

SOUTHERN EUROPE

GREECE, CYPRUS,
SPAIN AND
PORTUGAL



GREECE

Golden Dawn (GD)

CYPRUS

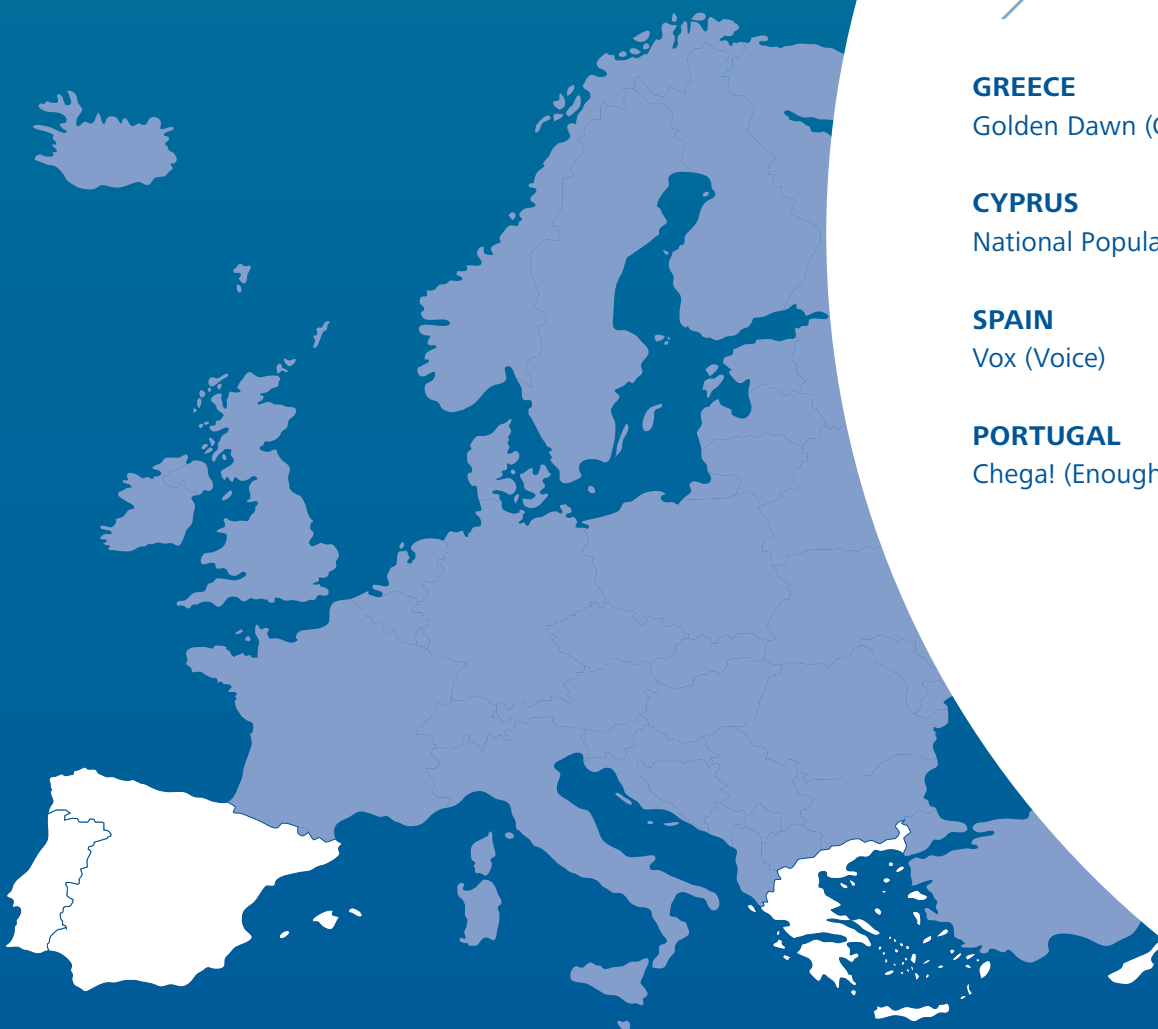
National Popular Front (ELAM)

SPAIN

Vox (Voice)

PORTUGAL

Chega! (Enough!)



CONTENT

3 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

THE RISE OF RIGHT-WING POPULISM IN EUROPE
 PATTERNS OF RWPP SUCCESS ACROSS EUROPE
 WHY IS RIGHT-WING POPULISM SUCCESSFUL?
 HOW SHOULD PROGRESSIVES RESPOND? POLICY
 RECOMMENDATIONS

**8 SOUTHERN EUROPE: GREECE, CYPRUS, SPAIN
AND PORTUGAL**

PATTERNS OF SUCCESS

11 PARTY PROFILES

GOLDEN DAWN (GD)
 NATIONAL POPULAR FRONT (ELAM)
 VOX
 CHEGA

18 ANALYSIS

UNDERSTANDING THE END OF SOUTHERN EUROPEAN
 EXCEPTIONALISM

22 RECOMMENDATIONS

HOW SHOULD PROGRESSIVES RESPOND?

26 REFERENCES

IMPRINT

ABOUT THE AUTHORS

Daphne Halikiopoulou is Professor of
 Comparative Politics at University of Reading.
 She has published extensively on nationalism
 and the cultural and economic determinants of
 right-wing populist parties support.

Tim Vlandas is Associate Professor of
 Comparative Social Policy in the Department
 of Social Policy and Intervention and Fellow of
 St Antony's College at University of Oxford. His
 research explores the political and economic
 determinants and consequences of social and
 economic policies in Europe.

**FES REGIONAL OFFICE FOR INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION
 DEMOCRACY OF THE FUTURE**

Reichsratsstraße 13/5, A-1010 Vienna

RESPONSIBLE FOR CONTENT: Johanna Lutz, Director, Democracy of the Future

PROJECT LEAD: Michael Jennewein, Researcher for Democracy & Economics

Project website: <https://democracy.fes.de/topics/right-wing-populism>

Contact: democracy.vienna@fes.de

DESIGN: Caroline Plank-Bachselten | www.bueroblack.at

The views expressed in this publication are not necessarily those of the Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung or of
 the organization for which the author works. Commercial use of media published by the Friedrich-
 Ebert-Stiftung (FES) is not permitted without the written consent of the FES.

This publication consists of identical chapters of the full FES report

UNDERSTANDING RIGHT-WING POPULISM AND WHAT TO DO ABOUT IT

ISBN: 978-3-98628-156-4

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

THE RISE OF RIGHT-WING POPULISM IN EUROPE

Since the early 2010s, right-wing populist parties (RWPPs) have been on the rise across Europe. This development has taken place at the expense of the mainstream: while the average electoral score of RWPPs has been steadily increasing over time, support for both the mainstream left and right has declined.

The right-wing populist momentum sweeping Europe since the early 2010s has three features:

1. ELECTORAL PERFORMANCE

Many RWPPs have improved their electoral performance over time. The French Rassemblement National (RN) (formerly Front National - FN), the Austrian Party for Freedom (FPÖ), the Greek Golden Dawn (GD) and the German Alternative for Germany (AfD) have all increasingly managed to mobilise voters beyond their core support groups. Countries previously identified as 'outliers' because of the absence of an electorally successful RWPP are no longer exceptional in this respect – for example, Portugal with the rise of Chega and Spain with the rise of Vox.

2. ACCESS TO GOVERNMENT

A substantial number of RWPPs have either recently been part of governing coalitions, or served as formal cooperation partners in right-wing minority governments. These include the Lega (Italy), the FPÖ, the Polish Law and Justice (PiS), the Hungarian Fidesz, the Greek Popular Orthodox Rally (LAOS) and Independent Greeks (ANEL), the Finns Party (PS), the Danish People's Party (DF), the National Alliance (NA) (Latvia) and the Conservative People's Party of Estonia (EKRE).

3. ABILITY TO INFLUENCE THE POLICY AGENDA

RWPPs such as the RN (France), the SD (Sweden) and UKIP (UK) have successfully competed in their domestic systems, permeating mainstream ground and influencing the agendas of other parties. As a result, mainstream parties on the right and, in some instances, on the left have often adopted accommodative strategies – mainly regarding immigration.

PATTERNS OF RWPP SUCCESS ACROSS EUROPE

A close look at the parties' support trajectories reveals interesting regional patterns:

WESTERN EUROPE

In much of Western Europe, RWPP success takes the form of systemic entrenchment – i.e. the gradual ability of niche parties to permeate mainstream ground. Most Western European RWPPs commenced as niche actors operating on the fringes of the political system. They increased their support beyond their secure voter base by becoming progressively embedded in the system either as coalition partners or as credible opposition parties.

SOUTHERN EUROPE

RWPP success has varied significantly across Southern European countries. Greece has had RWPPs both in government (LAOS, ANEL) and opposition (GD). In contrast, RWPPs in Cyprus, Spain and Portugal for a long time failed to make substantial electoral gains despite economic grievances and immigration. But this trend is changing. These countries are no longer 'exceptional' cases. ELAM has gradually increased its support in Cyprus. Spain and Portugal have been experiencing the rise of Vox and Chega, respectively.

THE NORDIC COUNTRIES

The Nordic countries have witnessed considerable RWPP success. The Danish DF has exerted substantial policy influence as a recognised cooperation partner of the centre-right parties since the early 2000s. The Finns Party (PS) turned in its first good result in 2007, making its electoral breakthrough in 2011, and in 2015 even joining a centre-right coalition government. In Sweden – a 'deviant' case until recently – the Sweden Democrats' (SD) achieved their electoral breakthrough in 2010. While a *cordon sanitaire* strategy has kept them out of government, this consensus may be changing, as the SD has recently become more influential in local coalitions.

EASTERN EUROPE

Eastern Europe has some of the most electorally successful RWPPs, including Fidesz in Hungary, PiS in Poland, the Slovenian Democratic Party (SDS) and the NA in Latvia. The dominant pattern is a radicalisation of the mainstream. Formerly mainstream parties have radicalised in government, increasingly adopting populist, illiberal and authoritarian policy positions. Given the low levels of immigration in the region, Eastern European RWPPs tend to target domestic minorities. In the more ethnically homogenous countries such as Poland, Hungary and Slovenia, mobilisation occurs along socially conservative lines. In the more ethnically pluralistic societies, such as Estonia and Latvia, RWPPs have mobilised against larger politicised ethnic groups, most notably the Russian minorities that reside in these countries.

UNDERSTANDING THE SUCCESS OF RWPPS

What factors are influencing support for RWPPs across Europe? Conventional wisdom emphasises the political climate of RWPP normalisation and systemic entrenchment, where issues 'owned' by these parties are salient: immigration, nationalism and cultural grievances. The importance of cultural values in shaping voting behaviour and the strong empirical association of cultural concerns over immigration and RWPP support at the individual level have led to an emerging consensus that the increasing success of RWPPs can be best understood as a 'cultural backlash' (Norris and Inglehart 2019; Halikiopoulou and Vlandas 2020).

This report contests the view that the rise of right-wing populism should be predominantly understood as a 'cultural backlash'. A sole focus on culture overlooks:

- (1) the predictive power of economic concerns over immigration and the critical distinction between galvanising a core constituency on the one hand and mobilising more broadly beyond this core constituency on the other (Halikiopoulou and Vlandas 2020)
- (2) the strategies RWPPs themselves are pursuing to capitalise on multiple insecurities, including both cultural and economic; and
- (3) the role of social policies in mitigating those insecurities that drive RWPP support.

To address these issues, the report looks at three levels – what we call the Three Ps: People, Parties and Policies:

1. People: How do cultural and economic grievances affect individuals' likelihood of voting for a RWPP? How are those grievances distributed among the RWPP electorate? And how does this distribution compare to the distribution of the same types of grievances among the centre-left and the entire country electorates?



2. Parties: What strategies do RWPPs adopt to capitalise on their core and peripheral electorates? How do they employ nationalism, populism and welfarism in their narratives and programmatic agendas?



3. Policies: Do policies matter, and if so, what type of policies can mitigate the economic risks driving different social groups within the electorate to support RWPPs?



We address these questions using empirical evidence from both quantitative and qualitative analyses. First, we perform statistical analyses using nine waves of the European Social Survey (ESS) to analyse objective and subjective individual characteristics associated with RWPPs' support and thus identify the conditions that drive the RWPP vote at the individual level (demand). Second, we analyse RWPP manifestos using the Comparative Manifestos Project (MARPOR) dataset to map RWPP positions and identify the supply-side conditions that facilitate their success (supply). Third, we draw on our research matching ESS data with social policy datasets to determine the extent to which social policies mediate the risks that drive individuals to vote RWPP (policy).

OUR ANALYSIS SHOWS THE FOLLOWING

At the **people** level, both cultural and economic concerns over immigration increase the likelihood of voting for an RWPP. While cultural concerns are often a stronger predictor of RWPP voting behaviour, this does not automatically mean that they matter more for RWPP success in substantive terms because people driven by economic concerns are often a numerically larger group. The main issue to pay attention to here is **size**: both the size of the effect, and also the size of the voter groups that are subject to this effect. Voters primarily concerned with the cultural impact of immigration are core RWPP voters. Although they might be highly likely to vote RWPP, they also tend to be a numerically small group. By contrast, voters that are primarily concerned with the economic impact of immigration are peripheral voters. They are also highly likely to vote for RWPP, but in addition they are a numerically larger group. Since the interests and preferences of these two groups can differ, successful RWPPs tend to be those that are able to attract both groups. What determines RWPP success is therefore the ability to mobilise a coalition of interests between core and peripheral voters (Halikiopoulou and Vlandas 2020).

At the **party** level, we emphasise the importance of nationalism, as opposed to populism, as a mobilisation tool that has facilitated RWPP success. We argue that RWPPs in Western Europe employ a **civic nationalist** normalisation strategy that allows them to offer nationalist solutions to all types of insecurities that drive voting behaviour (Halikiopoulou et al. 2013). This strategy has two features. First, it presents culture as a value issue and justifies exclusion on ideological grounds; and second a focus on social welfare and emphasis on welfare chauvinism. Eastern European RWPPs, on the other hand, remain largely **ethnic nationalist**, focusing on ascriptive criteria of national belonging and mobilising voters on socially conservative positions and a rejection of minority rights.

At the **policy** level, this report documents the previously overlooked importance of welfare state institutions (Rathgeb and Busemeyer 2021; Vlandas and Halikiopoulou 2021). Our analysis illustrates that welfare state policies moderate a range of economic risks individuals face. This reduces the likelihood of support for RWPPs among insecure individuals – for example, the unemployed, pensioners, low-income workers and employees on temporary contracts. Our key point here is that political actors have agency and can shape political outcomes: to understand why some individuals vote for RWPPs, we should not only focus on their risk-driven grievances, but also on policies that may moderate these risks.

HOW SHOULD PROGRESSIVES RESPOND? POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

Our analysis suggests that co-opting right-wing populist policy agendas is, by and large, not a winning strategy for the centre-left. This finding is consistent with the recent literature suggesting that the centre-left and RWPP electorates are considerably different (Abou Chadi et al. 2021) and that employing accommodative RWPP ‘copycat’ strategies may attract a small number of RWPP voters, but alienate a much larger proportion of their own voters (Chou et al. 2021).

The current hype about ‘new’ issues such as immigration and cultural grievances often overlooks significant economic concerns among voters. Indeed, a large share of the electorate is concerned about inequality. These concerns are not niche, nor are they confined to a shrinking voter group that is becoming irrelevant. Even within the context of emerging cleavages, inequalities are embedded in – and shape the salience of – ‘new’ issues.

Instead, a more beneficial strategy for the centre-left is to try to (re)capture these voters by reclaiming ownership of (in)equality. Articulating a vision of an equitable society will allow progressive parties to re-build their broad voter coalitions and pioneer a strategy that mobilises voters on an issue the left already ‘owns’.

SOUTHERN EUROPE: GREECE, CYPRUS, SPAIN AND PORTUGAL

GREECE



Golden Dawn (GD)

CYPRUS



National Popular Front (ELAM)

SPAIN



Vox (Voice)

PORTUGAL



Chega! (Enough!)

PATTERNS OF SUCCESS

RWPP success has varied significantly across Southern European countries. Greece has had RWPPs both in government (LAOS, ANEL) and opposition (GD). In contrast, RWPPs in Cyprus, Spain and Portugal for a long time failed to make substantial electoral gains despite economic grievances and immigration. Following the eruption of the financial crisis, Greece was the only country among the four to develop significant RWPP support with the election of the Golden Dawn, a previously marginalised neo-Nazi party, in the Greek parliament. The GD managed to retain approximately 7 per cent of the vote for almost seven years, during some of which time it was already undergoing trial. It failed to enter parliament in 2019 and in late 2020, the party’s 5-year trial concluded with the Golden Dawn being declared a criminal organisation and its leading cadres indicted and imprisoned.

While equivalent parties did exist in the other countries – Golden Dawn’s sister party National Popular Front (ELAM) in Cyprus, Democracia Nacional (DN) and España 2000 in Spain and the Partido Nacional Renovador (PNR) in Portugal – these only received low support. These countries have been referred to as ‘negative’ or ‘exceptional’ cases because, despite favourable conditions (economic grievances, immigration), those RWPPs were not successful. This trend is changing. ELAM has gradually increased its support in Cyprus, reaching 6.8% in 2021. Spain and Portugal have been experiencing the rise of RWPPs with increasing support for VOX and less so Chega, both radical RWPP variants parties which, unlike the GD, have largely shed the stigma of fascism.

Figure 1: RWPP national election history in Greece 2004-2021

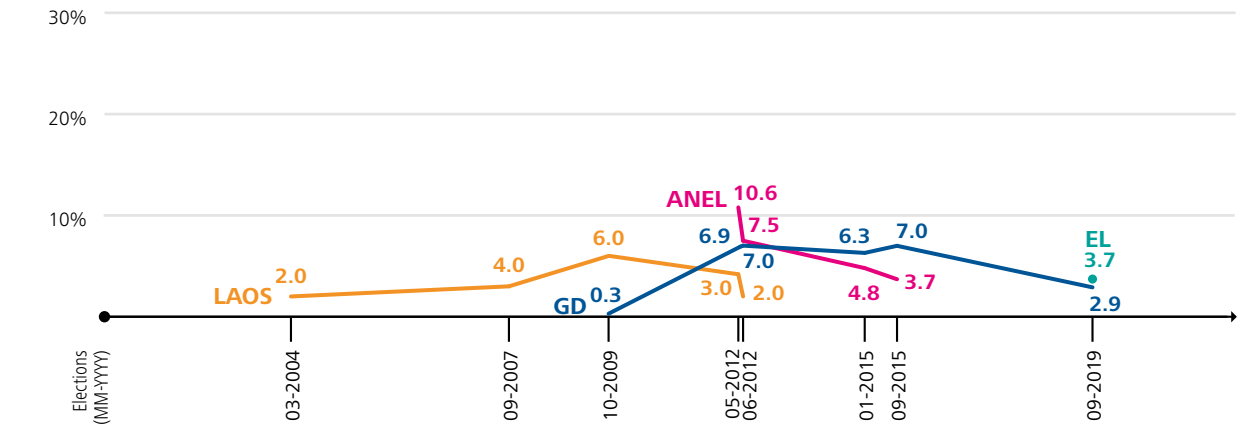


Figure 2: RWPP national election history in Cyprus 2004-2021

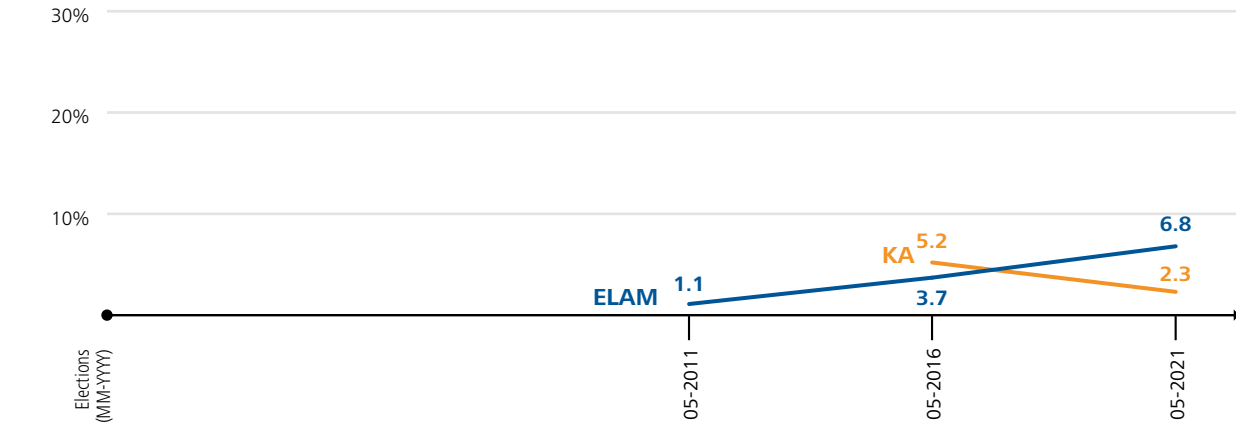


Figure 3: RWPP national election history in Spain 2004-2021



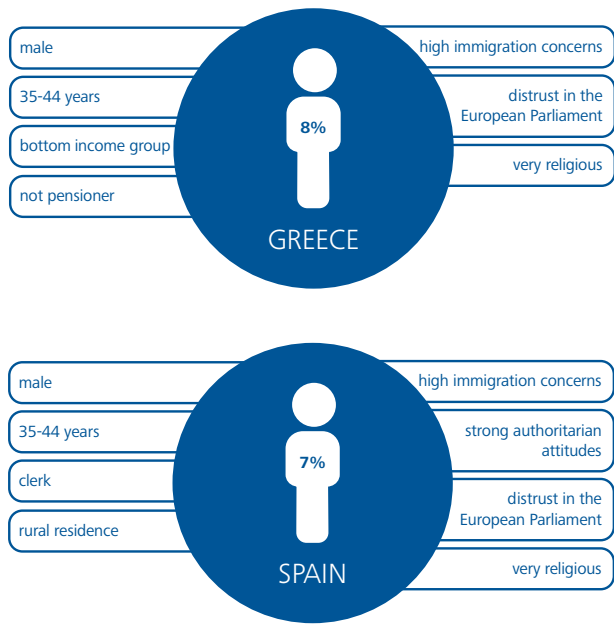
Figure 4: RWPP national election history in Portugal 2004-2022



DEMAND: WHO VOTES FOR RWPPS IN SOUTHERN EUROPE?

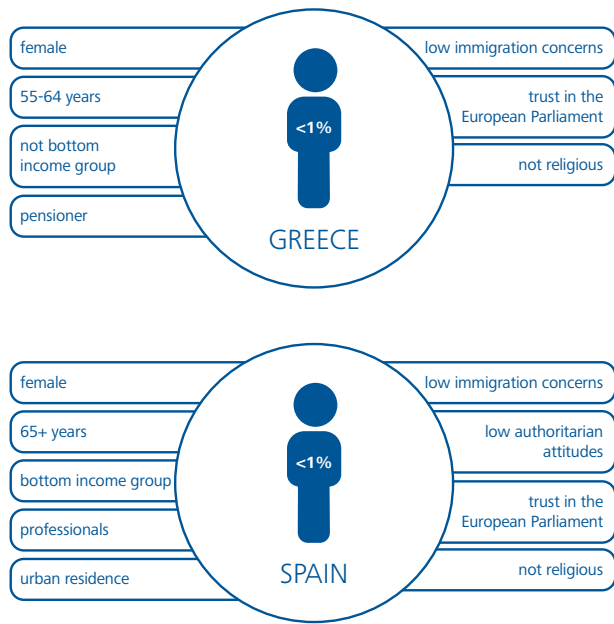
In terms of demand, voting trends in Southern Europe were largely shaped by the severe economic crisis that erupted in 2008, which entailed the prevalence of societal divisions over austerity and welfare. There is strong left-right polarisation and the materialist cleavage remains salient. We may also observe the increased salience of immigration consistent with developments in Western Europe. Greece, Spain and Portugal share a history of authoritarianism, a strong involvement of religion in politics and a left-right party system bipolarity. In Spain, the issue of regional autonomy, and in Cyprus, the ‘national’ issue cross-cut the left-right cleavage.

Figure 5: Who is the most likely right-wing populist party voter?



Probability to vote for a Right Wing Populist Party (%)

Figure 6: Who is the least likely right-wing populist party voter?



Probability to vote for a Right Wing Populist Party (%)

SUPPLY: WHAT MAKES THESE PARTIES' NARRATIVES [UN]SUCCESSFUL?

There are two RWPP variants in South Europe: The extreme-right variants in Greece and Cyprus (GD and ELAM) and the radical-right variants in Spain and Portugal (Vox and Chega). The former two are nationalist-welfarist, while the latter two emphasise – with some variations – liberal economic policies and are closer to the new radical-right parties successful in Western Europe. There have also been successful variants in Greece, including the Popular Orthodox Rally (LAOS) and Independent Greeks, both of whom have had access to office.

PARTY PROFILES

GOLDEN DAWN (GD)

The Golden Dawn was first established in December 1980 as a bulletin published by a group of former members of the neo-fascist ‘Party of August 4th’, associated with the dictatorial regime of Ioannis Metaxas (1936–1941). The Golden Dawn has consistently and openly emphasised its Nationalist Socialist principles, thus differentiating itself ideologically from other Greek far-right-wing factions. Since the party’s establishment, Golden Dawn members often roamed the streets attacking, beating and stabbing their victims: refugees, immigrants and left-wing activists. Since getting voted into parliament in 2012, party members often became embroiled in acts of violence, attacking small street vendors of non-Greek origin and terrorising anyone who did not fulfil their criteria of belonging to the ‘superior Greek race’. In January 2013, they murdered Pakistani immigrant Shehzad Luqman. In September of the same year, the murder of Pavlos Fyssas – a left-wing activist known as ‘Killah P’ – became the catalyst for indictment after a trial that lasted over five years. The party failed to obtain parliamentary representation during the 2019 national elections, and in late 2020 its leading cadres were indicted and imprisoned for maintaining a criminal organisation.

GOLDEN DAWN’S VALUE PROFILE: EXTREME POPULIST ULTRA-NATIONALISM

The Golden Dawn can be categorised as an extreme, ultra-nationalist, and racist party. The party’s leadership itself rejected the Neo-Nazi label, preferring instead the term ‘Greek nationalists’. However, the party falls clearly within the fascist, and more specifically neo-Nazi category, in its outright espousal of National Socialism: it opposes democracy, rejects liberalism and socialism, employs violence and concentrates all power in the hands of the leader. Specifically, the party fulfils the defining criteria of a fascist group, including nationalism, statism, para-militarism, transcendence and cleansing (Vasilopoulou and Halikiopoulou 2015). Its goal is the establishment of a state that is subservient to the nation. The extensive collection of Nazi paraphernalia found in possession of the party’s leading cadres since the beginning of the trial also attests to the party’s association with the Nazi regime. Its logo is the Greek meander, which is reminiscent of the Nazi swastika.

The defining characteristics of the Golden Dawn’s ideology include an emphasis on law and order, the national way of life and political corruption (Figure 7). The party centres on an ethnic understanding of the Greek nation – an entity which it defines based on ascriptive signifiers such as bloodline, language, religion, and community of birth. The party equates the state with ethnicity and emphasises white supremacy, understood as the supremacy of the Greek race. Accordingly, their anti-immigrant narrative is expressed in organic terms: Greek status is something one is born into, and therefore non-Greeks, i.e. those who do not fulfil the bloodline criteria of national membership, should not be granted Greek citizenship because they will ‘spoil’ the continuity of the Greek nation. Like fascist movements of the past, the Golden Dawn puts forward its own myth of national rebirth. It highlights the significance of social decay and regeneration and sees itself as having the unique mission to lead the nation into a phoenix-like national rebirth, rising from the ashes of the old degenerate social order. The party’s value profile

differentiates it from other successful European RWPPs which have progressively adopted a civic nationalist narrative, emphasising the ideological rather than biological criteria of national belonging.

Populist ultra-nationalism is a recurrent theme in the party’s ideology. While the extent to which extreme right variants can be populist is debated in the literature, scholars agree that the Golden Dawn is populist given the emphasis on the popular basis of its authoritarianism. (Vasilopoulou and Halikiopoulou 2015; Charalambous and Christoforou 2018). The Golden Dawn is populist in the way fascists are the quintessential populists: claiming that their legitimacy derives from their embodiment of the singular unified popular will into an all-encompassing state subservient to the nation. The Golden Dawn presented itself not in elitist terms, but rather as a movement from below that did not only speak on behalf of the ‘pure’ Greek people, but also embodied their collective will. Through this narrative, the party justified its quest for ultimate state power. According to the party’s leader Nikolaos Michaloliakos, the ‘Nationalist Socialist leader [...] incarnates the secret calling of the blood and his ultimate goal is full control of state power in the name of the nation’ (Vasilopoulou and Halikiopoulou 2015).

Figure 7: GD’s, ANEL’s and LAOS’ stance on political corruption, the national way of life, and law & order

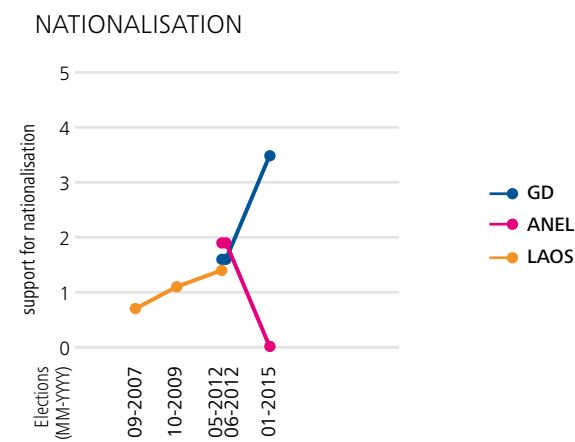


GOLDEN DAWN’S ECONOMIC AND WELFARE POLICY PROFILE: NATION-STATISM AND WELFARE CHAUVINISM

The Golden Dawn’s economic programme is underpinned by the party’s rampant nation-statism. In line with its National Socialist ideology, the party proposed maximum state intervention in the economy, linking its nationalist narratives to the importance of sovereignty over economic decision-making. The Golden Dawn advocated the expansion of the welfare state, supported welfare chauvinism and idealised nationalist-welfarist regimes. For example, the party cadres glorify Ioannis Metaxas, the leader of Greece’s interwar fascist regime famous for refusing to co-operate with Nazi Germany, thus paradoxically becoming a symbol of resistance in Greece. The party has systematically emphasised Metaxas’s welfare contributions, including the establishment of the welfare state itself, the introduction of national insurance, a six-day working week, the minimum wage and a range of collective labour agreements (Vasilopoulou and Halikiopoulou 2015).

In terms of its broader economic programme, the Golden Dawn emphasised autonomy and self-sufficiency regarding food, medicine, fuel and weapons. Furthermore, the party proposed nationalising all wealth resources and industries such as energy and allocating funds to Greeks through subsidising domestic production (Figure 8). In terms of immigration, the party emphasised the question of entitlement, making clear that the collective goods of the state should only be available to Greeks, as defined by the ascriptive criteria discussed above. Its rampant nation-statism and emphasis on welfare became evident in the party’s activities on the ground. The Golden Dawn set up a social solidarity programme, presenting itself as an alternative provider of state services. It organised a range of welfare provision activities such as health and job centres, blood donations and ‘soup kitchens’, which would be available only to Greeks upon the presentation of a Greek identity card.

Figure 8: GD’s, ANEL’s and LAOS’ stance on nationalisation



NATIONAL POPULAR FRONT (ELAM)

The National Popular Front (ELAM) is the sister party of the Greek Golden Dawn. It was first established as a Golden Dawn branch in Cyprus. While initially it received few votes despite the ripe crisis conditions in the country, ELAM has increasingly improved its electoral performance. It received 3.7% of the popular vote in the 2016 parliamentary elections with 13,041 votes, while in 2021 it almost doubled its support to 6.8%.

ELAM'S VALUE PROFILE: EXTREME POPULIST ULTRA-NATIONALISM

Like the Golden Dawn, ELAM is an extreme ultra-nationalist party whose ideology centres on an ethnic understanding of the nation which only includes Greek Cypriots. They oppose representative democracy and are openly racist. ELAM's populism is similar to that of the Golden Dawn's, as the party claims to be a popular movement from below, deriving from the Greek Cypriot people. The party also shares the Golden Dawn's anti-system narrative, blaming corrupt and incompetent elites who it deems responsible for the economic crisis in Cyprus. Despite their similarities, research suggests that the Golden Dawn's profile is overall more extreme in terms of violence, paramilitarism and the espousal of Nazism employed in its practices. ELAM has progressively moderated and 'normalised' its populist rhetoric (Katsourides and Pachita 2021).

ELAM'S ECONOMIC AND WELFARE POLICY PROFILE: WELFARE CHAUVINISM AND ECONOMIC STATISM:

The party espouses welfare chauvinism and supports economic statism. It puts forward a similar nationalist-welfare narrative, proposing a large and generous welfare state, but only to Greek Cypriots. The party copied Golden Dawn initiatives during the financial crisis to provide alternative state provisions organising blood donations and soup kitchens. ELAM describes itself as a party for the economically destitute, deriving most of its support from the lower social strata and seeking to protect and promote the interests of the working class and unemployed individuals (Katsourides and Pachita 2021).

VOX

Vox was established in 2013 by individuals with previous links to the centre-right Partido Popular (PP). The party been electorally unsuccessful until 2018, when it obtained political representation in the Andalusian regional elections. During the November 2019 national elections, Vox received 15% of the popular vote, becoming the third-largest party with 52 seats. It is the first RWPP in Spain to gain considerable popular support in the past decades, ending the period of 'Spanish exceptionalism' (Alonso and Rovira Kaltwasser 2015).

VOX'S VALUE PROFILE: DEFENDING SPANISH UNITY

Vox is an RWPP that fulfils the criteria of nationalism, authoritarianism and populism. The party presents itself as a right-wing conservative party with no links to fascism. The fact that it seeks to operate within Spain's representative democratic institutions makes it a radical, as opposed to extreme-right, RWP variant (Turnbull-Dugarte et al. 2020). Vox, therefore, differs from the Greek Golden Dawn in that it has managed to gain support by shedding the stigma of fascism. The party's nationalism centres on the homogeneity of Spanish culture at the expense of the sub-cultures present in the country. Vox's signature theme is the defence of Spanish unity. It advocates the dissolution of Spain's devolved communities and the establishment of a single centralised state government. It is the first party in parliament to defend a complete re-centralisation of the state (Mendes and Dennison 2021).

Vox's nationalism focuses heavily on the maintenance of the national way of life. The party positions itself as pro-family and opposes abortion and same-sex marriage. It supports traditional family values and opposes feminism and gender equality on traditional gender nationalist grounds (Bernardez-Rodal 2020). Its anti-immigrant narrative is based on values: the party is explicitly Islamophobic, similarly to many 'civic nationalist' Western European RWPPs. However, the justification of this position derives largely from the need to defend Spain's Christian democratic heritage rather than secularism, suggesting this narrative is distinct from that of parties such as the French Rassemblement National (RN) that adopt a value-based discourse based on laïcité. Vox supports the deportation of all undocumented immigrants. In the literature, there is an absence of consensus with regards to the party's populism. While the PopuList dataset (Rooduijn et al. 2020) categorises Vox as a radical right-wing populist party, some researchers suggest that the party's populist rhetoric is not a central aspect of its agenda (Turnbull-Dugarte et al. 2020).

VOX'S ECONOMIC AND WELFARE POLICY PROFILE: TAX REDUCTIONS AND WELFARE CHAUVINISM

Vox's welfare and economic policy appears inconsistent, with both elements of a liberal economic policy centring on tax reductions, and, at the same time, calls for maintaining the welfare state for Spanish consumption only. Vox policy choices match the 'blurring' hypothesis, which suggests that to cater for their diverse constituencies, RWPPs downplay the importance of the economy and dedicate comparatively little time to this issue, sometimes adopting inconsistent or unclear policies (Enggist and Pingera 2021).

Similarly to other RWPPs in Western Europe, such as UKIP, the party seeks to fill an ideological space closer to the economic right wing, which advocates for a smaller state. Founded by three former members of PP, Vox commenced as an economically liberal party. Accordingly, the party promotes a right-wing conservative agenda with a focus on market liberalism and reduced state intervention (Olivas-Osuna and Rama 2021). In its 2018 manifesto, VOX proposed a series of tax reductions – for example income and corporate tax – as well as the elimination of fees and taxes and the simplification of regulations and procedures for setting up a company. In line with its positions on Spanish unification, the party also called for a drastic reduction in public spending on regional bodies, proposing centralisation and the merger of municipalities.

On the other hand, in line with its nationalist positions, Vox also puts forward welfare chauvinist ideas. The party supports the welfare state only for natives (Rama et al. 2021) and speaks a language of protection for native Spanish families, workers, pensioners and other at-risk groups. For example, they propose an 'extensive system of tax benefits for families, especially large ones', advocate 'support for the unemployed over 50 and the long-term unemployed by reducing the company's contributions', and pledge to exempt contributory pensions from personal income tax 'for justice to those who have paid taxes throughout their working life' (Vox 2018). The party has also called for reforming the welfare system because it allegedly incentivises immigrants to come to Spain (2018). Since 2019 the party made some changes in their agenda and communication style, increasingly adopting anti-globalist arguments.

CHEGA

Chega was established in 2019 by football TV commentator Andre Ventura. Chega's support has been more modest in comparison to the Golden Dawn and Vox, with the election of one representative in the 2019 national elections. The party performed well during the 2021 Presidential elections, when Ventura managed to capture 11.9% of the vote. Overall this is a fairly new party, in many ways still undefined its terms of ideological identity, often lacking consistency and consensus among its leading cadres. Chega has been described as a 'one-man show' given Ventura's personal visibility.

CHEGA'S VALUE PROFILE: 'LIBERAL CONSERVATISM'

Chega describes itself as 'liberal conservative'. It is a party of the new radical right with a liberal-conservative agenda willing to engage in the democratic process. Like Vox, it has its origins in the mainstream political space rather than the traditional or 'old' extreme right. Overall, the party's rhetoric is similar to that of Vox, bar the absence of the regional/centralisation dynamic. Chega, however, places more emphasis on the populism narrative. Ventura presents himself as the voice of the people betrayed by the established political elites. As such, in comparison to Vox, Chega relies more emphatically on its anti-establishment rhetoric focusing on crime, security and corruption (Marchi 2019). This suggests the party is oriented more towards protest than identity.

Chega's nationalism may be characterised as civic: the party emphasises equal treatment of citizens before the law, without distinctions based on ethnicity, race and religion. The justification is closer to secularism than that of Vox, but there is lack of consensus among party cadres. At the same time, the party is opposed to multi-culturalism, suggesting societal inequalities ought to be addressed by assimilating minorities into the homogeneous social body. Chega's position towards minorities is less consistent: those Chega cadres linked to the Catholic Church oppose the normalisation of the practices of LGBT communities, while the more secular members advocate freedom of the individual in the private sphere. There is agreement, however, in the rejection of "cultural Marxism", as the party opposes initiatives that may be seen as an 'attack on the traditional family', for example the introduction of gender theories in public education (Marchi 2019).

CHEGA'S ECONOMIC AND WELFARE POLICY PROFILE: ECONOMIC NEOLIBERALISM AND WELFARE CHAUVINISM

Chega positions itself as economically liberal. Consistent with the 'blurring hypothesis' (Enggist and Pingera 2021), the party dedicates only a short paragraph to the economy in its 2021 online manifesto. This is in contrast to Vox's much longer section in its 2018 manifesto, although Chega presents a somewhat more consistent narrative. In this short paragraph, the party claims that 'it is not up to the State to be the "owner" of the Economy, as the communists understand it; nor an engine of the economy, as the socialists understand it; or even a dynamizer of the Economy, as the social democrats and democrats – Christians understand it ... It is incumbent upon the State, as the liberal conservatives that we are, to function as an arbitration, regulatory and, at the limit, supplementary entity' (Chega 2021). Despite this, the party still claims primacy of natives over foreigners in its national socioeconomic policies. Its welfare chauvinism, less clear, may be observed in its calls for more restrictive immigration policies according to the country's economic needs, but never to the detriment of the national workforce (Marchi 2019).

ANALYSIS

UNDERSTANDING THE END OF SOUTHERN EUROPEAN EXCEPTIONALISM

Southern European countries share a common experience of economic crisis, but vary in terms of their support for RWPPs. During the crisis, levels of unemployment, youth unemployment, the government deficit, and negative GDP growth were among the highest in Greece, Portugal, Cyprus and Spain, which all introduced harsh austerity measures. Greece, Portugal and Spain share a number of additional demand- and supply-side conditions, including electoral systems that produce bipolarity, a salient left-right cleavage, highly conservative right-wing competitors, a history of right-wing authoritarianism and a fragmentation of the right. Greece experienced a much more protracted crisis, being the last to exit from the bailout agreements with its lenders in summer 2018. It was also the first to experience the rise of an RWPP and the only one to experience the rise of an extreme RWPP variant not only across Southern, but also across Western Europe. While indeed most of Western European Neo-Nazi parties have been in progressive decline precisely because of their nostalgia for fascist ideals, the Golden Dawn was voted into the Greek parliament in 2012 *because of* rather than *despite* its extremism.

A comparison between these countries suggests that support for the Golden Dawn should be understood not just as the product of economic discontent, but more broadly as a response to a perceived breach of the social contract as the Greek economic crisis turned into a political, and subsequently ideological, crisis where the legitimacy of the state and its capacity to provide basic services was at stake (Halikiopoulou and Vasilopoulou 2018; see also Figure 15). The Golden Dawn captured a broad range of discontented voters who saw it as able to propound plausible solutions to the three sets of crises – economic, political, and ideological – that befell Greece and culminated in an overall crisis of democracy. The party's welfarist position was part of these solutions – for example offering goods and services exclusively to Greeks not only helped the party to become identified as an organisation that protects national insiders, but also as an alternative provider of the collective goods of the state, which the latter was seen as unable to deliver. In other words, the Golden Dawn presented itself as a substitute for the state and saviour of the nation when the nation-state was in crisis. As such it should be understood to a great extent as a product of that crisis.

Figure 10 shows the profile of the Golden Dawn voter: a male individual with low or intermediary education who is distrustful of the parliament, disillusioned with the establishment and most likely right-wing. Our analysis of ESS data confirms that bottom income, religious, male individuals with cultural concerns over immigration are more likely to vote for RWPP. Indeed, research confirms that immigration is positively associated with RWPP support in Greece, with stronger effects during the Greek economic crisis (Roupakias and Chletsos 2020). Although cultural concerns over immigration are the strongest predictors of RWPP support, as Figure 9 illustrates, the majority of people with immigration concerns among the RWPP electorate have both cultural and economic concerns (72%).

This suggests a strong economic story linking anti-immigration attitudes to RWPP in the country.

While the indictment of Golden Dawn cadres has eliminated – for now – the prospect of extreme right representation and the 2019 national elections marked a 'normalisation' of Greek politics with the return of the mainstream ND to power and the decline of populist parties, it is worth noting that another RWPP, the Greek Solution (EL), entered parliament at that time with 3.7% of the popular vote. This is a radical right variant with a nationalist-populist narrative. After all, the Golden Dawn was not the only RWPP to enjoy parliamentary representation during the metapolitefsi era – although it was the only extreme right variant to do so. Other RWPPs in parliament have included the Popular Orthodox Rally (LAOS) and the Independent Greeks (ANEL), both splinter parties from the mainstream New Democracy established in 2000 in 2012, respectively. While these parties are also nationalist, unlike the Golden Dawn they do not premise their ideology on Nationalist Socialism and do not adopt violent practices and can be therefore categorised as radical variants (Vasilopoulou and Halikiopoulou 2015). Both parties joined government coalitions. LAOS joined the government of national unity between PASOK, ND and LAOS formed in 2011 within the context of the crisis under the leadership of Lucas Papademos, a former head of the Bank of Greece. Given its association with 'systemic' politics, the party lost its support and became marginalised after this. ANEL formed a surprise coalition with the radical left SYRIZA in 2015. While seemingly unlikely bedfellows, the two parties were united by their anti-bailout stance, converging on their opposition to austerity and external interference in domestic economic affairs. All this suggests that there is latent support for RWPPs as well as strong left-right polarisation in Greece.

Neither Cyprus, Spain nor Portugal experienced the rise of an RWPP in the immediate aftermath of the crisis despite the presence of ripe conditions. Although ELAM put forward a similar anti-system narrative blaming corrupt elites for the economic crisis, the latter did not benefit the rise of RWPPs in Cyprus. Arguably, the situation was somewhat different in Cyprus, as political conflict did not threaten austerity legislation, protest was more limited and there was no party system collapse (Charalambous and Christoforou 2018). The party's progressive rise from 2016 onwards may be understood in terms of its attempts to normalise its rhetoric (Katsourides and Pachita 2021). ELAM, however, remains closer to the extreme rather than the radical right category, and its nationalism remains predominantly ethnic. The party continues to place an extensive focus on the economy and at-risk social groups, proposing clear nationalist-welfarist positions. These include, for example, heavily taxing multi-national companies, introducing a EUR 1,200 minimum wage and an EUR 800 minimum pension, offering generous benefits to vulnerable groups and at the same time cutting benefits for immigrants and Turkish-Cypriots (ELAM 2021).

In Spain and Portugal, extreme right RWPP variants, including Democracia Nacional and Espana 2000 in the former and Partido Nacional Renovador in the latter, remained marginalised. This could be because, in sharp contrast to Greece, where the Golden Dawn was openly extreme, and voted for because of its extremism, these parties failed to distance themselves from fascism and portray a more moderate image (Mendes and Dennison 2021). Democracia Nacional (DN), a neo-Francoist party founded in 1995 by individuals who had previously held positions in neo-fascist organisations, unsuccessfully attempted to put forward a more moderate image in a bid to attract mostly conservative right-wing voters. The party continued to be seen as fascist, with its model of political

organisation opposed parliamentary democracy and its connections to extremist groups contributing to its stigmatisation. Similarly, the Portuguese PNR was created in 2000 from the merger of several minor parties and extreme right movements, which included neo-fascists and individuals nostalgic of Salazar. While like the Spanish DN the party tried to modernise its profile, the party has remained a part of the ‘old’ extreme right, not seen as a credible contender in the Portuguese political system.

Spain, and less so Portugal, experienced the rise of RWPP more recently with Vox and Chega, respectively. Both parties are splinter parties from the mainstream right and have benefited electorally from a significantly less stigmatised image (Mendes and Dennison 2021). This is in line with Western European RWPPs which have increased their electoral support through a ‘normalisation’ strategy and the adoption of civic nationalist narratives that emphasise values as opposed to the biological criteria of national belonging. There are also case-specific dynamics at play, however. In Spain, Vox has profited significantly from nationalist concerns over regional separatism, as the constitutional crisis in Catalonia has revealed the preference of a substantial number of Spanish for a centralised state with little or no autonomy for the regions (Turnbull-Dugarte et al. 2020). Our empirical analysis confirms that middle-aged, male individuals in low and middle-skill occupations or on social benefits, and have authoritarian attitudes are more likely to support RWPPs in Spain. These individuals have both cultural and economic concerns over immigration, are religious and distrust the EU Parliament (Figure 11). In terms of composition, the RWPP electorate is quite divided, with 42% having no immigration concerns, 32% having both types of concerns, and 13% having only cultural or only economic concerns, respectively (Figure 9).

In Portugal, Chega has attracted a lot of support through its populist anti-system and anti-corruption discourse (Marchi 2019). While sample size does not allow meaningful conclusions to be drawn about Chega voters from ESS data, recent research using local election results sheds light on RWPP voter trends (see e.g. Afonso 2021). According to this research, factors such as unemployment, average income levels as well as the share of immigrants and their change over time do not appear to explain variation in shares of the RWPP vote. Instead, there are positive associations between RWPP vote share and the share of social assistance benefit recipients, as well as with the size of the local Roma minority (Afonso 2021).

Figure 9: Distribution of immigration concerns

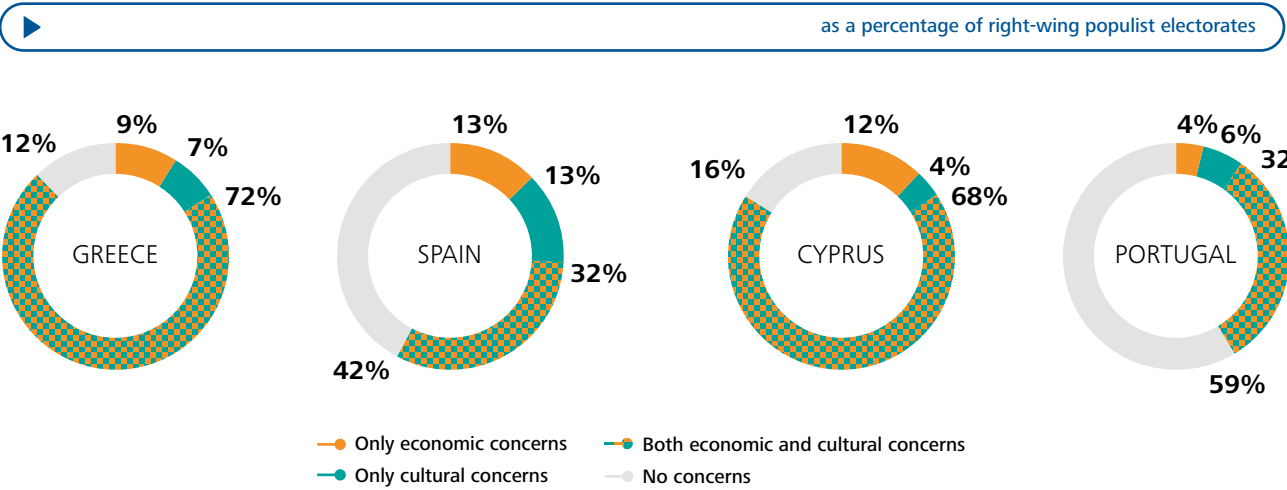
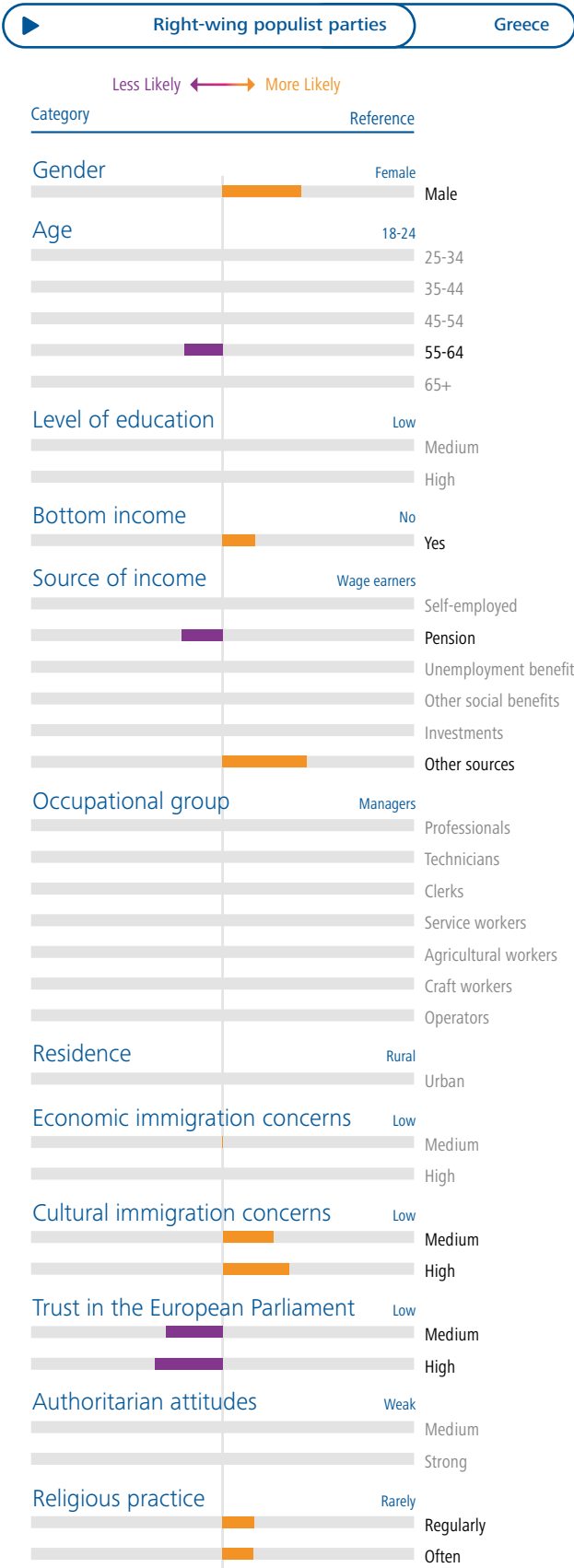
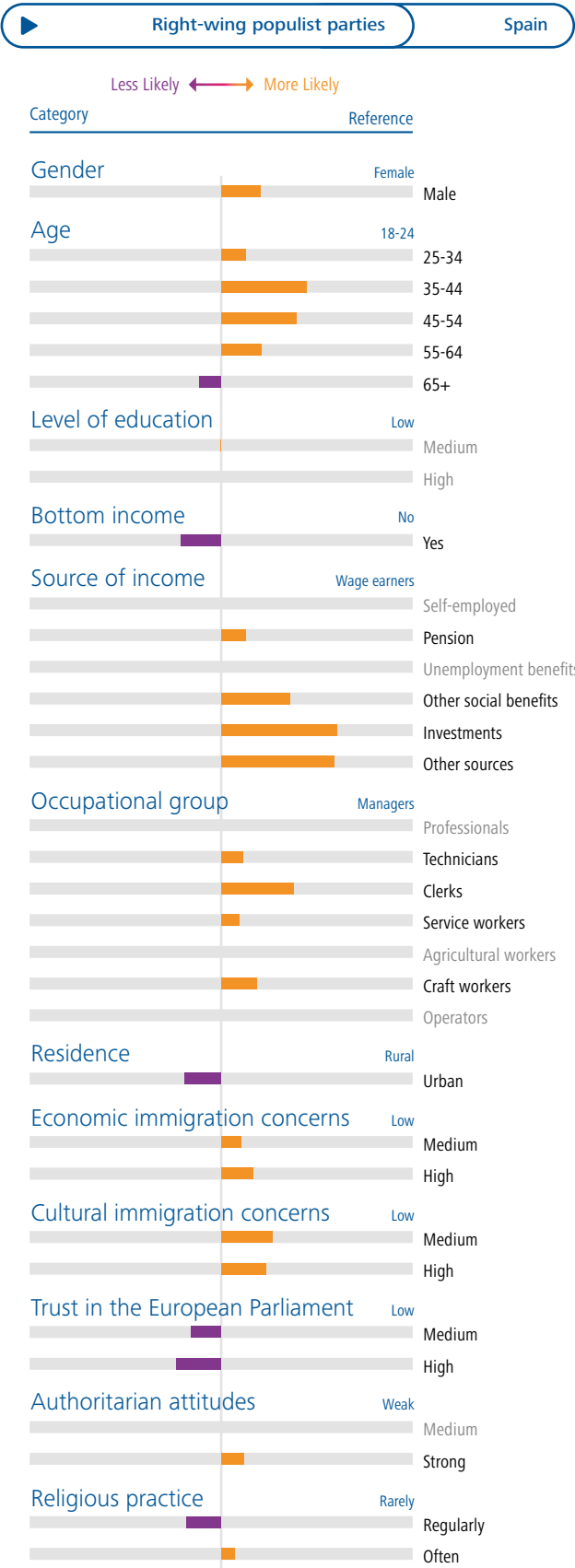


Figure 10: Characteristics affecting the probability to vote



Only statistically significant results are shown.

Figure 11: Characteristics affecting the probability to vote



Only statistically significant results are shown.

RECOMMENDATIONS

HOW SHOULD PROGRESSIVES RESPOND?

How should progressive parties in these countries respond? Our comparison of the RWPP and centre-left electorates in the four countries suggests that co-opting RWPP positions will likely be costly for progressive parties. This finding is consistent with recent literature, which suggests that the centre-left and RWPP electorates are considerably different (Abou Chadi et al. 2021) and that centre-left repositioning towards RWPP restrictive immigration policies may attract a small number of RWPP voters, but alienate a much larger proportion of their own voters (Chou et al. 2021). A more beneficial strategy for the progressive left is to instead compete on issues the left owns, such as equality.

First, RWPP core voters, i.e. those voters who oppose immigration on principle and have strong cultural concerns over immigration, are a minority among the entire electorate in all four countries. These voters are a larger group in Greece and Cyprus, accounting for 11% and 15% of the electorate, respectively, than in Spain and Portugal, where they account for only 7% of the entire electorate in each country (Figure 12). These voters are principled RWPP voters and are unlikely to switch to the centre-left even if it adopts ‘copycat’ strategies. They identify more staunchly with a right-wing platform and are more likely to switch from ‘far’ to centre-right. They are the least likely centre-left constituency and do not constitute a centre-left target voter group.

Second, a comparison between the RWPP and centre-left voter profiles in Greece and Spain (Figures 13+14) shows considerable differences. In Greece, older individuals who are service or craft workers and have economic concerns over immigration are more likely to vote for the centre-left. In Spain, female, middle-aged or older secular individuals who trust the EU are more likely to vote for the centre-left. These individuals are likely not self-employed or have income from investments. They are also unlikely to have cultural concerns over immigration and are therefore likely to not be attracted to culturalist anti-immigration narratives. Indeed, among the centre-left electorate, the RWPP signature theme (i.e. exclusively cultural concerns over immigration) has very little prevalence. As above, in Greece and Cyprus this percentage is higher with 11% and 21%, respectively, while in Spain and Portugal it is tiny with 6% and 3%, respectively (Figure 12).

Third, even among the RWPP electorates, individuals with exclusively cultural concerns over immigration (i.e. core voters) are a minority. The RWPP electorates in all four countries are composed of a significant percentage of people with either no immigration concerns or combined economic and cultural concerns (Figure 9). This suggests the majority of voters of these parties are protest or peripheral voters, i.e. voters whose opposition to immigration is contingent. These voters are primarily concerned with the economic impact of immigration and tend to support the populist right as a way of expressing their discontent and punishing the establishment. They are likely to feel economically insecure and may have lost trust in institutions and the political system both at the domestic and EU levels. Because they have salient inequality concerns – broadly defined – and have no principled opposition to immigration, these voters can ‘switch’ to parties that emphasise

issues related to equality and offer effective policy solutions to them. This voter group is a more likely centre-left target constituency through a broader ‘equality’ narrative.

Fourth, the percentage of voters with immigration concerns among the centre-left electorate is unusually high in Greece and Cyprus compared to Spain and Portugal (Figure 12) and indeed most other European countries. Still, these voters have either predominantly economic or combined economic and cultural concerns, which is consistent with arguments that native attitudes toward immigration are largely shaped by labour market concerns (Roupakias and Chletsos 2020). By contrast, the vast majority of people among the centre-left electorates in Spain and Portugal – 66% and 65%, respectively – have no immigration concerns. The ones that do – 15% in Spain and 22% in Portugal – are driven by economic considerations. As such, their underlying frustrations could be understood as driven by inequality / material considerations and would likely switch if their economic concerns are accommodated.

Figure 12: Distribution of immigration concerns

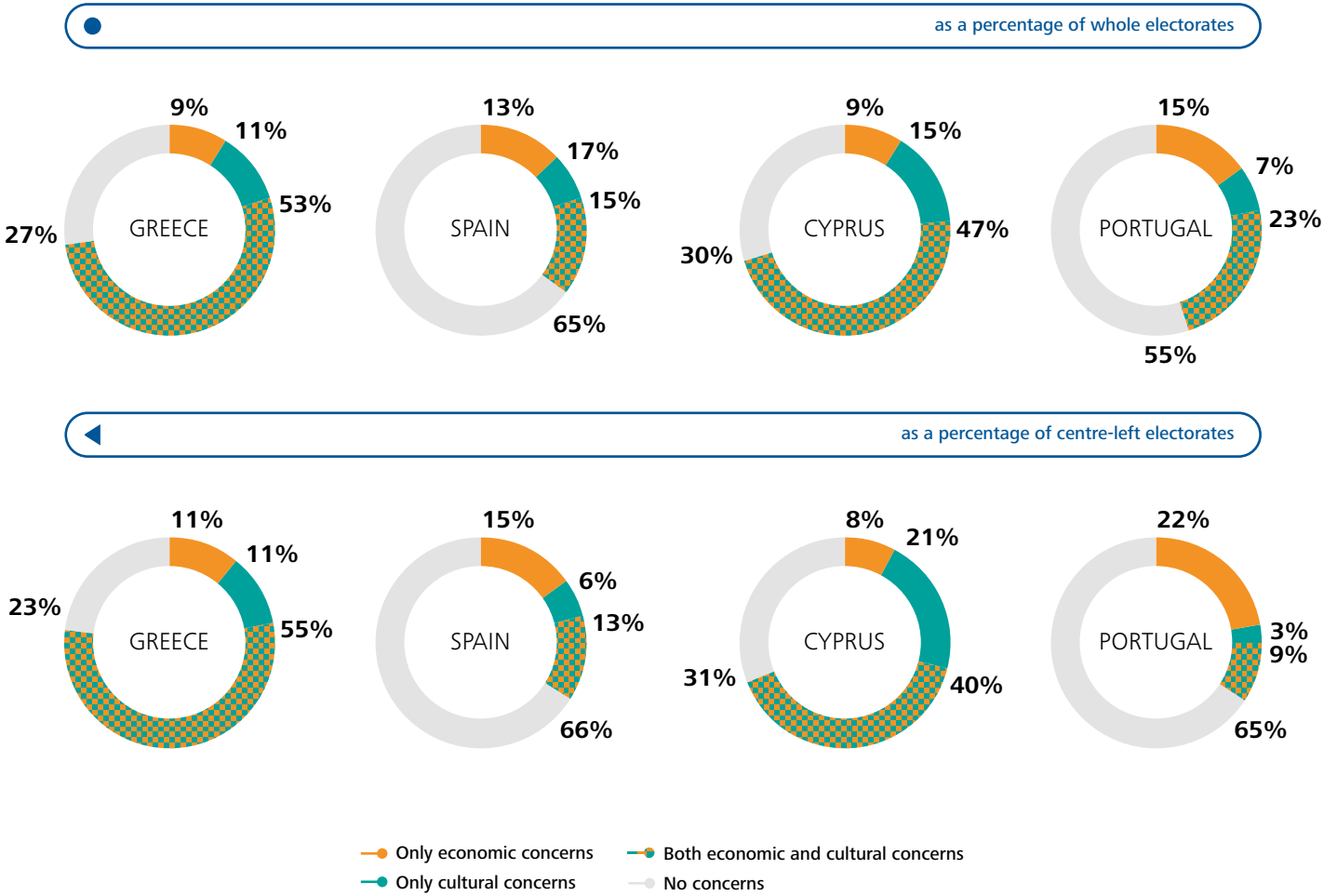


Figure 13: Characteristics affecting the probability to vote

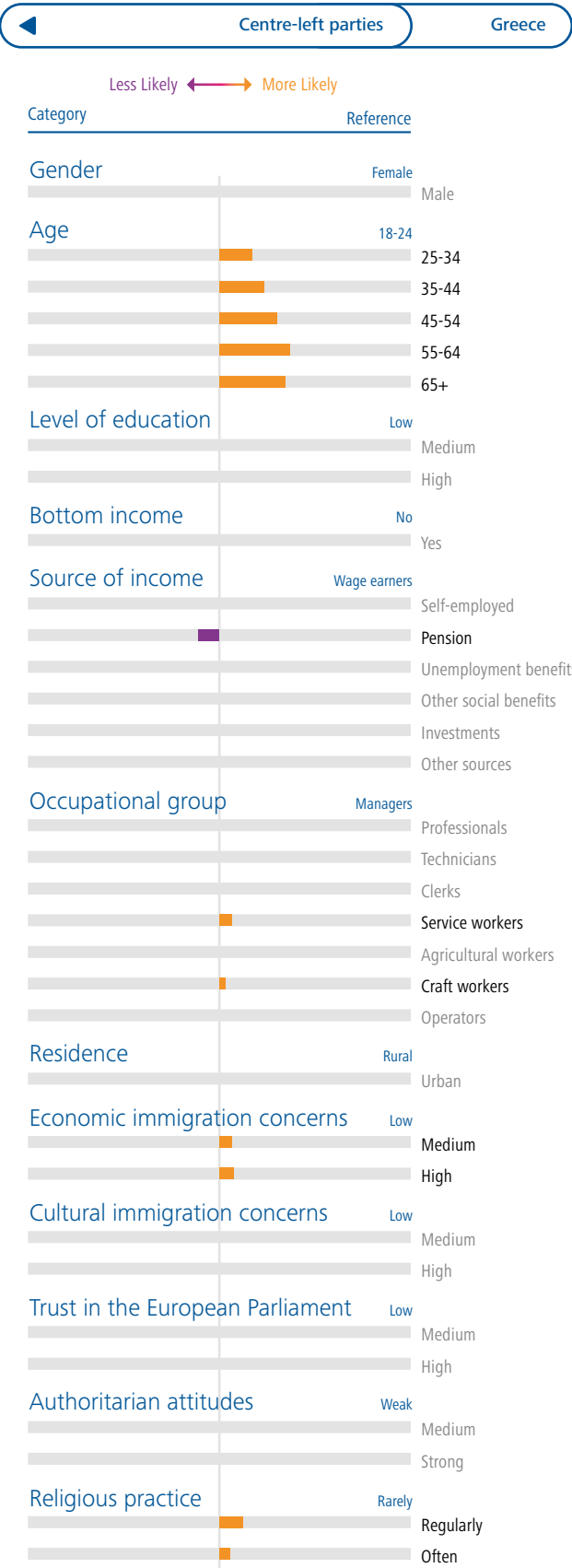


Figure 14: Characteristics affecting the probability to vote

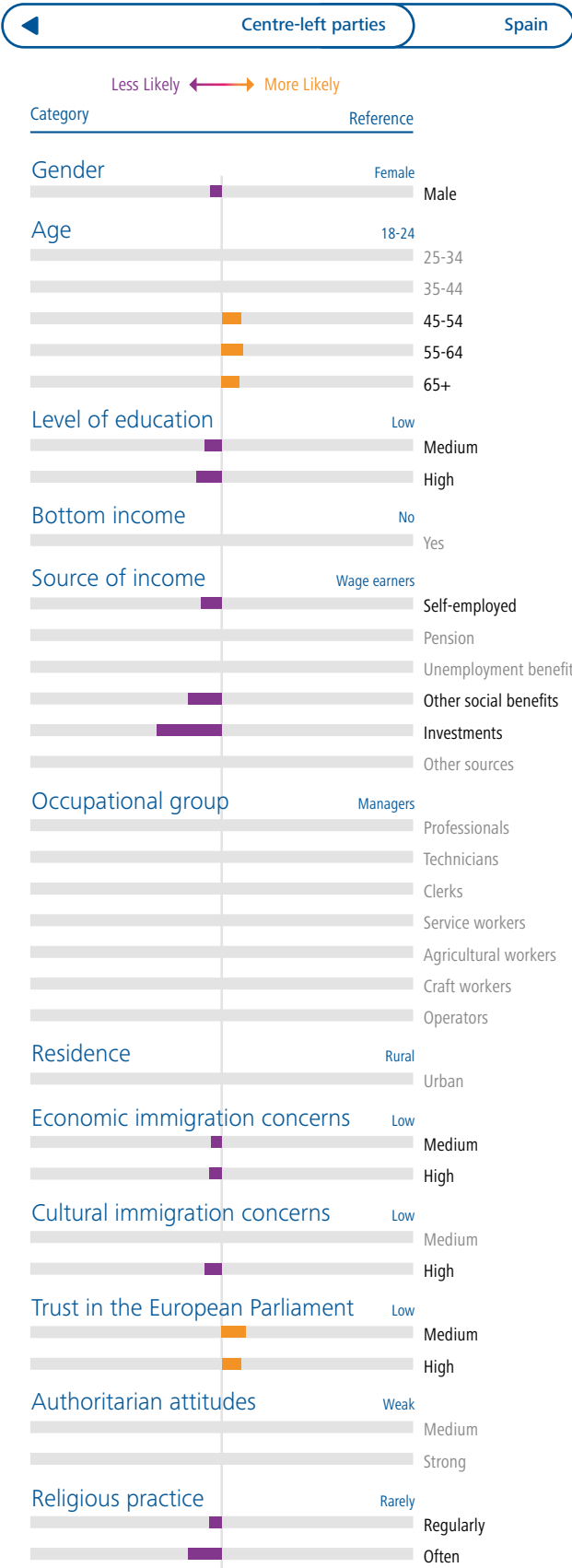
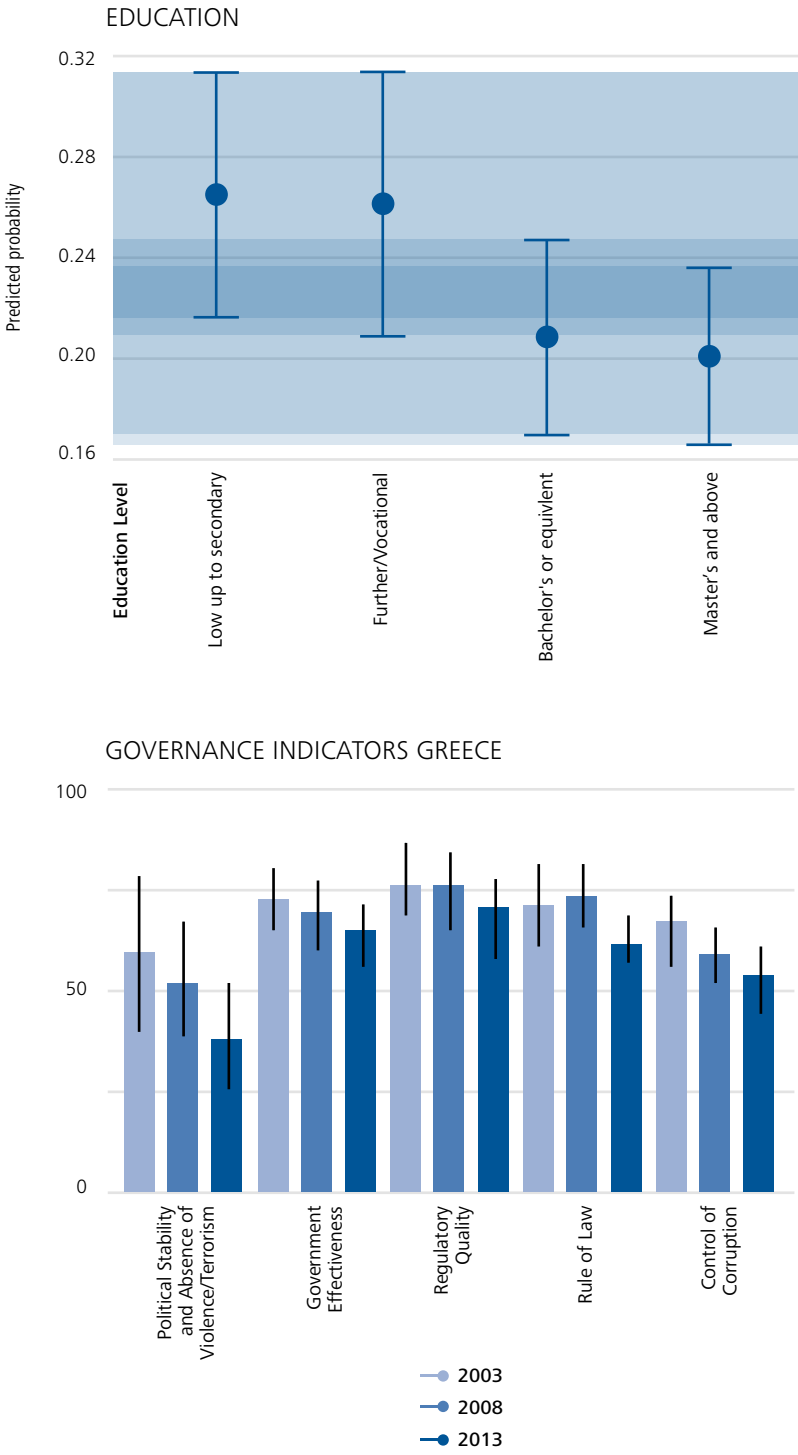


Figure 15: The predictive power of education and governance deficits in the Greek case



REFERENCES

- Abou-Chadi, T., R. Mittereiger and C. Mudde (2021). Left Behind by the working class? Social democracy's electoral crisis and the rise of the radical right, Berlin: Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung.
- Afonso, A. (2021). Correlates of aggregate support for the radical right in Portugal. *Research & Politics* 8(3).
- Bernardez-Rodal, A., P. R. Rey and Y. G. Franco (2020). Radical right parties and anti-feminist speech on Instagram: Vox and the 2019 Spanish general election. *Party Politics*.
- Charalambous, G. and P. Christoforou (2018). Far-Right Extremism and Populist Rhetoric: Greece and Cyprus during an Era of Crisis, *South European Society and Politics*, 23:4, 451-477.
- Chega (2021). <https://partidochega.pt>.
- Chou, W., R. Dancygier, N. Egami and AA. Jamal (2021). Competing for Loyalists? How Party Positioning Affects Populist Radical Right Voting. *Comparative Political Studies*. 54(12):2226-2260.
- ELAM (2021). <https://elamcy.com/theseis/>.
- Enggist, M. and M. Pinggera (2021). Radical right parties and their welfare state stances – not so blurry after all?, *West European Politics*.
- Halikiopoulou, D. and T. Vlandas (2020). When economic and cultural interests align: the anti-immigration voter coalitions driving far right party success in Europe. *European Political Science Review* 12(4): 427-448.
- Halikiopoulou, D. and S. Vasilopoulou (2018). Breaching the Social Contract: Crises of Democratic Representation and Patterns of Extreme Right Party Support. *Government and Opposition* 53(1): 26-50.
- Halikiopoulou, D., S. Mock and S. Vasilopoulou (2013). The civic zeitgeist: nationalism and liberal values in the European radical right. *Nations and Nationalism* 19(1): 107-127.
- Katsourides, Y. and E. K. Pachita (2021). Normalising far right party rhetoric: the impact of media populist frames and coverage on the electoral prospects of far-right parties in the case of Cyprus, *Journal of Contemporary European Studies*.
- Marchi, R. (2019). 'Um olhar exploratorio sobre o partido Chega', *Observador*, 21 December, available at: <https://observador.pt/opiniao/um-olhar-exploratorio-sobre-o-partido-chega/>.
- Mendes, M.S. and J. Dennison (2021). Explaining the emergence of the radical right in Spain and Portugal: salience, stigma and supply, *West European Politics*, 44:4, 752-775.
- Norris, P. and R. Inglehart (2019). Cultural backlash : Trump, Brexit, and the rise of authoritarian-populism.
- Olivas Osuna, J. J. and J. Rama (2021). COVID-19: A Political Virus? VOX's Populist Discourse in Times of Crisis, *Frontiers in Political Science*.
- Rama, J., L. Zanotti, S.J. Turnbull-Dugarte, and A. Santana (2021). *VOX: The rise of the Spanish Populist Radical Right*, Abingdon: Routledge.
- Rathgeb, P. and M. R. Busemeyer (2021). How to study the populist radical right and the welfare state? *West European Politics*.
- Roupakias, S. and M. Chletsos (2020). Immigration and far-right voting: evidence from Greece. *Annals of Regional Science* 65(3): 591-617.
- Turnbull-Dugarte, S., J. Rama and A. Santana (2020). The Baskerville's dog suddenly started barking: voting for VOX in the 2019 Spanish general elections, *Political Research Exchange*, 2:1, 1781543.
- Vasilopoulou, S. and D. Halikiopoulou (2015). *The Golden Dawn's nationalist Solution: Explaining the Rise of the Far Right in Greece*. (New York: Palgrave).
- Vlandas, T. and D. Halikiopoulou (2021). Welfare state policies and far right party support: moderating 'insecurity effects' among different social groups. *West European Politics*.
- Vox (2018). 100 Medidas para la España Viva. VOX España. March. https://www.voxespana.es/biblioteca/espana/2018m/gal_c2d72e181103013447.pdf.

**FRIEDRICH
EBERT 
STIFTUNG**