



The Extreme and Far Right in Europe

Lisa Bjurwald

About the author

Lisa Bjurwald is a freelance journalist and author. Her reportage on the Swiss ban on minarets (Expo no 4/09) has been awarded the European Parliament journalist prize 2010 in the Swedish press category. This spring she will release the book *Europe's Shame: Racists on Advance* (Nature & Culture). She is member of the editorial board of the anti-racist magazine *Expo* and has previously worked as editorial writer for the Swedish dailies *Dagens Nyheter* and *Svenska Dagbladet*.

Contents

About the author	2
Contents	3
Foreword.....	1
Summary.....	3
1 Introduction.....	9
2 A New PR-Strategy.....	10
3 The Militant Branch.....	13
4 Racist Parties in a Position of Power	15
5 The Hatred Against Muslims	19
6 Roma: A People Persecuted	22
7 The New Anti-Semitism.....	26
8 Strategies Against the Extreme Right.....	28

Foreword

Warnings from Europe

There is a belief that Sweden is uniquely vaccinated against xenophobic parties, that if such a party were to enter the Parliament it would be short-lived and/or adapt. Sadly this runs counter to experience from those countries in Europe where this type of extremism has entered parliament. Rather, they have locked in at a gradually higher level, driven other parties along with their rhetoric, with an increasingly severe discourse and methods, threats and hate campaigns. Slogans and similes that have not been heard since the 1930's appear on posters and in election speeches. In particular Muslims and Romanies have more frequently been subject to physical threats.

The extremists have also created a reoccurring chaos in the political system as other parties have had difficulty in establishing stable majorities and have oscillated between cooperation with extremists, which often collapses after a short period of time, and rejection.

It is therefore important to review the so-called extreme right (which often is just as much left populist as right) in other European countries. What comes to light in this exposition by Lisa Bjurwald is how many extremist parties under the last decade have, just like the Sweden Democrats, polished their exterior, and thrown out the skinheads and criminals. The aim is to gain power and influence.

The xenophobic parties have become more capable, much better organized and media-trained. Whereas the old generation of extremists such as the French Pierre Poujade, the Danish Mogens Glistrup, and Bert Karlsson and Ian Wachtmeiser in Sweden were ruthless populists that were ready to attack immigration in order to win short-term victories, the new generation from Jean-Marie Le Pen to Pia Kjaersgaard is much more coherent and calculating. However, as this exposition shows their policies are much the same and in some cases even more xenophobic than before the change of image.

In the European Union, which was built on the common memory of the Holocaust and the Second World War as its fundament, several extreme right parties are represented in parliament. Several initiatives have been

made by Islamophobes across Europe to collectively work out strategies against what they see as the Islamization of Europe, in a way that brings up strong memories from the conspiracy theories of a Jewish usurpation of power. Leaders at the highest political level from several European countries meet to solve the “Roma question”. At the same time Romanies are mass evicted in contradiction to EU laws, they are subject to mistreatment, arson, shootings resulting in death, and lack the same rights as other citizens in many countries.

To approach these parties’ policies (“triangulation” in political lingo) has in every European case led to legitimizing the position and role of the extremists. Those who have approached their anti-immigration rhetoric have won shortsighted gains, but have soon lost their support and the end result has been a strengthening of the extremist parties. The only counter-medicine seems to be establishing a strong and coherent counter-image to that of the xenophobic parties. Luckily this counter-image has support in facts and economic reality.

Our hope is now to collect comments from our colleagues at think tanks and research institutes across Europe in order to collectively discuss the further development, but we have chosen to publish this report already.

Martin Ådahl
CEO FORES

Summary

Organized racism, often misleadingly from an ideological perspective called the extreme right, is gaining parliamentary power all across Europe. Since the beginning of the 1980's, the parties have gone through a superficial image transformation, while they have kept their racist and in many cases Nazi roots. Their new, more orderly, image has given them increased respect by media as well as other parties and they have been able to march into both the European parliament and national parliaments.

Many of the racist parties have also been able to unite in their hatred against Muslims. Furthermore, as they have gained parliamentary successes, the established parties have adopted their Islamophobic rhetoric, and discrimination of Muslims has become part of the political climate.

This study provides an overview of the organized racism in Europe. In the final part, strategies to combat xenophobic and racist parties are presented.

The Militant Branch

Militant nationalists constitute an urgent threat to democracy, especially in Russia and Hungary. The Russian skinhead movement consists of approximately 70 000 people and in 2009 at least 71 people were killed in racist attacks.

Jobbik, the anti-Semite and anti-Ziganist party that made great gains in this year's election in Hungary, has a paramilitary branch, the Hungarian Guards (Magyar Gárda). This neo-fascist movement has been banned, but has since reformed into a "cultural society". They find their inspiration in the Arrow Cross Party –a Hungarian movement from the Nazi era, and especially the youth has been drawn to their nationalist propaganda.

Racist Parties in a Position of Power

At present (September 2010), two nationalist parties in Europe are part of their respective government: the Swiss People's Party and Lega Nord in Italy. In Denmark, the Danish People's Party is operating as a support party to the government coalition. Xenophobic parties are represented in about half of the national parliaments of Europe, as well as in Switzerland and

Norway. In the Netherlands, the Freedom Party led by Geert Wilders might become part of a government coalition.

In 1999 when the Austrian party FPÖ entered the national parliament, the EU responded with a diplomatic boycott. Now, a decade later, Europe has become used to having racist parties within the parliamentary system. A number of parties on the extreme right are represented in the European Parliament. 40 out of the 736 MEP's can be classified as extreme right or xenophobic. Moreover, there has been a shift in the kind of parties represented, the trend being towards more extremism.

For example, Lega Nord, the Italian party part of the government coalition, reacted on the race riots in Italy in the beginning of this year, when African guest workers were assaulted and shot at, by saying that Italy has been too slack against illegal immigrants.

Jobbik received 15 % of the votes in the election to the European parliament and 16,7 percent in the Hungarian election. In the Netherlands, Geert Wilders, who at present stands prosecuted with charges of hate speech after amongst other things having compared the Quran with Hitler's Mien Kampf, received 17 percent of the votes, making his party the second biggest. For the first time even Britain is represented by xenophobes in the European parliament, by the British National Party (BNP). In the French regional elections, Front National managed to do a comeback and received over 9 percent of the votes.

Jobbik has initiated cooperation between several of the racist parties in Europe. In October 2009, a new extreme right alliance was formed in Budapest, The Alliance of European National Movements (AENM). The BNP and the Sweden Democrats are some of its members.

In Sweden, the Sweden Democrats, a party with its roots in neo-Nazism and with several members still having affiliations with Nazi movements, has a substantial possibility of entering the parliament in the election in September.

The Hatred Against Muslims

Since the 9/11 terror attacks in 2001 and the following attacks in Europe, Islamphobia has really established itself in Europe. A ban against minarets has been past in Switzerland and the parliamentary process of banning the

full cover veil in public spaces has come real far in both Belgium and France.

According to a report from the EU bureau on fundamental rights (FRA), one in three Muslims has experienced discrimination. In another report, from the Open Society Institute, based on interviews with Muslims in eleven cities in seven European countries, 50 percent of the respondents said they had experienced discrimination, compared to 9 percent of the non-Muslim respondents.

The term Islamization has become widespread in Europe. The idea that a Muslim overtaking of power constitutes a threat strongly resembles Jews' alleged aspiration of global power. A number of anti-Muslim organizations have been founded, amongst others Stop Islamization of Denmark (SIAD), a Danish organization that now has national branches all over Europe. In Mars this year, hundreds of Islamophobs came together in Germany in order to discuss anti-Muslim strategies. This was only one example of meetings and campaigns organized by racists and politicians. The international secretary of the Sweden Democrats was one of the participants in Germany.

Roma: the Persecuted People

Particularly in Eastern- and Central Europe as well as Italy the Romanies are subject to shocking levels of violence, persecution and discrimination. It includes shootings and arson against adults as well as children. Thousands of Roma families flee to Canada and the US in order to seek asylum.

Approximately ten to twelve million Romanies live in Europe. Their situation is complex and it is well known that their social exclusion is to a certain degree a result of choice. As they have been subject to persecution during several centuries, the trust in government protection from e.g. the police is extremely low among the Roma minority – 65-100 percent have stated that they lack trust in the judicial system and acts of prosecution according to the first EU-wide study. A reason for this is the fact that the police in Eastern- and Central Europe have repeatedly refused to intervene in cases of mistreatment and arson. In other words Romanies may be forced to isolate themselves for reasons of safety.

Public authorities in several EU-countries have with force thrown out Roma families and have then demolished their camps, in open contradiction against human rights legislation. In Romania certain Roma families have been forced to live in tin sheds next to sewerage plants, in Kosovo others have been placed in camps with high concentrations of lead.

Much attention has been drawn by the mass expulsions of Romanies, in particular in France, during the late summer. Several thousands have been expelled, without individual examinations, and contradict the rules of free movement within the EU. Even Sweden has expelled Romanies that have survived on begging, despite this not being legal.

Romanies lack rights that other citizens enjoy in several EU member states. In Bosnia, they are forbidden from running for parliament or the presidency. In France they have to be registered in a municipality for at least three years in order to vote, whereas it six months suffices for all other French citizens.

Anti-ziganism is widespread in Europe. Parties such as the Hungarian Jobbik, Bulgarian Ataka and Slovak National Party see Romanies as subordinate to animals. In Hungary and the Czech Republic mistreatments and murder is happening in a way that could be seen as a pretrial to a pogrom.

The New Anti-Semitism

Against all odds, Islamists, persons from the extreme right, Holocaust-deniers and left activists have united in their anti-Semitism. Within the modern anti-Semitism, the same old stereotype of the bloodthirsty, greedy Jew is used, with the only difference that the rhetoric has changed. "Sionists" and "Sionism" are used as synonyms with Jews and an imagined Jewish influence, as well as the state of Israel is used as a code word for Judaism. Because of this, Nazis can march outside of synagogues in central Stockholm and cry "Israel out of Sweden", despite there being no doubt which minority they are addressing.

Anti-Semitism in the southern Swedish city of Malmö has stirred up much debate, even internationally. Many Jews have felt forced to leave the city. In several countries Anti-Semitist parties have won

popularity and even gains in parliament. In addition to Hungarian Jobbik one can even mention FPÖ's presidential candidate Barbara Rosenkranz who in the Australian presidential election became the only incumbent president's only contestant, winning 15 percent of the vote, despite her husband, from whom she has not distanced herself politically, is a leading profile within the country's radical nationalist movement.

Strategies Against the Extreme Right

European countries have tried different strategies in order to counteract the organized racism, but many parties have seemingly stood perplexed by the growing right extremist parties. Neither isolation nor active opposition has seemed to work, which the German Bertelsmann Foundation also discovered in their study and comparison of strategies against the extreme right in eleven European countries. According to them, there is no universal solution, but a few suggestions of action can be made.

The suggestions include showing political responsibility through the establishment of alliances against racism and not allowing the extremists to dictate the debate agenda. Furthermore the political parties need to increase their consciousness of hate crime. Finally, the media play a key role in investigating and exposing the xenophobe's agenda.

Several researchers agree that conventional politicians have to take the extreme right seriously and not consider them solely as a group of fanatics. In concluding, there are also strategies that have worked well and that others should heed: among these is a popular opposition. A strong anti-racist popular movement is not only a healthy sign, but also a clear sign to the electorate as well as the extreme right that racist opinions are not welcome in civilized and diversified societies.

A much less successful strategy is playing along in those areas that the extreme right is trying to make use of for their ideological aims. In several countries, such as Norway and Denmark, such a strategy has led to a very unpleasant fixation on Islam and Muslims. The xenophobic parties have been allowed to set the agenda. Now their support has grown and in Denmark the Government is dependent on parliamentary support from the Danish People's Party.

Even in other countries, such as Italy, where racist parties have been given political influence and have been met by embrace, racism has spread quickly and been normalized. This is not a risk that European countries should take.

1 Introduction

The purpose of this paper is to give an overview of the organized racism in present-day Europe, with a focus on the EU countries. The term organized racism is used to describe populist parties with xenophobic ideas, as well as the groups and parties often (and rather misleadingly) termed the extreme right. The term is not ideal, as the extreme right is often more "left" – like the National *Socialists* of Hitler Germany – than "right", as in conservative or liberal conservative. In fact, the anti-fascist left spearheading the fight against the extreme right has quite a lot in common with its sworn enemy. The two sides both take a critical stance on, for example, the European Union, capitalism, free trade and peace-keeping operations abroad.

At the same time, the hatred against Muslims within many of the xenophobic and anti-immigrant parties has strengthened their (mostly superficial) support for the state of Israel and the Jewish population of Europe. Today, these parties can hold manifestations on Holocaust Remembrance Day, or even pay a solemn visit to Auschwitz. This has triggered reactions of disgust within the anti-Semitic extreme right, who still regard the Jews as their number one enemy. In some corners, the hatred against Jews is so strong that extreme right activists will even consider collaborating with radical Muslims; see [The new anti-Semitism](#) for more on this development.

The roots of today's xenophobic parties and/or their leadership can often be traced to the extreme right movement. Some have co-operated in the past, or still unofficially do so, with more extreme elements. This, in combination with a shared agenda and identical arguments driven by racism and nationalism, means that the racists covered in this paper will be sorted under the same heading – whether they are wearing boots or suits.

2 A New PR-Strategy

The skinhead movement of the late 1970's and the early 1980's was a highly marginalized, male-dominated movement, tainted by alcohol abuse and a penchant for street fights. Yet a major part of the extreme right would evolve out of the skinhead scene. The perceived threat of increased immigration led to a resurgence of racist ideas that had been taboo since the end of the Second World War. A polarizing "us and them" worldview managed to sway at least a few percent of the voters.

Soon, in the 1980's and 1990's, the racist populists – many with a background in neo-Nazi groups, a handful with less soiled backgrounds – entered the electoral arena. Some, like Austria's Freedom Party under Jorg Haider and Front National under Jean-Marie Le Pen, went on to gain political influence. Others, such as the Sweden Democrats, were growing quietly.

The 1990's was also marked by division within the new parties. Suddenly, they were at a crossroads. The choice: to remain faithful to their radical ideology or sell out – or aim for the real power, depending on whom you asked. Today's nationalist European parties are filled with those who chose paths with their brains, while their hearts still pounded for the white power ideology. This became evident in, for example, the radio show Kaliber on the Swedish Radio, which, using hidden cameras, revealed how leading people within the SD sang along with modern white power music as well as national socialist fight songs.

At the dawn of the 21st century, the 9/11 bombings in the U.S. and the later terrorist acts on European soil triggered an Islamophobia that became the unifying factor for the parliamentarian far right. Muslims and the alleged "islamization" of Europe appeared as the primary target. The by now suit-clad racists cleared out at least the most visible anti-Semitism and replaced it with the more sellable Islamophobia. A strong hatred of Jews is still a central part of the ideology for some nationalist parties, especially those who portray the United States as the devil and do not hesitate to co-operate with Islamists. But it comes as no surprise that Islamophobic parties are enjoying greater electoral success in today's Europe than anti-Semitic ones.

The image make-over is an important factor to take into account when

discussing the evolution of today's extreme right and how to tackle the democratic challenge. First of all, we must acknowledge that the creation of a new, polished façade has been a successful strategy. In Denmark, the government has become dependent on the xenophobic Danish People's Party (DF), allowing them to influence the political climate for the worse. The Muslim minority in particular has become the target of government-sanctioned Islamophobia. And the trend is in no way declining; in the spring of 2010, the government and the DF agreed on a host of new restrictions for immigrants. Not unexpectedly, many likeminded European parties dream of repeating this Danish success story.

Another example of the success of this strategy is the way racists are portrayed in the European media. In Britain and Germany, large racist parties are consistently described as "fascists", "extreme right" or "neo-Nazis". Those labels clearly signal that the parties in question stand for radical and in the British and German societies unacceptable views. In other European countries, the media is more careful. It is almost considered worse to label someone a racist than to actually be one. Thus, milder terms such as "populist", or the politically misrepresentative "ultra right", are being used.

That media in Germany and the UK take such a clear stand against the extreme right is probably related to their involvement in WWII. But in the rest of Europe, we can observe a clear connection between political influence and/or an image make-over, and the degree of respect the parties are treated with. This is not necessarily the way it ought to be.

The stance can be compared to the attitude towards Palestinian Hamas. After their election victory in 2006, they are rarely described as the (from a security policy perspective) correct term "terrorist organization" – despite the fact that their terrorist activities haven't ceased.

In the same way, the racist groups maintain their abhorrent views, albeit in a glossier package. Just how shallow the change really is can easily be verified. Keeping the same leadership, the same program (with offensive words removed or modified) and the same organizational structure after a so-called modernization is more common than not.

The racist groups and parties have also learned to use democracy for their own cause. Referendums can become a tool for oppressing minorities (more on this under The hatred against Muslims). Through ambitious campaigns and manifestations for freedom of speech, the extreme right is increasingly portraying themselves as the true defenders of democracy.

An increased focus on family issues and family activities is an important component of the movement's new strategy. White power concerts, paramilitary training and violent demonstrations are all still there. But they are supplemented with family days, special women's organizations and a stronger stance on classic conservative (and National Socialist) issues such as nativity. By doing this, they manage to reach the voters who were previously put off by the militant rhetoric. That an increasing number of women are joining the extreme right ranks has not just led to a softer image, but to the creation of entire extreme right families, where both parents are active on the scene.

During the course of the transformation from aggressive skinheads to suited politicians, popular resistance against racism has weakened. The prominent anti-racist manifestations of the 1980's and 1990's, where top politicians queued up to be seen, are rare in today's Europe. This is further verified by data from the University of Gothenburg showing people's attitudes toward joining anti-racist organization. During the past ten years, the share stating willingness to do so has decreased.¹

¹ Demker, M. (2008), 'Långsamma förskjutningar inom stabila ramar', i Holmberg, S. och Weibull, L. (red.) *Skilda världar*, SOM bokserien nr. 44

3 The Militant Branch

A large number of extreme right groups have purposely positioned themselves outside the democratic system and have no desire to be accepted by mainstream society. Militant groups who despise democracy and wish to bring down (or at least interfere with) the system in a violent manner, exist in practically every European country. The groups have low membership figures and it is not unusual for their activists to have been convicted for violent crimes such as assault or murder. They can co-operate with, or constitute a national branch of, international Nazi networks such as Combat18 or Blood & Honour.

In Hungary and Russia, the situation is rather different from the rest of Europe. There, the militant nationalism is a threat against democracy. About 70 000 activists are thought to make up the Russian skinhead movement. In 2009, 71 people were murdered and 333 injured in racist attacks, according to the Russian human rights NGO Sova Center. Despite the shocking figures, this is actually the first demise to be observed in six years. But different kinds of white power-related vandalism increased during 2009.

In Hungary, the anti-Semitic and anti-Roma party Jobbik, founded in 2003, has managed to gain considerable success within a short period of time. In the parliamentary elections in 2010, the party obtained 16,7 percent of the votes, giving them 47 seats. The party even has a paramilitary wing, the Hungarian Guard, which is strongly reminiscent on the Arrow Cross Party of the 1940's (more on this under Roma: A people persecuted).

The so-called free nationalists are a new phenomenon. They have copied the network-based structure of the autonomous left and gathered in smaller, independent groupings, often based on city or region. In other words, they do not belong to an official mother organization or an extreme right youth association. Interestingly enough, Europe has also seen the advent of so called autonomous nationalists, a sort of anarchist Nazis. At demonstrations, it is almost impossible to tell them apart from the autonomous left they proclaim to despise, as both sides dress identically in anarchist inspired clothing – even down to their keffiyehs.

Even if these anti-democratic groups do not constitute a threat at the

election booths, they are a very real threat to their enemies. These include persons of other ethnic backgrounds, homosexuals, police officers, the handicapped, judges, politicians, journalists and anti-fascist activists. The threat can manifest itself in murders or physical attacks, such as the stabbing of a police chief in German Passau in 2008, an act of attempted murder carried out "with greetings from the national resistance". It can make working life difficult for reporters; according to Britain's National Union of Journalists, their members have received death threats in connection with their coverage of the anti-Muslim hooligans of the English Defence League². And it can lead to innocent people having their names and faces published online because of their Jewish ethnicity, which is the case on the many European hate sites legally unreachable on foreign servers.

² "Death threats for journalists covering far right demos", press release from the National Union of Journalists 091102, www.nuj.org.uk

4 Racist Parties in a Position of Power

At present (September 2010), two of Europe's nationalist parties are present in their respective governments: The Swiss People's Party and Italy's Northern League. As previously mentioned, the Danish People's Party has supported the government since 2001, while not being part of the cabinet. Xenophobic parties are represented in approximately half of the EU countries' national parliaments, as well as those of non-member states Switzerland and Norway.

When the Freedom Party of Austria (FPÖ), led by the now deceased Jörg Haider, was included in the national government in 1999, a stunned EU responded with a diplomatic boycott. In 2008, when FPÖ and populist break-out party BZÖ together gained two percent more of the votes than a decade prior (29 percent), the reactions were notably absent. Europe had become accustomed to the presence of xenophobic parties at the highest political levels.

Since the short-lived New Democracy party in the early 1990's, Sweden has been spared from racists in parliament, but that may change in September. The Sweden Democrats (SD), a xenophobic party with roots in the extreme right soil, for the first time stand a real chance of entering the hallways of power. In several polls, they reach over the four percent barrier. Such an electoral success would be a major political breakthrough – but not against the trend. SD has more than doubled their results in the majority of elections held since their founding in 1988. After the election in 2006, they were able to take their seats in almost half of Sweden's municipalities.

In Brussels and Strasbourg, the European Union member countries are represented by racists of different shades of brown. There's the ultra-nationalist Ataka of Bulgaria, the French veterans of Front National, Belgium's Vlaams Belang – excluded by a united political front in their own country – and Geert Wilders' fanatically Islamophobic Freedom Party (the Netherlands). Notable parties from Central and Eastern Europe include the ultra-nationalist Greater Romania Party, who managed to break up the EP's extreme right political group in 2007, and the anti-Roma and anti-Semitic Slovak National Party, whose Hungarian counterparts Jobbik incite hatred against the same ethnic groups. Around 40 of the European Parliament's 736 members can be characterized as extreme right or xenophobic. The

majority of the racist MEPs are either non-aligned or belong to the right-wing Eurosceptic group Europe of Freedom and Democracy.

In the EP election of June 2009, the extreme and far right made gains in almost half of the member states. Considerable successes could be noted in no less than 11 of the 27 countries. While some have pointed out that racist parties were already represented in the European Parliament, and that some even made a poorer showing in 2009 than in previous years, a focus on *which* parties made progress in 2009 gives a better picture of the situation than just comparing statistics.

Take for example Italy, one of the European countries where the xenophobia is most worrying. In January this year, the country was shaken by race riots as African migrant workers in the Southern city of Rosarno were beaten up and shot at by locals. The separatist Northern League, governing the country in coalition with Silvio Berlusconi's People of Freedom, controls the interior ministry through interior minister Roberto Maroni. Maroni has previously tried to push through a national racial register with finger prints of all Italian Roma. This time, he reacted to the riots not with condemnation, but by declaring that Italy has had too much tolerance against illegal immigrants.

Last June, the Northern League seriously advanced their positions. The party received more than three million votes and increased their mandates from four to nine, making them the largest extreme right party in the European Parliament. This achievement is far more meaningful to the xenophobic movement, on an Italian as well as a European level, than the fact that the already marginalized, neo-fascist Forza Nuova ended up with only 0, 47 percent of the vote (146 000 votes). The Northern League was also the party that made the most gains in the Italian regional elections in March this year. In two regions, they became the largest party for the first time: Piedmont and Veneto.

The Danish People's Party made unexpected gains in the summer of 2009. Pia Kjaersgaard's anti-immigrant party increased from barely seven to 15 percent, thereby doubling their mandates in the European Parliament. Just a few years prior, Morten Messerschmidt, who has now taken up a seat in the EP, was convicted for incitement to racial hatred. In 2009, a record 284 500 Danes sent him to Brussels. The anti-immigrant True Finns also took the voters by storm, going from 0, 5 to almost 10 percent of the vote. Over 100 000 Finns elected party leader Timo Soini to the European Parliament.

The extreme right party Jobbik (The Movement for a Better Hungary), obsessed with the "gypsy question" and with clear anti-Semitic views, won almost 15 percent of the votes and three seats in the European Parliament. At his first session in Strasbourg the following month, one of the members wore the banned fascist uniform belonging to Jobbik's paramilitary guard.

In the Netherlands, the xenophobic Party for Freedom (PVV) – whose leader Geert Wilders is currently facing charges for incitement of racial hatred – became the country's second largest party with 17 percent of the vote. The charge against Wilders is, among other things, based on his equating Islam with fascist ideologies. In consciously provocative statements, Wilders has compared the Koran to Hitler's Mein Kampf. The charge has resulted in Wilders becoming a martyr amongst neo-Nazis as well as populists.

Another one of the EP election's big winners is Nick Griffin. Over one million Brits made sure that the extreme right British National Party (BNP) sent him and another member to Brussels. It is the first time that the United Kingdom is represented by an extreme right party in the European Parliament. Party leader Griffin, with a prominent career in the neo-Nazi National Front on his resume, is regularly on the road in Europe, making new contacts and keeping up others. The co-operation between Jobbik and the BNP has been so successful that Jobbik established an overseas office in London in 2009 – a unique move by a non-British extreme right party.

France's infamous Front National lost four out of its seven mandates in the election to the European Parliament. Party leader Jean-Marie Le Pen is now over 80 years old and is soon expected to hand over the throne to his daughter Marine, also an MEP. Nick Griffin and his BNP have been quick to seize the moment and try to fill what they perceive as a void in the pan-European extreme right leadership.

But on a national level, Front National made an unexpected comeback in March. After being down for the count since the catastrophic election of 2007, the party won over nine percent of the vote in this year's regional elections. Part of their regained success is probably due to Marine le Pen who has given the party of softer image. She has dissociated herself from anti-Semitism, played down the extremism and tried to camouflage Islamophobia with feminism and nationalism.

Jobbik has taken several initiatives to pan-European collaborations. In October 2009, a new extreme right alliance was forged in Budapest. The

party federation Alliance of European National Movements (AENM) consists of Jobbik, the British National Party, Belgium's Front National, France's Front National, Italy's Fiamma Tricolore and Sweden's National Democrats. After the founding meeting, the National Democrats wrote that the purpose of the federation is to "work against liberalism and globalism in the West, within an EU framework (...) The main purpose of the federation is to co-ordinate the fight against the mutual enemy which manifest (sic) itself in the international globalism threatening the culture and unique character of us all."

Austria's Freedom Party (FPÖ), somewhat less radical than the AENM parties, is included in the meeting protocol but has not signed it, and has officially denied the collaboration. In the EP elections, FPÖ won 13 percent of the vote, an almost seven percent increase.

It takes seven parties and 25 members to create a formal political group in the European Parliament, something the extreme and far right has failed to do. In 2007, Identity, Tradition, Sovereignty (ITS) broke up after Alessandra Mussolini accused Romanians in general of being criminal. This infuriated the Greater Romania Party to the extent that they left the group, leaving ITS with not enough members. Alessandra Mussolini is the grandchild of Benito Mussolini and was an MEP until 2008. She is now a member of the Italian parliament (chamber of deputies).

5 The Hatred Against Muslims

Muslims have become the new Jews, claim prominent experts such as Austrian professor Anton Pelinka³. Islamophobia gained a foothold after the 9/11 attacks against America in 2001 and the subsequent terrorist acts on European soil. Islamophobia is here used as a term for prejudice against and discrimination of Muslims, not criticism against (for example) Islamism or the radicalization of young Muslims. Unfortunately, Islamophobia has more and more come to infect the serious public debate. What started as a legitimate resistance against the oppression of women has, in countries like France and Denmark, turned into a fixation on a tiny burqa wearing minority.

The majority's oppression of the minority has always been one of democracy's weak points. Racist parties all over Europe are now trying to use the democratic system to their advantage. In November 2009, Switzerland voted on a ban against the construction of minarets, the towers adorning as few as four of the country's around 200 mosques. The initiative to the referendum was taken by the Egerkinger Committee, which consist of politicians from the xenophobic Swiss People's Party (SVP), the country's largest party, and also of politicians from a small evangelical party, the Federal Democratic Union of Switzerland (FDU). In 2008 the committee had amassed the 100 000 signatures required for a referendum on a change or amendment to the Swiss constitution. Against the odds, the ban on minaret constructions was voted through, and Switzerland was sharply criticized by the UN and NGO's such as Amnesty International.

By the end of Mars this year, Belgium's lower house of parliament passed a burqa ban. The law is expected to come into force this summer, making Belgium the first country in Europe to ban the wearing of full-coverage veils in public. Those who refuse to comply are threatened with jail. The National Assembly of France voted for a ban of the full cover veil in public spaces. The law must also be passed in the Senate.

The German anti-Muslim movement is trying to stop "islamization" with the help of the Lisbon Treaty and signatures from one million EU citizens. The term islamization has made a real breakthrough in Europe. The idea of an imminent Muslim take-over is reminiscent of the well-known conspiracy

³"Neo-Nazis? No such thing", Primor, Adar, Haaretz 5.3.2010

theories of ZOG⁴ and the Jews' alleged struggle for world domination.

European Muslims are subject to a disturbing degree of discrimination. In a 2009 survey of Muslims in 14 EU countries, the European Union for Agency Fundamental Rights (FRA) established that one out of three Muslims have experienced discrimination. Eleven percent of the respondents had also been victims of a racially motivated crime. As with other minority groups surveyed by the FRA, an overwhelming majority, 79 percent, had chosen not to report their experiences of crime and discrimination to the authorities⁵.

According to the report Muslims in Europe (December 2009) from the Open Society Institute⁶, who have taken a closer look at 11 cities in seven European countries, 50 percent of the Muslim respondents said that they had experienced discrimination because of their religion in the past 12 months. This can be compared to only nine percent of the non-Muslim respondents.

In the Netherlands, Geert Wilders is waiting in the wings after the government collapse in February. In the local elections on March 4, seen as a test ahead of June's parliamentary elections, his Freedom Party came first in Almere outside Amsterdam and second in the country's political capital The Hague. The situation for Muslims in the Netherlands, where they only make up about five percent of the population, is as previously mentioned very difficult. Local experts regard the anti-Muslim rhetoric of the Freedom Party to be a directly contributing cause. According to a 2009 survey, half of the country's Muslims are considering emigration. A third state that they would definitely like to emigrate⁷.

As pointed out in the case with the Swiss minaret ban, the Islamophobes are quick to copy other countries' successful strategies. The Stop the Islamisation of Denmark organization (SIAD) has thus grown into the pan-European movement Stop the Islamisation of Europe (SIOE). National chapters, from Sweden to Bulgaria, have also been established. During the controversy regarding a Muslim cultural center on Manhattan, Stop Islamization of America (SIOA) has figured in the media on a more or less daily basis because of their campaign against the planned building.

⁴ Zionist Occupation Government. Zionists and Zionism are extreme right code words for Jews and perceived Jewish influence.

⁵ fra.europa.eu

⁶ www.soros.org

⁷ Opinion poll ordered by the Dutch program Netwerk. Quoted in "Wilders makes half of Dutch Muslims want to emigrate", Blass, Michael, Radio Netherlands Worldwide 090629 (www.rnw.nl)

Local anti-mosque protests are now supported by likeminded European groups and players. Pro-Köln (Cologne, Germany) and its regional parent party Pro-NRW (NRW is an abbreviation of the North Rhine-Westphalia state) are examples of small anti-Muslims parties who have reached a wider audience. Thousands of racists and politicians from countries like Germany and Italy gathered in Cologne in 2008 for an “anti-islamization” congress. The meeting was the largest extreme right gathering in Cologne since the Second World War. A similar meeting was held in German Gelsenkirchen in March this year.

In December 2009, Pro-NRW launched a campaign to ban the construction of mosques and minarets in all of Europe. Pro-NRW also aimed high in this year’s local elections, but won only 1,4 percent of the vote.

6 Roma: A People Persecuted

Tatarszentgyörgy in Hungary, February 23. A house is set on fire with Molotov cocktails. A young father and his 5-year-old son are shot dead as they flee their home.

Vitkov in the Czech Republic, April 18. Three family members are injured in an arson attack. Their 2-year-old daughter suffers burns on 80 percent of her skin.

Tiszalök in Hungary, April 22. 54-year-old Kóka, leaving to work the night shift, is shot dead in front of his family home.

Kisléta in Hungary, August 3. Mária, a middle-aged mother, is shot and killed in her bed. Her 13-year-old daughter is severely wounded.⁸

The statistics covering beatings, arson attacks and murders in Hungary and the Czech Republic can be read as the first stages of ethnic cleansing. But the year when the above attacks took place is not 1939 – but 2009. Roma, previously called gypsies, are falling victim to choking levels of violence, persecution and discrimination in Italy and in Eastern and Central Europe. Now, Roma families flee Europe by the thousands, seeking asylum in Canada and the United States. Yet the safety of the Roma remains a low priority for Europe. The Roma themselves have a difficult time rousing public opinion for their cause. The group lack, with few exceptions, representatives at the higher levels of society.

The Roma are Europe's largest ethnic minority. Approximately ten to twelve million Roma live here, but the figures are uncertain and could be much higher. As opposed to for example the well-integrated Jewish population, the Roma situation is more complex. It is well-known that the "outsider status" is to some degree a conscious choice. Many Roma parents have, for example, taken their children out of school before they have been able to go on to higher education.

But centuries of anti-Roma persecutions shine a light on the reasons behind the isolation. In other words, Roma families may well choose to remain separated from the rest of society for security reasons. In Eastern and

⁸ European Roma Rights Centre (ERRC)

Central Europe, the police have repeatedly refused to come to the rescue at beatings and even arson attacks. In EU-MIDIS, the first EU-wide report on discrimination (2009), 66-92 percent of the Roma state that they have not reported their latest experience of discrimination to the authorities. 65-100 percent says they lack trust in the judicial system and the law enforcement⁹. A reasonable suspicion can actually be behind those high figures.

Authorities in several EU countries have forcefully evicted Roma families and demolished their camps. The demolitions have been carried out in blatant breach of human rights laws. Often, there is no advance warning. In Romania, about 75 Roma, including children, live in simple metal shacks right beside a sewage treatment plant. Six years ago, they were forcefully moved in what was cynically called a “temporary transfer”. Industrial areas and garbage dumps are other places where Roma families are deported to. And their new homes are often everything but temporary.

Despite repeated criticism from human rights organizations, healthy Roma children in countries such as the Czech Republic are still placed in schools for the mentally disabled. In Bosnia, Roma and Jews are legally barred from running for parliament and the presidency. The Roma who fled persecutions in Kosovo are currently being sent back from a host of EU member states, despite the fact that the situation hasn't improved. On the contrary, the Roma in Kosovo are victims of hate attacks and are forced to live under ghetto-like circumstances. One of those who have expressed their concern is the Council of Europe Commissioner for Human Rights, Thomas Hammarberg, who at the beginning of this year condemned the transfer of Roma families across country borders. Hammarberg is now demanding a stop to deportations of Roma to Kosovo.

Needless to say, the Roma are in grave danger if Europe leaves their destiny in the hands of anti-Roma extremists. Hungarian Jobbik, Bulgarian Ataka and the Slovak National Party consider Roma to be lower than animals. The first party has, as previously mentioned, already made their entrance in Brussels. Jobbik's anti-Semitism is expressed openly – in written materials, in speeches and at manifestations. In September this year, the vice president of Jobbik said to Reuters that the party wants to place Romas in “public order zones”, some for a lifetime.

Side by side with Jobbik's MEPs marches the militant neo-fascists of the party's paramilitary division, the Hungarian Guard (Magyar Gárda),

⁹ fra.europa.eu

inspired by the Hungarian Arrow Cross party of the Nazi era. Despite a ban on the Guard, few of them have put away their boots and vests adorned with roaring lions. Instead, the Guard has been re-established as a “cultural association”. Men and women of all ages have joined their ranks, but youths seem particularly lured by the tough-talking nationalist propaganda. In the beginning of March, an opinion poll showed that Jobbik was, for the first time ever, more popular with young Hungarians than the Socialists. In the age group 18 to 24, Jobbik was even twice as large as the previous ruling party¹⁰.

In Italy, the threats against Roma have increased disproportionately since Silvio Berlusconi’s new government came to power in 2008, according to the human rights report *Security à la Italiana: Fingerprinting, Extreme Violence and Harassment of Roma in Italy*. The report describes how racially motivated attacks against Roma are no longer isolated incidents but rather a structural component of the Italian everyday reality¹¹.

According to a study presented to the Italian parliament in February 2010, almost half of the country’s young men and women are xenophobic or intolerant against immigrants. 15 percent claimed to have a phobia against Romanians, Albanians and Roma. Those 15 percent were dominated by women¹².

In August 2010 France commenced a much criticized mass deportation of Rumanian and Bulgarian Romanies. 300 camps were demolished in order to, according to French president Nicolas Sarkozy, curb criminality and around 1000 Romas have been deported (September 2010). The events that triggered the deportations started with a deadly shot by the police of a young man belonging to the Roma minority, which lead to riots.

The deportations have met massive protests both from the Romanies themselves and from politicians and human rights NGO’s around the world. Viviane Reding, The EU commissioner for Justice, Fundamental Rights and Citizenship, said that they might contradict EU laws of free movement, fundamental rights and citizenship. Critics of the deportations argue that they are illegal on the grounds of not being tried individually, in addition to breaking the law of free movement within the EU. In September 2010, the European parliament passed a resolution calling for France and other countries to immediately end deportations of Roma people. Amongst other

¹⁰ “Poll reveals Jobbik scores better among young people than Socialists”, MTI/Politics.hu, 100305

¹¹ From a coalition of human rights groups including the Open Society Institute and the ERRC, 2009. See for example www.soros.org

¹² “46 percent [of] young Italians xenophobic”, AFP 100219

things, the parliament argued that since the deportations are grounded on race they are acts of discrimination. Voices have also been raised for sanctioning France economically.

There are already different laws in place for Roma in France concerning the right to vote in local elections. While Roma people have to be registered in the same municipality during three years to have a right to vote, six months is enough for all other citizens.

Deportations of Romanies have taken place in Sweden as well during 2010. The police deported approximately 50 Roma because they earned their living through begging - despite all EU citizens having a right to stay in another country three months without proving how they make a living. Furthermore, begging is not illegal in Sweden, but the police found it "dishonest".

7 The New Anti-Semitism

A worrying phenomenon is growing stronger in Europe. We can call it “my enemy’s enemy is my friend”: Islamists, right-wing extremists, Holocaust deniers and left-wing activists who, against all odds, bond over their strong anti-Semitism. The events in the Southern Swedish city of Malmö in 2009 are a good example. During the Gaza war in January, a pro-Israeli demonstration was attacked by Arabic and left-wing activists armed with bottles, stones and home-made explosives. About a month later, riots broke out in connection to the Davis Cup match between Israel and Sweden. There, too, were the Hamas sympathizers and communists amongst the demonstrators, using anti-Semitic rhetoric to express their hatred against the state of Israel and, in some cases, against Jews in general. Ancient stereotypes such as the blood-thirsty, greedy Jew is today surfacing in anti-Israeli contexts.

In the beginning of 2010, the anti-Semitism in Malmö yet again raised concerns internationally. The strong increase in anti-Semitic hate crimes has led to Jews taking the difficult decision to leave the city, for their own security. Mainly radicalized Muslims, but also extreme right groups, are thought to be behind the worsened climate. In France, Muslim gangs have stalked, abused and even murdered strangers because of their Jewish ethnicity.

According to a new (January 2010) study from Aarhus University, anti-Semitism is virulent amongst immigrants from Muslim countries. Two out of three Danish Muslims had anti-Semitic prejudices. It cannot be ruled out that these opinions are shaped by the polarized Danish society, but the development is nevertheless a cause for concern. As in several other European cities, the Jewish congregation in Copenhagen advises against Jews wearing religious symbols in Muslims areas¹³.

The Swedish poet Mohamed Omar, previously a part of Sweden’s higher cultural-intellectual circles, has come out as a fully-fledged Islamist and anti-Semite. He has created a coterie of anti-Semites from left to right, including infamous characters such as Ahmed Rami, founder of the hate site Radio Islam. Rami is convicted for incitement to racial hatred in Sweden and for the spreading of anti-Semitic propaganda in France. Mohamed

¹³ ”Antisemitism bland grupper i Danmark”, SR Ekot 100131

Omar and Ahmed Rami have copied the French and created an “anti-Zionist” party. Within contemporary anti-Semitism, “Zionists” and “Zionism” are used as code words for Jews and delusions of Jewish global influence. The state of Israel is also used as a coded symbol for anything Jewish. Thus, a horde of neo-Nazis carrying torches can chant “Israel out of Sweden!” outside synagogues (which has happened in Stockholm), without breaking the law – despite there being no doubts as to which minority is intended.

The French Parti Anti Sioniste is led by comedian Dieudonné M’Bala M’Bala, who, like Ahmed Rami, has been convicted for anti-Semitism (in Dieudonné’s case, for anti-Semitic statements). One of the goals stated in their party program reads: “Eradicating all forms of Zionism in the nation.” The party ran in the European Parliament election in France but didn’t manage to secure enough votes. But Dieudonné himself is very popular among French activists on the far left, as well as with radicalized immigrant youths. The godfather of one of Dieudonné’s daughters is none other than the godfather of French racism, Jean-Marie Le-Pen of Front National.

The Freedom Party’s candidate in this year’s Austrian presidential election, Barbara Rosenkranz, is testament to the anti-Semitism remaining within the populist parties – even if Muslims have become their premier target. Rosenkranz, married to a man from more extreme nationalist circles, have previously defended doubts surrounding the Nazi gas chambers. In the April election, she became the sitting (and re-elected) president Heinz Fischer’s only challenger. Despite harsh criticism, Rosenkranz secured almost 16 percent of the vote. The result has been met with unease in the Austrian Jewish community. In Israel, newspaper editorials have encouraged Jews in Austria and Hungary to leave their respective countries.

8 Strategies Against the Extreme Right

The European countries have tried different strategies to face the threat from organized racism. In some countries, xenophobic parties have been left out in the cold, while their anti-immigrant arguments have been copied in order to win over voters. In other places, exemplary measures have been taken to inform the public of the racists' hateful agenda – only to have the extreme right dominate the polls. Many political parties lack any sort of strategy and seem too perplexed to take serious action.

And it's no wonder: neither isolation nor active opposition has worked. This is also what the Bertelsmann Foundation in Germany found when they, in a groundbreaking project, studied and compared strategies against the extreme right in 11 European countries. No strategy is universal and guaranteed to work, they conclude, but suggest a number of specific measures. Amongst those are:

- Show political responsibility. By forming anti-racist committees on the highest political levels, the politicians will make it clear that discrimination and racism are areas of concern.
- Practice political leadership and be sure to take the initiative in the debate. Politicians should never forget to emphasize the positive effects of a diversified society.
- Racism has to result in a red card. When politicians or organizations demonstrate xenophobic ideas, they have to be banned from important positions. Without this sort of zero tolerance, society will be infiltrated by, for example, Islamophobic ideas.
- Increase awareness of hate crimes and keep track of infringement of laws. Sweden is held up as a good example, but the Swedish hate crime law is actually a paper tiger. In other words, it is important that the threat of hate crime convictions doesn't lose its teeth.
- The media plays a key role when it comes to exposing the agenda of the xenophobes. As in for example France and Germany, investigative journalism focusing on the extreme right should be encouraged.

The Bertelsmann Foundation is also focusing on the need for information. The European countries should share their knowledge about the different strategies that exist to combat the threat. Perhaps there is even a need for a

common European strategy. In any case, the threat must not be dismissed as a marginalised phenomenon, they warn. The extreme right must be kept under close watch, especially as it is assumed that globalisation will make the movement grow even larger¹⁴.

Professor Montserrat Guibernau at the University of London comes to the same conclusion in her paper, *Migration and the rise of the radical right* (March 2010)¹⁵. In it, she criticizes mainstream parties for regarding the extreme right as a bunch of fanatics. The fact that no major party has neither been able to calm the public's fears about immigration, or stop the rise of the ultra right, begs the question of whether the parties have truly understood what factors are driving the voters into the arms of the xenophobes, writes Guibernau.

Guibernau presents three elements that should be included in the parties' response to the challenge. First of all, voter confidence in politics must be restored by increased transparency and less bureaucracy. The parties also need to formulate a balanced way of relating to immigration, which needs to be controlled, while still respecting the human rights. Finally, politicians should acknowledge the working classes' concern over the labor market, where they often feel incapable of competing with cheaper, foreign labor (despite studies showing that there is no such competition on the market).

Popular Resistance

On a strictly moral note, it must be considered better to face the extreme right than to remain passive. A strong anti-racist popular movement is a sign of health – and a signal to voters as well as the extreme right, that racist opinions do not belong in civilized, diversified societies. Preventative activism is one of the best cures against organized racism, and this is also what Fores has concluded in its policy paper 2010:1, *Local resistance to xenophobia*.

In Great Britain, the anti-racist Searchlight Magazine runs a national campaign against racism, *Hope not Hate*. A double-decker bus painted a hopeful yellow has toured the country to inform about the British National Party. Searchlight has managed to mobilize thousands of activists and co-

¹⁴ Bertelsmann Stiftung (red.), *Strategies for Combating Right-Wing Extremism in Europe*, Gütersloh: Verlag Bertelsmann Stiftung, 2009

¹⁵ Published by the Policy Network ahead of the conference “Migration and the rise of nationalist right-wing parties: confrontation, isolation or engagement” in Copenhagen. Can be downloaded from: [http://www.policy-network.net/uploadedFiles/Publications/Publications/Migration and the rise of the far right.pdf](http://www.policy-network.net/uploadedFiles/Publications/Publications/Migration%20and%20the%20rise%20of%20the%20far%20right.pdf).

operates with local anti-BNP groups from North to South.

The Swedish anti-racist foundation and magazine Expo runs a similar campaign, *The Sweden Democrats Are Wrong*, since 2008. Based on a book with the same name, Expo campaigns through lectures, study circles and Internet activism.

In Germany, it is not unusual for people from all walks of life to turn up at anti-racist manifestations. Families with young children, anarchists, gay activists, priests from the Catholic Church and others have, through the use of active non-violence, managed to stop the extreme right's show of force and spreading of propaganda. One of the most important dates in the European extreme right's calendar is the Dresden Memorial Day, where the victims of the Allied bombings are honored. At this year's memorial, 10 000 Germans formed a human chain, barring the neo-Nazis from marching through the city.

***Cordon Sanitaire* – a Line of Decency**

A political equivalent of the Dresden resistance is the so called *cordon sanitaire* drawn up by Belgian parties to keep the xenophobic Vlaams Belang at bay. The strategy involves an agreement amongst the other parties not to cooperate with the racist party in order to keep it at a distance. A similar line was also drawn up by the mainstream parties in France to counter the threat from the Front National (which is currently marginalized, much because of this strategy). One obvious criticism was and still is that the approach is undemocratic. In the case of France, xenophobic ideas also managed to break through the "sanitary quarantine" and enter mainstream politics.

Supporters and Dealmakers

Some experts propose a strategy where the established parties take on the areas that the extreme right tries to claim as theirs. In other words, immigration, integration and Islam. But this strategy is quite easy to criticize. In several European countries, attempts to "take back" such issues have resulted in a political debate uncomfortably fixated upon Islam and Muslims. In reality, the result has been that the extreme right is setting the agenda. Norway's Progress Party (FrP) is one example of xenophobia slowly but surely being normalized. Today, after compromises and discreet support from other parties, the FrP is Norway's second largest party.

The question Europe's politicians need to address is whether this risk is

better than co-operating with xenophobic parties. In Denmark, the Danish People's Party has the role of support party to the government since almost a decade. In the local and regional elections of November 2009, the party increased its local mandates from 125 to 186. The successful normalization process has been very favorable to the Danish People's Party, who also doubled their mandate in the EP election. It is easy to see why xenophobic parties on the rise regard the Danish People's Party as their role model.

Risky Acceptance

But the Danish tolerance is still more vigorous than in Italy, where the Northern League is part of the government. More and more often, Italian politicians refuse to condemn racial riots and hate crimes. Instead, they shift the guilt to the victims, sending a dangerous signal to the population that ethnic and religious discrimination is acceptable – perhaps even desirable. Italy is the worst case scenario, an example of how fast racist ideas can gain a foothold once you let the extreme right in from the cold. The question is whether any European country should allow itself to take the same risk.



Om FORES

FORES är en ny tankesmedja som vill förändra. Globalisering och klimatförändring innebär utmaningar som kräver nya sätt att se på samhället. FORES ger debatten nya perspektiv, frimodiga idéer och positiv energi. Vi bygger nätverk av samhällsintresserade och experter. Tillsammans kan vi ta fram tydliga och konkreta förslag på lösningar för en hållbar framtid.