



International Conference of the *Institute of European Democrats* and *Fundacja Samorządność i Demokracja*

The Rise of Nationalisms in Europe: Causes and Concerns.

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The right-wing and national populist parties currently present one of the main challenges to the European Union, its values and the future of its integration. The parties such as the French *Front National*, the British *UKIP*, the Dutch *Party for Freedom*, the Austrian *Freedom Party*, the Hungarian *Jobbik Party*, the Polish *Law and Justice*, the Cypriot *ELAM*, the *Danish People's Party*, the Finnish *True Finns*, the German *Alternative for Germany*, the Italian *Northern League*, Slovak *People's Party-Our Slovakia* or the Greek *Golden Dawn* continue to rally large levels of support. They have entered parliaments across Europe and some parties are even participating in the national and/or regional governments.

Mainly the migration crisis has fuelled popular support for these parties; but it is not only about the migrants – the right-wing and national populist parties spread xenophobia, hatred, fear, critique of the elites, fears about globalisation and the criticism of everything which is “European” or related to the European Union. **They use nationalistic rhetoric and abuse national history in order to mobilise against further European integration and/or European project itself.** In this sense, **these parties directly endanger the European Union and the future of our continent.**

The worrying fact is that right-wing and national populist parties have changed their mobilisation tactics. While mainly xenophobic in the past, right-wing populists use more moderate and sophisticated methods nowadays. Through this, **they have managed to establish themselves as the relevant political players in almost every European country.** Consequently, populist politicians find support even among economically secure regions, highly-educated societies or young people. For all actors involved in the EU politics, **these developments should be taken very seriously because the future face of our continent is at stake.**

1st Session: Revival of nationalist vision of history in Poland

Prawo i Sprawiedliwość (PiS, Law and Justice), Jarosław and Lech Kaczyński's party, was established in 2001 when public debate in Poland was already shaped by noticeable social discontent, corruption scandals and high unemployment levels. The party accused the traditional political establishment for the existing state of affairs. **PiS applied populist strategy to establish a large centre-right conservative party.** Its populism has gradually moved from strategy to “party ideology” – PiS moved from being a party that used populist strategy to becoming a populist right-wing party. The promotion of traditional Polish Christian values and culture and the glorification of ordinary people have become the most important aspect of PiS' rhetoric.

The very serious issue is that **PiS has recently started controlling and abusing Polish history with the aim to use it for its political goals.** The case with the museum of the Second World War in Gdansk is only one example – the permanent museum's exhibition has examined global events that led up to the war and, irrespective of nationality, illustrated the sufferings of ordinary people; however, PiS pushes the museum to concentrate on the patriotic theme of Polish resistance to Nazism in order to turn the museum into a **celebration of PiS-style nationalism.** By calculated abuse of historical events, PiS aims to build nationalist emotions in the country and substitute Europeanism and the country's lean towards the EU by the Polish nationalism.



2nd Session: Right wing politics in the European Union in the light of the East-West relationships

The right-wing and national populist parties are on their rise in almost all EU member states and their rise has come at the expense of all traditional European political parties. Despite these parties share the same patterns and themes in their rhetoric, there is **the rising division between the right-wing and national populist parties existing in the “Western”, founding or older member countries of the EU and the “Eastern”, new EU member states.**

On the one hand, the nationalist parties in the Visegrad Four countries, Baltic states and Balkan countries try to get the popular support by harsh critique of the EU in general and criticism of “bureaucratic” Brussels in particular. **They accuse Brussels from dictatorship, robbing and “enslavement of nations” and from the attempts to destroy the European national states.** In last two years, the topic of the migration flow to Europe has been heavily used by all these parties; they spread half-truths or lies about refugees in order to spread fear from them among the electorate and thus get political credit. Only few days ago during the commemoration of anti-communist uprising in Hungary from 1956, the Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orbán publicly accused Brussels from “sovietisation” of Europe because of the refugees against which the Hungarian nation must stand up.

On the other hand, the populists in France, United Kingdom, Germany, Netherlands or Denmark seek the votes by the criticism of the “Eastern newcomers” to the EU. Specifically, **the parties criticize that their states have to pay up for the countries which entered the EU after 2004,** that these countries use the EU funds from the financial contribution of the richer EU members and that the economic migrants coming from new EU countries “steal” jobs from people in the older EU member states.

3rd Session: Where do the fears come from – Russia, Turkey, Middle East?

The populist parties benefit mainly from the current problems the EU has been facing for the last couple of years. The ongoing impacts of the economic crisis, massive migration flow from the Middle East and North Africa, the Britain’s decision to leave the EU, the problems with increasingly authoritarian Turkey in the management of migration and the continued tensions with Russia over Ukraine represent the driving force for generating simplistic solutions related to national identity and far-right ideology.

The parties create artificial fears that refugees will destroy traditional European culture and values and impose “islamization” of Europe by which the Christian tradition of European continent will fade away. The online media are massively and very effectively used in spreading hatred and getting more popular support for the nationalist populists. The examples of Russia and Turkey, where nationalism was used for establishing personal dictatorship, also serve the goals of the European populists. What is more, there are highly serious suspicions that Kremlin finances many of the European right-wing parties in order to weaken or directly disintegrate the European Union and create the dominant power in Europe from Russia once again.

All these aspects are extremely serious issues to which the EU, its institutions and leaders have to respond effectively and decisively, promoting and defending the values of democracy, solidarity, freedom and liberal rights which Europe stands on and which are the highest principles of the European civilization.

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