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# THE STATE OF POPULISM IN EUROPE



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# **The State of Populism in the European Union 2016**

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# Foreword

**2016 has been one of the most eventful years in European politics since the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989. Observers accustomed to predictable European affairs were shocked again and again by unexpected events: the refugee crisis – still lingering from the previous year – and the social tensions surrounding it; the British referendum on leaving the European Union (EU) and its striking outcome that shook the European project to its core with the unprecedented case of a Member State parting from the EU; the surprising results of German regional elections and the worrying trend of increasing popularity of right wing populists; the Hungarian plebiscite on the EU’s migrant quota, which added to refugee crisis tensions at the European level; and the Italian referendum on constitutional reforms that turned into a protest vote against the country’s prime minister. This eventful year attests that not only is the EU changing, but so too is the world. The United States elected a right wing populist president and the world stood in shock and disbelief. Two illiberal democracies, Russia and Turkey, have become increasingly active in interfering with both the lives of their citizens and global affairs, while their leaders persecute domestic liberal thinkers with increasing ruthlessness.**

**These political processes differ from one another in terms of their geographies, causalities and results. Nevertheless, they share many similarities. Clearly,**

**powers that engage in politics in the name of “the people” and against “the elites” are growing stronger across Europe. These actors prefer to use “the wisdom of the people” to accomplish their goals, often by using referenda as a tool to enhance their legitimacy in a direct way. These parties and politicians exploit and foment disappointment with liberal democracy, campaigning with a focus on the perceived interests of the nation as opposed to European integration and international cooperation. These politicians transcend the division between the left and right of the political spectrum. They are constantly searching for new enemies to fight and thereby create new and emotionally charged cleavages in societies. They are the populists.**

**This volume surveys the state, popularity and influence of populist parties in the EU’s 28 Member States in 2016. The Foundation for European Progressive Studies (FEPS) and Policy Solutions have been monitoring approximately 80 active populist parties in the EU since 2015, under the auspices of The Progressive Post’s Populism Tracker research project. Below, we will review the most significant results of this initiative.**

**First, we will examine which populist parties were able to achieve real breakthroughs and which ones caused “more smoke than fire.” Next, we will analyse the trends in various regions of the EU and the differences between individual populist parties. Following the conclusion, readers can review the chronology of populism in 2016 in Appendix I. Finally, we also include a detailed table of all significant European populist parties’ popularity according to opinion polls.**

**We hope this 2016 yearbook on populism will offer useful insights to all who wish to familiarize themselves with the old and new political forces that form the political edge of our times.**

# About Populism Tracker

The Populism Tracker of The Progressive Post aims at becoming the most comprehensive website investigating the trends of populism in all the countries of the EU. The website is operated by FEPS and Policy Solutions. The website allows readers to track the popularity of all European populist parties on its Populism Map, analyse trends with the help of a continuously updated Populism Graph, and read studies, research and analyses published by Policy Solutions, FEPS and their partners on the subject of populism.

Link: <http://www.progressivepost.eu/spotlights/populism>

# Methodology

Some of the recurring and controversial questions that feature in research related to populism tend to ask which parties and politicians can be called populists, how precise and/or important this description really is, and whether populist parties pose a threat to democracy. In this study, we classify parties as populist on the basis of several criteria, and we use the word descriptively rather than in an evaluative or negative sense. We have primarily examined whether a given party's programme, the rhetoric of its leading politicians and its official campaign messaging coheres with Cas Mudde's definition of populism, according to which populism is *"a thin-centered ideology that considers society to be ultimately separated into two homogeneous and antagonistic groups, 'the pure people' and 'the corrupt elite', and which argues that politics should be an expression of the volonté general (general will) of the people."* The party programme, leadership rhetoric and campaign slogans are then assessed in terms of their tendency to build upon animosity, their use of the "us versus them" dichotomy, their denial of social and political pluralism, and whether they prefer direct democracy over a representative system. If, in 2016, a party meets all or many of these criteria and their popularity was sufficiently significant in the polls, we have included it in our list of populist parties. In compiling this list, we also took into consideration categorizations from the relevant academic literature – that is to say, designations by leading political analysts and researchers. Populist politicians, of course, often supplement their messages with other ideologies and values, such as nativism, ethnocentrism, nationalism, illiberalism, socialism or communism. We have attempted to categorize individual parties as either left wing or right wing populists. Naturally, we are aware that choosing to label a party as populist or to consciously omit one from this study could be controversial. Nonetheless, we hope that, based on our methodology, our categorization will correspond with the evaluations of the readers of this study.

## Overview:

# The most important trends in the support for populism in 2016

The current state of populism in the EU can be studied from many different perspectives, of which the most clear-cut is the **support for populist parties among voters and shifts in that support**. The “Populism Tracker” monitoring system, developed by FEPS and Policy Solutions, **investigates approximately 80 parties in the 28 Member States of the EU that the scholarly literature labels as populist**. Policy Solutions collects data on the popularity of these parties among likely voters from the pollsters of each country. Populism Tracker is updated with these data quarterly.

## Countries with high support for populists

The comparison of the opinion polls’ findings reveals that, **in 2016, eastern Member States of the EU were the most affected by populism**. If we aggregate the support for populist parties in each Member State, **we find only one western European country on the “top 10” list** (see Figure 1).

### The support of populist parties among likely voters in EU countries (Top 10 countries)

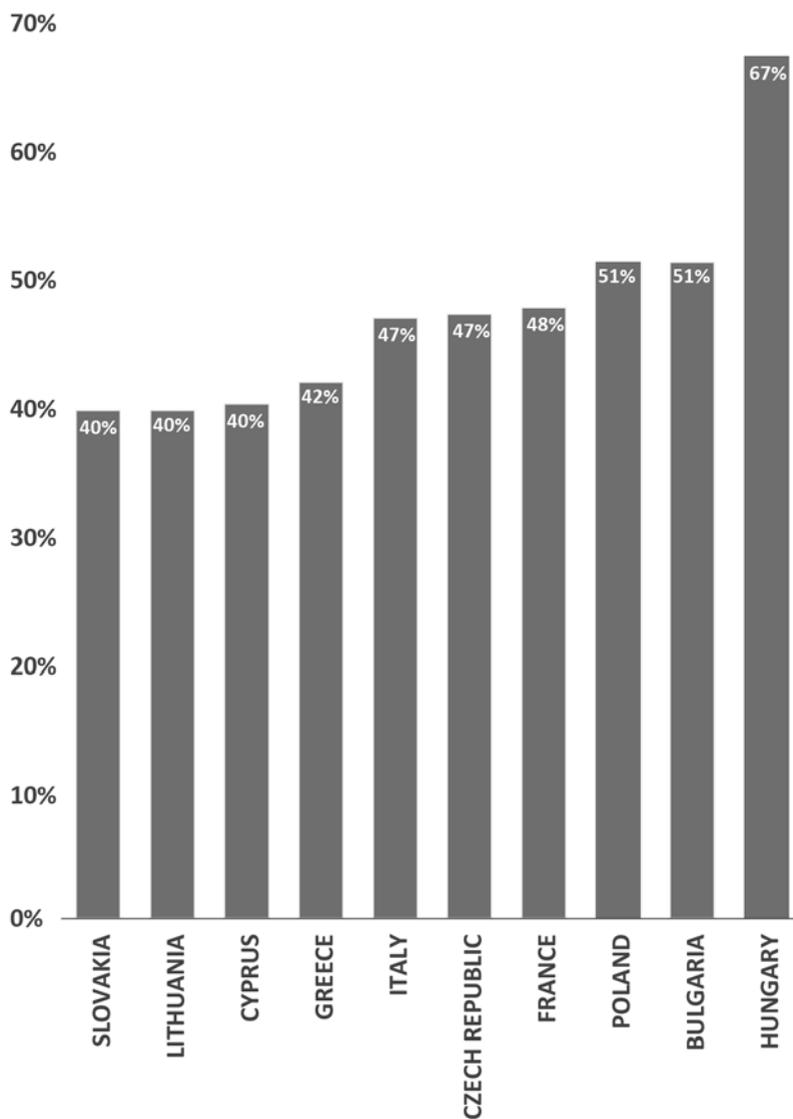


Figure 1 – Last updated: Q3, 2016. Source: <http://www.progressivepost.eu/publications/populism-report-july-september-2016/>

**In three of the 28 Member State of the EU, more than half of the likely voters would cast their votes for populist parties.** Among them, **Hungary takes the absolute lead**, where two thirds of those willing to vote would choose a populist force. **In Bulgaria and Poland, the majority of voters** also sympathize with non-mainstream parties, at **51% in both countries**. All three countries are currently governed by populist forces – Hungary by **Fidesz**, Bulgaria by the moderate **Citizens for European Development of Bulgaria (GERB)**, and Poland by **Law and Justice (PiS)** – which are simultaneously the most popular populist forces both in their respective countries and throughout Europe. Populist voters also constitute **nearly half of those** with political party preferences **in the Czech Republic, France and Italy**. Given their population and size, the latter two states are especially notable. **Among the top 10 in this regard**, one may also find **Cyprus, Greece, Lithuania and Slovakia, where 40% of voters** side with populists.

**Regarding growth of support for populism, the list of countries with the greatest increase differs slightly from the above.** Furthermore, western and eastern countries are represented much more equally on this list (see Figure 2).

## The increase in the proportion of those citizens who are likely to vote for a populist party (in percentage points)

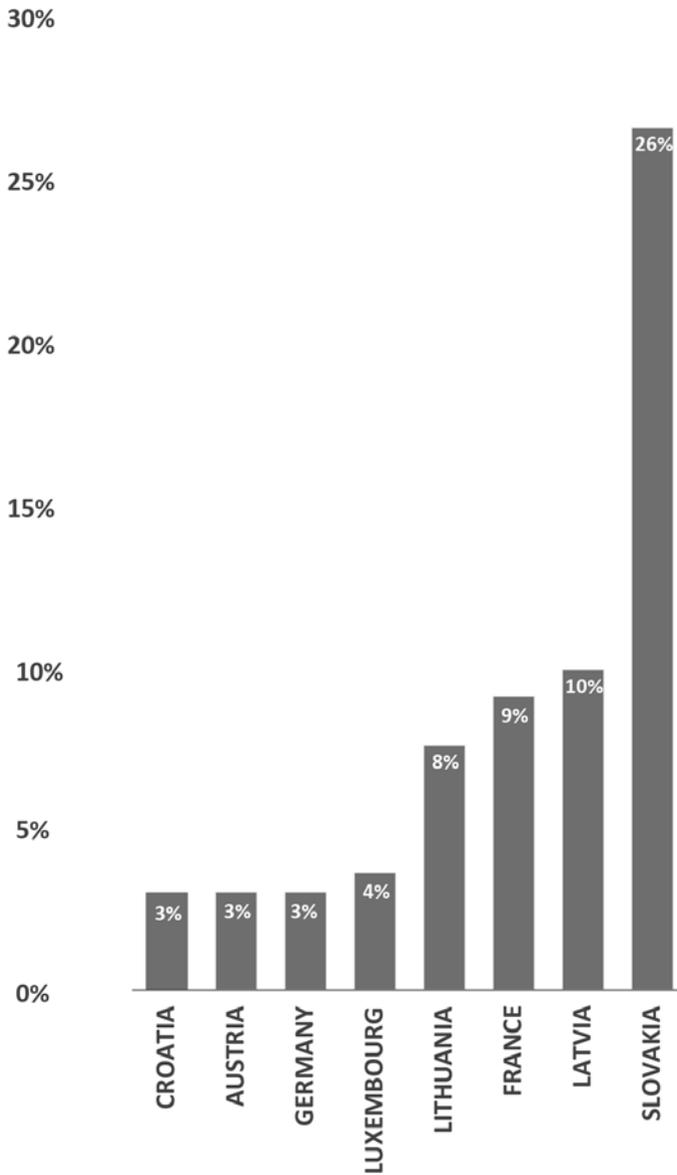


Figure 2 – Last updated: Q3, 2016. Source: <http://www.progressivepost.eu/publications/populism-report-july-september-2016/>

**Populist organizations achieved the most outstanding growth in Slovakia**, where, uniquely within Europe, their support **increased by 26 percentage points**, thereby tripling in under a year. **Populist parties have also boosted their support in Latvia and Finland**, where their voting groups have expanded by ten and nine percentage points, respectively. In addition, a significant increase can be observed in **Lithuania**, where the number of voters favouring populists is now eight percentage points higher than it was a year earlier. **Except for these four states, however, significant growth cannot be seen elsewhere**. The increase in Luxemburg, Germany and Austria skims the margin of error, and the overall support for these organizations has grown to an even slighter degree in the rest of the EU Member States.

**Overall, support for populism has grown considerably in only four Member States in the EU, which clearly indicates that, in 2016, we cannot speak of a breakthrough, as we could in 2015, but rather a definite stagnation regarding the spread of populism in the continent.**

### **Most successful populist parties**

**The three most popular populist parties** of the EU are also the **governing parties** of the three Member States with the highest levels of sympathy towards populist parties. **Five of the ten most supported populist organizations are currently part of the government of their respective countries** (see Figure 3).

### The support of the most popular populist parties in the EU among likely voters

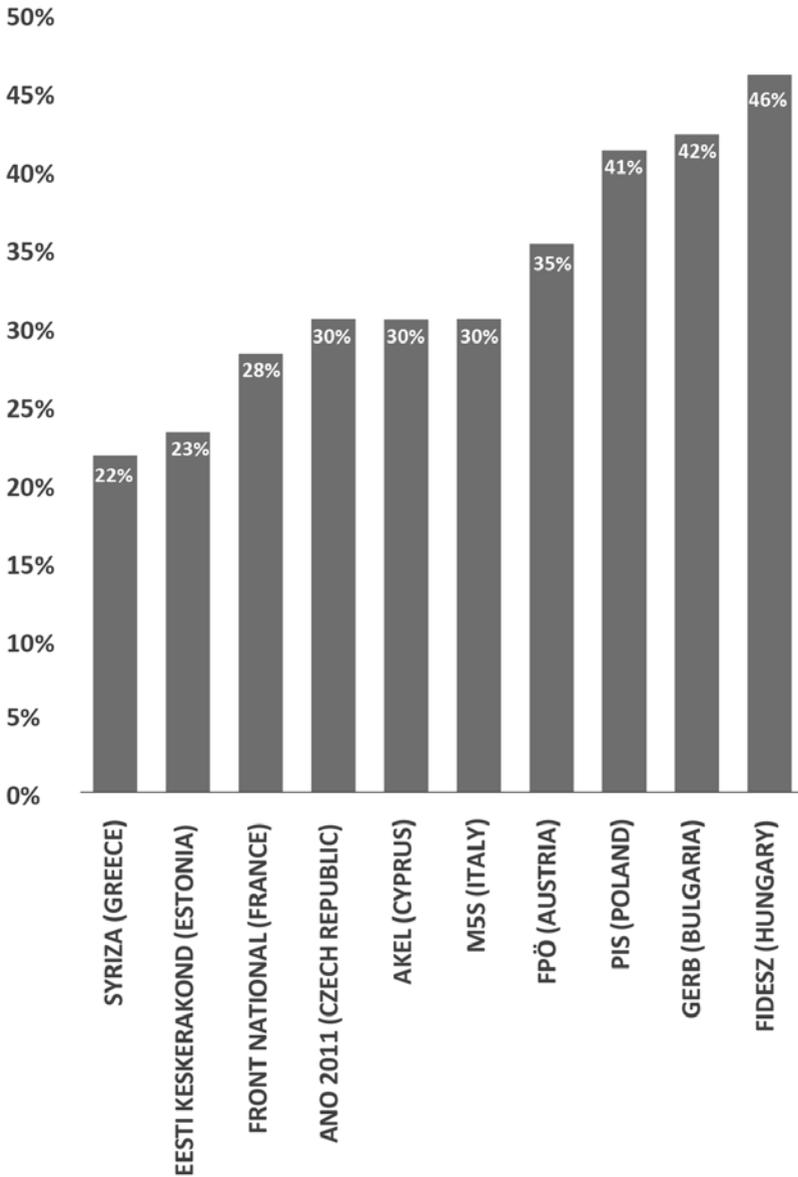


Figure 3 – Last updated: Q3, 2016. Source: <http://www.progressivepost.eu/publications/populism-report-july-september-2016/>

The Hungarian governing party Fidesz is the single most popular populist force in Europe, having the support of 46% of the likely voters. The Polish and Bulgarian ruling parties have similarly large bases of 41-42%, making PiS and GERB the most popular political forces in their respective countries. The Austrian Freedom Party (FPÖ) is the fourth strongest populist force in the EU, with the support of more than one third of likely Austrian voters, while, according to the polls, the Italian Five Star Movement (M5S), the Cypriot Progressive Party of Working People (AKEL) and the Czech governing YES 2011 (ANO 2011) each command 30% of likely votes, bringing them to the forefront of the European field. The French National Front (FN) has a base of over 25%. Additionally, on the list of the top 10 European populist parties, we can find the Estonian Centre Party (Eesti Keskerakond) and the Greek ruling party Syriza – the support for both of which exceeds 20%. Among the 10 most popular parties, the right wing populist parties dominate, represented by six parties, whereas left wing populism is represented by two forces: the Cypriot AKEL and the Greek Syriza. The Italian M5S and the Czech ANO 2011 cannot be easily located within the traditional left-right divide, but based on their position on the list, it can be argued that moderate populism also has successful representation in Europe.

The list of parties that have achieved the most significant growth in popularity also deserves attention (see Figure 4). In this regard, eastern European dominance has prevailed – the majority of the 10 parties achieving the most intensive growth are located in the eastern part of the EU, and only three of them are in western Europe. The agrarian Lithuanian Peasant and Greens Union (LVŽS) counts as the most dynamically developing party of 2016, doubling its popularity by some 10 percentage points. Another newly founded Baltic organization, the Latvian party Who owns the state? (Kam pieder valsts?) registered a similar degree of increase in popularity. This is an even more impressive achievement when time-weighted, considering that the organization was founded in May 2016 and managed to establish a 10% base in only a few months. In France, the Left Front (Front de gauche) can take pride in having similarly earned nearly 10 percentage points of growth, making it the third most dynamic populist party between the end of 2015 and 2016.

**The most significant increases in support for populist parties  
between 2015 and 2016 (in percentage points)**

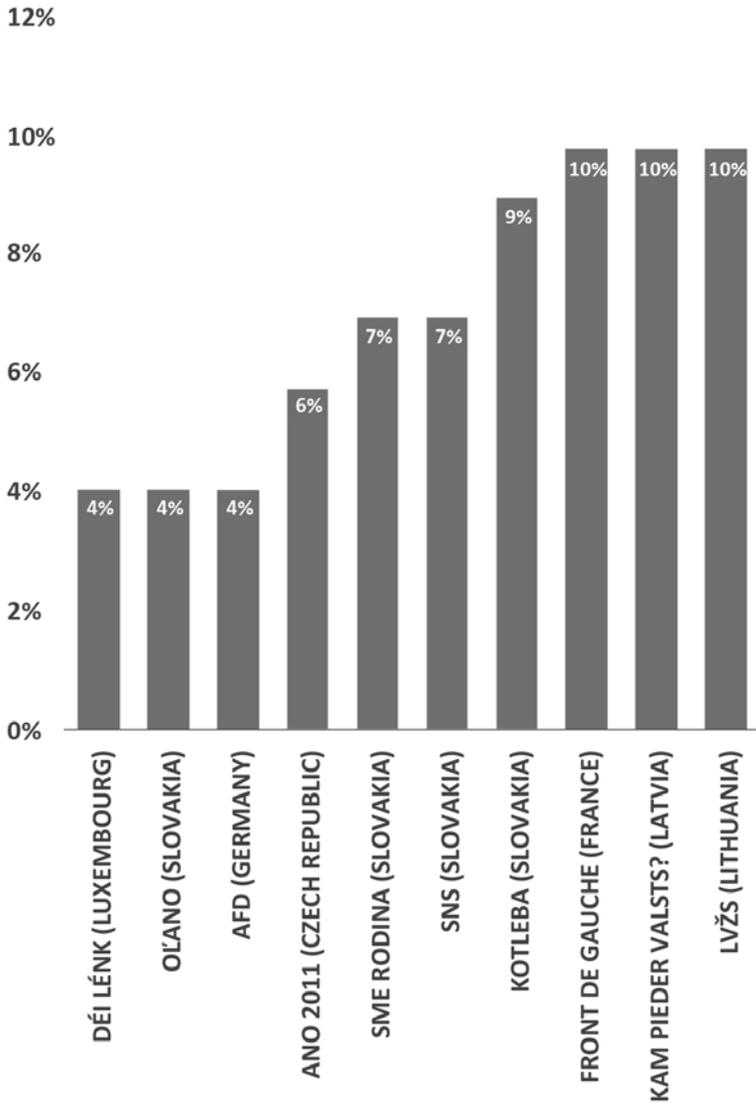


Figure 4 – Last updated: Q3, 2016. Source: <http://www.progressivepost.eu/publications/populism-report-july-september-2016/>

It is evidenced here that **Slovakia**, experiencing the greatest populist sweep, is **represented by four parties in this summary**, indicating a shift in the Slovak political system towards populism. The far right **Kotleba – People’s Party Our Slovakia (LSNS)** achieved **nine percentage points of growth**, while the rightist **Slovak National Party (SNS)** and the **We Are Family (Sme Rodina)** each gained **seven**, and the **Ordinary People (OLaNO)** earned slightly less, with **four**. The Czech ANO 2011 expanded its base by some six percentage points, while the **German Alternative for Germany (AfD)** did so by four. The Luxembourgish **The Left (Déi Lénk)** managed to hold a place on the top 10 list with an increase of four percentage points, brushing the margin of error. In sum, **six right wing, two left wing** (the French Left Front and the Luxembourgish The Left), and two “neither left, nor right” organizations (the Lithuanian LVŽS and the Czech ANO 2011) constitute the forefront of the most intensively developing parties of the EU.

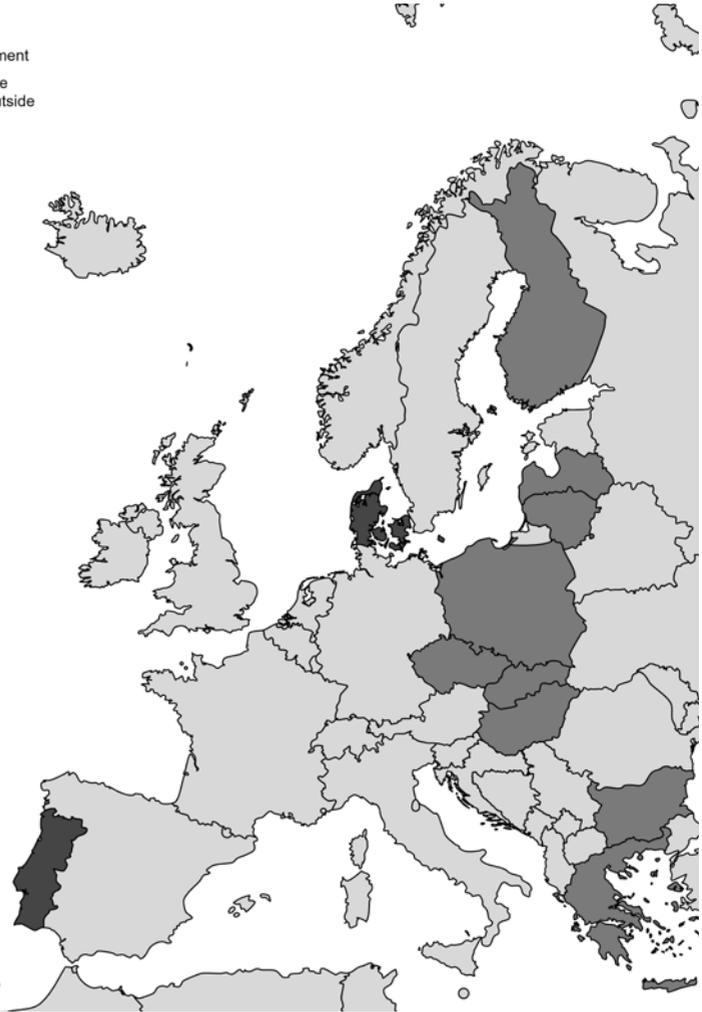
## Populists in government

**Of the 28 EU Member States, populist parties constitute part of nine countries’ governments, while in two other countries populists play a supporting role in government (see map 1).** Briefly overviewing these nine countries, we can see a wide variety of patterns in how populist forces perform in government. Populists form part of the government in all Visegrád Group members, that is, Hungary, Poland, the Czech Republic and Slovakia. **In Hungary, Fidesz** has been the ruling party since 2010, and won all national elections (including two parliamentary, three local and two European Parliament [EP] elections) in the last 10 years. Fidesz’s popularity still exceeds the combined aggregated support level of the two most important opposition parties. Poland is another country in which right wing populists govern without a major mainstream coalition partner. **PiS** first won the Polish parliamentary elections in 2005, but failed to finish its four-year term. However, in 2015, with 37.6% of the votes, they were re-elected and have been implementing an illiberal political programme since. Greece has also been governed by populist forces since 2015. Although, **ANO 2011** is only a minority partner to the Czech Social Democratic Party (ČSSD) in the Czech coalition government, the party is nevertheless responsible for six ministries, and its party leader Andrej Babiš is the first deputy prime minister. Moreover, ANO’s level of popularity is currently double that of its coalition partner. Finally, the Slovakian Fico cabinet is also partly built on populism. The **SNS**, as the fourth strongest party in the 2016 elections, delegated three ministers to the government.

### Legend

- Populists in government
- Populists support the government from outside

Created with mapchart.net ©



Map 1 – As of November 2016.

Source: <http://www.progressivepost.eu/publications/name-people-performance-governing-populist-parties-europe/>

Turning away from central Europe, populists form governments in the Balkan region too. The **Bulgarian GERB** won parliamentary elections in 2009 for the first time, and the party has been in government again since 2014. However, the founder of GERB and two-time prime minister Boyko Borissov submitted his resignation in November 2016. In Greece, **Alexis Tsipras' Syriza** won two consecutive elections in 2015 and have since been leading the country together

with the populist right wing **Independent Greeks (ANEL)**. Greece is the only country in the EU in which two populist parties are in coalition, showing that, despite ideological differences, the Greek anti-mainstream forces are more likely to cooperate with each other than with centrist parties.

Although rarely appearing in the news, populist parties are also coalition members in the governments of two Baltic states. **In Latvia, the right wing National Alliance (NA)** became a member of the government for the third time in 2016, following the resignation of the previous Prime Minister, Laimdota Straujuma. The **Order and Justice** party was also one of the governing parties of **Lithuania** until 2016, providing one minister to the Butkevičius cabinet. However, in October 2016, another populist party, **the LVŽS**, unexpectedly won the parliamentary elections and consequently the party's most popular politician, Saulius Skvernelis, was appointed as the 13th Prime Minister of Lithuania.

In Finland, the right wing populist **Finns Party** has been participating in the government since 2015, generating much criticism when Prime Minister Juha Sipilä appointed its cabinet. However, within 18 months following the 2015 elections the voter base of the Finns Party has almost halved, demonstrating the difficulties a populist party faces when forming coalition with mainstream forces. Finally, in two further Member States, Denmark and Portugal, a right wing and a left wing populist party, respectively, offer outside support to the current governments.

# Populist parties in EU Member States

To gain a more in-depth insight into the populist trends in the EU, **the 28 Member States merit further attention according to region**, beyond the 2016 top 10 list reviewed above (for the complete list of populist parties in the EU, see Appendix II). In 2016, populist parties have ascended in many countries, while in other Member States – including some economic giants – they may take leading positions in the upcoming months. Moreover, **populist parties can influence the governance of a country even without winning elections**, due to diverse party structures, election systems, coalition compulsions or political compromises prevailing in the Member States. The review below helps us to discern **which populist forces influence today's European politics**.

## Western Europe

**Western Europe** is the only region in the EU in which **populist forces are not part of any country's government**. However, anti-establishment sentiment has similarly been slowly increasing in most of these countries – especially in France, which faces a presidential election in 2017.

In France, **in addition to a strong right wing populist party, a considerable left wing populism is also present.** This is in part due to the changes of the past year. Here, in the EU's second most populous country, **public support for populists has increased significantly, by nine percentage points,** meaning that **almost half of the French electorate now support non-mainstream parties.** The voter base of the strongest and most well-known French populist force, the far right **FN, was characterized by stability between the end of 2015 and that of 2016, as the base of Marine Le Pen's party stood just below 30% throughout this period.** FN can currently expect to receive 28% of votes, meaning that they are viable contenders for the title of "most popular French party". Stability was also characteristic of **France Arise (Debout la France),** a significantly smaller right wing populist party, support for which, in the studied period, **stood at around 4%.** The support for the similarly marginal left wing **New Anticapitalistic Party (NPA) remained similarly stable at 1-2%.** The significant shift in 2016 can mostly be attributed to the **Left Front** which, **over a period of just one year, tripled its voter base from 4% to 14%,** evolving from the status of a small to a medium-sized party. Besides the campaign for the presidential election and the stability of FN, **the significant strengthening of left wing populism** was the most important development of this most recent period.

In the most populous EU Member State, **Germany, populism is institutionalized in an anti-refugee, Eurosceptic far right party and an anti-capitalist left wing party.** Even though **their joint support has enjoyed a mild three percentage point increase** over 2016, support for non-mainstream parties in Germany is still relatively weak when compared to the EU average. In autumn of 2016, **only one fifth of German voters would have cast their ballots for populists.** In terms of popular support, both the **Left Party (Die Linke)** and the right wing populist **AfD** can be considered medium-sized organizations, with only the latter being truly successful during the period of examination. The base of the **Left Party** has not changed substantially, with its **current standing at 9% similarly to their 10% result at the end of 2015.** By contrast, AfD found itself in a somewhat more favourable circumstance, as the dominant domestic and European political themes of the period created a favourable context for the party of Eurosceptic and anti-immigrant ideas. AfD outperformed all expectations in a number of state elections in 2016, coming in third with 15% in Baden-Württemberg, second behind the Green Party with 24% in Saxony-Anhalt, and second with 21% during the autumn election in Mecklenburg-Vorpommern, managing to beat the United Democratic Coalition (CDU) for the first time. Despite their compelling results in these state elections, **the party failed to achieve national momentum – their current 12% backing suggests a moderate four percentage point increase as compared to their position last year.**

**The only significant populist force in Austria, the extreme right FPÖ**, has been part of Austrian political life for decades. The nationalist, Eurosceptic and anti-immigrant party rates as one of the most successful right wing representative of populism in Europe. Furthermore, its popularity has increased remarkably in recent years, rendering it a considerable actor among Austrian and European anti-establishment parties. **In spring 2014, the party gained 20% of the votes in the EP elections, and by the end of 2015 support for FPÖ increased significantly, to 32%.** Over the past year, FPÖ has managed to moderately further this expansion. **In autumn 2016, 35% of voters sided with the organization, exceeding the results of the previous year by three percentage points.** As a result, the party has gained **stability as the most popular Austrian party** in 2016, with its popularity significantly outstripping that of the two traditional mainstream parties, the Social Democratic Party of Austria (SPÖ) and the Austrian People's Party (ÖVP). Support for the organization peaked in the second quarter of 2016, when 37% of Austrians would have voted for FPÖ. This was further bolstered by presidential elections held in spring, in which FPÖ candidate Norbert Hofer won the first round with a major lead at 35%, and only barely dropped behind the Green candidate with 46.2% in the second round in December. The fact that neither SPÖ nor ÖVP managed to make it through the second round indicates the weakening of these two mainstream parties.

**In Belgium, Flemish Interest (Vlaams Belang)** has remained the only populist party in the country with a measurable base. Contrary to its 2014-2015 period of growth, the support for this far right, Eurosceptic, anti-immigration party, which also demands the independence of Flanders, **stagnated in 2016. At the end of 2015, 12% of the Belgian likely voters supported this medium-sized party, while by the end of autumn 2016 the level of its support remained almost unchanged (13%).** Flemish Interest did not show any significant changes in its support during the year, maintaining 12-14% support throughout the examined period. This indicates that **the radical Belgian populists have managed to stabilize, but failed to increase their social base since 2015.**

**Overall support for populist forces in 2016 was also marked by stability in the Netherlands.** In the past year, support for populist parties has decreased, within the margin of error, by nearly two percentage points, meaning that **more than a quarter of Dutch voters** remain disillusioned with traditional political organizations. The far right, anti-Islam and anti-immigration **Party for Freedom (PVV)** is still the most popular non-traditional party in the Netherlands, even though **its base has shrunk from 19% to 16% over the past year.** The left wing **Socialist Party (SP)**, which is somewhat critical towards the EU, has grown slightly, within the margin of error, **increasing from 10% to 12%.**

Populism does not enjoy notable support in one of the smallest EU countries, **Luxembourg**. Only one actor within the party system, **The Left**, can be categorized as European populist. This leftist party can be described as democratic socialist and anti-capitalist. The size of its social base is rather moderate, although it has recently increased. At the end of 2015, 4% of likely voters supported the leftist party, whereas, **according to opinion polls, in the summer of 2016, 8%** would have voted for The Left. That is to say, support for the only populist party has nearly doubled in under a year, though it remains primarily a supporting character of Luxembourg politics.

## Central and eastern Europe

Central and eastern European countries, with a few exceptions (such as Croatia, Romania and Slovenia), are the heartland of the surge of right wing populism in Europe. In this region, of the 11 EU Member States, six countries are partly or exclusively governed by populist forces. However, as we can see below, the ideology and influence of these parties vary across the central and eastern European political landscape, ranging from smaller conservative populist parties with limited impact to supermajority illiberal nationalists.

The social demand for populist parties is still **at its highest in Hungary**, even though the overall base of such parties shrank by the end of 2016. **The support for populist forces has decreased by five percentage points in the past year, though it still accounts for two thirds of voters.** Right wing populism is so popular in Hungary that both of its populist forces are located on the conservative side of the political spectrum. The right wing populist Fidesz, the ruling party, can be described as an illiberal, Eurosceptic and anti-immigration party, taking a position that is increasingly similar to that of the far right Jobbik. **Support for Fidesz has decreased by five percentage points, from 51% to 46%, in the past year.** This drop primarily occurred between the first and second quarter of 2016, after which the party managed to stabilize its base thanks to the announcement of the mandatory settling quota and the party's accompanying referendum campaign. **Support for Jobbik did not change within the studied year, standing at 21% from the end of 2015 to the end of 2016.** The party, however, had to regain a three percentage point loss at the beginning of 2016 to retain the 21% support level. That moderate decrease aside, **the highest support for populist parties in the EU can be observed in Hungary.**

**In Poland, at the end of 2016, populist parties enjoyed the same ratio of support as they did at the end of 2015.** This means that **the absolute majority of voters, 51%, sided with populists**, thereby stabilizing the support for populists in the largest country of the central and eastern European region. In 2016, the governing **PiS** remained the most popular political force, enjoying growth of four percentage points. **This brought PiS's share of support to 41% of voters.** **Kukiz'15**, which can be labelled as a right wing populist party, did not manage to attract new voters, but **was able to retain throughout 2016 its base of 8%, which it achieved at the end of 2015.** **Sympathy towards** the libertarian, Eurosceptic **KORWiN**, which was already weak at the end of 2015, **further decreased from 5% to 2%.**

In **Bulgaria**, the social embeddedness of populism is quite significant, even despite the notable decrease in overall support for populist parties in 2016. Right wing populism is typical in this country, with three such organizations having a measurable base. **Besides the ruling party, the conservative GERB, two smaller nationalist forces, the Patriotic Front and Ataka, are the other representatives of Bulgarian populism, the latter being notorious for its extremist views.** **Joint support for these three organizations** has decreased **from 60% to 51%** since 2015. This significant drop can be attributed to GERB, the most influential political force, which **lost 10% of its social base over the course of a year**, while support for the two significantly smaller organizations did not change substantially, both standing at the same rate as they had a year previously - the Patriotic Front at 7%, Ataka at 2%. While the ruling party, at the end of 2015, had enjoyed the support of more than half of the voters, by the beginning of 2016 its support had dropped quite steeply to 37%, only to recover and stabilize at 42% by the second half of the year. Even though support for Bulgarian populist forces did experience a significant drop, the fact that **their overall support stands above 50% suggests that the social demand for populism remains high in this country.**

**The joint support for populist forces in the Czech Republic stagnated during the examined period, leaving the proportion of the Czech electorate that would vote for a populist party at almost 50%**, an exceptionally high share even by European standards. Czech populism is rather diverse: the country's political system includes three smaller right wing parties, a medium-sized communist party and a large centrist governing party. Since 2015, the support for right wing parties – that is, for **the Party of Free Citizens (Svobodní)** and **Dawn – National Coalition (Úsvit)** – has not changed substantially, remaining at **around 3% for both organizations.** While support for the far left **Communist**

**Party of Bohemia and Moravia (KSČM) has decreased by three percentage points over the past year**, it still enjoys the confidence of **11% of Czech voters**. The victor in the studied period was **ANO 2011, the largest local populist force, which managed to significantly expand its base between the end of 2015 and autumn 2016. Almost 30% of likely voters would vote for ANO, indicating growth of six percentage points within one year. This puts ANO among Europe's most supported populist forces in government.**

Romania has remained one of the few EU countries **in which institutionalized support for populism can scarcely be detected**. The only important populist force is a recently established party, the **Save Romania Union**, which, in its rhetoric, attacks the Romanian political establishment, denounces political corruption and attempts to transcend political ideologies. The party managed to **boost its popularity to 8%** over just a few months in 2016.

**Slovakia is one of the few EU countries in which populists have managed to achieve a significant breakthrough in 2016**, tripling their joint social support: **while at the end of 2015 only 13% of Slovaks supported an anti-mainstream force, this share increased to 40% by autumn 2016**. What is more, this number does not include the base of Direction – Social Democracy (SMER), the largest governing left wing party of Slovakia, which has often been described as populist by researchers. The populists achieved their most significant momentum during the 2016 parliamentary elections in early spring. Since then, support for Slovakia's diverse – albeit exclusively right wing – collection of populist parties has increased only moderately. The centre-right **OĽaNO** experienced the smallest increase in support, nevertheless **managing to nearly double its 2015 base from 6% to 11% by the March elections** and closing the autumn of 2016 at 10% – an overall expansion of four percentage points. Established just at the end of 2015, **We Are Family**, one of the newest conservative political formations, **reached 7% support** in merely a year. Since autumn 2015, the nationalist **SNS** has **doubled its base from 7% to 14%**. Though gaining only 9% of the votes during the 2016 spring elections, it managed to greatly improve its support as a member of the coalition government. The most radical extreme right wing **LSNS** (sometimes even described as neo-fascist) **has grown most prominently. Hardly detectable in 2015, it achieved 8% support in the spring parliamentary elections**, after which the Eurosceptic, anti-globalization, nationalist party, often employing anti-Roma and anti-Semite rhetoric, managed to consolidate its base at 9%.

Currently, only one populist party, the **United Left (ZL)**, is present **on the Slovenian political scene** with significant support, meaning that **popular support for non-mainstream parties is rather moderate in the country, with hints of decline in the examined period**. Support for the left wing anti-capitalist and slightly Eurosceptic party **decreased** only minimally in the examined period, from **15% to 13%**, thereby retaining its position as one of the country's medium-sized parties.

Both right wing and centrist populist parties can be found in the northernmost Baltic country, **Estonia** – the centrist **Estonian Centre Party** and the medium-sized **Conservative People's Party of Estonia (EKRE)**. The latter represents nationalist conservative values, takes a Eurosceptic posture and rejects immigration from outside of the EU. In 2016, within the set of populists, only minimal movement was detected – their joint support stands at exactly the **same level as that at the end of 2015, when 36% of Estonian voters would have gone for a non-mainstream party**. Of the two political forces, the more moderate Estonian Centre Party has greater social embeddedness and registered a decline of only two percentage points, within the margin of error, during the period under review, **meaning that it still enjoys the trust of close to a quarter (23%) of Estonians**. The change in support between the end of 2015 and the third quarter of 2016 for the nationalist EKRE was of a similar degree in the opposite direction, **putting its support currently at 13%**.

Overall support for populist organizations unequivocally increased in **Latvia**, largely due to the **emergence and significant expansion in popularity of the party "Who owns the state?"**. This is another right wing conservative force, joining **two already existing right wing organizations, which was founded in spring 2016**. Right wing populism, which had already been present in the country, thus gained new momentum in 2016. According to opinion polls, Who owns the state? **attained a 10% base** in only a few months, constituting a serious success in terms of winning over new voters. The demand for right wing populism is reflected in the fact that the party did not attract the voters of the two other populist organizations, managing instead to draw new supporters from the mainstream. The **NA**, which is party to the governing coalition, **stagnated at 15% in 2016**, and the **For Latvia from the Heart (No sirds Latvijai)** achieved merely **3% support**. The breakthrough of Latvian populism (**an increase from 18% to 28%**) is, therefore, mainly due to the appearance of the Who owns the state? party.

**Support for populist organizations has grown significantly in the past year in Lithuania**. The ratio of Lithuanians sympathizing with anti-establishment parties has **expanded by eight percentage points**, from one third of likely voters

to **40% by the end of 2016**. Populist organizations in the country represent right wing, left wing and agrarian ideologies alike, and the latter has increased considerably in the past year, resulting in the growth of populism nationwide. The **LVŽS** has doubled its base in less than a year: 9% of voters sided with this agrarian party at the end of 2015, with this proportion growing to **nearly 20%** in autumn 2016. The other two populist forces have not managed to attract further supporters, but LVŽS did not expand primarily at their expense. The support for the left wing populist **Labour Party** stagnated throughout 2016, achieving **over 10% of votes**. The right wing conservative **Order and Justice**, a member of the governing coalition, registered a moderate decrease within the margin of error, as the ratio of **its supporters** diminished by two percentage points, to **9%**.

As elections were held both at the beginning and at the end of the studied period **in Croatia**, shifts in party preferences can be tracked through real election results rather than merely opinion polls. Left wing and right wing populist parties alike are present in Croatia, representing both sides of the political spectrum with two organizations each. All four are small parties, and **their overall support is only around 10%**. Populism is, therefore, varied in Croatia, but it is not deeply embedded in the population. The left wing **Human Shield (Živi zid)** grew by two percentage points since November 2015 (**to 6%**), and the right wing **Milan Bandić 365 – Labour and Solidarity Party (MB365)** **increased support from 3% to 4%**, whereas the two smaller parties played marginal roles in the elections.

## Southern Europe

**Southern Europe is the exception to the sweep of anti-immigration right wing populism** – in this region, demand for left wing (or for “neither left, nor right”) populists continues to dominate in 2016. We experienced this trend, which we call the **“Populist Iron Curtain”**, in previous years too. While left wing populism is on the rise in the entire Mediterranean region (with the exception of Italy), and right wing populism is rather weak in this part of Europe, in western and eastern Europe the situation is just the reverse – that is, we observe a surge in the strength of right wing populist forces without strong competition from the left. This situation has not changed in the period under analysis, even though left wing populists had to implement serious austerity measures in Greece, supported Portugal’s government from the outside, and merged into a new

formation in Spain. However, the increase in support for left wing populists halted over the last year, and new parties were not able to secure a significant breakthrough in any of the EU Member States in this region.

**In Greece, the overall ratio of voters who support the wide range of diverse populist parties in the country has even decreased significantly over the last year. While at the end of 2015, more than half of voters would have voted for populist forces, this figure declined by the autumn of 2016 by 12 percentage points to 40%. Not only did aggregated support for populist parties diminish, but also the support for each and every right wing and left wing populist party stagnated or decreased to some extent. In other words, we can say that there has been a general drop in the demand for populism in Greece. The currently governing Syriza faced the greatest loss of seven percentage points over the last year, meaning a decline from 29% to 22% of voters. Support for the Communist Party of Greece (KKE) decreased within the margin of error, by two percentage points, from 9% to 7%. Right wing populists, however, have managed to maintain their position across the studied period. The Golden Dawn (ChA) of the radical right is the second most popular Greek populist party, with 9% of voters, while the currently governing conservative right wing ANEL would have gained 3% of the votes in an election in 2016.**

**The social embeddedness of populist parties has remained stable in Italy, as during the year their popularity has decreased just within the margin of error by one percentage point. However, their base has remained quite significant: almost half of the Italian electorate would pick a populist party. Retaining a 30% voter base, M5S has remained the strongest populist Italian party, and the second most popular overall, continuing to refuse categorization as either right or left wing. The party achieved major successes in municipal elections in 2016, winning the mayoral races in both Rome and Turin. The base of the right wing populist Northern League (Lega Nord) also remained relatively stable during the examined period, with 13% support, a result just one percentage point lower than 2015.**

**Left wing populism stands at around 20% in Spain, meaning that there has not been a marked change in support for populism since the end of 2015. Similarly to Croatia, Spain held two parliamentary elections during the examined period. In December 2015, nearly a quarter of the electorate chose one of the left wing populist forces – 20.7% voted for Podemos, while 3.7% picked the United Left (Izquierda Unida). Generating a stalemate situation in which no governing coalition could be established, the 2015 election had to be repeated half a year**

later. Despite the joining of forces of Podemos and the United Left, the new formation failed to improve its popularity, gaining just as many votes as the larger left wing populist force did alone six months earlier. Recent surveys have continued to measure the two organizations as one – with **21% support during the third quarter of 2016** the populist formation has exactly as many supporters as Podemos had at the end of 2015. **Therefore, there was a four percentage points decline in the number of Spanish voters supporting populists**, which can largely be attributed to the merging of the United Left into Podemos.

Similarly to other southern EU Member States, **left wing populism enjoys strong social embeddedness in Portugal**, while right wing populism is basically non-existent. Accordingly, when it comes to Portuguese political populism, two markedly left wing organizations of similar size are dominant, with a rather stable **support of just under one fifth of the electorate**. The **Left Bloc (B.E.)** is the representative of the anti-capitalist, Eurosceptic and feminist ideology, while the **communist Unitary Democratic Coalition (CDU)** – comprising the **Portuguese Communist Party (PCP)** and the **Ecologist Party (PEV)** – stands even further to left of B.E. on the political spectrum. During the year, both parties have retained a rather stable, essentially unchanging base. With **CDU having an 8% backing**, the less radical B.E. has wider **national approval with 10%**. As both support the minority government of the Socialist Party (PS) from outside, their actual political influence is much more significant than their 8-10% base would suggest.

**In Cyprus, while left wing populism is dominant**, similarly to southern European countries, the radical right is also present. The recent period has not witnessed significant shifts in this regard as support for populist parties has remained rather high – **the share of voters who would pick populists is around 40% in the country**. Even though populists received fewer votes in the spring parliamentary elections, as had been predicted at the end of 2015, their support during the third quarter of 2016 was at the same level as polled a year previously. **The Marxist-Leninist AKEL has remained the most successful populist party in Cyprus, standing at 30% both at the end of 2015 and in autumn 2016**. However, during the May 2016 elections, AKEL achieved a somewhat weaker result of 26%. The smaller and more moderate left wing **Citizens' Alliance** performed similarly: it was unable to assert **its support, standing at 8%** at the end of both 2015 and 2016. In the spring election, however, it gained only 6% of the vote. The radical right wing **National Popular Front (ELAM)** is the smallest populist force in Cyprus, which maintains close relations with the Greek ChA, a party notorious for its fascist elements. ELAM is characterized by strong Greek nationalism and Euroscepticism, yet its social

embeddedness is rather low – at the end of 2015, the party was undetectable, while during the May elections it gained only 3.7% of the votes. **According to the autumn surveys, ELAM now stands at 2%.**

Finally, **in Malta**, traditionally two major parties – the Labour Party (PL) and the Nationalist Party (PN) – have competed for power, meaning that, **uniquely for an EU Member State, serious populist groups are not present in the country's political scene.**

## Northern Europe

Some Nordic countries are showcase examples for the **consequences of cooperation between mainstream parties and populist parties**. Where populists give up their own political agendas and cooperate with centrist parties, such as in Finland, they can easily lose their voters' trust. The increase in support for populists can also be halted by **mainstream parties by adopting their agenda**, as we saw in the United Kingdom with the Brexit referendum. The Conservative Party was under pressure from UKIP with its anti-EU message for years. The topic of Brexit was so popular among the British voters that UKIP even won the 2014 EP elections, having overtaken both the Conservatives and the Labour Party. However, Prime Minister David Cameron, to take the wind out of UKIP's sails and to secure his victory for the 2015 general election, also campaigned with the promise of holding a referendum on the UK's EU membership. Although Cameron believed that he would be able to both persuade the voters to vote "Remain" and to halt the popularity increase of UKIP, he ultimately lost the referendum and had to resign.

From the populist parties' point of view, supporting a government from outside, as is the case in Denmark, might be a better strategy. The **Danish People's Party** (Dansk Folkeparti) is the only significant populist force in the Scandinavian country and, according to surveys, the anti-migration right wing organization **has managed to consolidate itself as the country's second largest party**. Surveys suggest that its social base has fluctuated around the rate achieved in the June 2015 parliamentary elections: having gained 21% of all votes in these elections, the party closed both 2015 and autumn 2016 **at 20% public support**. Therefore, the party supporting the minority government from outside has stabilized its base – its support during 2016 changed only by a few tenths of a percent, showing very consistent performance in the recent period.

The political processes that took place in **the United Kingdom** are a good example of how populist forces can have an erosive effect. The EU referendum initiated by the governing conservatives and its outcome of the United Kingdom leaving the EU are the result of populist politics creeping into mainstream politics. **This example shows that populists do not always directly shape politics, but also do so indirectly, replacing the old political agenda with a new, populist rhetoric.** They successfully influenced mainstream parties to take on populist messages themselves, attempting to thereby take the wind out of the sails of populist parties. **However, for the Independence Party (UKIP), the United Kingdom's significant populist force, the successful referendum was not accompanied by an increase in popularity – quite the contrary can be observed as, in the short run, its voter base, which was at its peak right before the vote at 17%, has since shrunk. After the referendum, by the third quarter of 2016, UKIP's support base dwindled to 13%.** Nevertheless, the example of UKIP is a warning sign that populists can achieve significant political objectives without ever stepping into power or growing into the most popular party.

**Finland** is among those European countries that are less exposed to populism, as only around one fifth of its voters support an organization with such ideologies. However, **as a governing force, the Finns Party (Perussuomalaiset), also known as True Finns, has significant influence over the northern European country's politics.** The share of votes of right wing and left wing populists during the past year has increased only within the margin of error, from **17% to 19%**, meaning that, contrary to numerous other EU countries, Finnish populists did not achieve a breakthrough. The two ideologically opposite populist parties, the far right Finns Party and **the Left Alliance (VAS)**, have voter bases essentially equal in size, both at 9%. This means that the base of the two Finnish populist forces has remained unchanged since the end of 2015. However, **the Finns Party managed to gain 18% in the parliamentary elections in 2015, meaning that joining the coalition government and their joint governance of the country resulted in the loss of half of their voter base.**

**In Ireland, left wing populism**, which is traditionally socially embedded, is today represented by the **Irish republican "We Ourselves" (Sinn Féin)** and the far left **Anti-Austerity Alliance–People Before Profit parties.** The latter is a smaller actor in Irish politics; its base of a few percent has not changed significantly between the end of 2015 and 2016, and it is currently backed by **4% of voters**, maintaining its result from the February 2016 election. Sinn Féin, on the contrary, is a medium-sized political force, which nevertheless experienced a significant drop of trust over the past year. **Although, at the end of 2015,**

**around one fifth of Irish voters supported Sinn Féin, it ultimately gained only 14% in the parliamentary elections at the beginning of 2016, becoming the third strongest political force in the country. It has not managed to regain the base it had at the end of 2015, currently commanding a stable 15%. The overall support for Irish populists thus has diminished by a quarter over the past year, currently covering 19% of voters – a relatively low level by comparison to other EU Member States.**

**The state of Swedish populism did not change between the end of 2015 and autumn 2016 as one in four Swedes continue to support a populist organization, just as in 2015. In Sweden, both right wing and left wing populism have an institutionalized embodiment – the former is represented by the extreme right wing anti-immigrant **Swedish Democrats (SD)**, while the latter is represented by the socialist **Left Party (V)**. Of the two formations, the radical right enjoys wider popular support, reaching its peak precisely at the end of 2015, when nearly one fifth of the Swedish electorate supported them. Experiencing a period of decline during the beginning of 2016, by the third quarter the party has managed regain its former support. **Currently standing at 18%, SD remains the third most popular party in Sweden. With 7%**, support for the significantly less well-established **Left Party** remained unchanged over the examined period.**

# Conclusion

It became clear while analysing populist trends in the EU that the expansion of populist parties in 2016, though at its highest levels in recent history, has halted in most Member States. Notwithstanding that in some eastern European and Baltic nations – in Slovakia, Latvia and Lithuania, for example – populist forces continue to shatter glass ceilings. The popularity of Slovakian populist parties grew by 26 percentage points in a single year, while LVŽS won the Lithuanian parliamentary elections last fall.

A “populist Iron Curtain” continues to endure: in western and eastern Europe, practically only right wing populism exists, while southern Europe allows almost exclusively leftist populism. In Italy, the “neither right, nor left” M5S is fighting to dominate. Of the most populous EU countries, Poland has been led by populists for a year, and populists could easily become the most prominent force in both France and Italy in their respective upcoming elections. Though France already had a notable mass of populist voters, in 2016 this number continued to increase.

Of 28 EU Member States, nine had right wing populist governments at the end of 2016; this list includes Hungary, Poland, Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Finland, Latvia, Lithuania, Greece and Slovakia. The governments of Denmark

and Portugal are supported by right and left wing populists, respectively. Right wing populists govern alongside left wing populists in Greece. Thus, populists have direct influence over a third of EU Member States.

Data from 2016 polls also show that populists retain their support base while in power. The three most beloved populist forces in the EU (the Hungarian Fidesz, the Bulgarian GERB and the Polish PiS) are currently governing. Affiliated voters in Hungary are the most likely in the EU to vote for a populist party, as 67% vote for right wing populists.

Although the questions emphasized by populists vary from country to country, there are several common causes and topics that dominated the communications and public debate of the most successful populist parties in 2016. Initiatives strengthening national sovereignty and, simultaneously, opposing part or the whole of European integration were present in almost all of the parties monitored. Opposition to refugees and immigrants, “traditional” topics for right wing populists, also featured in the spotlight to a considerable degree in 2016 due to terror attacks and an unresolved refugee crisis. In eastern Europe, among other regions, Hungarian, Slovakian, Polish, Czech, Lithuanian and Estonian populists launched anti-refugee campaigns or delivered speeches in that vein. Populist parties in western Europe, primarily in Austria and France, also profited from the situation. Though German right wing populist factions grew stronger, their favourability is still less prominent as compared to most other EU countries.

In addition to opposition to refugees and support for national sovereignty, a well-liked message of populist parties concerns the rejection of austerity measures. Unlike xenophobia, spurning austerity can hardly be considered a radical stance. Coincidentally, traditional populist elements – the search for an enemy, the contrast between the “evil elites” and the “people,” and uniform criticism of both centre-right and centre-left camps – are generally characteristic of anti-austerity (and mostly left wing) parties. Next to the political effects of Brexit and the amplifying Euroscepticism it has caused, however, this economic topic has faded into the background in populist rhetoric. It has found supporters mostly, though not solely, in Mediterranean countries such as Greece, Spain and Portugal. Nonetheless, these parties were unable to expand their bases in 2016.

The result of the Brexit referendum – the United Kingdom’s departure from the EU – has, furthermore, highlighted the tendency of populist forces to

threaten mainstream parties and political systems through alternatives to direct positions of authority. It has been found that such populists can achieve success regarding at least some of the causes they advocate without formal standing.

After Brexit, it is important to note that certain populist parties aim to organize referenda on European issues: M5S favours direct democracy vis-à-vis representative democracy, and aims to withdraw Italy from the Eurozone, while FN and the Left Front aim to completely disrupt France's European integration. The Hungarian plebiscite against the EU's refugee quota was not a lone initiative either: among others, populist parties campaigned for similar measures, albeit unsuccessfully, in Estonia and Poland.

Overall, 2016 brought all the European political processes that started years ago to the fore, as the signs of these were already apparent during the 2014 EP elections. Nonetheless, the populists' ascent to power – whether Donald Trump in the United States or local rightists in eastern Europe – could result in a counter effect even in the short term. Should mainstream, centre-left, centre-right, green and liberal parties organize into a single bloc, they could compete easily with the populists, or, as happened in Austria, stem a populist advance.

# Appendix I.

## Chronology: European populism in 2016

**24 January 2016**

**Portuguese presidential election**

An independent candidate, António Sampaio da Nóvoa, supported by the Portuguese Workers' Communist Party/Reorganized Movement of the Party of the Proletariat (PCTP/MRPP) reached second place with 23% of the votes. Marisa Matias, the B.E. candidate, gained 10% of the votes, making her the third most popular choice.

**26 February 2016**

**Irish general election**

Sinn Féin strengthened its position and became the third largest party in the Oireachtas after winning 14% of the votes, granting them 23 deputies in the lower house of the Irish parliament. A smaller populist party, the Anti-Austerity Alliance–People Before Profit, received 4% of the votes and thus six seats in the parliament, two more than in the previous election.

**5 March 2016**

**Slovak parliamentary election**

Cumulatively, one third of the electorate supported populist forces and four populist parties managed to reach the electoral threshold of 5%. OĽANO and SNS increased their votes and deputies in the parliament, where the former received 11% of the votes and 19 seats, and the latter gained 8.6% of the votes and 15 seats. SNS joined Robert Fico's cabinet, and the nationalist party thereby returned to government after six years. Two new populist forces won parliamentary representation for the first time: the ultra-nationalist, far right LSNS (8%) and centre-right We Are Family (6.6%).

**13 March 2016**

**Baden-Württemberg, Rhineland-Palatinate and Saxony-Anhalt state elections**

The anti-Islam right wing populist party, AfD, received over 10% of votes in all three German federal states. AfD became the third most supported party in Rhineland-Palatinate (13%) and Baden-Württemberg (15%). Saxony-Anhalt recorded a breakthrough victory for the populist party, which received almost a quarter of votes in this state, becoming runner-up and overtaking the Social Democratic Party of Germany (SPD) for the first time in the party's history.

**24 April 2016**

**First round of the Austrian presidential election**

Norbert Hofer, the candidate of the far right FPÖ, surprisingly won the first round of the election with the support of 35% of the electorate. Alexander Van der Bellen, an independent candidate supported by the Greens, came second with 21%. Thus, for the first time since the Second World War, no mainstream party's candidate qualified for the second round of the presidential election.

**5 May 2016**

**United Kingdom local elections**

The hard Eurosceptic UKIP won 12% of the popular vote in the United Kingdom local elections.

**22 May 2016**

### **Second round of the Austrian presidential election**

In a very tight run-off vote, Alexander Van der Bellen defeated Norbert Hofer by just 0.6%. However, the results were challenged by Hofer and later annulled by the Constitutional Court of Austria due to irregularities in the count of the vote in several constituencies. The second round revote was planned for 2 October, but was postponed to 4 December 2016.

**22 May 2016**

### **Cypriot legislative election**

The communist AKEL became runner-up after winning the support of 26% of the voters. AKEL thus received 16 seats in the Cypriot House of Representatives. The party registered a slight drop in both popular support and number of MPs.

**5 June and 19 June 2016**

### **Italian local elections**

Anti-establishment and Eurosceptic M5S received one fifth of the popular vote, making it the second most supported party in Italy. M5S gained a majority in 21 of 150 Comuni (cities with a population greater than 15,000). The party won mayoral elections in two of Italy's largest cities – Virginia Raggi was elected as the mayor of Rome and Chiara Appendino as the mayor of Turin.

**23 June 2016**

### **Brexit referendum**

The referendum on the EU membership of the United Kingdom, initiated by the Conservative Party and inspired and supported by UKIP, demonstrated the success of the British anti-European movement. A narrow majority of the electorate voted in favour of leaving the EU, with a highly divided, 52-48 split result, which will influence the future of the EU as a whole.

**26 June 2016**

**Spanish general election**

Left wing populist Unidos Podemos did not manage to increase its support from the previous election in December 2015. The party came third and received 21% of votes, three percentage points lower than its previous result. Podemos gained 71 seats in the parliament, the same number as at the end of 2015.

**4 September 2016**

**Mecklenburg-Vorpommern state election**

AfD secured parliamentary seats for the first time in the legislature of Mecklenburg-Vorpommern. The party came second behind SPD with 21% of the vote, an outstanding result for the anti-Islam populist party.

**11 September 2016**

**Croatian parliamentary election**

Croatian populists achieved modest results in the parliamentary election. The Only Option Coalition, led by left populist Human Shield, received only 6% of the votes and gained eight seats of the 151, while the For Prime Minister Coalition, led by MB365, failed to pass the 5% threshold.

**18 September 2016**

**Berlin state election**

Though the party only came fifth, the anti-immigration AfD gained representation in the Berlin state parliament for the first time, receiving 14% of the popular vote.

**25 September 2016**

**Basque parliamentary election**

The left wing populist Elkarrekin Podemos alliance became the third most popular party, with 15% of the votes, and won representation in the Basque parliament for the first time in its history. Thus, the party now has 11 deputies in the legislature of the Basque Country.

**2 October 2016**

### **Hungarian EU migrant quota referendum**

Although 98% of voters supported the populist government's anti-quota stance and rejected the EU's migrant quotas, the turnout for this referendum was too low and did not reach the threshold of validity, despite the government's long, intensive and overwhelming anti-immigration campaign. The opposition called for a boycott of the referendum.

**7-8 October 2016**

### **Czech regional and senate elections**

Members of regional councils in 13 regions and one third of the eight-member senate were elected. Regarding the regional elections, the support for the populist ANO 2011 was the largest, with the party gaining one third of the popular vote, while the communist KSCM gained 11%. ANO 2011, which is also one of the governing parties, won the first round of the Senate election with 14 candidates advancing, but only three of them were ultimately elected. KSCM did not win any senate seats.

**9 and 23 October 2016**

### **Lithuanian parliamentary election**

The agrarian and populist LVŽS won the general election with 22.5% of the popular vote, gaining 54 seats. This is regarded as a huge victory for the party, which had only one representative in the Seimas during the last legislative period. The party formed a cabinet with the Social Democratic Party of Lithuania. The right wing nationalist liberal Order and Justice only came sixth, supported by 5.55% of the electorate, while the centre-left populist Labour Party suffered a major setback, dropping from 20% to 5%.

**6 and 13 November 2016**

### **First and second round of the Bulgarian presidential election**

Rumen Radev, a pro-Russian independent politician supported by the Bulgarian Socialist Party, won the presidential election after defeating the candidate of the governing centre-right populist GERB. Tsetska Tsacheva received only 36% of votes, while Radev was supported by 59% of the electorate. Following Tsacheva's defeat, Prime Minister Boyko Borissov announced his resignation.

## **4 December 2016**

### **Rerun of the second round of the Austrian presidential election**

Norbert Hofer was defeated by Alexander Van der Bellen in the rerun of the second round of the Austrian election. The FPÖ candidate received 46.2% of the votes, and males were overrepresented in his voter base of the rural, (lower) middle class. Many commentators saw the defeat of Hofer as the first sign that populism can be countered in Europe by pro-European, tolerant and calm messages.

## **4 December 2016**

### **Italian constitutional referendum**

The referendum on constitutional reform, proposed by Prime Minister Matteo Renzi, aimed to modify the composition and powers of the Italian parliament, as well as the division of powers of the Italian state, its regions and administrative entities. As the overwhelming majority (59.11%) of voters rejected Renzi's proposal, the prime minister offered his resignation after the election results were announced. The populist M5S, which was among the first political forces to oppose the government's reform initiative, is expected to make substantial gains due to its successful referendum campaign and result.

## **11 December 2016**

### **Romanian legislative election**

The recently formed Save Romania Union became an important political party in 2016, reaching 9% in the legislative elections, surpassed only by the Social Democrats and the National Liberals. The success of Nicușor Dan's party was one of the most significant surprises of Romanian political life in 2016.

## Appendix II.

# List of populist parties in the European Union

| Country/<br>Party                     | Abbreviation | Political<br>group in<br>the EP | EP<br>election<br>result in<br>2009 | EP<br>election<br>result in<br>2014 | Popularity<br>among likely<br>voters at the<br>end of 2015 | Popularity<br>among likely<br>voters at the<br>end of 2016 | Change in<br>popularity<br>among<br>likely voters<br>between 2015<br>and 2016<br>(in percentage<br>points) |
|---------------------------------------|--------------|---------------------------------|-------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|--|--|--|
| <b>AUSTRIA</b>                        |              |                                 | <b>17.30%</b>                       | <b>19.97%</b>                       | <b>32%</b>   | <b>35%</b>   | <b>3%</b>  |
| Freedom Party of<br>Austria           | FPÖ          | ENF                             | 12.70%                              | 19.50%                              | 32%  | 35%  | 3%   |
| Alliance for the<br>Future of Austria | BZÖ          |                                 | 4.60%                               | 0.47%                               |  | 0%   | 0%   |
| <b>BELGIUM</b>                        |              |                                 | <b>14.36%</b>                       | <b>4.16%</b>                        | <b>12%</b>   | <b>13%</b>   | <b>1%</b>  |
| Flemish Interest                      | VB           | ENF                             | 9.85%                               | 4.16%                               | 12%  | 13%  | 1%   |
| List Dedecker                         | LDD          | ECR                             | 4.51%                               |                                     |  |  | 0%   |

| Country/<br>Party  | Abbreviation        | Political<br>group in<br>the EP | EP<br>election<br>result in<br>2009 | EP<br>election<br>result in<br>2014 | Popularity<br>among likely<br>voters at the<br>end of 2015 | Popularity<br>among likely<br>voters at the<br>end of 2016 | Change in<br>popularity<br>among<br>likely voters<br>between 2015<br>and 2016<br>(in percentage<br>points) |
|--|---------------------|---------------------------------|-------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|--|--|--|
| <b>BULGARIA</b>  |                     |                                 | <b>36.32%</b>                       | <b>47.05%</b>                       | <b>60%</b>   | <b>51%</b>   | <b>-9%</b>   |
| Attack   | Ataka               |                                 | 11.96%                              | 2.96%                               | 2%   | 2%   | 0%   |
| Bulgaria without<br>Censorship                                   | BBC                 |                                 |                                     | 10.64%                              |  | 0%   | 0%   |
| Patriotic Front  | NFSD                | EFD                             |                                     | 3.05%                               | 6%   | 7%   | 1%   |
| Citizens for<br>European<br>Development of<br>Bulgaria           | GERB                | EPP                             | 24.36%                              | 30.40%                              | 52%  | 42%  | -10%   |
| <b>CROATIA</b>   |                     |                                 | <b>5.77%</b>                        | <b>3.40%</b>                        | <b>9%</b>  | <b>11%</b>   | <b>2%</b>  |
| Croatian<br>Labourists –<br>Labour Party                         | HL                  | GUE/<br>NGL                     | 5.77%                               | 3.40%                               |  | 0%   | 0%   |
| Human Shield   | Zivi Zid            |                                 |                                     |                                     | 4%   | 6%   | 2%   |
| Croatian<br>Democratic<br>Alliance of<br>Slavonia and<br>Baranja | HDSSB               |                                 |                                     |                                     | 1%   | 1%   | 0%   |
| Milan Bandić<br>365 - The Party<br>of Labour and<br>Solidarity   | Milan Bandić<br>365 |                                 |                                     |                                     | 3%   | 4%   | 1%   |
| <b>CYPRUS</b>  |                     |                                 | <b>34.90%</b>                       | <b>33.68%</b>                       | <b>39%</b>   | <b>40%</b>   | <b>1%</b>  |
| Progressive Party<br>of the Working<br>People                    | AKEL                | GUE/<br>NGL                     | 34.90%                              | 26.90%                              | 31%  | 30%  | -1%  |
| Citizens' Alliance   | Συμμαχία<br>Πολιτών |                                 |                                     | 6.78%                               | 8%   | 8%   | 0%   |
| National Popular<br>Front  | ELAM                |                                 |                                     |                                     |  | 2%   | 2%   |
| <b>CZECH<br/>REPUBLIC</b>  |                     |                                 | <b>15.44%</b>                       | <b>35.47%</b>                       | <b>48%</b>   | <b>51%</b>   | <b>3%</b>  |
| Czech Communist<br>Party   | KSČM                | GUE/<br>NGL                     | 14.18%                              | 10.98%                              | 14%  | 11%  | -3%  |
| Party of Free<br>Citizens  | Svobodni            | EFD                             | 1.26%                               | 5.24%                               | 3%   | 3%   | 0%   |
| Dawn - National<br>Coalition                                     | Úsvit               |                                 |                                     | 3.12%                               | 4%   | 3%   | -1%  |

| Country/<br>Party                            | Abbreviation            | Political<br>group in<br>the EP | EP<br>election<br>result in<br>2009 | EP<br>election<br>result in<br>2014 | Popularity<br>among likely<br>voters at the<br>end of 2015 | Popularity<br>among likely<br>voters at the<br>end of 2016 | Change in<br>popularity<br>among<br>likely voters<br>between 2015<br>and 2016<br>(in percentage<br>points) |
|--|-------------------------|---------------------------------|-------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|--|--|--|
| Freedom and<br>Direct Democracy              | SPD                     |                                 |                                     |                                     | 3%   | 4%   | 1%   |
| ANO 2011                                     | ANO                     | ALDE                            |                                     | 16.13%                              | 24%  | 30%  | 6%   |
| <b>DENMARK</b>                               |                         |                                 | <b>22.50%</b>                       | <b>34.60%</b>                       | <b>20%</b>   | <b>20%</b>   | <b>0%</b>  |
| Danish People's<br>Party                     | O                       | ECR                             | 15.30%                              | 26.60%                              | 20%  | 20%  | 0%   |
| People's Party<br>Against the EU             | N                       | GUE/<br>NGL                     | 7.20%                               | 8.00%                               |  | 0%   | 0%   |
| <b>ESTONIA</b>                               |                         |                                 | <b>26.07%</b>                       | <b>26.40%</b>                       | <b>36%</b>   | <b>36%</b>   | <b>0%</b>  |
| Conservative<br>People's Party of<br>Estonia | EKRE                    |                                 |                                     | 4%                                  | 11%  | 13%  | 2%   |
| Estonian Centre<br>Party                     | EK                      | ALDE                            | 26.07%                              | 22.40%                              | 25%  | 23%  | -2%  |
| <b>FINLAND</b>                               |                         |                                 | <b>15.70%</b>                       | <b>22.20%</b>                       | <b>17%</b>   | <b>20%</b>   | <b>3%</b>  |
| Finns Party                                  | PS                      | ECR                             | 9.80%                               | 12.90%                              | 9%   | 10%  | 1%   |
| Left Alliance                                | VAS                     | GUE/<br>NGL                     | 5.90%                               | 9.30%                               | 8%   | 10%  | 2%   |
| <b>FRANCE</b>                                |                         |                                 | <b>23.57%</b>                       | <b>35.41%</b>                       | <b>39%</b>   | <b>49%</b>   | <b>10%</b>   |
| National Front                               | FN                      | ENF                             | 6.30%                               | 24.95%                              | 29%  | 28%  | -1%  |
| Libertas<br>(Movement for<br>France)         | Libertas (MPF-<br>CPNT) | EFD                             | 4.60%                               |                                     |  | 0%   | 0%   |
| Left Front                                   | FG                      | GUE/<br>NGL                     | 6.00%                               | 6.34%                               | 4%   | 14%  | 10%  |
| New<br>Anticapitalistic<br>Party             | NPA                     | NA                              | 4.90%                               | 0.30%                               | 2%   | 2%   | 1%   |
| France Arise                                 | DLF                     | EFD                             | 1.77%                               | 3.82%                               | 4%   | 5%   | 1%   |
| <b>GERMANY</b>                               |                         |                                 | <b>7.50%</b>                        | <b>15.50%</b>                       | <b>18%</b>   | <b>21%</b>   | <b>3%</b>  |
| The Left                                     | DIE LINKE               | GUE/<br>NGL                     | 7.50%                               | 7.40%                               | 10%  | 9%   | -1%  |
| Alternative for<br>Germany                   | AFD                     | ECR                             |                                     | 7.10%                               | 8%   | 12%  | 4%   |
| National<br>Democratic Party<br>of Germany   | NPD                     |                                 |                                     | 1.00%                               |  | 0%   | 0%   |

| Country/<br>Party   | Abbreviation  | Political<br>group in<br>the EP | EP<br>election<br>result in<br>2009 | EP<br>election<br>result in<br>2014 | Popularity<br>among likely<br>voters at the<br>end of 2015 | Popularity<br>among likely<br>voters at the<br>end of 2016 | Change in<br>popularity<br>among<br>likely voters<br>between 2015<br>and 2016<br>(in percentage<br>points) |
|---|---------------|---------------------------------|-------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|--|--|--|
| <b>GREECE</b>   |               |                                 | <b>20.20%</b>                       | <b>45.47%</b>                       | <b>54%</b>   | <b>43%</b>   | <b>-11%</b>  |
| Popular Orthodox<br>Rally   | LAOS          | EFD                             | 7.15%                               |                                     |  | 0%   | 0%   |
| Communist Party<br>of Greece  | KKE           | GUE/<br>NGL                     | 8.35%                               | 6.07%                               | 9%   | 7%   | -2%  |
| Coalition of the<br>Radical Left  | SYRIZA        | GUE/<br>NGL                     | 4.70%                               | 26.57%                              | 29%  | 22%  | -7%  |
| Golden Dawn   | XA            |                                 |                                     | 9.38%                               | 10%  | 9%   | -1%  |
| Independent<br>Greeks   | ANEL          | EFD                             |                                     | 3.45%                               | 3%   | 3%   | 0%   |
| Popular Unity   | LAE           | GUE/<br>NGL                     |                                     |                                     | 4%   | 2%   | -2%  |
| <b>HUNGARY</b>  |               |                                 | <b>71.13%</b>                       | <b>66.16%</b>                       | <b>72%</b>   | <b>67%</b>   | <b>-5%</b>   |
| Jobbik, the<br>Movement for a<br>Better Hungary                             | Jobbik        |                                 | 14.77%                              | 14.68%                              | 21%  | 21%  | 0%   |
| Fidesz -<br>Hungarian Civic<br>Alliance                                     | Fidesz        | EPP                             | 56.36%                              | 51.48%                              | 51%  | 46%  | -5%  |
| <b>IRELAND</b>  |               |                                 | <b>13.86%</b>                       | <b>17.00%</b>                       | <b>24%</b>   | <b>19%</b>   | <b>-5%</b>   |
| Socialist Party   | Soc           | GUE/<br>NGL                     | 2.76%                               |                                     |  | 0%   | 0%   |
| Sinn Féin   | SF            | GUE/<br>NGL                     | 11.10%                              | 17.00%                              | 21%  | 15%  | -6%  |
| Anti-Austerity<br>Alliance – People<br>Before Profit                        | AAA-PBP       |                                 |                                     |                                     | 3%   | 4%   | 1%   |
| <b>ITALY</b>  |               |                                 | <b>13.58%</b>                       | <b>34.99%</b>                       | <b>45%</b>   | <b>44%</b>   | <b>-1%</b>   |
| Northern League   | LN            | ENF                             | 10.20%                              | 6.15%                               | 14%  | 13%  | -1%  |
| Communist<br>Refoundation<br>Party, European<br>Left, Italian<br>Communists | PRC, SE, PDCI | GUE/<br>NGL                     | 3.38%                               |                                     | 1%   | 1%   | 0%   |
| Five Star<br>Movement   | M5S           | EFD                             |                                     | 21.15%                              | 29%  | 30%  | 1%   |
| For Another<br>Europe - With<br>Tsipras                                     | -             | GUE/<br>NGL                     |                                     | 4.03%                               |  | 0%   | 0%   |

| Country/<br>Party  | Abbreviation | Political<br>group in<br>the EP | EP<br>election<br>result in<br>2009 | EP<br>election<br>result in<br>2014 | Popularity<br>among likely<br>voters at the<br>end of 2015 | Popularity<br>among likely<br>voters at the<br>end of 2016 | Change in<br>popularity<br>among<br>likely voters<br>between 2015<br>and 2016<br>(in percentage<br>points) |
|--|--------------|---------------------------------|-------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|--|--|--|
| <b>LATVIA</b>  |              |                                 | <b>7.45%</b>                        | <b>14.25%</b>                       | <b>18%</b>   | <b>28%</b>   | <b>10%</b>   |
| For Fatherland<br>and Freedom/<br>LNNK (National<br>Alliance in 2014)    | NA-LNNK      | ECR                             | 7.45%                               | 14.25%                              | 15%  | 15%  | 0%   |
| For Latvia from<br>the Heart   | NSL          | ECR                             |                                     |                                     | 3%   | 3%   | 0%   |
| Who owns the<br>state?   | KPV LV       |                                 |                                     |                                     |  | 10%  | 10%  |
| <b>LITHUANIA</b>   |              |                                 | <b>12.22%</b>                       | <b>20.89%</b>                       | <b>32%</b>   | <b>39%</b>   | <b>7%</b>  |
| Order and Justice  | TT           | EFD                             | 12.22%                              | 14.27%                              | 11%  | 9%   | -2%  |
| Labour Party   | DP           | ALDE                            |                                     |                                     | 12%  | 11%  | -1%  |
| Lithuanian<br>Peasant and<br>Greens Union                                | LVŽS         | G/EFA                           |                                     | 6.62%                               | 9%   | 19%  | 10%  |
| <b>LUXEMBOURG</b>  |              |                                 | <b>3.41%</b>                        | <b>5.76%</b>                        | <b>4%</b>  | <b>8%</b>  | <b>4%</b>  |
| The Left   | Déi Lénk     | NA                              | 3.41%                               | 5.76%                               | 4%   | 8%   | 4%   |
| <b>MALTA</b>   |              |                                 |                                     |                                     |  |  | <b>0%</b>  |
| <b>THE<br/>NETHERLANDS</b>   |              |                                 | <b>24.07%</b>                       | <b>29.80%</b>                       | <b>29%</b>   | <b>28%</b>   | <b>-1%</b>   |
| Party for<br>Freedom   | PVV          | ENF                             | 16.97%                              | 13.20%                              | 19%  | 16%  | -3%  |
| Socialist Party  | SP           | GUE/<br>NGL                     | 7.10%                               | 9.60%                               | 10%  | 12%  | 2%   |
| <b>POLAND</b>  |              |                                 | <b>27.40%</b>                       | <b>39.39%</b>                       | <b>51%</b>   | <b>51%</b>   | <b>0%</b>  |
| Law and Justice  | PiS          | ECR                             | 27.40%                              | 32.33%                              | 38%  | 41%  | 3%   |
| Congress of the<br>New Right   | KNP          | ENF                             |                                     | 7.06%                               | 0%   | 0%   | 0%   |
| Kukiz'15   | K'15         |                                 |                                     |                                     | 9%   | 8%   | -1%  |
| Coalition for<br>the Renewal of<br>the Republic –<br>Freedom and<br>Hope | KORWIN       |                                 |                                     |                                     | 5%   | 2%   | -3%  |
| <b>PORTUGAL</b>  |              |                                 | <b>22.59%</b>                       | <b>19.29%</b>                       | <b>17%</b>   | <b>18%</b>   | <b>1%</b>  |
| Left Block   | BE           | GUE/<br>NGL                     | 10.73%                              | 4.93%                               | 10%  | 10%  | 1%   |

| Country/<br>Party  | Abbreviation       | Political<br>group in<br>the EP | EP<br>election<br>result in<br>2009 | EP<br>election<br>result in<br>2014 | Popularity<br>among likely<br>voters at the<br>end of 2015 | Popularity<br>among likely<br>voters at the<br>end of 2016 | Change in<br>popularity<br>among<br>likely voters<br>between 2015<br>and 2016<br>(in percentage<br>points) |
|--|--------------------|---------------------------------|-------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|--|--|--|
| Unitary<br>Democratic<br>Coalition   | CDU                | GUE/<br>NGL                     | 10.66%                              | 12.69%                              | 8%   | 8%   | 0%   |
| Workers'<br>Communist Party  | PCTP               |                                 | 1.20%                               | 1.67%                               | 0%   | 0%   | 0%   |
| <b>ROMANIA</b>   |                    |                                 | <b>8.65%</b>                        | <b>2.70%</b>                        | <b>1%</b>  | <b>8%</b>  | <b>7%</b>  |
| Greater Romania<br>Party   | PRM                |                                 | 8.65%                               | 2.70%                               | 1%   | 0%   | -1%  |
| Save Romania<br>Union  |                    |                                 |                                     |                                     |  | 8%   | 8%   |
| <b>SLOVAKIA</b>  |                    |                                 | <b>5.55%</b>                        | <b>12.80%</b>                       | <b>13%</b>   | <b>40%</b>   | <b>27%</b>   |
| Kotleba –<br>People's Party<br>Our Slovakia  | ĽSNS               | APF                             |                                     | 1.73%                               |  | 9%   | 9%   |
| Ordinary People  | OLaNO              | ECR                             |                                     | 7.46%                               | 6%   | 10%  | 4%   |
| Slovak National<br>Party   | SNS                | EFD                             | 5.55%                               | 3.61%                               | 7%   | 14%  | 7%   |
| We Are Family  | Sme Rodina         |                                 |                                     |                                     |  | 7%   | 7%   |
| <b>SLOVENIA</b>  |                    |                                 | <b>2.88%</b>                        | <b>9.51%</b>                        | <b>9%</b>  | <b>13%</b>   | <b>4%</b>  |
| Slovenian<br>National Party  | SNS                |                                 | 2.88%                               | 4.04%                               | 4%   | 0%   | -4%  |
| United Left  | ZL                 | GUE/<br>NGL                     |                                     | 5.47%                               | 5%   | 13%  | 8%   |
| <b>SPAIN</b>   |                    |                                 | <b>3.73%</b>                        | <b>17.96%</b>                       | <b>24%</b>   | <b>21%</b>   | <b>-3%</b>   |
| United Left-<br>Initiative for<br>Catalonia<br>Greens-United<br>and Alternative<br>Left-Bloc for<br>Asturias | IU-ICV-EUIA-<br>BA | G/EFA,<br>GUE/<br>NGL           | 3.73%                               | 9.99%                               | 4%   | 0%   | -4%  |
| Podemos  | UP                 | GUE/<br>NGL                     |                                     | 7.97%                               | 21%  | 21%  | 0%   |
| <b>SWEDEN</b>  |                    |                                 | <b>8.93%</b>                        | <b>16.00%</b>                       | <b>26%</b>   | <b>25%</b>   | <b>-1%</b>   |
| Sweden<br>Democrats  | SD                 | EFD                             | 3.27%                               | 9.70%                               | 19%  | 18%  | -1%  |
| Left Party   | V                  | GUE/<br>NGL                     | 5.66%                               | 6.30%                               | 7%   | 7%   | 0%   |
| <b>UNITED<br/>KINGDOM</b>  |                    |                                 | <b>16.50%</b>                       | <b>27.50%</b>                       | <b>16%</b>   | <b>13%</b>   | <b>-3%</b>   |
| UK Independence<br>Party   | UKIP               | EFD                             | 16.50%                              | 27.50%                              | 16%  | 13%  | -3%  |

# Foundation for European Progressive Studies

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# THE STATE OF POPULISM IN EUROPE

## 2016

The Foundation for European Progressive Studies and Policy Solutions have been monitoring approximately 80 active populist parties in the EU since 2015, under the auspices of The Progressive Post's Populism Tracker research project. This volume surveys the state, popularity and influence of populist parties in the EU's 28 Member States in 2016.

In this book, we examine the countries in which populist parties were able to achieve real breakthroughs, and those in which they caused 'more smoke than fire.' We overview the differences between individual populist parties, and readers can also find a detailed table, listing all significant European populist parties and their current popularity according to opinion polls.

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