## Workshop Proposal Outline form

for prospective Workshop Directors for the ECPR Joint Sessions of Workshops

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<th><strong>Title of proposed Workshop:</strong></th>
<th>The influence of radical right populist parties on policy-making in Europe</th>
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**Outline of topic:**

In the last three decades, radical right populist parties (RRPP) have emerged, developed, and strengthened their electoral weight in Europe (Mudde, 2013). This tendency has been highly criticized, since RRPP are often perceived by journalists, citizens, policy-makers, and some researchers (e.g. Albertazzi and Mueller, 2013) as a threat to democracy. Indeed, several RRPP have managed to become a member of a coalition government while others have become strong opposition forces. Generally speaking, this type of parties tends to be well integrated into the European political landscape.

The populist phenomenon has already been extensively studied by scholars through different angles and in many disciplines: theoretical and empirical works mainly deal with the leaders (e.g. Vossen, 2013), the voters (e.g. Norris, 2005), the activists (e.g. Gottraux and Péchu, 2011), citizens’ voting behavior (e.g. Bakker et al., 2015), party institutionalization (Arter and Kestilä-Kekkonen, 2014), party history (e.g. Betz, 2013), and discourses (e.g. Wodak, 2015).

Despite this richness, there is a need to go beyond the knowledge of these parties themselves. In light of the electoral success of RRPP, it thus appears crucial to explore the link between politics and policies. As these parties have become important actors in the political landscapes in many European countries, it is essential to better apprehend their real effects on public policies, on party systems and, in fine, on democracy.
A publication is expected to follow from the results of the workshop, *(i.e. edited book or special issue of a peer-reviewed journal).*

**Relation to existing research:**

The influence of RRPP on policy-making has been hardly addressed by researchers. There are only a few studies that have recently started to investigate this research question. These researches are significant contributions to the scientific literature. Nevertheless, they are still in their infancy and suffer from several drawbacks (e.g. Mudde, 2007: 277-292).

To begin with, scholars have focused on a limited number of countries, notably Italy (e.g. Verbeek and Zaslove, 2015), Austria (e.g. Luther, 2011), and Denmark (e.g. Akkerman and De Lange, 2012). Given that RRPP proved to be electorally successful in a wide range of European countries, it seems indicated to consider other cases too, from the Eastern as well as the Western part of Europe.

In addition, these cases are similar in that sense they have been studied during the period they were a member of a government or they supported a minority government. As reminded by Williams (2006: 42), “what distinguishes a democracy from a dictatorship is the legitimacy of opposition”. Yet opposition parties can be influential actors in the policy-making process. Moreover, parties without any parliamentary representation can also exercise a decisive influence. There is thus the necessity to study these four possibilities in order to get the best overview of the influence of RRPP on policy-making.

Then, only a few analyses focus on the sub-national level (Van Ostaijen and Scholten, 2014, and Bolin et al., 2014). Though most of RRPP realize their first significant electoral results at a local level, it is important to conduct studies at the national level but also at the sub-national level.

Furthermore, several studies assess the influence of RRPP on mainstream parties (e.g. Schumacher and Van Kersbergen, 2014), without investigating the influence on the policy-making process itself, from the agenda-setting until the decision-making.
Finally, the immigration issue is the only to have been examined so far. Other core issues of RRPP such as law and order and the European Union (Mudde, 2007) have been neglected. Thus, it seems important to expand the range of domains.

**Likely participants:**

This overview of the scholarly literature review offers a research agenda that the workshop proposes to address. The goal of the workshop is to contribute to theoretical and empirical research in the *politics* and *policies* fields by bringing together a variety of scholars working on political parties, populism, extremism, democracy and policy analysis and whose papers revolve around (one of) the following questions:

- Do RRPP manage to influence policy-making?
- Do RRPP need to be in a government to be influential?
- How do RRPP exercise their influence?
- Can we distinguish a direct from an indirect influence?
- Which contextual conditions make such influence more likely to occur?

**Type of Papers required:**

The workshop welcomes papers dealing with the influence of RRPP on policy-making in Europe. The cases can belong to any of the four RRPP categories depicted above (participation to the government; support to a minority government; opposition status; no parliamentary representation). Contributions that focus on the core issues of RRPP (i.e. immigration, law and order, and European integration) will be prioritized. Methodologically, this workshop is open to a wide range of approaches (single case studies as well as cross-cases analyses) in order to enrich the understanding of the policy-related effects of populist parties.

**Funding:**

Funding has to be obtained by participants themselves by applying to national and international agencies. In particular, junior researchers can apply to the grants and scholarships for people who participate in ECPR
organized and sponsored activities.

| Biographical notes: | Benjamin Biard is an FNRS Research Fellow in political science at the Catholic University of Louvain (Belgium). His research focuses on populism, public policy, and democracy.  
Laurent Bernhard is a post-doctoral researcher at the University of Zurich (NCCR Democracy). His main research interests include populism, direct democracy, and comparative politics. |

ALBERTAZZI D., MUELLER S. (2013), Populism and liberal democracy: populists in government in Austria, Italy, Poland and Switzerland. *Government and Opposition*, 48, pp 343-371  
17:4, pp 453-470


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