

# Illiberal advance, but no breakthrough – yet?

The balance of the 2024 super-election year for European illiberal  
populist actors and Hungarian influence-building



December 2024

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This study would not have been possible without the conscientious, thorough, and persistent work of Political Capital's interns.

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## Executive summary

**The populist radical right and far-right parties made significant gains in the European elections, but their performance varied across EU member states.** These parties were able to capitalize on economic uncertainty, social and cultural tensions, and political instability in some countries. As a result, they won in France, Austria, Hungary, Italy and made significant gains in Belgium, Bulgaria, the Netherlands, Romania, and Estonia. In Italy, the success of Giorgia Meloni's party highlights the ongoing shifts within the radical populist bloc and the waning influence of Matteo Salvini. His party has lost most of its support compared to 2019, in part due to Meloni's rise. Radical populist right parties had limited success in Sweden and Spain and lost ground in Finland and Portugal. Jarosław Kaczyński's party lost 12 percent and five seats in Poland and faces competition from the far-right Confederation Alliance.

**In addition to the European elections, the most consequential events in 2024 were the elections in Austria, France, Slovakia, and Germany.** In Austria, the far-right Freedom Party of Austria (FPÖ) failed to form a government despite winning the parliamentary elections, as other parties ruled out a partnership with the FPÖ under Kickl's leadership. In France, President Emmanuel Macron called for a snap election after the National Rally (RN) won the European elections by a large margin over Macron's centrist alliance. However, tactical voting between the centrist and left-wing New Popular Front alliances prevented the RN from winning the election. In Slovakia, Peter Pellegrini, an ally of Robert Fico and former leader of Hlas-SD, won the presidential election, giving SMER-SD a strategic advantage by reducing the likelihood of presidential vetoes of some of SMER's controversial policies. In Germany, the far-right Alternative for Germany (AfD) won the regional elections in Thuringia and came in second in Saxony.

**The populist radical right and far-right parties made significant gains in the European elections but remained divided.** These forces are represented in three political families, and their ideological and political differences are evident. European Conservatives and Reformists (ECR), the Patriots for Europe, and the Europe of Sovereign Nations (ESN). Together, they account for 25% of the mandates in the European Parliament, a significant increase from 17% in the last legislature. The Patriots for Europe is a largely rebranded successor to the Identity and Democracy group, and the Europe of Sovereign Nations includes the most extreme far-right parties, such as the AfD.

**The European People's Party (EPP) seeks to expand its political influence by creating flexible alliances through its dominant position in the European Parliament.** This approach allows the EPP to form a centrist mainstream majority and a right-wing majority with radical and far-right groups. The EPP can achieve its political goals without depending on either side of the political spectrum. As part of this strategy, the EPP occasionally adopts positions in line with the radical and far-right groups in order to reduce their appeal and ensure that they do not represent these views alone. This right-wing cooperation, dubbed the "Venezuela majority," highlights a right-wing shift driven by the EPP's willingness to align itself with radical right-wing groups rather than the independent strength of these groups.

**The Orbán regime's influence-building efforts aim to ensure its long-term survival by creating a favorable foreign policy environment and changing the existing power structures in the Euro-Atlantic area.** To achieve a change of cultural and political hegemony, the regime aims to deepen cooperation with radical and far-right parties, support them, and facilitate their collaboration. The main tools for building influence and alliance have been the export of illiberal

ideas, policies, and narratives through meetings, events, publications, and providing practical support.

**Viktor Orbán has joined forces with mostly far-right parties to create the Patriots of Europe, which envisions a "Europe of nation-states."** The creation of the Patriots group, which has become the third largest political group and the largest far-right bloc in the European Parliament, is a major achievement for Viktor Orbán, as Fidesz is the second largest force in a group of powerful European parties. Viktor Orbán has formalized his alliance with major far-right parties from France, the Netherlands, Austria, Italy, and Spain. Their influence in the European Parliament will be limited in the short term, as the mainstream parties have denied them significant representation in parliamentary leadership bodies. Their position in the European Council and the Council of the European Union may increase in the coming years. In the Czech Republic, for example, nationalist Andrej Babiš's ANO is leading the polls ahead of national elections.

## Introduction

European populist radical right and far-right parties are gaining ground across Europe as they steadily rise in the polls. They influence the mainstream right to adopt nativist and populist policies and win elections. These parties have recently won general elections in Austria, the Netherlands, Italy, and Hungary. This wave of populism blends anti-establishment, nationalist, and populist ideas in response to economic downturns, the migration crisis, and cultural changes driven by globalism.

The Orbán regime's influence-building efforts in the EU have been aimed at establishing cooperation with populist radical right and far-right forces. These efforts have included organizing conferences and joint events aimed at increasing their collective influence and institutional presence within the European Parliament, the European Commission, and the European Council. Viktor Orbán actively projects himself as a leader of the international populist movement for like-minded politicians to follow.

This study aims to provide a snapshot of the state of radical populist parties and their cooperation after the "super election year" of 2024. It also provides an overview of the Orbán regime's efforts to build influence among populist radical right parties. It explains why and how the Orbán regime wants to promote itself as a model of populism on the international stage.

Before delving into what happened in 2024, let's unravel who the populist radical parties are.

The far-right landscape is highly diverse, encompassing a range of tendencies such as the radical right, extreme far-right, populist right, right-wing authoritarianism, populist radical right, and the new right. One of the main challenges in differentiating between the various movements and actors is the overlap in characteristics and themes between far-right parties and populist radical right parties. Populist radical right parties typically adhere to democratic norms, whereas the extreme right often seeks to undermine the democratic system. These parties often reject being labeled as either far-right or populist, making classification efforts challenging. Some also dismiss the traditional left-right political spectrum, claiming instead to be "neither left nor right." In other words, they no longer define themselves through left or right ideologies but their identity around voters' economic and cultural insecurities.

In this study, we build on Cas Mudde's concept of the populist radical right because anti-establishment populism serves as a key distinguishing factor between (extreme) far-right and the populist radical right. We believe this element is central to the success of the broader far-right parties. Mudde defines populism as a thin ideology that 'considers society to be ultimately separated into two homogenous and antagonistic groups, the 'pure people' and the 'corrupt elite', and argues that politics should be the expression of the *volonté générale* (general expression) of the people.<sup>1</sup> Due to the lack of an ideological core, populism is more of a political style than an ideology. Consequently, populism is combined with thicker ideologies for its pragmatic content.<sup>2</sup> Right-wing populism is closely associated with nationalism, nativism, and traditionalism. Right-wing populists advance the notion that states should be solely populated with the members of the 'indigenous' group ('the nation,' defined arbitrarily) while 'non-native' or 'foreign' elements, such as immigrants or even minorities, are viewed as a serious threat to the unity of the nation-state. Opposition to cosmopolitan ideas of gender and sexuality is also becoming an increasingly significant factor.<sup>3</sup> At the same time, populists are often long-time participants and beneficiaries of the political system. A key aspect of the populist approach is the arbitrary and exclusionary creation of the people or nation as a homogeneous entity shaped by current political

circumstances. As a result, populists exclude their opponents and certain minority groups from their (flexibly defined) nation and present them as adversaries.

In our paper, we discuss populist radical parties from the right and the left that embrace nativism and populism. For instance, the Slovak PM Robert's Smer-SD and the German Sahra Wagenknecht Alliance have adopted narratives and perspectives of the populist radical right.

# 1. The state of radical right parties after national and European elections

In the course of 2024, populist radical right and far-right parties have made significant gains across several EU member states. The Freedom Party of Austria's (FPÖ) general election victory, the Alternative for Germany's (AfD) breakthroughs in regional elections, and the strong performance of radical and far-right parties in the European elections all indicate a significant shift to the right within the European Union. While the far-right breakthrough has not materialized in the EU elections as some commentators and experts anticipated, there is a clear long-term trend of growing support for radical and far-right parties at both the European and national levels. The populist radical right and far-right parties are part of governing coalitions in Hungary, Slovakia, Finland, Sweden, the Netherlands, Italy, and Croatia. In the EU elections, populist radical right and far-right parties achieved first place in five member states (France, Italy, Austria, Hungary, and Belgium) and second or third place in several others. In this section, we analyze and assess the performance of radical and far-right in the 2024 EU elections, as well as national elections. The firewall against far-right parties has crumbled in many cases, allowing them to shape policy on migration, security, environment, and economy despite being in the minority.

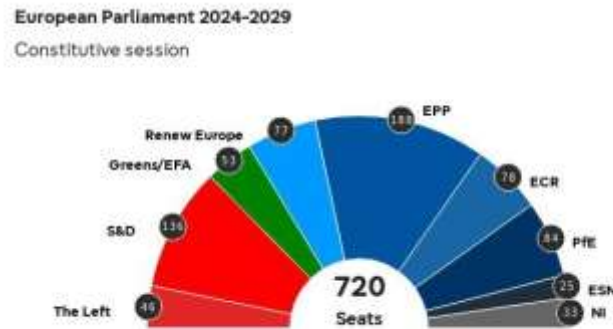
## 1.1 Populist radical right and far-right parties in the European Parliament

**The European populist radical right and far-right parties are divided and in the minority but growing.** To the right of the European People's Party in the European Parliament (EP), there are three populist radical right and far-right political families: the European Conservatives and Reformists (ECR), the Patriots for Europe, and the Europe of Sovereign Nations (ESN) – which together account for 25% of MEPs. This is a significant jump from about 17% last term. These parties are still divided for a number of reasons, including personal differences, party volatility, ideological extremism, and diverging national and strategic priorities. The radical ECR, dominated by Italian Prime Minister Georgia Meloni's Brothers of Italy (Fdi), has grown by 9 MEPs to 78. The far-right and the extremists are represented in the other two groups. While the Patriots are a new political family and the third biggest in the EP, it is largely a continuation of the former far-right Identity and Democracy (ID) group, where Marine Le Pen's National Rally (RN) dominated. The biggest additions to the group are Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orbán's Fidesz, former Czech Prime Minister Andrej Babiš's Action of Dissatisfied Citizens (ANO) from Renew Europe, and the Spanish party Vox from the ECR. The ESN group includes the most extreme far-right parties, such as the German AfD, Poland's Confederation, Bulgaria's Revival, and Hungary's Our Homeland. Together, the ESN and the Patriots have 109 MEPs, marking a significant rise from 49 MEPs of the ID group in the previous term.

**Mainstream political groups maintained their dominance despite the relative rise of populist radical and far-right groups.** The center-right European People's Party (EPP) is the biggest winner of the European elections as they increased their parliamentary group by 6 MEPs to 188, a quarter of the 720 MEPs. The center-left Socialists and Democrats (S&D) remained stable, losing only two seats, while the liberal Renew Europe and the Greens lost 21 and 17 seats, respectively. However, these are not severe losses as the four mainstream groups continue to enjoy a comfortable majority in the EP, representing 63% of its legislature.



Figure 1: Political groups of the 10th European Parliament (2024-2029) (source: European Parliament)



**The ECR group continues to pursue its strategy of constructive engagement with the European mainstream.** Despite an increase in the group's size, its relative significance has diminished, with the group now ranking as the fourth largest group after the Patriots. In the previous term, the ECR had deliberately adopted a constructive and pragmatic approach to maximize its influence in the EP.<sup>4</sup> The group members want to be involved in forming compromises in the EU institutions. In contrast to the Patriots and the ESN, the group has a firm transatlantic orientation and stands firm with Ukraine. However, the group is not part of the European “grand coalition” of the mainstream groups that usually form majorities in the European Parliament. For instance, Italian Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni was sidelined when EU leaders discussed the EU's top jobs after the EU elections. Nevertheless, the EPP seeks to avoid alienating the ECR, as it could provide an alternative to the 'grand coalition'. The ECR secured two vice-president positions in the Bureau and three committee chairs, including the influential budget and agriculture committees. Meloni's commissioner-designate, Raffaele Fitto, also received one of the most influential posts in the EU executive's power structure, executive vice-president for cohesion and reforms. Despite opposition from the S&D, the Greens, the Renew, and the Left, the EPP backed Meloni's pick for commissioner.<sup>5</sup> The EPP dismissed these groups' call for Fitto to be demoted to a "regular" commissioner. In exchange for Fitto, the ECR has supported almost all commissioners during their individual evaluations, even Donald Tusk's commissioner nominee, Piotr Serafin. The ECR used the appointment of the new European Commission to prove to the EPP that it could be a pragmatic and constructive ally to its right.

**The Patriots and the ESN groups will contribute to normalizing the far-right ideas and policies in the EP.** They will push the conservative EPP, the largest group in the legislature, even further to the right on policies such as migration and the climate<sup>6</sup>. The far-right parties have argued that people's problems with healthcare, housing, and the cost of living are due to immigration. The center-right parties have sought to adopt far-right narratives and policy positions on tackling immigration, hoping to keep voters who might otherwise be drawn to far-right parties. The EPP lawmakers backed budget amendments from the Sovereignists, calling on the EU to finance the building of fences and deportation centers outside of the EU<sup>7</sup>. Radical and far-right parties have also been critical of ambitious climate policies and even announced that they opposed the implementation of the EU's Green Deal. The EPP has already backpaddled climate and environmental policies to retain rural voters and accommodate far-right views. For instance, the EP adopted a less ambitious nature restoration law<sup>8</sup> due to major concessions to the EPP<sup>9,10</sup>. The center-right wanted to water down key aspects of the legislation because it would hurt European farmers – and partly, it is thought, because far-right parties strongly opposed the legislation.

**The EPP's dominant position in the European Parliament allows the group to form a majority in a number of ways.** The EPP's openness to cooperating with the radical right parties could drive a rightward shift in the European Parliament. The EPP has defined three basic principles, namely pro-Ukraine, pro-Europe, and pro-rule of law, for cooperation with the ECR.<sup>11</sup> These principles aimed to explore cooperation with Meloni's FdI while deliberately excluding parties that were further to the right. While Ursula von der Leyen secured a majority backing in the EP for her second term as European Commission president with the support of the S&D, the Renew, and the Greens, the EPP has not ruled out vote-by-vote cooperation with some parts of ECR. The EPP's aim is to have an alternative majority coalition to the centrist one.<sup>12</sup> This alternative coalition could water down an ambitious climate policy in favor of competitiveness and European industrial policy and possibly pave the way for more right-wing policies. However, the EPP and the ECR still could not secure their own majority without the Patriots and the ESN, even if they included the Renew group, with which they agreed on economic policy.<sup>13</sup> In the current parliament, the EPP has snubbed its traditional allies on a few occasions to form a center-right to far-right majority made up of the EPP, the ECR, the Patriots, and the ESN.<sup>14,15</sup> Crucially, the EPP joined forces with radical and far-right parties in the Parliament to dilute anti-deforestation rules that are key pillars of the European Green Deal.<sup>16</sup> This loose alignment of political groups on the right is called the "Venezuela majority," which stems from a controversial resolution on the country's disputed election outcome. The EPP voted with the radical and far-right groups against all other parties to adopt a non-binding declaration on Venezuela. The Patriots and the ESN celebrated this loose cooperation as a rejection of the cordon sanitaire. As a result, the rightward shift in the EP would not be due to a surge of radical and far-right forces but to the center right's willingness to cooperate with them.

**The S&D, the Renew, and the Greens have been critical of the EPP leadership's rapprochement towards the ECR.** They argue that there should be a clear separation between the far-right and the pro-EU groups, as they have emphatically ruled out cooperation with all right-wing groups, including the ECR. In a show of power, the EPP even threatened to topple the S&D's Teresa Ribera, forcing the socialist to concede to von der Leyen on Fitto. Socialist, green, and liberal lawmakers stressed that E&P cannot govern back and forth between the far-right majority and the pro-democratic majority.<sup>17</sup> To ease the tension, the liberal Renew, the EPP, and the S&D signed a cooperation agreement committing to work together.<sup>18</sup> This agreement will not stop the EPP from swinging to both the center and the radical right to find majorities. The mistrust between the EPP and other mainstream political groups eroded support for the new European Commission since it received fewer votes in the Parliament than von der Leyen's nomination in July.<sup>19</sup> A number of lawmakers within the S&D and half of the Green abstained and voted against the college because of the inclusion of Fitto.

**A second Trump presidency could strengthen the momentum of populist radical right and far-right forces in Europe by boosting the legitimacy of policies and narratives once deemed too extreme.** Donald Trump is particularly hostile to alliances such as NATO and the European Union, which he believes constrain U.S. freedom of action.<sup>20</sup> His preference for transactional deals with strongmen could benefit far-right forces in Europe. Donald Trump has forged close ties with Fidesz and, to a lesser extent, with other radical and far-right parties in Austria, Italy, Poland, and Slovakia. These parties share common ground with Trump on migration and obstructing climate policy. For instance, Trump could legitimize and support their efforts to slow down the EU's fossil fuel phase-out and block the implementation of the EU's Pact on Migration and Asylum. In return, these radical and far-right parties could leverage their influence in the EP and the

Council to complicate EU decision-making. Ultimately, this movement could strengthen Orbán's alliance-building across Europe and beyond.

## 1.2 Common themes among populist radical right and far-right parties

**Populist radical right and far-right parties in the EU aim to focus strictly on common topics.**

They build ideology-based alliances around common themes and ideological positions, such as anti-immigration, anti-establishment, anti-liberalism, Eurosceptic or even rejection of deeper European integration, anti-woke, ultra-conservative "pro-family" stances, cost-of-living, and obstruction of climate policies. They reject all immigration, which, in their interpretation, is a threat to the 'native' (white) population, the Western culture, and Christian civilization. They also object to gender and LGBTQI, especially trans, rights under the pretext of opposing modernity, protecting 'normality', traditional values, especially the "traditional family", and, increasingly, children. Additionally, several extreme and hardline positions became normalized as centrist and conservative parties strategically shifted to adopt far-right policies and rhetoric on migration and other issues. This normalization of the far-right's agenda made these parties acceptable and popular. In other words, the tactic of imitating the far-right has not paid off in the elections.

## 1.3 Divisive themes

Despite similar themes, populist radical right and far-right parties are far from united ideologically and continue to have significant differences. Nevertheless, their collaboration strictly focuses on common topics, and they try to conceal their differences. These parties remain divided due to various factors, such as personal differences, diverging national interests, and conflicting foreign policy positions. In other words, they can easily find themselves on different platforms on practical issues if their national context or interests dictate otherwise. For instance, radical and far-right parties are critical of European integration in principle, but some accept it in certain areas that align with their national interests. While the Finns Party and the Fdl have pursued a pragmatic approach, Fidesz and PiS have adopted a confrontational approach to the EU institutions, often obstructing EU decision-making.<sup>21</sup>

**The populist radical right and far-right parties are deeply divided over foreign and security policy issues. While the ECR has a transatlantic orientation and strongly supports Ukraine, the far-right Patriots, and the ESN are characterized by an anti-Western stance.**<sup>22</sup>

The members of the ECR, including the largest parties, Meloni's Fdl and the Polish PiS, are firmly critical of Russia and China.<sup>23</sup> They are a strong supporter of transatlantic ties and NATO. The group tends to vote with the mainstream on foreign policy matters, reinforcing its strategy of moving to the center-right. While the Patriots are dominantly pro-Russian, there are parties with critical attitudes. While some parties, such as France's RN and Austria's FPÖ, are pro-Kremlin, others, like Czechia's ANO and Belgium's Vlaams Belang, are more critical of Moscow. These parties are even more divided over China than Russia. While Belgium's Vlaams Belang, Spain's Vox, ANO, and Italy's Lega are critical of Beijing, others like Fidesz, FPÖ, and RN are more supportive of it. While Fidesz and Lega support transatlantic ties and cooperation with NATO, others like FPÖ and RN are more critical. The FPÖ opposes NATO as it fiercely advocates for Austria's neutrality. The extreme right ESN is the most supportive of Russia and China and the most skeptical of deepening transatlantic relations.

**EU enlargement policy is a point of division that contributes to the fragmentation of the far-right spectrum.** The ECR parties, including Poland's PiS and Italy's Fdl, overwhelmingly support

the Commission's EU enlargement initiatives and strategies. The PiS sees Ukraine's accession as essential for Poland's security. Fidesz supports the EU accession of like-minded Western Balkan countries because it would improve Hungary's influence in the Union. On the other hand, the RN, PVV, AfD, Sweden Democrats, and the Finns Party are critical of enlargement, seeing it as costly and potentially conducive to more migration.<sup>24</sup> The RN, for example, sees it as a threat to sovereignty and a potential catalyst for further immigration.

**While all populist radical right and far-right parties advocate greater national sovereignty over economic policy decisions, their national contexts dictate different positions.** In countries grappling with the aftermath of the economic crisis, greater fiscal flexibility and joint debt issuance are seen as a means of regaining economic sovereignty, a stance typically expressed in debtor-deficit countries. For example, the RN, the Fdl, the PiS, and Lega do not see debt mutualization as an external interference in their national self-determination. By contrast, the PVV, the FPÖ, and the Afd argue that sovereignty means rejecting fiscal risk sharing, including fiscal compensation for members hit hard by economic crises or common debt issuance (Eurobonds). While the FPÖ, the PVV, and the Afd support strict EU fiscal deficit rules, others such as PiS, Fdl, RN, and Lega favor greater fiscal leeway. These diverging economic preferences on fiscal discipline are difficult to reconcile.<sup>25</sup>

**Personal differences and conflicting power interests also hinder cooperation between the populist radical right and far-right parties.** The Patriots represent a direct challenge to the constructive and pragmatic populism of the ECR. However, ECR members do not want to merge with the Patriots, as they see the group as a bridge between the EU mainstream and the far right. Meloni's Fdl and the Polish PiS have refused to join the Patriots. Meloni wants to keep her options open and believes that the best way to advance Italy's priorities is to work constructively with EU institutions and member states. The Patriots' decision not to invite extremist parties to join the group was clearly a deliberate move by the group's key leaders to improve their public image and appear more moderate, particularly in contrast to the ESN. Most parties consider the AfD "toxic" and oppose closer cooperation with it.

## 2. The state of the populist radical right and far-right in Member States in 2024

### Austria

In 2024, Austria had two elections: the EP elections in June and the general elections in September. The far-right Freedom Party of Austria (FPÖ, Patriots) came out on top in the European elections with 25.4% of the vote, but the Austrian People's Party (ÖVP, EPP) came very close with 24.5%. Compared to the 2019 EP elections, the FPÖ has doubled its mandates (from 3 to 6 seats), while ÖVP has lost two seats. In September, the FPÖ secured the first far-right national election victory in post-World War II Austria, finishing ahead of the conservative Austrian People's Party (ÖVP) and the center-left Social Democrats (SPÖ). In addition, the liberal NEOS and the Greens crossed the electoral threshold. Despite winning the election, the FPÖ could not form a government as other parties ruled out a partnership with the FPÖ with Kickl at the helm. President Alexander Van der Bellen has tasked the leader of the ÖVP, Karl Nehammer, with forming a government. The conservative party holds coalition talks with the SPÖ and the NEOS.

### Czech Republic

After the 2024 elections, Andrej Babiš's ANO 2011 is positioning itself to reclaim power in the Czech Republic. In the European Parliament elections, ANO emerged as the leading party, securing 7 out of 21 seats, a gain of one seat compared to 2019. Formerly a member of Renew Europe, ANO aligned with populist and far-right parties such as Fidesz and FPÖ to establish the new right-wing European Parliament group, Patriots for Europe. In contrast, the ruling center-right Civic Democratic Party (ODS, ECR), led by Petr Fiala, lost one seat, securing just 3 seats. ANO's campaign leveraged Eurosceptic rhetoric, emphasizing Czech sovereignty, EU inefficiencies, and concerns over migration and the Green Deal. Other parties, such as Freedom and Direct Democracy (SPD, ESN) and Oath and Motorists (Přísaha a Motoristé), adopted similar populist stances, with SPD targeting Islamization and condemning the EU as a "dictatorship of Brussels," while the Motorists opposed the EU's planned ban on combustion engine vehicles. Despite these gains, governing parties, while still holding 37% of the vote, lost support to populist factions, primarily due to economic conditions, inflation, and austerity measures. ANO also triumphed in the Senate and regional elections, securing 8 Senate seats and winning 10 out of 13 contested regions, further signaling a shift in favor of Babiš ahead of the 2025 general election.

## **France**

The European Parliament elections in France marked a significant victory for Marine Le Pen's far-right National Rally (RN, Patriots). Despite President Macron's framing of the election as an existential struggle between pro- and anti-European forces, the RN secured almost 32% of the vote and 30 seats. This result far outstripped Macron's centrist alliance, Besoins d'Europe (Renew Europe), which won only 14.6% of the vote - a gap of almost 20 percentage points. The RN's campaign, which positioned the party as the sole defender of French identity against the "elitist institutions of Brussels", proved effective. In the wake of these results, Macron dissolved parliament and called for snap elections. However, after the first round of voting, the left-wing New Popular Front alliance and Macron's centrist parties coordinated their efforts through tactical voting to block the RN. As a result, the New Popular Front won the election with 32.6% of the vote, dealing a severe blow to the far-right RN. French President Emmanuel Macron's centrist alliance received 27.9% of the vote, while the RN received 24.6%.

## **Germany**

Similar to the 2019 EP elections, the Christian Democratic Union (CDU/CSU, EPP) won the election, slightly outperforming its last election result and securing 29 mandates. The populist far-right Alternative for Germany (AfD, ESN) emerged stronger, securing 15 seats, four more than in 2019. They also led the creation of a new parliamentary group called Europe of Sovereign Nations (ESN)(1,2). However, compared to the success of the AfD, the current governing coalition, the "traffic light" parties performed poorly; the Greens lost 9, and the Social Democratic Party of Germany (SPD, S&D) lost two mandates, presumably due to infighting and economic mismanagement. The main difference between the parties in terms of narratives is that the AfD has successfully securitized the issue of migration to attract voters from conservative or liberal parties to its side.<sup>26</sup>

In September 2024, three eastern German states—Brandenburg, Thuringia, and Saxony—held regional elections. The most notable outcome of these elections was the significant success of the AfD. The AfD emerged as a dominant force in all three states, finishing either first or second. In Thuringia, the party secured its first-ever state election victory and narrowly lost to the Christian Democratic Union (CDU) in Saxony and to the Social Democratic Party (SPD) in Brandenburg.

Moreover, the German “traffic light” coalition government collapsed due to internal divisions over key policy issues. Germany will hold a snap election in February 2025.

## **Italy**

The 2024 European Parliament elections marked a significant shift in Italy's political landscape, with Giorgia Meloni's right-wing populist Brothers of Italy (Fdi, ECR) emerging as the dominant force, securing 24 of Italy's 76 seats and further consolidating its leadership within the governing coalition. Meloni's rise to prominence, both domestically and on the European stage, was characterized by a strategic moderation of her anti-EU and anti-immigration rhetoric internationally, aligning herself with EU policies on Ukraine and immigration while maintaining a hardline stance domestically on certain issues. In contrast, her coalition partners - Matteo Salvini's League (Lega, the Patriots) and Forza Italia (EPP) - suffered significant losses, with the League's controversial campaign strategies and declining credibility leading to a drop from 28 seats in 2019 to just 8 in 2024. This imbalance within the coalition risks future tensions as Meloni's rising popularity positions her as a key European power broker, attracting support from the likes of Le Pen and von der Leyen while overshadowing her coalition partners.

## **The Netherlands**

In the Dutch general election of November 2023, the far-right Party for Freedom (PVV, PffE) emerged as the largest party, winning 23.49% of the vote and 37 seats in parliament, but well short of the 76-seat majority needed to govern. After seven months of difficult negotiations, a four-party coalition government was formed in July 2024, including the PVV, the liberal People's Party for Freedom and Democracy (VVD, RE), the centrist New Social Contract (NSC, EPP), and the populist Movement of Farmers and Citizens (BBB, EPP). This coalition required PVV leader Geert Wilders to soften controversial policies, such as leaving the EU and giving up the role of prime minister. However, significant tensions remain, particularly over immigration policy. The coalition faced its first major test in the June 2024 European Parliament elections, where the PVV made significant gains, securing six seats after failing to win any in 2019. However, the PVV and its coalition partners underperformed compared to their national election performance, reflecting public dissatisfaction with protracted coalition negotiations and ongoing policy disagreements.

## **Poland**

Poland's political landscape has changed significantly, with the right-wing populist Law and Justice (PiS, ECR) losing power after eight years in power, as Donald Tusk's Civic Coalition (KO, EPP) formed a government in October 2023. This decline in PiS's popularity was reflected in the 2024 European Parliament elections, where it came second with 20 seats - five fewer than in 2019 - while KO narrowly won with 21 seats. Despite misinformation campaigns targeting KO leader Donald Tusk and anti-LGBTQ and anti-migrant narratives during the campaign, PiS failed to regain its previous dominance. Meanwhile, the far-right Confederation of Freedom and Independence achieved its best-ever result, winning six seats, with half of its MEPs joining the ESN group and the rest remaining independent.

Poland's presidential election could be a make-or-break moment for Donald Tusk next year. President Andrzej Duda has effectively blocked the government's agenda and lacks the votes to override the president's veto of key legislation. If PiS candidate Karol Nawrocki wins next year, the government can expect continued opposition from the presidential palace for the rest of the parliamentary term. A victory for the liberal mayor of Warsaw, Rafal Trzaskowski, would mean that Tusk's government can unravel the legacy of its predecessor and implement deep institutional

reforms. Given the exceptionally high stakes, the presidential campaign is likely to be as polarised and closely fought as last year's parliamentary elections.

### **Portugal**

The Democratic Alliance (AD), led by the Social Democratic Party, narrowly won the snap election in March 2024 over the outgoing Socialist Party (PS) and formed a minority government, led by Prime Minister Luis Montenegro, which relies on the external support or at least toleration of the PS to pass legislation. Both the PS and the AD refused to cooperate with the far-right Chega!, which was the biggest winner of the election, quadrupling its parliamentary representation to 50 members in the 230-seat legislature. Chega!'s campaign focused on the fight against corruption and immigration, as well as the economic downturn. The PS and the AD likely continue to snub and stigmatize Chega! in the hope that its success will be a one-off. This strategy of isolating Chega! could bear fruit as the far-right party's support has fallen dramatically in the 2024 European Parliament elections. Chega! has won two of Portugal's 21 seats in the European Parliament, though still up from its zero mandates. After the EU elections, Chega joined the far-right Patriots for Europe group. The two mainstream parties, the PS and the AD, were the biggest winners of the election, winning 8 and 7 mandates, respectively.

### **Slovakia**

The balance of power remained relatively stable in Slovakia, albeit with a slight margin in favor of centrist Progressive Slovakia (PS, Renew Europe), which won six seats in the 2024 European Parliament elections, two more than in 2019. Meanwhile, Robert Fico's populist left-wing Direction - Slovak Social Democracy (Smer, Independent), secured five seats, also two more than in 2019. Notably, Smer and its coalition partner Voice-Social Democracy (Hlas-SD) were suspended from the S&D group following their controversial coalition with the ultranationalist Slovak Nationalist Party (SNS) after the 2023 parliamentary elections, leaving their MEPs independent in the EP.

The presidential election in the spring of 2024 played a crucial role in shaping the political landscape. Peter Pellegrini, a Fico ally and former leader of Hlas-SD, overcame initial setbacks to win the presidency, giving Fico a strategic advantage by reducing the likelihood of presidential vetoes of his controversial policies. The EP election campaign was overshadowed by an assassination attempt on Fico, which shifted public attention. Despite this, the pro-European PS maintained its lead in the EP elections. Far-right populism also gained traction, with the newly formed Republika party securing two mandates and coming third, highlighting the growing influence of radical parties in Slovakia.

### **Spain**

The European elections reconfirmed Spain's increasing shift to the right, with the center-right People's Party (PP, EPP) winning 22 of Spain's 61 seats, closely followed by the center-left Socialist Party (PSOE, S&D) with 20 seats. While the margin between the mainstream parties may seem insignificant, the EU elections marked the third time that the PP had won despite the Socialist coalition being in power. The PP had hoped that its EP victory would lead to the collapse of the Socialist coalition government, similar to what happened in France. However, the Sanchez-led coalition remained intact amid fears of a potential PP-VOX coalition. The far-right party Vox (Patriots) has been slowly gaining in popularity, resulting in it winning 6 MEP mandates compared to 4 mandates last time. Vox's campaign focused mainly on migration, "restoring the sovereignty of nation-states," cultural narratives, and climate skepticism. While the prospect of a PP-Vox

coalition is feasible, factions between the two parties continue. Vox has abandoned key regional governments with the PP over its decision to support the central government's migration policy.

### 3. The platform with real potential influence: the European Council

**The growing support for radical and far-right parties could affect the composition and the working of the European Council and the Council of Ministers in the medium and long term.**

One of the reasons why Viktor Orbán pushed for the creation of the far-right Patriots group was to unite the far-right parties in power or who are polling to win their respective future general elections. In contrast to the old ID, of which only the Lega was part of a government, the Patriots are in government in Hungary and in the Netherlands. Although the Dutch prime minister is politically neutral, the PVV is the largest party of the governing coalition. While Herbert Kickl's FPÖ won the general election in Austria in September 2024, all other parties ruled out forming a coalition with him. Two additional Patriots members, ANO and Vox, are aiming to become parties of coalition governments after their respective national elections, in Czechia in October 2025 and in Spain in 2027. In the medium term, this could reduce Viktor Orbán's isolation within the European Council and potentially increase his influence.

**The influence of the radical and far-right parties has been limited in the Council of the European Union.** They are the major force in government in four countries, Hungary, Italy, Slovakia, and the Netherlands, and are the minor coalition partners in Finland and Croatia. They support the government externally in Sweden. When the Council of the European Union takes a decision that requires unanimity, a radical or far-right party that is part of or leads a government can veto a decision. When it comes to qualified majority voting, the governments with ECR and Patriots representation would need to account for 35% of the total EU population to form a blocking minority, which they fall short of with their current proportion of 26.1%. These parties could only influence the EU's decision-making process in the European Council if they were to win a general election in a large member state (e.g., France) or in several medium-sized member states. However, open blockades in the European Council and the Council of the European Union are extremely rare, as most decisions are made by consensus, and these parties have acted largely pragmatically so far. The far-right will seek to co-shape legislation through collaboration with other governments.

## 4. The Orbán regime's influence building in Europe and the United States.

### 4.1. The basics of the Hungarian influence building

**The Orbán regime's foreign policy is based on the theory of realism, with interests and "national sovereignty" at its core.** It interprets the global shift as the West losing its dominance and eroding its foundations through liberal policies. In his address in Baile Tusnad in July 2024, Viktor Orbán asserted that a shift in the global order is imminent, with Asia – and particularly China, becoming the center of the world. In the allegedly changing world order, the Orbán regime advocates for a strategy of connectivity, in which Hungary strives to develop good connections



with rising powers of the 'East' while being part of the West<sup>27</sup>. Additionally, it wants to increase its influence in the EU and the U.S. to challenge and overthrow the political mainstream in the West.

The pursuit of international influence-building is a legitimate foreign policy objective for all nations. It enables them to enhance their clout and advance their political, security, and economic interests. However, as we pointed out in our 2022 and 2023 study on the Orbán's regime's political influence building<sup>2829</sup>, it has a different approach and characteristics that set it apart from those of democratic countries. Most importantly, its strategic **aim is to ensure the regime's long-term domestic survival by trying to create a favorable external environment**. This strategy also intends to counter and prevent criticism and prosecutions for dismantling the rule of law and systematic corruption.

**To ensure the survival of his regime, Viktor Orbán aims to change the existing power structures in the Euro-Atlantic area and bring about a 'regime change.'** Viktor Orbán has repeatedly stated in recent years that he does not want to leave the European Union but instead shape and transform it from within. Therefore, the Orbán regime has aimed to establish cooperation with like-minded radical 'sovereigntist' forces to change the mainstream political, societal, and cultural hegemony. In an interview, Viktor Orbán stated, "We should try to go further in, occupy positions, gather allies, and mend the European Union."<sup>30</sup> The Hungarian presidency chose the "Make Europe Great Again" slogan, underpinning the notion that the EU must change. Viktor Orbán said in a press conference that "through the work of our Presidency, we want to be the catalyst for this change."<sup>31</sup>

Notably, the Orbán regime has built its international network not through institutions but through parties and individual politicians based on mutual interests and ideology. Thus, although the regime justifies its foreign policy with national slogans, it does not yet seem to serve national interests beyond the regime's own.

Regarding the EU, Viktor Orbán aims to occupy "Brussels" and provide support to like-minded parties throughout the EU in order to create a favorable international environment. In his speech on 15 March 2024, he claimed that "we have no choice but to occupy Brussels" and "make a change in the European Union ourselves."<sup>32</sup> The Orbán regime has increased its soft power presence in Brussels through the Hungary House and the Fidesz-affiliated Mathias Corvinus Collegium. Ahead of the 2024 EU elections, Orbán posted on his social media, "I have not seen such a good opportunity for national, conservative, sovereigntist, and Christian-based forces to become dominant in the European Union in a long time" accompanied by clips of him with radical and far-right leaders, such as Giorgia Meloni, Andrej Babiš, Geert Wilder, Marine Le Pen<sup>33</sup>. He wanted to unify the radical and far-right parties in Europe to ignite a chain reaction and bring about a change on a European scale. In his vision, Fidesz and its allies will transform the EU into a "Europe of nation states" focused on economic cooperation, leaving out political integration and "interferences" in member states' internal affairs, such as the rule of law. Political Director of the Prime Minister Balázs Orbán summarized the main priority of Fidesz's EU strategy as "sovereignty and cooperation among the member states."<sup>34</sup> As a result, the Orbán regime's strategy of building influence in the EU aims to deepen cooperation with radical and far-right parties, support them, and facilitate their collaboration to achieve a change of political and social hegemony.

#### 4.1.1 Economic neutrality and connectivity

In 2024, Viktor Orbán regularly talked about the decline of the West, the end of the neoliberal order, and Asia's "inevitable" rise. In response to economic challenges, he argued that Western

countries are trying to re-establish a system of blocs in which the Eastern and Western economies are separated. In his view, Hungary should introduce a policy of economic neutrality and connectivity to preserve economic growth<sup>35</sup>. The point of economic ‘neutrality’ is that if the world becomes divided, there will still be meeting points where they can intersect. In his eyes, Hungary is ideally placed geographically and intellectually to serve as a transit country and a bridgehead between the East and the West. Viktor Orbán has been trying to achieve a middle power status for Hungary in the European Union, at least in the Central and Eastern European region, to expand to influence and to ensure his regime’s long-term survival. To fulfill these ambitions, his government strives to develop connections with as many countries and market players as possible.

However, Viktor Orbán’s high expectations about economic neutrality could be unfounded. Hungary cannot be entirely neutral as it has to adhere to NATO and EU commitments. For instance, Hungary has to align with the EU’s tariffs on electric vehicles imported from China. There are also security policy considerations, such as the safety of utilizing Chinese software or telecommunications technology. Additionally, this foreign economic policy could have other adverse effects, such as decreased foreign direct investment from the West or eroding distrust towards Hungarian companies in the West. In October 2024, U.S. Ambassador Pressman stated that this new economic policy and Hungary’s growing dependence on Moscow and Beijing have security implications for U.S. and Euro-Atlantic interests.<sup>36</sup> In August, The Spanish government did not approve the sale of the Spanish train manufacturer Talgo to the Hungarian consortium Ganz-MaVa on security grounds.<sup>37</sup>

## 4.2. Main tools of influence building

The main tools for building influence and alliance among the radical and far-right in the EU have been the export of illiberal ideas, policies, and narratives through meetings, events, publications, and providing practical support.

### 4.2.1 Exporting illiberal ideas, policies, narratives, and tactics

Viktor Orbán has emerged as a leading role model and a reference point of the global right-wing populist movement. As the longest-serving head of government, Orbán occupies a unique position among the radical populist leaders since he has had the time to implement illiberal policies. He has developed a model that rejects the liberal-democratic order, including its rule of law, checks and balances, and pluralistic information sphere. He actively portrays himself as an example and depicts Hungary as a blueprint that like-minded politicians should follow and implement. At the CPAC Hungary 2024, he proclaimed that “in an ocean of progressive liberalism, here – miraculously – a conservative island has survived.”<sup>38</sup> At the CPAC conference in Dallas, he claimed that “we Hungarians know how to defeat the enemies of freedom on the political battlefield”.<sup>39</sup> Radical and far-right parties should, therefore, enact the Hungarian illiberal model in their own countries. At the same time, Viktor Orbán leverages the international attention that he enjoys from populist figures to enhance his domestic image and legitimacy.

Additionally, he actively uses unconventional tools in foreign policy, like sharpening differences, creating divisions, provoking conflicts, engaging in taboo-busting rhetoric, trolling, and obstructing international decisions through vetoes and veto threats. In his speech on the anniversary of the Hungarian Revolution of Independence of 1848, he laid out the fundamentals of his foreign policy: “We are the grain of the sand in the machinery, the stick jammed between the spokes, the splinter under the fingernail.”<sup>40</sup> Orbán, therefore, uses these unconventional tools

to extract concessions for his regime or complicate EU decision-making in the service of foreign partners like Donald Trump or Vladimir Putin. Orbán has regularly confronted EU leaders over financial and military support to Ukraine and sanctions against Russia. Orbán also upheld the G7 loan to Ukraine to help Donald Trump.<sup>41</sup> Viktor Orbán and Fidesz lawmakers even stalled Sweden's NATO accession for almost two years, accusing the country of being hostile against Hungary.

Viktor Orbán provides other radical and far-right parties with an illiberal playbook comprising narratives, policies, strategies, and tactics that were successful in Hungary. He hopes this playbook will boost their performance and increase their election chances. In 2022 CPAC Hungary, the Hungarian leader claimed that his regime developed a formula, an “antidote to dominance by progressive.”<sup>42</sup> His 12-point formula for success includes the following key elements: owning your own media, exposing your opponent's intentions, and building communities and institutions. However, these lessons do not take into account that the Orbán regime's political success is largely attributable to the dismantling of democratic institutions and the rule of law, as well as the expansion of its control over the media and the judiciary. The Orbán regime's main export items are measures to undermine the rule of law, media freedom, anti-immigration, anti-gender narratives and policies, ‘pro-family’ policies, and populist tactics hijacking participative tools like government-initiated referenda and push-poll-like consultations. In September 2024, the Center for Fundamental Rights organized the first ‘Wokebuster Academy’ in collaboration with the Italian Machiavelli Centro Studi Politici Strategici to discuss the Hungarian strategy and model to combat woke ideology. Aspiring conservatives from different countries attended the boot camp, including Spain, Mexico, Argentina, Brazil, France, Poland, Austria, and Slovakia.<sup>43</sup>

#### 4.2.2 Meetings, events, and publications

The Orbán regime's most prominent officials and ideologues regularly meet with their radical and far-right counterparts to deepen personal relations, settle differences, and discuss common goals, strategies, and proceedings. Viktor Orbán and Balázs Orbán have been among the most active politicians who have participated in far-right events between 2000 and 2024<sup>44</sup>. Far-right conferences have frequently hosted influential Fidesz ideologues, including Miklós Szánthó, general director of the Center for Fundamental Rights, a Briton John O’Sullivan, the president of the Danube Institute, an American expat Rod Dreher, the director of Network Project of the Danube Institute.

The Orbán regime's willingness to sponsor high-profile events suggests that Orbán accords himself a leading role within an international movement of radical and far-right forces. These events have provided the regime and other radical right forces opportunities to project strength and unity, amplify messages, and attract media attention. In 2024, the key events were the **Conservative Action Conference (CPAC) Hungary**, organized by the Center for Fundamental Rights, and the **National Conservatism Conference (NatCon)**, organized by the Mathias Corvinus College, the Danube Institute, the Edmund Burke Foundation, the Nazione Futura, and the Herzl Institute, the **Geopolitical Summit** organized by the Danube Institute, and the **MCC Feszt 2024**.

The CPAC Hungary is one of the most influential far-right events.<sup>45</sup> It brought together leading politicians, ideologues, influencers, and activists of the populist radical right from Europe, South America, and the U.S. The event features 80 speakers, including Georgian Prime Minister Irakli Kobakhidze, former Polish Prime Minister Mateusz Morawiecki, former Slovenian Prime Minister Janez Janša, former Australian Prime Minister Tony Abbott, President of Spanish Vox Santiago

Abascal, leader of the Dutch PVV, President of the Belgian party Flemish Interest Tom Van Grieken, President of the Portuguese Chega! party, André Ventura, three Congressman Andy Harris, Paul Gosar, and Keith Self.<sup>46</sup>

The NatCon events feature large numbers of influential far-right politicians and representatives of far-right media and organizations. The NatCon Brussels 2024 gathered leaders, such as Viktor Orbán, Nigel Farage, Mateusz Morawiecki, Éric Zemmour, politician of the French far-right Reconquête, British Conservative MP Suella Braverman, and Paul Coleman, the executive director of AfD International. This year's conference descended into chaos after a local mayor tried to close it down due to the possibility of public disorder. However, the conference resumed after a Brussels court overturned the mayor's attempt to stop it.<sup>47</sup> Viktor Orbán tried to capitalize on the scandal by arguing that "the forces of freedom and oppression were up against each other, fighting."<sup>48</sup>

The Geopolitical Summit is an annual global conference that attracts far-right intellectuals worldwide. The Danube Institute co-hosted the event with the American Heritage Foundation and brought together speakers from academia, media, and international and American think tanks. The fourth Summit featured keynote speakers, such as Balázs Orbán, Honorable Lord David Frost, Professor Ryszard Legutko, Henry Olsen, Fellow at the Ethics and Public Policy Center, and Fox News National Affairs Columnist John Fund.<sup>49</sup>

The MCC Feszt is an annual event primarily dedicated to students, hosted by the Mathias Corvinus College campus in Budapest. It combines cultural activities, including concerts and other programs, with discussions and presentations by pro-Orbán speakers. The event is part of Mathias Corvinus College's broader initiative to cultivate the next generation of pro-Fidesz elite.

The Center of Fundamental Rights announced after the 2024 CPAC Hungary that an international alliance of national forces has been established and launched the **Wokebuster initiative, which is an alert chain for "sovereignist" forces and a year-round online and offline series event.**<sup>50</sup> These Wokebusters pledged to drain the liberal swamp and take back the West. They claim that they know the enemy because "all that has happened is that the ideology was renamed from Bolshevik to Bolshewoke". The initiative has been signed by a number of European radical and far-right politicians, such as Geert Wilders, Santiago Abascal, Janez Janša, Mateusz Morawiecki, Tom Van Grieken, the leader of the Democratic Alliance of Hungarians in Romania Kelemen Hunor, the Chairman of Hungarian Alliance Krisztián Forró, President of the Conservative People's Party of Estonia (EKRE) Martin Helme, MEP Harald Vilimsky from the FPÖ, MEP Hermann Tertsch from Spanish Vox, MEP Gerolf Annemans from the Belgian Flemish Interest, MP Simone Billi from the Italian Lega, Polish MP and former speaker of the Sejm Marek Kuchciński from PiS, Polish MP Janusz Kowalsk from PiS, Polish MP Radoslaw Fogiel from PiS, MEP Stephen Bartulica from the Croatian Home and National Gathering (member of the ECR group in the EP) and many more activists, ideologues and advisors.

In addition to events, the Orbán government also funds government-organized organizations that can produce publications for international and European audiences. **These publications seek to influence the political culture in Europe by disrupting the mainstream think tank circuit.** They aim to facilitate the Orbán regime's efforts to foster illiberal and sovereignist hegemony change in the EU. A prime example is the **European Conservative**, an English-language magazine and website that offers a conservative take on European and global political affairs and is funded by Hungarian public money through the government-organized Batthyányi Lajos Foundation (BLA).<sup>51</sup> The BLA also supports the **Hungarian Conservative** and co-funds **ReMixNews**, a website

featuring news and commentary on Central and Eastern Europe, published by a Budapest-based company. The website provides propagandistic and sometimes disinformation messages echoing the Orbán regime's narratives.<sup>52</sup> Kristóf-Szalay-Bobrovniczky, Hungary's current defense minister, has set up a pro-Fidesz news agency called **V4 News Agency** (V4NA) in London, aimed at disseminating the narratives of the Orbán government disguised as news. Shareholders include Árpád Habony, a long-time unofficial advisor to Viktor Orbán<sup>53</sup>. In an interview, István Iván Kovács, Ambassador to Belgium and Luxembourg, explained the Hungarian soft power offensive: "it's important that we have a way of communicating this directly. Unfortunately, some of the mainstream coverage is distorting and not telling the full picture."<sup>54</sup>

### 4.2.3 Providing practical support

The Orbán regime not only exports the Hungarian illiberal playbook but also provides practical support to like-minded parties and politicians to enhance their performance, help them win elections, and enter governments. Beyond the mutual benefits of the growing number of 'sovereignist' governments, the Orbán regime seeks to increase its influence by fostering dependencies and creating reciprocal obligations among its allies. This support can take various forms, including political, media, financial, and campaign know-how support.

**Practical support:** The Orbán regime has supported and legitimized the authoritarian behavior of like-minded leaders such as Serbian President Aleksandar Vučić, the President of the Republika Srpska Milorad Dodik, and Georgian Prime Minister Irakli Kobakhidze. Viktor Orbán pushed Serbia's EU accession efforts through Olivér Várhelyi, the former enlargement commissioner, who boosted Serbia's bid while downplaying the rule of law and human rights concerns during his mandate.<sup>55</sup> Viktor Orbán supported Dodik politically and financially on several occasions when the Serb leader escalated his secessionist threats.<sup>56</sup> Hungarian Foreign Minister Péter Szijjártó delivered an endorsing speech in Serbian at Dodik's final campaign rally ahead of the 2024 Bosnian municipal election.<sup>57</sup> The Hungarian prime minister visited Georgia and applauded Irakli Kobakhidze for his party's election victory despite irregularities that marred the vote.<sup>58</sup>

**Media support:** Since 2017, Hungarian private companies that are closely associated with Fidesz have invested heavily in the Slovenian and North Macedonian media. While Fidesz argues that such investments are driven by commercial interest, the evidence suggests that they are part of the Orbán regime's broader influence-building strategy to influence the media and support like-minded allies.<sup>59</sup> The Orbán government has also established strong positions in the minority media sectors in Slovakia, Romania, Ukraine, and Romania to gain indirect influence on the mainstream politics in these countries.<sup>60</sup>

**Financial support:** The MBH bank, which is largely owned by shareholders and companies close to Viktor Orbán's childhood friend Lőrinc Mészáros, provided a loan of EUR 9.2 million to Spain's far-right Vox party for its 2023 general and local election campaigns.<sup>61</sup> One of MBH's predecessors, MKB Bank, also owned by Lőrinc Mészáros, famously financed Marine Le Pen's 2022 presidential campaign with a EUR 10.7 million loan at the personal request of Viktor Orbán.<sup>62</sup>

**Campaign know-how support:** Fidesz campaign advisors supported PiS during the 2023 Polish elections. Media reports suggested that these unnamed advisors were Árpád Habony and analysts from Századvég. These consultants advised PiS to pursue aggressive and polarizing messages and engage in hostile narratives against Donald Tusk.<sup>63</sup> Viktor Orbán also suggested that Hungarian experts contributed to the program writing system of Donald Trump's team.<sup>64</sup>

### 4.3 Main actors of influence building

Since 2010, Viktor Orbán has transformed Hungary's foreign policy institutions from a technocratic approach to a hyper-powered foreign policy that is politicized and personalized at its core.<sup>65</sup> Politicization involves the deinstitutionalization and the restructuring of the existing foreign policy bureaucracy and institutions, including the removal of career diplomats and the appointment of personnel loyal to the leadership. Personalization occurs when the newly restructured institutions are centralized in the hands of the leader in a way that reflects his interests and narratives. Following the 2014 general election, Viktor Orbán has profoundly transformed the Ministry of Foreign Affairs through organizational and personnel changes.<sup>66</sup> The Prime Minister's Office has increasingly become a 'super institution' dealing with many policy areas, including foreign policy. Viktor Orbán claimed, after the Hungarian Institute of International Affairs was placed under the Prime Minister's Office, that "the reins of foreign policy must be held tightly (...) the Prime Minister."<sup>67</sup> As a result, the Orbán government's foreign policy agenda is primarily shaped by regime, not national, interests.

The Orbán regime's politicized and personalized foreign policy has significant implications. The regime prefers to establish relations with like-minded parties and politicians through personal, one-on-one, bilateral meetings rather than through institutions and traditional diplomatic channels. Personal ties and friendly media images are essential for the regime. Foreign policy priorities must ensure the regime's survival, which increases the likelihood of risky foreign policy behavior, especially in the face of domestic challenges or in the run-up to elections. Consequently, the regime's foreign policy aims to portray Viktor Orbán as a "savior" who will protect the nation from external enemies. However, this foreign policy approach is not without its drawbacks. Viktor Orbán has been forced to make U-turns and zigzags because his foreign policy is based on personal relationships rather than long-term planning and preparation by his institutions. The quality and transparency of decision-making could deteriorate. Viktor Orbán may have created an echo chamber in which loyalists rarely disagree with him.<sup>68</sup>

The Orbán regime's most active influence-building actors have been Prime Minister Viktor Orbán, the Political Director of Prime Minister Balázs Orbán, Minister of Foreign Affairs Péter Szijjártó, Minister of Prime Minister's Office Gergely Gulyás and Minister of EU Affairs János Bóka.<sup>69</sup> In addition to these high-profile politicians, other politicians, such as MEP and the first Vice-President of the Patriots for Europe, Kinga Gál, MEP Enikő Győri, MEP Balázs Hidvégi, Hungarian embassies, and lower-level government officials play a role in facilitating the establishment and maintenance of relations.

Furthermore, government-organized non-governmental organizations (GONGOs) and "think tanks" contribute to building the Orbán regime's international influence and alliances. These organizations 1) cultivate and maintain relations with ultra-conservative, radical, and far-right parties, politicians, NGOs, and experts, 2) shape public discourse at national and international levels by providing ideological justifications for Fidesz's decisions, policies, tactics, and political views, 3) organize events and produce publications to support the above functions, 4) provide funding and scholarships for foreign conservative researchers and writers, who can defend the Hungarian prime minister in Brussels and Washington, as well as in the European and American media.<sup>70</sup>

The leading organization is the **Mathias Corvinus Collegium** (MCC), headed by Balázs Orbán, a privately funded college that gives stipends, scholarships and networking opportunities for students and a government-organized think tank that disseminates the government's messages

in key policy areas. In 2020, the Orbán government granted 10% of the shares of the Hungarian oil company Mol Plc and 10% of Richter Gedeon Plc to MCC. These shares are worth a total of about EUR 1 billion. The MCC has spent an enormous amount on events, parties, and hosting international guests friendly to the Orbán government.<sup>71</sup> The MCC also pays incredibly high salaries for instructors compared to standard Hungarian higher education.<sup>72</sup> To cultivate the next generation of Hungarian intellectuals with conservative values, the organization provides scholarships for children and students to participate in extracurricular activities and education at centers throughout Hungary. Not only is it active domestically, but it has also expanded its international reach. It has opened centers in Belgium, Slovakia, Romania, Serbia and Ukraine.<sup>73</sup> The MCC has also acquired a stake in the Modul University in Vienna in 2023.<sup>74</sup> To challenge to the political and cultural hegemony in Brussels, the **MCC Brussels** has organized several events and published reports advocating the Orbán regime's messages and policies, such as the dangers of migration and multiculturalism<sup>75</sup> and the efforts to create “a United States of Europe”<sup>76</sup> the “Commission’s power grab,”<sup>77</sup> and “the EU’s attack on free speech.”<sup>78</sup> Balázs Orbán described the MCC as a counter-cultural initiative whose aim is to “influence the European debate.”<sup>79</sup>

**The Center for Fundamental Rights** plays a key role in fostering, maintaining, and relations with ultraconservative and far-right politicians, parties, NGOs, and intellectuals. The organization is a cornerstone of the Orbán regime’s narrative hegemony over the public discourse, offering ideological “spin” for the ruling party’s decisions, policies, tactics, and political views, mainly related to anti-migration, anti-LGBTQ, and anti-gender narratives. It cooperates closely with anti-LGBTQ+ groups, such as the Polish group Ordo Iuris and the Spanish CitizenGO against the Istanbul Convention<sup>80</sup>. In March 2024, it opened an office (Centro de Derechos Fundamentales) in Madrid, where it started organizing conferences for Spanish audiences attended by the members of Vox<sup>81</sup>. It also focuses on establishing relations with U.S. actors, so it organizes the CPAC Hungary event and the ‘Wokebuster Academy’. Miklós Szánthó, general director of the Center for Fundamental Rights, has established a connection with the America First Policy Institute, a pro-Trump think tank often described as a “White House in waiting”<sup>82</sup>. The representatives of the organizations regularly attend far-right events around the world, such as CPAC 2024 in DC Washington, CPAC Brazil 2024 in Balneário Camboriú, and other speaking events in Poland, Belgium, Romania, and Italy. The Centre for Fundamental Rights received funds up to EUR 2.53 million in grants from the Prime Minister's Cabinet Office through the Batthyányi Lajos Foundation between 2018 and 2020.<sup>83</sup>

The **Danube Institute** was founded in 2013 by the Batthyányi Lajos Foundation to facilitate the cooperation between thinkers, academics, experts, media representatives, political leaders, and cultural actors in Central Europe and the English-speaking world.<sup>84</sup> The Institute established a formal partnership agreement with the Heritage Foundation, which prepared the controversial political initiative Project 2025.<sup>85</sup> Representatives from both organizations regularly attend each other's conferences, reinforcing each other's efforts and reaching audiences on both sides of the Atlantic. Danube’s President, John O’Sullivan, a respected British conservative and former speechwriter of Margaret Thatcher, has extensive connections with conservatives worldwide. He has been described as “Orbán’s conduit to the American right.”<sup>86</sup> The Danube Institute paid more than EUR 1.5 million to foreign speakers, visiting lecturers, and scholars between 2022 and 2024. The activities of these public figures appear to be primarily aimed at portraying the Hungarian government and Viktor Orbán in a positive light in the U.S. media. The most notable of these is Rod Dreher, who has been paid to publish articles in the American media and has promoted “American Orbanism.”<sup>87</sup>

Other relevant government-affiliated actors in international influence-building include **the Hungarian Institute of International Affairs, which** supports the Prime Minister's strategic foreign policy decision-making. For example, the members of the Institute were present at a private meeting attended by the Heritage Foundation, the Hungarian Embassy, and elected members of the Republican Party to stop the military support to Ukraine in December 2023.<sup>88</sup> **The Hungary Foundation** was established by the government in 2012 with the goal of creating educational and cultural ties between the United States and Hungary. However, under the guise of educational and cultural exchange programs, the Hungary Foundation donated more than EUR 4.9 million through the end of 2020 to think tanks, conservative groups, and Hungarian-American organizations engaged in lobbying efforts in the US<sup>89</sup>. The Fidesz-affiliated polling firm, **Nézőpont Intézet** prepared a report on the rule of law situation of the EU institutions. The report strongly described the way the President of the European Commission is appointed as "illegitimate." The EPP, ECR, and Patriots MEPs participated in the report presentation.<sup>90</sup>

## 4.4. Influence building by region

### 4.4.1 European Union

**The European far right has been reorganized in a way that reflects Viktor Orbán's vision to create a "Europe of Nation States."** The establishment of the Patriots under the co-leadership of Fidesz, which was sidelined in the European Parliament after leaving the EPP in 2019, was one of the greatest achievements of the Orbán regime in 2024. Fidesz, FPÖ, and ANO presented the founding manifesto of the Patriots, in which they portray a Europe they perceive as dominated by distant institutions, globalist forces, and unelected bureaucrats, whose ultimate goal is to replace the nation states with a European "superstate."<sup>91</sup> They pledged to return the power to the people by retaking the institutions and reorienting European policy that restores the sovereignty of nation-states. The group's formation suggests that far-right parties are in line to pursue this European vision.

**The Orbán regime has formalized its relations with key like-minded allies.** Viktor Orbán has consolidated his alliance with Marine Le Pen's RN, the largest far-right party in Europe, despite its failure to obtain a majority in the country's snap election. The RN is in a strong position in the French parliament. Other key actors are Geert Wilders' PVV and Herbert Kickl's FPÖ, who won the latest general elections in their respective countries. Andrej Babiš's ANO party left the liberal Renew, and Spain's VOX left the ECR despite having strong ties with Meloni's FdI to join the Patriots. After the RN, Fidesz has the second-largest national delegation and the only party with a direct vote in the European Council.

**In addition to members of the Patriots, the Orbán regime has established partnerships with parties across Europe based on ideological similarities or sympathy for Fidesz policies.** Hungarian embassies in member states and Fidesz-affiliated think tanks help the regime monitor political developments across the EU, with a particular focus on populist radical right actors. The Orbán regime has adopted a highly pragmatic approach, seeking to build ties with like-minded parties even when there are more of them in a country. It has consistently adapted its strategy to changing circumstances. For example, when the Lega's popularity soared in the polls, Viktor Orbán sought to cultivate close ties with Matteo Salvini. But when the Lega's support declined and the FdI's grew, leading to Meloni's election victory, Viktor Orbán shifted his attention to her.



Important partners from the EPP group include the Hungarian Democratic Alliance of Romania (RMDSZ), and former Prime Minister Janez Janša's Slovenian Democratic Party (SDS). From the ECR group, the Italian FdI, the Polish PiS, and the Estonian Conservative People's Party (EKRE) are also among Fidesz's most important allies and partners. Fidesz has also forged links with the Czech Freedom and Direct Democracy (SPD) and Éric Zemmour's Reconquete from the ESN. Robert Fico's SMER is also an important ally. Political Capital's online infographic on Fidesz's EU-wide partner network is [accessible here](#).



QR code leading to the infographic on Fidesz's EU-wide partner network

**Although Viktor Orbán claims that populist radicals and far-right parties are aligned, they are not united in the EU institutions.** Viktor Orbán has found allies on immigration, gender issues, climate skepticism, and the rule of law debates, but they diverge on many key EU policy areas, such as enlargement, EU politics, and foreign and security policy. For example, the Orbán regime welcomed Meloni's election victory in September 2022 and had high expectations as a new ally took over one of the EU's largest member states. It saw the Meloni government as an important ally, especially in the Council, mainly because Italy could help Hungary form a blocking minority or act as a veto partner. The regime wanted to find a new key ally as relations with Poland's PiS deteriorated over Hungary's Russia policy. Despite ideological similarities, the cooperation between Meloni and Orbán quickly became superficial. Crucially, Meloni voted for the partial suspension of funds to Hungary related to the rule of law procedure. While Meloni seeks to align herself with the mainstream parties on a number of issues, Orbán is in direct conflict with them. Meloni has reaffirmed Italy's pro-European and Atlanticist orientation, along with staunch support for Ukraine. She has also supported sanctions against Russia, while Viktor Orbán has called them misguided.

**Olivér Várhelyi's performance as the Commissioner for Neighborhood and Enlargement overshadowed his hearing for another term as Commissioner for Health and Animal Welfare.** In 2019, Viktor Orbán hailed the confirmation of Várhelyi as a key EU commissioner, the country's biggest diplomatic success of the last decade, and hoped it would increase Hungary's influence in the EU.<sup>92</sup> During his mandate, Várhelyi was widely seen as advancing the agenda of the Orbán regime rather than that of the European Commission.<sup>93</sup> He was accused of being partial in his assessment of the efforts of Ukraine and other countries to join the bloc. As a result, Várhelyi lost his chance to retain the enlargement portfolio and was assigned to the Health and Animal Welfare portfolio. During his hearing, there were some professional objections, but the barrage of questions from MEPs focused on his loyalty to Viktor Orbán, his views on vaccines and abortion, and his commitment to animal welfare. Ultimately, Várhelyi did not have the support of any of the major political blocs, which led to his portfolio being reduced to set an example.

## 4.4.2 Western Balkans

Since 2010, the Orbán regime has reorientated Hungary's foreign policy strategy by shifting it eastward.<sup>94</sup> The regime started to pursue closer relations with Eastern states, such as China, Russia, and Turkey, and Central Asian countries, such as Azerbaijan, in an alleged attempt to serve as a strategic link between the East and the West.<sup>95</sup> This geopolitical shift extended to the Western Balkans, where the Orbán regime aimed to establish Hungary as a political and economic regional power. The regime's growing presence in Serbia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, and Northern Macedonia is driven by strategic, economic, and political drivers. The influence-building in Bosnia and Herzegovina concentrated on the Serb-dominated entity, Republika Srpska.

### Economic cooperation

**The Orbán regime has a growing economic interest in the Western Balkans, especially in Serbia.** The Orbán regime is willing to provide significant bilateral loans to its allies, which is typically accompanied by the emergence of Hungarian companies closely linked to the ruling party in these markets.<sup>96</sup> Hungarian investments have increased in several sectors, including telecommunications, media, infrastructure, and energy.

- **Serbia:** The Hungarian government has invested heavily in the autonomous Serbian province of Vojvodina, where these investments have been presented as beneficial to Hungarians living there. Trade between Serbia and Hungary increased significantly between 2016 and 2021, as imports from Hungary to Serbia increased by 83.6% and exports from Serbia to Hungary grew by 166%, making Hungary the fifth largest export partner<sup>97</sup>. One of the largest strategic projects between the two countries is the Belgrade-Budapest railway development, which is largely funded by China.<sup>98</sup> In December 2020, Serbian Minister of Foreign Affairs Nikola Selaković stated that Hungarian companies would invest EUR 130 million in Serbia.<sup>99</sup> In 2021, the Orbán regime even allocated EUR 25 million to support Hungarian companies investing in Serbia.<sup>100</sup>
- **Republika Srpska:** In 2022, the Hungarian government provided a loan of EUR 110 million to Republika Srpska through the state-owned Eximbank.<sup>101</sup> In 2023, Milorad Dodik announced that Hungary would invest a total of EUR 118 million in the Serb-dominated entity<sup>102</sup>. In 2024, Viktor Orbán announced a further EUR 140 million investment in energy projects with the participation of Hungarian companies, such as Veolia, MVM, and Alteo.<sup>103</sup>
- **North Macedonia:** In 2024, the Orbán government granted a EUR 500 million loan through Eximbank to North Macedonia after its ally, the nationalist Internal Macedonian Revolutionary Organization – Democratic Party for Macedonian National Unity (VMRO-DPMNE), returned to power.<sup>104</sup> The 4iG, a Hungarian IT company closely associated with Fidesz, has established a subsidiary in North Macedonia. The VMRO-led government supports the market entry of the 4iG as it considers that the arrival of the new service provider will increase competition and improve the quality of telecommunication networks<sup>105</sup>.

### Political cooperation

**The Orbán regime has fostered close political ties with the leaders of the Western Balkans.** Shared ideological similarities have facilitated personal connections between Viktor Orbán and these leaders. These ties have been instrumental in Hungary's expanding economic presence in the region.

- **Serbia:** Viktor Orbán and Serbian President Vučić have developed close political and personal ties, which flourished into a “special relationship.”<sup>106</sup> Since 2019, bilateral meetings between the two leaders have tripled.<sup>107</sup> In June 2023, the two governments formalized bilateral relations with the establishment of the Hungarian-Serbian Strategic Cooperation Council.<sup>108</sup> The two government has held two meetings of the Council, where they signed altogether 18 bilateral agreements in a variety of areas, including infrastructure, defense, European integration, and energy.<sup>109</sup>
- **Republika Srpska:** Viktor Orbán regularly meets with President Milorad Dodik to strengthen ties. During the 2024 celebration of the founding of the Republika Srpska—an event deemed unconstitutional by Bosnia’s state-level Constitutional Court—Dodik awarded Viktor Orbán the Order of Republika Srpska, the highest decoration for the entity.<sup>110</sup>
- **North Macedonia:** The Orbán regime has established and maintained close relations with the VMRO-DPMNE. The Hungarian intelligence service helped former Prime Minister Nikola Gruevski escape to Hungary in 2018<sup>111</sup>. Despite attempts from North Macedonia, Fidesz has refused to extradite the former prime minister. In 2024, the VMRO-DPMNE won the parliamentary and presidential elections, and relations with the Hungarian government intensified. In September 2024, Viktor Orbán and Prime Minister Hristijan Mickoski held a joint Hungarian-North Macedonian government meeting to discuss EU enlargement, migration, and deeper economic cooperation.<sup>112</sup>

### Strategic cooperation

**The Orbán regime views the stability of Western Balkans as a great strategic importance for Hungary.** The countries in the region are situated at the gateway to the European Union, and the Russian aggression against Ukraine has enhanced their geopolitical positions. Given the geographical proximity, the stability of Southeast Europe plays a key role in the Hungarian security. The Hungarian government has praised Vucic, Mickoski, and Dodik for their efforts to curb illegal migration and maintain regional stability. Viktor Orbán has used these arguments to justify his position in favor of accelerated enlargement to the Western Balkans.<sup>113</sup>

#### 4.4.3 USA

Although Viktor Orbán had limited success in building relationships with Trump during his first term, he has since advanced Hungary's influence by investing heavily in building ties with the Make America Great Again (MAGA) side of the Republican Party and Trump-aligned networks and organizations. Some American conservatives argue that Orbán's governance should serve as a model for America. Viktor Orbán has developed close personal ties with Donald Trump and Vice President J.D. Vance and people in his inner circle, such as Donald Trump Jr<sup>114</sup>. Trump called Orbán his “friend”<sup>115</sup> and a “great man”.<sup>116</sup> In the run-up to the U.S. presidential elections, Viktor Orbán placed all his bets on Trump’s victory, because a Republican win would enhance the stability of his regime. **With Trump in power, Orbán can anticipate less criticism from Washington regarding Hungary’s democratic backsliding and corruption.** The Hungarian government can operate without concern for external pressure on democratic principles, providing Orbán greater flexibility in domestic affairs.

**Initially, the Orbán regime had limited success in developing relations with the Trump administration.** The Orbán regime depended on the efforts of U.S.-based Hungarian institutions, such as the Hungary Foundation, the services of paid and registered American lobbyists, including Connie Mack<sup>117</sup> and David Reaboi<sup>118</sup>, along with various lobbying companies.<sup>119</sup> After the

first meeting between Trump and Orbán in 2019, Balázs Orbán has played pivotal role in accelerating Fidesz's efforts to strengthen ties with the MAGA movement. After Tucker Carlson, the former Fox News host, presented his show from Budapest in 2021, Orbán's popularity and recognition among the American conservatives surged. As a result, Fidesz and its think tanks easily identified counterparts on the right side of the Republican party.

**The Orbán regime has invested heavily in a soft power strategy aimed at deepening cooperation with like-minded think tanks, academics, public intellectuals, and media personalities, and using them as a platform to access and influence conservative politicians on foreign and domestic policy.** Close ties with conservative think tanks could be beneficial for the Orbán regime as they also serve as a breeding ground for the next generation of politicians and officials.<sup>120</sup> For example, several figures in Trump's first administration have ties to institutes, such as Matthew Boyse (Hudson Institute) and Fiona Hill (Brookings Institutions). In essence, the Orbán regime is trying to influence American policymaking through U.S think tanks. In March 2024, Viktor Orbán participated in a panel discussion with the President of the Heritage Foundation, Kevin Roberts, and failed Republican presidential candidate Vivek Ramaswamy in Washington to discuss the successes of Hungary's conservative family and economic policies, the war in Ukraine and U.S-Hungary relations.<sup>121</sup> Kevin Roberts has called Orbán's leadership as "a model for conservative governance"<sup>122</sup> and has received a Hungarian state award<sup>123</sup>. The Orbán regime's influence-building efforts have focused on the following institutions: Heritage Foundation, Counterpoint Institute Claremont Institute, Texas Public Policy Foundation, and America First Policy Institute<sup>124</sup>.

**Fidesz-affiliated think tanks have been able to gain a foothold within the Republican establishment, effectively integrating the Orbán regime's pro-Russian stance alongside MAGA narratives.** Although much of the outreach to US conservatives appears to focus on common themes, such as anti-woke, anti-immigration, and the promotion of religious values, the discussions also touch on pro-Russian foreign policy objectives.<sup>125</sup> These include limiting Western support for Ukraine and implicitly weakening support for NATO. These think tanks can inject pro-Russian messages into the Republican agenda through cooperation with U.S. think tanks. For example, in October 2022, the Conservative Partnership Institute<sup>126</sup>, a nerve center for incubating the next generation of Trump loyalists and MAGA policies, co-hosted a conference with the Counterpoint Institute on achieving "peace in Ukraine," that included the Hungarian Minister of Foreign Affairs Peter Szijjártó.<sup>127</sup> Pamphlets promoting pro-Russian messages were distributed to conservative policy advisers, national security officials, and GOP strategists attending the event.<sup>128</sup> In December 2023, representatives of Fidesz-affiliated think tanks attended a two-day event hosted by the Heritage Foundation to discuss the war in Ukraine.<sup>129</sup> The President of the Heritage Foundation Kevin Roberts played a key role in lobbying in Congress to end congressional funding to Ukraine.<sup>130</sup>

**The shared ideological views of Donald Trump and Viktor Orbán could lead to stronger ties.** Their similarities centered on anti-woke, anti-immigration, anti-LGBTQ, and anti-liberal discourses, with the objective of protecting sovereignty, Christianity, traditional values, and the traditional family model.<sup>131</sup> The Orbán regime aims to present its pro-natalist family policies as a success against declining birth rates and an example of resistance to 'gender ideology'. Florida Governor Ron DeSantis is the only Republican who may have been inspired by Orbán's example. The governor passed the 'Don't Say Gay' law in Florida, which banned classroom instruction by school personnel or third parties on sexual orientation or gender identity. Rod Dreher claimed that the bill was inspired by a similar law adopted by the Orbán regime.

**While Trump and Orbán seek to focus on common themes, their parties diverge on certain economic and foreign policy issues.** Unlike Republicans in the United States, who have traditionally championed free markets and opposed government intervention in the economy, Orbán embodies a right-wing ideology that advocates for state intervention. For example, the Hungarian government imposed food price caps to combat inflation between February 2022 and July 2023.<sup>132</sup> The Senate Minority Leader, Republican Mitch McConnell, criticized the Hungarian prime minister's foreign policy and expressed his disapproval of Republicans who have become fond of the leader.<sup>133</sup> He stressed that Hungary has been drifting towards the West's most determined adversaries, such as China, Russia, and Iran. He criticized the Hungarian government for helping Russia by gumming up European and transatlantic efforts to combat Russia's unlawful aggression. In October 2024, a U.S. Senate delegation led by Republican Jerry Moran visited Hungary and expressed concern over Hungary's deepening ties with Russia and China and the erosion of its democratic institutions.<sup>134</sup>

## Annex – The list of populist radical right and far-right parties in the European Parliament

The ECR, the Patriots and the ESN political groups in the EP as of 30 November 2024

Party name in English	Party name in original language	Country	Number of MEPs	Proportion of party in political group in EP	Proportion of party in EP
<b>European Conservatives and Reformists (ECR)</b>					
Brothers of Italy	Fratelli d'Italia	IT	24	30.77%	3.33%
National Alliance “All For Latvia!” - “For Fatherland and Freedom/LNNK”	Nacionālā apvienība "Visu Latvijai!" - "Tēvzemei un Brīvībai/LNNK"	LV	2	2.56%	0.28%
Law and Justice Party	Prawo i Sprawiedliwość	PL	18	23.08%	2.50%
Greek Solution	Elliniki Lysi	EL	2	2.56%	0.28%
Alliance for the Union of Romanians	Alianța pentru Unirea Românilor, AUR	RO	5	6.41%	0.69%
Home and National Gathering	DOMiNO (DOM i Nacionalno Okupljanje)	HR	1	1.28%	0.14%
Identity-Liberties	Identité-Libertés	FR	4	5.13%	0.56%
Sweden Democrats	Sverigedemokraterna	SE	3	3.85%	0.42%
National Popular Front	Ethniko Laiko Metopo, ELAM	CY	1	1.28%	0.14%
Sovereign Poland	Suwerenna Polska	PL	2	2.56%	0.28%
Alternative Democratic Reform Party	Alternativ Demokratesch Reformpartei, ADR	LU	1	1.28%	0.14%
Civic Democratic Party	Občanská demokratická strana	CZ	3	3.85%	0.42%
Denmark Democrats	Danmarksdemokraterne	DK	1	1.28%	0.14%
Dutch Reformed Party	Staatkundig Gereformeerde Partij	NL	1	1.28%	0.14%

Party name in English	Party name in original language	Country	Number of MEPs	Proportion of party in political group in EP	Proportion of party in EP
Electoral Action of Poles in Lithuania - Christian Families Alliance	Lietuvos lenkų rinkimų akcija - Krikščioniškų šeimų sąjunga	LT	1	1.28%	0.14%
Finns Party	Perussuomalaiset	FI	1	1.28%	0.14%
Lithuanian Farmers and Greens Union party	Lietuvos valstiečių ir žaliųjų sąjunga	LT	1	1.28%	0.14%
New Flemish Alliance	Nieuw-Vlaamse Alliantie	BE	3	3.85%	0.42%
The Estonian Centre Party	Eesti Keskerakond	EE	1	1.28%	0.14%
There Is Such a People	Ima takav narod	BG	1	1.28%	0.14%
United List	Apvienotais Saraksts, AS	LV	1	1.28%	0.14%
The Romanian National Conservative Party	Partidul Național Conservator Român (PNCR)	RO	1	1.28%	0.14%
<i>ECR Total</i>			78		10.83%
<b>Patriots for Europe (PfE)</b>					
National Rally	Rassemblement National	FR	30	35.71%	4.17%
Fidesz – Hungarian Civic Alliance	Fidesz	HU	12	14.29%	1.67%
League	Lega Nord / Salvini Premier	IT	8	9.52%	1.11%
ANO 2011	ANO 2011	CZ	6	7.14%	0.83%
Party for Freedom	Partij voor de Vrijheid	NL	6	7.14%	0.83%
VOX	VOX	ES	6	7.14%	0.83%
Freedom Party of Austria	Freiheitliche Partei Österreichs	AT	6	7.14%	0.83%
Flemish Interest	Vlaams Belang	BE	3	3.57%	0.42%
Enough!	Chega	PT	2	2.38%	0.28%

Party name in English	Party name in original language	Country	Number of MEPs	Proportion of party in political group in EP	Proportion of party in EP
Voice of Reason	Foni Logikis	EL	1	1.19%	0.14%
Conservative People's Party of Estonia	Eesti Konservatiivne Rahvaerakond	EE	0	0.00%	0.00%
Confederation Liberty and Independence	Konfederacja Wolność i Niepodległość	PL	2	2.38%	0.28%
Danish People's Party	Dansk Folkeparti	DK	1	1.19%	0.14%
Motorists for Themselves	Motoristé sobě	CZ	1	1.19%	0.14%
<i>PfE Total</i>			84		11.67%
<b>The Europe of Sovereign Nations (ESN)</b>					
Alternative for Germany	Alternative für Deutschland	DE	14	56.00%	1.94%
Our Homeland	Mi Hazánk Mozgalom	HU	1	4.00%	0.14%
Freedom and Direct Democracy	Svoboda a přímá demokracie	CZ	1	4.00%	0.14%
People and Justice Union (Centrists, Nationalists)	Tautos ir teisingumo sąjunga	LT	1	4.00%	0.14%
Reconquest	Reconquête!	FR	1	4.00%	0.14%
Revival	Vazrazhdane	BG	3	12.00%	0.42%
Confederation Liberty and Independence	Konfederacja Wolność i Niepodległość	PL	3	12.00%	0.42%
Republic Movement	Hnutie Republika	SK	1	4.00%	0.14%
<i>The ESN Total</i>			25		3.47%



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