

Working Group on Populism Autumn 2017 Report

The past few months have been extremely eventful with regards to the spread of populism across Europe. While one can celebrate the success of VVD and D66 in the Netherlands, Macron's victory in France, and the return of the FDP to the Bundestag, now is not the time to be complacent. These 'victories' cannot serve to cover up the problem that persists in our societies: the PVV is the second biggest party in the Netherlands, over 10 million French people voted for Marine le Pen, and the AfD is now the third biggest party in Germany. Add to this a few examples, such as the fact that Fidesz is in power in Hungary, that PiS is in power in Poland, that the Sweden Democrats are the third biggest party in Sweden, and that the recent Bulgarian elections saw the creation of a coalition that includes far-right extremists, and you will see that things are not as rosy as many would claim. Our societies remain divided, and so the ground remains fertile for both right- and left-wing populist parties to sow and exploit divisions..

Over the past few months, the Working Group on Populism has focused on polishing and updating the *Draft Strategy*, which will be presented to the upcoming Congress. The Working Group has relied on individuals who have recognised the importance of this topic, and who have taken the time to contribute to it.

As it stands, the strategy is composed of five key sections:

- Europeanism: a new approach to pro-European politics
- Constituents: how to connect with our base
- Communication: bridging the divide
- Engagement: bringing the youth and politics closer together
- Solutions: from the theoretical to the practical

Particular work has also been done on the issue of Fake News, identified as a key topic during one of the IMS Hangouts, and for which a discussions group was formed. This section also includes insights from an event held by ALDE Group at the European Parliament on 6 September 2017 entitled "Protecting European Democracy in a Post-Truth Society", which the coordinator of the Working Group attended.

That being said, it must unfortunately be underlined that the work being carried out by the Working Group seems to have attracted little interest beyond the circle of individuals who have contributed. Complacency is something that we specifically warn against in the strategy, and I hope that we can see more cooperation from here onwards. I hope that, taking into account resolution 1003 on the upcoming European elections that will be introduced at the Sofia Congress, more attention will be paid to the work being done by this Working Group, and that we can proceed to implement this strategy and tackle a threat that seeks to tear our liberal societies apart.

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