



AFCO

FACT SHEET

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Committee on Constitutional Affairs (AFCO)

The question of the rise of nationalism and how to secure future involvement of member states in the EU.

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Introduction to the topic

A rise in support for nationalist parties and groups has been seen all over Europe. The parties have gained political influence as well as the support of the Europeans. The rise of nationalism amongst European countries poses an immense threat to international cooperation. The nationalist movements promote an isolationist foreign policy as well as an anti-EU stance. Given the considerable sway that parties and movements wield, there's apprehension about their potential impact on the EU's future and its efficacy as a supranational entity. The AFCO committee is tasked with finding solutions on how to secure future involvement of member states in the EU taking into account the rise of nationalism all over Europe. This fact sheet will provide you with information that can give you an overview of the situation. Though we also encourage to search broader information and facts on this subject. We recommend platforms such as [statista.com](https://www.statista.com).



Vocabulary

In today's world, political discourse is often clouded by ambiguity and differing perspectives. By aligning our understanding of terms such as nationalism, populism, and sovereignty, we can ensure that our discussions are grounded in shared definitions, thus minimizing misunderstandings, and fostering more meaningful exchanges. Under you will find key terms with definitions together with explanations.

Term	Definition	Example
Nationalism	A political ideology characterized by an individual's strong attachment to their nation, often manifesting as pride in national identity and a desire for self-governance or independence.	The rise of nationalism in Europe has led to increased scrutiny of supranational institutions like the European Union.
Populism	A political approach that seeks to appeal to the concerns and interests of ordinary people, often by criticizing elites and advocating for policies perceived to benefit the common citizen.	Populist movements have gained traction in recent years by capitalizing on economic anxieties and cultural grievances.



<p>Authoritarian Bureaucracy</p>	<p>A system of governance characterized by centralized authority, limited political freedoms, and a bureaucratic apparatus that exercises control over societal functions.</p>	<p>Some critics argue that certain aspects of the European Union exhibit tendencies toward authoritarian bureaucracy, citing concerns over democratic deficit and lack of transparency.</p>
<p>Supranationalism</p>	<p>A form of international cooperation in which sovereign states voluntarily cede some of their powers to a higher authority, typically a supranational organization such as the European Union.</p>	<p>The European Union represents a pioneering example of supranationalism, where member states pool their sovereignty to achieve common goals such as economic integration and peacekeeping.</p>
<p>Sovereignty</p>	<p>The supreme authority of a state to govern itself and make decisions within its territorial borders without external interference.</p>	<p>Debates over sovereignty have been central to discussions surrounding the future involvement of member states in the European Union, with some advocating for greater national autonomy.</p>
<p>Integration</p>	<p>The process of bringing together separate entities or components into a unified whole, often used in the context of political, economic, or social cooperation.</p>	<p>The European project aims to promote integration among member states through initiatives such as the Schengen Area and the Eurozone.</p>



Euroscepticism	Scepticism or opposition towards the European Union and its policies, often rooted in concerns over loss of national sovereignty, democratic accountability, or economic implications.	Eurosceptic parties have gained electoral support in several member states, challenging the EU's legitimacy, and calling for reforms or even withdrawal
Multilateralism	The principle of coordinating and engaging in international relations and diplomacy through cooperation among multiple states or actors, often contrasted with unilateral or bilateral approaches.	Many advocate for a multilateral approach to address global challenges such as climate change and terrorism, emphasizing the importance of collective action and shared responsibilities.

1. The rise of nationalism in Europe

Our information stems from various sources including news outlets, and we urge our delegates to acknowledge the possibility of bias in their consideration.

Nationalism has long had a [presence in the European political landscape](#). However a recent boom in voter support towards nationalist and populist radical parties have emerged.

It is visible from Germany, where the Alternative for Germany (AfD) has become the biggest opposition party in the Bundestag, and Spain, where Vox has become the third largest force in parliament.

In part, voters are frustrated with the political establishment, but they also have concerns about globalisation, immigration, a dilution of national identity and the European Union.

In the European Parliament, nine far-right parties have formed a new bloc called Identity and Democracy (ID).

Rise of nationalism in Europe

% of votes won by nationalist party in most recent national elections

1-8 9-16 17-24 25+



In many countries nationalists got higher scores in European Parliament elections and opinion polls

- | | |
|--|--|
| ① Hungary
Fidesz 49% Jobbik 19% | ⑪ France
National Rally 13% |
| ② Austria
Freedom Party 26% | ⑫ Netherlands
Freedom Party 13% |
| ③ Switzerland
Swiss People's Party 25.8% | ⑬ Germany
Alternative for Germany 12.6% |
| ④ Denmark
Danish People's Party 21% | ⑭ Czech Republic
Freedom & Direct Democracy 11% |
| ⑤ Belgium
New Flemish Alliance 20.4% | ⑮ Bulgaria
United Patriots 9% |
| ⑥ Estonia
Conservative People's Party 17.8% | ⑯ Slovakia
Our Slovakia 8% |
| ⑦ Finland
The Finns 17.7% | ⑰ Poland
Confederation 6.8% |
| ⑧ Sweden
Sweden Democrats 17.6% | ⑱ Greece
Greek Solution 3.7% |
| ⑨ Italy
The League 17.4% | ⑲ Cyprus
ELAM 3.7% |
| ⑩ Spain
Vox 15% | |

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1.1 Countries within the EU

Germany

In 2017, the far-right Alternative for Germany (AfD) made its inaugural entry into the federal parliament, [securing 12.6% of the vote](#) and positioning itself as Germany's largest opposition party. The AfD's stronghold lies in the former communist regions of eastern Germany, where its supporters fervently echo the rallying cry of "Wir sind das Volk!" (We are the People), reminiscent of the emotive slogan from the anti-communist protests of 1989.

Spain

In Spain, the far right nationalist movement has risen in the form of the party VOX. In the 2019 and 2023 VOX came out as the third largest party in Spain. VOX styles itself as



defending the unity of the Spanish state, with a promise to deport illegal immigrants and repeal laws against gender violence. It has made major gains by calling for a suspension of autonomy for the north-eastern Catalonia region, after separatists failed in their push for independence in [October 2017](#).

Austria

In 2017, the Freedom Party (FPÖ) became the sole far-right party in power in Western Europe, forming a coalition with conservative Chancellor Sebastian Kurz. This disrupted the longstanding dominance of the People's Party and the Social Democrats in Austrian politics. Like in Germany, the migrant crisis of 2015 played a significant role in the FPÖ's rise, an issue they had campaigned on extensively.

France

Despite being defeated by Emmanuel Macron for the presidency in 2017 and 2022, Marine Le Pen still continues to have a massive impact on the far right political landscape in France. She has found a common voice in the EU with other nationalist and far-right parties on topics such as immigration.

Sweden

The nationalist far-right party [Sweden Democrats \(SD\)](#) has managed to become the second largest party in Sweden. Like many other nationalist parties they have a critical tone towards multiculturalism and globalism and also oppose to immigration.

Estonia

In 2015, Estonia's far-right Conservative People's Party of Estonia (EKRE) secured its first parliamentary seats. Fast forward four years, and EKRE had more than doubled its vote share to nearly 18%, becoming the third-largest party. Leveraging this influence, it joined forces with the Centre and Pro Patria parties.

Poland

The far-right Confederation party got 6.8% of the vote in Poland's 2019 general election. The party is strong on social welfare, as well as nationalism, making it rather different from many other right-wing parties in Europe.



Hungary

In 2022 Victor Orban secured his fourth term in office. Orban has long presented himself as the defender of Hungary and Europe against Muslim migrants, once warning of the threat of "a Europe with a mixed population and no sense of identity".

Slovenia

Although it fell a long way short of a majority, the [anti-immigrant Slovenian Democratic Party \(SDS\) was the largest party in this year's general election.](#)

The party is led by former Prime Minister Janez Jansa, a supporter of Hungary's Viktor Orban. He has said he wants Slovenia to "become a country that will put the wellbeing and security of Slovenians first".

With that far right nationalists seem to be gaining more influence after every election.



2. How nationalism affects international cooperation.

The nationalist far-right agenda poses a significant threat to international cooperation, particularly within the European Union (EU). With a focus on [prioritizing national interests over collective endeavors](#), these parties often advocate for policies that undermine the principles of unity and solidarity upon which the EU was founded.

In France Le Pen stands for a militant assertion of national sovereignty — vowing at a rally last month to [wrest back powers](#) from an “intrusive and authoritarian” bureaucracy in Brussels — that appears incompatible with the way the EU works.

Far-right nationalism presents a challenge to cooperation [because its agenda diverges from that of the EU regarding international cross-border collaboration](#). Moreover, its anti-EU stance complicates cooperation in Brussels when a significant number of parties doubt the EU's existence and relevance

In countries like Italy, we observe how nationalism can operate alongside the EU. Meloni has [withdrawn Italy from China's Belt and Road Initiative](#), ensuring stability in Italy's relations with the EU. Additionally, Italy portrays itself as a pro-Ukrainian nation, advocating for its self-defense against Russia.

In countries such as Germany, Leader Weidel has proposed that [Brexit could serve as a model for Germany](#) as well. It would be disastrous for the EU if the largest economy withdrew from cooperation. If additional countries also embrace this, the EU will not retain its current level of authority.



3. Depleting involvement of member states in the EU.

The future involvement of member states in the European Union (EU) stands at a crossroads, shaped by various factors, including rising nationalist sentiments, evolving geopolitical dynamics, and shifting public perceptions of EU integration. Recent trends indicate a concerning decline in involvement, marked by challenges posed by nationalist movements within member states.

How the nationalist parties are gaining power and moving away from the European Union

Policy Positions:

Nationalist parties often adopt policy positions that directly challenge many key aspects of EU integration. This can include migration policy changes that several member states have pushed for stricter immigration controls and changes. For example, the rise of nationalist parties like the Fidesz party in Hungary has led [to the adoption of tougher immigration policies at national level](#), including border controls and restrictions on refugee resettlement quotas mandated by the EU.

In 2018, Hungary adopted a controversial package of laws called [Stop Soros](#), named after Hungarian-American billionaire George Soros, which criminalized assistance to undocumented migrants and imposed restrictions on asylum seekers.

Austria has adopted stricter immigration policies, particularly in response to the [migrant crisis and the rise of right-wing populist parties like the Freedom Party of Austria \(FPÖ\)](#). The government has implemented measures to limit asylum applications, tighten border controls, and crack down on illegal immigration, reflecting a more restrictive approach to migration management.

By understanding the dynamics at play and charting a path forward, the EU can strive towards fostering greater cohesion, resilience, and unity among its member states in the years to come.

Euroseptic Rhetoric:



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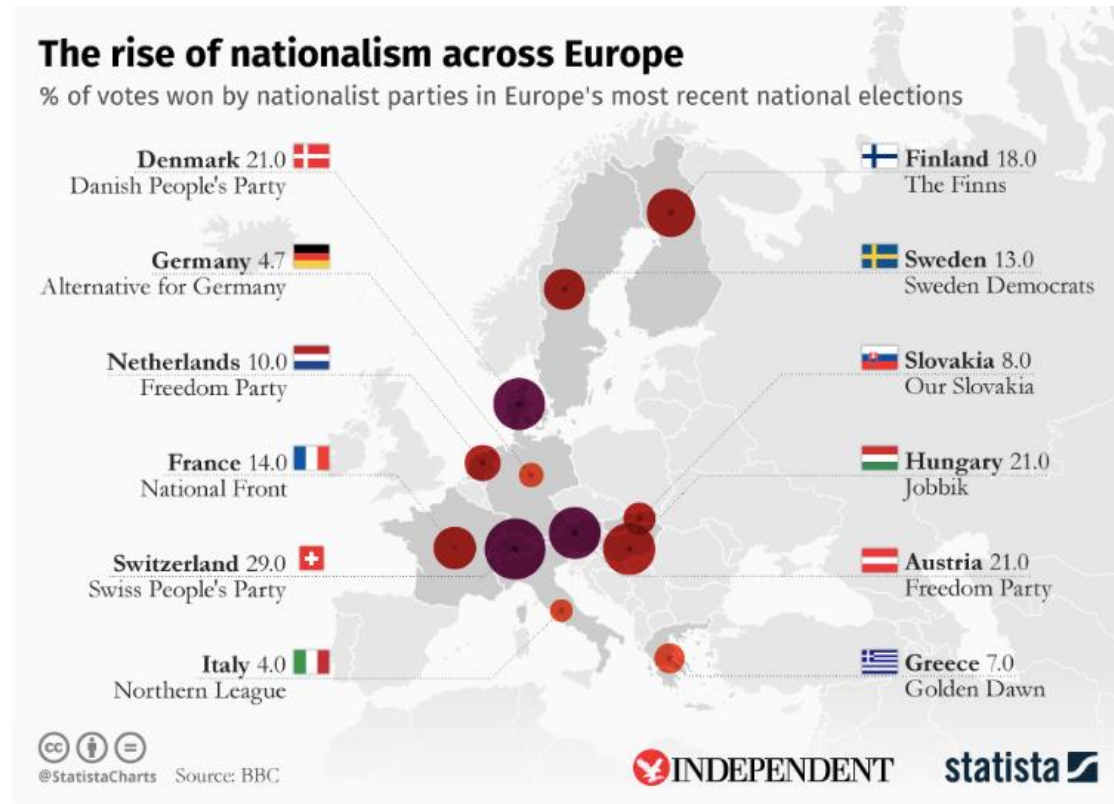
Nationalist parties frequently employ Eurosceptic rhetoric to criticize the EU and its institutions. They highlight perceived shortcomings of EU policies and institutions, emphasizing issues such as loss of sovereignty, lack of democratic accountability, and unequal distribution of benefits among member states.

The National Rally, led by Marine Le Pen, has long been critical of the European Union and its policies. The party emphasizes the loss of national sovereignty to Brussels and argues that [EU membership undermines French interests and identity](#). National Rally frequently highlights issues such as immigration, economic inequality, and the perceived democratic deficit within EU institutions.

[Alternative for Germany is a right-wing populist party that has emerged as a significant critic of the European Union](#). AfD has denounced what it perceives as Brussels' interference in German affairs and advocates for a renegotiation of Germany's relationship with the EU. The party opposes further European integration and supports the idea of a Europe of sovereign nation-states.

4. Navigating nationalism, and fostering cohesion in the EU.

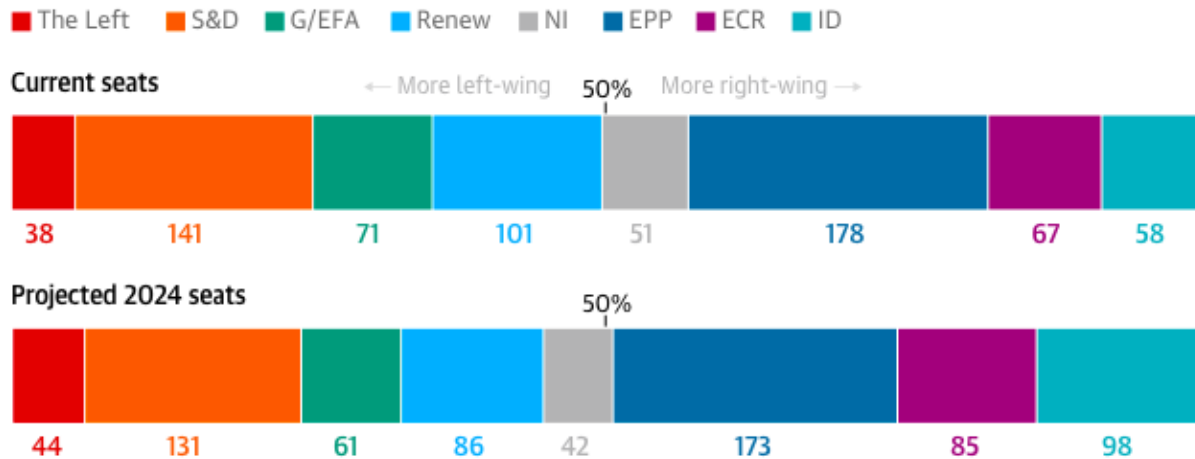
Analyzing recent election results reveals a notable surge in nationalist parties across EU member states.



In the context of Europe's nationalist surge, a prognosis for the upcoming election indicates a continuation of this trend, suggesting that nationalist parties will maintain dominance in the 2024 elections. This shift to the right could disrupt EU priorities like climate action, according to polling and analysis. Radical right parties are projected to lead in several countries, possibly forming a majority coalition.



Right-wing groups are forecast to be the largest bloc in the EU parliament after next election



Guardian graphic. Source: European Council on Foreign Relations. Note: S&D = Progressive Alliance of Socialists and Democrats, G/EFA = Greens/European Free Alliance, Renew = Renew Europe, NI = Non-Inscrits, EPP = European People's party, ECR = European Conservatives and Reformists, ID = Identity and Democracy

To be able to address nationalism there has to be acknowledgment of the challenges and obstacles ongoing and yet to come.

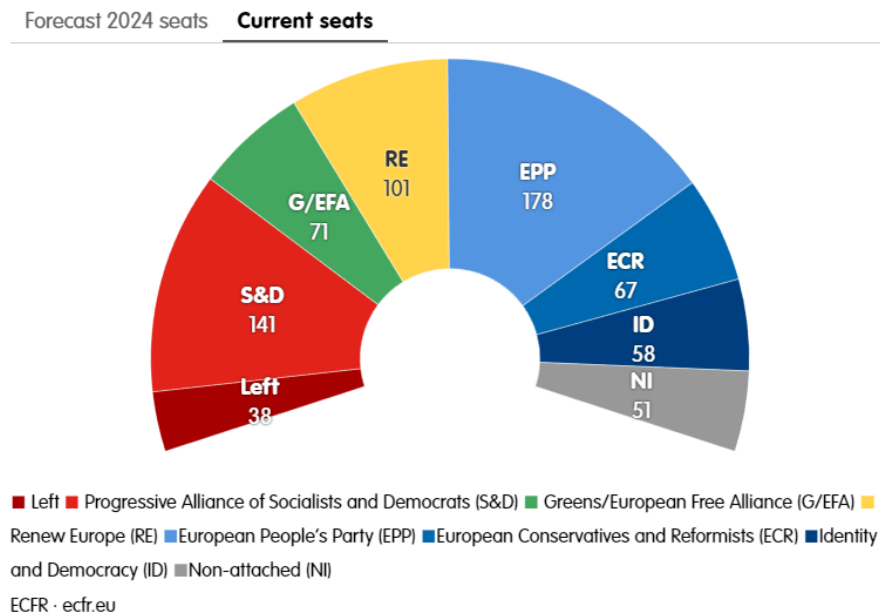
Challenges to Cohesion:

Ongoing nationalist movements in some EU member states prioritize national interests over collective action and solidarity, potentially leading to tensions within the EU.

Geopolitical tensions, both within Europe and with external actors, can strain unity among member states and impede progress on common objectives.

External factors such as the COVID-19 pandemic, economic downturns, and global migration trends have significant implications for EU cohesion, requiring coordinated responses from member states and EU institutions.

Figure 1: Projected make-up of the European Parliament



On occasion, nationalism and emphatic language can also function as a tool to garner popularity. It's frequently observed that when these radical parties come into power, their rhetoric and political agenda tend to adopt a more diplomatic tone.

EU ENLARGEMENT

Expanding the EU could serve as another strategy to counter the emergence of anti-EU movements. Within the EU, there has been significant talk about expansion. There are currently ten so-called [candidate countries](#): Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Georgia, Moldova, Montenegro, North Macedonia, Serbia, Türkiye, Ukraine and possibly Kosovo. Many of these nations are former Soviet countries, and their inclusion could not only enhance trade within the EU but also serve as a response to Russia and China's global influence. Amid the rise of neocolonialism in Asia and Africa, EU enlargement could be a means to promote values such as human rights and democracy, countering autocracy. In terms of sprouting nationalism the enlargement of the EU presents a strategic opportunity to counteract the rise of nationalism within its borders. By welcoming new member states, particularly those from regions with histories of nationalist sentiments, the EU can foster a sense of inclusivity and solidarity among diverse populations. The accession process often requires candidate countries to [adopt EU norms and values, promoting democratic governance, respect for human rights, and multiculturalism](#). Additionally, the economic integration that comes with



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enlargement can diminish economic grievances often exploited by nationalist movements. Moreover, the EU's expanded influence on the global stage, through the inclusion of new member states, strengthens its position as a beacon of cooperation and stability, providing a compelling alternative to nationalist ideologies.

