

The Risks of growing Populism and the European elections:

Populism and the European elections in Cyprus

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The aim of this paper, is to examine the rise of Populism in Europe and its association with the increase in anti-European sentiments, using Cyprus as a case study. A questionnaire in the format of a survey, was completed by 1009 Cypriot participants. The findings, were that compared to other European Union member states, show that Populism and Euroscepticism in Cyprus seem, at present, not to be extensively prevalent. However, there seems to be a slight shift towards Euroscepticism and pre-conditions for the emergence and rise of radical right-wing Populism in Cyprus, are evident.

Introduction

While definitions of populism have varied over the years, making “populism” a rather vague and ill-defined concept, scholars and political analysts agree that its general ideology is that society is divided into two groups: the “pure people” and the “corrupt elitist” and that politics should be, above all, an expression of the general will of the people.²

With its positive connotation, it is argued, that populism can have a positive, corrective impact on democracy, by pointing out the need to integrate people’s ideas and interests into the political system and the political agenda.³

However, “populism” in general has acquired a negative connotation, as a potential threat to democracy, due to its historical association with authoritarian rule and due to some of its characteristics such as “illiberal democracy” and its exclusive nature. “Illiberal democracy” is described as the rejection of all limitations on the expression of majority will, such as protection of the rights of minorities and the independence of key institutions.⁴ The exclusive nature of populism

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² Mudde, C., 2004. The Populist Zeitgeist. *Government and Opposition*, 39, pp.541–563.

³ Kaltwasser C.R. 2012. Scholars should not just assume that populism is bad for democracy, but should instead concentrate on explaining populism’s positive and negative effects. *LSE EUROPP Blog*. 15 October 2012. Available at

http://eprints.lse.ac.uk/50146/1/blogs.lse.ac.uk-Scholars_should_not_just_assume_that_populism_is_bad_for_democracy_but_should_instead_concentrate_on_.pdf or at <http://bit.ly/OtUces> [Accessed 5 January 2014]

⁴ Bryder, T. 2009. Populism- a threat or a challenge for the democratic system? [pdf] Department of Political Science. University of Copenhagen. Available online at http://polsci.ku.dk/english/international_students/present_international_students/taking_exams/past_papers/populism_a_threat_or_a_challenge_for_the_democratic_system.pdf/

as a threat to democracy refers to the tendency of populists to exclude certain groups of people that do not fit to their definition of “the people”.⁵ In other words, populist parties and movements are often attributed with being intolerant, xenophobic, racist and as having the tendency to divide people into “friends” and “enemies”.⁶

In Europe, populism is also closely associated with anti-European tendencies and Euroscepticism.⁷ The European Union (EU) tends to be described as an ‘elite driven’ project from the beginning and that the process of European integration, has so far relied on a pro-integration propensity among mainstream, political elites and on the permissive consensus at a mass level.⁸ Eurosceptics accuse the EU of a “democratic deficit” and of being “a club of elite”, thus employing the populist argument of “the people” vs “the elite” on a European level.

Szczerbiak and Taggart (2002)⁹ distinguish between two types of Euroscepticism: “hard” Euroscepticism and “soft” Euroscepticism. “Hard” Euroscepticism is defined as a principled opposition to the EU and to the process of European integration; whereas “soft” Euroscepticism refers to an expressed concern on one or a number of EU policy area(s) or to the sense that “national interest” is at odds with the EU’s trajectory.

As the emergence of populist parties and movements is particularly observed during social and economic transition periods, the combination of the economic crisis in Europe and long term trends of political mistrust and disappointment, have provided fertile ground for the rise of populist parties and movements in Europe.¹⁰ Indeed, recent years have seen the rapid rise of European populist parties and movements, many of which have triumphed electorally, or have succeeded to establish themselves as relevant political forces with solid electoral bases. While the ideology and/or the

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Taggart. P. 1997. The Populist Politics of Euroscepticism. In: UNSPECIFIED (Unpublished). Archive of European Integration. Available online at http://polsci.ku.dk/english/international_students/present_international_students/taking_exams/past_papers/populism_a_threat_or_a_challenge_for_the_democratic_system.pdf

⁸ Taggart. P. and Szczerbiak A., eds. 2008. *Opposing Europe? The Comparative Party Politics of Euroscepticism*. Volume 2: Comparative and Theoretical Perspectives. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

⁹ Taggart P. and Szczerbiak. A. 2002. *The Party Politics of Euroscepticism in EU Member and Candidate States*. SEI Working Paper No51/Opposing Research Network Working Paper No6. Brighton: Sussex European Institute. Available online at <https://www.sussex.ac.uk/webteam/gateway/file.php?name=epern-working-paper-6.pdf&site=266>

¹⁰ Taggart, P. 2012. Populism has the potential to damage European democracy, but demonising populist parties is self-defeating. *LSE EUROPP Blog*. 13 December 2012. Available from <http://blogs.lse.ac.uk/europpblog/2012/12/13/populism-has-the-potential-to-damage-european-democracy-paul-taggart/> (Accessed 15 January 2014)

platform of these populist parties may differ, they have something in common: their hostility towards the EU and particularly, the prospect of further European Integration.

A comprehensive discussion and research on the topic of growing populism and its association with Euroscepticism, is timely, pertinent and warranted. With the next European Parliament (EP) elections approaching, there are fears that populist parties which advocate for less European integration or even for outright withdrawal from the Eurozone and the EU as such, could make significant gains in these European elections. This could possibly have significant implications for the European agenda, European democracy and the EU as a whole.

The aim of this paper is to shed some light on the challenges posed by the recent rise of populism in Europe and its association with the increase in anti-European sentiments, by examining the case of Cyprus. This paper will attempt to answer the following questions:

- * Is there a rise in populism and in anti-European tendencies in Cyprus?
- * If yes, what could be the main reasons for this?
- * What could be the effect of growing populism, on the results of the EU election in Cyprus?

In this paper it is argued that, compared to other member states, populism and especially “hard” Euroscepticism in Cyprus, are not as present and seem to be a limited force.

The paper is divided into three sections. The first section provides an overview of the current situation in Europe. The second section provides an overall view of the current situation at the Cypriot level. Here, the focus is on the current political situation in Cyprus and on the Cypriots’ attitudes, by employing the use of survey responses on mass-based populism and Euroscepticism in Cyprus. The final section of this paper discusses the future implications of the rise in populism.

1. Situation in Europe

For some time now, disillusionment with the EU has been spreading throughout the Member States, largely due to the emergence of the economic crisis. The Eurobarometer indicated that, in 2007, 52% of EU citizens had a positive image of the EU¹¹, while in 2013, following the eruption of the economic crisis, this percentage fell to 30%.¹²

¹¹ European Commission. 2007. Standard Eurobarometer 67: Spring 2007. *Europa EU* Press Releases database. Available from http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_IP-07-853_en.htm?locale=en [Accessed 11 January 2014]

¹² European Commission. 2013. Standard Eurobarometer 79/ Spring 2013. Public Opinion in the European Union. First Results. Available from

This rise in Euroscepticism has been accompanied by the rise in many populist and Eurosceptic parties which aspire in the coming EU elections, to cash in on the protest votes of the people who feel they have been disappointed by the EU. Many analysts warn that there is a mostly, highly conservative shift among the European citizens, something which will feed many right wing populist parties, gaining them votes and sending them in greater numbers to the EP.

Many consider “the rise of the populist parties and especially the rise of the far right”, as a mere consequence of the economic crisis that hit Europe.¹³ However, this is not the case entirely.¹⁴ Many right-wing populist parties were already present in the political scene well before the crisis erupted and even had big electoral successes.¹⁵ Such a party is the National Front (Front National) in France which was originally founded in 1972 by Jean-Marie Le Pen. It has succeeded to become a major force of French right-wing nationalism by the 1990s, and in the 2002 French presidential elections, Le Pen, progressed to the presidential run-off election.¹⁶ Mudde (2013)¹⁷, while examining the successes of the far right populist parties between the years of 2005-2013, found that there have been examples of gains for such parties in Austria, Britain, France, Hungary and the Netherlands, but that there have also been examples of electoral losses for far right parties in Belgium, Italy and Slovakia.

However, there are clear examples of populist parties for which the economic crisis has been the main reason behind their electoral success and their increase in popularity. Greece, offers two examples of such parties, albeit of completely different ideologies: the case of the populist radical left-wing party of the Coalition of the Radical Left (SYRIZA) and of the far-right populist party of Chrysi Avgi (Golden Dawn). Both these parties, before the crisis were struggling to stay afloat on the political scene and had a very low percentage of popular votes. Amidst the crisis however,

http://ec.europa.eu/public_opinion/archives/eb/eb79/eb79_first_en.pdf

¹³ Morris. M. 2012. European leaders must be wary of rising Eurosceptic populism from both the right and the left. *LSE EUROPP Blog*. 26 March 2012. Available from <http://blogs.lse.ac.uk/europpblog/2012/03/26/eurosceptic-populis/> [Accessed 8 January 2014]

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ Oakley, R. and Bitterman, J. 2002. Le Pen upset causes major shock. *CNN.com*. 21 April 2002. Available at <http://edition.cnn.com/2002/WORLD/europe/04/21/france.election/?related> [Accessed 7 January 2014]

¹⁷ Mudde. C. 2013. The Myth of Weimar Europe. *Open Democracy*. 20 August 2013. Available at <http://www.opendemocracy.net/can-europe-make-it/cas-mudde/myth-of-weimar-europe> [Accessed 8 January 2014]

their popularity rocketed enabling them to become major political powers in the current political scene of Greece.¹⁸

In general, the reasons behind the successes of many populist parties go beyond the economic crisis and its effects. Rather, what we are now experiencing, with the crisis and its disastrous effects on the economies and the people of Europe, is the setting of a scene which offers fertile ground and favors, mostly, the rise of populist right wing parties.¹⁹ Right wing parties, like the French Front National (FN) and Geert Wilder's Dutch Party for Freedom (PVV), use the crisis to advance their nationalistic rhetoric and promote their Euroscepticism.²⁰

It is interesting to note however that, amidst the economic crisis many right-wing populist parties have adopted many left wing attributes in their economic policies to broaden their electoral appeal. Rather than advocating for neo-liberalism, many right wing populist parties, like for example the FN's and the Danish Peoples' Party, promote economic policies which can be described as social democratic, by supporting protectionist policies, the welfare system and even for some renationalization of key state assets.²¹ Nevertheless, all their economic positions are in line with their nativism, that is, that they are restricted to protect the native's interests only.²²

According to polls and the last results of national elections, 12 of 28 right wing populist parties of the EU Member states, (in France, Hungary, Bulgaria, Greece, Austria, Belgium, Netherlands, Denmark) who recorded double digit percentages at the national level, are expected to enter the EP.²³

¹⁸ Halikiopoulou. D. 2012. Golden Dawn, SYRIZA or a pro-Memorandum party? *Counterpoint*. 15 June 2012. Available at <http://counterpoint.uk.com/project-publications/golden-dawn-syriza-or-a-pro-memorandum-party/> [Accessed 18 January 2014]

¹⁹ Mudde. C. 2013. Nothing left? In search of (a new) social democracy. *Open Democracy*. November 21, 2013. Available at <http://www.opendemocracy.net/can-europe-make-it/cas-mudde/nothing-left-in-search-of-new-social-democracy> [Accessed 17 January 2014]

²⁰ Steinglass. M. 2011. Wilders latches on to euro crisis. *FT.com*. 13 November 2011. Available at <http://www.ft.com/cms/s/0/4d941412-0c81-11e1-8ac6-00144feabdc0.html#axzz2rvLF60tL> [Accessed 16 January 2014]

²¹ Rippon. H. 2012. The European far right: actually right? Or left? Or something altogether different? *The Conversation*. 4 May 2012. Available at <http://theconversation.com/the-european-far-right-actually-right-or-left-or-something-altogether-different-6796> [Accessed 17 January 2014]

²² Ibid.

²³ Mudde. C. 2013. A European shutdown? The 2014 European elections and the great recession. *The Washington Post*. 4 November 2013. Available at <http://www.washingtonpost.com/blogs/monkey-cage/wp/2013/11/04/a-european-shutdown-the-2014-european-elections-and-the-great-recession/> [Accessed 18 January 2014]

This paper will focus on analyzing the situation in Europe in relation to far right-populist parties as they are the ones mostly perceived as a “threat”.

2. Current situation in Cyprus

Compared to other EU member states, populism in Cyprus seems at present, to be a limited force. The few examples of seemingly populist parties and movements in Cyprus do not attract much support and have not become a threat to the mainstream political parties.

Furthermore, currently in Cyprus “hard” Euroscepticism is barely present among the parties. In Cyprus there are four mainstream parties: DISY, AKEL, DIKO and EDEK. DISY (Democratic Rally), DIKO (Democratic Party) and EDEK (Movement for Social Democracy) have been traditionally pro-European. Originally, principled opposition to the EU came mainly from the communist party, AKEL (Progressive Party of the Working People). In the past, AKEL maintained a hard Eurosceptic position, mainly on ideological grounds. However, the positive trends in the Cypriot public opinion of the EU, along with the prospect that Cyprus’ accession into the EU could contribute to the reunification of Cyprus, led the party to alter its stance in 1995 and subsequently, AKEL’s position has shifted from hard to soft Euroscepticism.²⁴

In Cyprus there are no “single issue Eurosceptic parties”, as is the case in other EU member states and overall the political parties in Cyprus are in broad agreement about the desirability of the European project. Euroscepticism is thus mostly expressed as a form of protest to various policies of the EU and as a result of feelings of disappointment and disillusionment. However, there seems to be a slight increase in Euroscepticism amongst the Cypriot citizens, who have been traditionally pro-European, due to the effects of the economic crisis and the role of the EU in Cyprus’s bailin agreement.

On the 25th of March 2013, Cyprus agreed to a last-ditch deal with Troika (the European Commission, the European Central Bank and the International Monetary Fund) to shut down its second largest bank and impose a bank deposit haircut for deposits over €100,000 in return for a

²⁴ Agapiou-Josephides, K. 2011. Changing Patterns of Euroscepticism in Cyprus: European Discourse in a Divided Polity and Society. *South European Society and Politics*, Volume 16, Issue 1, March 2011, pages 159-184.

€10-billion bailout. This unprecedented deposit haircut shocked the Cypriot people and sparked anger, dissatisfaction and mistrust towards the politicians and mostly towards the EU.²⁵

Along with a rise in Euroscepticism, the populist trend, which at present sweeps across Europe, has also not bypassed Cyprus. While there are various movements operating in Cyprus which could be affiliated to right-wing populism, the majority of these are very marginal. There is however, one exception, the National Popular Front, which has attracted much attention and raised some concerns about the future development of far right wing populism in Cyprus.

The National Popular Front (Εθνικό Λαϊκό Μέτωπο - ELAM)

In 2008, the same year that the communist leader of AKEL, Dimitris Christofias, was elected as the new President of the Republic of Cyprus, a nationalist movement, the National Popular Front (ELAM) was founded in Cyprus. In May 2011, ELAM was approved as a legal political party by the former Attorney General of Cyprus. Currently there is a dispute between ELAM and the current Attorney General who claims that ELAM is not registered as a political party under the current law.

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ELAM is considered to be the brother party of the far right, extremist party of Golden Dawn in Greece and it initially existed under the name Golden Dawn Cyprus Branch. On its website, ELAM has the webpage link of Golden Dawn and often posts press releases and other documents issued by Golden Dawn. Its current leader Christos Christou, as well as a lot of ELAM's members, were initially members in the Golden Dawn.²⁷ ELAM and Golden Dawn share the same ideology and have close cooperation with each other.

ELAM has the features which are attributed to far right populism: a strong sense of nationalism, xenophobia, authoritarianism and populism. Its ideology is described as “popular and social

²⁵ Michalopoulos, S. 2013. Bail-in and stance on Turkey fuel Euroscepticism in Cyprus. *EurActive*. 16 December 2013. Available at <http://www.euractiv.com/eu-elections-2014/haircut-eu-stance-turkey-fuel-eu-news-532353> [Accessed 10 January 2014]

²⁶ Phileleftheros. 2014. Πολιτικό κόμμα ή όχι το ΕΛΑΜ; Νέα κόντρα με το Γεν. Εισαγγελέα. (Is the ELAM a political party or not? New dispute with the Attorney General). 11 April 2014. Available at <http://www.philenews.com/el-gr/eidiseis-politiki/39/194345/politiko-komma-i-ochi-to-elam-nea-kontra-me-geneisangelea> [Accessed 14 April 2014]

²⁷ O'Connor. N. 2013. Cyprus' Golden Dawn wing confident of success. *Al Jazeera*. Available at <http://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/features/2013/11/cyprus-golden-dawn-wing-confident-success-201311561611135787.html> [Accessed 7 January 2014]

nationalism” and ELAM’s main goal is to protect and promote Greek nationalism in Cyprus.²⁸ The main position of ELAM is the rejection of the bizonal, bi-communal federation as a solution to the Cyprus problem.²⁹ ELAM supports that instead, the only viable solution is to have a strong central government to cater to the Greek Cypriots and to the extent that it must, to the minorities, such as the Turkish Cypriots.³⁰

ELAM puts forward strong populist and anti-systemic rhetoric, declaring that it is the only true representative and advocate of the “people” and the only party that opposes the Memorandum agreement which was signed for the “bail-in” of Cyprus and which obliges strict austerity measures. It accuses politicians and the other political parties as being corrupt, labeling them as “faithful and obedient servants of Troika”³¹ while also accusing the Cypriot President and his government of being “perjurers”.³²

Anti-immigration is the other issue which dominates the platform of ELAM

The number of foreign citizens residing in Cyprus has been increasing vastly in the last years. In 2001 the population census recorded that 9.4% of the total population were foreign citizens. By 2011, this percentage increased to 21.4%. Of this, 62.6% were EU citizens and 37.3% were Eastern Europeans and Asians.³³ The large number of legal immigrants, especially the number of illegal immigrants along with the number of refugees and asylum seekers, became a cause of increasing concern among the Cypriots in the recent years.

²⁸ ELAM. 2009. *Πολιτικές Θέσεις. (Policy positions)*. Available at <http://elamcy.com/latest-articles/item/615-oi-theseis-mas.html> [In Greek] [Accessed 12 January 2014]

²⁹ Sergiou X. 2013. Interview with ELAMs’ Candidate for Cyprus 2013 Presidential elections. Available at <http://titloi.com/20130131/synteyxeis/giorgos-haralampos-stin-politiki-skini-tis-kyproy-yparhoyn-2-kommata-elam-kai> [In Greek] [Accessed 15 January 2014]

³⁰ National People’s Front. 2011. ELAM: putting the Greeks of Cyprus first. *National People’s Front Blog*. 10 May 2011. Available at <http://nationalpeoplesfront.blogspot.com/2011/05/elam-putting-greeks-of-cyprus-first.html> [Accessed 15 January 2014]

³¹ ELAM. 2013. *Οι θέσεις του ΕΛΑΜ για την οικονομία. (ELAM positions on the economy)*. 23 March 2013. Available at <http://elamcy.com/latest-articles/item/2715-oi-theseis-tou-e-la-m-gia-tin-oikonomia.html> [In Greek] [Accessed 12 January 2014]

³² ELAM. 2013. *Οι θέσεις του ΕΛΑΜ για τα δάνεια (ELAM position on loans)*. 16 July 2013. Available at <http://elamcy.com/latest-articles/item/2602-oi-theseis-tou-elam-gia-ta-daneia.html> [In Greek] [Accessed 12 January 2014]

³³ Statistical Service of the Republic of Cyprus. 2011. Preliminary results of the census of Population 2011. [Online] Available at <http://www.mof.gov.cy/mof/cystat/statistics.nsf/All/732265957BAC953AC225798300406903?OpenDocument&sub=2&sel=1&e=&print> [Accessed 12 January 2012]

ELAM advocates for quotas for EU nationals and declares to put an end to illegal immigration.³⁴ It believes that immigrants and asylum seekers, especially Muslims, pose a real threat to the socio-demographic, religious and cultural identity of the Greek Cypriots, while also exacerbating the problem of unemployment in Cyprus with immigrants depriving Greek Cypriots of jobs.³⁵ ELAM members, many of which are young adults and teenagers, have been accused of racism and acts of violence against immigrants as well as against Greek Cypriots, especially communists, who oppose ELAM's views.³⁶ However, so far, ELAM does not portray the same violent image, mobilization and rhetoric of Golden Dawn, nor does it publicly display the same strong attachment to the Nazi ideology.

Contrary to other far right wing populist parties in Europe, ELAM does not have a charismatic leader whose strong personality or rhetoric would appeal to the masses, gathering support for the party. Rather, ELAM managed to acquire visibility mainly due to its association to Golden Dawn which has in the recent years enjoyed widespread public support and vast media attention in Greece and abroad. ELAM seeks to boost its popularity by mirroring the methods and policies of the Golden Dawn, for example, hosting charity events exclusively for Greek Cypriots facing hardships, portraying an image of military discipline and offering nationalistic solutions for the problems faced by the country.³⁷

With regards to the EU, ELAM expresses “soft” Euroscepticism. As a principle, ELAM does not oppose the EU or Cyprus's membership, supporting that “as Greeks, we belong with the other European people”.³⁸ However, ELAM opposes further European integration and argues in favor of an intergovernmental EU. Furthermore, ELAM has been increasingly hardening its position towards the EU, as it accuses the EU of “turning a blind eye” to Turkey's consistent violation of human rights in Cyprus. ELAM also states that it would support Cyprus's exit from the Eurozone, if it believed that the Euro endangered the country's best interests.³⁹

³⁴ ELAM. 2009. *Πολιτικές Θέσεις. (Policy positions)*. Available at <http://elamcy.com/latest-articles/item/615-oi-theseis-mas.html> [in Greek] [Accessed 12 January 2014]

³⁵ O'Connor. N. 2013. Cyprus' Golden Dawn wing confident of success. *Al Jazeera*. 7 November 2013. Available at <http://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/features/2013/11/cyprus-golden-dawn-wing-confident-success-201311561611135787.html> [Accessed 12 January 2014]

³⁶ Ibid.

³⁷ Ibid.

³⁸ ELAM. 2009. *Πολιτικές Θέσεις. (Policy positions)*. Available at <http://elamcy.com/latest-articles/item/615-oi-theseis-mas.html> [in Greek] [Accessed 12 January 2014]

³⁹ Ibid.

Following a year after its creation, ELAM participated in the European elections of 2009 where it won only 663 votes (0.22% of the votes).⁴⁰ In two years' time however, in the last parliamentary elections of 2011, ELAM gained 4,354 votes and 1.08% of the votes, albeit without being able to elect any Members of the Parliament.⁴¹ In the 2013 presidential elections, ELAM won 3,899 votes, a percentage of 0.88% and ranked 4th among eleven candidates.⁴² While ELAM is predicted to have some gains in the upcoming elections, it does not yet have a very strong electoral appeal among Cypriots and it is not expected to gain a seat in the EP.

Rather, the implications of a possible rise in ELAMs' popularity will be felt only at the national level. ELAM has tripled its percentage in the last 13 years and keeps seeing its percentages rising. It is believed that in an abnormal or crisis situation, right wing populist parties can acquire political momentum and dynamics that boost their popularity.⁴³ Consequently, the recent rise of the populist radical right parties is to a large extent a product of the ongoing systemic (economic and political) crisis in EU.

In the effort to better comprehend the reasons for ELAMs' success, this study seeks to investigate the attitudes of Cypriot citizens, in order to identify whether the conditions which favor the rise of radical right wing populist parties are present in Cyprus. The intention of this analysis is therefore to identify and examine (i) possible traits of populism among Cypriot citizens that benefit or could benefit right-wing populist parties and secondly (ii) to examine whether there has been an associated rise in Euroscepticism.

⁴⁰ Εκλογές. Τα πάντα σχετικά με τις εκλογές. (Everything about Elections). 2009. Results of 2009 European Elections. *Elections pblog.gr*. Available at <http://elections.pblogs.gr/tags/kypriakes-eyroekloges-2009-gr.html> [in Greek] [Accessed 17 January 2014]

⁴¹ Phileleftheros. 2011. Αφιερώματα. Βουλευτικές Εκλογές 2011 (Parliamentary Elections 2011). *Phileleftheros*. Available at <http://www.philenews.com/afieromata/ekloges2011/apotelesmata.html> [in Greek] [Accessed 16 January 2014]

⁴² Declaration of the Chief Returning Officer. 2013. Presidential Election Results 2013. Available at [http://www.moi.gov.cy/moi/moi.nsf/all/F369A1CE05584D69C2257B15006B7BFF/\\$file/Anak%20Dilosi%20Genikou-Apotelesmata-17%202%202013.pdf?openelement](http://www.moi.gov.cy/moi/moi.nsf/all/F369A1CE05584D69C2257B15006B7BFF/$file/Anak%20Dilosi%20Genikou-Apotelesmata-17%202%202013.pdf?openelement) [In Greek] [Accessed 19 January 2014]

⁴³ Taggart, P. 2003. The Populist Turn in the Politics of the New Europe. Sussex European Institute. University of Sussex. Available at <http://aei.pitt.edu/2962/1/165.pdf>

2.2 Survey on Populism and Euroscepticism in Cyprus

Methodology

Participant Demographics

A questionnaire designed by the researcher, was completed by 1009 participants. The participants were Cypriot citizens residing in areas under the control of the Republic of Cyprus (in the southern government controlled part of the country as opposed to the northern Turkish occupied areas).

Fifty two percent of the participants were males and 42.8% were females. Four age groups were examined. The first was the age group of 18-24 year olds which comprised 13.8% of the sample group, 51.5% were in the 25-40 years of age category, 26.7% were in the 41-60 years of age category and 8% were in the category of 61 years and over.

In relation to the level of education of the participants, 2.5% achieved a primary school level, 19.3% achieved a secondary level education, 38% had attained a Bachelor's degree, 35% had achieved a Masters level education and 5.3% had attained a Doctorate level of education.

With respect to professional occupation, 18.6% of the participants were unemployed, 8.5% were students, 0.6% were farmers, 32.8% were private sector employees, 15.3% were public servants, 10.6% were self-employed, 1.4% were military officers, 0.5% were homemakers, 5.7% were pensioners and 5.9% were of other profession.

Participants that resided in cities comprised of 73.4 % of the sample group, 16.8% were residents in villages and 9.7% resided in towns. Additionally, six income groups were established, 22.4% of the participants had no income, 24% earned up to 1000 euros per month, 29.8% earned between 1001 and 2000 euros per month, 13.1% attained between 2001 and 3000 euros per month, 5.6% earned between 3001 and 4000 euros per month and 5.1% earned above 4001 euros per month.

When questioned about their political ideologies, the participants were classified into nine categories. 8.6% of the participants identified themselves as social democrats, 13% as centrists, 30.6% as right wing, 8.3% as left wing, 2.1% as environmentalist, 5.8% as nationalists, 3.3% as communists, 6% as other and 22.2% stated that they had no political ideology.

Sampling

Data was collected using a questionnaire which was distributed via social networking sites and by hand at various community centers. Additionally, the questionnaire was distributed via email to representative bodies of all political parties in Cyprus, as well as various tertiary institutions. Approximately 5000 questionnaires were distributed. All completed questionnaires sent back to the researcher were submitted and used as data.

Questionnaire

The questionnaire was constructed using KwikSurvey, a free online survey creator. It was distributed as an electronic link, via email and published on social network sites, informing prospective participants of the purpose of the survey and secures their anonymity. The questionnaire was also printed as a hard copy in order to be distributed to people who did not have the necessary technical skills to complete an electronic questionnaire (for example, pensioners). Data collected using hard copies was later recorded electronically. Once all the required responses were collected, the survey data was analyzed using SPSS (Statistical Package for the Social Sciences).

The survey was built in a manner that would enable comparable results with other similar European studies; hence some of the questions used were influenced by Zapryanova's paper, "Party Competition, Corruption and Electoral Behavior in the New EU Member States."⁴⁴ The questionnaire was comprised of a total of 28 questions. The first six questions were socioeconomic demographic questions. Question 7 examined the participants' political ideology. Questions 8-17 aimed to identify possible traits of populism among the participants, measuring variables such as nativism, attitudes towards minority groups and immigrants, trust in government institutions, views of corrupted officials, social class distinction and identification with a "heartland". Questions 18 and 19 aimed to measure the participants' democratic values. Questions 20 – 27 were used to measure the participants' perception of the EU, measuring variables such as perception of Cyprus' membership in the EU and in the Eurozone, the image of the EU, areas of satisfaction and disappointment with the EU, feelings associated with the EU, knowledge of the EU and the participants' opinion about European integration. Finally, question 28, required the participants to state whether they are going to vote in the upcoming European Elections in 2014.

Results and Discussion

Populist Trends

Strong sense of identification with ethnicity and country

The sense of national identity seems to be very strong among Cypriots. Most participants (52%) mostly identified themselves with their ethnicity, and secondly with their country (43.4%). EU identification rated relatively low scores, since only 6.7% of participants identified themselves primarily as Europeans and 13.8% secondarily identified themselves as Europeans.

⁴⁴ Zapryanova, G. ,2011. Party Competition, Corruption and Electoral Behavior in the New EU Member States. [pdf] European University Institute, Florence. Max Weber Programme. EUI Working Paper MWP 2011/21, Available at http://cadmus.eui.eu/bitstream/handle/1814/18234/MWP_2011_21.pdf.

Perceptions of Political Party similarity

In order to measure the perceived similarity of political parties, that is, to capture the degree to which citizens perceive all parties to be the same, participants were asked to choose whether they believe that “all large parties are the same”, “all new and small parties are the same” or whether they believe that “all political parties are the same”. The goal of this question was to try and identify the people who vote for mainstream large parties and those who vote for small and new parties. The large mainstream parties in Cyprus are: the right wing DISY, the communist party AKEL, the centre-right DIKO and the socialist party, EDEK.

We can thus make the following hypotheses:

- If the respondent chose the first option, “all large parties are the same”, then it can be inferred that he/she is most likely to be a supporter or cast a protest vote to one of the small or new parties, the category in which, for example, ELAM falls in.
- If the respondent chose the second option, which is that “all small and new parties are the same”, then it can be assumed that he/she is a voter of mainstream large parties.
- In the case where the respondent has chosen the third option, “that all political parties are the same”, we can assume that the person is likely to not be strongly affiliated to any existed political party and likely to be a protest voter. That person may either wish to abstain from all party politics or be more inclined to vote in favor of any other viable party alternative.

The vast majority of participants perceive that “all political parties are the same” (60.6%), while 27.6% believe that all large parties are the same and only 6.8% perceive that all small and new parties are the same. The 60.6% of participants who perceive that “all parties are the same”, could include a percentage of protest voters. Such voters (unsatisfied / protest voters) are more likely to vote in favor of any other political party which will present itself as something “different” from the mainstream parties and not because he/she positively endorses that party. A protest voter will thus register discontent rather than vote to express an ideological affiliation with a party.⁴⁵ Given that a feature of populist parties is their “anti-establishment” image, it is more likely for a populist party to find fertile ground (target) among this type of voters.

⁴⁵ Whitaker, R. and Lynch, P. 2011. Explaining support for the UK Independence Party at the 2009 European Parliament elections. [pdf] Working Paper. University of Leicester. Available at <http://www2.le.ac.uk/departments/politics/documents/centre-right/UKIPvoteworkingpaper-1.pdf>

The results show that there is a significant difference between the peoples' political ideology and their views on political party similarity [$\chi^2(16, N = 1009) = 63.53, p < 0.001$]. Interesting to note is that, 72.9% of the participants who identify themselves as nationalists believe that "all parties are the same", while 25.4% believe that "all large parties are the same" and 1.7% believe that "all small and new parties are the same". In relation to the participants who identify themselves as Communists, 63.6% believe that "all parties are the same", 30.3% believe that "all small and new parties are the same" and 6.1% believe that "all large mainstream parties" are the same. This relatively high percentage of communists who perceive small/new parties as the same, in a way verifies our hypothesis that participants who perceive "all small and new parties to be the same", are voters of one of the large mainstream parties, in this example, AKEL.

Very low levels of trust in National Institutions

Using a scale of 1 to 5, choosing 1 for no trust and 5 for complete trust, participants were asked to indicate the level of trust they have in different national institutions which constitute the country's political system (courts, political parties, army, parliament, police, president, trade unions, church, mass Media). Overall, the majority of participants responded that they do not trust almost all national institutions. The highest percentage of "no trust" was observed for the political parties (65.9%), 52.1% for the Cypriot Parliament, 40.5% for the President and 64.3% for the Army. The lowest percentage of "not trust" was observed for the Judiciary System (Courts, 15.7%) with the majority of participants responding that they neither trust nor distrust it (30%). These results indicate a great disappointment among the Cypriot citizens with the political system. Populists, through their markedly anti-elite discourse, appeal most to the people who have a sentiment of intense disenchantment and distrust of traditional political elites.⁴⁶

The findings show that there is significant difference between the participants' political ideology and their trust in political parties [$\chi^2(32, N = 1009) = 126.44, p < 0.001$], their trust in the Judicial System (courts) [$\chi^2(32, N=1009)=137.64, p < 0.001$], their trust in the parliament [$\chi^2(32, N=1009)=90.75, p < 0.001$], their trust in the President [$\chi^2(32, N=1009)=224.507, p < 0.001$] and in their trust in the army [$\chi^2(32, N=1009) = 222.450, p < 0.001$]. Examining all the political

⁴⁶ De La Torre, C. 2000. *Populist Seduction in Latin America: The Ecuadorian Experience*. Athens, Ohio: Ohio University Press. Quoted in Zapryanova, G., 2011. *Party Competition, Corruption and Electoral Behavior in the New EU Member States*. [pdf] Max Weber Programme. EUI Working Paper MWP 2011/21. Available at http://cadmus.eui.eu/bitstream/handle/1814/18234/MWP_2011_21.pdf

ideologies of the participants, the nationalists seem to be the ones with the highest percentages of no trust in all of the above mentioned key institutions.

Perception of corruption among public officials

Most participants believe that corruption among public officials is widespread (43.7%). The percentage of participants who believe that almost all public officials are engaged in corruption was 23.9%, 26.7% believe that some public officials are engaged in corruption and only 4.9% believe that almost no public officials are engaged in corruption. Furthermore, in a following question, corruption was also perceived as one of the two most important problems that are faced in Cyprus at present. Corruption is often cited as a pre-condition for the emergence of populism.⁴⁷ Corruption issues feature high on populist parties' campaign agenda and populists often use anti-corruption rhetoric to attract people's support away from "elitist" mainstream parties which could be engaged in corruption.⁴⁸

Turkey and Immigration: The perceived two real threats to peace and security

When questioned about what they perceive as a real threat to peace and security in Cyprus, given seven choices to choose from (including the choice of "none"), the vast majority of the participants (68%) viewed the neighboring country of Turkey as a real threat. The second most popular threat perceived by participants was the threat of immigrants (25.4%) and third, the threat of ethnic minority groups (18.5%).

There is significant difference between the participants' political ideology and their perception of threat of immigrants [$\chi^2(8, N = 1009) = 39.68$ $p < 0.001$] and for political ideology and perceived threat of minority groups [$\chi^2(8, N = 1009) = 17.19$ $p < 0.005$]. The highest percentage of participants who view minorities and immigrants as threats to peace and security is found among the nationalists. Specifically, 40.7% of the participants who have identified themselves as nationalists view minority groups as a threat and 33.9% view immigrants as a real threat.

View on Multiculturalism

To examine their views on multiculturalism, participants were asked to state whether they agree that "ethnic diversity destroys the unity of a country". 14.3% of participants responded that they strongly agreed, 29.5% agree, 18.6% disagreed and 13.2% strongly disagreed. Again there is a

⁴⁷ Zapryanova, G. ,2011. Party Competition, Corruption and Electoral Behavior in the New EU Member States. [pdf] European University Institute, Florence. Max Weber Programme. EUI Working Paper MWP 2011/21. Available at http://cadmus.eui.eu/bitstream/handle/1814/18234/MWP_2011_21.pdf.

⁴⁸ Ibid.

significant difference between the participants' political ideology and their perception on ethnic diversity [$\chi^2(32, N = 1009) = 281.62p < 0.001$]. The highest percentage of participants who strongly agree that ethnic diversity erodes a country's unity are nationalists (44.1%).

Economic situation and corruption, the two important problems faced by Cyprus

When asked to prioritize the two most important issues faced by the country, participants ranked in order of importance: the country's economic situation (45.4%) and corruption (31.5%).

Perceptions on Socioeconomic changes

In exploring the perceptions of participants about possible increases in the social class gap due to the economic situation in Cyprus, 35.8% of the participants believed that it has increased 'very much', while 28.6% believed that it has increased 'much'. There is significant difference between participants' political ideology and their perception of how much the economic crisis has increased the social class gap [$\chi^2(32, N = 1009) = 113.88 p < 0.001$]. The majority of the participants who believe that there is a large increase in the social class gap were primarily the communists (69.7%) and then the nationalists (55.9%). When asked whether they believe that Cyprus in the past years was better than present Cyprus, 68.9% of the participants agreed.

Participants answered two questions which were used to measure their authoritarian tendencies/democratic values. Presented with the argument that "we would be in a better position if we cast aside elections and the Parliament and instead had a strong leader who could take all decisions", 67.1% of the participants disagreed while 18.6% agreed. In the second question, when asked to choose the statement with which they agreed the most, most participants (69.6%) chose that democracy is preferable to any other kind of government, in relation to 22.2% of participants who chose the statement that "under some circumstances, authoritarianism is preferable to a democratic government". These results indicate that overall Cypriot citizens have high level of democratic values.

There is a significant difference between the participants' political ideology and authoritarian tendencies [$\chi^2(16, N=1009)= 86.05p < 0.001$]. The vast majority of the participants who believe that it is better to have a strong leader who can take all decisions rather than having elections and parliament are nationalists (49.2%). Similarly, there is a significant difference between the participants' political ideology and the perception that an authoritarian government under some circumstances is more preferable than a democratic one: [$\chi^2(16, N=1009)=151.78p < 0.001$]. 57.6% of the participants who said that they prefer an authoritarian government are nationalists.

Feeling, knowledge, areas of discontent and of content

The survey results also indicate a high level of distrust in the EU. The majority of participants (30.3%) answered that they have no trust in the EU while only 3.1 % said that they had complete trust. The results come in contrast with the results of the Eurobarometer of Spring 2008 (before the economic crisis hit Cyprus) which showed that Cypriots exhibited high levels of support for the EU, as 71% said that they trusted the EU.⁴⁹ In line with the same Eurobarometer report, the majority of participants in the survey consider Cyprus' membership in the EU "a good thing", however the percentage is lower (52% in 2008 and 47.5% according to this survey).⁵⁰ A large percentage of participants (34.4%) consider Cyprus' membership to be neither a good nor a bad thing.

In relation to the feeling inspired by the EU, 36.9% of participants answered that the EU inspires in them "hope" while 26% that inspires in them "mistrust". Compared to the results of the report of the Eurobarometer in Autumn 2004, (a few months following Cyprus' accession in the EU), the percentage of participants who said that the EU inspires in them "hope" has fallen (60% in 2004 to 36.9%, according to this survey) and the feeling of "mistrust" has increased (14% in 2004 to 26%, according to this survey).⁵¹ When asked to rate their knowledge on the EU, the majority of participants (34.7%) felt that they had an average level of knowledge, while 26.6% said that they had a good level of knowledge.

When requested on which issues, if any, they feel disappointed with the EU, the majority of participants chose support of the EU on the Cyprus issue (71.1%), followed by the support on the management of the economic crisis in Cyprus (70.2%) and then the management of the economic crisis in Europe (42%). As the most positive results of the EU, the majority of participants chose "freedom of movement" (65%), "peace and security" (53.2%) and "the student exchange programs such as Erasmus" (28.9%).

The majority of participants (51.6%) are in favor of more European integration ("more Europe") and oppose Cyprus' exit from the Eurozone (65.2%). With regard to the upcoming EU elections

⁴⁹ European Commission. 2008. Standard Eurobarometer 69.4. The European Union and its citizens. Available at http://ec.europa.eu/public_opinion/archives/eb/eb69/eb69_part2_en.pdf

⁵⁰ Ibid.

⁵¹ European Commission. 2004. Standard Eurobarometer 62/Autumn 2004: Public Opinion in EU, National Report Executive Summary Cyprus. Available at http://ec.europa.eu/public_opinion/archives/eb/eb62/eb62_cy_exec.pdf

only 42.4% of the participants said that they will vote, 19.9% will probably vote, 18.8% will probably not vote and 13.7% will not vote.

Conclusions

So far, Cyprus has been an exception in Europe, lacking a strong populist party and “hard” Eurosceptic parties. However, the findings of the survey indicate that there is movement among citizens towards Euroscepticism and evidence of pre-conditions for the emergence and rise of populism in Cyprus. Currently, Cyprus experiences a period of immense crisis, with unprecedented high levels of unemployment, harsh austerity measures and deep economic recession. There are very low levels of trust in the political institutions, large discontent with all political elites, large socioeconomic discontent and there is perception of widespread corruption.

Whilst one cannot exclude the possibility of a left-wing populist party emerging from these conditions, the likelihood of an emergence or surge in right wing populism in Cyprus is more prominent. The majority of participants who seem to be more affiliated to populist traits are participants who identify themselves as nationalists. Nationalists perceive a higher degree of party similarity, have the lowest trust in the political system and are the most hostile to liberal democracy tending to authoritarianism. Furthermore, nationalists exhibit strong populist right wing traits, such as anti-immigration tendencies and objection to multiculturalism.

Overall, Cypriot citizens seem to continue having a general good image of the EU and the majority still support both Cyprus’ membership to the EU and in the Eurozone. However, trust in the EU has fallen, as the findings of the survey suggest, due to the perceived lack of support of the EU on the Cyprus issue and in relation to the management of the economic crisis in Cyprus.

3. FUTURE DEVELOPMENT

With only a few months left to the European elections, the question of whether populist Eurosceptic parties will be able to have significant gains and increase in their number of seats in the EP, becomes more pertinent. In the case of such a potential success, more questions arise: To what extent will they be able to affect decision making at the level of the EP and to what extent will they be likely to affect the overall process of European integration and the European agenda?

According to polls and results of previous national elections, the right-wing populist Eurosceptic parties which are most likely to have significant gains from these elections are: the French Front

National, the UKIP in the United Kingdom (UK), the Dutch Party for Freedom (PVV), the Austrian Freedom Party, the Bulgarian Ataka, the Hungarian Jobbik, the Greek Golden Dawn and the Swedish Democrats. The Belgium's Vlaams Belang, the Italian Northern League, the British BNP and the Danish People's party, are also expected to be represented in the EP.

Le Pen and Wilders, the leader of the PVV, had long been mobilized to persuade other likeminded parties to join them in forming an alliance to collaborate in the elections. Their aim is to create a formal Eurosceptic group in the EP which will act as a "Trojan horse" and wreck the EU from inside.⁵² By having a political group, their Members of the European Parliament (MEPs) will secure access to committee seats and chair and to more prominent chamber speaking rights, as well as, access to additional funding which they can use for promotional activities in their national constituencies.⁵³

Thus far, the likelihood is for the political group to include the National Front, the PVV, the Austrian Freedom Party, the Italian Northern League, the Belgian Vlaams Belang and the Sweden's Democrats. The UKIP and the Danish Peoples' Party have turned down the offers by Le Pen and Wilder to join the group, due to their refusal to collaborate with the FN because of its extremist reputation and its anti-Semitism.^{54,55} Perceived extreme right wing political parties such as the Hungarian Jobbik, the Greek Golden Dawn and the British party of the BNP have been excluded from joining the group.⁵⁶

In order to be able to form a political group, the alliance needs to have at least 25 MEPs which will represent a quarter of the EU member states, that is, seven out of the 28 EU member states. The major force driving the new group is Marine Le Pen's Front National, which if it succeeds as predicted, will gain 20 or more seats. Mudde (2013) predicts that the far right would gain a total of

⁵² Traynor, I. 2013. Le Pen and Wilders forge plan to 'wreck' EU from within. *The Guardian*. Available at <http://www.theguardian.com/politics/2013/nov/13/le-pen-wilders-alliance-plan-wreck-eu> [Accessed 7 Jan.2014]

⁵³ Ibid.

⁵⁴ Samuel, H. 2014. Marine Le Pen says Front National and Ukip 'closer than they would like to admit. *The Telegraph*. Available at <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/europe/eu/10561969/Marine-Le-Pen-says-Front-National-and-Ukip-closer-than-they-would-like-to-admit.html> [Accessed Jan 2014]

⁵⁵ Ottens, N. 2013. Danish Nationalists Reject Eurosceptic Alliance with Dutch, French. *Atlantic Sentinel*. 15 November 2013. Available at <http://atlanticsentinel.com/2013/11/danish-nationalists-reject-eurosceptic-alliance-with-dutch-french/> [Accessed 8 January 2014]

⁵⁶ Samuel, H. 2014. Marine Le Pen says Front National and Ukip 'closer than they would like to admit. *The Telegraph*. Available at <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/europe/eu/10561969/Marine-Le-Pen-says-Front-National-and-Ukip-closer-than-they-would-like-to-admit.html> [Accessed 8 Jan 2014]

34 seats, which is roughly 4% of all EP seats and at best, up to 50 seats, which is 6.5% of the seats in the EP.⁵⁷

There has been a debate among scholars and political analysts as to whether this alliance will eventually bear fruit, given many past failed attempts. Even if the group is formed, there are expressed doubts as to whether it can be a coherent group and whether it will stand in time.⁵⁸ This could be proven unlikely, as political scientist Kai Arzheimer supports, given the parties' ideological differences, their often conflicting nationalisms and the difficult personalities of many of the far right politicians.⁵⁹ Furthermore, some of these parties could refuse cooperation with right wing parties which could be labelled as extreme so as to avoid stigmatisation.⁶⁰

But even if the alliance becomes a political group and even if all other populist right parties have significant gains from the elections, political analysts have doubted the extent of power they can have in the EP. After investigating the current behaviour of populist radical right (PRR) MEPs in the EP, Morris (2013)⁶¹ supports that even if there is a significant gain in the representation of radical right parties in the new EP, this does not necessarily mean that this will lead to a dramatic rise in their influence. He bases his assumption on the fact that they have, in general, been more active in making speeches and asking questions at the plenary sessions, rather than involving themselves in the committee work of the EP, thus not really affecting policy making.⁶² Moreover, Morris finds that radical right MEPs have “no blackmail powers” over other party groups, as in general they have an impact on a policy, only if a mainstream group with sufficient political influence happens to agree with them.⁶³ Given that the PRR face significant barriers to forming strong alliances in the EP, the likelihood for them to affect policy making is limited.⁶⁴ Finally, Morris' findings show that the three larger political groups (the EPP, S&D and ALDE) exert

⁵⁷ Mudde, C. 2013. A European shutdown? The 2014 European elections and the great recession. *The Washington Post*. 4 November 2013. Available at <http://www.washingtonpost.com/blogs/monkey-cage/wp/2013/11/04/a-european-shutdown-the-2014-european-elections-and-the-great-recession/> [Accessed 18 January 2014]

⁵⁸ Fischer, H. 2013. Denmark's populists on the rise. *DW DE*. 19 November 2013. Available at <http://www.dw.de/denmarks-populists-on-the-rise/a-17238507> [Accessed 8 January 2014]

⁵⁹ Ibid.

⁶⁰ Morris, M. 2013. Conflicted Politicians: The populist radical right in the European Parliament. *Counterpoint*. Available at <http://counterpoint.uk.com/wp-content/uploads/2013/06/Conflicted-politicians-the-populist-radical-right-in-the-European-Parliament.pdf>

⁶¹ Ibid.

⁶² Ibid.

⁶³ Ibid.

⁶⁴ Ibid.

disproportionately greater influence over the policy making process and thus the effect of the populist radical right parties on EU legislature is constrained.⁶⁵

The major effect of possible successes of the PRR in these EU elections is the impact at the national level, as this could bring pressure on the national mainstream parties to harden their approach towards the EU or in relation to EU policies, such as immigration, out of fear of losing their electoral appeal.⁶⁶ This is especially the case with the predicted success of the UKIP party which poses the most serious challenge for the EU at present, as it can affect UK's relationship with the EU. If the UKIP party is the winner of the EU elections in the UK, (as widely predicted), then this could have great implications for the British Prime Minister David Cameron and his governing party of Conservatives.⁶⁷ Having being under an enormous pressure, he eventually bowed to demands and promised to call an EU referendum in 2017, in order to determine the UK's membership in the EU.⁶⁸ A win for the UKIP party in the elections could be a bad omen for the result of the referendum and thus a bad omen for the future of the UK's membership to the EU.

Furthermore, once elected to the EP, the right populist parties are given the chance to boost their image at a national level. Given that their interest in the proceedings of the European parliament, as well as their power over policy making is limited,⁶⁹ right populist MEPs seek to speak out at plenary sessions so as to publicize their views and show to their supporters back home that they are sabotaging the EU from inside, as in the case of Nigel Farage.⁷⁰

With respect to the Cyprus European Elections, the right wing populist party of ELAM is predicted (according to a recent poll) to have an increase in its percentage in relation to the EP elections in 2009 from 0.22% to 1%.⁷¹ Although this increase in its percentage may be a source of concern at

⁶⁵ Ibid.

⁶⁶ Leonard, M. 2013. Europe's self-hating parliament. *Reuters Blog*. 19 November 2013. Available at <http://blogs.reuters.com/mark-leonard/2013/11/19/europes-self-hating-parliament/> [Accessed 10 January 2014]

⁶⁷ Press TV. 2013. UKIP to win European Parliament elections: Tory MP. *Press TV*. 29 December 2013. Available at <http://www.presstv.ir/detail/2013/12/29/342567/ukip-to-win-european-parl-elections/>

⁶⁸ BBC news. 2014. Lib Dems face 'uphill struggle' in EU elections – Clegg. *BBC news*. 16 January 2014. Available at <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-politics-25757168> [Accessed 18 January 2014]

⁶⁹ Morris, M. 2013. Conflicted Politicians: The populist radical right in the European Parliament. Counterpoint. Available at <http://counterpoint.uk.com/wp-content/uploads/2013/06/Conflicted-politicians-the-populist-radical-right-in-the-European-Parliament.pdf>

⁷⁰ Traynor, I. 2013. Le Pen and Wilders forge plan to 'wreck' EU from within. *The Guardian*. Available at <http://www.theguardian.com/politics/2013/nov/13/le-pen-wilders-alliance-plan-wreck-eu> [Accessed 7 January 2014]

⁷¹ Offsite. 2014. Δημοσκοπήση ΡΙΚ - Ποια η δύναμη των κομμάτων σήμερα; (RIK (CyBC) Poll-What is the power of the political parties today?). *Offsite*. 12 April 2014. Available at <http://offsite.com.cy/dimoskopisi-rik-pia-dinami-ton-kommaton-simera/> [In Greek] [Accessed 15 April 2014]

the national level, it is not enough to enable it to enter the EP by electing an MEP, forecasted to finish in sixth place in the elections.

The same recent poll indicates that the likely winner of the elections will be the alliance between two traditional pro-European parties, the governing right party DISY and the smaller centre-right party, EVROKO (European Party). The communist, “soft” Eurosceptic party of AKEL is predicted to gain the second highest percentage of votes and subsequently to follow, the centre-right, pro-European DIKO, the pro-European alliance of socialist EDEK and the Cyprus Green Party and the newly founded party of the Citizens’ Alliance.

CONCLUSION

In the recent years many populist parties and especially right Eurosceptic populist parties have experienced a major increase in their percentages and many are expected to gain seats in the new EP with the upcoming EU elections in May 2014.

The reasons behind the rise of these parties are associated not only to the economic crisis that has hit the EU, which divided the Member states to debtors and creditors, but also on socioeconomic problems such as immigration and corruption issues. By capitalizing on the feelings of disappointment and mistrust towards domestic political elites and EU “elites”, populist parties, have increased their appeal to voters with their anti-establishment, anti-corruption, anti-immigration and anti- EU discourse.

European leaders, such as the Prime Minister of Italy Enrico Letta and EU top officials such as the European Commission President Jose Manuel Barroso, warn that possible gains for the populist parties could “backlash” against the EU. Mr. Letta especially has warned that populist parties could have the ability to cripple the EU by blocking legislature in the EP associated with the pursuance of economic growth policies.⁷²

However, the recent study of Morris (2013)⁷³ suggests that while the radical right parties might be able to increase their representation in the EP, given their current operation in the EP and the various constraints they face, they will be less likely to affect policy making to an extensive level. This surge of Eurosceptic populist parties will likely have more implications for mainstream parties

⁷²Davis. L. 2013. EU must unite against sceptics and populists, says Italian prime minister. *The Guardian*. 31 October 2013. Available at <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2013/oct/31/eu-unite-sceptics-populists-italian-pm> [Accessed 8 January 2014]

⁷³ Morris. M. 2013. Conflicted Politicians: The populist radical right in the European Parliament. *Counterpoint*. Available at <http://counterpoint.uk.com/wp-content/uploads/2013/06/Conflicted-politicians-the-populist-radical-right-in-the-European-Parliament.pdf>

at a national level who might be pressured to harden their approach on European issues and the process of European integration.

The rise of the populist parties in Europe has been mostly considered as a threat. However, as Bryder (2009)⁷⁴ suggests, it can be seen also as corrective to democracy as well as corrective to the political system, both at the national and the EU level. The rise in populism is mostly a product of citizens' dissatisfaction and mistrust towards the political system and the politicians. Thus, the rise in populism should be perceived as a wakeup call by the political "elites", in order to look more closely and respond to the concerns of the people, thus restoring their trust and confidence in the EU and national political systems.

⁷⁴ Bryder, T. 2009. Populism- a threat or a challenge for the democratic system? [pdf] Department of Political Science. University of Copenhagen. Available at http://polsci.ku.dk/english/international_students/present_international_students/taking_exams/past_papers/populism_a_threat_or_a_challenge_for_the_democratic_system.pdf/

Appendix A: The Questionnaire

**Survey Titled: «The Risks of growing Populism and the European Elections:
The case of Cyprus»**

1. What is your gender?

- Male
- Female

2. What is your age?

- 18-24
- 25-40
- 41-60
- 61+

3. What is the highest level of education you have completed?

- Primary education
- Secondary education
- Bachelor's Degree
- Master's degree
- Doctoral degree (Ph.D)

4. What is your current occupation?

- Unemployed
- Student
- Farmer
- Private employee
- Public employee
- Self-employed
- Military
- House person
- Retired
- Other

5. Where do you live?

- City

- Town
- Village

6. What is your average monthly income?

- 0 €
- Up to 1000 €
- 1001 – 2000 €
- 2001 – 3000 €
- 3001 – 4000 €
- 4001 € and over

7. With which of the following do you most closely identify yourself? And which do you identify with secondly?

	Ethnicity	Country	Local Community	Football Team	The EU	Other
First Choice	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Second Choice	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

8. How would you describe your political ideology?

- Social democratic
- Right wing
- Left wing
- Centrist
- Environmentalist
- Nationalist
- Communist
- Other
- I do not have a political ideology

9. Consider the existing political parties and choose the statement with which you agree the most:

- All large political parties are the same
- All new and small political parties are the same.

- All political parties are the same.

**10. To what extent do you trust each of the following institutions to look after your interests?
Please indicate on a scale of 1 to 5 with 1 for no trust at all and 5 for great trust.**

Courts	<input type="text"/>
Political Parties	<input type="text"/>
Army	<input type="text"/>
House of Representatives	<input type="text"/>
Police	<input type="text"/>
President	<input type="text"/>
Trade Unions	<input type="text"/>
Church	<input type="text"/>
Media	<input type="text"/>
Most of your countrymen	<input type="text"/>
Most people you know	<input type="text"/>
The European Union	<input type="text"/>

11. How widespread do you think bribe-taking and corruption is in this country?

- Almost no public officials are engaged in it.
 A few public officials are engaged in it.
 Most public officials are engaged in it
 Almost all public officials are engaged in it.

12. Do you think any of these pose a real threat to peace and security in this society?

- National and religious minorities in Cyprus
 Immigrants
 Turkey
 Other neighboring countries
 Terrorist groups
 Radical movements

None

13. “Ethnic diversity erodes a country’s unity”. What is your position on this statement?

I completely disagree	I disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	I agree	I completely agree
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

14. In your opinion, what is the most important problem facing the country at present? What is the second most important problem?

	First Choice	Second choice
The poor economic situation	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Corruption	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Crime	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The loss of decision-making power and erosion of national identity after entry into the EU	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Immigrants	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The poor condition of the environment	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Decay of moral values in the society	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Other	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

15. How much do you think that the present financial situation of the country has increased the gap between social classes?

Not at all	Little	Enough	Very	Very much
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

16. Cyprus in the past was better than Cyprus today. Do you agree?

- Yes
- No
- I don't know

17. "Some people say that we would be better off if we get rid of the Parliament and elections and have a strong leader who can decide everything." Do you agree?

- Yes
- No
- I don't know

18. With which of the following statements do you agree the most?

- Democracy is preferable to any other kind of government
- Under some circumstances, an authoritarian government can be preferable to a democratic one.
- For me, it does not matter whether we have a democratic regime or not.

19. Generally speaking, would you say that Cyprus's membership in the EU is a....

Bad thing Neither bad Good thing
 nor good

Cyprus's EU membership	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
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20. Do you believe that Cyprus should exit the Euro zone?

- Yes
- No
- I don't know

21. In general does the EU conjure up for you a very positive, fairly positive, neutral, fairly negative or very negative image?

Very negative Fairly negative Neutral Fairly positive Very positive

General image of the EU	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
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22. In which of the following issues do you feel that the EU has disappointed you? (Please select up to three issues or select "none" if you do not feel any disappointment with the EU).

- Cyprus problem

- Economic crisis management with relation to Cyprus
- Economic crisis management in the EU in general
- Environment
- Social issues
- Immigration control and asylum
- Human Rights
- EU's Foreign Policy
- Other
- None

23. Which of the following do you think is/are be the most positive result (s) of the European Union (EU)?

- Free movement of goods, people and services
- Peace and security among Member States of the EU
- The Euro
- Student exchange programs such as Erasmus
- The Common Agricultural Policy (CAP)
- Economic power of the EU in the world
- Political influence of the EU in the world
- Other
- None

24. Does the EU give you personally the feeling of...? (Please choose one answer)

- Hope
- Trust
- Enthusiasm
- Indifference
- Rejecting it
- Mistrust
- Anxiety

25. How much do you feel you know about the European Union?

Very good Good Average Little None

Knowledge of the EU



26. Some argue that we need more actions and decisions to be taken at a European level (we need “more Europe”). Do you agree?



Yes



No



I don't know

27. Will you be voting in the upcoming European Elections?

Yes

Probably yes

No

Probably no

I don't know



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