
explainity explained: populism

“Axe the tax”. “Pensions too low”. “Leave the EU”.

Don't we hear these kinds of slogans daily? Many people are dissatisfied; with politics or other social circumstances.

Particularly in Europe, this is becoming evident. More and more populist parties and movements are appearing. They promise the people changes and want to go back to what's tried and tested (or “what's old and familiar”). Populism: What does that actually mean?

The word derives from the Latin Populus and means people. So it's about the concerns of the people.

Let's take Mister Smith for instance. He is dissatisfied, too. The politicians don't really care about his interests. It's either the big bosses and corporations that get everything or those who don't contribute to the economy at all. And what's left for him???

The populist party “The little man” expresses exactly what he feels. It fights for people like Mr Smith, against those politicians that govern badly in its opinion. The party focuses on everything the people are concerned about, for instance, the current refugee crisis. The word “populism”, particularly in Europe, has a negative connotation.

One example: in 2016 the British people voted in a referendum to leave the EU.

Populists used convincing slogans to support the BREXIT.

These were simple, clear words that many people found appealing.

Shortly after the referendum, it became apparent that many of the slogans weren't entirely true.

After a wave of clarification about the consequences of the exit, many voters regretted their decision.

When it comes to complicated issues, populists usually provide simple solutions. They reject institutions like - banks, influential politicians, large corporations or mass media - and always have a very strict opinion. Either you're for or against them.

For example, the “Little men” say, that the unity of the people matters. Anyone who has a different opinion doesn't count for them. They know what's the right thing for everyone. The actual problem here: What about the opinion of Mr Thomson or Mrs Aboud, or that of Alan or Katy? In a society and particularly in a democracy, there are many different views.

Mr Smith thoroughly re-read the party platform of the “Little Men“. Most of that sounds exactly, the way he imagined it. But some points give him pause. How does the party actually plan to succeed in financing all the pensions? What would it be like if the EU no longer existed or if tax money wasn't available? And why do they exclude whole social groups who are also part of the nation??

He will now take a much closer look, try to collect information and get his own idea of what's going on. Only then can he decide whether “the Little Men” can keep the promises they're making.

Because, in the end, the simplest solution isn't always the best one.