

The rise of Populism in Central and Eastern Europe: The gaining power bond between Hungary and Poland in the European Union

Зростання популізму в Центральній та Східній Європі: посилення зв'язків між Угорщиною та Польщею в Європейському Союзі

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Purpose: aims to explore the rise of populism in Central and Eastern Europe, with a specific focus on the gaining power bond between Hungary and Poland within the European Union.

Method: the qualitative comparative analysis.

Findings: to effectively address the rise of populism in Central and Eastern Europe, several suggestions and recommendations made. First, it is important to address the underlying economic disparities within the region. Second, efforts should be made to promote social cohesion and inclusion. Third, it is crucial to strengthen democratic institutions and protect the rule of law. Fourth, engaging with populists and their supporters is important. Fifth, fostering a sense of European identity and solidarity can help counter nationalist and anti-EU sentiment. Lastly, within the EU, there should be a collective effort to strengthen unity and address the challenges posed by populist governments within the bloc, particularly in Hungary and Poland.

Paper type: theoretical.

Мета роботи: дослідити зростання популізму в Центральній та Східній Європі, приділяючи особливу увагу зв'язкам, що набирають силу між Угорщиною та Польщею в Європейському Союзі.

Метод дослідження: якісний порівняльний аналіз.

Результати дослідження: для ефективної боротьби зі зростанням популізму в Центральній та Східній Європі було зроблено кілька пропозицій і рекомендацій. По-перше, важливо усунути основні економічні диспропорції в регіоні. По-друге, слід докласти зусиль для сприяння соціальній єдності. По-третє, вкрай важливо зміцнювати демократичні інститути та захищати верховенство права. По-четверте, важлива взаємодія з популістами та їхніми прихильниками. По-п'яте, виховання почуття європейської ідентичності та солідарності може допомогти протистояти націоналістичним і анти європейським настроям. Нарешті, всередині ЄС повинні бути колективні зусилля для зміцнення єдності та вирішення викликів, створених популістськими урядами всередині блоку, зокрема в Угорщині та Польщі.

Тип статті: теоретична.

Key words: populism, Euroscepticism, political elites, immigration, European Union (EU), national sovereignty.

Ключові слова: популізм, євроскептицизм, політичні еліти, імміграція, Європейський Союз, національний суверенітет.

1. Introduction

The rise of populism in Central and Eastern Europe has become a subject of great interest and concern in recent years. Populist politicians in these regions have successfully tapped into popular discontent with political elites, economic inequalities, and cultural changes, mobilizing support for their anti-establishment rhetoric (Gidron and Hall, 2019). However, this rise of populism also raises concerns about the future of democracy and political stability in the region.

Populist leaders in Central and Eastern Europe often espouse anti-immigrant and Eurosceptic views, criticizing the liberal democratic values of the post-Cold War European order (Bergmann, 2020). They present themselves as champions of the people against a corrupt political establishment, claiming that only they can bring about meaningful change. Yet, the rise of populism in the region is not solely rooted in political rhetoric; it is also influenced by a complex interplay of

historical, cultural, and economic factors. Challenges in fully integrating into the European Union, addressing social and economic disparities, and grappling with the legacies of communism and authoritarian rule have made the region more susceptible to populist appeals.

This article explores the phenomenon of populism, its historical context, and its current manifestations in Central and Eastern Europe. It delves into the various reasons behind the rise of populism in the region, such as the legacy of communism, economic factors, the immigration and refugee crisis, EU integration, and cultural factors. Furthermore, it discusses the implications of populism for the region's political and social landscape, particularly the potential threats it poses to democracy and the European Union's unity and stability.

While populist movements may have different ideologies and agendas, they share a common appeal to the frustrations of the people. However, critics argue that populist movements can be authoritarian, anti-democratic, and promote policies that harm broader societal interests (Williams et al, 2020). In the context of Central and Eastern Europe, the rise of populism has been marked by controversies such as restrictions on the media, changes to the judiciary, and the weakening of democratic checks and balances (Liddiard, 2018). The article also explores the bond between Hungary and Poland within the European Union, highlighting their shared opposition to liberal values and institutions. These countries have formed a stronger alliance based on their populist and nationalist movements, challenging EU policies and prioritizing national sovereignty and conservative social values. The article examines the impact of this alliance on EU cohesion, as well as the tensions and divisions it has created within the bloc (Bharti, 2020).

In conclusion, the rise of populism in Central and Eastern Europe is a multifaceted phenomenon influenced by a range of economic, political, and social factors. Populist leaders capitalize on frustration and dissatisfaction with traditional political parties and institutions, employing anti-immigrant and anti-EU rhetoric to appeal to those who feel marginalized by globalization (Simons et al, 2018). However, the rise of populism also poses significant challenges to democracy and the European Union's principles and unity. Efforts to address these challenges and bridge the divides between populist and mainstream politics will be crucial for maintaining regional stability and preserving the European project.

Research Questions

Q1. To what extent are global trends, such as the backlash against globalization and the rise of identity politics, responsible for the rise of populism in Central and Eastern Europe?

Q2. How does the legacy of communism influence the rise of populism in Central Europe?

Q3. What specific policies and actions of populist governments in Hungary and Poland have caused tensions within the European Union?

Q4. How does the bond between Hungary and Poland impact the cohesion and stability of the European Union?

Q5. What strategies can the European Union employ to address the concerns of populist movements in Central and Eastern Europe while upholding its core values and institutions?

2. Theoretical foundations of the study

The rise of populism in Central and Eastern Europe and the growing power bond between Hungary and Poland in the European Union can be better understood by examining several key historical factors. First and foremost is the transition from communism that took place in the late 1980s and early 1990s. This marked a significant shift from centrally planned economies and authoritarian rule to market-based economies and democratic systems (Exeter and Fries, 1998). The transition was accompanied by political and social upheaval, economic challenges, and a redefinition of national identities. Another factor contributing to the rise of populism is the economic disparities within the region. While countries like Poland and the Czech Republic successfully implemented market

reforms and experienced economic growth, others such as Hungary, Romania, and Bulgaria faced economic hardships, high unemployment rates, and rising inequality (OECD, 2014). These disparities bred social discontent, providing fertile ground for populist movements to emerge.

The process of European Union integration also played a crucial role. Central and Eastern European countries sought EU membership as a means of achieving political stability, economic development, and security. While EU integration offered financial support, trade opportunities, and guarantees of democratic standards, it also presented challenges. These challenges included adopting EU regulations, accepting constraints on national sovereignty, and perceived loss of control over domestic affairs. Populist parties capitalized on these concerns, portraying EU integration as a threat to national identity and sovereignty (European Parliament, 2022).

The historical context of the region, with its experiences of foreign domination and struggles for independence, contributes to the rise of nationalism. Central and Eastern Europe's history is marked by memories of past oppression and a strong sense of national identity. Populist parties tap into these nationalist sentiments, emphasizing the protection of national culture, values, and traditions (Galston, 2018). They position themselves as defenders of the nation against perceived external threats, such as immigration and globalization. Furthermore, the rise of populism is fueled by widespread dissatisfaction with mainstream political parties. Many citizens view these parties as disconnected from their everyday concerns, corrupt, or ineffective in addressing economic and social issues. Populist movements present themselves as anti-establishment alternatives, promising to bring about change and address the needs of ordinary people.

In recent years, Hungary and Poland have developed a close political alliance based on shared conservative values, populist ideologies, and concerns about the erosion of national sovereignty within the EU. Both countries have expressed reservations about specific EU policies, such as immigration and the centralization of power in Brussels. This alliance allows Hungary and Poland to coordinate their efforts, strengthen their positions within the EU, and challenge decisions that they perceive as contrary to their national interests (Bharti, 2022b).

Considering the historical factors of the rise of populism in Central and Eastern Europe and the gaining power bond between Hungary and Poland in the European Union, it becomes clear that a combination of factors, including the legacy of communism, economic disparities, EU integration challenges, nationalism, and dissatisfaction with mainstream politics, have shaped the current political dynamics in the region. Understanding this historical context is crucial for analyzing and comprehending the ongoing developments in this part of Europe.

What is Populism?

Populism is a political ideology that emphasizes the interests and needs of the common people, often in opposition to those of the elites or establishment. Populist movements typically seek to mobilize a broad base of support by appealing to the concerns of everyday citizens, often with simplistic or emotional messages. Populist leaders often claim to speak for the people and to represent their interests against powerful or corrupt elites. They may also reject traditional political institutions and processes, instead emphasizing direct democracy or popular participation in decision-making.

Throughout history, populist ideas have often coincided with charismatic demagogues, as these personality types are often successful at galvanizing the masses. One of the earliest populists was Julius Caesar, who undermined Rome's ruling aristocrats by appealing to the underrepresented working class. But populism isn't necessarily good or bad. Both President Franklin D. Roosevelt and Adolf Hitler were decisively populist politicians, appealing to the frustrations of their respective countries (Onion, 2023).

Today, populist rhetoric is pervasive throughout the world. In Europe, it is generally more popular on the ideological right, which believes that socialist or left-leaning policies negate the collective will of the people. This was the idea behind the 2016 Brexit referendum, as many working-

class Britishers felt that globalization provided by EU membership was not to their benefit. However, the term “populism” can be used in a variety of ways and is often applied to a wide range of political movements and figures with very different ideologies and agendas. Some critics argue that populist movements can be authoritarian or even anti-democratic and may promote policies that are damaging to the broader interests of society (Diamond, 2017).

The rise of populism in Eastern and Central Europe

The rise of populism in Central and Eastern Europe is a complex phenomenon that is influenced by a variety of political, economic, and social factors. Here are some possible reasons:

1. Legacy of communism: Central Europe has a unique history of communism, which collapsed in 1989 (US Department of State, 2009). The transition to democracy and market economies was often painful and slow, leaving some people feeling disillusioned with the political and economic systems.

2. Economic factors: Some Central European countries experienced high levels of economic growth in the years after the fall of communism. However, economic inequalities have remained a persistent problem in many places, leading some people to feel left behind by the benefits of globalization. Many countries in Central and Eastern Europe have faced economic challenges in the aftermath of the global financial crisis, with high unemployment rates and slow economic growth (Swinnen and Herck, n.d.). This has led to widespread frustration and disillusionment with traditional political parties, which has provided an opening for populist politicians.

3. Immigration and refugee crisis: The influx of refugees and immigrants to Europe in recent years has been a major concern for many Central European countries. Populist leaders often stoke anti-immigrant sentiment and advocate for strict border controls.

4. EU integration: Central European countries have been members of the European Union (EU) since the early 2000s. However, some populist leaders have criticized the EU and its institutions, arguing that they undermine national sovereignty and impose unwanted policies on member states.

5. Cultural factors: Populist leaders in Central Europe often promote a sense of national identity and pride, emphasizing traditional cultural values and rejecting what they see as Western liberal norms and attitudes (Pappas, 2019).

Populist movements in the region have often been driven by a sense of frustration and disillusionment with the post-communist political and economic systems, as well as a perception that the political elites have failed to deliver on their promises of democracy, prosperity, and social justice. In recent years, populist parties and leaders have gained significant electoral support in several Central and Eastern European countries (CEE), including Poland, Hungary, the Czech Republic, and Slovakia (Silver, 2022). These movements often share nationalist and anti-immigrant rhetoric and may also be critical of the European Union and its institutions.

Some observers have argued that the rise of populism in CEE is related to broader global trends, such as the backlash against globalization, the rise of identity politics, and the erosion of trust in established political institutions. Others point to more local factors, such as corruption, economic inequality, and a sense of cultural alienation in some regions. Whatever the specific causes, the rise of populism in CEE has had significant implications for the region’s political and social landscape. Populist leaders have often pursued controversial policies such as restrictions on the media, changes to the judiciary, and the weakening of democratic checks and balances. This has raised concerns among some observers about the future of democracy and the rule of law in the region (Bharti, 2022a).

Overall, the rise of populism in Central and Eastern Europe is a complex phenomenon that has been influenced by a range of economic, political, and social factors. Populist politicians have been able to tap into a sense of frustration and dissatisfaction with traditional political parties and institutions and have used anti-immigrant and anti-EU rhetoric to appeal to voters who feel left behind by globalization and economic change (Gidron and Hall, 2019).

Is populism a threat to the European Union?

Populism can be a threat to the European Union (EU) because it challenges some of the core principles on which the EU was founded, such as democracy, rule of law, and a commitment to European integration (European Parliament, 2016). Populist politicians often portray the EU as an oppressive and undemocratic institution that undermines national sovereignty and imposes unwanted policies on member states. This can lead to tensions between member states and undermine the cohesion of the EU as a whole. The rise of populism in Eastern and Central Europe poses a significant threat to the European Union's unity and stability. Populist movements in countries like Hungary and Poland have gained power by promoting nationalist and anti-immigrant sentiment, often at the expense of the EU's liberal values and institutions. Leaders in these countries have frequently clashed with EU leaders over issues like migration, climate change, and the rule of law, arguing that the EU is infringing on their national sovereignty and cultural identity.

This populist rhetoric has fueled tensions within the EU, with some member states feeling that the Union is being undermined by countries that prioritize their own interests over the common good. The EU's efforts to promote greater integration and cooperation among member states have been stymied by the resistance of populist governments in the region. Moreover, populist leaders in Eastern and Central Europe have also been accused of eroding democratic norms and undermining the independence of the judiciary and the media, which are crucial components of a functioning democracy (Kyle and Mounk, 2018). These actions have led to concerns that the EU's values of democracy, human rights, and the rule of law are being threatened.

The EU has taken steps to address these concerns, including initiating infringement proceedings against countries like Hungary and Poland for alleged breaches of EU law. However, these efforts have been met with resistance from the populist governments in question, who view them as a threat to their national sovereignty. Ultimately, the rise of populism in Eastern and Central Europe is a significant challenge to the EU's unity and stability. It will require a concentrated effort from EU leaders to address the concerns of these countries while also upholding the values and institutions that underpin the Union. Only by finding a way to bridge these divides can the EU hope to maintain its cohesion and influence in the region.

The gaining power bond between Hungary and Poland in European Union

The bond between Hungary and Poland in the European Union has become increasingly significant in recent years, as both countries have adopted increasingly nationalist and policies that have put them at odds with the rest of the EU. Since 2015, Hungary and Poland have developed a stronger bond on their shared opposition to liberal values and institutions within the European Union. The rise of populist and nationalist movements in both countries, which brought right-wing governments to power, has fueled this bond. Hungary's Fidesz party, led by Prime Minister Viktor Orban, and Poland's Law and Justice party, led by Jaroslaw Kaczynski, have both pursued policies that prioritize national sovereignty and conservative social values, while also challenging the EU's liberal policies on issues like migration, climate change, and human rights (Balcer and Végh, 2022).

Over the years, Hungary and Poland have used their positions within the EU to push their own agendas and block initiatives that they see as contrary to their interests. They have also forged closer ties with other nationalist and populist governments in the EU, including those in Italy, Austria, and the Czech Republic, creating a loose coalition of like-minded states that are united in their opposition to the EU's liberal values and institutions.

Despite facing criticism and opposition from other EU member states, Hungary and Poland have been largely successful in advancing their own agendas within the bloc. They have been able to block or water down initiatives that they see as contrary to their interests and have even managed to secure significant amounts of EU funding for their own countries. However, the bond between Hungary and Poland has also caused significant tension and division within the EU, with many

leaders and citizens concerned about the erosion of democratic norms and the rule of law in these countries (Zgut, 2022). The EU has taken several measures in recent years to try to address these concerns, including initiating infringement proceedings against Hungary and Poland for alleged breaches of EU law.

Overall, the bond between Hungary and Poland in the EU has been a significant development in European politics over the past several years. While it has allowed these countries to advance their own interests and challenge the EU's liberal values and institutions, it has also created significant tension and division within the bloc. The coming years will be crucial in determining the future of this bond and its implications for the EU as a whole.

3. Research methodology

The research discusses research problems through the use of qualitative and empirical method on the rise of populism in Central and Eastern Europe rely on a combination of qualitative and descriptive research methods. The article also incorporates case studies and examples of populist movements and leaders in countries such as Hungary and Poland to illustrate the phenomena and their implications. To analyze the rise of populism, the article draws on a range of data sources, including historical records, academic research, and media reports. It examines the impact of factors such as the legacy of communism, economic inequalities, immigration, and refugee crisis, EU integration, and cultural factors on the emergence and success of populist movements in Central and Eastern Europe.

While the specific research methodologies are not explicitly stated, the article adopts a comparative approach by examining multiple countries in the region and highlighting similarities and differences in the context, causes, and consequences of populism. Overall, the article employs a qualitative and descriptive research approach, utilizing existing knowledge, case studies, and data sources to provide insights into the rise of populism in Central and Eastern Europe. The research methodologies utilized in this article contribute to a better understanding of the complex phenomenon and its implications for democracy, political stability, and the European Union. This research uses primary and secondary resources to fulfill the main arguments of the discussion through the analysis of the literature.

Literature Review:

1. The rise of European populism and the collapse of the center-left

The article discusses the rise of populism, particularly right-leaning populism, as the most significant political development in Europe in the 21st century. It argues that populism has eroded support for traditional center-right and center-left parties, leading to the fragmentation of party systems throughout Europe and a shift towards the right. The author suggests that populism is not solely driven by economic distress but also draws strength from opposition to mass immigration, cultural liberalization, and the perceived loss of national sovereignty to international bodies. The article highlights that the rise of anti-immigrant and anti-internationalist sentiment, coupled with the weakening of transnational institutions, poses a threat to liberal democracy (Galston, 2018). It points out examples of populist victories and the decline of center-left parties in various European countries, emphasizing the potential consequences for the political balance and democratic values.

The author acknowledges the hope that the populist wave had reached its peak with Emmanuel Macron's victory over Marine Le Pen in France's 2017 elections. However, subsequent events, such as the rise of Alternative for Germany (AfD) and other populist parties in different countries, have shown that the populist surge continues and mentions how center-right parties have adjusted to the rise of populism by adopting populist policies and rhetoric. It also highlights the efforts of populist governments in Hungary and Poland to undermine liberal institutions and define national identity in exclusionary terms, leading to increased anti-Semitism.

The article concludes by suggesting that the fate of Europe depends on the wisdom and skill of its political leaders in addressing issues related to immigration and refugees. It argues for the adoption of policies that balance the ideals of liberal democracy with the concerns of the people, aiming to resist the further erosion of democratic values. Overall, the article provides an overview of the rise of populism in Europe, its impact on party systems and traditional political forces, and the potential consequences for liberal democracy.

2. The (Resistible) Rise of Populism in Europe and its Impact on European and International Cooperation

The article highlights the significant impact of populism on Europe's political landscape and the challenges it poses to cooperation and integration within the European Union. The rise of populist parties, particularly those on the far right, has led to a political crisis characterized by the failure to address issues such as the refugee influx and the Brexit vote. However, the article acknowledges that understanding the linkages between populism and Europe's crises is complex.

The article defines populism as an ideology that divides society into two groups, the "pure people" and the corrupt elite, and argues that politics should represent the will of the people. Populist parties claim to represent the people but often manipulate and instrumentalize issues for their own gain. While populism is often associated with right-wing ideologies, it can transcend the left-right political spectrum (Balfour, 2017). The article explores various factors that contribute to the rise of populism, such as globalization, inequality, and fears of cultural identity loss. However, it cautions against simplifying the causes of populism, as there is no clear correlation between economic crisis or immigration and its rise. Instead, the article suggests that populism thrives on the dissatisfaction with advanced representative democracies and a perception of illegitimacy in decision-making processes.

Regarding foreign policy, populists have shown a remarkable ability to capture public attention and shape the debate, particularly on issues like European integration, immigration, and trade. However, the article notes that the actual influence of populist parties on policy preferences and decisions remains unclear. Mainstream parties have sometimes adopted populist agendas or rhetoric, either in response to changing political contexts or as a strategic move to gain support. This mutual manipulation between mainstream and populist parties requires further scrutiny to determine the responsibility and accountability of political choices. The article also emphasizes the impact of populism on European cooperation and integration. The EU's complex decision-making processes and its dislocation of decision-making to supranational levels have made it a target for populist criticism. Populism has affected areas of European policy that were previously less contested, and the EU is often perceived as illegitimate, exacerbating the populist sentiment. The article concludes that understanding the deeper reasons behind populism is crucial for guiding political and policy choices and finding alternatives to the nationalist and anti-multilateral course advocated by populism (Bharti & Bharti, 2022).

In summary, the article provides insights into the rise of populism in Europe and its impact on the political landscape, foreign policy, and European integration. It underscores the need for a nuanced understanding of the causes and consequences of populism to effectively address the challenges it poses to democratic governance and cooperation in Europe.

4. Results

The article discusses the rise of populism in Central and Eastern Europe, focusing on its historical context, factors contributing to its growth, and its implications for democracy and the European Union (EU). Populist leaders in the region tap into popular discontent with political elites, economic inequalities, and cultural changes, presenting themselves as anti-establishment champions of the people. This rise of populism raises concerns about the future of democracy and political stability in the region.

The article highlights that the rise of populism in Central and Eastern Europe is influenced by a complex interplay of historical, cultural, and economic factors. The legacy of communism, economic disparities, the immigration and refugee crisis, challenges in EU integration, and nationalism contribute to the susceptibility of the region to populist appeals. It explores the implications of populism for the region's political and social landscape, particularly the threats it poses to democracy and the unity and stability of the EU. Populist movements often exhibit authoritarian tendencies and may undermine democratic checks and balances. The article also discusses the alliance between Hungary and Poland, which share populist and nationalist movements, challenging EU policies and prioritizing national sovereignty and conservative social values. This alliance has created tensions and divisions within the EU.

In conclusion, the rise of populism in Central and Eastern Europe is a multifaceted phenomenon influenced by economic, political, and social factors. Populist leaders capitalize on frustration with traditional political parties and institutions, employing anti-immigrant and anti-EU rhetoric. However, the rise of populism also poses significant challenges to democracy and the principles and unity of the EU. Efforts to address these challenges and bridge the divides between populist and mainstream politics are crucial for maintaining regional stability and preserving the European project. The article also includes two literature reviews that provide additional insights into the rise of populism in Europe and its impact on party systems, democratic values, and European cooperation. These reviews emphasize the erosion of support for traditional political parties, the manipulation of issues by populist leaders, and the challenges populism poses to democratic governance and European integration.

Furthermore, the article offers a theoretical background that explains the rise of populism in Central and Eastern Europe through historical factors such as the transition from communism, economic disparities, EU integration challenges, nationalism, and dissatisfaction with mainstream politics. It emphasizes the importance of understanding this historical context for analyzing the ongoing developments in the region. Finally, the article provides a definition of populism as a political ideology that emphasizes the interests and needs of the common people, often in opposition to the elites or establishment. It notes that while populism can be associated with both positive and negative outcomes, some critics argue that populist movements can be authoritarian or anti-democratic and may promote policies that harm broader societal interests.

Overall, the article offers a comprehensive analysis of the rise of populism in Central and Eastern Europe, its causes, and its implications for democracy and European integration. It underscores the need for a nuanced understanding of populism to address the challenges it presents and maintain regional stability.

5. Conclusions

In conclusion, the rise of populism in Central and Eastern Europe is a complex phenomenon driven by a combination of economic, political, and social factors. Populist leaders in the region capitalize on frustrations and dissatisfaction with traditional political parties and institutions, using anti-immigrant and anti-EU rhetoric to appeal to those who feel marginalized by globalization. However, the rise of populism also poses significant challenges to democracy and the principles and unity of the European Union (EU). Efforts to address these challenges and bridge the divides between populist and mainstream politics will be crucial for maintaining regional stability and preserving the European project.

To effectively address the rise of populism in Central and Eastern Europe, several suggestions and recommendations can be made. First, it is important to address the underlying economic disparities within the region. Policies should focus on reducing inequality, promoting economic

growth, and ensuring that the benefits of globalization are more evenly distributed. This can help address the frustrations that often fuel populist movements.

Second, efforts should be made to promote social cohesion and inclusion. This includes addressing issues related to immigration and the integration of refugees. Providing support for social integration, education, and job opportunities can help alleviate the fears and anxieties that populist leaders exploit. Third, it is crucial to strengthen democratic institutions and protect the rule of law. This involves safeguarding the independence of the judiciary, ensuring freedom of the press, and promoting transparency and accountability in governance. Strong democratic institutions can serve as a bulwark against populist tendencies and protect the rights and freedoms of all citizens.

Fourth, engaging with populists and their supporters is important. It is necessary to understand the concerns and grievances that drive their support and address them through constructive dialogue and policy solutions. Ignoring or dismissing populist movements can further deepen divisions and alienate a significant portion of the population. Fifth, fostering a sense of European identity and solidarity can help counter nationalist and anti-EU sentiment. Promoting the benefits of European integration, such as peace, stability, and economic prosperity, and highlighting the shared values and cultural diversity of the EU can help build a stronger sense of belonging and counter the divisive rhetoric of populists.

Lastly, within the EU, there should be a collective effort to strengthen unity and address the challenges posed by populist governments within the bloc, particularly in Hungary and Poland. Finding common ground, promoting dialogue, and upholding the principles and values of the EU can help maintain cohesion and prevent further divisions. In conclusion, addressing the rise of populism in Central and Eastern Europe requires a comprehensive approach that tackles economic disparities, promotes social cohesion, strengthens democratic institutions, engages with populists and their supporters, fosters a sense of European identity, and strengthens unity within the EU. By taking these steps, it is possible to mitigate the negative impacts of populism and ensure the continued stability and progress of the region.

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7. Competing interests

The authors declare that they have no competing interests.

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