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## Welfare chauvinism and principles of redistributive justice: A case study of the Austrian Freedom Party

Laurenz Ennser-Jedenastik  
University of Vienna  
Department of Government  
[laurenz.ennser@univie.ac.at](mailto:laurenz.ennser@univie.ac.at)

**Abstract.** Welfare chauvinism denotes the application of nativist principles to social policy. Yet not all areas of the welfare state are equally susceptible to welfare chauvinistic mobilization by political actors. This paper argues that the underlying principles of redistributive justice matter. Universal benefits for all residents of a country are fundamentally at odds with nativist thinking. Also, nativists should seek to limit means-tested assistance to citizens, since such programs are likely to have immigrants overrepresented among their beneficiaries. By contrast, social insurance programs individualize benefit claims and thus undercut the group logic inherent in nativist arguments. An in-depth analysis of the social policy proposals put forward by the Austrian Freedom Party (FPÖ) since 2005 confirms these expectations. Welfare chauvinism is mostly targeted at universal and means-tested benefits. Where it is applied to social insurance programs (pensions, unemployment benefits), the purpose is typically to exclude immigrants from non-contributory elements and thus strengthen the actuarial principles for non-citizens.

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## Introduction

Welfare chauvinism has become a central plank in the policy platforms of the populist radical right. The large-scale influx of immigrants into West European welfare states during the past decades did not generally reduce the support for redistribution among voters, yet it promoted the view that social benefits should not be given to natives and nonnatives equally. Populist radical right parties (PRRPs) quickly discovered that large groups of voters support the notion that the welfare state should discriminate between citizens and non-citizens.

Empirical research has found strong support for the presence of welfare chauvinism among voters (Cappelen & Midtbø, 2016; Hjorth, 2016; Muñoz & Pardos-Prado, forthcoming). Also, mainstream parties have emulated the radical right's welfare chauvinism under certain conditions (Schumacher & van Kersbergen, 2016).

While we thus have learned much about the presence (or absence) of welfare chauvinism among voters and in party platforms, we still know very little about how welfare chauvinism is conditioned by welfare state institutions – at least as far as party policy is concerned. With regard to voters, some research has hinted at a connection between welfare regime types and welfare chauvinist attitudes (Reeskens & van Oorschot, 2012; van Der Waal, de Koster, & van Oorschot, 2013). With regard to party policy, the conditionality of welfare chauvinism on institutional arrangements has received very little scholarly attention (e.g. Ennsner-Jedenastik, forthcoming).

This paper theorizes that welfare chauvinism is conditioned by the architecture of social benefits and the principles of redistributive justice that underlie them. More specifically, it argues that equality- and need-based social programs (i.e. universal and means-tested benefits) are more likely to attract nativist critiques from PRRPs. By contrast, social insurance systems should be less vulnerable. This proposition is tested through an in-depth analysis of social policy proposals put forward by the Austrian Freedom Party (FPÖ) since 2005. The analysis uncovers that welfare chauvinism is typically present for universal and means-tested benefits, yet not for social insurance benefits. With respect to social insurance, the FPÖ seeks to segregate the systems by citizenship, with the purpose of restricting access to the non-actuarial elements in these schemes (e.g. minimum pensions, tax-funded compensation payments) to Austrian nationals, thus effectively *strengthening* the insurance principle for nonnatives.

## **Theoretical framework**

### *Welfare chauvinism*

The term welfare chauvinism was first coined by Andersen and Bjørklund (1990, p. 212) in their analysis of the Danish and Norwegian Progress parties.<sup>1</sup> It is typically used to denote the application of nativist principles to social policy. Welfare provisions should be more generous for citizens, whereas non-citizens should receive lower benefit levels (if any).

To be sure, not all research applies the term welfare chauvinism in this exact way. Some studies on party competition have used it to denote a position in the two-dimensional policy space that combines a leftist stance on socio-economic matters with a rightist stance on the cultural dimension (especially immigration) (Kitschelt & McGann, 1995; Schumacher & van Kersbergen, 2016). While such a policy position is clearly consistent with (and often causally related to) applying nativism to social policy, it is not the same thing. For the present purpose, thus, the term welfare chauvinism represents a political view that seeks to favor natives over nonnatives in the provision of social benefits. In other words, it combines a leftist social policy position regarding natives with a rightist social policy position regarding nonnatives.

The literature on welfare chauvinism can be grouped into two strands, one focused on the supply side of politics (i.e. parties' ideology and policy platforms), the other focused on the demand side (voters' preferences). In the former line of research, scholars of party competition have identified welfare chauvinism as an important feature in the policy programs of populist radical right parties (Careja, Elmelund-Præstekær, Baggesen Klitgaard, & Larsen, 2016; Norocel, 2016; Schumacher & van Kersbergen, 2016). Earlier research had portrayed PRRPs as pursuing economically liberal policies (Betz, 1994; Kitschelt & McGann, 1995) – a view that was soon challenged (De Lange, 2007; Mudde, 2000). As Mudde (2007, p. 119) argues, socio-economic matters are only secondary elements in the ideology of PRRPs. PRRPs thus subordinate their views on education, the economy, or the welfare state to their core ideological principles: nativism, authoritarianism, and populism (Ennsner-Jedenastik, 2016).

The second line of research focuses on voter preferences about redistribution to immigrants. A number of survey-based studies have identified immigrants as the least deserving social group (van Oorschot, 2000, 2006, 2008), and found that the size of local immigrant

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<sup>1</sup> The precise term was 'welfare state chauvinism'.

populations as well as attitudes towards immigration shape redistributive preferences (Eger, 2010; Finseraas, 2008). The degree to which voters embrace welfare chauvinistic attitudes is influenced by a number of factors, such as low cultural capital (van der Waal, Achterberg, Houtman, De Koster, & Manevska, 2010) and contextual forces such as economic inequality (van Der Waal et al., 2013) and cultural heterogeneity (Reeskens & van Oorschot, 2012).

More recently, survey experiments have been employed to parse the conditions under which voters are more inclined towards welfare chauvinism (e.g. Kootstra, 2016). This research has identified variables such as an immigrant's cultural proximity (Hjorth, 2016) or respondent gender (Cappelen & Midtbø, 2016) as important explanatory factors. Most importantly for the present purpose, the negative impact of immigration priming on redistributive preferences is larger for means-tested than for universal programs (Muñoz & Pardos-Prado, forthcoming). This finding supports the notion that redistributive justice principles (and their real-world implications) can help explain why welfare chauvinism is targeted at some social programs more than at others.

### *Principles of redistributive justice*

Social programs are organized according to different principles of redistributive justice, of which the three most fundamental are equity, equality, and need (Clasen & Van Oorschot, 2002; Deutsch, 1975). The equity principle holds that benefits should be equal to one's contribution. Deutsch (1975, p. 143) argues that it should be dominant when the goal is to maximize economic productivity. The realization of this principle in the realm of social policy is the creation of social insurance programs. Those who contribute more (typically as a result of higher income) will receive higher benefits should they face unemployment, sickness, or old age. The application of the equity principle maintains status differences between individuals and is therefore a core characteristic of the conservative welfare regime (Esping-Andersen, 1990).

The principle of equality, by contrast, dictates that benefits should be provided equally, irrespective of contribution or need. This principle applies to types of cooperation in which 'enjoyable social relations' (Deutsch, 1975, p. 146) are the prime goal. Such universal benefits are typical of the social democratic welfare regime ideal-type.

Finally, the need principle requires that benefits should be adjusted to one's material needs. Welfare provisions should thus be targeted primarily towards the individuals at the bottom of

the income distribution – where the marginal utility of each unit transferred is greatest. The need principle should be dominant when ‘personal development and personal welfare’ is the primary goal in a social relation (Deutsch, 1975, p. 146). The empirical correspondence to this principle is the provision of means-tested benefits, a cornerstone of the liberal welfare regime type.

### *Welfare chauvinism and redistributive justice principles*

The premise of this paper’s central argument is that there is a tension between nativist logic and the architecture of some social programs. The strength of welfare chauvinistic appeals should therefore be a function of the degree to which underlying principles or real-world outcomes of a social program are at odds with a nativist worldview (for an earlier version of this argument, see Ennsner-Jedenastik, forthcoming).

The *equity principle* (‘to each according to his or her contribution’) is orthogonal to nativist thinking. Or, as Reeskens and van Oorschot (2012) have put it, ‘merit’s underlying importance of economic duties towards society makes no appeal to in-out group conflict.’ Nativism relies on a group-based logic, pitting the native in-group against the nonnative out-group. By contrast, the equity principle makes no reference to groups, but awards benefits according to individuals’ contributions. Anyone – irrespective of group membership – can earn the right to claim benefits by contributing. In practice, social insurance programs produce little native-to-nonnative redistribution, since status differentials between immigrants (who have lower average incomes, see Morissens & Sainsbury, 2005) and natives are maintained. Also, immigrant populations in most Western democracies are younger than the general population and thus underrepresented among those individuals that rely most heavily on insurance-based benefits (pensioners and the sick).

The *equality principle* is fundamentally at odds with nativism – that is, as long as universal benefits are paid based on residence or employment, not citizenship. Nativism is an ideology of inequality and thus outright incompatible with the notion that benefits be provided equally. Also, due to the income disparity between natives and immigrants (OECD, 2015; Sainsbury, 2012, p. 12), universal benefits generate a considerable level of redistribution from natives to nonnatives.

Finally, the *need principle* is not per se incompatible with nativist thinking. As a general rule, redistributing income to those who have greater need is not antithetic to having a preference

for natives. However, the fact that incomes are typically lower (and benefit claims therefore typically higher) among immigrants in Europe should make nativists strongly adversarial towards means-tested programs. More than any other type of social program, means-tested benefits redistribute resources from natives to nonnatives. As Muñoz and Pardos-Prado (forthcoming) argue, the notion of means-testing activates the ‘other-regarding’ dimension of social policy preferences (Cavaillé & Trump, 2015). This dimension is ruled less by considerations of material self-interest but rather by evaluations of the groups that will likely benefit. Means-tested social programs thus provide the most favorable context for political entrepreneurs seeking to employ nativist arguments in the realm of social policy.

Based on this reasoning, it is reasonable to conjecture that welfare chauvinistic appeals should be targeted at those policies that most strongly violate nativist logic – either as a matter of principle (e.g. explicitly recognizing all residents of a country as equally deserving) or practice (generating high levels of native-to-nonnative redistribution). By contrast, social programs that are based on the insurance principle should face less nativist critique.

### **Case selection, data, and method**

The core theoretical proposition of this paper is tested through a qualitative study of social policy proposals put forward by the Austrian Freedom Party (FPÖ) since 2005. The data are gathered from the FPÖ’s election manifestos (2006, 2008, 2013, and 2017),<sup>2</sup> the 2011 basic program (FPÖ, 2011), the party’s 300-page policy handbook (*Handbuch freiheitlicher Politik*) (FPÖ, 2013), its 2017 economic policy platform (FPÖ, 2017), as well as legislative proposals and press releases issued by the party since April 2005.<sup>3</sup>

The FPÖ is one of Europe’s most successful populist radical right parties, and certainly emblematic of this party family in terms of ideology and voter profile. Founded in 1955, the FPÖ remained a marginal force throughout much of Austria’s postwar era, scoring election results in the single digits. From the beginning, the party was torn between its national and its liberal wing. In 1983 the party, then led by a group of liberal-minded individuals, entered a coalition with the social democrats (SPÖ) and thus found itself in national government for the

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<sup>2</sup> At the time of preparing this paper for the ECPR General Conference (August 2017), the 2017 election manifesto had not been published. Its content will later be added to the analysis.

<sup>3</sup> Austria’s national news agency (the Austria Press Agency, APA) runs a centralized platform for press releases ([www.ots.at](http://www.ots.at)) that is open to the public to read. All major parties and their subsidiary organizations feed their press releases into this website. The site can be searched systematically, e.g. limiting search results to certain senders, keywords, and time periods.

first time. The ensuing internal conflict reached its peak at a party congress in 1986, when challenger Jörg Haider (supported by the national wing) beat sitting party leader Norbert Steger (a liberal) in a leadership contest. As a consequence, the SPÖ declared the coalition terminated and snap elections were called. The populist turn under Haider marked the begin of the FPÖ's electoral rise, culminating in 1999, when, with a vote share of 27 percent, the party eked out second place and subsequently went into coalition with the Christian democratic People's Party (ÖVP). In late 2002, conflict within the FPÖ led to early elections and a dramatic vote loss for the party (only 10 percent voted for the FPÖ). Still, the ÖVP-FPÖ coalition was renewed in 2003, but further internal rifts culminated in a party split in April 2005, when Jörg Haider and most of the party's elites (all ministers and most MPs) founded the Alliance Future of Austria (BZÖ) and continued the coalition with the ÖVP. The remainder of the FPÖ was taken over by Vienna party chairman Heinz-Christian Strache who remains party leader until today. Under this new leadership the party has steadily built up its support, reaching 20.5 percent in the 2013 parliamentary election. Its candidate for the (largely ceremonial) presidency scored 47 percent in the run-off election in December 2016. At the time of writing, the party is expected to make moderate gains in the October 2017 parliamentary election.

The analysis proceeds by policy area and covers the period from 2005. This year marks the beginning of the latest phase in the FPÖ's development. From 2005 on the party pursued a more pro-redistributive stance, branding itself as the 'social homeland party' (*soziale Heimatpartei*) and strongly embracing welfare chauvinistic policies which up until then had not been central to the FPÖ's programmatic profile (Ennsner-Jedenastik, 2016).

## **Analysis**

### *Pensions*

Austria runs a public pay-as-you-go pension scheme, supplemented by tax incentives for occupational and private pension plans. The public scheme is insurance-based and provides the bulk of income for the overwhelming majority of people in old age. During its most recent stint in government (2000 to 2005), the Freedom Party together with the ÖVP pushed through a major retrenchment effort (Busemeyer, 2005), which cost the party dearly at the polls (Heinisch, 2003).

Since its return to opposition in 2005 the FPÖ has been much less eager to promote pension reform. Only in its 2017 economic policy program does the party vaguely endorse ‘minimizing the gap between actual retirement age and life expectancy’. Also, it argues that civil servants’ pensions should be brought into line with the general system more quickly than currently planned (FPÖ, 2017, pp. 40-41).

However, a much more prominent plank in the party’s platform has been the proposal to segregate the Austrian social insurance systems into two tiers, one for citizens and one for non-citizens, sometimes further distinguishing between EU citizens, third-country nationals, and asylum seekers (FPÖ, 2013, p. 118; 2017, p. 45). Each group’s contributions should be used to fund only that group’s benefits.

While the distributional impacts of such a system could even be negative for the native population (in 2017 only 10 percent of non-citizens were of age 60 or older, yet 27 percent of Austrian citizens fell into that group), the FPÖ also demands that tax-funded compensation payments should be retained only for Austrian citizens. Given that the shortfall in the Austrian public pension scheme is currently at around €10b per year (which are financed from the general budget), eliminating compensation payments for non-citizens equals a severe pension cut.

At first glance, the FPÖ’s proposals on segregating social insurance by citizenship contradict the expectation that insurance-based systems should be less subject to welfare chauvinistic critique. However, what the reforms envisaged by the Freedom Party amount to is actually a *strengthening* of the insurance principle for foreigners. Limiting compensation payments to citizens means that non-citizens’ pensions will be entirely dependent on what they pay into the system. This notion is corroborated by the FPÖ’s skepticism towards paying non-citizens the compensatory allowance (*Ausgleichszulage*), a means-tested benefit that guarantees most pensioners a minimum income (FPÖ, 2013, pp. 119-120).<sup>4</sup>

Clearly, thus, the FPÖ’s welfare chauvinistic appeals with regards to pensions are targeted at the non-insurance elements in the system (tax-funded compensation payments into the pay-as-you-go scheme and the means-tested compensatory allowance).

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<sup>4</sup> See also press release no. 67, 20 January 2017: [www.ots.at/presseaussendung/OTS\\_20170120\\_OT0067](http://www.ots.at/presseaussendung/OTS_20170120_OT0067)



### *Family benefits*

The two most important cash benefits for Austrian families are the child care allowance and the family allowance. Both are universal benefits in principle, although recent reforms have made it possible to opt into an earnings-related version of the child care allowance – a measure that was taken with the purpose of getting more fathers to take on child care duties.

Child care allowance is paid for up to three years after childbirth and comes with strict limits on additional earnings. Family allowance is paid to parents with children up to age 24 (25 for men who complete mandatory military or alternative civilian service), and increases with age and with the number of children in a family.

In its most extreme demands, the FPÖ proposes to eliminate these cash benefits for non-citizens altogether (FPÖ, 2006, p. 3; 2013, p. 36).<sup>5</sup> An idea more commonly floated by the party is to adjust cash benefits for families to the local purchasing power for children living abroad.<sup>6</sup> This would mostly affect parents in Hungary, Slovakia, Poland and other CEE countries, who work in Austria but are entitled to receive family allowances for their children living abroad. This proposal has recently been adopted by the ÖVP. The Christian democrats elected a new party leader in 2017 (foreign minister Sebastian Kurz) and have as a consequence moved their rhetoric notably closer to the FPÖ's position on questions of immigration (including welfare rights for immigrants).

While cash transfers to families are substantial in Austria, more than a quarter of family expenditures are used to pay for in-kind benefits, mostly financing the provision of child care services (kindergartens and crèches). The FPÖ's core tenet regarding institutional child care is that these services should not be made mandatory (FPÖ, 2013, p. 156). Starting in 2010, however, one year of kindergarten was made mandatory, and current government policy is to extend this period to two years. Both measures were vehemently opposed by the FPÖ,<sup>7</sup> even though the policy was explicitly designed to improve German language skills among non-native speakers – a longstanding concern for the FPÖ. Yet the party argues that the government should not force Austrian children who have no language difficulties into institutional child care.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> See press release no. 120, 19 February 2007: [www.ots.at/presseaussendung/OTS\\_20070219\\_OTS0120](http://www.ots.at/presseaussendung/OTS_20070219_OTS0120).

<sup>6</sup> See the party's parliamentary motion no. 199/A(E) from 24 January 2014: [https://www.parlament.gv.at/PAKT/VHG/XXV/A/A\\_00199/fname\\_337980.pdf](https://www.parlament.gv.at/PAKT/VHG/XXV/A/A_00199/fname_337980.pdf)

<sup>7</sup> See press release no. 111, 16 September 2016: [www.ots.at/presseaussendung/OTS\\_20160916\\_OTS0111](http://www.ots.at/presseaussendung/OTS_20160916_OTS0111).

<sup>8</sup> One could argue that this view may represent a case of indirect welfare chauvinism (Careja et al., 2016). However, this would only be true if enrollment rates were higher among natives than among nonnatives. While

Taken together, the FPÖ's policy views on family benefits exhibit strong welfare chauvinistic tendencies. Since family benefits are typically universal, this finding fits the theoretical argument well.

### *Health care*

The Austrian health care system is run on an insurance basis. Insurance is established automatically with employment, free co-insurance covers dependent family members. Most individuals cannot choose their insurance provider, hence there is no competition between insurers. Mandatory insurance guarantees that only a small fraction of people living in Austria go without being covered (1.2 percent according to Fuchs, 2009). Sick pay is paid out in proportion to income, whereas (most) medical benefits are provided (mostly) free to the insured.

Compared to the FPÖ's overall policies on family benefits and social assistance (see below), welfare chauvinism features much less prominently in the party's health care policy statements. In line with its nativist perspective on social insurance, the FPÖ argues that health insurance should be segregated, with a separate insurance scheme for non-citizens (FPÖ, 2008, p. 9; 2011, p. 12). As for pensions and unemployment, this scheme should be financed by non-citizens' contributions and fund 'basic care'.<sup>9</sup>

The party does not go into further detail, but it is safe to assume that such a scheme would substantially lower access to medical services for foreigners, given that health care contributions cover only about half of all public health expenditures in Austria.<sup>10</sup>

### *Unemployment*

Unemployed workers in Austria receive earnings-related unemployment benefits with net replacement for individuals currently at 55 percent (rates are higher for people with

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the numbers are somewhat sketchy, this does not appear to be the case. In 2016, for instance, 32 percent of children in child care institutions had another language than German as mother tongue. Among school children (which capture the full population, since schooling is compulsory), the rate was 29 percent ([www.statistik.at](http://www.statistik.at)). Take-up of child care services thus appears to be similar among natives and immigrants. This suggests that the FPÖ's opposition to mandatory kindergarten is not driven by welfare chauvinistic considerations, but by a principled objection against forcing young children into institutional child care.

<sup>9</sup> See press release no. 285, 6 June 2007: [www.ots.at/presseaussendung/OTS\\_20070606\\_OTS0285](http://www.ots.at/presseaussendung/OTS_20070606_OTS0285).

<sup>10</sup> In 2016, health insurers took in around €13b in contributions, yet public health expenditure stood at over € 26b ([www.statistik.at](http://www.statistik.at)).

dependents). All individuals with 52 weeks of employment during the past two years prior to losing their job are eligible. Unemployment benefits are paid for up to a year. After that, insured individuals qualify for the emergency assistance (*Notstandshilfe*) which is slightly lower than unemployment benefits (typically 92 percent). In addition, the Public Employment Service (AMS) provides a range of active labor market policies, most importantly training and job placement.

The FPÖ views immigrant labor as largely responsible for much of Austria's labor market woes, be it high unemployment or downward pressure on wages. The party therefore strongly opposes the Posted Workers Directive (96/71/EC), and proposes to close off parts of the Austrian labor market to immigrants (FPÖ, 2017, pp. 42-43).

As with all social insurance schemes, the FPÖ seeks to create a separate tier for non-citizens, with no tax-funds provided to compensate for budgetary shortfalls (FPÖ, 2013, p. 113). This, again, amounts to a strengthening of the actuarial principle for immigrant workers. In addition, the FPÖ would require non-citizens to apply for a job in their country of origin after 26 weeks of unemployment. Also, foreign workers should not be eligible for emergency assistance or social assistance (*Bedarfsorientierte Mindestsicherung*) after being unemployed for more than 52 weeks (FPÖ, 2017, p. 44). Neither should the AMS provide training or job placement for non-citizens, since its purpose should be to exclusively serve the Austrian unemployed (FPÖ, 2013, p. 112). Support through active labor market policies (which one could count as universal benefits) would thus become a prerogative for citizens.

While most of the FPÖ's labor market policies conform to the expectation that insurance-based benefits are less affected by welfare chauvinism than universal and means-tested ones, there is one exception. The proposed elimination of emergency assistance for non-citizens is one case where the FPÖ proposes a direct cut to an insurance-based benefit. To be sure, the notion that emergency assistance is an insurance-based benefit was only legally established by the European Court of Human Rights in its judgement no. 17371/90. The ECtHR ruled that restricting this benefit to nationals constitutes a violation of article 14 (anti-discrimination) of the European Convention of Human Rights.

### *Social housing*

Social housing in Austria covers around one in four households (Reinprecht, 2007), thus making housing a social policy area of central importance. While much of social housing is

provided by cooperatives, a substantial stock of housing units remains in direct public ownership ('municipal housing'). The city of Vienna alone, for instance, owns 220,000 social housing units.

Access to social housing is subject to a means test, yet the income thresholds are typically high enough to cover the large majority of the population (80 to 90 percent according to Reinprecht, 2007, p. 39), thus rendering social housing a quasi-universal benefit. However, municipal (i.e. directly owned) housing mostly caters to lower-income households (and thus enforces stricter income limits), whereas housing associations also target firmly middle-class individuals and families. Much of the political debate revolves around municipal housing, not least in Vienna, where it accounts for one in four household units (Reinprecht, 2007).

In some of Austria's nine *Länder*, publicly owned housing was tied to citizenship until 2006, when European regulations necessitated granting access to EU and EEA citizens. The FPÖ vehemently opposed the change at the time and remains strongly critical of non-citizen access to social housing (FPÖ, 2011, p. 7). In its policy handbook, the party demands that municipal housing be reserved for Austrian citizens (FPÖ, 2013, p. 39). At other times it has opposed publicly owned housing to be opened to refugees, third-country nationals, individuals with insufficient German language skills, or non-EU citizens more generally.<sup>11</sup>

In addition to social housing, the Austrian *Länder* provide housing assistance (*Wohnbeihilfe*), a means-tested benefit for low-income individuals and families whose net income is insufficient to cover their rental costs. The FPÖ has regularly argued that this benefit should not be paid to non-EU citizens.<sup>12</sup>

### *Social assistance*

The Austrian social assistance program (*Sozialhilfe* until 2010, *Bedarfsorientierte Mindestsicherung* since then) is a means-tested income replacement program. From 2010 to 2016 there was an agreement between the federal government and the *Länder* about uniform standards. Negotiations about a continuation of that agreement broke down not least because

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<sup>11</sup> See these press releases: [www.ots.at/presseaussendung/OTS\\_20151027\\_OTS0063](http://www.ots.at/presseaussendung/OTS_20151027_OTS0063),  
[www.ots.at/presseaussendung/OTS\\_20110701\\_OTS0285](http://www.ots.at/presseaussendung/OTS_20110701_OTS0285),  
[www.ots.at/presseaussendung/OTS\\_20110225\\_OTS0159](http://www.ots.at/presseaussendung/OTS_20110225_OTS0159),  
[www.ots.at/presseaussendung/OTS\\_20150814\\_OTS0011](http://www.ots.at/presseaussendung/OTS_20150814_OTS0011).

<sup>12</sup> See press release no. 24, 6 April 2013: [www.ots.at/presseaussendung/OTS\\_20130406\\_OTS0024](http://www.ots.at/presseaussendung/OTS_20130406_OTS0024).

the influx of refugees starting in 2015 propelled ÖVP and FPÖ to argue for tighter eligibility criteria and lower benefits for some groups of non-citizens.

The FPÖ opposed the *Bedarfsorientierte Mindestsicherung* (BMS) from the start, arguing that it would encourage immigration by individuals whose prime motivation was cashing in welfare benefits. Hence, the social assistance scheme would ‘endanger the survival of our country’ (FPÖ, 2013, p. 110). As a consequence, eligibility for social assistance should be tied to Austrian citizenship (FPÖ, 2017, p. 39).

While such drastic measures remain politically (and legally) infeasible, some *Länder* have implemented welfare chauvinistic reform to social assistance. These reforms cut benefits for individuals with only a brief history of residence in Austria, made the attendance of German language and ‘value’ courses mandatory to receive the full benefit, or required beneficiaries in some cases to sign an ‘integration agreement’. The FPÖ was instrumental (though not alone) in pushing for these changes.

## **Discussion and conclusion**

Table 1 presents an overview of the results thus far. The discussion above has shown that welfare chauvinism has become a central plank in the FPÖ’s platform. The party promotes nativism in all main areas of social policy. However, as the overview makes clear, the logic by which welfare chauvinist arguments are applied to different program types strongly correlates with the design of the program.

All universal and means-tested benefits discussed above are subject to strong and unveiled welfare chauvinistic critiques. Depending on the circumstances, the group to be excluded varies between refugees, other third-country nationals, non-EU citizens, and non-citizens generally. Yet all of the most important means-tested and universal social programs in Austria have attracted nativist appeals from the FPÖ.

**Table 1**      **Overview of welfare chauvinism in FPÖ policies**

Policy area	Policy	Program type	FPÖ position
Pensions	Public pensions	Insurance-based, earnings-related	Segregate insurance scheme, no use of tax funds for non-citizens
	Compensatory allowance	Means-tested	Eliminate/retrench for non-citizens
Family benefits	Family allowance	Universal (funded through employer contributions)	Eliminate/retrench for non-citizens
	Child care allowance	Universal (funded through employer contributions)	Eliminate/retrench for non-citizens
Health care	Medical services	Insurance-based, not earnings-related	Segregate insurance scheme, only basic care for non-citizens
Unemployment	Unemployment benefits	Insurance-based, earnings-related	Segregate insurance scheme, no use of tax funds for non-citizens
	Emergency assistance	Insurance-based, earnings-related	Eliminate for non-citizens
	Active labor market policies	Universal	Eliminate for non-citizens
Housing	Social housing	Means-tested	Eliminate/restrict for non-citizens
	Housing assistance	Means-tested	Eliminate/retrench for non-citizens
Social assistance	Social assistance	Means-tested	Eliminate/retrench for non-citizens

Note: Grey area denotes cases that deviate from the theoretical argument.

By contrast, the party pursues a different logic of argument when it comes to social insurance (pensions, health care, and unemployment benefits). The general idea is to segregate the social insurance system, with one tier for non-citizens strictly governed by actuarial principles: what you pay in determines what you get out. The purpose of segregating the social insurance systems, however, is not to apply different actuarial mathematics to citizens and non-citizens, but to restrict non-insurance based elements to the native population. All measures that take the edges off a pure contribution-based system should benefit only Austrian citizens: tax-funded compensation payments into the public pension and unemployment schemes, or compensatory allowances (i.e. minimum pensions). Immigrants should thus be submitted to a strict contribution-based system, whereas the cushioning effects of using tax revenue to pay for pension and unemployment benefits (or medical services) should be retained only for Austrian nationals.

Overall, the empirical case of the FPÖ since 2005 thus presents a remarkably good fit for the theoretical argument that welfare chauvinism is targeted at means-tested and universal benefits, whereas insurance-based social programs are better insulated from nativist attacks. The only policy claim that does not fit this pattern is the FPÖ's demand to eliminate emergency assistance (a contribution-based benefit that kicks in after one year of unemployment) for non-nationals. To be sure, the Austrian government and administration long held the view that this benefit should not be granted to non-citizens. However, since emergency assistance is proportional to prior income and claims are established based on unemployment insurance contributions, there is little question that this benefit is substantively part of the social insurance system.

As with all studies of individual countries or parties, there is a question to what extent the results generalize to other cases. First, it should be noted that the findings presented here are in line with (or even stronger than) what has been reported in previous cross-national comparisons (Ennsner-Jedenastik, forthcoming). Second, there are reasons to believe that the FPÖ is not untypical within the family of populist radical right parties in (Western) Europe. It is a member of the 'Europe of Nations and Freedom' group in the European Parliament, alongside the French *Front National*, the Belgian *Vlaams Belang*, the Dutch *Partij voor de Vrijheid*, and the Italian *Lega Nord* in the European Parliament. Its ideological profile is pretty similar to that of other PRRPs (Ennsner, 2012). Third, the FPÖ's supporters are similar to other PRRP supporters in Europe (Ivarsflaten, 2008; Rooduijn, forthcoming), such that other PRRPs have similar incentives to employ welfare chauvinistic appeals.

To be sure, future research will have to establish the applicability of the findings presented here in a comparative context. Also, it will be important to establish whether the relationship between the institutional characteristics of social programs and welfare chauvinism holds not only at the level of campaign rhetoric and public statements, but also when it comes to policy-making.

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