Executive Summary

In the wake of the Eurozone crisis, the rise of ‘outsider’ parties from both ends of the political spectrum has increased concerns over the future viability of the European project. In some countries, traditionally fringe parties have been able to force their way into the political mainstream. Ahead of the elections between 22 and 25 May 2014, which look likely to test this at a European level, this report examines these rising political parties.

The report identifies 25 parties in 19 EU member states which belong to the fringe left-wing GUE-NGL, right-wing EFD and non-aligned NI blocs within the European Parliament. All have been predicted either to win 10% (or more) of the national vote or to rank in the top three most successful parties/coalitions in the most recent national opinion polls (as of 1 April 2014). The report provides comprehensive profiles of these ‘outsider’ parties and analyses key trends found among them.

KEY FINDINGS

‘Outsider’ parties and countries

Four ‘outsider’ parties are polling a quarter (or more) of the national vote

- The pro-Russia Harmony Centre (Latvia, 37%); the radically anti-austerity SYRIZA (Greece, 25.4%); populist ANO 2011 (Czech Republic, 24.8%); and the Eurosceptic United Kingdom Independence Party (UKIP) (24.7%).

Greece is the only country where three ‘outsider’ parties are predicted to secure 10% (or more), polling almost half (49.7%) of the national vote between them

- SYRIZA (25.4%); new anti-establishment party The River (13.6%); and fascist Golden Dawn (10.7%).

Four countries feature two popular ‘outsider’ parties. In order of predicted national vote share (highest–lowest), they are: Latvia; the Czech Republic; the Netherlands; and Sweden

- Latvia: Harmony Centre (37%); nationalist agrarian Union of Green and Farmers (ZZS) (17%); total (54%);
- Czech Republic: ANO 2011 (24.8%); far-left Czech Communist Party (CPBM) (14.8%); total (39.6%);
- The Netherlands: anti-immigration Party for Freedom (PVV) (16%); anti-austerity Socialist Party (14%); total (30%);
- Sweden: Eurosceptic Left Party (10.8%); populist right Sweden Democrats (10.0%); total (20.8%).

14 countries feature only one popular ‘outsider’ party. Of these parties, UKIP is polling the most favourably

- These ‘outsider’ parties are: UKIP (24.7%); the Danish People's Party (DF) (24%); France’s National Front (21.5%); the Freedom Party Austria (FPO) (21%); Italy’s Five Star Movement (M5S) (21%); the Progressive Party of Working People in Cyprus (AKEL) (20%); Lithuania’s Order and Justice Party (20%); Ireland’s Sinn Féin (19%); the Finns Party (18%); Hungary’s Jobbik (16%); Spain’s United Left (14%); the Democratic Unitarian Coalition in Portugal (CDU) (12%); Bulgaria Without Censorship (10%); and, the Croatian Labourists – Labour Party (HL-SR) (10%).

Fringe blocs

Non-aligned parties were most commonly identified, followed closely by those in the fringe left-wing bloc, while few belong to the furthest right bloc

- 11 out of the 25 parties identified are NI; 10 parties belong to the GUE-NGL; and four belong to the EFD.

National Parliamentary representation

Almost all parties (23/25) are represented in their respective national parliaments; only UKIP and The River have no MPs

- Two parties have 30% (or more) of available seats: AKEL (19 of 56 seats, 33.9%) and the Harmony Centre (31/100, 31%);
- Three parties have between 20 and 29%: SYRIZA (71/300, 23.7%); ANO 2011 (47/200, 23.5%); and FPO (40/183, 21.9%);
- Seven parties have between 10% and 19%; the remaining 11 have fewer than 10%;
- Some of the most well-known ‘outsider’ parties hold a relatively small proportion of seats: PVV, for example, holds 12/150 (8%); Golden Dawn holds 18/300 (6%); and the National Front has the lowest level of those parties with parliamentary representation at 2/577 (0.3%).
19 of the 25 parties have competed in at least two recent parliamentary elections

- 12 increased their share of the vote: SYRIZA (by 23 percentage points) and the Finns Party (15) saw the largest increase; UKIP saw the smallest increase (0.9);
- Six saw their vote share decrease: ZZZ (by 7.5) and PVV (5.4) saw the largest decrease;
- One party’s (CDU) vote share remained the same.

European representation

Four of the 25 parties failed to secure seats in the European Parliament in the June 2009 elections, yet have since increased in popularity by between two- and twenty-fold

- They are: Golden Dawn (won 0.5% in 2009; predicted 10.7% in 2014); ZZZ (3.8%, 2009; predicted 17% in 2014); Sweden Democrats (3.3% in 2009; predicted 10% in 2014); and Sinn Féin (11.2% in 2009; predicted 19% in 2014).

Policy positions

16 of the 25 parties can be described as ‘Eurosceptic’

- Anti-EU sentiments identified across all three fringe blocs range from calls to renegotiate current treaty commitments to demands for an immediate exit from the political union.

11 of the 25 parties can be identified as ‘anti-immigration’

- Anti-immigration sentiments identified in the non-aligned and furthest right bloc range from parties calling for an end to immigration from all Muslim-majority countries (i.e. PVV; DF) to European immigration reform returning powers to national governments (i.e. The River).

11 of the 25 parties prioritise opposition to NATO

- The majority (8/11) belong to the furthest left bloc; the remaining three are Sweden Democrats, Golden Dawn and the Finns Party.

Nine of the 25 parties can be described as anti-corruption

- Half of these were formed after the 2009 European elections: M5S (2009); ANO 2011; Bulgaria Without Censorship (2014); and The River (2014).

Eight of the 25 parties prioritise criticism of EU anti-austerity measures

- Three quarters of these parties belong to the GUE-NGL bloc; the remaining two are Golden Dawn and M5S.

Controversies

11 of the 25 parties have been involved in religious hatred-related controversies

- The majority of these parties (8/11) have a history of anti-Muslim-related controversies or policies (FPO; DF; Finns Party; National Front; PVV; Socialist Party; Sweden Democrats; UKIP); a smaller number have been involved in anti-Semitism-related controversies, with four including members censured for Holocaust denial or anti-Semitic conspiracy theory (National Front; Golden Dawn; SYRIZA; Jobbik);
- Of these 11 parties, SYRIZA is the only GUE-NGL member.

Nine of the 25 parties have been involved in racism-related controversies

- The majority of these relate to immigrants from Africa or Asia, with MPs or candidates from eight parties (FPO; DF; Finns Party; National Front; Golden Dawn; PVV; Sweden Democrats; UKIP) involved; in addition, two parties (National Front; Jobbik) have been criticised for anti-Roma remarks and/or policy suggestions;
- All are members of EFD or NI.

Nine of the 25 parties have been involved in controversies involving far-right/neo-Nazi/Nazi links

- Of these, two thirds have seen party members or associates accused of using Neo-Nazi/Nazi imagery including Nazi salutes or songs (Finns Party; National Front; Golden Dawn; Jobbik; ZZZ; Socialist Party);
- Of these nine, the Socialist Party is the only GUE-NGL member.

Eight of the 25 parties have been involved in corruption-related controversies

- Half of these parties belong to GUE-NGL;
- Two (Bulgaria without Censorship; The River) can be described as anti-corruption.

Six of the 25 parties have been involved in homophobia-related controversies

- All are members of EFD or NI;
- MPs from two of these parties have submitted unsuccessful bills to their country’s national parliament: calling for a ban on the “promotion of sexual deviations” (Jobbik); or forbidding Gay Pride parades, public speeches, or campaign materials supporting LGBT rights (Order and Justice Party).
Five of the 25 parties have been involved in controversies involving violence/murder (or the threat of)

- The Left Party is the only GUE-NGL member; all others are NI;
- Two have been repeatedly accused of violence against minority communities: Golden Dawn MPs and members have been involved in anti-immigrant violence, or been accused of incitement; Jobbik’s quasi-paramilitary Magyar Guard was proscribed after anti-Roma rallies throughout Hungary.

KEY THEMES

Anti-establishment politics

Among the parties profiled, anti-austerity views are more frequently found in the countries most affected by the Eurozone crisis. Parties identified as exploiting anti-immigration rhetoric are concentrated in the more affluent countries of Western and Northern Europe, with a smaller number on the continents’ poorer Southern and Eastern borders.

EU integration and NATO

Euroscepticism appears to unite the political fringes, with the right focusing on the EU’s so-called democracy deficit and the left opposing its ‘neoliberal’ agenda. Despite this, parties which demand an immediate exit from the political union and/or those which threaten to leave NATO and close foreign military bases are in a minority.

‘Outsider’ impact on domestic politics

‘Outsider’ parties can also function on the ‘inside’ of, or have an impact on, domestic politics. The PVV and DF supported coalition governments in return for concessions on immigration; while UKIP has become central to British political discourse. Their influence has helped encourage right-wing shifts domestically and/or prompted other political parties to clarify and/or strengthen their positions on issues like Europe and immigration.

Populist leadership

While populist parties traditionally centre on a strong personality, there is an apparent evolution from ‘straight-talking’ right-wing politicians towards anti-establishment celebrities. Italy’s M5S relies on founder celebrity satirist Beppe Grillo’s popularity and social media following; and ‘The River and Bulgaria Without Censorship were formed in 2014 by popular television journalists.

A right-wing ‘wrecking’ alliance?

Leaders of populist right-wing parties are attempting to capitalise on rising Euroscepticism by forming a new European political group to, in their own words, “wreck” the parliament from the inside. While these parties would still collectively remain a minority and clashes of personalities and policy positions could potentially rupture such an alliance, it could also pull parties in the current EFD bloc even further to the right.