



## Partecipazione e Conflitto

<http://siba-ese.unisalento.it/index.php/paco>

ISSN: 1972-7623 (print version)

ISSN: 2035-6609 (electronic version)

PACO, Issue 14(1) 2021: 152-175

DOI: 10.1285/i20356609v14i1p152

Published 15 March, 2021

Work licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-Non commercial-Share alike 3.0 Italian License

## RESEARCH ARTICLE

# Covid-19 Crisis: Government's (Dis)Trust In The People And Pitfalls of Liberal Democracies

**Marija Sniečkutė**

*European Studies, University of Amsterdam*

**Inga Gaižauskaitė**

*Institute of Sociology, Lithuanian Centre for Social Sciences*

### ABSTRACT:

The COVID-19 crisis highlighted the issue of trust in European democracies. Governments had to both undertake (unprecedented) restrictive measures to manage the spread of COVID-19 and to rely on citizens' willingness to adhere to these measures. Scientific works on political trust generally focus on people's trust in government and stress its centrality during the crisis. Public opinion surveys, conducted during the initial stages of the COVID-19 pandemic, reported fluctuating levels of people's trust in national governments. However, it is as important to ask how government constructs trust, including in its own people. In the article, we aim to focus on the latter aspect of political trust in order to highlight the role of trust in such crises as pandemic, and draw evaluative implications for democratic arrangements. Using discourse analysis, we look at how the Prime Ministers (PMs) of three European countries (Hungary, Lithuania, and the Netherlands) articulated (dis)trust as well as constructed images of "Us" in their public speeches informing respective societies about the COVID-19 situation. In PMs' speeches (dis)trust is articulated along a "trust-control" continuum, and we identified distinctive patterns of the "Us" vs. "Them" construction.

### KEYWORDS:

Citizens, COVID-19 crisis, democracy, discourse analysis, political trust

### CORRESPONDING AUTHOR(S):

[m.snieckute@uva.nl](mailto:m.snieckute@uva.nl), [inga.gaizauskaite@lsc.lt](mailto:inga.gaizauskaite@lsc.lt)

## 1. Introduction

The COVID-19 crisis has swept throughout the world, shaking the feelings of certainty and highlighting the issue of trust. The Edelman Trust Barometer recorded increased levels of public trust in government in 11 countries worldwide (Edelman 2020), while the “Living, working and COVID-19” survey observed a low level of trust in national governments (in April 2020, with a further decrease in July 2020), whereas in July, trust in the EU increased among respondents in 13 Member States (Eurofound 2020a, 2020b). Already in their very first address to the people, governments appealed to trust, solidarity, and responsibility as the means of getting through the crisis. For instance, the Dutch Prime Minister (PM) Mark Rutte stressed that “[It is] the times of putting the common interest above the individual ones. The times of granting space and trust to all these people who in these hectic circumstances are busy day and night trying to help others and keep the virus under control <...> Together we will come out of this difficult period” (16-03-2020). The Lithuanian PM, Saulius Skvernelis, echoed: “We have to get united and do what is required to do. Each of us” (12-03-2020).

While social cohesion and people’s trust in the government is crucial in the crisis management process, it is as important to address the other side of political trust, i.e., on how government, as an institution, constructs trust, including in its own people. We depart from conventional survey measurement, which presupposes that trust is a unitary phenomenon having different intensity levels (in the sense of having more or less trust). Instead, we approach trust as a multifaceted phenomenon; therefore, it is more sensible to look at different varieties of trust/distrust, and discourse analysis method permits us to capture that. Our research questions are twofold: 1. *How did government articulate (dis)trust in the people during the initial stage of the pandemic?*; 2. *How did government articulate elicitation of peoples’ trust in governments?* Both questions pertain to shedding more light on the way governments articulated (dis)trust in the initial stage of the pandemic, and we will be able to understand the role of trust in such crises as pandemic and evaluate its consequences for democratic arrangements.

Our major theoretical contribution is the conceptualization of *trust* in constructivist rather than essentialist terms. Therefore, trust is not an entity to be expressed in agents’ actions, but is constituted by and through them, linguistic actions included. Accordingly, we distance ourselves from an understanding of *trust* in terms of *beliefs*, and embrace an understanding of *trust* in terms of *commitments*. Our theoretical framework integrates sociological and philosophical insights and aligns with the *practice theoretical* thought. Consequently, this theoretical angle re-directs our attention towards the relevance of linguistic acts in research on trust, and enables us to use discourse analysis methodological tools, i.e., *imagology* and *argumentative language analysis*. More concretely, we focus on PMs’ (1) discursive articulations of the terms “trust” and “distrust”, and their synonyms, and (2) discursive construction of trust in terms of “Us” vs. “Them”. Political communication strategies are multi-functional actions: they not only convey the intention of motivating people to comply with political measures, but also function as actions through which political (dis)trust is conveyed. We analysed the cases of three European countries: Hungary, Lithuania, and the Netherlands. These countries represent different cases of the culture of trust preceding pandemic. We presume that the credit of trust accumulated before crisis is linked to a more cooperation and mutual trust-oriented government discourse, whereas the lack of trust between citizens and government may lead to more confrontational discursive practices and tendency to exploit crisis management for excessive control or exclusion of certain social groups.

Our data includes PMs’ official public speeches and statements at the initial stage of the COVID-19 pandemic. Stemming from the concept of political trust, which mainly depicts citizens’ trust in political institutions, we presume PMs to be the backbone of the government institution, which in turn allows us to analyze the reciprocal direction of the political trust, i.e., government’s trust in citizens.

The backbone of our article is the analytical claim that government's discursive articulations of (dis)trust (in terms of explicit term "trust", its synonyms, and images of "Us" vs. "Them", and argumentative characteristics of language use) provide us an insight into the phenomenon of political trust, thereby opening avenues to explore implications for research on trust (e.g., broadening the concept "political trust", discursive research methods) and democracy (e.g., the role of culture of trust, democratic resilience).

At the end of the article, we discuss our comparative findings along the tension between *trust* and *control*, raise problematic questions on crisis management in the democratic arrangements and return to the theoretical concept of *trust*.

## 2. The theoretical framework

### 2.1 Crisis, Democracy, and Trust

Our research contributes (theoretically, methodologically, and empirically) to the study field on crisis, democracy and trust.

Crises recur throughout history, bringing disturbances in social, economic, and political life (Hasel 2013, 265). The COVID-19 pandemic was an unpredicted crisis with the vast global effects. Governments had to accept urgent measures in opaque circumstances and rely on citizens' willingness to defer to them voluntarily. Therefore, the question of trust between citizens and governments becomes of crucial importance. Notwithstanding, the linkage between trust and crisis is not straightforward: trust can be used as a source of voluntary cooperation, solidarity, and mutual support, but trust is also a fragile resource, which can be easily destroyed (Blomqvist 1997, 283).

Recent research stressed the complexity of the dynamics and effects for and of political trust during the COVID-19 crisis. Trust was associated with higher levels of compliance with policy measures, lower mortality rates and decreasing risk perception, though it could also lead to a later or slower adoption of restrictive measures (Devine et al. 2020). The relationship between higher levels of political trust and citizens' compliance with restrictive policies was also observed during previous epidemics (e.g., 2014–15 Ebola Virus Disease (EVD) epidemic in West Africa (Blaire, Morse, and Tsai 2017)). Conversely, Newton (2020) showed that the public in Britain complied with the lockdown rules despite the substantial decline of trust in government; he also highlighted the importance of government's communication strategy. Based on the case of the Netherlands, Schraff (2020) argued that the increase in diffuse political support during the COVID-19 pandemic should not be interpreted as a lockdown effect but rather as an outcome of the intensity of crisis, growth of COVID-19 cases, and emotionally charged anxiety. He stressed the importance of emotions for the formation of political trust and their use for populism. Within this debate, Jennings et al. (2020, 6) compared the cases of Australia, Italy, UK and USA, and argued that citizens kept relying on "reasoned judgements" about the competence of governmental actors during the COVID-19 crisis.

These studies show that the COVID-19 crisis indeed has an effect on trust between citizens and government, but it is ambiguous. Moreover, most studies rely on empirical survey data focusing yet again on citizens' attitudes towards governments. They employ a myriad of standard survey measures, which may be not sufficient for a comprehensive understanding of trust in the context of dynamically evolving crisis (Devine et al. 2020, 8–9). Therefore, with our study we intend to contribute to the theoretical concept of political trust (by expanding it to include governments' side of articulation of trust) and to propose a discursive, non-survey-based empirical approach for the analysis of political trust.

Certainly, crisis affects trust not directly but mediated by a particular political regime. We restrict ourselves to democracy, thereby positioning our theoretical framework within a solid body of social scientific research on trust and democracy. Not all political systems need or require trust, e.g., totalitarianism often relies on spreading distrust among citizens (Marková, Linell, and Gillespie 2008, 5). Democracy, in contrast, is a system based on trust (Sztompka 1997, 1999). This is not to say that a well-functioning democracy implies that there is and/or should be an absolute citizens' trust in political institutions. On the contrary, "in stable democracies <...> showing distrust is interpreted as a sign of healthy scepticism and the rise of a critical citizenry" (Letki 2018, 5; see also Norris 2011). In this sense, dissent and distrust is an essential element of a well-functioning democracy (e.g., Mouffe 2018; Sztompka 1999). However, scholars generally agree that trust is beneficial for the efficient democratic government and quality of citizenry under democracy (e.g., Warren 1999; Braithwaite and Levi 1998; Lenard 2012). Authors argue that a level of citizens' trust grants governmental institutions a "credit of trust" that gives them the space to make the necessary or viable decisions (Sztompka 1999, 104). Such a reserve of support is particularly needed under conditions of uncertainty and risk. A lack of public trust in political institutions and leaders, and *vice versa*, obstructs political decisions and consensus (Hetherington 1998; Hetherington and Rudolph 2015). Therefore, political trust presumably becomes more relevant during times of transitions, reforms or crises (Catterberg and Moreno 2005; Hetherington and Rudolph 2015).

Crises occurring in democratic regimes are further mediated by the so-called "culture of trust", i.e., a normative framework, where trustfulness is a pervasive cultural orientation and people both tend to trust and are culturally encouraged to hold trustful disposition towards others (people and institutions) in a society (Sztompka 1997, 8–9). Prevalence of a culture of trust generates collective solidarities and facilitates cooperation, among others (Sztompka 1997, 9–10). A culture of trust might be particularly relevant for political crisis management. Governments which have a credit of trust accrued from the culture of trust might implement political measures requiring less vigilance and surveillance, while governments which operate within milieus lacking a culture of trust might opt for political measures, leading to more excessive control and opening avenues for fostering conspiracy theories. All in all, a culture of trust is an important contextual factor when discussing the dynamics of trust during the crisis.

## 2.2 Building a Theoretical Framework

Given the social scientific framework on political trust, crisis and democracy, we want to make a proposal to the field by targeting the concept of "political trust". Generally, *political trust* entails that the trustee is a political actor (e.g., Bauer and Freitag 2018, 16), and "political actor" refers to political institutions (Catterberg and Moreno 2005, 34; Turper and Aarts 2017, 417) or central government and politicians (Levi and Stoker 2000, 475). In our opinion, this definition unnecessarily presupposes a uni-directionality of trust, division between citizens and institutions, and focuses on citizens. It leaves institutions and their role in articulating trust in the shade, treating them as constants rather than as active agents in constructing trust in a mutual (e.g., dialogical, polylogical) way. However, in times of crisis, including the COVID-19 pandemic, political institutions articulate (dis)trust not only while shaping citizens' trust and motivation with regard to political measures (e.g., cooperation), but also when justifying a specific political action, or inaction. Regarding the latter, the case of Sweden is particularly illustrative (Esaiasson et al. 2020).

Furthermore, we propose to modify the definition of "trust". This step is necessary because the agency of institution cannot be accounted for by individualistic, mentalist entities (which is also problematic on ontological grounds (Schatzki, Knorr Cetina, and von Savigny 2001)); more importantly, the accounts of trust explicated in terms of motivations and attitudes cannot satisfactorily account for the phenomenon of trust and

provide a framework for a systematic integration of “trust” and “distrust” (Hawley 2014). To make this step, we attend to – and necessarily supplement – the social scientific theoretical framework on the study of trust (whereas trust seen as a constituent element of social order and the fundamental strategy to deal with the complexity and unpredictability of social reality (Giddens 1990; Lewis and Weigert 1985; Sztompka 1999)), with the philosophical component.

Stemming from a *sociological* perspective, we generally see *trust* as a feature of social relationship between two or more actors (Lewis and Weigert 1985, 968). Similarly, we regard *distrust* also as a relational concept. More particularly, we define trust as a *practice category*, i.e., trust is seen as constituted in and by actions (also linguistic) embedded in social relationships. This emphasis on trust as practice enables us to relate *sociological* and *philosophical* conceptualizations of trust. From the sociological perspective, we define trust as “a bet about the future contingent actions of others” (Sztompka 1999, 25), and, drawing on the philosophical view on trust, we approach trust in terms of commitment, which is the key constituent of an action (Dutilh Novaes 2020; Hawley 2014). Trust in terms of commitment opens up a systematic way to relate distrust: “To trust someone to do something is to believe that she has a commitment to doing it, and to rely upon her to meet that commitment. To distrust someone to do something is to believe that she has a commitment to doing it, and yet not rely upon her to meet that commitment” (Hawley 2014, 10). Our theoretical framework not only systematically relates trust and distrust, but also stresses public commitment rather than mental entities, brings collective agency to the fore (which is crucial in the study of institutions), and invites us to study trust in terms of (pragmatic) language use (Brandom 1994; Dutilh Novaes 2020). Precisely due to the latter, we are able to turn to discourse analysis as methodological tools, and delineate discursive strategies, as specific linguistic actions conducive to (dis)trust articulations.

In order to capture governments’ (dis)trust, we relate discursive elements with the phenomenon of trust in two ways. First, the usage of terms “trust” and “distrust”, and their synonyms, provides us the means to gain a better understanding of trust. This is not to say that every time a PM mentions the word “trust”, it actually denotes a case of institutional trust. It is rather to say that it is the means to capture governments’ *articulations* of (dis)trust (as conducive to or undermining the culture of trust). Second, discursive framing of “Us” vs. “Them” also gives us the means to gain a better understanding of trust. Scholars observed that a *group* was an important *locus* generating trust (and cooperation), stressing that group norms and sanctions motivate cooperation (Cook and Hardin 2001), group stereotypes form the basis of trustworthiness (Foddy and Yamagishi 2009), and group identity markers facilitate cooperation (Habyarimana et al. 2009). To be(come) a group is also to be named as a group, which immediately raises the question of who is not included or actively excluded, not least when PMs talk.

This approach to the study of political trust enables us to discuss possible pitfalls of liberal democracies during the COVID-19 crisis. One possible way to explore it is to examine how governments’ linguistic acts contribute to polarization of trust in the form of “epistemic bubbles” or “echo-chambers” (Nguyen 2020). An epistemic bubble is “a social epistemic structure in which other relevant voices have been left out, perhaps accidentally” (Nguyen 2020, 141), while an echo chamber is “a social epistemic structure from which other relevant voices have been actively excluded and discredited” (Nguyen 2020, 141). While members of an epistemic bubble lack exposure to relevant information and arguments, the echo chamber members are brought to “systematically distrust all outside sources” (Nguyen 2020, 141). These two epistemic structures are different in morphology, require different intervention (e.g., evidence can shatter an epistemic bubble but reinforce an echo chamber) and “escape” strategies (e.g., leaving an echo chamber might require to “reboot” the whole belief system). Echo chambers might be more hazardous to democracy. Government in crisis might actively shape societal epistemic structures, echo chambers included. A good place to look for crucibles of echo chambers is populist rhetoric. Thus our redefinition of “political trust” enables us also to problematize

governments' linguistic actions and trust transactions. And importantly, since members “share beliefs which include *reasons* to distrust *those outside* the echo chamber” (Nguyen 2020, 142; our italics), *argumentative language use* and *discursive construction of “Us” vs. “Them”* seems to be of primary importance here.

### 3. Methodological approach

The COVID-19 crisis has created a peculiar epistemic tension: it created an epistemic regime, in which knowledge and information sharing (“giving and asking for reasons”) became of a primary importance, and it opened up a space to invoke national stereotypes, which are by definition simplifications. For the analysis of PMs' speeches, we will address this tension also by choosing discourse analysis methods, i.e., *imagology* to analyse images (e.g., national stereotypes), and *modern argumentation theory* to flesh out the argumentative language use surrounding and constituting these images.

Imagology, or “image studies” (Beller and Leerssen 2007) is the study of the formation of national identity defined as a “political instrumentalization of an ethnotype”, and *ethnotypes* are “commonplaces and stereotypes of how we identify, view and characterize others as opposed to ourselves” (Leerssen 2006/2010, 17). Launched in the field of comparative literature, imagology was preoccupied with the analysis of the discursive articulations of national characterizations studied as a cross-national dynamic and from a transnational point of view alongside the core axes of “Self” (“auto-image”) vs. “Other” (“hetero-image”) (Leerssen 2016, 14–16). Current perspectives complicate the view on auto-image (e.g., many auto-images are interiorizations of a hegemonic view; auto-images embrace ethnicity in conjunction with sociotypes (e.g., gender, age, class)) (Leerssen 2016, 25).

Although imagology proceeds on a number of theoretical assumptions (Leerssen 2016, 16–19), it is primarily a “working method” with “the aim to understand <...> a discursive logic and representational set of cultural and poetic conventions” (Leerssen 2016, 19). A fully-fledged imagological analysis is *intertextual* (tracing the paper trail of textual occurrences of the commonplace concerned), *contextual* (socio-political conditions of the ethnotype concerned) and *textual* (the actual study of the text) *analysis*. Our study will focus on the *textual* analysis, opening up the possibilities for a broader analysis.

Following methodological guidelines, we pay attention to dominant genre-conventions, the position and foregroundedness of ethnotype, and the extent to which it is juxtaposed with other nationalized characters or other implied self-image in the text. More concretely, we specify discursive features of the dominant images by reconstructing employed commonplaces, delineate their functions in PM's speeches, and highlight junctures between used ethnotypes and sociotypes.

Next to imagological tools, we draw on modern argumentation theoretical insights. We suggest that trust has a discursive dimension, therefore the use of (argumentative) language may also be a constituent of trust. Moreover, by locating trust articulation within the context of giving and asking for reasons, it is taken from the *pre-rational* sphere and can be *critically* scrutinized, which is valuable for mutual trust between the government and citizens in a democratic arrangement.

Dialectics,<sup>1</sup> one of the key modern argumentation theoretical approaches, accentuating critical questions, is generally understood as a system of rules for the conduct of discussions aimed at the resolution of conflict about avowed opinions. *Argumentation scheme*, i.e., a specific way on how arguments are linked with the standpoint, is one of the most generic argumentation methodological tools, which captures the core of argumentative language use and constitutes a *locus* for critical questions. Depending on particularities of the

---

<sup>1</sup> For an overview see van Eemeren, Grootendorst, and Snoeck Henkemans (1996)



relationship, an interlocutor may question or criticize the acceptability of argumentation by raising critical questions specific to a particular argumentation scheme. There are three main types of argumentation scheme: argumentation based on a *symptomatic* relation, *analogy*, and *causal* relation (van Eemeren, Grootendorst, and Snoeck Henkemans, 2002). In this article, we will scrutinize argumentation schemes used by the PMs in order to highlight the discursive underpinnings of (dis)trust and open up a space for critical reactions.

#### 4. Empirical context and data

For discourse analyses, we selected three cases: Hungary, Lithuania, and the Netherlands. Following the rationale of qualitative research approach, we used purposive sampling method, selecting *diverse*<sup>2</sup> cases regarding our research questions. We used two substantial selection criteria: a) diversity in the culture of trust (prior to the COVID-19 pandemic); and b) diversity in formation and character of liberal democracy. In addition, we drew on a pragmatic criterion to facilitate content analysis: c) availability of data in language(s) accessible to the authors.

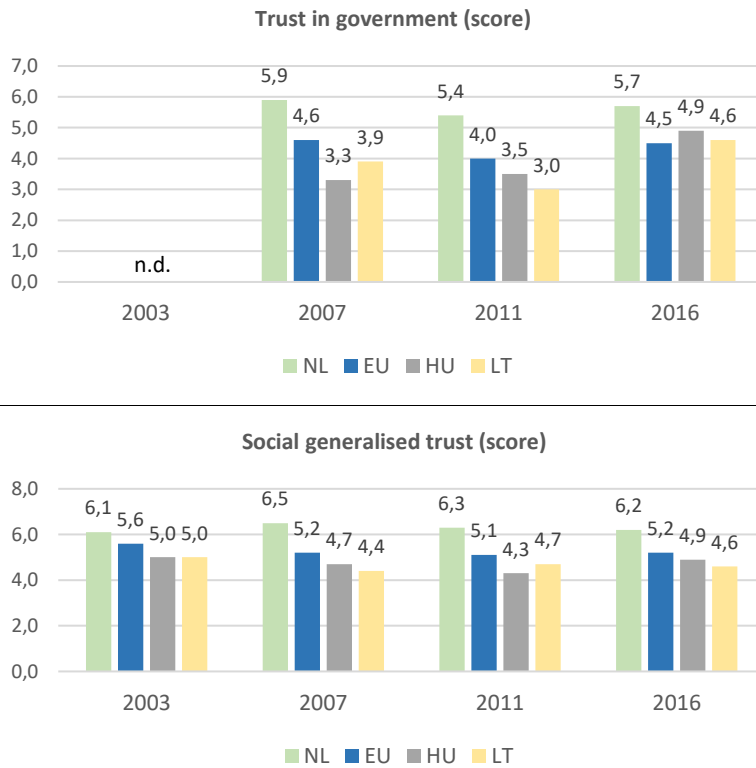
With regard to (a), we presume that a culture of trust prevails in cases of persistent high levels of social and political trust, whereas lower levels of trust feature societies less embedded in culture of trust. In the Netherlands, the culture of trust prevails, while Lithuania is observably less successful in the formation of a culture of trust; Hungary is a mediate case in this regard (Eurofound 2012, 134; Eurofound 2017, 84; Gaižauskaitė 2019, 159). Data from the “European Quality of Life Survey” (Eurofound 2012, 134; Eurofound 2017, 84; European Foundation 2015) revealed that over time the levels of social generalized trust and trust in government in the Netherlands tended to be above the European Union (EU) average (and was among the countries with the highest trust levels), whereas in Lithuania and Hungary trust levels were below or close to the EU average (see Figure 1). The latest Eurobarometer data (European Commission 2019, T48) prior to the pandemic showed that the Netherlands entered the crisis having a high level of peoples’ trust in the government, whereas only a third of citizens in Lithuania and a half of Hungarians expressed their trust in the national government (see Figure 2).

With regard to (b), the Netherlands is a case of a long-lasting established liberal democracy, whereas democracies in Lithuania and Hungary emerged after the collapse of the Soviet regime that relied on a culture of distrust (Marková 2004; Sztompka 1999). After the restoration of independence in the 1990s, Lithuania gradually though consistently consolidated democratic order, whereas the direction of politics in Hungary observably acquires features of autocratic rule (Kis 2018), which makes it particularly relevant for our analysis of (dis)trust, democracy, and crisis.

---

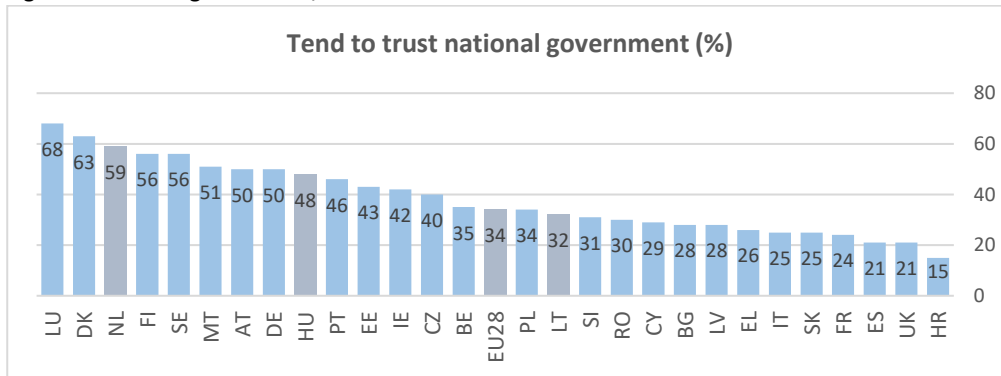
<sup>2</sup> These cases are not extreme or deviant in regard to our research questions. However, they provide substantial examples of diverse deployment of tradition of democracy and culture of trust in a country, thus being highly informative to answer the research questions

Figure 1 – Comparison of levels of trust, 2003-2016 (score).<sup>3</sup>



Source: composed by the authors based on data retrieved from Eurofound 2012, 134; Eurofound 2017, 84; European Foundation 2015

Figure 2 – Trust in government, Autumn 2019.<sup>4</sup>



<sup>3</sup> Note: Trust in government survey question wording “Please tell me how much you personally trust each of the following institutions. Please tell me on a scale of 1 to 10, where 1 means that you do not trust at all, and 10 means that you trust completely”; social generalised trust question wording “Would you say that most people can be trusted or that you can’t be too careful in dealing with people?”, scale from 1 (you can’t be too careful) to 10 (most people can be trusted)

<sup>4</sup> Note: Trust in government survey question wording “I would like to ask you a question about how much trust you have in certain media and institutions. For each of the following media and institutions, please tell me if you tend to trust it or tend not to trust it”



*Source:* composed by the authors based on data retrieved from European Commission 2019, T48

With regard to (c), for Lithuania and the Netherlands we were able to collect and analyse empirical material in national (original) languages as the authors command one or both languages fluently. In case of Hungary, we used empirical material, which was fully translated into English and published on the official governmental channel.

We selected PMs' speeches in all three countries because PMs were the key figures conveying official governmental position to the publics in the context of crisis.

For each analyzed country, we collected PMs speeches addressing COVID-19. We focused on the speeches delivered 1 March–1 June 2020, because it marks the period from the crisis acceleration until the settlement of the key strategies of operation under the COVID-19 pandemic. We collected the PMs' speeches delivered to inform the public during press conferences and/or via official communication channels. Overall, we collected 73 speech units: Hungary (17, in the forms of regular PM's interviews on the radio program "Good Morning Hungary"; press statement; announcement); Lithuania (29, in the forms of official information; press conference; public appeal, greeting or condolence), and the Netherlands (27, in the form of press conference; appeal). The speech units were collected in text, video or voice format; for the purpose of analysis, all speeches were processed (transcribed) into text format.

Below we present our research results organized by country, i.e., Hungary, Lithuania, and the Netherlands, and by three dimensions of analysis: articulations of (dis)trust, images of "Us" vs. "Them", and argumentative characteristics of crisis management. The key findings are highlighted in Table 1 below.

Our findings are supported with extracts from speech units. Where necessary, the original utterances have been adjusted for readability (marked "<...>" where a piece of text had been removed and [text] where a piece of text had been included by the authors). We reference the extracts used in the text by the date of their appearance and provide the reference list of sources in Table 2 (see Appendix).

## 5. Results

### 5.1 Hungary

#### 5.1.1 (Dis)trust articulations

Hungarian PM Viktor Orbán pleads for mutual trust between himself and the people only in a couple of explicit uses of the word "trust": e.g., "Perhaps not everyone is happy to see the Prime Minister <...> [but] at times like this I think we must trust one another" (10-04-2020). There is a distinctive use of "entrust", e.g., referring to people's vested trust in PM ("the people entrusted me with the leadership of the state" (08-05-2020)) or pointing to the values that "Hungarian people" possess: "Hungarians know what's been entrusted to them, and they also know what they have responsibility for" (17-04-2020).

A more general solidarity narrative is built upon references to rules, compliance, and discipline. There is a clear linkage between "voluntary" action and "forced" action – there is no place for failed "voluntary" compliance: "those who are unwilling to do this voluntarily must be compelled to do so by the police. Those who fail to comply with these rules – although I ask everyone to do so – must be made to do so, by force if necessary" (13-03-2020). Unity and discipline are counterparts of Orbán's vision of Hungarian solidarity in the face of crisis.

### *Images of "Us" vs. "Them"*

Alongside the articulation of "Us" vs. "Them", an image of "Me" as the Leader representing the Hungarian people stands out. However, the PM constructs his position as separate and above the people (as well as the government). Orbán construes himself as knowledgeable (informed by the healthcare experts), being in control, having "common sense", "experience", and "loyalty" to his people, – all of which taken together gives sufficient legitimacy to his leadership. Orbán extensively narrows "the government" into his persona via the rhetoric of "Me" ("I suggested/believe/know") or expropriating governmental units, e.g., "my medical team" (13-03-2020).

In terms of "Us", Orbán mainly distinguishes Hungary as a (1) *society*, (2) *nation*, and (3) *nation-state* (on the European map).<sup>5</sup>

In Orbán's eyes, (1) *society* is top-down and hierarchically-organized (priests, government, people in "uniforms", healthcare specialists, and the rest). The PM in particular acquires tremendous power in organizing society vertically, most obviously expressed in Orbán's idea that he, with the help of military, needs to visit each hospital to clarify information (e.g., bed number), and install police there for efficient crisis management. The society is the working class, the enemy of which is the *virus* itself: the virus has stolen working places, and the PM gives his personal word that every job will be reclaimed. The working class is expanded to include social outcasts (e.g., prisoners are sewing masks) and woven with militaristic and "strength" terms (e.g., virile young bodies are to be recruited for the military service). The sociotype of *age* stands out as a contrast between the young (least vulnerable) and elderly (most vulnerable). The elderly are requested to isolate themselves. It is achieved by employing various tactics, e.g., in terms of *health* (no one left behind, old people included), *economics* (reassurance that pensions remain), *empathy* (Orbán himself has an old mother and grandmother), *pleading* (younger people should never tell old people how to behave, therefore Orbán only pleads with them to stay home). Not surprisingly, "staying home" is envisioned in war-like metaphors ("bunker").

(2) "Us" as the "Hungarian nation" is the strongest auto-image, formed by applying commonplaces (also "collective memory"), and articulated in opposition to various "others". The Hungarian nation is envisaged primarily as nativist merged with (mono-)culturalism, and contrasted with migrants of a different culture. There is an opposition to EU bureaucrats ("EU nit-pickers" (27-03-2020)), Brussels ("In Brussels they're sitting in some sort of bubble" (03-04-2020)), and George Soros – the key enemies, who are advocating relaxation of migration policy. This oppositional divide is based on extreme distrust, rooted in conspiracy topos, and performed by such a linguistic strategy as "I do not advocate conspiracy, but ..." (15-05-2020). Enemies' "true" motives are to enslave and eradicate the Hungarian people. Culture is used as a strong rhetorical tool of division: all "Them" (e.g., external media) will not understand the Hungarian "heart and soul", because they do not understand its culture and soil. The Hungarian nation is thus against multiculturalism (because it threatens its survival). Culture gives the means to portray Hungary as a (true) European country, safeguarding values and civilizational heritage.

Important "others" of the "Hungarian nation" are also Communists ("red mud"). The talk about Communists enables Orbán to appeal to the collective memory, and transfer – by analogy – the opponents and situation from the communists to the current political Left opponents, who are criticized for wanting only power (and using crisis for that goal too), and endangering the life of the nation as such.

---

<sup>5</sup> "Us" as "Christian Democracy" is hardly here mentioned by Orbán, quite differently from its rhetorical weight in his last post-electoral speech (Sniečkutě, 2020)

While most of Orbán's rhetoric on the Hungarian nation and its enemies is old, the novelty is coupling old enemies with the *virus*. Virus is not only a threat to the Hungarian people, but is *aligned* with migrants and opponents (especially the EU bureaucrats). The analogy serves Orbán proof of the legitimacy of his measures in both cases, e.g., "The same was true for migration. Now the situation is the same with the distinctive national approach to managing the pandemic" (08-05-2020).

(3) Finally, Orbán envisages Hungary as *nation-state*, exceptionally successfully fighting the COVID-19 virus among other European countries. The healthcare system is portrayed as the best in the world, not least because the Hungarian government is smart enough to use other countries as a model, or laboratory. The Austrian case stands out because Austrians are seen as "guinea pigs", on the basis of which the Hungarian approach can be modeled. Interestingly too, due to the anti-virus goods, state alliances are made with China and Turkey (and anti-EU).

### 5.1.2 Argumentative characteristics of crisis management

Overall, Orbán's vision of politics *excludes* debate as a valuable crisis management tool. On the contrary, debate is seen making the crisis only worse. *Speed* (action) is needed, and not a *debate*: if we discuss, we do not act, and the virus will spread. This rationale is used to justify special political measures. The speedy actions/special political measures are also justified as correct on Orbán's *common sense* and *experience*. He discursively constructs distrust in the functionality of a democratic system in the face of crisis: "Even if one has a two-thirds majority in Parliament, one normally still needs to submit a proposal, it needs to be debated <...> But in situations such as these, every hour counts" (29-05-2020). There is no need to *respond to criticism* either: "So there are times when one must shake off baseless attacks, like a dog shaking water off on its coat <...> we must make it clear that Hungarians cannot be bullied without repercussions – especially not when they're in difficulty" (08-05-2020). Or criticism is rejected on the grounds of alternative, "real" reality, e.g., Orbán dismisses the possibility that there might be a lack of protective gear: "That statement doesn't correspond to the reality" (20-03-2020). Orbán's indirect invitation to trust his decision to increase his personal power vs. democratic rule builds upon the picture of risk and uncertainty: "The world's biggest problem is that this is an unknown virus <...> there's no vaccine, no cure, no antidote; this is why everyone is filled with worry and fear. We are facing an unknown enemy" <...> "The good news is that in such a situation the law in Hungary is able to vest the Government with powers to enact rapid and effective containment measures, and we shall not hesitate to use them" (13-03-2020).

To conclude, Orbán's rhetoric is *militarist* and resorting to pure *force*: "There's no doubt that we're engaged in a war on two fronts" (13-03-2020). "Fight", "defence operation", "defence measures", "military-style plan" are common stylistic expressions as well as "rules", "strict measures", "power". Police and military force are referred as the sources to ensure solidarity via compliance. Metaphors on *youth virility* and *sport* (e.g., the Hungarian government is portrayed as a football team with strong legs) are also used as rhetorical props. While Orbán employs rich metaphors and other rhetorical devices, his reasoning is also quite straightforward. One of the preferred argumentation schemes is arguments from *analogy* (which provides us with the tools to evaluate whether analogy can stand critical scrutiny).

## 5.2 Lithuania

### 5.2.1 (Dis)trust articulations

The Lithuanian PM Saulius Skvernelis hardly uses the term “trust” explicitly. When used, it is related to the narrative of solidarity and unity: “I firmly believe that it is solidarity, trust and the knowledge that we will overcome all adversity together that accompany us” (12-04-2020). Occasionally he uses the term “trust” to denote the relationship to medical personnel and between the Baltic States. The main counterpart of trust is a call for internal “unity” (e.g., “all together”). At the same time, “compliance” via obligation and duty is stressed: “We have to unite and do what is a must” (12-03-2020).

### 5.2.2 Images of “Us” vs. “Them”

In terms of the discursive articulation of “Us”, the terms “Lithuania” and the “Lithuanian people” (e.g., 12-03-2020) stand out as identity-conveying combination. “Lithuania” mostly denotes *state* (e.g., 14-03-2020) and *society* (e.g., 27-04-2020) rather than *nation*, as the terms “nation” (16-03-2020) and “fatherland” (25-03-2020) are only mentioned. It is remarkable that Skvernelis’ discourse is largely devoid of pointers to any national memory. The most dominant social glue is *values*, which are constitutive of an (1) (*ideal*) *society* (e.g., “Dear people of Lithuania, by being assembled and unanimous we live through a complicated period for the whole country. Only by being aware, by realizing the significance of responsibility and the meaning of civility, we are strong and can call ourselves as a mature society” (12-04-2020)). Similarly, “modern society” is something to aspire for: “Most importantly, never forget the key characteristics of the modern society: it is social responsibility, commonality, justice, and respect for every human being” (01-05-2020). These values function as commonplaces, which are argumentatively employed to unite “Us” for a pragmatic goal, i.e., to overcome the crisis (causal argumentation), and as a symptom of modern and mature society (symptomatic argumentation). In order to call for these values, Skvernelis uses various discursive tactics, e.g., *pleading* (“Therefore I am asking you once more for a responsible attitude to yourself and others” (08-04-2012)); *preaching* (“Let’s not forget: Lithuania is as safe, as each of us is taking care of the safety of our own and of our close people” (12-03-2020)) and even *threatening* (“If people do not agree with these conditions <...> they will have to stay there, where they are, if they do not want to act responsibly when returning to Lithuania, to our Fatherland, and threaten the lives and health of our country’s residents“ (25-03-2020)). The discursive construction of an ideal “Us” has an effect of tearing the Government and the people apart precisely because of authority presupposed in Skvernelis’ speech acts.

Furthermore, the “Us” image is constructed as (2) a *family*, an atomic unit of society. Reference to family is also used as a deliberate rhetorical move to target emotionally all the members of society: “We have to take care of our health, the health of our children, parents, the closest people – and the health of all other people of Lithuania” (12-03-2020); “Stay at home, don’t visit grandparents, parent and closest people, who live in other cities” (08-04-2020), etc. The main “social glue” is *care*, which implies protection and presupposes trust. The care narrative becomes the means to move from the family unit into the sociotype of elderly people distinguished as vulnerable. Care is used to justify the isolation of this social group, which is achieved by a series of directive speech acts (e.g., “Let’s <...>”), analogical argumentation (e.g., quarantine is the most effective means because it is the most effective means elsewhere in the world) and arguments from authority

(reference to medical experts). The care narrative is supplemented by references to social welfare (promised pensions).

(3) Skvernelis' discourse contains other layers articulated in terms of "Us" vs. "Them", which create further strains on trust. The "*Lithuanian people*" is a *medical and biological body*, thereby relating it to "threat": "[threat] to the life and health of us all" (25-03-2020); "from my personal experience I know that in your work you [medical staff] do not lack <...> determination to courageously move forward for people's health and life" (27-04-2020). The Lithuanian people, understood in terms of health and life, are articulated in relation to social groups, invoking sociotypes: government and medical staff are those who protect people's health and life, and people from abroad (especially, returning Lithuanian emigrants) are depicted as a threat to "Us". The Lithuanian people as a medical and biological body is defined by opposition with returning emigrants, who are named as both "part of our society" and "non-humans": "Pardon my expression, perhaps I will be rude, but we cannot call them human beings <...> we cannot allow that this part of our society would dictate us the conditions and later would pose threat to our health and lives" (25-03-2020).

This argumentative strategy of *scapegoating* is achieved by employing commonplaces, stereotypes of the returning Lithuanian emigrants circulating on social media and beyond. Distinction between a "good" and "bad" citizen is manifest (excluding the "bad" from the concept of "Us"): "As a result, that selective exclusion will have to be made. And yes, with people who truly abide <...> are responsible <...> Who do not understand, the state will ensure the security of our population with all the strictness of the law" (25-03-2020). The tension between aspired "unity" and discursive "threat" strategy is apparent. The initial appeal of "unity" and "shared responsibility" shifts towards explicit depiction of *measures of discipline* for those who will disobey.

Finally, a distinctive notion of "Us" as (4) the *Baltic state* is forwarded at the European level. Interestingly, Skvernelis stresses solidarity among three Baltic states, but in contrast to other EU countries. Lithuania's (and the Baltics') exceptionalism is framed: Lithuania is supposedly one of the European countries which dealt with the pandemic the best.

### 5.2.3 Argumentative characteristics of crisis management

Skvernelis employs *argumentum ad baculum* as one of the dominant argumentation strategies: if you do not comply, you will have the situation of Italy/Spain; if you want to celebrate Easter with your relatives next year, stay home; if you do not follow rules, you will be sanctioned. Related is *ad consequentiam* argument (e.g., "If we behave... <...> how part of society behaved these past two weeks, when self-isolation was ignored, <...> then it is natural that the quarantine <...> will continue" (25-03-2020)).

Skvernelis also cuts off what is crucial for democracy – a consideration of alternatives. This is a very important argumentation strategy as it justifies why the Government *was pushed, had no choice* but to accept administrative and even criminal penalties and punishments and enforce them with police (e.g., "Unfortunately, we were inevitably forced to make these decisions with the sole goal of saving the lives and health of the Lithuanian people" (14-03-2020)). The lack of critical question space also manifests by pointing out "Them": *political opposition* (also labeled as populist) and *media*; both – according to Skvernelis – transmitting only gossip, and not official information, because of which society may feel unsafe.

The relationship between the government and the people is hardly discussed: it is presumed that the people should obey. Only once Skvernelis speaks of the need to have a mutual rational agreement, but it concerns only the place of quarantine. Stylistically, discourse is formulated in passive terms and a static, bureaucratic manner. Many arguments are presented in an abstract, implicit form of "Us" (presumably government), e.g., "(We) need to take new measures" (12-03-2020), "(We) put all the effort" (02-04-2020). Government's



responsibility is hardly discussed. Skvernelis seemingly redirects his own (respectively – government’s) responsibility of imposing restrictive measures upon the (medical) experts (e.g., “This serious warning is grounded upon the recommendations of scientists” (02-04-2020)). Likewise, he points to experts to prove the trustworthiness of government’s decisions: “One [prognosis] is really intensive, the scientists will speak <...> Then it [opinion] will probably be received differently than when a politician speaks, and one thinks he wants to intimidate someone. I would just stay neutral in this place. We rely on scientists’ predictions” (01-04-2020).

## 5.3 The Netherlands

### 5.3.1 (Dis)trust articulations

The Dutch PM Mark Rutte explicitly uses the term “trust” several times, denoting citizens’ *reasonable* trust, i.e., based on trust in the medical experts and scrutinized through political debate: “<...> I do not expect that people will immediately trust the Prime Minister <...> I think that the Netherlands trusts the specialists who advise us, whereas I can assure that we always fight with each other about this advice <...> by way of questioning and asking” (13-03-2020). Rutte stresses the mutual trust evolving between the government and the people: “<...> it is crucial that people would take the measures very seriously. But this trust we may have with each other after the last two months” (06-05-2020). It becomes a repetitive slogan: “<...> we may have trust, but we must remain watchful” (15-05-2020). Government’s trust in citizens is also framed *rationally*: “Yes, perhaps it is too crazy from me, perhaps I am enormously naïve, but I have a very large trust in the Netherlands’ understanding [verstand]” (15-05-2020). However, it is not rationality related to “facts” (experts) and political debate, but *pragmatic rationality*. “(Healthy) common sense [(gezond) verstand]” (21-04-2020) becomes the key – very ambiguous – term, used to invoke people’s trust and to justify political measures: “[stopping handshakes] is implemented, because we think that in this phase, it is *sensible*” (09-03-2020). The Dutch PM is aware of the tension between *trust* and *policing*, and opts for the former. He is proud that “we have never placed any policemen near the doors” (01-05-2020), that “we are one of the countries with the highest percentage of compliance” (29-05-2020), and stresses that in order to ensure people’s compliance, political measures should provide sufficient space for people to cooperate (20-03-2020).

#### *Images of “Us” vs. “Them”*

Three images of “Us” stand out: (1) people as a *statistical body* to be governed; (2) *pragmatic* Dutch people; and (3) the Netherlands as *democracy*.

(1) “We with all 17 mln. people” (09-03-2020) – *the body to be governed* – has been a prominent framing especially when Rutte spoke of building up “group immunity”: “with this scenario, whereas most people would develop only light complaints, we build up the immunity and make sure that the healthcare system can handle” (16-03-2020). After fierce public criticism, the government discarded this reasoning from governmental discourse. Although “our immunity” is at stake, the “Us” is constructed as the body to be governed, and necessarily implies a rupture between the people and government, justified on democracy premises. Still, the managerial rationale sometimes contrasts democratic values, as evident in Rutte’s response to a question of whether a smartphone app should be compulsory in a liberal society: “we are keeping this option open because we simply have no luxury at this moment to rule it out” (17-04-2020).



(2) Rutte uses the widespread cultural stereotypes of the Dutch people as *pragmatic*, rule-abiding, and “normal” people: “Everyone sees that in the Netherlands we can very well follow the rules” (31-03-2020), whereas rules are interpreted as “agreements” (27-05-2020). To follow the rules is pragmatic: “Keep thinking a bit smartly. Because the goal is not these rules. The goal is to defeat the virus” (19-05-2020). Sometimes the rule-following is backed up by arguments from authority: “And there is trust that when you do this, the average Dutch person is so structured that one says: OK, if guys have found out all this <...> and all those expert have grounds <...> then we are going to follow ” (19-05-2020). Rules and normality is ingrained in the stereotype of a Dutch person. As the Dutch saying goes: “Just act normal, that’s already crazy enough!” (“Doe maar normal, dan doe jij al gek genoeg!”). Rutte employs the normality trope by coining the term “new normality”: “We will have to search together for a new normal in the society of one and half meter (17-04-2020). According to Rutte, “the rules are very clear” (27-03-2020), and people who do not follow them are seen as non-pragmatic, or plainly stupid. Rutte’s references to “facts” also reveal that they are also not crystal clear, as he usually attempts to present. Instead, he repeatedly admits that “There is 50% of knowledge and 100% of decision” (12-03-2020), or shifts political responsibility away: “And I don’t say here anything [about face masks], I give no answer, I leave it to experts and they will look at it” (17 04 2020).

(3) The Netherlands is framed as (*liberal*) *democracy*: “We are democracy. We have here no bosses, we know no hierarchy here” (19-05-2020). Rutte points out “democracy” (symptomatic reasoning) as premises to justify a lenient crisis-handling approach: “The Netherlands, next to Sweden, has the most liberal lockdown of Europe. We have never installed a policeman near the door. We have always told to the people: these are the facts and we are thinking that it is sensible that you stay at home as much as possible” (01-05-2020). Rutte speaks of “adult democracy”, which stresses mutual responsibility: “it belongs to the adult democratic country that people ultimately take their own responsibility” (31-03-2020). Due to frequent references to the term “adult”, Rutte’s speeches acquire paternalistic rhetorical style: “We are doing this all together and if people are so stupid that they are going to sit in a full tram, then it is their choice <...> We are not a playground. <...> I don’t want to play the boss, and I am not the one” (08-05-2020). In this way, non-obedient citizens are portrayed as free but stupid and child-like. Rutte also misuses the democracy vocabulary: e.g., in attempting to counter legitimate criticism of government’s reluctance to introduce face masks, Rutte says “Everyone is free to wear a face mask. We live in a free country” (01-05-2020).

Articulations of *distrust* are more difficult to spot in Rutte’s speeches. Generally, (1) a *disobedient citizen* is not to be trusted. Dutch PM uses three major discursive strategies to articulate distrust: *stupefying* (“if people are so stupid to sit in a full tram <...>” (08-05-2020), *infantilizing* (“We are not a playground” (08-05-2020) and *shaming* ([people who keep insufficient distance in shops, spit] “Really asocial and very unacceptable” (27-03-2020). (2) Speaking of sociotypes, Rutte contrasts (potentially disobedient) *young people* with (vulnerable) *old people*: “There are often youngsters, who are saying: well, we cannot get sick. Nonsense <...> [and] they still can transmit the disease to someone, who is vulnerable or who is older” (03-04-2020). Stylistically, Rutte stylistically chooses to use coarse language while describing potentially disobedient youth, e.g., “ten youngsters in Ter Aar who were sitting in a booze-bar [“zuipkeet”] and <...> who literally told to the police ‘corona measures do not apply to us’” (03-04-2020); “I-don’t-give-a-shit-about-corona” parties [“schijt-aan-corona-feestjes”]” (23-03-2020). Finally, (3) other *nation-states* are also not trustworthy. Although Rutte frames the Netherlands as a European country (“Our approach is very comparable to the surrounding countries <...> this is what we do with the whole Europe” (31-03-2020)), the European solidarity discursively crumbles (“solidarity and Europe and etcetera aside” (20-05-2020)), once economic questions are at stake. Also adversity is triggered once Rutte addresses the request to Germans and Belgians not to enter the Netherlands: “And we are also going to tell to these countries via social media: *bleib zu Hause, rester à la maison*, stay home” (02-04-2020).

### 5.3.2 Argumentative characteristics of crisis management

Rutte’s utterances on trust, with a “healthy common-sense” at the core of it, is embedded in the overall “togetherness” narrative (e.g., “we all understand that we must do that together” (31-03-2020), which, in turn, is subjugated to a *managerial* discourse, since the major goal is to “control” the virus: “Keep up. Because only together we will get corona under control” (15-04-2020). Various rhetorical devices, including metaphors, are employed here, e.g., “There is no road, there is no TomTom, which tells us what the next street exactly is. We are driving from sight” (21-04-2020). All in all, Rutte uses pragmatic and paternalistic rhetorical style, and often opts for arguments *ad verecundiam* (when referring to “facts” determined by medical expertise) and symptomatic argumentation scheme (when pointing to democracy as an important premise).

**Table 1 - The key findings of (dis)trust articulations in PMs speeches**

<i>Dimensions</i>	<i>Hungary</i>	<i>Lithuania</i>	<i>The Netherlands</i>
Use of “trust” term	-Rare [between PM and the people; peoples’ trust in the PM]	-Rare [trust in medical staff]	-Yes [between citizens and government; PM’s trust in people]
Key “trust” leitmotif	-Loyalty	-Unity	-Agreement
Evoking peoples’ trust in government	-Evoking trust in PM via reasoning PM’s knowledgeability, experience, being in control	-By stating government’s effort and reasons when managing the crisis	-Mutual agreement and pragmatic rationality -Reasonable, cooperative compliance of people
Articulation of government’s distrust in people	-Discourse of militarism & conspiracy	-Focus on control measures -Unity in obedience	[Difficult to trace explicit articulation of distrust]
Image of “Us”	-Government in PM’s persona (“Me”/“I”) -Society -Nation	-Lithuanian people -The Baltic states	-Pragmatic Dutch people -Liberal democracy
Image of internal “Them”	-Communists -Sociotypes of young and elderly people	-Returning Lithuanian emigrants -Sociotype of elderly people	-Non-pragmatic Dutch people -Sociotype of young people
Image of external “Them”	-Migrants -Brussels -G. Soros -The virus	-Most affected European countries (e.g. Italy)	-Other nation-states (e.g. Germany, Belgium)
Argumentative characteristics	-Dismissal of debate and critical discourse -Militarist and force rhetoric	-Lack of critical questions space -Discursive tactics of pleading, preaching, and threatening	-Managerial discourse -Pragmatism and mutual agreement rather than control discourse (control of virus, not people)

**Source:** Composed by the authors

## 6. Conclusion and discussion

Employing discourse analysis, we attempted to trace explicit and implicit articulations of (dis)trust in the public communication of PMs of three European countries in the context of COVID-19 crisis: Hungary, Lithuania and the Netherlands. Empirical findings reveal that PMs do not use the concept “trust” often. When used, it is stressed in pleading to trust the government and experts (primarily medical personnel). There are also calls for a mutual trust between the government and the people (Hungary, the Netherlands). A direct expression of trust in citizens was identified only in the case of the Netherlands. Typically, mutual trust is articulated in a cluster of conceptually cognate terms: “unity” (Lithuania), “loyalty” (Hungary), “common sense” and “agreement” (the Netherlands).

In their speeches, PMs primarily invoke trust and distrust by discursive constructions of “Us” vs. “Them”. Although all analyzed countries construct an auto-image of their respective *societies*, delineated by state borders, discursive framing diverges immensely. Here we see “Us” primarily as oscillating between a *working-class society* and (nativist, mono-cultural, virile, disciplined) *nation* (Hungary); swinging between *value-impregnated ideal society* and *medical and biological body* to be treated (Lithuania); and weaving a *body to be governed, pragmatic people* with (*liberal*) *democracy* (the Netherlands). PMs target “Them”, either they are old enemies (migrants, political opponents, media, Soros, and Brussels) revealing their “true” virus’ DNR (Hungary); their own returning emigrants discarded as a “non-human” part of the nation (Lithuania); or potentially disobedient and stupid citizens (the Netherlands). Various “Us” attach to the sociotypes of young people – to be cheered (Hungary) or vigilantly watched (the Netherlands) and old people – to be taken care of, albeit for the sake of isolation (Hungary, Lithuania). Arguments from authority (“facts”) are abundant as well as causal argumentation (when relating to political goals and measures). The Hungarian PM is keen to point out *analogies*, while the Dutch PM refers to democracy in *symptomatic* argumentation.

Overall, in the PMs’ speeches (dis)trust is anchored into a “trust-control” continuum. Despite discursive articulation of mutual reciprocity, the Hungarian and Lithuanian PMs directly stress control/sanction measures. The Hungarian PM calls for having a policeman in every hospital, the Lithuanian PM uses a threatening technique (if you do not cooperate, punishment will follow), whereas the Dutch PM is proud of “adult democracy” with no need to have a policeman at each door. A lower focus of control measures indirectly conveys trust in citizens’ commitment to be responsible, while Lithuanian and Hungarian discourse features “trust” via control and citizens’ obedience (thus citizens’ commitment to act for the cause of common good is disregarded or distrusted).

The PMs’ speeches reveal the fragility of European identity and solidarity in the context of the crisis. The Hungarian PM takes a stance of antagonism and superiority, the Lithuanian PM highlights the regional solidarity with other Baltic States and superiority to other European countries, and the Dutch PM stresses the similarity of the Netherlands to the EU, though solidarity withers when economic interests surface.

Our analysis is rich in sparkling discussions on possible pitfalls and vulnerabilities of our (liberal) democracies. First, crisis reveals the necessity and fragility of a *political debate*. In Hungary, political discussions are discarded as harmful to crisis management, which serves as the grounds to expand governmental power; in Lithuania criticism is cut off. Even in the Netherlands, the country with a debate culture, not all the important questions (e.g., on rules, masks) are properly answered. All this highlights the issue of government’s communication and responsibility at times of crisis. Second, governments often invoke national stereotypes as the grounds to justify certain political measures. Thus, we hear of “pragmatic Dutch” or “loyal Hungarians”. But what is “common-sense”? Is “loyalty” not misused? Stereotypes are by definition artefacts, therefore should be critically scrutinized when employed during crises. Third, the argumentation schemes used invite us to pose critical questions, like: Does analogy hold? Is X indeed a symptom of Y? Does

X indeed lead to Y? In regard to trust, these questions invite scrutiny of the argumentative constructions of (dis)trust within democracy, and thereby open up a space to relate emotions and reasons, rather than to assume a dualism between them. Furthermore, it might be that the COVID-19 crisis intensifies and reveals specific power mode workings, which erode democratic arrangements: power directed at governing the “body” (“group immunity”), expansion of informal control mechanisms (e.g., shaming), abuse of democratic vocabulary (the Netherlands); bureaucratic, monological, and impersonal power (Lithuania); and autocratic and militaristic power (Hungary). Finally, our analysis on trust between the government and the people raises important questions about democracy. The Lithuanian case stands out: the Lithuanian PM does not stress trust as a value, even though he mentions other abstract values of a modern society, all wrapped in bureaucratic rhetoric. This brings us back to diverse trust cultures preceding the crisis. A long-lasting lack of a culture of trust in Lithuania is reflected in discursive dismissal of trust, as well as reliance on control and discipline measures rather than cooperation anchored by trust. The cases of Hungary and the Netherlands are also peculiar. Both PMs stress trust between the government and the people, but to different effect. The Dutch PM acknowledges trust as the value of democracy, though he uses it pragmatically, i.e., as the means (and premises in an argument) to secure people’s cooperation with political measures. Embedded in a solid culture of trust, the Netherlands clearly stands out in this regard. The Hungarian PM discursively uses and abuses trust. Resonating the idea of an “echo chamber”, Orbán actively undermines his “enemies” as untrustworthy, and creates his exclusionary vision of reality and “Us”. Even though he positions himself as a trustworthy leader, and supposedly trusts his own people because they are disciplined, precisely this underlying level of discipline cancels trust as such. Even though Hungary entered the crisis having some credit of trust, the PM did not use it as a resource to consolidate society and democracy; conversely, the PM’s discourse reasons the accumulation of power and constructs rifts between “Us” and “Them”. All this raises questions for future research on manipulation of trust, culture of trust and democratic resilience.

Finally, our attempt to empirically grasp articulation of a government’s trust in citizens points to the need to develop a theoretical framework of political trust. We demonstrated that governments’ dispositions towards their citizens in the context of crisis are linked to the style of management as well as the upholding of democratic provisions. Therefore, we suggest to further conceptualize on government’s trust in citizens and incorporate it into current accounts, which mostly focus on citizens’ trust in political institutions. One way to pursue that is to conceptualize the government (political institution) in terms of collective agency and thereby highlight reciprocal commitment constituting a trust relationship.

Our choice to employ a discursive, non-survey empirical approach proved beneficial in grasping the governments’ side in constructing (dis)trust and confirmed the need to broaden the horizons of trust research in the context of crisis (Devine et al., 2020). We invite the application of discourse analysis and other non-survey methods (e.g., digital ethnography) in trust research (e.g., to observe if and how (dis)trust in government is articulated in public discourse on social media). Such novel approaches can highlight the dynamics of (dis)trust between government and citizens in the course of crisis development. Our study was limited to the initial stage of the pandemic, thus it would be interesting to explore how governmental discourse shifts with the next waves of the pandemic. How do people comprehend and react to the most prominent argumentative strategies of government? Most importantly, how does this shape (dis)trust between the government and the people?

## References

- Bauer P. C., M. Freitag (2018), “Measuring Trust”, in E. M. Uslaner (ed.), *The Oxford Handbook of Social and Political Trust*, New York, NY: Oxford University Press, pp. 15-36.
- Beller M., J. Leerssen (eds. 2007), *Imagology. The Cultural Construction and Literary Representation of National Characters. A Critical Survey*, Amsterdam-New York, NY: Editions Rodopi B.V.
- Blair R. A., B. S. Morse, and L. L. Tsai (2017), “Public Health and Public Trust: Survey Evidence from the Ebola Virus Disease Epidemic in Liberia”, *Social Science & Medicine*, 172: 89–97.
- Blomqvist K. (1997), “The Many Faces of Trust”, *Scandinavian Journal of Management*, 13(3): 271-286.
- Braithwaite V., M. Levi (eds. 1998), *Trust and Governance*, New York, NY: Russell Sage Foundation.
- Brandom R. (1994), *Making It Explicit: Reasoning, Representing, and Discursive Commitment*, Cambridge, MA, London, UK: Harvard University Press.
- Catterberg G., A. Moreno (2005), “The Individual Bases of Political Trust: Trends in New and Established Democracies”, *International Journal of Public Opinion Research*, 18(1): 31–48.
- Cook K.S., R. Hardin (2001), “Networks, Norms, and Trustworthiness”, in M. Hechter and K. Dieter-Opps (eds.), *Social Norms*, New York: Russell Sage Foundation, pp. 327-347.
- Devine D., J. Gaskell, W. Jennings, and G. Stoker (2020), “Trust and the Coronavirus Pandemic: What are the Consequences of and for Trust? An Early Review of the Literature”, *Political Studies Review*, 00(0): 1-12.
- Dutilh Novaes C. (2020), “The Role of Trust in Argumentation”, *Informal Logic*, 40(2): 205-236.
- Edelman (2020), *Spring Update: Trust and the COVID-19 Pandemic*, Edelman Trust Barometer 2020. Retrieved August 10, 2020 (<https://www.edelman.com/sites/g/files/aatuss191/files/2020-05/2020%20Edelman%20Trust%20Barometer%20Spring%20Update.pdf>).
- Esaiasson P., J. Sohlberg, M. Ghersetti, and B. Johansson (2020), “How the Coronavirus Crisis Affects Citizen Trust in Institutions and in Unknown Others: Evidence from ‘the Swedish Experiment’”, *European Journal of Political Research*, 2020 Sept ahead of print: 1-13.
- Eurofound (2012), *Third European Quality of Life Survey - Quality of Life in Europe: Impacts of the Crisis*, Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Union.
- Eurofound (2017), *European Quality of Life Survey 2016: Quality of Life, Quality of public Services, and Quality of Society*, Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Union.
- Eurofound (2020a), *Living, Working and COVID-19 First Findings – April 2020*, Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Union.
- Eurofound (2020b), *Living, Working and COVID-19, COVID-19 Series*, Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Union.
- European Commission (2019), *Public Opinion in the European Union, Standard Eurobarometer 92, Autumn 2019* [Annex], European Union, <https://ec.europa.eu/commfrontoffice/publicopinion>
- European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions (2015), *European Quality of Life Time Series, 2007 and 2011: Open Access* [data collection], UK Data Service, SN: 7724, <http://doi.org/10.5255/UKDA-SN-7724-1>
- Foddy M., T. Yamagishi (2009), “Group-Based Trust”, in K.S. Cook and M. Levi (eds.), *Whom Can We Trust?: How Groups, Networks, and Institutions Make Trust*, New York: Russell Sage Foundation, pp. 17-41.

- Gaižauskaitė I. (2019), “Socialinio ir politinio (ne)pasitikėjimo kaita Baltijos šalyse 1990–2018 m.” [= Development of Social and Political (Dis)trust in the Baltic States during 1990-2018], *Lietuvos socialinė raida: Regioniniai socialinės diferenciacijos ypatumai*, 8: 145-166.
- Giddens A. (1990), *The Consequences of Modernity*, Cambridge, UK: Polity Press.
- Habyarimana J., M. Humphreys, D. N. Posner, and J. M. Weinstein (2009), “Coethnicity and Trust”, in K.S. Cook and M. Levi (eds.), *Whom Can We Trust?: How Groups, Networks, and Institutions Make Trust*, New York: Russell Sage Foundation, pp. 42-64.
- Hasel M. C. (2013), “A question of Context: The Influence of Trust on Leadership Effectiveness during Crisis”, *M@n@gement*, 16(3): 264-293.
- Hawley K. (2014), “Trust, Distrust and Commitment”, *Noûs*, 48(1): 1-20.
- Hetherington M. J. (1998), “The Political Relevance of Political Trust”, *The American Political Science Review*, 92(4): 791-808.
- Hetherington M. J., Th. J. Rudolph (2015), *Why Washington Won't Work: Polarization, Political Trust, and the Governing Crisis*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Jennings W., V. Valgardsson, G. Stoker, D. Davine, J. Gaskell, and M. Evans (2020), *Political Trust and the COVID-19 Crisis: Pushing Populism to the Backburner? A Study of Public Opinion in Australia, Italy, the UK and the USA*, TrustGov Project, Democracy 2025.
- Kis J. (2018), “The Puzzle of “Illiberal Democracy”, in M. Ignatieff and S. Roch (eds.), *Rethinking Open Society: New Adversaries and New Opportunities*, Budapest, New York: Central European University Press, pp. 179-193.
- Leerssen J. (2006/2010), *National Thought in Europe. A Cultural History*, Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press.
- Leerssen J. (2016), “Imagology: On Using Ethnicity to Make Sense of the World”, *Iberic@*, 16: 13-31.
- Lenard P. T. (2012), *Trust, Democracy, and Multicultural Challenges*, University Park: Penn State University Press.
- Letki N. (2018), “Trust in New Democratic Regimes”, in E. M. Uslaner (ed.), *The Oxford Handbook of Social and Political Trust*, New York, NY: Oxford University Press, pp. 335-356.
- Levi M., L. Stoker (2000), “Political Trust and Trustworthiness”, *Annual Review of Political Science*, 3: 475-507.
- Lewis J. D., A. Weigert (1985), “Trust as a Social Reality”, *Social Forces*, 63: 967-985.
- Marková I. (2004), “Introduction: Trust/Risk and Trust/Fear”, in I. Marková (ed.), *Trust and Democratic Transition in Post-Communist Europe*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, pp. 1-23.
- Marková, I., P. Linell, and A. Gillespie (2008), “Trust and Distrust in Society”, in I. Marková and A. Gillespie (eds.), *Trust and Distrust: Sociocultural Perspectives*, Charlotte: Information Age Publishing, pp. 3-29.
- Mouffe Ch. (2018), *For a Left Populism*, London, UK: Verso Books.
- Newton K. (2020), “Government Communications, Political Trust and Compliant Social Behaviour: The Politics of Covid-19 in Britain”, *The Political Quarterly*, 91(3): 502-2013.
- Nguyen C. T. (2020), “Echo Chambers and Epistemic Bubbles”, *Episteme*, 17: 141-161.
- Norris P. (ed. 2011), *Democratic Deficit: Critical Citizens Revisited*, Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.
- Schraff D. (2020). “Political Trust during the Covid-19 Pandemic: Rally Around the Flag or Lockdown Effects?”, *European Journal of Political Research*, 2020 Nov ahead of print: 1-11.



- Sniečkutė M. (2020), “Values in Populism and Argumentative Counter-Strategies: The Case of Viktor Orbán”, in I. van der Geest, H. Jansen, and B. van Klink (eds.), *Vox Populis. Populism as a Rhetorical and Democratic Challenge*, Cheltenham, UK, Northampton, MA: Edward Elgar Publishing.
- Schatzki Th., K. Knorr Cetina, and E. von Savigny (eds. 2001), *The Practice Turn in Contemporary Theory*, London, New York: Routledge.
- Sztompka P. (1997), “Trust, Distrust and the Paradox of Democracy”, Wissenschaftszentrum Working paper P97-003, Wissenschaftszentrum Berlin für Sozialforschung (WZB), Berlin.
- Sztompka P. (1999), *Trust: A Sociological Theory*, Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.
- Turper S., K. Aarts (2017), “Political Trust and Sophistication: Taking Measurement Seriously”, *Social Indicators Research*, 130(1): 415–434.
- Van Eemeren F., R. Grootendorst, and F. Snoeck Henkemans (eds. 1996), *Fundamentals of Argumentation Theory. A Handbook of Historical Backgrounds and Contemporary Developments*, Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.
- Van Eemeren F., R. Grootendorst, and F. Snoeck Henkemans (2002), *Argumentation. Analysis, Evaluation, Presentation*. Mahwah, New Jersey, London: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.
- Warren M. (1999), “Democratic Theory and Trust”, in M. Warren (ed.), *Democracy and Trust*, Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, pp. 310-345.

## Appendix

**Table 2 – List of cited empirical data (speech units)**

<i>Date</i>	<i>Country code</i>	<i>Speech unit type</i>	<i>Speech unit title</i>	<i>Speech unit link</i>
13-03-2020	HU	Radio program	Prime Minister Viktor Orbán on the Kossuth Radio programme “Good Morning Hungary”	<a href="https://2015-2019.kormany.hu/en/the-prime-minister/the-prime-minister-s-speeches/prime-minister-viktor-orban-on-the-kossuth-radio-programme-good-mowrning-hungary">https://2015-2019.kormany.hu/en/the-prime-minister/the-prime-minister-s-speeches/prime-minister-viktor-orban-on-the-kossuth-radio-programme-good-mowrning-hungary</a>
20-03-2020	HU	Radio program	Prime Minister Viktor Orbán on the Kossuth Radio programme “Good Morning Hungary”	<a href="https://2015-2019.kormany.hu/en/the-prime-minister/the-prime-minister-s-speeches/prime-minister-viktor-orban-on-the-kossuth-radio-programme-good-morning-hungary-20200320">https://2015-2019.kormany.hu/en/the-prime-minister/the-prime-minister-s-speeches/prime-minister-viktor-orban-on-the-kossuth-radio-programme-good-morning-hungary-20200320</a>
27-03-2020	HU	Radio program	Prime Minister Viktor Orbán on the Kossuth Radio programme “Good Morning Hungary”	<a href="https://2015-2019.kormany.hu/en/the-prime-minister/the-prime-minister-s-speeches/prime-minister-viktor-orban-on-the-kossuth-radio-programme-good-morning-hungary-20200328">https://2015-2019.kormany.hu/en/the-prime-minister/the-prime-minister-s-speeches/prime-minister-viktor-orban-on-the-kossuth-radio-programme-good-morning-hungary-20200328</a>
03-04-2020	HU	Radio program	Prime Minister Viktor Orbán on the Kossuth Radio programme “Good Morning Hungary”	<a href="https://2015-2019.kormany.hu/en/the-prime-minister/the-prime-minister-s-speeches/prime-minister-viktor-orban-on-the-kossuth-radios-programme-good-morning-hungary">https://2015-2019.kormany.hu/en/the-prime-minister/the-prime-minister-s-speeches/prime-minister-viktor-orban-on-the-kossuth-radios-programme-good-morning-hungary</a>
10-04-2020	HU	Radio program	Interview with Prime Minister Viktor Orbán on the Kossuth Radio programme “Good Morning Hungary”	<a href="https://2015-2019.kormany.hu/en/the-prime-minister/the-prime-minister-s-speeches/interview-with-prime-minister-viktor-orban-own-the-kossuth-radio-programme-good-morning-hungary">https://2015-2019.kormany.hu/en/the-prime-minister/the-prime-minister-s-speeches/interview-with-prime-minister-viktor-orban-own-the-kossuth-radio-programme-good-morning-hungary</a>
17-04-2020	HU	Radio program	Interview with Prime Minister Viktor Orbán on the Kossuth Radio programme “Good Morning Hungary”	<a href="https://2015-2019.kormany.hu/en/the-prime-minister/the-prime-minister-s-speeches/interview-with-prime-minister-viktor-orban-on-the-kossuth-radio-programdme-good-morning-hungary">https://2015-2019.kormany.hu/en/the-prime-minister/the-prime-minister-s-speeches/interview-with-prime-minister-viktor-orban-on-the-kossuth-radio-programdme-good-morning-hungary</a>

08-05-2020	HU	Radio program	Prime Minister Viktor Orbán on the Kossuth Radio programme "Good Morning Hungary"	<a href="https://2015-2019.kormany.hu/en/the-prime-minister/the-prime-minister-s-speeches/prime-minister-viktor-orban-on-the-kossuth-radio-programme-good-morning-hungary-20200508">https://2015-2019.kormany.hu/en/the-prime-minister/the-prime-minister-s-speeches/prime-minister-viktor-orban-on-the-kossuth-radio-programme-good-morning-hungary-20200508</a>
15-05-2020	HU	Radio program	Prime Minister Viktor Orbán on the Kossuth Radio programme "Good Morning Hungary"	<a href="https://2015-2019.kormany.hu/en/the-prime-minister/the-prime-minister-s-speeches/prime-minister-viktor-orban-on-the-kossuth-radio-programme-good-morning-hungary-2020-05-15">https://2015-2019.kormany.hu/en/the-prime-minister/the-prime-minister-s-speeches/prime-minister-viktor-orban-on-the-kossuth-radio-programme-good-morning-hungary-2020-05-15</a>
29-05-2020	HU	Radio program	Prime Minister Viktor Orbán on the Kossuth Radio programme "Good Morning Hungary"	<a href="https://2015-2019.kormany.hu/en/the-prime-minister/the-prime-minister-s-speeches/prime-minister-viktor-orban-on-the-kossuth-radio-programme-good-morni2nq-hungary">https://2015-2019.kormany.hu/en/the-prime-minister/the-prime-minister-s-speeches/prime-minister-viktor-orban-on-the-kossuth-radio-programme-good-morni2nq-hungary</a>
12-03-2020	LT	Appeal	Ministro Pirmininko S. Skvernelio kreipimasis	<a href="http://ministraspirmininkas.lrv.lt-it-naujienos-ministro-pirmininko-s-skvernelio-kreipimasis">http://ministraspirmininkas.lrv.lt-it-naujienos-ministro-pirmininko-s-skvernelio-kreipimasis</a>
14-03-2020	LT	Press conference	Premjeras S. Skvernelis dalyvavo spaudos konferencijoje dėl karantino paskelbimo (Premjero S. Skvernelio komentarai žiniasklaidai po Vyriausybės posėdžio dėl karantino visoje Lietuvos Respublikos teritorijoje paskelbimo)	<a href="http://ministraspirmininkas.lrv.lt-it-video-premjeras-s-skvernelis-dalyvavo-spaudos-konferencijoje-del-karantino-paskelbimo">http://ministraspirmininkas.lrv.lt-it-video-premjeras-s-skvernelis-dalyvavo-spaudos-konferencijoje-del-karantino-paskelbimo</a>
16-03-2020	LT	Press conference	Premjeras S. Skvernelis dalyvavo spaudos konferencijoje po Vyriausybės posėdžio ir pasitarimo	<a href="http://ministraspirmininkas.lrv.lt-it-video-premjeras-s-skvernelis-dalyvavo-spaudos-konferencijoje-po-vyriausybes-posedzio-ir-pasitarimo-1">http://ministraspirmininkas.lrv.lt-it-video-premjeras-s-skvernelis-dalyvavo-spaudos-konferencijoje-po-vyriausybes-posedzio-ir-pasitarimo-1</a>
25-03-2020	LT	Press conference	Premjeras S. Skvernelis dalyvavo spaudos konferencijoje po Vyriausybės posėdžio	<a href="http://ministraspirmininkas.lrv.lt-it-video-premjeras-s-skvernelis-dalyvavo-spaudos-konferencijoje-po-vyriausybes-posedzio-20">http://ministraspirmininkas.lrv.lt-it-video-premjeras-s-skvernelis-dalyvavo-spaudos-konferencijoje-po-vyriausybes-posedzio-20</a>
01-04-2020	LT	Press conference	Premjeras S. Skvernelis dalyvavo nuotolinėje spaudos konferencijoje po Vyriausybės posėdžio	<a href="http://ministraspirmininkas.lrv.lt-it-video-premjeras-s-skvernelis-dalyvavo-nuotolineje-spaudos-konferencijoje-po-vyriausybes-posedzio">http://ministraspirmininkas.lrv.lt-it-video-premjeras-s-skvernelis-dalyvavo-nuotolineje-spaudos-konferencijoje-po-vyriausybes-posedzio</a>
02-04-2020	LT	Appeal	Premjero Sauliaus Skvernelio kreipimasis į Lietuvos senjorus	<a href="http://ministraspirmininkas.lrv.lt-it-naujienos-premjero-sauliaus-skvernelio-kreipimasis-i-lietuvos-senjorus">http://ministraspirmininkas.lrv.lt-it-naujienos-premjero-sauliaus-skvernelio-kreipimasis-i-lietuvos-senjorus</a>
08-04-2020	LT	Official information	Karantinas pratęstas dar dviem savaitėms, Velykų savaitgaliui – griežtesni apribojimai	<a href="http://ministraspirmininkas.lrv.lt-it-naujienos-karantinas-pratestas-dar-dviem-savaitems-velyku-savaitgaliui-grieztesni-apribojimai">http://ministraspirmininkas.lrv.lt-it-naujienos-karantinas-pratestas-dar-dviem-savaitems-velyku-savaitgaliui-grieztesni-apribojimai</a>
12-04-2020	LT	Greeting	Premjeras: Velykų proga artimus ir brangius žmones apkabinkime savo širdyse	<a href="http://ministraspirmininkas.lrv.lt-it-naujienos-premjeras-velyku-proga-artimus-ir-brangius-zmones-apkabinkime-savo-sirdyse">http://ministraspirmininkas.lrv.lt-it-naujienos-premjeras-velyku-proga-artimus-ir-brangius-zmones-apkabinkime-savo-sirdyse</a>
27-04-2020	LT	Greeting	Premjeras dėkoja šalies medikams už pasiaukojamą darbą	<a href="http://ministraspirmininkas.lrv.lt-it-naujienos-premjeras-dekoja-salies-medikams-uz-pasiaukojama-darba">http://ministraspirmininkas.lrv.lt-it-naujienos-premjeras-dekoja-salies-medikams-uz-pasiaukojama-darba</a>
01-05-2020	LT	Greeting	Premjeras sveikina visus dirbančius Lietuvos žmones	<a href="https://ministraspirmininkas.lrv.lt-it-naujienos-premjeras-sveikina-visus-dirbancius-lietuvos-zmones">https://ministraspirmininkas.lrv.lt-it-naujienos-premjeras-sveikina-visus-dirbancius-lietuvos-zmones</a>
09-03-2020	NL	Press conference	Letterlijke tekst persconferentie minister-president Mark Rutte en directeur Jaap van Dissel (Centrum	<a href="https://www.rijksoverheid.nl-regering-bewindspersonen-mark-rutte-documenten-mediateksten-2020-03-09-letterlijke-tekst-persconferentie-minister-president-mark-rutte-en-directeur-jaap-van-dissel-rivm-na-afloop-van-crisisberaad-kabinet">https://www.rijksoverheid.nl-regering-bewindspersonen-mark-rutte-documenten-mediateksten-2020-03-09-letterlijke-tekst-persconferentie-minister-president-mark-rutte-en-directeur-jaap-van-dissel-rivm-na-afloop-van-crisisberaad-kabinet</a>

			Infectieziektebestrijding) na afloop van crisisberaad kabinet	
12-03-2020	NL	Press conference	Letterlijke tekst persconferentie minister-president Rutte en minister Bruins naar aanleiding van de maatregelen tegen verspreiding coronavirus in Nederland	<a href="https://www.rijksoverheid.nl-documenten-mediateksten-2020-03-12-persconferentie-minister-president-rutte-en-minister-bruins-naar-aanleiding-van-de-maatregelen-tegen-verspreiding-coronavirus-in-nederland">https://www.rijksoverheid.nl-documenten-mediateksten-2020-03-12-persconferentie-minister-president-rutte-en-minister-bruins-naar-aanleiding-van-de-maatregelen-tegen-verspreiding-coronavirus-in-nederland</a>
13-03-2020	NL	Press conference	Letterlijke tekst persconferentie na ministerraad 13 maart 2020	<a href="https://www.rijksoverheid.nl-documenten-mediateksten-2020-03-13-letterlijke-tekst-persconferentie-na-ministerraad-13-maart-2020">https://www.rijksoverheid.nl-documenten-mediateksten-2020-03-13-letterlijke-tekst-persconferentie-na-ministerraad-13-maart-2020</a>
16-03-2020	NL	Appeal	TV-toespraak van minister-president Mark Rutte (16-03-2020)	<a href="https://www.rijksoverheid.nl-regering-bewindspersonen-mark-rutte-documenten-toespraken-2020-03-16-tv-toespraak-van-minister-president-mark-rutte">https://www.rijksoverheid.nl-regering-bewindspersonen-mark-rutte-documenten-toespraken-2020-03-16-tv-toespraak-van-minister-president-mark-rutte</a>
20-03-2020	NL	Press conference	Letterlijke tekst persconferentie na ministerraad 20 maart 2020	<a href="https://www.rijksoverheid.nl-documenten-mediateksten-2020-03-20-letterlijke-tekst-persconferentie-na-ministerraad-20-maart-2020">https://www.rijksoverheid.nl-documenten-mediateksten-2020-03-20-letterlijke-tekst-persconferentie-na-ministerraad-20-maart-2020</a>
23-03-2020	NL	Press conference	Letterlijke tekst persconferentie minister-president Rutte, ministers Grapperhaus, De Jonge en Van Rijn over aangescherpte maatregelen coronaviru	<a href="https://www.rijksoverheid.nl-documenten-mediateksten-2020-03-23-persconferentie-minister-president-rutte-ministers-grapperhaus-de-jonge-en-van-rijn-over-aangescherpte-maatregelen-coronavirus">https://www.rijksoverheid.nl-documenten-mediateksten-2020-03-23-persconferentie-minister-president-rutte-ministers-grapperhaus-de-jonge-en-van-rijn-over-aangescherpte-maatregelen-coronavirus</a>
27-03-2020	NL	Press conference	Letterlijke tekst persconferentie na ministerraad 27 maart 2020	<a href="https://www.rijksoverheid.nl-documenten-mediateksten-2020-03-27-letterlijke-tekst-persconferentie-na-ministerraad-27-maart-2020">https://www.rijksoverheid.nl-documenten-mediateksten-2020-03-27-letterlijke-tekst-persconferentie-na-ministerraad-27-maart-2020</a>
31-03-2020	NL	Press conference	Letterlijke tekst persconferentie minister-president Rutte en minister De Jonge over verlenging coronamaatregelen	<a href="https://www.rijksoverheid.nl-documenten-mediateksten-2020-03-31-persconferentie-minister-president-rutte-en-minister-de-jonge-over-verlenging-coronamaatregelen">https://www.rijksoverheid.nl-documenten-mediateksten-2020-03-31-persconferentie-minister-president-rutte-en-minister-de-jonge-over-verlenging-coronamaatregelen</a>
02-04-2020	NL	Press conference	Letterlijke tekst persconferentie minister-president Rutte en minister De Jonge na afloop van crisisberaad kabinet	<a href="https://www.rijksoverheid.nl-documenten-mediateksten-2020-04-02-letterlijke-tekst-persconferentie-minister-president-rutte-en-minister-de-jonge-na-afloop-van-crisisberaad-kabinet">https://www.rijksoverheid.nl-documenten-mediateksten-2020-04-02-letterlijke-tekst-persconferentie-minister-president-rutte-en-minister-de-jonge-na-afloop-van-crisisberaad-kabinet</a>
03-04-2020	NL	Press conference	Letterlijke tekst persconferentie na ministerraad 3 april 2020	<a href="https://www.rijksoverheid.nl-documenten-mediateksten-2020-04-03-letterlijke-tekst-persconferentie-na-ministerraad-3-april-2020">https://www.rijksoverheid.nl-documenten-mediateksten-2020-04-03-letterlijke-tekst-persconferentie-na-ministerraad-3-april-2020</a>
15-04-2020	NL	Press conference	Letterlijke tekst persconferentie minister-president Rutte en minister De Jonge na afloop van crisisberaad kabinet (15-4-2020)	<a href="https://www.rijksoverheid.nl-documenten-mediateksten-2020-04-15-letterlijke-tekst-persconferentie-minister-president-rutte-en-minister-de-jonge-na-afloop-van-crisisberaad-kabinet">https://www.rijksoverheid.nl-documenten-mediateksten-2020-04-15-letterlijke-tekst-persconferentie-minister-president-rutte-en-minister-de-jonge-na-afloop-van-crisisberaad-kabinet</a>
17-04-2020	NL	Press conference	Letterlijke tekst persconferentie na ministerraad 17 april 2020	<a href="https://www.rijksoverheid.nl-documenten-mediateksten-2020-04-17-letterlijke-tekst-persconferentie-na-ministerraad-17-april-2020">https://www.rijksoverheid.nl-documenten-mediateksten-2020-04-17-letterlijke-tekst-persconferentie-na-ministerraad-17-april-2020</a>
21-04-2020	NL	Press conference	Letterlijke tekst persconferentie minister-president Mark Rutte en directeur Jaap van Dissel (Centrum	<a href="https://www.rijksoverheid.nl-documenten-mediateksten-2020-04-21-letterlijke-tekst-persconferentie-minister-president-mark-rutte-en-directeur-jaap-van-dissel-centrum">https://www.rijksoverheid.nl-documenten-mediateksten-2020-04-21-letterlijke-tekst-persconferentie-minister-president-mark-rutte-en-directeur-jaap-van-dissel-centrum</a>

			Infectieziektebestrijding) na afloop van crisisberaad kabinet	<a href="#">infectieziektebestrijding-na-afloop-van-crisisberaad-kabinet</a>
01-05-2020	NL	Press conference	Letterlijke tekst persconferentie na ministerraad 1 mei 2020	<a href="https://www.rijksoverheid.nl/documenten-mediateksten-2020-05-01-letterlijke-tekst-persconferentie-na-ministerraad-1-mei-2020">https://www.rijksoverheid.nl/documenten-mediateksten-2020-05-01-letterlijke-tekst-persconferentie-na-ministerraad-1-mei-2020</a>
06-05-2020	NL	Press conference	Letterlijke tekst persconferentie minister-president Rutte en minister De Jonge na afloop van crisisberaad kabinet	<a href="https://www.rijksoverheid.nl/documenten-mediateksten-2020-05-06-letterlijke-tekst-persconferentie-minister-president-rutte-en-minister-de-jonge-na-afloop-van-crisisberaad-kabinet">https://www.rijksoverheid.nl/documenten-mediateksten-2020-05-06-letterlijke-tekst-persconferentie-minister-president-rutte-en-minister-de-jonge-na-afloop-van-crisisberaad-kabinet</a>
08-05-2020	NL	Press conference	Letterlijke tekst persconferentie na ministerraad 8 mei 2020	<a href="https://www.rijksoverheid.nl/documenten-mediateksten-2020-05-08-letterlijke-tekst-persconferentie-na-ministerraad-8-mei-2020">https://www.rijksoverheid.nl/documenten-mediateksten-2020-05-08-letterlijke-tekst-persconferentie-na-ministerraad-8-mei-2020</a>
15-05-2020	NL	Press conference	Letterlijke tekst persconferentie na ministerraad 15 mei 2020	<a href="https://www.rijksoverheid.nl/documenten-mediateksten-2020-05-15-letterlijke-tekst-persconferentie-na-ministerraad-15-mei-2020">https://www.rijksoverheid.nl/documenten-mediateksten-2020-05-15-letterlijke-tekst-persconferentie-na-ministerraad-15-mei-2020</a>
19-05-2020	NL	Press conference	Letterlijke tekst persconferentie minister-president Rutte en minister De Jonge na afloop van crisisberaad kabinet	<a href="https://www.rijksoverheid.nl/documenten-mediateksten-2020-05-19-letterlijke-tekst-persconferentie-minister-president-rutte-en-minister-de-jonge-na-afloop-van-crisisberaad-kabinet">https://www.rijksoverheid.nl/documenten-mediateksten-2020-05-19-letterlijke-tekst-persconferentie-minister-president-rutte-en-minister-de-jonge-na-afloop-van-crisisberaad-kabinet</a>
20-05-2020	NL	Press conference	Letterlijke tekst persconferentie na ministerraad 20 mei 2020	<a href="https://www.rijksoverheid.nl/documenten-mediateksten-2020-05-20-letterlijke-tekst-persconferentie-na-ministerraad-20-mei-2020">https://www.rijksoverheid.nl/documenten-mediateksten-2020-05-20-letterlijke-tekst-persconferentie-na-ministerraad-20-mei-2020</a>
27-05-2020	NL	Press conference	Letterlijke tekst persconferentie minister-president Rutte en minister De Jonge na afloop van crisisberaad kabinet	<a href="https://www.rijksoverheid.nl/documenten-mediateksten-2020-05-27-letterlijke-tekst-persconferentie-minister-president-rutte-en-minister-de-jonge-na-afloop-van-crisisberaad-kabinet">https://www.rijksoverheid.nl/documenten-mediateksten-2020-05-27-letterlijke-tekst-persconferentie-minister-president-rutte-en-minister-de-jonge-na-afloop-van-crisisberaad-kabinet</a>
29-05-2020	NL	Press conference	Letterlijke tekst persconferentie na ministerraad 29 mei 2020	<a href="https://www.rijksoverheid.nl/documenten-mediateksten-2020-05-29-letterlijke-tekst-persconferentie-na-ministerraad-29-mei-2020">https://www.rijksoverheid.nl/documenten-mediateksten-2020-05-29-letterlijke-tekst-persconferentie-na-ministerraad-29-mei-2020</a>

Source: composed by the authors

## Notes on Contributors

**Marija Sniečkutė**, European studies, University of Amsterdam, Kloveniersburgwal 48, 1012 CX Amsterdam, the Netherlands, [m.snieckute@uva.nl](mailto:m.snieckute@uva.nl). She is a PhD Researcher at the department of European Studies, University of Amsterdam, and has recently worked as a Research Assistant at the University of Groningen for the project EXCEPTIUS: Exceptional powers in time of Sars-CoV crisis. She has an academic background in Argumentation and Philosophy (University of Amsterdam), Sociology and Criminology (Vilnius University). Sniečkutė is an affiliate of the Amsterdam Centre for European Studies and a member of the Huizinga Institute. Her research focuses on nationalism, populism, political communication, cultural history, and discourse analysis. Lately, she wrote articles for the Encyclopedia of Romantic Nationalism in Europe (2018) and a chapter “Values in Populism and Argumentative Counter-Strategies: the Case of Viktor Orbán” in *Vox Populi: Populism as a Rhetorical and Democratic Challenge* (2020).

**Inga Gaižauskatė**, A. Goštauto str. 9, LT-01108, Vilnius, Lithuania, [inga.gaizauskaite@lsc.lt](mailto:inga.gaizauskaite@lsc.lt). She is a sociologist, currently working as a Junior Researcher in the Institute of Sociology at the Lithuanian Centre for Social Sciences, Lithuania. Her main areas of research interests include democratization, social and

political trust, intergenerational relationships as well as developments of social research methodology. She is a co-author of two handbooks on research methodology for university students and a number of scientific publications in the fields of her research interests. Since 2018, she is a board member of International Sociological Association's RC33 "Logic and Methodology in Sociology". Gaižauskaitė is also engaged as a promoter of academic integrity and currently is a board member of European Network for Academic Integrity (ENAI).