



July 2025

## Patriots for Europe one year after the Euro elections - still isolated?

*Jan Rovenský*

### Summary

Patriots for Europe (Pfe) was founded after the 2024 European Parliament elections as an ambitious project to unite conservative, nationalist, and Eurosceptic parties. It quickly established itself as the third strongest political force in the European Parliament, however, its influence is still limited a year later by the so-called *cordon sanitaire* - an informal block made up of traditional pro-European factions. Analysis shows that this cordon is gradually losing effectiveness and is no longer a functional instrument of political isolation. On the contrary, the Patriots for Europe are having partial successes and there are signs of cooperation with factions such as the ECR or parts of the EPP. The future of this faction depends on its ability to maintain internal cohesion, to communicate its priorities convincingly and to win allies at a time of growing tensions between nation states and the European institutions.

### Key Takeaways

- Significant emergence of a new faction: the Pfe has become the third strongest faction in the European Parliament, uniting key sovereigntist and conservative parties across the EU and pushing an agenda based on national sovereignty, rejection of the Green Deal, and control of migration.
- *Cordon sanitaire* loses effectiveness: Although the traditional factions are trying to isolate the Pfe, it is being disrupted. The Patriots are gaining more influence in the legislative processes and finding allies among MEPs of the EPP and the ECR.
- Key challenges and future potential: The Pfe must overcome internal divisions between national parties, confront stigmatization, and respond to the changing geopolitical situation. Further success will depend on the ability of the group to consolidate its influence and offer voters an alternative to the current form of European integration.

## Introduction

One year after the European Parliament elections in 2024 is a good moment to take stock of the position of the Patriots for Europe (PfE) group, which was founded as an ambitious attempt to unite nationalist, conservative, and sovereigntist forces across the EU Member States. The faction, which includes the Czech ANO movement, the Hungarian Fidesz, the French Rassemblement National, the Italian Lega and the Austrian FPÖ, has declared its aim to become a significant counterweight to the traditional groups in the European Parliament.

Although the PfE has become the third strongest faction in the EP with 86 MEPs, its ability to effectively influence European legislation and form strategic coalitions remains limited by the persistence of the so-called cordon sanitaire that the traditional factions in the European Parliament have created around the group. One year on from the Euro elections, this text aims to analyze the real political position of the PfE, its influence in European institutions and possible shifts in light of Donald Trump's second administration in the US, which may fundamentally transform transatlantic relations and the geopolitical framework of European politics.

## PfE's position in the European Parliament

The 2024 European elections represented a significant moment for the realignment of political forces in the European Parliament. One of the most significant changes was the consolidation of the nationalist parties under the banner of the new group Patriots for Europe, which was formed on June 30, 2024, on the initiative of Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orbán, ANO chairman Andrej Babiš and Austrian FPÖ chairman Herbert Kickl. Representatives of the three founding parties signed the “Patriot Manifesto for Europe's Future”, which outlined the main priorities of the Patriots: an emphasis on greater sovereignty for nation states, the fight against illegal migration and the revision (now abolished) of the Green Deal (PfE Manifesto 2024). The Patriots have been gradually joined by the Dutch Party for Freedom, the French Rassemblement National and the Italian Lega, among others, and from the Czech parties also Příklad and Motoristé sobě. Currently, the group has 86 MEPs from 13 EU member states and is the third largest group in the European Parliament after the European People's Party (EPP) and the Progressive Alliance of Socialists and Democrats (S&D). In terms of mandates, the PfE has surpassed the ECR (78 mandates) and the liberal Renew Europe (76 mandates), theoretically opening more space for the implementation of its political priorities.

The Patriots are highly critical of Brussels' migration policy, preferring a restrictive approach to migration and advocating for strict security of the EU's external borders. In the area of cultural and identity politics, they advocate for the protection of traditional European values and reject progressivist policies. On climate policy, they strongly criticize the Green Deal as economically destructive and seek to push for its revision or repeal to protect the interests of national economies, particularly in agriculture and energy.

Strategically, the PfE profiles itself as an alternative to the federalist visions of the EU and seeks a “Europe of nations”. Although some of the parties represented in the Patriots have conflicting views on foreign policy, according to its members, there is unquestioning agreement on three basic priorities.

## Cooperation within European structures

Despite its numerical strength, the PfE faces obstacles in working with other factions. Traditional groups such as the People's Party, the Socialists, and Renew Europe expressed their reluctance to work with the Patriots because of ideological differences right from the start and built a “cordon sanitaire”

around the new faction in an attempt to limit its influence. This informal agreement between the main political groups forced the PfE out of committee chairmanships, reports, and other important legislative roles in the European Parliament. A year on, however, it can be said that the effort to isolate the Patriots is showing its first cracks and that the cordon sanitaire is gradually crumbling.

In January 2025, PfE chair Jordan Bardella called on the right-wing factions to act in unison to end the Green Deal. The European Conservatives and Reformists (ECR) group responded to this call by writing to the European People's Party (EPP) calling for an exit from the 'cordon sanitaire' and an alliance with the PfE. The ECR stressed the need to "build bridges across political lines and deliver results that benefit European citizens and businesses" (Griera 2025). There are indications from the EPP about their willingness to work with the Patriots on specific issues, such as the fight against illegal migration, which may be a way to get the PfE more involved in the legislative processes in the European Parliament (Genovese 2025).

The PfE is expanding its influence through cooperation with extra-parliamentary actors and national governments, for example the Israeli Likud party joined the PfE as an observer in February 2025 (Genn 2025). The Patriots for Europe hold similar views on illegal migration and climate policy to the US administration of Donald Trump, whose inauguration in January 2025 was attended by PfE representatives and whose slogan "Make America Great Again" was adopted as "Make Europe Great Again" in February 2025 at their conference in Madrid (Morel, Kaval 2025)

Czech MEPs from the ANO movement, who are members of Patriots for Europe, also believe that the cordon sanitaire is weakening. Klára Dostálová, vice-president of Patriots for Europe, said for this analysis that "MEPs from the PfE, ECR and EPP can agree on many points. Our rapporteur Ondřej Knotek, who as the representative of Patriots for Europe pushed through the report in the committee on the European Investment Bank, succeeded," she said.

MEP Ondřej Knotek believes that the effectiveness of the "cordon" has significantly decreased in the first year since the elections. "Every plenary session support for the Patriots' amendments grows, some even pass. In several cases, the Patriots have been assigned a report, to the displeasure of the Greens or Liberals, i.e. the main rapporteur for the EP has been a Patriot," he said. He said the EPP often must decide whether to vote with the program, where they are closer to the Patriots on some issues, or cordon, i.e. make difficult ideological compromises with the Liberals, Greens and Socialists. "The more the cordon crumbles, the more the Socialists, Greens and Liberals get nervous to the point of hysteria and do everything they can to force the cordon. They don't care about democracy and freedom, they want to regulate and hold on to power at all costs," he added.

MEP Jana Nagyová confirmed that when voting in plenary or in committees, it is taken into account who presents a proposal, not its substance. "It's not an entirely comfortable situation, especially when one wants results. You get the label 'extreme right' and it's officially over. On the other hand, on an informal level, the cordon disappears, and one can even manage things on a working level. But it requires many times more strength and patience," she said. "We have already succeeded repeatedly, in specific cases, and I personally, in forming a coalition of the 'sane', as I refer to the EPP, ECR, PfE and non-aligned in work terms, and in voting for things that are desirable for Europe, but which would not have happened without us," she added.

MEP Jaroslava Pokorná Jermanová said that the cordon sanitaire is still evident in the fact that the PfE has not managed to fill even one seat in the leadership of the committees. "The government factions are very consistent in this and are willing to break or circumvent rules, such as women's representation, because of this. They have internal rules for their members, where there are even sanctions for breaking cordon towards the Patriots," she explained, adding that only rarely do they

manage to get rapporteurs on committees. However, according to Jaroslava Pokorná Jermanová, government factions do not resist cooperation when it suits them. "The amendments that are submitted by us are rejected in most cases, although this is gradually improving. If someone from the Patriots comes up with an issue, the governing coalition has no problem rejecting it and then raising it as an issue of their own. But on a personal level, in my daily contacts, I don't feel the cordon," she added.

## Current and future challenges

In addition to the efforts of the other factions in the European Parliament to isolate and shut them out of influence in the EU, Patriots for Europe faces other challenges.

Firstly, the political positions of the individual parties represented in the PfE are in some cases quite different, for example the Austrian FPÖ has in the past strongly threatened the Czech Republic: the Freedmen have demanded the abolition of the Benes Decrees as a condition for the Czech Republic's accession to the European Union, opposed the completion of the Temelín nuclear power plant and warned of the flooding of the labor market with cheap labor from the East. Diversity of opinion is also evident regarding the approach to the economy or the war in Ukraine, e.g. between Chega and Fidesz (Mahdalová, Škop 2024). On the other hand, the three main priorities of the Patriots - strengthening the sovereignty of nation-states vis-à-vis Brussels, fighting illegal migration and abandoning the Green Deal - are agreed upon by all parties, and differences of opinion on other issues have not affected the functioning of the faction in the past year. If the PfE is to play a significant role in the future, these potential areas of friction must not jeopardize the consensus on the fundamental priorities at the heart of their common political project. Otherwise, the faction risks disintegrating into a loose coalition of national parties without a coordinated approach, which would significantly weaken its ability to advance its agenda in the European Parliament and to negotiate with other actors.

Secondly, the mainstream media and the political competition of Patriots for Europe very often label terms such as "far right", 'populists', "threat to democracy", etc., which create the impression of some kind of danger in society. This then affects the reputation of the PfE, negatively influences the public perception of the group and undermines its legitimacy at European level. It will be important for the PfE to actively resist these labels and build its own narrative that is understandable to the public and emphasizes the legitimacy of its program priorities. Effective use of their own media platforms, communication on social media and working with public opinion at national and European level will be key. The group will need to articulate convincingly that its agenda is not extremist but responds to the real concerns of voters - from loss of sovereignty, to concerns about migration, to the impact of climate regulation on everyday life.

Third, the PfE will have to strategically deal with the changing international situation, especially in the context of the second Donald Trump administration and the expected changes in transatlantic cooperation. In the event of a major U.S. pivot towards NATO or Ukraine, the current bet on proximity to Trump may become more of a liability than an advantage. The faction will be forced to define its positions on defense, security and European autonomy, where there is no unanimity among its members. The absence of a clear line in these areas could undermine the group's external credibility and internal cohesion.

For Patriots for Europe, consolidation, empowerment and breaking the monopoly of the traditional parties in the EP is crucial in this election period. PfE will have to demonstrate political maturity and the ability to negotiate pragmatically if it wants to go beyond the protest vote and become

a structural player in European politics. The key question is whether the historical divisions and mistrust between the various Euro critical currents - especially between the PfE and the ECR - will be overcome and whether the two groups will be willing to work together to create a real counterweight to the current dominance of pro-integration forces. As already mentioned, there are already signs of a possible rapprochement. The calls for the abolition of the Green Deal, or the call for a rethink of the so-called cordon sanitaire, suggest that the floodgates have already begun to open. It is possible that in the future the cooperation between the PfE and the ECR will intensify and potentially expand to include the EPP. In this context, it will also be important for the PfE to seek support outside the European Parliament itself, both at the level of national governments and in the sphere of experts and civil society. Asserting legitimacy outside the traditional institutions can be a way to bypass established power blocs and gain wider acceptance across Europe. But the challenge remains whether the faction can present itself as a positive force for reform, rather than as a destructive or isolationist element, as the main European factions are attempting to do.

In summary, the future influence of the PfE will depend not only on the number of mandates, but above all on its ability to forge effective alliances, to articulate a clear and constructive political message, while maintaining unity within the faction even in times of turbulent international change.

## Conclusion

One year after the 2024 European elections, it is becoming clear that the Patriots for Europe (PfE) faction represents not only the third strongest grouping in the European Parliament, but also a real challenge to the existing balance of power. Despite being surrounded by a 'cordon sanitaire' - an informal agreement between the traditional factions to politically isolate a certain part of the spectrum - the PfE faction has managed to partially break through this barrier and in several cases to push through its proposals. Increasingly, however, the cordon is running up against its own limits - both strategic and democratic. Initially presented as a defense of the values of European democracy, it is increasingly acting as an instrument of the power monopoly of the existing pro-integration forces, which use it to secure control over the legislative process and to block new, legitimately elected political currents.

This development is increasingly evident in the daily practice of the European Parliament - from the partial votes, where the number of adopted amendments submitted by the PfE is growing, to the increasing willingness of the representatives of the ECR and part of the EPP to seek pragmatic cooperation with the Patriots. Rigid exclusion based on labelling ('far right', 'extremists') is proving to be a political reality, but also a growing pressure from voters who are calling for a greater plurality of voices and alternative approaches to issues such as migration, sovereignty, security or climate policy.

Yet, so far, the traditional factions have managed to hold on to key positions and legislative power. It will probably still be possible to keep the PfE out of the main decision-making processes in this parliamentary term, but it is already evident that the situation will change in the years to come. If the trend towards a weaker cordon is confirmed - and all the indications are that it is - the 2029 EP elections could be a turning point. Until then, the key will be whether the PfE can continue to strengthen not only in numbers but also in quality - in terms of its professional agenda, its negotiating skills and the image it presents to the European public.

## Sources

- Genn, J. 2025, 9. 2. „Likud joins EU right-wing alliance Patriots.eu as observer, while AfD attempts to build ties“. Jerusalem Post. <https://www.jpost.com/breaking-news/article-841334>
- Genovese, V. 2025, 7. 4. „ The EPP takes firmer line on migration in policy pitch“. Euronews. <https://www.euronews.com/my-europe/2025/04/07/the-epp-takes-firmer-line-on-migration-in-policy-pitch>
- Griera, M. 2025, 30. 1. „Let’s kill the Green Deal together with the far right, ECR tells EPP.“ Politico. <https://www.politico.eu/article/lets-kill-the-green-deal-together-with-the-far-right-ecr-tells-epp/>
- Mahdalová, K. Škop, M. 2024, 4. 7. „Data ukazují, jak křehké spojení budují „patrioti“ Babiš, Orbán a Kickl“. Seznam Zprávy. <https://www.seznamzpravy.cz/clanek/volby-eurovolby-data-odhaluji-krehkost-spojenectvi-babisovych-patriotu-255134>
- Morel, S., Kaval, A. 2025, 9. 2. „In Madrid, Europe's far right looks to Trump as a role model“. Le Monde. [https://www.lemonde.fr/en/international/article/2025/02/09/in-madrid-europe-s-far-right-looks-to-trump-as-a-role-model\\_6737955\\_4.html](https://www.lemonde.fr/en/international/article/2025/02/09/in-madrid-europe-s-far-right-looks-to-trump-as-a-role-model_6737955_4.html)
- PfE Manifesto. 2024. Patriots for Europe. <https://patriots.eu/manifesto/>

## Author



### JAN ROVENSKÝ

#### Analyst

He graduated from the Faculty of Arts of Charles University, majoring in English and Political Science, and in 2008 he received his PhD in Political Theory from the LUISS Guido Carli University in Rome. For fifteen years he worked at the daily Právo, where he first worked in the foreign editorial office. Since 2009 he has worked in the political department, from 2018 to January 2021 as deputy editor-in-chief. Since February 2021, he has been the media advisor to the chairman of the ANO movement.

## Publisher



### INSTITUTE FOR POLITICS AND SOCIETY

The institute's mission is to improve the quality of the Czech political and public environment through professional and open discussion and the creation of a lively platform that names major problems, develops their analysis and offers recipes for their solution through the cooperation of experts and politicians, international conferences, seminars, public discussions, political and social analyses available to the entire Czech society. We are convinced that open expert discussion and understanding of the nature and causes of individual problems are a prerequisite for any successful solution to the problems of contemporary society.



Martinská 2, 110 00 Prague 1



[www.politikaspolecnost.cz](http://www.politikaspolecnost.cz)



+420 602 502 674



[office@politikaspolecnost.cz](mailto:office@politikaspolecnost.cz)