This handbook describes the main characteristics of party families. It serves as a basis for categorizing parties in the Manifesto Project Dataset.
The Manifesto Project groups parties and political alliances into party families. The party families are approximations and merely serve as an orientation for Manifesto Project data users. The party family assignment is kept constant for all entries of one party, i.e. a party cannot belong to different party families at different points in time. In most cases the party family is kept stable at the value a party was originally assigned too, only in rare cases where a party drastically changes its positions, is the assignment re-assessed and if needed changed. If that is done the change is applied to the party at all observations in the Manifesto Project Dataset.

The party family categories were developed based on the original countries included in the Manifesto Project Dataset, i.e. mostly European countries, plus USA, Canada, Australia, New Zealand, Japan, Turkey, and Israel. It has since then included other OECD countries from Asia, as well as Latin American countries and South Africa and attempted to account for some variations in categories since then. Different kinds of information can disclose a party’s party family. Mair and Mudde describe four approaches that can guide researchers in determining a party’s party family association: origin and sociology, international federations and transnational groupings, policy and ideology, and party name. To assign the party family code in the Manifesto Projects Dataset all these aspects are considered to get a rather robust grasp of the party family the respective party belongs to. Specifically, the following steps are taken to categorize each party:

1. Check whether the party is member of an international party association or a European party group, that gives information about the party’s ideology.
2. Check their origin, i.e. is the party a splinter, merger of another party/parties whose party family is known (sometimes, but rather seldom, there are also splits that go in line with a new ideology).
3. Check their name, this can give a very first, intuitive understanding of a party’s roots in a party family, however it can also be very misleading, therefore this information can only be considered in connection with the other approaches.
4. Determine their ideology according to the party’s programmatic profile.

The central programmatic ideas of the respective party families are indicated in the following list.

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2 An example is the Austrian FPÖ (42420), which was coded as liberal at the time of its foundation, but as this party is now clearly nationalist, the party family coding has been adapted.
5 Please note that the mentioned conditions are neither exclusive nor sufficient. They represent rather general guidelines for the programmatic classification of a party.
10 ECO Ecological parties

Central points of the party’s profile

• environmental protection
• principle of subsidiarity / regionalism (e.g. Grassroots democracy)
• peace / anti-war

Detailed explanation

• more references than other party families to environmental protection;
• emphasis on welfare state expansion;
• creation of a sustainable society rooted in environmentalism, social justice and grassroots democracy, subsidiarity principle whereby power/responsibility is exercised on the smallest unit and delegated upwards only when necessary;
• regionalism, relation to grassroots democracy as it favours a federal system instead of a unitary state with a strong central government;
• participatory democracy and minority politics: aim to represent minorities – not related to ideas of regional autonomy for the minorities;
• nonviolence: conviction that there is no need for hurting people, animals or the environment in order to attain one’s goals;
• international cooperation and dialogue instead of military intervention and war;
• orientation towards post-materialism.

20 LEF Socialist and other left parties

Central points of the party’s profile

• anti-capitalism / planned economy and state intervention in the economy
• anti-imperialism
• strong support of trade unions and the working class
• Communist or Socialist ideology
• social equality

Detailed explanation

• adherence to communist or socialist ideologies; welfare state expansion, anti-imperialism, anti-capitalism, planned economy, nationalization and collective ownership, redistribution, state intervention in the economy, policies in favour of trade unions and the working class, full social and economic equality, critique of economic elites;


• emphasis on environmental protection;
• priority of collective decision making over individual liberty;
• at times critique of “liberal” democracy but importance of democracy is stressed
• belief in cultural libertarianism.

Please note: This party family serves as a repository for all left-wing parties that do not fall into the Socialist category. Not every party in the Socialist party family must therefore follow Marxist philosophy.

30 SOC Social democratic parties

Central points of the party’s profile
• welfare state expansion
• mixed economy (rejection of an unregulated market and a centrally planned economy), social market economy
• redistribution through economic growth
• representative democracy

Detailed explanation
• great variety of social democratic parties ranging from those inclined to communist or socialist ideology, to those following a reformist stance, to those parties associated with neoliberal Third Way positions;
• generally, social democratic parties have (partially) abandoned Marxist ideology and now occupy the centre-left of the political spectrum;
• welfare state expansion is traditionally one of their policy priorities;
• traditionally importance of workers’ rights and labour standards, idea of prosperity through work, with safety net, equal access to education;
• social democrats favour a mixed economy, rejecting both an unregulated market and centrally planned economy;
• the idea of a regulated economy and fair welfare distribution is common: opposition to the negative effects of capitalism such as inequality and poverty (yet here, too, exist differences among social democratic parties as some prefer more neoliberal market systems);
• culturally liberal policies, combination of liberalism and socialism, personal freedom and material egalitarianism.

40 LIB Liberal parties

Central points of the party’s profile

- political and civil liberties
- free market / minimal state regulation
- neoliberal or neoclassical economic theory

Detailed explanation

- liberal democratic values, emphasis on democracy as a political system based on the ideas of free and fair elections, political and civil liberties, freedom of religion, but also secularism, human rights;
- individual freedom, personal choice and privacy: minimal state control over the individual and private matters (e.g. right to abortion, euthanasia, LGBT rights, data security, low taxes);
- most parties favour a market economy with minimal state regulation and champion free trade (they adhere to neoclassical economic theory – "laissez faire");
- in support of a strong and decentralized European Union, and in favour of international cooperation;
- right-wing economic stances and centre-left cultural positioning (this can vary between countries).

50 CHR Christian democratic parties

Central points of the party’s profile

- Christian values (e.g. high value of the family)
- regulated market economy
- support of social policies

Detailed explanation

- Christian democratic parties combine Christian (traditionally Catholic) values (e.g. traditional gender roles, rejection of abortion, solidarity) and modern democratic ideas; religious identity but belief in secularization;
- traditionally for welfare state expansion and social policies, state has a regulating function in the economy to assist those who cannot help themselves; capitalist elements of economic growth, private property, and initiative but some degree of regulation, social market economy, support of trade unions; critical of capitalist effects on environment and society (traditionally rejecting both communism and capitalism);
- traditionally seen as centre-right (in Europe).

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60 CON Conservative parties

Central points of the party’s profile

- conservatism and opposition to modernism (‘keep things as they are’)
- free market economy

Detailed explanation

- general principle is to keep status quo, traditions or even return to how things were, importance of customs and institutions;
- on the other hand orientation of economic policies towards neoclassical theory and support of the free market, importance of private property;
- traditionally embedded in the idea of royalism and in favour of a strong state with regard to law & order;
- societal inequality is rarely perceived as problematic, importance of hierarchy, social order, based on the principle of competition and performance;
- historically right-wing, nowadays more affiliated with the centre-right of the political spectrum (although this can vary between countries).

70 NAT Nationalist and radical right parties

Central points of the party’s profile

- prioritisation of national interest
- cultural conservatism
- anti-immigration
- anti-globalization / Euro-scepticism, defence of national sovereignty
- right-wing populism

Detailed explanation

- this category covers a spectrum of nationalist parties up to parties adhering to fascist ideologies
- major significance of national interest:
  - interventionism;
  - national (cultural) conservatism: support of a homogenic cultural and ethnic identity (keep the tradition), anti-immigration, xenophobia;
  - euro-scepticism or anti-globalization (not necessarily), importance of national sovereignty;
  - social conservatism, meaning support of the traditional way of life such as traditional family structure, limiting immigration;


• despite social conservatism, nationalists and radical right parties prefer different economic systems: some support planned economies, some mixed-economies, others the free-market idea;
• belief in authoritarianism, a structured society, enforcement of law and order;
• these parties are often associated with right-wing populism;
• radical right parties often reject democratic principles and norms and human equality.

Note: This party family does not concern ethnic parties advancing 'nationalist' politics in support of an ethnic group or regional territory. In this case, please refer to 90 ETH ethnic and regional parties.

80 AGR Agrarian parties

Central points of the party’s profile
• support of the agricultural sector
• representation of the interests of farmers or rural populations

Detailed explanation
• emphasis of specific issues related to agrarian ways of life and the needs for acknowledgment, support of and investment into these areas;
• historically focus on territorial politics, emphasis of local (and national) political power, local values and interests (as distinct from centre), opposition to central administration;
• often problematize market prices of agricultural goods and stress the difficult conditions that small agricultural producers and farm owners face in the age of globalization and free market economy;
• related euro-scepticism may be present due to the free flow of goods and common agricultural policy, but some agrarian parties also have a pro-EU outlook, emphasising farmers’ benefits.

90 ETH Ethnic and regional parties

Central points of the party’s profile
• focused on certain ethnic groups or specific territorial regions within the country
• decentralization / federalism to complete regional independence

Detailed explanation
• focus on a certain ethnic group or territorial region within a country;
• sometimes these parties stand solely for the rights of a particular group whereas other times they call for partial or full independence of specific regions;
• federalism and decentralization are often on the agenda;
• it is difficult to identify a unifying political or economic ideology because ethnic and regional parties differ within and across countries.

95 SIP Special issue parties

Central points of the party’s profile

- focused on one specific issue (large variance of the kind of issue is possible, e.g. animal rights, pensioners, digital democracy)
- very narrow further programmatic agendas

Detailed explanation

- special issue parties generally emerge from advocating one specific topic and have little else on their agenda (e.g. freedom of speech, digital democracy);
- they can also focus on a minority group (e.g. focus on women, pensioners or youth; but not on ethnic groups);
- includes only parties that have no distinct political ideology (in contrast to radical left-wing, green, right-wing etc. parties).

98 DIV Electoral alliances of diverse origin without dominant party

This code applies when all other categories fail. It is used for electoral alliances or coalitions that subsume a wide range of parties adhering to various ideologies, without a dominant party.

999 MI Missing information

This code applies when there is no information on the party, alliance or coalition available.

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