



From Breakthrough to Breakdown? Analyzing the Pirate Party of Luxembourg through a Supply-and-Demand Framework

Raphael Kies¹ · Patrick Dumont^{2,3}

Accepted: 26 January 2026

© The Author(s), under exclusive licence to Springer Nature Limited 2026

Abstract

This article analyzes the trajectory of the Pirate Party of Luxembourg from its founding in 2009 and its electoral breakthrough in a traditionally stable system, up to the internal crisis that occurred in 2024. Using a supply-and-demand theoretical framework, the study integrates the analysis of supply factors (organization, programme, modes of action) and demand factors (voter motivations). On the demand side, the party's support is primarily driven by protest voting, linked to political alienation and low internal efficacy perceived by voters. Issue voting, conversely, is strongly connected to positive attitudes toward participatory democratic reforms rather than the traditional digital priorities of pirate parties. On the supply side, the combination of highly personalized leadership, non-conventional and institutionalized activism, increasingly populist communication and even ideological heterogeneity contributed to the party's electoral rise. This model, however, led to growing tensions between the two leading figures and a mismatch between participatory ideals and actual centralized organization. The 2024 party crisis, triggered by financial irregularities and leadership conflicts, exposed Luxembourg's Pirate Party's chronic organizational fragility. The article contributes to debates on new party institutionalization and the dynamics between protest and issue voting for new party support.

Keywords Supply-and-demand framework · Protest voting · Participatory democratic reforms · Personalization · New party institutionalization



Introduction

Small countries tend to be overlooked in comparative politics, and this is particularly evident in research on parties and party systems (Casal Bértoa and Dumont 2022). Yet, when examining the trajectories of party families in the twenty-first century, one quickly notices that two of the most electorally successful pirate parties in Europe—those that have held seats in their respective national parliaments across consecutive legislative terms—are to be found in Iceland and Luxembourg, two affluent democracies with relatively small populations (Otjes 2020). Notably, these two parties kept on performing comparatively well in times of electoral support decline for most of their pirate counterparts in Europe. Still, the Icelandic Pirate Party lost its parliamentary representation in 2024, the same year that Luxembourg's Pirates entered a period of profound internal crisis.

While the Icelandic Pirate Party has been the subject of extensive comparative and case-oriented research, scholarly knowledge about Luxembourg's Pirate Party (PPL) remains extremely limited. This article examines the rise and subsequent challenges of Luxembourg's branch of the pirate party family through a supply-and-demand conceptual framework (Kitschelt 1995). On the supply (of political alternatives) side we analyse the party's organization and leadership structure, its programmatic profile and cohesion, whilst we investigate the sociodemographic characteristics and attitudes of the pool of potential Pirates' supporters through survey data on the voter demand side. Drawing on unique empirical material, our study of each of these two dimensions and their interaction allows us to account for the rise of the Pirate party to parliamentary representation—becoming the most recent addition to Luxembourg's parliamentary landscape, a polity characterized by compulsory voting and an electoral system that historically produced a highly stable party system—and to conjecture over a potential downfall triggered by supply-side factors (endemic organizational dysfunctions, chronic mismatch between proclaimed participatory ideals and organizational practice, leadership conflict) affecting the party's credibility.

By confronting comparative and case-oriented research explanations for the rise of Pirates parties (elsewhere) in Europe to the successful yet under-researched Luxembourg case, we fill an important gap in the study of this party family. In addition, contrary to most existing comparative or case-oriented analyses of members of the Pirate party family, we refrain from studying Luxembourg's Pirates independently from their competitors on the Grand Ducal political scene. Rather, we provide comparative insights of the PPL with Luxembourg's two other challenger parties.

The article opens with a contextual introduction situating the Pirate Party of Luxembourg within its political and institutional environment, emphasizing its emergence and significance. Our theoretical framework builds on the general supply-and-demand model, reviewing literature on pirate parties which has mostly tackled either the protest and issue voting questions over their electorates or their organizational dynamics. The empirical section combines a quantitative analysis of voter demand, using survey data to model propensities to vote, with a more qualitative and descriptive exploration of party supply factors such as leadership structure, programmatic coherence, and internal cohesion. The final section concludes by synthesizing insights from our investigation of supply and demand factors, deepening



our understanding of the PPL's electoral fortunes and drawing broader theoretical implications for new party institutionalization and the dynamics between protest and issue voting for new party support.

Background

The Grand Duchy of Luxembourg's electoral system imposes compulsory vote to citizens aged between 18 and 75 for the election of the 60 members-Chamber of Deputies for a five-year term (Dumont et al 2022). As foreign residents do not have the right to vote at these elections, close to half of the population of Luxembourg is not allowed to vote for these national contests; as a result, at the latest 2023 election, only 250,000 people actually voted. Proportional representation (PR) is based on four electoral constituencies: the South elects 23 MPs, the Centre 21, the North nine and the East seven. In each of the constituencies, citizens have the same number of votes as there are seats to be filled. Voters may cast them for a single party list (list vote), or they may vote for candidates of one or more than one party (inter-party panachage); voters may award up to two votes for each candidate of their choice. Together with the size of its population and a highly preferential electoral system this has, for most of Luxembourg's history, contributed to partisan ideological moderation and pragmatic, consensus-based democratic solutions. A moderate pluralist (Sartori 2005) party system developed, under the predominance of the Christian Social Party (CSV), which was at the helm of coalition governments for almost a century (1919 to 2013).¹

It is in this institutional and political context that the Pirate Party of Luxembourg was founded in October 2009 by two students: Sven Clement who studied business informatics and Jerry Weyer who studied European law. The new party emerged from an online forum of computer enthusiasts who discussed the possibility of creating a political party since January 2009. As the PPL was explicitly created as a promoter of the Swedish (and German) Pirate parties' ideas in the Grand Duchy, it constituted a clear case of an international party family establishing a new local branch (Cirhan and Pršín 2025: 5).

Since then, the PPL stood out for its capacity to rapidly establish itself in Luxembourg's political landscape. The PPL's first electoral contest was the 2013 national election and it garnered 3 per cent of the votes.² In comparison with other new parties competing in a national election in the last decades, this was a good electoral result for a newcomer. It then reached 4.2 per cent at the 2014 European election. It managed to get its first three candidates elected at the 2017 local elections.³

The real electoral breakthrough happened in the following year, when the PPL won 6.6 per cent of the votes, resulting in its entry to the Chamber of Deputies with

¹ In this 94-year period, it was only out of government in 1925–1926 and during the 1974–1979 term.

² We here refer to 'theoretical' voters, weighting numbers of votes obtained by constituency size to arrive at a proportion of the national votes.

³ The party managed to draft complete candidates lists in six of the large communes (where elections are held with a PR electoral system), for a total of 82 candidates.



two national MPs at their second try in elections at that level. The Pirates reached their electoral top result at the 2019 European elections with 7.7 per cent of the votes, but this result was not enough to win a seat in the European Parliament (EP).⁴ The 2023 local and national elections saw the PPL improve on its previous performances at these levels; in June the number of local representatives jumped from three in 2017 to 19, with even one pirate candidate becoming mayor of a small commune, and performing particularly well in communes of the South constituency⁵; gaining an additional (third) MP at the October national election was however a bittersweet victory, as the PPL had been riding high in opinion polls and members were boosted by the local election outcome (see Fig. 1). Clearly, moving from 6.6 per cent of the vote in 2018 to 6.7 per cent in 2023 was not the expected result. But the PPL's most recent electoral contest, at the 2024 European election, was the party's first actual setback, with a loss of close to three percentage points (obtaining 4.9 per cent of the votes) and again no seat in the EP (see also Wondreys 2026, in this collection). Whilst this drop in electoral support could largely be explained by the weakness of the list (absence of prominent candidates), it foreshadowed the outbreak of a fundamental internal crisis within the party in the summer of 2024; the latter was widely reported and fuelled by the leaders of the party themselves in the media, leading to a critical decrease of support and only a slight recovery to 2013–2014 levels in the opinion polls since then.

Theoretical framework

Comparative party research has shown that the emergence and consolidation of new parties can be fruitfully analysed through a demand–supply framework (Kitschelt 1995). Party competition is seen as a dynamic interaction between voter demand for representation and the supply of political alternatives offered by new actors. Van de Wardt and Otjes (2022), for instance, recently examined support for new parties through spatial theory and ideology. Here, a broader supply-and-demand approach is adopted to account for the emergence, breakthrough, persistence and decline of the PPL.

Extending prior research on pirate parties, the analysis considers both supply-side factors—organizational structure, programmatic coherence and internal cohesion—and demand-side ones—supporters' ideological preferences, sociological composition and voting motivations. Demand-side factors highlight latent voter needs for new representation, while supply-side factors determine whether and how parties articulate these needs politically. Given the limited scholarship on the PPL, this framework helps describe both the party's offer and its electorate.

Because electorally weak parties are difficult to study empirically, research has focused more on pirate parties' organization, communication and ideology (Demker 2014; Khutkyy 2019; Jääsaari and Hildén 2015; Bolleyer et al 2015; Cammaerts

⁴ Luxembourg's delegation to the EP is only made of six members, making the effective electoral threshold hard to reach for smaller parties.

⁵This time the PPL had 218 candidates in 27 communes (which meant that about a quarter of the party's members were on the lists). It managed to present complete lists in 13 of the PR communes.



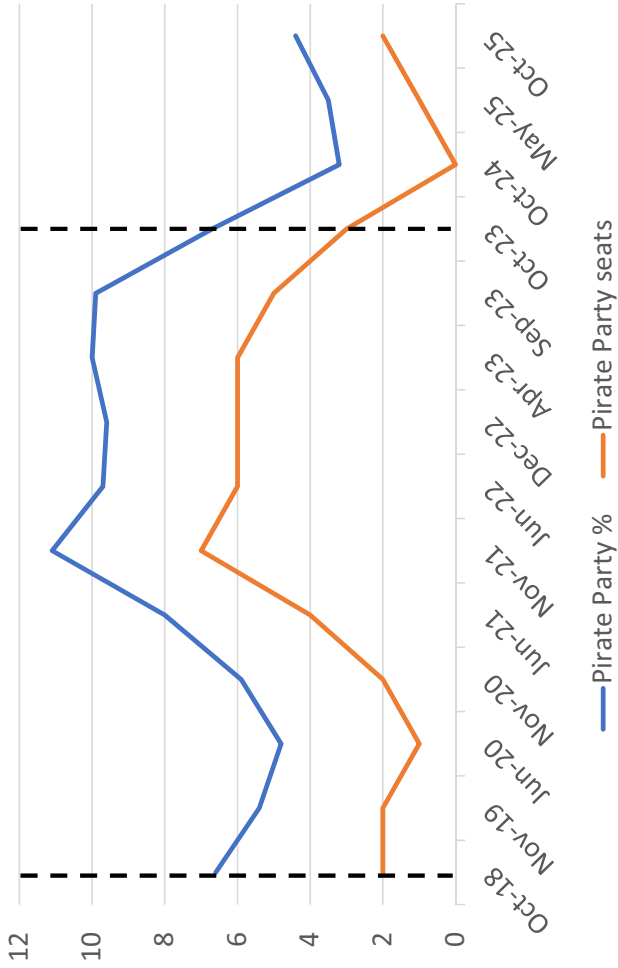


Fig. 1 Polling estimations and seat predictions, 2018–2025 (ILRES). Dotted lines represent actual electoral results in 2018 and 2023; ILRES surveys are reported at length in the main media outlets (RTL, Sonndestro; Wort, Politmonitor)



2015; Naxera 2023; Folvarčný and Kopeček 2024; Cirhan and Pršín 2025) than on demand-side dynamics (Erlingsson and Persson 2011; Zulianello 2020; Otjes 2020; Maškarinec 2020).

Cirhan and Pršín (2025) show that the Czech and Luxembourgish Pirate Parties arose without links to existing parties or social movements, making durable organization harder to build. Broader trends, such as the personalization of politics and the rise of intra-party democracy and online participation, have both challenged and defined these newcomers. From their inception, pirate parties embedded digital participation and equality norms into their structure (Bolleyer et al 2015). While this encouraged mobilization, internal tensions and dissatisfaction with online decision-making later undermined stability.

Drawing on social movement theory, Cammaerts (2015) identifies three factors shaping pirate parties: collective identity, internal efficacy, and external efficacy. As to collective identity, their weak ideological anchoring attracts diverse members but may also generate internal discord. From the internal efficacy perspective, participation-oriented organization boosts engagement, yet may breed frustration and informal hierarchies. Externally, while electorally weak, pirate parties have influenced debates on digital rights, privacy, and freedom of information through activism connected to initiatives like WikiLeaks and Anonymous. Overall, most supply-side research portrays pirate parties as hybrids combining anti-establishment protest with digital-democracy idealism (Demker 2014; Khutkyy 2019; Jääsaari and Hildén 2015).

On the demand side, pirate parties have been shown to attract voters disillusioned with traditional elites yet supportive of open, participatory politics. Two main explanations dominate: protest voting (Alvarez et al 2018) and issue voting (Rabinowitz and MacDonald 1989; Dennison 2019). Protest voting reflects rejection of mainstream options more than endorsement of pirate platforms, while issue voting centres on values such as transparency, privacy, and participatory democracy. Depending on the cases studied and the methodologies applied, findings on the demand-side differ, indicating that the interpretation of the pirate vote is far from obvious: some find issue voting stronger (Erlingsson and Petersson 2011), while others stress a new digital-rights cleavage (Demker 2014). Otjes (2020) concludes that both protest and issue voting account for voting for pirates in his comparative analysis of 11 pirate parties; however, this electoral choice is primarily driven by the age of the survey respondent, then by political distrust, while support for cyberlibertarian issues only ranks third.

Methods

Our analysis of supply side factors relies on various sources such as the formal statutes of the party, its webpages, its activities as recorded on Luxembourg's parliament website and reported on by the media. We further analyse the evolution of the PPL's basic programme up to its most recent version for the 2023 national election, and other electoral campaign material. Finally, we benefit from the deployment of a candidate-based voting advice application in Luxembourg to track the party's positions on specific policy issues and place the PPL on a two-dimensional space.



Crucially, this data provides us with unique material to investigate the PPL's degree of internal cohesion, with an emphasis on the divergences between the two leading figures of the party. Such a systematic analysis is rare in the study of new or small parties' candidates, because this kind of information is notoriously harder to collect for these parties.

In the empirical assessment of the demand side, we refrain from considering the PPL in isolation. Rather, we first inspect how PPL support correlates with that of all other parties represented in parliament. This helps uncover attitudinal clustering and potential cross-party protest dynamics. Second, we also investigate demand for challenger parties in Luxembourg, thus considering the PPL but also its left (*déi Lénk*) and right (*ADR*) alternatives, in order to situate it with respect to its markedly ideologically different competitors with regard to protest and issue voting. We perform multivariate regressions model to analyse individual-level determinants of PTV for the PPL and these other two parties. Our variables of interest are protest voting indicators (such as political alienation and indifference) and issue/ideology-based factors, and we control for a variety of socio-demographic variables. This modelling strategy allows for quantifying the independent associations of each factor with potential Pirate Party support and compare these relations with those of the two other challenger parties.

The analyses are based on data from a representative pre-electoral survey conducted in 2023 ($n=1,544$). The key dependent variable is the propensity to vote (PTV) for each party, measured on a 1–7 scale, where respondents indicate how likely they are to vote for each party. This approach captures the breadth of potential support, overcoming the limitations posed by small actual voting numbers for new or minor parties in survey samples.

Analysis

Supply-side factors

Party organization–internal efficacy

The PPL was founded in 2009 by Sven Clement and Jerry Weyer, two young tech enthusiasts supported by members of the German Pirate Party. Neither had prior electoral experience, and the new party emerged not from a split or a social movement but from frustration with Luxembourg's traditional parties, viewed as opaque and undemocratic (Kies 2012). Inspired by the Swedish Pirates' 2009 European success, the founders aimed to launch a digital-era party committed to transparency and participation.

As the first political party in Luxembourg to fully integrate online tools for communication and organization, the PPL reflected the broader transformation of party politics toward digital mediation. Yet while the internet lowered organizational costs, it could not replace traditional structures or deliver stable mobilization. The party adopted a hybrid model combining conventional hierarchies (president, vice-president) with limited participatory features, reflecting broader trends in modern



party politics (Scarrow et al 2022). Clement served as president until 2019, when a new collective leadership replaced him following his election to parliament. Subsequent reforms further flattened the structure on paper, but real power remained centralized. Membership grew modestly, from 14 founders to about 650 by 2023—a low number relative to other parliamentary parties despite minimal fees and Luxembourg’s prosperity. The party reached the public funding threshold early (2013) and therefore faced limited pressure to expand or professionalize its base. Over time, the management of these funds and dependence on a small leadership team created internal dissatisfaction and later scandals.

Unlike some European pirate parties that experimented participatory models like liquid democracy (Folvarčný and Kopeček, 2025), the PPL never integrated such processes into its decision-making. Nevertheless, it developed a number of interactive tools, the most successful of which being a website allowing the public to suggest parliamentary questions to its elected MPs.⁶ This online tool highlights the party’s modest commitment to participatory culture. In parallel, the party, its leaders and candidates have made ample use of the internet and social media to communicate and widen their electoral appeal (Léonard 2018), but this digital activism did not fundamentally change internal dynamics.⁷

Beneath its formally horizontal design, the PPL evolved into a highly personalized organization dominated by Clement and, from 2012 onwards and more markedly since 2017–2018, Marc Goergen, who shared leadership roles and public visibility. Both used social media intensively and cultivated distinct personal brands, generating unprecedented online reach for a small party but also deepening asymmetries of influence. Their prominence brought electoral success but undermined collective governance, as their diverging styles and constituencies fostered internal factions. Contrary to what its leaders have stated in interviews for the media or academics (Cirhan and Pršín 2025) the PPL underwent and overcame some shocks that tested its durability. Contrary to its German sister party, these internal conflicts were not triggered by a high level of participatory, intra-party democracy, but rather concerned diverging strategies at the top for the conduct and evolution of the party.

Early disputes occurred in 2014–2015, when several founders of the Northern constituency branch of the party aimed at ousting the then vice-president Goergen. Later ones revolved around candidate selection for the 2018 and 2019 elections, where alliances with other minor parties and top-down decisions alienated early members. These tensions exposed the discrepancy between the PPL’s participatory ideals and its centralized decision-making. Another major rift followed the 2018 decision of the top of the party to form a technical parliamentary group with the populist, national-conservative ADR—a pragmatic step for greater resources and institutional visibility but one that blurred the party’s ideological profile and gener-

⁶ 188 questions have been submitted and 105 adopted since May 2019. URL: <https://lb.fro.lu/> (Last accessed March 7, 2025).

⁷ In 2022, the news website Reporter.lu revealed that the PPL was the party that had spent the most of social media advertisements in the preceding three years. In addition to spending much more (60,000 euros) than the Greens in government or the national-conservative ADR in opposition, which ranked second and third, the Pirates used more than one third of this budget to promote the social media pages of their most prominent representatives (RTL Today 2022).



ated disillusionment among activists and voters. This purely strategic and pragmatic move triggered much confusion and a sense of deception among members and supporters about the PPL's actual ideological identity (Kies et al 2019; 191). This collaboration with the ADR ended in 2019, once a reform of parliamentary 'political sensibilities' improved their funding.

Finally, internal power struggles were re-ignited in 2024. In June 2024, national media reported that the Pirate Party of Luxembourg had mismanaged public funds awarded for a 2015 EU- and state-supported project to develop a Luxembourgish-learning app for Arabic-speaking asylum seekers. Then still outside parliament but seeking revenue beyond limited public funding, the party won contracts worth €207,000, with companies linked to founders Sven Clement and Jerry Weyer, but also other members', carrying most of the work. Although the app was completed, an audit uncovered major accounting irregularities, including insufficient justification for extensive payments. The responsible government agency demanded repayment of roughly €90,000 and, after the party refused, the European Public Prosecutor's Office froze €25,000 of its assets. The ensuing public dispute between the current leading figures Clement and Goergen—marked by accusations of bullying, authoritarianism, and blurred boundaries between party and private financial interests—exposed longstanding problems of amateurish accounting and weak organizational oversight—largely undermined the party's credibility in the public eye and further damaging its internal cohesion. Since the public outpouring of the two leaders also had strategic, stylistic and ideological sources (see below), the controversy triggered a cascade of resignations, beginning with newly elected MP Ben Polidori and followed by roughly half of the party's local representatives, plunging the PPL into an existential crisis.

Whilst late 2024 statutes reforms were presented by party leaders as efforts to reconcile the party's founding principles of horizontal, participatory organization with internal practices that had increasingly concentrated decision-making within a small inner circle, such changes seemed unlikely to offset the severe reputational damage sustained by a party whose electoral strategy relies heavily on valence issues such as transparency, accountability, and modern organizational practices.

Ideological ambiguity and intra-party cohesiveness—collective identity

Pirate parties typically acted as agenda setters on digitalization and transparency, and the PPL was initially no exception. Its 2009 basic programme focused almost exclusively on core pirate issues—privacy, copyright reform, government transparency, and opposition to censorship—expanding only slightly in the following years to include democratic reform, neutrality of the state, and environmental protection. By 2012, additional sections on migration, gender, and social policy were introduced, but the party's ideological orientation remained diffuse.

Over time, the PPL's manifestos grew dramatically in scope. The 2023 programme spanned more than 150 pages, devoting only a sheer 6 percent of total content to its original digital themes and moving some of its earlier owned issues, such as citizen participation down in the ranking of their prioritized themes. Mainstream issues such as taxation, housing, mobility, and healthcare now dominated, giving



the Pirates a platform almost indistinguishable from conventional parties if some hobby horse issues of figures who recently emerged in the party, such as animal rights, old age care and drugs policy did not make it among the ten first sections of their manifesto. This broadening diluted their distinctiveness and further obscured ideological coherence.

Luxembourg’s Pirates generally reject left–right classifications, claiming instead to represent a pragmatic, socially liberal centre. Their leaders, Clement and Goergen, describe themselves as “radical centrists who borrow good ideas from both sides” (Berthol and Molitor 2023), and that their pragmatism would allow them to collaborate with all four large parties of the country, but would not work with *déi Lénk* nor the ADR, that they consider extremist.⁸ Yet such self-characterization masks an internal fragmentation that extends beyond broad ideological labels.⁹

Figure 2 shows that, based on data of smartwielen’s (Luxembourg’s voting advice application–VAA–for the 2023 elections) smartmap, the PPL appears to be close to the centre (though rather centre-left) on a socio-economic dimension and more on the liberal side in terms of societal values. As such, it stands closer to the DP on both dimensions, and to the CSV on the socio-economic divide than to any of the two

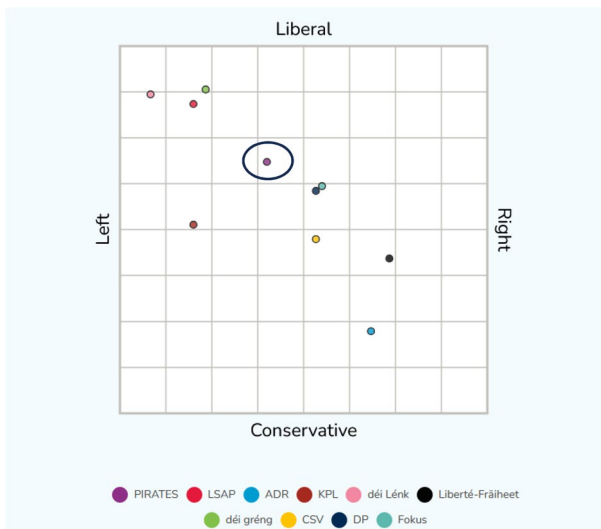


Fig. 2 Smartmap of the smartwielen voting advice application implemented for the national elections in 2023. The horizontal axis (x-axis) represents 15 questions that correspond to the left–right dimension. These are mainly questions about the role of the state and the market in the economy, private property, and the redistribution of wealth. The vertical axis (y) represents 20 questions on cultural and societal themes. The axis shows the differences between conservative and liberal views. For more information see methodology section on <https://2023.smartwielen.lu/>

⁸ Clement recently pointed out that they were young and naïve at the time of their 2018–2019 collaboration with the ADR, and that it had taught them a lesson (Berthol and Molitor 2023).

⁹ The PPL campaign statement on smartwielen 2023 added that they ‘described themselves as a progressive, participatory and social-liberal party’. In turn, its 2024 version (for the European election) only stucked to their political priorities (<https://2023.smartwielen.lu/en/profiles/party/7;> <https://2024.smartwielen.lu/en/profiles/party/13>).



mainstream left parties. Its left position on the liberal-conservative dimension tends to put closer to the radical left challenger party than to the ADR.

This unique data from the 2023 smartwielen voting advice application further reveal the PPL as the least cohesive party in parliament, with only 86 percent agreement between candidates and official party positions, while all other parties displayed an average of 90 per cent. Furthermore, standard deviations of candidates' positions indicate that they mainly differ on the socio-economic left–right dimension, and less on the liberal-conservative one. This overall weak cohesion level stemmed only in part from rapid candidate turnover and the recruitment of politically diverse newcomers, creating a “political supermarket” of clashing profiles.¹⁰ Despite leaders framing that level of divergence—which was actually already largely present in previous elections—as pluralism, this diversity undermines collective identity, producing inconsistencies both within policy stances and between leadership factions.

These divisions are most evident at the top of the party. Clement and Goergen—its dual standard-bearers—differed on roughly one-fifth of all issues in 2023, often on value-based questions such as adoption rights, language policy, and migration. This same rate of about 80 per cent agreement between the two was also obtained in 2018 and 2013, confirming the image of a forced marriage between two different kinds of Pirates. Goergen consistently occupied more conservative ground, opposing multilingual education and more inclusive citizenship measures, whereas Clement leaned toward liberal positions. This recurring pattern since 2013 reflects two competing Pirate identities: one entrepreneurial and libertarian,¹¹ the other rooted in local conservatism. The result is persistent ideological ambiguity and a chronic absence of internal cohesion that continues to impede the PPL's maturation as a unified political actor.

Party activism–external efficacy and populism

The early success of the Pirate Party of Luxembourg rested on its activist spirit and capacity to use unconventional initiatives to draw public attention to issues of transparency, openness, and citizens' control over politics. Before entering parliament, the party demonstrated high external efficacy through actions that resonated with its digital-democracy ideals. Initiatives such as Depuwatch.lu in 2011 directly pressured the Chamber of Deputies to disclose MPs' attendance, while the “Medicoleak affair” thrust data protection and privacy to the centre of public debate. Clement's pioneering 2014 public petition on student aid showcased the party's ability to turn institutional innovation into political visibility.

¹⁰ Interestingly, socio-demographic statistics for the 2018 elections showed that the PPL lists contained the lowest number of public servants (12 out of 60—similar to DP and ADR; up to 27 for CSV) and a high number of private sector workers (24), but also a comparatively high number of students (6, like the Greens and close to *déi Lénk*). Overall, the profile of PPL candidates in 2018 borrowed characteristics of both markedly left *and* right parties on the socio-economic and liberal-conservative dimensions, rather than characteristics of candidates of the more centrist parties (Hennebert 2018; see also Valgarðsson et al. 2026, in this collection).

¹¹ Even more clearly visible in the profile of co-founder Weyer than Clement's.



Once represented in parliament, the PPL's activism became institutionalized but remained highly visible. Both of the MPs elected in 2018 are the most active question submitters ever since—each accounting for well over 10 percent of all parliamentary questions put together—using procedural tools to symbolically underscore transparency deficits and government inefficiency.¹² When it became known at the end of 2019 that the RTL media group would relocate part of its activities from Luxembourg to Germany, Sven Clement asked PM and Media minister, Xavier Bettel, for parliament to be allowed to read the agreement between RTL and the Luxembourg state. Upon refusal, Clement took it to court. Clement's court victory in 2021, the so-called "Arrêt Clement", strengthened MP oversight rights, while his work on lobbying transparency and opposition to corporate opacity reinforced the party's reputation for moral integrity. This consistent activity, coupled with Clement's fact-based opposition during the pandemic, turned him into one of the country's most popular politicians (the most popular of the whole opposition) and enhanced the party's external legitimacy far beyond its size.

At the same time, the PPL's communication style gradually shifted from that of a political start-up made of reasonable and competent technocrats criticizing traditional parties and their old ideologies for not having answers for present and future societal challenges toward clearer signs of populism. While it long defined itself as anti-establishment and pragmatic, by the late 2010s it increasingly borrowed populist rhetoric centred on moral reform, opposition to political elites, and defence of "ordinary citizens" against bureaucratic waste and nepotism. Campaign slogans such as "Don't trust any election promises" in 2018 and "No corruption" in 2023 epitomized this evolution, while attacks on rivals—particularly the Greens and *déi Lénk*—signalled a harder-edged tone. Figures like Marc Goergen, whose confrontational and personalized communication contrasted with Clement's more moderate stance, amplified this populist style. Social media became a key stage for their performance-oriented politics, blending moralising and anti-elite appeals with popular cultural references and irreverent humour.¹³

Empirical assessments support this interpretation. Analyses of Chapel Hill 2019 expert survey data (Jolly et al. 2022) show the PPL as Luxembourg's party with the highest level of anti-establishment and "people versus elites" discourse, though without the ideological radicalism found in the ADR. This situates the Pirates within what Zulianello (2020) terms "valence populism": a hybrid form of populism centred on non-positional issues like transparency, fairness, and competence, rather than on fixed ideological divides (see also Svatoňová et al 2026, and their discussion of technopopulism in this collection). The PPL's centrist but flexible stance, appealing to disparate voter segments, proves electorally advantageous in a fragmented environment while contributing to its internal incoherence. Its continued focus on

¹² In comparison, since 2023 the leaders of parliamentary groups of other opposition parties only accounted for 3.5 percent (Greng, *déi Lénk*, ADR) or less (LSAP) of all parliamentary questions, recording a level of activity about 4 times lower than that of the leaders of the PPL.

¹³ Notable evidence of escalation on social media came with some officials' response to investigatory pieces in the press on the Pirates' internal organization, characterising these as "fake news" (Bumb and Wirth 2019) or personal attacks against left parties' figures on animal welfare themes which degenerated into death threats (Thomas 2023).



activism and populist communication thus remains the key to both its political success and its structural fragility.

Demand side factors

Before the PPL reached parliamentary representation in 2018, several developments had shaken up Luxembourg's long-standing party system stability and created fertile ground for both issue-based and protest-driven support for new political actors. By 2009, Luxembourg's party system had long been dominated by the CSV, supported by a stable coalition pattern with either the Socialists or the Liberals, and two challenger parties (The Greens and the ADR) were represented in parliament. The PPL was created at a moment of growing disaffection with established elites. Rooted in the international pirate movement and drawing on the latter's ready-made platform on issues of privacy, copyright, and digital rights, PPL founders anticipated potential success for anti-establishment politics capitalizing on a widening gap between citizens and mainstream parties—signalled by the unexpectedly tight 2005 referendum on the European Constitution—and the broader climate of dissatisfaction following the 2008 financial crisis. Although the 2009 elections were overshadowed by the global financial crisis, actually favouring continuity and experienced leadership, support for non-parliamentary parties, old and new, also increased, and the radical left *déi Lénk* managed to win a seat back in the Chamber.

Between 2009 and the PPL's first electoral participation in 2013, dissatisfaction with established parties deepened. A series of political and judicial scandals involving the CSV-led government, culminating in the intelligence-service affair that led to the resignation of PM Juncker, eroded trust in institutions and raised the issue of transparency of the state. The early 2013 election—triggered by these dysfunctions—thus provided a context in which protest voting became increasingly plausible, even if it did not yet translate into seats for the PPL. Instead, a one-seat majority coalition that excluded the CSV and included, for the first time, The Greens was formed. This rather unexpected coalition had a reformist agenda that eventually hurt it, as evidenced by its defeat in the 2015 referendum on foreigner voting rights. In 2018, PPL's unexpected win of two seats did build on this declining satisfaction among younger voters and disenchantment with governing alternatives, but also amid renewed attention to data privacy triggered by the Cambridge Analytica scandal and a domestic cybersecurity controversy.

Taken together, these developments and the 2023 outcome (where PPL plateaued and the more radical challenger ADR did better than expected) would largely support the sequential pattern posited by Alvarez et al (2018) according to which voters dissatisfied with the status quo first shift toward untried yet mainstream alternatives to incumbent parties, and, once these prove disappointing in office, increasingly turn to challenger and eventually more radical options. Still, we saw that both elements of protest and issue voting could have been at play.



Who would vote for Luxembourg's Pirate Party?

Moving towards an analysis which will allow us to disentangle the respective effects of issue and protest voting in PPL support, we first situate the level of demand for the party, in comparison with others. First, grouping average PTV scores by party electorate reveals that Pirate voters attributed the lowest propensity-to-vote to their preferred party in the 2023 pre-electoral survey (5.4)—See Graph 1.A in the appendix.¹⁴ Following Dassonneville and Hooghe (2018), this result would indicate that PPL voters were the most alienated from Luxembourg's party system at large. Indeed, if we look at the 15 per cent of respondents who indicate no positive inclination towards voting for any party on offer, we find that the single party's eventual electorate (among parties represented in parliament) for which this group is overrepresented is that of the Pirate Party. Second, inspecting the correlations between PTVs for each of the parties, we find that propensities to vote for the Pirate Party show no statistically significant relationship with any governing coalition parties (Greens, Socialists, Liberals), nor for the main opposition CSV—See Graph 2.A in the appendix. Contrary to ADR and déi Lénk that display expected significant negative or positive correlations with left and right mainstream parties, the Pirate Party's PTVs only significant correlations emerge with those of the two “fringe” parties—showing positive relationships with both ADR (national-conservative) and déi Lénk (radical left). This would indicate that PPL supporters could vote for any of the alternatives to the mainstream parties, indicating that they are more driven by a rejection of establishment politics than by ideology.

Following Otjes (2020), our regression analyses aim at disentangling the effects of issue and protest voting, here on the propensity to vote for the PPL or one of other two challenger parties in Luxembourg. We test 13 predictors grouped into protest voting (five variables), issue/ideology voting (five variables). The protest voting factors include political alienation, lack of representational choice,¹⁵ and internal political efficacy (self-assessed political competence).¹⁶ These capture nuanced dimensions of dissatisfaction and efficacy informed by classic political theory of political efficacy (Campbell et al 1954) and the political support literature (Easton 1965). The issue bloc includes left–right ideology, views on taxing higher incomes (typical for déi Lénk), language requirements for public jobs (ADR), and surveillance camera expansion (Pirates).¹⁷ A novel “democracy renewal” index—support for participatory democratic mechanisms.¹⁸ This democracy renewal index comple-

¹⁴They are followed by ADR voters, giving an average of 5.6 out of 7 to the ADR, and déi Lénk (6.2, the same score as the Greens, which is also the highest average PTV across all electorates), with the mainstream parties' electorates rank in between that of the ADR and déi Lénk's.

¹⁵The statement “parties are so similar that it does not matter who I vote for” used here tapping on both dissatisfaction with existing parties but also the meaninglessness of elections.

¹⁶Operationalized by the item “I feel that I have a pretty good understanding of the important political issues facing our country”.

¹⁷Formulation of the questions: 1) Should higher incomes be taxed more? 2) Should knowledge of two of the three official languages (Luxembourgish, French and German) be sufficient for access into the public service? 3) Should the number of surveillance cameras in public places be increased?

¹⁸See the construction of that scale in appendix.



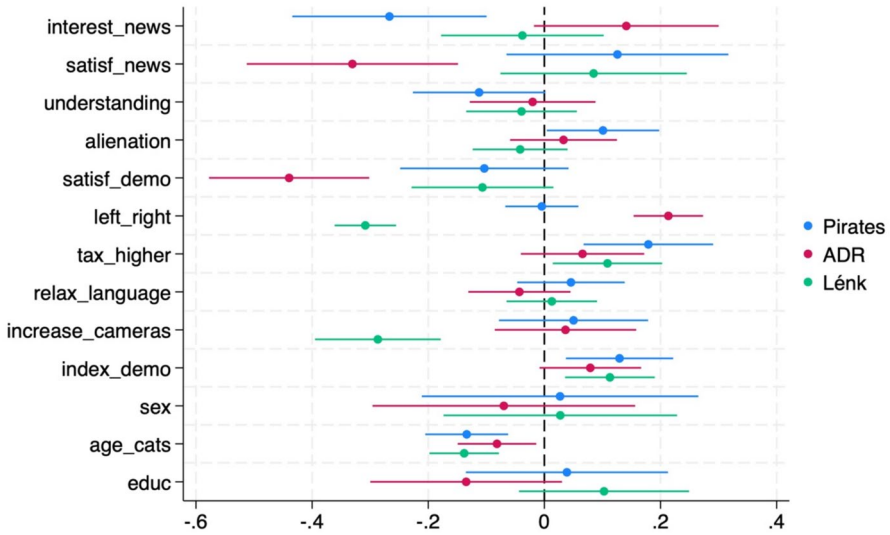


Fig. 3 Vote choice determinants for the 2023 national elections. Regression coefficients and standard errors; dependent variable is the PTV (scale from 1 “not at all probable to vote” to 7 “very probable to vote”) for the Pirates, the ADR, and déi Lénk; 2023 national election pre-electoral survey (n=around 800); all variables are coded so that higher values represent “positive”, “more” or “agreement with” options; the constant term was omitted from the figure

ments the attitudes towards the different parties’ ‘owned’ issue and respondents’ left–right ideological leanings. We control for age, sex and education level, and refer to results when also including a household revenue question, which would reduce the size of the sample if integrated in our main model. Regarding age, existing research point to it as significant predictor of pirate party support, with younger voters more likely to choose pirate parties; we also know that pirate parties’ voters tend to be male, while education level returns inconsistent results which may be due to the young age of the party supporters (a number of them not having yet completed high education levels).

Figure 3 shows the combined results of our three regression analyses (one for each party). A first observation is that this model only accounts for 9 percent of the variation in the Pirates’ PTV, whilst it explains twice as much for the ADR and even close to 30 percent for the Lénk.¹⁹

The two first variables of the model, on top of Fig. 3, record respondents’ interest in following the news and whether they are satisfied with the way journalists convey the news. Whilst propensity to vote for the radical left (in green) is not significantly affected by any of the two, respondents with a low interest in the news are much more likely to declare that they could vote for the Pirates (in blue) than those who would support the ADR (in red), for instance. This is somehow counterintuitive, given pirate parties’ take on the importance of a well-informed citizenry able to think critically, their stance on freedom of information etc. Conversely, being dis-

¹⁹The lowest R² recorded for the same regressions on mainstream parties’ PTVs was .15.



satisfied with the news treatment by professional journalists is significantly related to being likely to vote for the ADR, suggesting that those respondents express and stronger distrust to the traditional media institutions, which is generally associated with protest voting. Indeed, distrust in professional journalism, particularly when fueled by misinformation, contributes to a broader climate of political cynicism. This environment often aligns with increased support for protest or populist parties as voters seek alternative ways to express their dissatisfaction with the status quo (Ognyanova et al 2020).

Moving downwards in the figure, we see that those who are most likely to support the PPL acknowledge have little confidence in their ability to understand or shape mainstream politics (low internal efficacy) that they do not have a good understanding of the political issues at stake. They also have a negative view of the representational responsiveness of existing parties, considering elections, the institutionalized mechanism of representative democracy, as meaningless (political alienation as one dimension of external efficacy). Both of these factors have a significant effect on Pirates' PTVs, even when controlling for the more classical 'satisfaction with democracy' measure of external efficacy, whilst none of the other parties displays such a significant relationship. For that indicator of dissatisfaction with system responsiveness, we see that the relation with all of the three challenger parties' PTVs is, as expected, negative, but for the Pirates (and déi Lénk) this is not a significant predictor. The analysis of this bloc of variables provides rich information: on the one hand, Pirates' PTV evolve in line with four of the five indicators of protest voting; for three of these (low interest, low understanding and high alienation), this relationship is significant. For the ADR we observe that it is for the two other, institutional and regime-focused factors (dissatisfaction with media treatment and with democracy) that discontent comes about. For déi Lénk, none of our indicators of protest voting have a significant effect on PTV levels.

The five following variables pertain to broad ideological divisions and policy issue-specific motivations for the formation of political preferences and electoral choices. First, we see that the general left–right dimension does not affect the propensity to vote for the Pirates. This constitutes a clear difference with both the ADR and déi Lénk for which this subjective broad ideological positioning matters, as the more voters take a rightist position, the more they are likely to vote for the ADR and less for the radical left. This result is in line with the absence of clear ideological line of pirate parties in general. Second, and contrary to our expectations, a clear relationship between parties' PTV and respondents' positions on specific issues that are salient to the respective parties does not emerge from our analysis: only a positive view on taxing higher incomes is as expected significantly related to a higher PTV for the Lénk; conversely, Pirates' PTVs are not significantly affected by respondents' answers on the proposal of increasing surveillance cameras—even worse, on this core issue of the PPL, we see respondents who are likely to vote for the party taking an opposite position on the matter.

Only on the third element of this ideological-issue voting bloc do we see a clearer link between potential support for the PPL and the reforms which are part and parcel of their policy agenda. More positive assessments of the alternatives to traditional representative democracy presented to respondents lead to significantly higher vot-



ing propensity for the Pirates. It is also the case for déi Lénk, whilst it does not reach significance levels for the ADR's PTVs (the latter is a vocal supporter of referenda but does not support some of the other mechanisms proposed). Hence, it is only this novel factor which can, given its democratic model topic, be seen as bridging the protest and issue voting debate for the determinants of voting intentions for Pirate parties that displays convincing results, contrary to purer issue- or ideological-based explanations.

Altogether, our results clearly show that propensities to vote for the radical left party match the issue voting (and, more broadly, the Downsian ideological proximity voting model) expectations, whilst those of the ADR respond on the one hand, to the more classical measures of protest voting (dissatisfaction with democracy and with one of its core institutions) and the broad ideological left–right dimension. In comparison with the results for the long-standing challenger parties, PPL support relies on less straightforward factors related to each of the two explanations. What we see is that voters who are less interested in the news, who have little confidence in their ability to understand or shape mainstream politics (low internal efficacy), and feel politically alienated from the existing party system may signal their discontent through an “expressive protest vote” (Rooduijn et al 2016). In this sense, such voters may support challenger parties that positively push for democratic reforms but avoid voting for those they perceive, even with their limited knowledge of politics, as too extreme alternatives (too far left or far right from them) on day-to-day politics.

Finally, among our socio-demographic control variables we find that sex and education do not matter for the propensity to vote for Luxembourg's Pirates. The latter variable is close to significance for the ADR, as less educated voters are significantly more likely to vote for that party. For all three challenger parties on Luxembourg's political scene we find that younger respondents are likely to give higher PTVs, but this phenomenon seems to be due to their propensity of giving all parties ‘the benefit of the doubt’, whilst older voters on the other hand do not hesitate to express their more entrenched likes and dislikes for political parties when responding to the party-specific PTV questions.²⁰

Conclusion

This study provides a comprehensive examination of Luxembourg's Pirate Party, integrating voter behaviour and party organizational dynamics to understand its rise and position within Luxembourg's political landscape up to 2025.

²⁰ Using the actual party for in a logit model instead of linear regression on PTVs, we indeed find that age is no longer significant for any of the three parties. This is an interesting result as bivariate relations showed that, as in other research on pirate parties, younger voters were more likely to vote for the PPL. While we could not replicate the full 2023 model and run it on 2018 data –not the least because that survey did not contain PTV questions– we could nevertheless find similarities with the 2023 results for several variables across the protest and issue voting blocs by using actual vote for the PPL as dependent variable. One socio-demographic factor stood out in comparison with our 2023 results and other research on pirate parties however, as respondents with lower education levels were significantly more likely to vote for the Pirates in 2018.



On the demand side, the analysis highlights a nuanced interplay between protest and issue voting as drivers of support. PPL supporters exhibit clear signs of political alienation, low internal efficacy, and dissatisfaction with established parties, consistent with protest voting theories. Yet, their attitudes are not simply anti-establishment; they generally endorse professional journalism and occupy a centrist ideological space. Contrary to traditional Pirate Party voter profiles, PPL supporters show limited alignment with core issues such as digital privacy. Instead, their support is linked to positive evaluations of participatory democratic reforms like citizens' assemblies and electronic petitions, signalling an evolving issue agenda that bridges protest motives with preferences for democratic innovation.

On the supply side, the PPL's organizational structure and leadership dynamics provide important complementary insights. Unlike many decentralized pirate parties, the PPL's destiny has been strongly shaped by its two charismatic co-leaders, who embody contrasting ideological and strategic orientations. This centralized leadership style initially helped broaden the party's appeal by offering diverse entry points to voters but also introduced tensions in defining a cohesive party identity. The prominence of these leaders, mediated through social media, also functioned as both an asset in outreach and a source of internal strain, underscoring leadership's critical role in shaping party cohesion and public perception. Eventually, the 2024 party crisis triggered by financial irregularities and fuelled by leadership conflicts revealed both the chronic organizational fragility of the party in managing resources and the inherent contradiction between the party's public commitment to openness and participatory principles and actual centralized decision-making. The future of Luxembourg's Pirate Party thereby also seems to depend in large part on the personal fate and decisions of its leaders, in addition to how the party manages to recover from this internal crisis and loss of credibility in the eyes of voters.

By adopting an integrated supply-and-demand perspective, this article advances understanding of the evolving nature of Pirate Parties in the digital age, demonstrating how issue agendas, voter attitudes, and internal governance structures jointly shape party success. Beyond the specific case of the PPL, the findings speak to wider theoretical debates on the boundaries between protest and issue voting, and the institutionalization of new political actors. The trajectory of Luxembourg's Pirate Party indeed illustrates both the opportunities and constraints faced by emerging parties as they seek to consolidate within established democracies, and how new political offers appear as electoral outlets for expressive protest, ideological moderation and issue innovation centred on democratic reform. Future research could extend this analysis by examining how institutional contexts—such as compulsory voting—condition the emergence and electoral viability of valence-oriented populist parties.

Appendix

Propensity to vote analyses

See Figs. 4 and 5.



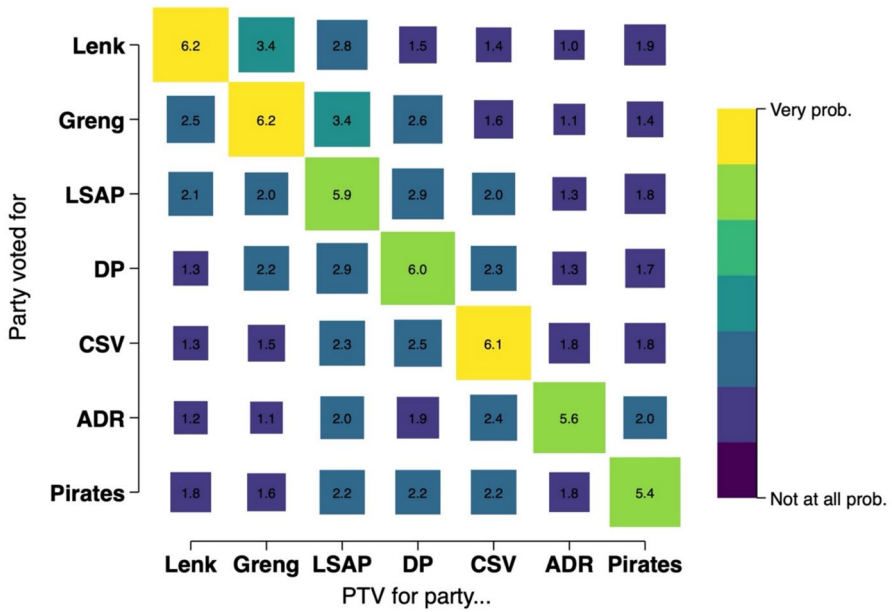


Fig. 4 A: Average propensities to vote (PTVs, here scale from 1 “not at all probable to vote” to 7 “very probable to vote”) as recorded in the pre-electoral wave, by party eventually voted for, as recorded in a post-electoral wave of a panel survey; all parties represented in Luxembourg’s parliament, 2023 national election (n=1,160)

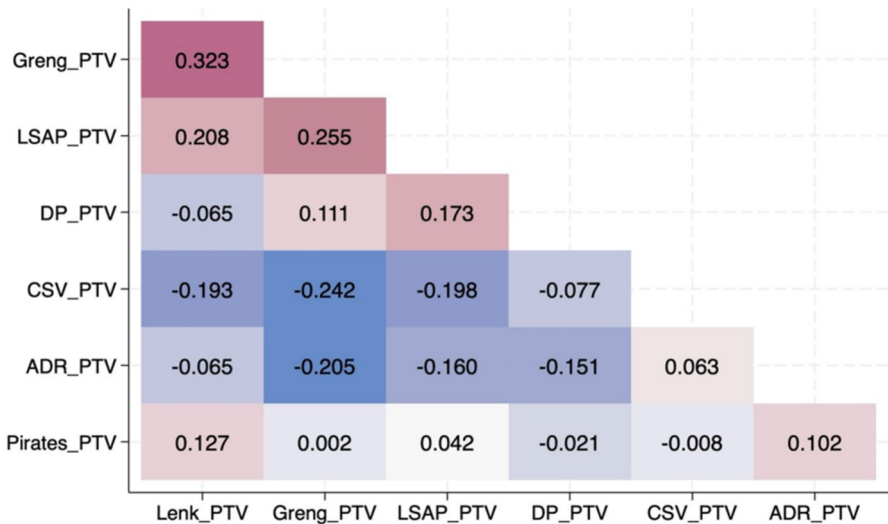


Fig. 5 A: Correlations between propensities to vote (PTVs, here scale from 1 “not at all probable to vote” to 7 “very probable to vote”) of all parties represented in Luxembourg’s parliament, 2023 national election (minimum n=1,544)



Construction of the democracy renewal index

The survey question was: “On a scale of 1 (‘very negative/harmful’) to 7 (‘very positive/useful’), how do you rate the impact of the following mechanisms on the quality of democracy?”.

The original battery of questions contained eight items. We selected five of them: 1) Chamber (of Deputies) e-petitions; 2) Collecting signatures for a popular initiative referendum; 3) Collecting signatures for a citizens’ legislative initiative (new constitution); 4) Citizens’ assemblies drawn by lot; 5) Participatory budgets.

We checked their scalability through Mokken analysis. Loevinger’s average H , as well as that of each of the components was higher than 0.5, which made for a strong scale. We added the responses and divided the results by 5 to arrive at an index from 1 to 7.

Unfortunately, as this variable was only measured in the post-electoral wave of our survey, due to attrition between the two waves of our panel survey (and to a lesser extent due to listwise deletion in creating this index), we lose about 200 survey respondents when running the model in Fig. 3. Our results for the other variables are nevertheless robust to the exclusion of this index and running the analysis on a sample of 1,000 voters instead of 800.

References

- Alvarez, R. M., D. R. Kiewiet, and L. Núñez. 2018. A taxonomy of protest voting. *Annual Review of Political Science* 21:135–154.
- Berthol, T. and Molitor, S. (2023) ‘Nous sommes des centristes radicaux’, *Virgule*, 21 June. Available at: <https://www.virgule.lu/luxembourg/sven-clement-nous-sommes-des-centristes-radicaux/1716323.html>, accessed 11 January 2025.
- Bolleyer, N., C. Little, and F.-C. von Nostitz. 2015. Implementing democratic equality in political parties: Organisational consequences in the Swedish and the German Pirate Parties. *Scandinavian Political Studies* 38 (2): 158–178.
- Bumb, C. and Wirth, C. (2019) ‘Die Kehrseite des Erfolgs der Piraten’, *Reporter*, 27 May. Available at: <https://www.reporter.lu/piratenpartei-luxemburg-die-kehrseite-des-erfolgs-der-piraten/>, accessed 15 June 2025.
- Cammaerts, B. 2015. Pirates on the liquid shores of liberal democracy: Movement frames of European Pirate Parties. *Javnost* 22 (1): 19–36.
- Campbell, A., Gurin, G. and Miller, W. (1954) *The voter decides*. Evanston, IL: Row & Peterson.
- Casal Bértoa, F., and P. Dumont, eds. 2022. *Party politics in European microstates*. New York: Routledge.
- Cirhan, T., and M. Pršín. 2025. Institutionalization of the Czech and Luxembourgish Pirate Parties: a comparative perspective. *Zeitschrift für Vergleichende Politikwissenschaft* 19: 1–37.
- Dassonneville, R., and M. Hooghe. 2018. Indifference and alienation: Diverging dimensions of electoral dealignment in Europe. *Acta Politica* 53 (1): 1–23.
- Demker, M. 2014. Sailing along new cleavages: Understanding the electoral success of the Swedish Pirate Party in the European Parliament election 2009. *Government and Opposition* 49 (2): 188–206.
- Dennison, J. 2019. A review of public issue salience: Concepts, determinants and effects on voting. *Political Studies Review* 17 (4): 436–446.
- Dumont, P., R. Kies, and D. Schmit. 2022. Party politics in Luxembourg: Stable, consensual and pragmatic. In *Party politics in European microstates*, ed. F. Casal Bértoa and P. Dumont, 121–145. New York: Routledge.
- Easton, D. 1965. *A framework for political analysis*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall.
- Erlingsson, G. Ó., and M. Persson. 2011. The Swedish Pirate Party and the 2009 European Parliament election: Protest or issue voting? *Politics* 31 (3): 121–128.



- Folvarčňý, A., and L. Kopeček. 2024. A digital party organisation? Evolution of the Czech Pirates. *East European Politics* 41 (1): 1–23.
- Hennebert, J.-M. (2018) ‘Ce que révèlent les listes des législatives 2018’, *Paperjam*, 13 September. Available at <https://paperjam.lu/article/news-ce-que-revelent-les-listes-des-legislatives-2018>, accessed 13 January 2025.
- Jääsaari, J. and J. Hildén. 2015. From file sharing to free culture. The evolving agenda of European pirate parties. *International Journal of Communication* 9: 870–889.
- Jolly, S., R. Bakker, L. Hooghe, G. Marks, J. Polk, J. Rovny, M. Steenbergen, and M. A. Vachudova. 2022. Chapel Hill expert survey trend file, 1999–2019. *Electoral studies* 75: 102420.
- Khutkyy, D. 2019. Pirate parties: The social movements of electronic democracy. *Journal of Comparative Politics* 12 (2): 49–68.
- Kies, R., D. Schmit, and P. Dumont. 2019. Luxembourg: Political developments and data in 2018. *European Journal of Political Research Political Data Yearbook* 58:184–193.
- Kies, R. (2012) ‘Le parti pirate: le parti des jeunes combattants’, *d’Lëtzeburger Land*, 13 January.
- Léonard, N. (2018) ‘Qui est vraiment Sven Clement, le patron des pirates’, *Paperjam*, 15 October.
- Maškarinec, P. 2020. Crossing the left–right party divide? Understanding the electoral success of the Czech Pirate Party in the 2017 parliamentary elections. *Politics* 40 (4): 510–526.
- Naxera, V. 2023. “Let us blow them down!”: Corruption as the subject of (non-)populist communication of the Czech Pirate Party. *Politics* 43 (4): 457–471.
- Ognyanova, K., D. Lazer, R. E. Robertson, and C. Wilson. 2020. Misinformation in action: Fake news exposure is linked to lower trust in media, higher trust in government when your side is in power. *Harvard Kennedy School Misinformation Review* 1 (4): 1–19.
- Otjes, S. 2020. All on the same boat? Voting for Pirate Parties in comparative perspective. *Politics* 40 (1): 38–53.
- Rabinowitz, G., and S. E. Macdonald. 1989. A directional theory of issue voting. *American Political Science Review* 83 (1): 93–121.
- Rooduijn, M., W. van der Brug, and S. L. de Lange. 2016. Expressing or fuelling discontent? The relationship between populist voting and political discontent. *Electoral Studies* 43:32–40.
- Sartori, G. 2005. *Parties and party systems: A framework for analysis*. Colchester: ECPR Press.
- Scarrow, S. E., P. D. Webb, and T. Poguntke. 2022. Intra-party decision-making in contemporary Europe: Improving representation or ruling with empty shells? *Irish Political Studies* 37 (2): 196–217.
- Svatoňová, E., Custodi, J. and Slačálek, O. (2026) Is There a Pirate Nation, and How Populist Is It? The Case of the Czech Pirates. *Comparative European Politics* XXX.
- RTL Today (2022) ‘Pirate Party spends the most on social media advertisements’, 26 January. Available at: <https://today.rtl.lu/news/luxembourg/a/1853307.html>, accessed 22 April 2025.
- Thomas, B. 2023. ‘Nei Gesiichter op neie Verpackungen’, *d’Lëtzeburger Land*, 8 September. Available at: <https://www.land.lu/page/article/785/340785/FRE/index.html>. Accessed 20 Apr 2025.
- Valgarðsson, V. O., Ómarsdóttir, S. B. and Önnudóttir, E. H. (2026) Pirates of the Atlantic: At a Decade’s End. *Comparative European Politics* XXX.
- Van de Wardt, M., and S. Otjes. 2022. Mind the gap: How party–voter incongruence fuels the entry and support of new parties. *European Journal of Political Research* 61 (1): 194–213.
- Wondreys, J. (2026) Green and pirate parties in second-order elections: alternative to the political mainstream and the far right? *Comparative European Politics* XXX.
- Zulianello, M. 2020. Varieties of populist parties and party systems in Europe: From state-of-the-art to the application of a novel classification scheme to 66 parties in 33 countries. *Government and Opposition* 55 (2): 327–347.

Publisher’s Note Springer Nature remains neutral with regard to jurisdictional claims in published maps and institutional affiliations.

Springer Nature or its licensor (e.g. a society or other partner) holds exclusive rights to this article under a publishing agreement with the author(s) or other rightsholder(s); author self-archiving of the accepted manuscript version of this article is solely governed by the terms of such publishing agreement and applicable law.



Raphael Kies is a Luxembourgish-Italian political scientist and researcher at the University of Luxembourg. He holds a PhD from the European University Institute in social and political sciences, specializing in online deliberation. Founder and director of the Luxembourg Platform for Participatory Democracy (PLDP), he coordinates projects like MediaLux and the Media Pluralism Monitor. His research focuses on democratic innovations, electoral studies (including Smartwielen since 2009), and media in Luxembourg. He serves on boards like Radio 100.7 and advises the Council of Europe on generative AI, as well as Parliament and other institutions.

Patrick Dumont is a senior researcher at the Luxembourg Institute of Socio-Economic Research (LISER), and Honorary Professor of political science at the Australian National University. He worked on this manuscript in the context of an FNR Inter Mobility In project (INTER/MOBILITY/2022/17569437/ Smartwielen). He is the co-editor of the Routledge Research on Social and Political Elites book series. He has published extensively on coalition politics, political elites, electoral campaigns and political representation in Europe and Australia.

Authors and Affiliations

Raphael Kies¹ · Patrick Dumont^{2,3}

✉ Raphael Kies
raphael.kies@uni.lu

Patrick Dumont
patrick.dumont@liser.lu; patrick.dumont@anu.edu.au

¹ Luxembourg Platform for Participatory Democracy (PLDP), Université du Luxembourg, 11, Porte des Sciences, L-4366 Esch-sur-Alzette / Belval, Grand Duchy of Luxembourg

² Luxembourg Institute of socio-Economic Research (LISER), 11, Porte des Sciences, L-4366 Esch-sur-Alzette / Belval, Grand Duchy of Luxembourg

³ School of Politics and International Relations (SPIR), Australian National University, 146 Ellery Crescent, Acton ACT 2601, Australia

