



Long Report

MO responsible for the project	Gülçin Sinav
Title of the project	RALF DAHRENDORF ROUNDTABLES
Dates, place and titles of events (if applicable)	Atölye – Bomontiada, Istanbul, 14 June 2019 A Liberal Response to the Populist Challenge: “Quo Vadis Populism? An Assessment”
Targeted audience	Civil society activists, academics, media representatives, politicians journalists
Number of participants	2 moderators, 8 panelists, audience of approx. 100-120
VIPs present	Olle Schmidt (ELF Vice President, former Member of the European Parliament)
Media presence and media response (add links if applicable)	Instagram: https://www.instagram.com/p/Byr4k2yhbm/ Twitter: https://twitter.com/ozgurlukar/status/1139463406984073217 Facebook: https://www.facebook.com/hashtag/populismconf?source=feed_text&epa=HASHTAG&_tn=*NK-R News: https://medyascope.tv/2019/06/14/yukselen-populizm-karsisinda-liberalizmin-plani-var-mi/
Applied media strategy. Please give examples.	The event was beforehand largely announced and advertised on social media such as Facebook and invitations were sent via a mail distributor. During the event, media representatives were present. Moreover, the organizers wrote protocol of the event so that the produced notes could later be used for a long report for online publication. After the event, photos were posted on social media like Facebook, Twitter and Instagram. A video consisting of interviews will also be published.
Short summary for social media (150 words max.)	See short report/ introduction paragraph of the long report

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Narrative report of the project (1,500 words max.– also used for publication on website), including:

- relevant quotes,
- conclusions;
- policy recommendations.

Is there anyone these days who does not talk explicitly or implicitly about populism? From Donald Trump in the US via Nicolas Maduro in Venezuela and Matteo Salvini in Italy to Victor Orban in Hungary: populists of their kind – the list is long – do not only shape the current public debate to a large degree, they are also responsible for an increase in populist policies that not seldom have authoritarian leanings. In these troublesome days, it is more important than ever to find liberal answers to populist and authoritarian threats to democracy and the rule of law. For this purpose, a number of European liberal leaders came together in **Istanbul** on **14 June 2019** to discuss the approach of populists to contemporary problems, their communication strategies as well as potential liberal answers to fight back. Under the framework of **Ralf Dahrendorf Roundtables**, organized by the **European Liberal Forum** with the support of the **Friedrich Naumann Foundation for Freedom Turkey Office**, the **Freedom Research Association** and the **International Democratic Initiative**, politicians, academics and civil society activists discussed what populism is, why it is rising now and how it impacts states and societies under the topic: “**A Liberal Response to the Populist Challenge: Quo Vadis Populism? An Assessment**”.

Since during the last century, the “traditional” enemies of liberal democracies were communist or fascist states, the spreading wave of populism caught liberals unprepared to deal with this kind of threat. Therefore, the goal of the Ralf Dahrendorf Roundtable on Populism was not only to locate the roots of populism and exchange experiences from countries that are considered populism’s hotbeds but also to share best practice and develop possible communication strategies and alternative agendas to push back populism. Thus, active liberal members of the civil society were to be brought together and strengthened in their resistance against populism.

Under the moderation of the Turkish Hürriyet journalist Barçın Yınanç, panelists from the US, Turkey, Italy and Belgium sensitized the audience to the manifestations and roots of populism. The recognized author and Vice-President of the Atlas Network, Dr. Tom G. Palmer and the Turkish

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academic and Vice chair of International Relations at Bilkent University, Dr. Berk Esen, explained to the audience the common characteristics of populists all over the world and the psychological reasons of their appealing effect for the masses. Populism, which was identified as strategy rather than ideology, lives on creating the image of an enemy to which it opposes the “true” people. Since humans have a predisposition to authoritarianism when they feel threatened, populists have an easy game in times of an ever more rapidly changing world in the face of globalization. They use the fears of the people who feel left behind and play them off against the winners of globalization – the “elites”. In Western countries, especially people who are low-educated, economically less mobile and have traditional values, might feel scared and left out. First, because traditional national and religious viewpoints are more and more criticized so that it became harder for them to assert themselves in society. Second, because they fear to lose their jobs in the competition with large influxes of migrants who might bring about skillsets that are better adapted to the economic changes. When this large group no longer feels that politicians are responsive to their worries, their anger can turn to populism. As Emma Galli, a Professor and Scientific Director of Fondazione Luigi Einaudi, explained, this is even more problematic since citizens in Western countries tend to largely overestimate the number of migrants in their country. Consequently, populists can exploit this misperception and the resulting fear of migration even more for their vote catching. Against the background of these developments, Adam Bartha, the director of Epicenter Network, indicated a shift in the factors that shape political identification. While traditionally, the primary factor was an economic one, dividing the society in left- and right-wing ideas based on the question of how much the government should redistribute in terms of economic wealth, nowadays the primary factor for political identification seems to be societal openness. While social democrats and Christian conservatives lack a clear attitude towards this issue, populists take a clear stance by expressing their wish for a more closed society while liberals position themselves on their opposite by fighting for an open society. Thus, in the future of politics, liberals will become increasingly relevant and have to take the crucial role as opponents of populists.

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In the second session under the moderation of the Turkish journalist Nevşin Mengün from Deutsche Welle Turkey, panelists from Hungary, Poland, Croatia and Turkey reported about the impact of populism in their home countries and particularly raised awareness about the importance of tackling populism from the beginning. The teacher and politician Zoltan Kesz described how in Hungary the heritage of the Soviet regime influenced people's susceptibility for populism. On the one hand, Hungary suffered less from "communist terror" than for example Romania or Czech Republic so that the freedom experienced after the Cold War was valued less. On the other hand, people expected big, great developments after the regime change and became disappointed and nostalgic when those huge changes failed to appear. In such an atmosphere, an apparently "strong leader" like Orbán could perfectly adapt to the people's disappointment and seduce parts of the population with populist promises. Marek Tatala, economist and vice president of the Civil Development Forum explained the role of populism in Poland and used the changes of the judiciary system after 2015 as example to show how populists' policies undermine the rule of law in the country. He drew the conclusion that in comparison with Hungary, the bad transition in Poland is less advanced. Therefore, it would be even more important to adapt the medical principle of treating diseases in the early stage and to tackle populism in Poland before it can attack democratic institutions and rule of law as much as it already did in other countries. Diana Topcic-Rosenberg, vice president of the Civil Liberal Alliance in Croatia, took up this point and emphasized that to tackle populism, more visions are needed. European politicians should acknowledge the existence of the real problems that populists bring up and offer alternative solutions. Citizens should be presented clear responses and visions, especially in regard to where the EU will take them in the future. The Turkish academic Burak Bilgehan Özpek pointed out how populist parties often already apply this strategy with the help of charismatic leaders who clearly present to the public the future direction of their party. Their "one-man-show-populism" does not only lead to rather weak party structures but also to irrational economic policies based on populist promises. The economic threat populist

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	<p>policies pose are another reason why liberals should do everything to curb them and offer clear alternative visions and ideas.</p> <p>In the end, the panelists of the Dahrendorf Roundtable discussion called on everyone to become active. They stressed that the answer to populism is not liberalism alone; neither is it socialism, communism or conservatism. The answer to populism starts with individual responsibility and coalition building. By taking responsibility and cooperating with politicians, NGOs, academics and independent media, liberals can counter populism with strong arguments. Since populism tends to spread in rural areas and usually does so very “loudly”, it is even more important that liberals do the same and focus on encouraging and strengthening individuals and movements fighting for democratic and liberal values on the local levels. This approach is also crucial for not leaving the “losers” of globalization to the hands of populists. Instead, the fears of the people that feel left behind and scared by the developments that globalization brought about should be taken seriously and be offered alternative agendas and solutions. How this can be practically implemented was a main topic of the Q&A session and discussion following the panels. Do we need a credible utopia to oppose populist promises? This question built an inspiring entry into the discussion. However, eventually the answer is: We do not need a credible utopia, since such an oxymoron would not be helpful for the liberal cause. What we need instead is a credible story. This story has to focus on the real problems voters face, especially the economic ones. It has to respect and reflect the values of the masses, which means that it has to include some traditional values, too. And last but not least, the story tellers, namely politicians, academics and activists have to defend the different parts of the story, particularly the democratic institutions, with all their heart.</p>
<p>Present the output and outcomes of the project. Please connect this to the expected outputs and outcomes that were submitted in your project proposal</p>	<p>In this event, one of the expected outputs was to understand why populism is rising now and how it can have such an appealing effect to the masses. This was analysed by the panelists by linking the rise of populism to impacts that globalization and its related developments had especially on lower-skilled, less-educated and less-mobile people. Another aim was to identify how liberal strategies to fight back populism could be designed. By presenting examples of populism in different countries, similarities in the propaganda strategy of populists in different locations could be identified</p>

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	<p>and thus, possible reactions and answers to populist messages were suggested in terms of political agenda content and also communication strategy (as described in the long report). The event was also used by civil society activists to engage into discussion and to network which will strengthen the liberal community in their fight against populism.</p> <p>The panelists of the Roundtable, which were also part of a following seminar, will, together with the other seminar participants, also produce a small statement each to summarize which “food for thought” they gained from the event. After collecting all statements, they will be processed together with the notes of the event in a report or brochure on the roots and strategies of and possible answers to populism.</p>
Were further goals reached?	<p>By listening of examples of populisms from different countries, the audience became aware of the fact that they are not alone with the challenge to fight populism. Due to the “loud” and partly harsh campaigning of populism, liberal defenders of democracy might feel alone and powerless. The well-attended Ralf Dahrendorf Roundtable and the following discussion did not only show the participants that they don’t fight alone against populism but also that with the support of the liberal community, creative strategies to push back populism can be found.</p>
Additional comments/difficulties experienced/ lessons learned	