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THE CONSERVATIVE

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A Time for Choosing

From the 23rd to 26th of May, 500 million European will head to the polls in the second largest democratic election in the world. These elections will determine the future of not just their countries, but their entire continent. They must choose what sort of Europe their children and grandchildren grow up in, a Europe of free and independent Nation States working together towards common goals in their mutual interest, or a Nation of Europe governed by people far away from them in Brussels.



ELECTION special edition

by Richard Milsom

Welcome to the 7th edition of The Conservative. Our final edition before 500 million citizens head to the polls to decide on the future of Europe. And the stakes have never been higher. Years of economic and social mismanagement have left people frustrated with the direction of the Union. The migration crisis has left people untrusting of the political system and a slow recovery has left people feeling bitter about the state of the Eurozone. People are tired of the calls for Europe to do more. They have had enough of the status quo and are unwilling to allow things to continue as they are.

As a result this election will see a huge shift away from the establishment. But who will be the new MEPs? What parties are likely to enter the new Parliament? For our part, we are happy to introduce you to our candidates. In this Special Election Edition of the newspaper we would have a snapshot analysis of our member parties and those who sit in the European Conservatives and Reformists Group. We offer you details of their platforms and present to you, for the first time in one place, their Party lists of candidates.

We also offer you their views on how we can make a Europe that does less but better and works in the interest of all member states. We look at what kind of substantial reforms our

member parties want to see from the EU over the next five years.

Elsewhere in the paper we offer you our usual coverage of European and World news, including a story about the evolution of the center right in Latin America. Chile has long struggled with how best to unite its conservative movement. A new movement looks set to add to the complications.

We also cover two recent reports on Human Rights around the world. The first looking at the violent suppression of Muslims in China, and the new system of state control being imposed by the Chinese Communist Party. The central government is forcibly re-educating the Muslim community and holding them in internment camps that the US State Department has described as 'genocide'.

Spain has just concluded its hotly contested elections, but voting isn't over. Spain will head to the polls again on the 26th of May for regional and European elections, in what is being described as 'Super Sunday'. We look at what impact that may have on turnout and the results.

Finally, Croatian MEP Ruza Tomasic looks at the future of European Cohesion funding and the impact Brexit will have on the budget. In her opinion piece she argues that Cohesion policy has been a driver of economic growth, and will continue to do so, if it's reformed the right way.

These upcoming elections are a time for choosing, and perhaps the last chance to see substantial reform of the European Union. This is our time, as conservatives, to make the case for a looser Union of Nation States, rather than allowing federalists

to keep moving towards a nation of Europe. We must seize the opportunity to make a Europe that does less, but better and works for the people. That's why these elections are so important and that's why we urge you to go and vote. ■



Campaign Season

As expected, most events in the last couple of weeks have been heavily focused on the European Elections and supporting our member parties. Across the continent, from Riga to Rome, our candidates have been busy at work trying to persuade the public that it's time to reform the EU, rather than continue on the current path, or destroy it.

On Saturday 4th of May, ACRE was in Lecce, Apulia in Italy to lend support to Vice President Raffaele Fitto. Mr Fitto is standing for re-election as an MEP in the Southern Italy seat. Before he was an MEP he was President of the Apulia region, and a member of the Chamber of Deputies. ACRE hosted a stand at the rally for him,

where a video of support from Presidential Candidate Jan Zahradil was shown.

On Monday 6th of May, Jan Zahradil was in Madrid to meet with the Vox party. The party has come out of the recent Spanish General Election with more than twenty seats and is going into the European Elections with a strong list of candidates.

Across the rest of Europe, our parties are building up momentum and holding election rallies and attending debates in each member state. The campaign is now in full swing, as we approach the key stage of the campaign to ensure we that we have a reformed Europe in years to come. ■



European Parliament Discover EU initiative gives young people free travel passes

The Discover EU Initiative is a program to distribute free travel passes to young people to enable them to travel to other European countries. Under this program European citizens born in the second half of 2000 and first half of 2001 can register their online application for free rail tickets from 2 May until 16 May.

The European Parliament voted to finance the program that will give 30,000 18-year-olds the chance to travel in the EU for free in 2018. An additional 20,000 young people will now also be able to benefit from the Discover EU initiative and enjoy the chance to travel for free in Europe by rail between 1 August 2019 and 31 January 2020.

The participants will be able to travel up to 30 days to at least one foreign country. Travel will be mainly by rail, but also by bus and ferry to ensure wide access. Flights will be allowed in exceptional cases where no other form of transport is available; for example,



for people coming from remote areas or outermost regions.

The articulated intention of the initiative is that it will allow young people to experience Europe's diversity, better understand each other and learn more about our continent. The hope is that it will encourage young EU citizens to travel in the EU and meet people from other countries and foster European

identity and reinforce common EU values. Critics have argued that the initiative mostly will benefit the already relatively well-to-do as the travel will include additional costs. Furthermore, it has been argued that the costly program in reality is a backhander to persuade the youth to think positively of the European Union and its institutions. ■

Retune the EU
JAN ZAHRADIL

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European Parliament Majority votes to turn Frontex into border and coast guard agency



Around 700 million people cross the European Union's borders each year, so to properly guard these borders is an ambitious task. A majority in the European Parliament has voted in favour of turning Frontex into a permanent EU Border and Coast Guard Agency, but for this to happen the Member States still need to accept this in the Council.

In 2018, 150,000 people tried to cross the EU's borders illegally. Even though this number is considerably lower than in previous years, there are still fears in many Member States that developments such as the increased warfare in Libya may drive it up again.

The proposal supported by a majority in the EP is to turn Frontex into a permanent agency with a capacity of 5,000 staff by 2021 and 10,000 staff plus additional staff delegated by Member States by 2027. The EP also wants Frontex to have additional capacity for a rapid intervention force for emergency situations. European Commissioner for Migration, Dimitris Avramopoulos, has said in response that "little by little, we will increase and reach our goal by 2027. This is not a postponement, but a step-by-step approach".

Another measure agreed by MEPs is to centralise and cross-reference a number of databases containing information on asylum seekers, arrivals and departures, wanted persons and missing passports. This is something that police services have been requesting for a long time, but has been frowned upon by civil rights group who fear data leaks.

The idea of upgrading Frontex is not only to protect EU borders, but also to fight cross-border crime and help national authorities with repatriation operations, for example to identify illegal migrants and acquire travel documents to enable them to be returned.

Frontex, which is headquartered in Warsaw, currently only employs around 300 people. It does not have its own equipment or border guards and relies on EU Member States to provide border guards, vessels, aircraft and other resources. The main task of Frontex at present therefore is to share intelligence between the Member States.

One idea that was abandoned was to enable Frontex staff to act against the wishes of a Member State. This caused concern that the establishment of an EU Border and Coast Guard Agency might violate national sovereignty. As a result, Austria and Hungary were initially strong supporters of the reform but subsequently became more hesitant.

Another open question that has yet to be answered is what will happen to migrants trying to enter the EU illegally who are picked up at borders or coastlines. Commissioner Avramopoulos has claimed that Frontex officials will soon be able to expel migrants at the borders.

In light of the fact that Africa's population is to double in the next few decades, European policy makers have started to seriously consider changing EU border policy. In June 2018 EU leaders agreed a new approach: to create "disembarkation platforms" for those who are saved in search and rescue operations. The idea is that such platforms could be hosted in Egypt, Tunisia or Morocco, and serve as a place to send those caught entering the EU illegally. They could then await their asylum request or repatriation procedure in these locations, eliminating the incentive to embark on perilous journeys.

Despite the fact that such disembarkation platforms would be a border protection game changer, the European Commission has failed to negotiate such an arrangement with third countries. In theory, the Commission should have great leverage in terms of denying visa and development aid over the countries that could be candidates to host such centres, but has so far not been using that leverage.

A more ambitious idea that has also been discussed is to create proper "refugee cities". These cities would be located in North Africa but governed by Western officials, in the same way that Hong Kong was governed by British officials. They would serve as a safe hub for refugees just as Hong Kong sheltered refugees from Communist China and, if designed well, may bring more investment to North Africa. Perhaps this option might be more attractive to the countries the EU is negotiating with than the prospect of having to host migrants denied asylum in Europe. ■

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Spanish general Election

Socialists win, PP falls and Vox is a success

In the last four years, Spain has held three general elections. On Sunday 28 April polls closed with a record turnout, but the political outcome of the election was uncertain as no clear majority formed for either the left or the right. Since the election, however, some trends have become apparent, and this will probably dictate the future development of Spanish politics for the foreseeable future.



On the left, the Socialist Party improved its result. The party increased its number of votes from 5.5 to 7.5 million compared to the previous election. Incumbent Prime Minister Pedro Sánchez celebrated this as a major victory, but his party's 123 seats in parliament is the lowest result ever for a victorious party. It seems that some of the support for the Socialist Party came from Podemos, the communist coalition, as its total number of votes fell by almost 350,000 and its representatives were reduced from 71 to 42. In the ongoing negotiations, it looks like Sánchez is likely to lead a minority government that takes Podemos as its key partner but is forced to negotiate with separatist parties in order to produce a stable majority.

All of these changes are part and parcel of politics. In the history books the 2019 general election will be remembered for the historic rise of Vox. The party went from 0.2 to 10.3 per cent of the popular vote. Almost 2.7 million voters supported the new conservative force in Spanish politics. This impressive performance was the grand finale of a remarkable campaign, in which Vox became the most discussed political party in the country. Vox will have 24 representatives in parliament and will have solidified itself as a real choice for Spanish voters.

Some pollsters and political strategists have pointed to the fact that the likely government did not win the popular vote, and attributed the disappointing result for the PP, Ciudadanos and Vox to the electoral system. In total the Socialist Party and Podemos earned 11,213,684 votes, while the PP, Ciudadanos and Vox obtained 11,276,920 votes. When translated in to parliamentary seats, however, the leftist bloc earned 158 representatives while the right-wing forces received 147 seats.

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ALDE member Ciudadanos did improve its result. Its leader, Albert Rivera, was widely perceived as the winner of the two electoral debates

Danish European Election campaign

EPP Split over migration

In a recent interview with the Danish newspaper Berlingske, Pernille Weiss, lead candidate for the centre-right Danish EPP party the Conservatives, argues in favour of strengthening the EU's cooperation with Africa and bringing more foreigners to work in the EU. She explains that in the coming years the EU will need 10 million people to come and work, and that she wants to create a "front door" to the EU through which "everyone is welcome". The interview has caused headlines and a rift in the party.



Weiss, whose company offers advice on health and architecture, wishes to make it easier for EU companies to hire labour from outside the bloc. This is not seen as a vote winner by her party. With just weeks until the European election and a month before the national parliamentary election, the controversial proposal is making it easy to attack the Conservatives. Reactions have been harsh from within her own party: "I spilled coffee on myself this morning out of pure amazement at Pernille Weiss. This is not a conservative policy. It is important to focus on the labour market's need for labour, but not by getting millions of Africans to come to Denmark", the Conservative Minister for Social Affairs Mai Mercado wrote on Twitter.

Conservative Party Chairman Søren Pape Poulsen emphasised that it "is not the party's position", but accepts the candidate's regret and statement that it all was a "misunderstanding". Pernille Weiss now says that "we must ensure qualified labour in the future, but it is not in itself a conservative wish to have 10 million migrants come to Europe just like that".

Peter Kofod, the Danish People's Party's leading candidate for the European election, does believe Weiss' explanation. In a comment he quotes the Bible as saying "for the mouth speaks out of that which fills the heart", and goes on to state that "Europe's borders must be secured, they must not be overrun".

This internal conflict may help to explain why the centre-right parties in the government are expecting losses to the Social Democrats in both the European election and in the general election expected to be held in June. One reason is that in recent years the Social Democrats in Denmark have changed their policy and are now in favour of a stricter immigration policy.

Spain's "Super Sunday"

European Election to be held on same day as Regional and Local votes

Spain's political calendar did not end with the general election on 28 April. On 26 May the Iberian country will celebrate what is widely being called "Super Sunday", when the electorate will vote in three elections at the same time, electing new European, regional and local representatives.

In 2009 turnout in the European election was only 45 per cent. This dropped by one point to 44 per cent in 2014. By comparison, the regional and local elections of 2011 had a turnout rate of 69 per cent, increasing by one point to 70 per cent in the 2015 elections. For this reason, and not because Spaniards have significantly increased their interest in Brussels affairs, it is likely that turnout in the forthcoming European election will increase substantially.

No independent organisations or media outlets have commissioned any polls on how Spanish voters intend to vote in the European election. The only survey that has been released was commissioned by the European Parliament. The fact that it is a single sample together with the commissioning organisation indicates that the estimates should be taken with a pinch of

salt. But, for what it is worth, the survey shows that the Socialist Party stands to earn 29 per cent of the vote, the PP 20 per cent, Podemos 16 per cent, Ciudadanos 15 per cent, and Vox would enter the European Parliament with more than 8 per cent of the popular vote.

However, the answers to the survey were collected before the general election and therefore fail to take into account the results of 28 April. For instance, it is unlikely that the PP will be able to reach 20 per cent in the European election if they only were able to reach 17 per cent of the popular vote in the general election. Several commentators also believe that the Vox result will be better than these polls indicate since it is at the centre of the Spanish political debate.

It should also be noted that Spain's electoral rules are different in the European election. Instead of assigning a certain number of representatives per province, the entire country is counted together. This increases proportionality and should in theory benefit the centre-right parties and shrink the impact of separatist groups in Cataluña and the Basque provinces. Furthermore, voters often perceive



the European election as a special opportunity to vote for a party that they may not support in national, regional or local elections for tactical reasons. This could work against traditional parties like the PP, and benefit Ciudadanos and Vox.

The Vox leader, Santiago Abascal, has declared that the main objective of Vox in Super Sunday is to achieve a great result in the European election. This explains why Vox has saved some star candidates – such as Hermann Tertsch, a very well-known conservative journalist – for this election rather than the general election. Tertsch, who reaches hundreds of thousands of people through social media and also enjoys a large following in traditional media outlets, is expected to do very well.

French European Elections

Nicolas Dupont-Aignan, the Euro-realist



Since his support of the Gaullist candidate Jacques Chaban-Delmas in 1974, Nicolas Dupont-Aignan has always been loyal to his Gaullist ideals. After his dissociation from Les Républicains in 2007, he is emerging as a right-wing alternative to Emmanuel Macron thanks to his unification of several political parties and to his increasing popularity among the right-wing electorate.

Rewarding convictions

On March 28th, Nicolas Dupont-Aignan presented his list for the European elections of 2019. His ambition motivated by a continuous progression, starting from winning 1.79% of the vote in the presidential election of 2012 to winning almost 5% in 2017 and possibly as high as 8% in the European elections of 2019. Mr Dupont-Aignan has slowly but surely promoted himself as an alternative to Laurent Wauquiez of the Republicans and Marine Le Pen of the Front National, and possibly has more of recognition for his own right-wing alternative to Emmanuel Macron. Mr Dupont-Aignan also benefits from declining trust in Les Républicains by the electorate as Laurent Wauquiez has betrayed Gaullist traditions with his active adherence to the current EU positions. At the same time, the Front National has failed to offer up a clear and coherent alternative to EU positions, under Marine Le Pen.

Mr Dupont-Aignan's political engagement can be traced back to 1992 when he started to work with Philippe Séguin, a firm opponent of the Maastricht Treaty. Twenty years later, he has not abandon his ideals: "In all of the European countries, there is a magnificent awakening of the people. It is our duty to cement it. We will defend a Europe of the nations and of the projects." This sovereigntist discourse has to be associated with his Gaullist heritage and the refusal to delegate national responsibilities to supra-national institutions.

Europe of nations instead of technocratic federalism

To build an alternative European Union Mr Dupont-Aignan insists on the necessity to reinforce the EU's

competitiveness compared to the rest of the world. This requires two things to be done. First, he defends that the EU has to protect itself from external risks including unfair competition. He actively defends the member-states' right to not adopt a treaty that does not suit them which led him to condemn the undemocratic application of the Transatlantic Free Trade Treaty and the Comprehensive Economic and Trade Agreement. Even if he calls for more protection against unfair competition and uncontrolled neoliberalism, he does not reject openness to markets and economic liberalism. His economic doctrine can therefore be defined as a cautious and pragmatic kind of liberalism as he seeks to balance competitiveness and protection to preserve the European living standards.

He castigates the current European Union for its lack of democratic spirit. He argues that it is through "authentic democracies that the EU will be strong when facing the others". This implicitly means that he rejects unwilling further delegation of power from the nation-states to Brussels and that he wants to give back power to the European citizens.

Common projects, innovation and political emancipation of the EU

His model of alternative EU would consist more of projects made up of small groups of European countries in various

fields including energetical transition, health and spatial concern. In a context of growing concern regarding the energetical transition, Nicolas Dupont-Aignan does not lack of imagination: for instance, he calls for the development of modernized solar panels and of algae fuels. He emphasizes the need to build European alternatives to rely less on the American technologies. Typically, he insists on the necessity to relaunch the European spatial program to allow the European people to fully benefit from the economic spin-offs of the spatial conquest. He often refers to Airbus which he describes as a standing example of the efficiency of nation-states' voluntary expertise sharing.

According to him, this emancipation from the United-States can be also achieved through a common European defense policy. He stands for the systematic preference of European military material and heavily criticized Belgium's recent choice to buy American warplanes instead of European ones.

Unsurprisingly for a right-wing euro-reformist, Nicolas-Dupont Aignan plans to completely re-shape the EU's border policy. He intends for more control. It starts by stopping the enlargement of the EU given that he estimates that the accelerated integration process has been a failure and has fragilized even more the external borders of the EU. He supports more cooperation regarding the protection of the external and internal borders of the EU. Innovative in his communication, he spectacularly highlighted the absence of border control within the EU by crossing the Franco-Italian border with an AK-47 in his car trunk.

This uncensored political program largely relies on his platform les Amoureux de la France, which includes his party Debout la France and other groups such as the National Centre of Independents and Peasants (CNIP) and an increasing amount of diverse right-wing personalities that adhered to his project. In a context where Les Républicains keeps a Macron-friendly stance and where the Front National heavily lacks legitimacy after a failed presidential second round, Debout la France emerges as a very likely positive surprise in the May 2019 elections.

Macron's response to "Yellow Vest" protests

Rules are meant to be broken

French President Emmanuel Macron has announced a second package of measures in a bid to cope with the "yellow vest" protests. The first package included an additional spending of €10 billion and an increase in the minimum wage, and the second includes a €5 billion reduction in taxes. The French fiscal deficit for this year was already estimated at 3.2 per cent, and the new measures to deal with the protests are likely to make it worse. It is likely therefore that France will violate the European Union's budget deficit rules.

The French President's first response to the protests, which were triggered by a hike in fuel taxes, was a massive spending package, but this failed to boost his popularity materially. He then embarked on a "national conversation" with the public, triggering nearly two million online responses. One of the conclusions made by the French Government was that taxes were too high in France.

Macron has now come up with a second set of measures serving to respond to the public concerns. These include €5 billion in tax cuts, decentralising public services and lowering barriers to hold referendums. Another high-profile measure is to shut down the École Nationale d'Administration, a top school that has educated most of the French Government elite. It is, however, notable that the French President, despite substantial pressure to do so, has refused to restore the wealth tax he scrapped at the beginning of his presidency.

The public does not seem convinced by the second package either. A poll by Le Figaro found that 61 per cent of the population do not think these measures constitute a big change in policy. Other policies that might work but

Eric Drouet, one of the self-appointed spokespeople of the "yellow vests", called Macron's announcement of the new measures "bla bla" in a video published after the French President's press conference.

Given the French tax burden, Macron is absolutely right to go for tax cuts. But the tax cuts should be financed by the same amount of spending cuts. This is necessary not only to comply with EU deficit rules, but to also restore trust in France's financial position and attract more private investment. Many of the yellow vests are opposed to spending cuts and call for the reintroduction of the wealth tax.

Given the situation, Macron should focus on reforms that do not cost money but rather boost employment. Scrapping the rigid labour market rules and opening up the services sector should be particularly high on the list. France's unemployment rate hovers around 9 per cent and youth unemployment in particular is at a troubling 21 per cent. There is no reason, however, why unemployment in France should be much higher than in the UK or Germany, both of which also have disadvantaged regions that have been struggling to compete at the global level.

The Italian Government has complained that the European Commission applies different standards when judging budgetary policies. The Commission's excuse for giving France a pass has always been that the country not only has a lower debt to GDP ratio than Italy, but also that it is also more ambitious in undertaking economic reform. In order to avoid a clash with the EU and other Member States, however, the French will need to limit the deficit.

Swedish European Election campaign

Left abandons working class

The party leader of the Sweden Democrats, Jimmie Åkesson, has raised the temperature of the European election campaign considerably by maintaining that the Social Democrats are no longer the workers' party they once were. According to Åkesson, the labour movement has broken the undertakings of the welfare state.

Mr Åkesson claims that the left-wing government's cut in taxes for those who earn the most whilst increasing taxes for those who have the least "is a betrayal". He also argues that it has become increasingly apparent that access to care has decreased and that the policies of the Social Democrats have broken the promise of universal healthcare. Furthermore, cuts in police funding will lead to increased insecurity. Åkesson also takes aim at the government's tax increase on fuel, which makes it more expensive to

get to work and mainly affects the poor and those living in rural areas.

In an op-ed piece in Aftonbladet, Sweden's largest newspaper, Åkesson argues that the "Swedish labour market model" is under threat from EU rules. The Swedish model is a tradition from the 1920s where the main players on the labour market – employers and unions – sign binding agreements on wages and conditions for the employed. Sweden therefore has no legislation on the minimum wage. This is an example of the diversity of customs and traditions in different European countries that could be under threat if the EU harmonises social conditions across the Union. In the European Parliament the Social Democrats have actively voted in favour of a policy that is eroding the Swedish model, thereby degrading workers' conditions in Sweden.

Hungary

Orban withdraws support for EPP Candidate

Victor Orban, the Hungarian Prime Minister, has withdrawn his parties support for Manfred Weber, the European Peoples Party lead candidate for the Commission. Mr Orban's Fidesz party currently sits in the EPP Group in the European Parliament, however was suspended from the European Peoples Party itself just before the election started.

Mr Orban has been at odds with the EPP establishment for some time now, in particular in his criticism of German Chancellor Angela Merkel and her policy towards migration. Hungary felt the full force of the migration crisis as it was a

major artery in the transit route for those heading to Germany.

Orban has also clashed with Commission President Jean Claude Juncker, who famously referred to him as "the dictator" before a European Council Summit in Brussels. This spat was partly what led to his party being suspended.

Without the support of Fidesz in his own party, Mr Weber could struggle to become Commission President without enlisting the support of the Social Democrats and Greens, which would put him at odds with a number of his other parties, and risk a wider split within the movement.



Austria

Kurz calls for reform

Austrian Chancellor Sebastian Kurz called for a reopening of the treaties during a speech in Vienna. The 32-year-old Chancellor said that a lot had changed in Europe since the Lisbon treaty was signed in 2007, and that the EU didn't seem to be in a position to react to the problems that face the continent today.

In particular he called for tougher measures to be taken against member states who waved illegal migrants through, rather than stopping them at the external border. Mr Kurz also called for stricter fiscal measures to prevent countries from running up large amounts of debt in the Eurozone.

"He who demands reforms must also be prepared to make them where it hurts," Kurz said during the speech. Many of the measures that the Chancellor are calling for put him at odds with the leadership of the European Peoples Party, to which his Austrian Peoples Party belongs.



Mr Kurz, who has been in government in Austria since 2017, has made a number of changes to the Peoples Party since becoming its leader. Most notably he has changed taken the party in a more conservative direction, including in the parties attitude towards the migrant crisis and his willingness to bring the party into coalition with the Freedom Party.

The Austrian Peoples Party currently sits with the European Peoples Party in the European Parliament, however if it's leader, Manfred Weber, requires the support of the Socialists and Greens to secure the Commission Presidency, he may be forced to kick the Peoples Party out of the EPP.

Belgian Federal Election

Calculating the cost of political proposals

In the run-up to Belgium's federal election on 26 May, the country's Federal Planning Bureau has been calculating the cost of selected measures proposed by the different political parties. It is the first time that an effort has been made by the Federal Planning Bureau to evaluate the cost and income of political proposals ahead of an election. The initiative to calculate the cost of the different parties' election proposals is inspired by a similar practice in the Netherlands, which has had a law in place since the 1980s requiring such estimates.



According to the Federal Planning Bureau, only three parties propose measures that do not increase the deficit. The measures proposed by the centre-right Flemish nationalist N-VA would reduce the deficit by an estimated €2.7 billion, mostly through savings in government expenditure. The other two parties proposing measures that would reduce the deficit are the Flemish Greens and the hard-left Communists. Both parties aim to achieve the reduction in the deficit through hefty increases in taxation.

N-VA, in power between 2014 and 2018, has proposed cutting taxes and increasing the lowest pension. But the party, currently leading in the polls, has also suggested that savings can be achieved by limiting the period a person can receive unemployment benefits, limiting the growth in healthcare spending and keeping nuclear plants open longer. Belgium is one of the only countries in the industrialised world where unemployment benefits are not limited in time, and introducing a cut-off point would not only lead to a direct saving but also create greater incentive to return to work.

The Flemish Greens want to increase taxes by €13 billion, including a new CO2 tax, a tax on flight tickets and road tolls. The party's proposal to abolish the system of company cars without enabling employers to pay the equivalent amount to their employees tax free would – according to analysts – mean that the average employee currently with a company car would effectively lose €500 per month in compensation.

The Francophone Greens, who according to the polls are the biggest party in Brussels and the second biggest in Wallonia, are keen to go on a spending spree, increasing support for

train travel and welfare. For this reason, their promise not to increase the general taxation level is less than credible. The liberal parties, who have been in power since 1999, have proposed considerable tax cuts that would lead to a €5 billion increase in the deficit.

Controversial proposals by the Socialists include a guaranteed pension of €1,500 per month and free visits to a general practitioner. The party has been criticised by its opponents for the latter proposal since it is thought that this would lead to over-consumption. The Flemish Socialists have, however, also proposed savings in the government and cuts in subsidies for companies. The Federal Planning Bureau was unable to calculate government income from the party's proposal for a capital gains tax, which contributed to the conclusion that the proposal would increase Belgium's already high public debt burden.

In Belgium, where Tax Freedom Day falls in August, taxes are a major political issue. Some left-wing parties are keen to cut taxes on labour by increasing them on capital. However, their claims that Belgium has no effective taxation on capital are being contradicted by the centre-right parties, who argue that international statistics indicate that the country already has some of the highest taxation on capital in the OECD when including the high taxes on acquiring real estate.

The Federal Planning Bureau has struggled to calculate a whole range of measures proposed by the political parties, such as those relating to stopping migration or climate policies.

Belgium's largest daily newspaper, Het Laatste Nieuws, has called the calculation effort a "disappointment". The paper suggests that since only five policies of each political party were included in the calculations, and the fact that the parties themselves suggested which five measures should be calculated, the door was left open for manipulation.



FUTURE OF COHESION POLICY



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@RuzaTomasic

“
In the next programming period, all regions within the EU will continue to be supported by Cohesion Policy – differentiated according to their respective structural development and their regional needs.

The budgetary and policy debates on the post-2020 reform have potentially major implications for the future of Cohesion policy. In my view, post-2020 Cohesion Policy should continue to pursue the reduction of regional disparities. The importance of maintaining a strong Cohesion Policy is particularly evident in small Member States, like Croatia.

It is clear that the EU's future multi-annual financial framework will face special challenges. Consequently, the weighting of European policy will shift. Most obviously, the EU budget will be under pressure as a result of Brexit and the loss of the second largest net payer. The spending review being conducted within the European Commission is looking at scenarios of cuts of 15-30 percent in the budgets of different policy headings. In future, assistance from the EU Structural and Investment Funds should be better integrated and more effective in reaching the regional and local level.

Within the framework of the fund-specific objectives, Cohesion Policy supports smart, sustainable, innovative and inclusive growth and employment. Because of its fundamental role in strengthening the EU's economic, social and territorial cohesion, we should all make sure that Cohesion Policy will continue to be an investment area of outstanding importance and a key element of EU economic and employment policy.

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We should be thinking if we can further enhance its EU added value by focusing even more on projects that contribute strongly to EU priorities, notably growth and jobs. An important question is whether we should focus more on regions in need. We need to reflect how we can help regions that are strongly affected by globalisation and technological change.

and their regional needs. Therefore, the most important goal remains to reduce the backlog of severely disadvantaged regions. At the same time, however, Cohesion Policy should also provide funds to help regions effectively tackle demographic change and brain-drain.

Furthermore, simplification of the regulatory framework and harmonisation of rules across the ESI Funds and potentially other EU instruments has been extensively discussed, but the challenge will be to simplify and maybe differentiate while ensuring that the progress with reducing the error rate is not reversed. Flexibility is another important theme, either by enabling programmes to respond more quickly to unexpected shocks. The Structural Reform Service is likely to play a greater role in developing the institutional and policy

frameworks, including administrative capacity-building, for implementing the policy.

The existing Cohesion Policy already addresses many of these challenges and contributes to mobilisation at a local and regional level, which is crucial when it comes to achieving concrete results. The challenge for the EU is how to promote stronger and sustainable growth while ensuring that national, regional and local levels are able to exploit opportunities from globalising trade and technological change. In this regard, recent research has focused on the longer term pathways of economic development, providing a better understanding not just of the current or recent development positions but how these are evolving over time – and their prospects for sustainable development in future, in particular whether lagging regions have a prospect of catching up.

Smart specialisation is a particularly successful working methodology for focusing resources regionally. It is based on each region's specific strength and is important for the whole Europe to develop. A clearer focus on smart specialisation in the next programming period would lead to a more strategic linkage between projects, better synergies with other EU programmes, and better complementarity and cooperation between regions across Europe.

While maintaining its focus on disparities, future Cohesion Policy should also be capable of addressing the different social, territorial and economic realities in Member States. In this respect, the forthcoming discussions regarding the allocation mechanism of the next Cohesion Policy and its thematic concentration could also explore some new avenues such as introducing specific criteria related to national and/or regional needs and particularities.

Cohesion Policy has been a driver for economic growth and jobs and has helped many regions to develop. Therefore, it clearly has an added value. During and in the aftermath of the economic and financial crises it helped to prevent major disruptions in many regions. So, this policy should remain an important part of the future EU budget. But we should be thinking if we can further enhance its EU added value by focusing even more on projects that contribute strongly to EU priorities, notably growth and jobs. An important question is whether we should focus more on regions in need. We need to reflect how we can help regions that are strongly affected by globalisation and technological change. ■

A Time for Choosing



The upcoming European elections will see 500 million citizens, across 28 member states, vote for several thousand candidates to fill 750 seats in the European Parliament. We have produced this special feature on the European elections so that you can see at least some of the candidates being put forward by our member parties, and so you can see their agendas for the next mandate. Many of these candidates will go on to become the next generation of MEPs, fighting for a reformed European Union that does less but better and works in the interests of ordinary citizens.





A TIME FOR CHOOSING

by Robert Tyler

In 1964, Ronald Reagan, at the time a little known actor who had never held elected office, gave a speech endorsing Arizona Senator Barry Goldwater for President. Reagan had already started to establish a name for himself in the growing American conservative movement of which Goldwater was its head at the time. During the speech Reagan set out the problems that faced the nation and how conservative ideas would fix a divided country.

America in the 1960's was at a crossroads, deeply divided and still reeling from the assassination of President John F Kennedy a few months before. It was in the middle of battle for the soul of the nation with culture and counter-culture clashing over the future direction of the Union. A battle of wills between the people and establishment.

Europe today faces a similar battle for its future. Answering fundamental questions about which direction it too wishes to move in. Does it want to move towards a centralisation of power, away from the people and towards the elite, or does it wish to stay that coalition of willing partners, working together on the issues that really matter. I believe that the people of Europe would rather the latter option. They would rather Europe applied the breaks and took some time to reflect on what direction they want to move in.

And the signs have been there for a long time now. Each election that takes place in the member states, on every level, sees those who wish to oppose the establishment doing a little better. In some cases those on the extremes have come close to taking power.

The federalists would like you to believe that these are just anomalies, that they aren't really reflective of the mood of the people and that actually they were victories for their own cause. But I put this to you, at what point did Marine Le Pen securing 33% of the popular vote in France become a victory, when only ten years before she won less than 10%. Or when did the Austrian Freedom Party losing the Presidency by only a few percentage points become a victory, when in years past they would never have found themselves in the second round.

And in the United Kingdom, a majority of voters decided to leave the Union entirely. If these aren't the wake up call that Europe needs a change of direction then I don't know what is. It's clear that something has gone wrong along the way,

and contrary to what Mr Verhofstadt or Mr Weber may want to believe, this wave of dissatisfaction is heading for Brussels.

So I put it to those in the establishment, it's not too late to change. Another Europe is possible, and without having to surrender to the populist forces of Madam Le Pen and Mr Salvini. Change can come in the form of well-structured reform. That once again sees the single market as the centre of European policy, rather than the obsession with creating a political union. A Europe that sees the commission as the guardian of the treaties, rather than a quasi-government. A Europe that focuses on cooperation in the areas that matter and respects the principle of subsidiarity, rather than trying to take more power away from the member states.

For the last ten years, the Alliance of Conservatives and Reformists has been at the forefront of that movement for constructive European Reform. From London to Warsaw, Bratislava to Riga, Prague to Rome, the conservative movement has been working towards the creation of a platform to promote sub-

stantial change in the EU, and move Europe back towards policies that work in the interest of ordinary people.

And yet, all the while, those on the federalist fringes of European politics continued to push their agenda for more Europe. The last five years have seen the EU take power away from Member States on foreign policy and security policy, two areas most sacrosanct to nation states. The proposals being pushed forward today would undermine the independence of European countries defense and ability to choose the direction of their own foreign policy. It would undermine the NATO Alliance and undermine the Transatlantic relationship. The obsession with a European Army is heading the same way as the Euro.

And all the while, federalists are looking to take more power from the Member States and hand them to the Commission, including the ability to raise taxes. They want to create an EU finance ministry, cementing their control over the Eurozone, and finally building capacity to raise their own resources. As conservatives, we stand against the imposition of European level taxes, and reaffirm our position that lower taxes overall raise the quality of life for working people.

That's why in this election we must conjure up the spirit of Ronald Reagan and make this a time for choosing. Choosing whether or not we want to continue down the current path towards a European Super State, or if we apply the brakes, and take time to reassess our direction of travel. It's time to choose what kind of leaders we have in Europe, do we continue with the same federalist elite, or do we allow the next generation to step up and bring fresh ideas.

Equally, Swedish Democrat MEP Peter Lundgren delivered substantial changes to transport legislation, by changing regulation for truck drivers. Mr Lundgren himself had spent many years as a truck driver and so he knew where value could be added, and where regulation would get in the way of his former colleagues on the road.

Conservatives also led the way on reforming counter-terrorism legislation, taking leading positions in the European Parliament. Working closely with Commissioners, advisors and the EU's Counter Terrorism Coordinator, they updated guidelines on dealing with radicalism, extremist content online, and how to prevent terrorists from entering the EU. Constructive cooperation meant that Member States and not the central bureaucracy remained at the core of these changes.

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The New Flemish Alliance (NVA) is the largest political party in Belgium. They are the governing party in Flanders, where they have cut taxes and promoted sustainable growth. They also currently have the most seats in the Belgian House of Representatives and Senate. Until recently they were also represented in the Belgian government but left in December 2018, citing their opposition to the Global Migration Compact.

In the last mandate, NVA MEPs sat with the European Conservative and Reformist Group. From there, they went on to introduce important legislation on strengthening Europe's approach to counter-terrorism, and reform of the single market.

Their lead candidate, Geert Bourgeois, is a former party leader and the current Minister-President of

MANIFESTO

- They believe that laws should be made as close to the people as possible.
- They want to strengthen the internal market, as they believe that it is the core to the European Union.
- Fight against group think in the European Union, and prevent politicians from being too detached from the people.
- Protect and strengthen the European external border.

Flanders. The number two on the list is Assita Kanko, a survivor of FGM and a strong advocate for women's rights across the globe.

TOP 5 CANDIDATES



Geert BOURGEOIS



Assita KANKO



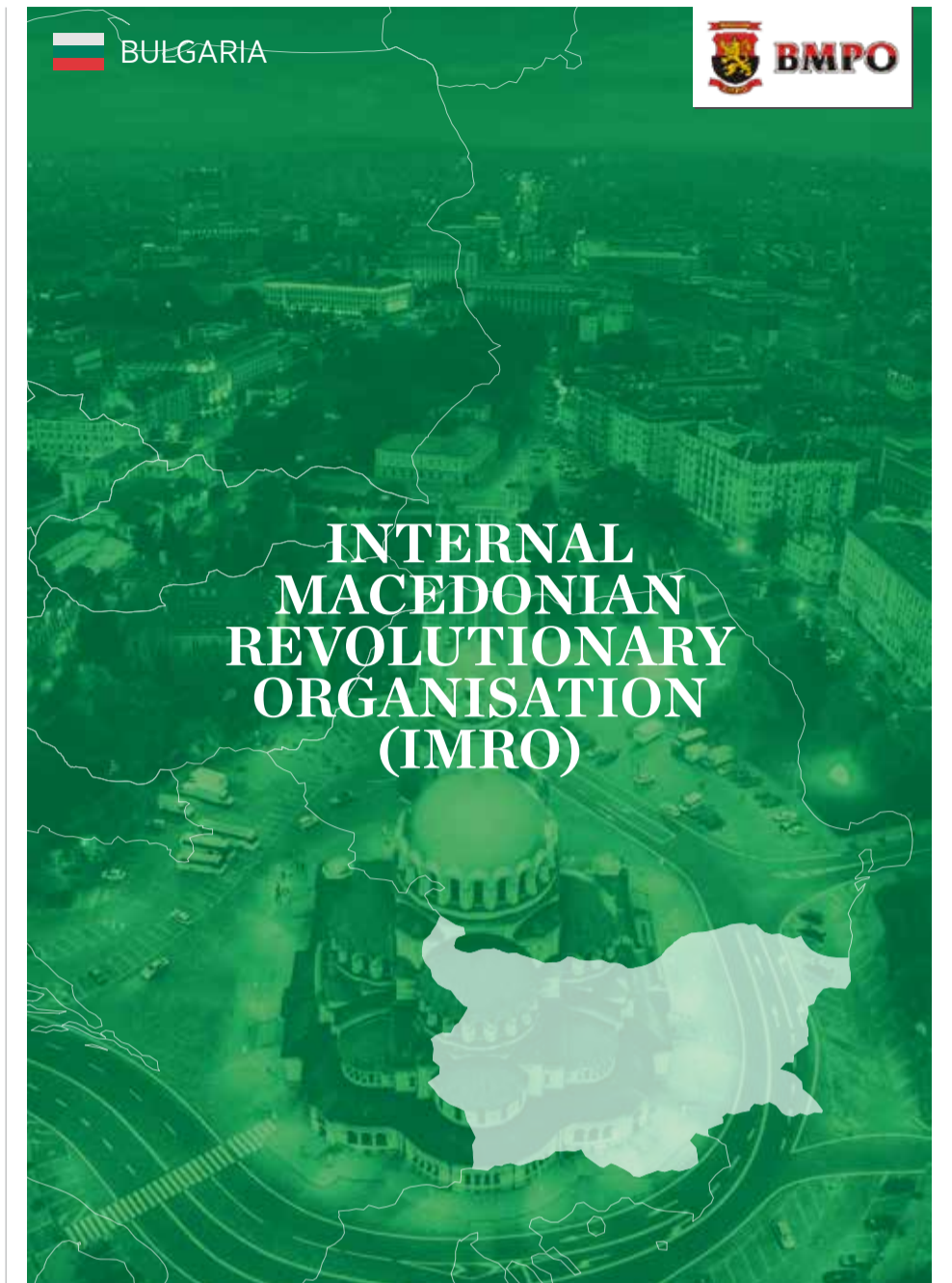
Johan VAN OVERTVELDT



Mark DEMESMAEKER



Caroline DE MEERLEER



The Internal Macedonian Revolutionary Organisation, or IMRO, was founded in 1991; built on the legacy of a historic organization of the same name, which encompassed the area of 'Greater Bulgaria', including modern day Macedonia as well as Bulgaria. After 1994 the Party became politically active, and over the next decade transformed itself into a modern political party.

In the 2014 election IMRO joined the newly formed Patriotic Front coalition, which won 19 seats. In 2014 they also elected their first MEP, Angel Dzhambazki. In 2017 they joined the United

Patriots group for the Parliamentary elections, and won 27 seats. They entered government in coalition with the governing GERB party. Party leader Krasimir Karakachanov became Minister of Defence as a result.

Their lead candidate in the European Elections is Angel Dzhambazki, who has been an MEP since 2014. Before becoming an MEP he was a member of the Sofia City Council. He sat on the Culture Committee and the Foreign Affairs Committee. He was the Vice Chairman of the delegation to the North Macedonia-EU Parliamentary Committee.

TOP 5 CANDIDATES



Angel DZHAMBAZKI



Yulian ANGELOV



Aleksandar SIDI



Andrey SLABAKOV



Dimitar SHIVIAKOV



The Croatian Sovereign List is a coalition of conservative parties standing together in the European Elections. The lead candidate is Ruža Tomašić MEP from the Croatian Conservative Party.

The Croatian Conservatives and their allies are standing on a platform

of reducing the influence of the EU on member states, and advocate keeping Europe as a community of sovereign states cooperating closely on issues of common concern. They believe in promoting Croatian sovereignty and preserving the history of the country.

MANIFESTO

- HKS advocates a free market, deprived of protectionism and unfair competition
- The European Union is accepted solely as a community of sovereign national states cooperating on issues of mutual interest and refusing its federal regulation and concentration of power far from the eyes of the citizens of the Republic of Croatia.
- HKS believes that public administration, as a service of

- citizens financed by the taxpayer's money, must be efficient, modern and transparent.
- HKS believes that every citizen with the right to vote in the elections bears the greatest responsibility for the state of the state and therefore has to have the right to freedom of speech and opinion, but also of direct influence on political circumstances in the country through the National Referendum Institute.

TOP 5 CANDIDATES



Ruža TOMAŠIĆ



Ladislav ILČIĆ



Ante Žoni MAKSAN



Željko SAČIĆ



Pero KOVAČEVIĆ



Founded in 1991 as the pro-free market wing of the Civic Forum by Václav Klaus and modelled on the British Conservative Party, the ODS won the 1992 legislative election, and has remained in government for most of the Czech Republic's independence. In every legislative (except for the 2013 election) it emerged as one of the two strongest parties.

Václav Klaus served as the first Prime Minister of the Czech Republic after the partition of Czechoslovakia, from 1993 to 1997. Mirek Topolánek, who succeeded him as leader of the party in December 2002, served as Prime Minister from

2006 to 2009. In the 2010 election, the party lost 28 seats, finishing second, but as the largest party right of the centre, it formed a centre-right government with Petr Nečas as Prime Minister.

In the 2017 legislative election, the party won 25 seats in the Chamber of Deputies, making it the second strongest party in chamber and the main opposition party in the country. The party is currently being led by Petr Fiala, who has been leader since the 2014.

Their lead candidates is Jan Zahradil MEP, who has represented the Czech Republic since 2004, when the country first entered the European Union.

MANIFESTO

- The only source of political legitimacy for the European Union is the Member States.
- The EU institutions are here to serve Member States and to facilitate mutually beneficial cooperation between Member States and to contribute adequately to strengthening the EU's economic and social importance and addressing common problems.
- The influence of Member States on day-to-day European policy needs to be strengthened.
- The EU does not have to pursue one common goal in all but it should operate flexibly.
- The fight against unnecessary bureaucracy is crucial. We are pushing for "big legal cleaning" to radically reduce the number of European standards. The EU should do less, but better.
- We want to increase the autonomy and flexibility of Member States' decision-making on how to use "European" money.
- Adoption of the euro must be voluntary.
- Free movement within the Schengen area applies only to citizens of the Member States.
- Our security depends on NATO. It is therefore necessary to fulfill the existing commitments.
- Brexit is changing the situation in the EU and needs to respond. Our citizens and interests need to be taken care of and in the future working with states that share the idea that further integration must be considered and not threatening the EU as such or coherence in the fundamental pillars of cooperation.

TOP 5 CANDIDATES



Jan ZAHRADIL



Evžen TOŠENOVSKÝ



Veronika VECIONOVÁ



Ondřej KRUTÍLEK



Radka TRYLČOVÁ



The Finns Party is a conservative political party founded in 1995. The Finns party underlines the role of national sovereignty and are critical of both the EU and of globalism.

The Finns party believes in national sovereignty and favour a policy of neutrality in international affairs and sustain of a large conscript army to guarantee the defence of Finland. The party's judicial programme included tougher punishments for violent crime, more resources for police and prosecutors, and calls for a prohibition on wearing the burqa and the niqab in public.

The Party is committed to a continuous revision and renewal process for the EU and a corresponding need for change to be recognized. The Party believes that distributing existing bank debt across Europe will result in an even wider crisis. It is not the function of the EU to rescue the financial disasters of the investment bankers.

They believe that the single currency is a political project. They hold that Eurozone members differ too much with each other for the Euro to function properly without some kind of integrated financial framework.

In June 2014, the Finns Party joined the ECR Group in the European Parliament. In the 2019 parliament election the party got 17,5 per cent of the vote but increased its representation to 39 seats.

MANIFESTO

- The EU membership costs for Finland are too high and the calculation process needs re-evaluation and correction.
- The party believes Finland should renegotiate its membership in the Union, transfer more power back to Finland from Brussels, reduce the power of the EU Commission, and diminish common responsibility in economic affairs.
- The current immigration policy does not increase the taxpayers' number and is very costly taking the place of spending in other areas. A strict control of immigration and the promotion of repatriation are in practice the most important measures available to protect the country from the downside of immigration.
- The Finns party argues that the European Union is inefficient and has created excessive central governance in Brussels. The party does not accept the excessive centralisation of power to unelected technocrats and commissioners.
- Climate policy must not be based on pretentious self-flagellation. Emission reduction should therefore take place at the same rate, no more, not faster, in Finland than agreed in the EU. The largest reductions should occur in the countries with the largest emissions.

TOP 5 CANDIDATES



Pirkko RUOHONEN-LERNER



Simo GRÖNROOS



Teuvo HAKKARAINEN



Ippo HELTIMOINEN



Laura HUHTASAARI



Debout la France is a French Gaullist party. They claim to be the true heirs to the intellectual traditions of the former French President, and World War Two hero, Charles De Gaulle. Their current party leader, Nicolas Dupont-Aignan stood for the French Presidency in 2017, winning nearly 2 million voters and 5% of the vote. He is their lead candidate, and has promised to step down from the National Assembly if elected to the European Parliament.

Their candidates include, Stephanie Gibaud, a former nominee for the Sakharov prize for her work as whistle-blower during the UBS scandal in France, and Marie-Jo Zimmermann, a former member of the French National assembly.

MANIFESTO

- Focus on coordination when dealing with terrorism.
- Shift power away from the European Commission and back towards the Member States.
- Double the Erasmus budget so that at least 50% of students and apprentices study in a European country. Extend the program to the neighbors of Europe.
- Help sustainable growth on Africa to lessen the push factors when it comes to the migration crisis.

TOP 5 CANDIDATES



Nicolas DUPONT-AIGNAN



Stephanie GIBAUD



Jean-Philippe TANGUY



Marie-Jo ZIMMERMANN



Bruno NORTH



Founded in July 2015 by a group of five German MEPs the Liberal-Konservative Reformer (LKR) sits in the European Conservatives and Reformists Group in the European Parliament. They split from the Alternative für Deutschland party, citing problems with the direction that the party was heading, including its increasing support for Russia and move towards exclusionary nationalism.

MANIFESTO

- They want to continue EU cooperation where it works, but don't want to see an expansion of competencies without good reason.
- They want to tackle the problems of inequality between North and South created by the introduction of the Euro.
- They believe in increased cooperation when it comes to strengthening the EU's external borders. They support the implementation of existing treaties when it comes to asylum, and are critical of the current unlawful approach.
- They oppose moves towards the creation of an independent EU military capability and support the role of NATO as the organisation best suited to defending Europe. They would call on all member states to meet their 2% budgetary commitment to NATO instead of spending on EU duplication.

They oppose the EU's move towards centralisation and believe that the EU should remain a loose association of Member States cooperating on areas within the principle of subsidiarity. They are particularly opposed to the idea of an EU level finance minister. They are advocates of market liberalisation and strong supporters of international trade. Their lead candidate in the European Elections is Bernd Lucke MEP, a member of the European Parliament committee on Economic and Monetary affairs. Before being elected to the European Parliament in 2014, he was a university academic specialising in monetary policy.

TOP 5 CANDIDATES



Bernd LUCKE



Peter REICH



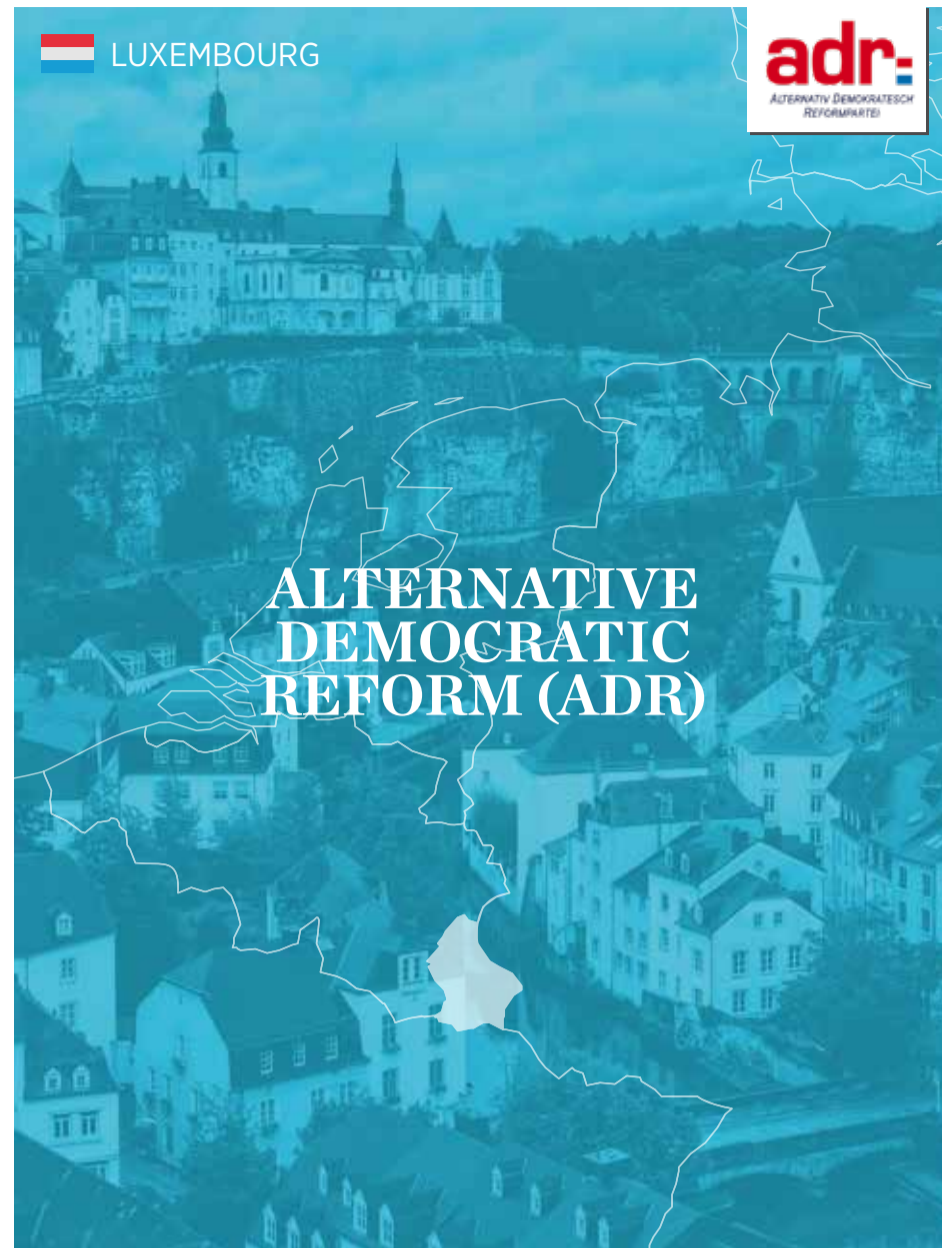
Ulrike SCHUTT



Stephan SCHLITZ



Hans-Werner SCHOUTZ



The party was founded in 1987 in response to a fight over the Luxembourgish pension system between the public and the private sectors. The original name of the party was "Aktiounskomitee 5/6 Pension fir jiddereen". This movement had its origin in the Luxembourgish private sector, trade unions, among which were prominently the NGL, as well as an independent farmers' organisation. Two years later the party, massively supported by the private sector, sent four representatives to parliament. In 1999, after reform of the pension system, the party got to seven MPs, its best score until now. Since then, the party has evolved into a moderately conservative, value-oriented party.

MANIFESTO

- Defend unanimous decision making at a Council level, especially when it comes to tax and foreign policy.
- Defend freedom of speech and a free internet.
- Respect for the policy of subsidiarity and the sovereignty of member states.
- Reject any proposals for the introduction of EU level taxation.
- A fresh approach to dealing with illegal immigration abuses that's fair to real asylum seekers.

TOP 5 CANDIDATES



Gast GIBÉRYEN



Tessy BRISBOIS



Fernand KARTHEISER



Fred KEUP



Sylvie MISCHEL



Fratelli d' Italia is a national-conservative political party in Italy led by Giorgia Meloni. It was founded in 2012. Fratelli d' Italia is a Movement that aims to implement a political program that, based on the principles of popular sovereignty, freedom, democracy, justice, social solidarity, merit and fiscal equity, is inspired by a spiritual vision of life and values of the national tradition, liberal and popular, and participates in the construction of the Europe of Peoples. Fratelli d' Italia promotes respect for sovereignty, independence and national unity, the peaceful coexistence of peoples, states, ethnic groups and religious confessions. Fratelli d' Italia carries out its own political program through the action of its members, its supporters, its sympathizers and all those who recognize themselves in the projects of the Movement of participation in the administration and government of the nation.

MANIFESTO

- Refocus public financing to infrastructure, education and border security.
- Strengthen geographic indicators for agricultural and non-agricultural products.
- Stronger environmental protection and emphasis on renewable energy.
- Strengthen Europe's external borders and reform asylum policy.
- Boost spending on aid in Africa and increase trade in order to counter push factors when it comes to migration.

In the 2013 general election the party obtained 2.0% of the vote and nine seats in the Chamber of Deputies. On 5 March 2013 the party's executive board appointed La Russa president, Crosetto coordinator and Meloni leader in the Chamber. In the 2018 general election the FdI obtained 4.4% of the vote and won more than three times the seats compared to 2013. In November 2018, in the run-up to the European elections, the party agreed to join the European Conservatives and Reformists (ECR) group in the European Parliament opening the way for a pact with other conservative parties in Italy, notably including Raffaele Fitto's Direction Italia.

TOP 5 CANDIDATES



Giorgia MELONI



Raffaele FITTO



Elisabetta GARDINI



Remo SERNAGIOTTO



Stefano MAULLU



The National Alliance was founded in 2012 as part of a merger between two centre right political parties. It has constantly been in coalition government since its founding. Currently the party has two ministers, the Minister of Agriculture and Minister for Culture. In the 2018 General Election, the party won 11% of the vote and 13 seats. They also

currently hold the Presidency of the Parliament.

Their lead candidate is long-time MEP Roberts Zile, who has represented Latvia in the European Parliament since 2004. He was their candidate for Prime Minister following the General Election in 2018. Another of their candidates is the Chairman of the Foreign Affairs committee in the Latvian Parliament.

MANIFESTO

- The European Union is a union of national states, whose activities and essence are clearly defined in its treaties.
- Not a "multi-speed" but a decentralized European Union.
- A fair EU multiannual budget for 2021-2027 year. Only a European Union budget that works in the interests of all EU countries and is a means of reducing the gap between EU countries is welcome.
- The single market is a cornerstone of the EU. The National Alliance advocates strengthening the single market rather than destroying it. Fair competition in the single market is in everyone's interests, while unilateral barriers are a threat to EU development. The National Alliance is against pseudo-social dumping, which essentially distorts the single market, restricting competition from Latvia and the region.
- The National Alliance believes that NATO is the sole security and defence provider in Europe. The National Union is opposed to the European Security Union in a form where it duplicates NATO objectives and thus weakens the Alliance's forces in Europe.

TOP 5 CANDIDATES



Roberts ZILE



Dace MELBARDE



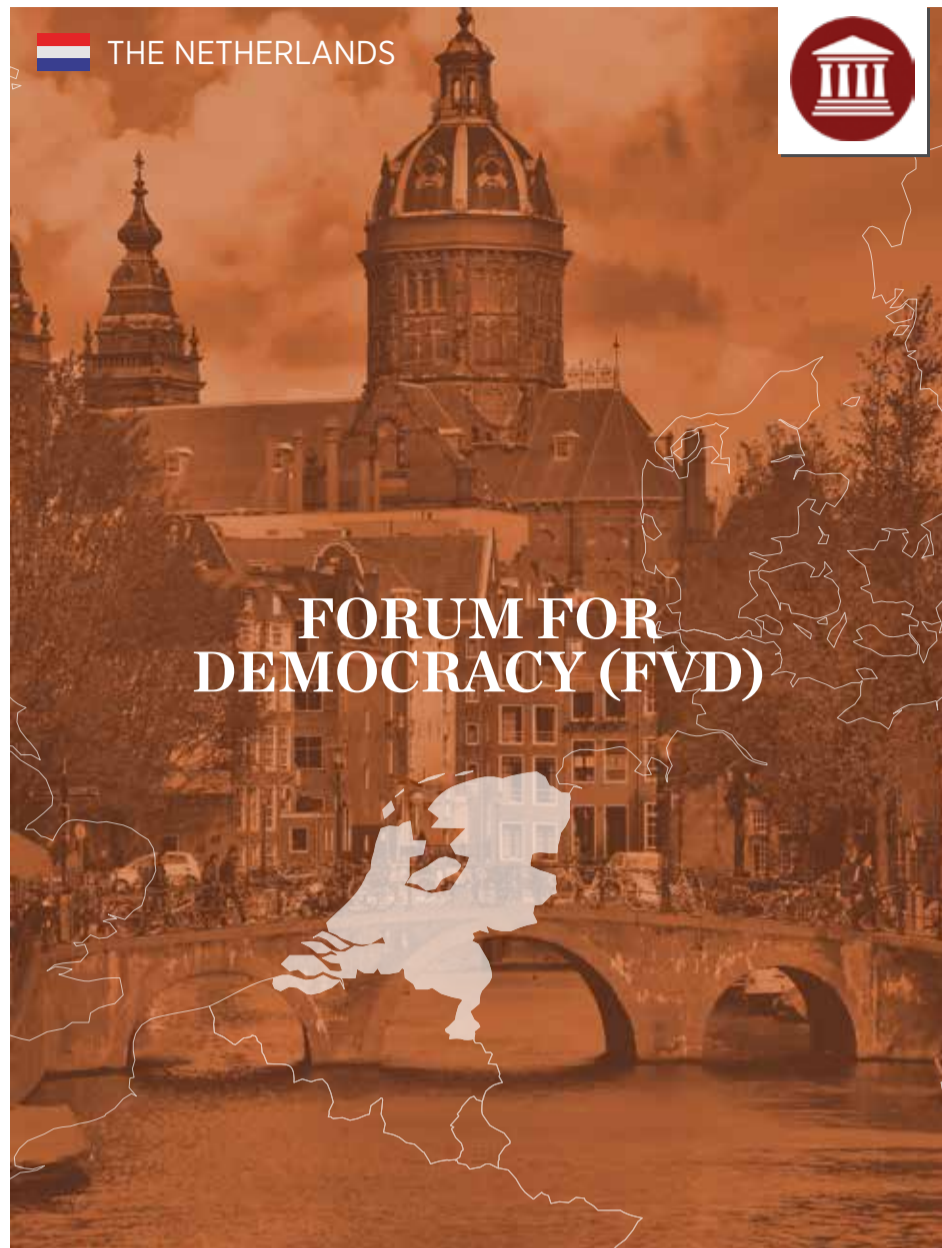
Anis PUPOLS



Janis GRASBERGS



Edvins SNORE



The Forum for Democracy (FVD) was founded in 2016 as a think tank. However, in 2017 they became a fully registered political party, winning two seats in the Dutch Parliamentary elections. From there they have gone from strength to strength, most recently coming first in the Dutch provincial elections, giving them their first ever seats in the Senate.

MANIFESTO

- Stop the further enlargement of the EU
- Referendum on Dutch membership of the Eurozone.
- Referendum on the free movement of people.
- Prevent the deepening of EU policy.

They are a liberal conservative party, with a strong emphasis on free trade and economic liberalisation. Many of their voters have come over from the Dutch Liberal party, having found that their views on Europe are better represented by the FvD. The party aims to push for more accountability of elected

politicians, become more in touch through the use of direct democracy and reform of the political system.

Their lead candidate is former Member of the European Parliament Derk Jan Eppink, who sat with the ECR Group between 2009-2014.

TOP 5 CANDIDATES



Derk Jan EPPINK



Rob ROOS



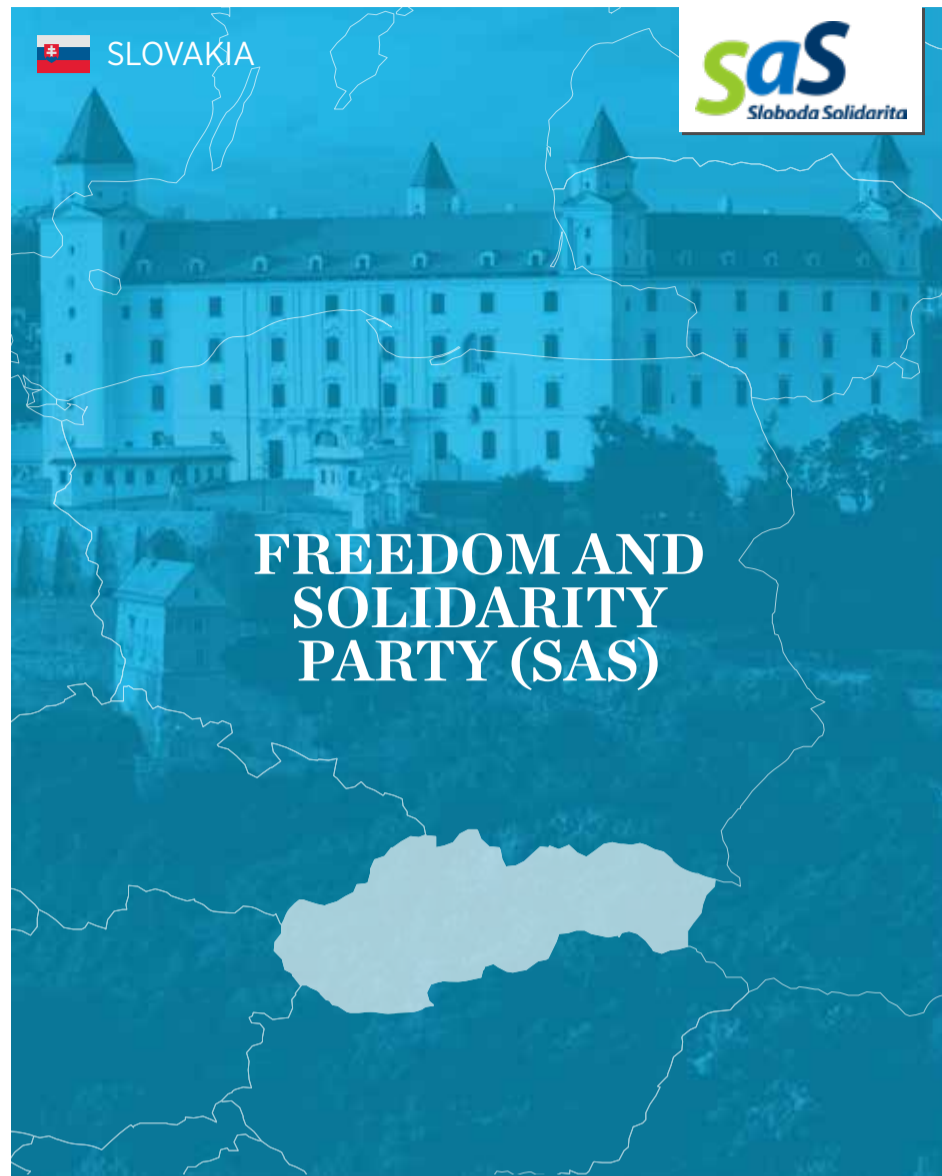
Rob ROOKEN



Dorien ROOKMAKER



Michiel HOOGEVEEN



The Slovakian 'Freedom and Solidarity Party' was founded in February 2009 by former Slovakian Finance minister Richard Sulik. Sulik was an economist who had designed Slovakia's flat rate of income tax, that led to strong economic growth. They are currently the largest opposition party, having previously been in coalition government from 2010-2012.

MANIFESTO

- Abolish Economic and Social Committee as it is a drain on resources.
- Cut the number of committees in the European Parliament.
- A single seat for the European Parliament.
- ECB to stop financing public debt.
- Stricter asylum policy and strengthening of the external border.
- Cut the number of Commissioners and departments in the Commission.

The Party stands on a classical liberal platform and advocates a smaller state. On Europe, they strongly believe in the principle of subsidiarity and the need to ensure that the EU does not become too overbearing.

Mr Sulik will be standing down as an MEP, having first been elected in 2014. Eugen Jurzyca, an MP in the Slovak National Council, will be their lead candidate.

TOP 5 CANDIDATES



Eugen JURZYCA



Alojz BARANIK



Lucia Ďuriš NICHOLSONOVÁ



Natália BLAHOVÁ



Miroslav ŽIAK



The Law and Justice Party is the governing party of Poland, founded in 2001. Since 2014 they have set about reforming the country, including introducing a new streamlined welfare system and vast reforms to how people pay into their pension. Among their lead candidates standing are a number of their existing MEPs, as well as a number of new candidates, including Beata Szydło, the former Prime Minister of Poland, and Anna Zalewska the education minister.

TOP CANDIDATES



Ryszard LEGUTKO



Tomasz PORĘBA



Beata SZYDŁO



Witold WASZCZYKOWSKI



Joachim BRUDZIŃSKI



Anna FOTYGA



Elżbieta KRUK



Karol KARSKI



Zbigniew KRASNODĄBSKI



Adam BIELAN



Anna ZALEWSKA



Patryk JAKI



Beata KEMPA



Jacek SARYUSZ-WOLSKI



Ryszard CZARNECKI

Law and Justice puts forward a strong team for EP elections

The Law and Justice has selected its candidates for the elections to the European Parliament aiming to secure at least 20 seats in the next mandate, out-performing their electoral successes in the 2014 and 2009 European Parliament election.

At the heart of the ideological program of Law and Justice lies the respect for the inherent and inalienable dignity of every human being. The protection of this dignity is the chief duty and justification for the existence of a political community. This dignity is the foundation of the most elementary rights of the human person. Three of these rights have a special meaning - the right to life, the right to freedom and the right to equality rooted in human solidarity.

"The future of Poles and the future of Poland are the stake of the upcoming elections. Restoring dignity to Poles is our great goal" said Law and Justice President Jarosław Kaczyński during the Law and Justice Convention in Rzeszów in MARCH. He added that "Law and Justice invests in the family, because the family is the basic social cell that lay at the foundation of our civilization."

Prime Minister Mateusz Morawiecki emphasized that the promises made by Law and Justice will be kept and change Poland for the better. He emphasized that he wants to be Prime Minister not for the elites, but for ordinary people who need help and support. "The foundation of the changes we want to introduce is credibility," he added. He stressed that Europe is strong with its diversity, and Poland is able to give a lot to the EU.

"We are directing the EP to a strong representation that will defend the Polish raison d'état. We want to influence the fate of Europe. Already, together with the V4, we managed to change the migration policy. I believe that the spirit that is in us will allow us to fulfill our ambitions for a better life for Polish families" he said.

During the convention, Tomasz Poręba MEP, presented the European Declaration of Law and Justice, a twelve-point manifesto that includes the return to European Values and to the EU's founding principles, defending European families, increasing European support for Polish rural communities, negotiating a favorable EU budget for Poland, securing equal treatment of Polish companies in the European Common Market, defending European border protection and Security, ensuring energy security for Poland and Europe, protecting consumers and ensuring equal treatment and access to products of same quality, ensuring a Europe of equal opportunities and the elimination of double standards in the treatment of countries, a fair climate policy for Europe, sustainable development and ending the illegal immigration to the European Union.



Electoral Action of Poles in Lithuania - Christian Families Alliance is a Christian-democratic political party that was founded in 1994. The party primarily represents the Polish minority in Lithuania and primarily champions family values, sound economic management and the causes of minorities in Lithuania (for example, the laws that regulate language use, surnames in passports and street signs). It has 8 seats in the Seimas and one seat in the European Parliament.

The party experienced a surge in support under the leadership of Valdemar Tomaševski and in the 2012 parliamentary election for the first time broke through 5 per cent threshold qualifying for proportional representation seats. The party always fared well in the Vilnius district council and the south-east of the country, which has the biggest population of Lithuanian Poles. The party is a member of the Alliance of Conservatives and Reformists in European

and the party leader Valdemar Tomaševski sits in the European Parliament with the European Conservatives and Reformists.



Valdemar TOMAŠEVSKI



Vox is a political party created for the renewal and strengthening of Spanish democratic life. It comprises of people from all walks of life, professionals, freelancers, housewives, retirees, entrepreneurs, employees, workers, officials, students, people who have never lived through politics, who have been disappointed by current politicians and who have taken a step to the front to change this situation.

Vox was founded on 17 December 2013 as a split from Popular Party. The reasons for this schism was because of the violence of separatist group ETA, the fiscal policy of the PP, and the desire for a more centralized government in

MANIFESTO

- VOX is a political project for the renewal and strengthening of Spanish democratic life with the aim of uniting the nation, achieving state efficiency, improving the quality of institutions, guaranteeing the honesty of public officials and promoting economic growth in benefit of all citizens.
- VOX notes that in the face of the degradation of the constitutional state to the state of parties and the inability of the two major political forces at the national level to design and implement the profound reforms that our institutional and legal system and our production model need, it is essential that new options emanating from civil society capable of responding to the current

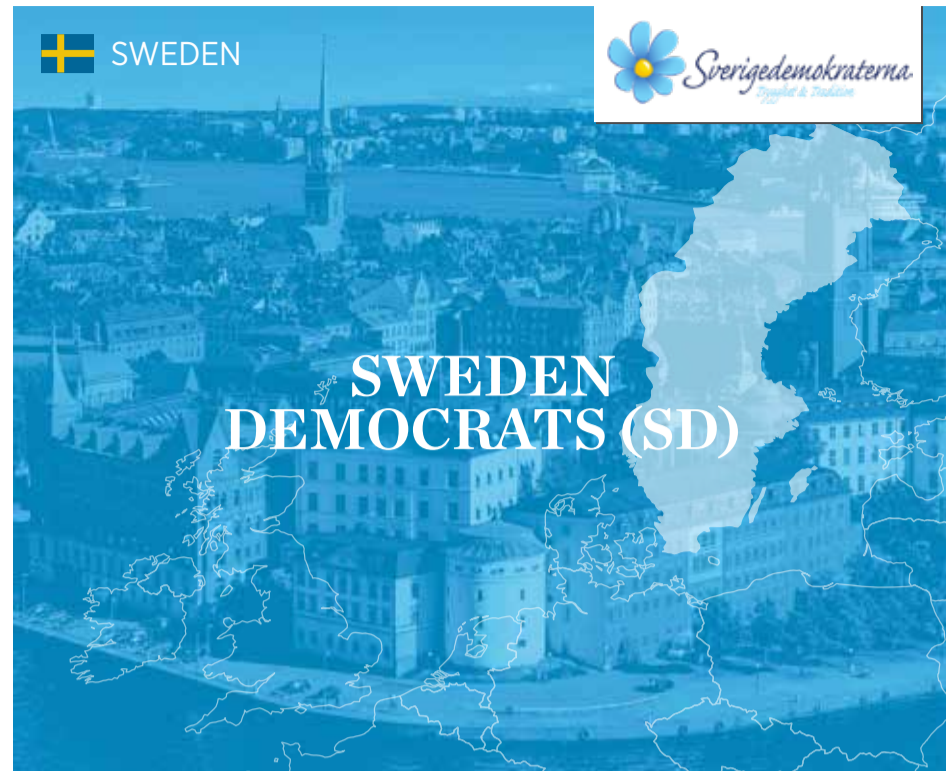
contrast to the current, quasi-federal political system ("State of Autonomies") instituted in 1978.

Vox opposes Basque and Catalan separatism in general. Vox have labelled themselves as a right-wing and Christian democratic party. In September 2014 the party elected Santiago Abascal, one of its founders, as the new President, and Iván Espinosa de los Monteros, as the General Secretary.

After the Catalan referendum of 2017 and the start of a Spanish constitutional crisis, Vox opted to not participate in the Catalan regional elections of 2017. On 28th April 2019, they won 24 parliamentary seats in the National Parliament, entering Parliament for the first time.

- structural crisis that Spain is going through.
- VOX proposes, therefore, a Renewal Agenda that is specified in a set of measures that make the process of democratic transformation that Spanish citizens have been claiming through numerous platforms and civil initiatives since the beginning of the crisis come true.
- VOX calls all Spaniards who want a united Spain in permanent material and moral progress, and endowed with the prestige and influence that corresponds to it in the world for its historical, cultural and economic scope, to join a new project based on firmness of democratic convictions and the values of the open society.

TOP 5 CANDIDATES



Sweden Democrats is a social conservative political party. The Sweden Democrats believe that the current Swedish immigration and integration policies have been a failure and that the country has had too much immigration in recent years, which threatens the national identity and societal cohesion. They wish to combat climate change by expanding nuclear power, investing in climate research, and funding climate action on a global scale. SD wishes to lower the tax rate and increase subsidized housing for the elderly. On law and order the SD wishes to instate the possibility of life without parole for the worst crimes and to repatriate a larger number of foreign citizens found guilty of serious crime. The Sweden Democrats reject joining the Economic and Monetary Union and are opposed to the accession of Turkey to the European Union.

The Sweden Democrats are a member of European Conservatives and Reformists group in the European Parliament. The Sweden Democrats crossed the threshold necessary for parliamentary representation for the first time in the 2010 general election, polling 5,7 per cent and gaining 20 seats in the Riksdag. In the European election of 2014 SD received 9,67 percent of votes, winning two seats in the European Parliament. In the 2014 election the Sweden Democrats received 12,9 per cent of the votes,

MANIFESTO

- The European Union's Institutions must respect the differences between member states.
- The European Union should reduce the fees paid by the member states.
- The European Union should enhance its ability to control external and internal borders.
- The European Union should not dictate migration policy for the member states, e.g. forcing member states to receive a specific number of migrants.
- The European Union should strengthen cross-border work against terrorism.

doubling their support and becoming the third-largest party. The party is strong-hold in rural areas and in the southern two regions of the country. During the European migrant crisis in the summer of 2015, the Sweden Democrats soared in the polls. In the 2018 general election, the SD increased its support to 17,6 per cent of the vote and secured 62 seats in parliament. The SD performed particularly well in the county of Skåne, having the highest number of voters in 21 out of the county's 33 municipalities.

TOP 5 CANDIDATES



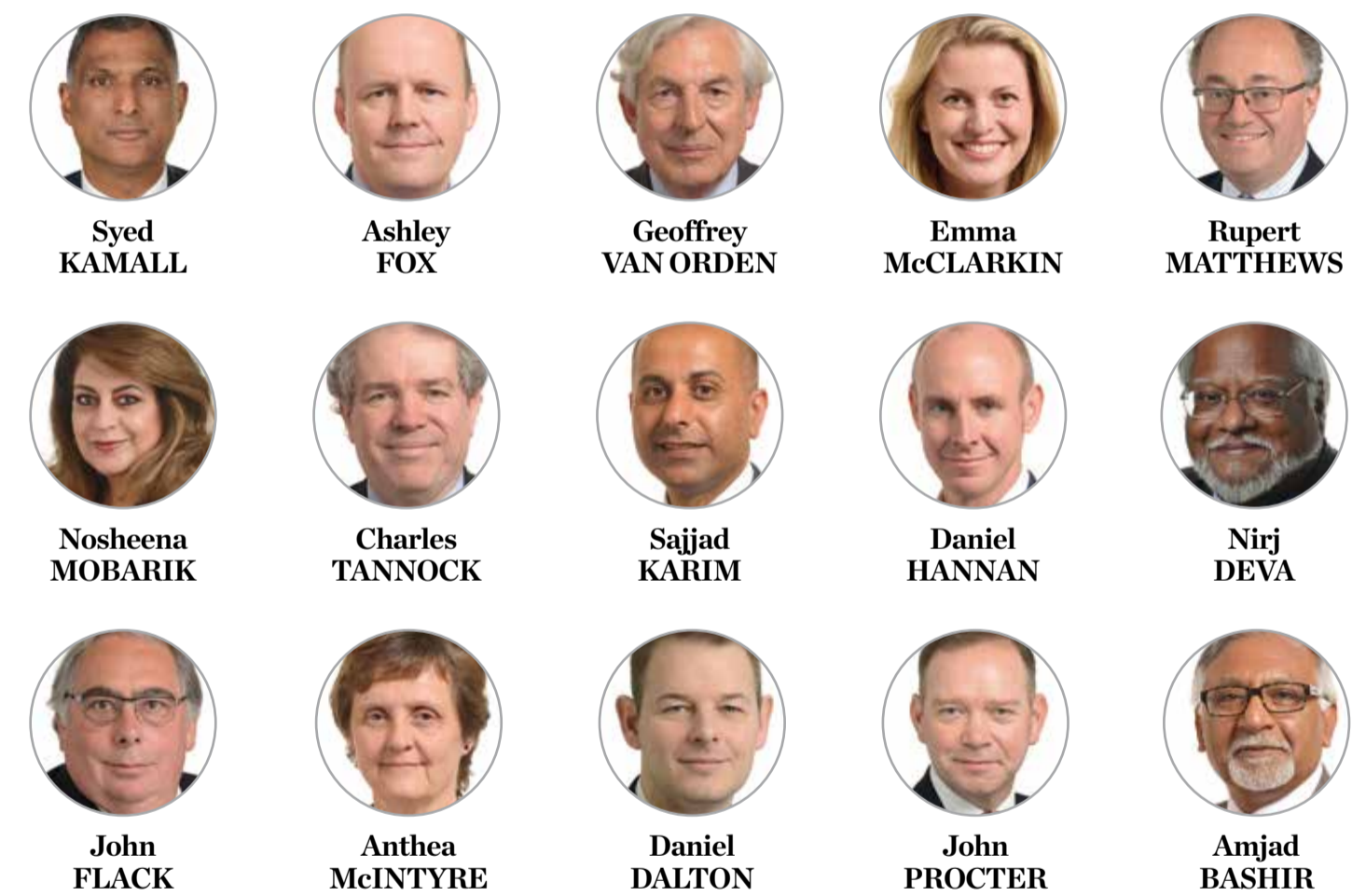
The Conservative Party is the oldest political party in the world. Founded in 1834 by Sir Robert Peel, the party has been one of the two main parties of government ever since. It has been through many changes over the last two centuries, but the core values have remained broadly the same: belief in the integrity of strong institutions, the strength of the marketplace, and the value of individual liberty.

Being so old the party is also a broad church of idea and opinion, with a number of strong internal factions who work with one another: One Nation Conservatives, Traditional Tories, and Classical Libera/Libertarian wing of the party.

The Conservatives are currently the largest party in the United Kingdom. They are the largest party in the House of Commons, House of Lords, Local Government, and the second largest in the Welsh and Scottish Assemblies.

They are the governing party in the UK at the moment, having been brought back into power by David Cameron in 2010. David Cameron was also the Prime Minister, who in 2009, helped to set up the European Conservatives and Reformists movement.

TOP CANDIDATES



Founded in 1905, the Ulster Unionist Party is one of the big three parties in Northern Ireland. They are seen as the moderate face of British Unionism within Northern Ireland and are not as hardline as the Democratic Unionist Party. They take part in the power sharing arrangements as part of the Good Friday Agreement.

They currently have 10 members of the Northern Irish Assembly and a strong presence in local government. They also hold one of the three seats allocated to Northern Ireland in the European Union. Since 1989

they have been represented by Jim Nicholson, who has been an outspoken member of the Agricultural committee, and strong defender of unionist interests in the European Parliament. He will be standing down in 2019.

MANIFESTO

- Reform of the Common Agricultural Policy.
- Reduce the regulatory burden of the EU.
- Support research and innovation in the agricultural sector.

The UUP's lead candidate will be Danny Kennedy, a former member of the Northern Irish assembly who had previously been the Minister for Regional Development, and the Minister for Employment.





THE WHOLE PROJECT MUST BE SENT BACK TO THE DRAWING BOARD

An Interview with Derk Jan Eppink by Eva Vlaardingerbroek

Derk Jan Eppink (DJE) is the lead candidate on Forum for Democracy's list in the upcoming European Elections. DJE is a Dutch journalist, columnist, author, cabinet secretary for European Commissioners Bolkestein (1999-2004) and Kallas (2004 – 2007), a Member of the European Parliament (2009 – 2014) and the recipient of the 2006 Prize of Liberty from the Flemish libertarian think tank Nova Civitas

EVA VLAARDINGERBROEK

You are no stranger to Brussels having worked there as a journalist, in the Commission and as an MEP. Tell our readers about your professional background and political experience and how they have changed you

DERK JAN EPPINK

I have witnessed the whole evolution of the European Union, from the very first elections back in 1979 up until today. The message of the first elections was loud and clear: "the EU is the best thing that could have happened to Europe". Supporting the EU was a condition for being considered a decent human being. At that time, the differences between parties were minor. It took quite a while before the first dissenting opinions materialised. And when dissent did form, the critical voices came from the Left. Especially the Far Left saw the EU as a dangerous capitalistic project – as a cathedral for big multinationals.

With the introduction of the single market, the focus of the project changed and came to centre on the process of harmonisation, which fed the bureaucratic machine like crazy. It installed bureaucratic centralism, which further increased in the 90s due to great optimism after the fall of the Berlin Wall, and of course later the introduction of the euro. The EU was presented as the world power of the future. Commissioner Barroso even described the EU as the new Rome, completely in line with Fukuyama's idea that the end of history had dawned upon us.

Even in my early days in Brussels, when I started out as an intern for the European Commission, I found myself sceptical of the constant hail and praise of the EU, but it was especially when I started working as a cabinet secretary for European Commissioner Frits Bolkestein, that I – and Bolkestein too – started to think: "this is getting out

of hand. This project is like the Tower of Babel, it will just get bigger and bigger". Already then, I knew this would not result in more integration but in disintegration.

EVA VLAARDINGERBROEK

Why and when did you decide to run as a candidate for Forum for Democracy?

DERK JAN EPPINK

In 2017, when Forum for Democracy was elected to Parliament for the first time, I was living in the United States commenting in a journalistic capacity on Trump's election. So the election of Thierry Baudet came as quite a surprise to me at the time. When I started seeing more of Thierry I was engaged to hear all the things I had been thinking – and saying – for years, coming from the mouth of such a young man! To me he really represents a new generation – the Renaissance Generation.

I see a young generation who are not ashamed of their cultural history and who want to protect and defend the core values of our democracy. This type of cultural assertiveness has been lost ever since the Netherlands, and the rest of Western Europe, became occupied with the ideas of the protest generation, the Baby Boomers. I use the word "occupied" because it really describes what the Baby Boomers did: they occupied all institutions, media and universities. The Renaissance Generation is the first generation that has the ability to take a real stand against this occupation. People from my generation lived in what, during the time of the German Democratic Republic, was called *die innere Immigration*. We could express our ideas in the privacy of our own homes, but if you expressed your ideas in public or in writing, like I did as a columnist, people would warn you "not to become right-winged", like it was a sin. We were treated like a relic of history, a leftover of the 19th century.

When I wrote that Trump would win the elections, people treated me as if I had lost my mind, and when he did win, they drowned in tears of disbelief. They still can't seem to accept the fact that they lost. Everything that they now call "populism" is nothing but the revolution of the ordinary man who practises a common sense lifestyle. In America we see Trump, in England Brexit, in France the yellow vests and in Holland Forum for Democracy.

I was tired of working in an environment where I couldn't speak my mind freely, so the moment Thierry approached me to join his party, to join the movement, I knew this was the way forward. I want to help the first generation that is free from the grip of the *soixante-huitards* to strengthen their position.

EVA VLAARDINGERBROEK

You have also recently written a book called *European Realism*. What is the central thesis in the book?

DERK JAN EPPINK

The thesis of the book builds on the idea that I have proclaimed during most of my time in Brussels, namely the idea that the Union has continuously overstepped its boundaries. This has embedded many faults into the European landscape, and the consequences are becoming increasingly visible with every passing day.

The first rupture we have witnessed is of course the division between the North and South with regard to the eurozone. Another is the division between Eastern and Western Europe with regard to immigration; something which is a consequence of a much deeper cultural and political division. Then we have the issue of Brexit, the question of membership for Turkey, and of course the conflicts between France and Italy.

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Everything that they now call “populism” is nothing but the revolution of the ordinary man who practises a common sense lifestyle. In America we see Trump, in England Brexit, in France the yellow vests and in Holland Forum for Democracy.

At this point in time, there is not one single major topic on which a consensus can be found. The common security and foreign policy has not been in the least common in the last decade. The only issue the EU Member States seem to have been able to agree a common position on is the punishment of the State of Israel. In short, the EU model is an ideal that will never succeed, no matter how hard the European elites try to force it upon the Member States.

EVA VLAARDINGERBROEK

How does this book relate to your other books?

DERK JAN EPPINK

In 2004 Bolkestein and I wrote a book called *De Grenzen van Europa (The Limits of Europe)*. It was filled with interventions with prominent MEPs at the time. Quite frankly, the reason we wrote this book was because Bolkestein clashed with the Cabinet quite regularly for simply speaking his mind. "Commissioner, what are you doing?!", people would ask. "There's a problem with the Commission, he just simply says what he thinks!" Bolkestein's direct approach

led to all sorts of conflicts, so frankly this book, filled with interviews with prominent MEPs, was a sort of token of reconciliation; a way to get back into the Parliament's good books.

The book itself deals with both the physical borders of the EU and the boundaries that should be placed upon the EU's competences. The thesis was that the competences of the EU had extended too far.

For the EU, the euro was meant to be a means to force European unity. Which it actually never did. Instead it resulted in division. Instead of learning from the financial crisis, the response of the EU was again to try and force more integration. This type of bureaucratic centralism – which was actually the central principle of the Soviet Union – uses every crisis to impose a top-down intervention process; in this case by calling for a European government, a European state, European taxation and even a European army.

EVA VLAARDINGERBROEK

What should ideally be dealt with on a European level? And what should the EU do to get there?



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The Socialists will also suffer a big loss, which will make them irritable and less likely to want to collaborate.

EVA VLAARDINGERBROEK

What are your plans for after the elections?

DERK JAN EPPINK

The big problem with the European Parliament is that it has no real opposition. Václav Klaus once said: a parliament without opposition is a parliament without liberty. Our goal is to form a real opposition after the upcoming elections. These elections are particularly important because now, for the first time, finally, we have an actual chance to really make a change. We want to shift the power ratio and pull the brakes where needed. The time of endless compromise is over and this time we actually see a possibility to work together with Eurosceptic voices from both the Left and the Right.

We in the ECR are in a special position where we can try to coordinate votes with people on the Left who would be hesitant to work together with parties such as Le Pen's Rassemblement National. We need to join forces to finally get things done; to take a real stand against the Liberal group and the EPP. Yes, people like Guy Verhofstadt and Sophie in 't Veld [Editor's note: leader of the Democrats 66 in the European Parliament] are the true federal fundamentalists. The other fundamentalists in the Parliament are of course the Greens, who have only one agenda: the climate.

“

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EVA VLAARDINGERBROEK

What are your thoughts on the climate and how the Left have instrumentalised it?

DERK JAN EPPINK

The climate is a new religion, with Greta Thunberg as the high priestess. The fight that the EU has started against "fake news" is just a way to get control over the internet, where critical views on the EU are being spread on a daily basis. It is comparable to what happened in the United States after Trump's election, when the Democrats claimed that the only reason he could have won was through Russian tampering. This gives them a legitimacy to regulate platforms like Twitter and to get rid of unwanted opinions.

The European Left has completely adopted this narrative and presented Russia as our common enemy, which also just happens to legitimise the idea of a European army. Of course, the Russians are provocative from time to time, and they are not free of blame in bullying their neighbours – in particular the Baltic states – but the extent to which the European Left has propagated the story of Russian intervention is completely out of proportion. Most disinformation and fake news that we do find from Russian sources is about Ukraine and the Crimea, not about Europe.

The biggest spreaders of fake news in Europe are our own mainstream media, not the Russians. The idea behind the European incentive to tackle "fake news" is their way to silence and censor unwanted opinions that are spread through social media.

DERK JAN EPPINK

Actually, we shouldn't overestimate the number of people who are truly still calling for an ever-closer-union. People like Verhofstadt are loud, but they don't form a majority. Of course, we will find those voices in the Brussels bureaucracy and in the European Parliament, as well as in parties like the Greens. But the call for an ever closer union are dying down, simply because it will be impossible to form a majority with this message.

I think the EPP will suffer a big loss, since the Christian Democratic parties are losing support all over Europe. They also have the issue of the Hungarians, who they have banished to the penalty box, and many parties in the EPP are calling for them to be removed from the group permanently. This will make it very difficult for the EPP to keep its position of power.

The Socialists will also suffer a big loss, which will make them irritable and less likely to want to collaborate. The Liberals, led by people like Macron and Verhofstadt, will overplay their cards, calling for an army and more power to Europe. This will pose some major issues when it comes to the formation of a majority coalition. The appointment of a President of the European Commission will therefore be an extremely difficult task. It would be no surprise to me if the first candidate that the Council presents is immediately rejected.

EVA VLAARDINGERBROEK

As an ex-journalist, what are your thoughts on European plans to counter fake news?

DERK JAN EPPINK

The mainstream media is completely in the hands of the European structures. In Brussels, critical media sources are hardly to be found. The fight that the EU has started against "fake news" is just a way to get control over the internet, where critical views on the EU are being spread on a daily basis. It is comparable to what happened in the United States after Trump's election, when the Democrats claimed that the only reason he could have won was through Russian tampering. This gives them a legitimacy to regulate platforms like Twitter and to get rid of unwanted opinions.

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EVA VLAARDINGERBROEK

How do you see the growing influence of identity politics in Europe? Are we still allowed to be proud of our national history?

DERK JAN EPPINK

The basis of Europe, historically speaking, is our nation states. Europe's landscape is incredibly diverse and the source of immense cultural richness. These countries are perfectly able to work together, not just when forced to in a top-down manner. Every attempt to unify Europe in a fast and aggressive manner – be it by Napoleon, the Germans during World War II or the EU – has always failed. The cultural diversity of the European nation states is too big to be placed in a straitjacket, and attempts to constrain diversity are not desirable. We should embrace and celebrate European diversity, all the different languages and cultures. It is exactly this diversity that makes us European.

EVA VLAARDINGERBROEK

So, you are a true European?

DERK JAN EPPINK

Well yes, I even have an intercultural marriage! I have always been extremely fascinated by different cultures and languages. I've been to almost all European countries. The only country I haven't seen yet is Romania. ■



Jan Zahradil CAMPAIGN DIARY Part VI.

Prague, Latvia, Maastricht debate



EVENTS

Press conference in Prague



On the road to Riga



The Spitzenkandidat debate in Maastricht



It is only natural that one of the stops of Jan Zahradil's Retune the EU campaign tour was in his home town Prague. On 24th April he spoke to journalists and supporters in the Prague Hard Rock Cafe where he presented his 6 main priorities towards less centralisation and flexible EU integration: The Great Review, Flexible integration, Security for citizens, EU as global leader in free trade, a multi-currency EU and More power for national parliaments.

ACRE lead candidate Jan Zahradil visited Riga, Latvia as part of his Retune the EU tour on 25th - 26th April. He delivered a key note speech at the ACRE Riga Meeting 2019 organised together with ACRE member party, The National Alliance, and discussed foreign policy with the Chairman of the Foreign Affairs Committee of the Latvian Parliament Rihards Kols.

Jan Zahradil also met the Agriculture Minister Kaspars Gerhards with whom he spoke about the Common Agriculture Policy and the issues of underfunded farmers Latvia is dealing with. With Ināra Mūrniece, Speaker of the Latvian Saeima they agreed that Central and Eastern Europe countries together with Baltic States must be more listened to in the EU because they bring to the table a unique historical experience and a different perspective.

The first big Spitzenkandidat debate of all lead candidates except EPP's Manfred Weber took place in the city of Maastricht on Monday 30th April. Organised by the University of Maastricht, the debate was moderated by Politico Europe's Ryan Heath and Rianne Letschert, rector of Maastricht University, and focused on 3 main themes: Digital Europe, Future of Europe, and Sustainable Europe.

ACRE lead candidate Jan Zahradil was the only speaker campaigning for a real EU reform against further centralisation and politicisation of the Commission.

"My country joined the EU 15 years ago together with 9 others. But even after these 15 years we are still different and we need to respect that. We need to find a new balance between EU solutions and national solutions. I call this a flexible Europe and I believe it is the only way forward out of the current deadlock," said Jan Zahradil in his final pitch. The debate can be watched on Politico Europe YouTube channel.

The new *Retune the EU!* video is out!
You can watch it on the ACRE website:
acreurope.eu/janzahradil



TWEETS

2:17 AM - 8 May 2019
Unfortunately, #SibiuSummit is turning into one more eurofederalist "one size fits all" show. @EPP, @PES_PSE, @ALDEParty not ready to change. Instead of their centralized eurostate, time to pursue scaled-back, flexible, slimmer #EU. #RetuneTheEU with @ACREurope in #EP elections!

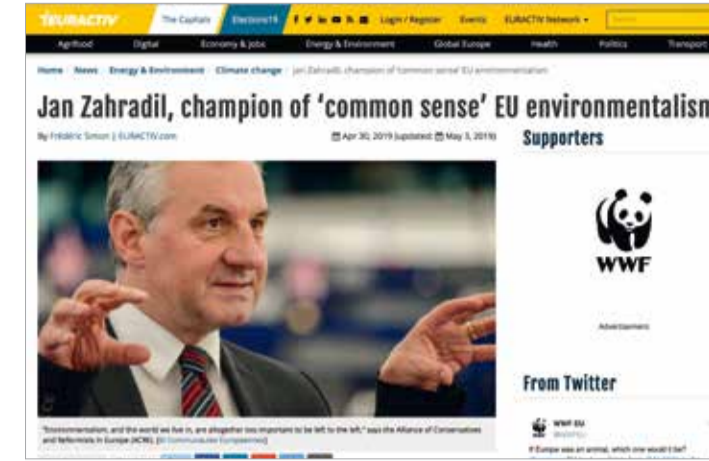
2:41 AM - 3 May 2019
I see @EUCouncil as my partner, not as "common enemy" as all other "spitzenkandidaten". Their attitude is frightening - do they continue power struggle among #EU institutions? Any comment from @donaldtusk? @ACREurope #RetuneTheEU

12:07 AM - 1 May 2019
#OnThisDay 15 years ago 10 countries mainly from Central & Eastern Europe joined the EU. "Sadly, 15 years later we're still not considered equal partners. #EU needs to work for all its Member States, not just the biggest two." #RetuneTheEU

6:40 AM - 27 Apr 2019
On behalf of @ACREurope I would like to wish our partner party @vox_es and its president @Santi_ABASCAL a great success in the general elections this Sunday in Spain. Good luck!



IN THE NEWS



MUSIC WHAT I AM LISTENING TO RIGHT NOW



Kiss
Detroit Rock City (Rocks Vegas)



Carole King
Hard Rock Cafe

ZAHRABEER

This beer is for all politicians who once used to have a proper job.



About ACRE's Campaigns' Consultant, Richard Murphy

Richard Murphy is ACRE's official Campaigns' Consultant. Richard is Managing Director of Communication Strategy & Management Ltd (CSM), a political campaign consulting firm based in the UK. CSM works alongside Members of Parliament, Members of the European Parliament and candidates delivering professional advice on the construction and management of their communication strategies. With almost thirty years' experience of working with the UK Conservative Party, Richard has campaigned directly with seven party leaders including the incomparable Margaret Thatcher. He has a wealth of experience and expertise in structuring and managing election campaigns at European, Parliamentary and Local Government levels. Richard specialises in grassroots

capacity building and GOTV. He also trains party activists nationally, and internationally, in "on the ground" field campaigning techniques. Richard has trained party political activists in countries such as Ukraine, Moldova, Bulgaria, Trinidad & Tobago, Slovenia, Bosnia Herzegovina, Kazakhstan, Armenia, Serbia and Montenegro. A member of the Institute of Leadership & Management, Richard is also a former Board Member of both the International Association of Political Consultants and the European Association of Political Consultants.

In each edition of *The Conservative*, Richard writes a short piece on a particular aspect of campaigning. He has penned his latest article below. If you wish to contact Richard, please email info@csmlimited.com.

The iceberg is straight ahead, the band is still playing, the ship is starting to slip beneath the waves - and you need to be fully turbo charging your grassroots team

Many of you reading this may be doing so after key elections have concluded. Others may still have elections to face in the very near future. Either way, let's take a brief moment to contemplate the future.

For readers in most countries, European or otherwise, political change is likely to be coming. The political elite, the establishment, within many nations may not yet realise it but - *be in no doubt* - political life in many places is soon to alter forever. Things are never going to be the same again. Some of our ruling classes may still be in denial, they may still be dismissive and continue to believe in, what many would see as, their arrogant self-serving bubble of self-importance. But several are in for a very, very rude awakening. Currently, numerous of our governing elites give the impression of imitating the band on the deck of the Titanic as the liner sails full steam ahead, into the huge waiting iceberg ahead. Equally, some of the great and the good seem so blissfully unaware of their impending peril that they even appear to be re-arranging the deck chairs, for equally oblivious fair-weather co-passengers, to fleetingly indulge in the pleasures of the palpably ill-fated band.

The trouble is that the ship is actually already lethally holed and is gently starting to glide ever so quietly beneath the waves. Nobody is yet abandoning ship, the lifeboats (if they are in evidence at all) are still firmly fixed in place, and the champagne and oysters are still being served with carefree abandonment to those who believe they have an inalienable God given right to rule.

Someone once said that it was time to "drain the swamp". Well, swamp or no swamp, the inescapable but unspoken fact is that many countries' politicians continue to sit in their soundproof bunkers unwilling to take even a peak over the trench lines at what is actually happening 'outside'. They will only truly understand the magnitude of the disenchantment from their peoples, when the 'swamp drainers' have finally kicked over the final traces of, what some regard as, the elite's long time industrial scale incompetence and duplicity. Only when we are rid of these people's vanity, and their contempt for anyone who doesn't agree with them, can we truly start again. There is an undemocratic method, an undemocratic system, and an undemocratic vision of government whose time has come and gone.

That's the good news. The 'old order' is, as I say, majestically oblivious to their unescapable doom but is actually, unknowingly, clinging on to the cliff edge by their fingertips. At this point I am transported back in time to 1964 and that magnificent film *Zulu* starring the inimitable Jack Hawkins, playing the

Rev. Witt, who memorably screams out in frustration "Don't you realise? Can't you see?" On that occasion, of course, he was only partly correct in his predictions. Some of those present survived - miraculously. *But it most certainly wasn't pretty.*

But back to 2019. Now is the time for you to prepare to finish the job off and take control of your country's destiny. You *can* do it and you *must* do it for the sake of your respective electorates. Many politicians have forgotten that they are the servants of the people - *not the other way around*. People deserve better. People deserve to be heard. People deserve to be listened to and to see their will being democratically enacted by those they elect to serve them.



Richard Murphy
Managing Director of Communication Strategy and Management (CSM),
ACRE's Campaigns' Consultant
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You have to now present a new style, a new type of politics. Out with the old and in with the new. Everything, *everything*, needs to be viewed via a new prism. And, crucially, do not allow yourself to be distressed by the establishment labelling you 'populist'. The left, the liberals and so-called the social democrats have hijacked the word populist. They make it out to be far-right, to be extremist, to be racist. In most cases this is sheer and unadulterated nonsense. It doesn't have to be any of those things. The reality is that this is just yet more Project Fear from politicians who would never be likely to understand, or have empathy, with the real meaning of populism. And so, next time you hear a politician race to demonise the word populism or denigrate and dehumanise someone they brand as populist - Google the word. In the UK, different search engines describe the word 'populism' as:

"Populism is a political philosophy supporting the rights and power of the people in their struggle against a privileged elite."

"Support for the concerns of ordinary people."

"It is clear that your populism identifies with the folks on the bottom of the ladder."

Consequently, it seems to me that all populism means is politicians, candidates and political parties articulating

the views of a majority group. The word appears to entail representing those who feel left behind, or those who believe that they no longer have a voice in society. And those definitions are correct, why exactly is populism regarded by the liberals as such a dreadful thing? After all, is it so very horrendous for politicians to listen to the will of the people and then promise to campaign for those viewpoints? I appreciate that it would most likely be a radical change to what we have all used to, in many of our respective countries, but it doesn't make it intrinsically wrong to listen to one's electorate does it? I may be old fashioned but is that not democracy?

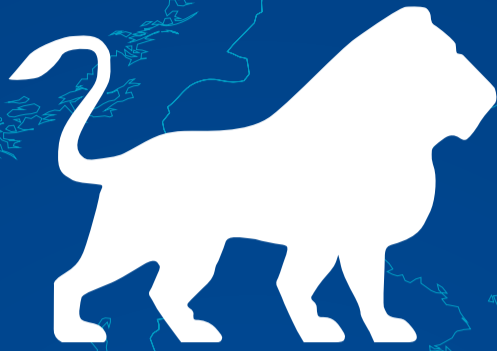
Think about it... And whilst you are thinking about it, take the opportunity to re-invigorate your emphasis on building your grassroots people's movement. And, if you think that I personally can help to provide some guidance or advice in this important venture, please do get in touch. I would be thrilled to help, if I can.

But whether we team up together, or not, please don't overlook the fact that there is almost certainly a groundswell of public opinion on your side, just waiting to be asked to help. So, get out there now and recruit new members. Sign up new volunteer canvassers, surveyors and literature deliverers. Ask people to assist you with regular street stalls and action days. There is masses to be achieved and like will always attract like. Your movement will grow and grow exponentially. And with the mass of the people on your side, in the long run, you cannot fail in your objectives. The people in many scenarios have too often been left, ignored, for too long. Many are angry and disillusioned. Many want to take action but simply don't know how. To paraphrase someone rather famous for utilising every resource possible - give the people the tools, and they will help you finish the job.

Trust me, wherever you are, you can make these failed politicians listen. You really can. Just remember those, never more poignant, words from the great Bob Dylan.

Come senators, congressmen
Please heed the call
Don't stand in the doorway
Don't block up the hall
For he that gets hurt
Will be he who has stalled
There's a battle outside
And it is ragin'.
It'll soon shake your windows
And rattle your walls
For the times they are a-changin'.

Good luck to you all and I look forward to seeing many of you on the other side, in a brave new world, where the people's views are no longer discounted and dismissed but actually acted upon. ■



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