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**STUDY**

# CONVENIENT TRUTHS

Mapping climate agendas of right-wing populist parties in Europe

Stella Schaller and Alexander Carius

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# ABSTRACT

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Right-wing populists are picking up momentum across Europe and elsewhere. An understanding of how these new actors conceive climate change and influence current and future European climate action is vital to communicating and designing effective and inclusive policies. However, the broad spectrum of European parties' stands on climate change is yet to be assessed, contextualised with voting results and interpreted regarding future European policy-making. This study is a first and explorative attempt to fill this gap and provide empirical evidence on the nexus between right-wing populism and climate change.

We draw on official national electoral programmes, public statements by party leaders and spokespersons, press releases and news sources for the strongest 21 European right-wing populist parties to identify views on climate change. We then quantitatively analyse parliamentary activities, especially voting behaviour in 28 votes in the European Parliament for two legislative terms between 2009 and 2018. Furthermore, the Annex provides a guide to all parties analysed in this study, based on case-by-case analyses.

Although right-wing populist parties mostly oppose climate and energy transition policies, there are important nuances. A number of parties exhibit a type of 'green patriotism' which strongly supports environmental conservation, but not climate action. Other parties advocate renewable energy instalment for the sake of clean air and energy independence. The analy-

sis of votes in policy fields not related to climate change indicates that right-wing populist parties are relatively positive about environmental topics but hostile towards policies supporting multilateralism and international cooperation. The empirical results further suggest that we will see a slight growth in positions against climate policy post 2019.

As the share of climate sceptics in European institutions increases, progress and ambition regarding climate policy are increasingly at risk. One of the main threats to the implementation of the Paris Agreement is the danger that centrist parties will pander to climate-sceptic priorities or nationalistic rhetoric, and shift from progressive towards reactionary positions. Meanwhile, new and broader issue-based coalitions across political beliefs and preferences may occur, raising new political challenges.

Current headwinds present an opportunity to investigate the weaknesses in the design of climate policies. Most of the narratives used to counter climate and energy policies are fundamentally rooted in economic or social justice grievances and climate action is perceived as an elitist issue. The authors therefore argue for new ways of conceiving climate policy: On the one hand, policies must be comprehensive, multi-sectoral and also more creative to alleviate social inequality. On the other, the story of climate change needs a new positive framing and progressive narrative so as to inspire the imagination and empower citizens.

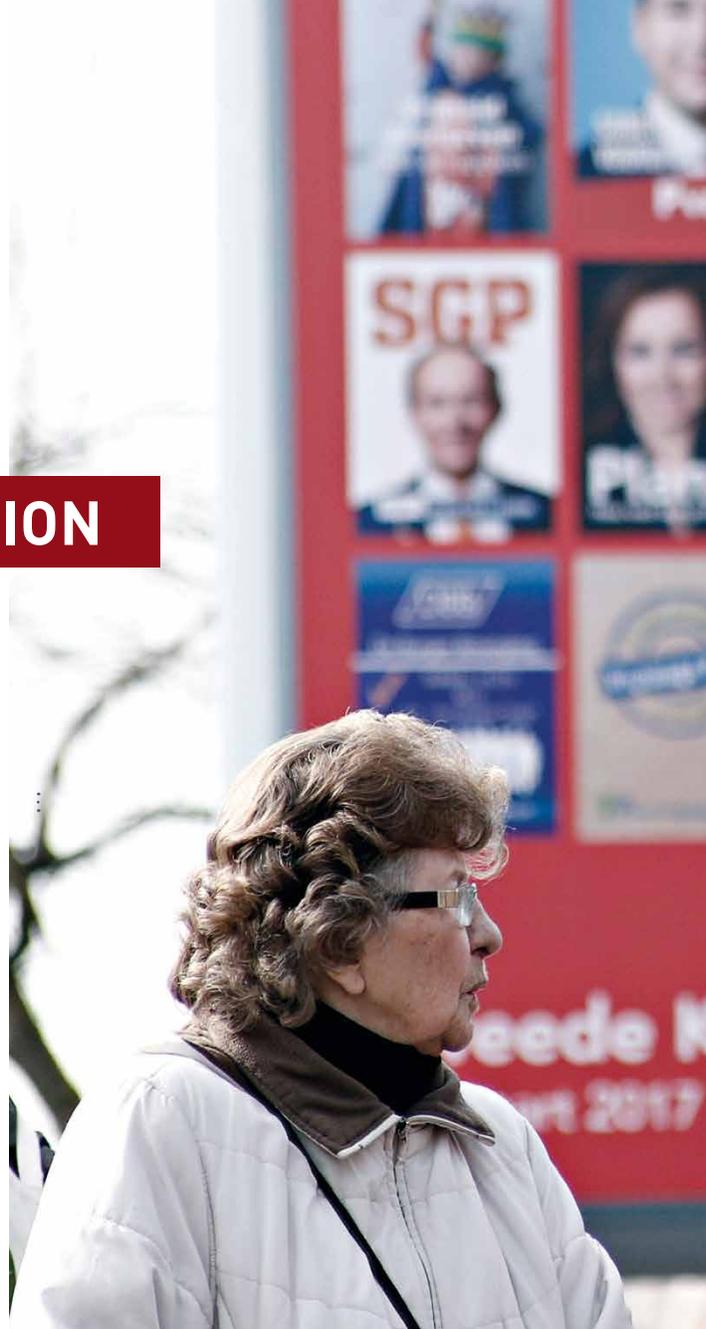
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1

## INTRODUCTION



**R**ight-wing populist parties in Europe are picking up momentum: topping polls in Sweden; taking power in Italy and Austria; holding ground in Poland, Hungary and Bulgaria, among others. Their anti-EU and draw-bridges-up mentality is a growing concern in Brussels and beyond. In August 2018, from the 751 Members of the European Parliament (MEP), 151 belonged to political groups “*openly critical or hostile toward the EU*”<sup>1</sup>. This share is projected to

grow significantly after the European elections in May 2019.

Amidst the political shakeups, the 2018 heat wave and prolonged drought period served as a climate wake-up call: Ravaging forest fires in Sweden, Greece and Portugal; crop failures in Scandinavia, Scotland, Ireland, the Baltics, the Netherlands and Germany; suffocating fish in the Rhine river; spread of Lyme disease-carrying ticks; rising death tolls – these are some tasters



EU continued to advocate ambitious emission targets, adopted a series of central climate and energy legislations ranging from a revision of the EU emissions trading system to action in the transport and buildings sector<sup>5</sup>, and it has stepped up international climate diplomacy and strengthened ties with European allies<sup>6</sup>. The EU has shown that it is able to act. Yet, more ambition is required. The current target of a 40% emission cut by 2030 – the EU’s nationally determined contribution (NDC) – is considered insufficient to achieve the goals set out in the Paris Agreement<sup>7</sup> and therefore needs to be increased. As unprecedented popular discontent obstructs governments in shaping climate policy, the question is whether the EU will be able to maintain its progressive role after the next elections.

Right-leaning populist parties, claiming to speak for the “true interest of the common people”, often oppose climate and energy transition policies. As they gain power, one might expect severe harm to climate policy. Within the right-wing populist spectrum, however, there are significant variations in terms of climate change frames, arguments and voting behaviour. While the German Alternative for Germany (*AfD*) questions the scientific consensus on human-induced climate change, wants to exit the Paris Agreement and cancel renewable energy plans, the Hungarian *Fidesz* is campaigning for international greenhouse gas reductions to mitigate climate change. France’s *National Rally* strongly rejects the *UNFCCC*, seeing it as “a com-

*unist project*”, but is in favour of developing domestic renewables including solar and biogas through “*intelligent protectionism*” and “*economic patriotism*”<sup>8</sup>.

**T**he success of international climate policy rests on multilateral cooperation, global responsibility, evidence-based decision-making, and respect for civil and human rights. As right-wing populist parties across Europe question those fundamental preconditions, they are an important subject of investigation. Understanding the rationale of and variance across growing populist movements with regards to climate change is a first step in communicating and co-designing inclusive policies.

In this paper, we thus seek to answer three questions:

- *How do right-wing populist parties conceive climate change science and climate policy?*
- *What is their voting behaviour in the European Parliament?*
- *What are the implications for successful climate and energy policy in Europe and globally?*

**W**e draw on official national electoral programmes, public statements by party leaders and spokespersons, press releases and trustworthy news sources for 21 right-wing populist parties, and analyse parliamentary activities, especially voting behaviour in Europe’s legislative body, the Parliament. The methodology and data as well as the source of all referenced quotes can be found in the Annex, along with a guide to the parties in our sample.

A handful of scholars have scrutinised the nature and causes of the hostility of right-wing populists towards climate protection policies<sup>9</sup> or have answered the question how different radical right-wing parties frame anti-environmental discourse<sup>10</sup> or have assessed far-right climate change communication in exemplary countries<sup>11</sup>. Others have looked into sustainable energy transformations and the rising political polarisation in times of “*post-truth politics*”<sup>12</sup>.

Yet, the broad spectrum of European parties’ stand on climate change has not been qualitatively assessed, contextualised with voting results or interpreted in view of future European policy making. This study is a first and explorative attempt to fill this gap.

#### EU climate policy in 2017 and 2018

- The EU revised the EU emissions trading system (EU ETS) for the period 2021–2030. The ETS is the world’s first major, and biggest, carbon market.
- It adopted the Effort Sharing Regulation (ESR), to set binding emission reduction targets in sectors falling outside the scope of the ETS such as agriculture and buildings.
- It adopted a regulation on emissions from land use, land use change and forestry (LULUCF).
- It passed a renewable energy and energy efficiency directive with binding targets as well as other laws to regulate CO<sub>2</sub> emissions from transport.
- Its overarching Governance Regulation comprised of an EU carbon budget and national strategies is meant to help achieve its targets.

## 2

# THE RISE OF RIGHT-WING POPULISM IN EUROPE



The closing press conference of the first ENF (Europe of Nations and Freedom) congress in Milano, Italy, on January 29, 2016.

The conference brought together: Romania's Laurentiu Rebeca, Great Britain's Janice Atkinson (UKIP), the Netherlands' Marcel De Graaff (PVV), Czech's Tomio Okamura (SPD), Italy's Matteo Salvini (Lega), France's Marine Le Pen (National Rally), the Netherlands' Geert Wilders (PVV), Austria's Heinz Christian Strache (FPÖ), Belgium's Tom Van Grieken (Vlaams Belang), and the Polish politician Michal Marusik.



**A** common characteristic of populist parties, leaders and movements is a rejection of pluralism and the claim of exclusive representation of “the people” who feel betrayed by elites (politicians, Brussels and the media, among others) deemed corrupt or morally inferior.<sup>13</sup>

The anger and fear bubbling beneath the surface or being openly expressed often have their roots in long-standing social grievances about the unequal merits of market liberalisation, perceived threats to prosperity, one's culture, security and stability. Right-wing populism further

draws its strength from the influx of migrants, a seeming loss of sovereignty and unstoppable technological and demographic change, to propagate its anti-elitist ideology.

In many parts of Europe, inflation is low, employment rates are historically high, the number of refugees has somewhat shrunk and economies are growing (with a few exceptions), yet citizens' trust in democratic institutions and the EU system is dwindling. In seven EU countries, as well as non-EU countries such as Switzerland, right-wing populist parties are part of a government coalition – more countries than ever before



in Europe.<sup>14</sup> In Poland and Hungary, non-populist parties turned into populist parties and hold an absolute majority. **FIG 2**

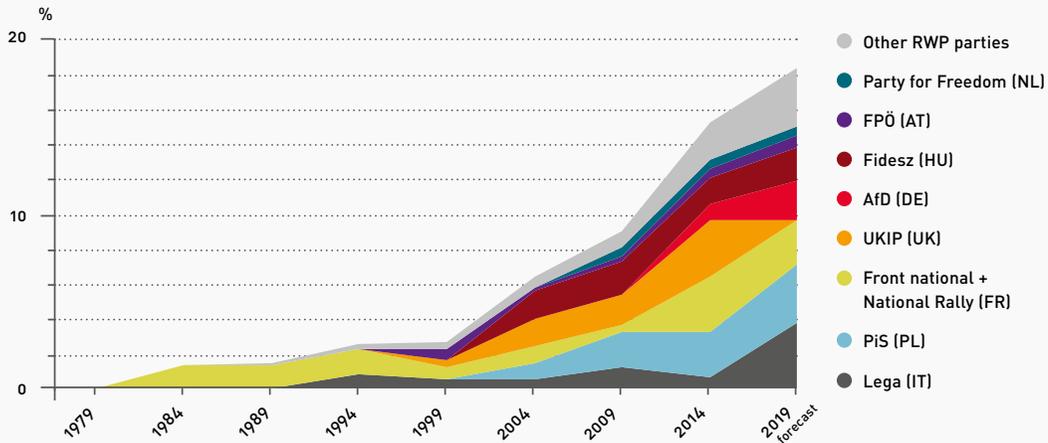
In the legislative term from 2014–2019, the share of seats that right-wing populist parties hold in the European Parliament (EP) is higher than at any time in the last 30 years. Right-wing populist parties won almost 15% of seats in the 2014-elections, a share that is projected to be higher in 2019 – despite the loss of about 18 *UKIP* MEPs. National polls indicate that more Europeans than ever before will vote for a party with an authoritarian, nativist and populist core.<sup>15</sup> **FIG 1**

As more right-wing populists enter the political groups of the parliament, their influence on agendas and procedures grows: they receive longer speaking times in plenary debates, the power to write reports or table disruptive questions and plenary amendments, and more resources to negotiate with MEPs from mainstream groups. All these have an impact on the outcome of parliamentary proceedings.<sup>16</sup> Although many radical MEPs remain marginalised or have not yet united under one umbrella, they can change prevailing social norms around what sort of claims are acceptable to make within political

FIG 1

### Evolution of today's strongest right-wing populist parties in Europe

The chart shows the percentage of seats in the European Parliament, assigned to 19 right-wing populist parties



The chart does not consider parties relevant in the past or populists' overall share. The forecast 2019 is based on polls in which Europeans are asked how they would vote in a hypothetical national election.  
 © adelphi 2019 Based on national poll data from Polls of Europe 2018 and historical data from Europe Politique 2018

debates, thereby slowing down the legislative works as well as policy and funding approval processes.<sup>17</sup> The fragmentation and polarisation of party systems also constitute challenges to democracy, forcing established parties into multiparty and minority government coalitions, making progressive domestic reforms harder to carry through.

In the following, we look at the spectrum of right-wing and populist parties – ranging from far-right ultra-nationalist parties (such as Marine Le Pen's *National Rally*, Matteo Salvini's *Lega*, and Geert Wilders' *Party for Freedom*) to neo-Nazi/fascist and anti-democratic varieties (such as *Golden Dawn* in Greece or the *Slovak National Party*).

In light of successful left-wing populist parties such as *La France Insoumise* and Spain's *Podemós*, it is important to clarify why we chose to focus on *right-wing* populism in this study, as opposed to 'populism' in general, a term which also applies to politics on the left. Topics related to environmentalism and climate change have

often been associated with left-wing politics, but are more often refuted by those on the right, as literature suggests<sup>18,19</sup>. In the context of climate change, scepticism about the scientific evidence is much more widespread amongst right-wing party members than others.<sup>20</sup> As such, an analysis on how rising right-wing populists act upon issues related to climate change and how they compare with each other would be more constructive.

Our sample contains the 21 strongest right-wing populist parties in European countries, of which 7 are part of a government coalition in an EU member state, and 16 hold seats in the European Parliament.

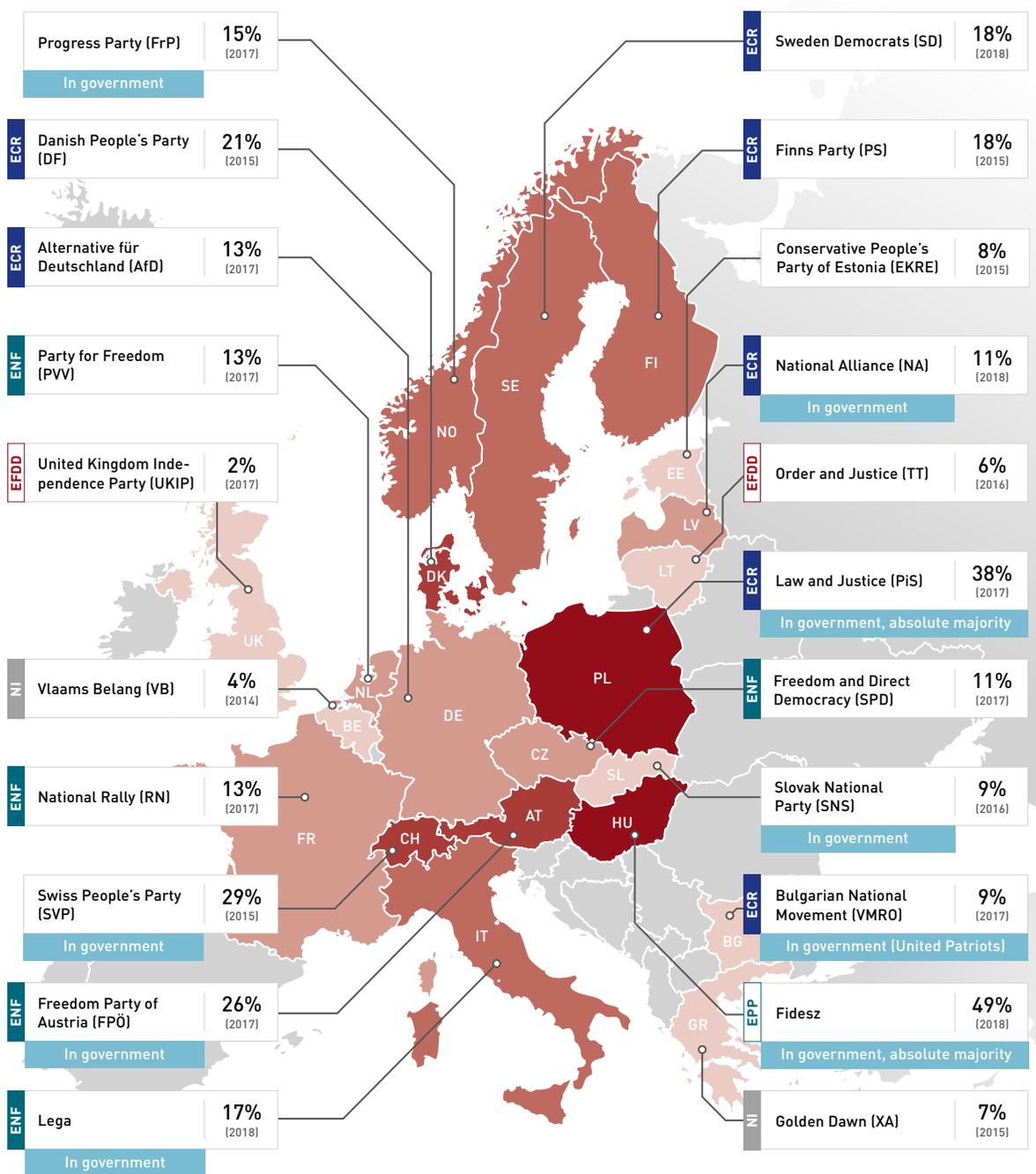
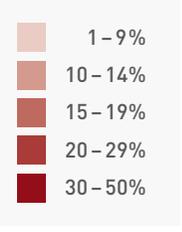
#### What is right-wing populism?

A political ideology that combines "right-wing" ("conservative or reactionary"<sup>21</sup>) views and policies with "populist" rhetoric – a "political approach that strives to appeal to ordinary people who feel that their concerns are disregarded by established elite groups".<sup>22</sup>

FIG 2

### Election results of right-wing populist parties in Europe

The chart shows the parties' share in last elections (2014–2018)



**Affiliation to groups in the European Parliament**

- ECR European Conservatives and Reformists
- EFDD Europe of Freedom and Direct Democracy
- NI Non-Inscrits
- ENF Europe of Nations and Freedom
- EPP European People's Party

© adelphi 2019 (Based on data from CIA World Factbook and Polls of Europe 2018, as of 8 October 2018)

### 3

## RIGHT-WING POPULIST POSITIONS ON CLIMATE CHANGE

Alexander Gauland speaking at the large AfD anti-EU Demo in Berlin, Germany, on 7 November 2015. Strident refutation of scientific consensus and strong rejection of any kind of climate policy make the AfD prominent examples of populist climate denialists.



Foto-berlin.net - shutterstock.com

**H**ow do right-wing populist parties perceive climate science and what is their stance on climate action and cooperation? In this chapter, we explore the spectrum of different positions on climate change as articulated in official electoral programmes and statements by party leaders and spokespersons in the media.

## SCEPTICISM ABOUT THE SCIENCE

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Our analysis finds that seven of the 21 right-wing populist parties are sceptical of the scientific consensus on human-induced climate change or are overtly denying it. Another 11 parties are inconsistent in their communication or remain completely silent on the problem. Two parties explicitly support the consensus on climate change (Hungary's *Fidesz* and the extreme-right Latvian *National Alliance* – both part of their respective national governments). **FIG 3**

In the following, we summarise the three types of attitudes towards climate science we observed. Longer summaries of each party's position and respective references can be found in the "Guide to right-wing populist parties" in the Annex.

### Type 1

**"DENIALIST | SCEPTICAL" parties cast doubt on the scientific consensus on human-induced climate change or explicitly reject evidence beyond reasonable doubt.**

Two prominent examples are the German *AfD*, claiming in their programme that "*CO<sub>2</sub> is not a pollutant, but an indispensable component of all life*" and that "*the IPCC and the German government are suppressing the positive effects of CO<sub>2</sub> on plant growth and thus on global nutrition*" (official programme 2017); and the British *UKIP* whose ex-party leaders Nigel Farage and Paul Nuttall, and whose current leader Gerard Batten, deny the reality of climate change. In 2018, an MEP from *UKIP*, John Stuart Agnew, authored an EU report claiming that climate change came from cosmic rays and that the effect of CO<sub>2</sub> levels is "*negligible*" and "*one of agriculture's greatest friends*."<sup>23</sup>

The Dutch *Party for Freedom* argues that there is no independent scientific evidence that human-related CO<sub>2</sub> emissions are the cause of climate change and that the IPCC has not been able to prove this relationship either.

The *Danish People's Party* does not mention climate in its programme but doubts anthropogenic climate change, as demonstrated in an exemplary press release ("*The*

*question of whether climate change is man-made or not is a matter of faith – and faith belongs to the People's Church*", Climate Rapporteur Mikkel Dencker, 2018).

The *Conservative People's Party of Estonia*, the *Sweden Democrats* as well as the Austrian *FPÖ* are also questioning or completely rejecting climate science.

Assertions that "*Greenland used to be a green country with vineyards*" (interview with Austrian *FPÖ* chief Heinz-Christian Strache, 2017) or online-news claiming that Antarctica is in fact getting cooler (*AfD*, 2017) illustrate that some parties even promulgate manipulative or fake news.

Sometimes, overtly denialist parties portray their people as victims of secret plans by leading political actors, using similar storylines to those known as conspiracy theories. Not uncommonly used is the claim that anthropogenic climate change is an invented theory used to draw (financial) resources out of the public, for example by applying additional taxes (see quotes in the Annex).

**Type 2**

“DISENGAGED | CAUTIOUS” parties either have no position on climate change or attribute little importance to the problem.

This attitude might be linked to their background as single-issue parties, the relative lack of focus on climate change in respective domestic public debates or to their own internal division. From our sample, 11 right-wing populist parties belong to this type, for example the the Belgian *Vlaams Belang*, the far-right Czech *Freedom and Direct Democracy*, the Italian *Lega* and the Greek *Golden Dawn* party – the last of which has a “Green Wing” which organises reforestation activities and firefighting, but the party does not mention climate change in its communications. In Lithuania, the *Order and Justice* party addresses energy prices, but does not specify its stance on climate change.

The Polish *PiS*, Europe’s “pro-coal party”, is known for a few ambiguous statements

by its leaders and its frequent opposition to climate policies, but does not have an overtly sceptical position on climate science.

Parties of this variety often emphasise the uncertainty around the impacts of emissions in the atmosphere and the effects of climate policy. For example, the Norwegian *Progress Party* stated that “*Earth’s climate changes over time, and we know too little about what affects these changes.*” The French *National Rally* also falls into this category, with its sceptical utterances about whether or to what extent humans contribute to climate change, while simultaneously promoting ambitious visions of national environmental action by means of the party’s New Ecology movement<sup>24</sup> in particular, as well as renewable energy deployment.

FIG 3

**Where right-wing populists stand on climate change science**

Denialist   Sceptical	<b>Austria</b>	Freiheitliche Partei Österreichs / Freedom Party of Austria (FPÖ) <sup>25</sup>
	<b>Denmark</b>	Dansk Folkeparti / Danish People’s Party (DF) <sup>26</sup>
	<b>Estonia</b>	Eesti Konservatiivne Rahvaerakond / Conservative People’s Party of Estonia (EKRE)
	<b>Germany</b>	Alternative für Deutschland / Alternative for Germany (AfD)
	<b>Great Britain</b>	United Kingdom Independence Party (UKIP)
	<b>Netherlands</b>	Partij voor de Vrijheid / Party for Freedom (PVV)
	<b>Sweden</b>	Sverigedemokraterna / Sweden Democrats (SD)
Disengaged   Cautious	<b>Czech Republic</b>	Svoboda a přímá demokracie – Tomio Okamura / Freedom and Direct Democracy (SPD)
	<b>France</b>	National Rally (former National Front) (RN)
	<b>Greece</b>	Chrysi Avgi / Golden Dawn (XA)
	<b>Italy</b>	Lega Nord (Lega)
	<b>Lithuania</b>	Tvarka ir teisingumas / Order and Justice (TT)
	<b>Norway</b>	Progress Party (PP)
	<b>Belgium</b>	Vlaams Belang / Flemish Interest (VB)
	<b>Bulgaria</b>	Bulgarsko Natsionalno Dvizhenie / Bulgarian National Movement (VMRO)
	<b>Poland</b>	Prawo i Sprawiedliwość / Law and Justice (PiS)
	<b>Slovakia</b>	Slovenská národná strana / Slovak National Party (SNS)
	<b>Switzerland</b>	Schweizerische Volkspartei / Swiss People’s Party (SVP)
Affirmative	<b>Finland</b>	Perussuomalaiset / Finns Party (PS)
	<b>Hungary</b>	Fidesz
	<b>Latvia</b>	Nacionālā Apvienība / National Alliance (NA)

© adelphi 2019. Based on an analysis of 21 official political party programmes, statements from party leaders, spokespersons, press releases, and other news sources.

### Type 3

“AFFIRMATIVE” parties support the scientific mainstream and recognise the danger that climate change poses to the world and their own countries.

Only three of the right-wing populist parties analysed in our study belong to this group: The governing Hungarian *Fidesz*, which received almost 50% of the votes in the last national elections (2018), the Latvian *National Alliance*, with 11% in the same year, and the *Finns Party* gaining about 18% of votes in 2015. *Fidesz* emphasises the global nature of the problem and is continually making an effort to encourage other countries to reduce emissions; yet domestic climate action is weak. The *National Alliance* argues strongly in favour of more climate research and investing in clean technologies and energies. It also highlights the wide spectrum of climate change related threats such as extreme weather events, floods and the spread of invasive plant species. The party also supports multilateral climate action, saying that “*climate change affects every single citizen of the world*” and “*only through joint efforts will we be able to make*

*a positive change*” (party representative Janis Eglitis 2017)<sup>27</sup>. The same is true for the *Finns Party*, with its leader stating “*climate change is a reality and climate problems are real, but they are global challenges.*”

*Fidesz* and *National Alliance* have been in government for a relatively long time – the Latvian party since the 2011 parliamentary election and the Hungarian since 2010. This comparatively substantial experience with governmental responsibility might be one reason for the moderate stance on climate change. Hungary’s energy sector is less carbon-intensive, due to the larger share of natural gas, oil and nuclear energy in its energy mix.<sup>28</sup> Thus, Hungary’s national emissions are below the EU-average.<sup>29</sup> Latvia’s emissions are also below this average, and it has one of the highest shares of renewables (hydro) in its energy mix.<sup>30</sup>

Viktor Orbán, the Prime Minister of Hungary, answers questions at the press conference at the federal chancellery in Berlin, Germany on 5 July 2018.



## POLICY PERSPECTIVES

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In the following section, we look at the most prominent arguments against climate policies as well as the context in which statements on climate policies appear. The aim is, firstly, to cluster arguments, priorities and fears that underpin climate policy opposition, and, secondly, to identify frames, namely how issues and policy interventions are constructed and portrayed.

Framing refers to “*communicative processes of sense-making in which some aspects of reality are emphasised and others are de-emphasised*”<sup>31</sup>, and determines the perspective from which a topic is debated and interpreted. The framing used by politicians and journalists to describe climate change and policy triggers certain cognitive processes which shape the audiences’ responses. The way an issue is presented is often done so “*with the intention of making it appear either more or less acceptable to the audience*”<sup>32</sup>. In short, arguments are not neutral – all climate change communication is framed and appeals to values and interests of the target group.

Throughout this paper, we define ‘climate policy’ as political actions which aim to limit or reduce greenhouse gas emissions or improve carbon sinks. These include, but are not limited to, climate targets, carbon trading and taxation laws, various types of energy policy such as renewable energy subsidies and targets and energy efficiency laws as well as policies and subsidies to promote e-mobility.



## Criticisms over climate policy

Firstly, we find that hostility towards national climate action and energy transition policies is primarily based on four arguments: they are perceived as expensive, unjust, harmful to the environment or not worthwhile.

Secondly, the four overarching and cross-cutting frames used to support these arguments are “economic decline”, “homeland (“Heimat”) and nature”, “national independence” and “scientific dissent”. The *scientific dissent frame*, as we saw earlier, delegitimises most climate policies by questioning the main premise, i. e. that climate change is human-induced. The *national independence frame* is a typically populist one, used under the guise of defending or restoring the people’s sovereignty which, according to some parties, is threatened by international agreements. It appeals to an ‘imagined community’<sup>33</sup> of the people overruled by external elites.

By taking advantage of one or more of those mental frames, messages take on a deeper and sometimes moral or emotional dimension, bringing invisible values into the debate. The following types of arguments are a subjective clustering based on an iterative assessment; other interpretations of populist concerns and rhetoric are of course possible.

### 1

#### Economically harmful

The argument put forward by many parties in the sample is that climate policies (renewable support schemes, efficiency laws, emissions trading or carbon taxes) harm the economy and the competitiveness of national industries. *UKIP* and the Norwegian *Progress Party* are prominent examples as well as most pro-coal parties, including *Party for Freedom*, *PiS*, and *AfD*. Climate protection measures, especially “uncompetitive” renewable energies, are assumed to drive up energy prices. However, the claims are often unsubstantiated with evidence.

The argument is typically framed in the overarching context of *economic decline*, *national independence*, and occasionally *scientific dissent*. For example, the *AfD* – after highlighting that climate has always been changing and questioning the IPCC’s

credibility (*scientific dissent frame*) – argues that compulsory CO<sub>2</sub> reductions would weaken the local economy and lower standards of living (*economic decline frame*). The extreme-right *Golden Dawn* argues that Greece is entitled to exploit its national oil, gas and precious mineral resources (*national independence frame*).

The *Danish People’s Party* states that “*Danish business is already suffering from high taxes and charges [...] the new climate law will impose heavy burdens on Danish business life*” (*economic decline frame*).

Another argument is that climate policy has unjust effects: Assuming that emission reduction policies would lead to higher energy prices and cost people their jobs (*economic decline frame*), a number of parties argue that climate policy undermines social justice. While securing affordable energy for everyone is a common political priority across the entire political spectrum, some right-wing populist parties disproportionately emphasise rising electricity prices for “the common people”. The seemingly widespread assumption that climate policy often leads to rising energy prices with unjust effects can best be illustrated by the *Finns Party’s* programme: “*The EU’s climate policy must be concerned with social justice – it must realise that high energy prices affect the poorest the most.*”

Subsidies for renewable energies are considered particularly expensive and unfair, despite the fact that power generation costs for renewables today are comparable to those of conventional technologies or lower in many parts of Europe<sup>34</sup>. The Czech *SPD* used the term “*solar barons*” for companies getting rich on renewable energy subsidies and argues that “*this year, renewable energy sources will cost Czech taxpayers around 40 billion crowns [~1.5 billion Euro].*” The Italian *Lega* argues that climate policy had only benefitted the “*large foreign multinationals with their mega plants.*” In countries where coal trade unions retain their grip on politics, right-wing populist parties often appeal to coal communities and oppose energy reforms, particularly in the EU context (*national independence*).





The **Gilets Jaunes** (Yellow Vests) revolts against fuel-taxes which began in France in November 2018 are interpreted as backlash for climate policy. The increasingly violent protests showed how feelings of anger arise when single climate policy measures are not embedded in wider social reform and redistribution policies,

and omit structural problems such as social marginalisation, privileging of higher income urban population and lack resonance amongst those most affected by such measures. Though not conventionally right-wing, it was endorsed and strategically used by many right-wing groups across Europe.

## 3

## Environmentally harmful

Many parties oppose very specific climate policy measures such as increasing wind and solar power among other renewable energy sources, which would impact the national environment (*homeland and nature frame*). For instance, new turbines are seen to destroy the traditional landscape and harm local bird species. Solar panels are often criticised for occupying land and, when put on rooftops, changing the typical imagery of settlements (“*Landschaftsver-schandler*”<sup>35</sup> – SVP; “*solar is occupying our native land*” – SNS; “*Our arable land is covered with solar panels. When we subsidise biofuels, we destroy our own agriculture*” – Czech SPD leader Radim Fiala).

This selective perception of the environmental impact of renewables is often coupled with a much lower concern for environ-

mental impacts of other energy sources and industrial activities. It often also correlates with strong support for nuclear energy (e.g. SNS, *Party for Freedom*, *Sweden Democrats*). A key condition under which these parties would accept climate policy is that it would not pose harm to the landscape. The *Danish People’s Party*, for instance, wants to “*phase out the support for wind turbines on land and instead focus on offshore wind turbines*”, which do not “*bother anyone in their backyard or spoil our landscape.*”

Another less prominent theme is human health: in its programme the *Finns Party* stresses that “*the wind power industry could have public health consequences, since infra-sonic waves emanating from the turbines are suspected of having negative health effects.*”

## 4

## Not worthwhile

Climate policy is portrayed as useless, either when a party questions the relation between greenhouse gas emissions and temperatures (*scientific uncertainty frame*) or when it considers national abatement futile. Some arguments used to support the latter include the alleged insignificance of national reductions when compared to the apparent inaction of other major polluters such as China, or in view of potential carbon leakage effects. An example is the *Danish People’s Party*, claiming that “*the newly-industrialised countries like China, India and Brazil will for many years increase their CO<sub>2</sub> emissions dramatically, far more so than [we and] others can reduce their emissions.*” *Sweden Democrats* argue that “*Sweden currently accounts for 1,5% of total CO<sub>2</sub> emissions*

*in the world. That’s a very small part. Is it then reasonable that the focus should be on higher gasoline taxes and expensive railways for us at home, while China and India, which account for the largest emissions globally, should be allowed to increase their share?*” The *Finns Party* also claims that Finland is already far ahead in the climate agenda and the focus should thus be on other bigger polluters like China and India.

The Austrian FPÖ, stating that “*global warming cannot be corrected in the face of increasing solar flares and warming of the sun,*” also uses the *scientific uncertainty frame* to question the effectiveness of climate policy measures (party leader Heinz-Christian Strache, 2017).



The Sweden Democrats leader Jimmie Akesson holding a public speech at Vaghustorget in Orebro, Sweden on 24 August 2018. The rising party is known for anti-establishment rhetoric and outspoken protests against immigration and crime.



## Support for climate policy

A number of right-wing populist parties promote energy transition (regardless of their attitude towards climate change), drawing mainly on two co-benefits of clean energy: energy independence/economic benefits and improved quality of life. Again, these arguments are framed within a context of *national independence* and *homeland and nature*.

1

### Energy independence | economic benefits

The *National Rally* seeks to massively develop the French renewable energy sector by means of intelligent protectionism, economic patriotism and public and private investment. As Marine Le Pen said, reducing fossil fuels would make France “*less dependent on the Gulf countries like Saudi Arabia which, in addition to their oil, send us their ideology*” (*national independence frame*). The Austrian *FPÖ* – although strictly opposing carbon taxation which would trigger a European “*deindustrialisation*” – seeks to fully transition to domestic, locally available energy sources and to consequently expand solar, hydro, wind and bioenergy (as well as phasing out coal and nuclear

and thereby open up a new job market and decrease dependency on imported fossil fuels (*national independence frame*). The *Finns Party*, to some extent, supports climate and energy policies so long as they support economic growth, social justice and energy independence: “*A significant increase in energy self-sufficiency must be thought of as a central goal.*”

The Norwegian *Progress Party* promotes the notion that “*Earth’s climate changes over time, and we know too little about what affects these changes. Thus, it is sensible to prioritise measures that have an additional effect beyond being a climate measure.*”

2

### Improved quality of life

An example of this argument is that of the Italian *Lega* which is strongly in favour of renewables such as “*small systems [solar and wind], with high technological value, where Italian ingenuity comes first*” as well as sustainable mobility, and emission reductions by prohibiting circulation for the most polluting cars. It also advocates energy saving and energy efficiency measures by reducing current consumption.

In their electoral programme, under the chapter on “*climate and energy*”, the *Sweden Democrats* state that “*Sweden has a rich*

*and valuable natural environment that must be protected and preserved.*” To preserve “*untouched nature*”, the cultural landscape, biodiversity and beautiful scenery that are to be enjoyed by the Swedes, they aim to “*take on our share of responsibility for global challenges*” and focus on energy efficiency and energy research to move climate policy forward (programme 2014) (*homeland and nature frame*). In other official statements, the *Sweden Democrats* have denied human-induced climate change (see profile in the Annex).

# MULTILATERAL CLIMATE ACTION

## The Paris Agreement and EU climate policy

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Climate change is unsolvable at the national level, and as emissions do not respect borders, multilateral climate action is required to facilitate collective action on problems. In our analysis, we were particularly interested in statements on international climate cooperation, such as processes and regulations developed and applied by the UNFCCC and European Union.

### Hostility against the Paris Agreement

The Paris Agreement – hailed as an important success story of multilateralism and the one major breakthrough-agreement in climate change diplomacy – has little support amongst right-wing populist parties. Just one party mentions it in its latest electoral programme (France’s *National Rally*), but a number of interviews with party leaders reveal a widespread negative perception of the accord, mainly due to perceived high cost of implementation and externally imposed unfair regulations, undermining national sovereignty.

The Austrian *FPÖ* voted against the ratification of the Paris Agreement in 2016 in the Austrian Parliament (Nationalrat), calling it a “redistribution of significant amounts of money. New agreements hide foreign aid without control options.” The party opposes “this sanction policy” that would impose a penalty on all citizens. A similar view is expressed by the *Dutch Party for Freedom* in a statement on the Paris Agreement: “Sovereign states decide what they want to do with regard to climate change. [...] The elite are laughing here while rubbing their hands. They will benefit from these climate action plans. But the hard-working citizens in the Member States will pay for their electricity, their car, their heating.” A *PVV*-senator said before the Dutch ratification of the Paris Agreement: “Not ratifying [the Paris Agreement] is a unique opportunity to stop the hoax around the climate [...] 100 billion dol-

lars a year goes from the developed world to the third world. China does not pay anything. Russia does not pay anything. India does not pay anything. Saudi Arabia does not pay anything. No, it is the Dutch taxpayer, who pays” (Dannij van der Sluijs).

The *Finns Party* sees the Paris Agreement as a threat to its national economy and employment (“*The catastrophic EU application of the Paris Agreement is a threat to growth in Finland*”, “*Finnish work must be given priority*”) whereas the *Lega* perceives the Agreement as economically unfair: “*The agreement reached was a downward compromise on continuing to allow Chinese companies and developing countries to compete unfairly with Italian companies, who fully comply with environmentally friendly production*” (party President Gianluca Pini). The *Sweden Democrats* reason that “*we cannot forbid anyone to pick up oil or coal from the ground, as long as there is someone else, who will nevertheless consume that energy.*”

Another notion is that the agreement is simply ineffective, because countries will not comply. Parties using this narrative distrust international mechanisms and pledges made by other countries: The *National Rally*, calling the UNFCCC a “*communist project*” and being determined to take France out of the Paris Accord, argues that local action is more legitimate and effective than multilateral agreements: “*Climate policy*

actions can only be decided on and implemented at the national level, the only legitimate political framework.”

The FPÖ argues that “countries such as the USA, Canada or India will not comply with the Agreement and will quit prematurely in case of sanction.” A similar narrative appears in Estonia, where EKRE’s leader Mart Helme expressed that Estonia’s emissions of greenhouse gases were insignificant compared to the rest of the world, and that “the Paris Agreement was signed with so many countries only because it was very general and non-binding. [...] This is a classic left-wing action, where a lot of things are said.”

Only Fidesz actively supports the Paris Agreement, partly using it as a reason to be less ambitious at home. President Orbán agrees that climate change is dangerous and requires global action, thus supports the Paris Agreement. In

2016, Hungarian President János Adér wrote a letter to 10 heads of state from the world’s top greenhouse gas polluters. The message was simple: Set an example and tighten your reduction targets.

The Polish PiS also considers Paris a success story and wants to implement the objectives, as displayed at the COP24 in Katowice where Prime Minister Morawiecki (PiS) said: “we are a leader in climate protection. We are glad that all the countries supported and adopted the Katowice Package.” Yet, its other actions in government speak a different language.

As we will see in Chapter 4, eight of the right-wing populist parties in our sample (32 MEPs) voted in favour of ratifying the Paris Agreement in 2016, many of which criticised it in official statements, including the *Finns Party*, *Sweden Democrats* and *PiS*.

## Hostility towards EU climate action

To a large extent, these parties oppose EU climate and energy policies in their national electoral programmes or statements – especially *binding* EU rules, such as emission reduction targets, renewable energy and energy efficiency targets and/or mitigation policy, considering them unrealistic, economically harmful or socially unjust.

An example is the FPÖ, fearing that the “hypocritical [ETS] emission certificates squeeze money out of our businesses’ pockets, but without actually reducing CO<sub>2</sub>.” The Finns Party argues that “the Commission’s present climate and energy policies have resulted in industry slowdowns and unemployment” (EU electoral programme, 2014). Neno Dimov supported by Bulgaria’s *United Patriots*<sup>36</sup>, who chaired the EU Environmental Council in 2018, reasons that “if the EU’s 40% emission reduction target is met, the [global] effect would be



Logo of Law and Justice (Polish: Prawo i Sprawiedliwość, PiS). Within the EU, Poland is careful not to isolate itself, while also opposing reforms that would strengthen the EU’s reduction ambitions.



Climate change will intensify winter storms in Europe, causing increased damage. However, the links between extreme weather events and climate change are mostly absent from party programmes and statements.

*minimal, but in Europe alone, more than 500 billion Euros would be spent.”*

The fear of disadvantage in a competitive international market is also prominent in party members’ statements, as *AfD’s* Alice Weidel’s statement illustrates: *“European companies are in danger of being increasingly thrown back by the EU’s unilateralisation of tightening climate targets in international competition with the US and China.”*

*PiS’* programme states that at the EU level, the party will fight against *“discrimination against electricity generation from hard coal”*. It demands the revision of the EU’s energy and climate package in exchange for Poland’s consent on other key EU issues.

Often, hostility towards EU climate action drifts into general anti-EU rhetoric, exemplified by Geert Wilders’ quote from *Party for Freedom*: *“Will our women still be safe in the streets 20 years from now? [...] How long will it take before Sharia law is introduced here? [...] But not a single European government dares to address these existential questions. They worry about climate change. But they will soon be experiencing the Islamic winter.”*

Most right-wing populist parties in our sample are generally opposed to EU action and rules that impact national sovereignty, not just sustainable energy and climate policies. In the next chapter, we will reveal how voting behaviour in the European Parliament is mostly, but not always, consistent with that rhetoric.

## REVIEW

### Perceptions of climate science and policy

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Overall, climate change mitigation and adaptation policies are still niche issues for European right-wing populist parties. Most of them do not invest their political energy into defying climate science, with the exception of *AfD* (Germany) and *UKIP* (Great Britain) where climate change denial is a key feature of the party profile. Political agendas are shaped around national identity politics, immigration and a simplified view of national economic interests – climate (in-)action is rarely a focus in their election campaigns. Energy prices and energy dependency are a more salient topic amongst the populist parties in our sample.

The most common arguments expressed by right-wing populist parties are that climate and energy policies present an unbearable burden for the national economy/consumers and have unjust effects. The most common frames utilised to legitimise inaction are *economic decline*, *national independence*, *scientific dissent*, as well as notions of “*homeland and nature*”. Internationally agreed climate targets – from the UN to the EU – are mostly considered over-ambitious, ideological and harmful to consumers and national economies.

The parties do not refer to the vulnerability of their own territory, economy and society to climate change impacts. Effects such as increases in mortality from heatwaves, sea level rise, increasing risk of river floods or decreases in economic values of forests are absent in statements on climate change. For example, crop losses or melting Alpine glaciers do not feature on the agendas of the Polish *PiS* and Swiss *SVP*. If environmental changes are mentioned at all, the parties do not link them to climate change.

Most of the “anti-migration” parties do not draw links between global environmental change, climate change and the wellbeing of other countries, and forced migration. However, exceptions are the *National Rally* (criticising French deputies for proposing a regulatory framework on climate refugees as this would open “*Pandora’s box*”, whereby “*millions*” could claim asylum in France) and the *Lega* with Deputy Prime Minister Matteo Salvini asserting that climate should not be used as a pretext to justify illegal migration. The Austrian *FPÖ* takes the same line (“*climate change must never become a recognised justification for asylum. [If the message spreads,] Europe, including Austria, will be overrun by millions of climate refugees*”). The *Finns Party’s* leader Jussi Halla-aho recently stated that energy expenditure in the North is more than that in the South. Therefore, the argument goes, international migration from the South to North should be halted for climate reasons (interview with Jussi Halla-aho, 2018).

## POPULIST VOTING BEHAVIOUR IN THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT



The European Parliament votes on the ratification of the Paris Agreement, 4 October 2016.

European Union 2016 –  
European Parliament/Flickr [CC BY-NC-ND 2.0]

**W**e now turn to the dynamics in the European Parliament and the parties' electoral behaviour to see which voting patterns emerge and how European climate and energy policy is influenced by right-wing populism.

Empirically, the EP has been a strong advocate for ambitious EU climate and energy policies, despite varying majorities. Parliament's institutional set-up, with strong rapporteurs and committees, has been instrumental in forming and maintaining its relatively firm position on environmental matters.<sup>37</sup> The European Parliament has recently been sending strong signals to governments and proposed climate targets far above the Commission's proposals.<sup>38</sup>

In the following, we explore how MEPs belonging to right-wing populist parties and the political groups of the EP vote on climate and energy policies. For detailed voting records of each vote in our sample, please consult the Annex.

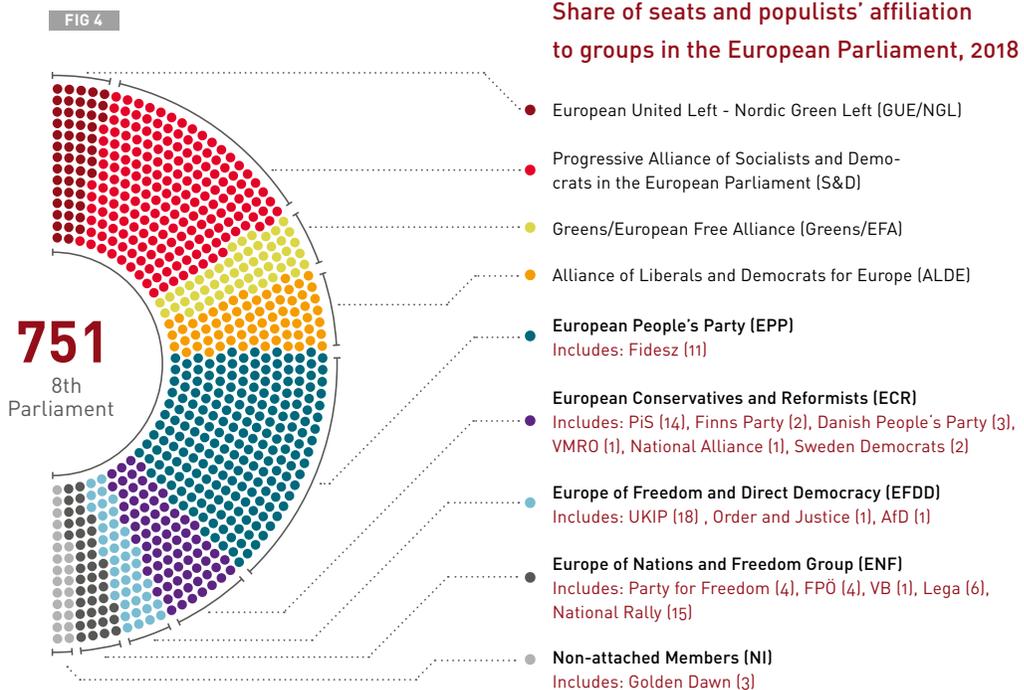
## Right-wing populist parties are likely to increase their share of seats in the next EU Parliament.

Eurosceptic and right-wing populist parties are likely to significantly gain seats in the next EU Parliament, but whether they will unite as a single party group or remain divided is still unclear. At the time of writing this paper, the parties are scattered throughout the right-wing parliamentary groups and are mainly active in the Europe of Nations and Freedom (ENF), Europe of Freedom and Direct Democracy (EFDD) and European Conservatives and Reformists (ECR). *Fidesz* is the only member of the more centrist European People's Party (EPP).

Whereas the centrist groups EPP and Socialists and Democrats (S&D) are currently polling poorly, the right-wing populist ENF group is expected to almost double in size, as parties take up overtly Eurosceptic posi-

tions and join their group. Although Brexit will push *UKIP* MEPs out of parliament, the EFDD could grow if alignments remain unchanged and MEPs from growing parties such as Germany's *AfD* and Italy's *Five Star Movement* (M5S) do not switch loyalty. The ECR is set to lose all of its seats held by *UK Conservatives* while some of its far-right MEPs might be join the more nationalist forces, primarily ENF. ENF and *Fidesz* have recently held discussions on possibilities to join forces. New parties will have about the same strength as the European Left/Nordic Green Left (GUE/NGL) and EFDD.<sup>39</sup>

The German *AfD*, Italian *Lega*, Hungary's *Fidesz* and the *Sweden Democrats* are predicted to increase their share of seats the most.



National polls signal that after May 2019, ALDE may receive 70 seats (+2), ECR 48 [-25], EFDD 47 [+4], ENF 61 [+26], EPP 181 [-38], Greens/EFA 45 [-7], GUE/NGL 57 [+6], new parties 41 [+41], non-affiliated MEPs (NI) 10 [-11], and the S&D 145 [-44]; 705 MEPs in total [-46]. Gains or losses are indicated in the brackets. © adelphi 2019 (based on VoteWatch.eu)

**Right-wing populist parties predominantly vote against climate and sustainable energy policies.**

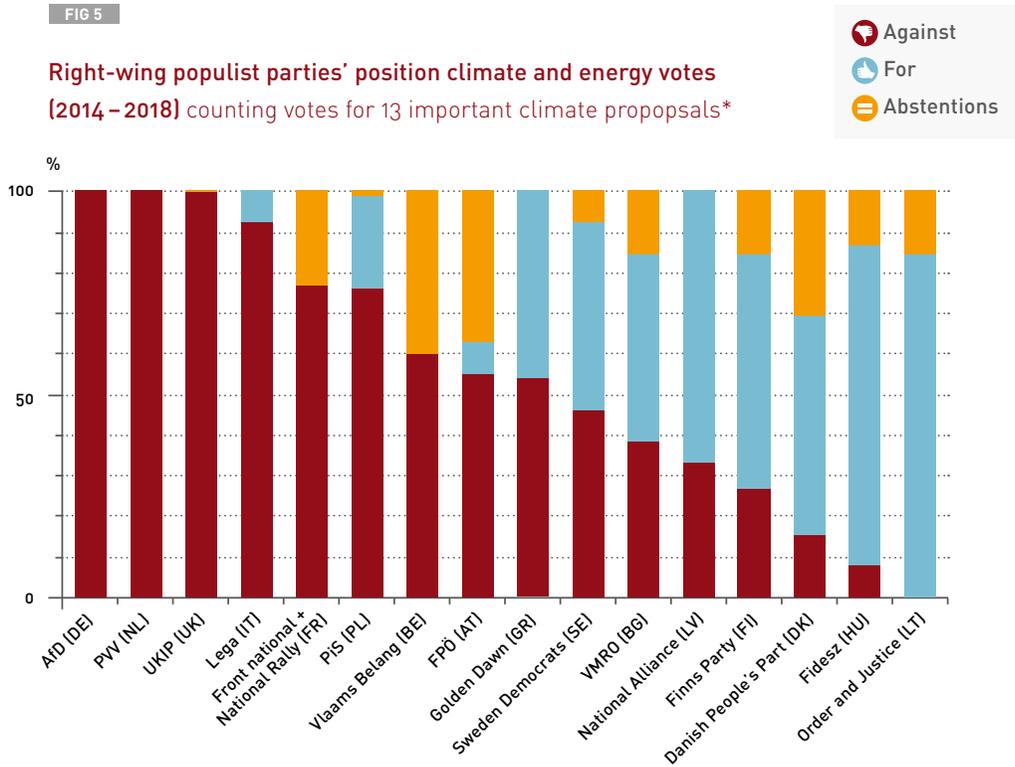
We analysed the parties' votes in parliament, using 13 important decisions since the pivotal climate talks in Paris in 2015 to identify general party positions on climate and sustainable energy policy. These include the revision of the EU ETS Directive for the period 2021–2030, on binding emission reduction targets in sectors falling outside the scope of the ETS (non-ETS) for 2021–2030 (Effort Sharing Regulation, ESR), and on accounting of emissions from land use, land use change and forestry (LULUCF). Furthermore, we included the Buildings Directive and three key proposals (energy efficiency, governance of the Energy Union, promotion of renewables) of the “Clean En-

ergy for All Europeans” package – the most important set of measures enabling the EU to deliver on its Paris Agreement commitments and a key element of the Juncker Commission's political priority of “a resilient Energy Union with a forward-looking climate change policy.”<sup>40</sup>

We also considered the proposal on EU climate diplomacy – very indicative for international parliamentary engagement on climate change – and a proposal on strengthening CO<sub>2</sub>-regulations for heavy-duty vehicles (e.g. SUVs), which was perceived as an important step to reduce emissions in the transport sector. We also assessed a proposal on reducing CO<sub>2</sub> emis-

FIG 5

**Right-wing populist parties' position climate and energy votes (2014–2018) counting votes for 13 important climate proposals\***



\*includes 13 votes on: Governance of the Energy Union 2018; energy efficiency 2018; promotion of renewables 2018; climate diplomacy report 2018; CO<sub>2</sub> emission from heavy-duty vehicles 2018; CO<sub>2</sub> emissions from light vehicles 2018; energy performance of buildings directive 2018; inclusion of the land use and forestry sector in reduction targets 2018; ETS reform 2017; effort sharing decision 2017; EU position for COP22 in Marrakesh 2016; ratification of the Paris Agreement 2016; EU position for COP21 in Paris 2015. Total right-wing populist MEPs in the sample (n=): 93. © adelphi 2019 (based on VoteWatch.eu).

sions of light vehicles as well as the EU's position for the UN climate conference in Paris (COP21) in 2015 and the ratification of the Paris climate accord in 2016.

In total, we considered 93 MEPs from 16 right-wing populist parties in the parliament. **FIG 5**

In all votes, the majority of right-wing populist parliamentarians voted "against" the resolution. The German *AfD*, Dutch *Party for Freedom*, British *UKIP*, Italian *Lega* and French *National Rally* (formerly *Front National*) consistently voted against all resolutions, the latter with a few abstentions. The Polish *PiS* opposed all policies but three.

This pattern is significant, because these parties are from the largest EU member states and thus have higher numbers of MEPs. **FIG 4**

*Fidesz* stands out amongst the populist parties: As members of the more mainstream EPP group, as government representatives, and as supporter of climate science and multilateral climate action, its MEPs voted "in favour" in almost all resolutions. It opposed the vote on setting CO<sub>2</sub>-standards for cars in 2018, but provided more support for climate proposals than other right-wing populist parties. *Fidesz* is also one of the largest parties of the right-wing populists.

The Lithuanian *Order and Justice* also favoured all climate policy proposals, but with just one MEP, its influence is limited. The *Danish People's Party* too, was relatively supportive of climate and energy policy. The remaining parties on the right of the political spectrum hold more varying positions, but are considerably more hostile to the climate and energy proposals than the average MEP.

The least popular vote (boosting EU energy efficiency by 35% by 2030) was opposed by all right-wing populist parties except *Fidesz* and 1 MEP from *Order and Justice*. Likewise, the 2018-climate diplomacy report to strengthen international EU engagement on climate was opposed by an overwhelming share of right-wing populist parties from our sample (65 MEPs).

However, there are a number of outliers: The ballot results on the EU's ratification of the Paris Agreement in 2016 show support by eight of the right-wing populist parties in our sample (32 MEPs out of 93 right-wing populist MEPs in the sample). For the EU, it was a symbolic non-legislative vote – the result of which was not unexpected. That said, 30 right-wing populist MEPs from the sample still voted against the ratification (*Lega*, *UKIP*, *FPÖ*, *Party for Freedom* and *AfD*) and 23 abstained.

The vote on reducing CO<sub>2</sub> emissions from heavy-duty vehicles such as buses and trucks had more support than the average climate vote – possibly because stricter regulations have little impact on national energy models and consumers, but reduce domestic air pollution. However, even though 37 MEPs across the right-wing populist parties of our sample supported the vote, 43 MEPs opposed it.

We found that the vote on energy performance in buildings received most support from right-wing parties: nine parties from our sample voted "in favour" of the resolution on new EU rules for buildings and homes, among them three Scandinavian parties (*Sweden Democrats*, *Danish People's Party* and *Finns Party*), five Central-Eastern European parties (*Golden Dawn*, *Order and Justice*, *PiS*, *VMRO*, *Fidesz*) as well as the Italian *Lega*.

**Right-wing populist parties make up a significant share of total votes against climate and sustainable energy policies in the European Parliament.**

The populist parties in our sample and their MEPs – holding about 15% of seats in the European Parliament during the eighth term (2014–2019) – made up a significant share of the total votes against the policies, contributing almost half of all “against” votes (48%).

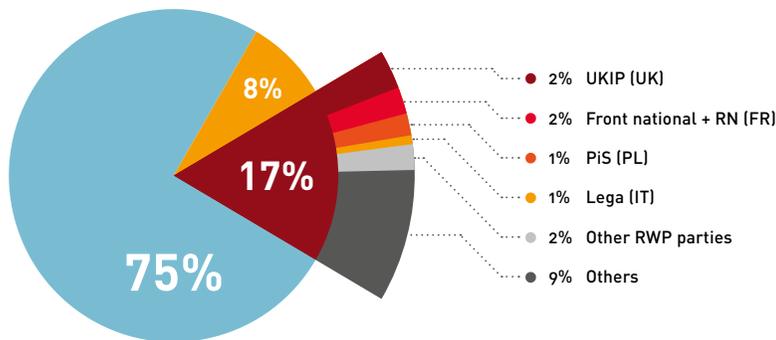
In some cases, this share was much higher: In the vote on reducing CO<sub>2</sub> emissions from heavy-duty vehicles, as described in the previous section, the 43 opposing MEPs from the 16 right-wing populist parties in our sample contributed to about 77% of

“against”-votes in parliament. “Against”-votes on promoting renewable energy sources consisted of 61% right-wing populist parties’ MEPs.

Most votes against the tabled policy proposals came from the populist parties holding more seats: *UKIP* (18 seats) and *National Rally*, formerly *Front National* (15 seats), as well as *PiS* (14 seats) and the *Lega* (6 seats). The German *AfD*, polling between 15–18% in October 2018<sup>41</sup>, may receive a similar influential amount of seats after May 2019.

FIG 6

**Right-wing populist parties’ share of total votes against climate and energy proposals**  
counting votes for 13 important climate proposals\*



The graph shows the total parliament’s average voting result. Total right-wing populist MEPs in the sample (n=): 93. Total number of MEPs in the parliament: 751. © adelphi 2019

4

**Right-wing populist parties' positions on climate policy and sustainable energy have been relatively stable over time.**

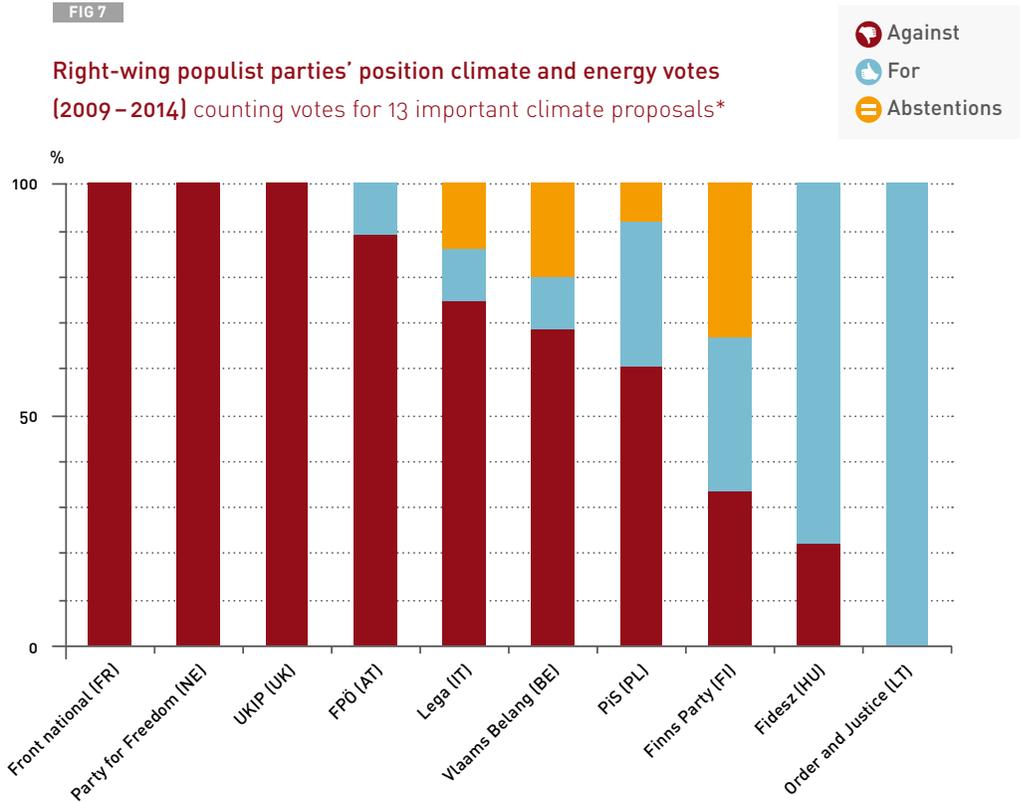
To track voting behaviour across legislative periods and ascertain whether positions became more extreme, we compared the voting records of the period from 2014 – 2019 with those of the previous electoral term (2009 – 2014). We included seven important votes on climate and sustainable energy policy (for further details, see the Annex). The voting patterns for and against climate policies we observed during both periods were very similar. For example, in both electoral terms, *Front National* (today *National Rally*), *Party for Freedom* and *UKIP*

consistently voted against the resolutions. *FPÖ*, *Lega* and *Vlaams Belang* also voted consistently against the majority of the votes.

The Lithuanian *Order and Justice* party and Hungarian *Fidesz* were in favour of almost all of the climate and energy policies – just as in the term from 2014 – 2019. The Polish *PiS* however, opposed *more* climate and energy votes in the current term than in the past; the share of “against”-votes slightly increased.

FIG 7

**Right-wing populist parties' position climate and energy votes (2009 – 2014) counting votes for 13 important climate proposals\***



\*The 7 votes included are: UNFCCC conferences in Copenhagen (COP15, 2009), Durban (COP17, 2011), Doha (COP18, 2012) and Warsaw (COP 19, 2013); the implementation of the Kyoto Protocol (2014); the vote on the EU environment and climate program (LIFE) (2013); non-CO2 climate-relevant anthropogenic emissions (2011); the mechanism for monitoring and reporting of emissions and climate information (2013); and accounting rules on GHG emissions related to land use (2013). In the 7th term (2009-2014), only 10 parties from our sample had MEPs in the EP. Total right-wing populist MEPs in the sample (n=): 61. © adelphi 2019 (based on VoteWatch.eu).

## Right-wing populist parties are relatively positive about other environmental topics (non-climate) ...

Right-wing populist parties often draw on environmental and landscape protection arguments to protest against infrastructure development for the renewable energy transition. To understand if this concern played a role in voting behaviour, we looked at voting patterns in other environmental policy areas not directly related to climate change, such as biodiversity protection in the EU, air pollution, and reduction of single-use plastics.

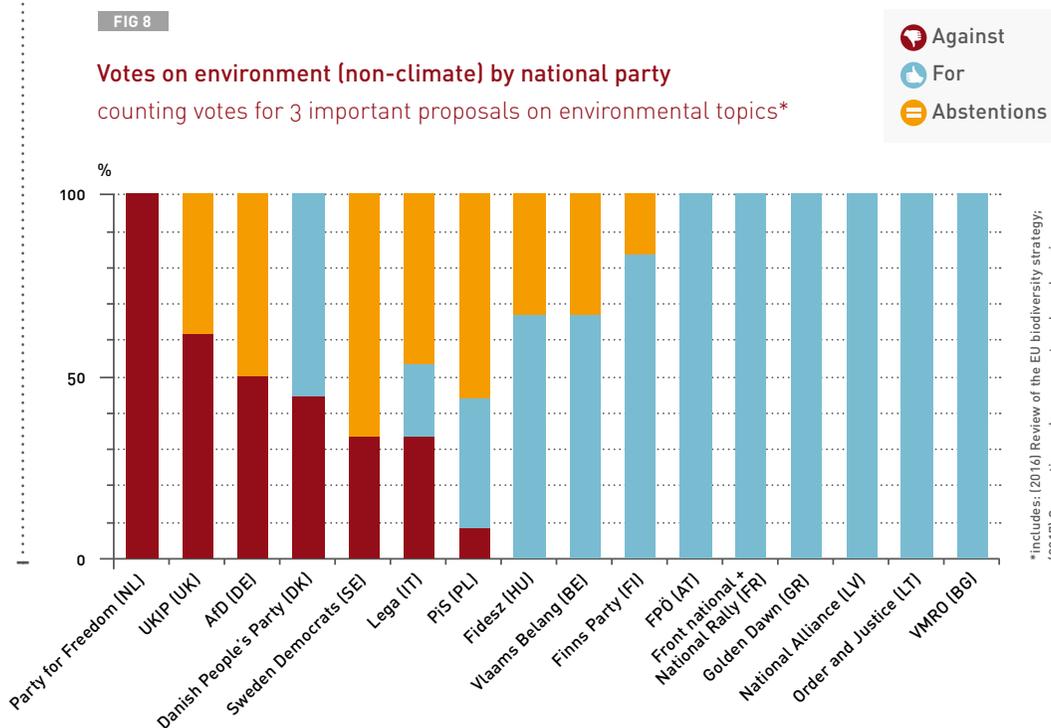
Voting behaviour in the EP more or less reflects the pro-environmental attitude that was evident in party programmes and statements: The majority of the right-wing populist MEPs were in favour of these proposals. With the exception of *UKIP* and the Dutch *Party for Freedom*, the voting results were relatively similar across parties and indicate stronger support for locally protective environmental regulations than for climate regulations associated with glo-

balist politics. The parliamentarians from *National Rally* (former *Front National*), *FPÖ*, *Golden Dawn* and *National Alliance* consistently opposed climate policy but strongly supported other environmental proposals.

However, a review of policies in the sample indicates widespread parliamentary support for such policies, which minimises any indication of positive influence right-wing populist parties may have on European environmental policy action. As an example, the vote on reducing plastic pollution – to ban single-use cutlery, cotton buds, straws etc. – was supported by 571 MEPs (87% of the whole parliament) and opposed by only 53 MEPs (8%). From the populist spectrum, 40% of the right-wing populist sample voted “against” the resolution – hence, right-wing populist parties cannot be considered a ‘pro-environmental bloc’.

FIG 8

### Votes on environment (non-climate) by national party counting votes for 3 important proposals on environmental topics\*



\*Includes: (2016) Review of the EU biodiversity strategy; (2017) Convention on long-range transboundary air pollution; (2018) Regulation of plastic products. Total right-wing populist MEPs in the sample (n=): 93. © adelphi 2019 (based on VoteWatch.eu).

In Chapter 3, we saw negative attitudes towards climate change seem to be driven by negative attitudes towards multilateralism – numerous quotes of right-wing populist parties portray multilateral agreements as ‘elitist’ projects, undermining economic sovereignty at the expense of ‘the people’ or ‘the nation’.

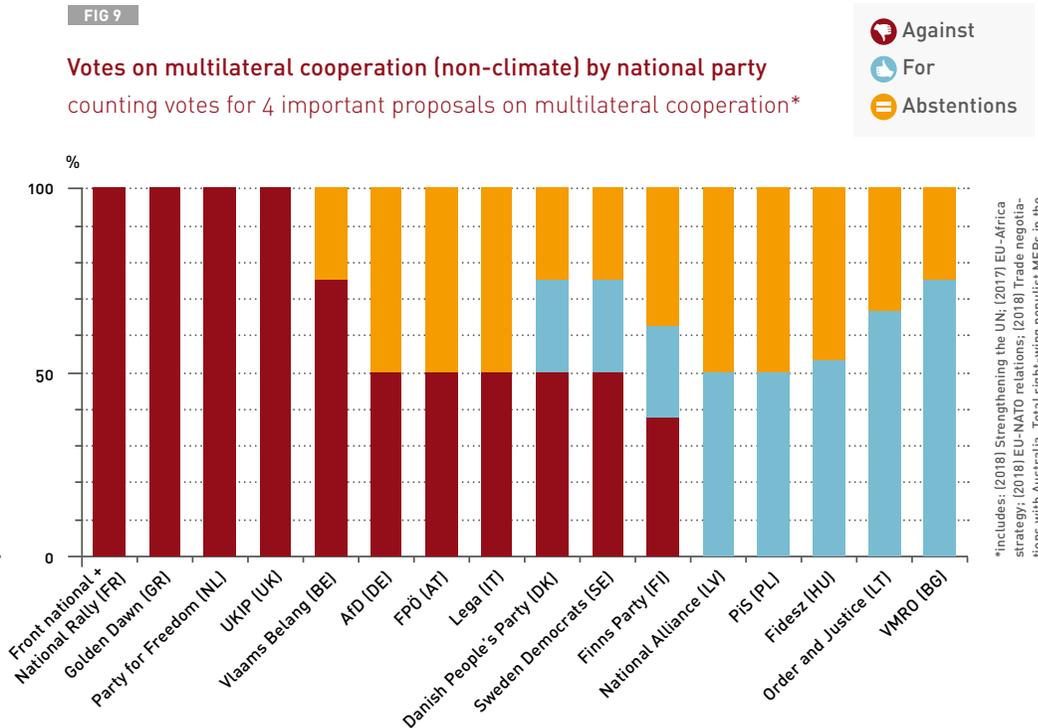
To test this, we evaluated votes on multilateral cooperation not related to climate. Considerable opposition against multilateral solutions is depicted in the following chart, which supports the hypothesis that right-wing populist parties’ negative attitude towards climate and energy policies could be partially driven by their general stance against multilateralism rather than their attitude on environment.

In four decisive votes on multilateral cooperation, the majority of right-wing popu-

list parties either voted against or abstained. The vote on strengthening the UN system was the least popular and all parties except *Fidesz* either opposed or abstained. Only two parties supported the EU-Africa strategy as opposed to eight parties who voted against it. The trade negotiations with Australia were perceived to be much more positive, where seven parties voted in favour of the resolution that aimed at boosting trade in goods and services, as well as investment flows. The vote on EU-NATO relations was also rather unpopular. Among the right-wing populist parties, only the four Eastern European parties voted for the proposal – Latvia’s *Order and Justice*, Bulgaria’s *VMRO*, Greece’s *Golden Dawn* and Hungary’s *Fidesz* – likely driven by a historically different perception of NATO as a protective force against Russian influence.

FIG 9

### Votes on multilateral cooperation (non-climate) by national party counting votes for 4 important proposals on multilateral cooperation\*



The Europe of Nations and Freedom (ENF), Europe of Freedom and Democracy (EFDD) and European Conservatives and Reformists (ECR) are the EP's political groups most hostile towards climate policy.

We also assessed how the nine political groups – ideological coalitions of otherwise constantly changing parties – voted in both electoral terms in the last 10 years. Across all of our 22 votes on climate and sustainable energy (see Annex for the full list), the anti-immigration Eurosceptic ENF followed by EFDD and ECR showed the least support for climate policy. The non-attached members (NI) (e.g. MEPs from *Golden Dawn*), though few in numbers, were also very hostile against the proposals.

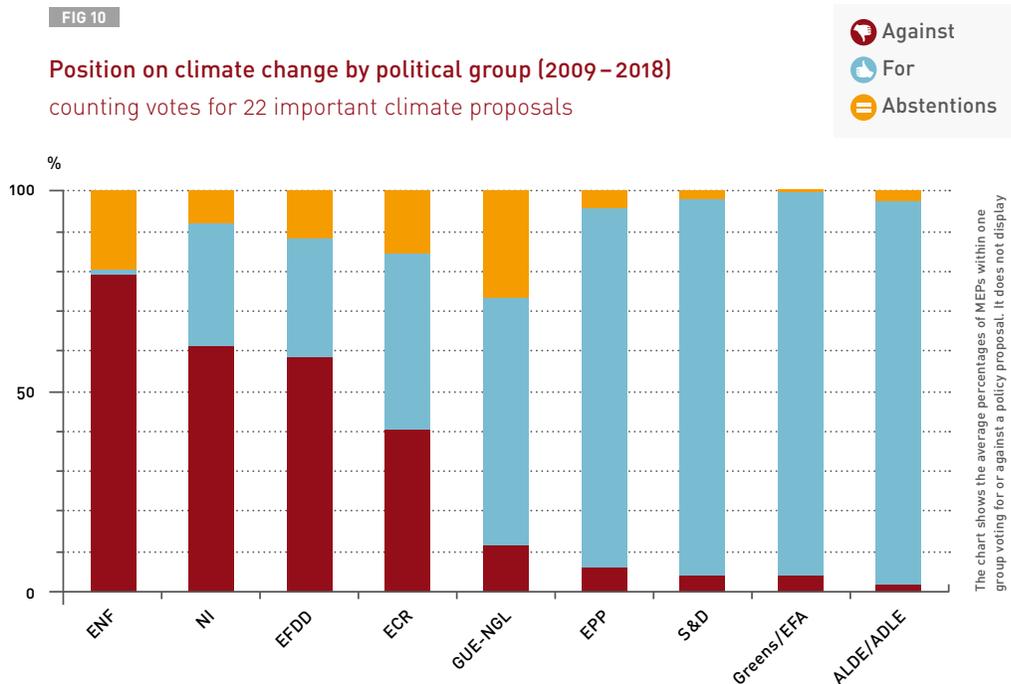
Opposition to climate policy is not a merely populist phenomenon; members in more established parties in the conservative and market-liberal groups also opposed climate policy proposals. Within the centrist EPP, conservative MEPs regularly vote against climate policy, although in far smaller numbers than those from right-wing populist

parties. For instance, three out of 34 MEPs from the German *CDU* voted against the renewable energy proposal and two against the climate diplomacy report. Within the ECR, there are a series of anti-climate MEPs, e.g. from the *British Conservative Party*. The Italian populist *Five-Star-Movement*, a member of the EFDD which usually favours climate action, also voted against some of the resolutions. In general, the EFDD has very low cohesion rates in the area of environmental policy, as group members often-times diverge from their own peers.

On a side note, green groups have also opposed policy proposals on climate action in parliament alongside right-wing populists. This position however, has been driven by a very different reason, namely to highlight the perceived lack of ambition.

FIG 10

### Position on climate change by political group (2009–2018) counting votes for 22 important climate proposals



## A slight growth in positions against climate policy post 2019

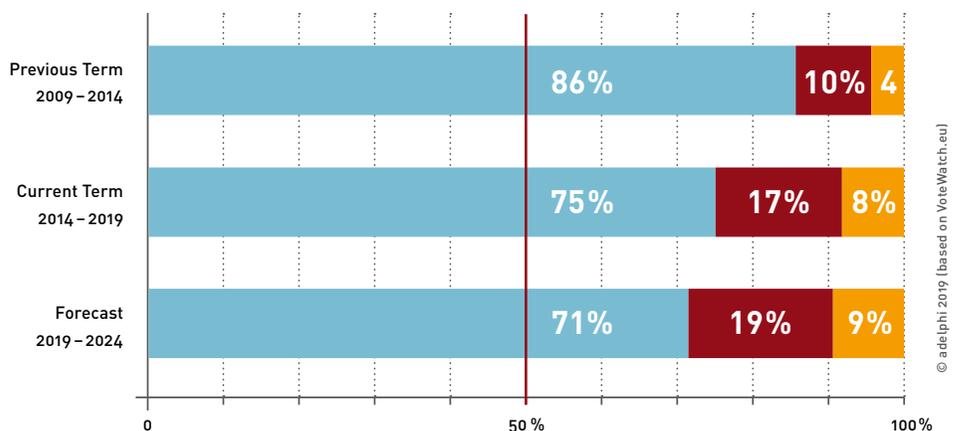
During the current term, 75% of all MEPs supported climate and sustainable energy policy. The ratification of the Paris Agreement in 2016 was supported by 90% of MEPs, while the proposal on reducing CO<sub>2</sub> emissions from new heavy-duty vehicles and their fuel consumption was also backed by 90% of MEPs. Other issues such as the promotion of renewables in 2018 received 72% in affirmative votes. The share of positive votes is likely to shrink post-2019, as anti-climate political groups gain voting power (such as ENF and perhaps also EFDD) and some pro-climate groups are expected to shrink significantly, namely the centrist S&D and EPP.

Extrapolating from current polls and based on our analysis of voting behaviour, we find that right-wing populist parties' influence in parliament is set to increase. Figure 11 depicts a future projection of vote shares towards climate proposals (the current average vote of each group is indicated in Figure 10). Positions against climate and sustainable energy might grow slightly from 17% to about 19%.

While it is possible that views on climate policies could change in the next term, the forecast makes a strong case for vigilance, as we will discuss in Chapter 6.

FIG 11

**Positions on climate and sustainable energy policies over time**  
2019 forecast based on aggregate national polls and expected seats in each political group. Counting votes for 22 important climate proposals as above.



5

## CONCLUSIONS



**Climate change remains a niche issue for right-wing populist parties.**

.....

We found that party programmes seldom cover climate policy and if they do, the position is relatively simplistic or underdeveloped. This could be due to the lack of historic records in policy-making of comparatively young parties, lack of exposure to climate and energy policy (exposure which other parties gained as members of government), a so far narrow portfolio focusing on anti-Euro/anti-immigration policies, and/or absence of climate policy expertise in the party structure. Thus, political positioning often happens as parties use ideological frames to justify non-action, e.g. anticipated economic decline, nationalist preferences or a focus on homeland affairs (the concept of “Heimat”) and nature conservation.



**While there are some outright deniers of the scientific consensus on climate change, explicit denial of climate science is not the norm amongst right-wing populists in Europe.**

.....

Seven out of 21 right-wing populist parties deny the scientific consensus on climate change and its causes. The most explicit climate science deniers are the German *AfD* and British *UKIP*, which go so far as to spread false information through press releases by drawing on ‘alternative sources’ that are rarely scientifically credible. However, the majority of our sample (11 parties) is classified as disengaged or having inconsistent, sometimes ambiguous views, without openly rejecting climate science. This second group of parties includes, for instance, the French *National Rally* (“*Rassemblement National*”), Italian *Lega* as well as Polish *PiS*. Three parties affirm the scientific consensus, namely the Hungarian *Fidesz*, the *Finns Party* and Lithuanian *Order and Justice*.

**Most narratives utilised against climate and energy policies are rooted in economic or social justice grievances, or stress the ineffectiveness of European climate action in the face of worldwide inaction.**

.....

The most common arguments expressed by right-wing populist parties argue national mitigation policies present an unbearable burden on national industry and higher energy prices would harm businesses and consumers. This is a concern that is widespread across the political spectrum and is also utilised by some left-wing parties as well as conservative and market-liberal parties. Interestingly, environmental concerns are also prominent reasons for opposing climate policies, particularly those that promote renewable energy. They claim wind turbines and solar panels destroy cultural landscapes and historically or architecturally significant scenery, an argument also articulated across the political spectrum.

Rather than embodying conspiratorial rhetoric, all of these arguments reflect climate and energy policy externalities worth discussing and form the basis for dialogue with on the appropriate design of climate and energy policies:

⊗ **Economically harmful and socially unjust?**

In some European countries such as Germany, household electricity prices have significantly increased<sup>42</sup> in the last decade. Regardless of the extent to which this is due to climate and energy policies (as renewables today are comparable to or cheaper than fossil fuels), rising energy prices leave the door open for populist exploitation across the political spectrum. In France, the populist Yellow Vests revolts against carbon taxes show how feelings of anger arise when climate policy measures are not embedded in wider social reform and redistribution policies, and omit structural problems such as social mar-

ginalisation, privileging of higher income urban populations and lack *resonance* amongst those most affected by these measures.

Social justice aspirations have reached established parties across Europe. When compared to populist rhetoric, the objective of the “just transition” movement is to find pathways that reconcile social justice and decarbonisation policies. However, dealing with the social implications of climate policy measures by government often comes late to the game.

⊗ **Environmentally harmful?**

This argument pertains to negative environmental consequences of renewables (a cultural issue becoming increasingly salient with increased deployment of renewable energy) rather than climate change mitigation. But while the impact of wind and solar installations on flora and fauna is indeed

problematic and concerns about landscape conservation are certainly legitimate, the consequences of coal-based power generation on the environment and human health are much more severe in the long-term. This is not addressed by right-wing populist parties.



### Not worthwhile?

The announcement from large global emitters such as the USA to withdraw from the Paris climate agreement, together with its roll-back of domestic climate and environment policy and dismantling of its national environmental, climate and sustainable energy institutions, represented a populist backlash against global mitigation efforts. However, pursuing climate action is worthwhile. There is a large and growing body of

research highlighting how it results in numerous social and economic co-benefits from improved health and economic and societal wellbeing to increased technology innovation.<sup>43</sup> Regaining European leadership on climate mitigation is thus crucial to advance global climate action, promote multi-lateral solutions to ubiquitous problems, as well as shape and ensure a competitive European economy in a decarbonised world.

These arguments are often framed in isolation, divorced from contextual and broader conditions conducive to human welfare. However, among European right-wing populist parties, climate change is not (yet) as ideologically entrenched and identity-laden as it is in the American context<sup>44</sup>.

### The majority of right-wing populist parties vote against EU climate and energy policy proposals.

Our analysis of ballot results of the EP shows that most MEPs belonging to right-wing populist parties in our sample oppose climate and energy policies and make up a significant share of total votes “against”. The votes are thus consistent with anti-climate rhetoric in official statements by party officials and within party programmes.

### As right-wing populist parties are expected to gain additional seats in upcoming elections, the bloc voting against sustainable energy climate policy in the European Parliament could grow.

Extrapolating from current polls and based on our analysis of voting behaviour, we find that right-wing populist parties’ influence in parliament is set to increase. In the new European Parliament, the bloc voting against climate policy – which is primarily constituted of the three European parliamentary groups: ENF, EFDD and ECR – could potentially grow to make up around a quarter of the European Parliament. However, unaffiliated MEPs, such as those from Emmanuel Macron’s *En Marche* party, could provide support to green-liberal groups, although domestic opposition in France may lessen its climate policy ambition. Moreover, the expected increase in negative attitudes towards climate policy is less steep than the one observed in 2014 from the 7<sup>th</sup> and the 8<sup>th</sup> Parliament, which also saw significant climate policy momentum despite the increase. Thus, there are scenarios where effects of rising right-wing populism on climate policy in the 9<sup>th</sup> Parliament remain limited.



## There are important nuances among right-wing populist parties.

While they make up a large part of the opposition to climate and energy votes in the European Parliament, there is also heterogeneity between the parties.

### Climate-friendly parties

Two parties are clearly “pro-climate” and voted in favour of almost all tabled resolutions in the European Parliament. (Hungary’s ruling *Fidesz* and Lithuania’s *Order and Justice*). *Fidesz* acknowledges the scientific consensus on climate change, the Paris Agreement and European climate policy due to perceived global climate risks. As it is a governing party and also part of the centrist political group in the Parliament, the EPP, this could give hope that right-wing populist parties moderate with political responsibility, just as other political groups do. Several other

right-wing populist parties also supported the Effort Sharing Regulation, which accounts for almost 60% of EU emissions and even the EU ETS reform was not opposed by all right-wing populist parties. Rather than further polarising the issue, maintaining dialogue with parties who engaged with climate (also including the Latvian *National Alliance*, the *Finns Party*, and partly the *Danish People’s Party*) may help build bridges among elected parliamentarians and allow for a substantive thematic discourse in the various committees.

### Pro-environment parties and green patriotism

A number of right-wing populist parties exhibit a kind of ‘green patriotism’ which strongly supports environmental conservation, but not climate action. Historically, Europe’s environmental movement was based to a large extent on nature conservation in the romantic period of the early nineteenth century. The *eco-nationalism*, which is based on ethnic, *völkisch* and ultra-conservative interpretations of nature conservation, can be found within most European environmental movements. “Nature”, “the good life” and “ecology” have long been used as ideological categories to legitimise reactionary political positions<sup>45</sup> and to live in harmony with nature is not just a left-liberal notion. Ultra-nationalists have used these images to decorate their ideological content and appeal to patriotic emotions. Right-wing popu-

list parties, including Austria’s *FPÖ*, France’s *National Rally*, and the extreme-right *Golden Dawn* in Greece and *VMRO* in Bulgaria, are “pro-environment”, but for nationalist not global interests.

The analysis showed that compatibility with localism rouses interest about renewables among right-wing populist parties. A few right-wing populist parties (e.g. Latvia’s *National Alliance*, Italy’s *Lega* and the Austrian *FPÖ*) support renewable energy in their party programmes and/or public statements, given their perceived benefit to domestic industries and population. Framings relate to reduced energy dependence, creating job opportunities and/or improving quality of life. However, this does not necessarily translate to votes in favour of promoting renewables in the European Parliament.

General environmental issues receive more support than climate action among right-wing populist parties. Votes on environmental issues such as the EU's biodiversity strategy, have more support from the right-wing populists. This is especially the

case for those parties in our sample that use environmental arguments against climate policy – most prominently Belgium's *Vlaams Belang* and France's *National Rally* (formerly *Front National*).<sup>46</sup>

### Context-specific support

Right-wing populists' policy positions also mirror national circumstances and benefit sharing. For example, those most supportive of climate and energy policies tend to be from countries with relatively low emissions, namely the Nordic countries as well as some poorer Eastern European countries (Bulgaria, Hungary, Lithuania) with relatively clean power mixes. On the other hand, parties from countries with high per-capita emissions, such as Germany and Poland, were most opposed. Voting behaviour seems to be often correlated with how cost and

benefits are distributed. For example, only 9% of right-wing populist parties supported regulation of light-duty vehicles whereas 46% supported regulation of heavy-duty vehicles. This is likely related to the fact that heavy-duty vehicles (e.g. trucks) are not typically owned by individual households. Similarly, the buildings directive on better insulation enjoyed wide support from right-wing populist parties.



### Europe's vulnerability to climate change is generally ignored by right-wing populist parties.

.....

The parties in our sample, with a few exceptions, do not refer to Europe's and their own country's vulnerability to climate change impacts and related economic losses and social costs. For instance, references to extreme weather events are absent from party programmes and statements. This summer of extreme droughts in Europe in 2018 heavily affected domestic economies, particularly agricultural production and domestic maritime transportation. Most of the "anti-migration" parties also do not draw upon the links between global environmental degradation triggered by climate change, increased climate variability and its effects on economic development in the global South, and increased migration within these countries and beyond. Only three parties – *National Rally*, *FPÖ* and *Lega* – address these interacting factors but claim climate policy may be used to promote and justify illegal immigration and give climate migrants legal title for asylum.

### Climate action is perceived as a globalist issue.

.....

The opposition to climate policy in multilateral contexts, such as at the UN or EU levels, draws on economic and fairness arguments (unilateral action) while seemingly driven by generally negative attitudes towards multilateralism. In national discourses, right-wing populist parties (in particular *Lega*, *National Rally*, *FPÖ*) agitate against the Paris Agreement and EU climate action, considering it both ineffective and unjust. In a milieu characterised by Eurosceptic sentiments, opposition against EU climate action is thus not surprising. The strong opposition to other policy proposals aiming to foster multilateralism – for example to strengthen the UN system or intensify the political dialogue between the EU and Africa – mirrors the nationalist ideology that governs populist parties' political positions, including climate action. Rejection of multilateralism is not the only reason for the hostility towards climate policy and the acceptance of other, perhaps less complex, environmental issues. Across all parties, local environmental policies enjoy more support than global protection efforts – this is not a exclusive to right-wing populists. At the local level, right-wing populists tend to support environmental initiatives, which often contrasts to their hostile stances towards climate action at national level and with regards to foreign policy.

### Is climate policy an elitist concept?

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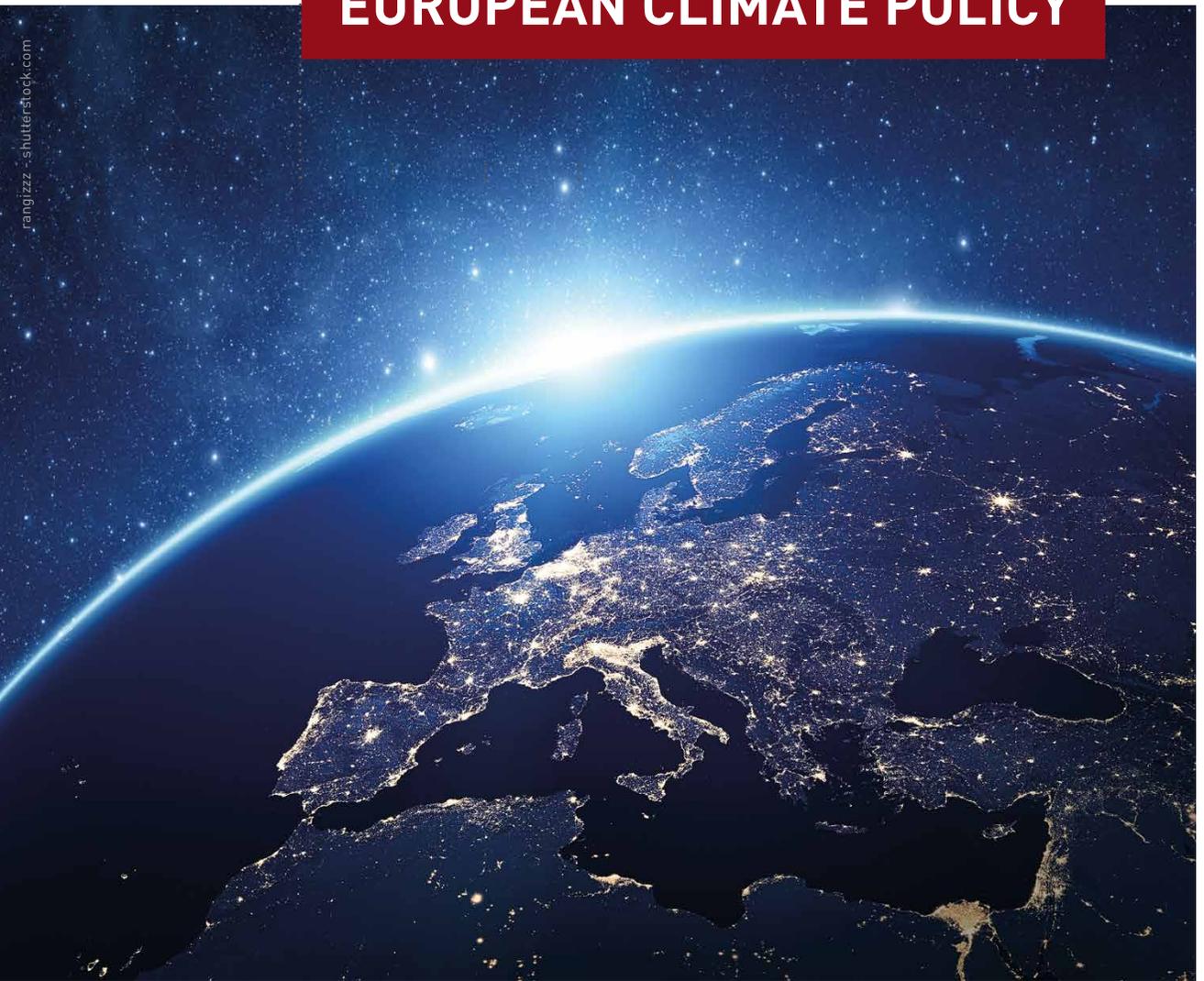
The analysis of statements by right-wing populist parties and their leaders indicates climate change is widely perceived as a *liberal-elitist concept*. Many of the parties assessed dismiss EU climate action, referring to the EU as a supranational institution which overrules and exploits member states, and framing it as a selfish enemy that imposes harmful legislations and infringes upon people's sovereignty. They use arguments against climate policy to back up typically populist divisive narratives ("we against the other"). In this sense, the topic of climate change is used to articulate mistrust towards international institutions. On the other hand, growing inequality in a globalised, fast-changing world and failed climate policies point both towards an urgent need to address the flaws in the design of climate policies as discussed in Chapter 6.

Marcel de Graaff, Co-president of the Europe of Nations and Freedom (ENF) and member of the parliamentary group leader of the Dutch Party for Freedom (PVV). PVV MEPs have voted against all analysed EU climate and energy policy proposals tabled in the European Parliament between 2009 and 2018, without exception.



6

## THE RETURN OF EUROPEAN CLIMATE POLICY



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# RISKS AND CHALLENGES TO THE EU

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Building consensus on internal and external EU policies is increasingly difficult for the union's 28 (and soon 27) member states, shackled by rising authoritarian and nativist sentiments across the continent. Recent struggles to agree on a common line towards China's human rights violations, the distribution of refugees among European member states and Russia's intervention in Crimea illustrate these challenges.

The rise of anti-globalist populism from the Americas to Europe and Asia is an additional backlash for any kind of multilateral climate action. Brazil's new climate-sceptic president Jair Bolsonaro has already begun undermining environmental and Amazon protection efforts in the country. Since his inauguration, U.S. President Donald Trump, a radical climate change denier, has decried internationally recognised reports on climate impacts, withdrawn billions of dollars of climate funding, and weakened the national US Environmental Protection Agency. As of now, Russia has yet to ratify the Paris Agreement. As populist leaders weaken climate action of the three most important global players, the international outlook for multilateral action is set to be tough.

Against this backdrop, EU politics will need to be reconfigured in 2019. In times where polarising narratives may harm the 'social fabric' needed for a sustainable transformation – including a strong environmental movement, independent media, strong scientific institutions and government accountability – there are four main risks to EU climate action.

## 1

### Risk of failure to achieve important climate targets

During the next term, the EU will have to align its development with the goal to keep warming under 2°C as set by the Paris Agreement. It remains to be seen if it will bump up its reduction targets from its current long-term goal of 80% reductions from 1990 levels to carbon neutrality by 2050. For that, the European Council and European Parliament would need to approve the Commission's 2050 vision.<sup>47</sup> Likewise, the negotiation of the new EU budget (MFF) after the elections, in which climate policies might make up between 25 and 40%<sup>48</sup>, will be decisive, as it will determine the successful implementation of climate policy measures.

The increasing share of climate-sceptics in European countries could side-line any

ambitious climate policy proposals. This not only due to the climate-sceptic attitude itself, but the likely shift of democratic parties' positions in the fight for votes. By rejecting science or opposing multilateral climate action, reactionary forces obstruct national governments tasked with passing more sustainable laws and filling the EU and UN mechanisms with life. Rising numbers of climate-sceptic (or cautious) parties in European member states' governments, coupled with an increased politicisation of climate change, will bring more controversy into the debates.

The current composition of the European Parliament saw a number of relatively ambitious reforms, particularly on the European Emissions Trading System as well as an

Effort Sharing Regulation for the non-ETS sectors. Although those framework legislations are now in place and relatively robust, the relative stringency of the post-2020 effort-sharing targets for wealthier Member States may be reasons for political controversy and right-wing agitation going forward. The targets require countries to step up efforts in hard-to-decarbonise sectors such as transport and buildings. Ambitious climate policy in these sectors has signifi-

cant potential for social friction as – unless compensation mechanisms are in place – the poorest would likely be hardest hit by rising fuel prices.

Furthermore, there are other important pillars of EU climate policy which might not be as resistant to political turmoil. The MFF is such an example: the share dedicated to climate financing is still subject to debate.

## 2

### Risk of problematic liaisons to reach necessary compromises

New and broader issue-based coalitions across political belief and preferences may occur, raising new political challenges. As the global community agrees on sustainable development goals (2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development) and transition towards carbon-neutrality (Paris Agreement), the demand for substantial collective action towards transformative change at the European level requires achieving voting majorities beyond parliamentary groups in the EP.

Against this background, would democratic parties (or parliamentary groups) in the EP enter into thematic coalitions with right-wing populist parties on climate and energy policy? Would such coalitions on particular issues then legitimise right-wing populist parties and positions, which undermine basic democratic ideas which constitute Europe?

Irrespective of its domestic policy preferences operating along the thin line of democratic principles, coalitions with Hun-

gary's governing *Fidesz* or Poland's *PiS* could be important for both advancing climate and energy policy at European level as well as sustaining the structural integrity of Europe. Cooperation on disputed policies and measures is an essential part of any democracy. The real challenge from a democratic perspective is to answer the question where to draw the line between **a)** the necessity for issue-based coalitions (especially those that are aiming to preserve the heritage of human mankind such as climate policy) and **b)** voicing the concerns about violation of fundamental human rights and constraints of civil society engagement and other aspects at the foundation of a liberal democracy.

### 3

#### Risk of illiberal ideas infiltrating the discourse

The Future of Europe's climate policy will not be determined by the extreme peripheries but by the eventual shift of centre parties. One of the main threats to the implementation of the Paris Agreement is not the rising climate-sceptic populist parties across Europe, but the danger that centrist parties will adopt their language and arguments. The EU is well equipped with strong institutions and robust mechanisms to carry through ambitious policies, despite efforts of illiberal forces to obstruct parliamentary proceedings.

However, democratic parties in the EP may follow a shift from progressive towards reactionary positions in order to respond to the preferences of increasingly nationalist

and right-wing voters in Europe. This may include less ambitious climate and energy positions in order to respond to voters' scepticism on climate policy measures – a shift that may threaten economic development and individual well-being. Recent shifts in party positions across the political spectrum in Germany revealed that catering to nationalist preferences and demands in a bid to lure votes of rising populist parties does not necessarily result in rising electoral support. In this regard, there is also a risk that democratic parties will increasingly weaken their support for collective action at the international level as well as reduce efforts for ambitious climate and energy policy.

### 4

#### Risk of higher fences against international cooperation

The repercussions of weakened international cooperation undermine the very core of populists' own efforts: security, stability and social justice. While erecting political fences does not hinder cross-border impacts from occurring, doing so reduces prospects for trans-boundary solutions. Driving a wedge between the people and the political system reduces countries' ability to collaborate in multilateral contexts and respond to global change. This is particularly true for the risks posed by environmental degradation and climate change, which can neither be downplayed nor addressed by single states alone.

Political attention is stretched as these parties emerge amid other pressing crises and political battles in Europe, such as Brexit, the Italian financial crisis, the future of the Euro and immigration. Under these circumstances, politicians and governments might not have enough bandwidth to drive the climate change debate and energy transition forward. European politicians would therefore need a new strategy of cooperation across political groups, as well as a new approach to communicate the transition and its benefits.

## NEW WAYS OF CONCEIVING CLIMATE POLICY

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The success of climate policies depends upon constructive deliberation, honest assessment of synergies and trade-offs and creating popular support for transformative change. European societies are required to jointly manage the transformative shift that lies ahead, to ensure justice and prosperity across and within nations. Many issues – be it promotion of electric cars, carbon pricing or promotion of wind energy – are deeply entrenched with identities and culture. Rather than viewing climate action as a technical problem and framing it as such, a credible and positive narrative of progress and modernisation is urgently needed where climate policy measures are embedded in and framed as *societal* policy.

In the past, the majority of established parties have pursued a type of fact-based, but highly technocratic climate discourse often neglecting social realities distant from citizens'



Disillusionment creates a vacuum that is filled by appeals to fear and opportunism. A credible and positive narrative of progress and modernisation is urgently needed where climate policy measures are embedded in and framed as societal policy.

expectations. The “elite steering the transformation” has itself contributed to the proliferation of mistrust in science, democratic institutions and multilateralism, and is hence part of the problem. While one can argue that climate scepticism and hostility within populist movements is a very unwelcome phenomenon, it is necessary to address potential weaknesses in the design of climate and broad sustainability policies.

To change this, reciprocal communication is essential and would need to be embedded in the specific context of regional politics while staying cognisant of values and needs. Conflicts cannot be avoided in deep transformative processes and transformative change obviously creates winners and losers.

The story of climate change needs a different and progressive narrative in order to bridge the gap, regain credibility and legitimacy, while conveying the bandwidth and depth of transformation so as to activate the imagination and empower citizens.

## 1

### Restoring credibility and discussing trade-offs

Drawing on right-wing populist parties’ statements, climate change is often portrayed as an elitist invention to extract resources from “the people” or to distract from the government’s failures. Such anti-elitist expressions indicate that credibility has been compromised and patterns of mistrust prevail. In this context, it can be valuable to acknowledge that the multilateral project of globalisation, climate policies and fundamental societal changes have unjust effects if they remain unmanaged. Not everyone will profit from a transformative change towards a low-carbon economy and

society – both losers and winners of the green shift will try to shape climate agendas to their benefit. Legitimate concerns against climate agendas must not be ignored or downplayed. Taking concerns seriously and acknowledging the grain of truth contained within populist narratives – from corruption to the repercussions of neoliberalism – is an important step to regain trust. Transparently discussing trade-offs, highlighting policy drawbacks and admission of uncertainties on impacts of climate change may contribute to more authentic and credible communication.

## 2

### Communicating uncertainty and correcting false views

Uncertainty has become an argument for discrediting and doubting climate science and for delaying policy responses.<sup>49</sup> False interpretations of climate science and its inherent uncertainty have to be countered by using language that resonates with the audience. Referencing examples of a recent flooding or farmer’s crops being destroyed

can help people weigh the consequences.<sup>50</sup> The 2018 summer heatwave across Europe could be highlighted as an example of Europe’s own vulnerability to climate risks when communicating climate sciences and policy. While tipping points are a powerful communicative tool to alert and raise a sense of urgency, the repeated “too late”

narrative, based on scientific modelling of future events of impacts, may overheat the debate, further raising doubts and disempowering people. “Too late” arguments underemphasise the adaptive capacity of societies and governments to cope with climate change. Abstract communication of carbon budgets and footprints have not resulted in significant change of consumption patterns and collective behaviour.

Social network research further finds that fake news spreads faster online<sup>51</sup> and there is evidence that people are highly

receptive to messages dissenting from the scientific consensus.<sup>52</sup> Reducing their flow and influence may become a more important political focus given that a growing part of the population turns to social media as information source and as misinformation may lead to poor policy decisions. In this context, informed debunking of misinformation is also important in order to correct false views without reinforcing the myth in peoples’ minds or stigmatising opinions.

### 3

#### Creating positive visions of transformative change

*“Disillusionment creates a vacuum that is filled by appeals to fear and opportunism.”*<sup>53</sup> The populist tide is a signal that we need success narratives which convey trust in political change – precisely because the transformative shift involves trade-offs as well as co-benefits and requires unprecedented levels of collective action. European cooperation on energy politics could be an example of a constructive narrative that stresses diversification and grid integration to benefit peripheral regions and the reduction of energy imports. If democracy is at the centre of transformative policies, climate action is also a means to social justice as well as higher living standards and a healthy environment (reduced air pollution, improved health, biodiversity etc.).

The aspiration to strengthen social justice and well-being through climate policy thus needs to be further established in climate discourse. Examples articulated in the 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda, in the Green New Deal, and within the “just transition” movement showcase new and sub-

stantial policy approaches. The experience of forerunner countries indicates the way forward: In Switzerland, the income from carbon pricing directly benefits all sections of the population through the redistribution of income via health insurance. The Swedish government is also using part of its carbon tax revenue to reduce tax burdens on low and medium income households. Copenhagen became the new role model for public transport, as more than 100 public bike sharing stations, several bike highways and bike bridges have been built, and bikes are allowed on trains for free.

*Communicating co-benefits* of climate action helps connect climate policy to the long list of domestic concerns while reconciling internal and external dimensions of climate policy. Here, the prevalent frames we identified in our analysis of party programmes – economic development, independence, homeland and nature as well as fairness – provide entry points to emphasise common ground.



Knallert  
forbudt

#### 4

### Narrating the future

“Stories, not bar charts have the power to change the world.”<sup>54</sup> Social science suggests that climate change attitudes do not primarily stem from the intellectual, cognitive dimension but also to a large extent from *emotions* – the fuel of human behaviour.<sup>55</sup> Communication on climate change and policy needs to find a new *aesthetic* and a new optimistic myth that connects to lived social realities.

Appealing to positive emotions, empathy and hope through stories of change will be key for redefining solidarity and gathering popular support for a just transition.

*Narrating* a sustainable tomorrow is a necessary means to empower people and motivate communities to co-create and shape a world worth living in. We are still at the very beginning of visualising and picturing the details of a sustainable future for societies in Europe and beyond.

#### 5

### Standing up for multilateralism and liberal democracies

Multilateralism is not partisan; it does not belong to left or right. Agreements on managing the global commons, be it international peace or the state of the atmosphere, affect citizens of all nations. The EU’s tremendous contributions to consolidating peace on the European continent, and the huge strides made in decades of EU environmental policy are testament to the benefits of international cooperation. Despite regional disparities and diversity in culture and values, the EU has succeeded in resolving major environmental problems. Without these multilateral efforts, poisonous lead would still be pumped into the air by much of our car fleet, and chlorofluorocarbons would have further depleted the ozone layer.<sup>56</sup>

In the context of political and economic fragmentation, the historical achievements of multilateralism speak as evidence for its integrative power. Europe can bring together, as one voice, one of the largest global economic powers and have considerable influence on shaping global politics. Its

self-image as a community of values as well as an economic union works well as an international normative force.<sup>57</sup>

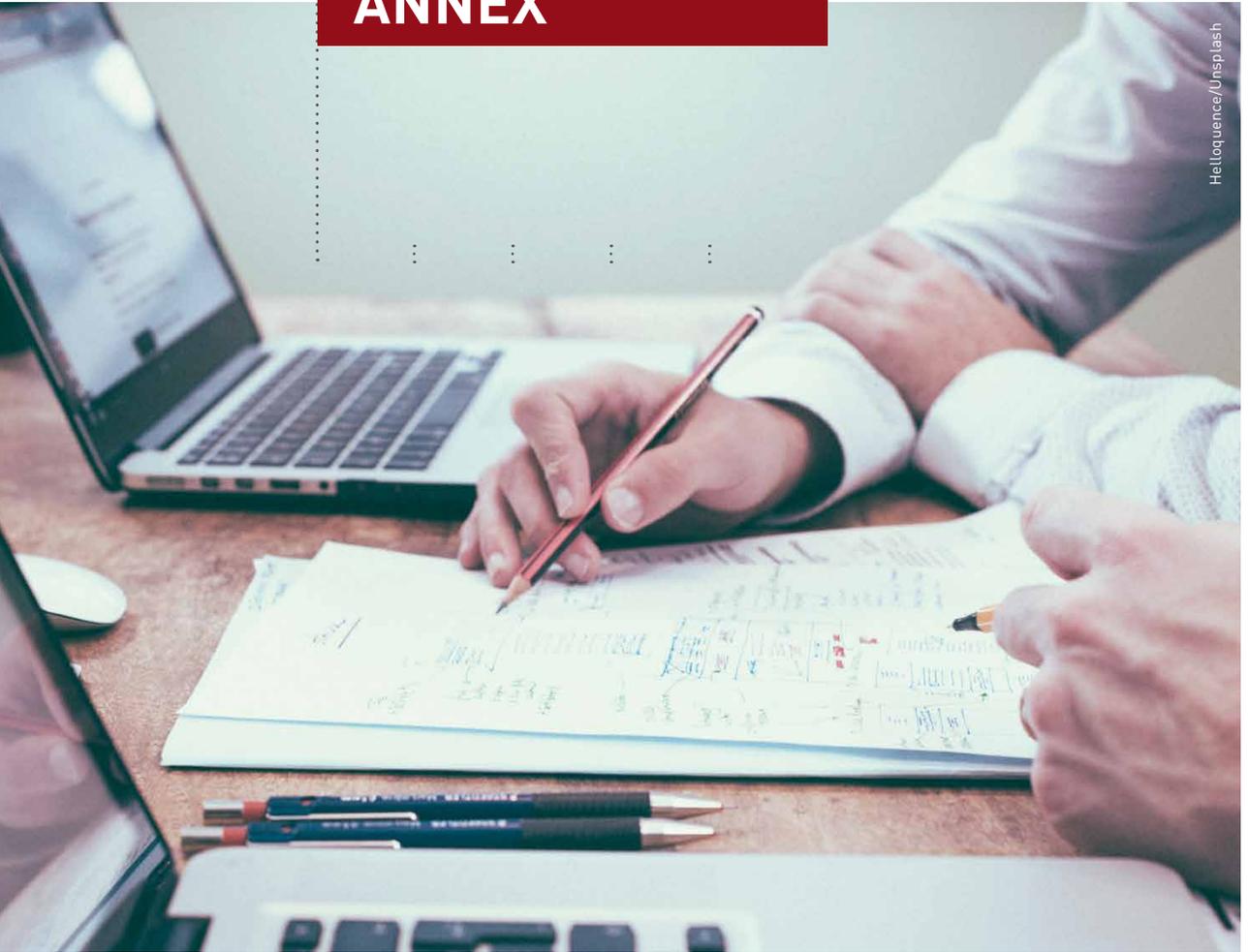
Climate change is not the priority of populist parties. Hence, it is not only climate and energy policy-makers who must get engaged. The entire spectrum of political decision-makers and communicators must find new, creative approaches of handling and communicating with illiberal and reactionary forces. Jointly standing up for the cause of multilateralism is one way of safeguarding the achievements of the past and countering moral degradation, with effects reaching far beyond climate attitudes.



Appealing to positive emotions, empathy and hope through stories of change will be key for redefining solidarity and gathering popular support for a just transition.

Even if right-wing populist parties become stronger after the May 2019 elections, the main challenge lies not in engaging which extreme positions or in justifying outright climate denial. It lies in the necessity for democratic parties to develop credible and robust political approaches for transformative change. Climate change as a wicked problem demands comprehensive multi-sectoral policies and will eventually lead to trade-off questions which need be deliberated at a societal level. Engaging in the democratic process to co-develop solutions is vital to achieve fair and sustainable solutions. Taking peoples' needs and doubts seriously, explaining policies, dealing honestly with uncertainties and trade-offs, and communicating positive visions for society must be at the core of climate action.

# ANNEX



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# ABBREVIATIONS

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AfD	Alternative for Germany	M5S	Five Star Movement
CDU	Christian Democratic Union of Germany	MEP	Member of the European Parliament
COP	United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, Conference of the Parties	MFF	Multiannual Financial Framework
ECR	European Conservatives and Reformists	NA	National Alliance
EEG	Renewable Energy Sources Act	NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organisation
EFDD	Europe of Freedom and Democracy	NDC	Nationally determined contribution
EFD	Europe of Freedom and Democracy	NFSB	National Front for the Salvation of Bulgaria
EIKE	European Institute for Climate and Energy	NI	Non-attached members of the European Parliament
EKRE	Conservative People's Party of Estonia	ÖVP	Austrian People's Party
ENF	Europe of Nations and Freedom	PiS	Law and Justice
EP	European Parliament	PV	Photovoltaic
EPP	European People's Party	PVV	Party for Freedom
ESR	Effort Sharing Regulation	RCV	Roll Call Vote
ETS	Emissions Trading System	RWP	Right-wing populist
EU	European Union	S&D	Socialists and Democrats
FPÖ	Freedom Party of Austria	SD	Sweden Democrats
GDP	Gross Domestic Product	SNS	Slovak National Party
GHG	Greenhouse gas	SPD	Freedom and Direct Democracy
GUE/NGL	European United Left – Nordic Green Left	SUV	Sport-utility vehicle
IPCC	Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change	SVP	Swiss People's Party
LIFE	Funding instrument for the environment and climate action	UKIP	United Kingdom Independence Party
LULUCF	Land use, land use change and forestry	UN	United Nations
		UNFCCC	United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change
		USA	United States of America
		VMRO	Bulgarian National Movement
		WW2	World War 2

## METHODOLOGY

**Sample** Our analysis identifies positions, narratives and voting behaviour of 21 right-wing populist parties in the EU and/or Schengen countries. The sample was put together purposefully using parties preselected by the German Federal Agency for Civic Education<sup>58</sup> and additionally included relevant non-EU case studies such as Switzerland’s *SVP* and Norway’s *Progress Party*.

The parties included are all considered right-wing but are very heterogeneous with regards to their age and history, as well as their respective countries’ size, populations and policy-relevant characteristics such as the country’s energy mix, abatement cost, degree of dependence on energy imports and total footprint. Some parties in the sample hold government responsibility, whereas others are relatively marginalised. The “right-wing” political ideologies range from far-right nationalist yet democratic, to neo-Nazi/fascist and anti-democratic – each with different positions on economic and social policies. All parties share “populist” characteristics, i. e. rejection of pluralism; rhetoric that seeks to split society into “the people” and a type of “other” (the elite) and nativist (prioritising native inhabitants’ interests over migrants), pro-authoritarian (strong central power) features.

TABLE 1

Country	Right-wing populist party	Part of Government
Austria	Freiheitliche Partei Österreichs / Freedom Party of Austria (FPÖ)	Yes 
Belgium	Vlaams Belang / Flemish Interest (VB)	No 
Bulgaria <sup>59</sup>	Bulgarsko Natsionalno Dvizhenie / Bulgarian National Movement (VMRO)	Yes 
Czech Republic	Svoboda a přímá demokracie – Tomio Okamura / Freedom and Direct Democracy (SPD)	No 
Denmark	Dansk Folkeparti / Danish People’s Party (DF)	No 
Estonia	Eesti Konservatiivne Rahvaerakond / Conservative People’s Party of Estonia (EKRE)	No 
Finland	Perussuomalaiset / Finns Party (PS)	No 
France	Rassemblement National / National Rally (RN)	No 
Germany	Alternative für Deutschland / Alternative for Germany (AfD)	No 
Great Britain	United Kingdom Independence Party (UKIP)	No 
Greece	Chrysi Avgi / Golden Dawn (XA)	No 
Hungary	Fidesz – Magyar Polgári Szövetség (Fidesz)	Yes 
Italy	Lega	Yes 
Latvia	Nacionālā Apvienība / National Alliance (NA)	Yes 
Lithuania	Partija tvarka ir teisingumas / Order and Justice (TT)	No 
Netherlands	Partij voor de Vrijheid / Party for Freedom (PVV)	No 
Norway	Fremskrittspartiet / Progress Party (FrP)	Yes 
Poland	Prawo i Sprawiedliwość / Law and Justice (PiS)	Yes 
Slovakia	Slovenská národná strana / Slovak National Party (SNS)	Yes 
Sweden	Sverigedemokraterna / Sweden Democrats (SD)	No 
Switzerland	Schweizerische Volkspartei / Swiss People’s Party (SVP)	Yes 

## Step 1 | Content analysis

By using a qualitative text analysis approach<sup>60</sup>, we aimed to understand the meanings, concepts and metaphors in the political communication, to identify patterns and describe the messages.

Where available, we analysed (1) the official electoral party programme documents and (2) statements on the party's website or communicated by party leaders through speeches and interviews. In total, we analysed 21 party programmes. The study aimed to include all relevant positions in the analysis, however due to translations from 16 languages, it is possible that statements have not entered the body of evidence. It is also inevitable that through the translation process, nuances of meaning were lost or altered. The data obtained was complemented by (3) news sources, where appropriate.

The analysis of party positions (step 1) covers the period between the EU elections in 2014 and September 2018. Where information was plentiful, the newest sources were prioritised. If parties had no communications on climate change issued after the 2014-election, we drew on statements issued prior to the timeframe of this study and indicated the year.

We assume that statements in official party programmes are representative of the party's policy preferences, though we are aware that domestic political behaviour oftentimes deviates. To avoid taking "greenwashed" phrases as indications of party policy preferences, we checked the programmes for internal consistency and noted blatant contradictory policy positions (e.g. if a party claims to support low-carbon development, but overtly supports expansion of coal mining)<sup>61</sup>.

We then defined three categories that the researchers of this study used as a flexible frame-

work for data collection: (1) attitude towards climate science, (2) attitude towards climate policy, (3) attitude towards multilateral climate action. By using an exhaustive key word search in the respective language ("climate change", "climate", "global warming", "emissions", "emission trading", "ETS", "energy", "CO<sub>2</sub>", "Paris Agreement", "renewable", "coal", "mobility", "agriculture") and by systematically scanning the programme chapters on relevant sectors (environment, climate and energy, waste), we aspired to collect and hand-code all relevant content for each category.

Throughout the process, we followed a bottom-up approach: To identify the most prominent positions on climate science, as well as arguments against and for climate policies, and to identify frames, we constructed bottom-up categories (open coding) from all statements collected. This was done after getting a sense of the whole, noting and clustering recurring themes, going back to the data with the themes in mind, defining labels and then assembling the data belonging to each label, in some cases re-coding the data<sup>62</sup>.

1. Attitude towards climate science (perception and engagement): *The rhetoric of party programmes and leaders vis-à-vis the scientific consensus on climate change, including statement of whether the climate is changing (trend), if it is human-caused (attribution) and if it has significant negative effects (impact).*<sup>63</sup>

- A party was characterised "Denialist or sceptical" when its party programme and/or leading figures clearly rejected or questioned one of the three aspects of the scientific consensus. This includes statements highlight-

ing uncertainty as to whether climate change is happening at all, that the climate has always been changing and this phenomenon is mostly caused by natural events, that climate change has slowed down or that there seems to be no link between carbon dioxide and climate change, that climate change has mostly positive effects, and claims that climate science is propaganda/fraud etc.

- A party was characterised “Doubtful/cautious” when **a)** the data collection yielded absolutely no statements on climate change, **b)** the statements understated the scientific consensus but did not clearly question climate science (e.g. highlighting the uncertainty around the entire phenomenon; questioning the gravity of climate change impacts) or **c)** the position was blurry, unclear and/or rather inconsistent.
- A party was characterised “Affirmative” when the screening of statements yielded only phrases confirming the trend, attribution and/or negative impact of climate change.

2. Attitude towards climate policy (arguments and frames): *The rhetoric of party programmes and leaders vis-à-vis national climate policy and concrete policy proposals to limit or reduce greenhouse gas emissions or improve carbon sinks<sup>64</sup>, such as but not limited to climate targets, carbon trading and taxation laws, renewable energy subsidies and targets, energy efficiency laws, as well as broader and more general statements on climate policy and sustainable energy transition for the sake of climate mitigation.*

3. Attitude towards multilateral climate action: *The rhetoric of party programmes and leaders vis-à-vis international and supranational climate policy and cooperation, especially statements on the Paris Agreement and EU climate action.*

Member State / Group	ECR	Affirmative	Abstentions	Total positive	Total absent	Total non-voters	Total abstentions	Cohesion
Christlich Demokratische Union Deutschlands	Germany EPP	1	25	0	22	0	2	25
Conservative Party	United Kingdom ECR	0	18	0	18	2	0	20
Partido Popular	Spain EPP	0	15	0	15	1	0	16
Rassemblement national	France	1	14	0	15	0	0	15
United Kingdom Independence Party	United Kingdom EFDD	0	14	0	14	2	2	18
Prace i Sprawiedliwość	Poland ECR	0	13	0	13	1	0	14
Fidesz Magyar Polgár és Szövetség	Hungary EPP	0	12	0	12	0	0	12

## Step 2 | Voting behaviour

Interpretative research is subjective by nature and can help develop new theories and paths to understand political dynamics. To complement our qualitative approach to understand the positions, we quantitatively analysed the voting behaviour in the European Parliament along 29 decisive votes on legislative pieces, listed below. To obtain the sample and limit it to the most important votes, we conducted a series of expert interviews, discussing the relevant developments in EU climate and energy policy.

For each of the votes, we used voting results as documented in VoteWatch.eu databases, which register all “roll call” and “recorded votes”. The data covers both legislative and non-legislative issues, but we limited it to *final votes* and excluded *separate votes* (on specific paragraphs or amendments) (VoteWatch.eu 2018). The Roll Call Vote (RCV) of Members of the European Parliament is a standard data source for modern research into the EP and has become a reliable data source in recent years, though not all votes are included in RCV samples.<sup>65</sup> We registered the share of MEPs voting with “for” (=“in favour”), “against”, and “abstain” the policy proposal.

For a description of each vote, please consult Table 2.

### A Climate and sustainable energy policy – sampling

To create the typical party position on “climate policy”, we assumed that votes are comparable with one another, being aware there might be many other variables in the resolution influencing the voting behaviour, such as the specific content of the resolution, i. e. the proposed policy measure, the proposed targets, cost distribution etc. We were

thus able to trace and discuss voting behaviour over time. The same premise underpins our results on “environment” and “multilateralism” – we took seemingly relevant votes on the policy area as proxies to identify general positions. We disregarded proposals on climate topics which were in fact considered ‘anti-climate’, for instance resolutions to lower existing targets or repeal decisions. For more details on each vote, please see the next subchapter (Voting records).

The sample of the eighth legislative term (2014–2019) includes the votes on the ETS and ESR, negotiations for the EU’s position at COP21, the ratification of the Paris Agreement, stricter CO<sub>2</sub>-regulations for cars (light vehicles) and trucks (heavy-vehicles), energy efficiency as well as energy performance for buildings, the governance of the Energy Union, promotion of renewables (including biofuels), and the climate diplomacy report. We also considered the LULUCF-vote.

1. COP21: Towards a new international climate agreement in Paris (2015)
2. Conclusion on behalf of the EU of the Paris Agreement adopted under the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (2016)
3. COP22: UN climate change conference in Marrakesh, Morocco (2016)
4. ETS: Cost-effective emission reductions and low-carbon investments (2017)
5. ESR: Binding annual greenhouse gas emission reductions to meet commitments under the Paris Agreement (2017)
6. Energy efficiency (2018)
7. Governance of the Energy Union (2018)

8. Promotion of the use of energy from renewable sources (2018)
9. Climate diplomacy report (2018)
10. CO<sub>2</sub> emissions from and fuel consumption of new heavy-duty vehicles (2018)
11. Emission performance standards for new passenger cars and for new light commercial vehicles (2018)
12. Energy performance of buildings (2018)
13. Inclusion of greenhouse gas emissions and removals from land use, land use change and forestry (LULUCF) into the 2030 climate and energy framework (2018)

The sample of the previous term (2009–2014) includes resolutions prior to UN climate conferences such as Copenhagen (COP15, 2009), Durban (COP17, 2011), Doha (COP18, 2012) and the vote on Warsaw (COP19, 2013). Other important resolutions – the implementation of the Kyoto Protocol (2014) as well as the adoption of the LIFE programme (2013) – are also part of the analysis. To receive an even more comprehensive set of votes and a more solid base for comparison, we also included important votes on European climate and energy policy during the time frame, i.e. votes on non-CO<sub>2</sub> climate-relevant anthropogenic emissions (2011), the mechanism for monitoring and reporting of emissions and climate information (2013), accounting rules on GHG emissions related to land use (2013).

1. COP15: Preparation of the Copenhagen (Denmark) summit on climate change (2009)
2. COP17: Climate change conference in Durban, South Africa (2011)

3. A comprehensive approach to non-CO<sub>2</sub> climate-relevant anthropogenic emissions (2011)
4. COP18: Climate change conference in Doha, Qatar (2012)
5. COP19: Climate change conference in Warsaw, Poland (2013)
6. Mechanism for monitoring and reporting greenhouse gas emissions and other information relevant to climate change (2013)
7. Accounting rules and action plans on greenhouse gas emissions and removals resulting from activities related to land use (2013)
8. Programme for the environment and climate action (LIFE) (2013)
9. Technical implementation of the Kyoto Protocol to the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (2014)

### **B** Environmental policy (non-climate) – sampling

As exemplary votes on environmental policy areas not related to climate change we purposefully chose three decisions covering *different aspects* of environmental policy, including biodiversity protection in the EU (in 2016, the EU reviewed its strategy to halt the loss of biodiversity and ecosystem services in the EU); transboundary air pollution especially in the reduction of black particulate matter (in 2017, the EU decided to endorse an amendment to the 1999 Gothenburg Protocol to Abate Acidification, Eutrophication and Ground-level Ozone), and reduction of single-use plastics to protect the environment, especially oceans and human health (in 2018, the EU decided to ban single-use plastics by

2021 – a vote that gained significant media attention).

1. Reduction of the impact of certain plastic products on the environment (2018)
2. Convention on long-range transboundary air pollution to abate acidification, eutrophication and ground-level ozone (2017)
3. Mid-term review of the EU biodiversity strategy (2016)

### C Multilateral cooperation (non-climate) – sampling

As exemplary votes on policy to promote multilateralism in a broader sense, we purposefully chose four decisions covering different aspects of multilateralism, i. e. activities in the form of alliances of multiple countries with the ambition to strengthen global governance. For the EU itself, this means “*joining forces with the United Nations, the African Union and NATO*”<sup>66</sup>, among other partners. We thus included the most recent votes on strengthening the United Nations system (in 2018, the EU recommends to reform the UN system and strengthen political cooperation between EU and UN), NATO relations (in 2018 the EU MEPs stress that neither organisation has the full range of tools to tackle new security challenges and that EU-NATO strategic ties and common cyber defence need be improved<sup>67</sup>), and the strategy for EU-Africa cooperation. The 2017-resolution on the new EU-Africa strategy suggests for instance to step up European peace and security actions and start an intense EU-African Union dialogue in various fields, to ensure development but partly also to

tackle root causes of migration.<sup>68</sup> The resolution on trade relations with Australia aims to boost trade in goods and services, to promote investment flows and to create business opportunities. In times of rising protectionism, we included this vote as proxy for attitudes towards free trade, which in turn is an indicator for preferences about multilateral cooperation.

1. EU-NATO relations (2018)
2. 73<sup>rd</sup> Session of the UN General Assembly (2018)
3. The EU-Africa Strategy: a boost for development (2017)
4. Trade relations with Australia (2017)

**FIG 5**

We used voting results for 13 votes on climate and energy from the sample of the current term from 2014–2019 (see above) as documented in VoteWatch.eu databases. The vertical axis shows the average percentage of MEPs for and against in each party, across all votes. In most cases, all MEPs from one party voted for the same option in one vote. In exceptional cases, outlier MEPs took a different stance compared to their peers, and because we used *percentages of MEPs*, those outliers are included in the chart. Whenever parties did not participate in a vote, that vote was excluded from the party’s track record. The number of right-wing populist MEPs included for this calculation is 93.

**FIG 6**

We used the voting results of the entire European Parliament on 13 climate and energy resolutions of the current term from 2014–2019 (8<sup>th</sup> European Parliament) (as above). Thereby we calculated the total parliament’s average voting result (751 MEPs are included) and the relative share of right-wing populist parties in our sample (93 MEPs are included).

**FIG 7**

We followed the same methodology as in Figure 5, using the data set from the previous term (2009–2014, 7<sup>th</sup> European Parliament). Parties that did not exist at that time, or had no seats in the European Parliament are excluded from the chart. 10 parties from our sample had MEPs in the EP during the previous term. Therefore we were able to include 61 right-wing populist MEPs in the sample.

**FIG 8**

We followed the same methodology as in Figure 5, using the data set on environment from the current term from 2014–2019 (8<sup>th</sup> European Parliament, see above).

**FIG 9**

We followed the same methodology as in Figure 5, using the data set on multilateral cooperation from the current term 2014–2019 (8<sup>th</sup> European Parliament, see above).

**FIG 10**

We used voting results for all 22 votes on climate and energy from both samples of the 8<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> European Parliament from 2009–2019 (see above) as documented in VoteWatch.eu databases. The vertical axis shows the average percentage of MEPs for and against in each political group, across all votes.

**FIG 11**

We used polling data as of 24 November 2018, aggregated by Polls of Europe<sup>69</sup>, a private, non-profit and independent project to observe electoral trends across Europe. In their model, *En Marche* is included with the new parties and M5S are included in the EFDD group. As there was no track record of those yet to be affiliated MEPs, we anticipated an even share of “against”, “for”, and “abstain” votes (33,3%).

Further assessments of the positions articulated in parliament through MEP speeches and more quantitative research on voting patterns as well as on the frequency and correlation of climate change frames are desirable. Contrasting domestic rhetoric and action would also be beneficial, if only as a comparison with rhetoric at other ends of the political spectrum.



# VOTING RECORDS

## Voting behaviour (by national parties)

### Eighth European Parliament 2014 – 2019

TABLE 2

#### Climate policy – voting results

	For	Against	Abstain
<p><b>Environment &amp; public health</b></p> <p><b>Towards a new international climate agreement in Paris</b> (14.10.2015)</p> <p>Non-Legislative. Vote on the EU mandate for Paris UN climate talks (COP21). Includes reduction and energy-efficiency targets, RE targets and argues for a legally binding protocol.</p>	Fidesz, Order and Justice	AfD, FPÖ, National Rally (+1 Abstain), Golden Dawn, Lega, PVV, PiS, UKIP	Danish People's Party, Finns Party, Sweden Democrats, VMRO
<p><b>Environment &amp; public health</b></p> <p><b>EU ratification of the Paris Agreement</b> (04.10.2016)</p> <p>Legislative (consent). With this vote, members of Parliament give their consent to the ratification of the Paris Agreement, thereby ensuring it will come into force before COP22 in Marrakesh.</p>	Fidesz, Order and Justice, VMRO, PiS (+1 Abstain), SD, Finns Party, Golden Dawn, National Alliance	UKIP (+1 Abstain), Lega, PVV, FPÖ, AfD	National Rally, Vlaams Belang, Danish People's Party
<p><b>Environment &amp; public health</b></p> <p><b>UN Climate Change Conference in Marrakesh, Morocco</b> (06.10.2016)</p> <p>Non-Legislative. Vote on a resolution highlighting the urgency of ratifying and implementing the Paris Agreement and stipulating the EU position for the COP22 in Marrakesh, Morocco.</p>	Order and Justice	FPÖ, Danish People's Party, Golden Dawn, PiS, AfD, National Rally, Lega, PVV, UKIP, Finns Party (+1 Abstain), VMRO, National Alliance	Vlaams Belang
<p><b>Environment &amp; public health</b></p> <p><b>ETS reform: Cost-effective emission reductions and low-carbon investments</b> (15.02.2017)</p> <p>Legislative (ordinary legislative procedure, first reading). Proposal to revise the EU ETS for 2021 – 2030 envisaging achieving a 43% reduction in GHG emissions by 2030 in comparison with 2005 levels. Key points of the position are that 800 millions of allowances should be taken out from the Market Stability Reserve as of 1 January 2021 and a new Just Transition Fund.</p>	Finns Party, National Alliance, VMRO	AfD, FPÖ, National Rally, Golden Dawn, Lega, PVV, PiS, Sweden Democrats, UKIP, Vlaams Belang	Danish People's Party, Fidesz, Order and Justice
<p><b>Environment &amp; public health</b></p> <p><b>Effort Sharing Regulation: Binding annual greenhouse gas emission reductions to meet commitments under the Paris Agreement</b> (14.06.2017)</p> <p>Legislative (ordinary legislative procedure, first reading). Vote to regulate emissions from non-ETS sectors incl. transport, building, agriculture and waste in the 2021 – 2030 period.</p>	Danish People's Party, Fidesz, Finns Party, National Alliance, VMRO	AfD, FPÖ (+1 Abstain), National Rally, Golden Dawn, Lega, PVV, PiS, Sweden Democrats, UKIP, Vlaams Belang	Order and Justice

<p><b>Environment &amp; public health</b></p> <p><b>CO<sub>2</sub> emissions from and fuel consumption of new heavy-duty vehicles</b> (12.06.2018)</p> <p>Legislative (ordinary legislative procedure, first reading). Vote on first ever CO<sub>2</sub> emission standards for lorries, buses etc.</p>	<p>Danish People's Party, Fidesz, FPÖ, National Alliance, VMRO, Finns Party, Golden Dawn, PiS, Sweden Democrats, Order and Justice</p>	<p>AfD, National Rally, Lega, PVV, UKIP</p>	<p>Vlaams Belang</p>
<p><b>Foreign &amp; security policy</b></p> <p><b>Climate diplomacy report</b> (03.07.2018)</p> <p>Non-Legislative. Vote on strengthened climate diplomacy to address increasingly severe effects of climate change on different aspects of human life as well as on development opportunities, the worldwide geopolitical order and global stability.</p>	<p>Order and Justice, Sweden Democrats</p>	<p>Finns Party (+1 Abstain), Danish People's Party, National Alliance, VMRO, Finns Party, Golden Dawn, PiS, AfD, National Rally, Lega, PVV, UKIP</p>	<p>Fidesz (+3 For), FPÖ</p>
<p><b>Environment &amp; public health</b></p> <p><b>Emission performance standards for new passenger cars and for new light commercial vehicles</b> (3.10.2018)</p> <p>Legislative (ordinary legislative procedure, first reading). Proposal to establish CO<sub>2</sub> emissions performance requirements for new passenger cars and for new light commercial vehicles.</p>	<p>Danish People's Party, Finns Party (+1 Against), Golden Dawn, Order and Justice</p>	<p>FPÖ, PiS, AfD, Lega, PVV, UKIP, Vlaams Belang, Sweden Democrats, VMRO</p>	<p>National Rally</p>
<p><b>Environment &amp; public health</b></p> <p><b>Inclusion of greenhouse gas emissions and removals from land use, land use change and forestry (LULUCF) into the 2030 climate and energy framework</b> (17.04.2018)</p> <p>Legislative (ordinary legislative procedure, first reading). Resolution to include the areas of land use, land use change and forestry into member state's reduction commitments to achieve the objectives of the Paris Agreement and the EU's climate target for the period 2012 – 2030.</p>	<p>VMRO, Danish People's Party, Finns Party (+1 Against), Golden Dawn, Fidesz, Order and Justice, Sweden Democrats</p>	<p>Vlaams Belang, National Rally, AfD, Lega, PVV, PiS, UKIP</p>	<p>FPÖ</p>

Parties that did not participate in the votes were excluded.

TABLE 3

### Sustainable energy policy – voting results

	For	Against	Abstentions
<p><b>Industry, research &amp; energy</b></p> <p><b>Energy efficiency</b> (17.01.2018)</p> <p>Legislative (ordinary legislative procedure, first reading). Vote on the EU energy efficiency target of 35% by 2030.</p>	<p>Fidesz, Order and Justice</p>	<p>FPÖ, National Alliance, VMRO, Finns Party, Golden Dawn, PiS, Sweden Democrats, AfD, National Rally, Lega, PVV, UKIP</p>	<p>Danish People's Party</p>
<p><b>Industry, research &amp; energy</b></p> <p><b>Governance of the Energy Union</b> (17.01.2018)</p> <p>Legislative (ordinary legislative procedure, first reading). Vote on the umbrella piece of legislation that should ensure the achievement of the 2030 energy and climate targets. Under the Governance Regulation, Member States will have to adopt national integrated energy and climate plans.</p>	<p>Danish People's Party, Fidesz, Order and Justice, National Alliance, Finns Party</p>	<p>FPÖ (+1 Abstain), VMRO, Golden Dawn, PiS, Sweden Democrats, AfD, National Rally, Lega, PVV, UKIP, Vlaams Belang</p>	

Industry, research & energy

**Promotion of the use of energy from renewable sources** (17.01.2018)

Legislative (ordinary legislative procedure, first reading)  
Vote on a EU renewable energy targets of 35% of total consumption and on banning palm oil in biofuels from 2021.

Danish People's Party, Fidesz, National Alliance, Finns Party (+1 Abstain), Sweden Democrats

Golden Dawn, PiS, Sweden Democrats, AfD, National Rally, Lega, PVV, UKIP, Vlaams Belang

FPÖ, VMRO

Industry, research & energy

**Energy Performance of Buildings** (17.04.2018)

Legislative (ordinary legislative procedure, first reading)  
Member States shall establish a long-term strategy to support the renovation of the national stock of residential and non-residential buildings, both public and private, into a highly energy efficient and decarbonised building stock by 2050, with a view to the long-term 2050 goal of reducing greenhouse gas emissions in the Union by 80 – 95% compared to 1990.

VMRO, Danish People's Party, Finns Party, Golden Dawn, Fidesz, Lega, Order and Justice, PiS, Sweden Democrats

AfD, PVV, UKIP

FPÖ, Vlaams Belang, National Rally

Parties that did not participate in the votes were excluded.

TABLE 4

**Environmental policy – voting results**

	For	Against	Abstentions
<p>Environment &amp; public health</p> <p><b>Mid-term review of the EU biodiversity strategy</b> (02.02.2016)</p> <p>Non-Legislative. Vote to enhance the role that biodiversity and ecosystems play in economic affairs, and better reflect the economic value of biodiversity in the indicators for decision-making.</p>	<p>Danish People's Party (+1 Against), Fidesz, Finns Party (+1 Abstain), FPÖ, National Rally, Golden Dawn, National Alliance, Order and Justice, Vlaams Belang, VMRO</p>	<p>PVV, UKIP (+3 Abstain)</p>	<p>Lega, PiS (+4 Against), Sweden Democrats</p>
<p>Environment &amp; public health</p> <p><b>Reduction of the impact of certain plastic products on the environment</b> (24.10.2018)</p> <p>Legislative (ordinary legislative procedure, first reading). Vote to amend the proposal for a Directive of the European Parliament and of the Council on the reduction of the impact of certain plastic products on the environment with the aim to introduce an EU-wide ban on single-use plastic products whenever alternatives exist.</p>	<p>Finns Party, FPÖ, National Rally, Golden Dawn, Order and Justice, VMRO</p>	<p>AfD, Danish People's Party, Lega, PVV, Sweden Democrats, UKIP</p>	<p>Fidesz, PiS (+1 For), Vlaams Belang</p>
<p>Environment &amp; public health</p> <p><b>Convention on long-range transboundary air pollution to abate acidification, eutrophication and ground-level ozone</b> (05.07.2017)</p> <p>Legislative (consent). Vote to amend the 1979 Protocol to the 1979 Convention on Long-Range Transboundary Air Pollution to Abate Acidification, Eutrophication and Ground-level Ozone.</p>	<p>Danish People's Party, Fidesz, Finns Party, FPÖ, National Rally, Golden Dawn, National Alliance, Lega (+2 Abstain), Order and Justice, PiS, Vlaams Belang, VMRO</p>	<p>PVV</p>	<p>AfD, Sweden Democrats, UKIP</p>

Parties that did not participate in the votes were excluded.

TABLE 5

## Multilateralism – voting results

	For	Against	Abstentions
<p>Foreign &amp; security policy</p> <p><b>The EU-Africa Strategy: a boost for development</b> (16.11.2017)</p> <p>Non-Legislative. Vote to intensify the political dialogue by making resilience a major component of the development cooperation/relations strategy. (Includes the stepping up of financial contribution to trust funds and other instruments aiming to foster inclusive and sustainable growth and stimulate job creation thus contributing to addressing the root causes of migration.)</p>	Order and Justice, VMRO	Finns Party, National Rally, Golden Dawn, Lega, PVV, Sweden Democrats, UKIP, Vlaams Belang	Danish People's Party, Fidesz, FPÖ, PiS
<p>Foreign &amp; security policy</p> <p><b>EU-NATO relations</b> (13.06.2018)</p> <p>Non-Legislative. Vote to maintain and strengthen the strategic partnership between the EU and NATO. Cooperation between the EU and NATO should be complementary and respectful of the specificities and roles of each of the two organisations.</p>	Fidesz, National Alliance, PiS, VMRO	Danish People's Party, FPÖ, National Rally, Golden Dawn, PVV, Sweden Democrats, UKIP	AfD, Finns Party (+1 Against), Lega, Order and Justice, Vlaams Belang
<p>International Trade</p> <p><b>Negotiating mandate for trade negotiations with Australia</b> (26.10.2017)</p> <p>Non-Legislative. Vote to recommend to the Council the negotiation of an ambitious, balanced and comprehensive free trade agreement with Australia as a suitable way of deepening the bilateral partnership and further reinforcing the existing, bilateral trade and investment relationships between Australia and the EU.</p>	Danish People's Party, Fidesz, Finns Party, Order and Justice, PiS, Sweden Democrats, VMRO	National Rally, Golden Dawn, Lega, PVV, UKIP, Vlaams Belang	FPÖ
<p>Foreign &amp; security policy</p> <p><b>73rd Session of the UN General Assembly</b> (05.07.2018)</p> <p>Non-Legislative. Vote to recommend for the EU to stay fully committed to multilateralism, global governance, the promotion of UN core values as an integral part of the EU's external policy, and the three pillars of the UN system: (i) human rights, (ii) peace and security, (iii) development. Also: deepening of cooperation at Member State level both within the EU and the UN.</p>		AfD, Danish People's Party, FPÖ, National Rally, Golden Dawn, PVV, UKIP, Vlaams Belang	Fidesz (+1 For), Finns Party, National Alliance, Lega, PiS, Sweden Democrats, VMRO

Parties that did not participate in the votes were excluded.

## Voting behaviour (by political groups)

Seventh European Parliament 2009 – 2014

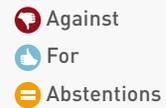


FIG 12

COP15: Preparation of the Copenhagen summit on climate change, 25.11.2009

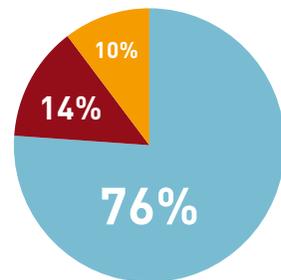
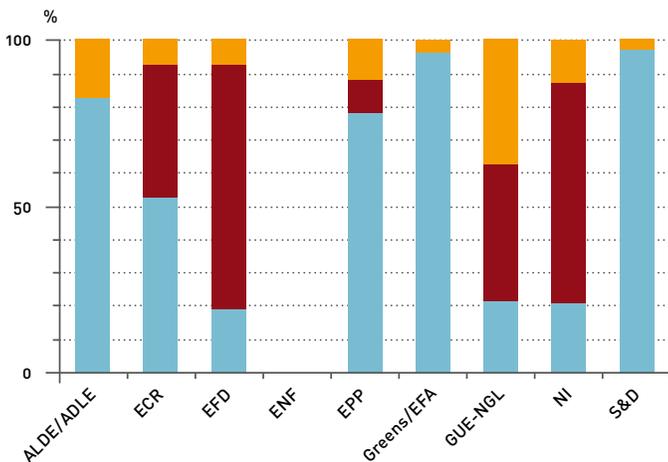


FIG 13

A comprehensive approach to non-CO<sub>2</sub> climate-relevant anthropogenic emissions, 14.09.2011

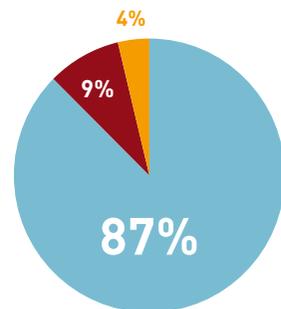
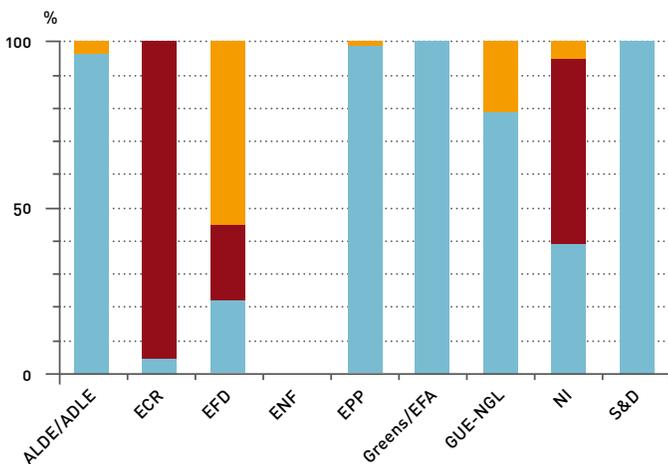


FIG 14

**COP17: UN climate change conference in Durban, South Africa, 16.11.2011**

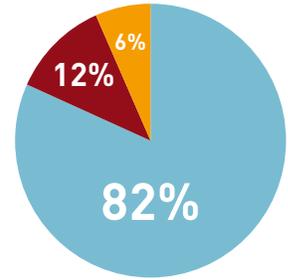
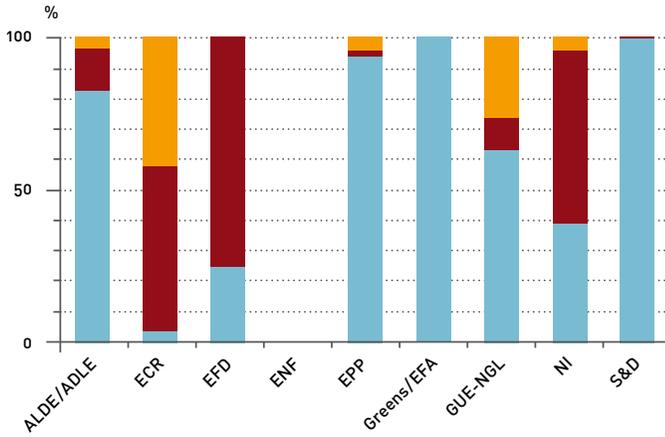


FIG 15

**COP18: Climate change conference in Doha, Qatar, 22.11.2012**

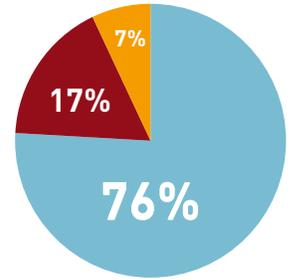
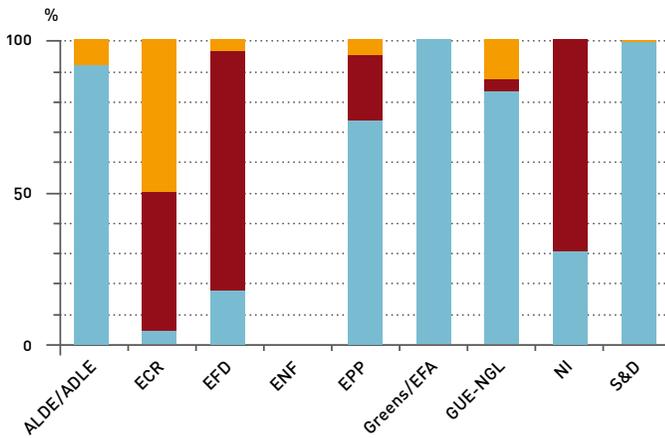


FIG 16

**Mechanism for monitoring and reporting greenhouse gas emissions and other information relevant to climate change, 12.03.2013**

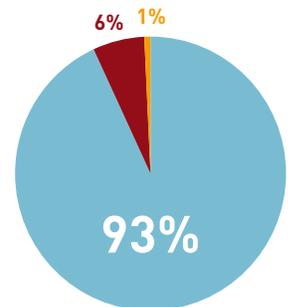
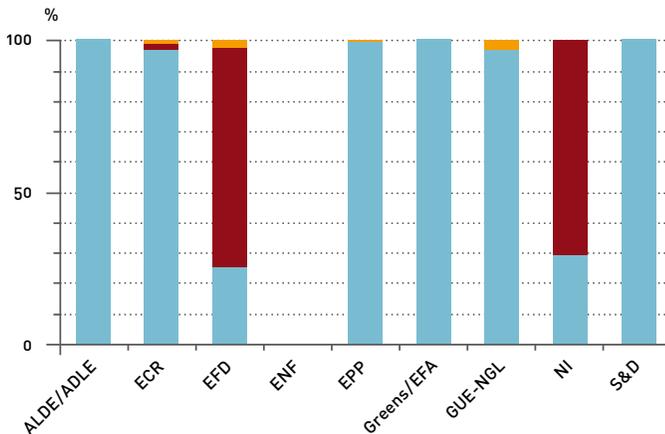


FIG 17

Accounting rules and action plans on greenhouse gas emissions and removals resulting from activities related to land use, 12.03.2013

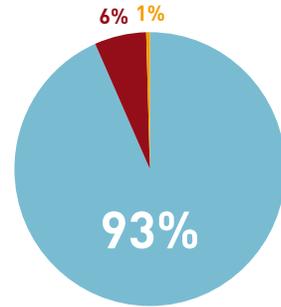
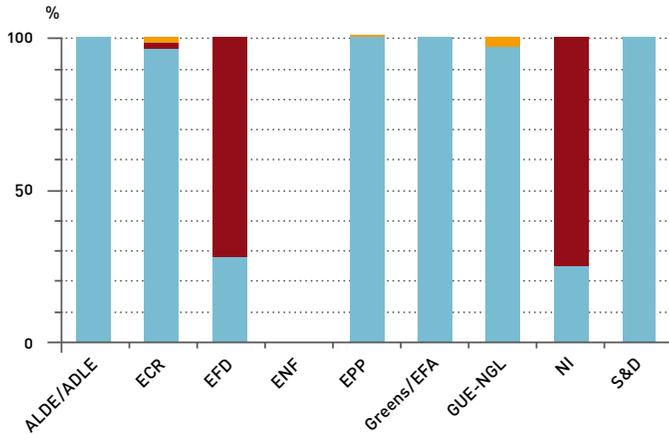


FIG 18

COP19: UN climate change conference in Warsaw, Poland, 23.10.2013

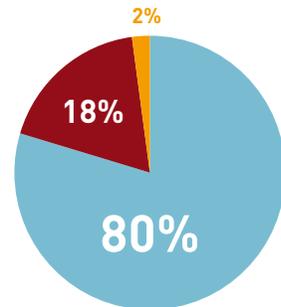
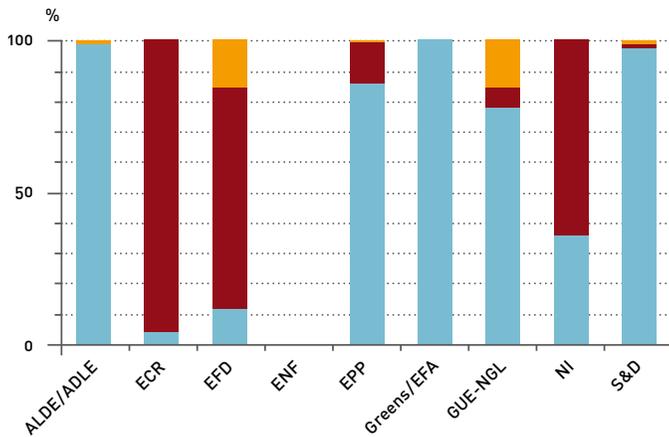


FIG 19

Programme for the environment and climate action (LIFE), 21.11.2013

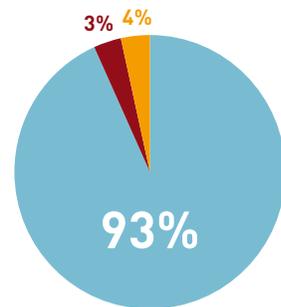
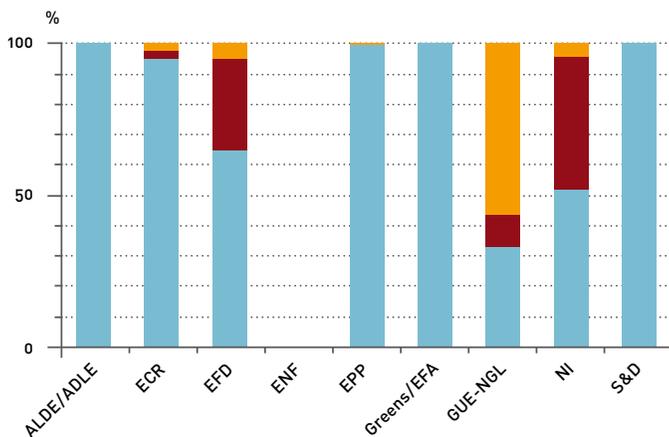
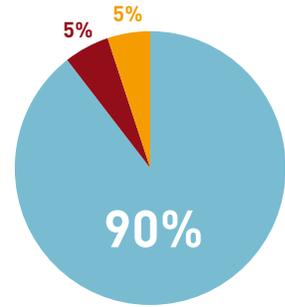
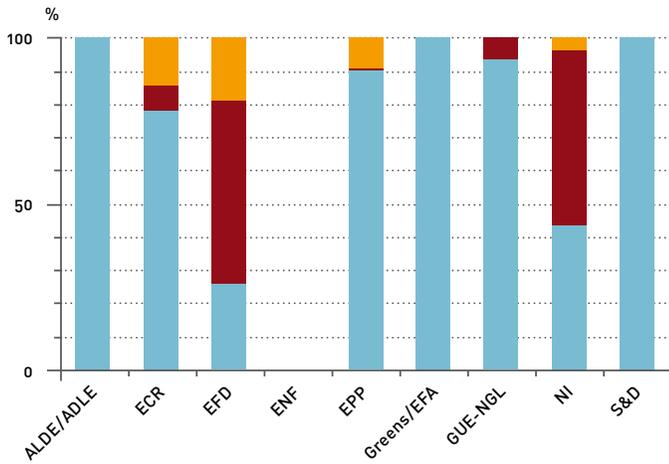


FIG 20

Technical implementation of the Kyoto Protocol to the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change, 16.04.2014



Eighth European Parliament 2014 – 2019



FIG 21

COP21: Towards a new international climate agreement in Paris, 14.10.2015

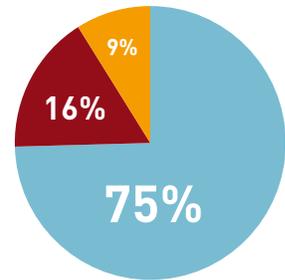
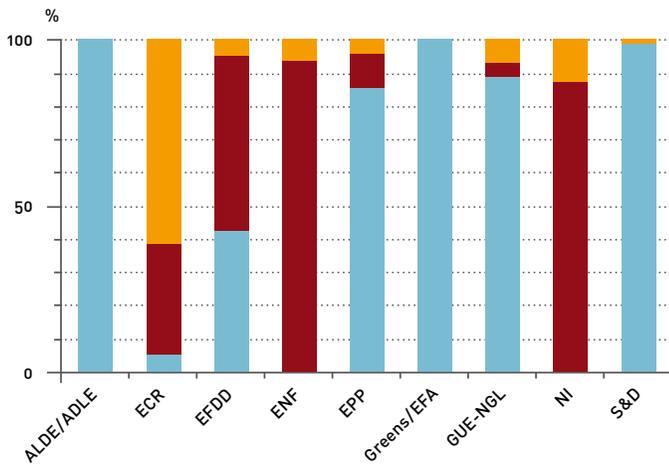


FIG 22

Conclusion on behalf of the EU of the Paris Agreement adopted under the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change, 04.10.2016

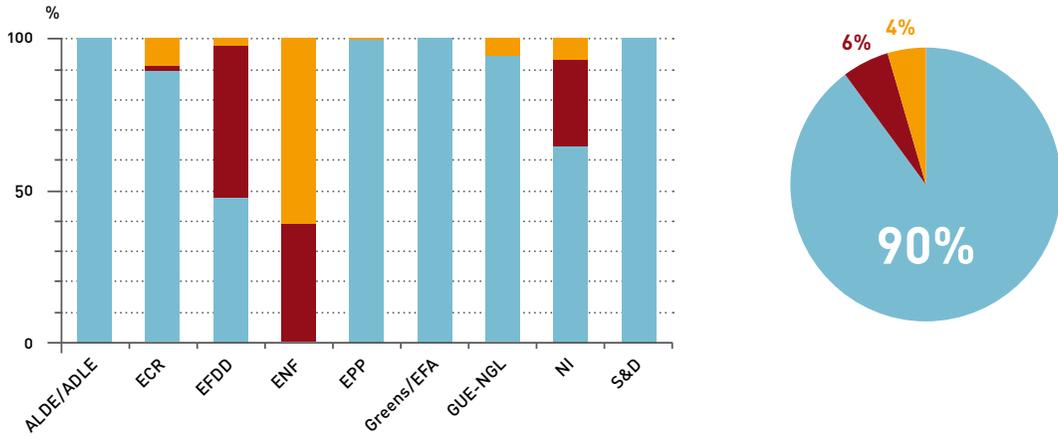


FIG 23

COP22: UN climate change conference in Marrakesh, Morocco, 06.10.2016

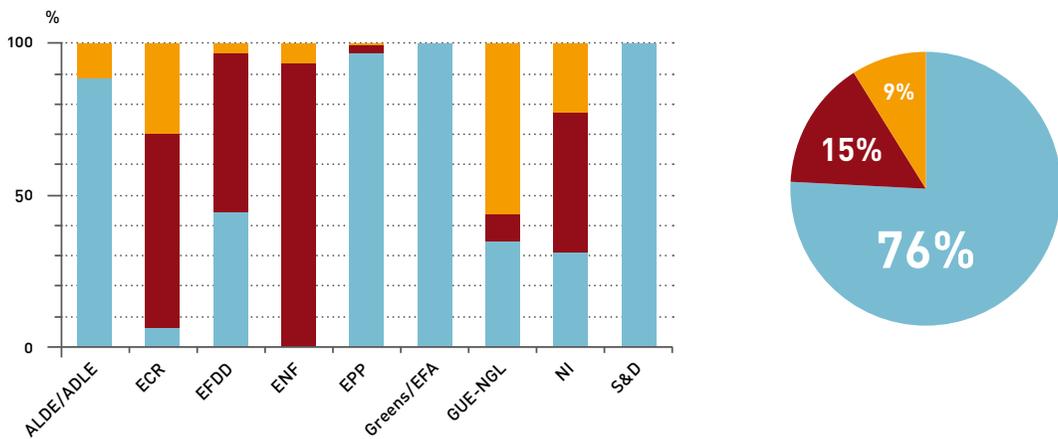


FIG 24

ETS: Cost-effective emission reductions and low-carbon investments, 15.02.2017

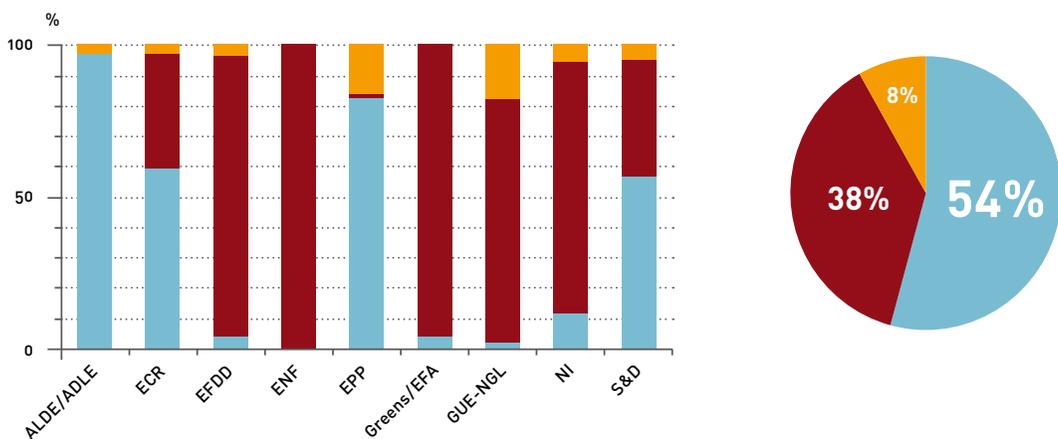


FIG 25

**ESR: Binding annual greenhouse gas emission reductions to meet commitments under the Paris Agreement (Effort Sharing Regulation), 14.06.2017**

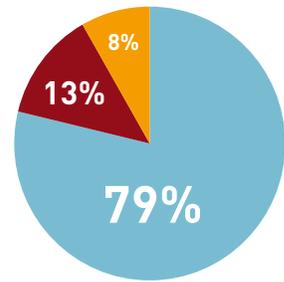
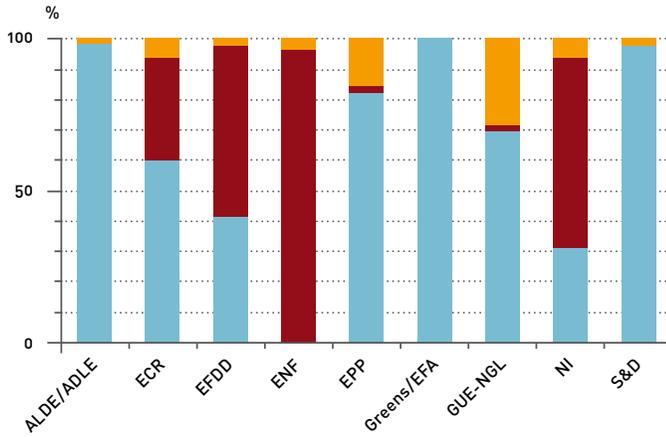


FIG 26

**Governance of the Energy Union, 17.01.2018**

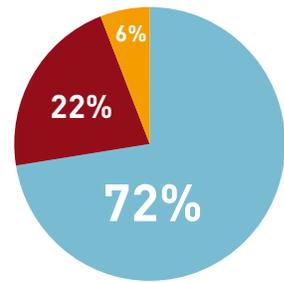
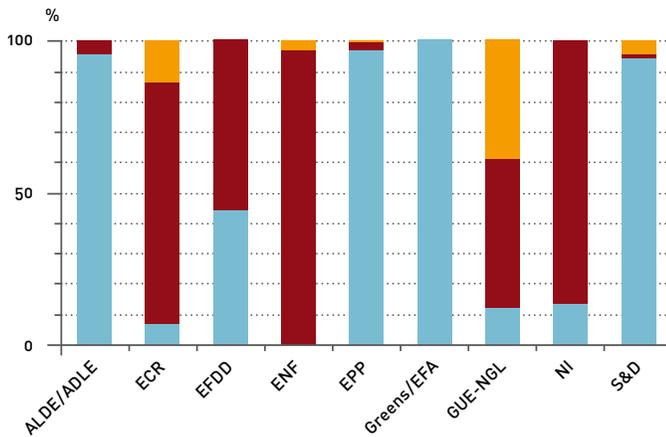


FIG 27

**Energy efficiency, 17.01.2018**

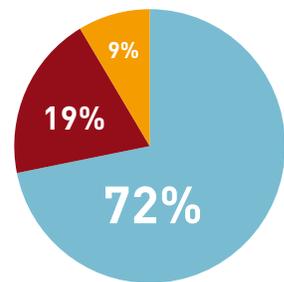
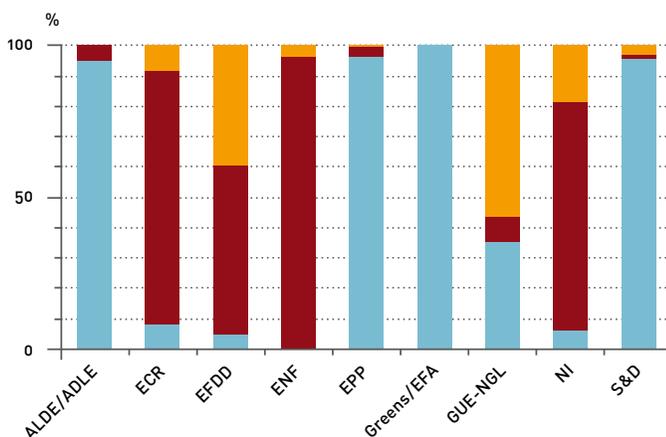


FIG 28

Promotion of the use of energy from renewable sources, 17.01.2018

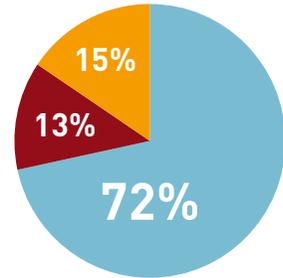
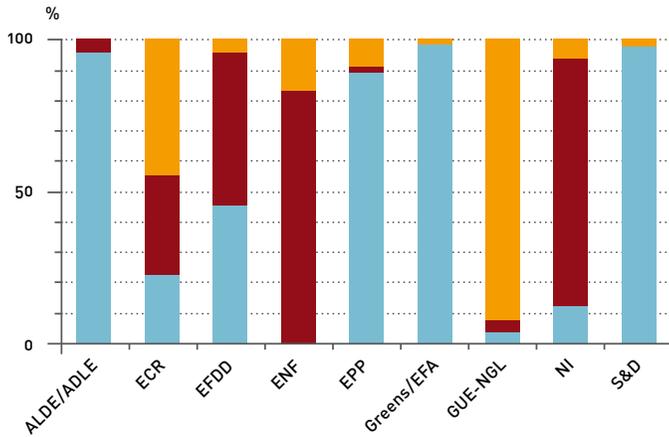


FIG 29

Inclusion of greenhouse gas emissions and removals from land use, land use change and forestry into the 2030 climate and energy framework, 17.04.2018

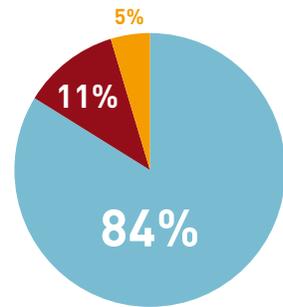
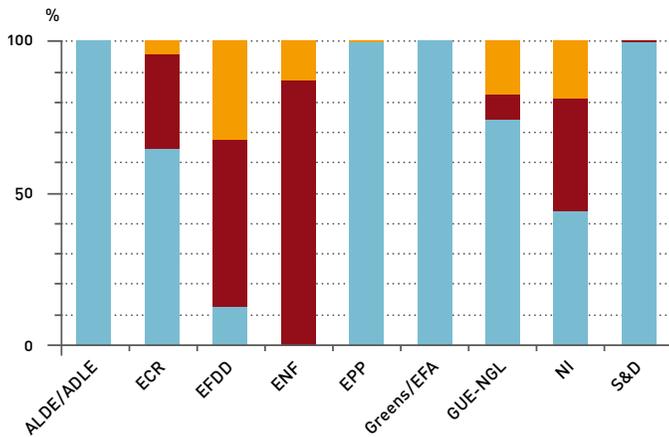


FIG 30

Energy performance of buildings, 17.04.2018

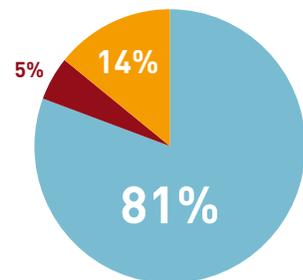
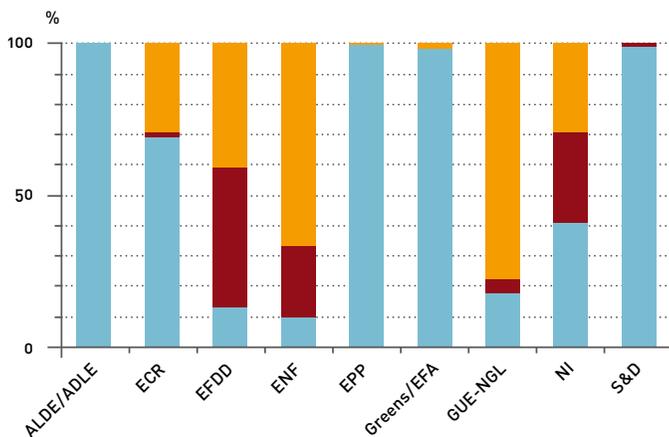


FIG 31

CO<sub>2</sub> emissions from and fuel consumption of new heavy-duty vehicles, 12.06.2018

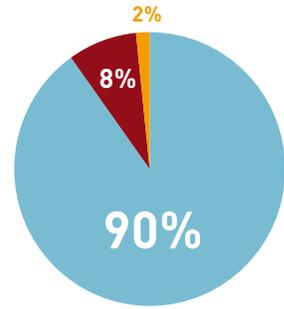
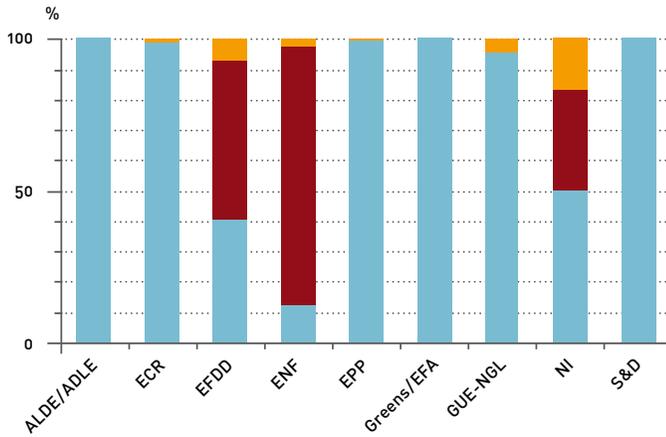


FIG 32

Climate diplomacy report, 03.07.2018

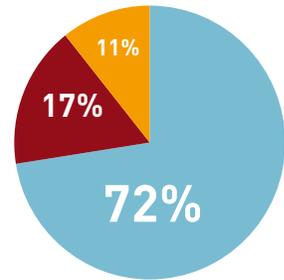
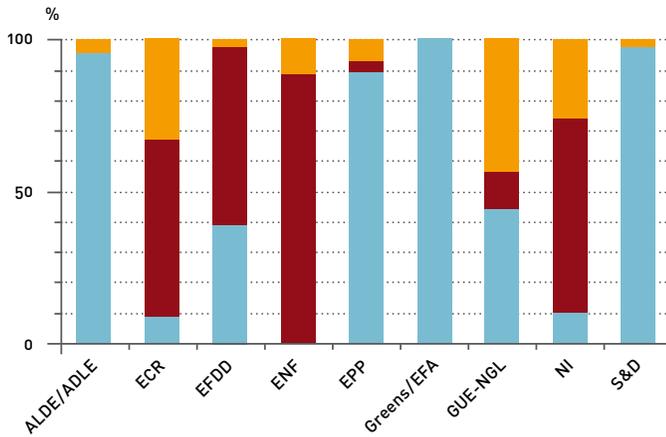
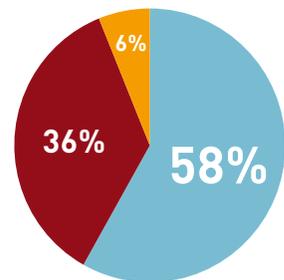
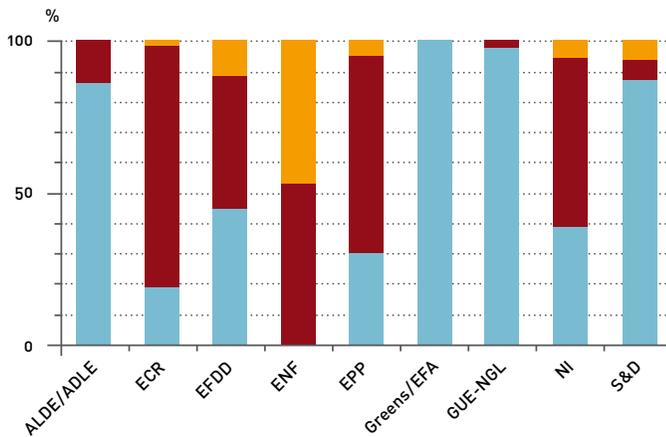


FIG 33

Emission performance standards for new passenger cars and for new light commercial vehicles, 03.10.2018



# GUIDE TO RIGHT-WING POPULIST PARTIES AND CLIMATE CHANGE

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## FREEDOM PARTY OF AUSTRIA (FPÖ)

**Leader** Heinz-Christian Strache

**European Group** ENF

*“Greenland used to be a green country with vineyards”, “In view of sun eruptions and a heating of the sun, we cannot correct global warming”*

.....

Founded in 1956, the FPÖ looks back at a long history of national conservative “Heimat” (homeland) party politics and gained 26% in the last federal election in October 2017. It is the junior partner of ÖVP and is the third strongest force in Austria, holding six ministries, including Defence and Foreign Affairs. Assertions that “Greenland used to be a green country with vineyards” (FPÖ chief Heinz-Christian Strache, 2017) and official statements suggesting climate change was not science but “propaganda” or “climate religion” illustrate FPÖ’s anti-climate rhetoric. FPÖ is very concerned about climate change becoming a justification for immigration: “Climate change must never become a recognised justification for asylum. [If the message spreads,] Europe, including Austria, will be flooded with millions of climate refugees.”

Recently, the party has altered shifted from its hostile discourse: “We want to protect our climate, of course [...]. Here in Parliament, we have an agreement that climate action is our first priority” (Secretary General Hafenecker, October 2018).

The party is ambitious with regards to domestic environmental policies, supporting a 100% renewable energy target by 2030 and the phasing out of coal and nuclear energy. The reason for their support of these targets is that energy independence could be achieved from transitioning to domestic renewables. On the other hand, the party has strong ties with the steel, automotive and fossil fuel industry, and its economic policies contradict its aforementioned position on sustainable energy.

FPÖ opposes carbon taxes and other climate policies as they are too costly and would trigger a “deindustrialisation” of Europe/Austria. It voted against the ratification of the Paris Agreement in 2016 in the Austrian Parliament (Nationalrat). FPÖ further opposes deeper political integration among EU member states and EU climate action, for example the ETS (“hypocritical emission certificates squeeze money out of our businesses’ pockets, but without actually reducing CO<sub>2</sub>”, party programme 2017). The FPÖ considers tax schemes and international agreements to be hidden redistribution tactics, foreign aid or sanction mechanisms beyond national control. It voted against all climate policy proposals in the EP that were analysed in this study.

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## VLAAMS BELANG (VB)

**Leader** Tom Van Grieken

**European Group** NI

*“The current climate story is an excellent pretext for raising taxes once again in the form of CO<sub>2</sub> or environmental taxes in order to get the budgets in order.”*

Vlaams Belang (~“Flemish Interest”) had 3,7% of the votes (2014) and is still a small party in the Belgian parliament but has grown its support base in recent years with anti-immigrant and sometimes anti-Semitic rhetoric. It emerged as a Flemish separatist movement and incorporated other nationalist themes to effectively position itself against multiculturalism. It has no clear stance on human-induced climate change and opposes renewable energies, especially wind (*“We reject the instalment [of wind turbines] in areas of open space, especially in scenically valuable agricultural and natural areas.”*).

Yet, according to its party programme, it seeks to *“stimulate the transition to new forms of energy by supporting research and the use of new forms of energy generation”* and reward families and businesses that produce less waste *“rather than to impose increasingly stringent norms according to international and European agreements”* (2012). In 2014, Vlaams Belang refused to participate in the parliamentary debate on Flemish climate policy, calling it *“a dubious initiative of a small group of private limited companies.”* The party is in favour of nuclear energy to drive down emissions as well as a stable investment framework for green electricity. In the European Parliament, Vlaams Belang voted against the majority of climate policy proposals and abstained in the rest of cases.

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## BULGARIAN NATIONAL MOVEMENT (VMRO)

**Leader** Krasimir Karakachanov

**European Group** ECR

*“Climate change is more a matter of manipulation than of serious concern, manipulation related to economic interests and a lot of money” (Neno Dimov, 2015)*

The “United Patriots” is an alliance of three right-wing populist and xenophobic parties including VMRO, National Front for the Salvation of Bulgaria and Attack, which gained 9% in Bulgaria’s 2017 elections. In our analysis we focused on VMRO, which has a longer history and sends 1 member to the European Parliament. Yet, the United Patriots coalition, founded in 2016, forms one patriotic front with commonly shared positions and is part of the Bulgarian government coalition. The United Patriots nominated Neno Dimov – admirer of US President Trump – as Minister of Environment and Water. He has oftentimes openly challenged the scientific consensus on climate change and described it as “fraud ... used to scare the people” and as “an inexhaustible source of fear” to distract from failed policies. In a lecture titled “Sustainable development is the

new socialism”, Dimov argued against imposed restrictions on the free market. Although VMRO does not mention climate change, its support of climate-denialist Neno Dimov serves as a reflection of its position.

Air pollution control – including CO<sub>2</sub> regulation of cars – is a priority for VMRO, which even has its own “Green is patriotism” movement aiming for nature conservation. It runs tree planting activities and national campaigns for weekend clean-ups (“Let’s Clear Bulgaria”), but in the eyes of many VMRO members, a complete energy transition is not affordable, especially in the case of more stringent coal regulations: “We cannot leave people without work or bread, especially in regions associated with mines” (Angel Djambazki, Deputy Chairman of VMRO, 2017). In the European parliament, VMRO voted against the CO<sub>2</sub> regulation for cars in 2018, as well as a range of other climate policies.

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## FREEDOM AND DIRECT DEMOCRACY (SPD)

**Leader** Tomio Okamura

**European Group** no seats in EP

*“I think the climate is really changing, and it is just a question of expert discussion on how much a person contributes to it” (Tomio Okamura); “Under the pretext of combating climate change, unprecedented economic atrocities are taking place” (Radim Fiala, 2015).*

Founded in 2015 by Tomio Okamura and Radim Fiala, the party is still very young. The party’s name was adapted from that of the Eurosceptic “Europe of Freedom and Direct Democracy” (EFDD) group. The rejection of the bureaucratization of Europe is one of SPD’s principles.

In general, SPD is rather silent on the topics of climate change and energy policy, but the few statements uttered are contradictory. When asked about climate in an interview, Okamura said he considered climate change and its impacts undeniable. Fiala is less convinced and sees the climate change argument as an instrument used to manipulate the people: *“Our society faces media manipulation that is unprece-*

*ented in history. Under the pretext of combating climate change, unprecedented economic atrocities are taking place” (Radim Fiala, 2015).*

The party opposes subsidisation of renewable energies, especially solar and biofuels which compete with domestic agriculture and are deemed too expensive: *“This year, renewable energy sources will cost Czech taxpayers around 40 billion crowns” (Czech SPD).* They are also considered unfair (the Czech SPD used the term *“solar barons”* for companies getting rich on RE subsidies). The party thereby fuels fears of rising electricity prices for the Czech citizens.

Okamura chose temperate words when commenting on the energy transition on his blog: *“What is crucial is [...] not just the climate but the energy strategy in general for this century. This is clearly the latest technology, the end of fossil fuels, including oil and gas, the decentralisation and diversification of local resources, which in practice means maximum energy self-sufficiency plus austerity technologies.”*

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## DANISH PEOPLE'S PARTY (DF)

**Leader** Kristian Thulesen Dahl

**European Group** ECR

*“The question of whether climate change is man-made or not is a matter of faith – and faith belongs to the People’s Church.”* (Danish People’s Party Climate Rapporteur, Mikkel Dencker, 2018)

This party is one of the most popular right-wing populist parties across Europe, with the most Danish votes (27%) in the last European elections (2014). It has a strong influence on Danish immigration policies, openly rejects multilateralism, pledges to boost contraception aid to developing countries in order to prevent migration and holds a blatantly anti-Euro position. The party is openly sceptical about human-induced climate change. Statements in the past argued that *“the climate goes on its own and cannot simply be changed”* and that *“we Danes cannot change the course of climate”* (press release 2011).

The *Danish People’s Party* opposes most domestic climate policies on the basis that they would impose heavy burdens on Danish business and tax payers: *“Danish business is already suffering from high taxes and charges [...] new climate law, will impose new heavy burdens on Danish business life.”* (website, 2014).

The party also wants to *“phase out the support for wind turbines on land and instead focus on offshore wind turbines”*, which do not *“bother anyone in their backyard or spoil our landscape.”*

Yet, there are recent signs of this position softening. The party did not veto the 2018 Danish Energy Agreement and its current programme states their aspiration to engage in *“both national and international work to [...] take care of the nature and all the living beings that we as managers of the riches of the earth are responsible for.”* In the EU parliament, it is more climate-friendly than other right-wing populist parties. Recently, the parliamentary leader said: *“I speak on behalf of the party and say what we mean: Man affects the climate.”* When it came to voting, the party voted in favour of the majority of climate proposals analysed in this study, with a number of abstentions.

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## CONSERVATIVE PEOPLE'S PARTY OF ESTONIA (EKRE)

**Leader** Mart Helme

**European Group** no seats in EP

*“It cannot be the case that Justice Mafia, which brings a left-liberal, globalist ideology, does what it wants and the nation must accept it silently.”* (Mart Helme, 2018)

The central objective of the 2012-founded Eurosceptic EKRE is the survival of Estonian ethnicity. Therefore, it focuses on fighting immigration and protecting traditional Estonian values and social cohesion. The party leader Mart Helme stated in 2016 that according to researchers, the last 18,5 years of global warming have not occurred. *“We are told that there is a pause in the warming of the climate and if this long break cannot be explained, it is simply climate or heat fluctuation. Nobody was able to convincingly speak about what it is and whether it has anything to do with human activity.”* Helme’s party seeks to withdraw from the Paris Agreement, mainly because CO<sub>2</sub>-quotas would increase domestic prices, but also due to doubts about the mechanism itself (*“[...] trad-*

*ing greenhouse gas quotas is a big business that has not had a real impact on emissions reductions and nature conservation. For example, the emissions from Germany, which has joined the Kyoto and Paris treaties, have steadily increased”* (EKRE website 2018). Estonia’s participation would also not *“contribute significantly to the cleanliness of nature.”*

Cheap energy prices are an absolute priority for EKRE. It supports environmentally-friendly and renewable energy, provided that it does not raise the price of energy for consumers. Prudent management of natural resources and reducing external energy dependence are also on their agenda.

Besides, EKRE vehemently opposes genetically modified foods as well as littering, and proposes persecution of those harming nature.

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## FINNS PARTY (PS)

**Leader** Jussi Halla-aho

**European Group** ECR

### *“The EU’s implementation of the Paris Climate Treaty is catastrophic for Finland”*

In Finland, the immigration-sceptic and nationalist *Finns Party* gained enough votes to become part of the Finnish Parliament in 2015 but dropped out in 2017. Back in 2015, Finland was one of the first countries in the EU in which a right-wing populist party came into government. The party supports climate science with party leader Halla-aho having said that *“climate problems are real”*. In its 2015 electoral programme it argued climate and energy policies should be in support of employment growth and economic growth rather than hindering them.

Despite its affirmative position towards human-caused climate change, the party is known to oppose most national climate policy reforms and argues against current EU climate policy. The party opposes carbon emission trading schemes as well as ETS-backloading, partly because they

were *“unfair”* and would increase the costs to Finnish industry and thus reduce national employment. *“The EU’s implementation of the Paris Climate Treaty is catastrophic for Finland”* and *“the catastrophic EU application of the Paris Agreement is a threat to growth in Finland”*, said the party’s presidential candidate Laura Huhtasaari in 2017. However, in the European Parliament, the parliamentarians voted in favour of both the ETS reform and also for the ESR reform.

The *Finns Party* is in favour of domestically produced peat and wood (biomass) energy as means of supporting the government’s energy and climate goals, as long as these measures support energy self-reliance, increase national employment and do not harm the environment. In its programme for the municipal elections, the party stresses that *“the wind power industry could have public health consequences, since the infrasonic waves emanating from the turbines are suspected of having negative health effects.”*

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## NATIONAL RALLY (RN)

**Leader** Marine Le Pen

**European Group** ENF

*“To wait for our salvation from supranational decisions [...] leads to paralysis because only Nations have the legitimacy and the means of action to make big changes to the energy model.”*

The former *Front National*, which in the summer of 2018 regathered under the new name *National Rally* (“*Rassemblement National*”), has lost a share of its votes but is still one of the most popular right-wing nationalist parties in Europe. The party is mostly silent on the matter of climate change, and occasionally highlights the uncertainty, for example when party leader Marine Le Pen admitted: “*I am not a climate scientist; I think that human activity contributes in proportions to this phenomenon, which I am unable to measure*” (2017). Deeming it a “*communist project*”, the *National Rally* berates the UNFCCC and wishes to pull out of the Paris agreement.

The party’s patriotism supports environmental policies. It founded a “green” movement

called “*New Ecology*” (Collectif Nouvelle Ecologie) that seeks to distance environmentalism from the left’s “*utopian solutions*” and protect “*family, nature and race*”. However, they fiercely oppose national climate action. Marine Le Pen recommended the phasing-out of fossil fuels to reduce dependence on “*Gulf states such as Saudi Arabia who in addition to their oil, send us their ideology*”, prohibition of shale gas, and instead the expansion of French solar and partly wind power («made in France») to create new jobs in France. It is a prime example of “*eco-nationalism*” – aiming to create domestic wealth, promoting ecological policies while withdrawing from global mechanisms for cooperation. Statements on nuclear energy have been very contradictory.

*National Rally* has not supported any EU climate and energy policy proposals in our sample from 2009 – 2018.

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## ALTERNATIVE FÜR DEUTSCHLAND (AFD)

**Leader** Jörg Meuthen and Alexander Gauland

**European Group** ECR

*“The IPCC and the German government are suppressing the positive effects of CO<sub>2</sub> on plant growth and thus on global nutrition.”*

The AFD started off as a Eurosceptic party in 2013 and evolved into a far-right party, propagating an identitarian ideology with a strong anticonstitutional group. “CO<sub>2</sub> is not a pollutant, but an indispensable component of all life,” is the official position on climate change. Strident refutation of scientific consensus and strong rejection of any kind of climate policy make them prominent examples of populist climate denialists. The party spreads false news on climate change with alternative explanations of climate change impacts such as Arctic ice melting. It has close links to the „Europäisches Institut für Klima und Energie“ (EIKE), an independent organisation of climate denialists aiming to systematically attack climate science. The organisation’s Vice President Michael Limburg and other contributors to the EIKE platform played a key role in developing AFD’s positions on climate change.

The AFD rejects all national and EU climate action, condemning the German Renewable Energy Sources Act (EEG) and calling it a tool to draw money away from the people and economy and funneling it to a small group that gains the subsidies. The ETS is blamed for negatively affecting the steel industry in Germany. Wind turbines, according to the party programme, “destroy the picture of our cultural landscapes and are a deadly risk for birds”. The AFD also ridiculed other “red-green placebo” policies recently, through a comic series dedicated to the topic. One of its statements is that “the list of eco-anxiety makers is long: Acid rain, alleged forest dying and ozone holes have proven that we do not need any more fine dust fairy tales” (AFD-Fraktion Abgeordnetenhaus Berlin in a Facebook post in 2017).

AFD voted against all analysed EU climate and energy policy proposals tabled in the European Parliament between 2014 and 2018.

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## UNITED KINGDOM INDEPENDENCE PARTY (UKIP)

**Leader** Gerard Batten

**European Group** EFDD

*“[The fight against climate change is] one of the biggest and stupidest collective misunderstandings in history”*

UKIP’s polling score has decreased in recent years and is now at 4% (September 2018). However, it is still a prominent player in the European Parliament, being the third-largest British party. The party that originated as the “Anti-Federalist League” is a single-issue Eurosceptic party that in most public statements denies human influence on climate change. Prominent climate sceptics such as ex-party leaders Paul Nuttal and Nigel Farage cast doubt on the scientific consensus in the past and continue to oppose climate policy. The party repealed the 2008 Climate Change Act, calling it “the most expensive piece of legislation in history”. UKIP strongly supports cheap energy for homes and businesses and is committed to “secure, affordable energy for everyone”, “based on

coal, nuclear, shale gas, conventional gas, oil, solar and hydro, as well as other renewables when they can be delivered at competitive prices.” The party seeks to end all subsidies for wind turbines and solar voltaic arrays and withdraw from the Paris Agreement.

One of UKIP’s representatives in the European Parliament, John Stuart Agnew, has sparked outrage with a report denying anthropogenic climate change. The report claims there is a “long-term decline in atmospheric CO<sub>2</sub>” and that “human activity played no part whatsoever”. High levels of CO<sub>2</sub> coincided with an ice age. According to the report, the factors that “really do change our climate” are “gravitational pulls” in the solar system, ocean currents and “cosmic ray fluctuations”, among others (Agnew 2018).

UKIP voted against all analysed EU climate and energy policy proposals tabled in the European Parliament between 2009 and 2018.

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## GOLDEN DAWN (XA)

**Leader** Nikolaos Michaloliakos

**European Group** NI

*“The environment is the cradle of our race, it mirrors our culture and civilisation, and it is therefore our duty to protect it.”* (Golden Dawn news page 2014)

The far-right (and by many accounts neo-Nazi and fascist) *Golden Dawn* is Eurosceptic party, which opposes Greece’s participation in the EU, including the Eurozone. After scoring more than 9% in the Greek elections of 2014, it was able to send three MEPs to the European Parliament, who remained marginalised as no group accepted them. They regularly make headlines with racist speeches or being kicked out of the plenary.

The party is silent on climate change; the topic is not mentioned in its communications. It aims to exploit all of Greece’s national resources, especially its oil, gas and precious metal reserves. *Golden Dawn* is promoting “energy nationalism”, as illustrated by this statement in the

official party programme, referring to plans for cross-border gas pipelines from Greece to other EU countries: *“Berlin’s money-makers prohibit [Greece] to conduct surveys and mining [for exploiting the rich natural gas reserves south of Crete]. Syriza [a Greek left-wing party] also says it will not take advantage of the country’s energy reserves for ecological reasons! Golden Dawn is the only movement with clear positions on Greek energy: Immediate nationalisation of all our energy deposits and return of profits from their exploitation to the Greek people [...]”*

The party also has its own patriotic, ecological organisation called “Green Wing” which deals with racial and environmental issues and is organising reforestation and firefighting activities.

In the European Parliament, voting behaviour of *Golden Dawn* on climate and energy proposals was mixed, with just over 50% of votes “against”, and the remainder “for”.

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## FIDESZ

**Leader** Viktor Orbán

**European Group** EPP

*“In Hungary, there is a consensus that climate change is real, that it is dangerous and since it is a global phenomenon, requires global action to combat.” (Viktor Orbán, 2017)*

Fidesz has been governing Hungary since 2010, defying European Union rules and curbing some civil freedoms. The party emerged as an anti-communist party in 1988, led by young intellectuals, while nowadays it has an authoritarian and Eurosceptic ideology, curtailing civil rights and the rule of law and leverages right-wing populist issues for political gain. As we write this report, the continuation of Fidesz’ membership in the European People’s Party (EPP) is debated, given the Article 7 procedure against Hungary.

Fidesz’ clearly supports climate action by for example saying that *“our welfare, security and the future of our civilization depends on smart and forward-looking adaptation”* (Hungarian

President János Áder), and that *“action against climate change requires action at a global level”* (Prime Minister Viktor Orbán). Áder and Orbán, both Fidesz members, are very eager advocates of international climate policy. While they set an example by making Hungary the first party to officially approve the Paris Agreement, this green image is not reflected at the domestic level. Even though the Fidesz-led government integrated the EU ETS into its Energy Strategy in 2012, it is keen to embrace fossil fuels and nuclear technology while dismissing the potential of renewables. The phasing out of fossil fuels is considered infeasible in the foreseeable future, yet in terms of transport – Fidesz is in favour of low-carbon technologies.

In the European Parliament, Fidesz supported all policy proposals in the field of climate and sustainable energy with very few exceptions.

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## LEGA

**Leader** Matteo Salvini

**European Group** NI

*“It is crazy to exploit a serious subject like climate to legitimise illegal immigration”; “The actions currently considered at the national level to combat climate change and toward a transition to more sustainable models of economy and management of renewable resources need to be strengthened.”*

.....

The Italian *Lega*, former *Lega Nord*, was founded with the purpose of advocating separation of the Northern parts of Italy from the rest, and is now known for its anti-immigrant and anti-European orientation. In early 2018, it pledged to conduct mass migrant deportations and joined government a few weeks later. Although the party programme mentions climate change in the context of renewable energy deployment and advocates climate adaptation measures, the topic is mostly absent from official communications. The *Lega* also abstained from the ratification of the Paris Agreement, terming it a “downward compromise in continuing to allow Chinese companies and developing countries to compete un-

fairly with Italian companies, who fully comply with environmentally friendly production” (party President Gianluca Pini). The party supports a sustainable energy transition, including energy efficiency and renewable energies, sustainable mobility as well as the prohibition of pollutive cars. Clear priorities are low energy costs for Italian users and benefits to small Italian energy production plants, so as to “not favour the large foreign multinationals with their mega plants” (party programme 2018). It also supports national environmental policies such as an expansion of natural parks, green areas, recycling and waste management. Deputy Prime Minister Matteo Salvini recently tweeted “It is crazy to exploit a serious subject like climate to legitimise illegal immigration”, using the hashtag #stopinvasione, thereby framing climate change in the context of migration.

*Lega* has voted against all analysed EU climate and energy policy proposals tabled in the European Parliament between 2014 and 2018, except the vote on energy performance in buildings.

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## NATIONAL ALLIANCE (NA)

**Leader** Gaidis Bērziņš and Raivis Dzintars

**European Group** ECR

*“The Paris Conference was a breakthrough in our attitude towards our planet, the future of which we are responsible for.”*

The anti-immigrant party, officially named National Alliance “All For Latvia!” – “For Fatherland and Freedom/LNNK”, lost a share of their votes in the October 2018 elections, which dropped from 16,6% to about 11%. It emerged as a coalition between ultra-nationalist and extreme right parties, rooted partly in the fight for independence during the Perestroika movement, and now positions itself against Russian minorities and refugees, based on its ethnic nationalism. National Alliance’s political leaders participated in a memorial march for veterans of the Latvian unit of the “Waffen SS” in 2012.

The party does not deny the scientific consensus on climate change nor does it oppose energy reforms. On the contrary, it sees climate and energy policy as absolutely necessary to avoid risks and to modernise the economy: *“Energy policy is a very significant element in the process of technological change, the increasing integration of the various energy sectors (electricity, heat, transport) into a single intelligent energy system and the growing global climate change risks”* (2018). Na-

tional Alliance aims to *“develop and implement a detailed research programme to analyse the potential impacts of climate change (negative – more frequent extreme weather conditions, threats from invasive species, flood risks, greater international instability, and positive – faster growth of forest and agricultural crops, lower energy consumption for heating)”* and argues that it is important for Latvia to ensure the achievement of the climate goals. To achieve them, *“investment support from the EU and climate funds and tax credits should be used as key support tools.”*

The party also supports multilateral climate action, saying that *“climate change affects every single citizen of the world. Only by joint efforts, will we be able to make a positive change”* (MoE, Janis Eglītis, 2016).

Energy independence is another lever: *“It is essential to increase Latvia’s energy independence, therefore we will integrate research on climate and energy, economic and social processes, in order to implement Latvia’s zero-emission model in the best way possible by 2050”* (2018 programme).

In the European Parliament, the party voted largely in favour of climate and energy proposals in the term 2014–2019, with a small number of exceptions such as the vote on energy efficiency.

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## ORDER AND JUSTICE (TT)

**Leader** Remigijus Žemaitaitis

**European Group** EFDD

*“We will use the EU much more actively, and Lithuania will use its diplomatic potential more efficiently to achieve energy independence and economic integrity.”*

.....

Founded by former prime minister and short-term president Rolandas Paksas, the radical and anti-establishment identity party currently holds 6,5% of votes according to national polls. It has no official position on climate change. Its 2018 electoral programme supports all sorts of renewable energy and promotes expansion of electricity generation from wind, small hydro-electric power stations and *“local fossil fuel fired power plants.”* Energy prices are high up on the agenda, as can be seen in plans to reduce heat-

ing costs by renovating existing boilers so they can burn local fuels (wood, straw, peat, biogas) and reduce imports of expensive fuels.

There is a notable lack of consistency in the party’s argumentation for and against sustainable energy policy.

Its 2018 programme contains a number of anti-multilateralism statements, reflected in Paksas’ quote *“Those globalists, who from morning till evening, propagate their lives – Americans call it public relations – are constantly misleading the public.”*

In the European Parliament, *Order and Justice* is the only party that supported all policy proposals on climate and sustainable energy.

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## PARTY FOR FREEDOM (PVV)

**Leader** Geert Wilders

**European Group** ENF

*“They worry about climate change. But they will soon be experiencing the Islamic winter.” (Geert Wilders, 2017)*

The Dutch anti-Islamic PVV grew in popularity in recent years and scored 17% in the 2017 national elections. It gained increasing media attention through Eurosceptic, anti-elitist rhetoric, advocating the “Next” – the Netherlands leaving the EU, along with other ideas. The party’s 2010 programme demands to cut resources from climate change mitigation programmes, development aid and immigration services. Online news on PVV’s website doubt human-caused climate change and the IPCC’s credibility, drawing on statements delivered by PVV-Senator Dannij van der Sluijs and parliamentarian Machiel de Graaf, among others.

European PVV leader Marcel de Graaff said in a 2016-statement on the Paris Agreement: *“Sovereign states decide what they want to do with regard to climate change. [...] The climate effects*

*are not clear at all [...]. The elite are laughing here while rubbing their hands. They will benefit from these climate action plans. But the hard-working citizens in the Member States will pay for their electricity, their car, their heating.”*

PVV opposes wind power due to its impact on the “traditional landscape” and supports nuclear power plants as well as clean coal plants to reduce dependence on imported oil and because coal is cheaper. Party leader Geert Wilders is also known for his blunt rejection of climate policy: *“Will our women still be safe in the streets 20 years from now? [...] How long will it take before Sharia law is introduced here? [...] But not a single European government dares to address these existential questions. They worry about climate change. But they will soon be experiencing the Islamic winter.” (2017).*

PVV has voted against all analysed EU climate and energy policy proposals tabled in the European Parliament between 2009 and 2018, without exception.

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## PROGRESS PARTY (FRP)

**Leader** Siv Jensen

**European Group** not EU member

*“Earth’s climate changes over time, and we know too little about what affects these changes.” (Party programme 2017 – 2021)*

The *Progress Party* is one of the oldest populist parties in Europe and recently received 15,2% of voter support (2017), making it the second largest party in the Norwegian government. It is a rather liberal party, fighting for individuals’ rights and improved public services, for instance elderly care and health. The party programme 2017 – 2021 is rather sceptical about the overwhelming consensus on human-induced climate change (*“Earth’s climate changes over time, and we know too little about what affects these changes.”*) but does draw attention to the threat climate change poses (*“The problem that politicians and researchers from the UN’s climate panel draw attention to*

*could be serious. The warnings provide a basis for caution“*). Due to the perceived uncertainty of human influence on climate change, it prioritises climate measures which have an additional effect, beyond climate.

The party argues for multilateral agreements that include mechanisms for cost-effective abatement, and is critical of using climate policy to increase taxes and fees, or expenses for residents and businesses (*“You must respect the taxpayer’s money and the citizens’ desire for predictability and flexibility in everyday life. We are therefore critical to introduce ever new prohibition, injunctions, restrictions and other public interventions that limit the freedom of the individual or impair Norwegian competitiveness. Instead, environmentally friendly behaviour should be stimulated through positive means.”*).

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## LAW AND JUSTICE (PiS)

**Leader** Jarosław Kaczyński

**European Group** ECR

*“The biggest obstacle in the field of electricity production is the climate policy imposed by the European Union.” (Party programme 2014)*

The governing party *PiS*, topped polls in recent years and has been heavily criticised for its reforms, and being accused of trying to transform and take more control of the Polish judiciary system and media landscape. The “pro-coal party” is known for a few climate-sceptic statements (e.g. by Jarosław Kaczyński and Jan Szyszko) and for its protests against renewable energy and climate policy (such as emissions trading). For instance, in 2015, the Polish President Andrzej Duda vetoed an amendment to the Kyoto protocol on greenhouse gases, because it would impact the Polish economy, given that it is highly dependent on coal. Within the EU, Poland is careful not to isolate itself too much, while also opposing reforms that would strengthen the ETS and raise the EU’s reduction ambitions. *PiS* is lobbying for

investments in new coal generation blocks and removal of economic and legal discrimination of coal-generated electricity, since they see coal as the foundation of Poland’s power generation in the long-term, important for GDP, energy security and employment. The party also supports diversification of energy supplies, a modernisation of Polish power plants and investments in new energy sources. In his capacity as Prime Minister, Mateusz Morawiecki from *PiS* stated at the 2018 Petersberg Climate Dialogue: “we believe that the climate challenges facing the world are very important.” At the same event, he highlighted that every country starts from a different position – Poland after WW2 could not, for example, develop atomic energy.

In the European Parliament, *PiS* voted against the majority of climate and energy proposals analysed in this study, but voted in favour of policies on CO<sub>2</sub> regulation of heavy duty vehicles and energy performance of buildings.

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## SLOVAK NATIONAL PARTY (SNS)

**Leader** Andrej Danko

**European Group** no seats in EP

*“The Slovak National Party is in favour of consistent protection and restoration of the environment in order to preserve natural heritage and for the healthy development of future generations.”*  
(Party programme 2016-2020)

The SNS, founded to promote Christian, national and social values, received almost 9% of votes in 2016. It has often been accused of racism and hostility towards Hungarians, Romani and homosexuals.

The party’s programme does not refer to climate change, but the group is in favour of adaptation, such as anti-flood measures, as well as protection of wetlands and the environment in general. It opposes most renewable energies, except for biomass which is considered a promising solution not only for Slovakia but for the whole world. In the long run, it prefers nuclear power over renewables. The SNS is against solar PV since the panels occupy native land; and against wind and hydropower because it doubts their profitability.

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## SWEDEN DEMOCRATS (SD)

**Leader** Jimmie Åkesson

**European Group** ECR

*“Sweden cannot solve the world’s environmental problems” (Party programme 2018)*

The Eurosceptic *Sweden Democrats (SD)* scored 17,5% in recent national elections (October 2018) now being the third strongest party in Sweden. The rising party is known for anti-establishment rhetoric and outspoken protests against immigration and crime. With claims like *“There seems to be no direct link between increased levels of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere and global warming”* and *“curves that measure the amount of greenhouse gas and curves that measure the temperature do not interact in any clear way”* (SD spokesman, 2016), they can be considered sceptical of human-induced climate change. The SD voted against laws to oblige governments to set tougher goals to cut fossil fuel use, as well as the

cross-border climate policy framework. Aiming to abandon many of Sweden’s climate targets and lobbying for expanding nuclear power, the SD support renewable energies only if they do not influence *“our national rivers”* and *“cultural and landscape values.”* Action to reduce carbon emissions at the national level is considered useless as long as fossil fuels are competitive in the global market. Recently, the party promised voters cheaper petrol.

Voting behaviour of the SD in the European Parliament on climate and energy proposals was mixed. The party voted against several multilateral policy framework proposals such as those on the EU emissions trading system and Effort Sharing Regulation, but voted in favour of other policies such as the promotion of the use of renewable energy sources.

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## SWISS PEOPLE'S PARTY (SVP)

**Leader** Albert Rösti

**European Group** not EU member

*“Climate policy in Switzerland is poison for the country as a business location. Emissions are global and should be reduced where it is cheapest”*

The conservative-right SVP holds almost 30% of voter support according to new opinion polls (Polls of Europe 2018) and is the largest party in the Federal Assembly. During the record 2018 summer, SVP National Council member Marcel Dettling – when asked about climate change – said *“I enjoy living in warmer times.”* However, SVP-President Albert Rösti was recently quoted saying *“if we can avoid climate change, then it is the big industrial countries like the US, China and India that must act.”* With frequent changes in positions on the issue, the party is not the most typical denialist. SVP’s standpoint on climate change can be summarised in statements such as *“We care a lot about the environment*

*and about our successors”, “the current state of the environment is good. Since the industrial age the amount of pollutants and emissions has never been lower than today”, and “we want to fight fear mongering and hysteria”* (party programme 2015 – 2019). The party has an official climate strategy, in which it states that since 2005 *“the climate has cooled down.”* Yet, as the denialist policy paper dates back to 2010 and has not been updated, it was omitted in this analysis.

Recently, the party opposed the Swiss Energy Strategy 2050, calling it an *“unrealistic, ideologically disguised and a dangerous road to nothing”*, referring to its economically and ecologically disastrous consequences. In 2016, it voted against the ratification of the Paris Agreement and in 2018 opposed the revision of the Swiss CO<sub>2</sub> Act.

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