



December 2019

Monthly Report About the Far- Right in Europe



International Alliance for Peace and Development

A Report on Far-Right Activity in December 2019

Introduction

Far-Right Activity has increased significantly in December, when some of European governments' attempts to resist far-right parties and the extremist activities they undertook, have emerged. However, these efforts were narrowly framed and implemented. This month, too, has witnessed a surge in radicalization process targeting opposition, including, but not limited to, the riots took place in Germany during the second half of December, when vandals overturned a Jewish cemetery and sprayed it with blue paint.

Therefore, as we stand at the threshold of a new year, ensuring a powerful representation of the far-right inside Europe. Hate speeches against foreigners are not new to Europe, as this year witnessed many events, throughout Europe, indicating the powerful rise of the far-right party, as evidenced by the report.

Such events include, but are not limited to, Germany's far-right activity, which recorded its highest rate this year, and Italy, which became, by the end of this year, one of the European countries restricting far-right activity. The report, therefore, presents the activity of the far-right during the first and the second halves of December, provided with an analytical view on the events of this year and the activities of the year to come.

First: Far-Right Activity in the First Half of December

December witnessed a surge in far-right activity throughout Europe in 2019, paving the way for the rise of the far-right in 2020 to control European Union decisions. The far-right has concluded this year by entrenching itself in European countries, as the first half of December documented various activities by governments regarding the use of measures to curb the rise of the far-right and its activities undertaken by political parties (far-right extremists) targeting immigrants.

Far-right extremism is seemingly plaguing Germany, such as the persistent threats to leading politicians who support immigration and refugee issues. The deputy spokeswoman for the German Foreign Ministry, Sawsan Chebli, who tweeted that “she would never allow continuing threats to prevent her from expressing her opinions on some issues and revealed that she is targeted because of her religious identity” was allegedly threaten with death this month.

German Foreign Ministry spokeswoman was not the only target, as the number of German politicians whose lives have been threatened by right-wing has increased, including two MPs from the Green Party which one of its members was targeted last October.

Far-right terrorism in Germany appears in various forms; including, but not limited to, targeting German politicians. Statistics published by Germany's Federal Intelligence Service confirmed that far-right activities has increased notably over the past few years. Accordingly, the rate of detained roiters and troublemakers has alarmingly risen to 80%, which is the highest rate ever recorded in years. This is also due to a number of reasons, the following are just few examples:–

Attracting Young People to Support Extremist Rhetoric:–

The far-right spread anti-immigrant highly inflammatory rhetoric and supported the idea of free Europe. It is mainly supported by the German Alternative Party (AfD), one of the strongest political parties, which main thrust is its opposition to Angela Merkel's welcoming policy toward migrants, which has achieved its best ever set of results in recent elections in the eastern German last October.

Founded in 2013, the AfD has moved steadily to the far-right, occupying many of the seats previously held by marginal parties and attracting conservative voters dissatisfied with Merkel's liberal immigration policies.

Critical Security Situation:–

Germany's security services have warned that far-right extremists feel increasingly emboldened, citing the killing in June of a moderate politician from Merkel's party who was shot dead by a suspected neo-Nazi, and the anti-Semitic shooting this month in Halle in which two people were killed.

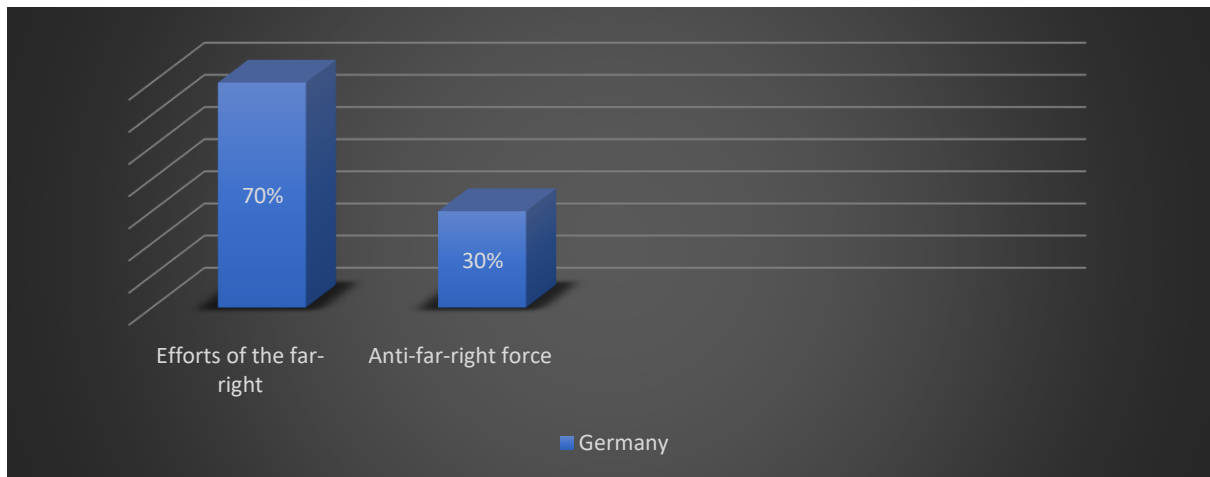
Using Violence to Silence Opposition:–

Other parties have accused AfD of fueling violence against political opposition and minorities with its vocal criticism of immigration, a charge the party has strongly denied.

Although his message was confirmed to be strong and clear to voters in the final days of the campaign, Bjorn Hocke, The Alternative Party Leader, **said** that AfD would "launch a deportation offensive 2020 if we didn't get into government." But that campaign should be backed by larger numbers of Germans, and the party's overall orientation would expectedly be a thorn in Merkel's government throughout the years to come.

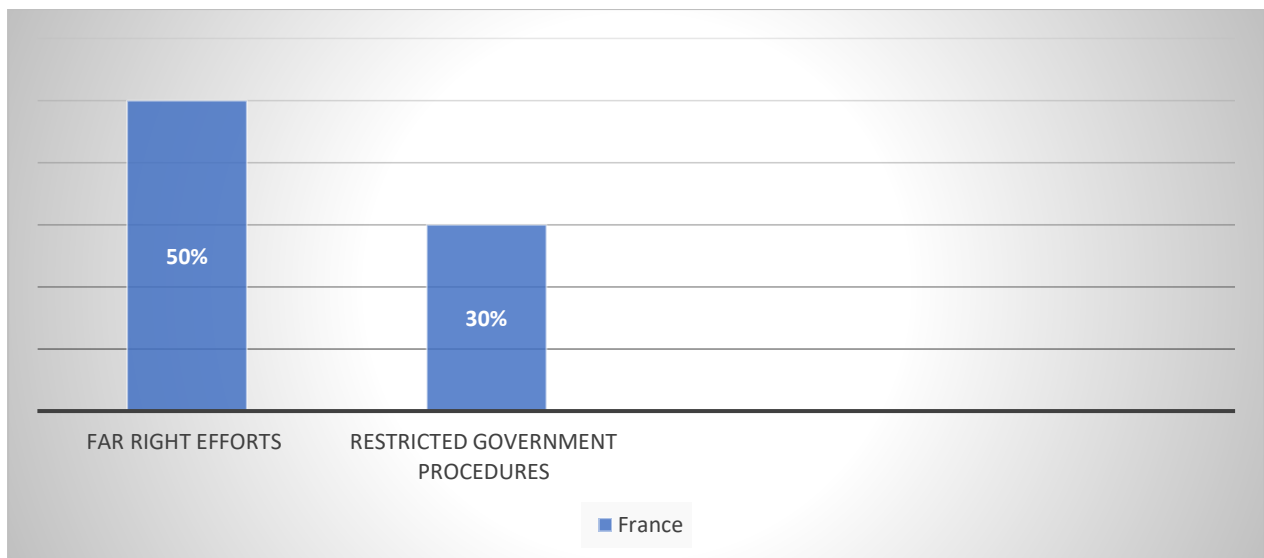
As for the part dealing with resisting the far-right in Germany, opposition still try to mitigate violent extremism that poses a threat not only to immigrants or Muslims, but also to Nazi victims. On December 2, 2019, a memorial was set up in front of the European Parliament containing a sample of the Holocaust victims' ashes. And although activist artists claim that the installation was meant to remember the victims of the Holocaust, it was also reportedly sending a message to Merkel's government warning about the dangers of working with AFD.

Unfortunately, Merkel's dealing with the Alternative Party became a fact following his victory in the recent local elections, despite the Christian Democratic Union of Germany (CDU) has ruled out dealing with the far-right both internationally and locally, leaving the anti-far-right force of the first half of December vulnerable against the far-right efforts. The far-right has gained 70% of the highest effort against the anti-far-right activities, which have only gained 30%.



Observing the far-right activity has shown that Germany was not the only European country witnessing far-right activities, as France was another European country that tried to curb the far-right activities. The first half of December, French media reported that five far-right activists had been arrested after attacking a celebration at Le Mans city in France and destroying shop windows among other acts of vandalism.

France, before December, was one of the first European countries to take measures against the growing activity of the far-right, mainly because it is the only rival far-right party blocking Macron's progress inside the country. Macron, therefore, intensifies the government's efforts to counter the far-right attacks, whether by issuing decisions on immigration reforms or creating new alliances to counter the alliances of Marine Le Pen, who –assisted by far-right– gained greater ground in the European Parliament during last May's EU election.



Despite the anti-far-right procedures consistently applied by the French government to restrict its activity, the terrorist threat in France remained high, with extremist activities targeting immigrants, refugees, or other non-extremist ideologies, leading France to come second, that month, after Germany.

Some European governments are largely supporting the far-right activity; **the Spanish government** is one of the leading ones. Spain's far-right Vox party was about to lose its political representation in the country's parliament because of corruption and other issues damaging its reputation and undermining its credibility among other political parties. Yet, thanks to government support, which has greatly helped the Vox to overcome the crisis, in return for supporting the idea of Catalonia remaining as part of Spain. Vox is currently expanding in Spain to support radical ideas and help the Spanish government solve its internal political problems. Recent activities of Spain's third-largest political force have been reportedly monitored in Madrid to support youth issues and open new ways for them to join the 52-member party.

The first half of December recorded higher representation of far-right activity and restricting government procedures, in Germany and France, than the first half of November. Additionally, Spain's far-right Vox party continues to hold the top spot for countries supporting far-right activities, just as the first half of November.

Second: Far-right Activity in the Second Half of December

In the second half of December, Germany is still among the top European countries to represent far-right activity. The far-right movements were remarkably more powerful than those of government in the first half of December, and its activity in Germany is rapidly growing at an alarming rate.

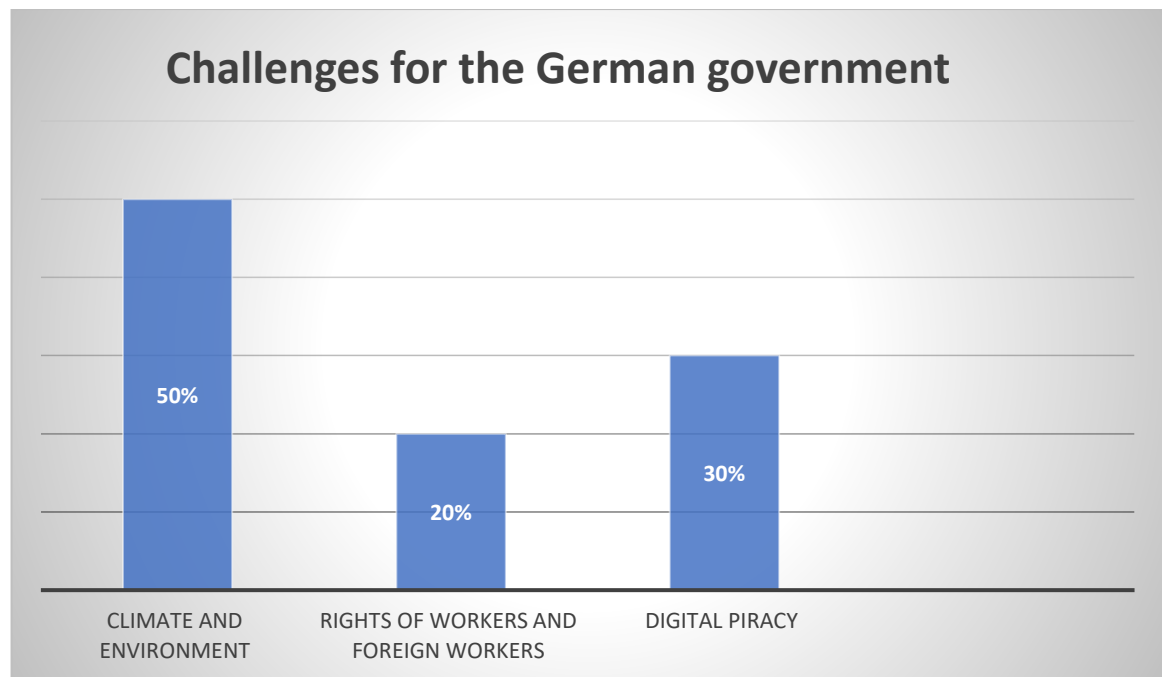
Germany has announced sweeping plans to restructure domestic intelligence and law Measures include 600 new intelligence positions for weeding out potentially violent right-wing extremists and their networks, and more targeted cyber investigations will be brought to justice, in coordination with state and federal intelligence services, German Interior Minister Horst Seehofer announced.

Why would Germany Restructure its Intelligence Service?

The plan was developed in the wake of the recent statistics published by the German government, which revealed that the number of extremists within the country had reached 32,200,000 people, increased by one third in compare to its rate back in 2018 when there was more than 24,000 active far-right extremists reported in Germany, with about 12,500 of them capable of committing violent acts.

Another reason behind the German government's action was the high-profile cases of far-right terror over the past six months, in which a number of leading political figures were targeted. The killing of Walter Lübcke, the president of the district council for the central German city of Kassel, who was shot dead in his home.

Germany does not only face the alarming growth of the far-right. At the end of this year, Merkel made a number of statements on some of the issues and challenges Germany will face by 2020. The climate crisis, the digital hacking and conditions of labor and jobs within Germany are critical, but Merkel's optimistic view of the future will facilitate implementing the plans developed by the German government and overcoming the challenges facing Germany. She also noted that climate issues will be listed at the top of her priorities.



Germany passed a climate legislation at the end of this year, approved by the European Parliament. But that legislation, which would provide a framework for Germany's contribution to addressing the climate crisis, was rejected by many environmental groups. In addition, political parties criticized the bill and demanded that Merkel renegotiate it.

In addition to climate issue, Germany is facing other greater challenges, given the fact that it will be the next to hold the presidency of the Council of the European Union. For example, the idea of Brexit from the EU, and the fact that Merkel's future plans have not been sufficiently ambitious, particularly in the light of the penetration of far-right ideology in Merkel's government.

In the second half of December, Robert Moritz, a local politician from Scuña, East Germany, resigned from Chancellor Angela Merkel's Christian Democratic Union and said that one of the reasons for his resignation was to protect the party from any further damage and to cause the political uproar to calm down because of his links to Germany's far-right.

Saxony has been a stronghold of the far-right for years, owing to the recent state elections won by the far-right AfD. This confirms that Germany is one of the most powerful European countries trying to put an end to far-right activity within it.

This reason may contribute to the issue and impede the efforts exerted by the government in that region. The German government, therefore, is trying to take a stand. Around 650 demonstrators of the extremist far-right National Democratic Party (NDP) of Germany were prevented from marching in the northwestern German village of Eschede.

Police said demonstrators blocked a road into the village from an estate where several NDP supporters were staying, and prevented 10 of them from driving down the road to the village in a car equipped with a loudspeaker.

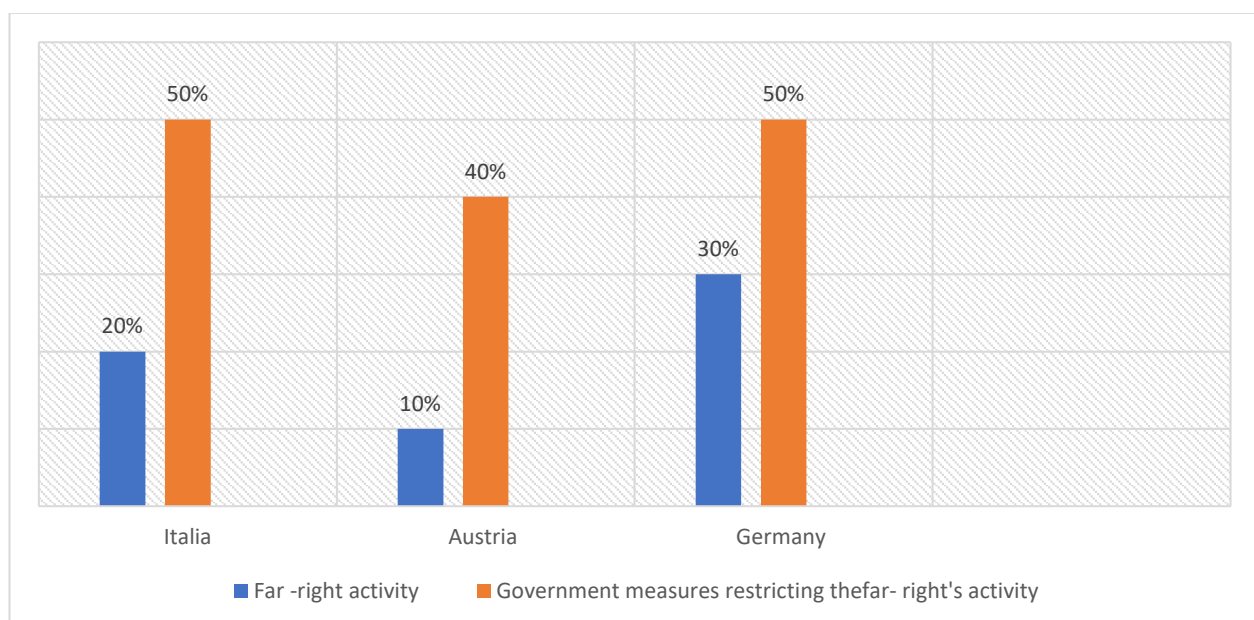
This does not mean that the second half of December was all about the support provided by the government to counter the hostile activity of the far-right. Nevertheless, the far-right's activity didn't seem hugely affected in the second half of December. A number of young men, between 21 and 33, were reportedly arrested for knocking over tombstones in a Jewish cemetery and spraying some of them with blue paint, in western Germany. It is worth noting that far-right extremist groups are targeting young people who are recruited and trained to be used as tools for terrorism.

As for Austria, the Austrian Constitutional Court has overruled many provisions of the controversial law on reducing aid funds to immigrants approved by the coalition of the far-right Austrian People's Party (OVP) and the far-right Freedom Party (FPO), which requires subsidies to be provided for whoever is competent to speak and write (in German or English). The court declared that the law was unconstitutional, as it discriminates against people with language learning difficulties for the obstacles it poses to immigrants seeking job opportunities. The Act also paves the way for the cutting down migrants living assistance by amount of €300 as benefits from the normal minimum of €863 Euro. The Act, issued in 2018 by the above-mentioned parties,

aimed at eliminating refugees and migrants within Austria– the first measure taken by Austria during 2019 to protect the rights of migrants.

As for Italy, over the recent months, Italy's political arena has been fluctuated due to the government's disputes, which caused the early exit of Matteo from the government coalition, resulting in the formation of a new coalition led by Prime Minister Giuseppe Conte and the Democratic Party (PD). Conte wanted to fight the far-right alone, and since then, the rate of resignations increased after Matteo left the government, as well as recent decisions made during the second half of December on restructuring the Italian state's plans for 2020 regarding education (Increase budget on education) and also (amend immigration law).

But this does not satisfy the far-right party within Italy, where political leaders are gathering from within the party and from outside, to put an end to the decisions of the currently operating government, posing major challenges in 2020 for the Italian government, which, according to its vision, is supposed to go for the idea of free Europe, with no immigrants.



Monitoring the far-right activity and the countering government measures in the second half of December is showing that Italy has joined the list of European countries taking measures to restrict the far-right activity, although far-right activities within Italy are

trying to defy the government's effort to eject far-right leader Salvini Matteo, but this is not guaranteed because the government support, provided by Giuseppe Conté, is poor if compared to the far-right power.

Additionally, pro-far-right alliances are way stronger than the anti-far-right alliances in Europe. And although Italy has tried to stand up among the European states restricting far-right movements in cooperation with Germany and France, this is not guaranteed, given the fact that Italy is one of the strongest European states enforcing legislation to reduce immigration and migrants

Analytical Vision

December paves the way for new developments on the European scene and for the activity of the far-right during 2020 in the light of this month's initial results that has been revealed after monitoring the far-right activity. These results, indeed, can present a glimpse on the situation of the far-right political parties, and the situation of the governments that play a powerful role in restricting the activity of these parties or the trained groups implementing their plans.

Germany ranked first, this month, in the countries restricting far-right activity, but the far-right steps were faster than government actions.

Austria is also an example of a country walking its very first steps towards restricting radical thought. The first of these steps is to repeal the legal acts adopted by those parties in 2018. Although these laws have caused immigrants many problems, it, nevertheless, offered us a glimmer of hope and a sense of wonder

What about the EU's Decisions in 2020?

The answer of this question, indeed, will bring us to the status of the far-right political parties in 2019



European parties managed to achieve their goals in 2019 both locally and internationally.

Far-right political parties have demonstrated a heavy presence in the European Parliament, the following are just few:

- **The Brexit Party in UK:** Currently led by Nigel Farage, former UK Independence Party leader, and the global face of the Brexit campaign, who won the EU general elections with 32.84% of the vote.
- **As for France:**– The leader of France's far-right National Front party, Marine Le Pen, won the elections with 23.31% of the votes, ahead of president Emmanuel Macron's Republic party that achieved 22.41% of the votes.
- **As for Italy:**– The Euroskeptic leader of the far-right League party, Matteo Salvini, won 33.64% of the vote, and in a parallel situation, the leader of the far-right Hungarian Nationalist Party, Viktor Orban, also won 52.14% of the vote in his country.
- **As for Germany:** – The extremist Alternative Party succeeded in increasing its share of the vote to 11%– however, it is way less than the results achieved by other countries.

Therefore, some political analysts believe that the rise of political parties to the European Parliament during 2019 is an expected, yet powerful, blow to the

European unity projects in light of the crisis Europe is plagued with on many levels. Perhaps the most important of which is the social crises that explain the overspread of the phenomenon of violent protests in many European countries such as France, Yellow Vest protests take place across France last May, and the expected Brexit from the European Union. After the former Prime Minister failed to remain in the European Union and the crisis of the countries part to the Union went deeper we started to assume about the future decisions the European Union will make in 2020.

The Presidency of European Union in 2020 will rotate between two different countries. Croatia, the smallest and the last European country to join the European Union, will take its turn as host of the EU revolving presidency for the first time. Therefore, it has to seize the opportunity and demonstrate its practical capabilities to solve the most critical issues facing the European Union, highlighted by the expected Brexit from the European Union. Croatia's six-month presidency, however, will end on 1 July 2020, allowing Germany to take its turn.

The European Union's decisions in 2020 will expectedly be characterized by instability, mainly due to the certain approaches adopted by countries regarding how they deal with the issues. However looks normal, because the position of the European Union is not a fixed or a country-specific one, it means here that Germany adopts a pro-immigrant approach, fueling the conflicts against Germany within the European Union. This does not mean, however, that all European countries will be against Germany's decisions, but only very few European countries will take its side during its presidency, such as France, to just name a few.

Adopting a pro-immigration attitude was the leading reason behind the Brexit this year. Therefore, it is highly expected that migrants and pro-immigration political leaders will continue to be targeted and terrorized throughout 2020.

The International Alliance for Peace and Development, accordingly, recommends to the European countries to amend the anti-immigrant and anti-refugee legislations, to develop a pro-immigrant strategy that includes improving procedures for entry to

European countries and reducing inappropriate detention by a number of European countries. This strategy should realize the sustainable development goals. European governments must step up their efforts to reduce the spreading hate speech throughout Europe, in implementation of the strategy launched by the United Nations in January 2019.

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