

# VEFAMUN'26

## EUROPEAN UNION

### STUDY GUIDE

#### The Rise of Far-Right Extremism in Europe

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# 1. Letter from Secretary-General

Most Special Participants of VefaMUN'26,

As the Secretary-General of VefaMUN'26, I'm absolutely thrilled to welcome you to our 6th edition, happening on March 28-29 right here at Vefa High School.

My journey with this club began on day one of my high school career, and it's been a true passion ever since. I started as an Academy Team Member, climbed to Head of Academy, served as the Deputy Secretary-General, and now stand proudly as Secretary-General. Over these years, I've given my all to this club and this family. We've faced endless obstacles together, and turned "an idea that became reality" from our slogan into our living truth. Every challenge we overcame only made us stronger, more united, and ready to deliver something extraordinary.

Our academy and organisation teams have poured relentless effort into this conference. We tackled every hurdle with grit and designed eight dynamic committees to challenge your minds, spark debates, and create unforgettable memories. From crisis simulations to deep policy dives, each one is crafted for maximum engagement and growth.

But here's the heart of it: none of this shines without you, our incredible participants. Your energy, ideas, and passion are what breathe life into VefaMUN. So come join our family, dive into action, and let's make this edition legendary together.

Best Wishes,

Melis Usanır

Secretary-General of VefaMUN'26

## 2. Letter from Under-Secretary-General

Distinguished delegates,

I am honored to welcome you all to VEFAMUN'26. I, Begüm Özger, am a junior at Beşiktaş Anatolian High School. It is a great pleasure to serve as Under-Secretary-General of the European Union committee. To support you as best as possible during the conference, we prepared our study guide with my academic assistant, Nazlı.

The structure for the continuity of the committee and the academics' success lies in the efficiency of its study guide. The next crucial step is how effectively delegates engage with it. We tried our best to create the study guide that best explains the agenda item for our most esteemed delegates.

I am confident that with dedication, we will not only gain valuable academic experience but also have a great and enjoyable time together.

Please do not hesitate to contact me via email if you have any questions to best understand the agenda item. I am looking forward with great interest to seeing you all at VEFAMUN'26!

Under Secretary General

Begüm Özger

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### **3. Introduction to the Committee: European Union**

The European Union (EU) is a unique political and economic partnership between 28 European countries, created to promote peace, stability, and prosperity across the continent. Its foundations were laid after the devastation of the Second World War, when European leaders recognized that deeper cooperation could prevent further conflict. What started as limited economic cooperation gradually turned into a broad and influential union, shaping many areas of public policy.

Over time, European integration expanded through a series of treaties and enlargements. The establishment of the European Economic Community (EEC) in 1957 created a common market based on the free movement of goods, services, capital, and people. With the Maastricht Treaty in 1993, the European Union was formally created, marking a shift from purely economic cooperation toward stronger political coordination. Today, the EU plays an important role in areas such as trade, regional development, environmental policy, agriculture, and, for many of its members, a shared currency: the Euro.

What makes the EU different from most international organizations is the depth of integration between its member states. While national governments remain central decision-makers, EU institutions, such as the European Commission, the Council of the European Union, and the European Parliament, have significant authority to propose, shape, and adopt legislation. The European Parliament is especially notable as it is directly elected by citizens of member states, giving the EU a distinct democratic dimension at the supranational level.

### **4. Introduction to the Agenda Item: The Rise of Far-Right Extremism in Europe**

In recent years, far-right extremism has become a growing problem in Europe, becoming more visible not only through street movements but also through political parties that hold seats in national parliaments and the European Parliament. Nationalist and strongly anti-immigration movements have increased their support in several countries, significantly shaping election results, public discourse, and policy debates, while raising serious concerns about the future of democracy, minority rights, and social cohesion.

There are many reasons behind this rise, including long-term economic instability, unemployment, rapid migration waves, cultural polarization, and the powerful influence of social media in spreading simplified and sometimes misleading narratives. In many cases, individuals who feel economically insecure, politically ignored, or uncertain about their national identity may become more vulnerable to extreme ideologies that promise quick and decisive solutions.

In this committee, we will examine both the main causes and the broader political and social consequences of far-right extremism in Europe, focusing on its impact on democratic institutions, human rights, and European integration. We expect delegates to work toward balanced and realistic policy proposals that protect democratic values while addressing the concerns of European societies.

## 5. Key Terminology

**Far-Right Extremism:** Far-right extremism refers to political ideas and movements that are at the far end of the right-wing spectrum. They strongly emphasize nationalism, oppose immigration, and often reject basic democratic values like equality and respect for minorities. These movements may support strong state control, limit individual freedoms, and promote the idea that certain groups are better than others.

**Ultranationalism:** Ultranationalism is an extreme form of nationalism that holds one nation as superior to others, often rejecting multiculturalism and cooperation with other countries and leading to exclusionary or aggressive policies.

**Anti-Immigration Sentiment:** Anti-Immigration Sentiment refers to public or political opposition to immigration, where people express concern that immigrants may compete for jobs, threaten cultural norms, or pose security risks, leading to negative attitudes or policies. This sentiment can influence elections and debates about national identity and border control.

**Nativism:** The belief that native-born citizens should be prioritized over immigrants and that foreign influence threatens national identity and social stability.

**Xenophobia:** Xenophobia is an intense dislike of foreigners or people perceived as outsiders, often leading to prejudice, exclusion, and negative attitudes toward immigrants or cultural differences. This attitude can shape public opinion and influence social and political policies.

**Populism:** Populism is a political idea and activity that intends to appeal to ordinary people by giving them what they want.

**Authoritarianism:** Authoritarianism is a system of governance that concentrates power in a leader or small group, limits political opposition, and restricts civil liberties such as freedom of speech. Elections may exist, but opposition voices are often suppressed to maintain control.

**Islamophobia:** The term Islamophobia, which is directly related to the extreme right, was first developed by political activists, non-governmental organisations, and international institutions by the end of the 1990s and the beginning of the 2000s to draw attention to harmful actions and discourses against Islam and Muslims in Western liberal democracies. The term not only expresses anti-Islamic feelings and opinions, but it is also used to condemn people with these feelings and opinions.

**Illiberal Democracy:** Illiberal democracy is a political system where elections take place, but democratic principles like judicial independence, media freedom, and minority rights are weakened. Although leaders are elected, checks and balances are limited, and rights are not fully protected.

## 6. Historical and Political Background

### 6.1. Early European Far-Right Movements (World War II)

The most influential far-right movement in recent history was seen with the Axis powers. Their rise to power signified their respective ideologies to the world. Ideologies such as fascism, which emerged and developed quickly in Italy because of internal factors like economic difficulties experienced after World War I and racism, the most extreme display would be the Holocaust, which was committed because of Nazi Germany's antisemitic and similar ideals, spread through Europe.

The Kingdom of Italy was the birthplace of the fascist movement during World War I, which only grew in power when Mussolini was appointed the Prime Minister of Italy. Italian fascism was initially a left-nationalist and anti-clerical movement, and originated from ideological combinations of ultranationalism and Italian nationalism, national syndicalism, and revolutionary nationalism. Even though at the start of the war Italy's ideologies were described as 'neither right nor left,' Mussolini's extreme opposition to left-wing ideologies such as communism and socialism later on labeled it as far-right.

Nazi Germany, which was ruled with totalitarian dictatorship and was known to have extreme racist, anti-slavist, antisemitic, and eugenic ideals, was one of the key players during World War II. We can see its effect on the world's politics in ideologies following in its footsteps just as much as we can see it in the ruined lives of many victims of its crimes against humanity.

### 6.2. The Rise of Modern Far-Right Parties

After World War II, most of the far-right parties in Europe had lost their support and social base. Many organizations were founded to unite countries and to ensure peace, which, all combined, would become the European Union. But as time went on, values such as anti-immigration, anti-globalisation, and nationalism grew.

While there are multiple economic, social, cultural, and political causes for the current rise in the radical right in various European countries, it is difficult to say which is the most important. However, perhaps the best explanation can be found in the crisis of democracy,

which today, more than ever before, seems incapable of fulfilling its theoretical promise. In this regard, establishment parties are regularly accused of not representing the true people.

### 6.3. The Ongoing Surge of the Far-Right

Today, populist radical right parties rank among the top three political parties in a third of European countries. They have achieved significant success in regional and national elections. Initially, populist radical right political parties were dismissed as marginal, temporary reactions from voters, but their rapid spread across the continent, sustained voter base, and increasing institutionalization indicate that they are not a transient phenomenon, but a serious issue that demands more attention.

## 7. Key Factors of Far-Right Extremism

### 7.1. Immigration and Refugee Crisis

A refugee crisis refers to difficulties or dangerous situations in the acceptance of large groups of refugees, who are individuals who find themselves outside their home countries due to a justified fear of oppression or cruelty based on different factors such as race, religion, ongoing conflict, or political opinion.

The similarity between immigration and a refugee crisis is that they both mean having foreigners in your country. Anti-immigration and xenophobia are a big part of the far-right ideologies. There are many reasons why the far-right holds these views concerning foreigners, but the most prominent ones are ethnocentrism, increased competition for employment, and claims of immigrants' contribution to higher crime rates.

### 7.2. Economic Inequality

Economic inequality is an umbrella term for three concepts: income inequality, how the total sum of money paid to people is distributed among them; wealth inequality, how the total sum of wealth owned by people is distributed among the owners; and consumption inequality, how the total sum of money spent by people is distributed among the spenders.

The far-right mostly focuses on income inequality, which they claim is caused by foreigners. An ongoing economic crisis fuels far-right parties as they often promise protective measures for the native population while blaming immigrants and refugees for 'stealing jobs' or living off countries' welfare systems.

### 7.3. Public Security and Trust Concerns

Throughout history, the far-right has been seen to rise right before conflict. Certain worries of the public have helped push its ideologies and convince people of ‘safer’ government models.

The European Union’s peaceful policies, formed after World War II, such as the absence of a military power within the union, had left it defenseless against worldwide conflicts. After Russia invaded Ukraine USA’s denial of support, countries in the union began to worry about a full-scale war and began investing in individual armies. The funding of national military forces has pushed nationalism further than it has been during non-conflict times and enforced far-right ideals in Europe.

## 8. Current Far-Right Parties and Groups in Europe

### 8.1. Freedom Party of Austria

The Freedom Party of Austria (German: *Freiheitliche Partei Österreichs*, FPÖ) is a political party that is known to show ideals such as national conservatism, German nationalism, right-wing populism, and euroscepticism. It is the largest party in the National Council of the Austrian Parliament and won the 2024 elections by 28.8%. On an international scale, it is a founding member of the Patriots for Europe group with 6 MEPs (Member of the European Parliament).



### 8.2. Brothers of Italy

Brothers of Italy (Italian: *Fratelli d'Italia*, FdI) is the current ruling party of Italy. It became the largest party in Italy in the 2022 Italian general election. The party has far-right, post-fascist, and national-conservative ideals. Its symbol is taken from the National Alliance, which was the successor of the Italian Social Movement, a neo-fascist party that defended Italian fascism until the 1990s. On an international scale, it has 24 MEPs who are affiliated with the European Conservatives and Reformists.



### 8.3. Fidesz - Hungarian Civic Alliance

Fidesz - Hungarian Civic Alliance (Hungarian: *Fidesz - Magyar Polgári Szövetség*) is a national-conservative, right-wing populist political party that started as a centre-left activist movement, later on adopting far-right policies. It has held the majority of the seats on the National Assembly ever since the 2022 Hungarian parliamentary election. On an international scale, it is a founding member of the Patriots for Europe group with 10 MEPs.



### 8.4. Alternative for Germany

Alternative for Germany (German: *Alternative für Deutschland*, AfD) is a right-wing populist, national conservative, and völkisch nationalist political party in Germany. Its ideals include opposing immigration, especially Muslim immigration into Germany, Euroscepticism, and supporting affiliation with Russia. It has 15 MEPs.



### 8.5. Patriots for Europe

Patriots for Europe (PFE or Patriots), founded by *Fidesz* and the *Freedom Party of Austria*, is a far-right sovereignist political group. Following the European Parliament elections in June 2024, it has become the third-largest group in the European Parliament with 86 MEPs. Its ideals include Euroscepticism, opposition to illegal immigration, and national conservatism.



### 8.6. European Conservatives and Reformists

European Conservatives and Reformists Group (ECR Group or simply ECR) is a centre-right to far-right political group of the European Parliament. It holds national conservative, soft Eurosceptic, and anti-federalist ideals. The largest party in the group is the Brothers of Italy (FdL) party with 24 MEPs out of 79.



## 9. Case Studies of Affected Member States

### 9.1. France

In 1962, with the abolition of UDCA, the radical right weakened in France, and right extremists could not gather under the same roof. Jean-Marie Le Pen founded the National Front in 1972. This party is remarkable since it brings together many people of different opinions. At the time when the party was established, it did not manage to be successful since subjects of security, nationalism, and migration were not leading themes.

Le Pen has transformed the party into a more modern and political order by trying to keep it away from her father's racist identity, and thus been able to draw more people into the party. One of the areas where Le Pen is powerful is the fact that she has managed to bring together right extremists under the same roof while drawing individuals who do not have radical opinions to her party. The far-right in France has had its share of populist discourse. France uses a two-round presidential



election system, and in 2017, the main candidates who advanced to the second round were Marine Le Pen and Emmanuel Macron. Le Pen campaigned on nationalist and anti-immigration policies, including leaving the EU and limiting migration, while Macron supported European integration, liberal economic reforms, and cooperation with NATO. Although Macron won the second round with 66% of the vote, the election showed that far-right ideas had gained significant public support, especially in regions facing unemployment and economic hardship. Even though Macron became president, the growing vote share for Le Pen and the continued influence of movements like the Yellow Vests indicate that far-right support has been rapidly increasing in France.

The 2017 elections highlighted how far-right politics have become a serious force in France. Even though Le Pen was defeated, the scale of her support suggests that such movements are capable of shaping debates that directly affect the future direction of the European Union.

### 9.2. Germany

Germany provides a significant example of the rise of far-right politics within a stable democratic system. After World War II, the German constitution was designed to prevent

extremist ideologies from gaining power, and Nazi-related organisations were strictly banned. For decades, far-right parties remained politically weak and socially marginal.

However, during the 2015 refugee crisis, public debate over migration intensified. In this context, the party Alternative for Germany (AfD), originally founded as a Eurosceptic party in 2013, shifted its focus toward anti-immigration and nationalist rhetoric. In the 2017 federal elections, AfD won 94 seats in the Bundestag, becoming the first far-right party to enter parliament with such strength in post-war Germany.

The party gained particularly strong support in eastern Germany, where economic dissatisfaction and feelings of political neglect were more common. Although Germany's democratic institutions remain strong, the presence of AfD has influenced debates on migration, national identity, and EU integration.

### 9.3. Hungary

Hungary is frequently discussed in EU-level debates concerning migration policy and democratic governance. Since 2010, under Prime Minister Viktor Orbán, the government has emphasized national sovereignty, cultural identity, and stricter migration control.

A major turning point occurred during the 2015 migration crisis. Hungary constructed border fences along its southern borders and introduced emergency legislation to limit irregular migration. The government framed these measures as necessary to protect national security and preserve social stability. Although these policies were supported domestically, they sparked discussions at the European level about burden-sharing and asylum standards.

In the following years, constitutional and legal reforms attracted attention, particularly in relation to judicial independence, media regulation, and civil society space. While elections have continued regularly, debates have emerged about the balance between majority rule and institutional oversight.

Hungary has also been involved in discussions concerning the EU's Rule of Law Mechanism and funding conditionality.

These developments illustrate how national political choices can influence broader EU policymaking processes.



## **10. Potential Policy Solutions**

### **10.1. Proportionate Counter-Extremism Frameworks**

EU institutions adopt balanced counter-extremism policies and avoid overstating the far-right threat. Policy responses need to remain balanced and grounded in evidence. Over-securitisation may unintentionally increase polarisation. A structured and data-based framework strengthens democratic legitimacy.

### **10.2. Integrating Desecuritisation Mechanism**

Not every issue related to far-right extremism should be addressed solely through urgent security measures. Although security responses may provide short-term stability, they are often insufficient for long-term prevention. For more sustainable outcomes, social, educational, and economic policies need to be integrated into counter-extremism strategies. Addressing structural factors such as social exclusion and political dissatisfaction contributes to lasting stability.

### **10.3. Clear and Consistent Legal Definitions**

To avoid an essentialist approach to this phenomenon, EU-level coordination can recognise that categories such as “extremism” and “terrorism” are not fixed or context-free. A harmonised legal framework across member states reduces ambiguity. Consistency in terminology strengthens rule-of-law standards. Clear definitions also prevent selective application.

### **10.4. Cross-Border Monitoring and Research Networks**

Important reflection on the far-right’s production within and beyond terrorism research can be institutionally supported at the EU level. The EU may expand cross-border monitoring systems and fund independent research initiatives across member states. Continuous analytical evaluation allows policies to adapt to changing political and social dynamics. Coordinated monitoring strengthens policy coherence and improves strategic planning.

## 10.5. Responsible Political and Media Communication

Political leaders and media institutions shape how society understands far-right extremism. Sensational or dramatic framing can deepen fear and social division instead of encouraging constructive discussion. Establishing communication standards based on accuracy, accountability, and transparency can reduce misinformation and polarisation. Strengthening ethical media practices and responsible political rhetoric supports democratic resilience and social cohesion.

## 10.6. Democratic Institutional Resilience

Recognising that political situations are changeable and often contested, policies must be designed to respond to the existing conditions in the world. Reinforcing judicial independence, media freedom, and civic participation mechanisms reduces structural vulnerability to exclusionary ideologies. Strong institutions decrease the appeal of radical narratives. Institutional reinforcement provides a long-term safeguard beyond short-term security measures.

## 11. Questions to be Answered

1. Which EU policies can counter far-right extremism effectively?
2. How can social, economic, and educational strategies reduce far-right support?
3. How can over-securitisation and polarization be avoided?
4. What measures strengthen civic participation and media freedom?
5. How can cross-border research support counter-extremism efforts?
6. How should political leaders and media communicate responsibly on extremism?
7. Which legal frameworks can ensure consistent EU-wide action against extremism?
8. What initiatives address root causes like economic insecurity and social exclusion?
9. How can national governments and the EU collaborate more effectively?

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