

LEFT-RIGHT, LEFT-RIGHT

- Economic Policies of Eight European Populist
Radical Right Wing Parties

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ABSTRACT

The recent electoral success of contemporary populist radical right wing parties in Europe resulted in an increased scholarly interest. Despite the large number of studies on the nature of such parties and the voting behavior behind them, their economic agenda has not yet deserved thorough academic attention. This thesis content analyzes the electoral programs of eight European populist radical right parties – both from Western and Central-Eastern Europe – and measures their stance on economic policy. It empirically supports the theory that contemporary populist radical parties rather pursue protectionist, leftist, welfare-chauvinist economic policy. It concludes we can expect more emphasis on the economy in their political agenda in the future. The thesis also points out that the left-right dichotomy has not faded over time, while stresses the relevance of multidimensionality in measuring party positions.

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

During recent decades populist radical right wing parties have been surging in popularity in many countries throughout Europe. In some cases, they are gaining not only legislative seats, but are also enjoying all the opportunities offered by ministerial offices. Such popularity that was achieved by emblematic radical, populist leaders such as Jörg Haider, Jean-Marie Le Pen or Pim Fortuyn has been never seen before in the post WWII democracies. The new phenomena and all topics it puts on the table have raised scholarly and public interest alike.

Nothing can describe more the relevance of a subject than the amount of literature on it. In this regard, the populist radical right wing party family is an absolute winner. The books and articles published on the phenomena only in the last couple of years may exceed in number of those written on any other party family ever. However, research has focused mainly on the question, *why* radical right wing parties have become such relevant actors in the political arena. Studies have discussed either the phenomena that triggered the crescendo/appearance of these, new type of radical parties or the voting behavior that exists behind them. Only little work has been done on the parties themselves and on their electoral programs, especially from a comparative perspective. Moreover, most of the studies that examine party ideology focus mainly on issues like migration policy, attitude towards the European Union or the historical roots of the given party in the light of fascism. To the best of my knowledge, few works, however, have yet been done on their economic policies, and no complex work has examined the question from a comparative point of view.

In the first half of the 1990s, Betz (1994) and Kitschelt (1995) claimed that radical right wing parties pursue neo-liberal economic philosophy, and are calling for smaller state, less state expenditure, and lower taxes. The current political discourse, though not has provided sufficient empirical research on it, tend to question this assertion. In this thesis, I will be examining whether the standpoint of the two eminent scholars is still applicable, or those who are questioning it are right.

Henceforth, I am going to scrutinize the electoral manifesto of eight relevant European radical right parties and examine their stance on economic issues. Four of the eight parties are Western European; four of them are Central-Eastern European. The aim of my paper is three-folded:

- 1) to position these groups of radical right parties in the economic left-right dimension,
- 2) to see whether there are any noteworthy differences between their economic standpoints and
- 3) to discuss what significance economic policy has – or may have in the future – in their political agenda.

I will also discuss the left-right dimension as a possible instrument of illustrating party positions. I will be exploring its origin, meaning and development and will ask if the Downsian spatial theory in its original format provides the best option for attitude measurement. I will examine the possible use of a second dimension that could serve as a tool for a more sophisticated positioning of political parties. For exemplifying the implication of this second dimension, it is essential to understand the nature of populist radical parties. Therefore, by screening the literature on it, I will touch upon the question of their character as well.

During my research I am planning to apply qualitative methods and use a comparative content-analytic approach. For laying down economic policy positions of the examined parties I am going to scrutinize party manifestos, other official party programs and documents together with academic sources. I will concentrate on substantive elements of economic policy: the role of the state in the economy, taxation, wealth redistribution, trade regulation, national ownership, labor market, equality or the question of individual versus collective responsibility etc.

CHAPTER 2: MAPPING POLITICAL PARTY POSITIONS

With the emerging significance of political parties in representative democracies, scaling and analyzing party positions on various policy issues have increasingly caught scholarly interest in the last thirty years. Measuring party positions is a vital and delicate tool for the science of comparative politics. The results of these researches have significance in the practical political affairs as well. Coalition formation, prediction on how long a multi-party government will rule and over what issues disagreement between them may arise could be estimated by their place in the political space.

Despite its importance, mapping party positions has proved to be a difficult mission. In the last thirty years, various methodologies have been developed in order to achieve this task the most appropriately.

The current arsenal of political science includes for instance mass surveys of the electorate (Barnes, 1971; Middendorp, 1989; Evans et al, 1996, Todosijevic, 2004), expert surveys of country specialists (Castles and Mair, 1984; Huber and Inglehart, 1995; Benoit and Laver, 2006) and content analysis of official party programs as well. The latter can be divided into hand coded (Budge, 2001; Coffé, 2008) and computerized research of party manifestos (Manifesto Research Group/Comparative Manifestos Project).

Each of these approaches clearly has its own shortcomings as well as advantages. All of them buy “the strength in some aspects of measurement quality at the cost of measurement quality in other aspects” (Volgens, 2007). Though methodology can differ significantly, as of today, almost all comparisons have taken place in the left-right dimensions of the electoral competition, as it is considered being “the core currency of political exchange in Western democracies” (Huber and Inglehart, 1995).

CHAPTER 3: THE USE OF THE LEFT-RIGHT SCALE IN POLITICS AND POLITICAL SCIENCE

3.1 The origins of the concept

The French Revolution in the late 18th century not only was relevant because of the dramatic transformation of the French society. From the point of view of this paper, it was also significant as the 1791 Legislative Assembly brought two smashing terms into the political terminology. These terms have been defining political discourse ever since.

According to historians, seating arrangements of the Assembly referred to the attitude towards the monarchy: those favored it were sitting on the right side of the chamber, while those opposed it were sitting on the left. With the publish of Anthony Downs' determining work *The Statics and Dynamics of Party Ideologies* (1957) the labels 'right' and 'left' reappeared again in the political discourse and started their glorious career.

Thirty years before Downs, Harold Hotelling introduced his famous conception – later refined by Arthur Smithies – on how two competing firm relate to each other. According to him, “two competing firms would converge toward adjacent positions at the middle of the market” “until equilibrium is reached” as “consumers at a given point of the market will buy a fixed amount of goods from whichever of two producers is closer and, hence, can offer the lower transportation costs to consumers located at that point” (Stokes, 1963). This established the

theory of *spatial competition*, which later was used by Downs for analyzing political space and ideologies.

In his work, Downs (1957) applied Hotelling's linear scale left-right market to party positioning and political behavior. He assumed that political preferences can be positioned from left to right if agreed upon the characteristics of the two ends of the scale. According to him, the two extremes should be determined by one central issue, namely the degree of governmental intervention in the economy. As he explains: "the left end of the scale represents full government control and the right end means a completely free market" (Downs, 1957).

Party competition and voting behavior have since been widely interpreted along this uni-dimensional scale and the terms *left-right* and the use of spatial theory is still central topics of political discourse.

3.2 The meaning of 'left' and 'right' in the modern political discourse

Even though the concepts of left and right are commonly and extensively used terms in the political discourse, their meaning, however, "is multifaceted at best, elusive at worst, and - over time and across polities - quite divergent" (Arian and Shamir, 1983). Scholars gladly and widely apply the terms in the modern scientific discussion, however, the interesting question of what meaning they attribute to them mostly remain unresolved. As Barnes (1971) noted, Downs "labeled the scale as '*ideology*', which is not the same thing as define it". Pedersen (1997) also points out, that „before the 1970s the 'Left-Right'-continuum was treated in an

impressionistic way (e.g., Lipset 1960). Some scholars would even warn against its use as a meaningful theoretical concept”.

It is also assumed by Downs that rational voters would normally vote for the party closest to them, therefore “the distribution of voters is a crucial determinant molding a nation's political life” (Downs, 1957). Consequently, not only parties, but voters also can be positioned along a scale running from left to right. As a result, mass surveys have also quickly gained massive scholarly interest. Especially from the 1970s, when new “survey techniques made it possible to construct ‘Left-Right’-scales from electoral data” (Pedersen, 1997)¹. This novelty at the same time, not contributed much to the question: *with what meaning the left-right terms are being used?* Moreover, some scholar honestly admit that “unlike Downs’ reference to the desired degree of government intervention in the economy, our left-right dimension is open in meaning, with only the respondent (if anyone) knowing precisely what dimension was intended” (Barnes, 1971).

Despite of the lack of clear and common understanding of them, the terms quickly stroke root not only in the scientific sphere, but also in the public discourse. We might say that for voters, nevertheless, the vague meanings might have only facilitated the identification. However, at this point, we need to note an important distinction. Arian and Shamir (1983), point out that it is better to differentiate between considering the left-right continuum as “*party space*” and “*ideological space*”. While the latter may make sense for political professionals, scientists and for those with higher understanding of public life, the mass public rather sees the scale as mere space², where parties and voters themselves can be placed.

¹ As a tool of empirical research, the left-right scale is said to be originated in France, where the SOFRES polling agency started using it for mass surveys in 1964 (Deutsch, et al., 1966, in Mavrogorditos, 1987)

² Research of Fuchs and Klindemann (1987) has showed that the extent of understanding of the left-right schema increases with the level of education.

The relationship between voters and their self-placement in this virtual space - as recognition of and identification with the terms - is well documented. Mass surveys, with the aim of picturing voters' whereabouts in the party/ideological space, thus predicting voting behavior, have been carried out in large numbers in the past decades. These also reflected to and demonstrated the assumption that the electorate is not seem to be fully aware of ideological dimensions, however, in fact, they are easily locating parties and themselves on the left-right scale. Research also reveal that being able to explain what the labels 'left' and 'right' mean – even specifically for them – is also a great challenge for respondents.

The study of Barnes (1971) is an early example of these. When survey participants were asked to place themselves and parties of the Italian party system on a left-right scale running from 0 to 100, 76% of the total voter sample were able to do that. Todosijevic (2004) concluded the same when surveying the Hungarian public. He claims respondents to be “reasonably successful” in matching their own and their representatives' issue preferences in the scale of left-right scale.

With regards to the understanding of the vocabulary, numerous studies point out the electoral struggle. Most respondents, though showed no difficulty with self-positioning on the scale, had little or no comprehension on the sense of the 'left' and the 'right' (Arian and Shamir, 1983; Mavrogordatos, 1987). Only when terms like 'fascism' or 'communism' were added to the discourse can be said that the majority of the people seem to have a “generalized” ideological understanding (Mavrogordatos, 1987). These findings support the assumption that for the mass 'left' and 'right' rarely denote ideologies; it rather serves as mere space for party positioning.

As it can be seen, the terms are well known and widely accepted. For its astonishing success among the electorate, Laponce (1981) gives a convincing explanation. He sees that the left-right scale is transformable from a dichotomy into a continuum - and the other way round. As a continuum, it also has a rather important feature: it has a center. It is not to be underestimated, as it can be referred to in contrast with the extremes of the scale. Moreover, this third piece is not outside of the dual, but rather embedded into it. Last, but not least, the left-right scale is obvious and visual, therefore easily and immediately understandable. All these features make it possible to effortlessly transfer it across countries and cultures.

As studies have shown, the mass has learned the labels as such, self-identifying with them and able to connect political parties to them. Even though it is clear that “the relationship between party and self-location on the left-right scale is stronger than the relationship between left-right labels and ideological content” (Arian and Shamir, 1983) voters do bond issues to the terminology, although with significantly less success.

Despite the anyway excruciating fact of not providing (or not being able to provide) a comprehensive definition of it, the academic literature means, or suggests, economic meaning to the left-right dimension in most of the cases (Knutsen, 1997), by consequently citing economic issues as most important components of the left-right dimension (Huber and Inglehart, 1995).

The original connotation, namely, the degree of government intervention to the free market, however, can be and has to be stretched in accordance with the current changes of the economic policies. The novelties of contemporary economy have added new issues to the left-

right continuum's original scope, broadened its extent. Government interference into the market economy has now proved to be only one part of the economic aspect.

Issues of economic distribution – considering the activities what we include to the achievements of the modern welfare state –, also distinguish left from right. From this aspect we can ask if only ambulance service or expanded medical services can be considered a public good (as this question is very much asked in the United States – winning or losing elections depending on the answer). Politicians, analysts, policymakers and parties both on the left and on the right answer this question adversely. “It should be delivered to those who have earned enough to purchase it (right), to the elderly only (center-right), to those whose resources indicate they could not purchase it for themselves (center-left), or to everyone (left)” (McDonald et al, 2007). Moreover, the same question could be asked about almost all policy issues, in almost all policy areas; let it be housing, education, defense, infrastructure, etc.

Observing these matters from the left, one gives different answers to the most basic concerning questions than those being on the right. Being on the left means one sees the need for greater (or in the far-left even full) government involvement, whereas looking at the same issue right wing people will ask for as little government involvement as possible. They might call it ‘government interference’ – just to wage a semantic war as well.

3.3 Challenging the Left-Right concept

3.3.1 The critics of uni-dimensionality

Since the appearance of the spatial model in political science, a horde of objection and doubt have been articulated against it. Not long after the publication of Downs' book *Stokes* (1966) raised several important questions that challenged the spatial theory in its original format. As issues, like the dilemmas of stability and fixed structure will be touched upon one section below, when discussing the challenges of the new era politics on the left-right semantic, I am now only going to highlight one specific predicament that seems to be the most disturbing from this thesis's point of view: *multidimensionality*.

The conception of uni-dimensionality, as Downs (1957) pictured, assumes that one single dimension (in his understanding, the degree of government intervention) dominates the public policy, or, at least, other dimensions can be also incorporated and laid on the very same scale. Downs admitted that certain important theoretical concerns do can be raised about the nature of the left-right continuum in this regard. He himself considered the apparatus unrealistic beyond a certain point, because "each party is leftish on some issues and rightish on others" (Downs, 1957). He, however, proposed a technique to overcome the problem. He considered the party's final placement as a "*weighted average* of the positions" of all the issues it favors.

The question, however, can be raised: can we really incorporate all the issues dominating the electoral competition into one single scale?

Stokes (1963) argues that electorate space is unlikely uni-dimensional anymore. He sees other, more timely issues than the economy that *per se* can stipulate voting behavior. These dimensions, he sees, vary from time to time, from one election to another. He also finds the practice of cumulating independent set of issues solicitous and empirically weak. He underlines that there are no relation for instance between the attitudes towards welfare

policies and the US foreign involvement. Instead, he suggests introducing further dimensions into research. He, nonetheless, emphasizes that it is not the spatial model that “should be rejected root- and-branch. However, without the introduction of certain new dimension (though which ones he had in mind, is not defined) he fears “the model is likely to remain a kind of instructive insight that seems plausible in some contexts, implausible in others, and only poorly suited to guide empirical observation of real political events” (Stokes, 1963).

It is not only Stokes in the academic literature who raises the question of multi-dimensionality. Middendorp (1989), when examining and mapping the Dutch electorate and political parties, clearly states he has no doubt in it that the ideological space is two-dimensional. Each dimension, he believes, predicts voting behavior, by each dimension having a particular predicting effect. Having studied the American party system and ideologies, he notes that parties in the Netherlands – and generally in Western Europe – are more divided ideologically. This feature of Western European political culture, offers the voters to organize their beliefs along two different ideological lines³. The two dimensions, namely the *left-right* and *liberal-authoritarian*, are rooted in different philosophical basis.

Other scholars also find useful introducing a second dimension into the research. Evans et al (1996) also operate with a second, *liberal-authoritarian* scale beside the traditional left-right one in their study on the British electorate. The former has personal freedom, while the latter has equality as attributes.⁴

³ Stokes (1963) also pled multiparty systems in relation with uni-dimensionality. He claimed that the „support for the parties of a multiparty system is often more easily explained by the presence of several dimensions of political conflict than it is by the distribution of the electorate along any single dimension.

⁴ A two-dimensional, orthogonal scale filled with policy issues is to be found in the Appendix of this thesis.

3.3.2 The Left-Right concept in the era of new politics

From the late 1960s the world has been experiencing dramatic and fundamental changes that also raise significant questions about the meaning and importance of the Downsian left-right ideology. In the advanced industrial societies, post-materialist values increasingly took root as fundamental principle of the society. New conflicts have surfaced over previously not existed issues, like migration, feminism, environment and technology (Huber and Inglehart, 1995). Though the left-right dimension has been in constant motion in the political discourse, scholars have started to challenge increasingly and more fervently both the concept's significance and its denotation from the late 1980s. There are at least four theories that aim to redefine the left-right dimension in the light of the new socio-political era (Kitschelt and Hellemans, 1990).

- a) The first theory considers the left-right division to be meaningless. It does nothing, but apprehends the clash between socialist statism and market capitalism. However, nowadays it loses ground, as life - and with it, politics - changes. In today's world certain post-materialist issues such as ecology, quality of life, political participation, etc. challenges living in a post-industrial society emerge. This is what people are concerned with.

According to this '*resistant theory*', the left-right dimension still keeps hold of its original meaning "whereas new politics supporters are concerned with post-materialist issues" (Kitschelt and Hellemans, 1990). So, the dichotomy continuously includes traditional key issues such as economic redistribution, economic intervention and state ownership. But, due to the appearance of post-material parties and politics, the left-right division becomes

increasingly irrelevant because its discourse is deeply rooted in the industrial society. According to this view, the left-right segmentation is immune to the new, appearing meanings.

- b) The second view says that the parties of the new, post-industrial politics do neither transform nor adjust to the actual political discourse, but continue all the conventional political issues under a new, or maybe somewhat altered label.

This hypothesis, however, though principally admits that the conventional meaning of the left-right has remained largely intact, also believes that it is, at the same time, getting “coupled with” a new meaning that catches more the role of the new politics in modern democracies. Inglehart (1979) also claims that the “meaning of left is changing—imperceptibly but continuously” mainly due to their “adaptive and absorptive capacity”.

He also argues that the emergence of new political issues in the developed world continuously transforms the meaning of left and right. By doing so, values considered to be economic turn out to be non-economic. According to this view, the left-right dimension tends to refer to a set of issues concerning the quality of social and physical environment, the situation of certain disadvantaged groups or countries and the matters of peace or war. The meaning of left and the meaning of right is changing unstoppably as well – and this is linked to the new, post-material politics and to its parties.

To summarize it, this second theory says that the conventional meanings of the left and right, such as the division itself remains important. They are, however, synthesized with new meanings that may differ from their original, purely economic and material meaning.

Of course, the economic arguments still very much influence the actual meaning of left and right, and new meanings became important, but they are conjoint with the old meanings. (Grendstad, 2003)

- c) The third , '*transformation hypothesis*' (Grendstad, 2003) points out, that the left-right terminology remains an important semantic reference point to structure the ongoing political debates but it loses its traditional meaning. Parties having post-materialist issues are on the left, but in the post-industrial age the left is driven somewhat more by socio-cultural than by pure economic issues. In other words, in mature industrial societies non-material priorities replace material and economic issues (Grendstad, 2003).
- d) The fourth idea says that both the traditional and the new meanings of left and right coexist continuously. There is no proper indication that the latter will replace the other – or the other way round. The '*pluralization hypothesis*' (Grendstad, 2003) maintains that the economic meaning of the left-right language does not gradually disappear but will be enriched by the words of the post-material politics.

This last hypothesis, as it can be observed, tries to combine arguments from transformation and persistence theories. The fourth idea suggests that economic leftism prevails, but post-material politics is not only linked to the left. This implies that other ideological divides may emerge, and those may or may not be based on the 'classic' left-right dichotomy.

3.4 Significance of the left-right scale in party positioning

The left-right scale is a universally accepted, yet controversial categorization of parties, policies, politicians, and other political manifestations. Academic scholars, political analysts, even politicians argue about its relevance, importance, validity. This thesis is based on the existence of this dichotomy, so it seems inevitable to examine what scholars find its significance lays in.

Most academics find the scale a useful and easily understandable compass for interpreting the day-to-day politics. Knutsen (1995) believes that the use of the left-right scheme is an efficient way to summarize the programs of political parties and groups and to label important political issues of a given era. Hellemans and Kitschelt (1990) are not far from this definition by saying that the left-right dichotomy constitutes a set of symbols and ‘superissues’. These have the capacity to enable even citizens with moderate levels of information to relate their own political preferences to the position they assign to parties in a one-dimensional left-right space.

Many find the left and right partition a useful and practical one. Todosijevic (2004) considers the left-right division to have a particular advantage: the ability to represent party stands on many issues simultaneously.

Whereas some others, including Keman (2007) argues that the left and right divide can be as important as the progressive versus conservative dichotomy. According to him, both schemes can be appropriate indicators for analyzing parties, politicians, policies within and across party systems.

Some points out the dichotomy's most important advantage as its simplicity and its ability to represent at an easily apprehendable way. Laponce (1981) emphasizes that left and right is visual and spatial, therefore it is immediately understandable and easily translatable across cultures. Fuchs (1983) stresses its international nature. He says the left-right scale is "eminently suited as a political code", and gives opportunity to act as a generalized way of communication.

Another prominent academic, Sartori (1976) highlights the left-right scheme's simplicity and usefulness in communication. However, a new factor appears in his discourse: the ability to manipulate by using it. He says that the left-right distinction is valuable and functional since most of the experts, journalists and citizens use it day-by-day. One view of its attraction is that "in a mass communicating world characterized by mass politics a maximum of visual simplicity coupled with a maximum of manipulability represent an almost unbeatable combination" (Sartori, 1976).

Inglehart and Klingemann (1976) find the labeling function of the left-right scale exceptionally important. This gives another vote for the simplicity, but – however, not said explicitly – it also implies the manipulation factor. They think political labels, such as left and right, help out individuals with shortcuts and simplify ideas, programs, policies for guidance and orientation in the political system as a whole, and also in everyday politics.

Arian and Shamir (1983) argue that the a need for such aids increases as politics in a country becomes more and more complex, voters are in need of cues, and labeling helps them navigate in the party system – especially, if a classification is widely used and those given

labels are provided not only by the parties but also by analysts and people within the political circus.

In his book, Downs (1957) also touched upon an exciting question, though left it unresolved in the end. As mentioned above, he admitted that the spatial model, do has unrealistic aspects. One of these, he acknowledged that in the real world, a number of right wing extremists desire “fascist control of the economy rather than free markets” (Downs, 1957). As an area for further research, I am continuing my work with a deeper examination of this difficulty, with strong relation to the question, if it is worth examining different set of issues and party position on them separately, or should we keep going along with traditions of using the uni-dimensional left-right?

CHAPTER 4: THE POPULIST RADICAL RIGHT WING PARTIES AND THEIR STANCE ON ECONOMY IN THE MODERN SCIENTIFIC DISCOURSE

4.1 The changing party systems in Europe after the WWII

After the WWII, established western democracies had all the benefit of considerably stable party systems. From the late 1960s, however, these established party systems started to be challenged. New parties - which were able and willing to reflect the ideological and political turbulence - aiming to address young, purposeful voters emerged radically in numerous Western democracies both on the left and on the right. Mass protests of the new social movements in 1960s were symptoms of the subtle transformation of Western Europe and its politics.

Plenty of new political issues emerged, advocated by new and rising social actors, using 'backdoors' and bypassing the well established mainstream political channels. For instance, the growing recognition of environmental problems generated a group of people who did present themselves in returning ecological protest. All these movements shed light on other post-material issues, like demands for further social equality, fairer redistribution of general welfare, and greater opportunities for both political and social participation of disadvantaged groups, like women and minorities (Betz, 1993).

The former “frozen” blocks on the left (Social Democratic, Labor, and Communist parties) and on the right (Christian Democratic, Liberal, and Conservative parties) faced new challengers from the late 1960s (Lipset and Rokkan, 1990). Beside the rising new-leftist (and) green parties, institutionalized right wing radicalism also started gaining space in the electoral arena.

For some decades after the Second World War, the extreme right appeared only marginally and was rather fragmented. (Betz 1999, Norris 2005) In the 1970s and 1980s, as a result of the changes in the party systems across Europe, the emergence of new radical right parties became more visible. The French Front National (FN), the Flemish Vlaams Blok (VB), the Austrian FPÖ, or the Italian Alleanza Nazionale (AN, the ex-MSI) forged ahead. These early radical right wing parties, however, were largely different from today’s ones. A clear distinctive element is the degree of continuity between pre- and post-war radicalism.

The French Front National (FN) founded by activists of the nationalist movement Ordre Nouveau, was inspired by the Italian openly fascist MSI’s electoral successes. As Klandermans and Mayers (2006) describe “the movement brought together those nostalgic for the Vichy government, former Poujadists, anti-Gaullists and neo-fascists. Some [of them] even came from the collaborationist parties”. The creation of the ancestor of the Belgian Vlaams Blok, the Vlaams Belang, was also not without any premise. Its party members were recruited from various Flemish nationalist organizations, with clear connection to the collaborative past. The British National Front, formed in 1967, was also an “amalgamation of fascist and more conservative racists” (Eatwell, 2000). Although Fascism and Nazism have always been marginal in the Netherlands and most citizens rejected the 1930s’ National

Socialist Movement (NSB), political organizations with clear links to fascist and racist movements could be observed in the 1970s and 1980s.

The fall of the communism, the re-united Europe, the expansion of the European Union and the obvious increase of globalization together with the technological advances and the unavoidable migration, have opened the door for a new type of radical right wing populism throughout in Europe (Ignazi, 1996; Swank and Betz, 2003). The interest for fascism and for state nationalism has faded. The new radical right not only focuses on new topics, but also makes clear distinction between themselves and the “backward-looking, reactionary politics of the traditional extremist” (Betz, 1994). New and re-newed political parties with noteworthy charismatic leaders (Lubbers, Gijsberts and Scheepers, 2002), xenophobic and ethno nationalist sentiments claimed attention from the early 1990s.

4.2 In the forest of synonyms – categorizing problems of the current radical parties

Recognizing a radical right wing party is significantly easier than defining it. Categorization of the radical right-wing parties is considered to be more difficult than any of other party families’ for various reasons. First, the phenomenon of “extreme right” itself has a very diverse and broad nature and it can be divided into various subtypes (Hainsworth, 2000). Second, while other party families’ members often indicate their political ideology in their names, extreme right parties sometimes even refuse being labeled as ‘extreme’⁵.

⁵ Observing the 10 European party alliances one can easily notice that very few of the member parties use 'left', 'right' or 'centre' to identify themselves. Moreover, 'right' is not used by any of the examined 329 European parties. 'Centre' is used by four parties, out of which only the Swedish Centre Party can be considered an important one – all the others are rather marginal.

Left is used relatively more often than any other identifier I examined. The Party of the European Left, the alliance of the far left, communist parties, is the only group which extensively uses the 'left' as a marker. Twelve out of the twenty-seven parties call themselves some kind of a 'left' party.

European party alliances	Has 'left', 'right', 'centre' in its name	Name of the party
European People's Party	1 out of 73 parties	Union of the Center - IT
Party of European Socialists	1 out of 32 parties	Democratic Left Alliance - PL
European Liberal Democrat and Reform Party	2 out of 56 parties	Liberal and Centre Union - LT, Centre Party - SE
European Green Party	1 out of 46 parties	GreenLeft - NL
Alliance of European Conservatives and Reformists	0 out of 11 parties	<i>none</i>
Party of the European Left	12 out of 27 parties	12 are "left", however, 10 are "communist"
European Democratic Party	0 out of 13 parties	<i>none</i>
European Free Alliance	1 out of 37 parties	Republican Left of Catalonia - ES/FR
EUDemocrats	0 out of 12 parties	<i>none</i>
European Christian Political Movement	0 out of 22 parties	Centre Party - DE

Table 1. Parties with left-center-right identification in their name

Third, due to the many times clear clash of interests between them, they often even refuse cooperating with each other, therefore, strong international cooperation between these parties, are rare at best. As a result, no umbrella party serves as facilitator in case of extreme right parties - unlike at other party families.

The plentiful adjectives that have gained currency and been widely used - not only in journalism and by the public but – by scholars as well, do neither help to keep clear order of terms nor support unambiguous categorization. In his seminal work, Cas Mudde (2007) collected more than twenty expressions of titles of comparative books and articles that all aimed to examine the same phenomenon. *Radical right; extreme right; extremist right-wing parties; populist right; neo-Fascist parties; neo-Nazi parties; ultra-right-wing parties; far-right; radical right-wing populist; racist parties; etc.* have been all used as a label by

journalists and scholars without any consensus on their exact meanings. Instead, they often use these terms as synonyms, substituting one another.

Mudde (2007) also points out, “it is not exceptional to see one author to use three or more different terms to describe the same party or group of parties in one article, if not on a single page”. Though most scholars try at least to bring together and explain some characteristics of the examined parties, only few offer a definition. Despite the anyway crucial and fascinating question of categorization, due to the obvious limits of it, this paper does not aim to either summarize or synthesize them. However, as the goal of this thesis is to examine eight European populist radical right wing parties, certain common characteristics of them – indispensable for careful case selection – need to be listed at this point.

4.3 Case selection

The basic rule of comparison is to have a common set of characteristics shared by our examined elements. As there seem to be no space at the moment for thorough analysis of the nature of the examined parties, the case selection of this thesis is built on the judgment of well-known and widely recognized scholars on radicalism and right wing populism in contemporary Europe. I have chosen four parties from Western Europe and four parties from the Central European region that - according to the current scientific literature - share the following characteristics, pieced together by Betz (1994):

- they play upon the frustration of the masses, therefore, can be labeled as *populist*,
- they oppose the current political and welfare system, hence can be called *radical*, and
- they reject social equality and the integration of ‘outsiders’, which means they are *right-wing*

Based on the most significant studies, I am examining the parties below that are claimed to meet these requirements and is labeled radical/populist/extreme right wing party by minimum two scholarly works.

1. National Front (Front National) (Mudde, 2007; Norris, 2005)
2. Freedom Party of Austria (Freiheitliche Partei Österreichs) (Mudde, 2007; Norris, 2005)
3. Flemish Interest (Vlaams Belang) (Mudde, 2007; Norris, 2005)
4. Danish People's Party (Dansk Folkeparti) (Mudde, 2007; Norris, 2005)
5. Hungarian Justice and Life Party (Magyar Igazság és Élet Pártja) (Mudde, 2007; Norris, 2005)
6. Greater Romania Party (Partidul România Mare) (Mudde, 2007; Norris, 2005)
7. Slovak National Party (Slovenská Národná Strana) (Mudde, 2007; Vachudová, 2008)
8. League of Polish Families (Liga Polskich Rodzin) (Mudde, 2007; Dakowska, 2010);

For being selected the parties also had to enjoy electoral support in the last twenty years that resulted in seats in their national assemblies for at least one legislative term⁶.

At this point I have to remark that in the literature on populist radical right wing parties the centre of attention has mainly been on Western European countries, and only few scholars have focused on Eastern Europe⁷. Moreover, expressly comparative pan-European studies rarely can be found on radical right wing parties. Obviously, the question can be raised of why it is worth it, moreover, whether it is possible at all examining parties in Western and

⁶ Detailed party profiles can be found in the Appendix of this thesis. Information provided includes: party name in English, original name, logo, abbreviation, date of foundation, name of the leader, name of other dominant figure, results of all domestic and European elections, short bio of the party.

⁷ At this point, I also have to point out that the case is the same with measuring voters' self-placement on the left-right continuum. Though extensive research can be found on Western European mass approach to the political left-right space, – according to my knowledge – no substantive scholarly work has been carried out on the Central Eastern European electorate. It is important to note, however, that the 'Politikai Térkép' (www.politikaitekep.hu) project – with a survey asking 1200 voters – was conducted with academic ambition, but it has not yet been processed scholarly.

Eastern Europe with similar concepts and theories, since CEE region has dramatically different histories, social-economic circumstances etc.

However, while admitting the fact that differences do exist, I tend to agree with Cas Mudde (2007) who says that due to for instance the “homogenizing effects of EU membership” certain distinction between the regions are presumably becoming more and more irrelevant. He also emphasizes that since recent comparative literature on party politics has revealed an increasing convergence of East and West “there is no reason to assume that this would be significantly different for populist radical right parties”.

4.4 Isn't it the economy? – Disputes of economic standpoints of radical parties in the literature

Despite of the outsized number of scholarly work on populist radical right parties, few authors have provided us with thorough analysis on their economic program. Kitschelt and Betz play a crucial role in the yet not too noisy debate, by starting the debate with the claim that the free market economy to be a central element of radical right parties (Kitschelt, 1995). According to his views, neo-liberalism, authoritarianism and ethnic particularism are linked in the course and rhetoric of an archetypal radical right-wing party. By using this “winning formula”, he claims, parties can take up room in a niche of the electoral market and target a wider range of voters. While authoritarian and ethnocentric ideas are easily caught by the working class, the notion of the free market attracts the self-employed. Betz, agreeing with Kitschelt, also states that radical right wing populist parties advocate neo-liberal economic philosophy, even Thatcherism, by calling for smaller state, less state expenditure, and lower taxes.

Scholars, however, not unequivocally share these views; therefore standpoints in the literature differ. A bloc of authors disputes Betz and Kitschelt, and rather argues for the radical right wing parties being less market oriented. The line starts with Ignazi (1996), who states that the concept of *free market combined with protectionist measures* consist the economic stance of a radical right wing parties. Mudde (1999) continues questioning Kitschelt and Betz and says that their program on economy mirror their nationalism, so they are rather '*welfare chauvinist*' than neo-liberal.

Rydgren (2004) also claims that most radical right wing parties turned to protectionism during the 1990s and their economic position now can be described as *centrist* if not even *leftist*. Mudde (2007) goes further and asks if it was possible that "the populist radical right parties were just trying to fit the neoliberal *Zeitgeist* of the 1980s" and only their *rhetoric* was neoliberal "without fronting a consistent neoliberal *program*". In their recent works, Betz (2002) and Kitschelt also acknowledge that radical right wing parties seem to make the neo-liberal attitude softer in the last two decades (McGann and Kitschelt, 2005).

Kitschelt explains this as most probably "the 'winning formula' does not require a consistent neo-liberalism, but rather a compromise that is sufficiently free-market to appeal to petty bourgeois voters, but does not alienate working-class support by attacking the welfare state too vigorously, while at the same time promising protectionism favorable to both" (McGann and Kitschelt, 2005).

Although the dispute on what economic standpoint radical right wing parties have and whether it is influencing their program in a dominant way reached scholars since Kitschelt's study in 1995, not one single comprehensive – and comparative - work has been published on

the topic. Most authors have missed to support their argument with substantial empirical evidence or often seem to fail even detailing their views on parties' stance on the economy. One of the unquestionably most successful radical right wing parties, the Flemish Vlaams Belang, has, however, caught some scholarly interest. Anton Derks (2006) and Hilde Coffé (2008) test hypothesis on the Belgian party, by examining "the relationship between cultural attitudes (including authoritarianism and ethnocentrism) and economic rightist attitudes concerning social policy and the welfare state" (Derks, 2006) and investigating directly, if Kitschelt's views are met by the VB's party program (Coffé, 2008).

As Derks (2006) observes, the underlying economic rhetoric of the VB is clearly different from 'free-market' liberalism. Phrases such as "economic nationalism, welfare chauvinism or economic populism" are far more accurate to characterize their economic discourse. Coffé (2008), however, while admitting that "the Vlaams Belang's programme includes some protectionist measures" concludes that the party's economic line of sight yet still meets Kitschelt's theory.

Also great example is the Romanian PRM, lead by Corneliu Vadim Tudor. The party may sometimes flirt with enlightened capitalism, but the core of his economic program is clearly left-wing. He has asked for privatization and also for renationalization of large previously privatized holdings, moreover even soil. PRM even encouraged compulsory labor service "so that no one can complain that they would like to work and there isn't any". The party also urges for vetting the wealthy. This meets public demands as a 1999 poll shows that 54% of the electorate thought authorities should investigate how their wealth was acquired. (Gallagher, 2003). In 2000, PRM gained unprecedented number of votes, reaching almost 20%, sending 126 MPs to the Romanian Parliament.

As Mudde (2007) points out, “all populist radical right parties have accepted the fundamentals of capitalism and market economy” just like have other parties in contemporary Europe. The question, however, remains: to what degree wish a populist radical right wing party to see state involvement in free market? Can we notice differences between standpoints of parties of the Central Eastern part of Europe and parties of Western Europeans when examine their economic program? Further to this, do they have any chiseled and elaborated program with regard the economy? To what extent do economic questions dominate their program? Are Betz (1996) and Mudde (1999) right when criticizing the Kitschelist theory of (favoring free market) economy being a central and crucial role of party programs? Mudde (1999) states the opposite when saying that economic matters are “secondary feature[s] in the ideologies of populist radical right-wing parties”. Coffé (2008) concludes similarly, when saying that “economic issues remain subordinated to the [VB’s] ideological core”.

In the next chapter, I will take a closer look on the eight selected parties’ latest electoral manifestos and other official documents (available pamphlets, policy work) and will try to locate the group of Western European and the group of Central Eastern European radical right wing parties on an economic left-right scale. The aim of this research is to get a closer understanding on whether these parties pursue a rather neo-liberal or a rather leftist economic agenda.

CHAPTER 5: MEASURING THE ECONOMIC STANDPOINTS OF EIGHT EUROPEAN POPULIST RADICAL RIGHT WING PARTIES

5.1 Methodology and analyses

Manifestos can be considered as documents produced for general consumption. Their role is to try to convince those interested in the party's politics 'in detail'. Therefore, manifestos are written in a rather straightforward, often repetitive way, so that they could show the party position or opinion simply and clearly.

Studying manifestos gives us a stable overview of party positions – probably a sufficiently comprehensive one. Budge (2001) explained: no single document provides such concise summary of the aims and agenda of a given party. When creating it, party prominent try to distil ideas appear around the organization. As it is usually created as a consensual paper (on a certain level) it shows a collective opinion rather than a concept of certain individuals or fraction of the party.

In addition, analyzing texts has methodological advantages – as Budge (2001) points it out. Election programs are announcements of the party's politics, policy and ideology made at a certain time, by a particular organization. Studying them subtracts all distracting circumstances, such as opinion of other experts, and by itself defines the period it intends to cover.

In the following, I will be content analyzing the electoral manifestos of the eight European populist radical right wing parties selected above, in order to get a comprehensive picture on their views on economic issues. Though studying manifestos has its clear advantage as we see above, due to certain regional differences, party programs may not mention issues that are significant for them, but due to the cultural and economical environment they operate in, there is no need for them to separately emphasize them. To eliminate the possible distortion this could cause, I have sent the twenty statements to each and every party asking them to give an answer to them. However, I only received response from the Belgian Vlaams Belang.

At this point, my next step will be to locate the average standpoint on economy of the four Western European and separately, of the four Eastern European parties on a left-right scale. My presumption is that the current populist radical parties in Western Europe though pursue protectionist, national-oriented economic agenda, are still in strong favor of the free market and trade. To the contrary, parties from Central-Eastern Europe, I assume, support an articular left wing economic policy, by strongly playing on the masses' intensifying demand for a caring state, with slight nostalgia towards the seeming stability of the former regime.

For mapping the eight radical right wing parties' position on the economy, I used twenty indicator statements. Each of them reflects one segment of the current political economy. Statements were compiled in accordance with topics appearing in scholarly texts (Middendorp, 1989; Evans et al, 1996) as well as in online political compasses.

- S1) Controlling inflation is more important than controlling unemployment.
- S2) Land shouldn't be a commodity to be bought and sold.
- S3) It is regrettable that many personal fortunes are made by people who simply manipulate money and contribute nothing to their society.
- S4) Protectionism is sometimes necessary in trade.
- S5) The only social responsibility of a company should be to deliver profit to its shareholders.
- S6) Today's economy disproportionately benefits the wealthiest.
- S7) The rich are too highly taxed.
- S8) A genuine free market requires restrictions on the ability of predator multinationals to create monopolies.
- S9) The freer the market, the freer the people.
- S10) Taxpayers should not be expected to prop up any theatres or museums that cannot survive on a commercial basis.
- S11) Those who are able to work, and refuse the opportunity, should not expect society's support.
- S12) What's good for the most successful corporations is always, ultimately, good for all of us.
- S13) It is acceptable that people become poor in order to increase economic growth.
- S14) State should provide job for everyone who wants to work.
- S15) Those with jobs have a moral duty to help those are in need.
- S16) Companies owned by the state should not be privatized.
- S17) State should take more responsibility to its citizens.
- S18) State has to do everything it can to provide the same opportunities to all.
- S19) State should actively support domestic companies in order to enhance their competitiveness.
- S20) Multinational companies often unethically exploit their workers.

Based on the electoral manifestos of the political parties, answers have been assigned to each statement, according to the degree of agreement of each and every party. The four possible answers are:

- fully agree
- rather agree
- rather disagree
- fully disagree

Answers then have been coded to a scale running from 1 to 4. As not every manifesto contains information on every statement, to avoid distortion, missing party position has been indicated with 0.

In order to get a picture on where the Western European and the Central-Eastern European parties stand on the left-right dimension, both groups of parties have been positioned on an aggregated scale. This scale has been created by summing the data of the above mentioned evaluation method.

5.2 Party placements on economic left-right scales

The two extremes of the scale are representing the extreme left and extreme right standpoints on economy. The minimum value of the scale (20) represents the extreme-left, the maximum value (80) represents the extreme-right standpoint. Centrist position would be located on the mean, with a value of 50. During the analysis, final data on party positions have been determined by summing up the values rather than counting their average, in order to get a more precise result.

On the scale, the bloc of Central Eastern European Parties reaches a value of 29.5, while the group of the Western Europeans scores 38.75 (these values have been counted by summing the data of each party in the group first. Then their average has been taken).

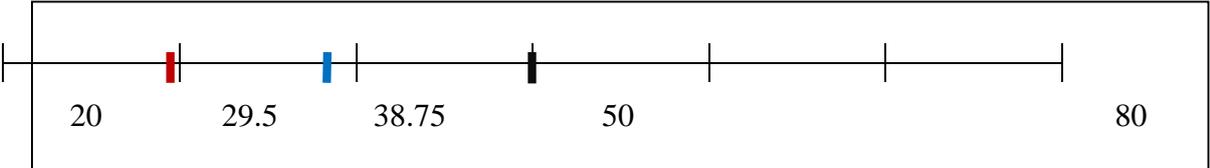


Table 2. Combined values on economic issues

At this point the question, whether these twenty statements do can serve as a tool for examining party positions on political economy, can be raised. Hence, a reliability test has been run in order to prove internal consistency. The cronbach's alpha I got is of value of 0.7. This is high enough for confidently stating that the compilation of these statements can be a suitable tool for measuring party positions.

In order to get an even more sophisticated picture on the examined parties' views on the various segments of the economy, further sub-groups of issues can be created and studied. For that very reason, statements have been divided into two larger groups along specific subject-matters. Statements on *social and employment issues* constitute the first, statements on the notion of *free market and trade* constitute the second group. Values for each section of the parties have been counted in accordance with the above described method.

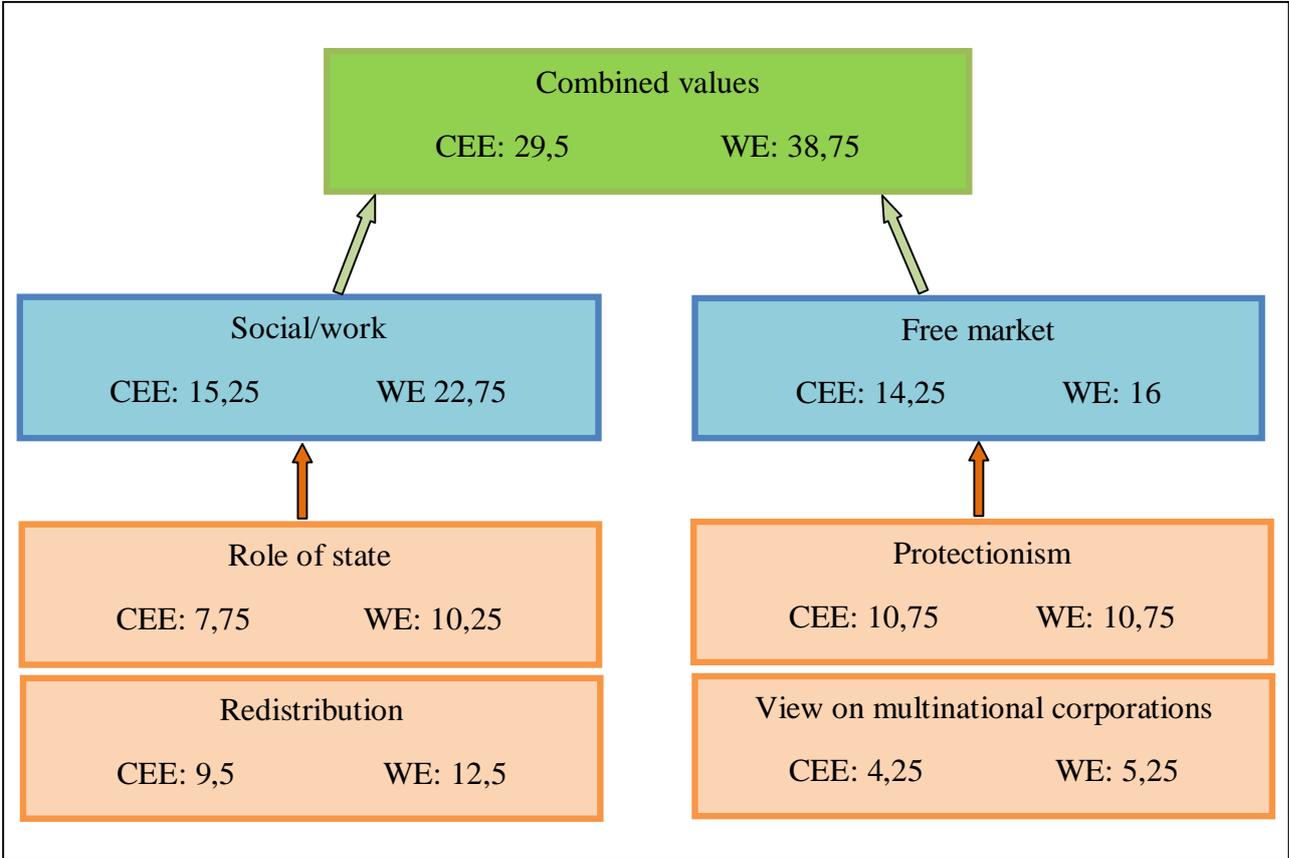


Table 3. Roadmap to combined values (CEE: Central and Eastern Europe, WE: Western Europe)

Results show that on a left-right scale from 11 to 44, representing the *socioeconomic agenda* (S1, S3, S6, S7, S10, S11, S13, S14, S15, S17, S18), Eastern European parties score 15.25, while the group of the Western Europeans reaches 22.75. With the mean of 27.5, it is shown that populist radical right wing parties, in both parts of the continent, go for a rather leftist standpoint on these aspects of the economy.

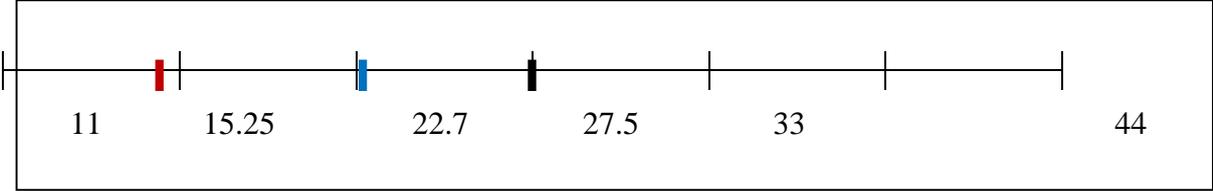


Table 4. Values on the views about employment and state responsibilities

Regarding the second group, namely the group of statements (S2, S4, S5, S8, S9, S12, S16, S19, S20), on *trade and market economy*, we can see the Eastern Europeans with the value of 14.25 and the Western Europeans with the value of 16 to be placed on the left-right scale from 9 to 36 (mean=27).

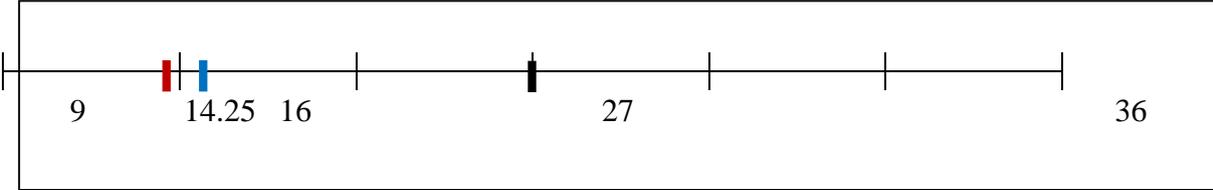


Table 5. Values on the views about trade and market economy

The picture gets even more sophisticated, when we split even these two groups further. The social and employment group can be divided into two smaller ones by differentiating between statements concerning a) employment along with state responsibilities and statements regarding the question of b) taxes and redistribution of wealth.

By doing so, the result we have on standpoints on *employment/state responsibilities* (S1, S13, S14, S17, S18) is two groups of parties, both to be placed left from the mean (12.5) of the scale running from 5 to 20. Western European parties' value is 10.3, while that of is 5.8 when it comes about the Eastern Europeans.

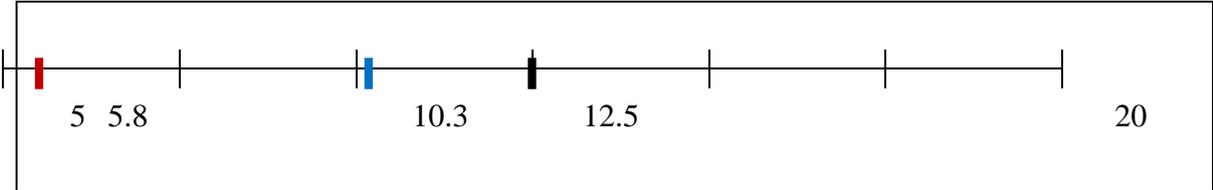


Table 6. Values on the views about employment and state responsibilities

We have the second subject-matter group within the larger social and employment group on *taxes and wealth redistribution* (S3, S6, S7, S10, S11, S15). The scale on this sub-group is running from 6 to 24, with the mean of 15. Having calculated the values, we get the Eastern European populist radical right parties having a value of 9.5, while the Western European ones having 12.5.

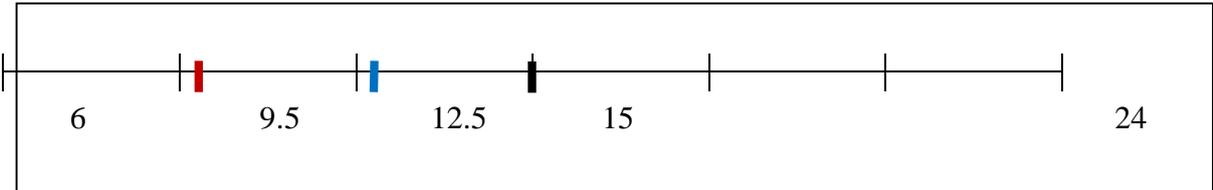


Table 7. Values on the views about taxes and wealth redistribution

Regarding the first main group on trade and free market, we can this divide into two as well. The first sub-group is examining the issue of *protectionism* (S2, S4, S9, S16, S19). The left-right scale is now running from 5 to 20, with a mean of 12.5. In this case, interestingly, the two party groups' value is the same: 10.75.

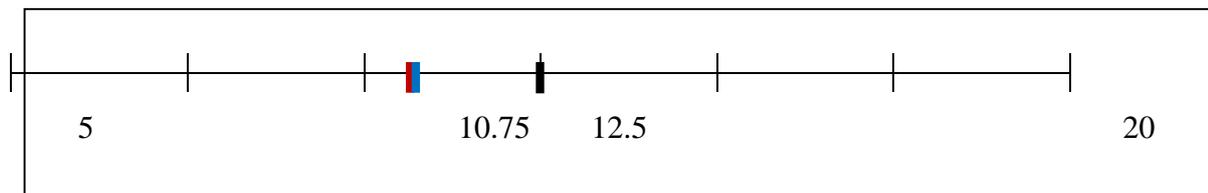


Table 8. Values on the views about the issue of protectionism

The second sub-group within the trade/free market group aims to show the parties' standpoints on *multinational companies* (S5, S8, S12, S20). On a left-right scale of 4 to 16, Eastern European parties position is 4.25, while that of is 5.25 in the case of Western European parties.

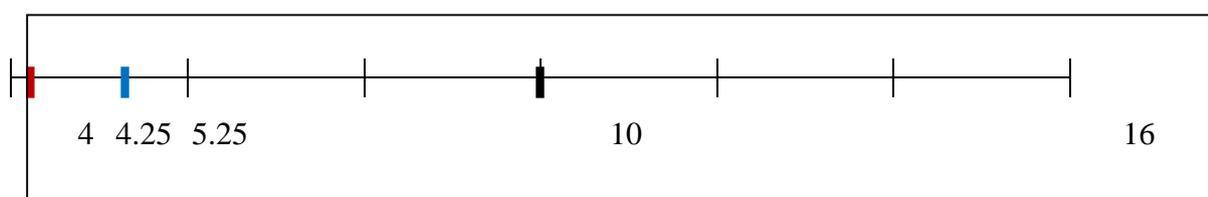


Table 9. Values on the views about multinational corporations

5.3. Neoliberal or Leftist? - Economic standpoints of the examined parties

Seeing the data and taking the look at the scales, we have to conclude that none of the party groups support right wing, neoliberal economic agenda in any of the cases. No matter if we examine taxation, trade, or employment policies, the result is the same. Contemporary populist radical right parties, regardless of their regional origin, do not pursue neoliberal economic policy as Kitschelt (1995) described it. Parties in both parts of the continent seem to support protectionist economic policy with strong antipathy towards multinational companies, and broad social benefits for those are in need.

At this point, however, it needs to be pointed out that – if examined separately – the Belgian Vlaams Belang – solely in the group of the eight parties – are in favor of the free market and capitalist values. In the answers of the party given to the statements, the importance of a free market system and small state is clearly stressed.

The „land is an asset, for which the market is best suited to form an exact price” they say, for example, continuing with sentences like „a market is most effective when there are a lot of competitors. Monopolies cause higher prices for consumers” and „taxpayers should not be expected to prop up any theatres or museums that cannot survive on a commercial basis”.

They explicitly refuse the ultimate caring sense of the state. As an answer to S15, they say: „The state is not an employment machine. However, it is the task of the government to create a business friendly economical climate (low taxes, free market, and transparent regulation) to support the creation of employment.” However, they also put emphasis on the necessity of the social system: „A developed country should look after its people. Unfortunately there will always be people who fall out of the economic system. The society has the obligation to help them by developing a good working social security system”.

If going back to the standpoints of the party groups on the scales, it can be seen that even though the bloc of Western European parties still standing on the left part of the scale⁸, it still holds a slightly more rightist position. The only exception is the question of protectionism, where parties in general seem to favor strong nationalistic attitude.

⁸ as a group, and – with the exception of the Vlaams Belang – as one by one as well

Summarizing the analysis, my original presumption that Western European radicals are strong supporters of free market and trade seems to be wrong in general. Seeing the second scale running from 9 to 36 – where Eastern Europeans holds the value of 14.25 – Western Europeans with the value of 16 seem to be relatively far from the mean with of value of 27.

As a result, we have to conclude that the assertion of Betz (1994) and Kitschelt (1995) is not supported by our analysis.

CHAPTER 6: DISCUSSION

We cannot bypass the phenomena that globalization and the continuous presence of populist radical right parties are increasingly noticeable in the last twenty years in the European politics. As scholars noted (Ignazi 1992; Betz 1994; Kitschelt 1995) the two phenomena are not only interconnected in several ways, but rather, globalization - and its social and economic implications - are one of the main causes of the rise of the radical right. This is also manifested in the politics of radical right parties, as they seem to be one of the most outspoken opponents of globalization.

It is important to note that almost all aspects of today's developed world are deeply influenced by the performance of the economy. We can say: political economy matters a lot. It is obvious why economic policy is of utmost importance for governments. After national security, it is the state of the economy that matters the most, especially because national security itself is also heavily constrained by the economy.

6.1 Economy matters

As discussed above, numerous leading scholars (Betz, 1994; Kitschelt, 1995) labeled the economic policies of the radical right parties' neo-liberal' or 'right-wing'. This has been questioned by Mudde (2000, 2007), who points out that policy papers and party manifestos seem to suggest the opposite. He claims that the economic policy of these parties is determined by fervent economic nationalism and welfare chauvinism. This resembles a

protectionist, leftist economic policy, where the economy should be controlled by the government and it should serve the nation's interest. They are not against the welfare state, but they are for the people living in the nation – and for no one else. Therefore, it is no surprise that these parties are strongly against globalization.

First, they attack it, because in their eyes global market means nothing else but foreign exploitation of the country. Radical parties consider globalization, especially its economic side, disastrous for the national interests. As István Csurka, President of the Hungarian Justice and Life Party (Magyar Igazság és Élet Pártja, MIÉP) expressed: “Globalization is an evolutionary dead end, the global market destroys everything that is national”⁹. We can also quote a prominent leader of the Belgian Vlaams Blok, who believes that “The Vlaams Blok – according to every survey the largest labourers party in Flanders – has the right and duty to watch over the social interests and the socio-economic welfare of our people, not only of workers, but of all the working population“ (Derks, 2006).

Regarding the Central and Eastern part of Europe, citizens of countries of the former Soviet Bloc were living under the caring umbrella of a protective state-driven economy for decades. As the protective side of the regime was overdeveloped, those socialized under this state-socialism, were used to being taken care of from the cradle to the grave. Personal feelings connected to this era - with all its illusory advantages - have not yet diminished without trace. Surveys have shown that there is an increasing support for more comprehensive state involvement in Central and Eastern Europe than in the Western part of the continent. (Mudde, 2000)

⁹ <http://www.miep.hu/index.php?option=article&id=2994:a-pusztito-szabadsag-rabsagaban>

Although still a dominant ideology, the widespread international consensus on the divinity of neo-liberalism has come under increasing criticism, both from the countries in the center and from those in the periphery. In Central and Eastern Europe, political actors with heterogeneous background have openly disputed the mantra and are calling for new approaches. Researchers also noticed that the extensive penetration of market capitalism and its unique way of development – especially in the post-communist countries –, have caused a rather unwanted "social polarization" (Mudde, 2000)

As Mudde (2000) points out, market capitalism and its effects are rapidly dividing the people into “winners and losers, haves and have-nots”, while they put increasing burden on the old, extensive, holey and increasingly malfunctioning welfare system. This progression, together with the overwhelming need and desire for more equality and an even stronger, therefore impermissible welfare state at the mass level, is creating a fertile ground for economic populism in the post-communist part of Europe. All these lead to a stronger demand for political forces that intend to capitalize from this phenomenon (Mudde, 2000).

6.2 Key drive: fear of existential descent

Results of Eurobarometer¹⁰ survey reports reflects the negative future European population envisage. The researches show greater competitive pressure on (mostly local) small entrepreneurs and also on medium sized domestic companies. In fear of the globalization they are facing painful re-adjustments. Keeping voting maximization in mind, radical right parties usually respond to this by further detailing the threatening aspects of economic globalization (Minkenberg, 2007). They keep emphasizing the danger to national welfare and proposing a restoration of national and local oriented economy.

¹⁰ Deutsche Bank Research 2001.

Similar trends have been noticed on the rise of radical right parties in Western and Central-Eastern Europe. As Kitschelt pointed it out, the current socio-economic situation is favorable for the emergence of extremist parties, as mainstream parties fail to comply with providing an answer to/reasonable solution for the challenges of capitalism. To put it in another way: incumbent parties fail to deliver. The emergence of extremist, populist and protest vote-seeker parties that easily gain support for its political agenda is to be anticipated (Kitschelt, 1995).

The rather unfavorable economic conditions helped the unprecedented success of Romania's PRM in the 2000's. In the country where a significant proportion of active workforce emigrated since the regime change it is no surprise the PRM's have become filled with individuals who feel outcast in the new economic conditions. In these times people are nostalgic for the punctilious hierarchy of the state-socialist regime and for a stable and predictable day-to-day life, seeking less fear from unemployment and more foreseeable economic benefits. The voters are confused by the cruel competition of the harsh and often unjust labor market, and also frustrated by the barely functioning education system which cannot offer the kind of knowledge and skills what the labor market demands. (Gallagher, 2003)

PRM's leader, Corneliu Vadim Tudor bestrides the public mood in his landmark, August 1998 speech:

“[...] Renationalize factories, installations and hotels which passed to foreign ownership by illegal means, to create a strategy to exploit the national wealth for the benefit of the population, organize a national referendum for the introduction of the death penalty [...] social integration of the Roma or their isolation in colonies, ban the [Hungarian ethnic party in Romania] UDMR, impose martial law in Harghita and Covasna [where Hungarians cluster], install a dictatorship of

laws and declare a state of emergency over the whole Romanian economy”.
(Gallagher, 2003)

PRM’s populist and welfare chauvinist rhetoric appeals to the disappointed many. Economic redemption and the nationalistic, ethnic intimidation resonate well when there are a lot of deprived electorates both on the left and on the right. As Gallagher points out, World Bank data in 1999 show 41% of Romanians living on or below the poverty threshold compared to the 25% in 1995. The trend is no different when we examine the share of Romanians living in extreme poverty: 16% of the population in 1999 compared to 8% in 1995.

It is no surprise that the significant decline of living standards corresponded with the steep rise of PRM’s support. Disturbing economic clash left a distracted electorate, who’s obvious choice was the radical right-wing party which provided them with a clear picture of suspected enemy.

Gallagher (2003) emphasizes that in the 2000 campaign, the PRM decided to put aside the ethnic topic and focused almost exclusively on the socio-economic challenges voters had to face. As at those times, one-quarter of the unemployed had university or high school education and 65% of the students were ready to leave their home country because of the hopelessness around, the PRM started to gain excessive support among the youth.

The PRM’s manifesto for the landslide 2000 elections was precisely constructed to reflect the frustrations and hopelessness of the millions of the electorate. They had not only been depressed by the harsh times, but also felt themselves neglected and exploited by the political elite (Gallagher, 2003). All these ended up in the landslide victory of the PRM, achieving almost 20% in the general elections and gaining 126 seats in the Romanian Parliament.

The main factors causing the rise of the radical right are economic or related issues (i.e. immigrants), but of course, not the only ones. Ignazi (1996) argues that important ingredients for the success of the radical right are psychological factors. In his book, he explains that the emergence of the right-wing radicalism vents of a post-industrial identity crises. In the transition caused by globalization, the networks of traditional, guarding bonds were loosened; meanwhile the emerged individualism conflicts with them. All these result in losing the protective roots and people responding with increasing authoritarian attitudes to it. In this process voters start not to trust in the political system and alienate themselves from politics, or at least from the mainstream parties (Ignazi, 1996). There might be a lot in these insights; however it is important to stress that these psychological causes are triggered by the social and economic changes of globalization.

Betz (1993) emphasizes that workers generally feel threatened by the growing unemployment, desperate housing conditions and lost or potentially lost opportunities. As they unleash their anger, extreme parties' support rises. In Central and Eastern Europe, overwhelming political, social and most importantly, economic changes and tensions were generated. All these brought fears forward. This was not at all difficult, as the transition from socialism to capitalism has brought rapid economic decline, rising unemployment, thus growing existential problems.

The radical right parties' success can largely be explained by the given socio-economic conditions. Factors include increasing costs of living caused by the accelerated modernization and increasing competition (i.e. immigrants, expansion of multinational companies), steadily decreasing rewards at workplace (wages and other benefits) for unskilled and semi skilled

workers (Betz 1994). As the wished and expected swift economic catch up has not yet come, things have not become easier for most people in Central and Eastern Europe. This made voters nervous and welfare chauvinism started to gain ground in the beginning of the 21st century (Tóth and Grajczjár, 2007).

By all means, it cannot be said that the losers of the transition are the only ones attracted to the extreme right parties. In several Central and Eastern European countries - Croatia, Serbia, Hungary, Romania, Slovakia for instance - historical reasons, ethnic problems and state nationalism are also identified as underlying forces in leaning against the radical right. Whereas, in other semi-peripheral countries, there are further factors explaining why people choosing radical parties. The roadmap includes fear from relative deprivation, feeling (politically) weak and unprotected. All these can be categorized as fear from a material or existential, therefore economic challenge (Tóth and Grajczjár, 2007).

6.3 Economy: primary or secondary?

There are several competing arguments whether economy is a primary or a secondary issue for populist radical right wing parties and whether it is a neoliberal right-wing, or rather a leftist one they pursue. Betz (1993) and Kitschelt (1995) argue that neoliberal economic rhetoric is a distinctive, core feature of the populist radical right parties and it serves as an important factor in their electoral success. In contrast to this, Mudde (2007) holds that economic issues are neither primary to the politics and policies of the populist radical right parties, nor they add to their success.

As mentioned above, economy plays a substantive and elemental role in the general state of a country. Moreover, in Europe, economic welfare seems to be in strong correlation with post-materialist wellbeing. According to surveys, existential problems of citizens across Europe are in a rise. Due to the global economic crisis of the recent years, people have to face an even growing number of unemployment, intensifying job insecurity and serious cuttings in social benefits. Retirement age is expected to be increased, so are mortgage payments.

Ján Slota, co-founder and president of the Slovak National Party (SNS), intended to capitalize the (rather successful) 2001-04 modernization program of Mikulas Dzurinda's government. Despite the fact that the stabilizing and structural reforms were one of the most successful ones in the Central and Eastern European region, social tensions emerged. The pro-market reforms might have been too fast and people were impatient to see the results of the restructuring. Although unemployment had been dropped from the 2003's 18% to 8.6% by 2007 (Eurostat), the SNS gained 11.6% in the 2006 general election.

The reforms were fruitful on the national level; yet, as social inequality was also rising fast many remained frustrated – what happens often with rapid economic boom. Not everybody was happy with the investment boom of those years either. Several strategic sectors (i.e.: banking, oil, automotive) were almost completely privatized and are still in foreign hands (CIA Factbook, 2009).

The SNS, in its 2006 campaign, tried to gain electoral success from these frustrations. SNS leaders noticed that the success of the reforms had not been felt by the people at those times. Slovakia was affected by poverty, and voters experienced social insecurity and loss of

perspectives. Moreover, due to the socially insensitive changes many felt helpless and completely lost interest in public matters.

As they wrote in the English language version of their program:

“The outcome of what the government calls reforms is first of all a frivolous sale of the national fortune, the monopoly companies of strategic character, on which the future effectiveness of the Slovak economy and the satisfaction of the social needs of the society are dependent on. There is a threat that if we sell even the land, the forests and the water, we will be one of the few states of the world that will have its own defined territory, but we will not be the owner of its natural valuables and its land.” (We are Slovaks, 2006)¹¹

The situation was rather similar in 1995-98 in Hungary. In 1995, the so called Bokros-package, a set of austerity measures named after the finance minister of those times was introduced. The package was harsh, but later it turned out to be a successful resolution of the economic crises of the transition. However, its effects were not felt by the voters until the 1998 election. This not only led to the fall of the government, but got MIÉP, a radical right party to the parliament for the first time in the history of the Third Hungarian Republic. Both the Slovak and the Hungarian cases underline the often primary importance of economic issues and conditions.

Citizens feel the impacts of global economy closer than ever in the last decades. Another fertile ground is given for populist parties for boosting their electoral base further. The need of providing the disappointed many with an economic program that can satisfy them cannot be ignored by these parties. And in the light of the goal of voting maximization, it is unlikely that they will try not to make use of this mood. Therefore, a larger emphasis on economic issues can be expected in their agenda and electoral program in the future.

¹¹ Some grammatical mistakes corrected.

In 2006, Gerolf Annemans, President of the Vlaams Belang's Research Service also admitted that his party did not give enough attention to economic issues earlier. He thinks this is a gap that needs to be filled by the VB (Coffé, 2008). Thus, we might count on the fact that economic issues manage to make a real overtake in the race of issues for primacy in populist radical right parties' electoral manifestos.

CHAPTER 7: CONCLUSION

The massive success of the contemporary populist radical right wing parties in Europe has called for a need of deeper academic research on their nature, electoral support and programs. Although there is an extensive and perspicacious literature on the voting behavior that fuels their triumph and on their socio-cultural agenda, not much emphasis has yet been put on a before less exposed area of their program, namely, their economic policy.

This thesis aimed to examine eight significant European parties' stance on economic affairs. My purpose was to find out whether the theory of Western European radical right parties pursuing neoliberal program and the political folklore of Central Eastern European radicals, to the contrary, holding leftist views on economy prove to be right or not. Having analyzed their most recent electoral programs and matched values to their standpoints on economy, the group of the Western and the group of the Central Eastern European parties have been positioned on a left-right scale. My findings support those scholars (Mudde, Rydgren, Ignazi) who questioned the theory of Betz and Kitschelt: contemporary populist radical right wing parties support protectionist, leftist economic policy and call for broader social benefits for those are in need.

During this research, the nature and the dilemma of the left-right dichotomy have been discussed as well. This thesis also aimed to contribute to the fervent debate on the relevance of the left-right dimension in the new era of politics. I conclude that the significance of these terms has not faded during the times and they still operate as a useful and understandable

compass for the electorate for interpreting day-to-day politics. Regarding the question, however, if a uni-dimensional space can serve best for positioning parties (and voters), my answer is not. I argue for the use of a second dimension as well that aims to measure socio-cultural attitudes. The existence of the contemporary populist radical right parties is a great example for the validity of multi-dimensionality. As we have seen, these parties stand for a leftist economic policy, while at the same time, are strong advocates of rightist values in the cultural aspects of life.

The relevance of the topic of this thesis also lies in the current socio-economic trends. The recent global crises facilitated the rise of populist radical right wing parties. Economy, for the obvious reasons, is also in the limelight of general interest. We should better watch both carefully.

APPENDIX

1. Party profiles

1.1 France

Name: National Front

Original name: Front National

Abbreviation: FN

Founded: 1972

Leader: Marine Le Pen (president)

Other dominant figure: Jean-Marie Le Pen (former president)



All domestic and European Parliament election results are from the *European Election Database*.

The golden age of the French party was in 2002 when party leader Jean-Marie Le Pen ranked second on the presidential election and entered the next round of voting. The event shocked Europe and debates on the far right suddenly emerged throughout Europe. Few weeks later the party received 11.3 per cent of the votes in the general elections. This number was even higher in the previous parliamentary elections, when 3.8 million voters (15 per cent) said 'yes' to FN's program. Though currently the party has no seats in the National Assembly, they have managed to send 7 representatives to the European Parliament last time.

FN's Election results for the French National Assembly

Election year	1st round results, number of votes	1st round results, percentage of votes	2nd round results, number of votes	2nd round results, percentage of votes	Number of seats
1973	122	0.5%	—	—	0
1978	82 743	0.3%	—	—	0
1981	44 414	0.2%	—	—	0
1986	2 705 336	9.7%	—	—	35
1988	2 359 528	9.7%	—	—	1
1993	3 152 543	12.7%	1 168 160	5.1%	0
1997	3 800 785	15.0%	1 434 854	5.7%	1
2002	2 862 960	11.3%	393 205	1.9%	0
2007	1 116 136	4.3%	17 107	0.1%	0

FN's Election results for the European Parliament

Election year	Number of votes	Percentage of votes	Number of seats
1984	2 210 334	11.0%	10
1989	2 121 836	11.8%	10
1994	2 050 086	10.5%	11
1999	1 005 225	5.7%	5

2004	1 684 868	9.8%	7
2009	1 091 681	6.3%	3

1.2 Austria

Name: Freedom Party of Austria

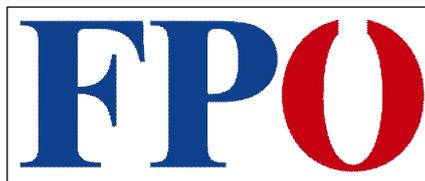
Original name: Freiheitliche Partei Österreichs

Abbreviation: FPÖ

Founded: 1956

Leader: Heinz-Christian Strache (federal leader, president)

Other dominant figure: Jörg Haider (former president, died)



The party has its origins in the Pan German Movement, but only gained real support and became relevant political power under the leadership of Jörg Haider. In the 1999 general election FPÖ received 27 per cent of the votes; more than ever before. The party formed the governing coalition with Wolfgang Schüssels's People's Party in early 2000, the first right wing extremist government in Europe since 1945. Though the coalition was re-formed in 2003, the FPÖ has lost numerous seats. Moreover, a party split in 2005 that resulted in the creation of BZÖ caused further loss in electoral support. This loss, nevertheless, seemed to be temporary only, since the party re-gained power and achieved 18 per cent of the votes (34 seats) in the latest general election, September 2008.

FPÖ's Election results for the Austrian National Council

Election year	Number of votes	Percentage of votes	Number of seats
1956	283 749	6.5%	6
1959	336 11	7.7%	8
1962	313 895	7.0%	8
1966	242 57	5.4%	6
1970	253 425	5.5%	6
1971	248 473	5.5%	10
1975	249 444	5.4%	10
1979	286 743	6.1%	11
1983	241 789	5.0%	12
1986	472 205	9.7%	18
1990	782 648	16.6%	33
1994	1 042 332	22.5%	42
1995	1 060 175	22.0%	41
1999	1 244 087	26.9%	52
2002	491 328	10.0%	18
2006	519 598	11.0%	21
2008	857 028	17.5%	34

All party profile information is from the website of the parties.

FPÖ's Election results for the European Parliament

Election year	Number of votes	Percentage of votes	Number of seats
1996	1 044 604	27.5%	6
1999	655 519	23.4%	5
2004	157 722	6.3%	1
2009	364 207	12.7%	2

1.3 Belgium

Name: Flemish Interest (earlier: Flemish Block)

Original name: Vlaams Belang (earlier: Vlaams Blok)

Abbreviation: VB

Founded: 2004 (predecessor: 1978)

Leader: Bruno Valkeniers (chairman)

Other dominant figure: Frank Vanhecke (former chairman, MEP)



As a successor of the Vlaams Blok (founded in 1978), the Belgian extreme right party's successes started in 1991 when suddenly gained 6.6 per cent of the votes. This number continuously increased afterwards, reaching 12 per cent (17 seat), in 2007, and slightly decreased to 7.8% in the last 2010 elections. Currently, the party not only has 12 seats in the Belgian House of Representatives but also 2 representatives in the European Parliament.

Their success is not at all limited to the national level: they had 15-32 seats in the Flemish Parliament since 1995; where they gained the most seats in the 2004 elections. VB have 3-5 seats in the Senate since 1991 .

VB's Election results for the Belgian Chamber of Representatives

Election year	Number of votes	Percentage of votes	Number of seats
1981	66 422	1.1%	1
1985	85 391	1.4%	1
1987	116 534	1.9%	2
1991	405 247	6.6%	12
1995	475 677	7.8%	11
1999	613 399	9.9%	15
2003	767 605	11.6%	18

2007	799 844	12.0%	17
2010	506 697	7.8%	12

VB's Election results for the European Parliament

Election year	Number of votes	Percentage of votes	Number of seats
1996	1 044 604	27.5%	6
1999	655 519	23.4%	5
2004	157 722	6.3%	1
2009	364 207	12.7%	2

1.4 Denmark

Name: Danish People's Party

Original name: Dansk Folkeparti

Abbreviation: DF

Founded: 1995

Leader: Pia Kjaersgaard (co-founder and leader)

Other dominant figure: Morten Messerschmidt (MEP)



Denmark's third largest party, the Danish People's Party was also founded after a party split: Pia Kjaersgaard and her fellows left Progress Party in 1995 and gained 13 seats in parliament right away in 1998 general elections, receiving 7.4 per cent of the votes. During the years the party has steadily increased popularity and by now, they have 25 representatives in the national assembly and two in the recent European Parliament.

DF's Election results for the Danish National Assembly

Election year	Number of votes	Percentage of votes	Number of seats
1998	252 429	7.4%	13
2001	413 987	12.0%	22
2005	444 205	13.2%	24
2007	479 532	13.8%	25

DF's Election results for the European Parliament

Election year	Number of votes	Percentage of votes	Number of seats
1999	114 865	5.8%	1
2004	128 789	6.8%	1

2009	357 942	15.3%	2
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1.5 Hungary

Name: Hungarian Justice and Life Party

Original name: Magyar Igazság és Élet Pártja

Abbreviation: MIÉP

Founded: 1993

Leader: Csurka István (president)

Other dominant figure: N/A



MIÉP was founded by former center-right politician (MP of MDF party) István Csurka in 1993, reviving extreme right ideology in Hungary. After a term out of the assembly, MIÉP achieved its best electoral result in 1998: the 5.5 per cent resulted in 14 seats in the National Assembly. Mainly due to the high turnout in 2002 the party did not gain the necessary 5 per cent threshold and the party lost all its seats in legislation. In 2006, an electoral alliance was made between the party and the new extreme right formation, Jobbik, but they achieved only 2.2 per cent of the votes. By now, due to the permanent struggle and inner discordances, MIÉP hardly exists; however, extreme right ideology has not only survived but is extremely flourishing, represented only by Jobbik now. Jobbik took over the path of MIÉP, however, targets the Roma instead of Jewish people. Recognising the need to refocus, and "helped" by the economic crises, capitalising from the former politicians of MIÉP, Jobbik gained an unprecedented, 16.67% of votes, 47 seats.

MIÉP's Election results for the Hungarian Parliament

Election year	Number of votes	Percentage of votes	Number of seats
1994	85 623	1.59%	0
1998	248 825	5.55%	14
2002	245 326	4.37%	0
2006*	119 007	2.20%	0
2010	1 286	0.03%	0

*in coalition with Jobbik

MIÉP's Election results for the European Parliament

Election year	Number of votes	Percentage of votes	Number of seats
2004	72 203	2.35%	0
2009	-	-	-

1.6 Romania

Name: Greater Romania Party

Original name: Partidul România Mare

Abbreviation: PRM

Founded: 1991

Leader: Corneliu Vadim Tudor (co-founder and leader)

Other dominant figure: N/A



Founded in 1991, the party led by Vadim Tudor has been a relevant actor of party politics in Romania in the last 18 years. The party's big breakthrough in 2000 general election resulted in gaining almost 20 per cent. Even though the party has experienced a steep fall in recent years and not managed to enter parliament last time, it still has 3 members in the European Parliament.

PRM's Election results for the Romanian Parliament

Election year	Number of votes	Percentage of votes	Number of seats
1992	424 061	3.9%	22
1996	546 430	4.46%	27
2000	2 112 027	19.48%	126
2004	1 394 698	12.92%	45
2008	217 595	3.15%	0

PRM's Election results for the European Parliament

Election year	Number of votes	Percentage of votes	Number of seats
2007	212 596	4.15%	1
2009	419 094	8.65%	3

1.7 Slovakia

Name: Slovak National Party

Original name: Slovenská Národná Strana

Abbreviation: SNS

Founded: 1989

Leader: Ján Slota (co-founder and president)

Other dominant figure: Ján Mikolaj (former deputy prime minister)



The party was founded in 1989 by as an ideological heir of the Slovak National Party. After many years of waving performance, the party managed to form governing coalition with center-left Smer, giving 3 ministers for the cabinet. The unusual forming alliance got a Europe-wide attention and Smer's membership in Party of European Socialist was suspended for more than a year due to the coalition with the extreme right. In the 2009 European elections the SNS gained one seat to the EP.

SNS's Election results for the Slovak National Council

Election year	Number of votes	Percentage of votes	Number of seats
1990	470 984	13.94%	22
1992	244 527	7.93%	15
1994	155 359	5.4%	9
1998	304 839	9.07%	14
2002	95 633	3.32%*	0
2006	270 230	11.6%	20
2010	128 490	5.08%	9

* in coalition with PSNS, The Real Slovak National Party

SNS's Election results for the European Parliament

Election year	Number of votes	Percentage of votes	Number of seats
2004	14 150	2.02%	0
2009	45 960	5.56%	1

1.8 Poland

Name: League of Polish Families

Original name: Liga Polskich

Rodzin

Abbreviation: LPR

Founded: 2001

Leader: Mirosław Orzechowski (chairman)

Other dominant figure: Roman Giertych (former chairman)



LPR is another party that was created just before the coming general election (2001), though managed to get into the assembly immediately. The 8 per cent of the votes the party received meant 38 seats out of the 460. Three years later, in the 2004 EP elections, the party could increase its support that resulted in 10 MEPs for them. Though the party repeated its 2001 success in 2005 parliamentary election, it lost 4 of its seats. Not long after the party started declining and failed to reach the 5 per cent threshold required to enter the Sejm.

However, in 2009 quite a number of its leaders, including the former chairman, Janusz Dobrosz, joined the newly formed party called: Forward Poland (Naprzód Polsko, NP). NP had some success in the 2009 EP elections, under the umbrella of Polish People's Party "Piast" (PSL) *coalition* as Piast reached 7.01%, and 3 seats.

LPR's Election results for the Slovak National Council

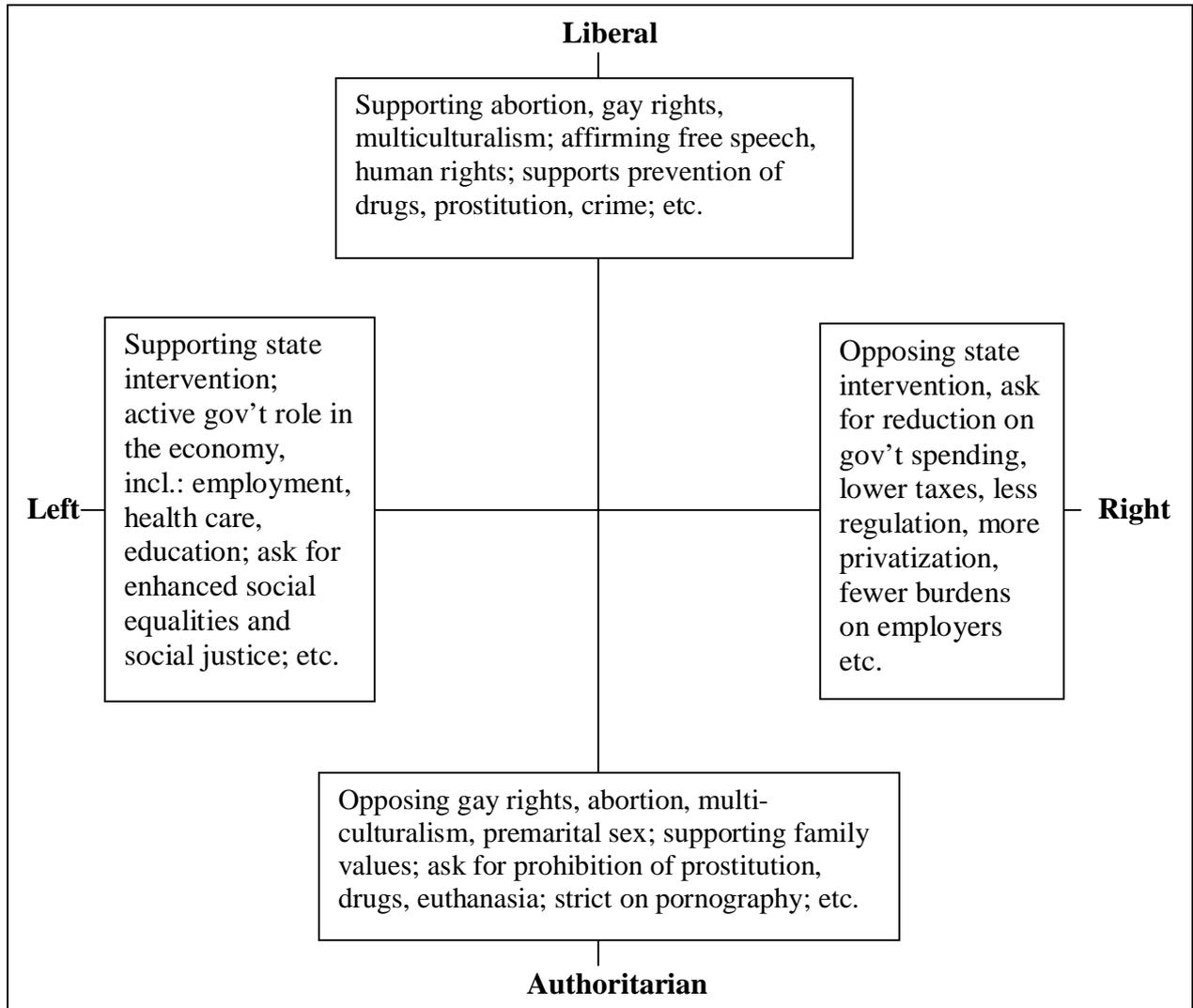
Election year	Number of votes	Percentage of votes	Number of seats
2001	1 025 148	7.87%	38
2005	940 762	7.97%	34
2007	209 171	1.30%	0

LPR's Election results for the European Parliament

Election year	Number of votes	Percentage of votes	Number of seats
2004	969 689	15.2%	10
2009	308 052	11.96%	1

2. Policy issues on orthogonal scale

Dimensions: horizontal: economic; vertical: social-cultural



3. Raw answer data

Party	S3 (-)	S6 (-)	S7 (+)	S10 (+)	S11 (+)	S15 (-)		S1 (+)	S13 (+)	S14 (-)	S17 (-)	S18 (-)	
MIEP	1	1	1	1	4	3		0	1	1	1	2	
SNS	0	2	2	1	0	2		0	0	0	2	1	
LPR	1	1	2	1	3	1		2	2	1	1	1	
PRM	1	1	1	4	4	0	9,5	2	2	0	3	1	5,8
-													
FPÖ	2	2	1	1	3	1		2	1	4	3	2	
FN	0	1	3	2	4	2		1	2	2	1	2	
VB	3	3	4	2	4	1		4	1	4	3	2	
DPP	0	4	2	1	4	0	12,5	0	1	1	2	3	10,3

Party	S2 (+)	S4 (-)	S9 (+)	S16 (+)	S19 (-)		S5 (+)	S8 (-)	S12 (+)	S20 (-)	
MIEP	4	1	1	3	1		1	1	1	1	
SNS	3	2	0	3	2		0	1	3	3	
LPR	4	1	2	4	1		1	1	1	1	
PRM	4	2	0	4	1	10,75	1	1	0	0	4,25
-											
FPÖ	1	2	1	2	1		1	2	1	1	
FN	3	1	3	4	1		3	1	3	1	
VB	1	4	4	2	2		3	1	2	2	
DPP	2	2	3	1	3	10,75	0	0	0	0	5,25

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