

No 01 | 2024

EUSYP Think Tank
"STRATEGIES AND POLICIES ON YOUTH IN THE EU"

WORKING PAPER

GOING TO THE EXTREME: HOW THE RADICAL
APPROACH THE YOUTH IN EUROPEAN
COUNTRIES

MARIOS PACHIDIS



EUSYP Think Tank

STRATEGIES AND POLICIES ON YOUTH IN THE EU

Youth’s Dilemma

**How the Radical Parties approach the Youth in European
Countries**

Pachidis Marios

**All rights reserved. No part of this paper may be reproduced in any form without
permission from the author**

**This publication reflects the views only of the authors, and the EUSYP Think Tank
cannot be held responsible for any use which may be made of the information
contained therein.**

Abstract

Europe's political scene is directly affected by the rise of the Eurosceptic far right. It is worth focusing on the practices these political groups use to reach young people, through well-structured, context- and emotion-based political and public communication. We note that the sociopolitical frame of reference of mainly soft Eurosceptic parties tend to be quite similar: false dilemmas and a choice between “Us” and the Other”. The 'Other' may be a particular party, a government or even an entire social group. This is the opponent who, according to these groups, causes social, political, and economic hardships for young people: immigrants, fascists, the system itself or the government that does not produce policies that would favor the development and progress of young people. Of course, in terms of how they seek to achieve their goals, some parties use traditional and contemporary strategies (the use of the internet and social media), while they use strong language as a tool to appeal to mass audiences. The far right has an extended sphere of influence in the European North and South. Examples of parties, political formations, and charters of groups from Europe, such as Belgium, Spain, and Portugal, highlight the key element that spark the interest of young people to these political entities: their need to radically change the existing social, political and economic situation. It is critical to examine this phenomenon of radicalization by also considering the results of the European elections in June 2024 and the rising percentages of voting for the far right, especially by young people.

Keywords:

Far Right; Far Left; violence; Europe; Strategies; Youth; Young People; Euroelections

Contents

Introduction.....	4
1. Theoretical Framework of the Far-Right Strategies on Youth.....	5
2. EU Youth Strategies and EU Youth Expectations.....	8
3. Case Studies: Vlaams Belang (Belgium), Vox (Spain), Chega (Portugal).....	10
3.1. The Vlaams Belang Party (Belgium).....	10
3.2. The Vox Party (Spain) and the Chega Party (Portugal).....	12
Conclusion: The Solution to Radicalism Post EU Elections.....	18
Bibliography.....	20

Introduction

Young people (people from ages 15 to 29) can participate in the political sphere through many forms, such as expressing their opinion on topics of development, empowerment, efficiency or could be based on their rights (Barta et al, 2021). The radicalized youth acts with the influence of a group that criticizes the prevailing social and political order. Concerning youth participation, it could be defined as the political participation to cause change in the internal and external policies of a state (Barta et al, 2021, Uba and Bossi, 2022; Charting the Radical Right’s Influence on EU Foreign Policy, 2024). All the political parties we are going to analyze are soft Eurosceptic, which means they recognize the essence of the EU but criticize it constructively through political and economic alternatives that preserve national interest, with activities and campaigns that occur in a non-violent way (Soft Euroscepticism, n.d.).

Participation is important, as it renders young people as stakeholders and choice makers in their community and makes them more sensitive about the problems that their local societies face (economic problems, education, social protection, health, environment), as well as the world in general (World Program Action for Youth, 2019). Radical parties and their leaders are adept at recognizing the youth’s aspirations and needs. This is very critical in Europe, where most of the community’s and youth’s problems are tackled with robust narratives by the radical parties. These narratives are fundamental for the rise of popularity of the far right in numerous countries in the North and the South and the shockingly important scores in elections. These parties manage to make people sympathize with them just by appearing as normal people and use victimhood as their weapon (Far right: The significance of an umbrella concept, 2023; Far and Extreme Right, n.d.). It is worth noting that the parties analyzed use a specific pattern. They are presenting themselves as the problem-solvers of youth’s and society’s problems and offering radical, simplistic alternatives, while also blaming few components of the status quo or the other parties for the current situation.

We are going to examine all parties based on how their rhetoric corresponds to the expectations of the Youth about the European Union, concerning international peace and solidarity, poverty and inequalities, job market opportunities, fighting for climate change and European Values

linkage. The analysis of the strategies will also follow theories of radicalization. We observe that the approach of radical parties on the youth in the EU consists of some common strategies and practices of simplification and polarization. This is important as we can connect this phenomenon with the outcomes of the EU Parliament Elections of 2024. The plethora of books, websites and infographics, as well as reports, EU legislation and strategic documents and news articles constitute the core of this essay.

1. Theoretical Framework of the Far-Right Strategies on Youth

Radicalization has many levels to it, macro, meso and micro (civil society, governments and EU parties) (Maskaliūnaitė, 2015). There are also multiple differences on the left- right spectrum regarding radicalization. The left radicals seek to drastically change the root principles of the current society, either through direct action or indirect political pressure (Henley, 2024). On the other hand the right radicals support that returning to more traditional routes could be better.

For the young men, giving support to a far-right party seems like a solution to their social, economic and political problems. Either the radical ideology becomes a stage in their life, or this ideology characterizes their political opinion. Or either, it is due to the influence of close friends that one adopts radical ideas such as anti-liberalism, anti-parliamentarianism, anti-Semitism, anti-communism, partly anti-capitalism, while ethnic culture is in the center of the far right narratives. However, if we want to understand the parties of the far right we need, as Ernt Laclau said, to examine their practices of populism rather than their ideologies (Afouxenidis et al., p. 57; Makris, 2017; Moreira, 2022).

The “far-right” is an umbrella term for those parties that seek change in the state and thus desire to reform the societies and replace the mainstream parties’ notions of liberal democracy and socially based policies (Far right: The significance of an umbrella concept, 2022). Extreme far right groups resort to the use of violence to redefine the existing political norms and democracy itself. There are also parties and movements that are defined as populist radical right, which desire to reform societies and replace the mainstream parties’ notions of liberal democracy and socially based policies, while rhetorically being in favor of democracy. Far right groups vary and

are usually complex when it comes to categorization, and their range is from neo-fascist, homophobic or anti migrant to fundamentalist religious groups.

The more moderate to central right parties have differences with the far right, concerning liberal constitutionalism, and considering to what extent the three powers within a state (judicial, executive and legislative) can contribute to the defense of individual freedoms and rights. Major emphasis is given to national roots and anti-individualistic approaches (Pirro, 2023). Populism also needs to be defined to understand how the far right’s appeal has been augmented and how the left attracts fewer people. Populism uses the terminology of people’s rights about one problem and establishes two opposing groups, the people that suffer due to the prosperity of “the other” (Aschwanten, 2020). The radical right usually uses specific situation-driven narratives in order to appeal to young people’s sentiments. We are going to examine the most widespread and the most democratic version of the far right, that uses democratic populism and is more dangerously augmenting its electoral base.

Whom does the far right attract and what strategies does it use? They usually target young males around the ages of 15 to 25, excluded from the labor market or society itself, with formed or preexisting prejudices and fatigue with current government policies (Nilan, 2021). The internet is utilized as a tool to escape legal and police control. This form of mediatization of politics is an eligible strategy to approach young people, since there is only 2% of youngsters who do not utilize the internet in Europe (Statista, 2023). Due to some of the European Union’s strategies being open source, that means that all far-right movements can read and alter the meaning of them, based on context, and thus use misinformation to manipulate audiences. The narratives of self- or group victimhood are very strong while the notion of “group-focused enmity” (devaluing people based on the social or ethnic group they belong to) is the norm (Bourgon and Marson, 1997; Samaras, 2010). The usual strategy of the far right consists of a variety of ways. Specifically, targeting people that follow or support far right influencers and dislike organizations, or people susceptible to conspiracy theories, they spread rumors or allegations and thus use disinformation through digital mediatization (Afouxenidis et al., 2022). There are personas who build their profile through addressing political issues. They serve as amplifiers of strong radical emotions, creating a network of followers, whom they encourage to spread their content. The risk of de-platformation forces them to use subtle codified language. Telegram is the most common platform where far right influencers prosper (Afouxenidis et al., 2022).

The parties target the economic and social frustration, that the youth may experience through their parents, or even their general political apathy for the parties of the center, creating a fear of another component (Nilan, 2021). The far-right uses migrants and migration as a narrative weapon. . Anti-Islamic or anti-government rhetoric is tailored to resonate with the anger of young people, particularly young men. Social and labor exclusion are significant causes of this anger. There are personally- driven motives that lead young people to be radicalized (push factors). Both these factors are fundamental part of wider strategies used by movements or parties to attract potential supporters, based on narratives framing them as serving a good cause. The radical or extremist movements use the “Net” to spread their narratives, the “channel” to target specific people vulnerable for recruitment.

As Ernst Laclau describes this situation, there is a theoretical death battle between a friend and an enemy. The friend (other people like us) is oppressed by this well constructed enemy. We can consider that the democratic malaise of Alasdair Roberts applies for Europe, as populism utilizes it as a hegemonic strategy, in the case of the far right (Makris, 2017; Moreira, 2022). But we would have to link the democratic malaise to problems of corruption perception, as the image of left or center politicians is undermined by either scandals or the perceived inefficiency during their terms and their “empty promises”. Education could be linked to a more progressive understanding of democracy, however if the societal problems affect educational procedures, the youth could be led to paths of totalitarianism according to Ellen Rugby (Makris, 2017). We can even say that, if utilizing the system justification theory of John T. Jost, that the norms of the youth’s social system, in this case (parents, surroundings, the world through the news and the economy) matter too much.

What is the false dilemma fallacy? It is a logical fallacy used frequently by a number of parties trying to drive the voters to choose between exclusively two options: either join their cause or be with the opponent, who will lead them to stagnation and perhaps, destruction. (COVID-19, Donald Trump and The False Dilemma Fallacy, 2020; False Dilemma Fallacy | Examples & Definition, 2023). It is a method Donald Trump frequently used, exaggerating and fabricating events to create a false sense of choice. It is usually mixed with the slippery slope argument,

which implies that negative consequences will follow if a choice is made. It is easier for far-right parties to manipulate adolescents, as they are more likely to decide based on sentiment.

2. EU Youth Strategies and EU Youth Expectations

The EU Youth Strategy 2019-2027 is based on the principles of inclusion of all people and considering their diverse needs, motivating young citizens to vote and understand they can impact policies and decisions, fighting discrimination and promoting equality of all kinds, and understanding that the complex challenges of today require a comprehensive and multicomplex approach through local, regional, national and European levels. (Council of the EU, 2018).

The European identity of the youth can be linked to proximity, perception of a common situation, similar values and experiences (Neoi kai Europi,: Tautothta, Stohoi, kai to Mellon tis Europis, 2022). When asked about the experience (that relates to the EU) that influenced them the most, young people reference the economic crisis of 2008, the 2015 Refugee Crisis, Brexit, the Covid 19 Pandemic and Russia’s War on Ukraine. It is worth noting that several young people view the European Union not as a union, but as a concept where states participate equally or unequally in common decisions. As Figures I and II showcase to us, there are a few topics that are fundamentally important to youngsters in Europe such as employment, education and health improvement, the promotion of democracy and human rights, and fighting social and economic inequalities (Youth and Democracy, 2024; EU priorities according to young Europeans, 2022).

International peace and solidarity have become more important considering the war in Ukraine, while also crises around the world are rising every day. It is also apparent that despite the efforts of the West through various initiatives, inclusivity in societies is not something that affects the youth’s perception as much as other issues do. This is also apparently how in times of crises far right parties utilize the narrative of salvation through radical changes. It is also equally understandable that many people view disinformation campaigns through the media as a huge problem and people with political apathy might even show trust issues from governments. All these problems drive a percentage of people away from their governments and even from the European Union to an extent, especially if a shock influences one country more than the other.

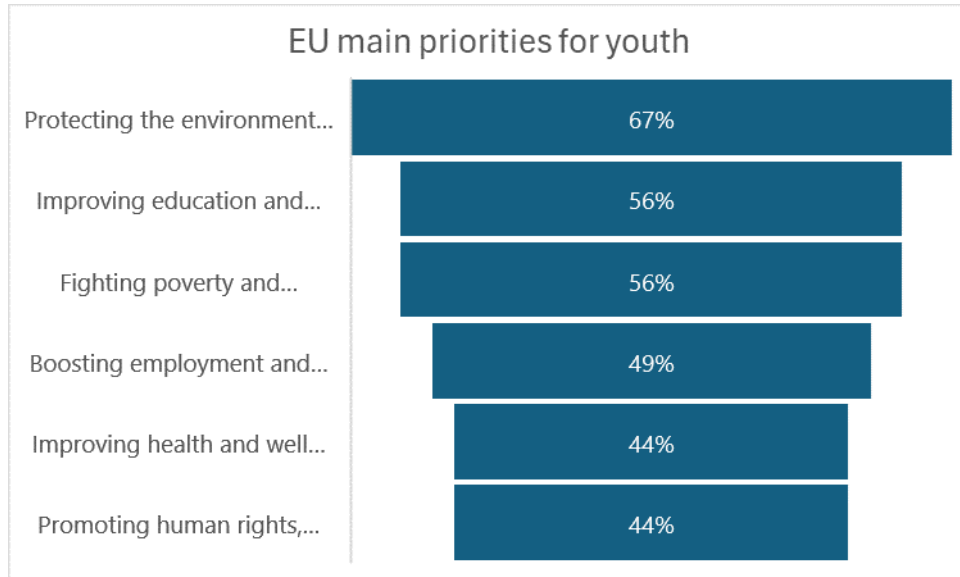


Figure 1: European Union’s Priorities for Youth
(Iliou, K., Kakepaki M., and Klironomos, N., 2023)

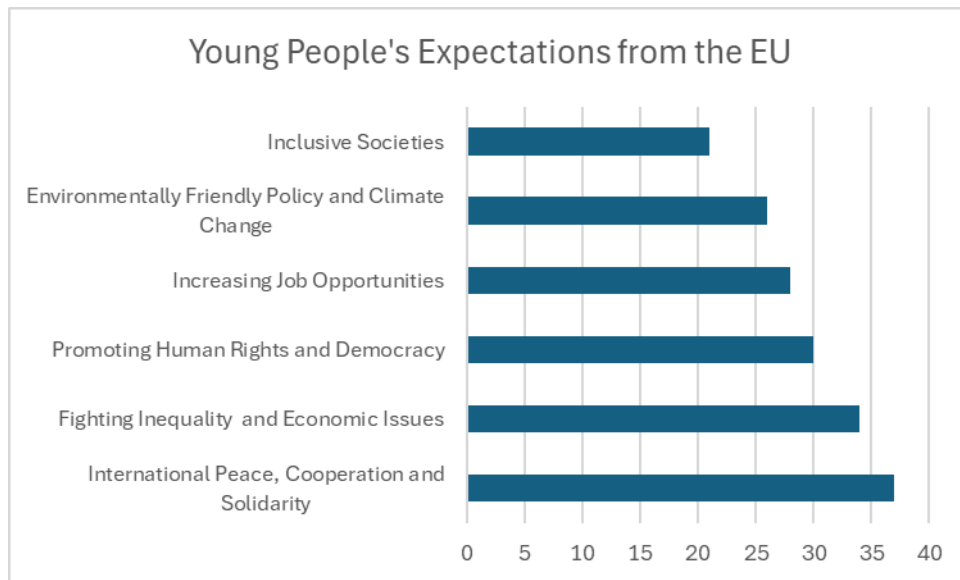


Figure 2: The expectations of young people from the EU
(European Commission, 2024)

3. Case Studies: Vlaams Belang (Belgium), Vox (Spain), Chega (Portugal)

3.1. The Vlaams Belang Party (Belgium)

In all relevant case studies, lots of measures are taken in order to empower the youth and enhance their participation. However, due to internal problems these strategies are not implemented as they were planned. The far right also has gained a strong presence as they have taken into consideration (young) people’s issues.

In Belgium, the realization of the EU Strategies for Youth occurred with different measures in different regions of the country. Specifically for the Flemish Region, the Flemish Youth and Children’s Rights Policy Plan (2015-2019) was implemented (Youth Strategies, 2018). According to the European Youth Survey of 2021, 2 from 10 Belgians do not perceive the EU as an environment that could reinforce the future generations. There is a generally complex youth policy due to the country’s structure, based on three communities, the French, the German speaking, and the Flemish. The Flemish community is an interesting case for analysis, as there are many social and political differences among people concerning schooling. Cultural divergence creates sharp differences between the three communities, so as government and public agencies are not producing policies that satisfy the Flemish (Council of Europe, 2013).

Youth in Belgium is usually radicalized due to isolation and alienation, glorification of specific ideas, social and economic inequality. Radical movements utilize mostly the internet as a form of communication with their voters and potential future voters. The narratives that they tend to use are those of discontent with the political and judicial system as well as a dehumanized version of the “Other”. Offline the right-wing targets football events to find new members and especially young ones. In Belgium, the initiative to join far right movements happens as people want to change things around. The problem of Islamic radicalization and activities of Islamist groups in Belgium has caused a reaction from the local communities. Anti-asylum, anti-migration and anti-Islamist policies are strong in Belgium. Vlaams Belang, or otherwise known as the Flemish Interest, is a far-right political party active in the region of Flanders. The predecessor party was focused around 4 issues which were also the key factors for their voters, Flemish nationalism, immigration, antipolitics (distrust in traditional politics) and crime policy (Walgrave and De

Swert, 2004; CRIMINALITEIT ECHT AANPAKKEN VEILIG VLAANDEREN). Lastly, regional differences in economic and social affairs between the three communities is a major issue, while corruption does not carry the same dynamic as in the other two case studies.

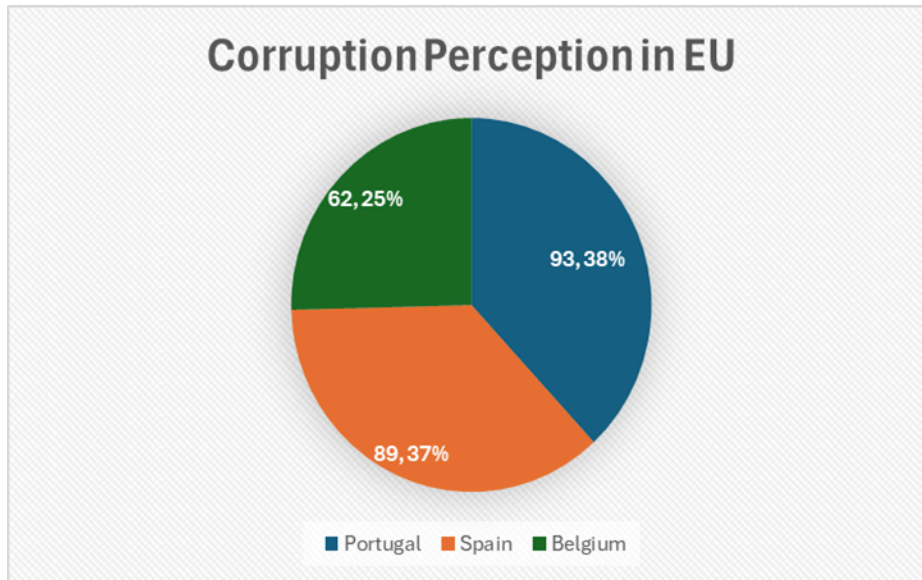


Figure 3: Corruption Perception in the EU by Case Study

Source: European Commission. “Citizens' attitudes towards corruption in the EU in 2023”

Vlaams Belang has a very diversified agenda of topics addressed on their website. Some of them follow the typical far right rhetoric and emphasize on the rights of the Flemish people, while others are mostly focused on the need for change in Belgium. The biggest reason that Vlaams Belang advocates for the independence of Flanders, is the huge cultural and social differences between them and the citizens of Waloons (VLAANDEREN VLAAMS, n.d.). Vlaams Belang condemns every element that leads to the divergence from Flemish culture, Islam and the French language, while also having a strong stance on migration issues (MASSA-IMMIGRATIE STOPPEN GASTVRIJ MAAR NIET GEK, n.d; Brussels Times, 2022). They recently referenced the Islamic State as a threat to the communities of Flanders and the state’s security resources as insufficient to counter them (Vlaams Belang, 2024). Additionally, they have proposed the creation of a National Guard to assist and enhance security and information operations and combat terrorism, organized crime, and drug trafficking effectively

(WELVAREND VLAANDEREN, n.d.). Furthermore, they are very active in the municipal regions, where they try to act as an alternative to the government (Vlaams Belang, 2024; VLAANDEREN VLAAMS, n.d.; Een warm en sociaal Vlaanderen, n.d.). Last of all, there was the call for the Francophones to stop offering similar linguistic services.

3.2. The Vox Party (Spain) and the Chega Party (Portugal)

In Spain there have been many initiatives to motivate young people to participate and be the future policymakers and decision makers. The Youth Strategy of 2030, the Spanish Youth Institute and the Youth Interministerial Commission are some of the political measures taken in order to engage and aid the youth socially, politically and economically (*Youth Policy in Spain*, 2023). However, education dropout by youngsters and serious concerns about unemployment, might inevitably drive them to far right parties (Llach, 2023; Statista, 2022). On the other hand, in Portugal the Institute for Sport and Youth, the Ministry of Education and civil societies in continental and autonomous regions are funnels through which the youth can decide for their state and the European future, enhancing their skills through national and transnational activities, such as the Program Formal +, Euroschool Contests, Youth Parliament, Young Artists Programme (Youth Policy Governance in Portugal, n.d.). However problems in the National Health System, government, corruption, economy, access of less adults in higher education and unemployment undermine these notable multi-level efforts (Statista, 2023; Amaral, 2023).

Vox is a particular case of a populist far right party. Despite its setbacks in the 2019 elections, the indicators are favorable for this party in 2024. It has a strong presence on social media. They question global sustainable development strategies, as they could be used as a way for upper classes to gain income at the expense of state protection, and they believe that national law is above European law (Blanco, 2023; Griera, 2023). Furthermore, they believe that several of the initiatives of the 2030 agenda are a form of globalism that threatens the sovereignty and good governance of the state which could have, according to them, implications for the environment. The party also addresses migration problems and a zero-tolerance migrant policy, showcasing the Spanish society’s stance, concerning the majority, on issues such as migration (Vox ha estado en la Plaza Dipòsit en L rida donde el aumento de los guetos en Europa, 2024;). Lastly, being a part of the European Conservatives, Vox believes itself a party that endorses democracy and can

enhance the economy and it condemns Catalonia’s independence and every element that divides Spain.

In many digital campaigns the party tries to appeal to larger audiences as a patriotic party (Sabes que hay un evento sólo para jóvenes este viernes en Madrid?, 2024). They also depict the problem with Islamic minorities being in Europe, with slogans such as “STOP ISLAMISATION” (La verdad que solo VOX defiende. ¡Estamos a tiempo de pararlo, 2024). Additionally, they describe gender ideology as a problem and an obstacle concerning education. They urge young people to connect with them through language such as “the solution is to return to our roots”. Their target audience is not only male but also female, as they try to inspire both sexes into a more conservative approach. This party has its own youth movement, “Cañas por España”. The leader of Vox, Santiago Abascal, noted that the interest of youngsters in their parties is a return to their patriotic roots (Beers for Spain and Instagram: VOX and the youth vote, 2019).

The three- leveled Portuguese government has faced a lot of trouble in the past few years, despite managing to come out of a hard economic crisis (Portugal Profile, n.d.). Its former prime minister Costa was involved in a scandal that undermined both his personal and his party’s image. This has been a part in many of the opposing far right party’s narratives. Chega (Enough) was formed in 2017 by Andre Ventura. It is a Eurosceptic, far right, yet not extremist, party, whose rhetoric focuses around the socio-economic identity of its voters. The demand and supply approach is rather important to interpret the rising popularity of the party (New York Times, 2024). The party weaponized young people’s resentment over the scandals and the corruption of the Costa Government and its “predatory” practices. The “other” in the terms of Chega are migrants, the government and the LGBTQI+ community (European Center of Populism Studies, 2024). The sense of corruption in Portugal makes Chega’s strategy on augmenting external and internal security even more attractive for young people. They believe LGBTQI+ people are “rejecting women’s essential social role” (Dias, 2023; Joyner, 2024; Kassam, 2024), a statement many “anti-woke” people agree with in Portugal. Young people that follow Chega, tend to highlight the migration issue in a negative way, given that illegal migration is a pivotal part of Chega’s narrative. This stance inspired the creation of a community of supporters with even more extreme positions on social and political issues (using a strong rhetoric against Muslim and

Roma minorities), Chega Juventude (Global Project Against Hate and Extremism, 2023; Partido Chega, 2024).

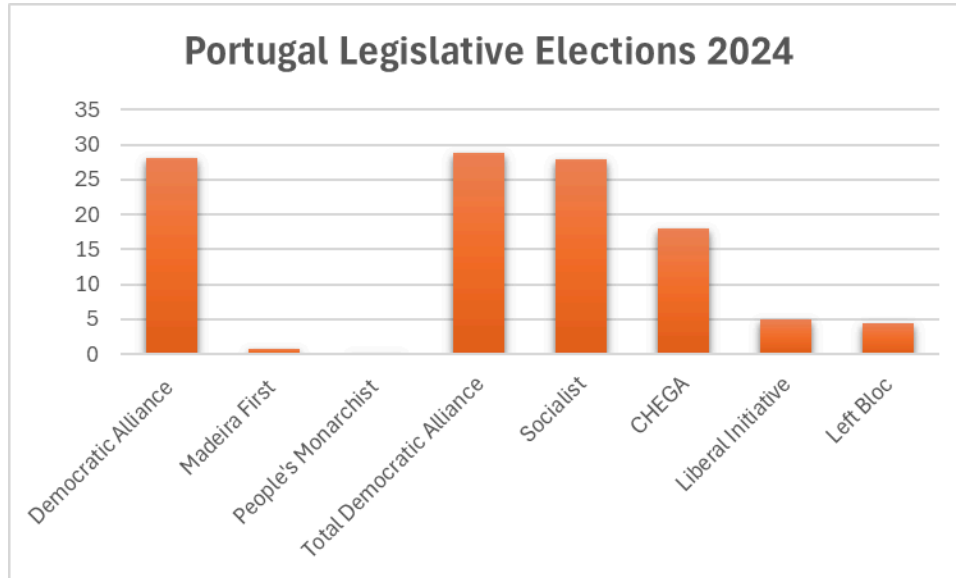


Figure 4: National Elections in Continental and Autonomous Portugal Results (Statista, 2024)

In both Spain and Portugal, the far-right parties that had issues with migration policies were considered marginal. However, in both countries the unemployment rates, which were augmented, are usually connected by parties to illegal migrants' presence on the job market, creating a wave of economic nationalism. Vox is the leading party that organized Viva Europa 2024, where many parties, including Chega, participated and discussed topics that not only concern the EU but the youth (social and economic issues, energy and innovation and change) (The Conservative, 2024; France24, 2024; Ha sido un inmenso honor recibir en Madrid a tantos buenos amigos de Europa, Estados Unidos, Israel e Hispanoamérica, 2024). It is worth noting that to make the right-wing parties seem united in the eyes of the voters, the European Conservative Party decided not to have a lead candidate, which could be perceived by young people as a form of humility (ECP, 2024). All three parties had a small presence in the EU

Elections of 2019, as parties with only federal and regional presence, while the more centrist parties were the winners of the elections.

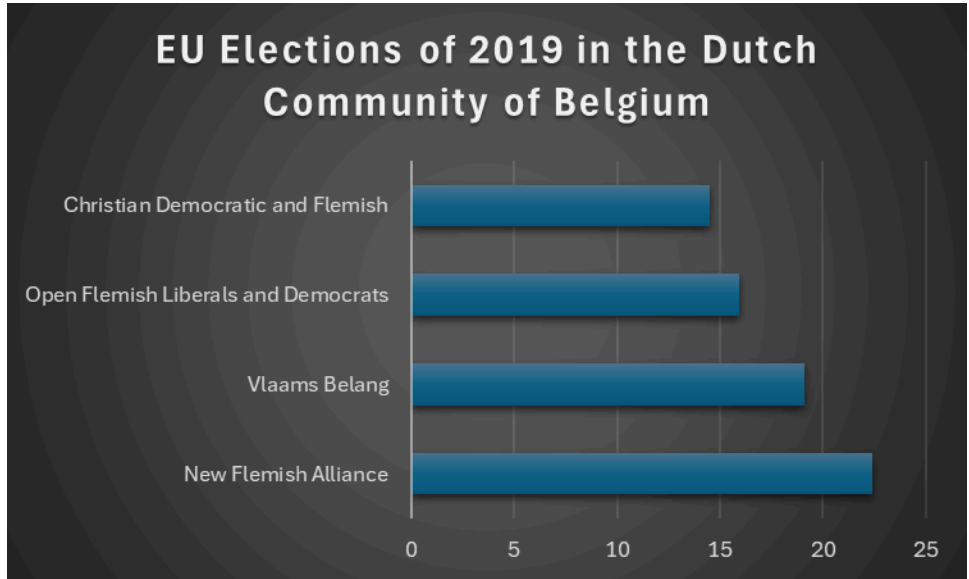


Figure 5: EU Parliament Elections in the Dutch Speaking Region of Belgium (Flanders) Results (European Parliament, 2019)

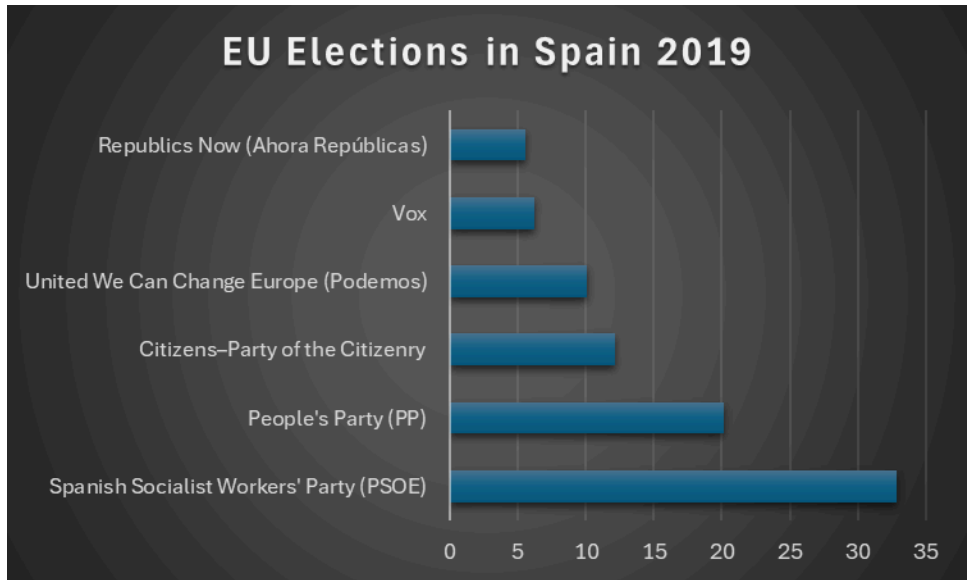
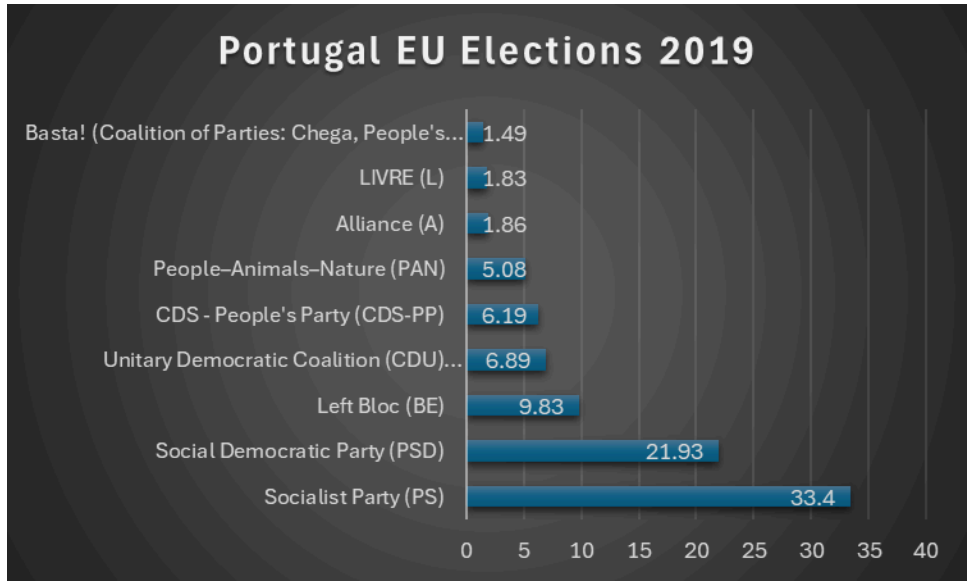


Figure 6: EU Parliament Elections in Spain 2019 (European Parliament, 2019)



**Figure 7: Portuguese EU Election Results
(European Parliament, 2019)**

Their results in their respective legislative elections showcase that they increased in numbers heavily in the past 4-5 years, and they could be important powers in the EU contributing greatly to the rise of the far right. Key to the success for these parties, is the usage of the right tools, in order to convince young people driven by sentiments, to vote them.

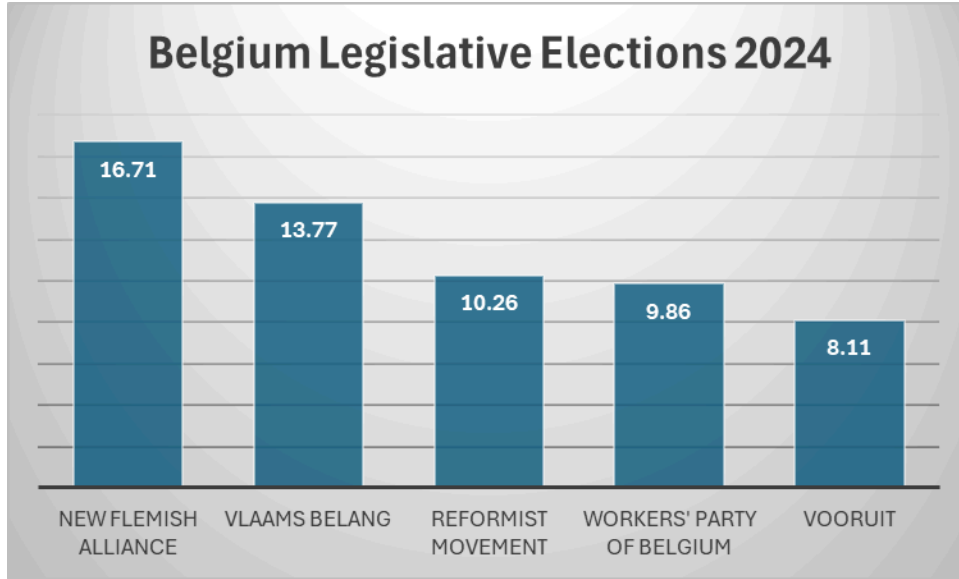


Figure 8: National Elections in the Dutch Speaking Community in Belgium
(Robert Schuman Foundation, 2024)



Figure 9: Spain General (National) Elections of 2023 Results
(Statista, 2024)

All three parties used narratives that adapt to the youth’s expectation from the EU and the logical fallacy of the false dilemma. They present themselves as the friend who will drive the countries and the youth back to their roots while also curing situations concerning internal and external

problems, migrants in Europe, the excessiveness of progressivity (their indifference toward gender identity politics and climate pacts), justice issues and youth (un)employment, while considering security and stability more urgent and important than inclusivity (ECP, 2022). Meanwhile, they consider national sovereignty a stronger value than the European Union’s shared governance, they share the reformist values of the European Conservative Party and render radical solutions to global problems. Illegal migrants, Islam, the LGBTQI + community, the European Union’s previous centrist policy makers, the far left and federalist EU opinions are the “Other”, the opponent of the “friend” party and the radicalized youth.

However, only Vlaams Belang’s strategy appears effective, as the high voter turnout might have led to its first place in the region of Flanders. In contrast, Chega and Vox were third in their respective countries with less than half of Brussels’ voter turnouts. Brussels' status as a decision-making hub may make its youth more engaged in European Elections (Chastand and Malingre, 2024; Picheta, 2024; Constitutive session - 23/07/2024, 2024).

Conclusion: The Solution to Radicalism Post EU Elections

It is understandable that the radicals have employed strategies that are opportunistic. Especially the far right have taken advantage of the youth’s sentiments about the internal and external crises of their societies. The far right’s ideological stance is grounded in problems Europe has been facing since 2015, xenophobia, homophobia, islamophobia. They offer simplistic explanations for wider problems and resort to logical fallacies. The choice between them or any other party does not exist due to their narrative.

The agenda of the far-right parties is simple, migration, foreign policy, gender ideology, nationalism, economic crisis due to external events, expressed in a soft Eurosceptic way to appeal to a wider range of young voters. Center and progressive parties should focus on crafting cohesive, adaptable narratives that address young people's concerns to mitigate radical voting tendencies. They need to analyze young voters' responses to current and past narratives to identify effective strategies and improve their outreach. Parties need to approach the youth through truth and transparency to help them understand the complexities of adapting to the challenges of the current era. Also, enhancing effective control in all of the legislative and

executive bodies of the EU could be important for the youth’s sentiments on justice and scandal detection and prevention.

If policymakers and the states themselves seek to reduce the gains of the far right, utilizing information the right way and tackling disinformation are the best strategies of defense. Children across the world should be aware of fallacies. An important way that could lead to that, is teaching by example at schools. Kids would learn about the importance of judging what they hear, since there are loads of information on the internet that could manipulate them. If information campaigns about the dangers of radicalism are enhanced, the youth will understand better the bigger picture. People need to see from a young age that they can actively address local and global issues. Enhancing their role as problem solvers from early primary school can counter youth pessimism and the belief that they cannot influence events in their country or the world. Replacing the passive approach of “nothing I do matters as decisions are made by others” to “my vote and my opinion matters” since a young age can develop a healthy habit for many young people. Especially for countries who deem themselves progressive, they should teach young people the effects of radical regimes across the world through workshops and special courses. This can be achieved by utilizing multiple digital media and taking into account standards for managing and handling stressful situations and information on the internet and the world in general.

Schools, alongside civil society organizations, need to initiate joint projects concerning information about the EU elections and institutions, like seminars, campaigns and perhaps joint cultural events of a small scale or even through the enhanced cooperation of local stakeholders with both the European Research Center on Radicalization and other state relative actors (Radicalisation Awareness Network, 2021; RAN Working Group, 2023; EU Knowledge Hub, 2024). The youngsters also need to learn constantly through case studies of politicians’ speech, and their narratives. This is why the youth needs to learn how radicalism, radical thought and radical solutions discriminating certain groups of people, can lead to harmful consequences. Meanwhile, given that disinformation and corruption permeate the established parties and the anti- establishment parties, the youth needs to be informed about their rights and obligations concerning justice, judgement and doubting as soon as they enter secondary school. This is a critical period when young people begin to question their surroundings and learn how to inform themselves. Far-right disinformation can still be countered, as center-right parties could engage

with the youth and potentially change outcomes in the next EU Elections (Stavis-Gridneff, 2024; Picheta, 2024).

For adult young people, it is important to remind them through volunteering, that there are multiple small steps they could take for the better, while also giving. Even if the European Union supports the voting procedure from the age of sixteen, teenagers and future adults should be prepared and use all the tools and know all the relevant history to be able to judge, let alone be judgmental and decisive themselves., If young people obtain the essential knowledge on good citizenship, they can judge the government’s decisions, choose wiser, based on informed opinions and not sentiment- wise opinions. Therefore, the curriculum needs to be changed step by step to advance in modern times and to solve modern problems. This approach could lead to the European countries’ educational practices to be more adaptable and less rigid, and thus more effective.

All the relative actors should follow these fundamental steps, if their intention is to reconnect with the youth in the EU. Crucial fact stays that it is essential that the far right’s propaganda does not undermine their reasoning and common sense. Respecting European way of Life and its values of democracy and peace, is a must. Motivating the youth to vote in national elections is important, but it is even more vital to vote in the EU Elections, considering that the European level of governance can effect seriously both regional and global issues.

Bibliography

Age distribution of internet users worldwide as of 2023, by region. (2024, April 16). Statista Daily Data. <https://www.statista.com/statistics/209101/age-distribution-internet-users-worldwide-by-region/>

Amaral, A. (2023). EDUCATIONAL CHALLENGES IN PORTUGAL: challenges of mitigating socio-economic inequalities. Broken Chalk. <https://brokenchalk.org/educational-challenges-in-portugal-challenges-of-mitigating-socio-economic-inequalities/>

Asta Maskaliūnaitė* EXPLORING THE THEORIES OF RADICALIZATION INTERNATIONAL STUDIES INTERDISCIPLINARY POLITICAL AND CULTURAL JOURNAL, Vol. 17, No. 1/2015

ASCHWANDEN, C. (2020, October 29). Why Hatred and ‘Othering’ of Political Foes Has Spiked to Extreme Levels. Scientific American.
<https://www.scientificamerican.com/article/why-hatred-and-othering-of-political-foes-has-spiked-to-extreme-levels/>

Barta, O., Bodt, G., & Lavizzari, A. (2023). MEANINGFUL YOUTH POLITICAL PARTICIPATION IN EUROPE: CONCEPTS, PATTERNS AND POLICY IMPLICATIONS. Council of Europe and the European Commission.
<https://pjp-eu.coe.int/documents/42128013/47261953/PREMS+149821+GBR+2600+Study+on+Youth+political+participation+WEB+16x24+%281%29.pdf/d2ecb223-edda-a9d2-30f7-c77692a086bd>

Beers for Spain and Instagram: VOX and the youth vote. (2019, August 6).
<https://www.opendemocracy.net/en/countering-radical-right/beers-spain-and-instagram-vox-and-their-links-youth/>

Blanco, P. R. (2023, September 19). From banning meat to indoctrinating children: These are some of the conspiracies about the UN Sustainable Development Goals. El Pais.
<https://english.elpais.com/international/2023-09-19/from-banning-meat-to-indoctrinating-children-these-are-some-of-the-conspiracies-about-the-un-sustainable-development-goals.html>

Constitutive session - 23/07/2024. (2024, July 23). European Parliament.
<https://results.elections.europa.eu/en/spain/>

Council of Europe & European Commission. (2021). MEANINGFUL YOUTH POLITICAL PARTICIPATION IN EUROPE: CONCEPTS, PATTERNS AND POLICY IMPLICATIONS.
<https://pjp-eu.coe.int/documents/42128013/47261953/PREMS+149821+GBR+2600+Study+on+Youth+political+participation+WEB+16x24+%281%29.pdf/d2ecb223-edda-a9d2-30f7-c77692a086bd>

Council of the EU (2018) Draft resolution of the Council of the European Union and of the representatives of the governments of the Member States, meeting within the Council, concerning a framework for European cooperation in the youth field: The European Union's youth strategy 2019-2027 (2018/C 456/01). Journal of the EU. [\(In Greek\)](https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EL/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:42018Y1218(01))

CRIMINALITEIT ECHT AANPAKKEN VEILIG VLAANDEREN. (n.d.). Vlaams Belang.
<https://www.vlaamsbelang.org/criminaliteit-aanpakken>

Dias, J. F. (2024, March 12). Chega Emerges as the Elephant in the Room: What’s Next? Populism Studies. <https://www.populismstudies.org/cheга-emerges-as-the-elephant-in-the-room-whats-next/>

EU priorities according to young Europeans. (2023, August 19). Youth 4 Europe.
<https://youthforeurope.eu/eu-priorities-according-to-young-europeans/>

European Commission Youth Strategies. (2018).
https://youth.europa.eu/d8/sites/default/files/inline-files/2018_youth_strat_2_youth_strategies.pdf

European Elections 2019 in Belgium. (2019). European Parliament.
<https://results.elections.europa.eu/en/national-results/belgium/2019-2024/constitutive-session/>

European Election 2019 Results in Portugal. (2019). European Parliament.
<https://results.elections.europa.eu/en/national-results/portugal/2019-2024/constitutive-session/>

- ECR Party EU perception from Europeans. (2024). In European Conservative Party Website. https://ecrparty.eu/wp-content/uploads/2022/05/ECR_Europe_perception_from_Europeans_1_1-1.pdf
- European Commission (2023). Citizens’ attitudes towards corruption in the EU in 2023. In Europa.EU (Special Eurobarometer 534). European Union. <https://europa.eu/eurobarometer/surveys/detail/2968>
- Europe’s Elections: The Fight Against Disinformation. (2019, May 23). Net Politics and Digital Cyberspace Policy Program. <https://www.cfr.org/blog/europes-elections-fight-against-disinformation>
- ECR party will continue to work to build a confederation of sovereign states. (2022, May 9). European Conservative Party Website. <https://ecrparty.eu/2022/05/09/the-ecr-party-will-continue-to-work-to-build-a-confederation-of-free-and-sovereign-states-2/>
- ECR Party adopts manifesto for European elections, decides not to put forward a lead candidate. (2024, April 24). European Conservative Party Website. <https://ecrparty.eu/2024/04/24/ecr-party-adopts-manifesto-for-european-elections-decides-not-to-put-forward-a-lead-candidate/>
- European Commission. (2024). Youth and democracy. In Eurobarometer. <https://europa.eu/eurobarometer/surveys/detail/3181>
- European Elections Voter Turnout. (2024, July 15). European Parliament. <https://results.elections.europa.eu/en/turnout/>
- Europa Viva 2024: Identity Manifesto of European Conservatives in Madrid. (2024, May 14). The Conservative. <https://www.theconservative.online/europa-viva-2024-identity-manifesto-of-european-conservatives-in-madrid>
- Eurydice. (2023, November 27). Population: demographic situation, languages and religions. European Commission. <https://eurydice.eacea.ec.europa.eu/national-education-systems/belgium-french-community/population-demographic-situation-languages-and>
- Een warm en sociaal Vlaanderen. (n.d.). Vlaams Belang. <https://www.vlaamsbelang.org/een-sociaal-vlaanderen> (in Dutch)
- False Dilemma Fallacy | Examples & Definition. (2023, July 24). Scribbr. <https://www.scribbr.com/fallacies/false-dilemma-fallacy/>
- Far right: The significance of an umbrella concept. (2023). Nations and Nationalism, 21(1), 101–112. <https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/nana.12860>
- Far Right’s Success Is a Measure of a Changing Portugal. (2024). New York Times. <https://www.nytimes.com/2024/03/21/world/europe/portugal-chega.html>
- Far or Extreme Right. (n.d.). European Center for Populism Studies. <https://www.populismstudies.org/Vocabulary/far-or-extreme-right/>
- Griera, M. (2023, June 23). Meet far-right Party VOX’s ‘patriotic’ vision for Spain. Euractiv. <https://www.euractiv.com/section/politics/news/meet-far-right-party-voxs-patriotic-vision-for-spain/>

Ha sido un inmenso honor recibir en Madrid a tantos buenos amigos de Europa, Estados Unidos, Israel e Hispanoamérica. (2024, May 21). Santiago Abascal.

https://twitter.com/Santi_ABASCAL/status/1792677820805656962 (in Spanish)

Henley, J. (2024, June 18). Populist, nativist, neofascist? A lexicon of Europe’s far right. Guardian.

<https://www.theguardian.com/world/article/2024/jun/18/populist-nativist-neofascist-a-lexicon-of-europes-far-right>

Iliou, K., Klironomos, N., Kakepaki, M. (2020). Young People and Europe: Identity, Goals and the Future of Europe. In National Center for Social Studies (Final Report. EKKE – GG EEEKDB & N.). (In Greek)

Joyner, E. (2024, March 12). What next for Portugal after far right gains ground?

<https://www.dw.com/en/what-next-for-portugal-after-far-right-gains-ground/a-68497180>

La verdad que solo VOX defiende. ¡Estamos a tiempo de pararlo! Vota #EnDefensaPropia. (2024, May 10). Vox. https://www.instagram.com/p/C6yQDentH1_/?hl=el (In Spanish)

Llach, L. (2023, September 25). Spain has among the EU’s highest number of young people out of work and education, but why? Euronews.

<https://www.euronews.com/2023/09/25/spain-has-among-the-eus-highest-number-of-young-people-out-of-work-and-education-but-why>

Makris, S. (2017). Political Science: Social Reform and Theories of Democracy, Classical- Neoteric and Modern Narratives. Athens: Sideris Publications (In Greek)

MASSA-IMMIGRATIE STOPPEN GASTVRIJ MAAR NIET GEK. (n.d.). Vlaams Belang.

<https://www.vlaamsbelang.org/gastvrij-maar-niet-gek> (In Dutch)

Marson, S. M., & Bougon, P. B. (1997). Politics of Enmity. *Yale French Studies*, in the Language of the Enemy (1997), 91, 141–158. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/2930378?seq=8>

Moreira, P. G. (2022). Laclau’s New Postmodern Radicalism: Politics, Democracy, and the Epistemology of Certainty. *Critical Review: A Journal of Politics and Society*, 34(2).

<https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/08913811.2022.2060540>

Most common concerns of young people in Spain in 2021. (2024, February). Statista Daily Data.

<https://www.statista.com/statistics/1308962/youth-most-common-concerns-spain/>

Nilan, P. (2021). *Young People and the Far Right*. Palgrave Macmillan.

<https://www.palgrave.com/us/blogs/social-sciences/nilan>

Oosterdorf, B., & Alvis, L. (2019). Emotional Costs and Benefits of Politics: Implications for Adolescent Political Development. *Political Emotions and Adolescent Engagement*.

Partido Chega. (2024, August 1). O cúmulo da impunidade revela-se quando PS e PSD atiram culpas um ao outro, em vez de resolverem o problema e admitirem que a culpa desta imigração descontrolada é de ambos! Twitter. <https://x.com/PartidoCHEGA/status/1818929722572558423/photo/1>

Portugal. (n.d.). European Center for Populism Studies. <https://www.populismstudies.org/tag/portugal/>

Petrou, M., Petridis, P., & Kavoulakos, K. (2020). *Far Right Social Networks: Research on Political and Cultural Activism*. National Center of Social Service. Available at

<https://www.ekke.gr/services/publication/akrodexia-kinonika-diktia-diareunisi-tou-politikou-kai-politismikou-aktivismou>

Public opinion about the principal current issue in Portugal in 2023. (2024, January 29). Statista Daily Data. <https://www.statista.com/statistics/1446800/portugal-main-problem-in-the-country/>

Pudar, G., Suurpa, L., Williamson, H., & Zentner, M. (2013). Youth Policy in Belgium. In Youth Policy Reviews. Council of Europe Publishing. <https://rm.coe.int/16807023f1>

Radicalisation Awareness Network. (2021). Lessons Learned from Alternative Narrative Campaigns. In European Commission. https://home-affairs.ec.europa.eu/system/files/2022-03/ran_lessons_learned_from_alternative_narrative_campaigns_032022_en_1.pdf

Radicalisation Awareness Network Working Group (2023) How can arts, civic pride and culture contribute to boosting local resilience and democracy against extremism, hate crimes and other threats to democracy?. European Commission.

https://home-affairs.ec.europa.eu/system/files/2023-11/ran_local_arts_civic_pride_culture_boosting_local_resilience_democracy_against_extremism_28-29092023_en.pdf

Raymond, G. A. (2020, August 18). COVID-19, Donald Trump And The False Dilemma Fallacy. <https://www.boisestate.edu/bluereview/covid-19-donald-trump-and-the-false-dilemma-fallacy/>

Results of the Portuguese general election of March 10, 2024. (2024, May 22). Statista Daily Data. <https://www.statista.com/statistics/1455638/portugal-general-election-results/>

Results of the Spanish general election of July 23, 2023. (2024, February 5). Statista Daily Data. <https://www.statista.com/statistics/1401337/spain-general-election-results/>

Reinerman, C. (2016). Populist Political Communication. Toward a Model of Its Causes, Forms, and Effects. In Populist Political Communication in Europe. Routledge.

Samaras, A. (2010). Images of States: Strategic Communication, Soft Power and Media. Athens: Ideologio Publications. (In Greek)

Santi _abascal lanza un mensaje frente al autócrata Sánchez. (2024, May 5). VOX. <https://www.instagram.com/p/C6IMLwoNB7a/?hl=el> (In Spanish)

Spain’s far-right Vox holds mass rally with Argentina’s Milei, France’s Le Pen. (2024, May 19). France24. <https://www.france24.com/en/europe/20240519-spain-s-far-right-vox-holds-mass-rally-with-argentina-s-milei-france-s-le-pen>




Vlaams Belang polling at 25% among Flemish young people. (2024, January 28). Brussel Times. <https://www.brusselstimes.com/897056/vlaams-belang-polling-at-25-among-flemish-young-people>

Vlaams Belang ook onder jongeren de grootste partij. (2024, April 5). Vlaams Belang Website. <https://www.vlaamsbelang.org/nieuws/vlaams-belang-ook-onder-jongeren-de-grootste-partij> (in Dutch)

VLAANDEREN VLAAMS. (n.d.). Vlaams Belang. <https://www.vlaamsbelang.org/vlaanderen-vlaams>

VLAANDEREN WELVAREND. (n.d.). Vlaams Belang. <https://www.vlaamsbelang.org/vlaanderen-welvarend>

VLAANDEREN VRIJ. (n.d.). Vlaams Belang. <https://www.vlaamsbelang.org/vlaanderen-vrij>

VOX SÍ quiere derrotar al separatismo y al socialismo del PSC. Queremos derrotar a quienes han traicionado a los trabajadores y a los más humildes dando ayudas a los ilegales. ¡Es hora de cambiarlo todo este #12M!   #EnDefensaPropia  _____ #VOX #España #Barcelona #Tarragona #Gerona #Lérida #VivaEspaña #ViscaCatalunya #elecciones #12M #VotaVOX 7 εβδ. (2024, May 8). VOX. https://www.instagram.com/p/C6rq1j5t-SF/?hl=el&img_index=1 (in Spanish)

Vox ha estado en la Plaza Dipòsit en Lérida donde el aumento de los guetos en Europa. (2024, May 10). Vox_Es. <https://www.instagram.com/p/C6yL0vaNwid/?hl=el> (in Spanish)

Sabes que hay un evento sólo para jóvenes este viernes en Madrid? Celebraremos un gran encuentro con patriotas de toda Europa. (2024, May 17). Vox Jovenes. <https://www.instagram.com/p/C7D7D5-t4Ue/?hl=el>

Walgarve, S., & Swert, K. D. (2004). Making of the (Issues of the) Vlaams Blok. Political Communication, 479–500. https://www.researchgate.net/publication/248988249_The_Making_of_the_Issues_of_the_Vlaams_Blok

With the radical right pushing ahead in Flanders and the radical left in Wallonia, Belgium could be divided after the elections. (2024, May 21). Robert Schuman Foundation. <https://www.robert-schuman.eu/en/monitor/6160-with-the-radical-right-pushing-ahead-in-flanders-and-the-radical-left-in-wallonia-belgium-could-be-divided-after-the-elections>

WELVAREND VLAANDEREN. (n.d.). Vlaams Belang. <https://www.vlaamsbelang.org/een-welvarend-vlaanderen>

Uba, K., & Lorenzo, Bosi. (2022). Explaining youth radicalism as a positioning of the self at opposite extremes. Politics, 42, 128–145.

Youth Policy in Spain. (2023, December 20). European Commission. <https://national-policies.eacea.ec.europa.eu/youthwiki/chapters/spain/overview>

Youth Policy Governance in Portugal. (2023, November 28). European Commission. <https://national-policies.eacea.ec.europa.eu/youthwiki/chapters/portugal/14-youth-policy-decision-making>

(Note: All texts in Belgian and Spanish were translated and paraphrased with the help of DEEPL)