

Europe's biggest far-right parties

Written by AFP / The Swedish Wire

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PARIS (AFP) - Here is a breakdown of the most prominent far-right parties in Europe following Sunday's election to the leadership of France's National Front of Marine Le Pen.

FRANCE - Presided since its formation in 1972 by Jean-Marie Le Pen, 82, the anti-immigrant National Front on Sunday chose his daughter, Marine Le Pen, as its new leader. Jean-Marie Le Pen, who has several convictions for racism and anti-Semitism, sent ripples through Europe in 2002 by coming in second in a presidential election, ahead of the Socialist candidate. Recent polls showed 22 percent ready to vote for Marine Le Pen if she runs for president in 2012.

AUSTRIA - Austria's main far-right party, the Freedom Party of Austria (FPO), came in second in municipal polls in the capital Vienna last October, winning 27 percent of the vote. The result was similar to that obtained in 1996 by the party's charismatic leader Joerg Haider, who died in 2008.

SWITZERLAND - According to election results, the populist Swiss People's Party (SVP) has been the country's biggest single grouping since 2003. Part of the ruling coalition, it enjoys the support of about a third of the electorate. It was further strengthened when it received citizens' backing in referendums on banning the construction of new mosque minarets, and automatically expelling foreign residents convicted of certain crimes.

NETHERLANDS - Far-right leader Geert Wilders, 47, heads the Freedom Party, which holds 24 of the Dutch lower house of parliament's 150 seats, having finished third in legislative elections last June. Wilders stirred controversy in March 2008 when he released a short film denouncing the Islamic holy book the Koran as fascist. The party supports the minority centre-right government of liberal Mark Rutte.

THE NORDIC COUNTRIES - Extreme right and populist parties are gaining ground across the nordic countries. In Sweden the anti-immigrant Sweden Democrats, led by Jimmie Aakesson, 31, were voted into parliament in September, 2010 with 5.7 percent of the vote. In Denmark the Danish People's Party (DPP) is the third biggest party, and has since 2001 been a key government ally.

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ITALY - The far right Northern League party, led by Umberto Bossi, is the junior partner in the coalition government of Silvio Berlusconi. It came third in March, 2010 regional elections winning 12.7 percent of the vote.

HUNGARY - The Jobbik party won third place in legislative elections last April, with 16.71 percent of the vote. Its leader Gabor Vona, 32, has been at the head of the party since 2006.

In 2009 Jobbik's uniformed paramilitary wing, the Hungarian Guard, which recalled World War II Hungarian fascists, was banned.