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Against Right-Wing Populism and Euroskepticism – For Openness and Respect

Introduction

Right-wing populism is more and more threatening our free democratic basic order and thereby the European integration process, too. All over Europe, right-wing populist parties, groups or individuals make use of a general feeling of economic, social and political insecurity amongst people and push their own interests forward at the expense of European politics. In the same time, right-wing populist topics and opinions have already arrived in the “heart” of our society long time ago. We, the Young European Federalists, a pro-European organisation take a clear stand on this issue.

Right-wing populist ideas are willingly accepted because of their simplicity and in the same time pretended scientific evidence. The danger comes from the difficulty to name a clear ideology that right-wing populist ideas are based on, as it takes various forms and can have different origins. Right-wing populism is no closed ideology but consists of pieces that might partly even be contradictory to each other. “Right-wing” populism therefore appears in all parts of society and in many political ideologies. The corresponding patterns do not necessarily appear only in organisations that are generally considered as right-wing extremist or radical. Associations and parties that identify themselves as being part of the “core of society” may have right-wing populist features to stir up public opinion.

JEF against right-wing populism and euroskepticism

Especially since the financial and debt crisis that provoked a predominant euroskeptical mood, reinforced by economic insecurity, right-wing populist parties make use of this distinct social atmosphere to underpin their general nationalistic attitude. “Soft” and “hard” forms of euroskepticism have to be distinguished.

Right-wing populist parties use the democratic deficit of the European institutional system as well as the transfer of national sovereignty towards the EU to defend their policy. These parties often pretend to be popular and unbureaucratic. They are actionist and thus are able to distinguish their policy from EU policy. They often declare the EU as totalitarian and as an



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institution that supports conformity instead of national identity. Following this argumentation, the European integration means centralisation and incapacitation of the nation states. These fears are particularly present in Central and Eastern European countries which are specifically concerned about the loss of sovereignty due to their history.

Right-wing populist parties often use migration as a preface to bring up related subjects such as nationalism, EU-skepticism and racism. Therefore such parties could take root especially in Scandinavian countries. Recently, many right-wing populist parties take advantage of the financial and economic crisis. Besides, one has to worry that due to the increasing youth unemployment which results from the crisis, the popular right-wing populist attitude of young Europeans could be enhanced. This trend has to be counteracted. The advantages of a strong EU need to be explained.

JEF supports the demand for a reform of the European integration processes and calls upon pro European parties to discuss this issue constructively and as soon as possible. That is the only way to disprove the arguments of the right-wing populist parties concerning the supposed incapacitation of national affairs by the European Union.

JEF for democracy and integration!

JEF works actively against the spreading of right-wing populist ideas. By means of education, discussions and workshops we want to actively take action against the right-wing populist developments as well as against the desensitization of society in this regard. Moreover we want to promote a broad discussion about the future of Europe. Populist arguments of any kind have to be confronted by well-informed discussions.