



# The Extreme Right in Europe

Current Trends and Perspectives

Edited by

Uwe Backes and Patrick Moreau

Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht

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# Introduction

*Uwe Backes/Patrick Moreau*

The extreme right in Europe is no longer a terra incognita of research. On the contrary: scientific literature has become almost unmanageable. There are historic reasons for this. But this boom is also connected to the periodic new updates of the phenomenon: Election successes of respective parties, the vitality of militant scenes and subcultures, or the aftermath of frequently scandalizing forms of articulation arouse the interest of a broader public in the intellectual-cultural realm at times. As the imposing number of new publications shows, the strong interest in the topic continues to persist and does not subside.<sup>1</sup>

This applies especially to the numerous studies within the national framework. But there is no lack of transnational research of a comparative character any longer. Special emphasis is placed on research on the extreme right parties, their electoral basis, and the conditions for their success. Nevertheless, the state of the research shows a strong east-west gradient. For easily comprehensible reasons, the countries of Eastern Europe are generally less well researched than the Western ones. Concerning the non-partisan organized part of the spectrum, the yield is equally modest for the West as well as the East. Few authors have investigated militant scenes and subcultural phenomena transnationally. The number of those, who have, in recent years, studied cultural phenomena (ideologies, theory circles, artistic forms of expression etc.) in a comparative and transnational way, is even smaller. In spite of the numerous publications available within the national framework, the topic is, thus, by no means “exhausted”.

The plan for the present edition emerged in the run-up of the elections to the European Parliament that were held in all the EU-member states from June 4 to June 7, 2009. The 7<sup>th</sup> direct elections offered an opportunity for measuring

1 In view of the large number of publications, only the following editions of the years 2010/2011 will be named as *pars pro toto*: Botsch/Kopke/Rensmann/Schoeps (Eds.), *Politik des Hasses*; Eatwell/Goodwin (Eds.), *The New Extremism in 21st Century Britain*; Lebourg, *Le Monde vu de la plus extrême droite*; Mayer/Odehnal, *Aufmarsch*; Minkenberg (Eds.), *Historical Legacies*; Moroska, *Prawicowy populizm a eurosceptycyzm*; Pankowski, *The Populist Radical Right in Poland*; Rodrigues/Donselaar (Eds.), *Monitor Racisme & Extremisme*; Spöhr/Kolls (Eds.), *Rechtsextremismus in Deutschland und Europa*; Stöss, *Rechtsextremismus im Wandel*; Zick/Küpper/Hövermann, *Die Abwertung der Anderen*.

the conditions of power at the right wing of the national party systems and to comparatively classify the total potential. Most authors contributing to this volume met in Strasbourg in November 2009 to present the first results of their research, to hold discussions, and to prepare the proposed publication. This also comprised the coordination of topics and the central leading issues that were to result in an edition of the greatest possible evidential value and unity.

The presented volume aims at setting new accents in various ways and at expanding the state of knowledge on the European level. *Firstly*, all contributions use a comparative approach exceeding the national framework. The authors fall back on previous research on the countries in order to bring out differences and common denominators in selected European states. *Secondly*, partially due to the inclusion of states such as Turkey and Serbia, which are not EU-members yet, Eastern Europe is represented in an approximately balanced fashion although the state of research is much less favorable than for Western Europe. In spite of the existing gaps, hope seems justified that from this volume, impulses for further research efforts will arise. *Thirdly*, the research presented here does not only deal with partisan organized right-wing extremism and the election activities connected with it. It equally includes two additional broad realms: on the one hand, militant scenes and subcultures including some paramilitary phenomena in Eastern Europe, on the other hand, the broad realm of political ideas and cultural trends and their influence on European political culture. Here, again, these topics are treated in a comparative and transnational manner.

All the contributors to this book deal with their research subjects with the tools of the historian, the political scientist, and the social scientist as discriminatingly as possible and *sine ira et studio*. The selection of the topics in the realm of the “extreme right”, however, cannot do without a normative framework determining the direction and allowing for the setting of limits. The scale is based on the fundamental values last set down in the Treaty of Lisbon which all the member states are obligated to. They stand in a long tradition of constitutional history which in the examination of lack of freedom, intolerance, tyranny, and heteronomy led to an “agreement of fundamentals” as recorded in Par. 2: “The Union is founded on the values of respect for human dignity, freedom, democracy, equality, the rule of law and respect for human rights, including the rights of persons belonging to minorities. These values are common to the Member States in a society in which pluralism, non-discrimination, tolerance, justice, solidarity and equality between women and men prevail”.

The contributions in this volume deal with the impairment of these values which, for the most part, stem from an anti-egalitarian (and often at the same time anti-liberal) attitude that negates the ethos of fundamental human equality implicitly and explicitly. Aside of the sober analysis of the represented phenomena it is the intention of the publication to point out threats to the peaceful and liberal co-existence of mankind and to allow the judging of the extent of the endangerment. For this, it is necessary to go partially beyond the edge of the – in a narrower sense – “extreme right”, to examine transitional zones and to

grasp discriminations also where they are not accompanied by an unambiguous and in every respect disloyal attitude toward the basic values and rules of conduct of European constitutional states. In contrast, the issue of how the dangers pointed out in such a way can be confronted appropriately is being omitted.<sup>2</sup>

This publication has many fathers. It is foremost the product of a German-French cooperation, particularly between the Hannah-Arendt-Institut für Totalitarismusforschung an der Technischen Universität Dresden and the Laboratoire Cultures et Sociétés en Europe (University of Strasbourg/CNRS), whose director, Pascal Hintermeyer, has accompanied its creation with support and advice from the very first planning stages to going to print. The Laboratoire was the host of the Strasbourg Conference in November 2009 and also made possible the workshops and coordination meetings that followed, without which the project would hardly have gotten off the ground. The Cercle Gutenberg, which awarded the German publisher of the edition a “Chaire Gutenberg” in the research year 2010/2011, thus laying the foundation for research that went far beyond the framework of this edition, offered important support. Additional valuable assistance was offered by the Région Alsace and the partner cities Strasbourg and Dresden. The creation of this book was for the most part entrusted to the Hannah-Arendt-Institute. The editors are grateful to its editorial department and experienced publishing team led by Walter Heidenreich. Many expert translators transmitted French, German, and Czech texts into English like Rachel Ives, Elisabeth Orrison, Rita Schorpp, and Mirko Wittwar to name only a few. Special thanks also go to Isabel Eisfeld who maintained the contacts with the authors and edited the papers. Any possible flaws are the sole responsibility of the publishers.

2 The following publication contains important insights to this: Bertelsmann Stiftung (Ed.), *Strategies for Combating Right-Wing Extremism in Europe*.



# I. Parties and Elections



# The Populist Radical Right in European Elections 1979–2009

*Gilles Ivaldi*

## I. Introduction

The resurgence of populist radical right parties in European democracies has been one of the most scrutinized and thoroughly documented political phenomena in the past four decades. Few nations across the continent have proved totally immune to the development of this new breed of partisan actors located on the right end of the political spectrum.<sup>1</sup> The electoral consolidation of this party family in a number of Western European countries throughout the 1980s and the 1990s has been echoed with similar parties gaining substantial political ground in the younger post-transitional regimes of Central and Eastern Europe in the more recent period.

The overall significance of the populist radical right and the challenge it poses to liberal democracy can be judged from the vast amount of literature devoted to the phenomenon. Beginning in the late-1980s, scholars have striven to identify propitious conditions for the success of the populist radical right in the deep structural socio-economic, political and/or cultural changes that have taken place in post-industrial societies.<sup>2</sup>

For their part, comparative empirical studies have focused on factors that account for the observed variance in the electoral performances of those parties across time and space. Not surprisingly, immigration features prominently here.<sup>3</sup> In most cases, it is brought into explanation for the electoral fortunes of the populist radical right.<sup>4</sup> On the supply-side of electoral politics, these parties have successfully managed to frame multifaceted public concerns about immi-

1 This was demonstrated recently by the outbreak of populist radical right parties in some countries traditionally regarded as the most “tolerant” such as the Netherlands, Sweden or Finland.

2 See for instance Betz, *Right-Wing Populism*; Kitschelt, *Radical Right in Western Europe*; Ignazi, *The Silent Counter-Revolution*.

3 See Van der Brug/Fennema, *Protest or Mainstream?*

4 See Jackman/Volpert, *Conditions Favouring Parties*; Lubbers et al., *Extreme Right-Wing Voting*; Golder, *Explaining Variation*; Swank/Betz, *Globalization*; Jesuit et al., *Electoral Support for Extreme Right-Wing Parties*.



gration into a broader set of salient issues in the competitive space.<sup>5</sup> Their voters tend to be significantly more xenophobic and wary of ethnic or religious pluralism.<sup>6</sup> Simultaneously, a great deal of attention has been given to the “populist” dimension in the electoral appeal of those parties. Betz or Taggart, for instance, have emphasized the populist radical right’s ability to mobilize public resentment towards the political elite.<sup>7</sup> The examination of the broader political context has led to further consideration of historical, political opportunity structure and organizational factors behind the variation in levels of electoral support for those parties across European nations.<sup>8</sup>

So far, the bulk of the existing comparative research on populist radical right parties has been mainly concerned with first-order elections in Western Europe, although there has been growing interest in a broader pan-European perspective.<sup>9</sup> If only because of the quasi absence of non-European immigration, the analysis of party systems in CEE countries provides a most fertile ground for a theoretical (re-)assessment, refining and possible expansion of some of the core concepts that are customarily employed in the literature on Western Europe.<sup>10</sup> These efforts are in line with the general assumption that populist radical right parties in former communist countries share some core ideological similarities with their Western counterparts notwithstanding the regional peculiarities in the historical transformation of post-communist political systems.<sup>11</sup> This is true, for instance, of the issues of territoriality, fierce anti-Communism or widespread political corruption in the East. There are also interesting prospects for future research in the functional analogy whereby hostility towards neighboring countries and negative attitudes towards inner minorities in Central and Eastern Europe are satisfactorily employable as substitutes for anti-immigrant feelings in the West.<sup>12</sup>

Implications of populist radical right success are far reaching and evidently go beyond the sole academic sphere. At the political level, there are well-founded concerns with the policy impact by those parties, either because of their joining national coalition governments such as in Italy, Austria, Slovakia, Poland or the Netherlands, or simply due to their ability to exert influence on mainstream pol-

5 See Rydgren, *Is Extreme Right-Wing Populism Contagious?*; Givens, *Voting Radical Right*.

6 See Arzheimer/Carter, *Political Opportunity Structures*; and his chapter in this volume.

7 Cf. Betz, *Right-Wing Populism*; Taggart, *New Populist Parties in Western Europe*.

8 See for instance Arzheimer/Carter, *Political Opportunity Structures*; Art, *The Organizational Origins*.

9 See Norris, *Radical Right*; see also Mammone et al., *The Extreme Right in Contemporary Europe*.

10 See Bustikova, *The Extreme Right in Eastern Europe*; Stefanova, *Ethnic Nationalism*.

11 See also Mudde, *Populist Radical Right Parties in Europe*, p. 4.

12 See Kopeček, *The Far Right in Europe*.

icy making while remaining in opposition.<sup>13</sup> Such concerns have also become central to international bodies, above all the European Union.<sup>14</sup>

The European dimension is of further importance because of the contribution by post-Maastricht Euroscepticism and rejection of supra-nationality to the electoral dynamics of the populist radical right on both the supply and demand sides. Most parties of the populist radical right take a negative stance towards the European Union, although the intensity of their opposition varies across time and space.<sup>15</sup> As will be discussed, the European Parliament is also an arena that allows if not encourages cross-national co-operation by parties of the populist radical right.

The objective of this chapter is to examine the fluctuation in the electoral performances of populist radical parties in European elections across all Western and Eastern member states. The simultaneity in the 2004 and 2009 waves of elections permits to examine cross-national factors of variation in the electoral support for those parties. It also allows to look more specifically at how European elections are linked to the national election cycle and the degree of constancy they exhibit with the political developments in the domestic arena. Because of the predominance of “second-order” dynamics, it is of particular interest to assess the “bellwether” status of European ballots and the extent to which the latter provide specific political opportunity structures for parties of the populist radical right.

Based upon one commonly used academic definition of the populist radical right idiosyncrasy, this chapter suggests a brief account of the presence of this party family in European parliament since the first set of Euro elections in 1979, together with a political mapping of its location in the collaborative space within the European arena. The second section of this chapter then looks more specifically at the status and role of EP elections within the national election cycle, and addresses the issue of regularity and change in the existing inter-relations between European and national first-order elections across EU-member states.

- 13 Cf. Albertazzi/McDonnell, *Twenty-First Century Populism; Centre-Right Parties and Immigration and Integration Policy in Europe*, Special Issue of the *Journal of European Public Policy*, 15 (2008) 3.
- 14 See for instance Fieschi, *European Institutions*. Let us recall that in 2000 the controversial forming of the ÖVP-FPO coalition in Austria had led to the EU taking unprecedented action and issuing temporary diplomatic sanctions against Schüssel’s “Schwarz-Blau” government. In June 2006, the European Parliament voted a text on the “Increase in racist and homophobic violence in Europe” whereby it expressed anxiety about how “some political parties, including those in power in a number of countries or well represented at local level, have deliberately placed issues of racial, ethnic, national, religious and gay intolerance at the heart of their agenda, allowing political leaders to use language that incites racial and other forms of hatred and stokes extremism in society”. European Parliament, Document no. P6\_TA(2006)0273, [http://www.europarl.europa.eu/meetdocs/2009\\_2014/documents/ta/23/04/2009%20-%200273/p6\\_ta-prov\(2009\)0273\\_de.pdf](http://www.europarl.europa.eu/meetdocs/2009_2014/documents/ta/23/04/2009%20-%200273/p6_ta-prov(2009)0273_de.pdf).
- 15 See Mudde, *Populist Radical Right Parties in Europe*, pp. 158–183.

## II. Political mapping of the populist radical right in European parliament

Any attempt to examine parties of the populist radical right empirically and comparatively is inevitably confronted with the issue of concept formation, the lack of inter-subjective agreement on case categorization and more generally the absence of a commonly accepted perimeter for the phenomenon.<sup>16</sup> The plethora of literature on the subject has long identified major shortcomings in delineating clear boundaries around the different manifestations in this heterogeneous party family. The diversity in the anthropology and trajectories of its members within their respective party system is another factor that has hindered the many efforts to achieve a single definition for this party family.

A general debate about the merits and limitations of existing definitions would clearly fall beyond the scope of this chapter. The analysis presented here adopts the theoretical framework proposed by Mudde in his conceptualization of the populist radical right's core ideological features combining nativism, authoritarianism and populism.<sup>17</sup> This definition allows for a categorization of a number of parties that can be identified as members of the populist radical right family as well as some "borderline" cases. For example, it provides the criteria that are needed to assess the location of newly formed right-wing populist or anti-establishment actors with strong anti-immigrant appeal such as the Dutch LPF and PVV or the *True Finns* in the Finnish context.

Figure 1 below shows the populist radical right parties and their position in the various networks of cross-national collaboration that have developed in-and-outside the European Parliament since the late 1970s. Historically, the French FN has been at the centre of gravity of this constellation of parties, together with the Austrian FPÖ and the *Flemish Bloc* (VB). The centrality of the FN's position is consistent with both the identification of the party as perhaps one of the most typical – or least debated – instances of the populist radical right, and its leading role in a number of attempts at unifying nationalist parties across Europe.

Yet as can be seen, there are only partial overlaps between academic classification and those parties' actual location on the EU political map. Their actual spread shows a greater deal of heterogeneity. To date some well-established representatives of the populist radical right family such as the Greek *Popular Orthodox Rally* (La. O. S.), the *Danish People's Party* (DF), the *League of Polish Families* (LPR) or the Italian *Lega Nord* (LN) have not entered formal co-operation with other core members such as the French FN, the Austrian FPÖ or, more recently, the *British National Party* (BNP). Whilst Euroscepticism and anti-federalism are clear common denominators to the bulk of populist radical right parties represented in European institutions, movements cluster into distinct

16 See Kitschelt, *Radical Right in Western Europe*; Zaslove, *The Populist Radical Right*.

17 See Mudde, *Populist Radical Right Parties in Europe*.

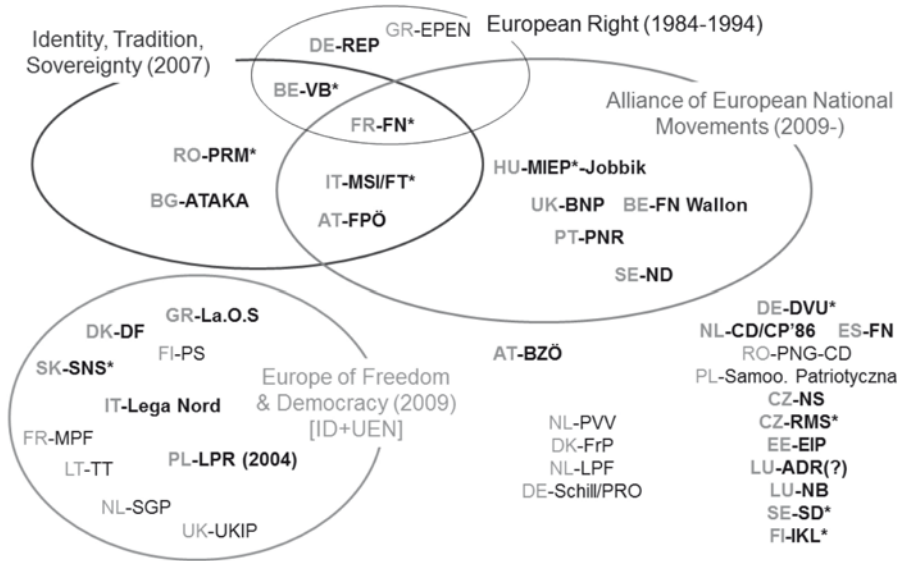


Figure 1: A political map of the European populist radical right

In bold: “Populist radical right parties” as identified by Mudde, *Populist Radical Right Parties in Europe*, pp. 305–308.

\*Current or past member of EURONAT

political groups, mostly the short-lived Identity, Tradition, Sovereignty (ITS) and Europe of Freedom and Democracy (EFD).<sup>18</sup> In the latter group, populist radical right movements coalesce with another heterogeneous collection of right-wing anti-federalist Eurosceptics such as Lithuania’s *Order and Justice* (TT), the French *Mouvement pour la France* (MPF), the *Dutch Reformed Political Party* (SGP) or the UK *Independence Party*. Some parties with a strong anti-immigration agenda such as the now defunct Danish *Progress Party* (FrP) or Dutch *List Pim Fortuyn* (LPF), as well as the Dutch *Party for Freedom* (PVV), distance themselves from either group of actors.

Outside the European parliament, the evolution for instance of the EURONAT network initiated by French FN leader Jean-Marie Le Pen in 1997 shows similar trends of instability and lack of unity over time although the make-up of the organization would appear to be more homogeneous with regard to its constitutive parties’ political pedigree.<sup>19</sup> In October 2005, EURONAT

18 Formed in July 2009, the EFD group brought together former Eurosceptic “Independence/Democracy” (ID) and “Union for a Europe of Nations” (UEN) outgoing parliamentary parties in 2009. Following the break up of the ITS group in November 2007, most populist radical right parties will seat as non-attached members (non-inscrits) in the 2009–2014 European parliament.

19 With the exception of “Social National Party of Ukraine” (SNPU) and the “Italian New Force” (FN), all current or past members of EURONAT are listed as populist radical right parties by Mudde, *Populist Radical Right Parties in Europe*.

comprised six member parties in Western Europe (French FN, the *British National Party*, the Dutch *New Right*, the Italian *Fiamma Tricolore*, the Swedish *National Democrats* and the *National Democracy* in Spain). In the late 1990s, the pan-European network had managed to bring together a larger number of organizations (n=10), including Central and Eastern European participants such as the Hungarian MIÉP, the *Greater Romania Party* or the *Slovak National Party*, which subsequently left over political disagreement.

The most recent attempt at federating nationalist parties within the Alliance of European National Movements (AENM) represents another significant reshuffling of the formal agreement that had underpinned the creation of the ITS group in 2007 or the reactivation of EURONAT two years earlier. The Alliance was formed in October 2009 under joint leadership of French MEP Gollnisch and *British National Party*'s chairman Griffin. Membership was expanded from seven to nine national parties at the organization's first general assembly in Strasbourg in June 2010 with the addition of the Portuguese PNR and Swedish *National Democrats* (ND) (see Figure 1).<sup>20</sup> In line with the general Eurosceptic orientation of all previous nationalist networks, the common declaration issued by the Alliance insisted on the "creation of a Europe of free, independent and equal nations in the framework of a confederation of sovereign nation states, refraining from taking decisions on matters properly taken by states themselves", while calling simultaneously for the "rejection of any attempt to create a centralist European super state".

Reasons for this heterogeneity in political positioning by the populist radical right are diverse and essentially practical rather than ideological. First, the accumulation of unsuccessful attempts at unifying the pan-European nationalist camp results from the prevalence of strong and often diverging national interests. Antagonistic views were revealed for instance in the dispute that sparked the collapse of the ITS group after Italian MEP Alessandra Mussolini played the anti-Romanian card in alleging a relationship between immigration and criminality in domestic politics. Despite clear ideological convergence on some key socio-cultural issues, there have also been strategic image-seeking concerns that have prevented party leaders from collaborating with some of their potentially more "fiendish" counterparts in Europe. A controversial figure in the Netherlands, PVV chairman Geert Wilders does for instance take great care in distancing himself from other populist radical right leaders in Europe.

Lastly and perhaps most importantly, the reminiscence of old historical irredentist or ethnic disputes has precluded forming more stable and broader cross-national federations of parties.<sup>21</sup> This had already been the case within the group of the European Right between 1989 and 1994 where longstanding disagree-

20 The Alliance also comprises the All-Ukrainian Union "Svoboda" which is classified as a populist radical right party by Mudde, *Populist Radical Right Parties in Europe*, p. 308.

21 Mareš, *The Extreme Right in Eastern Europe*.

ments between the German *Republikaner* and Italian MSI over the South Tyrol region had complicated efforts of pragmatic co-operation in the European parliament. At the time of building the Alliance of European national movements in October 2009, leaders of the Hungarian MIÉP-*Jobbik* coalition fiercely rejected any attempt at bringing in the Romanian PRM or Bulgarian *Ataka* because of their strong nationalist anti-ethnic Hungarian agenda. Similarly, the increased salience of the linguistic cleavage in Belgium made very difficult formal collaboration between the Walloon FN and its Flemish VB counterpart.

### III. The electoral weight of the pan-European populist radical right: 1979–2009

Is the populist radical right on the rise on the European stage? To some extent, the answer to this question again depends on which individual parties are counted as members of the populist radical right family. Performances in Euro elections by those parties over the 1979–2009 period are summarized in Figure 2. As can be seen, the populist radical right remains a relatively stable yet marginal transnational political force averaging less than 6 % of the vote across all seven waves of EP elections since the late 1970s (slightly more in 2009 if we include the Dutch PVV as shown on the chart). The unweighted conditional means displayed in Figure 2 show no clear discernible trend over time and at the very least dispel the myth of an ineluctable electoral growth of extreme forces on the right of the European political spectrum.<sup>22</sup>

Looking at seat ratios as a more proportional measure of electoral impact relative to population size across member states leads to similar conclusions. In the last set of elections in June 2009, populist radical right parties *stricto sensu* won 31 seats (4.2 %), a proportion very similar to that achieved by those parties in the late 1980s and throughout the 1990s prior to Eastern enlargement of the EU. Using a broader definition that would encompass borderline cases such as the Dutch PVV or, even more extensively perhaps, the *True Finns* (PS), a total of thirteen parties received 38 seats in the last European elections, that is 5.2 % of all MEPs compared with 4.8 % in the previous wave of 2004/07. This can be contrasted for instance with the outcome of the 2009 elections for the *European Green Party* or the *European United Left–Nordic Green Left* (EUL/NGL) whose member organizations totalled 46 seats (6.3 %, up to 55 seats if we include the *European Free Alliance*) and 35 seats (4.7 %) respectively.

However, this relatively modest electoral impact should not conceal a substantial amount of inter-country variance and the changing balance of forces

22 Nor do we find significant differences if we consider the regional divide between Western and Eastern Europe across the 2004–2009 waves of European elections. In 2004–07, the populist radical right achieved 4.5 and 5.5 % of the EP vote in Western and Eastern member states respectively; in June 2009, comparable figures were 6.4 and 6.0 %.

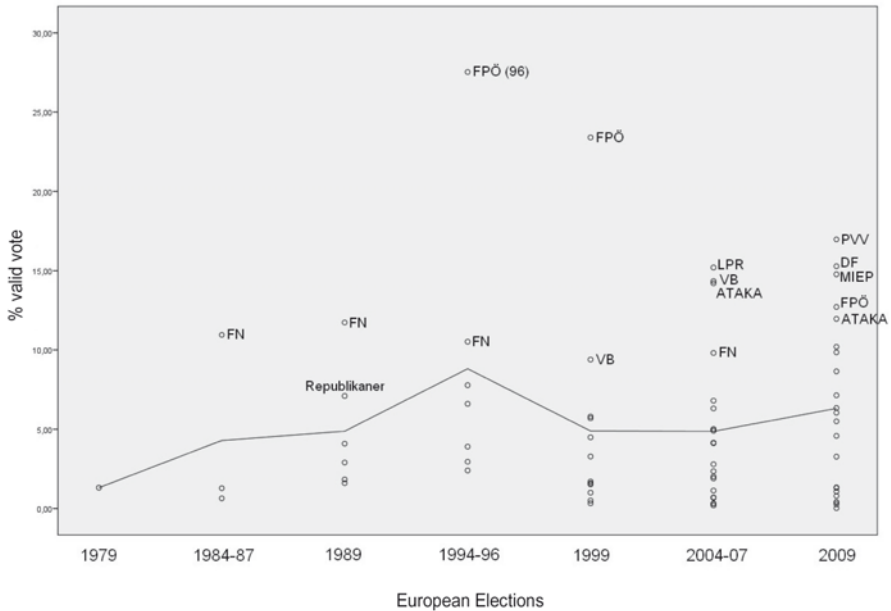


Figure 2: Vote cast for populist radical right parties in European elections, 1979–2009

within the populist radical right family. Table 1 below has a brief summary of election results for this group of parties in the 2009 and 2004 EU parliamentary contests. In recent years, some of the well-established members of the populist radical right have experienced electoral setbacks or decline. This is the case for instance in Austria where the FPÖ-BZÖ duopoly has only recovered part of the former strengths of the unitary FPÖ in the 1990s. Similarly the populist radical right has lost ground in Flanders (VB), France (FN), Bulgaria (Ataka) and most dramatically in Poland where the *League of Polish Families* (LPR) joined the Libertas coalition and polled a mere 1.1 % of the vote in 2009 as opposed to 15.2 % in the 2004 ballot. A flash phenomenon in the 1989 Euro election, the *Republikaner* (REP) have become largely irrelevant to German politics since the mid-1990s.

This contrasts with the strengths of other parties such as the Italian *Lega Nord* (LN), the *Greater Romania Party* (PRM) or the *Danish People's Party* (DF), which have all made substantial electoral gains in the 2009 EP elections. In Italy, the *Lega Nord* benefited from the polarization of its proprietary immigration and law-and-order issues in the domestic arena.<sup>23</sup> Bossi's party increased its

23 The 2009 European election took place concurrently to the parliamentary debate over the most contentious centre-right government's bill criminalising irregular immigration

share of the vote to 10.2 % (compared with 5 and 8.3 % in the 2004 European and 2008 general elections respectively) for the most part at the expenses of its dominant coalition partner, Berlusconi's *Popolo della Libertà*. In Romania, the *Greater Romania Party* (PRM) coalesced with nationalist right *New Generation Party - Christian Democrat* ("Partidul Noua Generație - Creștin Democrat"). The tactical alliance with Becali's PNG-CD allowed the PRM to re-stage the forefront of national politics winning 8.6 % of the vote and electing three representatives to the European Parliament after the party had lost parliamentary representation in the previous general election of November 2008 (3.1 % of the vote in the Chamber of Deputies). Lastly, in Denmark, Eurosceptic and anti-immigration *Danish People's Party* (DF) won a large victory under the lead of young candidate Messerschmidt by polling 15.3 % of the total vote, up from 6.8 % in the 2004 EP election. The successful campaign by the populist radical right was consistent with the uninterrupted rise of the party in Danish politics since its creation in the mid-1990s.<sup>24</sup>

Beside those traditional members of the populist radical right family, a number of 'new' political actors have gained momentum in 2009. In Greece, the *Popular Orthodox Rally* (La.O.S.) has received 7.1 % of the vote cast. In Hungary, the *Justice and Life Party* (MIÉP) has joined forces with the *Jobbik* movement to receive 14.8 % of the vote coming third in the polls. The populist radical right vote was boosted by the deep economic crisis and the anti-incumbent vote that was expressed against the ruling *Socialist Party* in office since 2002. In the UK, Nick Griffin's *British National Party* (BNP) has made entry into European parliament for the first time with 6 % of the vote and two seats, as have the *National Party* (SNS) in Slovakia or the *True Finns* (PS) in Finland. In the Finnish case, the high performance achieved by Soini's party in the most recent EP election (9.8 %) follows the acceleration in the upward trend observed since the 1999 general election at both national and local level, as revealed by the party's score in the 2008 local council elections (5.4 % as opposed to only 0.9 % four years earlier). In the Netherlands, Geert Wilders' *Party for Freedom* (PVV) has come second in the polls behind the *Christian-Democrats* and won an impressive 17 % and four EU parliamentary seats.

and the right for citizens to organise anti-crime vigilante patrols. The bill was approved by the Lower Chamber on 13 May 2009 with a majority vote of confidence of 316 to 238. The law was passed by the Senate in July 2009.

- 24 It was boosted by controversies over the possibility of holding a Euro referendum and the July 2008 ruling by the European Court of Justice against the tightening of Denmark's immigration laws that had resulted from the DF offering parliamentary support to the minority centre-right government.



Table 1: The populist radical right in the 2009 European elections

Country	Party	Full name and acronym	% 2009	Seats 2009	% 2004	Seats 2004
AT-Austria	Freedom Party Alliance for the Future of Austria	Freiheitliche Partei Österreichs, FPÖ Bündnis Zukunft Österreich, BZÖ	12.71 4.58	2 -	6.31 -	2 -
BE-Belgium	Flemish Interest National Front	Vlaams Belang, VB Front national, FN	9.85 1.33	2 -	14.34 2.79	2 -
BG-Bulgaria	National Union Attack	Ataka	11.96	2	14.20 <sup>(d)</sup>	2
CZ-Czech Republic	National Party Workers' Party	Národní strana, NS Dělnická strana, DS	0.26 1.07	- -	0.67 -	- -
DE-Germany	National Democratic Party; German People's Union Republicans	Nationaldemokratische Partei Deutschlands, NPD (Die Nationalen); Deutsche Volksumion, DVU Republikaner, REP	0.40 1.30	- -	0.90 1.90	- -
DK-Denmark	Danish People's Party <sup>(c)</sup>	Dansk Folkeparti, DF	15.28	2	6.80	2
FI-Finland	True Finns <sup>(a)</sup> The Finnish People's Blue-Whites	Perussuomalaiset, PS Suomen Kansan Sinivalkoiset, SKS	9.79 -	3 -	0.54 0.20	3 -
FR-France	National Front	Front national, FN	6.34	3	9.81	3
GR-Greece	Popular Orthodox Rally	Laikós Orthódoxos Synagermós, La.O.S.	7.14	2	4.12	2
HU-Hungary	Hungarian Justice and Life Party	Magyar Igazság és Élet Pártja, MIÉP-Jobbik	14.77	3	2.35	3
IT-Italy	Northern League <sup>(b)</sup> The Right-Tricolor Flame	Lega Nord La Destra-Fiamma Tricolore	10.20 0.79	9 -	5.00 0.70	9 -
LV-Latvia	All for Latvia!	Partija Visu Latvijai!	2.81	-	-	-
MT-Malta	National Action	Azzjoni Nazzjonali, AN	0.64	-	-	-
NL-Netherlands	Party for Freedom <sup>(a)</sup>	Partij voor de Vrijheid, PVV	16.97	4	-	-
PL-Poland	League of Polish Families	Liga Polskich Rodzin, LPR	1.14	-	15.20	-

Country	Party	Full name and acronym	% 2009	Seats 2009	% 2004
PT-Portugal	National Renewal Party	Partido Nacional Renovador, PNR	0.40	-	0.30
RO-Romania	Greater Romania Party	Partidul Romania Mare, PRM	8.65	3	4.15 <sup>(d)</sup>
SE-Sweden	Swedish Democrats	Sverigedemokraterna, SD	3.27	-	1.13
SI-Slovenia	Slovene National Party	Slovenska nacionalna stranka, SNS	2.86	-	5.00
SK-Slovakia	Slovak National Party <sup>(b)</sup>	Slovenská národná strana, SNS	5.50	1	2.01
UK-United Kingdom	British National Party	British National Party, BNP	6.04	2	4.90

(a) Parties not considered by Mudde, Populist Radical Right Parties in Europe, Appendix A: pp. 305–308;

(b) incumbent at time of EU election;

(c) parliamentary support to the ruling coalition;

(d) 2007 European election.

#### IV. European elections and the national election cycle

Cross-national variability in the electoral performances of the pan-European populist radical right needs of course to be considered within each particular national election cycle. The “second-order” model formulated by Reif/Schmitt in the early 1980s emphasizes some key features of EP elections in relation to the political situation of the first-order arena. One central claim by the authors is that European elections are in fact largely dominated by the domestic agenda.<sup>25</sup> Another original proposition of particular relevance to the present analysis is that voters are more prone to cast “expressive” votes for peripheral and fringe parties in European contests. As suggested by Reif in his follow-up study of the 1979 and 1984 sets of Euro elections, the tendency by voters to “follow their heart” in second-order elections benefits smaller, new and more radical movements whose prospects in European elections are often brighter than those of established parties.<sup>26</sup>

Because of their strong anti-establishment appeal, populist radical right parties are propositionally in a favorable position to mobilize dissatisfied voters, even more so in second-order ballots where citizens have a greater propensity to “vote with their boots” against mainstream parties. Populist radical right parties could therefore be expected to perform somehow better in European elections than in contiguous national contest. In countries with majoritarian electoral systems in principal elections such as the UK or France, the change to proportional representation in EP elections is another factor that might further boost votes for those parties in the second-order arena. Lastly, the Eurosceptic focus of the populist radical right political platform might appeal to those voters who in varying proportions across member states tend to disagree with the European integration process generally supported by larger parties of government.

One way to test the populist radical right party short-term gain hypothesis is to compare aggregate national election results for domestic and European elections at the level of individual parties. A simple calculation can be performed by looking at differences in party size from the general election immediately preceding each European contest. On average, performances in EP elections represent a modest 0.7 % improvement on the parties’ showings in the preceding first-order contest ( $sd=3.9$ ,  $n=69$  over the 1979–2009 period). Alternatively, in order to examine more closely the extent to which European elections are independent from the first-order electoral cycle, one can choose to look at the previous but also the subsequent first-order ballot. Where data are available, a hypothetical “mid-term” performance can be computed by averaging the populist radical right’s electoral returns in general elections immediately preceding and following each European contest. Actual scores in European ballots are then

25 See Reif/Schmitt, *Nine National Second-Order Elections*.

26 See Reif, *National Electoral Cycles and European Elections 1979 and 1984*, pp. 244–255.

contrasted with this measure of expected electoral performances between adjoining general elections. Populist radical right parties win on average 0.4 % more than their mean score in the two concomitant first-order elections, within substantial range and with a significant amount of variance across time and space (sd=3.1, min=-7.45, max=7.28, n=60 over the 1979–2010 period of time).

Put in comparative and longitudinal perspective, the observed variance in party performances between first and second-order elections gives only partial evidence of any such political opportunity structure that would foster the populist radical right vote in European ballots. The data fail to reveal systematic sweeps in favor of those parties. At country level, cases of recurring European electoral bounties are relatively few. They include the *National Union Attack* (ATAKA) in Bulgaria, the Greek *Popular Orthodox Rally* (La.O.S.) and to a much lesser extent irrelevant fringe parties such as the *Workers' Party* (DS) in the Czech Republic or the *National Renewal Party* (PNR) in Portugal or the Italian *MSI-Fiamma Tricolore* following the 1995 breakaway from Fini's *Alleanza Nazionale* (AN).

Demarcation is perhaps clearer in Britain and Germany where performances by the populist radical right are more compatible with the second-order hypothesis of short-term deviations in electoral choices away from traditional party allegiances. In Germany, the *Republikaner* (REP) have enjoyed higher levels of popular support in European elections compared with concomitant domestic contests. In Britain, the change in the electoral system from FPTP to party list prior to the 1999 election has certainly created a favorable structure of opportunity for minor parties, which has benefited the BNP and eventually led to the party's first notable success in returning two MEPs in 2009.

In contrast, there are cases where populist radical right parties tend to underperform in European elections if not simply fail to enter the competition. For example, the small *Estonian Independence Party* (EIP) did not run in the 2004 and 2009 EP elections despite being present in the 2003 and 2007 general elections. In Italy, the electoral showings of the *Lega Nord* and predecessor party *Lega Lombarda* were poorer in European elections throughout the 1990s, at a time when the party had not yet completed its process of ideological radicalization on immigration. Similarly, the *Sweden Democrats* (SD), the *Slovak National Party* (SNS) or the *Danish People's Party* (DF) have often underperformed in EP contests although, as discussed above, the most recent 2009 election in Denmark showed a sharp increase in Euro votes for Kjærsgaard's party.

There are of course limitations to such a rudimentary approach. The second-order model draws attention to the temporal location of European elections in the domestic electoral sequence. Using a simple difference assumes a "smoothed" linear trend between elections whereas there have long been suggestions of the existence of more complex popularity cycles for governments and opposition parties.<sup>27</sup> The propensity for disillusioned voters to defect to third

27 See Tufte, *Determinants of the Outcomes of Midterm Congressional Elections*; Schmitt, *The European Parliament Elections*.

parties in rebellion against incumbent and/or mainstream opposition parties may be expected to vary according to whether the European election takes place during the so-called “honeymoon period” just after the general election or, on the contrary, at mid-term when government popularity usually reaches a nadir.

Figure 3 below shows the distribution of changes in populist radical right parties’ scores compared with the preceding first-order election based on the location of the European contest within the national electoral cycle. The traditional first-order popularity cycle hypothesis of different effects at different points in time is materialized by the third-order polynomial curve in Figure 3. As can be seen, however, there is only limited support for the hypothesis of consistently higher gains for the populist radical right in cases of European elections taking place around mid-term, as opposed to smaller changes either earlier or later in the domestic cycle closer to general elections. Such variability across the cycle is exemplified in a number of cases. In Austria, both the 1996 and 2009 elections were contested early in the national cycle and yet gave very contrasted outcomes for the FPÖ when compared with the party’s score in the 1995 and 2008 general elections (+5.6 and -4.8 respectively). In Hungary, the *Justice and Life Party* (MIÉP) significantly increased its share of the European vote (+12.6) in June 2009 only a few months ahead of the 2010 general election, whereas the party had lost 2 % in the mid-term 2004 EP contest. In the 2007 Euro elections, the *Greater Romania Party* had suffered heavy electoral losses on its preceding performance in the 2004 general election (-9.5 %) in the final quarter of the national cycle. In 2009, on the other hand, Tudor’s movement increased its score by more than 5 % during the honeymoon period for the coalition government that had emerged from the 2008 legislative election a few months earlier.

As briefly alluded to in the opening section of this chapter, a whole host of interrelated structural socio-economic and political opportunity factors help account for the variation in support for the populist radical right across elections. If only because of the existing links between first and second-order electoral arenas in most countries, none of those factors can be considered peculiar to European elections alone – with the exception perhaps of changes that might take place in the electoral system for EP contests. The connection between the parties’ ups and downs in EP elections and the next general elections will be examined below. Attention should be briefly given here to shorter-term variables that might also affect the populist radical right vote in European elections.

First, the differentiation process that occurs in the European election party system should not be overlooked. Across several EU member states, the shape of the competitive space is temporarily altered by single-issue parties entering the European electoral arena. In some cases, these actors compete directly for the electoral constituency of the populist radical right on issues of national sovereignty and the rejection of EU “bureaucracy”. The breed of anti-EU movements in Scandinavia such as the *Danish June Movement* (“JuniBevægelsen”) or *Swedish June List* (“Junilistan”) is one instance of single-issue parties with a broad appeal to cross-sections of the electorate in European elections, which

