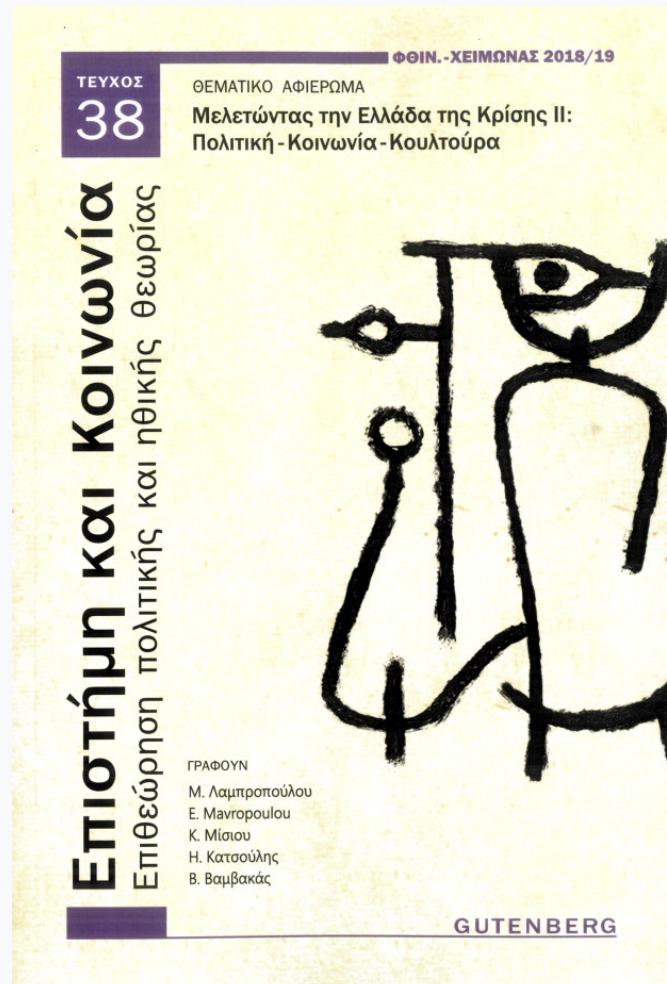


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Voting for far-right parties in the 2014 European Parliament Elections

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VOTING FOR FAR-RIGHT PARTIES IN THE 2014
EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT ELECTIONS

The primary goal of the present research note is to concentrate on the electoral performance of far-right parties in the 2014 European Parliamentary elections in order to interpret the aspects of this vote through the bidirectional relationship between the demand-side and supply-side explanatory accounts. According to the demand-side perspective, we discuss to what extent a range of socioeconomic issues affected the electoral dynamic of the far-right parties in the latest European elections. At the same time, our research purpose concentrates on the external supply-side developments in terms of how the positions of mainstream parties across several ideological aspects and the subsequent configuration of party competition create electoral opportunities for the far-right parties. More specifically, by comparing the views of the electorally major centre-right, centre-left and far right parties across the dimensions of immigration and redistribution of wealth, we ascertain how the configuration of party competition influences the electoral decision of voters towards the right-wing family. Therefore, the analysis provides inferences relating to how the interrelationship between the demand and supply-side framework in conjunction

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with a range of additional control variables contribute to the interpretation of the electoral behaviour of the far-right voter in the recent European elections.

Introduction

OVER THE LAST FOUR DECADES, European party systems have been facing the political emergence and the uneven electoral accomplishments of far-right parties. A considerable number of scholars have been trying to approach the causes that effectuate the political survival of the far-right party family and the determinants that contribute to its electoral rise (Golder 2003; Inglehart and Norris 2016; Georgiadou et al. 2018). Far-right parties have appeared in three different waves in post-war Europe (von Beyme 1988), a framing that permits to explore the ideological variations and the uneven electoral course of the far-right spectrum throughout this period. To illustrate that, the first wave, which was associated with the neo-fascist movements of post-war Europe, remained electorally marginal. In the case of the second wave, which coincided with the emergence of post-industrialism, far-right parties were surrounded by a contradictory narrative relating to ‘free market’, ‘ecology’, ‘law and order’, ‘security’, ‘identity’ (Kitschelt and McGann 1995). The rise of the third wave has been accompanied by the gradual electoral prominence of the populist radical right-wing party pole, which has been assuming properties of an electoral take-off for some party cases notably during the last years and irrespectively of the order of elections. Far-right parties of the third wave have been cultivating a discourse against the procedure of modernization and globalization by perceiving immigration as a socio-economic threat and advocating the concept of ‘welfare state chauvinism’ (Betz 1994). Trying to identify the factors that contribute to the successful electoral course of the third wave, we could agree that they are associated with the grievances that rose due to the changes in the social and economic structures

of Western democracies (Arzheimer 2009). Moreover, the electoral accomplishments of far-right parties could be also linked to how these parties exploit the political opportunities in order to approach the electorate (Tarrow 1998).

In this review, our research focuses on the 2014 European Parliament elections, which have attracted academic interest due to the meteoric ascent of Eurosceptic anti-establishment parties of either a left-wing or a right-wing slant and the consequent rearrangement of party systems' traditional structures. More generally, European elections are dependent on the national political arena and tend to provide the radiography of the central party stage's directions. Four years after the 2014 European elections and a few months before the next ones, we have the research advantage of looking into this electoral process as a benchmark for the framing of national second-order elections. According to Reif and Schmitt (1980), this entails the partial electoral shrinkage of governing parties and the attendant rise of new, smaller and marginal parties as voters wish to express their warning, punishment or protest towards the political establishment. In this case, even if the previous European elections were accompanied by the widespread ascent of anti-establishment parties with radical left and radical right ideological properties, similar electoral results have been also confirmed in first-order elections. In other words, the national elections that have been taking place after the 2014 European elections in every single EU member-state have not entailed the expected restoration of party equilibrium, a fact that verifies the permanent and ingrained presence of anti-establishment trends in the current party systems.

By concentrating our analysis entirely on the case of far-right parties, we aim to discuss the factors that contributed to the electoral mobilization of voters towards the right-wing party spectrum in recent European elections. Could we perceive the success of far-right parties as an incidental phenomenon attributed to the advent of the financial crisis? Assessing the 2014 pan-European electoral map compared to the corresponding one

in 2009, far-right parties recorded an overall success in France, Austria, Greece, Denmark and the UK. By contrast, far-rightwing parties had reduced levels of electoral support in the Netherlands, Italy, Belgium, Hungary and Bulgaria, or remained electorally marginalized in several country-cases (Spain, Portugal, Cyprus and Ireland). Therefore, we notice that far-right parties presented remarkable electoral performance not only in countries which have been hardest affected by the consequences of the financial crisis.

Although the 2014 European elections were conducted amid a multilevel crisis with financial, socio-cultural, political and European implications, the electoral presence of several far-right parties could not be interpreted as a circumstantial and singledimensional phenomenon. Since many scholars concentrate mainly on the demand-side perspectives for the explanation of far-right parties' electoral success, in this research note we proceed a step further by not attributing their rise exclusively to grievances (Golder 2016) that tend to activate the social demand and the electoral availability of voters towards the right-wing party spectrum. Our research purpose will be to examine in parallel the macro-level developments in conjunction with the context of party competition, in order to approach and explicate the framework of the vote for far-right parties.

In the next section, we conceptualize the hypothetical expectations pertaining to how the interplay between the demand and supply-side context (Mudde 2007) underpins the interpretation of the vote for far-right parties. Consequently, we describe the formulation of the research design, and the variables and data sources used for this comparative review. The following part discusses the results, and in the closing section we proceed to the conclusion of this research note as regards the electoral performance of far-right parties in the 2014 European elections.

Formulation of research hypotheses

Demand-side explanations

In elaborating our hypotheses, which are balanced between the social demand and political supply-side interaction, the first set of expectations are dedicated to the macro-level developments of the demand-side explanations. Even though the electoral accomplishments of the far-right pole could also be linked to micro-level determinants related to the voters' expression of punishment or protest towards the mainstream political establishment (Mudde 2007; van der Brug et al. 2000), our research concentrates mainly on interpreting the macro-level perspectives (Ignazi 1992; Lubbers et al 2002). Through the examination of the macro-level approximations, which are associated with the consequences of modernization, the eventual onset of financial and political crisis or the escalating of immigration (Betz 1993; Eatwell 2003), it is argued that socio-cultural and socioeconomic changes tend to affect the decision of voters and electorally reinforce far-right parties. The acceleration of the process of globalization and modernization in conjunction with the impact of de-nationalisation has been contributing to the emergence of 'losers of modernization' (Betz 1993). The 'losers of modernization', who are not able to adjust to the new socioeconomic and socio-cultural conditions and feel threatened and insecure given these structural changes, are apt to the far-right rhetoric. Therefore, the 'losers of modernity' are in a continual competition with immigrants, since they attribute their economic and social uncertainty to the presence of immigrants. In this case, we expect that the effects of the contemporary multilevel European crisis have been decisively contributing to the electoral ascent of the right-wing party spectrum. More specifically, one of our primary goals will be to investigate the correlation between the salience of the issue of immigration and unemployment and the vote for far-right parties in the 2014 European elections. Right-wing parties have always invested in the cultivation of an anti-immig-

grant ideological discourse (Arzheimer 2009), claiming that immigration implies among others a rise in unemployment levels. Hence, we formulate the following set of hypotheses:

Hypothesis 1: The more the voters raise the issue of immigration, the more likely they are to vote for far-right parties.

Hypothesis 2: The more the voters highlight the issue of unemployment, the more likely they are to vote for far-right parties.

Supply-side explanations

Subsequently, on the one hand, supply-side developments are associated with the internal parameters, which concern the ideology and the structures of party organisation (Mudde 2007). On the other hand, supply-side explanations are linked to external factors relating to political opportunities (Tarrow 1998). In this case, our research focuses on a specific aspect of the external supply-side perspectives, as the second set of our hypothetical approximations investigate the effect of the configuration of party competition on the vote for far-right parties. Scholarly research has demonstrated that the political emergence and the electoral ascent of far-right parties could be affected by the positions of mainstream parties across specific policy dimensions (Kitschelt and McGann 1995). Hence, our research will focus on the elaboration of how the established party spectrum contributes to the strengthening or weakening of the electoral presence of far-right parties. More specifically, a potential ideological convergence between centre-right and centre-left parties could imply either the creation of political and electoral opportunities for the far-right party spectrum (Abedi 2002) or the absence of this correlation (Norris 2005). As voters perceive the absence of ideological distinction among mainstream parties, they could express their protest by voting in favour of the far-right. Moreover, the adoption of a more centrist ideological platform (Var der Brug et. al 2005) by the traditional right in order to approach the median voter, could contribute to the electoral

reinforcement of far-right parties or to their electoral shrinkage (Arzheimer and Carter 2006). In this case, far-right parties extend their political space and prevent the eventual ideological expropriation of their agenda by the mainstream right party.

In this research note, our interest concentrates on the investigation of how the distance between mainstream parties (centre-right and centre-left) and the mean voter position across a range of policy dimensions could affect the vote for far-right parties. In other words, we are interested in examining if the divergence of mainstream from the mean voter position could contribute to the maximization of the electoral gains of far-right parties. Our model will be implemented in a two-dimensional framework in which we investigate the distance between mainstream parties and the mean voter position across the economic dimension of the redistribution of wealth and the socio-cultural one of immigration. It is argued that the transition to post-industrialism and the acceleration of the realignment process given the emergence of new divisions relating to the procedure of globalization and the attendant impact of denationalization have been contributing to the salience of the socio-cultural policy dimension (Inglehart 1997). Therefore, we posit the following set of complementary hypotheses, namely that:

Hypothesis 3: The further away from the voter centre-right parties (Christian Democrats/Conservatives) position themselves on immigration, the higher the chances that the voter will vote for a far-right party.

Hypothesis 4: The further away from the voter centre-left parties position themselves on the redistribution of the wealth, the higher the chances that the voter will vote for a far-right party.

Research Design and Data

This research note in question aims to explain the vote for the far-right party family in the recent European Parliamentary elections by concentrating on the socioeconomic framework and

the aspects of party competition. To measure the dependent variable, namely the vote for far-right parties, we use the 2014 European Election Study and specifically the post-electoral Voter study, and create a new variable in which we enclose exclusively the vote for the electorally powerful and EU parliamentary right-wing parties of every single member-state. Therefore, even though most far-right parties represent the populist radical right pole, we also incorporated two parties derived from the extremist right current, namely Jobbik and Golden Dawn, which are electorally the most influential parties of the far-right spectrum in Hungary and Greece respectively. More specifically, the parties included are *Freiheitliche Partei Österreichs* (FPÖ) in Austria; *Vlaams Belang* (VB) in Belgium; *Front National* (FN) in France; *Dansk Folkeparti* (DF) in Denmark; *True Finns* (PS) in Finland; *Alternative für Deutschland* (AFD) in Germany; *Xροσή Αργή* in Greece (XA); *Lega Nord per l'Indipendenza della Padania* (LN) in Italy; *Patij voor de Vrijheid* (PVV) in Netherlands; *Sverigedemokraterna* (SD) in Sweden; *United Kingdom Independence Party* (UKIP) in the United Kingdom; *Prawo i Sprawiedliwość* (PIS) in Poland; *JOBBIK* in Hungary; *Nacionālā Apvienība* (LNNK) in Latvia; *ATAKA* in Bulgaria; *Partija Tvarda Ir Teisingumas* (PTT) in Lithuania; *Slovenská Národná Strana* (SNS) in Slovakia.

Regarding the independent variables, for the first set of hypotheses that relate to the socioeconomic framework we use the Voter Study by recoding the variable '*What are the issues which make you vote in the recent European elections? Firstly?*' and creating a new variable in which we include exclusively the issue of immigration and unemployment. The selection of this variable is not random, as our research purpose is to examine a variable that is inseparably and directly associated with the formulation of electoral behaviour and the final voting decision of the electorate. Our research focuses on the demand-side perspective by investigating how the electorate highlight the issue of immigration and unemployment and the level of correlation between the vote for far-right parties and the salience of these

specified issues. Next, we assess the second set of assumptions, which examine the role of the supply-side context. By concentrating on the configuration of party competition, we measure the ideological distance between the electorally major mainstream parties and far-right parties and voters on a two-dimensional policy space, relevant to the issue of immigration and the redistribution of the wealth. In this case we use data derived from the Euro-manifesto Study and the Voter Study in order to detect the ideological placements of parties and voters across the socio-cultural (vertical axis) and socioeconomic dimension (horizontal axis). Given that the Euro-manifesto dataset presents limitations¹ (Krippendorff 2004; Budge et al. 2001) regarding the ideological positions for every single party, we proceed to the use of Chapel Hill Expert Surveys (CHES) to identify the ideological imprints of every single party-case. For the economic dimension, we use the question, '*Pro redistribution of wealth-no redistribution of wealth*' and for the socio-cultural dimension the question '*No restrictive immigration policy-Pro restrictive immigration policy*'. The scale of both dimensions ranges from 1 to 10, where '1' means fully in favour of the redistribution of wealth and the adoption of a non-restrictive immigration policy and '10' means entirely opposed to the redistribution of wealth and to a favourable immigration policymaking stance. The measurement of the ideological distance is derived from the squared difference between parties' mean placements and voters' mean position across both policy dimensions.² Moreover, the incor-

1. The dataset of the Euro-manifesto Study does not provide the ideological positions of each party along the axis of the redistribution of wealth and the corresponding one of immigration. This leads to the emergence of research difficulties since the use of a non-single dataset, which is composed by the Euro-manifesto Study and the Chapel Hill Expert Surveys, might imply the partial redirection of the results.

2. In order to calculate the distance between parties and voters, we proceeded to the following steps. First, we converted the 11-point scales – relating to the positions of voters (Voter Study) and the placements of parties that were derived from the Chapel Hill Expert Surveys (CHES) across the

poration of several additional control indicators of how the index of Euroscepticism, the effect of dissatisfaction against the political establishment and the strength of partisanship contribute to the interpretation of the vote for the right-wing party spectrum. This model concludes with the inclusion of several socio-demographic variables with a view to approaching the properties of the far-right voter's electoral portrait in the 2014 European elections.

The analysis will be based on a quantitative methodological approach. Using a linear regression model, accompanied by two explanatory figures for every set of our hypotheses, we investigate how the interrelation between the demand and supply-side framework leads to the interpretation of the far-right vote.

Results and Discussion

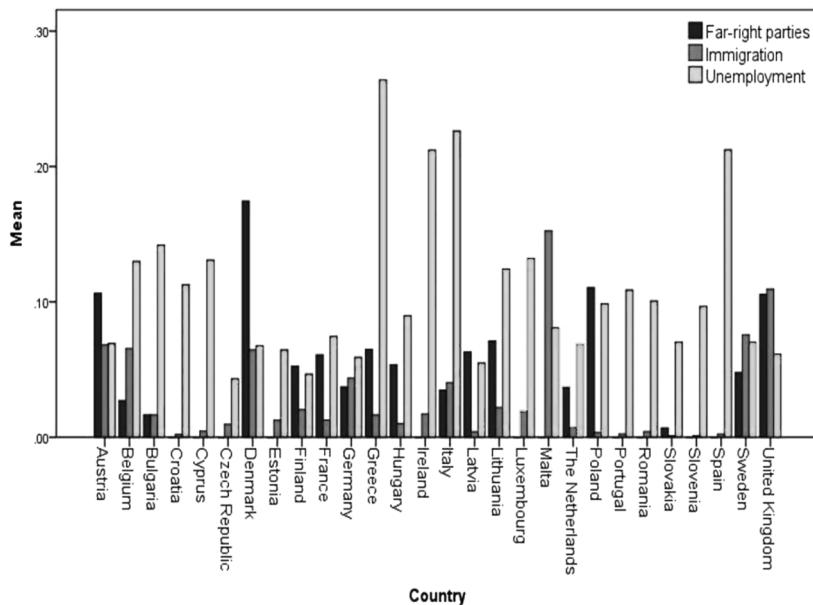
The descriptive Figure 1, which accompanies the first set of hypotheses, presents the mean value of immigration and unemployment salience in conjunction with the vote for far-right parties across the member-states of the European Union. Moreover, the determinant of immigration, unlike unemployment, does not present an equable diffusion across the European territory. On the one hand, the issue of immigration is more salient in Malta and the countries of Northern Europe, such as Austria, Belgium, Germany, Sweden and the United King-

dimension of immigration and the dimension of the redistribution of wealth- to 10-point scales as to assure the point similarity among our scales (the ideological positions of parties that were derived from the Euro-manifesto dataset were already measured on a 1-10 scale). By calculating the mean position of the centre-right, centre-left and far-right party groups across the dimension of immigration and the dimension of the redistribution of wealth, then we followed the same procedure in order to detect the mean voter position across these specified dimensions. The computation of the ideological distance arises through the squared difference between the mean voter position and the mean placement of each party family.

dom. Except for Malta, far-right parties in these countries had a remarkable electoral presence. On the other hand, the salience of the unemployment issue is widespread across the European Union map and particularly in countries that have been hardest affected by the consequences of the financial recession namely in Southern Europe (Greece, Italy, Spain, Portugal) and Ireland. It has been argued that immigration and unemployment are interconnected, since far-right parties have been cultivating a narrative through which the rise of unemployment is attributed to migration (Golder 2003). Nevertheless, the descriptive Figure 1 does not reveal sufficiently the confirmation of theforesaid triptych particularly in the countries of Southern Europe. Hence, as a future research step, it would be interesting to investigate the further endogeneity of this relationship by examining how the number of immigrants in conjunction with the level of unemployment could create fertile ground for far-right parties. More specifically, by consulting the descriptive Figure 1, we observe that the heightened salience of unemployment particularly in the European South is not associated with the electoral rise of far-right parties except for the case of Golden Dawn in Greece. The outcome of the 2014 European elections was accompanied by the electoral ascent of radical left-wing parties in the countries of Southern Europe, since they cultivated an anti-austerity discourse of 'resistance' against the international actors that were involved in dealing with the financial crisis (IMF, ECB and EC) (Halikiopoulou 2014). Therefore, we could assume the existence of a stronger correlation between the vote for radical left-wing parties and the salience of unemployment, even though the above ascertainment requires additional empirical evidence.

FIGURE 1.

Graphical presentation of the mean value of the far-right vote and the salience of immigration and unemployment issues across the EU member-states in the 2014 European elections.



Source: Schmitt, H., Hobolt, S.B., Popa, S.A., Teperoglou, E., European Parliament, Directorate-General for Communication, Public Monitoring Unit (2016): *European Parliament Election Study 2014, Voter Study*, First Post-Election Survey. GESIS Data Archive, Cologne.

By concentrating on the evaluation of our hypothetical approximations, our main findings are summarized in Table 1, where we observe that the R Squared measure presents a low value of 18.8%. In other words, 18.8% of the variation in the dependent variable is explained by the independent variables (Lewis-Beck et al. 2004). More specifically, the first section of this table displays the dependence of the far-right vote on the macro-level perspectives of the demand-side context and the concerns of party competition relevant to the supply-side aspect. This model

concludes with the exposition of the correlation between the vote and additional control variables. By evaluating the results of the linear regression analysis, we confirm the verification of the first set of hypotheses (hypothesis 1 and 2), since we identify a strong and positive correlation between the vote for far-right parties and the salience of the immigration and unemployment issue. We ascertain the existence of a stronger relationship between the immigration indicator and the vote towards the far-right party spectrum – an outcome which verifies that far-right voters tend to be mobilized largely by the traditional and most publicized issue of the far right-wing ideological ownership.

TABLE 1.
*Linear regression model assessing determinants of voting
in favour of far-right parties in the 2014 European Elections.*

| Coefficients ^a | | | | | |
|------------------------------|--------------------------------|---------------|------------------------------|--------|------|
| Model | Unstandardized Coefficients | | Standardized Coefficients | | |
| | B | Std. Error | Beta | t | Sig. |
| 1 (Constant) | -.075 | .010 | | -7.283 | .000 |
| Demand Side | | | | | |
| Salience of Issues | | | | | |
| Immigration | .332 | .010 | .274 | 33.585 | .000 |
| Unemployment | .057 | .007 | .068 | 8.278 | .000 |
| Supply side | | | | | |
| Distances of party positions | | | | | |
| Distance immigration FR | -.062 | .010 | -.064 | -6.028 | .000 |

| | | | | | |
|---|-------|------|-------|--------|-------------|
| Distance immigration CR | .035 | .017 | .022 | 2.026 | .043 |
| Distance immigration CL | .120 | .017 | .079 | 7.035 | .000 |
| Distance redistribution FR | -.002 | .022 | -.004 | -.079 | .937 |
| Distance redistribution CR | -.052 | .013 | -.038 | -4.063 | .000 |
| Distance redistribution CL | .035 | .015 | .021 | 2.289 | .022 |
| Additional control variables | | | | | |
| Reason to vote: | | | | | |
| Dissatisfaction | .192 | .010 | .162 | 19.839 | .000 |
| Index of Euroscepticism | .015 | .001 | .099 | 11.525 | .000 |
| Socio-demographic variables | | | | | |
| Sex | | | | | |
| Reference category: Female | | | | | |
| Male | .031 | .004 | .063 | 7.728 | .000 |
| Age | | | | | |
| Reference category: 65+ | | | | | |
| 16-24 | -.024 | .012 | -.026 | -2.020 | .043 |
| 25-34 | -.016 | .009 | -.022 | -1.770 | .077 |
| 35-44 | -.006 | .009 | -.009 | -.696 | .486 |
| 45-54 | -.003 | .009 | -.005 | -.385 | .700 |
| 55-64 | -.006 | .007 | -.008 | -.774 | .439 |
| Educational level | | | | | |
| Reference category: Higher Education | | | | | |
| Primary Education | -.005 | .007 | -.008 | -.834 | .404 |
| Secondary Education | .009 | .005 | .017 | 1.767 | .077 |
| Profession | | | | | |
| Reference category: Retired | .010 | .009 | .010 | 1.025 | .305 |

| | | | | | |
|--------------------------------|-------|------|-------|-------|-------------|
| Self-employed | -.003 | .009 | -.004 | -.313 | .755 |
| Managers | .012 | .009 | .015 | 1.352 | .477 |
| Other white collars | .013 | .008 | .019 | 1.565 | .418 |
| Manual workers | .007 | .011 | .005 | .588 | .557 |
| House person | .004 | .010 | .005 | .431 | .666 |
| Unemployed | .011 | .013 | .010 | .797 | .426 |
| Students | .011 | .005 | .020 | 2.256 | .024 |
| Strength of Partisanship | | | | | |
| Reference category: Very close | | | | | |
| Fairly close | .005 | .005 | .009 | .989 | .323 |
| Merely a sympathiser | .053 | .010 | .055 | 5.237 | .000 |
| N = 13129 | | | | | |
| R Squared = .188 | | | | | |

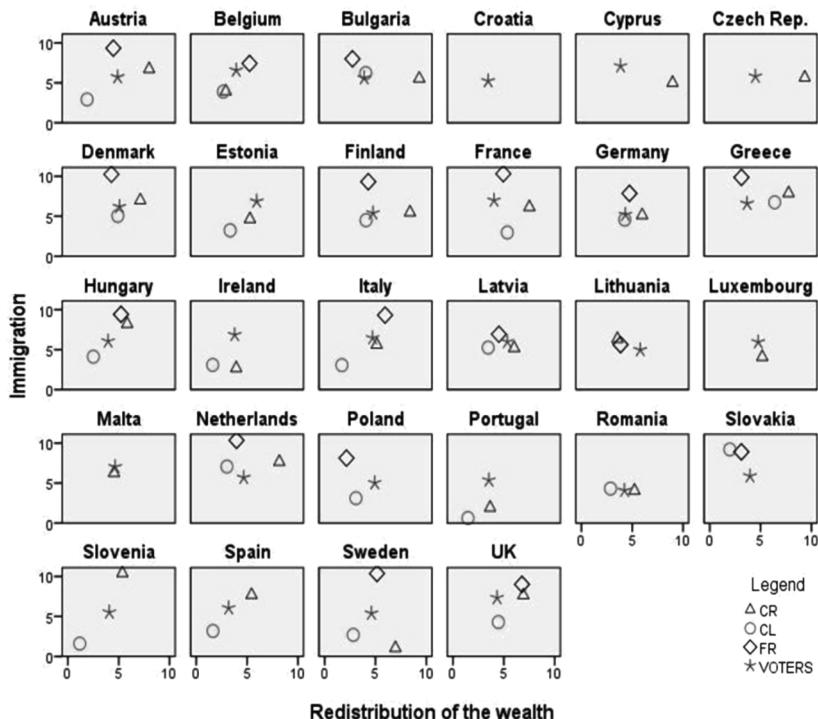
Dependent Variable: Vote for Far-right parties (1 = yes, 0 = no).

By consulting the coefficients table, when the observed p-value ('Sig.' abbreviation) is less than 0.05 (bold parameters), then the results, derived from the correlation between the dependent and independent variables are statistically significant.

Source: Schmitt, H., D. Braun, S.A. Popa, S. Mikhaylov, and F. Dwingen. 2016. *European Parliament Election Study 2014*, Euromanifesto Study. GESIS Data Archive and R. Bakker, and E. Edwards, L. Hooghe, S. Jolly, G. Marks, J. Polk, J. Rovny, M. Steenbergen, and Schmitt, H., Hobolt, S.B., Popa, S. A., Teperoglou, E., European Parliament, Directorate - General for Communication, Public Monitoring Unit (2016): *European Parliament Election Study 2014, Voter Study, First Post-Election Survey*. GESIS Data Archive, Cologne.

The following network of scatterplot charts (Figure 2) displays the positions of the electorally major centre-right, centre-left and far-right parties in conjunction with the views of the mean voter on the socio-cultural axis of immigration and the socioeconomic axis of the redistribution of wealth. To illus-

FIGURE 2.
Scatterplots charts presenting the positions of parties and voters on the dimension of immigration and the redistribution of the wealth in the 2014 European elections.³



Source: Schmitt, H., D. Braun, S.A. Popa, S. Mikhaylov, and F. Dwinger. 2016. *European Parliament Election Study 2014*, Euromanifesto Study. GESIS Data Archive and R. Bakker, and E. Edwards, L. Hooghe, S. Jolly, G. Marks, J. Polk, J. Rovny, M. Steenbergen, and M. Vachudova. 2015. '2014 Chapel Hill Expert Survey.' Version 2015.1. Available on ches-data.eu. Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill.

3. The scale of both axes ranges from 1 to 10, where '1' means fully in favour of the redistribution of wealth and the adoption of a non-restrictive immigration policy and '10' means entirely opposed to the redistribution of wealth and to a favourable immigration policymaking stance.

trate that, we observe that most of the far-right parties present a similar anti-immigrant position across the vertical dimension. Regarding the horizontal axis, far-right parties seem to adopt either pro-redistribution positions or are located on the median placement of the socioeconomic dimension, apart from UKIP, which is entirely opposed to the redistribution of wealth. Centre-right parties express their opposition to the redistribution of wealth and tend to adopt median or pro-restrictive immigration positions, particularly in the cases of the United Kingdom, Greece, Hungary and Slovenia. Centre-left parties summarize similar pro-redistribution positions. However, centre-left parties seem to adopt stricter immigration views in some country-cases namely in Bulgaria, Greece, Latvia, the Netherlands, the United Kingdom and Slovakia. Voters present similar and centrist positions on both policy dimensions.

Proceeding to the assessment of the second set of hypotheses (hypothesis 3 and 4), which concern the interaction between the configuration of party competition and the vote for far-right parties (table 1), we ascertain the verification of both assumptions. Specifically, in the case of the third hypothesis, we observe that the greater the distance between both mainstream parties and voters on the dimension of immigration, the more likely voters are to vote in favour of far-right parties. In other words, the weakness of mainstream parties to converge towards voters, who adopt more centrist positions across both policy dimension (descriptive figure 2), contributes to the creation of electoral opportunities for the far-right spectrum. It is worth noting that the distance of centre-left parties from voters on immigration is even more statistically significant than the one of centre-right parties. The adoption of pro-immigrant positions by the centre-left parties could be interpreted by working-class voters as support in favour of their competitors in the labour market. In the case of far-right parties, it seems that the greater the distance between far-right parties and voters on the dimension of immigration, the less likely voters are to vote in favour of far-right parties, since voters tend to adopt a more

centrist position and far-right parties support the implementation of a restrictive immigration policy. Far-right parties could not approach strategically the median voter, as the advocacy of a non-centrist policy agenda signals electoral gains for far-right parties (Ezrow 2005). In other words, even though the median voter presents centrist positions, far-right parties are traditionally surrounded by non-centrist ideological positions, in order to preserve their '*raison d'être*' and their issue-credibility (Spoon 2011), namely the agenda of immigration. Regarding the final hypothesis, which concerns the distance between parties and voters on the redistribution of wealth, it is argued that the greater the distance between centre-left parties and voters across the dimension of the redistribution of wealth, due to the abandonment of a centrist economic policymaking, the more likely the voters are to vote in favour of far-right parties. On the other hand, the larger the distance between centre-right parties and voters on the axle of the redistribution of wealth, the less likely the voters are to vote in favour of far-right parties. Even though this finding requires further empirical investigation, we could explain the above ascertainment through the switch of most of the centre-right parties towards an opposed policymaking stance across the dimension of the redistribution of wealth (descriptive figure 2). Therefore, the adoption of non-redistributive policies by the centre-right parties, a fact that could also imply the non-socioeconomic favour of minorities, could partially restrict the electoral potentiality of far-right parties.

Our model concludes with the investigation of additional control variables. More specifically, we observe the existence of a positive correlation between the far-right vote and the dissatisfaction of voters, namely the aspect that concerns the negative assessment of governmental handling. At the same time, we find a strong statistical relationship between the vote for far-right parties and the index of Euroscepticism, since far-right voters tend to empathize with the opposition against the perspectives of the European edifice. Concluding with the evalua-

tion of socio-demographic variables, we ascertain the insignificant impact of these factors on the rise of far-right parties. It is confirmed, that men are more likely than women to vote for far-right parties. The youngest age group between 16 and 24 years, is less likely to support the far right-wing parties compared to the older age groups. Moreover, 'fairly close partisans' are more likely to vote for far-right parties than 'very close partisans'. In this case, given the limitation of the statistical significance of the socio-demographic variables we are unable to confirm the characteristics of the traditional electoral identity of the far-right supporter over time

Conclusion

The recent European elections could be considered as evidence that party systems are undergoing a transformation which has been taking place since the post-1970s. The electoral ascent of Eurosceptic, anti-establishment parties with either right-wing or left-wing ideological inclinations in conjunction with the attendant shrinkage of mainstream parties could not be interpreted as a flash phenomenon, which exploded due to the onset of the financial crisis. Over the last decades, voters have been passing through a process of realignment, owing to the decline of traditional cleavages and the emergence of new concerns relating to the impact of globalization and Europeanization. Simultaneously, the wane of political bonds between voters and mainstream parties has been activating the procedure of dealignment by leading to the electoral abandonment of the political establishment and the switch of the electorate towards new parties. Therefore, the consequences of the multilevel European crisis did not cause but contributed decisively to the further redirection of party systems' traditional structures. Four years after the 2014 European elections, we could argue that national second order elections could be no longer evaluated as the exclusive advantageous arena of anti-establishment par-

ties and specifically of right-wing parties. During the last years, far-right parties present an electoral diffusion in national elections, a fact which verifies that the vote in favour of these parties has been acquiring properties of political endorsement and does not remain a protest or dissatisfaction vote against mainstream parties.

The findings referred above indicate that the complementary relationship between the social demand and political supply-side account contributes to the interpretation regarding the aspects of the vote for far-right parties. One of the main goals of this research note was to investigate the impact of socio-economic and socio-cultural conditions relating to the issue of unemployment and immigration on the electoral presence of the far-right party spectrum, since demand-side explanations possess a deterministic role in the approximation of the far-right phenomenon. On the other hand, research should not neglect the effect of the supply-side context on the explanation of the far-right vote. According to our findings, the configuration of party competition as regards to how far away or close from the voter mainstream parties position themselves across the policy dimensions of immigration and the redistribution of wealth, seems to contribute to the eventual complication or facilitation of the electoral performance of far-right parties.

Future studies should continue to invest methodologically on the interplay between the demand and supply-side context with a view to approaching the far-right phenomenon. In the case of the demand-side perspective, the future research concern should focus more systematically on how the effect of cross-national contextual level factors (i.e. related to the number of immigrants and the level of unemployment) could contribute to the mobilization of the electorate towards the far-right spectrum. Furthermore, the comparative investigation of party competition between first and second order elections in conjunction with the inclusion of more policy dimensions, which are associated with the issue of the European Union, could provide inferences regarding the deeper and extensive

explanation of the determinants that compose the framework of the far-right vote.

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APPENDIX

TABLE A.1.

List of included centre-right, centre-left and far-right parties

| Count- ries | Centre-Right Parties | Centre-Left Parties | Far-right Parties |
|-------------------------|---|--|--|
| Sweden | Moderata Samlingspartiet (Moderate Coalition Party) | Sverige Socialdemokratiska Arbetareparti (Social Democrats) | Sverigede- mokraterna (Sweden Democrats) |
| Den- mark | Det Konservative Folkeparti (Conservative People's Party) | Socialdemokraterne (Social Democrats) | Dansk Folkeparti (Danish People's Party) |
| Finland | Kansallinen Kokoomus (National Coalition Party) | Suomen Sosialidemo- kraattinen Puolue (Social Democratic Party of Finland) | Perussuo- malaiset (True Finns) |
| Belgium | Christen- Demokratisch & Vlaams (Christian Democrats & Flemish) | Parti Socialiste (Socialist Party) | Vlaams Belang (Flemish Interest) |
| The Nether- lands | Volkspartij voor Vrijheid en Democratie (People's Party for Freedom and Democracy) | Partij van de Arbeid/Europese Sociaaldemocraten (Labour Party) | Partij voor de Vrijheid (Party for Freedom) |
| Luxem- bourg | Chreschtlich Sozial Volkspartei (Christian Social People's Party) | Letzebuergesch Sozialistesch Arbechterpartei (Luxembourg So- cialist Workers' Party) | No Far-right party |

| Count- ries | Centre-Right Parties | Centre-Left Parties | Far-right Parties |
|----------------|--|---|---|
| France | Union pour un Mouvement Populaire (<i>Union for a Popular Movement</i>) | Parti Socialiste - Parti Radical de Gauche (<i>Socialist Party - Radical Party of the Left</i>) | Front National (<i>National Front</i>) |
| Italy | Forza Italia (<i>Go Italy</i>) | Partito Democratico (<i>Democratic Party</i>) | Lega Nord (<i>Northern League</i>) |
| Spain | Partido Popular (<i>People's Party</i>) | Partido Socialista Obrero Español + Partit dels Socia- listes de Catalunya (<i>Spanish Socialist Workers' Party + Party of the Socia- lists of Catalonia</i>) | No Far-right party |
| Greece | Nea Dimokratia (<i>New Democracy</i>) | Elia Dimokratiki Parataxi (<i>Olive Tree</i>) | Laikos Syndesmos - Chrysi Avgi (<i>People's Association - Golden Dawn</i>) |
| Portu- gal | Partido Social De- mocrata + Centro Democratico So- cial/Partido Popular (<i>Social Democratic Party + Democratic and Social Centre/ People's Party</i>) | Partido Socialista Portuguêsa (<i>Portuguese Socialist Party</i>) | No Far-right party |
| Cyprus | Dimokratikos Synagermos (<i>Democratic Rally</i>) | Dimokratikó Kómma (<i>Democratic Party</i>) | No Far-right party |

| Count- ries | Centre-Right Parties | Centre-Left Parties | Far-right Parties |
|----------------|---|--|---|
| Malta | Partit Nazzjonalista (<i>Nationalist Party</i>) | Partit Laburista (<i>Labour Party</i>) | No Far-right party |
| Germany | Christlich Demokratische Union Deutschlands (<i>Christian Democratic Union of Germany</i>) | Sozialdemokra- tische Partei Deutschland (<i>Social Democratic Party of Germany</i>) | Alternative für Deutschland (<i>Alternative for Germany</i>) |
| Austria | Österreichische Volkspartei (<i>Austrian People's Party</i>) | Sozialdemokra- tische Partei Österreichs (<i>Social Democratic Party of Austria</i>) | Freiheitliche Partei Österreichs (<i>Freedom Party of Austria</i>) |
| UK | Conservative Party | Labour Party | United Kingdom Inde- pendence Party |
| Ireland | Gaelic Nation - Fine Gael | Irish Labour Party - Páirtí an Lucht Oibre | No Far-right party |
| Bulgaria | Grazhdani za Evro- pejsko Razvitie na (<i>Bulgaria Citizens for European Deve- lopment of Bulgaria</i>) | Balgarska Socia- listicheska Partija (<i>Bulgarian Socialist Party</i>) | Ataka (<i>Attack</i>) |
| Croatia | Right Coalition (Hrvatska Demokra- tska Zajednica + Hrvatska Seljačka Stranka + Hrvatska stranka prava Ante Starčević) (<i>Right Coalition Croatian Democra- tic Union + Croatian Peasant Party + Croatian Party of Rights Dr. Ante Starčević</i>) | (Socijaldemokratska Partija Hrvatske + Hrvatska Narodna Stranka – Liberalni Demokrati + Istarski Demokratski Sabor) (<i>Left Coalition (Social Democratic Party of Croatia + Croatian People's Party - Liberal De- mocrats + Istrian Democratic Assem- bly + Croatian Par- ty of Pensioners</i>) | No Far-right party |

| Count- ries | Centre-Right Parties | Centre-Left Parties | Far-right Parties |
|----------------|--|--|--|
| Czech Rep. | TOP 09 + Starostové a nezávislí (TOP 09 + Mayors and Independent) | Česká strana so- ciálně demokratická (Czech Social Democratic Party) | No Far-right party |
| Estonia | Erakond Isamaa ja Res Publica Liit (Union of Pro Patria and Res Publica) | Sotsiaaldemo- kraatlik Erakond (Social Democratic Party) | No Far-right party |
| Hun- gary | Fidesz Magyar Polgári Szövetség + Keresztyéne- mokrata Néppárt (Fidesz Hungarian Civic Union + Chris- tian Democratic People's Party) | Magyar Szocialista Párt (Hungarian Socialist Party) | Jobbik Magyarországról Mozgalom (Movement for a Better Hungary) |
| Latvia | Partija Venotība (Unity Party) | Saskaņa sociāldemokrātiskā partija (Saskaņas Centrs) (Harmony Social Democratic Party (Harmony Centre) | Nacionālā apvienība Visu Latvijai! - Tēvzemei un Brīvībai/ LNNK National (Alliance All for Latvia! - Fatherland and Freedom/ LNNK) |
| Lithua- nia | Tėvynės sajunga - Lietuvos krikščio- nys demokratai (Homeland Union - Lithuanian Chris- tian Democrats) | Lietuvos socialdemokratų partija (Lithuanian Social Democratic Party) | Partija Tvarka ir teisingumas (Order and Jus- tice Party) |

| <i>Countries</i> | <i>Centre-Right Parties</i> | <i>Centre-Left Parties</i> | <i>Far-right Parties</i> |
|------------------|--|---|--|
| <i>Poland</i> | Platforma Obywatelska (<i>Civic Platform</i>) | Koalicja Sojuszu Lewicy Demokratycznej i Unii Pracy (<i>Democratic Left Alliance - Labour Union</i>) | Prawo i Sprawiedliwość (<i>Law and Justice</i>) |
| <i>Romania</i> | Partidul Național Liberal National (<i>Liberal Party</i>) | Partidul Social Democrat + Uniunea Națională pentru Progresul României + Partidul Conservator (<i>Social Democratic Party + Democratic and Social Centre + People's Party</i>) | No Far-right party |
| <i>Slovakia</i> | Krestansko-demokratické hnutie (<i>Christian Democratic Movement</i>) | Smer - sociálna demokracia (<i>Direction - Social Democracy</i>) | Slovenská národná strana (<i>Slovak National Party</i>) |
| <i>Slovenia</i> | Slovenska demokratska stranka (<i>Slovenian Democratic Party</i>) | Socialnih demokratov (<i>Social Democrats</i>) | No Far-right party |

S o u r c e: Schmitt, H., D. Braun, S.A. Popa, S. Mikhaylov, and F. Dwinger. 2016. *European Parliament Election Study 2014*, Euromanifesto Study. GESIS Data Archive and R. Bakker, and E. Edwards, L. Hooghe, S. Jolly, G. Marks, J. Polk, J. Rovny, M. Steenbergen.

TABLE A.2.
*Electoral results of far-right parties
in the 2014 European Parliament elections*

| Country | Party | Electoral result | Number of MEPs |
|-----------------|---|------------------|----------------|
| Sweden | Sverigedemokraterna (<i>Sweden Democrats</i>) | 9.7 | 2 |
| Denmark | Dansk Folkeparti (<i>Danish People's Party</i>) | 26.6 | 4 |
| Finland | Perussuomalaiset (<i>True Finns</i>) | 12.9 | 2 |
| Belgium | Vlaams Belang (<i>Flemish Interest</i>) | 4.1 | 1 |
| The Netherlands | Partij voor de Vrijheid (<i>Party for Freedom</i>) | 13.2 | 4 |
| France | Front National (<i>National Front</i>) | 24.85 | 24 |
| Italy | Lega Nord (<i>Northern League</i>) | 6.2 | 5 |
| Greece | Laikos Syndesmos - Chrysi Avgi (<i>People's Association - Golden Dawn</i>) | 9.4 | 3 |
| Germany | Alternative für Deutschland (<i>Alternative for Germany</i>) | 7.04 | 7 |
| Austria | Freiheitliche Partei Österreichs (<i>Freedom Party of Austria</i>) | 19.7 | 4 |
| UK | United Kingdom Independence Party | 26.6 | 24 |
| Hungary | Jobbik Magyarországért Mozgalom (<i>Movement for a Better Hungary</i>) | 14.7 | 3 |
| Latvia | Nacionālā apvienība Visu Latvijai! - Tēvzemei un Brīvībai/LNNK National (<i>Alliance All for Latvia! - Fatherland and Freedom/LNNK</i>) | 14.3 | 1 |
| Lithuania | Partija Tvirta ir teisingumas (<i>Order and Justice Party</i>) | 14.25 | 2 |
| Poland | Prawo i Sprawiedliwość (<i>Law and Justice</i>) | 31.8 | 49 |

Source: <http://www.europarl.europa.eu/elections2014-results/en/election-results-2014.html>