

GENERAL SECTION

**BENEFICIARIES OF THE SECOND ORDER ELECTION
MODEL: RADICAL RIGHT PARTIES IN THE EUROPEAN
PARLIAMENT**

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Abstract

After the latest European electoral cycle, right wing parties on the far side of the political spectrum along with right-wing euro-sceptics and conservative anti-federalists won 112 seats. The presence of the radical right in the European Parliament (EP), has often been attributed to the second order election model theorised by Reif and Schmitt (1980). In European elections, turnout is traditionally lower compared to “first” order national elections, parties in government tend to lose vote-shares while smaller parties benefit from the European system of proportional representation. This article analyses the relationship between radical parties and the EP by examining the French and Danish results in the 2014 elections. Though both constitute the third political force in their countries at that time, *Front National* and *Dansk Folkeparti*’s electoral support is representative of a second order election. The former party benefited from a classic sanction vote while the second one owes its breakthrough to a particular Danish voting behaviour, somewhat singular in the European Union. The article offers an in-depth overview of the literature on both the radical right, the Second Order Election model as well as radical right parties’ dynamic at the European Parliament level.

Keywords

Dansk Folkeparti; European Parliament Elections; Front National; Radical Right Parties; Second Order Model

1. INTRODUCTION

When the economy becomes a point of contention for the electorate, voters have been noted to sanction and reward parties on an asymmetric basis. In other words, the parties in government will be held responsible for economic hardships but will not necessarily be acknowledged in times of prosperity either (see Stevenson 2002, 45-47). In the case of the European Union (EU), the effects of the debt, banking and currency issues are compounded by the political crisis at the core of the European project in as far as voters are concerned (see Habermas 2012), especially those from the EU15 countries. In this context, the EU electorate is divided between the promises of economic advantages and development (more so in Central and Eastern Europe) and the threats to the 'welfare status quo' in Western Europe, posed by factors generally centred on immigration.

Consequently, marginal internal political forces – be they proponents of Euroscepticism or hardcore nationalists – will ramp up the rhetoric of the 'house divided against itself' in order to further their political agenda and win over the dissatisfied and disenfranchised electorate. In turn, this poses the following questions: Are radical right parties registering higher electoral percentages during periods of economic turmoil shaped by welfare cuts and growing financial unrest?; Are there enough arguments supporting the claim that there is an ascending radical right pan-European trend in the EU?; How much are these parties influencing the decision-making process in the EU? The study looks at the voting behaviour in the European Parliament (EP) elections from a second order voting perspective in order to assess the relationship between "fringe parties", electorates, economic climate and the EU, based on the results of the eighth EU parliamentary election. It further examines the 2014 European election – with a focus on the French and Danish cases – through the lenses of the Second Order Election (SOE) model, in order to better understand the mechanisms which have permitted small, radical parties (divided between the extreme right, the right-wing Euro-sceptics as well as the conservative anti-federalists), to win seats in the EP.

2. THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

Since 1979, the European Parliament (EP) has been elected by universal suffrage. From 1979 to 1994, the turnout for the European Parliament

elections registers at over 50%: in 1979 – 61.99% (EU9: Germany, France, Italy, the Netherlands, Belgium, Luxembourg, the UK, Denmark and Ireland); in 1984 – 58.98% (EU10: EU9 + Greece in 1981); in 1989 – 58.41% (EU12: EU10 + Spain and Portugal in 1986); in 1994 – 56.67% (EU12). Afterwards, from 1999 to 2014, the turnout averages below 50%: in 1999 – 49.51% (EU15: EU12 + Austria, Finland and Sweden in 1995); in 2004 – 45.47% (EU25: EU15 + the Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland, Slovakia, Slovenia, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Cyprus and Malta in 2004); in 2009 – 43% (EU27: EU25 + Bulgaria and Romania in 2007); while in 2014 – 42.54% (EU28: EU27 + Croatia in 2013) (EU Parliament 2014a)¹. The turnout has declined from one election to the next even though potential voters from new Member States (MS) were added in seven out of eight electoral cycles. Hix and Hagemann (2009, 28) attribute the low turnouts to a weak “electoral connection” between Members of the EP, the politics of the EU and the national electorates.

Is there any merit to the argument that in times of economic hardship² – such as the Eurozone crisis – dissatisfied electorates vote for populist, nationalist and/or Eurosceptic radical right parties? Moroska cites Lawrence Goodwyn who defines a “populist moment” as “situations (changes, crises, conflicts) in society which favour [...] the emergence or electoral rise of the right-wing populist parties” (Moroska 2009, 302). Could they in turn form pan-European coalitions? Nikolaj Nielsen reports in the EUobserver that after the 2014 EP election, the Italian anti-immigration party, *Lega Nord* intended to abandon Europe of Freedom and Democracy (EFD) – the right wing Eurosceptic group, which also comprised of the British Ukip and the Danish People’s Party – in order to join Marine Le Pen’s *Front National*, in its attempt to establish a new political group more aligned with their parties’ agendas (Nielsen 2014).

Leading researcher on populism and political extremism, Cas Mudde contends that at the aggregate trans-national level, this “motley crew” of right wing parties are the embodiment of the “house divided that cannot stand” in the EU. Despite being a staple in the fight against “European integration and solidarity (notably against the bailouts)”, radical right parties gained support

¹ See also Turnout at the European elections (1979-2009):

<http://www.europarl.europa.eu/aboutparliament/en/000cdcd9d4/Turnout-%281979-2009%29.html> (Accessed 10 September 2015).

² See: Von Mering, S. and T. Wyman McCarty (eds.). 2013. *Right-Wing Radicalism Today. Perspectives from Europe and the US*. New York: Routledge.

in “only nine of the twenty-eight EU Member States” (Mudde 2014a, 100). At the 2014 elections, these parties won 86 seats in the EP (11.45%). The UK Independence Party (Ukip) secured 27.55% of the votes while *Front National* fared similarly, totalling a quarter of the votes in France. Other radical parties from the Czech Republic, Germany, Poland and Sweden, registered electoral breakthroughs as well (European Movement International 2014). This being said, Mudde argues that while in recent years some radical parties have gained a more notable position in the mainstream, most Member States had electorally failing far right parties before and during the economic crisis (Mudde 2014a, 101).

The European elections have been already theorised as Second Order Elections (SOE); compared to first-order elections, SOE are characterised by: “a) lower turnout; b) brighter prospects for small and new parties; c) national government parties’ losses” (Hajner 2001, i). In addition, the electorate tends to vote based on the previous first order (national) stated options, instead of the opting for the potentially more second order (European) inclined parties (Hobolt and Wittrock 2011, 30).

The analysis of the 2014 French and Danish elections indicates that the voting pattern is consistent with the SOE model. As Hix and Marsh’s have noted, only the first EP election could be regarded as less of a second order election, especially in regards to government performance. Afterwards, “the anti-government effect in European Parliament elections increased significantly between 1979 and 1994, fell slightly in 1999, [...] [and] re-emerged clearly again in 2004, 2009 [and 2014]” (Hix and Marsh 2011, 6). Rohrschneider and Clark’s study supports this claim, adding that the framework for the current second order model is “based on several assumptions about individual-level motivations [...] summarised by a *transfer hypothesis*: individuals presumably apply their evaluations of national-level phenomena to the EU-level when voting in EU elections” (Rohrschneider and Clark 2009, 645).

The nature of the election can influence both the turnout as well as the party preference. Giebler theorises that the relevance of the election influences the case-by-case turnout, especially in the case of a traditional rational choice framework. Despite the fact that party and media resources invested in second order elections, are rather scarce, a substantial number of citizens still votes in these elections (Giebler 2014, 116). This can be attributed to the fact that being unable to maximise their personal utility in the EP elections, voters split their tickets (see Burden and Helmke 2009, 2). This voting behaviour is supported

by the fact that “second-order voters tend to vote ‘differently’ in comparison to more important elections” (Giebler 2014, 116). Without disregarding the multitude of motives attributed to a complex political behaviour such as the voting one, in the case of EP elections, low turnout and other anomalous voting behaviours can be explained by the fact that “the process is not rewarding enough for voters” while “the perceived benefits of voting are often outweighed by the costs”; the voters do not feel represented by the political parties in the EU and the parties fail time and time again to connect the interests of their electorates with the EU mechanisms (Grand and Tiemann 2012), as shown by the constant dips in turnout across eight electoral cycles.

Even though the EP elections are a reflection of the European citizenship across 28 Member States, 35 years later, Flickinger and Studlar remarked that the “mass level EU polity” has remained underdeveloped when compared to the national ones (Flickinger and Studlar 2007, 384). Moreover, the relation between “the Europeanization of the EP elections [...] [and the voters’] «anti-Europeanization»” (Manow 2005, 21), constitutes another second-order factor in assessing the results of SOE elections. Watts has noted that the voters’ position on European issues has almost no direct relation with how they vote in EP elections (Watts 2008, 130), especially since in the voters’ mistaken assessment, second order elections do not significantly contribute towards the establishment of a European executive (Almeida 2012, 141).

3. RADICAL RIGHT AND VOTING BEHAVIOUR IN SECOND ORDER ELECTIONS

In his study “The Far Right and the European Elections”, Mudde (2014, 98-99) identifies twelve radical right parties with parliamentary representation in “national legislatures of EU Member States (MS)”: *Freiheitliche Partei Österreichs* (FPÖ - Freedom Party of Austria), *Vlaams Belang* (VB - Flemish Interest, Belgium), *Ataka* (Bulgaria), *Hrvatska stranka prava* (HSP - Croatian Party of Rights, Croatia), *Dansk Folkeparti* (DF - Danish People’s Party, Denmark), *Front National* (FN - National Front, France), *Golden Dawn* (CA - Greece), *Jobbik* (Movement for a Better Hungary - Hungary), *Lega Nord* (LN - Northern League, Italy), *National Alliance* (NA - Latvia), *Partij voor de*

Vrijheid (PVV – Party for Freedom, Netherlands), and *Sverigedemokraterna* (SD – Sweden Democrats, Sweden)¹. In the European elections from 22nd-25th May 2014, these parties won 47 seats. *Front National* gained 23 mandates while Ukip (with 24 seats) became the largest party from UK in the EP.

The majority of them are non-aligned: FPÖ (4 seats), VB (1 seat), FN (23 seats), Golden Dawn (3 seats), Jobbik (3 seats), LN (5 seats), PVV (4 seats). Ukip (24 seats) and SD (2 seats) are members of Europe of Freedom and Direct Democracy (EFDD), a right wing populist group while DF (4 seats) and Finns Party (2 seats) are part of the European Conservatives and Reformers (ECR), another right-wing group though not as hard Eurosceptic as EFDD. ECR won 6.1% of the votes and 45 seats while EFDD “won 5.1% of the votes and 38 seats” (Deloy 2014, 2). Initially, *Front National’s* and Party for Freedom’s leaders, Marine Le Pen and Geert Wilders did not meet the requirements needed to form a new group (at least 25 MEPs from at least seven countries). With only Austria’s Freedom Party, Italy’s *Lega Nord* and Netherland’s Flemish Interest, Le Pen’s initiative initially did not meet the minimum number of Member States required to form a new political group in the EP (Willsher and Traynor 2014).

One year later, in June 2015, after a British MEP defected from Ukip’s group, Marine Le Pen succeeded in launching Europe of Nations and Freedom (ENF) which boasts 39 members from: Austria (4 MEPs – Freedom Party of Austria), Belgium (1 MEP - Flemish Interest), France (21 MEPs – National Front), Italy (5 MEPs – Northern League), Netherlands (4 MEPs – Party for Freedom), Poland (2 MEPs – Congress of the New Right), Romania (1 MEP – United Romania Party, initially a member of the Conservative Party), United Kingdom (1 MEP – Independent, elected as Ukip) (De La Baume and Vinocour 2015).

Europe of Freedom and Direct Democracy (EFDD) values “the cooperation among sovereign European States and rejects the bureaucratisation of Europe and the creation of a single centralised European

¹ Highest results in national parliaments: Austria – 26.9% in 1999, with 20.5% in 2013 (FPÖ); Hungary – 20.3% in 2014 (Jobbik); Latvia – 16.6% in 2014 (NA); Netherlands – 15.5% in 2010 with 10.1% in 2012 (PVV); France – 14.9% in 1997 with 13.6% in 2012 (FN); Denmark – 13.8% in 2007 with 12.3 in 2011 (DF); Sweden – 12.9% in 2014 (SD); Belgium – 12% in 2007 with 3.67% in 2014 (VB); Italy – 10.8% in 1996 with 4.1% in 2013 (LN); Bulgaria – 9.36% in 2009 with 4.52% in 2014 (NSA); Croatia – 7.06% in 1992 with 3% in 2011 in coalition with Croatian Guard (HSP); Greece – 6.97% in May 2012 (CA) (Mudde 2014a: 99, adjusted for the 2014 national parliamentary elections).

superstate" (Farage 2014). It also promotes the right of European states "to protect their borders and strengthen their own historical, traditional, religious and cultural values" (Faure 2014, 9). Europe of Nations and Freedom (ENF) takes these notions further and doubles down on them. On the Mediterranean refugee crisis, Le Pen stated how she "wanted to stop foreigners from entering France" and that members of the group "are all opposed to mass migration" (Levy-Abegnoli 2015). Meanwhile, Geert Wilders, leader of Dutch Freedom Party and co-leader of the ENF, vowed that "together will fight mass immigration and the islamisation of our continent. We want to once again be masters of our laws, of our money, of our own country and this is what we are fighting for" (Levy-Abegnoli 2015).

Radical right parties are defined as "a collection of nationalist, authoritarian, xenophobic, and extremist parties that [share] the common characteristic of populist ultranationalism" (Minkenberg and Perrineau 2007, 30). Contrasting results lead to contrasting explanations. For example, Kessler and Freeman highlight the fact that the radical right benefits from "low electoral thresholds and high unemployment", while "unemployment is inconsequential. [L]imited welfare state coverage, proportional representation, and insecurity are more indicative factors of an increase of the radical right's share of the vote" (Kessler and Freeman 2005, 262). Compared to other parties, they tend to represent their voters better on issues such as immigration and EU integration (Walczak and Van der Brug 2013, 15) and advocate for "restrictions on immigration and on the ethnic, cultural, and religious diversification of Western European societies" (Ivarsflaten and Gudbrandsen 2012, 1). In the EU, radical right parties a direct, institutional access to policy making. Instead they compensate this insufficiency, on the rhetorical front, by appealing to latent, rising xenophobia in large swathes of the electorate, outside their regular voting pool. Currently, with the European Union in the middle of the Syrian refugee crisis – rather easily foreseeable where not for deficient policies – the ultra-nationalist radical right parties are capitalising on the impeding flux of refugees and are doubling down on the hate, anti-Muslim, anti-immigration rhetoric, couched in economic, employment and welfare state pragmatism. As far as the European Parliament is concerned, with the establishment of the ENF group, the radical right MEPs use the institution as a drive for electoral campaign. With an estimated budget of € 17.5 million over the next four years, the ENF members also gain access to a larger administrative support as well as more time to address and influence the plenary debates. In spite of these, at least for the current legislature, ENF's influence on the EP remains low.

Charles de Marcilly, head of the Brussels office of the Robert Schuman Foundation, notes that either in the case of proposing new legislation or introducing table amendments, ENF lacks the support of other groups (Stafford 2015). The problem – as with the refugee / immigration crisis – is that in the current atmosphere, the radical right trend, if left unmitigated, has the potential to become a more complicated crisis for the European Union, in the absence of a counterbalancing narrative / policies, aimed at moderating the anti-European / anti-establishment / nativist / segregationist message of the radical right.

As indicated by factors such as “social position, personality traits and value orientation” (Arzheimer 2012, 38), the radical right electorate – though not homogeneous – is often represented by “young men, the self-employed, and working-class voters” (Givens 2005, 46). Usually part of lower-middle classes and of the “petite bourgeoisie” (“self-employed professionals, own-account technicians and small merchants” - Norris 2005, 147)) and more recently, from well-educated segments of the middle class (as seen in Austria and Denmark), these voters remark themselves by their openly expressed authoritarian tendencies. Such behaviours are further explained: “the very nature of jobs in certain segments of the private sector predisposes their occupants towards mixture of market-liberal and authoritarian ideas”, such as those embraced by French *Front National* or the Austrian Freedom Party (Arzheimer 2012, 3). According to Flecker *et al.* in the study “Potentials of Political Subjectivity and the Various Approaches to the Extreme Right: Findings in the Qualitative Research”, radical right voters show high levels of frustration stemming from failed expectations about social status, work, employment, or standard of living. In addition, economic precarity, devalued occupations and overall political powerlessness add to these voters’ generalised anxiety, uncertainty and wariness about mainstream politics. The notion of a trans-European unified radical right trend is debatable because electoral success, voting behaviour and public opinion fluctuate from one country to another and while there are prominent cases from Ukip to Front National, Danish People’s Party or Golden Dawn, the notion of a transnational movement has so far been limited to a discursive reality. Instead, the more likely scenario is that where centre-right parties are contaminated by the radical right issues, would have higher chances of being elected and hence potentially negotiating *quid pro quos* with radical right parties, like in the case of Denmark (prior to the 2015 election). This being said, the risk of cross-contamination at the level of the European institutions – in our cases, the

European Parliament - remains low. The European institutions should address the causes that led these parties to gain traction in the national mainstream and to reassess the medium-to-long term effects of prolonged austerity. The importance of this cannot be underestimated in a context where presently, MS are asked to take Syrian refugees, the Common European Asylum System has collapsed and there are heightened tensions related to terrorist attacks (such as the November 2015 Paris ones), on which radical right parties thrive on.

Compared to previous years, many Europeans consider that the EP “does not take into consideration their concerns’ while trust in EU institutions has decreased. At the EU28 level, 52% (+12% compared to the 2009 elections) declared they did not trust the institutions of the EU. Of these, 43% voted in the 2014 EP elections while 58% abstained. On the other hand, of the 43% (-7% from 2009) who declared that they trust the EU institutions, 55% voted while 35% abstained. Moreover, 54% (+13% from 2009) declared that the EP does not take into consideration the concerns of European citizens. Out of 54%, 47% voted in the 2014 election, while 59% abstained” (Directorate-General for Communication 2014a, 5, 55). This attitudinal change is not limited just to the EU. In fact, it is part of a global trend characterised by an increased loss of trust in institutions and organisations at various levels of representation. The perceived prolonged failure of national and European institutions to manage the economic crisis (responsible for high levels of unemployment as well as work-related and social insecurity), have – according to a European Social Survey – greatly undermined the trust of European citizens in these institutions (Roos and Oikonomakis 2014, 124). Outside of the crisis, Schweiger argues that the European institutions’ problem solving capacities can only go so far in meeting the expectations of European citizens. In other words, the EU failed in assuring the citizens that critical events are better managed at the European level than the national ones. Moreover, the European system of multi-level governance lacks transparency and is therefore regarded as distant and unaccountable to the citizens without prior knowledge on the European Union (Schweiger 2014, 63-64).

However, this has not influenced the overall performance of the radical right parties¹ in the EU (Backes and Moreau 2012, 421). Generally, their

¹ See Ivaldi, G. 2012. “The Populist Radical Right in European Elections 1979-2009’. In Backes U. and P. Moreau (eds.), *The Extreme Right in Europe. Current Trends and Perspectives*. Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht GmbH & Co. KG, pp. 15-34.

electoral success is attributed to a precarious socio-economic context, characterised by high rates of unemployment and austerity measures. Since popular support is highly uneven in the EU, the economic crisis represents an insufficient, albeit necessary condition in some cases, for the long-term success of the radical right (Ansell and Art 2010: 3). In these circumstances, “political disaffection and partisan dealignment [...] prove significant but relatively weak predictors of electoral support for the radical right” (Norris 2005, 25). Allen puts forth the idea that the crisis and subsequent recession allowed these parties attract a different electorate, more economically vulnerable and sceptical of the mainstream parties (Allen 2014, 2-3). This is relevant in the case of first order elections where elected parties could potentially implement their proposed reforms and are sanctioned if they fail but it does not entirely stand the test of a SOE since the MPEs are hardly ever sanctioned or constrained by the electorates. Hence the EP is seen as a “forum for [radical right-wing parties’] views outside the national-level scrutiny that generally accompanies them” (Williams 2006, 73). The fluctuations in the configuration of the EP have yet to be a source of disturbance to the EU process. While the radical right has been steadily increasing the numbers of MPEs and is constantly trying to make itself more palatable to various constituencies by masking the radical rhetoric behind the agenda “of preserving Europe for the Europeans” (Williams 2006, 76), policy wise, it has not affected the decision-making process notwithstanding the crisis.

EP elections represent a microcosm encompassing varied ideological views on a transnational scale, which help explain the contextual factors for different voting behaviours. European elections play an important role in the formation and consolidation of new political entities (as is the case of *Lega Nord*). If radical right parties do not treat European elections as SOE (De Winter and Cachafeiro 2002, 494), then we can hypothesise that neither do their core electorates, especially when “voters may feel less tied to parties that had [once] represented their social group” (Givens 2005, 50). In this case and whenever EU integration becomes a point of contention, “voters [are] disagreeing with the [mainstream] parties on European (second order) issues” instead of sanctioning “the performance of governing parties in the national (first order) arena’ (Hobolt *et al.* 2008, 95).

Though EP elections cannot be reduced to just “second order protest events”¹ (Weber 2009, 1), they are perceived as “safe”: the parties in government are not affected by the protest / sanction / no-confidence votes. As seen in the Danish and British cases, “[m]ainstream parties, particularly those in government, suffer defections among their Eurosceptic supporters, particularly if there is hostile media coverage of the EU during the campaign” (Whitaker and Lynch 2011, 6). In this context, Van der Brug and Fennema argue in favour of the idea of a protest vote in support for radical right parties, since “neither democracy, nor EU, nor government dissatisfaction play an important role in explaining radical support for [these] parties” (Schmitt 2010, 9). European elections present a platform compatible with their national strategies, where these parties “gain public visibility [...] mobilise voters”, and forge alliances (Almeida 2012, 141, 148).

In the 2014 EP elections, among the 21 parties that lost representation, no less than five were right-wing: Ataka (Bulgaria), British National Party (UK), Popular Orthodox Rally (LAOS, Greece), the Greater Romania Party (Romania) and the Slovak National Party (Slovakia) (Mudde 2014b). While prior to the Eurozone crisis, in the 2009 EP elections, in “18 countries where radical right parties participated in both national and European elections [...] 11 saw the radical right secure a larger share of the votes at the European level”. UK (+19.2%), Hungary (+12.6%), the Netherlands (+11.1%) and Finland (+5.8%) registered the most significant differences between the national and European results (Faure 2014, 9). Aside from individual exceptions (France and Greece in 2012), during the economic crisis, radical right parties gained support in ten of the 28 EU MS (35%) and only in four (14%), the electoral gains exceeded over 5% (Mudde 2013). This means that while radical right parties have mainstreamed some of their views on policy issues regarding immigration and minorities, their success or failure is dependent upon the local context, the type of election, the dominant political traditions or whether the parties benefit from an established position in the political system (as is the case with the radical right presence in the parliaments of Belgium or Denmark) or not (as in the case with Great Britain, Ireland or Germany, where these

¹ Especially since as Stratulat and Emmanouilidis point out “the conditions that sustained the *status quo* have changed during the last EP legislature, [...] with the 2014 EP elections [...] the first since the entry into force of the Lisbon Treaty in 2009. [The treaty] broadened significantly the legislative and budgetary powers of the EP [and] has also given the EP the responsibility to elect the President of the Commission [...]” (Stratulat and Emmanouilidis 2013, 2).

parties failed in challenging the mainstream, across varied types of electoral campaigns). On the other hand, their success stems the traditional parties perceived inability or unwillingness to address socio-economic vulnerabilities, in favour of opaque macro-economic indicators, whose perceived importance is inaccessible to the regular voter. High unemployment and continued austerity measures, reflected in public spending cuts or restrictions, pushes the electorate towards more radical choices, even when there's nothing behind their rhetorical grandstanding that would support their claims of a minimalist welfare state for the natives, fixed by expulsing the immigrants, other foreign nationals and especially the Muslim communities. This was the case, especially in France, where if we look at the latest results from the regional elections, *Front National* won 30% share of the votes to the Republican / UDI coalition (29%) and the socialists (22%), but which as experts warned, benefited from the earlier terror attacks.

In Central and Eastern Europe, Pirro explained that “[t]hese parties tap into a 'syndrome' stemming from the disappointments of the transformation process and frame the populist radical right ideology according to the idiosyncrasies of their context [...] [which] is primarily reflected in the set of (electorally viable) issues fostered by these parties: ethnic minorities, corruption, and the EU (Pirro 2015, 188). At the national level, Pirro states that irrespective “of their electoral performance, the populist radical right in Central and Eastern Europe may have wielded direct or indirect influence over certain policy dimensions and prompted shifts within respective national party systems” (Pirro 2015, 118). More than the electoral performance, both at national and EU levels, it is important to take into consideration the degree in which radical right themes cross-contaminate the centre-right agendas as well as the degree in which centre-right parties compromise with the radical right in making alliances or governmental coalitions.

Even if the radical right parties divided among multiple groups or simply non-inscrit, are “by no means a necessary interlocutor, as the key forces driving European policy-making (EPP, S&D, ALDE¹) [have retained their positions], despite being squeezed by the extremes” (Gergely and Gautier

¹ EPP (European People's Party) won 28.5% of the vote and 214 seat in the EP (down by 59 seats in comparison with 2009). S&D (Socialists and Democrats) with 25.4% of the vote, won 191 seats (down by 5), while ALDE (The Alliance for Democrats and Liberals for Europe) won 8.5% of the vote and 64 seats (down by 19) (Deloy 2014, 2).

2013, 5), Kallis notes that the 2014 electoral breakthrough is due in part to the mainstream parties inability or unwillingness “to reverse the mounting Euro-sceptic, anti-immigration, anti-Islam, anti-establishment / elite, and strongly nationalist mood in public opinion” (Kallis 2014, 8). The author observes that this “troubling trend [...] related only partly to the European Union itself” and that the world post-9/11 and post-worldwide economic crisis combined to upgrade the populist discourse of the radical right, building on the “old prejudices (formally de-legitimised but never truly eradicated)” and adding “new fears of a new alternative vision of radical political transformation in an anti-establishmentarian, anti-multicultural, and narrowly nationalist direction” (Kallis 2014, 8-9). As stated earlier, while “[EP] elections do not have a direct impact on the formation of the national government, they can be used by voters to influence the next national election or the policies of the current government” (Hix and Marsh 2007, 496), which is why the electoral performance of the radical right is indicative of a particular political mindset of parts of the electorate at a given time that is contingent on the internal and external state of affairs of a country and its relationship with the EU.

4. OCCUPYING THE FRENCH FRINGE MAINSTREAM: *FRONT NATIONAL*

The 1984 European elections “catapulted *Front National* [FN] from fringe into minor party status” and allowed it “to gain credibility as a force in national politics” (Norris 2005, 242-243). Founded by Jean-Marie Le Pen in 1972, *Front National* “combin[ed] different parties of the extreme right: fundamentalist Catholics, neo-fascists and the anti-immigrant populist right” (Howarth and Varouxakis 2014, 72). Outside the “protest dimension” of the French vote in second order elections, Norris observes how the institutionalisation of FN benefited initially, from a misguided change of the electoral system aimed at dividing the right, pursued by the Mitterrand government (Norris 2005, 243). In addition, particularities¹ of the French political system allowed FN to portray itself “as the only «real» opposition”

¹ For example, “when the president does not have a majority in parliament, and the system switches to cohabitation, it takes over certain traits of more consensual systems” (Bornschieer and Lachat 2010, 122).

while “strategic decisions [...] provided a context in which [the party] could reach significant electoral gains” (Bornschiefer and Lachat 2010, 122).

In the rundown to the 2014 EP elections, FN – like its counterparts in the UK and Czech Republic, led an intensive campaign which began well before other parties (Van den Berge 2014, 4). Furthermore, it treated the March local elections, as a test-run in preparation to the EP [campaign] (Van den Berge 2014, 4) – these were “the first real ‘test’ for the government in a difficult economic and social environment” (Bendjaballah 2014, 30). At the 2014 EP elections, FN placed first (24.86% share of the votes compared to 6.3% in 2009), registering an 18.56% increase compared to the previous elections. In 2009, FN was the fifth party behind *l’Union pour un Mouvement populaire* (UMP) (27.8% – 2009), *Parti Socialiste* (PS) (16.48% – 2009), *Europe écologie* (16.28% – 2009) and *Mouvement Démocrate* (MoDem) (8.4% – 2009) (EU Parliament 2014b). These results were reminiscent of “the political context of the 1980s when [t]he socialist government [failed] to increase employment and reduce inflation” and was faced with “a public sanction at the urns” (Morris 1994, 148-149), which was similarly mirrored in the 2015 regional elections.

Previously, in June 2012, at the national parliamentary elections¹, in the first round, FN was voted by 13.6% of the electorate (3.528.373 voters) and by 3.66% (842.684 voters) in the second round. It gained two seats in the *Assemblée nationale* (National Assembly) (Election Guide 2012). In April 2012, in the first round of the presidential elections, FN’s candidate, Marine Le Pen was voted by 17.9% of the electorate (6.421.426 voters) (Bamat 2012). In the 2014 municipal elections, where FN had candidates in only 596 out of almost 36.000 municipalities, pollster BVA placed FN in third place (7% of the votes) behind UPM and PS (Vidalon 2014). The French EP election followed the SOE requirements as far as the parties, the candidates and the campaign themes were concerned. Firstly, as a party that “could not accede to power within the prevailing system”, FN’s priority has been to consistently participate in a “battle of ideas, to exert pressure on all the other parties, and on French political life” (Shields 2007, 187, 172). FN’s anti-establishment and anti-immigration stances attracted an electorate, dissatisfied by the Socialist president’s performance.

¹ Unlike the proportional representation system utilised in the European elections, at the national level, the ‘two-round plurality system [...] strongly favours big parties’ (Spoon 2011, 54-55).

In general, as Van der Brug, Fennema and Tillie have shown, the electorate is strongly responding to a mixture of “ideological (left/right) proximity and (antagonistic) attitudes towards immigrants” (Van der Brug, Fennema and Tillie 2000, 94). Complementarily, FN anti-system identification helps attract support from young voters, at the centre of the unemployment crisis and more dismissive, distrustful and dissatisfied with mainstream politics” (Ivaldi 2003, 139). Since the mid-90’s, FN developed an electoral base comprised “predominantly [of] male, blue-collar worker and petty-bourgeoisie support, with low education” (Ivaldi 2003, 139), representing “a cross-section of French society, from people concerned with high unemployment, crime and immigration” (Howarth and Varouxakis 2014, 72). True to the traditional radical right nativist agenda, FN’s political programme constantly promotes anti-immigration measures such as “the expulsion of all illegal immigrants”, shortening “the length of employment contracts of non-Europeans, reject[ing] the automatic acquisition of French citizenship by children born in French to foreign parents, [...] call[ing] for an end to dual citizenship” (Carter 2005, 29-30).

Secondly, in line with the SOE model, the selected candidates for the EP election, highlighted the fact “that appointments respond to domestic rather than European politics [...] [and] have been chosen according to national criteria and not [...] their EU background” (Bendjaballah 2014, 31). Aside from Marine and Jean Marie Le Pen who had previously won MEPs seats, the other FN candidates were selected based on their performance during the local elections (Bendjaballah 2014, 31). Thirdly, since European elections are in general not about Europe (Ferrara and Weishaupt 2004, 289), the campaign was dominated by the domestic agenda. A debate between Marine Le Pen and President of the EP, Martin Schulz, was cancelled because FN’s leader “claimed [that] the EU campaign was above all a «French one» and that she did not have «to discuss [such matters] with a foreigner»”. France was also one of the few member states that did not broadcast on public television “the key debate of the EU campaign, between the candidates for the European Commission Presidency on 15 May 2014” (Bendjaballah 2014, 31-32). Moreover, based on the electoral alliances¹ that participated in the 2014 EP

¹ These were: 1. *Parti Socialiste* allied with *Parti radical de gauche* (in the third place with 13.98%); 2. *Alternative (Union des Démocrates et Indépendants + Mouvement Démocrate)* placed fourth, with 9.94%); 3. *Coalition Front de gauche (FG)* composed of *Parti Communiste Français, Parti de Gauche,*

election, we can argue that the higher the percentage of mainstream and radical right in past elections, “the higher the probability that an alliance will form” (Spoon 2011, 60). Facing a “sanction vote”, the two left-wing alliances underperformed: PS placed third, while the extreme left-wing *Coalition Front de gauche* placed sixth (EU Parliament 2014b).

Front National – which is at present, the third party of France – like Italy’s *Lega Nord* or Netherland’s *Partij voor de Vrijheid*, had made inroads in mainstream politics long before the onset of the debt crisis and the increased “polarization between richer and poorer nations, between the North and the South, creditors and debtors”, exploiting in Crame and Hobolt’s view, “popular anxieties about migration, globalization, Islam, and European integration to varying degrees” (Crame and Hobolt 2015, 4). *Front National*’s breakthrough (4.7 million votes) is an example of what Le Cacheux and Laurent regard as the success of the “anti-EU rhetoric [which] fuelled national populism [...] [i]n a context of very high abstention (56%)” (Le Cacheux and Laurent 2015, 17), which as we have shown earlier is characteristic of Second Order Elections. Outside the crisis, *Front National* prolonged electoral support, successfully tested in the 2014 elections, is attributed in part due to a “resurgence of a long tradition of French ethno-nationalism” that’s drawn to the *Front*’s “preservation and defence of national identity” (Rydgen 2004, 151). In François Beaudonnet’s view, “it was easy for people to vote for the *Front National* because it doesn’t have a direct impact on their daily lives. Europe is seen as very far away and, in any case, they know that the Eurosceptic parties won’t have a majority in the European Parliament. It was a way of showing they don’t agree with the general evolution of Europe today, and it was a vote against the elites” (Beaudonnet 2014).

Practice has shown that “the established parties [...] are by and large successful in blocking the entry of [...] competitors”¹ but *Front National* has proven to be the exception precisely because it has successfully managed “to

Ensemble and *Front de gauche* (sixth place with 6.33%); 4. *Union pour les Outre-Mer* (*Parti Communiste Réunionnais* and *Parti Progressiste Martiniquais*); 5. *Alliance des régionalistes, écologistes et progressistes des Outre-Mer régions et peuples solidaires* (ALE-RPS) (EU Parliament 2014b).

¹ The number of seats held by the two main political groups in the EP across legislatures: European Peoples’ Party (221/2014; 274/2009; 288/2004; 233/1999; 156/1994; 121/1989; 110/1984; 108/1979); Progressive Alliance of Socialists and Democrats (191/2014; 195/2009; 217/2004; 180/1999; 198/1994; 180/1989; 130/1984; 112/1979) (Directorate-General for Communication 2014b, 14-28).

exploit the potential offered by the second-order logic of EP elections” (Raunio 2007, 76-77). This comes in contrast to first order elections, where FN fails poorly “when faced with strong competition from mainstream-right candidates close to their own ideology”¹ (Beauzamy 2013, 183). France – Grossman suggests – “usually had a contradictory and unstable attitude towards European integration”, varying from “permissive consensus” when “neither governing parties nor major interest groups or public opinion were openly hostile to [it]”, to an outright rejection, as was the case with the referendum on the European Constitution; consequently, a France in crisis, whose “central position in European integration is challenged” by the enlargement of the EU (Grossman 2007, 983-984), solidifies “[t]he durability of the Front’s electoral appeal [...] [which] [u]nlike other ‘flash’ parties”, has remained a fixture in the national and European political landscape, long after its initial success (Morris 1994, 148).

5. BETWEEN NORDIC HOMOGENEITY AND EURO-PRAGMATISM: *DANSK FOLKEPARTI*

In Denmark’s case, so reticent of the “ever closer political union” (Axtmann 1996, 1), the second order election model applies distinctly in contrast to the other European countries. Of the Scandinavian Member States, Denmark has been the first to obtain EU membership in 1973 and has voted in European elections since 1979. Its EU membership has encountered its share of difficulties with the Danish voters deciding on two separate occasions, “to keep the country outside the most integrated parts of the modern Union” (Aylot, Bergman and Blomgren 2013, 50). The two rejected referendums² and the large minorities that opposed the other four, indicate that the divergent positions on European matters tend to be divided between the population and the elites and not necessarily between the political parties (Friis and Parello-Plesner 2012, 2).

¹ This was the case with the presidential campaign from 2007, when UMP decided “to incorporate FN themes as a counter strategy – [i.e.] [...] the appropriation of the theme of «national identity» by Nicolas Sarkozy” (Beauzamy 2013, 183).

² The referendum in which the Maastricht Treaty was rejected, led to the inclusion of ‘op-outs’ on issues pertaining to the monetary union, home affairs, justice and defence (Friis and Parello-Plesner 2012, 2).

In the 2014 EP elections, *Dansk Folkeparti* (DF) (Danish People's Party) doubled its MEPs and placed first (26.6% of the votes, +11.8%). In the previous election, it secured the fourth place, behind *Socialdemokratiet* (S) (20.9%), *Venstre – Danmarks Liberale Parti* (V) (19.6%) and *Socialistisk Folkeparti* (SF) (15.4%). In 2014, with a turnout at 56.32% – higher than the European average – the 13 seats allotted to Denmark, were divided between: DF (four seats, member of the European Conservatives and Reformists Group), *Socialdemokratiet* (-1.8%, three seats, member of the S&D Group), *Venstre* (-2.9%, two seats, member of ALDE), *Det Konservative Folkeparti* (KF) (-3.2%, one seat, member of EPP), *Socialistisk Folkeparti* (SF) (-4.4%, one seat, member of the Greens/European Free Alliance), *Det Radikale Venstre* (RV) (+2.4%, one seat, member of ALDE), *Folkebevægelsen mod EU* (People's Movement against the EU), (+1.1%, one seat, member of European United Left/Nordic Green Left) (EU Parliament 2014c).

Among the Eurosceptic parties, DF (26.6%) matched Ukip, behind Cyprus' Progressive Party of Working People (AKEL) and ahead of France's *Front National*, Italy's Five Star Movement or Austria's Freedom Party. With the exception of AKEL (-7.9%) and Jobbik (-0.1%), the other main Eurosceptic parties registered higher electoral scores compared to 2009 (Emanuele, Maggini and Marino 2014, 13). In the national parliamentary elections from 2011, DF won 12.3% of the votes (22 seats) and placed third behind the liberal and social-democrat parties (Inter-Parliamentary Union). Similar results were obtained in the local elections held in November 2013, at the Regional and Municipal level (Levring 2013). In 1998, at its first participation in parliamentary elections, DF obtained 7.4% of the votes. In 2001, DF rose to 12% and 22 seats in the *Folketing* (the Danish Parliament) and became "the support party of a Conservative-Liberal minority government" (Bolleyer 2013, 188). This electoral success continued during the next decade and registered only "minor losses: 12.3% and 22 seats [in 2011] as opposed to 13.8% and 25 seats in the previous election" (Bolleyer 2013, 188). A poll conducted in 2014, revealed that if an election were held today, DF would receive 21.2% of the votes, ahead of other parties, such as *Venstre* – the main opposition party (20.9%) or the ruling coalition partners, the Social Democrats (19.8%) (*The Local* 2014). At the general elections held on 18 June 2015, the Danish People's Party came in second with 21.1 percent of the votes, winning 37 seats, behind the Social Democrats and ahead of *Venstre*, the conservative liberal party which lost 21 seats compared to the previous election (Gani 2015).

Unlike other right-wing parties that occupy the fringes of the political spectrum, DF is the third main political force in Denmark. It has evolved from a party that in the words of the former Prime Minister, Social Democrat, Poul Nyr Rasmussen (1994-2001), “would never become respectable in the Danish political system” to what Helle Thorning-Schmidt – the new social democratic leader – characterised in 2006, as “a typical right wing party” (Susi 2010, 22). DF opposes the EU, favours “Danish independence” and is against the “transformation to a multiethnic society” (Pia Kjærsgaard, the party’s co-founder cited by Moreau 2012, 102). Consistent with the nativist position, DF’s Work Programme from 2007 stated that: “Denmark belongs to the Danes... A multiethnic Denmark would mean the breaking down of our stable homogenous society by anti-development and reactionary cultures” (Fryklund 2013, 267).

Similar to other Nordic radical right parties, DF has a “narrow outlook”: anti-immigration, anti-deeper integration within the EU (Pelinka 2013, 14), while advancing more drastic policies in both sectors (Abedi 2004, 41). Givens (2005, 142) observes that support for DF is higher when both unemployment and the level of immigration increase. This assessment is not entirely substantiated in practice. Since April 1993, when the unemployment rate was at 9.9%, it has been on the decline, registering its lowest level between February and May 2008 (3.1%) and its highest since, in May 2012 (7.9%). As of October 2014, the unemployment is at 6.4% (Eurostat). By comparison, according to the International Organization for Migration, as of 2013, immigrants were at 9.9%, with the net migration rate (2010-2015) at 2.7 migrants/1000 population (International Organization for Migration 2014).

DF’s electorate is “much less likely to have a university education than any of the other radical right parties [...], with the exception of the German parties: men without higher education, from the blue-collar sector or self-employed” (Givens 2005, 140-142). By acknowledging and adapting to the popular trend, DF’s exclusionary policies have avoided outright controversies¹. Furthermore, it has strategically politicised the EU so much so that in 2011, in exchange for DF’s support, the Liberal-Conservatives in government were acquiescing to measures such as the reintroduction of permanent border controls (Kelstrup 2013, 22). DF had previously rejected the

¹ Only 2% of the news articles frame the DF as *very different* compared to the mainstream parties, according to a study conducted by Hellström and Hervik (2013, 12).

Schengen Agreement precisely because it was perceived as weakening the national prerogatives on matters pertaining to border control, immigration law and crime prevention, seen as detrimental to the wellbeing of the Danish state (Topaloff 2012, 176). While it has somewhat toned down on the extremist rhetoric, DF's influence on the European issue has made its presence known on various instances. When in 2011, the right-wing government took a measure that would undermine the Schengen border-free zone, by deploying "over 40 additional customs control officers to be permanently stationed at the border with Germany", it did that after concluding a deal with DF (Adler-Nissen 2014, 65). In another instance pointed out by Wind, DF "demanded a special national agreement, specifying how fraud with regard to EU rules could be combated and how the national immigration rules for non-EU citizen could be tightened even further"; as a result, and though not prohibited by European directives, "the Ministry today randomly checks 50 per cent of all EU family unification cases for fraud. [...] cases where there is no particular suspicion of fraud" (Wind 2014, 170).

At the EP level, DF is part of the European Conservatives and Reformists group, aligning itself strategically with the political group more likely to advance its agenda. Previously, in the 2009 election, DF joined the Europe of Freedom and Democracy. Though the Danish turnout is higher than in other European countries, it is still lower when compared to the percentage at the national elections (85.9% in 2015), hence fulfilling one of the criteria for Second Order Elections. Continuing in line with the SOE model, government parties lose more votes in a typical sanction vote, than the opposition, the left parties are sanctioned, while right and centre right parties are most successful. Bischoff and Wind (2016, 285-286) have noted how multivariate analysis shows that EP elections respond both to national issue / needs / critics. Due to the particularities of the political system¹, European elections do not constitute an optimal ground for national parties to anticipate an upcoming electoral direction, as in the French case. While the prerequisites for SOE are met, EP elections in Denmark are insulated from Danish internal politics to such an extent that is almost unique in the entirety of the EU² (Franklin 2006, 231).

¹ Franklin argues that this is due to the fact that "the two Eurosceptical parties [...] compete only in European elections. Because they receive a significant share of the vote, which is taken from other parties in proportions that are hard to compute with any accuracy, these elections do not have the outcome that is readily interpreted in national terms" (Franklin 2006, 231).

² UK constitutes another exception.

Unlike in other Member States where the European Union issue is relegated to the back burner, in Denmark, this “issue has been severely politicized” (Kelstrup 2014, 22). Yet outside the referenda and the EP elections, Kelstrup finds that “there has been very little debate and European issues have hardly had any role in normal parliamentary elections” (Kelstrup 2014, 26). DF’s argument against the EU “is that it is saturated with planned economics and centralism, egregiously resembling the political and economic structure of the former communist countries” (Toppaloff 2012, 176). After the 2015 election, DF’s stated goals revolve around: “Denmark leav[ing] the Schengen area [...] boosting border controls [...] and mak[ing] it hard for EU migrants [sic] to claim benefits in other member states” (BBC News 2015). Presently, the Eurozone crisis combined with the contemporaneous flows of migration and the downside of globalisation have “exposed the disconnect between domestic politics in many countries and EU politics” (Erlanger 2015). Parts of the electorate no longer identify with the mainstream parties while the parties that push forward, are those aiming at changing the system, exploiting the fact that traditional parties failed to address to acknowledge the notion that they could still maintain their pro-European stance, while also criticising the EU (Erlanger 2015).

The nationalistic DF’s anti-European position is not an exception but more of a symptom of the Danish ambivalence. In Fennema and Van der Brug’s assessment, Denmark is the only Member State where the political union or EU enlargement have been “politicised to such an extent that these EU-attitudes translate into electoral preferences” (Fennema and Van der Brug 2008, 17). If in the past, the left was more sceptical while the centre-right was pro-EU, today, both tend to favour a Eurosceptic stance (Fris and Parello-Plesner 2012, 2). Aylot, Bergman and Blomgren consider that this ambivalent position prompted a political cleavage – unique in Europe – which has “in turn created two parallel systems”: a national and a European one, respectively (Aylot, Bergman and Blomgren 2013, 57-58). As far as the Left is concerned, in De Vries’ opinion, “leftist voters have conceived of European integration as a market-liberal project that threatens to undermine leftist domestic policy – not because European integration is orthogonal to the left/ right dimension” (De Vries 2010, 22).

The four opt-outs (on economic and monetary union, defence, justice and home affairs and citizenship) attest to the Danish aversion towards deeper political integration. Consistent with the Euro-reticence displayed by the political system, DF – which rejects a closer union and is opposed to the

Danish membership – campaigns on European issues in the second order election (Franklin 2006, 222). To this end, in the EP elections, the Danish identity, sovereignty and citizenship are at the forefront of a strategic vote that balances economic pragmatism with the risks posed by the loss of autonomy and European citizenship.

6. CONCLUSIONS

If in 2009, Europe of Freedom and Democracy, the right-wing group founded and led by Ukip and *Lega Nord*, was the seventh and last group in the European Parliament, in 2015, with 45 MEPs (+11 from the 2009 elections), the reconstituted Europe of Freedom and Direct Democracy occupied the penultimate position, before Le Pen's Europe of Nations and Freedom (39 MEPs). Outside these two groups, the European Conservatives and Reformists with 74 MEPs (+ 20 from the 2009 elections) – which have also endorsed an Eurosceptic and anti-federalist stance – has moved from being the fifth group at the 2009 EP elections, to become the third group in the EP after the 2014 elections, by surpassing the Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe and The Greens-European Free Alliance.

While the EU is regarded by the sceptics as a “house divided against itself that cannot stand”, this assessment would seem to be a better fit for the radical rights populists. In support of this, Mudde finds that “far right parties seldom work effectively together within the European arena, [while] [...] FN's leading role has often been both crucial and highly divisive” (Mudde 2014a, 103). In the French and Danish cases, both *Front National* and *Dansk Folkeparti* have been shown to abide by the Second Order model. At the institutional level, a wider coalition could transform the “radical right [into] the driving force in producing a new demarcation-integration cleavage in West European societies” (Grande 2012, 291). Yet this remains unlikely because as Kolaric points out, radical right parties in the EP “face limitations for effective performance”, while “many of the Eurosceptic radical right MEPs tend to not participate regularly in plenary voting” (Kolaric 2013, 13). This applies both in terms of average participation in roll-call votes as well as in drafting reports in the committees (Kolaric 2013, 17). This phenomenon is explained in the literature: “these are the European Parliament's most conflicted politicians, working in an institution that they often oppose. [...] It makes perfect sense, then, that in this context populist radical right MEPs do not put their efforts

into policy impact, but instead try to take a stand by speaking out in at plenary. That way they can show to their electorate that they are taking on the EU from the inside” (Kolaric 2013, 5). The radical right parties’ influence in the EP remains low, even though these parties benefited from the uncertain environment created by the economic and financial crisis affecting the European Union in general and the Eurozone in particular. This is especially the case in Member States where they already had an established presence on the political scene – as we have shown with the French and Danish examples.

Moreover, the electoral behaviour in EP elections is not particularly indicative of national electoral trends across all 28 MS, when compared to first order elections. Though austerity measures proposed and implemented to combat the crisis, have reawakened national anxieties by underlining the divide between the “haves and have nots”, we are far from talking about a pan-anti-European popular trend clamouring for the rejection of the European Union. If the Greek debt crisis from summer 2015 showed us anything, it showed that even the people of Greece – that were faced with two terrible options: exit from the Eurozone and more austerity – still mandated their representatives to negotiate for a solution inside the Eurozone.

Generally, while electoral breakthroughs on the part of radical right parties are indicative of a particular mindset of parts of the electorate which identify with their rhetoric, their lack of “credible expertise”¹ in dealing with economic problems, makes them unreliable in dealing with policy-making. On a case by case basis, the problem posed by radical right parties lies in the fact that mainstream parties on the centre right, might appropriate pet themes of the radical right and radicalise their platform, in regards to immigration or Euro-scepticism (as seen with the British Conservative Party or France’s Union for a Popular Movement). When co-opted to the government, as seen with *Dansk Folkeparti*, the effects on policy making in regards to the EU, are even more drastic. These being said, at the EU level in general and at the EP level in particular, any long-standing radical influence in European decision making is undermined for the moment, both because these parties are divided across different groups or are non-inscrit and because their main focus remains on

¹ In Mudde’s view: “During an economic crisis the political debate is dominated by socioeconomic issues, on which far right parties put little emphasis and have little credible expertise” (Mudde 2014a, 103).

garnering publicity and not on “participating in policy-making activities” (Mudde 2014a, 103).

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