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# CHANGING ENEMIES OF THE WESTERN FAR-RIGHT: *from Immigrants to Europe*

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## Key findings

- The more successful populist, Euro-reject<sup>1</sup> parties in the last few years have shifted their platform's central pillar from anti-immigration in 2009's EP election to anti-EU in 2014's EP election.
- The essence of the shift can be summarized as immigration still being a dominant issue in the far-right parties' 2014 EP-campaigns, but now as a part of a more general Euro-reject agenda. In 2014 migration is not as much of a cultural phenomenon, a 'scarecrow', any more than it was in 2009, in the wake of the mass immigration of asylum seekers from the Middle East.
- Some examples:
  1. Front National's shift was carried out through a leadership change that made it evident in the case that saw Jean-Marie Le Pen's "invasion of migrants" and "the surrendering of France's borders" being dropped for rhetoric more along the lines of disillusionment and the unrepresented of the Union.
  2. Meanwhile the Dutch Party for Freedom's Geert Wilders took to moving away from politicizing mostly against Muslim immigration into the Netherlands towards publishing economic reports that serve to illustrate the positive impact of an EU exit (beforehand, Wilders did not want to leave the EU).
  3. As for the Freedom Party of Austria, Heinz-Christian Strache transitioned FPÖ from 2009 rhetoric that focused on the portrayal of immigrants as criminals to 2014 rhetoric that focused on preventing the "federalization of Europe" from jeopardizing the Austrian identity.
  4. Whereas United Kingdom Independence Party's Nigel Farage made use of a "matter of fact" tone to show that immigration was, and still is, a problem for Britain (especially from Eastern Europe) he iterates that this problem comes from the EU.
- Consequently, there is a substitution of migration as a cultural group-threat with a more systematic cross-country Euro-reject stance in which **the rejection of the European establishment serves as a common cause for the effects of migration on the economic hardships of the majority**. This also reveals a unique, far-right logic of conspiracy which treats migration as only a visible symptom of the real enemy working behind the scenes, the European Union.
- The parties' change of rhetoric is somewhat backed by the Eurobarometer polls on public opinion, they showed continuous concerns over economic hardships in the EU amid easement of intercultural tensions. Still, according to autumn 2013 Eurobarometer national poll reports, the voters are not necessarily buying into the far-rights' exit-agenda, since the majority in three of the four countries would rather prefer a supra-national solution to the financial and economic problems instead of rejecting the Union as a whole.

<sup>1</sup> According to Petr Kopecky's and Cas Mudde's classification, Eurorejects combine Europhobe and EU-pessimist positions. They subscribe neither to the ideas underlying the process of European integration nor to the EU. - Petr Kopecky and Cas Mudde: The Two Sides of Euroscepticism, European Union Politics, Volume 3 (3), 2002 - <http://m.eup.sagepub.com/content/3/3/297.short>

## Country-by-country analysis

### Austria

Though Heinz-Christian Strache has been heading the Freedom Party of Austria (FPÖ) prior to the 2009 elections there are still indications of a rhetoric shift between 2009's campaign and 2014's. In 2009/2010 Strache's language portrayed rhetoric leaning more so to targeted criminalization of Muslim immigrants and the addressing of "Islamization" of Austrian culture. The 2014 program and rhetoric focus more on issues with the EU and the prevention of the "federalization" of Europe, with immigration and crime still linked, but they now seem to be treated as a byproduct of EU membership.

Statement made by	Statement
Heinz-Christian Strache, FPÖ leader, 2010 speech (The Guardian, <a href="http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qUaZwf1owf0">http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qUaZwf1owf0</a> , 2010)	I say to all those who have come here but are not prepared to integrate, those who believe they can use us or take advantage of us living from our welfare state, misusing it, and to those who are not willing to live here decently because they don't want to abide by the laws and become criminally active here; [...] I don't want them in our society. We have enough Austrian criminals. We don't want to import more.
FPÖ 2014 European Parliamentary Program ( <a href="http://www.fpo.ee">www.fpo.ee</a> )	[...] organized crime, smuggling and crime tourism have increased dramatically within the EU since the opening of the border as part of the Schengen Agreement. [...] This includes a clear commitment against mass immigration, Islamization, [...] and the creation of a European „unity society“. [...] Priority for domestic workers. Restriction of EU free movement principle by a sectoral closure of the Austrian labor market for EU and non-EU citizens.
FPÖ 2014 European Parliamentary Program ( <a href="http://www.fpo.ee">www.fpo.ee</a> )	EU centralism and regulation delusions are stupid and [...] Unimpeded crime and asylum abuse are stupid.
Heinz-Christian Strache, FPÖ leader, 2013 speech ( <a href="http://www.diepresse.com">www.diepresse.com</a> , 24 October 2014)	The EU behaves as a globally organized band of robbers.
Heinz-Christian Strache, FPÖ leader interview ( <a href="http://www.freiheitlich.me">www.freiheitlich.me</a> , 27 August 2013)	Islam is a world religion, for which I have great respect. But I do not want Europe to become Islamized or hate preachers becoming active here [...] We act against the faulty development of the European Union. I also want a strong currency, which means no expropriation for Austria. I believe that the Euro has failed.

### France

Front National's rhetoric shift is more physically observable in nature through the leadership change that was undergone following the 2009 election. The party election in 2011 for the successor to Jean-Marie Le Pen was between Marine Le Pen representing a future of change and Bruno Gollnisch representing the identity built up under Jean-Marie Le Pen. The lack of borders and mass migration in Jean-Marie Le Pen's 2008 rhetoric exerts influence over all aspects of life from economics to national "spirit" and a cultural subordination to Islam. In contrast, Marine Le Pen attributes the hardships experienced by the majority to the financial system and to the EU as whole.

In Front National’s 2014 European election site, immigration and border control were made out to be a part of the problem that EU membership brings. Thus, migration no longer serves as the sole cause for the problems of the majority; instead the majority’s problems and migration are both consequences of the systemic forces of the European Union. The party’s process of disassociating itself with its past remains the key goal of the rhetoric shift through more rational, more grounded “de-demonizing” wordage.

Statement made by	Statement
Jean-Marie Le Pen, FN leader European Parliament speech ( <a href="http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=20W4XBy15M8">http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=20W4XBy15M8</a> , 10 July 2008)	Without borders gradually invaded by a mass immigration which is just beginning, economically ruined by free-market fanaticism, socially impoverished, weakened demographically, lacking spirit and defensive strength [...] At worst, it will fall under the slavery of dhimmitude*.
Marine Le Pen, FN leader, speech in Metz ( <a href="http://www.opendemocracy.net">www.opendemocracy.net</a> , 11 December 2011)	Farmers, unemployed, workers, pensioners, those of you who live in rural areas of the country, you are the forgotten, invisible majority, crushed by a financial system gone mad.
Marine Le Pen, FN leader editorial ( <a href="http://www.fn-europeennes.fr">www.fn-europeennes.fr</a> , 2014)	We must be able to decide our fate as all the nations of the world, controlling our laws, controlling our economic borders and migration, controlling our currency, our budget, our public services, our foreign and defense policy, refusing a foolish enlargement of the European Union to the East and Turkey, saying that austerity is an unbearable social violence in the name of the sacred currency of the Euro [...]

(\* Dhimmitude is a neologism borrowed from the French language. It is derived by adding the productive suffix -tude to the Arabic noun dhimmi, which refers to a non-Muslim subject of an Islamic state.)

### United Kingdom

United Kingdom Independence Party (UKIP) shift in rhetoric went from social disposition and risk of cultural identity loss due to immigration, to the economic detriment immigration is having on the British people due to EU membership. The party’s 2009 platform portrays this as a matter of border control and the real threat being mass migration and the loss of “British identity” in the neighborhoods. The 2014 European Parliament elections is widely considered as an “in” versus “out” debate considering the decision making power of the EU over member states rather than refugee immigration and social security.

Statement made by	Statement
Nigel Farage, UKIP leader, debate (Ukipmedia, <a href="http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OJWHnHM4pvU">http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OJWHnHM4pvU</a> , 17 November 2008)	[...] right across the UK, not just in the big cities, but in a small market towns and villages, people have seen a massive change, we’re seeing social dislocation [...] we’re seeing people say we simply cannot cope with an influx on this scale, many people, they’re finding it quite difficult to recognize the neighborhoods in which they live.
Nigel Farage, Europe Debate with Nick Clegg ( <a href="http://www.youtube.com">www.youtube.com</a> , 02 April 2014)	The debate on immigration is framed in terms of economics, you know, one side claims it’s a net benefit to the economy and the other side claims, actually its costing us money [...] it’s led to increasing segregation in our towns and cities for a country that has always had a great record of racial harmony and integration [...] Worst of all what it’s done socially [...] it’s left a white working class effectively as an underclass and that I think is a disaster.

## Netherlands

Party for Freedom (PVV) has seen the most drastic shift from immigration centered rhetoric to euro-reject -centered rhetoric. At the beginning, PVV did not want to leave the EU, but rather had a soft euro-reject position. In 2010 the cultural threat of Islamization served as much of the basis for Wilders' platform. Meanwhile, in 2014 he has swung more so towards economic motifs with his rationale, i.e. the publishing of Nexit, the Dutch plan for exiting the European Union. Wilders has used the effects of the economic crisis to umbrella over his anti-Islamic immigration rhetoric.

Statement made by	Statement
PVV 2010 TV Spot (PVVpers, <a href="http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=U-kVbDb8Www">http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=U-kVbDb8Www</a> )	We are faced with the mass immigration of headscarves, burkas, minarets, benefit dependency, crime, entire neighborhoods are Islamized [...] It does not make sense to let everyone live in the Netherlands.
Geert Wilders, PVV leader, press-conference about Nexit in Hague ( <a href="http://www.ft.com">www.ft.com</a> , 06 February, 2014)	We can save billions by liberating ourselves from EU regulations. We can end the mass immigration and stop paying welfare checks to, for instance, Romanians and Bulgarians.
Geert Wilders, PVV leader, press release ( <a href="http://www.geertwilders.nl">www.geertwilders.nl</a> , 05 February 2014)	The report shows that leaving the EU is our way out of the crisis. Without the self-defeating austerity policies imposed by Brussels, the Dutch will be able to cut taxes and reduce VAT and excise duties. The Dutch will no longer have to ship their tax money to Greece and will be able to stop paying welfare benefits to Romanians and Bulgarians.

## Change of public opinion

The shift of the parties' rhetoric can be interpreted as a reflection of the social climate change which occurred in the different countries during the last five years. The 2013 Social Climate report<sup>2</sup> from the Eurobarometer, shows that the majority across the four nations thinks that the national economy has worsened since 2009. Moreover, Austria is the only country of the four to have a majority that considers the economy to currently be doing well. As for the intercultural/religious relations, only the majority of the UK expresses deteriorating inter-ethnic relations in the last five years, and only the French majority experiences likewise in the present. While all the other countries consider their present intercultural and religious affairs to be doing well.

<sup>2</sup> Social Climate: 2013- [http://ec.europa.eu/public\\_opinion/archives/ebs/ebs\\_408\\_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/public_opinion/archives/ebs/ebs_408_en.pdf)

How would you judge the current situation of the national economy?				
	UK	AT	NL	FR
Since 2009				
better	7	12	1	1
worse	77	57	94	89
same	13	29	4	8
In 2013				
good	22	65	36	7
bad	74	34	63	89
Future: 12 months from now				
better	21	20	17	13
worse	37	25	49	55
same	38	51	33	29

How would you judge the current relations in our country between people from different cultural or religious backgrounds or nationalities?				
	UK	AT	NL	FR
Since 2009				
better	13	14	10	4
worse	46	33	43	55
same	36	49	44	35
In 2013				
good	63	61	56	39
bad	33	37	41	54
Future: 12 months from now				
better	16	13	6	11
worse	39	24	35	36
same	42	59	58	47

So, on the one hand, the far right parties have sensed correctly the public opinion’s subtle change about continuous economic hardships and stagnant or improving inter-ethnic relations which of the latter can be linked directly to their former core agenda of migration. While on the other hand, the people’s opinion about who is adept to handle the systemic problems showcases a quite different answer than the parties’ proposed skepticism. When asked about “In your opinion, which of the following is best able to take effective actions against the effects of the financial and economic crisis?” in the Eurobarometer national fact sheets for autumn of 2009 and autumn of 2013<sup>3</sup>, most of the majorities of the three countries would prefer an existing supra-national organization. As an exception, as of autumn 2013, Great Britain demonstrated that the national government is even more favored by the public to handle the effects of the economic and financial crisis. Austria had favored the national government in 2009, but public opinion has shown that the EU edges out the national government in 2013. The Dutch maintain all along that the G20 is the way to go, but there is far less in favor of the G20 and more leaning towards the EU and the national government in 2013. In 2009 the French had thought that the G20 could solve their problems, but the EU has garnered enough support in France to establish itself as the best to handle the affects in 2013. Something that stands out with the French, is their response to this question is that following the EU is the IMF who has a 1% edge over the national government.

3 [http://ec.europa.eu/public\\_opinion/archives/eb/eb72/eb72\\_fact\\_uk\\_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/public_opinion/archives/eb/eb72/eb72_fact_uk_en.pdf), [http://ec.europa.eu/public\\_opinion/archives/eb/eb80/eb80\\_fact\\_uk\\_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/public_opinion/archives/eb/eb80/eb80_fact_uk_en.pdf), [http://ec.europa.eu/public\\_opinion/archives/eb/eb72/eb72\\_fact\\_nl\\_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/public_opinion/archives/eb/eb72/eb72_fact_nl_en.pdf), [http://ec.europa.eu/public\\_opinion/archives/eb/eb80/eb80\\_fact\\_nl\\_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/public_opinion/archives/eb/eb80/eb80_fact_nl_en.pdf), [http://ec.europa.eu/public\\_opinion/archives/eb/eb72/eb72\\_fact\\_fr\\_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/public_opinion/archives/eb/eb72/eb72_fact_fr_en.pdf), [http://ec.europa.eu/public\\_opinion/archives/eb/eb80/eb80\\_fact\\_fr\\_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/public_opinion/archives/eb/eb80/eb80_fact_fr_en.pdf), [http://ec.europa.eu/public\\_opinion/archives/eb/eb72/eb72\\_fact\\_at\\_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/public_opinion/archives/eb/eb72/eb72_fact_at_en.pdf), [http://ec.europa.eu/public\\_opinion/archives/eb/eb80/eb80\\_fact\\_at\\_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/public_opinion/archives/eb/eb80/eb80_fact_at_en.pdf).