

Scholars usually avoid comparisons between Populist Radical Right Parties (PRRPs) from Western Europe and Central and Eastern Europe (CEE). They often base this avoidance on alleged fundamental differences within the ideological profiles of PRRPs in the two regions. These differences are assumed to stem from the Communist historical legacy of the CEE countries. The thesis at hand challenges this assessment from a perspective of social policy. Specifically, it compares the welfare state agendas of PRRPs in the EU-15 states and the post-communist member states of the European Union between 1990 and 2021 through a historical-institutionalist lens. A welfare state agenda refers to the combination of the welfare-related ideas and policy positions that PRRPs advocate. Methodologically, Ordinary Least Square regressions conducted on two custom-designed data sets with yearly fixed effects do not reveal comprehensive systematic differences in the emphasis PRRPs place on welfare state expansion and welfare chauvinism. However, such differences would be expected under historical-institutionalist premises. Furthermore, an interpretive analysis of more than 500 welfare-related passages from the manifestos of European PRRPs suggests two common ideas pitching policy positions – namely, a populist fear of abuse and the family as the nativist societal gamete. At the same time, some ideational differences relating to the Communist legacy crystalize in the framework of the interpretive analysis: Whereas PRRPs in the post-Communist state have reservations towards diversifying the institutional components of the welfare state and tend to be advocates of centralizing provisions, PRRPs in the EU-15 states do not oppose diversification from the outset. Therefore, the final argument of the thesis is that in regard to social policy, the wide-spread distinction between PRRPs from CEE countries and Western Europe originating in the distinct historical pretexts holds some analytical value. Notwithstanding, this should not deter comparative research because there are two common and predominant ideas from which PRRPs derive their welfare-related policy positions beyond the historical divide.