

April 2012 – Issue 55

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EDITORIAL

By Antonio Missiroli

Populism and populists in Europe – old and new

Recent electoral results and political developments across Europe – North and South, East and West – have highlighted the rising impact of “populist” forces on both national polities and EU policies. While appreciation of the gravity of such populist challenge still varies, concern about its short-term effects is now widespread.

BEPA has recently organised – in cooperation with some European think tanks – a workshop to reflect in more depth on the root causes, the drivers, the manifestations and vehicles, and the possible consequences of what seems to be brewing up in Europe these days on the populist front. This issue of our Monthly Brief presents some of the points raised on that occasion and offers some additional and sometimes unconventional food for thought to those who want to better understand a phenomenon that has different facets and multiple faces.

What we talk about when we talk about “populism”

The term *populism* is often used in a derogatory sense to describe a type of political discourse and style – usually an appeal to “the people” (*us*) against “the elites” (*them*) in defence of the (supposed) genuine interests of the citizens or a specific community, and against the political agenda of powerful “outsiders”.

The populist discourse tends to oversimplify policy issues that are intrinsically complex, controversial and/or poorly explained to the public. It also tends to blend different ideological ingredients and to appeal to transversal groups of potential voters who share similar views. Its growing success often represents a symptom and symbol of broader difficulties and deficiencies affecting advanced liberal democracies in dealing with both policies and citizens.

Historically speaking, populism dates back to the agrarian movements of 19th century America. Ever since, although some of its traits were discernible also in the totalitarian ideologies of the first half of the 20th century, “populism” as we know it emerged after World War II in the

most diverse democratic political systems: from Latin America, where it has the most distinctive and durable roots, to the developing world; from France (Pierre Poujade in the 1950s) to the Scandinavian countries (since the 1970s); and once again in the US, in the 1990s, with Ross Perot.

Most of the time, it focused on a single issue (high taxation in Northern Europe, NAFTA for Perot); it appealed to frustrated voters on both sides of the political divide, thus making it difficult to identify it with the extreme right (or left) only; and it materialised into “flash” parties with a very short life span.

The rise (and decline) of populist forces and the spread of anti-EU rhetoric have not always gone hand-in-hand. Nordic countries have long experienced recurrent, if volatile, surges of populist parties and lists, often driven by tax revolt but mostly indifferent to European integration. Moreover, some regional parties initially combined support for the EU against the national state with elements of tax revolt and anti-immigration sentiments, often including xenophobic innuendos. Their record over time shows that maintaining a certain level of mobilisation among sympathisers and achieving some degree of institutionalisation permit such forces to consolidate, last, and even thrive. Alternatively, they deflate and disappear.

For its part, vintage “euro-scepticism” originally shaped some core elements of the anti-EU arsenal, although Britain’s politics and constitution have mostly managed to contain its most destructive effects (though not its rhetoric). Elsewhere, both North and South, anti-EU arguments have often been popular on the left as part of an ideological – but not necessarily populist – platform in which opposition to neo-liberal policies targeted especially the European Commission as their main agent and enforcer.

The chances of success for populist forces have traditionally depended on the configuration of electoral systems: strict proportional representation has normally been a facilitator (especially for “flash” parties, also in the European Parliament), whereas bipolar and first-past-the-post arrangements have curbed them.

On the other hand, referenda have often represented – regardless of and well beyond the legitimate reasons for calling them – powerful catalysts for the spread of such sentiments and messages, entailing as they do an over-simplification of the debate and recourse to a quintessential populist theme: just saying “No” to the establishment. Since 1992 (the referenda on Maastricht), in fact, popular votes on subsequent treaties have become recurrent occasions for campaigning against “Brussels” and consolidating a populist anti-EU narrative.

This is also why it is virtually impossible now to resort or return to the old ways. The kind of permissive consensus that long characterised the European integration process – as driven by enlightened and far-sighted elites (the “blessed plot” described by the late Hugo Young) – is long gone. The risk now for EU policies is instead to be seen by angry voters as a “cursed plot”.

The “new” populism

Following the outbreak of the financial and economic crises (which in turn acts as a catalyst and multiplier), a number of developments have made populist forces and their embracing anti-EU rhetoric a much more tangible phenomenon, in both electoral and public opinion terms.

Declining social cohesion, rising immigration (often perceived as being much larger than it actually is), widening income disparities, growing uncertainty in times of change, and mounting dissatisfaction with the apparent lack of alternatives to austerity: this is the background against which a growing number of political “entrepreneurs” – mostly (but not only) on the right of the political spectrum – have started betting on the combination and mutual reinforcement of socio-economic and anti-EU populism with a view to exploiting the fears of European citizens.

They emphasise dangers to identities and communities – be they local, national, historical or social. They try to appeal directly to voters, rather than activists, and to appeal to *all* voters, thus often reaching between 10 to 20 per cent of cast ballots. When that happens, in fact, they stop being a political symptom and symbol – and

start becoming a political factor, and a player in its own right.

Some populist forces have indeed become either formal partners in or key parliamentary supporters of coalition governments. In some cases, they have managed to reshape public policies in a significant way, especially on immigration. In others, their record is more modest and their impact more of an indirect nature. In both cases, they have succeeded in creating additional obstacles to the kind of consensual decision-making that characterises the European integration process – be it on Schengen, enlargement, or EMU itself.

Their success has also triggered a more or less evident race to catch up among established parties, who have changed their political agenda and language accordingly. Even when this new populism does not translate into electoral scores, in other words, it does permeate the political climate and is reflected in opinion polls and the media.

On top of that, if and when mainstream parties coalesce for the common good (for instance, in various types of “grand coalition”), they risk further consolidating the gap between the established elites and “the people” and feeding the populist narrative.

The new media

Four years ago, political analysts were all enthralled by the use Barack Obama was making in particular of Facebook to mobilise young and new voters for his presidential bid. Just one year

ago, the entire world was mesmerised by the formidable impact that Twitter and the new social media had on the uprisings in the Arab countries. But very few observers seem to be paying much attention in Europe to the political potential – in terms of both mobilisation and communication – that such new media enshrine, and to the effect they are already having on European politics and, alas, also the rise of populist forces.

It would indeed be very difficult to understand the success of certain lists and campaigns across the Union – at local, regional, and national level – without focusing on the parallel universe created by and through the web. And this applies as much to more classic populist parties as to such new movements as “Occupy” or the “Pirates”, whose followership is less permeable to xenophobia and more in line with the liberal mindset of the “native” Internet generation.

The social media have dramatically lowered the entry barrier to the public debate: they can and do shape new agendas (the campaign against ACTA is a case in point), provide new fora for discussion, and cast new light on how and where political views are formed in the 21st century. Here lies not only a risk but also an opportunity: lacking (still) a common European public space, why not make better use of a quintessentially cross-national cyberspace to fill the vacuum that an increasing number of EU citizens feel in terms of political participation and democracy? It is notably this vacuum that populist forces are trying to fill these days – with some success.



Margaritis Schinas, Vice-President Olli Rehn and Philippe Legrain, at the seminar on populism, organised by BEPA on 25 April.

1 Europe's democracy paradox

By Ivan Krastev*

The real crisis in Europe is not a financial/economic one, but a much deeper social/political crisis, of which the financial/economic dimension is just a symptom. That deeper crisis has formed not just because there is a democratic deficit between the centre and the parts of the European Union, or because current European leaders are less devoted to genuine federal union than their predecessors. It has formed because of a cumulatively dramatic transformation of the very character of Europe's liberal democratic regimes.

The European project is characterized by policy without politics on the European level and politics without policy on the nation-state level. As such, it is an example of the contradictions not of capitalism, but of democracy itself.

The European Union cannot be saved by its citizens because there is no European *demos* – but neither can it survive much longer as an elite project because the crisis has sharply escalated the process of dismantling the elite-guided democracies in Europe.

The central political paradox of our time is in fact this: the crisis of trust in democratic institutions in Europe is the outcome not of the failure of the democratisation or integration of its societies but of the unbalanced success of both. Our present crisis, therefore, is not really about banks or money. It is not even about the institutional deficiencies of Europe. It goes deeper than all of that.

Contradictions and inversions

In the 1960s, many liberals feared that Europe's democratic institutions remained hostages of the authoritarian cultures from which they had only recently emerged. World War II destroyed those regimes but not the underlying attitudes that had sustained them. Today we have the opposite problem: order does not destroy freedom, yet freedom destroys order.

In today's EU, citizens' rights are protected, people have access to more information and are freer to travel and practice their lifestyles than

ever. But these freedoms have increasingly paralysed Europe's democratic institutions over the past forty years. Democratic societies are becoming ungovernable as the ideas of a common life and a public interest have gone missing. Trust in politicians has reached a new low.

The current European economic crisis is producing two very different conceptions – or just practices – of democracy. In countries like Germany, the public's influence in democratic politics is increasing; in countries like Greece and Italy, the public's influence in (especially economic) decision-making is decreasing. What Berlin and Paris have to offer the citizens in Italy, Greece or Spain is a democracy in which the voters can change governments but not the basic economic policies of those governments. The logic of current proposals for strengthening the euro would take virtually all economic policy decision-making out of electoral politics, presenting citizens in debtor countries with the unappealing choice of either “democracy without choices” or “occupying” the streets.

The results of this inversion are so strange to us that we have trouble naming and acknowledging what we are seeing – and we often do not, in fact, actually see them. Europeans increasingly come to the streets but not to the ballot boxes. They attack capitalism in moral terms, not in policy terms. They see their camp as an alternative but they cannot put a name to what their camp stands for. They have no leaders because they refuse to be anyone's followers. Perhaps the strangest thing about today's European rebels is that they seek to preserve the old *status quo*. We are thus witnessing 1968 in reverse. Then, students on the streets of Europe declared their desire to live in a world different from that of their parents. Now students are on the street to declare their right to live in the same world as that of their parents, but fear they cannot.

This explains why most pan-European votes today end up as referenda on derailing the idea of “Europe” as a construct *of* the elites, *by* the elites and *for* the elites. Until recently, however,

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none of these votes – including the French and the Dutch “no” to the European Constitution – has stopped the European elite from pressing its project forward. The result is that, at the fringes of European societies at least, there are now deeply mistrustful, conspiracy-minded, uncomfortably significant minorities who are scared of the future. Fear on such a scale has consequences in politics we know all too well.

Identity, globalisation, Europe

Surprisingly, right-wing ideas find support on both the centre-right and the far left. In Denmark, Italy, Sweden, the Netherlands, Austria and Finland, anti-immigrant parties are now strong enough to re-shape national politics. In Central and Eastern Europe, fear of immigrants is not the defining political issue, principally because there are fewer immigrants. But levels of xenophobia and racism are nonetheless striking. They are, in fact, much higher than in Western Europe *despite* the absence of a significant number of immigrants.

All over Western Europe, historical communities have witnessed their control over everyday life erode as ever more decisions are made by “Brussels”, the ECB, or corporate headquarters across the globe. At the same time, the look and feel of these communities has been destabilised by immigrants so numerous and culturally distinct as to seem impossible to assimilate. Today, threatened majorities are acting like aggrieved minorities. They blame the real or imagined loss of control over their lives on a conspiracy between cosmopolitan-minded elites and tribal-minded immigrants.

Thus, ironically, Europe’s democratic institutions are more transparent than ever but less trusted than ever. Elites are more meritocratic but also more resented than ever. Our societies are more open and democratic than ever, but also less effective.

The process of European integration succeeded in delegitimising the European nation-state but failed to create a common European public space and common European political identity. The populist grudge against the EU is a reassertion of more parochial but culturally deeper identities within individual European countries. This movement is driving European

politics toward less inclusive, and possibly less liberal, definitions of political community.

Publics in most European countries fear ageing and depopulation. They fear that immigrants or ethnic minorities are overtaking their countries and threatening their way of life. They fear that European prosperity can no longer be taken for granted and that Europe’s influence in global politics is in decline.

The xenophobic Right, not the egalitarian Left, is benefiting most from the crisis in pure political terms. Yet the sharp Left-Right divide, which structured European politics ever since the French Revolution, is gradually blurring. Proletarian forces are now liable to be captured by decidedly anti-liberal leaderships. And the emerging illiberal political consensus is not limited to right-wing radicalism: it encompasses the European mainstream itself. It is not what extremists say that threatens Europe: the real threat is what the mainstream leaders no longer say – for example, that diversity is good for Europe.

Threatened majorities now express a genuine fear that they are becoming the losers of globalisation. Globalisation may have contributed to the rise of numerous middle classes outside the developed world, but it is eroding the economic and political foundations of the middle-class societies of post-World War II Europe. In this sense the new populism represents not the losers of today but the prospective losers of tomorrow.

The new populism also differs dramatically from the traditional populist movements of the 19th and 20th centuries in its language, political objectives and ideological sources. It does not represent the aspirations of the repressed but rather the frustration of the empowered. It is not a populism of “the people” held in thrall by the romantic imagination of nationalists, as was the case a century and more ago; but a populism of the pragmatic complaint of majorities as manifested in almost daily published opinion polls. It is a kind of populism for which history and precedent have poorly prepared us.

This is our real crisis, and it is a crisis of political culture. Everything else is a sideshow. The only way to save the European project, then, is to reinvent it.

2 The new face of European politics is on Facebook

By *Jamie Bartlett** and *Heather Grabbe***

Is Marine Le Pen's strong showing in the first round of the French presidential election just a result of the crisis, as Nicolas Sarkozy claims? Or is it another sign that mainstream parties of both centre-right and centre-left are losing voters permanently?

The Front National's attraction of nearly one in five French voters follows electoral gains by populist parties across much of Europe. Once relegated to the political fringes, these parties now command significant support in Austria (Freiheitliche Partei Österreichs), Belgium (Vlaams Belang), France (Front National), Hungary (Jobbik), the Netherlands (Partij voor de Vrijheid) and even the socialist bastions of Scandinavia (Dansk Folkeparti in particular). In some countries, they are the second- or third-largest party and are seen as necessary members of coalition governments. Their policy platforms are characterised by an opposition to immigration and multiculturalism, and support for the protection of national identity. On economic policy, they are often critics of globalisation and they pledge to protect workers' rights with rhetoric that sounds like that of the traditional Left.

Often led by colourful, outspoken leaders, they do not fit easily into classic left/right political categories. Indeed, one of their attractions to voters seems to be that they break the mould by campaigning on issues that centrist parties of both traditional right and left in many countries are squeamish about discussing: immigration, race, religion and the downsides of globalisation.

Populism is often assumed to be a cyclical phenomenon, with new protest parties and extremist movements gathering momentum because of the anger of voters who have lost their jobs and the fear of those who might be laid off next. The conventional analysis is that when economic times get tough, people blame the political elite and seek scapegoats for job losses among immigrants. Many mainstream

politicians assume that they will win back voters when the economy recovers.

A Facebook review

This view is out of date and deeper changes are restructuring European politics, according to recent research undertaken by Demos, the cross-party think-tank based in London, and commissioned by the Open Society Foundations. A survey of the Facebook fans of populist parties shows that they are not no-hopers at the bottom of the social scale, and many of them previously supported mainstream parties. What is more, they may not return to supporting the centre-right or left even if the European economy improves because they are not primarily drawn to populism because of concern about unemployment or recession. Rather, they are worried about cultural identity and they are mistrustful of elites in general.

Over the summer of 2011, Demos surveyed over 13,000 Facebook fans of 15 of these parties in twelve European countries. This is a unique new way of collecting data, generating new insight into who these digital activists are, what they think, and how they combine their online and offline activities.

The results are surprising, and should cause other parties to take note. The new generation of voters attracted to populist parties is not all the racist, xenophobic reactionaries sometimes portrayed. They are very young (around two-thirds under 30) and overwhelmingly male – but they are not the losers of economic liberalism. They are generally employed and their education levels broadly match national averages.

What draws them to support populist parties most are perceived threats to their national and cultural identity, especially from immigration and multiculturalism. Interestingly, younger respondents are even more likely to cite immigration than older respondents as a reason for joining. They consider mainstream

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politicians to be out of touch, and incapable or unable to respond to their concerns: only 20 per cent trust their national governments (compared to 43 per cent for the public as a whole).

Just 14 per cent trust the European Union, which they see as distant, ineffective, and a waste of money. They do not see the results of European integration as freedom to travel and greater economic opportunity, but a loss of border control (58 per cent) and a loss of cultural identity (56 per cent). They also lack faith in national pillars of democracy. Only 30 per cent trust the judicial and legal system, which compares to 60 per cent on average in Europe, while only 12 per cent trust the mainstream media (for Die Freiheit fans, it is just 4 per cent).

Given the explosion of propaganda and misinformation now widely available online, this is a cause for concern. Only the police and army command any sort of confidence among them, and even that respect falls below national averages. To quote one of the respondents on the question of why he switched his support: “They are the only honest party.”

Populism is on the rise not only in the familiar spaces for political debate such as television, newspapers and doorstep campaigns, but also in the new political spaces of social media and internet forums. As formal membership of most political parties is falling across the continent, young people are increasingly using social media as a means of expressing their political preferences – whereas parties use them to organise, recruit and mobilise. Populist groups have been particularly adept at taking advantage of these new opportunities, especially through the most influential social media platform of all: Facebook.

The Freiheitliche Partei Österreichs alone has over 80,000 Facebook fans. For some groups, their online following dwarfs their formal membership, and even that of far larger parties, perhaps because the openness of the Internet allows them far more freedom to reach voters with their views than traditional media outlets. For example, the Facebook page of Jimmie

Akesson, leader of the Sverigedemokraterna has over 23,000 “likes” – far more than the current Prime Minister Reinfeldt.

Most striking is that these people are not just armchair “clicktivists”: they are motivated and active in the real world. Over 80 per cent of them think that it does matter who you vote for – and they do vote. At the last election, 67 per cent of them voted for the party they are a fan of (which might increase, because many respondents were too young to vote last time around). Twenty six per cent report having demonstrated or protested in the last 6 months, significantly higher than the European average of under ten per cent. Social media are a bridge into formal channels of politics, rather than a substitute for them. The “Occupy” movement shows the sort of impact that well-networked, internet-savvy groups can, and will continue, to have.

New politics for all?

This combination of virtual and real-world political activity is the way millions of people, especially the young, relate to politics in the 21st century. It is no longer possible to understand the influence of populist political movements – and their opponents – just by looking at their voters or formal members. These new ways of organising also present opportunities for new ways of understanding trends in European politics.

A significant number of Europeans are concerned about the erosion of their national culture in the face of immigration, the growth of Islam in Europe, European integration, and economic globalisation. Our research also offers a glimmer of hope for mainstream parties. Those online activists who were also active offline – by voting, demonstrating, or being part of a political party – were more democratic, had more faith in politics, and were more likely to disavow violence.

This is powerful evidence that encouraging more people to become actively involved in political and civic life, whatever their party preference, should be top priority for all European politicians.

3 Pirates @ EC

*By Niklas Heusch, Erik Olsson and Carole Richard**

A new spectre is haunting Europe – the spectre of Pirates. This brand new political movement has emerged on the continental political landscape only recently. According to the polls and the number of adherents, however, it keeps growing in significance and strength.

Founded in Sweden in 2006, the Pirate Party has inspired groups in many other EU countries to set up lists and organisations under the same label. So far, Pirates have won seats also in local or regional councils in Germany, Spain, Austria and the Czech Republic.

Young, innocent and wired?

The name “pirate” was chosen to refer to unauthorised music downloaders in Sweden (active since 2001), and was then adopted by the famous Swedish file-sharing website “The Pirate Bay”. The party emerged from the necessity to defend and extend the new so-called “information commons” – and from the fear of seeing individual freedoms restrained.

The movement has its roots in youth culture and the so-called “netizens” (citizens of the net). Indeed, the core of the Pirates’ voters is young and online. Such core, however, is inadequate to explain the Pirates’ popularity and current success in the polls. The party also appeals to those who are disappointed by and disenchanted with the current state of politics at all levels.

The Pirates do not seem to be a “classical” populist protest party: they are not “against” the system as such but rather “for” a different type and shape of politics, based on grassroots democracy and full transparency. Emerged from the Internet generation, used to its egalitarian culture, and convinced that the established parties are ignorant of and removed from their lifestyle, the Pirates see themselves as a community of citizens interested in political and social issues, driven by a genuine desire for a more participatory democracy.

Their way of practising it is seen as a goal in itself, even when their proposals lack substance, coherence and depth (or, as in some areas, are

utterly missing). Their core issues are indeed: fostering transparency in government, giving citizens a greater voice in decision-making, and reforming the concept of intellectual property.

The Internet has remained their main source of inspiration as they aim to extend its free, democratic and egalitarian culture to other areas, thus broadening their political views to embrace a wider progressive agenda.

From Sweden

The Pirate Party of Sweden, the very first of its kind, was founded in 2006 following an ever increasing censorship of the Internet by public authorities in alliance with commercial interests, according to its founder Rickard Falkvinge. In the 2006 general elections it earned only 0.63% of the votes, becoming the third largest party outside parliament. Only three years later, however, the party gained an astonishing 7.1% in the elections for the European Parliament, upsetting the historically stable Swedish party system and gaining one seat. It was given an additional one later on, following the marginal seat reallocation prompted by the Lisbon Treaty.

A couple of highly significant events occurred between these two elections: the 2006 raid by Swedish police on the file-sharing website “The Pirate Bay” (which, thanks also to wide media coverage, prompted a doubling of party membership); and the increased surveillance and control measures on music downloads and electronic “traffic” in general introduced by law (FRA and IPRED) in 2008-09. A third *cause célèbre*, namely the mobilisation against ACTA (Anti-Counterfeiting Trade Agreement), is also likely to have a major impact on the political fortunes of the pirates – and to do so well beyond Sweden.

The party officially claims it takes no stand on such traditional issues as tax and welfare distribution. Research about its members indicates a hybrid political orientation, with members originally from both left and right. Supporters tend to be young males, students in

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the field of natural science or technical subjects, or unemployed aged between 15 and 30 – thus reflecting an image of individuals without a solid position on the labour market.

Across Germany

The past 15 months have marked a major breakthrough for the Pirate Party in Germany. It now has representatives elected in regional parliaments, namely: in the September 2011 Berlin elections, the Pirates managed to overcome the 5% threshold with 8.9% of the votes, winning 15 out of 141 seats in the Abgeordnetenhaus; in the March 2012 elections in the Saar, they received 7.4% of the votes and won 4 seats in the Landtag.

"By voting for the Pirates, one votes first and foremost for a different way of conducting politics – contents can be dealt with later", as the German weekly *Der Spiegel* put it. The 15 institutional representatives embody this different approach: debates within the party take place in public on blogs and Twitter; anybody can follow meetings of the parliamentary groups through online live-streams; and elected politicians are on equal footing with those they represent.

Through their online-voting software *Liquid Feedback*, for example, the Pirates frequently and easily give their members the chance to vote on and discuss most issues. Through *Mumble*, the Pirates' software for conducting online conference calls, virtually anybody can engage in party discussions. This way of conducting politics is seen as goal in itself: to some extent, the means is the end, and the process the outcome.

Unsurprisingly, reforming copyright and intellectual property legislation is high up on the Pirates' agenda, although their proposals and demands appear bizarre and/or naïve to established political parties and commentators. Intellectual property, for instance, is seen as an antiquated barrier, aimed at limiting access to knowledge within information societies and serving solely commercial interests. However, lacking realistic proposals to reframe intellectual property, the Pirates are frequently portrayed as just keen "to download everything for free" and as contesting the right of creators to be paid for their work. In fairness, they have done little to rebut such criticism.

As for "off-line" issues, the Pirates demand free access to education and local public transport. A call for a basic income – an automatic allowance paid by the state to all citizens, replacing most other welfare payments – and a proposal to legalise all drugs (yet combined with educational campaigns on their health and social effects) complement their agenda and cast them as a left-leaning political force, albeit free of any traditional ideological baggage – and sometimes inconsistent.

By offering only a vague political vision, however, the Pirates can appeal to a wider audience, serving as some kind of projection screen for the electorate's hopes and preferences. The Pirates' voters is indeed as diverse as its leaders, argues a recent study by the German Konrad Adenauer Foundation. The public face of the Pirates – composed of Marina Weisband, Gerwald Claus-Brunner, Christoph Lauer, and Martin Delius – is a mixed bunch of individuals who differ markedly in personality, background and political style, allowing them to represent and appeal to different currents among voters and sympathisers.

Horizon 2014

Notably this heterogeneity, coupled with the Pirates' open culture, will also be their biggest challenge in the future. The narrowness of their political agenda may end up limiting their impact, whereas developing a comprehensive political vision may highlight underlying divisions and end up constraining its grassroots practice of politics.

To date the Pirates have been more a political experiment than a party movement in its own right. But their own success – lately also in Catalunya, Tyrol, Prague – may bring change: having voted for them, supporters might expect the experiment to transform itself into a stable political feature.

To continue to promote their ideals, and following on the continent-wide mobilisation against ACTA, the fledgling Pirate Parties across Europe agreed in April 2012 to work together for the 2014 European elections by coordinating their campaigns and drafting a joint programme: another EU party "family" in the making, or just a crew?

4 The future of Europe – seen from its present

By Eurobarometer

The survey on “The Future of Europe” was conducted at the end of 2011 – a time of great uncertainty in and across Europe. Perhaps unsurprisingly, citizens feel there is a gap between public opinion and the decisions taken by political leaders. However, over half of Europeans express confidence in the ability of political leaders in the EU to face up to the main global challenges.

Among the other main findings of the survey:

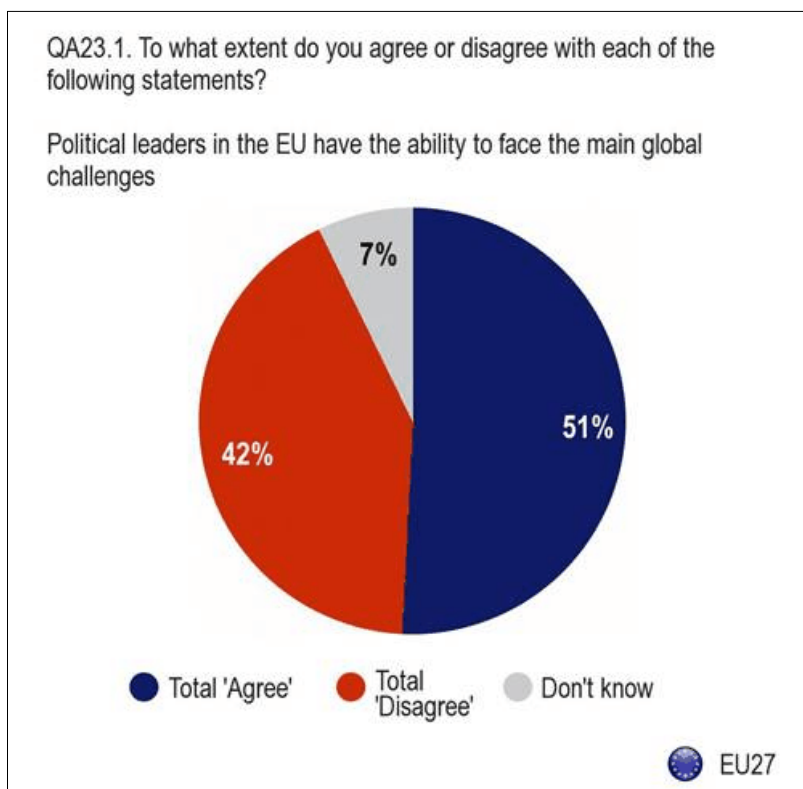
More than six in ten Europeans agree that the EU has sufficient power and tools to defend Europe’s economic interests in the global economy, even if the proportion of Europeans who disagree has increased since spring 2011. The survey also reveals that Europeans broadly agree that globalisation requires common global rules.

In this context, the survey finds widespread support for more decision-making at the EU level in a range of EU policy areas. Close to three-quarters of Europeans support more decision-making at a European level for ensuring economic growth, and almost two out of three for tackling unemployment. In both cases, support is more widespread inside the euro-zone than outside it.

Furthermore, a third of Europeans believe that the establishment of an economic government would be most helpful for the future of Europe

– coming in third place after comparable living standards (mentioned by just above half of Europeans) and comparable educational standards (mentioned by close to four in ten).

Despite the gloomy situation, Europeans still say they are happy living in the EU and its Member States: just above three-quarters indicate that they are happy living in the EU and close to nine out of ten Europeans are happy living in their own country. In particular, the survey reveals that Europeans cherish the quality of life in the EU, which they believe is better than in Brazil, India, China, Japan and the US. Behind this EU average, however, lie significant variations between Member States – and in some countries the sentiment is markedly negative.



At the same time, views about the EU’s economic performance relative to other major economies (Brazil, China, India, Japan and the US) highlight the extent of public concern about the economic crisis: while the European economy is seen to be performing better than that of emerging economies like Brazil and India, the Chinese, Japanese and American economies are perceived to be doing better than Europe’s. This concern has grown in intensity since autumn 2009.

A full report on the “Future of Europe” Eurobarometer is published at http://ec.europa.eu/public_opinion/index_en.htm

5 Think Tank Twitter

Think Tank Twitter (TTT) aims to provide regular information and updates on what is produced by think tanks and research centres across Europe (and beyond) on EU policy issues. As an analogy to the original Twitter, each summary – or tweet – does not exceed 140 words, rather than characters. Those who wish to signal new publications for possible inclusion can send them to the email address bepa-think-tank-twitter@ec.europa.eu

For a Revival of Europe

In this commentary, Jacques Delors reminds the stranglehold in which the Economic and Monetary Union is caught. Not only is fiscal consolidation necessary to address this situation and boost growth and employment, but it is also imperative to restore confidence in Europe. The author looks at the international sources that have triggered the crisis in the Eurozone pointing to the absence of the completion of the EMU, which relies only on a monetary pillar rather than an economic one. He deplores the lack of coordination of economic policies in Europe and stresses the necessity to come back to the triptych: “competition, cooperation, and solidarity”. Finally, he holds that it is necessary to support the “Community method” and to better define the spheres of competences of the EU and its member states.

http://www.notre-europe.eu/uploads/tx_publication/SocialistEuropeanAlternative_J_Delors_NE_April2012.pdf

The European Union budget 2014-20: More boldness needed

The EU budget has always been the cause of bitter arguments. The negotiations for the new long-term budget framework that are under way in 2012 are likely to become even tougher, as they are taking place against the backdrop of fiscal austerity in most member states. The EU agriculture policy should be reformed substantially, in particular by putting an end to lump sum payments to big farmers. Such a reform would free up more resources for a simplified and greener regional policy as well as for more spending on research and development, measures to strengthen the EU’s external border controls to protect Schengen, cross-border infrastructure, as well as foreign and defence policy. The euro crisis makes it more pressing that the EU budget does more for growth.

http://www.cer.org.uk/sites/default/files/publications/attachments/pdf/2012/pb_budget_5april12-4897.pdf

Choosing Cooperation over Conflict: Russia and the Euro-Atlantic security order

With Putin once again taking the reins as Russia’s president, it can be expected that the country will become a difficult partner for the West over the coming years. It is necessary, however, that there be continued efforts with Russia in order to dampen the systemic conflict over political order. As long as the question of how the Euro-Atlantic security order can incorporate Russia remains unresolved, it is not possible to fully realise the amount of security policy cooperation with Moscow necessary to address current local and global security challenges. The Georgian war of 2008 emphatically demonstrated that this fragile relationship can worsen and take on crisis proportions as long as a stable system for cooperative security does not exist with Russia.

http://www.swp-berlin.org/fileadmin/contents/products/comments/2012C10_kle_rsv.pdf

European Economic Governance: The Union at a crossroads

The harshness of the economic and financial crisis has allowed the debate on economic governance to move forward. Even if measures have been taken, they are not sufficient to overcome the difficulties and tackle future challenges. Policymakers had not initially correctly assessed the magnitude of the crisis. They were wrong in their diagnosis and have striven to reduce the economic governance of the Eurozone to an increased budgetary surveillance. This paper highlights the failures of the intergovernmental method at the expense of a stronger commitment by the European Parliament. The author advocates for enhanced economic governance based in particular on the creation of a European Treasury and Eurobonds. She also calls for the renegotiation of the Treaty on Stability, Coordination and Governance to include growth-oriented policies.

<http://ifri.org/downloads/notecerfa94b.pdf>

An Assessment of the Commission's 2011 Schengen Governance Package: Preventing abuse by EU member states of freedom of movement?

The Schengen system has recently been at the centre of sharp controversy arising from attempts by several member state governments (such as Denmark and France) to challenge the right to the free movement of persons and the abolition of internal border checks. This paper examines the European Commission's response to the Schengen controversies, namely the Schengen Governance Package published in September 2011 and currently under negotiation in the Council and the European Parliament. It assesses the scope and added value of the Package's two new legislative proposals – a new Schengen evaluation mechanism and revised rules for restating internal border checks – by looking at the origins and features of the debate surrounding liberty of circulation in the Schengen area.

<http://www.ceps.eu/book/assessment-commission%E2%80%99s-2011-schengen-governance-package-preventing-abuse-eu-member-states-free>

The EU Strategic Partnerships Review: Ten guiding principles

The European Union needs to rethink its approach towards great and emerging powers in the multipolar era. The development of the concept of strategic partnerships was meant to address precisely this issue, but they still fail to deliver strategic results. As the EU is in the process of reviewing these partnerships, the author presents a list of ten principles that should guide this review exercise: strategic issues are central to strategic partnerships; strategic partnerships grow out of cooperation on concrete issues; summits are one part of the strategic partnerships process; strategic partnerships go beyond bilateral relations, are compatible with effective multilateralism, at odds with the regional approach and part of a broader strategic framework ; greater coordination is needed; the transatlantic partnership is a strategic asset; and the list of strategic partnerships is flexible.

http://www.egmontinstitute.be/papers/12/sec-gov/ESPO_PB_2_TenPrinciples_FINAL.pdf

Moldova Deserves More from the EU

In spite of chronic political instability, Moldova has made considerable political and economic progress over the past two and a half years. However, the popularity of the current government is lower than ever, and the country may face a third early parliamentary election within three years. Torn between the EU and Russia, Moldova (especially the young generation) is more attracted by the Union, because it will more likely bring long-term economic development. In line with its wish to join the EU, Moldova has conducted reforms, reinforced cooperation with the Union, and worked hard to implement EU conditions (e.g. for visa liberalisation). Despite these efforts, the EU is reluctant to continue enlargement. Yet, as promised, it should offer more support and closer integration for countries, such as Moldova, that undertake democratic reforms.

<http://www.fiiia.fi/en/publication/252/moldova-deserves-more-from-the-eu/>

The Case for Renewing Transatlantic Capitalism

The report underlines that only by joining forces can Europe and the United States most effectively respond to current economic challenges, reinvigorate economic growth and job creation and overcome the shortcomings of transatlantic capitalism. Accordingly, it provides policymakers on both sides of the Atlantic with a set of recommendations, including: organising an annual strategic economic dialogue involving officials from the US Federal Reserve, the European Central Bank, the US Treasury, finance ministers from EU member states and relevant officials from the European institutions. It also suggests resolving the remaining obstacles to a new comprehensive framework for financial regulation; and negotiating common rules for subsidies and the practices of state-owned enterprises – rules on inward investment and government procurement – to ensure the maintenance of genuine global market standards.

http://www.atlanticcapitalism.eu/resources/NAC_report_final_light.pdf

6 BEPA News

Evénements

Les 17 et 18 avril, le Groupe européen d'éthique se réunissait pour la 13^{ème} fois à Bruxelles. Le Groupe a accueilli deux experts qui ont fait des présentations sur le thème de l'énergie. Les présentations sont disponibles sur le website du BEPA: http://ec.europa.eu/bepa/european-group-ethics/docs/pdf/furfari_ege_hearing_170412.pdf) et http://ec.europa.eu/bepa/european-group-ethics/docs/pdf/the_energy_issue_in_europe_p_colona.pdf).

Le 23 avril, le BEPA a organisé conjointement avec l'Association européenne de la pensée libre un colloque sur le thème : « Un partenariat pour la démocratie et une prospérité partagée : une volonté commune de promouvoir les droits et libertés démocratiques dans les pays du sud de la Méditerranée ». Ce colloque se tenait dans le cadre du dialogue de la Commission avec des organisations philosophiques ou non confessionnelles (Article 17, TFUE).

L'audience était principalement composée de membres de l'AEPL et de personnel de la Commission européenne (BEPA, DEVCO) ainsi que du SEAE. Jean-Claude Thébaud, le directeur général du BEPA, a notamment rappelé à cette occasion l'engagement et l'action de la Commission européenne vis-à-vis des pays du Printemps Arabe. Le professeur Abdelaziz Kacem est quant à lui venu témoigner de son ressenti un an après le soulèvement de son pays la Tunisie. Christian Jouret du SAEF et Andrew Jacobs de la Commission ont pour leur part expliqué les mesures mises en œuvre par l'UE depuis un an au Moyen Orient et en Afrique du nord, dans le contexte de la politique européenne de voisinage.

Le 24 avril s'est tenu le séminaire « Multipolarité et son impact sur l'Union européenne : Intégration ou désintégration ? » organisé par l'Institut d'Etudes Européennes de l'ULB et FRIDE, en collaboration avec la DG Recherche et Innovation et le BEPA. Cet événement a permis à des experts, des décideurs politiques et

des universitaires d'échanger leurs vues sur la multipolarité, l'émergence de nouveaux acteurs sur la scène internationale, et les conséquences que cela entraînait pour l'Union européenne en termes de cohésion et d'intégration.

Le 25 avril s'est déroulé un atelier sur le populisme, organisé par le BEPA en coopération avec les think tanks Open Society Institute de Bruxelles et Stiftung Wissenschaft und Politik de Berlin. Les discussions ont porté sur les facteurs d'évolution du populisme en Europe et sur la manière dont devrait être abordée ce phénomène. Une séance inaugurale consacrée à une analyse comparative du "populisme" en Europe était suivie d'un déjeuner de discussion libre en présence des services du Président. Le Vice-Président en charge des affaires économiques et financières Olli Rehn a participé à une table ronde dans l'après midi qui portait sur les réponses possibles au phénomène du populisme. Des représentants de la Commission et des experts travaillant dans des think tanks ou issus du monde universitaire ont participé au débat.

Activité à venir

Le BEPA organisera le 7 mai en collaboration avec l'unité de planification politique du Secrétariat général de l'OTAN un déjeuner portant sur "L'Union européenne, l'OTAN et la montée en puissance de l'Asie". Cet événement sera l'occasion pour des représentants de la Commission européenne, du Service européen pour l'action extérieure et de l'OTAN d'échanger leurs vues sur le thème.

Un séminaire consacré aux relations entre l'UE et la Russie se déroulera le 21 mai, en collaboration avec le centre moscovite de Carnegie Endowment. Ce séminaire réunira notamment la spécialiste de la Russie Hélène Carrère d'Encausse ainsi qu'une vingtaine d'experts russes. Ce séminaire permettra de faire le point sur la situation en Russie après les élections présidentielles, ainsi que sur les questions de sécurité, d'énergie, de commerce et de voisinage.