

Current Populism in Europe: Gender-Backlash and Counter-strategies

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Democratic Efficacy and Populist Attitudes: A Conceptual and Empirical Exploration

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Introduction

Starting in the early 1950s with the first systematic studies of voting behaviour, interest in political efficacy developed mostly because it was found to be one of the most important predictors of political participation.¹ Since political participation was always considered an important feature of democratic governments, high political efficacy among citizens was consequently deemed an important characteristic of good democratic governance. However, at the beginning of this century, many studies of political behaviour found decreasing levels of political participation in the Western – not to mention Eastern European – democracies during the twentieth century,² which was sometimes seen as an indicator of a declining quality of democracy. More recently, this decline in political participation seems to have stabilized and, in some countries, even increasing levels of political participation have been detected. However, increasing numbers of people participating in politics started supporting populist and extremist political actors.³ As a result, it has become clear that this crude level of political participation on its own is an insufficient (or even misleading) indicator as to the quality of democratic governance, and the democratic quality of political participation should be taken into consideration as well.

The same seems to apply to the concept of political efficacy. Political efficacy is an important motivational background for political participation, but it can say nothing about its democratic quality. Therefore, to make the concept fit the contemporary challenges of political science and political realities, it seems reasonable to supplement it with a democratic component. The “DEMOS” project developed the concept of democratic efficacy for this purpose. The concept of democratic efficacy is an analytical framework to understand the challenges of populism and to provide guidance for actions and interventions. The term is designed to capture the way subjective sentiments towards politics – in other words, external and internal political efficacy – are connected to “objective” individual capacities that are assumed to promote democratic behaviour. The concept of democratic efficacy thus embodies both subjective (attitudinal) and “objective” (measurable individual skills) dimensions. Also, as we interpret populism as a sign of mismatch between the operation of the polity and the needs of citizens’, facing the challenges of populism necessitates considering the role of both sides: the system and the individual. Democratic efficacy should be interpreted in its context; therefore, it is important to uncover how contextual factors shape it and how its working and effects on political behaviour are conditioned by those factors. Although we will not deal with the problem of context here, it is important to keep it in mind.

In line with this idea, we argue that the concept of democratic efficacy consists of two dimensions: *political efficacy* and *democratic capacities*. Below, we present these aspects and connect them to each other. In this paper we also use data from an online survey made by the DEMOS project in 15 European countries in order to provide descriptive data on democratic efficacy. The first step in testing the association of democratic efficacy indicators with populism was also made, showing that most of the

1 See Angus Campbell, Gerald Gurin, and Warren E. Miller, *The Voter Decides* (Evanston: Row Peterson, 1954).

2 André Blais, “Political Participation,” in *Comparing Democracies 3*, ed. Lawrence LeDuc, Richard G. Niemi, Pippa Norris (London: Sage, 2010), 165–183.

3 For increasing populist voting on both the left and right of the political spectrum, see <https://populismindex.com>.

items composing democratic efficacy have a negative association with populist attitudes. This opens promising avenues for the use of the concept in further analyses concerning populism.

Starting Point: Political Efficacy

The concept of political efficacy (PE) is rather well-researched, and interest in it dates back to the classical political behaviour study of Campbell, Gurin and Miller.⁴ The authors proposed that the “sense of political efficacy may be defined as the feeling that individual political action does have, or can have, an impact upon the political process, i.e. that it is worthwhile to perform one’s civic duties. It is the feeling that political and social change is possible, and that the individual citizen can play a part in bringing about this change.”⁵ As such, political efficacy was demonstrated to strongly determine whether people would participate in the political processes, and this emphasis in empirical studies continues to this day.⁶

Soon after, Lane distinguished two dimensions of political efficacy: a person’s image of the self and that of the government.⁷ Consequently, internal and external dimensions of political efficacy have been conceptualized and used in political studies.⁸ Broadly speaking, *internal political efficacy* (IPE) refers to citizens’ beliefs that they have the competence to understand and effectively participate in politics (subjective competence), and *external political efficacy* (EPE) is related to public perceptions of governmental institutional responsiveness (perceived system responsiveness). Importantly, low political efficacy means that citizens distrust governmental institutions and do not believe that their actions will influence governance. Therefore, low political efficacy is related to political alienation, which is detrimental to the health of a democratic political system.

People can be divided into four general groups based on their level of political efficacy. Some people have a high level of PE in both dimensions: They believe in both the responsiveness of the political system and their political competence to influence it. Its reverse form is when one has a low level of PE in both dimensions; those who perceive politics to be difficult for ordinary people to shape. A mixed type is when one thinks that the political system cares about people’s will (higher EPE) but do not regard themselves as capable of meaningful participation (lower IPE). As these people believe in the political system more than in themselves, they can be labelled as “paternalists”. Others feel that it is hard to change the political system (lower EPE), but they are confident in their own political capabilities (higher IPE). As the strong inner motives are at odds with the perceived external opportunities, this group can be labelled as “sceptics” (see table 1).

4 Campbell et al., *The Voter*.

5 *Ibid.*, 187.

6 See Nicholas A. Valentino, Krysha Gregorowicz, and Eric W. Groenendyk, “Efficacy, Emotions and the Habit of Participation,” *Political Behavior* 31, no. 3 (2009): 307–330; Paul Marx, Christoph Nguyen, “Are the Unemployed Less Politically Involved? A Comparative Study of Internal Political Efficacy,” *European Sociological Review* 32, no. 5 (2016): 634–648; Homero Gil de Zúñiga, Trevor Diehl, Alberto Ardévol-Abreu, “Internal, External, and Government Political Efficacy: Effects on News Use, Discussion, and Political Participation,” *Journal of Broadcasting & Electronic Media* 61, no. 3 (2017): 574–596.

7 Robert E. Lane, *Political Life: Why People Get Involved in Politics* (Glencoe: The Free Press. 1959).

8 George I. Balch, “Multiple Indicators in Survey Research: The Concept ‘Sense of Political Efficacy,’” *Political Methodology* 1, no. 2 (1974): 1–43; Stephen C. Craig, Michael A. Maggiotto, “Measuring Political Efficacy,” *Political Methodology* 8, no. 3 (1982): 85–109; Alan Acock, Harold D. Clarke, and Marianne C. Stewart, “A New Model for Old Measures: A Covariance Structure Analysis of Political Efficacy,” *Journal of Politics*, 47, no. 4 (1985): 1062–1084; Stephen C. Craig, Richard G. Niemi, and Glenn E. Silver, “Political Efficacy and Trust: A Report on the NES Pilot Study Items,” *Political Behavior* 12, no. 3 (1990): 289–314; Richard G. Niemi, Stephen C. Craig, Franco Mattei, “Measuring Internal Political Efficacy in the 1988 National Election Study,” *American Political Science Review* 85, no. 4 (1991): 1407–1413.

Table 1. The concept of political efficacy

	Political efficacy			
	High	Low	Paternalists	Sceptics
External PE	+	-	+	-
Internal PE	+	-	-	+

The eighth round of the European Social Survey (ESS8) included only two internal and two external political efficacy items⁹, and the illustration below draws upon those questions. Respondents had to indicate their level of agreement with each statement on a 5-point scale, where 1 represents the lowest level of political efficacy. A high level of internal and external political efficacy is established when a given respondent marked 3 or above for both questions.

Table 2. The share of respondents of the ESS8 based on their level of political efficacy (only for countries involved in the DEMOS project)¹⁰

Political efficacy (N = 33,159)			
High	Low	Paternalists	Sceptics
10.4 %	61.1 %	14.1 %	14.4 %

These findings indicate that a large majority of respondents have a low level of political efficacy in both dimensions. Only 10% of people in the sample are politically efficacious. The results suggest that it is appropriate to distinguish the two mixed types of political efficacy since significant shares of our respondents can be classified by these categories. Almost equal shares of the sample belong to these two mixed forms (paternalists and sceptics).

However, in recent studies, the notion of measurement and analysis of political efficacy as an important motivational background for political participation brought an important disconcerting insight to light. Namely, an increase in general political participation appeared to be related to populist voting and increasing support for populist attitudes and activism. Therefore, the standard causal logic relating higher levels of political efficacy with growing political participation and, consequently, with increased quality of democratic governance appeared to be tenuous. Thus, to make the concept of political efficacy fit the contemporary challenges of democratic governance, it seems reasonable to supplement it with a democratic component. We propose that democratic participation is enabled by a higher level of political efficacy that is paired with certain democratic capacities.

9 The external dimension included “How much would you say the political system in [your country] allows people like you to have a say in what the government does?” and “How much would you say that the political system in [your country] allows people like you to have an influence on politics?” The internal dimension included “How able do you think you are to take an active role in a group involved with political issues?” and “How confident are you in your own ability to participate in politics?”

10 Belgium, Czechia, Germany, France, Hungary, Italy, Lithuania, Netherlands, Poland, Spain and the United Kingdom.

Democratic Capacities

The normative theories of democracies impose certain requirements not only on the level of political system or the elite but also on that of the citizens. According to these, ideal democracy can only work if citizens have certain democratic capacities. For instance, some degree of information is needed and desired to substantively participate in politics.¹¹ In democratic settings, citizens must make decisions on the most important political questions. Besides, decision-making based on relevant information is more likely to reflect voters' true preferences. Consequently, citizens need to have some general political knowledge but also keep up with the day-to-day political processes.

However, having political knowledge and being up to date are not enough to make informed political decisions. Citizens must be reflective about their decisions and base their choices and political preferences on them.¹² However, strong emotional attachments may undermine this reflexivity and introduce serious biases in reasoning and evaluation of political information.¹³

Furthermore, the idea of democracy is based on some core values that citizens are required to embrace in order to make it work properly. First, the political and legal equality of the citizenry is a prerequisite of democracy.¹⁴ Second, the normative justification of democracy rests upon the premise that citizens are capable of making free and autonomous decisions.¹⁵ Third, democracy is a social activity where individuals must consider that others also have legitimate interests, opinions and values. Citizens must tolerate and listen to opinions different from their own because democracy is based on the idea of exchanging and confronting competing views and interests.¹⁶ These values correspond to the three core values of democracy. Namely, equality of interests, political autonomy and reciprocity, as conceptualized by Brettschneider.¹⁷

Also, certain political or civic skills have long been considered to represent crucial democratic capacities.¹⁸ We assume that coping with populism requires specific skills, for example, the quality of being able to deal with plurality and conflicts in politics and policy, practicing empathy towards others' legitimate needs and goals, scrutinizing leaders and their decisions, consuming media content in a reflective manner (media literacy) and being able to express one's own legitimate needs, aspirations and preferences.

We propose five groups of democratic capacities and values that must be paired with political efficacy in order to derive a measure of democratic efficacy¹⁹:

■ *Factual political knowledge.* Citizens need to have some general political knowledge but also keep up with day-to-day political processes.

11 Michael Delli Carpini and Scott Keeter, *What Americans know about politics and why it matters* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1996).

12 John Dewey, *The Public and Its Problems* (Athens: Swallow Press, 1954).

13 Robert Y. Shapiro, Yaeli Bloch-Elkon, "Do the Facts Speak for Themselves? Partisan Disagreement as a Challenge to Democratic Competence," *Critical Review* 20, no. 1–2 (2008): 115–139; Michael Bang Petersen, Martin Skov, Søren Serritzlew, and Thomas Ramsøy, "Motivated Reasoning and Political Parties: Evidence for Increased Processing in the Face of Party Cues," *Political Behavior* 35, no. 4 (2013): 831–854.

14 Robert A. Dahl, *A Preface to Democratic Theory* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1956).

15 Sanford Lakoff, "Autonomy and Liberal Democracy," *The Review of Politics* 52, no. 3 (1990): 378–396.

16 Hannah Arendt and Jerome Kohn, *Between Past and Future: Eight Exercises in Political Thought* (New York: Viking Press, 1968); Diana C. Mutz, *Hearing the Other Side: Deliberative versus Participatory Democracy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006).

17 Corey Brettschneider, "The Value Theory of Democracy," *Politics, Philosophy & Economics* 5, no. 3 (2006): 259–278.

18 Sidney Verba, Kay Lehman Schlozman, and Henry E. Brady, *Voice and Equality: Civic Voluntarism in American Politics* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1995).

19 For more details see: Márton Bene and Zsolt Boda, "Conceptualising Democratic Efficacy." DEMOS Working Papers, April 2020, https://openarchive.tk.mta.hu/419/1/Democratic%20Efficacy_31-03-2020.pdf.

- *Political news consumption.* Citizens need to develop habits of using the media for political information in a reflective manner.
- *Political reflexivity.* Citizens must reflect on political information; however, strong emotional attachments (political identities) may undermine this reflexivity and introduce serious biases in reasoning and evaluation of political information.
- *Core values of democracy.* As prerequisites of democracy for it to work properly, citizens are required to embrace certain values: respect for political and legal equality (equality of interests), capability of making free and autonomous decisions (political autonomy) and tolerance of and attention paid to opinions different from their own (reciprocity).
- *Political or civic skills.* Citizens must be at ease with practicing certain behaviours and attitudes: coping with plurality and conflicts in politics and policy, scrutinizing leaders and their decisions and being able to express one's own legitimate needs, aspirations and preferences.

Based on this conceptualization, people with complete democratic capacities are those citizens who have (1) a certain level of factual political knowledge; (2) are regular and reflective news consumers; (3) are non-intensive partisans (as a proxy of reflexivity); (4) strongly identify with the core values of democracy, that is, political and legal equality, tolerance towards dissenting opinion and individual autonomy; and (5) have some involvement in political activities.

In order to measure the levels of democratic efficacy, we turned to survey data available in the major international academically driven surveys. They employed data from the European Social Survey, well-known for its rigorous cross-cultural design. The ESS8 conducted in 2016–17 contained items for the measurement of both political efficacy and democratic capacities except for political knowledge. In the ESS questionnaire political news consumption was measured by the question of how many minutes respondents spend consuming political news in a regular day. They consider regular news consumers those respondents who read, watch or listen to news at least 30 minutes in a regular day. Regarding partisanship, closeness to a political party was measured on a 4-point scale, and only the extreme value indicating “very close” was regarded as a highly partisan answer. Participants were also asked to what extent they identify with certain character types and values on a 6-point scale. Three items of the ESS survey are closely related to the three core values of democracy discussed above. In detail, values of 1 and 2 indicate identification with these statements as they were labelled as “very much like me” and “like me” respectively. Our political activity measure was based on the ESS8 questionnaire items measuring involvement in different types of political activity. Table 2 shows the share of respondents who meet these criteria for each component of our democratic capacities concept.

Table 3. The share of respondents of the ESS8 based on available measures of democratic capacities (only for the countries involved in the DEMOS project)

	News consumption	Partisanship	Equality	Tolerance	Autonomy	Political activity
Criteria	At least 30 min. per day	1–3 (4-point scale)	1–2 (6-point scale)			At least 1
Percentage	79.4 (N = 34,256)	95.2 (N = 33,747)	71.5 (N = 34,215)	65.2 (N = 34,114)	68.5 (N = 34,207)	52.0 (N = 34,695)

The findings above suggest that all these capacities are widely shared in the democratic countries under investigation. The large majority of respondents share the following democratic capacities: They consume news regularly, are non-intensive partisans and they believe in the values of equality, tolerance and individual autonomy. More than half of them were involved in at least one political activity in the preceding 12 months.

However, table 4 indicates that their combined presence is not as universal: Only a fifth of the respondents have all these democratic capacities, while most respondents have incomplete capacities. These findings suggest that these capacities are suitable to let us categorize respondents; the validity of them is supported by their wide presence in democratic countries, but their combined occurrence can differentiate people with more or less democratic capacities.

Table 4. The share of respondents to the ESS8 based on the mixture of their democratic capacities (N = 34,695)

People with complete democratic capacities	People with incomplete democratic capacities
19.5 %	80.5 %

Constructing Democratic Efficacy

After conceptualizing democratic capacities, the concept of political efficacy can be supplemented with a democratic component in order to introduce a quality aspect into the original term. While political efficacy is about subjective attitudes towards politics, which is crucial as a motivational background of political behaviour, democratic behaviour requires some objective capacities as well. The concept of democratic capacities supplements this subjective construct (political efficacy) with these objective requirements. As a result, the concept of democratic efficacy as a more nuanced approach to political efficacy may provide an appropriate framework for understanding democratic political behaviour, which is also one of the most important themes of the DEMOS project.

We conceptualize democratic efficacy not as a linear but as a two-dimensional concept. It would not make sense to simply add the measures of democratic capacities to those of political efficacy; we believe it is conceptually sounder and more interesting to capture the different combinations of the two sets of measures.

Theoretically, pairing the two concepts makes sense only if they are not highly correlated with each other. As long as people with a high level of political efficacy are exactly those who have complete democratic capacities, the democratic component would not make any substantial contribution to the original concept. Connecting the term of political efficacy to democratic capacities is meaningful if the latter makes relevant distinctions within categories of political efficacy and helps to differentiate between people with the same level of PE.

Using ESS data, a chi-squared independence test was performed to check whether the two categorical-level variables (PE and democratic capacities) are related in any way. The two components are not entirely independent of each other. A significant ($p < .001$) but modest (Cramer’s $V = .213$) relationship exists between the two-level democratic capacities component and the four-level political efficacy component. However, table 5 indicates that the democratic component yields a more nuanced picture of political efficacy. More precisely, the cells of table 5 provide different forms of democratic efficacy.

Table 5. The share of respondents of the ESS8 based on democratic efficacy (N=33,158)

Democratic capacities	Political efficacy				Total (as in table 4)
	High	Low	Paternalists	Sceptics	
Complete capacities	3.7 %	8.3 %	2.9 %	4.5 %	19.5 %
Incomplete capacities	6.6 %	52.9 %	11.1 %	9.9 %	80.5 %
Total	10.4 %	61.1 %	14.1 %	14.4 %	100%

Let us interpret the most interesting categories with a focus on populism: Almost two-thirds of the respondents with a high level of political efficacy have incomplete democratic capacities. In principle, those people are active in politics, although their democratic skills fall short of the democratic ideal. We assume that this group might be more open to populism than people with both high political efficacy and complete democratic capacities. Of course, here we took a very strict approach, placing together all the respondents who underperform in at least one capacity measure under the label “incomplete capacities”. It is very probable that the low value of a single capacity measure does not signal the same level of “incompleteness” as does a general lack of democratic capacities. Therefore, empirically speaking, it seems useful to create different categories of people with incomplete capacities according to the number of capacity measures they underperform in.

The category of people with incomplete capacities and low political efficacy is theoretically not so challenging: Those are the ones who are not interested in politics and probably have a low political activity level as well. However, they are very important from a policy perspective. The question is what could be done in order to increase their democratic skills and feelings of political efficacy? A related question is whether they are open to populist arguments or does their low interest in politics make them largely immune to populist arguments as well?

At the same time, a significant minority of people with a low level of political efficacy have complete democratic capacities. Those people are interested in politics, consume media, have high democratic values and are active in politics; however, they do not feel they can achieve change in politics. They seem to have a generally negative attitude towards politics and their role within it. It is also remarkable that a larger share of sceptics have complete democratic capacities than paternalist citizens. This is in line with the theoretical construct: We expect people with complete democratic capacities to believe in themselves and share a more sceptical attitude towards the political system. Again, a possible hypothesis is that those sceptical people with high democratic capacities might be open to populist arguments as they seem not to trust the political system.

Overall, the results make clear that the democratic component is suitable to introduce additional analytical distinction to the concept of political efficacy, which may help to capture behavioural outcomes more precisely.

Democratic Efficacy and Populism

In 2019, an original online survey was undertaken in 15 European countries (Germany, the UK, Czechia, Hungary, Italy, the Netherlands, Poland, France, Slovakia, Lithuania, Denmark, Turkey, Spain, Greece and Bosnia and Herzegovina) within the framework of the DEMOS project. Our desired representative sample size amounted to approximately five hundred respondents per country while quotas based on current census data were set up for gender, age and geographical region. The fundamental *eligibility criterion* for respondents was having lived in their current country of residence for at least ten years, which we consider a sufficient timeframe to feel at home in the country. The survey questionnaire was developed by the researchers of the DEMOS project and was administered by the University of Amsterdam.²⁰

20 We are grateful to David Abadi for his work preparing the dataset ready for analysis.

The survey included the usual measures of political efficacy and proxies for democratic capacities: follow news at least some days, are not extremely partisan (mean above 5), identify with democratic values (equality, tolerance, autonomy). The survey used a scale measuring populist attitudes, based on existing items by Castanho and Silva et al.,²¹ consisting of *people-centrism* (e.g., “Politicians should always listen closely to the problems of the people”), *anti-elitism* (e.g., “The political elites have failed to protect our cultural identity”) and *Manichaeian outlook* (e.g., “You can tell if a person is good or bad if you know their political views”). Finally, we added three items to measure *nativism* (such as “The political elites have failed to protect our cultural identity”). The ten items formed a reliable scale (alpha = .66).

Based on the data of this survey, we made a first attempt to use the concept of democratic efficacy as well as to test the association between democratic efficacy and populist attitudes. In our analysis we addressed the following:

Descriptive research questions

- RQ1. How are our respondents distributed among the categories of the political efficacy typology (i.e., high, low, paternalist, sceptics) by country?
- RQ2. What share of our respondents have complete democratic capacities, that is, follow news at least some days, are not extremely partisan (mean above 5), identify (or at least somewhat agree) with democratic values (equality, tolerance, autonomy) by country?
- RQ3. How are our respondents distributed among the categories of the democratic efficacy typology (i.e., political efficacy plus democratic capacities)?

Inferential research questions

- RQ4. What is the connection between external political efficacy and populist attitudes?
- RQ5. What is the connection between internal political efficacy and populist attitudes?
- RQ6. What is the connection between democratic capacities (complete vs incomplete) and populist attitudes?
- RQ7. What is the connection between the typology of democratic efficacy and populist attitudes?

Findings

RQ1. How are our respondents distributed among the categories of the political efficacy typology (i.e., high, low, paternalist, sceptics) by country?

Both EPE and IPE are constructed from two items respectively by taking their average. All four items are measured on a 7-point Likert scale where the larger values indicate a higher level of efficacy. Mean values above 4 are considered a “high” level and under 4 are a “low” level of efficacy. As our goal is to test hypotheses related to the different types of democratic efficacy; respondents who were placed at the middle value (4) in each of the constructed EPE or IPE variables were not considered in the typology (45.5% of respondents), but their share is also reported by country.

21 Bruno Castanho Silva, Sebastian Jungkunz, Marc Helbling, and Levente Littvay, “An Empirical Comparison of Seven Populist Attitudes Scales,” *Political Research Quarterly* 73, no. 2 (2020): 409–424.

As indicated in table 6, 41.8% of respondents have a low level of political efficacy, while 24.7% of them are efficacious. As for the mixed types, more than a fourth of the citizenry has a high level of internal and a low level of external political efficacy, thereby they can be labelled as sceptics, whereas only an 8% of them are paternalist, that is, have a low level of internal and a high level of external political efficacy. However, there are remarkable variations between countries. In the CEE (except Lithuania) and some Mediterranean countries (Italy, Greece, France), the share of people with a high level of PE is smaller, while they have a larger share of people with low PE than in Western European countries. The proportion of paternalists is higher in Lithuania, Czechia, Turkey and Greece, while the most sceptical respondents were found in Bosnia, Slovakia, Denmark and the United Kingdom.

Table 6. Share of respondents based on the level of their political efficacy by country and mean values of external and internal efficacy (incl. cases with middle values) by country (last two columns)

Country	Political efficacy (%)				Resp. on middle value on each variable	EPE	IPE	N
	High	Low	Paternalists	Sceptics		Mean		
Germany	35%	40%	5%	20%	37%	3.61	4.22	476
UK	32.4%	32.8%	4.3%	30.5%	40.1%	3.64	4.37	937
Czechia	11.6%	56.4%	12.2%	19.8%	38%	3.29	3.53	529
Hungary	8.7%	64.6%	6.3%	20.5%	29.4%	2.82	3.39	540
Italy	23.4%	43.7%	8.3%	24.6%	37.1%	3.45	3.95	517
Netherlands	39.1%	30.6%	5.8%	24.5%	41.8%	3.74	4.36	505
Poland	21.8%	48.7%	8.2%	21.2%	38.5%	3.33	3.78	514
France	23.1%	53.4%	7.2%	16.3%	39.3%	3.44	3.77	506
Slovakia	14.5%	44.9%	9.5%	31.1%	37.9%	3.36	4.01	523
Lithuania	35.4%	30.1%	13%	21.4%	38%	3.90	4.17	519
Denmark	44.3%	18%	7%	30.6%	34.1%	3.95	4.56	496
Turkey	26.1%	33.6%	12.1%	28.3%	35.1%	3.60	4.28	473
Spain	32.5%	34.4%	9.8%	23.3%	36.5%	3.69	4.10	499
Greece	15.1%	45.1%	10.4%	29.4%	31.2%	3.29	3.90	519
Bosnia and Herzegovina	8.6%	51.7%	2%	37.7%	30.8%	2.79	3.92	506
TOTAL	24.7%	41.8%	7.9%	25.6%	36.5%	3.46	4.03	8,059

RQ2. What share of our respondents have complete democratic capacities, that is, follow news at least some days, are not extremely partisan (mean above 5), identify (or at least somewhat agree) with democratic values (equality, tolerance, autonomy) by country?

There are slightly more people in our sample who have incomplete democratic capacities, but more than 46.4% of our respondents have complete democratic capacities (DC; see table 7). It is difficult to find clear geographical patterns behind the country-level variations, but it is noticeable that in Mediterranean countries (Greece, Bosnia, Spain, Italy) more people have complete democratic capacities than in other countries. It is also interesting that in some Western European countries, the proportion of people with complete DC is rather low (Denmark, Netherlands, France).

Table 7. Share of respondents based on the level of democratic capacities by country

Country	Democratic capacities		N
	Incomplete	Complete	
Germany	49.4%	50.6%	476
UK	50.5%	49.5%	937
Czechia	70.1%	29.9%	529
Hungary	57%	43%	540
Italy	52.8%	47.2%	517
Netherlands	63.4%	36.3%	505
Poland	59.1%	40.9%	514
France	58.1%	41.9%	506
Slovakia	59.3%	40.7%	523
Lithuania	38.7%	61.3%	519
Denmark	63.9%	36.1%	496
Turkey	56.2%	43.8%	473
Spain	47.5%	52.5%	499
Greece	37.6%	62.4%	519
Bosnia-Herzegovina	43.1%	56.9%	506
TOTAL	53.6%	46.4%	8,059

Looking at the bivariate correlation between different components of democratic capacities, it seems that partisanship is an outlier component (see table 8). While there is a significant positive relationship between news consumption and the values of equality, tolerance and autonomy, non-partisanship is significantly and negatively correlated with each of them. Those who consume news at least some days are more likely to agree with the values of equality, tolerance and autonomy. At the same time, less partisan people consume news infrequently, and they are more likely to be neutral or negative with these values. The strongest correlation is found between the three democratic values.

Table 8. Bivariate correlations between the components of democratic capacities (N = 8,059)

	News cons.	Non-partisanship	Equality	Tolerance	Autonomy
News consumption		-.132**	.075**	.111**	.096**
Non-partisanship			-.064**	-.075**	-.058**
Equality				.430**	.427**
Tolerance					.481**

Note: * p < .05, ** p < .01, *** p < .001

RQ3. How are our respondents distributed among the categories of the democratic efficacy typology (i.e., political efficacy plus democratic capacities)?

Just one in ten people have both complete democratic capacities and a high level of political efficacy (see table 9). On the other end of the typology, 21% of respondents have both incomplete democratic

capacities and a low level of political efficacy. Interestingly enough, a large share of respondents with low political efficacy have complete democratic capacities, while 13% of respondents have both a high level of political efficacy and incomplete capacities. Half of the sceptics have complete and the other half have incomplete democratic capacities.

Table 9. The share of respondents at the intersections of democratic capacities and political efficacy (N = 5,117)

Democratic capacities	Political efficacy				Total
	High	Low	Paternalists	Sceptics	
Complete democratic capacities	11.2%	20.6%	4.2%	12.8%	49.1%
Incomplete capacities	13.2%	21.2%	3.7%	12.8%	50.9%
Total	24.7%	41.8%	7.9%	25.6%	100%

RQ4. What is the connection between external political efficacy and populist attitudes?

The scale of populist attitudes is constructed by averaging the measures of populism. External political efficacy and populist attitudes are significantly and negatively correlated, and the effect size is fairly remarkable. People with a low level of external political efficacy have more populist attitudes ($p < 0.001$; Pearson’s $r = -0.375$).

RQ5. What is the connection between internal political efficacy and populist attitudes?

Internal political efficacy is also significantly and negatively related to populist attitudes, but here the effect size is much smaller; only a weak relationship exists between the variables. However, people with a low level of internal political efficacy have slightly more populist attitudes ($p < 0.001$; Pearson’s $r = -0.046$).

RQ6. What is the connection between democratic capacities (complete vs incomplete) and populist attitudes?

A weak but significant negative association exists between democratic capacities and populist attitudes as well. People with incomplete democratic capacities are more likely to have populist attitudes ($p < 0.01$; Pearson’s $r = -0.032$). At the same time, when looking at the bivariate correlations between the components of democratic capacities and populist attitudes, it is apparent that not all the capacity measures perform the same way in terms of their relationship to populism (table 10).

Table 10. Bivariate correlations between the components of democratic capacities and populism

Democratic capacities	Populism
News consumption	.009
Non-partisanship	-.165**
Equality	.136**
Tolerance	.121**
Autonomy	.222**

Interestingly, democratic values are significantly and positively correlated with populist attitudes. It seems that democratic values and populist attitudes are not mutually exclusive. The only democratic capacity that significantly decreases populist attitudes is non-partisanship; the component is signifi-

cantly negatively associated with the other democratic components. Citizens who are not extremely partisan are less likely to identify with populist attitudes. News consumption is not significantly associated with populism, but when its interval variety is considered, there is a small ($r = 0.051$) but significant ($p < 0.001$) relationship between the two variables showing that more frequent news consumption is correlated with less populist attitudes.

RQ7. What is the connection between the typology of democratic efficacy and populist attitudes?

Table 11 shows the mean values of populist attitudes for each category of democratic efficacy. It seems that the most populist subcategories are sceptic people with incomplete democratic capacities, followed by those with “incomplete capacities with low PE” and “complete capacities with low PE”. The less populist respondents are those who have complete democratic capacities and a high level of political efficacy. Interestingly enough, paternalists are also less populist; moreover, paternalists with incomplete democratic capacities are even slightly less populist than those with complete capacities.

Table 11. Mean values of populist attitudes by category of democratic efficacy. (Standard deviations are in parentheses; N=5,117)

Democratic efficacy	Populist attitudes
Incomplete capacities with low PE	5.05 (.66)
Complete capacities with low PE	5.02 (.65)
Incomplete capacities with paternalist PE	4.48 (.74)
Complete capacities with paternalist PE	4.56 (.64)
Incomplete capacities with sceptic PE	5.11 (.67)
Complete capacities with sceptic PE	4.82 (.78)
Incomplete capacities with high PE	4.69 (.76)
Complete capacities with high PE	4.38 (.74)
TOTAL	4.88 (.73)

Conclusions

In our chapter we presented the concept of democratic efficacy as a construct based on the quantification of political efficacy and democratic capacities. The concept of democratic efficacy is two dimensional and, therefore, should not be conceived of as a simple addition of political efficacy and the measurement of democratic capacities.

Our assumption is that democratic efficacy might be a useful conceptual innovation in order to analyse and better understand the political profile of people holding populist attitudes. We believe that our first results illustrate that this is indeed the case. Using the concept of democratic efficacy, we can draw a nuanced picture of populist attitudes.

First, it seems that people with higher political efficacy are less prone to populist sentiments. This is in line with our expectations, just as the fact that the negative correlation is stronger in case of external political efficacy. This is hardly surprising if we assume that populism is a sign of discontent with politics given that external political efficacy is about trust in the political system.

Second, overall, democratic capacities also show a weak but significant negative association with populist attitudes. People with incomplete democratic capacities are more likely to have populist attitudes.

Third, the negative relationship does not hold for all democratic capacity measures. For instance, people with populist attitudes do share basic democratic values. However, non-partisanship is negatively associated with populism.

Fourth, combining political efficacy and democratic capacity, we find that people with the strongest populist attitudes are “sceptic people with incomplete democratic capacities”, followed by those in the “incomplete capacities with low PE” and “complete capacities with low PE” categories. The less populist respondents are those who have complete democratic capacities and a high level of political efficacy. This latter finding, together with the finding that sceptic people with incomplete democratic capacities show the strongest populist attitudes, is in line with our expectations and shows that populism is generally associated with discontent with politics and diminished democratic capacities. However, the combinations of political efficacy and democratic capacities as well as their relationship with populism show a considerable variation, suggesting that populism is a complex phenomenon. If we want to understand it better, we should refrain from easy simplifications.²²

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