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Metaphoricity of the Opinions of the CJEU Advocates General

Thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of requirements for the degree of MA in Language for
Specific (Legal) Purposes

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Vilnius

2026

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Abstract

The present study investigates the use of metaphorical language in a specific institutional genre, the opinion of Advocate General at the Court of Justice of the European Union (CJEU). The current study examines the source domains through which the target domain of LAW is metaphorically constructed in this institutional context. Based upon Conceptual Metaphor Theory and further works on metaphor, metaphor identification procedure, and metaphorical patterns along with the scenario approach, the study analysed twelve CJEU Advocate General opinions on EU asylum and migration from 2013 until 2025. Frequency counts using AntConc were performed to identify the most frequent words, the search results were then used to group metaphors by their respective source domains. As a result of the analysis, five major source domains emerged: OBJECT, CONTAINER, SPACE, CONFLICT and SPORT. Of them, the OBJECT source domain was found to be the most productive, accounting for approximately a third of all metaphorical expressions. In addition to the major source domains, four minor source domains of BUILDING, POWER, ENTERTAINMENT and LIQUID were also identified. Similarly to previous works, the OBJECT source domain was the most common source domain. A difference from earlier works was noted that personification is not evident in this paper compared to earlier works. This is likely due to the genre of Advocate General opinions, which uses highly formal and institutional language.

Keywords: metaphor, source domain, legal discourse, Advocate General, opinion, metaphorical patterns.

Anotacija

Šiame darbe nagrinėjamas metaforinės kalbos vartojimas konkrečiame instituciniame žanre – Europos Sąjungos Teisingumo Teismo (ESTT) generalinių advokatų nuomonėse. Šiame tyrime nagrinėjamos šaltinio sritys (*source domains*), per kurias šiame instituciniame kontekste metaforiškai konstruojama paskirties sritis (*target domain*) TEISĖ. Remiantis konceptualiosios metaforos teorija ir tolesniais darbais apie metaforą, metaforų identifikavimo procedūrą (MIP) bei metaforinius junginius kartu su scenarijų metodu, tyrime buvo analizuotos dvylika ES Teisingumo Teismo generalinio advokato nuomonių dėl ES prieglobsčio ir migracijos nuo 2013 iki 2025 metų. Siekiant nustatyti dažniausiai pasikartojančius žodžius, buvo atliktas dažnio skaičiavimas naudojant „AntConc“ programą, o paieškos rezultatai buvo panaudoti metaforoms sugrupuoti pagal atitinkamas šaltinio sritis. Analizės rezultate išryškėjo penkios pagrindinės šaltinio sritys: OBJEKTAS, KONTEINERIS, ERDVĖ, KONFLIKTAS ir SPORTAS. Iš jų OBJEKTO šaltinio sritis buvo didžiausia, sudaranti maždaug trečdalį visų metaforinių pasakymų. Be pagrindinių šaltinių sričių, taip pat buvo nustatytos keturios mažesnės šaltinių sritys: STATINYS, GALIA, PRAMOGOS ir SKYSTIS. Kaip ir ankstesniuose darbuose, OBJEKTO šaltinio sritis buvo dažniausia. Buvo pastebėtas ir skirtumas nuo ankstesnių darbų. Šiame darbe, palyginti su ankstesniais darbais, personifikacija nėra akivaizdi. Tai greičiausiai lemia generalinių advokatų nuomonių žanras, kuriame naudojama labai formali ir institucinė kalba.

Raktažodžiai: metafora, šaltinio sritis, teisinis diskursas, generalinis advokatas, nuomonė, metaforiniai modeliai

1. Introduction

Legal discourse and law are integrally tied together. Legal discourse is used to create, interpret and contest legal action (Tiersma, 1999: 30). While the language employed in legal texts does not only describe the legal reality of the matter it also constructs it (Durant & Leung, 2016: 10). Thus, it is no surprise that legal language has gotten the attention from scholars across linguistic disciplines, discourse analysis and legal theory. In addition, the study of metaphor has become a prolific area of investigation regarding legal discourse. Specifically, studies have shown that abstract legal concepts that form the foundation of legal reasoning such as rights, justice, authority are typically understood and communicated by legal professionals through reference to concrete physical experiences (Winter, 2001: 1610-1611).

This paper will examine the metaphoricity of a specific legal genre, which has been relatively underexplored. The opinions of the Advocates General (AGs) of the Court of Justice of the European Union (CJEU). Advocate General opinions are not legally binding, yet they are very influential legal texts, produced by high-level legal advisors to the CJEU with the purpose of providing an independent and rationalised recommendations about the cases brought before the CJEU (European Parliament, 2019). Because of their ability to have several functions such as combining the analytical precision of judicial writing with the persuasive and argumentative aspects of scholarly commentaries, AG opinions offer a unique opportunity for studying metaphorical language in institutional legal discourse (Bobek, 2012). Though the growing research on metaphor in legal discourse across a range of genres, such as court judgements, legislative texts, academic legal writing and educational legal documents (Šeškauskienė, 2022), the genre of AG opinions remains quite an unexplored territory in metaphor research.

The present study aims to address this gap by providing a corpus-based analysis of the metaphorical patterns found in twelve AG opinions on EU migration and asylum cases, covering the period from 2013 to 2025 as it encompasses the period from before the migrant crisis, during it and after the effects, as well as the policies implemented during the crisis (Zaun, 2025: 5). It is important to note that in this study, the corpus consists of opinions focusing on migration and asylum cases, the focus of this study is not on migration-specific vocabulary. Migration cases provide institutional context for the analysis rather than its analytical content. The findings of this study demonstrate not only the specific field of EU migration law but the broader perspective on how legal concepts are metaphorically arranged in legal discourse.

The study is grounded in Conceptual Metaphor Theory (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980/2003) and draws on the Metaphor Identification Procedure (MIP) (Pragglejaz Group, 2007) for the systematic identification of metaphorical expressions. The analysis is further guided by the notions of

metaphorical pattern (Stefanowitsch, 2006) and scenario (Musolff, 2016), and builds on the methodological framework developed by Šeškauskienė (2026) for the corpus-based study of metaphor in legal discourse. The corpus was analysed using AntConc (Anthony, 2023), with metaphorical expressions grouped according to their source domains and organised into scenarios within the domains. The present study is shaped by two research questions:

1. What metaphorical patterns are identified in Advocate General opinions, and which source domains are most productively employed in the selected corpus of legal discourse?
2. How do the metaphorical patterns found in Advocate General opinions compare to those identified in other legal genres?

The structure of this paper is as follows. The Literature Review discusses previous research concerning metaphor theory and its development, metaphor in legal and judicial discourse, the variety of legal discourse in terms of genre, Advocate General opinion as a distinct legal-discursive genre, and migration as both a discursive and legal field. The Data & Methodology chapter overviews the corpus, outlines the theoretical bases of the analysis, and describes the process followed when analysing the data. The Results & Discussion chapter analyses the metaphorical patterns identified within the corpus, sorted by source domain together with comparisons to findings in other legal genres. Lastly, the Conclusion summarizes the major results, comments on their implication for understanding metaphor in legal discourse, as well as suggests ideas for future research.

2. Literature review

The literature review assembles research on metaphor and legal discourse to establish theoretical foundations on how metaphor operates in Advocate General opinions of the Court of Justice of the European Union. By investigating the existing work on conceptual approaches to metaphor, on the discursive features of legal and judicial texts, and on the ways, migration is portrayed in European legal contexts, this literature review aids in understanding how metaphors shape and reflect the ways in which Advocate General conceptualise movement, border, and belonging in European Union law. The literature review includes metaphor and its development, metaphor in legal judicial discourse, legal discourse and genres, Advocate General opinions as a legal-discursive genre, migration as a legal and discursively constructed field, and migration in EU legal discourse.

2.1 Conceptual Metaphor Theory and its development

In the past metaphor was commonly approached as a figure of speech that enhances a text; however, scholars have approached metaphor from a different point of view and defined the ubiquitous nature of it. One of the many and highly influential definition of metaphor as a concept was executed by Lakoff & Johnson (1980/2003), who explained how people perceive abstract concepts through metaphorical aligning of SOURCE and TARGET domains, or, in other words, Conceptual Metaphor Theory (CMT). An example of this can be given through the metaphor ARGUMENT IS WAR which can be observed through the metaphorical expressions such as his *criticisms were right on target*, *he shot down all of my arguments*, etc. (ibid. p. 4). The example illustrates the scholars' argument that everyday language systematically pushes towards a thought process which people associate specific themes with, such as an argument can be seen as a battle between people in conversation.

Following this foundational scope, Kövecses (2002) refined CMT by emphasizing that conceptual metaphors, the underlying mental frameworks through which we understand one concept in terms of another are not random features of language, yet they are a systematic and culturally ingrained way of understanding the world. Furthermore, the scholar examines how culture shapes specific linguistic realizations and salience of metaphors. For example, Kövecses compared the way English and Hungarian express anger. Both languages express anger drawing on the conceptual metaphors THE BODY IS A CONTAINER FOR EMOTION and ANGER IS FIRE (Kövecses 2002: 184-185); however, they do it differently. While English generally refers to bodily containment in more general terms such as *to lose one's head*, Hungarian details this metaphor using the head as a specific container for the brain and the burning substance of anger (Kövecses 2002: 184-185). The comparison illustrates how shared conceptual metaphors can be expressed differently across languages, reflecting cultural variation in metaphorical expression.

Since the research cited above, metaphor has been researched in different discourses. Metaphor has been found in specialized language and types of discourse. For example, in medical discourse, metaphors expressing battle and journey have been found to shape the experience of illness in ways that impact patient understanding and general clinical communication (Semino, 2008). In scientific discourse, Steen et al. (2010) have demonstrated through a very large-scale corpus study that academic discourse is amongst one of the most metaphorically heavy registers of language with nearly one out of every six lexical units being related to metaphors meaning that it challenged a long-held assumption that formal or specialized language is primarily literal. In political discourse, Musolff (2016) has shown how metaphorical scenarios shape political argumentation and influence the public perception of complex topics such as European integration. Similarly, Charteris-Black (2004) used corpus analysis to show how politicians strategically apply metaphor to persuade and influence their audience. Koller (2004) similarly demonstrates how metaphor creates gender and power dynamics in media portrayals of corporations. Additionally, Cibulskienė, Šeškauskienė, Masiulionytė (2024) examine how political events are conveyed using entertainment scenarios across different cultures. Furthermore, Šeškauskienė and Urbonaitė (2018) show that much of the terminology used in legal writing in Lithuania is derived from metaphoric associations with physical experience to provide a basis for abstract legal concepts. Overall, the abundance of research certifies that metaphor is not simply an incidental or aesthetic aspect of language but rather a central cognitive instrument that functions across all discourses, forming how speakers and writers understand their surroundings. Having established that conceptual metaphors are both systematic and culturally shaped, the next section of this review focuses on how metaphor operates in legal discourse, exploring how institutional and judicial texts employ metaphor in arguments, structure reasoning and convey legal meaning and values.

2.2 Metaphor in Legal and Judicial Discourse

Legal discourse is often perceived as remarkably precise, formal and literal. Studies indicate that metaphor plays a crucial role in legal reasoning and argumentation, influencing the comprehension, interpretation, and communication of abstract legal concepts (Šeškauskienė & Urbonaitė, 2018; Winter, 2001). In the context of the European Union law, especially in Advocate General opinions, metaphor serves to effectively convey intricate ideas regarding migration, rights, and responsibilities (Winter, 2001; Šeškauskienė, 2022), while also reflecting the linguistic and cultural backgrounds of the legal professionals themselves (Goodrich, 1987; van Leeuwen & Wodak, 1999). Šeškauskienė & Urbonaitė (2018:12) illustrate that legal terms such as *deprivation of liberty* or *imprisonment* are rooted in metaphor, shaping abstract ideas about rights and obligations through images that evoke restriction and containment. Similarly, Winter (2001:1610) explains that legal reasoning relies on

metaphorical structures that organize normative and procedural thinking. In the context of migration, these structures can show state responsibilities, migrants and human rights in ways that shape both interpretation and argumentation.

Research has been conducted examining metaphor in various forms of legal discourse from several disciplines across multiple languages, including English, Lithuanian, and other European languages illustrating both cross-disciplinary similarity and specificity. Campos-Pardillos (2022: 161) finds that English-speaking judges apply space metaphors such as *uplifting the sentence*. Urbonaitė (2022: 81-84) identifies direct metaphors used in TED presentations on crime and criminal justice to convey legal concepts and get emotional engagement. Šeškauskienė (2022: 114-117) finds that spatial expressions of verticality *under the law* realize the conceptual metaphor AUTHORITY IS UP. These studies demonstrate that metaphor is an integral part of legal discourse, with specific realisations varying systematically across languages, genres and institutional environments.

The need for a broader exploration of the specific discursive contexts in which the current study is located, arises from the understanding of both the central role and wide-ranging variability of metaphor across all legal discourse. Given that the present study is focused on asylum and migration in Advocate General opinions, they relate to EU law the following segment provides context on research around migration law and metaphors in it. Migration law frequently uses metaphors of movement and impact, such as viewing migration as a flow, burden or threat (Cunningham-Parmeter 2011; Crawley & Blitz 2018). Cunningham-Parmeter (2011) highlights metaphors like immigration as an invasion and immigrants as flood, which portray migrants as external dangers that must be managed. Crawley & Blitz (2018) observe that EU migration policies apply metaphors such as flows needing management or burdens requiring distribution, reflecting various agendas and ideological stances. In the opinions of AGs, this metaphorical framing shapes the presentation of legal arguments regarding migration, influences normative reasoning, and may differ based on the AGs national and linguistic context, highlighting variations in conceptualisation and focus.

2.3 Legal Discourse and Legal Genres

Legal discourse represents a unique communicative domain which is governed by institutional norms, particular terminology and declarative traditions, meaning established conventions for how legal acts, obligations and rulings are stated and enacted through language. Tiersma (1999) describes law being essentially dependent on language, since legal acts are legitimized through linguistic expression as a change of a single word in a legal text can change its meaning and legal force, meaning that the provision in question has binding authority and is enforceable.

The exactness and formality of legal discourse fulfill the institutional requirements for stability and authority, while also serving a persuasive role by seeking to convince courts, legislators and the public

of interpretations (Bhatia, 1993:104). Furthermore, Durant & Leung (2016: 35-39) explain that legal discourse represents a distinctive register, which is characterized by precision, formality, and established patterns of expression. Its specialized character arises from the social function of law itself which is to dictate, regulate and enact behaviour through language. In this sense, legal discourse is performative meaning that it creates legal realities rather than merely describing them (Durant & Leung, 2016: 41-43). Legal discourse functions as both technical and persuasive, linking formal precision with rhetorical strategy in ways that render legal authority both logically compelling and institutionally legitimate (Goodrich, 1987).

There are various genres within legal discourse, including statutes, contracts, judgments and legal opinions that have their unique communicative aim and stylistic conventions (Durant & Leung, 2016: 44-49). However, despite their differences, they all share a demand for accuracy, authority and uniformity while still considering interpretative flexibility. For example, judicial and advisory texts, such as judgements or Advocate General opinions tend to combine narrative and evaluative elements, which in turn makes legal reasoning more accessible and persuasive (Goodrich, 1987:27; Tiersma, 1999:7).

Despite the perception that legal discourse is entirely objective and literal, it is fundamentally interpretive and conceptual. As Winter (2001: 1611) argues, metaphor and analogy are imperative tools for explaining abstract concepts such as responsibility, rights or justice within familiar frameworks. These figurative aspects indicate that legal reasoning does not operate only through logic and precedent yet also through creative linguistic processes that render the law comprehensible and persuasive.

2.4 Advocate General Opinions as a Legal-Discursive Genre

Within the judicial framework of the European Union, the opinions of the Advocates General constitute a unique and prominent legal genre. Although the opinions are formally non-binding, they operate as interpretative analyses intended to assist the Court of Justice of the European Union (CJEU) in its judgements. As highlighted in a briefing by the European Parliament that summarizes Tridimas' seminal work (Tridimas 1997, referred to in the European Parliament, 2019: 4), the Advocate General fulfills both a doctrinal and persuasive role, illustrating legal issues while seeking to shape the Court's legal reasoning. Bobek (2012) notes that the AG holds a position that is intermediate between a judge and an academic, generating texts that combine judicial analysis with scholarly commentary. From a linguistic point of view, AG opinions serve as a description of the hybrid legal genre characterized by Durant & Leung (2016:46-48) as a genre that merges formal institutional qualities with a demand for clarity and accessibility. These texts incorporate elements from both judicial and academic discourse because they reference legal precedents and statutory laws

while also employing argumentative indicators, evaluative adjectives and narrative sequencing to aid interpretation. Tiersma (1999: 6) notes that such stylistic blend is common in judicial communication, where the objective extends beyond simply reaching a decision to also validating and justifying that decision through language.

Because each Advocate General is from distinct national legal traditions, variation in rhetorical style, lexical choice, and metaphorical representation naturally occur. Goodrich (1987: 27) describes this phenomenon as the *rhetoric of legality* where individual authors adjust institutional discourse to their own interpretive traditions. This diversity is further extended in the EU's multilingual setting, where English and French often serve as common languages for legal communication yet still reflect elements of national conceptualisation (van Leeuwen & Wodak, 1999: 95-97). As a result, AG opinions bring a valuable collection for examining how metaphor functions within a shared legal discourse. Metaphor in these texts frequently aim to convert abstract constitutional concepts into concrete, tangible terms. Bobek (2012: 225-229) highlights the repeated references to balance, structure, and pathways in AG reasoning, with each framing the dynamics between EU and national law in subtle ways. Additionally, Winter (2001: 1612) illustrates that metaphor is important in legal reasoning that is, by associating complex normative ideas with well-known conceptual frameworks. Therefore, the Advocate General opinion can be perceived as more than just procedural text because it represents rhetorical display by employing linguistic innovation, narrative sequencing, and metaphorical representation to make EU law comprehensible and persuasive to diverse audiences.

2.5 Migration as a Legal and Discursively Constructed Field

Migration law is among the most debated and symbolically important areas of the European Union law. It pertains to the governance of movement, residency, and entry both within the Union and at its external borders. Přívara et al. (2023: 52) emphasize that migration in the EU is often portrayed through economic and administrative lenses, such as labour mobility and competitiveness, contrasting with the humanitarian perspective of asylum law. In addition, Selanec & Petrić (2021: 501-504) illustrate that human dignity as a basic legal principle is understood via moral discourse mirroring larger European discourses on membership and assimilation. As Durant & Leung (2016: 88-92) claim, discussions surrounding migration laws and policies are never purely objective as they also encompass significant ideological aspects. Labels like illegal, irregular, or undocumented imply certain assumptions regarding legitimacy and authority. Nelson & Davis-Wiley (2018: 9-11) established that in media and institutional language, the term *illegal* suggests criminality and deviance, while undocumented highlights administrative irregularity. These word choices demonstrate how language influences perception before any formal legal reasoning takes place.

In AG opinions concerning migration, metaphorical patterns frequently resurface in more technical yet equally evaluative expressions, for example, metaphors related to balance, burden-sharing, or movement that illustrate concepts of proportionality, solidarity, or administrative collaboration (Bobek, 2012: 225-228). The persistent imagery of flows and management indicates that even such refined judicial reasoning is involved in wider discursive frameworks that view migration as a process needing regulation and control. As noted by Fairclough (2001: 34-38), institutional discourses manifest social ideologies through seemingly impartial language choices, a phenomenon that is evident in how the EU legally addresses migration. Therefore, analyzing migration as both legal and discursive field is crucial for understanding how AGs portray migration cases. Their viewpoints provide insight not only into how EU law interprets individual rights and state responsibilities but also into how metaphorical and evaluative language aids in defining migration as a legal issue. Acknowledging the connection between legal discourse as legal reasoning helps illustrate how language both reflects and shapes policy within the Union's legal framework (Crawley & Blitz, 2018: 2265–2268; Selanec & Petrić, 2021: 510–512). The examination of migration as a legal and discursive domain emphasizes the pivotal function of language in shaping the perception of migration within EU law. The following section will expand on this by reviewing how these portrayals are influenced by discursive and metaphorical frameworks found in legal and institutional texts.

2.6 Migration in EU Legal Discourse

In EU legal discourse the representation of migration develops differently from public and media discourse due to the structural nature of EU law and the way it is communicated through various genres. Due to the EU law functioning in multilingual and multicultural environment, the representation of migration has unique features (van Leeuwen & Wodak, 1999: 108). EU migration law is dynamic and very complex area governing cross-border movement among Member States, rights afforded to asylum seekers or refugees, responsibilities of Member States to manage migration both internally and externally in the EU (Selanec & Petrić, 2021; Crawley & Blitz, 2018; Přívara et al., 2023).

The CJEU serves a key function as interpreter of EU migration law by hearing cases that pose questions regarding relationships between EU obligation with national sovereignty as well as individual rights with national interests (European Parliament, 2019). Selanec and Petrić (2021: 498-500) argue that some of the recent CJEU decisions on migration address human dignity as a foundational principle which could be considered metaphorical in itself by depicting associations with value, worth, elevation to convey legal status of migrants, making the language employed in Advocate General opinions play a critical function.

The CJEU represents a multilingual nature of the EU and that results in having legal concepts expressed to be comprehensible in all of the Member State languages across different national legal traditions (Van Leeuwen & Wodak, 1999: 95). According to Přívvara et al. (2023: 52), migration within EU contexts is usually generated using institutional legal categories such as rights, cases, protections without directly referencing any individuals, or people who are involved in the act of migration. Therefore, Advocate General opinions avoid personalization; rather, they use abstract notions inherent in EU law and the study conducted in the present paper represents ideological systems through which EU legal professionals conceptualise migration.

Overall, the literature has established the contextual and theoretical foundations for the present study. Studies on Conceptual Metaphor Theory, metaphor in legal discourse, the genre of Advocate General opinions and the discursive framing of migration in EU legal contexts show that metaphorical language is a ubiquitous and functionally important aspect of legal reasoning, one that will be examined in the following chapter of the paper, which will describe the data collected for this study and the analytical procedure through which metaphorical patterns in Advocate General opinions were identified and examined.

3. Data & Methods

In this section, I am going to describe the data collected for this investigation, the methodological framework and the procedure of research. I will start with the description of the data.

The corpus of the study consists of twelve Advocate General (AG) opinions on migration cases. The whole corpus of investigation consists of 129,082 words. The data for the study was gathered from the EUR-lex database of the European Union law. The study consists of twelve opinions on migration cases from six different Advocate Generals. To ensure coherence in the analysis, only opinions by Advocate Generals originally written in English were analysed. This ensures that the metaphorical patterns identified reflect the original language choices of Advocates General without interference from translation.

The timeline of the opinions is between the years 2013 and 2025. This range was chosen to capture the development of the linguistic framing of migration discourse before, during and after the effects of the migrant crisis that emerged in 2015. The six Advocate Generals come from six different countries: Laila Medina from Latvia, Nicholas Emiliou from Cyprus, Michal Bobek from Czech Republic, Nils Wahl from Sweden, Tamara Capeta from Croatia, Eleanor Sharpston from the United Kingdom. All the above countries are currently European Union members, except for the United Kingdom. Nevertheless, the timeline of the opinions allows the study to include an Advocate General from the United Kingdom, as Eleanor Sharpston worked as Advocate General at the CJEU until February 2020, when the UK officially left the EU. The remaining Advocate Generals were appointed for at least six years, with the possibility to be reinstated. The selected Advocate Generals come from different countries, which means that the metaphorical patterns identified reflect broader conventions of EU legal discourse rather than individual stylistic preferences.

The methodological framework relies on the Conceptual Metaphor Theory (Lakoff and Johnson 1980/2003) and further works on metaphor. Within this framework metaphor is understood both as a linguistic feature and as a cognitive mechanism through which abstract concepts are understood and structured in terms of more concrete experience (Lakoff and Johnson 1980/2003). A crucial principle of this approach is the differentiation between the source domain and the target domain. The source domain refers to a more concrete and grounded area, usually related to embodied or physical experience, while the target domain is more abstract (Kövecses 2010). A metaphor illustrating the relationship between the source and target domain is LIFE IS A JOURNEY, in which the abstract target domain of LIFE is structured through a more concrete source domain JOURNEY, which involves direction, movement. Another example is ARGUMENT IS WAR, where the elements of a conflict such as an attack and defense are used to conceptualize the process of arguing experience (Lakoff and Johnson 1980/2003). In the present study, the target domain is LAW. Law is considered an abstract

domain, because it comprises of complex principles, institutional structures and norms that are not directly attainable through physical experience. Because of this, it requires conceptual structuring in a way that would be communicated and understood effectively. For this study the target domain of LAW was chosen because of a central focus on how legal concepts such as rights, cases and legal processes are expressed in language the Advocate Generals use in their opinions.

The procedure of the analysis relies on an investigation that was completed by Šeškauskienė (2026: 8) which helped form my own steps and expand my research on the metaphorical patterns found in Advocate General opinions. The analysis was done in 3 steps: 1) the collected data was analysed using the AntConc (Anthony 2023) software, from which the word-frequency count was performed, as well as the Keyword in Context (KWIC) function provided concordance lines with the frequency of words that were chosen for the analysis and later the results were transferred onto Microsoft Excel sheets; 2) the identification of metaphorical patterns were grounded in the key principles of Conceptual Metaphor Theory (Lakoff & Johnson 1980/2003), as well as later research on metaphors, such as some principles of Metaphor Identification Procedure (MIP) (Pragglejazz Group 2007). MIP is a systematic step-by-step procedure used to identify metaphorically used words in naturally occurring discourse. The procedure consists of four steps: 1) reading the text in its entirety to establish a general understanding of its meaning; 2) identification of lexical units in the text; 3) determining whether each lexical unit has a more basic contemporary meaning in other contexts, where the basic meaning refers to the most concrete, bodily or historically older sense of the word, generally more closely related to physical experience; 4) if the lexical unit has a more basic meaning that contrasts with its meaning in the given context, though can be understood in relation to it through comparison or analogy, the word is identified as metaphorical (Pragglejazz Group 2007). In the present study MIP is not applied in its entirety. Because the analysis is based on a corpus-driven approach, meaning that it begins with high-frequency lexical items identified through AntConc rather than reading each text in full, steps 1 and 2 were adapted accordingly. The most crucial step for this research from MIP was step 3, which determines the basic meaning of the word, so that it is closest to the bodily experience or the most physically accessible (Pragglejazz Group 2007). To define the basic meaning for this study, Oxford English Dictionary (OED) and Merriam-Webster dictionaries were used; 3) the analysis included the identification of metaphorical patterns, or multi-word expressions “from a given source domain (SD) into which one or more specific lexical items from a given target domain (TD) have been inserted” (Stefanowitsch 2006: 66), and in the case of this thesis the target domain is LAW. The analysis for the thesis will focus on the SD found from the chosen words.

Another important notion relevant for the analysis, was the notion of a scenario proposed by Musolff (2016). In the analysis, the results were organised around Musolff’s (2016) concept of scenarios which are interconnected cluster of roles, activities and expectation which is evoked when drawing

upon source domains metaphorically. When a source domain, such as object is applied to a legal concept it brings a complete range of relationships inherent to what objects are and how we engage with them, for example, we can possess them, lose or damage them, move them from one location to another. Similarly to Šeškauskienė (2026), this study applies Musolff's (2016) framework as well, where a scenario is "a discourse-based, culturally and historically conditioned version of a source domain."

In the next chapter, the results and discussion will be presented.

4. Results & Discussion

4.1 General overview

Following the compilation of the corpus, the analysis of the data began with the raw frequency list created by AntConc (Anthony 2023), as visualized in Table 1 below.

Table 1 *Raw frequency data*

Type	Rank	Frequency	Range
the	1	11808	12
of	2	6866	12
to	3	4547	12
that	4	3510	12
in	5	3481	12
a	6	2718	12
and	7	2529	12
is	8	1457	12
for	9	1381	12
be	10	1270	12
as	11	1237	12
article	12	1222	12
on	13	1113	12
or	14	1087	12
by	15	1048	12
member	16	1046	11
not	17	913	12
it	18	899	12
directive	19	842	11
court	20	828	12
which	21	744	12
with	22	741	12
an	23	712	12
state	24	601	12

The frequency list determines the most frequent content words in the sample. The most frequent words in the data that appeared were function words, such as articles, pronouns, prepositions etc. as visualized in Table 1 above.

After removing the function words, the next step was determining which words should be chosen for the analysis of metaphoricity. The word frequency data is visualized in Table 2 below.

Table 2 *Frequencies of the content words in the corpus*

Rank	Rank	Word	Frequency (overall)
1	12	article	1222
2	16	member	1046

3	19	directive	842
4	20	court	828
5	24	state	601
6	25	states	567
7	27	law	545
8	28	protection	515
9	31	national	448
10	35	country	418
10	35	decision	418
12	37	case	409
13	39	under	392
14	40	origin	376
15	44	international	344
16	45	application	339
17	52	applicant	307
18	54	person	284
19	56	status	283
20	57	integration	271
21	59	refugee	263
22	60	commission	254
23	63	examination	241
24	65	obligation	233
25	66	question	231
26	68	other	229
26	68	asylum	229
28	70	rights	228

Table 1 shows the most frequent words used in the Advocate General opinions. The content words that appeared earlier than the ones chosen, were excluded because of three reasons: 1) words such as *article* or *directive* refer to the documents from which the AGs base their opinions on, as they functions as references to sources of law and therefore were not considered analytically productive for the purposes of this study; 2) the words do not appear as stand alone in the texts for analysis and often appear as metonymies, for example *member states* (EU member states); 3) they are not related to law and would not provide the results that the thesis set out to explore. The words chosen for the analysis were *law* (27th in total), *case* (37th in total), *integration* (57th in total) asylum (68th in total) and right(s) (70th in total). The content word *case* had to be disambiguated, as it has at least two meanings, the first being case as an example of a situation, and the other one relating to law, a problem that is dealt with in court (OED). The other words that were analysed were related to the domain of migration law. It was rather surprising that though the AG opinions are about migration cases, the content word for *migration* or *migrant* was mentioned only a few times, with *migration* having 27 cases and *migrant* only used in 2 cases and they do not appear on the list of the most frequent words given in Table 1, they were analysed to determine if they had any possible metaphorical patterns.

After this, the metaphorical patterns were analysed. As a result, it appeared that *right(s)* was the most frequent word used in metaphorical patterns, and the word has the most representation in the analysis, while *integration* concluded in having no metaphors. Overall, 610 cases were analysed and 193, or 31.63 % of all cases, were metaphorical. Table 3 below visualizes how the source domains distributed throughout the metaphorical cases.

Table 3 *Source Domains in Advocate General opinions*

Source domain	Cases	%
OBJECT	59	30.57
CONTAINER	28	14.51
SPACE	23	11.92
CONFLICT	23	11.92
SPORT	20	10.36
PERSON	14	7.25
OTHER	26	13.48
Total	193	100

As seen in Table 2 above, the first five source domains, OBJECT, CONTAINER, CONFLICT, SPACE and SPORT, account for 79.28 % metaphorical cases. Further in this section, each source domain will be discussed in more detail including the analysis of specific examples where applicable.

4.2 The source domain of OBJECT

In this study, an object is defined as a physical, bounded entity that can be possessed, manipulated and influenced (Šeškauskienė, 2026: 10). Objects can be acquired, retained, and may also possess internal qualities that are part of the thing itself and can be altered without the object being removed or destroyed. A legal right can be maintained while its interior substance, such as its efficacy or practical force is diminished, much as a physical object can be hollowed out or drained of its contents while maintaining its form on the exterior. These features are reflected in verbs such as *have*, *retain*, *deprive*, and *grant*, which in their basic meanings indicate interactions with physical objects, *have* refers to possession of a physical object, *retain* means to hold onto an object over time, *deprive* refers to the removal of something from an entity's possession and *grant* denotes the transfer of a physical object from one entity to another (OED). Words from the OBJECT domain combine with abstract concepts and form metaphorical patterns. For example, the expression *retain the right* constitutes a metaphorical pattern wherein the verb *retain*, in its most basic sense, refers to having possession of a

physical object. This implies that legal matters in AG opinions are discussed in terms of the lens of something that can be owned or preserved.

In the data analysed for this study, there were four main scenarios identified in the OBJECT metaphor. The list of scenarios was modified taking into account the work done by Šeškauskienė (2026) and adjusted for this research, with legal concepts conceptualized as: 1) objects of possession, 2) manipulable or transferable objects, 3) objects with internal properties, and 4) cases as entities/objects in space domains.

While the OBJECT and CONTAINER source domains share some similarities, they both refer to bounded entities, they are differentiated in two different conceptual structures in this paper. Specifically, the OBJECT source domain focuses on how entities can be possessed, transferred or have their internal properties altered. Differently to object, the CONTAINER source domain highlights spatial containment and inside and outside boundary structure of a container. These scenarios are analysed in depth below.

The first scenario involves the legal concepts being understood as objects of possession, which means that legal rights are viewed as tangible entities that an individual or organization can own and keep, e.g.:

(1) *Directive 2013/32 provides: ‘1. Member States shall ensure that applicants have the right¹ to an effective remedy before a court or tribunal, <...> (Bobek1)²*

(2) *Member States retain the right to refuse to relocate an applicant <...> (Sharpston1)*

In example (1), applicants have the right to an effective remedy, where the verb *have* in its basic meaning according to Merriam-Webster dictionary indicates possession of a concrete object, implying that the *right* is presumed to be something that an individual can possess. A similar pattern can be observed in (2), where the Member States *retain the right* to refuse to relocate an applicant. In its basic meaning (OED) the verb *retain* means keeping possession of an object over a period, which further conceptualizes that rights are objects that can be held and maintained. As such, legal rights are conceptualised as possessions that can be retained and possibly lost. In addition, this conceptualisation creates a tangible and enforceable framework for legal reasoning because it includes legal rights as belonging to an individual or an organization. Furthermore, this conceptualisation creates an expectation that once a right is lost, it cannot be regained.

This conceptualisation is consistent with Šeškauskienė (2026), who notes that possession is one of the most constant and frequent conceptualisations of legal rights as objects in human rights discourse. The second scenario is comprised of manipulable or transferable objects which means that rights can be given or taken away from people or organisations. The following examples illustrate this:

¹ Metaphorical expressions are underlined in the examples

² The codes in parentheses following each example refer to the source opinion within the corpus. The last name of the AG is given and the number indicating which one of their opinions the example is drawn from.

- (3) <...> *the Member States may decide not to automatically grant that right to applicants from safe countries of origin, and such <...>* (Emiliou1)
- (4) <...> *not give the authorities of that second Member State the right to undermine the powers of the first Member State <...>* (Medina1)
- (5) <...> *not (and could not) remove a Member State's inalienable right to rely on Article 72 TFEU to override any other <...>* (Sharpston1)

In example (3), the verb *grant*, in its most basic sense, refers to transferring a physical object from one entity to another (OED), implying that the *right* is something that is conceptualised as something that can be transferable. A similar pattern appears in (4), where authorities are not to *give the right* to undermine certain powers. The verb *give* denotes the transfer of a physical object, reinforcing the conceptualisation of rights as transferable entities. Differently from (3) and (4), in example (5), the verb *remove* is used, which in its basic meaning in Merriam-Webster dictionary refers to taking something away. It suggests that rights can be taken from an entity, supporting the interpretation of legal concepts as objects subject to manipulation. This duality of being able to give or remove a right represents the contested nature of rights in EU migration and asylum law where Member States simultaneously possess authority to confer and deny.

The third scenario shows the legal concept as an object containing internal properties. Conceptualising legal notions as objects with internal properties can be distinguished from conceptualising legal concepts as containers. Containers conceptualise cases as enclosed spaces wherein legal facts and rulings are situated. This differs from internal properties scenario as the right itself as an object with internal properties that can diminish. The CONTAINER source domain views a container as a space and the other views an object as organized whole with material content that can degrade independently of whether the object exists or not, for example:

- (6) <...> *imposed – must not be so high as to deprive the right of access to integration programmes of its effectiveness.* (Medina2)

In example (6) the verb *deprive* in its primary sense means removing something from ownership (OED). In the above sentence, it is not the right itself that gets affected, but its effectiveness. This suggests that the right is an object that possesses internal properties, the qualities contained within the right itself, which can be depreciated, supporting the interpretation that legal concepts are objects with internal properties. Therefore, this implies that the right is viewed as an encapsulated object whose inherent attributes can decline without diminishing its existence. Even though this pattern appeared less than the ones mentioned previously, it merits separate consideration due to its frequent use in legal discourse as it addresses a particular type of legal vulnerability not addressed by either of the previous two scenarios, mainly that a right can be formally intact, however substantially weakened

at the same time. The OBJECT metaphor does not solely serve to define a right, it also lets Advocate General opinions to argue that if a right lacks functionality, it is damaged.

The last scenario involves the conceptualisation of legal entities, such as cases, as objects existing in space. In this scenario, cases are not shown as active processes moving through a legal system, but as static entities that exist in a fixed position. This type differs from the SPACE source domain, as the SPACE SD emphasizes movement and placement of legal entities into spatial pathways or hierarchical systems, this type emphasizes stationary cases existing in space while also emphasizing physical object-like qualities rather than their spatial path:

(7) *The Commission considered that the situations from which the cases pending before the referring court arose should be classified <...> (Capeta I)*

(8) *Similar questions are currently the subject of three further cases pending before the Court of Justice. (6) II. (Medina I)*

In both examples the verb *pending* suggests that a state of being suspended in a fixed position, neither moving forward or resolved (OED). It indicates that cases are conceptualised as objects hanging in the air, in the cases of the example sentences before the courts. In both cases, a case, like an object, once placed into the air, will not move forward until force is applied. When used in conjunction with *pending* the word creates the visual representation of an object hanging mid-air. Thus, it emphasizes that a case is not simply an ongoing process but instead is a physically bounded and not moving entity. Pending has spatial qualities that represent the length of time that cases remain unresolved in EU law. It represents institutions experience with the long-term nature of unsolved cases that are still in progress. Furthermore, *pending* transforms the institution's experiences into concrete representation of a suspended state and waiting period experiences by litigants during the pre-resolution decision making phase.

Overall, the OBJECT metaphor appears recurrently throughout the Advocate General opinions representing 30.57 % of all metaphors that appeared in the corpus. Advocate General opinions employ a wide variety of arguments and procedural analyses. Rights and cases are most frequently conceptualised as object-like entities. They can be possessed and transferred. Cases can be internally depleted. Case decisions can prolong the progression of cases. The structure is based on how people physically interact with tangible objects. By reasoning about abstract elements, such as rights, cases in terms of tangible physical objects, Advocate Generals make these abstract elements more accessible and understandable. These patterns indicate that the target domain of LAW is consistently structured through the OBJECT source domain.

4.3 The source domain of CONTAINER

The next source domain, that appeared most frequently was CONTAINER. Container is defined by Kövecses (2002) as a bounded domain that has an inside and an outside, within which the elements can be in. The key aspect of this is the concept of interiority and how legal facts, decisions and circumstances are related to the inside and outside of a bounded entity. Differently from the OBJECT source domain that emphasizes relationships with things, the CONTAINER source domain emphasizes the boundary of the inside and outside. In this analysis, the CONTAINER metaphor is most frequently realised through the preposition *in*. This preposition being in usage implies that the referenced entities serve as a place for containing a certain location for other elements. Examples below show how the CONTAINER metaphor is realized in AG opinions, primarily through the concept of *case*:

- (9) <...> *already granted that status to that person. 76. In the present case, the determining authority of a second Member State (Germany), <...> (Medina1)*
- (10) <...> *case-law on those provisions. Indeed, in a number of cases, the Court has already provided important clarifications as to <...> (Wahl2)*
- (11) <...> *Z has also appealed to that court. 18. In all three cases the homosexual orientation of the applicant is not disputed. (Sharpston2)*

In the provided examples, the preposition *in* shows that the *case* is conceptualised as a bounded domain, in which decisions, legal facts or situations exist. Example (9) suggests that a specific legal situation functions as a container that holds elements relevant to the situation at present. Similarly, in (10) *in a number of cases* shows that multiple cases are perceived as multiple separate domains within which the legal clarifications occur. Example (11) applies a similar pattern as (10), implying that each case is a separate container in which specific factual information is revealed. This suggests that cases are perceived as domains having container-like qualities which structure legal reasoning.

The CONTAINER metaphor appearing so frequently in Advocate General opinions has several implications for legal reasoning. To frame each legal issue as contained within boundaries, the language creates a framework where each legal case is viewed independently and can be evaluated based upon the extent to which it is similar or different to other legal issues. To compare different cases, each case must first be constructed as a complete, self-contained case with its own internal logic. Thus, the CONTAINER metaphor proves a means to enact the underlying logical structure of legal reasoning, in addition to providing a descriptive device to explain and describe cases. This study identifies CONTAINER as a different source domain, rather than a subdomain of OBJECT, because of the frequency of occurrence in comparison to other patterns found in the Advocate General corpus.

In the overall majority, the CONTAINER metaphor in this analysis was realised through the conceptualisation of *cases* as bounded domains. The investigated examples reveal that legal cases are

routinely understood as containers within which the decisions, legal facts, and circumstances are situated.

4.4 The source domain of SPACE

In this analysis the SPACE metaphor is mainly realised in relation to legal concepts through expressions that indicate spatial positioning or movement. Unlike the OBJECT and CONTAINER metaphors, which mainly highlights other characteristics of interaction with an entity, and containment of an entity, the SPACE metaphor focuses on the positioning of legal entities within a conceptual spatial framework, for example:

- (12) <...> *in the two transformation areas that are parties to the cases before the national court, the Institut for Menneskerettigheder* <...> (Capeta1)
- (13) <...> *about by a loss of trust between the Member States. Cases falling under such ‘exceptional circumstances’ should be seen as <...>* (Medina1)
- (14) <...> *or Ethnic Origin Directive. 25. When explaining the background of the case, the referring court indicates that, prior to the 2018 amendments, <...>* (Capeta2)

Johnson (1987: 29) defines a spatial schema from a cognitive-linguistic perspective as a recurrent embodied pattern of experience that gives rise to abstract conceptualisations by using the embodied patterns of physical spatial logic, e. g., when we physically experience things being in front of us, behind us, above us or below us. In example (12) the preposition *before* refers to spatial location, implying that the case is perceived as an entity placed in a frontal position in the court. Drawing upon the front-back spatial schema, the expression *before the court* places the case in front of a court and highlights the spatial opposition between the two sides. Furthermore, Šeškauskienė (2022:127) points out that the spatially rooted pattern of *before the court* represents the conceptual metaphor LEGAL ARGUMENT/DISPUTE IS SPATIAL OPPOSITION. A similar pattern can be detected in (13), where *falling under* indicates movement into a specific domain or category. The verb *falling* designates movement, whereas *under* indicates spatial hierarchy (OED), implying that cases are entities that can move within a structured spatial system. This determines a conceptualisation of legal entities as areas or domains into which the cases may be placed. Example (14) introduces a spatial dimension by positioning elements relative to a central focus. The term *background* denotes a spatial arrangement, suggesting that certain features of a case are shown as being behind or surrounding the main issue. This expedites the interpretation of legal reasoning being structured through spatial relationships. Overall, the SPACE metaphor is realised through expressions that conceptualise legal notions in terms of spatial relations. The analysed examples display that cases are viewed as entities that are either located, moved or positioned withing a space, indicating that the target domain of LAW in Advocate General opinions is partially structured through spatial organization.

4.5 The source domain of CONFLICT

In the analysis the CONFLICT SD had the same number of metaphorical expressions as SPACE SD. A further breakdown of conflict metaphors resulted in having two main scenarios. This is consistent with Šeškauskienė (2026), who also identifies two scenarios within the CONFLICT domain in human rights legal discourse, though the scenarios differ. While Šeškauskienė's (2026) analysis foregrounds rights as precious entities under threat and rights as protective agents, for the present analysis, these scenarios were determined to be fit for this paper: 1) expressions of violation, and 2) expressions of protection. The scenarios under the SD of CONFLICT are based on the use of lexical items that express harm, opposition, and defense. These terms are associated with situations of conflict, where one entity is threatened and the other pursues actions to defend or protect it. In the first scenario the legal concepts as entities that can be violated or attacked:

(15) <...> *in so far it relates to the violation of the rights of the defence. In Case C-719/17, insufficient precision in (Sharpston1)*

(16) <...> *of the principle of equal treatment; (iii) breach of the rights of the defence, in as much as they were not given <...> (Wahl1)*

In the above examples, the basic meaning of the terms *violation* and *breach* refer to acts of damaging, breaking or infringing upon something (OED). These actions are mostly associated with the situation of conflict where one is the attacker and the other the attacked. In (15), *violation* in its basic meaning refers to an act of breaking or infringing upon something, which suggests that the rights are something that can be harmed. Similarly, in (16), the verb *breach* also denotes a form of infringing or breaking the rights. While both verbs denote harm, *breach* often suggests a breaking of a predefined boundary, while *violation* encompasses a broader sense of infringement. Collectively, both examples emphasize the conceptualisation of rights as entities susceptible to injurious actions. In the following examples, the conflict metaphors are realised through expressions of protection contrasting the examples analysed above:

(17) <...> *parties that it may not be able to safeguard those rights and freedoms in the light of the exceptional situation <...> (Emiliou1)*

(18) <...> *to take into consideration, where relevant, the protection of the rights of the defence, the principle of legal certainty and <...> (Bobek1)*

Example (17) employs the verb *safeguard*, which refers to protecting something from harm. It implies that rights are entities that require defense. Another interpretation can be found in example (18), where the noun *protection* also suggests a defense against potential dangers. Together, these examples demonstrate that legal concepts are understood in terms of conflict, involving both harm and defense.

Overall, the CONFLICT metaphor is realized through expressions that show legal concepts in terms of harm, opposition, and defense. The source domain accounted for 11.92 % of metaphorical cases the

same as the SPACE domain. The co-existence of harm language and protection language within the same source domain suggests that rights in EU migration and asylum law are discursively constructed entities that exist in a state of permanent vulnerability and requiring constant institutional attention. The partial nature of the conflict schema activated is itself meaningful as by drawing only on the expressions of violation and protection, Advocate General opinions construct a legal world in which rights are always at risk; however, the full conflict scenario is not fully realized as combatants, strategy and victory are missing. This selective activation reflects the institutional character of the Advocate General opinions, as legal texts whose function is to analyse and give recommendations to the Court rather than to argue and dispute the laws. The opinions are not battlegrounds, and the CONFLICT domain that is employed is calibrated to signal urgency and moral stakes without invoking the full rhetoric of war. The conflict source domain functions not merely as a descriptive device but also as a rhetorical one, constructing the stakes of legal decisions in terms of violence and protection and lending moral urgency to the Advocate General opinions.

4.6 The source domain of SPORT

In the analysis the SPORT metaphor is primarily realized through expressions, that involve the verb *exercise*. In the context of Advocate General opinions, the metaphor does not draw on the definition of competition or games directly, it refers to physical activity or practice (OED)

- (19) <...> *I do not consider that Hungary's exercise of its rights of defence was adversely affected. 143. I therefore conclude that <...> (Sharpston1)*
- (20) <...> *his Member State of origin after having exercised his residence rights in another Member State where he has created or <...> (Bobek2)*
- (21) <...> *is the driving force to exercise one's free movement rights, the remote and hypothetical nature of such events and <...> (Bobek2)*

All the above examples include the verb *exercise*, which refers to training or physical activity that is repetitive (OED). When applied to *rights*, it suggests that rights are conceptualized as entities that are actively used or performed, rather than passively held. The concept of *exercise* implies active realization of legal entitlements, and this pattern can be observed in all the examples. This signifies that *rights* are a dynamic concept that necessitates individual involvement and engagement. Although the expression *exercise a right* may be considered conventional in legal discourse, its metaphorical origin remains significant, as it makes use of the domain of physical activity and practice. According to Lakoff & Johnson (1980/2003: 11), just because a metaphor has developed into conventionality, it does not negate its role in shaping our cognitive processes which could potentially represent the degree to which metaphor is embedded in legal thinking and therefore influences legal argumentation without being recognized consciously as being metaphoric.

In general, the verb *exercise* is used to realize the sport metaphor by framing legal rights in terms of physical activity and active engagement. The examples suggest that rights are conceptualized as entities that must be performed or enacted, indicating that the target domain of LAW in Advocate General opinions is partly structured through patterns that are associated with activity and practice. Advocate General opinions show that rights are viewed as an interactive activity that necessitates individual involvement and activation. The appearance of the verb *exercise* across many of the opinions shows that the usage of it is not just a stylistic decision made uniquely by one AG; instead, it has become a component which reflects the interpretation of entitlement to law as something one must claim and realize actively, rather than something one can simply possess passively.

4.7 Minor source domains

This section briefly discusses the minor source domains found in the Advocate General opinions. These are considered minor as there were eight or fewer instances of their appearance in the analysed corpus. These minor source domains include BUILDING, POWER, ENTERTAINMENT, AND LIQUID.

4.7.1 The source domain of BUILDING

The BUILDING source domain is realised through expressions that construct legal concepts as physical structures with foundations and surfaces. At their core, the words *ground* and *base* describe physical relationships between a structure and the surface upon which it sits (OED).

(22) <...> *the Charter has no added value. To begin with, the right to asylum is not grounded in secondary EU legislation* <...> (Medina2)

(23) <...> *Union's common asylum policy, the Qualification Directive bases the right to international protection on the recognition of refugee status*. 35. <...> (Capeta2)

The verbs *ground* and *base* in examples (22) and (23) show a building sitting on a stable foundation. They also represent the understanding of rights and legal provisions as buildings whose legitimacy depends on the stability of legislative foundation on which they sit. Thus, a legal right without a legitimate basis is seen as unstable or illegitimate. This observation is supported by research that identifies BUILDING as one of many productive source domains in legal discourse. Legal systems, arguments and institutions are typically conceptualized in terms of built structures (Šeškauskienė, 2022).

4.7.2 The source domain of POWER

The source domain of POWER was primarily realized using the word *power* in conjunction with the capacities of legal authorities. In its basic form, power describes the physical ability to apply force (Merriam-Webster dictionary).

(24) <...> *merits of the case — and, if necessary, shall order the asylum authority to conduct a new procedure.* (6) *The court's <...>* (Bobek1)

(25) <...> *have the power to amend administrative decisions of the competent asylum authority refusing international protection and also to grant such <...>* (Bobek1)

In the examples above, *power* is described as a physical entity or capacity that legal entities possess or use. Example (24) refers to the court's authority as a tangible capacity, which is something that can be identified and assessed. Example (25) constructs institutional power as something that can be held and used. It reflects the possession scenario found in the OBJECT source domain but applies it to the institutional authority. It also allows for what is a question about jurisdiction to become an evaluable concept. It is particularly important because questions about jurisdiction are central issues in Advocate General opinions where there are frequent disputes over who has the authority to make decisions that are related to policy.

4.7.3 The source domain of ENTERTAINMENT

The ENTERTAINMENT source domain was mainly identified in cases which included the verb *enjoy* used in connection with legal rights. In its basic meaning, following the Merriam-Webster dictionary definition, enjoy represents experiencing pleasure or satisfaction from an activity or a condition.

(26) <...> *Convention is to enable refugees to enjoy a series of rights attaching to refugee status. It follows that Article 34 of <...>* (Medina2)

(27) <...> *this Directive and who therefore do not enjoy an automatic right of entry and residence in the host Member State, <...>* (Bobek2)

In the above examples, the verb *enjoy* constructs legal entitlements as sources of positive experience, something that can be actively savoured rather than merely possessed. Example (26) shows the enabling of rights as providing access to positive experience. Example (27) introduces a negative aspect to the source domain, by denying individuals positive experience of *enjoying automatic right* of entry. The negative aspect creates a spectrum which shows the emotional dimension which does not appear in the other source domains, by representing rights as experiences not to be enjoyed and values, rather than things only to be held and used.

4.7.4 The source domain of LIQUID

The LIQUID source domain was primarily realised through the noun *flows* in conjunction with migration. In its basic meaning, flow represents a movement of a liquid on a continuous path (Merriam-Webster)

(28) <...> *nationals of third countries due to a sharp shift of migration flows and taking into account the views of the <...>* (Sharpston1)

(29) <...> sea borders has again sharply increased, and the shift of migration flows has continued from the central to the eastern <...> (Sharpston1)

In both examples, the movement of people across EU borders is conceptualized as the flow of a liquid. Example (28) illustrates migration as an entity requiring control rather than an entity comprised of humans that need management, meaning that Advocate Generals depersonalized the asylum seekers and migrants who constitute that movement. Example (29) shows directional change by illustrating a stream flowing in one direction and then another and portraying migrants' movements as impersonal and fluid. Liquid metaphors have been widely documented and are highly influential within EU migration discourse (Cunningham-Parmeter, 2011; Crawley & Blitz, 2018), since they tend to dehumanize migrants by perceiving them as natural forces rather than as individuals who have rights.

The minor source domains provide further evidence of metaphorical conceptualisation in Advocate General opinions. Overall, the analysis presented in this chapter identified five major source domains and four minor source domains, through which legal concepts were metaphorically constructed within Advocate Generals opinions relating to EU law. Across all domains, a consistent pattern emerges, the abstract legal concepts are repeatedly understood and communicated through concrete, physically grounded experience. The pervasiveness of the pattern confirms that metaphor in Advocate General opinions are not merely stylistic but constitutive, it shapes the cognitive structures through which AGs construct their arguments and render abstract legal reasoning persuasive. The importance of these findings, the implications of the present research findings for studies on metaphor in legal discourse, and the constraints of the current analysis will be discussed in the final chapter.

5. Conclusion

The study aimed to examine the use of metaphorical language in the opinions Advocates General at the Court of Justice of the European Union with emphasis placed upon determining the source domains through which legal concepts are metaphorically expressed in this specific institutional genre.

The first research question was asking what kind of metaphorical patterns are identified in Advocate General opinions and which source domains are most productively employed in the selected corpus. The analysis identified five major source domains: OBJECT, CONTAINER, SPACE, CONFLICT, and SPORT, as well as four minor source domains: BUILDING, POWER, ENTERTAINMENT, and LIQUID. In addition to identifying the major and minor source domains, the analysis also identified unique scenarios through which each source domain metaphorically represents legal concepts. Within the OBJECT source domain, four scenarios were found: rights as objects of ownership, rights as transferable and manipulable objects, rights as objects possessing inherent characteristics, and cases as objects suspended in space. The CONTAINER source domain showed that cases were represented as bounded entities where legal fact exist. The SPACE source domain illustrated that legal concepts are defined along hierarchical spatial arrangements, predominantly vertical ones. The CONFLICT source domain presented two scenarios: expressions of violation and expressions of protection. The SPORT domain was realised nearly entirely through the verb exercise, representing rights in need to be exercised rather than passively possessed. The minor source domains of BUILDING, POWER, ENTERTAINMENT, and LIQUID added further dimension to the metaphorical expressions used to represent aspects of legal authority as physical constructs, institutional power as forces, rights as enjoyable resources, and migration as a natural flow that requires regulation. A surprising result was that even though the opinions were taken in the theme of migration and asylum, the metaphors were not found to be in line with the metaphors that would be typical to migration themes. Also, the words migration and migrant appeared rarely in the corpus, suggesting that Advocates General do not refer to migrants directly in their opinions, instead they use formal and technical language to address migration as a legal matter rather than a human phenomenon.

The second research question asked how the metaphorical patterns established in Advocate General opinions relate to other legal genres. The results of this investigation show considerable agreement with prior studies on metaphor in legal discourse, namely Šeškauskienė (2026) who analysed metaphors contained in the Handbook on European Non-discrimination Law (2018) that resulted in similar identification of five primary source domains: OBJECT, CONTAINER, SPACE, CONFLICT, and SPORT. The fact that these source domains appear consistently across different legal genres indicated

that the metaphorical conceptualisation of law in EU legal discourse represents a cognitive framework applied to different forms of legal genres rather than patterns unique to any given form of text type. However, there is some variation. The conflict domain was proportionally lower in frequency in this study than in Šeškauskienė (2026), possibly due to the wider range of argumentation associated with Advocate General opinions compared to a handbook educating about discrimination rights. The difference indicates that although considerable similarity exists regarding the metaphorical conceptualisation of law amongst EU legal genres with varying realisation depending on each genre's communicative purpose context.

The present study contributes significantly to research in metaphorical representation within legal discourse. First, it presents a detailed corpus-based examination of variously realised metaphorical patterns across multiple major and minor source domains within Advocate General opinions which has received surprisingly little attention in metaphor analysis. Second, it establishes that metaphorical language used in Advocate General opinions illustrate the fundamental cognitive structures through which EU legal professionals communicate about law, rights, and institutional authority. Third, the analysis of metaphors related to migration, particularly in the LIQUID source domain, illustrates that even for formal language used in judicial discourse, some ideologically loaded metaphoric representation of migration as a natural flow continue to prevail with important implications for how legal duties such as processing claims, granting protection and safeguarding fundamental rights towards migrants are comprehended.

Some limitation exists regarding this thesis. First, the size of the corpus is modest and consists of twelve opinions from six Advocates General. A larger corpus consisting of opinion from a greater variety of Advocate General and legal topics would enable researchers to develop stronger conclusions, concerning the use of metaphor within this genre. Second, the analysis focused upon a specified subset of target domain terms, as opposed to carrying out a full-scale metaphor analysis of every word included within each individual opinion. Lastly, since this study examined only Advocate General opinions originally written in the English language, it is possible that an examination of Advocate General opinions written in other EU languages would provide insight into potential impacts from Advocate Generals native languages upon selection of metaphorical terms.

Possible avenues for addressing these limitations include a larger corpus study including opinions from Advocate Generals across numerous legal subjects, as well as conducting a cross-linguistic comparison to determine whether metaphorical patterns identified in this study apply uniquely to English legal discourse or across all EU legal languages, as well as a cross-discourse comparison of legal discourse and public discourse on cases, and how they are metaphorically addressed in each discourse.

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Summary

This paper investigates how Advocates General at the Court of Justice of the European Union (CJEU) express metaphors in their opinions regarding abstract legal concepts specifically those found in EU asylum and migration law based on source domains. The opinions of the Advocates General have no legally-binding force; however, they do function as an important legal recommendation. As such, the paper is grounded in Conceptual Metaphor Theory and further works on metaphor as well as metaphor identification procedure, and metaphorical patterns along with the scenario approach. Additionally, the paper uses AntConc software for Corpus Analysis of twelve CJEU opinions written by six different Advocates General on issues pertaining to EU asylum and migration policy written between 2013 and 2025. From the twelve CJEU opinions, a total of 193 metaphorical expressions were found. These metaphorical expressions represented approximately 31 % percent of the 610 examples that were analyzed. Five primary source domains were identified, which were OBJECT, CONTAINER, SPACE, CONFLICT, and SPORT. Of the five identified source domains, OBJECT was the most productive source domain for metaphorical expression and accounted for 30.57 % of all metaphors. This result supports prior research findings. Notably absent from the Advocates General opinions were metaphorical representations of migration. Migration was instead addressed in the opinions of the Advocates General through abstraction of migration into abstract legal categories, for example *rights*, *cases* and *obligations*. Furthermore, references to either migrants or migration were not made in the opinions of the Advocates General. The lack of reference to migrants or migration through metaphorical representation may reflect the institutional genre of the opinion. Future research could expand the sample size of the corpus by examining additional opinions of Advocate Generals across multiple legal areas and time frames. Furthermore, future research may examine how other forms of discourse, for example public discourse differ or are similar when expressing metaphors for migration in order to demonstrate increased variety.

Santrauka

Šiame darbe nagrinėjamos metaforos Europos Sąjungos Teisingumo Teismo (ES Teisingumo Teismo) generalinių advokatų nuomonėse, ypatingą dėmesį skiriant šaltinių sritims (*source domains*), kuriose teisinės sąvokos yra metaforiškai struktūrizuotos šiame konkrečiame instituciniame žanre. Nors generalinių advokatų nuomonės nėra teisiškai įpareigojančios, jos turi didelę įtaką kaip kvalifikuotos teisinės rekomendacijos. Tyrimas yra pagrįstas konceptualiosios metaforos teorija ir tolesniais darbais apie metaforą, metaforų identifikavimo procedūra, metaforinių junginių ir scenarijų metodu. Metodologija apėmė tekstyno analizę naudojant „AntConc“, po kurios buvo rankiniu būdu nustatyti metaforiniai pasakymai, kurie vėliau suskirstyti pagal šaltinio sritį. Tekstyną sudaro dvylika generalinio advokato nuomonių dėl ES prieglobsčio ir migracijos bylų, kurias parengė šeši generaliniai advokatai 2013–2025 m. Buvo atlikta penkių žodžių dažnio paieška, šie žodžiai buvo *rights*, *case*, *law*, *asylum* ir *integration*. Iš viso iš 610 analizuotų pavyzdžių buvo nustatyta 193 metaforiniai pasakymai, o tai sudaro 31,63 % visų duomenų. Analizė nustatė penkias pagrindines šaltinių sritis: OBJEKTAS, KONTEINERIS, ERDVĖ, KONFLIKTAS ir SPORTAS, iš kurių OBJEKTAS turėjo daugiausiai metaforinių pasakymų, sudaręs 30,57 % visų metaforinių atvejų, kas atitinka ankstesnių tyrimų rezultatus. Taip pat buvo nustatytos keturios mažiau metaforinių pasakymų turinčios šaltinių sritys STATINYS, GALIA, PRAMOGOS ir SKYSTIS. Visos minėtos sritys buvo aptartos pasitelkiant pavyzdinius sakinius iš generalinių advokatų nuomonių. Visose srityse abstrakčios teisinės sąvokos nuosekliai suvokiamos per konkrečias, fizines patirtis, o tai patvirtina, kad metafora yra svarbi teisės specialistų mąstymo apie teisę ir jos perteikimo dalis. Rezultatai buvo palyginti su ankstesniais teisinio diskurso tyrimais ir atskleidė tiek panašumus, tiek skirtumus tarp žanrų. Ypač pastebimas buvo metaforinių modelių, tiesiogiai susijusių su migracijos sąvoka, nebuvimas. Generalinių advokatų nuomonėse migraciją traktuojama per abstrakčias teises kategorijas, tokias kaip teisės, bylos ir pareigos, o ne per tiesiogines nuorodas į migrantus ar migraciją kaip tokią, o tai atspindi šio žanro institucinį pobūdį. Ateityje atliekant tyrimus būtų galima išplėsti tekstyną, įtraukiant daugiau generalinių advokatų nuomonių iš įvairesnių teisės sričių ir laikotarpių, taip pat lyginant su kitais diskursais, kaip viešasis, kad rasti skirtumus ir panašumus, atrandant didesnę įvairovę.