

**EUROPE
& THE**

THREAT

**A Progressive
Response**

FROM

THE POPULIST

RADICAL

RIGHT

S&D

EXTREMISM WG

*Working Group on Extremism, Populism,
Nationalism and Xenophobia*

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“Mainstream politics must be more willing to challenge the nationalists and the populists. They pretend to stand up for people who are suffering but their diet of hate, division and suspicion create only misery and poverty. It’s time to stop the nuanced language: They’re liars.”

Seb Dance MEP

PREFACE

With just a few months ahead of the European elections, we are facing major challenges from nationalist and populist forces from inside and outside Europe. Their evil influence can be seen everywhere: It is spreading on social networks, infiltrating people's minds with hatred and fear. It is on the streets of the East-German town of Chemnitz, where we saw mobs hunting migrants. It has a voice in governments and parliaments in Europe, be it ex-Front National in France, Lega in Italy or the AfD in Germany but also outside Europe, for example in Brazil with the newly-elected President Jair Bolsonaro.

Nationalist and xenophobic forces have never disappeared altogether. However, for the first time since World War II, they have reached a degree of power and of global organisation, that poses a serious threat to our democracy and freedom. People like Steve Bannon are trying to build alliances in order to attack our liberal way of life. While we are certainly not afraid of these people, we should not make the mistake of underestimating the boldness and insidiousness they apply. Only recently did we see an attempt from the leader of the right-wing ECR Group in the European Parliament to rewrite history and label Nazism a left-wing ideology. At best, this shows a complete ignorance of European history, at worst it is a cynical attempt to deflect from the renewed growth of extreme nationalism in Europe. It is certainly no coincidence that the same absurd idea was reported to have been voiced in other European countries.

What is at stake is nothing less than our open societies, based on freedom, tolerance and solidarity. Our enemies want to install a model of hatred, fear and intolerance. History has shown where this leads but there are more recent examples as well, such as the murder of UK Labour MP Jo Cox and the horrors of the Utøya massacre in Norway.

We Socialists and Democrats are determined to stop this trend. The past months have shown that in this fight, we can no longer rely, without question, on the support of Conservative forces such as the European People's Party, which is accepting a right-wing leader like the Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orbán in its own ranks. Some Conservatives such as the Austrian Chancellor Sebastian Kurz do not even bother to hide their admiration for Orbán or openly imitate him. It is on us now.

One of our priorities in this respect is the fight against the threat of online interference in the European elections. Fake news spread via Facebook or Twitter belong to the most powerful tools used by our enemies in order to influence public opinion and the outcome of elections. We need to get to the core of the problem, namely the algorithms that are able to read our citizens like open books and can thus be abused to manipulate them. We need effective measures to prevent this kind of brainwashing online and we need them now – this is why we insist that Facebook and other companies are held to account and further legislative action is taken.

Above all, we must offer political concepts that improve people's lives noticeably, thus making them less receptive to right-wing propaganda. Too many people are afraid to lose their jobs, do not know whether their kids will ever get a pension, feel left behind and are disappointed by Europe. This helps right-wing forces in Europe to tell their story of fear and turn it into a climate of hatred. The current development model is bringing more inequalities, concentrating power and wealth in the hands of the few, ignores the limits of our fragile planet and does not take account of the complex and interrelated challenges of our time. We need a new economic and social model that works for the many – not just the few. Because a just society is one in which people will not listen to right-wing agitators.

In the 1930s and 1940s, millions of Social Democrats across Europe stood against fascism and many of them paid with their lives. We will live up to their courage and stand up now as we did before. We continue the fight against fascism or Nazism in all its forms whenever and wherever it rears its ugly head.



Udo Bullmann, President of the S&D Group in the European Parliament, 2018-2019

POPULIST RADICAL RIGHT IN THE 2014-19 EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT:

NORMALISATION & CONTESTATION IN A CHANGING EU

by Tanja Fajon



Populist radical right parties have consistently increased their support in Europe in the last two decades. Today they are part of government coalitions in several EU Member States or exert strong influence over mainstream political parties from the opposition ranks. In some Member States, we even see collusion between political leaders, political parties and law enforcement with neo-fascists and neo-Nazis.

The European Parliament has taken a strong position on these worrying trends in the resolution on the rise of neo-fascist and neo-Nazi violence in Europe adopted on 25 October 2018. Our political group was instrumental in gathering a huge EP majority supporting this strong resolution. Another historic decision by the 2014-19 Parliament was the launch of the Article 7 procedure against Hungary over the rule of law and support for the European Commission's decision to take the same step against Poland over judiciary reform. We demanded a full investigation into murders of investigative journalists in Malta, Slovakia and Bulgaria and insisted that Romania fully implements the Venice Commission's recommendations concerning reforms to criminal justice legislation and the fight against corruption.

Our Working Group on Extremism, Populism, Nationalism and Xenophobia has carried out extensive monitoring of the recent xenophobic surge in Europe and in particular of radical right actions in the European Parliament. In June 2015 the far right managed to form a political group (the ENF), which survived the whole legislature in contrast to some previous attempts when they quickly disintegrated due to internal quarrels. Although the ENF's Members have shown much more appetite for EP activities than in the past, they struggled to build alliances and to have their proposals approved by majorities. Parliamentary committees assigned only a small number of more or less technical reports to the group.

We have demanded sanctioning racist hate speech in plenary or other formats in line with Parliament rules; we reacted to the unauthorised political occupation public spaces by the far right within the Parliament premises and prevailed.

During the 2014-19 legislature, we witnessed how far right parties and financial irregularities often go hand in hand. Contrary to the populists' pledge to "drain the swamp", the so-called anti-establishment forces were often the ones replacing the "swamp". We therefore insisted on vigorously implementing of the new rules on the funding of European parties and political foundations. Effective use of financial intelligence is indeed a critical part of any strategy to combat fascism, racism, xenophobia and other forms of intolerance.

Ever since 2016 – the year of the Brexit referendum and the election of Donald Trump – the populist radical right fascinates the media. The best antidote to the so-called "alternative facts" is professional journalism. Investing in education is a key for ensuring media literacy of our citizens.

We organised a number of conferences to take advice from prominent experts on the radical right and to promote our values of social inclusion and diversity. Our conference "Muslims in Europe: untold success stories", was highlighted as best practice in the Counter Islamophobia Kit by the University of Leeds.



Europe has been through very troubled times, as our press monitoring published at the end of this publication proves. It will take time to regain the trust of our citizens. We need to do better. If we want to be credible when challenging the radical right we must be irreproachable ourselves and never give up on our values of equality, solidarity, rule of law and justice. We must translate these into public policies and articulate clear alternatives to the current simplistic solutions proposed by the populist radical right spreading hate, division and promoting nationalist selfishness.

We must continue our fight to keep democracy in place and push for progressive policies and economies based on solidarity. Our ability to express citizens' progressive opinions in such a way that they are represented in EU-policy making is important. It matters not only for representative democracy but also for citizens' support for the EU project.

Tanja FAJON, Chair of the WG on Extremism, Populism, Nationalism and Xenophobia, 2014-2019

“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.”



Cas MUDDE

Stanley Wade Shelton UGAF Professor in the School of Public and International Affairs at the University of Georgia, USA and a Professor II in the Center for Research on Extremism (C-REX) at the University of Oslo, Norway



IT IS SO MUCH EASIER TO BLAME MUSLIMS THAN TO ACTUALLY FIX EUROPE

by Wajid Khan



Anyone working on policy will know that the problems facing Europe are complex and the solutions are complicated. This does not translate well into soundbites and everyday debate - instead of saying "your factory job has disappeared because of the globalised fourth industrial revolution" it is easier to say "it's the Muslims' fault". It is easier, but that does not make it right or helpful.

European society has changed, incredibly quickly. As post-industrial cities in Europe have experienced a transition towards de-industrialization, manufacturing processes have been relocated overseas. Social classes have rapidly changed, as have urban spaces, leading European industrial towns into an identity crisis, and creating a feeling of insecurity in the local population, which manifests in social interactions.

Post-industrial towns are no longer developed hierarchically, along traditional class division. They now seem to be a heterogeneous melting pot where different ethnic or religious identity groups compete. There are around 25.8 millions of Muslims living in Europe, which accounts for 4.9% of the overall population¹.

Many of these Muslim communities live in post-industrial contexts. Despite being part of European societies for long, they still face discrimination and socio-economical disadvantages. Muslims are overrepresented in poorer urban areas, creating residential segregation.

Religious discrimination against Muslim people remains a strong barrier, and it results in social exclusion, especially for women. Muslims experience higher rates of unemployment, they often work in marginal sectors, and they are often underpaid.

Discrimination against Muslims, Islamophobia, has been exacerbated in recent years, particularly in the wake of the recent terrorist incidents on European soil, leading to an increase of violence against Muslims in many EU Member States. In 2017, 1200 Islamophobic attacks have been reported in the UK only, a 26% increase from 2016².

It has not just risen by itself. Such discriminatory narratives are also fuelled by far-right extremist propaganda. Far-right groups have targeted Muslims and labelled them as exogenous elements that do not belong in European societies.

The rise of far-right movements all over Europe has been driven by economic uncertainty and security concerns following the 2008 financial crash and the 2015 migration crisis. Far-right parties have offered superficial explanations at a time when people were desperate to find causes to their problems, and a scapegoat. It is easier to blame a tangible enemy when it is identified in a person that looks, dresses and speaks differently.

Whether extremist parties openly use anti-Islam rhetoric, such as the PVV in the Netherlands, or they hide it behind anti-immigration stances, like the FPÖ in Austria, their success in recent EU elections highlights a worrying trend of intolerance and racism.

Integration and social cohesion are a challenge for the EU, and Muslim people are at the centre of this debate. It is important that EU States pursue inclusive policies, to eradicate discrimination and ensure social cohesion in times of economic uncertainty and within socially tense environments. Member States have a duty to protect those who have suffered from the negative effects of globalisation.

Urban policies should aim at multiculturalism, incentivizing religiously and ethnically mixed districts. European cities should become an area of freedom, where no Muslims or any other group feels excluded. Then, together, Europeans can tackle the challenges that the modern world presents.

The narrative of Muslims as outsiders is vicious. Muslims are not outsiders in European societies. European Muslims are exactly that, Europeans. There is one group that deserves to be perceived as outsiders - the racists who would capitalise on uncertainty and incite hatred against others. It is not the Muslims that do not belong in Europe, it is the extremists, of every kind.

**Wajid KHAN MEP, S&D special representative
to the Muslim communities, 2017-2019**

¹ www.pewforum.org/2017/11/29/europes-growing-muslim-population/

² www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2018/jul/20/record-number-anti-muslim-attacks-reported-uk-2017

HATE SPEECH AND FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION

by Cecile Kyenge



The European Union was founded on the shared values of democracy and the rule of law, expressed in Article 2 of the Treaty on European Union, which emphasizes the importance of respect for human dignity, human rights, rights of people in minority groups, and a society characterized by pluralism and non-discrimination. Common to all open and democratic societies is the fundamental recognition that every individual is of equal worth and should have fair access to opportunities in life. However, the increasing racism, xenophobia and hate speech in Europe that we are experiencing today threatens these shared values and poses a real threat to our democratic societies. The spreading of hate speech from politics to social media, usually supported by fake news and misinformation, has enabled the normalization of hatred and the dehumanization of minorities.

Far-right and populist parties in different European Union Member States have used the rapid spread of hate speech and its normalization in order to build more and more consensus. They have used fear and hate so that it is now acceptable for openly racist parties to enter parliaments as a political force, and form part of a coalition in national and regional governments. This gives them a platform that encourages a political discourse full of hate, and drives forward legislation and policies that go against vulnerable communities. In the past few years, I have personally been the victim of racism inside and outside the European institutions.

Perpetrators of hate speech and fake news usually justify their actions under the guise of freedom of speech. However, the right to freedom of speech is not absolute according to international conventions, and the European Parliament reaffirmed that in a resolution, championed by the Socialists and Democrats on the rise of neo-fascist violence in October 2018. This resolution expressly states that hate speech and scapegoating by politicians and public officials at all levels and on all types of media should be condemned and sanctioned. The European Parliament in May 2018 also adopted a text on "Media pluralism and media freedom in the European Union" which took a strong stand against fake news whilst while at the same time fully supporting freedom of expression.

As members of Parliament and leaders of opinion, we also have the responsibility to speak out against hate speech and to use all the tools at our disposal to counter it. Addressing the threat to our democratic values, requires a deeper sense of obligation in politicians, public figures and opinion leaders to stand firm against all forms of intolerance and hate speech.

This means tackling the constant stream of hate speech from other politicians, media and across society. We can do this by discussing solutions and implementing concrete action, as well as amplifying voices of tolerance and respect. An important element of this is promoting understanding and tolerance of different communities through the use of respectful language when referring to minorities, and by respecting and upholding the dignity and rights of all individuals.

As Socialist and Democrats, we have made the values of human dignity, human rights, rights of minorities and non-discrimination our own, and we act to make them real. We have been working in the European Parliament to ensure

the implementation and application of legislation that was adopted by the European Parliament in previous mandates, such as Race Equality Directive (2000/43/EC), the Employment Equality Directive (2000/78/EC) and the Council Framework Decision on combating certain forms and expressions of racism and xenophobia by means of criminal law (2008/913/JHA). The Council Framework Decision provides a legal base for taking action against hate speech and for imposing various penalties.

In the digital policy field, we have worked on the updating the Audio Visual Media Services Directive to counter hate speech and hatred in this sector. With the European Commission, we have supported the Code of Conduct on countering illegal hate speech online. The Code of Conduct is important, as it is a voluntary agreement, rather than hard law, co-signed by the major IT companies with the European Commission to prevent and counter the spread of illegal hate speech online. The IT companies agreed to "assess the majority of users' notifications in 24 hours whilst respecting EU and national legislation on hate speech and they committed to remove, if necessary, those messages judged to be illegal. They also agreed to carry out further work on improving feedback to users and on being more transparent towards society in general."

This is just the start of our work and we face a long road ahead in our fight against racism, xenophobia and other forms of intolerance. We as Socialist and Democrats are committed to this fight to ensure equal rights for all citizens in Europe for a progressive, pluralist and inclusive future for our Europe.

Cecile KYENGE MEP, 2014-2019



Cécile Kyenge campaigning against hate speech during a Europe Together Go Local in Fossoli-Modena, Italy, June 2018

“DRIVING ON THE RIGHT” - THE AUSTRIAN CASE³

by Ruth Wodak



This CARR Insight blog addresses the obvious shift to the right in the Austrian party landscape, and the acceptance of formerly taboo subjects and expressions in mainstream discourse. I refer to the latter as “normalization”. Such normalization goes hand in hand with a certain “shamelessness”: the limits of the sayable are shifting regarding both the frequency of lies and the violating of discourse conventions – as well as regarding repeated attacks on central democratic institutions such as independent media and courts (Wodak 2018). In particular, normalizing the assessment of migrants as a threat to inner security and a burden on the welfare state and education system must be seen as an international development (Wodak 2015a, 2015b; Rheindorf 2017).

The Austrian parliamentary elections on 15 October 2017, saw just such a normalization: The ÖVP (now rebranded as "Ballot Sebastian Kurz – The New People's Party", changing colour from black to turquoise) focused almost exclusively on migration issues (equating all refugees with so-called "illegal migrants"). The party also promised to close the "Mediterranean route" to migration; to reduce the legally fixed minimum welfare (for recognized refugees but also other people in need); and ultimately, to reduce the upper limit for asylum applicants, in effect since 2016, from 37,000 to zero (although the number of new arrivals since 2015 has decreased dramatically). In doing so, Kurz, the party leader installed on July 1, 2017, adopted almost verbatim the program of the radical right FPÖ.

As Hans-Hennig Scharsach (2017) argues in his book *Stille Machtergreifung* [Quiet Coup], the FPÖ's internal structures have changed significantly since Heinz-Christian (HC) Strache took over as leader in 2005, moving the party ever closer to the radical right: members of dueling fraternities, which make up only 0.4 percent of the Austrian population, have, as Hans Rauscher pointedly observes, effectively taken over the FPÖ. FPÖ politicians such as Strache, Hofer, Stefan, Gudenus and Haimbuchner constitute the federal board of the FPÖ as the highest leadership body. They all belong to dueling fraternities, or "Schlagende Burschenschaften". Remarkably, the leadership of the FPÖ consists entirely of "Allemans", "Marco-Germans" and "Vandals" (Rauscher 2017).

Core characteristics of the extreme right, such as anti-liberalism, authoritarian leadership and subservience, a so-called "Volksgemeinschaft" (an ethno-culturally defined people), of misogyny and racism, as per Rauscher, apply to most fraternities.

Nonetheless, the incitement and stirring up of resentment by Kurz and Strache was electorally successful. On the one hand, the now national-conservative (right-wing populist) ÖVP gained 4.7% more than their 2013 election results, and thus an overall 31.5% as the first-ranked party. On the other hand, the FPÖ took third place with 26%, gaining 5.5% over their last result. Due to the substantial overlap between the political programs of the FPÖ and ÖVP, coalition talks began soon after.

The new turquoise-blue government, though accompanied by loud protest, was inaugurated by President Van der Bellen on December 18, 2017. Thus, under their new chairman, the ÖVP was able to win the chancellorship. But at what cost?

The ÖVP's adoption of a right-wing populist agenda implies a clear shift to the right (similar developments can be observed in other EU member countries). For Austria, it also marks an abandonment of Christian social values and of its previously clear pro-European position. The fact that some FPÖ politicians question universal human rights seems not to bother them. Unlike the year 2000, when the first "black-blue" coalition in Austria caused strong national and international criticism – culminating in EU-wide sanctions against that government (Wodak and Pelinka 2002) – this time it is mainly civil society which voices outrage: for example, over the 21 members of fraternities in parliament on an FPÖ ticket; or over the appointment of extreme-right politicians as ministers.

During the coalition's negotiations, President Alexander van der Bellen (in office since January 26, 2017) had described several members of the FPÖ as unsuitable to be ministers (namely the Viennese non-acting deputy mayor, Johann Gudenus, and the MEP Harald Vilimsky). He successfully prevented both the Ministry of Interior and Ministry of Justice going to FPÖ officials in the coalition deal. Van der Bellen also succeeded in pushing for the EU-agenda to be relocated from the soon-to-be FPÖ-led Ministry of Foreign Affairs to the Chancellery of Sebastian Kurz. Yet for all this, Van der Bellen did inaugurate the turquoise-blue coalition, despite frequent assurances to the contrary while running for president.

This increasing normalization of radical right themes is clearly recognizable in the figure of Johann Gudenus, former non-acting deputy mayor of Vienna and since, December 2017, leader of the FPÖ's parliamentary group (Pollak 2015). For instance, Gudenus claimed that "Europe is the cradle of the whites. We demand a European-wide, coordinated policy for the family and the population, affirming that Europe is 'white'". He has attacked political opponents by means of, among other things, antisemitic stereotypes: "When you mix red and green, you get yellow."

And yellow is the color of Judas, that is the color of treason!" Gudenus rejects the right to asylum on principle, declaring: "Asylum is no human right" Should the FPÖ win the next regional elections in Vienna in 2019, Gudenus – a member of the dueling fraternity Vandalia, may well become major of Vienna.

Naturally, such radical right rhetoric is seldom heard in public. Naturally, there is no straight or even causal link between the radical right's backstage and the FPÖ's many frontstage posters, speeches and TV debates and Kurz's new ÖVP. This recontextualization (and respective coding) happens via social media, the tabloid press, opinion polls; taking place alongside political scandals and provocations, subsequent denials, justifications and repetitive empty phrases (Wodak 2016, p. 38–40). In public, these extreme views are naturally presented in mitigated form, enveloped by a sea of flags and landscape images reminiscent of Riefenstahl's aesthetics (Rheindorf and Wodak 2018).

The new ÖVP has demonstrably adopted key demands made by the FPÖ regarding migration and refugee policies. The new Austrian government now propagates an extremely restrictive immigration policy (Rheindorf and Wodak 2017) and closed borders (even to Italy and South-Tyrol), including the so-called Mediterranean route. Shamelessly, both the FPÖ and the new ÖVP are actively spreading rumors, strawman fallacies and erroneous reports about migrants and refugees – all of which merge into a single threat scenario consisting of an imagined "invasion" by so-called "illegal migrants" (Ötsch and Horaczek 2017). Even the ÖVP's long-standing, established Governor, Wilfried Haslauer (Salzburg), has adopted the FPÖ agenda, challenged the Geneva Refugee Convention, and claimed that "asylum is a basic right, a theoretical thought game that has its limits in the factual".

In order to side-step the obligations of the Geneva Refugee Convention and prevent further loss of voters to the FPÖ, ÖVP politicians now define people who have been persecuted and are fleeing as "illegal migrants" in their government program. This implies that they were not actually persecuted but are criminals – people who claim to be refugees and travel to rich European countries, live off welfare and benefits, and thereby endanger the prosperity of those countries. Such fallacies foment resentment and envy: why should foreigners gain access to benefits that take something away from "us"? Such exclusionary and xenophobic politics – sustained and implemented by the formerly Christian democratic ÖVP – corresponds to the welfare chauvinism of other right-wing populists in Europe, and demonstrates the continuing normalization of the radical right. It is fitting that the Green Party referred to the ÖVP's chairman Sebastian Kurz during the 2017 election campaign as "the better Strache".

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COMPETING WITH THE RADICAL RIGHT:

THE IMPACT OF SOCIAL DEMOCRATIC POLICY STRATEGIES

by Tarik Abou-Chadi



Two developments of the past 20 years have led to a fundamental transformation of the European political space. On the one hand, populist radical right parties have seen an unprecedented increase in their vote shares and have become established political actors in many European democracies. On the other hand, electoral support for Social Democratic (S&D) parties has dramatically declined.

Parties that once played a crucial role for their respective national politics such as the French PS or the Dutch PvdA have faced their by far worst election results in the post-war period. Public debate surrounding the demise of S&D parties and the success of the new radical right often assumes a direct link between these two developments. There is a common and widespread narrative that describes this link in the following way: The working class, once the core support group of social democratic parties, has turned their back on them and has found a new home with the populist radical right. One explanation often brought forward lies in S&D parties' supposedly increasingly progressive positions on cultural issues such as gender equality and immigration that cannot appeal to this working class segment whose attitudes are often more authoritarian and nationalist than other groups in society. Implicitly and sometimes explicitly, this narrative entails the advice for S&D parties that in order to be electorally successful again, they should accommodate the wishes of those supporting the radical right and shift toward a more anti-immigrant position and focus less on so-called identity politics issues favored by educated, urban electorates. Hence, winning back the working class through less progressive positions, S&D parties should be able to increase their own vote share and weaken the radical right at the same time.

I want to outline why this narrative and the formulated advice are strongly at odds with the empirical reality in recent Western European elections. I am going to illustrate how S&D parties in the last years have lost the largest share of their voters not to the radical right but to centrist and left progressive parties. In addition, our research shows that there is little evidence that established parties can weaken the radical right by adopting their positions. Social democratic parties themselves, in turn, electorally benefit from more progressive, pro-EU and generally open/cosmopolitan policy positions.

In the Dutch General Election of March 15 2017, the Dutch Labor Party (PvdA) received its historically worst result with 5.7% of the vote. Before and after the election, media reporting and a broader discourse had strongly focused on dwindling support for the PvdA and how their former supporters turned toward the populist

radical right PVV. The election outcome and the loss of nearly 20 percentage points was often regarded as the result of this development. However, if we actually analyze where the former voters of the PvdA went, a strikingly different picture emerges. The PvdA lost by far most of its voters to left or center progressive parties like Groen Links or D66. Only a tiny share of the many voters that abandoned the PvdA went to the mainstream right VVD or the PVV, most of them voted for a more progressive alternative. This development is in no way limited to the Netherlands. In the first round of the French presidential election in 2017 for example, Emmanuel Macron won more former PS voters than Benoît Hamon and Jean-Luc Mélenchon combined. The current free fall of the German SPD is largely driven by an exodus of their voters to the Greens.

The lesson from this should be clear, however, seems to stand in strong contrast to what many active and former S&D politicians suggest. In the cases described, the electoral crisis of S&D parties is not driven by a loss of the working class vote to the radical right, but by failing to appeal to educated, often young and female middle class voters. The important question that S&D parties thus need to ask themselves is why they are losing the center ground. It should be clear that they are not losing that many voters to centrist and left-libertarian parties because they are too progressive and cosmopolitan. On the contrary, especially in the case of immigration issues, S&D parties in the past ten years have chosen an often fuzzy strategy trying to appeal to both more authoritarian as well as more progressive voters. This ambivalent strategy that often includes increasingly tough positions on immigration and refugees seems to backfire with educated voters and does not seem to help to win back voters from the radical right.

This is very much in line with our own research that has focused on two questions: (1) how do the strategies of established parties affect the electoral fortunes of the radical right; (2) how do Social Democratic policy strategies affect their own vote shares? Analyzing a vast array of data on parties' policy positions, electoral outcomes and individual voting behavior, we find no evidence that tougher positions on immigration help established parties to weaken the radical right.

We generally find that more attention to the issues most important to the radical right increases the exchange of voters between established and radical right parties. However, the radical right on average comes out as the net winner of this increased exchange and thus stands strengthened and not weakened. As Jean-Marie Le Pen already noted in the 1990s, when parties try to imitate the positions of the radical right, voters will still opt for the original.

For Social Democratic parties themselves we find that more progressive strategies generally increase their vote shares. Our results show that S&D parties with less progressive non-economic positions fail to attract educated professionals and young voters. Responding to the radical right challenge by taking a tougher stance on immigration thus alienates a core group of social democratic support. Since these groups are crucial for S&D parties' overall election results, a failure to appeal to them can be regarded as a main driver of the current electoral decline. An additional consequence of this is that we can observe an increasingly old S&D electorate (and membership) which should be another strong warning sign for politicians interested in the long-term fortunes of the Social Democratic party family.

In sum, a narrative that focuses on radical right parties attracting the former core electorate of Social Democracy does not adequately capture the main reason for their electoral losses in the past years in Western Europe. While many seem to suggest that less progressive positions and especially tougher stances on immigration would help S&D parties to regain their electoral strength, our research shows that rather the opposite is the case. Accommodating the policy positions of the radical right neither weakens those parties nor does it help S&D parties electorally. S&D parties in many countries are struggling because educated middle class voters do not find themselves represented by these parties anymore. When S&D parties do not formulate clear progressive positions in favor of open societies, they will increasingly fail to attract young and educated voters. Without the support of these groups, they will cease to be the leading force of the Left in Western Europe – electorally and ideologically.

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**ENSURING ETHNIC AND RACIAL DIVERSITY AND
REPRESENTATION IN THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT:**

WHAT POLITICAL PARTIES CAN DO

by Javier Moreno Sanchez



The true measure of a democracy is how we represent our minorities' interests. First generation immigrants and their descendants are rare among the Members of the European Parliament. Their limited numbers contrast sharply with the wide diversity across our continent. There are approximately 60 million citizens with an ethnic or religious minority background in the EU, making up about 12 percent of the total European population. Every day, these citizens show a rich heritage of civic responsibility, justice, generosity and strong family values.

The S&D Group in the European Parliament and the PES member parties remain firmly committed to an inclusive campaign ahead of the 2019 European election. We want to ensure that our MEPs and Commissioners fully embrace diversity and represent all groups within our diverse European society.

One of the key rights linked to EU citizenship is the right to vote and stand as a candidate in elections. Despite the fact that the European Parliament's powers have consistently increased, the voter turnout has fallen in every single European election since 1979. EU citizens belonging to ethnic and religious minority communities can play a key role in reversing these trends.

On the initiative of the S&D Group in October 2013, the PES Presidency adopted a declaration "Striving for fair representation of people with an ethnic or migrant background". Party dynamics, candidate selection procedures and their securing electable places on the lists are highly significant for immigrant and minority representation. As a parliamentary group in the EP we have been calling on our sister parties to make more efforts to further increase the number of candidates with a minority background on electable places on the lists.

In 1986 the Socialist Group elected for the very first time a member of the Roma community, Juan de Dios Ramirez Heredia, who kept his seat until 1999. In the current 2014-19 legislature, we are the only political group composed of MEPs representing all 28 EU Member States. Furthermore, our approach has always been to truly empower representatives of minorities: for instance, our Roma Member from Sweden Soraya Post is the S&D Group spokesperson for Roma issues. Our UK Labour Member Wajid Khan has taken up the role of special representative for Muslim communities, previously exercised by his predecessor Afzal Khan who has since been elected to the UK Parliament in 2017.

Also at the staff level, the S&D Group has been making efforts to open the door of the EP to young people with a migrant or minority background. Since 2010, we have put in place an internship programme for young Roma people. Young Roma students regularly receive funding to join a professional training programme with the S&D Group, working on different policy areas and gaining new skills.

This followed the Ghilardotti Fund for the S&D Equality and Diversity Traineeship, created in 2004, inspired by the work of former MEP and women's rights campaigner Fiorella Ghilardotti. This fund enables young people to gain practical experience in the areas of social rights and employment, women's rights, anti-discrimination, equal opportunities and fundamental rights and freedoms.

We have also promoted inter-cultural dialogue and tolerance through our international cooperation fund, offering traineeships to young Palestinians and Israelis. More recently, we have proudly welcomed refugees among our trainees. In an era of increasing disaffection with traditional politics, parties will seem even more remote from the citizens if their membership profiles do not match the image the party hopes to project. In democratic countries, political institutions face calls to reflect fairly the diversity of their populations. The current lack of diversity in the European Parliament sends a message of exclusion and signals a democratic deficit and the S&D Group is leading the way in changing this.

Javier MORENO SANCHEZ, Secretary General of the S&D Group in the European Parliament, 2014-2019



S&D ACTIVITIES

The Working Group on Extremism, Populism, Nationalism and Xenophobia has provided important input into our parliamentary work. It has also initiated a number of events and projects seeking to raise awareness of the danger that extremism poses, to monitor the worrying trend, and to propose action to tackle it.



**PARLIAMENTARY
WORK**

Parliament calls for a ban of neo-fascist and neo-Nazi organisations⁴

Led by the S&D Group together with its partners from the European Left and the Greens, the Parliament adopted a strong and comprehensive resolution on the rise of neo-fascist violence in Europe. With the number of hate crimes and xenophobic parties growing across the continent, the resolution is the first to be adopted on this topic since 1999 and it therefore represents an important parliamentary position ahead of the 2019 EP elections. It should be noted that, the 90 MEPs from the right of the house who voted against the text, 31 were EPP, 22 ECR, 20 ENF, 10 ELDD, 5 NI and 2 ALDE.

The resolution calls on Member States to condemn and sanction hate crimes and hate speech. Moreover, it asks them to ban neo-fascist and neo-Nazi groups or any other foundation or association that exalts and glorifies Nazism and fascism. The resolution cites the 2011 deadly attacks in Norway staged by Anders Breivik, the 2016 murder of UK Labour Member of Parliament Jo Cox as well as a number of incidents in Italy, Poland, Greece, Germany, France, Spain, Croatia, Latvia and Nordic states as examples of the growing and deadly right-wing violence in Europe.

A historic vote to defend the rule of law in Hungary⁵

For the first time ever, the European Parliament took the ultimate step of starting procedures against the Hungarian government for breaching European values on the rule of law. Based on numerous reports from the EU institutions and international organisations and bodies, Parliament concluded that there is a clear risk of a serious breach by Hungary of the values on which the Union is founded, and triggered Article 7(1) by sending the reasoned proposal adopted by a two-thirds majority to the Council. Examples of risks of a breach of European values in Hungary include a shrinking independent media, government policy breaching academic freedom, misuse of EU funds and nepotism in the judiciary.

An overwhelming majority of the Parliament voted to launch Article 7 procedures, considerably higher than the necessary two-thirds majority needed.

This showed the level of support from across the political spectrum for finally taking real action against Viktor Orbán's government.

Stop dismantling democracy in Poland!⁶

Members of the European Parliament approved a resolution, which supports the European Commission's decision to trigger Article 7 against Poland for passing constitutional changes that undermine the independence of the judiciary. The text also calls on the Council to determine swiftly whether Poland is at risk of a serious breach of EU law.

With the worrying developments on the rule of law in Poland since the election of the PiS government in 2016, the S&D Group has consistently pushed for action to be taken: from April 2016 to December 2017, five resolutions have been negotiated and supported by the S&D.

A call for an independent mechanism to monitor the situation of democracy, the rule of law and fundamental rights in each EU Member State

Our Group has been pushing for a long time for the creation of a truly independent mechanism to monitor the state of democracy, the rule of law and fundamental rights in each EU Member State. These principles are the building blocks on which the European Union is founded and should not be misused for political purposes.

The European Parliament adopted a resolution⁷ calling on the European Commission to finally come forward with proposals on this independent mechanism. Every year we want to see an evidence-based review of democracy, the rule of law, and fundamental rights situation in each member state. This should be followed by country-specific recommendations and parliamentary debates. This is the only way to ensure that such an important issue is dealt with in a fair, transparent, and non-political manner.

⁴ P8_TA(2018)0428 <http://www.europarl.europa.eu/sides/getDoc.do?pubRef=-//EP//TEXT+TA+P8-TA-2018-0428+0+DOC+XML+V0//EN&language=EN>

⁵ P8_TA(2018)0340 <http://www.europarl.europa.eu/sides/getDoc.do?type=TA&reference=P8-TA-2018-0340&language=EN&ring=A8-2018-0250>

⁶ P8_TA(2018)0055 <http://www.europarl.europa.eu/sides/getDoc.do?pubRef=-//EP//TEXT+TA+P8-TA-2018-0055+0+DOC+XML+V0//EN&language=EN>

⁷ P8_TA(2018)0456 <http://www.europarl.europa.eu/sides/getDoc.do?type=TA&reference=P8-TA-2018-0456&format=XML&language=EN>

Combating anti-Semitism⁸

As a result of an S&D proposal, the Parliament adopted a resolution on combatting anti-Semitism in Europe, which includes a call on Member States to adopt and use the IHRA working definition of anti-Semitism and to increase cooperation with Jewish communities on security issues.

Anti-Semitism is deeply rooted in Europe, as its resurgence after the Holocaust proved. It is with great concern that we have seen a general increase over recent years. According to the European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights, Jewish people in Europe are increasingly afraid of being verbally harassed (46%) or physically attacked (33%). The S&D stands against any forms of discrimination. Education is essential to prevent intolerant attitudes. It can help to foster tolerance, spread universal values and encourage critical thinking. It can help children and young people to bring a change of mindsets to their families and communities, and ultimately to society.

A European Day to commemorate the Roma Genocide⁹

Following a campaign launched by the S&D Group, the European Parliament in April 2015 solemnly recognised the genocide of Roma that took place during World War II and declared that a "European Roma Genocide Memorial Day" should be dedicated to remember the 500,000 Roma people who were exterminated by the Nazis.

The adoption of the resolution, sponsored by the S&D Group, is the first EU document dedicating several paragraphs to the introduction and definition of anti-Gypsyism and also to the recognition and commemoration of the Roma genocide, also known as Porrajmos or Samudaripen, one of the most horrific, yet often forgotten attempts to exterminate the Roma population of Europe.

Fundamental rights aspects in Roma integration in the EU: fighting anti-Gypsyism¹⁰

The Parliament adopted the report on protecting fundamental rights of Roma people in the EU, drafted by the S&D Spokesperson for Roma issues Soraya Post. The report recognises anti-gypsyism as a horizontal issue, and demands a range of policies from desegregation measures in public services to monitoring of anti-discrimination programmes. The ambitious report is a firm condemnation of the current predicament of Roma people in Europe, and a call for action for the Commission and Member States.

Anti-gypsyism is a specific form of racism, and the results are seen at every level of European society. 80% of Roma parents live at risk of poverty, as do their children who, in 47% of cases, do not attend early education. One third of Roma households live without running water or access to an inside toilet, shower or bathroom inside. The problems continue into adult life with 63% of young Roma not in employment, education or training in 2016, compared to the EU average of 12%. This is an intolerable situation in Europe, and more must be done to improve it.

⁸ P8_TA(2017)0243 <http://www.europarl.europa.eu/sides/getDoc.do?pubRef=-//EP//TEXT+TA+P8-TA-2017-0243+0+DOC+XML+V0//EN&language=EN>

⁹ P8_TA(2015)0095 <http://www.europarl.europa.eu/sides/getDoc.do?pubRef=-//EP//TEXT+TA+P8-TA-2015-0095+0+DOC+XML+V0//EN&language=EN>

¹⁰ P8_TA(2017)0413 <http://www.europarl.europa.eu/sides/getDoc.do?pubRef=-//EP//TEXT+TA+P8-TA-2017-0413+0+DOC+XML+V0//EN&language=EN>

New rules to prevent funding abuses by far-right parties¹¹

The new rules for European political parties and foundations have introduced more effective and democratic checks on transparency and democratic accountability of officially recognized European parties receiving EU funds. The revised regulation reaffirms the need to strengthen European parties, as key-players in the goal of creating a common public sphere and with the aim of strengthening the European dimension of the EP election campaign. The obligation of visibility of the logo and programme of European parties as well as the obligation to include information on gender balance and the respect of fundamental rights also represent an important step forward in improving the previous rules.

New rules on hate speech in the EP¹²

Our leading Member on the Constitutional affairs committee, Richard Corbett (S&D), steered the process of the general revision of the EP Rules of Procedure and ensured stricter procedures for tackling hate speech in the EP.

New rule 11 states that 'Members shall not resort to defamatory, racist, or xenophobic language or behaviour in parliamentary debates'. New rules allow for immediate challenge on a point of order with no automatic right of reply. Sanctions for hate speech have been increased 10-fold: non-payment of up to 30 days daily allowance (doubled if repeated) and MEPs cannot represent the EP on any of its official delegations for a year.

¹¹ P8_TA(2017)0274 <http://www.europarl.europa.eu/sides/getDoc.do?pubRef=-//EP//TEXT+TA+P8-TA-2017-0274+0+DOC+XML+V0//EN&language=EN>

¹² P8_TA(2016)0484 <http://www.europarl.europa.eu/sides/getDoc.do?pubRef=-//EP//TEXT+TA+P8-TA-2016-0484+0+DOC+XML+V0//EN&language=EN>



DB
CONFERENCES



“My son used to tell me keep your chin up and keep moving forward! I say keep peace with you and keep moving forward.”

Latifa IBN ZIATEN, mother of Imad ibn Ziaten, born in 1981 who was the first service member in Toulouse killed by Mohammed Merah in the terrorist attack of 11 March 2012.

PROGRESSIVE SOLUTIONS TO COUNTER VIOLENT EXTREMISM

DATE: 21 April 2015

TOPIC: A discussion on radicalisation leading to violent extremism

GUEST SPEAKERS:

Stavros LAMDBRINIDIS, EU Special Representative for Human Rights; Peter R. NEUMANN, founder of the International Centre for the Study of Radicalisation (ICCR) and professor of security studies, Department of War Studies, King's College, London; Latifa IBN ZIATEN, founder and president of the association Imad-Ibn-Ziaten for Youth and Peace; Hayat KHYARE, family member of a child that joined Daesh in Syria; Preben BERTELSEN, Department of psychology and behavioural science, Aarhus University, Denmark; Hocine BEN ABDERRAHMANE, historian and Imam at the Brussels El Azhar mosque; Hadja LAHBIB, RTBF news anchor and author of the documentary "Patience, Patience t'iras au paradis"; Tata MILOUDA, participant from the documentary; Shiria KHATUN, chair of the Shanaz network, UK; Malika HAMIDI, director of the European Muslim Network; Eugenia RELAÑO PASTOR, senior lecturer on Islam in European Society, Complutense University, Madrid; Hans BONTE, Mayor of Vilvoorde

In the aftermath of the tragic events in Paris, Copenhagen and Tunis, the S&D Group in the European Parliament organised this high-level conference on violent extremism, highlighting de-radicalisation policies and preventive measures to counter intolerance and discrimination.

Since 2012, more than 4,000 young Europeans have gone to fight for Daesh in Syria. As much as we would like there to be easy answers to the threat of terror, there are none. The rhetoric of right wing political groups which claims that closing our borders or providing unlimited surveillance would somehow end the threat, are patently false. Yes, we need to enhance security in the face of new threats, making full use of the measures we have available and ensuring information is shared between law enforcement agencies on a permanent basis. However, more importantly we must deal with the uncomfortable question of why an increasing number of young Europeans are being drawn towards extremism. As Social Democrats, we must lead the fight against the marginalisation, social exclusion and inequality that extremist recruiters feed on.

PROGRESSIVE SOLUTIONS TO COUNTER VIOLENT EXTREMISM

**TUESDAY 21.04.2015
14:30 - 18:00**

**EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT
60, RUE WIERZT - 1047 BRUSSELS
ALTIERO SPINELLI BUILDING
ROOM A3G-3**

REGISTRATION: Deadline 14 April 2015
a-d Conf-Integration@europarl.europa.eu

TRANSLATION: FR, DE, IT, SL, EN, DA, ES, PT, BG, ET, PL, SK, RO

WEBSITE/IMG: www.socialistsanddemocrats.eu

INTRODUCTION: GIANNI PITTELLA, S&D GROUP PRESIDENT

PANEL ONE: THE TOOLS OF DE-RADICALISATION

THE AFTERMATH OF PARIS AND COPENHAGEN ATTACKS

- Malika Hamidi, High Representative
- Preben Bertelsen, King's College London

MOVING A STEP TO THE FRONTS OF VIOLENCE

- Latifa Ibn Ziaten, IMAD-IBN-ZIATEN FOR YOUTH AND PEACE
- A DOCUMENTARY FROM A FAMILY WHO ENDED UP CONVICTED IN SYRIA

LEARNING LESSONS FROM DENMARK

- Preben Bertelsen, National University

TACKLING DISCRIMINATION IN FRANCE

- Hans Bonte, Mayor of Vilvoorde

PANEL TWO: THE TOOLS OF INTEGRATION & EDUCATION

TRAINING WORKSHOP

- Shiria Khatun, Chair of the Shanaz Network, UK
- Hadja Lahbib, Member of the European Parliament

EXPERIENCES AND RESEARCH SHARING

- Hadja Lahbib, RTBF
- Tata Milouda and Latifa Ibn Ziaten

CONCLUSION AND PROJECTION OF AN EXTREMITY FROM THE DOCUMENTARY

- "Patience, Patience t'iras au paradis"

S&D Group of the European Parliament

“There is an uncomfortable truth for many Europeans. However different the foreign fighters’ motivations to go to Syria and Iraq, what most of them had in common is that they did not feel they were part of their societies. They sometimes thought it was because of the way they look, who they are or, where they come from. They were not part of us; they were not European no matter how hard they have tried. That did not turn them into terrorists but it made them open to an ideology that says that the West is at war with you, and that you can’t be open and Muslim at the same time. Therefore, this is where we need to start our prevention; yes it’s the toughest part but it’s essential if we want to stop this from happening again and again.”



Professor Peter NEUMANN, founding Director of the ICCR, King's College, London

UNITED AGAINST HATE AND FEAR

DATE: 21 October 2015

TOPIC: Hate speech in Europe

GUEST SPEAKERS:

Nick LOWLES, Founder of Hope not Hate, UK; Heiner BIELEFELDT, UN Special Rapporteur on Freedom of Religion or Belief; Paul NEMITZ, Director - Fundamental Rights and Citizenship, DG Justice, European Commission; Jacob MCHANGAMA, Director of Justitia and Founder of The Freedom Rights Project, Denmark; Siobhan CUMMISKEY, Policy Manager, Facebook; Ricardo GUTIÉRREZ, General Secretary of the European Federation of Journalists.

Freedom of expression is one of the building blocks of a democratic society but hate speech on the other hand is a violation of that freedom. We have witnessed a surge of xenophobic hate speech in recent times. We clearly need better and serious recording of hate crimes to ensure appropriate investigation, prosecution and sentencing. It is high time that Member States fully implemented EU law to combat racism and xenophobia. By fighting hate speech, the European Union can reinforce the key reasons for its existence: the values of freedom, democracy, coexistence.



The dissemination of hate speech online often leads to a rise in violence, including by neo-fascist groups. The conference participants called on EU Member States to condemn strongly and sanction hate crime, hate speech and scapegoating by politicians and public officials at all levels and on all types of media, as they all too often normalise and reinforce hatred and violence in society.



The lessons learned about “Politics of hate and organised intolerance within European society” included these imperatives:

- **Understand your enemy**
- **Frame the debate**
- **Plan a strategy and campaign**
- **Challenge hate with HOPE**
- **Identify and mobilise your key messengers**
- **Build shared identities.”**

Nick LOWLES, Founder of Hope not Hate, United Kingdom



MUSLIMS IN EUROPE: UNTOLD SUCCESS STORIES

DATE: 29 September 2016

TOPIC: The event was designed to provide a counter-narrative to the growing environment of mistrust and bigotry towards Europe's 25 million Muslims. Many events in the Parliament focus on Islamic terrorism or radicalisation, so we wanted to highlight how Muslim individuals and communities are contributing to Europe and making it a better place to live.

Social entrepreneurs transforming Molenbeek into a source of innovation: Ibrahim OUASSARI and Julie FOULON, co-founders of MOLENGeek on the importance of supporting education and entrepreneurship amongst Muslim youth:

"MolenGeek is a digital social project based in Molenbeek, a district of Brussels that has unfortunately been in headlines for negative reasons. MolenGeek is a part of changing that narrative, a symbol of hope in an area that faces many challenges."

GUEST SPEAKERS:

Dr Taoufik BEN ADDI, Urologist surgeon and Coordinator of uro-oncology at the Brussels' Clinique du Parc Leopold, Winner of the Diwan Awards | Inspiring Young Generations (Belgium); ABDEL EN VRAI, Brussels humorist, stand-up artist, blogger, awarded "Bruxellois de l'année 2013" (Belgium); Faten EL-DABBAS, poet and activist (Germany); Leyla AKCA, Clinical director at Maya Vakfi, Project Lift - Human refugee empathy (Turkey); Mohammed AL-SAUD, Syrian Refugee in Sweden, founder of the NGO The Young Republic, Special mention by the Jury for the European citizenship award 2016; Yasmine NAHLAWI, The Voice of the Syrian Community of Manchester (UK); Farida TAHAR, Molenbeek City Counsellor; Ibrahim OUASSARI and Julie FOULON, co-founders of MOLENGeek.

The narrative of Muslims as outsiders is not only incorrect, it plays into the hands of extremist groups. As the Daesh narrative grows, so does the far right in Europe, each using fear to advance their own agenda. The 25 million Muslims in Europe bring to this continent a rich heritage of civic responsibility, justice, generosity, family life, and faith. By presenting just a handful of the millions of successful Muslims: doctors and entrepreneurs, artists and activists, we hope to give a more positive image of Muslims in Europe. They deserve more of the media attention that is too often reserved only for the fundamentalists.



REMEMBERING THE PAST AND VINDICATING FORGOTTEN VICTIMS

DATE: 29 March 2017

TOPIC: The recognition and commemoration of the Roma Holocaust

GUEST SPEAKERS:

Rita PRIGMORE, Roma genocide survivor, Ambassador for Peace at Saint Egidio, Würzburg, Germany; Zoni WEISZ, Roma genocide survivor from the Netherlands; Romani ROSE, head of the 'Central Council of German Sinti and Roma', Heidelberg, Germany;

The S&D Group hosted a unique event with Roma Holocaust survivors sharing their stories. Zoni Weisz, a Sinti Holocaust survivor from the Netherlands, told how his family was ordered by the Nazis to be deported to the Westerbork transit camp in May 1944. Zoni made a brief escape with his aunt, but they were quickly found and arrested. They were then deported to the Auschwitz concentration camp. The rest of his family were sent on a deportation train to Auschwitz, but a Dutch police officer and member of the Dutch resistance put Weisz on a separate train that allowed him to eventually escape to his grandparents' home for the remainder of the war.

Rita Prigmore shared her life story and suffering. Rita and her twin sister Rolanda were born into a Sinti family on March 3, 1943, in Würzburg in northern Bavaria in Germany. A year earlier the Nazi regime had passed a "racial law applied to Gypsies", forcing them to undergo compulsory sterilization. Those who refused to comply were deported to Auschwitz. In 1942, just before her appointment for sterilization by the Nazis, Rita's mother became pregnant. The abortion was cancelled when the Nazis realized she was carrying twins," Prigmore recounted.

THE GREAT GERMANY OF THE REPUBLIC OF THE NETHERLANDS

REMEMBERING THE PAST & VINDICATING FORGOTTEN VICTIMS:

EXCHANGE OF VIEWS WITH THE ROMA HOLOCAUST SURVIVORS

29/03/2017
14.00-16.00
EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT
ASP A50-3 - BRUXELLES

MODERATED BY: Sander SOETEMAN, MEP (Dutch Conservative and Reformed Party) and S&D Group Vice President

SPEAKERS:
Rita PRIGMORE: Roma Holocaust survivor, Ambassador for Peace at Saint Egidio, Würzburg, Germany
Zoni WEISZ: Sinti Holocaust survivor from the Netherlands
Romani ROSE: Head of the Central Council of German Sinti and Roma, Heidelberg, Germany
Oliver ROSE: European Commission Director General for Justice and Consumers
Thomas ROSENTHAL: Chief of the Swedish Consulate General in Copenhagen and former Chief of the Swedish Consulate General in Brussels
Miguel SÁNCHEZ: MEP (Spanish Socialist Workers' Party) and S&D Group Vice President

INTERNATIONAL ROMA DAY
29 March 2017

Please support the event by clicking on the social media icons below. If you wish to help please contact your national office of the S&D Group.

S&D

The Nazis sought twins for medical experiments. "Dr. Josef Mengele was a ruthless twin researcher and the doctor of the "Gypsy family camp" in Auschwitz. His student, Werner Heyde, examined Rita's mother several times. Rita's mother was forced to sign a paper handing her children over to the Nazis for medical studies immediately after their birth. Otherwise the entire family would be deported to Auschwitz—as were thousands of other Sinti and Roma. Four doctors in uniforms were present at Rita and her sister's birth at Würzburg University Hospital. When Rita's mother returned to the hospital to see her girls, the body of Rita's sister, Rolanda, was lying in the bathtub with a shirt and a bandage around her head—she was dead. Rita was only reunited with her mother in 1944 through the Red Cross. In later years, Rita discovered a large scar behind her right eye; lifelong poor health including migraine headaches, fainting spells, and weak eyesight leave her in no doubt that she was subject to experiments by the SS doctors.

S&D Joint Extremism/Digital Europe Working Group Conference

FAKE NEWS LIVE

POLITICAL & LEGAL CHALLENGES

WEDNESDAY
06/09/2017
13.00 – 17.30
ROOM: A3G3
EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT
BRUSSELS

HOSTED BY S&D
VICE-PRESIDENTS

• S&D TALK 467
• LIVE WEBINAR 10/17

REGISTERED ON: www.congress.europa.eu

SPEAKERS	AGENDA
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ingrid BRODNIG, Austrian Digital Ambassador to the EU Paolo CESARINI, Head of Unit, Consumer Commission Ricardo GUTIÉRREZ, General Secretary of the European Federation of Journalists Arnaud MERCIER, Professor of Political Communication at Panthéon-Assas University, Paris Paolo AMENDOLINI, Head of Unit for the EU's Consumer Frank LA RIVE, MEP Neil SPENCE, Vice-President of the Commission Christian MEYER-SEITZ, Federal Minister of Justice, Germany Thomas MYRUP KRISTENSEN, Managing Director EU Affairs, Facebook Joe MULHALL, Hope Not Hate, UK Gerald HENSEL, Fearless Democracy, Germany Ricardo GUTIÉRREZ, General Secretary of the European Federation of Journalists Guy BERGER, UNESCO Director for Division of Freedom of Expression and Media Development 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Fake news and recent elections in EU Member States Government responses and legislative challenges Social media platforms and their backing of fake news The battle against fake news and the rise of the medical right Fake news and the future of professional and ethical journalism Cocktail Reception

S&D     

FAKE NEWS: POLITICAL AND LEGAL CHALLENGES

DATE: 6 September 2017

TOPIC: Fake news and alternative facts

GUEST SPEAKERS:

Arnaud MERCIER, professor of political communication at Panthéon-Assas University, Paris; Ingrid BRODNIG, Austrian Digital Ambassador to the EU; Christian MEYER-SEITZ, Federal Minister of Justice, Germany, Head of Unit: Consumer Policy in the Information Society, Telecommunications and Media Law; Paolo CESARINI, Head of Unit DG Connect European Commission, Media Convergence & Social Media



Ricardo GUTIÉRREZ, General Secretary of the European Federation of Journalists on professional journalism in the "Trump era"

Unit; Jon STEINBERG, Senior member of the Public Policy team at Google; Thomas MYRUP KRISTENSEN, Managing Director EU Affairs, Head of Office, Facebook; Joe MULHALL, Hope Not Hate, UK; Gerald HENSEL, Fearless Democracy, Germany; Ricardo GUTIÉRREZ, General Secretary of the European Federation of Journalists; Guy BERGER, UNESCO Director for Division of Freedom of Expression and Media Development.

More and more people are getting their information about the world primarily or even exclusively from social media. Already we have seen that fabricated stories posing as credible journalism, so-called fake news, can spread rapidly through social media channels. This is a growing concern across the EU and a particular concern when fake news is spread ahead of elections – threatening the democratic process. The participants at the conference called on the European Commission to come forward with proposals to fight fake news and to strengthen effective media work. We want to see common rules across the EU, to crack down on fake news, give companies legal certainty, and ensure that they fulfil their obligations.

The spread of fake news goes hand-in-hand with the increase in hate speech online. With people getting information solely from others who share similar beliefs or political viewpoints, we are getting a deepening separation and greater vitriol between opposing sides of the political debate. This, combined with the anonymity of posting online is causing a huge increase in violent, racist and sexist abuse online. Social media companies must do more to tackle this type of hate speech – removing illegal content and shutting down accounts of those responsible. We must protect free speech but that does not mean allowing threats or abuse to spread.

“Work on responsible journalism and transparency is key to combatting fake content in news. American journalists have therefore suggested additions to the five journalistic “W”s: Who?, What?, When?, Where?, and Why?:

- Seriously?
- Have you no shame? “

JOURNALISTS UNDER PRESSURE

DATE: 10 January 2018

TOPIC: Press freedom in Europe

GUEST SPEAKERS:

Ricardo Gutiérrez, Secretary General of the European Federation of Journalists, Andrew and Paul Caruana Galizia, the sons of the murdered Maltese journalist Daphne Caruana Galizia.

The hearing was organised to highlight the growing threat to journalists in Europe. The traditionally safe environment for journalists has begun to deteriorate. Seven journalists were killed in Europe between 2016 and the beginning of 2018. Political leaders in Europe are increasingly the source of verbal attacks and harassment that create a hostile climate for journalists.

Journalists are also exposed to the hostility of criminal groups operating in Europe, which particularly dislike reporters who investigate unscrupulous businessmen and track the cross-border tentacles of their operations. Another emerging trend is for public broadcasting

to be threatened by reforms. Government interference is the source of the threat in some EU countries. This is the case in Croatia, where the government continues to meddle in the state radio and TV broadcaster HRT. In France, a draft bill to combat fake news during elections was the subject of much debate. Some see it as a threat to press freedom, others as an attempt to defend "quality journalism." The speakers at our event urged EU Member States to implement the Council of Europe Recommendations on the protection of journalism and safety of journalists and other media actors.



THE POWER AND PERILS OF PROPAGANDA

DATE: 27 June 2018

TOPIC: The power of propaganda, anti-Semitism and historical revisionism in contemporary Europe

GUEST SPEAKERS:

Steven Luckert, curator, United States Holocaust Memorial Museum; Frédéric Potier, Head of the French government's committee against anti-Semitism and racism; Emrah Gürsel, Kreuzberg Initiative against Antisemitism, Berlin; Benjamin Fischer, public affairs officer, European Jewish Congress; Ivo Goldstein, professor, Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, University of Zagreb; Gadi Luzzatto Voghera, director, Centre of Contemporary Jewish Documentation, Milan.

While the Parliamentarium hosted an exhibition by the US Holocaust Memorial Museum "State of Deception: The Power of Nazi Propaganda" and the S&D working group on extremism wished to use this unique opportunity to organise a joint conference with the US Holocaust Memorial Museum on the power and perils of propaganda. The participants drew some conclusions about contemporary radical right populism, which is on the rise on both sides of the Atlantic and continuously challenges liberal democracy. The politics of historical revisionism and manipulation of the past were also discussed at the conference.



THE POWER AND PERILS OF PROPAGANDA

Wednesday
27 June 2018
15:00-18:00

European Parliament
ASG-3
Brussels

EN & FR

INTRODUCTION:
TARAFA FAJON MEP
Chair, S&D Working Group
on Extremism, Populism,
Nationalism and Xenophobia

MODERATOR:
HEATHER GRABBE
Director, Open Society
European Policy Institute

REGISTRATION:
• us.holocaustmuseum.org
REGISTRATION: 15 June 2018

PANEL 1:
Propaganda Can Transform Neighbour into Enemy
• Juan Fernando López Aguilar MEP, Vice President, European Parliament Working Group on Antisemitism
• Steven Luckert, Curator, US Holocaust Memorial Museum
• Frédéric Potier, Head of the French government's Committee against Antisemitism & Racism
• Mohamed El Bachtel, Author, A Jihad for Love
• Emrah Gürsel, Kreuzberg Initiative against Antisemitism, Berlin

PANEL 2:
Politics of History, Historical Revisionism and Manipulation of the Past
• Peter Niedermüller MEP
• Benjamin Fischer, Public Affairs Officer, European Jewish Congress
• Ivo Goldstein, Professor, Faculty of Humanities & Social Sciences, University of Zagreb
• Gadi Luzzatto Voghera, Director, Centre of Contemporary Jewish Documentation, Milan

UNITED STATES
HOLOCAUST
MEMORIAL MUSEUM

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S&D

“The Nazis’ tactics mirror those used by populist parties today to appeal to voters. ‘Fake news’ is not new: the Nazis used it too. Their marketing campaigns targeted women, farmers, and other more vulnerable classes of society. Even Hitler’s use of body language helped to form public opinion. The Nazis’ success came in part from people’s desire for conformity, which encouraged them to act differently in a group, for example, by supporting something they might not otherwise. Propaganda works not just to change your opinion, but also to change how you behave.”



Steven LUCKERT, Curator, United States Holocaust Memorial Museum



**PRESS
MONITORING**

2015

The January attacks on the French satirical newspaper Charlie Hebdo and a kosher market in Paris fuelled rising anti-immigration movements around Europe and inflamed a “culture war” about the place of religion and ethnic identity in society. In France, Germany, Greece, Sweden, the Netherlands and Britain, nationalist leaders were seizing on the tragic events in France to argue that they were right all along. They argued that the open borders and tolerance championed by the EU were allowing a virulent jihadist virus to infect their countries.

Denmark was in shock after a 22-year-old Danish-born lone gunman attacked a Copenhagen cafe on February 15, killing a participant at a freedom of speech event, and then fired shots at a synagogue, killing a guard, before being shot dead by police. His action was inspired by the attack on the French satirical weekly Charlie Hebdo. The attacker was known to the police due to his links to a gang. He had been convicted of assault and released from prison a few weeks before the latest shootings.

After up to 900 desperate people drowned trying to reach Europe from Libya, EU leaders agreed in April to triple naval search missions in the Mediterranean, restoring funding to the 2014 level. They looked at ways to capture and destroy smugglers’ boats and deploy immigration officers to non-EU countries.

Hungary’s PM Viktor Orban brushed aside mounting international criticism against state discussion about migrants and the possible reintroduction of the death penalty. “Not everything is inscribed in stone. These rules are created by men and can therefore be changed by men. This is freedom, this is democracy,” he told MEPs at the Strasbourg plenary. He said Hungary was not making any formal moves to reintroduce the death penalty but said there was no EU law that banned them from discussing such issues in public.

The results of the general election in the UK were a major disappointment for the British Labour Party, and gave the Conservatives an overall majority in the House of Commons. In

Northern Ireland, the Democratic Unionists (NI) remain at 8 seats, Sinn Fein (GUE/NGL) lost 1 seat and now have 4, the SDLP (PES) remain on 3 and the Ulster Unionists (ECR) gain the 2 seats they now have. In Wales, Plaid Cymru (V/ALE) remain on 3 seats. Overall turnout was 66.1%, up slightly from 2010. The result gives the Conservatives an absolute majority of 12 seats. The main Labour losses were not to the Conservatives, but to the SNP (who overall gained 56 of Scotland’s 59 seats), and most Conservative gains were from the Liberal Democrats. In percentage terms, there was a small increase in Labour’s share of the vote, and 30.4% is one of the highest scores by PES member parties in recent elections.

Andrzej Duda from Law and Justice (ECR) was elected President with 53% against 47% for the outgoing President Bronislaw Komorowski from the Civic Platform (EPP). Komorowski has recognised his defeat and congratulated his opponent.

Ireland became the first country to legalize marriage for same-sex couples by popular vote, less than 30 years after Ireland’s top court said homosexuals had no right to privacy because homosexual acts were “immoral.”

More than a year after the 2014 European elections, Marine Le Pen and Geert Wilders announced the formation of the new Europe of Nations and Freedoms group (ENF) in the European Parliament.

The anti-immigration Danish People’s Party (DPP) became Denmark’s second largest party in general election and the biggest in the right-wing bloc, which ousted a centre-left government. Boosted by rising concerns over the cost of immigration to Denmark’s generous welfare state and a perceived erosion of “Danish values”, it secured 21.1% of the vote, its highest score ever and up from 12.3% in the previous election. “This election campaign has shown that we are a party that the others just can’t avoid. We are a party to be taken seriously here in this country,” party leader Kristian Thulesen Dahl told cheering supporters at a party event in the Danish parliament.

Luxembourg voters overwhelmingly refused to grant voting rights to foreigners and to lower the voting age from 18 to 16. In a referendum, 78.02% said No to letting foreigners register on voting rolls if they have lived in the Grand Duchy for at least 10 years and have voted in communal or European elections. An even larger majority, 80.87%, were against allowing people aged 16-18 to register for legislative, European and communal elections as well as for referendums. They also rejected by 69.93% a proposition to put a 10-year limit to ministerial mandates.

A French court cancelled Jean-Marie Le Pen's suspension from the far-right Front party in a ruling that could relaunch a public feud with his daughter and current party leader, Marine Le Pen. By pushing her maverick father out of the party he founded four decades ago, Marine Le Pen was seeking to prevent him ruining her bid for power. But her 86-year-old father went to the court to be reinstated in the party.

An attempted attack by a heavily armed man on a train in France on August 21 was premeditated and well prepared, according to a French prosecutor. Ayoub El-Khazzani, 25, was carrying 270 bullets for his assault rifle and a bottle of petrol, prosecutor Francois Molins told reporters. The Moroccan's phone showed that he had watched a jihadist video shortly before launching the attack, Molins added. Prosecutors have now filed formal charges against him.

Golden Dawn, one of Europe's most violent far-right parties, has consolidated its presence in the Greek parliament and power on the streets. The neo-fascist group came in third with 7% of the vote, behind Syriza and conservative New Democracy. The result was met with abhorrence and dismay. In April most of its leaders were put on trial on charges of running a criminal organisation masquerading as a political force. The party – which has denied the charges – stands accused of murder, armed attacks, money laundering and trafficking. Golden Dawn's anti-immigrant stance at a time of mounting fears over Greece's frontline role in Europe's biggest humanitarian crisis in recent history, almost certainly helped. The party, portraying itself as the "only nationalist choice" played heavily on fears that Greeks could soon become a minority in their own country.

Hungary has passed drastic new laws allowing its army to use rubber bullets, stun grenades, tear gas and net guns on the thousands of desperate refugees hoping to pass through the country on their way to new lives in northern and Western Europe.

The President of the S&D Group in the European Parliament, Gianni Pittella, proposed to suspend the Slovak Direction Third Way Party (SMER) from the Party of European Socialists (PES). The persistent unwillingness to take responsibility and show solidarity in the framework of the refugee crisis contrasts with our values and political convictions, said Pittella.

The far right PVVV leader in the EP Marcel de Graaff was under investigation for voting fraud after voting on behalf of National Front leader Marine Le Pen. Marcel de Graaff voted as Le Pen during a vote on air pollution on 28 October, which is in strict contravention of rules. Le Pen has admitted De Graaff used her voting card. 'He voted for me four times while I was absent, without my permission,' Le Pen told the parliament.

Poland has consolidated its rightwing shift after exit polls showed voters had handed an absolute majority in its parliamentary election to Law and Justice (ECR), an Eurosceptic party that is against immigration, wants family-focused welfare spending and has threatened to ban abortion and in-vitro fertilisation. The current ruling party, Civic Platform (EPP), conceded defeat following the first exit poll, published by Ipsos moments after polling stations closed.

In Austria, Heinz-Christian Strache's FPÖ won 31 percent of the vote in a city election in October in Vienna, putting it in second place in a historic stronghold of the Social Democrats.

A co-ordinated series of terrorist attacks in Paris on November 13th killed at least 130 people. The militant jihadist group, Islamic State (IS), has claimed responsibility for the attacks. The attacks increase the likelihood of a broader shift in Western policy towards Syria, with the imperative to defeat IS increasingly overshadowing qualms about Syria's president, Bashar al-Assad, remaining in power. On November 16th President Hollande addressed both houses of parliament at the palace of Versailles, emphasising his commitment to destroying IS. Hollande's rhetoric was firm—the attacks were "acts of war" and, as such, the French military would step up its air campaign against IS.

Slovakia filed a lawsuit against EU over refugee quota plan. Slovakia's Prime Minister Robert Fico said the plan (which requires it to take in 802 migrants) is not only "nonsense" but "technically impossible." The European Commission said Slovakia must comply with the law while the European Court of Justice deliberates.

2016

The far right political group Europe of Nations and freedom (ENF) held its first conference in Milan and sent a message to "Brussels' politically correct elite" that the far-right is here to stay. "Finally Schengen is dead and the European Union is breaking apart," said Marine Le Pen. "Frexit," she said, was now a distinct possibility. The Northern League, led by Matteo Salvini who organized the two-day meeting in Milan, is on an upward trajectory with 16-17 percent support in polls. The ENF, according to Wilders, wants to "save Europe from itself." Predicting that he could be the next prime minister of the Netherlands – and lead it out of the EU in a "Nexit" – Wilders said the people of Europe were "tired of governments that don't listen to them and of Brussels imposing decisions that are not put under scrutiny."

Denmark's parliament adopted reforms aimed at dissuading migrants from seeking asylum by delaying family reunifications and allowing authorities to seize valuables, under legislation that has sparked widespread condemnation.

On the morning of 22 March 2016, three coordinated bombings occurred in Belgium: two at Brussels Airport in Zaventem, and one at Maalbeek metro station in Brussels. In these attacks, 32 victims and three suicide bombers were killed, and over 300 people were injured. Another bomb was found during a search of the airport. Islamic State (IS) claimed responsibility for the attacks. The bombings were the deadliest act of terrorism in Belgium's history. The Belgian government declared three days of national mourning.

The Ruling SMER party won Slovakia's general election, while neo-nazis gained seats. Robert Fico sealed a coalition deal with three rightwing and centrist parties, handing his party a third term in office and averting the risk of an early election ahead of Slovakia's EU presidency. His Smer-Social Democracy clinched an 81-seat majority in the 150-member parliament along with the right-wing, nationalist and eurosceptic Slovak National Party (SNS), Siet liberals and the Most-Hid party Hungarian minority party.

Lutz Bachmann, the founder of Germany's xenophobic and anti-Islam group Pegida was summoned to court on hate speech charges for describing refugees as "cattle" and "scum", a court in Dresden said.

The Venice Commission, an advisory group to the Council of Europe, warned that the rule of law, democracy and human rights were in danger as long as Poland was embroiled in a constitutional crisis "and as long as the Constitutional Tribunal cannot carry out its work in an efficient manner." The European Commission recommended that Poland changes its constitution in the long run and called on both the ruling party and the opposition "to do their utmost" to find a solution to the crisis.

German MEP Beatrix von Storch from the xenophobic and Eurosceptic Alternative for Germany (AfD) party, who was asked to leave the ECR group after comments about shooting refugees, said she will instead join the Europe of Freedom and Direct Democracy (EFDD) group, which is led by UKIP's Nigel Farage. On the other hand, MEP Marcus Pretzell (AfD) has joined Marine Le Pen's far-right ENF Group.

The elections for the 56 Greek-Cypriot seats in the divided island's parliament saw a first ever success for the nazi ELAM (National People's Front) party. Exceeding the electoral threshold, raised in November 2015 from 1.8% to 3.6%, ELAM secured two seats with 3.7% of the votes (compared with 1.1% in the previous elections in 2011). One went to its leader, Christos Christou, who was a member of the Political Council of Golden Dawn when he was living in Greece, and openly declares: "We are the Golden Dawn of Cyprus." In fact, in 2008, the party first filed for registration as Golden Dawn but the Cypriot Ministry of the Interior rejected the title that was then replaced by ELAM.

A referendum was held on Thursday 23 June, to decide whether the UK should leave or remain in the European Union. Leave won by 52% to 48%. The referendum turnout was 71.8%, with

more than 30 million people voting. It was the highest turnout in a UK-wide vote since the 1992 general election. England voted strongly for Brexit, by 53.4% to 46.6%, as did Wales, with Leave getting 52.5% of the vote and Remain 47.5%. Scotland and Northern Ireland both backed staying in the EU. Scotland backed Remain by 62% to 38%, while 55.8% in Northern Ireland voted Remain and 44.2% Leave.

Jo Cox, a British Labour MP, died after being attacked in her constituency. She is the first British lawmaker to be killed in office since the IRA assassinated Conservative MP Ian Gow in 1990. The grieving husband of Jo Cox, the Labour MP shot and stabbed to death, has called on people to fight "the hatred that killed her". The 41-year-old mother of two young children was the victim of a daylight attack outside her West Yorkshire constituency surgery by a man who shouted "Britain first" during the assault.

A majority vote in Poland's parliament killed legislation that would have imposed almost blanket restrictions on abortion in the predominantly Catholic country.

The murder of two French police officials by a man claiming allegiance to so-called Islamic State (IS) is "unquestionably a terrorist act", President Francois Hollande said. A police commander and his partner were stabbed to death at their home west of Paris. Their three-year-old survived. The attacker was killed in an police assault on the house.

On the evening of 14 July 2016, a 19 tonne cargo truck was deliberately driven into crowds celebrating Bastille Day on the Promenade des Anglais in Nice, France, resulting in the death of 86 people and injuring 434. The driver was Mohamed Lahouaiej-Bouhlel, a Tunisian resident of France. The attack ended following an exchange of gunfire, during which Lahouaiej-Bouhlel was shot and killed by police. Within hours of the attack, the French government extended the state of emergency, declared following the Paris attacks, for another three months, and announced an

intensification of the French military attacks on Daesh in Syria and Iraq.

Czech opponents of Islam burnt pages of Quran before the local mosque at a permitted public rally called by the Martin Konvicka Initiative group, Petr Stika, secretary of the local town hall who watched the event along with the police, has told CTK.

A Croatian court has annulled a Catholic cardinal's 1946 treason conviction on grounds that he did not receive a fair trial. Cardinal Alojzije Stepinac died in 1960 and had been convicted of collaborating with Nazis during his time as Archbishop of Zagreb.

A member of Hungary's ruling Fidesz party is facing backlash after he suggested the country's southern border fence should be lined with pigs' heads to deter Muslim refugees. MEP Gyorgy Schopflin made the comment during a Twitter spat with Andrew Strohlein, the European media director for Human Rights Watch, after he publicly criticized Hungarians for using homemade scarecrows to frighten refugees along the border of neighboring Serbia. "Refugees are fleeing war and torture, Hungary," Mr. Strohlein tweeted. "Your root vegetable heads will not deter them." Mr. Schopflin responded to Mr. Strohlein writing: "Might do so. Human images are haram," referring to forbidden acts under Islam, Reuters reported. "But agree, pig's head would deter more effectively." Mr. Strohlein accused the MEP of spouting "xenophobic filth." "You are an embarrassment to Hungary, to Europe and to humanity," he wrote.

UN human rights chief Zeid Ra'ad Al Hussein called for world to reject populist bigots. In his speech UN high commissioner attacked the 'bonding of demagogues' including Geert Wilders, Donald Trump and Nigel Farage.

The conservative Croatian Democratic Union (HDZ/EPP) won the most seats in parliamentary elections but the country looked set for lengthy coalition horse trading after voters once again declined to return a clear governing majority.

The Hungarian government claimed victory over the weekend, with 98 percent of voters casting their ballots against the EU's already agreed refugee relocation and resettlement plans. The problem: only about 40 percent of those eligible bothered to vote, and the National Election Committee declared the referendum void. While Prime Minister Viktor Orbán's critics sought to use that as a reason to say the referendum had failed, the turnout of more than 3.3 million voters was impressive nonetheless. Hungary's referendum to join the EU in 2003 generated 45.6 percent turnout and even then only 83.8 percent voted in favor. Orbán, for his part, remained unbowed: "Brussels or Budapest, that was the question, and the people said Budapest," he said.

European far right celebrated Trump's victory in US Presidential election. While the Trump victory could further strengthen the already considerable momentum of the European far right in the coming months, it could come back to haunt them later on. Just as the Brexit vote has decreased Euroscepticism in several European countries, the expected chaos of a Trump presidency could lead to a popular backlash against far-right parties in Europe. This is the main reason why Europe's far-right leaders were cautious in their embrace of Trump, celebrating the phenomenon rather than the man himself.

Austria rejected the far-right candidate Norbert Hofer in presidential election. The Pro-European Alexander Van der Bellen (Greens) increased his lead after narrow win in May election was annulled.

On 19 December 2016, a truck was deliberately driven into the Christmas market beside Kaiser Wilhelm Memorial Church at Breitscheidplatz in Berlin. The terrorist attack left 12 people dead and 56 others injured. One of the victims was the truck's original driver, Łukasz Urban, who was found shot dead in the passenger seat. The perpetrator was Anis Amri, a Tunisian failed asylum seeker. Four days after the attack he was killed in a shootout with police near Milan in Italy. An initial suspect was arrested and later released due to lack of evidence. IS claimed responsibility for the attack, saying the attacker answered its calls to target the citizens of states that are fighting against it. IS released a video of Amri pledging allegiance to the terror group's leader, Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi.

2017

The German Federal Constitutional Court ruled against a proposed ban of the far-right National Democratic Party.

An investigation by the European Parliament claimed that, between 2011 and 2012, Le Pen had illicitly paid party staff for Front National work using money that should only be used for MEPs to pay assistants for legislative tasks. Le Pen refused to pay back the funds and now faces her salary as an MEP being docked each month.

Marine Le Pen allegedly used fake job contracts for two of her assistants in the European Parliament, according to a report by the EU anti-fraud body, Olaf. A three-month contract, signed in October 2011 by Le Pen for Thierry Legier, her bodyguard, could constitute a "misappropriation of funds, or fraud and use of fraud", Olaf said in a report handed to French judges in 2016 and revealed by French media on 16 February. It said the contract did not correspond to reality and pointed out that Legier's salary - €7,237 net per month for a part-time post - was "extremely high". According to the report, leaked by the Mediapart news website and by Marianne, a weekly, Le Pen admitted to Olaf investigators that she had "not employed Legier during these three months". She said the job contract had been established to "rectify earlier salaries and charges spending that has not been paid by the parliament". Olaf also said that another person paid since December 2010 as an EU parliament assistant to Le Pen, Catherine Griset, was actually her personal assistant at the National Front's headquarters in France. The anti-fraud office started to investigate in June 2014 on suspicions of violations of the parliament's rules and "possible use of fake jobs" by Le Pen since 2009. It could not confirm allegations that Louis Aliot, Le Pen's partner and now an MEP, and Florian Philippot, also an MEP and the FN's deputy leader, were unduly paid as assistants to Le Pen before their election in 2014. But it said the cost to the parliament of Legier and Griset's alleged fake contracts amounted to €336,146.

General elections were held in the Netherlands on 15 March 2017 to elect all 150 members of the House of Representatives. The VVD lost seats but remained the largest party, while the PvdA saw a massive loss in vote share and seats, failing to win a single municipality for the first time in the party's history. The Party for Freedom (PVV) made gains to reach second place, with the CDA, D66 and GroenLinks also increasing their number of seats. It was clear that at least four partners would be needed for a coalition with a parliamentary majority.

On 22 March 2017, a terrorist attack took place in the vicinity of the Palace of Westminster in London, seat of the British Parliament. The attacker, 52-year-old Briton Khalid Masood, drove a car into pedestrians on the pavement along the south side of Westminster Bridge and Bridge Street, injuring more than 50 people, four of them fatally. After the car crashed into the perimeter fence of the Palace grounds, Masood abandoned it and ran into New Palace Yard where he fatally stabbed an unarmed police officer. He was then shot by an armed police officer and died at the scene. The attack lasted 82 seconds.

In its first decision on the issue of women wearing Islamic headscarves at work, the European Court of Justice in Luxembourg ruled the garments could be banned, but only as part of a general policy barring all religious and political symbols. Nor can customers simply demand workers to remove headscarves if the company has no policy barring religious symbols. The right wing politicians in France and Germany hailed the ruling.

On 7 April 2017, in central Stockholm a hijacked truck was deliberately driven into crowds along Drottninggatan (Queen Street) before being crashed through a corner of an Åhléns department store. Five people were killed and around 15 others were injured. Police considered the attack an act of terrorism. Rakhmat Akilov, a 39-year-old rejected asylum seeker from Uzbekistan, was apprehended the same

day, suspected on probable cause of terrorist crimes through murder (a Swedish legal term). Swedish police said he has sympathized with the Islamic State (IS), and Uzbek authorities said he had joined IS before the attack. Akilov admitted carrying out the attack at a pre-trial hearing on 11 April.

Emmanuel Macron was elected the next French president. He has defeated Marine Le Pen and got the support of 66.1% of voters in the second round of the presidential election. Marine Le Pen gathered 33.9%. The abstention was very high for the second round of a presidential election, the highest since 1969 (26%), as well as the number of blank votes.

On 22 May 2017, 22-year-old Salman Ramadan Abedi (British citizen) detonated a shrapnel-laden homemade bomb at the exit of Manchester Arena in Manchester, following a concert by American singer Ariana Grande. Twenty-three adults and children were killed, including Abedi, and 119 were injured, 23 critically. After initial suspicions of a terrorist network, police later said they believed Abedi had largely acted alone.

On June 3, an attack took place in the Southwark district of London, when a van mounted the pavement of London Bridge and was driven into pedestrians. The van crashed, and the three male occupants ran to the nearby Borough Market pub and restaurant area, where they stabbed people with long knives. Amber Rudd, the Home Secretary, stated that the attackers were Islamist terrorists. Eight people were killed and 48 were injured, including four unarmed police officers who attempted to stop the assailants. The three attackers, who wore fake explosive vests, were all shot dead by police. It was the third terrorist attack in Great Britain in just over two months, following a similar attack in Westminster in March and a bombing in Manchester in May.

The 2017 United Kingdom general election took place on 8 June, having been announced just

under two months earlier by Prime Minister Theresa May on 18 April 2017 after it was discussed at cabinet. After an extraordinary results night, it became clear that no single party had an overall majority in the Westminster parliament. The Conservative party has won 43% of the national vote in an early election held on , and is forecast to gain 318 of the 650 parliamentary seats. Labour gained 40% of the vote and 262 seats. 326 seats are required for a parliamentary majority.

Emmanuel Macron's La République en Marche and its junior coalition centrist party MoDem won around 350 seats in the 577 seat assembly, to the Les Républicains' and its allies' 137. Around 40 percent of the newly elected MPs are women.

Hungary's parliament has approved a law imposing strict regulations on foreign-funded non-government organisations. The new rules increase reporting requirements for the groups, which risk closure for non-compliance.

Poland's parliament backed an amended bill tightening political control over the Supreme Court, putting the country on a collision course with EU institutions. The vote came after two other bills aimed at giving the government control over the selection of judges throughout the country's legal system were approved earlier. Minor amendments were made to accommodate some of President Andrzej Duda's concerns; it will now take a three-fifths majority in parliament to choose new judges for the Council for the Judiciary rather than a simple majority.

16 civilians were killed and more than 130 others were injured when a van ran over pedestrians in La Rambla of Barcelona. Two of the attackers were arrested and another, who fled, stabbed to death a civilian then stole his car in Sant Just Desvern and also ran the car into three Catalan police officers in Avinguda Diagonal of Barcelona injuring them. A woman was killed in a related attack in Cambrils when

a car tried to run into pedestrians and later attackers stabbed people with knives, axes and machetes. 16 people were injured in Alcanar bombings which were meant to be used in Barcelona attack. In the two bombings, two terrorists were also killed. The van driver was shot dead in Subirats, a village in the south of Barcelona by Mossos d'Esquadra, the Catalan police. According to the police, the terrorists were preparing much stronger attacks than 2004 Madrid bombings.

Two people have been killed and at least six others wounded in a stabbing in the south-western Finnish city of Turku. Police shot the s attacker and arrested him. A Finnish court sentenced the attacker Abderrahman Bouanane, a failed Moroccan asylum seeker, to life in prison in 2018.

Nicolas Bay replaced Marine Le Pen as co-president of the ENF Group in the EP.

In September 2015, the European Council introduced measures to support countries coping with sudden massive migrant inflows. Among them was the requirement that all EU countries except the U.K. and Ireland take a specific number of arrivals. Slovakia and Hungary asked the European Court of Justice to annul the decision. The court ruled in the EU's favour (supporting the European Council's decision). Hungary reacted by saying that refugee ruling 'raped' EU law 'The real battle is only just beginning,' foreign minister declares.

On September 15 an explosion occurred on a District line train at Parsons Green tube station, in London. Thirty people were treated in hospital or an urgent care centre, mostly for burn injuries. The incident is being treated by the Metropolitan Police as a terrorist attack. The two attack suspects were foster children.

Federal elections were held in Germany on 24 September 2017 to elect the members of the 19th Bundestag. At stake were all 598 seats

in the Bundestag, as well as 111 overhang and levelling seats determined thereafter. The Christian Democratic Union/Christian Social Union (CDU/CSU), led by Chancellor Angela Merkel, won the highest percentage of the vote with 33%, though suffered a large swing against it of more than 8%. The Social Democratic Party (SPD) achieved its worst result since the Second World War with only 20% of the vote. Alternative for Germany (AfD)—which was previously unrepresented in the Bundestag—became the third party in the Bundestag with 12.6% of the vote, whilst the Free Democrats (FDP) won 10.7% of the vote and returned to the Bundestag after losing all their seats in the 2013 election. The other parties to achieve representation in the Bundestag were the Left and the Greens, who each won close to 9% of the vote.

Three MEPs who until recently were members of the Front National have joined the Europe of Freedom and Direct Democracy (EFDD) group. Florian Philippot, Mireille D'Ornano, and Sophie Montel have formed their own party, leaving the far-right Europe of Nations and Freedom group.

The Austrian People's party (ÖVP/EPP) with its 31-year-old current foreign minister and New People's Party leader, Sebastian Kurz, won the general election, after a campaign in which Kurz has been calling for the strengthening of (national) border controls, to close immigration via the Balkan-route. Kurz was also stressing the need to fight "political Islam", to reduce caps on refugees and to cut social benefits for newcomers and benefits for children of EU-citizens not living in Austria (a low-tax-populism). 17 years after the first coalition between ÖVP & FPÖ, a new government of the two "big winners" (+7,5% and +5,5%) with their thematically almost identical programmes was set to take power.

The Czech elections, where anti-establishment parties won an overall majority, was the biggest victory for populists in the EU since the Brexit referendum. It happened in a country where economic growth was solid, unemployment and inequality were among the lowest in the Europe, and wages were rising.

On 1 October 2017 Catalan separatists organised an unconstitutional referendum on the independence of Catalonia. The referendum was declared illegal on 7 September 2017, and suspended by the Constitutional Court of Spain after a request from the Spanish government, who declared it a breach of the Spanish Constitution. The referendum question, which voters answered with "Yes" or "No", was "Do you want Catalonia to become an independent state in the form of a republic?". Most electors did not take part in the referendum and the results were highly contested, as the consultation took place in open disobedience of and contempt for the Constitutional Court Ruling which declared it illegal, and was intended to prevent it.

On 21 December 2017 elections were held in Catalonia. The voter turnout was almost 82% and the results were: Ciudadanos – C's (ALDE): 25% and 36 seats; Junts per Catalunya - JxC (Puigdemont's list, ALDE): 22% and 34 seats; Esquerra Republicana de Catalunya – ERC (Junqueras' Party, EFA): 21% and 32 seats; Partit dels Socialistes de Catalunya - PSC (S&D): 14% and 17 seats; Catalunya en Comú – CEC (Greens and GUE): 7% and 8 seats; C a n d i d a t u r e s d'Unitat Popular - CUP (no EP Group): 4% and 4 seats; Partit Popular Catalunya - PPC (PPE): 4% and 4 seats.

On 16 October 2017, a Maltese investigative journalist Daphne Caruana Galizia was killed in a car bomb attack close to her home, attracting widespread local and international reactions. The EP adopted resolutions calling on the Commission to investigate the country's adherence after murder of investigative journalist.

Far-right attacks on refugee homes in Germany still happen nearly every day, statistics show. Though the total number of attacks is down, there are still more incidents than before the 2015 refugee crisis.

60,000 nationalists marched on Poland's independence day. Xenophobic phrases and far-right symbols mark event described by anti-fascists as a magnet for worldwide far-right groups.

The European Commission decided to take the first step in a so-called Article 7 process against Poland over judiciary reform that could ultimately strip Warsaw of its EU voting rights, Commission Vice President Frans Timmermans said. "It is with a heavy heart that we have decided to initiate Article 7.1," Timmermans told reporters. "But the facts leave us no choice."

2018

Miloš Zeman wins second term as Czech president. He beat rival Jiří Drahoš in a close runoff vote.

A scandal in Austria over a student fraternity songbook with lyrics glorifying Nazis has put the new government under pressure and prompted soul-searching about the country's relationship with its past.

Finland's President Sauli Niinistö was comfortably re-elected in the Presidential election held on January 28. His nearest rival, Pekka Haavisto of the Green Party, congratulated him on his victory. Laura Huhtasaari from the nationalist Finns Party and independent candidate Paavo Väyrynen, won 6.9% and 6.2% of the vote respectively. Mr Niinistö won popularity by maintaining relations with Moscow, despite Finland backing economic sanctions against Russia over its annexation of Crimea from Ukraine. In 2012, he won the presidency as a candidate for the centre-right National Coalition Party, but he campaigned as an independent in this election.

German parliament creates anti-Semitism commissioner post. Lawmakers passed measures designed to tackle anti-Semitism in Germany.

Hungarian government outlined legislation to tackle illegal immigration that it says is undermining European stability and has been stoked in part by U.S. financier George Soros. The legislative package, dubbed "Stop Soros" by government spokesman Zoltan Kovacs, includes mandatory registration of some non-government organizations that "support illegal immigration".

A journalist investigating alleged tax fraud involving businessmen connected to Slovakia's ruling party has been found murdered alongside his girlfriend. Ján Kuciak, 27, and his fiancée, Martina Kušnírová, were discovered shot dead in the home they shared after worried relatives alerted police, saying it had been a week since they had heard from the couple. Prime Minister Robert Fico's resignation failed to quell Slovakian protests. Thousands take to the streets for third week in biggest display of anger since 1989.

MEPs voted to remove a European Parliament Vice President for the first time, in this case the ECR's Ryszard Czarnecki, by 447 to 196 after he compared a fellow Polish legislator to a Nazi collaborator. Awkwardly, that's the sort of claim that would be illegal under Poland's soon-to-be-finalized Holocaust law, drafted by Czarnecki's Law and Justice party.

EU Justice Commissioner Vera Jourova said she had been tasked with "proposing a framework that would highlight the need to respect the rule of law" to benefit from EU funding in the EU's 2021-27 budget.

Steve Bannon meets AfD's Alice Weidel during European far-right roadshow. Bannon met the AfD's Alice Weidel at an event in Switzerland where he reportedly advised her on "alternative media." The former Trump strategist was also in Italy to support the far-right in national elections.

The outcome of Italian elections of March 4 brought the victory of the two anti-establishment parties - The Five Star Movement and the anti EU and far-right League party led by Matteo Salvini. The League was particularly strong in the north, its traditional base. In Veneto, where it won 11% of the vote in the last elections in 2013, it captured around 48% this time around. The 5-Stars had a remarkably strong showing in the south, which has long been a stronghold of the center-right and Forza Italia. The Democratic Party is the biggest loser, hovering at just under 20%. The new left wing Free and Equal (LeU), party of former Senate Speaker Pietro Grasso, also failed to achieve its goal, scoring about 3.3%. The coalition led by former center-right Prime Minister Silvio Berlusconi's Forza Italia and Matteo Salvini's right-wing League won the largest share of the vote (37.4%). However, they fall short of the 40% needed to govern outright. The fact that the League won more votes than Forza Italia, in accordance with pre-election coalition arrangements, gave Salvini a stronger claim to become prime minister.

Marches were held in France after suspected antisemitic killing. Mireille Knoll, an elderly woman who survived the notorious Vel d'Hiv roundup was attacked in her flat in Paris. In the latest, horrific anti-Semitic murder to defile France, Mireille Knoll, an 85-year-old wheelchair-bound Parkinson's sufferer, was stabbed 11 times and burnt to death in her flat in Paris.

50 million Facebook profiles have been harvested for Cambridge Analytica in major data breach. A whistleblower described how firm linked to former Trump adviser Steve Bannon compiled user data to target American voters. Weeks later Facebook said Cambridge Analytica may have gained 37million more users' data. Company reveals up to 87m people may have been affected as Mark Zuckerberg takes responsibility for 'a huge mistake'.

In the general election held on April 8, Viktor Orban has won a sweeping Majority and control of Hungary's Constitution. OSCE monitors delivered damning verdict. Observers found 'intimidating and xenophobic rhetoric, media bias and opaque financing'. The joint list of Fidesz and KDNP (Christian Democratic satellite party of Fidesz) reproduced the same results as four years ago in terms of MPs, with 133 seats out of 199 in Parliament, which means a two-third majority.

Polish conservatives have opposed plans to fly a rainbow flag in front of the European Parliament in Brussels to mark International Day Against Homophobia.

The Dutch EPP member party, the CDA, adopted a motion calling for Hungary's Fidesz to be excluded from the Christian Democratic Party family should Orbán not "return to the way in which Fidesz was previously a valued member of the EPP family." The CDA wants the EPP to develop "red lines" and, if they continue to be crossed, to provide "the ultimate remedy by requesting the (temporary) suspension of membership."

Denmark passed a law banning burqa and niqab. Campaigners say ban violates rights to freedom of expression and religion.

EU countries that have not legalised gay marriage must respect the residency rights of same-sex spouses who want to live together in their territory, the European Court of Justice has ruled, in a move hailed as a victory for human dignity. The ECJ said member states must recognise the rights of all married couples to free movement, no matter their gender or sexual orientation.

The Council of Europe warned that neo-fascism is on the rise in Croatia. The release of the report comes after a memorial to remember Ustasha militia killed by Communist forces at the end of World War II. The annual memorial has become a meet-up for supporters of the Nazis' Croatian allies.

The European Commission has decided to refer Hungary to the European Court of Justice for non-compliance of its asylum and return legislation with EU law.

Riot police clashed with protesters at a Lesbos rally against the EU's migration policy. Some groups have warned that the island is "reaching breaking point" with thousands of refugees stranded by the policy.

The Biggest EPP party in Slovenia, the SDS, won the general election in Slovenia on June 3 after running on an anti-migrants xenophobic campaign. However, the relative winner will face a very fragmented political scene and therefore an extremely difficult task of forming a coalition government. If taking into account only right wing parties, SDS comes short in votes, even if including the far-right SNS in addition to the smaller EPP party NSi. The situation is additionally complicated as most parties have been rejecting cooperation with the SDS/EPP, which has been pursuing a nativist agenda of the type advocated by Viktor Orban in Hungary and Donald Trump in the US. After months of deliberations, five centrist and left-leaning parties managed to form a government led by Marjan Šarec, whose party later joined the ALDE.

Poland made a partial U-turn on its controversial Holocaust law after strong protest from Israel. Threat of jail has been removed from the legislation for those who attribute crimes of Nazi Germany to Poles.

The European Court for Human rights suspended clearing of the Roma camp in the Italian capital and urged alternative accommodation to be found.

Croatian national football team celebrated World Cup 2018 success by inviting the controversial ultranationalist singer Thompson on the team bus and on the stage in Zagreb square.

The UK Electoral Commission accused Vote Leave campaign of breaching spending rules. Britain's Electoral Commission has fined the Vote Leave for "serious breaches of the law." The Commission has accused the Leave campaign of breaking electoral law in the Brexit campaign.

During the press conference in Milan, Viktor Orban and Matteo Salvini jointly called for deportation of migrants from Europe.

The death of a 35-year-old German man drew spontaneous protests, organized by several far-right groups in Chemnitz. Police struggled to control the rowdy crowds, some of which allegedly chased and attacked foreigners. Saxony police mostly managed to cope with sporadic violence, although the protests caught them by surprise.

Austrian police raided the main domestic intelligence agency and seized top-secret documents on the orders of the far-right Freedom Party. Spy agencies across the West are freezing Austria out as a result. "We used to have very deep and good cooperation," a top European intelligence official told the Washington Post. "But since the raids, we have stopped sharing highly sensitive information. We're worried it might get into the wrong hands."

Two months before Swedish national elections on 9 September, the European Conservatives and Reformists (ECR) group in the European Parliament has adopted the far-right Sweden Democrats as a new member. The party, riding high in the polls on an anti-migration ticket, previously sat in the EFFD group, with Ukip and Germany's AfD. The ECR group includes UK Conservatives, Poland's Law and Justice Party, the Finns Party and Danish People's Party.

After Sweden's most important election in decades, results show that the Red-Green coalition and centre-right bloc are neck-to-neck. The Social Democrats remain the largest party in the country and one of the largest in Europe. The xenophobe, extreme-right Sweden Democrats have made significant gains but fell very short of the many doomsday predictions published before the election. They hold the third place of most voted parties.

A former Slovenian presidential candidate and far right politician Andrej Šiško has formed an armed group called the "Štajerska Guard" and conducted training exercises that will help the group "secure public peace and order" if needed, he told Reuters. Slovenian police have arrested three persons on suspicion of involvement in para-military activity. Among the three arrested was Šiško but also an influential member of the youth organisation of the EPP/SDS party.

The AfD leader Alexander Gauland triggered an outcry because of a speech describing the Third Reich as a "bird shit in a thousand years of successful German history".

A French court has ordered far-right leader Marine Le Pen to undergo psychiatric tests as part of an inquiry into her sharing images of Islamic State group atrocities.

MsLePen tweeted pictures of the court order, calling the move "crazy". She posted the images back in 2015, including one showing the decapitated body of IS victim James Foley. She has been stripped of her immunity as a parliamentarian and she could still face a fine or even jail.

Italian Interior Minister Matteo Salvini and Jean Asselborn, Luxembourg's minister for foreign affairs, got locked in a bitter war of words about European migration. The feud started at a Vienna conference. Salvini posted a video on his Facebook page of an exchange with Asselborn, who interrupted the Italian's speech with a profanity after Salvini likened African immigrants to slaves.

A referendum to establish a constitutional ban on same-sex marriage in Romania has failed - after only a fifth of voters bothered to turn out.

A Bulgarian broadcast journalist Viktoria Marinova was attacked while jogging in a park in her hometown of Ruse on 6 October. She was raped, beaten and died of suffocation. Bulgarian prosecutors have said there is no evidence to suggest the attack was linked to Ms Marinova's work as investigative journalist, recently reporting on alleged fraud with EU funds linked to big businessmen and politicians. A man suspected of raping and murdering Bulgarian television journalist Viktoria Marinova was extradited from Germany to Bulgaria on October 17.

German Chancellor Angela Merkel announced she would step down as chancellor and retire from German politics by 2021 in an unprecedented attempt to hand over power to a successor. Her long farewell, announced after her party suffered a slump in national polls and drubbing state elections in Hesse and Bavaria, heralds a period of instability in Europe's largest economy. After the state elections in Hesse and Bavaria, the far right AfD is now represented in all state parliaments.

Austrian right-wing government, while holding the EU Presidency, announced that it would not agree to the global compact on migration because it feared this would lead to "a human right to migration", a claim dismissed by the UN. European Commission spokesperson spoke of regret at Vienna joining Hungary in snubbing compact.

French President Emmanuel Macron has sought to justify paying homage to Nazi collaborator Philippe Pétain during centenary commemorations marking the end of World War One. Macron said Marshal Pétain was a "great soldier", even though he had made "disastrous choices" during WW2. Pétain was praised for the defence of Verdun in 1916, but he was sentenced to death for high treason after WW2. Some French politicians and Jewish leaders condemned Macron's comments.

ABOUT THE S&D GROUP

The Group of the Progressive Alliance of Socialists and Democrats (the S&D Group) is the second largest political group in the European Parliament with 187 members from all 28 EU Member States.

We stand for an inclusive European society based on principles of solidarity, equality, diversity, freedom and fairness. We campaign for social justice, jobs and growth, consumer rights, sustainable development, financial market reforms and human rights to create a stronger and more democratic Europe and a better future for all citizens.



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