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Research Article

## The challenge from within: EU development cooperation and the rise of illiberalism in Hungary and Poland

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## Abstract

This article examines how the emergence of 'illiberal democracy' in Hungary and Poland has impacted the behaviour of these two countries in the EU's international development policy making processes. Adapting Hirschmann's concepts of voice, exit and loyalty, the article argues that three factors may have undermined the loyalty of these member states towards EU development policy, increasing the likelihood of them using more extreme forms of voice (vetoes) or even enact partial exits from the policy area. Erosion of loyalty is seen to be more likely if (1) illiberalism actually impacts bilateral development policies in the two countries; (2) they have poor track records in influencing EU development policy; and (3) alternatives to EU level action emerge. Applying this framework, a greater erosion of loyalty is expected in the case of Hungary than for Poland. Hungary's recent actions in EU development policy are in line with the expectations from the framework: it has increasingly been using more extreme forms of voice following the 2015 refugee crisis, while Poland has been a less 'problematic' member state in the policy area.

## Keywords

EU development cooperation, Hungary, Poland, illiberalism, voice and exit

## INTRODUCTION

Since their accession to the EU, the Central and Eastern European (CEE) countries have showed little interest in international development cooperation. Creating bilateral development policies was a condition for accession, which all CEE countries did after the turn of the Millennium, albeit with relatively small and underfunded policies (Szent-Iványi and Lightfoot 2015). Even in 2016, the eight CEE countries which joined the EU in 2004 only provided about 1.4 billion dollars in total development aid, which was less than the amount provided by Austria alone (OECD 2018). The CEE countries also became contributors to the EU's international development efforts, giving them some material interest in the policy area. Despite this, efforts from the CEE countries to influence the EU development cooperation have been limited, and often restricted to niche issues, such as supporting democratic transitions.

Some of the CEE countries, especially Hungary and Poland, have increasingly been drifting towards more 'illiberal' domestic politics in the past years under nationalist/populist governments. This emerging illiberalism has led to several instances of confrontation between these two countries and the EU. EU institutions have been highly critical of policy developments in Hungary and Poland, but have generally been powerless to reign in the authoritarian tendencies of the two governments. While the European Parliament has voted to start procedures under Article 7 of the Treaty on European Union (TEU) against Poland (in 2017) and Hungary (in 2018), which carries the threat of suspending their voting rights in the Council, actual sanctions remain unlikely. The EU is increasingly portrayed by both governments as an outside power interfering in domestic affairs, and thus a force that needs to be contested and stopped.

The aim of this paper is to investigate what this shift towards illiberalism in Hungary and Poland means for the EU's international development cooperation policy. Are the two countries becoming problematic partners in this policy area, or do they continue to behave as the 'uninterested followers' they have mostly been since their accession? The paper uses a framework based on Albert Hirschmann's (1970) classic concepts of voice, exit and loyalty, which have already been adapted fruitfully to explain various processes of European disintegration (Vollard 2014; Jachtenfuchs and Kasack 2017). We argue that there are three factors which may undermine the loyalty of member states towards EU development cooperation, and thus increase the likelihood of these states 'making trouble' by using more extreme forms of voice (vetoes) or enacting partial exits from the policy area. Loyalty will be eroded if (1) the illiberal shift in domestic politics is reflected in bilateral development cooperation practices; (2) if the member states have a poor track record of influencing EU development cooperation; and (3) alternatives to acting within the EU emerge.

Applying this framework, there are reasons to expect lower levels of loyalty from Hungary than from Poland: the illiberal shift seems to have had a larger impact on Hungary's international development policy than in case of Poland, and Poland has potentially been more influential in EU development cooperation. Alternatives to acting within the EU however are relatively scarce for both countries. When comparing the actual behaviour of the two countries in the EU's development policymaking processes, we find that Hungary has been using stronger forms of voice, such as vetoes, more frequently than Poland, especially in relation to the migration-development nexus. Poland, by contrast, has generally been satisfied with the direction of the EU's development policy, especially since the EU itself has been putting a greater emphasis on managing migration and supporting the private sector through development funds.

The analyses focuses on the years between 2015 (when the Law and Justice Party came into power in Poland) and 2018, although some links to earlier developments will be made in the case of Hungary, given how Viktor Orbán's Fidesz party has been in power since 2010. The main sources of data include government documents, political statements and media reporting. We use the term development cooperation in a relatively broad sense, to refer to all EU policies which include the transfer of resources and expertise between the EU and less developed countries. Thus, beyond the EU's development cooperation activities with the African, Caribbean and Pacific countries, we also include areas like the EU's Neighbourhood Policy or its democracy promotion efforts. Development cooperation also touches on a number of other EU policy areas, among which migration policy has gained recent prominence.

The paper contributes to the literature on European disintegration by examining the processes eroding loyalty and potentially leading to various forms of EU disintegration in a policy area which has received relatively little attention. Furthermore, the paper also highlights key issues for the EU development policy literature, emphasizing the fact that the policy has not performed well in terms of integrating the new member states, which is a source of internal challenge in need of a solution.

The following section discusses the paper's conceptual framework, followed by an analysis of the factors, which may have eroded the loyalty of Hungary and Poland towards EU development cooperation. The subsequent section compares the recent actions of the two countries in the EU's development policymaking processes, with the aim of identifying whether lower degrees of loyalty have led to more voice or even partial exits. The final section provides concluding remarks.

#### **EXIT, VOICE AND LOYALTY IN EU POLICYMAKING**

While the literature on the EU has paid much attention to explaining the processes of integration, it has only recently started to develop theoretical accounts of disintegration, driven by challenges such as the Greek debt crisis and Brexit. Most agree that existing theories of integration 'in reverse' do not provide sufficient explanations for disintegration processes (Webber 2014; Jones 2018). A number of new approaches have therefore emerged to explain disintegration, using a variety of explanatory variables and theoretical backgrounds (Vollard 2014; Webber 2014; Jachtenfuchs and Kasack 2017; Jones 2018). A particularly fruitful approach, focusing on explaining the actions of member states who are dissatisfied with the workings of an EU policy area, adapts Albert Hirschmann's (1970) framework of exit, voice and loyalty (Vollard 2014; Jachtenfuchs and Kasack 2017).

Jachtenfuchs and Kasack (2017) argue that member states face a trade-off between national autonomy and collective problem-solving. A member state may either try to influence an EU policy in order to ensure that it reflects its preferences (voice), or it may decide not to be part of a collective policy effort (exit). Voice can take many forms centred around constructive participation in EU policymaking processes, including techniques aimed at achieving influence such as coalition building, framing, or persuasion (Panke 2010). In the extreme (and depending on the rules of the policy area), a member state may block or veto a decision. Similarly, exit from a policy area is not a binary in/out choice either. A full exit would represent a situation when a member state opts out fully from an EU policy area, such as Denmark's opt-out from the EU's military policies. A partial exit refers to situations that are less drastic (Vollard 2014): a member state refusing to comply with specific decisions made in the policy area, or limiting its own participation without

complete withdrawal. A partial exit represents a form of EU disintegration, although the member state does not receive a formal opt-out.

Hirschmann's (1970) third concept, loyalty, is conceptualized as a variable which affects the choice between voice and exit. Organisations may foster loyalty among members, who thus remain committed to the organisation, even though they are dissatisfied with its performance. Loyal members may passively accept the status quo, while less loyal ones are more likely to use voice or even exit. However, in the dynamic setting of EU policymaking, with shifting national and European interests, there is rarely a stable status quo. Member states engaged in EU policy processes constantly need to make decisions regarding their actions, ranging from being passive, through using various forms of voice, to a (partial) exit. The decision they make along this continuum can be seen as a function of loyalty. Using voice is part of the normal functioning of EU policy processes, and if done constructively and within the written and unwritten rules of the integration, it is actually a manifestation of loyalty rather than a sign of eroding loyalty. Only opting for stronger forms of voice such as vetoing decisions, or a partial exit would be associated with lower levels of loyalty. Furthermore, to note, passivity does not necessarily signal a high degree of loyalty in the case of the EU, but can also mean a lack of interest from the member state in the given policy.

Loyalty towards the EU can decrease for three reasons. First, as Webber (2014) argues, a significant driver of disintegration comes from the domestic politics of member states, mainly due to the upsurge in anti-EU, national/populist politics, or shifts towards values which are less compatible with those embodied in EU level policies. The general shift in domestic politics can spill over to specific policy areas, which may be adapted to reflect the broader national political discourse. This adaptation, in turn, will decrease loyalty towards EU level solutions, as these are based on values no longer accepted by the member state. This makes the usage of stronger forms of voice or a partial exit more likely. Furthermore, a member state may also feel the need to signal its new values, especially towards domestic audiences, and is more likely to select policy areas for this where greater confrontation is not perceived as costly. Second, even without a shift values, member states may still experience an erosion in their loyalty towards the policy area if they continuously find it difficult to ensure that EU policies reflect their interests. In the extreme, the perceived lack of influence may even lead to perceptions on how the rules of the policy area discriminate against them (Jones 2018). This can lead to a gradual disappearance of loyalty towards collective problem solving. Third, loyalty towards a policy area may decrease due to the emergence of alternatives for managing it. An alternative to collective action is acting alone, and the perceived effectiveness of this may increase, providing member states with incentives to argue for the renationalization of the policy. Other, non-EU, collective solutions may also emerge which member states perceive as more effective. These three factors may co-exist simultaneously, in which case the erosion of loyalty is expected to be the strongest.

The remainder of this section illustrates how this approach is relevant for the case of EU development policy. Development policy is a shared parallel competence within the EU: member states retain their bilateral development policies, but the European Commission (EC) provides aid as well, as an additional donor. The EC is also charged with coordinating the bilateral development activities of members. Most of the *acquis communautaire* aimed to promote this coordination is based on non-binding, soft law instruments (Carbone 2007: 50). Many decisions, usually in the forms of Council Conclusions, do not carry legal weight, and enforcement mechanisms are weak. None the less, given how the development *acquis* often emphasizes key norms and principles, giving it symbolic and moral weight, less loyal member states may have reasons to block them before they are accepted.

Given the non-binding nature of most of the development *acquis*, and the fact that most member states have been selective in aligning their development activities with these rules (Carbone and Keijzer 2016; Delputte et al. 2016), conceptualizing a partial exit is difficult. Not applying a specific rule is clearly a harsh criteria, which would lead to large number of partial exit instances. A partial exit would thus need to be conceptualized as a systematic and vocal refusal to implement or engage with the development *acquis*. In essence, a partial exit is a situation in which a member state's international development policy is only minimally informed, or not informed at all by the development *acquis*, and the member state clearly acknowledges its opposition to these rules.

International development cooperation is often viewed as a technical and 'depoliticized' issue area, which rarely enters political discourses in the CEE countries (Horký-Hlucháň 2015). While the rise of nationalist populism and anti-EU politics have been well documented for Poland and Hungary (Krekó and Enyedi 2018), the degree to which these affect such a technical policy area is unclear. Development cooperation could remain relatively isolated from the broader political direction of the country, and thus rising illiberalism would not (automatically) translate into a lower degree of loyalty towards EU development policy. In order to get a sense of the impact of these domestic changes, the effect of changing domestic politics on the bilateral development cooperation of the two countries needs to be examined. Populist/illiberal shifts in bilateral development policies can take several forms. Discourses in the policy area may start to reflect the broader discourses used by the government, especially in terms of putting national interests first and combating external threats to society. Practice may also shift to better serve government goals, such as through a greater emphasis on the promotion of economic interests, the selection of partner countries, or reducing efforts in areas, which are less compatible with government rhetoric, such as democracy promotion. Of course, many donors talk about economic motivations in international development, or the need to combat certain external threats, and this does not make their development policies populist/illiberal. What matters is whether there is a push to systematically align development policy with government rhetoric and practice.

The lack of long-term influence in the EU can also erode loyalty. Thus, we need to examine how Poland and Hungary have engaged with EU development policy in the past, what results they have had achieved in uploading their preferences, and how this engagement has impacted the two countries. There is a substantial literature examining the Europeanization of member states in development policy (Lightfoot and Szent-Iványi 2014; Orbie and Carbone 2016), which can provide insights in this regard. Finally, possible alternatives to EU development policy may also decrease loyalty. Member states may see the relative effectiveness of bilateral development efforts increase in terms of dealing with new challenges. A renationalization of development policy would allow them to use their aid more freely. There are also a number of other multilateral arrangements, including the relatively recent proliferation of trust funds, which allow bilateral donors to retain much stronger control over their contributions than in case of traditional multilateral (Reinsberg 2017).

We now turn to examining whether there is reason to expect an erosion of loyalty in the case of Poland and Hungary, along these three dimensions.

## THE EROSION OF LOYALTY?

### Rising Nationalism in Bilateral Development Cooperation

In Hungary, the right-wing Fidesz party led by Viktor Orbán has been in power since 2010. The actions of Orbán's governments and Hungary's slide towards 'illiberal democracy' have been well documented in the literature (see e.g. Greskovits 2015; Krekó and Enyedi 2018). Many of these actions, including regulation of the media and the gradual 'taming' of opposition media outlets, attacks on the judiciary, electoral reform, the undoing of checks and balances on the executive, or legislation against non-governmental organisations have received heavy international criticism (see e.g. Venice Commission 2015). In September 2018, the European Parliament voted to start disciplinary action against Hungary over breaches of the EU's core values, under Article 7 of the TEU. The government framed international criticism as unjustified and ignorant attacks against Hungary, and portrayed itself as standing up for the country.

The shift away from Europe was reflected in the Orbán government's foreign policy as well. Introduced in 2011 and entitled 'Global Opening', the government's foreign policy aimed to diversify Hungary's EU-centric external relations, especially towards emerging economies (Hungarian Ministry of Foreign Affairs 2011). The main goals were clearly economic: increasing Hungarian exports and generating new business links. The policy shift included opening new embassies and a number of high profile visits in various countries in Asia, Africa and Latin America, which had previously been neglected by Hungarian diplomacy (Tarrósy and Vörös 2014). A sub-component of the Global Opening policy, entitled Eastern Opening, specifically aimed at strengthening relations with countries East of Hungary, especially Russia and China. The Orbán government has developed a particularly close relationship with Russia, most clearly manifested in the fact that Russia's state owned nuclear energy firm was awarded a contract to build two new reactors in Hungary, funded by a loan from Russia.

The Global Opening policy also led the government to embrace bilateral development cooperation much more strongly than its predecessors did. Orbán's government carried out a number of reforms, including the enactment of Hungary's first law and strategy on development cooperation in 2014 (Szent-Iványi and Lightfoot 2015). The government also committed itself to increasing funding for bilateral aid. The main motivation for increased interest in the policy was to use it to promote Hungarian exports to emerging and developing economies (Tétényi 2018), serving the goals of the Global Opening policy. The government significantly increased the number of scholarships for students from developing countries wanting to study in Hungary (from 6.2 million USD in 2014 to 23.8 in 2017), and also increased funding for concessional loans for infrastructure projects in developing countries, tied to procurement from Hungarian companies. In 2016 alone, the government signed new loan agreements with Laos (30 million USD), Mongolia (25 million USD) and Vietnam (60 million EUR) (Hungarian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade 2017).

The European refugee crisis of 2015 led to the most significant confrontation between Hungary and the EU, and is relevant for Hungary's bilateral development cooperation, as well as its engagement with the EU's development policy. Hungary closed its Southern border towards refugees in 2015, and labelled all arrivals as economic migrants who were not eligible for asylum protection, regardless of their actual individual circumstances. The country opposed any mandatory redistribution scheme of refugees among EU member states (Washington Post 2017), and the government whipped up anti-immigrant sentiments and even organized a referendum about accepting the EU's refugee reallocation

quotas in October 2016. In 2017, Hungary launched a new bilateral aid programme entitled Hungary Helps, with the declared aim of addressing the root causes of migration. The programme claimed to focus on supporting Christian minority communities in conflict zones, through providing post-conflict rehabilitation assistance. The emphasis on Christian solidarity was in line with the government's ideology. The government also organized a series of international conferences on the persecution of Christians (Orbán 2019), and funded reports on the topic (Kaló and Ujházi 2018). Little is known however about the exact financial resources devoted to the Hungary Helps programme, and most likely the purpose of its existence is to show that Hungary is taking bilateral initiatives which back up its anti-migrant rhetoric.

In Poland, the nationalist-populist Law and Justice Party (PiS) won the elections in October 2015, and quickly began challenging the EU institutions. Changes in the Constitutional Tribunal beginning in December 2015 and subsequent reforms of the judiciary put the government in serious conflict with the EU. Poland became the first country against which the EC activated the Article 7 procedure in January 2018. Furthermore, due to the alleged violations of the principle of judicial independence, the EC referred Poland to the ECJ in September 2018 (European Commission 2018). Together with some other policy changes enacted by PiS relating to the public media, many in Western Europe started asking whether Poland is also building an illiberal democracy. Similarly to Hungary, the Polish government retaliated by accusing the EU of discrimination and double standards.

The PiS government, despite declaring a cut-off from the foreign policies of the previous government, showed a great deal of continuity in the field of development cooperation. This was manifested in three dimensions. First, the government continued to work along the lines of the Multiannual Programme of Development Cooperation for 2016-2020, adopted by its predecessor in 2015 (Polish Ministry of Foreign Affairs 2016). Second, Poland has continued to regard development assistance as a foreign policy tool, serving Polish national interests. Similarly to Hungary, there was an emphasis on ensuring closer alignment between aid and economic diplomacy. The new government signed new loan agreements with Angola (60 million USD), Mongolia (50 million EUR) and Vietnam (250 million EUR) in 2017 (Polish Ministry of Finance 2019). Just like Hungary, it also expanded scholarships, which's value more than doubled from 2016 to 2017 (to approximately 70 million EUR), emerging as the single largest modality of bilateral aid (Polish Ministry of Foreign Affairs 2018: 23). Finally, the third element of continuity was the underestimation of development cooperation in general. While in Hungary we clearly see evidence of increasing government attention to development policy, in Poland the limited presence of the issue in political debates and the low level of financing has not changed. The PiS government made no clear commitment for increasing aid, and any increases that did happen went to issues linked to the refugee crisis and contributions to development banks.

However, there are also departures from the past under the PiS government. The first, as in the case of Hungary, relates to migration policy: Poland also rejected the EU's refugee relocation scheme and has blocked any attempts to reform European migration policy. Like Hungary, the PiS government also felt that in order to make this rhetoric credible, it needed to prioritize humanitarian assistance to the Middle East as a tool of addressing root causes of refugee crisis. During the height of the refugee crisis and in midst of the Polish election campaign in September 2015, PiS leader Jarosław Kaczyński suggested increasing assistance to refugee camps in the Middle East (Sejm of the Republic of Poland 2015: 14). After PiS' victory, this approach became the official position of the new government, claiming that help must be provided where the problem starts (Rzeczpospolita 2016). Government officials prioritised assistance to Christian communities, though this commitment was less visible in actual activities. The new emphasis on the Middle East is



also clear from the number of official visits to the region and the increase in funding. An increase in Polish humanitarian aid duly followed, increasing from 6 million USD in 2015 to over 43 million USD in 2017, although the vast majority of this increase represented contributions to the EU's various migration-related trust funds.

A second major change by PiS was a lower focus on democracy assistance and transition support, areas which in the past have been seen as Poland's comparative advantages in development cooperation (Pospieszna 2014). PiS politicians had major reservations about the successes and achievements of the Polish transformation post-1989. In addition, being a subject of external pressure from the EU, the PiS government had more hesitations about interfering in the internal affairs of other countries through democracy support. As a result, democracy assistance was downgraded in Poland's development cooperation. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs also became much less vocal about democracy support as Polish added value in development cooperation (Polish Ministry of Foreign Affairs 2018: 2).

In summary, we see evidence of a populist/illiberal shift in the bilateral development cooperation policies of both countries, with anti-EU elements. Both countries made increasing use of their bilateral aid to promote economic objectives, and Poland has scaled back on its normative commitment to supporting democracy. Both countries have also used bilateral aid as a vehicle to back-up their anti-migration rhetoric, claiming that the root causes of migration need to be addressed. A key difference however between the two countries is that Hungary seems to have integrated bilateral development cooperation more strategically into its foreign policy. In Poland however, there seems to be a surprising continuity with the past. While development policy clearly did not remain isolated from the broader political direction of either country, the impact in Hungary seems larger, potentially leading to a greater erosion in loyalty towards EU development cooperation.

### **Influence and Europeanization**

Most CEE countries created bilateral international development policies during the run-up to their accession to the EU (Carbone 2004). A significant literature has emerged to examine what impacts EU membership has had on these policies, mostly using a framework based on the theory of Europeanization (Horký 2010; Timofejevs Henriksson 2013; Lightfoot and Szent-Iványi 2014). There have also been efforts to examine the influence the CEE states have had on the EU's development cooperation (Hellmeyer 2015), especially in terms of uploading their preferences to the EU's development agenda. We examine these two processes below.

The Europeanization of development cooperation in the CEE countries has been 'shallow' (Horký 2012a), and the CEE countries have been 'reluctant' donors in terms of their engagement with the EU's development *acquis* (Lightfoot and Szent-Iványi 2014). Member states will only Europeanize their policies, i.e. adopt the norms and rules into their domestic policies if either they face strong material incentives to do so, or they gradually internalize them due to socialization. Given how most of the EU's development *acquis* is in the form of soft law, the EU was not able to put pressure on member states to comply. Compliance has costs, thus the rationalist approach focusing on material incentives points towards weak Europeanization. There is also little evidence of CEE member state officials being socialized into accepting the EU's development policy norms and values (Lightfoot and Szent-Iványi 2014). They have clearly pay lip service to these at times, but there is also evidence of rhetoric which shows that these values have not been internalized (Paragi 2011).

The conclusions on the low degree of Europeanization seem to be shared for all CEE countries, and it is difficult to pinpoint any differences between Hungary and Poland. In fact, both countries have generally been among the laggards even within the region in terms of adopting the EU's development *acquis* (Szent-Iványi and Lightfoot 2015: 80). Neither country made significant efforts to raise its aid spending towards the EU's target of 0.33% of GNI, nor did they adapt EU recommendations relating to the quality of their aid (such as untying aid, reducing the number of partner countries, or focusing more aid on the least developed). If any effect of Europeanization could be seen beyond the rhetorical level, it would be negative – over the years, both Poland and Hungary learned how to ignore EU soft laws. Rather than making the two countries 'good' European donors, past experiences may in fact have encouraged them to break away even more from European standards. The EU has failed to foster loyalty to development cooperation through Europeanization in either country.

In terms of influencing the EU's development cooperation, the CEE countries never formulated any grand visions on how they would like this policy area evolve. This general disinterest however did not mean that they had no ambition to shape EU development cooperation. Due to perceptions that development cooperation is mainly the field of the Western member states and CEE actors cannot compete with Western actors in winning EU development contracts and grants, the CEE countries mainly focused on trying to carve out niches for themselves (Szent-Iványi 2014). First, due to their own historical experience, they aimed to position themselves as having unique expertise in political and economic transition processes (Horký 2012b). This led countries like Poland, and to a lesser degree Hungary, to prioritize democracy support in their bilateral development cooperation. Second, the CEE countries argued that they are well placed to work with countries in the Eastern neighbourhood, due to a shared history as members of the Eastern bloc. Third, they aimed to get positive discrimination from the EU for CEE actors bidding for EU development funding, arguing that they are at a relative disadvantage due to their status as newcomers.

Much of the lobbying in these areas was carried out jointly by the CEE countries (Non-paper 2011), so it is difficult to identify specific successes for Hungary and Poland separately. In terms of joint successes, CEE transition experience, and the value it brings to EU development cooperation, received explicit mentions in key EU policy documents, such as the 2006 European Consensus on Development (Article 33). In order to operationalize this commitment, the EC started a project to map CEE transition experience, which resulted in the publication of the European Transition Compendium (ETC) in 2010. The ETC however never truly entered EU development policymaking (Hellmeyer 2015). Poland was especially vocal on democracy support, and it was during the Polish Presidency in 2011 when the European Endowment for Democracy (EED) was established, clearly seen as a success for Poland. Poland (together with Sweden) was also instrumental in the creation of the Eastern Partnership initiative in 2009 (Copsey and Pomorska 2014), however, this proved less of a transformative force on the EU's development cooperation than anticipated, mainly due to mounting geopolitical tensions with Russia. CEE actors have also achieved some success in twinning projects in the Eastern Neighbourhood (Bossuyt and Panchuk 2017). The EU agreed to some 'ring-fencing' of funds for CEE actors for projects aimed at domestic development education and awareness raising. CEE actors however had trouble in bidding for even these ring-fenced amounts, and performed generally weakly in terms of winning EU funding for projects abroad (Szent-Iványi 2014). Contributions to the EU's development budget were increasingly seen as 'lost money'.

Following the 2015 European refugee crisis, both Hungary and Poland adopted hostile positions towards immigration, and has framed the issue in terms of national security and cultural identity. This not only led to confrontation with the EU through the refusal to accept refugee quotas, but also to stronger, and more politically visible efforts to influence EU development cooperation. The heads of government of the Visegrad Group (V4), a loose framework for cooperation between the Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland and Slovakia, issued a joint statement in 2015, emphasizing the need to use aid to tackle the root causes of migration, calling on the EU to 'mobilize the relevant resources', and ensure that 'their development assistance to countries of origin and of transit [...] is well-targeted [...], both for preventing and fighting irregular migration as well as combating root causes of migration' (Visegrad Group 2015). Poland has also committed itself to support and 'take part in EU actions that lead to solving problems [of migration] at their sources' (Polish Ministry of Foreign Affairs 2017: 24). Given the general sense of crisis in the EU due to the surge in refugee flows, the V4 countries did not face an uphill battle in terms of getting these interests uploaded to the EU's agenda. They were supportive of the Joint Valetta Action Plan and the creation of the EU's migration-related trust funds in 2015, the EU Regional Trust Fund in Response to the Syrian Crisis and the EU Emergency Trust Fund for Africa.

Weak Europeanization and only limited influence points to a low degree of loyalty towards EU development cooperation. Poland, perhaps due to its larger weight in EU decision-making, may have had relatively larger influence than Hungary, as evidenced by its role in creating the Eastern Partnership and the EED. This could mean that loyalty towards the EU's development efforts may have eroded to a lesser degree in Poland than in Hungary, although given the PiS government's decreasing emphasis on democracy promotion, one must be careful with such conclusions. Furthermore, both countries have lobbied for, and have welcomed the more recent shift in the EU's development policy towards managing migration. This shift may have increased the relevance of development cooperation for the two countries, contributing to an increase in loyalty.

### Alternatives to EU Development Policy

The loyalty of member states may also decrease if the relative attractiveness and perceived effectiveness of alternative solutions increases. Alternatives may include bilateral development cooperation or multilateral arrangements other than the EU. As discussed, both Hungary and Poland have been using more aid bilaterally to address the root causes of migration. Hungary created the Hungary Helps programme, while Poland increased its humanitarian assistance to the Middle East. Just how serious these efforts are, and how much they represent an alternative to EU development cooperation is questionable. Neither country has sufficient resources to achieve any kind significant impact that would reduce migratory pressures. These countries mainly expect the EU to increase funding for managing migration, and have clear perceptions about the limits of their bilateral funding (Visegrad Group 2015). Bilateral initiatives should therefore be seen as efforts by the governments to make their anti-migration rhetoric more credible, and do not represent a realistic alternative to joint EU funding. A closer look reveals that the resources devoted to new bilateral efforts are rather minimal. While the exact amounts devoted to the Hungary Helps programme are unclear, sporadic data on a government website indicate that around 6.3 million EUR were committed in 2017, and a further 5 million EUR in 2018 (About Hungary 2019). Another government source mentions 25 million EUR in total support for persecuted Christians, 'directly enabling 35 thousand people to remain or return home within the framework of the Hungary Helps Programme' (Kormany.hu 2019). The bilateral share of Poland's humanitarian aid increases points to similarly modest amounts: only around 6.7 million EUR was delivered through Polish NGOs

and diplomatic missions (Polish Ministry of Foreign Affairs 2018). These are relatively tokenistic amounts, especially when compared to the tied loan agreements both countries have recently signed with various developing countries.

There is some evidence of both countries making slightly greater use of multilateral arrangements outside of the EU. Poland has increased its contributions to UN agencies between 2015 and 2017, both countries began contributing to regional development banks in 2016 (OECD 2018), and both have joined the China-led Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank. However, these increases are relatively modest, and not out of line with the general trends of the multilateral development cooperation policies of the two countries.

An interesting situation is represented by the EU's migration related trust funds. As mentioned, both Poland and Hungary were supportive of these initiatives. While these funds were created by the EU, and can thus be conceptualized as new aid modalities, they may also be thought of alternatives to the EU's traditional development cooperation processes. Both funds aim explicitly at managing migration, and have their own governance mechanisms with lower oversight from the EC. Each contributing member state receives one vote in board of the funds, and a minimum contribution of 3 million EUR also provides a seat in the operational committee. These features may make some member states see these trust funds as more attractive in terms of achieving influence than the EU's general development cooperation processes. The Visegrad countries jointly contributed 3.14 million euros to the EU Emergency Trust Fund for Africa, which gave them a joint seat in the Fund's operational committee. Hungary and Poland both contributed 3 million euros each to the Syria Trust Fund (European Union 2015), with Poland contributing an additional 1.2 million in 2017 (European Commission 2017). Both countries have also clearly expressed that they see the goals of the trust funds fitting very well into their development cooperation strategies. While amounts contributed are not large compared to the total values of these funds, the fact that both countries made efforts to ensure that they have a say in how these are allocated shows that they have taken them seriously. Due to their close links to the EU however, including the fact that the EC implements the projects approved under the trust funds, it is unclear whether they are seen as alternatives by the two countries which would erode loyalty towards EU development cooperation.

It is difficult to argue that either Poland or Hungary see a clear alternative to EU development cooperation. They clearly do not have the resources to achieve any meaningful impact through bilateral development cooperation, and there is no strong evidence of turning towards other multilateral agencies either: contributions to the EU still make up the bulk of the total foreign aid expenditure of both countries.

### **LESS LOYALTY, MORE VOICE?**

There are clearly processes at work in both countries which erode loyalty towards EU development cooperation, although these are not uniformly strong. In case of Hungary, there is evidence of the Fidesz government's nationalist and anti-EU rhetoric entering bilateral development policy. There is very little indication that EU membership would have had any socialization effects on Hungary's development cooperation, and while Hungary has managed to have some impact on EU development policy, these have not been large, and reflect collective CEE efforts. The emerging picture is slightly different for Poland. Poland's bilateral development policy has shown greater continuity, although there is also evidence of the impact of illiberalism in the form of decreasing emphasis on democracy promotion. Poland has been more influential than Hungary, although it is just as difficult to identify any socialization effects. Based on these differences, we expect Hungary to

have become more vocal in EU development policymaking. This section analyses the recent actions of the two countries in these processes.

There is evidence that Hungary has increasingly been acting as a 'trouble maker' in EU development policy. Its opposition towards migration has translated into extreme hostility towards any positive mentions of the issue in EU documents. As stated in a report by the Hungarian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade (2017: 15):

Hungary places a strong emphasis on ensuring that the EU separates discussions on refugees eligible for protection and economic migrants. Not all EU countries think the same in all development-related topics, which became evident during the elaboration of the New European Consensus, the backbone of the EU's international development cooperation policy. While all members supported the goals of international development and criteria aimed at increasing effectiveness, approaches to migration divided the member states. While finalizing the document, Hungary was unable to accept any references to the positive impacts of migration on destination countries.

Contestation of positive images of migration was visible in a number of Hungarian actions on the EU level. In April 2018, Hungary vetoed the text of the Marrakesh Political Declaration between the EU and African countries on migration and development – in the end, Hungary was the only EU member not to sign it (444.hu 2018a). Hungary also vetoed the EU's negotiating mandate for the post-Cotonou negotiations in May 2018, arguing that it speaks too favourably of migration, and demanded removing references to legal routes for migration. Hungary was the only member state to oppose the mandate (Euractiv 2018). Furthermore, Hungary was the first member state to break away from the EU's joint position on the United Nations' Global Compact on Migration in June 2018, a non-binding instrument laying down principles on managing migration. The government argued that 'migration is an unfavourable and dangerous process [...], at odds with the country's security interests' (Gatti 2018).

These are all clear instances of using an extreme form of voice, which had previously not characterized Hungary's participation in EU development policy, or even EU policymaking more generally. Previously, Hungary only opposed EU declarations if it was not alone in doing so. The shifts towards acting alone became evident in other areas of EU foreign policy as well in 2018: for example, Hungary was alone in opposing a declaration condemning China on human rights (444.hu 2018b). Hungary has also been perhaps one of the most vocal critics of sanctions against Russia in the aftermath of the annexation of Crimea. The government has also been making the development of closer ties with Ukraine more difficult: Orbán's government, has taken a distinctly pro-Russian angle after the Maidan revolution (Krekó and Szicherle 2018). Relations with Ukraine deteriorated especially after the country passed a controversial education law in 2017, which affects minority languages users (including ethnic Hungarians living in the Transcarpathia region of Ukraine) negatively. Peter Szijjártó, Hungary's foreign minister, stated that 'Hungary will block and veto all steps in the European Union, which [...] would bring Ukraine closer to the European integration' (Valasz.hu 2017). While there has been no evidence of Hungary living up to this promise, Hungary's actions have been seen as disproportionate and benefiting Russia (Kreko and Szicherle 2018).

Poland has acted much less controversially in EU development cooperation and related policies, with rather little evidence of a stronger Polish voice or partial exits. While Poland also broke away from the EU position on the Global Compact on Migration and did not sign the document, it was more a follower in this regard after Hungary and several other

member states broke away (Gatti 2018). Poland eventually voted against the Compact in the UN General Assembly and did not support a separate Global Compact on Refugees either. However, Polish objections to the migration related issues in EU development policy documents and positions were much softer than those of Hungary. Poland gave some technical support to Hungary relating to its criticism of migration and seems to have 'felt comfortable' hiding behind Hungary during the negotiations of the EC's mandate for the post-Cotonou agreement.

Paradoxically, the refugee crisis in 2015 and its impacts on EU policy had a positive influence on Poland's position within EU development cooperation. The EU's approach to migration shifted from a welcoming to a more deterrent approach after 2016, which gave an impression to Polish officials that the EU was aligning itself with the Polish position. The failure of the refugee relocation scheme and greater EU focus on addressing the 'root causes of migration' in development policy strengthened the narrative that the CEE countries were right all along. The securitization of EU development policy was a welcome change for the Polish government, which had always regarded aid as a foreign policy tool. After rejecting any substantial reform of migration policy at the European Council in June 2018, Polish Prime Minister Mateusz Morawiecki stated that 'we have succeeded in convincing our partners that the refugee relocation scheme cannot force any country to admit refugees against its sovereign will. [...] The position of Poland is now the position of the entire EU' (Deon.pl 2018). While this statement may be exaggerated, there has clearly been convergence between the Polish and European approaches to using foreign aid as a tool of migration control. As opposed to Hungary, which thought that the EU did not go far enough, Poland was satisfied with this convergence. Furthermore, Poland has been much less of 'troublemaker' in other areas of EU external relations and development policy than Hungary.

There were further changes in EU development policy which were in line with Poland's interests. For instance, the growing European discourse on the stronger engagement of the private sector aligned with the multiannual strategy of Polish Aid (Polish Ministry of Foreign Affairs 2015). This gave an opportunity for Poland to justify its own support for Polish businesses in development cooperation. Poland welcomed the proposal for the European External Investment Plan and was one of the biggest donors for the European Resilience Initiative of the European Investment Bank. Poland saw it as a success that the New European Consensus on Development recognized the Eastern Partnership countries and Middle Income Countries, where most of Polish bilateral aid goes, as important partners for the EU.

There is one final area in development cooperation where both Poland and Hungary have been increasingly using their voice: Sexual Reproductive Health Rights (SRHR). Both governments argue that this concept is not clearly defined and can be a cover for opening the way for supporting abortion, same-sex marriage, or adoption of children by same-sex couples. Both claim to protect 'traditional' family values, although in rather archaic forms, which fits into their proclaimed illiberal/nationalist ideologies, and their adversity towards 'gender ideology' (Vida 2019). Poland and Hungary played a role in softening the language and propositions on SRHR in the negotiating mandate for the post-Cotonou agreement, as well as the New European Consensus on Development, making this a further area where they are using a stronger voice.<sup>1</sup> However, there is little data as to how systematic the opposition to these issues is from these countries, and it has clearly been less emphasized than migration. A report sponsored by the Hungarian government attempted to link the two issues, arguing that the way international organizations promote sexual education programs amounts to the persecution of Christians for their beliefs (Muller 2019).

Comparing the recent actions of Hungary and Poland in EU development cooperation processes supports our expectation that Hungary has become more likely to use extreme forms of voice, although there is no evidence for partial exit. Development cooperation has not emerged as a sticking point in Poland's relations with the EU, and Poland is acting in a less confrontational manner than Hungary. In fact, shifts in the EU's development policy have been in Poland's favour, lending the government an argument that it can wield influence in the EU. The fact that Hungary remained confrontational indicates that it would have liked the EU to be even more radical. Hungary has emerged as an internal challenger to the EU's development policy, while Poland less so.

## CONCLUSIONS

This paper has examined how the rise of illiberalism in Hungary and Poland has affected their actions in EU development cooperation. Using a framework based on Hirschmann's (1970) concepts of voice, exit and loyalty, the paper argued that a number of processes may have eroded Hungary and Poland's loyalty towards EU development cooperation, making them more likely to use extreme forms of voice, and potentially even partially exit from the policy area. We argued that the erosion of loyalty could be caused by increasing discrepancy between the values embedded in EU development cooperation and those in bilateral development policy; a lack of Europeanization and low influence in shaping the policy; and the emergence of alternative solutions. Hungary's bilateral development policy has become more nationalist/illiberal than Poland's, where there is a strong degree of continuity. While neither country has been successfully Europeanized into the norms of the common development policy, Poland may have developed a stronger sense of loyalty due to the fact that it has had more success in influencing the policy area than Hungary. Finally, it is difficult to argue that there are any true alternatives to the EU's development policy in terms of addressing collective problems, such as the migration-development nexus. Both countries have made greater use of bilateral aid to address the root causes of migration, but these efforts are mostly symbolic.

The framework explains the differences between Hungary's and Poland's actions within EU development policy well. While partial exits would perhaps be a strong expectation, there is reason to expect Hungary to embrace stronger forms of voice due to how its loyalty towards the policy may have been eroded more than that of Poland's. This is supported by recent evidence: Hungary has indeed been using stronger forms of voice, including vetoes, in EU development policymaking. Poland on the other hand seems content with the policy area, especially since it has shifted towards placing a greater emphasis on managing migration and supporting businesses. In other words, the modus operandi of the EU has shifted closer to Poland's preferences, making the erosion of loyalty less likely. Indeed, Polish officials have communicated this as evidence of Polish influence. While these changes were in Hungary's favour as well, the government seemed to be pushing for even more radical change. It may also be using development policy for other political purposes, e.g. signalling to other member states that it is ready to act in a more disruptive manner, should the EU become tougher in challenging the authoritarian nature of Orbán's governance. In case of Poland, the convergence with EU development policy should not be seen as an effect of successful Europeanisation. To the contrary, the Polish approach emerged in opposition to the EU's refugee relocation scheme. Other changes, such as the marginalisation of democracy promotion, are home-grown phenomena, linked to the ideology of PiS.

EU development cooperation has provided an important, negative lesson for Hungary and Poland. Over the years, both countries learned how to ignore soft laws of EU in this area

and pursued a selective internalisation of EU norms and priorities. This experience may have emboldened them, especially Hungary, to act more vocally in the policy area, and may have also encouraged them to break free from European standards in other areas as well.

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#### ENDNOTES

<sup>1</sup> Interview with a Polish diplomat, Brussels, April 2019.

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