



Democratic Efficacy and the Varieties of Populism in Europe

Selected

Findings

Edited by Zsolt Boda





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1. Introduction

Zsolt Boda (Centre for Social Sciences, Budapest)

DEMOS has studied the populist phenomenon from a multitude of perspectives and disciplines, combining insights from psychology, sociology, political science, legal studies, media studies, and policy studies using experimental research, deliberative polling, qualitative methods, survey research, interpretive analysis, legal analysis, and theoretical research. The results of the project have been published in dozens of publications, including the project's own Working Paper series, peer-reviewed journal articles, essays, book chapters, and edited volumes. This section does not aim to recap and summarise all these publications. Instead, it provides a selection of some of the most important and interesting research results. On each topic, an overview of the research result is provided, followed by the link to the publication. Some of the materials are published articles and, in other cases, when the publication is a work in progress, we refer to it as a DEMOS Working Paper. Most of the studies presented here have many authors.

This collection of papers is organised under four general titles: The populist phenomenon; Roots of populism; Impacts of populism; and Reactions to populism. The papers all represent research findings. Many of them have policy implications, but these aspects are covered in a collection of [policy briefs](#) available on the project website.

2. The populist phenomenon

2.1 Populist parties in contemporary Europe

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Populism is the “40 is the new 30” of political research, buzzing for the last two decades with what seems as an unfading energy. A lot of attention has been paid to defining the phenomena and outlining its general features. Significantly less notice has been paid to political parties. Even less work has been done on comparative party populism in contemporary Europe, one that would take into consideration social, political and historical aspects. This paper fills this void. Examining sixteen European populist parties and movements across the continent, we argue that while all adhere to the standard populist framework, there are not one but four populisms in contemporary Europe. We demonstrate our argument by positioning the case selection against the following dichotomies: exclusionary v. inclusionary populism, authoritarian v. non-authoritarian populism, strong nativist v. weak nativist populism, and radical democratic v. conspiratorial populism. Based on these variables, we introduce four types of party populism: (1) radical right-wing populist parties, which are exclusionary, authoritarian with a strong nativist appeal and which use conspiratory explanations of liberal democracy; (2) radical left-wing populists, which are inclusionary, non-authoritarian with a weak nativist appeal and use a radical democratic approach; (3) illiberal (post-communist) populist parties, which are exclusionary with strong a nativist appeal and use conspiratory explanations of liberal democracy; (4) anti-establishment populists and political entrepreneurs, which are non-authoritarian with a weak nativist appeal and tend to have radical democratic appeal (exclusionary variable is rather inconclusive due to their lack of ideology).

- Read the study: <https://openarchive.tk.hu/424/>

2.2 Populist communication on social media

Samuel Bennett, Artur Lipiński, Agnieszka Stępińska (Adam Mickiewicz University, Poznań)

David Abadi (University of Amsterdam), Martin Baloge (University of Lorraine, UL), Giuliano Bobba (University of Turin, UNITO), Eglė Butkevičienė (Kaunas Technology University, KTU), Charlotte Brands (University of Amsterdam), Agneta Fischer (University of Amsterdam), Thomas Gammeltoft-Hansen (University of Copenhagen, UCPH), Nicolas Hubé (UL), Bogdan Ianosev Glasgow Caledonian University, GCU), Lena Karamanidou (Glasgow Caledonian University, GCU), Sune Klinge (UCPH), Jiří Kocián (Charles University, CUNI), Umut Korkut (Glasgow Caledonian University, GCU), Jaume Magre (University of Barcelona, UB),

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This paper presents the findings of quantitative and qualitative research into populist communication on Facebook. Specifically, we look at how populist politicians from all across Europe used Facebook in their campaigns for the European Parliamentary elections in May 2019 and compared this with posts from July 2019. We start the paper with sections on research design and then outline the importance of social media for populist political communication. From here, we present the findings of our comparative research. We found that the use of Facebook varied widely around the bloc. Some countries – Spain, Italy, the UK, France, and Poland – display a more widespread use of social media and with more complex usage, whilst others, such as Lithuania, have a low usage level. As a result, we maintain that there is no one online populist strategy currently in use. Instead, the frequency, tone and topic of social media usage by populist actors differs from country to country, actor to actor, and over time, with specific national contexts playing an important role. The findings point to a ‘weak’ Europeanisation, with European elections acting as second order elections, and politicians acting nationally rather than as Europeans. As both a symptom and a cause of this, there is a strong current of Euroscepticism and anti-European sentiment, with a growing network of right-wing, nativist, populist actors, who share policies and discourses. This is proven in the emergence of the Europe of Nations and Freedom group in the EP.

- *Read the study:* <https://openarchive.tk.hu/420/>

2.3 Populist policy making

Attila Bartha, Zsolt Boda, and Dorottya Szikra (Centre for Social Sciences, Budapest)

The rise of populist governance throughout the world offers a novel opportunity to study the way in which populist leaders and parties rule. This article conceptualises populist policy making by theoretically addressing the substantive and discursive components of populist policies and the decision-making processes of populist governments. It first reconstructs the

implicit ideal type of policy making in liberal democracies based on the mainstream governance and policy making scholarship. Then, taking stock of the recent populism literature, the article elaborates an ideal type of populist policy making along the dimensions of content, procedures and discourses. As an empirical illustration, we apply a qualitative congruence analysis to assess the conformity of a genuine case of populist governance, social policy in post-2010 Hungary with the populist policy making ideal type. Concerning the policy content, the article argues that policy heterodoxy, strong willingness to adopt paradigmatic reforms and an excessive responsiveness to majoritarian preferences are distinguishing features of any type of populist policies. Regarding the procedural features, populist leaders tend to downplay the role of technocratic expertise, sideline veto-players and implement fast and unpredictable policy changes. Discursively, populist leaders tend to extensively use crisis frames and discursive governance instruments in a Manichean language and a saliently emotional manner that reinforces polarisation in policy positions. Finally, the article suggests that policy making patterns in Hungarian social policy between 2010 and 2018 have been largely congruent with the ideal type of populist policy making.

- *Read the study:* <https://www.cogitatiopress.com/politicsandgovernance/article/view/2922>

2.4 Populist constitutionalism?

Zoltán Szente and Fruzsina Gárdos-Orosz (Centre for Social Sciences, Budapest)

According to conventional wisdom, populism is one of the most characteristic political trends in contemporary Europe, posing a significant challenge to the traditional values and institutions of constitutional democracies. It is generally thought that one of the distinguishing features of modern populism is its “constitutional project”, that is, the ambitions of populists to pursue constitutional changes to achieve their goals when they come to power. In this study, we explore how the characteristics of populism have been transformed into constitutional law in the EU Member States or, in other words, which attributes have been institutionalised in these countries, and to what extent. In doing so, we wanted to know whether there are more general European trends, i.e. if we assume that populism is a political movement that is widespread in many countries of the continent, whether it generates similar constitutional changes in different countries. Ultimately, we were looking for an answer to the theoretical question of whether, on the basis of the actual constitutional development of the past period, it is possible to identify

populist constitutionalism as a specific form of modern European constitutionalism. Our findings suggest that if we examine the presumptions of the theory of populist constitutionalism in the light of recent constitutional changes in Europe, empirical evidence suggests that the postulates of this theory have only modestly influenced the real constitutional development of EU Member States over the last decade. As a matter of fact, no strong correlation was found between the prevalence of the criteria of populist constitutionalism and the constitutional development of countries with populist governments or strong populist parties.

- Read the study: <https://openarchive.tk.mta.hu/536/>

2.5 Between mitigation and dramatization: The effect of the COVID-19 crisis on populists' discourses and strategies

Giuliano Bobba (University of Turin) and Nicolas Hubé (University of Lorraine)

This paper addresses the general research questions of the book that DEMOS researchers did on the COVID-19 pandemic and populism, namely the possibility that populists in Europe can profit from a peculiar crisis such as COVID-19, and it wonders whether populists reacted in a similar way across countries or whether the institutional role they play at the national level has affected their reactions. Findings show that while populists have tried to take advantage of the crisis situation, the impossibility of taking ownership of the COVID-19 issue has made the crisis hard to be exploited. In particular, populists in power have tried to depoliticise the pandemic, whereas radical right-populists in opposition tried to politicise the crisis without gaining relevant public support though.

- Read the study: <https://openarchive.tk.mta.hu/456/>

3. Roots of populism

3.1 What kind of public policies trigger populism?

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This paper investigates public policies that precede the rise of populism. A mixed method research design is applied: on the one hand, we use data from international surveys and databanks to explore the policy–populism nexus from a comparative European perspective. On the other hand, country case studies have been prepared to understand the country-specific historical and socio-economic features of populism and its potential policy roots. Four countries were selected as national case studies: two EU member states (Greece and Hungary) because of a strong, long-term support of populist parties; one EU member state (Lithuania), where support of populist parties remains moderate, although historical and socio-economic features suggest a likely rise of populism; and one country (Turkey) that exhibits the potential hybridization tendencies of populism and the role of policies in the shift from democratic towards authoritarian regimes. We found that the content of policies were weak predictors of the rise of populism. Country-specific measures were more important predictors than policy ideas. At the same time, our results demonstrate that the lack of activation policies may be a strong predictor of populist attitudes of citizens, and the exclusion of a significant proportion of young people from the labour market clearly feeds populist attitudes. Another important finding is that crisis management policies matter, but not the socio-economic crisis in itself: the management of crisis by non-elected policy experts, through technocratic governance methods, will probably trigger populism. This is particularly true in societies where political polarization is high.

- Read the study: <https://openarchive.tk.mta.hu/430/>

3.2 Populism and emotions

David Abadi, Pere-Lluis Huguet Cabot, Jan Willem Duyvendak, and Agneta Fischer (University of Amsterdam)

Previous research on predictors of populism has predominantly focused on socio-economic (e.g., education, employment, social status), and socio-cultural factors (e.g., social identity and social status). However, during the last years, the role of negative emotions has become increasingly prominent in the study of populism. We conducted a cross-national survey in 15 European countries (N=8059), measuring emotions towards the government and the elites, perceptions of threats about the future, and socio-economic factors as predictors of populist

attitudes (the latter operationalized via three existing scales, anti-elitism, Manichaeian outlook, people-centrism, and a newly developed scale on nativism). We tested the role of emotional factors in a deductive research design based on a structural model. Our results show that negative emotions (anger, contempt and anxiety) are better predictors of populist attitudes than mere socio-economic and socio-cultural factors. An inductive machine learning algorithm, Random Forest (RF), reaffirmed the importance of emotions across our survey dataset.

- *Read the study:* <https://openarchive.tk.mta.hu/483/>

3.3 Democratic efficacy: a safety net against populist attitudes?

Márton Bene and Zsolt Boda (Centre for Social Sciences, Budapest)

The DEMOS project proposes the concept of democratic efficacy, which has been designed to capture the way subjective sentiments toward politics—i.e., external and internal political efficacy—are connected to ‘objective’ individual capacities that are assumed to promote democratic behaviour. It has two components: political efficacy and democratic capacities. Four types of political efficacy are specified based on two variants—i.e., external and internal political efficacy: high political efficacy (PE), low political efficacy (PE), paternalists, and sceptics. Democratic capacities consist of political knowledge, news consumptions, political attachment, political values, and political skills. People with complete democratic capacities have: (1) a certain level of factual political knowledge; (2) consumed news regularly; (3) non-intensive partisans; (4) identities with core values of democracy — i.e., political and legal equality, tolerance toward dissenting opinion, and individual autonomy—and (5) had some involvement in political activities (as a proxy of skills). In line with this, we investigate how external and internal political efficacy are associated with populist attitudes in the case of people who have and who do not have certain democratic capacities. Our findings drawing upon an original international survey covering 15 European countries show that higher internal political efficacy is associated with more populist attitudes in the case of people with incomplete democratic capacities, but complete democratic capacities yield a ‘safety net’ against this effect. However, the negative relationship between external political efficacy and populist attitudes does not depend on these capacities: stronger dissatisfaction with the responsiveness of political elites leads to more populist attitudes irrespective of people’s democratic background. Nonetheless, our findings imply that a stronger emphasis on certain

democratic practices and values in political socialization or civic education could prevent that stronger political confidence would turn into populist views about politics.

Read the study: <https://openarchive.tk.mta.hu/419/>

3.4 Democratic efficacy at schools

Zsolt Boda (Centre for Social Sciences, Budapest, CSS), Eglė Butkevičienė (Kaunas University of Technology, KTU), Moreno Mancosu (University of Turin, UNITO), Vaidas Morkevicius (KTU), Attila Z. Papp (CSS)

This working paper studies the role of schools in developing attitudes related to democratic efficacy, which, as proven by previous DEMOS research, offers a protection against populist appeal. We analyse the subject from two different perspectives. First, we study the relationship between civic education (CE) curricula at schools and democratic political efficacy of youth in 14 European countries. We look at whether national level policies related to civic education have an effect on internal and external political efficacy, political interest, political participation and support for democratic values (equality, tolerance and autonomy) of youth. As our explanatory variables at country level we include 5 variables identified in the Eurydice Report ‘Citizenship at School in Europe Education 2017’: compulsory guidelines on classroom assessment in citizenship education, recommended minimum number of hours of compulsory citizenship education as a separate subject, inclusion of competences related to ‘knowledge of political processes’, ‘knowledge of fundamental political and social concepts’ and ‘knowledge of/participation in civil society’ in national citizenship education curricula. As the data source for investigating the relationship at the individual and country levels, we employ data from the European Social Survey, Round 9. We find that the most consistent effect on youth’s democratic political efficacy is exerted by the recommended minimum number of hours of compulsory citizenship education as a separate subject. Second, we go beyond formal education and study the role of school climate in developing democratic attitudes among the students. Using PISA survey data from 18 countries, we found that the sense of belonging to school, the perception of competitiveness at school, the perception of cooperation at school and the perception of teacher commitment by students predict democratic attitudes. At the same time, if the school climate is characterised by bullying and discrimination, this hinders the consolidation of democratic habits. To a lesser extent, it also hinders the consolidation of

critical, democratic thinking when there is poor discipline in the classroom. These correlations are general, since they apply to all types of countries.

- Read the study: <https://openarchive.tk.mta.hu/517/>

4. Impacts of populism

4.1 Between normalisation and polarisation: media populism in a comparative perspective

Giuliano Bobba, Antonella Seddone, Moreno Mancosu (University of Turin), Jiří Kocián, Martin Mejstřík (Charles University Prague), Martin Baloge, Nicolas Hubé (University of Lorraine), Agnieszka Stępińska, Samuel Bennett, Artur Lipiński (Adam Mickiewicz University Poznań), Andrej Školka (School of Communication and Media Bratislava), Jaume Magre, Esther Pano, and Lluís Medir (University of Barcelona)

This paper aims at identifying and operationalizing the so-called “media populism” in media outlets, as well as the social and political factors that prompt journalists to contrast or favour populism. The empirical analysis, including six EU countries (Czechia, France, Italy, Poland, Spain, and Slovakia), combines an original expert survey (aimed at measuring the level of populism by the media in each national context) and in-depth interviews with journalists about news media perception and reaction to populism in politics. General results suggest that the media landscape is witnessing a process of normalisation of populism in news coverage. This happens mainly by the inclusion of people-centrism and anti-elitism as a simplified way of accomplishing the information and control functions typical of political journalism. The expert survey data also suggest that a process of polarisation between news outlets is occurring in most of the countries. This polarisation takes place particularly with respect to outgroup ostracism: some news outlets support this orientation, while others actively act to counter it. In the second part of the paper, the authors stress, by means of in-depth interviews, that populism is in the beholder's eye. Populism can be conceived as positive (rarely) or negative (often), and in any case, it is perceived as a normative concept. “Populism” is therefore a typical word and concept in political competition, not only for political actors but also for journalists and news outlets. The interviews also suggest that populism is becoming a constitutive element of contemporary political journalism. The relationship between journalism and populism is characterised by forms of parallelism, polarisation or normalisation: all these processes lead to

the inclusion of populist frames and claims within mainstream media outlets' political coverage.

- Read the study: <https://openarchive.tk.mta.hu/534/>

4.2 The policy patterns of populist parties and their effect on non-populist parties

Oliver W. Lembcke (Ruhr University, Bochum)

The aim of this study is two-fold. It will try to identify populist policy fields' patterns in contrast to non-populist positions; it will measure the impact that populist parties have on other parties' policy positions and the party system. The analysis's critical questions are the following: Do populist parties have a stable core of policy positions? Or does their essential policy direction change over time? On which policy positions do they give up? Is there a distinct cluster of populist policy positions that distinguishes populist parties from their contenders within the party system? What impact do populist parties have on other political parties' policy positions, and the party system's competition mode (centripetal or centrifugal)? These perspectives may also contribute to the broader discussion if the rise of populist parties reflects the emergence of a new cleavage in Europe. The research design is based on a quantitative cross-country data analysis with party manifestos as the core unit of analysis (MARPOR data set). Four hypotheses will guide this analysis: The first hypothesis (flexible policy program) refers to the widely acknowledged definition of populism as a 'thin ideology'. It will test if populism is more flexible in terms of its policy goals and or guiding principles than fully fledged ideologies like liberalism or socialism. The second hypothesis (representation gap) picks up on the notion of populist policy supply. It takes a closer look if populist parties try to pursue a different kind of policies outside of or in contrast to the mainstream. The third hypothesis (contagion effects) points to the relation between the electoral success of populist parties and the policy adaption of other parties, especially among established parties. It will test the impact of the electoral success by populist parties on other political parties, especially parties with a conservative, nationalist, or centrist-right ideology. Finally, the fourth hypothesis (polarization effects) deals with the impact of populist parties on the party system. It will analyse if populist parties have polarizing effects on the political party system, changing the party competition mode from centripetal to centrifugal. The sample, extracted from the MARPOR data set, includes

manifestos of political parties from twenty different European countries. For a comparative approach between West- and East-European party systems, this analysis restricts itself to the recent ‘wave of populism’ 1990-2020.

- Read the study: <https://openarchive.tk.mta.hu/491/>

4.3 The “EU Populist Crisis”: The effect of populism on the EU legal order and vice versa

Helle Krunke, William Alexander Tornøe, and Caroline Egestad Wegener (University of Copenhagen)

This paper has two purposes: first, to provide an overview of the effects of populism on the EU legal system, and to make the argument that the EU legal responses to populism may contribute to crystallising the EU’s constitutional identity. Looking back at the history of the EU, we find several events, which are linked directly or indirectly to a crystallisation of EU values. One might call them “constituting moments” in defining an EU identity and maybe even an EU constitutional identity. The chapter argues that the EU’s responses to the rule of law crisis form part of this evolution. The second purpose of the paper is to turn the picture around and ask which effect the EU responses have had on populism, using Poland as a case study.

- Read the paper: <https://openarchive.tk.mta.hu/538/>

4.4 The Populist Challenge of Common EU Policies - The Case of (Im)migration

Lukasz Gruszczynski (Centre for Social Sciences, CSS, and Kozminski University), Réka Friedery (CSS), Andrea Crescenzi (Sapienza University of Rome), Angeliki Dimitriadi (Hellenic Foundation for European & Foreign Policy, ELIAMEP), Katarzyna du Vall (Jagiellonian University), Rosita Forastiero (National Research Council of Italy), Zsolt Körtvélyesi (CSS), Andrej Školkay (School of Communication and Media), Viktor Szép (CSS)

One of the major conflicts between populist and non-populist forces (movements, parties, governments) as well as the European Union (EU) institutions is manifested in the area of EU immigration policy. This working paper discusses how the influx of migrants (mostly from the Middle East and North Africa region) into the EU has been used as a policy conflict ground within the EU. In this context, the paper assesses the policy responses in the selected EU

Member States and analyses the challenges in implementation of the common EU policies. The paper covers the period from 2015 to 2018 and includes the following countries: France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Italy, Poland and Slovakia. The paper concludes that the 2015 migration crisis and the response to it led to (or reinvigorated existing) the politicisation of the topic across the EU, forcing the parties from all sides of the political spectrum to take a position on it. Simultaneously, one may also observe a process of securitisation of migration in the political debate in all analysed countries. Irregular migration was construed as a security threat by many political parties and leaders, ‘requiring emergency measures and justifying actions outside the normal bounds of political procedure’. While the securitisation strategy was most visible in the discourse of the right-wing populist parties, its elements were progressively taken by the mainstream parties, arguably in response to increased salience of the issue. The paper also finds a correlation between the ideological profile of the parties and their approach to the migration crisis and the proposed EU response. All the parties located close to the right extreme tended to take a strong anti-immigration and anti-EU stance. All of them also ranked high in the populist index. On the other hand, the populist parties located on the left side or in the centre of the political spectrum took a moderate stance on this issue.

- Read the study: <https://openarchive.tk.mta.hu/486/>

5. Reactions to populism

5.1 Citizens’ Reactions to Populism in Europe: How do target groups respond to the populist challenge?

Osman Şahin (Glasgow Caledonian University, GCU), Federico Vegetti (University of Turin, UNITO), Umut Korkut (GCU), Giuliano Bobba (UNITO), Moreno Mancosu (UNITO), Antonella Seddone (UNITO), Agnieszka Stępińska (Adam Mickiewicz University, Poznan, AMU), Samuel Bennett (AMU), Artur Lipiński (AMU), Dimitri A. Sotiropoulos, Manos Tsatsanis, Alexia Mitsikostas (Hellenic Foundation for European & Foreign Policy, ELIAMEP), Zsuzsanna Árendás, Vera Messing (Centre for Social Sciences, Budapest), Nicolas Hubé, and Martin Baloge (University of Lorraine, UL)

In this paper, we explore the reactions of target groups to populist discourse through focus groups in five European countries and perform a quantitative analysis of Facebook data in eight European countries. We demonstrate the ways in which populist discourse and policies affect

target groups, including migrants, ethnic or religious minorities, academics, and LGBTIQ+ groups. Focus groups revealed that organised religion is an agent of populist movements. The Catholic Church in Poland and the Greek Orthodox Church legitimise and disseminate populist discourses. We also find that vulnerable groups complain about mainstreaming of hate language in their countries. The rise of populist movements and these movements' eagerness to express controversial opinion on issues including immigration, homosexuality and political liberalism caused certain groups examined in this paper to appropriate these opinions and voice them in everyday life. Vulnerable groups, in an attempt to counterpoise the populist challenge in their countries, have developed four main strategies: i) creating echo chambers, ii) self-censorship, iii) migration, and iv) active resistance. Echo chambers enable members of vulnerable groups to avoid what they deem unnecessary and potentially unpleasant encounters with supporters of populist movements. It provides them with a comfort zone where they can express opinion more freely. Self-censorship, similar to echo chambers, helps target groups to stay under the radar of populist movements and their supporters. Those defending migration state that the process in their countries is irreversible and migrating to another country is the only way out. Finally, some participants argued that rather than conceding defeat, they actively resist through civil society organizations, street protests, and openly display their identity to fight off populism. Analysis of Facebook data revealed information about the ways in which populist parties and leaders communicate on social media and how the public perceives their communication. Populists use an anti-elitist language more frequently than mainstream political actors. Turkey and Hungary are exception to the rule, because in both countries populist governments have been in office for a long time. Second, populist actors in all countries but Poland and Turkey talk about immigration more. In Germany, France and the UK, populist actors frequently discuss EU-related issues. We also found that populists in Germany, France, Italy and the UK talk more about 'democracy and legitimacy' than mainstream parties do, whilst populists talk about these issues less than mainstream parties do in Greece, Hungary and Turkey. Analysis also suggests that populist actors' Facebook posts obtain more reactions, shares, and comments than mainstream political actors'. Anti-elitist language in social media posts produces more reactions, shares, and comments. Posts with references to religious minorities trigger fewer reactions from the users while posts making references to ethnic minorities, including immigrants or asylum seekers, as well as country-specific minorities like Roma in Hungary or Kurds in Turkey, trigger more reactions, and these posts are shared more. Finally, we find that posts referring to 'immigration' trigger more

reactions and shares and produce more discussion than other issues. In the final section of this working paper, we conclude with a short discussion on policy options.

- *Read the study:* <https://openarchive.tk.mta.hu/489/>

5.2 Legal responses to populism in Europe

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The research conducted in this working paper focused on the best practices adopted at the European level to respond to populist threats to constitutional rules. The investigation, based on ten country reports involving national experts' information, allowed the evaluation of the role of the constitutional judiciary and the impact of courts' decisions-interpretations on the spread and on the counterreaction to populism. These pieces of empirical evidence allowed to identify three different types of methods and practices: (I) the “business-as-usual model”, in cases no changes in the jurisprudence occurred to react to populist threats (Austria, Italy, Romania, Czechia, United Kingdom); (II) the “changing interpretive practice to promote populist aspirations”, meaning those cases where populist issues triggered changes in interpretive practice resulting in a substantive concepts change and in some cases bringing real innovations into jurisprudence (Greece, Poland, Hungary); (III) the “changing interpretive practices to counteract populist initiatives” (Croatia). However, it should be noticed that, in all cases, populism did not generate any new theory of interpretation. Likewise, no close connection can be established between populist constitutionalism and methods of constitutional interpretation. In short, populists do not have preferable interpretive patterns of theory or practice. Elements relating to populist constitutional drifts were grouped into four categories: (a) the preference of popular sovereignty and the promotion of direct democracy; (b) the claim for authentic representation and, together with this, the anti-pluralism; (c) an extreme approach of majoritarianism; (d) the restriction of certain fundamental rights together with intolerance/discrimination against certain minorities. The analysis proved that there are no national answers to “populist threats” that are effective everywhere, every time. However, some best practices are more dominant in the EU than others are. Moreover, legal reactions to

anticonstitutionalist tendencies were examined on the basis of the Venice Commission's opinions and the European Court of Human Rights decisions. Regarding the legal practices and practices of law in response to populism under the EU rule of law principle, the “EU Toolbox” – naming the set of legal tools and legal responses aiming to safeguard the EU Rule of Law – was examined theoretically and scrutinised in practice through case-law examination. The evaluation was assessed through the tailored “best practices” methodology: “efficiency”, “effectiveness” and “transferability” criteria.

- Read the study: <https://openarchive.tk.mta.hu/554/>

5.3 Who are the populists and how to respond to them: Evidence from mainstream European Parliament parties

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The main research questions of this paper are how mainstream European Parliament parties conceptualise populism, and how they respond to the rise of populism. The paper is based on semi-structured interviews with top officials of non-populist parties in the European Parliament (“Europarties”), such as the ALDE, EPP, the Party of European Socialists and the European Greens. The research technique of the paper is thematic analysis, performed on the responses obtained from the aforementioned interviews. Europarty officials identified populist parties by associating them with core themes such as anti-migration, Euroscepticism, and the tendency to make undeliverable policy promises. As for the effectiveness of anti-populist strategies, the interviewees converged on the idea that the problems posed by populists cannot be ignored and that clear and concrete policy solutions are what mainstream parties need, if they are to defend themselves against the evasive political discourse of populist parties.

- Read the study: <https://openarchive.tk.mta.hu/512/>

5.4 Civic strategies addressing populism

Editor: Elisa Lironi (European Citizen Action Service, ECAS)

Hendrik Nahr and Rhys Nugent (ECAS)

Projects that aim to tackle populism have not attracted particularly great attention from the research community. But it is important to understand better their applied strategies, the circumstances in which they were created, the challenges they have faced, and their indicators for success. This paper analyses ten case studies representing such projects. We find great diversity of action taken and approaches chosen by civil society and the academic community to address the consequences of populist movements. Those findings contribute to designing guidelines for project managers setting up similar initiatives. When it comes to the goals of such projects, we find that some aim to deconstruct populist narratives, while others aim to trigger citizen action. Depending on the goal, project managers have different methodologies at hand that come with diverse challenges and factors that indicate success. Based on those findings, four general recommendations are put forward, namely: ensuring sufficient and easy-to-access public funding for (innovative) projects addressing populism; more proactive use of project outcomes by policy makers; more synergies between different kinds of projects; and dedicated channels to facilitate the exchange of expertise between project managers responding to the challenges posed by populism. The shared willingness of all project managers to connect with one another in the future is another promising finding.

- *Read the study:* <https://openarchive.tk.mta.hu/463/>