



# **Trade Union Strategies in the EU to address trade union members' and workers' growing propensity to vote for right wing populists and nationalists**

**STUDY**



***European Economic and Social Committee***



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## **Study**

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## General information

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STUDY FOR	<i>The European Economic and Social Committee</i>
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REQUESTING SERVICE	<i>Workers' Group</i>
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STUDY MANAGING SERVICE	<i>Relations with Organized Civil Society and Forward Studies Unit - Information Centre and Studies</i>
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DATE	<i>03/06/2019</i>
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MAIN CONTRACTOR	<i>NOTUS-ASR</i>
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## IDENTIFIERS

		ISBN	doi
STUDY			
print	<i>QE-03-19-589-EN-C</i>	<i>978-92-830-3407-0</i>	<i>10.2864/978952</i>
PDF	<i>QE-03-19-589-EN-N</i>	<i>978-92-830-3402-5</i>	<i>10.2864/413128</i>

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## **Abstract**

This report analyses trade union strategies to address trade union members' and workers' growing likelihood to vote for Populism Radical Right (PRR) parties. The study focuses on four countries where PRR parties have different political stances and have achieved different levels of political support, namely Germany, Denmark, Spain and Hungary. These countries also have different patterns in their industrial relations and highlight distinctive features of national trade union movement. The report has been compiled based on desk research and individual national reports from national experts, involving semi-structured interviews with trade unions. The study shows that trade unions' discourses and views on PRR parties differ in the countries studied. Overall, trade unions tend to be critical with PRR parties' agenda. However, in some countries, notably Denmark, trade unions' appeal to political neutrality means that critics are only focused on certain policy proposals or areas such as migration policies, and explicit critics toward PRR parties are not formulated. The study also identifies several trade unions' direct and indirect actions against PRR parties, particularly in Germany, where the trade union movement has developed a comprehensive set of actions to counteract the rise of PRR parties and extremist movements.

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## **Executive summary**

### **Introduction**

The growing support for populist radical right (PRR) parties across Europe has generated extensive debates. Among the different debates, the analysis of the working class's support of radical right parties has received special attention. Literature on radical right voting trends suggests that these parties have increasingly attracted voters from the working class, including unionised workers, since the mid-1980s. Those trends suggest that trade unions are subject to a special level responsibility in counteracting the PRR parties (Stöss, 2017). In this context, the European Economic and Social Committee has contracted NOTUS-ASR to conduct a comparative study whose aim is to research trade union strategies to address trade union members' and workers' growing likelihood to vote for PRR parties. The study focuses on four countries where PRR parties have different political stances and have achieved different levels of political support, namely Germany, Denmark, Spain and Hungary. These countries also have different patterns in their industrial relations and highlight distinctive features of national trade union movements.

The current project has three specific objectives:

1. To provide an overview of the main PRR parties in each of the countries analysed
2. To analyse trade union discourses and views of PRR parties
3. To analyse trade union strategies and actions to address the growing propensity of workers and trade union members to vote for radical right-wing parties

The report was compiled based on desk research and individual national reports from national experts, involving semi-structured interviews with trade unions. A total of seven semi-structured interviews were conducted with senior officers and heads of peak-level trade union units affiliated with the European Trade Union Confederation (ETUC).

### **Policy context**

The policy context includes the rise of PRR parties across different European countries and the growing support these parties are getting by workers and, in some countries, trade unions' members (Stöss, 2017). In the four countries studied, PRR or strong conservative parties have grown in recent years.

In Germany, Alternative for Germany (AfD), was founded in 2013 by renegades from the Christian Democratic Party (CDU) who felt that their party had moved too far to the centre. There is general consensus on classifying the AfD as a PRR party (Vehrkamp, 2017); although even in 2015 many experts still defined AfD as a national conservative or national liberal party. AfD obtained 12.6% of the votes and 94 seats in the 2017 federal parliament elections. For the first time in the modern history of the Federal Republic of Germany, a PRR party was elected for the country's parliament.

In Denmark, the Danish People's Party (Dansk Folkeparti, DF), founded in 1995, has been included within the PRR party family (Jungar and Ravik Jupskas, 2014), being also defined as national conservative, social conservative and right-wing populist (Nordsieck, 2015). DF has progressively grown since the end of the 1990s until becoming the second largest political force in 2015 parliamentary elections. DF abstained from joining the centre-right government despite invitations from the leading centre-right party Venstre, being from 2015 to 2019 the main political party in the opposition. At the 2019 general parliamentary elections, DF lost 21 MP compared to 2015, obtaining 16 parliamentary seats.

In Spain, VOX political party emerged in 2013 led by former Popular Party leaders disaffected with the moderate approach of this conservative political party. Although VOX ideology has not been in-depth studied in the specialised literature, most of observers agree that VOX discourse and programme falls within the scope of the PRR political family. VOX won less than 0.3 per cent of total votes in the general parliamentary elections held in 2015 and 2016 (González-Enríquez, 2017). However, at the 2019 general parliamentary elections it obtained 10% of total votes and 24 parliamentary seats, ending the so-call "Spanish exceptionalism" (Alonso and Rovira Kaltwasser, 2015).

In Hungary, the two parties labelled as PRR or conservative nationalist parties, namely Fidesz and Jobbik, are the two largest political forces in the country. Fidesz has dominated Hungarian politics nationally and locally since its landslide victory in the 2010 national elections on a joint list with the Christian Democratic People's Party (Fidesz-KDNP). Parliamentary majority was retained in 2014, when Fidesz-KDNP obtained 45% of total votes and 133 MPs out of 199, and again in 2018 (49% of total votes and 133 MPs out of 199). Jobbik stabilised its positions in 2014 and 2018 and has become the second largest political force in Hungary, in opposition.

### **Key findings**

The study has shown that AfD in Germany, DF in Denmark, VOX in Spain and Fidesz and Jobbik in Hungary adhere to some extent to the core ideological features which, following Mudde (2007),

define the PRR party family, namely nativism or strong conservative nationalism, populism and authoritarianisms. However, those ideological features take different forms depending on national contexts.

The study has found a greater degree of variation on the socio-economic dimensions among the main parties that are classified within the PRR party family in Germany, Denmark, Spain and Hungary. PRR parties analysed rang from centrist positions (DF, JOBBIK) to more neoliberal approaches (AfD, VOX and Fidesz).

The revision of quantitative studies analysing voters for PRR show that AfD, DF and Fidesz are attracting a high proportion of voters from working class (blue collar, semi-skilled workers) and lowest income strata. Research and trade union sources also confirm that AfD and DF are getting considerable support by unionised workers. It appears therefore that unionization does not longer prevent voting for radical right in Denmark and Germany. In Spain, research on VOX voters is scarce. Recent studies based on regional elections portray a different voter profile compared to AfD, DF and Fidesz, who predominantly come from medium and high-income households (CIS, 2018).

Different demand and supply side factors can explain the evolution of PRR parties in the four countries studied. Comparatively, Spain appears as the country where there was the most significant demand for PRR parties, particularly due to rise on unemployment and inequality and on distrust in political institutions and the European Union since the onset of the economic crisis. As far as supply side factors are concerned, different internal and external factors such as the structure of cleavages, or the role played by different ideological formulas (for instance, antiimmigration combined with centrist redistributive policy in Denmark) contribute to understand PRR parties rise.

Trade unions discourses and views in relation to PRR parties differ in the countries studied. Germany is the country where trade union discourse on PRR parties and the right extremist movement is more elaborated as a result of several studies on the topic commissioned by trade union DGB. It is also the country where trade unions have expressed greater concern about the rise of right-wing extremist and PRR parties. In Denmark, the study has focused on the biggest trade union confederation, that is the Confederation of Danish Trade Unions (Fagbevægelsens Hovedorganisation, FH). The report shows that FH does not have an explicit critical discourse on the PRR party DF. Overall, the trade union FH opposes DF's policies and proposals in some fields (particularly migration) but, at the same time, is open to cooperating with it in relation to other topics such as pensions, as a result of the DF centrist welfare agenda. In Spain, most representative trade unions' confederations (CCOO and UGT) have a very critical discourse on the main PRR



party, which has led them to denounce its whole ideology (nationalism, critiques of gender equality policies, etc.). In Hungary, trade unions approached (MASZSZ and SZEF) mainly criticise labour code reforms enacted by Fidesz that increase flexibility and restrict workers' rights. However, a less clear trade union position is seen in other key political areas and topics such as migration and xenophobic discourses.

Germany is also the country where the trade union movement has developed the most comprehensive set of actions to counteract the rise of PRR parties. In the remaining three countries, findings revealed primarily indirect actions.

## **Conclusions**

In a nutshell, report findings show that trade unions' views and actions to counteract the rise of PRR parties differ among the four countries studied. Existing relationships between PRR parties and trade unions appear to be conditioned, first, by the different forms these parties take depending on national contexts. In this sense, attention has to be drawn to the different PRR parties' socio-economic agendas and views about national industrial relations models. Besides, trade unions logics of action shaped by institutional contexts and ideologies seem also to partly determine trade unions' perceptions and actions towards PRR parties. With this regard, it is worth noting that although most of the trade unions are currently self-assessed as party-politically neutral, certain trade unionism varieties have more ambiguous positions. This appears to be the case of countries where industrial relations are highly politicised and the state tends to enact by law the norms of employment, working conditions and collective bargaining, as it applies to Spain and Hungary. In Spain, trade unions are particularly concerned with VOX proposals to limit the role of trade unions within the democratic system while in Hungary, trade unions have defended workers' interests by opposing recent amendments in the labour code enacted by Fidesz. In addition, Spanish trade unions are concerned with VOX's regressive policy agenda in some fields such as gender equality or migration in which they have influenced policy making through discussions with different governments and social pacts. In Germany, trade unions' formal political neutrality is not reflected at the regional level, where a number of regional union officials have publicly supported left-wing political parties such as die Linke. Moreover, formal political neutrality has not refrained DGB and its sectoral federations in adopting actions to counteract the rise of AfD, denouncing both its neoliberal and nativist agenda. In contrast, Danish trade unions have a more pronounced neutral position and are open to negotiate policy consensus with different political parties, including PRR parties, in a policy context where the main Danish PRR party (DF) has a centrist position on the socio-economic dimension and accepts the Danish self-regulated industrial relations model. Finally, the historical political context has to be also taken

into consideration, particularly in the German case, where trade unions started to promote internal debates and actions in the 90s as a response to violent acts perpetrated by right wing extremists. Currently, German trade unions are highly committed to combatting radical right and extremist attitudes amongst workers and trade union members even in a period marked by the decline of trade union membership.

## Study

### Introduction

The growing support for populist radical right (PRR) parties across Europe has generated extensive debate. Among the different debates, the analysis of the working class' and trade union members' support of radical right parties has received special attention. Literature on radical right voting trends suggests that these parties have increasingly attracted voters from the working class, including unionised workers, since the mid-1980s. Those trends suggest that trade unions are subject to a special level responsibility in counteracting the PRR parties (Stöss, 2017). In this context, the European Economic and Social Committee has contracted NOTUS-ASR to conduct a comparative study whose aim is to research trade union strategies to address trade union members' and workers' growing likelihood to vote for PRR parties. The study focuses on four countries where PRR parties have different political stances and have achieved different levels of political support, namely Germany, Denmark, Spain and Hungary. These countries also have different patterns in their industrial relations and highlight distinctive features of national trade union movements.

The current project has three specific objectives:

1. To provide an overview of the main PRR parties in each of the countries analysed
2. To analyse trade union discourses and views of PRR parties
3. To analyse trade union strategies and actions to address the growing propensity of workers and trade union members to vote for radical right wing parties

The report was compiled based on desk research and individual national reports from national experts, involving semi-structured interviews with trade unions. A total of seven semi-structured interviews were conducted with senior officers and heads of peak-level (confederation) trade union units affiliated with the European Trade Union Confederation (ETUC) (see Appendix 1).

Following this introduction, the report is made up of four sections. The first section presents the conceptual framework, addressing the main definitional debates around the PRR family and adopting a common definition for comparative purposes made up of three core ideological features (Mudde, 2007). Following this, the main demand and supply-side causes are discussed that explain the rise of these parties. Then, the current debates and empirical evidence on workers and trade unions' members support of PRR parties are set out, reviewing also political science and industrial relations literature that can contribute to understanding the conflictual relationship between trade unions and PRR parties.

The second section of the report provides an overview of PRR parties in the four countries studied, namely Germany, Denmark, Spain and Hungary (research objective 1). The section identifies the main PRR parties in each country. Following this it addresses their socioeconomic policies (employment, industrial relations, etc.). Then, it analyses PRR parties' electoral outcomes, voters and main demand and supply side causes explaining their evolution in the four countries.

The third section first provides a brief introduction to the varieties of trade unionism existing in each country, also briefly describing the relationships currently in place between trade unions and politics. Following this, it analyses both the trade unions' discourses on PRR parties and existing actions and strategies that aim to counteract workers' and trade union members' support for these parties (research objectives 2 and 3).

Finally, conclusions are presented, summarising key findings and discussing cross-country differences observed.

## **1. Conceptual framework**

### **1.1 Definitional debate**

Different labels such as 'right extremism' (Fichter, 2008), 'far right', 'radical right', 'authoritarian populism' (Norris and Inglehart, 2018) and 'populist radical right' (Mudde, 2007) are used interchangeably to refer to the same organisations, such as Alternative for Germany (AfD), the Austrian Freedom Party (FPÖ) and the National Rally (RN). Although consensus has emerged that they represent a single family (Muis and Immerzeel, 2017), scholars generally disagree on terminology and definitions.

Nationalism is generally considered to be the main ideological feature or key common denominator of these political parties (Muis and Immerzeel, 2017). As this idea is expressed through radical restrictive immigration policies, some authors have opted for simple categories to describe this family of parties, such as 'anti-immigrant parties' (Art, 2011; Van der Brug et al., 2005). In the view of Mudde (2007), nationalism is too broad of a category, as it embraces both moderate or liberal nationalism and radical nationalism. To stress that radical right parties are only concerned with the latter type of nationalism, the author uses the term nativism. Nativism is defined as a combination of nationalism and xenophobia or as an '*ideology which holds that states should be inhabited by members of the native group—the nation—constituting the core of the ideology of this political family*' (Mudde, 2007:19).

Second, many authors agree that populism should be stressed as a key ideological feature of this political family. Populism is defined as a 'thin ideology' or discourse style that divides society into two homogeneous and antagonistic groups, the 'pure people' and the 'corrupt elite'. It further argues that politics should be an expression of the people's *volonté générale* (general will) and that legitimate powers rest with the people, not the elite (Mudde, 2007; Norris and Inglehart, 2018). According to Norris and Inglehart (2018), populism mainly reflects first order principles about who should rule (the people), although remaining vague about second order principles concerning what should be done. Accordingly, populist parties do not generally have a consistent programme and—compared to mainstream parties—are more likely to reveal differences determined by each national context (Greven, 2016; Ivaldi, et al., 2017). As noted by Greven (2016), populist radical right-wing parties share some similarities which, however, take different forms depending on national contexts. For instance, the opposition to globalisation as it relates to immigration is shared by all radical right parties, but differs in terms of degree and targets. The same applies to the perception of the European Union. While some radical right parties in Eastern Europe and some continental countries (France) oppose the EU, other radical right parties like the AfD acknowledge the value of the EU for the export-oriented German economy. Also, disaffection with 'the establishment', which has been identified as a key defining feature of this political family, takes different national forms depending on whether the political party is in the opposition (for instance the AfD in Germany) or in government (FIDESZ in Hungary).

According to Mudde's (2007) influential definition, one additional feature beyond nativism and populism characterises populist radical right parties (PRR): authoritarianism. This feature refers to the belief in a strictly ordered society, in which violations of authority must be punished severely. It does not necessarily mean anti-democratic attitudes, as it is mainly defined as 'law and order' (Mudde, 2007:23). In a similar vein, Norris and Inglehart (2018) state that authoritarianism is the key ideological feature that defines the cultures and practices of parties such as the AfD, Jobbik, Fidesz and Law and Justice. The authors define authoritarianism as a 'cluster of values prioritising collective security for the tribe at the expense of individual autonomy' (Norris and Inglehart 2018:). In the view of Mudde (2007), authoritarianism lets PRR parties be distinguished from old or traditional far or extreme right parties. PRR parties are (nominally) democratic, though they are at odds with some aspects of liberal democracy. On the

contrary, extremist parties are directly opposed to democracy and support authoritarian government forms.<sup>1</sup>

For this report, Mudde's (2007) term (PRR) and definition were chosen due to having several advantages. First, the definition is mainly circumscribed within contemporary Europe (Mudde, 2009), which is the time and space context analysed in this study. Second, instead of focusing on a single idea such as anti-immigration, it covers a set of core ideas upon which most scholars studying the topic agree. It is true that relevant ideological concepts are excluded, particularly in relation to socioeconomic ideas and programmes (Zaslove, 2009). However, literature disagrees on the extent to which the socioeconomic angle is part of the core ideology of PRR parties. For instance, Mudde (2009) argues that PRR parties give priority to the socio-cultural side of political competition. Conversely, other authors state that socioeconomic issues are also important to them (Afonso and Rennwald, 2018). Literature does find a greater degree of variation on this subject among parties that are classified within this party family. During the 1990s, some scholars argued that compared to traditional/old radical or 'welfare chauvinist' right-wing parties, new radical/extreme right-wing parties were characterised by nationalism on immigration issues and neoliberalism on economics (Merkel and Weinberg, 1993; Betz, 1994; Kitschelt and MacGann, 1995). Today, however, there have been questions about whether or not economic neoliberalism is a common goal of this party family. For instance, Stöss (2017) claims that neoliberal concepts are found more frequently in right-wing conservatism than in right-wing extremism. Moreover, some radical right parties in Europe have increasingly included welfare state issues on their political agendas, presenting themselves as pro-welfare (chauvinism) (Afonso and Rennwald, 2018). The exclusion of this ideological feature in the definition of PRR parties lets us include parties in our research that share nativism, populism and authoritarianism views, but may hold different socioeconomic ideas, some of which could be used to attract the support of workers and trade union members.

## **1.2 Causes explaining the rise of PRR parties: demand and supply side approaches**

The causes that explain the rise of PRR parties are generally grouped into two approaches: demand side and supply side. Demand side refers to existing grievances or structural changes that

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<sup>1</sup> The German state has recognised the distinction between 'extremist' parties that are anti-democratic (*verfassungswidrig*, unconstitutional) and should be forbidden, and 'radical' parties that merely question key aspects of the constitutional order (*verfassungsfeindlich*, anti-constitutional) and should thus be tolerated.

favour the emergence or rise of PRR parties, where this is the main sociological approach to the phenomenon.

The main demand side factors studied are situated at a macro level and are used to explain similar developments in different national contexts (Mudde, 2007). Globalisation (and economic openness) has been a relevant factor considered. The argument is that PRR parties appear as opponents to globalisation, attracting the so-called losers in this macro trend, such as precarious workers from deindustrialised areas (Standing, 2011). Recently, the crisis and its effects have been considered as explanatory variables. In this sense, rising unemployment and social inequality are understood as factors determining voters' support of alternative parties such as populist or PRR parties (O'Connor, 2017; Burgoon et al., 2018). Related to this, the political crisis and growing disaffection with liberal democracy and mainstream parties have been also considered as important demand side factors. Finally, immigration has also been extensively analysed, as some authors find positive correlations between the number of foreign-born citizens and PRR electoral success. However, this argument could not properly explain the rise of PRR parties in Eastern Europe, as immigration was not a mass phenomenon in most of these countries. In these cases, PRR would have focused on mobilisation against minorities such as the Roma population (Mudde, 2007). In recent years, the refugee crisis would represent a factor that could explain the rise or support of PRR parties in different European countries. For instance, Steinmayr (2018) finds a positive correlation between the number of refugees entering the country and support for PRR parties, which would reveal that the refugee crisis has a positive effect on PRR electoral success.

Supply side includes the political constraints and opportunities that foster the rise of PRR parties. Political scientists tend to focus on these factors. They are divided into external and internal (Muis and Immerzeel, 2017). External supply side factors first include the institutional framework (usually the electoral system and its degree or proportionality). Second, they include the electoral strategies for the competition of mainstream political parties and the extent to which they can occupy the electoral space of PRR parties (Kriesi et al., 2008). Third, the structure of cleavages in the country, that is, how cultural issues and identity politics, which are the main conflicts politicised by PRR parties, have a greater weight in relation to the classic socioeconomic left–right cleavage that depends on economic conflict (Alonso and Rovira Kaltwasser, 2015). Finally, internal supply side factors take organisational characteristics into consideration, such as the role of leadership and ideology (Muis and Immerzeel, 2017).

### **1.3 Workers' and trade union members' support of PRR parties**

The analysis of the working class's support of radical right parties has received growing attention. Literature on radical right voting trends suggests that these parties have increasingly attracted voters from the working class since the mid-1980s. However, the so-called 'proletarianisation' proposition of PRR parties is not fully supported by empirical evidence since cross-national variation appears to be relatively high (Afonso and Rennwald, 2018).

In the past, union membership and the presence of 'trade union awareness' were considered to have an immunising effect on support of the radical right. Classic studies on the electoral results of Nazi and fascist parties explained lack of workers' support because of the strength of the labour movement (Lipset, 1960). Currently some studies have questioned or—at least—nuanced the existence of a trade union membership effect preventing workers from supporting PRR parties. For instance, research conducted by Mossiman et al. (2018), focused on 11 countries in Western Europe based on European Social Survey (ESS) data, did however find some cross-country variation on the link between union membership and voting preferences. Overall, the study found a so-called 'union membership effect' in the sense that union membership reduces support for PRR parties. However, findings also show that unionisation no longer prevents voting for the radical right. These results suggest that trade unions' actions to counteract the radical right also have to consider their own members (Mossiman et al, 2018).

### **1.4 Trade unions and PRR parties**

The relationship of trade unions with PRR parties has barely been problematised in literature. From the PRR perspective, trade unions are generally included on the list of national enemies that, in coalition with left-wing parties, favour policies detrimental to the nation. For instance, some PRR parties accuse trade unions of fostering mass immigration with a view to increasing their support base at the expense of national interests (Mudde, 2007). According to Mossiman et al. (2018), PRR parties and trade unions are necessarily rivals because they provide mutually exclusive political offers to mobilise workers. PRRs appeal to workers through anti-immigration proposals and welfare chauvinism. On the contrary, trade unions and their allied socialist parties promote the idea of solidarity among workers irrespective of nationality, origin, race, or gender, and these principles are at odds with the exclusionary values and the nativist ideology of PRR parties.

However, the argument of Mossiman et al. (2018) neglects three relevant issues raised by industrial relations scholars. First, trade unions' logics of action are not universally homogeneous.



They instead vary across countries, as they are conditioned by institutional/regulatory contexts, and ideologies and identities that are determined by their historical evolution (Hyman, 2001). Diverse logics of action entail different approaches towards mobilising and shaping solidarity among workers and with regard to migrant workers (Connolly et al., 2014).

Second, establishing transnational worker solidarity is challenging because labour migration is also a problematic issue for trade unions. The presence of migrant workers who may have low wage expectations because of low wage levels in their home countries may lead them to accept poorly paid jobs. Moreover, the increased labour supply caused by immigration may also strengthen an employer's position in the labour market. Faced with these challenges, different strategic choices can be made (Eldring et al., 2011). It is also worth noting that trade unions' approaches toward immigration may be constrained by several external factors such as dominant public discourses and workers' attitudes towards immigration (Wrench, 2004).

Third, considering trade unions as 'allies' of socialist parties is problematic and inaccurate. It is true that most unions in Europe have had formal links with specific parties, particularly socialist or social democratic but also Christian democratic and communist. However, these political identities and connections have been almost universally weakened (Gumbrell-McCormick and Hyman, 2013). Moreover, the tendency of most European trade unions has been to break free from formal political associations with left-wing and social-democratic parties and appeal to some kind of political neutrality. According to Gumbrell-McCormick and Hyman, (2013), the main developments that contribute to understanding the relationship between trade unions and political parties are the ideological blurring to which trade unions have been subjected to in most countries; the rise of white collar occupations that are more difficult for trade unions to recruit and, when they succeed, it increases the heterogeneity of interests and identities among members; and the advance of globalisation and neoliberalism, which has caused centre-left parties to lose faith in Keynesianism and focus on deregulation and public deficit control, thus confronting trade unions' interests and objectives (Piazza, 2001; Upchurch, 2009).

These considerations call for the need to revisit the relationship between trade unions and PRR parties, assuming that although trade unions are still actors that inevitably address politics, their ideologies have become more blurred or neutral and previous relationships with left-wing political parties have become weaker.

## **2. Overview of populist radical right parties in Hungary, Spain, Germany and Denmark**

### **2.1 Identification of the main populist radical right parties**

There is some debate when it comes to classifying national political parties that are in the PRR family. This section of the report classifies individual national parties in Germany, Denmark, Hungary and Spain that fall within the PRR family based on party ideology.

In Germany, Denmark and Spain, there is some consensus in literature with regard to which parties are PRR. Overall, Alternative for Germany (AfD), the Danish Peoples' Party (Dansk Folkeparti, DF) and VOX adhere to some extent to nativism or strong conservative nationalism, populism and authoritarianism. The question is more complex in Hungary, where there are three political parties that could all be somewhat categorised as PRR parties.

Alternative for Germany (AfD) is currently considered the main PRR party in Germany. It was founded in 2013 by renegades from the Christian Democratic Party (CDU) who felt that their party had moved too far to the centre. There is general consensus on classifying the AfD as a PRR party (Vehrkamp, 2017); although even in 2015 many experts still defined AfD as a national conservative or national liberal party. The AfD programme for the 2013 federal elections was particularly focused on criticising the European bailout policies followed in response to the financial crisis and populists' demands for direct democratic methods. On the contrary, emigration, Islam and xenophobia did not play a key role in its discourse at that time (Nestler and Rohgalf, 2014). Moreover, the AfD's manifesto for the 2014 European Parliament proposed ordoliberal prescriptions to address the European debt crisis and stressed the need to avoid moral hazard and re-establish creditable commitments across the Eurozone. While it also contained some populist anti-EU rhetoric, the AfD's approach to European economic policy showed a great degree of continuity with classic right-wing and conservative ideas (Lees, 2018). After the 2014 European Parliament elections, the AfD joined the European Conservatives and Reformists group (ECR) alongside parties such as the United Kingdom's Conservative Party, Poland's Law and Justice and the Danish Peoples' Party. Thus, it did not join more radical and EU-sceptical forces such as Europe of Freedom and Direct Democracy (EFDD), which includes parties such as UKIP. Nevertheless, the AfD discourse and core ideology have grown closer to that of PRR parties since 2015, in parallel to relevant changes in AfD's senior leadership in 2015 and 2017. Lewandowsky (2017) argues that the AfD illustrates how the programmatic orientation of a political party can change radically in a short period of time. This is confirmed by Lehmann and Matthieß (2017) and Lees (2018) who, comparing the programmes for the 2013 and 2017 federal elections,

observed a switch towards a strong nationalistic or nativist approach. In the electoral programme for the 2017 federal election, *'only one out of 11 sections, amounting to three out of the document's 76 pages, was dedicated to the eurozone. The other 10 chapters, including chapters on Islam and its claimed incompatibility with democracy and on the demographic impact of asylum seekers, mention European integration, but only as a theme nested within a broader populist critique of German society and politics'* (Lee, 2018:307). Thus, nativism and populism are currently considered to be the main ideological features of AfD. An ideological switch is also detected with regard to new AfD transnational allies. AfD was asked to leave the European ECR group in 2016 as a result of comments made by AfD members on the use of firearms to prevent migrants crossing the border, and a meeting in Dusseldorf between leading members of AfD and the PRR Freedom Party of Austria (FPÖ). In 2019 AfD joined the new European movement led by Italy's Northern League, which aims to create a European group after the 2019 elections and includes, among other PRR parties, Marine Le Pen's National Rally.

In Denmark, the Danish People's Party (Dansk Folkeparti, DF) was founded in 1995 and has been included within the PRR party family (Jungar and Ravik Jupskas, 2014), although it has also been defined as national conservative, social conservative and right wing populist (Nordsieck, 2015). It is generally considered to represent the most 'moderate' variant of the European PRR party family or the less 'ideological' European PRR party (Jungar and Ravik Jupskas, 2014; Johansen, 2018). In Denmark, DF currently competes with two new more radical parties: *Nye Borgerlige* (NB, The New Right) and Stram Kurs (SK, Hard Line). NB was founded in 2015 and is considered to be more nativist compared to DF. SK merged more recently and is largely a (social) media created Islamophobic single-issue party. This study will focus on DF, for being the main PRR party in Denmark. Transnationally, DF was part of the Europe of Freedom and Democracy, which was considered to be a moderate alternative to radical right and more anti-Semitic groups such as Identity, Tradition and Sovereignty. After the 2014 European Parliament elections, it joined the European Conservatives and Reformists group (ECR). Currently, DF has agreed to join the new European movement led by the Northern League, alongside AfD. DF is aligned with the core ideological features of PRR parties. Nativism or strong conservative nationalism is the main ideological feature of this party. It is expressed through statements critical of immigration and multiculturalism and favouring the protection of national traditions and culture. DF has often focused on campaigns against Muslims, which include, for instance, a call for a ban of burkas in Denmark. It also holds a very pronounced anti-immigration policy, opposing taking in a workforce from third countries and rejecting the integration of the great wave of refugees that came through Europe in 2015-2016. In this sense, it has proposed Denmark's

withdrawal from the UN Refugee Convention and the UN Convention on Statelessness because these conventions prevent a tightening of immigration legislation. It also presented a motion to the Parliament to remove compliance with the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR) from Danish legislation, with a view to tightening the rules on family reunion and making it easier to expel immigrants convicted of criminal acts (Johansen, 2018). The DF also criticises immigration from Eastern Europe, which is blamed for provoking social dumping. DF can also be labelled as Eurosceptical as it strongly criticises the European Union for not letting Denmark govern its sovereignty. In 2016, DF said it would consider a Danish referendum dependent on how Brexit works for the UK. However, DF critiques of the European Union have been assessed to be mainly rhetorical because it does not oppose the EU as an institution and is in favour of the single market (Johansen, 2018). With regard to authoritarianism, DF gradually increased its authoritarian appeals over time and particularly since 2001 (Jungar and Ravik Jupskas, 2014). Authoritarianism is expressed in the defence of stronger policies against crime, strengthening the country's internal and external security and proposals to increase discipline in schools. Finally, populism has been observed in relation to the tensions between a centrist programme and a far right-wing rhetoric, which could reflect a populism tactic to attract votes (Johansen, 2018). This rhetoric includes criticism of 'the establishment' (mainstream political parties, media, etc.), appeals to 'ordinary people' and a connection between EU policies and immigration on the one hand, and deterioration of working and living conditions on the other.

In Spain, high fragmentation has traditionally existed within the radical right political family. Several radical right political parties have existed since the 1990s which, however, have never obtained more than one per cent of the total Spanish vote in any national election. The radical right parties that were most significant were National Democracy (Democracia Nacional, DN), founded in 1995, Spain-2000 (España-2000, E-2000), founded in 2002. It is also worth mentioning Platform for Catalonia (Plataforma per Catalunya, PxC), founded in 2002, which is only organised in the autonomous community of Catalonia. However, this landscape has changed recently with the emergence of a new radical right party, VOX, which is gaining progressively greater media attention and attracting greater support than previous radical right political parties in both European elections and recent regional and parliamentary elections. VOX emerged in 2013, led by former Popular Party leaders disaffected with the moderate approach of this conservative political party, at that time in office, mainly in relation to socio-cultural problems (Spanish nationalism, gender equality, abortion rights, etc.). After the 2019 European Parliament elections, VOX has joined the European Conservatives and Reformists group (ECR). The VOX discourse and programme falls within the scope of the PRR political family. Nativism is a core

feature of VOX's political discourse. VOX relies on historical, cultural and religious arguments to define the nation. Influenced by Gustavo Bueno's school of philosophy (Chinchetru, J. A., 2018), VOX defends an idea of Spain that is associated with 'Spanishness' (*hispanidad*) and the legacy of the Spanish empire. Based on this, the VOX political manifesto (VOX. 100 Urgent Measures for Spain) proposes the establishment of 'country quotas with favourable treatment for nationalities that share the Spanish language and that have significant cultural and friendship ties with Spain' (Latino and South American countries). Conversely, Muslim migrants appear to be the main 'enemy', being represented as opposed to Western and Spanish values. Bearing this in mind, VOX claims in its political manifesto to limit Muslim migration to Spain and Europe, to close mosques disseminating 'radical' Muslim ideologies, to arrest and deport extremist imams, to participate in military combat missions against the Jihadist threat and to build an 'insurmountable' wall in Ceuta and Melilla. In addition, VOX proposes to automatically deport all illegal immigrants; to strengthen the legal criteria for becoming a legal immigrant and acquiring Spanish citizenship; and fostering companies to hire native workers through fiscal incentives (VOX. 100 Urgent Measures for Spain). Nationalism is also expressed in the defence of a single national identity, which leads VOX to reject and fight against peripheral nationalisms that exist in regions such as Catalonia and the Basque Country. In this sense, VOX proposes to eliminate all regional governments, thus abolishing the decentralised system of governance, and to reverse laws protecting or fostering regional languages which, according to national constitution, are co-official national languages (VOX. 100 Urgent Measures for Spain). Authoritarianism is reflected in VOX's appeals to reinforce security, calling for higher defence and policy budgets; strengthening punishment for disrespect of national symbols; and establishing more discipline in schools (VOX. 100 Urgent Measures for Spain). It is also worth noting that, in the case of VOX, authoritarianism is connected to the nationalist agenda, as one of the most publicly debated VOX proposals is to illegalise pro-independence peripheral nationalist parties in Catalonia and the Basque Country (VOX. 100 Urgent Measures for Spain). Finally, populist ideology is detected in constant VOX criticisms of established political parties, which are accused of being corrupt elites that do not defend the general will. Accordingly, fighting corruption is stressed. Beyond these issues, a defining element of VOX's political discourse that merits mention is the radical criticism of the so-called 'gender ideology'. VOX proposes to abolish the Law against Gender Violence and increase resources to fight against false police reports filed (VOX. 100 Urgent Measures for Spain), even if the 2017 annual report by the Public Prosecutor's Office reveals that false reports by women only represent 0.078% of the total police reports filed on gender violence. VOX also proposes to abolish all gender laws that allow positive discrimination

and to suppress so-called 'subsidised radical feminist institutions' (VOX. 100 Urgent Measures for Spain). Finally, VOX is also in favour of limiting women's abortion rights. As opposed to other PRR parties, Euroscepticism is not a core feature of VOX ideology. VOX only calls for increasing Spanish power in European decision-making processes, to reduce the European budget and to promote a new European treatment in line with the Visegrád group's proposals regarding national borders (VOX. 100 Urgent Measures for Spain).

In Hungary, some observers argue that Fidesz (Federation of Young Democrats – Hungarian Civic Alliance), which is currently the ruling party, is part of the PRR party family, although others reject its inclusion and argue that MIÉP and Jobbik (Right-Wing Youth Community) are the main PRR parties in Hungary. Scholars also observe a progressive ideological evolution in Fidesz and Jobbik, with Fidesz shifting to the right and Jobbik towards the centre (Kreko, 2017).

Jobbik was founded by a group of patriotic, conservative intellectuals in 1999. In 2002, a group of Catholic and Protestant university students established the Right-Wing Youth Community (Jobboldali Ifjúsági Közösség – Jobbik). This movement became a political party in October 2003 under the name of Jobbik Movement for a Better Hungary. Jobbik was originally a radical nationalist far right and racist party, but since 2014 it has started to re-define itself as a conservative people's party and changed the controversial features in its communications. During the 2006-2010 period, the party was racist, exploiting the 'gypsy issue' to mobilise voters from economically depressed areas. During this period, it also proved to be extremist in rejecting the liberal state. Party leader Gábor Vona even declared that he was not a democrat while allies in paramilitary circles clamoured for authoritarian rules with a view to overcoming problems of democracy (Szombati, 2018). Currently 'Jobbik's ideology is mostly based on national conservatism that bears relations to Christian values. An element of Jobbik's ideology is also, apart from radical nationalism and anti-globalisation, the critique of being part of the Western community' (Bobek, 2017).

MIÉP (Hungarian Justice and Life Party) is a radical right-wing, nationalist party, founded in 1993, which led the far-right forces in Hungary at that time, although it is no longer important today. In 2005, MIÉP joined forces with Jobbik, under the name MIÉP-Jobbik Third Way Alliance of Parties, but following their failure in the Parliamentary elections in 2006, the alliance broke up.

Fidesz was founded in 1988, originally as a liberal anti-communist party. It is affiliated with the European People's Party, although it will take a final decision about its European affiliation after

the 2019 European Parliamentary elections. Fidesz was classified in the 1990s and early 2000s as a 'conservative' and 'centre-right' party (Kiss, 2002) or as a neoliberal conservative party (Ádám and Bozóki 2016). According to Mudde (2016) most experts and journalists continue to classify Fidesz as a conservative rather than a PRR party, but this is due to the 'often multi-faceted interpretation of party-families' and because its electorate is more similar to centre-right than radical right parties. However, the Fidesz electoral programme and statements are currently closer to the PRR party family (Mudde, 2016). In terms of nativism, Fidesz has progressively stressed since the end of the 1990s an ethno-nationalist understanding of Hungary: not as a political community but as an ethnic community including every Hungarian living outside the country's borders. As argued by Bozóki (2013), Fidesz discovered the power of nationalism as a constitutive force to mobilise people. In this sense, the launch of so-called Civic Circles in 2002, a network of citizens aiming to reinvigorate the right from the bottom-up and bring together previously unconnected players, appeared as a powerful tool to introduce new frameworks for Hungarians to think as members of a re-imagined community (Szombati, 2018). Although in recent years it has gradually abandoned far-right ideas related to anti-Semitism, it talks about preserving Hungary's 'ethnic homogeneity', thus rejecting immigration, and used to compare the EU to the Soviet Union' (Dunai, 2018). Nativism is directly connected to the concept of 'illiberal democracy' which Prime Minister Viktor Orban defended in a 2014 speech: *'the new state that we are constructing in Hungary is an illiberal state, a non-liberal state. It does not reject the fundamental principles of liberalism such as freedom, and I could list a few more, but it does not make this ideology the central element of state organisation, but instead includes a different, special, national approach'*. Authoritarianism is also key to defining an ideological feature of Fidesz's discourse and practices. Fidesz formally adheres to democratic principles but its policies represent a shift towards an authoritarian statism (Szombati, 2018). Authoritarianism is also closely connected to nativism and was exacerbated in 2015 at the beginning of the refugee crisis (Kreko, 2017). It is connected to the illiberal war on poverty, which entails harder repression of homeless people, migrants and the Roma population (Kallius et al., 2016). Finally, populist rhetoric has been progressively adopted by Fidesz since the early 2000s. The party launched a number of campaigns defending the 'people' or the powerless against the left liberal elite, who were accused of dispossessing the nation. The flagship initiative of this populist strategy was the proposal for a referendum on abolishing medical costs and higher education tuition (Szombati, 2018). The positive outcomes of the referendum made Fidesz move back towards the political centre, giving the party the opportunity to attract many disillusioned socialist voters and to capitalise on the loss of confidence in the government (Edelényi et al., 2008). Currently, populist

discourse is particularly explicit in constant outcries against the 'anti-democratic' elite in Brussels, who should be replaced by a conservative, anti-immigration and family values-oriented movement (Bíró-Nagy and Sebők 2019).

Because MIÉP is less representative inside Hungary, our study will focus on Fidesz and Jobbik.

## **2.2 Socioeconomic ideology of PRR parties**

The PRR parties analysed in this report (AfD, DF, Fidesz, Jobbik and VOX) show some differences in socioeconomic ideologies, ranging from centrist positions (DF, JOBBIK) to more neoliberal approaches (AfD, VOX and Fidesz)

German AfD has a neoliberal market-oriented programme calling for the tradition of ordoliberalism. This orientation has not changed substantially in its basic programme. The economic position of the AfD reflected in its Programme for the Federal Election 2017 has been assessed as the rightmost programme to the conservative parties CDU/ CSU and the liberal party FDP (Kim, 2018). Overall, the party wants to reduce public spending, lowering taxes and reducing administrative burdens for SMEs. Proposals related to labour market regulation and social policies are not very detailed in the programme. With regard to social policies, AfD holds a welfare chauvinism position that states that social benefits should be restricted to nationals (Fenger, 2018), stressing in its political programme for the Federal Election 2017 'the need to limit the benefits to the population of the national community' (AFD 2017: 56). When denouncing those who do not deserve support from the welfare state, the AfD has focused on illegal immigrants and asylum seekers (Fenger, 2018). In addition, AfD political rhetoric has represented immigration as a threat to the welfare state, stating for instance that '*A country can have a well-advanced social system. And a country can have open borders. But a country cannot have a well-advanced social system and open borders*' (in Fenger 2018:195). At a programme level, two social policy fields have been given priority, namely family policies and unemployment protection. With regard to family policies, AfD's political discourse is primarily focused on improving the financial position of families with children through tax relief for parents and continuation of unemployment benefits for unemployed parents (Fenger, 2018). With respect to unemployment protection, AfD wants to '*restore the unjust consequences that "different occupational biographies" have for benefit coverage*' (Fenge, 2018:197). In the programme for the 2017 federal election, these specific proposals were included: to promote qualification for the unemployed in relation to demand; to link the first unemployment benefit period to the duration of the previous job; and to create an



offer of community services or citizen work (*Bürgerarbeit*) for the long-term unemployed. In terms of labour market regulation, the AfD expressed very few positions defending a statutory minimum wage (already in force in Germany) and a statutory upper limit of 15 percent of employees with temporary contracts in companies. To sum it up, the AfD's economic programme is aligned with neoliberal principles. However, the welfare state and labour market policy proposals are less developed and reveal ambiguous stances. This ambiguity could reflect a breakdown on neoliberal consensus within the party (Decker, 2018).

As far as industrial relations are concerned, an employee section linked to the AfD's (*AidA Arbeitnehmer in der AfD*, or *Employees in the AfD*), has expressed ambivalent positions. On the one hand, it has defended legislation in force on the works council. On the other, it has argued that the system has been corrupted by the elites, which are no longer defending workers' interests, but instead their own positions of power. *AidA* considers that trade union elites are defending employers' interests more, instead of looking for an adequate balance between the employees' and employers' interests. Along the line of defending basic democratic principles, *AidA* proposes to add to the Industrial Constitution Law the possibility of employees filing a motion of censure against the works council. For instance, three-quarters of *AidA* also advocates limiting the influence of the trade union on the works council and, in parallel, giving them more margin of action at enterprises (*AidA*, 2016).

With regard to DF in Denmark, observers note that it has a relatively centrist position in the socioeconomic angle. The party supports moderate state regulation, public commitment to welfare and tax distribution. DF positions itself closer to the centre with regard to social policy as it proclaims the defence of the welfare state. In this field, it is closer to the Social Democratic Party than to the liberal and conservative parties in government. DF does not support a neoliberal economy and is against the liberal parties' claim for lower income taxes and abolishment of the so-called 'top tax'. It is significant that the neoliberalist party in Denmark, Liberal Alliance, a member of government, never had support from DF regarding a liberalist tax policy. Furthermore, DF does not share the opinion of the liberals that a large public sector is a hindrance to economic development. DF has furthermore succeeded in taking position as the party that supports decent conditions for the elderly, in senior housing or homecare. Despite this, it supported a government initiative in 2018 that, among other issues, meant saving costs on the aging policy. When DF was confronted with this, it withdrew part of its support of the initiative. However, some authors hold that the social or welfare agenda is a secondary issue for this party because, in local politics, DF has sought commitments with parties developing austerity policies. According to Johansen

(2018:42) *'the party's' verbal assurances or opposition to welfare cuts simply do not match the reality of their actions'*. DF also supports social partners' role in regulating employment relationships through collective bargaining and bipartite social dialogue (so-called Danish model). DF also supports welfare chauvinism, which claims that Danish people should be given priority. Also, it strongly defends small and medium enterprises, in so far as they are part of the 'ordinary Danish people' it claims to represent.

In Spain, VOX combines neoliberalism and a type of welfare chauvinism. As far as neoliberalism is concerned, several measures included in its political manifesto propose to reduce the public budget, to privatise pensions, to abolish inheritance taxes and to reduce both business taxes and income tax. In relation to income tax, VOX proposes a very regressive tax system made up of two flat income taxes: 20% for people earning up to €60,000 on an annual basis and 30% for people earning more than €60,000 on an annual basis. This entails a drastic tax reduction for high incomes, bearing in mind that income tax for higher earners is set up at 45%. VOX also proposes lower social security contributions for self-employed workers. Welfare chauvinism is particularly reflected in VOX's proposals to restrict immigrants' access to health services. VOX proposes prohibiting illegal immigrants from accessing basic healthcare, including emergency care, and wants to establish a co-financing model for legal immigrants. With regard to employment policies and labour market regulation, very few proposals have been formulated, which basically aim to target employment incentives (discounts on social security contributions linked to open-ended contracts) for native workers and encourage youth employment through social security deductions. Also, VOX proposes to promote work-life balance measures and extend maternity leave. These proposals are mainly shaped by Catholic values, leading the political party to promote birth rates by defending traditional families. In terms of industrial relations, the VOX electoral programme is nearly void of proposals, only advocating the limitation of funding and its social partners' institutional role. Its political programme sets out the elimination of all public funding (subsidies, etc.) allocated to trade unions, employer organisations and any social partners' foundations. The programme also states that 'trade unions should only be financed by their own members' (VOX. 100 Urgent Measures for Spain).

In Hungary, Fidesz has a more well-established and detailed programme in relation to socioeconomics, partly because it is in power rather than in the opposition, as are the PRR parties in Denmark, Germany and Spain. As pointed out by Alonso and Rennwald (2018), being in government makes it more difficult for parties to blur their economic policy positions and to confine their agendas to socio-cultural issues. Fidesz's main reforms implemented in recent years

have aimed to transform the welfare state into a 'workfare state' and to establish a hybrid 'authoritarian neoliberalism' model (Lendvai-Bainton (2017). Victor Orbán declared in 2012 that *'instead of the Western type of welfare state that is not competitive, a work-based society has to be established'* (Szikra (2018:5). In the view of Szikra (2018:5), *'the major difference between the pre-2010 governments and the second and third Fidesz cabinets is not primarily that decreasing resources were devoted to social protection, but rather the explicit negation of the values of the welfare state and the European Social Model'*. The workfare schemes implemented have decreased unemployment benefits, which have the shortest duration in the EU (90 days), and link social benefits and active labour market policies to labour market position or availability. This has resulted in excluding the long-term unemployed from the primary labour market and proper training. Attention must also be drawn to reforms on family policies. In the second and third Orbán cabinets, the Fidesz government made an especially sharp division between so-called 'responsible' and 'irresponsible' families. What it termed 'deserving' and 'hard working' families received formerly unheard of resources through the flat tax and family tax allowance system, as well as the extra child homecare fee (GYED) programme. On the contrary, 'undeserving' families, that is, those with no sufficient connection to the job market, lost out via the increased bottom Personal Income Tax rate and the lack of upgrading of the most important universally available family benefits, as well as cuts to the social assistance and unemployment benefit systems. As Roma families are overrepresented among the unemployed and the poor compared to their overall percentage in society, and because they also have higher average numbers of children than the non-Roma, they suffered from the reforms disproportionately (Szikra, 2018).

Concerning the regulation of the labour market and industrial relations, Fidesz has promoted sharp deregulation. The most important step was the implementation of the new Labour Code in 2012. The Fidesz government declared that the Hungarian labour market shall be 'the most flexible in the world', which will help to create one million new jobs from 2010 to 2020 (Government Programme, 2010:18). Therefore, employees' rights were curtailed and an extremely flexible regulation of working hours and wage supplements were introduced. Moreover, in December 2018, bill amending the labour code was passed to allow extreme flexibility in employment—up to 400 hours of compulsory overtime per year and up to three years to pay for it. This bill was dubbed 'the slave labour law'. In terms of industrial relations, in December 2010 the Parliament amended the Strike Law, severely restricting employees' rights to stage industrial actions by modifying the regulation of minimum public services and public utility services (public transport, communications, electricity and water supply). The law stipulates a very high minimum level of essential services in postal services and public transport. If stakeholders cannot agree on minimum

services, the court decides on it. This regulation makes it difficult to launch a strike in public services (Borbély-Neumann (2018)). The new Labour Code approved in 2012 also weakened collective bargaining by allowing collective agreements to deviate from the law, eased employment protection, and limited the rights of trade union officials (Bernaciak, 2015). Finally, it weakened social dialogue in 2012 by replacing the tripartite National Interest Conciliation Council (OÉT) with the multipartite National Economic and Social Council (NGTT), which includes churches, business chambers and NGOs and in the private sector by the Consultative Forum of the Competitive Sector, the VKF.

Further, the social partners in Hungary have lost their role in the Labour Market Fund which, since 2012, has functioned without social partner involvement (Eurofound, 2014).

On the contrary, Jobbik has a more centrist position and has gradually strengthened its social agenda. For instance, as an answer to the labour shortage in Hungary, it has promoted the idea of decreasing the wage gap between EU regions and launching a 'pan-European wage union' to reduce economic differences between Eastern and Western Europe. Even earlier, 'Jobbik presented itself as a party taking considerable interest in the economic issues of poverty and inequality triggered by capitalism' (Varga, 2018).

### **2.3 Electoral outcomes and PRR parties**

Among the four countries analysed, Hungary is the country where PRR parties have the greatest support, since the two parties labelled as PRR parties are the two largest political forces in the country. Fidesz has dominated Hungarian politics nationally and locally since its landslide victory in the 2010 national elections on a joint list with the Christian Democratic People's Party (Fidesz-KDNP). Parliamentary majority was retained in 2014, when Fidesz-KDNP obtained 45% of total votes and 133 MPs out of 199, and again in 2018 (49% of total votes and 133 MPs out of 199). Jobbik stabilised its positions in 2014 and 2018 and has become the second largest political force in Hungary, in opposition. Currently, JOBBIK holds 26 of the 199 seats in the Hungarian Parliament. Jobbik increased its presence in the parliament from 11.56% in 2014 to 13.07% in 2018.

AfD was founded in 2013 for its participation in the federal election of that same year, in which it obtained 4.7% of the votes, the highest percentage earned by a newcomer party in all federal elections. However, it did not make the 5% threshold to obtain parliament seats. In the 2017 federal election, AfD obtained 12.6% of the votes and 94 seats in the federal parliament. Due to the fact that the two most-represented parties in Parliament—CDU/CSU and SPD—agreed to

form a grand government coalition, the AfD, as the third most voted party, became the opposition leader.

In Denmark, DF has progressively grown since the end of the 1990s until becoming the second largest political force in the last parliamentary elections. DF took part in the first Danish general election in 1998, when it won 13 members of parliament (MP) out of 179 and 7% of the votes. DF's number of MPs has increased election after election, with the exception of 2011. DF's best election result was achieved in 2015 when DF became the second largest party in parliament (37 MPs out of 179) after the Social Democratic Party (47 MPs). DF abstained however from joining the centre-right government despite invitations from the leading centre-right party Venstre. In 2019 at the general parliamentary elections on 5 June, DF lost 21 MP compared to 2015, obtaining 16 parliamentary seats. The new radical right party Nye Borgerlige obtained 2.4 percent of votes and 4 MP.

In Spain VOX won less than 0.3 per cent of total votes in the general parliamentary elections held in 2015 and 2016 (González-Enrríquez, 2017). In 2019 at the general parliamentary elections on 28 April it obtained 10% of total votes and 24 parliamentary seats. Prior to this, the best result achieved by VOX was in the regional parliament elections in Andalusia in December 2018. It won nearly 11% of the vote and 12 seats. It was a better performance than any poll had predicted and it ended Spain's so-called exceptionalism (Alonso and Rovira Kaltwasser, 2015).

Table 1 below shows the results of PRR parties in the four countries studied in the European Parliament elections in 2009, 2014 and 2019. AfD in Germany improved its electoral results in 2019 compared to 2014, increasing both the percentage of total votes and the number of MEPs from seven to 11. DF in Denmark and Fidesz in Hungary were the most voted parties in the 2014 European Parliament elections, obtaining 26% and 51% of total votes, respectively. Jobbik was the second largest political party, obtaining 15% of total votes and 3 MEPs. In the 2019 elections, DF lost 16% of the vote compared to 2014 and four MEPs in the parliament, according to national sources, while Fidesz slightly improved its outcomes. In Spain, VOX obtained 2% of all votes in 2014, which was not however enough to obtain a seat. In the 2019 elections, VOX got 6% of the votes and 3 MEPs, thus entering the European Parliament for the first time.

**Table 1. Outcome of elections to the European Parliament, 2009 and 2014**

	<b>AfD (DE)</b>		<b>DF (DK)</b>		<b>VOX (ES)</b>		<b>FIDESZ (HU)</b>		<b>JOBBIK (HU)</b>	
	% votes	MEP	% votes	MEP	% votes	MEP	% votes	MEP	% votes	MEP
<b>2009</b>	-	-	15	2	-	-	56	14	15	3
<b>2014</b>	7	7	27	4	4	0	51	12	15	3
<b>2019</b>	11	11	11	1	6	3	52	13	6	1

*Source: European Parliament for 2009 and 2014; national sources for 2019*

## **2.4 Voters for PRR parties**

Literature analysing voters for PRR parties suggests that the so-called proletarianisation of PRR parties appears to be somewhat confirmed in Denmark and Hungary. The outlook in Germany is more complex, as research shows that the lowest and highest income groups are overrepresented among AfD voters but, at the same time, blue-collar status positively correlates with voting for AfD. On the contrary, in Spain recent studies do not confirm the proletarianisation thesis.

In Germany, recent quantitative studies analysing AfD voters have been conducted. One of the main studies on the topic was a panel study commissioned by the Hans-Böckler Foundation (HBS), which acts on behalf of the Confederation of German Trade Unions (DGB), in which 4892 persons were interviewed between 16 January and 1 February 2017<sup>2</sup> (Gagné et al., 2017). Study results show that there is no linear statistical correlation between personal incomes and voting for the AfD. Authors observe a certain 'sandwich structure' compared to the overall voting population. The two lowest income groups and the highest income groups are overrepresented among AfD voters, while the intermediate income group is less represented within AfD voters compared to all voters. In parallel, the study shows that AfD voters perceived their financial situation significantly more negatively than the overall population. While 56 per cent of all voters

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<sup>2</sup>The target group for the study was people entitled to vote in Germany above the age of 18. Respondents were drawn from an access panel comprising a total of 100,000 exclusively active and with the majority of people recruited offline. The selection was made through a quota based randomisation procedure, so that the structure of the sample accurately reflects the actual structure of the German electoral population in terms of age, gender, religion and education (maximum deviation among the age groups one and education groups three percentage points).

interviewed describe their situation as good or very good, only 46 per cent of AfD voters do so. In terms of occupational status, the study shows that of the percentage of blue-collar workers among AfD voters is significantly higher. Moreover, the majority of AfD voters have a low or medium education level (70%). In terms of age, AfD voters are predominantly individuals between 30 and 59 years old, somewhat concentrated in the age group between 40 and 49, while with regard to gender the study shows that AfD voters are made up of significantly more men (Gagné et al., 2017). Besides this quantitative analysis of AfD voters, the study conducted a survey researching the attitude of AfD voters compared to all voters. It concluded that AfD voters are clearly more authoritarian, chauvinistic, anti-Semitic and nationalist than average Germans. Xenophobia and rejection of migration are clearly at the core of their political positioning. The survey on attitude also revealed that AfD voters tend to be people who perceived their lives as characterised by defeat, worries and loss of control. This is, following Gagné et al. (2017), not so much related to an objective socioeconomic situation, but rather to a subjective perception.

Hilmer et al. (2017) also analysed, based on the same data from the panel study described above, the extent to which there is a trade union member effect preventing workers' support of AfD. The author concluded that trade union members vote for AfD as often as the general population. This is in line with the results revealed by surveys from several state elections, which showed that up to 25 per cent of union members voted for the nationalist party, often more than the general population (DGB 2016a). These results show a similar trend with previous studies conducted by Stöss et al. (2004) and Fitcher (2008), who found, based on representative surveys and group interviews in Germany, that union members were not less prone to far-right stances than their non-member counterparts. These studies showed that workers were not immune from supporting the radical right just because they were union members.

In Denmark, studies conducted after the 2011 elections showed that the main DF voters included workers and tradesmen as well as unemployed people, pensioners, and people in early retirement. Additionally, DF voters recorded the lowest educational level of all voters in Danish parties. A 2016 study on the workers' votes for the parties in 2015 Parliament elections found that DF was by far the largest workers' party with a share of the working class votes of 33.7%, compared to the 26.3% obtained by social democrats (Lang, 2016). Workers in this analysis are both unskilled and skilled manual workers, including for example, general labourers, artisans, stevedores, cleaning assistants, truck drivers, joiners, home-helpers and television technicians. The analysis was based on a representative survey with 10,941 interviews conducted by TNS-Gallup in the period from 1 March to 31 March 2016. The mass support the workers' electorate gave to the

Danish People's Party was the culmination of several years of solid growth in the party's support from workers. Over the past four years, workers' support of DF has thus almost doubled, and only since the general election three quarters earlier, DF achieved a workforce increase of workers' votes of 3.6 percentage points (Lang, 2016). However, more recent studies show that DF is no longer the largest workers' political party, as it was in 2016. The election researcher, professor Kasper Møller Hansen has, again on behalf of the digital magazine Altinget, conducted a new analysis on workers' votes for political parties (workers are still defined as general workers, both skilled and unskilled; see above), based on a representative survey with 11,473 interviews conducted between 1 January and 31 March 2019. The results were published on 1 May 2019, and showed that the Social Democrats would be the most voted political party among the working class, while DF would be the second party. According to the analysis, 26.1% of workers would vote for the Social Democratic Party, while 17.9% would vote for DF. In third place was the ruling party, the Liberal Party (Venstre) with 12.3% (Qvirin Holst, 2019). An interview conducted with the representative of the Confederation of Danish Trade Unions (FH) reported that, based on internal trade union surveys, 'there are only two workers' parties, that is, the Social Democratic Party (SD) and Danish Peoples' Party (DF)'. According to FH data, SD is currently the biggest workers' party with more votes than DF

In Spain, there are not scientific publications or studies on VOX voters' sociology because, until December 2018 it was a very insignificant party with no seats in regional, national or European parliaments. The main study shedding some light on the VOX voter profile is the 'Andalusian post-electoral report', elaborated by the CIS based on 2,900 interviews (CIS, 2018). The report shows that 77% of their voters voted conservative (Popular Party, 43%) and centrist-liberal (Citizens, 34%) political parties in the 2016 parliamentary elections. Only 3% and 5%, respectively, voted for the social democrat (Socialist party) and left-wing parties (Podemos). Therefore, most of their voters have previously supported political parties defending conservative values (Popular Party), liberal/neo-liberal economic programmes (Popular Party and Citizens) and a relatively centralised system of governance (Popular Party and Citizens) compared to centre-left and left parties that support decentralisation to a greater extent. In terms of ideology, the report provides information about left-right self-placement of VOX voters on a 10-point scale (left is rated at 1 and right at 10). According to this, only 5% of VOX voters assess themselves on the left (3, 4 or 5) while 69% assess themselves as radical right (8, 9 and 10). These data would suggest that although VOX aims to go beyond the classic socioeconomic left-right division, the core of their voters are from the right spectrum: they voted for right-wing parties in the past and tend to consider themselves on the right. With regard to social class, data indicate that VOX voters



predominantly come from middle and high-income households. Indeed, VOX is the party that obtained the second worst electoral outcome among individuals in the lowest income household group (8%) (CIS, 2018).

In Hungary, several quantitative studies based on representative surveys have been published in the media (Rigó, 2018; Fabók, 2018) and research centre websites (Zavecz Research), analysing Fidesz voters' profiles (Zavecz Research, 2018). These studies show that Fidesz is supported by most of the socio-demographic groups more or less evenly. Nevertheless, some socio-demographic groups are overrepresented. First, Fidesz voters are overrepresented in rural areas. The percentage of Fidesz supporters who live in villages is above the average (with 8 percentage points above the average) and in the group of those with elementary education (11 percentage points above the average). Second, low income individuals predominate among Fidesz voters, where a negative correlation was detected between income level and voting for Fidesz. According to Fabók (2018), 80% of the poorest population voted for Fidesz in the last parliamentary elections. In the ten poorest Hungarian villages, the overwhelming majority voted for Fidesz and in four villages Fidesz got more than 90% of the votes. Third, a negative correlation was reported between voters with at least a secondary school diploma and support for Fidesz. After checking the election results of 197 districts, it was found that, with few exceptions, the greater the number of secondary school graduates in the district, the lower the number of Fidesz voters (Rigó, 2018).

With regard to Jobbik, a key element highlighted in the literature is its high popularity among youth (Pirro and Róna, 2018). Jobbik received 28% of the votes from individuals younger than 30 and 24% from individuals with ages between 30 and 40. According to Pirro and Róna (2018:19) *'one of Jobbik's most significant achievements has been to satiate a demand for participation coming from the younger strata of Hungarian society'*.

There is no direct or concrete evidence (surveys) on the degree to which trade union members vote for Fidesz or Jobbik. According to the estimation of the president of the trade union SZEF, some 10-20% of SZEF members voted for Fidesz. It is not a high percentage, although it is worth noting that SZEF members are mainly highly educated professionals working in Budapest or other large cities. According to surveys (Republicon, 2018; Zavecz research, 2018), this voter group voted for Fidesz less.

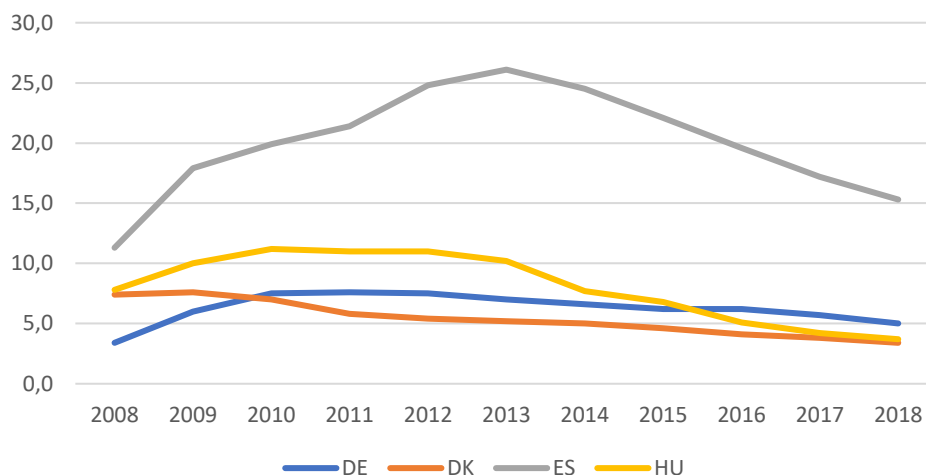
## **2.5 Causes of the rise of PRR parties**

### **2.5.1 Demand-side factors**

#### **2.5.1.1 Unemployment and social inequality**

The rise of unemployment and social inequality are understood as factors determining voters' support for alternative parties such as populist or PRR parties (O'Connor, 2017; Burgoon et al., 2018). From the four countries studied, Spain is by far the country most negatively affected by the economic crisis. As shown in Figure 1, in Spain the crisis provoked a dramatic rise of unemployment. The unemployment rate increased from 11 per cent in 2008 to 26 per cent at the peak of the crisis in 2013. By comparison, only Hungary recorded an unemployment rate higher than 10% from 2009 to 2013. In 2018, the unemployment rate recorded in Spain was 15%, compared to 5% in Denmark, 4% in Hungary and 3% in Germany.

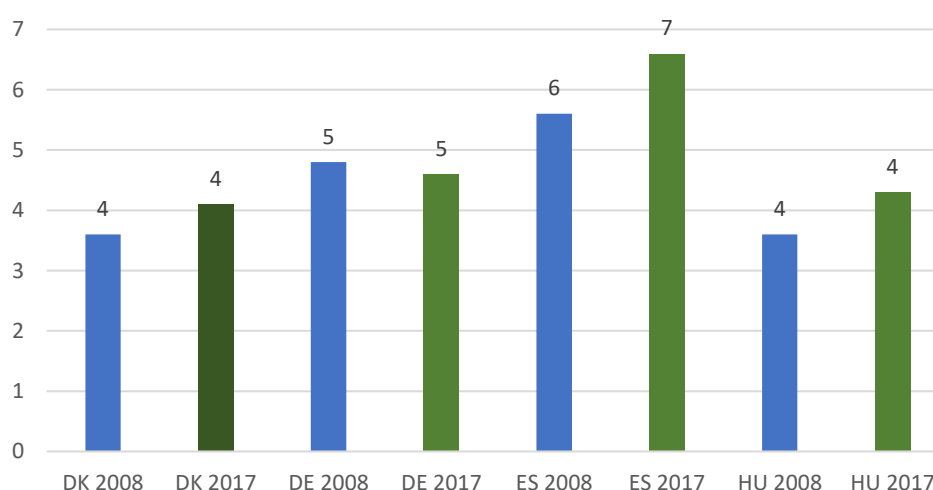
**Figure 1. Unemployment rate 2008-2018**



*Source: Eurostat*

The crisis has provoked a very visible rise of inequality and in-work poverty in many European countries that still persists in the post-crisis period (Eurofound, 2018). However, different trends are observed among the four countries studied (Figures 2 and 3). Again, Spain is the country in which income inequality is highest. From 2008 to 2017, Spain also recorded the highest rise in inequality, followed by Hungary and Denmark. On the contrary, income inequality has decreased in Germany from 2008 to 2017.

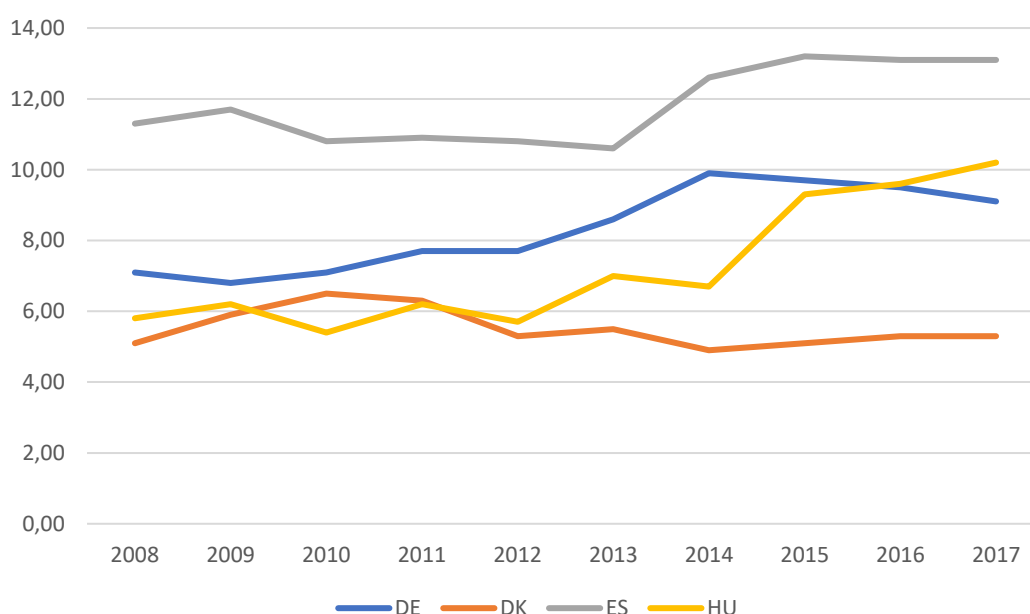
**Figure 2. Income inequality: the gap between rich and poor (20% with highest income; 20% with lowest), 2008-2017\***



*Source: Eurostat - \* 2017 is the last year available for the four countries.*

As far as in-work poverty is concerned, in 2017 Spain recorded the highest rate of workers with an equivalised disposable income below the risk-of-poverty threshold (13%), followed by Hungary (10%), Germany (9%) and Denmark (5%). Hungary and Spain record the sharpest increase of the in-work poverty rate. In Hungary, this rise is particularly evident since 2014, while in Spain the phenomenon has been seen since 2013. In Germany, in-work poverty increased from 2010 to 2014, at which time it started to decrease. In Denmark it has remained relatively stable from 2008 to 2017.

**Figure 3. In-work poverty 2008-2017\***



*Source: Eurostat - \*2017 is the last year available for the four countries*

In summary, Spain appears to be the country where economic deterioration has had a greater negative impact on unemployment and inequality.

### 2.5.1.2 Immigration

In the analysis of the main structural changes that can foster the rise of PRR parties, an increase in ethnic heterogeneity due to immigration is a key variable considered. As explained in the conceptual framework section, some authors find positive correlations between the number of foreign born citizens and PRR electoral success. However, this argument does not properly explain the success of PRR parties in Hungary or the marginal role that PRR parties have played nationally in Germany and Spain. According to Eurostat data, in 2018 some 5% of the total population were immigrants in Hungary compared to 13% in Spain and 17% in Germany. From

these three countries, only Germany records a significant increase in the immigration percentage out of the total population since 2009. The Spanish case is particularly interesting because between 2000 and 2009, it received half of all migrants to the EU-15. Net immigration per capita was the highest of any European Union (EU) country (González-Enríquez, 2017). In this context, no PRR party was represented in regional or national parliaments. In Denmark, the increase of immigration as a percentage of total population has occurred in parallel to the rise of DF.

**Table 2. Immigration as % of total population, 2009 and 2018**

	<b>2009</b>	<b>2018</b>
<i>Denmark</i>	9	14
<i>Germany</i>	12	17
<i>Spain</i>	13	13
<i>Hungary</i>	4	5

*Source: Eurostat*

The refugee crisis has also been considered in recent years to represent a factor that can explain the rise or support of PRR parties in different European countries (Steinmayr, 2018). Of the four countries studied, Germany and Hungary were the countries that received the most asylum applicants from 2014 to 2018, according to Eurostat data. However, the number of asylum applications withdrawn was much higher in Hungary than in Germany.

**Table 3. Asylum applicants**

	<b>2014</b>	<b>2015</b>	<b>2016</b>	<b>2017</b>	<b>2018</b>
<i>Denmark</i>	14,680	20,935	6,180	3,220	3,570
<i>Germany</i>	202,645	476,510	745,155	222,560	184,180
<i>Spain</i>	5,615	14,780	15,755	36,605	54,050
<i>Hungary</i>	42,775	177,135	29,430	3,390	670

*Source: Eurostat*

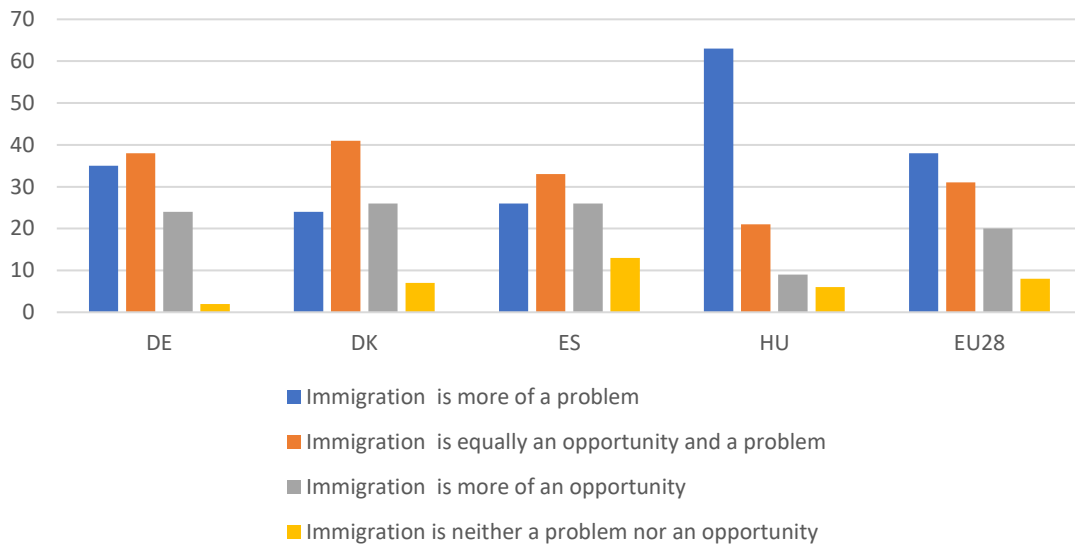
**Table 4. Asylum applications withdrawn**

	<b>2014</b>	<b>2015</b>	<b>2016</b>	<b>2017</b>	<b>2018</b>
<i>Denmark</i>	1,235	1,730	3,255	1,480	1,450
<i>Germany</i>	8,190	14,530	45,245	40,285	6,935
<i>Spain</i>	645	875	1,870	1,610	2,985
<i>Hungary</i>	18,150	103,015	44,905	3,460	120

*Source: Eurostat*

Beyond the quantitative importance of immigration, it is also worth considering the saliency of immigration as a political problem. As shown in Figure 4, although immigration is comparatively low in Hungary, 63% of Hungarians consider that immigration is more of a problem in 2017 (Special Eurobarometer 469). In Germany, Denmark and Spain, citizens appear to be more tolerant within the European Union setting. In the three countries, the percentage of citizens who considered that immigration is more of a problem was lower than the EU average.

**Figure 4. Attitudes towards immigration 2017**

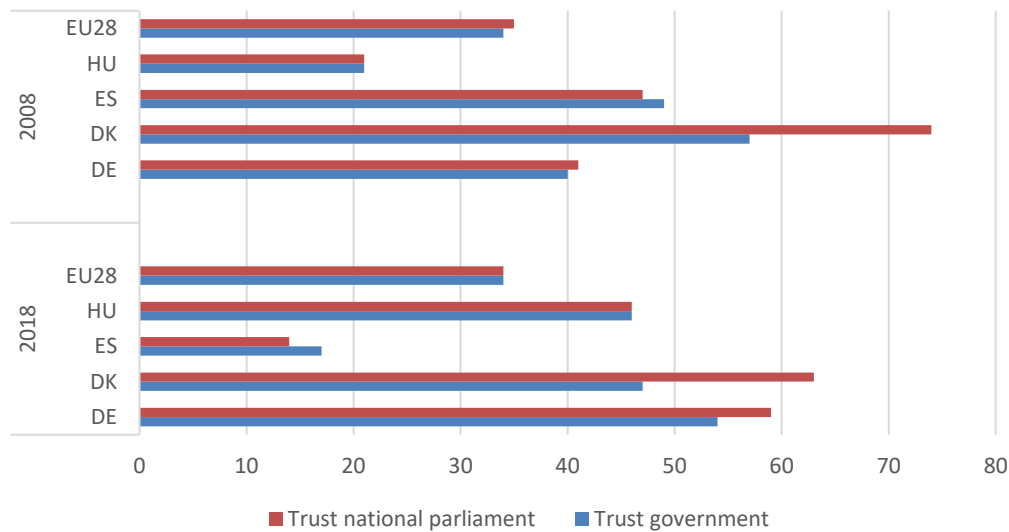


*Source: Special Eurobarometer 469*

### 2.5.1.3 Disaffection with democracy

The political crisis and growing disaffection with liberal democracy and main institutions have been considered as important demand-side factors explaining the rise of PRR parties who hold populist ideologies. Political disaffection can be approached considering the level of trust in democratic institutions such as parliaments and governments. In comparative terms, Spain appears to be the country where the level of trust in parliament and government has decreased to a greater extent since the onset of the crisis. Whereas in 2008, around 49% and 47% trusted in government and parliament, respectively, in 2018 only 17% and 14% do so (figure 5). The trust in democratic institutions has also decreased in Denmark, but to a lesser extent. On the contrary, trust has increased in Hungary and Germany. Thus, it appears that the presence of a PRR party in government in Hungary has gone hand in hand with an increase in trust in democratic institutions.

**Figure 5. Trust in democratic institutions, 2008 and 2018**



*Source: Eurobarometer data 2008 and 2018. Trust is measured as the percentage of respondents who claim they trust the institution.*

A perception of corruption can also foster PRR parties, bearing in mind that populist rhetoric tends to establish a division between the ‘pure people’ and the ‘corrupt elite’, which usually includes government and mainstream political parties. According to Transparency International’s Corruption Perception Index, Spain is the second-most corrupt large European economy (beaten out only by Italy). And corruption in Spain is indeed concentrated mainly within the political class. Perception of corruption is also comparatively high in Hungary, although lower than in Spain. On the contrary, Germany and Denmark are among the least corrupt European countries (Denmark is ranked as the least corrupt country in the world).

Finally, it is also worth considering the disaffection with regard to the European Union, bearing in mind that Europe scepticism is also a key defining ideological feature of the PRR parties analysed. DF opposes membership in the European Union, while the AfD political manifesto sets out leaving the EU within the next five years if relevant reforms are not enacted. With regard to Fidesz, it has a very critical discourse towards the European Union although, formally, it proposes a new European approach together with Visegrád group countries aiming to strengthen national borders. The VOX political manifesto states that it adheres to the Visegrád group proposal. Disaffection with the European Union appears to be high in Spain, where only 33% of citizens



have a positive image of the European Union. Moreover, disaffection has sharply increased from 2017 to 2018. In the three remaining countries, the percentage of citizens who have a positive image of the European Union is higher than the EU average. In Hungary, disaffection also increased from 2017 to 2018. On the contrary, in Germany and Denmark the number of citizens having a positive image of Europe increased in this same period.

**Table 5. Image of the European Union 2018**

	<b>Total positive</b>	<b>Sept. 2018- Autumn 2017</b>	<b>Neutral</b>	<b>Sept. 2018- Autumn 2017</b>	<b>Total Negative</b>	<b>Sept. 2018- Autumn 2017</b>
<i>Germany</i>	49	+4	34	+4	17	+1
<i>Denmark</i>	43	+2	42	+3	14	-4
<i>Spain</i>	33	-6	50	+3	15	+2
<i>Hungary</i>	41	-2	38	-3	20	+5
<i>EU 28</i>	40	=	37	=	21	=

*Source: Eurobarometer data 2019*

#### 2.5.1.4 Summary of demand-side factors

Three main structural or demand-side factors have been considered which, following the literature reviewed in section 1.2, can explain the rise of PRR parties: unemployment and social inequality; increased ethnic heterogeneity due to immigration; and disaffection with democracy. These dimensions have been analysed through quantitative indicators taken from Eurostat and Eurobarometer.

In terms of unemployment and social inequality, Spain appears to be the country where economic deterioration has had a greater negative impact on unemployment and inequality. Paradoxically, this is the country where PRR parties have had the least support in the past. This is to some extent in line with some studies that, for countries such as Germany, stress that the rise of PRR parties is not so much related to the objective socioeconomic situation, but rather to subjective perception (Gagné et al., 2017).

An increase in ethnic heterogeneity due to immigration does not seem to properly explain the success of PRR parties in Hungary or the marginal role that PRR parties used to play at a national level in countries such as Spain. The Spanish case is interesting because, although it received half of all migrants to the EU-15 from 2000 to 2009, no PRR party was represented in regional or national parliaments. In Denmark, increased immigration as a percentage of the total population has occurred in parallel with the rise of DF. The impact of the refugee crisis must also be considered. In this regard, Germany and Hungary were the countries that received the most asylum applicants from 2014 to 2018, according to Eurostat data. As pointed out in previous sections, the asylum crisis was a problem highly politicised by AfD and Fidesz even though many applications were withdrawn in Hungary, unlike in Germany. In any case, data show that there is not a straightforward relationship between the quantitative relevance of migration and its saliency as a political problem, bearing in mind that Hungary, where immigrants only represented around 5% of the total population in 2018, around 63% of individuals consider that immigration is more of a problem (Special Eurobarometer 469).

Finally, Spain also appears as the country where there is a higher structural chance for populist parties, bearing in mind that the economic crisis has increased distrust to the greatest extent in political institutions and the European Union among the four countries under study.

#### **2.5.2 Supply-side factors**

In Germany, literature suggests that a key supply side factor explaining AfD's rise is related to the higher weight that the topic of migration received during the critical phase of the migrant crisis. This topic gained relevance in parallel to the emergency of the radical right-wing social movement Pegida (Hafeneger et al., 2018). The AfD would have been successful in politicising the migration problem. Although AfD's tone on immigration had been more aggressive compared to other right-wing German political parties since the start, it became more radical as the migrant and refugee crisis grew. Lees (2018) also points to the changes in the AfD's senior leadership in 2015 and 2017 with a view to explaining the drivers of AfD's programme changes. In July 2015, the original leading spokesperson, the economically liberal Berndt Lucke, was replaced by Frauke Petry from the AfD's national conservative wing. Frauke Petry took a strong position in opposition to Angela Merkel's open-door policy to Syrian refugees in late 2015 and 2016. According to Lees (2018:306), *'Petry advocated the closing of EU borders, more extensive identity checks at the German border, and the construction of camps in the Middle East and Mediterranean to prevent refugees from ever reaching Germany. Under her leadership, AfD*

*stressed the primacy of German Leitkultur, or primacy of German culture, rejected the idea of Islam as a desirable part of German society and advocated the banning of minarets'.*

In Denmark, some observers (Altinget, 2016) attribute DF electoral success to ideology. In this case, the winning formula combines enforced law and order and sharp immigration curbs with a centrist redistributive policy (income distribution policy). DF has been very successful in politicising the migration problem. Beyond its aggressive campaign focused on Muslim immigrants, its discourse regarding Eastern workers was crucial to attracting votes from Danish working-class members. DF has a very critical position against the European 2004 and 2007 enlargement and the right to free movement for Eastern European workers. DF claimed that the 'old parties' opened the borders for a veritable flow of—in particular—Polish workers who were ready to enjoy the benefits of the Danish welfare state. Workers' support stems from this constant claim to defend the 'small man' (that is, the workers) from the foreign workforce, which either works illegally (because no border control catches them) or for a wage far below the agreed sector minimum wages in Denmark. The mainstream parties were taken by surprise because they saw that suddenly their moderate immigration policy came under fierce attack from a relatively new party, and—even more surprisingly—received immediate support from the middle class and the workers that felt threatened by 'uncontrolled' immigration. As explained in the previous sections, DF lost 21 MP in 2019 parliamentary elections compared to 2015. The decline of DF in the last parliamentary elections has been explained based on two relevant supply-side factors. First, because mainstream parties (including Social Democrats) have accepted key aspects of the radical right's nativist agenda, voting stricter migration policies. Second, because of the emergence of new radical competitors (NB and SK) with a more pronounced nativist discourse (Jupskås, 2019).

In Spain, scientific literature had been oriented towards explaining the so-called Spanish exception (Alonso, S. and Rovira Kaltwasser, 2015; González-Enríquez, 2017), that is, the fact that since the 1990s no radical right political party had obtained more than one per cent of the vote in national elections until 2019 even if, as shown in the previous section, several structural changes could reveal a demand for PRR parties (inequality, immigration and disaffection with democracy). Literature has identified several supply-side factors related to cleavage, the electoral system, the political contest and party competition.

According to Alonso, S. and Rovira Kaltwasser(2015), the lack of electoral success obtained by PRR parties partly lies in the Spanish cleavage structure that exists, with a pronounced centre-periphery division, and in the nativist feature of PRR parties. The nativist discourse of PRR parties entails a defence of a single national community that hinders these parties from attracting voters

aligned with some of their ideas (e.g. anti-immigration or populism), but who identify with another national identity (Catalan or Basque) or consider themselves citizens with dual national identities. Also, authors argue that the difficulties of PRR parties can be explained because the mainstream right-wing party (Popular Party) has somewhat included issues in their agendas that PRR Parties have tried to politicise. This also includes the centre-periphery conflict, in which the Popular Party successfully represented and articulated the 'single-nation' idea. As a result, between 80% and 83% of right and extreme right voters voted for the Popular Party from 1986 to 2011. Nevertheless, recent trends seem to refute authors' arguments. Indeed, media observers attribute VOX's recent electoral success in regional elections to the way party leaders have politicised the Catalan-Spanish conflict. In its rhetoric, VOX has been strongly against peripheral nationalisms, proposing to eliminate all regional governments, thus abolishing the decentralised system of governance, and to reverse laws protecting or fostering regional languages which, according to the national constitution, are co-official national languages. It also proposes to prohibit pro-independence Catalan political parties.

González-Enríquez (2017) highlights the fragmentation among radical right parties. He also notes that most of these parties are old radical right parties that defend anti-capitalism, conservative and nationalist ideas that do not match the liberal values that prevail in Spanish society. However, he also points out that VOX is the first attempt to create a 'modern' PRR party. The author also explains how the electoral system and its non-proportional distribution of parliamentary seats in small circumscriptions are detrimental to small parties with a national scope.

Finally, Ivaldi et al. (2017) argue that PRR parties have not obtained support because of the existence of left-wing varieties of populism. According to Ivaldi et al. (2017), the political party PODEMOS, which obtained 21% of total votes and 71 seats in the Spanish parliament, would represent a left variant of the populist ideology. As opposed to PRR parties, PODEMOS rejects nativism and presents a libertarian universalist definition of the 'people', which advocates minority rights, gender equality and civil liberties. In this political party, the antagonism between the people and the elite rests on socioeconomic lines. This party would have attracted support from voters who are discontent with inequality and corruption.

In Hungary, literature also attributes Fidesz's success to the party's ideology. According to Kováts (2018:35) '*the governing Fidesz-KDNP party convinced the Hungarian population with a narrative about regaining control over migration, which strongly influenced the party's electoral victory in April 2018*'. In the view of Ádám and Bozóki (2016), the win-win electoral formula includes anti-elitism, nationalism and an anti-EU stance, combined with a pragmatist approach in

most policy areas. Furthermore, Bíró-Nagy et al. (2019) explain Fidesz's electoral success among working class members because of strong communication propaganda campaigns with slogans like 'Hungary performs better' (2014, 2019), 'We raise the minimal wage', and 'Hungary first!' (2018).

In addition to ideology, literature from Hungary has also considered external supply-side factors related to the political party system. According to Bíró-Nagy et al. (2019), the three main ingredients of Fidesz victory are rewriting of the rules of Hungarian democracy (by adopting a new constitution, changing the country's electoral laws, and asserting government control over independent media), migration issues and, last but not least, the fractured opposition: *'Not only is the country's opposition divided between the left and the far right, but the left itself is highly fragmented... there is no single centre-left party comparable to Fidesz's position on the centre-right'* (Bíró-Nagy et al., 2019:11). In relation to the opposition, the authors argue that there was a strong competition between the Socialists (MSZP-P), the left-liberal Democratic Coalition (DK), and the Greens (LMP) for the leading position on the left.

Finally, Fabók (2018) attributes Fidesz's success in poor villages to 'clientelism approaches' related to workfare programmes implemented by local administrations governed by Fidesz. In these villages, the largest employer is the municipality, which in most cases is governed by Fidesz. As a result, local Fidesz mayors control workfare and public service jobs.

### **3. Trade unions and PRR**

#### **3.1 Varieties of trade unions in Germany, Denmark, Spain and Hungary**

Overall, the four countries selected are representative of different varieties of trade unionism (Hyman, 2001; Bernaciak et al., 2014).

Germany has been classified within an industrial relations 'social partnership model', which has comparatively weaker trade unions (see Table 6 below) but centralised levels of collective bargaining that ensure high coverage and highly institutionalised forms of employee representation in companies (Visser, 2009). However, in recent years debates about the stability of the German industrial model have been at stake (Eurofound, 2018). While some scholars argue that the system remains stable, others point out that recent trends prove its erosion (Gold and Artus, 2015; Müller-Jentsch, 2018). The main legal provisions representative of a German model of 'conflictual partnership', characterised by a duality between industry-level collective bargaining and works councils, have remain unreformed. However, changes in the internal dynamics of institutions and the way they function have been observed (Gold and Artus, 2015). Some of the changes concern decreased coverage of collective bargaining; the decentralisation of collective bargaining through the increasing use of opening clauses; the drop in the density rates of social partners recorded since the 1990s (although membership levels have remained stable in recent years); and dualism, or segmentation, trends in industrial relations (Müller-Jentsch, 2018). The Trade Union Confederation (Deutsche Gewerkschaftsbund, DGB) is the largest trade union confederation in Germany. It includes eight individual trade unions, covering all industries and economic sectors, with around six million affiliates, although approximately 70% of members are in two federations: IG Metall and ver.di. The DGB is not directly involved in collective bargaining as this task is carried out by its sector federation. Its role is to generate policies on social and economic issues, to present these issues to federal and regional governments (Land) and to influence public opinion (Gumbrell-McCormick and Hyman, 2013). The DGB works internationally at the European Trade Union Confederation (ETUC) and the International Trade Union Confederation (ITUC) and represents the German trade union movement in international institutions such as the EU and the UN. In this study, DGB representatives were approached, as well as representatives from one of its largest federations, ver.di, which represents workers in services and related industries.

As the remaining Nordic countries, Denmark's industrial relations model is defined as 'organised corporatism', with deep traditions of labour market regulation based on powerful central

organisations of unions and employers (Visser, 2009; Eurofound, 2018). The Danish industrial relations model has remained comparatively stable in recent years (Eurofound, 2018). Denmark records the highest trade union density of the four countries studied and one of the highest in Europe. In this country, the main trade union division has been based on occupational status. As a result, separate organisations have been in place for blue-collar, white-collar and professional or graduate employees. Historically, Denmark has had 'Ghent' systems of state-subsidised, but voluntary unemployment insurance managed by trade unions. This system is seen as providing strong incentives to trade union affiliation (Bernaciak et al., 2014). The Danish trade union landscape has changed recently. In the past, there was an occupation-based division between the three main confederations. Since February 2019, there are two trade union confederations: the Danish Confederation of Professional Associations (Akademikerne, AC) and the newly formed Confederation of Danish Trade Unions (Fagbevægelsens Hovedorganisation, FH). FH is a result of a merger—which took effect on 1 January 2019—between the oldest confederation in DK, the Danish Confederation of Trade Unions (LO, mainly blue-collar) and the Confederation of Professionals in Denmark (FTF-white-collar). The two confederations had been discussing the merger since 2013. The outcome of the merger is a confederation representing 79 unions and 1.4 million blue and white-collar members, making it the largest trade union confederation in Denmark, compared to AC, which represents 25 unions and 370,000 workers. FH is affiliated with ETUC. As FH is now the dominant union confederation in Denmark, this has been the trade union approached in this study to study discourses and potential actions to counteract support for the PRR party.

Spain has generally been classified under the so-called state-centre model of industrial relations, with stronger dependence on state regulation (Visser, 2009; Eurofound, 2018). In this country, collective bargaining coverage is relatively high, close to 70% according to ICTWSS data (2013, last year available), within centralised but quite uncoordinated collective bargaining institutions. High collective bargaining coverage mainly relies on state regulation (mandatory extension mechanisms, etc.) and it coexists with comparatively weak trade unions, which record low densities. As noted by Hannan (2011), the Spanish trade union system is one of the most powerful in terms of influence in collective bargaining, although the number of affiliated workers is one of the lowest in Europe. However, it is worth noting that this influence cannot always be exercised by ensuring the effective fulfilment of the collective agreements, due to low trade union sectoral density (García Calavia and Rigby, 2016). In recent years, Spain has been subjected to radical reforms in collective bargaining legislation promoting marketisation and decentralisation. These reforms have weakened trade unions' bargaining position although collective bargaining

centralisation and coverage have remained stable (Fernández Rodríguez et al., 2016). With regard to the trade union landscape, historically, the Trade Union Confederation of Workers' Commissions (CCOO) and the General Workers' Confederation (UGT) have been the most important cross-sector trade unions, and they are also currently assessed as the 'most representative' trade unions according to legal criteria on representativeness, which in Spain are based on the electoral audience (% of members obtained in works council and workers' delegates elections at company levels). They are therefore entitled to take part in national social dialogues and collective bargaining. CCOO and UGT compete with regional trade unions that are particularly important in Galicia (Galician Interunion Confederation, CIG) and the Basque Country (Basque Workers' Solidarity, ELA-STV). Other cross-sector union is the Workers' Trade Unionist Confederation (USO, member of ETUC). These unions are neither involved in cross-sector collective bargaining nor in tripartite social pacts. Furthermore, their representativeness status does not confer them the right to be consulted by public authorities. In this study, both CCOO and UGT have been approached. Both trade unions are ETUC members.

Hungary has been classified within a residual, less clearly defined 'mixed' or 'transitional' model in post-communist Central Eastern Europe (Visser, 2009). This country records low coverage rates of collective agreements and the state plays a key role in employment relations. In this context, trade unions are weak (see Table 6) and fragmented. There are currently some 800 registered trade unions in Hungary belonging to six confederations (Strategy of ÉSZT 2014-2020, p 2). The origin of the division between confederations can be traced back to the time of the change of regime, to battles around the demolition of the state monopoly, the breakdown of the National Council of Trade Unions (SZOT) and the distribution of its assets. Hungarian trade unions are also assessed as ideologically divided (see below). The Confederation of Hungarian Trade Unions (MASZSZ) and the Forum for the Cooperation of Trade Unions (SZEF), which represent public employees, are the two biggest confederations and both are ETUC members<sup>3</sup>. They are the Hungarian trade unions we approached for this study.

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<sup>3</sup> ÉSZT, LIGA and MOSz are also ETUC members



**Table 6. Collective bargaining coverage and trade union density**

	Trade union density		Collective bargaining coverage	
	2008	2013	2008	2013
<i>Germany</i>	19%	18%	61%	58%
<i>Denmark</i>	66%	67%	82%	84%
<i>Spain</i>	17%	17%	79%	78%
<i>Hungary</i>	14%	11%*	29%	23%

*Source: ICTWSS \* data only available for 2012.*

### **3.2 Trade unions and politics**

German trade unions are formally self-assessed as party-politically neutral. The post-war reconstruction of the trade union movement transcended previous ideological divisions between social and Christian democratic trade unions (Gumbrell-McCormick and Hyman, 2013). Many DGB union leaders have been social democrats but, at the same time, a minority of seats on executive bodies was kept for Christian democrats, which only have one trade union (CDA). For instance, the minister of labour during the Kohl government, Norbert Blüm, was a member of IG Metal. However, this relationship has weakened in recent years. The same holds true with regard to the DGB's relationship with the social democratic party SPD, which was particularly conflictual during the Schroeder government (Gumbrell-McCormick and Hyman, 2013). In recent years, a number of regional union officials have supported the left-wing party die Linke.

In Denmark, unions have traditionally lacked ideological divisions. The largest trade union FH terms itself a party that is politically independent. As written in its status, '*in the management of political interest, FH shall, based on the values of the trade union movement, cooperate with parties and organisations that will work for FH's policy cross party*'. LO, which was the bigger of the two confederations, traditionally had tight bonds with the Social Democratic Party. However, at the congress in February 2003, LO broke the formal and economic bonds with the Social Democrats in order to be able to act independently and engage with other parties that want to support the trade union movement.

In Spain, trade unions were historically ideologically divided and—as opposed to Denmark and Germany—they were linked to more adversarial bargaining approaches and higher levels of conflicts and industrial actions (Luque Balbona, 2013). Since the 1980s, however, relevant changes have occurred. The main trade union confederations, that is CCOO and UGT, severed connections with the left-wing (Communist Party) and social democratic political parties (PSOE), respectively, and started to cooperate within the framework of a ‘unity of action’ agreement. Since that time, they have followed common collective bargaining and social dialogue approaches and the strong political inter-union rivalry has been downplayed (Holm-Detlev, 2018). They both have achieved social pacts with centre right and centre-left parties in the past. However, the economic crisis initiated in 2008 strongly affected agreement at a macro level, particularly during the time in which the centre-right wing Popular Party was in government (2011-2018). In that period, the Popular Party government unilaterally enacted reforms on collective bargaining and labour market rules. Some dialogue bargaining boards were opened but negotiations did not lead to any agreements. As a result, both trade unions were very critical of this political party.

Hungarian trade unions are considered ideologically divided, although in recent years the majority of trade unions have called for some kind of political neutrality. In the past, observers identified a general division between, on the one hand, MASZSZ, SZEFE, which represent public employees, and the Confederation of Intellectual Workers (ÉSZT); and, on the other, the Workers’ Council (MOSZ) and LIGA. MASZSZ, SZEFE and ÉSZT emphasise political neutrality in their statutes but have been directly in ‘opposition’ to the Fidesz government for years. On the contrary, MOSZ and LIGA have had close relationships with liberal-conservative parties in the past. The president of MOSZ is still Imre Palkovics, who was formerly an MP of the conservative Hungarian Democratic Forum. Currently, MOSZ adheres to Christian values and is open to cooperating with other trade unions, as stated by Imre Palkovics in the 2018 trade union congress. With regard to LIGA, it was close to the liberal party SZDSZ (Alliance of Free Democrats) and later to Fidesz. However, since 2014 LIGA has explicitly distanced itself from the ideas of the Fidesz government on the ‘illiberal’ state and committed itself to the model of liberal democracy in a presidential resolution (LIGANET, 2014). Today, LIGA defines itself as a party-neutral confederation (Fábián-Stubnya (2018).

### **3.3 Trade unions’ views and discourses on PRR**

Trade unions’ discourses and views differ in the countries studied. In Germany, the topic of the radical right and, particularly, right extremism, has been very relevant since the 1990s. Trade unions’ concerns on xenophobic and right extremist values increased as a result of a series of

violent acts perpetrated by right extremists in different parts of Germany in, for instance, Hoyerswerda, Rostock, Mölln, and Solingen. The topic gained special relevance after a new series of violent attacks against foreigners in summer 2000. Under these circumstances, both employer associations and trade unions took an active role in this debate and started to draft proposals on how to tackle the problem of xenophobia and extreme right attitudes. On 28 August 2000, the Federation of German Trade Unions (Deutscher Gewerkschaftsbund, DGB) and the Confederation of German Employers' Associations (Bundesvereinigung der deutschen Arbeitgeberverbände, BDA) issued a joint declaration, stating that the two organisations would provide joint information on the threat of right-wing extremism and would promote initiatives for democracy and tolerance at regional and company levels.

Prior to this joint declaration, the trade union DGB had been discussing the topic. In this sense, attention should be drawn to the 'trade union commission on right-wing extremism', which was established after the DGB congress in 1998 in order to 'analyse the development of right-wing extremism in Germany from a trade union point of view and to develop recommendations for trade union action'. In May 2000, the commission presented its final report (DGB-Bundesvorstand 2000). The report highlighted that the creation of the commission offered a platform for the first time via which the DGB, its member organisations and affiliates could jointly discuss the topic and identify areas and perspectives for political actions. The report discussed the state of the art in social sciences studies on the extreme right attitudes of the general German population and trade union affiliations, especially their voting behaviour, and the theoretical approaches to explain right extremism. Then the commission defined strategic action areas and measures (DGB-Bundesvorstand 2000).

The trade union commission's report concluded that there is no single reason for the significant spreading of right-wing extremism in Germany. Economic causes, such as high unemployment and precariousness, were considered to contribute to explaining the phenomenon. However, the commission found that the problem could not be confined to certain underprivileged groups or underclass because extreme right attitudes were found in almost all social groups. There were also culturally based explanations, related to the destruction of traditional milieus and values. In response to these developments, people not in favour of individualisation trends seek alternative systems with a stable orientation such as those offered by extreme right ideologies and organisations. Finally, the report also identified political factors or, more specifically, discourse elements of democratic mainstream political parties that can foster right extremist attitudes. This included the use of economic globalisation and national competitiveness to justify social cutbacks,

which can be transformed into a xenophobic way of thinking, making foreigners responsible for the deterioration of working and living conditions.

Currently, the topic of the right-wing extremist and populist radical right continues to be on the table within the German trade union movement debate. This is determined by the growth of AfD and its progressive switch towards populist radical right-wing positions. As the ver.di trade union representatives interviewed (DE TU1) pointed out, AfD was initially perceived as a conservative party to the right of existing conservative parties. However, it is increasingly viewed as a radical right party. In this sense, the representative drew attention to AfD politicians' personal connections to the 'Identitarian Movement', which can be classified as right-wing extremist. German trade unions are particularly concerned with the fact that many workers and trade union members are supporting AfD. As Christiane Benner, vice president of the German metal workers union IG Metall stated, *'The rise of the AfD is something that shocks unions. It has not remained concealed from us that many of its voters are employed in our companies'* (Dietl, S and Birner, 2017). Moreover, it merits mentions that several studies commissioned by the trade unions have showed that trade unions even vote for AfD more often than the average population (DGB, 2016a). Bearing this in mind, different trade union leaders have publicly discussed the causes behind right wing radicalism in both Europe and Germany, stressing demand-side factors related to the deterioration of working and living conditions and the rise of inequality. In these analyses, there is also a critique of modern-day neoliberalism, which influences and determines populist and authoritarian reactions. For instance, Busch Bsirske, who is the president of the trade union ver.di, was the co-author of an article (Birske and Busch, 2018) which stressed that the high social costs of European economic and financial policies (high unemployment, decrease in real salary levels, and weakening of collective bargaining institutions and trade unions) were increasing support for PRR parties in many EU-countries. In a similar vein, H. J. Urban (2018), vice-president of IG-Metal, stated that neoliberal financial capitalism is putting democracy at risk. According to him, the rise of PRR parties has its origins in the disruptive transformation of the welfare state and increasing economic uncertainties. These disruptive transformations are causing fear about the future not only among workers, but also among the upper middle and upper class, activating radical right-wing patterns of behaviour. As a result, workers become susceptible to the messages of right-wing populist propaganda which, in the case of Germany, is challenging the social model (welfare state, etc.) as well as democracy and pluralism, postulating a post-democratic and authoritarian capitalism.

In recent years, DGB leaders have also explicitly criticised AfD proposals and programmes, focusing on its xenophobic discourse as well as on its neoliberal tax policies. For instance, the head of Germany's DGB confederation of trade unions, Reiner Hoffmann, criticised the AfD programme in a speech in Stuttgart in May 2016, stating that *'their alternatives are nothing but simple, dull and inconsistent'*. He also stated that the AfD was not only conducting a hate campaign against refugees but also aiming for a tax policy that went against workers' interests.

In Denmark, the trade union movement has barely discussed the problem of the populist radical right. As opposed to Germany, Danish trade unions have also refrained from making critical statements about the main PRR party's (DF) discourse or programme, partly due to its appeals to political neutrality and openness to achieve policy consensus in different areas with all political parties. In this sense, the main Danish trade union confederation FH political programme states (that has officially existed since 1 January 2019) that *'it can enter into concrete agreements as well as more strategic alliances with political parties, depending on what best promotes the trade union's protection of interests and influence'*. This statement means that if DF is willing to engage in a strategic alliance that favours the goals of the trade union movement and/or benefit workers, they are receptive to cooperating on a case to case basis. According to the FH representative interviewed (DK TU1), there is not a trade union debate about right extremism or PRR parties. Moreover, FH is not spearheading collective opinion among the union members about/against main PRR party in the parliament (DF), as they are not encouraging an active position against any other party on the right or centre-right. The member unions themselves deal individually with the issues if necessary.

Asked about the relationships with DF, DK TU1 responded as follows:

*DF does not support FH or the unions directly. It is not part of their agenda. However, they have a (social) welfare agenda that means that they are not hostile to the trade unions. Nevertheless, we do not know exactly where they stand. Single cases determine the dialogue. In a conflict between 3F (United Federation of Danish Workers, 3F Private Service, Hotel and Restaurants Group) and a restaurant (Vejlegården, which did not want to sign an agreement for the employees), DF supported the restaurant owner and the party leader showed up in the restaurant in spite of the blockade made by 3F. This was truly an example of DF defending the 'little man' against the 'large trade union'. In another actual case, discussions on a progressive and differentiated pension age, DF and we have common standpoints. Again, DF defends the 'little man' who has been working hard all his life and now can see the 'old parties' trying to push back the year of his retirement. In other cases, the unions have taken initiatives to invite DF to*

*Trade Union Strategies in the EU to address trade union members' and workers' growing propensity to vote for right wing populists and nationalists*

*meetings and conferences about topics on the unions' agendas with the aim to get DF as ally (DK TU1)*

As revealed in the quotation, DF and FH may agree on some topics related to social welfare, as in the recent debates on a progressive and differentiated pension age. With regard to this topic, the unions have even taken initiatives to invite DF to meetings and conferences with the aim of attracting DF as an ally. For instance, the sectoral trade union federation 3F, which is currently the biggest in Denmark, invited the chairmen of SD and DF to an informal talk which, among other issues, discussed a possible common pension age plan concerning worn-out workers (See UgbrevetA4, 2016).

However, there are also topics on which DF and FH positions are at odds. On the one hand, DF is against centralised tripartite discussions related to labour market issues, while for FH social pacts are a defining feature of the Danish industrial relations model. On the other, DF does not support that union membership fees are tax deductible while trade unions want to keep this deduction as a motivation for the workers to remain members.

DF and FH also disagree fundamentally with regard to the topic of migration and, particularly, on labour integration policies addressed to this group. In 2016-17, the social partners and the government agreed at tripartite negotiations to a special integration allowance to facilitate a quick integration of the many refugees from these years into the Danish labour market. DF was and is strongly against such an agreement. At the tripartite discussions, FH pushed to provide the refugees with faster processing for entering the labour market, via a new basic integration programme (Ny Integrations-GrundUddannelse, IGU) which would provide the opportunity for refugees to enter a job-training programme combined with a minimum salary equivalent to the collectively agreed wage for apprenticeships. The government and the employer confederation, DA, agreed to FH's suggestion while DF opposed. The IGU scheme was extended in February 2019.

As opposed to DF, FH defends the position to accept immigrants and refugees in the Danish labour market, as long as they work under Danish wages and working conditions according to the collective agreements. Thus, regarding the integration of immigrants and refugees into the Danish labour market, they have conflictual interests with DF, who is against any kind of integration of foreigners. However, it is worth noting that, as opposed to trade unions in Germany, FH has not explicitly criticised DF discourse or proposals in relation to migration. The same holds true in relation to other political parties' actions or proposals. For instance, FH has not made any public statement with regard to the new SD position regarding migrant workers which, according to

several observers, has moved to the right. Moreover, LO and FTF (now integrated into the FH confederation) remained silent when SD supported a controversial government and DF decision to put a cap on the refugee quota in September 2017. For the first time since 1978, Denmark rejected UN quota refugees (Johansen, 2018)

The only small step in the direction of a criticism towards DF policies on immigration was in connection with the introduction of a new law regulating a so-called paradigm shift in Danish migration policy from integration to repatriation. In February 2019, with the support of DF (which originally proposed the law) and the Social Democrats, the government passed law L140. Among other measures, this reform amends the residency rules applicable to refugees and beneficiaries of subsidiary protection. In the future, residency rules will only be granted for temporary residence. Thus, international protection of any kind becomes synonymous with a temporary stay. Upon each permit renewal, the need for protection is to be reviewed. In addition, the law has reduced the integration benefit and changed its name to 'self-sufficiency and return travel benefit' to send a signal that one should not be integrated, but sent home whenever possible. In a consultation response to the law, FH stated that *'the paradigm shift in the migration policy counteracts integration in the labour market... FH believes that the existing integration benefit—because of its low level—is poverty-generating and that it counteracts integration. The low allowance means that foreigners and their children have fewer opportunities than Danes and less surplus to participate in the labour market, for instance to look for a job'* (FH, 2019). FH also points out that the tripartite agreement on an 'integration package for refugees' (IGU – see above) has been successful.

In Spain, the most representative trade unions (CCOO and UGT) share a very critical discourse on the VOX programme. The representative interviewed from the trade union CCOO (ES TU1) assesses VOX as an 'ultra-conservative' and neo-fascist political party. The VOX discourse and political programme is at odds with the CCOO discourse in all areas. In this sense, ES1 stressed three fields in which trade unions and VOX provide exclusionary offers: gender equality, economic and industrial relations policies and institutional/governance framework. Gender related issues have gained a growing importance in recent years, especially since the 90s. In those years, the main trade unions CCOO and UGT formally adopted a mainstream approach that led them to include a gender equality perspective on a large variety of measures both internally and externally. In the case of CCOO, the gender mainstreaming approach is incorporated in its legal statutes. Accordingly, they formally assume that gender concerns must be integrated in all actions and decisions, internally and externally. In addition, it is worth noting that CCOO (as well as

UGT) strongly supported the main national laws promoting gender equality, which VOX wants to amend or abolish (Law against Gender Violence or Law 3/2007 for effective gender equality). With regard to economic and industrial relation policies, ES TU1 assesses the VOX programme as extreme neoliberalism. In his view, the VOX programme aims to individualise industrial relations and dramatically increase employers' powers to unilaterally set up employment and working conditions, at the expense of trade unions. For ES TU1, VOX's proposal to abolish public funding to trade unions is of very high concern as it neglects that trade unions are entitled to public funding because they fulfil a public function acknowledged in the Spanish constitution. Finally, ES TU1 points out that, as opposed to VOX, CCOO defends the existing decentralised system of governance. Leaving aside the trade union's critical analysis of the VOX programme, the CCOO representative expressed his concern on the potential influence of the VOX discourse in mainstream parties:

*The VOX irruption has provoked an internal debate because it has a great capacity to influence the political discourse of mainstream political parties. This influence may have greater influence at the time of negotiating government coalitions (ES TU1).*

The representative from UGT trade union (ES TU2) explained that VOX satisfies the demands of a relatively small group of individuals who have a radical right-wing ideology and used to vote for the mainstream right-wing party (Popular Party). However, the UGT general secretary expressed concerns about working class individuals voting for VOX prior to the parliamentary elections, implicitly criticising left-wing parties for not offering workers convincing proposals: *'when a worker feels he is more represented by the far-right nationalism populist ideology it means that the left has not known how to specify a political programme attractive for the workers'* (Infolibre, 2019)

According to the UGT representative interviewed, the eruption of VOX has not generated any internal trade union debate. UGT is critical of the VOX discourse in different fields (immigration, gender equality, homosexual rights, etc.) and rejects its proposals to abolish public funds to trade unions. However, it does not consider the political party as a threat because it foresees that it will not grow substantially.

In Hungary, the trade unions approached in the study (MASZSZ and SZEF) have only drafted a critical discourse on Fidesz's socioeconomic policies. The topics of migration and xenophobia, linked to the Hungarian PRR parties' discourses and policies are not on the table within the trade union movement. Moreover, both trade unions stressed the need to maintain political neutrality



with a view to retaining members. This was clearly pointed out by the MASZSZ representative interviewed (HU TU1) and also by the SZEFG representative (HU TU2). According to HU TU2, in the debates of the SZEFG's governing bodies (executive body, the council of member-federations and the yearly congress) the topic of the radical right has been present. However, the discussion of political issues—including the radical right—is very cautious. SZEFG is afraid that otherwise right party sympathisers would leave the union. The maintenance of membership is among the priorities for the union.

However, the radically amended Labour Code in 2012 provoked a more critical trade union discourse with regard to Fidesz. MASZSZ considers these features of Fidesz's discourse and political programme as the most problematic:

- the destruction of social dialogue: the FIDESZ government does not negotiate with the employees' representatives with a view to reaching agreement and is not willing to compromise
- the Labour Code and its amendments, which are deemed to increase employers' powers to unilaterally establish working conditions
- 'public works' (workfare) as the approach for handling unemployment, combined with a drastic decrease in the unemployment benefit

SZEFG also considers the amendments of the Labour Code as one of the most problematic elements of the Fidesz programme. In addition, it does not believe the Fidesz government is public service friendly.

*There are approximately 690,000 employees in the public sector; the wages of 590,000 increased. However, around 100,000 blue-collar workers were also left out of any wage settlements in 2019. They have access only to the guaranteed minimum wage increase. The trade union has difficulties in reaching them. Fidesz is able to win them with its demagoguery, the violent and permanent media campaigns even if they are left out (HU TU2).*

### **3.4 Trade unions' actions to counteract the rise of PRR parties**

Germany is the country where the trade union movement has developed the most comprehensive set of actions to counteract the rise of PRR parties. In the remaining three countries, findings revealed primarily indirect actions.

In Germany, debates are at stake among DGB sector trade unions concerning the most appropriate strategy to counteract trade union members' and workers' growing sympathy toward voting for AfD. In recent years, the so-called 'defining limits and open door' strategy has been widely discussed, which has been defended by H. J. Urban (2018), vice-president of IG-Metal. Defining limits (*Klare Kante*) means to have an aggressive strategy of confrontation with workers who

defend right-wing populist positions at enterprises. Open door means to develop an offensive strategy offering participation to those workers whose uncertainty and anger could lead them to support populist radical right political alternatives. The idea is to redirect workers' anger and frustration towards solidarity and collective action.

The implementation of this 'defining limits' (*Klare Kante*) strategy, which could involve expelling members who defend radical or extremist radical right-wing positions, can however be politically sensitive in a period marked by the decline of trade union membership. This concern was raised by the trade union ver.di representative interviewed (DE TU1), who does however favour the 'defining limits' strategy:

*In the framework of the decreasing numbers of affiliates, the question arose within the trade union of whether it would be a good strategy to combat part of their own clientele in the sense of banning extreme and radical statements by trade unionists. Concerns were expressed because this would push members to leave trade unions, which would hurt them. I do not share this perspective. In my view, showing the 'defining limits' strategy (Klare Kante) is necessary because our experience as well as social scientific proof show that it is fruitless to hold discussions with convinced right-wing extremist and radicals. (DE TU1).*

This position is also shared by the DGB representative interviewed, who thinks that a 'defining limits' strategy is appropriate with a view to counteracting the rise of PRR parties, where the target group should be *'workers who are (still) not convinced of these positions, but showing some sympathy for radical right statements because, based on my experience, there is no point in discussing with truly right-wing extremists and radicals* (DE TU2)

There are also critical voices within the German trade union movement that, relying on materialistic or economically based explanations on the rise of PRR parties, stress the need to develop more radical actions aimed at strengthening workers' bargaining power, combating inequalities and improving working conditions. For instance, Helmut Born, member of the regional presidency of ver.di North Rhine-Westphalia and member of the left-wing party 'Die Linke', claimed in an article for the German-Turkish newspaper *Yeni Hayat* that the trade union must reflect on their recent strategies and take corrective measures. He criticised the trade unions lack of sufficient action against precariousness. Moreover, he critically pointed out that trade unions have been co-designers of new employment relationships resulting in precarious working conditions. He criticised that—with some exceptions—trade unions have not achieved substantial improvements in working conditions and salaries through their social bargaining policies in recent years. In his opinion, it is therefore not surprising that some members are open to AfD

propaganda, which claims that refugees are the cause of social misery in Germany (Born, 2017). In a similar vein, Stefan Dietl, member of the regional presidency of ver.di Bavaria, also advocates in an article (Dietl, 2018) for more combative trade unions. In his opinion, trade unions have been following a corporatist strategy in recent years, passively supporting the reduction of the social welfare state, so that they are not perceived any more as transformative movements aimed at improving working conditions, but as a part of the establishment. He advocates a combative trade union to show that the solution is not the authoritarian extreme or radical right-wing ideology, but collective action. He also stated that trade unions' defence of the national economy and competitiveness may foster nationalistic based ideologies. Instead of highlighting the conflicts of interest between employers and workers, this strategy suggests a common interest of capital and work and undermines international solidarity among workers.

Leaving aside the debates on trade union strategies, the study found several trade unions' initiatives and actions developed at both cross-sector and sector levels with a view to counteracting the rise of right extremism and PRR parties (namely, AfD). First, DGB and its members are developing actions to increase knowledge on the radical and extreme right. The trade union DGB and its sector federations, as well as its research foundations (Hans-Böckler Foundation, HBS) have funded or commissioned several studies on extreme and radical right attitudes of workers and, particularly, trade union members. These studies have been crucial to detecting that trade union members are not immune from extreme or radical right attitudes and have encouraged DGB and its federations to develop actions at the enterprise level with a view to counteracting extreme and radical right-wing attitudes among their members and workers as a whole.

Second, they are developing awareness-raising and educational actions to counteract the rise of AfD. DGB and its members have developed brochures on the AfD programme (DGB 2017; DGB 2016a) and organised campaigns. One example is the platform and initiative of the youth organisation of IG-Metall: Klare Kante gegen Rechts! [<https://junge-igm,zusammenhandeln.org/klarekante>] (Clear limits against the right!). Trade unions have also launched seminars and educational programmes to prepare rank and file members for debates at work. A crucial function of these educational activities is to clarify the AfD's neoliberal agenda, as trade unions perceive that most workers are unaware of the AfD's social and economic programme. The assumption is that workers would be more reluctant to support this party once they are aware that it contradicts their interests (Dietl and Birner, 2017).

Third, DGB and its members are setting standards and ideals on democracy and solidarity. In this sense, it is worth mentioning the DGB resolution approved in the 2018 federal congress, which confirms the defence of democracy and antifascism as a pillar of the trade unions' activity. At a federal level, The IG Bauen-Agrar-Umwelt adopted five 'Principles against the Right' in November 2018. The position paper draws on its understanding of democracy and solidarity, comprising a basis for value and lines of reasoning, on which all trade unionists can orient their actions. The five principles are:

- Defence of human rights
- Defining limits (*Klare Kante*) against right wing movements and parties, with an explicit reference to the AfD
- Solidarity instead of exclusion
- Fair work for all
- Assuming responsibility for democracy

Fourth, attention should be drawn to the current trade union discussions on declaring the incompatibility of trade union membership and AfD affiliation. In the 1980s, trade unions affiliated with DGB approved what they called 'incompatibility measures' aimed at preventing the membership of workers who support far-right political parties. The measures enabled some trade unions such as ver.di to expel any member who also belonged to the National Democratic Party (NPD), a right extremist party with an anti-Semitic discourse whose leaders have even glorified the Nazis.<sup>4</sup> Some local union leaders have begun applying this rule to AfD members as well. At a federal level, the EVG (railway and transport union) was the first DGB sectoral federation to declare the incompatibility of trade union membership and AfD in April 2019. Beyond this single case, at state and federal levels there are still discussions on whether or not to implement incompatibility measures. For instance, Ebenau (2018), secretary of IG Metall Frankfurt Mitte, would welcome such a measure as an important political signal, but he also calls the attention to the judicial difficulties in applying the decision to individuals. Officials interviewed from ver.di say they are still deliberating. The ver.di trade unionist interviewed stated that recent studies have clearly shown '*that there is no incompatibility established in the statutes. This is now become an issue at trade union conferences proposing resolution, so right-wing radicalism would not be compatible with trade union positions*'.

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<sup>4</sup><https://www.spiegel.de/international/germany/german-society-struggles-to-find-right-approach-to-populists-a-1265498.html>

Fifth, trade unions have joined local coalitions that mobilise against AfD activities in towns (Dietl and Birner, 2017). Moreover, they are engaged in different networks and associations that implement activities against right-wing extremism, racism and xenophobia. A relevant example is the Kumpelverein ([www.gelbehand.de](http://www.gelbehand.de)) association, which was founded by the trade unionist journal Rand and the DGB youth federation (DGB-Jugend) in 1986. This association was created to conduct actions against racism, xenophobia and right-wing extremism, inspired by the French organisation SOS Racisme. In 2011 it changed its name to '*Mach meinen Kumpel nicht an!*<sup>5</sup> – für Gleichbehandlung, gegen Fremdenfeindlichkeit und Rassismus e.V.'. Its work currently focuses on equality and equal opportunities, especially in enterprises. In the words of the trade union representative interviewed, who is also its president, the association is a network that coordinates trade unionists' activities. To support the different actions carried out by the trade unions and their affiliates at different levels (cities, regions and state), the association has created a wide range of materials, which include a handbook and guides to counteract racist attitudes in different fields. For instance, it published a guide that includes options and examples of practices to prevent racism in vocational education and training;<sup>6</sup> a manual for activists in the world of labour, which sets out recommendations on how to protect emigrants and counteract racism;<sup>7</sup> and a guide to deal with right-wing extremist slogans.<sup>8</sup>

Sixth, German trade unions are implementing several actions at company levels, particularly in response to recent extreme and radical right-wing movements' attempts to organise and present their own candidates for works council elections in some establishments, especially in the automobile sector. In the last election for works councils in 2018, the One Percent Network (Netzwerk Ein Prozent)—a radical right-wing citizens' initiative with 44,000 supporters (according to its website)—tried to promote a 'patriotic' alternative to DGB trade unions. In the automobile branch, the so-called 'Zentrum Automobil' was created, presenting lists at different sector enterprises. This strategy had a limited impact. Some right-wing lists obtained representation at relevant automobile companies such as Daimler Benz, Opel, BMW and Porsche.

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<sup>5</sup> Colloquial expression, roughly meaning 'Do not turn my pal on!'

<sup>6</sup> Aktiv gegen Rassismus in der Ausbildung. Handlungsmöglichkeiten und Beispiele aus der betrieblichen Praxis (2018)

<sup>7</sup> Flüchtlinge schützen, Rassismus entgegenreten. Handreichung für Aktive in der Arbeitswelt. Handreichung (2017), 2. Auflage

<sup>8</sup> So nicht! Kleiner Ratgeber zum Umgang mit rechtsextremen Sprüchen (2017)

However, in an analysis of the works council elections<sup>9</sup>, IG-Metal stated that the right-wing lists have obtained 19 from more than 78,000 seats in works councils (21/03/2018). In the view of the ver.di representative interviewed, trade union activities perceived the significance of focusing trade unions' actions at companies once they knew that workers with right wing ideologies were deciding to present their own list at works councils elections instead of '*breaking up the trade union store from the inside, as some radical right-wing workers were trade union members*' (DE TU1).

Trade union activities at company levels to counteract radical right-wing movements' attempts to mobilise workers are decentralised initiatives corresponding to the specific circumstances of each enterprise. With the information gathered, it seems that there is no general strategy or strategic transfer of knowledge within and between unions on their experiences in this dispute. The interviewed trade unionist from ver.di gave the example of the case of a security enterprise with a multinational workforce. In this case, the trade union mobilised different resources, including judicial expertise, to counteract radical right-wing attempts to create new workers' representation organisations.

*In this company, the trade union followed the strategy to isolate the radical and extreme rights. Some of them tried to present their own lists at the last works council election, but failed as they did not manage to collect enough signatures. Then the radical right tried to found their own trade union. A recognised trade union can only nominate two of their representatives to a list for works council elections. Ver.di submitted nominations based on judicial expertise and the election committee decided that the radical right organisation did not meet the requirements to be recognised as a trade union.* (DE TU1)

There are also educational initiatives whose purpose is to counteract the rise of radical right-wing attitudes within companies, like the SEDA project<sup>10</sup> (Sensitisation, Democratisation and Diversity in the World of Work), carried out by the DGB Training and Education Centre (DGB Bildungswerk). The project has been operational since 2017. It offers companies support to strengthen their internal democratic culture. The trade unionist and project leader of DGB Bildungswerk interviewed explained that the project offers training for 'multipliers' of

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<sup>9</sup> <https://www.igmetall.de/im-betrieb/ig-metall-liegt-bei-den-betriebsratswahlen-voll-auf-kurs>

<sup>10</sup> <https://www.dgb-bildungswerk.de/politische-bildung/seda-sensibilisierung-demokratisierung-und-vielfalt-der-arbeitswelt>

democratic culture and supports them in their workplace. After a first year dedicated to contacting companies, the project is currently working with some eight companies on this topic. In his opinion, the project is successful, although the current evaluation is not yet available. In this sense, the project covers the second part of the strategy to 'define clear limits and open doors' against right-wing radicalism. It opens the door by promoting a culture of debate at enterprises on different sensitive democratic issues, including right wing radicalism, thus strengthening a pluralistic understanding of democracy. The project could be considered an example for a strategy that both trade unions interviewed consider promising: cooperation with companies. The ver.di trade unionist refers to some initiatives in which this happens, but, in his opinion, this way (still) is not envisaged sufficiently as a trade unionist strategy. The DGB trade unionist points out that companies can participate in such cooperation not only for political convictions, but also for economic interests, as some of them have problems filling highly-qualified jobs with foreigners and, accordingly, should be willing to counteract xenophobic attitudes and values.

Finally, the DGB representative interviewed also referred to trade unions' transnational cooperation initiatives. According to him, *'There is increasing networking among trade unions. But they face the problem of differences between systems of industrial relations and trade unionist culture'* (DE TU1). Bearing these obstacles in mind, he stressed the need to develop this strategic line of action by sharing experiences and knowledge in order to counteract the rise of PRR parties in different countries.

In Denmark, there is neither a strategy to counteract workers' and trade union members' support for the main PRR party (DF) nor specific actions. As previously noted, FH trade union calls for political neutrality. As a result, trade union campaigns and actions are never targeted at political parties. Instead, they aim to rally union members on special topics—pension age for instance—through go-home meetings at the local union, statements on website homepages and adverts in the public room and on social media.

*We do not engage in a fixed strategy of constantly attacking political movements or parties. We react when we think that our institution is under threat from movements or parties or ad hoc situations where the legitimacy of the trade union movement is challenged. Regarding DF, we do not have a fixed strategy and they are not expressing direct hostility towards the trade union movement.* (DK TU1)

One of the main reasons behind not having developed a specific strategy to counteract workers' and trade union members' support of the radical is therefore that DF does not appear as a direct

threat to the trade union movement. DF is primarily seen by the trade union as a right populist party with a strong nationalistic discourse and a relatively centrist welfare agenda, which supports the Danish industrial relations model. Besides, trade unions in Denmark stress their political neutrality and, as a result, do not establish alliances or explicitly criticise political parties. As opposed to Germany, the fact that many workers and trade union members vote for DF is not a trade union concern.

In Spain, trade unions have only developed awareness-raising initiatives at a political level. The trade union CCOO issued a statement that alerts trade union members of the risks that the rise of PPR parties such as VOX represent towards democracy and the world of work. The statement was drafted by the Confederal Council. According to the representative interviewed, CCOO has not demanded that its members vote for any particular political party since it declared itself as politically autonomous regarding any party in the 1980s. Since then, the trade union has only encouraged trade union members to vote with a view to fostering democracy. However, recent electoral outcomes that VOX achieved in the Andalusian elections led the union to change this approach, explicitly demanding that its members refrain from voting for VOX.

In addition, both UGT and CCOO organised joint acts during the 2019 parliamentary election campaign with some significant intellectuals (writers, etc.) in Andalusia and Madrid. These acts were used to encourage political parties to discuss their social agendas, as well as being used to inform citizens of the threat represented by PPR, as it may trigger a regression in terms of civil, social and labour rights. In addition, UGT and CCOO presented a joint document on 2 April for the 2019 parliamentary elections with '10 trade union proposals for a social switch'.<sup>11</sup> These proposals stressed the topics that trade unions felt political parties should focus on during the electoral campaign. The proposal did not mention VOX, but it did include topics such as gender equality and anti-discrimination policies that are at odds with its ideology and discourse and that they have highly politicised. It also contained socioeconomic topics on which VOX leaders' discourses do not tend to focus. With this, trade unions expected to contribute to illuminating the VOX neoliberal agenda. As explained by the UGT representative interviewed, '*VOX is waiting for us (the trade unions) to criticise them. Then VOX leaders will say that in this country trade unions have been given too much power to interfere in political life. Accordingly, the best way to*

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<sup>11</sup> [http://www.ugt.es/sites/default/files/2019-04-02-folleto\\_10\\_propuestas304312.pdf](http://www.ugt.es/sites/default/files/2019-04-02-folleto_10_propuestas304312.pdf)



*Trade Union Strategies in the EU to address trade union members' and workers' growing propensity to vote for right wing populists and nationalists*

*deal with them is by not talking about them and causing them to make their ideology explicit by debating the 10 topics we propose with other political parties' (ES TU2).*

On the other hand, it is worth mentioning some indirect trade union actions that could be useful in preventing xenophobic or nativist attitudes. In this sense, attention should be drawn to long-term trade union actions in defence of migrant workers. Trade unions have become involved in a variety of national and local tripartite bodies comprising unions, employers and immigrant organisations. They favoured discussions with the government on several issues such as immigration flows, social policy, etc. Discussions with the government have resulted in different agreements on immigration. Trade unions have also developed a network of information offices and centres in most Spanish cities that provide migrants with information services related to employment, citizenship, social rights and housing. Both the UGT and CCOO trade unions have aimed to improve and extend migrants' social and labour rights through a state-related approach (Conolly et al., 2014). The UGT representative interviewed also stressed that in recent years, trade unions have aimed to stimulate diversity within the union by increasing the participation and representation of workers with foreign backgrounds. On the contrary, anti-racist initiatives at work and in society, which—as the German case shows—can be important for counteracting workers' xenophobic attitudes, have not been a priority within the trade union approach towards immigration (Conolly et al., 2014).

In Hungary, there are no direct strategies or actions carried out by trade unions to counteract trade union members' support in particular or workers' support in general of radical right parties. According to HU1, *'MASZSZ does not have anything directly on its agenda to combat trade union members' or workers' support of the right-wing, or any strategy to involve Fidesz and/or Jobbik voters'* (HU1). According to the SZEFE representative, *'combating trade union members' or workers' support of the radical right is not directly and concretely on the SZEFE agenda'* (HU2).

Neither are there any particular or major actions by trade unions to combat xenophobia, although Hungarian trade unions (confederations) have taken part in European projects, addressing the topic of migrant workers as contributors or partners; and in training initiatives organised by the European Trade Union Confederation and the European Trade Union Institute.

However, there are some indirect strategies included in trade union programmes that can be quoted. For example, SZEFE values include Europeism and support of the disadvantaged strata, which are left-wing values. However, it does not mean that SZEFE is openly acting against right-wing parties (being in power or opposition).

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*According to members of the executive body—where there are sometimes debates on the radical right—the best trade union strategy to fight workers' growing propensity for the radical right is to serve trade union members' interests well and with success. It is the best brake. (HU2)*

It is also worth considering trade union actions carried out to decry against the last amendment of the Labour Code on overtime (also called the 'Slave Act'), which had a major impact on the trade union movement. On 19 December 2018, a committee was established with the participation of 15 trade unions and four confederations (MASZSZ, SZEF, ÉSZT and LIGA joined later as well). The goal of the committee was to prepare a nationwide demonstration and strike against the new overtime regulation, which had already entered into force on 1 January 2019.

The committee for preparing for the demonstration and strike established in December 2018 demands a comprehensive review of the Labour Code and in particular:

- regulation of working hours and the working time frame
- modification of the Strike Act
- proper social dialogue with the right to reach appropriate agreements
- decent wages for decent work
- restoration of favourable taxation on fringe benefits
- solving the poor wage situation of public employees and establishing a minimum wage for graduate employees
- a more flexible pension system with a particular view to early retirements due to reduced working capacity

As the government did not respond, the preparatory committee called for nationwide demonstrations on 19 January 2019. As a result, workers demonstrated in 60 Hungarian cities and in several foreign cities too.

#### **4. Conclusions**

The report has focused on Germany, Denmark, Spain and Hungary. In these four countries, there is currently at least one political party in the national parliament which can be included within the PRR party family. The report has showed that AfD in Germany, DF in Denmark, VOX in Spain and Fidesz and Jobbik in Hungary adhere to some extent to the core ideological features which, following Mudde (2007), define the PRR party family, namely nativism or strong conservative nationalism, populism and authoritarianisms. However, those ideological features take different forms depending on national contexts. For instance, conservative nationalism lead all the PRR parties analysed to target campaigns and propaganda against Muslims but, in the case of Spain, VOX nativism is particularly expressed through a radical discourse and programme against peripheral nationalist parties which are supposed to threat the Spanish single national identity. In Hungary, Fidesz xenophobic discourse has been focused on ethnic minorities such as Roma population. In Denmark, DF has focused most of its xenophobic campaigns on Muslims but it also claimed against 2007 EU enlargement and free workers movement fostering migration from European Eastern countries. In Germany, AfD has specifically focused on illegal immigrants and asylum seekers. In connexion with nativism discourse specificities, different authoritarian proposals are also identified: to illegalise pro-independence peripheral nationalist parties in Spain; hardest repression towards homeless people and Roma population in Hungary in the framework of and illiberal war on poverty; or call for a ban of burkas in Denmark. The same applies to some extent to the perception of Europe. In the four countries, PRR parties formulate critics to the European Union but its vehemence and degree of Euroscepticism varies. Comparatively, VOX in Spain appears to be the less Eurosceptic PRR party. Also, populism and disaffection with the 'establishment' takes different national forms which, in the case of Fidesz in Hungary, is conditioned for the fact of being in government and not in opposition, as it applies to the remaining PRR parties studied. Moreover, only in the case of AfD populism has been expressed through demands for direct democracy.

The study has found a greater degree of variation on the socio-economic dimensions among the main parties that are classified within the PRR party family in Germany, Denmark, Spain and Hungary. AfD and VOX embrace a neoliberal agenda which postulates lowering taxes, reduce public spending or privatise some social policy fields (such as pension in Spain). In terms of industrial relations however, VOX programme may entail a more radical approach compared to AfD, as it has proposed to eliminate all public funding (subventions, etc.) addressed to trade unions, employer organisations and any social partners' foundation, while employee sections

linked to AfD has mainly formulated rhetorical and populism critics to “trade unions’ elites”. On the contrary, DF and to some extent Jobbik have a relatively centrist position. It is worth noting that DF also supports Danish industrial relations model. As far as Fidesz is concerned, it is the PRR party analysed which has the most detailed programme in this field, for being in the government. Fidesz main reforms implemented in recent years have combined attempts to transform welfare state into a ‘workfare state’ with radical reforms aiming to extend flexibility in the labour market and weakening industrial democracy (social dialogue, collective bargaining, etc.).

Among the four countries analysed, Hungary is the country where PRR parties have had greatest electoral support followed by Denmark. In Germany and Spain, PPR parties have only recently achieved parliamentary representation. Fidesz has dominated Hungarian politics on the national and local level since 2010 while Jobbik become the second largest political force in 2018. In Denmark, DF has progressively growth since the end of the 1990s until becoming the second largest political force in the last Parliamentary elections held in 2015. However, in 2019 DF electoral support substantially declined. In Germany and Spain, PRR parties have currently a similar weight in the national parliaments. AfD and VOX achieved parliamentary representation for the first time in 2017 and 2019, respectively. AfD obtained 12,6% and VOX 11% of total votes.

The revision of quantitative studies analysing voters for PRR show that AfD, DF and Fidesz are attracting a high proportion of voters from working class (blue collar, semi-skilled workers) and lowest income strata. Research and trade union sources also confirm that AfD and DF are getting considerable support by unionised workers. It appears therefore that unionization does not longer prevent voting for radical right in Denmark and Germany. In Spain, research on VOX voters is scarce. Recent studies based on regional elections portray a different voter profile compared to AfD, DF and Fidesz, who predominantly come from medium and high-income households (CIS, 2018).

Different demand and supply side factors have been considered with a view to explain the evolution of PRR parties in the four countries studied. Comparatively, Spain appears as the country where there was the most significant demand for PRR parties. In this country, economic deterioration had the greatest negative impact on unemployment and inequality. Moreover, the economic crisis has increased to a greatest extent than in the remaining countries studied distrust in political institutions and European Union. With regard to immigration, data show that there is not a straightforward relationship between the quantitate relevance of migration and its saliency

as a political problem bearing in mind that Hungary, where immigrants only represent around 5% of total population in 2018, around 63% of individuals consider that immigration is more than a problem (Special Eurobarometer 469). However, it is also worth considering the potential impact of the refugee crisis, particularly in Germany and Hungary, that received a substantial number of asylum applicants from 2014 to 2018.

As far as supply side factors are concerned, in Germany, some authors point to a change in the structure of cleavages through which identity politics got a higher weight in relation to the classic socioeconomic left–right cleavage. This would have been determined by the weight that the topic of migration got during the critical phase of the migrant crisis, in parallel to the emergency of the radical right-wing social movement Pegida (Hafeneger et al 2018). In this context, the AfD would have been successful in politicising the migration problem. In Denmark, DF growth and attractiveness among workers could be explained by DF ideology combining law and order and sharp immigration curbs with a centrist redistributive policy (income distribution policy) which rhetorically oppose neoliberalism. In Spain, scientific literature had been oriented to explain absence of PRR parties represented in the parliament (Alonso and Rovira, 2014; González-Enríquez, 2017). Literature had identified several supply-side factors related to cleavage structure, the electoral system and the political contest and party competition. These factors will have to be revisited in the light of recent electoral outcomes of VOX. In this case, may observer stress the relevance of the centre-periphery division and the failure of mainstream political parties to address this problem, as one of the main factors which can explain VOX evolution is the way they have politicised the Catalan-Spanish conflict. In Hungary, literature has stressed the role played by external supply-side factors related to the political party system and the high degree of fragmentation of the political opposition, as well as internal supply factors linked to successful party nationalist ideology.

Trade unions discourses and views in relation to PRR parties differ in the countries studied. Germany is the country where trade union discourse on PRR parties and the right extremist movement is more elaborated as a result of several studies on the topic commissioned by DGB. Due to this, evidence-based discussions about the populism radical right-wing movement (causes, workers' support, etc.) are on the table. It is also the country where trade unions have expressed greater concern about the rise of right-wing extremist and PRR parties. In Denmark, main trade union confederation does not have an explicit critical discourse on PRR party DF. Trade union FH oppose DF policies and proposals in some fields (particularly migration) but, at the same time, is opened to cooperate with it in relation to other topics such as pensions as a result of DF centrist welfare agenda. Overall, it appears that DF is not perceived as a direct threat to the trade unions

in Denmark. This is mainly explained because DF does not question the representativeness of the social partners and the so-called Danish Model. DF (in principal) supports the guidelines of the Danish Model as long as the social partners stick to negotiating wage and working conditions. In relation to the topic of migration, FH and DF have different views. However, FH does not explicitly criticise or combat the DF discourse and proposals due to its appeal to political neutrality. In Spain trade unions have a very critical discourse about VOX. VOX discourse and political programme is at odds with trade union discourse in all the policy fields (gender, welfare agenda, migration, political model of governance, etc.). However, at an organisational level, there is still no formal discourse. As opposed to Germany, trade unions have not commissioned or implemented studies on the topic. This is mainly explained because in Spain the populist radical right is a very recent phenomenon and some trade unions (mainly UGT) are still sceptical about its potential growth. In Hungary, trade unions approached in the study (MASZSZ and SZEF) have only an elaborated critical discourse on Fidesz socio-economic policies. Trade unions mainly criticise labour code reforms enacted by Fidesz extending flexibility and restricting workers' rights. However, a less clear trade union position is found with regard to other key political areas and topic such as migration or xenophobic discourses.

Germany is also the country where the trade union movement has developed the most comprehensive set of actions to counteract the rise of PRR parties. In this country, debates are also on the table about the most appropriate strategy to counteract growing propensity of trade union members and workers to vote for AfD. In recent years, it has been widely discussed the so-called "defining limits (Klare Kante) and open door" strategy, which has been defended by H. J. Urban (2018), vice-president of the IG-Metal. Also, trade unions leaders have stressed the need to develop more radical actions aiming to combat inequalities and improve working conditions. Overall, German trade unions have developed at both cross-sectoral and sectoral level actions aiming to increase knowledge on the radical and extreme right; awareness-raising and educational actions to counteract the rise of AfD; "incompatibility measures" aiming to prevent membership of workers supporting far-right and PRR political parties; and actions at company level which, among other goals, have aimed to counteract recent extreme and radical right-wing movements attempts to organise and present their own candidates for work council elections in some establishments.

In the remaining countries, only indirect measures have been developed at most. In Denmark, there is neither a strategy to counteract workers and trade unions' members support for main PRR party (DF) nor specific actions. Danish trade unions disagree with DF migration policies and have recently had great political influence in developing integrative policies for refugees. Nevertheless,

compared to German trade unions, Danish trade unions are less active against discrimination policies or in developing actions counteracting extremism or radical right-wing attitudes at company levels. In Spain, trade unions have only developed awareness-rising initiatives at political level. It is also worth noting that Spanish trade unions have developed long-term trade unions actions in defence of migrant workers. However, they have been mostly focused at state level. On the contrary, anti-racist initiatives at work and in society, which, as the German case shows, can be important to counteract workers xenophobic attitudes, have not been priority within trade union approach towards immigration (Conolly et al., 2014). In Hungary, there are not direct strategies or actions carried out by trade unions to counteract workers support for PRR parties. Main trade unions actions against Fidesz government were focused on the socio-economic field. In this sense, attention should be drawn to the trade union committee established on December of 2018, with the participation of 15 trade unions and four confederations (MASZSZ, SZEF, ÉSZT and lately LIGA joined too). The goal of the committee was to prepare a national wide demonstration and strike against so-called “slave labour law”.

In a nutshell, report findings show that trade unions' views and actions to counteract the rise of PRR parties differ among the four countries studied. Existing relationships between PRR parties and trade unions appear to be conditioned, first, by the different forms these parties take depending on national contexts. In this sense, attention has to be drawn to the different PRR parties' socio-economic agendas and views about national industrial relations models. Besides, trade unions logics of action shaped by institutional contexts and ideologies seem also to partly determine trade unions' perceptions and actions towards PRR parties. With this regard, it is worth noting that although most of the trade unions are currently self-assessed as party-politically neutral, certain trade unionism varieties have more ambiguous positions. This appears to be the case of countries where industrial relations are highly politicised and the state tends to enact by law the norms of employment, working conditions and collective bargaining, as it applies to Spain and Hungary. In Spain, trade unions are particularly concerned with VOX proposals to limit the role of trade unions within the democratic system while in Hungary, trade unions have defended workers' interests by opposing recent amendments in the labour code enacted by Fidesz. In addition, Spanish trade unions are concerned with VOX's regressive policy agenda in some fields such as gender equality or migration in which they have influenced policy making through discussions with different governments and social pacts. In Germany, trade unions' formal political neutrality is not reflected at the regional level, where a number of regional union officials have publicly supported left-wing political parties such as die Linke. Moreover, formal political neutrality has not refrained DGB and its sectoral federations in adopting actions to counteract the

rise of AfD, denouncing both its neoliberal and nativist agenda. In contrast, Danish trade unions have a more pronounced neutral position and are open to negotiate policy consensus with different political parties, including PRR parties, in a policy context where the main Danish PRR party (DF) has a centrist position on the socio-economic dimension and accepts the Danish self-regulated industrial relations model. Finally, the historical political context has to be also taken into consideration, particularly in the German case, where trade unions started to promote internal debates and actions in the 90s as a response to violent acts perpetrated by right wing extremists. Currently, German trade unions are highly committed to combatting radical right and extremist attitudes amongst workers and trade union members even in a period marked by the decline of trade union membership.



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## **Annex 1. Trade unions approached in the study**

### Germany

Ver.di (DE TU 1)

National Training Institute of the Trade Union Confederation (DGB-Bildungswerk) (DE TU2)

### Denmark

Confederation of Danish Trade Unions (FH): DK TU1

### Spain

Trade Union Confederation of Workers' Commission (CCOO): ES TU1

General Workers Trade Union (UGT): ES TU2

### Hungary

The Confederation of Hungarian Trade Unions (MASZSZ): HU TU1

The Forum for the Cooperation of Trade Unions (SZEF): HU TU2



***European Economic and Social Committee***

Rue Belliard/Belliardstraat 99  
1040 Bruxelles/Brussel  
BELGIQUE/BELGIË

Published by: "Visits and Publications" Unit  
EESC-2019-71-EN  
[www.eesc.europa.eu](http://www.eesc.europa.eu)



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*Print*  
QE-03-19-589-EN-C  
ISBN 978-92-830-3407-0  
doi:10.2864/978952

*Online*  
QE-03-19-589-EN-N  
ISBN 978-92-830-3402-5  
doi:10.2864/413128

EN