

EASTERN EUROPE

POLAND, HUNGARY AND SLOVENIA



POLAND

Law and Justice (PiS)

HUNGARY

Fidesz
Jobbik

SLOVENIA

Slovenian Democratic Party (SDS)
Slovenian National Party (SNS)



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

EASTERN EUROPE: POLAND, HUNGARY AND SLOVENIA

PATTERNS OF SUCCESS

11

PARTY PROFILES

LAW AND JUSTICE (PIS)

FIDESZ

JOBBIK

SLOVENIAN DEMOCRATIC PARTY (SDS)

SLOVENIAN NATIONAL PARTY (SNS)

20

ANALYSIS

UNDERSTANDING THE RADICALISATION OF THE MAINSTREAM RIGHT IN EASTERN EUROPE

24

CONCLUSION

COMPARING RIGHT-WING POPULIST AND CENTRE-LEFT ELECTORATES IN EASTERN EUROPE

28

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-Bachseltens | www.bueroblank.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’.

EASTERN EUROPE: POLAND, HUNGARY AND SLOVENIA

PATTERNS OF SUCCESS

Eastern European RWPP trajectories are the product of historical conjectures that include the communist experience. The dominant pattern is of radicalised mainstream parties that increasingly adopt populist, illiberal and authoritarian policy positions based on ethnic nationalism. This differs from Western Europe, where most RWPPs commenced as niche actors operating on the fringes of the political system. Western European RWPPs progressively increased their support beyond their secure voter base by adopting civic nationalist narratives and progressively permeated mainstream ground either as coalition partners or as credible opposition parties.

There are notable variations within Eastern Europe itself. One important distinction is between the more ethnically pluralistic societies such as Latvia and Estonia, where RWPPs mobilise against larger politicised ethnic groups, and the more ethnically homogenous countries such as Poland, Hungary and Slovenia, where mobilisation takes place along socially conservative lines (Bustikova 2018). These cases are characterised by radicalised mainstream RWPPs in government, resulting in democratic backsliding in power (Pirro and Stanley 2021). Given the low levels of immigration in the region, Eastern European RWPPs tend to target domestic minorities. As such, there is a strong association of minority policies with democratisation in Eastern Europe (Bustikova 2018).

Hungary, Poland and Slovenia are prominent examples of radicalised mainstream parties in power with Fidesz, PiS and the SDS, respectively. Smaller RWPPs, on the other hand, have been in a state of flux: initially some, for example Jobbik, experienced an increase in their support, but then declined, largely as a result of the radicalisation of the mainstream, indicating a weakness of liberal democratic consolidation (Bustikova 2018).

DEMAND: WHO VOTES FOR RWPPS IN EASTERN EUROPE?

Eastern European voters differ from their Western European counterparts in many respects. They tend to be more religious and have stronger authoritarian attitudes. They vary in terms of their immigration scepticism. Overall, the link between anti-immigrant attitudes and RWPP support tends to be stronger in Western Europe than in the East (Allen 2017).

In Poland, older male, educated rural dwellers who are either professionals or employed in the agricultural sectors are more likely to support RWPPs. These individuals are more likely to be religious, distrust the EU, have authoritarian attitudes and cultural but not economic concerns over immigration.

In Hungary, middle-aged, educated rural dwellers who are religious but have no immigration concerns tend to vote for RWPPs.

In Slovenia, middle-aged, male, religious individuals with cultural immigration concerns are more likely to vote for RWPPs.

POLAND



Law and Justice (PiS)

HUNGARY



Fidesz



Jobbik

SLOVENIA



Slovenian Democratic Party (SDS)



Slovenian National Party (SNS)

Figure 1: RWPP national election history in Poland 2000-2021

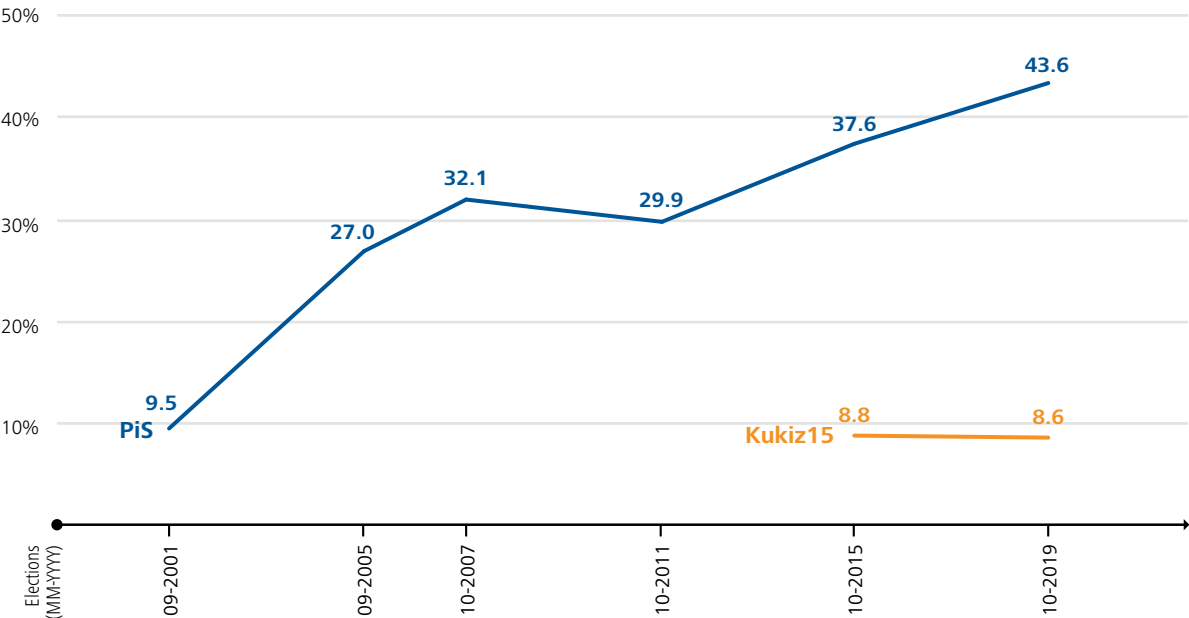


Figure 2: RWPP national election history in Hungary 2000-2021

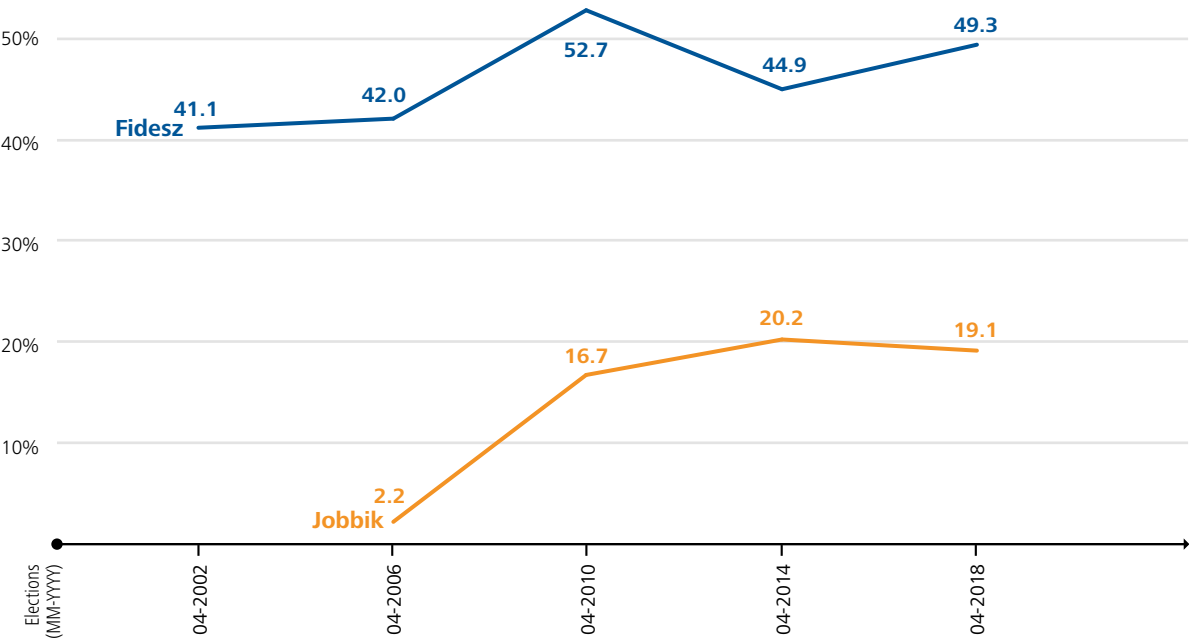


Figure 3: RWPP national election history in Slovenia 2000-2021

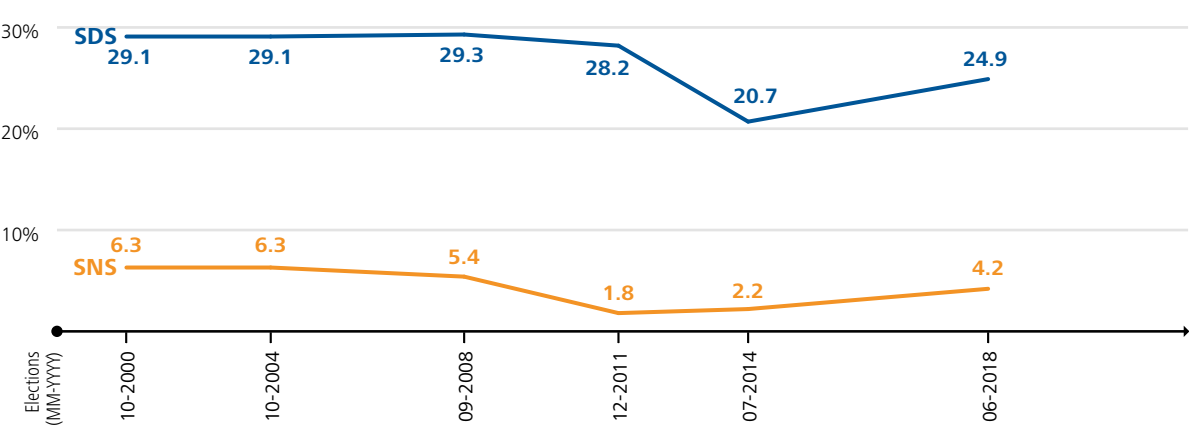
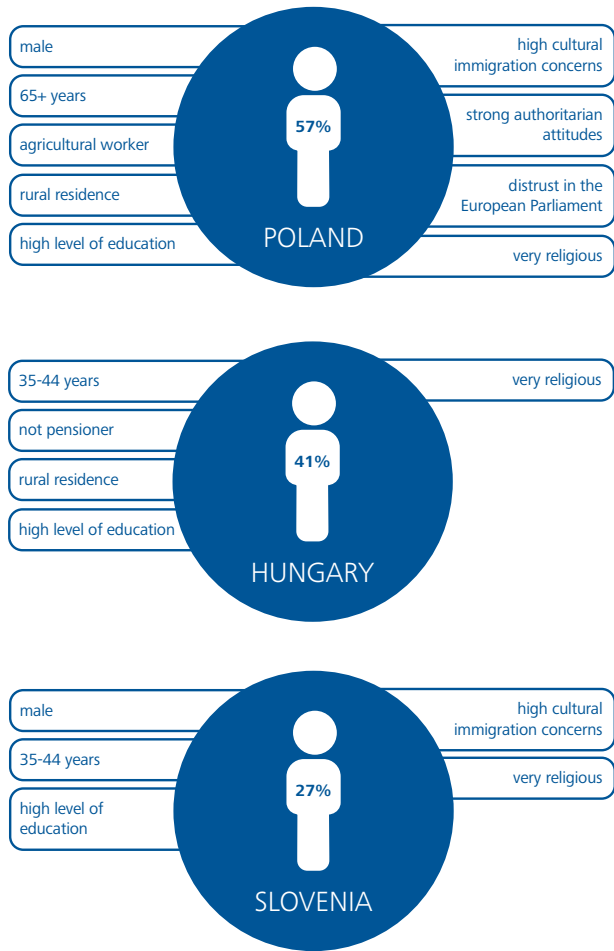
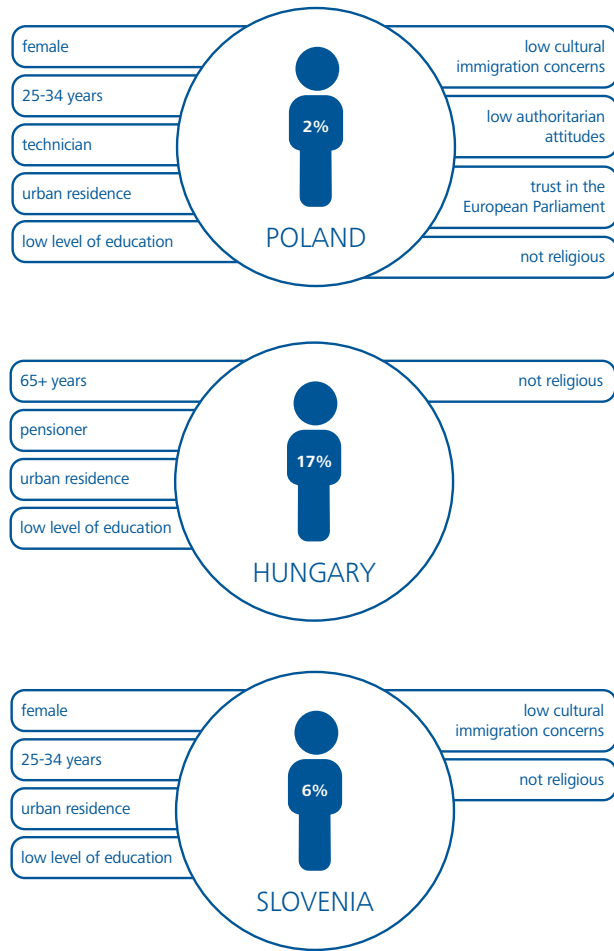


Figure 4: Who is the most likely right-wing populist party voter?



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

Figure 5: 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?

Fidesz, PiS and the SDS commenced as mainstream parties and gradually radicalised, becoming more right-wing. They all tend to draw on predominantly ethnic forms of nationalism (Vachudova 2020). While the influx of Syrian refugees had a significant impact on their agendas, incentivising them to focus more on Islam, their justification for these exclusionary agendas remains predominantly grounded on ethnic criteria of national belonging. This also sets them apart from their Western European counterparts, which, in their majority, justify their anti-Muslim positions on civic nationalist grounds. Their economic positions tend to be ‘blurry’. They employ anti-Western narratives that focus on Western ‘exploitation’ of the region and emphasise the importance of empowering domestic companies. They are welfare chauvinist and have implemented a range of social policies to protect native families.

PARTY PROFILES

LAW AND JUSTICE (PiS)

Law and Justice (PiS) was founded by brothers Jarosław and Lech Kaczyński in 2001. While initially focused on anti-corruption and anti-establishment politics, PiS has progressively turned towards illiberalism, engaging in democratic backsliding and attempts to undermine the constitutional rights and freedoms of individuals and social groups (Pirro and Stanley 2021). The party has been in power in Poland since 2015.

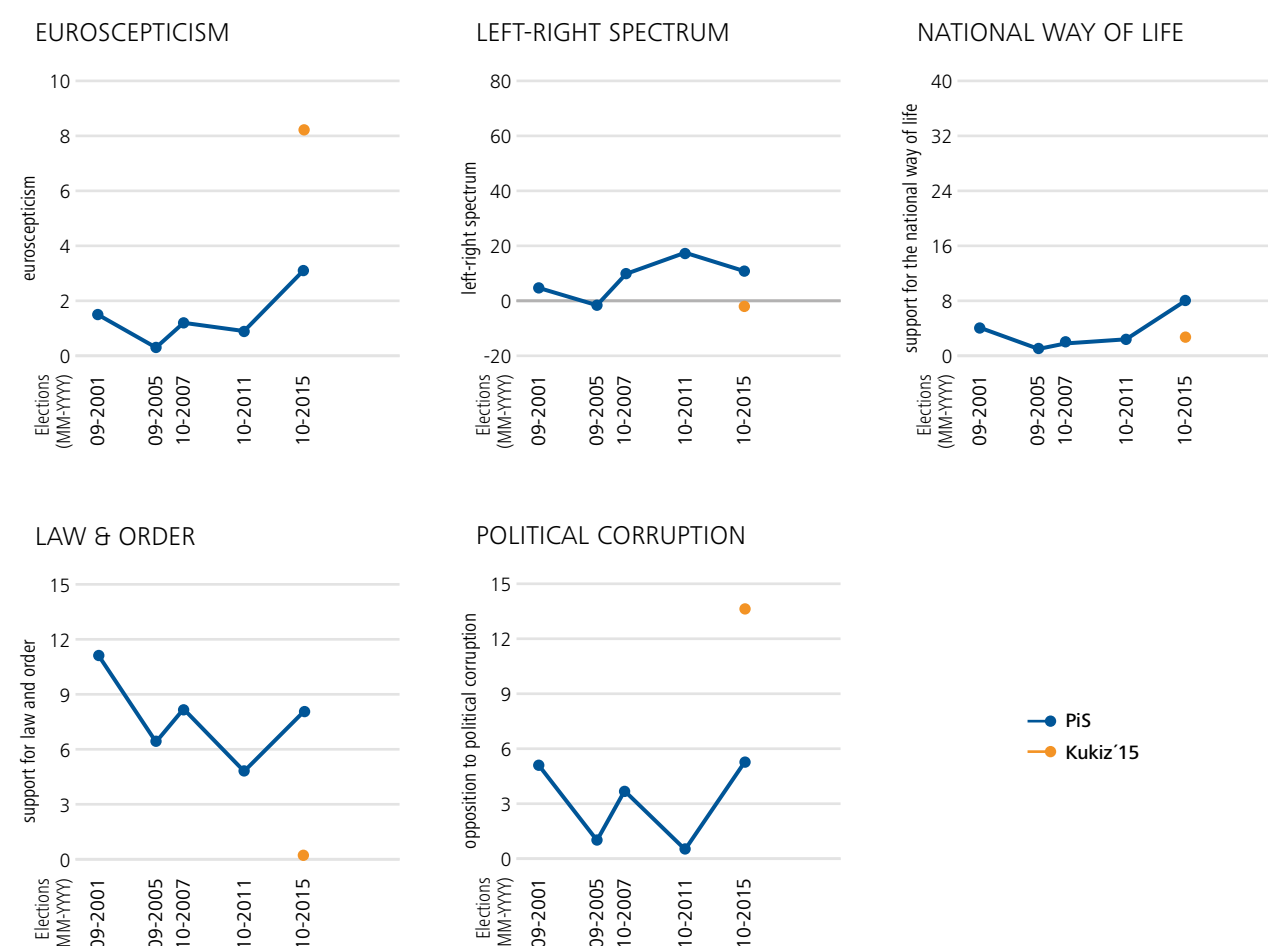
PiS’ VALUE PROFILE: ‘ETHNOPOPULISM’

PiS falls under the category of ‘Ethnopolitism’, which includes parties that merge populist with ethnic nationalist narratives, i.e. narratives that define the nation in ethnic/cultural terms (Vachudova 2020). Overall, the party has become progressively more right-wing, Eurosceptic and nationalist. It places extensive emphasis on the Polish nation’s unity and homogeneity, which it defines through ascriptive criteria. Its ethno-populist discourse focuses on the ‘betrayal’ of ordinary Poles by exploitative domestic elites who represent foreign interests (Bill and Stanely 2019). PiS adopts a harsh stance on immigration, refugees and minorities, including LGBT communities. Some members of the party are openly anti-Semitic.

Initially, PiS was an anti-establishment party focusing on corruption. Its positions on corruption have fluctuated over time. Its nationalist, Eurosceptic and left-right positions have also fluctuated, with the party becoming overall more Eurosceptic and nationalist. In addition, its progressive, illiberal turn has been accompanied by staunch positions on law and order (Figure 6), strengthening ties with the Catholic Church and support for the traditional family, which it describes as ‘the basic unit of society with unquestionable rights’ (Folvarčný and Kopeček 2020). PiS rejects abortion and supports measures that protect the unborn child’s life on these grounds.

Although, similarly to Western European RWPPs, PiS has progressively targeted Islam to cultivate and capitalise on resentment against Muslim refugees, its overall narrative remains more closely aligned to ethnic nationalism. The party criticises Western values and stresses the alleged dangers of multiculturalism, liberalism and ‘gender’ ideologies. Instead, it seeks to defend Polish culture on the basis of traditional Christian family values and ascriptive criteria of national belonging. Party members often resort to racist hate speech in the public sphere to create resentment and fear.

Figure 6: PiS' and Kukiz' stance on euroscepticism, the left-right spectrum, the national way of life, law & order, and political corruption



PiS' ECONOMIC AND WELFARE POLICY PROFILE: NATIONALISM AND WELFARE CHAUVINISM

In terms of its economic / welfare policy profile, PiS conforms to the 'blurry' pattern. On the one hand, it favours economic growth and has supported private ownership and tax decreases. On the other hand, it also supports nationalisation policies that prioritise domestic entrepreneurs and favours maintaining state ownership in major companies and regulating banks and the stock market (Folvarčny and Kopeček 2020; Figure 7).

Overall the party supports welfare policies, although this has declined over time (Figure 7). Its economic and welfare policies are largely informed by nationalism. PiS focused on a range of purported 'injustices' perpetrated by the West on Poland and argues that the dominance of cosmopolitan values, the failure of elites to distribute the benefits of economic growth in an equitable manner, and the 'colonisation' of political institutions have left Poland in ruins (Stanley and Stanley 2019). Accordingly, the party adopts a welfare chauvinist agenda that prioritises native Poles, and has introduced a range of public welfare policies oriented towards supporting various social groups. These include, for example, free medication for the over-75s and pregnant women, increasing the minimum wage, lowering of the pension age and an extensive pro-family programme, which included large contributions per child.

Figure 7: PiS' and Kukiz' stance on nationalisation, welfare, protectionism, and market economy



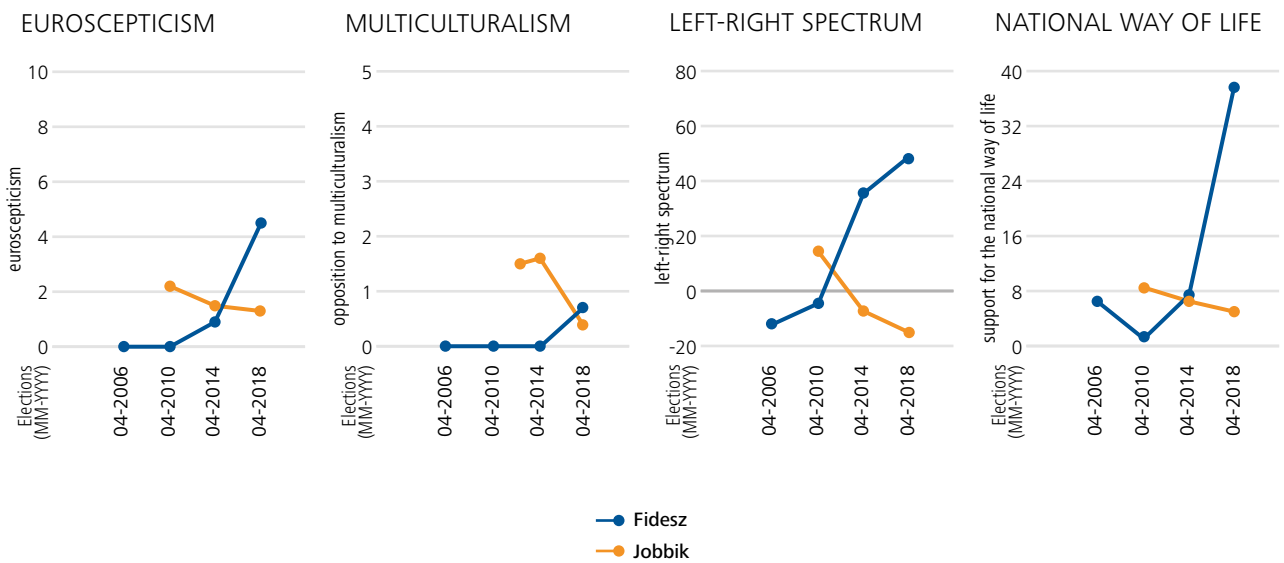
FIDESZ

Fidesz was founded as a youth organisation in 1988 by Viktor Orban. Initially, the party followed a liberal and anti-communist agenda. Its first shift to the right took place after 1994, with the increasing adoption of religious-national conservative ideas. Around the turn of the millennium, the party adopted a populist rhetoric and began to focus on the principles of Catholic social teaching (Pytlas 2013). In 1998, Fidesz formed a coalition government with two other parties, and Orbán became prime minister. The party lost the election in 2002 and remained in opposition until 2010 when, with 52.7% of the vote, Orbán became prime minister for the second time. Subsequently, Fidesz secured supermajorities in 2014 and 2018 following electoral processes deemed free but not entirely fair (Pirro and Stanley 2021). Overall the party is characterised by a turn towards illiberalism and democratic backsliding. In 2011, Fidesz introduced a Fundamental Law that makes government decisions very difficult to alter or repeal (Pirro and Stanley 2021), ensuring its policies survive the party.

FIDESZ’S VALUE PROFILE: RIGHT-WING NATIONALISM

Fidesz has become progressively more right-wing, conservative and illiberal. As Figure 8 illustrates, the party’s move to the right of the political spectrum on national and cultural issues is striking. The party espouses an ethnic form of nationalism and portrays itself as a defender of traditional values. It promotes Christian white nationalist ideals and opposes Islam, employing ethnic nationalist justifications. The party has successfully mobilised support by capitalising on the Syrian refugee question on these grounds – for example, the party organised its 2018 election campaign around the slogan “Stop Soros,” suggesting that the philanthropist George Soros was planning to bring millions of Muslims into Europe in order to destroy European culture (Vachudova 2020). Fidesz has also become increasingly Eurosceptic. Gradually, the party has displaced the extreme right party Jobbik (Pirro et al. 2021).

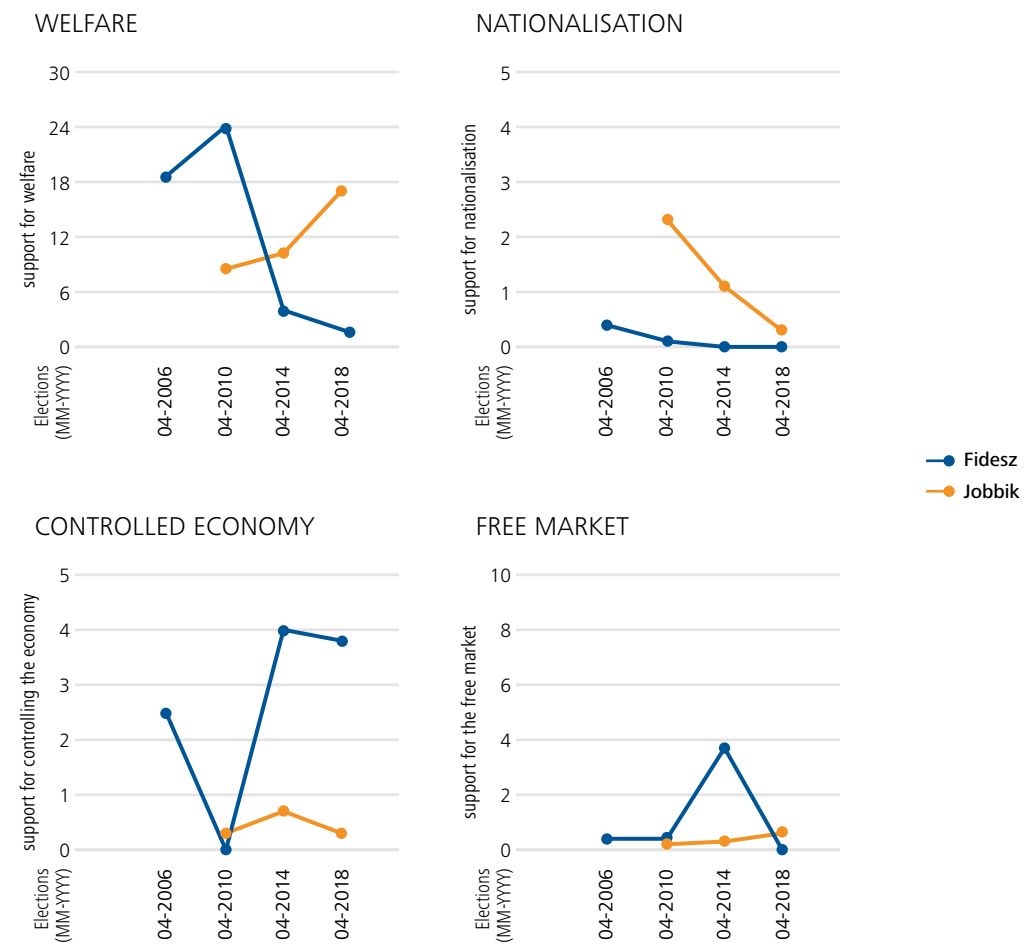
Figure 8: Fidesz’ and Jobbik’s stance on euroscepticism, multiculturalism, the left-right spectrum and the national way of life



FIDESZ’S ECONOMIC AND WELFARE POLICY PROFILE: INCONSISTENT ECONOMIC POSITIONS AND WELFARE CHAUVINISM

Fidesz instrumentalises opposition to neo-liberal economic policies, which it suggests the West is imposing on Hungary. Taking advantage of the aftermath of the financial crisis, it puts forward a narrative that attacks liberal democracy more broadly on these grounds. On the one hand, the party supports economic protectionism and openly attacks foreign-owned companies, the IMF and the EU in the name of ending economic subordination. At the same time, however, party officials lower taxes, eliminate environmental safeguards and change regulations in order to promote their own economic interests (Vachudova 2020). Our analysis of MARPOR data supports this inconsistent picture: overall, the party’s pro-welfare positions have declined, as has its support for nationalisation. At the same time, the party has increased its support for a controlled economy and has changed its positions on the free market (Figure 9). Overall, Fidesz supports welfare chauvinist policies. During its time in power, it has implemented a range of such policies aimed at supporting traditional families by offering, for example, generous child payments that are popular among their voters.

Figure 9: Fidesz’ and Jobbik’s stance on welfare, nationalisation, controlling the economy and the free market



JOBBIK

Jobbik was founded in 2003 by members of a radical right-wing student club, (Pytlas 2013). The party marked its first electoral breakthrough in the 2009 European Parliament elections. Subsequently it achieved a landslide result in the 2010 national elections, capturing 16.7 per cent of the vote and becoming the third largest party in parliament. Its success, however, has been constrained by the radicalised Fidesz, which has increasingly occupied Jobbik's ground.

JOBBIK'S VALUE PROFILE: FROM EXTREMISM TO MODERATION

Jobbik can be described as an extreme right RWPP variant, comparable to the Greek Golden Dawn. The party endorses ethnic nationalism and economic nativism. It is openly anti-Roma, anti-Semitic, anti-Communist and anti-globalisation (Pytlas 2013). In its founding charter, Jobbik describes itself as a value-centred, conservative, patriotic Christian party with radical methodology (Jobbik 2021). The party's extremism is reflected in its organisational structures: in 2007 Jobbik established the Hungarian Guard, which was essentially its militia wing and made several attempts to increase its membership by expanding its local branches and activities (Pytlas 2013).

Since 2013, however, the party has embarked on a moderation path (Pirro et al. 2021). This is related to the radicalisation of Fidesz and its attempt to capture Jobbik voters by co-opting Jobbik's positions. Pirro et al.'s (2021) analysis of Jobbik's rhetoric across time reports a retrenchment from the protest arena, a progressive distancing from the fringe and a toning down of the anti-Roma narrative. While these changes have not necessarily altered Jobbik's substantive policies, they have aimed at 'repackaging' the way the party portrays itself. Part of this repackaging includes the use of civic language – for example 'we want Hungary to become a free, democratic and competitive country, just as we wished for at the time when Communism collapsed' (Jobbik 2021). Our analysis of MARPOR data confirms that the party has toned down its opposition to multiculturalism, has become less right-wing, less Eurosceptic and even less nationalist (Figure 8).

The party's rhetoric remains mixed, however. On the one hand, Jobbik describes themselves as 'a patriotic force' that seeks 'real cultural diversity', toning down their racist narrative. On the other hand, they continue to use ethnic nationalist language – for example, they refer to Roma communities as 'Gypsies', linking them to crime and recommending the establishment of 'a state-operated boarding-school system for Gypsy children with special education needs and adaptability problems' (Jobbik 2021).

JOBBIK'S ECONOMIC AND WELFARE POLICY PROFILE: THE 'PROTECTION OF THE NATIONAL INTEREST'

Jobbik identifies the protection of the national interest as its economic priority and frames its economic policy as 'mutual benefits instead of modern colonisation' (Jobbik 2021). It supports domestic enterprises and proposes to cease all economic initiatives undermining Hungarian sovereignty. The party has become increasingly pro-welfare (Figure 9). While it is welfare chauvinist, the small section of its online manifesto that is dedicated to this issue focuses specifically on the Roma. Jobbik proposes ending 'ethnically based affirmative action' and 'financing development funds by hundreds of billions, most of which disappears in the pockets of various foundations, Gypsy organisations and civil rights activists' and implementing instead a "jobs instead of benefits" policy (Jobbik 2021). They also support the agricultural sector and promote a new legal framework of 'family farm-based land ownership structure'.

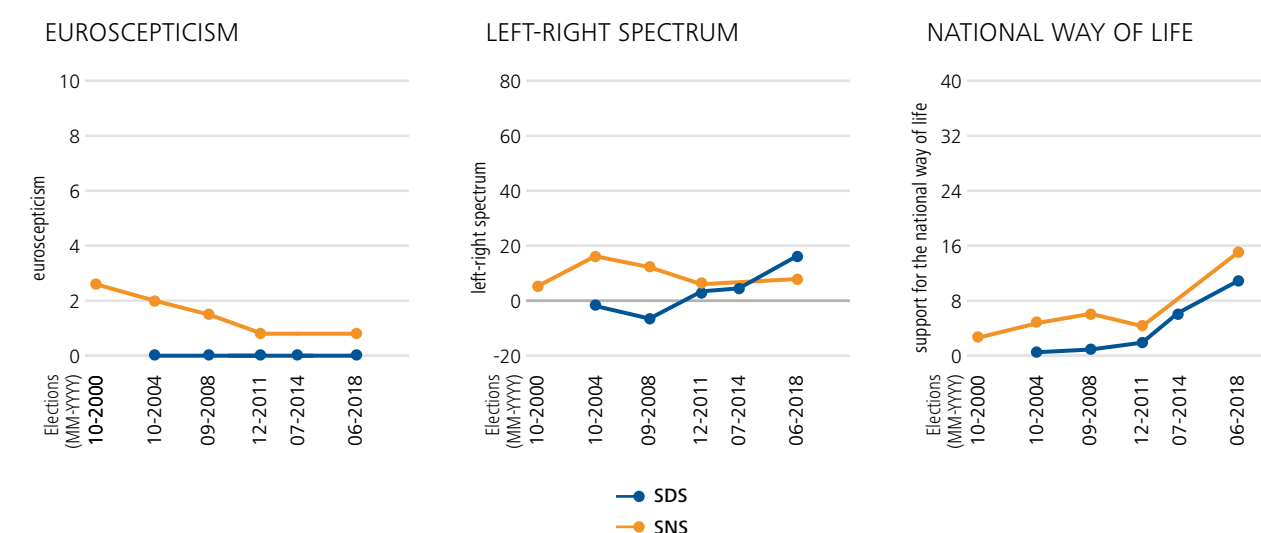
SLOVENIAN DEMOCRATIC PARTY (SDS)

The Slovenian Democratic Party (SDS) started up as a moderate liberal party. Led by Janez Janša since 1993, the party now qualifies as an RWPP, with a conservative nationalist agenda and a commitment to the free market. The party describes itself as 'a democratic political organisation' (SDS 2021). It is the product of the merger of the former Social-Democratic Union of Slovenia and the Slovenian Democratic Union which, according to the SDS, 'carried out the democratisation of Slovenia and led the quest for the gaining of Slovenian independence and international recognition of Slovenia' (SDS 2021). The party came in first in the 2018 general election, with 25% of the popular vote, but was not able to form a coalition government. The party accessed office in early 2020 as the leading partner of a right-wing coalition government after the collapse of the centre-left coalition.

SDS' VALUE PROFILE: BETWEEN ETHNIC AND CIVIC NATIONALISM

The SDS has become more right-wing and nationalist over time (Figure 10). It opposes 'left-sponsored' immigration, 'false solidarity', and multi-culturalism (Taggart and Pirro 2021). The party, however, is not hard Eurosceptic. Overall, its nationalist positions are ambivalent, making references to both civic and ethnic nationalism. In some respects, the party is closer to civic nationalism than some of the other Eastern European RWPPs. It uses a language that links Europe, Christian values and ethics: 'Slovenia shares its values with the society of one and the same cultural and civilization circle of Europe and Western countries. Slovenian democrats therefore enshrine these values: freedom, human dignity, justice, solidarity, patriotism and environmental awareness' (SDS). This type of language also sets the party apart from some other Eastern European RWPPs with respect to attitudes toward Europe and other supranational organisations such as NATO: 'our entry into Euro-Atlantic institutions, particularly NATO and the EU, is additionally ensuring the modernisation and preservation of Slovenia' (SDS 2021). At the same time, however, the SDS emphasises the preservation of Slovenian identity in the long durée, with clear ethnic nationalist connotations: 'Slovenian identity in its scope of civilization, along with its cultural and ethnic framework, has been formed over the centuries' (SDS 2021).

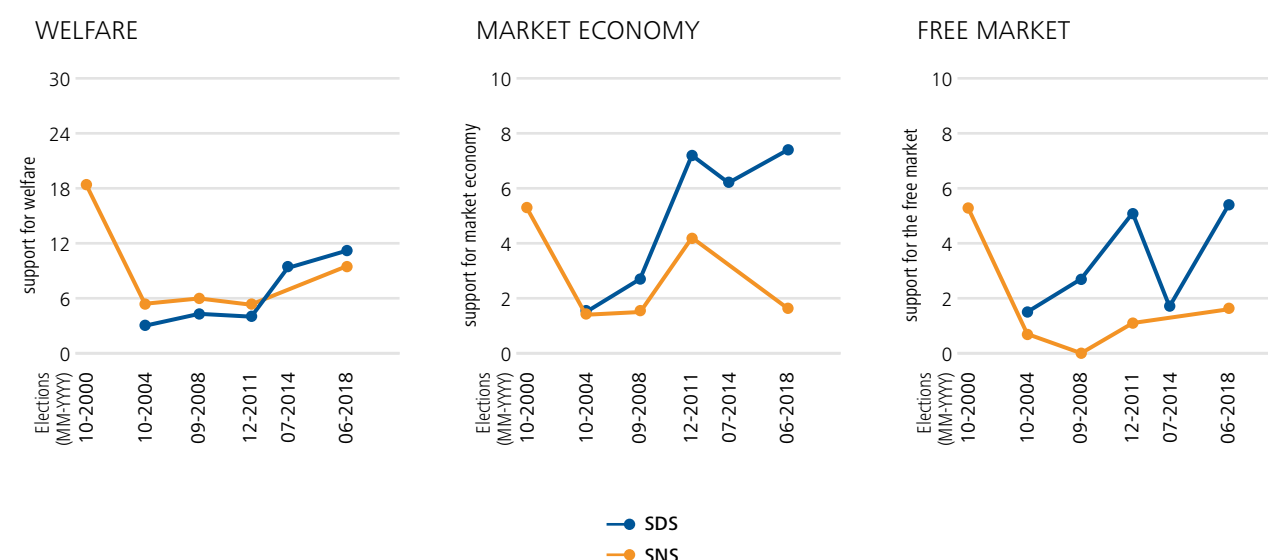
Figure 10: SDS' and SNS' stance on euroscepticism, the left-right spectrum and the national way of life



SDS' ECONOMIC AND WELFARE POLICY PROFILE: FREE MARKET AND WELFARE CHAUVINISM

Overall, the SDS supports the free market economy (Figure 11) and believes 'there should be as little indirect state ownership as possible in the economy' (SDS 2021). It supports the development of small and middle-size companies on the grounds that 'ownership plurality and eliminating power centres ... are a must in order to develop and consolidate democratic relations in the society and make the individual feel truly free and happy (SDS 2021). At the same time, the party supports certain welfare provisions, and indeed its positions on welfare have become increasingly favourable over time. According to the party's online programme, 'despite following the principle of equal starting opportunities, in the conditions of social market economy certain individuals and groups are still being pushed aside to the margins. In order to prevent social isolation and poverty, we need a comprehensive national system of social security' (SDS 2021).

Figure 11: SDS' and SNS' stance on welfare, market economy and the free market



SLOVENIAN NATIONAL PARTY (SNS)

The Slovenian National party (SNS) was founded in 1991 by Zmago Jelinčič Plemeniti (Taggart and Pirro 2021). It is a small party with support ranging between 2-6% during the period 2000-2020.

SNS'S VALUE PROFILE: NATIONALISM AND HARD EUROSCEPTICISM

The SNS is a nationalist party which advocates withdrawal from the EU and NATO, thus qualifying as hard Eurosceptic (Taggart and Pirro 2021). The party has significantly strengthened its nationalist positions over time (Figure 10), advocating an ethnic form of nationalism which supports the 'national-awakening aspirations of the Slovenian nation in history' (SNS 2021). Drawing attention to 'the dangers of losing national identity', the SNS strictly opposes immigration, especially from Asia and Africa, and accuses the Slovenian government of opening 'the country to all possible suspicious individuals under EU dictates' (SNS 2021). In its official programme, the party claims that it 'respects the religious feelings of citizens insofar as they are not in conflict with Slovenian tradition and the environment' (SNS 2021).

SNS'S ECONOMIC AND WELFARE POLICY PROFILE: ECONOMIC NATIONALISM AND WELFARE CHAUVINISM

One of the SNS's basic pledges is an 'economically strong Slovenia' (SNS 2021). The party is economic nationalist, 'demanding' rational and economical management of natural resources, as well as their protection' (SNS 2021). It promises the return of 'economic entities to Slovenian hands' and opposes the 'tycoon's rogue sales of national wealth at any cost' as well as 'any trade or similar agreements between the EU and the USA that lead to the takeover of the entire Republic of Slovenia and the ownership of foreign corporations' (SNS 2021).

The party's welfare positions have fluctuated during different time periods (Figure 11). Its positions on welfare chauvinism have been more consistent, however. The SNS declares in its programme that 'by no means do we agree to selective employment, which preferences foreigners and neglects our citizens. In the case of employment of foreign labour, we demand strict compliance with law governing employment of foreigners and the use of the lowest restrictive quotas for foreign labour, with domestic applicants having absolute priority' (SNS 2021). The party firmly opposes 'marginalised groups and communities, let alone migrant groups', having 'an advantage in the provision of basic health care' (SNS 2021).

Finally the SNS takes a firmly pro-Russia stance, suggesting they 'will do everything we can to reunite the Republic of Slovenia, both economically and politically, with the Russian Federation, which we see as a driving force and a guarantee of new economic development (SNS 2021).

ANALYSIS

UNDERSTANDING THE RADICALISATION OF THE MAINSTREAM RIGHT IN EASTERN EUROPE

Hungary, Poland and Slovenia are among the most prosperous Eastern European states and the most ethnically homogenous. Although they exhibited promising democratic trajectories after 1989, these trajectories have been stalled by Fidesz, PiS and the SDS, which have progressively embarked on a democratic backsliding route in the three countries. The fact that this democratic backsliding takes place alongside economic progress is puzzling. Particularly in Hungary and Poland, much of RWPP success can be attributed to these parties' economic narratives, which highlight economic disparities between East and West and inequalities resulting from the EU's 'neoliberal' economic programme. This is accompanied by domestic welfare chauvinism and a series of policies providing benefits for a broad range of vulnerable or at-risk social groups that have been very popular with voters.

While Fidesz and PiS both won power as mainstream conservative parties, they have radicalised in government and implemented a series of measures to undermine democratic institutions (Vachudova 2020). As such, they have become associated with a decline in the overall quality of democracy in Hungary and Poland, respectively (Pirro and Stanley 2021). Although both parties originate in the mainstream, they tend to be more anti-democratic than their Western European RWPP counterparts. Similarly the SDS has become increasingly more nationalistic and right-wing across time.

Fidesz and PiS are 'ethnopolitist': they merge an ethnic nationalist with a populist rhetoric. Christianity occupies a prominent role in this rhetoric. Hungary and Poland are homogenous states and the ethnic cleavage is less pronounced, suggesting that Fidesz and PiS lack a sizeable immigrant population against which they can mobilise. This has prompted them to focus their attention on the small, non-politicised internal minorities in each country, for example the Roma, sexual minorities and other small groups with little capacity to organise politically (Bustikova 2018). They have still tried to mobilise against the alleged threat of Muslim immigration despite the very small numbers of Muslim immigrants and refugees in the region (Vachudova 2020) through the employment of ethnic nationalist rhetoric that focuses on Christian values and the erosion of cultural identity. The SDS makes more references to civic nationalism compared to the other parties, but is still strongly nationalistic and also targets minorities.

These narratives have made these parties appealing to a broad range of social groups. In Poland, older male, educated rural dwellers who are either professionals or employed in the agricultural sectors are more likely to support RWPPs. These individuals are more likely to be religious, distrust the EU, have authoritarian attitudes and cultural but not economic concerns over immigration (Figure 13). Among the RWPP electorate in Poland, just under

60% have no immigration concerns at all. The majority of those that do have either a combination of cultural and economic concerns (18%) or only economic concerns (17%) (Figure 12).

In Hungary, Fidesz and Jobbik together capture a large portion of the electorate. Our analysis of ESS data confirms that middle-aged, educated rural dwellers who are religious, but have no immigration concerns tend to vote for RWPPs (Figure 14). Jobbik itself has consistently drawn support from a broad range of voters with different backgrounds, including the young, affluent, and educated as well as from voters in economically left-behind regions (Bustikova 2018). The marginalisation of Jobbik should be understood as the result of the consolidation of Fidesz as an RWPP and its attempt to capture Jobbik voters by turning into a full-fledged RWPP, co-opting Jobbik's positions (Pirro et al. 2021). Among the RWPP electorate, just over one-third has no concerns about immigration at all. Those that do have either a combination of both cultural and economic concerns (40%) or only economic concerns (21%) (Figure 12).

In Slovenia, middle-aged, male, religious individuals with cultural immigration concerns are more likely to vote for RWPPs (Figure 15). Among the RWPP electorate, just over one-third (36%) have no immigration concerns at all. Those that do have either a combination of cultural and economic concerns (36%) or only economic concerns (20%) (Figure 12).

Overall, the attitudes and characteristics of RWPP voters in Eastern Europe differ from those in Western Europe (Allen 2017; Santana et al. 2020). Anti-immigration sentiments are not consistently related to RWPP voting (especially cultural concerns over immigration). However, socially conservative attitudes and lower levels of support for liberal democracy and minority rights are important drivers of support (Santana et al. 2020; Vachudova 2020). Euroscepticism is also an important driver in Hungary and Poland.

Figure 12: Distribution of immigration concerns

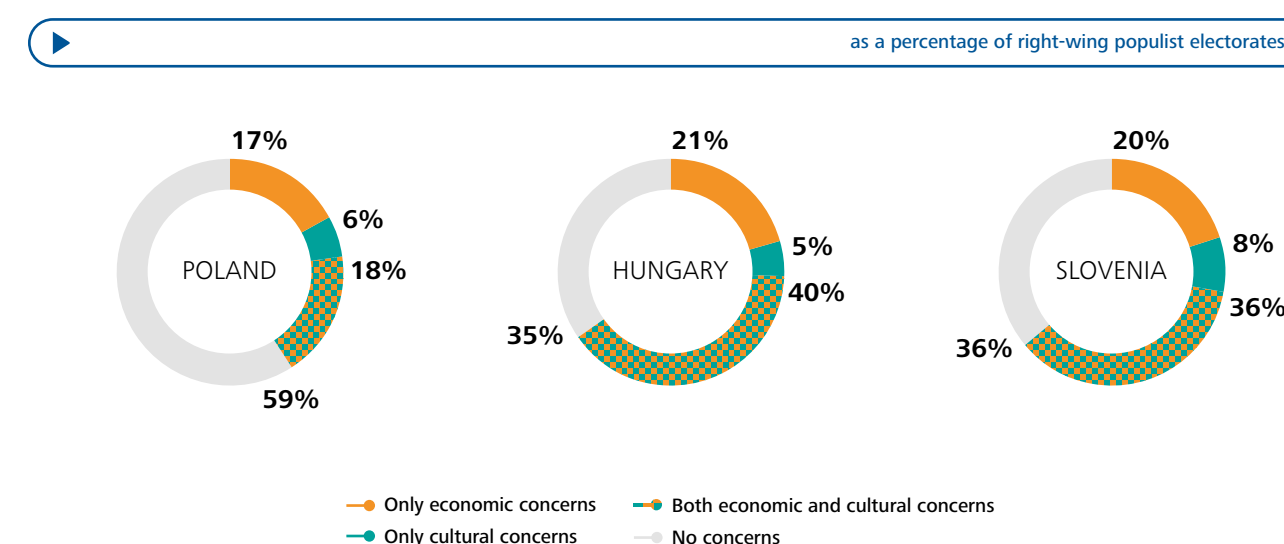
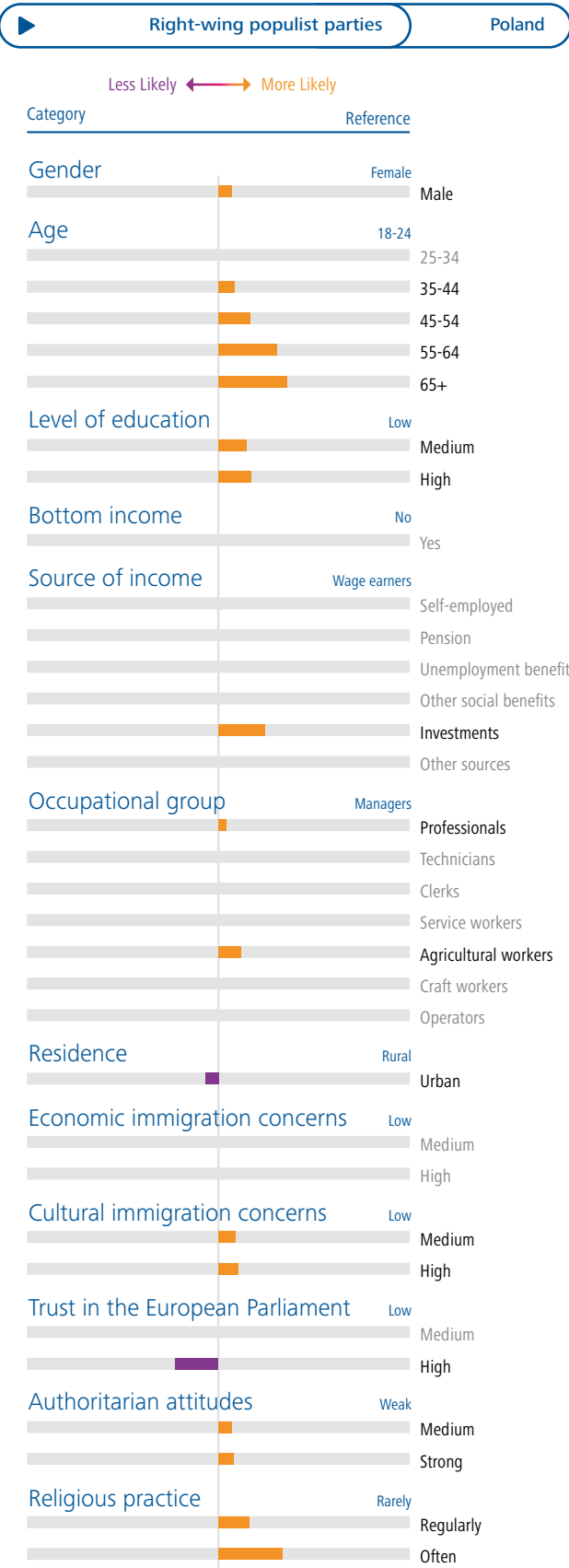
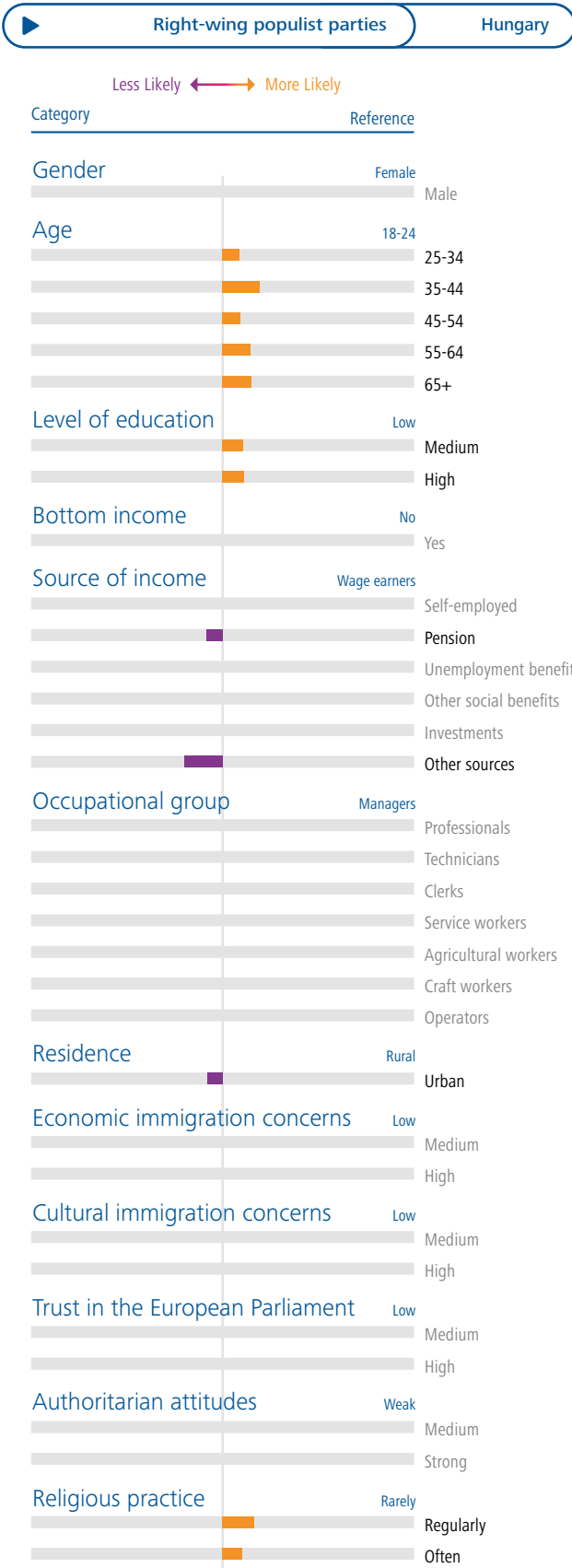


Figure 13: Characteristics affecting the probability to vote



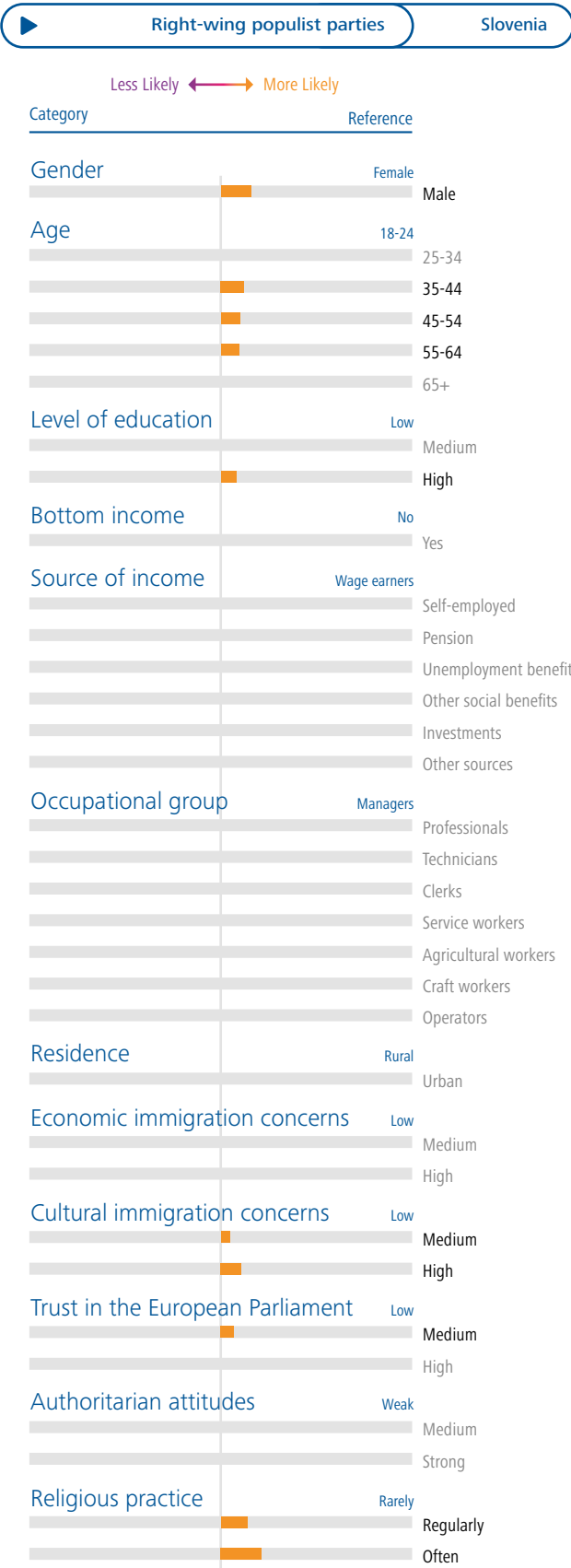
Only statistically significant results are shown.

Figure 14: Characteristics affecting the probability to vote



Only statistically significant results are shown.

Figure 15: Characteristics affecting the probability to vote



Only statistically significant results are shown.

HOW TO READ THESE GRAPHS

The graphs **characteristics affecting the probability to vote** frequently appear in this report. They all show the significant coefficients of the regression analyses of our empirical analyses for a specific party family and region. Here you see for instance *the characteristics affecting the probability to vote FOR right-wing populist parties IN Slovenia*. The arrow icon in the top left corner pointing to the right indicates the respective party family shown in this particular graph (here: right-wing populist parties).

In the graph itself you see what objective (e.g. gender; age) and attitudinal (e.g. economic immigration concerns) characteristics make people more or less likely to vote for a party family and how big that effect is (indicated by the size of the orange and purple bars). The effect is always shown in relation to a reference category (e.g. men in relation to women; people with medium level of education in relation to people with low level of education).

CONCLUSION

COMPARING RIGHT-WING POPULIST AND CENTRE-LEFT ELECTORATES IN EASTERN EUROPE

Our analysis of the RWPP electorates in the three countries, and a brief comparison between the RWPP and centre-left electorates, highlights the following:

- Poland, Hungary and Slovenia are distinct from Western Europe and other parts of Eastern Europe in that all three countries are highly ethnically homogenous. Given the absence of sizeable immigrant populations in these countries, RWPPs mobilise voters on socially conservative issues that target various minorities. This suggests that the electorates in these two countries are motivated by these considerations.
- There are some important similarities and differences between Hungarian, Polish and Slovenian RWPP voters. Notably, RWPP voters tend to be religious in all three countries. They are older males in Poland and middle-aged males in Slovenia. These voters are also middle-aged in Hungary, but gender has no significant effect. In Poland and Hungary educated rural dwellers have a greater probability of voting RWPP. In terms of attitudes, interestingly, individuals with no immigration concerns tend to vote for RWPPs in Hungary. By contrast, individuals who have cultural but not economic concerns over immigration tend to vote RWPPs in Poland and Slovenia (Figures 17-19).
- In terms of the composition of the RWPP electorates, individuals with exclusively cultural concerns over immigration (i.e. core voters) account for a very small portion of the RWPP electorates in all three countries (6% in Poland, 5% in Hungary and 8% in Slovenia). Just over one-third of the RWPP electorates in Hungary and Slovenia have no immigration concerns at all, while in Poland these voters constitute a substantial 59% (Figure 12).
- In terms of the composition of the entire electorate in the three countries, RWPP core voters, i.e. those voters who oppose immigration on principle and have strong cultural concerns over immigration, are a minority. In Poland and Hungary these voters account for 5% of the countries' entire electorates respectively. In Slovenia this figure is 7% (Figure 16).
- A comparison between the RWPP and centre-left voter profiles shows some interesting similarities and differences. In Poland, educated, middle-aged, male individuals who are not in the bottom income group, but likely to be technicians or pensioners, have a greater probability of voting for the centre-left. These individuals are likely to be secular and trust the EU. While they are unlikely to have cultural concerns over immigration, they are likely to be motivated by authoritarian attitudes and economic concerns over immigration (Figure 17). In Hungary older females who are not in the bottom income group, but may be on pensions, have a greater probability of voting for the centre-left. These individuals are likely to be secular and trust the EU. Neither cultural nor economic concerns over immigration have an effect on voting centre-left

in Hungary (Figure 18). Finally, in Slovenia older, educated wage-earning individuals in craft occupations are more likely to vote for the centre-left. These individuals are likely to trust the EU and are secular. Both cultural and economic concerns over immigration are negatively associated with voting for the centre-left in Slovenia (Figure 19). Among the centre-left electorates in the three countries, the RWPP signature theme (i.e. exclusively cultural concerns over immigration) has little prevalence: 3% in Poland, and 4% in Hungary and Slovenia, respectively (Figure 16).

- The proportion of voters with no immigration concerns among the centre-left electorates in the two countries is fairly high: 65% in Poland, 43% in Hungary and 57% in Slovenia (Figure 16). Those centre-left voters that do have concerns over immigration have predominantly economic concerns in Poland (22%) and Slovenia (20%). In Hungary, a large share of these voters have a combination of cultural and economic concerns (28%), as well as exclusively economic concerns (24%).

Figure 16: Distribution of immigration concerns

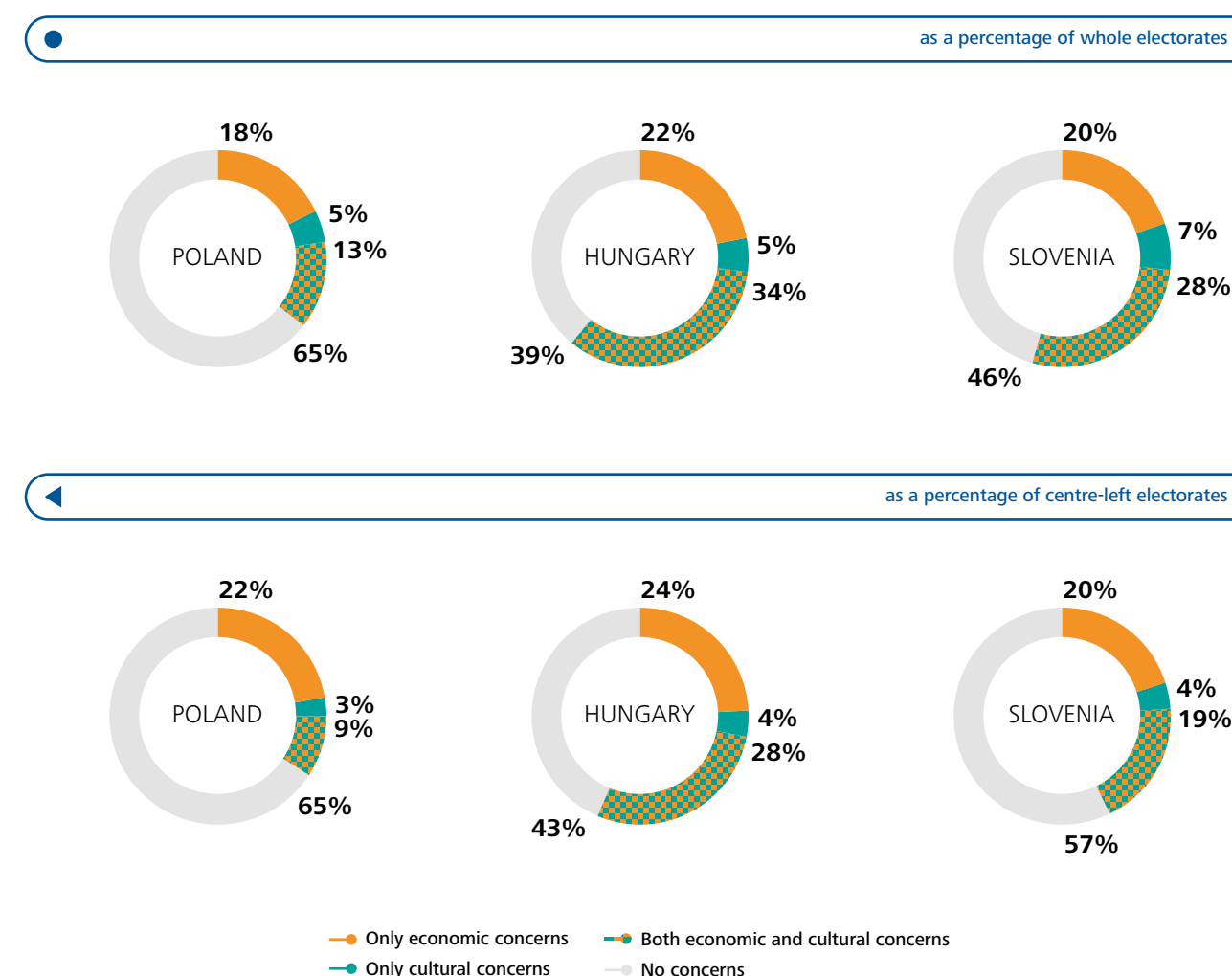
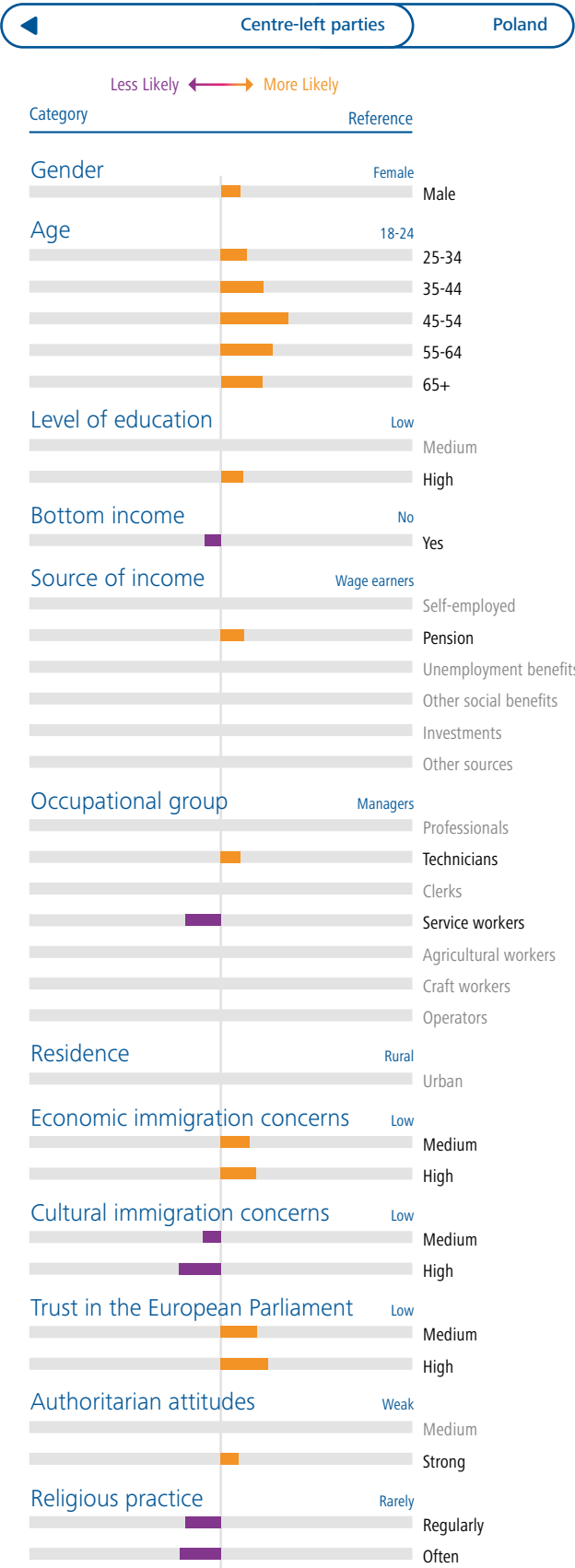
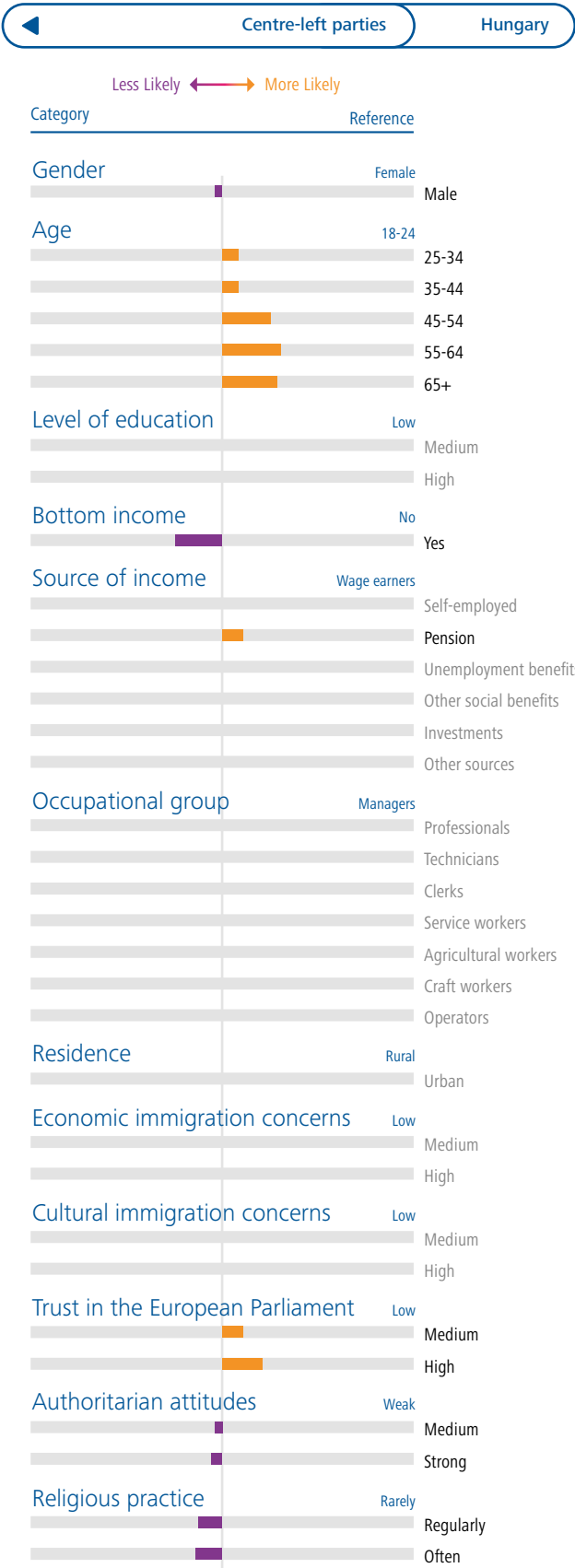


Figure 17: Characteristics affecting the probability to vote



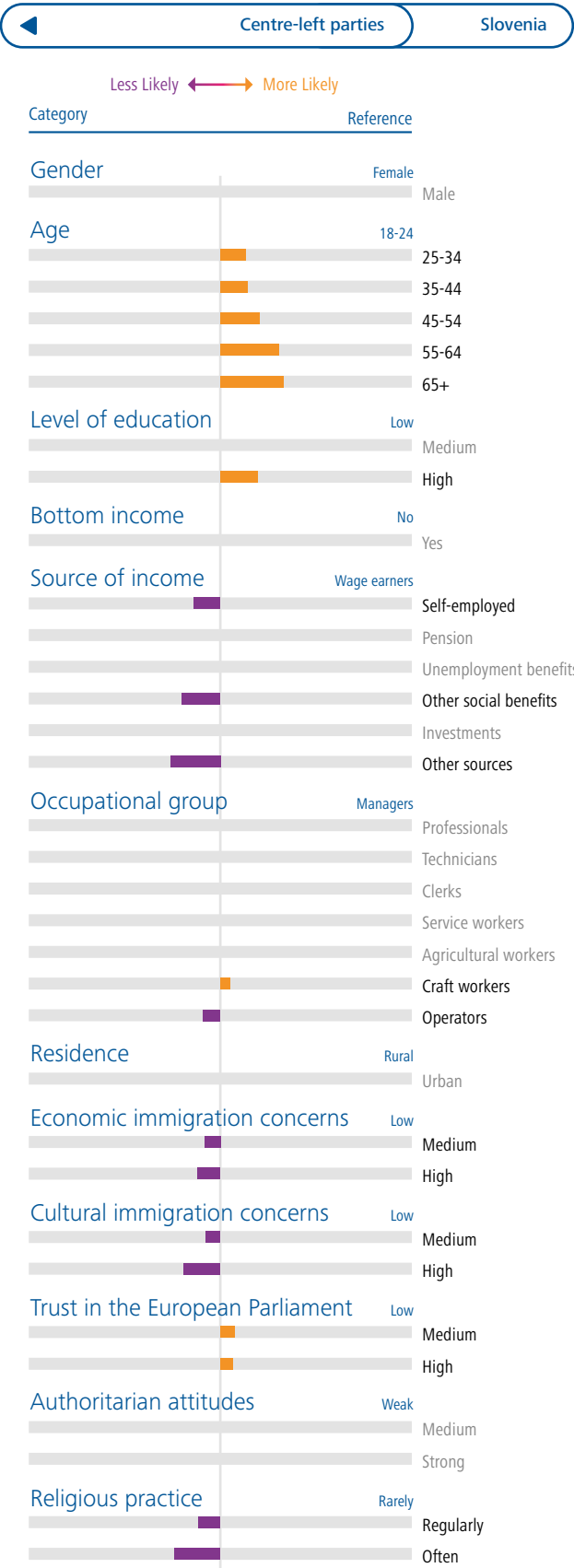
Only statistically significant results are shown.

Figure 18: Characteristics affecting the probability to vote



Only statistically significant results are shown.

Figure 19: Characteristics affecting the probability to vote



Only statistically significant results are shown.

REFERENCES

- Abou-Chadi, T., R. Mittereager 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.
- Allen, T. (2017). All in the Party Family? Comparing Far Right Voters in Western and Post-Communist Europe, *Party Politics*, 23, 3.
- Bušítková, L. (2018). The Radical Right in Eastern Europe in Rydgren, J. (Ed) *The Oxford Handbook of the Radical Right*, Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- 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.
- Folvarčny, A. and L. Kopeček (2020). Which conservatism? The identity of the Polish Law and Justice party, *Politics in Central Europe* Vol. 16, No. 1.
- Halikiopoulou, D. (2018). A Right-wing Populist Momentum? A Review of 2017 Elections Across Europe. *Jcms-Journal of Common Market Studies* 56: 63-73.
- 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., 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.
- Jobbik (2021). About Jobbik <https://www.jobbik.com> [accessed 24/09/2021].
- Norris, P. and R. Inglehart (2019). *Cultural backlash : Trump, Brexit, and the rise of authoritarian-populism*.
- Pirro A.L.P. and B. Stanley (2021). Forging, bending, and breaking: Enacting the illiberal playbook in Hungary and Poland. *Perspectives on Politics*, OnlineFirst.
- Pirro AL., E. Pavan, A. Fagan and D. Gazsi (2021). Close ever, distant never? Integrating protest event and social network approaches into the transformation of the Hungarian far right. *Party Politics*. 27(1):22-34.
- Pirro, A. (2014). Populist Radical Right Parties in Central and Eastern Europe: The Different Context and Issues of the Prophets of the Patria. *Government and Opposition*, 49(4), 600-629.
- Pytlas, B. (2013). Radical-right narratives in Slovakia and Hungary: historical legacies, mythic overlaying and contemporary politics, *Patterns of Prejudice*, 47:2, 162-183.
- Rathgeb, P. and M. R. Busemeyer (2021). How to study the populist radical right and the welfare state? *West European Politics*.
- Santana, A., P. Zagórski and J. Rama (2020). At odds with Europe: explaining populist radical right voting in Central and Eastern Europe, *East European Politics*, 36:2, 288-309.
- Slovenian Democratic Party (2021). Identity Card, <https://www.sds.si/en/about-sds/identity-card> [accessed 10/12/2021]
- Slovenian National Party (2016). PROGRAM SLOVENSKE NACIONALNE STRANKE https://www.sns.si/wp-content/uploads/Program-SNS-2016_FINAL.pdf [accessed 13/12/2021].
- Stanley B. and B. Stanley (2020). Whose Poland is it to be? PiS and the struggle between monism and pluralism, *East European Politics*, 36:3, 378-394.
- Taggart, P. and A. Pirro (2021). European populism before the pandemic: Ideology, Euroscepticism, electoral performance, and government participation of 63 parties in 30 countries. *Italian Political Science Review/Rivista Italiana Di Scienza Politica*, 51(3), 281-304.
- Vachudova, M. V. (2020). Ethnopolulism and democratic backsliding in Central Europe, *East European Politics*, 36:3, 318-340.
- Vlandas, T. and D. Halikiopoulou (2021). Welfare state policies and far right party support: moderating 'insecurity effects' among different social groups. *West European Politics*.

**FRIEDRICH
EBERT 
STIFTUNG**