

The Rise of Populist Parties in Europe: The Dark Side of Globalization and Technological Change?

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Globalisation and technological change are usually considered welfare-enhancing developments by economists. This proposal sheds light on potentially very important political, social and economic costs that have, until very recently, been neglected: the recent rise of populist and nationalist movements, possibly leading to political disintegration of the European Project. The applicants aim to highlight whether globalisation and technological/structural changes increase vote shares of populist and nationalist parties because of the economic hardships caused by these phenomena. They provide up to date and comparable evidence for European regions and also explore whether transfer payments via European Union (EU) structural funds mitigate these effects. They extend this basic analysis by focusing on the three specific cases of the Czech Republic, Germany, and the United Kingdom to provide a clear understanding of (i) which type of hardships matter, (ii) which subgroups are affected, (iii) whether individual-level or regional-level hardships matter and (iv) the individual-level economic mechanisms behind the rise of populism. Methodologically, the applicants will deploy both microeconomic and experimental tools to identify causal relationships between exogenous trigger events (e.g. import shocks, robot use, refugee inflow) and outcome variables (labour market, election outcomes and populist sentiments). They will make use of survey, experimental and administrative data at both aggregate (regional) and individual levels. The ultimate goal of the project is to assess whether economic hardship, caused by forces hitting open economies - typically viewed as being beyond the control of individual voters and national authorities - can explain the recent success of populist and nationalist movements in the EU. They will also provide guidance to European and national policy makers concerned with the future of the EU and open democratic societies.

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