



**COUNTERING
RADICAL RIGHT
AND XENOPHOBIC
POPULISM
IN EUROPE**

- A PROGRESSIVE RESPONSE



Group of the Progressive Alliance of
Socialists & Democrats
in the European Parliament

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PREFACE

Claude MORAES
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The rise of the far right and the worrying presence of the anti-immigrant sentiment across the EU draws attention to an urgent need for progressive forces to unite and counter the xenophobic narrative that has fuelled an increase in hate crime across the EU, particularly in recent months. Respecting fundamental rights and promoting tolerance are core European values and essential components to countering the far right and xenophobic populism. The murder of my Labour colleague Jo Cox sheds light on the rise of hatred and intolerance that has spread across the continent. Her death represents an attack on the efforts and the work of progressive forces in promoting respect of diversity and fundamental rights.

The increasing presence of the far right at local, national and at EU level draws attention to the success of the far right in broadening their appeal and exploiting the impact of austerity policies by blaming immigrants. The success of the far right in recent elections has also given these forces a wider platform to promote their xenophobic rhetoric and has enhanced their ability to influence political dialogue. The narrative of the far right in response to the ongoing refugee crisis in Europe has been to push for a tougher stance towards people seeking international protection as well as conflating security and asylum policies.

Austerity-driven policies have also contributed to targeted hostility towards ethnic minorities. It has become normal for immigrants to be scapegoated for the problems faced in Member States. The recent referendums held in the UK and Hungary were dominated by campaigns that incited an anti-immigrant sentiment influenced by the far right. It is important that we resist scapegoating particular groups with hate speech and focus our attention on improving a wide range of socio-economic factors that have exacerbated problems for societies in Europe. The increased presence of the far right across Europe draws attention to failures

in effectively tackling discrimination and the worrying increase of hate crimes and hate speech as highlighted in the annual report of the EU Fundamental Rights Agency. Racial discrimination is a violation of fundamental rights and dignity and there should be zero tolerance of it in all settings.

The Civil Liberties, Justice and Home Affairs (LIBE) committee has general competence concerning discrimination and the protection within the EU of fundamental rights, including the protection of minorities, this has been a core of our Committee work. As co-legislator it is important that progressive forces in the Parliament work together to shape legislation that upholds EU values. In addition, as Socialists and Democrats we must offer a more positive agenda to counter the xenophobic populism of blaming immigrants that has spread across Europe.

It is essential that we apply a multilayer approach, including local, regional, national and EU level, to push for policies that strengthen legislation on anti-discrimination measures. As Chair of the LIBE committee, I will continue to pressure for negotiations to begin with the Council on the horizontal Anti-Discrimination Directive. It is unacceptable that the EU is still lacking a horizontal anti-discrimination instrument, which results in serious gaps and asymmetries in protection from one Member State to another.

Looking into the future, the progressive forces need to be more proactive as opposed to reactive about eliminating xenophobia and discrimination in our continent. We should celebrate the diversity of our continent and continue to promote inclusivity and respect for others. Failure to do so will further offer a chance for the far right to reinforce their presence and further influence the political dialogue. This, in turn, will continue to increase the hostile environment towards minority communities.

THE RISE OF THE FAR RIGHT IN EUROPE

No topic has generated such extensive media coverage and intense political discussion as the rise of the far right in Europe. The discussion actually dates back to the late 1980s, when only a few far right parties were gaining some initial electoral successes, but started to dominate public debate only in the 1990s, as a larger group of parties gained bigger successes. Today the discussion is no longer focused on the causes for their successes but also addresses the consequences.

As the former “fringes” have become part of the mainstream, far right politics are no longer limited to far right parties. While the economic crisis of the Great Recession had fairly little effect on the strength of the far right, the so-called refugee crisis, as well as the recent surge of Islamist terrorist attacks in Western Europe, have catapulted far right politics, and parties, to the centre of European politics. To better understand the challenge the far right poses, it is crucial to move beyond the strict equation of far right politics with far right parties and to accept that key far right tropes have become a central part of the European political and public debate.

Cas MUDDE

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A Note on Concepts and Classifications

I distinguish between ‘left’ and ‘right’ on the basis of the position on (in)equality: the left considers inequality to be fundamentally artificial and wants to use the state to establish (more) equality, whereas the right believes that inequality is natural and should be beyond the purview of the state. The term far right includes both the extreme and the radical right: the extreme right rejects the basis of democracy, i.e. popular sovereignty and majority rule, while the radical right accepts it, but challenges some basic features of liberal democracy, most notably pluralism and minority rights. Most successful far right parties are part of the populist radical right party family, which shares an ideological core of nativism, authoritarianism, and populism.¹

The best example of an extreme right party is Golden Dawn (XA) in Greece, while the National Front (FN) in France is the prototype (populist) radical right party in Europe. Most of the usual suspects are (populist) radical right parties, including the Austrian Freedom Party (FPÖ), the Belgian Flemish Interest (VB), the Dutch Party for Freedom (PVV), and the Italian Northern League (LN) – which together constitute the core of the populist radical right political group in the European Parliament (EP), Europe of Nations and Freedoms (or Europe des nations et des libertés, ENL). Some parties are clearly far right, but it is debated whether they are extreme or radical right – this is most notably the case for the faltering British National Party (BNP) and the Movement for a Better Hungary (Jobbik); the only truly successful far right party in Central and Eastern Europe. In addition, there is a (growing) group of borderline cases, i.e. parties that some scholars consider to be part of the far right and others do not.²

The Electoral Rise of Far Right Parties

Far right parties were almost completely absent from parliamentary politics in the first four decades of the postwar era – an exception being the neo-fascist Italian Social Movement (MSI). In the 1980s they contested elections in a minority of West European countries and averaged less than 2 percent of the national vote. Since then far right parties have increased their scope and support: they are contesting elections in most European countries although they are successful in only a minority. Focusing only on Western Europe, far right parties averaged 4.8 percent in the 1990s and 5.7 percent in the first decade of the 21st century.

As the media has extensively noted, far right parties increased their representation in the EP, gaining a record 51 MEPs, up by 15 since the 2009 election (see Table 1). A total of 11,095,265 people (or 6.8%) voted for far right parties throughout the EU.³ If one looks at the numbers in more detail, it turns out that in many ways the success of the European far right is largely the success of the FN. Its 4,711,339 voters account for 42.5 percent of all far right voters in the 2014 European elections! Similarly, the increase in FN support, of 3,619,648 voters, constitutes roughly two-thirds of the new far right electorate. Hence, it is clear that Europe as a whole wasn’t hit by a far right “earthquake”, as the dominant media narrative argued.⁴

TABLE 1. MAIN FAR RIGHT RESULTS IN 2014 EUROPEAN ELECTIONS (VOTES AND SEATS) AND CHANGE WITH REGARD TO 2009.

COUNTRY	FAR RIGHT PARTY	Percentage of Vote		Number of Seats	
		2014	Change	2014	Change
AUSTRIA	Austrian Freedom Party (FPÖ)	19.7	+7.0	4	+2
BELGIUM	Flemish Interest (VB)	4.1	-5.8	1	-1
BULGARIA	Ataka	3.0	-9.0	0	-2
DENMARK	Danish People’s Party (DF)	26.6	11.8	4	+2
FRANCE	National Front (FN)	25.0	18.7	24	+21
GERMANY	German National Democratic Party (NPD)	1.0	+1.0	1	+1
GREECE	Popular Orthodox Rally (LAOS)	2.7	-4.5	0	-2
	Golden Dawn (XA)	9.4	+8.9	3	+3
HUNGARY	Movement for a Better Hungary (Jobbik)	14.7	-0.1	3	0
ITALY	Northern League (LN)	6.2	-4.0	5	-4
NETHERLANDS	Party for Freedom (PVV)	13.2	-3.8	4	-1
ROMANIA	Greater Romania Party (PRM)	2.7	-6.0	0	-3
SLOVAKIA	Slovak National Party (SNS)	3.6	-2.0	0	-1
SWEDEN	Sweden Democrats (SD)	9.7	+6.4	2	+2
UNITED KINGDOM	British National Party (BNP)	1.1	-4.9	0	-2
EUROPEAN UNION		6.8	+0.8*	51	+15

Source: <http://www.results-elections2014.eu/en/election-results-2014.html>

* This is the average change in percentage for the fourteen countries included here.

Although the far right had enough seats to constitute a political group (i.e. 51 seats from ten member states), it initially failed to do so. The European Alliance of Freedom (EAF), tirelessly promoted in the media by FN-leader Marine Le Pen and PVV-leader Geert Wilders, was unable to attract new members, with some target parties (e.g. DF) being accepted into the Tory-led ‘soft Eurosceptic’ European Conservatives and Reformists (ECR) and others (e.g. SD) opting for the UKIP-led ‘hard Eurosceptic’ Europe for Freedom and Direct Democracy (EFDD). This left the EAF with only extreme right parties like NPD and XA, which even they considered beyond the pale. It took the

EAF one year, and a name change (to ENL), to pick up enough defectors from other parties to finally constitute a political group. So far the new group has been fairly inactive inside and outside of the EP.

2015: A Transformative Year for the Far Right?

While the economic crisis gave the far right only a modest push, despite the ‘received wisdom’ that economic crises breed political extremism, the so-called ‘refugee crisis’ has in many ways transformed the role of far right politics within Europe.⁵

It has not only led to a significant surge in the electoral support of far right parties – with long-established parties like the FN and FPÖ now even leading in the polls – but it has also brought far right politics to the center of European (and EU) politics.

The most important development in this respect is the (second) transformation of Hungarian premier Viktor Orbán, who has used the so-called refugee crisis, as well as the terrorist attacks, to mount a frontal attack on liberal democracy in Europe; including challenging German Chancellor Angela Merkel for dominance within the European People’s Party (EPP) and the EU. His new politics of “Hungary for the Hungarians and Europe for the Europeans” are near identical to that of established far right parties, which have embraced him as a champion of their cause, accordingly.

Orbán’s model of illiberal democracy, based on far right values of nativism and authoritarianism, is openly embraced by the new Polish government of Law and Justice (PiS), while it has found partial support among other leaders in the region, including Czech president Miloš Zeman and Slovak premier Robert Fico. This means that far right politics are no longer limited to relatively isolated groups in the European Parliament but have become part of the European Council too – and, as some have alleged, in the European Commission in the person of Hungarian Commissioner Tibor Navracsics.

Hence, to try to counter far right politics by only targeting far right parties will only address part of the problem; and, arguably, the less important part. It is time to separate far right politics from far right parties – without, obviously, ignoring the far right message of far right parties – and target the message rather than just the messenger. Given that far right attitudes are widespread within European populations, this means that an exclusive electoral strategy is destined to fail. Social democratic parties have to regain the upper hand in the political and public debate by trying to win (back) their target electoral base with a positive agenda. This means not just arguing that far right solutions are morally bad and politically impossible but, more importantly, that social democratic options are more beneficial and realistic.

¹ For a more elaborate discussion of terminology, see chapter 1 in my book *Populist Radical Right Parties in Europe*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007).

² Of these, some have far right factions, but are not overall far right parties – this is the case with, most notably, the Finns Party (PS) and the Latvian National Alliance (NA). Other parties employ a far right discourse at times, particularly during election campaigns, but do not have a far right core ideology – the most prominent examples are Fidesz-Hungarian Civic Alliance, Law and Justice (PiS) in Poland, and the United Kingdom Independence Party (UKIP). I exclude all of these from my analysis of the far right.

³ The precise gains depend on issues of conceptualization and categorization (see above). Using a broad interpretation, the British anti-racist organization Hope Not Hate (2014) calculated that 16,835,421 Europeans (or 10.3%) voted for a far right party in the 2014 European elections. This was over six million voters more than in 2009, or roughly 160% of the 2009 far right electorate. See Hope Not Hate, ‘Euro-Vote Epic Over Bar the Shouting’, available at: <http://www.hopenothate.org.uk/2014/europe> (Last accessed 18 June 2014). This difference is mostly caused by my exclusion of the British UKIP, Finnish PS, Latvian NA, and the Polish Congress of the New Right (KNP).

⁴ See, in more detail, Daphne Halikiopoulou and Sofia Vasilopoulou (2014) ‘Support for the Far Right in the 2014 European Parliament Elections: A Comparative Perspective’, *The Political Quarterly* 85(3): 285-288; Cas Mudde, ‘The Far Right and the European Elections’, *Current History* 113(761): 98-103.

⁵ See, in more detail, Cas Mudde, *On Extremism and Democracy in Europe* (London: Routledge, 2016).

RESPONDING TO THE NEW POLITICAL LANDSCAPE: LESSONS LEARNT AND COUNTER-STRATEGIES

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Responses to the electoral successes achieved by nationalist-populist parties and the far right in Europe need to be assessed in the light of the experience of the left; since this trend, which political scientists refer to as the 'third wave' of the far right, emerged at the start of the 1980s. For responses and counter-strategies to be effective, however, two other things need to be understood. Firstly, at the start of the 1980s, i.e. before the fall of Communism, the far right was confined to Western Europe, whereas it has now spread throughout the continent. As a result, people in the East and West do not necessarily look at the two major totalitarian regimes of the 20th century in the same way, nor do they draw the same line between what is and is not acceptable in mainstream politics. Because of this, social democrats urgently need to agree on a

minimum definition of this democratic 'common denominator', in particular in the context of the key questions of national identity, immigration and xenophobia. For example, politicians in both the West and the East need to recognise that citizenship is based on a contract, a voluntary commitment to a set of rights and duties that are laid down by national law, but are necessarily also based on the fundamental values of the EU. Member States must not deny anyone citizenship or residency, once the necessary legal formalities have been completed, on the grounds of the applicant's ethnicity or religion. No political party, whatever it calls itself or however it describes itself, that subscribes to an ethno-political or ethno-religious definition of nationality can be a coalition partner or claim to be part of the social democratic family.

The other major shift since the start of the 1980s concerns the ideological landscape of the right throughout Europe. We have reached a point where both the traditional liberal right and the conservative right have declined to such an extent that their hegemony over the political right as a whole is coming under challenge. It even seems possible that, in the near future, the illiberal democracy described by Fareed Zakaria could overthrow conservatism/liberalism. What sets this ideology apart in particular is its opposition to the primacy of individual rights, its organicist view of society, and its disregard for the principle of the separation of powers. We have to imagine that the line between the mainstream right and the far right has already become so blurred that the right wing in western Europe could draw inspiration from the FIDESZ or Law and Justice models. This means, among other things, that the left must no longer react to the far right by systematically writing it off as 'fascist'. Whereas parties such as the NPD in Germany, Jobbik in Hungary, CasaPound Italy and all the groups affiliated with the Alliance for Peace and Freedom since 2015 are actually traditional far-right parties, others, like The Finns Party, Geert Wilders' PVV, the Lega Nord in Italy and Alternative for Germany have different, non-fascist origins, although this does not mean that they are beyond reproach when it comes to upholding democratic standards.

If it is to be effective against them, the counter-strategy simply has to be more subtle, and be based on rational arguments which deconstruct their own, highlighting their inherent contradictions and the gulf between what they often say, i.e. taking a stance as an 'anti-system' movement, when in opposition, and what they do when in power. This pattern has been familiar since the FPÖ entered into a coalition with the ÖVP after the 1999 elections in Austria: although it portrayed itself as the party that represented the interests of the working classes, whose status and quality of life was allegedly being jeopardised by globalisation and the enlargement of the EU, the FPÖ actually pursued strictly orthodox neo-liberal social and economic policies in the areas of government over which it had control, without being able to influence European policy. As a result, its share of the vote fell from 26.9% in 1999 to 10% in 2002.

The best line of attack for the left, therefore, is to emphasise these contradictions and to show that a vote for the nationalist-populists amounts to a hijacking of the people's clear and justified aspirations; on the one hand for more control over the practical implications of liberal globalisation, and, on the other, for more political diversity, particularly on the left. In that connection, while all alliances that blur the line between right and left, such as 'Grand Coalitions', have to be judged in the light of circumstances in the country concerned, they must be seen as paving the way for far-right or radical-right parties, or, indeed, for an electoral breakthrough for far-left parties. It goes without saying that a coalition between social democrats and a nationalist-populist group, in addition to being difficult to envisage from an ethical standpoint, would damage the credibility of the left-wing party and make the far right seem more acceptable.

This leads us directly to issue of the cordon sanitaire, to quote the term used in France and French-speaking Belgium to designate the blanket refusal to cooperate with, not to put up candidates against or acknowledge any ideological common ground with far-right or nationalist-populist groups. Rather than challenging the whole idea of this cordon sanitaire, we must assess its effectiveness. Take Belgium, for example.

Although Vlaams Blok, the forerunner of Vlaams Belang, won 24.1% of Flemish votes in 2004, the determination of the other right- and left-wing groups to side-line it at every level brought about its decline. In 2014 it secured only 9.36% of the votes.

The fact that its decline owed much to the simultaneous rise to power of a Flemish nationalist party, the Nieuw-Vlaamse Alliantie (N-VA), as part of a coalition, is not a major problem for democracy. The two groups actually have different origins and political trajectories, and Flemish aspirations for an independent state are not, intrinsically, anti-democratic or a monopoly of right-wing parties. The second example concerns the French Front National - observers regularly wonder what its 'glass ceiling' actually is. Is it the 28% won in the 2015 regional elections, or is it even higher? The question is irrelevant, partly because, even if the FN does gain ground in the 2017 presidential election, it is sure to lose in the second round because it has no allies who will call on their supporters to vote for its candidate.

The cordon sanitaire which has surrounded the FN since the 1980s is working and keeps the party from securing power. Of course, it is primarily the right that will be faced with the need to maintain this attitude towards the far right. The left may have to confront it, however, not during the election, since the withdrawal of one of its candidates to give the FN a clear run is, so far, only a theoretical possibility, but rather in parliament. The question that arose in the French regional assemblies, and in the National Assembly from 1986 to 1988 (and has arisen again since 2012) is whether or not it was acceptable to vote for a 'technical' amendment tabled by a Front National MP or to co-sign a 'technical' amendment with one of them. The response, as we see it, was wrong in two ways: the aim of parties like the FN, particularly those affiliated with the European Alliance for Freedom (EAF), is normalisation, which they seek to achieve by removing from their manifesto and activities all forms of ideology, at least as the term was understood in the last century, i.e. as a way of seeing the world and a Utopian project to transform society.

These same parties that rail against the hold that the technocrats have over political decision-making try to put some of their proposals across as ideologically neutral. Without doubt, the biggest deception employed by identity-based neo-populism, which the left must not ignore, is that of replacing party-political divisions by setting up an opposition between the 'common sense' displayed by ordinary people and the decisions made by the elite which show that they are 'out of touch'. In other words, they are trying to promote a sort of axiological neutrality in political decision-making that could realistically cause left-wing MEPs to vote for a seemingly innocuous proposal by a far-right MEP. This would amount to wrongly validating the view that the left and the far right can see eye to eye on matters of public interest. The most appropriate counter-strategy in response to the nationalist-populists' attempt to become normalised, without abandoning their ethnically divisive goal of establishing a society which denies individuals' equality and is based on social Darwinism, including in its dogmatic neo-liberal form, seems to be to continue refusing to participate in this deception.

MONITORING DEMOCRACY AND CONFRONTING BACKSLIDING - THE ROLE OF THE EU

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The European Union is more than just a big internal market, it is a union of democracies. Article 2 TEU stipulates that “the Union is founded on the values of respect for human dignity, freedom, democracy, equality, the rule of law and respect for human rights, including the rights of persons belonging to minorities. These values are common to the Member States in a society in which pluralism, non-discrimination, tolerance, justice, solidarity and equality between women and men prevail.” It has therefore rightfully inspired the basic set of rules that every state has to adhere to when it joins the EU which are also known as the “Copenhagen Criteria”.

However, what happens if a Member state backslides on these basic principles? For example, in recent years, the EU had to witness how

Hungary’s Prime Minister Victor Orbán enacted a large set of reforms of the judiciary, the media and the constitutional set-up, to name but a few. Many critics, among them high representatives from the UN, the Council of Europe and the European Commission, have voiced their concerns regarding what many consider an attempt to cripple the democratic foundations of the country.

Of course, we can refer several instruments when an EU Member State is not in line with EU laws, with the so-called infringement proceedings being the most prominent example. In fact, the Commission initiated such proceedings against Hungary, for example regarding the forced retirement of a large portion of judges by drastically lowering the retirement age. Eventually, Hungary was forced by the European Court of Justice (ECJ) to revoke this controversial law. Yet, by then, a large number of Hungarian judges had already left office. Furthermore, proceedings were initiated on the basis that such provision contradicts the EU interdiction of discrimination on reasons of age. The ECJ could only rule on anti-discrimination aspects - an EU competence - but it could not look at the bigger picture: the clear attempt to change the judicial landscape in Hungary and interfere with the rule of law. As this example illustrates, safeguarding fundamental rights and values is much more complex when a Member State acts outside the scope of EU law.

There is only one treaty instrument that allows, in theory, for sanctions towards a serious and persistent breach of the values mentioned in Article 2 TEU by a Member State, regardless of whether they are implementing EU law or not: Article 7 TEU. This article, also widely known as the “nuclear option”, has never been triggered as it is a very political mechanism that requires unanimity within the Council when deciding on sanctions (with the exception of the Member state concerned). In addition, the ECJ can only rule on procedural aspects, not on the question itself of whether or not to impose sanctions. This could be compared to a football tournament, where a penalty could only be given to a team once all other competing teams have agreed to it - and where the referee’s only job was to make sure everybody was heard before the final decision was made. This makes no sense, within the European Union we need impartial referees that apply the same standards to everyone.

However, current instruments only target single Member States, thereby making it rather easy to dismiss them as “biased” towards certain governments. The Commission Rule of Law mechanism that was published in March 2014 has not solved this problem. It was established as a “pre-Article 7” procedure: by monitoring the state of rule of law and fundamental values in a given state and engaging in dialogue with it, the problems could be remedied before Article 7 has to be triggered. When the Commission started its Rule of Law Dialogue with Poland in January 2016 amid concerns over dangerous undemocratic developments in Warsaw, the Polish right-wing government was very quick to declare this a biased intervention from the outside.

In order to gain credibility as a rule of law watchdog, we therefore need to increase the monitoring capacity of the EU for all Member states and not only for the few in the spotlight. We do not need to create a new mechanism, additional to what is laid down in Article 7 TEU, but to complement it and to create a comprehensive framework for protection.

The Socialists and Democrats therefore want a tool that provides yearly assessments of all Member States based on fair and objective criteria. In order to be credible, these country-by-country assessments have to remedy a methodological problem: The EU does not have one set of clear and objective indicators that it can use to conduct such assessments. For example, there is no comprehensive legal definition of the terms “democracy” and “rule of law” as spelled out in Article 2 TEU. However, there is a number of indicators that could be used in order to assess these values, drawing inspiration e.g. from the Council of Europe, the UN or the EU Fundamental Rights Agency as well as the ECJ case law. The Commission, in consultation with an independent panel of experts, should draw up an annual European Report on the state of the rule of law in the Member States. The Commission should transmit the European Report to the European Parliament, the Council and the national parliaments. The Report should be made available to the public and could be presented in a harmonised format. It should be elaborated with a focus on issues such as separation of power, the

reversibility of political decisions after elections, freedom and pluralism of the media, to name but a few. Thus, it could also serve as an early warning tool for possibly worrisome developments in a Member state that could seriously harm European values such as democracy or the rule of law.

It should be clear that not every single violation of fundamental rights automatically threatens the very basis of the rule of law in a country. Quite on the contrary: In a state with a functioning system of checks and balances, the national judiciary will adequately take care of single violations of fundamental rights. The European added value cannot stem from making national systems of fundamental rights protection obsolete. However, when there is a systemic problem in a Member State (e.g., when the independence of the judiciary can no longer be taken for granted), we need a European mechanism to guarantee the respect of democracy and the rule of law in the concerned Member State.

In the long run, a possible future reform of the EU treaties could also reflect on how to remedy some of the current institutional problems. For example, national courts could be enabled to bring actions before the European Court of Justice under Article 2 TEU on the legality of Member States’ actions. Article 7 TEU could also be reviewed, especially with a view to identifying the rights of Member States that might be suspended as a sanction. Currently, the treaties only explicitly mention the “nuclear option” of withdrawing a Member’s voting rights. In addition, the unanimity requirement could be discussed. These are important reflections – however they are not likely to take place in the near future. We therefore need action in the present in order to preserve the rights of all EU citizens in all Member States. An impartial European Report of the state of play of the rule of law in every Member State would be a very important step.

CONCLUSION

PROTEST POLITICS AND XENOPHOBIC POPULISM - A THREAT TO EUROPE

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My generation grew up believing that the world had entered an era when government is based on reason, where tolerance and diversity are a norm. We grew up assuming that things can only get better than they were for our parents or grandparents, the generations marked by the most devastating wars in the human history. Nevertheless, today the growing right-wing populism, the hatred against minority groups and political violence have become Europe's new norm. All these are symptoms of those dark times that we in Europe hoped were well behind us.

The rise of xenophobic populists and extremists is now a global trend. The nationalist, anti-immigration, anti-European Union French National Front, which wants to leave the euro and favours French people over immigrants in giving out state benefits, remains the most significant far-right party in Western Europe. However, it is not the only party that tells people that the problems they face are because of some other group. In Britain, the U.K. Independence Party spreads prejudice toward Eastern European workers. In Hungary, the Prime Minister Viktor Orban incites hatred against refugees, while in the United States, the President-elect Donald Trump insults Muslims and Mexicans. Even in Scandinavia - traditionally a stronghold of social democracy - the anti-immigrant Swedish Democrats and the Danish People's Party - attract more and more voters.

The most important new populists of the past four decades in established democracies have been almost exclusively right wing and they have all very much evolved. They are now distancing themselves from fascism and they no longer give clear biological -in other words,

classical racist - explanations for their policies of exclusion. Some of the xenophobic populists operate from the mainstream parties and can no longer be dismissed as fringe movements. All of these parties have made religion a key component of their discourse. In the wake of the repeated terror attacks perpetrated by Daesh, they have insistently condemned the so-called threat of Islamisation, and stressed the need to reclaim the West's Christian identity. The massive arrival of refugees and migrants to Europe in 2015 has put additional wind into their sails.

There is a growing anti-politics and anti-establishment mood in Europe. The violence with which people express themselves on social media can very well illustrate the point. The right-wing populists tap into this mood and present themselves as the legitimate voice of the people. Research has shown that the management of the economic crisis in Europe has had an impact on the rise of the right-wing populists. While economic indicators such as the rate of unemployment do not necessarily correlate with the strong support for the radical-right, there is evidence that the actual choice of welfare policies, such as employment protection legislation or unemployment benefits, do matter. The austerity measures clearly triggered protest politics.

The governments from our political family have been for far too long complicit in accepting that the market will get things done. The market not only limited the power of states, it also limited the power of politicians. Too often, we hear our mainstream politicians saying that things are out of their hands because of globalization or because of "Brussels". Too often we hear them say "there is no alternative".

On the other hand, the radical populists say they can change this. "Take back control", the highly effective Brexit slogan, is actually nothing else than a yearning for government to be able to get things done.

The progressives must not lose confidence. We must put the emphasis on our political and legislative work in communities and towards social cohesion by:

- Speaking out against bigotry and preventing hate from becoming normalized;
- Highlighting positive integration stories of migrants and refugees in Europe: people from various backgrounds across Europe demonstrate to this continent a rich heritage of civic responsibility, justice, generosity and strong values every day. They deserve the media attention that is so often reserved only for the extremists and troublemakers;
- Working hard for proper reception and integration of refugees and migrant communities across Europe, by sharing and implementing positive practices, which have been developed across the European Union;
- Engaging the working class who may have real concerns about immigration, security or the speed of change in their communities: we must bring communities together and confront fears through personal contact in order to experience a common sense of solidarity. When one knows Samira or Ahmed, not only as someone who dresses differently or worships on a different day or celebrates different holidays, but also as someone who worries about kids, school, jobs and health, the distrust and the alienation tends to be replaced by ordinary human comradeship;

The threats to Europe from protest politics and xenophobic populism are varied and each calls for specific treatment:

- Antidemocratic parties should be countered with available legal and constitutional means to restrict the action of extremists;
- Populism prospers where the rule of law and safeguards for minority rights are weak. The EU should no longer tolerate noncompliance by its Member States when it comes to democracy and the rule of law. Control and enforcement mechanisms need to be strengthened to ensure sanctions follow if Member States refuse to enforce the rule of law. We must more efficiently ensure respect for fundamental rights and should no longer ignore measures that lower standards for protecting refugees or minorities or that prevent EU institutions or agencies from doing their jobs;
- We need to change our way of operating and empower people in local communities, especially social entrepreneurs, to build together a more positive and constructive alternative to the politics of hate. Nativist parties that thrive on fears in the society linked to immigration or closer EU integration need to be countered with better and effective policies. Winning elections takes successful policies. Economic policies alone will not be enough for the progressives to reconnect with working class communities that have suffered so much in recent years of economic crises and feel a sense of cultural loss. All progressives in Europe must join forces and re-engage directly with local communities. This is of existential importance for Europe. History reminds us: the politics of fear, if left unchallenged, leads to hate and violence;

It will take time before things start getting better in a Europe where many young people have lost their hopes and dreams. The EU institutions and national governments must invest more in relationships with active citizens who promote tolerance and contribute to cohesion of communities in a positive way. We must all together engage in civic leadership and social justice causes to make a real difference in the world;



Roma Genocide Survivor Raymond Gurême with the EP President Martin Schulz and S&D Group Leader Gianni Pittella



MEP Cecile Kyenge chairing the S&D Conference on hate speech, 21 October 2015



Protagonists from the documentary "Patience, patience T'iras au paradis !" at the S&D Conference 21 April 2015



Muslims in Europe - Untold Success Stories, S&D Conference, 29 September 2016



S&D Conference on hate speech, 21 October 2015



Launching the fight against antigypsyism

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