

# Transnational Networks of Extreme Right Parties in East Central Europe: Stimuli and Limits of Cross-Border Cooperation

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## Abstract

The paper analyzes the transnational cooperation of the extreme right parties in East Central Europe. Its aim is to answer the question how the specifics of the Central European region contribute to cooperation of extreme-right parties, and how they limit it. Although "protest-transformational" parties from Central and Eastern Europe consider themselves part of European extreme right, there hasn't yet emerged any shared "East Central European" identity of "protest-transformational" extreme-right parties. Neo-fascist parties, on the other hand, feel their transnational identity more strongly ("Western Slavonic catholic clerical fascism"). The cooperation is however limited in several cases by traditional nationalistic disputes (mostly in irredentist context).

Extreme right has become a relatively established part of the party spectrum in countries of East Central Europe, meaning the Czech Republic, Slovakia, Poland and Hungary. Its overall importance in individual countries has changed considerably over time, just as the position and character of its individual representatives. In the process of transition of regimes, it is often difficult to clearly define the borders of the extreme-right party family (Norris 2005: 74-76), or its subtypes.

A specific indicator for understanding the identity of the extreme right in the Central European region can be found in the transnational relations and networks established among the individual entities. This topic can be also used for demonstrating the specifics of transnational cooperation of the extreme right in general, including the stimuli and limits of this cooperation. The aim of this article is to answer the question how the specifics of the Central European region contribute to cooperation of extreme-right parties, and how they limit it.

## **1. Definition and Typology of the Extreme Right Parties in the Central European Region**

Defining the extreme right is generally accompanied in the world by a number of questionable elements, including a clear definition and differentiation from such terms of right-wing extremism or right-wing radicalism. In this article I see the extreme right as a specific ideological space that involves extreme professing of certain values that are generally considered right-wing. The interests of the extreme right can be represented by political parties and their satellite organizations, as well as non-party interest groups (including collectives around independent media), that can work openly or covertly (including militant and terrorist structures). Specific representatives can include subcultures (or countercultures) and social movements. The individual forms of activities can overlap and complement one another.

The current extreme right family groups parties that have very different genetic and ideological origins, and that can look for common identity only in subareas of what is identified from the outside as the extreme-right area. Still, there are certain common characteristics that allow defining the extreme right as at least

to a certain extent consistent whole. It is mainly the increased political emphasis (compared to the policies of other parties) on:

- national interests;
- protection of "traditional" population from negative impacts of immigration (criminality, terrorism, cultural disintegration) from other cultural areas;
- opposition to the abuse of the benefits of their "own" social state;
- strict criminal and penal policy;
- opposition to the current supranational integration that is viewed by the extreme right as a left-wing or "pseudohumanistic" project.

Similar elements can also be identified in the policies of other parties (especially conservative), but the extreme right brings them strongly to the fore of their promotional activities.

We can generally find a number of party subtypes within the extreme right, even if we focus only on the Central European area. This diversity has been caused mainly by historical development. The current extreme right has its roots already at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century and in the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century in the pronounced nationalist and authoritative groups that are the predecessors of current nationalist traditionalists<sup>1</sup>, who moreover also incorporate an element of Christian integristism (Camus 2005: 191-195).

Some parties (such as National Unity – NSj- in the Czech Republic) admit their organizational or ideological affiliation with historical entities, others - such as League of Polish Families (LPR) - are only ideologically inspired by the ideological ethos of traditionalist authoritarianism. With the exception of League of Polish Families the positions of these parties in East Central Europe is marginal.

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<sup>1</sup> These traditionalists dogmatically follow in the footsteps of 19<sup>th</sup> century conservatism and as opposed to modern conservatives they refuse to accept some of the current democratic and liberal values. They consistently defend traditional values, especially in the sphere of morals, keep subjectively interpreted national traditions (including traditional allied relations and hostility towards other nations) and emphasize traditional bearers of state and national authority (the army, aristocracy, traditional "high society", large-scale industry and agrarian sphere, sometimes the church, etc.). They negatively view the existence of plural value, political or media spectrum. Their specific subtypes in certain countries (especially with republican systems) are monarchists struggling for the return of traditional monarchy. Naturally, not every monarchist is a priori a member of the extreme right (Mareš 2005: 132).

Other parties to a considerable extent follow in the steps of traditional fascism<sup>2</sup> and Nazism<sup>3</sup>, and can be labelled neofascist or neo-Nazi<sup>4</sup>. Some of them directly follow in the steps of pre-war parties organizationally or by their names, while others are in a way inspired by the ideological legacy of fascism or Nazism. With regard to the legal system in democratic countries, they are forced for tactical reasons to modify their basic publicly proclaimed programme objectives. Some neofascist and neo-Nazi structures that call themselves parties can operate underground. However, determining the “party character” according to traditional criteria used for defining political parties can be questionable here.

With a few exceptions (National Democratic Party – NDP - in Germany, Social Alternative – AS- in Italy), these parties are marginal in current Europe with regard to their relevance in party systems (on European, national, regional, as well as communal level). They can however play a certain role in the integration of militant and terrorist structures to which they provide an umbrella through their organization.

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<sup>2</sup> Fascism (or neofascism) is based on political theses and practical policy of Benito Mussolini. Fascism works with the vision of new people united in a total state (i.e. a state that penetrates the whole society). It propagates the power cult of a leader who is the embodiment of the spirit, will and virtue of the nation. It protects national integrity by dealing with social issues. Wild capitalism must be replaced by classical tools of national solidarity – controlled economy and structured corporative organization, which is topped by a strong state centre. Fascism is revolutionary and activist. Despite this revolutionary character, a certain subtype of fascism is clerical fascism, which can be defined as the penetration of fascist movement or state machinery with structures of the church (clergy) (Mareš 2005: 132).

<sup>3</sup> Nazism (or neo-Nazism) is based on the ideological basis and practical policy of German national socialist movement from the nineteen twenties to the forties, and on the justification and real examples of cooperation and collaboration with German Nazis in various countries. The original National Socialism was to a considerable degree based on anti-attitudes (anti-parliamentarism, anti-liberalism, anti-bolshevism, anti-capitalism, anti-egalitarianism, anti-Semitism). This as reflected in the bases of this ideology – racist doctrine that put own people (Germans, Aryans) on the highest level of racial hierarchy, social Darwinism used to justify race struggle (which was viewed as a historical fact and principle of selection), promotion of “people’s community” (“Volksgemeinschaft”) based on race unity, “leadership principle” as the dominant model of political organization, and struggle to “claim the Lebensraum” (Backes, Jesse 1993: 470). Similarly as in fascism, it was important to provide social security for its own community (Mareš 2005: 132-133).

<sup>4</sup> Neo-Nazism tries to rehabilitate the Nazi movement and it considers the historical Nazi regime in the Third Reich and its satellites and subordinate territories by 1945 a positive inspiration for forming a new social system. Within it, we can trace variously strong relations to historical Nazism and its original race doctrine. Some of its elements are more related to the superiority of the German nation and the Nordic race (which is sometimes accepted even by neo-Nazis from other nations), others put more emphasis on their own national identity (sometimes in connection with the traditions of collaboration and the preceding development of the extreme right in the given country), or they work with the superiority of the white race or the Aryans generally. Some neo-Nazis (particularly in the USA) are interconnected with Christian religious dimension (which is opposed to the originally pagan anti-Christian tone of Nazi ideologists such as Alfred Rosenberg). In other context (mainly in the context of national socialist black metal) neo-Nazism was interconnected with Satanism (Mareš 2005b: 133).

In Central and Eastern Europe, parties with ideological relations to traditional fascism of the 1920s - 1940s occurred basically in all systems (despite organisational discontinuity during the communist era). But they didn't get a significant influence in electoral competition anywhere. Even less significance was achieved by parties providing an umbrella for neo-Nazi post-skinhead structures (such as the Right Alternative – PA - in the Czech Republic).

The last type of extreme-right parties is represented by protest populist parties characterized by pro-order ("law and order") and anti-immigration approaches. These parties did not have any or had only partial connection to historical forms of the extreme right (some personal relations, occasional controversial statements, etc., but no organizational or programme continuity). This type of parties is also characterized by heterogeneity<sup>5</sup>. Some authors include in this type even the middle-class protest parties in Western Europe of the 1950s.

The main group of these parties was however formed in the 1970s and 1980s in Western Europe as a result of opposition to the then established powers. These are particularly the French National Front (FN), German Republicans (REP) or protest parties from Scandinavia. Some parties turned from political conservatism or liberalism to the extreme right, a. o. the Swiss People's Party (SVP) or the Freedom Party of Austria (FPÖ). On the other hand, some originally extreme-right parties from this part of political spectrum in Western Europe have moreover shifted towards conservatism (National Alliance – NA - in Italy).

Another wave of Western-European right-wing populist parties occurred at the turn of the millennium, characterised by defence of "modern" western values against immigrants from the Muslim countries (the List Pim Fortuyn – LPF - from the Netherlands or the Law and Order Offensive Party – PRO - from Germany).

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<sup>5</sup> This relatively vaguely defined movement or type uses the public fear of criminality and disruption of traditional national societies by emphasizing the belief in law and order (and demands of strict repression of general and organized crime and political-economic corruption) and by openly advocating xenophobia (mainly against foreigners of different races and cultures). It plans to provide social security on a chauvinistic basis. In the society, which it claims to represent, it however promotes considerable rights and freedoms of the individual in relation to the state. It emphasises civic democracy (in the sense of protecting the "small person" from the "corrupted" state machinery). It also opposes the post-modern left-wing liberal complex of values, which it has recently been collectively labelling political correctness (this term is used pejoratively). It usually propagates neo-liberal approaches in economic sphere, at least in the sense of low taxes and non-involvement of the state in economy. On the other hand it usually negatively views economic globalisation and propagates protectionism for national economy (Betz 1998: 1-9, Mareš 2005: 133).

A specific subtype in certain typologies is represented by parties that became representatives of allegedly marginalized ethnic groups or regions (and there is therefore partial blending with the ethnic-regional party family), including for instance the Belgian Flemish Bloc (VB) or Italian Northern League (LN).

In post-communist Europe, including East Central Europe, a specific type of “protest-transformational” populist parties was formed. These parties were oriented against new post- transformational elites and used the dissatisfaction of the public with the impacts of political and economic transformation and strongly nationalist agitation (Beichelt, Minkenberg 2002: 262). A specific subtype was formed by separatist parties that adopted the roles of the extreme right in new party systems in the context of disintegrating former communist federations, e.g. the Slovak National Party that was moreover connected through its name with a historic party from the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Some Central European “protest-transformational” parties sometimes at least temporarily sheltered even groups with more pronounced neofascist or traditionalist-nationalist orientation.

In some countries the influence of these parties gradually declined, for instance the Association for the Republic – Republican Party of Czechoslovakia (SPR-RSČ) or the Hungarian Justice and Life Party (MIÉP). At the same time, however, the “westernization” of societies in the new EU member countries contributed to the potential for the origination of parties similar to the new populist right from Western Europe<sup>6</sup>. Some populist parties with a nationalistic accent can however be only hardly clearly classified, especially the Polish Solidarity (Thieme 2006: 352).

The post-communist area is also characterised by the existence of pronounced nationalism (sometimes including xenophobic and racist aspects) in a part of the extreme left that can then at least in certain cases cooperate even with the extreme right, or it can be hardly distinguished from it. We sometimes even talk about left-wing nationalism. A certain role in Slavonic countries is also played by the pan-nationalism of both the extreme left and the extreme right (Mareš 2006: 361). Also

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<sup>6</sup> These parties have however not asserted themselves significantly. In the Czech Republic it is mainly the National Party (NS), which combines traditional nationalism with the style of Western European populist ultra right, and the Independent Democrats (chairman V. Železný), who to a certain extent resemble the Dutch List Pym Fortuyn.

there exists also the strong nationalistic agenda of the liberal-conservative right in the East Central Europe.

In the context of all the above-mentioned types, we can also apply the criteria of right-wing extremism and right-wing radicalism. Right-wing extremism is seen as an intolerant and fanatical ideological position oriented against the values of a democratic constitutional state. Right-wing radicalism means positions that remain within the democratic constitutional state but they are characterised by an increased and destabilising potential. In East Central Europe in the post-communist period, right-wing extremist elements occurred in most types of extreme-right parties.

## **2. General Attributes of Cooperation between Extreme-Right Parties**

In current world, especially in the European area, increasing significance is attributed to the transnational cooperation of political parties from the same party families as a result of the interconnection of international and internal politics. It plays an important role even in the extreme-right family of political parties, while being influenced by the specifics of this family.

The general reason for international cooperation between political parties is the ideological and sometimes even material support with the aim of strengthening the influence of ideological movement within a wider geographic scope, thus at the same time within the state. A strong party partner from abroad (usually from a bigger country) can have a promotional effect for less successful parties of the same ideological orientation in local politics.

Transnational cooperation between political parties is also supported by the existence of common bodies for activities of political parties in various countries, especially transnational bodies of parliamentary type. Common transnational party factions are formed within these bodies, this type of cooperation being best demonstrable in the European Parliament. The European Union in fact even supports the institutionalisation of the so-called Europarties (political parties on European level), financed from the budget of the European Communities.

From the point of view of the number of parties participating in transnational cooperation, we can distinguish bilateral and multilateral cooperation. From the point

of view of geographic extent, we can talk about cooperation on subregional (such as Central European), regional, and world level; or from the point of view of the involvement of national parties in cooperation (which has a specific significance in the extreme right) we can talk about cooperation on pan-national or pan-racial basis. From the point of view of intensity of cooperation, we can generally define the following categories:

1. free non-institutionalised cooperation (often even ad hoc),
2. more stable networks and consistent organisations with stable bodies formed from entities on national level, and
3. transnational organisations forming national branches.

Decision-making in transnational party organisations can be based on the dominance of member parties, or it can be based on the bodies on transnational level, with possible combinations of both models.

Cooperation between the extreme right from various countries differs from cooperation between most other ideological movements or party families mainly thanks to strong emphasis on nationalism and national interests of individual participants in the cooperation. The extreme right mostly views itself as the keeper of national traditions. History has witnessed various conflicts between various nations and some interpretations of national histories pursued within the extreme right of a certain country or nation get into conflict with the interpretations of other nations or countries, especially if they are accompanied by territorial disputes, existence of irredentism in national minorities, etc. Some politicians sometimes even talk about “traditional hostility” between certain nations (these are mostly nations sharing borders and having asymmetric influences).

These facts also influence the willingness towards transnational cooperation in the extreme right that is often influenced and sometimes even discredited by historical nationalist disputes. Still, cooperation with various foreign partners is important even for extreme-right parties. Historical determinants can often facilitate cooperation between parties from many countries (especially those that don't share borders or that are traditional allies), or they don't need to play a bigger role at present.

Even in the case of clashing representatives of national traditions there are many common interests and values professed by extreme-right parties regardless of possible mutual clashes. These are mainly the opposition to the establishment (mutual support can be specifically shown in case of state sanctions against the extreme right), opposition to immigration, and opposition to globalisation (both in economic dimension and in the dimension of spreading post-materialistic values).

A specific role in the European area is also played by the relation towards Europeanism and towards the European Union. Many extreme-right parties acknowledge certain "European identity", which leads them to forming European structures (they can even continue in various historical conceptions). The relation towards the current European Union is however usually negative, with the exception of some current right-wing populist parties with a positive relation to at least some attributes of the EU (e.g. National Alliance in Italy).

The EU is however mostly regarded by the extreme right as an area where the activities of left-wing and "pseudohumanistic" forces lead to uncontrolled immigration, spreading of "destructive" postmodern values etc. The criticism of the EU is also interconnected with sharp criticism of democratic political representation on both state and European level (due to its "corruptness" and distance from the problems of common people). The EU is seen as a project of globalisation they are opposed to. From the point of view of some (mostly neo-Nazi) positions, united Europe is regarded as a "Jewish project", while in those countries where the extreme-right nationalism is connected with anti-German attitude, it is on the contrary viewed as continuation of Hitler's "New Europe".

All the above-mentioned factors can also be used in studying the transnational cooperation in East Central Europe. We can discover the specifics of the given region based on an analysis of objectives and interests of individual extreme-right parties, or types of certain parties, and their influence on transnational contacts.

### **3. Foreign Policy Relations of Right-Wing Extremist “Protest-Transformational” Parties in Central and Eastern Europe**

As we have already mentioned, all countries in East Central Europe (with a certain exception of Poland) witnessed the formation of a type of extreme-right parties that can be called protest-transformational. With regard to their programmes or public appearances of their representatives they belonged to the sphere of political extremism. They usually weren't significantly historically embedded in the sense of organizational continuity, although they strongly professed various national traditions and strictly promoted nationalistic interests.

Mutual cooperation between these parties in the Central European area was rather exceptional. The reason for this was mainly the fact that mutual cooperation means hardly any benefit to these parties. Within internal politics of the countries of Central and Eastern Europe, the general public is not very familiar with the conditions in neighbouring post-communist countries, which is why there is a relatively small chance to use contacts with local parties of the same ideological orientation in propaganda. Much more emphasis was first put on contacts with compatriot emigrant communities in Western Europe and overseas (where ultra-right factions existed), and later on contacts with worldwide known leaders of the ultra right from large countries outside Central and Eastern Europe.

A significant problem in many cases was represented by clashing nationalistic interests that are determined historically. Until the break-up of Czechoslovakia, SPR-RSČ operated on the whole area of the country and was against its break-up. It therefore got into conflict with the interests of the Slovak National Party. Only after several years after the disintegration of Czechoslovakia did the parties start at least informing about each other favourably in their periodicals (Mareš 2001c: 8).

There are fundamental differences between the Slovak National Party and MIÉP in their views of history, on the positions of their own minorities in the other country, as well as in the views on the issue of borders. There is therefore basically no bilateral cooperation between them. Neither was there any considerable interest in cooperating with MIÉP from the Czech SPR-RSČ. It looks for partners in the

German-speaking area, which can annoy the anti-German oriented Czech republicans<sup>7</sup>.

The "historical burden" in relations between the Polish ultra right and the ultra right in the rest of East Central Europe is relatively trouble-free. The question of territorial disputes between Poland and the Czech Republic (Těšín/Cieszyn area), or Slovakia, was not turned into any significant issue by the ultra right. The "new" extreme right was however unsettled for a long time in Poland and its representation kept changing. That is why no stable contacts were made with it from dominant ultra right parties in the Czech Republic, Slovakia and Hungary<sup>8</sup>. Only the success of the Polish right and extreme right in 2005 and the formation of government were a strong impulse for the interest in the events in Poland<sup>9</sup>.

While bilateral relations between ultra-right "protest-transformational" parties in the Central European area played rather a minor role, much bigger role was played by the relations of individual parties with common Europe-wide and worldwide projects of the ultra right, initiated by leaders of significant parties who claimed the leading role in the ultra-right spectrum. It was possible to use the contacts with them in winning new voters or media attention (mainly during their visits) at home.

A partial role was played by relations to the Liberal Democratic Party of Russia (LPDR) led by Vladimir Zhirinovskiy, but only in the Czech Republic and to a smaller extent in Slovakia and Poland. There had been contacts between Sládek's republicans and Zhirinovskiy already since the mid-nineties. Sládek even took part in the World Congress of Patriotic Parties in Moscow organized by the Russian leader in 2003.

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<sup>7</sup> It is interesting that in 1991, the chairman of SPR-RSČ Miroslav Sládek met with the then chairman of German ultra-right Republicans Franz Schönhuber, but this contact only led to more disagreement between these two politicians. Schönhuber refused to financially support Sládek and has called him since then the obstacle to cooperation of European extreme right. Sládek on the other hand started using in his policy anti-German agitation more intensively.

<sup>8</sup> In 1994 however the SPR-RSČ delegation attended the congress of the National Self-Defence Front in Warsaw

<sup>9</sup> It is interesting that among the candidates in the 2006 election in the Czech Republic was the ultra-right party Law and Justice whose name refers to the successful Polish conservative party. The main partner for the Polish PiS in the Czech Republic is the conservative-liberal Civic Democratic Party, not the Czech ultra-right.

Much more significant for foreign policy relations between parties from East Central Europe were the activities of Jean Marie Le Pen and his National Front (FN). As a result of failed cooperation between the extreme right in the European Parliament, Le Pen decided in the mid nineties to initiate the formation of a European ultra-right organization, and he also focused on the countries that were then not members of the EU. He invited the representatives of several extreme-right parties from Western and Eastern Europe to the FN congress held in Strasburg on 30<sup>th</sup> March 1997. The congress saw the foundation of Euronat (i.e. association of European nationalists).

The declared mission of Euronat was to associate all national and patriotic political parties and movements in Europe. According to its programme, Euronat, whose credo is a Europe of national states, was supposed to form an alternative to the current globalisation of the old continent. Euronat refused the European Union and NATO, as well as all attempts to transform Europe into a formless uniform whole with a single government and parliament. Its motto was "Europe is ours, let's take it back!" (Mareš 2001b: 129-130). The organizational structure was free and basically only based on coordination of activities from FN. The organization was joined by some other entities and there were plans for forming its regional sections<sup>10</sup> as well as for worldwide expansion (Mondo-nat), which were however not realized. Nevertheless, fourteen youth organizations of parties participating in EURONAT formed the EURONAT of the youth in 1999.

Euronat didn't attract a large membership in Western Europe<sup>11</sup>. Le Pen was more successful in 1997 when he addressed nationalistic and right-wing extremist parties from Central and Eastern Europe. The former Securitate officer, Corneliu

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<sup>10</sup> Nordic ultra-right parties – Swedish SD, Finnish IKL, Norwegian FP, and Danish National Party (NP) anticipated in 1997 the formation of a regional organization Nord-Nat.

<sup>11</sup> More significant "Western Europeans" were represented mainly by representatives of the Belgian Flemish Bloc (and it is noticeable that some circles of the party made openly heard the territorial claims against France, demanding annexation of French Flanders to the "German-Flemish" super-state). The FN congress in Strasburg was also attended by representatives of Spanish United National Alliance, Finnish Patriotic National Alliance (IKL), Greek parties EPEN and Hellenic Front (EM). In 1998, with the intention of winning a "new ally", FN financially supported the Swedish party Swedish Democrats (SD) in their electoral struggle. Participation in Euronat was refused by German Republicans (the Strasburg congress of FN was attended only individually by some former members of REP and DLVH) and Italian National Alliance. The only participant from Italy was MSI – FT. Some other Western European parties that are labelled as right-wing extremist (such as FPÖ) didn't cooperate with Le Pen, one of the reasons being their attempt to become acceptable coalitional partners for conservative and other right-wing parties in their countries.

Vadim Tudor, represented the Greater Romania Party (PRM), Czech republicans were represented by the then vice-chairman of SPR-RSČ Jan Vik, the Slovak National Party (SNS) sent Ján Slota to the congress, also attended by Istvan Csurka from the Hungarian Justice and Life Party (MIEP). The delegation from the Serbian Radical Party (SRS) of Vojislav Sesejl didn't get an entry visa, while the Croatian Party of Rights (HSP) led by its chairman Dobroslav Paraga presented itself in the congress.

To promote his project, Le Pen had made several visits to Eastern Europe by the end of the nineties – to MIEP, the Greater Romania Party, Slovak National Party, SPR-RSČ, and the Serbian Radical Party, and even to the Turkish Islamic Welfare Party of Necmettin Erbakan. Le Pen's ideas were started to be favourably accepted even by Deutsche Volkunion (DVU), influenced in this respect for instance by the former chairman of German republicans Schönhuber, who regularly promotes the idea of uniting the European ultra right in a magazine called Nation Europa. It is true, however, that Euronat had only a very free structure and didn't solve the disagreements between member parties (e.g. between DVU and SPR-RSČ on the Sudetes question).

Prior to elections to the EP in 1999, Le Pen had tried to use Euronat for promotional activities in order to increase the possibility of forming an extreme right political group in the EP once again. This however didn't happen. The gains of the extreme right were relatively low (especially if we don't count the deputies from the Italian AN that joined the conservatives). FPÖ with five deputies refused to cooperate with Le Pen again.

Le Pen tried even at the beginning of the new millennium to continue the activities of Euronat, even though a little less intensely than at the end of the nineties. Its member parties supported him in the French presidential election in 2002, where he advanced to the second round. Le Pen then came to support the Republicans of Miroslav Sládek before the European Parliament elections in 2004.

[Table 1 about here]

It is interesting that membership in Euronat was also being considered at the beginning of the new millennium by a part of the Moravian ethno-regional group

close to the Moravian Democratic Party (MDS)<sup>12</sup>(Mareš 2003: 85). This party paradoxically at the same time negotiated to become a member of the European Free Alliance, which is pro-European and it strictly opposed to the extreme right. The united party Moravians became member of EFA in 2006.

The Slovak National Party also had limited contacts with EFA at the beginning of the 90s (Mareš 2001a: 105), but it lost its status of a separatist party after the break-up of the federation and clearly occupied the position of the extreme right. SNS however didn't stay long in Euronat, either. Under the leadership of Anna Malíková, it started orienting itself on the projects of Gianfranco Fini, i.e. the Union for Europe of the Nations (UEN) and the Alliance for Europe of the Nations (AEN). They group some of the conservative and right-wing populist parties. This orientation of SNS has continued till the present, although the official member of AEN is the Movement for Democracy (HZD). The member of AEN from Hungary is the Hungarian Provincial Party (MVPP), and from Poland it is Law and Justice (PiS).

There were also other projects rivalling Euronat. Jörg Haider also tried to initiate a European party organization during his engagement with the FPÖ, maybe even under the influence of the support from a large part of extreme-right parties during the anti-Austrian activities of the EU in 2000 after the FPÖ had entered the government (Scharsach, Kuch 2000: 217-232). At the beginning of the new millennium, he was trying to enter into stable cooperation with the Flemish Bloc, the Northern League, and some other parties, probably even MIÉP, and perhaps even to initiate an extreme-right secession group from the Free Democratic Party of Germany (FDP) that would be more successful than the Union of Free Citizens (BFB) from the nineties. Haider's unifying activities however failed, and as far as East Central Europe is concerned, they would probably have encountered opposition from strong ultra-right parties from Slavonic countries.

Some newer nationalist-populist parties from Central and Eastern Europe are also interested in Eurosceptic projects such as EUdemocrats. Its members are Self-Defence from Poland, a small entity called Direct Democracy – Movement of the Home (PD-HD) from Slovakia, and deputies from the Centre Party from Hungary. The Czech National Party aspires to become a member of a network called The Alliance of

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<sup>12</sup> The Moravian National Party (MNS) declared in 1995 its support to the Flemish Bloc.

the EU-Critical Movements (TEAM)<sup>13</sup>. Independent Democrats (with chairman V. Železný) are strongly involved in the group Independence/Democracy in the European Parliament, together with the League of Polish Families, and it is currently possible that a wider European right-wing Eurosceptic formation will form on the basis of this group.

We can generally say that although the “protest-transformational” parties from East Central Europe had met in some all-European projects (especially Euronat), they never formed anything like a consistent Central European bloc within those projects. They haven’t formed their own organizations within East Central Europe and their mutual bilateral relations were relatively limited. These parties lacked the need of mutual cooperation. Nationalism and protest populism didn’t form strong bonds, although all of them were able to use some common topics in their internal policies (the Romany question, immigration, partly anti-Semitism). They didn’t even have any potential quasi-parliamentary forum where they could learn about one another and systematically cooperate within the regionally limited scope. These parties didn’t have any collective East Central European identity and therefore didn’t promote it.

#### **4. Neo(clerical)fascist Projects**

A stronger Central European bond was formed between entities that can be labelled neofascist, or – with regard to historical specifics of fascism in Poland, Slovakia and in the Czech lands (mainly Moravia) - neo-clerical fascist<sup>14</sup>. Although some of them had not operated in the form of political parties at first, they gradually got the party dimension in some way, but rather in the form of legal registration than by succeeding in elections.

As early as in the thirties, cooperation began appearing between authoritative, catholic-corporatist and fascist groups from Czechoslovakia and Poland. Czech and

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<sup>13</sup> National Party tries to achieve a policy combining traditional nationalism of the 19<sup>th</sup> century with the policy of Western European populist right. It has contacts with some extreme-right parties in Western Europe, such as the British National Party (BNP).

<sup>14</sup>Clerical fascism means a symbiosis between the clergy (or the church, especially catholic) and a fascist political party in dictatorship. A typical example of a clerical fascist state is the Slovak state during 1939-1945.

Moravian fascists, grouped mainly in the National Fascist Community, supported in joined opposition against the first republic system the Slovak autonomist demands represented mainly by Hlinka's Slovak People's Party (HSLs). They also refused the anti-clerical character of the Czechoslovak state and a part of them was strongly catholically oriented. They were also impressed by the authoritative system in Poland, which led them to the cooperation with the followers of Pilsudski. A certain role was also played by elements of Slavonic solidarity, although pro-Russian panslavism was only strong among Czech fascists.

After the fall of communism, some groups, which found their identity in historical traditions of the ultra right, continued in the pre-war period. They formed specific networks within the area of East Central Europe. Since the mid-nineties, there have been regular meetings of unregistered Movement for National Unity (HNS)<sup>15</sup> from the Czech Republic, National Rebirth of Poland (NOP)<sup>16</sup> and Slovak Community (SOP)<sup>17</sup>.

The reasons for cooperation can be traced in the programme of HNS, which said: "Our movement must build, as mentioned above, upon catholic morals and religion, because it is the only traditional and natural religion for us, in which our national tradition has been determined and through which our past was formulated. If we want to revive national pride, the feeling of national community, and the will to survive, we must build this effort on national tradition, on the greatest people of our

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<sup>15</sup> The Movement for National Unity (HNS) was formed in 1995 as the National Movement of Alliances, changing its name a year later to HNS. It was an unregistered organization, although there were efforts to transform it into a civic association. It professed the traditions of Czech and Moravian clerical fascism from the 20-30s, and Franko's and Salazar's concepts. It was interconnected with structures of integral Catholicism. In Moravia, where its main basis was, it also promoted the ideas of Moravian ethno-regionalism (for instance on the basis of the difference between catholic Moravia and the "heretical" and "atheistic" Bohemia). It also realized paramilitary practice and violent actions. Its membership consisted of about 50 people.

<sup>16</sup> National Rebirth of Poland (NOP) was formed as an unregistered organization as early as in 1981, transforming into a political party in 1992. It is ultra-conservatively catholic, nationalistic, anti-Semitic, and it advocates corporativism. Its chairman, graduate theologian Adam Gmurczyk, said that he refuses democracy "as a system that brings along moral relativism, while giving the nation's destiny into the hands of a corrupted political class". NOP has about 1000 members, mobilising even people from the skinhead subculture for political activity (in which it is assisted by the allied music group Legion). It has never achieved any significant electoral success.

<sup>17</sup> Slovak Community was founded as an association in 1996. It promoted clerical fascist ideas, especially among nationalistic skinheads. In 2005 it formed the basis for the foundation of a political party called Slovak Community – National Party, which was however dissolved in 2006 by the Slovak Supreme Court because of its conflict with the constitution. The association Slovak Community however still exists and its members were candidates in the 2006 elections on the ballots of Slovak People's Party (SLS).

nation and on their legacy. And the overwhelming majority of these people were Catholics. Only if we promote such national tradition can we again come closer to Slovaks, since a wedge of religious misunderstanding and the following suspiciousness and schism had been driven between us and them by masons already during the First Republic. We can also come closer to Poles who are one of the most catholic nations in Europe. This could be the basic step towards creating a common state, a huge and solid Slavonic empire that would be the home of seventy to eighty million people and that would equal France, Germany and Russia. Such a large society bound within solid authoritative organizations-corporations would guarantee state sovereignty and huge economic and political and military power” (Hnutí národního sjednocení 1996: 27).

In the nineties, all three organizations also joined the international network of International Third Position, organized from Great Britain on the ideological basis of traditional pre-war fascism. ITP was founded in the eighties by a former activist of the British National Front (NF), Derek Holland, in cooperation with Italian neofascist Robert Fiore<sup>18</sup>. In 2003, cooperation within ITP was expanded through the formation of the European National Front (ENF)(Zondlak 2006), which is a European freely organized structure grouping neofascist and traditionalist authoritative entities.

[Table 2 about here]

The members or affiliated groups of ENF are usually smaller parties and groups that do not achieve any significant electoral success, but sometimes they serve as an umbrella for the ultra-right militant scene. The main founder of ENF was Italian New Force (FN). A significant role was also played by the National Rebirth of Poland (NOP) that initiated the Central-East European Declaration of Cooperation within ENF in 2004.

Its members were not only entities from Slavonic countries of Central and Eastern Europe, i.e. NOP, HNS (in 2005 the membership was passed to National

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<sup>18</sup> An important role in the foundation of ITP was played by a group of people around the magazine Final Conflict. The International Third Position associated various small neofascist entities from Europe and America. (Mareš 2003: 364-365).

Unity into which a large part of HNS was incorporated) and Slovak Community (replaced in ENF by the end of 2004 by Slovak National Unity – SNJ), but also Romanian New Right (NP). Especially the Polish NOP tries to establish a wider Central European integration of ultra-right groups and to solve traditional historical disputes within this area of the ultra-right, but it is not always successful.

Even though for instance the chairman of NOP, Adam Gmurczyk, in an interview for the “patriotic information newsletter” *Proti prúdu* (Against the Stream) in 1998 asked Slovak nationalists to solve the disputes with Hungarians, the relations of the extreme right from countries against which Hungarian irredentism is aimed are still very strained (Mareš 2001c: 9). In 2005, an anti-Hungarian coalition of ultra-right groups was formed from the New Right (ND) from Romania, *Obraz* from Serbia and Slovak Community (SP).

Complications within ENF were also caused by the important role that was started to be played in 2004 by the National Democratic Party of Germany. This was not accepted by some members of this organization from Slavonic countries and relations within the organization were broken. Some goals of relatively allied organizations within East Central Europe are also conflicting (for instance irredentist demands of a part of the Slovak ultra right against Moravia, which would be refused by Czech and probably also Moravian ultra-right groups, or the above-mentioned Czech-Polish dispute over Těšín/Cieszyn area).

However, since these goals are not the most important for the organization’s identity and propaganda, they don’t hinder mutual cooperation. It generally seems that common neo(clerical)fascist identity together with shared exclusion and marginality within political systems strengthens the tendencies towards transnational cooperation, but only to a certain extent when the organization’s basic identity elements are not affected (for instance Slovak clerical fascist nationalism is mostly inherently anti-Hungarian).

## **5. Neo-Nazi Networks of Cooperation in Central and Eastern Europe**

There are also relatively stable relations between neo-Nazis in East Central Europe, but this issue is difficult to study from the perspective of party policy. In

many cases, neo-Nazism cannot be separated from neofascism, which is illustrated for instance by the general relations of some ENF members with neo-Nazis structures (Grumke 2005: 156).

Neo-Nazi activities are usually not represented by political parties. Even when neo-Nazis occurred for instance in youth organizations of larger ultra-right parties (to a greater degree for instance in Republican Youth that was closed to SPR-RSČ and RMS, or in the SNS Youth), these parties officially distanced themselves from neo-Nazism. It would be possible to a certain extent to work with the conception of illegal covertly operating parties, but in fact they are just very small groups of young neo-Nazis who only differ by their "party names".

The national sections of NSDAP/AO could be an exception, but even these are small (sometimes related to people originally from East Central Europe living overseas) and sometimes they are more of "virtual communities" grouped around chats and Internet sites. In the Czech Republic, the Right Alternative (PA) was trying to provide an umbrella for neo-Nazi militant structures in 2001-2005 (when its activities were officially paused due to financial problems).

Generally there is more willingness in neo-Nazi environment to solve nationalistic disputes. The "modern pan-Aryan" orientation was for instance demonstrated within party policy when the above-mentioned Czech Right Alternative had relations to German ultra-right parties such as German People's Union (DVU) and National Democratic Party of Germany.

In the subcultural scene, various demonstrations or concerts of White Power Music are attended by neo-Nazis of various nations whose nationalistic representatives have disputes. Despite occasional fights, Slovak neo-Nazis cooperate with Hungarian neo-Nazis, Polish with German, etc.

Neo-Nazi cooperation is realized within various transnational organizations and networks, such as Blood & Honour/Combat 18, Hammerskins Nations, Anti-Antifa etc., or on the basis of contacts between individual leaders of neo-Nazi movements. We cannot however talk about a specific Central European or East central European

dimension of neo-Nazism,<sup>19</sup> unless we see this in the acceptance of general German influence in this area and traditional "Mittleuropa-concepts" of German politics.

For the subcultural life of neo-Nazis, transnational cooperation is an important element of lifestyle. It allows them to overcome the ostracism on national level (partly even from ultra-right nationalists) by meeting with similarly oriented people from abroad. The pan-Aryan conception of a "fight for the white race", which is no longer bound to the dominance of the German race, facilitated the involvement of neo-Nazis from East Central Europe in global neo-Nazi movements.

## **6. Conclusion: Stimuli and Limits of Extreme Right Cooperation in East Central Europe**

As follows from the text above, there are several factors that are generally important for transnational cooperation of extreme-right parties in Central and Eastern Europe and that correspond to generally valid stimuli and limits of transnational cooperation. The specifics of the above-mentioned area can only be discovered in partial areas.

The basic stimulus is potential use of the cooperation within internal policy. However, with regard to the "isolationistic-nationalistic" orientation of most ultra-right parties (and probably also their voters<sup>20</sup>) in Central and Eastern Europe, this use is limited, which then represents a limit to cooperation. It is important that potential voters know the foreign partner, or that contacts, visits, etc. are publicized.

What was important in this respect for big ultra-right parties in Central and Eastern Europe was the activity of Jean Marie Le Pen and Euronat, and to a much smaller extent also the activity of Vladimir Zhirinovskiy and LDPR. Le Pen managed within Euronat (at the time when this organization worked) to concentrate significant

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<sup>19</sup> A certain exception could be represented by the part of neo-Nazism connected with the subcultural stream of the so-called "Slavonic Power", which was formed on the basis of pagan metal and national socialist black metal. However, not the entire stream is neo-Nazi, it isn't only connected with East Central Europe (besides the Czech Republic, Slovakia and Poland it also occurs in the Baltics, in the Ukraine, in Belarus or in Russia) and it is of course oriented on members of Slavonic nations (i.e. not on Hungarians, for example). Its followers however cooperate with the worldwide pagan and NSBM scene. Its overall importance is small and it has no party policy dimension.

<sup>20</sup> There hasn't yet been any detailed sociological research of this phenomenon.

parties from Central and Eastern Europe and helped strengthen the identity of the extreme right on European level.

It is important for neofascist and neo-Nazi structures within their internal policies to present themselves to their own followers and potential sympathizers not only as an ostracised part of local political spectrum, but as a part of a wider transnational movement (in case of legal sanctions against organizations and individuals it is possible to use international campaigns from friendly organizations).

Shared transnational identity of certain elements of the extreme right is a stimulus, and if there is no such identity, it is a limit. Although "protest-transformational" parties from Central and Eastern Europe consider themselves part of European extreme right, there hasn't yet emerged any shared "East Central European" identity of "protest-transformational" extreme-right parties (within Euronat or other groups of the extreme right), and neither is there a stable network of cooperation between these parties in the East Central European area or any intense bilateral relations. In this respect, however, East Central Europe represents no exception in the European context of populist extreme right (with partial exception of Scandinavia).

The reason for all-European orientation of the extreme right is overall Europeanization of politics, including the existence of European Parliament and the institute of political parties on European level. We could determine that the limit (even though hardly verifiable) to regional cooperation is non-existence of a common quasi-parliamentary forum in East Central Europe where deputies would group into factions, and non-existence of essential collectively articulated East Central European interests of the "protest-transformational" ultra right, which is hindered by the dominance of nationalism.

Neo-fascist parties, on the other hand, feel their transnational identity more strongly (even thanks to historical traditions of cooperation). The specific basis of Central European, or rather Western Slavonic catholic clerical fascism<sup>21</sup> also gave rise to more stable networks of cooperation that were put into effect in a certain (not

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<sup>21</sup> The interconnection of church structures and fascism is not a purely Central European specific (we can find a certain analogy to Central European models for instance in the Iberian context).

purely Slavonic) section of ENF. This Central European dimension complements the all-European or (in ITP) worldwide neofascist cooperation.

This cooperation is however at the same time limited in several cases (mostly in irredentist context) by traditional nationalistic disputes, which the extreme right succeeds to solve only to a limited extent and in many instances not at all. In Western Europe traditional disputes (a. o. French-German disputes) are weaker within the contemporary extreme right. The strongest disputes in East Central Europe are those between Slavonic nationalists and the German national feeling, and between Hungarian irredentists and the ultra right in countries with Hungarian irredentist minorities (Slovakia in narrowly defined East Central Europe, and Romania and Serbia in the wider context).

We can however generally say that cross-border relations and transnational identity of the extreme right are becoming increasingly significant, even though more on a European rather than East Central European regional basis. Despite its deepening transnational cooperation, the Central European nationalistic extreme right inherently fails to get rid of the conflict between articulation of subjectively interpreted national and wider supranational interests.

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**Table 1.** Euronat member parties

State	English name	Name and abbreviation in original language
Belgium	Flemish Bloc	Vlaams Blok (VB)
Czech Republik	Association for the Republic – Republican Party of Czechoslovakia Republicans of Miroslav Sládek	Sdružení pro Republiku – Republikánská strana Československa (SPR-RSČ) Republikáni Miroslava Sládka (RMS)
Finland	Patriotic National Alliance	Isänmaallinen Kansallis-Liitto (IKL)
France	National Front	Front National (FN)
Croatia	Croatian Party of the Rights	(HSP)
Italy	New Force (FN) Social Movement – Tricolour Flame (MSI- - FT)	Forza Nuova (FN) Movimento Sociale Italiano - Fiamma Tricolore
Hungary	Hungarian Justice and Life Party	Magyar Igazság és Élet Pártja (MIEP)
Germany	German People’s Union	Deutsche Volkunion (DVU)
Portugal	National Alliance	Aliança Nacional (AN)
Romania	Greater Romania Party	Partidul Romania Mare (PRM)
Greece	Hellenic Front	Elliniko Metopo (EM)
Slovakia	Slovak National Party	Slovenská národná strana (SNS)
Serbia	Serbian Radical Party	Srpska radikalna stranka (SRS)
Spain	National Democracy	Democracia Nacional (DN)
Sweden	Swedish Democrats	Sverige Demokraterna (SD)
Ukraine	Social-National Party of Ukraine	Social Nacionalnaja Partija Ukrajiny (SNPU)

**Table 2.** Member parties and affiliated groups of the European National Front

State	English name	Name and abbreviation in original language
Bulgaria	Bulgarian National Union	Български Национален Съюз (BNS).
Czech Republic	National Unity	Národní sjednocení (NSj)
France	Frankish Guard	Franque Guard (FG)
Italy	New Force	Forza Nuova (FN)
Latvia	National Power Unity	Nacionālā spēka savienība (NSS)
Germany	National Democratic Party of Germany	Nationaldemokratische Partei Deutschlands (NPD)
Netherlands	National Alliance	Nationale Alliantie (NA)
Poland	National Rebirth of Poland	Narodowe Odrodzenie Polski (NOP)
Portugal	National Renewal Party	Partido Nacional Renovador (PNR)
Romania	New Right	Noua Dreapta (ND)
Greece	Patriotic Alliance	ΠΑΤΡΙΩΤΙΚΗΣ ΣΥΜΜΑΧΙΑΣ (PS)
Slovakia	Slovak National Unity	Slovenská národná jednota (SNJ)
Serbia	Obraz Fatherland Movement	Otačastveni pokret Obraz
Spain	Falange	La Falange
Great Britain	England First Party	England First Party (EFP)