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Robert Schuman Centre for Advanced Studies
Integrating Diversity in the European Union (InDivEU)

The Politics of Differentiated Integration: What do
Governments Want? Country Report - Croatia

Marta Božina Beroš and Ana Grdović Gnip

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Integrating Diversity in the European Union (InDivEU) is a Horizon 2020 funded research project aimed at contributing concretely to the current debate on the 'Future of Europe' by assessing, developing and testing a range of models and scenarios for different levels of integration among EU member states. InDivEU begins from the assumption that managing heterogeneity and deep diversity is a continuous and growing challenge in the evolution of the EU and the dynamic of European integration.

The objective of InDivEU is to maximize the knowledge of Differentiated Integration (DI) on the basis of a theoretically robust conceptual foundations accompanied by an innovative and integrated analytical framework, and to provide Europe's policy makers with a knowledge hub on DI. InDivEU combines rigorous academic research with the capacity to translate research findings into policy design and advice.

InDivEU comprises a consortium of 14 partner institutions coordinated by the Robert Schuman Centre at the European University Institute, where the project is hosted by the European Governance and Politics Programme (EGPP). The scientific coordinators of InDivEU are Brigid Laffan (Robert Schuman Centre) and Frank Schimmelfennig (ETH Zürich).

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**Integrating
Diversity in the
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Abstract

This paper presents empirically substantiated answers on the salience of differentiated integration from the perspectives of Croatian governments between 2004 and 2020. Judging from our analysis, differentiated integration has been – and remains – a low salience issue for Croatian governments. The few times that DI salience peaked were in 2003-07 (the beginning of the EU accession negotiations), 2009-12 (the period leading to the conclusion of the accession negotiations), and finally a more prominent peak during 2015-16, prompted by the 2015 EU refugee crisis. This has allowed identification of the principal drivers of DI on the demand and supply sides. We find that in the Croatian case the peak-salience moments are largely driven by the broad mechanisms (e.g. either enhanced cooperation or opt-outs) and instances of DI (e.g. Rome III, Pesco), together with specific instances of DI that gained particular traction in Croatian political discourse (e.g. the opt-out from the Global Compact on Refugees and the ‘Marrakesh agreement’). For the most part, political reflection on DI has taken place in the Croatian parliament (cro. Hrvatski Sabor), while salience has been overall low in Prime Ministers’ (PM) speeches (annual parliamentary addresses, European Council reports) and government programmes. Lastly, over the same period, the position of Croatian governments on differentiated integration has largely been informed by a very broad and non-specific support for Croatia’s EU membership and advancing the integration process across policy areas.

Keywords

EU policy, differentiated integration, government, parliamentary debates

Summary of Results

I. Saliency

Judging from the analysis of the data collected, differentiated integration (DI) has been – and remains – a low saliency issue for Croatian governments over the last 15 years. This is a rather unexpected conclusion considering that over this period Croatia progressed from negotiating its EU membership to presiding over the EU Council during one of the most challenging times in recent European history. The few times that DI saliency peaked were in 2003-07, which corresponds to the beginning of the EU accession negotiations, followed by a modest increase in the issue during 2009-12, which is the period leading to the conclusion of the accession negotiations, and finally a more prominent peak during 2015-16, prompted by the 2015 EU refugee crisis. This has allowed identification of the principal drivers of DI on the demand and supply sides, even though there appears to be no synergy between demand and supply factors in the case of Croatia. With only a handful of factors on the demand side encouraging debate on DI (for instance, national security issues linked to the 2015 refugee crisis and Croatia's frontline position on the Western Balkan migration route), the phenomenon was largely driven by factors on the supply side (for instance, externality issues). At the same time, only the 'different speeds' model of DI had some relevance over the years, with the 'different end points' model being inexistent. Therefore, in the Croatian case the peak-saliency moments are largely driven by the broad mechanisms (e.g. either enhanced cooperation or opt-outs) and instances of DI (e.g. Rome III, Pesco), together with specific instances of DI that gained particular traction in Croatian political discourse (e.g. the opt-out from the Global Compact on Refugees and the 'Marrakesh agreement'). For the most part, political reflection on DI has taken place in the Croatian parliament (cro. *Hrvatski Sabor*), while saliency has been overall low in Prime Ministers' (PM) speeches (annual parliamentary addresses, European Council reports) and government programmes.

II. Position

In the timeframe observed, the position of Croatian governments on DI has largely been informed by the aspiration to consolidate the country's position in the EU. The analysis of **different government programmes** over the years reveals a common trait, namely that all programmes **state a broad commitment to the process of deepening and widening** political, economic and social integration. Indeed, the breakdown of government programmes shows that, irrespective of the contrasting political visions of the two main parties that have led Croatian government coalitions over the years (the centre-right EPP-adhering Croatian Democratic Union and the centre-left PES-adhering Social Democratic Party), their government programmes make reference to the EU and European politics in a very broad and non-specific manner, typically reduced to a generically articulated support for Croatia's EU membership and advancing the integration process across policy areas. At the same time, and in the context of DI, it is important to understand that **government programmes never mention distinct positions or national preferences with respect to DI** models, mechanisms, instances and so forth. Indeed, we find little evidence that governments in Croatia discuss DI specifically, **because of which our analysis often recurs to a 'contextualising exercise' of EU-related issues*** that in comparison to DI gained more traction in Croatian political discourse.

At the same time, we have been able to offset this restriction with an in-depth analysis of parliamentary debates, which allows a better assessment of governments' positions on DI. The latest parliamentary assembly (the 9th assembly of the *Sabor*, from 2016 to 2020) made important advances in this respect, thanks also to the PM's emphasis on post-Council debates in the parliament. Arguably, in comparison to government programmes, **parliamentary debates offer better insights into governments' positions with respect to DI** models (in particular, 'multi-speed Europe') and specific DI mechanisms and instances of them (chief among them, the Schengen area, the euro and Pesco). What can be concluded from these debates is that the manifold aspects of DI are essentially discussed in the context of ensuring better political leverage in integration processes while ensuring national interests and domestic political legitimacy. Overall, the government rejects the idea of DI at a general level, while the opposition endorses differentiation at the level of concrete policies, primarily in the context of euro area accession.

* Many thanks to Stefan Telle for bringing this valid point to our attention, and for all his insightful comments and constructive suggestions.

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1. Introduction

This report investigates the salience of differentiated integration (DI) in Croatian government discourse between 2004 and 2020. It also probes into the position of Croatian governments on the issue of DI in selected years (2008, 2012, 2017-2020). Regarding the salience of DI, an analysis of government discourse was conducted in a variety of documents. The analysis focused on five categories of documents: (a) government programmes, (b) Prime Minister annual reports and speeches to the Croatian Parliament, (c) Prime Minister European Council Statements to the media (pre- and post-Council), (d) Parliamentary debates (2008-2020 period), (e) Other documents (which include coalition agreements, EU Council presidency speeches and Future of Europe speeches) (Appendix 1).

A total of 376 documents were analysed, most of which relate to parliamentary debates (325).¹ The salience of DI in these documents was assessed by counting the prevalence of DI-related key words (Appendix 2). The assumption is that the more a government talks about DI, the more relevant it is. While key word counts in government programmes and PM speeches show the salience of DI at specific moments in time, the analysis of parliamentary debates allows us to identify trends over time and situational peaks. The list of key words reflects three levels of abstraction. First, we ask if governments talk about DI at a conceptual level, i.e. by discussing the advantages and pitfalls of different models of DI. Second, we ask to what extent governments talk about specific mechanisms of DI, such as enhanced cooperation or opt-outs from community policies. Finally, we ask what the differentiated policy fields which governments talk about most often are. Besides instances of enhanced cooperation and opt-outs from community policies, the report also looks at instances of inter se agreements and external agreements. It is important to highlight the fact that the Croatian language counts many declensions with nouns and/or adjectives requiring a change of suffix according to the declination, gender and number. This is why in almost all instances we account for all the possible word-endings by adding an asterisk (*) to the base word or root word.

Regarding the government's position on DI models and DI mechanisms, the results are based on a manual attitude analysis of parliamentary debates. To this end, references to DI key words in parliamentary debates were manually coded as negative, neutral or positive.

¹ On average, a parliamentary debate document is 11109 words long, while the average number of words found in the 32 Prime Minister (PM) speeches is 11882. It is important to emphasise the fact that we divide the PM speeches into three categories: i) speeches related to annual reports (a total of 6 documents), ii) speeches given to the Croatian Parliament (a total of 12 documents) and iii) European Council statements (a total of 21). The analysis of the latter is additionally split into statements given pre-Council and statements given post-Council. This enables us to make a more detailed analysis of the models, mechanisms and instances in DI. The documents that on average are the longest relate to government programmes, where a total of 7 documents in the corpus cover 101400 words. It is worth mentioning that on average the parliamentary debate corpus counts 26 documents per year. This average would be higher if the years 2020 and 2016 were left out (29 documents per year, in particular). On the one hand, there are only 7 documents from 2020 given that only the first quarter of 2020 entered in the analysis. On the other hand, 2016 marked a unique event in Croatia's political trajectory: the elections held in November 2015 resulted in a minority government run by a non-partisan technocratic Prime Minister with the largest number (six) of non-partisan ministers in Croatia's government to date. However, without wider political support the work of the 'technocratic' government was ineffective because of political disagreements and related controversies ultimately leading to a new election in October 2016. The lower number of overall documents in the parliamentary debate corpus for 2016 reflects political instabilities in the short-lived 2015 government. Besides the DI key words (Appendix 2), a number of additional key words were used to account for the Croatian context (Appendix 3).

2. Salience of DI from the perspective of Croatian governments

2.1 Government programmes

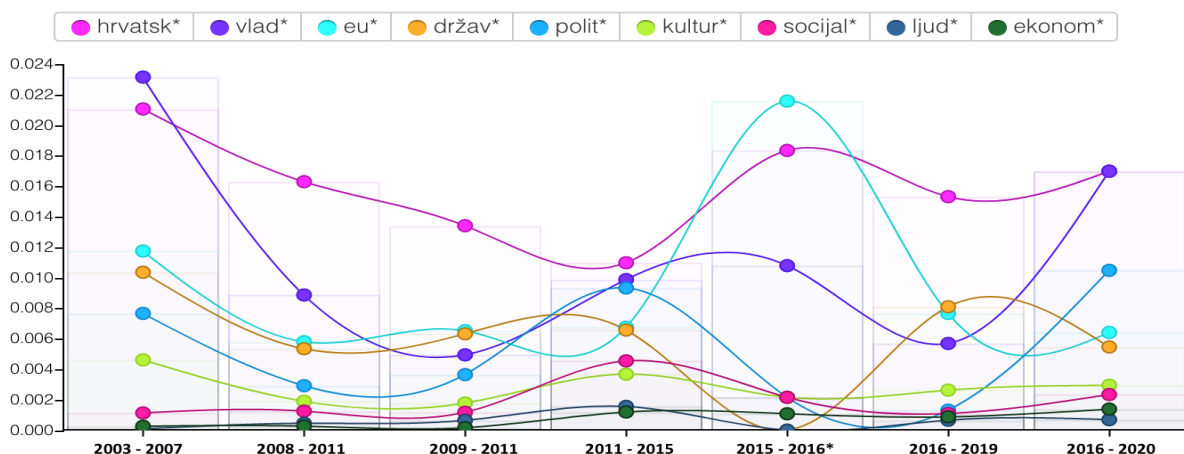
The first set of documents to be analysed were **government programmes**: the Croatian Democratic Union has led coalitions in 2003-08, 2008-09, 2009-11, 2015-16 and 2016-present and the Social Democratic Party led a coalition in 2011-16. The higher numbers of 4-year government programmes over the timeframe observed stem from two critical political events: in 2009 the PM unexpectedly resigned, leading to the formation of a new government (2009-11), while in 2016 a successful motion of no-confidence in the then PM resulted in an extraordinary parliamentary election in Croatia.

We began by translating selected key words into Croatian either literally or as closely as possible to their original meaning (Appendix 3 shows the English translations of comparable key words). The computer-assisted word count analysis of these key words showed that **government programmes did not reference DI models and neither did they mention the key words that allow tracking of DI mechanisms or instances**.

Therefore, an additional computer-assisted word count analysis was run to determine whether the EU and EU-related issues in general figure in government programmes, and to gauge their correlation with the ‘traditional tenants’ of such programmes: national (state), economic, social issues, etc. What followed from this analysis is that, first, EU-related matters figure more prominently in government programmes than social, cultural and – surprisingly – economic ones and, second, that EU-related issues have been about as central as state-related matters over the years, with an interesting deflection from 2011-2016, when EU-related matters gained salience unlike state-related concerns (see Figure 1).

The explanation for this is twofold. First, there was a rapid intensification of EU-accession negotiations in 2011-12, when Croatia’s policies and politics were debated primarily from a ‘European perspective’ in preparation for the 2013 membership. Second, the importance of EU-related matters was further prompted by Croatia’s frontline position in the context of the western Balkan migration route, which then informed the agenda of government programmes (also illustrated in Figure 1). What is also important to observe is that peaks in domestic salience correspond to some of the EU’s most important political developments and challenges, namely the 6th wave of EU enlargement and the unravelling of the 2015 EU refugee crisis.

Figure 1 - Salience of EU-related issues in government programmes (relative word frequencies)



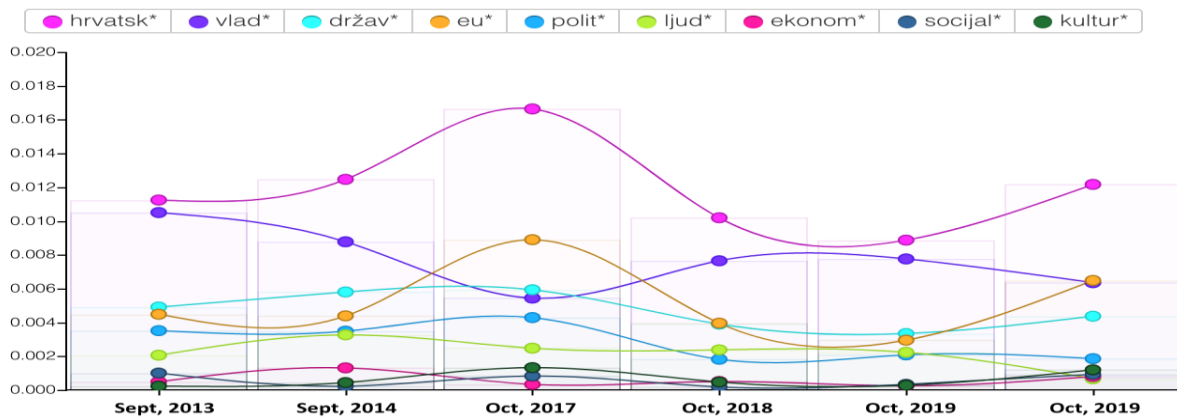
Note: hrvatsk* - croat; vlad* and držav* - government; kultur* - cultur; social* - social; ljud* - people; ekonom* - econom.

2.2 PM speeches

The next step was to run the same computer-assisted word analysis of various types of PM speeches given on different occasions and reflecting different contexts in order to gauge the salience of DI in the eyes of the leading government figures. It is worth noting that in Croatia the PM appears before the Parliament on the following occasions: i) ‘question time,’ when the government speaks about its work; ii) annual reports, which take place at the beginning of the 2nd regular session of Parliament and are opportunities to exchange views with parliamentarians about the direction of government policies and to argue in favour of the government’s approach to concrete EU-related matters that potentially relate to DI; and finally iii) speeches or reports on the meetings held at the European Council in the previous year.² Therefore, we narrowed our analysis to PM annual reports, PM European Council reports and PM European Council statements (pre- and post-Council).

We begin with **Prime Ministers’ annual reports before the Parliament** (N=6 documents, 143,746 words total). The PM annual reports do not mention specific DI key words, although they do refer to the EU in general with peaks in the salience of EU-related matters in 2017 and 2019 (Figure 2).

Figure 2 - Prime Minister annual reports



Note: hrvatsk* - croat; vlad* and držav* - government; kultur* - cultur; social* - social; ljud* - people; ekonom* - econom

They show one of the most prominent peaks in the salience of the EU and related issues in late 2017, which is not surprising considering that 2017 was a politically eventful year for the EU – reflecting on the 60th anniversary of the European project in the light of the Commission’s White Paper on the Future of Europe, while grappling with the uncertainties of the Brexit vote and a rising populist wave across MSs. At the same time, 2017 roughly corresponds to a highly contested and lengthy political debate concerning Croatia’s ratification of the so-called ‘Istanbul Convention’ (i.e. the Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence).

Similar findings emerge regarding the analysis of **PM European Council reports** (N=12 documents, 59,721 words in total). **These do not mention DI-related key words specifically** but instead focus on the broader topic of the future of the EU’s future and consolidating Croatia’s position in it. The key word count shows peaks in EU salience in 2017 and 2019 (Appendix 4).

The next set of documents to undergo a similar analysis were **PM European Council statements** (pre- and post-Council; N=21 documents, total words = 183,981). It is important to note that from December 2011 when the accession treaty was signed until the country’s full EU membership in July 2013 Croatia had observer status in all the EU institutions, which resulted in a low frequency of statements. The frequency of such statements increased in the second year of EU membership and

² For more information refer to <https://vlada.gov.hr/how-the-government-works/14967>

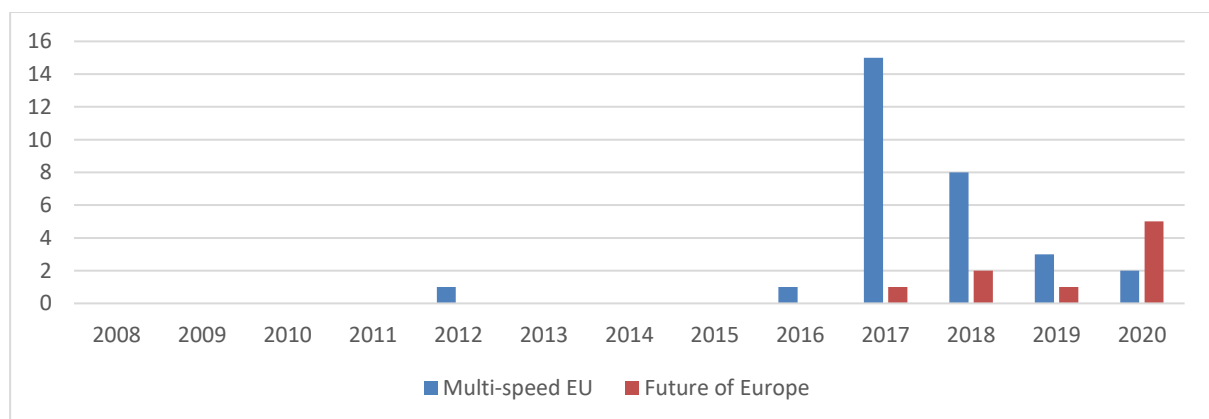
especially from 2016, when PM Andrej Plenković introduced customary post-Council statements to the media focusing on the most critical junctures between domestic and European politics. Overall, the analysis of PM pre- and post-Council statements confirms our previous analysis, with a **low salience of DI at all three levels of abstraction** being detected (Appendix 5).

2.3 Parliamentary debates

The next set of documents to be analysed were parliamentary debates.³ It is important to emphasise that the parliamentary debates considered in this analysis refer to the period 2008-2020.

In order to gauge the salience of DI, we relied on the same level of conceptual abstraction and used the same set of key words as before. Overall, **the salience of DI was again very low in the fixed periods observed** (Figure 4). It is worth mentioning that the analysis found references to only one key word: ‘multi-speed EU.’ No other conceptual DI key word was detected. In the period observed, ‘multi-speed EU’ appeared 30 times, which, considering the whole corpus and time span, is a relatively low frequency. Figure 3 also adds instances of the key words ‘Future of Europe’ (FoE). It is possible to notice that this appears in parliamentary debates with an even lower frequency, except in 2020, when the registered frequency of FoE is higher than that of DI models (i.e. ‘multi-speed EU’).

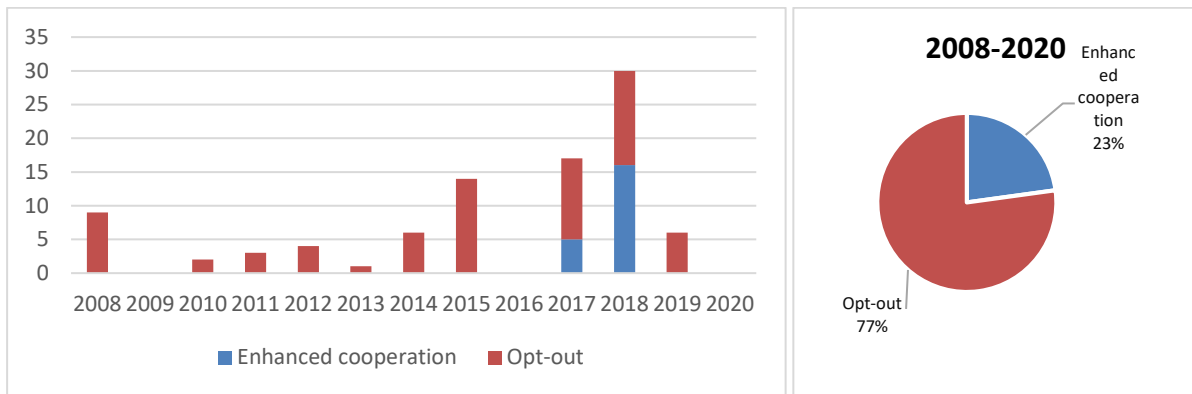
Figure 3 - Salience of conceptual key words in parliamentary debates – relative to the FOE debate



Given that DI models are limited to multi-speed Europe and no other form, we zoom in on the salience of DI mechanisms. The distribution of references to specific DI mechanisms over time is still low, with a total of 92 references and a peak of 30 references in 2018 (see Figure 4), but higher compared to the salience of DI models. The highest frequency is registered for 2018. The breakdown of DI mechanisms shows that the majority of references (77% to be exact) refer to opt-outs, with only 23% of them reflecting on opportunities for deeper integration through enhanced cooperation mechanisms.

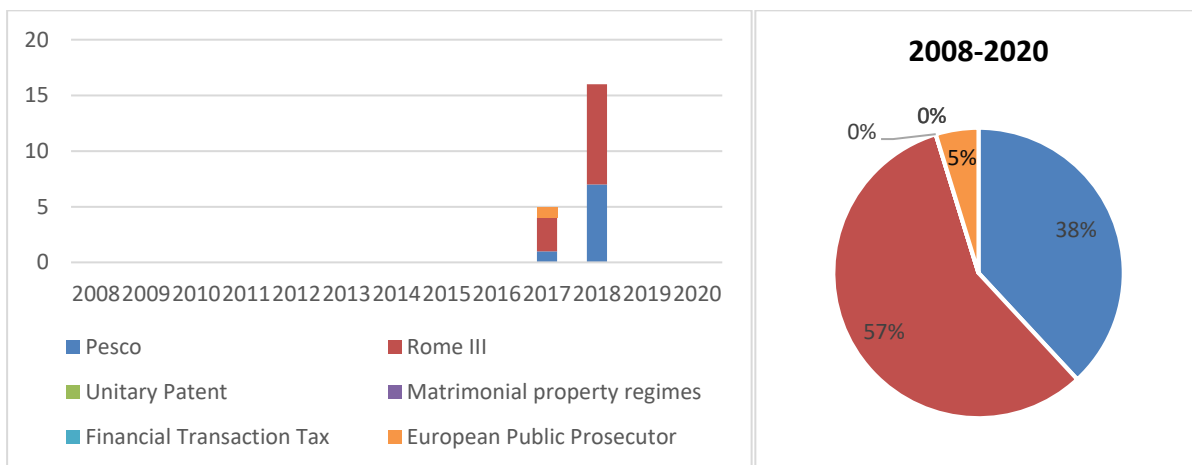
³ Phonograms of Croatian parliamentary debates are available at <http://edoc.sabor.hr/Default.aspx>

Figure 4 - Salience of DI mechanisms in parliamentary debates – over time (n=92)



In order to move the analysis forward, both categories of DI mechanisms were broken down into instances of DI following the suggested key words.⁴ Figure 5 shows the breakdown of enhanced-cooperation instances, which actually only appear in 2017 and 2018. This means that Croatian parliament debates did not refer to any of the suggested instances of DI before 2017. To be precise, all the enhanced co-operation instances refer to Pesco and Rome III (with the latter being the most referenced with 12 instances or 57%) except for one instance in 2017 referring to the European Public Prosecutor.

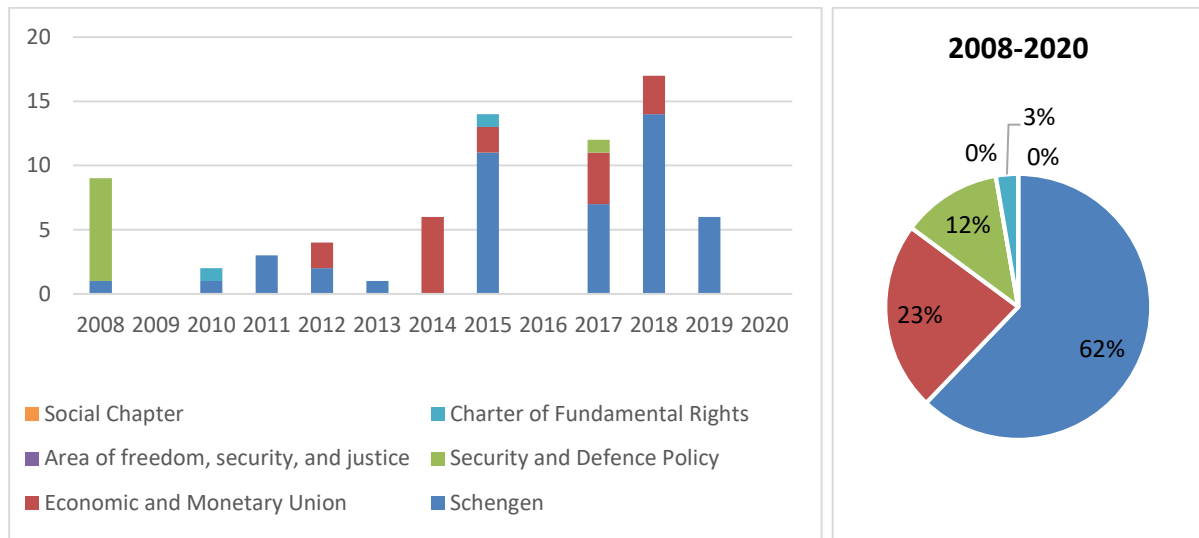
Figure 5 - Enhanced co-operation over time and breakdown into DI instances, 2008-2020 (N = 21)



When looking at instances of ‘opt-out’ policy fields, the total of references to this set of DI instances is rather low (74) but the breakdown of the percentages of ‘opt-out’ policy fields confirms the salience of each of these fields rather than the salience of parliamentary debates concerning whether to actually ‘opt-out.’ Indeed, the current Croatian government is resolute in joining the EU’s monetary union, which would consolidate the country’s economic credentials and help in the application process for the Schengen area.

⁴ Key words related to enhanced cooperation are Pesco, Rome III, Unitary Patent, Matrimonial property regimes, Financial Transaction Tax and European Public Prosecutor. Key words referencing opt-outs are Schengen, Economic and Monetary Union, Security and Defence Policy, Area of freedom, security and justice, Charter of Fundamental Rights and Social Chapter.

Figure 6 - Opt-out over time and breakdown into DI instances, 2008-2020 (N = 74)



Finally, there were no mentions of the key words relating to inter se agreements or external agreements. This was, in fact, surprising, especially regarding ESM, SRM and the Fiscal compact, from our point of view. However, when the debate on the Fiscal compact was particularly fervent, Croatia was still not a member of the EU, which may be the main reason for the lack of instances.

3. The position of Croatian governments on DI

This section discusses Croatian government and the opposition positions on DI. The analysis is based on quantitative and qualitative assessments of parliamentary debates in 2008, 2012 and 2017-2020. In the quantitative part, frequencies are distinguished between the ruling and opposing parties and between three different attitudes (positive, neutral, negative) in statements related to DI mechanisms and models (bold highlights emphasise points by the authors). In the qualitative part we cite selected statements, which allows us to better frame our quantitative analysis. Both the quantitative and qualitative parts are only based on parliamentary debates. Moreover, it is worth mentioning that the total number of frequencies listed in the quantitative part of this section (i.e. 2a) may differ from the numbers given in the previous section. This is due to the fact that the analysis in this section is restricted to three distinct periods (and six years overall), while in the previous section frequencies for all the years from 2008 to 2020 were counted.

3.1 Quantitative overview of government positions

As was shown in the previous section, scrutinising parliamentary debates (and the other documents considered in the analysis) **we find evidence of governments only discussing specific DI models**, referencing **more concretely the ‘multi-speed Europe’** key word (cro. *Europa više brzina*), with a total of 30 instances in parliamentary debates, of which 29 appear in the 2017-2020 period. **Our overall assessment suggests that DI models have positive mentions**, especially **in the eyes of the ruling party**, while **significant negative connotations characterise the opposition’s perception** (see the table below). Recall that (as was emphasised in the previous section and Figure 3 and Figure 4) DI models in the Croatian case only reference multi-speed Europe, with no mentions of multiple end points such as core Europe, variable geometry, à la carte and the like. This is why the following table solely lists connotations characterising multi-speed Europe, which were mainly positive (50% of instances), followed by neutral and negative (33% and 17% respectively).

Figure 7 - Position on multi-speed Europe

(n = 30)	Negative	Neutral	Positive
Government (n = 17)	0	4	13
Opposition (n = 13)	5	6	2
2008	0	0	0
2012	0	1	0
2017-2020	5	9	15

Given that there might be cases where the government's positions on DI mechanisms and instances of it are not the same, for example a government might be in favour of opt-outs but against joining the euro area, we carefully assessed the connotations of all the references in a specific parliamentary speech, also framing the connotation in a broader context (government and/or opposition position). In this respect it is worth mentioning that in all the periods if a government (or political party) was endorsing a particular mechanism it was also endorsing its manifold instances. For example, in 2012 the SDP-led government coalition was in favour of opt-outs but fully supporting Croatia's accession to Schengen. The CDU-led opposition was also in favour of the latter, while disputing the government's progress toward achieving it (see the dispute surrounding the 'lex Perković'). Regardless of the fact that from 2017 the roles of the SDP and the CDU switched (i.e. the CDU led the government and the SDP the opposition) their positions on mechanisms remained the same, with the SDP disputing the ineffectiveness of the government in negotiating Schengen. This is just an example highlighting the fact that we do not find clear examples of cases where the Croatian government (or opposition) is in favour of (or against) a mechanism while not supporting (while approving) a specific instance of it. With this main assumption, the tables that follow distinguish between the connotation in the speech-specific context and the instance which is mentioned in parliamentary debates, not with respect to the government's position. As all the tables indicate, the government (irrespective of its lead political party) endorses EU integration and stresses EU issues in a positive way, while the opposition typically discusses the government's efforts in a more neutral or negative way.

Similarly to DI models, the analysis of DI mechanisms (enhanced cooperation and opt-out) shows that issues related to PESCO and the Rome III regulation are primarily mentioned by the ruling party and in a positive light, while the opposition appears neutral regarding enhanced cooperation DI mechanisms. However, the opposition is relatively more 'aggressive' in the case of opt-out instances such as Schengen and Economic and Monetary Union, with a significant negative or neutral connotation. If we compare the selected time periods, it is possible to emphasise that DI mechanisms (and models too) gained more traction in Croatian parliamentary debates only from 2017, and with the Croatian Democratic Union (cro. Hrvatska demokratska zajednica) ruling the Croatian government.

Figure 8 - Position on enhanced co-operation

(n = 21)	Negative	Neutral	Positive
Government (n = 18)	0	0	18
Opposition (n = 3)	0	2	1
2008	0	0	0
2012	0	0	0
2017-2020	0	2	19

Figure 9 - Position on "Opt-outs"

(n = 48)	Negative	Neutral	Positive
Government (n = 15)	1	5	9
Opposition (n = 33)	12	15	6
2008	2	5	2
2012	1	3	0
2017-2020	10	12	13

Overall, the Croatian government is more positive with regard to DI models and mechanisms than the opposition. This is discussed in the qualitative part, but we expect that this positive connotation is underpinned by the fact that the ruling CDU government evaluates and hence emphasises the benefits gained from EU membership more than its eventual costs.

3.2 Qualitative assessment of government positions

This part of the analysis aims to give a detailed framework for the quantitative numbers assigned to different connotations expressed by the government or opposition. In order to better grasp the key political issues and concerns brought up in parliamentary debates, the analysis is clearly divided into periods. However, at this point it is vital to make a brief digression concerning our selection of the main political issues analysed. Besides general key words comparable to other EU countries (such as ‘multi-speed Europe,’ ‘Rome III’ and ‘Fiscal compact’) we additionally scrutinised documents in the light of key political points that can be considered Croatia-specific, such as the arbitrage procedure connected to the Ecological and Fisheries Protection Zone (cro. *Zaštićeni ekološko-ribolovni pojas*, hereafter ZERP), Schengen, the Dublin agreement, European and pre-accession funds and the Marrakesh agreement. Some of these were heavily discussed by parliamentarians and seem to point to relevant conclusions about DI from the Croatian perspective. Moreover, as was shown in the quantitative part, the general terms regarding models and mechanisms were mainly mentioned in 2017-2020, and this is another reason why we opted to qualitatively assess Croatia-specific issues in the years 2008 and 2012. **Additionally, it should be kept in mind that in 2008 and 2012 Croatia was not an EU member but an accession country**, which is also interesting in terms of elucidating governments’ positions on DI in the pre-accession period too.

3.2.1 2008 – ZERP (Ecological and Fisheries Protection Zone)⁵

In 2008, while the EU was preparing for the second Lisbon referendum in Croatia there were no direct mentions of DI, a fact that does not surprise given the legally and politically challenging task of **striking a delicate balance between EU and national interests that seemingly clashed on the subject of the ZERP**. The ZERP was widely supported by parties and citizens, who vociferously argued that there was a striking dissonance between the energetic political commitment to EU accession demonstrated by Croatia up to that point and the sudden halt *en route* triggered by the ZERP during the Slovenian EU Council presidency.

⁵ At this point it is essential to contextually frame the issue of ZERP within the broader DI discussion in order to explain its political (and economic) salience. The ZERP relates to the unresolved land and maritime border dispute between Croatia and Slovenia, a “legacy of Yugoslavia’s break-up in 1991 that significantly influenced the process of EU accession, as well as the public discourse on European integration” (Maldini and Pauković 2015, p. 46). Initially, Croatia declared its ZERP in 2003, withholding the application to EU Member States, but in 2006 it decided to extend the ZERP to EU countries from 2008 onwards. Maldini and Pauković note (ibidem) “The entering into force of this decision in early 2008 provoked pressure from the EU, primarily from Slovenia, for its abandonment. Slovenia claimed that Croatia, by introducing the ZERP, prejudged the sea border (...) The EU asked Croatia to resolve the issue with Slovenia, essentially pressuring Croatia to withdraw the application of the ZERP on EU member states in order to prevent ‘serious delays in the accession process’ (...) A few days later, the Croatian government abandoned the application of the ZERP on the grounds of a situation of clashing of two national interests – ZERP and EU accession.” Unresolved border issues again slowed the negotiation process in December 2008, when Slovenia blocked the opening of several negotiation chapters, prompting Croatia to ask “for a settling of the border dispute before an international court and the separation of bilateral issues from the accession process (...) The Commission became involved in resolving the issue, which resulted in an arbitration proposal (...) The Slovenian blockade of the negotiations had a negative effect on the perception of the EU by the Croatian public, and membership support fell steadily for eight consecutive months.” (Maldini and Pauković 2015, p. 47). The maritime border delimitation dispute in the Piran Bay with Slovenia is still pending, and Croatia has postponed the application of ZERP to EU Member States.

In 2008, ZERP had a frequency of 21 out of the 42 overall. Below we discuss the government's and opposition's stances toward the ZERP, drawing from the official document 'Planned proposal for aligning the legislature of the Republic of Croatia with the *Acquis Communautaire* in 2008 – Annex A to the Programme of the Government of the Republic of Croatia for EU accession – 2008' (cro. *Prijedlog plana usklađivanja zakonodavstva Republike Hrvatske s pravnom stečevinom Europske unije za 2008. godinu - Dodatak A Nacionalnom programmeu Republike Hrvatske za pristupanje Europskoj uniji - 2008. godina [od 28.2.2008.]*). The citations are in English with footnotes providing the original quotes in Croatian. Recall that in 2008 Croatia had a CDU ruling government coalition, with SDP being the main opposition party.

The government's position

Being very aware that **the ZERP had the potential to generate a negative public reaction toward the EU in general and that any assertive action might cause repercussions in the accession negotiations, the CDU government proceeded cautiously** with respect to the ZERP while **keeping full EU membership in primary focus**. Gordan Jandroković (CDU), future Minister for Foreign Affairs stated:

“In the first 4 months of the Slovenian presidency negotiation, dynamics and decision-making within the European Commission and the Council have been significantly slowed down by the Slovenian presidency. During the last two months and after the parliament's decision to temporarily postpone enforcement of the ZERP (...) the presidency and EU institutions have accelerated negotiations with Croatia. The decision dynamics to open (negotiation) chapters has also intensified, which resulted in the opening of the 4 chapters concerned. Furthermore, after a prolonged blocking in the same period progress has been made with chapters 24, concerning 'Justice, freedom and security' and 31 on 'Foreign, security and defence policy,' in respect of which the Council has decided to invite Croatia to present its negotiation positions.”⁶

Marija Pejčinović Burić (CDU) followed the spirit of Jandroković's statement while acknowledging that the ZERP had an adverse effect on the EU accession process:

“I can say that we think that all that has been done also during the Slovenian presidency despite objective circumstances that we faced, namely that virtually half of that period and until we stopped enforcing the ZERP with respect to EU Member States we have de facto been blocked, at least from the negotiation's formal perspective, that we have nevertheless managed to prepare excellent grounds for the French presidency that is ongoing, and also for the Czech presidency upcoming in the first half of next year and that we will do everything on our side to fulfil the rhythm that we've chosen and on which we are working, and that is to finish negotiations by the end of 2009.”⁷

It is also worth citing the position of the Croatian peasant party (cro. *Hrvatska seljačka stranka*, hereinafter CPP), which at the time was part of the ruling coalition but which nevertheless tried to underline that the ZERP was not merely one of the many points in the negotiation chapters but instead a vital national interest – Josip Friščić (CPP):

⁶ Original citation: “U prva 4 mjeseca slovenskog predsjedanja dinamika pregovora i donošenje odluka unutar Europske komisije i Vijeća Europske unije bili su bitno usporeni i to od strane slovenskog predsjedanja. U zadnja dva mjeseca nakon odluke Hrvatskog sabora o privremenom ne primjenjivanju ZERP-a na (...) predsjedništvo i institucije Europske unije pojačano radili na pregovorima sa Hrvatskom. Intenzivirana je dinamika donošenja odluka o otvaranju poglavlja i to je rezultiralo i otvaranjem 4 navedena poglavlja. Isto tako nakon duže blokade u tom razdoblju ostvaren je napredak u poglavljima 24. To je pravda, sloboda i sigurnost te 31: vanjska, sigurnosna i obrambena politika za koje je vijeće odlučilo pozvati Republiku Hrvatsku na dostavu pregovaračkih stajališta.”

⁷ Original citation: “Ja mogu reći da mislimo da sve ono što je napravljeno i u vrijeme slovenskog predsjedanja unatoč objektivnim okolnostima koje smo imali da je zapravo pola tog razdoblja dok nismo prestali primjenjivati ZERP na članice Europske unije smo praktički bili u zastoju, bar što se formalno tiče pregovora, da smo unatoč tome pripremili odličan teren za francusko predsjedanje koje je u tijeku, isto tako za češko predsjedanje koje slijedi u prvoj polovici sljedeće godine i da ćemo onaj ritam koji smo odabrali i na kome radimo, a to je da do kraja 2009. godine svakako s naše strane učinimo sve da se pregovori završe i ostvariti.”

“Slovenians have attempted to transform the presidency period into a period when they will turn their bilateral and unresolved issues into an issue of Croatia’s relationship with the EU. We have paid the price for the ZERP postponement to show that this is not a question of fishery and sardines but a question of borders, but after this I believe we are in a position to gain a certain reward concerning tempo, but for this we have to make preparations and I am confident they will be made, because we know who follows, and after whom and actually during whose presidency we expect to finish these negotiations.”⁸

The opposition’s position

At the same time, **the opposition underlined that the ruling party had “politicised” the issue of the ZERP in Croatia’s negotiation process**; reiterating its support for Croatia’s maritime (national) interests it too kept its eyes firmly on the goal of EU accession. This is the spirit of Neven Mimica’s (SDP) statement:

“The ZERP is only one of the issues that at this moment delay the negotiation process, but the ZERP isn’t the only issue. We have more work to do with respect to reforms, with which the parliament can and has to help. As for the ZERP, I want to make it immediately clear that the SDP will support everything that the government achieves in its dialogue with our European partners, if it succeeds in having the ZERP as well as the EU we will, of course, be the first to applaud and congratulate the government. If after a serious discussion, arguments, dialogue and assurances the government comes back to this parliament and says that we cannot have both the ZERP and the EU then the SDP will know how to choose. In that case the SDP chooses Europe and the continuation of our road to the EU but then we will also discuss the reasons why we have been faced with this situation to choose between the EU and the ZERP.”⁹

Similarly, Damir Kajin from the Istrian Democratic Assembly (cro. *Istarski Demokratski Sabor*; IDA) stated:

“Keeping in mind that 2007 was an election year, I dare say that all has been done that could have been done, because as things usually go when there are elections things tend to get radicalized, then national politics come in to play, then blood gets boiling, then we take stances that are informed by I don’t know what, pride and so on, then circumstances aggravate, and after elections we hastily correct what has been spoilt. The best illustration of this is the ZERP, since what was done around the ZERP in 2007 was completely unnecessary, as it was in 2003 to be fair, but 2003 and 2008 were also election years. Because of the ZERP we have lost at least 6 months and we still haven’t closed the fisheries chapter. To make things worse, it all happened, or better yet overlapped, with Slovenia’s presidency of the EU Council.”¹⁰

⁸ Original citation: “Slovinci su pokušali u vrijeme predsjedanja pretvoriti vrijeme kada će svoje bilateralne stvari pretvoriti i neriješena pitanja pretvoriti u pitanje odnosa Hrvatske Europske unije. Platili smo ceh odgode primjene ZERP-a da se prikaže da to nije pitanje ribolova i sardina, nego da je to pitanje granica, ali poslije toga vjerujem da smo u poziciji da zbog toga dobijemo i određenu nagradu kada je riječ o tempu, a za to treba raditi pripreme i ja sam uvjeren da će se one napraviti, jer znamo tko slijedi, pa onda iza toga i zapravo za vrijeme čijeg predsjedanja mi očekujemo da završimo ove pregovore.”

⁹ Original citation: “ZERP je samo jedna stvar koja u ovom trenutku dovodi do zastoja procesa pregovora, međutim ZERP nije jedina stvar. Ima puno još na reformama posla, tu Sabor treba i može pomoći. Što se ZERP-a tiče SDP odmah da kažem će podržati sve ono što Vlada uspije napraviti u dijalogu sa europskim partnerima ako uspije učiniti da imamo i ZERP i Europsku uniju naravno bit ćemo prvi koji ćemo zapljuskati i čestitati Vladi na tome. Ako nakon ozbiljne rasprave i argumenata i dijaloga i uvjeravanja se vrati Vlada ovdje u ovaj Hrvatski sabor i kaže ne možemo imati ZERP i Europsku uniju. SDP će znati izabrati u tom slučaju, SDP bira Europu i nastavak puta prema Europskoj uniji ali tada ćemo razgovarati o tome zašto smo dovedeni u takvu situaciju da uopće moramo birati između Europe i ZERP-a.”

¹⁰ Original citation: “Usudujem se reći imajući na umu, da je 2007. bila izborna godina, da je učinjeno što se učiniti dalo, jer kao što to biva, kada su izbor, onda jasno stvari se radikaliziraju, onda zaigra nacionalna patetika, onda krv uzvrije, onda se normalno govori sa tog ne znam ponosa itd., onda se prilike zaoštravaju, a po izboru se na brzinu ispravlja ono što se tada zabrljalo. Najbolji primjer je ZERP ono što se izvodilo 2007. oko ZERP-a bilo je posve nepotrebno, kao i 2003. da se razumijemo, ali i 2003. i 2008. bile su izborne godine. Mi smo zbog ZERP-a izgubili barem 6 mjeseci i još nismo zatvorili

Other members of the opposition argued that Croatia should have been wary of the ‘à la carte’ approach to the EU. Vladimir Šišljagić from the Croatian Democratic Alliance of Slavonia and Baranja (cro. Hrvatski demokratski savez Slavonije i Baranje; CDASB) said:

“Not to mention the ZERP, the act on the ecological and fisheries zone that, as we have wholeheartedly argued, will not be postponed. Alas, the problem lies in the fact that we have been led into this situation where we have to think how did that happen, what is Croatia’s interest? Not the interest of the CDU or SDP or any other party, but what is under concrete circumstances more positive and beneficial for Croatia. Of course, in my view, and in the view of the CDASB, it was more beneficial to postpone the enforcement of the ZERP at that moment. But why do we find ourselves in this situation to even think in that way, that we are forced to think that way? Well, because of the politics that over the last 4 years has led our accession negotiations with the EU until this moment when we had to, or better had the opportunity to, choose between the lesser of two wrong solutions.”¹¹

3.2.2 2012 – Schengen

The government’s position

The SDP-led government coalition showed undisputed support for Croatia’s Schengen accession, something that the government wanted to complete briefly after the country’s planned accession to the EU in 2013. Considering the timing (i.e. the euro area crisis period), the slow progression of the Schengen talks was often justified by the fact that the financial crisis rightfully shifted the EU’s focus elsewhere. In that light, Damir Kajin (IDA) highlighted:

“Understandably, no one can be blamed, but I would consider it a catastrophe if Croatia was – in some way – left behind the ‘Iron curtain’ of the Schengen, in a sense left behind something seen as a civilisation curtain. Certainly, as was mentioned by the Prime Minister in 2011, 2012, Europe today is not what it was during the prosperous 90s. Today even a great Germany, a wealthy France or a once powerful Italy have difficulties in responding to the crisis. It is not surprising then that this economic moment challenges Croatia as well.”¹²

The opposition’s position

Although sharing the same vision of Croatia’s Schengen membership, the opposition mainly reiterated that the government’s slow progress toward Schengen resulted from unsatisfactory domestic performance in the fields of justice, freedom and security, and the judiciary. Hence, **unlike the government, which correlated Schengen delays with external developments** (i.e. the euro area crisis), **the opposition correlated delays with internal domestic politics**, among them the government’s amendments to the law on judicial cooperation in criminal matters with EU Member

poglavlje o ribarstvu. Da stvar bude gora sve se to događalo, sve se to bolje rečeno poklapalo sa slovenskim predsjedanjem Vijećem Europske Unije.”

¹¹ Original citation: “A da ne govorimo o ZERP-u, Zakon o ekološko-ribolovnom pojasu koji je, zdušno smo branili, neće biti odgode. Međutim, dovedeni su, problem je u tome što smo dovedeni u tu situaciju da razmišljamo kad je do toga došlo, što je korist Hrvatske? Ne što je korist HDZ-a, SDP-a ili bilo koje druge stranke, nego što je u datim uvjetima pozitivnije i korisnije za Hrvatsku. Pa naravno, po meni, a i po HDSSB-u je bilo korisnije odgoditi primjenu ZERP-a tada, u tom trenutku. Ali zbog čega smo došli uopće u situaciju da na takav način moramo razmišljati da smo prisiljeni razmišljati, pa zbog politike koja je kroz 4 godine vodila politiku pristupanja Europskoj uniji do onog trenutka kada smo mi morali, odnosno imali prigode izabrati manje loše rješenje.”

¹² Original citation: “Razumljivo, nije nikome za zamjeriti ali smatram da bi bila katastrofa kada bi Hrvatska na neki način ostala iza ‘Željezne zavjese’ iza zavjese šengena, jednom riječju iza jedne civilizacijske zavjese. Europa sigurno danas, a o čemu je govorio i premijer 2011., 2012. nije ono što je bila prosperitetnih devedesetih godina. Teško je danas odgovoriti iskušenju krize, jednoj velikoj moćnoj Njemačkoj, jednoj bogatoj Francuskoj, nekada isto tako moćnoj Italiji. Onda se ne trebamo čuditi zašto je taj gospodarski trenutak i u RH tako težak.”

States with regard to the time limit for the enforcement of the European Arrest Warrant (also dubbed ‘Lex Perković’). In this sense, Tomislav Karamarko (CDU) cautioned:

“Thus in the name of the Croatian Democratic Union, and expectedly in the name of the majority of the Croatian public, I call on the government and its representatives, as well as all representatives in this high House, whether of opposing parties or those of the ruling coalition, to promptly repeal the Act on the amendments to the law on judicial cooperation with EU Member States, and so to mitigate the risk of the imposition of special measures toward Croatia that have been announced by the European Commission and ones that would withhold the use of European funds or ones that refer to post-accession monitoring and the delay in Croatia’s accession to the Schengen area.”¹³

Regarding Schengen, **it is interesting to observe the narrative of the main political parties after Croatia’s EU accession and in the 2017-20 period**, when Croatia’s political scenery changed: the CDU led the governing coalition while the SDP represented the opposition. In this period, the Schengen accession was seen as complementary to Croatia’s national interest, not least because of security issues raised by the 2015 migration crisis but also in terms of increased political and economic benefits it might also bring from the perspective of a ‘multi-speed Europe.’ Throughout this period the government showed a commitment to advance the country’s position in specific DI instances (e.g. Schengen and the euro area). In the words of the current PM Andrej Plenković (CDU):

“From that aspect we are in a distinct position, as a country that fulfils all obligations to join the Schengen area and hence yesterday, I wish to reiterate that, we had the opportunity to formally connect our systems to the Schengen information system, and you know well how crucial that is in terms of gaining credibility as a partner within the EU that is able to effectively control and register systematically all entrances and exits within our territory. Of course, the benefit of the Schengen data base is that we will have the possibility of increasing the quality and speed of resolving certain requests and issues that are part of our institutions’ everyday working agenda.”¹⁴

Schengen was also at times correlated with the need to avoid multi-speed Europe scenarios that would be detrimental to Croatia’s political leverage within the EU. In the words of PM Andrej Plenković (CDU):

“The eurozone and the Schengen area are the best known, but there are many other aspects of enhanced cooperation based on the Treaty of the EU where some Member States decided to delve deeper into integration. Because of that the thesis I’ve proposed in Croatia’s name was, considering that multi-speed Europe is now a fact that we all have to acknowledge, that the manner of cooperation in the future has to be inclusive. In other words, we have to avoid an amalgam in which a few powerful, wealthy and typically founding states will pursue closer cooperation, while the rest will remain at the margins with a decreased influence on the formation of the European project. In my opinion, this is one of the most important facts for Croatia, that because of the early stages of the evaluation of our Schengen membership, and that by signing the accession treaty we have formally agreed to become a eurozone member, and that we still have many criteria to fulfil on which we are working – that we are not left via facti within something of a firewall excluded from those that make decisions.”¹⁵

¹³ Original citation: “Stoga u ime Hrvatske demokratske zajednice, a vjerujem i velikog dijela cjelokupne hrvatske javnosti pozivam Vladu i njenog predstavnika, te sve zastupnike u ovom Visokom domu kako oporbenih stranaka tako i vladajuće koalicije da se žurno stavi izvan snage Zakon o izmjenama Zakona o pravosudnoj suradnji sa članicama EU, te da se otkloni opasnost posebnih mjera prema Hrvatskoj koje je najavila Europska komisija kako one o uskraćivanju sredstava europskih fondova tako i mjere post pristupnog monitoringa i odgađanja ulaska Hrvatske u schengenski prostor.”

¹⁴ Original citation: “Mi smo sa tog aspekta u jednoj posebnom položaju kao država koja se sprema za ispunjavanje svih obaveza koje podrazumijeva ulazak u šengenski prostor te evo i jučer, želim to podsjetiti, smo imali prigodu formalno spojiti naše sustave na šengenski informacijski sustav, znate i sami koliko je to bitno i za stjecanje kredibiliteta kao partnera unutar EU koji je u stanju kvalitetno kontrolirati, bilježiti sustavno sve ulaske i izlaske na naš teritorij. A naravno da će nam ta mogućnost šengenskih baza podataka dati prigodu i da puno bolje, puno brže riješimo i određene zahtjeve i pitanja koja imaju na dnevnom redu i naša tijela.”

¹⁵ Original citation: “Najpoznatiji su naravno eurozona i schengenski prostor, ali postoji čitav niz drugih aspekata pojačane suradnje, temeljem Ugovora o EU, gdje je dio država članica odlučio ići u dublje integracije. Upravo stoga je moja teza u

At the same time, discussions about Schengen were an opportunity for the opposition to point to the government's shortcomings in bilateral relations, primarily with Slovenia and in connection with the maritime border dispute. In the words of Joško Klisović (SDP),

“Honourable PM, in your exposé you have mentioned the Schengen area, and yesterday you personally visited the border to see for yourself how the Schengen information system functions. Schengen is an undisputable benefit for Croatia, and I would say that Croatia's membership of Schengen is an undisputable benefit for the EU. Moreover, you have mentioned that tomorrow the arbitration judgment will be published, which Croatia does not recognise as binding and where the Croatian position is absolutely clear. However, considering the history of our relationship with Slovenia in the European context, and that of negotiations and their completion, we can expect a certain political pressure on Croatia to somehow accept this judgment including contestations and blocking of Croatia's accession to the Schengen area. I would like to know what the Croatian government intends to do in that case, and if it intends to raise this question on the EU Council, also asking for the support of other Council members. As we know they are chiefs of governments and state presidents and not bureaucrats as has been mentioned earlier, and to pinpoint the importance of Croatia's accession to the Schengen area.”¹⁶

3.2.3 2017-2020 – Multi-speed Europe, PESCO

The idea of a ‘multi-speed Europe’ was relatively well discussed by Croatian parliamentarians, always framed by the general abstract position of favouring greater European integration, which is best illustrated by the statements of representatives from different political spectra. What is evident is that the government communicated its position more diplomatically, being careful not to exacerbate the limited domestic demand for deeper integration and citizens' negative attitudes to the EU, therefore often recurring to the argument that Croatia needed to be at the ‘centre of EU debates’ rather than remain at the margin. At the same time, **all the political parties were supportive of Croatia's enhanced pace of EU integration, although debates about a ‘multi-speed Europe’ revealed distinct party preferences about DI instances, whether of enhanced cooperation or opt-outs. The opposition argued in favour of Croatia maintaining greater diversity within the EU**, and thus opting out of specific arrangements – primarily the monetary union and PESCO. Recall that in this period Croatia has had, as in 2008, a CDU ruling government coalition, with SDP being the main opposition party.

Multi-speed Europe

The government's position was summarised by PM Andrej Plenković (CDU):

“The government's position is of course that the choice between five scenarios cannot be understood as a menu from which to choose a specific scenario and to discard all others. On the contrary, the future of Europe will be represented with a mix of all scenarios, this is the only thing that is certain.

ime Hrvatske bila, budući da je Europa više brzina u ovom trenutku jedna činjenica s kojom moramo biti svi skupa svjesni, način kako će se ta suradnja odvijati u budućnosti mora biti ključiv. Dakle, moramo izbjeći amalgam u kojem će nekoliko velikih, utjecajnih, bogatih najčešće država utemeljiteljica ići u tješnju suradnju, a ostali će ostati na margini sa smanjenim utjecajem na formiranje europskoga projekta. To je po meni za Hrvatsku jedna od najbitnijih činjenica, da se zbog toga da smo sada tek u fazi evaluacije za ulazak u schengenski prostor, da jesmo formalno pristali potpisivanjem Ugovora o pristupanju postati dio eurozone, ali imamo jako puno kriterija za ispuniti na kojima radimo da ne bi via facti ostali u svojevrsnom prstenu koji nije u žiži onih koji odlučuju.”

¹⁶ Original citation: “Gospodine predsjedniče Vlade u svom izlaganju spominjali ste Schengenski prostor, a jučer ste i sami išli na granicu uvjeriti kako funkcionira Schengenski informacijski sustav. Schengen je svakako u korist RH, a rekao bih da je i u korist EU ulazak Hrvatske u Schengen. Također ste spomenuli da je sutra objava arbitražne presude koju Hrvatska ne priznaje i tu je potpuno jasna hrvatska pozicija. No, uzimajući u obzir povijest odnosa sa Slovenijom u kontekstu europskih odnosa, pa i pregovora i završetka pregovora koje smo imali može se očekivati svojevrsan politički pritisak na Hrvatsku da ipak na neki način prihvati tu presudu uključujući i kroz osporavanja ili onemogućavanje primanja Hrvatske u Schengenski prostor. Mene zanima što hrvatska Vlada u tom slučaju namjerava učiniti i da li mislite to pitanje podići na Europskom vijeću i zatražiti potporu članova Europskog vijeća. To znamo da su šefovi vlada i predsjednici država, a ne činovnici kako je malo prije bilo rečeno i ukazati na važnost primanja Hrvatske u Schengenski prostor.”

Hence, the discussion about a multi-speed Europe gains an additional dimension, and in that respect, we have to be open.”¹⁷

At the same time Vesna Pusić from the Croatian People’s Party (cro. *Hrvatska narodna stranka*; CPP) noted:

“I think it would be detrimental to Croatia to support the idea of a multi-speed Europe. This idea is contrary to the founding European idea and, in my opinion, leads to an absolutely speedy disintegration of the EU. However, between the strategies that have been suggested what could be possible would be to define a Europe that regulates and harmonises a smaller number of areas but within those areas we all have to uphold those standards and common politics.”¹⁸

The opposition’s position

In the context of a multi-speed Europe, the opposition was much clearer about the need to avoid multi-speed scenarios at any cost and – in the case of their realisation – to safeguard diversity by opting out of cooperation arrangements that would impinge on Croatia’s political leverage. As Gordan Maras (SDP) put it,

“Mr. Prime Minister, in your discussion you’ve mentioned the need to find a cohesive, European narrative, with which I fully agree. I also agree with your concluding thesis that this is not a multi-speed Europe, also from the perspective of my belief that, as you’ve mentioned earlier, this would entail that countries in a so-called higher speed would come down to the countries that founded the EU, while countries that have been joining over the last 15 years and Croatia, which joined in 2013, wouldn’t be content with their position, meaning that our citizens wouldn’t have a perspective in certain situations since they already see many shortcomings. Unfortunately, it is always easier to see the shortcomings than the benefits of the EU. And we therefore have to find something that will encourage our citizens to see more benefits of the EU. In this sense, if I think about how to maintain a certain diversity I would then choose, for example, Croatia’s monetary sovereignty, and I wouldn’t rush into the monetary union. I would think about how to ensure certain benefits and the opportunity of circumventing positions imposed by the European Central Bank. So this is in a way something through which Croatia can build its diversity with respect to other EU countries and safeguard its sovereignty, and, I would say, maintain certain instruments within our own hands, also trying to explain to our citizens that we can uphold a greater degree of autonomy than we would otherwise have within a monetary union. Hence, I am absolutely against a multi-speed Europe, but I am also in favour of Croatia keeping certain elements of its sovereignty for the future because I think in that way citizens will perceive that they have more autonomy than they have now. Thank you.”¹⁹

¹⁷ Original citation: “Stav Vlade je naravno da taj izbor od pet scenarija nije meni u kojem birate jedan od scenarija, onda zaboravljate sve ostale. Naprotiv, budućnost Europe bit će svojevrsni mix svih tih scenarija, to je jedino što je sigurno. Stoga i rasprava o Europi više brzina dobiva svoju dodatnu dimenziju i tu moramo biti otvoreni. Europa više brzina postoji i danas”.

¹⁸ Original citation: “Smatram da bi za Hrvatsku bilo pogubno promovirati ideju Europe više brzina. To je suprotno temeljnoj Europskoj ideji i vodi po mom mišljenju apsolutno relativno brzom raspadu EU. Međutim između onih predloženih strategija ono što bi bilo moguće je definirati Europu koja posize za manjim brojem područja koja regulira i standardizira za sve članice ali unutar tih područja se onda držati zajedničkih standarda i zajedničkih politika.”

¹⁹ Original citation: “Gospodine premijeru, u ovom vašem izlaganju ste spomenuli da trebamo naći u EU kohezivni narativ, znači, ja se s vama apsolutno slažem. I slažem se i sa ovom tezom s kojom ste zaključili znači da to sigurno nije više brzinska Europa, znači pogotovo iz naše perspektive jer vjerujem da, kao što ste i prethodno govorili da bi se ove zemlje koje su u tzv. višoj brzini svele na one zemlje koje su krenule u EU a zemlje članice koje su pristupale zadnjih 15-ak godina ili Hrvatska koja je pristupila 2013. godine ne bi sigurno bile na neki način sretne u toj poziciji, odnosno naši građani ne bi vidjeli perspektivu jer već sada vide dosta manjkavosti, ja bih rekao u određenim situacijama. Nažalost, uvijek se lakše vide loše stvari nego dobre stvari EU. I mi moramo naći u biti ono što će naše građane stimulirati da vide što više dobrih stvari EU. Što se tiče toga, ukoliko bih gledao kako zadržati određene raznolikosti prije bih se opredijelio onda za, primjerice rekao sam, monetarnu samostalnost Hrvatske, znači ne bih žurio u monetarnu uniju, gledao bih tu na neki način da zadržimo koristi i mogućnost da nemamo a priori nametnute određene stavove Europske centralne banke. Znači to je nešto gdje bi Hrvatska mogla graditi određenu različitost od nekih drugih zemalja EU i štiti svoju suverenost i ja bih rekao pokušati zadržati određene instrumente u svojim rukama i pokušati objasniti građanima da možemo imati veću razinu

As for Croatia's modest role in the EU, Branimir Bunjac from the populist party Living wall (cro. *Živi zid*; LW) stated:

“We couldn't fulfil the euro criteria; we couldn't fulfil the Schengen criteria and those for some other European frameworks. And now we hear that Europe is shifting to several different gears. Here, some five gears are contained in this document. And now I would like to ask you and the Croatian citizens, which gear will be the one for Croatia? Meaning, will we move in the first or fifth gear? It is absolutely clear that Croatia will move in the fifth gear. Or, as put by representative Pernar, in reverse, because we simply cannot meet the same requirements as Germany, because they would simply have to provide that to us. They would have to provide that. They would have to partake in giving Croatia some sort of equality in the full sense of the term, and of course they will never do that.”²⁰

PESCO

The government and the opposition adopted similar political narratives (diplomatic communication of benefits vs. safekeeping diversity and national autonomy) when discussions turned to the common defence policy and PESCO.

The government's position is best illustrated by a statement by PM Andrej Plenković (CDU):

“In the context of defence policy, I wish to clarify that this permanent structured cooperation in the field of defence and security is a novelty within the domain. It builds on the Global Strategy for Foreign and Security Policy in a very concrete manner. Its moniker is PESCO. Therefore, this is a moniker that you will encounter when following this field of EU cooperation. Within it, 25 member states cooperate. Hence, this enhanced cooperation was a matter of preference. This is just one of the examples in which Croatia sends a strong message of wishing to be among those members that pursue deeper integration and closer cooperation. Overall, there are 17 areas of such cooperation, and in this initial phase Croatia has chosen 5 areas in which it wishes to cooperate closely with other Union members. The first area is assistance in the event of natural disasters, in which I believe we have a certain experience and in which we have shown ourselves to be good neighbours, and in which at times we have been the recipients of the assistance of other members. Then, in the area of the disposition of military movements, in the area of logistics and cybernetic security. These areas have been determined primarily by the Ministry of Defence as aspects of concrete cooperation on which we wish to build our partnership with other Member States. In fact, only the UK, Denmark and Malta do not cooperate in this framework.”²¹

samostalnosti nego što bi to eventualno imali kada bi ušli u monetarnu uniju. Znači apsolutno sam protiv višebrzinske EU ali sam za to da Hrvatska zadrži neke elemente svoje samostalnosti u svojim rukama za budućnost jer mislim da će naši građani na taj način osjetiti da imaju više samostalnosti nego šta eventualno imaju sada. Hvala lijepo.”

²⁰ Original citation: “Nismo mogli ispuniti uvjete za euro, nismo mogli ispuniti uvjete za Schengen i za neke druge europske okvire. A sad čujemo da će Europa prijeći na nekoliko brzina. Evo to je u ovom dokumentu sadržano nekakvih 5 brzina. I sad bih ja htio pitati vas i hrvatske građane u kojoj brzini će se kretati Hrvatska. Znači, da li ćemo se mi kretati u prvoj ili petoj brzini. Posve je jasno da će Hrvatska se kretati u prvoj brzini. Da, kaže zastupnik Pernar u rikverc jer jednostavno mi ne možemo ispuniti jednake uvjete kao i Njemačka jer da bi mogli ispuniti jednake uvjete oni bi jednostavno to nama morali dati. Znači, morali bi nam dati. Oni bi morali sudjelovati na neki način u davanju ravnopravnosti Hrvatske u potpunom smislu, a oni to naravno nikada neće učiniti.”

²¹ Original citation: “Kada je riječ o obrambenoj suradnji želim pojasniti da je ta stalna strukturirana suradnja u području obrane i sigurnosti jedan novum u toj domeni. On nadgrađuje globalnu strategiju za vanjsku i sigurnosnu politiku na vrlo konkretan način. Ona ima kraticu PESCO. Dakle, to je kratica sa kojom ćete se susresti kada budete pratili razvoj tog područja suradnje unutar EU. U njoj sudjeluje 25 država članica. Dakle, bila je stvar odabira pojačane suradnje. To je jedan od primjera gdje Hrvatska šalje snažnu poruku da želi biti među onim članicama koje žele dublju integraciju i žele tiješnju suradnju. Ukupno je 17 područja te suradnje, a Hrvatska je u ovoj fazi inicijalnoj izabrala 5 područja gdje želi tiješnije surađivati sa članicama Unije. Prvo područje je pomoć u prirodnim katastrofama gdje smatram da imamo određenoga iskustva i gdje smo se već pokazali dobrim susjedima, a ponekad smo i bili primatelji pomoći drugih članica. Zatim o razmjernosti snaga o vojnoj mobilnosti, o logistici i o kibernetičkoj sigurnosti. To su područja koja je prije svega Ministarstvo obrane ocijenilo kao konkretne aspekte suradnje na kojima želimo graditi naše partnerstvo sa drugim državama članicama. Jedino Ujedinjena Kraljevina, Danska i Malta ne sudjeluju u ovoj suradnji.”

In the same spirit Domagoj Ivan Milošević (CDU) underlined the benefits of PESCO for the modernisation of Croatia's defence equipment:

“Security and defence are third (areas). An ambitious permanent structured cooperation, the so-called PESCO, has been set up, and speedy implementation of projects is expected. We expect further efforts within the European defence fund in order to allow common procurement of defence equipment or its common maintenance or enhanced access to the most advanced technologies in terms of defence.”²²

The opposition's position

The position of the leading opposition party was best summarised by Joško Klisović (SDP):

“Another topic that is widely discussed in the EU, and on which Croatia hasn't taken a position because discussions have just begun, but we should also start considering it, is the topic of a European army. We have heard president Macron, who presented this suggestion in the name of France, we have heard chancellor Merkel, who has shown support, we have also heard some other European statesmen such as Orban and Zeman who support the idea of a European army with their own reasoning. It is unclear how this will play out. The main reason for establishing a Croatian army was to ensure the EU's full security with European military forces so that we can finally withdraw, or emancipate ourselves in Macron's words, from the American security umbrella and, in other words, be able to respond to possible threats from Russia, in the words of Macron. In this discussion, Croatia has to keep in mind avoiding Europe's multi-speed scenario, in which certain countries – particularly those that are bigger, stronger and politically powerful – will connect regardless of the stance of other EU members. This is not an idea that we can discard lightly, but at the same time we have to remind ourselves that we have PESCO as a permanent structural cooperation between countries that have agreed to it, among which is Croatia, and also before we adopt any final decision we have to consider how this idea affects our relationship with NATO and the US, how effective in this moment an EU military command would be and who would do it, will this army be European and hence wear new uniforms or will this be a group of national armies that will be commanded by selected commanders. Overall, there are many issues that we need to consider and Croatia has to begin this discussion in order to make .../Interjection: Thank you./... the best possible decision in the interest of our country.”²³

Another opposition comment, made by Ines Strenja-Linić from the Bridge of Independent Lists party (cro. Most), questioned EU common security issues by also referring to a multi-speed Europe:

²² Original citation: “Treće je sigurnost i obrana. Uspostavljena je ambiciozna stalna strukturirana suradnja tzv. PESCO te se očekuje brza provedba prvih projekata. U okviru Europskog fonda za obranu očekuje se daljnji napor kako bi se omogućili zajednička nabava obrambenih sredstava ili njihovo zajedničko održavanje ili poboljšanje pristupa najnaprednijim tehnologijama kada je u pitanju obrana.”

²³ Original citation: “Slijedeća tema o kojoj se puno priča u EU, o kojoj Hrvatska još nema stav, jer tek se počelo pričat, ali svakako bi tu diskusiju trebalo započeti, je pitanje europske vojske. Čuli smo predsjednika Macrona, izašao je sa takvim prijedlogom u ime Francuske, čuli smo i kancelarku Merkel koja je to podržala, čuli smo i neke druge europske državlike kao što su Orban ili Zeman koji također iz nekih svojih razloga podržavaju europsku vojsku. Nije jasno kako će se sve to skupa razvijati, temeljni koliko smo čuli razlozi za osnivanje hrvatske vojske osiguravanje pune sigurnosti EU od strane europskih oružanih snaga kako bi se konačno izvukli, emancipirali kako kaže Macron iz američkog sigurnosnog kišobrana odnosno kako bi samostalno bili u stanju odgovoriti na eventualnu prijetnju iz Rusije tako kaže predsjednik Macron. Ono što Hrvatska svakako u toj diskusiji mora voditi računa je da se izbjegne stvarno Europa više brzine, u kojoj će se određene države EU pogotovo one veće, snažnije, politički utjecajnije povezivati bez obzira na ono što misli ostatak članstva u EU, ovo nije ideja koju samo tako možemo odbaciti, ali jednako tako treba podsjetiti da imamo i PESCO dakle stalnu strukturalnu suradnju između država koje su to potpisale, a među njima je i Hrvatska, jednako tako treba prije nego se konačno odluči sagledati i kako ovakva jedna ideja utječe na naše odnose sa NATO-om i SAD-om, koliko je učinkovito u trenutnim uvjetima u EU zapovijedanje takvom jednom vojskom i ko će to činiti, da li će vojska biti europska u nekim novim uniformama ili skupina nacionalnih vojski kojom će zapovijedati izabrani zapovjednici. Dakle, apsolutno puno je tu pitanja o kojima se mora razmisliti i Hrvatska bi tu diskusiju trebala također započeti kako bi donijeli .../Upadica: Zahvaljujem./... najbolju odluku u interesu naše zemlje.”

“Esteemed Prime Minister Plenković, here is my reply related to that part of the report related to security. So, by the end of the year the EU wants to lay the foundations of a common defence policy. And concrete plans should be established in December this year while eliminating any disagreements. One of the plans is to connect member states in the development of the defence industry in terms of strengthening small and medium enterprises in that sector, implementing technical harmonisation of defence forces and coordinating their development. Therefore, the national budgets of the countries participating in the project will probably have to be increased. It is clear from this point that Europe is going at multiple speeds. Those who can pay will also be part of a joint civil-military co-operation project. What position can the Republic of Croatia take in this case? Renounce autonomy in decision-making processes about security and defence and in decisions about the allocation of common funds paid into the joint security and defence budget, or undertake the participation of Croatian military forces in joint projects and the like?”²⁴

In this context, it is also interesting to note that the government linked its pro-Pesco arguments with Croatia’s internal politics, such as the need to strengthen and modernise the country’s military force, and also from the perspective that the debate coincided with Croatia’s attempt to modernise its air force for the first time after the Homeland war, while the opposition maintained that Croatia should be very wary of involvement in PESCO if it would impinge on the country’s military autonomy, which is a delicate and complex subject considering Croatia’s modern history, and if PESCO would weaken its long-standing international partnerships in the field of defence, such as with the US.

4. Conclusion

After reading through these parliamentary interventions we can conclude that – irrespective of the fact that Croatian governments have maintained a very vague stance on DI over the years, because of which it is difficult to distil concrete DI stances and sentiments from the broader discourse on EU affairs in general – it was thanks to the opposition that governments were prompted to articulate a clearer position with respect to DI, and to DI models and mechanisms in particular. By starting our analysis before Croatia’s EU accession, we have been able to confirm that all governments (whether led by centre-right or centre-left coalitions) have demonstrated their commitment to the EU project, although it has been far easier for the opposition to pinpoint DI dilemmas (again, it is important to note that, apart from the 2011-2015 SDP-led coalition, in the timeframe observed CDU-led coalitions formed all the other governments). One of the first pre-accession dilemmas emerged in 2008, when the issue of the ZERP was triggered as a mandatory concession that was expected from Croatia in order to progress with its EU membership. The government heavily emphasised its political progress in terms of the negotiation process while avoiding articulating a clear stance on the ZERP and the requested concession that the opposition judged to be an important and critical integration risk to Croatian sovereignty. After the EU accession, arguments for a ‘considered closer integration’ were again raised by the opposition with respect to several DI models, chief among them the issue of a ‘multi-speed Europe,’ and DI mechanisms, primarily ones that envisage enhanced cooperation (PESCO). Judging from our selection of parliamentary debates, the government has maintained its ‘diplomatic,’ albeit slightly positive, stance on specific DI issues, always arguing for full integration justified by the ‘national interest’ to keep pace

²⁴ Original citation: “Poštovani premjeru Plenkoviću, evo i moja replika je vezana za onaj dio izvješća vezanog uz sigurnost. Dakle, do kraja godine EU želi udariti temelje zajedničke obrambene politike. I konkretni planovi se trebaju utvrditi u prosincu ove godine i otkloniti bilo kakva neslaganja. Jedan od planova je i međusobno povezivanja zemalja članica u razvoju obrambene industrije u smislu jačanja malog i srednjeg poduzetništva u tom sektoru, tehničkih usklađivanja obrambenih snaga i koordinacija njihovog razvoja. Zbog toga će se vjerojatno morati povećati nacionalni budžeti zemalja koji će sudjelovati u tom projektu. Jasno je iz ove točke da Europa ide u više brzina. Oni, koji budu mogli platiti, biti će i dio zajedničkog projekta civilno vojne suradnje. Koje stajalište RH uopće može zauzeti u tom slučaju? Odustajanje u suvremenosti u donošenju sigurnosno obrambenih odluka i donošenje odluka o raspodjeli i svrsi sredstava koja se uplaćuju u zajednički, sigurnosno obrambeni budžet ili preuzimanje obveze sudjelovanje vojnih snaga RH u zajedničkim projektima i slično?”

with the other Member States in the integration process. This complements our finding that CDU-led governments show a positive attitude to EU membership in general, with a habit of overshadowing the costs of EU membership with membership benefits. At the same time, the opposition has also endorsed the deepening of EU integration at a general level but articulated clear arguments in favour of Croatia maintaining greater diversity within the EU, and opting out from specific DI mechanisms – primarily the monetary union and Pesco.

References

Maldini, P., Pauković, D. (2015), *Croatia and the European Union – Changes and Development*, 1st edition, Abingdon/Oxon: Routledge.

Appendices

Appendix 1 Document corpus descriptive statistics

	Number of docs	Number of words	Average number of words per document
Government programmes	7	101400	14486
Prime Minister speeches (total)	39	387466	11882
<i>Prime Minister annual reports</i>	6	143764	23961
<i>Prime Minister speeches to the Parliament</i>	12	59721	4977
<i>Prime Minister European Council statements (total)</i>	21	183981	6710
Pre-Council	7	3897	557
Post-Council	14	180084	12863
Parliamentary debates (total)	325	3491537	11109
2008	23	245998	10696
2009	33	283203	8582
2010	24	175054	7294
2011	24	220927	9205
2012	11	164192	14927
2013	30	326952	10898
2014	30	303820	10127
2015	42	365296	8698
2016	9	78957	8773
2017	13	165006	12693
2018	49	614187	12534
2019	30	440943	14698
2020	7	107002	15286
Other documents	5	39106	7821
Total	376	4019509	11324

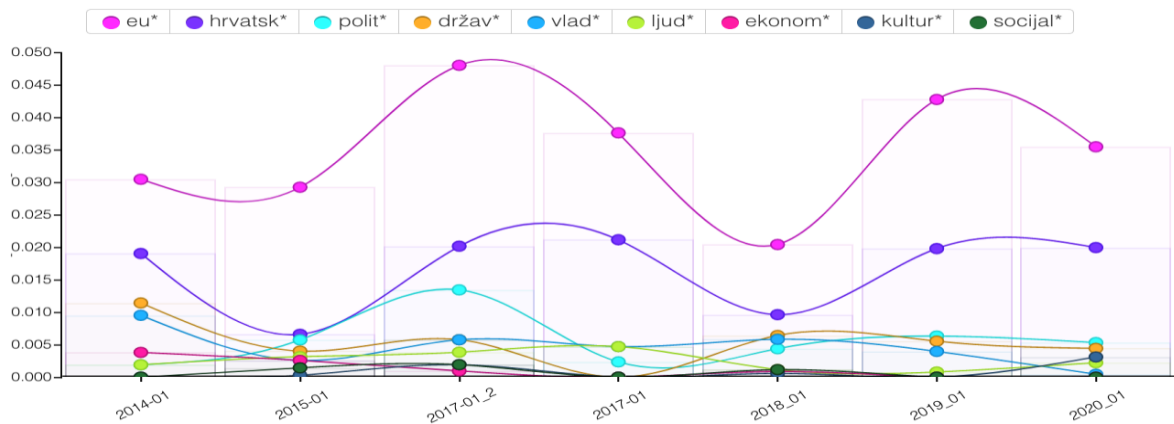
Appendix 2 DI key words and translations

English	Croatian	English	Croatian
Differentiated integration	Diferencirana integracija	Rome III	Rim III
Coalition of the willing	Koalicija voljnih	Unitary Patent	Unitarni patent
Two-speed Europe	Europa dviju brzina	Matrimonial property regimes	Bračnoimovinski režim
Multi-speed Europe	Europa više razina	Financial Transaction Tax	Porez na financijske transakcije
Variable Geometry	Varijabilna geometrija	European Public Prosecutor	Europski javni tužitelj
Core Europe	“Core” Europa	Schengen	“Schengen”
Two-tier Europe	Europa dviju razina	Economic and Monetary Union	Ekonomska i monetarna unija
Concentric circles	Koncentrični krugovi	Security and Defence Policy	Sigurnosna i obrambena politika
A la carte	Po izboru/“A la carte”)	Area of Freedom, security and justice	Područje slobode, sigurnosti i pravde
Pesco	Pesco	Charter of Fundamental Rights	Povelja o temeljnim pravima

Appendix 3 Croatian-English translation of main words/phrases used in the text

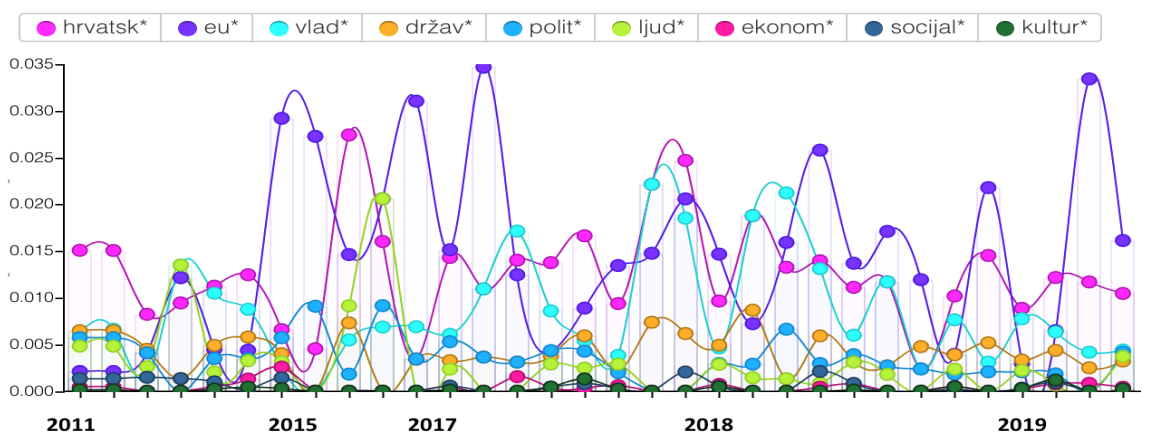
Croatian	English	Croatian	English
hrvatsk*	Croat*	budućn*	Future*
vlad*	Government*	integrac*	Integration*
držav*	Government*	brzin*	Speed*
eu*	Eu*	koncentr*	Concentration*
polit*	Politi*	sporazum*	Agreement*
ljud*	People*	arbitraž*	Arbitrage*
socijal*	Social*	marakeš*	Marrakesh*
kultur*	Cultur*	solidarn*	Solidarity*
ekonom*	Econom*	pravedn*	Justice*
fondov*	Fund*	istambul*	Istanbul convention
ugovor*	Contract*	ZERP*	Ecological and Fisheries Protection Zone

Appendix 4 PM European Council reports (relative frequencies)



Note: hrvatsk* - croat; vlad* and držav* - government; kultur* - cultur; social* - social; ljud* - people; ekonom* - econom.

Appendix 5 Prime Minister pre- and post-Council statements together (relative frequencies)



Note: hrvatsk* - croat; vlad* and držav* - government; kultur* - cultur; social* - social; ljud* - people; ekonom* - econom.

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