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The Netherlands

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Citation

Daniëls, S., & Veilleux-Lepage, Y. D. (2023). The Dutch identitair verzet and the European identitarian movement: alone at the table. In K. Kondor & M. Littler (Eds.), *The Routledge handbook of far-right extremism in Europe* (pp. 230-243). Routledge. Retrieved from <https://hdl.handle.net/1887/4214538>

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Note: To cite this publication please use the final published version (if applicable).

THE DUTCH IDENTITAIR VERZET AND THE EUROPEAN IDENTITARIAN MOVEMENT

Alone at the Table

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Introduction

Historically, the far-right movement has been “fragmented, leaderless and multi-dimensional” (Davey & Ebner, 2017). However, in the aftermath of the 2016 US elections and with the concurrent global rise of the alt-right, many academics and commentators have noted that the European far right have become emboldened (Eatwell & Goodwin, 2018). In this climate, far-right groups have begun to put aside their differences and cooperate to increase their influence, reach, and impact. Notable examples of such collaboration include the Defend Europe campaigns in the Mediterranean and Alps regions, which appeared to unite various national branches of the Generation Identity movement and groups associated with the pan-European Identarian movement. Nonetheless, despite anecdotal evidence that the far right is currently expanding beyond national borders, the relationship between the far right and transnational politics is both ambiguous and understudied.

In order to address this knowledge gap and improve understanding of transnational collaboration within the wider Identarian movement, this chapter investigates how the Dutch identarian group *Identitair Verzet* cooperates and interacts both online and offline with other European identarian groups in France, Germany, Austria, Denmark, and Italy. In doing so, this chapter not only sheds light on the underexamined Dutch identarian movement, but also contributes to a wider debate on the role played by shared identities (including shared ideology, symbolism, and terminology) play in mobilising distinct groups across national boundaries. Using the framework inspired by the work of Hall (1995) and Ackerman and Bale (2012), and leveraging data from social media, journalistic accounts, and government and law enforcement reports, we find that *Identitair Verzet* – due to its small scale and divergent identity – has largely been relegated to the fringe of the wider European Identarian movement. In fact, the instances of collaboration are mostly limited to the digital sphere, are rhetorical in nature, and are generally initiated by *Identitair Verzet* as the group attempts to secure itself a “place at the table,” with limited success.

The Identarian Movement

The seeds of the international Generation Identity movement, which first emerged in France under the banner of *Génération Identitaire*, can be found in the Nouvelle Droit movement, which emerged in the early to mid-1960s. The Nouvelle Droite arose as a

synthesis of the ideological currents of the Conservative Revolution and the New Left (Bar-On, 2011), and was, in many ways, the intellectual legacy of the ultra-nationalist thinkers who founded the *Groupeement de Recherche et d'Études pour la Civilisation Européenne* (GRECE) in 1968. The aims of the GRECE, as summarized by Bar-On (2011) were fourfold:

[F]irst, to reorient the ultra-nationalist French political milieu [...] towards greater doctrinal sophistication and the transcendence of internecine conflicts between various ultra-nationalist tendencies; second, to reject the right's dominant parliamentary and extraparlimentary methods of seizing power; third, to regain cultural power from the liberal-left by seizing the 'laboratories of thought' throughout Europe in a right-wing Gramscian spirit, and to restore the credibility of a revolutionary right-wing milieu [...] and, finally, to rethink the dominant ideological legacy of the ultra-nationalist right, which tended to be based on ethnic, biological or racist conceptions of the nation.

(pp. 203–204)

The Nouvelle Droite had a significant impact on the Identitarian movement's "preference for cultural combat, rejection of universalism, embrace of differentialism, and overall critique of a system captured by a disintegrating liberal capitalism" (Zúquete, 2018, p. 11). Indeed, by the late 1980s, certain figures who diverged from GRECE, including Guillaume Faye, had split from the Nouvelle Droite and begun to develop parallel responses to what they saw as Europe's "sorrowful state"; in particular, by refocusing the discourse on the ethnic dimension (Zúquete, 2018, pp. 12–13) with the aim of addressing "the necessity to defend the biological and cultural identity of one's people" (Faye, 2011, p. 134). This intellectual and theoretical reorientation eventually led to the emergence of the young, practical, and proactive groups who today represent the direct-action arm of identitarianism, pioneered by the well-known French organisation *Génération Identitaire*.

Génération Identitaire first gained widespread attention on October 4, 2012, when they posted a video on YouTube entitled "Déclaration de guerre" ("Declaration of war"). This high-quality video depicts a diverse group of young people denouncing the legacy of the French leftists of 1968. The group purported to oppose modern society, multiculturalism, and globalism. On October 20 of that year, shortly after the release of this video, at least 60 members of *Génération Identitaire* occupied a mosque in Poitiers, France. They scaled the building's roof and lowered large banners reading "732, *Génération Identitaire*" and "Construction de mosque, immigration: referendum!" ("Referendum on Mosque Constructions and Immigration") while waving flags bearing the symbol of the movement, lighting fireworks, and singing songs/statements in a hooligan-like fashion (France 3 Poitou-Charentes, 2012). This mosque was specifically targeted because of its proximity to the site of the Battle of Tours, in which Charles Martel defended France against a Muslim invasion led by Abdul Rahman Al Ghafiqi in 732 A.D. (Palmer, 2019). Such outlandish and spectacular protests are typical of the current Identitarian Movement: its members "see the streets as their headquarters, the Internet as a galvanizing weapon, and they rely on the hermeneutic power of shock to awaken the lethargic consciences of Europe's peoples" (Zúquete, 2018, p. 38).

Shortly after the publication of the "Déclaration de guerre" video, identitarian organisations in Germany and Austria were also formed. Although essentially separate identities, the German group *Die Identitäre Bewegung Deutschland* ("The Identitarian Movement in

Germany”) and the Austrian group *Die Identitäre Bewegung Österreich* (“The Identitarian Movement in Austria”) soon became deeply intertwined. For example, the two organisations collaborated in the production of the 2014 video “*Zukunft für Europa*” (“Future for Europe”), which can be viewed as the German-language equivalent of the French declaration of war video. The Identitarian movement also continued to spread throughout Europe, with organisations being formed in Italy, Denmark, Ireland, the United Kingdom, the Czech Republic, Hungary, Slovenia, Switzerland, Belgium, Poland, and the Netherlands. Of these, a close collaboration emerged between the French, German, Austrian, and Italian organisations: these four organisations openly refer to each other as members of the Generation Identity/European Identitarian “family,” linking to each other’s websites and social media accounts. Furthermore, these groups actively collaborated in two large operations to prevent the arrival of immigrants, namely the Defend Europe campaign in the Mediterranean aimed at obstructing search-and-rescue missions by temporarily blocking their passage across the Mediterranean from Libya to Italy, and the Defend Europe Alps Mission which focused on the French-Italian border crossing at Nevache (Barthélemy, 2018).

While remaining separate identities, the various identitarian organisations in Europe have adopted a uniform naming convention and a common logo of an encircled Greek letter lambda (a reference to the shield of the Spartan army). The only organisation which deviates from this is the Dutch group *Identitair Verzet*, which instead chose the omega letter as their main logo.

Identitair Verzet (“Identitarian Resistance”) was founded in September 2012, a few months after the founding of its French counterpart. In comparison to the other Identitarian Groups, *Identitair Verzet* is quite small with membership of roughly 15–25 active members spread out over the Netherlands (*Factsheets Extreemrechts in Nederlandse Gemeentes*, 2019). In 2015 and 2016, *Identitair Verzet* saw a brief increase in membership amid nationwide protests against the accommodation of refugees in the Netherlands. However, once these protests subsided, most of the new members left the movement again (*Factsheets Extreemrechts in Nederlandse Gemeentes*, 2019). *Identitair Verzet*’s most high-profile action was to prevent students of the Islamic Ibn Ghaloun school in Rotterdam from taking their final exams (Tierolf et al., 2014). The group’s other activities have been in line with those of their counterparts abroad, and have mostly consisted of banner drops, occupations of public or religious spaces, the dissemination of flyers and posters, and street protests.

Despite having adopted a repertoire of contention similar to that of their counterparts abroad, *Identitair Verzet* differs from the other Identitarian organisations in certain respects. Firstly, it was founded by a small group of people that split from *Voorpost*, an Identitarian organisation from Belgium and the Netherlands that was established back in the 1970s. In being founded by former members of another far-right organisation, *Identitair Verzet* was created in the same fashion as *Génération Identitaire*, but not in its image, as is the case for many of its other European counterparts. Secondly and perhaps most importantly, in addition to using a different logo than other identitarian organisations in Europe, *Identitair Verzet* has also eschewed the standard naming conventions. The group has occasionally used the name/term “*Identitaire Generatie*” (Identitarian Generation) during protests and in social media clips, but they never adopted this as the group’s official name (ID Verzet, 2014). As such, the nature of *Identitair Verzet* ties with their foreign counterpart groups in France, Germany, Austria, Denmark, and Italy is somewhat unclear, and deserves further attention.

Methodology

A review of the literature reveals extensive documentation of collaborative efforts amongst protest groups and organisations within a movement, in order to engage in joint planning and actions (Beamish & Luebbbers, 2009). Such literature encompasses nuclear disarmament groups (Barkan, 1979; Benford, 1993), environmentalist groups (Shaffer, 2000), feminists (Ferree & Hess, 2000), and labour movements (Fantasia & Voss, 2004). In recent years, a growing body of scholarly literature has sought to investigate the transnational nature of right-wing extremism organisations (Caiani & Kröll, 2015; Mammone et al., 2012; Veilleux-Lepage & Archambault, 2019), and political parties (Caiani, 2018; Macklin, 2013; Mares, 2006), however, there is little scholarly work examining on how right-wing extremist in The Netherlands interact with their foreign peers.

In order to partly address this knowledge gap, we conducted a study with the aim of increasing understanding of the nature of transnational collaboration within the wider Identitarian movement. Data were collected from four separate sources. Firstly, tweets made by of *Identitair Verzet*'s Twitter account between 1 January 2016 and 31 December 2019 were examined to uncover incidents of collaboration between *Identitair Verzet* and other Identitarian groups. In addition, we scrutinized tweets from accounts belonging to spokespersons from the *Identitäre Bewegung Deutschland* (Germany), *Génération Identitaire* (France), the *Identitäre Bewegung Österreich* (Austria), and *Generazione Identitaria* (Italy), along with the official Twitter accounts of the *Identitäre Bewegung Deutschland*, *Generazione Identitaria*, *Generation Identitaer* (Denmark) and the Defend Europe campaign. Secondly, data were collected from the official websites of *Identitair Verzet* (id-verzet.org), *Génération Identitaire* (generationidentitaire.org), the *Identitäre Bewegung Deutschland* (identitaere-bewegung.de), the *Identitäre Bewegung Österreich* (identitaere-bewegung.at), *Generazione Identitaria* (generazione-identitaria.com), and *Generation Identitaer* (identitaer.dk). Thirdly, we undertook a systematic search of newspapers articles published between January 1, 2016 and December 31, 2019 in order to uncover additional instances of collaboration between *Identitair Verzet* and their counterparts. Finally, data was collected from reports published between 2016 and 2019 by the governments of the Netherlands, Germany, Austria, and Italy.¹ For the Netherlands, these included annual reports from the Ministry of Social Affairs, the factsheet “*Extreemrechts in Nederlandse Gemeenten*” (Extreme Right in Dutch Municipalities) published by the Anne Frank Stichting, the “*Dreigingsbeeld Terrorisme Nederland*” (“Terrorism Threat Assessment in the Netherlands”) report published by the Dutch National Coordinator for Counterterrorism and Security, and annual reports of the national General Intelligence and Security Service (AIVD); for Germany, annual reports by the national security service (BfV) and by all of the 16 regional security services (LfV); for Austria, the annual intelligence reports by the national security service (BVT); and for Italy, the annual publication “*Relazione sulla Politica dell’Informazione per la Sicurezza*” (Report on the Information Policy for Security) of the national intelligence agency (AIS).²

Each incident uncovered was coded using a framework derived from the work of Hall (1995) and Ackerman & Bale (2012), which is stated below.²

- 1 Rhetorical cooperation – Expressions of support for the (actions of) other groups
- 2 Ideological cooperation – Coordinating strategies with respect to ideology
- 3 Joint political mobilisation – Coordinating strategies with respect to political activity
- 4 Logistical cooperation – The provision or exchange of vital materials

- 5 Operational cooperation – Coordinating strategies on activity beyond political demonstrations
- 6 Other forms of cooperation.

Results

In total, over 13,000 Tweets, over 250 newspaper articles, 72 government reports, and articles from 6 websites published between February 2016–December 2019 were reviewed. This content yielded 92 instances of cooperation between *Identitair Verzet* and one or several of the other five Identitarian organisations. The results will be presented in this section, focusing on the following four dimensions: (1) forms of cooperation, to demonstrate which forms occurred most often; (2) initiating actors, i.e. those who initiated the cooperation instances, to show which groups pursue cooperation most; (3) “targeted actors,” to show which groups were most “targeted” during cooperation initiatives, and (4) date of occurrence, to show the temporal distribution of the coded events. Following the presentation of the results, we relate the findings to the social movement theories of collective identity, resource mobilisation, and political opportunity.

As can be seen in Figure 16.1, the vast majority of instances were coded as examples of *rhetorical cooperation*: this category accounts for 80 of the total 92 instances of cooperation that were detected, while the two next-largest categories, *logistical cooperation* and *other forms of cooperation*, were only detected four times each. These 80 instances of rhetorical cooperation took place in various ways. The majority of them (N = 31) took the form of (re)tweets reporting the protest actions of other organisations. All but one of these were retweets of tweets by the original actor reporting on their own performed action; the remaining instance concerned a tweet by *Identitair Verzet* that reported on an action by *Génération Identitaire*.³ Meanwhile, 22 of the 80 instances of rhetorical cooperation were (re)tweets of news or information concerning another organisation; these include a retweet by *Identitair Verzet* about members of the *Identitäre Bewegung Österreich* being investigated as members of a criminal organisation, a retweet of the Augsburg faction of the *Identitäre Bewegung Deutschland* announcing they had joined Twitter, and a retweet mentioning that one of their members had had his car windows smashed by a member of the antifa movement. Fifteen other cases of rhetorical cooperation were related to sharing the opinions or commentary of other organisations or their members on certain topics. Amongst these are a retweet of a tweet

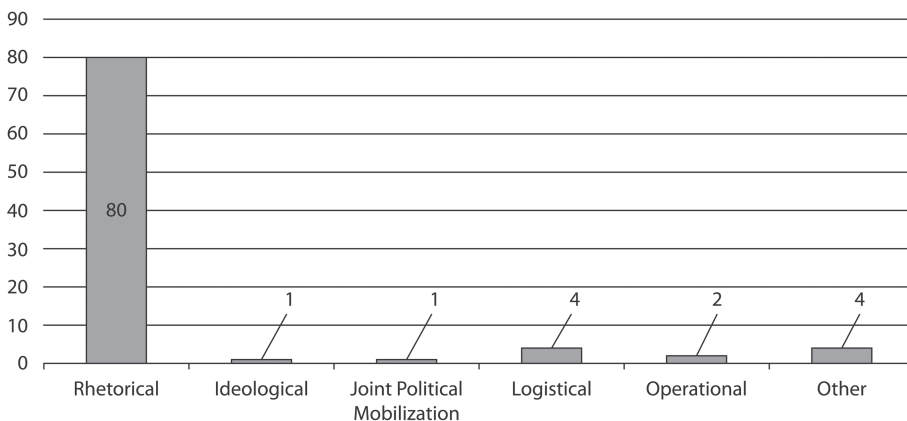


Figure 16.1 Forms of cooperation.

by *Identitäre Bewegung Österreich* leader Martin Sellner in which he analyses the position of the group in contemporary Austrian politics, and a retweet of a tweet by the *Identitäre Bewegung Deutschland* in which they criticise the German police for investigating a policeman found in possession of an *Identitäre Bewegung* sticker. Amongst these are also two retweets of more contextual tweets by *Identitäre Bewegung* about replacement through migration (“the Great Replacement”) and the costs of immigration. Additionally, seven examples concerned general expressions of support or solidarity towards other groups during protest actions (as opposed to support for specific protest actions), or online activity by a particular group. The best example of this is a protest by *Identitair Verzet* in front of the German and Austrian embassies in the Netherlands: the goal of this protest was to show solidarity with the *Identitäre Bewegung Deutschland* and *Identitäre Bewegung Österreich* and to protest against the position of the German and Austrian governments towards those organisations.

After rhetorical cooperation, the form of cooperation that is coded most often is *logistical cooperation*, with four instances. This category is defined as the provision or exchange of vital materials or services from *Identitair Verzet* to another group, or from another group to *Identitair Verzet*. The four coded instances concern members of *Identitair Verzet* being trained in self-defense on a Génération Identitaire camping weekend, *Identitair Verzet* calling their members to join a protest by the Nordrhein-Westfalen (“North Rhine-Westphalia”) faction of the *Identitäre Bewegung Deutschland*, *Identitair Verzet* members attending a political protest by the *Identitäre Bewegung Deutschland* in Berlin, and *Identitair Verzet* helping to gather resources for the Defend Europe campaign. Note, though, that the last of these events is contested: this specific data was derived from the Dutch national newspaper NRC Next, and *Identitair Verzet* also said at the time that they were participating in Defend Europe; however, the Italian leader of the campaign has denied that *Identitair Verzet* was involved.

Instances of *operational cooperation* were detected twice in the dataset. This form of cooperation regards the coordination of strategies between *Identitair Verzet* and the other groups with respect to activities beyond political demonstrations. This data, however, is as contested as the event mentioned above. The two coded instances of operational cooperation are derived from two separate *Identitair Verzet* sources stating that they were participating in the Defend Europe campaign. However, as mentioned above, it is highly doubtful that *Identitair Verzet* actually took part in this campaign, since the leader of the Italian group – who was the organiser of the first Defend Europe campaign around which time these statements were made – has denied Dutch involvement in the campaign.

Only one instance was found for each of the remaining two categories, *ideological cooperation* and *joint political mobilisation*. Ideological cooperation is defined as coordinating strategies between *Identitair Verzet* and (one of) the other groups with respect to ideology. The one instance detected for this category concerns Génération Identitaire convincing *Identitair Verzet* to not act against immigrants from Eastern European countries: *Identitair Verzet* previously perceived such immigrants as a threat to the economy and culture of the Netherlands, but were corrected by their French counterparts for this errant belief. Joint political mobilisation is defined as action jointly organised and performed by *Identitair Verzet* and another European Identitarian organisation. The one instance detected for this category concerns a joint banner drop by *Identitair Verzet* and the *Identitäre Bewegung Deutschland* at Cologne train station in December 2016.

The four remaining instances of cooperation are collected under *other forms of cooperation*. These include two cases of *Identitair Verzet* explicitly identifying themselves as the Dutch branch of the European Identitarian Movement,⁴ one case of an undefined link between *Identitair Verzet* and the *Identitäre Bewegung Österreich*,⁵ and one case of *Identitair Verzet* informing the *Identitäre Bewegung Deutschland* about a case of “white discrimination” in Germany.

When classifying the results by initiating actors, the results are fairly homogeneous. All instances of cooperation are initiated by *Identitair Verzet*, except for eight cases. Amongst those eight is one case of initiation by *Generazione Identitaria*, in which their leader shows his appreciation for *Identitair Verzet*'s support for the Defend Europe campaign (i.e. rhetorical cooperation). Two instances of cooperation were initiated by the *Identitäre Bewegung Deutschland*; both are also examples of rhetorical cooperation. One concerns the reply of the Augsburg faction to a tweet by *Identitair Verzet* in which they announce that the Augsburg faction has joined Twitter and advise their members to follow the account; the Augsburg faction greets *Identitair Verzet* and thanks them. The second case concerns the retweet of an *Identitair Verzet* tweet by the Hamburg faction of the *Identitäre Bewegung Deutschland*; the tweet in question shows a picture from an *Identitair Verzet* protest in the Netherlands during which they carried a banner bearing the slogan “solidarity with the Identitarian Movement” in German. Another two cases were initiated by the *Génération Identitaire*: these have both already been mentioned above and concern the ideological influence of the overall Generation Identity movement, and the provision of self-defense training by *Génération Identitaire*. The remaining three cases concern two cases of operational cooperation and one case of joint political mobilisation. These are initiated by various actors, rather than a single organisation. As mentioned earlier, however, the operational cooperation instances are contested.

Given the largely homogeneous picture regarding initiating actors, it is more interesting to turn to the targeted actors; that is, the actors that were subject to the instances initiated by *Identitair Verzet*. Filtering the dataset on cases initiated by *Identitair Verzet* results in a list of 84 instances, of which 4 were directed towards *Génération Identitaire*, 4 towards *Generation Identitaer*, 15 towards the *Identitäre Bewegung Österreich*, 27 towards various organisations, and 34 towards the *Identitäre Bewegung Deutschland*. These results are displayed as percentages in Figure 16.2.

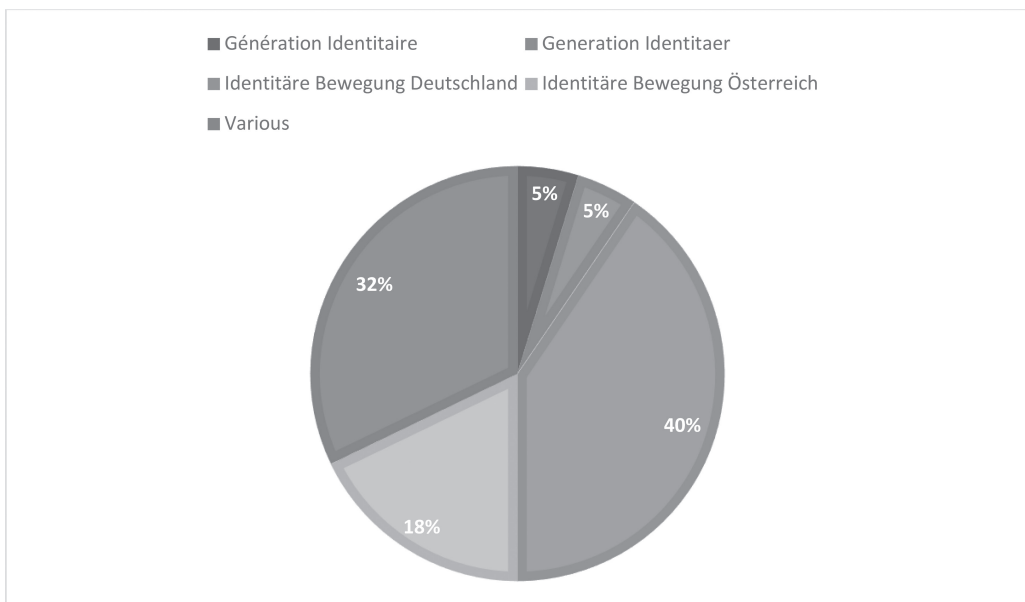


Figure 16.2 Cooperation instances initiated by *Identitair Verzet*.

Of the 27 instances of cooperation initiated by *Identitair Verzet* that targeted various organisations (see the “Various” category in [Figure 16.2](#)), 22 concern the European Identitarian Defend Europe campaign. All but one of these 22 cases are instances of rhetorical cooperation in which *Identitair Verzet* (re)tweets about the progression and/or successes of the campaign, or in which they assume the logo of Defend Europe during protests or other offline activity. The one other case is the (claimed) donation of money by *Identitair Verzet* to the Defend Europe campaign.

With regard to the cooperation directed towards *Génération Identitaire* (N = 4) and *Generation Identitaer* (N = 4), all eight instances concerned rhetorical cooperation. This was also the case for all but one of the instances directed at the *Identitäre Bewegung Österreich* and all but three of those directed at the *Identitäre Bewegung Deutschland*. The remaining case with regard to the *Identitäre Bewegung Österreich* concerns an undefined link between this group and *Identitair Verzet*; this instance was coded as initiated by *Identitair Verzet* because the source phrased it to appear that way. The three remaining cases of cooperation directed at the *Identitäre Bewegung Deutschland* concern two cases of logistical collaboration (one in which *Identitair Verzet* members took part in a protest in Berlin, and one in which they called upon their members to join a forthcoming protest), and one other form of cooperation.

Apart from 2016, the instances of cooperation were more or less equally distributed over the years of the data collection period. In 2019, 33 instances of cooperation were detected and in both 2018 and 2017, 27 were detected. The year 2016 deviates from this pattern, since only 5 cases were detected in that year. This low amount of cooperation events in 2016 could possibly be explained by European migrations crisis, which peaked in 2015 and the first half of 2016. During this time *Identitair Verzet* managed to recruit a group of young new members (*Factsheets Extreemrechts in Nederlandse Gemeentes*, 2019), which possibly made them less oriented at transnational cooperation. Towards the end of 2016 most of the new members had left again, which could explain why the cooperation efforts rose in the next year. Further noticeable affairs concern the temporal clustering of events within the investigated years. In 2017, for example, the majority (17) of the cases took place in July (8) and August (9). This is exactly the period the first Defend Europe campaign took place in the Mediterranean. Therefore, fourteen of these seventeen cases are unsurprisingly related to this campaign.

In 2018 the months with the densest clusters of events were April (7) and June (6). April of 2018 was the month in which the second campaign of Defend Europe took place in the Alps, and thus, unsurprisingly again, most events in this month were related to this campaign. All but one of the events in June of 2018 were (re)tweets about protest action by either the *Identitäre Bewegung Österreich*, the *Identitäre Bewegung Deutschland*, *Identitair Verzet* or Defend Europe. A relatively high number of offline protest actions by various actors thus causes a relatively high number of (online, rhetorical) cooperation between *Identitair Verzet* and the other groups ([Figure 16.3](#)).

The events that took place in 2019 were more or less equally distributed over the year, except for April, in which 11 instances of cooperation were detected. Two of these instances derive from newspaper reports published in these months, but where the reported events did not actually take place in that month. Of the remaining nine cases, three concerned retweets of protests by other organisations, four concerned retweets of commentary by Martin Sellner⁶ on contemporary politics and news items, and two concerned a new faction of the *Identitäre Bewegung Österreich* joining Twitter. This is another example of a high number of activities by other organisations leading to a high number of cooperation events in a certain month.

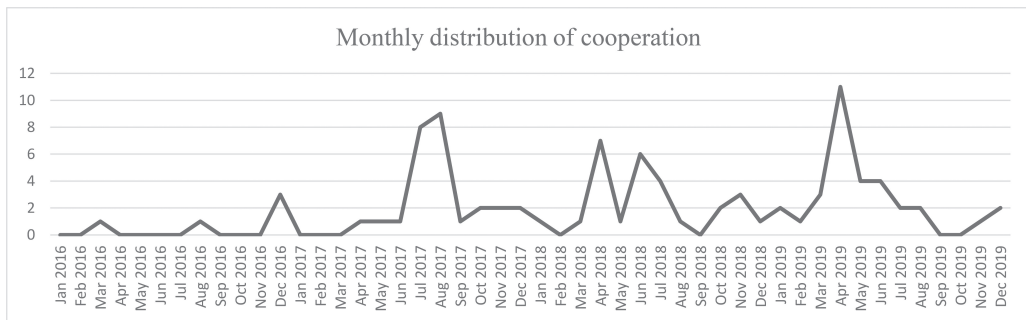


Figure 16.3 Distribution of cooperation events by month.

Discussion

The ideology of the European Identitarian Movement is based on ethnopluralist beliefs and a commitment to preserving the European identity as well as the national and regional identities of Europe. A logical result of this ideology is that all organisations associated with the movement identify themselves as Europeans and thereby share at least one collective identity, namely the European identity. As argued by McCarthy and Zald (1980) amongst others, this can influence the establishment of cooperation between social movement organisations. Besides this European identity, however, the European Identitarian organisations possibly share a collective identity at another, arguably deeper level, when they identify themselves and acknowledge each other as part of the European Identitarian Social Movement, i.e. the “Generation Identity family.”

The results of this study show multiple cases of *Identitair Verzet* explicitly identifying themselves with this “family.” On Liberation Day in the Netherlands in 2018, for example, they tweeted a picture of a German and a French WWII soldier sharing a cigarette with the captions “no more brother wars” and “next time we fight it’s side by side,” accompanied by the logos of *Génération Identitaire*, the *Identitäre Bewegung*, and *Identitair Verzet*. This suggests that *Identitair Verzet* see themselves and these other organisations as brothers within the same family. In another example, a tweet by *Identitair Verzet* stated explicitly: “we are the Dutch branch of the European Identitarian Family.”

Despite these tweets showing *Identitair Verzet*’s strong identification with the Generation Identity “family,” the group diverges from this family in some respects. For example, the symbol they adopt as their main logo is different from that of the other organisations: where the universal logo of the European movement is the Greek lambda, *Identitair Verzet* uses the Greek omega. Since symbols play a crucial role in the formation of unity (Kolstø, 2006), *Identitair Verzet* can be seen as driving a symbolic wedge between themselves and the other movements by this use of a different main logo. By using the lambda only as their secondary logo, they show that they do not regard membership of the Generation Identity “family” as their primary identity, whether intentionally or not. Moreover, *Identitair Verzet* differs from the other organisations with respect to the characteristics of their members. While the other organisations predominantly comprise young adults without a history in activism, a fair share of *Identitair Verzet*’s members are in their thirties or older and have been members of multiple far-right organisations before. Furthermore, the name “Identitair Verzet” differs in structure from the names of most of the other European Identitarian Organisations: with the exception of the German and Austrian movements, most organisations have a name that translates to

“Generation Identity,” while “Identitair Verzet” translates to “Identitarian Resistance.” This can be attributed to the fact that, unlike the other organisations investigated in this study, *Identitair Verzet* was not created in the image of the French group *Génération Identitaire*. Note that even though *Identitair Verzet* has used the name “*Identitaire Generatie*” (“*Identitarian Generation*”) on occasions, this has never been their official name.

Furthermore, although *Identitair Verzet* identify themselves as member of the Generation Identity “family,” they are not explicitly acknowledged as such by the other organisations. On no occasion do the other organisations mention *Identitair Verzet* when they speak about the Generation Identity family or other European Identitarian groups in general. This is true for their websites, Twitter accounts, interviews, and beyond, etc. lack of acknowledgement, furthermore, shows through the remarkable small number of rhetorical cooperation with *Identitair Verzet* by other organisations, for instance through Twitter. Only two cases of this were detected, one where a regional faction of the *Identitäre Bewegung Deutschland* replied to an Identitair Verzet tweet by thanking and saluting them, and one where another regional faction of the *Identitäre Bewegung Österreich* retweeted an *Identitair Verzet* tweet in which they showed footage of a protest at the German and Austrian embassies in the Netherlands, in solidarity with the *Identitäre Bewegung*. Both cases, however, were preceded by *Identitair Verzet* reaching out to the other actor by way of mentions. Other organisations do not (re) tweet (about) *Identitair Verzet* or their actions purely on their own initiative, albeit *Identitair Verzet* creates a reasonable amount of content.

In order for social movement organisations to take collective action, resources must be controlled or mobilised (McCarthy & Zald, 1977). Both McCarthy and Zald (1980), and Bandy and Smith (2005) have argued that resource building or provision of resources enables (transnational) cooperation between social movement(s) (organisations). This is a factor that partially explains the cooperation by and with *Identitair Verzet*. In comparison with the other organisations *Identitair Verzet* is only a small player. They have an active members base of 15–25, whereas those of the other organisations range from up to 100 (Generation Identitaer) to about 2.000 (Generation Identity France). Moreover, apart from the relatively small number of members, *Identitair Verzet* also struggles to maintain a healthy financial balance. On multiple occasions on their website and social media accounts⁷ they have stated on their website and social media accounts⁷ that they need money to pay fines and debts and to replace material (*Niet Praten, Maar Doen – Steun Ons Nu!*, 2017). Overall, this can lead other organisations to have little interest in cooperation with *Identitair Verzet*, because for the wider movement they offer few potential resources to mobilise, beyond their handful of members. Moreover, this certainly explains why the vast majority of cooperation instances by *Identitair Verzet* are of a rhetorical nature and occur through Twitter. Twitter serves as a (nearly) free resource and a vehicle for *Identitair Verzet* to establish cooperation with the other organisations. Since over two-thirds of this rhetorical cooperation through Twitter consists of expressions of support for (protest) activities or commentary by other organisations, *Identitair Verzet* relies greatly on the activeness of other organisations for their cooperative actions. The data did not show this to be true *vice versa*, except when the other organisations were explicitly mentioned by *Identitair Verzet*. This behaviour of *Identitair Verzet* can also be explained by the political process model: high levels of activity by other organisations are seen as an opportunity to promote the movement and ideology in their own country by means of rhetorical cooperation, and through doing so, to (attempt to) mobilise fresh resources.

The notion of political opportunity refers to a chance to make a political impact, and results from “any event or broad social process that serves to undermine the calculations and assumptions on which the political establishment is structured” (McAdam, 1982, p. 41).

As argued by Bandy and Smith (2005), such opportunities are enabling factors for (transnational) cooperation between social movement organisations. Even though this could be a plausible theoretical explanation for the levels of cooperation between *Identitair Verzet* and the other European Identitarian organisations, we found little evidence to support this approach in the data collected for this research (with the exception of the way in which *Identitair Verzet* views the activity of other organisations as an opportunity for rhetorical cooperation and mobilisation of resources, as described above). At the same time, evidence for this theory is found in the cooperation between the other organisations. In his 2018 book, Zúquete addresses the help of experienced European (mainly French) identitarians in establishing and professionalising small national factions abroad in the Czech Republic, Hungary, Belgium, and the United Kingdom (Zúquete, 2018, pp. 87–91). In this way, the emergence of new identitarian activists serves as an opportunity for the movement – both in France, and more broadly – to spread their ideology and expand their network. By incorporating these new organisations into the Generation Identity “family,” they create international chapters from which resources can more easily be mobilised than from isolated (potential) constituents (McCarthy & Zald, 1977). This situation does not yet seem to apply to *Identitair Verzet*. Another decisive factor in this respect is possibly the fact that *Identitair Verzet* was established in isolation around the same time that the first (French) European Identitarian organisation was founded, and therefore was not created in their image. The present-day lack of emerging activists in the Netherlands may therefore indicate the absence of a political opportunity in the eyes of the Generation Identity “family.”

Conclusion

In this study, the transnational cooperation within the European Identitarian Movement was researched by means of a case study of the Dutch group *Identitair Verzet*. This study has sought to explicate the way in which *Identitair Verzet* cooperates with the European Identitarian organisations in France, Germany, Austria, Italy, and Denmark. To this end, data was collected from Twitter, newspaper articles, the organisations’ websites, and government reports from the organisations’ countries of origin. Subsequently, this data was coded according to six categories within the framework derived from the works of Hall (1995) and Ackerman & Bale (2012) and which were complemented inductively. The collected data was then analysed using mixed methods of content analysis. In total, 92 cases of cooperation between *Identitair Verzet* and one or more of the other organisations were detected. Of these cases, the vast majority (84%) were examples of rhetorical cooperation, initiated by *Identitair Verzet*, and performed through Twitter.

These results can mainly be explained by drawing on theories of resource mobilisation and collective identity. Comprising only 15–25 members, *Identitair Verzet* is a small organisation in comparison with the others, that moreover struggles to maintain a healthy financial balance. Firstly, this means they must be creative in managing and mobilising resources, which has resulted in them embracing Twitter as an inexpensive tool to cooperate with the other organisations. Secondly, this partly explains why most instances of cooperation were initiated by *Identitair Verzet*: due to their small scale, they are not seen as a (potential) resource by the other organisations and/or the wider movement. By contrast, the other organisations and the wider movement are a large potential resource for *Identitair Verzet*, explaining why the Dutch group initiates forms of cooperation on a regular basis.

Furthermore, *Identitair Verzet* diverges from the other organisations in a number of respects. For example, as it was founded in isolation (and not in the image of the French

Génération Identitaire like the other organisations), *Identitair Verzet* uses a different symbol for their main logo. As a result of such divergences, they are not explicitly recognised as part of the Generation Identity “family,” and the other organisations therefore rarely initiate cooperation with them. On the other hand, *Identitair Verzet* does explicitly self-identify with this “family” and thus regularly initiates cooperation with the other organisations.

In this research, we found little evidence for the political opportunity structure theory as explanation for the cooperation between *Identitair Verzet* and the other organisations. It is possible to view the relative success of the Generation Identity “family” (in terms of member numbers) as a political opportunity that is seized by *Identitair Verzet*, who thereby attempt to mobilise fresh resources. The same holds for the emergence of new activists abroad, which is leveraged by the wider movement as an opportunity to establish new international chapters. However, these factors are ultimately more compelling as evidence to adopt the resource mobilisation theory and the collective identity theory, respectively, as explanations for the cooperation between *Identitair Verzet* and the other organisations.

Finally, this study adds to the body of literature on cooperation between European Identitarian organisations, and between far-right non-party organisations in general, by investigating the cooperation between the Dutch group *Identitair Verzet* and five other European Identitarian organisations. The divergences between *Identitair Verzet* and other Identitarian organisations limit the degree to which the results of this study can be generalised to other groups; however, the research design can be used to study cooperation between other Identitarian organisations. In addition, to confirm the results of this study or those of future studies with the same design, it would be fruitful to conduct a complementary study based on in-depth interviews with organisation members, and/or (participant) observations.

Notes

- 1 To this end the following query was made on Lexis Nexis: (“Identitair Verzet” OR “ID Verzet” OR (Dutch near/5 identita*) AND (samenwerking OR gezamenlijk OR samen OR buitenland* OR “identitaire beweging” OR “generation identitaire” OR “generation identity” OR “generazione identitaria” OR identitaer OR Frankrijk OR Duitsland OR Oostenrijk OR Denemarken OR Italie)) OR ((“Identitair Verzet” OR “ID Verzet” OR (Dutch near/5 identita*)) AND (cooperation OR joint OR together OR abroad OR “generation identitaire” OR “generation identity” OR “identitaire beweging” OR “generazione identitaria” OR Identitaer OR France OR Germany OR Austria OR Denmark OR Italy)). The query was set to include Dutch and English language articles without any limitations with regard to sources. The timeframe was set from 01 February 2016 to 31 December 2019.
- 2 The notions of “rhetorical cooperation”, “joint political mobilisation”, “logistical cooperation” and “operational cooperation” were derived from the work of Ackerman and Bale (2012) on research cooperation between various social movement. The idea of “ideological cooperation” is borrowed from Hall’s work (1995).
- 3 In this tweet, posted by Identitair Verzet on 12 March 2016, they report on an action by French Génération Identitaire activists in which they blocked roads in Calais so migrants were unable to get through.
- 4 On July 5, 2018, for example, Identitair Verzet responded to a question about their organisation with the statement “We are the Dutch branch of the European identitarian Family”.
- 5 In an NRC Next article on cooperation between the Dutch and Austrian intelligence services from 11 April 2019, the reporter states that one of the reasons for this cooperation is a link between *Identitair Verzet* and the *Identitäre Bewegung Österreich*. This information was not corroborated elsewhere.
- 6 Martin Sellner is the leader of the Austrian *Identitäre Bewegung Österreich* and founded the organization, together with two fellow students, in December 2012, after visiting a *Génération Identitaire* convention in France. In the past Sellner has been convicted of 100 hours of social work for putting stickers containing swastikas i.e. on an Austrian synagogue.

- 7 Besides the cry for financial help on their website, Identitair Verzet has posted similar calls on Twitter. For instance, on 30 June 2018, they tweeted “Want to support Identitair Verzet once for €12.00?” accompanied by a direct universal link to donate €12 via bank transfer. On 2 January 2020, they tweeted “On to 2020! Support us morally or financially...” accompanied by a link to a Facebook post, which included a link to their bank account.

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