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# A broadening agenda? Southern European far-right campaigns in the 2024 European Parliament elections

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## ABSTRACT

In the 2024 European Parliament (EP) elections, far-right parties achieved significant electoral success, further consolidating their position in Europe. Against this background, this article focuses on Southern Europe (Greece, Italy, Portugal, and Spain). It examines far-right parties' electoral campaigns by analysing four core issue areas, ranging from the traditional far-right focus on immigration to concerns related to the environment, gender rights and economic grievances. The findings point to the diversification of the far-right agenda beyond immigration. Although immigration featured prominently in all parties' campaigns, other issues, including environment, gender, and the economy, were emphasised and discussed to varying degrees across Southern Europe. These findings contribute to discussions around the far right's broadening agenda and its increasingly variegated appeal.

## KEYWORDS

Far right; Southern Europe; European Parliament elections; Party manifestos

## Introduction

Media and pundits presented the European Parliament (EP) elections held on 6–9 June 2024 as a barometer of far-right parties' performance in Europe, i.e. parties that combine anti-establishment narratives with authoritarianism and anti-immigration views (Pirro, 2023). The far right secured 187 seats in the EP, which is a little over a quarter of the total number of seats. Seats were divided mainly between the European Conservatives and Reformists (ECR), which secured 78 seats, and the newly established Europe of Sovereign Nations (ESN) and Patriots for Europe (PfE). The ESN and the PfE gained 25 and 84 seats, respectively (European Parliament, 2024).<sup>1</sup> The centre-right European People's Party (EPP) remains the dominant parliamentary group, followed by the Social Democrats (S&D). The far-right PfE and ECR emerged as the third and fourth groups, respectively, which is a clear reflection of the meaningful gains the far right achieved in 2024 (Schläger et al., 2024).

Despite their gains, the far right's success varied considerably across EU member states and within Southern Europe. Significant victories occurred in Austria, Italy, France, Poland, and Hungary (European Parliament, 2024). In Greece, Portugal and Spain, the far right achieved comparatively modest – yet significant – gains. Against this background, this article assesses the supply-side dynamics of Southern European far-right party success. It dissects these parties' agendas, policies and electoral campaigns by offering a deep dive into the predominant issues of immigration, the environment, gender and the economy.

Our findings indicate that despite considerable variation, far-right parties in Southern Europe enjoyed significant electoral success in the 2024 EP elections. In terms of party campaigns, we point to the heterogeneous broadening of far-right party agendas. While far-right parties in Southern Europe continued to prioritise immigration concerns in their campaigns, we also find evidence of a diversified policy portfolio. The Brothers of Italy, the League, Chega and Vox criticised the EU's environmental policy allegedly interfering with economic sovereignty. The Brothers of Italy, Victory, Voice of Reason and Vox discussed gender and family issues more broadly. Finally, the Greek Solution, the League, the Brothers of Italy, Chega and Vox also mobilised on economic grievances. Our findings contribute to the academic debate on the multifaceted performance of the far right in the 2024 EP elections.

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We commence by contextualising far-right politics in Greece, Italy, Portugal and Spain to allow for a more comprehensive understanding of the far-right party supply in these countries. We then sketch the 2024 EP election results across Southern Europe, highlighting the varying success of far-right parties. Following a methodological note, we turn to the analysis of the supply side of the far right through a qualitative analysis of far-right manifestos, shedding light on key salient issues indicating the broadening of the far-right portfolio beyond the typical far-right anti-immigration stance. We conclude by offering reflections on intra-regional comparisons of the 2024 EP election campaigns and by pointing to avenues for future research.

### Far-right electoral results in Southern Europe in the 2024 EP elections

Far-right parties in Southern Europe displayed high levels of variation in their vote shares and ranking (Table 1). In Greece, the far right remained fragmented, with three parties gaining parliamentary representation in the 2024 EP elections. Greek Solution (*Ελληνική Λύση*) doubled its previous electoral vote share with 9.3 percent of the vote (European Parliament, 2024). Victory (*Δημοκρατικό Πατριωτικό Λαϊκό Κίνημα – Νίκη*) and Voice of Reason (*Φωνή Λογικής*) ran for the first time and scored 4.4 and 3.04 percent, respectively (European Parliament, 2024).

In Italy, the Brothers of Italy (*Fratelli d'Italia*) maintained its leading position with 28.8 percent of the vote, while the League (*Lega*) trailed behind with 9 percent. The aggregate results of the far right in Italy show its staggering electoral appeal, with the Brothers of Italy outperforming the League, by securing more than three times the number of votes (European Parliament, 2024). These results further highlighted the League's diminished electoral relevance, with a decline of over two-thirds compared to the EP elections results in 2019 (European Parliament, 2024). Despite the League's dwindling popularity, during and after the electoral campaign, its leader Matteo Salvini has been vying for attention relative to Meloni, by offering remarks on a plethora of topics and lurching increasingly towards radicalism. Moreover, Salvini has strengthened ties with the National Rally's (*Rassemblement National*) leader Marine Le Pen who is profoundly hostile to President of the European Commission Ursula Von der Leyen in a ham-fisted attempt to steer dynamics within the now-dissolved parliamentary group Identity and Democracy (ID) and to reaffirm opposition to the EU. After the 2024 EP elections, he joined forces with Le Pen, Hungary's far-right PM Viktor Orbán, Spain's Santiago Abascal and Portugal's André Ventura as part of his party's membership of the PFE.

In the Iberian Peninsula, the far right performed similarly in Portugal and Spain, with Chega and Vox obtaining 10 and 9.6 percent of the vote, respectively (European Parliament, 2024). Vox gained six seats (two more compared to 2019), and its leader Abascal was sworn in as the leader of the new EU parliamentary group PFE (Brzozowski, 2024). These results reflect a comparatively lower level of far-right support in Spain and Portugal. However, when considered with reference to their domestic context, they indicate an upward trend for the far right in the Iberian Peninsula, which was – until recently – labelled as an exceptional case of EU member states shielded from radicalism (Mendes & Dennison, 2020).

### The far right: A conceptual approach

In this article, we adopt Pirro's (2023) definition of far-right ideology, i.e. anti-establishment and anti-immigration narratives blended with authoritarianism. The far right has attracted substantial academic attention, with scholars increasingly advocating an approach that accounts for their broadening agendas and increasing success. Their electoral performance in the 2024 EP elections points towards the growing influence and normalisation of this party family, which has been progressively mainstreamed in both domestic and EP

**Table 1.** Electoral performance of far-right parties in Southern Europe, 2024 European Parliament elections.

Country	Party	Per cent	Rank	EP Group
Greece	Greek Solution	9.3	4th	ECR
	Victory	4.4	6th	NI
	Voice of Reason	3.04	8th	PFE
Italy	Brothers of Italy	28.8	1st	ECR
	League	9	5th	PFE
Portugal	Chega	10	3rd	PFE
	Vox	9.6	3rd	PFE

politics (Mudde, 2024; Valentim, 2024). Although the far right has in the past been characterised as a single-issue party family prioritising their concerns over immigration (Boomgaarden & Vliegenthart, 2007; Van Der Brug et al., 2000; van Spanje, 2010), research increasingly points to the fact that the far right is broadening its appeal to different citizen groups beyond its core nationalist far-right constituency (Vasilopoulou & Halikopoulou, 2015; Vasilopoulou & Zur, 2024).

In addition to immigration, far-right parties tend to discuss issues related to the environment, gender and the economy. Far-right parties increasingly mobilise against climate action, and voice concerns over climate crisis mitigation measures and over what they view as overly ambitious environmental policies (Forchtner, 2019; Honeker & Spoon, 2025; Weisskircher & Volk, 2025). The far right's preoccupation with gender equality has also emerged prominently, with gender issues being weaponised to entrench traditional and anti-immigrant values (Kantola and Lombardo, 2020). Notably, some far-right parties have started adopting progressive stances towards the participation of women in politics and in the workforce, targeting female voters (Chueri & Damerow, 2022). Finally, the literature has also centred on the role of economic issues on the far-right agenda. While Rovny and Polk (2020) identify deliberate 'position blurring' in economic policy as a strategic far-right approach, Otjes et al. (2018) show that economics are core to far-right ideology. Specifically, they identify in Western European far-right parties substantial homogeneity regarding economic nativism (welfare chauvinism and protectionism) and economic populism, while positions on state intervention varied (Otjes et al., 2018). Busemeyer et al. (2022) delve deeper into a selective welfare model, with the far right supporting welfare for 'deserving' groups like pensioners, while demanding workfare requirements for the unemployed and opposing social investment programmes. Interestingly, welfare chauvinism results from anti-immigration sentiment bleeding into economic policy, thus limiting social benefits to native populations (Otjes et al., 2018).

Taken together, the literature points to the diversification of the far right's agenda beyond the issue of immigration. In our empirical section, we will examine far-right parties' stances on four issues: immigration, the environment, gender and the economy.

### The Southern European far right: the context

Before analysing the campaign themes in the 2024 EP elections, in this section, we offer a discussion of the far-right parties that were competing electorally in Southern Europe. We consider their evolution, ideology and government participation. While we identify broad ideological homogeneity, their historical trajectory shows significant variation.

#### Greece

Since the Eurozone crisis, two far-right parties dominated the Greek political scene for a decade, including the Golden Dawn (*Χρυσή Αυγή*) and the Independent Greeks (*Ανεξάρτητοι Έλληνες*). The neo-Nazi Golden Dawn, which stirred controversy for its extremist ideology and practices (Vasilopoulou & Halikopoulou, 2015), has been defunct since 2020, when its leader and some of its members were convicted for running a criminal organisation. The Independent Greeks, which participated in a government coalition with the Coalition of the Radical Left (2015-2019), suffered electorally in the 2019 EP elections and were also dissolved in 2020. Since then, several parties have occupied the far-right space, with Greece becoming a European country with three far-right parties in its parliament following the 2023 Greek general election. These include the Spartans (12 seats), Greek Solution (12 seats) and Victory (10 seats). These parties tend to avoid cooperation in Parliament, viewing one another as competitors and often highlighting their differences.

The Spartans (*Σπαρτιάτες*) were founded in 2017. They present themselves as the 'reborn National Patriotic Right', which believes in the presentation of Greek national identity and ideology. The party is against what it terms the 'cosmopolitan and internationalist' left and the 'globalised' centre-right. Despite its claim to strictly adhere to the Greek Constitution and Parliamentary Democracy, the Greek Supreme Court banned the party from running in the 2024 EP elections on suspicion of being led by Ilias Kasidiaris, who is a convicted former Golden Dawn Member of Parliament.

The Greek Solution was established in 2016 by Kyriakos Velopoulos, a former member of the far-right Popular Orthodox Rally (*Λαϊκός Ορθόδοξος Συναγερμός*) and the centre-right New Democracy (*Νέα Δημοκρατία*). The party became known for its criticism of the ‘Prespa Agreement’ signed between Greece and North Macedonia in 2018 to resolve a long-standing dispute between the two countries. The Greek Solution puts forward a populist ethno-nationalist narrative. The criticism of the ‘evil’ and ‘corrupt’ Greek political elites is core to its agenda. The party also prioritises ‘Greece, religion, and family’ inspired by ‘Hellenism’, i.e. a cultural ideal emphasising Greek language, heritage and civilisation. It is pro-Russian and anti-immigration (Greek Solution, 2024a).

Victory was established in 2019, also capitalising on the signing of the Prespa agreement. The party has a very strong moral message that presents Greece as ‘hurt and humiliated’ and driven towards ‘spiritual, biological and territorial self-destruction’ (Victory, 2020). Similar to the Greek Solution, it condemns Greek ‘corrupt’ political parties and a system of clientelism where parties have colluded against the ‘pure’ Greek people and nation. Victory rejects the left-right ideology. Its ultra-conservative narrative is premised on a strong belief in the Orthodox religious tradition and a conviction in the primacy of the Church over the State. Like the Greek Solution, Victory is pro-Russian and condemns Greek support for Ukraine.

The newly founded Voice of Reason (*Φωνή Λογικής*) also ran in the 2024 EP elections. Afrodit Latinopoulou, a former New Democracy candidate, established the party in 2023. Voice of Reason argues that Greece is in decline and that Greeks feel fear and uncertainty for the future. For this, it blames the latest Greek governments, which have replaced the ‘ideals of Greco-Roman civilisation and Christianity’ with ‘globalisation, atheism and a language of rights’ (Voice of Reason, 2024a). The party portrays itself as a ‘patriotic movement’ seeking to preserve Greek national identity and core values, such as ‘Homeland, religion, and family’. Voice of Reason criticises ‘political correctness’ and the Greek media for allegedly censoring its leader (Vasilopoulou, 2024).

### **Italy**

Italy has experienced the rise of several far-right parties since the fall of the First Republic following the corruption scandal of Tangentopoli in 1992 to the point of gaining the reputation as ‘the promised land of populism’ (Tarchi, 2015). The League was established in 1991 from the merger of regional leagues anchored in the imagined territory of *Padania* (in Northern Italy) (Albertazzi & Vampa, 2021). Initially advocating regional autonomy, this party began shifting its ideology and agenda towards nationalism in the early 2000s, which was completed in 2013 with the onset of Matteo Salvini’s leadership (Albertazzi & Vampa, 2021).

The far-right Brothers of Italy, instead, by contrast, emerged in 2012 as a firmly nationalist party following the dissolution of National Alliance (*Alleanza Nazionale*). The nationalist credentials of National Alliance are undoubtable when tracing back its origins: the party was the heir to the neo-fascist Italian Social Movement (*Movimento Sociale Italiano*), which was founded in the aftermath of the Second World War. The extent to which the National Alliance first and subsequently the Brothers of Italy distanced themselves from their fascist legacy continues to be debated, since arguably the National Alliance’s dissociation from its fascist past was primarily pragmatic (Newell, 2000). The Brothers of Italy have officially rejected fascism, although this is seemingly at odds with the presence of several fascist sympathisers within the party (Griffini, 2023).

The Italian case is particularly interesting in the context of the latest EP elections, which laid bare tensions within Giorgia Meloni’s government coalition. On the one hand, Matteo Salvini, leading the hard Eurosceptic League, joined the PfE. On the other hand, Meloni, as the leader of the Brothers of Italy and then-President of the ECR, attempted to maintain a comparatively more cordial relationship with the European Union and identified building ties with Von der Leyen as one of the objectives of her government’s first 100 days (Griffini, 2023). In Brussels, Meloni tends to be perceived as a pragmatic actor who skilfully avoids Eurosceptic slogans while focusing on the implementation of right-wing policies (Brzozowski, 2024). Research suggests an alignment in voting in the European Parliament between the Brothers of Italy and the EPP for most matters except for socio-cultural issues, such as gender and the environment (Bressanelli & de Candia, 2025).

### **Portugal**

Contradicting the so-called thesis of ‘Iberian exceptionalism’ (De Giorgi & Santana-Pereira, 2020), the far-right party Chega! (*Enough!*) entered the political scene in 2019, under Ventura’s leadership. While failing to secure

any seats in the 2019 EP elections as part of the Bastal coalition (1.5 percent of the vote), Chega subsequently won one parliamentary seat in the October 2019 national election, garnering 1.3 percent of the national vote.

Chega champions nationalism, sovereignty, Atlanticism, and a soft Eurosceptic stance (Biscaia & Salgado, 2024). It competes on an anti-establishment platform, attacks bureaucratic elites and advocates for a Europe of nations while opposing the alleged dilution of European identity (Taggart & Pirro, 2021). Interestingly, Chega did not emerge during the Eurozone crisis. In fact, Portuguese governments showed signs of resilience in the face of the Eurozone crisis, first under the centre-right leadership of Pedro Passos Coelho until 2015, then under Antonio Costa's centre-left minority cabinet (De Giorgi & Santana-Pereira, 2020). Chega's parliamentary breakthrough during the 2019 national election (De Giorgi & Santana-Pereira, 2020) signalled winds of change. Chega's leader, Ventura, became known for the adoption of the slogan 'God, country, family and work', a rearticulation of former dictator Antonio de Oliveira Salazar's Estado Novo's 'God, country, family' slogan (Chiappa, 2024).

In the 2024 early Portuguese legislative election, Chega made a remarkable breakthrough receiving 18.07 percent of votes cast (Parlamento, 2024). Notably, Chega became the main opposition party, yet did not manage to pierce through the cordon sanitaire that had historically excluded the far right from governing coalitions (Santana-Pereira & Rogeiro Nina, 2024). In fact, despite increasing its representation from one seat in 2019 to 12 in 2022 and reaching 50 in 2024, Chega remained excluded from cabinet positions (Santana-Pereira & Rogeiro Nina, 2024).

### Spain

The debut of Vox (Voice) in the 2019 EP elections dispelled the notion that Spain, along with Portugal, was an exception in a European political landscape marked by the rise of far-right parties (Mendes & Dennison, 2020). Unlike in Italy and Greece, where the 2009 Eurozone crisis and consequent EU bailouts triggered the alternation of several governments, governmental stability in the Iberian Peninsula seemed relatively unscathed (De Giorgi & Santana-Pereira, 2020).

Political competition intensified a few years later, in 2014, when Vox emerged in Spain under the leadership of Santiago Abascal. Initially, Vox struggled to carve out a distinct political niche. This changed with its electoral breakthrough in 2019, which signalled citizens' political dissatisfaction (Turnbull-Dugarte et al., 2020). In the 2023 Spanish legislative election, Vox became the third largest party in parliament, behind the Socialists and the conservative Popular Party.

Vox competes on a nationalist, anti-immigration and traditionalist platform, standing for the defence of Catholic heritage, the family, and traditional gender roles (Fernández-Vázquez, 2024; Taggart & Pirro, 2021). Similarly to the Brothers of Italy and Chega, Vox's economically liberal stance differentiates it from other European far-right parties (Taggart & Pirro, 2021).

### Methodological note

This study offers a comparative analysis of four Southern European countries – Spain, Italy, Portugal, and Greece – to examine cross-national variation in electoral discourse. This comparative analysis provides a thick and nuanced assessment of the parties' mobilisation strategies and captures commonalities and divergences in campaign content across Southern Europe. We conducted an in-depth qualitative content analysis of party pre-electoral material. While parties in Italy, Portugal and Spain issued manifestos for the EP elections, in Greece, only Victory released a manifesto specifically for the 2024 electoral contest. Greek Solution mobilised voters through several short videos published on its website and its social media accounts. The Voice of Reason mainly campaigned through its leader's social media accounts.

Electoral campaigns yield valuable insights into parties' thematic priorities and policies. They are periods of intensified political communication during which parties strive to appeal to their potential electorate, by signalling priorities to voters, establishing programmatic commitments, and articulating the party agenda. For the study of electoral campaigns, we deployed manifesto analysis, which has been widely used within political science research (Braun, 2023; Weisskircher & Volk, 2025), to gauge parties' official policy positions and commitments. A potential limitation of using manifestos as sources is that they represent the official façade of the party, which may be moderated to appeal to a broader public.

For the analysis, we proceeded with thematic coding of the party material. We adopted a deductive approach, guided by existing literature on the supply side of the far right. Our analysis broadly confirmed our expectations based on the literature, with the four most salient issue domains being immigration, the environment, gender, and the economy. Within each thematic category, we aimed to capture the granularity of the textual data. First, we conducted a within-case analysis for each country. Second, we performed a systematic cross-case comparison, identifying convergent and divergent patterns deployed to address the highlighted issues.

## **The supply side: electoral campaigns**

During the 2024 EP electoral campaign, the far right pressured the EU to tighten migration policies, tackle the cost-of-living crisis and economic inequalities, soften decarbonisation goals, and exercise caution regarding gender rights.

Overall, our analysis of the parties' campaign material suggests that while far-right parties in Southern Europe have expanded their campaign portfolios, this expansion has occurred in a heterogeneous manner. The Greek far right prioritised several different issues. For example, Voice of Reason highlighted immigration, Islam and the so-called woke culture. Yet, the Greek Solution tied its campaign to the cost-of-living crisis and Greek citizens' economic concerns. Victory prioritised the issues of religion and family. In Italy the far right, including the Brothers of Italy and the League, primarily campaigned on the issues of immigration, the environment, and the economy, with the Brothers of Italy also discussing gender-related matters. In addition to anxieties over immigration, Vox and Chega emphasised securing better economic opportunities and affordable housing. Vox considerably expanded its platform, railing against EU climate mitigation policies and gender equality measures. Chega significantly pushed against the European Green Deal, while championing food sovereignty.

Since far-right parties have built their profiles emphasising radical positions on immigration (Wagner, 2012), we first analyse their stances on this issue. We then proceed to dissect their campaigns on the environment, gender and the economy pointing to similarities and differences in their electoral mobilisation strategies.

### ***Immigration***

Harsh immigration control and the revision of the EU Pact on Migration and Asylum<sup>2</sup> remain the far right's core priorities fully anchored in far-right nativism. Although there were many common threads across Southern European far-right parties' politicisation of immigration during the 2024 EP election campaigns, there were also interesting differences in the prominence of the EU in far-right anti-immigration narratives.

The high salience of the immigration issue in far-right platforms in the 2024 EP elections is not surprising, considering the central role of immigration in the party family's nativist ideology (Mudde, 2007). These parties differentiate between regular and irregular immigrants as a strategy of outward-looking moderation (Griffini, 2023), using this distinction to present themselves as non-hostile towards regular immigrants. However, it can be hard to unequivocally distinguish and count irregular immigrants (Abbondanza, 2024), as the status of irregularity is often applied also to asylum seekers who lack the opportunity to enter their destination country through regular channels, even though may achieve a regular status, if their asylum request is approved (Talani and Rosina, 2025).

Starting with Greece, where three far-right parties competed in the 2024 EP elections, the issue of immigration featured prominently among Victory and Voice of Reason. Both parties grounded their anti-immigration discourse on the 'great replacement theory', which suggests that European elites are conspiring to replace white Europeans with people of non-European descent (Dennison & Kustov, 2025). Victory opposed the alleged demographic replacement of Greeks by non-white foreigners. It supported the taxation of migrant remittances and the abolition of the Ministry of Immigration in favour of the establishment of a Ministry for the Greek Diaspora, signalling its intention to facilitate the return of Greeks living abroad. Voice of Reason (2024b) argued that atheism and Muslim immigration are replacing Greek culture and Christianity. In line with the Islamophobia characterising far-right parties (Kallis, 2018), Voice of Reason warned against the 'Islamisation of Greece and Europe' and proposed the deportation of illegal immigrants, the closing

of Greek borders, and the relocation of reception centres for immigrants outside Greece. Interestingly, the parties did not directly blame the EU for immigration-related problems. This might be explained by their relative lack of experience in running for EP elections. Immigration was relatively less salient in the Greek Solution's agenda, which prioritised instead the cost-of-living crisis (see below).

Turning to Italy, both the Brothers of Italy and the League staged a vocal anti-immigration campaign, remarkably tied to criticism of the EU migration policy. In fact, Meloni has been aspiring to set Italy's restrictive immigration policy as a role model for the EU, which earned her praise from von der Leyen (Griffini & Rosina, 2024). Notably, the party's aspirations to set the standard for migration policy in the EU must be understood against the backdrop of its softened Eurosceptic stance (Griffini, 2023). Unsurprisingly, the relationship between Italy and the EU has been a divisive issue in the current governing coalition, where Meloni's moderating stance sharply contrasts with Salvini's long-seated tradition of Euroscepticism (Albertazzi et al., 2025).

Despite their divergent stances on the EU, the Brothers of Italy and the League aligned in their vision of EU migration policy. For these parties, migration management, including border control and asylum application processing, should be 'externalised' to third non-EU countries. The Italy–Albania Protocol, signed in 2024 under Meloni's auspices, exemplifies this policy and was intended to serve as a model for the EU (Griffini & Rosina, 2024).<sup>3</sup> According to the League, the disbursement of development aid to third countries should be contingent on their commitment to contain irregular immigration to the EU (League, 2024). Both parties also agreed that effective deterrence entails adopting a resolute position on the sanctioning of human traffickers (Brothers of Italy, 2024; League, 2024). Interestingly, several EU member states have expressed interest in the Italian far right's external migration management policies, and shortly after the 2024 EP elections, von der Leyen applauded Meloni's deal with Albania as a model for the future of EU migration policy (Giordano, 2024).

While maintaining an intransigent stance vis-à-vis irregular immigration, the Brothers of Italy pledged to support regular immigrants' integration and safe coexistence in Italian society (Brothers of Italy, 2024). The party, under the leadership of Meloni, has engaged in a strategic and pragmatic softening of its agenda (Griffini, 2023). For example, in the 2024 EP electoral campaign, it framed its immigration policies in terms of security and integration and justified its rejection of open border policies by employing humanitarian arguments allegedly in favour of immigrants (Brothers of Italy, 2024). This change in its approach towards immigration is in line with the far right's 'civic' turn (Halikiopoulou et al., 2013) and the more general trend of far-right moderation across Europe (see, for instance, Albertazzi & Vampa, 2021). Remarkably, the manifesto advocated the disassociation between immigration and crime, despite simultaneously framing immigration in security terms (Brothers of Italy, 2024). This securitised discourse often presents immigration as a law and order issue (Wodak, 2015).

In Portugal, Chega shares several similarities with the Brothers of Italy in its approach to immigration. Chega differentiated between regular and irregular immigration and added that it does not reject the EU's traditional humanitarian approach towards immigrants from countries involved in conflicts, who qualify for asylum-seeker status (Chega, 2024). The party offered a rich set of policies to combat irregular and unregulated immigration. It advocated fighting against human traffickers and implementing effective repatriation policies for 'irregular' immigrants (Chega, 2024). Chega's anti-immigrant leanings rooted in nativism are no less than its Italian counterparts: Chega went as far as calling for Portugal to pull out of the UN Migration Pact<sup>4</sup> and to terminate subsidies for NGOs 'supporting illegal immigration' (Chega, 2024). Finally, Chega requested annual quotas for regular immigrants, based on each country's labour market demand (Chega, 2024).

Vox's policy proposals echo its Portuguese and Italian counterparts, including the externalisation of asylum requests processing, immediate repatriation of illegal immigrants, and quotas for legal immigration subject to labour market demands (Vox, 2024). Vox tends to connect its anti-immigration campaign messages with criticism of the EU. Abascal's party suggested that migration policies put forward by the left and by the EU are 'hypocritical' and that, ultimately, they result in mass uncontrolled migration that illegally violates national borders (Vox, 2024). The party's manifesto used language with strong affective associations, describing immigration as an 'authentic invasion' with 'dangerous consequences', such as 'increasing violence', 'feeling foreign in one's place', and 'increase in crimes' (Vox, 2024). This discourse can serve to amplify emotional responses to immigration (Erisen & Vasilopoulou, 2022).

Vox portrayed immigrants' values as incompatible with the 'cultural foundations of Europe'. This incompatibility allegedly leads down to 'suicidal multiculturalism', embodied by excessive tolerance towards immigration and an open border policy resulting in deleterious multiculturalism, which is now paradoxically facing its self-defeat (Vox, 2024).

### **Environment**

Considering the prominent role of the Green Deal in the EU's agenda and the far right's increasing concern with environmental protection (Bryant & Farrell, 2024), it is not surprising that the environment was salient in the 2024 EP electoral campaigns. The Green Deal proposes to transform the EU into a fair and modern society with a just and competitive economy, achieving climate neutrality by 2050 and a 55 percent carbon emission reduction by 2030 compared to 1990 (European Climate Law, 2021). The far right has traditionally held reservations about the necessity of international action for climate change mitigation. Indeed, for these parties, environmental concerns are acceptable only when policy solutions reinforce borders and national identity rather than transnational cooperation (Forchtner, 2019). In line with far-right parties' sovereignism, claiming to take back control of national authority vis-à-vis supranational institutions (Basile and Borri, 2022), we expect that the environment will be present in their narratives, in the form of resentment towards the EU environmental policy. Although a post-electoral Eurobarometer (2024) survey suggested that the issue of climate change mitigation encouraged electoral turnout for 28 percent of respondents across the EU, in the 2024 EP electoral campaigns, the far right in Southern Europe did not address citizens' preoccupations over climate change. Instead, the far right invariably expressed reservations about EU strategies mitigating climate change and was critical of EU environmental policies, which were portrayed as harmful to industrial and agricultural sovereignty. Yet, there was significant variation in the electoral salience of this issue among the parties under investigation.

Greece stands out in the 2024 EP electoral campaigns, since far-right political parties did not substantially politicise environmental issues. Greek Solution and Victory focused on the primary sector as a core motor of the Greek economy as well as on the need to extract natural resources (see economy section below). Interestingly, although Voice of Reason also prioritised agriculture, its environmental policy supported renewable resources. The party viewed Greece as a country that can benefit from the green transition, which it views as pivotal for low electricity costs, Greek energy autonomy and environmental protection (Voice of Reason, 2024b).

In Italy, both the Brothers of Italy and the League were critical of the EU Green Deal, although their perspectives on environmental protections varied. The League expressed resentment against non-EU industries for outcompeting Italian businesses. An allegedly 'unrealistic' Green Deal with strict standards of climate change mitigation was criticised for unfairly disadvantaging Italian companies (League, 2024). The Brothers of Italy also opposed the Green Deal, which they portrayed as 'ecological madness' responsible for Italy's 'unhappy degrowth' (Brothers of Italy, 2024). In line with behaviour displayed in the previous European parliamentary term (Bressanelli & de Candia, 2025), the Brothers of Italy prioritised national sovereignty over supranational integration in the field of environmental regulation (Brothers of Italy, 2024). Overall, rather than 'denying' climate change entirely, far-right parties in Italy acknowledged the issue, yet prioritised domestic concerns.

Chega in Portugal expressed concerns about the protection of agriculture similar to those we observed in the campaign material of the Greek Solution, Victory and Brothers of Italy. Like the Brothers of Italy, Chega devoted a non-negligible section of its manifesto to criticising the European Green Deal for arguably damaging the agricultural sector, and, consequently, food sovereignty (Brothers of Italy, 2024; Chega, 2024). Overall, our findings are in line with research that shows that far-right parties are sceptical of global cooperation and dismiss broader climate action as 'ideological' or 'alarmist' (Bettini & Casaglia, 2024).

Vox is the most vocal antagonist of the European Green Deal in the Southern European far right. The European Green Deal and the UN 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development are blamed for their 'globalism and radical ecologism' and the imposition of a 'universal truth' about climate change driven by 'climate fanaticism' (Vox, 2024). Vox portrayed climate change mitigation measures as having negative effects on the Spanish agricultural sector (Vox, 2024). Moreover, in line with far-right sovereignism, Vox reclaimed Spanish industrial, energy, and food sovereignty from the 'diktat' of the European Green Deal (Vox, 2024).

## Gender

Compared to the issues of immigration and the environment, gender-related issues played a relatively smaller, but important, role in the 2024 EP election campaigns. This only partially echoes the minimal role of gender-related concerns in encouraging turnout at the EU-wide level, as the Eurobarometer demonstrates (Eurobarometer, 2024).

The Greek far right emphasised the 'traditional' family and adopted a critical attitude toward LGBTIQ+ communities. The Greek Solution's ideology is premised on the 'institution of family defined by nature and tradition' (Greek Solution, 2024a). As a result, the party did not really engage with policies related to gender equality. In fact, these issues were absent from its campaigns, apart from general criticisms of what the party called 'the language of rights', referring to rights of the LGBTIQ+ community.

The core concerns of Victory, on the other hand, related to gender and family and were fully embedded within a religious ultra-conservative rhetoric. The top two priorities in the party's 2024 EP election manifesto included the protection of the traditional Greek family and Greece's demographic growth. Specifically, Victory sought to promote the family 'as a sacred institution of a union between a man and a woman' where children grow up with a father and a mother. It opposed the so-called 'pink totalitarianism' and 'unscientific' theories about a third gender. Victory prioritised birth subsidies for Greek children, suggesting that families with three or more children are 'a source of pride and hope for the nation'. It opposed LGBTIQ+ and abortion rights. It claimed that nature is the only law that asserts the 'non-negotiable right to unborn life' (Victory, 2024).

The question of gender is often tied to the question of 'wokeness', which is a typical far-right target due to its liberal focus on minority rights (Valentin, 2023). Voice of Reason (2024b) politicised gender from the point of view of 'wokeness' and 'political correctness'. It portrayed LGBTIQ+ rights as part of a woke agenda. The party opposed gay marriage and adoption rights. It promoted demographic growth and measures that support the Greek family.

Taken at face value, the Brothers of Italy were by far the most interested in gender equality, with prominent calls for closing the gender pay gap and combating violence against women (Brothers of Italy, 2024). Yet substantively the Brothers of Italy define 'gender' primarily in relation to women's rights. The discussion of LGBTIQ+ rights did not feature in the party's electoral campaign, which instead gave centre stage to the promotion of the family and of natality. In their campaign manifestos, the League in Italy and Chega in Portugal did not foreground gender-related themes. Chega's manifesto (2024) did not engage with issues around gender. The League's manifesto (2024) mentioned in passing criticism of 'woke ideology' (which typically encompasses ideas in favour of gender equality), threatening 'European cultural and historical values'.

In Spain, Vox took a more radical approach compared to the Brothers of Italy. The Spanish far right proposed to abrogate legislation on gender self-determination and gender quotas arguing that measures fostering gender equality marginalise women and the female sex (Vox, 2024). Notably, Vox entangled its views on gender rights with Euroscepticism, denouncing the purported EU promotion of 'gender ideology' (Vox, 2024), a term often used by far-right parties to capture gender equality and challenges to the 'traditional' heteronormative family (Kantola and Lombardo, 2020). Vox (2024) implicitly referred to wokeness when it expressed resentment towards EU 'censorship' allegedly infringing on freedom of thought.

## The economy

Although far-right parties in South Europe engaged with questions related to the economy, the prominence of this issue varied across their campaigns. For the Greek solution, the cost-of-living crisis was prominent. In fact, the party leader argued that 'far-right parties are on the rise because of economic reasons, such as poverty, unemployment and the cost-of-living crisis' (Greek Solution, 2024b). This assessment contradicts the cultural model of the far-right vote (Inglehart & Norris, 2019). Yet in line with the party's populist ideology, this campaign served to criticise the government by arguing that 'Greeks are hungry and poor, but politicians are rich' (Greek Solution, 2024b).

In terms of economic policy, the Greek Solution combined low taxation with economic and welfare protectionism (Georgiadou & Mavropoulou, 2024). Its campaign prioritised agriculture and investment in mining to ensure that Greece is not reliant on other countries or multinational companies for its food and energy.

Although Victory did not emphasise economics in its campaign, it similarly had a protectionist agenda prioritising investment in the agricultural sector and the countryside. It supported oil and gas extraction across the country so that Greeks consume Greek rather than 'imported' energy. At the same time, Victory's economic agenda combined low taxation for Greek businesses and households with high taxes for banks and international companies (Victory, 2024). Voice of Reason (2024b), on the other hand, was in favour of free market economy and low taxation.

In Italy, the economy was of paramount importance to both the League (2024) and the Brothers of Italy (2024). While the League (2024) pledged to improve employment opportunities and people's purchasing power, the Brothers of Italy (2024) promised fiscal relief for industries and the creation of jobs. Interestingly, the economic policy portfolio included overwhelming attention to the protection of the agricultural sector, which, as mentioned above, is framed as threatened by seemingly detrimental EU agricultural and environmental policies (Brothers of Italy, 2024; League, 2024).

Chega's economic policy sought to cut across demographic and socio-economic groups and extend its appeal beyond the middle class, which it argued had been brutally impoverished, to industries, families and the young, who were promised fiscal reliefs and housing subsidies (Chega, 2024). The Portuguese housing crisis, in fact, has entailed a scarcity of homes and an increase in their renting and selling prices, which prices buyers out of the market (Jack, 2024). Seeking to echo broader economic anxieties of the Spanish population, Vox campaigned on concerns about declining quality of life, employment precarity, and rising costs of living (Vox, 2024). The party promised economic opportunities to the young and presented itself as 'Voice of the young who want to have a future' in Spain (Vox, 2024).

## Conclusion

Despite cross-country variation, the 2024 EP elections consolidated the success of far-right parties across Southern Europe. Against this background, this article dissected the parties' electoral mobilisation strategies through a comparative analysis of their electoral material. Drawing upon literature that points to the far right's broadening electoral agenda, our analysis focused on four core issues: immigration, the environment, gender and the economy. Our findings suggest that the far right in South Europe has diversified its portfolio, albeit with significant variation. Predominantly, immigration remained a priority in the campaigns of Victory and Voice of Reason in Greece, the League and Brothers of Italy in Italy, Chega in Portugal, and Vox in Spain. At the same time, the far-right agenda significantly expanded to include other topical issues, such as criticism of the EU environmental policy in Italy, Portugal, and Spain; concerns about gender equality and less traditional views on gender more broadly in the Brothers of Italy, Victory, Voice of Reason, and Vox; and grievances over the economy in the Greek Solution, the League, the Brothers of Italy, Chega, and Vox.

Overall, we have shown that far-right parties have broadened their agenda beyond their typical anti-immigration stance. Future research could study the policy implications of far-right parties' presence in the 2024 EP term and the impact they may have on EU-level policy beyond the issue of immigration. For example, Cunningham et al. (2024) suggest that the increasing weight of the far right in the European Parliament will push for harsher immigration policies and will seek to undermine the European Green Deal. Furthermore, a focus on citizens' electoral demand of far-right parties in the region during the EP 2024 elections would constitute a promising avenue of future research, which, due to space limitations, this article did not engage with. A comparative analysis of far-right voting in Southern Europe would enable researchers to assess the extent to which our findings on party supply converge with voters' concerns in the 2024 EP elections.

## Notes

1. A few far-right MEPs did not join these groups and are non-attached.
2. More information on The Pact on Migration and Asylum here: [https://home-affairs.ec.europa.eu/policies/migration-and-asylum/pact-migration-and-asylum\\_en](https://home-affairs.ec.europa.eu/policies/migration-and-asylum/pact-migration-and-asylum_en)
3. Bilateral agreements with third countries for immigration control have historically cut across the left-right divide. An example is the 2017 the Italy-Libya Memorandum of Understanding, under Gentiloni's centre-left government (Griffini & Rosina, 2024).

4. This intergovernmental agreement addressed immigration by recognising national sovereignty and the protection of immigrants' human rights (UN, 2018).

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