

D1.3:

A comprehensive
typology of political
parties in Europe,
including populist
and nativist ones

WP1 – Historical and comparative analysis



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**Populism and
Civic Engagement**



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1. Aims

The aim of this report is to provide a complete typology of political parties in postwar modern and contemporary Europe that can also be extended to other nation cases beyond it. Such a comprehensive methodological effort will enable differentiating political parties according to common core criteria. In particular, will also allow pinpointing populist parties against a panorama of various other competing party types.

2. State of the art

To the best of the present author's knowledge, there are not any fully developed recent attempts to construct typologies of political parties whether in Europe or globally. An older notable effort toward that direction was in Richard Gunther and Larry Diamond, "Species of Political Parties: A New Typology," *Party Politics* 9:2, 2003, pp. 167-199.

Two more recent efforts for classifying political parties are the [2019 Chapel Hill Expert Survey \(CHES\)](#), Pippa Norris' [Global Party Survey](#). Another effort, which however focuses solely on parties considered to be "populist," is [The PopuList](#). In terms of their methodologies, CHES, firstly, asks hundreds of political scientists specializing in political parties and European integration to evaluate the ideological and programmatic positions, including populist attitudes, of over 200 European political parties across all European Union member states. The [Global Party Survey](#), secondly, was conducted from November to December 2019 and asked 1,861 experts on political parties, public opinion, elections and legislative behavior to evaluate the ideological values, issue position and populist rhetoric of parties in countries on which they are an expert, which led to a classification of 1,051 parties in 163 countries. The PopuList, thirdly, surveys European parties that "obtained at least 2% of the vote in at least one national parliamentary election since 1998" and, based on country experts' opinions, classifies them as populist, far right, far left and/or euroskeptic.

3. Terms and methods

In technical language, a typology is "an ordering of 'attributive compounds,' i.e., an ordering resulting from more than one criterion."¹ More colloquially, "typology" refers to a logical system of dividing things into types based on commonly shared properties. Constructing a typology involves a hierarchical systematization which begins from the all-inclusive genus at the top, moves down to the more specific species levels, and ends with the lowest subspecies at its base level. For example, a typology of the genus "animals" includes two broad species, the vertebrates and the invertebrates. Each species is divided into subspecies. Thus, "invertebrates" includes such subspecies of animals as snails, spiders, crabs or sponges. As of the species "vertebrates," it comprises of fish, birds, reptiles, amphibians, and mammals. Moving further down, each subspecies is divided into sub-subspecies.

¹ Giovanni Sartori, *Parties and Party Systems: A Framework for Analysis* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 1976), p. 125.



For instance, “mammals” (commonly defined as animals that make milk for their young and grow hair) are distinguished into carnivorous and herbivorous. And so on and so forth.

Moving from the animal world to the universe of political parties worldwide, the question is: How can we devise a typology that includes all major party types organized *per genus at differentiam*, that is to say, in a way that proceeds by differentiating the overall genus of parties into more and more specific types that, while exclusive to each other, they collectively comprise the original genus?

One should naturally begin with methodological considerations. The endeavor to make sense of the bewildering complexity and fluidity of modern party politics requires that we proceed in steps. As a first step we need to decide about the key *variables* we are going to use so as to best capture the variation of our empirical cases. In the second step we must provide the specific *indicators* that help operationalization on the variables. Each indicator should be broad enough but still possible to observe empirically and relatively easy to operationalize. The third step is about *classification* proper. It is at that stage of our methodological venture that the variables will come into interaction with the indicators and take on different values for each individual political party. This in turn will facilitate ordering the universe of parties into specific classes that, at least in ideal-typical form, could be said to be mutually exclusive and jointly exhaustive. In the fourth and final step, we are going to move from classification to *typology* proper, that is, the ordering of the total ensemble of parties resulting from multiple criteria. If we arrive at this point, we will be able to make better sense of modern-day party politics, as well as better assess the outlook for future developments.

4. Variables

Since our general concern is about the present state and future of postwar liberal democracy, our two principle, or core, variables are *democraticness* and *liberalism*. Depending on how they interact between them, their combinations produce four different types of parties. The first variable, democraticness, is herein treated in a binary way: A political party is **democratic** if and as long as it meets certain criteria, and it is nondemocratic if it fails to meet them. This understanding does not allow for halfway situations, or democratic hybrids. It accepts, however, that parties may—and often do—switch from one type to another and several such transitions have occurred in modern European politics. The second variable, **liberalism**, is also binary since it distinguishes between liberal and illiberal parties. Yet, it allows significant gradation for the illiberal parties since they may range from prodemocratic to antidemocratic and even to nondemocratic ones.

5. Indicators

The role and purpose of indicators are to help us determine for each case examined whether our variables obtain or not. With respect to democraticness, it is said to obtain at single party level when parties contest “free and fair” elections in a non-violent or voter-intimidating way *and* are able to—vocally or otherwise—demonstrate their allegiance to parliamentary democracy. In contrast, nondemocratic parties oppose parliamentarism even if they participate in elections (in which case, they will be designated as *antidemocratic* parties).



With respect to liberalism, it obtains when a party observes the three interrelated sub-indicators that constitute liberalism: (a) the acknowledgment of a plurality of divisions, and hence interests, in society; (b) a clear preference for political moderation and consensual politics; and (c) adherence to the rule of law, including the protection of minority rights. Inversely, we are in the domain of illiberalism when a party presents society (aa) as an antagonistic duel between “the people” and the “elites”; (bb) opts for polarization while shunning political compromise; and (cc) is willing to curb the law and violate minority rights to serve majoritarianism.

6. Classification

Evidently, in close interaction with the indicators, our two principle variables take different values along which individual political parties may now be neatly located on a spectrum including nondemocratic and democratic parties, illiberal and liberal ones. The democracy-to-nondemocracy ordering yields three (mutually exclusive and jointly exhaustive) classes of parties: (i) *democratic parties*, those contesting competitive elections and are loyal to the rules of the democratic game; (ii) *antidemocratic parties* that contest competitive elections but are disloyal to democratic politics, openly declaring their opposition to it; and (iii) *nondemocratic parties* in nondemocratic systems that preclude contestation. The liberalism-to-illiberalism ordering, produces four additional (mutually exclusive and jointly exhaustive) classes of parties: (iv) *liberal parties*, those meeting all the criteria set for liberalism; (v) *illiberal parties* that contest competitive elections and are loyal to democracy; (vi) *illiberal parties* that contest competitive elections but are disloyal to democracy; and (vii) *illiberal parties* in nondemocratic systems, which usually have a monopoly on state violence and over the use political repression.

7. Typology

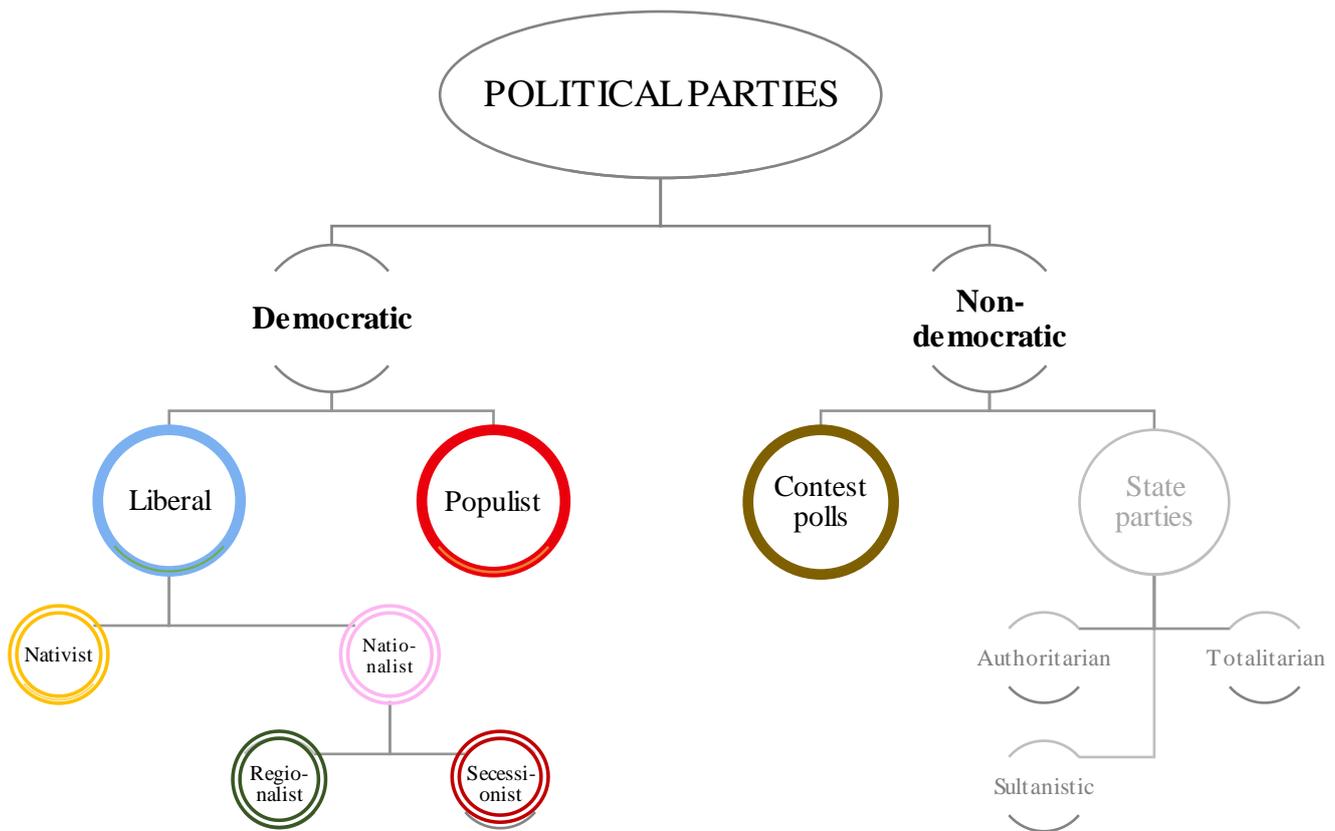
In a way similar to constructing the typology of animals discussed in the beginning, we are now in a position to construct a simple but exhaustive typology of all significant modern political parties by simply combining the core attributes of democraticness and liberalism. As shown in the graph below, the basic distinction is between democratic and nondemocratic parties. Democratic parties are further distinguished between liberal and illiberal (a.k.a. populist) ones. Descending even more on our classificatory ladder, liberal democratic parties are distinguished into nativist and nationalist. One more step down, and we get a distinction of nationalist parties into regionalist secessionist ones, thus having achieved a quite elaborate analysis of the various types of liberal parties. Nondemocratic parties, finally, are distinguished according to whether they take part in competitive elections or not. Their difference is that, while antidemocratic parties still contest democratic elections either in the hope of overthrowing parliamentarism (e.g., Greece’s Golden Dawn, GD) or simply because they are certain to win in elections that are unfree and unfair (e.g., Turkey’s Justice and Development Party, AKP), nondemocratic parties are already in control of uncontested power, which takes various forms herein distinguished into authoritarianism, totalitarianism, and so-called sultanism. No such party exists currently in Europe.

Table 1, below, presents a multi-level typology of political parties according to a multiplicity of criteria. It depicts a hierarchical systematization of the universe of Europe’s party types (colored) together with nondemocratic party types that have been extinguished from the continent (in grey). The typology begins with the overall *genus* “political



parties” which includes two *species*, democratic parties and nondemocratic ones. Each species is further divided in *subspecies* according two criteria: for democratic parties, whether they are liberal or not (which distinguishes liberal from populist parties); and for nondemocratic parties whether they contest parliamentary elections (which distinguishes between contestants and pure autocrats). Moving to hierarchically lower *sub-subspecies* levels, requires adding even more criteria in order to account for more distinct party types. In our case, liberal parties are classified into nativist and nationalist depending on their political goals (cultural homogeneity vs. national sovereignty) while state controlling nondemocratic parties are classified into separate classes depending on the type of rule each of them applies. One can descend at the *sub-sub-subspecies* level, for instance, as shown in Table 1, by distinguishing nationalist parties into secessionist and regionalist ones.

Table 1. A four-level *per genus et differentiam* typology of political parties



We have arrived at a point that allows us to seize the bewildering complexity and fluidity of contemporary Europe’s liberal world politics and make sense of party politics in a coherent way. We are now in a position to use the foregoing in order to serve two research purposes: First, a mapping purpose, in a way that will convey useful and theoretically relevant information about populism in contemporary politics; and, second, an explanatory purpose, so as to provide us with causally relevant insights for a more detailed empirical and comparative science. What remains is the application of our typology to concrete nation cases.



8. Case analysis

The present typology is based primarily on all European countries that became members of the European Union before its enlargement to the East, and still belong to it. To those cases I have added (a) the United Kingdom, which departed from the EU in 2021; (b) Norway, a non-EU country, which features an important nativist party; and (c) the duo of Hungary and Poland from Eastern Europe for the importance of their currently populist regimes. In addition, I have treated Belgium as a two-headed unit and examined separately the French-speaking and the Flemish-speaking parties. On that account, the present typology includes the following eighteen countries in alphabetical order: Austria, Belgium, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Ireland, Italy, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Spain, Sweden, and the United Kingdom. But first we need to define party types in a way that is as much as possible clear and unambiguous. The next section provides concise definitions.



9. Defining party types

LIBERAL

The majority of political parties in postwar and contemporary Europe. Both democratic and committed to liberal principles, they are distinguished by three characteristics: their acknowledgement that society is divided by multiple, often cross-cutting, cleavages; the pursuit of political moderation and overlapping consensus; and their adherence to the rule of law and the protection of minority rights.

POPULIST

They represent a novel party type that developed in Europe after the mid-1970s in opposition to liberal parties. Democratic but illiberal at their core, populist parties view society as being split between an integrated majority of ordinary people and elite minorities. This inevitably generates political polarization, which, in turn, justifies the pursuit of majoritarianism at the expense of liberal institutionalism.

NATIVIST

Technically a subspecies of the liberal type, nativist parties advocate policies of protecting the interests of native-born citizens against alien populations and their cultures in addition to fundamentally opposing further European integration. They have risen strongest since the 1990s particularly in Europe's most economically wealthy, culturally homogenous, and socially liberal democracies.

NATIONALIST

In the context of contemporary Europe, nationalist parties present as a subcategory of the modern liberal party type, their basic aim being to achieve sovereignty of their respective *nations* from other states or from supranational organizations, most notably the European Union.

SECESSIONIST

A subspecies of the liberal nationalist party, they promote the independence of a certain people and its territory from a federal, or unionist, state and the establishment of a new state of their own. When their claims involve the secession of people living in neighboring territories, secessionism meets with *irredentism*.

REGIONALIST

Another subspecies of liberal nationalist party type, they strive for greater autonomy of a geographically defined *region* (rather than a nation) and its people from a centralist nation state.

ANTIDEMOCRATIC

Located on both the far right and far left opposites of party systems, they participate in competitive elections as archetypal “antisystem” forces seeking to both delegitimize the political and normative foundations of parliamentary democracy and to subvert its legal-institutional structures, most often by use of violence.



Table 2. Significant political parties with corresponding party types in contemporary Europe*

Country	Party Abbr	Year founded	Party Name (and official website)	Name in English	Party type
AUSTRIA	<i>SPÖ</i>	1889	Sozialdemokratische Partei Österreichs	Social Democratic Party of Austria	Liberal
	<i>ÖVP</i>	1945	Österreichische Volkspartei	Austrian People's Party	Liberal
	<i>FPÖ</i>	1956	Freiheitliche Partei Österreichs	Freedom Party of Austria	Nativist
	<i>Grüne</i>	1986	Die Grünen – Die Grüne Alternative	The Greens – The Green Alternative	Liberal
	<i>NEOS</i>	2012	NEOS – Das Neue Österreich und Liberales Forum	NEOS – The New Austria and Liberal Forum	Liberal
BELGIUM Dutch-speaking	<i>VLD</i>	1846 (1971) (1992)	Open Vlaamse Liberalen en Democraten	Open Flemish Liberals and Democrats	Liberal
	<i>CD&V</i>	1884 (1968) (2001)	Christen-Democratisch en Vlaams	Christian Democratic & Flemish	Liberal
	<i>sp.a</i>	1885 (1978)	Socialistische Partij Anders	Socialist Party Differently	Liberal
	<i>Groen</i>	1982	Groen	Groen/Green Party	Liberal
	<i>N-VA</i>	2001	Nieuw-Vlaamse Alliantie	New Flemish Alliance	Nationalist
	<i>VB</i>	2004	Vlaams Belang	Flemish Interest	Secessionist
BELGIUM French-speaking	<i>MR</i>	1846 (1971) (2002)	Mouvement Réformateur	Reformist Movement	Liberal
	<i>cdH</i>	1884 (1968)	Centre démocrate humaniste	Humanist Democratic Center	Liberal
	<i>PS</i>	1885 (1978)	Parti socialiste	Socialist Party	Liberal
	<i>Ecolo</i>	1980	Ecolo	Ecolo	Liberal
DENMARK	<i>V</i>	1870	Venstre	Denmark's Liberal Party	Liberal
	<i>A</i>	1871	Socialdemokraterne	Social Democrats	Liberal
	<i>B</i>	1905	Radikale Venstre	Social Liberal Party	Liberal
	<i>C</i>	1916	Det Konservative Folkeparti	Conservative People's Party	Liberal



	<i>SF</i>	1959	Socialistisk Folkeparti	Socialist People's Party	Liberal
	<i>DF</i>	1995	Dansk Folkeparti	Danish People's Party	Nativist
FINLAND	<i>SDP</i>	1899	Suomen sosialidemokraattinen puolue	Social Democratic Party	Liberal
	<i>KESK</i>	1906	Suomen Keskusta	Center Party	Liberal
	<i>KOK</i>	1918	Kansallinen Kokoomus	National Coalition Party	Liberal
	<i>VIHR</i>	1987	Vihreä liitto	The Green League	Liberal
	<i>PS</i>	1995	Perussuomalaiset	Finns Party	Nativist
FRANCE	<i>PS</i>	1969	Parti socialiste	Socialist Party	Liberal
	<i>RN</i>	1972	Rassemblement National	National Rally (formerly National Front)	Anti-democratic Nativist
	<i>LR</i>	2015	Les Républicains	The Republicans	Liberal
	<i>LREM</i>	2016	La République En Marche!	The Republic Forward	Liberal
	<i>LFI</i>	2016	La France insoumise	Unsubmissive France	Populist
GERMANY	<i>SPD</i>	1863	Sozialdemokratische Partei Deutschlands	Social Democratic Party of Germany	Liberal
	<i>CDU/CSU</i>	1945	Christlich Demokratische Union Deutschlands	Christian Democratic Union	Liberal
	<i>FDP</i>	1948	Freie Demokratische Partei	Free Democratic Party	Liberal
	<i>Grüne</i>	1980	Bündnis 90/Die Grünen	Alliance 90/The Greens	Liberal
	<i>Die Linke</i>		Die Linke	The Left	Populist
	<i>AfD</i>	2013	Alternative für Deutschland	Alternative for Germany	Nativist
GREECE	<i>ND</i>	1974	Νέα Δημοκρατία	New Democracy	Liberal
	<i>PASOK</i>	1974	Πανελλήνιο Σοσιαλιστικό Κίνημα	Panhellenic Socialist Movement	Populist Liberal
	<i>SYRIZA</i>	2004	Συνασπισμός Ριζοσπαστικής Αριστεράς - Προοδευτική Συμμαχία	Coalition of the Radical Left - Progressive Alliance	Populist



	<i>KKE</i>	1918	Κομμουνιστικό Κόμμα Ελλάδας	Communist Party of Greece	Anti-democratic	
	<i>GD*</i>	1985	Χρυσή Αυγή	Golden Dawn	Anti-democratic	
HUNGARY	<i>KDNP¹</i>	1944	Kereszténydemokrata Néppárt	Christian Democratic People's Party	Liberal	
	<i>FIDESZ</i>	1988	Fidesz—Magyar Polgári Szövetség	Fidesz—Hungarian Civic Alliance	Liberal	Populist
	<i>MSZP</i>	1989	Magyar Szocialista Párt	Hungarian Socialist Party	Populist	Liberal
	<i>Jobbik</i>	2003	Movement for a Better Hungary	Jobbik	Anti-democratic	Nationalist
	<i>DK</i>	2011	Demokratikus Koalíció	Democratic Coalition	Liberal	
	IRELAND	<i>Sinn Féin</i>	1905	Sinn Féin	Democratic Socialist	Nationalist
<i>Labour</i>		1912	Páirtí an Lucht Oibre	Labour Party	Liberal	
<i>Fianna Fáil</i>		1926	Fianna Fáil—An Páirtí Poblachtánach	Fianna Fáil – The Republican Party	Liberal	
<i>Fine Gael</i>		1933	Fine Gael	Fine Gael (United Ireland)	Liberal	
<i>Green Party</i>		1981	Comhaontas Glas	Green Party	Liberal	
ITALY		<i>Lega</i>	1991	Lega	League (formerly Northern League)	Regionalist
	<i>PD</i>	2007	Partito Democratico	Democratic Party	Liberal	
	<i>FI</i>	2013*	Forza Italia	Go Italy	Populist	Liberal
	<i>M5S</i>	2009	Movimento 5 Stelle	Five Star Movement	Populist	Liberal
	<i>FdI²</i>	2012	Fratelli d'Italia	Brothers of Italy	Nationalist	



LUXEMBOURG	<i>LSAP</i>	1902	Lëtzebuenger Sozialistesch Aarbechterpartei	Luxembourg Socialist Workers' Party	Liberal
	<i>CSV</i>	1944	Chrëschtlech Sozial Vollekspartei	Christian Social People's Party	Liberal
	<i>DP</i>	1955	Demokratesch Partei	Democratic Party	Liberal
	<i>Greng</i>	1983	Déi Gréng	The Greens	Liberal
	<i>ADR</i>	1987	Alternativ Demokratesch Reformpartei	Alternative Democratic Reform Party	Liberal
NORWAY	<i>H</i>	1884	Høyre	Conservative Party	Liberal
	<i>V</i>	1884	Venstre	Liberal Party	Liberal
	<i>AP</i>	1887	Arbeiderpartiet	Labour Party	Liberal
	<i>Sp</i>	1920	Senterpartiet	Center Party	Liberal
	<i>FrP</i>	1973	Fremskrittspartiet	Progress Party	Nativist
	<i>SV</i>	1975	Fremskrittspartiet	Socialist Left Party	Liberal
NETHERLANDS	<i>PvdA</i>	1946	Partij van de Arbeid	Labor Party	Liberal
	<i>VVD</i>	1948	Volkspartij voor Vrijheid en Democratie	People's Party for Freedom and Democracy	Liberal
	<i>D66</i>	1966	Democraten 66	Democrats 66	Liberal
	<i>CDA</i>	1980	Christen-Democratisch Appèl	Christian Democratic Appeal	Liberal
	<i>PVV</i>	2006	Partij voor de Vrijheid	Party for Freedom	Nativist
POLAND	<i>PSL</i>	1990*	Polskie Stronnictwo Ludowe	Polish People's Party	Liberal
	<i>SLD</i>	1999	Sojusz Lewicy Demokratycznej	Democratic Left Alliance	Liberal
	<i>PO</i>	2001	Platforma Obywatelska	Civic Platform	Liberal
	<i>PiS</i>	2001	Prawo i Sprawiedliwość	Law and Justice	Populist
PORTUGAL	<i>PS</i>	1973	Partido Socialista	Socialist Party	Liberal
	<i>CDS-PP</i>	1974	Centro Democrático e Social—Partido Popular	People's Party	Liberal
	<i>PPD-PSD</i>	1974	Partido Social Democrata	Social Democratic Party	Liberal
	<i>PCP</i>	1921	Partido Comunista Português	Portuguese Communist Party	Anti-democratic



SPAIN	<i>PSOE</i>	1879	Partido Socialista Obrero Español	Spanish Socialist Workers' Party	Liberal
	<i>PP</i>	1989	Partido Popular	People's Party	Liberal
	<i>Cs</i>	2005	Ciudadanos–Partido de la Ciudadanía	Citizens—Party of the Citizenry	Liberal
	<i>VOX</i>	2013	VOX	Voice	Nationalist
	<i>PODEMOS</i>	2014	PODEMOS	We Can	Populist
SWEDEN	<i>S/SAP</i>	1889	Sveriges Socialdemokratiska Arbetareparti	Swedish Social Democratic Party	Liberal
	<i>M</i>	1904	Moderata samlingspartiet	Moderate Party	Liberal
	<i>C</i>	1913	Centerpartiet	Center Party	Liberal
	<i>KD</i>	1964	Kristdemokraterna	Christian Democrats	Liberal
	<i>SD</i>	1988	Sverigedemokraterna	Sweden Democrats	Nativist
UK	<i>Cons</i>	1834	Conservatives	Conservative Party	Liberal
	<i>Lab</i>	1900	Labour	Labour Party	Liberal
	<i>SNP</i>	1934	Scots National Party	Scottish National Party	Secessionist
	<i>LibDem</i>	1988	Liberal Democrats	Liberal Democratic Party	Liberal
	<i>UKIP</i>	1993	UK Independence Party	UK Independence Party	Nationalist

Notes:

¹ Officially a coalition partner of Fidesz, KDNP is in reality a satellite of it, which it helps to form its supermajority in Parliament.

² Brothers of Italy, founded 2012, is a successor party to National Alliance (1995-2009), which was partner in three coalition governments led by Silvio Berlusconi.

* Table 2 can also be viewed in infographic form by following the following link: https://popandce.eu/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/PaCE_D1.4_Interactive-Infographics_28March2021.pdf

