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Societies outside Metropolises: the role of civil society organisations in facing populism

STUDY



European Economic and Social Committee



European Economic and Social Committee

Study on Societies outside Metropolises

The role of civil society organisations in facing populism

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Foreword by Arno Metzler



Populism in the EU is currently at its highest levels since the 1930s. The average populist vote in EU Member States now stands at 24%, up from 8.5% in the year 2000. Hence, we must all ask ourselves at which in the last two decades did mainstream politics fall out of favour with our citizens ? What has caused the proliferation of populism and Euroscepticism ? What role can civil society play in limiting its propagation ? These are fundamental questions that must be asked and answered, if we, civil society are to help the public to become aware of the extent to which populist approaches can endanger our democratic values.

In this context, it is with great pleasure that I commend to you the study '*Societies outside Metropolises: the role of civil society organisations in facing populism*', which was commissioned by the European Economic and Social Committee (EESC), at the request of the Diversity Europe Group, the Group which represents civil society organisations. It is precisely because our Members represent such a wide spectrum of socio-professional sectors that we consider it our duty to use these networks and to raise awareness among citizens of the dangers of populism. Our value added lies in our access to local, regional and national civil society and citizen groups and we must put this value added at the service of 'Europe'.

What is interesting about this study is that it makes comparisons among regions in the same countries, one less and one more advantaged region. I am certain that we could project most of the conclusions to other EU Member States.

It will become evident to the reader that economic decline, social instability and limited levels of education are significant factors in explaining the increased support for populists throughout the EU. However, there are other interdependent and more important factors, such as the desire to preserve the status quo, to protect traditional values, monocultures or particular identities. What is commonly referred to as 'identity politics'. Opposing 'us' against the elites and 'others'. Picking the right 'enemies' of course is key!

In parallel, real or perceived insecurities are fuelled daily by disinformation, whilst many young voters are attracted to the idea that populist parties can bring *positive change* to stagnant and incompetent political systems. Unfortunately, once present, populism evolves and feeds on multiple forms of voter discontent. Personally I believe that there is one common reason which unities citizens who are attracted to populism. Namely: the fury of not been listened to and of not being *heard* by national and/or European institutions. The feeling that governments and 'Europe' care only for minority groups and not for them, the average European.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Arno Metzler', written in a cursive style.

Arno Metzler
President of the Diversity Europe Group

The sense that there is no shared European identity which expresses them.

I believe that the only way to strike out against populism is through our same democratic system that populists are trying to undermine. Listening and engaging in dialogue, rather than speaking at citizens. Ensuring that national and European policies are more responsive to proposals by citizens and civil society. Putting our energy towards communicating and explaining the EU's achievements and the positive impact on citizens' daily life. Trying to convince localities and regions to develop a common European purpose and explaining that diversity is welcome. In all of this frenzy of activities, civil society must play a key role against the proliferation of populism. However, this will necessitate national and EU assistance to enhance their current *capacity* to act. We as Members of the EESC have a *double* responsibility. To step up our activities at *both* the national and European levels, to strengthen networks, to better explain and to bring 'Europe' to its citizens. Ultimately, protecting and preserving liberal democracy is everyone's business!

Abstract

The Study identifies the factors influencing citizens' choices in favour of populism and the role of civil society organisations (CSOs) in countering it in eight non-metropolitan areas with high populist vote, one above and one below the EU average per country: Klagenfurt-Villach and Niederösterreich-Süd (Austria), Drôme and Aisne (France), Udine and Reggio di Calabria (Italy), Płocki and Nowosądecki (Poland).

Extensive desk research, two statistical analyses, 616 opinions of citizens from the regions, three focus groups and 54 in-depth interviews with CSOs and experts have informed the study's findings.

Socioeconomic and cultural factors of populism vary across different social groups, between countries and between different regions within a country. No factor alone causes populism - there is an interplay of factors, which feed on and reinforce each other. The crises of representative democracy, diminished trust in traditional parties and online disinformation are strong additional factors.

CSOs do not recognise populism as a distinctive type of challenge. There is a lack of encompassing and comprehensive civic initiatives in tackling populism due to the complexity of the phenomenon, the shrinking civic space in terms of lack of an enabling environment for CSOs operation, limited human resources, reduced funding and a lack of expertise.

1. Introduction

There is already evidence of a “populist wave” in Europe and the rest of the world and its impact on politics, society, the economy and even the international order. The upcoming 2019 European Parliament elections are expected to be a massive test for European societies and the EU as a whole with populist parties vying for control of the institutions and showcasing their power.

The word ‘populism’ was revealed as the 2017 Word of the Year by Cambridge University Press. The announcement said that “what sets populism apart from all these other words is that it represents a phenomenon that’s both truly local and truly global, as populations and their leaders across the world wrestle with issues of immigration and trade, resurgent nationalism, and economic discontent.” Populism is indeed a global phenomenon with a global impact, but there is a need to assess its local and regional roots and impact.

This report presents the findings of a study on populism in selected areas in Europe. Its motivation was twofold: to provide a better understanding of the factors influencing citizens’ choices in favour of populism in non-metropolitan areas and insight into how civil society organisations (CSOs) operate to counter populism in view of recommending further civic actions. Reflecting this goal, eight non-metropolitan areas in four EU Member States – Austria, France, Italy and Poland – were selected to carry out the research, based on income and social and economic development and high populist vote at the most recent presidential and/or legislative elections

(please, see [Appendix 21: Populist vote results on national and regional level](#)). Each area selected is either around, or slightly higher than, the EU average or lower than EU average in order to account for different socioeconomic factors on the continent.

The dual goal of the study has been operationalised through two sets of research questions.

The first set of questions pertain to the reasons behind the populist vote and, more concretely, the determinants of populism in non-metropolitan areas. That is, the factors that affect populist voting (socioeconomic, social, political, discursive, e.g. political rhetoric and online disinformation), the extent to which these factors are present in non-metropolitan regions in the focal countries and whether they explain populist voting.

The second set of questions address the situation of CSOs in the regions with regard to the populist challenge and their role regarding populism in non-metropolitan areas by asking if CSOs have specific programmes or actions targeted at tackling populism in the focal regions, identifying the strategies CSOs employ to combat populism and, ultimately, exploring the ways in which CSOs can increase the effectiveness of their strategies to tackle populism. The responsibility of mainstream parties and the role of political rhetoric, Euroscepticism, online disinformation and calls for more direct democracy were given special attention as elements of the populist challenge.

This report is organised into nine chapters. The first chapter contains an **overview of the methodology**, with more technical details laid out in the appendices of the other chapters. The second chapter introduces **the non-metropolitan areas and the populist parties**. The third chapter makes an **overview of factors for populism at national and regional level in the countries in focus**. Chapter four to seven are **case studies of Austria,**

France, Italy and Poland on the current situation of populism and role of CSOs in countering populism in the eight regions. The eighth chapter contains a comparison across the eight regions in focus. The ninth chapter makes **conclusions** and proposes **recommendations on how CSOs could improve their actions in preventing and opposing the populist challenge**.

2. Methodology overview

The point of departure of this study is the definition of the influential scholar of populism Cas Mudde, in which populism is defined as “a thin-centred ideology that considers society to be ultimately separated into two homogeneous and antagonistic groups, ‘the pure people’ and ‘the corrupt elite’, and which argues that politics should be an expression of the *volonté générale* (general will) of the people”¹.

The study also draws on the study of Inglehart and Norris² on cultural factors and the rise of populism, among others, as referred to further in this report. Generally, radical right populism has been related to three defining features – anti-establishment, authoritarianism, and nativism³, but researches point out that populism can be found on both left and right as it can be combined with other ideologies – usually some form of socialism on the left and some kind of nationalism on the right. It is important to note that populism is not necessarily considered anti-democratic; it just redefines democracy as anti-liberal, denying pluralism and minority rights.⁴

¹ Mudde, C., ‘The Populist Zeitgeist’, *Government and Opposition*, Vol.39, Issue 4, Autumn 2004.

² Inglehart, R.F. & Norris, P. ‘Trump, Brexit, and the Rise of Populism: Economic Have-Nots and Cultural Backlash’, HKS Faculty Research Working Paper Series, RWP16-026, August 2016.

³ Mudde, C., ‘Populist Radical Right Parties in Europe’, Cambridge University Press, 2007.

⁴ Mudde, C, ‘Populism in Europe: a primer’, *Open Democracy*, 12 May 2015, <https://www.opendemocracy.net/can-europe-make-it/cas-mudde/populism-in-europe-primer>

In the European context, Euroscepticism is often the focal point of expressions of resentment by populists. They frame Euroscepticism in terms of socioeconomics (e.g. fiscal sovereignty, national debt, the euro), culture (e.g. immigration, multiculturalism), sovereignty (e.g. transfer of decision-making, centralisation) and legitimacy (e.g. democratic deficit, effectiveness, corruption), accusing the EU “for the harmful socioeconomic consequences of austerity; the threat to national sovereignty, security, or cultural homogeneity posed by non-EU migrants ; the upholding of a distant and undemocratic system of governance; or a combination of the above.”⁵

As Mudde succinctly points out, while Euroscepticism and populism are not the same thing, ‘almost every populist is Eurosceptic, not every Eurosceptic is a populist’⁶.

The study has adopted a list of populist parties in the countries in focus, as identified in the scholarly literature on populism⁷. These are the Freiheitliche Partei Österreichs (FPÖ) for Austria, the Rassemblement national (RN; previously National Front) and La France Insoumise (LFI) for France, Forza Italia (FI), Lega Nord (LN) and Movimento 5 Stelle (M5S) for Italy⁸, and Prawo i Sprawiedliwość (PiS), Kukiz '15 and KORWiN⁹ for Poland.

The research methods were designed to complement each other and explain the issues from various perspectives, especially the national and regional outlook.

⁵ Pirro, A., Taggart P., & Van Kessel, S., ‘The Populist Politics of Euroscepticism in times of crisis: Comparative Conclusions’, *Politics*, Vol. 38, Issue 3, 2018.

⁶ Mudde, C., ‘The European Union is a victim of its own success: Cas Mudde on the root causes of populism in Europe’, *Dialogue on Europe*, 4 December 2017, <http://dialogue-on-europe.eu/interview-cas-mudde-causes-populism-european-union/>

⁷ Please, see Inglehart, R. F. & Norris, P., 2016.

And Algan, Y., Guriev, S., Papaioannou, E., & Passari, E., “The European Trust Crisis and the Rise of Populism”, *Brookings Papers on Economic Activity, Economic Studies Program*, The Brookings Institution, vol. 48 (2), Fall, 2017, <https://www.brookings.edu/bpea-articles/the-european-trust-crisis-and-the-rise-of-populism/>

For more information on the identification of the populist parties for the purposes of this study, please see the “Identifying the populist parties and the rise of populism in the countries in focus” part of this report.

⁸ The study decided to omit Il Popolo della Libertà, PdL because “On 18 November 2013, the Italian right-wing leader Silvio Berlusconi dissolved his party, Popolo della Libertà (PDL — People of Freedom), the founding of which he had announced to his supporters in Milan exactly six years earlier.” The Conversation, *Silvio Berlusconi is far from finished in Italian politics*, January 15, 2014, <https://theconversation.com/silvio-berlusconi-is-far-from-finished-in-italian-politics-22025>

⁹ KORWiN changed its name and is also known as *Wolność* (Liberty).

A number of approaches were employed to find answers to the main research questions and elicit insights and recommendations in order to provide a better understanding of the factors influencing citizens' choices in favour of populism in non-metropolitan areas and of how CSOs operate to counter populism.

The sources of information were existing studies of populism and related phenomena, social and economic data (mainly from national statistics and Eurostat), public opinion polls (national, international and Eurobarometer), election results and analysis (national and international sources) and CSO databases (national sources), collected through intensive desk research.

The project team also prepared and conducted citizen surveys and focus groups in the regions, interviews and panels based on specially designed questionnaires to gather further information to answer the research questions (see the [appendices for further details](#))¹⁰.

A statistical analysis was conducted to examine the relationship between socioeconomic indicators and populist voting patterns, based on existing social and economic data and election information. Two analyses were conducted: the first made use of the voting patterns observed in the eight regions themselves, using indicators at NUTS 3 level¹¹ where possible and NUTS 2 level when the former were not available; the second looked at national level indicators and their relationship to overall national voting patterns.

The eight regions identified in the four countries are Klagenfurt-Villach and Niederösterreich-Süd (Austria), Drôme and Aisne (France), Udine and Reggio di Calabria (Italy) and Płocki and Nowosądecki (Poland).

¶

The identification of the regions was based on socioeconomic criteria, with one region per country on/or higher than the EU average and one below the EU average.

¹⁰ The interviews, carried out for the purposes of the study, included CSOs activists and experts from the countries in focus or EU-based experts and officials. There is an appendix with a list of the names and affiliation of those, who agreed to reveal publicly this information.

The interviews in the text are quoted similar to the Chatham House Rule, where the study is free to use the information received, but neither the identity nor the affiliation of the interviewed was referred to directly to the quotes. Instead, the interviewees are into several broad groups when referred to in the text: CSO (representative) from the region,

national/international CSO representative, national CSO expert in populism, academic expert in populism, European expert in public affairs/populism or regional official.

¹¹ For more details and information, please see the next parts of this study on "Identifying the eight regions", "Factors for populism at national and regional level: exploring socio-economic, political-cultural and demographic indicators" and the respective appendixes.

Exploratory citizen surveys focused on citizens in the eight regions in the four countries identified in the study¹². An estimate of 36 closed questions aimed at understanding the political, cultural and social concerns of people resident in the respective regions and the issues that inform voters' choices, e.g. with a focus on populist parties, choices and likely factors for these choices. The survey also included a number of questions relating to demographic information and voting preferences in order to help understand the phenomena at hand. The survey was internet-based and aimed for at least 50 completed respondents from each of the eight regions (please, see **the national chapters** and **the respective appendices for more details**) to provide insight into the research questions and to serve as a basis for further exploration through focus groups and interviews. Overall 616 responses were received from the eight regions.

The analysis is based on select questions pertinent to the five dimensions of populism as identified in this study: ant-elite, majoritarian, authoritarian, monocultural and Eurosceptic with an additional focus on issues such as direct democracy and sovereignty.

As a rule, while only the responses to main questions out of 36 are provided in the text, all answers were taken into account and when deemed necessary (e.g. differences between the regions), additional questions and the responses to them were included in the analysis too. A CSO mapping, based on publicly available information was carried out to gather basic information about CSOs working in the regions, their main fields of operation and, especially, their actions to counter populism.

The focus groups aimed at eliciting in-depth information and opinion from stakeholders, including CSO activists, from several of the regions in the study. They were carried out in three regions – Klagenfurt-Villach and Niederösterreich-Süd regions of Austria and Drôme in France. The focus groups gathered 6-12 stakeholders from the respective regions to elicit their opinions on a number of research-related issues. The questionnaire for the focus groups was divided into several parts, exploring the situation with populism and populist parties in the regions, the underlying factors for their rise or failure (depending on the case), the situation with CSOs and what could be done to remedy the negative effects.

¹² The citizens survey used a Facebook campaign to target residents of each of the eight regions. In the Austrian and the French regions (especially in Aisne), local CSOs raised awareness on the survey as well. The survey employed a

specialized online survey tool for the structured, closed-ended questionnaire with 36 questions related to populism and questions related to the socio-demographic characteristics of the respondents.

More than 50 expert and CSO interviews were carried out in the four countries in question, including European level experts and CSO activists in the field. The in-depth interview further illuminated the populism phenomena from diverse national and European perspectives, identified commonalities and differences, and set out recommendations that encompass the various aspects of the complex populist challenge.

The questionnaires for CSOs and political science experts were open-ended and followed a similar blueprint for both groups of respondents, but were also designed to identify the regional and national specifics as well as the diverse perspectives of both political science experts and CSO activists (please, see [Appendix 4 on the questionnaire](#) and [Appendix 7 for a list of interviewed experts and CSO activists](#)).

The information from the various sources (existing and own surveys) was the analysed to produce this report, along with a set of recommendations.

3. Introducing the non-metropolitan areas and the populist parties

3.1. Identifying the eight regions

The study was carried out in eight non-metropolitan areas in four EU Member States – Austria, Italy, Poland and France. For each country, the study focused on two non-metropolitan areas presenting a level of income, economic and social development that is a) on or slightly higher than the EU average and b) below the EU average.

The geographical and socioeconomic scope was also taken into account in the evaluation. Moreover, the following regions were selected because of their high level of the populist vote at the latest presidential and/or legislative elections (please, see [Appendix 21: Populist vote results on national and regional level](#)): Klagenfurt-Villach (KV) and Niederösterreich-Süd

(NO-S) in Austria, Drôme (DR) and Aisne (AI) in France, Udine (UD) and Reggio di Calabria (RC) in Italy and Płocki (PL) and Nowosądecki (NW) in Poland.

The table below ([Table 1](#)) shows that the main economic and demographic data for the selected regions is GDP per capita compared to the EU28 average, GDP per inhabitant, the total population with population density and the largest urban area.

There are considerable variations within countries as well as between countries, e.g. a GDP compared to the EU28 average ranging from 43% in Nowosądecki, Poland, to 127% in Klagenfurt-Villach, Austria.

Table 1. Economic and demographic data for the selected non-metropolitan areas

Country/Region	GDP PPS % of EU28 average	GDP PPS per inhabitant (regional)/Real GDP per capita (national)	Total population	Population density (km2)	Largest urban area
Austria	130%	37,200	8,690,076	105.9	n/a
Klagenfurt-Villach	127%	36,900	281,395	144.4	100,316
Niederösterreich-Süd	94%	27,400	255,720	76.6	43,863
France	105%	32,300	66,759,950	105.5	6,754,282
Drôme	97%	28,100	504,637	78.3	127,559
Aisne	70%	20,200	538,659	72.7	110,369
Italy	95%	26,400	60,665,551	203.6	2,873,494
Udine	103%	29,900	536,180	112	176,000
Reggio di Calabria	62%	18,100	557,993	173.5	200,330
Poland	68%	11,800	37,967,209	123.6	1,735,442
Płocki	111%	32,200	330,040	100.8	162,000
Nowosądecki	43%	17,700	550,000	152.5	158,000

The non-metropolitan areas, referred to as regions in this text, encompass groups of districts (bezirken) in Austria, provinces in Italy (province), subregions (podregiony) in Poland and departments (départements) in France, corresponding to the NUTS 3 (Nomenclature of Territorial Units) classification.

Klagenfurt-Villach consists of the cities of Klagenfurt and Villach and the districts (bezirk) Klagenfurt-Land and Villach-Land.

Niederösterreich-Süd consists of the city of Wiener Neustadt and the districts Wiener Neustadt Land, Neunkirchen and Lilienfeld.

Drôme and Aisne are départements.

Udine relates to the Province of Udine (provincia) and Reggio di Calabria to the Metropolitan City of Reggio Calabria (Città Metropolitana di Reggio Calabria, which replaced the Provincia di Reggio di Calabria on 1 January, 2018. The territorial extent is the same.

Płocki consists of the city and county (powiat) of Płock, and the county of Sierpc. Nowosądecki consists of the city of Nowy Sącz and the counties Nowosądecki, Limanowa and Gorlice.

Figure 1. Maps of the non-metropolitan areas at NUTS 3 level¹³



Austria: Niederösterreich-Süd (AT122) and Klagenfurt-Villach (AT211)



France: Aisne (FRE21) and Drôme (FRK23)

¹³ Source: Eurostat, NUTS 3 Maps. All maps can be consulted on Eurostat's website in their original pdf size: <https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/web/nuts/nuts-maps-.pdf>.



Poland: Nowosądecki (**PL218**) and Płocki (**PL923**)



Italy: Udine (**ITH42**) and Reggio di Calabria (**ITF65**)

3.2. Identifying the populist parties and the rise of populism in the countries in focus

This study adopted the definitions of prominent scholars of populism Mudde, Inglehart and Norris. Cas Mudde defines populism as “an ideology that considers society to be ultimately separated into two homogeneous and antagonistic groups, ‘the pure people’ versus ‘the corrupt elite’, and which argues that politics should be an expression of the *volonté générale* (general will) of the people.”¹⁴

Drawing on Mudde’s ‘influential’ definition, Inglehart and Norris¹⁵ frame populism as a loose set of ideas with three core features:



They derive four aspects of populism from this definition.

First, faith in the wisdom and virtue of ordinary people, or silent majority, is emphasised over the corrupt establishment.

There is a dichotomy between a homogeneous and ‘good’ people and a corrupt and dishonest elite. Second, populists are often characterised by authoritarianism, favouring a strong and charismatic leadership that reflects the will of the people. Third, populists prefer majoritarian over representative democracy, with a distaste for the institutional checks and balances and protection of minority rights indicative of the latter.

Finally, populists prefer mono-culturalism over multiculturalism, national interest over international cooperation, closed borders over the free flow of people, ideas, labour and capital, and traditionalism over liberal social values. In addition, the study adopted an additional facet of populism in Europe – Euroscepticism – as specified by the assignment.¹⁶ As Mudde succinctly points out, while Euroscepticism and populism are not the same thing, “almost every populist is Eurosceptic, not every Eurosceptic is a populist”¹⁷.

¹⁴ Mudde, 2004.

¹⁵ Inglehart, R. F. & Norris, P., 2016.

¹⁶ For more information, please see Pirro & Van Kessel, 2018.

¹⁷ Mudde, 2017.

The populist parties in the countries concerned in the study were selected and categorised according to data from the Chapel Hill Political science expert Survey (CHES), which estimates party positioning on European integration, ideology and policy issues for national parties in a variety of European countries.¹⁸ For the purpose of this study, an index was constructed to measure positions and attitudes of identified populist parties along the lines of anti-elitism, majoritarianism, authoritarianism, monoculturalism and Euroscepticism (see **Table 2** below and **Appendix 22**). It is important to note that only parties that received 4% of the popular vote or more in the most recent election are included (see **Appendix 21 for more information**).

Table 2. Populism Index of selected parties in Austria, France, Italy and Poland¹⁹

Country	Party	Dimensions, scores on a scale 1 to 10, low to high				
		Anti-elite	Majoritarian	Authoritarian	Monocultural	Eurosceptic
Austria	FPÖ	8.20 ²⁰	8.92	8.88	9.76	8.46
France	RN/FN	9.01	9.90	9.03	9.84	9.91
	La France Insoumise	9.05	3.85	3.19 ²¹	3.39	7.87
Italy	M5S	9.89	5.95	5.11	6.13	7.34
	LN	8.06	7.00	9.10	9.67	9.07
	FI	4.32	6.06	7.66	7.25	4.27
	Fdi	6.99	8.30	9.29	9.65	8.44
Poland	PiS	6.59	8.11	8.95	9.33	6.58
	Kukiz'15	8.95	7.70	8.67	9.02	6.39
	KORWiN	6.22	7.88	8.07	9.53	9.22

The Populism Index was constructed for the purposes of this study. It scores the parties along five dimensions on a scale 1 to 10, lowest to highest. The data used was the available from the Chapel Hill Political science expert Survey (CHES). See also [Appendix 22](#).

¹⁸ The study and the data are available online at <https://www.chesdata.eu/>

¹⁹ See Annex 1 for comparative data on other political parties.

²⁰ This excludes the 'PEOPLE_VS_ELITE' variable since Austria was not covered by the 2017 CHES survey. However, using 'The Manifesto Project', it is clear that FPÖ are in favour of direct democracy over representative democracy. A content analysis of their 2013 manifesto shows that the only mentions of democracy referred to direct democracy. Furthermore, more direct democracy and voter participation in the legislative process was a condition of their coalition agreement with ÖVP in 2017. Find all the data here: <https://manifesto-project.wzb.eu/datasets>

²¹ 'CIVLIV_LAWORDER' data refers to Parti de Gauche, the party from which Jean-Luc Mélenchon resigned in 2014 to form La France Insoumise.

4. Factors for populism at national and regional level: exploring socioeconomic, political-cultural and demographic indicators

One of the major goals of the study was to examine the relationship between socioeconomic indicators and populist voting patterns. In this case, major socioeconomic indicators and related political-cultural (attitudinal) and demographic indicators were analysed using a statistical model (see [Appendix 1](#) and [Appendix 2](#)).

A broader set of possible indicators were included to help examine the factors and root causes behind the rise of populism and suggest further courses of action.

The information in this chapter is based on available data from Eurostat, Eurobarometer and national level data sources²² (see [Appendix 2: Socioeconomic and political-cultural variables](#)).

The information gathered through the citizen and CSO surveys and political science expert interviews in the course of the study is provided as part of each of the four national chapters on Austria, France, Italy and Poland.

As the study was focused on non-metropolitan areas, the analysis of statistical data was carried out at two levels – national and regional – providing valuable insights through comparisons between the different levels.²³ The analysis was conducted at the level of the eight regions in the four focal countries – NUTS 3 where possible and NUTS 2 when not available. The national level analysis included socioeconomic, demographic and attitudinal (public opinion) indicators and their relationship to the overall national voting patterns in regard to populist parties.

²² With regard to election results and socio-demographic profiles of voters the sources are as follows:

For Austria: <http://www.sora.at/themen/wahlverhalten/wahlanalysen.html>

For France data on the legislative election can be found here: https://www.ipsos.com/sites/default/files/files-fr-fr/doc_associe/ipsos_sopra_steria_sociologie_des_electorats_11_juin_21h00.pdf and data on the presidential election can be found here: https://www.ipsos.com/sites/default/files/files-fr-fr/doc_associe/ipsos-sopra-steria_sociologie-des-electorats_23-avril-2017-21h.pdf

For Italy: https://www.ipsos.com/sites/default/files/ct/news/documents/2018-03/elezioni_politiche_2018_-_analisi_post-voto_ipsos-twig.pdf

For Poland:

- data on gender: <https://www.tvn24.pl/wiadomosci-z-kraju,3/wybory-parlamentarne-2015-kobiety-wolaly-pis,589082.html>;

- data on age and education: <http://www.newsweek.pl/polska/szczegolowe-wyniki-wyborow-parlamentarnych-2015-jak-glosowaly-wojewodztwa,artykuly,372966,1.html>;

- data on employment: <https://www.tvn24.pl/wiadomosci-z-kraju,3/wybory-parlamentarne-2015-wyniki-glosowania-grup-zawodowych,589085.html>

²³ The study used the values of each indicator from the year of each election; where data is available quarterly, the study used the value for the last quarter of the year. Where data was not available for a given year, the study used the chronologically closest datum; in these cases, the data was not collected more than two years before/after the election reported.

4.1. Overview of factors for populism at national and regional level in the countries in focus

The macroeconomic situation, national public opinion, regional level developments and the populist vote at national level provide the necessary context for the drivers of the populist vote and further analysis.

In **Austria**, macroeconomic indicators and socioeconomic conditions seem highly promising. Gross disposable income has been consistently high, around 5,000 EUR above the EU average. Income inequality, as measured by the Gini coefficient, has been at least 7% lower than the mean of the EU-28, and has been falling relatively steadily, although it did increase between 2012 and 2013, and again between 2016 and 2017. Furthermore, employment has also been both high and stable, steadily increasing since 2014, and passing 75% in 2017, relative to an EU average of 72.2%.

National growth was, of course, hit by the financial crisis. Austria appeared to bounce back rather well from the first dip, showing growth of over 2.5% in 2011, but was slower to recover than the EU average during the second dip. However, this recovery was still faster than that of Italy and was largely in line with trends observed in France.

Social benefit expenditure is somewhat below the EU average, but with high levels of wealth and low levels of income inequality, this seems unlikely to have a negative impact.

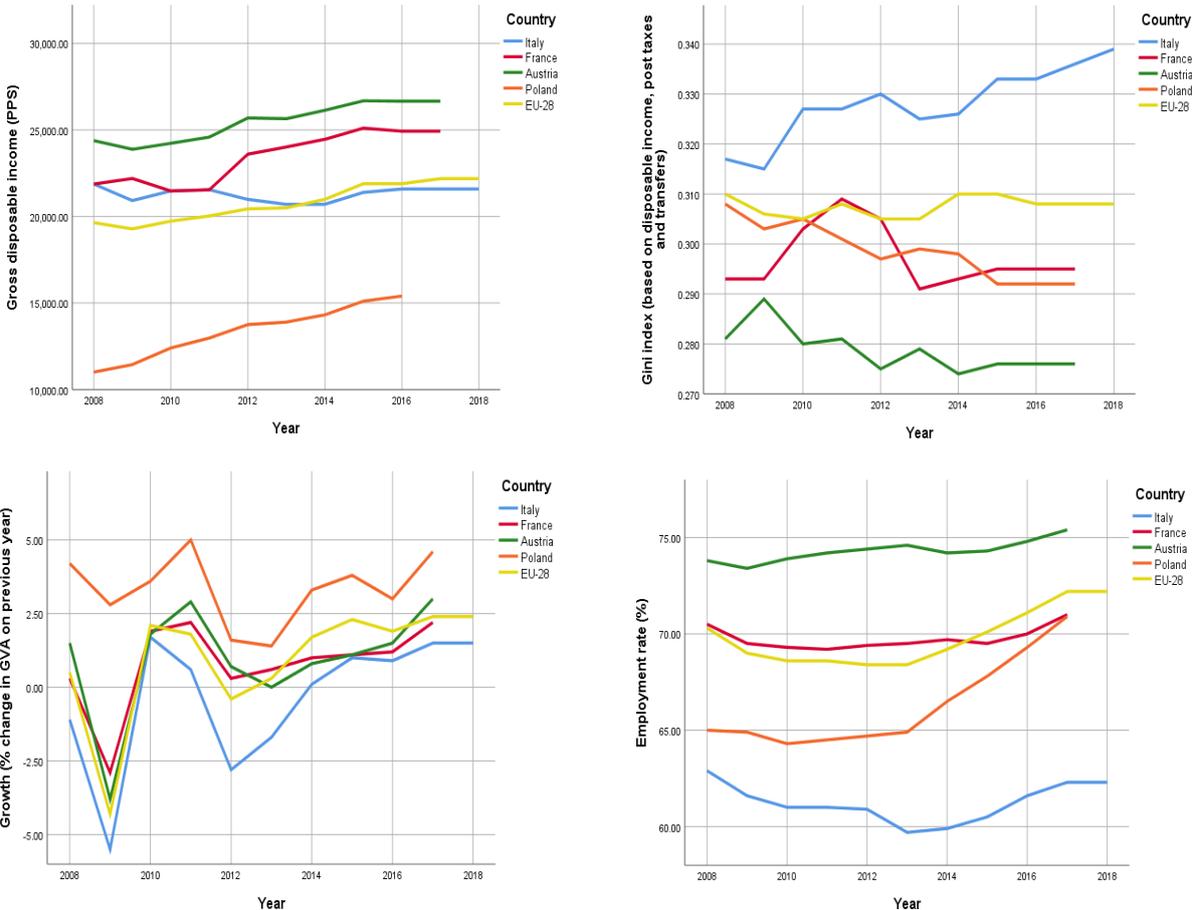
National opinion in Austria shows that, among the countries studied, Austrian citizens gave the highest ratings of their household financial situation, the national economy, satisfaction with national democracy and trust in the national parliament, averaged across the period 2008-2018. From 2014 to 2016, citizens began to distrust the national parliament and national government, but some trust was recovered in a sharp upturn in 2017. Despite a tendency to distrust national institutions, Austrians still reported overall satisfaction with the way democracy works in their country.

Ratings of the national economy fell in 2009 and 2014 but have shown a fast recovery in both cases. In 2017, these ratings were the highest observed in the ten-year period. Austria is the only country studied whose national economy was rated more positively than negatively at any point between 2008 and 2018. Similarly, ratings of household financial situation were much more positive in Austria than in the other three countries; they have, overall, been increasing and seemed to be barely hit by downturns in growth, possibly reflecting the consistent increases in gross disposable income at national level.

Regional level developments in Austria show that the growth of regional GVA was faster in Niederösterreich-Süd, which has a lower GDP than Klagenfurt-Villach, until the two growth rates converged in 2016. However, average disposable income, employment rate and social benefit expenditure are all higher in Niederösterreich-Süd, which suggests that, whilst there is more value produced in Klagenfurt-Villach, the standard of living is higher in Niederösterreich-Süd.

Populist voting in Austria shows that all the indicators implicated in the populist vote are stronger in Niederösterreich-Süd and it is perhaps not surprising that populist parties here receive a lower vote share than those in Klagenfurt-Villach. However, the differences in voting behaviour have been small since 2010 and, indeed, in 2016 and 2017 the two regions were practically indistinguishable by this measure.

Figure 2. Comparison of key socio-economic indicators across the four focal countries (2008-2018)



Austria appears to be, overall, the most socioeconomically successful of the countries studied, and shows the second lowest level of populist voting. There is a continued presence of a populist movement, with the FPÖ consistently receiving 20-30% of the total vote share, despite citizens remaining positive about the economic situation and national institutions.

At a macroeconomic level, **France** seems to have been comparatively stable in the years since 2008. Growth fell between 2008 and 2009, but, of the four countries studied, the contraction was least pronounced there, with growth reaching a low point of -2.5, nearly 1.5 points stronger than the EU average. Similarly, the second dip seemed to have less of an immediate effect on France than the rest of the EU, although economic recovery was somewhat slower. Income inequality has been turbulent but has been consistently at or below the EU average; the Gini index in 2015 (.295) was approximately equal to that of 2008 (.293), suggesting little progress in improving income equality.

Employment rates have been moderate and stable at around 70% for the entire period studied and, in 2017, increased to above 2008 levels for the first time. Gross disposable income remains well above the EU average and social benefit expenditure is high, at around four times greater than the EU average.

National opinion in France, despite the relatively positive macroeconomic picture, shows that French citizens appear dissatisfied with the national economy and have consistently rated it poorly. These ratings, however, have been increasing consistently, and relatively rapidly, since 2014. Satisfaction with the way that democracy works, as well as trust in national government and parliament have all followed the same pattern: rising slowly between 2009 and 2012, falling dramatically between 2012 and 2014 and rising again by 2017. At present, citizens lean slightly towards distrusting national institutions. In contrast, ratings of household financial situation have remained relatively stable and positive, although have failed to show the increases observed in the other three countries in recent years.

Regional level developments in France show that Drôme performs consistently better than Aisne in macroeconomic indicators: it has a substantially higher GDP, employment rate, and average disposable income.

The two regions have relatively similar rates of growth and have shown recovery in all the aforementioned indicators at approximately the same rate in recent years. This suggests that, whilst Aisne may not be said to have been “left behind”, there is no sign of convergence between the two regions, suggesting that regional inequality is persistent. The greatest disparity between the two regions lies in the fact that social benefit expenditure in Drôme is almost four times that in Aisne.

Populist voting in France shows that the national vote share for populist parties is lower in France than in any of the other three countries considered; this may be reflective of its relatively healthy economic status, although it is clear that recent economic crises have taken their toll on public opinion. However, local socioeconomic conditions may play a role. Populist parties in Aisne, the less socioeconomically successful of the two regions, consistently receive a vote share around five percentage points higher than those in Drôme.

In **Italy**, macroeconomic indicators paint a bleak socioeconomic picture. Between 2008 and 2009, Italy's GDP volume contracted significantly more than the EU average and the other countries in this study, with growth falling to -5.5%, relative to an EU average of -4.3%; initial recovery matched that of the rest of the EU, but Italy was dramatically affected by the second dip in 2012, with growth of -2.8% relative to an EU average of -.4%. National employment rates have been low for the entire period considered but have followed the general trends within the EU-28, falling until 2013 then beginning to show recovery. However, once again Italy seemed to be affected by a second dip, with a notable drop in employment between 2012 and 2013, which is not observed in the other countries. Furthermore, income inequality, as expressed by the Gini index, has been increasing dramatically since 2009 and this trend shows no sign of slowing down. Italy is the only country of the four that has a significantly higher Gini index than the EU-28 average.

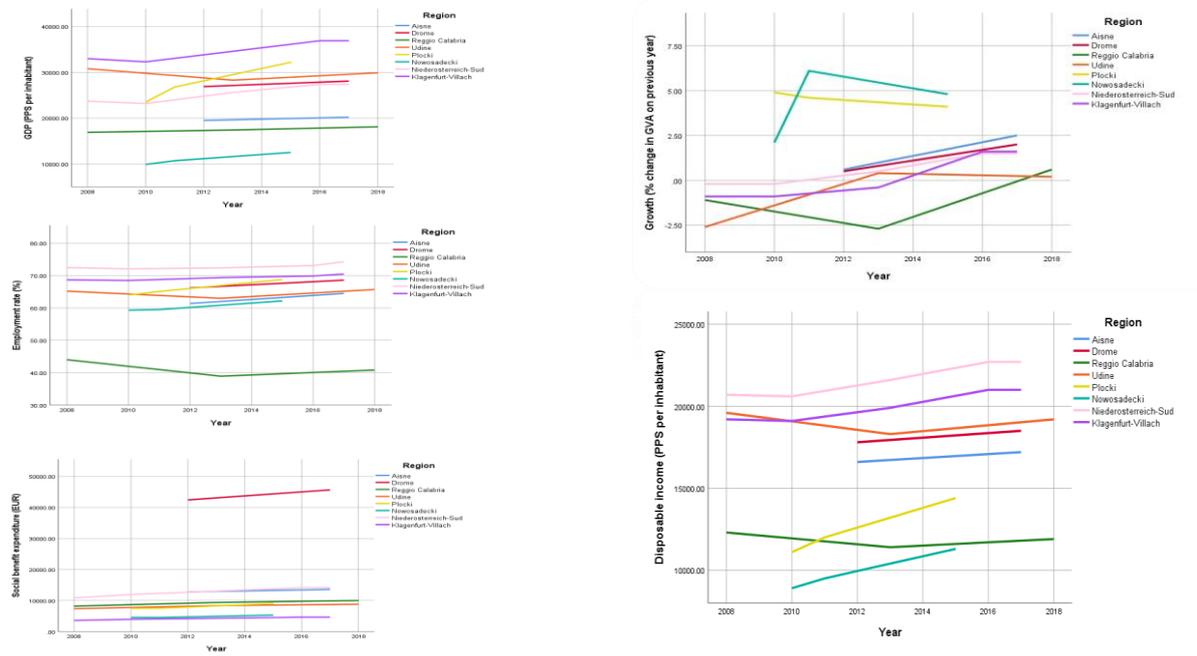
Somewhat more positively, gross disposable income is approximately equal to that of the EU average, and social benefit expenditure is much higher.

National opinion in Italy has been rather negative for the duration of the period examined. Ratings of the national economy and trust in national institutions have been consistently below zero. Of all four populations, Italian citizens give the lowest average rating of the national economy, household financial situation and trust in both national government and national parliament.

Citizens appear to have been more satisfied with both the national economy and their personal situation in 2009 than in 2008, but after 2009 they became increasingly dissatisfied until 2013. Whilst opinions are becoming more positive in all these domains, only the rating of household financial situation has fully recovered to surpass that observed in 2009.

Regional level developments in Italy show that there are significant disparities in the socioeconomic situations of the two regions, Udine and Reggio di Calabria. In particular, there is a large disparity in disposable income, with the average disposable income of households in Reggio di Calabria the lowest of all the regions we have studied. Disposable income has increased steadily since 2013, and this change is occurring in parallel in both regions, meaning that there is no sign of convergence. Employment rates mirror this pattern: employment in both regions has been steadily increasing since 2013, but there is a difference of over 20 points between them, with Reggio di Calabria showing the lowest employment rate of the eight regions by a wide margin.

Figure 3. Regional level comparison of key socio-economic indicators across the eight regions in focus (2008-2018)



Udine, which has a significantly higher GDP than Reggio di Calabria, has shown some small growth every year since 2013, whilst the GDP of Reggio di Calabria continued to contract until 2018. This disparity was greatest in 2017, with Udine showing a growth rate of .4, compared to -2.7 in Reggio di Calabria. However, when averaged across the ten years studied, Udine had the second lowest level of growth of the eight regions studied, so it is evident that both regions performed poorly.

Populist voting in Italy saw the largest average vote share for populist parties across the ten years studied, and this may be partially explained by the socioeconomic backdrop of massive inequality and incredibly low employment rates. It is notable, however, that despite large disparities in average disposable income and growth rates, the size of the populist vote is remarkably similar across the two regions, suggesting that populism is, here, more or less a national-level phenomenon, pertaining to the entire country and the regional socioeconomic differences have little impact. These questions are further explored by other methods within this study with the results of citizen surveys and CSO and political science expert interviews presented elsewhere in the report.

In **Poland**, macroeconomic indicators show that the country's economy is characterised by its rapid growth and the continued improvement of indicators of quality of life. Growth was hit in 2009 but did not fall below 2.5%. Whilst the second dip caused a more dramatic decline in 2012 and 2013, the Polish economy did not at any point begin to contract. Growth rates have remained much higher than the EU average, reaching a low point of 1.4% in 2013, relative to a mean rate of 0.3% across the EU-28. This continued growth is reflected in consistent increases in gross disposable income, with people, on average, being almost 5,000 EUR better off in 2016 than 2008. Disposable income has, however, remained well below the EU average, although convergence towards the rest of the EU-28 is clear: in 2008, EU gross disposable income was 8,633 EUR higher than that of Poland, whilst in 2016 this difference had fallen to 6,494 EUR. Similarly, income inequality has been continually decreasing across the entire ten-year period, falling from a high of .308 to a low of .292 on the Gini index, relative to an EU average of .310 and .308 respectively.

Growth in employment was arguably slightly delayed in comparison to the increases in disposable income. Employment rates were consistently around 5 percentage points lower than the EU average between 2008 and 2013, at which point they began to rise rather

quickly, from a low of 64.3% in 2010 to 70.9% in 2017, relative to an EU average of 68.6% and 72.2% respectively. Social benefit expenditure is a little below the mean of the EU-28 and has been fairly stable across the period in question.

National opinion in Poland indicates that there was a high level of distrust in national government and parliament in 2009, but this appeared to dissipate in 2010, when citizens still tended to distrust the institutions, but at a similar level to the populations of Italy and France. This level of trust has been stable since 2010, although there was a decrease in trust in the national government specifically between 2014 and 2015. Despite these low levels of trust, Polish citizens tend to respond positively when asked about their satisfaction with the way that democracy works in their country.

Public opinion of the national economy is somewhat negative but is significantly more positive than that observed in Italy and France and appears to be steadily increasing. Ratings of household financial situation fell dramatically between 2009 and 2010, but have been slowly recovering since 2011, and are now higher than those seen in both Italy and France. However, these ratings have still not surpassed 2009 levels, despite the dramatic increases seen in disposable income and employment rates.

Regional level developments in Poland show that Płocki has a GDP over 10,000 EUR higher than that of Nowosądecki and an average disposable income that is 3,100 EUR greater (2015). Disposable income in Nowosądecki is the lowest of all eight regions studied. Disposable income and employment rates have been increasing at an approximately equivalent rate in both regions and, as such, there is no sign that this regional inequality is shrinking. Growth in GVA is somewhat higher in Nowosądecki, but this difference is slowly decreasing. Social benefit expenditure in Płocki is near to the average of the regions studied, whilst Nowosądecki spends very little, with only Klagenfurt-Villach spending less.

Populist voting in Poland shows that Nowosądecki, the region with the lowest levels of disposable income and second lowest employment rate, is the region in which the average populist vote share is the highest. The picture in Płocki, similarly, is one in which disposable income is low, but employment and social benefits are at similar levels to those observed in other regions. The populist vote share here is higher than that in any French or Austrian region, but lower than that in both Italian regions. It seems reasonable to think that socioeconomic difficulties could be implicated in the attraction of populist parties here. However, it is important to bear in mind that the swift growth and improvements in income levels seen in Poland have not been mirrored by a decrease in the popularity of populist parties. This implies either that something else must also be in play, or that it is hard to push populism out of the national discourse once it has entered. This is explored further in this study (see [the results of political science expert interviews and CSO surveys in this report](#)).

4.2. Socio-economic and political-cultural indicators and the populist vote: main findings of the analysis at national level in the four countries in focus

This section of the study presents the results of the analysis of a specially designed statistical model²⁴, based on publicly available information. This analysis was made at both national and regional level and is described in two different sections below. The use of a single statistical model allowed us to explore the role of socioeconomic factors of populism in all countries in consideration. Aggregating the data, respectively, at national and regional level ensured a larger data set that provided a better normal distribution and higher confidence level, increasing the validity of the results. In addition to this method, the study employed other methods of research as planned – the citizen surveys, interviews with political science experts and CSO activists and focus groups – to deepen the understanding of the complex and multifaceted phenomena at hand. The latter research methods were better suited to implementation at regional level.

Using a variety of methods – quantitative and qualitative – allowed for a fuller/richer picture and a better pursuit of the goals of the study.

The use of national level data allowed the team to examine the role of socioeconomic and political-cultural indicators that were not available at regional level. These indicators included inequality, measured by the Gini index, employment levels, economic growth, gross disposable income, social benefits, the number of asylum decisions, satisfaction with democracy, trust in government and parliament, perception of one's own financial situation and related issues. The inclusion of public attitudes provided important insights as previous studies on populism have indicated the role of political-cultural factors²⁵. The raw data for the socioeconomic and attitudinal indicators at national level are represented in [Table 3](#) and the sources are listed in [Appendix 2](#).

²⁴ The statistical model is explained in more detail in the Appendix 1: Statistical model. The statistical model was used for exploring the relationship between socioeconomic, political-cultural (attitudinal) and demographic indicators and the populist vote. All variables are standardised z-scores, reflecting the number of standard deviations of change in the dependent variable for every standard deviation of change in the independent variable(s). All R^2 given are adjusted. The model used stepwise regression of: populist vote on regional level data, of right-wing populist vote on regional level data, of populist vote in national level data, populist vote on national level data, including Eurobarometer data. The variables (indicators) are populist

vote, disposable income, employment rate, social benefits expenditure, GDP, growth, Gini Index (for economic inequality), positive asylum decisions, employment, growth, gross disposable income, average rating of the situation of the national economy, optimism, trust in democracy average satisfaction with the way democracy works in country, average rating of household financial situation, all other Eurobarometer questions included in the appendix with data and sources.

²⁵ See, for example, Inglehart & Norris. "Trump, Brexit, and the Rise of Populism: Economic Have-Nots and Cultural Backlash." HKS Faculty Research Working Paper Series RWP16-026, August 2016.

Indicators	Countries			
	Austria	France	Italy	Poland
Positive asylum decisions (number)	3,925	8,005	3,335	55
Gini index (economic inequality) ²⁸	0.276	0.299	0.339	0.296
Employment (%)	75.4	70.6	67	70.9
Social benefits (% GDP)	0.18	0.198	0.199	0.143
Social benefits (m EUR)	66,543.4 6	453,757.5 9	341,670.0 1	61,497.8 2
Growth	3.00	2.20	1.50	3.80
Gross disposable income (EUR)	26,660	24,924	21,586	15,108
Optimism (job, finance, national economy - mean scored)	0.07	0.14	0.16	0.08
Trust (government, parliament, EU, democracy in EU and the country mean scored)	0.084	-0.046	-0.126	0.166
Satisfaction (national economy, employment, personal financial situation - mean scored)	0.29	0.12	0.10	0.13

The results of the statistical analysis, based on the raw data in Table 3, are shown in Table 4 and the main findings are described below.

Table 4. The statistical relationships between variables on a national level and populist vote

Variable	Direction	Standardised magnitude	P	R ² - % of total variance explained by this variable
Gini index (economic inequality)	Positive	.727	<.001	50.9
Employment	Negative	.701	<.001	47.2
Satisfaction with national democracy	Negative	-.608	.001	34.5
Tendency to trust National Parliament	Negative	.593	.001	32.6
Tendency to trust National Government	Negative	.566	.002	29.3
Rating of household financial situation	Negative	.552	.003	27.7
Social benefits	Negative	.356	.028	10.2
Growth – not significant, p = .818				
Positive asylum decisions – not significant, p = .056				
Gross disposable income – not significant, p = .158				
<i>This table displays the statistical relationships between national level variables and the populist vote. The results in this table were calculated based on the data in Table 3 above.</i>				
<i>The 'Direction' of relationship can be either positive or negative.</i>				

'Standardised magnitude' is a measure of the size of a relationship with -1 a perfect downhill (negative) linear relationship and +1 a perfect uphill (positive) linear relationship.

'p' is the probability that the results would be observed if there was no relationship between the variable and a populist vote; $p < 0.001$ is statistically highly significant as (less than one in a thousand chance of being wrong).

'R²' is the potential of total variation that can be explained by a variable; the higher value in the column, the better explanation by the variable.

The Gini index, which measures economic inequality, showed a striking positive relationship with the populist vote among all additional indicators. This suggests that greater levels of income inequality (post taxes and transfers) are closely associated with a greater vote share for populist parties.

The number of positive asylum decisions made was not associated with the populist vote. There is also an insignificant relationship between disposable income and the populist vote at national level. But it should be noted that a stronger relationship with disposable income was registered at regional level (see analysis below). The difference between the results at national and regional level may be because, at the larger national scale, the measure of mean gross disposable income says little about the actual income of most citizens, since it will be strongly influenced by the income of the very rich and collapses across regional disparities, in particular between metropolitan and non-metropolitan areas.

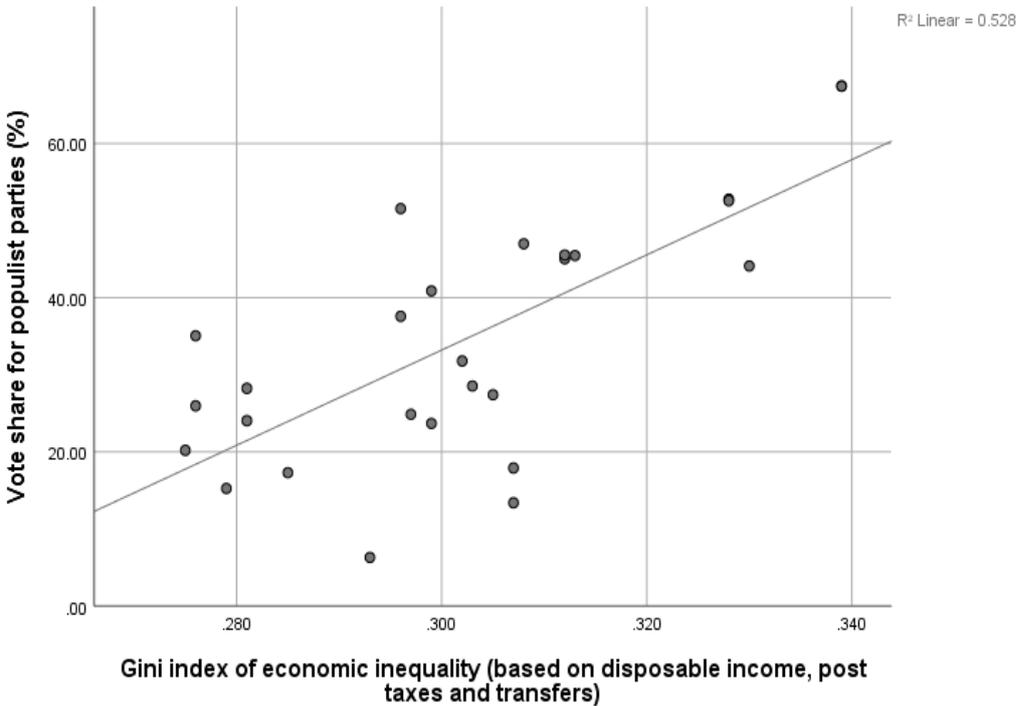
The addition of Eurobarometer data on public attitudes enabled an examination of the relationship between the perception of socioeconomic conditions and the populist vote. Greater satisfaction with national democracy, a stronger tendency to trust national parliament and national government, and a higher rating of household financial situation were all associated with a lower populist vote when considered individually. A poorer average rating of the situation of one's household financial situation was associated with greater populist voting and a lower average satisfaction with the way democracy works in one's own country showed the same relationship. In contrast, a more positive average perception of the situation of the national economy was associated with more success for populist parties. It is plausible that this latter finding may be explained by a perception of national wealth that 'the people' are not benefiting from and the resulting frustration, but this necessitated further exploration by employing other research methods (see the [CSO surveys and political science expert interviews further in this report](#)).

In general, the values of socioeconomic indicators did not change substantially over time, suggesting that they best explained the variation between regions or countries. It might be posited, then, that the socioeconomic situation of a region influences the extent to which populist parties may find success in that region, but that the development of populism over time is more likely to be influenced by political factors, such as the way in which campaigns are fought or how disinformation is spread, which is explored further in this study.

In the analysis, the Gini index continued to show the strongest relationship with the populist vote, thus it seems to explain, to a large extent, populist voting patterns – i.e. higher inequality is related to a higher populist vote and vice versa.

As **Figure 4** shows on the scatter graph, the higher the value of inequality (measured by the Gini Index), as shown on the horizontal axis, the higher the share of the populist vote, as shown on the vertical axis.

Figure 4. The relationship between income inequality and populist vote share at national level



4.3. Socioeconomic factors of populism at regional level

The same statistical model of analysis was applied at regional level with the data for all regions aggregated in a similar way to the national level analysis explained above. A different set of indicators was used at regional level compared to the national level due to data availability at the different levels as the data was compiled from public sources only (as shown in [Appendix 2](#)).

At regional level, the indicators included in the study were social benefits, GDP per inhabitant, regional economic growth, employment level and disposable income (find more information about the variables and sources in [Appendix 2](#)). The raw data is showed in [Table 5](#) and the results of the statistical analysis are shown in [Table 6](#).

Table 5. Socioeconomic indicators at regional level (see Appendix 2 for sources)

Indicators	Regions							
	Austria		France		Italy		Poland	
	KV	NO-S	DR	AI	UD	RC	PL	NW
GDP (PPS per inhabitant) EUR	36,900	27,400	28,100	20,200	29,900	18,100	32,200	12,500
Growth	1.6%	1.5%	2.0%	2.5%	0.2%	0.6%	4.1%	4.8%
Employment rate	70.5%	74.3%	68.6%	64.5%	65.7%	40.8%	68.8%	62.2%
Disposable income	22,300	25,300	21,800	19,300	20,900	11,500	17,800	11,900
Social benefits (m EUR)	4,626.00	14,153.00	45,647.20	13,576.30	8,797.90	9,984.20	9,038.98	5,309.15

The statistical analysis of socioeconomic data at regional level produced several important findings regarding the support for populist parties. The results suggest that higher levels of disposable income, employment rate, social benefit expenditure and GDP were all associated

with a smaller populist vote share at regional level, with [Table 6](#) displaying the statistical results. It seems that the economic wellbeing of a region is an important factor influencing populism amongst its citizens.

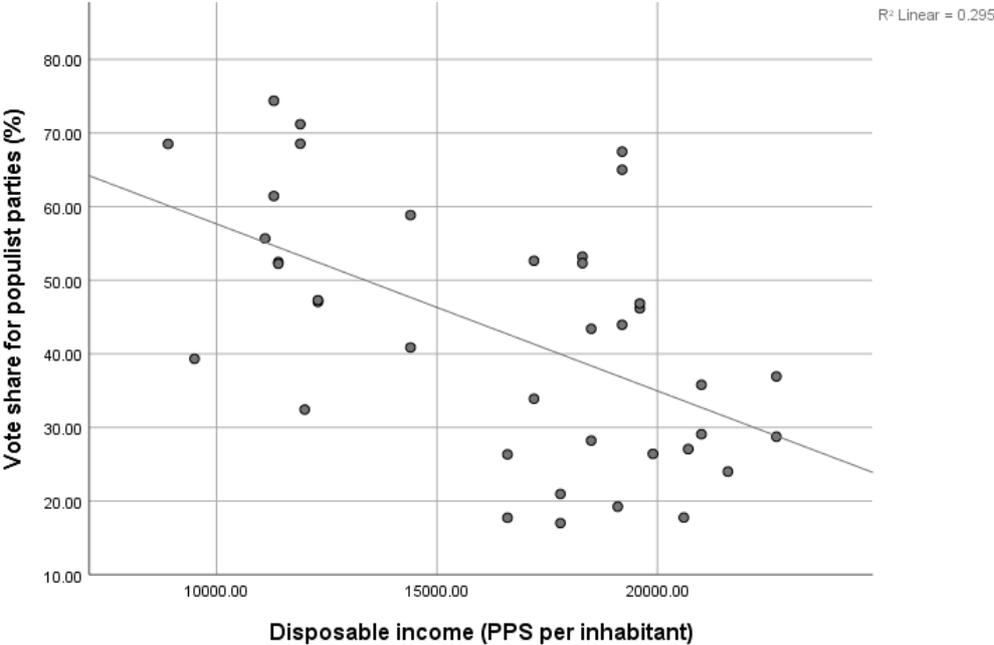
Table 6. The statistical relationships between variables on a regional level and populist vote

Variable	Direction of correlation	Standardised magnitude	P	R ² % of total variance explained by this variable
Disposable income	Negative	.544	< .001	27.6
Employment	Negative	.483	.002	21.2
Social benefits	Negative	.356	.028	10.2
GDP	Negative	.356	.028	10.2
Growth – not significant, p = .395				
<i>This table displays the statistical relationships between national level variables and populist vote. The results in this table were calculated based on the data in Table 3 above.</i>				
<i>The 'Direction' of relationship can be either positive or negative.</i>				
<i>'Standardised magnitude' is a measure of the size of a relationship with –1 a perfect downhill (negative) linear relationship and +1 a perfect uphill (positive) linear relationship</i>				
<i>'p' is the probability that the results would be observed if there was no relationship between the variable and a populist vote; p < 0.001 is statistically highly significant as (less than one in a thousand chance of being wrong)</i>				
<i>'R²' is the potential of total variation that can be explained by a variable; the higher value in the column, the better explanation by the variable</i>				

Importantly, when all the indicators are combined into a single model, disposable income is the only indicator that reaches significance, suggesting the relationship depicted by the scatter graph in **Figure 5** –

i.e. a decrease in disposable income as shown on the horizontal axis is associated with an increase in support for populist parties as shown on the vertical axis.

Figure 5. The relationship between disposable income and populist vote share at a regional level



At regional level, employment rate, social benefit expenditure and GDP have little influence on the likelihood of voting for a populist party directly. Rather, they likely have an indirect influence as together they are associated with a variation in disposable income. For example, it is the relative household wealth that is most closely associated with a reduction in the populist vote. Disposable income appears to explain 28% of the total variation in populist vote. The strength of this relationship can be seen in **Figure 5**.

If right wing populism alone is considered (i.e. excluding votes for La France Insoumise and Movimento 5 Stelle), then disposable income and social benefits show an even stronger association with the populist vote. When controlling for disposable income and social benefits, a positive relationship between employment and the populist vote emerges. This means that, in two theoretical regions with identical levels of average disposable income and social benefit expenditure, a higher populist vote would likely be observed in the region with the higher employment rate. This suggests that the working poor may be more likely to vote for populist parties than those who are unemployed.

5. The case of Austria: populism, citizens and CSOs

5.1. The rise of populism and populist parties in Austria

In Austria, populism can be traced back to economic decline in the 1980s and the transition from full employment to labour market liberalisation²⁶, which then developed under the charismatic leadership of Joerg Haider and, since 2005, Heinz-Christian Strache. Under Haider, the *Freiheitliche Partei Österreichs* (FPÖ) addressed three basic concerns of voters: the growth of the immigrant population, which led to questions about national

identity; the growing economic insecurity of the working class, which could no longer be mitigated by subsidies to industry and indefinite job protection; and, political corruption among the two main parties, Social Democratic Party (SPÖ) and the Austrian People's Party (ÖVP), which created popular resentment against mainstream politicians²⁷. Strache has continued these policies, campaigning since 2011 on putting "Austria first"²⁸.

Table 7. Populism Index of selected parties in Austria

Country	Party	Dimensions, scores on a scale 1 to 10, low to high				
		Anti-elite	Majoritarian	Authoritarian	Monocultural	Eurosceptic
Austria	FPÖ	8.2	8.92	8.88	9.76	8.46

The Populism Index was constructed for the purposes of this study. It scores the parties along five dimensions on a scale 1 to 10, lowest to highest. The data used was the available from the Chapel Hill Political science expert Survey (CHES). See also [Appendix 22](#).

The populist party identified in Austria was the Freedom Party of Austria (FPÖ). FPÖ scores highly in every category of populism we could measure, particularly monoculturalism. They are strongly in favour of assimilationist policies for migrants and restricted immigration, are committed to creating a true direct democracy in Austria and would prioritise the domestic workforce and expand social

welfare services for citizens. Their Euroscepticism includes renationalising EU competences, restricting free movement and halving Austria's contribution to the EU budget. Their idea of Europe is to preserve its cultural identity (that is, stopping immigration from third countries to prevent the Islamification of Europe) and restoring the democratic rights of European peoples against the EU bureaucracy²⁹.

²⁶ Liu, L., "The Decline of Centrist Mass Parties and the Rise of Right-Wing Populism (RWP) in Europe: Case Studies of Neoliberal Reform and Immigration in the UK", Germany and Austria, 2015.
²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ Party Programme of the Freedom Party of Austria (FPÖ), 2011.
²⁹ FPÖ 'Programm' <http://www.FPÖe.eu/dokumente/programm/>

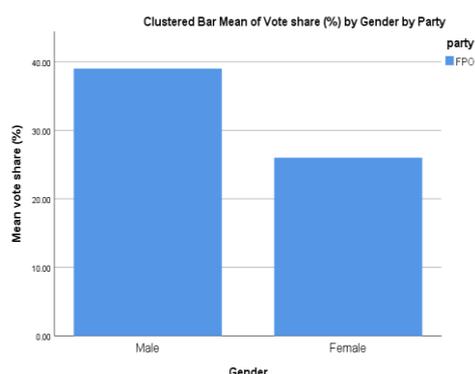
The regional trends in the populist vote in the two regions of Austria - Klagenfurt-Villach (KV) and Niederösterreich-Süd (NS) in Austria, show that there was actually a decrease in the populist from 2008 to 2010, followed by an increase and then another

drop in 2016 (please, see [the trends and comparison across all eight regions in the Appendix 3: The populist vote at regional level: an overview of trends across regions and time](#)).

5.2. Demographic indicators and the populist vote in Austria at national level

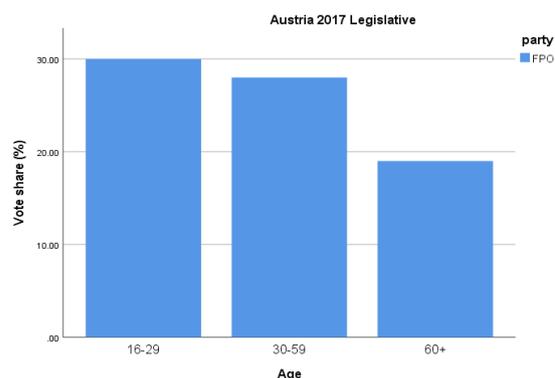
The study also carried out an analysis of a number of demographic indicators – gender, age, education and employment – to examine their relationship with populist voting patterns at national level.³⁰

In terms of gender, the results of the analysis generally showed that men are slightly more likely to vote for populist parties, but the differences are small.

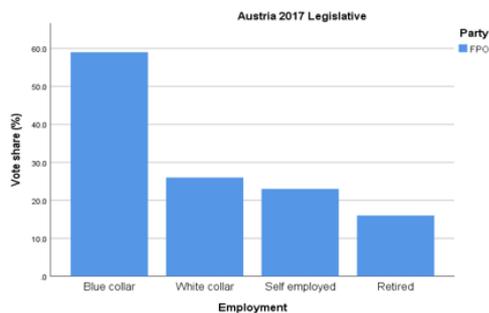


FPÖ consistently receives a higher percentage of the male vote than the female vote; this can be observed in the elections of 2013, 2016 and 2017. Since this pattern is consistent across time, the figure shows the mean vote share received by FPÖ for each gender, taken from all three aforementioned elections (an estimate of 37% male voters and about 25% female voters).

The relationship between age and vote share for FPÖ appears to differ from election to election and by the time of the 2017 legislative election, FPÖ had lost a number of voters aged 60 or over and gained popularity with those under 30.



³⁰ The study used national exit poll data, which provides an estimate as to the voting behaviour of particular demographic groups, to consider possible trends in voting patterns across these groups, both within individual countries and for particular parties. It allowed also for observations of any common features that hold across the countries studied. The analysis at national level is based on available public data and the analysis at regional level is based on the citizen surveys, conducted for the purposes of this study and provided in the national chapters.



In the 2017 Austrian legislative elections, those in more professionalised jobs expressed less of a populist vote; namely, they were less likely to vote for FPÖ. One notable difference between Austria and the other countries studied is that self-employed individuals tended not to vote for the populist party, whereas in other countries, such as Italy and to some extent France, this demographic provides a reasonable base for populist parties. Between 2013 and 2017, the FPÖ vote changed very little amongst all groups except blue-collar workers.

5.3. Citizen surveys in the Klagenfurt-Villach and Niederösterreich-Süd regions of Austria

The citizen surveys, as with the other countries, were focused on eliciting the opinion of citizens specifically in the two regions in focus in Austria – Klagenfurt-Villach and Niederösterreich-Süd (abbreviated respectively as KV and NS).³¹ The sample representation, however, in terms of age, gender, education, occupation, income bracket, religious affiliation and political preferences provides a suitable basis for the purposes of the study as there are respondents within all main demographic categories listed above (e.g. 34% male and 66% female in Klagenfurt-Villach and 41% male and 59% female in Niederösterreich-Süd).

A total of 68 respondents³² from Klagenfurt-Villach and 56 respondents³³ from Niederösterreich-Süd took part in the survey. As noted in the beginning of this report, the two regions were selected for their different socioeconomic characteristics and the high level of populist vote in those regions (please, see also [Appendix 22](#)). The table below shows the main indicators. Klagenfurt-Villach, which is located in the south of the country, is the wealthier of the two regions with a GDP 127% of the EU28 average. Niederösterreich-Süd, which is located in the north-east of Austria, is at 94% GDP of EU28 average, much lower than the national average for Austria of 130% GDP PPS. The population of Klagenfurt-Villach is more than twice that of Niederösterreich-Süd.

³¹ The survey included 36 closed-ended questions and demographic information about the respondents for each of the two regions. It was carried out online on a voluntary basis. They are exploratory surveys meant to complement the other survey methods as the samples are small for a representative study. A representative study for each of the regions, based on their population size, would require some 380 people or more to respond, with a 5% margin of error.

³² In Klagenfurt-Villach, out of 68 respondents, who responded to the political affiliation question, 14.70% (10) marked SPO, 19.10% (13) FPO, 35.30% (24) OVP, 19.10% (13) non-voters, 4.40% (3) preferred not to answer, 7.40% (5) other parties.

³³ In Niederösterreich-Süd, out of 56 respondents, who responded to the political affiliation question, 16,10% (9) marked SPO, 21,40% (12) FPO, 14,30% (8) OVP, 16,10% (9) non-voters, 12,5% (7) preferred not to answer, 19,6% (11) other parties.

Table 8. Socioeconomic characteristics of the two regions in Austria

Country/Region	GDP PPS % of EU28 average	GDP PPS per inhabitant (regional)/Real GDP per capita (national)	Total population	Population density (km ²)	Largest urban area
Austria	130%	37,200	8,690,076	105.9	n/a
Klagenfurt-Villach (KV)	127%	36,900	281,395	144.4	100,316
Niederösterreich-Süd (NS)	94%	27,400	255,720	76.6	43,863

The current analysis is based on select questions pertinent to the five dimensions of populism as identified in this study: anti-elite, majoritarian, authoritarian, monocultural and Eurosceptic, with an additional focus on issues such as direct democracy, disinformation and sovereignty³⁴.

Moreover an analysis of the socio-demographic characteristics of the respondents is provided based on the respective questions in the citizen survey.

With regard to **age**, 50% of the populist FPÖ respondents in the Klagenfurt-Villach region are between 45-54 years old and in the Niederösterreich-Süd region 43% of FPÖ voters are between 55-64 years old. The rest are younger, between 25-54 years old (**Appendix 11: Figures 1 and 2**).

Concerning **gender**, 60% of FPÖ voters in the Klagenfurt-Villach region are female, while in the Niederösterreich-Süd region, 64% are male (**Appendix 11: Figures 2 and 4**).

In terms of **education**, 40% of FPÖ voters in the Klagenfurt-Villach region have no qualifications and, in Niederösterreich-Süd, 21% do not have qualification, giving FPÖ voters the lowest education level of all the groups (**Appendix 11: Figure 3 and 6**).

With regard to **employment**, 35% of FPÖ voters in the Klagenfurt-Villach region are employed full-time and 20% unemployed, and in the Niederösterreich-Süd region, 64% of FPÖ voters are employed full-time, which is the highest for the region. (**Appendix 11: Figures 4 and 8**).

Concerning **annual household income**, FPÖ voters are almost equally divided between the smallest income group (up to EUR 24,999) and the next income bracket (EUR 25,000 to 49,999) and, in the Niederösterreich-Süd region, 50% of FPÖ voters are in the middle group (EUR 25,000-49,999) (**Appendix 11: Figures 5 and 10**).

³⁴ The questionnaire for the citizen survey often included two or more questions to explore each topic, totalling 36 questions on different aspects of populism. This report

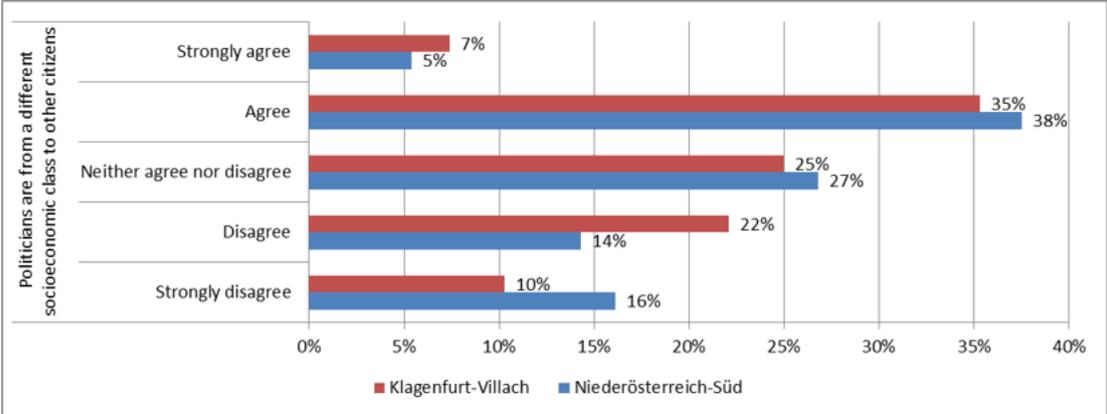
shows only selected key questions out of these 36 and the respective responses, which were deemed most relevant for the analysis.

With regard to **religion**, 70% of FPÖ voters in the Klagenfurt-Villach region belong to Catholicism, which is higher than the regional average and, in the Niederösterreich-Süd region, 36% of FPÖ voters are Catholic and 50% are not religious, which is comparable to the regional averages (**Appendix 11: Figures 6 and 12**).

On the issue of **anti-elitism** and whether politicians are from a different socioeconomic class to other citizens, there are two main conclusions. First, respondents in both regions have very similar opinions. Second, while there are no overwhelming majorities, there are more respondents who agree with the proposition that politicians are from a different socioeconomic class – 43% in Klagenfurt-

Villach and 42% in Niederösterreich-Süd – than who disagree with it – 32% in Klagenfurt-Villach and 30% in Niederösterreich-Süd. There are very similar levels of undecided respondents – 25% in Klagenfurt-Villach and 27% in Niederösterreich-Süd. In the Klagenfurt-Villach region, the populist FPÖ actually has a smaller share of those who agree with this populist proposition (54%), compared to the opposition SPÖ (70%), which is the highest share among all groups. It is a similar situation in the Niederösterreich-Süd region, as the opposition SPÖ has a higher share (56%) of those who agree (those who gave no political affiliation have 57%), compared to just 33% among the populist and governing FPÖ party (**Appendix 10: Figures 1 and 2**).

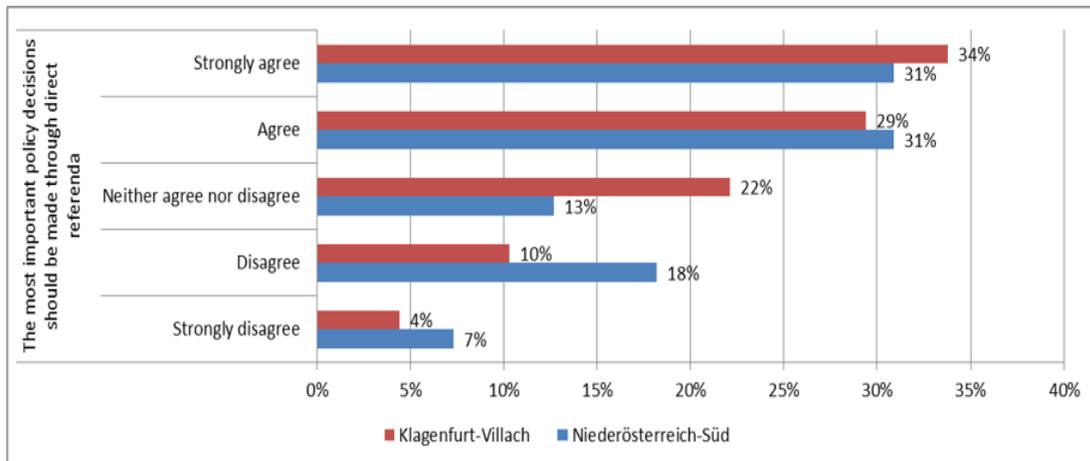
Figure 6. Anti-elitist sentiments



In terms of **direct democracy** and, specifically, using more direct referenda, there is very high support for this suggestion and it is almost identical in both regions with support as high as 63% in Klagenfurt-Villach and 62% in Niederösterreich-Süd. Disagreement is higher in Niederösterreich-Süd (25%) than in Klagenfurt-Villach (14%), but there are more undecided respondents in Klagenfurt-

Villach with 22% compared to 13% in Niederösterreich-Süd. In the Klagenfurt-Villach region, voters of the populist FPÖ are the biggest supporters of the notion with 85%, compared to 63% on average. In the Niederösterreich-Süd region, FPÖ voters are again the biggest proponents of direct referenda with 84% compared to 62% on average for the region (**Appendix 10: Figures 3 and 4**).

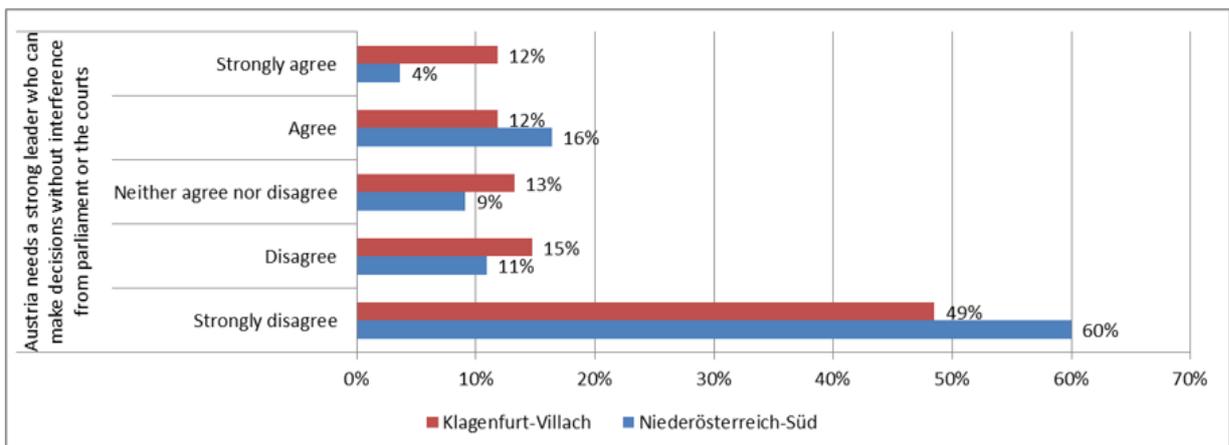
Figure 7. Attitudes to direct referenda



With regard to testing **authoritarian sentiment** through support for a strong leader unchecked by the parliament and courts, there is a very high rejection of this notion in both regions in focus in Austria. The share of those disagreeing with this is 64% in Klagenfurt-Villach and 71% in Niederösterreich-Süd, and the proportion of those who agree is 24% in Klagenfurt-Villach and 20% in Niederösterreich-Süd.

In the Klagenfurt-Villach region, 30% the FPÖ voters support this, which is the highest among party supporters, although non-voters are much more supportive with 54%. In the Niederösterreich-Süd region, 50% of FPÖ voters support this, which is the highest among all groups. ([Appendix 10: Figures 5 and 6](#)).

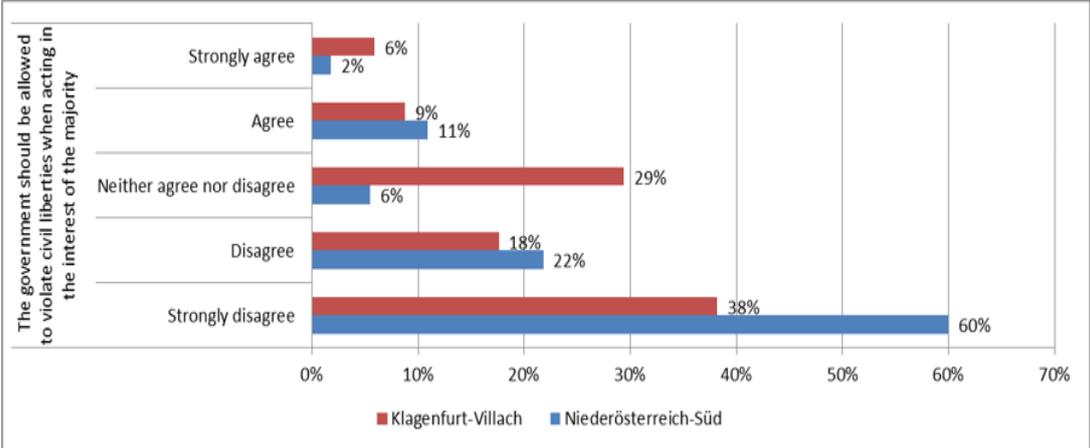
Figure 8. Attitudes to strong unchecked leader



The question of **majoritarianism** and the notion that governments should be able to violate civil liberties when acting in the interests of the majority is somewhat rejected, but there are regional differences. There is much stronger disagreement with this in Niederösterreich-Süd (82%) than in Klagenfurt-Villach (56%), but it should be noted that agreement with the proposal is quite low in both regions – 15% in Klagenfurt-Villach and 13% in

Niederösterreich-Süd. A high proportion in Klagenfurt-Villach, nearly a third (29%) of respondents, is undecided. FPÖ voters in the Klagenfurt-Villach region are the biggest supporters of this view with 38%, compared to just 15% on average. In the Niederösterreich-Süd region, there is a slightly different situation as voters of the ruling ÖVP support this to the highest degree (26%), compared to just 8% of FPÖ voters (**Appendix 10: Figures 7 and 8**).

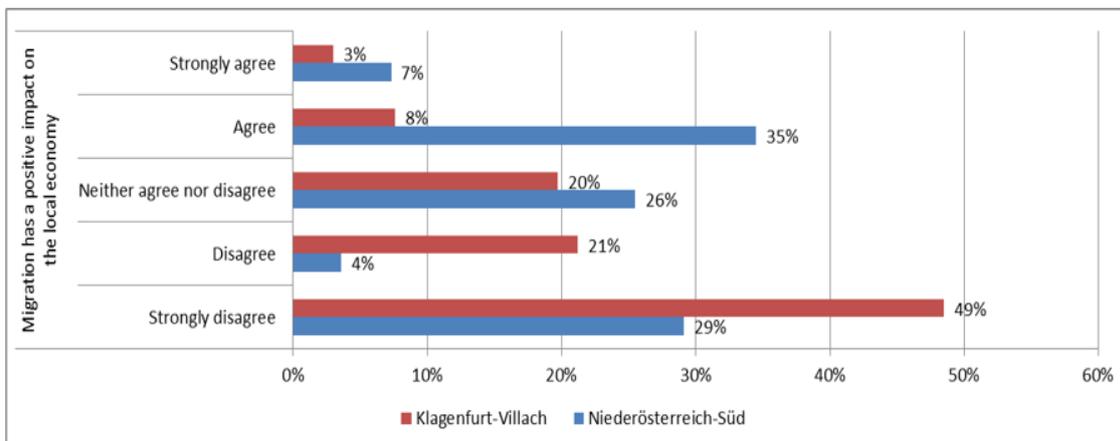
Figure 9. "Majoritarianism" and civil liberties



On the question of the **impact of migration on the local economy**, there are considerable differences between the two regions. About 70% in Klagenfurt-Villach disagree with the view that migration has a positive impact on the local economy, while the share for Niederösterreich-Süd is less than half (33%). The proportion of those who agree that migration is good for the local economy is much higher in Niederösterreich-Süd (42%) than in Klagenfurt-Villach (11%), and the number of undecided respondents in both regions is

relatively high – 20% in Klagenfurt-Villach and 26% in Niederösterreich-Süd. In the Klagenfurt-Villach region, 83% of the populist FPÖ voters and 84% of ÖVP voters – both governing parties – disagree with the idea, which are the highest levels among all groups. In the Niederösterreich-Süd region, FPÖ voters, again, have the highest share (67%) of respondents who reject the proposition that migration benefits the local economy (**Appendix 10: Figures 9 and 10**).

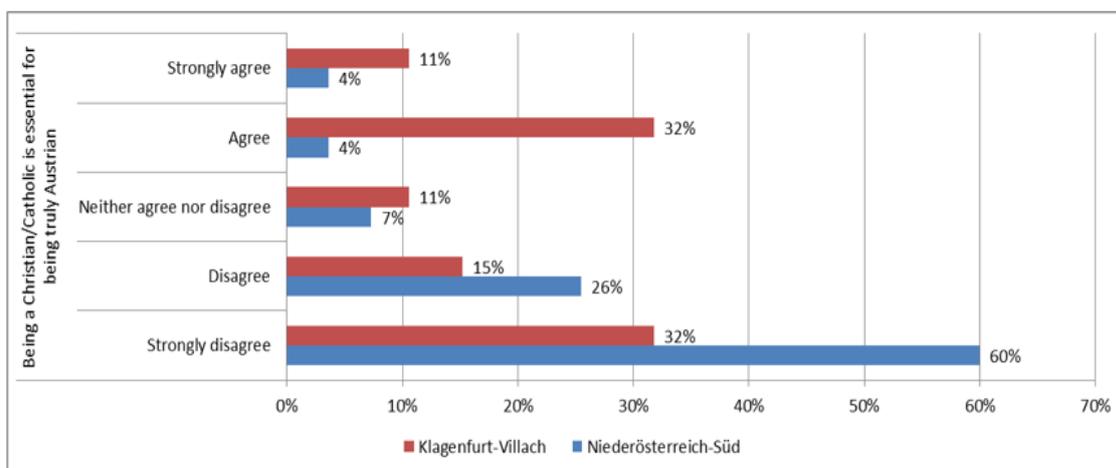
Figure 10. Migration and local economy



With regard to **Christianity and Catholicism** as an essential component of **national identity**, many more agree with this notion in Klagenfurt-Villach (43%) compared to Niederösterreich-Süd (8%). A large majority in Niederösterreich-Süd (86%) disagrees with this, while the share in Klagenfurt-Villach is 47%.

In Klagenfurt-Villach, the ruling conservative ÖVP (67%) has the highest share of respondents who support the statement that being Catholic is essential for being truly Austrian, and their coalition partner FPÖ comes second with 42%, which is close to the average of 43% for the region. In the Niederösterreich-Süd region, it is the FPÖ party who support this notion the most with 16%, and SPÖ is second with 11% (**Appendix 10: Figures 11 and 12**).

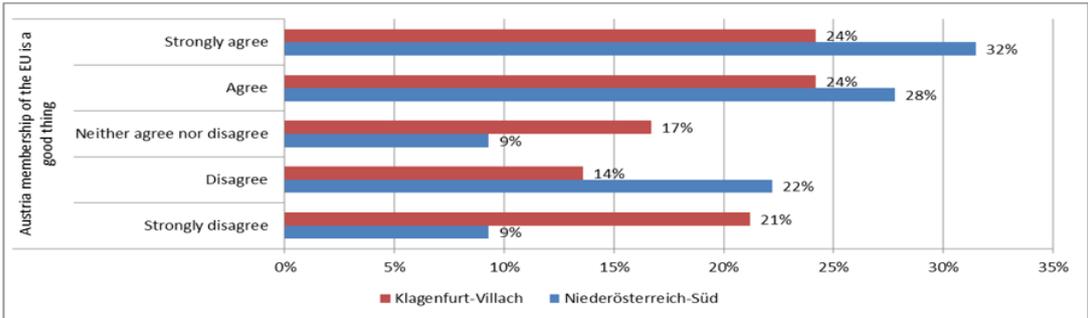
Figure 11. Religious affiliation and national identity



Concerning **Euroscepticism** and Austria's EU membership, there is a high level of support for EU membership in both regions, but it is higher in Niederösterreich-Süd with 60%, compared to 48% in Klagenfurt-Villach. Disagreement with EU membership is slightly higher in Klagenfurt-Villach with 35% compared to 31% in Niederösterreich-Süd. The share of undecided respondents is higher in Niederösterreich-Süd with 17%

while in Klagenfurt-Villach the proportion is just 9%. In Klagenfurt-Villach, FPÖ party respondents show the highest level of disagreement with 83%, compared to 35% on average and just 13% for their partner in government ÖVP. In Niederösterreich-Süd, FPÖ voters have the highest disagreement rate with nearly 91% compared to 31% for the region and just 13% for ÖVP (**Appendix 10: Figures 13 and 14**).

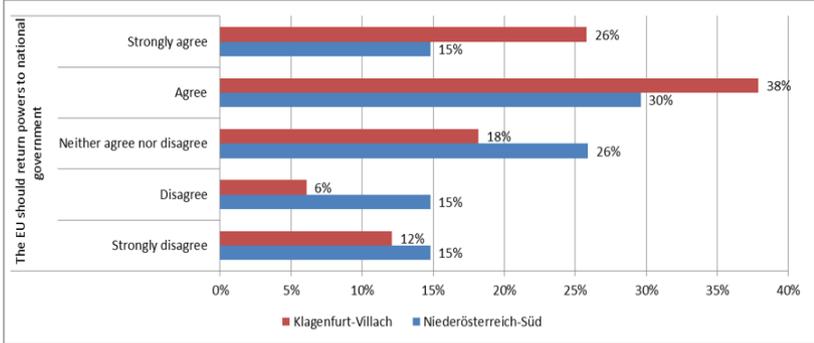
Figure 12. EU membership



In terms of the **sovereignty debate**, that is, whether the European Union should return powers to the national government, respondents in both regions tend to support this proposition but to different degrees. In Klagenfurt-Villach, support is as high as 64%, while it is 45% in Niederösterreich-Süd. Disagreement with the proposal is higher in Niederösterreich-Süd (30%) than in Klagenfurt-Villach (18%). About a quarter of respondents in Niederösterreich-Süd are

undecided (26%), while in Klagenfurt-Villach the proportion is 18%. In Klagenfurt-Villach, FPÖ voters are the biggest supporters with 91%, compared to just 18% on average for the region. In Niederösterreich-Süd, a similar share of 91% FPÖ voters approve of this proposition, compared to 45% on average for the region (**Appendix 10: Figures 15 and 16**).

Figure 13. Sovereignty and return of powers



The observations of responses to key questions on populism across political affiliation point to the following findings. With regard to **anti-elitism**, the populist FPÖ, a junior government partner, actually has a smaller share of those who agree with this populist proposition, compared to the opposition (SPÖ in KV region) and politically unaffiliated (in NV region) but still comes second and ahead of the other groups. With regard to support for **direct referenda**, voters of the populist FPÖ are the biggest supporters of the mechanism in both regions in focus in Austria.

Concerning the notion of a **strong, unchecked leader**, FPÖ voters are the biggest supporters in the NV region, but in the KV region they come second in their support after non-voters. With regard to “**majoritarianism**” and whether the government should be allowed to breach civil liberties, FPÖ voters in one region (KV) are the biggest supporters of this position, but in the other region (NV) the other ruling party – the non-populist ÖVP - voters

support this to the highest degree and the FPÖ voters provide very low support.

On the question of whether ***migration is good for the local economy***, the ruling populist FPÖ rejects it in the highest degree in both regions in focus, and in one region (KV) its partner the non-populist ÖVP voters also reject it in equal measure. With regard to **religious affiliation and national identity**, two non-populist parties’ voters are the highest supporters of this notion – ÖVP in KV region and the SPÖ in NV and the populist FPÖ voters come second in both cases.

On the issue of **EU membership**, in both regions in focus in Austria the populist FPÖ party respondents show the highest level of disagreement with this notion (with extremely high levels of over 80%-90%). With regard to the **sovereignty debate**, the populist FPÖ voters are the biggest supporters to the notion of EU returning powers to the national government (with extremely high levels of over 90%).

The **comparison between the eight regions** in focus (the two regions in Austria and the other six in the rest of the countries) in this study **across eight key questions** of the citizen surveys³⁵ can be seen in **Appendix 6. Comparison across the eight regions in focus**. The eight regions compared on key aspects of populism.

³⁵ The citizen surveys were conducted in all eight regions in focus for the purposes of this study, using a closed-ended questionnaire. For further details and the methodology, please see the national chapters in this report. These key questions on the dimensions of populism include anti-elitist sentiments, authoritarian and majoritarian tendencies, attitudes towards migration, religion as a marker of national identity, opinion about EU membership and the sovereignty debate in the context of EU membership.

5.4. CSO environment and CSOs at regional level in Austria

This section analyses the state of civil society organisations at national and regional level in Austria and is based on data from publicly available records and sources³⁶. It examines the environment in which CSOs operate, the typology of CSOs at regional level and the activities CSOs undertake to address populism in view of socioeconomic factors, migration, direct democracy, Euroscepticism, EU values, civic education and the use of online disinformation. There are examples of CSOs' initiatives, but the good practices identified to highlight the positive impact CSOs can have are presented elsewhere in this report. The CSO interviews conducted especially for this study are presented in section **5.5 Findings of the expert and CSO interviews**.

It should be emphasised that there were vast differences in the available public information between the different countries and the different regions within the same country, with definitions and data varying substantially even within a single country or region. The analysis took these circumstances into account and

standardised the information to the extent possible; nevertheless, it necessarily imposed differences in these sections of the report between the countries and regions.

The CSO environment in Austria deteriorated to a certain extent from 2008 to 2017, according to the V-Dem Core Civil Society Index (**Appendix 8: V-Dem Core Civil Society Index**), as the score for Austria fell by 1.6% between 2008 and 2017³⁷, which was the smallest drop compared to France with 6.5%, Italy with 6.2% and Poland with 27.3% during this period. In Austria, the Austrian Civil Society Umbrella Group (IGO) has reported “unexpected and existence-threatening” cuts for organisations working on discrimination, migration, women’s rights, family counselling and job integration, as well as a “never-experienced lack of access to policy-makers and consultation mechanisms”³⁸.

³⁶ Sources for Austria include:

http://gemeinnuetzig.at/wp-content/uploads/2018/06/Austria_CSI_RA_final_en.pdf
http://gemeinnuetzig.at/wp-content/uploads/2018/06/Austria_CSI_RA_final_en.pdf
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https://www.noe.gv.at/noe/Zahlen-Fakten/NOeSTAT_2017_www200dpi.pdf
<http://www.ideellarena.se/wp-content/uploads/2016/02/reinhard-millner.pdf>
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<http://www.wiener-neustadt.gv.at/stadt/vereine/soziales>
<https://neuwal.com/barometer/profile.php?b=11>
<https://www.digitalerkompass.at/>
<https://www.a1.group/en/csr/media-competency>

³⁷ The civil society score of Austria fell from 0.935 in 2008 to 0.920 in 2017 on a scale from 0 to 1, where 0=fragile, 1=robust. For the other countries, please see the respective country sections.

³⁸ <https://monitor.civicus.org/country/austria/>

In 2017, there were an estimated 4,488 CSOs in Klagenfurt-Villach, out of which 1,024 were sports and cultural associations and 3,464 were active in other areas.³⁹ The sports and cultural associations represented 17% and 20% of the sector respectively, which would be above the Austrian average (see [Appendix 9](#)) and the rest included numerous social services, education and healthcare organisations, among others. The 48% volunteering rate for Carinthia⁴⁰ shows that volunteering is common.

For Niederösterreich-Süd, as of 1 January 2017, there were 3,035 associations without political affiliation^{41,42}. Volunteering in Niederösterreich in 2013 stood at 31%⁴³.

With regard to **tackling socioeconomic issues**, civil society in both Klagenfurt-Villach and Niederösterreich-Süd is strong and well-organised in providing services to the community. The “big five” welfare organisations⁴⁴ – Caritas, Diakonie,

Hilfswerk, Rote Kreuze and Volkshilfe – are dominant in this sector in Austria and it is no different in Klagenfurt-Villach and Niederösterreich-Süd⁴⁵.

These organisations work with local governments to provide social services. Caritas, for example, offers help and advice in financial and social emergencies, counselling and therapy, shelter and housing, work and employment, asylum, migration, and integration, care and maintenance, and disability support services. Likewise, Diakonie provides a wide range of social services to address the difficulties of people in need, such as legal advice, help with addiction, residential care, education and training, employment, counselling and migration. Hilfswerk, Rote Kreuze and Volkshilfe are similarly engaged in social welfare activities. Social services provided by CSOs in Klagenfurt are well documented⁴⁶. There are, however, many other smaller organisations also providing such services⁴⁷.

³⁹Sources:

<https://www.klagenfurt.at/Resources/Persistent/e5370def05144622a45e0f60a562a72002218afa/Statistisches%20Jahrbuch%202017.pdf>

http://www.salzburgagentur.at/fileadmin/user_upload/StatistikAustria_2017oesterreich_zahlen_daten_fakten.pdf

An estimate based on the respective populations of Klagenfurt and Villach. If the figure for Klagenfurt is adjusted to Villach's population, which is approximately 60% of Klagenfurt's.

⁴⁰ Ibid.

⁴¹ In the case of Austria, this includes all non-governmental organisations in the broader sense, i.e. non-profit, voluntary citizens' groups that function independently of government, but excluding those with political affiliation.

⁴² The source is available at https://www.noel.gv.at/noel/Zahlen-Fakten/NOeSTAT_2017_www200dpi.pdf

⁴³ Ibid.

⁴⁴ <http://www.ideellarena.se/wp-content/uploads/2016/02/reinhard-millner.pdf>

⁴⁵ For example, Diakonie lists 85 different operations in Carinthia and Caritas operates in 9 main areas in the region. In Niederösterreich-Süd, Volkshilfe lists 70 services across the region.

⁴⁶ <https://www.klagenfurt.at/Resources/Persistent/e5370def05144622a45e0f60a562a72002218afa/Statistisches%20Jahrbuch%202017.pdf>

⁴⁷ Such as in Wiener Neustadt in Niederösterreich-Süd <http://www.wiener-neustadt.gv.at/stadt/vereine/soziales>

Concerning the role of CSOs and the **anti-immigration narrative**, many organisations in Klagenfurt-Villach and Niederösterreich-Süd, including the “big five”, provide integration services to migrants, refugees and asylum seekers, including German language courses and access to employment, training and intercultural dialogue. Furthermore, minority groups have their own community centres, which include the indigenous Carinthian Slovenes in Klagenfurt-Villach, as well as communities from the former Yugoslavia and Islamic groups. These community centres can have a strong role in explaining migrant cultures and improving intercommunal relations. AVESTA, for example, an Afghan cultural association in Klagenfurt, works with Afghan migrants to integrate them into society and to overcome misunderstandings and differences between communities and cited the attitude of society towards migrants as a major challenge. They emphasised the need to develop intercommunal dialogue and bring people into contact with migrants to address the concerns that arise from the political and media discourse around migration, also highlighting the success that discussion and explanation can have in overcoming these differences⁴⁸.

In Klagenfurt-Villach, the study identified three organisations working to facilitate **direct democracy** – Aktiv Demokratie, Mehr Demokratie Kärnten and Mutbürger – whilst in Niederösterreich-Süd there is only

the regional branch of Mehr Demokratie. Activities include public meetings, citizen surveys and referendum campaigns. Nationally, the Vienna-based Association for the Promotion of Political Education and Online Journalism, or neuwal, provides information on candidates and issues for elections across the country⁴⁹.

With regard to **tackling online disinformation**, media literacy projects in Austria aiming to address the problem of disinformation have a regional or local range, with only one national media literacy network (Medienbildung JETZT, mainly active around Vienna). The association Digitaler Kompass⁵⁰ offers workshops in Austria on the “critical and conscious use of information on the internet”, with participants learning how to evaluate articles, photos and videos, as well as research the internet correctly and address the problems of disinformation, filter bubbles and hate speech on the internet, although these are only carried out in the Vienna area. The A1 telecom group runs a media literacy programme devoted to “closing the digital divide”, which supports those who are disadvantaged in their access to the internet as a source of information and communication. “A1 Internet for All” started in Austria in 2011, providing free media competence training in three permanent locations, including Klagenfurt⁵¹.

Euroscepticism is not actively addressed.

⁴⁸ This was registered during an interview with CSOs for this study.

⁴⁹ <https://neuwal.com/barometer/profile.php?b=11>

⁵⁰ <https://www.digitalerkompass.at/>

⁵¹ <https://www.a1.group/en/csr/media-competency>

5.5. Findings of the expert and CSO interviews

This part presents the findings of the expert and CSO interviews⁵² (see the [Appendix 4 on the questionnaire](#) and [Appendix 7 for a list of interviewed experts and CSO activists](#)) carried out in the two regions in focus in Austria.⁵³ The interviewees were based in the country and in the two regions in focus. Ten in-depth interviews and two focus groups in the two regions with 16 participants in total were conducted in Austria. The answers are provided in a summarised form without referring to the names and positions of the respondents ([a list of respondents is provided in the appendices](#)).

For the sake of the research, the opinions of CSO activists and political science experts are represented as provided in the interviews, but this should not be construed in any way as an endorsement of these views and recommendations by the research team.

The questions asked about the causes of populism in Austria, the national and regional differences and similarities, and specific aspects related to populism, such as Euroscepticism, online disinformation, direct democracy and the role of CSOs, including impediments and solutions.

5.5.1. Factors of populism at national and regional level

With regard to the question of the **main factors that drive populism** in Austria – **socioeconomic or cultural** – the respondents were nearly unanimous that the cultural factors are stronger, but added that both sets of factors are important and socioeconomic anxiety reinforces the cultural aspects. There were two important clarifications made about the two sets of factors by the CSO activists, political science experts and focus group participants in Austria. The socioeconomic factors are more about **fear and anxiety** that the situation might worsen in the future, for example due to migration or EU integration conflated with the effects of globalisation.

One academic expert in populism contrasted the two, explaining that “*the socioeconomic one would be more a statement by someone wanting to take something away from me and the cultural issue is the challenge of integration, identity*”. Regional focus group participants pointed out that people in difficult socioeconomic circumstances are not bound to vote for populists, so this cannot be an excuse, for example a citizen voting for a far right xenophobic party cannot vindicate this action with the financial problems this citizen might have.

⁵² The interviewees were CSO activists and experts in political science, knowledgeable of the issues of populism and/or the civic sector on country and/or European level.

⁵³ There are further conclusions, recommendations and cross-country comparisons in the concluding chapter of this report.

As noted above, there is nearly unanimous opinion on the role of factors, but with one exception – **local officials and politicians** who were interviewed for this study were more inclined to think that **socioeconomic factors are more important** than, or **equally as important as, the cultural factors**. According to one participant, the

socioeconomic problems are the first to be felt by people, who care about incomes, housing, welfare and normal life. At the same time, all interviewees noted that the social and economic situation and public services in Austria are excellent, which leads back to the proposition that it is more about anxiety than the actual situation.

One academic expert in populism, comparing the strength of the two sets of factors, summarised that

“... the cultural issues are stronger, because identity and fear of the other and the scapegoat discourse “us against them”, is something that goes much deeper than the question of how many subsidies and how many social benefits or how many jobs or whatever, is given to your neighbour.”

The participants provided further details that are important for understanding the reasons for populism in Austria. Many of them noted that populists exploit and increase public concerns, such as the **fear of the unknown**. The dominant populist or national populist discourse simplifies the situation and feeds on emotions, and existing aggressive marketing strategies and the media environment and short political cycles contribute to propelling populists to power. With regard to the FPÖ party, it was noted that they exploit three topics – immigration, national identity and a kind of welfare chauvinism.

About Austria specifically, there is an additional outtake as most of the participants noted that it is not about populism in general, but **about a populist radical right party (FPÖ)**, while **there are no populist far-left parties** in the country. Also, some political science experts, as well as focus group participants, noted that the term “populism” is too broad or unclear for

them, so they prefer to identify those parties as national populists or radical right parties. Participants also noted the role of anti-establishment attitudes against mainstream parties in the rise of populism in Austria.

The situation is specific in Austria, as the populist party, FPÖ, is in power as a junior government partner. According to interviewees, the leading government partner is giving a free hand to FPÖ in their populist agenda as long as they don't oppose the neoliberal economic agenda. According to some opinions, this moderates FPÖ's agenda to an extent, but it gives them tools for influence. In other words, the participation of FPÖ has two opposite effects. On the one hand, being in power restrains some of their positions and behaviour. On the other hand, being in the government provides them with control of institutions and therefore leverages to implement other policies.

With regard to the question of whether there are **differences in the factors of populism in the different regions**, there were three interesting points made by the CSO activists, political science experts and focus group participants. First, most of the interviewees thought that, in general, the role of the different factors is similar across the country, that is, they have **national influence**. Secondly, according to one political science expert, the rural-urban divide, geographic proximity and the role of neighbouring countries around border areas may have some influence, but it is, above all, **a city - countryside divide**. Third, there is an example of the Carinthia region, the former stronghold of the populist FPÖ party, which made a turn and is now dominated by a non-populist party after FPÖ descended into corruption scandals.

In the focus groups with diverse participants from the two regions, however,

there were concerns voiced about perceived unfairness, which gives birth to populism – i.e. migrants and refugees receiving the same or more generous allowances and public services than local pensioners, which needs to be addressed.

On the question of **how populist parties rank as a challenge**, a number of interviewees (experts and CSO activists) in Austria thought that “*when it comes to the rule of law and the European values, this is a European wide challenge*” as defined by an academic expert in populism. There was a high degree of concern among those interviewed that the example of neighbouring countries, such as Hungary and Italy with Viktor Orban and Matteo Salvini, is the main challenge for liberal democracy. Another academic expert in populism pointed out the dangers of polarisation in society posed by populism:

“Populism in itself is dangerous, because it divides the people or electorate. It pushes the narrative that there is a clear and distinguishable group that is the enemy, whether it is the elite or whatever they call it.”

With regard to the question of **populist party weaknesses**, i.e. what drives people away from them and what limits their support, the interviewees made several points. The main weakness identified was that populist parties did not actually have concrete policies to improve the problems at hand, e.g. “*it is a lot about “short-termism” versus sustainable solutions*”, as

one academic expert in populism defined it. This is especially valid for the economy as economic issues are not part of their core ideology and core interests. The respondents also recounted the indicative story of FPÖ losing its stronghold of Carinthia as corruption cases damaged the party’s reputation.

The change of leadership after the death of Joerg Haider was also partly blamed for the poor fortunes of the party as it relied very much on his personal charisma.

Responses in the focus group in Niederösterreich-Süd emphasised the role of fundamental values: *“I think they are very blatantly going against very fundamental values, universal values that are constitutional values for almost all the nation states” as defined by a focus group participant.* Another participant reminded that the very history of FPÖ, related to WWII-era Nazi party members, played a strong role in deterring voters from actually casting a vote for them.

Regarding the question of **whether populists might have a valid point in some cases** even though people disagree with them in general, the interviewees said that the populists’ tactic was to select existing issues that attracted people’s attention but then inflate their anxieties, such as with asylum seekers, migrants or criticising government actions. The focus group in Niederösterreich-Süd reached a conclusion that populists benefit from criticism of globalisation as people are afraid of losing their privilege.

The interviewees and focus group participants in Austria share the opinion that **politicians** – populist and mainstream – **bear a lot of responsibility**. The populists are considered to instrumentally polarise and divide society. It is worth quoting an Austrian academic expert in populism in full regarding this issue:

“the mainstream parties have responsibility for the rise of populism and the populist radical right in the sense that they almost all the time failed to actually address those issues, when they became salient and politicised in the course of an event unfolding. And when they did, they shied away from taking a stand, from taking a position, because they thought it would hurt them.”

5.5.2. Related aspects: direct democracy, online disinformation and Euroscepticism

The question of **direct democracy** and, specifically, the issue of referenda being used more often elicited very carefully crafted answers among the interviewees in Austria. They generally considered that it is a good instrument of democracy, but it should be applied under several very strict conditions.

First, it **demands a very well-informed electorate**, including preparation about the referendum questions, information about what it entails, what the consequences will be and quality discussions.

Secondly, the **questions** should be **practical with a clear outcome**. Examples given for such referenda questions were tangible issues, such as about whether to hold the Olympic Games or construct a public building, or not.

Thirdly, **local referenda** would work much better than national ones as they will be closer to, and more understandable for, the people.

The interviewed said that while populists initially favoured referenda, they started to dislike and disregard them as soon as people voted against the populist agenda, such as with the smoking ban. At both the focus groups – in Klagenfurt-Villach and Niederösterreich-Süd – the younger participants tended to be more sceptical about using referenda as they lacked transparency due to the current government with populists in power and Brexit, as well, was evoked as an example of the damage that can be done to the

younger generation. Overall, the predominant opinion was very cautious as focus group participants defined it and one of them in Niederösterreich-Süd -defined it: *“I think we would need the right environment for direct democracy. If we start doing direct democracy by doing referendums it goes wrong. People don’t have the right education for it.” ... “People need to grow up with it [direct democracy]”.*

Concerning the role of **online disinformation** and populism, some interviewees in Austria pointed out that populism in Austria preceded the wave of disinformation, but generally all interviewees admitted its responsibility in the rise of populism. The participants in the Klagenfurt-Villach focus group agreed that social media is responsible and that traditional media were not affected to that effect, but the other focus group in Niederösterreich-Süd pointed out that media have their political and economic interests as well. One academic expert in populism, however, pointed to the specific media structure in Austria with one broadsheet dominating the country and catering more or less to the populists and just a small number of liberal media with limited influence. All interviewees thought that measures should be taken against online disinformation, including fact-checking, online transparency and information, and launching local discussions with citizens to counter disinformation.

In terms of **Euroscepticism and populism**, the interviewees in Austria pointed out that they are closely related. According to one academic expert in populism, populists in Austria used to be pro-European, but then they decided that they could benefit from blaming the EU as it couldn't defend itself. The populists, being nationalists and nativists, are against anything transnational, blaming the EU for the inflow of migrants to replace the local population. The deeper problem, according to another academic expert in populism,

is that there are no really committed main pro-European parties as even the mainstream ones are afraid to stand up to the anti-European trends. The 2019 European Parliament elections were also briefly discussed in view of the possible higher vote share for populists, as well as the possibility of populists being nominated as European Commissioners. At one of the focus groups, participants discussed the idea that Euroscepticism and populism can be unrelated as the EU is very complex and generally unknown and people have problems identifying with it.

5.5.3. Measures and levels of addressing the populist challenge

With regard to **measures to counter the rise of populism** and its effects, the interviewees identified a series of possibilities. First, **legislative measures** to counter the breach of red lines (e.g. European values and rules) and the imposition of sanctions if necessary, which would be at national and European level. Secondly, **better media** that will not polarise people and thrive on scandals and disinformation, e.g. fighting political rhetoric and disinformation. The media dimension would also require safeguarding media freedom and education and information for citizens, including for young people. There is, also, the responsibility of politicians for a new agenda and narrative to avoid such polarisation in the media. The third element would be **new models for participation**. These would aim to guarantee more participation at local, national, regional and transnational level by creating and implementing models for such participation and also educating people about them.

According to other interviewees, the most important aspects of tackling populism are to **avoid copying their style and positions** and decrease polarisation. As populists are loud minorities, the silent majorities have to be included and given greater coverage in the media. Populists should be confronted every time on their manipulations, i.e. regaining the initiative in public debates. A key measure, according to a number of interviewees, was education – civic education, starting from schools, media literacy education and dealing with social networks. The participants in one of the focus groups identified a number of measures to counter both the socioeconomic and cultural factors of populism: dealing with financial inequality, poverty, unemployment and social welfare, as well as fighting racism and disinformation, strengthening trust in democracy and tackling Euroscepticism. Addressing socioeconomic issues should not be underestimated as these issues affect people's lives.

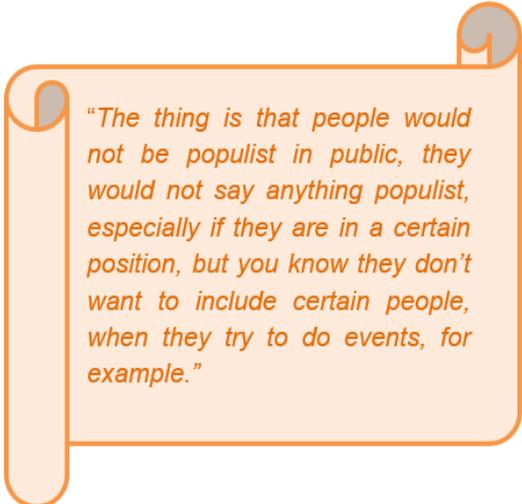
5.5.4. Populism, impediments to CSOs and civil society responses

With regard to specific CSO initiatives and organisations working to tackle the negative aspects of populism, the interviewees generally did not recognise populism as a separate field of work in itself, but rather identified it through related aspects. These include working with refugees, women's rights, promoting EU values, human rights, disinformation and media literacy, direct or participatory democracy, digital democracy and active citizenship through a variety of activities such as democracy workshops, public meetings and discussions and citizen surveys (e.g. many of the measures outlined in the previous two subsections can also be implemented by CSOs).

Respondents in Austria also pointed to expressing civil society positions through regular demonstrations against the current government with the populist FPÖ, especially in the capital, but also elsewhere in the country and in the regions. The big, international civil society groups, such as Caritas and Amnesty International, as well as the smaller, national organisations, such

as SOS Mitmensch and student groups, were mentioned as trying to confront and expose the populist far right. Protests against working conditions were also mentioned (12 hour working day) as attracting anti-populist players.

On the most serious impediments to CSOs tackling the populist challenge, the interviewees in Austria pointed to three groups of problems. First, there are attempts to limit funding to organisations dealing with migrant and women's rights. This takes place, specifically, at national level for now and not so much at local level. Secondly, there are problems with attracting donations and volunteers, which is a result of negative public campaigning against CSOs, which is the third problem. Negative campaigning by FPÖ is against pro-asylum, anti-fascist, women's rights and LGBT groups. Another problem was summarised by a focus group participant in Niederösterreich-Süd, as people, especially officials, are not publicly populist, but practically isolate CSOs:



“The thing is that people would not be populist in public, they would not say anything populist, especially if they are in a certain position, but you know they don't want to include certain people, when they try to do events, for example.”

It is important to note the discussion in one of the focus groups, as participants underlined education, information and civic engagement as the top priorities in both the short and the long term and more transparency and visibility as steps to be undertaken in the short term.

Improving CSOs' "communication" in a broader sense was a key measure repeated by many interviewees, and it was implied to be through either marketing or ongoing exchanges with people to understand their concerns or change

They also recommended working with local authorities, as people were not aware of the work of CSOs, trying to reach out to the citizens and involving volunteers. For example, according to focus group participants, the younger generation was aware of CSO activities, but the older generation was not – hence the misunderstanding and negative attitudes.

With regard to possible allies, interviewees mentioned that **CSOs should be cooperating more with each other**, especially for the big CSOs to work with the smaller ones. The other important elements that are missing, according to them, are a lack of strong anti-populist parties as well as the aversion of trade unions to oppose the populists in government.

Among the more **specific actions** recommended were sports activities (football was mentioned), art projects, cooking as an effective way to involve citizens and refugees and change

attitudes, explaining better what CSOs do to the public or cooperating with local authorities if this would make local citizens trust them more. For example, the Niederösterreich-Süd focus group participants emphasised that big CSOs could develop more professional marketing and communication approaches, similar to corporate ones, and added that this is not necessarily bad thing.

All members of the Klagenfurt-Villach focus group said that



“CSOs should focus on communication because otherwise people will stick to their narrow-minded opinion”

perceptions, more and constant information on social media, working with schools and talking about radicalisation, racism and immigration. The interviewees recommended training workshops against the populist discourse along the lines of the Caritas project “ZusammenReden” (talking together), which counters the so-called “Stammtischparolen” associated with populist behaviour (or bumper-sticker wisdom, bar talk often directed against foreigners).

The participants also underlined **the importance of personal experience**. For example, the value of volunteering was that citizens get a first-hand experience, which

changes perceptions. One participant in the focus group in Niederösterreich-Süd said that

“Civic engagement is important. Experience needs to be transformative. Talking to people is not enough. But after engaging in a relationship they gain substantial, significant experience on a closer personal and social level. Then there is the moment when there is a window of opportunity that actually can open and people can start to change their minds and views.”

With regard to **necessary resources**, the interviewees in Austria mentioned political science expertise and knowhow, human and financial resources, communication

skills, building networks and cooperation to be able to implement the recommendations at different levels – regional, national and European.

5.6. Conclusions and recommendations for Austria

5.6.1. Factors of populism at national and regional level

In Austria, cultural factors are a stronger driver of populism than socioeconomic ones, but both sets of factors are important and reinforce each other as socioeconomic anxiety reinforces the cultural aspects.

When talking about populist parties in Austria, it is not about populism in general, but about a populist radical right party (FPÖ), which is currently a junior government partner. There are no populist far left parties in the country. The three main topics exploited by FPÖ are immigration, national identity and a kind of “welfare chauvinism”.

The influence of both cultural and socioeconomic factors is generally uniform across the country with no substantial regional differences. However, a rural-urban divide, geographic proximity and the role of neighbouring countries around border areas may be influential. Above all else, there is a city-countryside divide that plays a role.

Speaking about populism in non-metropolitan areas in Austria, there is the example of the Carinthia region, the former stronghold of the populist FPÖ party, which took a turn politically after FPÖ descended into corruption scandals and is now dominated by a non-populist party.

The mainstream parties are also considered responsible for the rise of populism as they failed to address the issues that later helped populist advance and avoided taking a stand as they feared this would hurt their political positions.

Direct democracy is considered a good instrument of democracy, but it should be applied under several very strict conditions: a very well-informed electorate, sufficient preparation about the referendum questions and the potential consequences and the questions should be practical with a clear outcome.

Generational differences exist in regard to direct democracy as the younger participants in both focus groups (in Klagenfurt-Villach and Niederösterreich-Süd) were more sceptical about using referenda due to the current government, which includes the populist FPÖ, and Brexit was invoked as an example of the damage that can be done to the younger generation.

Generally, the rise of populism in Austria preceded online disinformation, but the latter is responsible for the spread of populist messages, which needs to be addressed. Views on traditional media and its role in Austria are divided as some view it as unaffected, but one country expert considered that the domination by a single populist-dominated broadsheet was a problem.

There is a close link between Euroscepticism and populism in Austria, which is characterised by nationalism and nativism. The populist FPÖ is opposed to anything transnational and blames the EU for the inflow of migrants, which populists think will replace the local population. Another identified problem is the lack of really committed pro-European parties, even among the mainstream, as they avoid standing up to the anti-European trends.

5.6.2. Conclusions regarding the role of civil society organisations

With regard to tackling socioeconomic issues, civil society in both Klagenfurt-Villach and Niederösterreich-Süd is strong and well-organised in providing services to the community, especially through the “big five” welfare organisations – Caritas, Diakonie, Hilfswerk, Rote Kreuze and Volkshilfe. They also provide integration services to migrants, refugees and asylum seekers, such as German language courses and access to employment, training and intercultural dialogue.

Calls for greater direct democracy and the challenge of online disinformation are addressed to a lesser extent and Euroscepticism is largely not addressed by local CSOs.

The CSO mapping in the regions, which was conducted based on the available public, national and regional databases⁵⁴ in order to identify the potentially relevant CSOs per region vs. all the other registered CSOs, supports these observations.

Table 9. Relevant CSOs on regional level in Austria

Region	Total CSOs in the region	Potentially relevant CSOs in the regions of Austria							%
		EU values	Civic education and engagement	Disinformation	Minorities, migrants and multiculturalism	Civil liberties	Direct democracy and participation	Total CSOs relevant	
KV	4,488	7	2	1	39	0	5	51	1.14 %
NO-S	3,035	1	0	0	5	0	2	7	0.23 %

Some organisations are active in multiple areas, so the sum of the column of activities and total number at the end may differ.

In the Klagenfurt-Villach region of Austria, there are an estimated 4,488 CSOs, of which 1.14%, or 51, were deemed to have potentially relevant activities: 7 working on European values, 2 on civic education and engagement, 1 on disinformation and the vast majority – 39 – on minorities, migrants and multiculturalism.

In Niederösterreich-Süd, out of 3,035 CSOs, about 0.23% – or 7 – were deemed to be potentially relevant: 1 involved in EU values, 5 working on minorities, migrants and multiculturalism and 2 on direct democracy and participation.

⁵⁴ The data sources are as follows:
 Niederösterreich-Süd: <http://www.wiener-neustadt.gv.at/stadt/vereine/soziales>;
<https://www.herold.at/gelbe-seiten/lilienfeld-mariazell/verband-verein-u-organisation/>;
<http://www.integration-noe.at/fileadmin/Einrichtungslisten/Neunkirchen.pdf>;
<https://www.ngojobs.eu/ngos/>;

Klagenfurt-Villach: <https://www.mein-klagenfurt.at/soziale-einrichtungen-in-kaernten/>; <https://www.herold.at/gelbe-seiten/villach-stadt-und-land/verband-verein-u-organisation/>; <https://www.ngojobs.eu/ngos/>;
 Local authority websites: e.g. <https://www.klagenfurt.at/>;
<http://www.villach.at/>; <http://www.wiener-neustadt.gv.at/>
 (KV has 40 local authorities; NO has 95 local authorities).

Reasons for the weak CSO response to the populist challenge include the fact that “populism” is not recognised as a separate field of work in itself and limited funding to organisations dealing with migrant and women’s rights. This, combined with negative campaigning by FPÖ against pro-asylum, anti-fascist, women’s rights and LGBT groups, a lack of “communication” skills at CSOs and negative public campaigning against CSOs, results in difficulties attracting donations and volunteers and the isolation of CSOs by public officials when it comes to debates and decision-making.

5.6.3. Recommendations

1	<u>Civic education</u> , including media literacy, dealing with social networks and new forms of citizen engagement should be introduced.
2	<u>Safeguarding measures against online disinformation</u> should be implemented.
3	<u>New models for participation at local, national, regional and transnational level</u> should be developed and implemented.
4	There needs to be <u>greater coverage in the media of the silent majorities vs. populists as loud minorities.</u>
5	<u>A knowledge base on populism</u> needs to be developed as it is not recognised as a separate field of work (the term “populism” is unclear).
6	There should be <u>training in communication tools to counter populist discourse.</u>
7	There need to be <u>investments</u> in political science expertise and knowhow, human and financial resources, communication skills, network-building and cooperation <u>to be able to counter populism at different levels</u> – regional, national and European.
8	Sporting activities, art projects and cultural activities should be implemented as an <u>effective way of involving citizens and refugees and changing perceptions.</u>
9	<u>Debates</u> should be held in communities and <u>with youth on social media and in schools on radicalisation, racism and immigration.</u>

6. The case of France: populism, citizens and CSOs

6.1. The rise of populism and populist parties in France

In France, populism is split between the right-wing Front National⁵⁵ (FN) of Marine Le Pen and Jean-Luc Mélenchon’s radical leftist La France Insoumise (LFI), which can broadly be differentiated by the nationalist and anti-immigrant leanings of the right-wing and the anti-rich sentiment of the left-wing. FN, which was founded by Le Pen’s father in 1972, has its ideological basis in post-Second World War ultra-nationalism, typified by anti-Semitism and xenophobia,

but Le Pen has attempted to moderate that narrative⁵⁶. LFI, by contrast, was set up by Mélenchon for the purposes of his 2017 presidential campaign and is a manifestation of the new anti-liberal populism of the left, based on a critique of austerity and neoliberalism⁵⁷. The study identified two populist parties in France that met the selection criteria: National Rally (Rassemblement national – RN) and La France Insoumise (LFI).

Country	Party	Dimensions, scores on a scale 1 to 10, low to high				
		Anti-elite	Majoritarian	Authoritarian	Monocultural	Eurosceptic
France	RN/FN	9.01	9.9	9.03	9.84	9.91
	La France Insoumise	9.05	3.85	3.19	3.39	7.87

The Populism Index was constructed for the purposes of this study. It scores the parties along five dimensions on a scale 1 to 10, lowest to highest. The data used was the available from the Chapel Hill Political science expert Survey (CHES). See also [Appendix 22](#).

⁵⁵ Known as *Rassemblement National* since 1 June 2018.
⁵⁶ Ivaldi, G., & Gombin, J., “The Front National and the new politics of the rural in France”, 2015.

⁵⁷ Ivaldi, G., Zaslove, A., & Akkerman, A., “La France populiste ?”, 2017.

RN was known until June 2018 as Front national (FN) and is still referred to often in this way. RN's programme focuses on the return of four sovereignties – monetary, legislative, budgetary and territorial – requiring either a renegotiation with the EU or a 'Frexit', limiting immigration and fighting multiculturalism.⁵⁸ Le Pen has gained support in non-metropolitan France, reflecting the geography of social and economic inequality, and supports the hard-working 'little people' against the elite. She advocates welfare nationalism, anti-globalisation, anti-immigration and interventionist and protectionist economic policies. In her anti-elite narrative, the common interests of the people are threatened by a powerful globalist elite.⁵⁹ The core message of her 2017 presidential campaign was to "give France its freedom back and give the people a voice."⁶⁰ She has called for policies of "national preference" – softened to "national priority" – which she would enshrine in the constitution, and a drastic reduction in immigration, describing immigration in France as a "tragedy"⁶¹ and a threat to France's national identity and social welfare system⁶². RN scores very highly on all measures of populism.

LFI, the other French party in the study, is built, like RN, around the politics of its leader, and is founded on the belief that traditional parties and political organisations no longer serve democracy, insisting upon the need to get rid of elites

who concentrate power and wealth. Mélenchon rejects globalisation and European integration, promising to hold a renegotiation with the EU and possibly a referendum on leaving the Union.⁶³ Mélenchon purports to offer an alternative to neoliberal hegemony, and has called upon the "era of the people" (*L'ère du peuple*), inciting people to "clear out" politicians (*dégagisme*) and "sweep away the oligarchy and abolish the privileges of the political caste"⁶⁴. Mélenchon's 'people' consists of the social groups at the bottom of society. He has pledged to eradicate poverty and unemployment, raise the highest tax rate to 90%, raise taxes on capital, expand public services, nationalise the banking sector, raise wages and lower the retirement age to 60.⁶⁵ On Europe, Mélenchon has shown particular antipathy towards the posted workers directive, stating that posted workers "steal the bread from local workers". LFI is strongly anti-elite and Eurosceptic, but is weak on the other measures. Despite this, there are signs that LFI is increasingly resorting to patriotic values and has abandoned previous celebrations of ethnic diversity and multiculturalism⁶⁶.

⁵⁸ Bourekba, M., "Populism in France: Towards Normalisation", 2017.

⁵⁹ Ivaldi & Gombin, 2015.

⁶⁰ Melander, I., "Le Pen kicks off campaign with promise of French 'freedom'", Reuters, 2017 - <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-france-election-fn/le-pen-kicks-off-campaign-with-promise-of-french-freedom-idUSKBN15J007>

⁶¹ Rassemblement National, Grand Meeting de Marine Le Pen au Zénith de Paris, 2017 - cited in Ivaldi, G., Crowding the market: the dynamics of populist and mainstream competition in the 2017 French presidential elections, 2018 - <https://www.rassemblementnational.fr/videos/grand-meeting-de-marine-le-pen-au-zenith-de-paris/>

⁶² Rassemblement National, UDT Marseille : Discours de Marine le Pen, 2015 – cited in Ivaldi, G., Crowding the market: the dynamics of populist and mainstream competition in the 2017 French presidential elections, 2018 <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gkEJoz7GZQI>

⁶³ Bourekba, M., "Populism in France: Towards Normalisation", 2017.

⁶⁴ Ivaldi, G., "Crowding the market: the dynamics of populist and mainstream competition in the 2017 French presidential elections", 2018.

⁶⁵ Ibid.

⁶⁶ Ibid.

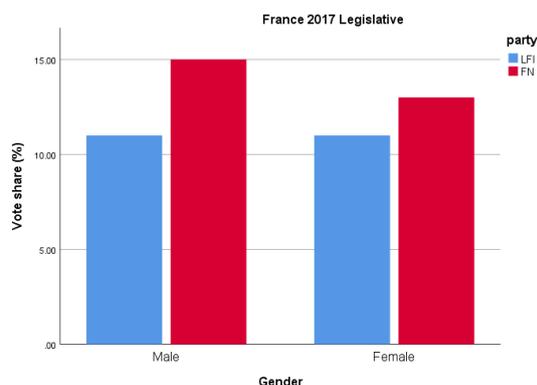
The regional trends in the populist vote

in the two regions of France- Aisne and Drôme, show that in the period 2008-2018 the populist demonstrates slow decrease in the start of the period and then increase

from 2012 onwards (please, see [the trends and comparison across all eight regions in the Appendix 3: The populist vote at regional level: an overview of trends across regions and time](#)).

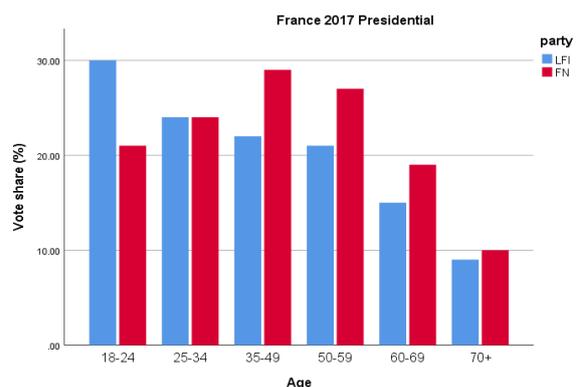
6.2. Demographic indicators and the populist vote in France at national level

The study also carried out an analysis of a number of demographic indicators – gender, age, education and employment – to examine their relationship with populist voting patterns at national level⁶⁷.

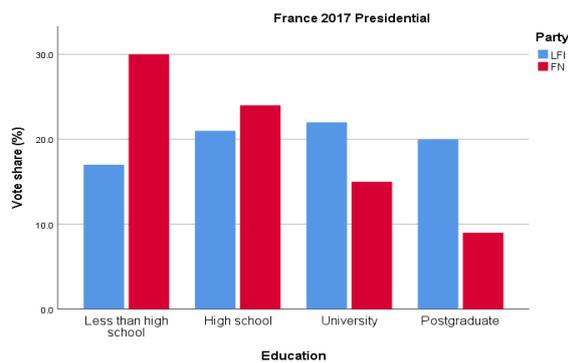


In terms of gender, a greater proportion of votes cast by men were for populist parties in both 2017 French elections. In the legislative election, in particular, Front National performed noticeably better with men than with women.

In terms of age, young people aged 18-24 voted for populist parties more than twice as frequently as those aged 70 or over in the 2017 presidential election. In particular, the vote received by La France Insoumise is closely correlated with age, with younger voters much more likely to vote for Mélenchon's party. Front National is most popular with those aged 35-49 and becomes less popular as voters get younger or older from this mid-point. This is an example in which young people are not only more likely to vote for populist parties overall, but are willing to accept a newer party, rather than one that has inhabited the system for some time.



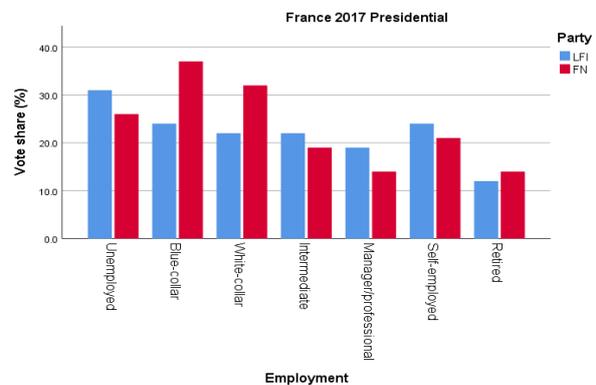
⁶⁷ The study used national exit poll data, which provides an estimate as to the voting behaviour of particular demographic groups, to consider possible trends in voting patterns across these groups, both within individual countries and for particular parties. It allowed also for observations of any common features that hold across the countries studied. The analysis is on national level, based on available public data and the analysis on regional level is based on the citizen surveys, conducted for the purposes of this study.



In terms of education and employment, both the presidential and legislative French elections of 2017 displayed a clear relationship between education and populist voting behaviour, e.g. those with less than a high school education were more likely to vote for FN, while those with a university or postgraduate qualification were more likely to vote for LFI. When looking at the vote shares received by Front National and La France Insoumise individually, this general

trend presents itself very clearly in the pattern of FN (RN currently) voters but appears not to hold for LFI votes. Indeed, those who received less than a complete high school education were much less likely to vote for Mélenchon's party than those with at least a high school diploma. Similarly, it seems that LFI was most popular amongst those with a university degree.

Likewise, the pattern of populist voting behaviour in the 2017 French elections showed a clear trend with regard to employment status. Overall, those who worked in more professionalised jobs were less likely to vote for a populist party. This pattern held for both elections that took place that year. Again, the overall populist vote declined between the presidential election in April and the legislative election in June. The only relative difference with regard to employment is that there appeared to be a smaller decrease in populist vote share amongst self-employed individuals than other categories of worker.



When examining the vote share received by specific parties, it is once again clear that the patterns of Front National votes follow the general trend. To an extent, the overall trend was mirrored in the votes received by Mélenchon in the presidential election, although in a muted form. In contrast, the pattern of voting behaviour in the legislative election shows that white-collar and intermediate workers actually gave a greater proportion of their votes to LFI than blue-collar workers. Furthermore, self-employed workers and unemployed people appeared to make up a relatively smaller part of LFI's base in the June election than they did in April.

6.3. Citizen surveys in the Aisne and Drôme regions of France

The citizen surveys, as was the case with the other countries, focused on eliciting the opinion of citizens specifically in the two regions in focus in France – Aisne and Drôme (abbreviated respectively as AI and DR).⁶⁸ The current sample sizes in terms of age, gender, education, occupation, income brackets, religious affiliation and political preferences provide a suitable basis for the purposes of the study as there are respondents within all main demographic categories listed above (e.g. 48% male and 52% female in Aisne and 39% and 61% in Drôme respectively). A total of 65 respondents⁶⁹ from Aisne and 66 respondents⁷⁰ from Drôme took part in the survey.

As noted in the beginning of this report, the two regions were selected for their different socioeconomic characteristics and the level of the populist vote in the regions (please, see also [Appendix 21](#)).

The table below shows the main indicators. Aisne, which is located in the north of the country, is the less wealthy of the two with a GDP 70% of the EU28 average. Drôme, which is located in the south of France, has a GDP 97% of the EU28 average, but still lower than the national average of France of 105%. The two regions have similar population numbers.

Table 11. Socioeconomic characteristics of the two regions in France

Country/Region	GDP PPS % of EU28 average	GDP PPS per inhabitant (regional)/Real GDP per capita (national)	Total population	Population density (km2)	Largest urban area
France	105%	32,300	66,759,950	105.5	6,754,282
Drôme	97%	28,100	504,637	78.3	127,559
Aisne	70%	20,200	538,659	72.7	110,369

The current analysis is based on select questions pertinent to the five dimensions of populism as identified in this study: anti-elite, majoritarian, authoritarian, monocultural and Eurosceptic with an additional focus on issues such as direct democracy and sovereignty.

⁶⁸ The survey included 36 closed-ended questions and demographic information about the respondents for each of the two regions. It was carried out online on a voluntary basis. They are exploratory surveys meant to complement the other survey methods such as in-depth interviews and focus groups as the samples are small for a fully-fledged, representative study. A fully representative study would require a sample of some 380 people per region.

⁶⁹ In Aisne, out of 65 respondents, who responded to the political affiliation question, 18.50% (12) marked La République En Marche!, 4.60% (3) Les Républicains,

18.50% (12) Front national, 7.70% (5) La France insoumise, 6.20% (4) Parti socialiste, 12.30% (8) other, 27.70% (18) non-voters, 4.60% (3) preferred not to say.

⁷⁰ In Drôme, out of 65 respondents, who responded to the political affiliation question, 23.10% (15) marked La République En Marche!, 6.20% (4) Les Républicains, 6.20% (4) Front national, 16.90% (11) La France insoumise, 7.70% (5) Parti socialiste, 13.80% (9) other, 23.10% (15) non-voters, 3.10% (2) preferred not to say.

Moreover an analysis of the socio-demographic characteristics of the respondents is provided based on the respective questions in the citizen survey.

With regard to age group and party preferences, the respondents of the two populist parties LFI and FN in both Aisne and Drôme tend to be somewhat younger, compared, for example, to Les Républicains and En Marche! respondents, but in Drôme they also have a higher share of older groups over 55 years old (**Appendix 14: Figures 1 and 2**).

There is a more or less balanced representation in Aisne and Drôme in terms of gender for both LFI and FN (**Appendix 14: Figure 7 and 4**).

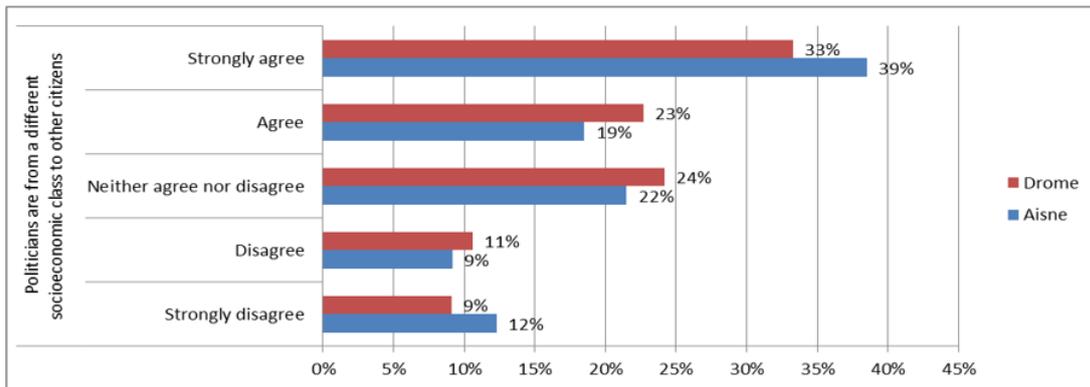
FN respondents, in general, have lower levels of education compared to the other parties, whilst LFI respondents tend to have more university (bachelor), or equivalent, and other professional qualifications (**Appendix 14: Figures 8 and 6**).

In terms of employment status, the full-time employed in Aisne are among the biggest groups in both LFI (40%) and FN (46%) respondents. In Drôme, there are equal proportions of FN voters who are fully employed or unemployed, whilst there are more retired persons among LFI respondents (**Appendix 14: Figures 9 and 8**). FN and LFI respondents also tended to be from lower income brackets (**Appendix 14: Figures 10 and 10**).

In terms of religion, in Aisne, both LFI (40%) and FN (54%) have a lower share of Catholics than the average for the region in the survey (58%) and, at the same time, a higher share of non-religious voters – 40% for LFI and 46% for FN, compared to a 29% average for all respondents in the region. In Drôme, FN respondents have the highest share of Catholics (80%) and, in comparison, LFI have the highest share of non-religious respondents – 64% (**Appendix 14: Figures 11 and 12**).

Concerning anti-elitist attitudes, registered by the statement “politicians are from a different socioeconomic class to other citizens”, respondents in both French regions largely subscribe to this notion and provide almost identical answers – 56% in Drôme and 58% in Aisne agree with this and only 20% and 21%, respectively, disagree. In Aisne, the vast majority of supporters of the populist LFI and FN agree with this statement – 80% and 92%, respectively, with non-voters and those who did not express a political affiliation coming next with 44% and 38%, respectively. In comparison, in Aisne Les Républicains and En Marche! supporters are equally divided by support (33%), undecided and rejection by 33%. The results for Drôme on this question show similar results – 73% of LFI voters agree with it as well as 50% of FN supporters and 60% of non-voters, which is generally either equal or higher than supporters of other parties. E.g. in Drôme, among the non-populist parties this anti-elitist proposition is supported by 50% of Les Républicains supporters, 50% of supporters of En Marche!, 60% of PS voters (**Appendix 13: Figures 1 and 2**).

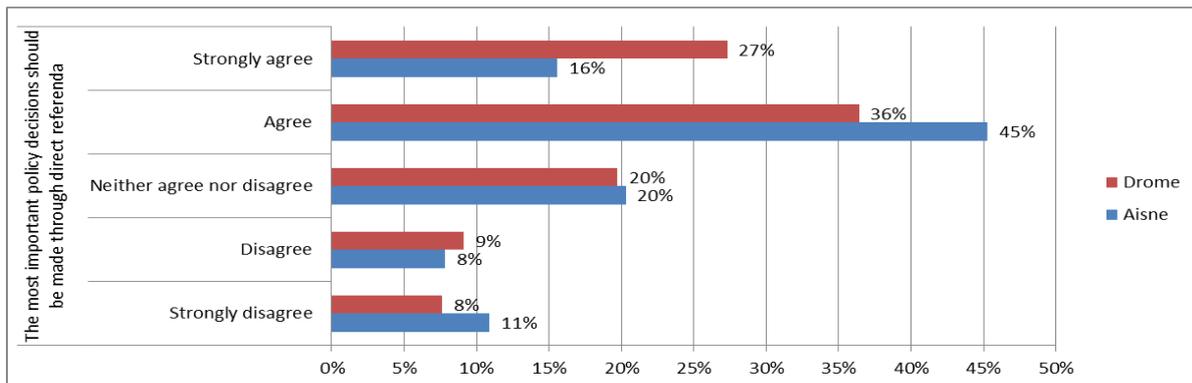
Figure 14. Anti-elitist attitudes



With regard to ***direct democracy***, e.g. opinions on using more ***direct referenda***, the majority of respondents in both regions in France support this notion to almost the same extent, with 61% in Aisne and 63% in Drôme in favour. Those opposing it have a share of 19% in Aisne and 17% in Drôme. The highest support in Aisne for more direct referenda is among En Marche! voters (83%) followed by supporters of LFI (80%), Parti socialiste (PS) (66%) and FN (59%).

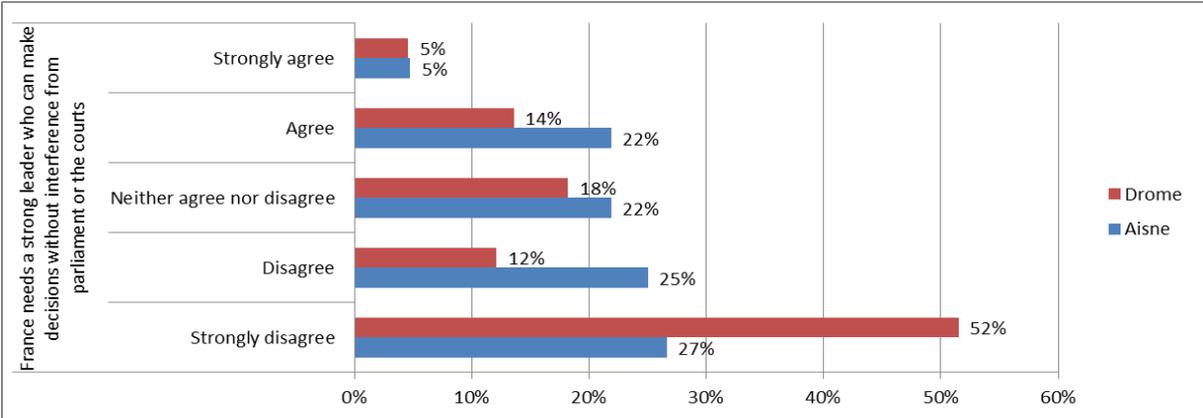
The biggest rejection of this notion is among the supporters of other, smaller parties (38%) and Les Républicains (33%). In Drôme, support for referenda is highest among the non-populist PS (100%), other, smaller parties (78%), En Marche! (66%) and Les Républicains (50%), and the populist FN and LFI at 50% and 55% respectively ([Appendix 13: Figure 3 and 4](#)).

Figure 15. Direct referenda



In terms of **authoritarian tendencies**, respondents in both French regions oppose the notion of a strong leader, unchecked by the national assembly and the courts, although to a different degree – 52% in Aisne and 64% in Drôme showing disagreement. In comparison, 27% in Aisne and 19% in Drôme are in agreement. Levels of support for a strong leader in the region of Aisne are similar across nearly all parties, except for non-voters with 17% (only the share among those who did not give a political affiliation is zero). The populist LFI supporters oppose it by 80%, but the share of rejection is smaller among FN voters at 50%. There is a strong level of rejection of this proposition among populist party voters in Drôme, too, with much higher disagreement among LFI (91%) than FN voters (50%). LFI voters, in fact, show higher levels of disagreement on this issue than all other groups ([Appendix 13: Figures 7 and 8](#)).

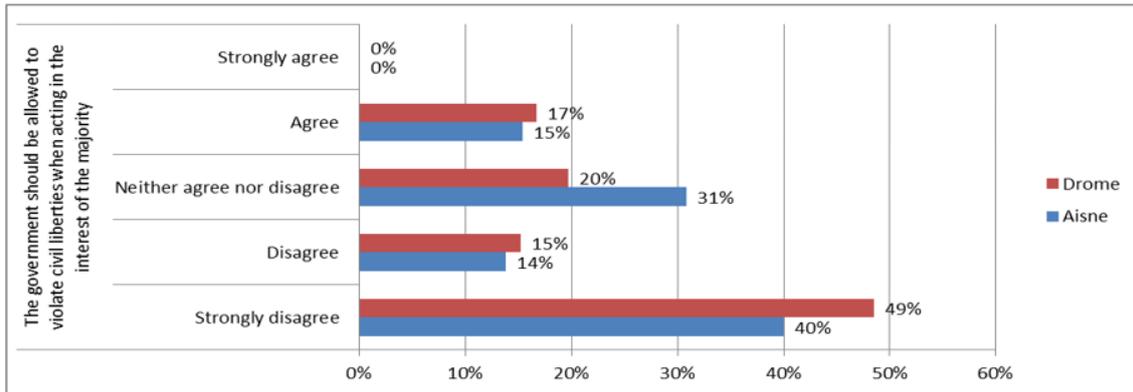
Figure 16. Strong, unchecked leader



On the issue of **“majoritarianism”** – that is, **breaching civil liberties by the government for the sake of the majority**, the majority of respondents reject this notion, with 54% in Aisne and 64% in Drôme. Only 15% in Aisne and 17% in Drôme agree but no respondents expressed strong agreement. The highest support for **“majoritarianism”** is among the non-populist Les Républicains, with 67%, and other, smaller parties, with 38%. It is opposed by non-populists and populists alike. For example, among supporters of the non-populist PS, the share is 75%, and

among En Marche! voters support is at 42%, i.e. 42% of them oppose majoritarianism compared to 25% who support the idea and 33% who are undecided. Among supporters of the populist LFI and FN, 80% and 67%, respectively, reject it. In Drôme, the highest support is among Les Républicains and En Marche! supporters – 50% and 47%, respectively. Populist party voters rather oppose it – FN by 50% and LFI by 82%, with all other parties also opposing the notion ([Appendix 13: Figures 5 and 6](#)).

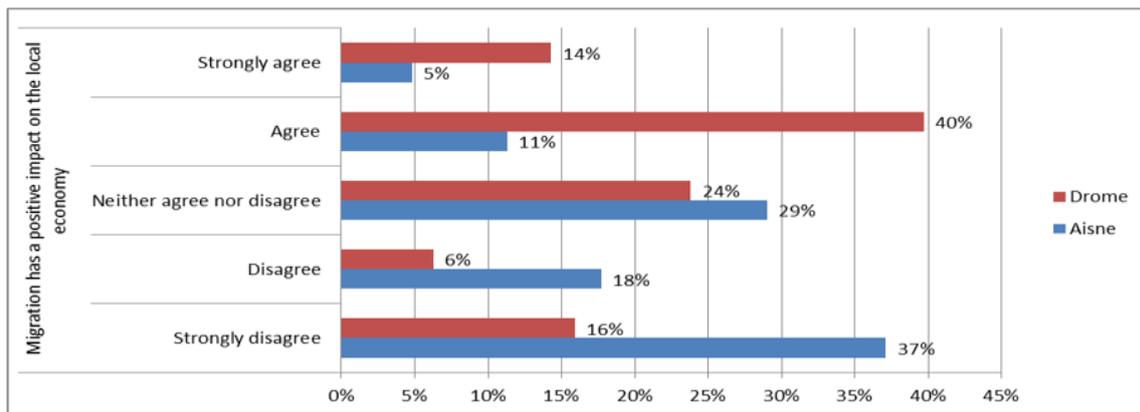
Figure 17. Government and civil liberties



With regard to migration and its economic aspects, there are marked differences between the two regions. A majority – 54% – of respondents in Drôme agree or strongly agree that migration has a positive impact on the local economy, while only 16% of respondents in Aisne are in agreement. A total of 22% in Drôme disagree, while a majority in Aisne (55%) disagree. There is a high proportion of undecided respondents in both regions – 24% in Drôme and 29% in Aisne. In Aisne,

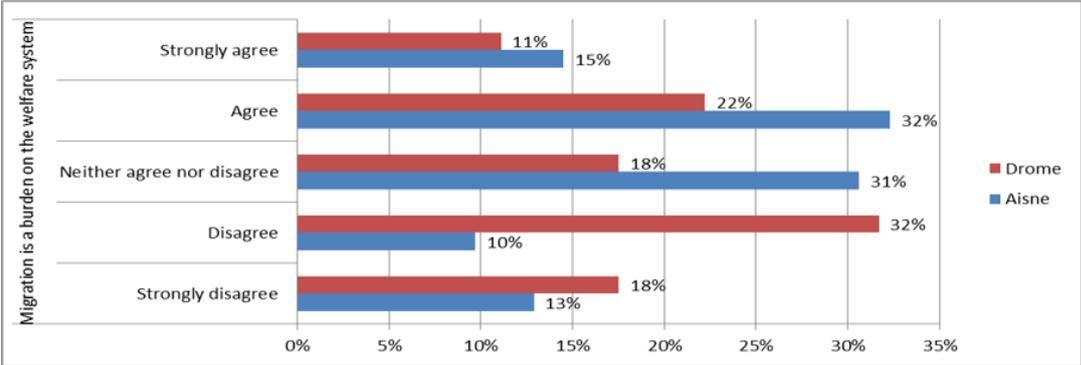
populist FN supporters show the highest level of disagreement (83%) followed by the non-populist PS (67%) and non-voters (64%). It should be noted that supporters of LFI, the other populist party, are equally split between agreement and disagreement with this notion, with 40% in each case. In Drôme, LFI supporters show the most support for the economic benefits of migration (82%), as well as FN voters (50%), which is on a par with supporters of other ([Appendix 13: Figures 9 and 10](#)).

Figure 18. Migration and local economy



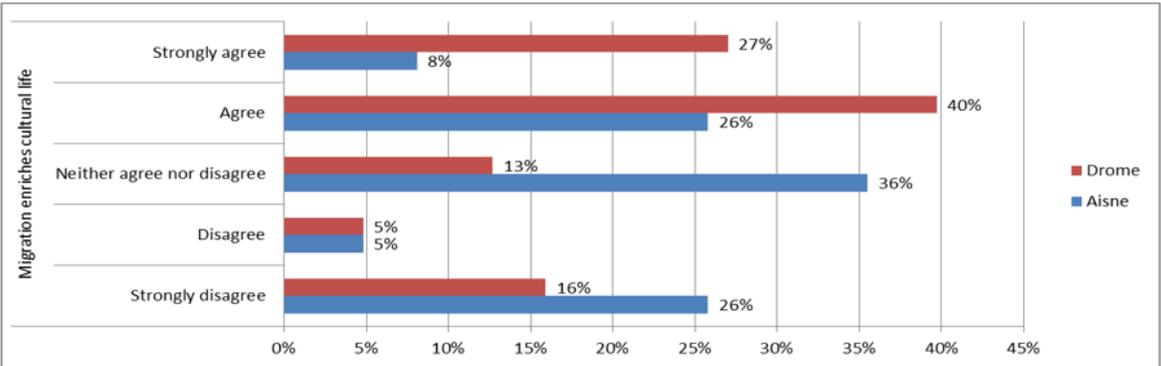
As there are regional differences, the additional questions on migration⁷¹ are explored to provide further explanations (see below). It can be concluded that respondents in Drôme accept **migration** to a higher degree in its economic and cultural aspects and do not think it is a **burden to the welfare systems**. On the latter point, the results show a difference between the regions, with a higher share of support in Aisne (47%) for the proposition that migrants are a burden to the welfare system than in Drôme (33%). Only 23% of respondents in Aisne disagree, whilst the proportion in Drôme is 50%, or nearly half of respondents. Aisne has a higher share of undecided respondents, nearly a third (31%), but only about a fifth (18%) of respondents in Drôme are undecided.

Figure 19. Migration and welfare systems



There is also a difference between the regions on the issue of **whether migration enriches cultural life**. This is supported by a majority of respondents in Drôme (67%), which is almost double the figure for Aisne (34%). Disagreement with this proposition is higher in Aisne (31%) than in Drôme (21%). In Aisne, more than a third (36%) are undecided, compared to only 13% in Drôme.

Figure 20. Migration and cultural life

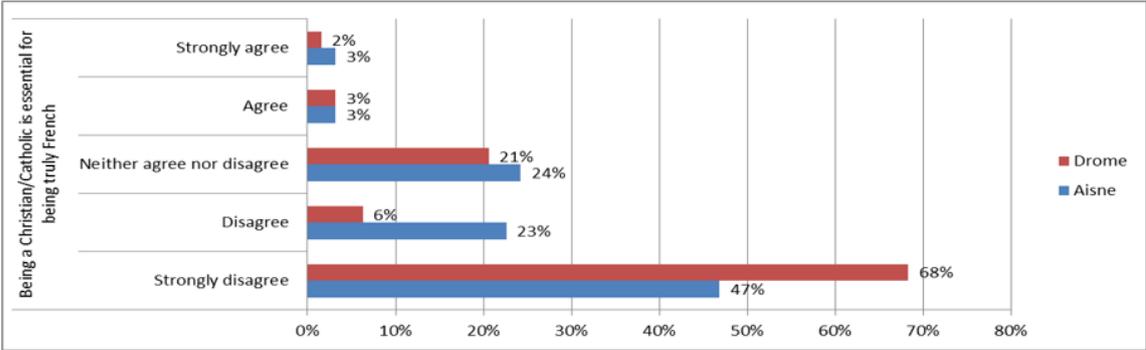


⁷¹ The citizen surveys contain 36 questions in total with some two or more questions per topic. As a rule, the report shows analysis of responses to only the main question on a topic, but if there are substantial regional differences, the additional questions are shown to further explore these differences.

A majority in the two French regions reject the idea of **religion as a marker of national identity** with almost identical results – 74% in Drôme and 70% in Aisne. Similarly, just 5% in Drôme and 6% in Aisne agree and about a fifth in each region are undecided – 21% and 24%, respectively. Populist party supporters in Aisne respond similarly to the question of religion and national identity, with 80% of LFI voters and 83% FN supporters rejecting the proposition. They are, therefore, in line with

other groups. Only FN supporters (8%) among the populist parties show some agreement with this, although Les Républicains are much more in line with the idea with 33% expressing support. The situation in Drôme is somewhat similar, as the highest support for this idea is among Les Républicains, with 75%. Supporters of the populist LFI and FN have similar views, with 73% and 75%, respectively, opposing it. The rest are undecided (**Appendix 13: Figures 11 and 12**).

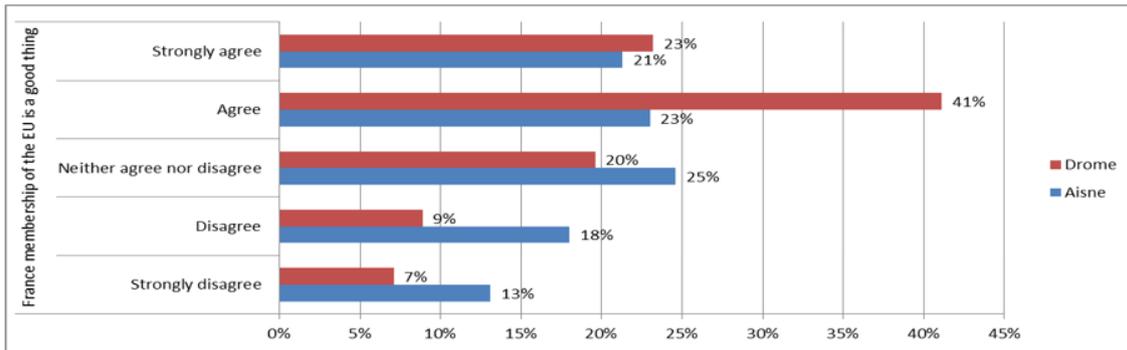
Figure 21. Religion and national identity



There are regional differences when it comes to **Eurocepticism** and, specifically, **EU membership**, with 64% in Drôme approving of France’s EU membership compared to 44% in Aisne. Respondents in Aisne disagree that EU membership is a good thing to a higher degree (31%), compared to almost half in Drôme (16%). 20% in Drôme and 25% in Aisne are undecided. Highest disagreement with the view that France’s membership of the EU is a good thing is found among the populist FN supporters, with 75% rejecting this and the rest

undecided on the question. In comparison, just 20% of the supporters of LFI, the other populist party, are against EU membership and 60% actually support it, which is higher than the average for the region. In Drôme, FN supporters, again, disagree most strongly with EU membership (50%), while 63% of LFI supporters, by contrast, are in favour, with none opposing it. In this region, En Marche! supporters agree to the highest extent on the benefits of EU membership (85%) (**Appendix 13: Figures 13 and 14**).

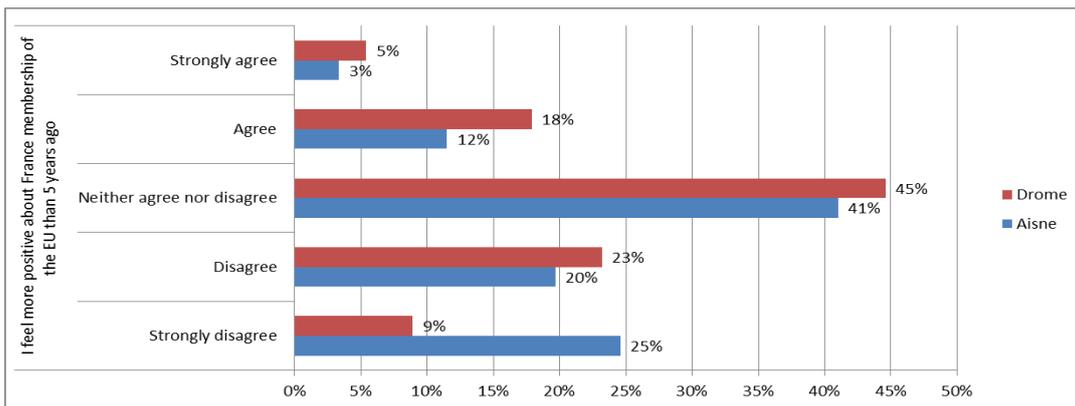
Figure 22. EU membership



When the related questions on the EU are taken into account in order to better understand the differences between the regions (see below), it can be concluded that respondents in Drôme support EU membership to a higher extent than respondents in Aisne, do not think that the French economy would be better off outside of the EU, are slightly more positive about EU now than 5 years ago and do not want the EU to return powers to the national government.

Answers to the question of whether citizens feel more positive about France’s EU membership than 5 years ago show that the predominant view in both regions is that respondents do not have an opinion on the issue, 45% in Drôme and 41% in Aisne, but respondents in Drôme are more inclined to feel more positively about EU membership, with 23% agreeing compared to 15% in Aisne. Around 45% in Aisne and 32% in Drôme are less positive about EU membership.

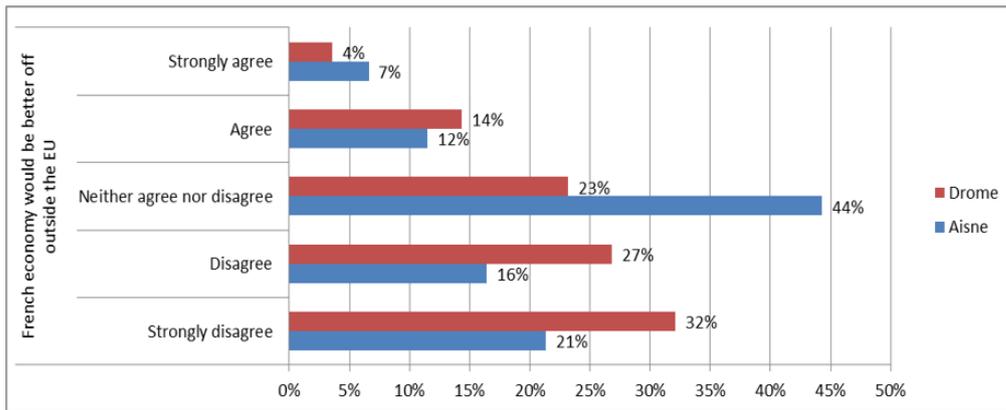
Figure 23. Attitude to EU 5 years ago



A related question may shed a light whether there is an **economic aspect to opinions on EU membership**. A majority of respondents in Drôme (59%) do not think that the French economy would be better off outside of the EU, compared to just 37% in Aisne. Only a small proportion of

respondents in both regions agree that the French economy would be better off outside of the EU – 18% in Drôme and 19% in Aisne. It is worth noting that a very high proportion of respondents in Aisne (44%) do not have opinion on this, compared to 23% in Drôme.

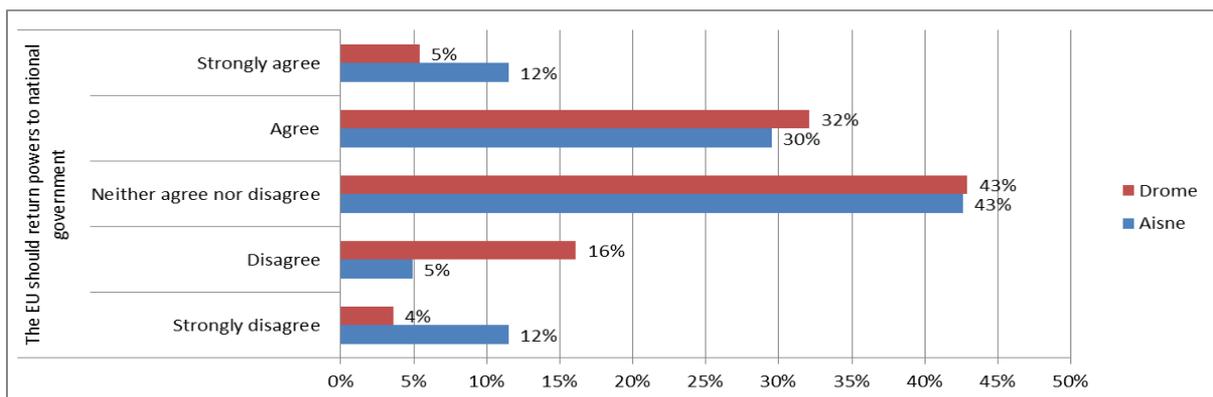
Figure 24. National economy outside of EU



In terms of the sovereignty debate, answering the question of whether the EU should return powers to the national government, the largest share of respondents in both regions is undecided – 43% in each region. Around 37% in Drôme and 42% in Aisne agree with this out of which just 5% and 12%, respectively, agree categorically. Just 20% in Drôme and 17% in Aisne do not agree that the EU should return powers to the national government. Supporters of the populist FN in Aisne

agree with this notion to the highest degree (67%), while a much smaller share of LFI voters (40%) are in agreement. The rest are undecided. In Drôme, 50% of FN supporters agree with this, which is the highest share and on a par with other, smaller parties and with those who did not specify a political affiliation. In comparison, 36% of LFI voters would like the EU to return powers to the national government, but a majority (55%) are undecided. (Appendix 1: Figures 15 and 16).

Figure 25. Sovereignty and EU



The observations from the analysis across party affiliation of respondents show the following results (see [Appendix 13: Party affiliation and key questions on populism in France for more details](#)).

In some respects, the voters of the populist parties LFI and FN are similar to each other and different from the other parties, e.g. in showing higher support for **anti-elitist positions** (still mainstream parties supporters show relatively high approval of such positions too).

At the same time, there are clear differences between the positions of the populist left LFI and the populist right FN voters. LFI supporters, compared to FN voters, disagree about the need for a **strong leader**, unchecked by parliament and courts, are inclined to favour the **economic benefits of migration**. They are also more supportive of EU membership and are against the EU returning powers to the national government.

It is interesting to note that the supporters of **non-populist parties sometimes favour positions associated with populism** – the centre right Les Républicains support **“majoritarianism”** with breaches of civil liberties, whilst the populists – especially LFI – tend to oppose it. Les Républicains also emphasise Catholicism as a key component of national identity more than voters of other parties. Supporters of the governing En Marche! are more supportive of **direct referenda** than the other groups. In one region (Aisne), the non-populist PS voters and non-voters have the second and third highest level of disagreement with the economic benefits of migration just after the populist FN supporters.

The **comparison between the eight regions in focus** (the two regions in France and the other six in the rest of the countries) in this study across eight key questions of the citizen surveys⁷² can be seen in the [Appendix 6: Comparison across the eight regions in focus](#).

⁷² The citizen surveys were conducted in all eight regions in focus for the purposes of this study, using a closed-ended questionnaire. For further details and the methodology, please see the national chapters in this report. These key questions on the dimensions of populism include anti-elitist sentiments, authoritarian and majoritarian tendencies, attitudes towards migration, religion as a marker of national identity, opinion about EU membership and the sovereignty debate in the context of EU membership.

6.4. CSO environment and CSOs at regional level in France

This section analyses the state of civil society organisations at national and regional level in France and is based on data from publicly available records and sources⁷³ as indicated in the text.⁷⁴ Due to vast differences in definitions and official information on CSOs between countries and regions, there are necessarily differences in the country sections, too.⁷⁵

The **CSO environment in France deteriorated from 2008 to 2017**, according to the V-Dem Core Civil Society Index (see **Appendix 8: V-Dem Core Civil Society Index**), as the country score fell by 6.5% over the period⁷⁶, compared to decreases in the other three countries of 1.6% in Austria, 6.2% in Italy and 27.3% in

Poland. The environment for French civil society has regressed due to the state of emergency from 2015-17. The 2018 Civicus Civil Society Report⁷⁷ assesses French civil society to have ‘narrowed’, meaning that there are some violations of the rights to freedom of association, peaceful assembly and expression, occasional harassment by those in power and an undermining of press freedom.

⁷³ Sources for France include:

https://www.associations.gouv.fr/IMG/pdf/france_associativ_e_en_mouvement_2017.pdf;
Répertoire National des Associations -
<https://www.data.gouv.fr/fr/datasets/repertoire-national-des-associations/>;
<http://www.journal-officiel.gouv.fr/association/>. 13,055 entries are recorded.
https://recherches-solidarites.org/media/uploads/essentiel_vie_asso_26.pdf
https://www.associations.gouv.fr/IMG/pdf/france_associativ_e_en_mouvement_2017.pdf
https://recherches-solidarites.org/media/uploads/essentiel_vie_asso_02.pdf
<https://france3-regions.francetvinfo.fr/hauts-de-france/aisne/possible-fin-subsventions-du-conseil-departemental-aisne-inquiete-associations-1525718.html>
<http://www.aisnenouvelle.fr/77038/article/2018-08-10/les-associations-presque-fatalistes-apres-la-disparition-des-subsventions>
<https://www.aisne.com/le-conseil-departemental/le-budget>
<http://www.aisnenouvelle.fr/77038/article/2018-08-10/les-associations-presque-fatalistes-apres-la-disparition-des-subsventions>
https://www.huffingtonpost.fr/2016/10/01/referendum-migrants-drome-fn-enrage_n_12281770.html
http://civictchno.fr/civic-theque/wpbdp_category/au-service-des-citoyens/
<https://www.franceculture.fr/numerique/la-democratie-liquide-ou-comment-repenser-la-democratie-l-age-numerique>
<https://laprimaire.org/>
<https://parlement-et-citoyens.fr>
<https://democratieouverte.org/>
<https://www.citizenlab.co/>
<https://jeparticipe.auvergnerrhonealpes.fr/auvergne-rhone-alpes>
www.action-citoyenne.org

<http://labelledemocratie.fr>

<https://www.facebook.com/romanscitoyens/>
<http://ocdl-democratie-locale.fr/signer-la-charte-ocdl/>
<http://www.aisnenouvelle.fr/70308/article/2018-03-04/abbecourt-une-association-pour-aider-les-citoyens>
https://www.facebook.com/pg/associationlamanufacture/ab-out/?ref=page_internal

European Audiovisual Observatory (2016), Mapping of media literacy practices and actions in EU-28. Strasbourg.
Internet Sans Crainte (2018) SID 2018, How to participate? <http://www.internetsanscrainte.fr/le-projet/safer-internet-day-2018-participez>
CLEMI (2018), The school media map. <https://www.clemi.fr/fr/carte-medias-scolaires.html>

⁷⁴ As in the other sections, it examines the environment in which CSOs operate, the typology of CSOs at regional level and the activities CSOs undertake to address populism in view of socioeconomic factors, migration, direct democracy, Euroscepticism, EU values, civic education and the use of online disinformation. There are examples of CSOs' initiatives, but the good practices identified to highlight the positive impact CSOs can have are presented elsewhere in this report. The CSO interviews conducted especially for this study are presented separately.

⁷⁵ It should be emphasised that there were vast differences in the available public information between the different countries and different regions within the same country, with definitions and data varying substantially even within a single country or region. The analysis took these circumstances into account and standardised the information to the extent possible; nevertheless, it necessarily imposed differences in these sections of the report between the countries and regions.

⁷⁶ The civil society score for France fell from 0.962 in 2008 to 0.899 in 2017 on a scale from 0 to 1, where 0=fragile, 1=robust. For the other countries, please see the respective country sections.

⁷⁷ <https://monitor.civicus.org/country/france/>

There are currently **four main challenges facing French CSOs**: shrinking public funds, administrative complexity, innovation and the rise of the circular and collaborative economies⁷⁸. Budget restrictions, especially, have had a big impact at local level, with a majority of funding switching from public to private sources. The nature of public funding has also shifted, with the financing of organisations' missions switching to contract work for local authorities. Other developments include the necessary professionalisation of civil society due to the complexity of French labour law and nature of association work becoming more technical, but social media and the circular and collaborative economies, too, have created new ways for civil society members to interact, which means informal grassroots movements tend to develop instead of associations⁷⁹ (for more information see [Appendix 12: CSO typologies and developments at national level in France](#)).

With regard to **regional CSOs**, as of 1 August 2018, 15,181 were registered in Drôme⁸⁰ according to the Law of Associations⁸¹. The largest proportion of these – 37% – is occupied by sport and leisure activities, followed by 20% in culture and 7% in education and training, and 6% in the social sector, although the figures for associations created in the last four years are probably more indicative of the activities of associations⁸². In that case,

30% of associations are active in sport and leisure, 22% in culture and 12% in the social sector⁸³. Besides those associations active in the social sector, very few are explicitly working in areas relevant to addressing populism.

Civil society in **Drôme** is characterised by **small, local or regionally focused organisations** – only 1,770 organisations had paid employees, 59% of them with fewer than 3 employees and 69 organisations with more than 50 employees. The social sector was overrepresented in this regard, accounting for 49.4% of employees. CSOs in Drôme receive substantial support from volunteers, estimated to number 112-122,000. Around 45% of them volunteer at least once a week.⁸⁴

Aisne has 5,000 fewer CSOs than Drôme, with 10,261 registered⁸⁵ according to the Law of Associations. The *Répertoire* indicates that 48% of associations in Aisne are active in the sport and leisure, followed by 13% in culture and 6% each in the social sector and education. Looking at the associations created in the past four years⁸⁶ an estimated 37% are active in the sport and leisure sectors, 18% in culture and 11% in the social sector.

⁷⁸ <http://efc.issuelab.org/resources/24213/24213.pdf>

⁷⁹ Ibid.

⁸⁰ *Répertoire National des Associations* - <https://www.data.gouv.fr/fr/datasets/repertoire-national-des-associations/>

⁸¹ The Law of Associations is the legal basis for non-profit making organisations of two or more people.

⁸² The *Répertoire National des Associations* records only one or two fields of activity, whereas the *Journal officiel Associations* records multiple sectors.

⁸³ <http://www.journal-officiel.gouv.fr/association/>. 13,055 entries are recorded.

⁸⁴ https://recherches-solidarites.org/media/uploads/essentiel_vie_asso_26.pdf

⁸⁵ *Répertoire National des Associations* - <https://www.data.gouv.fr/fr/datasets/repertoire-national-des-associations/>

⁸⁶ <http://www.journal-officiel.gouv.fr/association/>. 13,055 entries are recorded.

This gap in numbers of CSOs between Aisne and Drôme has also been widening in recent years. Between 2013 and 2017, the number of associations in Aisne grew by an average of 7.4 per 10,000 inhabitants and in Drôme by 13.5 per 10,000 inhabitants, which also **reflects a North-South divide in the growth of civil society** in France⁸⁷. Aisne has an estimated 19 CSOs per 1,000 inhabitants and Drôme around 30 per 1,000 inhabitants.

In 2017, there were only 1,005 organisations in Aisne with paid employees, 52% of them with fewer than 3 employees, and only 49 organisations with 50 or more employees. Employees were heavily concentrated in the social sector, which accounted for 53.5% of all employees. As in Drôme, CSOs receive significant support from volunteers, with numbers estimated to be approximately 80-87,000. Around 45% of them volunteer at least once a week.⁸⁸

Funding for civil society in Aisne is becoming a particular concern, especially for small CSOs, following an announcement by the President of the Council on 9 August 2018 that funding for 2019 cannot be guaranteed⁸⁹, recommending instead that organisations budget for the next year without the Council's contribution. The announcement follows 5 years of cuts in Council subsidies to local organisations, leaving organisations with no alternative but to

seek private funding, increase their dependence on volunteers and lose paid employees.⁹⁰ In 2018, EUR 364m was budgeted for social actions, EUR 37m for education, EUR 17m for sport and culture and EUR 10m for public health⁹¹.

With regard to **tackling socioeconomic problems**, social organisations are well represented in both Drôme and Aisne and, because of the nature of social assistance organisations, they inevitably come into contact with disadvantaged groups throughout society, including migrants and minorities. In Aisne, the challenge of replacing funds that can no longer be guaranteed by the departmental council risks compromising the capacity for organisations working in this area to address the socioeconomic causes of populism, such as inequality, employment and poverty.

When it comes to countering the **anti-immigration narrative**, there are organisations in both regions providing for the needs of minorities and migrants, including asylum seekers and refugees, as well as organisations actively bringing communities together, fighting discrimination and exclusion, and addressing poverty and social deprivation.

⁸⁷ https://www.associations.gouv.fr/IMG/pdf/france_associative_en_mouvement_2017.pdf

⁸⁸ https://recherches-solidarites.org/media/uploads/essentiel_vie_asso_02.pdf

⁸⁹ <https://france3-regions.francetvinfo.fr/hauts-de-france/aisne/possible-fin-subventions-du-conseil-departemental-aisne-inquiete-associations-1525718.html>

⁹⁰ <http://www.aisnenouvelle.fr/77038/article/2018-08-10/les-associations-presque-fatalistes-apres-la-disparition-des-subventions>

⁹¹ <https://www.aisne.com/le-conseil-departemental/le-budget>

Concerning **direct democracy** and increasing **democratic participation**, in general, the situation in France is developing⁹² and the concept of ‘liquid democracy’⁹³⁹⁴ is emerging. CSOs engaged in the process operate locally, nationally and internationally on issues such as enabling the public to select candidates for election⁹⁵, facilitating engagement between politicians and citizens⁹⁶, giving citizens a voice and enabling participation⁹⁷ and providing ready-to-use civic participation platforms for local government⁹⁸. One such organisation, Civocracy⁹⁹, facilitates public consultations for the Auvergne-Rhône-Alpes regional government, which will be available to citizens of Drôme. There are other organisations in Drôme active in this area, too. Action Citoyenne¹⁰⁰ is a movement committed to citizen participation in the Valence area so that citizens can find solutions to their own problems, such as with the economy, education and life in the city. La Belle Démocratie¹⁰¹ is an organisation that seeks to empower citizens to take control of decision-making at local level. Romans Citoyens¹⁰² aims to use citizen engagement to strengthen French Republican values. The Citizen Observatory of Local Democracy¹⁰³ wants citizens to be listened to outside of electoral periods.

Aisne, in contrast, only has three such organisations. Association défense citoyenne abbécourtoise¹⁰⁴ is a small association founded in 2018 that seeks to find citizen-led solutions to local problems. La Manufacture¹⁰⁵ aims to generate ideas from citizens. Collectif Agora de Saint Gobain seeks to build a participatory list comprised of members of the local community in Saint Gobain for the municipal elections in 2020.

⁹² http://civictchno.fr/civic-theque/wpbdp_category/au-service-des-citoyens/ list of organisations

⁹³ <https://www.franceculture.fr/numerique/la-democratie-liquide-ou-comment-repenser-la-democratie-l-age-numerique>

⁹⁴ “Liquid democracy”, known also as “e-Democracy” or “Proxy Democracy” is a form of direct democratic participation with the opportunity for a citizen to delegate her/his votes to another person, which can be done on issue-specific basis to different persons and can be taken back at any time.

⁹⁵ <https://laprimaire.org/>

⁹⁶ <https://parlement-et-citoyens.fr>

⁹⁷ <https://democratieouverte.org/>

⁹⁸ <https://www.citizenlab.co/>

⁹⁹ <https://jeparticipe.auvergnerrhonealpes.fr/auvergne-rhone-alpes>

¹⁰⁰ www.action-citoyenne.org

¹⁰¹ <http://labelledemocratie.fr>

¹⁰² <https://www.facebook.com/romanscitoyens/>

¹⁰³ <http://ocdl-democratie-locale.fr/signer-la-charte-ocdl/>

¹⁰⁴ <http://www.aisnenouvelle.fr/70308/article/2018-03-04/abbecourt-une-association-pour-aider-les-citoyens>

¹⁰⁵ https://www.facebook.com/pg/associationlamanufacture/about/?ref=page_internal

Regarding **online disinformation**, France has a very active media literacy landscape¹⁰⁶ (see **Appendix 12: CSO developments on national level in France**), but activities tend to be carried out by national associations that develop resources to be used directly in schools without the need for a regional intermediary. Internet Sans Crainte is important in developing the programme for Safer Internet Day, developing workshops and resources to be shared in schools, although there weren't any workshops registered in Aisne or Drôme for the 2018 Safer Internet Day¹⁰⁷.

CLEMI, Le centre pour l'éducation aux médias et à l'information, is a project supported by the Ministry of Education that produces resources and trains education professionals in order to facilitate the education of young people in information and media literacy. As part of its work, it encourages schools to allow students to produce their own media output. A number of schools in Aisne and Drôme have participated in producing radio shows, newspapers and other online content¹⁰⁸.

Euroscepticism is not actively addressed.

6.5. Findings of the expert and CSO interviews

This section presents the findings of the expert and CSO interviews and the focus group (see **Appendix 4 on the questionnaire** and **Appendix 7 for a list of interviewed experts and CSO activists**) carried out in the two regions in focus in France. There are further conclusions, recommendations and cross-country comparisons in the concluding chapter of this report. The respondents were based in France and in the two regions in focus. Twelve in-depth interviews and a focus group in the region of Drôme, with nine participants (local citizens, including CSO activists), were conducted in total in France. The answers are provided in a summarised form without referring to the names and positions of the respondents (a list of respondents is provided in the appendices). For the sake of the research, the opinions of CSO activists and political

science experts are represented as provided in the interviews, but this should not be construed in any way as an endorsement of these views and recommendations by the research team.

The questions asked about the causes of populism in France, national and regional differences and similarities, and specific aspects related to populism, such as Euroscepticism, online disinformation, direct democracy and the role of CSOs, including impediments and solutions.

¹⁰⁶ European Audiovisual Observatory (2016) Mapping of media literacy practices and actions in EU-28. Strasbourg.

¹⁰⁷Internet Sans Crainte (2018) SID 2018, How to participate? <http://www.internetsanscrainte.fr/le-projet/safer-internet-day-2018-participez>

¹⁰⁸ CLEMI (2018) The school media map. <https://www.clemi.fr/fr/carte-medias-scolaires.html>

6.5.1. Factors of populism at national and regional level

With regard to the factors that drive populism and whether the socioeconomic or cultural factors are stronger, there were a number of astute observations by the CSO activists and political science experts in France. While the answers emphasise the role of both sets of factors, a number of opinions focused on the

cultural factors as potentially stronger, such as the identity factor and the rejection of multiculturalism and migrants.

On the issue of migrants, it is worth quoting a regional official interviewed for this study, who said that

“it is less about the number or the percentage of immigrants than about the threat that a wave of immigration could represent”

Nonetheless, it is important to note that, when asked about regional factors, respondents pointed to social and economic problems, as noted below in the text.

For Aisne, in the north of the country, this was job losses linked to deindustrialisation as a result of globalisation, according to one interviewee, while in Drôme it was more job insecurity. At the same time, there was a perception of abandonment and loss of control as *“we have a rural, peripheral France that feels further and further from the decision-making arenas but also from the big public or private services”*, that is, a *“cocktail of resentment”* as a political scientist and populism political science expert put it.

A distinction, made by the Drôme focus group, at regional level is that, for **low income households**, the main factor is the **fear of poverty**, with related claims that migrants receive more funding and healthcare services than citizens. For **wealthier people**, on the other hand, the **main factor was cultural**. That is, concern that migrants might change culture, disrespect traditional ways of life or bring aggression (e.g. into French society). One participant was of the opinion that the concern about migrants is higher in areas like Drôme, which paradoxically has a lower number of migrants, meaning the issue is more about perceptions of migration (please, note that the citizens surveys in this study showed the opposite result). A participant in the regional focus group in Drôme identified that

“right-wing populism has grown because of the feeling of insecurity... far-left populism is more stemming from the problems of liberalism ... The gilets jaunes reflect what happens on the web and in particular on Facebook, ... of fake news, of conspiracy theories...”

A number of interviewees made a **connection between the two sects of factors**.

One interviewee said that, for him, there is no distinction between socioeconomic and cultural factors as populism is an expression of the decline of political, social and religious forces that underpin the structure of the society.

That is, socioeconomic factors do not cause populism directly, but rather cause fears about job security, income and life prospects, increasing general insecurity and removing hopes for social mobility.

A very important reason for the rise of populism, often cited by the interviewees in France, is the **distance and disconnect between political elites and the people** as politicians do not listen to people's concerns. Another reason, which was like a red line in the focus group and the interviews, was the collapse of structures for debate on social issues, a breakdown in social cohesion and a deterioration of communal bonds that previously helped facilitate discussion and channel concerns and resentments. A focus group participant in Drôme remarked:

“we can see a collapse of the associative sphere, people are pitted against each other, we are not in a spirit of living together anymore”. With regard to the growing polarisation, another participant noted candidly that “What shocks me the most is that we have the feeling that we cannot live without having a neighbour to hate.”

A **feeling of loss of control** was often mentioned – that is, the loss of power vis-à-vis big business and EU institutions, and that the EU has lost control of its borders, which the interviewees emphasised was not due to anti-EU feeling. One academic expert in populism pointed out that the feeling of **abandonment by the state** is especially acute in France and is a contributing factor for populism as the country used to rely heavily on state intervention. This adds to what an academic expert in populism identified as an *“introduced form of anxiety in terms of identity and culture”* adding that *“this was theorised as “cultural insecurity”*.

Speaking about the different factors in Europe in general, one academic expert in populism commented that, although the factors behind populism are conditioned by the different historical trajectory of each country, the common denominator is the opposition and division between the people and elites that is used by the populists.

As the study coincided with the **“gilets jaunes” (yellow jackets)** protests around France, the answers provide a commentary on them, too. A focus group participant in Drôme remarked that *“it is phenomenal, there’s everything in this movement, plenty of frustrations and demands... Among the things that they highlight and demand, many things have actually been said over and over again, for years and years, but the people’s demands haven’t been taken into account, and here is the result.”*

The **geographical location** mattered too, for example, according to one interviewee (a CSO representative from the region) Aisne's location near the Belgian border has brought about job competition for truck drivers from Central and Eastern Europe (i.e. the CEE EU member states that apparently used the region as both a base of operations and transit route). In fact, resentment against EU member states in CEE, such as Poland, was mentioned as French production and businesses have moved there and that there is a perception that those countries have misused EU funds that come from countries like France.

It is important to note a regional perspective that, along with the disengagement of people in general from politics, there is also a growing reluctance on the part of politicians to run for public office. For example, a considerable proportion of current mayors does not want to run again due to the growing responsibilities and difficulties that come with the office.

The interviewees were also asked **what drives people away from populists** and what factors limit support for them, e.g. in case populist sentiments might be more widespread, but electoral support for them is much lower. The predominant answer was that the incompetence of populists in terms of policies was the main factor for limiting their influence.

One expert in populism from France, who is also a European expert in public affairs and media made a comparison to Brexit as "*the caricature of venting people's frustrations*

but having absolutely no answers on how to conduct things."

The opinion is that they are successful at attracting support in the short term, but do not have a rational plan. As the "symbolic" issues override real interests, this puts them in a tough spot with regard to the electorate. Another problem perceived by an academic expert in populism is the leadership issue as leaders' egos present structural weaknesses for the populist parties. Similarly, an interviewee thought that the personal backgrounds of some populists are at odds with their public image as they are not one of the people as they present themselves.

A participant in the focus group pointed out that **the history of radical right parties** prevented them from voting for them (implying extremist behaviour), even though some of their points could be agreed with and added that there was a similar experience with La France Insoumise. In fact, the parallel with the experience between WWI and WWII in France was invoked in some of the interviews.

The opinion of the participants in the interviews is that populists are very good at picking up topics and framing the debate, but are **not good at proposing answers**. Populists' speeches are based on isolated factual assessments that can be shared by everyone, but they don't develop argumentation or deepen understanding. Interviewees consider that

"populists "cultivate fear and anxiety... and are focused on the issues that people get worried about and nurture these fears".

The interviews of political science experts and CSO activists in France indicated that **traditional parties have a “huge responsibility”** for the rise of populism, which was also defined by expert in populism with knowledge on populism in Europe as a whole. They consider that they don't invest in new ideas, play it safe and are *“shallow in their ability to think”*, so they open opportunities for the populist parties. According to a focus group participant in

Drôme, *“There was an absence of attentiveness, of listening, a breach with people”*. Another participant thought that an important aspect of this problem is that mainstream politicians adopt the language of extremist parties. Equally important, though, is that it is considered that mainstream politicians have acquiesced in the face of populists as they don't have the courage to oppose them.

6.5.2. Related aspects: direct democracy, online disinformation and Euroscepticism

The concept of **direct democracy** almost unanimously produced negative reactions from political science experts and CSO activists – *“referendums are a bit dangerous”*, as one participant in the Drôme focus group put it – but with caveats. In one opinion, it is a good idea, but a double-edged sword.

The problem is, especially with referenda, that they introduce distrust towards political representatives, imply that elected officials cannot be relied upon and could be bypassed and that legitimacy can only stem directly from the people. That is, populists and other parties, such as progressive left-wing parties, decided that referenda are a good idea, but it poured water into the mills of populists. One academic expert in populism with knowledge on European affairs considered that representative democracy is the opposite of direct democracy, saying that

“populist parties pretend that they represent the people directly, whereas in fact, they only represent its moods, not its interests or its profoundness.”

According to many political science experts and activists, however, there is a problem of participation that needs to be fixed, but direct democracy cannot work where it is not regularly practiced – e.g. France is not Switzerland. One academic expert in populism said that *“any direct democracy opportunity should be bolstered by an infrastructure of deliberation”* otherwise it would abandon the issue to populists.

Interestingly, an academic expert in populism, who also an official proposed *“a democracy of proximity”*, *“active subsidiarity”* consultations at appropriate levels – local, regional, national and European.

Online disinformation is seen as a substantial problem and closely related to populism. There was a clear connection between the collapse of traditional media and the rise of disinformation. It is interesting to note the reaction of a 16-year-old participant in the focus group in Drôme, saying that (in regard to Facebook) “*we don’t know any more what is true or false... I think that all they say is gross, dangerous, it is sprawling, it takes huge proportions and it’s shambolic*” and prefers to keep to the private sphere and avoid hazardous posts. Another participant said that he feels more optimistic for young people as they are acting more reasonably and responsibly with social media with this and know how to deal with online disinformation better than adults. There were examples of how it can be dealt with, such as with fact checking, analytical long pieces, discussions on media publications and programmes.

Answers from the interviews underlined the close connection between **populism and Euroscepticism**. “*Populism feeds on Europhobia*”, considered one interviewee. One political science expert’s explanation was that populists are strongly opposed to multilateralism, which the EU practices on a daily basis, so it is their main target. A number of interviewees mentioned the problem of politicians across the spectrum blaming the EU for failures and taking the credit for successes.

At the same time, the interviewees showed honest and well-meaning criticism towards the European Union for a number of reasons. These include the distance between the EU and its citizens, the limitations of the European Commission stemming from it being too diplomatic and unable to defend itself, the extremely poor communication of EU achievements and funding that goes unnoticed.

6.5.3. Measures and levels of addressing the populist challenge

Considering recommendations on what can be done, and at what level, to address the populist challenge, the interviewee offered a number of suggestions. **At EU level**, a key recommendation is to improve communication, as “*there is a consensus to say that the EU institutions’ communication is the worst that can be done*”, as specified by an academic expert on populism with deep knowledge on European public affairs. There were examples of Europe

Direct centres moving away from rural areas, where they are needed the most, to the biggest urban centres, and that the “EU dialogues” are not an appropriate name as there is not really any feedback to Commissioners. There was also criticism that the European Commission and its national representations were really not interested in supporting CSOs in communicating, for example, the 2019 European Parliament elections.

With regard to the role of the European Parliament, there were two important aspects to it. First, it is underrated in national politics by traditional parties and there is low turnout for the elections, thus benefitting populists who turn up in larger numbers and win. The other important point was that the European Parliament defends the values of the EU and its statements are important.

There were suggestions for practical approaches, linking the EU with the regional level, such as easing access and transport in border areas and expanding Erasmus as one of the best EU programmes.

In terms of a general strategy, there were two valuable points. First, the interviewees **highlighted the communication skills of populists** and their intuition for making politics, but also said they are poorly equipped for policies and **lacking in substance**. At the same time, one academic expert in populism offered a valuable piece of advice – “*we need rationality, in terms of expertise of public policies, etc., but we also need discourses on emotion*”, not undertaking purely technocratic approaches.

Another answer reminded that it is not enough simply to denounce populism without providing answers to the questions, such as in the case of anti-racist programmes, and it can, in fact, be counter-productive.

A recommendation for France, but drawing on Denmark’s experience, as identified by an experienced observer of French and European affairs interviewed for the study, pointed to the success of The Alternative party as a method or template:

“...they had hundreds of meetings on the ground, letting people express what they wanted, and this ended up in a manifesto which had some surprising elements, not resembling traditional parties. And it is a serious approach, with an insistence on the effectiveness of policies”.

6.5.4. Populism, impediments to CSOs and civil society responses

When asked about **impediments to their work, CSOs and activists** in France pointed out that they don't experience any pressure due to legal changes to limit CSOs (unlike Hungary and Poland, mentioned by four different interviewees - academic experts in populism and CSO representative from the region - in France as negative examples¹⁰⁹). Concerning **pressure from populists or negative campaigning**, it was noted that a smaller populist party, UPR (Union Populaire Républicaine), harassed activists online and elsewhere, but the bigger populist FN party did not bother them. Impediments to the work of CSOs in France included, most of all, a lack of finances and human resources, making it difficult to expand networks or continue operations.

Despite the considerable number of CSOs and political science experts interviewed, in addition to the active participants in the focus group in France, who formulated numerous astute observations and proposals for actions, there are few CSO-specific insights and recommendations. The interviewees ascertained **there are not enough relevant CSOs to tackle populism in either Aisne or Drôme**. For example, a European youth organisation

said that they do not have local sections in any of the two regions with the possible explanation that they are rural areas, while such organisations – youth or European – are established, as a rule, in urban areas. The fact that in the French regions in focus there are relatively few CSOs with the relevant profile compared to the other countries was also attested by the active desktop research to identify CSOs potentially relevant to tackling populism (i.e. 0.12% and 0.19% for the two regions in France compared to 0.47% and 0.95% for the Italian regions). As a consequence, many of the recommendations for civic activities in the regions were envisioned by the respondents as relevant for local authorities.

A CSO activist from the region in Aisne remarked that *“Unfortunately ... Aisne is a bit of a desert in terms of European information and of fight against Euroscepticism and populist parties.”* Moreover, a regional official with knowledge on civil society and populism in the country official summarised the general state of civil society vis-à-vis populism as *“still very limited today, very weak, in comparison to the populist wave”*.

¹⁰⁹ The respondents – political science experts and civic activists – mentioned Hungary and Poland for crackdowns on CSOs, the judiciary and institutions of democracy in general. In the case of the legislation to limit CSOs, the references were to problems reported in the international

press: <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-hungary-orban-ngos/civil-organizations-in-hungary-brace-for-government-crackdown-on-ngos-idUSKBN1HW1ZN> or <https://www.politico.eu/article/pis-polish-ngos-fear-the-governments-embrace/>

With regard to necessary resources, a CSO activist prioritised three aspects: financial and human resources as well as “communication” in the broader sense. For example, the focus group in Drôme mentioned a lack of funding as a reason for the otherwise very useful “régie de quartier” (a type of neighbourhood associational structure) that could play a civil society role. The interviewees underlined that while **financial resources** are a prerequisite to take effective actions, the **communication needs** are much wider and go beyond the financial means – for example, “scientific studies” were mentioned among necessary resources, including on migration, to help tackle misconceptions.

The resource needs listed implied **skills building**, acquiring more **knowledge** and **collaboration between the different actors** in the field, such as a platform to develop cooperation and networks.

Among them are Europe House in Aisne tackling Euroscepticism and raising awareness about the EU, the International League against Racism and Anti-Semitism, Romans Citoyennes, which helps citizens participate at town level, Action Citoyenne, which focuses on empowering citizen voices, ADOS (Ardèche-Drôme-Ourosoqui-Sénégal) and Group local de la Cimade working on international development and migrant integration. A number of activities were mentioned – in France, in general, and the two regions – for tackling populism: interventions in schools, conferences and debates with MEPs, campaigns (e.g. “L’Europe en mieux”, or “Better Europe”¹¹⁰), conferences, debate-cafes, awareness-raising activities in different regions of

France with the aim to reach other territories than big cities only, workshops and training on countering disinformation, and citizen consultations targeting different audiences and subjects.

Civic activists identified tackling disinformation and the distance between the institutions and citizens as the most important actions to counter populism. These require education and awareness-raising activities, not only theoretical, but also practical, in order to enable citizens to “regain their citizenship”. Education on “citizenship”, for example, was emphasised in several interviews as a necessary CSO activity. In regard to the level of action, the interviewees recommended more activities at municipal level and in cooperation with municipal authorities. Another key topic identified for **education activities** was the role of European institutions and the functioning of the EU, also to be tackled at local level and in cooperation with cross-border authorities in order to bring communities from different countries together and convince them of the practical benefits of the EU.

¹¹⁰ <https://www.uef.fr/europe-en-mieux/>

CSOs working on migration and international development proposed more concrete actions to tackle prejudices, such as through personal stories of migrants and refugees, to alter public opinion, and more fact-based approaches to deal with disinformation and negative campaigning. CSO political science experts and activists mentioned a variety of measures that could be undertaken, such as the organisation of

round tables, information campaigns, citizen debates and the popularisation in the media of the experiences of active solidarity (e.g. an emphasis on communication).

Culture and sports, closely related to education, emerged from an interview as well as the focus group in Drôme as potentially very important areas for CSO activities in tackling the negative aspects of populism:

“Through sport, we allow for a citizen dynamic through integration and insertion. And also through culture, a lot of associations fighting against discrimination or for gender equality, for example, do a daily work of awareness and explanation. And this goes against the populist movements.”

Both the interviews and focus group in France clearly identified **the need for debates** and recommended **restoring active debates in society**, either in clubs or neighbourhood associations. A focus group participant in Drôme pointed to a format of consultations at local level, combined with education – “La Turbine à Graines” (“The Seeds Turbine”) – “allowing citizens to express and transfer their ideas and demands to the city council”. These recommendations are related to education – popular education – implying elements to serve as prevention, as well as “developing education, culture and social mix” to

establish mechanisms of working together. It is worth noting the suggestion through education and debates to revive awareness and interest in citizenship, politics and institutions, in the public sphere. On online disinformation, an example of an online publication (Le Taurillon) was provided making an offline version to reach people, who would otherwise not seek to be informed. There was an interesting note regarding scepticism of the role of the media as a potential ally, with the possible exception of local media or alternative media, which might be more supportive.

6.6. Conclusions and recommendations for France

6.6.1. Factors of populism at national and regional level

In France, cultural factors are seen as potentially stronger in driving populism than socioeconomic factors at national level, although both sets of factors are closely linked. Socioeconomic factors might not cause populism directly, but rather lead to fears about job security, income and life prospects. In terms of identity, the rejection of multiculturalism and migrants also plays a considerable role.

There are regional differences in the impact of the different factors. For Aisne, in the north of the country, this was job losses linked to deindustrialisation as a result of globalisation, while in Drôme it was more job insecurity, fear of poverty and potential competition for jobs with migrants.

The feeling of abandonment by the state and loss of control, the perceived distance between political elites and the people and, especially, the cleavage between the centre and the peripheral parts of the country play a significant and specific role in France.

There is likely a difference in factors of populism between social groups. Cultural factors have a bigger role for the wealthier due to “cultural anxiety” from a loss of culture, while among the less wealthy the stronger factor is the anxiety of job losses and lower incomes. The rise of far-right and far-left populism was attributed to different factors, too, with the far-right playing on feelings of insecurity and the far-left on the problems of economic liberalism.

The current phenomenon of the “gilets jaunes” (yellow jackets) protests around France is viewed as an expression of a variety of multifaceted frustrations and demands that have been voiced through the years, but have not been taken into account.

Traditional parties are also considered to have a responsibility for the rise of populism as they play it safe, don't have the courage to oppose populists and are inattentive to the public concerns thus opening opportunities for the populist parties; they also tend to adopt the language of extremist parties, worsening the situation.

There is a problem of participation that needs to be addressed, but *direct democracy* is viewed rather as part of the problem. It is not opposed on principle, but it can easily be exploited by populists and indicate emotions rather than rational reasons. Direct democracy demands a number of preconditions, such as an “infrastructure of deliberation”. A “democracy of proximity”, “active subsidiarity” with robust consultation processes at regional, national and European level, was suggested as an alternative.

There is a clear link between *online disinformation* and populism, especially after the collapse of traditional media. Fact-checking, analytical long pieces, discussions on media publications and programmes were deemed part of the solution. Young people were seen as better equipped to deal with online disinformation than adults.

The close connection between *populism and Euroscepticism* was summarised by the statement that “Populism feeds on Europhobia”. Populists are strongly opposed to multilateralism, which the EU practices on a daily basis, so it is their main target. However, both populist and mainstream politicians contribute to Euroscepticism as they blame the EU for failures and take credit for successes.

6.6.2. Conclusions regarding the role of civil society organisations

France has a strong social sector, including in Drôme and Aisne, in which most CSO employees are concentrated. There are organisations in both regions providing for the needs of minorities and migrants, including asylum seekers and refugees. The other organisations are mainly reliant on volunteers. CSO activity is much more promising in terms of facilitating direct democracy and countering online disinformation, while Euroscepticism is not specifically addressed.

The mapping of the CSOs active in the areas of promoting EU values, civic education and engagement, civic liberties, direct democracy, support to minorities, refugees and migrants and tackling online disinformation, which was conducted in the regions based on official information sources¹¹¹, reveals a marginal number of CSOs implementing activities that can potentially tackle populism. It represents the lowest percentage of all registered organisations compared to Austria, Italy and Poland.

¹¹¹ The sources for the data for France are <http://www.journal-officiel.gouv.fr/association/>,

<https://www.data.gouv.fr/fr/datasets/repertoire-national-des-associations/>

Table 12. Relevant CSOs on regional level in France

Region	Total CSOs in the region	Potentially relevant CSOs in the two regions of France							Total CSOs relevant	%
		EU values	Civic education and engagement	Disinformation	Minorities, migrants and multiculturalism	Civil liberties	Direct democracy and participation			
DR	15,181	3	1	0	9	0	8	18	0.12%	
AI	10,261	2	4	0	8	0	7	19	0.19%	

Some organisations are active in multiple areas, so the sum of column of activities and total number at the end may differ.

In the Drôme region of France, there are an estimated 15,181 CSOs in total, of which 0.12%, or 18, were deemed to carry out potentially relevant activities: 3 working on European values, 1 on civic education and engagement, a majority – 9 – on minorities, migrants and multiculturalism, and 8 on direct democracy and participation. In Aisne, out of the 10,261 CSOs, about 0.19%, or 19, were deemed to be potentially relevant: 2 working on EU values, 4 on civic education and engagement, 8 on minorities, migrants and multiculturalism and 7 on direct democracy and participation.

The finding that there are not enough relevant CSOs to tackle populism in either Aisne or Drôme was confirmed by the interviews and the focus group. As one CSO activist interviewed observed, “Aisne is a bit of a desert in terms of European information (the Europe Direct Centre of Laon has closed, for example) and the fight against Euroscepticism and populist parties”.

A prominent pro-European CSO in France described the challenge that leads to the isolation of rural areas as “a bit of a vicious circle: we don’t manage to establish there, so there are no actions, so this contributes even more to the distancing of rural areas’ inhabitants from European citizenship and thematics”.

Additional impediments to CSO activities in countering the populist challenge include limited financial and human resources as well as a lack of “communication” skills in the broader sense. Particularly in Aisne, funding issues are apparent. With the decision of the local council to withdraw funding to CSOs in Aisne, which is much poorer and with much lower social benefit expenditure than Drôme, the factors behind the populist vote there could become even more acute. The lack of resources includes knowledge and skills and platforms for networking and collaboration.

6.6.3. Recommendations

1	<u>Traditional parties</u> have a <u>responsibility to innovate and confront populists</u> , instead of “playing it safe”.
2	<u>Infrastructure for citizens’ deliberation</u> , to solicit the opinions of people and <u>address calls for more direct democracy</u> should be created.
3	<u>EU communications</u> must improve, especially in rural areas, regarding its achievements and funding.
4	<u>Civic education, culture and sports</u> should be fostered.
5	<u>Disinformation and the distance between citizens and institutions</u> needs to be tackled.
6	<u>Active debates in society through local clubs and neighbouring associations</u> should be restored.
7	There needs to be <u>investment in CSOs in rural areas, in their human resources, communication skills and knowledge base</u> .
8	<u>Collaboration between different actors</u> to tackle populism should be fostered.
9	<u>Prejudices</u> in society can be addressed through the personal stories of migrants and refugees.

7. The case of Italy: populism, citizens and CSOs

7.1. The rise of populism and populist parties in Italy

In Italy, the roots of populism go back to the political corruption scandals of the 1990s, which discredited Italy's mainstream parties¹¹². Silvio Berlusconi was the chief beneficiary of this, dominating Italian politics between 1994 and 2011 through his personal parties – *Forza Italia* (FI) and *Popolo della Libertà* (PdL) – presenting himself as a saviour on a mission to “restore sovereignty and prosperity to a ‘people’ cast as victims of a series of elites and faced with a multi-faceted and ongoing situation of crisis”.¹¹³ The literature is split on whether FI can be defined as populist, but that depends on the framework of populism used and whether the populist discourse of Silvio Berlusconi, the dominant figure and President of FI, can be separated from the party itself¹¹⁴.

In the Populism Index of this study (see **Table 13**), FI scores relatively low on anti-elitism (4.32) and Euroscepticism (4.27), higher on majoritarianism (6.06) and highest on monoculturalism (7.25) and

authoritarianism (7.66) on the scale from 0-10, lowest to highest. This makes it the lowest scoring party among those considered populist in Italy. Since Berlusconi's resignation as prime minister in 2011 because of economic crisis and public debt, Berlusconi's star has waned, surpassed on the political right by his former coalition partner *Lega Nord* (LN) and *Movimento 5 Stelle* (M5S). This is what Christophe Bouillard¹¹⁵ calls the “third wave of Italian populist upheaval”, which is comparable in many ways to what happened in the years 2011-13 and 1991-94, in which the established parties were seen to be corrupt and unable to reform Italy and anti-party parties mobilised to tap into anti-establishment sentiment using populist discourse. In the present wave of populism, M5S has led this mobilisation.

The study identified four populist parties in Italy that met the selection criteria: *Lega Nord* (LN), *Movimento 5 Stelle* (M5S), *Forza Italia* (FI) and *Fratelli d'Italia* (Fdi).

¹¹² Chiapponi, F., “The Main Roots of Italian Populism”, 2016.

¹¹³ Bobba, G., & McDonnell, D., “Italy – A Strong and Enduring Market for Populism”, 2015.

¹¹⁴ Van Kessel, S., “The populist cat-dog: applying the concept”, 2014.

of populism to contemporary European party systems. *Journal of Political Ideologies*, 19 (1), pp.99-118

<https://dspace.lboro.ac.uk/dspace-jspui/bitstream/2134/16890/1/JPI%20Populist%20CatDog%20for%20InstRepos.pdf>

¹¹⁵ Christophe Bouillard. A long-term view on current Italian populism: Beppe Grillo's M5S (Five-Stars Movement) as the third wave of Italian populist upheaval. 2nd International Populism Conference in Prague: “Current Populism: Impact on the Political Landscape”, May 2016, Prague, Czech Republic.

Table 13. Populism Index of selected parties in Italy

Country	Party	Dimensions, scores on a scale 1 to 10, low to high				
		Anti-elite	Majoritarian	Authoritarian	Monocultural	Eurosceptic
Italy	M5S	9.89	5.95	5.11	6.13	7.34
	LN	8.06	7	9.1	9.67	9.07
	FI	4.32	6.06	7.66	7.25	4.27
	Fdl	6.99	8.3	9.29	9.65	8.44

The Populism Index was constructed for the purposes of this study. It scores the parties along five dimensions on a scale 1 to 10, lowest to highest. The data used was the available from the Chapel Hill Political science expert Survey (CHES). See also [Appendix 22](#).

Lega Nord (LN) is anti-immigrant, Eurosceptic, traditional and authoritarian, with a quasi-charismatic leadership and an aggressive attitude to national and supranational elites.¹¹⁶ Their populism is strongly borne out by the CHES survey (please, see also [Appendix 22](#)), which shows them to be deeply populist on all measures. They represent positions that are anti-immigrant, nativist, nationalistic and Eurosceptic.¹¹⁷ Their strong anti-immigrant message was taken into the 2018 general election, with Matteo Salvini pledging to deport 500,000 undocumented migrants within a year of taking power¹¹⁸. This message has been continued in government with policies to refuse entry into Italian ports for ships rescuing migrants in the Mediterranean and a proposal to clear Roma settlements¹¹⁹.

Movimento 5 Stelle (M5S), or the Five Star Movement, was the leading party at the

2018 general election. They are strongly anti-establishment and moderately Eurosceptic, but much less authoritarian, traditional and illiberal, and are committed to direct democracy. Their populism is based chiefly on being an anti-party committed to horizontal connections between citizens without the interference of intermediaries and partisan politics and are proud to claim that their programme is the

¹¹⁶ Chiapponi, 2016.

¹¹⁷ Albertazzi, D., Giovannini A., & Seddone, A., “‘No regionalism please, we are Leghistil!’ The transformation of the Italian Lega Nord under the leadership of Matteo Salvini”, 2018, *Regional & Federal Studies*, <https://doi.org/10.1080/13597566.2018.1512977>

¹¹⁸ “Italy’s new government wants to deport 500,000 people”, *The Economist*, 7 June 2018,

<https://www.economist.com/europe/2018/06/07/italys-new-government-wants-to-deport-500000-people>

¹¹⁹ Kirchgaessner, S., “Far-right Italy minister vows ‘action’ to expel thousands of Roma”, *The Guardian*, 2018 <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2018/jun/19/italy-coalition-rift-roma-register-matteo-salvini>

world's first to be voted for online by citizens¹²⁰.

Outside of anti-elitism, Euroscepticism and direct democracy, there is little to They have called for wage support for Italians, a minimum pension for all retirees, a lower retirement age and a universal basic income of at least EUR 780 a month.

Forza Italia (FI) has been at the heart of Italian politics for over 20 years, so it would be difficult for Silvio Berlusconi and his party to maintain an anti-elitist discourse, but FI remains populist in its personalised and charismatic leadership. It is liberal or neoliberal populist, but illiberal towards democratic checks and balances.¹²²

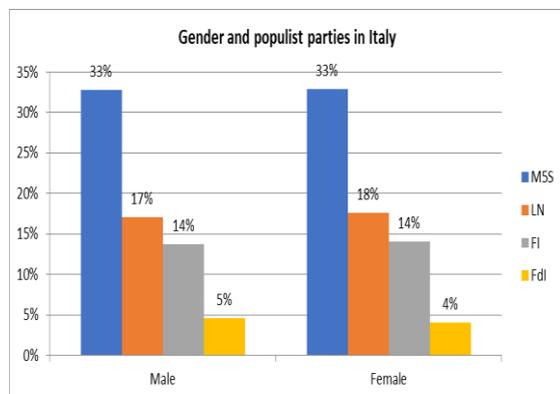
Fratelli d'Italia (Fdi) is a nationalist, conservative and Eurosceptic party. They support the traditional Italian family, putting

distinguish them politically and they have what one political science expert has defined as a "post-ideological political ideology"¹²¹.

Italy and Italians first, strong anti-immigration measures, restrictive citizenship policies, protection of Italian identity and economic protectionism. They are a minor force in Italian politics.

The regional trends in the populist vote in the case of the two regions in Italy – Udine and Reggio di Calabria, show there is a gradual trend upwards in populist support throughout the period of 2008-2018 (please, see [the trends and comparison across all eight regions in the Appendix 3: The populist vote at regional level: an overview of trends across regions and time](#)).

7.2. Demographic indicators and the populist vote in Italy at national level



The study also carried out an analysis of a number of demographic indicators – gender, age, education and employment – to examine their relationship with populist voting patterns at national level.¹²³ The analysis at national level is based on available public data and the analysis at regional level is based on the citizen surveys, conducted for the purposes of this study and

provided below in this chapter and [Appendix 5](#).

In terms of gender, during the 2018 general election the populist voting patterns of men and women were approximately the same, as illustrated in the Figure.

¹²⁰ Il Programma per l'Italia Scritto Dagli Italiani, Movimento 5Stelle

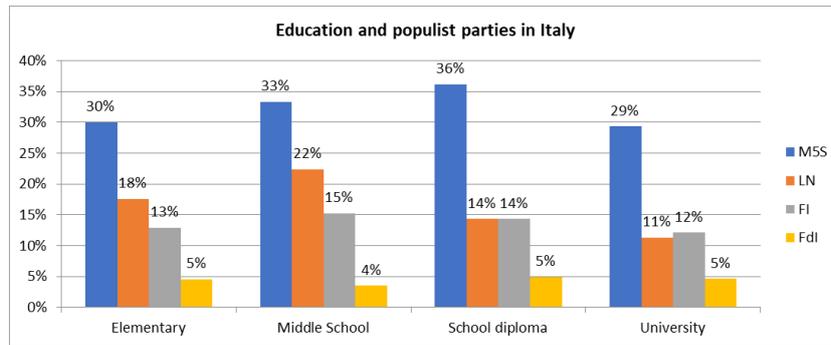
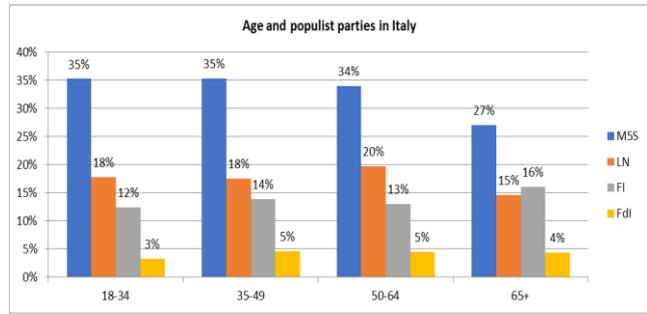
<https://www.movimento5stelle.it/programma/index.html>

¹²¹ As dubbed by Giannino, Domenico in "From the Parole Guerriere to Electoral Success: Italy's Five Star Movement", Oxford University Politics blog, 6 March 2018, <https://blog.politics.ox.ac.uk/parole-guerriere-electoral-success-italys-five-star-movement/>

¹²² Bobba, G., & McDonnell, D., "Italy – A Strong and Enduring Market for Populism", 2015.

¹²³ The study used national exit poll data, which provides an estimate as to the voting behaviour of particular demographic groups, to consider possible trends in voting patterns across these groups, both within individual countries and for particular parties. It allowed also for observations of any common features that hold across the countries studied.

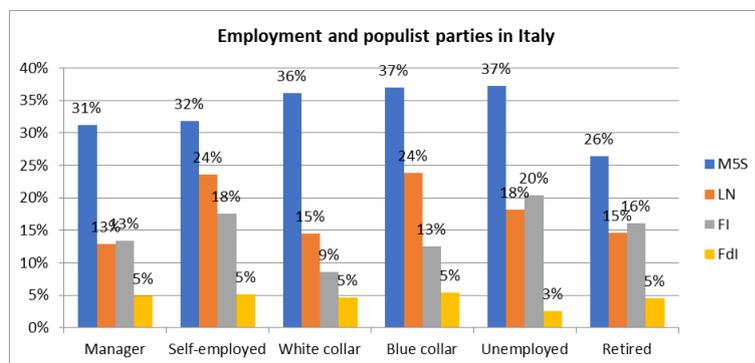
In terms of age in the 2018 election, M5S were the most popular party amongst all age groups but with a slightly lower vote share in the over 65 group. Lega performed best among the 50-64 age group and worst among those over 65. Fratelli d'Italia, the smallest party compared to the others, had its worst result among the youngest voters.



With regard to **education** in the 2018 general election, exit polls suggested that, in general, those who had received more education were less likely to vote for populist parties. This trend is not entirely consistent, however, as those who

received only an elementary school education were less likely to vote for a populist party than would otherwise be expected.

When the data is broken down by party, a possible explanation for this pattern emerges: M5S appear to have been more popular with those who received more of their school education, although they were notably less popular with those who have achieved a university qualification. Those who received only an elementary school education also voted less frequently for Lega than those who have a middle school education. In fact, those with only an elementary school education voted more frequently for the centre-left coalition led by PD than their non-university-educated peers. The centre-left received 28.5% of the votes from this demographic, 18.4% from those who had achieved a middle school education, 20.3% amongst those who had a high school diploma, and 31.4% of votes cast by those with university degrees.



Overall, populist voting behaviour by **employment status** did not seem to follow a clear trend in the 2018 general election. There is evidence that the unemployed, blue-collar workers, homemakers and self-employed people gave a higher proportion of their votes to populist parties. The picture is

mixed though. The vote for M5S is consistently fairly high, but the party is notably less popular with retirees than the data regarding age suggests. Their share of the student vote is surprisingly low given their popularity with young people, but this could perhaps signal that their youth base consists of those in entry-level jobs. Lega seems to be particularly popular with blue-collar workers and the self-employed.

7.3. Citizen surveys in the Udine and Reggio di Calabria regions of Italy

The citizen surveys, as the case with the other countries, were focused on eliciting the opinion of citizens specifically in the two regions in focus in Italy – Udine and Reggio di Calabria (abbreviated respectively as UD and RC). A total of 106 respondents¹²⁴ in Udine and 67 respondents¹²⁵ in Reggio di Calabria took part in the survey. The survey included 36 closed-ended questions and demographic information about the respondents for each of the two regions. It was carried out online on a voluntary basis. These are exploratory surveys meant to complement the other research methods as the samples are too small for a nationally representative study¹²⁶. It should be noted that, in this case, the sample sizes in terms of age, gender, education, occupation, income, religious affiliation and political preference provide a good basis for the purposes of the study as there are

respondents within all main demographic categories listed above (e.g. 32% male and 68% female respondents in Udine and 40% male and 60% female in Reggio di Calabria).

As noted in the beginning of this report, the two regions were selected for their different socioeconomic characteristics and the level of the populist vote in the regions (please, see [Appendix 21](#)). The table below shows the main indicators. Udine, which is located in the north of the country, is the wealthier of the two with a GDP 103% of the EU28 average. Reggio di Calabria, which is in the south of Italy, has a GDP 62% of the EU28 average, which is considerably less than Udine. The two regions have similar population numbers.

Table 14. Socio-economic characteristics of the two regions in Italy

Country/Region	GDP PPS % of EU28 average	GDP PPS per inhabitant (regional)/Real GDP per capita (national)	Total population	Population density (km ²)	Largest urban area
Italy	95%	26,400	60,665,551	203.6	2,873,494
Udine	103%	29,900	536,180	112	176,000
Reggio di Calabria	62%	18,100	557,993	173.5	200,330

¹²⁴ In Udine, out of 90 respondents, who responded to the political affiliation question, 17.80% (16) marked Partito Democratico, 16.70% (15) Movimento 5 Stelle, 3.30% (3) Forza Italia, 15.60% (14) Lega, 23.30% (21) other parties, 6.70% (6) non-voters, 16.70% (15) preferred not to answer.
¹²⁵ In Reggio Calabria, out of 65 respondents, who responded to the political affiliation question, 12.30% (8) marked Partito Democratico, 36.90% (24) Movimento 5

Stelle, 3.10% (2) Forza Italia, 7.70% (5) Lega, 16.90% (11) other parties, 9.20% (6) non-voters, 13.80% (9) preferred not to answer. The parties listed here, were included as answers in the questionnaires (Fratelli d'Italia is not included as it has lower election result).
¹²⁶ A fully representative study would require a sample of some 380 people per each region.

The current analysis is based on select questions pertinent to the five dimensions of populism as identified in this study: anti-elite, majoritarian, authoritarian, monocultural and Eurosceptic, with an additional focus on issues such as direct democracy, disinformation and sovereignty.

It is worth noting that, according to the citizen survey results below, there are differences in attitudes between the supporters of the two main populist parties in Italy – M5S and Lega – that are currently in government. The text below covers these two main parties since they achieved the highest election results as well as the highest representation in the citizen surveys, but there is further information about the other parties, including the smaller populist parties, in the respective appendices on citizen surveys in Italy (Appendix 16. Party affiliation and key questions on populism in Italy and [Appendix 17. Party supporters' profiles across demographic indicators at regional level in Italy](#)).

In terms of **gender**, there are no substantial differences across the party preferences. In the case of both Udine and Reggio di Calabria, women were a slight majority in nearly all cases because more women participated in the surveys.

Moreover an analysis of the socio-demographic characteristics of the respondents is provided based on the respective questions in the citizen survey.

With regard to **age**, 56% of M5S and 43% of Lega supporters in Reggio di Calabria are younger – between 18-24 and 25-34 years old. The remaining M5S supporters are represented by all age groups and Lega by older respondents. In Udine, 60% of M5S and 72% of Lega supporters are up to 34 years old, and, for the rest, are represented by all age groups.

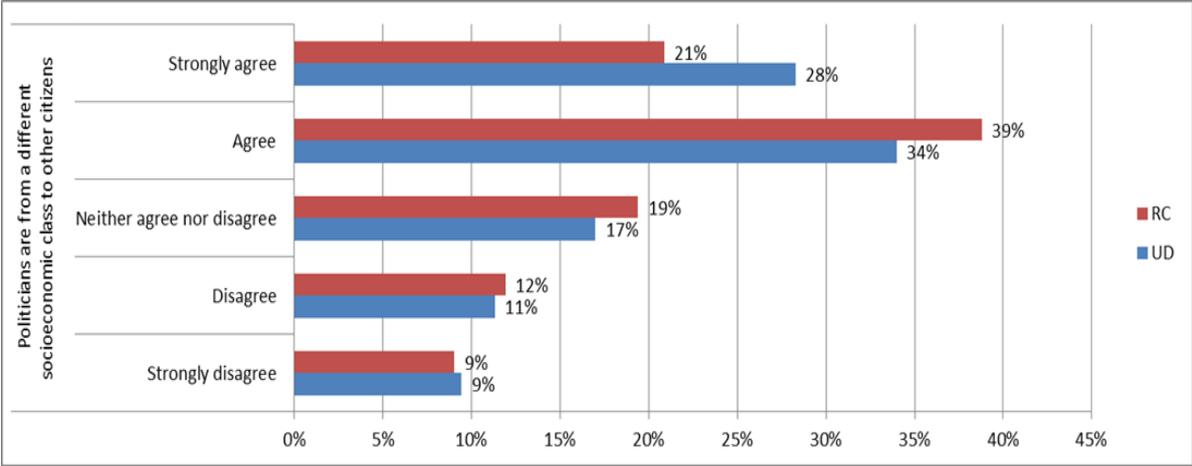
Concerning **education**, about 70% of the both Lega and M5S respondents in Reggio di Calabria have a high school education, but the other M5S supporters in the region have a slightly higher education than the remaining Lega supporters – 24% of M5S voters have a bachelor's or master's degree, while 28% of Lega's respondents listed "other" or "other professional" education. In Udine, M5S and Lega respondents have comparable levels of high school education – 67% and 60% respectively – but there are differences among the rest. 27% of M5S respondents have bachelor's or master's degrees, or PhD, while the remaining Lega respondents in the region have 11% master's with the rest having either "no education" or "other professional education". To sum up, it can be claimed that both M5S and Lega respondents in the survey have, on balance, lower levels of education compared to the other parties (PD, other small parties), with M5S supporters slightly better educated than those of Lega.

In terms of **household income** and party preferences in Reggio di Calabria, those within the lowest income bracket voted mostly for Lega (71%) and M5S (64%), but the situation in Udine is more diverse with about 47% in the lower income bracket voting for M5S.

With regard to **religion** and party preferences in Reggio di Calabria, M5S supporters are most diverse – with 72% Catholic and small shares of Orthodox Christian, Protestant, Agnostic, Atheist and other. The highest share of Catholic supporters can be found among Lega voters (86%). After non-voters in Udine, M5S voters are most diverse (40% Catholic, 27% agnostic, 20% atheist and 7% Muslim).

In terms of **anti-elite attitudes**, the majority of respondents in both Italian regions agree with the statement “Politicians are from a different socioeconomic class to other citizens”, with 60% in Reggio di Calabria and 62% in Udine. Only about a fifth of respondents in the two regions disagree with this and a similar proportion is undecided. Supporters of the ruling M5S party have the largest share of agreement in Reggio di Calabria (71%) and the lowest share of agreement is among Lega supporters (40%). In Udine, among the main populist parties, M5S supporters disagree with this notion to the highest extent (26%) compared to Lega voters (14%). In Udine, 60% of M5S supporters agree with this, which is equivalent to Lega respondents with 57% ([Appendix 16, Figures 1 and 2](#)).

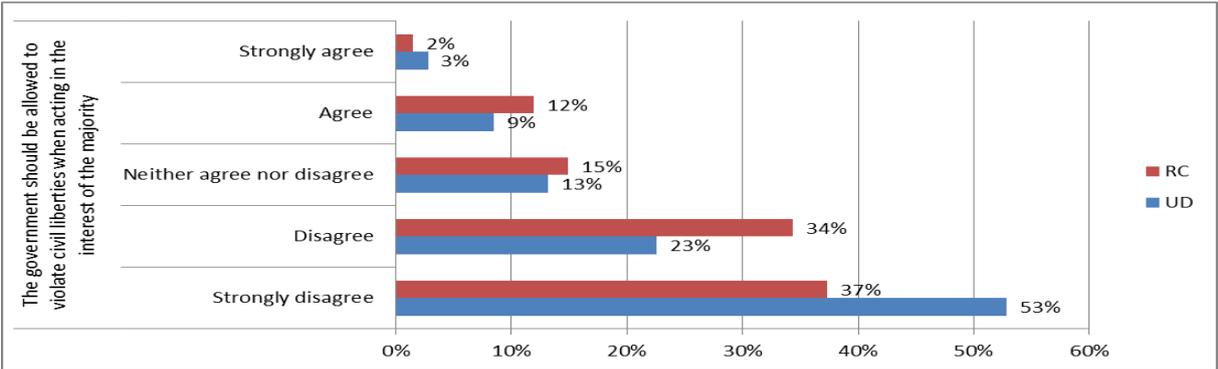
Figure 26. Anti-elite sentiments



With regard to **majoritarianism** and the statement “the government should be allowed to **violate civil liberties** when acting **in the interest of the majority**”, the vast majority of Italian respondents in both regions disagree with it. Opposition to this is slightly higher in Udine (76%) than Reggio di Calabria (71%). The share of those agreeing with the notion is just 14% in Reggio di Calabria and 12% in Udine, with small numbers also undecided (15% and 13%, respectively). It is worth contrasting the high disagreement towards the proposition for curbing civil rights in the name of the majority (71-76%) with the

level of support for a strong, unchecked leader at 41%-46% – i.e. there is no clear case of public support for authoritarian and majoritarian positions. On the issue of government breaching civil liberties for the sake of the majority, in Reggio di Calabria, Lega respondents are among those agreeing most (20%), but M5S supporters oppose it to a very large extent (79%). In Udine, it is opposed in the highest measure by M5S voters (80%). The least opposed are the non-voters (50%) and Lega supporters (58%) (**Appendix 16, Figures 7 and 8**).

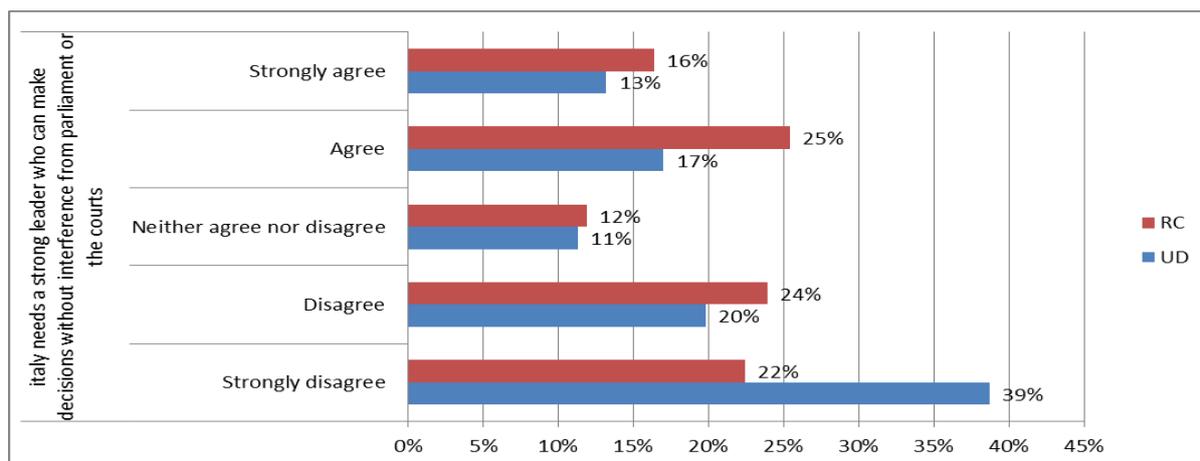
Figure 27. Government and civil liberties



With regard to **authoritarianism** and the proposal for a **strong leader, unchecked by courts or parliament**, there are again regional differences. 41% of respondents in Reggio di Calabria either agree or strongly agree, with a slightly higher share (46%) disagreeing. In Udine, around a third (30%) support the proposition, but twice as many (59%) reject it. In both cases, the share of undecided respondents is low – 11-12%. In

Reggio di Calabria, supporters of the main populist parties are equally split on the issue – 40% from Lega agree and 40% disagree, while within M5S 42% agree and 46% disagree. In Udine, support for a strong leader is highest among Lega voters (79%) and lowest among M5S supporters (14%). The most disagreement comes from within M5S (80%). (**Appendix 16, Figures 5 and 6**).

Figure 28. Strong, unchecked leader

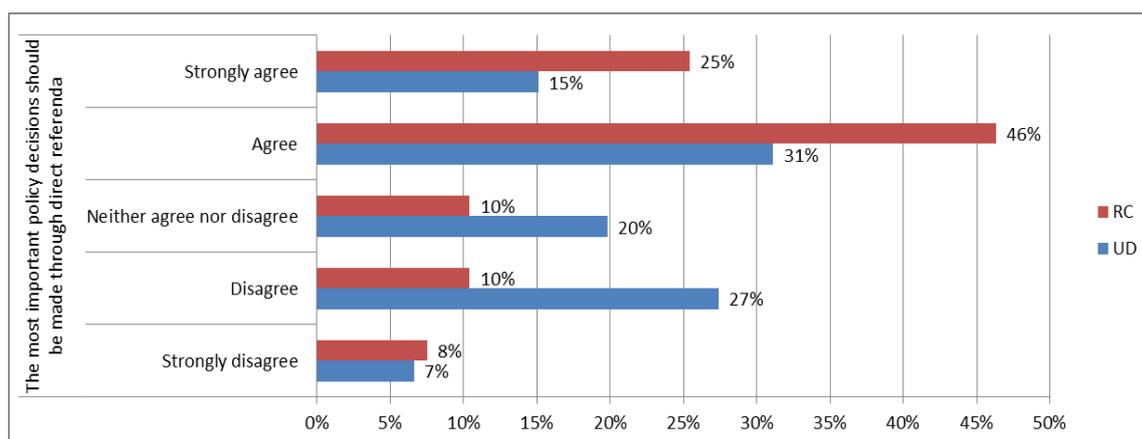


On the issue of **direct democracy**, there are regional differences. In Reggio di Calabria, the less wealthy of the two regions, more than 71% support direct referenda, while in Udine, the better-off region, only 46% support them. Support for more direct democracy is even more categorical in Reggio di Calabria, considering that only 10% are undecided and just 18% oppose the proposition. In Udine, there is much less support and a higher rejection of direct referenda. There,

less than half of respondents (46%) agree with this, over a third (34%) disagree and one fifth are undecided.

In Reggio di Calabria, direct referenda are most popular among non-voters and the populist Lega supporters with close to 100% and the lowest is 88% for M5S. In the Udine region, direct referenda are preferred most of all by Lega (71%), and M5S (60%) respondents. ([Appendix 16](#), [Figures 3 and 4](#)).

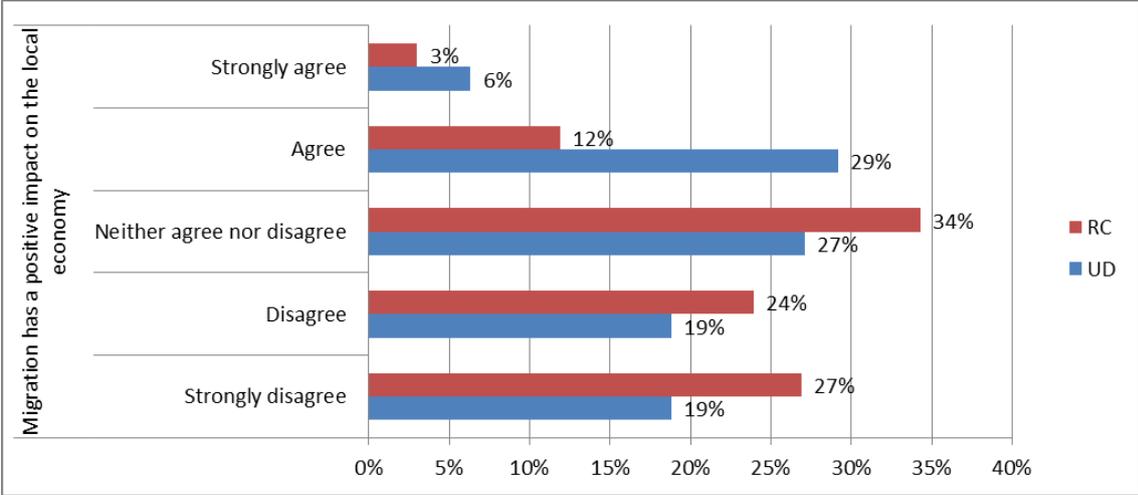
Figure 29. Direct referenda



In terms of ***attitudes towards migrants***, respondents in the northern and well-off region of Udine are more inclined to recognise the ***economic benefits of migration*** (35%) compared to less than half in Reggio di Calabria (15%). 51% in Reggio di Calabria disagree with this compared to 38% in Udine. About a fifth of

respondents in both regions are undecided. In Reggio di Calabria, the highest degree of disagreement can be found among Lega supporters (80%). Half of M5S voters are undecided, which is a large proportion. In Udine, opposition is higher among Lega supporters (71%) than M5S (47%). (Appendix 16, Figures 9 and 10).

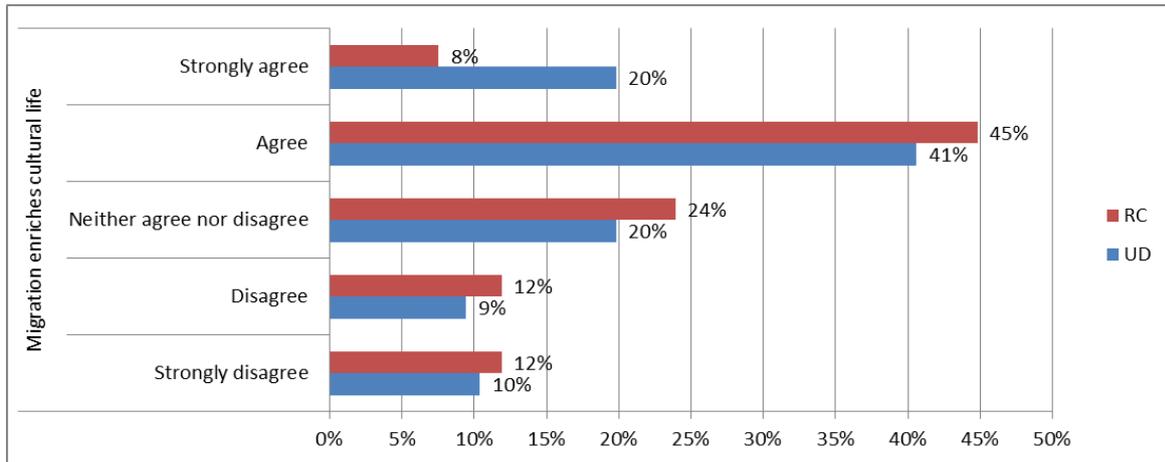
Figure 30. Economic impact of migrants



As there are regional differences, additional questions on the topic were used to explore these differences.¹²⁷ With regard to the question of whether ***migration enriches cultural life***, there is strong agreement about this notion in both regions, although agreement is smaller in Reggio di Calabria – 53%, compared to 61% in Udine. About a fifth of respondents in each region disagree with this – 24% in Reggio di Calabria and 19% in Udine.

¹²⁷ The citizen survey includes 36 questions with two or three questions on some of the topics. The current report uses the main questions, but in case the analysis necessitates it – e.g. there are regional differences, the additional questions and responses are used.

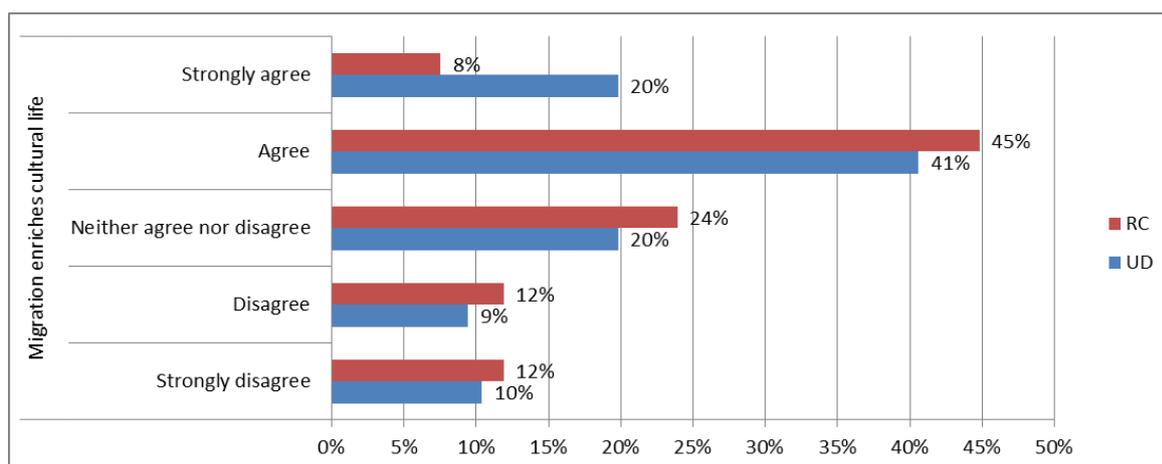
Figure 31. Migration and cultural life



Concerning ***EU membership***, there are again regional differences. Respondents in Udine show higher support for Italy’s EU membership (67%) than Reggio di Calabria (46%). Almost a third of respondents (28%) in Reggio di Calabria are opposed to EU membership, compared to just 18% in Udine. The share of undecided respondents is much higher in Reggio di Calabria (25%) than in Udine (16%). In

Reggio di Calabria, M5S voters expressed relatively high agreement with this (44%) while Lega supporters disagreed with EU membership to the highest extent (50%). In Udine, 60% of M5S supporters agree with this, but Lega supporters disagree most (33%), with a high share of undecided respondents (42%) (**Appendix 16, Figures 13 and 14**).

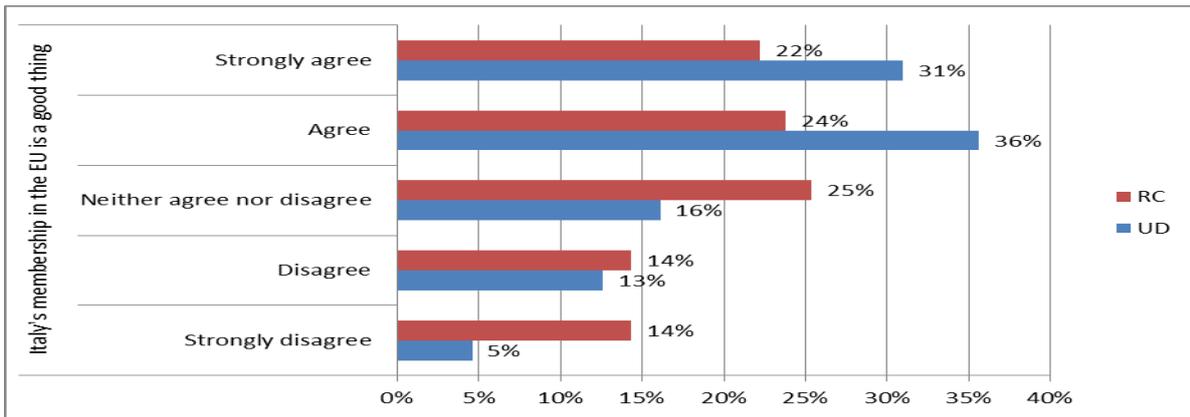
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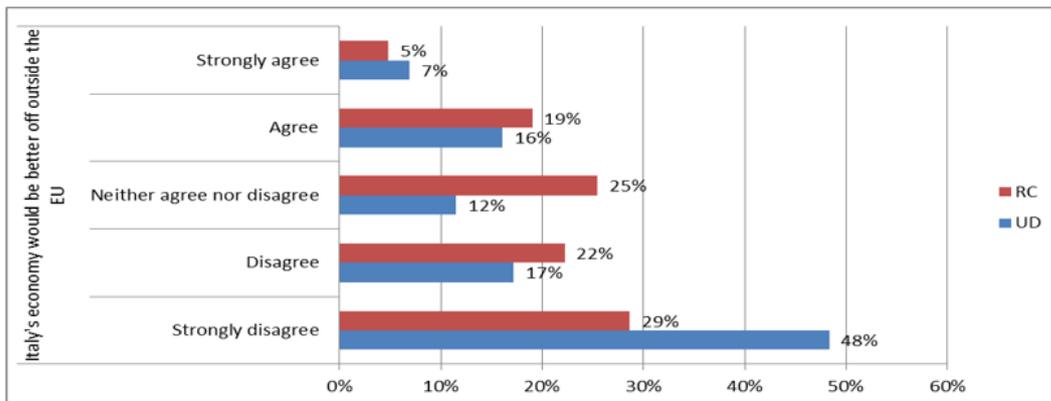
Figure 32. EU membership



The vast majority of Udine’s respondents (65%) disagree with the proposal **that Italy’s economy would be better off outside of the EU**. In comparison, the share in Reggio di Calabria is 51% – still a

majority, but lower than in Udine. The share of those unsure about the economic value of EU membership in Reggio di Calabria (25%) is more than twice that of Udine (12%).¹²⁸

Figure 33. Italy's economy and EU membership



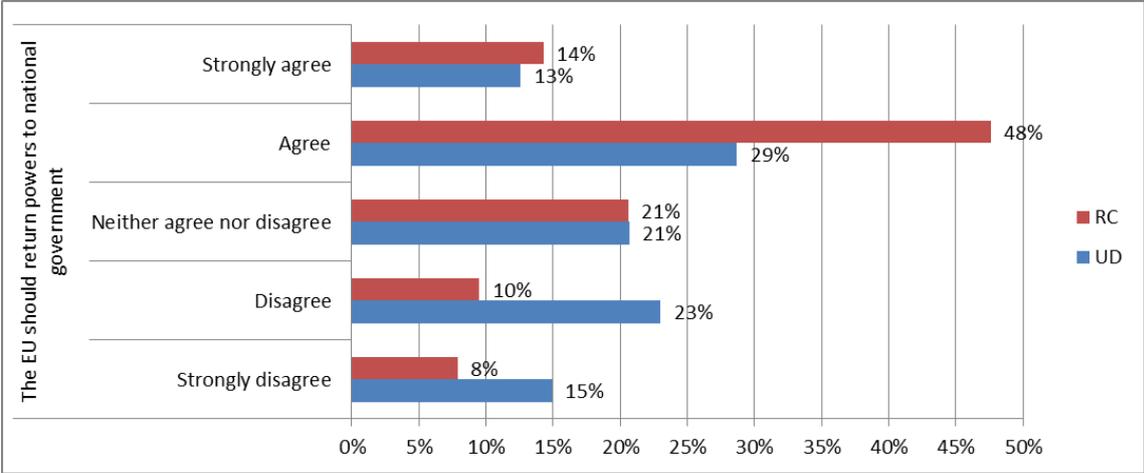
¹²⁸ The citizen surveys included 36 a closed-ended questions along eight dimensions with key questions. The analysis as a rule uses eight key questions on the dimensions of populism include anti-elitist sentiments, authoritarian and majoritarian tendencies, attitudes towards

migration, religion as a marker of national identity, opinion about EU membership and the sovereignty debate in the context if EU membership, and the rest are used only if deemed necessary for clarification.

With regard to the **sovereignty debate**, there are again markedly different regional perspectives. Respondents from Reggio di Calabria are much more inclined to agree that the EU should return powers to the national government (over half, or 62%) compared to Udine (42%). Undecided respondents in both regions are about a fifth (21%). In Udine, twice as many (38%) disagree with the proposition than in

Reggio di Calabria (18%). In Reggio di Calabria, the highest support for the proposal comes from those who refused to identify political affiliation (78%), followed by M5S (74%) and other, smaller parties (44%). In Udine, the strongest support for the return of EU powers to the national government is among M5S supporters (73%), as well as Lega voters (67%) and non-voters (50%) (**Appendix 16, Figures 15 and 16**).

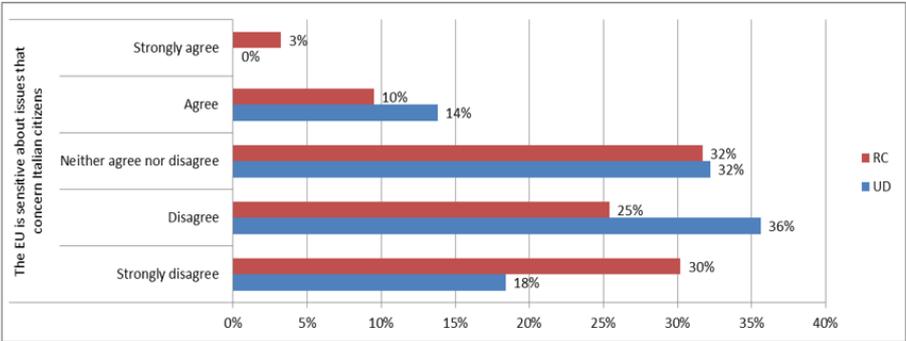
Figure 34. EU and national government powers



It is worth noting that there are virtually no differences between the two regions in the perception **how the EU is treating Italian citizens**. An estimate of 13% and 14%, respectively, in Reggio di Calabria and

Udine agree that the EU is sensitive to concerns of Italians, 32% in each region are undecided and 55% and 54% disagree with this in Reggio di Calabria and Udine, respectively.

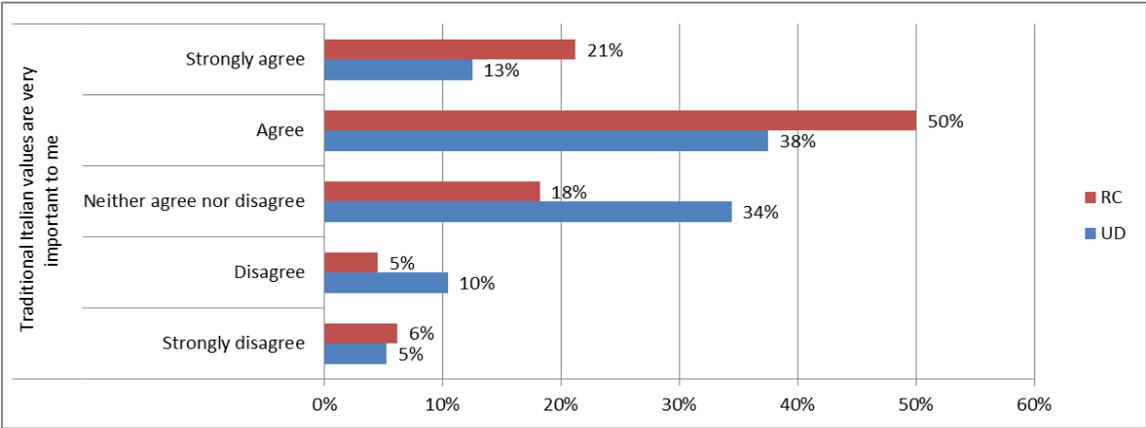
Figure 35. EU treatment of Italian citizens



There are regional differences in attitudes towards ***traditional values***. The share of those for whom traditional values are personally important is 71% in Reggio di Calabria and 51% in Udine, with smaller

numbers for whom they are not important – 11% in Reggio di Calabria and 15% in Udine. However, there is a high degree of uncertainty in the latter, with more than a third of respondents (34%) unsure.

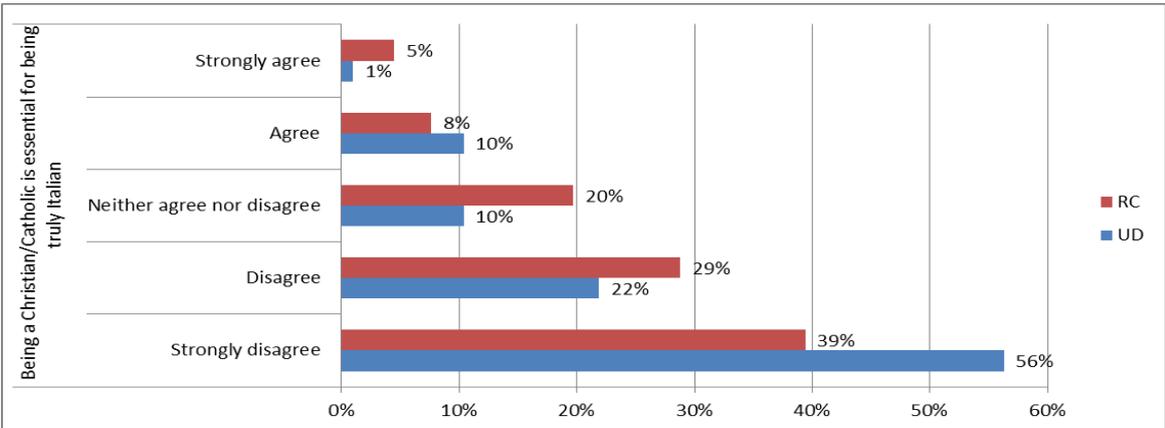
Figure 36. Importance of traditions



It is interesting, however, to note that the difference between the two regions is smaller on the question of ***whether Christianity/Catholicism is an essential aspect of Italian identity*** than on the importance traditional values. Just 13% in Reggio di Calabria and 11% in Udine agree that Christianity/Catholicism is essential to national identity, whilst 68% and 78%

disagree with this in Reggio di Calabria and Udine, respectively. In Reggio di Calabria, 60% of Lega voters support this proposition, but very high proportion of the M5S voters (71%) disagree. In Udine, 21% of Lega supporters agree with the proposition, but 73% of M5S supporters disagree ([Appendix 16, Figures 11 and 12](#)).

Figure 37. Christianity and national identity



A summary of the positions across political affiliation shows several observations. With regard to **anti-elitism**, there are regional and party differences as in Reggio di Calabria, supporters of smaller (“Other”) parties and those of the ruling M5S party have the largest share of agreement, but low support within the populist Lega and non-affiliated. In Udine, non-affiliated and FI voters agree most and among the populist parties, M5S voters are less anti-elitist than those of Lega. With regard to **direct referenda**, in both regions the populist Lega and M5S voters as well as those of FI are the biggest supporters of the idea and it is opposed most by the voters of the non-populist PD.

Support for a **strong, unchecked leader**, there are regional and party differences as in RC it is strong also among voters of the non-populist PD party and the populist Lega, but in Udine it is rejected by them and the populist M5S, the non-affiliated and FI voters and supported by the Lega (with FI voters somewhat divided). With regard to **“majoritarianism”**, there are some regional differences and similarities, as those opposed in both regions are M5S and smaller parties, in addition to non-affiliated and non-voters in RC and PD voters in UD. FI and Lega either agree (in RC region) or are least opposed (Lega in UD).

In regard to **economic benefits of migration**, there are regional similarities as in both regions non-voters, unaffiliated and Lega tend to disagree most and smaller parties and PD voters support migration. FI voters show different preferences – support in RC and disapproval in UD. There are high shares of undecided among smaller parties and especially PD and M5S voters (nearly half of them). On the issue of **religion and national identity**, in both regions the Lega voters agree with this

notion, and the populist M5S, the non-populist PD, non-voters, smaller parties and unaffiliated generally disagree with this.

In terms of **EU membership**, the populist Lega supporters reject it in the highest extent in both regions, but Lega has also high shares of undecided among them – as many other groups such as smaller parties, FI, PD and the populist M5S. Generally, PD voters, FI, M5S, smaller parties, non-voters, unaffiliated have higher shares of support to EU membership. With regard to the question of **sovereignty**, the populist M5S voters in both regions show a high level of support to EU returning powers to the national government. Depending on the region, there is high support to this proposition among unaffiliated and smaller parties voters (in RC) as well as the populist Lega, non-voters and FI supporters (UD).

While there are many similarities between the two regions, there are marked differences on key questions. For example, respondents from Reggio di Calabria are much more inclined to support **direct democracy** (RC 71%; 46% UD), reject **authoritarian proposals** for a strong leader, unchecked by the parliament and courts, to a lesser extent (RC 46% - 59% UD) and agree less that **migration brings economic benefits** (RC 15%; 35% UD). They are less supportive of **EU membership** (RC 46%; 67% UD), fewer disagree that Italy’s economy would be better off outside the EU (RC 51%; 65% UD) and more consider that the **EU should return powers** to the national government (RC 62%; 42% UD). That is, respondents from Reggio di Calabria tend to support populist positions to a greater extent.

With regard to similarities, respondents in both regions have similar views on politicians and citizens being from **different socioeconomic classes** (RC 60%; 62% UD), reject **breaching civil liberties** for the benefit of the majority (12% UD; 14% RC)

and attach less importance to **religion** as a marker of **national identity** (RC 13%; 11% UD). However, respondents from Reggio di Calabria put more emphasis on **traditional values** than those in Udine (RC 71%; 51% UD).

The **comparison between the eight regions** in focus (the two regions in Italy and the other six in the rest of the countries) in this study **across eight key questions** of the citizen surveys¹²⁹ can be seen in the **Appendix 6: Comparison across the eight regions in focus**.

7.4. CSO environment and CSOs at regional level in Italy

This section analyses the state of civil society organisations at regional level in Italy and assesses their potential role in tackling populism.^{130 131 132}

The **CSO environment in Italy deteriorated from 2008 to 2017**,

according to the V-Dem Core Civil Society Index (see **Appendix 8: V-Dem Core Civil Society Index**) as its score fell by 6.2% between 2008 and 2017¹³³, compared to falls of 1.6% in Austria, 6.5% in France and 27.3% in Poland.

¹²⁹ The citizen surveys were conducted in all eight regions in focus for the purposes of this study, using a closed-ended questionnaire. For further details and the methodology, please see the national chapters in this report. These key questions on the dimensions of populism include anti-elitist sentiments, authoritarian and majoritarian tendencies, attitudes towards migration, religion as a marker of national identity, opinion about EU membership and the sovereignty debate in the context of EU membership.

¹³⁰ The sources on Italy include:

<https://www.istat.it/it/files/2017/12/Nota-stampa-censimento-non-profit.pdf>

<https://www.istat.it/it/archivio/207807>

<https://www.istat.it/it/archivio/207807>

<https://www.istat.it/it/archivio/207807>

<http://www.comune.udine.gov.it/servizi-online/ascolto-attivo>

<http://www.reggiocal.it/on-line/Home/AreeTematiche/AssembleaPubblica.html>

<http://www.reggiocal.it/on-line/Home/AreeTematiche/SpazioGiovani/articolo109549.html>

<http://www.auserfriuli.it/index.php>

¹³¹ The section reviews the current and potential role of CSOs in countering populism and the populist narratives in view of socioeconomic factors, migration, direct democracy, Euroscepticism, EU values, civic education and the use of online disinformation. It examines the environment in which CSOs operate, the typology of CSOs at regional level and the activities CSOs undertake to address populism. There are examples of CSOs' initiatives, but the good practices identified to highlight the positive impact CSOs can have are presented elsewhere in this report. There is a short overview of the situation at national level (see Appendix 15: CSO typologies and developments on national level in Italy for more information about CSOs at national level). This section is based on data from publicly available records and sources and the CSO interviews conducted especially for this study are presented separately.

¹³² It should be emphasised that there were vast differences in the available information between the different countries and the different regions within the same country, with definitions and data varying substantially even within a single country or region. The analysis took these circumstances into account and standardised the information to the extent possible; nevertheless, it necessarily imposed differences in these sections of the report between the countries and regions.

¹³³ The civil society score of Italy fell from 0.964 in 2008 to 0.904 in 2017 on a scale from 0 to 1, where 0=fragile, 1=robust. For the other countries, please see the respective country sections.

The study used the data available on Regione Autonoma Friuli-Venezia Giulia as the most relevant source on **civil society in Udine**. When the Regione figures are taken into account, Udine has an estimated 4,494 CSOs, out of which 91% are associations, 2% social cooperatives, 1% foundations and 6% with another legal basis. CSOs in the culture, sport and recreation sectors are the most prevalent, with 70.45% of organisations, and the next highest is social assistance and civil protection, with only 7.3%.

The vast majority of organisations has no employees. Of the 12% of organisations that do have paid employees, 5.3% have 1-2 employees and 4.27% have 3-9 employees. Only 0.4% have 50 or more employees and 0.66% 20-49 employees, meaning that small volunteer organisations are very much the norm in the region. The number of employees in Udine is about 7,500 and the number of volunteers 74,000, with 67% of employees working for social cooperatives and 92% of volunteers for associations. This is generally the case across all sectors, although employees are concentrated in the social assistance and civil protection, education and economic development and social cohesion sectors, with 55.2%, 14.24% and 14.03% respectively. The majority of employees are in the social assistance and civil protection and economic development and social cohesion sectors, suggesting that there are large, professional organisations working in these areas. Indeed, 29 organisations in *Friuli-Venezia Giulia* are responsible for around 52% of the paid workforce. Volunteers, on the other hand, are largely active in culture, sport and recreation organisations, which account for 68.5% of the total, although more than 11% volunteer in the social sector.

For **Reggio di Calabria**, as with Udine, the most complete data is available at *Regione* level. Based on this data, there are an estimated 2,433 in the region, with 87% associations, 7% social cooperatives, 1% foundations and 4% with another legal basis. Culture, sport and recreation organisations are again the most common, making up 59% of the total, with social assistance and civil protection organisations the next highest with 10.5%, which may reflect the greater need for social assistance in Reggio di Calabria than in Udine.

In Reggio di Calabria, as with Udine, only a **small percentage of organisations have employees**, although the percentage is higher in Reggio di Calabria. Of the 18% of organisations with employees, 8.7% have only 1-2 employees and 6.45% have 3-9 employees. Only 0.29% have more than 50 employees and 0.58% 20-49 employees, meaning that small volunteer organisations, as with Udine, are typical. The number of employees in the region is about 3,000 and volunteers 27,500. Employees are concentrated in social cooperatives, which account for 48% of the total, but to a lesser extent than in Udine, whilst 93% of volunteers work for associations. There is more of an even distribution of employees across different activities than in Udine, with 30.5% in the social sector, 20.2% in education, 17% in health and 16.8% in economic development and social cohesion, and the workforce is spread across organisations of different size. Volunteers are mostly found in the culture, sport and recreation sector, with 49% of the total, but there is a large proportion in both social assistance and civil protection and health, which account for 23% and 11% respectively.

With regard to **tackling socioeconomic problems**, the social sectors in both regions are strong, with larger more professional organisations dominating, compared to the small, largely volunteer organisations in other areas of activity, and the sectors are rich in organisations addressing poverty, social development, marginalisation, discrimination and issues around asylum, refugees, migrants, minorities and community relations. Despite the fact that it has a smaller overall number of CSOs, the number operating in this field is larger in Reggio di Calabria than in Udine.

Concerning the populist **anti-migrant narrative**, OIKOS ONLUS¹³⁴, an organisation based in the Udine region that is active in the reception, protection and integration of foreign citizens in Italy, highlighted the difficulties populism causes for organisations working with migrants, including xenophobia, hostility towards NGOs operating reception centres, diminishing funds and propaganda against those who believe in solidarity and acceptance. Explaining the complexity of migration, according to OIKOS, especially in the toxic environment of social media, is a major concern, as is a lack of regional policies addressing migration.

With regard to **direct democracy** and related activities, there are mechanisms in place in Udine and Reggio di Calabria for citizen participation and engagement, though little provision for direct democracy. The administrations of both Friuli-Venezia Giulia and the Province of Udine provide information about transparent government

and consultations are held at *comune* level. In Reggio di Calabria, public assemblies are held at which all citizens over the age of 16 can participate alongside decision-makers. The last one took place on 9 March 2018 on the subject of “what has changed in the last two years in transparency, legality and participation?” There is also a Permanent Commission for Youth Policies, which enables young people in the region to submit suggestions, proposals and ideas on issues that affect them. The only organisation identified in Udine that is active in this area is AUSER RisorsAnziani, which is a national voluntary association. One of its aims is to promote active citizenship through the responsible participation of people in the life and services of the local community, but their specific activities are not clear.

The problem of **online disinformation** has been addressed in Italy by legislation to criminalise the sharing of disinformation, an online portal for citizens to report disinformation to the Polizia Postale and a national “Ten Commandments” for spotting disinformation, which was rolled out in 8,000 schools across Italy in 2017. At a local level, Media Educazione Comunita, based in Udine, promotes critical awareness of the media. It held a number of events in Udine schools for the 2018 Safer Internet Day, including on digital citizenship and civic awareness, works with schools to deliver a course on analysing the news and producing journalistic content, and is also working with schools on a digital citizenship and youth participation project that aims to promote the conscious and safe use of the internet, as well as social inclusion and active citizenship.

¹³⁹ The CSO participated in an interview for this study, which is documented.

In Reggio di Calabria, the AICA Calabria Section promotes the dissemination of digital culture and skills in Calabria, in line with the European e-Competence Framework.

In order to tackle **Euroscepticism** at regional level, Casa per l'Europa and Accademia Europeista actively promote EU values and awareness of the EU in Udine and work closely with young people. Casa per l'Europa aims to promote values of pluralism, peace and cooperation and to

establish a civil European conscience, providing information and outreach to the community. Accademia Europeista is a student exchange organisation that seeks to spread the values and opportunities of the EU to a wider audience. It organises activities, events and visits in the region. In Reggio di Calabria, Agenzia di Promozione Integrata per i Cittadini in Europa (APICE) promotes a common European culture through awareness-raising activities and the promotion of the fundamental values of the EU.

7.5. Findings of the expert and CSO interviews

This section presents the findings of the expert and CSO interviews (see [Appendix 4 on the questionnaire](#) and [Appendix 7 for a list of interviewed experts and CSO activists carried out in the two regions in focus in Italy](#)).

There are further conclusions, recommendations and cross-country comparisons in the concluding chapter of this report. The interviewees were based in the country and in the two regions in focus. Eleven in-depth interviews were conducted in total in regard to Italy with seven CSO activists, two political science experts and two officials, all with knowledge and opinions on the issues at hand. The answers are provided in a summarised form without referring to the names and positions of the respondents (a list of respondents is provided in the appendices). For the sake of the research, the opinions of CSO activists and experts are represented as provided in the interviews, but this should not be construed in any way as an endorsement of these views and recommendations by the research team.

The questions asked about the causes of populism in Italy, national and regional differences and similarities, and specific aspects related to populism, such as Euroscepticism, online disinformation, direct democracy and the role of CSOs, including impediments and solutions.

7.5.1. Factors of populism at national and regional level

With regard to the **factors that drive populism**, most interviewees pointed to a combination of socioeconomic and cultural factors, but with an emphasis on the socioeconomic factors. Based on the analysis of the information, it can be observed that it is, indeed, a case of

interplay between the different factors, where socioeconomic factors create financial and job uncertainty, which is then blamed on factors such as migration, EU rules and other issues and exploited by populists. As one regional official, interviewed for this study, put it

“First, there is the crisis, leading to the population being scared of losing their living standards, their jobs and their level of income... Then, there are the migrants, who are seen as a threat and as a factor of closure. Finally, for the populists in general, the main philosophy is to have benefits, but without having to respect the requirements of external regulations or agreements.”

Two other academic experts in populism put a strong emphasis on the role of **socioeconomic factors**, namely austerity policies in recent years, for triggering the rise of populism, with one of them ranking the importance of factors as follows. First, there is **the cultural factor** of anti-party sentiment among the citizens; second, the economic crisis; third, the bipartisan government of the last two years. The crisis of political parties was important in this regard as people have lost trust in mainstream parties, with left and right being perceived as the same thing. Also, the factors for populism are different for different social groups – the lower income groups suffer from unemployment and

economic uncertainty and the middle class is concerned about downgrading.

It is important to note that ‘populism’ as a term is not very clear among the public, not used very much, conflated with other phenomena, such as racism and xenophobia, or used too broadly to apply to anything disliked – e.g. CSOs reported the term being applied to them. Some media distinguish between “good” and “bad” populism, again without clarity of usage, according to one CSO representative from the region of *Reggio di Calabria*. According to this CSO activist from Reggio Calabria, the lack of a clear and accepted definition at national and European level makes it very difficult to deal with populism.

Answers to the question of whether there are different factors at play in the different regions of the country deserve extra attention. The rise of populism and its manifestations are part of a single national phenomenon but, according to the interviewed, there are regional differences that play a significant role. The main conclusion that emerged from the interviews of political science experts and CSOs was about **the regional differences in Italy between the North and the South** regarding the differences in the drivers behind populism, political choices and different “types of populism” and their manifestations. As one interviewed regional official opined, “...*in these two different parts of Italy, with different concerns, you also have two different tendencies to vote, two different populisms.*”

One academic expert on populism said that the **strongest factor in the North is anxiety about losing** safety, security, income and living standards, while in the South it is more about social benefits and increasing incomes. That is, **in the South, the strongest factor is socioeconomic**, connected to the underdevelopment of the region and the expectations of citizens that the government will intervene to solve these needs, thus opening easy opportunities for populist promises. The ensuing xenophobia and racism in the South is, therefore, linked to competition for resources with migrants, refugees and foreigners. In the North, one interviewee identified more straightforward xenophobia and racism as personal convictions.

According to political science experts interviewed, the different factors conditioned the different political choices when voting. This has led to support for **Legha Nord** in the North and **M5S** in the South with **their different agendas** – e.g. income and security from Lega and the promise of a universal basic income from M5S. As one academic expert in populism defined it “*the two populist parties of Italy succeeded in both parts of Italy: the Lega in the north, while the Five Star Movement had its main success in the south. At the moment, the two populist parties actually represent the two parts of Italy*”, adding that people in the North felt unrepresented by the central government and those in the South abandoned by it.

Several interviewees mentioned the link between populism and the mafia in the South, with populism boosting the influence of the mafia as a cultural factor. For example, at a time of growing polarisation and general uncertainty, some people rely on the mafia to impose rules and certainty. Another proposition was that the context in Udine was easier for CSOs, not only because it is a wealthier region, but also a border region with a more open mindset and better educated young people. In Reggio di Calabria, unemployment and other socioeconomic issues were mentioned as complicating the situation with populism. The political science experts also pointed to differences in Italy between the bigger cities and the peripheral towns and villages, with the latter more exposed to populist messages, such as Euroscepticism.

Populism was seen by the interviewees as a **challenge for the mainstream parties** and, in the longer term, for democracy as it **tests the limits of democracy**. It is also seen as a threat to EU institutions and the international order, but not so much to the rule of law. Some political science experts warned about threats to democracy based on **the pressure on CSOs and majoritarianism**. One academic expert in populism saw the **dangers of polarisation** – *“a brutalisation of the political battle, of the political competition, and of social relations”*. A specific aspect was hostility towards women by populists in Italy, especially Lega. There was a serious warning of CSOs closing down and other effects of populist policies: *“And this is the way democracy is being killed. The main problem we are having right now is that we are thinking that politics is just voting, and so the majority wins. But this is not democracy, this is Bonapartism, this is the room just before dictatorship.”*

With regard to the question of the **weak points of populists**, the predominant opinion was that there are two main impediments to populists. One factor is the **limiting influence of international factors**, such as the role of the EU as well as international relations in general. This includes the concerns of isolationism and the risk for the economy. The other factor is that there are actually **two broad groups of people** in Italy who do not subscribe to populist policies and **would resist them**, *“the ones open to the values of inclusion, solidarity, cultural exchanges, and the social dimension,”* according to one regional official with knowledge on the matter, as well as the economic actors concerned about the economic dimension. Populists were seen as a danger to

themselves as they provide too many promises they cannot keep and for which they don't have really a plan, or as one academic expert in populism said, *“they are more a symptom of the difficulties and the malaise than a solution”*. Their own communication style was seen as repulsive for many, so what attracts many voters, turns many others away.

Concerning whether populists have a point in some cases, the most common answer was that **populists are very good communicators** and can talk about the anxieties of people towards income levels, jobs and migration and offer them easy answers. Academic experts on populisms said that populists should not be underestimated and that the people who voted for them (referring specifically for those who voted for the M5S) did this for a reason and this vote should be respected.

On the issue of the **responsibility of politicians**, the interviewees thought that traditional politicians failed to acknowledge public concerns and communicate them in a new way. One regional official, interviewed for the study, pointed to Matteo Renzi's policies, which stabilised the country financially and improved GDP and employment, but were felt to be distant by the people, *“who did not feel this improvement”* and *“were more affected by fears in terms of immigration, security, working place, and about their future and their children's future”*. There was the wrong perception of the EU as imposing rules, without regard to rights and security. According to one interviewee, the populist answer was *“Italy first”*, implying it was successful.

7.5.2. Related aspects: direct democracy, online disinformation and Euroscepticism

With regard to **direct democracy**, CSO activists and political science experts in Italy warned that it has been exploited by populists. In their words, there is no point in more referenda if the institutional architecture remains the same. They said that populists falsely claim or misinterpret the use of forms of direct democracy – such as the “digital democracy” of M5S or “consultations” of limited number of citizens. Populism and the demands for direct democracy are linked and “*part of a phenomenon that people trust politicians less, recognise authority less, and are more competent, so they think they can have a say directly in political decisions*”, according to one regional official with knowledge and experience on these issues. A political scientist recommended the development, instead, of participative and deliberative practices, especially at local level, which on some policies would be very sensible and potentially useful, as it is not simply a binary “yes” or “no” in referenda, which are very prone to emotions and feelings of the moment and thus risky.

In terms of **online disinformation**, respondents identified it as a real threat and as the main channel for the spread of populist messages – i.e. the language of disinformation and populism can be equated. The form of the message was also pointed to, as populists use short messages without deeper analysis or reasoning, or a simplistic approach to complex phenomena. It was pointed out that online disinformation may influence the outcome, along with polarisation, hate speech and related aspects. Interviewees pointed out that the populist parties – Lega and M5S – are very skilled in using online

and social media as “... *social media match the populist mentality... Presence on social media can strengthen the role of the leader because there is dialogue between the leader and the followers*”, according to an academic expert on populism. Furthermore, one CSO reported that a factor for populism was “*a hate campaign structured wisely also on social media by very experienced people*” (in reference to right-wing strategist Steve Bannon). Political science experts pointed out that the public has low trust in mainstream media in the country as they are not operating as watchdogs, but rather as close to authorities. One academic expert on populism recommended ensuring a plurality of information, independent public channels and morality (*sic*) of journalists.

Populism is closely related to **Euroscepticism**, according to political science experts in Italy, due to the nationalism that puts “Italy first” and, thus, rejects the EU and puts the blame on “others” and the alleged attempts to rob the country of its wealth, privileges, history and so on. The EU is portrayed as an adversary by populists, who contrast the Europe of [too strict] rules and liberal market bureaucracy with themselves as advocates of the people against the unfair treatment of the EU and member states such as France and Germany. One academic expert on populism criticised the EU, which is seen as the right arm of neoliberalism, leading to inequalities and the socioeconomic problems that have contributed to populism. According to some interviewees, there is a clear clash between those who want to destroy the EU – the populists – and those who want to defend it. As mentioned above, the EU is portrayed, and increasingly seen, as too distant, failing to deal with concerns like migration, jobs and security.

7.5.3. Measures and levels of addressing the populist challenge

On the most important measures necessary to address the populist challenge, the interviewees mentioned that **dealing with socioeconomic issues** is a must, especially in the south of the country. For the EU, one regional official with knowledge on EU affairs mentioned that it needs to address the socioeconomic needs of the people. Another academic expert in populism listed unemployment, public services and offshoring as problems to be tackled. Positive values in society should be reaffirmed against xenophobia and racism to address the demographic crisis and emphasise the positives of integration. The benefits of the EU are taken for granted, so they should be reminded and reaffirmed – peace, security, social security, freedom and the tangible benefits

that contribute to the standard of living, such as roads, food safety and fighting climate change. It is also worth noting that, according to CSOs, attempting to talk to and persuade populist politicians is an unsuccessful approach.

With regard to the question of **assigning responsibility** and what could be done at different levels – regional/local, national and European – to tackle the negative effects of populist parties, the interviewees suggested several approaches. According to one regional official with knowledge on EU affairs, there should be a mobilisation at all levels, valorising the benefits of the EU in a clear way and well-communicated at local level. Furthermore, this interviewee also said that:

“at the EU level, the language of the EU has to be adapted for each citizen, each citizen must feel understood and helped.”

The EU should show that it can help Italian citizens with migration, the standard of living and other important issues for Italian citizens. At EU level, tackling the migration crisis should be addressed as other EU members have abandoned Italy to face this problem alone, thus providing Lega with fertile ground for campaigning.

In terms of **whether populists change** once in power and if they moderate or amplify their positions, most responses in Italy point to the observation that populists tend to moderate their positions under the circumstances. For example, many of their social and economic promises are

unrealistic and restrained by economic and political realities. One political science expert considered that there will be a clash between the governing populist parties' promises.

For example, M5S' promise to increase social payments in the South will be seen as a problem among the Lega voters in the North, according to an academic expert in populism. Also, M5S is seen as a smaller problem than Lega. In that regard, it is expected that political competitors should face the populists, but such players are currently missing.

7.5.4. Populism, impediments to CSOs and civil society responses

The interviewees mentioned a number of **initiatives and approaches** currently in place to tackle populism, but it should be kept in mind that many CSOs and citizens do not recognise populism as a distinct challenge (the term is still unclear to the public, see the remarks above), so the examples were provided for associated phenomena. Among other things, there are activities to prevent, combat, and report hate speech online and offline as part of an international network of young people active in promoting human rights online and combating the different forms of hatred and discrimination that leading to violence, radicalisation, and violations of human rights. Racism was mentioned as a special problem for Italy, borne out of the perceived competition for jobs, but allowed to grow into a dangerous phenomenon. There are media literacy and digital literacy campaigns, especially with young people, and a number of organisations working with migrants and refugees. It should be noted that the town of Riace, which entered the world news for its mayor's attempts to develop a model for integrating migrants, is also located in Reggio di Calabria, but is now being challenged by the populist government.¹³⁵

¹³⁵ The mayor of the small town of Riace Domenico Lucano started welcoming migrants at the height of the refugee crisis and was even hailed among the world's 50 greatest leaders by the Fortune magazine. In 2018, controversy ensued with the new Italian government. See: "Pro-refugee Italian mayor arrested for 'aiding illegal migration'", <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2018/oct/02/pro-refugee-italian-mayor-arrested-suspicion-aiding-illegal-migration-domenico-lucano-riace> and "Italy: Migrants in Riace to be transferred away", 13 October 2018, BBC, <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-45852952>

Another notable CSO initiative in Italy was a national campaign **to tackle Euroscepticism and nationalism** called “Upside Down”. The campaign aimed to empower citizens as political actors, make them aware of their role as civil society, talk to and understand people’s concerns especially in the periphery of the country. The organisations Arci, tackling racism, and Non Una Di Meno, addressing sexism, were mentioned as examples of CSOs countering aspects of populism.

The **most serious impediments**, as reported by CSOs in Italy that are tackling the populist challenge, are financial and human resources, growing negative attitudes towards them and, most importantly, the shrinking civic space in general. With regard to financial support, this includes limitations in government or municipal funding imposed by populists in power. A civic activist in Reggio di Calabria said that the organisation can rely only on working directly with EU funding as there was scarce funding at municipal, regional and, especially, national level, or none at all. They also pointed to the lack of desire of young people to join CSOs and their causes due to public apathy and a lack of understanding of the importance of CSO work. There was a reported case of media censorship, although it was also said that the rule of law still protects CSO activities. The worst affected seem to be organisations working with migrants and refugees as they face abruptly changed attitudes (from “heroes” to alleged “criminals”).

The interviewees were asked to recommend the most important actions for CSOs to undertake to tackle the populist challenge **in terms of urgent steps, specific programmes and longer-term strategies**, as well as possible allies. It is worth quoting a CSO activist of a youth CSO with national and international experience, who said that *“the main resource for doing politics, mostly at the civil society level, is passion, and then we can find solutions.”* Another CSO activist recommended public debates to address the problem of a *“shrinking space for the CSOs”*, among other things. A CSO activist also proposed the organisation of counter-demonstrations and/or displaying symbols against populist values, such as displaying European and federalist flags during Lega’s nationalist demonstrations.

At regional and local level, one key recommendation is to find and mobilise people who care about their town, community and region and who can stand up for them, according to a CSO activist from Italy. There should be more cooperation between citizen associations, and the elimination of existing rivalries, to share goals and resources. The general recommendation for CSOs at national and EU level is to become more political. There should be more cooperation among them, education for citizens, and more appearances and coverage on traditional big media as well as on social media. Especially regarding the EU, there should be new symbols and symbolic actions (demonstrations, concerts, etc.) to tackle Euroscepticism with the message that the EU brings freedom, democracy, solidarity, the welfare state and rule of law. Necessary activities are human rights' education and democratic active citizenship education for the youth. As a channel for the youth, it was recommended to use Instagram, and for adults Facebook, in order to reach out to them. There was a special emphasis by a

CSO activist in Reggio di Calabria on youth, with reintroducing civic education in schools, working on educating the youth and raising awareness of populism, civic participation, the democratic process and elections.

In terms of **necessary resources**, the most frequently recommended were human resources, funding, knowledge and a blueprint or strategic framework for tackling populism developed at EU level. There are recommendations for the EU to provide funding and training for communication tools against populism.

Also, it is recommended that there should be direct EU funding for CSOs and with eased access, especially considering that local and national authorities with populists in power put limitations on CSOs.

Finally, when asked about **what is missing from current** CSO debates, one CSO activist, interviewed for the study, answered that:

“We don't only have to defend the EU, because if you are arguing with someone and you are just defending a position, you have actually already lost the debate. We have to propose a new model of Europe, to defend the EU but also to give the perspective of changing the EU”

– that is, a proposal for a new, positive narrative on Europe with concrete proposals.

7.6. Conclusions and recommendations for Italy

7.6.1. Factors of populism at national and regional level

In Italy, there is a combination of socioeconomic and cultural factors that drives populism, but an emphasis on the socioeconomic factors with financial and job uncertainty. The crisis of political parties was as important contributing factor as people have lost trust in mainstream parties.

'Populism' itself as a term is not very clear among the public, not little used and conflated with other phenomena, such as racism and xenophobia.

There are different factors at play for different social groups – lower income groups suffer from unemployment and economic uncertainty and the middle class is concerned about downgrading.

There are significant differences between the North and the South of the country regarding populism and their respective political choices as Lega wins in the North and M5S in the South. In the North, there is anxiety about losing safety, security, income and living standards, while in the South it is more about social benefits and expectations about increasing incomes.

Moreover, those voting for populists in the North feel underrepresented by the central government and those in the South abandoned by it; in the South, anti-migrant sentiments are linked to perceived competition for jobs.

That is, in the South, the strongest factors are socioeconomic, connected to the underdevelopment of the region and the expectations of citizens that the government will intervene to solve these needs, thus opening up easy opportunities for populist promises. The ensuing xenophobia and racism in the South is, therefore, linked to competition for resources with migrants, refugees and foreigners.

Populism was seen as a challenge for the mainstream parties and, in the longer term, for democracy as it tests the limits of democracy, bringing high levels of polarisation in politics and society.

The traditional parties are also considered responsible for the rise of populism mainly as they failed to acknowledge public concerns and communicate them in a new way, felt distant to be distant by the people, who were more affected by fears of immigration, security, jobs and the future.

Direct democracy is seen to be exploited by populists, prone to emotion and risky as there is no developed institutional infrastructure for referenda which, for example, eventually brings about less trust in politicians and authority. As a viable alternative, participative and deliberative practices, especially at local level, should be introduced.

Online disinformation was identified as a real threat and the main channel for the spread of populist messages – i.e. the language of fake news and populism can be equated. Online disinformation may influence the outcome of elections, along with polarisation, hate speech and related aspects. Both main populist parties – Lega and M5S – are very skilled in using online and social media.

Populism is closely related to Euroscepticism, according to experts in Italy, due to the nationalism that puts “Italy first” and, thus, rejects the EU and puts the blame on “others” and the alleged attempts to rob the country of its wealth, privileges, history and so on. There is a clash between those who want to destroy the EU – the populists – and those who want to defend it.

7.6.2. Conclusions regarding the role of civil society organisations

Italian civil society is strong in social service provision in both Udine and Reggio di Calabria with larger more professional civil society organisations, in which CSOs’ paid employees are mostly concentrated. The vast majority of organisations have no employees, are small and largely volunteer-based. There is little by way of provision for direct democracy. Media literacy projects do address fake news and disinformation. Euroscepticism and the promotion of EU values are, to an extent, addressed by CSOs in both regions.

The mapping of the CSOs active in the areas of promoting EU values, civic education and engagement, civil liberties, direct democracy, support to minorities, refugees and migrants and tackling online disinformation, which was conducted in the regions based on official information sources¹³⁶, reveals a marginal number of CSOs implementing activities that can potentially tackle populism, out of all those registered.

Table 15. Relevant CSOs on regional level in Italy

Region	Total CSOs in the region	Potentially relevant CSOs in the two regions of Italy							%
		EU values	Civic education and engagement	Disinformation	Minorities, migrants and multiculturalism	Civil liberties	Direct democracy and participation	Total CSOs relevant	
UD	4,494	5	4	1	12	0	0	21	0.47%
RC	2,433	2	8	0	14	0	1	23	0.95%

Some organisations are active in multiple areas, so the sum of column of activities and total number at the end may differ.

In the Udine region of Italy, there are an estimated 4,494 CSOs in total, of which 0.47%, or 22, were deemed to carry out potentially relevant activities: 5 working on European values, 4 on civic education and engagement, 1 on disinformation, and a majority – 12 – on minorities, migrants and multiculturalism.

In Reggio di Calabria, out of 2,433 CSOs, about 0.95%, or 23, were deemed to be potentially relevant: 2 working on European values, 8 on civic education and

engagement, 14 on minorities, migrants and multiculturalism and 1 on direct democracy and participation.

The findings were confirmed by the interviews with CSOs based in the regions: “In Reggio Calabria, specifically, there are activities raised by some organisations ... which promote democratic values, freedoms or social protection, and denounce corruption. But CSOs are not so numerous in the region”.

The most serious impediments to the effectiveness of CSOs in countering

populism are financial and human resources, growing negative attitudes

¹³⁶ The sources on Italy's regions include, as follows:
 For Udine: <https://www.agenziaentrate.gov.it/wps/content/Nsilib/Nsi/Schede/Istanze/Iscrizione+allanagrafe+Onlus/Nuovo+Elenco+Onlus/?page=schedeistanze>; <http://www.regione.fvg.it>; http://www.regione.fvg.it/rafv/export/sites/default/RAFVG/economia-imprese/cooperative/allegati/Albo_Regionale_Cooperative_Sociali_11-6-2018.pdf;
 For Reggio di Calabria: <https://www.agenziaentrate.gov.it/wps/content/Nsilib/Nsi/Schede/Istanze/Iscrizione+allanagrafe+Onlus/Nuovo+Elenco+Onlus/?page=schedeistanze>;
<https://www.cittametropolitana.rc.it/canali/politiche-sociali/sezione-provinciale-del-registro-delle-organizzazioni-di-volontariato/sezione-provinciale-del-registro-delle-organizzazioni-di-volontariato.pdf/view>;
<http://www.regione.calabria.it/website/urp/regpersonegiuridiche/>;
<http://www.provincia.rc.it/uffici/settore-6/albo-provinciale-delle-cooperative-sociali/albo-cooperative-sociali.pdf>;
<http://www.unar.it/wp-content/uploads/2017/11/Elenco-Associazioni.pdf>

towards them and, most importantly, the shrinking civic space in general. This includes limitations in government or municipal funding imposed by populists in power but also the lack of desire of young people to join CSOs and their causes due to public apathy and a lack of understanding about the importance of

CSO work. The worst affected seem to be organisations working with migrants and refugees as they face abruptly changed attitudes (from “heroes” to alleged “criminals”). CSOs and citizens do not recognise populism as a distinct type of challenge.

7.6.3. Recommendations

1	<u>A knowledge base and blueprint (strategic framework) for tackling populism</u> should be developed and built as CSOs and citizens do not recognise it as a distinct type of challenge (the term “populism” is unclear).
2	The wish for more direct democracy should be addressed through the <u>development of interactive and collaborative participatory and deliberative practices of citizen engagement</u> between elections, especially at local level.
3	The <u>internationalisation of non-metropolitan areas</u> through economic and cultural exchanges, international networking, the showcasing of solidarity and social inclusion should be fostered.
4	<u>Cooperation and collaboration at local level</u> should be developed, including with non-populist politicians to address citizens’ concerns.
5	<u>Investment and support for formal and informal education</u> is required – such as human rights and democratic active citizenship, especially for youth.
6	<u>Media literacy and digital literacy campaigns and training</u> should be organised.
7	<u>A civic sphere at local level</u> should be developed, including public debates on critical issues such as tackling racism and populism.
8	<u>Investment in social media and communication training to counter populism</u> should be developed.
9	The EU should improve its <u>communication strategy</u> to reaffirm <u>positive values</u> and promote the <u>EU’s achievements</u> and funding.
10	<u>A new, positive narrative on Europe with concrete proposals</u> should be elaborated and discussed.

8. The case of Poland: populism, citizens and CSOs

8.1. The rise of populism and populist parties in Poland

The political parties identified for the purposes of the study in Poland are three: Prawo i Sprawiedliwość (PiS or Law and Justice), Kukiz '15 and KORWiN (now known as Wolność).

Table 16. Populism Index of selected parties in Poland

Country	Party	Dimensions, scores on a scale 1 to 10, low to high				
		Anti-elite	Majoritarian	Authoritarian	Monocultural	Eurosceptic
Poland	PiS	6.59	8.11	8.95	9.33	6.58
	Kukiz'15	8.95	7.7	8.67	9.02	6.39
	KORWiN	6.22	7.88	8.07	9.53	9.22

The Populism Index was constructed for the purposes of this study. It scores the parties along five dimensions on a scale 1 to 10, lowest to highest. The data used was the available from the Chapel Hill Political science expert Survey (CHES). See also [Appendix 22](#).

PiS won the 2015 presidential and parliamentary elections on the basis of a narrative of “Poland in ruins”, which combined the perception that market reforms in Poland are splitting the country into those who benefit from the reforms and those who do not, with the view that the Platforma Obywatelska (PO) government was ignoring the people in the less prosperous countryside who have to make do with insufficient infrastructure. PiS promised to build the country back from the ruins by rolling back the retirement age reform, vastly expanding family benefits

and expanding house building on state-owned land on the basis of a “majoritarian doctrine”, which it later applied to the court system, funding for NGOs and the political opposition.¹³⁷ PiS has a core electorate of older, rural voters with lower education levels and conservative Roman Catholics, but has also reached out to younger generations and swing voters disappointed by 8 years of government by PO. According to the CHES analysis (see [Table 3](#)),

PiS is strongly anti-elite, authoritarian, nationalistic and socially traditional.

¹³⁷ Owczarek, D., “The Roots of Populism in Poland: Unsustainable Growth and Cultural Backlash”, 2017.

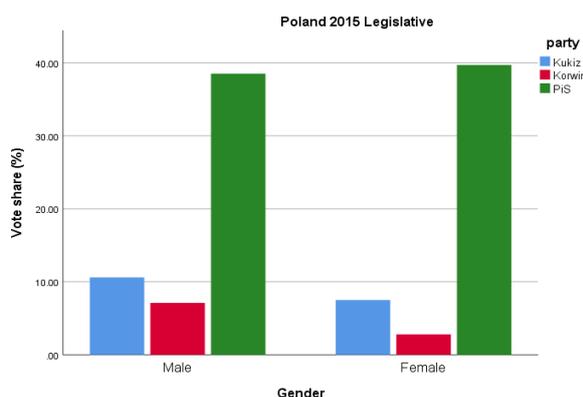
Kukiz '15 is a political association headed by Pawel Kukiz, who came third in the 2015 presidential election with 21% of the vote. It coordinated with the radical far-right Ruch Narodowy party during the 2015 parliamentary elections, gaining 8.8% of the vote. It is primarily aiming to break up the monopoly of political parties in Poland and replace proportional representation with a first-past-the-post electoral system, and has combined radical anti-establishment rhetoric with the promotion of conservative solutions, like a strong executive, and more direct democracy.

The regional trends in the populist vote in the two regions of Poland - Płocki (PL) and Nowosądecki (NW), show that between 2008-2018 the populist vote demonstrates patterns of relative decline in populist support in 2011, followed by an upward trend (please, see the trends and comparison across all eight regions in the [Appendix 3: The populist vote at regional level: an overview of trends across regions and time](#)).

KORWiN¹³⁸ is a Eurosceptic, traditional, authoritarian and right-wing libertarian party led by MEP Janusz Korwin-Mikke. It took 4.8% of the vote in the 2015 parliamentary election

8.2. Demographic indicators and the populist vote in Poland at national level

The study also carried out an analysis of a number of demographic indicators – gender, age, education and employment – to examine their relationship with populist voting patterns at national level.¹³⁹



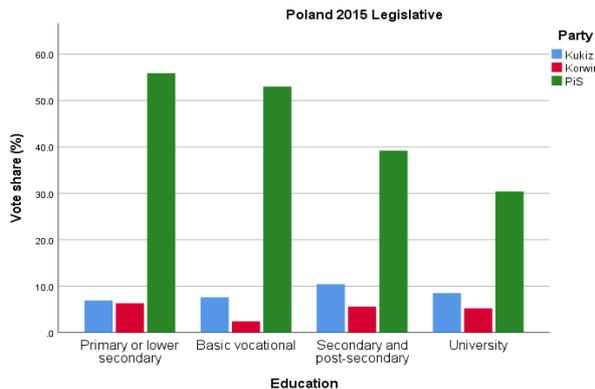
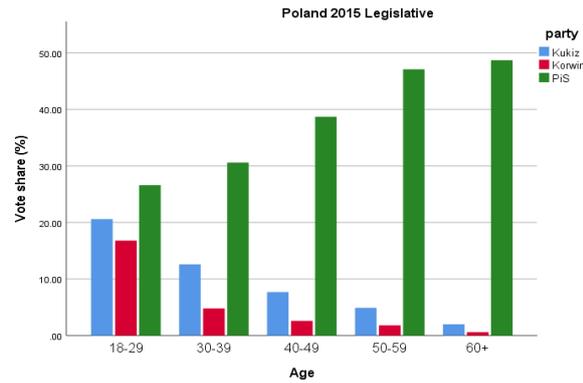
In terms of gender, in Poland in 2015, women were more likely to vote for PiS than men, but overall were less likely to vote for a populist party, due to the greater popularity of Kukiz'15 and KORWiN amongst men.

¹³⁸ Now known as *Wolność*.

¹³⁹ The study used national exit poll data, which provides an estimate as to the voting behaviour of particular demographic groups, to consider possible trends in voting patterns across these groups, both within individual countries and for particular parties. It allowed also for

observations of any common features that hold across the countries studied. The analysis at national level is based on available public data and the analysis at regional level is based on the citizen surveys, conducted for the purposes of this study and provided in the national chapters.

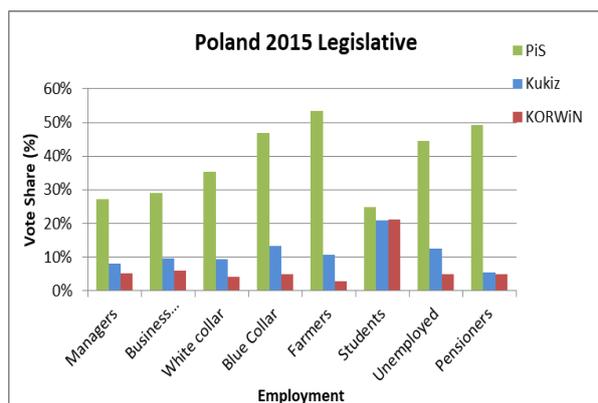
In terms of age, in both the legislative and presidential elections of 2015 in Poland, young people were more likely to vote for populist parties than their older counterparts. However, the youth vote is much more divided between different populist parties than that of older voters, who tended to vote PiS if they were to vote populist at all. Both the Kukiz'15 and KORWiN campaigns were more successful with younger voters, whilst PiS performed better with voters who were older. It has been suggested that a surprisingly large youth vote was a crucial factor in PiS' success¹⁴⁰, but it seems that they failed to achieve a clear victory amongst young people in the same way parties like M5S and LFI have elsewhere.



With regard to education, the vote share for the Law and Justice party in the 2015 Polish legislative election varied by a fairly wide margin between those with at least secondary education and those who had either only primary or lower secondary education, or who had received basic vocational education. Again, those who had received more education were less likely to cast a vote for a populist party. The pattern of vote share received by the Kukiz'15 and KORWiN

campaigns appears much less linked to education level.

In terms of employment and the populist vote in Poland, the 2015 legislative elections showed that farmers, pensioners and blue-collar workers had the highest share of support for PiS, who were also very popular among the other groups compared to the other populist parties. Students preferred, in equal share, Kukiz'15 and KORWiN, but the other groups preferred Kukiz'15 to KORWiN, but with PiS unrivalled among the three. PiS had the smallest advantage among students, compared to the other populist parties.



¹⁴⁰ Głowacki, W., "Prawo i Sprawiedliwość króluje w polskim internecie. Pomaga w tym zdyscyplinowana armia trolli", Gazeta Krakowska, 2017, <http://www.gazetakrakowska.pl/artykul/8866523.prawo-i-sprawiedliwosc-kroluje-w-polskim-internecie-pomaga-w-tym-zdyscyplinowana-armia-trolli,id,t.html>

8.3. Citizen surveys in the Nowosądecki and Płocki regions of Poland

The citizen surveys were focused on eliciting the opinion of citizens specifically in the two regions in focus in Poland – Nowosądecki and Płocki. The survey included 36 closed-ended questions and demographic information about the respondents for each of the two regions (**Appendix 5: Citizen survey questionnaire provides the full questionnaire**). It was carried out online on a voluntary basis. These are exploratory surveys meant to complement the other research methods as the samples are small for a fully-fledged representative study¹⁴¹, but it should be noted that, in this case, the sample sizes in terms of age, gender, education, occupation, income bracket, religious affiliation and political preference provide a solid basis for the purposes of the study (e.g. around 60% female and 40% male respondents took part in each of the regions and the political affiliation sample is

close to the election results). A total of 94 respondents in Nowosądecki¹⁴² and 94 respondents¹⁴³ in Płocki took part in the survey.

As noted in the beginning of this report, the two regions were selected for their different socio-economic characteristics and the higher level of populist vote. The table below shows the main indicators. Płocki, which is located to the north-west of the capital Warsaw, roughly in the centre of the country, is the wealthier of the two with a GDP 111% of the EU28 average and higher than the national average of 68%. Nowosądecki, which is located in the south of Poland, is the poorer region at 43% GDP of the EU28 average and much lower than the national average. The two regions have similar population numbers.

Table 17. Economic and demographic data for the selected non-metropolitan areas

Country/Region	GDP PPS % of EU28 average	GDP PPS per inhabitant (regional)/Real GDP per capita (national)	Total population	Population density (km2)	Largest urban area
Poland	68%	11,800	37,967,209	123.6	1,735,442
Płocki	111%	32,200	330,040	100.8	162,000
Nowosądecki	43%	17,700	550,000	152.5	158,000

¹⁴¹ A fully representative study would require a sample of some 380 people per each region.

¹⁴² In Nowosądecki, out of 94 respondents, who responded to the political affiliation question, 42.60% (40) marked Prawo i Sprawiedliwość (PiS), 18.10% (17) Platforma Obywatelska (Civic Platform), 8.50% (8) KWW „Kukiz'15”, 1.10% (1) Nowoczesna Ryszarda Petru (.Modern), 1.10% (1) Polskie Stronnictwo Ludowe (Polish Peasants' Party), 8.50% (8) non-voters, 11.70% (11) preferred not to answer, 8.50% (8) other parties.

¹⁴³ In Płocki, out of 83 respondents, who responded to the political affiliation question, 20.50% (17) marked Prawo i Sprawiedliwość (PiS), 27.70% (23) Platforma Obywatelska (Civic Platform), 2.40% (2) KWW „Kukiz'15”, 0% (0) Nowoczesna Ryszarda Petru (.Modern), 10.80% (9) Polskie Stronnictwo Ludowe (Polish Peasants' Party), 19.30% (16) non-voters, 7.20% (6) preferred not to answer, 12.00% (10) other parties.

The current analysis is based on select questions pertinent to the five dimensions of populism as identified in this study: anti-elite, majoritarian, authoritarian, monocultural and Eurosceptic with an additional focus on issues such as direct democracy, disinformation and sovereignty. While only select questions are provided in the text, all answers were taken into account.

Moreover an analysis of the socio-demographic characteristics of the respondents is provided based on the respective questions in the citizen survey.

With regard to age, in Nowosądecki, PiS voters are represented by nearly every age group and are very close to the regional average (total), which are about 21%-23% for each group between 18-24, 45-54 and 55-64 years of age, and about 11%-12% for the rest age groups, while those of Kukiz'15 are somewhat younger, half of them between 18 and 24 years of age. In the Płocki region, PiS voters are represented by diverse age groups in nearly equal share, while the other populist party, Kukiz'15, has a higher proportion of younger voters – all under 34 years old ([Appendix 20. Figure 37-38](#)).

In terms of gender, 76% of PiS respondents are female, which is the highest share compared to the other parties (except PSL), and the share of female respondents is for Kukiz'15 is 63%. In the Płocki region, PiS respondents are 67% female and 33% male, while for Kukiz'15 it is a 50-50 split ([Appendix 20. Figure 12-40](#)).

When it comes to **education**, in the Nowosądecki region, respondents with a high school education predominate for both PiS (60%) and Kukiz'15 (63%). The non-populist PO has a higher proportion of

postgraduates (42%) than the populist PiS (22%) and Kukiz'15 (25%). In Płocki, some 81% of PiS voters have either an undergraduate degree or high school education (38% and 43%, respectively), and Kukiz'15 are represented entirely by respondents with a high school education. Non-populist party supporters have relatively higher levels of education the populist parties, with postgraduates accounting for 30% of PO respondents and 33% of PSL respondents ([Appendix 20. Figure 41-42](#)).

With regard to **employment**, in the Nowosądecki region, PiS and Kukiz'15 voters are represented by a variety of groups, most of all those in full-time employment – 38% and 50%, respectively ([Appendix 20. Figure 43-44](#)).

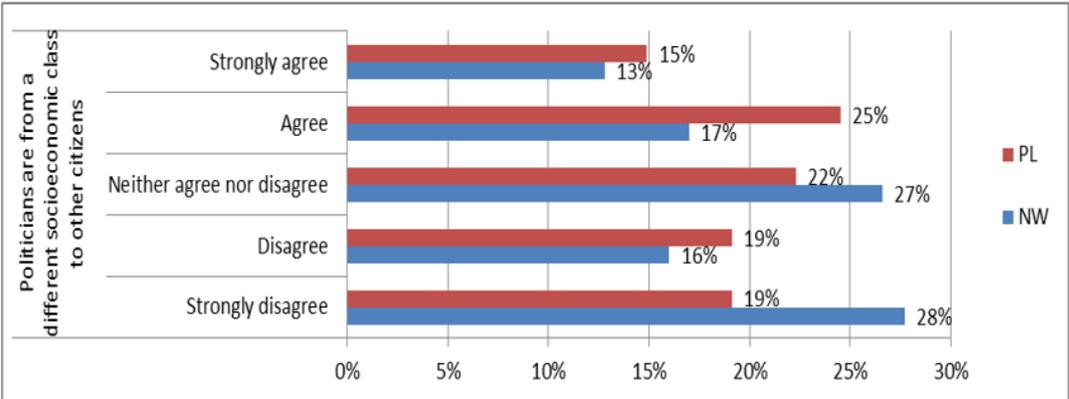
Concerning **annual household income**, in the Nowosądecki region, the highest share of PiS supporters (41%) is within the 18,000-41,999 PLN bracket, 25% are below this in the lowest bracket, while Kukiz'15 has a higher share of higher income respondents – 38% are within the 42,000-62,999 PLN group. In the Płocki region, 35% of PiS voters are within the lowest income group compared to 50% for Kukiz'15, although Kukiz'15 supporters have higher share of the higher income group – 50% are within the 42,000-62,999 PLN bracket ([Appendix 20. Figure 13-46](#)).

With regard to **religion and party affiliation**, in the Nowosądecki region, all of the populist PiS and Kukiz'15 supporters are Catholics, but that is considering that the total share for the region is 80%. Compared to this, 63% of the non-populist PO are Catholics, with the rest either with no religion or preferred not to say ([Appendix 20. Figure 47-48](#)).

With regard to ***anti-elite attitudes***, the respondents are somewhat split on the issue. For example, in Płocki, 40% agree and 38% disagree that politicians are from a different socio-economic class to other citizens, with 22% undecided. Voters for the non-populist opposition disagree to a larger extent with that view – 59% in Nowosądecki

region and 52% in Płocki region among the PO voters. In comparison, PiS voters (the share of agreement is 33% in NW and 29% in PL) and other populist voters and non-voters (26% agree in NW and 63% in PL) are more inclined to consider that this is true or don't have an opinion on the issue (see [Appendix 19, Figures 1 and 2](#)).

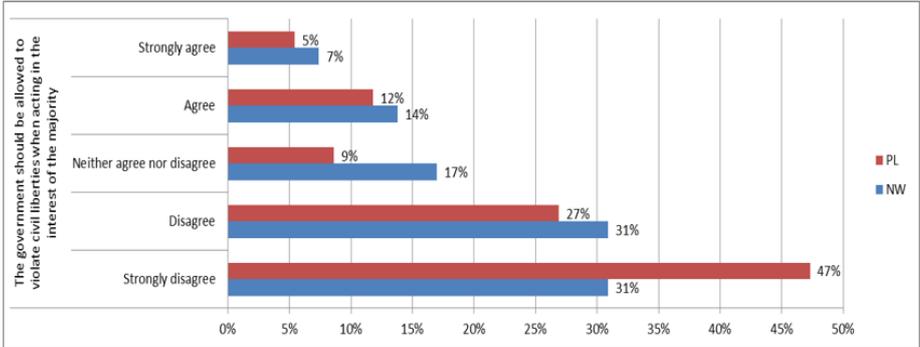
Figure 38. Anti-elite sentiments



In terms of ***majoritarian and authoritarian attitudes***, there are somewhat divergent views. There is a strong backlash against breaching civil liberties even for the sake of majority. This is demonstrated by the low support for the notion that the government should be allowed to violate civil liberties when acting in the interest of the majority –

62% in Nowosądecki and 74% in Płocki disagree. Supporters of the ruling PiS tend to have higher support for the proposition to curb civil liberties (33% in NW and 25% in PL), which is also supported by non-voters (26% in NW and 19% in PL) (see [Appendix 19: Figures 7 and 8](#)).

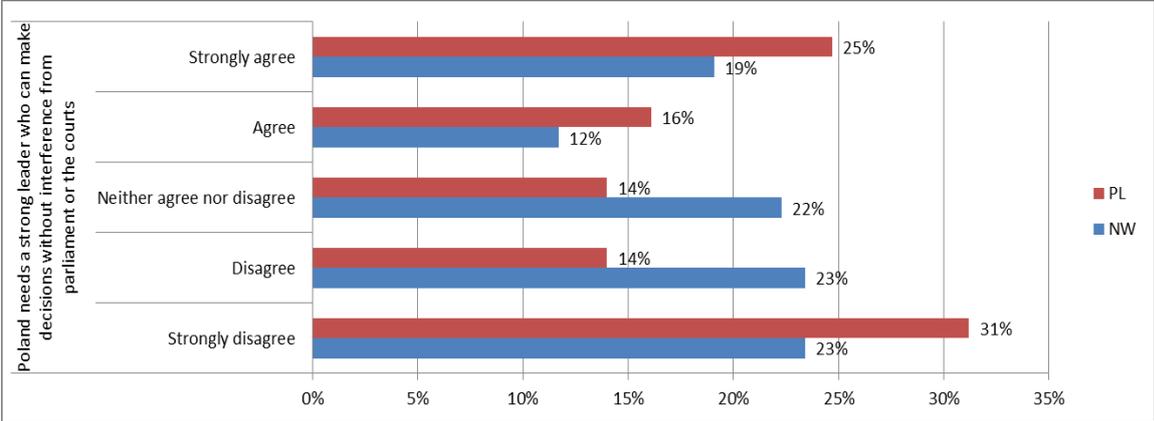
Figure 39. Government vs civil liberties



Concerning authoritarianism, or “façade democracy”, there is relatively high support for **a strong leader who can act without parliamentary or judicial oversight**, but also strong opposition to the idea – 41% in Płocki and 31% in Nowosądecki agree, but 45% and 46%, respectively, disagree.

Supporters of opposition non-populists and, to a lesser extent, opposition populist parties support it much less. PiS voters (43% in NW and 51% in PL) and non-voters (38% in NW and 44% in PL) tend to support this proposition more than the others (see **Appendix 19: Figures 5 and 6**).

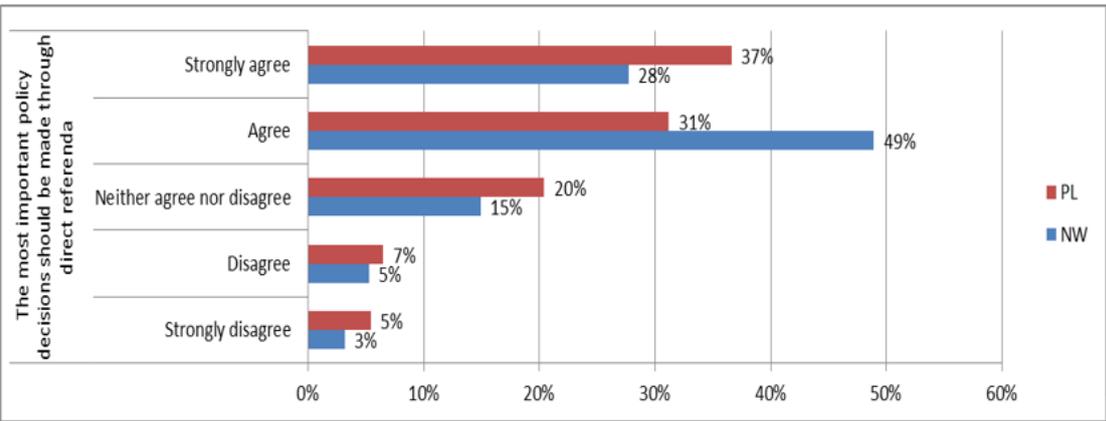
Figure 40. Strong, unchecked leader



Forms of **direct democracy**, such as referenda, enjoy a very high level of support in both Nowosądecki (77%) and Płocki (68%), with just 8% and 12%, respectively, opposing the idea.

It is worth noting that opposition non-populist and populist voters (e.g. PO voters share of “agree” is 88% in NW and 83% in PL), as well as non-voters (nearly 100% in NW and 69% in PL), in both regions generally show a higher level of support for direct referenda than voters of the ruling PiS party (70% in NW and 50% in PL) (see **Appendix 19: Figures 3 and 4**).

Figure 41. Direct referenda

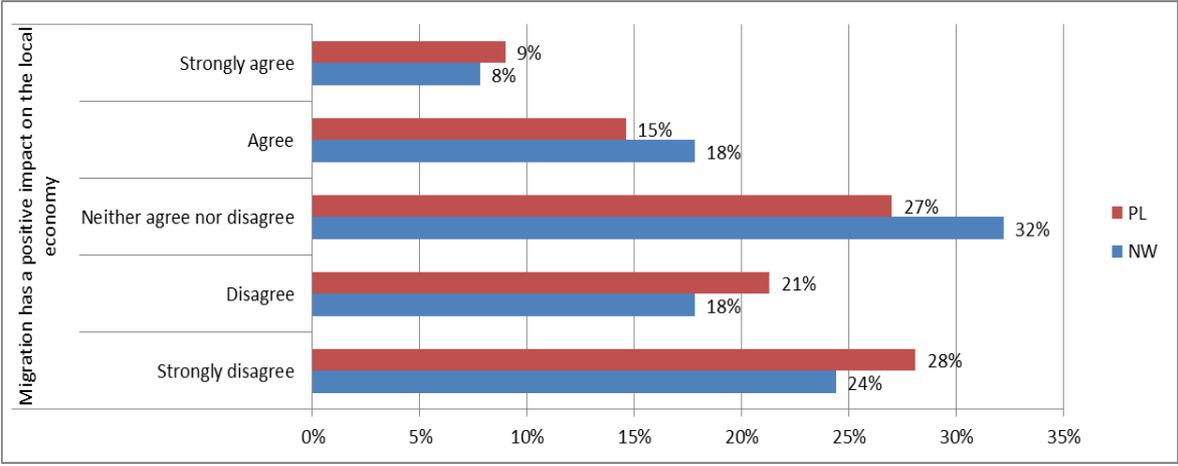


With regard to the **economic benefits of migration**, 42% in Nowosądecki disagree that migration is good for the local economy, whilst 26% agree. In Płocki, the numbers are 49% and 24%, respectively.

Supporters of the ruling PiS party (57% in NW and 69% in PL) and non-voters (65% in NW and 63% in PL) reject this notion to a higher extent, while the opposition

populists are largely undecided. Voters of the opposition non-populist parties (e.g. PO share is 33% in NW and 34% in PL) are inclined to agree that migrants are good for the local economy, yet there are high shares of undecided respondents among them – a third in Nowosądecki and half in Płocki (see **Appendix 19: Figures 9 and 10**).

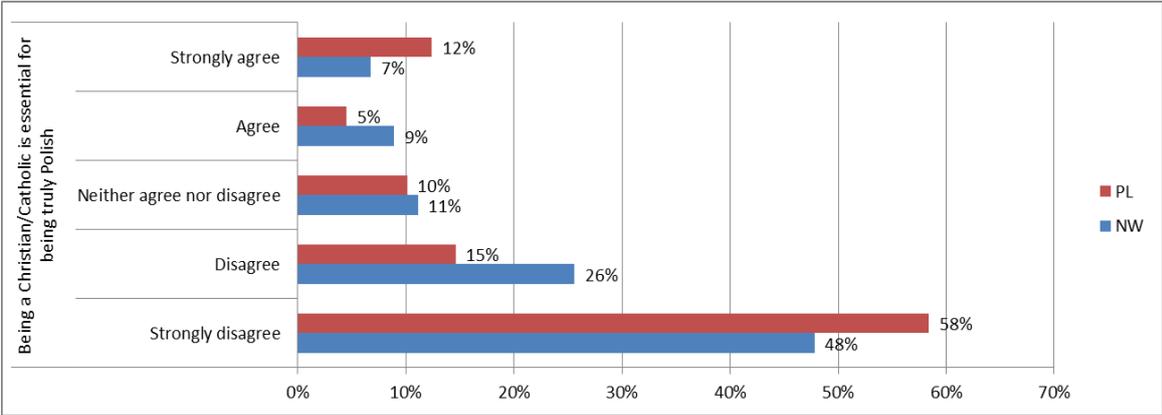
Figure 42. Migration benefits local economy



On the issue of **religion as an essential part of national identity**, the respondents rather oppose the notion with 73% in Płocki and 74% in Nowosądecki against it and just 17% and 16%, respectively, supporting it. The highest support is among PiS voters

(PiS voters 59% in NW and 44% in PL), but still more of them disagree. Opposition party voters, populist and non-populist (PO voters 74% in NW and 87% in PL) alike, reject the notion (see **Appendix 19: Figures 11 and 12**).

Figure 43. Religion and national identity



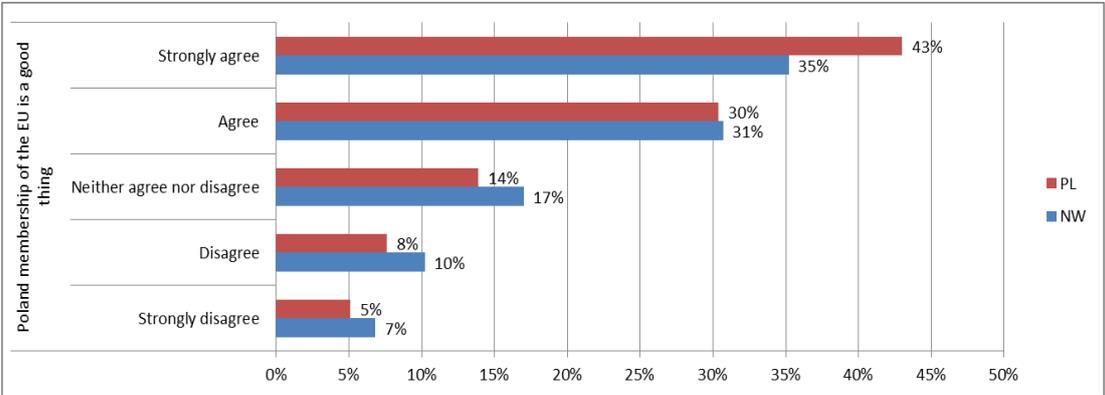
EU membership enjoys very high levels of support in both regions, which is relatively unopposed – 73% approval of EU membership in Płocki, against just 13% rejecting it and 14% undecided. Support for EU membership in Nowosądecki is at 66%, with just 17% disapproving and 17% undecided.

As this is an important issue, it is worth looking at further findings across the regions and party lines. In terms of EU membership being a good thing, the vast majority of respondents in the Nowosądecki region either strongly agree (35%) or agree (31%), with very few registering disagreement (7% strongly disagree and 10% disagree). The highest support for EU membership is among the non-populist Civic Platform with 78% (64% strongly agree and 14% agree), followed by the populist Kukiz'15 with 63% and PiS with

54%. It should be noted that the populist Kukiz'15 voters are divided, with 38% strongly disagreeing that EU membership is good for Poland, while rejection of EU membership is at 29% among non-voters.

In the Płocki region, 43% strongly agree and 30% agree that EU membership is good for Poland, with just 14% undecided and 13% opposed. The highest support is among those who did not express a political affiliation (100%), other small parties (90%), the non-populist Peasant Party (86%), and Civic Platform (83%). Those who oppose EU membership are voters of the populist Kukiz'15 (all of their respondents), PiS (26%) and non-voters (13%). Among PiS and non-voters, there are very high shares of undecided respondents – 27% and 25%, respectively. (see [Appendix 19, Figures 13 and 14](#)).

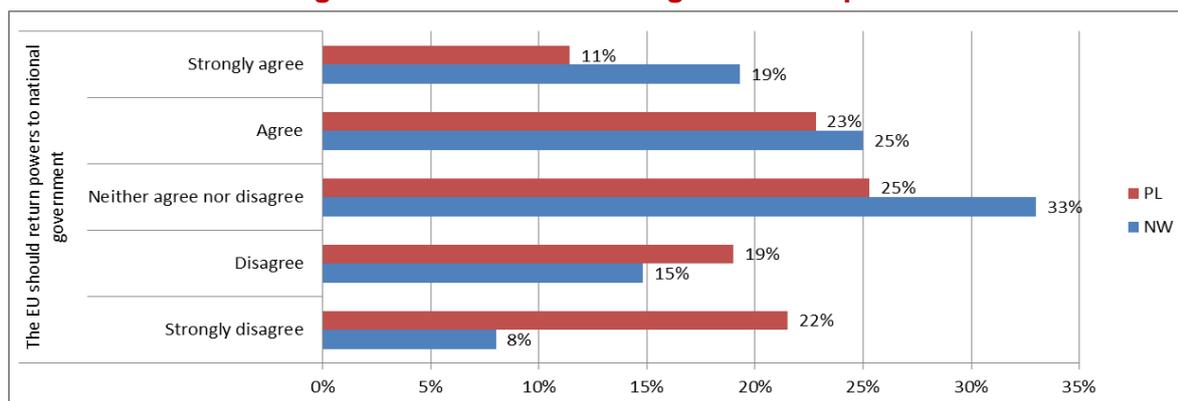
Figure 44. EU membership



In terms of the **sovereignty debate**, there is relatively high support for the EU returning powers to the national government – 34% in Płocki and 44% in Nowosądecki, but disagreement with this notion is also high at 41% and 23%, respectively, with a high proportion of undecided respondents. Supporters of the governing PiS agree to the highest degree about this, with nearly 70% (69% in NW and

67% in PL). Non-voters are either undecided or support the notion (29% in NW and 57% in PL agree). Non-populist opposition voters, on the other hand, tend to disagree with returning powers to the national government, almost half in Płocki and slightly less in Nowosądecki, or are undecided – a third or half of them, depending on the region (see [Appendix 19, Figures 15 and 16](#)).

Figure 45. EU and national government powers



A summary of the positions across political affiliation shows several observations. In fact, there is an observable difference between the voters of the ruling party and the rest. Proponents of the ruling populist party, PiS, tend to be more “populist” in many aspects than even the other populist party voters and are inclined to support **anti-elite, majoritarian and authoritarian notions** to a greater extent. Opposition populist party voters seem to shun, for example, authoritarian tendencies when their party is not in power.

It is worth noting that non-voters also tend to agree with populist positions to a high degree. Voters of non-populist parties are much less inclined to support populist positions. Younger voters, the less well-educated, the unemployed and those with a lower household income tend to support populist positions to a higher degree.

Concerning **anti-elite sentiments**, in both Płocki and Nowosądecki regions, non-populist voters of the Civic Platform oppose the position to a larger extent than populist voters do, but there are differences among populists as those of the ruling PiS support it more and generally reject it less than those of the opposition populist Kukiz’15 (and in the Płocki region the Kukiz’15 voters have a very high share of undecided).

With regard to the **majoritarian aspect of populism**, in both Płocki and Nowosądecki regions, the voters of the ruling populist PiS, and to a lesser extent the unaffiliated (Nowosądecki excluded) and non-voters, are inclined to show higher support to this proposal, but still the level of disapproval is higher among them. In both regions, the voters of the opposition – the non-populist Civic Platform and the populist Kukiz’15 – largely disapprove of majoritarianism.

On the issue of **authoritarianism**, in both regions the supporters of non-government parties – regardless of whether they are populist or not – do not agree with it (non-populists) and/or are undecided (opposition populists). Only among the governing populist PiS party is there support for a strong leader. Non-voters (in both regions), and the voters of the opposition populist Kukiz 15 (in Nowosądecki) tend to be divided generally in equal measure, in support and opposition.

With regard to **direct democracy**, in both regions the non-voters, populists and non-populists alike support the statement, although with party and regional differences. E.g. voters of the governing PiS in Płocki support it to a lesser extent and in the Płocki region disapproval is somewhat higher among the unaffiliated, other small parties and PiS voters compared to the others.

With regard to **migration** and its local economic impact, in both regions supporters of ruling PiS party and non-voters reject this notion. Voters of the non-populist PO show higher level of support with about a third of them, but there are high levels if undecided.

Regarding **religion and national identity**, there is identical situation in both regions as the non-populist and populist voters of Civic Platform and Kukiz'15 and non-voters reject the notion. The highest support is among PiS voters with about 30-40%, but large shares of them disagree too, especially in Nowosądecki. Overall, there are more similarities than differences between the two regions, so it doesn't warrant a differentiated approach. Respondents in both regions are very pro-European, with positive views of Poland's EU membership, and do not think that the economy would be better off outside of the EU. Still, there is relatively high support for the **notion of the EU returning powers to the national government**, predominantly among PiS voters. In terms of **EU membership**, in both regions there is identical situation. The highest support for EU membership is among the opposition non-populist Civic Platform, followed by the opposition populist Kukiz'15, followed by the governing populist PiS. Rejection of EU membership is at its highest among non-voters and voters of the populist Kukiz'15 voters are divided on the issue with high share of disagreeing.

With regard to the **sovereignty debate**, in both the Nowosądecki and Płocki regions, the governing PiS supporters agree to the highest extent and voters of the opposition non-populist Civic Platform voters reject it. The populist opposition Kukiz'15 and non-voters in both regions tend to agree in higher measure with the EU returning powers to the government.

The **comparison between the eight regions** in focus (the two regions in Poland and the other six in the rest of the countries) in this study **across eight key questions** of the citizen surveys¹⁴⁴ can be seen in the **Appendix 6: Comparison across the eight regions in focus.**

¹⁴⁴ The citizen surveys were conducted in all eight regions in focus for the purposes of this study, using a closed-ended questionnaire. For further details and the methodology, please see the national chapters in this report. These key questions on the dimensions of populism include anti-elitist

sentiments, authoritarian and majoritarian tendencies, attitudes towards migration, religion as a marker of national identity, opinion about EU membership and the sovereignty debate in the context of EU membership.

8.4. CSO environment and CSOs at regional level in Poland

This section analyses the state of civil society organisations at regional level in Poland and assesses their potential role in tackling populism. There is a short overview of the situation at national level (see [Appendix 18: CSO typologies and developments on national level in Poland](#) for more information).^{145, 146} This section is based on data from publicly available records and sources¹⁴⁷ and the CSO interviews conducted especially for this study are presented separately.

The CSO environment in Poland experienced a **substantial deterioration from 2008 to 2017**, according to the V-Dem Core Civil Society Index ([Appendix 8: V-Dem Core Civil Society Index](#)) as its

score fell by 27.3%¹⁴⁸, which was the largest drop of all the countries studied, compared to 1.6% in Austria, 6.5% in France and 6.2% in Italy.

The 682 CSOs based in the **Płocki region** consist of 498 associations, 107 foundations, 72 cooperatives and 5 federations. Organisations use a mix of different employment arrangements, with around 32% of employment consisting of paid employees, 31% volunteers, 20% contractors and 14% other forms of agreement. Within these areas, the most frequent kinds of activities are leisure (31%), food collection (13%), clothing collection (9%) and rehabilitation and medical treatment (9%).

¹⁴⁵ The section reviews the current and potential role of CSOs in countering populism and the populist narratives in view of socioeconomic factors, migration, direct democracy, Euroscepticism, EU values, civic education and the use of online disinformation. It examines the environment in which CSOs operate, the typology of CSOs at regional level and the activities CSOs undertake to address populism. There are examples of CSOs' initiatives, but the good practices identified to highlight the positive impact CSOs can have are presented elsewhere in this report.

¹⁴⁶ It should be emphasised that there were vast differences in the available information between the different countries and the different regions within the same country, with definitions and data varying substantially even within a single country or region. The analysis took these circumstances into account and standardised the information to the extent possible; nevertheless, it necessarily imposed differences in these sections of the report between the countries and regions.

¹⁴⁷ Sources for Poland include: <http://casaxeuropa.org/english/>; <https://bdl.stat.gov.pl/BDL/start>; http://fakty.ngo.pl/files/wiadomosci.ngo.pl/public/civicpedia/Raport_Klon_Kondycja_2015.pdf;

<https://mojepanstwo.pl/>;
<https://ekrs.ms.gov.pl/web/wyszukiwarka-krs/strona-glowna>;
<http://fakty.ngo.pl/wiadomosc/2006219.html>;
http://www.plock.eu/pl/wieloletni_program_rozwoju_wspolracy_20162020.html;
<http://mapa.plock.eu/placcategory/organizacje/>;
<http://fakty.ngo.pl/wiadomosc/2000001.html>;
<http://imi.org.pl/>;
<http://budzetyobywatelskie.pl/info/592/maraton-pisania-projektow-stary-sacz/#more-592>;
<http://reutersinstitute.politics.ox.ac.uk/sites/default/files/research/files/The%20Rise%20of%20Fact-Checking%20Sites%20in%20Europe.pdf>;
<http://reutersinstitute.politics.ox.ac.uk/sites/default/files/research/files/The%20Rise%20of%20Fact-Checking%20Sites%20in%20Europe.pdf>;
<http://www.ceo.org.pl/pl/media/news/edukacja-medialna-je-st>

¹⁴⁸ The civil society score of Poland fell from 0.9213 in 2008 to 0.67 in 2017 on a scale from 0 to 1, where 0=fragile, 1=robust. For the other countries, please see the respective country sections.

Budgets also tend to be low, but that is in keeping with a city of its size (see Appendix 18: CSO typologies and developments on national level in Poland for more information), and there is a range of organisations of different sizes – 25% operate on less than EUR 2,300 a year, 16% on EUR 2,301 to EUR 9,300, 16% on EUR 9,301 to EUR 18,600, 6% on EUR 18,601 to EUR 25,590 and 37% on more than EUR 25,590. Funding mostly comes from membership fees (25%), local government (24%) and donations and subscriptions (19%). The sources also identified **a number of problems organisations face** when carrying out their statutory activities. Over half indicated that their main problem was finances, which includes **raising funds, financing employees and a lack of support from public institutions**, and other problems included having insufficient material resources and equipment, complex legal and bureaucratic procedures, and a lack of interest from the private sector. The upshot is that there are developmental constraints on organisations in the area, a lack of opportunities to expand their activities and difficulties attracting both employees and volunteers.

Based on our research, there are 1,369 CSOs in **Nowosądecki**, of which 1,025 are associations, 197 foundations, 140 cooperatives and 7 federations. There's no data at the local level in regard to distribution by activity, but in the wider Małopolskie region, of which Nowosądecki is a part, 32% are active in sport, leisure, tourism and recreation, 18% in both culture and art and education, 7% in social

services and assistance, 5% in healthcare and 4% in local development.

In terms of human resources, 36% of organisations in Małopolskie, in which Nowosądecki is located, use paid employees, 22% occasionally use paid staff and 61% use volunteers. 45% of organisations depend only on volunteers. Organisations are fairly typical of Poland as a whole in terms of annual revenue, with 31% operating on less than EUR 2,300 a year, 42% on EUR 2,300 to EUR 23,200 and 27% on more than EUR 23,200. Most funding is sourced from public funds and from abroad. **Problems faced by organisations** in Małopolskie include accessing funds and equipment. The civil society sector has a very low public profile. There is an upside to this, as the sector attracts little negative attention and, thus, meets fewer barriers related to a poor public image.

With regard to **tackling socioeconomic issues**, financial problems for CSOs, many of which are active in the social sector, make it difficult for them to carry out their statutory activities, which address socioeconomic difficulties in the regions. Financial problems are particularly acute outside major urban areas, with lower operating budgets, a higher dependence on volunteers and less access to funding.

Concerning the populist **anti-migrant narrative**, CSOs are facing serious challenges in their work related to migrants and refugees because of lack of funding and hostile political environment (please, see the next chapter “Findings of the expert and CSO interviews” for more details).

With regard to **direct democracy** or increased democratic participation, CSOs in both Płocki and Nowosądecki are working to facilitate participatory budgeting.¹⁴⁹ In Nowosądecki, the Foundation Institute of Innovation Thought holds conferences and “marathon writing projects” to get people involved in participatory budgeting and give advice and instruction on what can be achieved in participatory budgeting, how to write a project well and how to promote a project. The only other organisation operating in this area is Polski Zespół Humanitarny, which provides training on participatory democracy in Nowosądecki.

When it comes to **tackling online disinformation**, the media literacy field in Poland is highly active, with 63 main stakeholders, including 19 CSOs. There are four main media literacy networks operating at national level and media literacy projects in Poland address content creation, critical thinking, intercultural dialogue and challenging hate speech, how to use different media and participation, engagement and interaction in social, cultural and economic life. The Civic Education Centre and Evens Foundation have developed a curriculum for media education, including teaching young people how to find and verify information, and encouraging students to create their own media. The project provides online training and materials to teachers, allowing them to then integrate these lessons into their work. Fact-checking is carried out by Demagog, which relies heavily on student volunteers and has an activist identity, which has led some to question its credibility as “just a bunch of students”.

With regard to **tackling Euroscepticism**, the Committee for the Defence of Democracy in Płocki is active in promoting European values, especially democracy, human rights and the rule of law, and actively opposes the *populist* government, and the Polish Foundation for European Integration supports democracy, societal cooperation and European integration. In Nowosądecki, the European Integration Centre and Foundation Europe + are both active in promoting awareness of the EU and EU values.

¹⁴⁹ Participatory budgeting is a democratic process in which community members directly decide how to spend part of a public budget.

8.5. Findings of the expert and CSO interviews

This section presents the findings of the political science expert and CSO interviews (see the [Appendix 4 on the questionnaire](#) and [Appendix 7 for a list of interviewed experts and CSO activists](#)) carried out in the two regions in focus in Poland. There are further conclusions, recommendations and cross-country comparisons in the concluding chapter of this report.

The interviewees were based in the capital and in the two regions in focus. A political science expert with an outside perspective was also interviewed. Nine in-depth interviews were conducted in total. The answers are provided in a summarised form without referring to the names and positions of the respondents ([a list of](#)

[respondents is provided in the appendices](#)). Most of the political science experts and CSO activists had strong opinions about the situation, and for the sake of the research their opinions are represented as provided in the interviews. This should not be construed in any way as an endorsement of these views and recommendations by the research team.

The questions asked about the causes of populism in Poland, national and regional differences and similarities, and specific aspects related to populism, such as Euroscepticism, online disinformation, direct democracy, and the role of CSOs, including impediments and solutions.

8.5.1. Factors of populism at national and regional level

The first question concerns the **factors that drive populism in Poland** and which are stronger according to the interviewees – socioeconomic or cultural. According to political science experts and CSO activists, the most important drivers of populism in Poland are **cultural factors, taking precedence over socioeconomic**

factors. These are cultural anxieties and can be grouped in several sets, including multiculturalism, secularisation and gender equality, with an additional focus on LGBTQI+ rights, the perceived threat from foreign powers, and fear of refugees and Islam. One national CSO expert in populism in Poland said

“cultural anxiety is what is driving this whole wave...it is largely about nationalism combined with something which you would call reactionary or traditional values. Defenders call them traditional. I would rather call them reactionary values”.

Three regional CSOs – two from Nowosądecki and one from Płocki region – listed additional reasons that helped propel populism such as **lack of interest in politics** among citizens, making them prone to following “easy” populist narratives, **disappointment with previous governments**, lack of knowledge and **fear of the unknown** among the people of which the politicians are taking advantage.

The **economic factors remain secondary** as all socio-economic groups vote for populists. But they also have a role, according to one of the Nowosądecki CSOs and CSO expert on populism interviewed for the study. For example there are economic expectations by people and respectively disappointment with the still existing disparities between the quality of life in Poland and the other member states, blaming the elites for this gap. According to the interviewees quoted above, this is valid for younger people too as they don't remember the situation before (e.g. during socialist era and early transition). Another example provided from these interviews is that there was unequal distribution of the fruits of growth, especially between smaller towns and bigger cities as part of the socio-economic factors, which answered partly the next question in the interviews about possible regional differences in the factors of populism.

The second question asked about the **different factors at play in the different regions** of the country and their similarity. With regard to regional differences, political

science experts again pointed mostly to cultural factors and the role of regional centres. Maps of the last election results, according to national CSO expert in populism and a European expert in populism with close knowledge of Poland, show the differences between Western and Eastern Poland, with the Eastern and Southern part voting for the ruling party PiS, although of course this picture had nuances and was not absolutely “black and white”.¹⁵⁰ These differences stem from the historical development of the country. Other opinions include the differences between bigger cities and smaller towns. For example, the bigger cities receive more EU funding (outside infrastructure) and the smaller populated areas feel more left behind. The **link between economic and cultural factors** on regional level, according to one CSO populism expert, was that the economically more advanced regions had higher levels of cultural advancement and respectively populism had less influence in such regions. A regional CSO representative was of the opinion that socioeconomic factors played an important role in the latest campaigns at local level, although at national level cultural factors may have been at work. The role of the Polish Catholic Church, especially at local level, should be taken into account as people are influenced by local church representatives. One national CSO expert in populism mentioned the role of national values and history, and opposition to the EU and globalisation as important in the regions.

¹⁵⁰ For a map with references, please see also the Economist, “Imperial borders still shape politics in Poland and Romania”, available at

<https://www.economist.com/graphic-detail/2018/11/21/imperial-borders-still-shape-politics-in-poland-and-romania>

The third question was how the interviewees ranked the **populist parties as a challenge**. According to the answers, populism has clearly been identified as a **challenge to democracy in Poland**, the EU and the current international order with a CSO expert on populism saying bluntly that “You see this creeping authoritarianism in almost every aspect of life.” According to an academic expert on populism, the reason why populism was more dangerous in the newer EU Member States (such as Poland and Hungary for example) is “that the democratic institutions are weaker and more fragile than in the West... Because they (i.e. the democratic institutions) are younger and that is... a very important difference” with the weakening of checks and balances and generally the destruction of democratic institutions.

The interviewees were also asked about the **weaknesses of populist parties**, including what drives people away from them and what factors limit their support, including in cases when there are widespread populist sentiments but less support than expected. According to the interviewees, there is trend of erosion in support for populists, although they will remain strong. The political science experts said that **EU integration is a very serious limiting factor** to populism for at least a couple of reasons. The EU is very popular even among populist party supporters and they cannot be seen as anti-European. Also, according to a national CSO expert in populism, it is difficult to establish an authoritarian state in the EU due to the openness of borders, the free market and

free internet. There is also strong political and civil society opposition in the country.

A local CSO activist said that there is a rationalisation in society that people who support populists are often aware that their solutions are short-term, unsustainable and even harmful in the longer-term. A similar view that short-term populist measures are detrimental in the long run was confirmed by other interviewee, a national CSO expert in populism.

Another question asked **whether populists have a point** in some cases, even if most people disagree with them. The respondents in the interviews said that the government’s social policies have become broadly popularised in the country. The policy of providing financial aid to families (Family 500+) was singled out as many families took advantage of it. However, it was criticised as a tool for mobilising voter support since it was a short-term solution that would bring problems in the future.

With regard to the question about **the responsibility of politicians** – populist and mainstream – and to what extent populists were successful due to political rhetoric and polarisation, the interviewees offered several explanations. They said that the main weakness of mainstream parties was the high level of distrust towards them and that populists exploited these sentiments.

One CSO representative from Plock offered the view that “mainstream parties in Poland are weak and do not propose attractive political and economic solutions. Given their poor performance in the past, people do not trust them. Populist parties exploit these sentiments. Given the negative experience with mainstream parties, populist’s rhetoric find a fertile ground in the

Polish society. In the last few years the polarisation of the society has been deepening in Poland and it is unsure whether it will reverse or go on even further.” Also, in terms of polarisation, it was noted that the process was deepening with no prospect of improvement. According to an interviewed CSO expert on populism, this is despite the talk of national unity and

“Poland has never been so divided and most people in opinion polls say that Poland has never been so politically, ideologically divided as under this government.”

8.5.2. Related aspects: direct democracy, online disinformation and Euroscepticism

The questionnaire included questions related to specific issues that are often associated with populism and its problems and solutions.

On the issue of **direct democracy**, the opinions of the political science experts and CSO activists are generally negative towards a greater use direct democracy tools, such as referenda. A national CSO expert in populism said that there were high hopes years ago for the beneficial effects of referenda and similar direct democracy instruments for addressing the deficits of representative democracy, but the experience was rather disappointing.

For example, it turned out that populists could easily manipulate referenda. There were opinions that direct democracy works better at local level, but within “a very carefully developed legal environment, which protects the instruments of local democracy”. Local referenda on local issues were given as a positive example,

but they cautioned against national ones. Participatory budgeting was given as a positive example by one regional CSO activist as it was employed by local civic groups but, according to another academic expert in populism, may then be taken over by more experienced politicians.

With regard to **online disinformation** and its role in the rise of populism, the interviewees provided their views and recommendations on how to tackle it, including in the context of controlled public media and a crisis of traditional media. According to political science experts and CSO representatives, online disinformation through social networks has made possible the rise of populists and their successes. This has happened in the backdrop of two phenomena: the full control over public media that is used to broadcast the governing party’s positions and the dire situation of the mainstream media.

As such, neither the public nor the private media can be relied on to effectively counter disinformation campaigns. As an example, a disinformation campaign completely turned around public opinion on the refugee issue with 70% supporting it before the campaign and 70% rejecting it afterwards, according to an academic expert in populism. It was mentioned, however, that foreign (i.e. Russian) propaganda has a limited direct influence in Poland, unlike other countries. Several solutions to online disinformation were offered. The main solution is education, according to those interviewed. It is important to note that they mentioned that civic education is missing in Poland as the basis for everything else. That is, civic education has never been carried out systematically in Poland, but only by CSOs that do it on a project-by-project basis due to resource limitations, as defined by a national CSO representative. There should also be more specialised education, such as media literacy, in order to teach people to critically work with information and media. There was a special emphasis, in this regard, placed on young people.

8.5.3. Measures and levels of addressing the populist challenge

The interviewees were also asked about the most important measures necessary to address the populist challenge and assigning the responsibility at different levels. According to a national CSO representative and a national CSO expert in populism in Poland, the list of measures on national level to tackle populism should start with the **judiciary and media**, making sure they are independent and functional. This would

With regard to the relationship between **Euroscepticism and populism**, the European Union is the main target for populists, which are deeply Eurosceptic, according to several interviewees – a national CSO expert in populism, European expert in populism and Poland and regional CSO representatives in Poland. It is vilified as the source of evil for the people, threatening cultural and ethnic homogeneity, instilling foreign (i.e. liberal) values and so on. It was pointed out that even at a symbolic level, populists in power were quick to remove EU flags and symbols. However, there is a paradox, according to the interviewees, as there is very high public support for EU membership (up to 80%), placing limitations on populist attacks on the EU. That is, populists want to benefit from the EU, but not adhere to its rules. In other words, populist parties and politicians are very Eurosceptic, but at the same time, the EU as a whole operates as a restraining factor on populists and, as the public in Poland is very pro-European, populists themselves restrain their attacks on the EU.

provide the necessary basis for tackling the other phenomena related to populism, such as xenophobia, racism, sexism, distrust in democracy and disinformation. The other most important element is **strengthening civil society** as it is experiencing similar problems to the free media – i.e. the goal of the populists is to weaken and control CSOs that are critical of them.

One local CSO activist underlined that dealing with socioeconomic issues such as an inequality, poverty and social services would also help as a measure in dealing with populism, despite as mentioned above the socioeconomic issues are less important in driving populism compared to cultural factors.

Also, with regard to responsibility at different levels (local/regional, national and European, where applicable), **local government**, according to the a national CSO expert in populism and a national CSO representative, and not so much regional government, has a lot of potential as it is more trusted and seen as more credible and democratically accountable than national government. Supporting local government, therefore, is crucial.

The following recommendations were put forward with regard to **the EU level**. The **EU should impose its values** more strongly, including through Article 7At EU level, the Article 7 procedure proved very effective and the EU should not be afraid to use it and should not fear turning Polish citizens Eurosceptic. There was criticism towards Europe's political families for reportedly shielding their members from criticism and

limiting the EU's effectiveness in restraining the populist challenge. There was high praise for the proposed European Values Instrument¹⁵¹, as identified by a national CSO experts in populism, but criticism that the EU is promoting democracy abroad whilst, at the same time, very hesitant in defending democracy in EU countries. The EU was also criticised for failing to adequately promote itself.

The questionnaire asked about **the possibility of populists to transform** once in power, i.e. whether a mitigation of their positions can be observed so that they may be treated more like other parties. The predominant opinion in the survey was that populists do not moderate their positions once they get in power. Rather, the opposite happens.

As they win elections, they radicalise their positions and policies. The general opinion was that cooperation with them was not effective as an approach. At the same time, however, one national CSO expert in populism said during an interview that an opening in the positions of populists, such as when they are ready to negotiate their positions, should be used to promote a common solution.

¹⁵¹ See the European Parliament motion on the need to establish a European Values Instrument to support civil society organisations that promote fundamental values within the European Union at local and national level

<http://www.europarl.europa.eu/sides/getDoc.do?type=MOTION&reference=B8-2018-0189&language=EN>

8.5.4. Populism, impediments to CSOs and civil society responses

The political science experts and CSOs were asked about civil society organisations and initiatives that are tackling the negative aspects of populism, mainly at regional level.

According to one national CSO expert in populism with experience in civil society issues, as a rule, **populism as such is not recognised specifically** as a problem by CSOs, but is identified through related phenomena. As another national CSO expert in populism said, in order for CSOs to tackle populism, they should continue to do their work. That is, the existence of “civil societies is a threat to populist or authoritarian populist government”. Hence, CSOs should continue with their core activities – gender equality, LGTB rights and countering extreme populist (i.e. radical right) groups. The interviewees said that most CSOs tackling populism are based in the capital with local operations. CSOs, especially local and regional CSOs, even if not specialised, are useful in tackling populism through their activities. Women’s rights, grassroots and pro-democracy youth organisations, among others, are especially effective.

With regard to the **problems faced by CSOs**, among the general problems mentioned were a lack of financial resources, knowhow and experience, a limited culture of philanthropy, the passivity of citizens, and lack of public awareness and mobilisation among the public about

the serious issues (e.g. the problems of the judiciary seem distant). It was mentioned that CSOs lack the communication skills to effectively counteract populists, who are skilled communicators.

Concerning a more specific question on the most serious impediments faced by CSOs at regional and national level because of populism, there were a number of issues raised. For example, populists in power have **limited funding for CSOs** they deem critical of them, or defunded them entirely. This is especially true for local CSOs as nearly half of their funding comes from public funds. This creates a problem for the independence of CSOs, especially at local level. Those interviewed reported that populists have started creating and supporting CSOs friendly to them to create parallel networks of so-called “conservative CSOs”, as identified by a national CSO expert in populism and knowledge of the CSO sector. Local CSOs report that funding depends on the political will of the authorities and is for a closed circle of organisations only. The **negative environment** created by populist politicians is considered a major impediment to the work of the organisations. This not only includes limited funding, but also **preventing people from volunteering** for certain organisations. The difficulty in carrying out long-term initiatives due to limited resources, as opposed to short-term projects, was also identified as an impediment.

Concerning the **populist anti-immigration narrative**, services for migrants can be particularly difficult to carry out. In Nowosądecki, especially, populism poses a serious challenge. One organisation, Polski Zespół Humanitarny, which works with refugees in Nowosądecki, reported that their work has been disrupted by people associated with far-right parties and that a group of people once set fire to a building because they thought it was supposed to hold refugees. The same organisation also described populism as a serious problem in the region, with people there susceptible to populist narratives, which are strongly anti-migrant. The effects of a populist government and a less secure civil society are being felt by CSOs, who have reported that it has a negative impact on civic engagement and volunteering, and the fragility of funding arrangements at local and national level that depend on the “political will”. The same organisations have called for more funding independent of public authorities in Poland, funding for awareness-raising activities, training for CSOs, better access to EU, or other international, funding and more funds for activities with schools and young people.

Firstly, **education** was singled out as probably the best solution, i.e. the education of citizens, starting from the young through systematic civic education and specialised education, such as media literacy. However, it was pointed out that the effects of education are long-term and take time, so there should be other measures. One national CSO representative suggested that a “positive propaganda” approach should be employed (in the vein of Germany’s education after WWII) to instil values and democratic attitudes in the population as part of the education measures.

Secondly, these were recommendations about pro-active and assertive behaviour of CSOs. To that effect, several CSO activists and experts in Poland recommended that **CSOs should be much more active** in taking positions on policy issues, in contrast to the current stance of avoiding “political” problems. To that effect, interviewed experts and CSO activists proposed that CSO actions should include providing knowledge and well-argued propositions on important policies. These might include issues such the independence of the judiciary, tackling online and other disinformation (compensating for the deficits in the media sector) and generally starting a “civic dialogue” with decision-makers and policy-makers, as formulated by a national CSO representative.

Thirdly, there were recommendations about real communication campaigns, capacity building to improve communication and cooperation among CSOs themselves, including some of the measures mentioned above such as the “civic dialogue”. Within this group of measures, a local CSO activist underlined the role of **active internet and media campaigns**, **“speaking to the people”** and cooperation with public institutions that should be undertaken as a series of measures by CSOs in dealing with the populism challenge. Cooperation between regional organisations and working with one another was recommended. Receiving and providing communication skills training was underlined as an important measure as this is certainly a disadvantage compared to populist politicians. Support for grassroots organisations at local level, such as women’s rights and pro-democracy youth groups, which are very effective, was underlined in the interviews.

Fourthly, measures to improve funding for CSOs were recommended. It was emphasised that there **should be more direct funding available to CSOs** to avoid dependence on regional or national authorities. To that effect and concerning

the EU level, an interviewed CSO expert underlined the that there was high support for the proposed **European Values Instrument** and direct EU support for CSOs should be on the list of measures to help CSOs tackle the populist challenge.

8.6. Conclusions and Recommendations for Poland

8.6.1. Factors of populism at national and regional level

The most important **drivers of populism** in Poland are cultural factors, taking precedence over socioeconomic factors. These are cultural anxieties and can be grouped in several sets, including multiculturalism, secularisation and gender equality, with an additional focus on LGBTQI+ rights, the perceived threat from foreign powers, and fear of refugees and Islam.

There are **different factors at play in the different regions**, stemming from historical developments, with the Eastern and Southern part voting for the populist ruling party PiS and the North-West for the main non-populist opposition. There are also differences between bigger cities and smaller towns, the role of the Polish Catholic Church, national values and history, and opposition to the EU and globalisation are important in the regions too.

Populism has clearly been identified as **a challenge to democracy in Poland**, the EU and the current international order.

Mainstream parties, according to a CSO representative in Poland, are also considered to have responsibility for the rise of populism due their poor record and low level of trust in them, with unattractive political and economic solutions, thus providing fertile ground in society for the populist parties.

Direct democracy is viewed mostly negatively as it turned out that populists could easily manipulate referenda, despite the high hopes vested in it. However, direct democracy can work better at local level as compared to national level but within “a very carefully developed legal environment, which protects the instruments of local democracy”, as one interviewee put it.

Online disinformation has a clear role in the rise of populism, as using social networks made possible the rise of populists and their successes. Two phenomena helped immensely with this process: the full control over public media that is used to broadcast the governing party's positions and the dire situation of the mainstream media. Neither the public nor the private media can be relied on to effectively counter disinformation campaigns.

There is a close link between Euroscepticism and populism and the EU is the main target for populists, who are deeply Eurosceptic. The EU is vilified as a source of evil for the people, threatening cultural and ethnic homogeneity, instilling foreign (i.e. liberal) values and so on, and there is a clash at a symbolic level, too, as EU symbols have been removed from public institutions.

At the same time, there is extremely high public support for EU membership in Poland, which constrains populist attacks against the EU as they don't want to clash with the public. The EU is attempting to limit the effects of populism in the country and the assault on the independent judiciary and liberal democracy in general (e.g. the Article 7 procedure), but the EU should be more assertive in doing so.

8.6.2. Conclusions regarding the role of civil society organisations

The main findings of the study are that civil society in Poland is in a financially precarious position, largely dependent on local authorities for funding and with organisations reporting the negative effects of a populist government. CSOs are active socially in both regions but financial problems make it difficult for them to carry out their statutory activities, which address socioeconomic difficulties in the regions.

Concerning the populist anti-immigration narrative, services for migrants are particularly difficult to carry out.

With regard to direct democracy or increased democratic participation, CSOs in both Płocki and Nowosądecki are working to facilitate participatory budgeting.¹⁵² CSOs in both regions promote EU values and raise awareness of Poland's place in Europe.

The mapping of the potentially relevant, in terms of activities, CSOs vs. all the other CSOs registered per region, based on the available public, national and regional databases¹⁵³, reveals their limited number in both regions.

¹⁵² Participatory budgeting is a democratic process in which community members directly decide how to spend part of a public budget.

¹⁵³ Sources for Poland in this regard are <https://mojepanstwo.pl/> and <https://ekrs.ms.gov.pl/web/wyszukiwarka-krs/strona-glowna>

Table 18. Relevant CSOs at regional level in Poland

Region	Total CSOs in the region	Potentially relevant CSOs in the two regions of Poland							%
		EU values	Civic education and engagement	Disinformation	Minorities, migrants and multiculturalism	Civil liberties	Direct democracy and participation	Total CSOs relevant	
PL	682	6	6	0	1	2	1	12	1.76%
NW	1,369	8	8	0	4	0	0	17	1.24%

Some organisations are active in multiple areas, so the sum of column of activities and total number at the end may differ.

In the Płocki region of Poland, there were 682 CSOs identified, of which 1.76%, or 12, were deemed to carry out potentially relevant activities: 6 working on European values, 6 on civic education and engagement, 1 on minorities, migrants and multiculturalism, 2 on civil liberties and 1 on direct democracy and participation.

In Nowosądecki, out of 1,369 CSOs identified, about 1.24%, or 17, were deemed potentially relevant: 8 working on EU values, 8 on civic education and engagement, and 4 on minorities, migrants and multiculturalism.

The effectiveness of CSOs is negatively impacted by a lack of financial resources, knowhow and experience, a limited culture of philanthropy, the passivity of citizens and a lack of public awareness, but CSOs also lack the communication skills to effectively counteract populists, who are skilled communicators. Financial problems are particularly acute outside major urban areas, with lower operating budgets, a

higher dependence on volunteers and less access to funding.

The manifestations of populism in Poland, however, are resulting in a serious erosion of fundamental democratic rights and freedoms, such as the rule of law, which makes it much more difficult for CSOs to counter considering the lack of deep-rooted democratic traditions due to the communist era and a lack of resources. The CSO environment in Poland experienced a substantial deterioration from 2008 to 2017, according to the V-Dem Core Civil Society Index, experiencing the largest drop of all the countries studied – Austria, France and Italy. The negative environment created by populist politicians is considered a major impediment to the work of CSOs. This includes, not only limited funding, but also preventing people from volunteering for organisations and difficulties carrying out long-term initiatives due to limited resources, as opposed to short term-projects.

The interviewed representatives of civil society formulated some of the challenges as follows:

“The civic sector is concentrated in larger urban areas, which impacts access to funding due to the centralisation of Poland. Local NGOs can only count on funding from local authorities, which can be easy for them to control as local politicians can pick and choose who to fund”.

“CSOs are never truly independent as they are intermediaries – should be engaged in political life. The civic sector is becoming divided between those that share values with the ruling party and those that don’t.”

8.6.3. Recommendations

1	The EU should take <u>a stronger stance in defending democracy in the EU and in Poland</u> as EU membership provides effective leverage against populists and enjoys broad public support.
2	An <u>independent judiciary and media</u> need to be ensured as the basis for tackling populism.
3	<u>Civic education, including media literacy</u> , should be invested in.
4	Civil society should be strengthened through <u>developing knowledge and knowhow on specific policy issues</u> .
5	<u>Local CSOs</u> should be supported <u>through direct EU funding</u> .
6	CSOs should be trained <u>in communication skills in order to effectively counter populists</u> , who are skilled communicators.
7	Participatory methods, such as <u>participatory budgeting</u> , should be developed, especially at local level.
8	<u>Cooperation among regional organisations and stakeholders</u> needs to be fostered.

9. Overall Conclusions and Recommendations

This study carried out extensive research into populism in eight non-metropolitan areas in four EU member states. The study used a variety of methods to look into different aspects of this phenomenon and related aspects and elicited proposals to tackle the challenge of populism by different players, but most of all recommendations for CSOs. Populism is indeed a very complex and multifaceted phenomenon, manifested at global, European, national and regional level. There are intense political science expert and public disputes on its causes and effects, common features and specificities, and debates over the necessary approaches to address the root causes and adverse ramifications.

This chapter compares the main findings of the study to outline the national and regional idiosyncrasies and commonalities, the European level features and effects and, ultimately, to formulate recommendations for CSOs and other actors to more effectively counter populism. Along with the outcomes from the other methods of research, this chapter's conclusions and recommendations make extensive use of the insights of the in-depth interviews with CSOs activists, political science experts and focus groups in those regions and countries – that is, the necessary, valid feedback on these crucial questions. In this chapter, especially, opinions of EU level observers aid the cross-country, European level of analysis.

9.1. Factors of Populism: highlights from the research

The key question is whether **socioeconomic or cultural factors** drive the rise of populism. The research¹⁵⁴ suggests several important conclusions:

Depending on the case, some factors are indeed stronger than others and take precedence in driving populism. Poland and Austria, for example, were identified as cases where cultural factors are much stronger, but they were less exposed in the cases of France and Italy compared to socioeconomic factors.

Factors for populism may vary across different social groups, such as with middle-income groups, where the fear of loss of status is the strongest factor, while in lower income groups it is the more direct fear of loss of jobs and income.

No factor alone causes populism, but rather there is an interplay of factors, which feed on and reinforce each other. For example, the rejection of migration can be due to cultural factors, but also to fear of job losses or job competition.

¹⁵⁴ Generally, one of the issues that emerged from the interviews is that the concept of populism is itself not clear, especially to CSOs working in the field, so this prevents them from identifying problems and corresponding solutions.

“Anxieties” and “fears” were often invoked by the CSO activists and political science experts interviewed to explain the rise of populism as populists employ a manipulation of popular fears as their main tactic. For example, an academic expert on populism identified “cultural insecurity” as an explanation for why, in countries where the economic situation is quite good, the rise of populist political forces also exists. Even in cases in which the socioeconomic factors were considered strong, their influence was thought to be indirect and due to economic and financial insecurity.

There are differences between the countries as well as between the different regions within the same country – “geography” matters. For example, in the north of Italy, populism is considered to be driven by cultural factors, while in the south, socioeconomic factors take precedence. In France, there are the central and peripheral parts of the country. In Poland, voting patterns may reflect the divisions of its historic partitions. In Austria, as in other countries, there was the split, not only in terms of centre-periphery, but also between rural and urban areas. Furthermore, as the citizen surveys indicated, there are regional differences – for example, in the cases of Italy and France, there are differences in regard to attitudes towards EU membership, migration, authoritarian tendencies and other issues.¹⁵⁵

Last, but not least, there are additional, strong factors that impact the rise of populism related to the very *crisis of representative democracy* and populism was often identified by political science experts as a long-term danger for liberal democracy, as populists play by the rules to win elections but then seek to change the rules to their advantage.

Another academic expert on populism saw **populism** as

“a symptom of deep-rooted challenges facing democracy, an externality of the changing character of political parties and party competition in many European polities in ways that make it increasingly difficult for parties to respond to voters and represent or act on their opinion”.

¹⁵⁵ In some cases, the differences in citizens’ perceptions may depend on whether a populist party is in power or in opposition, (as in Poland, Italy or Austria), but further research is necessary to examine it. For example, citizens who support non-populist parties in opposition, may have more populist views – e.g. higher support for anti-elite attitudes or direct democracy as they see as a way to deal with populists. In Austria, an interviewed activist said that the populist parties supported referenda while in opposition, but once in government opposed them as they were likely to lose them.

This is related to the issue of diminished trust in mainstream parties. Their standing was badly damaged from years of only them being in power and the approximation of party positions, leading to them being indistinguishable to voters or, as one European affairs expert stated, “*voters could change parties and leaders but not policies*”¹⁵⁶. This plays into the issue of the responsibility of politicians as people feel unrepresented and abandoned by the mainstream parties. The problem is exacerbated by the fact that mainstream parties have either given up without challenging populists or decided to mimic their tactics, according to the political science experts and CSO activists interviewed. One political science expert pointed to the danger of mainstream parties adopting the language and tactics of populists, especially “*traditional conservatives who – whether in an attempt to compete with the populists, to follow public opinion or because of ideological shifts – have endorsed a populist rhetoric*”.

The study found that **traditional, mainstream parties are also considered to have a responsibility** for the rise of populism as well as for their continuing inaction. As stated by an academic expert of populism in Austria “*the mainstream parties have responsibility for the rise of populism and the populist radical right in the sense that they almost all the time failed to actually address those issues, when they became salient and politicised in the course of an event unfolding. And when they did, they shied away from taking a stand, from taking a position, because they thought it would hurt them.*”

¹⁵⁶ The expert quoted in the interview Bulgarian political scientist Ivan Krastev.

With regard to the **strengths and weaknesses of populist parties**, their main strength is “communications”, but only in terms of instrumentally using fears and polarising society. In a sense, they

sometimes raise the right questions but provide the wrong answers.

According to one European affairs observer, interviewed for the study

“...populists, generally, and almost by definition, are good at reflecting people’s anxieties. And they’re not incommoded often by worries of being accurate, fair and transparent. They want to vent anger and frustration. Brexit is the caricature of venting people’s frustrations but having absolutely no answers on how to conduct things.”

However, communication is also a weakness for populists as their abrasive style and language can be considered repulsive and polarising. Their main weakness, however, according to the several academic experts on populism and CSO activists from the countries in focus, is that they do not have actual solutions or viable plans for policies beyond their shallow rhetoric.

The study also analysed three related aspects of populism: direct democracy, online disinformation and Euroscepticism as they received special attention in the research.

With regard to **direct democracy**, the study found that there is clearly a demand for more direct democracy on behalf of citizens (as indicated by the citizen surveys in regard to direct referenda), possibly as a response to the crisis of representative

democracy. The political science experts and CSO activists, however, were nearly unanimous in their criticism of direct democracy, saying that, in its current forms, it could create more problems than solutions.

This is a clear contradiction that needs to be addressed. The possible solutions, according to those interviewed, can be found in deliberative mechanisms, carefully prepared referenda with informed debate and clear questions and outcomes, especially at local level, a well-informed public and long-nurtured culture of direct democracy. There was also stronger approval for direct democracy mechanisms at local level due to the proximity between authorities and people, the “*democracy of proximity*” as one official defined it. An expert in populism with knowledge on European affairs said that

“There is no good participation without deliberation. And there is no good deliberation without a significant effort to create the conditions for a good deliberation.”

The role of **online disinformation** was considered closely related to populism, and clearly contributing to its rise – for example, populists make use of the advantages of social and online media to spread their messages and, on the back of a crisis of

traditional media, this is a very successful move. The quick cycle of news, polarisation and encapsulation through echo chambers works to their advantage. One European expert with experience on media outlined two specific problems:

“The first aspect, which is specific to the online environment, is the amplification (through algorithms, etc.) which gives a lot more visibility to these fake news. There is a range of things that need to be done: restoring trust in the media, showing the difference, tools to limit the amplification and the spread, trust indicators, fact-checking, media literacy, all sorts of tools... The second factor behind disinformation is a recent challenge of “l’esprit des Lumières”, of the notion of scientific progress, of reason.”

Euroscepticism is another related aspect, as populists have a strong relation to it. According to the opinion of one European expert in public affairs:

“To a large extent, EU/Euro-critical attitudes among citizens stem from widespread disappointment with the lack of effective reactions, let alone solutions, rightly or not pinned on Brussels to the mounting and overlapping troubles confronting Europe – most notably, the increase of (illegal) migration, a spate of terrorist attacks, and ongoing economic and social woes.”

9.2. The role of civil society organisations: highlights from the research

The overall conclusion based on the desk research of the civil society organisations in the regions identifies that CSOs providing social services on behalf of the state/municipalities are well represented. There are some examples of civic initiatives in support of migrants, and efforts to tackle online disinformation and support direct democracy, such as participatory budgeting. Euroscepticism is, by and large, not addressed, with the exception of Poland where support for the EU is high.

The mapping of CSOs active in the areas of promoting EU values, civic education and engagement, civil liberties, direct democracy, support to minorities, refugees and migrants and tackling online disinformation, which was conducted in the regions based on official information sources specifically for the study, reveals a marginal number of CSOs implementing activities that can potentially tackle populism. The lowest percentage is in France.

Table 19. Potentially relevant CSOs in the eight regions in focus

<i>Potentially relevant CSOs in the eight regions in focus</i>										
Country	Region	Total CSOs in the region	Potentially relevant CSOs in the regions							%
			EU values	Civic education and engagement	Disinformation	Minorities, migrants and multiculturalism	Civil liberties	Direct democracy and participation	Total CSOs relevant	
Austria	KV	4,488	7	2	1	39	0	5	51	1.14 %
	NO-S	3,035	1	0	0	5	0	2	7	0.23 %
France	DR	15,181	3	1	0	9	0	8	18	0.12 %
	AI	10,261	2	4	0	8	0	7	19	0.19 %
Italy	UD	4,494	5	4	1	12	0	0	21	0.47 %
	RC	2,433	2	8	0	14	0	1	23	0.95 %
Poland	PL	682	6	6	0	1	2	1	12	1.76 %
	NW	1,369	8	8	0	4	0	0	17	1.24 %

Some organisations are active in multiple areas, so the sum of the column of activities and total number at the end may differ.

The findings of the field research (interviews and focus groups) confirms the lack of encompassing and comprehensive civil society initiatives in tackling populism due to a variety of reasons: the complexity of the phenomenon, which needs further understanding, the shrinking civic space, which includes both a lack of an enabling environment in which CSOs can operate, limited human resources (many of the organisations are almost entirely reliant on

volunteers), reduced funding and lack of expertise.

The need for civil society to be supported in non-metropolitan regions in terms of resources, knowledge, expertise and knowhow has been identified as a prerequisite in order to empower CSOs to have capacity to:

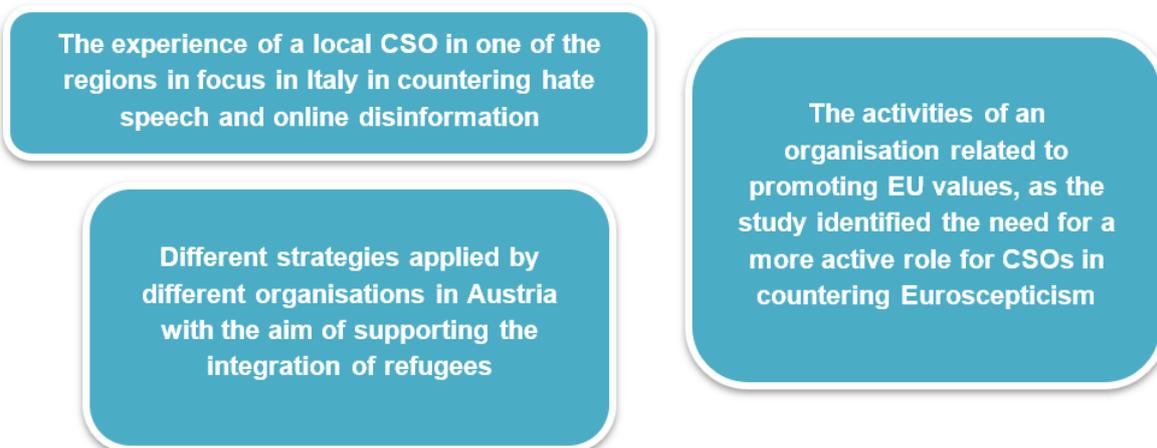
- raise **awareness of the specificities of the populist phenomenon in the regions and devise effective strategies to address its roots and manifestations;**
- give voice to and **advocate for those who are underrepresented or in an underprivileged position;**
- lead the **development of a public sphere for debate at local level;**
- foster the **development of cooperation and networks both across regions and countries and at different levels** (local, national, European) and among different stakeholders;
- monitor and challenge the **policy solutions proposed by populists;**
- support the elaboration of **policy solutions to citizens' problems and concerns** that have not, to date, been addressed by mainstream politicians and are exploited by populists;
- implement **initiatives related to informal civic education and active citizenship;**
- tackle **online disinformation;**
- **promote European values** and the essential ingredients of a healthy democracy

9.3. Positive examples of CSOs initiatives in countering populism

Although one of the research objectives of the study was the identification of good practices of CSOs in, countering populism in the regions, such practices, defined as civic initiatives with a sustainable impact were not identified through the desk research or the interviews and focus groups.

Some **positive examples of CSO initiatives** with the potential to be upscaled are presented below as the organisations were identified and shared their views and work through the interviews conducted.

This report chose to present the following three different examples from three of the countries in focus:



Agenzia di Promozione Integrata per i Cittadini in Europa (APICE), based in the Reggio di Calabria region of Italy, is a youth organisation with members all under 35 years old, mostly based in the central and southern parts of Italy. APICE's actions are aimed at preventing, combating, and reporting **hate speech online and offline** as a contribution to tackling populism. They initiated the Italian campaign and coordinate the national **network of young people**, which is active in promoting human rights online and combating the different forms of hatred and discrimination that lead to violence, radicalisation, and violations of human rights. It began as part of the Council of Europe's "no hate speech" campaign, but is now **youth-led** and active in different countries. As a corollary, APICE is addressing the related phenomenon of **online disinformation**, which, according to their observation, "initially was an isolated way to create disinformation, but is now becoming a systematic organised way to manipulate information. The closer the European elections of 2019, the more serious issue this is becoming". APICE's actions include:

- **Prevention**: human rights education, media literacy through educational tools and specific educational activities to combat disinformation: how to recognise them, how to react to them online and how to build a positive and reliable narrative online.
- **Reporting** online hate comments to the national authorities and advocating for a clear codification of the phenomenon across borders as hate speech is subject to different legislation in different countries.
- **Producing counter narratives online** against hate speech and disinformation. The organisation produces content, such as videos, that can reverse the oppressive narrative found in hateful comments. By developing alternative narratives, they aim to change the approach to stereotypes in general discussions and pursue changes to public discourse.

[Les Jeunes Européens France](#) (*Young Europeans France*) is the French national branch of the [Young European Federalists](#)¹⁵⁷. They target the negative aspects of populism by addressing Europhobic or Eurosceptic speeches, especially of political parties or candidates. They also organise street actions and they plan to take positions and argue against populists during the 2019 campaign for the European elections. The organisation has witnessed an increase in new members and activity in recent times, especially after Brexit, which served as a shock for young people, who realised that the EU is a benefit that is under threat from populists. Examples of their initiatives are:

- The campaign **“Europe en mieux” (Better Europe)** launched in 2015 in France, a joint initiative of the Young Europeans, the European Movement and the Union of European Federalists through which they challenged Eurosceptic positions, including through carrying out conferences and debate-café.

- Their programme **“Europe par les Jeunes” (Europe by the Youth)** is the most important initiative in tackling Euroscepticism and populism in general. It involves public awareness and educational activities. “Europe par les Jeunes” (formerly called “Europe at school”) is an educational programme that consists of presenting Europe and the European union to pupils and students in schools at all levels

(primary school, middle school, high school), as well as in extracurricular structures (e.g. social and recreation centres). More than 300 interventions were carried out last year among 10,000 young people in France¹⁵⁸.

- **Initiatives such as “Europe en Vacances” (Europe in Holidays)** <http://www.europeenvacances.eu/fr> is about meeting citizens directly on the ground to raise awareness of Europe among audiences that are sometimes very distant. In terms of public awareness, they consider this to be a success and an efficient activity with a real impact.

- Their publication **Le Taurillon** (<https://www.taurillon.org/>) is an online magazine with local printed editions in several cities in France. It is the main outlet to respond, refute and argue against parties or politicians who take populist positions (including on rule of law in Poland and Brexit). It also tackles online disinformation and fake news.

¹⁵⁷ It should be noted that the organisation does not have representation in any of the French regions in focus. This is instructive as according to them the fact that they did not manage to establish there and have any meaningful actions

contributes even more to the distancing of rural areas’ inhabitants from European citizenship and European thematic areas.

¹⁵⁸ <https://www.jeunes-europeens.org/Europe-par-les-Jeunes>

The CSO experiences in Austria in working with refugees include:

Caritas initiatives in arts to tackle the populist discourse

Caritas is one of the “big five” welfare organisations (along with Diakonie, Hilfswerk, Rote Kreuze and Volkshilfe), which are active in Austria in working with refugees¹⁵⁹, including in the regions in focus of Klagenfurt-Villach and Niederösterreich-Süd. Caritas have implemented art projects with refugees, such as dancing (Tanz die Toleranz), drawing and painting, with the results presented on social media as a way of communicating with citizens and changing attitudes despite the risk of racist backlash on the internet.

Caritas also has a project called ZusammenReden (talking together) that offers training for school pupils, teachers and other CSOs to counter the populist language known as “Stammtischparolen” (which can be translated as bumper sticker

wisdom, or the talk of drunken people in bars that is often related to foreigners).

Sport with refugees

An example of the success that CSOs can have in countering anti-migrant narratives is the “Sports with Refugees” project, originally funded by the International Olympic Committee, which has resulted in 167 refugees currently being integrated into 155 sport clubs in Carinthia. Anecdotal evidence of the effect of sports for integration and consequent changes in public attitudes was confirmed at the focus group in Klagenfurt as one participant recalled refugees integrated in the local football clubs. According to this testimony, they felt very welcome because most of the other players showed friendly behaviour to them, saying “Football connects people, no matter who they are and where they come from”.

¹⁵⁹ Caritas works with local governments to provide social services, help and advice in financial and social emergencies, counselling and therapy, shelter and housing,

work and employment, asylum, migration, and integration, care and maintenance.

9.4. Recommendations

1. Develop a knowledge base on “populism” to inform a tailored approach to tackling its roots and manifestations

Justification: Many of the interviewees in the regions reported that the term “populism” is not clear to them and it is not recognised as a distinctive type of challenge. While the report identifies some common features, it also demonstrates that different factors are at play in the different regions, which predetermines its different outcomes. Developing an in-depth knowledge on the specificities of the phenomenon and a blueprint (strategic framework) for tackling populism is, therefore, a necessary basis for devising tailor-made strategies that work at local level.

Concrete actions: research, analysis, training, public awareness

Actors involved: all interested stakeholders: politicians, academia, CSOs, media

Levels concerned: mainly regional, also national

2. Foster EU communication and engagement

Justification: The study shows that EU achievements are not visible at regional and local level. At the same time, the European project has the potential to tackle populism because of its international nature. It is up to the EU, therefore, to demonstrate that it is “part of the solution”, as put forward by a European expert in public affairs, rather than part of the problem, as claimed by populists.

Concrete actions: awareness raising campaigns, local debates and informational activities

Actors involved: EU institutions in cooperation with local stakeholders

Levels concerned: local, national and EU levels

3. Restore the public sphere of dialogue and discussion

Justification: The collapse of structures for debates around social issues and social bonds in local communities, in combination with the passivity of the traditional parties in reaching out to rural areas, creates feelings of abandonment and disconnect among citizens, which are exploited by populists. The restoration of the public sphere and the civic space is one of the ways of shrinking the space for populism.

Concrete actions: create an infrastructure for debate, discussion and engagement

Actors involved: all interested stakeholders – CSOs, businesses, academia and politicians

Levels concerned: local level

4. Complement representative democracy with collaborative elements of participatory democracy

Justification: The study shows a very high level of support among citizens for direct democracy while the experts interviewed were cautious, warning against serious drawbacks, especially regarding referenda. With representative democracy in crisis, as defined by one of the European experts in public affairs and populism interviewed¹⁶⁰, and a new deliberative-collaborative model of democracy emerging worldwide, there are initiatives that can be implemented as complementary to the current model of representative democracy in order to strengthen it by reducing the gap between political elites and citizens and transforming their relationship into more of a partnership.

Concrete actions: crowdsourcing citizens' ideas for policy solutions, participatory budgeting, etc.

Actors involved: politicians, CSOs, citizens

Levels concerned: especially at local level, but also at national and European level

5. Strengthen the EU's role and actions as guardian of EU values and democracy in the EU and in Member States

Justification: The different factors determining the different "faces" of populism in the different countries and regions are rooted in the historical development of the Member States. As defined by one of the European experts in public affairs and populism interviewed, the East-West divide has, as an outcome, the fact that disaffection with representative democracy in the East results in "an alternative which people see more in authoritarian regimes – leave the matters in the hands of a stronger government, whereas in Western democracies it's more "we citizens want to be involved more, to participate more"". At the same time, in the post-communist countries where democracy is still very fragile, EU membership provides effective leverage against populists and enjoys broad public support, as demonstrated by the research on Poland. Citizens do expect a firmer stance on behalf of the EU in defending fundamental rights and freedoms that are under attack from populists in these countries.

Concrete actions: debates and resolutions, infringement procedures, invocation of article 7 if needed.

Actors involved: EU institutions and national decision-makers

Levels concerned: EU, national

¹⁶⁰ The populists "are not a challenge as such but a reminder that we have a bigger structural problem on our hands, which won't just go away. To ruin the appeal of populists, you have to solve the crisis of representative democracy, you have to re-empower the people".

6. Provoke traditional parties to innovate and seek new solutions to citizens' concerns exploited by populists

Justification: In all the regions studied, interviewees and participants in focus groups articulated the responsibility of the traditional parties for the populists' expansion. As one of the European experts interviewed defined it, "*political parties are extremely shallow in their ability to think ... They don't really push for investing in new ideas, and they often kill new ideas, because they're challenging their position*". At the same time, the weakest point of populists, according to the study, is the fact that populists, as formulated by another European expert, "*have shown limited transformative power in terms of their ability to determine actual policy choices*". Reconquering the territory of ideas and policy solutions to real problems, therefore, is a tangible strategy for countering populism.

Concrete actions: debates and engagement activities to identify actual citizens' needs and concerns. Brainstorming with different stakeholders and soliciting the "wisdom of the crowd" on possible policy solutions.

Actors involved: politicians, citizens, CSOs, businesses, academics

Levels concerned: local and national

7. Support civil society at local level

Justification: The study identifies the very weak civil society response to the "populist" phenomenon in the non-metropolitan regions studied due to a variety of reasons: complexity of the phenomenon, lack of an enabling environment – shrinking civic space, lack of resources – insufficient financial and human resources, a lack of knowhow and communication skills, isolation and marginalisation, etc. Concrete and consistent actions over time are needed in order to empower civil society organisations in those regions to deliver their mission and play their role of "speaking on behalf of those who are underrepresented and advocating for the marginalised, and to educate and create a kind of genuine bond between different communities" as recommended by a European expert in public affairs and international CSO representative interviewed.

Concrete actions:

- Ensure independent funding from populist governments and players;
- Provide training and knowledge building on "populism", online disinformation, communication and advocacy skills development.

Actors involved: EU institutions, European civil society networks, local CSOs

Levels concerned: local, national and European with a supportive role

8. Tackle online disinformation at all levels

Justification: Online disinformation has been identified in the study as a very important tool of spreading populism by all those interviewed and surveyed at all levels. While it seems difficult to articulate a concrete strategy for dealing with this multifaceted problem, there is a high level of recognition of its importance for sustaining democracy and of the need for a consistent and coordinated approach at all levels. There is some expectation that the EU should lead the battle to counter it or at least provide a blueprint.

Concrete actions: elaborate a consistent multilevel strategy and an action plan; training on the implementation of concrete actions (e.g. fact checking and media literacy), work on civic education

Actors involved: all stakeholders

Levels concerned: local, national, EU level

9. Invest in formal and informal civic education

Justification: The need to boost civic education was identified in all regions and at all levels. This includes education on active citizenship, democracy, the EU and national competencies, populism, online disinformation, EU fundamental rights and values and, especially, respect for minorities and their role in an inclusive democratic society, which has been undermined by populists.

Concrete actions: develop and implement civic education curricula in schools as part of the formal education process and support informal civic education in communities through CSOs and other stakeholders.

Actors involved: Governments, educational institutions, CSOs, European institutions and CSO networks

Levels concerned: local and national

10. Boost internationalisation/Europeanisation through exchanges – horizontal, vertical and multi-stakeholder involving non-metropolitan areas

Justification: Isolation works in populists' favour as it exploits fears of the unknown and of those who are different from us. Internationalisation and Europeanisation broadens horizons and fosters the acceptance of "others" through personal experience.

Concrete actions: exchange schemes, networking and collaboration development between different regions, especially with similar problems across borders and between different levels, as well as between different stakeholders

Actors involved: CSOs, businesses, media, non-populist politicians

Levels concerned: local, regional, national, European, cross-border

10. Appendices

10.1. Appendix 1. Statistical model

The following statistical model was used for exploring the relationship between socioeconomic, political-cultural (attitudinal) and demographic indicators and the populist vote. All variables are

standardised z-scores, reflecting the number of standard deviations of change in the dependent variable for every standard deviation of change in the independent variable(s). All R^2 given are adjusted.

Stepwise regression of populist vote on regional level data

$V = -.544disp$ Where V = populist vote and d = disposable income

$p < .001$, $R^2 = .276$

Excluded variables: employment, social benefits, GDP, growth.

Entry criteria: $p < .05$

Stepwise regression of right-wing populist vote in regional level data

$V = -.820disp - .407socben + .419empl$

Where socben = social benefit expenditure and empl= employment rate

$p < .001$, $R^2 = .579$

Excluded variables: GDP, growth.

Entry criteria: $p < .05$

Stepwise regression of populist vote in national level data

$V = .928gini - .365socben$

Where gini = Gini index

$p < .001$, $R^2 = .621$

Excluded variables: positive asylum decisions, employment, growth, gross disposable income

Entry criteria: $p < .05$

Stepwise regression of populist vote in national level data, including Eurobarometer data

$V = .906gini + 1.109sit_{econ} - .522sat_{dem} - .343sit_{house}$

Where sit_{econ} = average rating of the situation of the national economy, sat_{dem} = average satisfaction with the way democracy works in country and sit_{house} = average rating of household financial situation.

$p < .001$, $R^2 = .759$

Excluded variables: social benefits, positive asylum decisions, employment, growth, gross disposable income, optimism, trust in democracy, satisfaction, all other Eurobarometer questions included in the relevant appendix with data and sources.

Entry criteria: $p < .05$

10.2. Appendix 2. Socioeconomic and political-cultural variables

The study used the values of each indicator from the year of each election; where data is available quarterly, we used the value for the last quarter of the year. Where data was not available for a given year, the study used the chronologically closest datum; in these cases, the data was not collected more than two years before/after the election reported.

Regional variables	
Variable	Details
Social benefits	Received social benefits other than social transfers in kind. NUTS 2 regions. Million euro. Eurostat . ¹
GDP per inhabitant PPS	Purchasing power standard (PPS) per inhabitant. NUTS 3 regions. Euro. Eurostat . ²
Growth GVA	Real growth rate of regional GVA at basic prices. NUTS 2 regions. % change from previous year. Eurostat .
Employment	Employment rate of the age group 15-64. NUTS 2 regions. Employed persons aged 15-64 as a percentage of the population of the same age group. Employed = those who during the reference week did any work for pay, profit or family gain for at least one hour, or were not at work but had a job or business from which they were temporarily absent. Eurostat .
Disposable income	The balance of primary income and the redistribution of income in cash. PPS (based on final consumption) per inhabitant. Eurostat .
National variables	
Variable	Details
Positive asylum decisions	Total positive final decisions on asylum applications. Includes Geneva Convention status, humanitarian Status, subsidiary protection status and temporary protection status. Eurostat .
Gini index	Gini coefficient calculated for disposable income, post taxes and transfers for the working age population 18-65. OECD Data and OECD Stat .
Employment	Employment rate of the age group 20-64. Calculated by dividing the number of persons aged 20-64 in employment by the total population of

¹ To access the data, you have to click on the link and then change the national accounts indicator to 'Social benefits other than social transfers in kind' and the direction of flow to 'Received'. You do this by clicking on the blue plus. This operation is necessary as no directly clickable link is available otherwise.

² As above, you have to change the unit of measure to 'Purchasing power standard (PPS) per inhabitant'.

	the same age group. Eurostat . (Differences in age group used between national and regional reflect differences in those reported by Eurostat).
Social benefits	Social benefits other than social transfers in kind, paid by general government in million euro. Eurostat . ³
Growth	Real annual growth rate of GDP volume. Percentage change on previous year. Eurostat .
Gross disposable income	Adjusted gross disposable income of households per capita in PPS. Eurostat .
Optimism	The mean of scored responses to questions marked 1 below.
Trust in democracy	The mean of scored responses to questions marked 2 & 3 below.
Satisfaction	The mean of scored responses to questions marked 4 below.
1.1 Job future	Mean scored responses to the question: “Will next year be better, worse, or the same when it comes to your personal job situation?” Responses scored as follows: better = 1, worse = -1, same = 0. Eurobarometer .
1.2 Financial future	Mean scored responses to the question: “Will next year be better, worse, or the same when it comes to the financial situation of your household?” Responses scored as follows: better = 1, worse = -1, same = 0. Eurobarometer .
1.3 National economy future	Mean scored responses to the question: “Will next year be better, worse, or the same when it comes to the economic situation in [our country]?” Responses scored as follows: better = 1, worse = -1, same = 0. Eurobarometer .
2.1 Tendency to trust National Government	Mean scored responses to the question: “Do you tend to trust or tend not to trust the [Nationality] Government?” Responses scored as follows: tend to trust = 1, tend not to trust = -1. Eurobarometer .
2.2 Tendency to trust National Parliament	Mean scored responses to the question: “Do you tend to trust or tend not to trust the [Nationality] Parliament?” Responses scored as follows: tend to trust = 1, tend not to trust = -1. Eurobarometer .
2.3 Tendency to trust the EU	Mean scored responses to the question: “Do you tend to trust or tend not to trust the European Union?” Responses scored as follows: tend to trust = 1, tend not to trust = -1. Eurobarometer .
3.1 Satisfaction with EU democracy	Mean scored responses to the question: “Are you very satisfied, fairly satisfied, not very satisfied or not at all satisfied with the way that democracy works in the European Union?” Responses scored as follows: very satisfied = 2, fairly satisfied = 1, not very satisfied = -1, not at all satisfied = -2. Eurobarometer .
3.2 Satisfaction with national democracy	Mean scored responses to the question: “Are you very satisfied, fairly satisfied, not very satisfied or not at all satisfied with the way that

³ As above, you have to change the unit of measurement to ‘Million euro’

	democracy works in [your country]?” Responses scored as follows: very satisfied = 2, fairly satisfied = 1, not very satisfied = -1, not at all satisfied = -2. Eurobarometer .
4.1 Rating of the situation of the national economy	Mean scored responses to the question: “How would you rate the current situation in the following? The situation of the [nationality] economy.” Responses scored as follows: very good = 2, rather good = 1, rather bad = -1, very bad = 2. Eurobarometer .
4.2 Rating of national employment situation	Mean scored responses to the question: “How would you rate the current situation in the following? The employment situation in [our country].” Responses scored as follows: very good = 2, rather good = 1, rather bad = -1, very bad = 2. Eurobarometer .
4.3 Rating of personal financial situation	Mean scored responses to the question: “How would you rate the current situation in the following? The financial situation of your household.” Responses scored as follows: very good = 2, rather good = 1, rather bad = -1, very bad = 2. Eurobarometer .

10.3. Appendix 3. The populist vote at regional level: an overview of trends across regions and time

This section shows the populist vote in the eight regions based on public records and election results⁴. The comparison across time (Figure 1) between populist vote shares in the period 2008-2018 for each region shows a general upward trend from 2010-2011 onwards. For Klagenfurt-Villach (KV) and Niederösterreich-Süd (NS) in Austria, there was actually a decrease from 2008 to 2010, followed by an increase and

then another drop in 2016. The two Polish regions, Płocki (PL) and Nowosądecki (NW), also show similar patterns of relative decline in populist support in 2011, followed by an upward trend. The data for Aisne and Drôme in France demonstrates similar patterns, with an increase from 2012 onwards. In the case of the two Italian regions, there is a gradual trend upwards in populist support throughout the period.

⁴ For sources and further details, please see the chapter “Overview of factors for populism at national and regional level in the countries in focus”.

Appendix 3. Figure 1. The populist vote share across time in the four regions

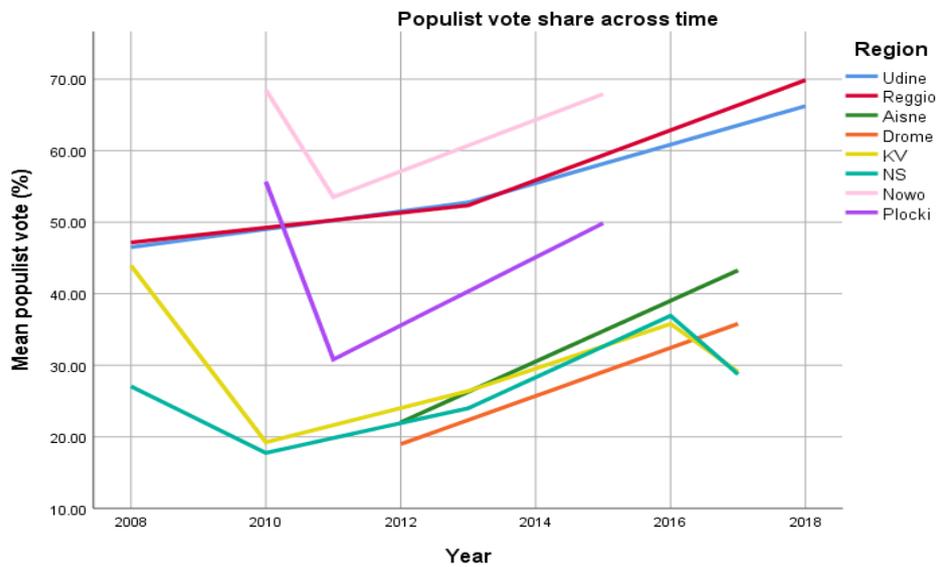


Figure 1 displays the populist vote share across time, from 2008 to 2018, for each region. Where more than one election occurred in a single year (for example one legislative and one presidential), the mean vote for populist candidates is displayed. National legislative and presidential elections, as well as European Parliament elections are included.

Appendix 3. Figure 2. Mean populist share on national and regional level between 2008 and 2018

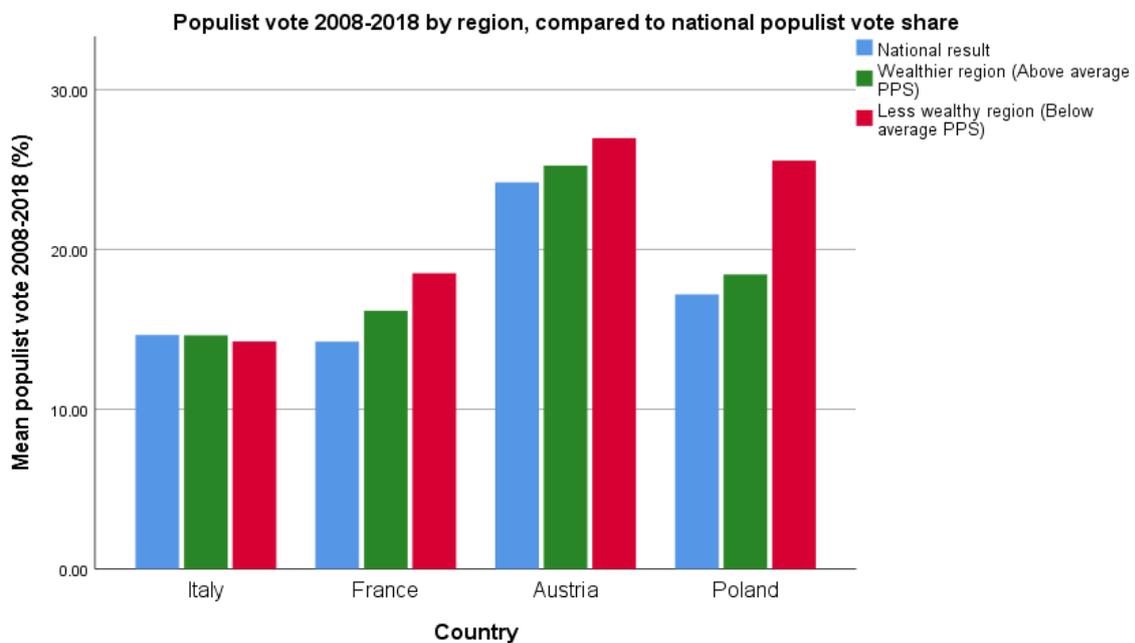


Figure 2 displays the mean populist vote share between 2008 and 2018 at national level and within each region. The green bars depict, from left to right, Udine, Drôme, Klagenfurt-Villach and Płocki; the red bars depict Reggio di Calabria, Aisne, Niederösterreich-Süd and Nowosądecki.

The comparison between the wealth of a region and populist voting patterns across the different countries and different regions provides several interesting results (Figure 2). In the cases of France, Austria and, especially, Poland, support for populists (as mean populist vote share between 2008 and 2018) is clearly stronger in the poorer regions (as measured by GDP per capita in PPS) compared to the wealthier regions and the national level. Still, support

for populist parties in the wealthier non-metropolitan areas was higher than the national level. Italy demonstrated a different pattern, as populist support was lowest in the poorest region and at similar levels in the wealthier region and the national level. Hence, the wealth of a region in terms of GDP per capita in PPS cannot explain support for populists in all cases and all countries, so other factors need to be explored.

10.4. Appendix 4. Questionnaire for political science experts and CSO activists

Study on Societies outside Metropolises: The role of civil society organisations in facing populism

Questionnaire for political science experts and CSO activists

1. According to your observations, which factors that drive populism in [country - for country political science experts] [Europe - for European political science experts] are stronger – socioeconomic or cultural? Can you rank the top 3 to 5 most important ones?
2. Are there different factors at play in the different [regions of the country – for country political science experts] [countries in Europe – for Europe political science experts] or they are more or less similar? Can you give examples of what issues drive populism more strongly?
3. According to you, how do populist parties rank as a challenge – compared to other challenges – for the countries in Europe and the EU as a whole? In what sense they can be considered as a challenge, e.g. to liberal democracy, rule of law, common EU institutions, economy, current international order or other aspects?

4. **And what are the weak spots of populist parties, i.e. what drives people away from them, what factors limit the support for them? E.g. in case populist sentiments might be more widespread, but electoral support for them is much lower, what would be the explanation?**
5. **Even if you, or most people in general, disagree with populist parties, do you think populists have a point in some cases? Can you give examples?**
6. **What do you think about the responsibility of politicians – populist and mainstream? According to you, to what extent is the success of populism due to underlying factors and to what extent is it due to the poor shape of mainstream parties and instrumental campaigning by populist parties? I.e. what is the role of political rhetoric and polarisations of society?**
7. **We would like to know your opinion about three issues, often associated with populism?** As these are indeed complex issues, please feel free to just very briefly share your take on them?
 - What about the calls for more **“direct democracy”** such as referendums to be used more often – as opposed to current representative democracy? Are there merits in adopting more of them – and which ones? Will it work at both local and national level (or European scale), i.e. considering there are differences of scale?
 - What do you think about the role of **online disinformation** for the rise of populism? What is the role of social media? What is the role of traditional media – and is there a difference between local and national media? What can be done to limit the effects of online disinformation and, in general, so-called “fake news”?
 - According to you, how is populism related to **Euroscepticism**? What is the most serious challenge posed to the European project? What can be done on [regional and national – for country political science experts] [country and European – for European political science experts] to tackle the most negative aspects, including by European CSOs and EU institutions?
8. **According to you, which are the most important measures necessary to address the populist challenge? If you have to choose only 3 to 5 measures, what would they be and in what order should they be carried out?** E.g. it can be assumed that the measures to tackle the populist challenge can be broadly divided in two groups:
 - Dealing with socioeconomic issues, such as inequality, unemployment, poverty, poor social services, etc.
 - Dealing with other associated phenomena, such as fighting xenophobia, racism and sexism, distrust in democracy and institutions with calls for more direct democracy, fake news and disinformation (on social media and traditional media), Euroscepticism

and the rejection of European values, negative political rhetoric that polarises the public.

9. How would you assign responsibility for these measures at different levels – local/regional, national and European (if applicable)? Could you be more specific about what can be done at European level to tackle the negative effects of populist parties, in regard to both legitimate resentments and political manipulation?

10. Do you have observations about how populist politicians change once they are in power, i.e. does this moderate or amplify (a) their positions and (b) public support for them? Respectively, what works best in mitigating the populist challenge – confrontation or cooperation, ignoring them? E.g. should populist parties be treated as any other party?

11. According to you, what else should be addressed in the debates on populism? What aspect of populism is being neglected in current discussions?

As the study focuses on CSOs, there are several questions below that refer to CSO activities. If you are not familiar with the topic, please feel free to skip these questions.

12. Are you aware of organisations and initiatives that are working to tackle these negative aspects of populism at [local, regional level – for country political science experts] [national and European level - for European political science experts]? What is the situation is now, have they been successful? Please, consider both:

- **Specific programmes and actions of CSOs targeted at populism**
- **Strategies of CSOs to tackle populism**

The examples from CSOs include issues such as the following: public awareness, involving famous people to dispel negative attitudes, media literacy education to fight disinformation. An example of unsuccessful approach has been CSOs reporting failure to work with and convince populist politicians.

13. According to you, what are the most serious impediments for CSOs, which are tackling populist challenges respectively at [local, regional level – for country political science experts] [national and European level - for European political science experts]? Please, comment also on the lack of resources (human, financial), knowhow and political science expertise?

For example, other CSOs in different countries have reported a number of problems, including negative campaigning against them, limiting their access to public funding, changing the law in order to put pressure on/persecute them, etc.?

14. In your opinion, what are the most important actions for CSOs in your [local, regional level – for country political science experts] [national and European level - for European political science experts] to undertake to tackle the populist challenge? How would you rate them from the most urgent steps to specific programmes and longer-term strategies? What are the valuable allies and what should they do to help CSOs and citizens?

Some problems that give rise to populism are of course too complex for CSOs to tackle alone. But if you had to make recommendations to CSOs and activists what would be the initiatives, the necessary steps, the allies (e.g. other NGOs, local-national-EU institutions, media, etc.) and the resources (in a broader sense) to most effectively tackle the negative aspects of populism?

15. What are the necessary resources to implement these specific programmes and strategies of CSOs as well as to boost the effectiveness of existing ones, which you mentioned?

Please, consider political science expertise and knowhow, human and financial resources, etc. You can also target your recommendations at different levels – regional, national and European – for the need of resources for CSOs?

16. Please, feel free to share anything else CSOs could do, which is currently missing from the civil society debates?

10.5. Appendix 5. Citizen survey questionnaire

The following survey is designed to understand the political, cultural and social concerns of people resident in [region] and the issues that inform voters' choices, which will be analysed in a study for the European Economic and Social Committee on societies in non-metropolitan areas.

All answers will remain anonymous. If you choose to enter the competition, your email address will only be used for the purposes of the competition and will be deleted once the competition process has ended.

The survey should take approximately 5-10 minutes to complete. Thank you for your participation!

1. Politicians are from a different socioeconomic class to other citizens
2. I am satisfied with the way democracy works in [country]
3. [Country] is governed for the benefit of all the people, not only for the benefit of a few groups
4. Policy should be driven by research and evidence rather than values
5. Political parties fulfil most of their electoral promises
6. I trust the national government to do what is right for the country
7. I trust the national government more than I did 5 years ago
8. Elected officials should make decisions based on the national interest, even if it goes against the will of the people
9. The most important policy decisions should be made through direct referenda
10. [Country] needs a strong leader who can make decisions without interference from parliament or the courts
11. The government should be allowed to violate civil liberties when acting in the interest of the majority
12. Migration has a positive impact on the local economy
13. Migration is a burden on the welfare system
14. Migration enriches cultural life
15. How often do you have interactions with migrants? (*regularly, often, sometimes, occasionally, never, don't know*)
 - a. Of these, how many are positive? (*More than 90%, more than 70%, 50%, less than 30%, less than 10%*)
16. Non-citizens living in [country] should have the same rights and duties as citizens
17. Being a Christian/Catholic is essential for being truly [nationality]
18. Traditional [nationality] values are very important to me
19. Which of the following are most important to your life in [region] (select up to 5)
 - b. Peace
 - c. Human Rights
 - d. Solidarity
 - e. Democracy
 - f. Intercultural understanding
 - g. Safety and security
 - h. Prosperity and economic success
 - i. Tolerance
 - j. Stability and reliability
 - k. Openness to the world
 - l. Shared culture
 - m. Rule of law
 - n. Individual freedom
 - o. Strong government
 - p. Religion and faith
20. Compared to 20 years ago, life in [region] is:

- a. Much worse
 - b. Somewhat worse
 - c. About the same
 - d. Somewhat better
 - e. Much better
21. The current economic situation in [region] is
- a. Very bad
 - b. Somewhat bad
 - c. Neither good nor bad
 - d. Somewhat good
 - e. Very good
22. The next 12 months will be better, worse or the same when it comes to the economic situation
23. The next 12 months will be better, worse or the same when it comes to the financial situation of my household
24. The next 12 months will be better, worse or the same when it comes to my personal job situation
25. When children grow up in [region], they will be better off than their parents
26. To what extent are inequality and poverty an issue in [region]?
27. How would you judge the way inequalities and poverty are addressed in [region]?
- f. Very bad
 - g. Somewhat bad
 - h. Neither good nor bad
 - i. Somewhat good
 - j. Very good
28. For [region], globalisation is:
- k. Very bad
 - l. Somewhat bad
 - m. Neither good nor bad
 - n. Somewhat good
 - o. Very good
29. [Country] membership of the EU is a good thing
30. I feel more positive about [country] membership of the EU than 5 years ago
31. [Country] economy would be better off outside the EU
32. The EU is an alliance of countries with common cultural values
33. The EU should return powers to national government
34. The EU is sensitive about issues that concern [nationality] citizens
35. What does the EU stand for?
- a. Peace
 - b. Human Rights
 - c. Solidarity
 - d. Democracy
 - e. Intercultural understanding
 - f. Safety and security
 - g. Prosperity and economic success
 - h. Tolerance

- i. Stability and reliability
 - j. Openness to the world
 - k. Shared culture
 - l. Rule of law
 - m. Individual freedom
 - n. Strong government
 - o. Religion and faith
 - p. None of the above
 - q. Don't know
36. How would you describe yourself?
- a. [Nationality] only
 - b. [Nationality] first, then European
 - c. European first, then [nationality]
 - d. European only
1. Age
- a. Under 18
 - b. 18-24
 - c. 25-34
 - d. 35-44
 - e. 45-54
 - f. 55-64
 - g. 65+
2. Gender
- a. Male
 - b. Female
 - c. Other _____
3. Highest qualification achieved
- a. No qualifications
 - b. High school
 - c. Undergraduate
 - d. Postgraduate
 - e. PhD
 - f. Professional qualification
 - g. Other _____
4. Current employment status
- a. Full-time employment
 - b. Part-time employment
 - c. Unemployed and looking for work
 - d. Unemployed and not looking for work
 - e. Self-employed
 - f. Homemaker
 - g. Student
 - h. Retired
 - i. Unable to work
 - j. Other _____
 - k. Prefer not to say
5. Annual household income

- a. EUR 0-24,999
 - b. EUR 25,000-49,999
 - c. EUR 50,000-64,999
 - d. EUR 65,000-74,999
 - e. EUR 75,000+
 - f. Prefer not to say
6. Religion
- a. Catholicism
 - b. Protestant
 - c. Muslim
 - d. Jewish
 - e. Hindu
 - f. No religion
 - g. Other _____
 - h. Prefer not to say
7. Who did you vote for in the last election?
- a. Party 1
 - b. Party 2
 - c. Party 3
 - d. Party 4
 - e. Other _____
 - f. Did not vote
 - g. Prefer not to say
8. What was the most important issue during the last election? _____
9. Are you currently resident in [region]
- a. Yes
 - b. No

10.6. Appendix 6. Comparison across the eight regions: the eight regions compared on key aspects of populism

This section presents a **comparison between the eight regions** in focus in this study across eight key questions of the citizen surveys⁵ conducted for the purposes of the study. The eight questions include anti-elitist sentiments, authoritarian and majoritarian tendencies, attitudes towards migration, religion as a marker of national identity, opinion about EU membership and the sovereignty debate in the context of EU membership.

The results of these comparisons show that *there are differences between the countries as well as between the regions within the countries on different topics* (see the graphs and text below for specific percentages).

The two regions in **Poland** are among those with the *highest support for direct referenda, strong leaders, majoritarianism and religion as an essential part of national identity*. However, they have among *the highest support for EU membership* and low anti-elitist sentiments compared to the other regions.

The *two regions of Italy* have *strong anti-elitist sentiments, but are quite different in other aspects* – Udine is strongly anti-elitist, but has low support for referenda and majoritarianism and a relatively high approval for migration and the EU.

Aisne and Drôme, in France, are *similar in regard to anti-elitism (relatively high), referenda, majoritarianism, religion and identity as well as sovereignty*, but *differ on migration* as there is a more favourable attitude towards it in Drôme. The EU, too, has much higher support in Drôme.

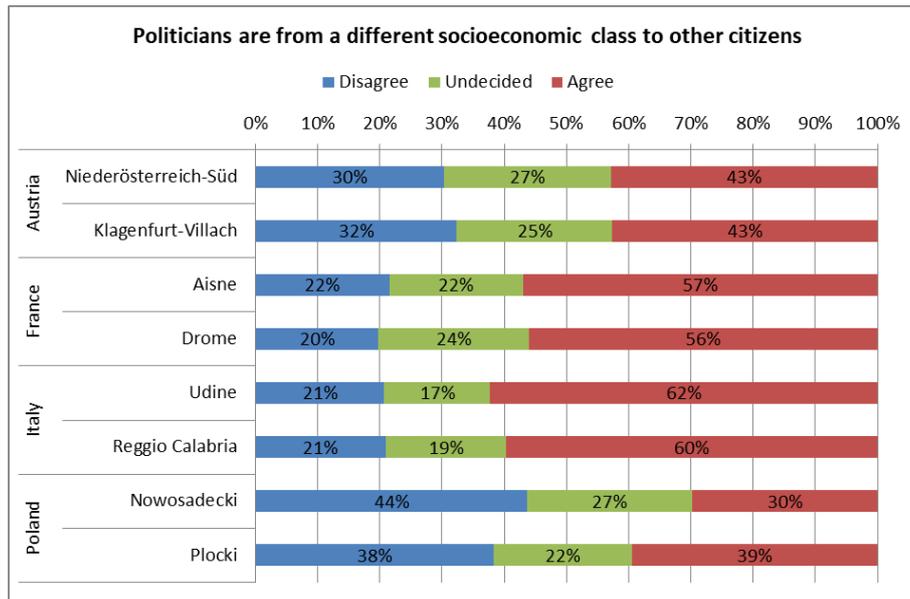
The *regions in Austria* are similar to each other in that they have *lower levels of anti-elitism, support for referenda, approval of strong leaders and majoritarian sentiment* compared to the other regions, and *relatively high disapproval of EU membership*, but *differ on migration*, with Klagenfurt-Villach opposing it and Niederösterreich-Süd showing more approval compared to the other regions. Furthermore, respondents in *Klagenfurt-Villach* were more inclined to see *Catholicism as a key part of national identity*, whereas the opposite is true of Niederösterreich-Süd.

Respondents from the two regions in Italy expressed the highest levels of ***anti-elitist sentiment*** (Figure 3), agreeing more than the other regions with the statement “Politicians are from a different socioeconomic class to other citizens”. Udine has the highest agreement in this regard (62%) followed by Reggio di Calabria (60%) Aisne and Drôme in France (57% and 56%, respectively) and the Austrian regions of Klagenfurt-Villach and Niederösterreich-Süd (both 43%).

Respondents in Poland were least inclined to approve of this statement, with 39% showing agreement in Płocki and 30% in Nowosądecki. The Polish regions also show the highest degree of disagreement with this view – 44% in Nowosądecki and 38% in Płocki, compared to 30% and 32% in Niederösterreich-Süd and Klagenfurt-Villach, respectively, and about a fifth of respondents in the French and Italian regions.

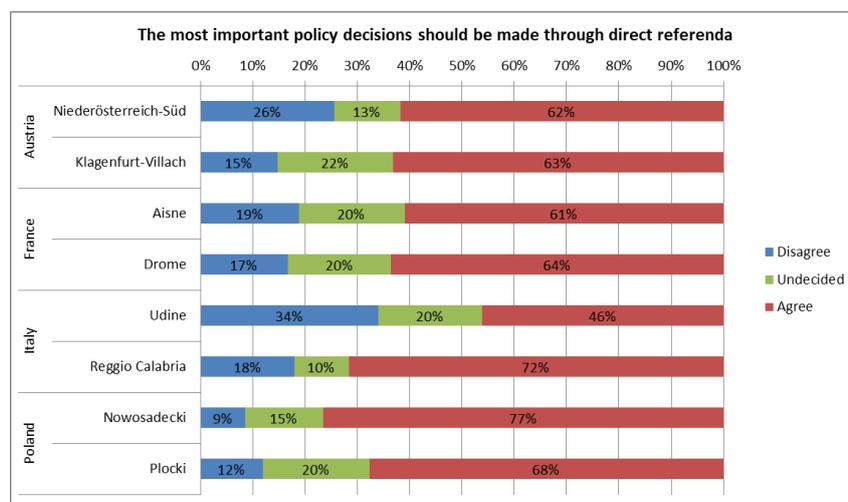
⁵ The citizen surveys were conducted in all eight regions in focus for the purposes of this study, using a closed-ended questionnaire. For further details and the methodology, please see the national chapters in this report.

Appendix 6. Figure 1. Anti-elitism in the eight regions



On the issue of **direct democracy** and the statement “The most important policy decisions should be made through direct referenda” (Figure 4), the highest support came from respondents in the Nowosadecki region in Poland (77%), followed by Reggio di Calabria in Italy (72%) and Płocki (68%), also in Poland. However, the other region in Italy, Udine, shows the lowest support for direct referenda by a considerable margin, with just 46% showing approval. The regions in Austria and France have similar shares of approval, between 61% and 64%. The highest disagreement with using direct referenda is in Udine (34%) and Niederösterreich-Süd (26%).

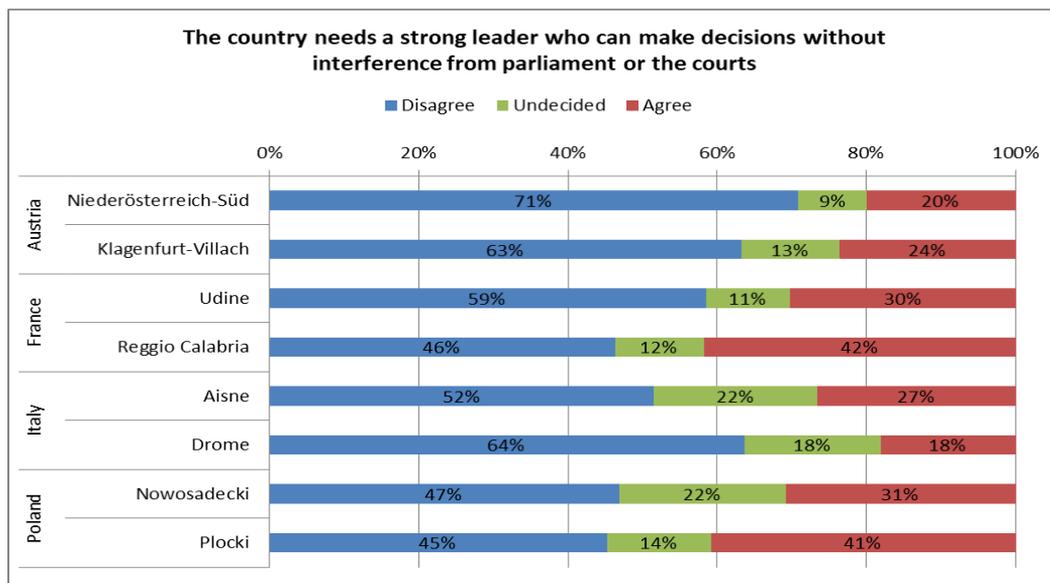
Appendix 6. Figure 2. Direct referenda



The highest support for the notion that the country needs **a strong leader unconstrained by parliament or the courts** (Figure 5) can be found in the Reggio di Calabria (42%) and Płocki (41%) regions of Italy and Poland, respectively. The other regions in these countries – Nowosądecki (31%) and Udine (30%) – follow suit. The lowest support is in the Drôme region of France (18%), the two

regions of Austria –Niederösterreich-Süd (20%) and Klagenfurt-Villach (24%) – and Aisne in France (27%). The highest level of disagreement can be found in the two regions of Austria, with 71% disagreeing in Niederösterreich-Süd and 63% in Klagenfurt-Villach. Drôme (64%) is close behind. The lowest opposition to strong leaders is in Płocki (45%), Reggio di Calabria (46%) and Nowosądecki (47%).

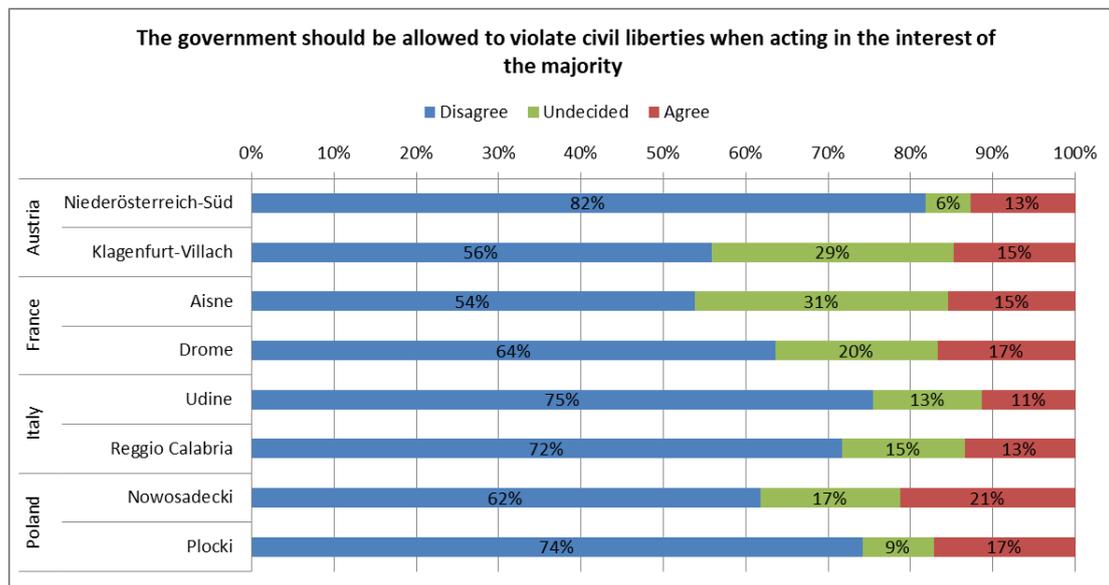
Appendix 6. Figure 3. Authoritarian tendencies



Support for **majoritarianism** and the statement “The government should be allowed to violate civil liberties when acting in the interest of the majority” (Figure 6) is highest in the Nowosądecki region of Poland (21%), followed by the other Polish region, Płocki (17%), and Drôme and Aisne in France (17% and 15%, respectively). The lowest support is found in Udine (11%) and Reggio di Calabria (13%) in Italy and it

is also low in the Austrian regions of Niederösterreich-Süd (13%) and Klagenfurt-Villach (15%). It is worth noting that, in Płocki, there is a very high disagreement with this statement (74%), despite the relatively high support there, but the highest disagreement is in the Niederösterreich-Süd region of Austria (82%), and Udine (75%), and Reggio di Calabria (72%), too.

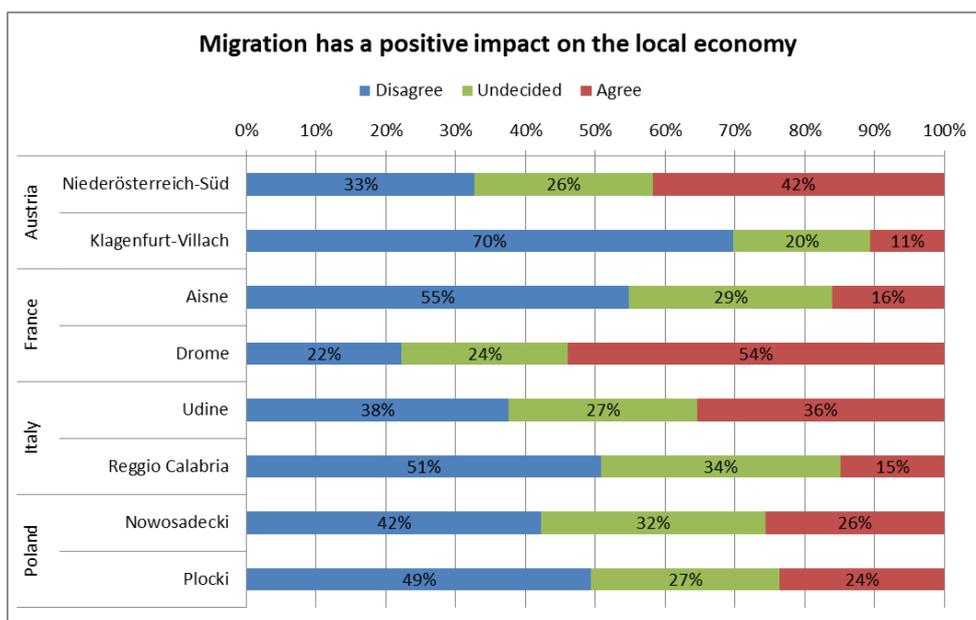
Appendix 6. Figure 4. Majoritarianism



Drôme in France (54%) and Niederösterreich-Süd in Austria (42%) agreed most with the statement “**Migration has a positive impact on the local economy**” (Figure 7), followed by Udine in Italy (36%). The lowest agreement was found in Klagenfurt-Villach in Austria (11%), Reggio di Calabria in Italy (15%) and Aisne in France (16%). The two regions in Poland – Nowosądecki (26%) and Płocki (24%) – are in the middle. The highest disagreement with the benefits of

migration is in Klagenfurt-Villach (70%), Aisne (55%) and Reggio di Calabria (51%). The lowest disagreement can be found in Drôme (22%), Niederösterreich-Süd (33%) and Udine (38%). The two regions in Poland are again in the middle – Nowosądecki (42%) and Płocki (49%). A relatively high proportion of respondents were undecided on this issue; about a third in the Polish and Italian regions, a quarter in Niederösterreich-Süd and Drôme and a fifth in Klagenfurt-Villach.

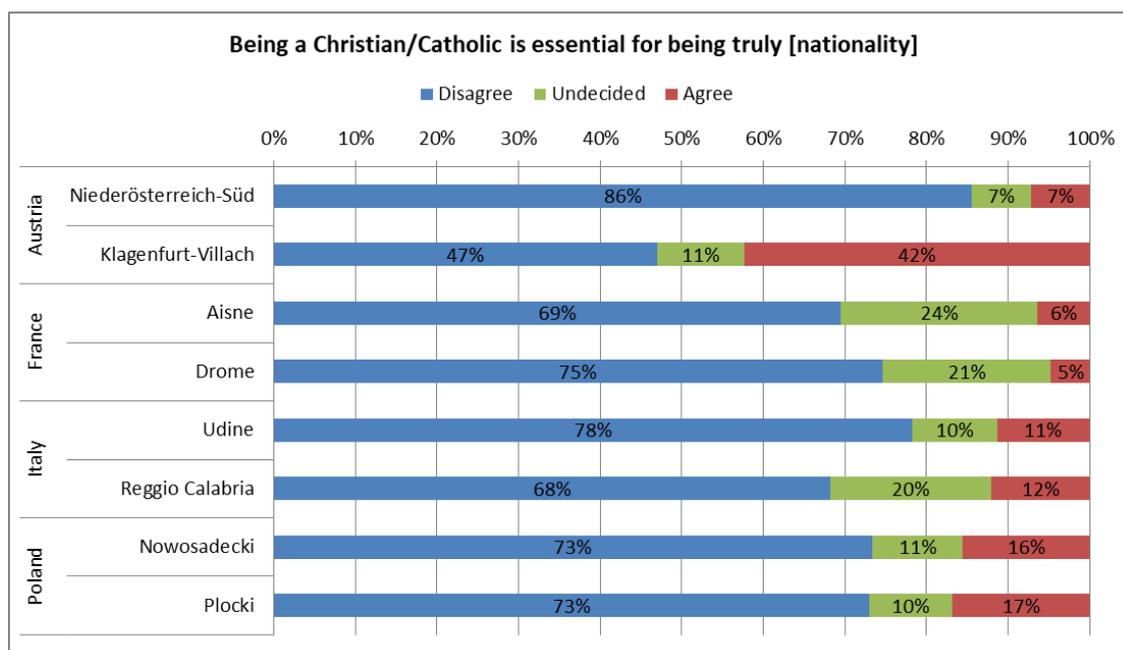
Appendix 6. Figure 5. Attitudes towards migration



With regard to Catholicism, or ***Christianity*** in general, ***as an essential aspect of national identity*** (Figure 8), the highest level of agreement was found in the Klagenfurt-Villach region of Austria (42%), which is much greater than the next highest – Płocki (17%) and Nowosądecki (16%), in Poland, and the other Austrian region, Niederösterreich-Süd (7%). There is even less support for this view in the French regions of Aisne (6%) and Drôme (5%).

The highest disagreement with this notion is in Niederösterreich-Süd (86%), followed by Udine (78%), Drôme (75%), Płocki and Nowosądecki (both 73%), Aisne (69%) and Reggio di Calabria (68%). The lowest disagreement is in Klagenfurt-Villach (47%), where there is the highest level of agreement and lowest level of undecided respondents.

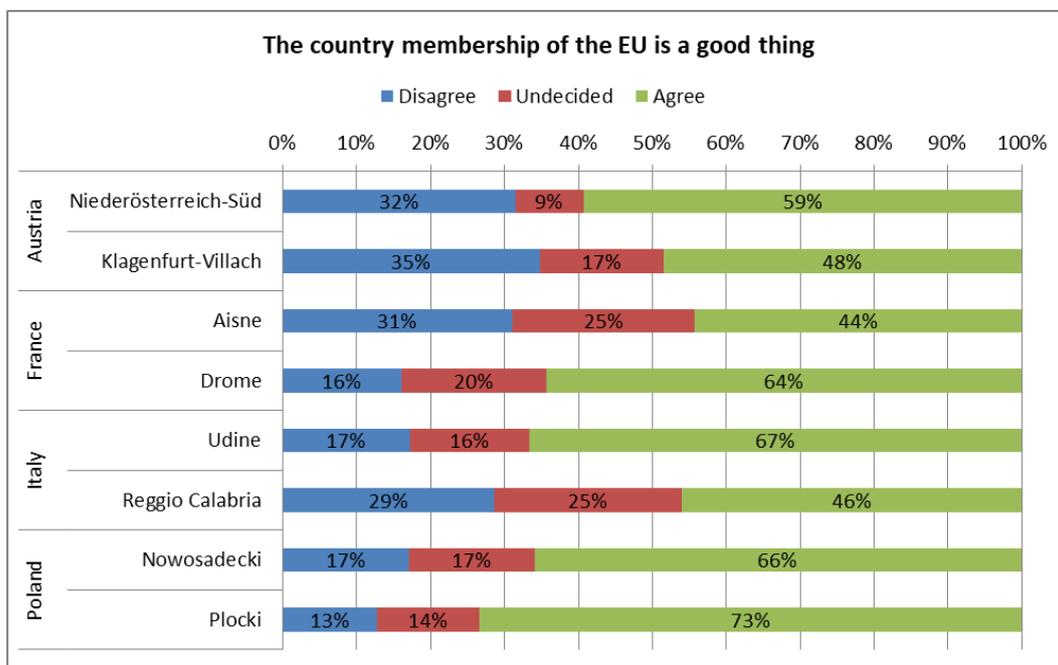
Appendix 6. Figure 6. Religion and national identity



The highest agreement with the statement that **membership of the EU** is a good thing (Figure 9) is found in the two Polish regions – Płocki (73%) and Nowosądecki (66%) – as well as Udine in Italy (67%), Drôme in France (64%) and Niederösterreich-Süd in Austria (59%). The lowest share of those who agree that EU membership is a good thing for their country is in Aisne in France (44%), Reggio di Calabria in Italy (46%)

and Klagenfurt-Villach in Austria (48%). The highest levels of disagreement are in the two regions of Austria – Klagenfurt-Villach (35%) and Niederösterreich-Süd (32%) – followed by Aisne (31%) and Reggio di Calabria (29%). The lowest levels of disagreement are in the two regions of Poland – Płocki (13%) and Nowosądecki (17%) – Drôme (16%) and Udine (17%).

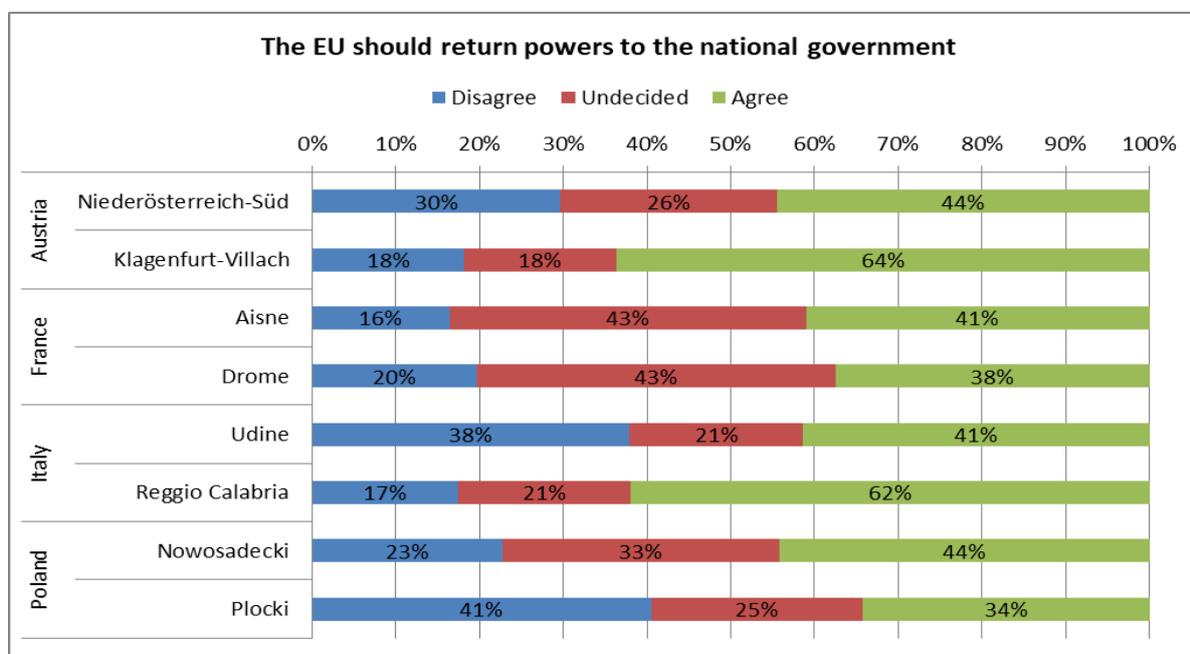
Appendix 6. Figure 7. EU membership



On the issue of **sovereignty** and whether the EU should return powers to national governments (Figure 10), the highest approval can be found in the Klagenfurt-Villach in Austria (64%) and Reggio di Calabria in Italy (62%). A number of regions have approval levels from 34-44%: they are Płocki (34%) and Nowosądecki (44%) in Poland, Drôme (38%) and Aisne (41%) in France, Udine (41%) in Italy and Niederösterreich-Süd (44%) in Austria. The highest disagreement with the idea of the

EU returning powers to the national government can be found in Płocki (41%) and Udine (38%), followed by Niederösterreich-Süd (30%). The lowest levels of disagreement are in Aisne (16%), Reggio di Calabria (17%) Klagenfurt-Villach (18%) and Drôme (20%). There are very high levels of undecided respondents in both regions in France (43% each), Nowosądecki (33%) and Niederösterreich-Süd (26%).

Appendix 6. Figure 8. The sovereignty debate



10.7. Appendix 7. List of interviews of CSOs and political science experts by country

Austria

Civil Society Organisations

Aktiv Demokratie

Die Kärnten Volkshochschulen

Verein Pilgrim from the Niederösterreich-Süd region

CSO from Niederösterreich-Süd region which wishes to remain anonymous

CSO from Klagenfurt-Villach region which wishes to remain anonymous

CSO from Klagenfurt-Villach region which wishes to remain anonymous

CSO from Klagenfurt-Villach region which wishes to remain anonymous

CSO from Klagenfurt-Villach region which wishes to remain anonymous

Political science experts

Paul Schmidt, Secretary General of the Austrian Society for European Politics

Ruth Wodak, Emeritus Distinguished Professor at Lancaster University, affiliated to the University of Vienna

Peter Kaiser, COR member, governor of Carinthia

Georg Plattner, Political science expert on Austria, university of Vienna

Herwig Seiser, COR member, Carinthia

France

Civil Society Organisations

Peio Dugoua-Macé, Vice-President of the CSO Young Europeans France (French national branch of the NGO Young European Federalists) & Employee at Unis-Cité

Stéphane Libert, Director of the Maison de l'Europe (Europe House) de la Grande Thiérache (Aisne)

Action Citoyenne from Drôme (*Citizen Action*)

Groupe local de la Cimade from Aisne (Local group of the Cimade)

CSO from Drôme region which wishes to remain anonymous

CSO from Drôme region which wishes to remain anonymous

Political science experts

Jean-Jack Queyranne, CoR member, Région Rhône-Alpes

Dr Thierry Chopin, former Director of Studies of the Robert Schuman Foundation, current Special Advisor of the Jacques Delors Institute, Professor of Political Science at the Université Catholique de Lille (European School of Political and Social Sciences, ESPOL), Visiting Professor at the College of Europe (Bruges)

François Decoster, CoR member, Région Hauts-de-France

Jean-Dominique Giuliani, President of the Robert Schuman Foundation

Dr Christian Lequesne, Professor at Sciences Po, Co-founder of the European Review of International Studies

Marc-Olivier Padis, Director of Studies of the French think tank Terra Nova

Jean-Yves Camus, Director of the “Observatory of Political Radicalness”, Fondation Jean-Jaurès

Italy

Civil Society Organisations

Alessandra Coppola, President of the CSO Agenzia di Promozione Integrata per i Cittadini in Europa, based in Reggio Calabria

Antonio Argenziano, Secretary General of the NGO Gioventù Federalista Europea (Italian national branch of the NGO Young European Federalists)

Silvia Crocitta, President of the CSO EuroDemos Youth Mobility, based in Reggio Calabria

Associazione MEC Media Educazione Comunità, Udine

OIKOS Onlus - Organization For International KOoperation and Solidarity Onlus, Udine

Associazione Coopisa, Reggio Calabria

MOCI, Reggio Calabria

Niccolò Milanese, Co-Founder, European Alternatives

Political science experts

Franco Iacop, CoR member, Friuli Venezia Giulia

Alfio Mastropaolo, Academic political science expert

Researcher at Turin University

Poland

Civil Society Organisations

Fundacja Edukacji i Rozwoju Społecznego (FERS) from Płocki

Ms Dudek, Polski Zespół Humanitarny from Nowosądecki

Europejska Fundacja Rozwoju from Nowosądecki

Marzena Kapuścińska, Chairwoman of the Board of Fundacja “Fundusz Grantowy dla Płocka”, Płocki

Leszek Staniszewski, Wolne Miasto Płock

Grzegorz Makowski, Fundacja im. Stefana Batorego, Warsaw

Filip Pazderski, Project Manager – Democracy and Civil Society Programme, Institute of Public Affairs, Poland

Political science experts

Jacek Kucharczyk, President of the executive board of the Institute of Public Affairs in Poland

Peter Kreko, Executive director of Political Capital- Policy Research and Consulting Institute

European political science experts

Stephen Boucher, Managing Director of the Fondation EurActiv

Dr. László Andor, Former Commissioner for Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion, Senior Fellow at Hertie School of Governance and Visiting Professor at ULB University

Corina Stratulat, Senior Policy Analyst and Head of EU Politics and Institutions Programme, European Policy Centre (EPC)

Andreas Aktoudianakis, special assistant Open Society Foundations, Brussels

Wouter van Acker from the KU Leuven Public Governance Institute

Arno Metzler – President of the Diversity Group, European Economic and Social Committee

Gabriele Bischoff – President of the Workers’ Group, European Economic and Social Committee

Zsolt Boda – Director of the Institute of Political Science, Hungarian Academy of Sciences, Centre for Social Sciences

10.8. Appendix 8. V-Dem Core Civil Society Index

The V-Dem Core Civil Society Index (see the table below), which measures how robust civil society is, shows that the situation for civil society in Austria, France and Italy may be said to have regressed from 2008 to 2017, although the changes are relatively moderate. The exception would be France, which had specific issues around the state of emergency from 2015-17 following terrorist attacks in the country⁶. In Poland, however, the index indicates a much deeper regression, which has largely occurred since *PiS* took power in 2015. The V-Dem Index is prepared by the V-Dem Institute, University of Gothenburg and is available here <https://www.v-dem.net/en/>.

Appendix 8. Table 1. Core Civil Society Index, 2008-17

Austria										
Year	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017
Score	0.935	0.935	0.935	0.927	0.925	0.919	0.919	0.919	0.928	0.920
Change in score from 2008 to 2017 in %										- 1.6%
France										
Year	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017
Score	0.962	0.962	0.955	0.970	0.970	0.967	0.944	0.944	0.944	0.899
Change in score from 2008 to 2017 in %										- 6.5%
Italy										
Year	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017
Score	0.964	0.964	0.947	0.947	0.947	0.920	0.920	0.920	0.920	0.904
Change in score from 2008 to 2017 in %										-6.2%
Poland										
Year	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017
Score	0.9213	0.9213	0.925	0.927	0.927	0.879	0.879	0.879	0.752	0.67
Change in score from 2008 to 2017 in %										-27.5%
Scores are on a scale from 0=fragile to 1=robust										

⁶ <https://monitor.civicus.org/country/france/>

10.9. Appendix 9. CSO Typologies and developments in Austria at national level

Civil society in Austria is based around the political, sectoral and federal structures, with organisations operating autonomously from their national or regional counterparts within the different federal states.⁷ There are different legal bases for CSOs to operate, but they tend to form as cooperatives, associations (including clubs and societies) and foundations. Since cooperatives and foundations tend to operate outside of civil society – in 2010, only 95 out of 1,817 cooperatives and 20% of all foundations could be considered charitable or non-profit – civil society is primarily composed of associations⁸.

This picture, however, is incomplete as non-profit public limited companies, cooperatives or limited liability companies are not recorded in the statistics⁹.

In 2010 there were 116,556 registered CSOs in Austria¹⁰, but this is the latest available figure. Only 11,000 (10%) CSOs

have at least one employee and 46% of those aged 15 or over do volunteering of some form¹¹. In 2014, the majority of organisations in disaster relief, culture, the environment, community work and sport had no full-time workers¹². On the other hand, a majority of paid employees work in social welfare, special interest groups, religious organisations and education, although the statistical data is incomplete. In terms of funding, public authorities contribute 53%, market revenues 33% and sponsorship and donations 11%¹³, although public funding may be as high as 59.5% for CSOs providing social services. In 2010, the civil society sector was divided into 43% social services, 23% education, 18% culture and art, 15% healthcare, 11% development and humanitarian aid, 10% sport and leisure, 9% interest activities, 6% research and science, 4% environment, 4% housing and labour and 7% others¹⁴.

⁷http://gemeinnuetzig.at/wp-content/uploads/2018/06/Austria_CSI_RA_final_en.pdf

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ Ibid.

¹²

https://www.sozialministerium.at/cms/site/attachments/1/4/3/CH3434/CMS1451900458557/soziale-themen_freiwilliges-engagement_bericht-zur-lage-und-zu-den-perspektiven-des-freiwilligen-engagements-in-oesterreich.pdf

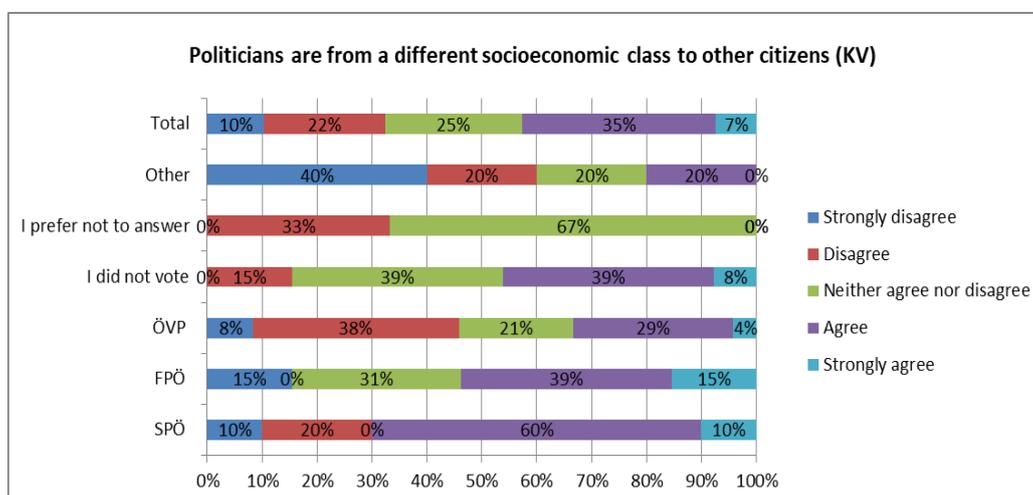
¹³ http://gemeinnuetzig.at/wp-content/uploads/2018/06/Austria_CSI_RA_final_en.pdf

¹⁴ The study looked at associations (*verein*), foundations (*stiftung*), public benefit organisations (*gemeinnützige Kapitalgesellschaft*) and cooperatives (*Genossenschaft*).

10.10. Appendix 10. Party affiliation and key questions on populism in Austria¹⁵

On the question of anti-elitism, answering to whether politicians are from a different socioeconomic class to other citizens, the populist FPÖ in Klagenfurt-Villach actually has a smaller share of those who agree with this populist proposition (54%), compared to the opposition SPÖ (70%), which is the highest share among all groups. Still, FPÖ has a higher share of anti-elitist sentiment compared to the rest of the groups.

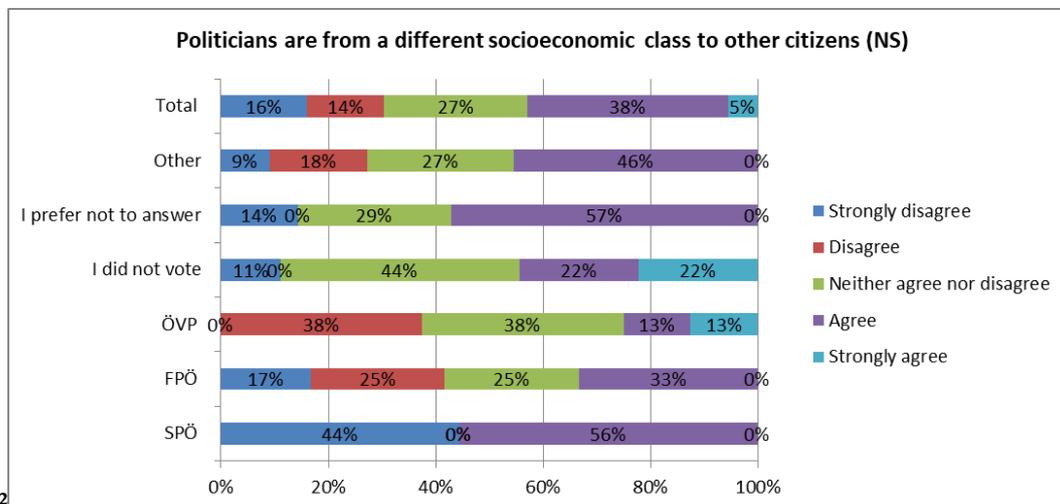
Appendix 10. Figure 1



It is a similar situation in the Niederösterreich-Süd region, as the opposition SPÖ has a higher share (56%) of those who agree, although those with no declared political affiliation have 57%, compared to just 33% among the populist and governing FPÖ party.

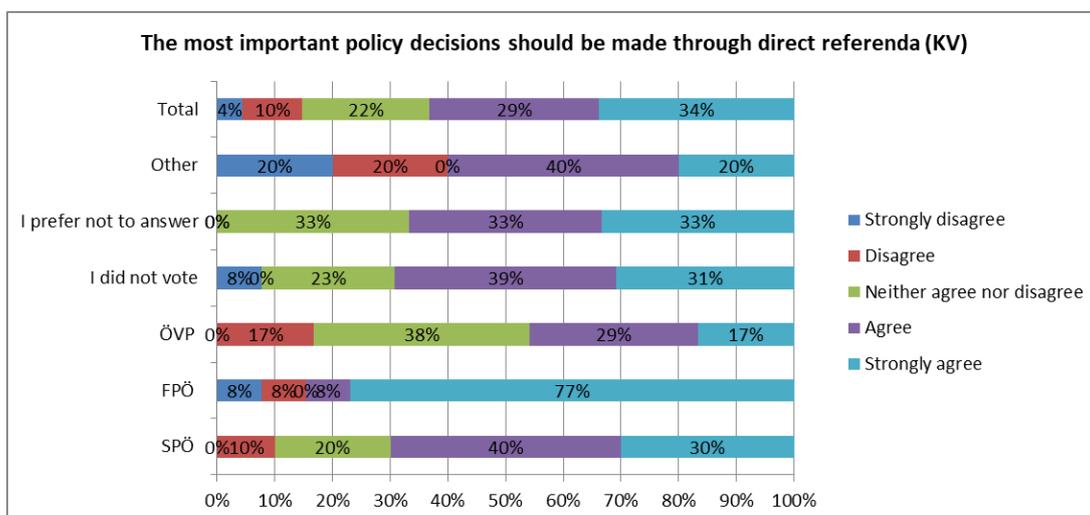
¹⁵ Zero percentage ("0%") in the graphs of citizen surveys means that the share of respondents who answered or the share of answers to a particular choice within a multi-choice question is zero, i.e. no respondent responded to the question or pointed to a choice in the multi-choice questions. A multi-choice question is for example Strongly disagree – Disagree - Neither agree nor disagree - Agree-Strongly agree (i.e. Linkert scale).

Appendix 10. Figure 2



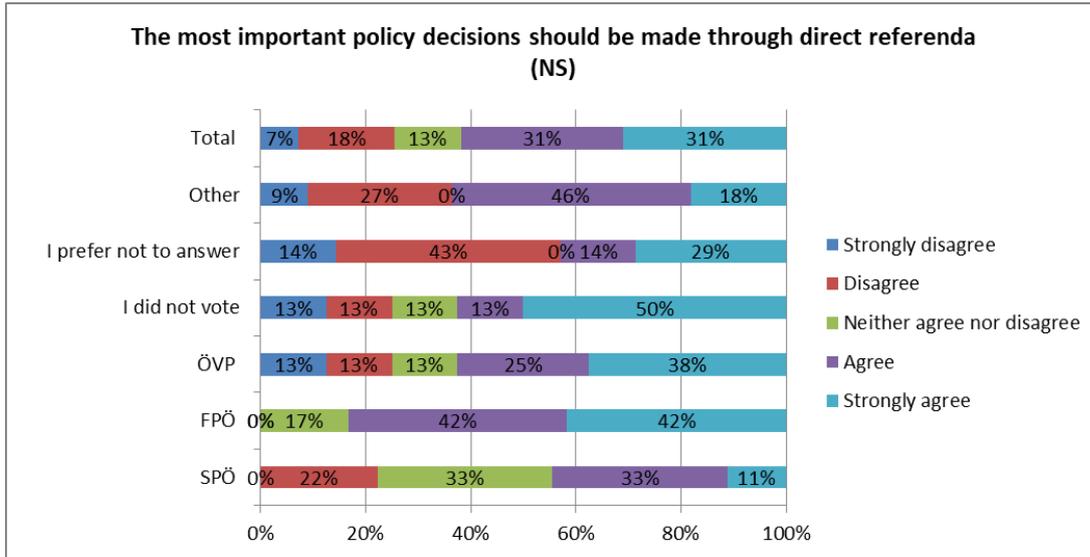
With regard to support for direct referenda, voters of the populist FPÖ in the Klagenfurt-Villach region are the biggest supporters of the mechanism with 77%, compared to 63% on average.

Appendix 10. Figure 3



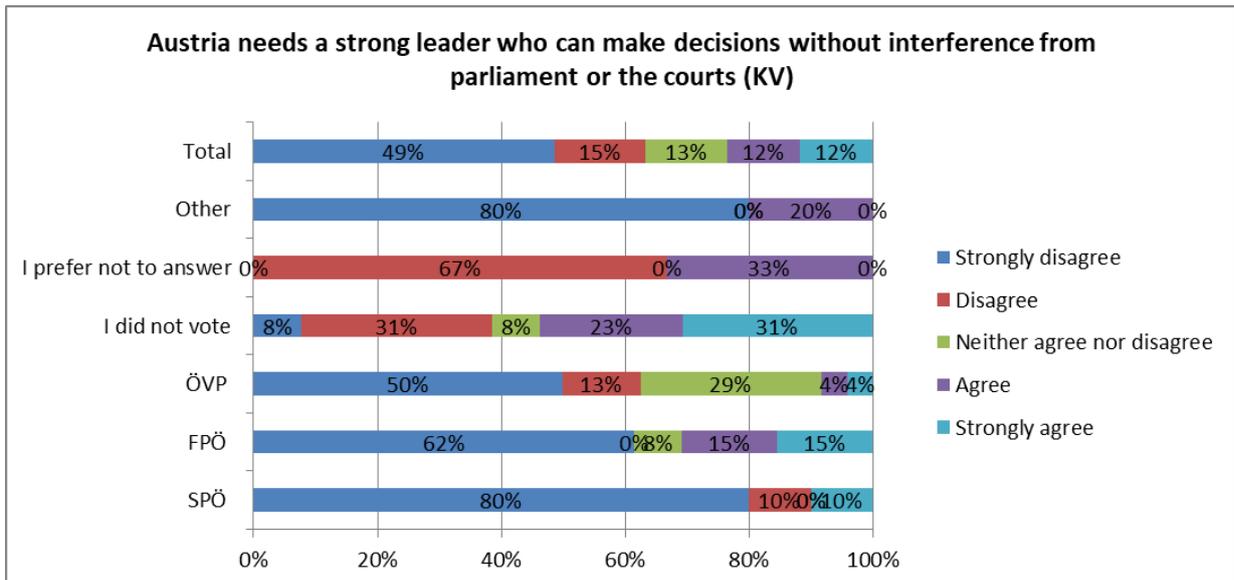
In the Niederösterreich-Süd region, FPÖ voters are again the biggest proponents of direct referenda, with 84% compared to 62% on average for the region.

Appendix 10. Figure 4



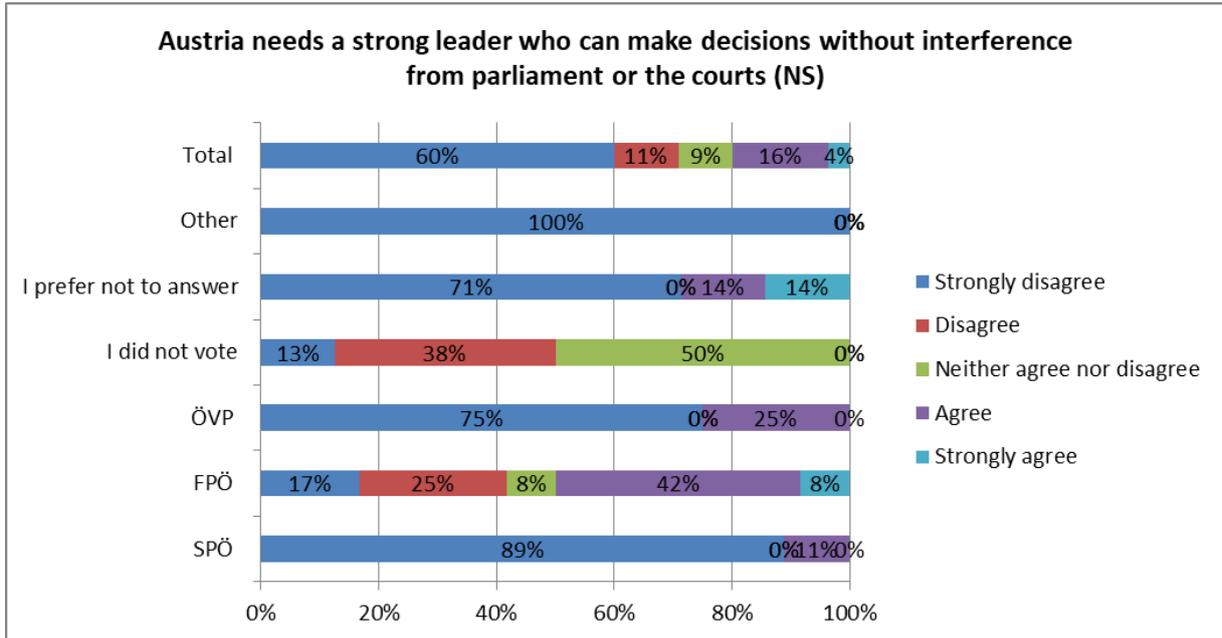
Concerning the notion of a strong, unchecked leader, in the Klagenfurt-Villach region about 30% of FPÖ voters support this, which is the highest level among party supporters, although non-voters are much higher with 54%.

Appendix 10. Figure 5



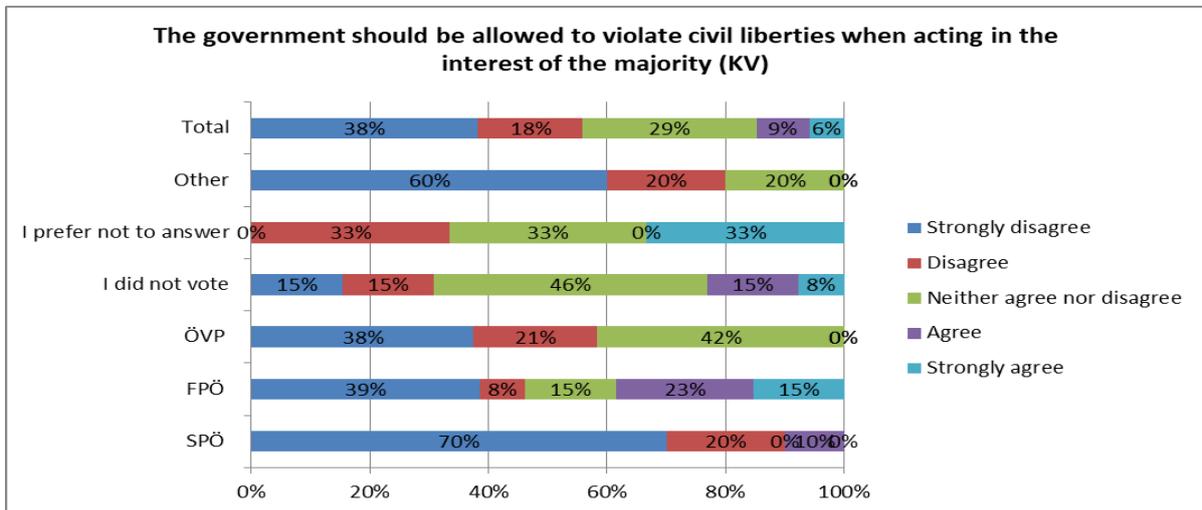
In the Niederösterreich-Süd region, 50% of FPÖ voters support this, which is the highest level among all groups.

Appendix 10. Figure 6



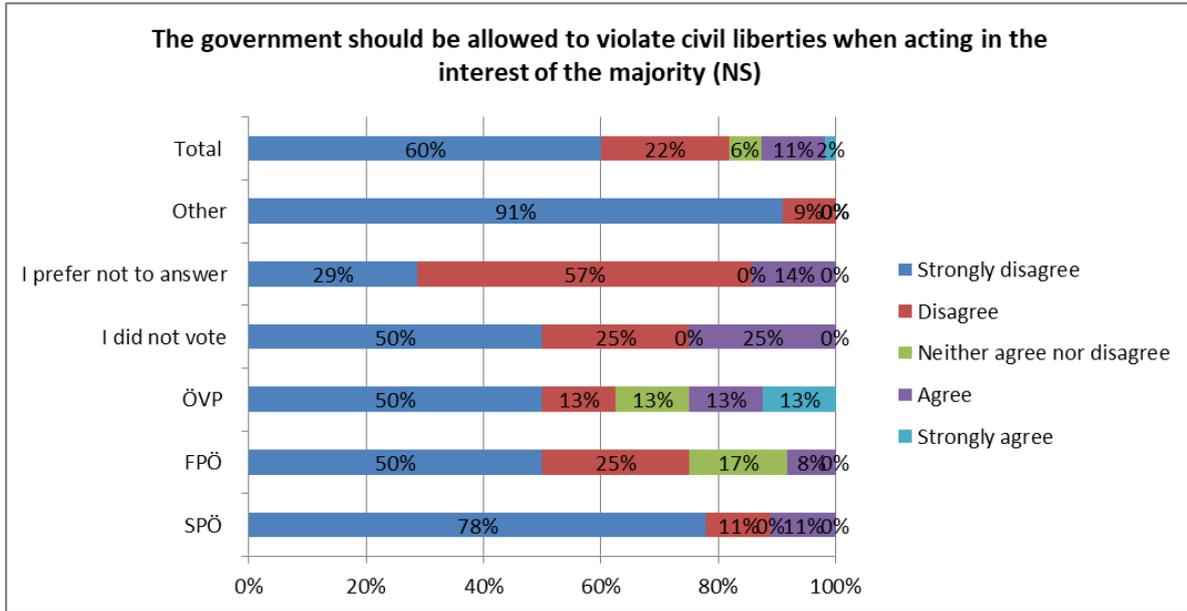
With regard to “majoritarianism” and whether the government should be allowed to breach civil liberties when acting in the interest of the majority, FPÖ voters in the Klagenfurt-Villach region are the biggest supporters of this position with 38%, compared to just 15% on average. They have the third smallest share of those opposing it with 45%, after non-voters (30%) and those with no expressed political affiliation (33%).

Appendix 10. Figure 7



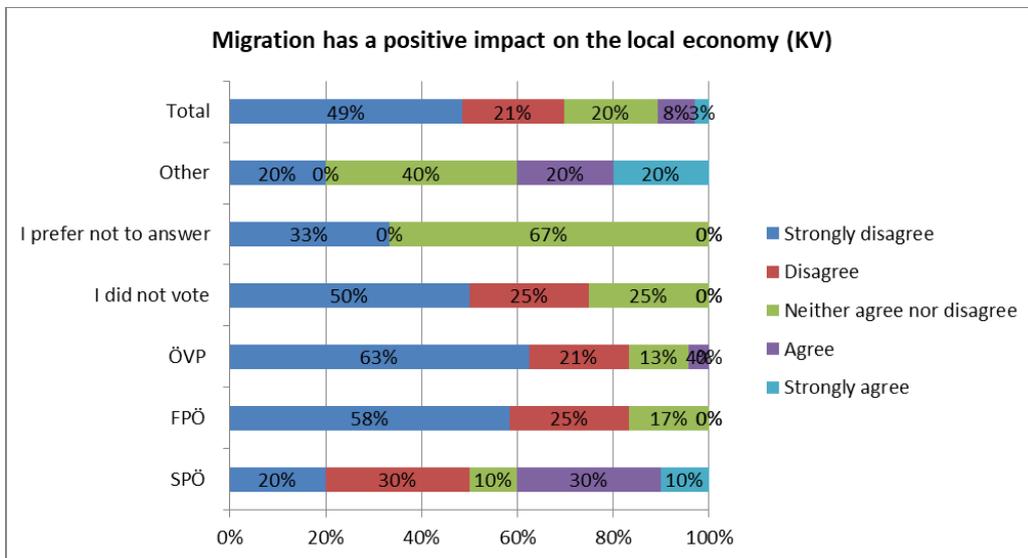
In the Niederösterreich-Süd region, there is a slightly different situation as the ruling ÖVP voters support this to the highest degree (26%), followed by non-voters (25%) and SPÖ (22%), with only 8% of FPÖ voters in favour.

Appendix 10. Figure 8



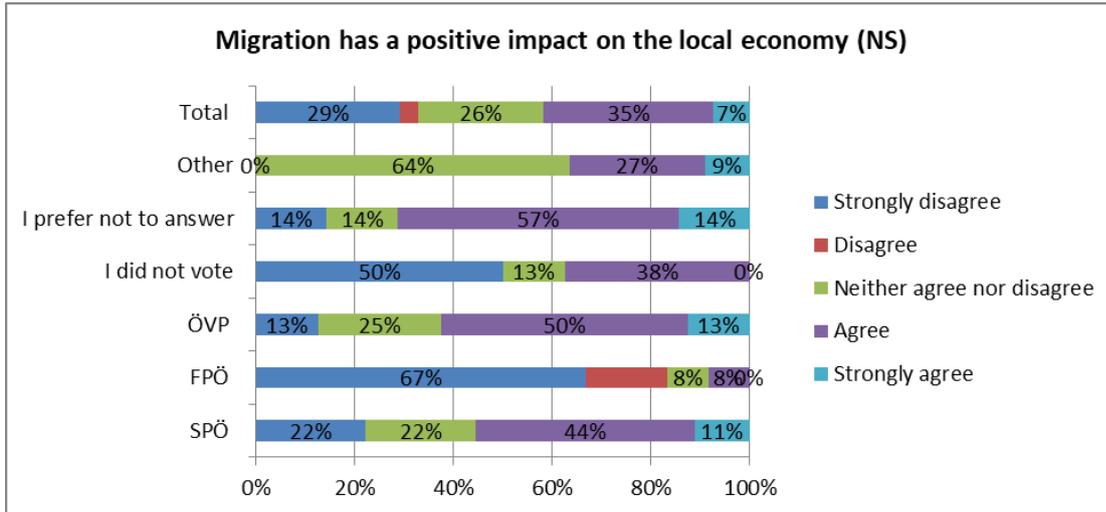
On the question of whether migration is good for the local economy, 83% of the populist FPÖ voters and 84% of ÖVP voters – both governing parties – in the Klagenfurt-Villach region disagree with the idea, which are the highest levels among all groups.

Appendix 10. Figure 9



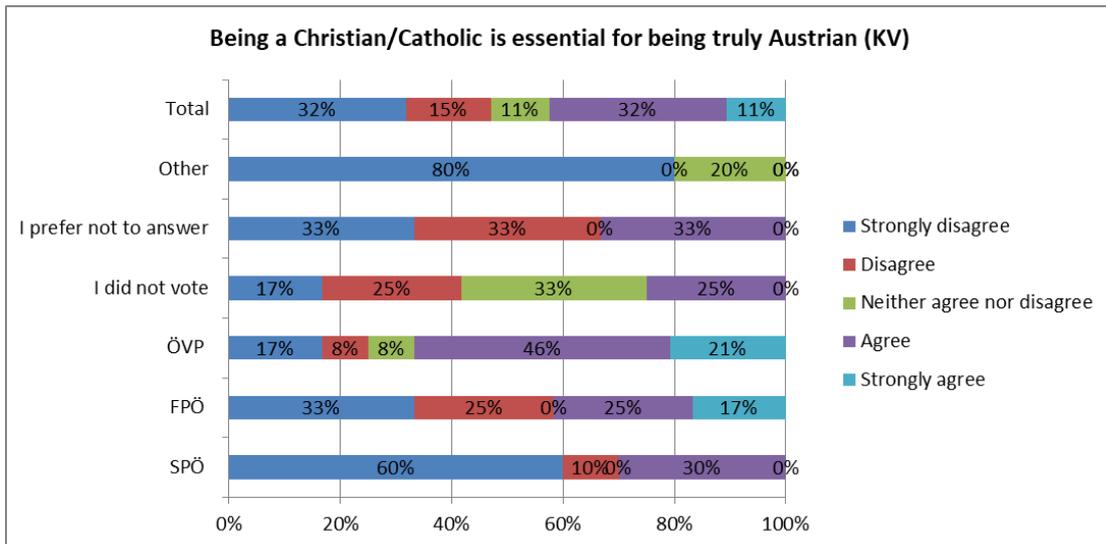
In the Niederösterreich-Süd region, FPÖ voters again have the highest share (67%) rejecting the view that migration is beneficial for the economy.

Appendix 10. Figure 10



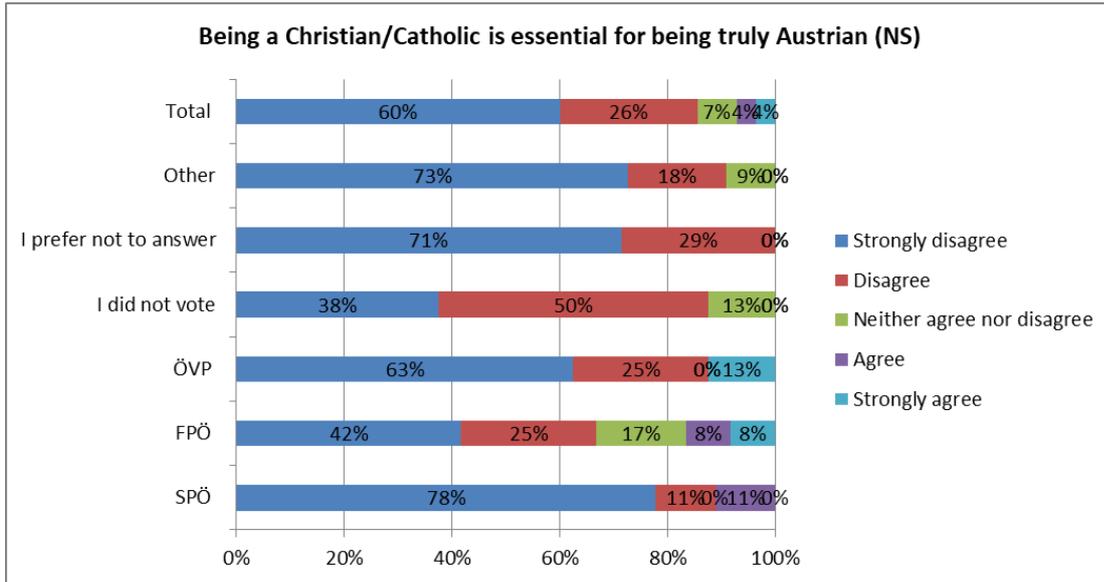
With regard to religious affiliation and national identity, in the Klagenfurt-Villach region, the ruling conservative ÖVP has the highest share of respondents who support the notion that being Catholic is essential for being truly Austrian (67%), and their coalition partner FPÖ came second with 42%, which is close to the average of 43% for the region.

Appendix 10. Figure 11



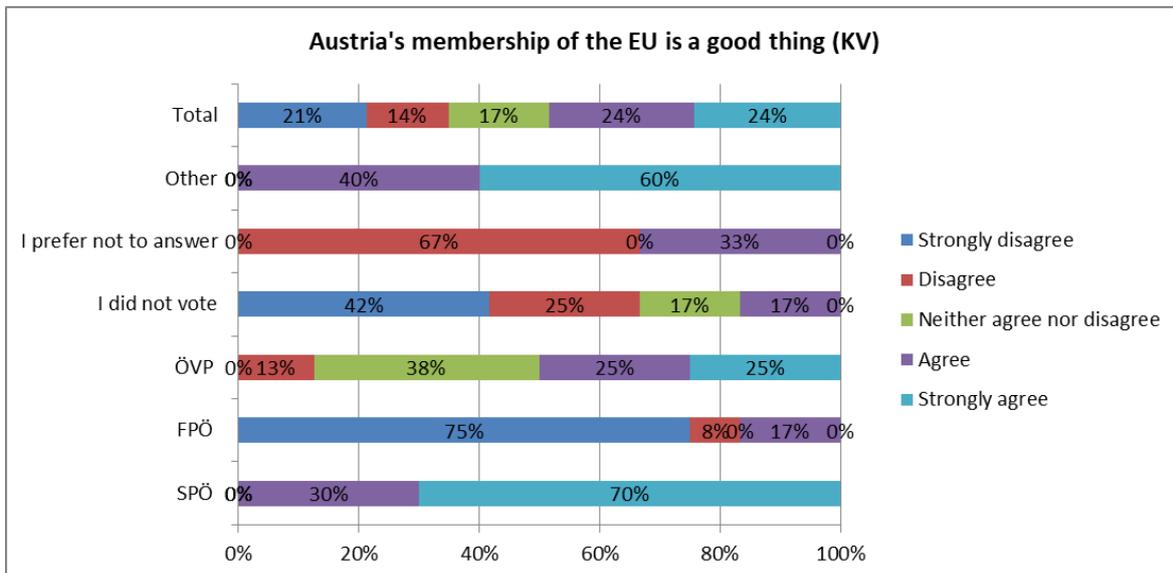
In the Niederösterreich-Süd region, it is the SPÖ party who support this notion most with 22%. FPÖ is second with 16%.

Appendix 10. Figure 12



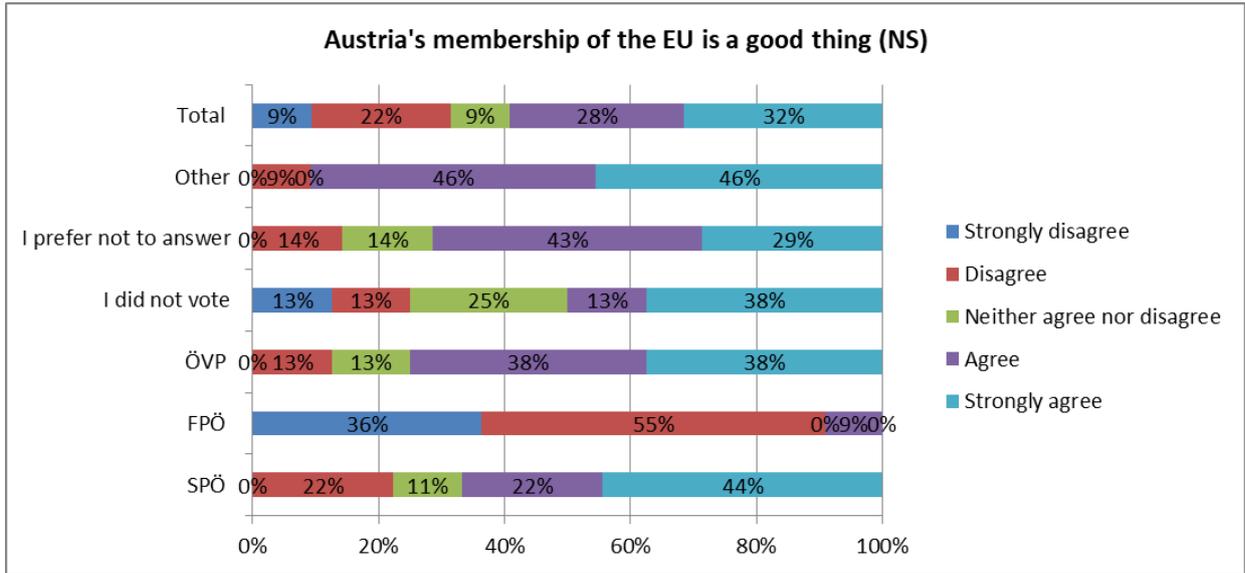
On the issue of Austria's EU membership being a good thing, FPÖ party respondents in the Klagenfurt-Villach region show the highest level of disagreement with 83%, compared to 35% on average and just 13% for their partner in government, ÖVP.

Appendix 10. Figure 13



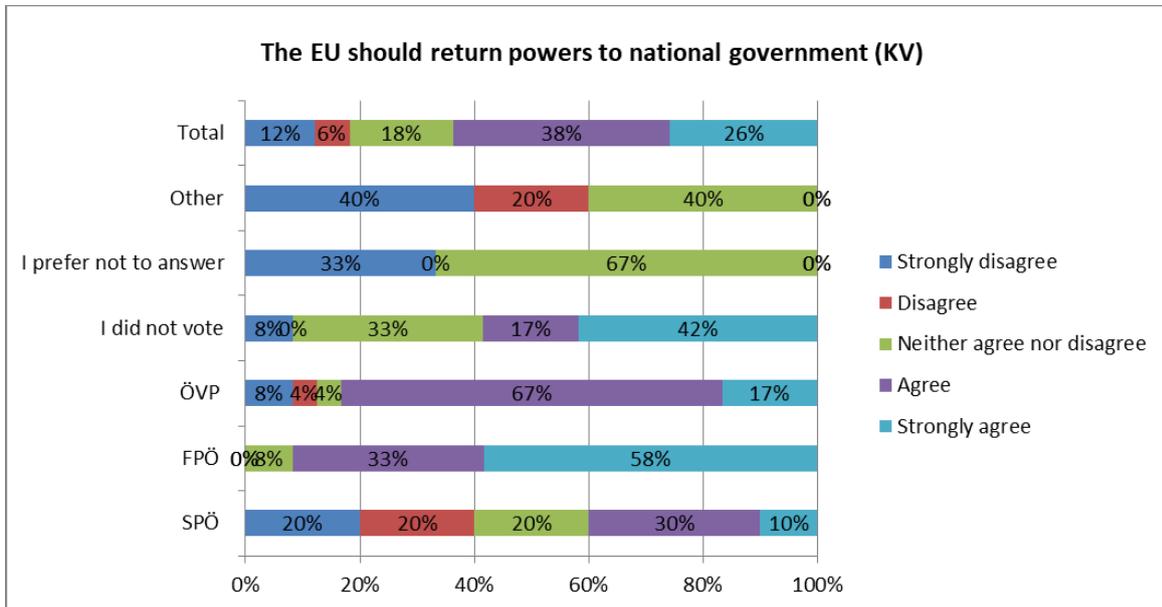
In the Niederösterreich-Süd region, FPÖ voters again have the highest level of disagreement with 91%, compared to 31% for the region and just 13% for their governing partner, ÖVP.

Appendix 10. Figure 14



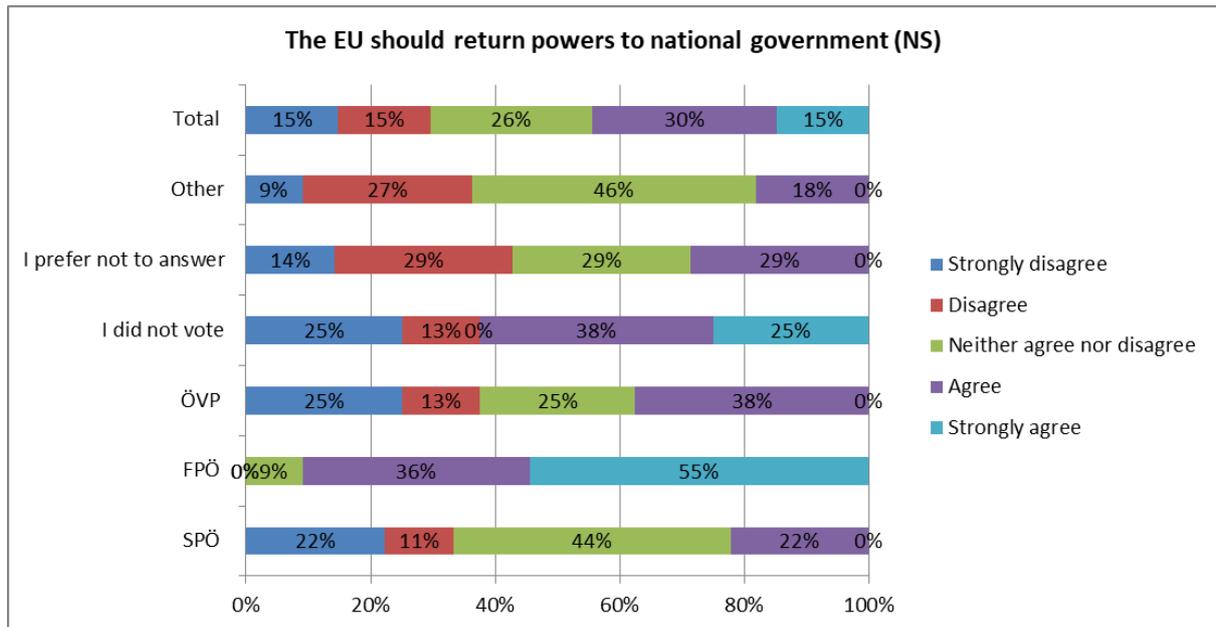
With regard to the sovereignty debate and whether the EU should return powers to the national government, FPÖ voters are the biggest supporters of this in the Klagenfurt-Villach region – 91% compared to just 18% on average for the region.

Appendix 10. Figure 15



In the Niederösterreich-Süd region, a similar share of 91% of FPÖ voters approve of this proposition, compared to just 10% on average for the region.

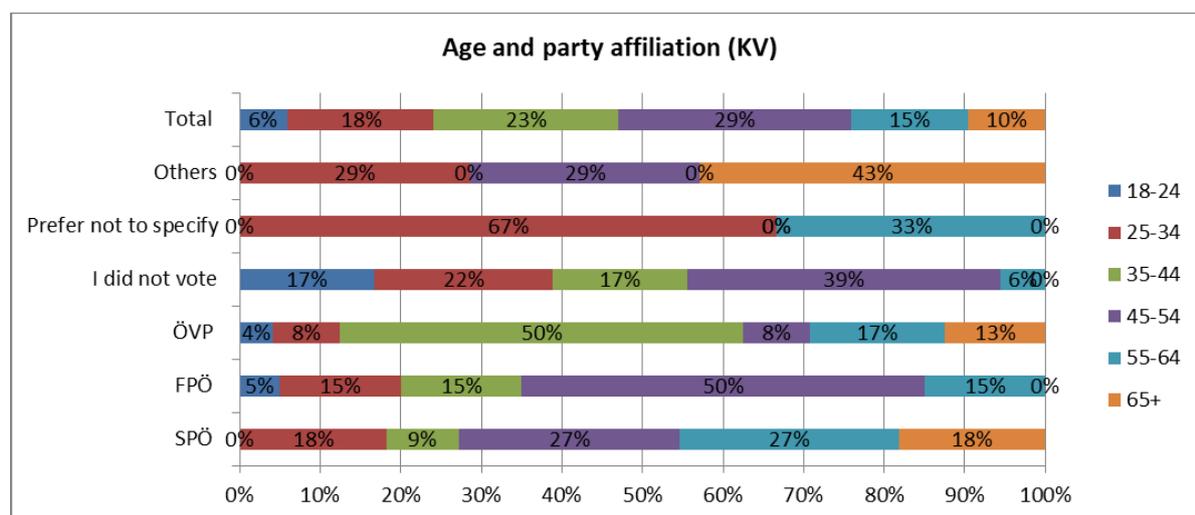
Appendix 10. Figure 16



10.11. Appendix 11. Party supporters' profiles across demographic indicators at regional level in Austria¹⁶

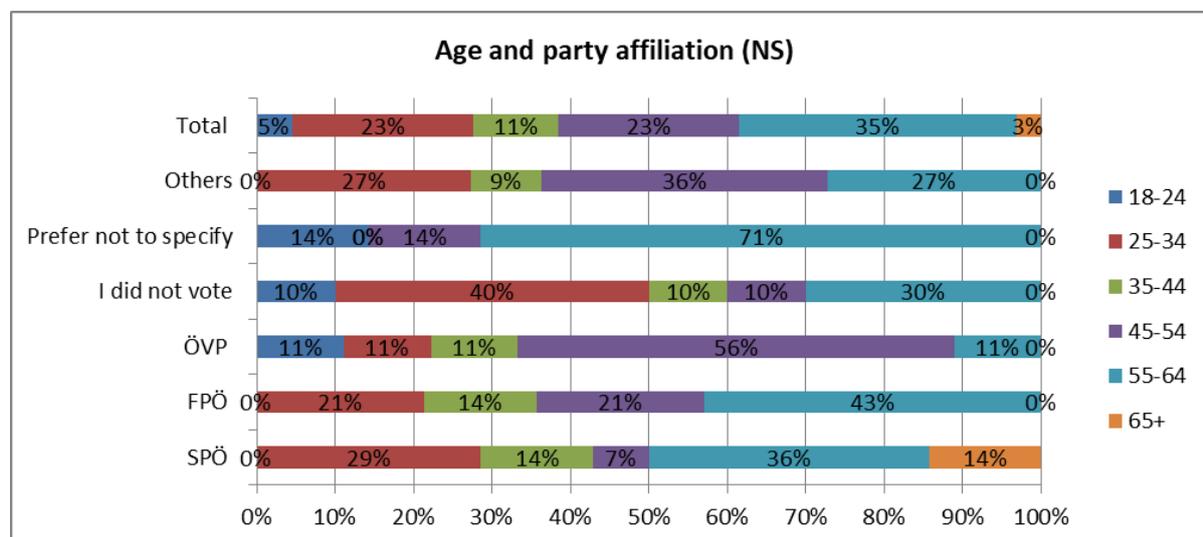
With regard to age and party affiliation, 50% of the populist FPÖ respondents in Klagenfurt-Villach are between 45 and 54 years old, compared to 29% for this group for the region, and 35% are in the 18-44 bracket.

Appendix 11. Figure 1



In the Niederösterreich-Süd region, 43% of FPÖ voters are between 55 and 64 years old and the rest are younger, between 25 and 54 years old.

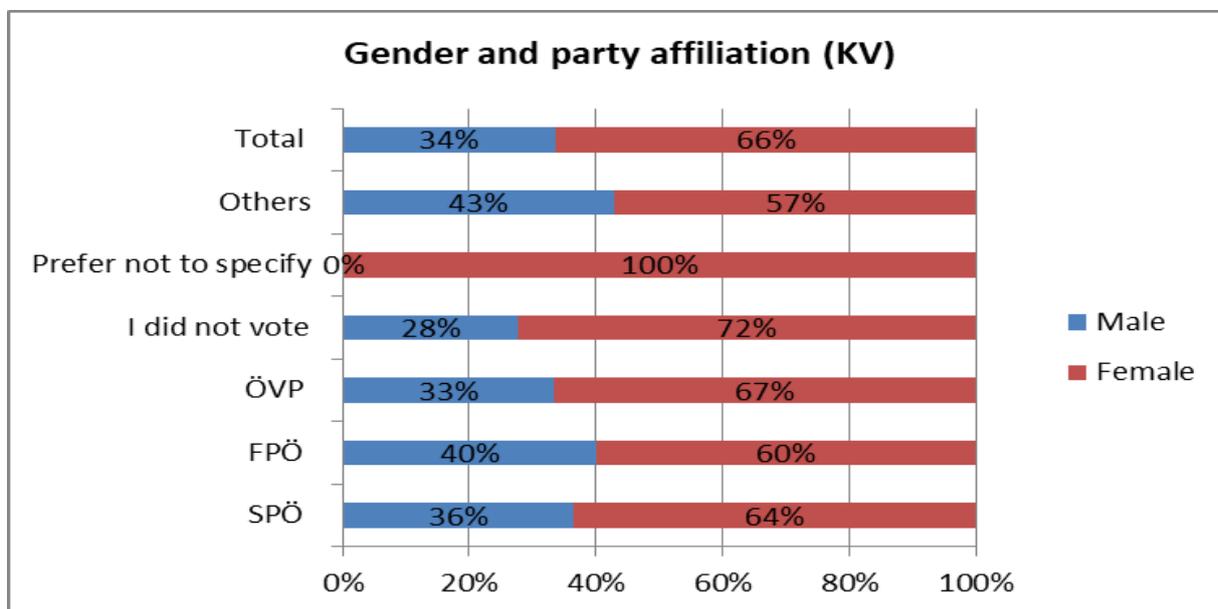
Appendix 11. Figure 2



¹⁶ Zero percentage ("0%") in the graphs of citizen surveys means that the share of respondents who answered or the share of answers to a particular choice within a multi-choice question is zero, i.e. no respondent responded to the question or pointed to a choice in the multi-choice questions. A multi-choice question is for example Strongly disagree – Disagree - Neither agree nor disagree - Agree-Strongly agree (i.e. Linkert scale).

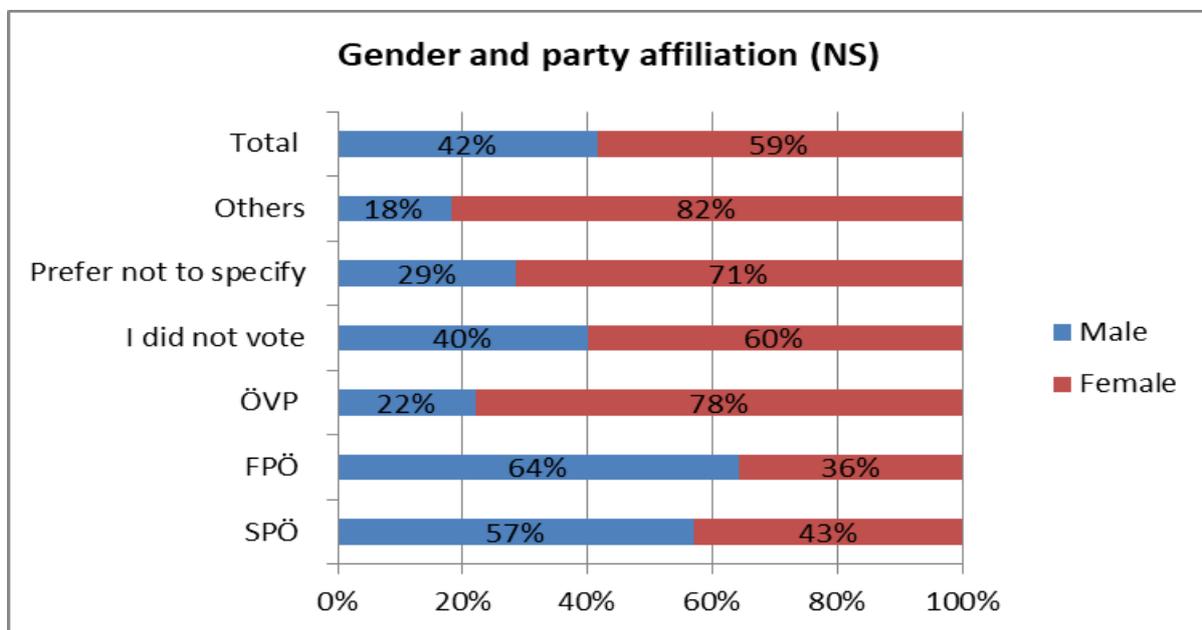
With regard to gender, 60% of FPÖ voters in Klagenfurt-Villach are female, which is close to the average for the region of 66%.

Appendix 11. Figure 3



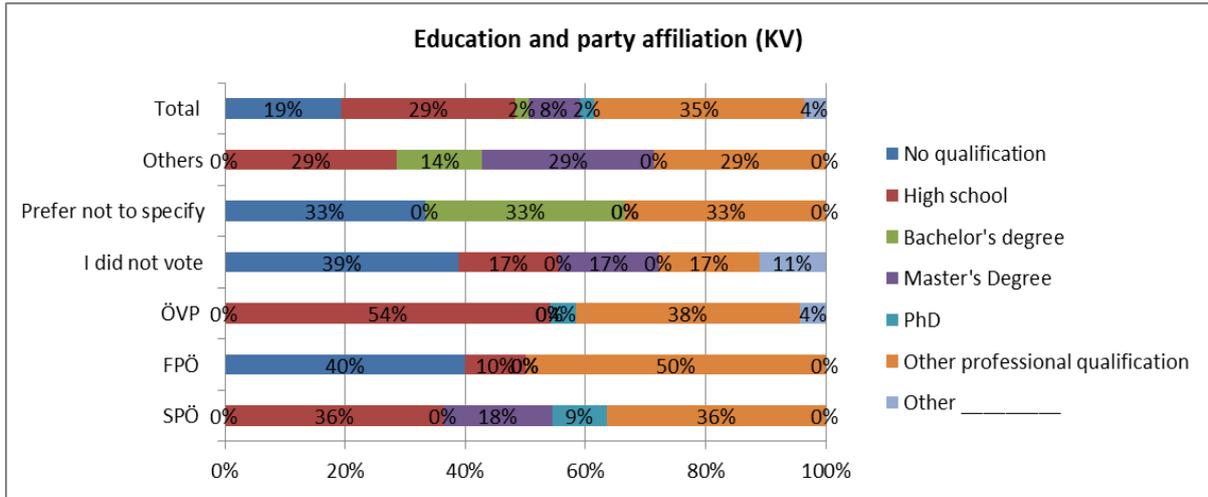
In the Niederösterreich-Süd region, FPÖ voters are 64% male, which is higher than the average of 42%.

Appendix 11. Figure 4



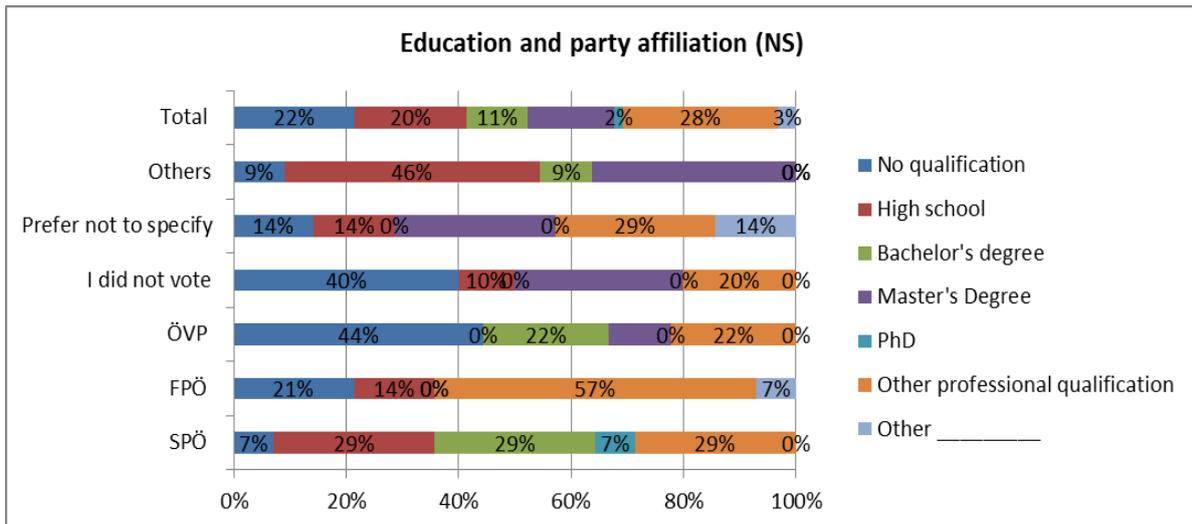
In terms of education and party affiliation, 40% of FPÖ voters in Klagenfurt-Villach have no qualifications, which is the highest share among all other groups, 50% have other professional qualifications and 10% have a high school education, leaving them, comparatively speaking, with the lowest education level.

Appendix 11. Figure 5



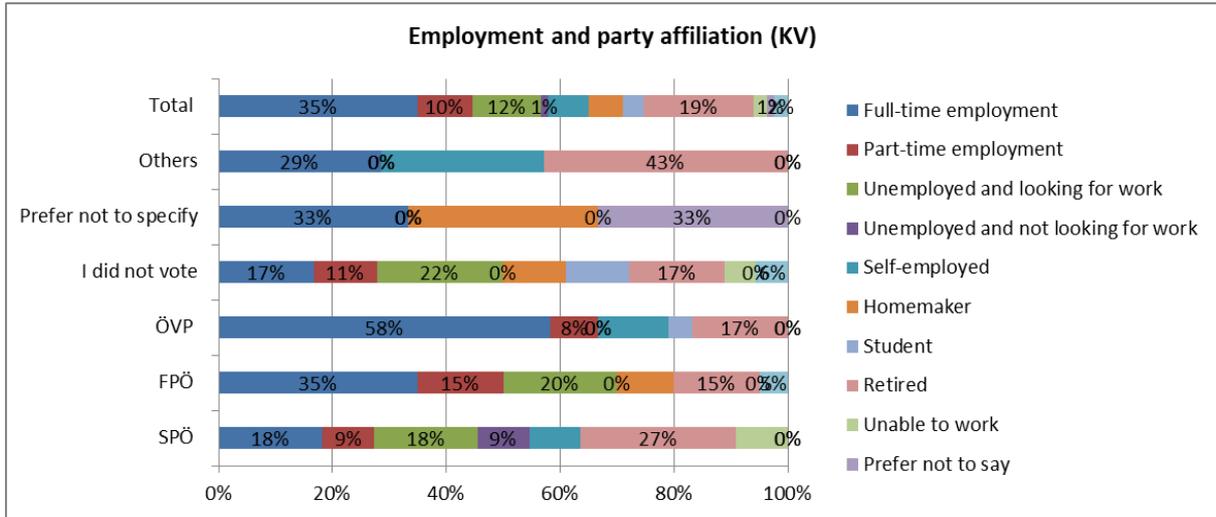
In the Niederösterreich-Süd region, 57% of FPÖ voters have other professional qualifications, compared to 28% for the region as a whole, 21% do not have a qualification and 14% have a high school education, leaving them, again, with the lowest education level compared to other groups.

Appendix 11. Figure 6



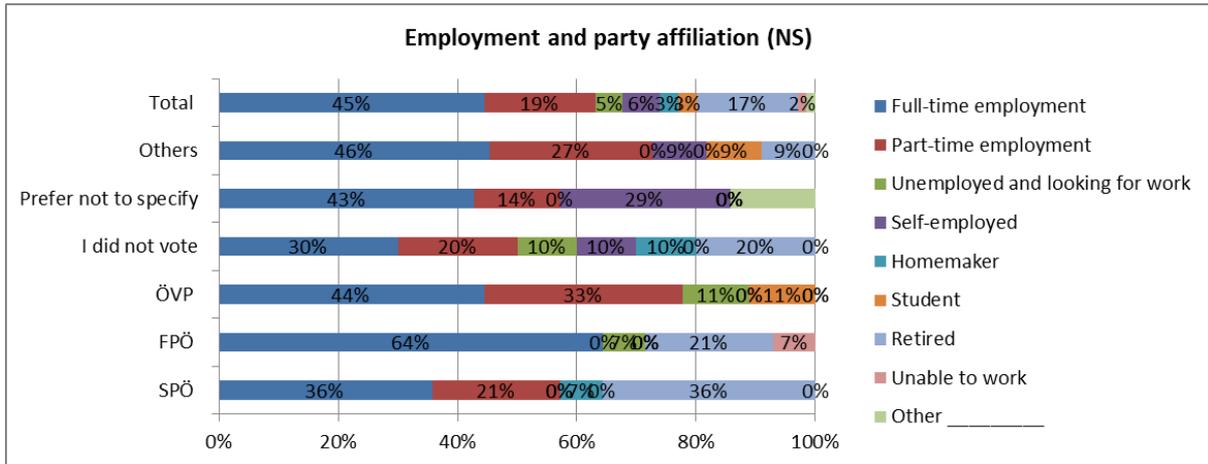
With regard to employment and party affiliation, 35% of FPÖ voters in Klagenfurt-Villach are employed full-time, with 20% unemployed, 15% employed part time and 15% retired, which is comparable to the regional average.

Appendix 11. Figure 7



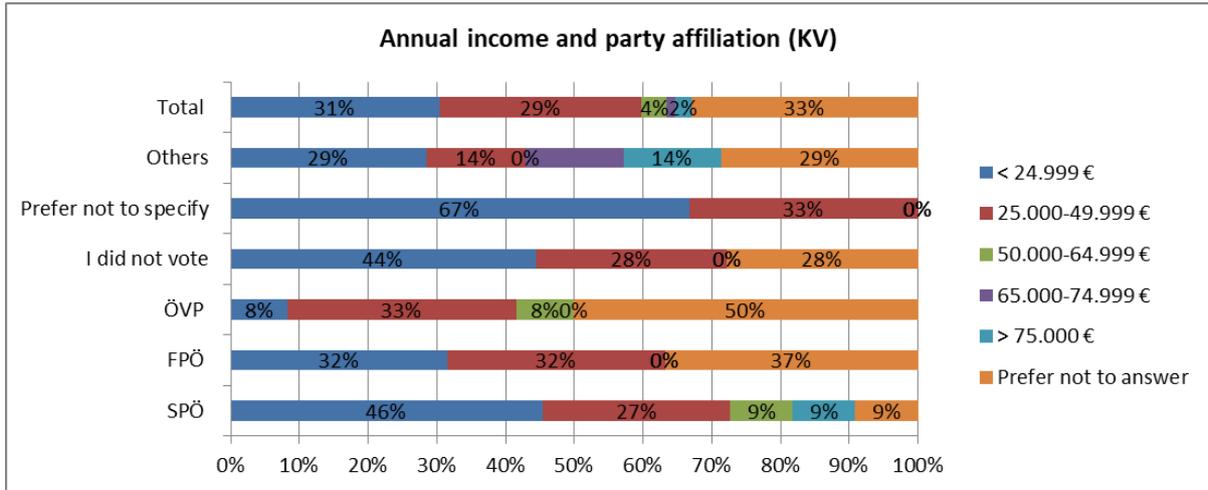
In the Niederösterreich-Süd region, 64% of FPÖ voters are employed full time, which is the highest for the region with 45% on average, and around 21% are retired.

Appendix 11. Figure 8



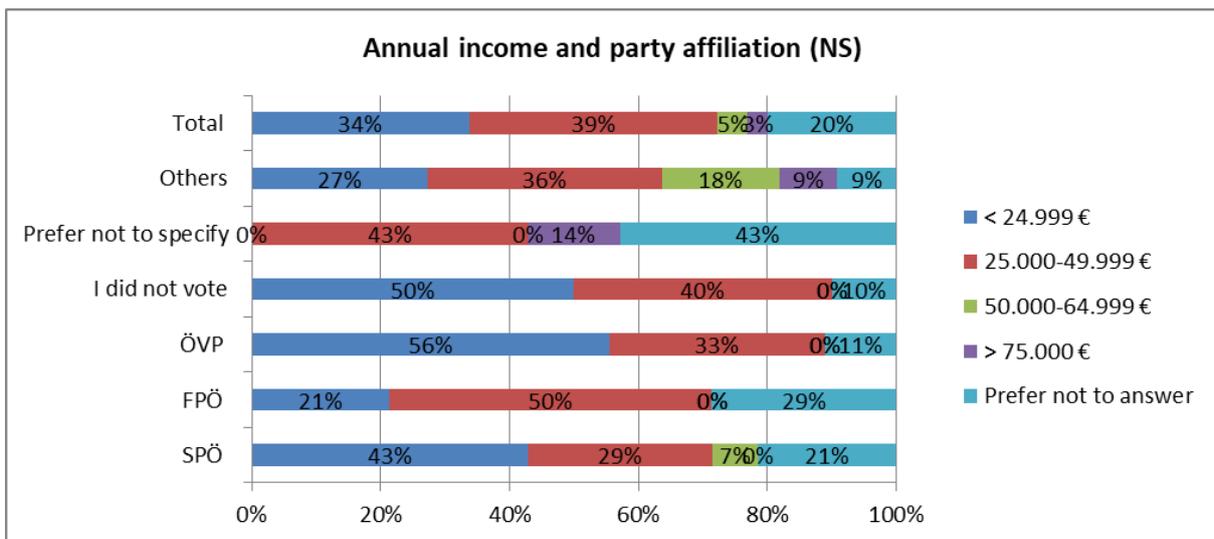
In terms of annual household income and party affiliation, FPÖ voters are almost equally divided between the smallest income group (up to EUR 24,999), the next income bracket (EUR 25,000 to 49,999 euro) and those who preferred not to answer, with all levels corresponding to the regional averages.

Appendix 11. Figure 9



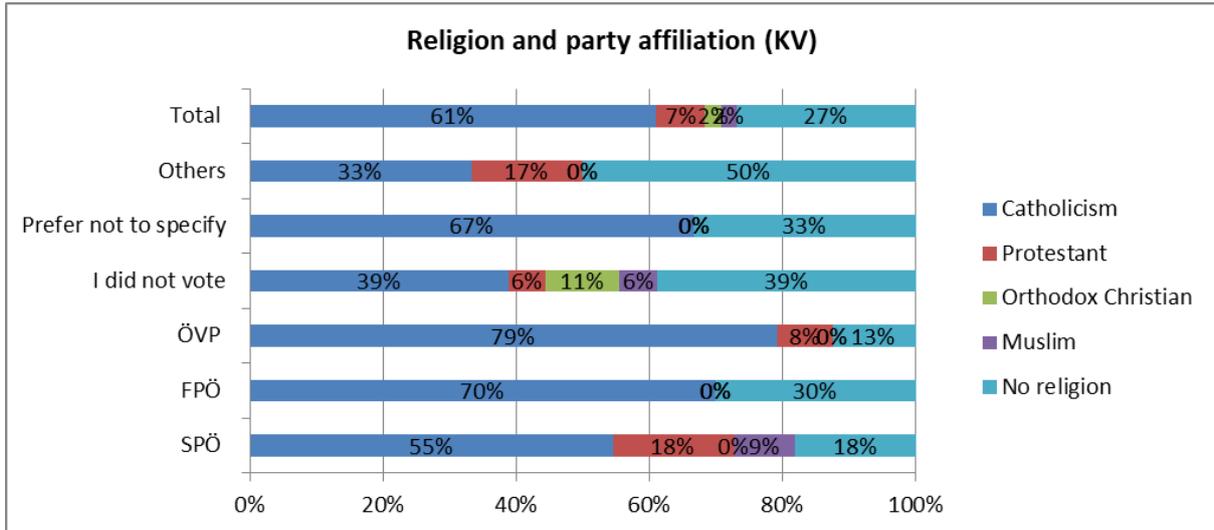
In the Niederösterreich-Süd region, 50% of FPÖ voters are in the middle group (EUR 25,000-49,999), 21% are in the lowest group and the rest preferred not to answer, which puts them slightly above the regional average.

Appendix 11. Figure 10



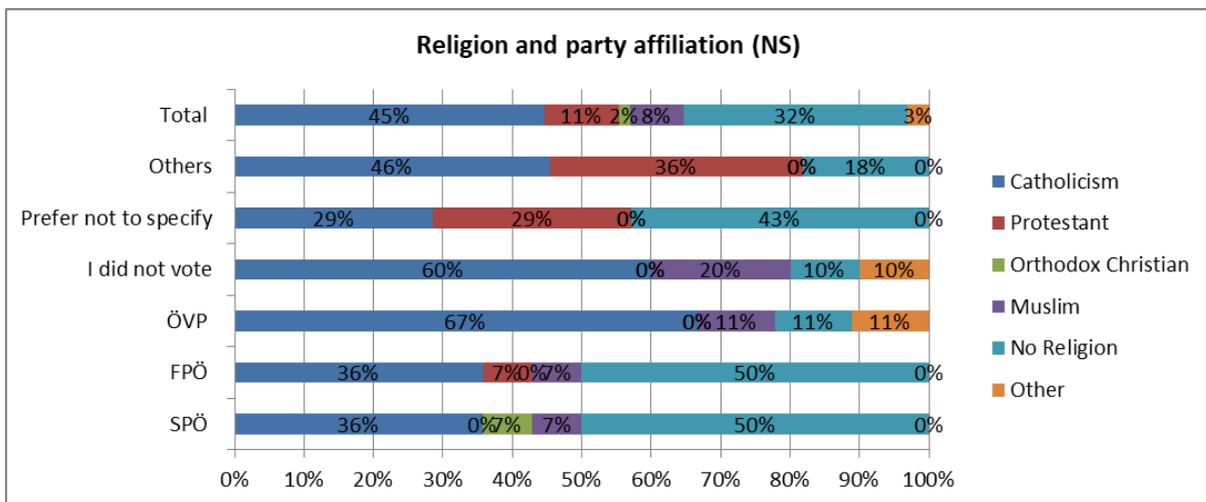
With regard to religion and party affiliation, 70% of FPÖ voters in Klagenfurt-Villach are Catholic, which is higher than the regional average of 61%, but lower than ÖVP with 79%. The remaining FPÖ voters in Klagenfurt-Villach (30%) are not religious, which is comparable to the regional average.

Appendix 11. Figure 11



In the Niederösterreich-Süd region, 36% of FPÖ voters are Catholic, 50% are not religious and there are small shares (7% each) of Protestant and Muslim respondents, compared to the regional averages of 45% for Catholics and 32% non-religious.

Appendix 11. Figure 12



10.12. Appendix 12. CSO typologies and developments at national level in France

There were around 1,500,000 registered non-profit organisations in France in 2017. In 2015, according to Eurostat, 46% of people aged 16 or over were involved in voluntary activities and 86-88% of organisations in France work only with volunteers, although the number of salaried employees grew by over 6% between 2008 and 2016. Over the same period, payroll rose by over 20%, which indicates both an increasing financial burden on CSOs and a need to professionalise, for the reasons outlined above. At the same time, the number of organisations grew by only 3%.¹⁷

Overall in France, 46% of employees are concentrated in 5% of the organisations (those with 50+ employees) and 36% in the 18% of organisations that have 10-49 employees, which means that 82% of employees are in 23% of the organisations. This is particularly the case in organisations active in socio-sanitary sectors where employees are heavily concentrated in larger organisations.¹⁸

France has a very active media literacy landscape, featuring around 55 key stakeholders, 22 of which are CSOs. A high proportion of stakeholders are said to have a statutory duty to engage in media literacy projects, either due to legal obligations, contractual obligations, or because all of their activities are related to media literacy. There is also a strong approach from the public authorities, as national education reform in 2013 introduced information and media literacy as a core task of schools. The “Investment Program for the Future” will fund “the great school for digital”, which is dedicated to projects training unemployed young people, and “digital plan”, which is focused on school equipment, such as digital tablets, and teacher training. This increasing implementation of media literacy projects is linked to an apparent increase in the dissemination of conspiracy theories, hate speech, bullying and harassment, in part following the 2015 terrorist attacks¹⁹.

¹⁷ https://www.associations.gouv.fr/IMG/pdf/france_associative_en_mouvement_2017.pdf

¹⁸ Ibid.

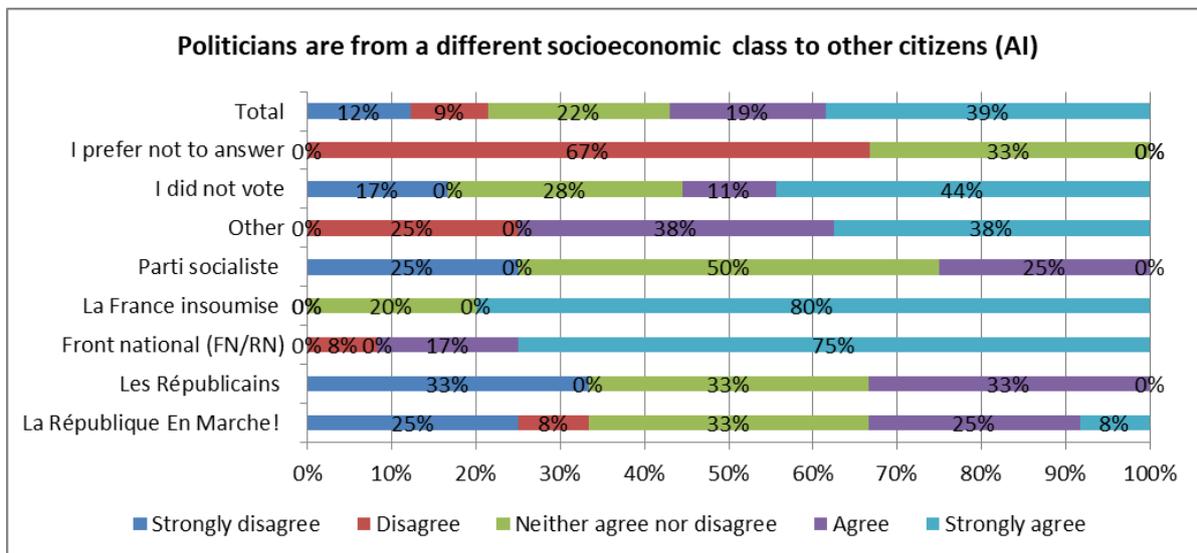
¹⁹ European Audiovisual Observatory (2016) Mapping of media literacy practices and actions in EU-28. Strasbourg.

10.13. Appendix 13. Party affiliation and key questions on populism in France²⁰

The analysis of party affiliation and the answers to key questions in the citizen questionnaire show the following results.

With regard to the question on anti-elitism, answering to whether politicians are from a different socioeconomic class to other citizens, the vast majority of supporters of the populist LFI and FN in Aisne agree with this notion – 80% and 70%, respectively – with non-voters and those who did not state a political affiliation coming next with 44% and 38%, respectively. In comparison, 33% of Les Républicains and En Marche! supporters disagreed.

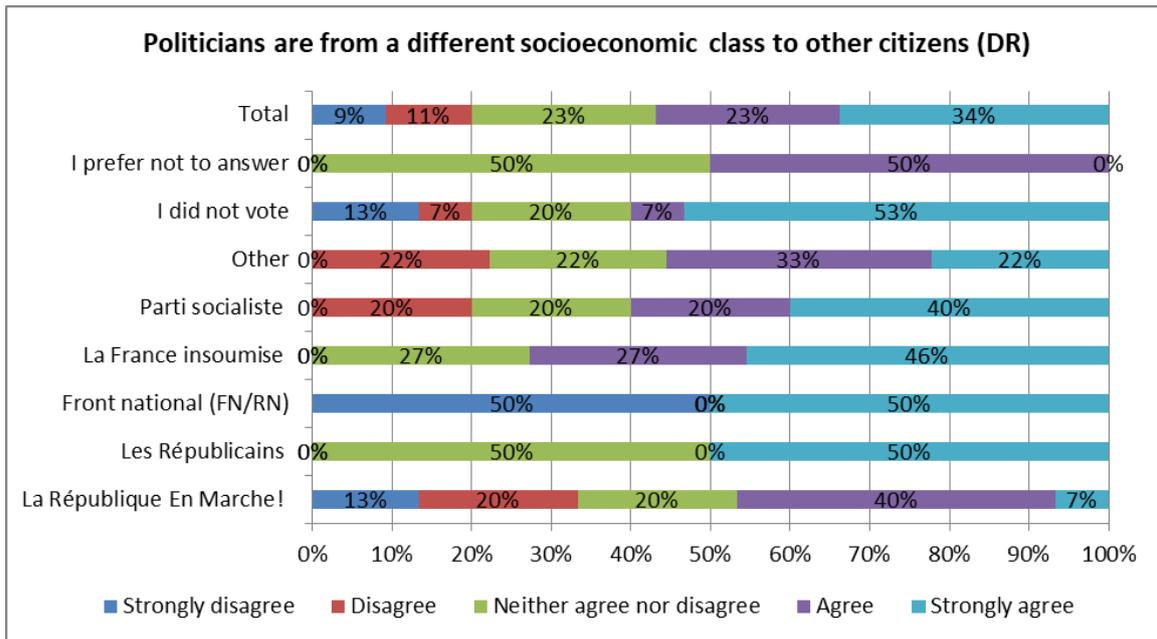
Appendix 13. Figure 1



The results for Drôme on this question show similar results – 73% of LFI voters agree with it as well as 50% of FN supporters and 60% of non-voters, which is higher than supporters of other parties.

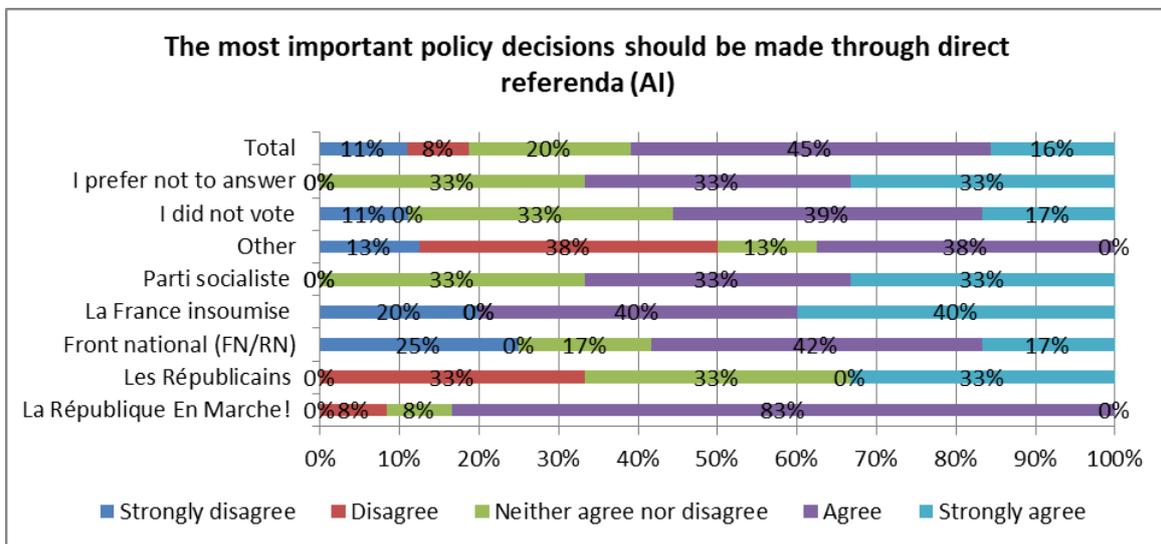
²⁰ Zero percentage (“0%”) in the graphs of citizen surveys means that the share of respondents who answered or the share of answers to a particular choice within a multi-choice question is zero, i.e. no respondent responded to the question or pointed to a choice in the multi-choice questions. A multi-choice question is for example Strongly disagree – Disagree - Neither agree nor disagree - Agree - Strongly agree (i.e. Linkert scale).

Appendix 13. Figure 2



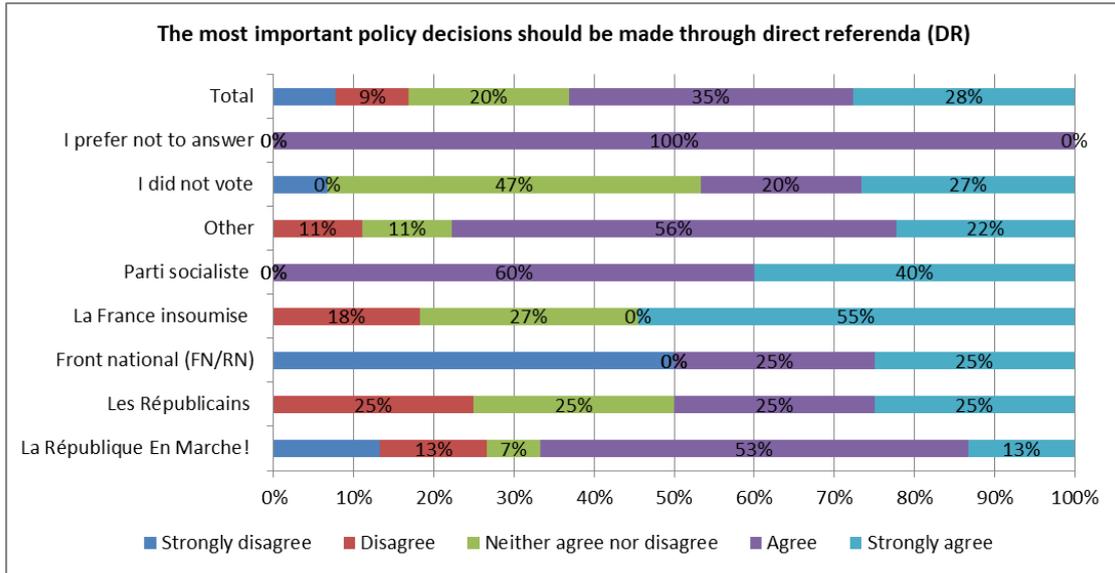
On the subject of direct democracy through using more direct referenda, the highest level of agreement in Aisne was among En Marche! supporters (83%), followed by LFI, (80%), PS (66%) and FN (59%). The biggest rejection of this notion is among the other, smaller parties (51%) and Les Républicains (33%).

Appendix 13. Figure 3



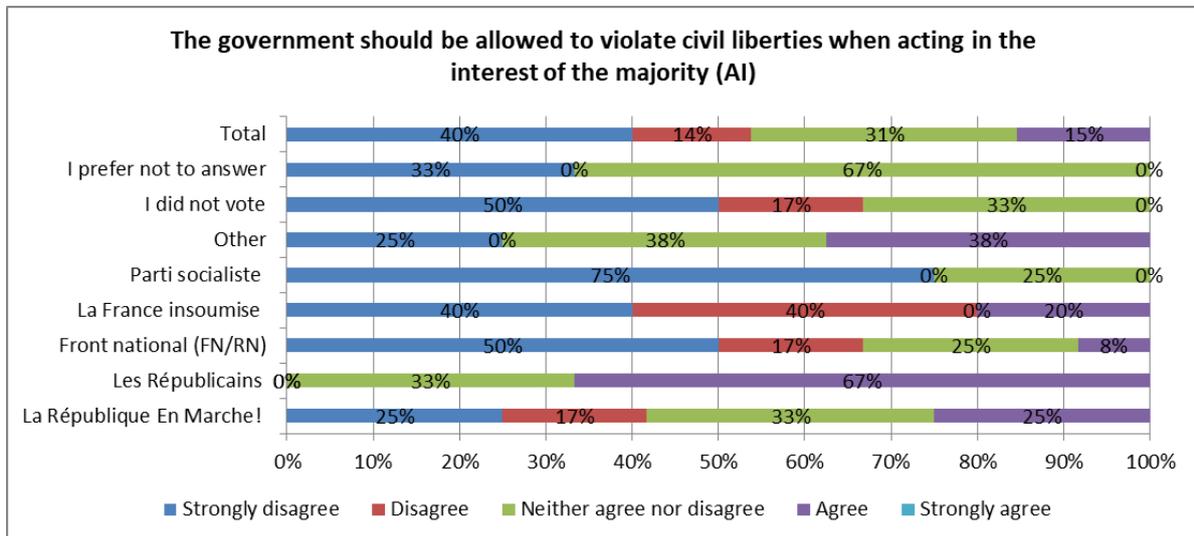
In Drôme, support for referenda is highest among the non-populist PS (100%), other, smaller parties (78%), En Marche! (66%), Les Républicains (50%), and the populist FN and LFI (both 50%).

Appendix 13. Figure 4



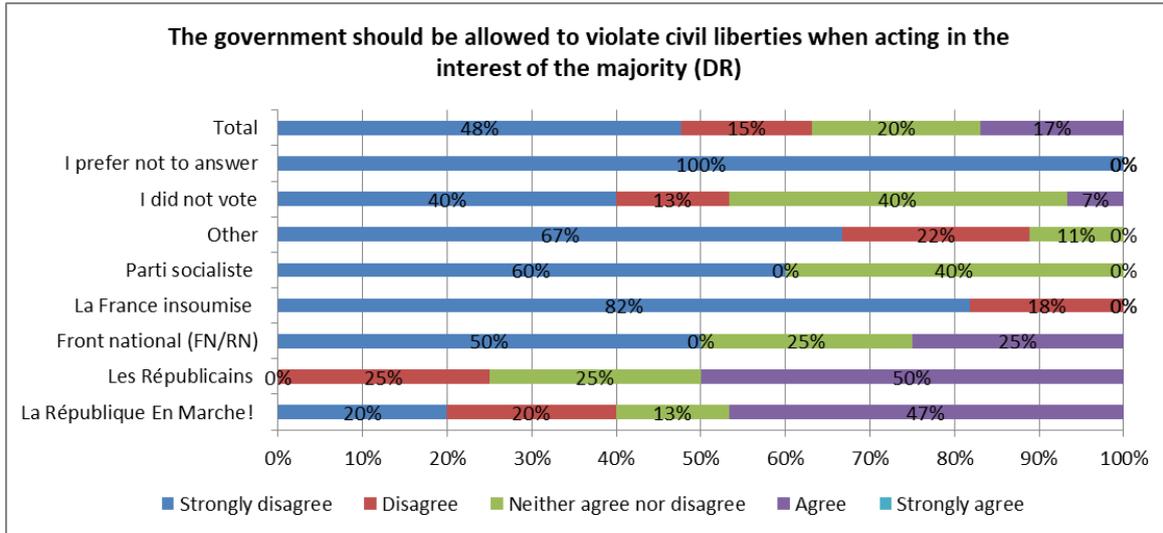
With regard to “majoritarianism” – whether the government can violate civil liberties for the sake of the majority – the highest support is among the non-populist Les Républicains (67%) and other, smaller parties (38%), but is opposed by the non-populist PS (75%) and En Marche! (42% – that is, 42% of them are opposed compared to 25% in support of the measure and 33% who are undecided), as well as the populist LFI (80%) and FN (67%).

Appendix 13. Figure 5



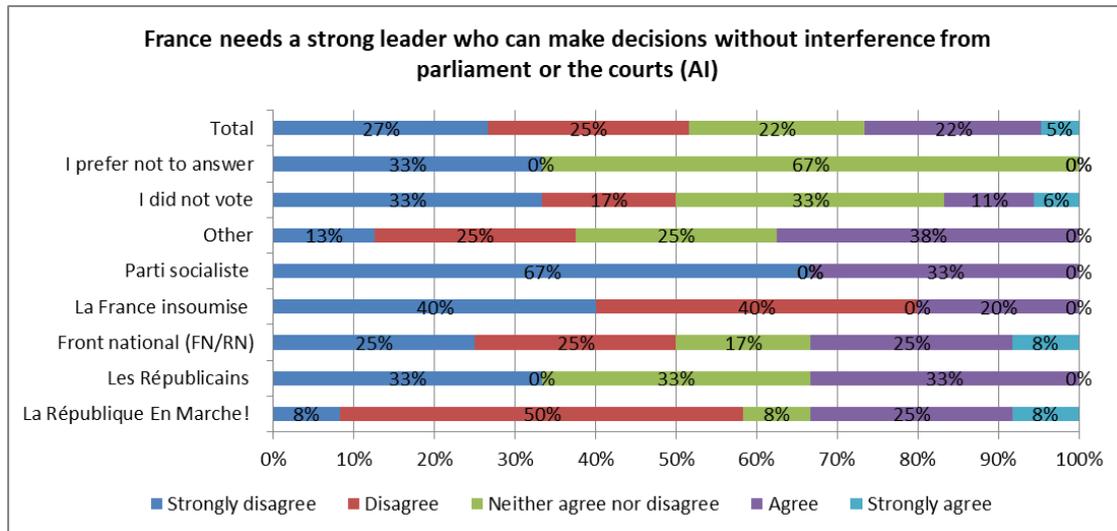
In Drôme, the highest support is among Les Républicains and En Marche! supporters – 50% and 47%, respectively. Populist party voters are, by contrast, opposed to it – FN by 50% and LFI by 82% – with all other parties also opposing this notion.

Appendix 13. Figure 6



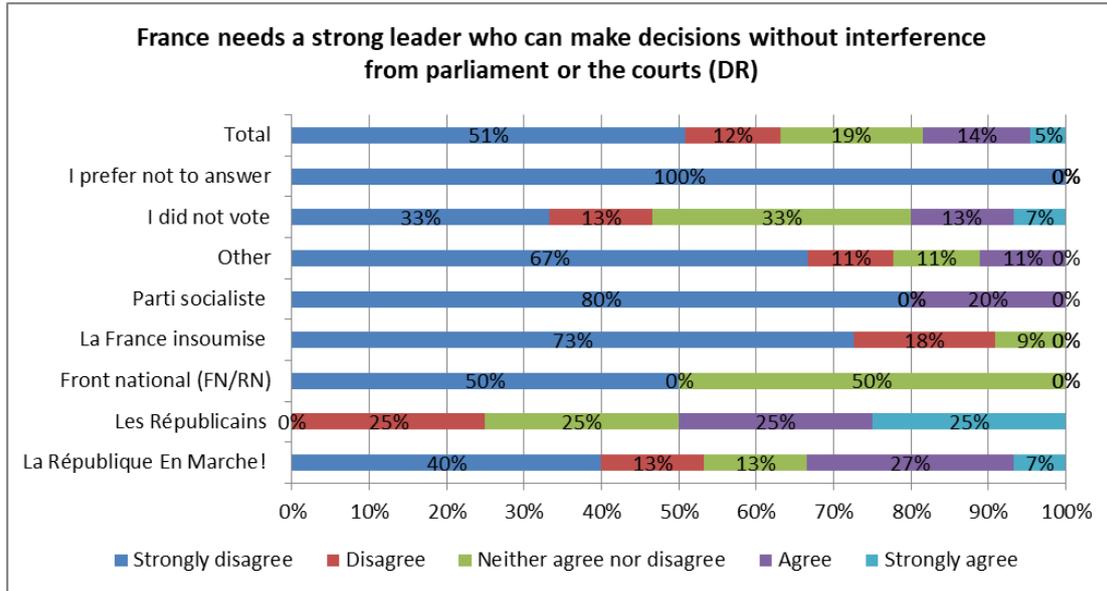
Concerning the question of a strong, unchecked leader, levels of support in Aisne are similar across nearly all groups, except for non-voters with a low of 17% (only the share among those who did not give a party affiliation is less with 0%). The populist LFI supporters oppose it by 80%, but the share of rejection is smaller among FN voters at 50%.

Appendix 13. Figure 7



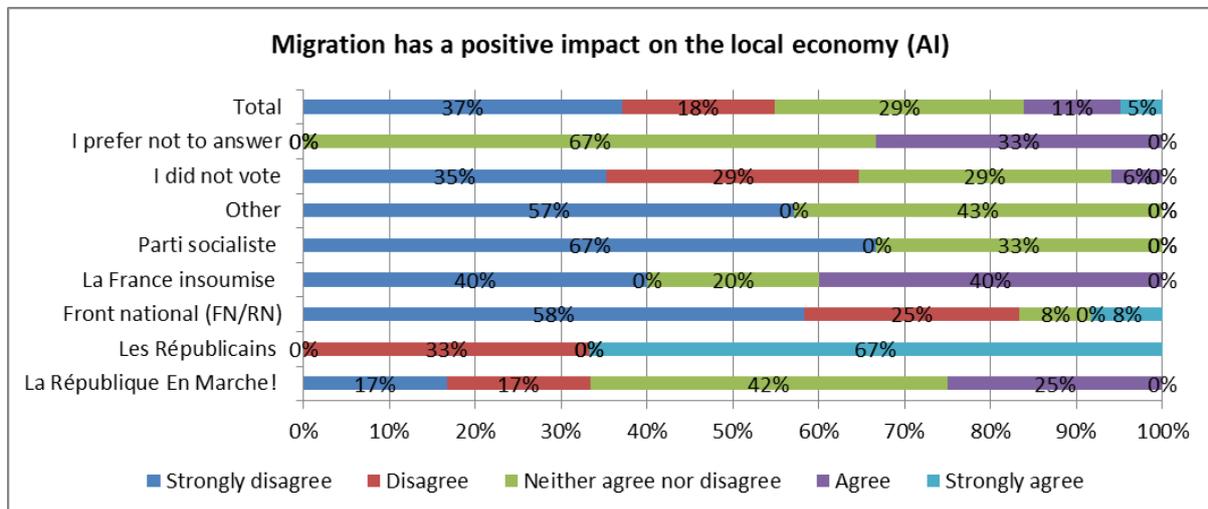
There is a strong level of rejection of this proposition among populist party voters in Drôme, too – much higher disagreement among LFI with 91% compared to around 50% of FN voters. The rejection is actually higher among LFI voters than the other groups.

Appendix 13. Figure 8



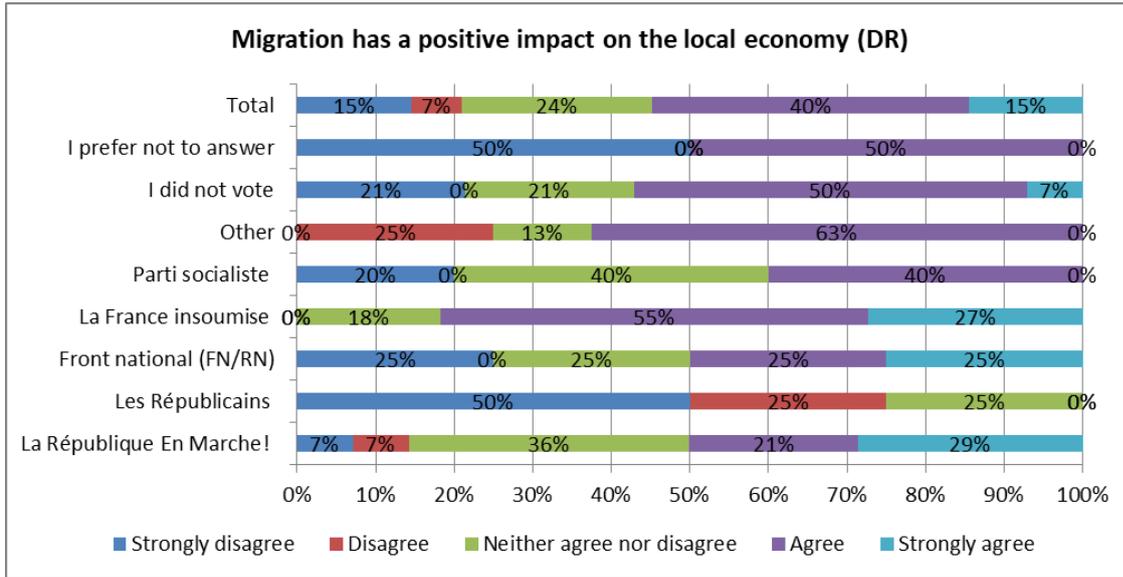
With regard to the positive economic aspects of migration, the highest disagreement with the notion in Aisne is among the populist FN supporters (83%), followed by the non-populist PS (67%) and non-voters (64%). It should be noted that the supporters of LFI, the other populist party are equally split between disagreeing and agreeing with this notion, with 40% in each case.

Appendix 13. Figure 9



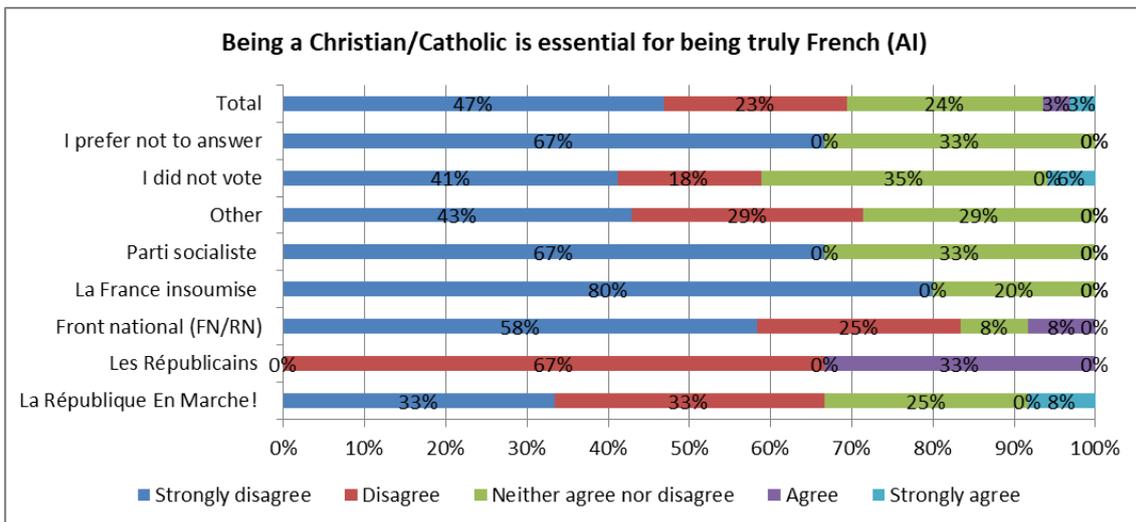
In Drôme, LFI supporters have the highest level of agreement with the question of economic benefits of migration (82%), as well as FN voters (50%), which is on a par with supporters of other parties.

Appendix 13. Figure 10



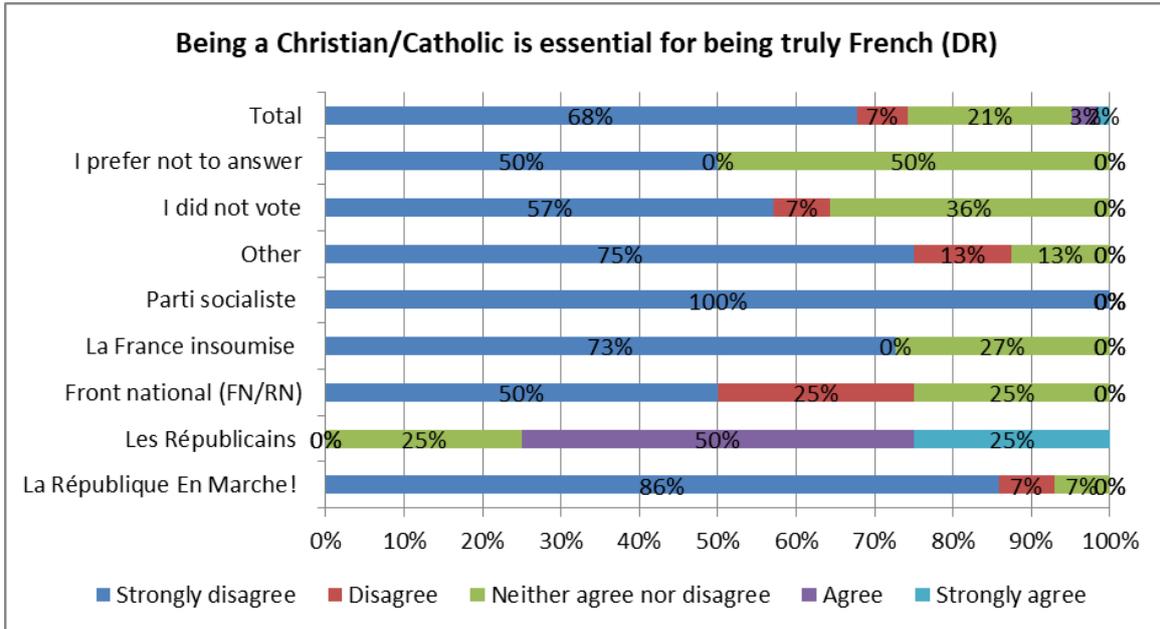
On the question of religion and national identity, populist party supporters in Aisne are similarly negative about such a relationship – LFI with 80% and FN with 83% – and are, thus, in line with other groups. FN supporters show some agreement – with this (8%), but Les Républicains are much more supportive of this as 33% of them agree with the notion.

Appendix 13. Figure 11



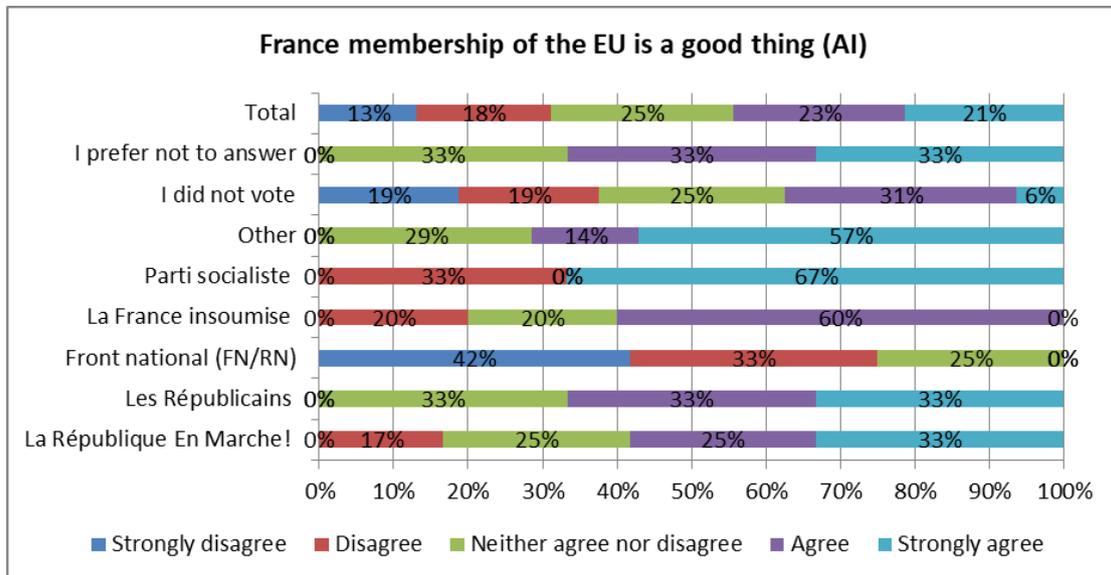
The situation in Drôme is somewhat similar, as the highest support for this idea is among Les Républicains with 75%. Supporters of the populist LFI and FN have similar views as, respectively, 73% and 75% oppose it and the rest are undecided.

Appendix 13. Figure 12



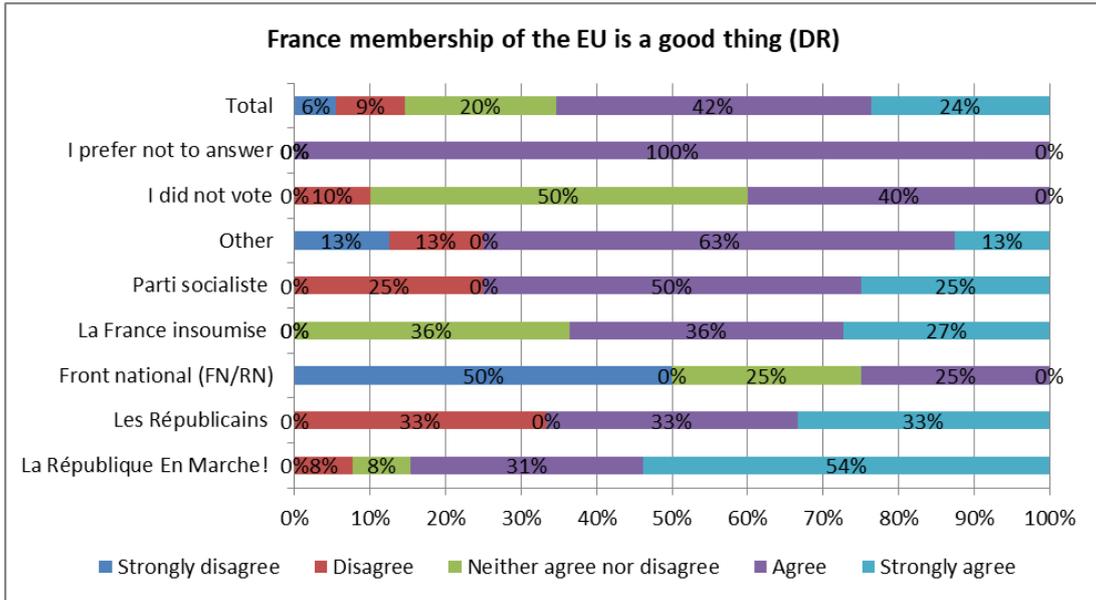
Regarding EU membership, the highest disagreement with the statement that EU membership is a good thing for France is among the populist FN supporters – 75% reject this and the rest of them are undecided. In comparison, just 20% of LFI supporters, the other populist party, disagree that EU membership is a good thing and 60% actually support it, which is higher than the average for the region.

Appendix 13. Figure 13



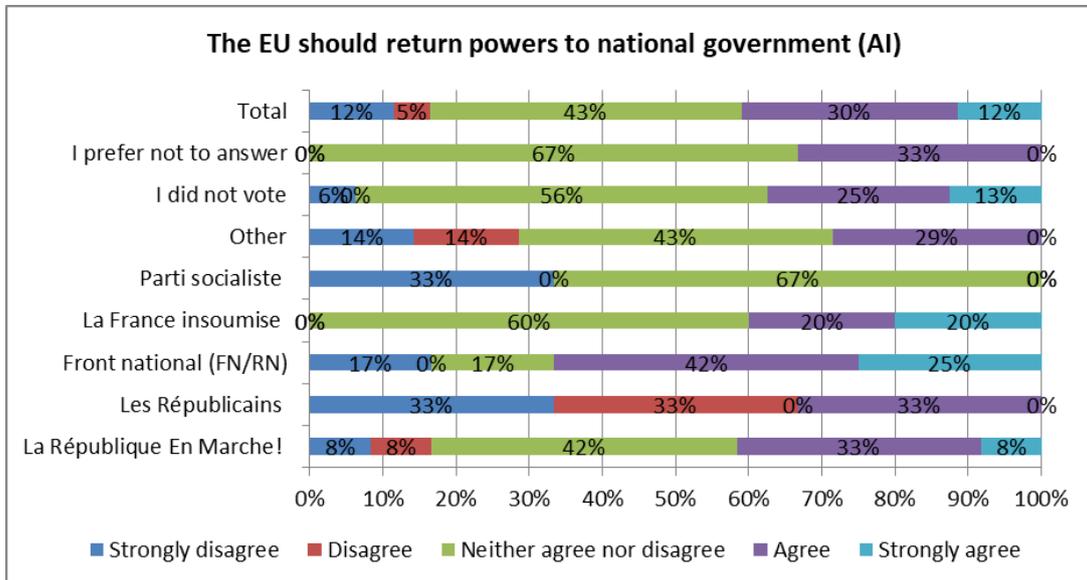
In Drôme, FN supporters are again those who disagree most strongly with EU membership (50%), while 63% of LFI supporters, by contrast, are in favour of it, with none opposing. In this region, En Marche! supporters agree to the highest extent that EU membership is a good thing (85%).

Appendix 13. Figure 14



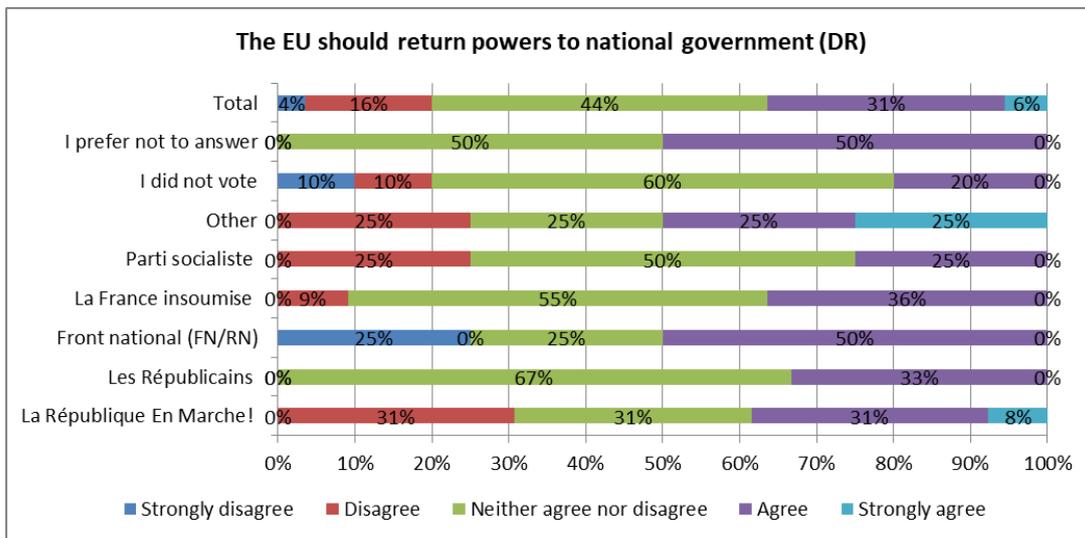
On the issue of whether the EU should return powers to the national government, supporters of the populist FN agree with this notion to the highest degree in Aisne (67%), while a much smaller proportion of LFI voters (40%) agree. The rest are undecided.

Appendix 13. Figure 15



In Drôme, 50% of FN supporters agree with this, which is the highest share and on a par with other, smaller parties and with those who did not specify a political affiliation. In comparison, 36% of LFI voters support this notion and a majority (55%) are undecided.

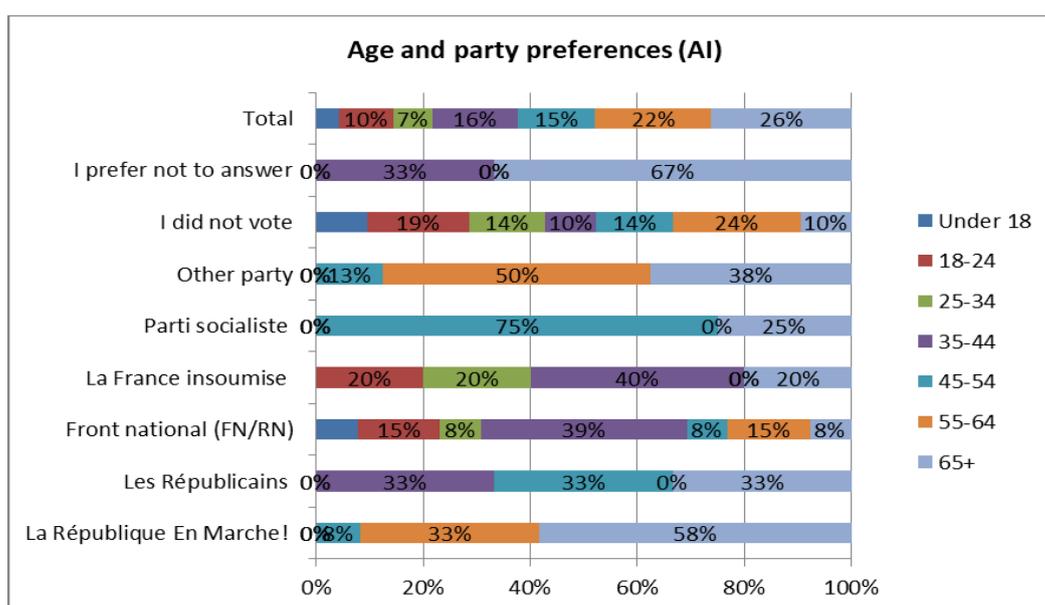
Appendix 13. Figure 16



10.14. Appendix 14. Party supporters' profiles across demographic indicators at regional level in France²¹

The analysis of the party affiliation of respondents and their demographic data at regional level in France provides the following results. With regard to age groups and party preferences, the respondents of the two populist parties in Aisne tend to be somewhat younger, in the 18-24, 25-34 and 35-44 age groups, compared to the average respondents for the region or compared, for example, to Les Républicains and En Marche!, which represent older groups.

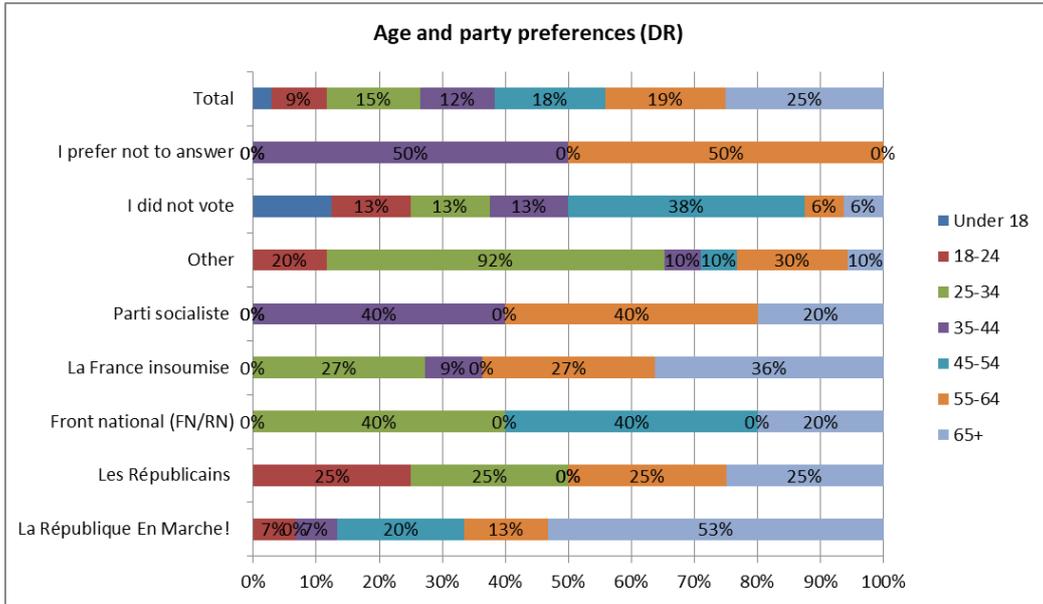
Appendix 14. Figure 1



In Drôme, the two populist parties are represented by younger respondents than the average in the groups – 27% of LFI supporters and 40% of FN voters are from the 18-24 and 25-34 age groups – but they also have a higher share of those aged over 55, constituting 63% of LFI supporters, and 45-54 and 65+ year olds, constituting 60% of FN voters.

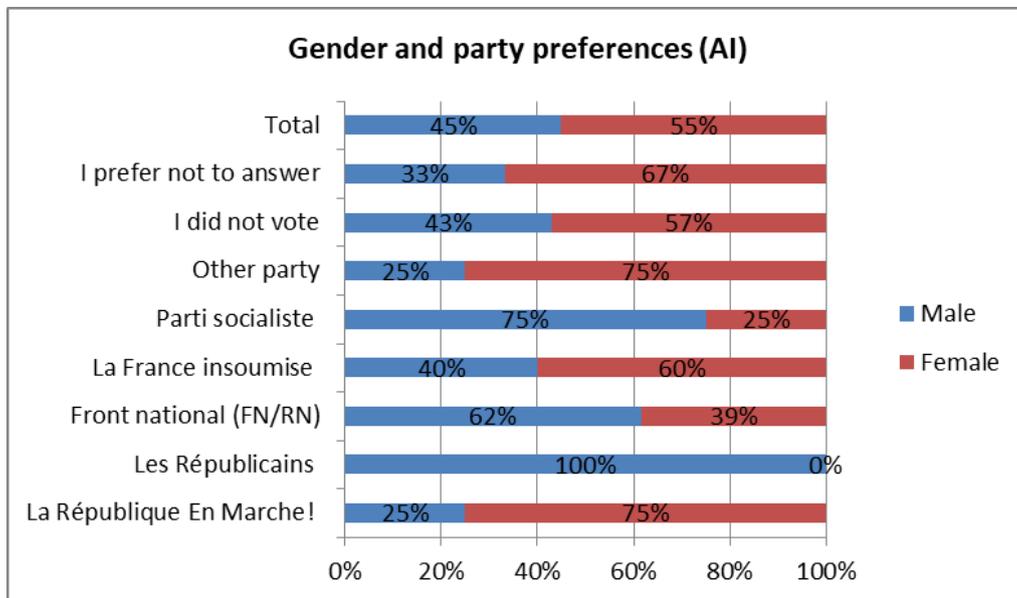
²¹ Zero percentage (“0%”) in the graphs of citizen surveys means that the share of respondents who answered or the share of answers to a particular choice within a multi-choice question is zero, i.e. no respondent responded to the question or pointed to a choice in the multi-choice questions. A multi-choice question is for example Strongly disagree – Disagree - Neither agree nor disagree - Agree-Strongly agree (i.e. Linkert scale).

Appendix 14. Figure 2

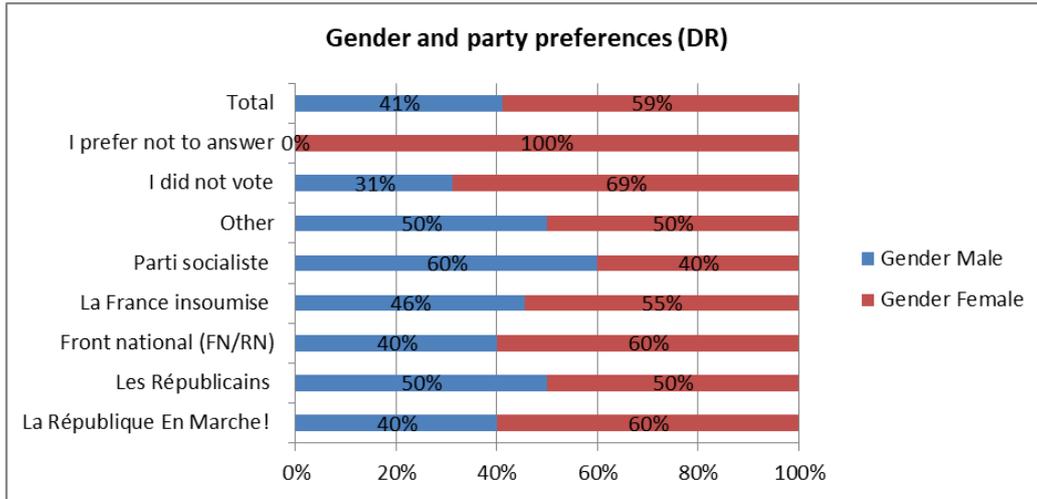


In terms of gender, there is, in Aisne and Drôme, a more or less balanced representation for the populist parties of LFI and FN.

Appendix 14. Figure 3

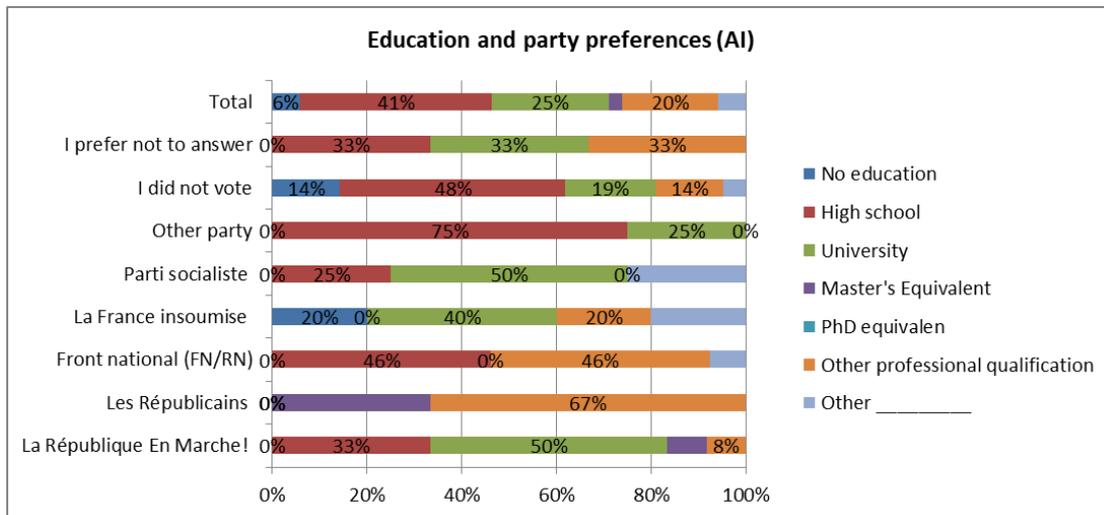


Appendix 14. Figure 4



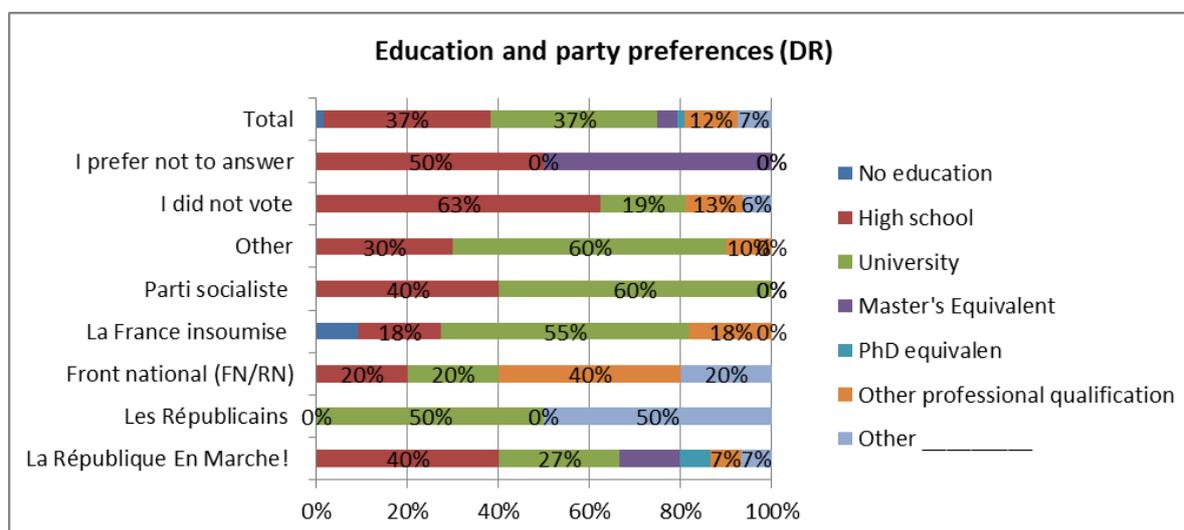
With regard to education, FN respondents in Aisne have a lower education compared to the other parties. For example, 46% of FN respondents have a high school education and 46% other professional qualifications. Among LFI respondents, 20% don't have an education, 40% have university (bachelor) or equivalent as well as other professional qualifications.

Appendix 14. Figure 5



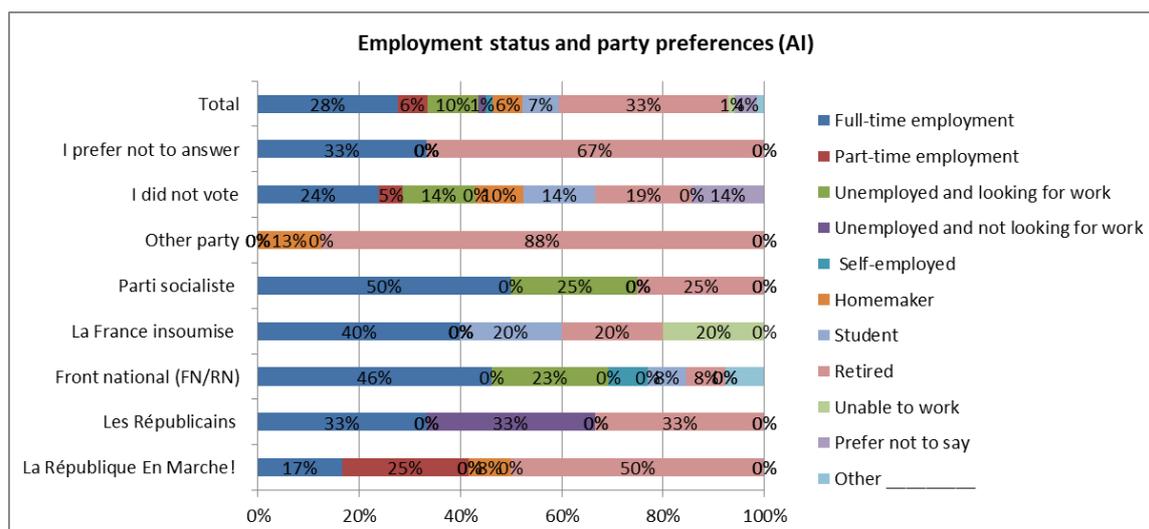
In Drôme, FN has the highest share of respondents with other professional qualifications (40%) and other qualifications (20%), while the rest are high school or university (bachelor) equivalent, compared to LFI respondents, who have 55% university (bachelor) level and the rest have mostly high school or other qualifications.

Appendix 14. Figure 6



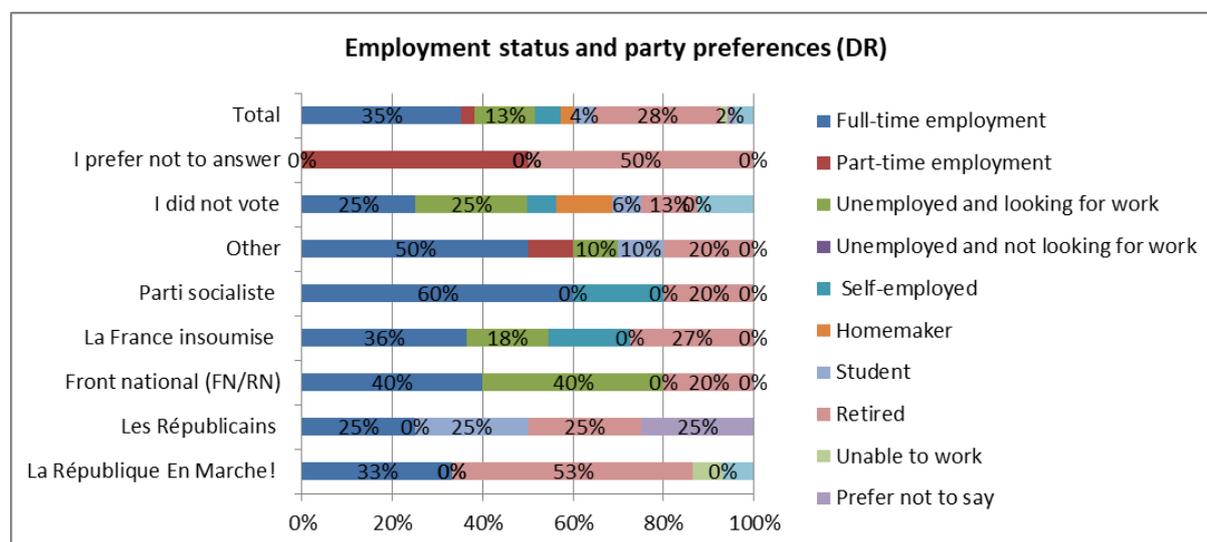
When it comes to employment status, in Aisne the full-time employed is the biggest group among both FI (40%) and FN (46%) respondents, and only PS (50%) has a slightly higher share. FN are much more diverse in terms of employment status, with 23% unemployed and smaller shares of self-employed and retired, among others. LFI has equal shares of students, the retired and people unable to work.

Appendix 14. Figure 7.



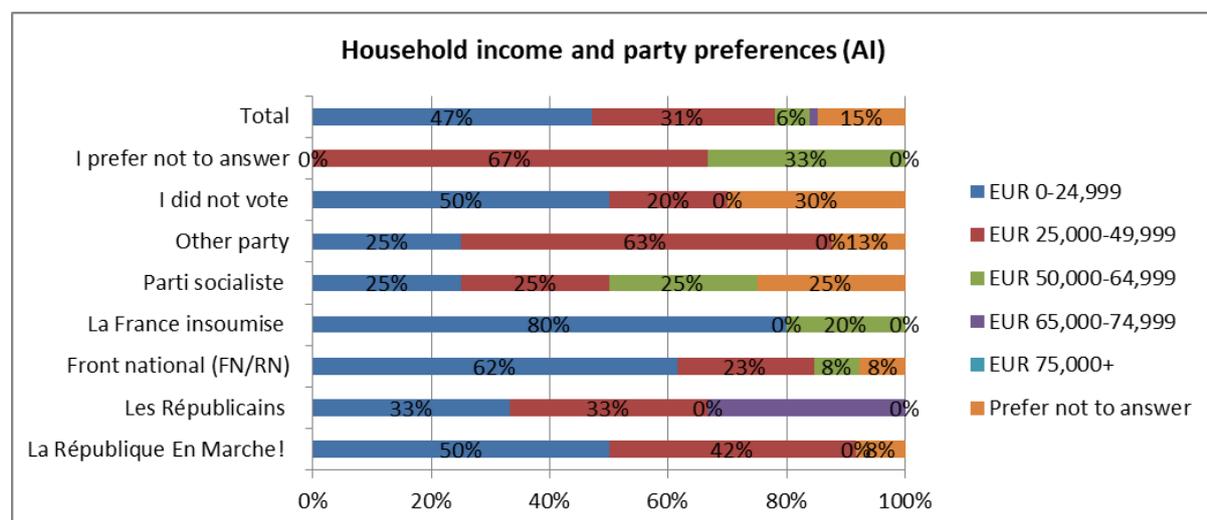
In Drôme, FN respondents are represented by equal shares of the fully employed and unemployed, 40% in each case, and the rest are retired. In the case of LFI, in addition to the 36% full-time employed, 27% are retired and the rest are self-employed or unemployed and looking for work.

Appendix 14. Figure 8



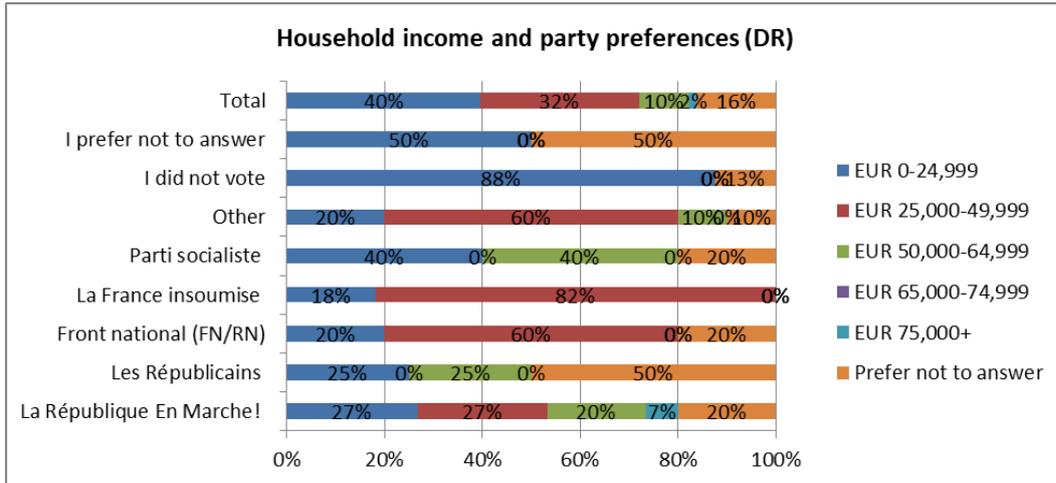
With regard to annual household income, in Aisne both FN (62%) and LFI (80%) respondents are within the EUR 0-24,999 bracket, compared to 47% on average for the region.

Appendix 14. Figure 9



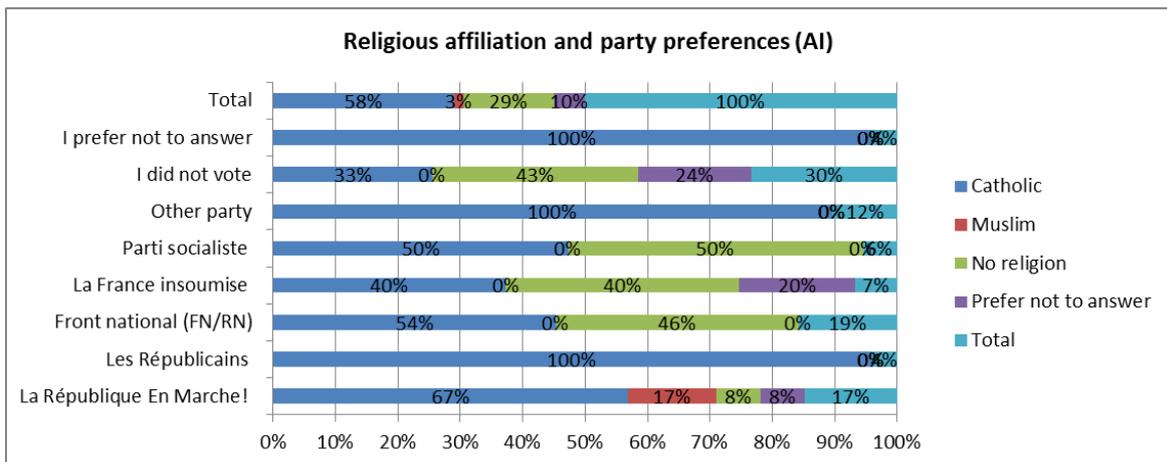
In Drôme, LFI and FN are equally represented by respondents within the EUR 0-24,999 group. The rest of LFI supporters are in the next group up to EUR 49,999. FN voters are 60% in the EUR 25,000-49,999 bracket and 20% preferred not to answer.

Appendix 14. Figure 10



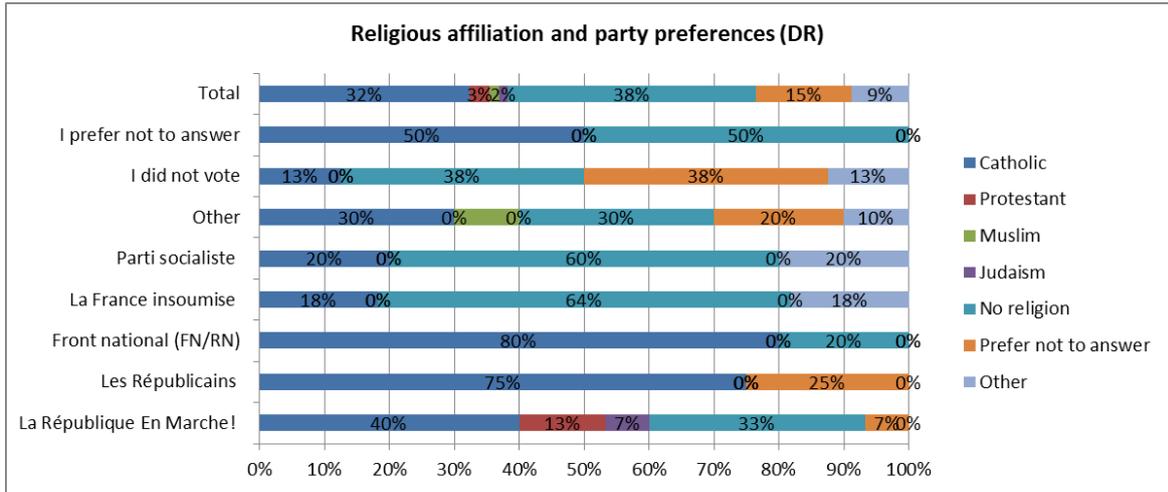
Concerning religious affiliation, both LFI (40%) and FN (54%) in Aisne have a lower share of Catholics than the average for the region in the survey (58%) and, at the same time, a higher share of non-religious, 40% for LFI and 46% for FN, compared to 29% on average for the respondents in the region.

Appendix 14. Figure 11



In Drôme, FN respondents have the highest share of Catholic supporters (80%) and, LFI have the highest share of non-religious respondents (64%).

Appendix 14. Figure 12



10.15. Appendix 15. CSO typologies and developments at national level in Italy

At national level in Italy, the most complete figures available are from 2015²² when there were 336,275 non-profit organisations, including 286,942 associations, 16,125 social cooperatives and 6,451 foundations. Associations were by far the most prevalent type of organisation in all areas of activity, except for economic development and social cohesion (86.1% social cooperatives) and religion, although social cooperatives were also present in social assistance and civil protection, with 20.9% of organisations in that area.

Out of those organisations, 267,529 used volunteers and only 55,196 had employees. The 5,528,760 volunteers made up 87.5% of people working in the non-profit sector. Culture, sport and recreational organisations were the most dependent on volunteers, with 56.6%, but a large number, 16.1%, were working for social assistance and civil protection organisations. Most paid employees were working in social assistance and civil protection (36%), health (22.6%), education and training (15.8%) and economic development and social cohesion (11.8%).

In terms of activities, 64.9% were active in culture, sport and recreation, with the next highest – 9.2% – involved in social assistance and civil protection.

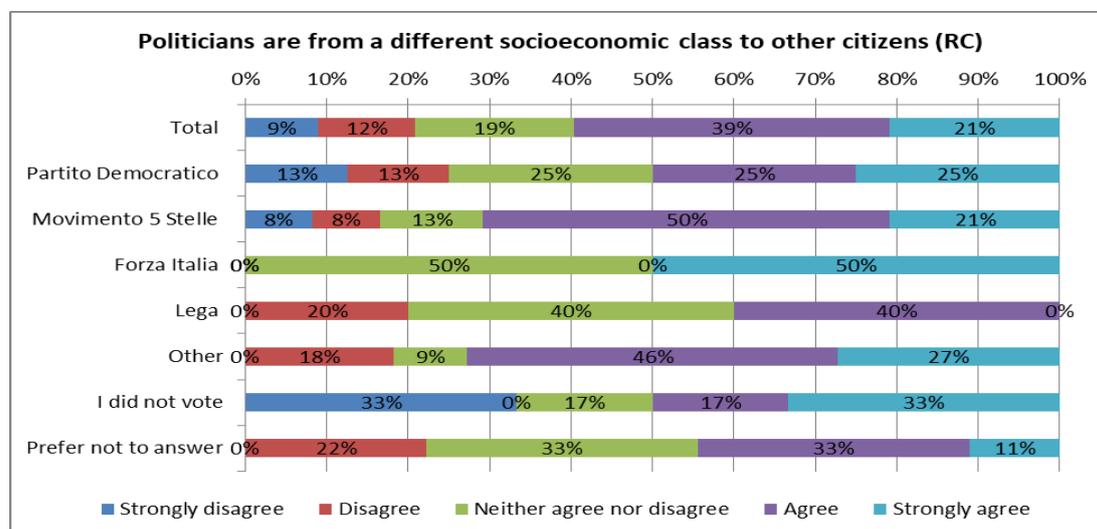
²² <https://www.istat.it/files/2017/12/Nota-stampa-censimento-non-profit.pdf>

10.16. Appendix 16. Party affiliation and key questions on populism in Italy²³

When the answers are broken down according to the party political preferences of the respondents in both regions, there are the following results.²⁴

When answering the question “Politicians are from a different socioeconomic class than other citizens”, in Reggio di Calabria, supporters of smaller (“Other”) parties and those of the ruling M5S party have the largest share of agreement, 73% and 71%, respectively, with the lowest agreement among Lega supporters (60%) and those who preferred not to express a political affiliation.

Appendix 16. Figure 1

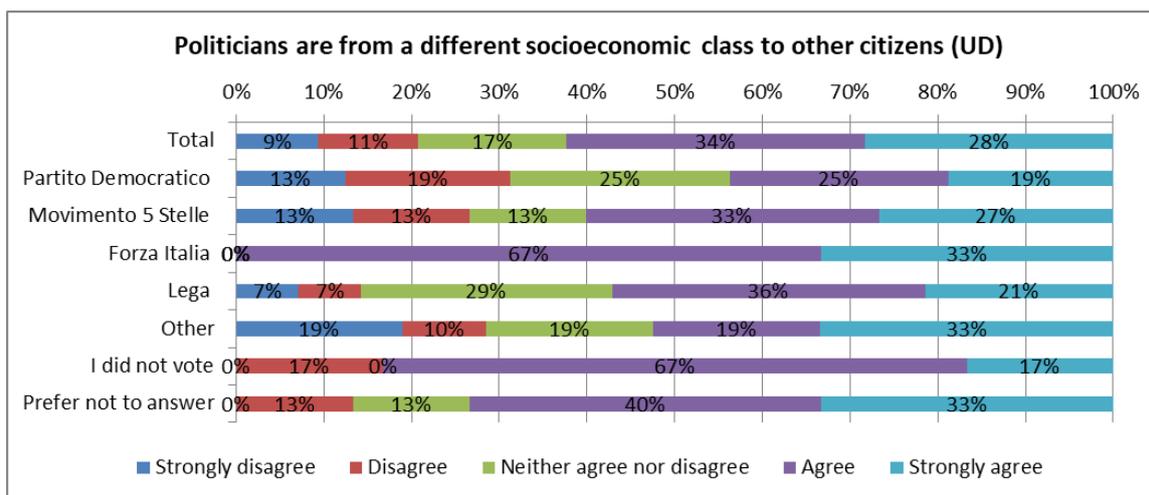


²³ Zero percentage (“0%”) in the graphs of citizen surveys means that the share of respondents who answered or the share of answers to a particular choice within a multi-choice question is zero, i.e. no respondent responded to the question or pointed to a choice in the multi-choice questions. A multi-choice question is for example Strongly disagree – Disagree - Neither agree nor disagree - Agree-Strongly agree (i.e. Likert scale).

²⁴ As explained in the national chapter, this is exploratory survey with smaller samples than those for fully fledged representative survey, but commensurate with the demographic characteristics and election results. The sample size for Udine was 96 respondents, among which 19% Lega supporters (18 respondents), 16% for M5S (15 respondents) and 3% (3 respondents) for Forza Italia. For Reggio di Calabria the sample size was 73 respondents, who answered to the political affiliation question too, with 34% of M5S supporters (25 respondents), 10% of Lega supporters (7 respondents) and 3% of Forza Italia (2 respondents). The main analysis thus shows the data for the bigger populist parties M5S and Lega, which had also higher participation in the survey.

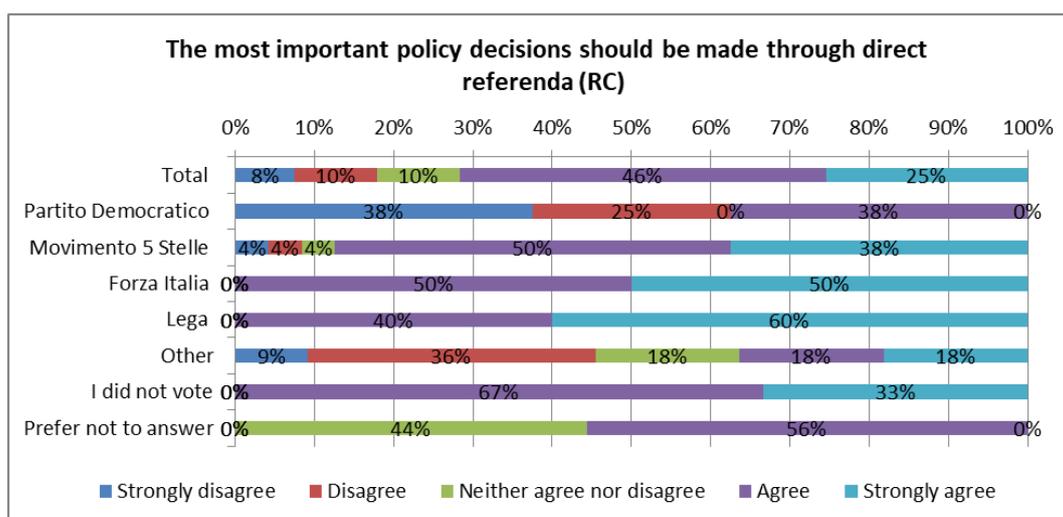
In Udine, most agreement with this notion can be found among non-voters (84%), those who preferred not to identify politically and Forza Italia voters. PD voters are least inclined to support the notion that politicians belong to a different class. Among the main populist parties, M5S supporters disagree to a higher extent (26%) and agree to a lesser extent (60%) than Lega voters (14% disagree and 57% agree).

Appendix 16. Figure 2



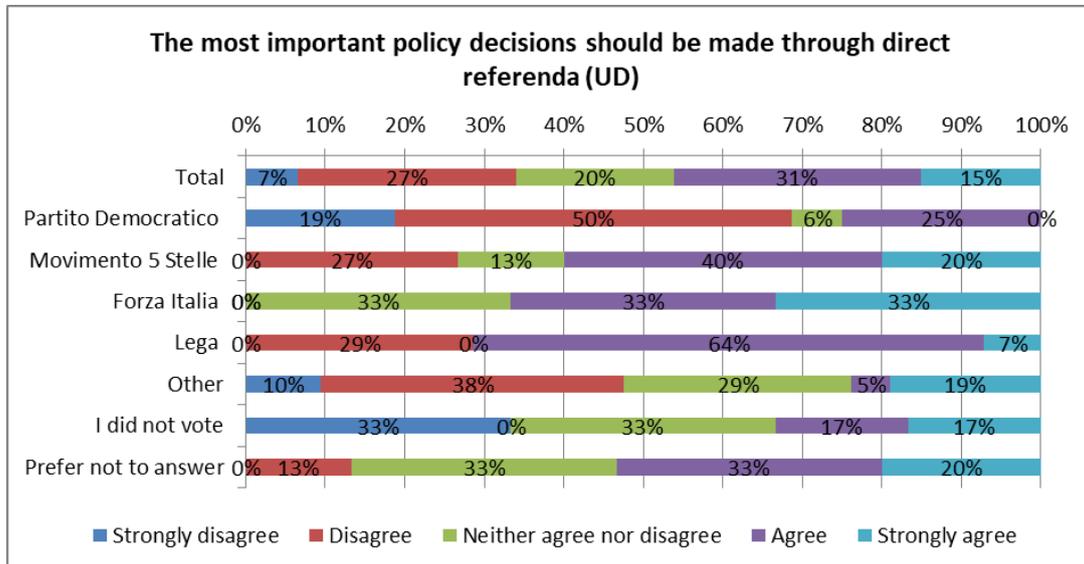
With regard to direct referenda, in Reggio di Calabria, this is most popular among non-voters and the populist Lega and Forza Italia (100%), followed by M5S (92%). On the other side, the highest disagreement is among PD voters (63%).

Appendix 16. Figure 3



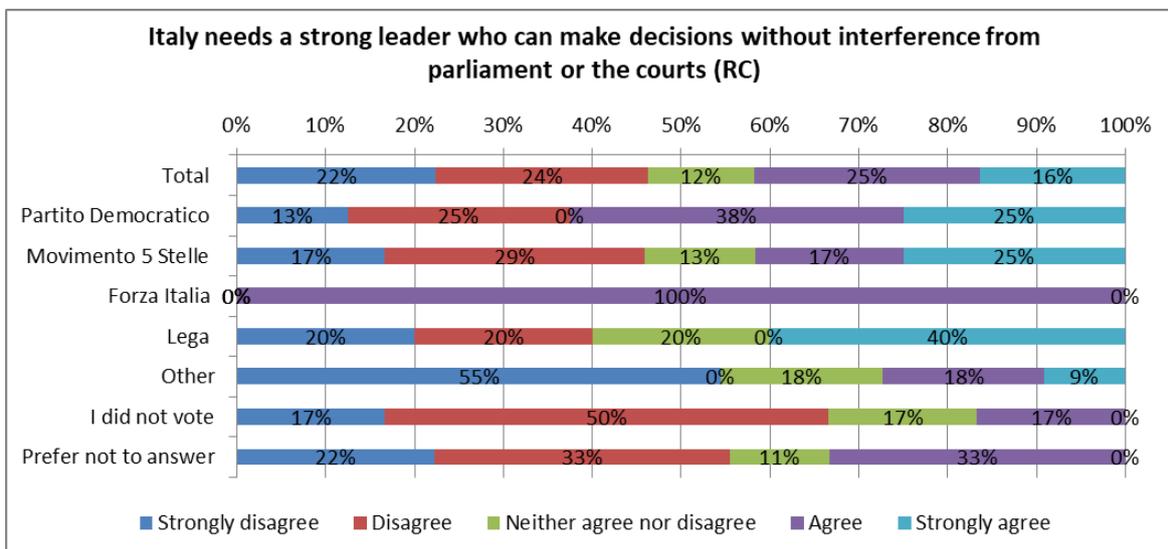
In the Udine region, direct referenda are preferred most of all by Lega (73%), Forza Italia (63%) and M5S (60%) respondents. It is opposed most by PD respondents (69%).

Appendix 16. Figure 4



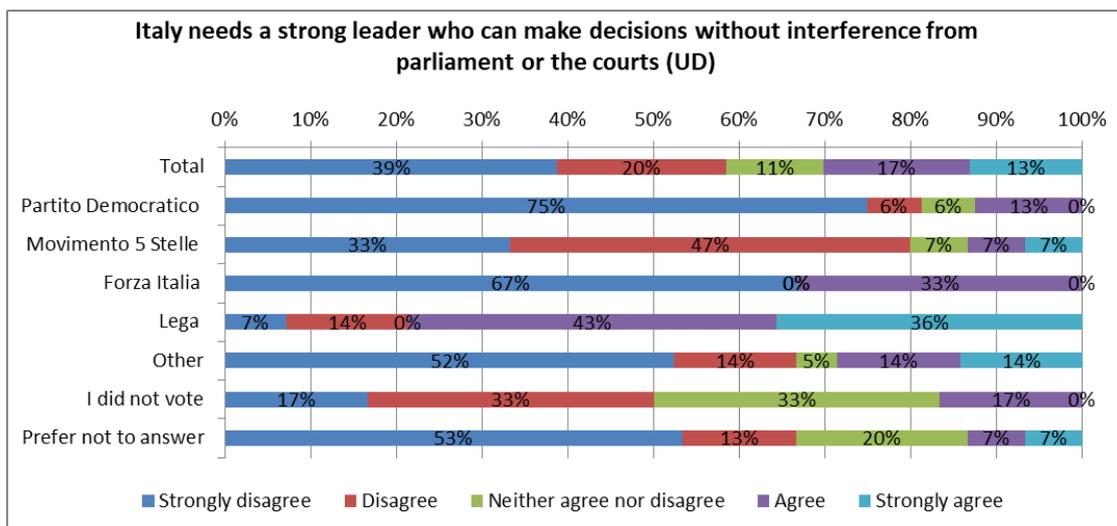
Support for a strong, unchecked leader, in Reggio di Calabria is strongest among Forza Italia voters and those of Partito Democratico and is least supported by voters of other, smaller parties.

Appendix 16. Figure 5



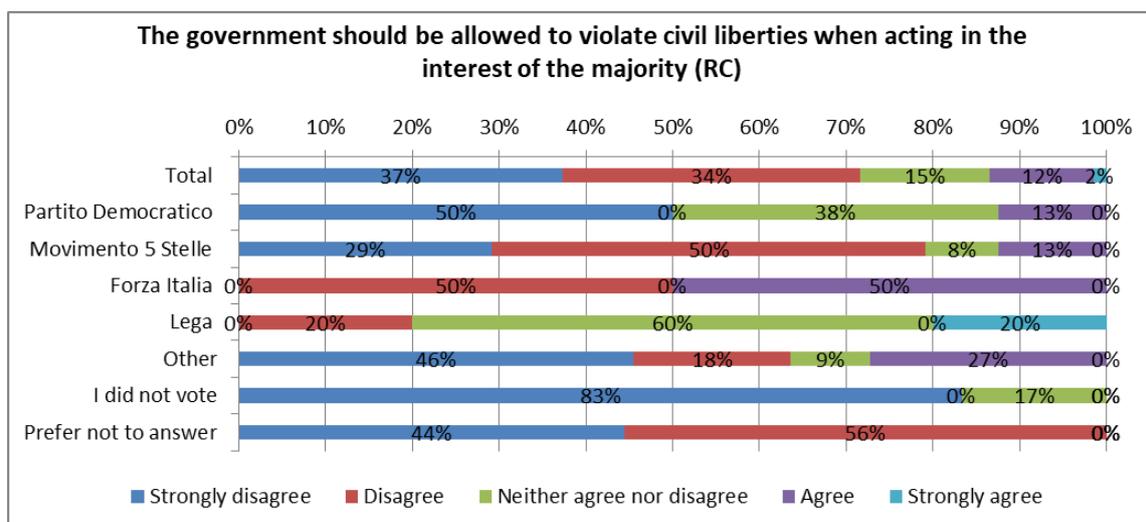
In Udine, support for a strong leader is highest among Forza Italia and Lega voters (79%) and least among M5S (14%) and PD (13%) voters. The most disagreement with this notion is among the PD (81%) and M5S (80%) voters, those who did not express a political affiliation (66%), smaller parties (66%) and Forza Italia (67%).

Appendix 16. Figure 6



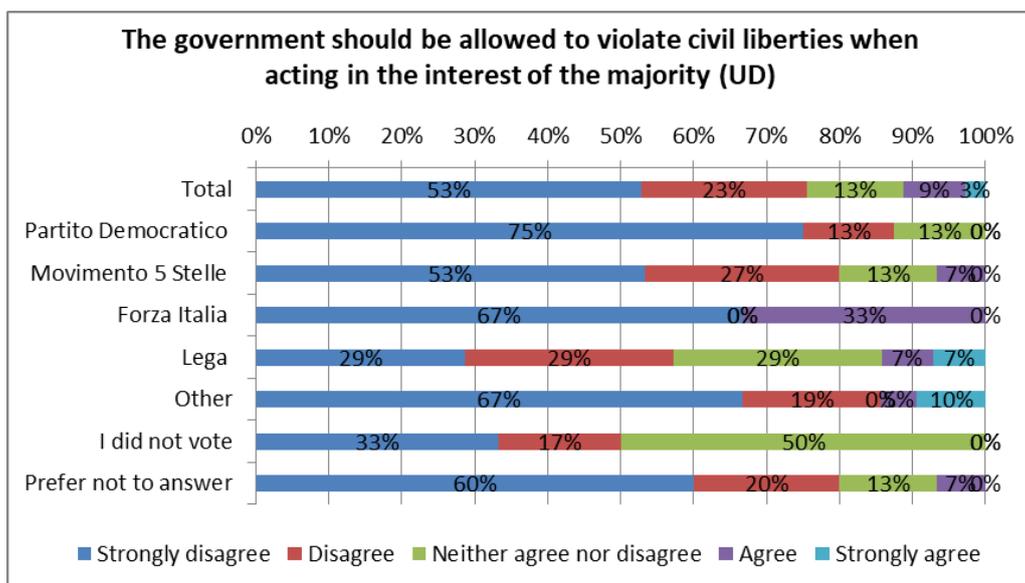
With regard to governments breaching civil liberties for the sake of majority, in Reggio di Calabria, the respondents who agree with the measure the most are Forza Italia (50%), smaller parties (20%) and Lega (17%). This is opposed to the highest extent by those who do not identify politically, followed by non-voters (83%), M5S (79%) and supporters of other parties (64%).

Appendix 16. Figure 7



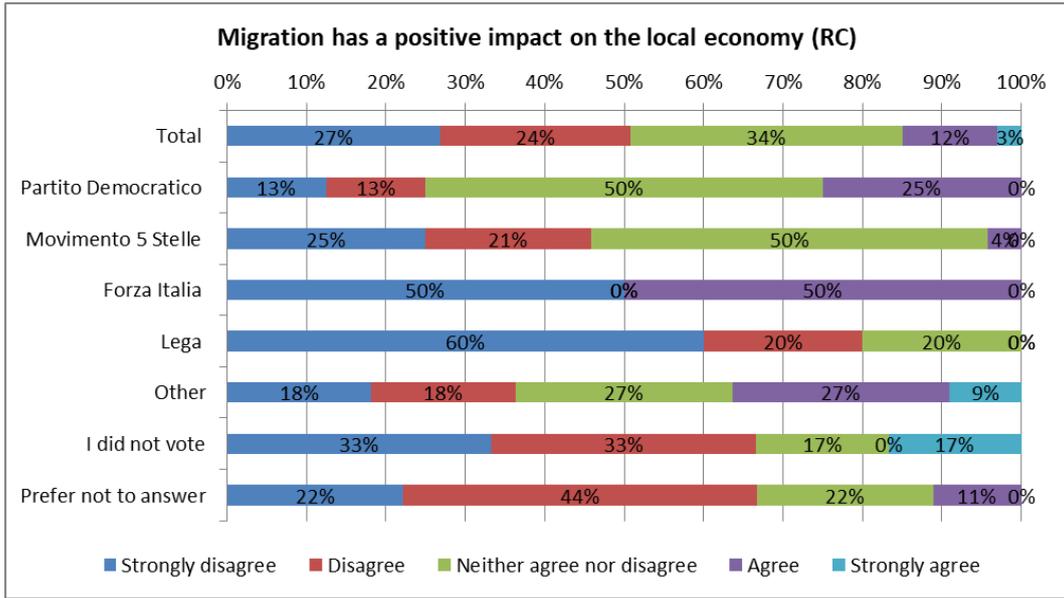
In Udine, the question of violating of civil rights for the sake of majority is opposed in the highest measure by PD supporters (88%), those of smaller parties (87%) and M5S voters (80%). The least opposed are non-voters (50%) and Lega supporters (48%).

Appendix 16. Figure 8



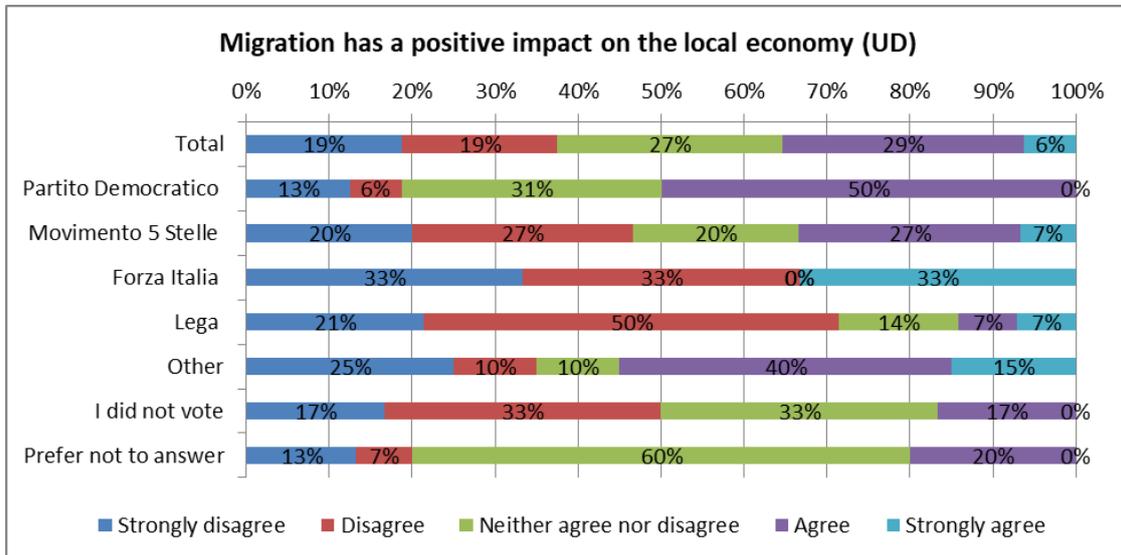
In terms of the economic impact of migration on the local economy, the highest degree of disagreement is among non-voters (66%), those who did not express a political affiliation (66%) and Lega supporters (60%). Supporters of Forza Italia (50%), smaller parties (35%) and PD (25%) agree that migration is good for the local economy. However, among there is a large proportion of undecided respondents for some groups – between a third (other parties) and half (PD, M5S), which means support is not very strong.

Appendix 16. Figure 9



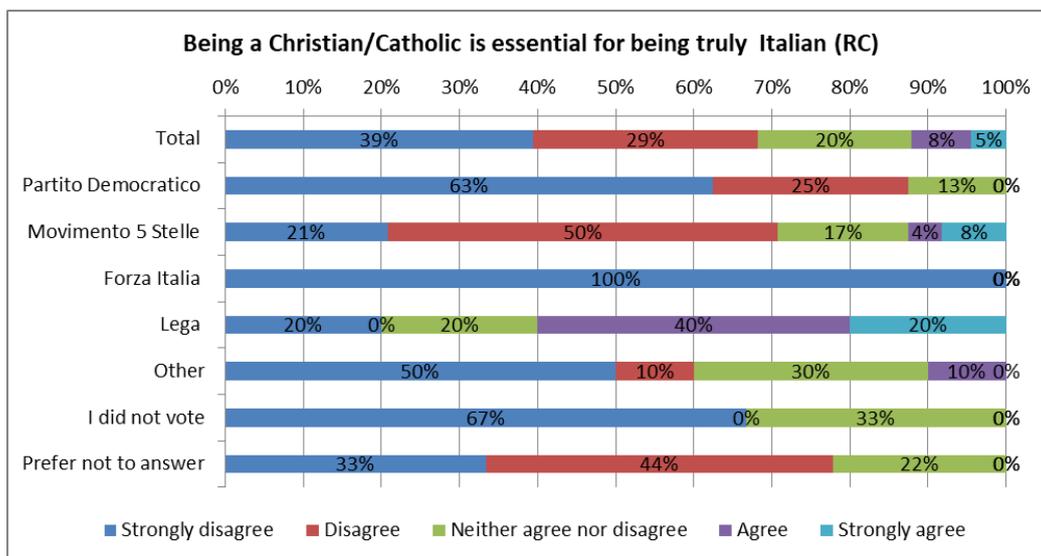
In Udine, the smaller parties' voters (55%) and PD supporters (50%) show highest support for the proposition that migration is good for the local economy, and opposition is highest among Lega (71%), Forza Italia (66%) and non-voters (50%).

Appendix 16. Figure 10



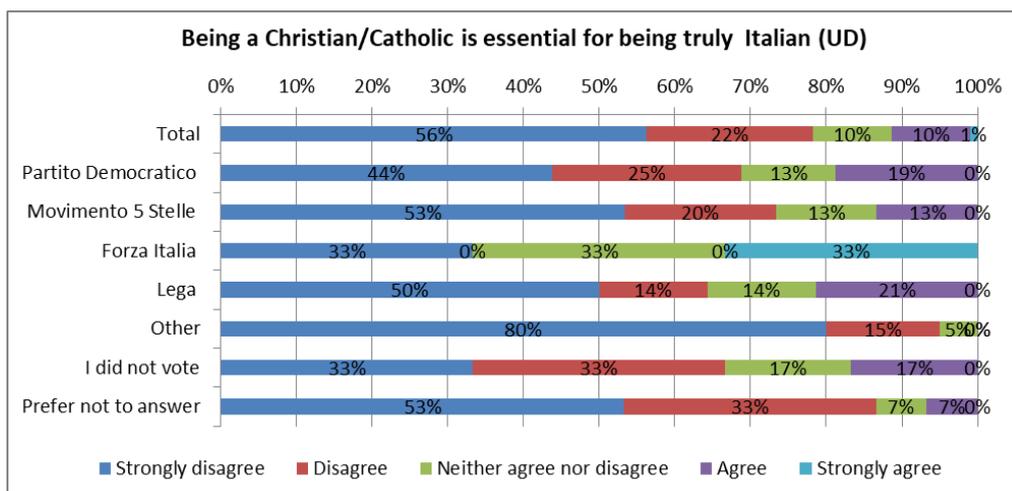
On the issue of religion and national identity, in Reggio di Calabria, Forza Italia (all respondents from the group) and Lega (60%) voters show the highest agreement with the view that religion is an essential part of national identity. The highest disagreement is among PD supporters (63%), non-voters (67%), M5S (71%), and those who did not identify politically (77%).

Appendix 16. Figure 11



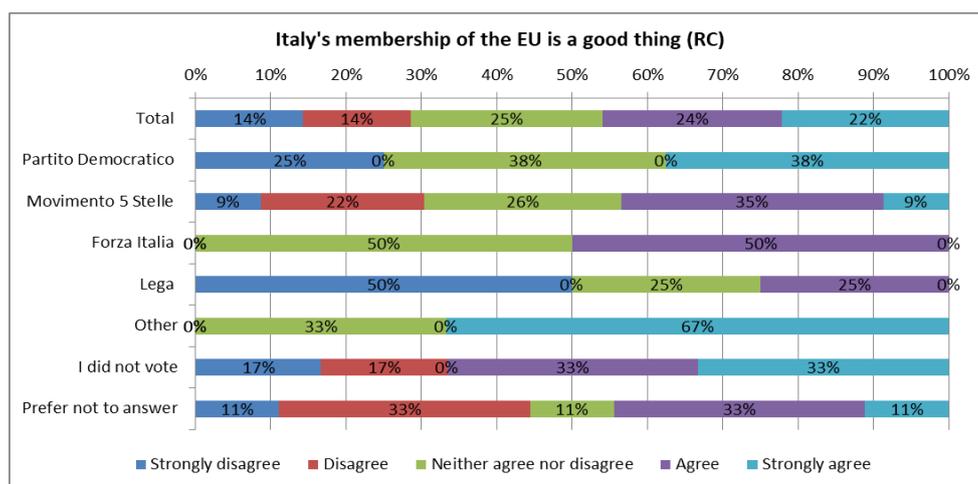
In Udine, those agreeing with the proposition most are Lega (21%) and PD (19%) supporters. Those who disagree that being Christian is essential for being Italian are those who refused to identify politically (86%), smaller parties (80%), M5S (73%), PD (69%) and non-voters (66%). The share of those undecided on this issue in Udine is very small – between 7% and 17%.

Appendix 16. Figure 12



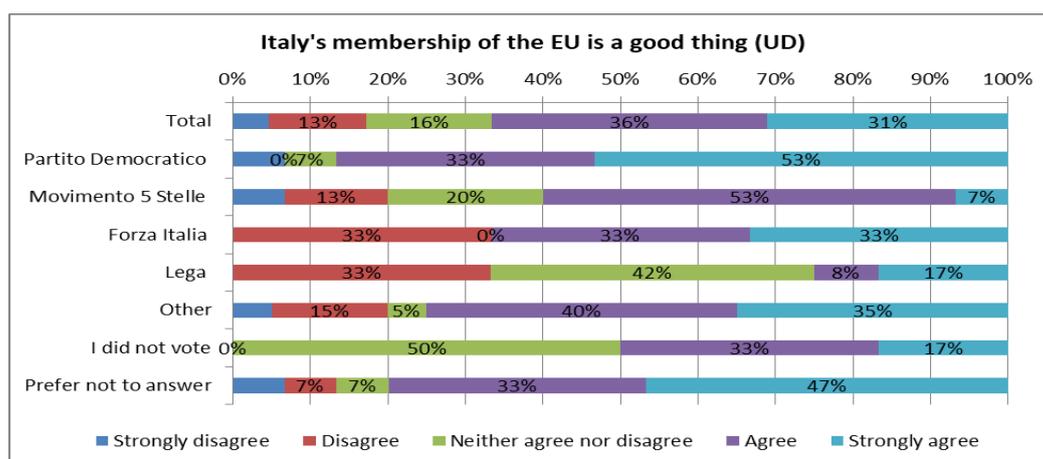
In terms of Italy's membership of the EU being a good thing, in Reggio di Calabria, those agreeing with the proposition most are voters of other, smaller parties (67%), non-voters (66%), Forza Italia (50%), M5S (44%), those who did not express a political affiliation (44%) and PD (38%). Those who disagree with EU membership to the highest extent are Lega supporters (50%), those who did not specify a political affiliation (44%) and non-voters (34%). There is a high proportion of undecided respondents among nearly all groups – a third of smaller parties' voters (33%), Forza Italia (50%), PD (38%), and a quarter of the ruling Lega and M5S supporters.

Appendix 16. Figure 13



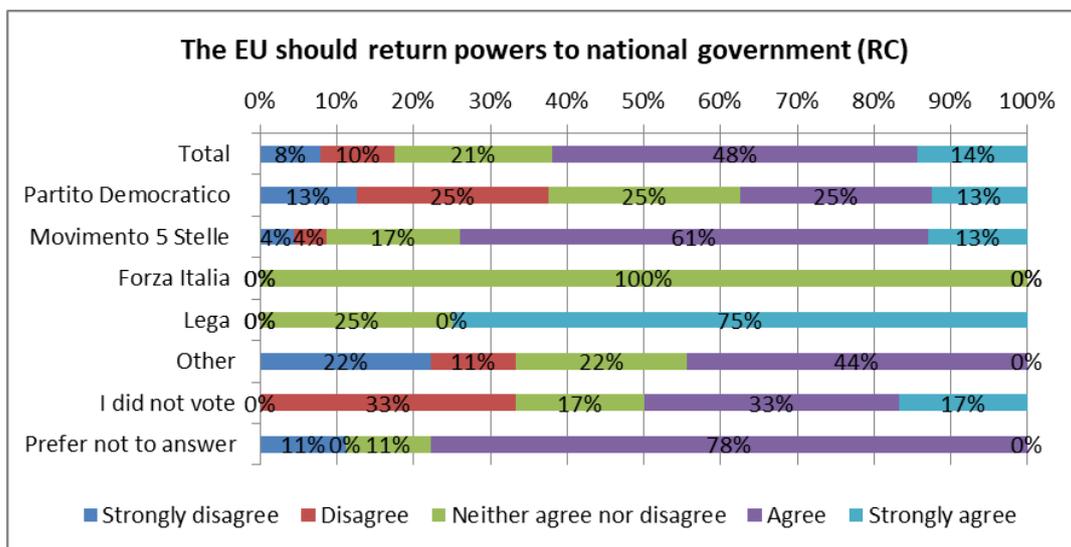
In Udine, agreement that EU membership is good for Italy is highest among PD voters (88%), FI (66%), other parties (75%), those undefined (80%) and M5S (60%). Those who disagree most are Lega voters (33%), which also has a high share of undecided respondents (43%).

Appendix 16. Figure 14



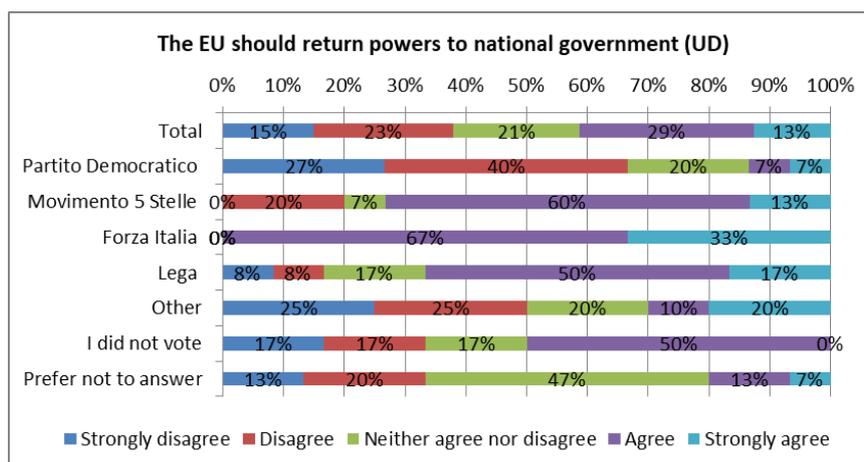
With regard to the question of sovereignty – that is, the question of whether the EU should return powers to the national government – there is the following result. In Reggio di Calabria, the highest support for the proposal comes from those who refused to express a political affiliation (78%), M5S (61%) and smaller parties' supporters (44%). Those who disagree with the suggestion, to a large extent, are non-voters (33%) and PD supporters (25%).

Appendix 16. Figure 15



In Udine, the strongest support for returning EU powers to the national government is among M5S supporters (73%), practically all Forza Italia respondents, 67% of Lega voters and 50% of non-voters. Those who oppose this notion are 67% of PD supporters, 50% of smaller parties, 34% of non-voters and 33% of those who did not answer the political affiliation question.

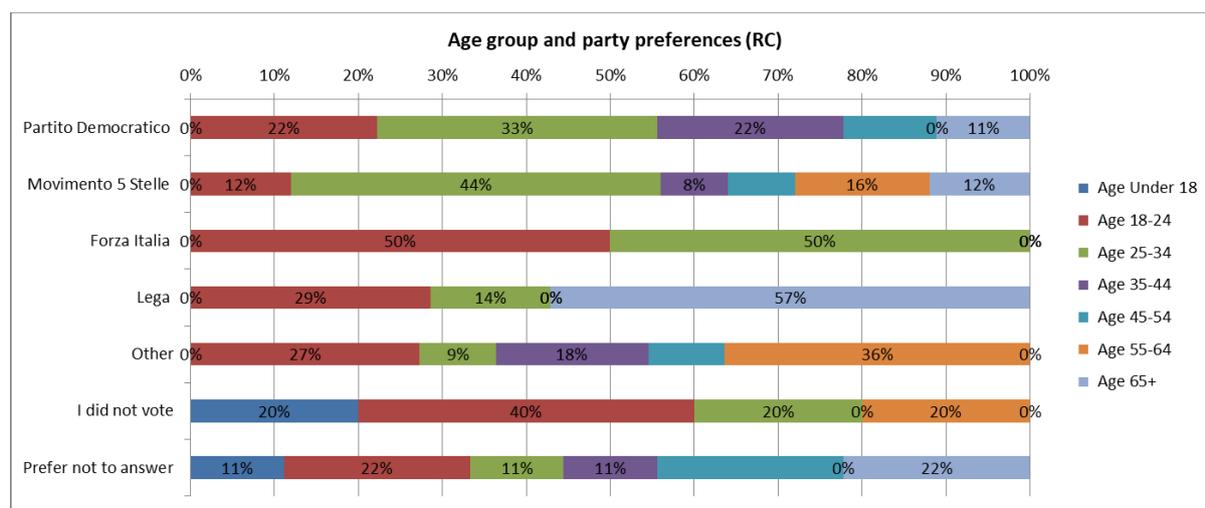
Appendix 16. Figure 16



10.17. Appendix 17. Party supporters' profiles across demographic indicators at regional²⁵

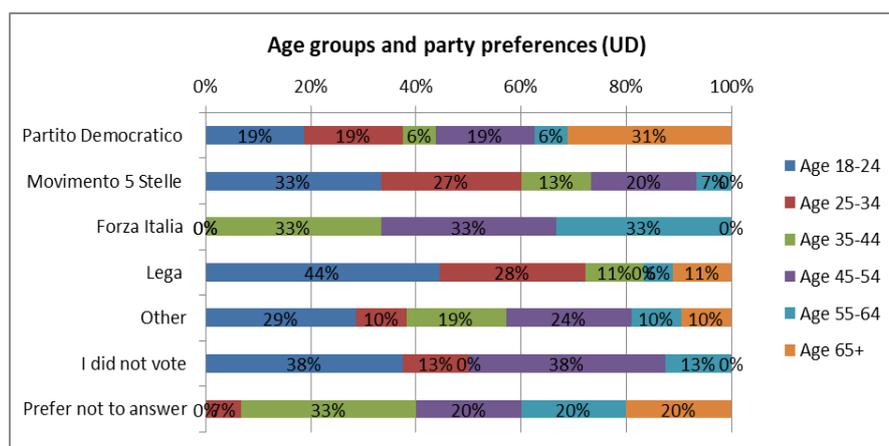
With regard to age in Reggio di Calabria, the youngest groups were mostly non-voters (80% up to 34 years old) and PD respondents (77% between 18 and 44 years old), while the older voters are dispersed among the other parties. The supporters of PD, M5S, those who did not express a political affiliation are from nearly all age groups. For Lega, there are younger and older supporters.

Appendix 17. Figure 1



In Udine, older voters predominate among PD supporters (31% over 65), those undefined politically (40% – 55-64 and over 65 years old) and FI (33% between 55 and 64 years old). The youngest respondents are among Lega supporters (44%), non-voters (38%) and M5S (33%).

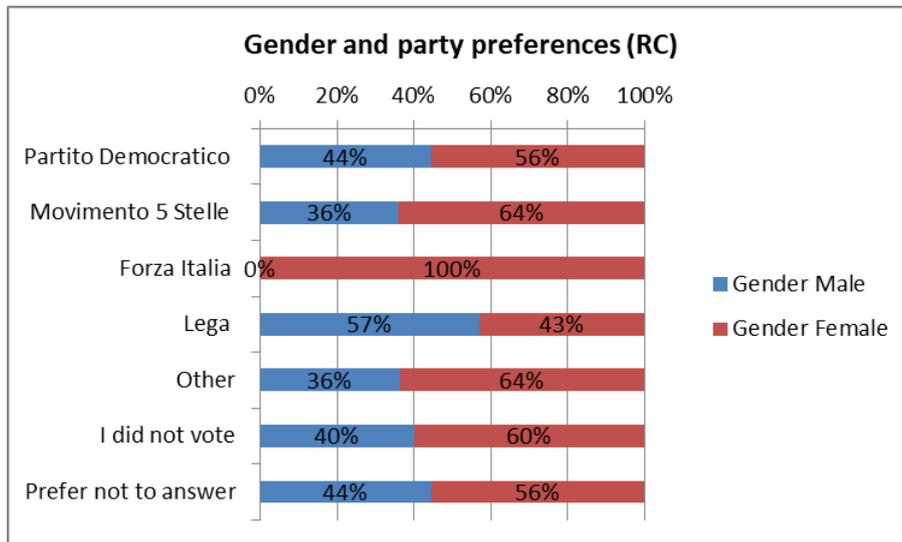
Appendix 17. Figure 2



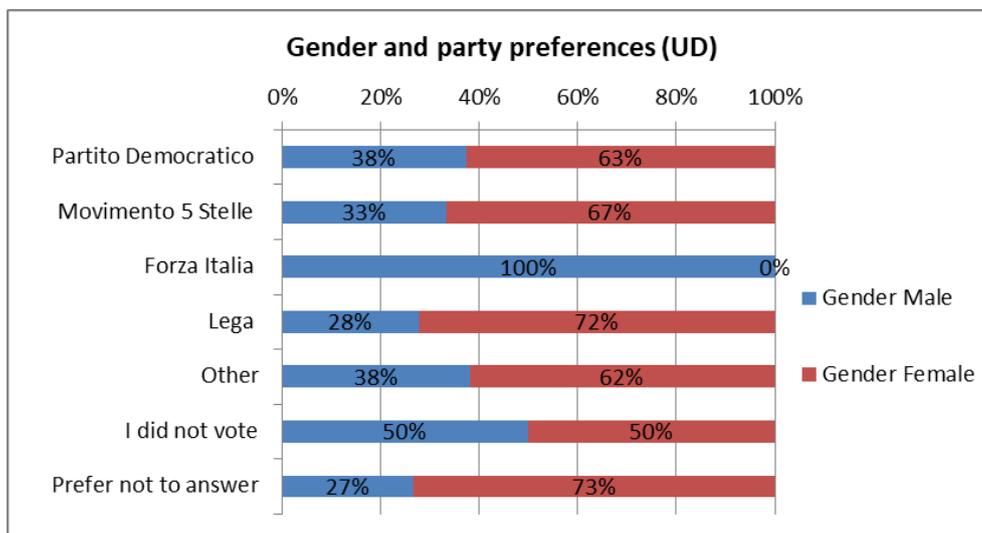
²⁵ Zero percentage ("0%") in the graphs of citizen surveys means that the share of respondents who answered or the share of answers to a particular choice within a multi-choice question is zero, i.e. no respondent responded to the question or pointed to a choice in the multi-choice questions. A multi-choice question is for example Strongly disagree – Disagree - Neither agree nor disagree - Agree-Strongly agree (i.e. Linkert scale).

In terms of gender, there are no substantial differences across the party preferences and gender. In the case of both Udine and Reggio di Calabria, there were more women participating in the survey, which explains why they have majority share among all parties.

Appendix 17. Figure 3

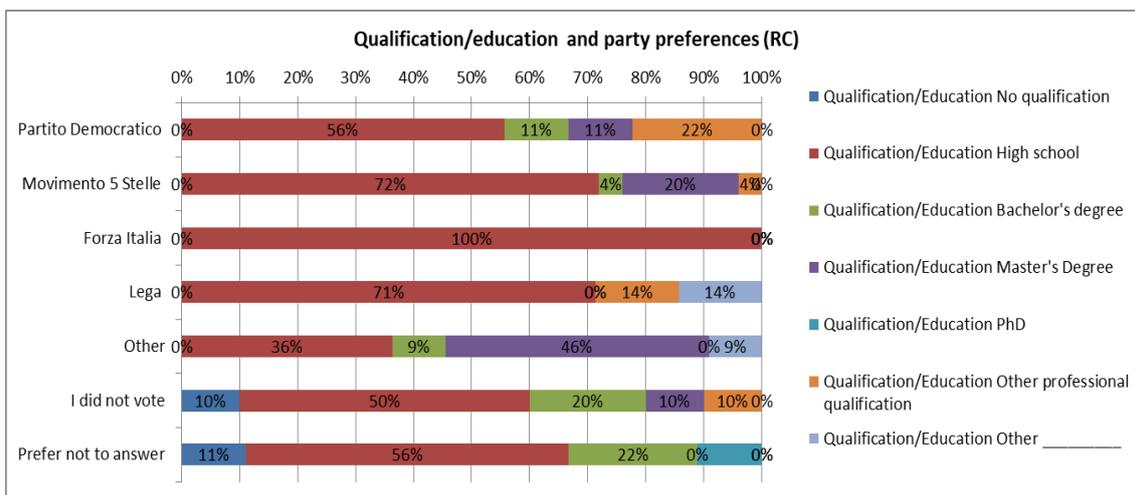


Appendix 17. Figure 4



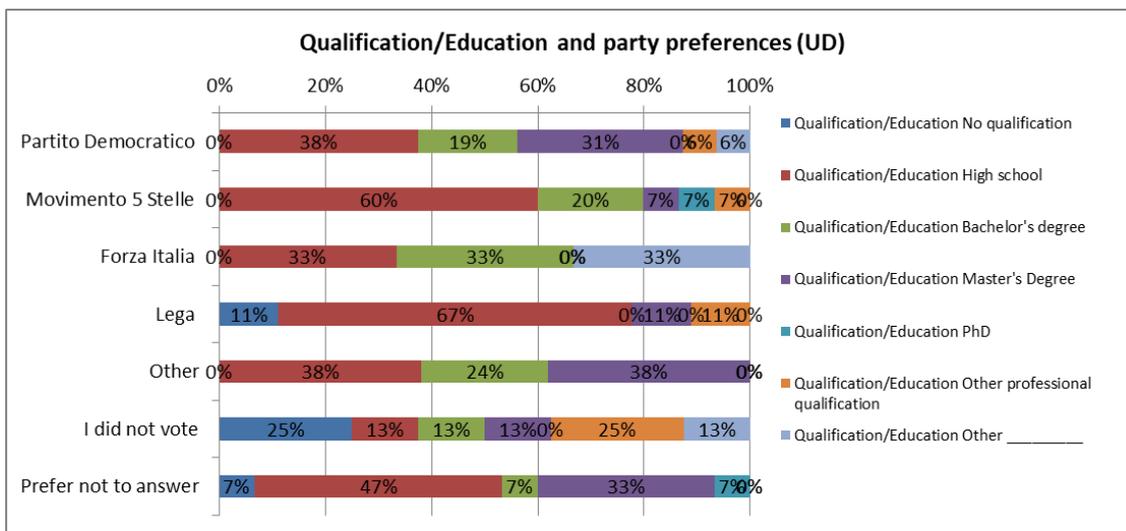
When it comes to education, the group with a high school education had a majority in Reggio di Calabria across all parties from 30% (other), 50% (PD, non-voters, undefined) and 70% (Lega, M5S). Those with a higher education – bachelor’s and master’s – are best represented by who did not identify politically (22%), PD (22%), M5S (24%), non-voters (30%), and smaller, “other” parties (55%).

Appendix 17. Figure 5



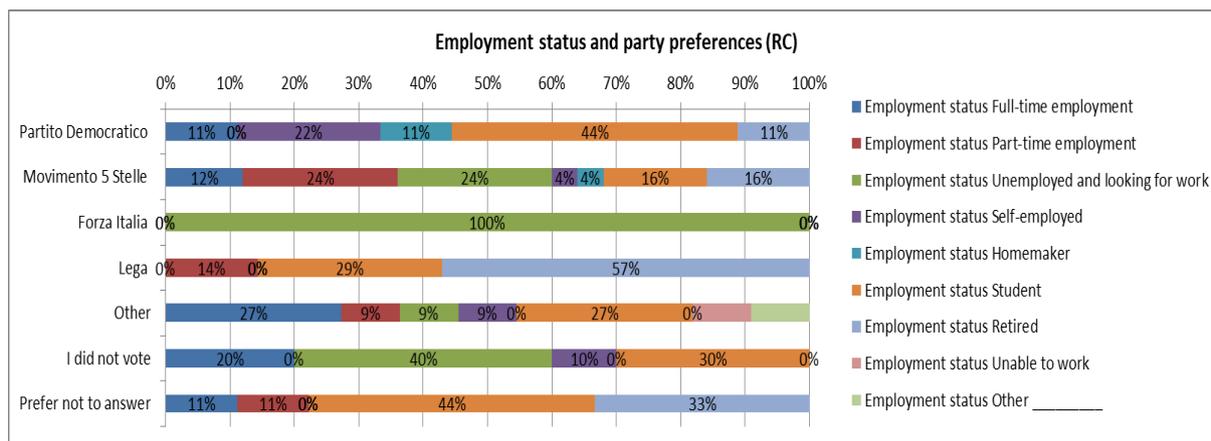
In Udine, the situation is much more diverse, with high school graduates again having high shares among Lega (67%), M5S (60%) and the politically undefined (47%). Those with a postgraduate education can be found among the voters of smaller, “other” parties (62%), PD (50%) and the politically undefined (40%).

Appendix 17. Figure 6



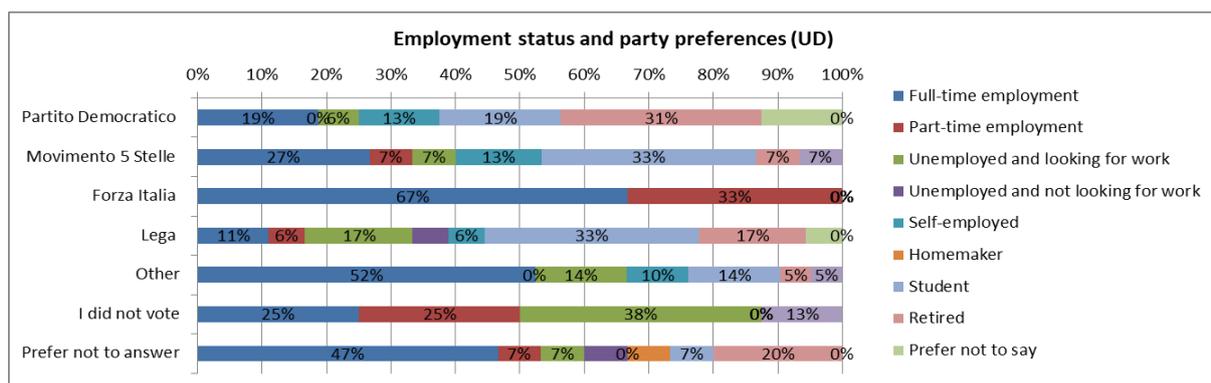
With regard to employment status and party preferences in Reggio di Calabria, the unemployed are associated to a higher degree with FI (100%), non-voters (40%) and M5S (24%), students mostly with the politically undefined and PD (44%) and about a third of non-voters, other, small parties and Lega. The retired are associated most with the politically undefined (33%), Lega (57%) and, to lesser extent, M5S (16%). Those in full-time employment are associated with smaller parties (27%) and non-voters (20%) and the part-time employed with M5S (24%).

Appendix 17. Figure 7



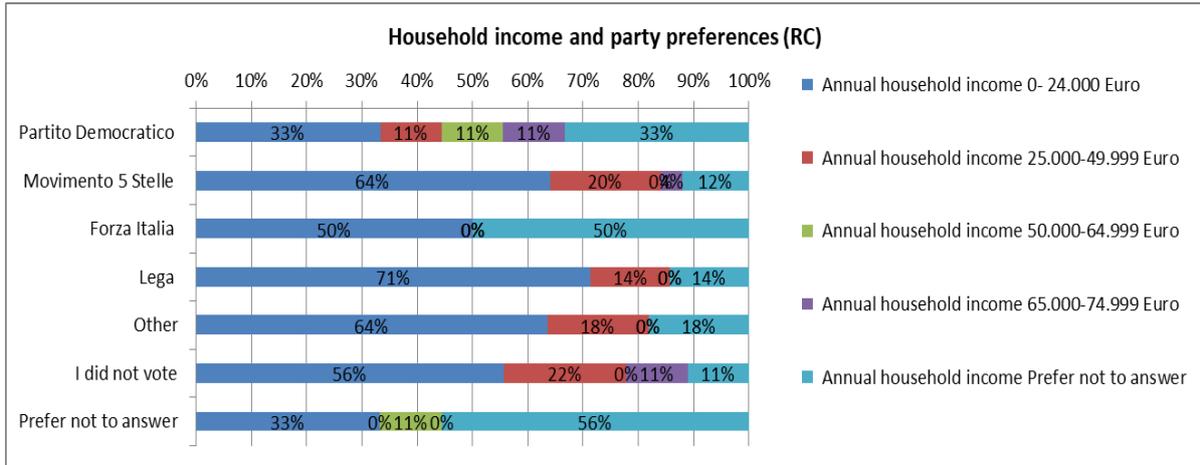
In Udine, the fully employed are associated most strongly with FI (67%), other small parties (52%), the politically undefined (47%) and M5S (27%). The retired are associated mostly with PD (31%), the politically undefined (20%) and Lega (17%), students with M5S and Lega (33%) and the unemployed with non-voters (38%).

Appendix 17. Figure 8



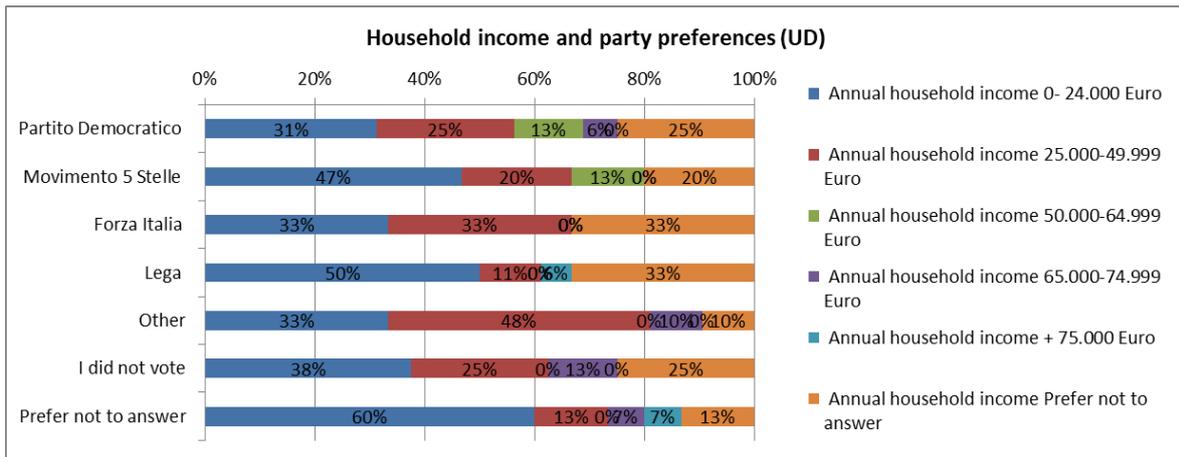
In terms of household income and party preferences, in Reggio di Calabria, respondents from the higher income brackets were found most among PD supporters (33% above the lowest income bracket), non-voters (33%) and M5S (24%). Those within the lowest income bracket voted mostly Lega (71%), M5S and smaller, "other" parties (64%) and about half of FI supporters and non-voters. Those who did not identify their income are mostly politically undefined and FI supporters (around 50%).

Appendix 17. Figure 9



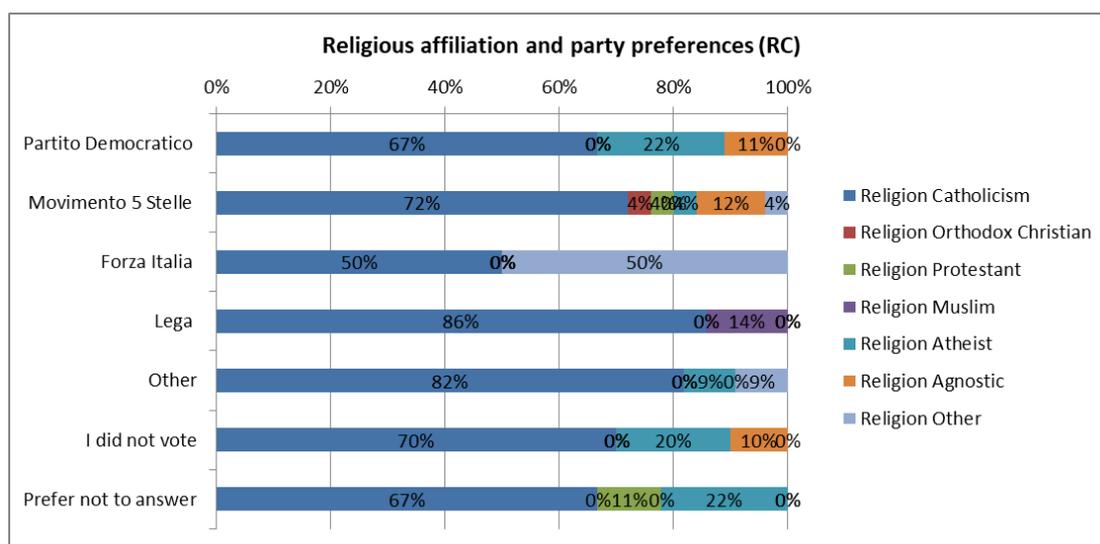
In Udine, those with a higher household income voted for the smaller, “other” parties (58%), FI (33%), were non-voters and PD supporters (38%), and M5S supporters (33%), with non-voters somewhat richer.

Appendix 17. Figure 10



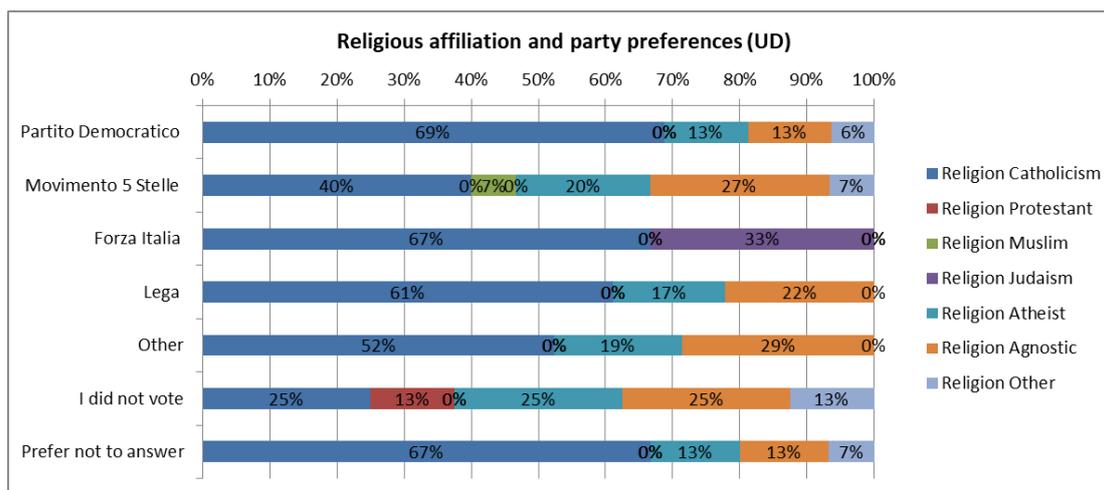
With regard to religion and party preferences in Reggio di Calabria, they are most diverse among M5S supporters – with 72% Catholic, but small shares of Orthodox Christian, Protestant, Agnostic, Atheist and other, followed by PD, non-voters and the politically undefined, with around a 30% share of religions other than Catholicism. The highest share of Catholic voters is among Lega (86%) supporter, other small parties (82%) and about 70% of nearly all other parties.

Appendix 17. Figure 11



In Udine, non-voters are the most diverse in their religious association (25% Catholic, Protestant and agnostic, among others), followed by M5S voters (40% Catholic, 27% agnostic, 20% atheist and 7% Muslim). The Catholic respondents are a majority for PD (69%), FI and the politically undefined (67%), Lega (61%), and least among non-voters (25%).

Appendix 18. Figure 12



10.18. Appendix 18. CSO typologies and developments at national level in Poland

In 2014, there were 150,000 registered CSOs, which were 85.9% associations and similar organisations, 7.1% foundations, 5.7% public benefit organisations and 1.2% faith-based charities, although it has been estimated that only 70% of organisations in 2015 were actually active.²⁶ The most established organisations are in sport, culture, recreation, tourism and social services and assistance, but the oldest organisations are active in healthcare, whilst the least established are in local development.

The largest sector is sport, leisure, tourism and recreation, which accounts for 34% of organisations, with education the second most common at 15%. This is followed by culture and art with 13%, healthcare with 8% and social services with 7%. However, if you account for organisations' more extended activities, not just their main focus, the numbers rise to 55% in sport, leisure, tourism and recreation, 53% in education, 35% in cultural activities, 21% in both local development and social assistance, and 20% in healthcare.

Approximately one-fifth of Poles are involved in volunteering, around half of whom volunteer at least once a month, and 61% of organisations make use of volunteer work, up from 40% in 2006. Volunteers usually work in the area of social services and assistance, accounting for 78% of volunteers, and are used most by the wealthiest organisations, although the least wealthy organisations use "internal volunteering"²⁷ through their members. Organisations active at multiple levels – local, regional, national, etc. – are also more likely to use volunteers. This could become more of a challenge for local, less wealthy organisations since membership of these organisations has declined, from 40 per organisation in 2007 to 30 per organisation in 2015. Since around only half of members actively participate in an organisation and paying employees is too expensive, many are forced to look for volunteers to fill the gap. Around 45% of organisations are based solely on volunteering and employ people through various means, such as permanent contracts, contract work, and other forms of agreement. Regular employment is most commonly found in social services and assistance, healthcare and local development, and is much more common in large urban areas than in peripheral or rural areas. Overall, the scale of employment in civil society is quite low.

Average revenues of Polish CSOs have increased since 2011, from EUR 4,180 in 2011 to EUR 6,280 in 2014, although this could be due to the disappearance of

²⁶ See the CSO environment and CSOs at regional level in Poland section of the report for sources.

²⁷ "Internal volunteer" means that persons volunteer for activities related to their organisation.

CSOs with the smallest budgets (fewer than EUR 230 per annum), which declined from 20% to 14%. Social services and assistance organisations have the highest budgets, followed by healthcare and education, local development, sport, leisure, tourism and recreation, and culture.

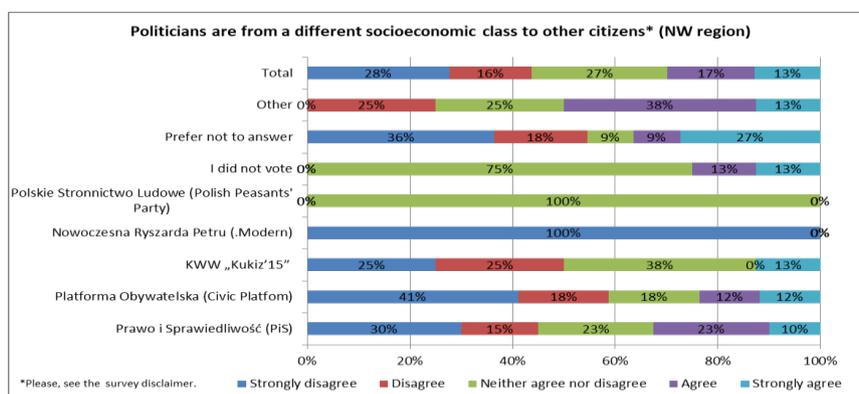
There are also big differences in income between rural and urban areas. The average income of organisations in rural areas in 2014 was EUR 3,955, increasing

to EUR 5,120 in places with 50,000 people, EUR 16,000 in places with 200,000 people and EUR 21,900 in Warsaw. More established organisations also tend to have larger budgets. In 2014, the main sources of income were membership fees, used by 60% of organisations, local government 55%, private donations 45% and institutional donations 35%, but in terms of total revenue, the EU accounted for 23% of income, local and central government 15% each, and private donations 9%.

10.19. Appendix 19. Party affiliation and key questions on populism in Poland²⁸

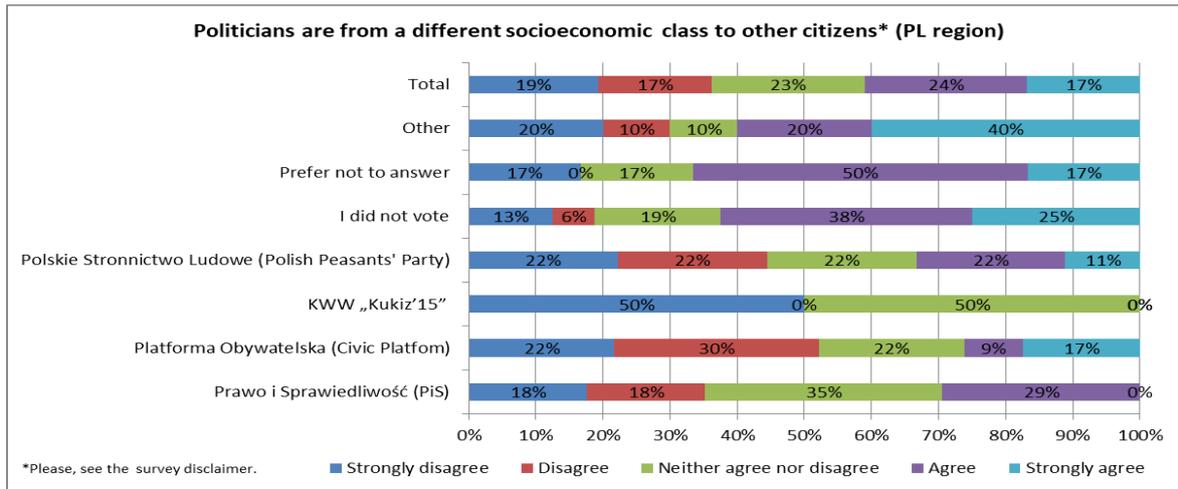
Concerning anti-elite sentiments, a significant share of respondents from the Nowosądecki region (44%) disagree with the statement that “Politicians are from a different socioeconomic class to other citizens” with 30% agreeing with it. Non-populist voters – 59% for Civic Platform – oppose the position to a larger extent than do populist voters (PiS, Kukiz’15). The supporters of such parties also have a larger share of disagreement, with 45% of voters of the ruling PiS opposing the position and 33% in agreement (Appendix 19, Figures 1 and 2).

Appendix 19. Figure 1



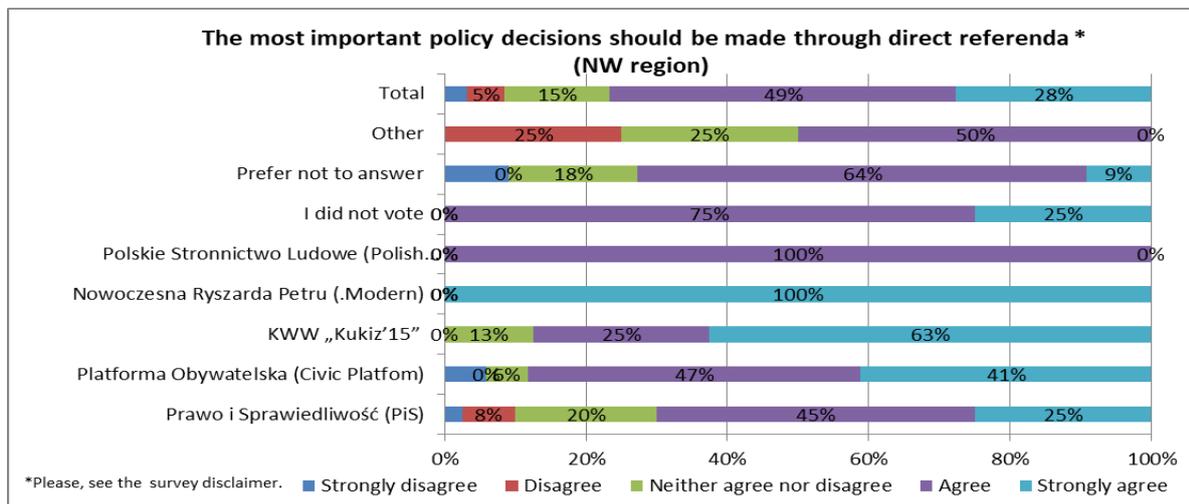
Appendix 19. Figure 2

²⁸ Zero percentage (“0%”) in the graphs of citizen surveys means that the share of respondents who answered or the share of answers to a particular choice within a multi-choice question is zero, i.e. no respondent responded to the question or pointed to a choice in the multi-choice questions. A multi-choice question is for example Strongly disagree – Disagree - Neither agree nor disagree - Agree - Strongly agree (i.e. Likert scale).

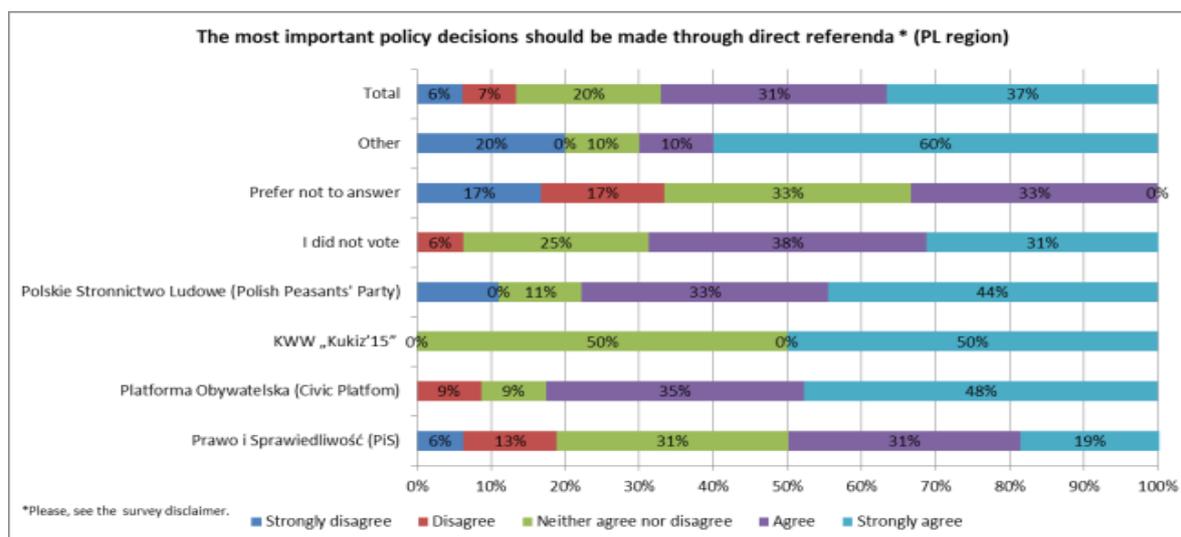


With regard to direct democracy, the majority of respondents in the Nowosądecki region (77%) strongly agree that the most important decisions should be made through direct referenda. Non-voters, populists and non-populists alike support the statement, although those of the governing PiS to a lesser extent (70%). Greater opposition to referenda comes from voters of the smaller parties, but even they are split 50-50 on the issue. In Płocki, the highest support for direct referenda can be found among PO voters (83%), PSL voters (77%), non-voters (69%) and Kukiz'15 (50%). Those against it are among the unaffiliated (34%), other small parties (20%) and PiS (19%) (Appendix 19: Figures 3 and 4).

Appendix 19. Figure 3

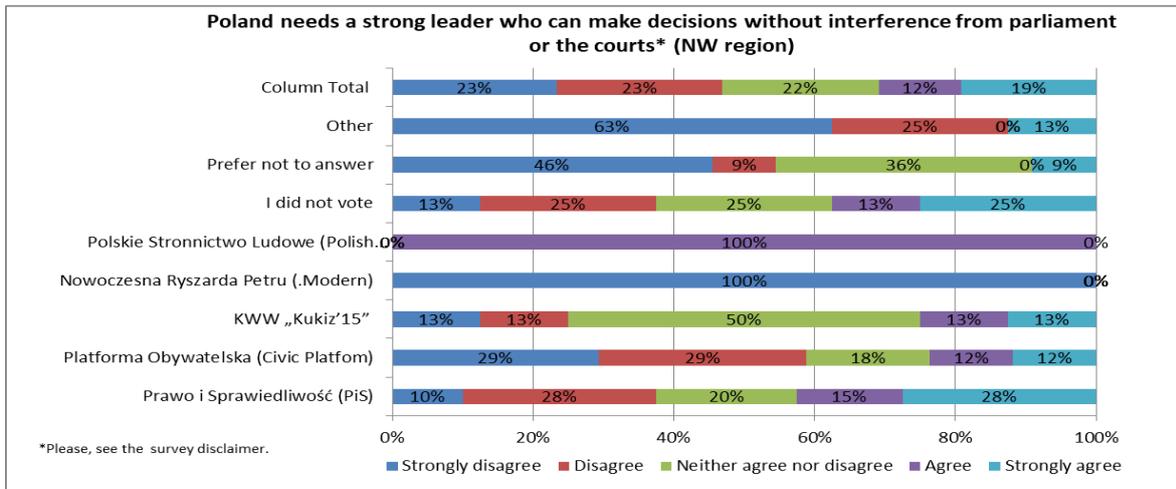


Appendix 19. Figure 4

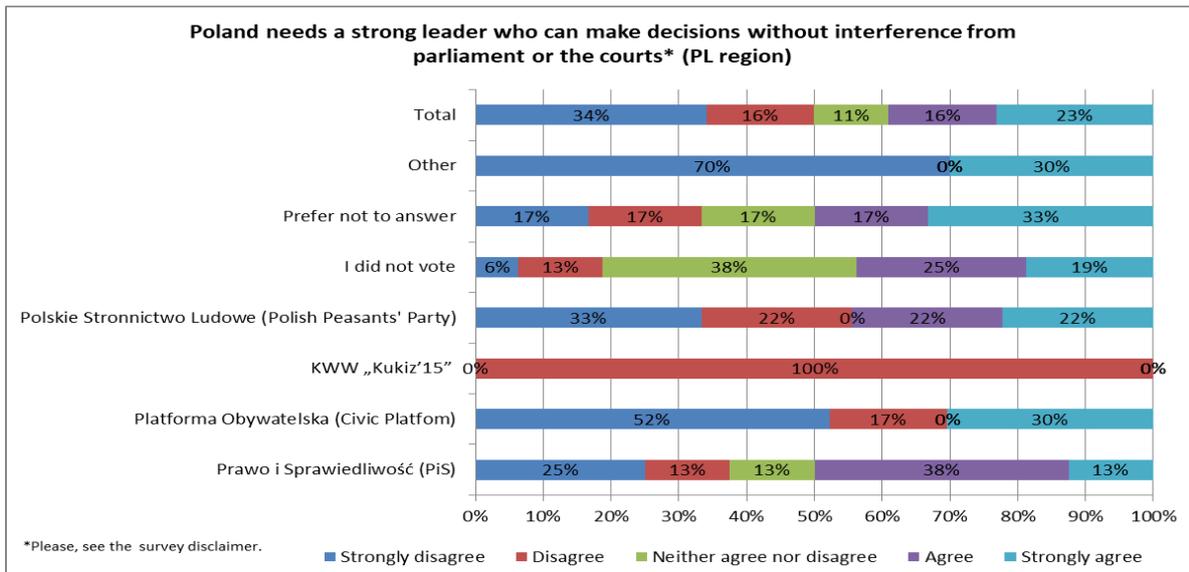


On the issue of authoritarianism, or “façade democracy”, answering the question “Poland needs a strong leader who can make decisions without interference from parliament or the courts”, the respondents in the Płocki region agree and disagree in equal measure – 39% and 40%, respectively. It seems that supporters of non-government parties – regardless of whether they are populist or not – do not agree with it (non-populists) and/or are undecided (opposition populists). Civic Platform voters in the Płocki region reject it by 69%. Only among the governing populist PiS party is there support for a strong leader – 51% against 38% who oppose it. There is relatively high support among non-voters, too, for a strong leader, with 34% in favour, 19% opposing and 38% undecided. Support for a strong leader who can act against democratic checks and balances is supported by 31% of respondents in the Nowosądecki region respondents and is opposed by 46%. The highest support is among the ruling PiS party (43%), with 38% against. The voters of another populist party, but which is in opposition – Kukiz 15 – are divided, in equal measure, in support and opposition to strong leadership – 26% apiece. It is interesting to note that non-voters are in the same position with 38% supporting and 38% opposing the suggestion. Civic Platform voters oppose it with 48% against 24% who support the position. (Appendix 19: Figures 5 and 6).

Appendix 19. Figure 5



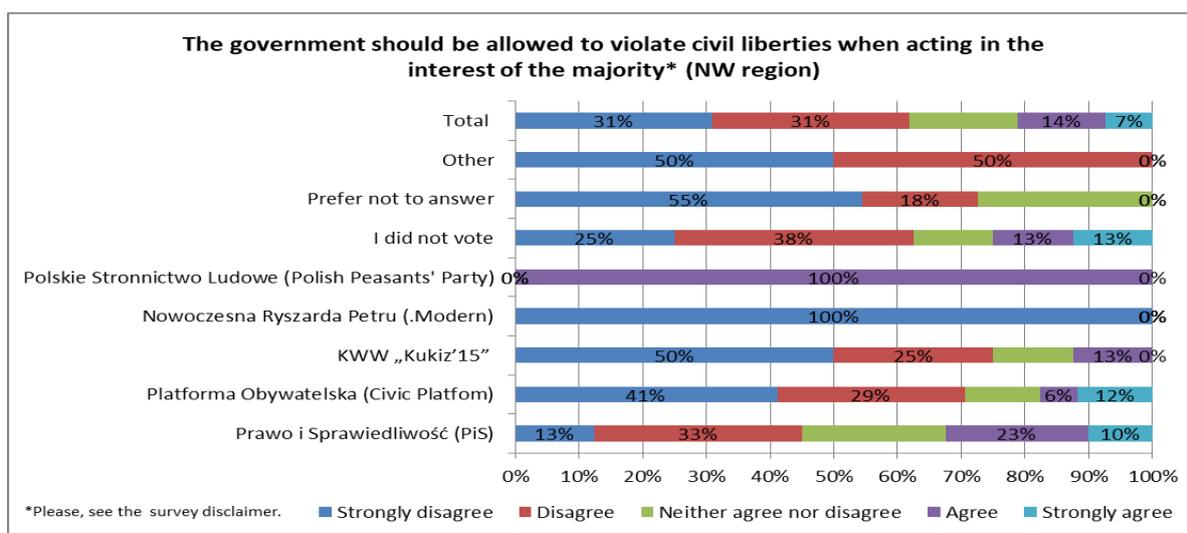
Appendix 19. Figure 6



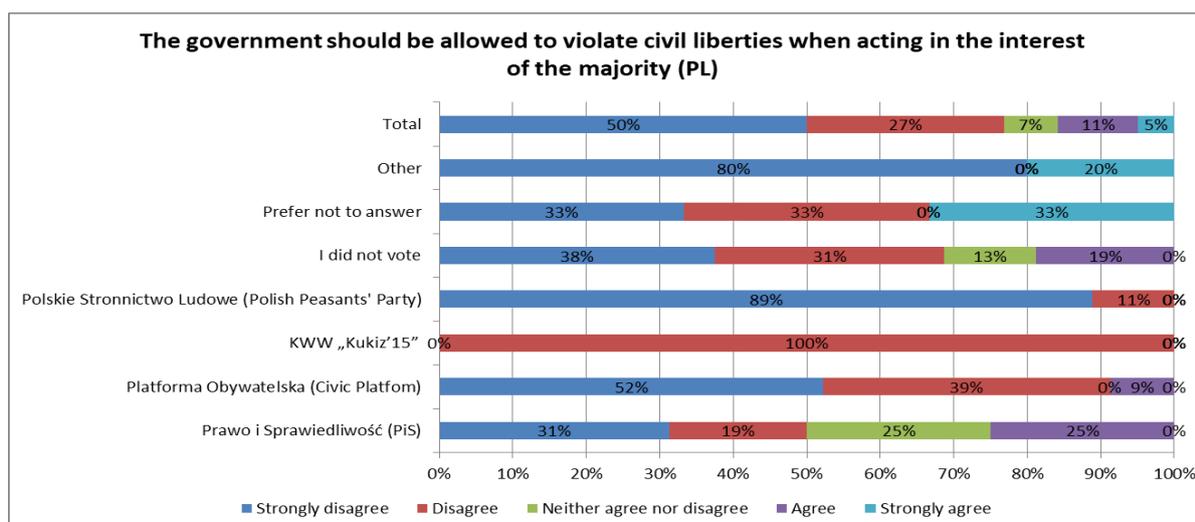
With regard to the majoritarian aspect of populism, answering to the question “The government should be allowed to violate civil liberties when acting in the interest of the majority”, the responses in the two regions are provided below. The vast majority of respondents in Płocki (74%) and Nowosądecki (61%) disagree with the proposition and just 17% and 21%, respectively, agree. In terms of party preferences, in the Płocki region the supporters of the ruling PiS tend to have higher support for curbing civil liberties (25%), with a similar share of undecided respondents (25%), but the rest (50%) are against it.

Non-voters are also more inclined to support the position – about 19%, with 13% undecided, although 69% reject this notion. The vast majority of voters of the non-populist Civic Platform are against it, with 91% opposing and just 9% in favour. Voters of the populist Kukiz'15 are also, almost unanimously, against the proposition. In Nowosądecki, a third of PiS voters support the notion of limiting civil liberties, 46% are against and 23% undecided. Voters of the non-populist Civic Platform strongly reject the proposal (70%), which is also the case with Kukiz'15 (75%) (Appendix 19: Figures 7 and 8).

Appendix 19. Figure 7

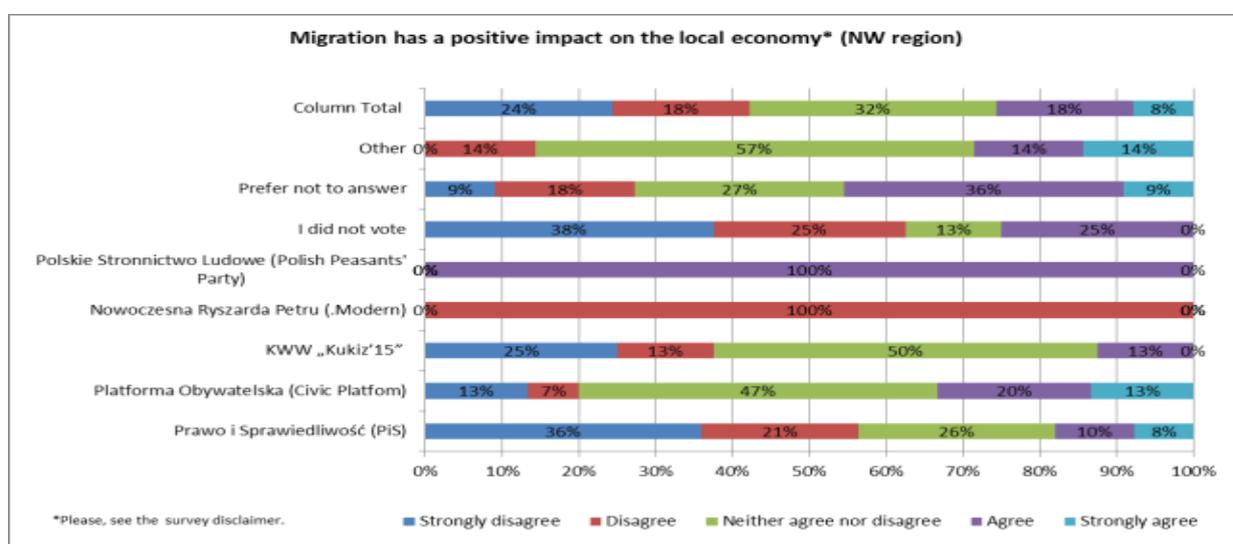


Appendix 19. Figure 8

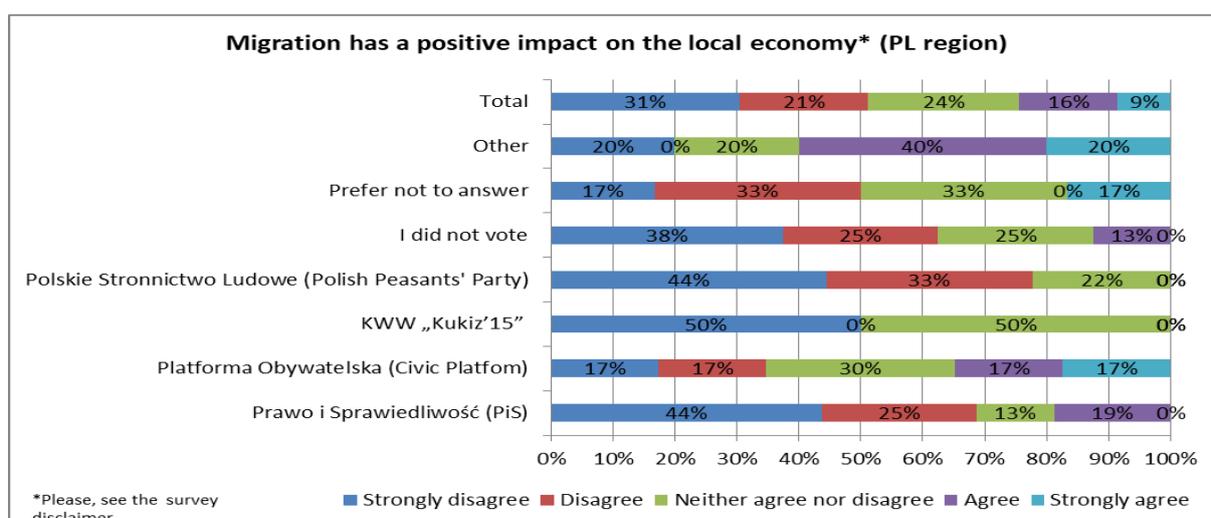


With regard to migration and its local economic impact, just 24% of all respondents in the Nowosądecki region say that it has positive impact and 42% say that it doesn't. Supporters of ruling PiS party and, to a greater extent, non-voters reject this notion in the highest degree – 57% and 63% respectively. It is worth noting that most of the voters of the non-populist Civic Platform are undecided, with 47% and only 33% in support. Voters of the opposition populist Kukiz'15 are also largely undecided (50%), but with a high level of disagreement (38%). In the Płocki region, the benefits of migration are supported most of all by the respondents of other, smaller parties (60%) and PO voters (34%). The notion is rejected most by the Peasant's Party (77%), PiS voters (69%), non-voters (63%) and Kukiz'15 (50%) (Appendix 19: Figures 9 and 10).

Appendix 19. Figure 9

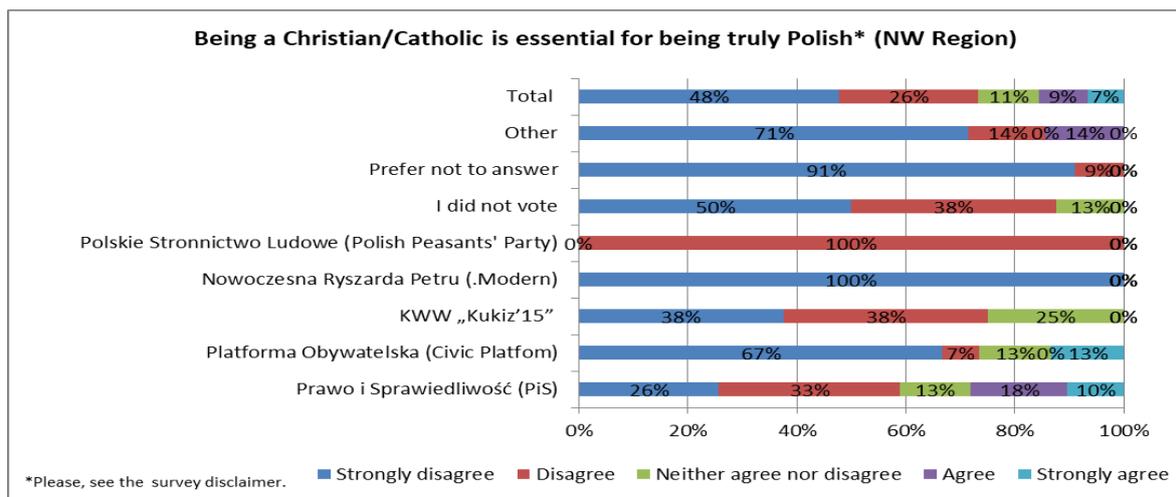


Appendix 19. Figure 10

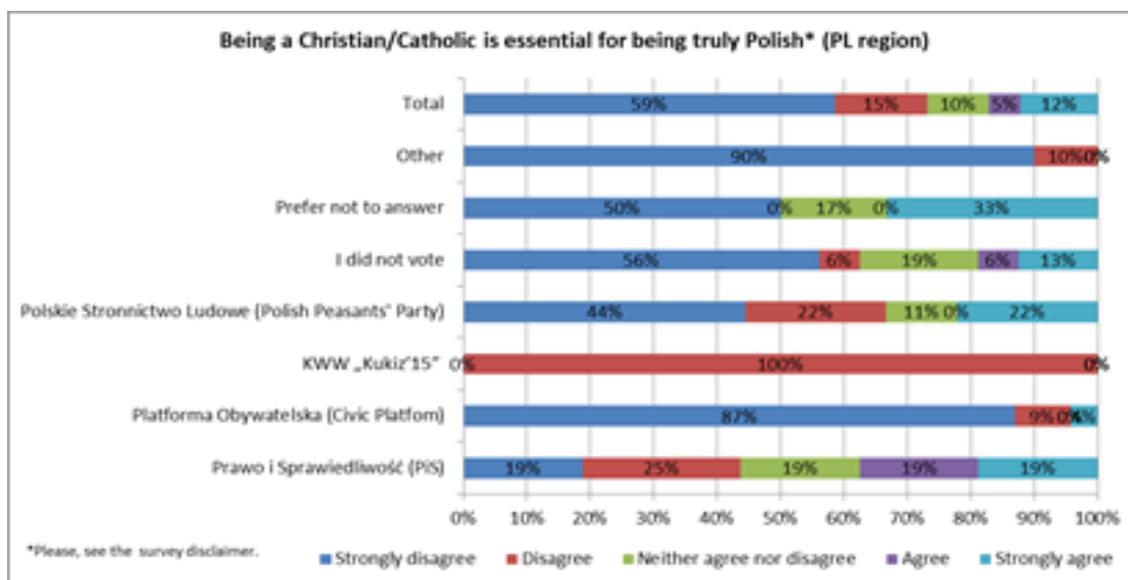


Regarding religion and national identity, it is interesting to note that only 16% of respondents in the Nowosądecki region support the idea that being a Christian/Catholic is essential for being truly Polish but the vast majority (74%) disagree with it. The highest support is among PiS voters (28%), but 59% of them disagree. The non-populist and populist voters of Civic Platform and Kukiz'15 reject the notion with 74% and 76%, respectively, and non-voters (88%) reject it to the greatest extent. The situation in the Płocki region is identical ([Appendix 19: Figures 11 and 12](#)).

Appendix 19. Figure 11

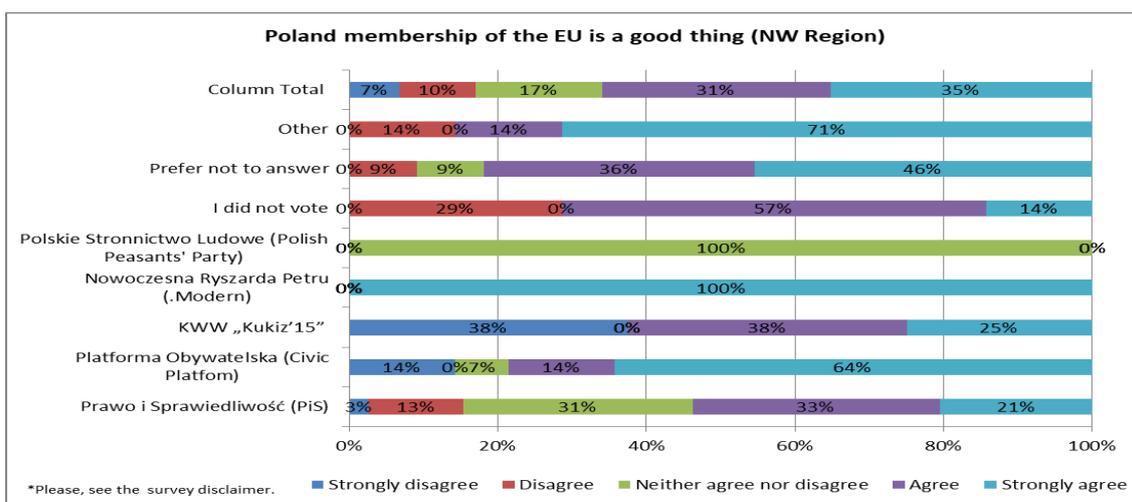


Appendix 19. Figure 12



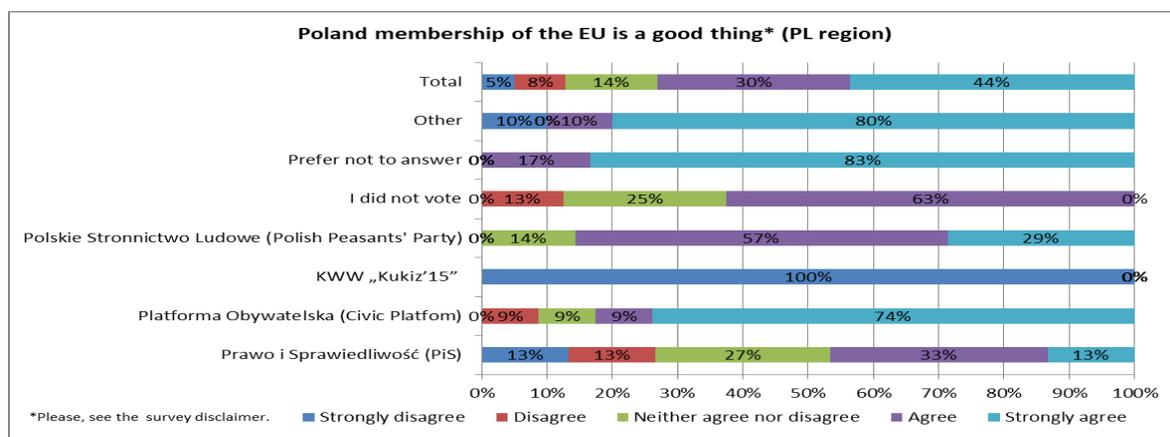
In terms of EU membership, the vast majority of respondents in the Nowosądecki region either strongly agree (35%) or agree (31%), compared to strongly disagree (7%) and disagree (10%). It should be noted that the highest support for EU membership is among the non-populist Civic Platform with 78% (64% strongly agree and 14% agree), followed by the populist Kukiz'15 with 63% and PiS with 54%. Furthermore, voters of the populist Kukiz'15 voters are divided, with 38% strongly disagreeing that EU membership is good for Poland, but rejection of EU membership is at its highest among non-voters, with 86%. The situation in Płocki is identical, with 44% strongly agreeing and 30% agreeing with that EU membership is good for Poland, with just 14% undecided and 13% against it.

Appendix 19. Figure 13



The highest support is among voters of the non-populist Peasant Party (86%), Civic Platform (85%), those who did not express a political affiliation (83%) and other small parties (80%). Those who disagree with membership most are the populist Kukiz'15 (all of their respondents), PiS (26%) and non-voters (13%). Among PiS and non-voters, there is a very high proportion of undecided respondents – 27% and 25% respectively (Appendix 19: Figures 13 and 14).

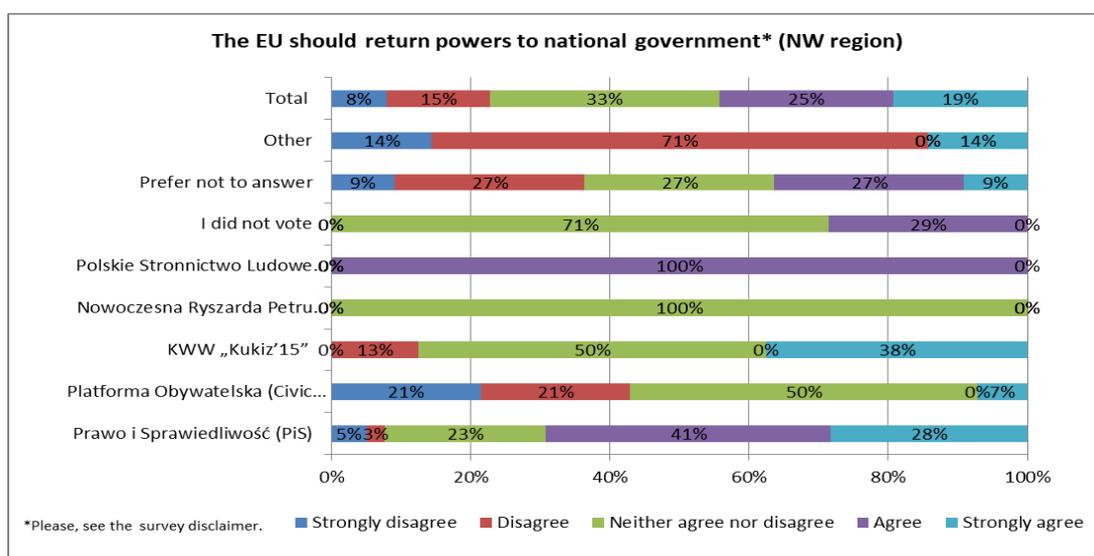
Appendix 19. Figure 14



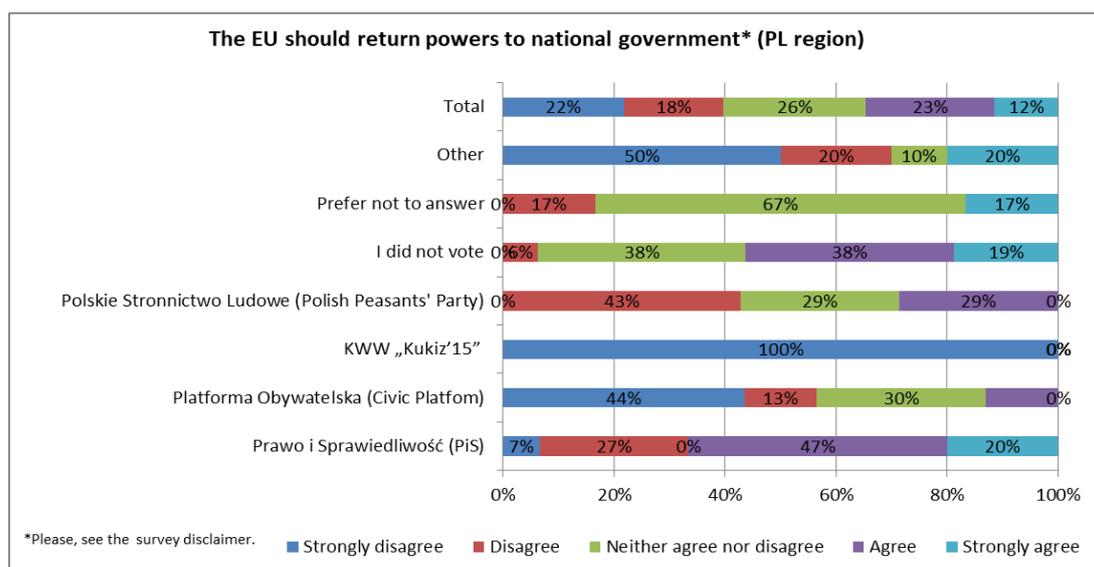
With regard to the sovereignty debate, respondents in the Nowosądecki region are almost equally divided between agreement, disagreement and undecided over whether the EU should return powers to the national government. The governing PiS supporters agree to the highest extent (69%), with just 8% disagreeing. About 38% of the populist Kukiz'15 also agree, as well as 29% of non-voters.

There is a similar situation in the Płocki region as 35% support and 40% oppose the EU returning powers to the national government. A sizable majority of the governing PiS party voters support this notion, while the opposition Civic Platform voters reject with it with 57%

Appendix 19. Figure 15



Appendix 19. Figure 16

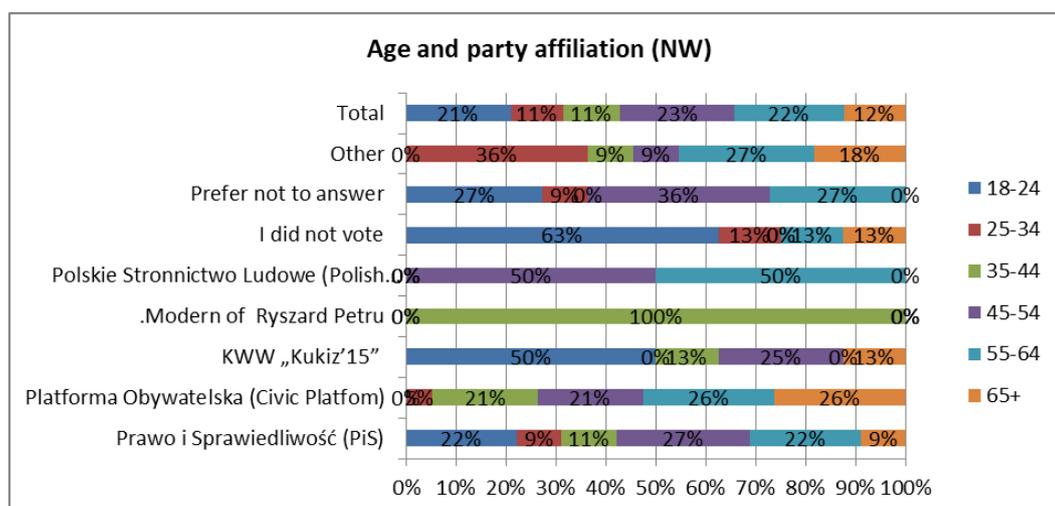


10.20. Appendix 20. Party supporters' profiles across demographic indicators at regional level in Poland²⁹

The breakdown of respondents in the survey by different demographic indicators in the two regions in Poland shows the following results.

With regard to age, in Nowosądecki, PiS voters are represented by nearly every age group and are very close to the regional average (total), which are about 21%-23% for each group between 18-24, 45-54 and 55-64 years of age, and about 11%-12% for the rest age groups, while those of Kukiz'15 are somewhat younger, half of them between 18 and 24 years of age.

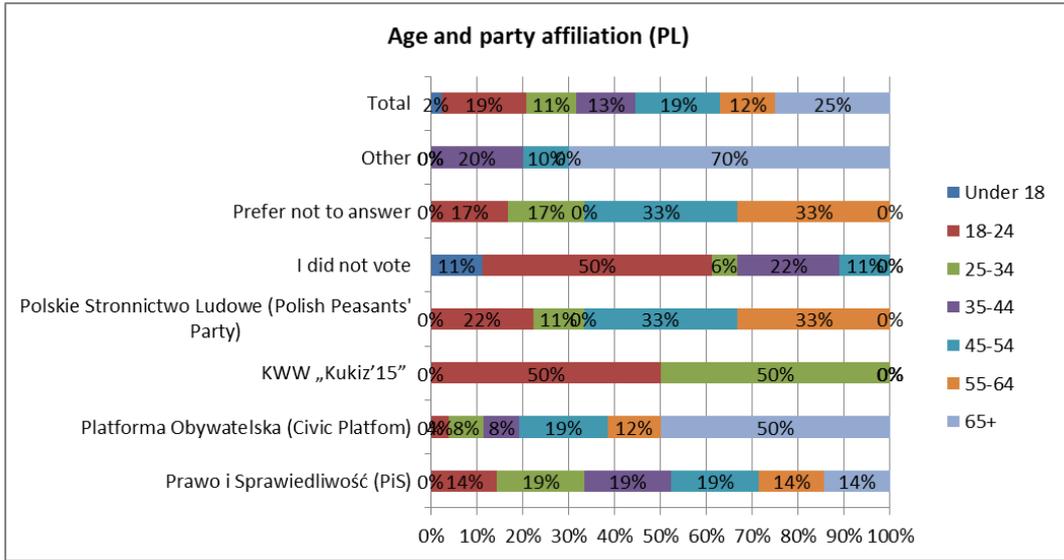
Appendix 20. Figure 1



In the Płocki region, PiS voters are represented by diverse age groups in nearly equal share, while the other populist party, Kukiz'15, has a higher proportion of younger voters – all under 34 years old.

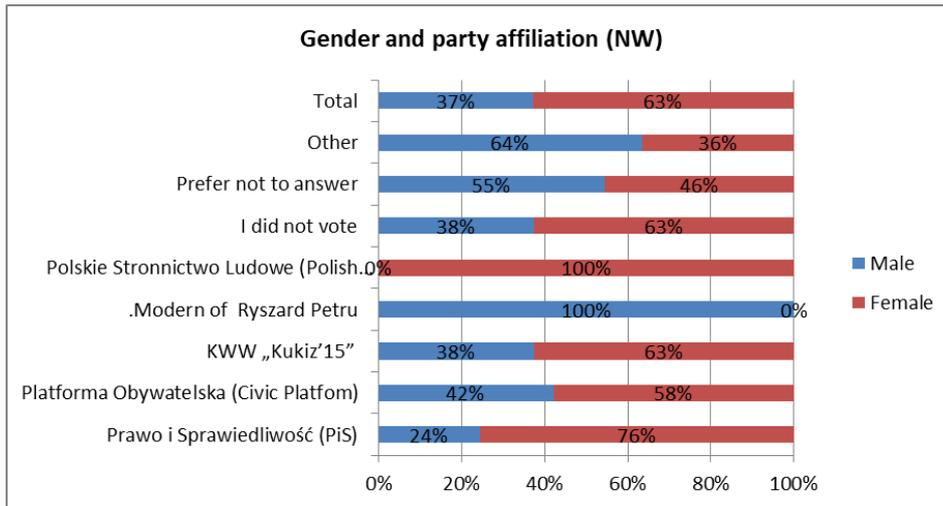
²⁹ Zero percentage (“0%”) in the graphs of citizen surveys means that the share of respondents who answered or the share of answers to a particular choice within a multi-choice question is zero, i.e. no respondent responded to the question or pointed to a choice in the multi-choice questions. A multi-choice question is for example Strongly disagree – Disagree - Neither agree nor disagree - Agree-Strongly agree (i.e. Linkert scale).

Appendix 20. Figure 2



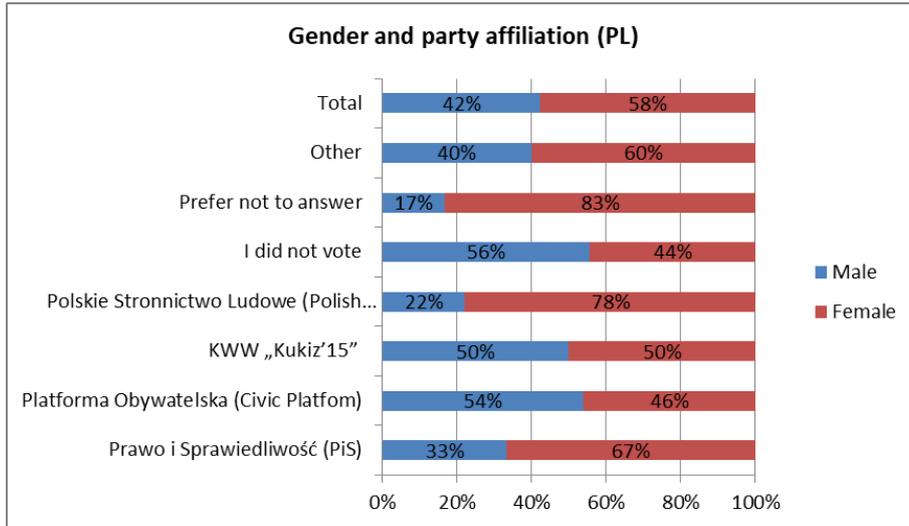
In terms of gender, 76% of PiS respondents are female, which is the highest share compared to the other parties (except PSL), and the share of female respondents is for Kukiz’15 is 63%.

Appendix 20. Figure 3



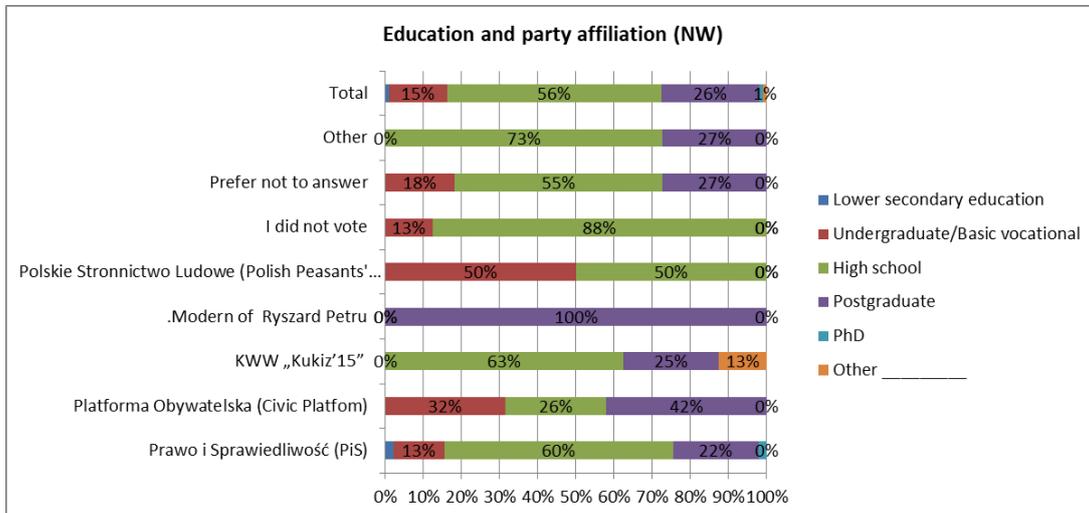
In the Płocki region, PiS respondents are 67% female and 33% male, while for Kukiz’15 the it is a 50-50 split.

Appendix 20. Figure 4



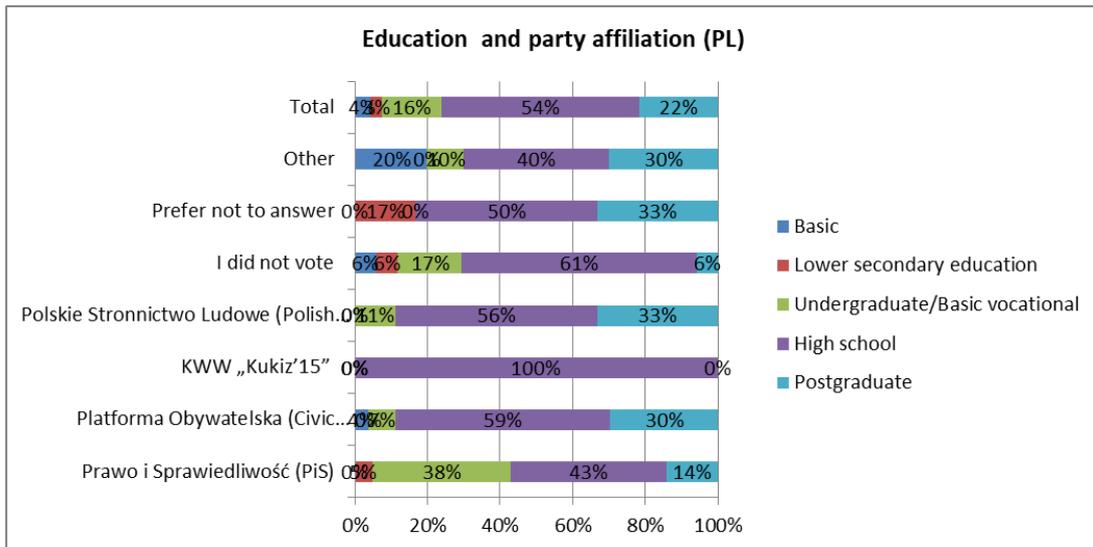
When it comes to education, in the Nowosądecki region, respondents with a high school education predominate for both PiS (60%) and Kukiz’15 (63%). The non-populist PO has a higher proportion of postgraduates (42%) than the populist PiS (22%) and Kukiz’15 (25%).

Appendix 20. Figure 5



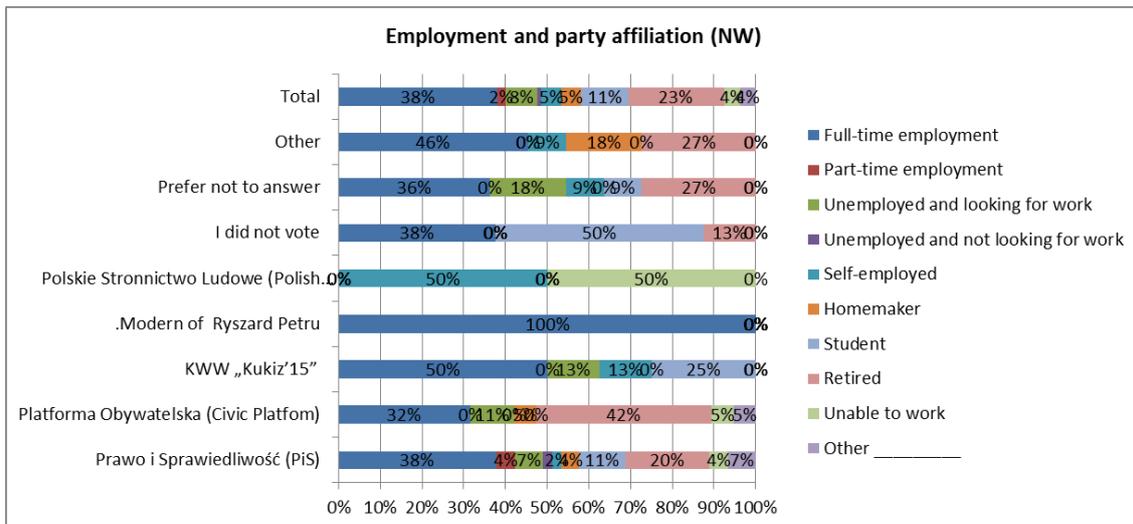
In Płocki, some 81% of PiS voters have either an undergraduate degree or high school education (38% and 43%, respectively), and Kukiz’15 are represented entirely by respondents with a high school education. Non-populist party supporters have relatively higher levels of education the populist parties, with postgraduates accounting for 30% of PO respondents and 33% of PSL respondents.

Appendix 20. Figure 6



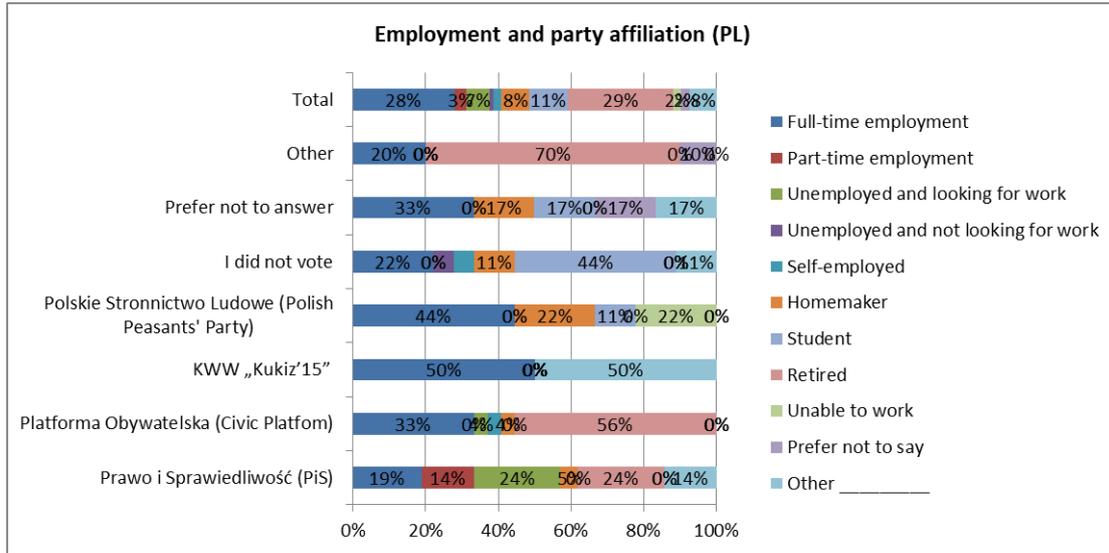
With regard to employment, in the Nowosądecki region, PiS and Kukiz’15 voters are represented by a variety of groups, most of all those in full-time employment – 38% and 50%, respectively.

Appendix 20. Figure 7



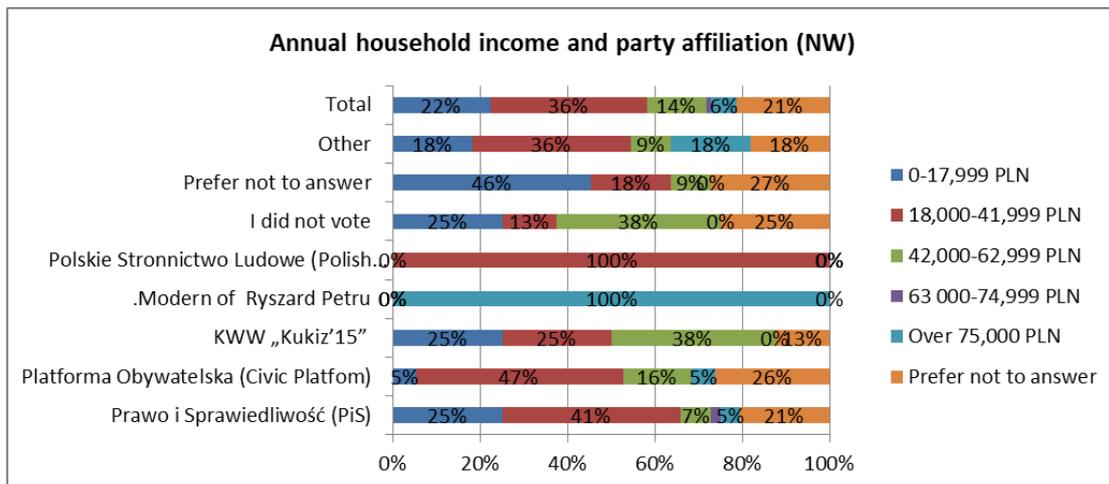
In the Płocki region, PiS and Kukiz’15 are again represented by a variety of employment groups – 50% of Kukiz’15 respondents are employed full-time whilst PiS supporters are mostly split between full-time employment, unemployed and retired.

Appendix 20. Figure 8



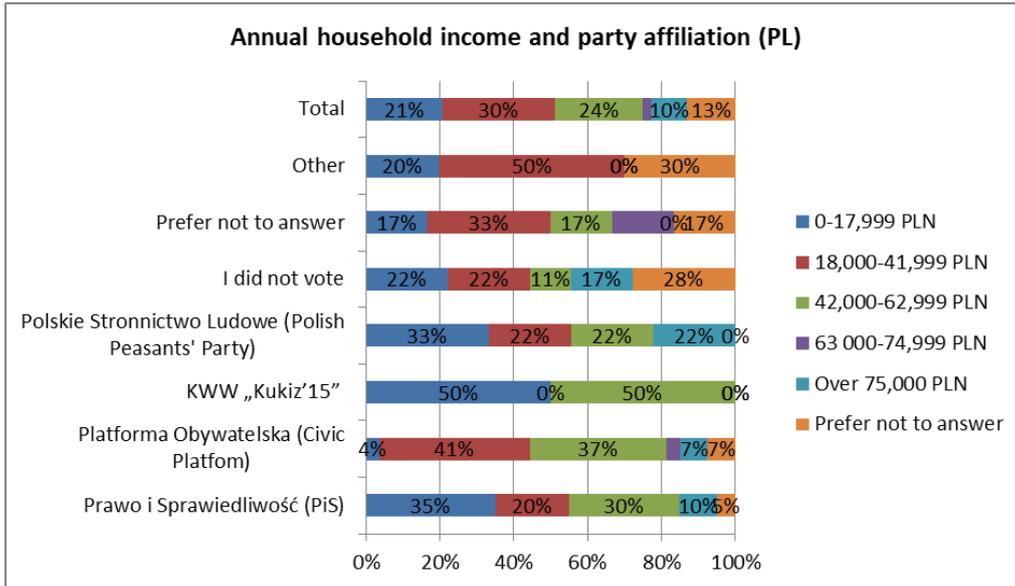
Concerning annual household income, in the Nowosądecki region, the highest share of PiS supporters (41%) is within the 18,000-41,999 PLN bracket, 25% are below this in the lowest bracket, while Kukiz’15 has a higher share of higher income respondents – 38% are within the 42,000-62,999 PLN group.

Appendix 20. Figure 9



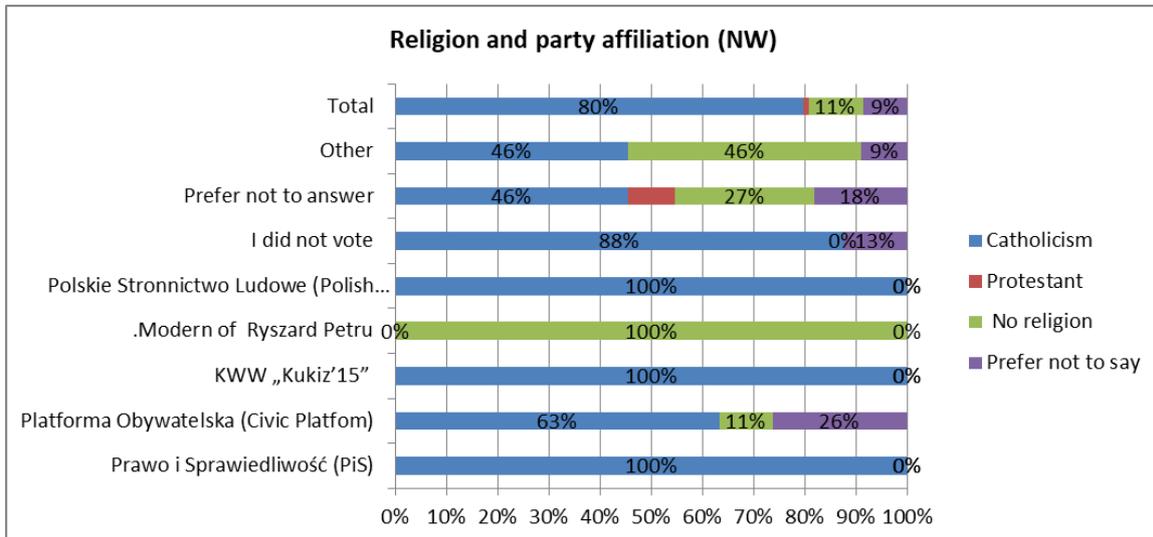
In the Płocki region, 35% of PiS voters are within the lowest income group compared to 50% for Kukiz’15, although Kukiz’15 supporters have higher share of the higher income group – 50% are within the 42,000-62,999 PLN bracket.

Appendix 20. Figure 10



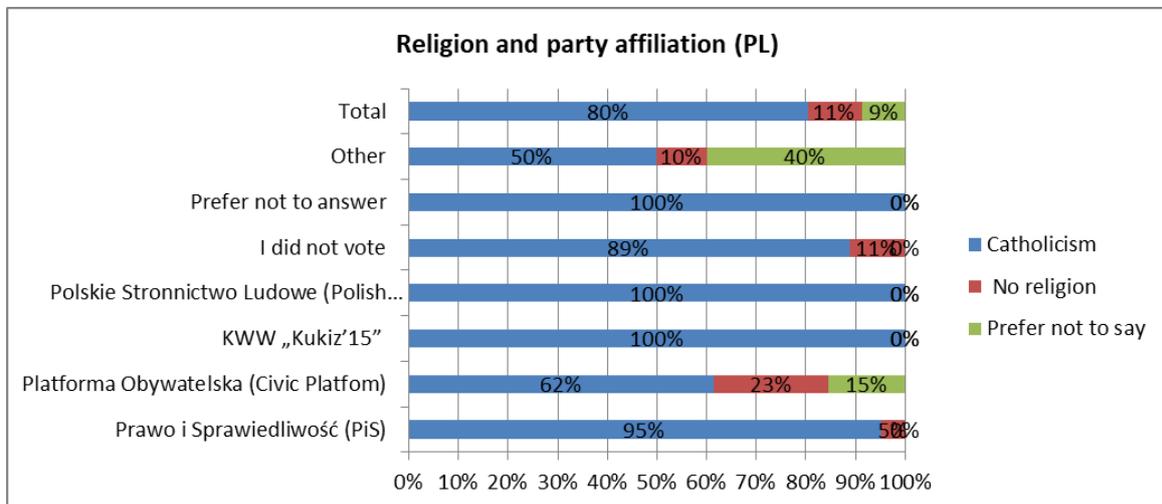
With regard to religion and party affiliation, in the Nowosądecki region, all of the populist PiS and Kukiz’15 supporters are Catholics, but that is considering that the total share for the region is 80%. Compared to this, 63% of the non-populist PO are Catholics, with the rest either with no religion or preferred not to say.

Appendix 20. Figure 11



In the Płocki region, it is a similar situation with all the populist PiS and Kukiz 15 voters declares as Catholics, while the total share for the region is 80%. The non-populist PO voters are represented by 62% Catholics and the rest either have no religion or preferred not to specify.

Appendix 20. Figure 12



10.21. Appendix 21. Populist vote results on national and regional level

	GDP (PPS) per inhabitant	% of EU average	Populist vote				Population density (km ²)	Largest urban area	Total population
			Leg. (2017)	Pres. (2016) 1 st round	Pres. (2016) 2 nd round (annulled)	Pres. (2016) 2 nd round			
Austria	n/a	130%	26%	35.1%	49.7%	46.2%	n/a	n/a	n/a
Klagenfurt-Villach	36,900	127%	29.4%	36.7%	53.6%	50.4%	144.4	100,316	281,395
Niederösterreich-Süd	27,400	94%	28.7%	39.5%	56.3%	53.6%	76.6	43,863	255,720
	GDP (PPS) per inhabitant	% of EU average	Populist vote		Population density (km ²)	Largest urban area	Total population		
			Chamber (2018)	Senate (2018)					
Italy	n/a	95%	69.7%	69.7%	n/a	n/a	n/a		
Udine	29,900	103%	70.6%	70.5%	112	176,000	536,180		
Reggio di Calabria	18,100	62%	75.2%	76.8%	173.5	200,330	557,993		
	GDP (PPS) per inhabitant	% of EU average	Populist vote			Population density (km ²)	Largest urban area	Total population	
			Parl. (2015)	Pres. (2015) 1 st round	Pres. (2015) 2 nd round				
Poland	n/a	68%	51.2%	58.8%	51.6%	n/a	n/a	n/a	
Płocki	32,200	111%	60.9%	64.2%	60%	100.8	162,000	330,040	
Nowosądecki	17,700	43%	73.8%	75.6%	74.6%	152.5	158,000	550,000	
	GDP (PPS) per inhabitant	% of EU average	Populist vote			Population density (km ²)	Largest urban area	Total population	
			Leg. (2017)	Pres. (2017) 1 st round	Pres. (2017) 2 nd round				
France	n/a	105%	24%	40.9%	33.9%	n/a	n/a	n/a	
Drôme	28,100	97%	28.2%	44%	37.4%	78.3	127,559	504,637	
Aisne	20,200	70%	33.9%	52.7%	52.9%	72.7	110,369	538,659	

10.22. Appendix 22. Constructing the Populism Index of selected parties in Austria, France, Italy and Poland

The study constructed a Populism Index of selected parties in Austria, France, Italy and Poland for the purposes of the research. Using the 2014 and 2017 Chapel Hill Expert Surveys (CHES)³⁰, the study looked at anti-elitism, authoritarianism, majoritarianism and cultural openness (that is, the extent to which they are mono- or multi-cultural) as aspects of populism, as well as assessed whether Euroscepticism is an additional facet of populism in the eight regions. The degree to which populist political parties reflect these different aspects of populism pointed to the nature of populism in the regions and served as a useful tool for understanding whether voters' choices reflect these same values.

The CHES³¹ asks political scientists specialising in political parties and European integration to assess party positions in terms of political ideology, European integration and various policy areas. These expert views are cross-validated with alternative sources of information on party positioning, including the Manifesto Project Database, which analyses parties' election manifestoes to study policy preferences³². Where possible, 2017 CHES data was used. If

2017 data was not available, we used 2014 data. For Austria, only 2014 CHES data was available.

The study used the variables from the CHES surveys listed in Table 1 below, standardised to a 1-10 scale – 1 is least populist and 10 most populist.

Anti-elitism was measured according to the salience of anti-elite and anti-establishment rhetoric. Majoritarianism was assessed by attitudes towards the rights of ethnic minorities. Authoritarianism was measured by positions towards civil liberties, individual rights and freedoms and direct vs. representative democracy. Cultural openness was scored according to positions towards immigration, multiculturalism and nationalism (the 'Nationalism' variable was used for Austria instead of 'GALTAN_NEW'). Euroscepticism was measured by a party's position towards European integration.

³⁰ Polk, Jonathan, Jan Rovny, Ryan Bakker, Erica Edwards, Liesbet Hooghe, Seth Jolly, Jelle Koedam, Filip Kostelka, Gary Marks, Gijs Schumacher, Marco Steenbergen, Milada Vachudova and Marko Zilovic. 2017. "Explaining the salience of anti-elitism and reducing political corruption for political parties in Europe with the 2014 Chapel Hill Expert Survey data," *Research & Politics* (January-March): 1-9.

³¹ All Chapel Hill survey data can be accessed here: <https://www.chesdata.eu/our-surveys/>

³² The Project uses coders from 50 different countries to analyse political party policy preferences. It aims to substantively analyse the role of parties at different stages of the political process and it specifically examines the quality of programmatic representation. It studies the programmatic supply of parties, the relation between parties and voters, the role of parties in parliament, and the translation of party programmes into policy output. <https://manifesto-project.wzb.eu/information/documents/information>

Appendix 22. Table 1. CHES variables

Measure	Variable	Description
Anti-elite	ANTIELITE_SALIENCE	1 = least anti-elite 10 = most anti-elite
	PEOPLE_VS_ELITE	1 = elected office holders should make the most important decisions 10 = “The people”, not politicians, should make the most important decisions 2017 data only
Majoritarian	ETHNIC_MINORITIES	1 = strongly supports rights for ethnic minorities 10 = strongly opposes rights for ethnic minorities
Authoritarian	CIVLIB_LAWORDER	1 = strongly promotes civil liberties 10 = strongly supports tough measures to fight crime 2014 data only
	GALTAN	1 = Libertarian/Postmaterialist 10 = Traditional/Authoritarian
Monocultural	IMMIGRATE_POLICY	1 = fully opposed to a restrictive policy on immigration 10 = fully in favour of a restrictive policy on immigration
	MULTICULTURALISM	1 = strongly favours multiculturalism 10 = strongly favours assimilation
	GALTAN_NEW	Position of the party in terms of a cultural dimension with Green/Alternative/Libertarian (GAL) at one extreme and Traditionalist/Authoritarian/Nationalist (TAN) at the other. 1 = GAL 10 = TAN
	NATIONALISM	1 = strongly promotes cosmopolitan rather than nationalist conceptions of society 10 = strongly supports nationalist rather than cosmopolitan conceptions of society
Euroscptic	EU_POSITION	1 = strongly in favour of European integration 10 = strongly opposed to European integration



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