

INSTITUTE OF EUROPEAN STUDIES AND INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS  
FACULTY OF SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC SCIENCES  
COMENIUS UNIVERSITY



## **WELFARE STATE ATTITUDES AND SUPPORT FOR POLITICAL POPULISM**

**Steven Saxonberg and Tomáš Sirovátka**

**Jean Monnet Chair Working Papers in Political Sociology**

**issue no. 2/2019**

**(for the Jean Monnet Project EUPOLSOC)**



Co-funded by the  
Erasmus+ Programme  
of the European Union

The European Commission's support for the production of this publication does not constitute an endorsement of the contents, which reflect the views only of the authors, and the Commission cannot be held responsible for any use which may be made of the information contained therein.

The work on this working paper was supported by the APVV grant 17-0596 for the project "Politics of emotions as a form of political inclusion and exclusion" and the Jean Monnet Chair project EUPOLSOC.

Institute of European Studies and International Relations

Faculty of Social and Economic Sciences

Comenius University

Bratislava

2019

**Jean Monnet Chair Working Papers in Political Sociology**

Editorial Board:

*Steven Saxonberg*

*Ol'ga Gyarfášová*

*Anton Gazarek*

FOR ACADEMIC USE

ISSN 2644-6596

Copyright notice: [ ] © Anton Gazarek, December 2019 [ ]

All rights reserved. No reproduction, copy or transmission of this publication or parts thereof may be made without written consent of the author(s).

## Introduction

In recent decades, populist parties and leaders have obtained great political success, winning elections (Trump in the USA, *Forza Italia* in Italy, *Smer* in Slovakia, ANO in the Czech Republic, *PiS* in Poland, FIDESZ in Hungary, *Syriza* in Greece, etc.) or they have gained enough seats to become a minority partner in government (FPÖ in Austria, *Věci veřejné* in the Czech Republic). In other cases, government coalitions have had to rely on the support of populist parties to stay in power (e.g. *Dansk Folkeparti* in Denmark). This has led to an upsurge in studies over the reasons for the increasing popularity of populist parties. The first studies focused on the factors that explain the rise of right-wing populist parties, but some later the studies have also analyzed the rise of left-wing populist parties. These recent studies have compared the common and distinct features and factors of the success of the left- and right-wing populist parties.<sup>1</sup> Studies investigating the factors behind the rise of populism focus on the individual level factors as well as on the contextual/country level factors. The latter group of factors includes sociological (social structures, and values/attitudes), economic and political (e.g. Lubbers et al. 2002).

Despite the many studies that have been carried out, two areas have been relatively neglected. One is *the interplay between welfare attitudes and support for populist parties*. Some political sociologists claim that in the post-World War II era, class struggles have moved from the area of ownership to the field of social policy (i.e. Esping-Andersen 1990, Korpi 1981, Ginsburg 1992 and Svallfors 1997). If this is the case, then we might expect that even if class-based voting has decreased in recent years, welfare attitudes should still play a major role in voting *including* voting for populist parties. The second issue is the question as to whether leftwing and rightwing populist parties share similar attitudinal patterns regarding the issues of the welfare state and in what respect these patterns are different. This is an

<sup>1</sup> There is a close association between the right/left-wing radicalism and populism, see theoretical section below.

important issue that has implications for developing political strategies that aim to decrease the strength of the radical populist parties and for the role of welfare state/social policies in these strategies.

This study aims to investigate the role of the welfare state attitudes in the interaction with the contextual variables that represent a direct challenge for the welfare state like unemployment, poverty, low living standards and inequality. We neglect here many important institutional political factors that were identified as crucial drivers of support for populism like degree of political decentralization, ideological position of other political parties, degree of convergence between parties of mainstream right and mainstream left, and other (e.g. Arzheimer and Carter 2006).

In the next section we discuss at the general level the interaction between welfare attitudes and support for political populism (right-wing and left-wing). After summarizing the existing studies we suggest some hypotheses. In the methodological section we explain the dataset, the variables and measures used, as well as our statistical methodology. Then we present the findings and finally, we discuss them in broader context.

## **Theoretical assumptions**

### ***Populism, its sources and the welfare state***

Gidron and Bonikowski (2014) see populism as a set of ideas, as a discursive style and as a political strategy. They summarize that four ideas are central to populism:

- (1) the existence of two homogenous groups: “the people” and “the established elite;”
- (2) an antagonistic relationship exists between these two groups;

(3) populist parties portray “the people” as virtuous, while the elite are denigrated; and  
(4) the will of the people is considered the ultimate source of legitimacy (popular sovereignty) (cf. Spruyt, Keppens and Van Drrogenbroek (2016: 336).

Studies of populism often emphasize the confrontational, chameleonic, culture-bound and context-dependent character of populism (Arter 2010, Gidron and Bonikowski 2014) as it cuts across ideological cleavages (Kaltwasser 2013), fused with either left or right-wing appeals (Mudde and Kaltwasser 2011). These features conform/correspond to the political strategy of populism: “populist policies thus emerge as a way for politicians to signal that they will choose future policies in line with the interest of median voter” (Acemoglu et al. 2011: 31). Next, because of the “lack of key values” populism is “particularly liable to the politics of personality” (Taggart 2000: 101, in Gidron and Bonikowski 2014: 13).

In short, scholars often consider populism to be a specific discourse or ideology, where the key emphasis is on the tension between “the people” versus the elites, as well as between “the people” and the “dangerous others.” For those on the left, these groups are large business corporations and financial interests; for those on the right these groups are minority groups like immigrants, the unemployed, environmentalists, and feminists. Populism combines centralized organizational structures with charismatic leaders and the understanding of democracy as unmediated popular sovereignty (Zaslove, 2008: 323).

Populist movements cover the entire political spectrum. Zaslove (2008) distinguishes center, radical right, left and national populist parties. Mudde (2007) differentiates between radical rightwing populist parties (which oppose liberal democracy) and non-radical populist rightist parties (which accept liberal democracy). Some studies suggest that there is significant – although not complete – overlap between political radicalism and populism. It is its degree of radicalism that determines how populist is the party – not the right-left position of the party. This is because the new radical right and radical left parties replaced their attacks on

liberal democracy with a much more modest critique of the political establishment (Rooduijn and Akkerman 2017). In addition, populism is not a dichotomous category: it might better be conceived as a scale: parties may be more or less populist (ibid.: 193).

Some scholars claim that globalization and the breakdown of the post-war social-market compromise between labor and capital is the source of the rise of populism. If this is true, then the performance of the welfare state and the assessment of the welfare state by the public is one of the key triggers of this change. Taggart (in Zaslove 2008: 324), for example, argues that growing demands, particularly in expansive Christian democratic and social democratic welfare states raised expectations to such levels that government could not adequately respond to voters, particularly due to the declining resources.

### ***The rise of political populism***

In this paper we focus only on “demand side explanations” of support for populism that may be examined in the attitudes of the public. We assume that there are two main mechanisms that mediate the relationship between the welfare state and support of the public for populism. The first one is the compensation/protective function of the welfare state, the second one is the formative/education function of the welfare state.

The most common demand-side, macro theories emphasize that the causes of populism are (cf. Mudde 2007: 201-231): 1) *modernization and globalization*; 2) *economic, social, and/or political crises*; 3) *ethnic backlash and unresolved ethnic cleavages*; and 4) a *latent authoritarian systemic legacy* in formerly fascist or communist societies.

According to the *modernization/globalization hypothesis*, support for populist parties is expected to be strong among the losers of modernization and globalization processes.

Scholars have stressed that radical right-wing populist parties received support from groups

that lose from contemporary features of modernisation (Betz 1994, Kaltwasser 2015, Kitschelt 1995, Kriesi et al. 2006 and 2014, Spruyt, Keppens and Van Droogenbroek 2016). Swank and Betz (2002: 221) explain that globalisation/internationalisation is associated with declines in demand for lower-skilled workers and increase in economic uncertainties (as well as attendant threats to the social status, values and institutions of affected groups). This process coincides with the significant immigration of culturally diverse population that has taken place in recent decades in Europe. Spruyt, Keppens and Van Droogenbroek (2016: 337) note that support for populism originates in different types of experienced vulnerability. They identify three central consequences of globalisation: increased economic competition, heightened cultural diversity and cultural competition, and increased political competition between the state and all kinds of supra-national organisations. In consequence, the losers of globalisation are not only those low educated but also those who face difficulties in finding positive social identity, irrespective of their actual competences – typical with members of the lower and working classes<sup>2</sup> (identity insecurity). Lastly, the feelings of the political discontent and feelings of a lack of political efficacy and less interest in politics are associated with support for populism. Summed up, very different feelings of economic, cultural and political vulnerability come together when forming the support for populism.

Another mechanism that links the welfare state and support for populism is the formative function/effect of the welfare state. The welfare state acts as a socializing force that shapes citizens' political and ideological beliefs (e.g. Dallinger 2010, Jaeger 2009, Pierson 2001). The welfare state teaches citizens political lessons concerning deservingness, a sense of entitlement, and norms relating to participation and policies (Kumlin and Stadelmann-Steffen 2014a: 7-8). Norm-shaping function of public policy means that people are aware of the cues and norms that social policy sends out (Reeskens and Van Oorschot 2012: 1178).

<sup>2</sup> Globalisation is not only an economic or technical phenomenon, but also a cultural revolution in which a particular cosmopolitan identity is actively promoted.

People's experiences with the impact of welfare policies thus form their expectations about government policies which in turn influence their (dis)satisfaction with the policies. The literature refers here to the *political and moral logic*. Rothstein (1998) suggests that universal welfare state that provides relatively generous and universal social benefits and services (adjusted to the tastes of the more affluent middle class) will promote high levels of mass support for welfare state and national institutions.

Following these assumptions, we might expect less support for populism in countries that provide universal and generous welfare state benefits and services. On the other hand, since the formative effect of welfare regime shapes also the expectations of those living under it, the room for support for (left-wing) populism may expand with the universalism and generosity of the welfare state due to learned high expectations towards the welfare state that are not met at the end, and shrink when the expectations towards the welfare state are modest and easy to meet them. For example, the expectations for social protection in post-communist countries may be high, because people's expectations were formed by the state-paternalism of the communist regime and these expectations continue to exist in the post-communist era (Dalinger, 2010; Andreß and Heien, 2001; Lipsmeyer and Nordstrom, 2003).

We combine both assumptions/hypotheses on the interface between the welfare state and support for populism, assuming that support for populism is embedded in deep feeling of discontent which is to great extent due to the feelings of lack of external political efficacy. This means that if 1) the welfare state does not fulfil the protective/compensation role/function and/or 2) the formative effect of the welfare state does not promote solidarity, respect and trust in state intervention and/or 3) if the learned expectations towards the compensation function are too high that it is difficult to meet them (due to the formative effect), then support for populism will be greater.

If a persistent discrepancy emerges between citizens' expectations and the actual policies implemented by the government, rising levels of distrust will likely result (Oskarsen, 2007: 127). In brief, policy (dis)satisfaction points to a central feature of the mechanisms by which the welfare state may affect political attitudes of the citizens.

In this paper, we assume – in line with the existing literature (see below) - that the ideological and context-dependent expectations of the supporters towards welfare state issues will be different, depending on whether the populist party has a rightist or a leftist orientation.

#### *Varieties in populisms and support for the welfare state*

Populist parties and their supporters, independently of their orientation, share some commonalities: they combine an ardent glorification of the people with fierce critique towards political and economic elites. Both types of parties are nationalist (they share a focus on economic and political nationalism), they are Eurosceptic and they share key political discontents, while their supporters come from similar social strata (Rooduijn and Burgoon 2018, Burgoon et al. 2018, Rooduijn and Akkerman 2017, Rooduijn et al. 2017, Visser et al. 2014).

At the same time, they come from the ideologies these parties stem from combined with their peripheral position vis-à-vis their party systems: while radical right populist parties combine anti-elitism with cultural themes, radical left populist parties combine anti-elitism with economic topics (e.g. Rooduijn and Akkerman 2017: 196). Their ideological profiles are sharply diverging, expressing traditions associated with the mainstream parties, particularly with respect to (non-)egalitarian, (non-)altruistic and (anti-)cosmopolitan values (e.g. Rooduijn et al. 2017). Hence, there are major differences between radical populist left and right parties on issues such as redistribution and immigration (Burgoon et al. 2018, Rooduijn et al. 2017, Visser et al. 2014). In Eastern Europe, populism seems to be, much more so than

in Western Europe, a message that is also employed by mainstream parties – as a result, the relationship between left-right radicalism and populism in Eastern Europe might be much less strong or even absent (Rooduijn and Akkerman 2017: 201).

Writing about Latin America, Kemmerling (2017) claims that support for both right-wing and left-wing populism originates in the lack of the commitment for formal or informal cross-class coalitions that enable the establishment of a well-organized welfare state. In contrast European welfare states are traditionally based on cross-class alliance and consensus (Baldwin 1990, Esping-Andersen 1990) that combines left forces with a moderate preference for redistribution and moderate right forces with preferences for a strongly organised insurance state (2017: 37). Eastern European democracies seem to follow policy cycles and excessive policy volatility similar to Latin America (2017: 52). The root cause of the (economic) populism is the lack of an implicate grand coalition which guarantees the rules of redistribution game, reducing fears of total redistribution among the political Right and the Left's fear of radical liberalisation (2017: 52-53).

### ***(Radical) right-wing populism (RRP) and the welfare state***

Support for RRP is traditionally associated with a declining economy (rising unemployment and inflation), rising levels of immigration, and dissatisfaction with the political regime (e.g. Knigge 1998, Lubbers et al. 2002). Although the findings on the effects of economic conditions are contradictory, the immigration issue seems to be the key trigger of the increasing support for RRP. Globalization losers perceive immigrants (and the other outer groups) to be competitors to the losers of globalization/modernization. According to this explanation, fears of competition for scarce resources increase when immigration increases (e.g. Lubbers et al. (2002), Arzheimer and Carter (2006). More generally, radical right populism has a strong focus on advancing the interests of the “modal” citizen (fairness for

average citizen), relative to “outsiders” and the “undeserving/lazy poor.” They are strongly against what they perceive as the opportunistic economic dependency of these outsider groups (e.g. Swank and Betz 2003, Burgoon et al. 2018). Empirical evidence exists that welfare states characterised by universal coverage of populations, a generous social wage and well developed employment policies depress the support for the new far right in times of new risks and insecurities (Swank and Betz 2003, Reeskens and Van Oorschot 2013), probably because of both the social stratification effect (the reduction of poverty and social inequality) and the formative effect, i.e. solidaristic attitudes that universalist welfare states promote.

Hence, studies on welfare attitudes of the supporters of rightwing populist parties generally conclude that these voters support welfare chauvinism. That is, they believe that “natives” should get more social benefits, while outgroups (such as immigrants and minority ethnic groups) should get less (e.g. De Koster et al., 2013; Emmenegger and Klemmensen, 2013; Van der Waal et al., 2010; Van Oorschot, 2000, 2006).

Other studies report that rightwing populist voters do not view ethnic minorities as less deserving *per se*, but rather they oppose giving more benefits to these groups because they allegedly display more “unfavourable” characteristics in other areas than are not related to their ethnic group (Koostra 2016). Jedenastik (2017) suggests that the support for welfare chauvinism is different in the case of principles of justice embedded in different types of programmes. He claims that social insurance and universal social benefits (based on citizenship) lead to low levels of welfare chauvinism, a high level of chauvinism arises for programs based on residency or means-testing. His findings confirm that the contribution-based elements of social programs are less likely to draw nativist criticism (for a similar conclusion see also Reeskens and Van Oorschot 2013).

The impact of the welfare attitudes on support for populism interacts not only with the individual social and demographic characteristics of people but also with the country level

contexts.<sup>3</sup> Regarding the contextual factors, economic conditions and immigration that are in the centre of debate, represent the challenges for the welfare state. The traditional argument was that growing inflation and unemployment in 1970s and 1980s contributed to the mobilization of latent right-wing extreme attitudes among the public, the ‘modernization losers’ in particular (e.g. Betz 1994, Kitschelt 1995) and the unemployed (Jackman and Volpert 1996). On the other hand, other studies provide contradictory results: unemployment does not exert the anticipated effect on potential vote support for rightwing populist parties. Instead, increasing unemployment decreases support for rightwing populist parties (Knigge 1998, Lubbers et al. 2002, Arzheimer and Carter 2006). The explanation is that when unemployment is on rise, traditional left-wing parties as well as mainstream centre and centre-right wing parties develop policies for dealing with these issues, so voters turn to these parties rather than small oppositional populist parties (Knigge 1998, Arzheimer and Carter 2006). Furthermore, people in prosperous countries are afraid to lose what they have gained in times of prosperity (Lubbers et al. 2002). On the other hand, Golder (2003) suggest, that in contrast to the old radical (fascist) right, the level of immigration and unemployment matter for the new RRP parties support. However, the effect of unemployment of this support is conditional on the level of immigration: when the immigration rate is high, increasing unemployment leads to greater support for radical right populist parties. Rygdren and Ruth (2013), however, document that in Sweden higher unemployment rates and lower average incomes lead to greater support for rightwing populism, because the socio-economically marginalized come into potential conflict with immigrants over scarce resources.

Individual level variables interact with the contextual/country level variables. Han (2016) suggests that income inequality (either the Gini or Decile ratio) increases support for radical right-wing parties among the poor but decreases support for these parties among the

<sup>3</sup> The supporters of rightwing populist parties are those losers of globalization who bear nativist and authoritarian attitudes.

rich in Western Europe. If there is a high level of income inequality, many poor belonging to the ethnic majority do not identify with the poor, but rather develop a cross-class sociocultural identity. In doing so they shift their attention to sociocultural issues rather than economic ones and thereby embrace nationalism. In addition, Van der Waal et al. (2013) find that varying levels of welfare chauvinism in European countries (measured as a degree to which the public considers immigrants entitled for welfare state provisions) may be fully attributed to the (post-transfer) income inequality which is an outcome of the welfare regime.

Rooduijn and Burgoon (2018) on the other hand document that individual economic hardship leads to radical right voting when socioeconomic circumstances are favourable and if social protection is high; the reason being that if marginalized people suffer amid favourable general economic conditions, these people feel they have been treated unfairly and therefore, turn to the populist right. In addition, risk avoidance strategy is an explanation: if economic conditions are favourable there is less risk that a radical right-wing party would fail to protect the vulnerable because of lack of experience of governing the country.

#### *(Radical) left-wing populism (RLP) and the welfare state*

Rodrik (2018) claims that while rightwing populism in Europe is based on the fear that immigrants will erode welfare benefits, in Latin America, leftwing populism has emerged based on the fear that international organizations such as the IMF force welfare cutbacks and austerity, while pressuring governments to allow foreign companies to take over utilities and national resources. Although he acknowledges the existence of leftist populism, he sees it as mostly a Latin American phenomenon rather than something that has impact on European politics.

Even though most research has been on rightwing populism, some recent studies have analyzed the rise of radical left-wing populism in Europe. These studies find that leftwing

populist parties embrace state intervention in the economy, claim to have socialistic or social democratic principles, but tend to oppose the EU's austerity policies and engage in some amount of economic nationalism. They oppose a "Neo-liberal Europe" but not a "Social Europe" (e.g. Rooduijn et al. 2017). As Kreisi (2014: 370) notes, rather than emphasize the nation, leftwing populists tend to emphasize defence of the national welfare state against Europe and aim to defend "the economic privileges of domestic sectors of the economy and of domestic production sites". Or as March (2007: 66) puts it:

Left-populists are 'populist' in that the 'moral people versus corrupt elite' dichotomy is central to their ideology. They generally have far less concern with doctrinal purity and class-consciousness than the traditional left. They adopt organizational features common to other populist parties across the political spectrum, such as the emphasis on a charismatic leader who has unmediated communication with his people and distaste for formal organization. Nevertheless, they are 'left' in their emphasis on egalitarianism, and their identification of economic inequity as the basis of existing political and social arrangements. The espousal of collective economic and social rights for their chosen people constitutes their principal agenda.

Similarly, March and Mudde (2005: 35) write about what they see as the emergence of leftwing social-populist parties, which accept parliamentary democracy and have an anti-capitalist profile:

However, whereas traditional socialists' egalitarianism and 'proletarian' anti-elitism might seem to lend themselves towards populism, their concern with doctrinal principle and the correct class politics did not. The social-populist parties are less overtly Marxist,

and as concerned with extending their vote as constituency representation. They are populist in terms of juxtaposing ‘the moral people’ against ‘the corrupt elite.’

Thus, defending the national welfare state, egalitarianism (in contrast to the right-wing populism), and anti-globalization (similarly to right-wing populism) form parts of the populist left. In the recent developments of welfare states, the window of opportunity for left-wing populism increased because social democratic parties have often supported measures resulting in welfare state retrenchment. Leftwing populist parties emerge when there is no credible left, as the left has been associated with communism (in Slovakia) or where the main socialist or social democratic parties become known for corruption and their market-oriented policies differ little from the rightwing parties (Greece and Spain). The voters of these parties hold leftwing views on social policies, but are disenchanted with the political elite. This leads to the welfarist hypothesis that supporters of leftwing populist parties will be more support of general welfare policies than supporters of rightwing populist parties. In particular they support government redistribution and redressing the privileges of the rich elite and the idea of social justice (Burgoon et al. 2018, March 2011, Ramiro 2014, Rooduijn et al. 2017, Visser et al. 2014), with far reaching consequences for the attitudes towards welfare state.

When it comes to the country-level economic aspects, some studies have concluded that worsening economic conditions increase support for the radical-left populist countries, similarly as high income inequalities. The empirical evidence, however, is not convincing. While some studies confirm expectations about positive correlation of unemployment and support for rightwing populist parties (March and Rommerskirchen 2015), others provide different results. According to Visser et al. (2014), unemployment and GDP level is not associated with support for ‘social populists’, and income inequalities are negatively correlated with support for such groups. The reason is that in the absence of a strong radical

left, concerns about income inequality are less prominent in public debates, so less support for leftwing populism emerges. In addition, the degree of social mobility might be more important than income inequality in explaining support for leftwing populism.

In contrast, Rooduijn and Burgoon (2018) document that immigration figures matter in interaction with individual economic hardship for voting for the radical left (including those parties classified as being “populis”): individual economic hardship only leads to radical left voting if the immigration level is low. Risk avoidance can explain this: since radical left parties are not very interested in immigration, the less well-off may perceive it to be risky to vote for the radical left when immigration rate is high, because they are afraid that immigrants will “steal” their jobs and welfare provisions.

## **Hypotheses**

*Based on the above discussion, and following the logic of the available arguments on the interface between populism and the welfare state we formulate our hypotheses as follows:*

### *H1 Welfare chauvinism/nativism*

*The voters/supporters of left populist parties are not against the full social rights to be provided to immigrants while supporters of right populist parties are strongly against.*

*At the country level: the difference in attitudes increases with the increasing immigration rates/increasing share of immigrants in population*

### *H2 Ideological distance*

*The voters/supporters of left populist parties support strongly government redistribution while supporters of right populist parties support government redistribution only conditionally (in some policy areas), emphasizing the principle of merit.*

*At the country level:*

*support for redistribution by supporters of right populist parties decreases when immigration is high.*

### *H3 Deservingness*

*The voters/supporters of left populist parties support strongly government responsibility for standard of living of the unemployed as well as of the living standard of pensioners while supporters of right populist parties support government responsibility only for the pensioners (related to the principles of merit and deservingness, not altruism).*

### *H4 The perceived effects of the welfare state*

*The voters/supporters of left populist parties do not think that social benefits hurt the economy while supporters of right populist parties fear they do hurt the economy.*

Give our lack of time, we did not fully investigate all of the hypotheses as much as we would like, but we will do so in the revised version.

## **Method**

We use the European Social Survey database from 2016, because it is the most recent European-wide survey that includes many questions on welfare attitudes as well as voting. We eliminated Israel from the sample because our article focuses on Europe. We also eliminated Russia because it does not have a liberal democracy, with competitive elections. Since Putin dominates the political scene, now rightwing or leftwing populist parties could emerge. We also eliminated respondents under 18 as they cannot vote.

Unfortunately, the countries with the two strongest leftwing populist parties (Greece and Slovakia) did not participate in the survey. Consequently, the number of voters of

leftwing populist parties is rather low at only 727 respondents of a total of 28,250 respondents. This compares to 2,706 voters of rightwing populist parties, which makes our data more reliable for the rightwing populist voters. For coding the parties, we used Rooduijn et al. (2019).

Ideally, we would want to perform a multilevel, multinomial analysis. However, the regular STATA commands for multilevel modelling do not allow for this; so instead we have performed separate logic regressions for rightwing populist and leftwing populist voting. We just found out that there are some ways around this in STATA, such as using its structural equation modelling functions or downloading a certain ado-program, so for our next draft we will look into these matters and learn how to apply these methods. Similarly, for this draft we did not have time to take any steps for dealing with missing variables, so we used the default listwise deletion function for this first draft.

In addition to adding variables on voting and welfare attitudes, we added sociodemographic variables: gender, age category, educational level, household income (in deciles) and whether one is unemployed.

At the country level at this state we used GDP-level adjusted for purchasing power, the risk of poverty and the immigration rate. Although it was not one of our hypotheses, we also added the variable as to whether the country was post-communist or not, just to see if there are any differences in dynamics between these countries and other European countries. In our revised draft, we will probably add change in GDP over time and Gini coefficient, but as all country-level variables so far have been very far from being significant, we are doubtful whether this will change our results.

## Results

We present here three models. Model 1 only includes welfare attitudes as well as the country-level variable as to whether a country is post-communist or not. In Model 2, we add sociodemographic variables. Model 3 adds country-level economic and social variables. Since it turns out that none of the country-level variables are statistically significant, we will leave them out of our discussion here (see Table 1, Model 3).

### TABLE 1 ABOUT HERE

The first and most common hypothesis about the relationship between welfare attitudes and voting for populist parties concerns *welfare chauvinism*. According to this hypothesis we expect voters of rightwing populist parties, but not voters of leftwing populist parties to be against welfare rights for immigrants. Our results confirm this hypothesis as there is a high correlation between believing that immigrants do not deserve social benefits and voting for rightwing populist parties (see Q1 1, Table 1). Meanwhile, the variable is not statistically significant for voters of leftwing populist parties.

The second hypothesis is about *ideological distance*. We expect voters of leftwing populist parties to support government redistribution while supporters of rightwing populist parties only give conditional support, for the cases in which they think government support is merited. Our hypothesis is partially confirmed. Leftwing populist voters are indeed more likely to think that large income differentials are not acceptable (Q2) and that differences in living standards should be small (Q3). However, when it comes to governmental responsible for actual aid programs, in Model 1 only support for childcare services is statistically significant (Q8), while in the full model (3) only support for the elderly is significant (Q6).

Our hypothesis works out better for voters of rightwing populist parties. As predicted, they do not support more equality (Q2-3) and they only think the government should be responsible for the elderly (Q6), which is a group that has no control over their situation, as

everyone who does not die young becomes elderly. Thus, in their view, the elderly merit support.

The third hypothesis is about *deservingness*. We expected voters of rightwing populist parties to be more selective in who they feel “deserves” social support than supporters of leftwing populist parties, who we expected to generally support social benefits. In general, we expected deservingness to be a much more important issue for supporters of rightwing populist parties.

Contrary to our expectations, voters of leftwing populist parties did not support aid to the unemployed (Q7) and they only supported benefits for the elderly in the full model (Q8). In the first model they also supported childcare services (Q8), but this relationship became insignificant in the full model. A possible explanation is that the sociodemographic variable age shows that those who are 31-40 years old are more likely to vote for leftwing populist parties (although they are also more likely to vote for rightwing populist parties). Thus, they might have been supportive of childcare because they were more likely to be at the age in which they had young children, who were in need of childcare. What is even more surprising is the results of the questions directly dealing with the issue of deservingness. It turns out that voters of leftwing populist parties are more likely to think that many unemployed people do not really try to find jobs (Q5).

In contrast, supporters of rightwing populist parties were actually against the notion that many unemployed do not try to find jobs. In addition, they were also against the notion that many who receive benefits are not entitled (Q4). This is the opposite of our expectations. Moreover, even though these voters do not believe the unemployed are abusing the system, they still do not think that the government should insure that the unemployed have a reasonable living standard (Q7). As predicted, supporters of rightwing parties only

support government responsibility only for the pensioners (which the literature claims is related to the principles of merit and deservingness, not altruism). Yet, one could think that if the unemployed are not abusing the system then they should be deserving of support. It is also interesting to note in this context that being unemployed is *not* statistically significant, which means that even the unemployed, who vote for rightwing populist parties do not think the unemployed in general should be getting generous aid from the government.

Our final hypothesis concerns the *perceived effects of the welfare state*. In this case our results confirm our hypothesis: voters of rightwing parties are more likely to think that social benefits place too much strain on the economy (Q9), while voters of leftwing populist parties are less likely to believe that.

When it comes to the sociodemographic variables, they were not central to our hypotheses, but still some points are worth noting. First, household income was negatively correlated with voting for leftwing populist parties, making their pattern similar to traditional social democratic parties. Second it turns out that education does not matter for leftwing populist voting. As expected, those with university education are less likely to vote for rightwing populist parties. Third, supporters of leftwing populist voters seem to be more youthful than those of rightwing populist parties, while rightwing populist voters tend to be more middle aged. Thus, only the 21-40 age category was statistically significant for voting for leftwing populist parties, while all three categories for people under 60 were significant for voting for rightwing populist parties. However, even though voters of rightwing populist parties think that government should ensure high living standards for the elderly, being near retirement age or over it was not significant.

Finally, our findings contradict previous studies over the role of gender. Some conclude that gender is insignificant for support for leftwing populist parties (Ramiro 2016, Rooduijn 2018, Visser etl. Al 2014) or women are significantly more supportive f than men

(Rooduijn 2018, Rooduij and Burgoon 2018). Other studies conclude that women are significantly more supportive of leftwing populist parties than rightwing ones (Visser et al. 2014, Rooduijn et al. 2017). Our results show that men are more supportive of both leftwing and rightwing populism than are women.

## **Conclusion**

There seems to be clear differences in welfare attitudes between leftwing and rightwing populist voters, but the differences are not always as predicted. Leftwing populist voters do not share the *welfare chauvinism* of rightwing populist voters, they are more traditionally left wing in that they want a society with a high level of equality, and they do not think that social benefits strain the economy. Yet, they are populist in the sense that they think that the unemployed abuse their benefits as many do not really try to find jobs. There is also the interesting seeming contradiction that although they support a society with a high level of equality, they do not think the government should be responsible for providing a good living standard for the unemployed, nor do they believe the state should support working families by providing daycare (at least not in the full model). Similar to rightwing populist voters, however, they think the state should provide a reasonable living standard for the elderly.

Rightwing populist voters, by contrast, do support welfare chauvinism, which verifies the most common hypothesis about welfare attitudes and rightwing populism. As one would expect from rightwing voters, they also do not think the government should be responsible for making sure that the unemployed have a reasonable living standard or that working families have access to daycare. In line with the *deservingness* hypothesis, they do think that the elderly deserves government support, so they make an exception for this case. Surprisingly, they are actually less likely than leftwing populist voters to think that people are abusing the system. In other words, even though they follow traditional rightwing views in opposing

welfare benefits (except for the elderly, whom many conservatives consider to be “deserving”), they do not believe that beneficiaries are abusing the system. Similar to traditional rightwing voters, they do believe, however, that welfare benefits strain the economy (thereby supporting the *perceived effects of the welfare state* hypothesis). So, they seem to oppose welfare benefits in general for the traditional rightwing view that social spending hurts the economy rather than because people are abusing the system. Thus, *ideological difference* hypothesis is partially confirmed in that there are ideological differences between leftwing and rightwing populist voters, but the differences are not always the ones the hypothesis predicted.

Finally, it is interesting to discover that country-level variables do not seem to matter. This implies that – at least at the European level – there are universal characteristics among leftwing and rightwing populist voters that are not influenced by their country setting.

## References

- Acemoglu, Daron, Georgy Egorov and Konstantin Sonin. 2011. 'A Political Theory of Populism,' *NBER Working Papers 17306*, National Bureau of Economic Research, Inc.
- Andreß, H.-J. and Heien, T. (2001) “Four Worlds of Welfare State Attitudes? A Comparison of Germany, Norway, and the United States,” *European Sociological Review* 17 (4): 337-356.
- Arter, David. 2010. ‘The Breakthrough of Another West European Populist Radical Right Party? The Case of the True Finns’. *Government and Opposition*, Vol. 45(4), pp. 484–504.
- Arzheimer, K. (2009). Contextual factors and the extreme right vote in Western Europe, 1980–2002. *American Journal of Political Science*, 53(2), 259–275.
- Arzheimer, K., & Carter, E. (2006). Political opportunity structures and right-wing extremist party success. *European Journal of Political Research*, 45(3), 419–443.
- Betz, H.-g. (1993) the New Politics of Resentment. Radical Right-wing Populist Parties in Western Europe. *Comparative Politics*. 25 (4), 413-427.
- Betz, H. G. (1994). *Radical right-wing populism in Western Europe*. New York: MacMillan Press LTD.

- Cappelen, Cornelius, & Midtbø, Tor. (2016). Intra-EU Labour Migration and Support for the Norwegian Welfare State. *European Sociological Review*, 32(6), 691-703.
- Dallinger, U. (2010) "Public Support for Redistribution: What Explains Cross-National Differences?" *Journal of European Social Policy* 20 (4): 333–349.
- De Koster, W., Achterberg, P. and Van Der Waal, J. (2013) the New Right and the Welfare State: the Electoral Relevance of Welfare Chauvinism and Welfare Populism in the Netherlands. *International Political Science Review* 34(1): 3–20.
- Emmenegger, P. and Klemmensen, R. (2013) Immigration and Redistribution Revisited: How Different Motivations Can Offset Each Other. *Journal of European Social Policy* 23(4): 406–422.
- Ennsner-Jedenastik, L. 2018. Welfare Chauvinism in Populist Radical Right Platforms: The Role of Redistributive Justice Principles, *Social Policy and Administration* 52(1): 293-314, <https://doi.org/10.1111/spol.12325>
- Esping-Andersen, Gøsta, 1990. *The Three Worlds of Welfare Capitalism*, Cambridge: Polity Press.
- Gidron N, Bonikowski B. [Varieties of Populism: Literature Review and Research Agenda](#), in Weatherhead Working Paper Series, No. 13-0004 ; 2013.
- Golder, M. (2003). Explaining variation in the success of extreme right parties in Western Europe. *Comparative Political Studies*, 36(4), 432–466.
- Ginsburg, Norman (1992) *Divisions of Welfare: A Critical Introduction to Comparative Social Policy* (London: Sage).
- Han, K.J. (2016). Income inequality and voting for radical right-wing parties. *Electoral Studies*, 42(1), 54-64.
- Jackman, R. W., & Volpert, K. (1996). Conditions favouring parties of the extreme right in Western Europe. *British Journal of Political Science*, 26(4), 501-521.
- Jaeger, M.M. (2009) "United but Divided: Welfare Regimes and the Level and Variance in Public Support for Redistribution," *European Sociological Review*, 25 (6): 723–737.
- Kaltwasser, Cristobal Rovira. 2014. 'The Responses of Populist to Dahl's Democratic Dilemmas', *Political Studies*.62, 470-487.
- Kemmerlink, A. 2017. *Populism and the Welfare State: Why Some Latin American Countries Produce Cycles Instead of Stability*. Weisbaden: Springer.
- Kitschelt, Herbert and Anthony J. McGann (1995), *The Radical Right in Western Europe*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press.

- Kitschelt, H., Mansfeldova, Z., Markowski, R. and Tóka, G. (1999) *Post-communist Party Systems: Competition, Representation, and Inter-party Cooperation*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Kootstra, Anouk. (2016). Deserving and Undeserving Welfare Claimants in Britain and the Netherlands: Examining the Role of Ethnicity and Migration Status Using a Vignette Experiment. *European Sociological Review*, 32(3), 325-338.
- Knigge, P. (1998). The ecological correlates of right-wing extremism in Western Europe. *European Journal of Political Research*, 34 (2) (1998), pp. 249–279.
- Korpi, Walter (1981) *Den demokratiska klasskampen. Svensk politik i jämförande perspektiv* (Stockholm: Tidens förlag).
- Kriesi, H. K. (2014) the Populist Challenge, *West European Politics*, 37(2) P. 361-378,
- Kumlin, S. and Stadelmann-Steffen, I. (2014a) “Citizens, policy feedback and European welfare states,” in Kumlin, S. and Stadelmann-Steffen, I. (eds.) *How Welfare States Shape Democratic Public. Policy Feedback, Participation, Voting, and Attitudes*, pp. 3–18, Cheltenham, UK, Northampton, US, MA: Edward Elgar.
- Lipsmeyer, C.S. and Nordstrom, T. (2003) “East Versus West: Comparing Political Attitudes and Welfare Preferences across European Societies,” *Journal of European Public Policy* 10 (3): 339–64.
- Lubbers, M., Gijsberts, M., & Scheepers, P. (2002). Extreme right-wing voting in Western Europe. *European Journal of Political Research*, 41(3), 345–378.
- March, L. (2007) “From vanguard of the Proletariat to Vox Populi: Left-populism as a 'Shadow' of Contemporary Socialism,” *Sais Review of International Affairs*, 27(1), P. 63-77.
- March, L. (2011). *Radical Left Parties in Europe*. New York: Routledge.
- March, L., & Mudde, C. (2005). What's left of the radical left? The European radical left after 1989: Decline and mutation. *Comparative European Politics*, 3(1), 23-49.
- March, L. and Rommerskirchen, Ch. 2015, Out of left field? Explaining the variable electoral success of European radical left parties, *Party Politics*, 21(1) 40–53, DOI: 10.1177/1354068812462929
- Mény, Y. and Surel, Y. (2002) *the Constitutive Ambiguity of Populism*. In Mény, Y. and Surel, Y.(Eds.) *Democracies and the Populist Challenge*. Basingstoke: Palgrave.
- Mudde, C. (2007) *Populist Radical Right Parties in Europe*. Cambridge: Cambridge U. Press.
- Mudde, Cas and Cristóbal Rovira Kaltwasser (eds.). 2012. *Populism in Europe and the Americas*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

- Oskarsen, M. (2007) "Social Risk, Policy Dissatisfaction and Political Alienation. A Comparison of Six European Countries," in Svallfors, S. (ed.) *The Political Sociology of the Welfare State. Institutions, Social Cleavages, and Orientations*, pp. 117–148, Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press.
- Pierson, P. (2001) *The New Politics of The Welfare State*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Ramiro, L. (2016). Support for radical left parties in Western Europe: social background, ideology and political orientations. *European Political Science Review*, 8(1), 1–23.
- Reeskens, T. & van Oorschot, W. J. H., 2012. Disentangling the 'New Liberal Dilemma': On the relation between general welfare redistribution preferences and welfare chauvinism, *International Journal of Comparative Sociology*. 53, 2, 120-139.
- Reeskens, T. & van Oorschot, W. J. H. 2013. Equity, equality, or need? A study of popular preferences for welfare redistribution principles across 24 European countries, 2013, *Journal of European Public Policy*, 20, 8, 1174-1195.
- Rodrik, D. (2018) Populism and the Economics of Globalization, *J. of International Business Policy*. <https://doi.org/10.1057/s42214-018-0001-4>
- Rooduijn, M., & Akkerman, T. (2017). Flank attacks: Populism and left-right radicalism in Western Europe. *Party Politics*, 23(3), 193-204.
- Rooduijn, M., Burgoon, B., van Elsas, E. J., & van de Werfhorst, H. G. (2017). Radical distinction: Support for radical left and radical right parties in Europe. *European Union Politics*, 18(4), 536-559.
- Rooduijn, M., & Burgoon, B. M. (2018). The paradox of wellbeing: Do unfavorable socioeconomic and sociocultural contexts deepen or dampen radical left and right voting among the less well-off? *Comparative Political Studies* 51(13): 1720-1753.
- Rooduijn, M., Van Kessel, S., Froio, C., Pirro, A., De Lange, S., Halikiopoulou, D., Lewis, P., Mudde, C. & Taggart, P. (2019). *The PopuList: An Overview of Populist, Far Right, Far Left and Eurosceptic Parties in Europe*. <http://www.popu-list.org>.
- Rothstein, B. (1998) *Just Institutions Matter: The Moral and Political Logic of the Universal Welfare State (Theories of Institutional Design)*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Rydgren, J., & Ruth, P. (2013). Contextual explanations of radical right-wing support in Sweden: Socioeconomic marginalization, group threat, and the halo effect. *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, 36(4), 711-728.
- Saxonberg, S. and Sirovatka, T. (2014) "Neo-Liberalism by Decay? The Evolution of the Czech Welfare State " *Social Policy & Administration* vol. 43, no. 2, 2009, pp. 186-203.
- Spruyt, B. Gil Keppens and Filip Van Droogenbroeck 2016. *Who Supports Populism and What Attracts People to It?* *Political Research Quarterly*, . 69(2) 335–346.

Svallfors, Stefan (1997) “Worlds of Welfare and Attitudes to Redistribution: A Comparison of Eight Western Nations” *European Sociological Review*, Vol. 13, No. 3, pp. 283-304.

Taggart, P. (2000) *Populism*. Buckingham: Open University Press.

Van Der Waal J., Achterberg P., Houtman D., et Al. (2010) ‘Some Are More Equal than Others’: Economic Egalitarianism and Welfare Chauvinism in the Netherlands. *Journal of European Social Policy* 20(4): 350–363.

Van Oorschot, W. (2000) Who Should Get What, and Why? On Deservingness Criteria and the Conditionality of Solidarity among the Public. *Policy & Politics* 28(1): 33–48.

Van Oorschot, W. (2006) Making the Difference in Social Europe: Deservingness Perceptions among Citizens of European Welfare States. *Journal of European Social Policy* 16(1): 23–42.

Van Oorschot, W. (2008). Solidarity towards immigrants in European welfare states. *International Journal of Social Welfare*, 17(1), 3-14.

van Der Waal, Jeroen, de Koster, Willem, & van Oorschot, Wim. (2013). Three worlds of welfare chauvinism? How welfare regimes affect support for distributing welfare to immigrants in Europe. *Journal of Comparative Policy Analysis: Research and Practice*, 15(2), 164-181

Vis B., van Kersbergen, K. and T. Hylands (2011) “To What Extent did the financial crisis intensify the pressure to reform the welfare state?” *Social Policy and Administration* 45 (4): 338–353.

Visser, M., Lubbers, M., Kraaykamp, G., & Jaspers, E. (2014). Support for radical left ideologies in Europe. *European Journal of Political Research*, 53(3), 541–558.

Zaslove, A. 2008. Here to Stay? Populism as a New Party Type, *European Review*, 16(3): 319-336. doi:10.1017/S1062798708000288

Table 1: Welfare Attitudes and Voting for Leftwing and Rightwing Populist Parties

	Model 1: attitudes		Model 2: adding soc.dem variables		Model 3: adding country-level	
	Leftpop	Rightpop	Leftpop	Rightpop	Leftpop	Rightpop
Q1. Immigrants do not deserve social benefits (5=never)	.04 (.04)	.41*** (.03)	.04 (.05)	.39*** (.03)	.04 (.05)	.39*** (.03)
Q2. Large income diff. not acceptable (5= strongly agree)	.18*** (.04)	-.01 (.02)	.18*** (.04)	.01 (.03)	.19*** (.04)	.01 (.03)
Q3. Differences in living standard should be small (5= strongly agree)	.23*** (.05)	.01 (.03)	.18** (.06)	-.03 (.03)	.18** (.06)	-.02 (.03)
Q4. Many receive benefits who are not entitled	.03 (.04)	-.20*** (.03)	.01 (.05)	-.18*** (.03)	.01 (.05)	-.18*** (.03)
Q5. Many unemployed do not really try to find jobs	.20*** (.05)	-.06* (.03)	.23*** (.05)	-.06* (.03)	.23*** (.05)	-.06* (.03)
Q6.Gvt should insure	.06	.09***	.07*	.10***	.07*	.10***

reasonable living std for the old	(.03)	(.02)	(.03)	(.02)	(.03)	(.02)
Q7. Gvt should insure reasonable living std for the unemployed	.02 (.03)	-.05*** (.01)	.01 (.03)	-.05*** (.01)	.01 (.03)	-.05*** (.01)
Q8. Gvt should ensure sufficient childcare services	.05* (.05)	-.05* (.02)	.04 (.03)	-.05*** (.01)	.04 (.03)	-.05*** (.01)
Q9 Social benefits place too great a strain on econ	-.20*** (.04)	.06* (.02)	-.21*** (.05)	.06* (.03)	-.21*** (.05)	.06* (.03)
<i>sociodemographic variables</i>						
household income (in deciles)			-.08*** (.02)	-.01 (.01)	-.08*** (.02)	-.01 (.01)
unemployed			.18 (.15)	-.03 (.13)	.18 (.15)	-.03 (.13)
educational level base=no secondary						
lower secondary			-.09 (.19)	-.01 (.13)	-.09 (.19)	-.01 (.13)
lower tier secondary			-.08 (.20)	.21 (.13)	-.08 (.20)	.21 (.13)
secondary or advanced vocational			.07 (.19)	.03 (.12)	.06 (.19)	.03 (.12)
lower tertiary			.14 (.21)	-.35* (.15)	.14 (.21)	-.35* (.15)
higher tertiary			.15 (.15)	-.44** (.15)	.15 (.21)	-.44** (.15)
Age (base 18-30)						
31-40			.47** (.17)	.22* (.10)	.47** (.17)	.22* (.10)
41-50			.15 (.17)	.41*** (.09)	.15 (.17)	.41*** (.10)
51-60			.29 (.16)	.32*** (.09)	.28 (.16)	.32*** (.09)
over 60			.07 (.16)	.15 (.09)	.07 (.16)	.15 (.09)
Woman			-.20* (.09)	-.34*** (.05)	-.20* (.09)	-.34*** (.05)
<i>Country level</i>						
postcommunist	-2.16 (2.51)	-.18 (1.47)	-1.75 (2.49)	-.11 (1.44)	1.63 (3.73)	-.99 (2.00)
GDP in PPP					.09 (.08)	-.31 (.05)
poverty risk					.38 (.38)	-.31 (.20)
immigration rate					-.30 (2.81)	1.17 (1.88)
constant	-16.14*** (.51)	-5.30*** (.83)	-16.43 (.67)	-4.74*** (.83)	-31.06 (11.80)	3.24 (6.29)
<i>Variance Parameters</i>						
Between Countries	8.33 (.24)	3.07 (.66)	7.73 (.47)	3.01 (.43)	6.88 (1.71)	2.86 (.61)
Interclass Correlation	.95 (.01)	.74 (.08)	.95 (.02)	.73 (.08)	.94 (.03)	.71 (.71)
Number of obs	33,923	33,923	28,250	28,250	28,250	28,250
Number of groups	21	21	21	21	21	21
Log likelihood	-2164.9	-6496.6	-1873.7	-5417.2	-1873.0	-5416.2

notes: Israel and Russia were eliminated, because Israel is not part of Europe and Russia does not have a liberal democracy, making voting rather meaningless. We eliminated respondents who are under 18 as they cannot vote.

The post-communist countries included in the study are the Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Lithuania, Poland and Slovenia.

sources:

For political parties: Rooduijn, M., Van Kessel, S., Froio, C., Pirro, A., De Lange, S., Halikiopoulou, D., Lewis, P., Mudde, C. & Taggart, P. (2019). *The PopuList: An Overview of Populist, Far Right, Far Left and Eurosceptic Parties in Europe*. <http://www.popu-list.org>.