

Right-Wing Populist Parties in Europe: Does Welfare Chauvinism Endanger Social Protection Budget?

Right wing populist parties in Europe are gaining significant number of votes. This paper is looking at welfare chauvinism, as part of their ideology, which aims at excluding non-natives from welfare rights or decreasing their ability to fulfil the eligibility criteria. However, it does not show a relationship between the welfare state budget and right wing populists. The paper aims at showing which policy areas are most prone to budget reductions. Data used in the paper show decrease of the social protection budget when populists are part of the government, but it is not a universal trend. Populists transcend welfare regimes as their presence is being increased in all of the regimes, but the paper shows that it is the policy areas of unemployment and family that have seen the greatest reductions of expenditure. The question is whether this trend represents a threat for immigrants' wellbeing in the future.

Keywords: right-wing populism, welfare chauvinism, welfare state, European Union

Introduction

Right-wing populist political parties are beginning to play ever more important roles in the political system and their presence in governments is becoming a regular part of everyday politics. Social policy has been under attack from other, more systemic sources such as (to name a few: globalisation, economic crisis, austerity measures, high deficits etc), and it is important to see if populists will further contribute to retrenchment of the welfare state. Populists around Europe are both similar and different in their ideology, depending on the country, but this paper is looking at welfare chauvinism, as an essential part of their ideology.

Increased economic insecurity together with austerity measures and greater vulnerability of immigrants has been studied already, but will it be further worsened by a welfare chauvinist approach? This paper is looking at the relationship between welfare chauvinism and social protection budget in European countries where populists are represented in the parliament of the government. The idea that a rise of populist movements has an effect on mainstream parties has already been studied (Schumacher & Kersbergen 2014) but

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is there an actual effect on the welfare state, seen in a decrease for the social protection budget? The paper is looking into specific policies and ways populists may affect welfare state and it is divided into six sections. The introduction is followed by the insight into most relevant social, political and economic circumstances in Europe that contributed the rise of populist parties. The third section defines the methodological approach of the paper and the fourth section defines welfare chauvinism. The fifth part is devoted to an analysis of results and it is followed by the conclusion.

Social climate in Europe: fruitful soil for populist rise

The economic crisis of 2008 and later has had multiple effects, going beyond the economy only, one being the increased electoral support for right-wing populist parties. The paper is looking into the relationship between right-wing populist parties and the welfare state, by focusing on welfare chauvinism. Welfare chauvinism is here considered as the unifying characteristic of right-wing populist movements and parties. It is part of their ideology which is most closely related to the welfare state. In other words, it defines their approach to social protection. Additional factors contributed to the rise of right-wing populist movements: globalisation, economic crisis, intensifying globalisation, moderate growth levels, fiscal pressures, economic internationalisation, increasing unemployment, austerity measures, changed social milieu of Europe after 2015, but also neliberalisation and retrenchment of the welfare state.

Legitimation of reserving welfare benefits for certain groups has only become one of the leading paradigms in some of the European countries (Keskinen, Norocel & Jorgensen 2016). Additionally, it was accompanied by stronger appeals for exclusionary politics, engagement in nationalist and border-controlling rhetoric and debate on welfare state entitlements to benefits (Ibid.). Right-wing populists use direct and indirect strategies. The former refers to decisions which have negative effects on immigrants directly, e. g. implementing policies that affect only immigrants, while the latter refers to policies which are directed towards all but immigrants or other minorities will be affected more (Careja et al. 2016: 438).

It can be seen here that right-wing populists use fractured discourse: pro-leftist thinking which is based in pro-rightist ideology. In other words, these parties combine two contrary thoughts, relating them in the political manner which transcends traditional left-right division in both ideological terms but also in looking for ways to attract voters. It is possible because their discourse is based on qualifying the notion of the citizen on different grounds. These are often not clear in populists' ideologies but here are the two major criteria: citizenship and paying taxes. (Ketola & Nordensvard 2018).

The major argument of right-wing populists is that foreign migrants have lower human and social capital because they do not speak language and are often low-skilled workers who cannot have well-paid jobs (Aiyar et al. 2016, OECD 2016). High unemployment can significantly contribute to further disentanglement between the two groups in this sense (Vadlamnati & Kelly 2017). Also, European public is susceptible towards considering immigrants having the same welfare rights and benefits as the native population (Van Oorschot 2006).

Methodology of the paper

The existing research does not deal with the relationship between welfare chauvinism and the welfare state but looks at different aspects of welfare state expenditure in relation to similar causes (e. g. Careja et al. 2016, Gaston & Rajaguru 2013). This paper is looking at whether a presence of right-wing populist party coincides with social protection budget decreases. It aims at showing whether right-wing populists are only a relevant political party or their presence has the actual impact on deciding on the social protection budget. In other words, does their discourse remain their only feature or it has an influence on the government to reduce social protection spending. The paper discusses EU member states where a right-wing populist party is represented in the parliament: Bulgaria, Denmark, Germany, Estonia, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Hungary, Netherlands, Austria, Slovakia, Finland, Sweden. France is not considered because of the electoral system, which significantly reduces representation of the National front in the parliament. The period from 2011 to 2017 is chosen because it is a period when state budgets for social protection became consolidated after austerity measures, at least for the majority of countries chosen here and to ensure availability of data. In this way, the effect of austerity measures should not be a main driver of budget reductions and the effect of right-wing populism should be more apparent. The Table 1. shows the case studies, with the name of the right-wing populist party and their electoral result on elections held between 2011 and 2019. The data for social protection budget used here cover 2011–2017, as it is the last year with available data.

The paper makes a distinction between EU citizens and non-EU immigrants, to make a differentiation between the native and non-native population. The first hypothesis of the paper is that a rise of welfare chauvinism of rightist populist parties coincides with decreases for social protection expenditure. It is expected because they are either gaining votes so when in opposition the government makes concessions by adopting some of their proposals or they actually implement their political strategy while in the government.

The current data, presented in the Table 2. show that foreign citizens in the EU face higher risk of poverty and social exclusion, have lower unemployment rate and have lower incomes. It is the case for

Table 1. Countries and right-wing populist parties electoral results. Blue sheets indicate that party is/was part of the governing coalition after that election. (Source: Nordstieck 2020).

Country	Name of the party	Year when elections were held											
		2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019			
Bulgaria	United Patriots*				7.3				9.1				
Denmark	Danish people's party	12.3				21.1							8.7
Germany	Alternative for Germany			4.7						12.6			
Estonia	Conservative People's Party	2.1				8.1							17.8
Italy**	Five star movement, Lega Nord			29.7								50.1	
Latvia	National Alliance	13.6			16.6							11	
Lithuania	Order and Justice		7.3				5.3						
Hungary	Fidesz				44.9							49.3	
Netherlands	Party for freedom		10.1						13.1				
Austria	Freedom party of Austria			20.5					26				16.2
Slovakia**	Slovak National party, Kotleba People's Party		6.2						16.6				
Finland	Finn's party	19				17.6							17.5
Sweden	Sweden democrats				12.9							17.5	

* United Patriots were formed as a coalition only in 2017; ** Italy (result for both parties and Five Star Movement is a part of the governing coalition from 2018); Slovakia (result for both parties in 2016, Kotleba did not pass the threshold in 2012 and Slovak National Party is part of the governing coalition from 2016).

almost all member states, but only countries used in this paper are presented here. The data on income present the median equivalised net income (PPS) and data for unemployment of foreigners are not available for some countries.

The paper uses Eurostat's methodology for defining broad policy areas: family and children, social exclusion, unemployment, sickness and health care, housing, old age, survivors (Eurostat, 2011). In accordance with the data from Table 1, the second hypothesis of the

Table 2. Median equivalised net income, risk of poverty and social exclusion and unemployment rates for EU and foreign citizens.
(Source: Eurostat 2020a).

Country	PPS-Median Equivalised net income		Risk of poverty and social exclusion		Unemployment rate	
	Foreign	Nationals	Foreign	Nationals	Foreign	Nationals
	2017	2017	2017	2017	2017	2017
EU28	14,320	17,741	40.7	21.8	12.2	7.0
Bulgaria	10,291	8,601	47.8	34.3	n/a	6.1
Denmark	18,544	22,559	41.7	19.3	11.9	4.8
Germany	18,906	22,832	29.2	19.2	8.0	3.1
Estonia	11,085	14,706	30.9	17.1	10.1	4.9
Italy	11,869	17,990	50.3	28.0	14.2	10.7
Latvia	9,179	10,807	32.0	23.0	12.0	8.4
Lithuania	8,024	10,994	35	25.4	n/a	7.2
Hungary	8,086	8,752	29.8	25.6	n/a	4.1
Netherlands	19,332	22,845	29.4	18.1	7.8	4.2
Austria	17,544	26,312	37.2	14.1	10.4	4.3
Slovakia	9,964	11,175	20	15.1	n/a	7.9
Finland	16,951	21,415	32.1	15.9	14.3	7.8
Sweden	13,664	22,687	45.5	13.5	20.5	4.7

paper is that the highest reductions of the social protection budget are expected for benefits for family and children, unemployment and social exclusion. It is the case because these are the three areas where presence of claimants from immigrants is expected to be the highest, due to lower earnings, higher risk of poverty and social exclusion and higher rates of unemployment. The other groups of benefits which are not expected to be affected by welfare chauvinist arguments are more all-encompassing and no strict line can divide native population with non-natives. These measures aim at protection of the population as the whole. It must be added that stricter criteria for receiving benefits may impinge actual negative effect of welfare chauvinism.

Populist rise in Europe: welfare chauvinism in the focus

The term welfare chauvinism was coined by Andersen and Bjørklund in 1990s, stating that it refers to the notion that „welfare services should be restricted to ‘our own’“ (Andersen & Bjørklund 1990: 212). Welfare chauvinism rests on the idea of dividing society on the line of nativism as the key organising principle of social policy (Ennsner-Jednastik 2018: 294). It implies a division of the society into „us“ and „them“, an in-group and an out-group. Kitchelt (2007) defines it as the system of collective social protection restricted to those who belong to an ethnically defined community who has

contributed to it. Populists have a two-fold aim here: to preserve solidarity by addressing the native group who should be kept together in the times of crisis (unemployment, precariousness of the labour market etc.) but also to ensure survival of the welfare state by keeping it only for those who contribute to it (Norocel 2016). The term welfare chauvinism is in this paper used as a broad concept and its target group are individuals who are foreign non-EU citizens.

There are studies showing that welfare expenditures are overrepresented among minorities and migrants (Aiyar et al. 2016, Blume & Verner 2007, OECD 2016, 2017) suggesting that, calculated proportionately, welfare incurred for either migrant family or migrants in total surpasses expenditure for natives' families or groups. Consequently, welfare chauvinism rests on two dimensions: socioeconomic and sociocultural, but it is the latter that defines the first one. Cultural and national affiliations define one's propensity to have welfare rights and determine their economic circumstances. Welfare chauvinism makes a very differing idea of the 'others': immigrants, minorities, refugees (Jorgensen & Thomsen 2016).

Social protection vs. welfare chauvinism: gains and losses

Right-wing populist parties aim at protecting the welfare state by discouraging unneeded transfers for individuals and groups who do not contribute to the state budget. They question of welfare generosity is not questioned but the principles of its delivery are. The existing studies have different conceptual approaches (Jorgensen & Thomsen 2016, Keskinen 2016, Van Oorschot 2006). Welfare state should be redesigned in a fashion which reduces a society to those that not only live in that state but are active. It is important point to note because it implies that social protection is expanded for those considered eligible but other expenditures are supposed to be cut.

The literature on the welfare state has so far had a different approach, looking at regimes and policy approaches which were not based on any of the criteria related to welfare chauvinism. The main question is how will these changes, together with more systemic effects, shape the future of the welfare state. Are we going to see further retrenchment and budget reductions or an expansion is possible but only for certain groups? Or, will it be a combination of the two with unclear outcomes? The literature has not dealt with this problem systematically.

The literature on the issue is focused on the case studies and the impact of populists on the welfare state in more general terms (Careja et al. 2016, De Koster, Achterberg & van der Waal 2012, Jorgensen & Thomsen 2016, Keskinen 2016, Marx & Naumann 2018, Norocel 2016). The Table 3. shows the total budget per year for social protection expenditure as percentage of GDP per country from 2008 to 2016. Blue cells show negative result, i. e. reduction of the budget.

Table 3. The total budget per year for social protection expenditure as percentage of GDP per country from 2011 to 2017; difference between 2017 and 2011. (Source: Eurostat 2020b).

Country	Social protection budget as % of GDP, per year							
	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2017–2011
Bulgaria	16.0	16.1	17.0	17.9	17.2	16.8	16.4	0.4
Denmark	31.0	30.9	31.3	31.6	31.0	29.7	30.9	-0.1
Germany	27.6	27.7	28.0	27.9	28.1	28.4	28.5	0.9
Estonia	15.3	14.7	14.6	14.6	15.8	16.4	15.8	0.5
Italy	27.2	27.9	28.5	28.7	28.8	28.3	28.0	0.8
Latvia	15.1	14.1	14.4	14.3	14.7	14.9	14.6	-0.5
Lithuania	16.3	15.5	14.5	14.5	14.8	14.6	14.4	-1.9
Hungary	21.3	21.0	20.5	19.5	18.8	18.6	18.1	-3.2
Netherlands	27.8	28.5	28.8	28.6	28.1	28.0	27.6	-0.2
Austria	28.0	28.4	28.8	29.0	29.1	29.0	28.6	0.6
Slovakia	17.2	17.3	17.8	17.9	17.5	17.9	17.7	0.5
Finland	27.9	29.2	30.2	30.9	31.2	31.1	30.1	2.2
Sweden	27.5	28.6	29.4	28.9	28.5	28.9	28.2	0.7

Results and discussion

Before analysing the data on populist parties' electoral performance, it is essential to look at expenditures for social protection. The data on social expenditure show less than half of chosen countries having their social protection budget as the share of GDP, reduced. In fact, it is only Hungary and Lithuania that have seen a significant reduction in 2017, compared to 2011. Among the case studies chosen here, Hungary has seen the constant decrease of the social protection budget from 2009 and especially from 2010, which is the time when Fidesz came to power. Lithuania has had a fairly constant budget for social protection after 2013.

According to the OECD data on GDP growth (OECD 2020), all countries have seen a gradual GDP growth from 2011 onwards. Consequently, it can be concluded that reduction in the spending on social protection was not a result of low performance of the economy. It is an important point because it shows that it is not only the economy that influences the welfare state budget. Also, it represents a strong basis for further research in the populists' influence because macroeconomic conditions were stable.

The majority of countries chosen here have seen increase in right-wing populists' appeal to voters. In nine out of thirteen countries, their increased the vote share and they have always remained in opposition in only three countries (Germany, Netherlands, Sweden). Right-wing populists are on the rise, but the most recent results in Denmark and Austria may be a call for a more cautious conclusion. Their participation in governing coalitions shows their potential to

not only remain on the fringes of the political system but to be able to participate in decision making.

Their influence in the political system increased but concerning the welfare state, there is little evidence that welfare chauvinist arguments coincides with reductions in social protection funding. In other words, having a right-wing populist party in the parliament does not result in welfare state budget reductions. However, there are important exceptions which have to be highlighted. Hungary and Denmark have seen a long participation of right-wing populists in the government and the literature shows the welfare chauvinism was one of the drivers behind social protection budget reductions (Lugosi 2018, Jorgensen & Thomsen 2016, Schumacher & van Kersbergen 2014, Szikra 2014). It is especially the case in Hungary, where Fidesz is the dominant party and which saw a sharp budget decrease (-3.2%). Lithuania is a rather different case, as well as Latvia and the reduction (-1.9%) is more related to a different ideological government orientation and changes of the welfare state programmes (e. g. Jaunarāja and Poiša 2020).

Restrictions to access to welfare benefits have been observed throughout Europe. Romer's study (Romer 2017) together with Sainsbury's (Sainsbury 2012) discusses availability (generosity) of welfare rights. Germany, Denmark, Austria, Netherlands and have seen restrictions in welfare rights and if budget reductions are added to it, it is highly likely that migrants might be even worse off and at more risk of poverty and social exclusion. It can be concluded that the first hypothesis of the paper has been rejected, but with the caution that dominance in political representation may have a strong potential for implementation of reductionist measures.

. The second hypothesis looked at types of welfare state expenditure and in the similar vein. Expenditure per policy area is presented in the Table 4. Two policy areas have seen reductions in the majority of countries: unemployment and survivors. Benefits for family and children were deduced in six countries and for disability in five. The highest reductions are observed in Hungary and Denmark, which have had populists in the government for the longest period. Consequently, out of the three expected areas to have budget cuts, it can be concluded that only the budget unemployment benefits was reduced. Previous conclusion for Latvia remains here, no cuts for unemployment benefits were observed for this period.

This paper deals with social protection expenditure, but the literature used here suggests that family and children benefits, together with social exclusion are the areas which have seen tightening of the eligibility criteria for receiving benefits and it is one of the reasons why there are no significant cuts. It is an indirect effect and suggests that welfare chauvinism uses a different form rather than just cutting the budget: redefinition of criteria for receiving benefits. In other words, tightening the qualification criteria for benefits. It is a different argument, but considered together with austerity measures

Table 4. Expenditure on social protection as percentage of GDP per policy area, as difference between 2017 and 2011. Negative results are indicated in blue colour. (Source: Eurostat 2020b).

Country	Expenditure on social protection as percentage of GDP									
	Family/ children	Social exclusion	Unemployment	Sickness/ health care	Housing	Old age	Survivors	Disability		
Bulgaria	0	-0.1	-0.1	0.4	0	0	0.1	0.0		
Denmark	-0.4	0.4	-0.5	0	0	0.7	-1.3	1.0		
Germany	0.2	0.2	-0.3	0.8	0	0.1	-0.2	0.3		
Estonia	0.2	0	-0.1	0.4	0.1	-0.2	0	0.0		
Italy	0.7	0.1	0.1	-0.2	0	0.1	0	0.1		
Larvia	0.5	-0.2	0	0.3	0	-0.9	-0.1	0.0		
Lithuania	-0.5	-0.6	-0.1	0	0.1	-0.6	-0.1	-0.3		
Hungary	-0.5	0	-0.5	-0.4	0	-1	-0.3	-0.6		
Netherlands	0.1	0.1	-0.2	-0.7	0.1	0.2	-0.2	0.2		
Austria	-0.1	0.2	0.1	0.2	0	0.6	-0.2	-0.3		
Slovakia	-0.1	-0.1	-0.3	0.4	0.1	0.6	0	0.1		
Finland	-0.2	0.1	0.2	-0.3	0.3	2.5	-0.1	-0.4		
Sweden	0	0.5	-0.1	0.4	0	0.7	-0.1	-0.5		

and effects of participation of populists in the government, may only add additional pressure to social protection budget.

The major conclusion that stems from findings of this paper is that populist parties act just like the mainstream parties, at least when it comes to social protection spending. Welfare chauvinism means little if populists are not part of the government and only if they represent the relevant political party, which Fidesz is. Danish people's party did not win elections but supported a minority government, providing it a space for negotiations. It is only when right-wing populists

have the option to implement the approach that it actually affects spending of the welfare state. The cases of countries where populist parties have come in power in the last two years will show if the argument is proven further. On the other hand, spending on unemployment and family benefits were policy areas that saw decreases of the expenditure budget and it proves that these areas are more prone to be affected by welfare chauvinism.

Welfare chauvinism realises its full potential when its propagators come to power and together with austerity measures and tightening of the qualification criteria, can have a destructive effects on the welfare state spending on the long run. Consequently, adopting either direct or indirect strategy of welfare chauvinism, it represents a threat for the future of the welfare state, especially for non-native population.

Conclusion

Welfare chauvinism has become a part of the everyday politics in all the countries where populist parties have gained significant amount of votes. Their strength has gradually increased as well as their presence in parliaments but even more, they have become part of the governing coalition in some of the European Union member states. Studies used in this paper show that perception of immigrants has worsened, in the sense that citizens prefer less migrants, irrespective of their social background, knowledge, skills or any other factor. Populists have utilised this in welfare chauvinism, looking at reducing welfare rights to native population only. In other words, only those who are considered eligible, not only by citizenship, but also by contributing to the state budget should be receiving the welfare state benefits.

This study aimed at showing if presence of welfare chauvinist arguments by populist parties coincides with welfare state budget reductions. It showed that welfare chauvinism does not directly coincide with social protection budget reductions. More support for welfare chauvinism on elections does not mean fewer funds for the welfare state. However, it is not a final conclusion because it was presented that longer periods in governing coalitions increase ability of populists to adopt decisions rooted in welfare chauvinism, with the final outcome of budget reductions. Cases of Hungary and Denmark are the best examples.

Social protection is in the EU divided into eight broad policy areas and it was expected to see the highest reductions in areas where migrants are expected to be of the highest presence: family, unemployment and social exclusion. However, it was only unemployment and family benefits that saw budget reductions. Seeing populists in power for longer periods might mean further endangerment of the welfare state. Knowing that welfare rights are at the focus of populists, linking the two trends could severely affect the welfare state as we know it today or as it was a decade or so ago.

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DESNIČARSKE POPULISTIČKE PARTIJE U EVROPI:
DA LI ŠOVINIZAM BLAGOSTANJA UGROŽAVA
BUDŽET ZA SOCIJALNU ZAŠTITU?

Desničarske populističke stranke u Evropi dobijaju značajan broj glasova na izborima. Ovaj rad se bavi problemom šovinizma blagostanja, kao dijela njihove ideologije. Ona ima za cilj isključiti ne-domićilne građane iz prava socijalne zaštite ili smanjiti njihovu sposobnost da ispune kriterijume podobnosti za dobijanje tih prava. Međutim, pokazuje se da ne postoji direktna veza između budžeta države blagostanja i djelovanja desnih populista. Rad ima za cilj da pokaže koje su politike najsklonije smanjivanju budžeta. Podaci korišteni u radu pokazuju smanjenje budžeta socijalne zaštite, za vrijeme vlasti populista, ali to nije univerzalni trend. Populisti prevazilaze režime blagostanja jer se njihovo prisustvo povećava u svim režimima, stoga ovaj rad pokazuje da su oblasti politike nezaposlenosti i porodice one koje su doživjele najveća smanjenja rashoda. Ostaje pitanje da li ovaj trend predstavlja prijetnju za dovoljan stepen blagostanja imigranata u budućnosti.