



Grassroots for Europe Round Table #44

Countering the alt-right incursion in EU and UK elections.

Tuesday March 5th, 2024

Summary Report

Background and aims.

As Gideon Rachman puts it in the *Financial Times* [27.11.2023], "[The far Right is moving into Europe's mainstream](#)".

A significant advance of right-wing or alt-right parties has been predicted in the coming EU Parliament elections this year. In the UK, now a third country, the right-wing Brexiter regime is apparently heading for heavy defeat later this year, while still attempting to whip up alt-Right polarisation issues (Islamophobia, culture wars, migrants) recognisable across Europe, the USA and elsewhere. Its defeat may even then only be partial, given that opposition parties still dare not propose to reverse Brexit. The EU is currently firm alongside the USA in its support for Ukraine against Russian aggression, but the risk of a second Trump presidency corruptly and ideologically allied to Putin poses new challenges, with Orbán ('Make Europe Great Again') operating as a would-be Putinist-Trumpian agent and facilitator within the EU. In the USA, some conservative forces are now explicitly announcing and pursuing an end to democracy. In some EU states, neo-fascist politicians [appear to be appealing successfully to young voters](#). [This article from 2019](#) cited by Rachman is a helpful description of the Polish and Hungarian regression models.

Progressive democratic forces thus face recognisably similar challenges and adversaries across the EU and beyond Europe, as they do currently in the UK in dealing with the forces which captured the Brexit state. Ahead of the EU June election and a UK election maybe in October, do we see opportunities for common and shared resistance to the projects of right-wing capture? What can we learn from recent successes and setbacks? Can we in the UK help to mobilise resident EU citizens to vote for democracy? How can Europe's democrats appeal to and mobilise the young vote? How can the centre-right be dissuaded from cynical and foolish alliances with the hard right? The Right has seen setbacks (if partial and incomplete) in Spain and Poland, while sensing future victory in France and Germany, advancing in Netherlands and consolidating in Italy; elsewhere there have been big changes in opposite directions (Brazil, Argentina); see a useful overview in Visegrad Foresight [here](#). How far is there now a united and coordinated working international of the Right, in Europe and beyond? How far do recent massive public demonstrations in German cities betoken a new public sense of urgency and a popular will to resist this trend? What about the [possibility of a far right party being banned](#) for violations of the German constitution?

The EU has not been inactive in its own democratic defence, particularly since Putin's attack on Crimea. Its [extensive work programme on disinformation](#) is of direct relevance to our subject, and has included [good analyses of national-specific hazards](#). (See also [here](#).)

We are keen to learn more about this work, during this session and beyond.

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*Our keynote guest speaker for this session was **Dr. Luke Cooper**, Associate Professorial Research Fellow in the Conflict and Civicness Research Group, LSE IDEAS. He is also co-founder of **Another Europe is Possible**. Luke's slides for the talk are available as an accompanying file.*

*We also heard briefings from Seema Syeda [**Another Europe is Possible and European Alternatives**], and from Dr Ruvi Ziegler and Else Kvist [**The New Europeans UK**]*

- **Beyond Thatcherism**

Dr Luke Cooper began by outlining how in the 21st century the radical right has shifted from forms of 'authoritarian individualism' to 'authoritarian protectionism' and then discussed how this shift might influence the June 2024 European Parliament elections.

The basic argument is that contemporary radical right narratives offer a very diminished status to the economic philosophy of liberal individualism we have known for the last 40 years, that associated with Margaret Thatcher and Ronald Reagan. Thatcher said there's no such thing as society in the sense of having obligations to other members of that society, but only individuals, their families and their self-interests. This guiding principle was according to its critics) a neo-liberal resurgence of nineteenth-century liberalism, not a progressive vision of liberalism. Thatcher was certainly not just a liberal, she was simultaneously articulating different ideas, drawing on a very conservative view of a British nation with Victorian values of hard work and a small state, but then combining it with very radical liberal individualism.

Thatcher and Reagan were classic proponents of this philosophy of allowing individuals to flourish, free from state interference, with low taxation as the principal crowning policy. The state was to be removed from the economy via sweeping privatisation, austerity, and market reform of public services. We tend to assume that those 1980s ideas are still very

much with us, especially in the UK. However, especially if one looks elsewhere conservatives nowadays win legitimacy for their ideas in different ways. Some of Thatcher's famous sayings, especially her very hard-line rhetoric about free markets, differ markedly from some contemporary forms of conservatism.

With Thatcher there was a very fierce attack on the idea that the state will be there to deliver for us. . this was a hard-line vision of meritocratic thinking, the idea that the distribution of resources in society is basically down to how hard you work and will be allocated fairly by markets. This view was accompanied by the theory familiar in neoliberalism, that letting markets flourish will cause wealth to trickle down to everyone. That argument fed into an entire technocratic infrastructure of globalisation in many ways.

Classical neoliberalism makes certain basic points. The starting point is the individual's interests. Individuals' claims on economic resources are all conditional on hard work. There are no unconditional rights to protection, health care, social welfare and so on. Allowing markets to run free creates a merit-based society, with poverty or wealth dependent on work level.

Modern authoritarianism as collective protection

'Contemporary authoritarianism differs from this by offering a kind of collectivism, usually some sort of 'ethno' vision of the nation. It doesn't necessarily offer people unconditional economic security, It says that the contemporary economic structure hasn't worked or delivered for you, but "we" (authoritarians) will defend the nation and make it great again for you. This Trumpian approach is vague about economic redistribution, offering instead guarantees that individuals have the unconditional right to be protected from the threats and forces allegedly ranged against them. The threats could be the influence of corrupt elites on the distribution of economic resources, but equally refugees, migrants, people of colour, trans identity, etc. One forerunner of such attitudes can be seen during the 2008 financial crisis, when Peter Thiel, the founder of PayPal, proposed abolishing democracy because it doesn't allow free markets to flourish as they (in his view) should. So free markets needed to be protected by an anti-democratic system. People like Thiel saw the bank bailouts of the financial sector and the American car industry as unjustifiable breaches of the fundamental principles of markets and distribution of resources. Unsurprisingly, Thiel later became a supporter of Trump, but Trump moved from the time of

his nomination in 2016 from a position of not wanting to protect individuals to a narrative of protecting ordinary Americans against a system that had betrayed them and against outside threats like China.

- **The American far right and Viktor Orbán: Liberalism is a disaster.**

Some American far-right circles propagate variations of Thiel in the idea that America is a republic, not a democracy, thereby mobilising a very explicit kind of philosophical authoritarianism. In those American circles Viktor Orbán has become a very prominent figure, intellectually and politically, trailblazing for the last decade the belief that liberalism has been a disaster because it puts individual rights above the rights of the conservative nation. For my book I interviewed Orbán's ideological spokesman Zoltán Kovács, who argues openly that his government rejects liberal rights, and only represent what it calls 'illiberal democracy'. This kind of vulgar majoritarian thinking, the idea that the individual doesn't have any rights in relation to a majority which is protected by Orbán, that even NGOs don't have a right to exist because they haven't been elected by the people, is the new model of hard-line political authoritarianism. Orbán's claim to be the sole protector against an emerging global civilisational and political crisis means that Hungarians are required to support his leadership.

There is still also a version of authoritarian individualism exemplified in Argentina's new president, Javier Milei, who basically claims we need an authoritarian state to unleash Argentinian markets via huge programmes of privatisation and public sector cuts. Milei, however, seems to be an exception that proves the rule. The reason is that since 2008 a series of huge crises has forced the state to intervene on a very large scale because markets left to their own devices cannot pay for the effects of things like Covid or climate change. The need for such large-scale state intervention has in turn contributed to a trend of authoritarian protectionist politics. Liz Truss in some ways took up the mantle of classical Thatcherism, but she lost power by dispensing with its macro-economic discipline. Since then she has embraced hard-line ethno-nationalism and even conspiracy theory.

These examples I've given of contemporary authoritarian attitudes are only approximations, which however may help us to make some sense of events.

- **The authoritarian offensive in the June 2024 European Elections: how can democrats respond?**

Projections for the European elections in June are very worrying from a progressive perspective. [Polling by the European Council on Foreign Relations](#) suggests a likely breakthrough for the radical right. The Identity and Democracy (ID) platform, the most far right of the European Parliament groupings, is predicted to go from sixth place in the 2019 European elections to third place in 2024. This is more or less borne out by other polls which predict up to 80 or 90 seats for the ID. That big gain comes mainly in the European Parliament elections, where the number of seats determined by the size of the country. Big gains in very big countries signify serious increases, in support, particularly through Marine Le Pen's Rassemblement National (National Rally), up by about 50%, and through Alternative für Deutschland in Germany. Nor is it yet clear who Orbán will ally with, but he will probably engage in some form of cooperation.

The rise in far-right prospects owes a lot to the power of authoritarian claims to be sole protectors of the nation, but it should not be simplistically explained as a movement of the disadvantaged or a straightforward revolt of the working classes or those on low incomes. One of the biggest indicators of authoritarian voting patterns in Europe is the role of regional, rather than individual, inequality. Often the well-heeled in relatively declining areas vote for authoritarian populists. So economic geography is a big factor.

Progressives need to develop their own narrative of what 'protection' looks like in a world of mounting crises and breakdown. 'Protection' is about such things as inclusive development and green transition that protects basic incomes, sharing and collaboration. We cannot expect liberal narratives to prosper if they fall back on simple meritocratic ideas about working hard.

[Luke has attached some slides from A longer lecture on which this talk was based,]

Jo Pye. Do authoritarians ever consider, or even factor in how their project would inevitably lead to civil war? And lawlessness even among their own membership? Do they ever think of civil war? Or they think they can just control it?

Luke Cooper. It's quite a big topic in the American far right. In fact the American right rather like the idea of civil war, it comes from an old-fashioned, white nationalist view that there's a coming race war in Western liberal societies with the influx of immigration. And what Steve Bannon does is develop that white nationalist view in a different direction. He's obviously an appalling far-right, fascistic figure. But he's a far-right fascistic figure that's very well read, that reads the *Guardian*, the *Financial Times*, the *Economist* that thinks about his political positioning and posture. In his previous arguments, he has this idea that there's a coming civilizational conflict between different states all over the world, and that America should be prepared to win that conflict by hunkering down around the America First agenda. So it links white supremacy in the domestic setting to this idea that America needs to protect itself from global threats, particularly China. Interestingly, in terms of Trump's current strategy going forward to the November elections, there was a recent News Agents episode that I would recommend, where they show clips from an interview with Bannon. The Trump campaign in this election is leaning into the idea of masculinity. It's trying to make a virtue of the fact that they've lost a lot of votes from the attack on abortion rights by the Supreme Court, and they are looking to appeal to male black voters or male Hispanic voters that they perceive would share some of their Incel-ish, anti-feminist agenda. And so that's their trajectory at the moment. It's a new form of articulating these different elements together.

Jo Pye. How can people in America think that there is a united white ethnic grouping or in-group?

Luke Cooper. I think that's right, there isn't. But we're not talking about rational political operators here. Violence for them is not a problem, it's the point. It's the way in which they generate legitimacy for their ideology. In conflict societies, where this authoritarianism raises its head, in societies that were already experiencing intractable violence and conflict in one way or another, in sectarian identity politics, the idea that your ethnic group will be protected from these other ethnic groups, or religious groups or whatever that threaten your identity in one way or another, is a really important part of the mobilization. There's research in political science that individuals and groups are more prone to support attacks on democracy when they perceive their fundamental identity is at risk in one way or another, when individuals and groups feel that there's some existential problem that cuts to the heart of who they are, then it opens up space to attack democratic institutions. Of

course, you're completely right: the identity itself is collectively invented.

Seema Syeda (AEIP). I agree with all of your analysis. I'm just wondering how the people who supported Brexit because they want to dismantle EU protectionism, how do Modi's liberalisation policies fit into the analysis? Neoliberals and liberal governments are not grasping that their own economic policies are causing the rise of the far right: is it something that they don't really care about? And what is the way forward for progressive parties in talking to younger voters, because younger voters in parts of Europe are supporting the far right? How can we reclaim that sense of belonging and community for them? Left parties do try and create some sense of social cohesion, but they've been failing and the right has been winning.

Luke Cooper. I agree that Modi complicates the analysis quite a lot. In one way Modi is consistent with this idea of authoritarian protectionism, but then I agree with you that there's also a difference. In Indian politics, even preceding the rise of the Hindu nationalists, and Congress was for a long time dabbling in Hindu nationalism as some kind of precursor of a modern, developed Indian nationalism; there was always a strong element of majoritarianism, that never really embraced the idea that the minorities of India were equal as citizens to the Hindus. So it was always quite Orbánistic, in some versions of this that have become really prominent under Modi. It takes this almost theological form in saying that, yes, we accept that you are Muslims now. And you are Christians now, or you don't have a religion now. But you're Indian, and this is derived from the fact that you were once Hindu. So everyone was once Hindu, and therefore the Hindus are the basis for the nation. And of course, this is a very dangerous idea, because it's linked to this notion that monotheistic reactionaries polluted what was once pure. So it's a very hardline majoritarianism, which is consistent with what Orbán is saying. Where it complicates the story is that they're also terribly neoliberal. And you get lots of Thatcherite-like narratives, in part maybe for the quite simple reason that there's been an enormous economic boom, even if maybe this is too crude; India has had an enormous economic boom, it does have a new middle class, there is a social constituency, where you tell people that the Indian economic revolution is how you have a meritocratic prosperity for everyone. And it appeals in that context to the middle class.

Why don't neoliberals realise that they're risking authoritarianism? Well, I think in some ways, a lot of them now do, that's the story of Joe Biden, very moderate, almost

conservative with a bit of trade union background, part of the Democratic Party, but extremely mainstream, but he realised after January 6, and even before, after the Trump period in office, that American democracy was in real crisis, and it was partly in crisis due to belief in what had come to be called trickle-down economics, an economic doctrine that he had supported for most of his career, up until that point, then routinely started attacking. We haven't had the same process for various reasons in UK progressive politics, but we're also and in some parts of Western Europe and in Eastern Europe in that situation as we anticipate what may happen in the European elections. So it's a mix, but I think in general, there is a trend to move away from that type of thinking.

Helen Johnston. Hi, I'm with Breman in Spain. It's a very interesting time in Spanish democracy at the moment, a lot of upheaval following the recent elections. And we are looking very closely at what's happening on the far right here with Vox. We've seen a lot of protests recently. The motorway has been blocked near my house for the last two or three weeks by farmers who are protesting against goods coming in from places like Morocco and also cheap labour and against European green policies that they see as holding them back from being able to do what they want to do. I'm interested in your view on how far what's going on with the farmers is a reaction to the drift towards the right, or is it being pushed and driven from the right wing, taking advantage of the disaffection that farmers are naturally feeling with what's going on in their sector?

Luke Cooper. Seema organised a briefing for us on this recently. I think it's a mix, I think you have to be careful, especially in Europe, because farmers can be politically engaged in different ways. The French farmers tend to be quite progressive, but I don't think that's the case in Germany, where there are reports of AfD infiltration in the farmers' movements. You might have seen these terribly depressing images of Ukrainian grain trains, with farmers taking direct action to destroy really significant amounts of grain, a punitive measure that is really hurting the Ukrainian economy. Obviously, people have a right to protest. But given the Ukraine situation, that just seems to me a really shocking thing to do. It's an interesting, challenging issue for progressives, because you have the mix of different issues. There's trade and protection policies, some involving Europe's relationship to one of the world's biggest grain producers, Ukraine, which happens to be a country fighting a war at the moment. Ukrainian grain is produced in an incredibly productive way,

on enormous farms that are very efficient, owned by oligarchs and vertically integrated with their own distribution systems. It's incredibly polluting, and it uses pesticides that are banned in the European Union. So it's a difficult issue with many aspects: it raises at one and the same time issues of environmental protection, democracy, security, geopolitics, and redistribution for European farmers. And the EU responds by disapplying its anti-pesticide rules in the face of farmers' demands, so it hurts the environment at the same time. In principle, it should be a resolvable issue, but it would have to be resolved through economic redistribution, some increase in subsidies that paid some farmers in order to grow their crops in a more ecologically sustainable way over the long term and supported bringing back the pesticide directives, but that's easier said than done when there's so many fears and conflicts over economic distribution at the moment.

Tony McCobb. When I listen to ultra-right Americans, in particular, I've often been struck by the biblical tone of what they say, the sense that they're preaching, that they have a feeling of utter righteousness which is almost apocalyptic, they seem as you say to be preaching civil war, as if they would welcome the eventual last battle and victory of good over evil. I wondered whether there's any element to that in European right-wing thinking, using religion to justify this sense of righteousness, as in Lee Anderson's intervention the other week: when you're right you don't apologise, and he was convinced he was right, so he never apologised.

Luke Cooper. Yes, I think you do very much get elements of that in the European picture. Christianity is a critical component of how Orbán positions himself in relation to his domestic population. It's the defence of Christian Europe against infidel invasions, the Muslims, as he has said very explicitly on countless occasions, during the 2015 migration crisis, and after, and continues to say. He really does see it as a battle, as you say, in this very dangerous way of good versus evil, right versus wrong, my ethnic group versus the other side. The other party group we should mention in the European Parliament that is projected to make big gains is the European Conservatives and Reformists. They're generally considered a bit more moderate, but they're not really, the difference is more due to geopolitical positions and attitudes to Russia and other such things that define them as slightly different to some of the other far-right parties, but their strongest member party is Law and Justice in Poland, and Vox is also part of them in Spain. There's lots of

commonalities, but for Law and Justice in Poland, Catholicism was absolutely critical to their mobilisation. And their attack on reproductive rights is very well known. I'd say looking forward, if there's any ray of light here, one thing is that the far right in the European Parliament will be very divided by personalities and factions. It's not entirely clear at the moment, although it's quite likely that the centre-right European People's Party, with the ECR and the Identity and Democracy group plus Orbán which are currently not aligned together, could well have a majority in the European Parliament. And that will be the first time that that's ever been the case. The hope, and probably at the moment, likelihood is that the European People's Party would maintain its historic position, which is to govern with the centre left in the European Parliament, maintaining a governing majority coalition with the centre left, which would keep those extremist elements out. But there are certainly people in the European People's Party who quite like the idea of creating a majority with the far right and there is a debate over this.

John Gaskell. We we tend to think of the right across Europe as as a single thing. But they're not all the same. Wilders is not the same as the AfD. In Germany. If you look at Italy, the far right isn't exactly the same as the French or indeed as Vox in Spain. So, to what extent can they hold together as a unit in the European Parliament if they are bickering amongst themselves?

Luke Cooper. The answer could be that they would just vote against everything. They wouldn't really need to have a positive programme, they would just... make trouble. And the Parliament now have co-legislative power with the European Council, such that if they they did just vote against everything, then it would seriously inhibit the European Union from doing anything. So that's a possibility. I suspect, the pressure from the national governments that will want the European Union to do things in their various interests in one way or another will act as a counterbalance to that possibility. But it not something that can be excluded in these times.

Dr. Ruvi Ziegler. Ruvi is chair of The New Europeans UK, a charity fighting for the rights of EU citizens living in the UK and British citizens living in the EU. One of their main areas of work has focused on the exercise and retention of voting rights. Campaigns were fought in 2014 and 2019 when, for various procedural and other issues, many EU citizens living in the UK were effectively denied that right. What happens later this year is particularly

interesting and throws up some specific campaign issues.

Local Government elections in May - England

The first set of elections will be the early May local government elections in England. In these elections EU citizens who are UK residents will continue to have the right to vote, as will Commonwealth citizens.

Local Government elections in England from June 2024

The UK government has brought in new rules for local government elections in England, effective from June this year, based on whether it has signed bilateral agreements with individual EU countries. This change is further complicated by the date at which EU citizens arrived in the UK. Those who arrived before the end of the Brexit transition period will retain their voting rights irrespective of the bilateral agreements. For example, those who arrived from Germany before the end of 2020 will retain their right to vote in local elections even though Germany does not have a bilateral agreement with the UK. But those who arrived from Germany after January 1st, 2021 will no longer be eligible to vote in local elections in England. As things stand, citizens of Denmark, Ireland, Luxembourg, Poland, Portugal and Spain will be able to vote in local elections in England, as well as citizens of Malta and Cyprus which are Commonwealth countries. This creates a very strange patchwork in which from June 2024, citizens of just eight of the 27 EU countries, who have arrived post-Brexit will be entitled to vote in English local elections. But EU citizens who arrived before Brexit will retain their voting rights. Obviously, this is incredibly confusing to explain, even more confusing to apply and to campaign on.

Different rules for Scotland and Wales

In stark contrast, the devolved governments of Scotland and Wales have adopted a much more inclusive and sensible approach by saying that there is no longer any reason to distinguish between EU citizens and other residents now that the UK has left the EU. In brief, in Scotland every resident can vote in local and Scottish parliamentary elections, and the same applies in Wales to local and Welsh Assembly elections, whereas in England the situation remains extremely complicated. The Scottish/Welsh model is far more sensible – levelling up voting rights rather than levelling down. – and should hopefully be adopted in England if there is a change of government in Westminster.

European Parliament Elections – June 2024

The first EU elections since the UK left the bloc bring further complications, raising the intriguing question as to whether EU citizens living in the UK will be eligible to vote. In fact, this will depend on their own country's approach to the rights of EU citizens living outside the Union. Four EU states – Cyprus, Malta, Denmark and the Republic of Ireland do not generally allow their citizens to vote if they live outside the EU – some exceptions include diplomats and those abroad short-term. So, some EU citizens in the UK will be eligible to vote whereas others will not.

Most egregiously, dual UK/Irish citizens living in Northern Ireland – which in many respects has remained within the EU framework but is outside it from a political perspective – will not be entitled to vote. So, a large proportion of the population of Northern Ireland will not be able to vote for Irish seats nor for any other seats in the European Parliament. It remains to be determined, but I may be involved in a legal challenge to this disenfranchisement focusing on people living in the UK which is now a third country but which was an EU member state at the time of their arrival here.

Else Kvist [The Young Europeans UK]: As a charity we can't be party political, but we have launched a new friends (membership) scheme based on feeling European / belonging to Europe: <https://steadyhq.com/en/im-a-new-european/posts/3e717abd-2b0c-406f-babb-3885c15b86c0>.

We've got another campaign, which follows on a bit from what Rudi Ziegler was explaining. On Friday for International Women's Day, we'll be launching our "Get out to Vote" campaign. We've got working with us the actor, writer and campaigner, Kate Willoughby, who plays the suffragette Emily Wilding Davison, some of us will have met her here on the Round Table. She will help us remind all EU citizens, and it is all EU citizens still, people might have been a bit confused by Brexit, that they will still be able to exercise their right to vote in the local elections on May 2nd, Then all changes from June as Rudi explained. Any citizens who arrived after Brexit will be will no longer be able to vote, unless their country of origin has a bilateral voting agreement with the UK. But for simplicity and for clarity: all EU citizens can still vote on the second of May in the local elections. And then when it comes to the European Parliament elections, we will be reminding all those EU citizens whose country or region allow them to vote from abroad to use their vote. We

mentioned that there are some countries such as Cyprus, Malta, and Denmark, which is unfortunately where I'm from, who don't allow their citizens to vote from abroad. People are currently trying to mount a legal challenge to these countries' refusal of voting from abroad. And then indeed, when the national election is called, or maybe even before, we will be reminding all Brits abroad that they can now vote in the general election.

Chair [Colin Gordon]. The progressive European parties will be pleased to know that the 3 million in the UK are being encouraged to use their vote in Europe. And maybe that makes a difference in some cases. We did ask if Terry Reintke MEP could join us today, who as we know is a great supporter of Rejoin and has been over several times to speak here, and is now of course the joint **Spitzenkandidat** for the Greens-EPA in the coming European election. We have hopes to get her to join us at a coming webinar. And now I'd like to invite Seema Syeda to brief us about news of her other organisation European Alternatives <https://euroalter.com/> and about a major upcoming event, the European Common Space for Alternatives (ECSA) <https://spaceforalternatives.eu/>

Seema Syeda (AEIP)

Hi, everyone. Yes, so European Alternatives is the other organisation that I work for, which is based across Europe. They have offices in Paris, Brussels, Berlin, and Italy. And the aim of European Alternatives is to act beyond the nation state. So it's campaigning against the ideas of borders and trying to create a real transnational community and a transnational sense of belonging. And so they act a lot of round European issues and we're going to be launching a campaign around the EU elections in the next month or so. So that's one of the organisations I work with. And related to that, but distinct from it, there is the European Common Space for Alternatives. The Common Space involves many, different social movement actors from across Europe, including national organisations and local organisations, coming together in Marseille on the 26th to 28th of April, to try and build, I don't know if many of you have come across the phrase, a movement of movements. It's seeking to overcome the fact that so many of our organisations and groups are fragmented and acting in silos. We want to bring as many of us as possible together into one common space, to look at all of the areas in which we have common campaigning, and to try and make that into something bigger than the sum of our parts. And this is looking ahead to the European elections, because as was discussed today, the polling shows that there will be major gains for the far right. And the message that European

Alternatives is trying to give is that, okay, the polling shows this, but we shouldn't lose hope. And we shouldn't just give up, be defeatist and assume that that's how it's going to be, it's still possible that things could change, especially given that many people don't actually pay attention to the European elections. That means that it's a space where things can change quickly, where new disruptors can change things in other directions. And where actually small bits of effort collectively across Europe can actually make big differences in the final results. So I think there's this big question of how do we get people engaged in the elections themselves? How do we get groups that wouldn't normally actually vote in these elections to come out and vote? There are new initiatives on this, there's an initiative called Diaspora Vote, trying to get EU citizens who are from diaspora communities to engage in the EU elections. So that's lots of people from migrant communities, who often don't come out to vote even in the national elections, let alone the European elections, who will actually be most affected by this very xenophobic far right getting a bigger platform in the European Parliament. So what the Common Space for Alternatives is trying to do is to get any organisation or movement that wants to take part to come to Marseille and to also engage in the process before Marseille, where we're having meetings based around different themes, for instance, climate, democracy, solidarity, economy, and think about how we can already before the event, connect our campaigning, come up with policy ideas, come up with ideas for action and organising. So that the event itself is actually a moment, not where we first meet each other, or we just talk and nothing comes out of it, but where we actually launch a process of united action. And so having a UK presence is really, really important as well, because firstly, all of the European, other European organisations are really keen to have UK involvement. There's UK organisations already involved. I don't know if you've seen the recent announcements from some of the left parties saying that an independent Scotland would be welcome to come back to the European Union, and that similarly the UK might also rejoin the European Union, and that we need to keep those avenues open and keep the discussion open. If you now go on to the websites, it's possible to get updates, it's also possible to propose a self-organised activity or workshop. And then once you register, you'll also get updates about how to take part in the online process beforehand. So when it comes to Another Europe is possible and European Alternative, were hoping to run a few self organised activities. One of them is about resisting imperialism, whether it's Russia and Ukraine, or what's happening in Palestine at the moment, as well as looking at the situation in Sudan, and Congo and other parts of the world. And then there's a second self-

organised activity that we'd like to propose with Grassroots for Europe as well, which is on the question of migration. And we've had some discussions with Colin about this too. And I'm sure Colin can also add a bit to that, but we'd really like to bring for instance, Mimmo Lucano to Marseille, to think about what resistance and solidarity actually means in practice, as well as to get local groups in Marseille, which is a city that has many migrants and asylum seekers present, to also engage in the process in a way that maybe our organisations and civil society groups haven't been so successful at doing in the past.

Chair: Thanks, we'll spread the word about this to the grassroots networks. About the asylum issue in particular, there's been international support and solidarity from France and elsewhere, and from MEPs, for Mimmo Lucano whose pioneering work in Calabria on asylum welcome suffered a harsh and unjust judicial persecution by a semi-mafia, right-wing local state which persecutes and exploits migrants. We feel that connecting ourselves to a common, active culture of European civil society groups has to be a key to the way that pro-Europeans in the UK become successful over a period of time, and will help us get greater traction over here, as well as well as form deeper alliances over there. We hope the Round Table can do its bit to facilitate this.

Resources and campaign links cited in the session.

"A sharp right turn: A forecast for the 2024 European Parliament elections":

<https://ecfr.eu/publication/a-sharp-right-turn-a-forecast-for-the-2024-european-parliament-elections/#results>

The New Europeans UK "I'm a new European!": <https://steadyhq.com/en/im-a-new-european/posts/3e717abd-2b0c-406f-babb-3885c15b86c0>.

European Alternatives: <https://euroalter.com/>

European Common Space for Alternatives (ECSA): <https://spaceforalternatives.eu/>