



The End of the EU as We Know It? Street Protests and European Politics

Country Report on Germany

Fabian Weber

This report is part of the project “A new narrative for Europe: Bringing more union into the European Union”

Date of publication: November 2019
Place of Publication: Berlin
Editors: Dr. Katrin Böttger, IEP
Henrik von Homeyer, IEP
Layout: Fabian Weber, IEP

The author sincerely thanks David Dreja, Farina Kiefer, Sophia Klumpp and Inna Korsun for the wide-ranging support.

The European Commission's support for the production of this publication does not constitute an endorsement of the contents, which reflect the views only of the authors, and the Commission cannot be held responsible for any use which may be made of the information contained therein.

About the project

Euroscepticism, democratic deficit and low electoral turnout are affecting all EU countries. The gap among the democratic institutions in Europe, their representatives and Europe's young generation is growing. Young people are more likely to be present in other forms of civic participation (protests, strikes, boycotts), while voter turnout dramatically decreases. In 2014, only 28% of youth under 25 years old voted – a big gap compared to the overall turnout rate of 42.6 %. Across the EU, we are witnessing extensive protests or forms of active citizenship, ranging from pro-rule of law protests in Romania and Bulgaria, recent anti-populism and pro-EU in Germany or anti-austerity movements in Greece. In this context, how can we use most of these civic manifestations to debate the future of the EU? These movements require special attention for a proper understanding of the values their supporters stand for. The project aims to translate the messages from the grass root level and connect them to the EU public policies, favouring a more bottom-up approach, closer to the EU citizens, in order to ensure that the European project can move forward and respond to Euroscepticism and other EU challenges in a democratic and effective manner. A new narrative for Europe – a more engaging one – is strongly and urgently needed. The purpose of “A new narrative for Europe: Bringing more union into the European Union” was to document and address the protests as a new form of democratic participation that could be further used as an opportunity to re-shape European identity across borders, combat new populist trends and increase voter turnout. It gathered the experiences and views about the future of Europe as developed in recent protests and creative movements in Greece, Romania, Bulgaria and Germany and empowered youths in translating their messages at the level of EU decision makers. | futureofeuropa.europeanheroes.eu

About IEP

Since 1959, the Institut für Europäische Politik (IEP) has been active in the field of European integration as a non-profit organisation. It is one of Germany's leading research institutes on foreign and European policy. IEP works at the intersection of academia, politics, administration, and civic education. In doing so, IEP's tasks include scientific analyses of problems surrounding European politics and integration, as well as promoting the practical application of its research findings. | iep-berlin.de

Executive Summary:

Current statistics show that street protests have gained more popularity in Germany over the recent years.¹ What are the causes? Where are the roots of certain movements? What messages do they deliver to the government? What impact did they have on German and European politics so far? This paper addresses three main movements in Germany that have gained much attention over the past years: Fridays for Future, PEGIDA and Pulse of Europe.

At present, the German Fridays For Future (F4F) branch is the country's biggest and most media-covered movement, demanding measures from the government to stop temperatures from rising beyond 1.5 °C above the pre-industrial levels and to comply with the 2015 Paris Agreement.² The right-wing PEGIDA rallies similarly attracted a lot attention in Germany in recent years. They are protesting against an alleged Islamization and the immigration and asylum policies of Germany and the European Union. Chancellor Angela Merkel as well as many other political parties, public actors and civil society in Germany have repeatedly condemned their marches and demands as racist, xenophobic, Islamophobic and hostile to democracy.³ Lastly discussed in this paper is the pro-European and non-partisan movement Pulse of Europe that was initiated in 2016 as a reaction to Brexit. They are fighting for a united Europe that guarantees individual freedom, justice and legal security.

These particular three movements were chosen for this country report for the following reasons: (1) most recently, they assembled the most participants, (2) they are all connected to debates that are relevant on a European level, (3) they were identified as the most significant during a panel discussion that IEP organised as part of the BRING project, (4) they can be seen as an indicator for growing polarisation in the German society.

¹ Allhoff, Mark (2018): "Berlin geht zwölf Mal am Tag auf die Straße". Online available at <https://www.rbb24.de/politik/beitrag/2018/12/versammlungen-demos-berlin-protest.html> (last checked on 04.11.2019).

² Fridays for Future (Ed.) (2019): "Unsere Forderungen für den Klimaschutz". Online available at <https://fridaysforfuture.de/wp-content/uploads/2019/04/Forderungen.pdf> (last checked on 18.10.2019).

³ SPIEGEL ONLINE (Ed.) (2014): "Merkel verurteilt fremdenfeindliche Tendenzen". Online available at <https://www.spiegel.de/politik/deutschland/pegida-proteste-angela-merkel-verurteilt-fremdenfeindlichkeit-a-1008576.html> (last checked on 18.10.2019).

INTRODUCTION

From pro-democracy demonstrations in Hong Kong, far-right and anti-Trump marches in the US to anti-populism and pro-EU movements in Germany: There is a palpable sense that the number of protests, in particular right-wing protests, is on the rise worldwide. Yet, since there is no global database collecting information on participation numbers and sometimes no official data for protests at all⁴, it is arguably impossible to confirm this claim. With regard to Germany, however, there is data supporting this assumption. Data from police and municipal offices for public order confirm that the number of protests has almost doubled from 2008 to 2018 in major cities such as Berlin, Munich and Frankfurt.⁵ Although this data does not take the total number of participating protesters and their distribution across individual and possibly oftentimes small demonstrations into account, it indicates an increased role of street protest as a form of democratic participation in recent years. Yet, the focus of the protests has changed in the last decades: In the 1960s, demands for more democracy were prevalent. From the 1970s onwards, peace protests and later environmental protection as well as nuclear energy issues became more relevant. Another important topic since the mid-1980s has been migration and since the late 1990s globalisation.⁶

This report will deal with the three movements Fridays For Future (F4F), Patriotic Europeans Against the Islamization of the Occident (PEGIDA) and Pulse of Europe (PoE) analysing their roots, messages and impact on German public perception and politics. It will also include statements and findings from an IEP panel discussion on the topic *The End of the EU as We Know It? Street Protests and European Politics* taking place on 12 September 2019 in Berlin during which the previously three mentioned movements were highlighted as the currently most significant in Germany.

To contextualise the topic and to get an overview of civic mobilisation in Germany, it is important to provide a timeline covering some of the most significant protests and movements during the past 5 years. While doing so, it is essential to note that the attendance figures oftentimes significantly differ between organisers and police.⁷

⁴ The Guardian (Ed.) (2017): "Which city has the most protests?". Online available at <https://www.theguardian.com/cities/2017/sep/07/which-city-most-protests-hong-kong-trump> (last checked on 04.11.2019).

⁵ Allhoff, Mark (2018): "Berlin geht zwölf Mal am Tag auf die Straße". Online available at <https://www.rbb24.de/politik/beitrag/2018/12/versammlungen-demos-berlin-protest.html> (last checked on 04.11.2019).

⁶ Mujic, S.; Unterhitzberger, S.; Witzemberger, B.; Zajonz, M. (2019): "Von '68 bis Fridays for Future". Online available at <https://www.sueddeutsche.de/politik/demonstrationen-deutschland-1.4518558> (last checked on 14.11.2019).

⁷ Rucht, D. (2016): "Zahlenspiele – Wie viele haben demonstriert?". Online available at <https://protestinstitut.eu/zahlenspiele-wie-viele-haben-demonstriert/> (last checked on 11.11.2019).

Beginning / First demonstration in Germany	Demonstration/ Movement	Number of activists in Germany	Cities of protest
20 October 2014 - today	Right-wing movement PEGIDA	Up to 25.000	Mainly in Dresden
Early 2015	NoGIDA/Anti-PEGIDA movements to oppose PEGIDA	Up to 100.000	All over Germany
17 September 2016	Protest against TTIP and CETA trade agreements	Over 100.000	All over Germany
8 – 9 July 2016	G20 protest	100.000	Hamburg
End of November 2016 - today	Pulse of Europe	More than 6.000	All over Germany
3 September 2018	Wir sind mehr demonstration against discrimination and nationalism	65.000	Chemnitz
13 October 2018	#unteilbar demonstration for an open and free society	250.000	Berlin
7 December 2018 - today	Fridays for Future protest	Peak of 1.400.000 on 20 September 2019	All over Germany
15 March 2019	First Global Climate Strike For Future	Around 300.000	Over 230 cities
23 March 2019	Demonstration against new EU copyright directive (upload filters / “article 13”)	More than 100.000	All over Germany
24 May 2019	Second Global Climate Strike For Future	320.000	Over 200 cities
29 July 2019	Christopher Street Day 2019	Around 1.000.000	Berlin
20 September 2019	Third Global Climate Strike For Future	1.400.000	575 individual demonstrations

FRIDAYS FOR FUTURE

As well as in many other European countries, F4F is currently Germany’s biggest and most media-covered protest movement. A majority of participants are underage students that skip school on Fridays and join the protest marches that regularly take place in cities across the country. They demand action to mitigate climate change and further global warming. Noteworthy, Dr. Jochen Roose, Coordinator for Opinion Polls and Party Research at Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung and author of several publications dealing with the impact of civil society movements and protest, clarified at IEPs panel discussion that F4F is not necessarily an entirely new phenomenon from a long-term perspective. It rather builds on aspects of much older environmental protection movements such as the anti-nuclear movement that was strong in Germany in the 1970s and 1980s. An important difference is that these former demonstrations were organised on a national

level whereas the F4F movement operates globally. It also explicitly demands cooperation on a European and international level since it considers the climate crisis to be a global challenge. In a video series to which IEP contributed to within the project *A new narrative for Europe: Bringing more union into the European Union* (BRING), F4F activist Jones Sack comments, “I think that we need to work more closely together on a European level, so that all countries try to tackle the climate crisis. One country on its own cannot tackle it. If we do not work together, we all suffer under the same problems that will result from climate change. That is what we should keep in mind when we talk about climate justice or climate change on a European level.”

The first F4F student strike in Germany was organised in December 2018. So far, the movement has managed to gather the support of over 27,000 scientists in the German-speaking area and thousands of regular participants throughout the country. The movement’s peak up to now was on 20 September 2019 when millions around the world and according to the organisers more than 1,400,000 people marched on German streets to demand climate action.⁸

On 8 April 2019, F4F Germany published a list of demands addressing short-and long-term goals, which they want the German government to focus on.⁹ The pamphlet named “Our demands for climate protection” seeks to put pressure on the German government to take quicker action and to put global warming higher on its political agenda. It was drafted by German students in cooperation with climate scientists and reiterates the promise to continue the protests until the government takes action. The movements’ main goal is to stop temperatures from rising beyond 1.5 °C, above the pre-industrial levels and to hold the government to account for fulfilling their promises made in the 2015 Paris Agreement. F4F activists urge the government to implement the withdrawal from coal until 2030 and switch to 100% renewable energy by 2035 as well as to legally determine the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions in Germany to net zero by 2035. Changes that are demanded for immediate implementation are, amongst others, cutting all governments subsidies for fossil-fuel energy sources and shutting down one quarter of all German coal power plants.¹⁰ The movements’ goal is to have the largest possible impact on German politics.

In Germany, in particular, F4F inspired the establishment of other civic groups such as “Scientists for Future”, “Artists for Future”, “Change for Future”, “Entrepreneurs for Future”, and “Parents for Future”. Besides these more “peaceful” movements, a relatively small group of activists has brought the so-called Extinction Rebellion (XR), originally from Great Britain, to Germany. In the view of XR participants, F4F demonstrations have not

⁸ Grabitz, I.; Gökkaya, H.; Iser, J. et al. (2019): “Weltweit Hunderttausende auf den Straßen”.

<https://www.zeit.de/politik/2019-09/klimastreik-fridays-for-future-klimaschutz-live> (last checked on 17.10.2019).

⁹ Fridays for Future (Ed.) (2019): “Unsere Forderungen für den Klimaschutz”. Online available at <https://fridaysforfuture.de/wp-content/uploads/2019/04/Forderungen.pdf> (last checked on 18.10.2019).

¹⁰ Fridays for Future (Ed.) (2019): “Unsere Forderungen für den Klimaschutz”. Online available at <https://fridaysforfuture.de/wp-content/uploads/2019/04/Forderungen.pdf> (last checked on 18.10.2019).

achieved enough in the last year. XR participants therefore often take more radical action in form of non-violent civil disobedience.

While German politicians have often criticised the F4F protests, among other reasons for regularly skipping school and for demands that allegedly would disproportionately affect low-income citizens, Chancellor Angela Merkel repeatedly expressed her general sympathy¹¹ and stated the movement played a role in speeding up the government's development of climate policy measures.¹² In October 2019, the German government presented an official draft for a "Federal Climate Protection Law".¹³ The package is supposed to ensure Germany achieves its 2030 climate targets. Yet, it was met with sharp criticism from opposition parties as well as climate scientists and F4F activists for the proposed measures that are well below of what scientists have demanded.

In his video for IEP, Jan Osenberg, active in the grassroots think tank Polis180, identifies a concrete impact of F4F in the first half of 2019, but also added that underage pupils do not have the right to vote: "The Fridays for Future movement is definitely the most important (protest) movement in Germany. [...] It had a huge impact before the European elections. It eventually led to the Greens being super successful in those elections. Even the governing parties decided to put climate change policy back on the political agenda. [...] There is also another aspect of the Fridays for Future debate, which is that students and young people are not involved in politics anymore. [...] They don't have the means to channel their opinions into politics."

With regard to public opinion, national surveys indicate that F4F also had an influence to some extent. Around half of the respondents see a high (40 percent) or very high (12 percent) influence on German politics while two thirds (63 percent) believe that climate protection should take precedence over economic growth.¹⁴

¹¹ SPIEGEL ONLINE (Ed.) (2019): "'Es ist richtig, dass ihr uns Dampf macht'". Online available at <https://www.spiegel.de/lebenundlernen/schule/angela-merkel-bekraeftigt-lob-fuer-fridays-for-future-a-1260875.html> (last checked on 04.11.2019).

¹² Gaida, L. (2019): "Beim Klimaschutz zeigt sich Merkel von Greta Thunberg inspiriert". Online available at <https://www.welt.de/politik/deutschland/article197109345/Beim-Klimaschutz-zeigt-sich-Merkel-von-Greta-Thunberg-inspiriert.html> (last checked on 04.11.2019).

¹³ Bundesministerium für Umwelt, Naturschutz und nukleare Sicherheit (Ed.) (2019): "Entwurf eines Gesetzes zur Einführung eines Bundes-Klimaschutzgesetzes und zur Änderung weiterer Vorschriften". Online available at https://www.bmu.de/fileadmin/Daten_BMU/Download_PDF/Gesetze/gesetzentwurf_bundesklimaschutzgesetz_bf.pdf (last checked on 17.10.2019).

¹⁴ Infratest dimap (Ed.) (2019): "Einfluss von 'Fridays for Future' auf deutsche Politik umstritten". Online available at <https://www.infratest-dimap.de/umfragen-analysen/bundesweit/umfragen/aktuell/einfluss-von-fridays-for-future-auf-deutsche-politik-umstritten/> (last checked on 04.11.2019).

PEGIDA

The movement “Patriotic Europeans Against the Islamisation of the Occident” (PEGIDA) is another protest movement that has attracted a lot of attention in Germany in recent years, despite of the fact that participation numbers have been on the decrease since the end of 2015.¹⁵ PEGIDA, which is according to studies at least a partially racist, xenophobic and Islamophobic right-wing populist movement¹⁶, was founded in October 2014 in Dresden. It has its origins in Eastern German cities and only later spread temporarily to other parts of Germany. Thus, it remains largely a regional phenomenon.¹⁷

On 10 October 2014, PEGIDA founder Lutz Bachmann, who had already been convicted repeatedly for various crimes and in 2016 for incitement, posted a video on YouTube about a rally in Dresden in support of Kurdish fighters battling the so-called Islamic State. One day later, he created a Facebook group with the name "Peaceful Europeans against the Islamisation of the West" which ultimately turned into the protest movement of the same name. One of PEGIDA's first marches on 25 January 2015 attracted around 25,000 participants in the wake of the killing of 12 people in the editorial offices of the French satirical magazine Charlie Hebdo at the hands of al-Qaeda terrorists.¹⁸ The migration crisis in Europe as well as the European Sovereign Debt Crisis could be considered as catalysts for the PEGIDA movement. The spread of fake news, the use of unconstitutional symbols as well as the use of hate speech including xenophobic, Islamophobic and racist comments have been a constant characteristic of the PEGIDA movement.¹⁹

The movement's main demands are a “zero tolerance law” against criminal migrants, stricter deportation rules, direct democracy and more referenda at a federal level, increased spending on domestic security and an end to the alleged control from Brussels.²⁰ The PEGIDA movement argues that Germany is being “Islamicised” and believes it is its duty to oppose “Islamic extremism”. PEGIDA's demands were initially unclear, largely because it has refused a dialogue with the media, since it considers the media to be part of a political conspiracy against their cause. Demonstrators have been regularly shouting “Lügenpresse” (*lying press*), a term which was often used in Germany's National Socialist era. Similarly,

¹⁵ Durchgezählt (Ed.) (2019): “Statistik zu Pegida in Dresden”. Online available at <https://durchgezaehlt.org/pegida-dresden-statistik/> (last checked on 04.11.2019).

¹⁶ Daphi, P.; Kocyba, P.; Neuber, M. et al. (2015): “Protestforschung am Limit”. Online available at https://www.otto-brenner-stiftung.de/fileadmin/user_data/stiftung/02_Wissenschaftsportal/03_Publikationen/2015_Protestforschung.pdf (last checked on 22.11.2019).

¹⁷ Decker, F. (2015): “AfD, Pegida und die Verschiebung der parteipolitischen Mitte”. Online available at <https://www.bpb.de/apuz/212360/afd-pegida-und-die-verschiebung-der-partecipolitischen-mitte?p=all> (last checked on 22.11.2019).

¹⁸ SPIEGEL ONLINE (Ed.) (2015): “Pegida zieht immer mehr Menschen an”. Online available at <https://www.spiegel.de/politik/deutschland/pegida-25-000-teilnehmer-in-dresden-grosse-gegendemo-in-leipzig-a-1012650.html> (last checked on 18.10.2019).

¹⁹ Daphi, P.; Kocyba, P.; Neuber, M. et al. (2015): “Protestforschung am Limit”. Online available at https://www.otto-brenner-stiftung.de/fileadmin/user_data/stiftung/02_Wissenschaftsportal/03_Publikationen/2015_Protestforschung.pdf (last checked on 22.11.2019).

²⁰ PEGIDA - *Patriotische* Europäer gegen die Islamisierung des Abendlandes (Ed.) (2019): “Programm”. Online available at <https://www.pegida.de/> (last checked on 18.10.2019).

speakers at the protests have also repeatedly used discourses and expressions that are connected to the NS era. At the beginning of December 2014, PEGIDA published an undated and anonymous one-page manifesto of 19 position statements. Two months later, the 19 positions were developed further and broken down into the so-called ten "Theses of Dresden".²¹ They call for an immediate stop of asylum seekers, for a German asylum-emergency law as well as the protection, preservation and respectful treatment of the German culture and language.

The right-wing movement had significant influence on German politics and public discourse due to a high media coverage considering the regional character of the protests.²² In the past five years, PEGIDA also contributed to bringing the topic of migration into the centre of the public debate and strengthened the visibility of the political right, including the Alternative für Deutschland (AfD), in general. While in the German Parliamentary elections in 2012, the AfD only reached 4.7 % of all votes, the party gained 12.6 % in 2017²³ and even up to 27.5 % in state elections with particularly high results in the Eastern German states.²⁴

Since 2016, the number of participants at PEGIDA demonstrations is in decline. The latest numbers from 2019 demonstrate that only a small core of a few hundred people still gather on Mondays to protest. One reason for this might be the fact that the AfD now is present in the German Bundestag.²⁵ However, PEGIDA is another example demonstrating the potential impact of protests on politics by putting issues onto the agenda.²⁶

PULSE OF EUROPE

Three years ago, another important movement with ongoing relevance appeared in Germany: Pulse of Europe. This initiative is an independent, non-partisan civil movement and was founded in 2016 in Frankfurt am Main, shortly after and in reaction to the result of the United Kingdom European Union membership referendum. Brexit was not the only motivation for young Germans to establish a pro-European movement, but also the

²¹ PEGIDA - *Patriotische* Europäer gegen die Islamisierung des Abendlandes (Ed.) (2019): "Programm". Online available at <https://www.pegida.de/> (last checked on 18.10.2019).

²² Teune, S.; Sommer, M.; Rucht, D. (2017): "Zwischen Emphase und Aversion". Online available at https://protestinstitut.eu/wp-content/uploads/2017/11/ipb-working-paper-Grossdemonstrationen-in-den-Medien_web.pdf (last checked on 22.11.2019).

²³ Der Bundeswahlleiter (Ed.) (2017): "Bundestagswahl 2017: Endgültiges Ergebnis". Online available at https://www.bundeswahlleiter.de/info/presse/mitteilungen/bundestagswahl-2017/34_17_endgueltiges_ergebnis.html (last checked on 18.10.2019).

²⁴ statista (Ed.) (2019): "Stimmenanteile der AfD bei den jeweils letzten Landtagswahlen in den Bundesländern bis Oktober 2019" <https://de.statista.com/statistik/daten/studie/320946/umfrage/ergebnisse-der-afd-bei-den-landtagswahlen/> (last checked on 04.11.2019).

²⁵ Dick, W. (2016): "Pegida-Studie: Weniger Demokratiefeinde". Online available at <https://www.dw.com/de/pegida-studie-weniger-demokratiefeinde/a-19074547-0> (last checked on 17.10.2019).

²⁶ Allhoff, Mark (2018): "Berlin geht zwölf Mal am Tag auf die Straße". Online available at <https://www.rbb24.de/politik/beitrag/2018/12/versammlungen-demos-berlin-protest.html> (last checked on 04.11.2019).

increasing political radicalisation. PoE is protesting against the increasing polarisation across Europe and the disintegration of formerly stable political structures and alliances that ultimately worsen global problems and challenges. PoE participants demonstrate for a united Europe that guarantees individual freedom, justice and rule of law. Therefore, their main aim is to create European awareness and consciousness that brings people and nations together as well as to speak out in favour of a pan-European identity.²⁷

Silvan Wagenknecht who brought Pulse of Europe to Berlin argues in his video interview with IEP: “We want to drive the debate to a more positive and optimistic one. What drives me is the deep believe in European integration and in our core democratic values. We are living a once impossible dream. After decades of war, we are united in diversity and now it is time to stand up for what we have achieved. Without Europe, there is no future for our countries in terms of security, trade, customer protection, human rights, and perhaps the most important one, tackling climate change. We must work together. There is a huge majority of people fighting for those ideals.”

At the end of November 2016, around 200 people had joined the movement with more and more participants joining the initiative on the streets at weekly intervals from January 2017.²⁸ The number of participants and locations kept rising over the following months so that the initiative gained international media attention in Denmark, the Netherlands, the United Kingdom and France. Every Sunday on a weekly basis, the protests took place in various European cities. The movement’s peak came on 5 March 2017, when public meetings were organised in 35 European cities, ranging from 40 to more than 3,000 participants. One week later, 20,000 people joined the movement in more than 40 European cities. By May 2017, 118 cities in 10 European countries were participating. Between 2017 and 2018, the demonstrations amassed thousands of supporters and the initiative received support from nearly all political parties sitting in the German parliament. However, panelist Katja Sinko, organiser of the Campaign “The European Moment”, emphasised at IEPs panel discussion in September that pro-European movements, such as Pulse of Europe, are especially strong in Germany while other countries are of secondary importance to the movement. In her opinion, this is not only due to the fact that Germany has the largest population in the EU, but it might also be linked to the overall good economic situation. However, especially in the months prior to the European Elections, the public interest declined. In recent months, only a few hundred people gathered at the public rallies.²⁹

As PoE identifies as a non-partisan initiative, the concrete political impact is difficult to assess as participants cannot necessarily be assigned to a certain political direction.

²⁷ Pulse of Europe (Ed.) (2019): “Zeichen setzen für die Zukunft Europas”. Online available at <https://pulseofeurope.eu/ueber-uns/> (last checked on 04.11.2019).

²⁸ Hannebohn, Y.; Pontius, M. (2017): “Was ist "Pulse of Europe"?”. Online available at <https://www.jetzt.de/politik/pulse-of-europe-bewegung> (last checked on 18.10.2019).

²⁹ Der Tagesspiegel (Ed.) (2019): “Warum bei „Pulse of Europe“ nichts mehr los ist”. Online available at <https://www.tagesspiegel.de/politik/gehen-europa-die-fans-aus-warum-bei-pulse-of-europe-nichts-mehr-los-ist/24260068.html> (last checked on 13.11.2019).

According to a Eurobarometer survey commissioned by the European Parliament in June this year, the high turnout on the 2019 European elections was driven by a surge in participation by young European citizens.³⁰ Katja Sinko stated at IEPs panel discussion that pro-European initiatives including PoE can definitely take credit for this positive outcome.

CONCLUSION

The overall number of demonstrations and protests has increased over recent years, which reflects a growing polarisation of the German society. Although the visibility of the right-wing political spectrum has gained significantly in the past five years, it is important to bear in mind that movements that advocate democratic and free societies have clearly outnumbered them with regard to participant numbers.

The three movements discussed in this report have already had an impact on the German government and its society. They have not only been able to mobilise German civil society, but have also brought different people together and have created more political interest among the public. The F4F movement, for example, has not only internationalised the climate movement and has politicised young people that oftentimes have had little contact with politics before. For the first time, it is a movement largely carried by pupils and adolescents and particularly by young women. It can be expected that their ongoing dedication will have an impact on their future political participation.³¹ They have arguably already influenced the German government, environmental policies and the initiation of new laws.³² According to Katja Sinko, the high turnout of young people in the European elections can partly be contributed to Pulse of Europe. In contrast, the relatively small PEGIDA movement has not only managed to gather extensive media coverage, but can be seen as a significant factor for strengthening right-wing populist forces in Germany reflected by the surge in support of the AfD in national and regional elections.

Specific recommendations for the new Commission under German politician Ursula von der Leyen brought forward at IEP's panel discussion were the revision of the "Spitzenkandidaten"-process as well as the introduction of European-wide lobby registers. It was also suggested that it should be possible for the afore-mentioned issues (e.g. climate change) to be brought forward in more creative formats as there seems to be demand for more involvement in decision-making processes also reflected in the growing number of

³⁰ European Parliament (Ed.) (2019): "2019 European elections: Record turnout driven by young people". Online available at <https://www.europarl.europa.eu/news/en/press-room/20190923IPR61602/2019-european-elections-record-turnout-driven-by-young-people> (last checked on 18.10.2019).

³¹ Sommer, M.; Rucht, D.; Haunss, S.; Zajak, S. (2019): "Fridays for Future – Profil, Entstehung und Perspektiven der Protestbewegung in Deutschland". Online available at https://protestinstitut.eu/wp-content/uploads/2019/08/ipb-working-paper_F4F_final_online.pdf (last checked on 15.11.2019).

³² Die Bundesregierung (Ed.) (2019): "Neues Klimaschutzgesetz geplant". Online available at <https://www.bundesregierung.de/breg-de/aktuelles/neues-klimaschutzgesetz-geplant-1577200> (last checked on 18.10.2019).

demonstrations. These formats would need to be set up in cooperation with transnational scientific and cultural initiatives to find different ways of involvement opportunities. These ways of participation could be created for instance with the introduction of civic assemblies so that citizens would have an influence on democratic decision-making and that civil society would be institutionalised. It remains to be seen in how far the Conference on the Future of Europe will take on this role.