



The radical right in the European Parliament

Impact on development policy

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Abstract

In May 2014, European Parliament elections will be held across Europe. There is a growing awareness that the next European Parliament may contain a large contingent of anti-Europe radical right parties. At the domestic level, the reality is that 21 out of the 28 EU member states have a radical right party in their political system but only in nine countries have those parties gained in popularity since 2005. Nevertheless, at the European level, radical right parties could see an almost 50% increase in their number of seats. This increase could result in a stronger influence over European decision-making, with implications for reduced aid budgets, aid tied to national interests and potentially a threat to the EU aid programme.

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Abbreviations

ALDE	Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe
ECR	European Conservatives and Reformists
EFD	Europe of Freedom and Democracy
EP	European Parliament
EPP	European People's Party
EU	European Union
FN	Front National
FPÖ	Freedom Party of Austria
Greens/EFA	Greens/ European Free Alliance
GUE-NGL	European United Left - Nordic Green Left
MEP	Member of European Parliament
NA	Non-Associated
PVV	Party for Freedom
S&D	Progressive Alliance of Socialists and Democrats
UK	United Kingdom
UKIP	UK Independence Party

Introduction

European parliamentary elections will take place from 22 to 25 May 2014. There is a growing awareness that the next European Parliament (EP) may contain a large contingent of anti-Europe radical right parties, which could have significant consequences for future European Union (EU) legislation. In an interview published by *The Guardian* in October 2013, the former Prime Minister of Italy, Enrico Letta, warned that if radical right parties win more than 25% of the seats, we run ‘the risk of having the most anti-European European Parliament in history’ (*The Guardian*, 2013). In the United Kingdom (UK), the UK Independence Party (UKIP) achieved unprecedented results in the latest council elections across England, with an average of 25% of votes in the wards it was represented. In France, poll ratings published by *Le Nouvel Economiste* in March 2014 placed the Front National (FN) in second place in the run up to the European Parliament elections, with 21% of the votes -- just behind the centre-right party.

This paper analyses the extent to which there has been a rise in radical right parties at a European level, as well as the role and influence of those parties in the European Parliament, in order to determine their impact on EU development policy-making. It concludes with a set of risks to EU development cooperation should a stronger wave of radical right parliamentarians enter the EP after the elections next spring.

Although radical right parties are not a homogeneous group across the EU, they portray a series of common characteristics: they are (i) populist because of their condemnation of a ‘corrupt elite’, (ii) radical for the ‘outsider’ challenge they pose to the political mainstream parties, and (iii) of the right due to their social conservatism and anti-immigration stance (Morris, 2013; Mudde, 2013). They are also characterised by their Euroscepticism.

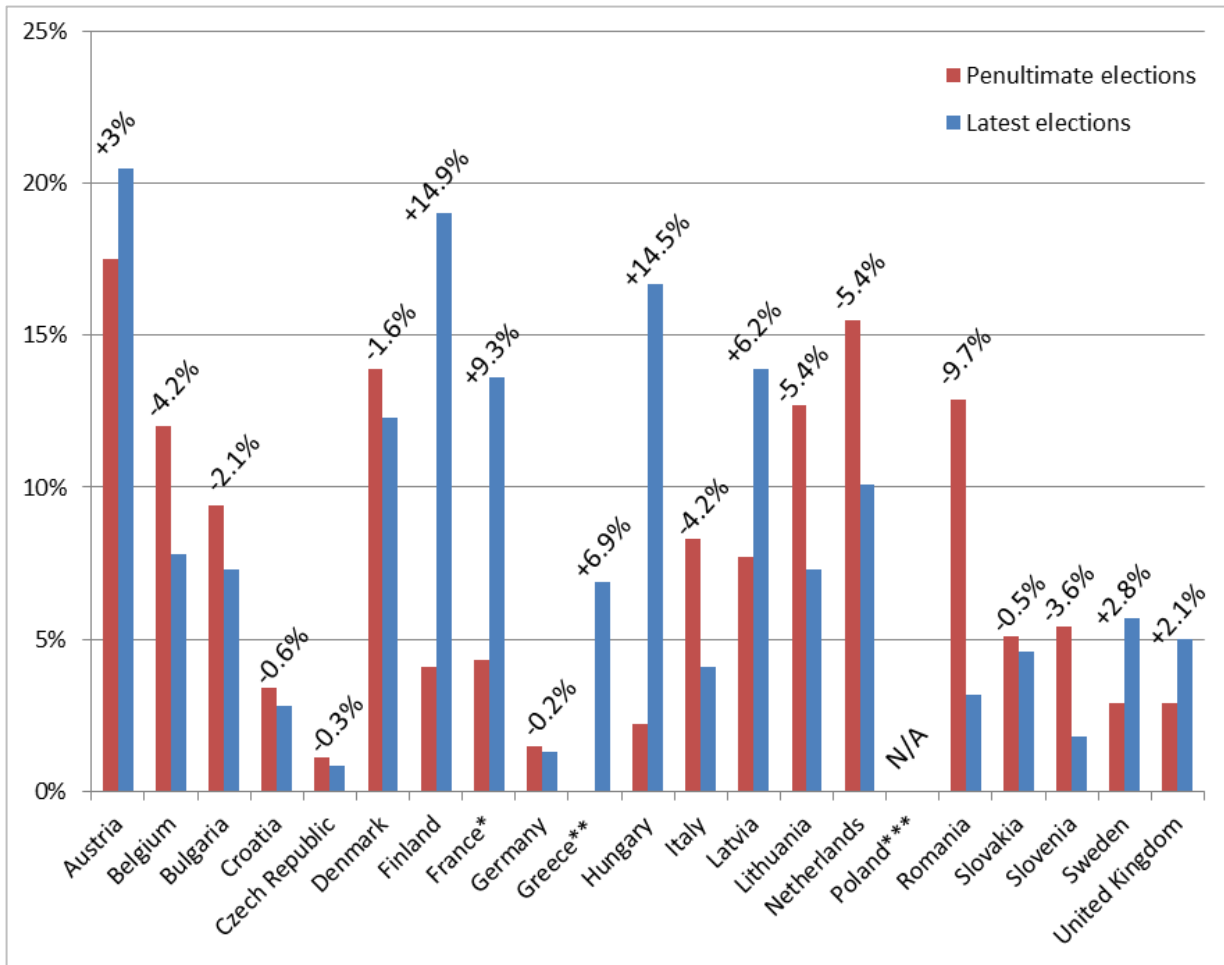
1 How do radical right parties fare in national elections?

The results presented in Table 1 and Figure 1¹ show that 21 of the 28 EU member states have radical right parties present in their political systems. Although the seven without represent a quarter of the EU member states, their combined population amounts to only 17% of the EU population. They include Cyprus, Ireland, Portugal and Spain -- four of the five countries bailed-out during the economic crisis.

Electoral results in the 21 countries with radical right parties have been uneven over the past decade. Between 2005 and 2013, radical right parties have seen an increase in their electoral results in nine countries, while their popularity declined in the other 12 (see Figure 1). In the former group, five countries experienced an increase of more than 5%: Finland (+14.9%), France (+9.3%), Greece (+6.9%), Hungary (+14.5%) and Latvia (+6.2%). Conversely, radical right parties' support decreased by around 5% in four countries: Belgium (-4.2%), Italy (-4.2%), Lithuania (-5.4%) and the Netherlands (-5.4%).

¹ The figures mentioned in this section are extracted from Table 1 and Figure 1; the relevant references can be found under the table and figure.

Figure 1: Share of radical right votes in the last two legislative elections and differences in percentage points (2005-2013)



Source: Author's compilation based on national parliamentary election results. Only the votes with direct universal suffrages were taken into account (so usually lower chambers in countries that have a bicameral system). Available at: <http://electionresources.org/>, <http://www.parties-and-elections.eu/countries.html> and <http://www.volby.cz/>.

* Results from the first round of votes for the National Assembly.

** These results are for the June 2012 and October 2009 elections.

*** United Poland was born in 2011 when 17 MPs broke away from the second main political party (PiS) after the elections. They have not yet run for elections under the colours of this new party.

Note: The radical right parties considered in this figure are the following: *Austria*: FPÖ; *Belgium*: Vlaams Belang; *Bulgaria*: Attack party; *Croatia*: Croatian Party of Rights (HSP); *Czech Republic*: Workers' Party of Social Justice (DSSS); *Denmark*: Danish People's Party (DPP); *Finland*: Finns party (formerly known as True Finns); *France*: Front National (FN); *Germany*: NPD; *Greece*: Golden Dawn; *Hungary*: Jobbik; *Italy*: Lega Nord; *Latvia*: National Alliance; *Lithuania*: Order and Justice; *Netherlands*: PVV; *Poland*: United Poland; *Romania*: Partidul România Mare (PRM); *Slovakia*: Slovak National Party; *Slovenia*: Slovenian National Party; *Sweden*: Sweden Democrats; *United Kingdom*: UKIP and BNP. Cyprus, Estonia, Ireland, Luxembourg, Malta, Portugal and Spain are not represented in this figure as they either have no radical right or they are very marginal.

Radical right parties have only managed to obtain directly elected parliamentary seats in 14 member states in the latest domestic legislative elections. Figure 1 and Table 1 show that radical right parties in Austria, Finland and Hungary received

between 15 and 20% of the votes in recent national legislative elections. In Denmark, France, Latvia and the Netherlands, they received over 10% of the votes. The parties doing well in those countries are also among the radical right parties expected to see an increase in their number of Members of the European Parliament (MEPs) in the next EP elections.

Table 1: Electoral results of radical right parties in domestic legislative elections (2005-2013)

EU Member States	Number of seats won in Parliament in last elections ¹	Difference in number of seats won in Parliament since prior election ²	Share of votes in latest national elections ³	Share of votes in prior national elections ⁴	Difference	Evolution in representation in national Parliament	Share of EU population ⁵
EU 28							100%
Austria	40	+6	20.5%	17.5%	3.0%	↗	1.65%
Belgium	12	-5	7.8%	12.0%	-4.2%	↘	2.12%
Bulgaria	23	+2	7.3%	9.4%	-2.1%	↘	1.51%
Croatia	0	-1	2.8%	3.4%	-0.6%	↘	0.87%
Cyprus	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	0	0.16%
Czech Republic	0	0	0.9%	1.1%	-0.3%	↘	2.08%
Denmark	22	-3	12.3%	13.9%	-1.6%	↘	1.09%
Estonia	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	0	0.26%
Finland	39	+34	19.0%	4.1%	14.9%	↗	1.05%
France	2	+2	13.6%*	4.3%*	9.3%	↗	12.77%
Germany	n/a	n/a	1.3%	1.5%	-0.2%	↘	16.28%
Greece	18	+18	6.9%**	0.0%**	6.9%	↗	2.22%
Hungary	47	+47	16.7%	2.2%	14.5%	↗	1.99%
Ireland	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	0	0.89%
Italy	17 / 18***	-8 / -42***	4.1%	8.3%	-4.2%	↘	11.91%
Latvia	14	6	13.9%	7.7%	6.2%	↗	0.46%

Lithuania	11	-4	7.3%	12.7%	-5.4%	↘	0.66%
Luxembourg	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	0	0.10%
Malta	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	0	0.08%
Netherlands	15	-9	10.1%	15.5%	-5.4%	↘	3.26%
Poland	17****	+17****	n/a	n/a	n/a	↗	7.57%
Portugal	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	0	2.10%
Romania	0	0	1.24%	3.2%	-1.96%	↘	4.27%
Slovakia	0	-9	4.6%	5.1%	-0.5%	↘	1.07%
Slovenia	0	-5	1.8%	5.4%	-3.6%	↘	0.40%
Spain	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	0	9.09%
Sweden	20	+20	5.7%	2.9%	2.8%	↗	1.83%
United Kingdom	0	0	5.0%	2.9%	2.1%	↗	12.25%

Source: Author's compilation based on European data and national election results.

^{1, 2, 3, 4} National Parliamentary electoral results based on direct universal suffrages (so usually lower chambers in countries that have a bicameral system). Sources: <http://electionresources.org/>, <http://www.parties-and-elections.eu/countries.html> and <http://www.volby.cz/>.

⁵ European Union population data: http://europa.eu/about-eu/countries/member-countries/index_en.htm.

↗ = rise in national elections; ↘ = decline in national elections and 0 = no radical right party or very marginal.

* Turn out in the first round.

** Comparison between the June 2012 elections and the October 2009 elections.

*** Both chambers are universally elected in Italy, the first figure represents the Senate and the second represents the Chamber of deputies.

**** United Poland was created in 2011 when 17 MPs broke away from the second main political party (PiS) after the elections. They have not yet run for elections under the colours of this new party.

Note: The radical right parties considered in this table are the same as in Figure 1.

Although radical right parties have had inconsistent results over the years, they have managed to convey the sense of a rising movement that is gaining in support and strength across Europe. Overall, the parties on the rise saw their electoral results increase faster than those who experienced a decrease. Thus, on average, there has been a rise in the popularity of radical right parties at a European level.

2 Who represents the radical right in the European Parliament?

The current European Parliament is composed of 764 MEPs from 28 countries. There are eight political groups plus a group of non-associated MEPs. MEPs belonging to European radical right parties broadly fall into two groups: the Europe of Freedom and Democracy Group (EFD) or the group of non-associated MEPs (Mudde, 2007).

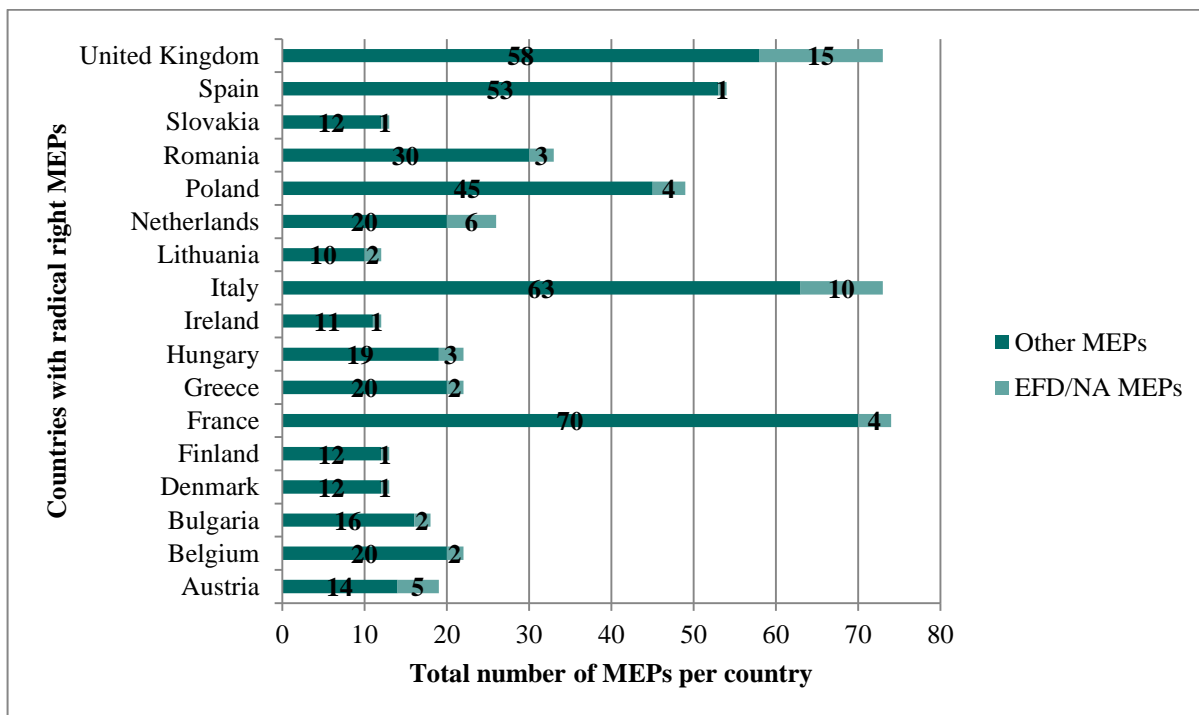
The EP comprises 63 radical right MEPs: 31 in the EFD group and 32 non-associated MEPs. They are the two smallest groups in the EP. (Table 2 provides an overview of the EP political groups' sizes.) Together, the EFD and the non-associated represent slightly more than 8% of the entire assembly. More than half of the MEPs in these two groups come from just four countries: the UK (24%), Italy (16%), the Netherlands (10%) and Austria (8%). Of the 28 member states represented in Parliament, 17 have MEPs belonging to the EFD and non-associated groups: they are for the most part from the radical right, with the exception of a few non-associated MEPs. Figure 2 illustrates the distribution of those MEPs in the 17 member states.

Table 2: Size of political groups in the EP

Political groups	Number of MEPs
European People's Party (EPP)	274
Progressive Alliance of Socialists and Democrats (S&D)	195
Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe (ALDE)	84
Greens/ European Free Alliance (Greens/EFA)	58
European Conservatives and Reformists (ECR)	57
Group of the European United Left - Nordic Green Left (GUE/NGL)	35
Europe of freedom and democracy (EFD)	31
Non-associated (NA)	32

Source: *European Parliament list of MEPs (21.03.2014)*

Figure 2: Distribution of radical right MEPs per member state



Source: Author, based on European Parliament list of MEPs.

The EFD brings together members from parties like the Italian *Lega Nord*, the Polish *Solidarna Polska* or the British UKIP. In its statute, the EFD group describes itself as ‘favour[ing] [...] cooperation among sovereign European States and reject[ing] the bureaucratisation of Europe and the creation of a single centralised European superstate’. It positions itself against ‘further European integration (treaties and policies)’ and calls for the right of European peoples and nations ‘to protect their borders and strengthen their own historical, traditional, religious and cultural values’ (EFD, 2009). Specific reference is made to rejecting xenophobia, anti-Semitism and any other form of discrimination. The defining features of this group are nationalism, anti-European integration convictions and the maintaining of strong borders against migration. Over the EP’s 2009-2014 term, the group has seen defections to both the non-associated and the European Conservatives and Reformists Group (ECR). It has also welcomed newcomers, so their numbers have remained the same. In relative terms, however, the EFD has shrunk slightly as a result of the increase in the number of MEPs when Croatia joined the EU.

As opposed to the EFD, the non-associated MEPs are not a unified political group, but rather a set of MEPs that do not belong to any of the established political groups, either because they have not managed to create or join a political group, or because of differences in opinion. The number of non-associated MEPs grew by four seats since the current Parliament was elected in 2009.

Radical right parties tend to do better in European elections than in national elections as illustrated in Table 3. From a total of 18 countries where radical right parties competed in both national and European elections around the time of the previous EP elections in 2009, 11 saw the radical right secure a larger share of the votes at the European level. The UK (+19.2%), Hungary (+12.6%), the Netherlands (+11.1%) and Finland (+5.8%) show the largest differences with domestic results.

Table 3: Comparison of electoral results in national and European legislative elections

EU Member States	Number of seats won in national Parliament in last elections prior to June 2009 ¹	Number of seats won in European Parliament elections in 2009 ²	Share of votes won in national elections prior to June 2009 ³	Share of votes won in European Parliament elections in 2009 ⁴
EU 28				
Austria	34	2	17.5%	12.7%
Belgium	17	2	12%	9.9%
Bulgaria	21	2	8.1%	12%
Croatia ⁵	0	0	2.8%	1.39%
Cyprus	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
Czech Republic	0	0	0%	1.07%
Denmark	25	2	13.8%	14.8%
Estonia	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
Finland	5	1	4.05%	9.8%
France	0	3	4.3%*	6.3%
Germany	0	n/a	1.6%	n/a
Greece	0	0	0%	0.5%
Hungary	0	3	2.2%	14.8%
Ireland	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
Italy	26 / 60*	9	8.3%	10.2%
Latvia ⁶	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
Lithuania	15	2	12.7%	12.2%
Luxembourg	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a

Malta	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
Netherlands	9	4	5.9%	17%
Poland ⁷	n/a	4	n/a	n/a
Portugal	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
Romania	0	3	3.2%	8.65%
Slovakia	20	1	11.7%	5.6%
Slovenia	5	0	5.4%	2.9%
Spain	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
Sweden	0	0	2.9%	3.3%
United Kingdom	0	15	2.9%	22.1%

Source: Author's compilation based on European data and national election results.

^{1, 3} National Parliamentary electoral results based on direct universal suffrages (so usually lower chambers in countries that have a bicameral system). Sources: <http://electionresources.org/>, <http://www.parties-and-elections.eu/countries.html>, <http://www.volby.cz/>.

^{2, 4} European elections results by national party. Sources: [http://www.europarl.europa.eu/aboutparliament/en/00082fcd21/Results-by-country-\(2009\).html](http://www.europarl.europa.eu/aboutparliament/en/00082fcd21/Results-by-country-(2009).html) and <http://www.wikipedia.org>.

⁵ Croatian elections were held in 2013.

⁶ This is not applicable as the National Alliance party was only created in 2010.

⁷ This is not applicable as the United Poland party was only created in 2012.

* The first figure represents the number of seats won in the Senate and the second number represents the number of seats won in the Chamber of deputies.

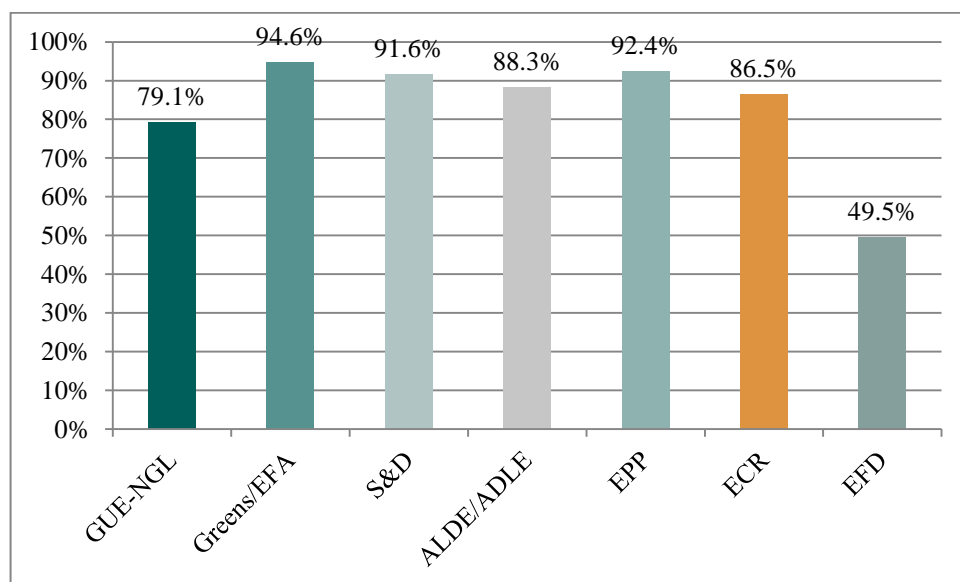
Note: The radical right parties considered in this table are the same as in Figure 1.

3 What influence do radical right parties have in the European Parliament?

Voting results show that MEPs from the EFD and the non-associated groups have had little influence on legislation. There are several reasons for this, including a lack of cohesion and poor organisation.

The EFD hosts a broad diversity of MEPs with wide-ranging political convictions, limiting its ability to influence decisions in Parliament (Morris, 2013). Figure 3 shows that the EFD is by far the least cohesive political group in the EP. EFD parliamentarians are cohesive in only half the votes across all policy areas, whereas the mainstream political groups show rates of cohesion of around 90%.

Figure 3: Cohesion rate across political groups (14 July 2009 to 27 February 2014)



Source: Author's own, based on EU Vote Watch data (17 March 2014)

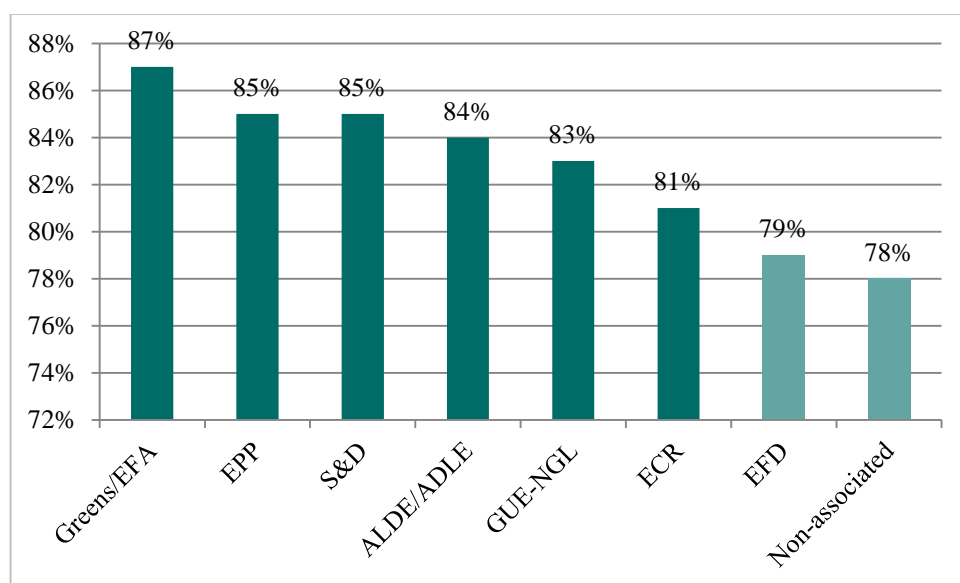
Note: The cohesion rate is determined by the extent to which MEPs within a given group have followed the 'party line'. The method of calculation is detailed on the EU VoteWatch website.

The non-associated group comprises MEPs from the FN, the Freedom Party of Austria (FPÖ) and the Dutch Party for Freedom (PVV), simply because they were

unable to meet the necessary requirements to create a political group (i.e. at least 25 MEPs from seven member states) and did not convince the EFD group to let them in. The group also includes MEPs with very different political affinities, such as the Irish Labour Party and the Spanish *Unión, Progreso y Democracia*. As the non-associated group is not a political group as such, but rather a collection of individuals who belong to no group, there is no measure of the cohesion rate.

Figure 4 shows that, of all the political parties, the EFD and the non-associated group participate the least in roll-call votes.² A comparison of the number of legislative reports and opinions produced by the various political groups reveals that the EFD and the non-associated group are the least involved in parliamentary written work. Furthermore, the EFD has the lowest approval rate of proposed amendments, with only two of 65 amendments adopted (Morris, 2013). On the other hand, EFD and non-associated MEPs are among the top three groups of MEPs, together with European United Left – Nordic Green Left (GUE-NGL), when it comes to parliamentary questions and speeches. To summarise, EFD and non-associated engagement in parliamentary written work is minimal, but they are vocal in parliamentary sessions.

Figure 4: Average participation in (roll-call) votes per European Party Group (%)



Source: Author's own construct, based on EU VoteWatch data available at <http://www.votewatch.eu/en/political-group-participation.html>.

Note: The score is calculated as the average participation in roll-call votes (in the plenary) of MEPs belonging to those political groups between 14 July 2009 and 27 February 2014.

² The European Parliament votes hundreds of times at every plenary session (on amendments, paragraphs, parts of paragraphs, reports and resolutions as a whole). Most of these votes are taken by a 'show of hands', meaning MEPs put up their hand to signal their agreement or disagreement. If the result is unclear, an electronic check may be carried out. This means that MEPs are asked to press a voting button (in favour, against or abstain), and the result is established electronically. This gives an accurate overall result, but the individual votes of MEPs are not registered. In a small proportion of votes, MEPs vote by 'roll call' or 'recorded vote'. In this instance the Parliament's services also record which MEPs voted which way (EU VoteWatch).

4 What influence do radical right parties have on EU development policy?

Voting records show that the EFD has a slight tendency to form part of the winning majority on development policy (in 54% of the votes), whereas the non-associated MEPs tend to form part of the minority by an equally small margin (in 46% of the votes) (EU VoteWatch, 2014). Compared to the other political groups, the EFD and the non-associated group vote with the losing minority most often.

Furthermore, the two groups exert less influence on development policy than their numbers would allow. Influence is measured by contrasting the nominal power of a political group (i.e. the group's size in the assembly) with its actual power (i.e. the group's degree of cohesion and participation when voting, as well as its capacity to build winning coalitions) (Fratescu, 2013). As illustrated in Table 4, both the EFD and the non-associated group's actual power to influence are significantly inferior to what they could expect in view of their numbers. In contrast, the GUE-NGL, which is similar in size to the EFD and non-associated groups, has an actual power much closer to its nominal power.

Table 4: Balance of power

Policy area	EFD		Non-associated		GUE/NGL	
	Nominal power	Actual power	Nominal power	Actual power	Nominal power	Actual power
Development	4.11%	2.06%	4.24%	1.46%	4.64%	4.24%
All policies	4.11%	2.16%	4.24%	1.71%	4.64%	4.07%

Source: EU VoteWatch (17 March 2014)

Another indicator of an MEP's influence is his or her participation in parliamentary committees. Members of committees are nominated by political groups, or in the case of non-associated Members, individual MEPs put their names forward, after which they are elected. The composition of committees reflects the composition of Parliament, so this suggests that if the number of radical right MEPs increases in the next EP term, they will sit in larger numbers in all of the committees, including the Development Committee. The current Development Committee is composed of 60 MEPs, four of whom belong to the EFD or non-associated group. However, only

two MEPs are full members; the other two are substitutes.³ In 2013, the Development Committee met on 15 occasions. Official minutes show that out of the four MEPs, only one attended a single meeting of the Committee.

Although MEPs engage little in the work of the Development Committee, they have expressed their views on this matter in the EP through speeches and report amendments. They tend to call for large reductions in development aid and a repatriation of development policy and spending to the national level. They consistently raise corruption as the major issue for the developing world, oppose any form of budget support and argue for aid to be used only for emergencies and humanitarian crises.

This stance is reflected at the national level. A review of radical right party manifestos⁴ reveals broad consensus on this topic across Europe. Radical right parties in Austria, Denmark, Finland and the Netherlands advocate for a large reduction in their development aid budgets and for funds to be tied to crises and emergencies. In France, the FN advocates for a geographical focus of aid on Africa in order to serve France's interests, mainly through state support to French private investments in Africa in exchange for a reversal of migration flows from the continent. In the newer EU member states, such as Hungary and Latvia, development cooperation is completely absent from their manifestos. In the UK, UKIP has repeatedly announced that it 'would scrap the majority of foreign aid given the colossal waste involved' and accused 'Westminster [of having] forced cuts on the British public whilst sending more hard-earned taxes abroad' (UKIP, 2014). The Belgian party, Vlaams Belang, has stated that aid must be limited to emergency operations.

In the Netherlands, the Dutch coalition in power (a minority government) between October 2010 and April 2012, struck a deal with Geert Wilders' PVV to gain enough support to enable the passing of legislation in parliament to cut €9 billion from the budget. The PVV called for cuts on immigration and reduced spending on development aid (Bloomberg, 2010). A Dutch article reported at the time: 'Mr Wilders is only prepared to talk about a new round of cuts if at least one to two billion euros is slashed from development aid. The senior coalition partner, the conservative VVD, seems to have accepted this' (Radio Netherlands Worldwide, 2012). In 2012, the government announced a €1 billion cut to its aid budget of just over €4 billion.

Overall, radical right parties broadly agree that development aid should be cut, that aid should be tied to promote domestic interests abroad and that humanitarian assistance should be the focus of international cooperation.

³ Substitutes have full speaking rights and can vote in replacement of absent full members.

⁴ FPÖ (Austria):

http://www.fpoe.at/fileadmin/Content/portal/PDFs/2012/2012_parteiprogramm_englisch_web.pdf; Vlaams Belang (Belgium): <http://www.vlaamsbelang.org/programma/59>; Danish Peoples Party (Denmark): http://www.danskfolkeparti.dk/The_Party_Program_of_the_Danish_Peoples_Party; Perussuomalaiset (Finland): http://www.perussuomalaiset.fi/wp-content/uploads/2013/04/Perussuomalaisten_eduskuntavaaliiohjelma_2011-english_summary_2.0.pdf; Front national (France): <http://www.frontnational.com/le-projet-de-marine-le-pen/politique-etrangere/notre-politique-etrangere/>; Jobbik (Hungary): <http://www.jobbik.com/sites/default/files/Jobbik-RADICALCHANGE2010.pdf>; National Alliance (Latvia): no programme available in English; PVV (The Netherlands): <http://www.rnw.nl/africa/article/what-does-wilders-freedom-party-want>.

5 Conclusion

Out of the 28 member states, nine have experienced a rise in radical right parties since 2005, 12 have seen a decline, and the remaining seven have no radical right party. Nevertheless, the parties on the rise have seen their electoral results increase faster than those that have experienced a decrease.

However, radical right parties tend to do better in European elections than they do at home. Opinion polls suggest that there will be a significant rise in radical right parties in the EP elections in May 2014. The four largest EU member states – France, Germany, Italy and the UK – which account for 316 MEPs (42% of the entire assembly), could see an increase in radical right MEPs from 29 to 65 (Poll Watch 2014). Latest polling results show that radical right parties across the 28 member states could increase to around 94 MEPs, from 63 at present – out of a total of 751 MEPs. If this materialises, the radical right will represent around 12 to 13% of the European Parliament. Although a 12 to 13% share of the EP would not be sufficient for the radical right to block decisions without building alliances with other political groups, it would entail a much stronger visibility and resonance of those parties in European decision-making.

Radical right MEPs have limited influence in the current EP. They are the least engaged in parliamentary work, and their cohesion and influence over decisions are both low and below that of other political groups' average. However, in November 2013, the FN, the FPÖ, the PVV and three other European radical right parties, currently in both the EFD and non-associated groups, forged an alliance. Their objective was to form the third largest political group in the EP and to alter the balance of power in the institution after May 2014 (*Le Monde*, 2013). A cohesive alliance of radical right parties would have the potential to influence the political agenda.

If radical right parties form a large political group – or perhaps two medium groups – they would increase their potential to influence at the European level. Given that radical right parties have been advocating for a reduction in aid budgets and a repatriation of development aid to the national level, a larger, more vocal and more visible contingent in the next Parliament would present a serious challenge to the EU aid programme in the future.

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