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New report warns that eroding faith in democracy fuels Europe's far-right surge



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As Europe's far-right political parties prepare to pounce on a frustrated electorate eager for change, research from global governance experts reveal what lies behind the wave of discontent. A new report based on the Berggruen Governance Index (BGI) shows how years of austerity-driven economic and social policies will likely result in far-right parties making substantial gains at the upcoming European Parliament Elections being held June 6-9.

The findings of "Right-wing Populism, the State, and Democracy: Governance Performance and the 2024 European Parliament Elections" are set to be released in Brussels on Tuesday (May 28), less than two weeks before Europeans begin casting their ballots. The report was conducted by researchers from the University of California Los Angeles (UCLA) in co-operation with the Los Angeles-based Berggruen Institute and the Hertie School, a university in Berlin, Germany.

The report details how the far-right shift is being driven by diminishing democratic accountability and waning state capacity. According to the report, both developments can be traced to the lingering effects of the global financial crisis and the Eurocrisis, which resulted in austerity measures and budget cuts that continue to be felt within regions across Europe.

To avoid what the report's authors describe as a "vicious cycle" of far-right gains, governments are urged to put an end to austerity policies that are increasing polarization and weakening Europe's institutions. However, its warnings are likely too late to stem the tide of an expected surge in right-wing support when polls open across Europe.

But to improve Europe's long-term outlook, the BGI-based report says that in order to drive growth, reduce inequalities, and tackle the dual challenges of climate change and migration, governments need to take action to increase economic productivity and must deliver on public policy promises.

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