

**Socio-economic Rights and the Rooting of National-Populist Parties
in Europe**

**The Cases of France, Switzerland and Hungary,
in the 2000s and 2010s**

**by
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Abstract:

The rise of national-populist parties has become a major challenge for liberal democracies, as these parties base their discourse on identity and national belonging, advocating greater isolation from other nations. It must be acknowledged that the issues raised by national-populist parties reflect the failure to implement the high socio-economic standards that Europe has nevertheless pledged to uphold.

Introduction

Socio-economic rights have evolved alongside globalisation; middle- and working-class groups appear to be among those most affected by the changes brought about by neoliberalism. Some scholars (Betz, 1993; Kriesi, 2009; Perrineau, 2014) refer to these groups as the “losers” of globalisation, namely individuals who do not benefit from its advantages (such as greater freedom of movement for education, travel or employment opportunities, for example) and who feel threatened not only in terms of their social and economic rights, but also in their way of life. These populations are particularly targeted by national-populist parties, which claim to defend the “little people” against the “powerful” and strongly criticise openness and the processes associated with globalisation (immigration, relocation of industries).

National-populist parties have thus become a major challenge and a central issue for democracy, not only because of their electoral successes in many countries, but also because their political reflection and programmes are based on identity and national belonging, advocating a form of withdrawal from other nations. National-populism (Taguieff, 1984) is therefore defined through its relationship with the outside world, but also and above all through its relationship with democracy. For P.-A. Taguieff, populism is embedded in the very definition of democracy and should be understood as a form of political practice within democratic societies rather than as a political movement:

“Modern democracy indeed stands on two pillars. The sovereignty of the people constitutes the populist pillar of the democratic regime, while the other pillar is constitutionalism, which is intended to frame and limit the expression of popular will. Between the principle of popular sovereignty and the rule of law, tensions are inevitable.”

It is through this relationship with democracy that scholars analysing populism agree on three main characteristics of national-populism: the role of the charismatic leader, the appeal to the people, and the opposition between “them” and “us”, or between the “little people” and the “powerful”.

The questions raised by national-populist parties — namely increasing inequalities, social, economic and environmental dumping, industrial relocation, and rising unemployment — are legitimate concerns. However, the responses they propose conflict with the principles and values of liberal democracies. At the same time, intergovernmental institutions such as the Council of Europe, and supranational organisations such as the European Union, have established high socio-economic standards aimed at providing a minimum level of protection for European citizens. In order to counter the negative effects of neoliberalism (inequalities, rising poverty), was not the development of a social Europe one of the objectives pursued during the 1980s? The question therefore arises as to whether these standards are effectively implemented today within Member States.

Our study focuses on three European countries. First, France, the second-largest economic power in Europe, which nevertheless faces difficulties in adapting to the changes brought about by globalisation; it has witnessed the rise of a right-wing populist party, the Front National (now the Rassemblement National), which has gained increasing influence since the 2000s. Second, Switzerland, a Central European country and member of the Schengen Area and the Council of Europe (as are the other two countries studied), but not of the European Union. Switzerland is highly integrated into globalisation and experiences low

unemployment, yet it has largely supported the Swiss People's Party (SVP/UDC) for nearly twenty years. The party became a major political force during the 2000s and contributes to the country's political leadership. Finally, Hungary, a former Eastern Bloc country and a more recent democracy, has been an EU Member State since 2004. It has witnessed the rise of Jobbik, a party founded in 2003, which gained significant influence during the 2010s and became the country's second-largest political force.

These three cases are particularly relevant because they represent different models of national-populist parties and socio-economic proposals. We may assume that the Rassemblement National represents a form of populism expressing a classical welfare-state approach combined with neoliberal elements and a strong national dimension; the SVP/UDC embodies a form of populism that is both conservative-liberal and national; finally, Jobbik develops a statist and authoritarian conception of economic policy. We will examine these three cases, which illustrate three distinct forms of national-populism in the field of economic and social policy.

We will analyse the socio-economic proposals of national-populist parties, which demonstrate that mainstream governing parties have failed to provide sufficient answers to socio-economic concerns. Therefore, we will ask whether the deterioration or lack of implementation of European socio-economic standards (if such a situation exists) contributes to the rise of national-populist parties in Europe.

To address this question, we will analyse socio-economic rights through the reference texts established by the European Union and the Council of Europe, in order to assess their implementation in the countries under study. In a second part, we will compare the programmes of national-populist parties (during the 2000s and early 2010s) with the expectations and concerns of citizens in the three countries examined.

1. An Inquiry into Socio-Economic Rights

1.1. High Socio-Economic Standards Established by the Council of Europe and Partially Incorporated by the European Union

The neoliberal paradigm has accompanied the evolution of industrial societies from the nineteenth century to the present day. It consists of economic liberalism (the development of the "market", free trade, and the free movement of goods, capital and people), but also political liberalism (the development of democracy). After the Second World War, economic neoliberalism was associated with the welfare state, following the economic theories of J.-M. Keynes, which dominated economic principles at the time.

During the 1980s, with the development of globalisation — which subsequently integrated newly industrialised countries (particularly in Asia and South America), and former Eastern Bloc countries from the 1990s onwards — the "market" increasingly prevailed over states, which withdrew from several areas of the economy (through privatisation, for example). Furthermore, decision-making processes shifted towards international frameworks (WTO, IMF) or supranational institutions (such as the EU).

By the end of the 1990s, scholars analysing globalisation argued that economic openness should once again be associated with a stronger role for the state. This led N. Khouri to state

that “[...] in a mature democracy, the state generally tends to strengthen the institutional environment in response to citizens’ demands for socio-economic rights” (Khoury, 1999).

However, this withdrawal of the state from economic and financial affairs has created a “democratic deficit”, implying that states become subordinated to economic institutions rather than to citizens (the current situation of Greece and its economic supervision is a revealing example of this “democratic deficit”). One may even identify a correlation between political and economic contestation and the willingness of populist parties to establish a counter-paradigm to the neoliberal vision, proposing, for some of them, protectionist policies reviving a form of “economic nationalism”.

Based on the Revised European Social Charter of the Council of Europe (1996), and the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union, in light of the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR) and the Revised European Social Charter, we can draw up an assessment of economic and social rights as provided for by the Council of Europe and the EU. Are these rights declining compared with the beginning of the 1990s? Have they been effectively implemented in France, Switzerland and Hungary?

The European Social Charter is a Council of Europe treaty guaranteeing fundamental social and economic rights related to employment, housing, health, education, social protection and social services. It also places particular emphasis on vulnerable groups (children, migrants, older persons and persons with disabilities).

The Charter aims to implement the principles of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) in Europe and complements the European Convention on Human Rights, which focuses exclusively on civil and political rights. The European Social Charter was adopted in 1961 and revised in 1996. In its revised version, it establishes rights that serve as pillars and benchmarks for states in the protection of socio-economic rights.

Among the 47 member states of the Council of Europe, 43 have signed the Charter, while only Liechtenstein, Monaco, San Marino and Switzerland have not ratified any of these treaties (although Switzerland adopted a new policy in 2006 defining its human-rights-based approach and its links with poverty reduction issues).

These European standards are particularly ambitious, and their implementation at EU and national level is not always clearly visible. The Revised European Social Charter of the Council of Europe therefore develops major principles that are partially reflected in certain European Union treaties.

Consequently, the right to work is included in the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights, which establishes professional freedom and the right to work, equality between men and women, solidarity, protection against unjustified dismissal, fair and equitable working conditions, the prohibition of child labour and the protection of young people at work.

The same Charter also specifies the right to organise (workers’ information and consultation within companies), the right to collective bargaining (freedom of assembly and association, solidarity, and the right to negotiate and take collective action), the right to social security (social assistance), the right to social and medical assistance (based on the principles of solidarity and health protection), the right of families to legal, social and economic protection (including children’s rights and the reconciliation of family and professional life), and finally,

the rights of migrant workers and their families to protection and assistance (based on principles of equality and non-discrimination).

These broad principles are partially reflected in the Treaty on European Union (Maastricht Treaty), which promotes employment policies within the framework of the right to work. Furthermore, these socio-economic rights have been developed through the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (Lisbon Treaty), notably through employment policies, the development of the European Social Fund, health and safety at work, and gender equality (right to work); by defending workers' rights to information, consultation and participation (right to organise); by introducing social dialogue (right to collective bargaining); by combating poverty, social exclusion and discrimination (right to social and medical assistance); and by allowing social security coverage in EU Member States other than the country of origin (rights of migrant workers).

After reviewing over the last twenty years the main socio-economic rights established by the Council of Europe and incorporated by the European Union through the Charter of Fundamental Rights, the Maastricht Treaty and the Lisbon Treaty, we can question whether these rights are effectively implemented in France, Switzerland and Hungary.

1.2. Socio-Economic Rights in France

We will base our analysis on the *Report submitted by France to the United Nations Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights*, published in 2014, in order to assess the state of socio-economic rights in the country.

The right to work places gender equality among its fundamental principles. The analysis demonstrates that, despite the implementation of legislation aimed at promoting positive discrimination, the proportion of women holding senior positions in large and medium-sized companies remains low, even though it has been gradually increasing. Although women's participation in the labour market has continued to grow, this increase in reality includes a significant proportion of part-time employment (30.1% in 2010). Furthermore, wage equality between men and women has not yet been achieved.

Unemployment remains a major issue in France (between 10% and 10.5% of the working population since 2013), particularly youth unemployment. In 2012, the left-wing government sought to develop subsidised employment schemes (through the “*emplois d'avenir*” programme launched in November 2012), as well as to expand apprenticeship-based training, particularly in disadvantaged neighbourhoods. However, youth unemployment (among 15–24-year-olds) remained high (23.7% in March 2017), and access to permanent employment contracts (*contrats à durée indéterminée*, CDI) remained difficult for this age group.

Regarding the right to organise and the right to collective bargaining, the law of August 2008 strengthened the legitimacy of social partners, although trade unions in France remain characterised by a low level of representativeness.

Concerning migrant workers and their families, “France is one of the few European Union countries to have ratified the European Convention on the Legal Status of Migrant Workers of 1983”, developed within the framework of the Council of Europe. This Convention aims to eliminate discrimination based on national legislation and to guarantee equal treatment between nationals, migrant workers and members of their families.

Regarding the fight against poverty and the return to employment, France introduced the *Revenu de Solidarité Active* (RSA), designed to replace several minimum social benefits, namely the *Revenu Minimum d'Insertion* (RMI), the *Allocation de Parent Isolé* (API) and the *Prime pour l'Emploi* (PPE).

For people without employment, the RSA “socle” provides a minimum income, while for those who are employed, the RSA “activité” acts as a supplementary income. The RSA aims both to ensure that returning to work results in additional financial resources and to serve as a tool in the fight against poverty.

Access to healthcare for the most vulnerable groups has also been guaranteed since 2000 through the *Couverture Maladie Universelle* (CMU). Furthermore, the French health insurance system is based on the principles of universality and solidarity.

Overall, the results of socio-economic reforms in France remain limited. Although the country provides a form of solidarity for the most vulnerable groups (through the RSA and CMU), and seeks to guarantee a degree of equality for migrant workers and their families, it also continues to experience significant socio-economic inequalities (gender inequalities, high unemployment, particularly among young people). These factors contribute to a loss of confidence among French citizens in the economic system, as will be analysed later in the second part of this study.

1.3. Socio-Economic Rights in Switzerland

Unlike France, Switzerland is not bound by the socio-economic recommendations contained in European treaties and has not ratified the European Social Charter of the Council of Europe. However, Switzerland became a member of the United Nations in September 2002 following a popular initiative, and it also published a *Report submitted to the United Nations Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights* in 2009 (an update of its initial report submitted in May 1996).

This report highlights that Switzerland promotes the principle of equality of all human beings before the law (before the new Constitution entered into force in 2000, this principle applied only to Swiss citizens). The country also prohibits racial discrimination.

Switzerland seeks to promote equality between men and women, without adopting positive discrimination measures in political representation (rejected by a popular initiative in 2000 concerning women's representation in political institutions), but by introducing quotas in semi-public companies, which are required to appoint 30% women to management positions by 2020.

Regarding unemployment, Switzerland has been relatively little affected by this issue, although the situation deteriorated after a return to full employment at the beginning of the 2000s. The unemployment rate, which stood at 1.7% in 2001, increased to 3.9% in 2004; French-speaking regions were the most affected, with unemployment reaching 5% in 2004.

Measures aimed at combating unemployment have focused particularly on increasing the availability of apprenticeship positions for young people and promoting professional reintegration for people aged 50 and over. Older workers are less affected by unemployment,

but when they lose their jobs, they are more likely to experience long-term unemployment (32% of long-term unemployed people are over 50).

The country also experiences inequalities in terms of wages, both between foreign and Swiss workers and between men and women.

Regarding trade union rights, these were strengthened in the new Swiss Constitution and are no longer derived from the article on freedom of association, but from a specific article dedicated to trade union freedom. These rights are no longer attributed solely to “citizens”, but to “employers and workers”.

Through this constitutional reform, which entered into force in 2000, Switzerland also recognises rights for foreign workers. Concerning the fight against exclusion and poverty, “Article 12 of the Federal Constitution guarantees that anyone in a situation of distress and unable to provide for themselves has the right to assistance and support, as well as to receive the essential means necessary to lead a dignified existence.”

Since social assistance falls under cantonal responsibility, with implementation carried out by municipalities, differences can be observed between social assistance systems, which vary from one canton to another.

Switzerland experienced an increase in unemployment at the beginning of the 2000s, which temporarily led to a decline in public confidence in the economy; however, this confidence was restored shortly afterwards. Moreover, the country is strongly influenced by neoliberal policies, which have contributed to a generally high standard of living but have also generated significant income disparities.

In 2005, 8.5% of the population lived below the poverty threshold (set at 2,200 Swiss francs for a single person), with women being more affected by poverty than men. Regarding social policies, the principle of solidarity is recognised in the Constitution, but the situation differs significantly from one canton to another, as Switzerland lacks a unified national approach and visibility concerning these issues.

1.4. Socio-Economic Rights in Hungary

The Report submitted by Hungary to the United Nations Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, published in 2006, provides information on the period of democratisation of the Hungarian state and preparation for entry into the common market, following a long period under Soviet influence.

As in the two other countries studied, Hungary sought to establish greater equality between men and women through the right to work. Women generally earned lower incomes, occupied more part-time positions and held fewer positions of responsibility. Two major measures were introduced:

- “The Act on Equal Treatment and the Promotion of Equal Opportunities adopted in 2003”;
- “The amendment introduced in 2001 to the Labour Code (Act XXII of 1992), introducing the concept of equal pay for work of equal value.”

Some economic measures introduced in the country, although appearing favourable to individuals, contributed to worsening the general economic situation. For example, the increase in the minimum wage (which raised labour costs) contributed to industrial relocation.

Employment in Hungary remains partly precarious, with a significant proportion of part-time work and fixed-term contracts. The unemployment rate, which reached 13% in 1993, fell to 4.3% in 2017.

To reduce unemployment, the country strengthened unemployment benefit regulations, while excluding many people from access to assistance. From the 2000s onwards, more flexible measures were introduced to combat unemployment, such as increasing financial support during training and professional retraining periods in order to encourage job-seeking skills development, as well as introducing more favourable rules for disadvantaged social groups, such as older people and Roma communities.

Although Hungary has established the principle of equal pay, reality shows significant income inequalities between men and women. Regarding trade union rights, these are recognised in Hungary “*under the provisions of the Law on Associations*”.

The right to social security is recognised for citizens of the Republic of Hungary in cases of old age, illness, disability, widowhood, orphanhood or unemployment.

Regarding the fight against exclusion and poverty, Hungary introduced family allowances aimed at reducing social hardship:

“The measures approved by Parliament in 1995 (Act CXXII) addressed for the first time the universal nature of the right to family allowance and represented an attempt to target transfers towards the most disadvantaged households with children.”

Hungary has developed a social assistance policy combining different approaches: modern Western-inspired mechanisms alongside subjective eligibility criteria applied on a case-by-case basis, which remain partly inherited from the communist system.

Furthermore, the reduction of unemployment-related assistance policies, although contributing to lower unemployment figures, risks excluding many individuals from social protection (long-term unemployed people receive very limited benefits).

Overall, socio-economic rights are recognised and defended in all three countries studied, but their implementation and outcomes in terms of equality and social inclusion differ significantly.

Unemployment remains a central issue in contemporary societies, alongside questions concerning solidarity mechanisms and the redistribution of wealth.

2. A “National-Populist” Socio-Economic Vision, Appearing to Correspond to the Concerns of a Significant Part of the Population

A report by the *European Economic Advisory Group* (EEAG) published in 2017 states that populist economic programmes share three main characteristics: *“first, they are short-term oriented and disregard external constraints such as budgetary constraints (promising tax cuts and increases in public spending); they deny the consequences of their measures on debt and inflation (capital flight); and they denounce globalisation (through protectionist measures).”*

Some national-populist parties therefore place particular emphasis on inequalities and the weaknesses associated with economic and political liberalism. These proposals are increasingly attracting voters in Europe, as well as in other industrialised countries.

This is why, in this section, we will conduct an analysis based on electoral opinion studies in the three selected countries, focusing on the social and economic issues that have influenced voters’ choices since the beginning of the 2000s. We will then compare this analysis with the socio-economic political programmes of our three parties during major national elections. This will enable us to determine whether citizens’ expectations correspond to the “populist offer”.

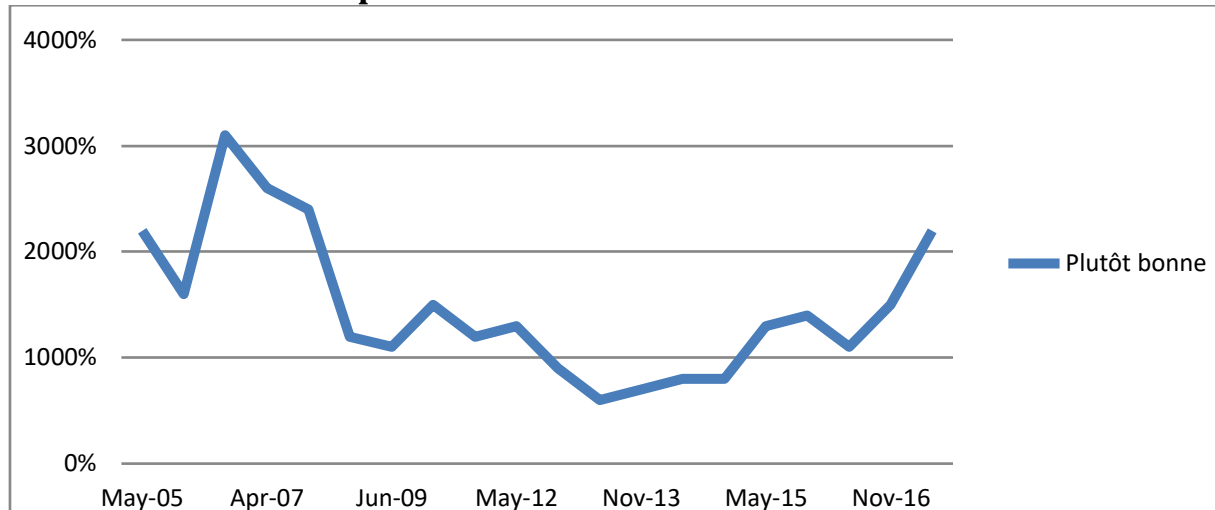
2.1. France and the Rassemblement National

Let us first examine the views of the French population through the Eurobarometer surveys conducted by the European Commission. These surveys, known as “Standard Eurobarometers”, measure twice a year the evolution of European public opinion.

Established in 1974, these surveys collect, on each occasion, responses from approximately 1,000 respondents through face-to-face interviews. Some questions focus on specific situations or events, while others are repeated regularly, such as perceptions of the country’s economic situation.

We have therefore analysed French citizens’ expectations from 2005 to 2017, in order to assess these expectations both before and after the global economic crisis of 2007 and during the rise of electoral support for the Front National/ Rassemblement National.

Graph 1: Economic Situation in France



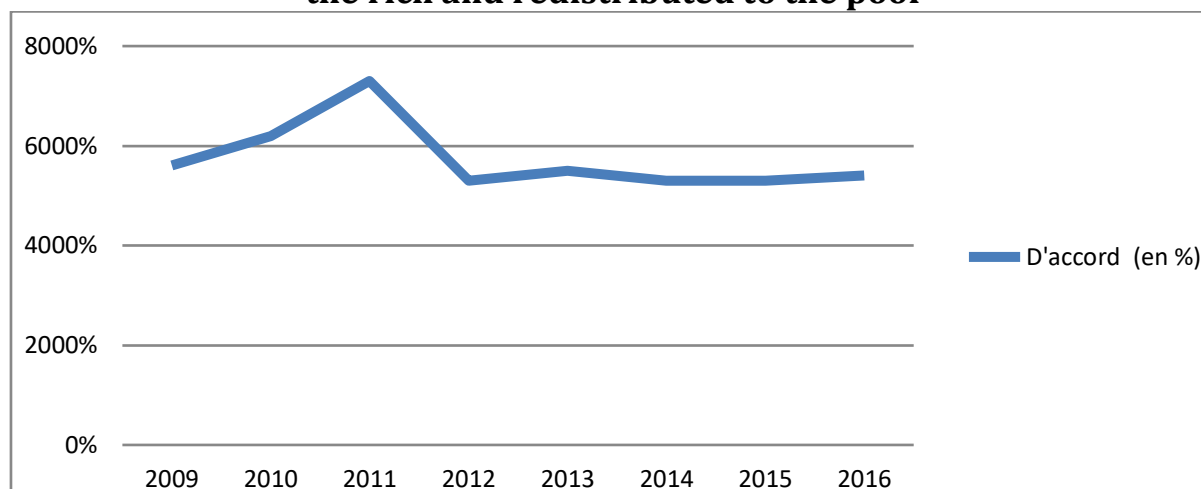
« Relatively good »

The proportion of undecided respondents in France ranged between 2% and 6% of those surveyed between September 2006 and May 2017. Regarding French citizens' perception of the country's economic situation, significant variations can be observed over the period from 2005 to 2017, although with an overall downward trend. In November 2014, only 8% of French respondents considered France's economic situation to be positive. From that point onwards, however, an increase can be observed, reaching 22% in May 2017.

Over a twelve-year period, French citizens appear to have remained concerned about the country's economic situation. This context enabled the Front National to promote the vision of a strategic state capable of restoring economic performance, particularly through policies aimed at reviving national industry and encouraging the relocation of economic activities.

Regarding social issues, according to the Sciences Po Socio-Political Data Centre, 80.4% of French citizens considered French society to be rather unjust in 2014. If we analyse these perceptions of social justice over a longer period, using the CEVIPOF political confidence barometer at Sciences Po, which has conducted annual surveys since 2009 on French citizens' confidence in democracy, we can measure the demand for greater social justice in France over an eight-year period (*Baromètre de la confiance politique du CEVIPOF*, wave 8, January 2017, p.65).

Graph 2: To achieve social justice in France, wealth should be taken from the rich and redistributed to the poor



« Agree »

This demand remained relatively high between 2009 and 2016. At least one French citizen out of two considered that the country's redistribution policy should be preserved by taking resources from the wealthy in order to redistribute them to poorer populations. From the perspective of social policy, this demonstrates the desire among French citizens to establish a greater degree of social justice in the country.

Therefore, it must be acknowledged that the socio-economic situation in France appeared to be a source of concern; economic indicators were unfavourable, and a strong perception of social injustice was present throughout society. This context created favourable conditions for a right-wing populist party, which proposed alternative solutions to those advocated by mainstream governing parties.

The constant element of the socio-economic programme of the Front National (between 2002 and 2012) was the protection of small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs and very small enterprises) against large multinational corporations (MNCs), a feature also found in the programmes of Jobbik and the Swiss People's Party (UDC/SVP).

The role of the state in the economy was specified in the 2002 programme, which defined it as that of an independent arbitrator between competing interests. At that time, the FN still sought to reduce statism, attempting to position itself between socialism and liberalism. The party proposed reducing state revenues by lowering tax pressure and decreasing public subsidies to the economy.

It was not until 2007 that the FN began advocating measures aimed at limiting free trade and countering the negative effects of speculative and financial capitalism. The party proposed protecting national industries through protectionist measures in order to prevent economic and social dumping. This strategy was oriented towards regaining control of the French domestic market.

The Front National therefore developed a protectionist economic programme based on import quotas, minimum requirements for domestic production, customs barriers, and public support for national companies. These measures aimed to protect France from wage, health and

environmental dumping originating from countries of the Global South or other emerging economies.

At the same time, the party introduced measures intended to encourage the return to employment rather than dependence on welfare assistance, notably by increasing the gap between minimum welfare benefits and minimum wages.

From 2011 onwards, with Marine Le Pen becoming leader of the FN, the party developed what it called a “crisis programme”. According to G. Ivaldi (Ivaldi, 2013), this programme concerned not only the transformation of the party’s socio-economic agenda, but also the construction of a coherent new economic and social project.

The author measured the importance of socio-economic issues within the party’s programmes (*issue salience*) as well as the policy positions adopted (*issue position*), based on the party’s official electoral programmes.

“In 2012, socio-economic issues represented 37% of the FN’s programme overall, compared with 16% at the end of the 1990s” (Crépon, Dézé & Mayer, 2015, p.166).

This quantitative measurement, based on the *Comparative Manifesto Project*, demonstrates that the FN had effectively incorporated socio-economic issues into its political programmes (although these issues remained proportionally less prominent than in the programmes of other parties), in response to the economic crisis and French citizens’ concerns regarding unemployment, living standards and social benefits.

From 2012 onwards, the Front National developed a stronger role for the state as a strategic economic actor and as a social state institution (a welfare-state model). The state was presented as a protective barrier against the European Union and its austerity policies.

Furthermore, the state was expected to lead and coordinate a major policy of territorial reindustrialisation through economic planning. The concept of “intelligent economic protectionism”, partly developed in the 2007 programme, was expanded in 2012 through measures such as agricultural patriotism (a national agricultural policy) and the “Buy French” law, intended to encourage state administrations and local authorities to prioritise French products.

The socio-economic programme of the Front National also relied on stimulating consumption by increasing purchasing power, particularly through raising the lowest wages.

Regarding social policy, the FN sought to promote an active family policy, including the creation of a parental education income. Among the three populist parties studied, it was the Front National that most clearly developed a form of “welfare chauvinism” (Betz, 1993), advocating that family allowances should be reserved exclusively for French families.

This concept of “national preference” (which remained a constant feature of the programmes of 2002, 2007 and 2012) extended to priority access to employment for French citizens, priority allocation of social housing to nationals, and the abolition of minimum income assistance for foreigners. The party also proposed creating separate social contribution systems for nationals and immigrant populations.

The socio-economic programme of the Front National/ Rassemblement National sought to respond to French citizens' expectations. From an economic perspective, it recognised public distrust towards the economic situation and neoliberalism, proposing a paradigm shift through the reintroduction of Keynesian-inspired policies aimed at supporting economic recovery while preserving the social protection system valued by French citizens — but reserving it primarily for nationals.

2.2. Switzerland and the Swiss People's Party (UDC/SVP)

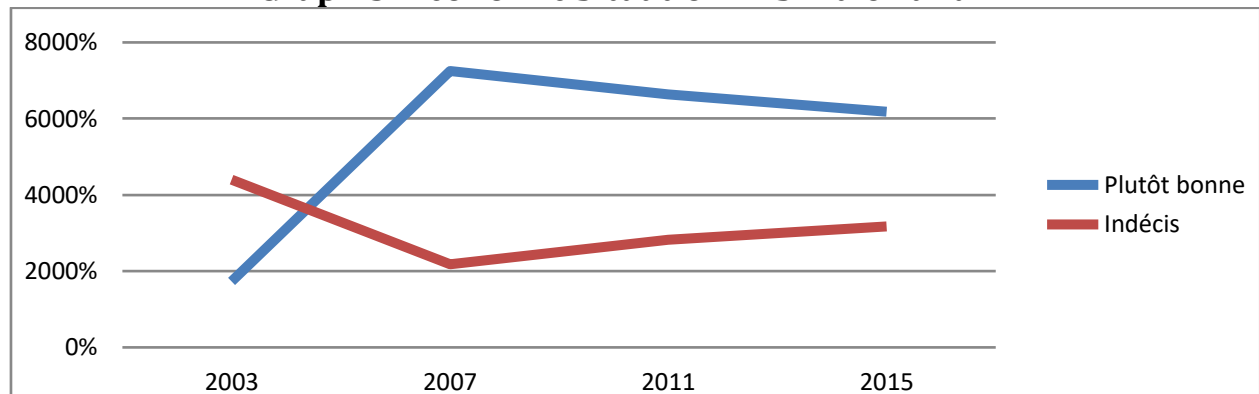
Regarding perceptions of the economic situation in Switzerland (the country not being a member of the European Union and therefore not included in Eurobarometer surveys), we used an online database based on the “Vox” studies conducted in Switzerland.

This social science database makes it possible to analyse surveys conducted among the Swiss population immediately after federal elections (since 1995), as well as following popular votes (since 1981). These surveys are part of the Swiss Electoral Studies (Selects) research project, a collaborative research initiative affiliated with the Swiss Foundation for Research in Social Sciences (FORS).

The dataset was collected through telephone surveys involving approximately 7,000 respondents (Swiss citizens with voting rights) immediately after national elections.

We chose to focus on data covering the federal elections of 2003, 2007, 2011 and 2015, in order to provide an overview of perceptions before and after the global economic crisis, while also measuring public opinion during the period of increasing electoral support for the UDC/SVP.

Graph 3: Economic Situation in Switzerland



« Relatively good », « Undecided »

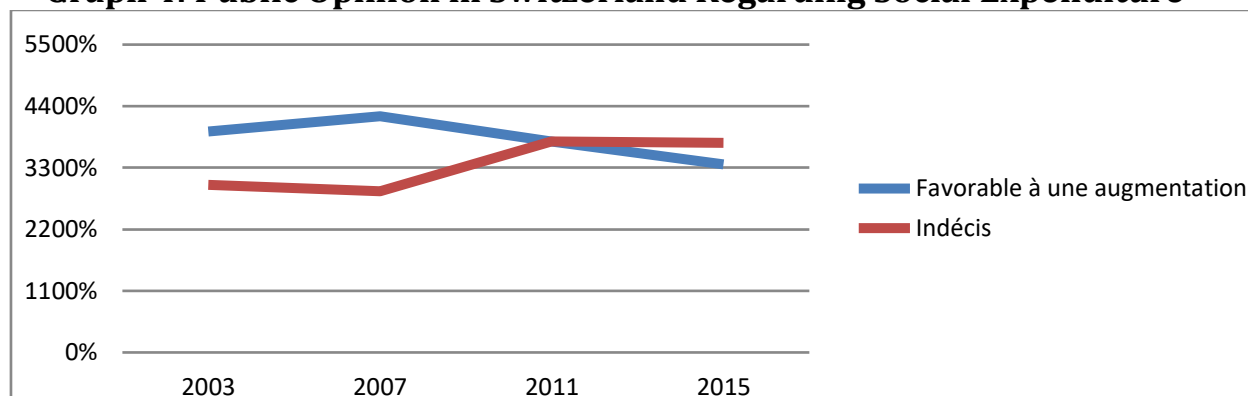
Following 2003, when Switzerland had just experienced a rise in unemployment, a significant improvement in public perceptions of the country's economic situation can be observed until 2007 (the beginning of the global economic crisis).

In 2015, 61.9% of Swiss respondents considered their country's economic situation to be rather positive, in contrast with France, where only 13% of respondents expressed the same view at that time.

Therefore, the market economy and neoliberal policies were not broadly rejected in Switzerland, which enabled the UDC/SVP to maintain its economic position, advocating a reduced role for the state and lower taxation.

Regarding social expenditure, we can once again use this database, which is based on surveys conducted immediately after federal elections in Switzerland over a twelve-year period.

Graph 4: Public Opinion in Switzerland Regarding Social Expenditure



« Favouring an increase », « undecided »

These surveys make it possible to observe the evolution of the number of people in favour of increasing social expenditure in Switzerland (both strongly and moderately in favour), as well as the proportion of undecided respondents.

In 2007, following a slight increase, 42.2% of Swiss respondents supported an increase in social spending, while 28.8% remained undecided. From 2007 onwards, and therefore after the global economic crisis, the trend in Switzerland was increasingly characterised by questioning the future of social expenditure.

As a result, fewer and fewer Swiss citizens supported an increase in social spending, while the number of undecided respondents continued to rise. In 2015, only one Swiss citizen out of three was in favour of increasing social expenditure.

A. Afonso and Y. Papadopoulos consider that the UDC/SVP has influenced the social policy of the welfare state since the 2000s (Afonso & Papadopoulos, 2015, p.2). As O. Mazzoleni had already indicated, the Swiss People's Party (*Schweizerische Volkspartei*, SVP/UDC) sought from the 1990s onwards to "defend the market economy", demanding greater labour market flexibility and advocating a more liberal healthcare policy, "based on the principle that the welfare state is contrary to values associated with individual responsibility" (Mazzoleni, 2008, p.33).

These principles can be found in the UDC/SVP programmes for the 2003, 2007 and 2011 federal elections. The party developed an economic discourse favourable to small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), while also supporting a reduction in corporate taxation, with the aim of granting companies greater freedom. At the same time, it opposed the introduction of any new taxes or increases in taxation for individuals and advocated the stabilisation of VAT rates.

In 2007, the UDC/SVP addressed a significant part of its electorate by “demanding tax relief in favour of the middle classes”. The economic policy promoted by the party aimed at reducing taxation in order to encourage consumption.

The party also sought to develop a policy of budgetary discipline in order to limit deficits and public debt. Consequently, by restricting state revenues through a neoliberal fiscal approach favouring lower taxation, the UDC/SVP considered it necessary to reduce public expenditure, particularly in the social policy sector.

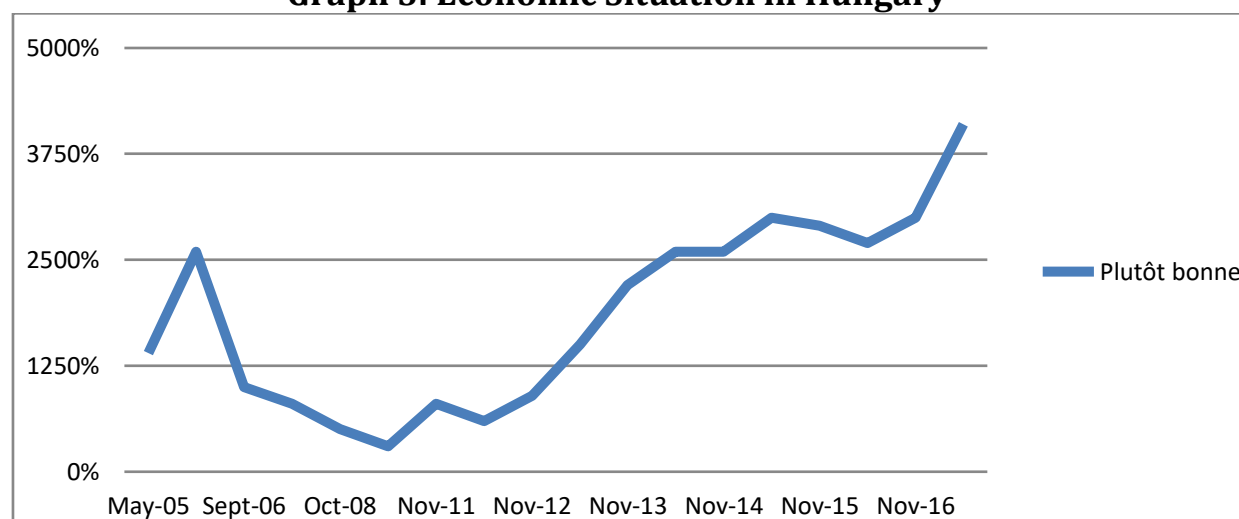
Regarding the UDC/SVP’s social policy proposals, the party sought to preserve the healthcare system by combating perceived abuse and “free riders”, while opposing any increase in social benefits. In its 2007 programme, the UDC/SVP introduced elements that can be described as “welfare chauvinism” (Betz, 1993), by distinguishing between foreigners and Swiss citizens.

For example, the party proposed encouraging foreigners “not to receive social assistance for three years in order to be authorised to immigrate to Switzerland”.

2.3. Hungary and Jobbik

Based on the Standard Eurobarometer surveys conducted by the European Commission (the same surveys used for the analysis of France), we can establish an overview of Hungarian citizens’ perceptions of the country’s economic situation over a twelve-year period, shortly after Hungary joined the European Union in 2004.

Graph 5: Economic Situation in Hungary



« Relatively good »

Hungarian citizens’ perceptions of the country’s economic situation cover the period from May 2005 to May 2017. Unlike Switzerland, where the proportion of undecided respondents is particularly high, Hungarians who were unable to form an opinion on this issue represented between 0% and 2% of respondents throughout the period.

A gradual decline in Hungarian citizens’ confidence in the country’s economic situation can be observed from March 2006 (two years after Hungary joined the European Union) until

May 2010, when only 3% of Hungarians considered the country's economic situation to be rather positive.

From that point onwards, a correlation can be observed between the decline in unemployment (according to Eurostat data) and an improvement in Hungarian citizens' confidence. This trend continued until May 2017, when 41% of Hungarians considered the national economy to be rather positive.

To measure public expectations regarding social issues over a period of approximately ten years, we can refer to Standard Eurobarometer 70 (more specifically the October 2008 survey, p.71, which addresses questions of inequality and poverty in Europe) and to *Public Opinion in Hungary* (2017, p.6), produced by the *Center for Insights in Survey Research*, which collected data in March 2017 from a sample of 1,000 people in Hungary.

Based on these data, we observe that in 2008 only 10% of Hungarians considered that poverty and social inequalities were being adequately addressed by their country, compared with 27% at the European Union level.

In 2017, 28% of respondents considered poverty and social inequalities to be among the country's main problems. Unemployment and employment-related issues ranked third. Overall, the economic situation in Hungary appeared to be improving, but inequalities and poverty continued to increase as a result of the development of neoliberal policies and the withdrawal of the welfare state.

These issues provided an opportunity for the populist Jobbik party to gain visibility in recent years, by promoting an agenda that challenged the policies of governing parties.

Regarding socio-economic issues, Jobbik criticised neoliberalism and the retreat of the welfare state, to which it sought to restore a more significant role (Ablonczy & Ablonczy, 2012, pp. 50–51). In its 2008 programme entitled “*Gábor Bethlen National Programme*”, Jobbik argued that the state should regain its autonomy and maintain control over the economy and finance by:

- renegotiating public debt;
- subordinating monetary policy to national interests;
- supervising privatisation processes;
- nationalising strategic industries;
- halting the liberalisation of the energy sector.

Regarding social issues, Jobbik sought to preserve the healthcare system while also reforming unemployment insurance by making benefits conditional upon participation in public employment programmes.

During the 2010 legislative elections, Jobbik developed a more comprehensive programme translated into English as “*Radical Change: A Guide to Jobbik's Parliamentary Electoral Manifesto for National Self-Determination and Social Justice*.” The socio-economic section constituted the first chapter of the programme.

The economic programme advocated strong state intervention in order to achieve a more balanced redistribution of wealth. It remained protectionist in nature, aiming to protect the

national economy and domestic companies through tax advantages, develop short supply chains as an alternative to multinational corporations, and preserve state-owned assets.

The party also sought to strengthen trade relations with Eastern Europe and Asia. The programme included the development of public employment schemes in industry and agro-industry. It also emphasised fiscal discipline regarding public debt, proposing renegotiations with creditors and a redefinition of future investments, which should primarily support the productive economy.

In terms of taxation, Jobbik proposed introducing a progressive tax system in order to support families and small pensions. In its 2015 programme, the party introduced measures aimed at encouraging unemployed people to return rapidly to employment, increasing the minimum wage, lowering the retirement age (after 40 years of employment), and increasing wages in the public sector.

The statist and authoritarian programme of Jobbik also sought to restore greater social justice by increasing taxation on higher incomes while improving the living standards of lower-income groups, notably through reducing taxes on essential goods.

The economic vision promoted by Jobbik was therefore strongly state-centred, with the state positioned at the core of economic decision-making.

Jobbik also sought to reform the social welfare system by targeting the Roma population, which the party stigmatised, thereby introducing a distinction within its own population. In its 2015 national programme, Jobbik specified these conditions by proposing greater control over child benefits in order to exclude what it described as “welfare abusers”.

The party therefore advocated a system of conditional access to social protection, notably through monitoring children’s school attendance, a measure primarily targeting the Roma community.

Furthermore, the right-wing populist party proposed that free dental care should only benefit Hungarian citizens, introducing a form of “welfare chauvinism” and creating a distinction between nationals and foreigners.

Ultimately, the Rassemblement National (formerly Front National) and Jobbik share several similarities in their socio-economic programmes. Both parties are opposition movements and are therefore able to defend welfare-state-oriented proposals that have not yet been fully tested, but which appear to correspond to the expectations of French and Hungarian citizens, who are largely distrustful of their country’s economic situation while wishing to preserve both the welfare state and redistribution policies.

The UDC/SVP, by contrast, participates in government in Switzerland and supports neoliberal policies (while also promoting a national vision of the economy). These policies have so far contributed to maintaining Switzerland’s favourable economic situation. Furthermore, we can observe that the UDC/SVP’s programme advocating reduced social expenditure may have influenced Swiss public opinion.

Conclusion

Ultimately, this study has sought to demonstrate that populist parties in Europe adapt their programmes according to the economic situation of their country, as well as according to their political position (whether they are opposition parties or governing parties).

The socio-economic rights defended by the Council of Europe and the European Union, and which appear to be among the most important, include the right to work, which remains a fundamental basis for social integration in contemporary Western societies.

The analysis has shown that in Hungary, confidence in the national economy improved when unemployment declined. The perception of injustice (resulting from wage inequalities and inequalities between men and women) contributes to social divisions.

These divisions weaken social cohesion within societies, generating European citizens' distrust towards globalisation and towards foreigners. Pascal Perrineau notably emphasises that "79% of Marine Le Pen's voters believe that globalisation represents a danger for France because it threatens its companies and its social model" (Perrineau, 2014, p.108).

This explains why an increasing number of voters are attracted to "national-populist" theories, which promise to preserve, or even improve, the social system and/or the living standards of nationals, while excluding foreigners.

This political vision is based on individualism, nationalism and withdrawal from external influences — trends that are increasingly visible in contemporary societies.

The role of states, European organisations and institutions is therefore more crucial than ever in establishing a legislative framework capable of countering identity-based withdrawal, which is ultimately counterproductive in a globalised world that cannot be stopped but can be regulated through greater social justice and stronger social cohesion.

Ultimately, these approaches could contribute to restoring citizens' confidence in representative democratic institutions, which are currently experiencing a crisis of legitimacy.

**Appendix: Socio-economic Rights Incorporated into the Main European Union Texts in
Relation to the Fundamental Principles of the Council of Europe**

Principes socio-économiques liés à la Charte sociale révisée du CoE / Textes de références de l'UE qui appliquent ces droits	<i>Droit au travail :</i>	<i>Droit à s'organiser :</i>	<i>Droit de négociation collective :</i>	<i>Droit à la Sécurité sociale :</i>	<i>Droit à l'assistance sociale et médicale :</i>	<i>Droit de la famille à une protection sociale, juridique et économique :</i>	<i>Droit des travailleurs migrants et de leurs familles à la protection et à l'assistance</i>
Charte des droits fondamentaux de l'UE	Chap.II : libertés Art.15 : liberté professionnel le et droit de travailler Art.16 : liberté d'entreprise Chap.III : égalité Art.23 : égalité entre hommes et femmes Chapitre IV : solidarité Art.30 : protection en cas de licenciement injustifié Art.31 : conditions de travail justes et équitables Art.32 : interdiction du travail des enfants et protection des jeunes au travail	Chap.IV : solidarité Art. 27 : droit l'information et à la consultation des travailleurs au sein de l'entreprise	Chapitre II : libertés. Art.12 : liberté de réunion et d'association Chapitre IV : solidarité, art.28 : droit de négociation et d'action collective	ChapIV : solidarité Art.34 : sécurité sociale et aide sociale	Chap.IV : solidarité Art.35 : protection de la santé Art.36 : accès aux services d'intérêt économique général	Chap.III : égalité Art.24 : droits de l'enfant Chap.IV : solidarité Art.33 : vie familiale et professionnel le	Chap.III : égalité Art.20 : égalité en droit Art.21 : non discrimination
Traité sur l'Union européenne (Maastricht)	Politique de l'emploi : Article 3.						

Traité sur le fonctionnement de l'UE (Lisbonne)	Politique de l'emploi : articles 8 à 10, 145 à 150, 156 à 159 et 162 à 164. Fonds social européen : articles 162 à 164, 174, 175, 177 et 178. Santé et sécurité au travail : articles 91, 114, 115, 151, 153 et 352. Egalité entre les hommes et les femmes : article 157 .	Le droit des travailleurs à l'information, à la consultation et à la participation : articles 5, 114, 115, 151 et 153.	Dialogue social : articles 151 à 156.		La lutte contre la pauvreté, l'exclusion sociale et les discriminations : article 19, articles 145 à 150 et articles 151 à 161.		La couverture sociale dans les États membres de l'Union autres que l'État d'origine : articles 48 et 352.
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