

The background of the middle section is a close-up photograph of a colorful map puzzle. The puzzle pieces are interlocked and show various countries and cities. A semi-transparent blue banner is overlaid on the puzzle, containing the text 'GOOD PRACTICES'.

GOOD PRACTICES

EUROPEAN EXAMPLES IN DEALING WITH POPULISM

Content

“Stand Up!”	4
“Open Saxony!”	5
Voices against racism and populism	6
Kleiner Fünf – Less than Five %	6
Right-wing extremism in nature conservation - “Brown Greens”	7
Good practices from Italy.....	8
AlboPop.....	8
Media Hacks.....	8
Literature against Negationism.....	8
“Il Riformista” and the Justicialism	9
Commission Against Racism.....	10
Good practices from the Netherlands	11
Art as a tool to open people’s eyes.....	11
Fighting fire with fire?.....	11
No-Winner takes all mechanism	12
Coming together to fight far-right populism.....	13
Using the UBI to fight against Populism.....	13
Good practices from Spain.....	15
Solidarity Foundation of the University of Barcelona	15
“Casal de Jóvenes”	15
Fighting fake news against populism: “La Maldita” magazine.....	15
ACOP (Association of Political Communication)	16
OXÍMORAI	16
Good practices from Cyprus.....	18
EU Youth Dialogue-Youth Board of Cyprus.....	18
EUROSCOLA – Ministry of Education	19
Nicosia Municipality.....	19
Conferences/ Seminars/ Events.....	20
The Association for Historical Dialogue and Research (AHDR)	22



Good practices from Portugal and Europe	25
“Polémica dos Lábios Vermelhos” (Red Lips Constroversy).....	25
“Pano Negro dos Estudantes de Coimbra” (Black Cover of Academic Association of Coimbra)	26
The Downfall of Populism in Greece.....	27
Dealing with Street Populists from a Political Perspectives.....	28
Formation of a Civil Antipopulist movement in Italy	29
Good practices from Poland	31
KOD	31
Gay Pride Parade.....	31
Women’s Strike.....	32
Education in schools without manipulation.....	32
Refugees from Ukraine	33
Imprint	35

We-Europeans aims to strengthen advocacy for European citizenship and for a Europe, in which inclusion, tolerance, justice, solidarity and non-discrimination prevail. This means to encourage standing-up for the European Union’s fundamental values: respect for human dignity and human rights, freedom, democracy, equality and the rule of law.

Populism and political alienation are threats for all democracies in Europe. And countering populism is a challenge for political and civil society actors, educational staff, journalists and others who are confronted with populism in their professional lives, but also for European citizens who face populism in their private lives. We-Europeans gives support to both target groups.

The good practice examples collected from various European countries are intended to serve as inspiration to deal with populism or to counter it.



Good practices from Germany

“Stand Up!”

"Stand Up!" is a project of the Arbeitsgemeinschaft Jugend und Bildung e. V. and was developed as part of the state programme "Hessen - active for democracy and against extremism", funded by the Hessian Information and Competence Centre against Extremism.

"Stand Up! - Arguing against Populists" is an app that intends to support adolescents and young adults in recognising and dealing with populist statements. Through the app, the users participate in simulated dialogues through which they learn to recognise populist statements and to react adequately to them. This happens on the one hand in everyday situations such as at football, in the underground, in a café etc., or, on the other hand in a chat. The users have the choice between several answer options. Feedback directly integrated into the game briefly explains whether the chosen answer was good, could be improved or was inappropriate. In addition, the users have the opportunity to view background information and general tips on how to conduct a de-escalating conversation. A glossary explains important terms and contexts. The playful approach of the app helps to reduce inhibitions and gives confidence in discussions. The main target group of the app includes adolescents from the age of 14 and up, young adults, teachers of secondary levels I and II at general and vocational schools, and especially pupils from the ninth grade onwards. "Stand Up!" can be used independently outside of school, but also in a classroom setting and is an interesting component of democracy education. In addition to conspiracy ideology and racist content, the app also deals with anti-semitism, anti-gypsyism, homophobia and xenophobia.

In the virtual world as well as in everyday life, populist statements are on the rise and political discourse is becoming sharper. Argumentation is being truncated and discriminatory, while inhuman statements are finding their way into discussions. Many exceed the limits of freedom of expression. Be it conspiracy ideologies, fake news, violent metaphors or hate speech - populist statements have become a common phenomenon in everyday situations and in social media. The scope of action of people who are confronted with them is diverse and ranges from silence to adopting opinions to helplessness or rejection.

Young people in particular should be able to participate independently and actively in shaping democracy and to work for peaceful coexistence without discrimination.

Respectful coexistence and a democratic culture of discussion are indispensable for the preservation of basic democratic values and their stability.



“Open Saxony!”

The project aims to strengthen Saxon companies in their commitment to respectful, non-discriminatory cooperation in the workplace. Open Saxony is funded by the state programme Weltoffenes Sachsen für Demokratie und Toleranz (Open Saxony for Democracy and Tolerance) and is carried out by Wirtschaft für ein weltoffenes Sachsen e.V. in cooperation with Die Courage – Werkstatt für demokratische Bildungsarbeit e.V.

The background of the project is the social climate in Saxony, which is increasingly influenced by populist movements. This again has a negative influence on the working atmosphere within companies, on the recruitment of employees and the attractiveness of the business location for international investors and business partners.

In order to strengthen their commitment to respectful and non-discriminatory cooperation in the workplace, the project focuses on the situation in companies. Educational and information formats are developed to qualify and strengthen the competence of employees.

Information and workshop formats are used to encourage employees:

- to reflect on the opportunities and challenges of an open corporate culture and to share their experiences,
- to sharpen their awareness of discriminatory statements and behaviour,
- to encourage them to work for an appreciative and prejudice-conscious cooperation in their personal and professional environment, and
- to strengthen their ability to act responsibly and courageously in concrete situations.

There are several face-to-face and online workshops offers, e.g., about conspiracy ideologies - workshop on causes, dangers and ways of dealing with them, recognising and dealing with anti-human attitudes, countering them, communication and teamwork, constructive conflict management, diversity, prejudice-conscious language and images, dealing with hate speech and online violence, etc. A workshop on populism shows what populism means and what characteristics populist statements have. It is discussed when and to what extent right-wing populism in particular endangers liberal democracy and by what means this happens. Finally, instruments are shown that make it possible to recognise and react to strategies. When employees recognise populism and counteract it, it strengthens their positive and cosmopolitan working atmosphere.



Voices against racism and populism

This is a Franco-German project created by students and volunteers of the Franco-German Youth Office (FGYO). The FGYO is an international government organisation dedicated to the German-French cooperation. Its founding goes back to the Franco-German friendship agreement, the “Elysée Treaty” of 1963. Its mission is to strengthen the ties between German and French youth and to deepen their understanding about one another and to facilitate key competences for Europe.

With the FGYO’s support, thirty-five students from France and Germany created a French-German blog called “Voices against Racism and Populism”. It is a multimedia platform that shares articles, podcasts and short films with the aim to raise awareness across borders about “existing problems of racism and populism within our society”. The target group are mostly students and young people. The project aims to sensitise the participants on topics of racism and populism and to teach them elementary skills of journalism. In addition, it gives possibilities for the students to connect with participants from other countries and to get to know other cities.

Kleiner Fünf – Less than Five %

In Germany there is a Five Percent Barrier Clause. This means that only political parties that have obtained at least 5% of the validly cast votes can obtain parliamentary representation. This five-percent rule was implemented after World War II, to help consolidate the allocation of seats in parliament among the strongest parties, promoting stable party majorities and a functioning parliament. It is also intended to prevent fringe extremist parties from gaining too much power.

The initiative Kleiner Fünf wants to keep the populist political party AfD (Alternative for Germany) under 5% in political elections, and therefore without parliamentary representation. The initiative was launched by the association Tadelpflichtet! e.V., which was founded in 2016. Its goal is to strengthen political participation and stand up to anti-democratic populism. They offer correct facts, argumentation trainings and tips on how to stay cool and polite during discussions with populists. They are especially active during election campaigns, but also throughout the rest of the legislature.



Right-wing extremism in nature conservation - “Brown Greens”

The Heinrich-Böll-Foundation (HBS, the foundation close to the Green party), the German Nature and Biodiversity Conservation Union (NABU), the Amadeu-Antonio-Stiftung and others are raising awareness on right extremism in the field of nature conservation. Not always easily recognisable, far-right populists have been mixing environmental protection and organic farming with nationalistic ideology for the last 100 years.

NABU, the Heinrich-Böll-Foundation and the Amadeu-Antonio-Foundation want to sensitize citizens for right-wing ecological homeland ideology disguised as ecological nature conservation. With workshops, conferences and publications they inform about the historic development and current forms of as well as giving practical argumentation help and contact and support organisations.

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Good practices from Italy

AlboPop

Populism often relies on people's low propensity to get information by consulting the official documentation produced by public institutions. Or, there is a clear institutional difficulty of people to navigate the sites, for example in the municipal praetors.

AlboPop is a project that intends to facilitate the use of Public Administration documents by citizens. It is an RSS Feed that can be activated on Telegram, which allows citizens to receive the publications made on the Register on their mobile phone in real time. Currently, dozens and dozens of municipalities in Italy have activated this service and thousands of citizens, almost daily, deepen the study of the documents published, through their mobile phones.

Media Hacks

Manipulating the news and creating real websites based on fake news are just some of the powerful weapons that populism uses. A tragic example, in this sense, was the very wide diffusion, on a global level, of no-vax propaganda, even before Covid. In Romania, for example, in recent years these movements have succeeded in convincing a large part of the population not to get vaccinated against measles, resulting in a drastic drop in vaccination coverage and the re-emergence of numerous outbreaks. Media-Hacks, an Erasmus+ project resulting from a partnership between APS Polygonal, Aklub and Infodef, intends to provide the necessary tools so that people can actually understand the truthfulness or otherwise of the news. A project that, day after day, continues to collect new members.

Literature against Negationism

The manipulation of history is one of the weapons that have always been used by reactionary movements and populists. One of the most striking examples, which over time has been dusted off several times, despite its now proven falsity, is that of the Protocols of the Elders of Zion, created at the time by the Tsarist secret police with the aim of spreading hatred towards the Jews of the Russian Empire. The most recent case is that concerning the sinkholes (foibe) in Italy, a tragic historical event of the second post-war period, used for years by the right as a "contrast" to the extermination of the Jews. Over the years a literature has developed aimed at countering falsehoods and exploitation. The



Revisionism books on the topics mentioned are interesting: “Revisionismo. Breve seminario per discuterne” (by Paolo Simoncelli) and “E allora le foibe?” (by Eric Gobetti). The first, published in 2011, is now purchased by thousands of people every year and has become important university material, especially in faculties such as Political Science. The second, published in 2020, met with important success and re-launched the debate on the veracity of what happened in those years.

“Il Riformista” and the Justicialism

Tangentopoli (a journalism term which is the merge of two words, namely: bribes and polis, city, so literally “the city of bribes”) was the media term that indicated the discovery and trial of a vast corruption system involving both the Italian judiciary and political system at all levels across the 80s and the 90s. Hundreds of people were under investigation, reaching the national government as well, bringing the end of the so-called “First Republic” (another media word), the political order established after the Second World War. Tangentopoli is particularly important with regards to the reinforcement of justicial populism in Italy, as the investigation of politicians (or any other public figure) was automatically presented/commented as admission of guilt, of responsibility, responding to the major call for rejecting the world of corruption which was endemic during the ‘First Republic’.

Over the years, populist movements such as the M5S have managed to build a very strong consensus on this equation: politicians who ended up under investigation were slammed on the front page, subjected to accusations and heavy attacks capable of damaging their reputation forever. It didn't matter if everything ended up in a soap bubble, with the investigation closed or with an acquittal. The person was now branded for life and would hardly have resumed his political career. One of most sensational cases is the one involving Antonio Bassolino, the former Mayor of Naples, who was under investigation for dozens of counts, was forced to resign as Mayor and faced a long series of trials, which led him to obtain 19 acquittals out of 19.

For some years, a famous Italian newspaper, Il Riformista (currently only online), distinguished itself as the only national newspaper that analysed investigations on important people in politics and beyond, with neutrality, explaining with clear language the different trials. Although its circulation was only 15 thousand copies a day, this peculiarity led it to be highly appreciated on social networks.



Commission Against Racism

Established in 2021 by the Italian Parliament, on the proposal of Senator for life Liliana Segre, the Commission against Racism is responsible for collecting material, elaborating studies and proposals on the phenomena of racism, violence and hatred that occur in Italy. To date, the Commission has met more than 50 times and currently, its most important result has been to draw up guidelines on which the work of Parliament and the Government should be based to combat these phenomena. Created with no unanimity (the right-wing parties abstained at the time of the vote for its establishment), the Commission is gathering an increasing number of appreciation from Italian citizens.

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Good practices from the Netherlands

Art as a tool to open people's eyes

As the 2021 general elections were close and the populist party led by Geert Wilders established its strong position, six eminent Dutch galleries came together in order to denounce the “fragmentation, self-interest, fear and individualism” international politics is subject to nowadays. The first project titled “Where do we go from here?” which included 25 artworks from artists from 13 countries, sought to reconsider the role, responsibility and sometimes disastrous consequences of speech at an utterly delicate moment in history. The unspeakable and unthinkable have become a reality and a commonplace after Brexit. In what is a largely unknown model, all galleries have decided to share costs as well as the revenue of the sales, showing artists they do not necessarily sponsor. As galleries are increasingly becoming a form of capitalisation rather than an opportunity for the artist, Nieuw Amsterdam Peil seems to be making a point about Amsterdam being one of the last bastions of international liberalism.

Fighting fire with fire?

Strongly connected to the backlash against ethnic and religious diversity by right-wing parties in Rotterdam, is the rise of “progressive” parties with a strong Muslim presence: denk and nida. Cultural anthropologist, Sinan Çankaya argues that the rise of denk can be explained by the fact that political Left has not been able to offer a “powerful multi-ethnic and multireligious (among others) alternative for the future”. (Loukili, 2020)

On 14 December 2017, Geert Wilders, leader and representant of PVV, made an appearance in Essalam mosque in Feyenoord, Rotterdam to announce the participation of the PVV in the upcoming local elections and to present the first and second candidates on the list. A denk delegation arrived unexpectedly at the mosque at the same time, attracting media attention and standing literally in opposition to the PVV party. The symbolic value of the encounter taking place in front of the mosque was amplified by denk members carrying Dutch flags—emphasising their claim to Dutch cultural identity.

Only a month after a tense encounter in front of the Essalam Mosque, denk decided to confront the PVV in Rotterdam again. After the PVV announced its demonstration, 59 denk not only appeared at the exact location, but had hired a barrel organ and dispensed syrup waffles (stroopwafels) among the public— both considered uniquely and “typically” Dutch. In addition, they brought along a large banner with the denk slogan: “The Netherlands belongs to all of us” (Nederland is van ons allemaal).



Denk's success is largely due to their ability to play into the discontent felt particularly by young Dutch Muslims by presenting and championing an identity that counters the dominant discourse in politics about Dutch identity and "reclaim" local identity. They tap into feelings of discontent and discrimination felt among their followers, which the PvdA and other leftist parties are perceived to have failed to address adequately.

No-Winner takes all mechanism

The Netherland's primer minister Mark Rutte, presented the halting of the rise of populism, and the election contest, as an either/or situation: you can either choose for the wrong kind of populism, or defeat it with the right kind of populism. The latter clearly refers to the VVD. But the key issue is not that the VVD defeated the PVV or that Populism has been defeated, rather than there is no-winner takes all mechanism to fight against it.

Firstly, the need for a coalition to win implies that it will be highly difficult for a political party to execute all its campaign promises. This is the after- election process that prevents any party governing alone in practice. Moreover, the multi-party system leaves many options for the Dutch voter. Rather than being defeated, populism seems to be accommodated within the political system and thus is likely to continue to play an important role in politics.

Elite cooperation is a big advantage as well as a danger. The danger lies in a disconnection between political leaders and their electorate when campaign promises are abandoned for the sake of cooperation. However, it allows for a broad range of outlooks and ideologies to be represented both in parliament and the governing coalition, and it protects against the possibility of a majority dominating minorities in the light of a strongly plural society. Historically, it has ensured religious parties' representation in government and nowadays continues to accommodate religious worldviews as well as other outlooks. Whereas Rutte seems to suggest that there is a clear and coherent 'Netherlands' that halted populism, it actually seems that diversity is key. It seems better to foster pluralism instead of a strong common political agenda we all share. Individuals should feel well represented in the political spectrum. If this is well accomplished and people find their ideas and interests to be well portrayed, we may not require a "good" populist leader to halt the "bad" populism. (Mudde, 2017)



Coming together to fight far-right populism

Major Dutch corporations including Shell, Unilever, Philips and dairy produce giant FrieslandCampina have joined forces in a PR campaign to showcase national talents in a bid to roll back gloom and populism. The initiative coincides with the run-up to general elections that are seen as a bellwether for nationalism in Europe in a critical year following last year's Brexit vote and the election victory of Donald Trump.

The PR campaign - whose launch coincides with the tense election campaign - will point to Dutch success in meeting five challenges of the future, the financial daily *Het Financieele Dagblad* said. Called "Global problems, Dutch solutions", it will look at how Dutch enterprises are enhancing farm yields and water management, coping with demographic ageing, the demands of urbanisation and the switch to renewable energy. The European head of Unilever, Jan Zijderveld, told the paper that "populism is a symptom of lack of progress". He added: "To combat populism, we need a new business model, a point on the horizon to which we can work over the next decade." (yahoo!news, 2017).

Using the UBI to fight against Populism

There are signs that something is brewing in the Netherlands. Take the grassroots movement for a universal basic income. Three years ago, few had heard of the idea, but today leaders in twenty Dutch cities want to trial it. This is an example of a genuine antidote to right-wing populism and of how, instead of clinging to the status quo or conceding ground to the populists, citizens can take matters into their own hands.

Unsafety and uncertainty are two of the most important factors from where most populist thoughts stem from. Therefore, it is utterly important for those to be tackled first in order to combat populism effectively. Social security is, therefore, becoming more expensive and ineffective. A new mechanism to maintain the living standards of large groups of people is desperately needed. This is why, the universal basic income is the only social policy that is guaranteed to reach everyone, unlike current schemes based on behavioural and income tests. A lot of right-wing and conservative politicians have also stated that it would attract more "illegal immigrants" to the country, who would seek to misuse such an opportunity. The problem with their claims is that they are all based on "a feeling." There are no actual figures to support those claims. However, during the Finnish experiment, 2,000 unemployed Finns received a basic income of €560 per month for two years. The results showed that the participants were not tempted to work substantially



more. Most worked less and decided to pursue interests that made them happy. Some decided to spend more time with their families (especially their young children), learn a new skill, or just relax and engage more in sports, and general wellbeing. It wouldn't just help reduce crime in the Netherlands, it would also eradicate poverty and increase creativity — especially in the entrepreneurial world.



Good practices from Spain

Solidarity Foundation of the University of Barcelona

The Solidarity Foundation of the University of Barcelona organised a series of conferences in March 2021, free and open to all, entitled "Populism, what are we talking about?". Antonio Gómez, professor of philosophy, Clara Serra, researcher of philosophy, Adrià Porta, doctor of philosophy, and Guillermo Fernández, sociologist, presented the following topics: "Populism and Hegemony," "Reflections on the Relationship between Populism and Feminism," "What is Alive and What is Dead in Contemporary Populism," and "Reactionary Populism".

The University of Barcelona organises seminars, conferences, lectures and debates in order to inform not only students but all people and positively influence their way of thinking, criticising and analysing the society around us.

“Casal de Jóvenes”

This is a space that can be found in most Spanish cities and has been set up by local communities as an information centre for young people and youth workers. They offer activities, workshops and advice on various youth-related topics. It is also a focal point for local politics. They offer different ways of sharing information about many social issues, but at the same time it is a place where young people can gain knowledge, share ideas and discuss issues that affect them, such as the rise of the right, populism and other social issues. In this way, they can share their views and make a critical analysis of society. Young people internalise all this knowledge by surrounding themselves with people who have the same concerns as they do.

Fighting fake news against populism: “La Maldita” magazine

“La Maldita” is an online magazine founded by Julio Montes, who has worked in television news for a decade, and Clara Jiménez Cruz, also a journalist and member of the Advisory Board of the International Fact-Checking Network. They are two journalists with experience in the fight against misinformation and disinformation. They focus on controlling misinformation and public discourse through fact-checking techniques and data journalism.

This non-profit association has three main goals:



- Monitor and control political discourse and promote transparency in public and private institutions
- Check and fight disinformation
- Promote media literacy and technological tools to create an aware community that can resist disinformation and be active in all fields

It is public and easily accessible via the Internet.

ACOP (Association of Political Communication)

ACOP is a non-profit association founded by researchers and teachers who study political communication, as well as professionals from political parties, public administrations, and private consulting firms who practice it. It is a forum for the exchange of knowledge, opinions and experiences in the field of political communication research and practice. It is based in Madrid, but has participants from more than 12 countries. It organizes seminars and informative workshops to provide objective analysis of national and international politics, which is always a good way to combat misinformation. There is an online magazine that summarizes all the issues to reach the population and provide relevant and factual data on political aspects.

OXÍMORAI

Oximorai is an online magazine founded by students and has the support of the University of Barcelona. It is an open space that promotes critical reflection on young people. It is a forum for communication, participation and feedback that promotes dissemination, creativity and exchange in an interdisciplinary sense, open to the diversity of knowledge that characterizes knowledge as solidarity. It publishes mainly research articles, critical reviews and interviews dealing with political, ethical and moral philosophy, civil society and political institutions, state power and social movements, among others. It provides free access for people who want to be informed and actively involved in the political and social life of their communities.

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Good practices from Cyprus

EU Youth Dialogue-Youth Board of Cyprus

The EU Youth Dialogue which is set by the Cyprus Youth Council (CYC), the Youth Board of Cyprus, and the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports and Youth, is an EU mechanism that gives the opportunity to young people and decision-makers to discuss youth related issues. The dialogue is taking place within the framework of the EU Youth Strategy 2019-2027, which focuses on three main core areas 'connect, engage and empower' and encourages the cooperation between the EU countries in respect to all issues concerning young people. The dialogue with policy makers and other dialogue activities happens in 18-month work cycles. Each cycle focuses on a different thematic priority (such as participation, inclusion, employment), set by the Council of Youth Ministers.

Once national and European consultations with youth are over, the results are compiled, analysed and further discussed at the EU Youth Conferences. During the conferences, youth representatives and policy makers have the opportunity to exchange views and work together for formulating policy recommendations on the topic under discussion. The EU Youth Conferences take place twice a year and are hosted by the country that holds the EU Presidency. The conclusions of the EU Youth dialogue activities are presented to the Council of the European Union which then proceeds to the adoption of a policy document on the EU Youth Dialogue outcomes.

The continuous presence of the organisation in all major social media was all year round, offering immediate information to people, and a variety of opportunities for young people, schools, educators and organizations. Although annual reports for the last year seem to be inactive due to Covid, the annual reports from 2013 – 2020, address that in the approved Mobility Plans, the number of participants is approximately around 1.500 – 1.600 and the number of people active in the youth sector is approximately around 400 - 600.

Numbers testify the great mobility towards young people who, through the whole process, have the opportunity to develop modern skills and enhance active citizenship and self-development through active interventions in their communities/municipalities, which bring positive change to their lives, meaning that the workshops rather have multiplying effect on the social environment of young people.



EUROSCOLA – Ministry of Education

The "EUROSCOLA" workshops, set by the European Parliament in 1992, in Strasbourg, France, gives the opportunity for young people from different countries in Europe, aged 16-18, to meet, exchange views on their experiences and the problems they face, and to express their expectations and plans for European integration. From the moment they enter the European Parliament, they represent their school and are part of multilingual groups of around 100 students. Thus, participants in order to communicate with their counterparts from other countries, are invited to use their language knowledge to the fullest extent possible.

The goal is to get familiar with the functioning of European institutions, raise awareness regarding the role they will be called upon to play in the future organisation of Europe and of the need to defend democracy and fundamental rights, understand how learning and using foreign languages helps to approach, solve problems and understand the other's views and expectations, and, find means that will allow young people to express their personal views and use their desire to offer.

Each year, approximately 3000 students from around the world come together and exchange ideas regarding various issues and get the opportunity to ask questions directly to the Vice-President of the European Parliament. According to Euroscola's Facebook page, in 2022, 2940 students from 98 schools from 24 countries will come together online for the third Euroscola session of this year and exchange their ideas about "Opportunities and risks of digital age".

Nicosia Municipality

The Municipality of Nicosia, the Office of the European Parliament in Cyprus, and the Delegation of the European Commission in Cyprus, each year organise an event with the hoisting of the European Union flag, on the occasion of Europe Day, on the 9th of May.

Europe Day is considered to be a celebration of peace and unity, inspired by the historic Declaration of former French Foreign Minister Robert Schuman in 1950, which laid the foundations for the economic and political community we know today as the European Union.

The main theme of those events concerns the European values and how they contribute to addressing various challenges affecting Europe. EU values, such as human dignity, freedom, democracy, the rule of law, human rights, are an integral part of European



identity and contribute to a social inclusion, tolerance, justice and solidarity in a society. Usually, these events seek to inform citizens about the importance of EU values and the future of Europe through various activities and actions for children and young people.

In Cyprus, usually the event is being organised in all municipalities, Nicosia, Limassol, Larnaca, Paphos, Ammochostos. In Nicosia, this year's event took place at Eleftheria Square in where a lot of people, interested to learn more about Europe and its values, participated with their families to celebrate the Europe Day. Posts and photos were shared on social media which depicted snapshots from the activities that carried out. Among others, there was a rich and entertaining program for young and elder, such as up to 30 information booths for organisations, embassy kiosk, activities for children and young people, art program and, discussion with MEPs.

Conferences/ Seminars/ Events

KISA – Movement for Equality, Support, Antiracism

KISA is an NGO, established in 1998, and its vision is the promotion of an all-inclusive, multicultural society, free of racism, xenophobia and discrimination and where, through the interaction and mutual respect of diverse cultures, there will be equality and respect for the rights of all individuals.

KISA organises on Friday and Saturday, May 31 and June 1, a seminar entitled "Countering hate speech, nationalism and populism in the public discourse and the media". The seminar, which will take place at the Goethe Institute in Nicosia, is organised within the transnational program "Words are stones", in which KISA participates together with organisations from five other EU Member States.

Respective speakers will be presenting issues regarding the interaction of hate speech, nationalism and populism and their parameters in human rights, individual freedoms and society in general, the need for prohibition of hate speech as a permissible restriction on freedom of expression, the contribution of the prosecuting authorities in the fight against discrimination and hate speech, and the need for combating hate speech through the search for truth, reconciliation and peace.



PRIO Cyprus Centre, Conference 2015

On November 5, 2015, in Nicosia, Cyprus, the PRIO Cyprus Centre, along with the Friedrich-Ebert-Foundation in Cyprus and the Cyprus Association of Political Science, co-organised a conference inviting international experts to discuss different conceptions of extremism, populism and far right movements across Europe.

All scientists attended, represented a comprehensive overview on the concepts and cases of European far right movements/ parties and discussed the factors favouring or inhibiting their impact on society and politics and their associated phenomena are discussed: ELAM in Cyprus, the Golden Dawn in Greece, the French Front National, the Italian Northern League and the space around it, the German AfD and Pegida and the Hungarian Jobbik.

Along with others, Giorgos Charalambous, Senior Research Consultant at PRIO Cyprus Centre and Adjunct Lecturer at the Department of Social and Political Sciences, University of Cyprus, presented his ongoing research on far-right populism in the Case of Cyprus, mentioning the "fundamentally populist" party, E.L.A.M, which was shifting a lot of blame to the government and the "national enemy, Turkey or the Turkish Cypriots" (PRIO Cyprus Centre, 2015, para 6). Giorgos concluded: "The Cypriot far right is fundamentally populist but in a particular fashion, which reflects a situation of ethnic conflict on the island and a country experiencing an economic and political crisis" (PRIO Cyprus Centre, 2015, para 6).

The conference attempted to shed light on the organisational nature, ideologies and electoral fortunes of far-right parties in contemporary Europe, especially during the post-2008 economic crisis, but also before. It also aimed at discussing the variety of new challenges that far-right extremism and populism present European citizens and governments with.

University of Cyprus, Department of French and European Studies

University of Cyprus's department of French and European Studies, seeks to contribute to the cultivation of its students by enriching their knowledge, sensitising them to the idea of interculturalism and the dialogue that develops around it, and developing their critical thinking. In this way, it prepares them to play an active and productive role in the society in which they will live.

At the same time, the department informs students about employment opportunities abroad, Erasmus and YUFE programs, as well as invites them to take part in various European programs and initiatives where they can discuss various topics concerning the future of Europe. Every year, University of Cyprus sends and accepts hundreds of students



from universities all over the world to participate in such programs and travel abroad to experience the opportunities offered to them through their degree and to be employed in other countries.

Throughout the years, it organises various events, seminars, conferences and, research activities related to the fields of Humanities, Social and Political Sciences, Economics and Law. Social justice and Humanities (December 12, 2019), Cultural Practices and Trends in the EU (30-31/03 2017), Migration and Multilingualism (22-23/10 2022), or Interdisciplinary Research Laboratories in the methodology of teaching and learning languages and cultures (12-13/05 2022), were few of the events held in the context of the department's programs and courses, that helped many students and non-students gain the necessary knowledge on the field.

The Association for Historical Dialogue and Research (AHDR)

AHDR is a multi-communal, NGO organisation, established in Nicosia in 2003. Since its foundation, ADHR aims to the advancement of historical understanding amongst the public and more specifically amongst children, youth, and educators by providing access to learning opportunities for individuals of every ability and every ethnic, religious, cultural, and social background, based on the respect for diversity and the dialogue of ideas, meaning to assist educational stakeholders, mainly students and teachers, in redefining the use of terms such as social justice, compassion, solidarity, peace and conflict and deconstruct the 'friend-enemy' logic.

Currently, is doing several projects in the Home of Cooperation, a place where Greek-Cypriots, immigrants and Turkish-Cypriots can gather around, exchange ideas and work together. In addition to this, an increasing number of schools, and, private and public organisations, are participating in European Erasmus projects, and focus on promoting diversity and acceptance of people with different cultural backgrounds. Furthermore, ADHR helps to the implementation of various Peace Education projects which derive from the necessity to respond to the educational needs of teachers, students and the society at large in relation to Education for a Culture of Peace as well as to the urgency to highlight the importance of peace and non-violence and increased inter-communal contact for constructing alternative futures for the generations to come.

Among them, in the year 2022, it will be reorganising the Crossroads Re-imagined Summer Camp 2022, which will take place mid of July, at the village of Kampos in the district of Nicosia, Cyprus. The camp is designed for young people aged 14 - 17 years old and it aims



to support the contact and cooperation between young people from all the communities in Cyprus by building mutual respect for each other, breaking down stereotypes and promoting reconciliation in the framework of a Culture of Peace and Non-Violence.

The camp's core activities are designed and implemented by skilled and experienced educators, facilitators and visiting artists, based on a range of expressive arts and applied theatre approaches, peace education methodologies and non-formal education tools. Participants will have the opportunity to get involved in workshops on a variety of topics with the purpose of promoting meaningful communication and providing safe spaces for creative learning, democratic dialogue and mutual understanding and respect between young people. The camp always concludes with a final piece of work developed by the young people and shared with family and friends, showcasing the ten-day long learning journey participants experienced together.

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Good practices from Portugal and Europe

Contrary to what some political scientists and research indicate, tendencies of populism have been around in the Portuguese political landscape, being present in the rhetoric of a every politician who claims to be a true representative of the people's voice and needs. But in the true sense of this definition, every party in every country could be to some extent classified as a populist party or as a party with populist traits. Because of this, the Portuguese political sphere has been somewhat impermeable to the fullness of the populist discourse.

However, it wasn't until the year 2019 and the correspondent Portuguese legislative election that the Portuguese parliament had a true populist present inserted. The new up and coming party CHEGA has been the main populist antagonist and his leader André Ventura have become the face of populism making his presence both in the political sphere and the civil debate forums. Because of what the so called "novelty" characteristic of the Portuguese populism the Portuguese society is still in the early stages of rebelling and counter proving the rhetoric of the CHEGA party which means that very few movements have emerged against this party agenda.

On top of this, we should also preface that being a far-right party and given the dictatorial past of Portuguese political system most of the movements and insurgence by the people have been against the party, not necessarily because of his populist speech and agenda but more so because of his far-right ideology. Even so we have collected two social movements preformed against the party CHEGA and three European examples of a successful combat on populism that did not occur in Portugal but from which our country and more so our political leaders can learn.

"Polémica dos Lábios Vermelhos" (Red Lips Constroversy)

One of the social movements that spread fast through social media, gathering support from almost everyone who is against CHEGA and André Ventura was the "Polémica dos Lábios Vermelhos" which occurred during the 2021 Portuguese presidential election. During the campaign leading up to the election, one of André Ventura's main strategies was to directly attack his opponent not just by their views or agendas but also by their physical appearance. This was one of the strategies used to charge against Marisa Matias, another presidential candidate supported by the left-wing party Bloco de Esquerda. The comment left by Ventura was along the lines of the referring to a damaged image on behalf of Marisa Matias alluding to the fact that the candidate didn't appear to take



anything seriously so much so that she even painted her lips like it was a child's play. Matias wore throughout her campaign a signature red lipstick (Gonçalves, 2021).

The response to this was an unplanned social media organized movement under the hashtag #VermelhoemBelem in which people of all genders and all social statuses including celebrities and even other presidential candidates, were seen wearing or putting on red lipstick as a sign of rebellion and opposition to the misogynist's comment made by the CHEGA leader.

This was one of the very first major initiatives that was able to garner a lot of support and social expression against the populist leader who chose not to evoke Matias' ideas or goals if she was chosen as the president but instead attacked her for a stylistic choice which made the Portuguese people stand with Matias against Ventura. Although this isn't necessarily a political movement, it represents a change in the way the Portuguese are able to deal with and accept the twist and nonsensical speech of Ventura. Ventura lacks so much of a well-defined political strategy that his choice was to go for the looks of the other candidate and the overall and overwhelming response of the people was that they will not stand for a complete lack of respect like the one Ventura did.

“Pano Negro dos Estudantes de Coimbra” (Black Cover of Academic Association of Coimbra)

The Academic Association of Coimbra (AAC), the institution that represents every higher education student in the city of Coimbra, decided to cover with a black cloth and a canvas the front face of their headquarters in response to the march and manifestation promoted by CHEGA.

As mentioned above, Portugal's past is still haunted by the effects of the dictatorial regime known as Estado Novo, that represented one of the most difficult times of the higher education students in Portugal. And the far-right party CHEGA is notoriously identified using the same rhetoric elements and ideas proclaimed during the Estado Novo. Coimbra is the city with the oldest university in Portugal and is famously regarded as the best student city by default, so when the CHEGA party made the choice of having their march in that city, it did not sit well with the Coimbra students (Lusa, 2021).

To show their disapproval and rejection of the party rhetoric, the association covered their building with a black cloth and put up a canvas on which you can see the faces of the figures of the Estado Novo. Like the previous example, it is not an organized social



movement per say and it was more in regard to the bad nostalgic feel that the party provide regarding the Estado Novo and not necessarily about populism. Regardless, it was an initiative that comes to show that the Portuguese students can be involved and are interested in the political sphere and are not afraid to speak up and to demonstrate and oppose those who in their view, are a threat to a free democratic education policy.

This initiative was also supported by the local population on which hundreds of people gather to also manifest their disregard and dislike of the party.

As mentioned before, since the Portuguese wave of populism really garnered a lot of expression thanks to the uprising of CHEGA in 2019 there are still very few good examples of initiatives being conducted to face the threat that populism represents, and are mostly conducted by the population expressing their disregard to the attitudes and agenda of the CHEGA party. Because of this we will add to good examples on how the Greek and French political ladders managed to contain populist insurgences originating both from other populist forces or from the people itself, without escalating the situation.

The Downfall of Populism in Greece

In 2015, after a major lost to populist forces, the center-right New Democracy adopted a new direction in combating the insurgence of populism. The party chose as its new leader a reformist technocrat avoiding the role attribution to a known reform rejecting politic. This decision led to a formation of staff filled with the new generation meaning mostly young, well-educated technocrats reading to take office if elected. He also began forging an anti-populist alliance which led to smaller centrist parties and to independent liberal politicians to align themselves with New Democracy.

The main lesson to retrieve from the strategy adopted by the New Democracy party was the moderate political discourse that emphasized the need to reinvigorate Greece's damaged liberal institutions but also stressed consensus-building and compromise. The notion of unity was an essential piece to undermine the typical speech applied by the populist rhetoric of "us" versus "them". This came to show that it is possible to combat other populist political forces without bringing the conversation to a high level of antics. This strategy of inclusion to even the ones who have a different rhetoric and different agenda shows a disposition to accommodate everyone and not shut down anyone just based in different perspectives. (Pappas, 2020)



From the Greek example of New Democracy, we can learn that political elites are not the enemy and are able to accommodate different elites if they can reverse the causal chain of developments that brought populists to power in the first place in a moderate strategy.

Dealing with Street Populists from a Political Perspectives

In 2018, France experiences the rise of a massive street level or bottom-up form of populist movement known as the Yellow Vest protests, that started with a call on social media which asked for an aggregation of people to mobilize on the street wearing a high-visibility vest to denounce the rising price of fuel. Their message was full of the idealised notion of the people versus those that were identified as the predatory elites. Their protest signs showed the fracture between the 'elites' and the 'people' or between the 'bottom' and the 'top' as well as their defiance towards the political establishment and the mainstream media (Ham).

To deal with the situation and the public demands, the anti-populist strategy adopted by the party La République en marche! (LREM), was a more moderate and of accommodation then the one used by main populist party the Rassemblement National (RN). Instead of the usual anti populist strategy of ostracized and strongly demonised any populist rhetoric their reaction to the populist protest movement was more balanced and cautious. A speech of inclusion and conciliation was then adopted, and the importance of street populists' grievances and demands were acknowledged by the LREM party members. This came to show the people that their needs were to be accommodated and supported, not combatted. They respected some of the protesters' demands as legitimate (Hamdaoui, 2022).

By doing this, the confrontation was softened, and accusation was rarely straightforward like in adversarial anti-populism. Indeed, the demonization of street populists was indirect or partial which allowed for an open dialogue of communication. The people managed to have their needs acknowledged, which allowed for a decrease of the problem and created more proximity between citizens and the populist challengers.



Formation of a Civil Antipopulist movement in Italy

The Sardines movement or has it can be read in Italian: movimento delle sardine, was a civil self-proclaimed anti-populist movement that began in 2019 as an opposition to the right-wing populist party League and its leader Matteo Salvini has a preventive measure regarding the then upcoming regional elections of 2020.

The movement consisted of a large organization of people who participated in several peaceful demonstrations to protest the right-wing surge in the country and, more specifically, against the political rhetoric of right-wing leader Matteo Salvini (Horowitz, 2019). Their primary aim was to “(...) stand against the populist drift and against the spread of sovereigntist and racist ideas as well as to be a barrier against the advance of populism” (Hamdaoui, 2022, 442).

The movement, although characterized as a party-less had a predetermine alignment towards the center left, so much that the movement disbanded after the victory of the Democratic Party in 2020 has the center right party League was defeated. The principal characteristics of this initiative involved the refusal to use violent forms of speech, enlightened the people regarding complex political context and promote an open and tolerant policy regarding immigration while combating racism and xenophobia (Hamdaoui, 2022).

The movement was successful in regaining support and electoral expression towards the center-left and diffusing the support for the right populist parties.

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Good practices from Poland

KOD

One example of good practices to fight with populism was KOD, which can be translated as: Democracy Protecting Committee. It was a movement created in December 2015, short after the first victory of PiS in the parliamentary election, as an answer to populist politic and breaking the constitution law by ruling party.

For years members of KOD movement are taking part in many demonstrations and happenings, connected with democracy values and freedom of speech. At one point, KOD was really popular in Poland: in December 2015, #KOD has been the most popular hashtag on Polish Twitter (Kolanko, 2016). Also, many artists and famous people expressed their support for KOD. Unfortunately, next years were definitely worse for this organisation, it became less popular (one of the reasons was a huge scandal connected with false invoices submitted by leader of KOD). Nowadays, KOD still exists, but its influence on Polish society is at the minimum. But all in all, in the best times of organisation, KOD was definitely one of the biggest social movements and example of good practice against populism in Poland.

Gay Pride Parade

One of the enemies of the ruling party in Poland are, the same as many right-wing and populist parties, LGBTQA+ people. Even Poland's president (who was also a candidate in elections as a PiS member) shared homophobic ideologies in 2020 by arguing that LGBTQA+ individuals "are not humans, they are ideology" (Parkiet challenge, 2020).

The first Gay Pride Parade of Poland was organised in Warsaw in 2005. But it was very far from a true parade: the march was illegal and, participants were very frightened, because no one really could know, what will happen. One of them told later: "we were just trying to get as fast as possible from start to finish of march track, without being hit by bricks, eggs or just being drubbed. It had nothing in common with pride" (Karpieszuk, 2022).

Nowadays the LGBTQA+ situation in Poland remains not good: homophobic statements of Polish political leaders still occur while same-sex marriage is still very not likely to happen in the nearest future. But Gay Pride Parade in last year's looks completely different then dozen years ago. In this year, almost 80 thousand people took part in parade, and it was a truly huge and colourful event in the centre of Warsaw. And what is the most important: it was really gleeful, without unpleasant incidences. It was wonderful festival of diversity and all LGBTQA+ people.



Women's Strike

It is a social movement created in 2016, when Polish parliament was debating about the "Stop abortion" project, which would institute a complete ban on abortion in Poland. At one day, called Black Monday, Polish women organised protests in 147 cities at the same time, to show their disagreement and anger about plans of right-wing politics about abortion. On that day, most of them were wearing black clothes, as a symbol of what they were fighting for. The number of participations in those protests is estimated at almost 200 thousand people.

After that, Polish Women's Strike became popular also in foreign media (Polsatnews, 2020), so that Polish women started cooperating with pro-abortion activities in other countries. Also, on March 8th in 2017 which was the International Women's Day, women's protests were organised in several cities of Poland. The main demands were: stop violence against women's, liberate abortion law, and equal women's opportunities in society. In the following years, Women's Strike activists took part in many protests, not only connected with abortion, but also anti-government, or anticlerical. In last year this movement was very popular in Poland. Especially on October 2020, when PiS politics once again wanted to tighten up abortion regulations, a significant number of women's protests were organised (despite the pandemic regulations). The latter is considered to be the biggest movement against populist and leading party in Poland.

Many women argued that Women's Strike protests were their first public manifestation, because they felt, that it was an important topic for them, and populist politics truly want to have control of their bodies and private choices. That's why Women's Strike is an important example of good practices of dealing with populism in Poland.

Education in schools without manipulation

In August 2021, shortly before the beginning of the new school year, forty Polish organisations connected with education participated in the "Free school" campaign (Polsatnews, 2020). The reason was a government legal act, which would strongly strengthen the position of the Polish Minister of education, who is a conservative, right-wing person. If the new law would be accepted, he would be able to control school directors, even appoint and dismiss them, without any specific reasons, simply because they were "disobeying the orders" of the Minister.

Knowing the political view of the Polish Minister of Education, many parents and organisations were afraid, that teachers will be forced to teach only conservative and



right-wing views, to avoid being fired. In that situation you can expect, that if a director or teacher needs to risk their jobs for teaching pupils about “controversial topics” (such as sex education, abortion, democracy, LGBTQA+), they will not do it. Also, according to new populist politician ideas, social organisations, would not have free access to schools since the approval of the Minister of education would be required.

Many people were saying that ideas in this government legal act are very far from democracy standards and how school education should be organised (Edukacja, 2022). Due to that, numerous educational organisations were against the new law and were demanding to stop it. They had created a big group in social media (their symbol was a red set square), which included not only members of educational organisations, but also teachers, school directors, parents, and students.

Refugees from Ukraine

The outbreak of war in Ukraine was shocking and deeply sad for everyone. Especially in Poland, because in first days of war many people were afraid, that Russia will also attack Poland. But above all, as it could be expected, civil Ukrainians were trying to escape as far as possible from the war. They were getting in the first bus or train, no matter, where it was going. Poland borders with Ukraine from West, so for many Ukrainian people, often whole families, Poland was the first stop, and sometimes also the last one, because they decided to stay in Poland for a longer time. It is estimated, that since beginning of the war in February, almost 6 million people from Ukraine have crossed the border between Poland and Ukraine.

Some people (usually connected with populist organisations) were saying that Polish individuals should not help people from Ukraine. Convincing reasons, for those people, were historical incidents during World War II (when Ukrainian UPA divisions murdered Polish individuals) and anxiety, that refugees will steal Polish peoples’ job places or taxes will increase, because of measures enforced for helping people from Ukraine. Even several small anti-Ukrainian protests were organized in Poland (Bojanowska, 2022).

Nevertheless, fortunately most of Polish society got involved in helping refugees from Ukraine. The vast majority of Polish individuals aided Ukrainians in need by offering them food, water, medical supplies, clothes or money on one from many fund-raisers. What is more, many Polish individuals shared their homes with refugees from Ukraine, often even their whole families. Many people were optimistically surprised, how fast Poles can unite and motive, despite of political issues and different worldviews, to help other people in



emergency situation. According to statistics, 77 percent of Poles have helped people from Ukraine after the beginning of war (Ciepielewski, 2022). It was a truly impressive example of good practice against populism and xenophobic. Even now, eight months after begging of the war, many people are still trying to help people from Ukraine, even though situation in Poland is not easy, because of rising inflation, high energy prices and impact of war.

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