

**Pascal DELWIT, Erol KÜLAHCI &  
Cédric VAN DE WALLE (eds.)**

# The Europarties Organisation and Influence

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## **The European party federations. A political player in the making?**

Pascal DELWIT, Erol KÜLAHCI and Cédric VAN DE WALLE, Free University of Brussels (ULB)

### **1. “Political parties at European level”?**

The development of European party federations is experiencing new impetus nowadays following recent measures integrated into the Treaty of Nice. They aim at regulating the financing of these federations and assuring them a legal status.

But for all that, the history of these transnational partisan organisations already goes back a long way. Considered as essential players in the smooth running of representative democracy, the parties have tried to adapt themselves to the new European environment. First, they did so by developing original structures within the European assemblies.

From the founding of the Council of Europe in 1948, the national political groups sent their MEP's into the midst of that which was only the embryo of a supranational parliamentary complex. In 1953, at the time of the first meeting of the Assembly of the European Coal and Steel Community (ECSC), the first transnational and parliamentary groups were formed at European level. In spite of the high expectations, these parliamentary groups did not give rise to more extensive developments. The ideological diversity, the partisan and national conflicts of interest and the election of MEP's during the national elections (G & P. Pridham, 1981) maintained the national identity of the parties (Hix & Lord, 1997). After several years of indecision (Costa, 2001), the organisation of the first direct elections of the European Parliament did not occur until 1979.

The contributions relating to the organisational evolution of the European party federations (EPFs) show it, the European institutional reforms have profoundly marked their history<sup>1</sup>. The decision to elect the European

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<sup>1</sup> Other elements studied in the contributions to this work are also at the origin of the development of federations. Hence, the fall of the Berlin Wall, or the successive enlargements of the EU have been important. Likewise, the increased political role of the European Council has pushed some federations to direct their actions towards

Parliament by universal suffrage implicitly recognised the seriousness of the integrating function of national parties within society, even if it were of European dimension. The political arena in which the parties evolved increased by an additional level of power that one had connect to the spheres already existing. The leaders of national party then tried to adapt their partisan structures to this new institutional environment. This Single European Act (1988), the Maastricht Treaty (1992) and the Amsterdam Treaty (1997) strengthened the European integration. Thus they offered the European party federations – or rather their constituent entities – opportunities to influence the European decision-making process. The introduction of Article 138A into the Maastricht Treaty explicitly recognised the role of “political parties at European level”<sup>2</sup>, but provided neither legal status nor financial foundation to the European federations. The Treaty of Nice (2000) provides for the filling in these shortcomings, confirming the supposed place of European party federations within the European political system.

“The analogy of words must not mislead” (Duverger, 1976: 23), said Maurice Duverger to open the introduction to his seminal work on the organisation of political parties. Along the lines of this judicious advice, we shall free ourselves much as possible this from this “nominal identity” in order to analyse the “political parties at European level”. Without entering into a long debate on the definition of parties at European level, we have wanted to analyse the essence of these supranational organisations (Delwit, De Waele, Külahci & Van de Walle, 2000). The work uses a transversal approach to each political family. In turn, we examine their organisational evolution and their influence on the decision-making process of the European Union (EU).

The partisan phenomenon at European level includes numerous dimensions. The main part of the European elite stems from parties: members of the

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this “centre of power”, in particular by creating the leaders’ meetings. See in this connection S. Hix, “Parties at the European Level and the Legitimacy of EU Socio-Economic Policy”, *Journal of Common Market Studies*, 1995, vol. 33, n.º 4, p. 545.

<sup>2</sup> The article 138 A of the Maastricht Treaty states that “*Political parties at European level are important as a factor for integration within the Union. They contribute to forming a European awareness and to expressing the political will of the citizens of the Union*”, *Treaty on European Union*, <http://europa.eu.int/en/record/mt/top.html>

Commission, European Council or Council of Ministers are part of the national partisan elite. The European members of Parliament are elected quasi exclusively on the basis of lists drawn up by the national parties. Nonetheless, the authors of this book devote themselves, firstly, to the examination of federations as extra-parliamentary party organisations at European level. In order to analyse them and understand the role they fulfil, they will follow the conventional approaches to the study of political parties. These consist in tracing the evolution of their organisation, in order to understand its origins and its functioning and to situate it within its environment.

The choice to focus our analysis on the transnational party federations does not allow broaching certain facets of the European level partisan phenomenon. Its most extensive form was impossible to understand other than theoretically. The research of empirical data necessary for such an undertaking has not as yet been started. The political persuasions that are not endowed with a parliamentary group are not taken into account. We are focussing on the European People's Party (EPP), the Party of European Socialists (PES), the European Federation of Green Parties (EFGP), the European Liberal, Democrat and Reform Party (ELDR) and the European Free Alliance-Democratic Party of the Peoples of Europe (EFA-DPPE).

To present the development of their organisation enable us to understand better the manner in which these structures function. Moreover, in order to appreciate the role of European party federations within the European Union, we have also chosen to study the manner in which they attempt to influence European decisions.

In particular, we examine the relationships they develop with other main constituents of the European decision-making systems, namely the Council of Europe, the Commission and the European Parliament.

For some time, the research regarding the European party federations and the legitimacy deficit of the European Union has gained in vigour. The research works of Simon Hix, Robert Ladrech (Ladrech, 1999), David Bell and John Gaffney (Gaffney, 1999) have contributed to this. Nevertheless, this subject remains one that is studied very little, so much so that "the study of parties at European level remains poor in Political Science, including in the study of

the partisan phenomenon” (Delwit, De Waele, Kùlahci & Van de Walle, 2000: 125).

The analysis of the EU legitimacy deficit also kept busy a growing group in scientific research. Let us mention, for example, the works of David Beetham and Christopher Lord (Beetham & Lord, Longman, 1998) as well as that of Fritz Scharpf (Scharpf, 1999). Apart from the differences in their approaches, these authors stress the “public policy” dimension of the EU legitimacy problem. It just so happens that at present, this aspect is rarely conceptualised in a scientific manner. Amongst the few researchers to take an interest in it, Jeremy Richardson distinguishes four stages in the EU policy-making process: establishment of the agenda-setting, policy formulation, policy decision and implementation (Richardson, 1996).

For reasons of feasibility and relevance, it was important to choose one of these four dimensions. We have turned our attention to policy decision and have done so for two reasons. On the one hand, at present time, this dimension is the only one to have been the subject of an attempt at relatively significant conceptualisation, in particular in the reference work by Elisabeth Bomberg and John Peterson. On the other hand, this dimension is important in European governance, as was emphasised by two American political scientists: “Why study the decision-making process in the European Union? The answer is more complicated than it seems: because a large part of public policies affecting the 370 million European citizens (and even more beyond the borders) is decided at this level of governance” (Bomberg & Peterson, 1999: 4)

## **2. Controversies and theoretical debates**

Upon analysis of the theories of European integration (Rosamond, 2000), it clearly emerges out that they are not very effective for our subject of study. The comparative politics approach, as conceived and applied by Simon Hix and Christopher Lord, suggest understanding the European party federations under the angle of conventional theoretical frameworks developed in national contexts (Hix & Lord, 1997). And yet, these frameworks cannot apply to the case of European party federations because even if “the connection, in the scientific analysis, to the national parties is significant (...), the European parties must above all be analysed as autonomous field of study (...)”(Delwit, De Waele, Kùlahci & Van de Walle, 2000: 137). That

does not mean that a comparative analysis of European party federations with regard to a given problem is not useful, on the contrary.

The first part of the book is structured on the basis of several approaches: combination of international relations and comparative politics; use of the comparative approach by applying the theories of oligopoly; resorting to theories of European integration – in particular to neo-institutionalistic frameworks as well as a combination of neo-functionalism and transnationalism – and comparative law approach .

The characteristics of European governance present implications for the functions of European party federations. The latter evolve in multi-level European governance: regional, national and European. This implies the reinforcement of their functions as links between the various levels (Johansson). In contrast, the far-reaching decentralisation of European governance, the profoundly functional character of the EU and the complexity of its institutional system greatly weaken the development of European party federations. If the Union does act as a restraint, it also leaves, in principle, the field open to a certain amount of room for manoeuvre (Magnette).

Independent of the institutional element, the European party federations are essentially made up of national parties. They have the main legitimacy attributes and most of the resources. From a political and practical view point, the development of the federations has consequently been very closely linked to the good will of its constituent entities. The most salient case is their difficult entry into the European electoral arena (Lord).

Following changes made by the IGC 2000 at Nice to the Union Treaty article relating to European party federations, the question of the European financing of federations is perhaps going to change how it's dealt out (Dorget). But the delicate question still has to be worked out regarding the criteria defining the acquisition procedure and the loss of "European political party" status.

### **3. Reticular organisation**

The authors of the work sometimes call the European party federations by different terms ("europarties", "European parties", "transnational

parties”,...). We have wanted to give an account here of a specific dimension of European-level partisan reality: its extra-parliamentary organisation. Under different terms, all nonetheless agree on recognising that the European party federations do not encompass a reality, or a conceptual abstraction, similar to parties that evolve at national level. It emerges from the contributions that the organisational characteristics of transnational federations are conditioned to a large extent by the specificity of the constituent elements – the member parties – and of the political system in which they evolve.

The institutional context of the European Union is conceptualised in several chapters of this work as decision-making structure with various levels of power. In a minimalist way, the European federations are conceived as meeting-place(s). In a maximalist way, the European federations are perceived as an arena enabling the political co-ordination amongst the partisan elite who mutually recognise each other as being part of the same political family with a view to influencing European decisions (Devin, 1993).

Each partisan family endeavours to form a network (Magnette) of relations (formal and informal), weaving links between the different levels of vertical (European, national, regional...) and horizontal powers (Dehousse, 1996) (executive, parliamentary, judicial networks ...) around specific themes. The European party federations are thus the co-ordination nuclei for partisan networks. Following the observation made by Gerassimos Moschonas for the PES, it emerges from the different contributions that “the functioning structure and logic [... of transnational federations], a primarily confederal structure, partly federal and supranational in intention, show the complexity of its situation”. They all present a weak nucleus, the power of which is limited by highly autonomous constituents, the national parties.

A kind of mimicry, in actual fact strongly encouraged by the European institutional context, has had an effect in the structuring of European federations.

They all have nearly the same internal organs. The *Congress* is statutorily the fundamental institution. It unites the greatest number of representatives of member parties and decrees the general political lines of the federation. The congresses often “serve” the national parties in the middle of an election



campaign by attracting mass media ready to report the facts and the speeches of major European public figures in each political persuasion.

The *Councils* are assemblies of national representatives which meet several times a year and which are opportunities for presenting reports or political declarations on European themes (employment, immigration, enlargement, transport policy, new information technologies ...). The latter have been discussed beforehand in working groups made up of a few experts and national representatives.

Like the Congresses, the Councils are paralysed by the high number of participants, the linguistic and financial difficulties (the logistical cost of these meetings is extremely high compared with the meagre budgets of the federations, but also for the small relatively minor parties who have to send representatives).

The central body in the day-to-day life of the federation is the *general secretariat*, which is the only federation organ with a team of permanent employees.

The *Office* assures the political representation of the federation. It makes essentially administrative decisions, but is relatively autonomous in its functioning vis-à-vis national parties).

Finally, some federations have a *meeting of partisan leaders* (Hix, 1995), supreme intergovernmental authority that brings together the most influential members of the same political family on the eve of European Councils. These are important times with regard to mass media, but are especially forums where a consensus of national views could be established. The decisions taken regard the medium and long-term European political questions. European Liberal, Democrat and Reform Party (ELDR) convenes meetings of the leaders. But it is especially the meetings organised by the EPP and the PES that are crucial in view of the political weight of these two families in national governments (Moschonas, Hanley).

Even if one finds identical organisational components among the various European federations, their methods of functioning are different. They have more or less integrated organisational development according to a series of factors. On this subject, all the authors recognise of the influence of the European integration process (direct elections of the European Parliament,

Treaty of Maastricht, enlargement ...). But the organisational crystallisation also depends on the member parties that make up the federations. The internal ideological cohesion has an influence. The memberships of some major parties, such as the Labour Party in the PES, Forza Italia in the EPP, or the Swedish Greens in the EFGP, can give rise to internal tension, break the “identity compromise” and destroy the possibilities to build a consensus. In the case of the ELDR (Sandström) or the EFA-DPPE (Seiler), the strained relationships between member parties on the left-right line threaten the ideological cohesion. In the EFGP on the other hand, the divisions with regard to European integration have checked its development for a long time (Van de Walle).

The *relevance of member parties* at national level is also an important factor. It conditions the structuring of European party federations. Parties that are weak at national level can attempt to develop structures at European level with a view to influencing political decisions. The situation manifestly arises in the ELDR, EFGP and in the EFA-DPPE.

Within the liberal federation, national parties have accepted to give up a part of their “sovereignty”, by favouring to reach majority rather than unanimous decision (Sandström). The adoption of such low majorities in the internal decision-making process of the EPP and PES is not possible, as is, considering the influence of some national parties, who refuse the prospect of being placed in a minority position (Moschonas). In the EFA-DPPE, the relevance of member parties at national level is so weak that the European partisan organisation has no other intermediary within the European institutions than the political group at the European Parliament (Seiler).

The EFGP has also essentially developed its partisan structure in order to cooperate with the Parliamentary group. However since 1995 and the initial governmental involvement, it has been attempting to establish links with other European decision-making authorities.

The result of the privileged leanings of the Green, Liberal and Regionalist federations towards the Parliamentary groups is increasing complementarity (not exempt from risks of competition) between these two partisan players. It is notably expressed through the joint organisation of meetings and working groups and the production of joint publications.

The member parties of the EPP and the PES have representatives in the national governments and are dominant political forces in most of the States of the Union. These two transnational groups have therefore more quickly developed partisan European structures directed towards “executive powers”. Thus, the EPP (Delwit), quickly followed by the PES (Moschonas) will go on to set up the meeting of partisan leaders so that the partisan elite, heads of government, party leaders, ministers ... of the same political family may meet together, negotiate and arrive at a consensus with a view to joint actions. The Parliamentary groups of these two federations therefore remain more autonomous and participate in federation meetings in order to influence, eventually, the national parties.

#### **4. The issue of influence on European decision-making**

A crucial question persists with contributions, concerning the influence of European party federations on the EU decision-making process: to what extent do these federations produce opinions that in turn are successfully projected into the European decision-making process, thus contributing to the shaping of supranational structure?

Several hypotheses emerge chiefly around three issues:

- The consensus or disagreement in each European party federation;
- The factors that influence the positions of member parties within the federations;
- The variables permitting to explain to what extent the federations act effectively or not on decision-making issues.

In what way is there convergence or differences within each of the federations? The importance of the convergence and the differences of political positions of member parties within the federations is highlighted on many occasions. (Dietz, Faniel and Soare, Hanley, Kulahci). It conditions the influence of the PES on European decisions regarding employment as well as that of the EPP on the European Council. In the case of the EFGP, the convergence conditions the possibility to unblock a minority veto in the case where the qualified majority vote is made within the Council of Ministers of the Environment Council. A series of stands characterises the EFA-DPPE on the centre-periphery divide, or predictably enough, there is a stand in favour of peripheral interests.

Why is there consensus or disagreement between the member parties within each of the European party federations? The institutionalisation or not of regular meetings between the main elites within an organ of the same federation is a factor identified by several observers. In the PES, the principal organ is the leaders' conference that brings together mainly leaders and Prime Ministers. By building a consensus from within, the practice of the PES poses a challenge to the intergovernmental mode of EU policy-making). Likewise, within the EPP, the principal organ is the conference of head of government and/or parties implied by a rather intergovernmental way of operating. The absence of regular meetings of the EFGP Council representatives, due in part to the federation's shortage of financial means, also explains the little cohesion and therefore the little influence it exerts. In the case of the EFA-DPPE, there is quite simply no representative at all at the European Council, the Council of Ministers or the European Commission.

The individual or collective role of national parties and through them, the strategies of their representatives, is also emphasised. In spite of major internal differences, the roles of the French Prime Minister, Lionel Jospin, during the leaders' meeting preceding the Luxembourg European Council and of the Portuguese Prime Minister, Antonio Guterres, during the leaders' meetings preceding the Lisbon European Council, were decisive for then reaching a compromise in the ranks of the PES during European Council. The ideological dimension in the European party federations is another element taken into account. As far as this is concerned, the evolution at the turn of the 80's/90's has affected the positioning of the EPP consecrating the impetus towards more socio-economic deregulation. The internal disputes linked to the question of European integration have worked against the emergence of cohesion with the EFGP.

Why do or why don't the European party federations have an influence on European decision-making? The relations they maintain with the European institutions are identified as one of the key factors. The relationship of the PES with European Council is one of the most determining considering the Social-Democratic influence in the national governments. Likewise, the link between the EPP, the European Council and Parliament are also considered to be important. The EFGP could favour relations with the Council of Ministers, the European Commission and the Green Group in the Europe Parliament, even if at present, it often gives way to the Parliamentary Group. The EFA-DPPE can only have links with its European Parliament counterparts.

A second series of hypotheses confirms the fact according to which these relations are intimately linked to the presence of member parties in the various EU institutions. This presence is conditioned by their electoral result in national elections and, in part, in European ballots. In the case of the PES, the fact of having a mainly majority party representation in the government and in the European Council is crucial. In 1991, the Christian Democratic influence was also linked to a substantial presence in the national executives. The presence of EFGP representatives in the Environment Council enables them, in theory, to have a minority veto. The very weak role of the EFA-DPPE is explained by the fact that in its ranks, there is not a single representative to the European Council, the Council of Ministers or the European Commission.

Other hypotheses concern factors specific to the European institutions. The dual logic in the European Parliament sanctions a confrontation between the Left and the Right which often gives way to an inter-institutional confrontation that at this point in time is diminishing the EPP's room for manoeuvre. On the other hand, co-decision enables the European Parliament to play an increasing role and consequently to highlight the political groups in the European Parliament rather than European party federations.

Let us add the elements underlined by Luciano Bardi. He considers that two fundamental factors will influence the future of European party federations: the enlargement to include the countries of Central and Eastern Europe and the possible public financing of the federations.

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**Toward a theory of federations of political parties in multilevel Europe:  
at the nexus of international relations and comparative politics**

Karl Magnus JOHANSSON, Institute of Contemporary History, Södertörns  
högskola (University College)

The emergence and further development of the European party federations pose a challenge to political science and its traditional subdisciplines, most notably international relations (IR) and comparative politics (CP). This field of research, and European Union politics in general, invites theorists and empirical analysts to move between the lines drawn between the branches of political science. As James Caporaso (1997: 588) has pointed out, Western Europe “will continue to be the site where the contests between interstate politics and a more rule-based European politics take place. If this is true, it will be Europe that will tell us a great deal about the appropriateness of our scholarly paradigms in the years ahead” (see also Caporaso, 1996; Hix, 1994; Pollack, 2000; Risse-Kappen, 1996; Rosamond, 2000). In broad terms, the clash is between perspectives that tend to characterize the EU either as an international organization or as a political system. Where the first predominates, there is little if any recognition of the role of political parties, neither national nor European.

The article provides an overview of perspectives within political science subdisciplines and the primary aim is to analyze conceptually whether or not these are competing or complementary, specifically in regard to the European federations of political parties. I start from the assumption that they rather are complementing each other. At the same time, I argue that the IR–CP dichotomy is false and an artificial distinction which is fundamentally misleading if we are to understand and capture the dynamics of multilevel, Europeanized, party politics and of European governance, policy coordination and institutions more generally.

Challenging the traditional distinction between IR and CP, I call for a new research agenda taking account of these multilevel dynamics, including political parties as arenas, institutions or actors in their own right. An influential approach subject to current theoretical refinement concerns precisely multilevel European governance. This approach could perhaps provide the theoretical key to bridge and glue together the nexus between IR

and CP in regard to theory development in analyses of European federations of political parties.

### **1. Political parties and multilevel European governance**

We should seek to move away from reductionist analyses of European integration that focus either on the European level or on the member states as unitary actors since such foci tend to ignore political processes within the member states or linkages between politico-administrative levels, including the supranational. We should avoid the territorially based division between “outside” and “inside” and instead focus on ways and means of political organization crossing these levels, such as different types of networks (cf. Jönsson *et al.*, 2000). For these reasons we should also avoid analyzing European politics and integration in terms of “two-level games” (cf. Putnam, 1988), with two more or less distinct and separate levels and primacy asserted to national governmental actors, instead highlighting multilevel “nested games” (cf. Tsebelis, 1990). As Ben Rosamond (2000: 157) has put it, IR has been accused of being “particularly ill equipped to deal with the complexity of the contemporary EU game. It lacks the tools to deal with the coexistence of multiple actors playing nested games... The EU is rather more than an international organization...” This implies a focus on interlocking politics, or *Politikverflechtung*, and on the fusion of various interaction patterns, both administrative and political (see, for example, Caporaso, 1995, 1996; Green Cowles *et al.*, 2000; Risse-Kappen, 1996; Scharpf, 1988, 1994; Wessels, 1997).

Given the general globalization and Europeanization it thus becomes more urgent to study linkages provided by actors involved in both national and non-national settings. Used to politicize issues in different settings and to provide multilevel linkages, political parties act as a perfect example of such actors. The European federations of political parties provide links bridging governmental and nongovernmental elites. Rudolf Hrbek (1988: 457; see also Henig, 1979; Johansson, 1996; Pridham & Pridham, 1981; Pridham, 1982) comments as follows on the analytical implications of the emergence of links between political parties in Europe:

If one sees the EC as a multi-level system...and if one understands integration as a process during which mutual links between these levels grow, then the existence and activities of transnational party organisations



are important for the integration process. They help to establish and maintain links between different levels; they are a component of the sociopolitical infrastructure of the EC system which can be regarded as an emerging political system.

Accordingly, political parties should be conceived of as linkage actors (cf. Mingst, 1995). They operate across levels and they are important, perhaps the most important, political actors in a polity. And the EU is an emerging, multilayered, polity. In the words of Fritz Scharpf (2000: 1): “The European Union and its member states have become a multilevel polity whose characteristics are poorly understood in political discourses as well as in academic controversies that are shaped by our conventional understanding of national politics and international relations”. He goes on to argue that “the conceptual tools with which the political-science sub-disciplines of international relations and comparative politics are approaching the study of European institutions are ill suited to deal with multilevel interactions”.

In the *multilevel governance* framework, the EU is analyzed in terms of a system of “governance without government” (see Kohler-Koch & Eising, 1999; Kohler-Koch, 2000; Marks *et al.*, 1996ab; Pierre & Peters, 2000). In a most interesting way, attention is paid to a network mode of governance and to transmissions systems, or belts, or channels. However, the place, role and impact of political parties in such networks and communications channels tend to go unnoticed, or being downplayed. Political parties in Europe interact precisely in network-style patterns of interaction (Ladrech, 1997, 1999, 2000).

A major weakness in persistent and unreflective reminders of a “democratic deficit” in the EU is the tendency to focus more or less exclusively on formal aspects of polity-building and constitutionalization. Instead, there is an interplay between formal and informal politics. And the networks of interaction provided by European federations of political parties confirm the determination of political elites – challenged by market forces and global pressure – to try to regain the initiative and the control of the political agenda. There is a broad and growing recognition among politicians across the political spectrum of the need for a larger political arena, at least as an extension of domestic arenas of politics. In the light of the circumscription of national politics one might argue that the presence of decision-making actors in such arenas is contributing to democracy, rather than the reverse, even

though we primarily are dealing with elites. In the words of Thomas Banchoff and Mitchell Smith (1999: 11), conceptualizing and analyzing legitimacy in the contested polity of the EU:

Work on *multi-level governance* has highlighted the importance of informal policy-making channels, mainly involving the European Commission and Parliament in *transnational networks* of political actors. These are not merely “backchannels,” patterns of elite interaction outside of public view. Increasingly, these networks involve established national representative institutions – interest groups, for example – which are coming to participate in *European governance*. With its focus on formalized channels of representation, the literature on the “democratic deficit” obscures these complex and evolving representative links between EU and national institutions and their actual and potential importance for the political legitimacy of the integration process. [Emphases added]

As a result of all treaty reforms over the years the competences of the supranational institutions, including the parliament, have increased considerably. These institutional changes, impacting on the “rules of the game”, have acted as catalysts for closer cooperation among political parties both within the European Parliament and the extraparliamentary party organizations at the European level (Johansson, 1997). This development – which is likely to continue – is linked to the nature of decision-making in various policy areas in general and particularly on left-right issues (Hix, 1995; Hix & Lord, 1997).

The Economic and Monetary Union (EMU) has provided an impetus for further integration – also among political parties – as demands have increased further for political legitimacy and greater policy capacity at the EU level, also in policy areas such as welfare, including employment and social affairs. The Stability and Growth Pact as well as the Employment Pact, emerging on the basis of the employment title in the Amsterdam Treaty, have encouraged policy coordination among governments, which in the EU are “party governments”. The process already well under way was further formalized by the Lisbon summit in March 2000, which came out in favour of a “new and open method of coordination. The supreme role of the European Council, that is, of heads of government who are also party politicians, was thereby emphasized. There is a general tendency that prime ministers are taking control of the integration process. However, it is

emphasized that they are also party politicians and they meet on a party-family basis prior to European Council summits. Nevertheless, it is not clear to what extent they need the European-level parties, other than as networks, venues and additional sources of information and advice. In this perspective, the European federations of political parties provide coordinating mechanisms for exchange of information, through working groups, etc. There are, for example, the caucuses in the Party of European Socialists (PES) prior to the special Council sessions, including those of EcoFin.

Especially the French have for a long time suggested that the European Council and primarily the finance ministers in the EcoFin and, for the time being and controversially, in the euro-zone should form a *gouvernement économique* as a political counterweight to the European Central Bank (ECB). This touches on sensitive issues of fiscal policy and thus of fiscal federalism. The initiatives for a closer coordination of economic policies attest to the political impulse and dynamics of the EMU (Dyson, 2000). However, these initiatives also indicate that there are remaining problems of accountability, transparency and legitimacy and thus a kind of “political deficit” in the present EU.

Analyzing EMU, Kenneth Dyson and Kevin Featherstone (1999: 800-801) have argued that the EU lacks “a genuinely European party system” and a “model of a transnational democratic polity....” To reduce the “political deficit” and democratize EU political space and modes of governance, parliaments and parties, at all levels, and including “parliamentary parties”, have a natural role to play. And to this end, national parliaments and the European Parliament as well as political parties at the national and European levels should complement rather than rival each other. In terms of democracy it is ultimately a matter of scrutiny and influence vis-à-vis the executive branch of government and also in relation to the monetary branch of the contested EU polity.

## **2. International relations, with particular reference to transnationalism**

Governance theory is represented also in IR (see, for example, Rosenau, 1997; Rosenau & Czempiel, 1992). Analyzing global governance, this body of literature builds on previous writings on interdependence and transnationalization.

A host of IR perspectives have been applied to analyses of European integration more generally and although they often are presented as competing they are perhaps complementary rather, especially in consideration of the different stages of a decision-making process (Pollack, 2000). A thorough discussion of such perspectives is beyond the scope of this article, which searches for a multilevel theory of political parties by looking at the nexus of IR and CP.

Traditional IR and particularly structural realism is basically state-centric. Governments, acting on behalf of national interests, are the prime unit of analysis. International organizations are seen as arenas for negotiations between governments, rather than as in any way autonomous actors in their own right. And the EU is “conceptualized in a single-level model of intergovernmental interactions” (Scharpf, 2000: 1)<sup>3</sup>. Or, perhaps more accurately, in a “two-level game” model looking at the interplay between chief negotiators, including heads of government, and domestic constituencies, where treaties and agreements need enough support to be ratified.

Structural realism is particularly weak in accounting for change related to process dynamics initiated and sustained by people. Original realist analysis even defined the concept of the national self-interest objectively. But, as Robert Keohane and Joseph Nye (1975: 398) have pointed out, the standard proposition of traditional IR that “states act in their self-interest” begs two important questions: “what self and which interest?” (see also Nye, 1988: 238). A fundamental weakness in the realist paradigm is thus the negligence of processes in which political elites – through actor socialization and learning – are influenced by others and thus may redefine interests and preferences. Such processes could indirectly influence the conduct and norms of states as well. This more ideational approach and constructivist critique of intergovernmentalism suggest that interests and preferences are not exogenously given but instead endogenous and formed within process, which could have a transformative impact also on identity formation (Christiansen *et al.*, 1999; Diez, 1999ab). Through their multilevel links political parties could perform as “transformers” in this connection.

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<sup>3</sup> However, Fritz Scharpf points out, also in a footnote, that Andrew Moravcsik calls attention to domestic politics in his “liberal intergovernmentalism” (see, for example, Moravcsik, 1998).

So-called *intergovernmentalism* has primarily paid attention to “grand bargains” and “history-making” agreements between self-interested governments acting at a “super-systemic level” rather than day-to-day decision-making or everyday politics (Peterson, 1995). Accordingly, supranational institutions and transnational actors are downplayed. In short, there is no recognition whatsoever of the impact of transnational coalition-building of political parties. By and large, political parties are also absent in *supranationalism*, which focuses on supranational institutions and leadership, or entrepreneurship.

The omission of political parties in intergovernmentalism, and also in supranationalism for that matter, is apparent in the extensive interpretations of the making of the Internal Market Programme and the Single European Act (SEA). It has been suggested that this process was limited to the governments, the Commission and business interest groups whereas political parties were not centrally involved (see Moravcsik 1991; Sandholtz and Zysman 1989). In short, they were and then again during the Maastricht treaty negotiations, not the least the powerful Christian democratic member parties of the European People’s Party (EPP) which had established longstanding and effective links.

However, political parties are salient actors in *neofunctionalism*, along with interest groups. Neofunctionalist reasoning provides the basis for more theorizing on European integration than is generally recognized. Leon Lindberg (1963: 90-91), one of the original neofunctionalists, argued that if the political groupings in the Assembly, the forerunner to the European Parliament, were “to develop into real European political parties, their activities will have to be coordinated with those of electoral parties organized on European and not national lines. This will come only with the introduction of direct popular elections for the Assembly”. And his intellectual mentor, Ernst Haas (1958: 413), who pioneered neofunctionalism, pointed out that the “long-range role played by the Assembly in relation to integration is the fact that continuing supranational communications channels are established physically and ideologically, probably “spilling over” eventually into the ranks of national parliamentarians not regularly deputised to go to Strasbourg. It is in this connection that the role of European supranational political parties becomes crucial”. Haas conceived of the Assembly as an institutional medium; a language corresponding to more current theorizing on transmission belts.

The neofunctionalist term of political spillover has been applied in more current research on the role of political parties and transnational party networks in the European integration process (Haahr, 1993; Johansson, 1997; Ladrech, 1993; Tranholm-Mikkelsen, 1991).

In the genealogy of IR and thus of IR perspectives applicable to European integration, it is important to emphasize that neofunctionalism laid the foundations for pluralist approaches such as interdependence and *transnationalism*. All too often this intellectual lineage has gone unnoticed. It was certainly ironic and theoretically illogical that neofunctionalism, incorporating supranational institutions and transnational actors, was abandoned rather than revised and developed at a time when interdependence theorists stressed precisely the role of channels provided by nongovernmental actors (Haaland Matlár 1993: 121).

Writing in the mid-seventies, Robert Keohane and Joseph Nye (1975: 365) recalled Haas's neofunctionalist works:

Haas's "neofunctionalism" stressed the interests of elites and institutions and the extent to which they altered their behaviour through learning. Transnational interactions not controlled by central foreign-policy organs of governments were no longer ignored. To the contrary, they were regarded as often being of crucial importance to the integration process.

Although neofunctionalism focuses on processes there is a lineage from Karl Deutsch's study of the conditions for political communities of mutual trust and shared values. By unbroken links of communication, Deutsch (1957: 51) meant social groups and institutions which provide effective channels of communication, both horizontally and vertically. Significantly, he pointed out that "[p]olitical parties might be considered a possible link across national borders" (Deutsch, 1957: 150). Having identified some "signs of future cross-national party connections", Deutsch (1957: 151) then suggested that a "more thorough understanding than we now have of the cross-national connections among political parties in the North Atlantic area would be highly desirable". The signs of "cross-national party connections" had been identified through transatlantic communication with Ernst Haas, who was doing fieldwork in the European Coal and Steel Community institutions.

One important theoretical argument of interdependence theory is that relations among nations are established through multiple channels and not exclusively through official state-to-state diplomatic channels (see Keohane & Nye, 1975, 1977; Nye & Keohane, 1971). With a more specific focus than the broad scope of interdependence the related process-oriented approach of transnationalism deals with transnational organizations and society-to-society interactions. In this way transnationalism fragments the nation-states internally where the realist image treats them as unitary and rational actors. Disaggregating states into components it is stressed that some of them operate transnationally.

Transnationalism is thus a theory of linkage politics. A theorist of linkage politics and a representative example of pluralist views of the changing dynamics of world politics is James Rosenau (1969, 1980, 1990), who has developed theories of interdependence and transnationalism by asking how transnational links across national borders make for penetrated societies. Having pointed to “workers of certain transnational political parties” as examples of actors establishing such linkages, Rosenau (1969: 46) emphasizes that “penetrative processes link direct outputs and inputs”. Rosenau (1980: 1) has defined transnationalization as follows:

More specifically, by the transnationalization of world affairs I mean the processes whereby international relations conducted by governments have been supplemented by relations among private individuals, groups, and societies that can and do have important consequences for the course of events.

By stressing the complexity and multiplicity of actors in world politics, Rosenau (1980: 84) includes political parties as units “which engage in activities that span national boundaries and contribute to the formation or maintenance of issues on the global agenda”.

Political parties almost always are referred to as illustrative examples of transnational actors. So did, for example, Karl Kaiser (1969) in his seminal article on transnational politics, referring to the historical family of Communist parties under the central authority of the Comintern.

Transnationalism, in combination with neofunctionalism, is privileged in my own research and writings in this field more broadly. Specifically, I have

analyzed the formation and evolution of the alliance between European Conservative and Christian democrat parties, notably in the European Parliament, and the role of party elite networks and socialization, primarily in the EPP and the PES, in connection to the EC/EU Intergovernmental Conferences of 1985, 1991 and 1996/1997. One article traces the employment title in the Amsterdam treaty and demonstrates that this title to a large extent was the result of a transnational policy contribution, or of transnational coalition-building (Johansson 1999). There is enough conclusive evidence to corroborate Thomas Risse's (1996: 59) assumption that "the increasingly dense network of transnational coalitions and organizations – from transnational interest groups to European party organizations – not only affects EU policies directly, but also the processes of national preference formation...". Transnationalism is a perspective originating in IR which I thus advocate as useful in the study of the European federations of political parties, particularly when analyzing the motivations and opportunities for such constellations (Johansson, 1997). However, for the analysis of the constraints on across-state patterns of interaction, also among nongovernmental actors, we have to elucidate within-state constraints and institutions, such as political parties themselves.

### **3. Comparative politics, with particular reference to political parties**

The nature of party politics at the European level can no more be understood without reference to domestic party politics than EU policymaking can be explained without reference to political processes within the member states. Overall, there is a belated but most welcome consensus emerging in integration theory and IR theory – tending to focus on international-systemic structures – about the need to undertake more research on within-states factors. As Risse (1994: 213) has pointed out, "structural theories of international relations need to be complemented by approaches that integrate domestic politics, transnational relations, and the role of ideas if we want to understand the recent sea change in world politics" (see also Risse, 1995, 1996). Domestic structures can be viewed as an intervening variable between European party politics, transnational coalition-building, and the behaviour of national parties. As national actors go transnational, logic requires us to make a theoretical synthesis between transnationalism on the one hand and domestic (comparative politics) approaches on the other. Transnationalism, originating in IR, has a clear connection to domestic politics, or CP approaches, in that we are dealing with entities – and more wider



phenomena – that traditionally are rooted in societal cleavage structures (cf. Hix, 1994, 1995)<sup>4</sup>.

In laying out his domestic politics approach to the study of the EU, Simon Bulmer (1983: 363) does in fact suggest that it “corresponds most closely to the transnationalist approach of international relations theories”. Of course, national governments are strong gatekeepers or veto groups in EU policymaking but, as Bulmer (1983: 369) points out, national governments may find that their manoeuvre in these regards is restricted by domestic as well as transnational sources. The domestic politics approach “recognizes that the same political organizations – political parties, interest groups, parliaments – are involved as in national politics. The methodological implication of this is that EC policy-making should be examined in the same way as domestic politics. Thus electioneering may play an important part in a member state’s behaviour in the EC...” (Bulmer, 1983: 351). Political party time, most notably electoral time, plays a fundamental role for party behaviour, and therefore for governmental behaviour, in national and European politics alike.

A modern political party is a more complex unit than the within-system channel of expression upward and downward depicted in CP textbooks. Despite the distinct features of the EU polity we should see the European party organizations as subsumed in the general nature of party formation rather than representing something that is *sui generis*. In short, the constitution of political parties is basically a matter of organization and power (cf. Panebianco, 1988). And of money and, ideally, of democracy.

Writing in the mid-fifties, Sigmund Neumann (1956: 416) pointed out that political parties – the “great intermediaries” – had become “international forces that must be studied...”. As examples he gave the Christian democrat movement, the Socialist International and the party alignments at the Council of Europe in Strasbourg. He further argued that these “movements ought to be studied not only as potential powers of the future but also in their

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<sup>4</sup> However, Hix seems to argue that the transnational approach is wholly inappropriate for the study of party behaviour and organization, including at the European level. As Ben Rosamond (2000: 159) has pointed out, “Hix’s objection to IR (as he sees it) could be reduced to his own preference for the theoretical models of comparative political science and the questions thereby generated”.

direct and indirect influence on national policy decisions at the present time” (Neumann, 1956: 416-417).

Political parties and their European federations act as agencies for diffusion of ideas and innovations across borders. This adds an interesting dimension to what Maurice Duverger (1951/1978: 25) once phrased as the “example of contagious organization”. In one way or the other political parties seem to undergo a process of policy emulation by learning from others through the transnational party activities and particularly in the European arenas (Heidar & Svåsand, 1997). Such activities have intensified and include exchanges of experiences with regard to ideas, party programmes and manifestoes, organizational solutions, forms of political communication (campaigning and media strategies), etc. Europeanization might thus result in convergence, or some degree of homogenization, across countries and party systems<sup>5</sup>. Except for “across-system” convergence, there may be “within-system” convergence (Katz & Mair, 1993). Possibly, the interaction patterns encourage political parties to embark on a catch-all strategy, reducing their “ideological baggage”, as Otto Kirchheimer (1966: 190) once put it. In any case, a theory of ideological change within modern political parties, and of their changes more generally, should take the European and transnational dimension into account<sup>6</sup>.

Differentiating between European-level party activity and that at the national level, Geoffrey Pridham (1982: 323) suggests that “possible two-way effects” should be examined:

This no doubt will confirm the predominance of the latter, although one cannot ignore the experience and effects of coordination between national parties within the European party federations, including the pressures

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<sup>5</sup> At the same time, however, ideas, programmatic points and experiences of parties in other countries will have to be interpreted and adjusted, or translated/edited, to fit into national contexts and identities in order to make them understandable to domestic audiences. This implies an element of diversity among different countries and their party systems.

<sup>6</sup> Institutional theory alerts us that political institutions such as political parties are sticky (see Panebianco 1998; Svåsand 2000 and the references therein). As institutions – with a distinct cultural and ideological identity, historical heritage and collective memory – party organizations are generally resistant to change and, in this conceptualization, “path-dependent” and “locked-in”.

operating from the process towards direct elections. Points of interest include the influence of individual party ideology and tradition, and the government versus opposition roles, as well as of national political coalitions or alliances.

The overall conclusion of his writings is that with an emerging “triangular relationship” between the national parties, the transnational party federations and the party groups in the European Parliament, “these three previously separate arenas of activity can no longer be considered in isolation from each other” (Pridham, 1982: 319; see also Gidlund, 1992: 91; Johansson, 1997; Pridham & Pridham, 1981).

Just as the metaphors of two-level game and multilevel nested games imply some degree of conflict in the linkage between the national and international levels, the metaphor of “arenas” used in the theory of party politics and strategies draws attention to conflicts and constraints within and between the various theatres, another metaphor, in which party politics are fought out. There are the internal, parliamentary and electoral arenas (Sjöblom, 1968). When the activities of political parties cross state borders their representatives are not suddenly transformed into free-floating elites. They remain constrained by politics related to the arenas in which they perform.

Since governments in EU member states are “party governments”, they rely on parties for political survival. Hence, we must acknowledge the party dynamics which in the short or long term, directly or indirectly, influence the policies of national governments toward European integration. The transnational dimension should, therefore, be added to empirical research on party government and to “the “game” which is played between governments and supporting parties...” (Blondel, 1993: 39; see also Blondel & Cotta, 1996).

The differentiation between the three faces of a party is helpful also when analyzing European federations of political parties: first, party in public office; second, party on the ground; and third, party in central office (Katz & Mair, 1994). It is important to pay attention to the role of parties in policy processes and notably in agenda-setting and policy coordination and networking.

Strøm and Müller (1999) distinguish between office-seeking, policy-seeking and vote-seeking models of party behaviour (see also Laver & Budge 1992).

Of these models, the policy-seeking is presently the most relevant in the case of the European federations of political parties, but the more the EU develops into a polity on its own, the more relevant will the other models become. The European party federations are already seeking votes to strengthen their positions in the European Parliament and they have played a role in nominations to particular jobs, such as the presidencies of the European Commission and Parliament. The electoral function will increase if there will be EU-wide lists in future European elections. In one way or the other, the three models concern decision-making and they are, however to varying degrees, applicable to the EU.

The transnationalization of party politics further complicates “the problem of congruence” between different levels of decision-making and provides another dimension to the tendency for political games to be nested one inside another (cf. Sjöblom, 1989: 70). To maintain cohesion in the internal and parliamentary arenas party leaders must also consider whether commitments in the European arenas are likely to inflame intra-party dissent. Problems originating in European politics may interact with intra-party politics to upset the balance of power or opinion within a party or even a government, reflecting intra-party tendencies. Moving beyond the limiting assumption of parties as largely unitary actors, alerts us to the importance of dynamics within political parties (cf. Graham, 1993; Hine, 1982).

In this connection, and contradicting the notion of nested games, there is the stratarchical model developed by Samuel Eldersveld (1964) on different organizational levels basically operating independently of one another, that is, the existence of different sub-groups enjoying mutual autonomy in their inter-relationships. This situation could occur in federal political systems and in a consociation such as Switzerland and the federal and consociational analogies are therefore clearly applicable to analyses of political parties and their roles in the EU polity.

Parties are often internally divided over European issues, both at the elite and rank-and-file levels. Such internal dissent can thus lead to factionalism, which in turn can take many forms. The efficiency of factions depends on their degree of organization, resources and durability. In the context of European integration it might be better to speak of issue-groups instead of factions. According to David Hine (1982: 38-39) factions are “solidly organized, disciplined, self-aware groups enjoying a relatively stable and

cohesive personnel over time”. Issue-groups instead seek to “influence the way in which power is exercised (by others) on given questions”. A way to cope with factionalism is to allow intra-party dissent on Europe (Johansson & Raunio, 2000). The leadership can indicate, either willingly or because it hardly has a choice, that there is scope for “conscientious objection” within the party. Intra-party factionalism is preferable to electoral losses and defections to other parties.

Possible threats to party unity emerging from the European level may make it wise for party managers to be silent about their transnational links or to opt-out – injecting a kind of conscience clause – from European party declarations that touch on sensitive issues. Given that it is at the national and subnational levels that a party’s credibility and governmental power are principally determined, they can be expected to take over the European level. As this is a problem that is shared by all party leaders, they can be expected to help each other manage it, and to return favours that improve the ability of each to play the multilevel nested games.

Analytically, the European federations of political parties may be considered coalitions of party-units that are, in turn, composed of national sub-units. Drawing on Giovanni Sartori’s (1976: 72) conception of political parties:

My reason for saying party *sub-units* is precisely that the focus is on the *next unit*, that is, on the major and most significant breakdown immediately below the party-unit level. Whatever the organizational – formal and informal – arrangement, a party is an aggregate of individuals forming constellations of rival groups. A party may even be, when observed from the inside, a loose confederation of sub-parties.

Although European party federations dealt with in this book contain the word “party” in their full names it is still disputed whether they really are parties (Johansson & Zervakis, 2001). It is arguable that they are better described as “confederations”, as the separate identities of individual member parties are not really subsumed in the common entity and identity (Bardi, 1992, 1994; Gresch, 1978; Kuper, 1995). The intensity of transnational party interaction varies between contact, cooperation and integration (Niedermayer 1983, 1997). Genuinely integrated European parties would require a further transfer of “sovereignty” from national parties. This implies that a European political party, unlike a mere

confederation, allows for majority voting in its internal bodies and in effect that a limitation of the autonomy of the national member party – in the sense of freedom of action – have taken place. This limitation is self-imposed on the grounds that the individual national party appreciates membership of a European political party as being of complementary and added value. It could increase the capacity for action, by way of joint actions with likeminded political parties in a larger political context in which channels for access and influence are of vital importance, as at all levels and arenas where decisions are taken (Johansson, 1997). In this respect, the existing European party federations have developed significantly since the time of their origins in the 1970s and are different from the traditional Internationals, with the exception of the Comintern, in that they have institutionalized beyond the stages of mere contact and cooperation. However, the extent to which they have reached the stage of integration must remain an empirical question to be analyzed on a case-by-case basis. The European party federations may still, by and large, operate on the basis of consensus, given their decentralized nature and multiple leaderships in the triangle of national member parties, party groups in the European Parliament and elsewhere, including the Committee of the Regions, and the European party organizations themselves. For the time being, there is only a limited, or even weak, centralized chain of command to promote unity and enforce discipline. The emerging European political parties are “parties of parties and groups” and this situation severely constrains the leadership authority at the European level of party organization as well as the evolution and consolidation of a European party identity.

Although the direct elections to the European Parliament have contributed to the transnational dimension of party politics, mainly through collaboration in the drafting of joint manifestos, they have not had the profound effects some predicted. That is to say, they have not produced European parties that function as electoral parties that coordinate campaigns and present candidates. While the European party federations may help the national member parties during the campaigns, the elections are still dominated by national political contexts (Raunio, 2001). And this is likely to continue unless there is a fundamental restructuring of the relationship between the European parties and their national member parties. This will, in turn, depend crucially on whether the formal powers of the EU institutions are redefined in a manner that catalyzes a party politics specifically related to the EU polity. For the foreseeable future, however, the national political

institutions will remain predominant. As David Hanley (1994: 197) emphasizes with special reference to the EPP, the national party leaders may agree about fundamental aspects of policy and consult regularly, but they “remain first and foremost national politicians, responsible to national electorates”. This is the central factor that constrains party formation at the European level.

The primary normative question concerning the constitution of European political parties is to what extent they could increase the democratic legitimacy of the EU by providing intermediary links, or transmission belts, between public institutions and decision-making elites on the one hand and the European citizens-electors on the other. At least three traditional party functions thereby come to light, namely those of linkage, political leadership, and interest aggregation.

The democratic linkage function is brought to light in the party article in the treaty and in various proposals for a firm and formal legal basis of European political parties. This corresponds to the classical function of political parties in systems of representative government and for the democratization of such systems (Lawson, 1980). Interestingly enough, Robert Dahl (1989), the eminent political theorist, has raised the question whether political parties could, as in national polities, constitute “the link between the delegates and the demos” in a larger and “a “democratic” transnational political community”<sup>7</sup>. However, this draws on a probably false analogy and the mass party and the party link between the state and civil society seems to be eroding practically everywhere (Katz & Mair, 1994, 1995).

Against this background, one might argue – thereby contradicting Rosenau (1990), the transnationalist who contributed this terminology – that political parties are “sovereignty-bound”, or at least restrained, rather than “sovereignty-free”. Party elites do not really float freely in multilevel Europe. They are responsible to multiple constituencies, including electorates and parliamentary parties.

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<sup>7</sup> It is also interesting to note that Maurice Duverger (1992) has prescribed genuine European political parties as the most important means to come to grips with the “democratic deficit”.

### **Conclusions: Toward a theory of multilevel federations of political parties in Europe**

The challenges of European multilevel politics, including federations of political parties, have given rise to a dialogue between IR and CP and these subdisciplines, and theoretical perspectives within them, are complementary and even converging. As Risse (1996: 62) has pointed out, “there is a growing convergence among international relations and of comparative politics scholars conceptualizing the EU as a multilevel structure of governance where private, governmental, transnational and supranational actors deal with each other in highly complex networks of varying density, as well as horizontal and vertical depth” (see also Pollack, 2000; Rosamond, 2000). Political parties are examples of actors in such networks. Yet, political parties have rarely been integrated in the overall multilevel governance framework.

The remaining and major challenge to future analyses of European party politics more broadly is to define and identify the conditions and circumstances under which political parties are able to act on a multilevel and European basis – and thereby avail themselves of various institutional changes and “opportunity structures” in the European arenas – given the constraints they suffer. In a two-way linkage process, there are the influences of transnationalization, globalization and Europeanization, and, at the same time, the constraining impact of domestic arenas and institutional factors there. As was noted above, the top echelon of political parties could be part of the state whereas the supporters and ideological foundations fit more closely with civil society.

It follows that different types of transnational actors should be differentiated from each other, with political parties having unique access to corridors of power and characteristics. A party may form government or an informal coalition in parliament with a governing party. This implies that political parties might be supportive of a regime and committed to the preservation of state sovereignty, acting in defence of some national interests rather than acting in solidarity and ideological community with counterparts from other countries. Political parties themselves are fundamentally different to for example private interest groups and firms.



There is a need for more empirical research on the effects of Europeanization on party organizations, notably on democracy and communication within them. Arguably, Europeanization increases the gap between the higher and lower echelons and also results in a changing power balance among competing elites within and between parties. And even though party elites are not floating free in Europe, they could enjoy a certain degree of autonomy insofar as the various party levels are decoupled as the stratarchical model asserts. One might even argue that the leading strata of national parties strengthen their positions as a result of the generally little involvement of the subnational party levels in the European party activities. This situation illuminates the analytical limitation of the multilevel perspective, also with regard to European party federations, since this perspective presupposes a more integrated, nested, pattern of political organization than is far from always corresponding to reality.

Anyway, the way forward for theoretical refinement in this field must be to rely on, as in this chapter, an eclectic combination and synthesis of different theoretical perspectives. And in the end, the value of such perspectives will remain a matter of focus, either on the European federations of political parties as organizations in their own right or as arenas to be acted upon or through. They have clearly been undergoing an organizational transformation. And they clearly play a political role insofar as they have a direct or indirect input into the policy agenda. In short, the European party federations should be looked upon and analyzed both as actors and as arenas.

The organization of EU political space is likely to undergo a further institutionalization along the spectrum from networks to more hierarchical and authoritative organizations at the European level, operating across different politico-administrative levels and targeting decision-making units. This development attests to the interplay between formal powers and informal dynamics, with activists in the networks of interaction in and around the emerging European federations of political parties shaping institutional changes and policies for their own ends.

In my view, the role of these European party organizations has been underestimated. This applies both with regard to political practice and theory. There are pressures towards political spill-over and these should be further analyzed. The theoretical implication of this analysis is that it remains a challenge for theorists of European integration, political

organization and political parties in particular to specify more precisely the role and institutionalization of European political parties, the criteria by which we measure the degree of “partyness” and state of “party democracy” in the EU, and how to conceive overall of European federations of political parties.

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## **Political Parties and the European Union. What kind of imperfect Competition?**

Christopher LORD, University of Leeds

The study of political parties and the European Union must be going places, since it is in danger of acquiring its own defining metaphor similar to the story of the blind men and the elephant that is often used to frame discussion of mainstream integration theory (Puchala, 1972). Following the example of Steve Wolinetz<sup>1</sup> a useful parable for the study of political parties and the European Union is Sherlock Holmes' story of the dog that did not bark in the night. This analogy suggests that it is the absence and not the presence of full Euro-parties that is significant, and that we should investigate the failure of Euro-parties to develop further in the expectation that it can unlock deep mysteries about the EU's political system and the integration process. Three requirements are needed for an enquiry into why parties have not developed further in the European arena. The first is to specify what would count as a fully-developed system of political parties. The second is to assess the EU's political system for attributes of party politics that are present as well as those that are missing. The third is to explain any deficit in party-political development in the EU's political system.

Although this chapter deals briefly with the first two issues, its main concern is with the last question. Its goal is to specify a range of plausible hypotheses for why parties have followed an uneven pattern of development in the European arena in which certain attributes associated with political parties are strongly present while others scarcely feature at all. It takes the problem to be one of barriers to entry associated with the prior existence of national parties. It notes that the study of oligopoly in microeconomics is the branch of social science that has probably gone furthest towards typologising conditions that may cause barriers to new actors entering an established competitive game. It concludes by considering whether that typology transcends ontological differences between economic and political forms of imperfect competition in a manner that offers a useful supply of hypotheses for why Euro-parties have not yet competed in any significant way in

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<sup>1</sup> This metaphor was suggested by a paper presented by S. Wolinetz for the Workshop on Institutional Change and European Integration, Vienna, 23-24 June 2000.

elections to the European Parliament, even though they are increasingly well organised within the institutions of the EU's political system itself.

## **2. A benchmark of fully-developed partyness**

How would we recognise well-developed political parties at EU level? The premise from which this chapter begins is that any test should be normative in its inspiration and empirical in its application. A good test would summarise contributions that only party-like actors can make to the legitimisation of political power in the political system under investigation. This introduces an element of contingency or contextual specificity to any definition. But it also puts tight limits on what should be regarded as well-developed political parties by directing attention to what is unique about parties, to criteria for the rightful exercise of power in a political system, and to any relationship between the two. For reasons that are more fully discussed elsewhere (Beetham, 1998; Lord & Beetham, 2001), this chapter begins from the assumption that being a non-state political system (Hix, 1999) does not free the EU from the need to satisfy liberal democratic legitimating principles of representative and responsible government. The value-added of party-like actors to representative and responsible government is that only they co-operate and compete for power around overall programmes of government, or at least general approaches to governance that are widely understood by citizens, usually in terms of relative location on a key dimension of values, such as left-right. To the extent that the most important trade-offs of values and resources are those between issues, rather than within them, public representation will be incomplete in any political system that does not have well-formed parties.

The distinctive task of integrating choices across values, issues, and resource constraints into coherent approaches to governance can, in turn, be understood as having an aggregative and a deliberative aspect. In their aggregative function, parties take the preferences of individuals and organised groups as given, and concentrate on adding, balancing and trading the views of citizens as part of their own efforts to obtain power and achieve policy outcomes. The idea of government made responsible to the public through the medium of political parties presupposes that the efforts of parties to aggregate preferences into overall approaches of government systematically track the needs and values of the represented. Such tracking can take either an *ex ante* or an *ex post* form. Party responsible government

takes an *ex ante* form where those who compete for votes publish programmes and more or less enact them if they obtain a share of governing power (H.-P. Klingemann, R. Hoffebert & I. Budge, 1994). It takes an *ex post* form where party competition - its mobilisation of criticism and its organisation of alternatives - provides a means of judging and replacing power-holders at the end of some pre-defined period. This provides an incentive for all parties - whether they participate in the exercise of political power or not - to form rational expectations of the distribution of voter preferences at the time of the next electoral contest and to adjust their policies on a continuous basis.

By contrast, the deliberative function of political parties includes the following elements. Parties may form preferences, and not merely aggregate them. They can also play an important role in informing citizens about a political system and the possibilities it offers them. They may, finally, increase mutual awareness among geographically dispersed citizens of the range of alternative points of view held within the unit of democratic governance. Even where acting to promote their own office or policy seeking goals, an external effect of competition between parties may, therefore, be to contribute to the formation of a public space co-extensive with the political system.

Although these are somewhat different means by which political parties can deliver representative and responsible government, they both imply the same two preconditions for fully developed political parties in a liberal democratic system of governance. The first is that putative parties must link citizens to the political system, and do so in a particular kind of way. Whether performing an aggregative or a deliberative function, they must ultimately structure voter choice around overall approaches to governance. This, however, presupposes a second precondition: they must be sufficiently coherent groups of executive or legislative decision-makers to articulate common approaches to government, perform basic tasks of political entrepreneurship, enact programmes, or steer public policy by anticipating public opinion at the next election. In the analysis, which follows these will be termed the 'electoral linkage condition' and the "elite coherence condition".

### **3. A glass half full? How much partyness is there already in the EU's political system?**

This section and the next looks first at how far the EU has developed attributes of partyness as just defined, and then at those qualities that remain under-developed. Concentrating first on the positive side of the balance-sheet, a case that the European Union has already travelled some of the road towards the development of political parties can be constructed around cumulative consideration of the following seven arguments.

1. Many of the most important executive and legislative positions in the EU are recruited from party actors. Only rarely is appointment to the political leadership of the main agenda-setting institution, the European Commission, achieved without a background in party politics. A convention even seems to be developing that the President of the Commission should be a former Prime Minister, and, therefore, a party leader accustomed to dealing with other party leaders in the European Council. Access to the Union's authoritative decision-making body – the Council of Ministers – is a by-product of domestic inter-party coalition formation, as is the question of who gets to sit on which sectoral Council. Membership of the European Parliament, is determined by direct election from national party lists.

2. Party actors are brought together at elite level in formations that are unique to the EU. These consist of a series of Federations of national parties and multi-national groups in the European Parliament. At the time of writing there are five federations of national parties whose work impacts on the EU: the European Federation of Green Parties (EFGP); the European Liberal and Democratic Reform Party (ELDR); the European Peoples Party (EPP); the Party of European Socialists (PES); and, to a lesser extent, the European Free Alliance (EFA) of regionalist parties. There are, on the other hand, eight parliamentary party groups in the EP: The European Peoples Party (EPP); the Party of European Socialists (PES); the European and Liberal Democratic Reform Party (ELDR); the Greens/European Free Alliance (GEFA); the European United Left (EUL); Union for a Europe of Nations (UEN); Europe of Democracies and Diversities (EDD); and a Technical Group (Hix & Lord, 1997). Although the Federations include parties from non-Member States, the bulk of their work is directed towards EU matters. They receive funding from the European Parliament's budget. Several of the federations restructured themselves and began to call themselves 'parties' in response to

article 138a of the Treaty on European Union which affirms the importance of political parties to the integration process<sup>2</sup>. Given that national parties representing the overwhelming majority of voters are subject to publicly-stated commitments that any MEPs elected in their name will automatically join a designated parliamentary group, around 80 per cent of the EP is now by parliamentary groups that are organisationally linked to extra-parliamentary federations of parties.

3. The party groups in the European Parliament provide a *complete* parliamentary party system in the sense that they include all the party families to be found in various member states. Christian Democrats and Conservatives (EPP), Socialists and Social Democrats (PES), Liberals (ELDR), Greens (GEFA), the Far left (UEL), Far Right and Eurosceptics are all represented. A series of factors indicate that this may be a system of parliamentary parties into which the EP could stabilise and settle: the first six groups on the list have all been present in all three of the last parliaments; most mainstream national parties are now aligned with their preferred EP group, with the result that changes of affiliation inbetween elections can be expected to slow; and the parliamentary groups are capable of consistently respectable levels of cohesion as measured by the frequency with which members vote with one another. Further enlargements may, however, prove a perturbing factor to the extent that parties from the East do not easily fit into Western European political families.

4. The formations that bring party actors together at European level play some role in providing the horizontal inter-institutional linkages that are needed in a complex political system of dispersed powers. Presidents of the Parliamentary groups attend the regular summits of national party leaders which the largest federations hold immediately prior to meetings of the European Council. Some commentators also claim to detect legislative alignments between partisan clusters of government on the Council of Ministers and their corresponding parliamentary groups in the EP. John Peterson, for example, makes the argument as follows:

Under co-decision bargains struck when EU policies are “set” often are not intergovernmental ones in any meaningful sense of the term. Co-decision

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<sup>2</sup> See Article 138a of *The Treaty of European Union*, Luxembourg, European Commission, 1992.

fosters competition between alliances of member states linked to European Parliament (EP) factions. Usually the strongest EP factions will seek allies on the Council who may have agreed reluctantly to the terms of a common position. The EP then tries to “peel them off” from the rest of the Council. When this strategy works, policy choices tend to be less determined by intergovernmental bargains and more reflective of broad political tendencies (Socialist v. Christian Democratic) (Peterson, 1997).

5. The role of parties at EU level is not monopolised by national parties of government. Indeed, the federations and EP groups allow national parties of opposition to make a significant contribution to the operation of the EU’s political system. On the one hand, the federations give national parties of opposition indirect access to the most authoritative agenda-setting body in the EU, since leaders of those parties are included in summits of party leaders immediately before European Councils. On the other hand, the European Parliament tends towards strong representation of national parties of opposition. This is as a direct consequence of the “second-order” pattern of voting in European elections, which is often associated with mid-term swings against national parties of government (Reif & Schmitt, 1980; Franklin & van der Eijk, 1996). The 1994-9 Parliament, accordingly, started life with a 39:61 per cent balance between government and opposition parties respectively. Likewise, in the 1999-2004 Parliament, the centre right EPP became the largest single group for the first time since 1975, just as the unprecedented hold of the centre-left on parties of Government gave the PES access to 11 out of 15 places on the European, and to 13 out of 15 seats on various sectoral Councils of Ministers.

6. The formations that bring party actors together at EU level have a degree of autonomy from individual national parties, even assuming they only exist to improve efficiency in the delivery of national party goals by lowering the transactions costs of repeat coalition formation. Frequent use of European initiatives to promote the policy goals of national parties has produced a pattern of policy accumulation in the first pillar of the EU with a predominantly left-right cleavage structure (Hix, 1999a, 2000a). Since it is on left-right questions that most national parties are sanctioned or rewarded in domestic politics, it is unsurprising that they should have used Treaty change and everyday policy-making in the Council and EP to promote socio-economic goals. As, however, the Union matures and the *acquis communautaire* grows, an increasing proportion of decisions are means of



servicing and up-dating existing policy frameworks, rather than entirely novel initiatives. The result is to perpetuate the socio-economic bias in the EU's policy portfolio. This, in turn, stabilises the organisation of national parties into federations and European parliamentary groups that are almost exclusively arrayed along a left-right continuum.

Pursuit of left-right objectives through a multi-national political system has, moreover, locked the EU into a "grand coalition" approach to the aggregation of partisan preferences. On the one hand, the transfer of socioeconomic responsibilities to common institutions have required Member States to accept a delegation of powers to majorities in the Council and the EP, given the importance of maintaining decision-making efficiency in questions that relate to economic competitiveness and the performance of markets. On the other hand, the multi-national character of the EU requires over-sized majorities to prevent one group of decision-makers dominating others. A measure can only be approved by the Council with 71 per cent of the weighted vote under the QMV. A like threshold exists in the EP when normal levels of absenteeism are considered in conjunction with the 'absolute majority rule' that legislative powers can only be exercised by a majority of all MEPs and not just of those voting. The extent to which supermajoritarianism constrains parties to build coalitions between large groups of the centre can be illustrated by voting figures from the EP. Using data from the 1994-9 Parliament Simon Hix has calculated that if all possible winning coalitions under the absolute majority rule were considered equally probable, the PES would have been pivotal to 50.3 of votes in that Parliament, the EPP to 39.5 per cent, and the others just 1.2 per cent each (Hix, 1999: 82). The effects of supermajoritarian decision rules in Council and EP are, moreover, cumulative: the consensus position within the Council and the Parliament can never be too far from that in the other body if the one is to propose legislative amendments that have any chance of being accepted by the other (Tsebelis & Kreppel, 1998). In sum, the overall environment of party politics in the EU is trebly centripetal: in relation to left-right alignments of party groups in the EP (Bardi, 1996); in relation to left-right alignments of governments in the Council; and in relation to the co-determination of outcomes by Parliament, Council and Commission (Kreppel, 2000).

To appreciate how all of this limits the choices available to any one national party, imagine that all except one had already made a choice of group in the

EP. The remaining national party would be doubly constrained: first, in any rejection of the pre-existing left-right dimensionality of the EU's political system and, second, in its choices along that continuum. It could join a group focused on an alternative dimension of choice, such as supranationalism vs intergovernmentalism. But it would have to return to the left-right dimension of choice in order to be coalitionable. It could affiliate with the left-right group that happened to be closest to its own preferences on supranational-intergovernmental issues. This would not, however, guarantee a change in focus on the part of the rest of the group, which could only be irritated by attempts to divert it from left-right issues, or by any loss of cohesion on that dimension. Even, however, if our imaginary national party stuck to left-right concerns it might still be constrained to make a sub-optimal choice of affiliation, as measured by the group whose average left-right preferences are the least distance from its own. It might, for example, face a trade-off between joining a marginalised group that is close to its own left-right position, or joining a group that is often pivotal to winning coalitions but a little further away from its own left-right ideals.

The basic structural consideration behind these constraints is that even the biggest national parties are now relatively small in relation to the EU's political system. There are, for example, more than 100 national parties in the EP. Few are large or strategically important enough to force a redesign of the overall party system on their own. In addition, existing formations of party actors represent significant sunk investments in the development of elaborate practices for transnational coalition-building at Union level.

7. Not only does the EU have formations of party actors that are significant constraints on component national parties. Those formations can even be attributed with some representative qualities. Perhaps the strongest case along these lines has been made by Hermann Schmitt and Jacques Thomassen, who argue that the second-order character of European elections does not prevent "political representation in the EU from working pretty well as far as general policy views are concerned" (Schmitt & Thomassen, 2000). Using data from the mega Euro-barometer survey of the 1994 European elections, the authors find a strong correlation coefficient between those who eventually go on to form the party groups in the EP and their voters, as measured by self-location on a left-right dimension of choice. Even though voters are some way to the left of those for whom they voted, representatives and represented cluster in the same order along the left-continuum. There is

also significant correspondence on supranational-intergovernmental questions if account is taken of evidence that representatives and represented are more separated by feelings of security towards the integration process than by any principled opposition to it.

#### **4. A glass half empty? Where the EU falls short of fully developed parties?**

The last section argued that the federations and EP groups operate as non-negligible constraints on the options available to national parties in the European arena. They also provide a loose form of representation via ideological correspondence between the EP groups and the national parties which structure voter choice in European elections. Yet, this does not mean that the EU should be classified as having full parties of its own. There are two reasons for this conclusion. The first is that even if national parties are individually constrained by transnational party alignments, the federations and groups are collectively constrained by national parties in ways that deny them independent authority and resources.

The only mass membership parties with direct roots in civil society are national ones. Nor do the federations or groups have much centralised control over appointments or policy, even where these are critical to their own continuity and coherence. The assignment of office or other political opportunities in the EU arena is either dominated by individual national parties or it is determined by an exchange relationship between them. National parties decide on the selection or re-selection of MEPs, and otherwise reward or sanction their careers. Opportunities to set the policy agenda in the European Parliament via rapporteurships are apportioned by the double application of a points system. After the party groups have made their bids, the national parties within the groups usually share out rapporteurships between themselves.

Similar patterns are discernable in matters of policy determination. Although the federations allow for weighted majority voting between their members, shared manifestoes for European elections are thin on concrete commitments, and rarely feature prominently in the campaigns of individual national parties. Likewise, decisions on the voting guidance issued by the EP groups to shape and co-ordinate the behaviour of their members in plenaries and committees of the parliament are in all cases taken by group bureaux

which follow a common structure: one member per national party within the group with a presumption of decision-making by consensus. In the event of failure to reach agreement, most of the groups also tolerate dissent by particular national party delegations, particularly where the group is notified before the vote is taken, and reasons for being unable to follow a common position are given.

A second reason why the federations and groups do not allow us to classify the EU as having full political parties is that they do not co-operate and compete in a way that directly links voter choice to the outputs of the Union's political system. The principal difficulty here is, of course, that European elections have tended to function as second-order national elections. Since they have primarily been used to express judgements on domestic politics, it is difficult to regard them as having much to do with the institution that is in fact being elected, the European Parliament. It is neither possible to view programmes agreed at the level of the party federations as structuring voter choice for a forthcoming European Parliament, nor to regard electoral outcomes as public judgements on an out-going European Parliament. Recalling the distinction between *ex ante* and *ex post* models of party responsible government, the combination of Euro-parties in the parliamentary arena and national ones in the electoral arena may be linked by common manifestoes agreed in the federations but it cannot yet be said to aggregate voter choice behind policy menus that operate with some commonality across the system as a whole. Nor has it yet been associated with competition between representatives to attract votes on the basis of alternative claims about the performance of the political system during the period covered by the out-going legislature.

Although Thomassen and Schmitt have made an important contribution by pointing out that an element of representation is provided by correlations along key dimensions of choice between the preferences of voters, the national parties for which they vote, and the EP groups to which those national belong, there are limits to how far a party system can represent the public in one political system by means of voter preferences expressed in other arenas.

One reason for this is that voting is an assessment of performance and not merely an expression of preferences. It is unlikely that rational voters will only be interested in the geometric difference between their own preferences

on some scale such as left-right and those of the parties competing for power. They will also want estimate the probability of each party delivering on its promises. In a political system where preferences are normally distributed and parties compete efficiently, many voters are likely to be more or less equidistant in their own likes and dislikes from the policy programmes of more than one party. In this instance, their judgement of the likely competence of rival parties in delivery of policy goals will function as a crucial “tie break”. Competence can, in turn, only be assessed by observing how competitors for power perform in the political system for which the voter is being asked to make a choice. Inferences that extrapolate from records of performance in another political system are unlikely to be reliable where there are significant differences in institutions and in the politics of coalition-building.

A further consideration is that dimensions of choice such as “left-right” are shorthand systems of political meaning. The specific policy choices that get aggregated and simplified into “leftist” or “rightist” orientations may be so different at national and European levels that a significant proportion of voters might want to classify themselves differently in relation to the two kinds of political system. Only parties specific to the European arena would allow voters to differentiate their choices in this way.

Absence from the electoral arena may be responsible for a self-perpetuating pattern of under-development in the EU’s party system. This problem is usefully elucidated with the help of James March and Johan Olsen’s observation that both representatives and citizens need “political capabilities” relevant to their roles if democratic politics are to function effectively (March & Olsen, 1995). The development of capabilities amongst representatives presupposes the existence of professional politicians who are committed to making their careers in European institutions. Yet, as long as national parties play the key role in rewarding or sanctioning political careers, turnover of MEPs is likely to remain high from one European Parliament to the next. Even the fourth and fifth directly elected Parliaments formed in 1994 and 1999 respectively, had more members who had never served in the EP before than had (Corbett, Jacobs & Shackleton, 1995). As for the development of citizen capabilities, each European election fought on national issues increases the probability of the next election following a similar pattern. One reason for this is that the domestic content of campaigns for European elections reduces their effectiveness as instruments of political

socialisation. It cannot be said that each round of voting leaves citizens with a better understanding of how best to use the political system in question to achieve their own needs and values. This, in turn, contributes to a cycle of alienation from European elections, since turnout is, in the words of Jean Blondel, Richard Sinnott and Palle Svensson, “related to interest in European politics, to knowledge of the EU, and to having a positive or even mixed image of the European Parliament” (Blondel., Sinnott, & Svensson, 1998: 244).

### **5. Specifying the problem as one of barriers to entry.**

To summarise the argument so far, the federations and groups in the European Parliament have gone some way to meet the “elite coherence” condition for classification as political parties. However, they remain underdeveloped as sources of electoral linkage. So, why have Euro-parties failed to appear in the electoral arena? If we are to take survey data at its face value, it is unclear that voters are inherently disinclined to vote in European Parliament elections on European issues. According to one survey during the 1999 European elections, those expecting to vote on national issues only ‘led’ those expecting to vote on European ones by 44 to 33 per cent (Bréchon, 1999). It is tempting to dismiss this as an example of how answers to opinion surveys often differ from preferences revealed by actual political behaviour, either because surveys are suggestive of thoughts that would not normally occur to respondents, or because the cost-benefit calculation behind a high-minded answer to an opinion poll is altogether different to that involved in casting a vote.

Yet, the finding that a significant proportion of electors would like to use EP elections to vote on European issues has some plausibility, and some support from other forms of evidence. Even if most voters care more about domestic than European politics, it does not follow that all will want to forego their sole opportunity to vote for a Union institution on European issues when there are other occasions for casting votes on national questions. In any case, recent survey evidence questions the assumption that citizens perceive the EP as unimportant<sup>3</sup>. Absence of Euro-parties from the electoral arena may thus

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<sup>3</sup> Blondel *et al*, *op. cit.*, find that the European Parliament is generally rated as important to the lives of citizens. There is, moreover, no difference between those who abstain and those who participate in European elections in their classification of the EP as important. It follows that - at least as regards the decision on whether to

be a problem of supply and not one of demand. It is not a problem of what voters want, but of what they are offered.

At this point, it is useful to distinguish three ways in which a more transnational structure of voter choice could be supplied by political parties. One possibility is that Euro-parties could be established *ab novo* without attempting – as the federations and groups do – to form themselves out of an association of national parties. This would mean setting up Euro-parties in competition to national parties, and it would probably mean both kinds of party fighting European elections for a period until one category dropped out of the contest. A second way to supply voters with a more transnational structure of choice would be for national parties to withdraw from the electoral arena in favour of the federations of which they are members. The federations would put up candidates in several Member States. Party labels on campaign material and ballot papers would be those of the federations and correspond in most cases to the parliamentary groups in which MEPs serve.

A third possibility is that national parties could continue to select candidates for European elections, but differentiate the manner in which they mobilise votes for national and European contests. This could involve hybrid party labelling with the name of a transnational party federation or of an EP party group appearing alongside national party names. It could entail a tilt in the emphasis of campaigning away from domestic politics to discussion of the programmes agreed in the federations. Most radically of all, national parties could experiment with mechanisms that permitted *ad hoc* realignments for the purposes of European elections. In several Member States, parties would probably find it easier to campaign on European issues if their “euro-enthusiast” and ‘euro-sceptic’ wings could compete separately for the purposes of EP elections (Andeweg, 1995). The structure of public opinion would probably be best served by a kind of 2 x 2 matrix of choice: centre-right-integrationist; centre-right-eurosceptic; centre-left-integrationist; centre-left-eurosceptic.

All three routes towards a more pan-European structure of voter choice can be analysed as a problem of new entry to the electoral arena. In each

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vote at all - behaviour is unaffected by perceptions of importance or unimportance of the institution.

instance, voters would be faced with new “products”. The creation of new Europarties that did not attempt to federate their national equivalents would automatically increase the number of parties competing for election. The withdrawal of national parties from European elections in favour of their federations or differentiation in the labelling, message or composition of national parties for the purposes of European elections would increase the number of parties competing for election in any Member State where voter resistance afforded opportunities to continue with the parallel organisation of some lists with purely national appeal.

It is, however, important to add some further refinements to the analysis. The first is that parties contemplating any strategy for greater Europeanisation of voter choice would probably have incomplete information about the reactions of all those (voters and competitor parties) in a position to determine the costs and benefits of innovation. Each strategy would include an element of risk. A further consideration is that any of the strategies could be played long or short. Playing short would mean constraining the Europeanisation of parties to what can be achieved without loss of support in any one electoral cycle. Playing long would involve willingness to accept a poor result in the present electoral cycle, provided there was a reasonable prospect that repeat employment of the strategy would yield benefits over successive elections. A final observation is that parties could conceivably follow different strategies of Europeanisation – or none at all – across time and space. The segmentation of European elections into national arenas – each with its own electoral rules and many with a distinctive interplay between cleavages on European integration and those on other issues – already underpins some spatial differentiation in the Europeanisation of electoral party politics. Denmark, France and Italy have during the 1990s offered the clearest examples of how lists specifically organised for European elections can be successful. Temporal differentiation in the speed with which Member States move towards greater Europeanisation of party choice for EP elections could, on the other hand, be linked to imitation effects, or to shock events, such as crises in particular parties or party systems which create momentary openings for new forms of electoral appeal.



## 6. What do theories of oligopoly tell us about barriers to entry?

To understand why Euro-parties have not entered the electoral arena we need to develop some alternative theories about obstacles that can deter new competitors from entering a game where there are established players. In this case, the new competitors are Euro-parties, the established players national parties, and the game in question is European elections. The study of oligopoly in microeconomics has typologised barriers to entry as follows. One barrier may simply be institutional in nature. Whether intentionally or not, the rules of a competitive game may give existing players advantages over new entrants. Equally straightforward is a second barrier to entry. We may need to look no further than a preference of consumers for the products of established suppliers. This barrier turns out to be associated with a third, since new entrants could overcome consumer resistance by expending sufficient resources, for example on advertising. To the extent, however, that existing suppliers do not need to invest in re-shaping consumer tastes, they have an absolute cost advantage over challengers.

But insiders may have a further kind of cost advantage. Production may involve enormous start-up costs followed by steeply falling unit costs with scale. This presents new entrants with a dilemma: either start large and gamble enormous resources on penetrating the market, or start small and expect to endure a long period of inferior earnings to established players. The pressure to start large highlights a fifth barrier to entry. It is not market conditions before entry that determine the pay-offs that a new entrant will receive, but those after entry. The latter may, however, be difficult to calculate. Oligopolistic games often have punctuated equilibria: a particular pattern of provision may persist for long periods, since all players know that any movement away from the *status quo* – including the entry of a new supplier – would be indeterminate in its effects, with rewards depending not so much on individual decisions, as on an infinite regress of actors attempting to form expectations about the expectations of others. So long as insiders limit their incumbency advantage to an amount that is less than cost disadvantages and risk premia likely to deter new entrants, they can secure higher pay-offs than under a more competitive game and still stop outsiders from coming into the market (Modigliani, 1958; Hall & Hitch, 1951).

## 7. Discussion.

Does the foregoing typology of barriers to entry help us understand constraints on the entry of Euro-parties to the electoral arena? To clarify the role of institutional barriers to the Europeanisation of parties in the electoral arena it is useful to employ Gary Cox's insight that the "minimum viable size" for a party competing for election will be affected by two kinds of electoral rule: the number of seats in a multi-member constituency and any supplementary threshold of votes that a party needs to pass if seats are to be allocated to it (Cox, 1997). Thus a party would have to achieve at least 2 per cent of the vote if it is to get just one candidate elected in a constituency where there are 50 seats to be allocated, though even that will be insufficient where seats are only awarded to those which parties that obtain a minimum share of the vote. Under present rules, seats are only allocated to lists in European elections that obtain 5 per cent of the vote in France and Germany, 4 per cent in Austria and Sweden, 3 per cent in Greece.

Some interesting conclusions follow for the Europeanisation of political parties. One is that the constraint of minimum viable size varies markedly across national arenas. Thus a new entrant – whether created *ab novo* or as a Europeanised version of an existing national party – would need some reasonable expectation of securing between 5 and 15 per cent of the vote in small Member State with less than 20 seats. A similar minimum would be needed in the UK or in Belgium, where seats are allocated in sub-national constituencies of varying size. 5 per cent would be needed in Germany and France. In Italy or Spain, on the other hand, minimum viable size is between 1 and 3 per cent (Grunberg, Perrineau & Ysmal, 1999).

Cox also observes that the full impact of voting rules in deterring new entrants needs to be seen in conjunction with the phenomenon of tactical voting, where some individuals vote for a party other than their favourite. Since a primary motive for tactical behaviour is to avoid casting a wasted vote it is a function of voter expectations of which parties are likely to be viable and which nonviable. Voters will find it easier to co-ordinate their behaviour around expectations that established parties – rather than new entrants – are likely to remain viable over an election campaign. The reason for this is that only existing parties have a track record of electoral performance (Cox, 1997: 158), brand recognition and well-established followings. The result is significant inertia in party systems, though it is

worth noting that fear of wasting votes is most likely in systems that do not use transferable voting. Only Ireland amongst present Member States uses transferable voting for European elections.

If use of Member States as constituencies is an institutional barrier to the Europeanisation of parties in the electoral arena, its most plausible alternative – the creation of a central pool of seats at Union level – would probably have the opposite effect. It would incentivise the organisation of Euro-parties, particularly if seats were only available to lists that secured a minimum number of votes in different Member States, or to those which passed some threshold of the popular vote calculated as a percentage of the pan-Union turnout. Such an arrangement could also be used to facilitate a transition from national to European parties. If a limited number of centrally apportioned seats were to be introduced before Member States ceased to be constituencies for the purposes of Euro-elections, voters would have an opportunity to familiarise themselves with Euro-parties competing for the central pool of seats, while still being mobilised by domestic parties interested in securing their support for nationally allocated seats.

Voter preferences are likely to be an obstacle to the development of Euro-parties where voting is not merely instrumental – to obtain particular policy outputs – but the expression of a group identity, or of a habit that is acquired in youth or inherited in families (Campbell, Converse, Miller & Stokes, *The American Voter*, New York, John Wiley and Sons, 1960; Butler & Stokes, 1974). Of our different pathways by which Euro-parties might enter the electoral arena, identitive voting would clearly disadvantage Euro-parties created in competition with national parties. However, the possibility of national parties ceding electoral mobilisation to the Federations could also be constrained by worries about the non-transferability of habitual supporters. Incremental Europeanisation of national parties for the purposes of elections to the EP would presumably be less constrained by inertial voting habits, but even this could lead to an element of “brand confusion”.

What of absolute resource differences between national parties and any Euro-party seeking to enter the electoral arena? Resources needed to accumulate votes include campaign finance, access to the media, party workers, and a supply of candidates that the public is prepared to entrust with a representative function. Euro-parties could, of course, be publicly funded according to some agreed formula. A couple of difficulties are,

however, immediately obvious. One is that Euro-parties would probably have to out-spend their national equivalents. Even if the latter stopped fielding candidates of their own, Euro-parties would have to build up brand loyalty and pull together a campaigning infrastructure from scratch. It is unlikely that they would want to rely entirely on national party machines to get the vote out once the latter had lost a direct interest in the election. If, on the other hand, Euro-parties found themselves competing alongside national ones, the need for advertising spending to overcome their comparative unfamiliarity to the voter would be even more acute. Could resource constraints be overcome by aiming to build up brand recognition over several European elections? Probably not. One difficulty with aiming for pay-offs beyond the present electoral cycle is that private campaign finance – which is important in several Member States – is likely to be linked to immediate policy-goals. Another is that the career goals of credible candidates may not be open to gratification through promises of election and office in the distant future.

A further barrier to entry is that pay-offs from securing election to the European Parliament do seem to follow a law of increasing returns to scale. Only large groups are able to build up a significant presence in each of the 20 EP committees that enjoy policy leadership and agenda-setting powers in specialised areas of policy. Small pockets of MEPs are, moreover, rarely pivotal to plenary votes. Compensation for their opposition or abstention can normally be found by picking up support elsewhere in the EP. Only the large parties have all of the following: real blocking power; an ability to use the powers of the Parliament with speed, efficiency and coherence over time by taking part in repeat mobilisation of absolute majorities in plenaries; and a capacity to change outcomes by co-ordinating moves with allies in the Commission and Council.

The difficulties this is likely to present for new entry to the electoral arena vary according to the three transitions to Euro-partyhood outlined above. New Euro-parties seeking to compete head-to-head with national parties would have to reckon with being excluded from the larger EP groups. If withdrawal of national parties from European elections or their incremental Europeanisation exposed the mainstream political forces of the centre right or centre left to loss of voter share – to other national parties that continued to compete as such or to new lists designed to appeal to those disaffected with any denationalisation of European elections- the proportion of the EP

covered by large groups would fall. In an extreme case, there could even be a splintering of the Parliament's party system. If this analysis is correct, it implies there may be circumstances in which progress in the development of parliamentary parties in the EU serves as a constraint on the development of electoral parties: an unwillingness to risk progress that has already been made towards satisfying the "elite cohesion" condition of party political development could act as a constraint on experiments designed to meet the "electoral connection" condition.

Indeed, the present pattern of Euro-party development can be interpreted as fitting the prediction of oligopoly theory that established players adjust the product they supply to the consumer (voter) by just enough to remove the incentive for new challengers to enter the market, but by less than would be necessary if they were to face a new form of competition for real. By taking part in the federations and groups, national parties have created a mechanism for the aggregation and deliberation of preferences within transnational party families. This facilitates articulation of partisan ideological cleavages that cross-cut the territorial units of intergovernmental representation. It also provides national parties – and those they represent – with continued access to a Union institution in the event of losing power nationally. It is an insurance, in other words, against the risks of delegating powers to a political system whose legislative powers would otherwise be monopolised by national parties of government. Yet, a combination of strong transnational groups in the European Parliament with nationally segmented electoral choice has created incentive structures that only require MEPs to track the views of voters in so far as they are mediated through instructions received from national parties. This attenuates the linkage between voter demands and the policy outputs of the EP and increases opportunities for national party elites – whether MEPs themselves or those instructing them – to substitute their own preferences as the basis for the EP's legislative outputs.

Behind the view that national parties have only allowed a controlled development of Euro-parties where it suits them, lies an assumption that domestic parties have both means and motive for operating a cartel over electoral competition. At first sight, three pieces of evidence appear to support this hypothesis. First, the Treaty formation process – which has confirmed Member States as the constituencies for European elections and thus sustained the central role of domestic parties in electoral mobilisation – is controlled by heads of government, most of whom are national party

leaders. Second, it is only possible to influence – or even join – one of the established Euro-parties indirectly via prior membership of a national party. Third, the powers that national parties maintain over those who choose to make their careers with the federations and EP groups can be used to limit the capacity of the latter to experiment with a Europeanisation of their electoral appeal. In most Member States – particularly where lists are closed and there are relatively few seats to be allocated – national party discipline is maintained by an iron law of startling simplicity: the order in which parties choose to present their candidates for election is the main determinant of who is likely to be chosen by the voters.

It is, however, possible to imagine circumstances in which national parties could lose their interest in retaining undivided control of European elections. It was argued above that the conclusion of the second-order theory of European elections – that voters will demand a structure of choice based on domestic politics – does not necessarily follow from the premise from which the theory starts: that actors care more about political outcomes in the national arena than the European. It is likewise possible to believe that core assumption yet doubt that parties will always be motivated to *supply* choices structured by domestic politics. Under present conditions where European elections fought between national parties are often destabilising of domestic political cycles, parties that care more about national than European political contests may even have an incentive to differentiate the two (Andeweg, 1995).

Why, then, have national parties done so little to Europeanise their appeal? This brings us by way of conclusion to a final possibility raised by oligopoly theory: established players may be victims of barriers to entry, and not just creators of them. There are at least two ways in which it may be difficult for national parties to break with the status quo even if many are tempted to do so. On the one hand, innovators may be individually constrained by a “game of prisoners” dilemma: all would be better off with greater Europeanisation of party choice, but no one dares make the first move because the worst outcome for any one competitor is to carry the costs and risks of experimentation alone. A second possibility is that innovators are collectively constrained by various forms of systemic risk: for example, a precipitous fall in turn-out during the period necessary for voters to adapt to unfamiliar parties.

## **8. Conclusion.**

This chapter has argued that party political formations at the European level – the federations and the groups in the European Parliament – have taken some significant steps towards fulfilling the ‘elite coherence’ condition for fully-developed political parties in liberal democratic systems. They have not, however, yet satisfied the “electoral connexion condition”. The study of barriers to entry to oligopolistic games suggests a number of reasons why Europeanised parties have not yet entered the electoral arena. These are, however, only hypotheses. Empirical research is needed to test alternative explanations, and weigh their relative importance.

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## **The institutional constraints in the development of European political parties**

Paul MAGNETTE, Free University of Brussels (ULB)

From a strictly formal point of view, the existence of European political parties is difficult to deny. Most European political families have organised themselves on a European scale and have even named themselves “parties”. What’s more, the Maastricht Treaty, through its Article 138a (now 191) endowed them with a constitutional status: “Political parties at European level are important as a factor for integration within the Union. They contribute to forming a European awareness and to expressing the political will of the citizens of the Union”.

This sentence, often quoted, and partially taken up in the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union adopted in December 2000, has not been analysed very much. It is very instructive however. First of all because it constitutes a perfect example of speech-act: the political leaders who wrote it wanted to give rise to European parties. Next, because this definition clearly states the limits fixed to their ambitions. The sentence echoes the history of partisan groups by evoking their integrative mission. But it moves away from it when it allocates the parties a role of conscientisation and expression, without mentioning the function of the conquest and exercising of power, which is the common point of practically all the conventional definitions of political parties <sup>1</sup>.

This double affirmation reveals the hesitant attitude of European political leaders when they refer to political parties. On the one hand, they are aware of the totally unique character of European Union, which is neither a State nor a parliamentary government. Consequently, they know that the parties

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<sup>1</sup> Certain definitions, wanting to justify the incapacity of some parties to obtain power, or the relative autonomy of leaders compared to parties, have emphasised the influence they exert without being in charge. On this topic and its topicality in the European framework, cf. Pascal Delwit, Jean-Michel De Waele, Eröl Kuhlaci & Cédric Van de Walle, “Les fédérations européennes de partis: des partis dans le processus décisionnel européen?”, in Paul Magnette & Eric Remacle (dir.), *Le nouveau modèle européen, Vol. I, Institutions et gouvernance*, Brussels, Editions de l’Université de Bruxelles, 2000, pp. 125-138.

cannot, apart from the event of a qualitative leap into European integration, play the role that they have in their countries. On the other hand, their political habitudes, their in-depth knowledge of these parties which are, in the national context, the key to political life, inclines them towards considering that the Union will only become fully democratic if it dispenses with these crucial organisations. Confronted with a political system that does not fit into the conventional categories, they cannot stop themselves from referring to them.

### **1. An institutionalist approach**

That confirms one of the fundamental intuitions of the study of political parties: these bodies can only be understood if one refers back to the institutional structures that give them meaning. All the major works devoted to political parties, ever since this subject became one of the main topics in political science, have in fact reminded us that parties were only born following an institutional revolution and that the major stages of their evolution have always been linked to structural reforms of political systems<sup>2</sup>. First of all, it is the advent of universal suffrage, reflecting a social revolution, which makes it essential to set up electoral machinery. At the same time, it is the “parliamentarisation” of the States which calls for the forming of coordinating bodies of elected representatives.

Once set up, the parties influence the institutions. Political science has never been able to decide its chicken or the egg quarrel: do the institutions shape social forces or do social forces shape the institutions? As one knows, the question cannot be resolved because it depends on the point of view of the person who asks it. What is certain on the other hand, is that the nature of the parties always remains closely linked to that of the political system in which they exist. The American parties, submerged in a presidential federal system of “checks and balances” are not British parties, created from a centralised parliamentary substratum, or those of small “consociative” democracies. Neither their organisation, nor their functions, nor their relations are the same. The study of political parties cannot ignore the phenomena of

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<sup>2</sup> Cf. in particular, the great classic works of Maurice Duverger, *Les partis politiques*, Paris, Armand Colin, 1951 and Joseph Lapalombara & Myron Weiner (eds.), *Political parties and political development*, Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1966. For a general outline, see the very useful anthology by Peter Mair (ed.), *The West European Party System*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1990.

structural homology between the parties themselves and the institutional system as a whole. This applies as much for the European Unions as it does for the States.

Numerous analyses of the European political system have gone astray because they ignored this obvious fact. The political players themselves have, from time to time, disregarded the unique nature of the European Union. Corinne Gobin showed very well that if the trade unions had so much difficulty in organising themselves at European level, it was first of all because they projected their national views onto the Community and thought they could federate themselves by concentrating their activity on the Commission, mistakenly treated as a government (Gobin, 1997). To a large extent, the same reasoning applies to the parties. The teleological perspective was so significant in the 1960's and '70's that most political observers and players claimed to be convinced that the election of the European Parliamentary by direct suffrage and the increase of its competence would lead almost naturally to the development of European political parties, media and transnational social movements... (Delwit, De Waele & Magnette, 1999) In short, the duplication at Community level of the dynamics that the European nations enjoyed during the twentieth century.

If institutionalism gets reduced to the conviction according to which it is enough just to change the rules in order to transform social structures, it spells disappointment – as is illustrated by the numerous failures of reform strategies based on an amendment of the electoral system. In its most modest version, institutionalism simply wants to remind that “institutions count”, i.e. that they are not only the result of social forces and political events, but also an “independent variable” that channels the forces and shapes the reforms (Steinmo, Thelen & Longstreth, 1992). Provided with these methodological precautions, one can examine what, in the European political system, encourages or on the hand limits, the formation of European parties.

## **2. The distinguishing traits of the European political system**

The nature of the European Union remains highly controversial. There is a wide gap between the intergovernmentalists who reduce it to a conventional international organisation operating according to the time-honoured precepts of diplomacy, and the functionalists who see an embryonic form of something resembling a federal State. Each of these approaches carries with

it, sometimes implicitly, a theory of European parties. For the strictest intergovernmentalists, the European parties only exist in the Treaty and their programmes and congress are only empty gestures with regard to negotiations between national administrations. For the federalists, on the other hand, the European parties have started a process of integration of national parties which is not unlike the creation of the historical parties that resulted from the merger of local committees, caucuses and numerous dissimilar parliamentary groups into homogenous centralised organisations. Between these two interpretations, which have the merit at least of marking out the discussions, other approaches endeavour to simultaneously give an account of elements of integration already acquired within the European federations and of the weight that the national identities continue to carry (Hix & Lord, 1997). Such research generally proceeds from the interior: it concentrates on the organisation, the work and the functions fulfilled by these parties under construction.

By adopting an institutionalist approach, we would like to propose here a way to complete this invaluable research. Basing ourselves on these internal analyses, it involves asking ourselves which are the structures peculiar to the European political system that explain the progress accomplished and the stalemates encountered by the European parties. In such an approach, reference to archetypal national parties is always implicit: it is by measuring what separates the European parties from the national counterparts that one can attempt to determine the causes. By *a contrario* reasoning, it concerns asking ourselves why the European parties do not share such or such organisational characteristic or do not fulfil this or that function typical of parties in the classic sense of the term. To draw up the inventory of these differences and to try to determine the causes can be a first step, negative but a first step all the same, towards a conceptualisation of party federations.

With a view to analytic simplicity, one can start from the idea according to which the parties in Europe generally fulfil a triple mission of mobilisation, programming and government. There are of course typologies of functions that are much more subtle, likely to give a much more discerning account of difference among parties, variations in time ... The choice of a consciously simplistic typology is justified, at this stage, by the fact that there is no consensus on the definition of "party federation". It is advisable to first try to establish this common analytical framework before getting involved in internal conceptual details. On this basis, one is inclined to bring out three

main characteristics of the European political system, which account for the party federations not fitting into the groove marked out by the history of parties.

### **2.1. A not very integrated political system**

The first and most obvious of these characteristics is the high degree of decentralisation of “European governance”. We know there is not one, but at least four major methods of decision-making in the European Union: the intergovernmental approach (CFSP...), the open method of cooperation (OMC), the Community method (internal market ...) and centralised control (currency, competition...). The common feature of these methods, with the exception of the last, of which the range of application remains very limited, is the vital role of the governments. Both in decision-making and in policy implementation, it is the national leaders and their administrations that remain the chief authorities. The Commission has undoubtedly succeeded in maintaining a general function of impulse-giving and control; the European Parliament has become, in a wide spectrum of matters, a co-legislator. But neither one of these two Community institutions can act without the support of the national apparatuses.

It follows that the national political parties are only relatively encouraged to co-ordinate. All the studies have shown that within the European Parliament, the parliamentary groups associated with party federations play a major role in shaping votes. This confirms the institutionalist intuition: when a strong formal restraint exists (as it happens, the demands of internal majorities and the need for coherence of the Parliament vis-à-vis other institutions), the parties discover a predisposition towards expansion. When, on the other hand, the decision essentially deals with a bargaining logic between national positions, which is generally the case as far as the European Council and Council of Ministers go, the federations have difficulty in affirming an ideological line that neutralises the national positions.

The relations that have been established between the European States up to now do not come under a logic of centralisation comparable to the dynamics of American federalism. European integration does not consist in subordinating national institutions to supranational bodies, but rather to establish relationships of horizontal co-operation between the State institutions (Dehousse, 1996). The Council is not an organ that replaces national governments, but a “network” of executive institutions; the

European Parliament, even though it tried for a long time to oust the national assemblies from the Community game, today it is endeavouring to construct a parliamentary network with its national counterparts; the Luxembourg Court of Justice, in the same line of reasoning, is not a Supreme Court acting by quashing rulings of national courts, but the nucleus of a European “judicial network”. The mediators, the central banks, the agencies, the committees of experts ... maintain the same sort of relationships. Consequently, there are good reasons for thinking that the European party federations are on the way to be part of this reticular pattern. But the concept, very highly valued, is vague. Its usefulness in the case we are dealing with is still only negative: it enables to avoiding sticking on the federations an analytic pattern inspired by typical parties, emphasising that their internal components keep their identity and that they are connected by relationships which are more co-operative than hierarchical. Without a doubt, some member parties command prestige and a higher degree of influence than others (this is the case for German, British and French parties in almost all the federations, due to their political weight and the strength of their identity). But these are only leadership phenomena, which depend on the level of influence and not on that of coercion, typical of parties organised along hierarchical lines. In a system of co-ordination of national policies, the “parties” therefore have a co-ordinating role, not one of homogenisation of views. It ensues from this that, for example, they do not have a programmatic function but more modestly a role of co-ordinating national programmes.

The highly decentralised character of the Union also explains the weakness of relationships between the federations and their individual members. The European parties fall under the category of indirect parties: they do not recruit or train or mobilise members. Their role of socialisation, when it exists, is limited to the élites of the parties directly involved in the Community decision-making process.

For as long as this job-sharing between national and Community remains, the parties will be condemned to act simultaneously on two flanks, following the example of the federal States. And for as long as the division of powers leans in favour of the governments, the parties will concentrate themselves on the national governments, making do with co-ordinating their action at European level.



## 2.2. A functional political system

The second factor particular to the Union, which inhibits the development of European parties, is the profoundly functional character of the Community system. The powers of the Community and the Union have been continuously developed since the mid-1980's. But they remain powers that are granted and defined in very precise terms. Which leads to a very segmental mode of decision-making. The agricultural policies are defined among agricultural ministers, acting together with the Commission services specialised in this matter. The same is true for each of the other common policies. As we know, the General Affairs Council, supposed to co-ordinate these campaigns with specific themes, is going through an acute leadership crisis. Within the Commission, and even in the European Parliament, the specialised departments (Directorates in one case, Committees in the other) carry considerable weight, which weakens the general positions. It ensues that "European governance" resembles more a collection of specific policies than a coherent policy programme.

In these conditions, the political parties struggle to affirm their identity. All the more so as the most centralised powers are not those that they usually favour. Generally speaking, the heart of these partisan programmes is made up of redistribution policies (fiscal, budgetary, economic, social and employment policies). As it happens, in these issues the Community has no powers or only the power to encourage the co-ordination of national positions. On the other hand, the domains in which the Community can produce standards (internal market, environmental, public health and consumer protection...) cut across traditional policy divides. It is difficult for the European parties to devise complete programmes when there are limited Community powers, and contrasting views when common matters are a bit the victims of ideological divisions.

In their electoral manifestos, the European parties have however given a hint of a contemporary equivalent of the left-right cleavage: the left and centre-left parties generally demand strong normative backing of the market on behalf of common interests (environment, health, ...) whilst the right and centre-right parties are opposed to or critics of any regulating initiatives. The issues are not about tax levies and redistribution, in the absence of *ad hoc* powers, but about market regulation. In the long run, it could represent a new form of this perpetual conflict between market and (wo)man in which Karl Polanyi found the essence of modern politics (Polanyi, 1944).

Nonetheless, this cleavage remains relatively unclear and it does not yet clearly mark out the discussions and decisions. The majorities that emerge within the Council as in the European Parliament are not clearly and durably modelled on this cleavage.

The nature of the European Commission, brought about from the functional character of the Community, further complicates the job of parties. Reputed for its independence and taking care to not appear like the reflection of a partisan majority in order to keep its room for manoeuvre, the Commission is hit by this conflict. As frequently emphasised in the speeches of Romano Prodi<sup>3</sup>, it sees itself as the venue where compromises between antagonistic views are sought, which weakens the visibility of this cleavage. To be sure, this is also true of coalition governments that incorporate left-wing and right-wing parties. But in these, the team composition is clear and each party publicly states its preferences before looking for an internal compromise. Therefore the citizens can identify the opposing ideologies. The Commission on the other hand, does not show its political colour (85% of the parties present at the European Parliament are “represented” in it (Magnette, 2001) and conceals its internal discussions in order to give an image of collective responsibility.

From its origins, European integration has tried to “de-politicise” sensitive issues in order to avoid decision-making deadlocks. The segmentation of powers, evading splits between partisans of regulation and supporters of the market, contributes to this. The increase in the number of consultation techniques and the substitution of broad-based negotiations by majority decisions, fulfil the same function. The parties, whose etymology reminds us that they symbolise and portray political conflict, have difficulty in adapting themselves to these unusual means of decision-making.

### ***2.3. An anonymous political system***

The final significant particularity of the European Union is the very complex character of its institutional system, which takes the logic of “checks and balances” to extremes (Magnette, 2000). Historically, the political parties

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<sup>3</sup> “The Commission does not function along party lines. The Commission is a body and the Commissioners are no more the extension of political groups than the representatives of national government”, he stated in the most perfect orthodoxy during his investiture speech before the European Parliament.

developed by identifying themselves (positively or negatively) with a central institution: the Parliament in an initial era, then the government. The concentration of power in the hands of the executive is the result of party actions: it is they who, by disciplining themselves, assured governments relative political stability. That enabled them to create broad programmes (covering all powers granted to the executive bodies) and to define themselves by the support or refusal of the policies conducted by the government. It became necessary for the parties (in any case in a Parliamentary system; the presidential and directorial systems fit different logic) to define a general programme. This simultaneously contributed to socialising and mobilising the citizens on the occasion of elections.

The hyper-fragmentation of government functions in the Union prevents reproducing this model. First of all because the decisions are not made by a dominant body but are the result of negotiations between the three poles of the institutional triangle (Commission, Council, Parliament). In these conditions, no organ can focus public attention and appear as the author of the policies. Then because the composition of these authorities depends only very indirectly on the European elections. The latter consist in renewing the European Parliament, but they have no influence on the composition of the Council, stemming from the national votes intervening at non-synchronised intervals, and practically none on the forming of the Commission – as illustrated by the Prodi team, with a PES majority although this group “lost” the 1999 European elections to the benefit of the EPP<sup>4</sup>. Even within the European Parliament, the changes in balance only have very little effect on the traditional alliances between the two main groups. In short, the elections only have a very reduced effect on the policies conducted by the Union and this is undoubtedly because they do indeed understand it that the citizens are uninterested in this election. In these conditions, the European parties find virtually no incentive to organise themselves. Just the same, were they to succeed in shaping coherent and distinct programmes, they would be condemned to admit that these influence only very indirectly the composition of the bodies and the European policies.

### **3. The structural homology between the system and its players**

The archetypal political party appears totally ill-adapted to the totally new political model that the Union is. The parties traditionally revel in the

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<sup>4</sup> See the contribution of David Hanley in this volume.

support from citizens, whilst the Union is content with passive public opinion or “constructive abstention”. The parties are built by creating an ideological identity that distinguishes them from their rivals, while the Union endeavours to deactivate the ideological references to the benefit of complex compromises. The parties built complete programmes; the Union conducts sector-based policies. Finally, the parties concentrate their attention on the fundamental body that the government became whilst the Union institutions are specialised and no single one of them dominates. The “Community model” rejects, in its most fundamental characteristics, the conventional form of political party.

The space deserted by the parties is taken over by other collective players. The spectacular development of pressure and interest groups – lobbies – around Community institutions confirms the idea there are bound to be structural homologies between a system and the collective players who drive it. The lobbies find fertile ground indeed for their development in the Union institutional system. Directed towards theme issues (*single-issue*), they adapt perfectly to the segmentation of Community powers and the importance given to the regulatory logic regarding redistributive practices. Organised in a flexible manner, non-hierarchical, they easily adapt to the “multilevel governance”. With very few exceptions, the lobbies present at Brussels gather together national groups acting in national spheres and co-ordinating their action at European level. Used to open negotiating methods and to multiple pressures, they benefit greatly from the division of functions characteristic of the Union and exert successive or simultaneous pressure on the Commission, Parliament, Council and the amorphous grouping of agencies and committees that surround them. Finally, the lobbies hinge on the mobilisation of active elites drawn from the upper socio-cultural categories, without looking for support from large groups of citizens.

*Table 1. Homology between parties, lobbies and EU features*

	<b>Parties</b>	<b>EU features</b>	<b>Lobbies</b>
<b>Public</b>	All citizens Social groups	Target-groups Stakeholders	Active minorities Stakeholders
<b>Definition of policies</b>	General programmes	Sectoral policies	Single-issue
<b>Dominant type of policies</b>	Redistributive	Regulative	Regulative
<b>Internal organisation</b>	Hierarchical	Multi-level network	Multi-level network

What's more, presenting an organisation adapted to European governance, they are encouraged by the Community institutions. The European MEP's as well as the Commission civil servants or the government representatives, acknowledge relying on interest groups. In their studies and their positions, they find elements of information, which, through lack of means, they cannot establish by themselves. It is particularly important for the Parliament: the contributions from the lobbyists enable it to not depend on analyses supplied by the Commission or the governments. Concerned about not being captured by these private groups, the Commission and the Parliament support, at a logistic and sometimes financial level, pressure groups that do not receive funds from private enterprises. Here, the institutional incentives are very present (Wallace & Young, 1997).

One must be wary however of the illusion according to which the lobbies are supposedly progressively led to replace parties in order to fill in the gaps in European public space. For even if the outcome of their action has been not very spectacular up to now, the European parties do intend to find their place in the Union. Besides, to evoke the constraints that limit their development does not amount to considering the institutionalisation of European parties as being impossible. One does indeed see that nowadays, there is a lack of institutional incentives that would oblige the parties to organise. But, historically speaking, it is often the parties themselves that created the institutions that allowed their rise. The majority of parties defended the universal suffrage that strengthened their foundation; they drew the needed forces from it to consolidate the assemblies then the executives; they relied on public-spirited movements to expand public powers ... and all that, backed their own role.

It is only the more surprising to see that the European party federations undertake few actions likely to stimulate their establishment. The idea, popularised by Jacques Delors, to encourage parties to nominate their

candidate for the presidency of the Commission, to make the European elections more personalised and to strengthen the influence of the Parliament in the Union, did not succeed. The programmes of the party federations generally support a decentralised vision of the Union and only rarely go beyond the outline of national policy co-ordination. No political group seems tempted to emphasise the ideological references during election campaigns, nor on the occasion of the investiture of the Commission or at the discussion of its programme. At this stage, the party federations appear more like the reflection of the Union institutional system than like the bearers of a process of greater integration.

### **Conclusions**

Nonetheless, nothing allows us to affirm that this situation is permanent. The national parties, centralised and presenting an image of unity, are the upshot from a long story. In his classic work, Maurice Duverger reminded that, beneath their uniform appearances, beneath the uniqueness of concept, the history of their origin survived. He wrote: “A party is not a community, but a group of communities, a meeting of small groups spread across the country (sections, committees, local associations, etc.) connected by co-ordinating institutions” (Duverger, 1951).

In the light of this reminder, the European federations do not usurp the name of party. But they call for clarification of the concept. The main objective of the broad definition given by Duverger is to avoid the reification of the party concept. It implies that in order to gain clarity, the components of one party and its “co-ordinating institutions” be analysed in depth. It should be possible, on this basis, to shift the “federation” into a broader typology of partisan forms, which would extend from regional or federal parties officiating at infranational level in the federal States, to the Internationals, and including the national parties and the transnational federations. One would hence see that even though they are not parties in the strict sense of the term, the European federations do nonetheless come close to a partisan phenomenon.

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## **Recognition and status of European Parties**

Christelle DORGET, European University Center of Nancy

The question of the adoption of a general outline of rules prescribing a status to the European parties and a financial ruling specifying their financing from Community funds presents a strong sensibility because it is likely to bring back to the surface some of the well-known debates of the States, putting public liberties in the forefront: must one regulate or not the organisation and functioning of parties? If the answer is yes, then to what extent?

But in particular, there emerges an interrogation linked to their *sui generis* nature. In other words, because of their distinctive character, different from that of the national parties, must they have a legal framework imposing rights and duties following the example of those that the parties know in the States or, on the contrary, precisely because of their specificity, not have to enter into a statutory framework and not ask for or accept public financing?

There is no obvious prior answer. It is the assessment made by each individual of the nature of European parties in particular and of the European Union in general that first determines the answer to the this question. And yet, the European parties are a reality that no one can dispute. Consequently, a compromise position as to a possible status can be sought, for want of being unanimously satisfactory. Keeping in mind the reality of European parties and their particularity in view of the national parties, flexible statutory and financial regulations, or perhaps even minimal but appropriate, may turn out to be sufficient. As for public financing, it should be surrounded by maximum precautions necessary for avoiding all misuse, but also to reassure public opinions that have become distrustful with regard to anything that touches, from near or afar, the financing of political parties.

Whatever the position retained, one ends up noting that the absence of a legal status presents major drawbacks. Contrary to parliamentary groups that act within a legal framework set by the rules and regulations of the European Parliament, the parties are not legally based on any legal rule. They exist because they qualify as such and have given themselves constitutions. This acknowledgement would suffice to guarantee them rights in the Member States as well as at Union level and to grant them Community subsidies. The

two legal orders not acknowledging them any legal effect, they therefore do not have legal status. This is an obvious disadvantage which has considerable practical repercussions: they cannot directly employ personnel themselves, sign contracts, receive funds, acquire property, go to court or be the subject of appeal, simply because they do not exist. Not having their own existence, the leaders can be sued or prosecuted in their place and their liability is not limited. For this reason, in order to fulfil some tasks, their leaders act either in the name of the parliamentary group or in the name of a member party; which does not contribute to the flexibility of which these parties are in need (Jansen, 1998).

Moreover, the parties can be victims of the absence of statutory regulations; any organisation, whatever its political and national representativeness, its objectives or even its actions can call itself “political party” since the European political party “label” is not protected. Which can damage the reputation of currently formed parties by degrading their image. Worse still, any organisation can assume the name of an existing party without the latter having the means to have its identity respected at European level.

A definition of European parties by EU law would contribute to greater transparency and should provide specific criteria on which public financing could be based. It just so happens that the modification of Article 191 TEC by the Treaty of Nice, 8 years after the Europarties were recognised by the original law, provides a certain legal basis allowing the adoption of legal and financial status at the same time. In fact, just in having the importance of European parties recognised as integration factor within the Union by contributing to the formation of a European conscience and to the expression of the political will of the Union citizens, the Treaty of Maastricht could itself serve alone as foundation for the adoption of rules and regulations (Dorget, 1999). From now on, explicitly mentioned is made of the procedure and the institution that will be responsible for adopting these texts: “The Council, acting in accordance with the procedure referred to in Article 251 [qualified majority], shall lay down the regulations governing political parties at the European level and in particular, the rules regarding their funding”<sup>1</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> Article 191, al. 2.

This progress being decisive, it has in principle been established that the Europarties will soon find themselves provided with a status or that at the very least, a regulations proposal (Dorget, 1999: 494) will be issued by the Commission. This project will undoubtedly provide answers to the questions that must be tackled within status framework, in particular that of the recognition and the loss of the European party attribute, precondition and sine qua non for the allocation and the distribution of EU financing. Indeed, in order to avoid displaying the same legal shortcomings that some States experience with regard to their constitutional and legal approach to the parties, a minimum definition and or at least criteria for their identification is necessary in order to distinguish the “genuine articles” from those who call themselves as such in the sole objective of taking advantage of the financial manna from the State. Even if there is little similarity between European parties and national parties, they do have one point in common: the risk of (downward) drift of the financing system.

Considering the extent and the complexity of the problems relating to the adoption of a status, especially due to highly different national approaches, the financial aspect will not be dealt with in this article, but only the legal status *stricto sensu*, knowing that there are numerous questions that will not be tackled. The object of this article is to present a study paper on the conditions and terms that could be modalities that could be laid down for the recognition of a Europarty and on the events that could lead to the loss of this quality.

## **1 The basic approach**

The European parties are specific in comparison to the national parties; the Declaration written in the final act of the intergovernmental Conference (IGC) of Nice relating to Article 191 TEC is an especially explicit illustration: “The conference reminds that the clauses of Article 191 do not imply any transfer of competence to the European Community and do not affect the application of pertinent national constitutional rules”. Nonetheless, in order to assess the criteria useful for the recognition of Europarties and their justification, a detour through the constitutions and national laws will come in useful.

### **1.1. The identification criteria**

Without dwelling on the constitutional function assigned to national parties, specified and implemented by legislatures, it is a good idea to question the validity of the identification criteria adopted by these national legislatures with a view to their possible application to Europarties. Two completely different references will be presented, namely Germany and France.

### *1.1.1 Transposable national measures?*

German Basic Law, in its article relating to parties – Article 21 – does not give any indication in the matter; it makes do with sending the adoption of rules of enforcement back to federal laws. That is what the legislator did in adopting the law of 24 July 1967, an original law with regard to French legislation relating to parties, since it pursues the rules and regulations a great deal further, going as far as the organisation and functioning. Article 2 defines them as associations of citizens who exert, permanently or for a rather long period, an influence on the forming of political will within the framework of the Federation or a Land (federal state) and intend to cooperate in the representation of the people within the Bundestag or a Landtag. The assessment of this criteria will be made in view of a series of objective data and in particular, the area and the solidity of their organisation, the number of their members and their impact on public opinion. Only physical persons may be members of a party. Article 6 devoted to constitution and programmes, stipulates that the party must have a written programme and constitution.

This law, like any law for that matter that wants to preserve the free formation of parties, does not give any encoded criterion objectively enabling to identify a party. This will be undertaken by subsequent financing laws<sup>2</sup>.

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<sup>2</sup> The present law of 1967 does not put forward the principle of party financing, but only establishes that of the reimbursement of the election campaign expenses. The law requires the parties to achieve a certain number of votes but does not define, through these figures, the parties that must be considered as such and those that cannot be due to not reaching the limits stipulated. The parties that do not obtain the required number of votes do not lose their party quality: quite simply, they are not reimbursed for the campaign expenses they incurred. See Loi du 24 juillet 1967 sur les partis politiques de la République d'Allemagne fédérale, *Travaux de l'Institut de droit comparé de Dijon*, introduction by Mr Fromont, 16 p.

The law gives more negative criteria since it stipulates that an association will lose its legal status as party if it has not participated in any election for six years, that is to say, has not put forward any candidates for the Bundestag or a Landtag. Furthermore, if its members or those of the Steering Committee are a majority of foreigners, these political associations shall not be parties. Furthermore, if its members or those of its Steering Committee are in the majority foreigners, these political type of associations shall not be parties. (Article 2 §2 and 3).

Thus four criteria can be usefully pointed out, those of the duration of electoral inertia (6 years), the written constitution and programme, the nature and the origin of the members. If it is not unthinkable to lay down as condition to the recognition of European parties the obligation that they be directly involved, or indirectly through their members, in European campaigns and that they adopt a constitution and programme, the fact that they are made up of physical persons hits with full force the very nature of these organisations; in any case such as it appears today. Moreover, the executive body is essentially made up of persons almost all having different nationalities.

In France, neither the constituent nor the legislator has set out to give a definition, let alone identification criteria, of parties. Not that it involves an omission or a “non-necessity”, but deliberately, because of the liberal parliamentary tradition “opposed by nature to all state control of political party life and to all intervention by the judge, administration or judiciary on the composition and activities of political groups” (Mestre, 1994: 182). To impose legal conditions of existence is analysed as a curb on democracy. General regulations, i.e. of the status and political activities, are perceived as a threat to free creation, if not to say free speech of the parties. Ch. Mestre concludes that for want of a positive definition, even though the *Conseil Constitutionnel* had the opportunity on numerous occasions to specify exactly what a political party is, one has to consider that the principle retained is that of auto-election: “it only appears possible to specify those that the constituent has wanted to exclude from the benefit of constitutional recognition. Excluded therefore are non-united citizens, i.e. operating individually, political supporters,... Any person or entity not directly participating in the political system cannot aspire to be included in the term parties and political groupings” (Mestre, 1994: 204).

Thus, no indication in terms of identification criteria is specified, the principle of liberty prevailing. Whence the possible future reluctance on the part of France when a regulations project relating to the status of Europarties comes up for discussion, especially if the latter proves to be far too restrictive. Let us note however, by way of information, that the pilot study of French composition submitted to the Ministerial Committee in June 1958 was more precise than the German Basic Law, as much on substance as on form, as to groupings that could be considered as parties. The first paragraph was expressed in these terms: “The groups or formations that put forward candidates for election or which have a political activity can be formed freely. However they must declare themselves and submit their constitution” (Jacqué, 1980).

The two objective criteria which are the putting forward of candidates and the submitting of the constitution tie up with the German position.

The comparative analysis clearly shows that the choice of one or the other approach will pose real problems. Consequently, must not preference be given to regulations that are adapted to the specificity of the Europarties?

### ***1.1.2 A definition that takes into account the specificity of European parties***

By means of a legal definition, we shall try to give criteria for European party identification that are objective and easily applicable, a minimum definition, as it were. Thus and in order to try to give a more complete definition – if that be at all possible – we shall refer to more subjective considerations but which, nonetheless, characterise these parties.

The report of the European Parliament on the proposals for the IGC 2000 (Dimitracopoulos & Leinen, 2000) not indicating any condition for the recognition of Europarties but only concerning those that do not respect democratic principles and fundamental rights, the starting point of our study will be based on the initial 1996 report relating to the constitutional status of European political parties – the Tsatsos report<sup>3</sup>. The latter fixes a double series of criteria in its points 3 and 4. Thus “in order to seek the statutory

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<sup>3</sup> PE 218.741/déf., A4-0342/96.

rights of a European political party, a political organisation must simultaneously meet the following requirements:

a) give their opinions essentially on topics about European and international politics, be represented at the European Parliament or aspire to be, or also participate in a different but comparable manner in the process of forming European political will,

(...)

c) be more, by its objectives and its organisation, than a simple election campaign organisation or a simple support organisation for a political group and parliamentary deliberations,

d) be represented in at least one third of member states and active beyond the national context;

4. consider it necessary that European political parties satisfy the following minimum obligations:

a) to have constitution (charter) and a basic political programme to which European citizens have access. (...)”<sup>4</sup>.

We also refer to the initial study relating to basic conditions for the creation of European parties which was the one put down by three presidents of federations in a letter dated 1 July 1991 and which asked the IGC for the inclusion of European political parties in the new treaty. At that time, the parties were defined as “federative associations of national parties, existing in the majority of Member States of the European Union, which have the same leanings and objectives and which make up a unique group at the European Parliament”<sup>5</sup>.

Amongst the conditions suggested in the above-mentioned documents, two major considerations seem to us absolutely essential for the objective recognition of European parties, at the same time as transnational organisations and expressing a certain representativeness. First of all, it involves representation at the European Parliament or the aspiration to have it. What’s more, the condition for it would have to be specified, i.e. by the presentation of candidates in the European elections by their member parties<sup>6</sup>. As to the third alternative of participation in a different manner but

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<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 5.

<sup>5</sup> PES Archive, Brussels.

<sup>6</sup> Professor Bieber considers that the participation in European elections is one of the optional criteria for the constitution of a party.

comparable to the process of forming European political will, it is more contentious because it would suppose an interpretation of the “other manner”, interpretation that will be meant to be broad if the principle of free creation is firmly asserted. As it happens, this principle can be written into the framework of strictly defined criteria, in view of the prospect of public financing of the Europarties. This is why we do not consider that this rough formula is necessary, on the contrary, it is the open door to an excessive increase in the number of European parties. But for the establishing of a definition or of a legal status, it is not necessary to set a threshold of parliamentary representation because small parties that met all the other criteria would find themselves excluded from the benefit of recognition. Such a limitation would hinder equal opportunities for parties being formed (Lange, 1999). Moreover, the clauses of the Declaration included in the final Act of the Nice IGC go in this direction since even for the financing, in which, *a priori*, criteria at least as strict as for the recognition of Europarties must be established, it is pointed out that the measures relating to financing apply “to all political forces represented in the European Parliament” without the presence of any threshold linked to the size of the representation limiting the number of parties that can benefit from it. This measure is nonetheless more restrictive for it is only directed at groups that have elected representatives at the European Parliament and not those that took part in the European elections without winning a seat.

In accordance with the initial spirit of setting up parliamentary groups in the Common Assembly of the ECSC, the other major criterion characteristic of the Europarties has to be “transnationality”. The Tsatsos report is in line with this through several considerations. The first is the necessity for European parties to be represented in at least a third of Member States, i.e. contain members in a third of States and that their activity be carried out beyond the context of each of the States concerned. The figure put forward does not appear to us to be disproportionate insofar as that only the number of States is taken into account and not the population of the Union as a whole. It is not an obstacle to the appearance of new parties such as organisations opposed to European integration, which exist in all the countries or nearly. R. Bieber puts forward by way of example the figure of two parties set up in accordance with the law of two Member States or 21 physical persons nationals of at least two States and residing therein (Bieber, 1999). Two parties do not seem to be enough from the point of view of the “transnationality” principle. What’s more, all the currently formed



Europarties, including the weakest and the least structured amongst them, are represented in at least a third of all States. Moreover, possible future European parties, whether it concerns the extreme right or sovereigntists, also fulfil the minimum requirements. As for the constitution of a European party on the basis of 21 physical persons and admitting that physical persons may organise themselves in European partisan form – let us remember that in the spirit of the initiators of Article 138A, it was only a question of national political parties – it is to obviously misrepresent the European parties in their organisation and current functions. In addition, one has to question the ability to act and the representativeness of parties set up in this way. Moreover, by placing them in terms of public financing prospects, such a broad definition, if it were not to be clarified, would inevitably lead to observable abuses in France.

It should be noted that the Tsatsos report does not mention the representativeness of members, that consequently and considering the facility for each grouping to organise itself if it wishes as party in the States of the Union, the threshold of members in at least one third of States is not to be considered as exorbitant.

Let us further add that the possibility offered to regionalist parties in the States, having a federal structure or organised into more or less autonomous regions, to be formed on only a regional basis, could not be transposed to Union level, otherwise it is the very negation of the “transnationality” affirmed in the European Parliament and objectives established by Article 191 TEC. A mono-national party cannot be a European party, it is a national party even when its programme contains proposals that interest the European sphere. In a document to be used for the internal discussion paper at the PES, professors Tsatsos and Schneider pointed out that if within the States that do not have appropriate representation structures, a popular movement emerges in favour of the creation of a European party, this movement would, under certain conditions, have to be able to serve as one. Furthermore, they would consider that the interpretation of the notion of party must not be narrow to the point of excluding from the outset groups similar to parties, for example movements, to the extent that the concept that the parties themselves have evolved in all the countries (Tsatsos, Schneider, 1993: 10). We shall point out that on the first point, all the States implicitly or explicitly recognise the free creation of political parties, consequently, if movements are not in a position to organise themselves in partisan form at national level, there is

very little chance that they will succeed in doing so at national level. As for the limited character of the notion of party, it must be stated that the movements that could not or would not be formed in partisan form would not find themselves forbidden as such, they simply would not be able to enjoy rights and discharge duties that are attached to recognised parties. The other way round, some affirm the necessity of representation in at least two-thirds of Union States, if not to say the totality, in order to prevent the Europarties from being led to defending partial or particularistic interests. Such a base goes hand in hand with the efforts and interests of large political bodies. The drawback of such rigour is to recognise only a limited number of parties, which would exclude a section of the electorate and would move away from representative democracy.

The transnational character of European parties also emerges from the fact that they must express themselves essentially on European and international political matters. This stipulation of the report that uses the adverb “essentially” simultaneously shows respect for the freedom of action of Europarties that are not statutorily forced to a pre-defined field of competence and that of the principle of subsidiarity; the Europarties in principle not intervening in the realm of national politics for which only national parties take action<sup>7</sup>. It does not appear to us to be necessary to write the principle of subsidiarity more explicitly into a statute, this would be interfering in the organisation of European parties, but this principle can be freely taken up in the charter that each one adopts.

The third type of criterion – objective – is the obligation for the Europarties to have a constitution (charter) and to define a programme. There is certainly logic in requiring a party that wants to be recognised as such to be in a

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<sup>7</sup> According to Th. Jansen, the subsidiarity principle is crucial to determine the status of European Parties: “Under the subsidiarity principle, European parties only undertake those tasks which could not be better tackled by member parties, or could not be tackled by them acting on their own. These specific tasks are, *inter alia*, developing a European consciousness; assisting the building of consensus and of political will among the citizens of the Union; evolving a programme to shape the Union and its institutions; creating a connection between the citizens of the Union and their institutions; informing the public about fundamental and topical problems in European politics, and about the consequences of possible solutions; encouraging the Union’s citizens to take an active part in political life; active political education; the co-ordination of member parties’ European election campaigns, (...)”.

position to adopt a constitution and succeed in working out a political programme which is a reflection of its ideology. By converse implication, one can not envisage that a party could exist without having either ideas or political programme to offer to voters.

All these objective criteria present the great advantage of being easily identifiable and hard to argue against; in other words, they do not need an interpretation or an assessment. They can be summed up as follows:

- Representation in the European Parliament or the ambition to achieve it.
- Representation in at least a third of Member States
- Transnational activity,
- Status and political programme.

These four criteria must be fulfilled simultaneously because the absence of a single one would take away their party character from the European parties, that is to say that of being European.

The definition can be completed a bit more, not from the viewpoint of *functions*, tasks or missions of the Europarties – Article 191 TEC of the treaty is used – but by greater precision of what they *are* in reality, namely tools for the co-ordination of political choices and European programmes of the national parties. It would even be suitable to place the accent on the fact that they are the only organisations to fulfil such a function, what the groups at the European Parliament do not do and that because they are alone, they represent a specificity that must be recognised and must have the necessary means to this effect.

The comparison with the national constitutional and legislative measures relating to the parties shows that the identification criteria have a common foundation – participation in the elections and adoption of a statute and a programme – but that the specificity of the Europarties must be affirmed on the basis of the transnational criterion.

The identification of European parties being one thing – important – it is also necessary to comprehend the conditions of their recognition.

## **1.2. Recognition under conditions**

As has been undertaken in the preceding developments, it will be advisable to take an interest in the conditions set by the constitutions and the national laws, which could serve as basis for the recognition of European political parties. And it will be undoubtedly necessary to add fundamental values that form the bedrock of the Community and the Union.

### ***1.2.1 National conditions that cannot be ignored?***

First of all, one has to mention the recognition in all the States of the Union, whether this be by constitutions or legislative measures, of the principle of free creation of political parties. But all bring to it a temperament linked to the respect of the values of democracy and public order.

This is how things go particularly in France. Article 4 of the Constitution stipulates that the parties “are formed and carry out their activity freely” but they “must respect the principles of sovereignty and democracy”. The basic founding texts of Civil Liberties adopted under the 3<sup>rd</sup> Republic – right of association, freedom of speech and of public meeting, freedom of the press – are the expression of the free creation of parties. But the latter do not escape the constitutional penal law, in particular the penal liability of corporate bodies. In other words, the parties must respect the principles of democracy and national sovereignty (Mestre, 1994: 195-96). The new Penal Code establishes the violations, in its fourth title relating to “crimes and offences against the nation, the State and public order, by defining what the basic interests of the nation are (in particular, they are directed at its independence, its territorial integrity, its security, the republican form of its institutions) as well as notions of treason, attack/attempted assassination and participation in an insurrectionary movement (Mekhantar, 1997: 534-35).

Article 21 of the Basic German Law also uses this approach. After laying down the principle of free creation, paragraph 2 stipulates that “The parties who according to their programme or from the attitude of their members, seem to undermine the basic liberal and democratic order or to eliminate or endanger the existence of the Federal Republic of Germany are unconstitutional”. Furthermore, the constitutional court has added a point according to which “amongst the basic principles of this order, one must place, at the very least, the respect for human rights (...), the principle of the

plurality of parties and the equality of opportunities for all parties, linked to the right to constitutionally form and assume opposition” (Jacqué, 1980: 119).

All in all, all countries have laws contain measures enabling the banning of parties whose goals or activities would be a threat to the existence of the State. But if the democratic form of the organisation of the authorities/powers is intangible, the institutions can, when it comes to them, be the target of criticism and parties to campaign for their change. The constitutions mentioned hereinabove have been written in this spirit; nothing forbids a party to contest the constitutional structure or the State if it respects the democratic principles. Moreover, the European Convention on Human Rights expressly provides for restrictions to the freedom of association (Article 11) and a much more general restriction in Article 17.

Can and/or must the balance maintained in the Member States between freedom of creation of parties and the restrictions that are assigned to it be taken up in the constitution of European parties?

### ***1.2.2. European parties flanked by Union values and the objective of European integration***

Like the national parties, the European parties must find themselves explicitly recognise the freedom of creation and action which would prevail against the Union institutions as well as to organs of the Member States. However, this freedom cannot be absolute, that is to say total, without bounds. The intangible principles and values laid down by the States must not be violated by the Europarties; consequently, the constitution should stipulate the obligation for the latter to respect the national measures on the matter and refer to the law of each State for the application of compliance therewith. When principles are declared inviolable by a constitution and a constitutional court sanctions them, these principles can not be challenged by the European level. The German Court very clearly indicated it in the Maastricht I judgement, which in concrete terms means that the European

parties that would violate the values declared inviolable, i.e. the basic rights, could not be recognised<sup>8</sup> by the victim State.

Another question that arises is that of the respect of European principles which themselves too would be inviolable, independently of those indicated in the States. The Tsatsos report deems it necessary that the European parties respect within their programme and their concrete action “the basic principles of constitutional law written into treaty on the Union, namely democracy, the respect of human rights and the constitutional State”. These three principles are recognised by the constitutions or brought out by the constitutional courts and therefore exist as inviolable values. Nonetheless, they are the very basis of the values on which the Community and the Union rest; the first set of criteria that each applicant country must fulfil is the respect of these principles. To those could be added others corresponding to the basic values of integration such as non-discrimination or the promotion of peace (Bieber, 1999: 78). Therefore, any European party which, displayed through its statutes and programmes or implicitly by its actions, would have as objective to oppose the founding principles of the Union could be banned. In addition, the European Parliament report on the proposals for the 2000 Intergovernmental Conference actually provided for a virtually similar measure: “the European political parties which do not respect the democratic principles and basic rights could be the object (...) of proceedings for suspension of their financing by the European Union”. This has to do with a sanction limited to financing and not relating to the recognition of Europarties or the validity of their existence.

But what about a European party that would be against European integration? Because of this, does a party opposing integration not fulfil the missions that the treaty gives to it: to be a factor of integration within the Union, to express the political will of Union citizens and to contribute to the forming of a European conscience? Here arises a problem of interpretation of Article 191 TEC. The party would not fulfil the first function, but it would not be against the two others, quite the opposite. The expression of the will of European citizens is the expression of all wills and not just those in favour

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<sup>8</sup> This verb must not be understood as the possibility the States would have to proceed to the recognition of European parties, but as the freedom the latter would have to carry out their activities freely on the territory of the State concerned.

of integration. The same thing applies for the formation of a European conscience; is there only one form of European conscience possible?

The idea of loyalty towards European integration could not be the interpretation of this article because the statute of the parties would indicate from the substance, i.e. from their study, of the content of their programmes and consequently from the electoral offer they are proposing. In short, that would be amount to institutionalising the “unique European thought”. National parties known as Eurosceptics or sovereigntists must be able to be created as European party and benefit from the same rights, including financial, and discharge the same duties as those Europarties that have declared themselves in favour of integration. The reason is of a legal nature, it stems from the fact that the Union is not a “consummate” political organisation, complete as are the States, but is on the contrary a structure in the process of forming. It just so happens that it is precisely the way this Europe is being constructed that is the subject of debates. To forbid the voicing of opinions from those who are not in favour of integration, whatever the pace incidentally, has no sense considering the evolution of national party positions. So, the concept of a Federal Europe such as was understood in the 1950’s has been abandoned by many parties, considering it for now as utopian. Furthermore, it would be no easy task because it is so subjective to decide the degree of sufficiency and insufficiency of Europessimism and Euro-optimism; and into what category should those who call themselves Eurorealists be classified? It is therefore quite understandable that Professor Constantinesco points out that “the loyalty that one demands from the national parties is a loyalty towards a constitution, which has been the work of the constituent power, which expresses a political choice of society; towards a constitutional document that is not European integration. To demand the same type of loyalty is not placing oneself at the same level”. Should the opposite occur, it would be necessary to question the democratic character of an organisation that wants to have this principle respected and which is founded on the principle in the first place. And it would not be serving the integration cause to make it go forward at an accelerated pace.

The reasonable conclusion that one must draw from this report is that it is more prudent, considering the lack of detachment regarding the European parties and of non-consummate nature of the European Union, not to define the tasks allocated to the Europarties. One already gets an idea of how

problematic Article 191 TEC is in this respect, especially in its first paragraph aiming at integration. The definition of tasks raises another problem which is that of a definition giving an account of the real activity at present of the parties or of what the people who drew up the treaty or statute would like to see accomplished. There cannot be a neutral definition with regard to integration.

After having seen the criteria and conditions that could be retained so that the European parties may be formed, form conditions could be added.

## **2. The formal approach**

As we did for the identification criteria of Europarties, we shall dwell on the French and German formal approaches before examining the recognition procedures and the loss of the status of European party on the one hand and on the other, the organs or authorities like to be competent whether it be for their recognition or their dissolution.

### **2.1. The procedure of acquisition and loss of the status of European political party**

#### ***2.1.1 Acquisition***

Two major types of procedure exist in the States concerning the recognition of political parties: the requirement or, quite the opposite, the absence of a prior control. The characteristic example of rejection of all control is that of France, where parties are set up freely, in the form they want, i.e. association or not, without any sort of reference being made in the constitution. If they do not adopt the association form, they obviously can not be submitted to advance authorisation. As for those who would chose to take the association form, they must, pursuant to the law of 1901, file their constitution but they can not be the object of an authorisation, the Constitutional Council being opposed to a constitution procedure that is subject to a control *a priori*<sup>9</sup>. The

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<sup>9</sup> CC. 71/44 D.C. of 18 May 1971, Rec.p.19. Contrary to the constitution, the Council has indeed declared the law establishing an administrative and judicial control *a priori* on the associations, which challenged the liberal inspiration of the law of 1901. If the Council has not come to a decision on the foundation of Article 4 of the Constitution, "it is in any event about a variation on the theme of the free constitution of political parties. Through the legal terms of this, the constitutional



distinction between declared association and *de facto* association seemed not to lead to fundamental legal consequences since the *Cour de cassation* (= House of Lords and Supreme Court of Justice) recognised that a non-declared party has legal status and consequently receives a certain number of rights and obligations<sup>10</sup>. The Law of 11 March 1988 relating to the transparency of political life gives for the first time a hint of legislative status to the parties. At the same time reaffirming their free formation and activity, they are expressly granted legal status and the attributes that go with it: right to go to court, right to acquire free of charge or for a consideration moveables or real estate, they can carry out all actions in accordance with their mission and in particular create and run newspapers/journals and institutes of education pursuant to the stipulations of the laws in force<sup>11</sup>.

This law makes it pointless for parties to form as an association since the laws that recognise them are enough. The status is consequently granted *ipso jure*. The parties have to make neither request nor declaration. In that one finds the traditional liberal approach with regard to the partisan phenomenon.

Many other constitutions and laws are identical or very similar to those of France. The German law of 1967 does not impose any prior control, any more for that matter than does Article 21 of the Basic Law. The same is true of Austrian law. The parties must vote on their constitution, which must be published in a periodical and filed at the Ministry of the Interior. *Ipsa jure* they acquire legal status with the filing of the constitution, without this being the result of a decision of the Minister of the Interior, for example (Pfersmann, 1995: 63).

The Italian and Belgian constitutions are even less demanding. Just like France, the principle of free creations results in the absence of advance authorisation. The right to join forces in Belgium, which includes the right to

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judge just reminded people of the constitutional principle of the free formation of parties and political groupings". Ch. Mestre, "Le statut des partis politiques en France", *Revue d'Allemagne et des pays de langue allemande*, volume XXVI, n°2, April-June 1994, p.209.

<sup>10</sup> Cass. Civ. 5 juillet 1954, Bull. Civ. N° 227.

<sup>11</sup> See article 7, *JORF*, 12 march 1988, p. 3290.

create political parties, forbids submitting this right to preventative measures.

The study of the legal situation in these few countries shows that advance authorisation for the creation of parties is rare and that just filing the constitution, when it is required, suffices for granting them legal status.

Can this liberal approach, from a formal point of view, which may be considered nowadays like a principle of the formation of national parties, be exported to the European parties?

The Tsatsos report and the second European Parliament report relating to the 2000 IGC 2000 go past this point in silence, they do not anticipate express recognition of Europarties. One must therefore draw the conclusion that their creation is free and takes place without any need for the constitution to be filed or published, for example in the OJEC. However, in their study on the implementation of Article 138A of the treaty on the European Union, D. Tsatsos and HP. Schneider deemed that a procedure aimed at establishing the European political party status and consequently to recognise as such a political organisation at European level is necessary because of the requirement of legal transparency (Tsatsos & Schneider, 1993: 11).

As for Professor Bieber, he suggests that recognition depends on “the registration in a European (or national) register”. The party would be founded from the moment that it meets the basic conditions and that it respects the publicity requirements as published in the OJCE. *A priori*, one can make reference to the proposal for a regulation concerning the European association which provides for the registration and publicity in the headquarters State. As it happens, it is more awkward for the European parties to register themselves in a State considering that all do not make provision for obligatory registration and publicity. As a result, the alternative is between free creation without registration, which, *a fortiori*, leads to the succinctness of the debate on preliminary control and the registration and publicity at European level with or without advance authorisation.

To the extent that Europarties present the specificity of being European parties, different from national parties, and that in order to highlight this quality, they must fulfil obligations that the national parties do not have, it seems necessary to us that they at least register their formation by submitting

their constitution before an organ or authority and by publishing them in the OJCE (Bieber, 1999: 78). The advance control is not essential, but will be with hindsight if the party set up asks to receive Community funds. Just filing the constitution and publishing it can be enough to confer legal status, which would allow them to exist and act accordingly by rights. Nevertheless, a minimum advance control could be set up by the registration body, which would simply objectively verify that the basic conditions set by the regulations are fulfilled, especially regarding the number of member parties required. Such recognition would limit the creation of Europarties which would be any and whose exclusive or nearly exclusive objective would be the quest for public funds. Without prior recognition, they could go as far as undertaking steps leading to receiving Community manna.

But if there is recognition, it raises the question of recognition of national parties at European level. Indeed, if a minimum number of member parties is required for the foundation of a European party, what does one mean by national party and under what condition is a party called national to be considered as a member party of a Europarty. This is a decisive question to the extent that the parties at European level are made up of State parties. But is it up to the Community to resolve or decide questions that have not found a solution in the States or rather which were decided by the liberal route, i.e. the absence of regulations and conditions for their existence? Considering different approaches indicated previously, it is mistaken to think that a European-level agreement could be found on this point. Furthermore, we do not think it desirable, in the name of national sovereignty, for the Community to define the identification criteria of parties inside the States. Consequently a solution exist: As national party and one that must be considered as such by the Community, is any party that has not been the object of a ban or dissolution in the State in which it was founded.

The specificity of European parties which means that they cannot benefit as greatly as the national party from the absence of formation procedure once public financing emerges. Furthermore, if the national parties are set up without formal constraint, they must legally assert their existence if they want to be eligible for State financing.

If an objective control is desirable on the face of it, is a control necessary after the event?

### **2.1.2 The loss of European party status**

In the States, the banning of parties is provided for by the constitution or by law and aims at the parties directly or indirectly through the law of de facto associations or groupings.

In France, the sanctions are provided for by the law of 1936, amended several times but not specifically to political parties, concerning militant groups and private militia. The law authorises the dissolution of parties, which by their actions, present serious dangers for democracy. Yet parties are granted preferential treatment, just like trade unions, since short-term (2 months-5 years) and long-term (more than 5 years) imprisonment applicable to corporate bodies expressly excludes dissolution and being placed under legal surveillance. The law of 1936 therefore sets up a special association and group police and lists the seven cases for dissolution. They are especially directed against the incitement of armed street demonstrations, organisations of a militant nature or private militia or those whose aim would be to breach national integrity or who would undermine the republican form of government or further still, those who would engage in activities with a view to causing acts of terrorism<sup>12</sup>.

Unlike the French Constitution, the German Basic Law makes a provision for the parties which, “by reason of their aims or the behavior of their adherents, seek or impair or destroy the free democratic basic order or to endanger the existence of the Federal Republic of Germany shall be unconstitutional”<sup>13</sup>. The verdict to ban has as consequence the dissolution of the party and the seizure of its property<sup>14</sup>. In addition, the ban involves one on creating organisations striving to continue the activity of the dissolved party. This procedure was used in the 1950’s against the Socialist Party of the Reich (1952) and the Communist Party (1956). It has not been used since in spite of the reconstitution of extreme right-wing and left-wing parties.

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<sup>12</sup> On the use of this law for purposes of the dissolution of groups, see Ch. Mestre, “Le statut des partis politiques en France”, *Revue d’Allemagne et des pays de langue allemande*, vol. XXVI, no. 2, April-June 1994, p. 233 and in particular, note no. 304.

<sup>13</sup> Article 21, al. 2.

<sup>14</sup> Concerning the execution of the ban imposed on unconstitutional parties see the law of 24 July 1967, Article 32.

In Spain, a 1978 law institutes an inductive control on parties in the framework of the law on associations<sup>15</sup>. They can be suspended or dissolved when they enter into the criteria of the “illicit association” defined by the penal code<sup>16</sup> or when their organisation or their activities are contrary to democratic principles.

The law of these three countries reveals the necessity for each one to acquire means of protecting the State and its democratic organisation against groups and in particular political parties that would have as objective or goal to undermine it, especially by violent means.

Is such protection necessary at European level and must it appear in the constitution of European parties.

A subsequent control on European political parties is necessary, in particular if their formation is done without advance control or authorisation. This control must serve to verify that after they are formed, the parties continue to fulfil the basic conditions required for their creation. On the other hand, it is not necessary to endow the Union with the specific means that the Member States have at their disposal. The national measures in the matter can be applied to European parties that would engage in attacks that they prohibit, whether the parties in question be organised in party form or whether they be de facto groups. Even though the Tsatsos report did not mention the possible dissolution of Europarties and the reasons that could lead to it, the European Parliament report for the 2000 IGC recommended the addition of a paragraph 2 to Article 191, meant to suspend the Community funding. Although the suspension of funding is on the face of it less serious than the loss of party status, the procedure indicated as well as the motives could be easily adapted to dissolution of the Europarties. The proposal of Article 191, par. 2 as

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<sup>15</sup> Law 54/1978.

<sup>16</sup> Article 173 of the penal code describes as “illicit associations” the associations which have as objective to commit any crime or those which, once formed, encourage a crime to be committed; those which, although not having an unlawful goal, use violent means in order to achieve it; clandestine organisations and those of a paramilitary nature. See in F. Rubio Llorente, J. Jimenez Campo, *Spain*, IX International Round Table, Aix en Provence, 10-11/9/93, *Constitution et partis politiques*, *Annuaire international de justice constitutionnelle*, 1993, Paris, Economica, 1995, p.129.

proposed stipulates: “The European political parties that do not respect the democratic principles and fundamental rights, may, before the Court of Justice of the European Communities, at the request of the Commission after the opinion of the Parliament and of the Council, be subject to proceedings to suspend their funding by the European Union; the terms of the suspension that can be taken on the basis of this Article are adopted by Commission proposal, by Parliamentary and Council decision pursuant to the procedure directed at in Article 251 of the Treaty”.

The dissolution at European level, which following the example of what it is in the States, must be exceptional and bring with it a suspension of public funding. As for the other effects of the dissolution, such as seizure of property, this can be referred to the law of the State in which the party has its headquarters.

The outline of formal criteria for identification of loss of European party status leads to questioning the nature of the competent authority that would decide on Europarty recognition and the loss of recognition.

## **2.2. What kind of control authority?**

It goes without saying that if the European parties do not find themselves in the obligation to submit their constitution, but only to publish it in the OJEC as sole condition for their creation, no authority will prove necessary for receipt of the constitution. But if criteria and a procedure are required – without meaning that a prior control be imposed – it becomes essential that an organ or an authority carries out recognition, at least by “receiving” the constitution of the party being formed. The same applies for the verification that once the Europarties are formed, they continue to fulfil the conditions laid down; and if this is no longer the case, that the necessary measures such as dissolution be taken. In addition, should it be possible to contest the decisions taken by this organ and if so, before which court? So many questions that appear very delicate at European level considering the different national approaches and the difficult assimilation of the CJEC, both to a constitutional court as to an administrative or judicial jurisdiction.

In France, not the constitutional judge or any other authority has competence for controlling the formation of parties. On the contrary, if the constitutional judge does intervene, it is to censure laws that would impose any form of

control on their creation or their activity. One should not look in the Constitution but in the modified law of 1936 for the sanction against political parties. The dissolution is administrative, by decree of the President of the Republic issued in Council of Ministers. The dissolved parties may introduce an application for annulment before the Council of State against the dissolution decree<sup>17</sup> and the latter carries out a thorough examination (Mestre, 1994: 234), it scrupulously verifies that the conditions laid down in the law are fulfilled (Mekhantar, 1997: 536-37). The dissolution decree must be sufficiently justified. A thorough examination is necessary because it is possible to question a possible ignorance of the principles of liberty laid down by Article 4 of the Constitution because of the insufficiency of guarantees around this dissolution (Roux, 1995: 148).

The German Constitution gives competence to the Federal Constitutional Court to come to a decision on the respect by the parties of the provisions of the Constitution, especially the undermining of the liberal and democratic order of the country<sup>18</sup>. But the Court can only give pass judgement on the constitutionality of a party if first of all, it is first referred to by the three competent authorities, namely the Federal Government, the Bundestag and the Bundesrat. They have discretionary power to refer a case to the Court. As for the latter, it has a wide enough power of review considering the imprecision of the terms of Article 21 (Fromont & Rieg, 1984: 20).

In Spanish law, the Constitutional Tribunal does not have competence to review the illegality or more precisely the unconstitutionality of a political party; it is the judiciary that rules. It alone can pronounce the party illegal at the request of the Public Prosecutor's Office (Rubio, Llorente, Jimenez & Campo, 1995: 128-129).

In short, the constitutional judge may decide on the constitutionality of the party, but to a much lesser degree on its interdiction and/or on its dissolution. Can this tendency be applied to the European parties?

Let us recall before any comments, the Community specificity regarding the national constitutions: the CJEC is not a constitutional court in so far as, strictly speaking, a European constitution does not exist, but only a Treaty.

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<sup>17</sup> Article 1.

<sup>18</sup> Article 21, al. 2.

Having said this, it is the jurisdiction responsible for having the treaty respected and interpreting it if need be. Let us also remember that the judge for general law of Community affairs is the national judge. Indeed, the Court only exercises control on the legality of acts adopted by the institutions according to Articles 230 TEC and 232 TEC and on the conformity of acts adopted by the States in application of Community Law (Article 226 TEC). Consequently, to verify the compliance with the norms governing the status of Europarties rests with the national courts.

It should be noted that this solution is the one adopted in the project of European association. Other possibilities can be envisaged. The first one could consist of making it compulsory for each one of the European party charters, to determine the courts of the State of their headquarters and specify the competence of the courts in the State aimed at regarding litigation proceedings undertaken against the party.

A second solution could be to rely on the preliminary ruling provided for in Article 234 TEC, which stipulates that the CJEC gives a ruling on a preliminary basis “on the interpretation of the statutes of bodies established by an Act of Council, when said statutes so provide”. The framework regulation concerning the status of European parties could then expressly provide for interpretative jurisdiction by the Court. Which, of course, in no way authorises the review of the legality of acts.

The Tsatsos report makes an original proposal, which without excluding the appeal to the CJEC, invites the European parties “to invoke non judicial conciliation and arbitration proceedings in order to resolve any differences of opinion concerning the application of the law relating to European parties”. This suggestion is not entirely innovative; it is inspired by the German law of 1967 that precisely provides, in its second section devoted to the internal organisation of German parties, for referring to Courts of Arbitration. Article 14, first paragraph, stipulates in this sense: “In view of the amicable settlement and of the contentious solution of the disputes opposing the party or a federation to one of its members, or, disputes concerning the interpretation and application of statutes, there are ground for establishing, at least within the party and federations of the highest levels,



courts of arbitration. (...)”<sup>19</sup>. One should however note that this solution only applies for internal party disputes and not for those that oppose the party to third parties. Whereas the amicable settlement is always preferable to a decision of a court, it could not be sufficient and it can exist regardless of the fact that it appears in a Community Regulation. The report does not indicate how the Arbitration Commission would be formed. The argument put forward by the rapporteur in favour of such a procedure is that the issue of European parties is very delicate politically; because of this, it is not appropriate to give the arbitration of disputes exclusively to a legal or even administrative body, which is partially the case in national laws as we have indicated.

Beyond the settlement of disputes that could oppose a European party to an institution, it can be conceivable to submit the proceedings in loss of the status of European party to a limited petition as is the case in a certain number of Member States. For example, only the president of the European Parliament and the presidents of parliamentary groups, the Council of Ministers and the Commission could introduce the petition. The petition could be submitted before the same authority as the one charged with the recognition or before the national courts that would thus apply the criteria established by framework regulation. In this last case, the CJEC could only be approached on reference for a preliminary ruling whilst in the first, its competence will depend on the nature of the authority that will be concerned.

The report of the European Parliament on the proposals for 2000 IGC, although not aiming at the suspension of Community financing, is quite close to this suggestion since it involves the intervention of the chief institutions: request for suspension by the Commission, opinion of the Parliament and the Council and decision by the CJEC.

These different proposals as to the appeals do not give any indications on the authority that could be brought in to check that the European parties comply with the defined criteria if it proved that such a condition should be adopted. Several proposals have been put forward mentioning the European Parliament, the Commission, the CJEC, or even an independent inter-

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<sup>19</sup> Loi du 24 juillet 1967 sur les partis politiques de la République d'Allemagne fédérale, *Travaux de l'Institut de droit comparé de Dijon*, p. 7.

institutional authority (Jansen, 1998: 17). And in their discussion paper on the implementation of Article 138A, D. Tsatsos and HP. Schneider suggest having recognition of parties depend on a decision of the president of the Parliament. The latter would only come to a decision on the request to register after a registration committee, reporting to the same Parliament, has examined the characteristics of the party from the viewpoint of its fundamental nature and its structures. This committee should write up a recommendation for the attention of the president of the Parliament and the decision of the latter would establish the legal recognition of the party in question (Tsatsos & Schneider, 1993: 11). It could be the one already existing in the framework of the European Parliament, namely the Committee on the Rules of Procedure, the Verification of Credentials and Immunities. The reproach that could be made to the Parliament is that it could be tempted to easily recognise parties that have elected representatives in the groups set up and display more rigour towards those that had no parliamentary representation, so that the number of rivals did not end up enlarging the European political spectre even more<sup>20</sup>. It should be noted that if the adopted recognition criteria do not leave room for a subjective assessment, this criticism loses pertinence.

As for the Commission, despite the fact that it is regarded as the guardian of treaties, that it has broad experience as far as control is concerned because of its competence in the issue of competition and that it has administrative machinery and lawyers that are up to the task, at the end of the day, it is still an executive institution. When in the States there is a control on the establishment of parties by the Minister of the Interior, it is not so much to check the parties themselves as to make sure there are no violations/breaches, especially by force, such as they are provided for in France by the law of 1936. Well, there are no grounds for such measures to be at European level, so the Commission does not seem to us to be the best institution to choose in view of recognition of parties.

The CJEC should be kept as a sort of “Court of Appeal” in case of contesting of decisions regarding recognition. But even so, it must be possible to link this decision to a decision of a Community institution.

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<sup>20</sup> This remark only applies if the recognition of European parties is not linked to their representation at the European Parliament as provided for in the Declaration appended to the Nice Treaty, cf *supra*.

As for the idea of an independent and limited inter-institutional authority, it is also defensible. It would be equitably selected from the point of view of political sensitivities represented and could, for example, include European commissioners and the presidents of Parliamentary groups; it would be a sort of “Advisory Council”. A right to appeal could be provided for to the extent that the authority could be considered as an institution. If this could not be the case proceedings before the Court of Justice could not be allowed on the basis of proceedings for annulment. This possibility of “appeal” is desirable to the extent that the recognition authority must not decide in a political sense, rather, it must apply the legal set of rules.

### **Conclusion**

The referred to set of basic criteria and its form that justify the status of European parties could not be considered as sure solutions to the numerous and difficult questions that arise, and not calling for any contradiction. Quite the opposite. But the clue of our study is that as soon as the parties called European will be able to “legally” make an appeal for public financing, they will have to be the subject of a framework that is specified and as much as possible established on objective criteria.

Moreover, other issues will necessarily be the subject of debates, especially that of the contents of the statute of each of the European parties. On this point, the national laws – particularly French and German – reveal diametrically opposed approaches. In other words, will the charter of each Europarty have to contain, following the example of German law, a certain number of compulsory clauses such as the rights and obligations of the members, the party structure or the composition or the allocations of the Steering Committee? On the other hand, in a reflection of French law, will the regulations have to leave complete freedom of organisation and internal operation to the European parties?

Another question is to know if the regulations regarding the status of these parties have taken an interest in the status of their members and consequently, decide between national parties and individual members or leave this point of disagreement to the discretion of the Europarties?

Finally, whatever the scope of the questions relating to the status, the latter will have to at least define what actually is a political party at European level since the Treaty does not do so; it just indicates their usefulness and their role. Failing a definition, the regulations will at least have to give the criteria for objective identification, i.e. not needing any interpretation in order to be applied in order to avoid appeals as much as possible. The only criterion given and which is only recorded in the Declaration written in the final Act of the 2000 IGC is the representation to the European Parliament for the allocation of Community financing. If this criterion is stretched to the recognition of Europarties, it does not suffice, on the one hand because it risks being distorted and more or less “mono-personal”, parties could appear and on the other hand, parties could be created that would not be parties in the sense of the Treaty or which could not be described as “European”.

However that may be, the establishment of rules laid down in the statute is the precondition for the adoption of a Community text on the financing of Europarties; a financing that also leads to numerous questions considering the very different national approaches in the matter, especially regarding the subject of financing.

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## **The party of European Socialists: the difficult “construction” of a European player**

Gerassimos MOSCHONAS, Panteion University of Athens

### **1. A party in search of identity and role <sup>1</sup>.**

The *Union of Socialist Parties of the European Community* (USPEC), founded in 1974, organisation that took over from the *Liaison Bureau*, wanted to be an ambitious organisational response to the Community dynamics of the period. As it happened, in spite of its transnational aims, the *Union*, also known in English as the *Confederation of the Socialist Parties of the EC* (CSP), noted a definite decline in European socialist co-operation. The socialists, handicapped by the arrival of new rather Eurosceptic members (British, Danish, Irish) <sup>2</sup>, by the swing to the left of others (French) and by a national decline of almost all (decline linked to the outbreak of the economic crisis and to the “territorial instinct” that the latter produced, not only were not able to lead the construction process of the European Community, but gave of themselves, especially during the 1970’s, an image of a political body, deeply divided and with uncertain “Europeanist” commitment. For the *Union* of the 70’s and 80’s, the supranational aim was only a rhetorical concept, without real impact on either the programmatic objectives or on the life and structures of the organisation. Indeed, following

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<sup>1</sup> The analysis that follows is based on numerous interviews conducted by G. Moschonas with PES executives and Social MEP’s. These interviews, made starting in 1992 and on different dates, would not have been possible without the help of the Université Paris-II (in the framework of the constitutional laboratory led by Pierre Avril).

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<sup>2</sup> With the membership of the British Labour party and to a lesser degree of the Danish SD and the Irish Labour party, what was won in representativeness was lost in cohesiveness. Even the name of the party became subject of different national versions. It is typical that the British Labourites retained the term *Confederation* (the Italians the term *Confederazione*, the Danish, *Samenslutningen*) and, at the other end, the Dutch, one of the most pro-integration parties, retained the term “Federation” (*Federatie*).

the formula of G. Devin, “not so much a renewal, the creation of the *Union* rather more marks an apogee” (Devin, 1989: 268).

The creation of the *Party of European Socialists* (PES) in November 1992, at the initiative of the Socialist group at the EP, constitutes a new stage in the co-operation process of Community Socialists. The objective clearly posted by the promoters of this transformation was to create “a political tool enabling Socialist bodies to exert *a decisive influence* in the European Community”<sup>3</sup>, by moving towards the creation of a “true party”.

Almost a decade after the creation of the PES, we can draw up a first assessment of European Socialist co-operation. This assessment is “on the whole, positive”. However, it does suffer from the results of major weaknesses that significantly reveal the limits of any transnational partisan action at European level.

### 1.1. An assessment of sharp contrasts

Faced with the barrier of stagnation from the preceding phase, the PES contributed to the renaissance and to the deepening of co-operation within European socialism. A party more united than the *Union*, it is nowadays more than a simple *framework* of co-operation, more than a liaison structure, more than just a roundtable organisation. The PES has established itself and has gradually become recognised as the *undisputed organisational centre* for Socialist co-ordination at EU level, bringing new dynamics to regional Social-Democratic “integration”.

The political *influence* of the PES has widened (in particular through the *Leaders’ Conference*) and its authority has been more clearly confirmed and consolidated at European level (see below). Today, the PES even appears more coherent and better equipped than the EPP, its long-standing rival-

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<sup>3</sup> Guy Spitaels, *Report on Union activity, 1990-1992*, The Hague. During the 1970’s, the *Union* found itself far from the Socialist Community declarations of 1966, when the latter affirmed their “objective and tireless combat for the creation of a “Federal Europe” (7<sup>th</sup> Congress, 1966). It was also far from the 1971 declaration, when the Socialists reaffirmed their belief that the construction of Europe must lead to the creation of the

“*United States of Europe in the form of Federal State*” (8<sup>th</sup> Congress, 1971).



partner, in order to lead ‘effective’ actions within the European institutions. The new strategy of “arithmetical predominance” that the EPP has adopted (desire to include the greatest number possible of national parties in order to optimise its influence) has called into question its traditional cohesion and its “Federalist” ability<sup>4</sup>. Faced with this evolution, the Socialists today – after their defeat at the 1999 European elections – claim themselves to be the “number one group” [!] at the European Parliament, thereby emphasising that their arithmetical inferiority is largely compensated by their greater political unity. The present-day Socialists are no longer “lagging behind on integration” (Telo, 1993: 52).

However, *the organisation and logistic infrastructure* of the PES was and is very light, which is an indication of the party’s *weak institutionalisation*. The “professional” staff numbers are rather stagnant, in spite of a slight reinforcement since 1992, year the party was founded<sup>5</sup>. The *secretariat* is limited and dependant on the Parliamentary group in terms of financing and recruitment of personnel.

The *Bureau*, *political organ par excellence*, supposed to carry out the decisions of the Congress and set the political guidelines in the interval between Congress meetings, according to the statutes, only very partially

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<sup>4</sup> See D. Hanley, C. Ysmal, “Le Parti Populaire Européen et la recomposition des droites européennes”, in G. Grunberg, P. Perrineau, C. Ysmal (2000), *Le vote des Quinze, Les élections européennes du 13 juin 1999*, Paris, Presses de Science Po, 2000, p. 213. The membership in the EPP of Silvio Berlusconi’s *Forza Italia* in 1998 and the membership of the British Conservatives in the Parliamentary Group are the two most eloquent demonstrations of the contradictions contained in the absorption strategy of the European right. For a detailed analysis, see Karl Magnus Johansson, *Transnational Party Alliances*, Lund University Press, 1997.

<sup>5</sup> According to T. Bulmer, Secretary General of the PES, 17 people (15 of which full time) work for the party (Interview with G. Moschonas, Brussels, November 1999). By way of comparison, in 1994, the PES had 13 paid members of staff (figure reported by L. Bardi, “Transnational Party Federations, European Parliamentary Party Groups and the building of Europarties”, in R. Katz, Mair Peter (Ed’s), *How Parties Organize*, London, Sage, 1994, p. 362). In the period 1985-87, the Union had a staff of 8 (figure reported by Gilbert Germain, *Approche socio-politique des profils et réseaux relationnels des socialistes, libéraux et démocrates-chrétiens allemands et français du Parlement Européen*, Doctorat d’Etat, Institut d’Etudes Politiques de Paris. 1995, p. 288).

takes on this role in reality. Its activity is mainly devoted to administrative and co-ordination issues (in spite of an increased “politicisation” during these last two-three years) and it deals very little with general policy issues. It is uncommon for the Bureau, in charge of the policy line to be followed, to make general declarations; it is also uncommon for it to intervene in everyday European political life. The obvious lack of political energy and dynamics on the part of the Bureau is a telltale sign of the uncertain situation of the PES – and of all Europarties – and takes on in reality an eminent political meaning: the Bureau, in the exact image of the party, is an organ that lacks a well-defined role. If the Bureau activity does not follow European political life, it is because the PES is not – other than marginally or on an interim basis – part of this political life, itself weakly structured. There is no *political demand*, coming from either the institutional system of the Union or from European publics, which would spark off an *offer*, inciting the Bureau – i.e. the party – to assert itself without discontinuity as influential and decision-making department. From this point of view, the largely “administrative” activity of the Bureau is eminently political and deserves to be treated as such.

In the *Congress*, highest representation of the party which is statutorily held ever two years, everything, or nearly all, is decided on in advance, everything, or nearly all, is a forgone conclusion. In this High Mass conducted through the media, the majority/opposition culture, constituent culture of conventional modes of representation, is *virtually* absent. Basically, what is lacking is a principle of *European* and potentially *supranational* legitimisation, which would be superior to the *national* principle, commonly accepted and nowadays dominant<sup>6</sup>. In this sense, the organisation of the congresses is indicative of the contradictory nature – and of all the ambiguity – of the PES, which on the one hand, is built on a transnational ambition whose legitimisation, on the other hand, appears problematic in the very eyes of the players who are its instigators. In the PES, the conflict (the “issues that anger”) is instead almost repressed or put off until later, which is the sign of an “immature” transnational structure (Smith, 1999).

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<sup>6</sup> In a conventional party, one places in minority, without too much difficulty, a trend or a political current. In a “transnational” party, one does not put a national party in a minority position, because one does not easily put a nation in minority – i.e.: in a position of subordination.

The party exerts no significant political influence on the national party elite and nor did PES contribute to the creation of a “European forum for Socialist political activism”. The grassroots movement of member parties do not feel part of an organisational forum that goes beyond national borders; symmetrically, the PES contacts are made in the intimacy of a tight circle, often limited to national party specialists in “international affairs” (this is the “internationalism of civil servants”, according to the concept of Catalan Socialist Raimon Obiols (Obiols, 1990)). The PES hence remains an “elite practice” (G. & P. Pridham, 1981: 163) and wrapped up in itself, is not able to find the “openings” for including the *out of town* Socialist activists in its approach. Virtually the quasi totality of member party members (national elite included) is not part of PES life and the latter is not part of their world. The PES, like the other transnational parties, acts to a large extent in a vacuum: it has no *direct* organisational contact with European societies (Bardi, 1994: 362).

The PES is hardly capable of really leading its Parliamentary Group (which, according to the statutes, is a fully paid-up member of the PES) and of truly focussing on its everyday political thinking. The group, assured of the “structuring support” of the parliamentary institution (G. Devin) represents (like the other groups) the most “integrated” element within the European Socialist body. Furthermore, it is in a position – and in the obligation – to manage a much greater volume of transactions than that which can be dealt with by the party. Compared with the party, it therefore differs – thanks to its place at the European Parliament – by its *functional superiority* (Devin, 1989: 275; Bardi, 1994: 360). Moreover, the attenuation, within the PE, of the “partisan handling of certain issues” (Ladrech, 1993: 126) and the functioning by *the conjunction of centres* further the independence of the group. Having said this, the trend is towards a *better co-ordination and an intensification of exchanges*. On the “major issues” and political choices, the PES presently seems better placed to influence the stands of Socialist parliamentarians, especially through the increase in contact links and collaboration between the President of the Group and the managing bodies of the party<sup>7</sup>. In this sense, more than in the past, the PES is taking on the role of *focal organization* between the national parties and the Parliamentary Group (Ladrech, 1998: 65). Furthermore, the “party spirit” – the feeling of

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<sup>7</sup> Interview of G. Moschonas with T. Bulmer (Brussels, November 1999).

belonging to the same transnational *organisation* – is becoming increasingly stronger.

### **1.2. The height of contradictions: Socialist summit meetings**

The Council is within the Community “institutional triangle” simultaneously the main constituent of the “Community legislature” and one of the constituent elements of its “executive body” (Quermonne, 1993: 18). Therefore in spite of the recent strengthening of the EP, following the Treaties of Maastricht (1993) and Amsterdam (1999), the Council remains the main institutional location and the privileged place in the decision-making process (Quermonne, 1993). Therefore it is not surprising that the European parties tend to concentrate their efforts in order to influence this privileged body in the exercising of power. “Parties will go where the power is!” wrote Simon Hix. “And in the EU, decisional power rests with the European Council and not the European Parliament” (Hix, 1995: 15).

For this reason, the Socialist summit conferences, either in the shape of a Conference of party leaders or, and in particular, in that of the Summit Conference of Socialist Heads of State and Government (*Pre-Council* meetings), take on special importance. In fact, the Summit Conferences are becoming a driving force for the revitalisation of Europarties and of the PES in particular, which takes great advantage of the fact that the majority of government heads in Europe are Socialists.

The meetings of socialist leaders go back to the ‘70’s, but it was only in 1992 that the *Leaders’ Conference* became a party organ recognised as such in the statutes. The figures show that the meeting of these irregular, sporadic and occasional “conclaves” in the ‘70’s and ‘80’s became regular and got used to a very steady rhythm in the 1990’s<sup>8</sup>. The functioning without discontinuity of these summits is indicative of the path followed in

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<sup>8</sup> The figures allow no interpretative doubt: from one meeting a year on average in the period 1970-1984 (1970-74: 3 meetings, 1975-79: 4, 1980-84: 5) one moves to around two meetings a year in the period 1985-89 (1985-89: 8 meetings), to more than three in the period 1990-94 (1990-94: 17 meetings) and to approximately four meetings a year in the second half of the 1990’s (data for the years 1970-1994: S. Hix, *op. cit.*, 1995, p. 17. For the last years: Data communicated by the PES Secretariat to G. Moschonas. These figures concern the Leaders’ Conferences as well as the meetings of participants in the *Council*).

comparison to the *Union* and clearly shows the trend towards the intensification of co-operation within European Socialism. These meetings, venues for dialogue, for smoothing things over and for resolving conflicts, contribute to the creation of an “ethos” of co-operation at highest level as well as a certain “Europeanising” of the left-right cleavage. This produces an undeniable “integration effect”, especially if one takes into account that the decisions made in the Leaders’ Conference are “sufficiently authoritative” (Hix, 1993: 93). Moreover, these meetings (prepared by groups of experts within which one finds PES representatives who often play the role of ‘motivating force’) are usually prolonged by a press conference, which reinforces – thanks to the presence of well-known personalities – party visibility amongst the European publics.

But the most significant contribution of these meetings, especially the Summit Conference of Heads of State and Government, is that they exert some influence on the Council agenda and via this, on decision-making within the European Union (Hix & Lord, 1997: 189-195; Ladrech, 2000: 109-130). From now on, the PES can state, as affirmed by the SPD slogan for the 1979 European elections, “Our word counts in Europe”! (G. & P. Pridham, 1981: 238). Hence the party obtains – at last! – the status of *discussion partner* for Community policy. Because of this, it becomes – in a way that is visible although not very institutional – an *indirect partner* in the integration process. Here it has to do with an evolution the impact of which must not be underestimated, even if the mediate (“back door”) and not *immediate* nature of this partnership (consisting in steps that do not always leave written traces, which often take place “behind the scenes” (Ladrech, 2000: 113)) lends itself with difficulty to a systematic analysis.

Nevertheless, one must qualify the importance and the integration effect of this “functioning by the summit”. The heads of parties and national governments only act in their capacity as *national* leaders (their legitimisation stemming solely from their position on the national political scene) and not as “bearers” or “carriers” of a European Socialist identity. More specifically, the heads of governments by their very function are more “sovereignty-restrained” than the party leaders who find themselves in the opposition (Johansson, 1998: 31). Indeed, the participation in these summits of PES representatives, notably, amongst others, by the President of the PES and by the President of the Group (as well as, on invitation, by Socialist Commissioners), brings a *Europeanist and supranational nuance* to these

intergovernmental type conclaves. However, the participation in question is not in a position to counteract the “superiority” of authority and legitimacy that the national heads have at their disposal. Consequently, it cannot be the spearhead of a supranational logic. Without dwelling too much on personal fates that we know are very diverse, there is no choice but to note that the balance of influence, tied to the list of prominent personalities, applies to the detriment of the PES President and the President of the Group. Faced with leaders with a lot of capital in terms of fame, personal capital and “delegated” capital (due to the influence of the country that a Prime Minister represents), the capability of the PES representatives to convert – within the Socialist summits – their arguments into decisions and into bills is not very strong<sup>9</sup>.

In reality, the summit conferences do not have very much in terms of “supranational” because – by virtue of their composition and functioning (joint representation of parties, use of unanimity, and therefore reduced autonomy in decision-making) – they inevitably tend to put forward national parties (and the national leaders) and to accentuate their supremacy within PES. This produces the following paradoxical result: the meetings at the summit increase the standing of the PES and increase its visibility as Europarty; at the same time, they doubly devalue it: simultaneously, as structure with supranational aim (by reinforcing within it the intergovernmental logic) but also as structure, full stop. In this last respect it is interesting to note that the leaders’ authority and the legitimization of this authority is completely independent of their participation (which is *non-existent*) in the organisational life of the PES. The importance thus taken on by the summit Conferences sanctions the predominance of a body, which is for the most part “external” with regard to the PES organisation. This *quasi superimposed* body acts in the name of the party – and is nominally part of the party – but in reality it has, in the absence of organisational foundation, a *great deal* of autonomy in comparison to it. The leaders, reassured by a

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<sup>9</sup> Opposite leaders such as T. Blair, L. Jospin or G. Schröder, the solvency and the influence of R. Scharping (who on top of it is Minister under G. Schröder) or of the new President of the PES, R. Cook, are not, and cannot be, of equal impact. The increased ‘importance of summit conferences within the Europarties means that the personal impact of their President carries more weight than in the past. Therefore considering the specific demands of this situation, the human capital that the Europarties have at their disposal and in particular the political fame of the President, will determine to a large degree their dynamics and their future.

collective express authority tied to their *illustrious national histories*, lead *from the top* and – almost- from *outside* the structure called “PES” and largely replace the “organisation-body” (Bardi, 1994: 361).

All in all, if the leaders’ conference constitutes a *major step forward* in socialist co-operation and an accelerator that denotes the accentuation of this co-operation, at the same time, it is a *step backwards*, since it indicates the increase of “intergovernmentalism” as well as a certain devaluation of the PES as *collective* action system. In reality, by the overemphasis on summits, the party adopts a presidential style “with several heads”<sup>10</sup>. Therefore contrary to what some analysts think, we are not sure that the summit conferences can take on the role of *driving force for integration* that will break through the wall of organisational and identity weakness of the Europarties. However, these meetings create new dynamics that encourage and will encourage even more in the future, the *European* affirmation (political, institutional and identity) of the Socialist/Social Democratic political body (as well as other political bodies). This will certainly have a significant *indirect* impact on the transnational parties and will facilitate their construction as European players. But to attribute already to these parties that which is the responsibility of a body that has *great* autonomy in comparison, is to overestimate the political and organisational framework of transnational parties.

### 1.3. The networking of a weak integrative institution

Having said this, the fact remains that the influence of the PES, thanks to the leaders’ conference, has increased since 1992. It is real progress in the European Socialist co-operation, progress too for the affirmation of the PES within – or better –: alongside – the EU decision-making bodies. However, this “alongside” aspect, this “indirect” aspect makes the PES less of a true party, even *sui generis*, and more of a “*proto-party*”, the term being indicative of a limited, or even elliptic, and highly incomplete partisan profile (Soldatos, 1989: 231). This proto-party carries out – provisionally? –

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<sup>10</sup> In the first period of the Scharping presidency, a clear decline, as for the democratic functioning (and for functioning full stop) took place with the party organisation. The devaluation of the *Bureau*, whose meetings had become less regular, was the most visible consequence of this decline in collective work, decline linked to the priority given by Scharping to the Leaders’ Conference.

functions of *co-ordination*, of *advice* and of *pressure* for want of being able to exercise conventional functions of a true political party.

Basically, the PES functions to a great extent like a *political network*, whose influence is tied to all the connections and contacts it is in a position to maintain (Ladrech, 1998). The PES is not perceptible without the relationships that are built between the bodies and the party elite on the one hand and on the other, the men and women who occupy positions of power and influence within the EU and within national parties. These relationships are *ad persona* (Germain, 1995: 297) relationships or institutional or semi-institutional relationships<sup>11</sup> or most often, a combination of the two. The connections thus established, institutionalised or not, are channels of influence and pressure that increase the *European capacity* (=aptitude to greatly influence decisions concerning European construction), *mediate* or immediate capacity, of the party. The *networking* is, moreover, largely favoured by the fact that the borders that define the attribution of the three components of the European institutional triangle do not correspond to the conventional model of *separation of powers*. Therefore, a major aspect of PES consolidation results from the fact that all the connections it is able to establish have become significantly more dense in the course of the last years. The PES is a structure, which by its work *in attendance* progressively and discretely strengthens its penetration with the institutional fabric of the European Union.

## 2. The PES and the 1999 European elections (Moschonas, 2000)

If the presence of the PES within the institutional elite of the EU is being felt more and is acquiring a certain “obviousness” and “visibility” (if only by the ambiguous route of Socialist summits), on the other hand, the visibility threshold within European societies has not yet been crossed, far from it. The PES presence (as well as that of all Europarties) in the national media is marginal (although much more than in the past) and its influence on the political life of European countries is quasi non-existent. The PES does not

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<sup>11</sup> Examples: link between the Secretary General of the PES and the President of the Parliamentary group, between the Bureau and the Socialist Commissioners. According to their particular domain of responsibility, the latter are invited to take part in *Bureau* meetings, and, in practice, either participate themselves or send a representative.



yet have the image and recognition of a *genuine* player in public opinion in Europe. Consequently, it is little able to attract media attention and incapable of *mobilising support* (“identifying” support and “systemic” support)<sup>12</sup> on European issues. Its visibility remains too weak even during campaigns for European elections. The 1999 elections largely confirmed this theory.

### 2.1. The Manifesto

The PES manifesto for the June 1999 elections was prepared – “reassuring” undertaking or fate? – under the responsibility of the Briton R. Cook and the Frenchman H. Nallet. Adopted by the Congress of Milan (on March 1<sup>st</sup> 1999), this manifesto is structured around four major themes (a Europe of jobs and growth, a Europe that puts citizens first, a strong Europe, a democratic Union that works better) and proposes “21 engagements” (*PES Manifesto*, 1999). The ideological leanings of the Manifesto (product of a laborious compromise) reflect the ideological and programmatic leanings of contemporary Social Democracy. However, it is closer to “continental” Social Democracy and themes dear to the left (job priority, striving for growth, promoting social Europe) top the list of PES objectives. The attachment to certain conventionally Social Democratic values and especially the *tone*, distinguish this manifesto from certain British developments as well as from the EPP manifesto which, while identifying with Christian “personalism”, is distinctly closer to the market logic.

The text is directly in keeping with the long tradition of Europarties (of any political colour), which consists in producing documents “which are ... bland, offering little more than platitudes ... [and] little in the way of hard policy proposals” (Smith, 1999: 93-96). The Socialist programme, written in extremely generous terms that cloud its European message, in reality contains *no* concrete engagement. All the issues that could give rise to disagreements (examples: concrete measures for boosting employment, budget reform, reform of European institutions, enlargement) are either skirted or, most often, dealt with in extremely vague terms.

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<sup>12</sup> On the distinction of L.N. Lindberg and S.A. Scheingold between *identifying and systemic* support, see in Soldatos, *op. cit.*, 241.

Hence this document does not differ – by the consensual logic that presided at its writing – from the other manifestoes adopted in the past either by the PES or by the Union. “That (...) finalisation procedure of such programmes”, wrote G. Germain, “obliges the Representatives of member parties, in the framework of programme committees started by the Federations, to confront their points of view, to detect better one another’s positions on certain precise themes and to seek together a consensual basis acceptable by all, even if it involves a *minimum minimorum*, seems to us already a determining factor in itself for the evolution towards a greater cohesiveness of political bodies at European level, as much on the conceptual level as in terms of policy practice” (Germain, 1995: 309-310). To be sure, compared to the Union failure to present a common manifesto for the 1979 elections (restricting itself to a simple “Appeal to the Voters”), the production of the *Manifesto* for the 1999 elections shows that a major “consensual base” exists in the present PES. It is even in constant expansion. But this consensual basis is fragile. And it will remain fragile as long as the program finalisation process is marked by the same profound contraction: the programme, as is rightly emphasised by G. Germain, is the means par excellence for debate among socialists and the tool for evolution towards greater cohesion; however, at the same time, the programme is the means par excellence for the “consensus in the mixing up” and consequently, for the narrowing of the debate. This inevitably produces a superficial cohesiveness. The persistent production of programmatic documents based on the *minimum minimorum* proves that the distance to be covered with a view to a *genuine* cohesiveness within European Socialism still remains large.

Besides, the minimalist programmes are not likely to be transformed into instruments for action. Considering the too general character of commitments made, it appears natural to us that the latest PES Manifesto, just like those in the past, has not become a political tool – not even purely verbal – of a truly European campaign. The programmatic formulations with weak doctrinal and practical impact are not made to truly engage the election activity of member parties, which was shown once again in June 1999<sup>13</sup>.

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<sup>13</sup> The appearance, a few days before the June elections, of the Blair-Schröder manifesto demonstrated in a spectacular fashion the little “compelling” and not very “committed” character of the PES programmatic documents. This manifesto, text of differentiation and not of unification within European Socialism, was poorly received and gave rise to frictions (French irritation) within the PES.

Basically, the national Socialist parties, and the PES with them, find themselves in front of a double impossibility: that of connecting itself with a too heavily committed programme and also that of connecting itself to a too weakly committed programme. Moreover, it is impossible for them to escape, by the definition of a median line to this double impossibility (which in reality is only an identity impossibility). To define a middle road between an “extensive” programme (which alone provides the consensus foundation) and an “intensive” programme (that makes the consensus difficult to achieve), is an approach that has not yet found the suitable ways to develop, in spite of the increasing ideological convergence within European Socialism.

“In view of future electoral declarations”, wrote in 1995 Axel Hanisch, former Secretary General of the PES, “the PES could ask the following questions: up to what point must we push the pursuit of common declarations and therefore often of the smallest common denominator; can’t the fact of putting to one side the points of view of certain isolated parties lead to expressing more forceful political electoral objectives?” (Hanisch, 1995). These questions, asked after the date of the 1994 elections, remain totally relevant after the elections of 1999. Hence they prove the slowness of the process of “integrated” programmes set up, slower than anticipated by some optimistic observers. For two reasons. First of all, the “integrated” programmes directly correspond to the weak *internal* “integration” of the PES. It’s a mirror effect. This absence then depends on “institutional” liberty. As long as the Europarties do not have to lead a governmental system (of the conventional type or not very conventional) they can get away with giving priority to the unity of their organisation, and because of this, with being imprecise, incoherent and adaptable as to the formulation of their policies and “permissive” as to the respect of “commitments” thus made. “The logic of influence”, which assumes an efficient transnational structure, being weak, “the logic of membership” wins. Hence, for want of institutional power and for want of significant influence, one favours the consensus. As it happens, the decision-making mode based on the consensus is of very reduced “integrative” value and impact.

## 2.2. The *Network Europe* Group

The group *Network Europe*, created in 1998, fulfilled the desire of the PES to go back to its roots and try out new, more inventive, forms of joint work. The *Network Europe* gave itself the objective to bring new dynamics into the activity of communication, internal and external, of the PES and its Group at the European Parliament. The clearly displayed ‘ambition of this communication network, probably inspired by the effectiveness of the communication structures of the British Labour Party, was “to be the best”.

“We, Network Europe, will be a dynamic and innovative team (...) It is our task to add value to the information and communication activities within the European socialist family therefore

We want to:

- Make the group more visible
- Make the members more visible
- Turn the discussions on European issues from a top and bureaucratic phenomenon to a relevant issue among the citizens of Europe (...)”<sup>14</sup>.

The *Network Europe* undertook the creation of three work groups, the *Polling Network*, the *Media Network* and the *Issues Network* with a specialist appointed as head of each of these three “networks”. These work groups at European level have increased the contacts (including face to face contacts through trips in the vast majority of European capitals) with the press agencies and the heads of opinion and communication research of PES member parties.

A European poll, the so-called “Pan-European Poll”, was carried out under the responsibility of *Network Europe* in December 1998 (by *Gallup International*). The poll, focused on the thematic priorities and the attitude vis-à-vis the Europe of public opinions of member countries, also tested the attractiveness (and the non-attractiveness) of the different “messages” regarding European construction. The aim of the research, which was not strictly pre-electoral (no question was asked about the partisan choice, the voting intentions, the assessment of the parties), was to put together the corpus of information necessary to facilitate communication from the PES and the Group with the citizens of Europe. The results thus produced have

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<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 2-3.

formed the guide which has greatly “structured” the information work, internal and external of the *Network Europe* group. Some conclusions are drawn from the work carried out by *Network Europe*.

The Internet sites of the Group and the Party have been clearly improved and modernised, as well as the internal information systems (by the creation of the “European Socialist Information Space” (ESIS) in Intranet). All this has favoured a better “structuring” and spreading of information.

The *Network Europe* organised and encouraged the joint work between those in charge and experts of the PES, on the one hand, and those of member parties (and national delegations at the EP) on the other. Hence it contributed to the setting up of an initial European Socialist “nucleus” in the domains of opinion, media and electoral management research.

However, this attempt at co-operation, never seen at such a scale before the creation of *Network Europe*, has remained limited to a very restricted number of people, a largely isolated micro-group and after a promising start, finds itself progressively losing momentum and influence. Apart from the inherent difficulties in this type of joint work, it appears that the prioritarily national character of the 1999 European elections has been a “structural” obstacle that heavily contributed to the group’s loss of momentum and influence. Moreover, the putting forward (and highlighting) of the *Network Europe* has greatly bypassed – and devalued- the communication structures already existing within the party and the Parliamentary group. This has created a great deal of tension, especially with the heads of communication of the Group, much more knowledgeable, even in the opinion of *Network Europe*, about the “corridors of the European Parliament”. This tension has harmed all the communication efforts and the influence of *Network Europe*. Finally, upon reading the *Manifesto*, it is interesting to note that the policy proposals of *Network Europe* have not been truly “incorporated” in the official programmatic document of the PES. This non-incorporation, implicit repudiation of the work carried out by the group, is an ominous sign for its future.

An overall view of the 1999 elections shows that the PES was not able to conduct a truly European electoral campaign, a campaign, which – beyond its national aspects – should have been in a position to enhance and showcase the party, and the transnational themes of which it is bearer. It

didn't really commit the PES to a more ambitious path and did not enable the co-ordination of major joint actions, in spite of the praiseworthy effort of the PES executive to increase the contacts and to reinforce the joint work. To be sure, the party tested new, resolutely "modern" forms of communication and advertising. However, the impact of these innovations was rather disappointing, their effect, after an initial grand gesture, faded as time went on. Furthermore, the non-adoption of common acronyms and logo (example: PES-SPD, PES-PASOK), adoption always put off for later<sup>15</sup>, is the sign of the weakness – even at symbolic semantic level – of the European dimension of its last electoral campaign. The party was not able to overcome the barrier of "non-visibility" and showed itself incapable of achieving the goal set at the Malmö Congress (1995), namely "to pass from the role of internal co-ordination to external representation, promoting the public role of the PES" (PES, 1999).

The experience of the 1999 elections has proved that the *European identity* offer of the Social Democrats is still too weak to really contribute to the shaping of a "European conscience" in the meaning of Article 138A of the Treaty of Maastricht. At the same time, the weakness of the "European conscience", – considered by the latter not as a substitute for the national conscience, to take the terms of Dimitris Tsatsos, but as a "second level" of politics and the politization directly linked to the existence of a *common European good* – damages all identity offer that does not use national vocabularies and does not aim at national customers (Tsatsos, WD: 5). The nation remains the centre of partisan identifications, and this handicaps the transnational groupings of parties. The 1999 European campaign, marked by a "faltering Europeanisation" confirmed it once again (Gerstle, Semetko, Schoenbach & Villa, 2000).

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<sup>15</sup> Some PES executives seem convinced that the Socialists will be in a position to present themselves under a common acronym at the next European elections.

### 3. Conclusions: between the national and the supranational

The PES assumes – clearly more than in the past – the function of *executive* and of *tool*, in short: of organiser, of Socialist co-operation. The PES of today constitutes an indispensable structure, and in one sense “not to be ignored”, for reducing the “transaction costs” of national Socialist party co-operation (Ladrech, 2000: 127). From now on, it is located at the heart of Social-Democratic networks at “systemic” level of the European Union (Socialist group at the EP, member parties, heads of Socialist governments, Commissioners coming from the Socialist body) and it holds a not insignificant place – although not a central place – in all the Social Democratic networks in Europe. Moreover, its activity, largely dependent of the rhythms and evolutions within the EU institutional system, established it as a *highly autonomous*, political and functional structure and not like a simple *regional* organisation (the “Europe” section) of the Socialist International. It is also certain that the party has a greater *operational capacity* in its transactions with the other players of the European game. It exerts a certain influence – and pressure – on the Community decision-making bodies, especially through the summit meetings and the Socialist Group within the European Parliament with increased competence. However, this influence is exerted through structures (Summits of Socialist heads of State, Group in the EP) which, to a certain extent, are “autonomous” with regard to the party, while at the same time belonging to it – theoretically. These structures are stronger and more “visible” than the PES. As a result, the influence exerted by the PES (which is, in some cases, more nominal than real) is without solid institutional and political foundation. Moreover, it does not follow, or not enough, a supranational approach because (it is) European (when it does signal, by some of its aspects, the *reintroduction* and the *reaffirmation* of an intergovernmental type of logic). Hence, the refractory zones of an authentically supranational logic are numerous and mark in a decisive manner the outlines of the PES and more generally, of the European partisan landscape.

The structure and the operating logic of the PES, structure confederal as a priority, partly federal and supranational in intent, indicates the complexity of its situation. In spite of its reinforcement, the PES, remains a “party of parties” whose authority is drastically limited by the national units that make it up. Neither centralised party nor polycentric party (in the meaning in which the authority of the member parties is strong but ultimately remains

inside the space defined by the party), the PES is more a party with a weak centre and very autonomous “territorial” structures. For want of a strong link between the central decision-making system and the member parties, the real authority, radiating in the direction of national parties, is hence often transferred *outside* PES<sup>16</sup>. All in all, the PES, passed through by conflicting tendencies, tendencies that are completed and superimposed, remains a party in search of a role, in search of a structure and in search of a European vision, while no longer being a party “without role”. Drawing our inspiration from a classification by Panayotis Soldatos, we could say that the PES, this strengthened PES, remains a *weak integrative institution* (Soldatos, 1989: 186).

The PES, as *weak integrative* structure, is incapable of imposing itself as source of strength and imposition and therefore, as political *force* in the *literal* sense of the term. In fact, in politics, a logic of *exclusion* operates in the constitution of every political group, in its production as group. The dialectics of exclusion/inclusion make a group cohesive – and therefore aggressive towards the “outside” and repressive towards the “interior”. When one speaks of international organisations, of social movements, of underground societies or of political parties, this “particularistic logic” is universal and is found at the foundation of politics (Zolo, 1992: 41-42). Each political group “creates” its own rivals, passes itself off as adversary/rival opposite them, and thus defines itself and affirms itself as distinct group, with distinct identity and distinct interests. As it happens, the PES appears little capable of being “aggressive”, of “creating” its own “enemies” – external and internal – and of giving itself a true identity, strong identity and widely shared. The largely consensual functioning of the EU institutions (the rule of the large coalition determining in part the decision-making process) and the programmatic affinity that brings together the Socialists of centre-right forces (assembled around the EPP) contribute to this. However, if in politics one is incapable of establishing oneself as structure of division and adversity, one is in fact and basically incapable of passing oneself off and imposing oneself as a political force in the literal sense of the term. This incapacity to conform to the logic of the *most usual and most universal* political code that has ever existed is indicative *not of a new political “ethic” but of the extreme vulnerability of the European Socialist identity.*

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<sup>16</sup> In the absence of centralisation and cohesion, no body of the PES can really prevent or punish dissidence.



The PES – what is more, like other Europarties, – is up to this day a proto-structure not very suitable for functioning like a real political force.

The *Union*, wrote G. Devin in 1989, remains fundamentally “the tool of national socialist policies, less for transcending them than for legitimising them by a common formulation” (Devin, 1989: 282). The PES of today, heir to the *Union*, is no longer the “tool of national policies”. Nonetheless, it does remain a structure that has not yet found its place and its role in the permanent and still current comings and goings between the “national” and the “supranational”. Indeed, this coming and going only involves a balance to be found and not a division decided on between pro-integrationists and Euro-sceptics. The present-day PES, consolidated and strengthened without a doubt, is still seeking to work its way in a difficult space where the border issue dominates: border between the national and the supranational, between the nations that make up Europe and the Europe that is more than the nations that make it up, border too between the “nationalist” dimension and the internationalist dimension of the innermost tradition of European Socialism. In this space, in which contradictory interests, fragile loyalties and unorthodox logic meet, the PES – like all Europarties – is looking for its marks. Therefore one will not be surprised that it proceeds by trial and error, that it hesitates, that it progresses slowly, that it advances often hidden. The “border” is internal, it crosses the party, its executives and the member parties that make it up. This border however does not constitute a “front line”(as etymology suggests): it is moving, fluid, indecisive, fickle, elusive, but real. Basically, the PES, wrought by contradictory tendencies and ambitions, finds itself – as does European Socialism as a whole – in an *identity interspace*. The 1999 elections have only confirmed this state – state of mind, but also intermediate strategic state. They showed that a “Common Market of political parties” has not yet emerged in Europe.

The effort by Socialists to reinforce their co-operation and their presence at European level can be interpreted as a contribution to European political integration. Nevertheless, the political and partisan conflict in Europe remains deeply and prioritarly “national-territorial” (Hix, 1995: 3). And the Socialist parties have neither defined a *Social Democratic* route for European construction nor found the means to “insert their combined weight in the variety of policy openings within the [European] Union” (Ladrech, 1999: 222). The PES, for its part, in spite of its reinforcement, remains at

“project” stage. A project that is certainly ambitious, but up to now, vague, modest, with indistinct outlines. European Socialism as a whole still lacks effective transnational structure and in a position to co-ordinate hegemonically the actions of national Socialist parties. The “European internationalism” of the PES is little developed for influencing in a determining manner the co-operation – and the contents of the co-operation – of Socialists in Western Europe. The PES is too respectful of national interests, its organisational structure, governed from on high, is too asthenic, its visibility is weak and its taking root in European societies virtually non-existent.

During the last years, Socialists have been in power simultaneously in the large European countries (Germany, France, and United Kingdom). During the last years, having partially overcome their strong traditional divisions on European construction, they have passed themselves off as the “party of Europe” within the EU. Or, in spite of small steps forward in this or that domain of European construction, Social Democracy has not been able to propose a Social Democratic project for Europe. Of course, such a project would have included splits within the EU, as well as major electoral risks for the national Socialist parties. Therefore if the challenge was a big one for the Socialists, the occasion was less “historic” than it appeared (Moschonas, 2002). The fact remains that the Socialists did not place the foundations of a *left-wing* strategy for a “different” Europe. And it is not certain that two or three years from now, the balance of power will still be so favourable for them. The “magic return” to power of Social Democracy (Cuperus & Kandel, 1998) has not produced a “split”, a change of direction within the EU. The contemporary Social Democracy is built, to use a term from Donald Sassoon, like a “modest” pragmatic and ideological force. At national level as well as at international level. The PES too, on its part, is built in a pragmatic and “modest” manner. Its weaknesses are for the most part the reflection of the weakness of the whole of European Socialism. Moreover, they are the reflection of the weaknesses of the system called “European Union”.

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## **The European People's Party: stages and analysis of a transformation**

Pascal DELWIT, Free University of Brussels (ULB)

In ten years time, the European People's Party (EPP) has experienced an unprecedented enlargement. From a European federation of parties originally made up of groups of Christian Democrats, the EPP has opened itself to conservative and liberal-minded parties in the countries of the European Union.

The increase in the number of party members is also due to the enlargement achieved and being achieved of the European Union, and to the fact that from 1999 on, there is no longer any structure of co-operation of "Christian Democrat parties" at European level. The European Union of Christian Democrats (EUCD) has indeed broken up. One also has to note that increase in the number of member parties stems from the fundamental and institutional developments of the European Union.

In this contribution, we shall first present the history of European co-operation of Christian Democratic parties so we can then focus on present-day changes, especially on the part of the European People's party and its group at the European Parliament. Finally, we shall contemplate the current identity of the EPP and its prospects.

### **1. Christian Democratic international co-operation**

Unlike the bodies of socialists or communists, there is no great tradition on the part of the body of Christian Democrats for inter-partisan co-operation at European or international level. The crystallisation of this co-operation has been difficult. For Roberto Papini, player in and analyst of this process, this phenomenon is due to a combination of factors. The development of co-operation between Christian Democrat forces has been curbed "by their national differences, by their inter-conservatism, by the fact they are not the expression of a determined social group (...) and finally, by their ideological frailty in general and by the concept of their internationalism in particular" (Papini, 1999: 20-21).

The first serious attempt was initiated by Don Luigi Sturzo. Sturzo founded the Italian People's party (PPI) in 1919. The creation of this group occurred after Pope Benedict XV had repealed the *Non expedit*. The *Non expedit* forbid Catholics to take part in elections even though they "were encouraged to act in society through works in co-operative associations and to be present in local administrations" (Durand, 1993: 43).

From 1919 on, the PPI received around 20% of the votes, a total it will keep until 1924. It also took part in certain government coalitions. At first with the Liberals, then in the first Mussolini government. The PPI parliamentarians therefore gave their vote of confidence and full powers to the Mussolini administration. The authoritarian direction taken by the regime condemned the Italian People's party and Sturzo in particular. The latter went into self-imposed exile and the party was disbanded in November 1926.

In the years immediately following the First World War, Sturzo travelled a great deal and worked on a reinforced collaboration of parties of Christian inspiration. His efforts were rewarded at the end of 1925. On 12 and 13 December 1925, the International Secretariat of Democratic Parties of Christian Inspiration (SPIDIC) was set up during a congress in Paris.

There were very serious internal tensions between party members. This was particularly true between the German Zentrum and the French Democratic People's Party (PDP), which had been created in 1924. These two groups had different visions, owing to the consequences of the Treaty of Versailles.

Moreover, the SPIDIC showed itself incapable of bringing a coherent response to the rise of the Nazis. The Italian leaders – especially Sturzo, wanted to give a clear anti-fascist colour to the SPIDIC, other member parties were reluctant to lock themselves into positions they considered as being too rigid.

Despite the holding of annual congresses, these elements condemned the organisation to relative confidentiality and minor political work. Set up in Paris, the International Secretariat of Parties of Christian inspiration was consequently only able to an occasional venue for meetings between leaders of Christian or Catholic Democratic parties. But this socialisation function will turn out to be important immediately after the conflict: "Thanks to the Secretariat, [the parties of Christian inspiration] have had the opportunity to

get to know each other better. During these few years of existence, this fragile structure has formed a rather exceptional club where Christian Democrat public figures have undergone their international apprenticeship, have better understood the necessity to work for peace, for the Franco-German entente and for the European Union and have established ties of friendship, the importance of which will emerge at the end of the Second World War” (Papini, 1988: 39-40). Sturzo expanded his international contacts, but the SPIDIC disappeared from the political scene in 1939. Sturzo created a short-lived International Christian Democratic Union in London.

## 2. After the Second World War

Just after the Second World War, two initiatives appeared in the world of Christian Democracy.

On the one hand, the network of *Nouvelles équipes internationales* (NEI)<sup>1</sup> was formed. The founding meeting of this new association took place at Chaudfontaine in 1947 under the chairmanship of the former Belgian Prime Minister, Paul Van Zeeland. The NEI presented itself as a not very integrating flexible structure. (It was made up of parties and personalities, which did not facilitate structuring or political work). For example, the French People’s Republican Movement (MRP) never integrated it, judging the conservative influence to be too strong. The label “Christian Democrat” was not taken up in the title, but in the subheading: International Union of Christian Democrats.

On the other hand, as from 1948, each year the “Geneva meetings” took place in the greatest secrecy. The initiative stems, amongst others, from the Frenchman Georges Bidault, one of the main leaders of the People’s Republican Movement, but also from a certain number of German personalities living in Switzerland. The edification of this network operated in one main perspective: the organisation against the Soviet world, again communism and against that which was presented as its expansionist desires. It is under this angle that the European unification was promoted in the ranks of the Christian Democrats. Jean-Marie Mayeur recalls it: “Anti-communism became a major component of the European idea. It is not specific to the Christian Democratic parties, but they support it especially as they are

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<sup>1</sup> The subtitle was: International Union of Christian Democrats.

sensitive to the fate of their sister parties in Eastern Europe. Moreover, this anti-communism stems from the doctrine of the Church itself, reaffirmed by Pope Pius XII. From then on, a united Europe appears as the condition for salvation of Christian and Western Civilisation” (Mayeur, 1980: 227). From this point of view, the integration of West Germany into Europe is perceived as an objective of highest priority. What’s more, for Papini, it is one of the three greatest successes of these meetings: “They enabled these same political leaders to work on the Franco-German reconciliation (the French and the Germans were present at the highest levels) and therefore on the solution of the German problem in the framework of European integration; it is probably during these meetings that the idea was clearly expressed for the first time in the second post-war period” (Papini, 1988: 82-83).

Hence the support brought by the Christian Democratic Parties to the edification of the European Communities is in keeping with a determined fight against the Soviet Union. Viewed in this light, the April 1948 elections in Italy were emblematic. The European Communities are seen as an efficient tool in the realisation of this objective. The Christian Democrat leaders, the German Konrad Adenauer and the Italian Alcide De Gasperi, strong men in their respective national political systems, played a key role in this matter. Of course one has to add the actions of the Frenchman, Robert Schumann.

The setting up of European organisations and networks, public or not, for collaboration between public figures and Christian Democratic parties and their contribution to European edification cannot be understood without reference to a major change that occurred in the European political area: the advent of powerful Christian Democratic parties. Compared with the situation between the wars, the change is clear. The parties in the Benelux stand out as dominant group of their political system in a more influential manner than at the eve of the Second World War. The CDU-CSU does the same in Germany and the DC in Italy is not to be outdone. In the Europe of six, the Christian Democrats are the main political group. And their influence goes far beyond the political context with powerful trade union, mutual and association networks in their societies. In this group, only France escapes this movement. The competition from General de Gaulle and the Independent Republicans keeps the French Christian Democrats of the MRP from emerging as a political force to be reckoned with.



At international level, the development of Christian Democratic co-operation has been difficult. In 1956, an initial preparatory meeting took place for the setting up of an international organisation assembling all groups that are Christian Democrats in essence. Notably present were the New International Teams, the Christian Democratic Organisation of America and the Christian Democratic Union of Central Europe. This Paris meeting was prolonged in 1958 in Brussels. One had to wait however until 1961 for the World Union of Christian Democrats to be edified during a conference held at Santiago in Chile. In November 1982, it was changed to the Christian Democratic International.

### **3. The European People's Party (EPP)**

At European level, the New International Teams were in for a difficult time assuring the transition from a flexible organisation to a more integrated political player. Jean Chesnaux attributes this slowness to French reservations. As we emphasised, the MRP did not want to join the NEI as party (Chesnaux, 1997: 451). At the end of sixteen congresses, the Taormina meeting in December 1965 gave rise to an organisation that was theoretically more structured and more intricate in its objectives: The European Union of Christian Democrats (EUCD). The European Union of Christian Democrats – the European Christian Democratic Union as from 1971 – emerged under the impetus of the Italian Christian Democrats. Fourteen political groups were members at the start, but one still notes the absence of French political organisations.

The specific issues of the Christian Democratic parties at work in the European communities were dealt with in a distinct manner in the EUCD. In 1971, it formally created a Political Committee of the Christian Democratic parties in the European Communities. This had the responsibility for the thought and the proposals on this question in prospect, in particular the running of the elections of the European Parliament by universal franchise. In the European assembly, the Christian Democrats sat as “group at the European Parliament”. Indeed, right from the set up of the common Assembly of the European Coal and Steel Community (ECSC), the Christian Democratic parties of the Europe of six decided to set up a common group.

On 23 June 1953, the “Christian Democratic group” that had actually been in existence since 11 September 1952, was officially recognised<sup>2</sup>.

The thinking of the Political Committee of the European Union of Christian Democrats led to the formation of the European People’s Party (EPP) in July 1976. At the beginning, twelve parties were members: the Christelijke Volkspartij (CVP); the parti social chrétien (PSC); the Christlich Demokratische Union (CDU); the Christlich Soziale Union (CSU); the Centre des démocrates sociaux (CDS), the Democrazia Cristiana (DC); the Südtiroler Volkspartei (SVP); Fine Gael (FG), the parti chrétien social (PCS); the Anti-revolutionaire partij (ARP); the Christdelijk Historische Unie (CHU) and the Katholieke Volkspartij (KVP)<sup>3</sup>. The first European federation of parties to class itself as “party”; the EPP was headed by Leo Tindemans – at that time Prime Minister of Belgium. He had been secretary-general of the EUCD between 1965 and 1973. Among these twelve groups, the Fine Gael is the only one to denote. “Rather removed from a true Christian Democratic party” (Mayeur, 1980: 230), this Irish party was admitted whilst its chief political rival, the Fianna Fail (FF), was also ready to join the European People’s Party. For its founders, the objective of the EPP was clear. It involved making the action of Christian Democratic groups more effective at the level of the nine Member States of the European Communities. On European questions, the ambition was clear: “Have the established structures evolved towards what has always been our objective and our ideal: the advent of the United States of Europe”.

The birth of the EPP took place in the difficulty which has been symbolically been marked in the name of the European Federation of parties. The historical Christian Democratic parties (Belgium, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Italy) wanted an explicit reference to the term “Christian Democrat” in the name. On the other hand, the German CDU-CSU was opposed to this. Obviously enough, the quarrel was not merely a semantic one. In reality, behind this name dispute hid a much more basic conflict regarding the content of the EPP. In view of integration of Great Britain, Denmark and Ireland into the European Communities in 1973 and the prospect of additional enlargement, the German Christian Democrats called

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<sup>2</sup> Groupe du Parti populaire européen (démocrate chrétien), *30 années. 1953-1983*, 1983, p. 6.

<sup>3</sup> The three Dutch Parties merged and created the Christen Democratisch Appèl (CDA).

for the edification of a wide-open European Federation of parties. In their view, the groups with Christian Democratic tradition in the new countries coming in to the European Communities were weak if not to say non-existent. Hence the development of the EPP had to be achieved beyond the Christian Democratic framework *stricto sensu* towards groups with conservative or even liberal leanings.

The political point of view was severely disputed by the Christian Democratic players from the Benelux and Italy (Jansen, 1997). In those days, the balance of power was in their favour. These four groups were powerful in their political system and almost always in power. The CDU-CSU did not have the capacity at that time to force their point of view on the substance. Apropos the form, things presented themselves in a more complicated manner, consequently the name is “European People’s Party. Federation of Christian Democratic parties of the European Community”. The same debate took place at the group of the European Parliament. From “Christian Democratic Group of the European Parliament”, it became, in the spring of 1978, “Christian Democratic Group of the European Parliament (Group of the EPP)”, before undergoing a new adaptation in 1979: “Group of the European People’s Party (Christian Democratic Group)” (de Brouwer, 1992).

In spite of this compromise with regard to the form, the German Christian Democrats did not give up on the political front. In the second half of the ‘70’s, they were the instigators of the formation of a parallel organisation to the EPP: the European Democratic Union (EUD). After a preparatory meeting at Munich in October 1977, the EUD was created at Klessheim in April 1978. Originally made up of eighteen parties, the European Democratic Union defined itself as “working partnership” of Christian Democrats, conservatives and non-collectivists. The CDU-CSU and the British Conservative Party were two of the driving forces.

This advent caused quite a stir in the ranks of the EPP. The latter had just held its first congress at Brussels on March 6 and 7 1978 and a meeting at Berlin was held in an atmosphere of gloom. The formation of the EUD was only one facet of this gloom. The Christian Democratic groups were going through a difficult period. The 1970’s proved not very flourishing for this political family. The debate within the Church on the interpretations to be given to the Vatican II Council, the difficult positioning with regard to new

questions brought by post-68 movements put it in a difficult situation. In addition, faced with a swing to the left by the Social Democratic parties, certain liberal groups or conservatives made a swing to the right opening the way towards neo-liberalism. In so doing, this polarisation placed the centrist position of the European Democratic groups in an awkward position. The electoral or political developments of the Christian Democratic parties bore witness to this. In spite of their regular presence in the government, the electoral weight of the Belgian, Luxembourg<sup>4</sup> and Dutch Christian Democratic groups eroded. The same remark prevails for the Italian Christian Democracy. As for the German Christian Democrats, they experienced their longest period in the opposition (1969-1982).

What's more, the wind that had brought on the European elections in terms of interest, attention or commentaries quickly tailed off. The European federations then presented themselves in the shape of relatively lax representative committees with limited action. From 1978 on, in his first edition of *Les partis politiques en Europe*, Daniel-Louis Seiler had anticipated this situation: "For a specialist in political science, this unrest has something that is quite artificial. This is only endless talks of the various leaderships and agreements of the party apparatuses. In the old days, political parties used to be born out of actions from the force of the people. At this stage of the preparations to the 1978 elections, one would even look in vain for their presence" (Seiler, 1978: 103). Likewise, Zeline Ward minimised the role of the European or international co-operation of the parties, insisting quite the reverse on the maintenance of the arena of the parties' historical action, the nation: "In 1964, the European Union of Christian Democrats was established, but its congresses are not regular. The Liberals take part in the Liberal International and the Conservatives in the European Union of Conservatives. Nevertheless, none of these broad alliances is the sign of the possible transfer of power from the national parties on a supra-national scale" (Ward, 1980). Nonetheless, ten years later, David Hanley stressed, regarding the EPP, the success of the co-ordinating function in the context of the European Union: "The European Peoples' Party (EPP) thus appears (...) as something of a misnomer. In no way could it be seen as a transnational mass party; rather it is a privileged forum for collaboration between like-minded elites of similar social background, which

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<sup>4</sup> There is however a liberal-socialist government under the leadership of Gaston Thorn between 1974 and 1979.

enables a considerable amount of co-ordination to take place within the decision-making processes inside EC institutions”<sup>5</sup>.

#### **4. From immobilism to consensus: the end of the Christian Democratic domination in the EPP**

The tension that reigned in the European People’s Party during the 1980’s, combined with paralysis in the construction of Europe, prevented the entry of non-Christian Democratic groups into its midst. One must however point out the notable exception of the New Greek Democracy (ND). For the party to the centre-right of the Greek political scene, the operation took place in two stages and with relative discretion (Jansen, 1998). While the New Greek Democracy was sitting in the European Parliament in the European Democratic group, it was admitted to the EPP group on 23 December 1981, thus making the EPP group go from 109 to 117 members<sup>6</sup>. In a second stage, early 1983, it was admitted into the EPP itself. This procedure was to be repeated for subsequent enlargements.

In the regard, the beginning of the 1990’s marked a pragmatic turning point. At the end of the Conference of EPP party heads and Heads of Government on 13 April 1991, the EPP announced a more intensive co-operation with people’s parties working with a comparable social design and having the same objectives in terms of European politics as it does: “The European People’s Party (EPP) will enter the future in closer co-operation with these people’s parties, which in their respective countries, pursue a comparable social project and the very objectives of the European policy of the EPP.

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<sup>5</sup> David Hanley, “Introduction: Christian Democracy as a Political Phenomenon”, in David Hanley (ed.), *Christian Democracy in Europe. A comparative Perspective*, London & New York, Pinter Publisher, 1994, p. 9. In 1988, the conclusion of Roberto Papini regarding the EPP hardly differed: “The EPP does not have any basic structure, the national parties do not actively co-operate, the decisions of the Political Bureau and the Congresses have hardly any impact on the mass media and on public opinion, besides that, they hardly have any either on the actions of national Christian Democratic ministers or inside the Community Council. Above all, the EPP like the other European party “federations”, unlike the parliamentary groups, lacks an institutional discussion partner since a real European power does not exist”.

Roberto Papini, *op. cit.*, p. 130.

<sup>6</sup> Groupe du Parti populaire européen (démocrate chrétien), *30 années. op. cit. ...*, p. 44.

Following its role of majority European force, it is fundamentally prepared to accept these people's parties within its organisation, if they so request, but only if they accept the principles, the programmatic basis as well as the EPP constitution"<sup>7</sup>.

The door had just opened to a broad policy of entry into the European People's Party. The first group to benefit from this new direction was the Spanish People's Party.

At the start, Christian Democracy in Spain was represented, at national level, in the Union of the Democratic Centre (UCD), headed by Adolfo Suarez, the Prime Minister of the Spanish transition. At regional level, there was also the Basque Nationalist Party (PNV) and the Union of Catalonia (UDC).

The Union of the Democratic Centre did not survive its scathing electoral defeat in 1982, which saw the first win of the Spanish Socialist Worker's Party under the leadership Felipe Gonzalez and the affirmation of the People's Alliance (AP) as opposition party to the Socialists. The People's Alliance had been created in 1976 by the former Minister of Information under Franco, Manuel Fraga Iribarne.

In order to relaunch the Spanish Christian Democracy, Alzaga Villamil created the People's Democratic Party. But it was never able to emerge independently and only owed its parliamentary representation to its partnership with the People's Alliance (Letamandia, 1993). On 28 January 1989, he finally decided to integrate it, or more precisely, to integrate the People's Party. The People's Alliance in fact transformed itself with the will to depart from its strictly conservative dress. In order to do this, the PP had to make a fresh start. In April 1990, Manuel Fraga Iribarne resigned from the presidency. He was replaced by José Maria Aznar. Unlike his predecessor, Aznar does not carry the charge of having links with the Franco regime.

It is in the context of this transformation that one has to understand the evolution regarding the European People's Party. After Spain joined the European Communities, the People's Alliance joined the European Democratic Group alongside the British and Danish conservatives. This

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<sup>7</sup> « Résolution adoptée par la Conférence des chefs de gouvernement et de parti du PPE à Bruxelles, le 13 avril 1991 », *PPE Bulletin*, juin 1991, n° 2, p. 3.

group, originally called the Europe Conservative Group, was founded in January 1973 (Corbett, Jacobs & Shackleton, 1995). It was in July 1979 that it took on its new name. But from the foundation of the PP, things started moving. At the 1989 European elections, the People's Party presented itself for the ballot on the basis of a programme worked out from the manifesto of the European People's Party. The Christian Democrats had a visibility on the party list, in particular Marcelino Oreja who led it. As a result, the European parliamentarians of the Spanish People's Party were authorised to sit in the EPP group, to the displeasure of the Union of Catalonia and the Basque National Party. While this was going on, José Maria Aznar approached the leadership of the EPP in order to contemplate the entry of his party into its midst. This was rapidly the case.

The question of the British Conservative Party was also on the agenda of the EPP and its group at the European Parliament. After the resignation of Margaret Thatcher from the leadership of the British Conservative Party, the prospects of a rapprochement of the EPP groups and the European Democrats appeared plausible. The second half of the year 1991 is lined with meetings and discussions on the prospects of collaboration, if not merger. Faced with the hostility of the Belgian and French Christian Democrats in particular, the British Conservative MEP's were submitted to a series of questions relating to their Christian identity and its political implications on a series of problems (Hanley, 1994). At the end of these negotiations, the convergent positions appeared numerous and forcible enough to forge ahead. Hence, during the February 1992 meeting of EPP leaders and heads of government, the endorsement is given for the entry of conservative parties into the EPP group. In May 1992, this became reality. The MEP's from the British Conservative Party were authorised to sit in the group, which marked a considerable evolution. The same applied for the Danish Conservatives, who also requested their entry into the EPP as permanent observer. Moreover, the conservative parties of the three at that time non-EU member Scandinavian countries – Sweden, Norway and Finland – also requested permanent observer status at the EPP. Despite original reservations by certain Christian Democratic parties of these States, the process was rapid: in January 1983, Swedes and Finns were integrated as permanent observers. And in May, the same thing happened for Norwegian Hoyre.

This process was accomplished with swiftness, but also with difficulty. Dutch, Belgian and French MEP's were opposed to it. Alain de Brouwer

recounts that from the outset, the president of the Belgian Christian Social Party, Gérard Deprez, had threatened to leave the EPP group if the conservatives joined it.

This moment was crucial because the movement undertaken turned out to be irreversible (Jansen, 1998a). The European People's Party left its identity of a political family confined to Christian Democracy to don the attire of a European federation of parties more broadly marked to the centre-right of the political spectre. How should one understand this metamorphosis?

It must first be emphasised that the tension between Christian Democrats trends and others in the forerunner groupings goes back a long way; it existed in the SIPDIC, in the New International Teams and in the European Union of Christian Democrats. At international organisation echelon, this caused close-fought sparring between Latin American and European delegations. More specifically, at European level, the CDU-CSU ardently strove for this objective.

The process also could have taken place because of an adoption of a moderate stance by the Conservative parties. In their political arena, groups like the New Democracy or the Spanish People's Party kept a certain distance from the past and integrated in their midst the different ideological sympathies of the centre-right – Liberals and Christian Democrats. What's more, at least rhetorically speaking, the time of the "Conservative Revolution" or Neo-Liberalism had passed. Even in Great Britain, the rise of John Major to the head of the Conservative Party and the Government, relegated the harshest Thatcherite view to other times. At the same time, Euro-scepticism remained deep-seated. It is in the United Kingdom that the transformation has gone the least far; that explains to a large extent the non-entry of the British Conservatives into the European People's Party itself.

During this period, there was clearly an impetus of a fundamentally institutional nature (Delwit, De Waele, Magonette, 1999). As the administrations went by, the European Parliament gathered prerogatives that were more significant than those at the beginning. The size of the parliamentary groups grew in importance. In this context, it was necessary for the European People's Party to go beyond the historical horizons of Christian Democracy. In order to compete with the Parties of European Socialists regarding the status of number one force in the European



Parliament, the enlargement was sped up. More globally, the recognition of European political parties in the Maastricht Treaty also constituted a strong incentive. Article 138A (today 191) stipulated: “The political parties at European level are important as factor of integration into the Union. They contribute to the development of a European conscience and to the expression of the political will of the citizens of the Union”. In spite of its normative character, this article was experienced as a form of encouragement towards a more in-depth construction of the European party federations. The prospects of financing the party federations at European Union level contained in the Nice Treaty confirmed this institutional stimulus. This is all the more true as the importance taken on by the European Councils has enabled European party federations to fulfil their coordinating role even better between leaders and party members. It was not by chance if one of the major statutory changes of the EPP had to do with this question. In 1990, the European People’s Party introduced into its constitution the “Meeting of heads of parties and governments”. Existing in actuality for several years, this structure was institutionalised in Article 10 of the EPP constitution. Besides national personalities, also sitting at it are the President and General Secretary of the EPP, the leader of the EPP group at the European Parliament and a representative of commissioners belonging to the EPP. This internal institutionalisation and the process at work at European Union scale have also had as effect to call out to the main parties not members in a European party federation: the British Conservative Party, the French RPR, until recently, Forza Italia,... It has become a handicap not to have this framework of information or consultation prior to the Council meetings.

Finally, it is necessary to mention the significant changes in the relation of internal forces at the European People’s Party. The enlargement of the EPP was achieved in circumstances of obvious dominance of the Federation by the German CDU-CSU. From a political point of view, the CDU-CSU had been in power since 1982 and was the group that worked towards the rapid reunification of Germany after the fall of the Berlin wall. At the same time, the same fall of the Berlin wall got the Italian Christian Democracy, the other leading light of the EPP, into a route that led it to implosion. The accelerated erosion of the political and electoral positions of the Benelux Christian Democratic groups did not allow them to enduringly oppose the direction set by the German Christian Democrats, additionally strengthened by the financial clout of the Konrad Adenauer Foundation.

The process of consensus and redefinition of the EPP and of the Christian Democratic body was again speeded-up at the end of the 1990's.

In 1999, the coexistence of two parallel organisations – EUCD and the EPP – came to an end. The EUCD broke up within the EPP. Let us underline however that since 1993, the two organisations had the same President, Wilfried Martens, and the same General Secretary, Thomas Jansen. Nevertheless, all the parties that were member of the EUCD were not members of the EPP and vice-versa. Thus, the Democratic Party of Albania (DP)<sup>8</sup>, the Latvian Christian Democratic Union (KDS), the Lebanese Christian Democratic Union (UCDL) and the Christian Democratic Party of Saint-Marin (PDCS) who were members of the European Union of Christian Democrats, did not join the EPP, either as member party or as associate party.

At the same time, the rapprochement with the European Democratic Union speeded up; so much so that it materialised in the same location. Indeed, at the Berlin congress, in April 1999, the EDU decided to house its headquarters in the same building as those of the EPP. This was done on 1 April 2000. Let us note however that the member parties did not necessarily get mixed up. The comparison of parties member of the EPP and of the EDU, with the member parties of the EPP that are not members of the EDU and the groups integrated into the EDU without being so in the EPP, is instructive. In the second category, one finds most of the groups with a Christian Democratic identity or joined with centre-left alliances (the Belgian PSC and CVP, the Union for French Democracy, the Italian People's Party, the Dutch CDA, ...) while in the third are groups of a more pronounced conservative or liberal nature like the British Conservative Party, the French RPR, the Czech ODS ... whose entry into the EPP seems nonetheless inscribed in the logic of consensus that we have described.

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<sup>8</sup> However, it is member of the European Democratic Union.

**Parties member of the EPP and the EDU, parties member of just the EPP, parties member of just the EDU**

Member of the EDU and the EPP	Member of the EPP without being member of the EDU	Member of the EDU without being member of the EPP
ÖVP	CVP	DP
UDF	PSC	DP (bg)
KF	US	OHDZ
KOK	KrF	DISY
CDU	UDF	ODA
CSU	FG	ODS
ND	PPI	PPU
FIDESZ-MPP	RI	RPR
FI	CDA	MDF
Hoyre	UDC	SF
PSD	KD	FBP
PNTCD	BANU-PU	VU
RMDSZ	DR	TS(LK)
SKD	KDU-CSL	KHD
PP	TP	MKP
M	LKPD	ANAP
CDU (i)	UW	C
PCS	AWS	IDU
PN	SKL	UCP
CVP (s)	SKD	VMRO-DPMNE
FGKP		SF
		SVP
		DYP
		DYCE
		EDS
		EMSBU
		EUW

The process seems all the more inevitable given the fact that an observation of the membership of European MEP's from the EPP-ED group in a European party organisation is informative.

*The member parties of the EPP-ED group and their relations at the EPP and at the EDU (in parenthesis: with permanent observer status)*

			<b>EPP</b>	<b>EDU</b>
PSC	2	Belgium	Yes	
CVP	3		Yes	
MCC	1			
KF	1	Denmark	Yes	Yes
CDU	43	Germany	Yes	Yes
CSU	10		Yes	Yes
ND	9	Greece	Yes	Yes
PP	27	Spain	Yes	Yes
UDC	1		Yes	
DL	6	France		
UDF	9		Yes	
RPR	5			Yes
SE	1			
FG	5	Ireland	Yes	
FI	22	Italy	Yes	Yes
PPI	4		Yes	
CCD	2		Yes	
RI	1		Yes	
SVP	1			(yes)
CDU	2		Yes	(yes)
PP	1			
EDU	1			
PCS	2	Luxembourg	Yes	(yes)
CDA	9	The Netherlands	Yes	
ÖVP	7	Austria	Yes	Yes
PSD	9	Portugal	Yes	Yes
KOK	4	Finland	Yes	Yes
SKL	1			
M	5	Sweden	Yes	Yes
KD	2		Yes	
CP	36	Great-Britain		Yes
UPP	1			
	233		179	184

Two elements are interesting to point out in this comparative table.

Firstly, in the group of the European People's Party-European Democrats, as of May 2001, out of the 233 that the group includes, there were only 170 European MEP's belonging to a member group of the EPP, or 76.82%. This is a weak proportion, particularly if one takes into account the fact of the policy of consensus previously examined. If one relates to the number of parties, this involves twenty-two groups out of the thirty-two that make up the Group.

Secondly, it is striking to note that as of 1 June 2001 the EPP-DE group counted more European MEP's from parties belonging to the European Democratic Union (184) than parties belonging to the European People's Party (179). Even if the difference is not large, it none the less reveals an indisputable evolution. Related to groups, it is a more qualified observation since there are only fifteen parties member of the EDU amongst the thirty-two of the Group against twenty-two for the EPP.

In terms of identity and profile, the current situation is therefore clear. The turning point taken at the transition of the '80's and 90's was crucial in the ideological evolution of the EPP. It has never been questioned; there are several reasons for this.

– Each new membership has weakened the opponents of this transformation. Conversely, each one has reinforced the strategy of opening up to sensitivities other than those that are Christian Democrat.

– We have emphasised several times that the Christian Democratic parties are in a phase of political regression. The example of the heart of European Christian Democracy, the Benelux countries and Italy, is there to bear witness to this. The new ideological version of the European People's Party is taking part in a general movement in the European countries, including the democracies of Central and Eastern Europe.

– The institutional and political dynamics at work at European Union level reinforce this trend. It is absolutely clear at the level of the European Parliament. The "confrontation" with the party of European Socialists has led the group, with the backing of the EPP, to expand. Likewise, the prospects of a financing of the European party federations are contributing to the same trend.

At the same time, this transformation of the European People's Party and its group at the European Parliament has caused problems and new handicaps. As of 1 May 2001, with strength of twenty-six members and sixteen associated parties, the EPP must nonetheless manage certain difficulties.

First of all, it is advisable to underline the increase in the discrepancies among the political strategies of its constituents. From now on, there are groups that in the EPP that are predominantly registered members in strategic alliances of the centre-left and in strategic alliances of the right, including the extreme right wing. The question of the attitude towards the ÖVP in January 2000 demonstrated the difficulties that that could cause for the European People's Party. Christian Democratic leaders no longer hid their embarrassment in public. The former president of the Belgian Christelijke Volkspartij, Marc Van Peel, was explicit: "I have always had a few conflicts with Mr Martens. Yes, I have a problem with the EPP"<sup>9</sup>, adding a few days later: "Personally, I would have a lot of difficulty remaining in the EPP if the ÖVP does not leave it. But I don't want be expelled from my home either. Having said that, the EPP includes several parties with which we no longer maintain a great deal of ideological ties. But if the ÖVP stays, this will create serious problems"<sup>10</sup>. His French-speaking counterpart, Joëlle Milquet, was even harsher towards the EPP on the Austrian question: "I am not disappointed, I am outraged!"<sup>11</sup>. At the other end, the German Christian Democrats clearly showed their status of dominating force in the federation. The then leader of the CDU-CSU, Wolfgang Schäuble did not hesitate to declare: "The EPP is indeed not unanimous, but there will not be any scission. We are going to make a case for our reasoning with our European friends. An exclusion of the ÖVP European MEP's will not have our support and I think that the voice of the German Christian Democrats carries a certain weight within the EPP"<sup>12</sup>. As we know, the Austrian People's Party was not subjected to any sanctions and has been entirely rehabilitated in the EPP, or more precisely, has entirely remained there<sup>13</sup>.

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<sup>9</sup> *La Libre Belgique*, 4 février 2000.

<sup>10</sup> *Le Matin*, 10 février 2000.

<sup>11</sup> *La Libre Belgique*, 11 février 2000.

<sup>12</sup> *Le Monde*, 8 février 2000.

<sup>13</sup> Despite the fact that in the EPP 1999-2004 plan of action, it was stipulated: "We are firmly opposed to all forms of extremism, be they from the right or from the left".

The Austrian case is interesting because it asserts, for the national parties, the nature of their relationship to the EPP. Basing himself on the words of Palmer, David Hanley put into perspective in 1994 the influence of the European party federations. He reminded that the crux of the party activities was essentially national (Hanley, 1994: 196). If the EPP, like the other supranational party organisation, had a legitimising effect for its member groups, the latter were still doing mainly what they wanted. Things present themselves in a less certain manner nowadays. To a large extent, the activity of the parties remains first of all national. But they are not escaping the phenomenon of acceleration of interdependencies that we have been witnessing for the last ten years. In such a way that if they are restricted on economic policy, this happens more and more politically. Much more than before, the parties are influenced by the evolution of their adopted European family and by the political choices and logical alliances that are dominant in it. In these conditions, one better understands the more frequent expression of the Christian Democratic discontent within the EPP. The cohabitation with conservative parties and sometimes with liberals is increasingly heavy to bear and increasingly more demanding politically. In addition, recently one has been able to observe a paradoxical situation in the EPP or in its group: the coexistence of parties of the same nationality but with opposing political systems. The most striking case concerns Italy. The PPI and the Revival Party were part of the previous government whilst Forza Italia, the United Christian Democrats and the Christian Democratic Centre are present in the current administration. The same is true for Spain, where the UDC is in the opposition vis-à-vis the government of José Maria Aznar.

The consensus has exceptionally led to departures or exclusions. This was the case with the Basque Nationalist Party (PNV), which, after the entry of the Spanish PP, left the EPP group at the European Parliament. In another angle, as for the Portuguese Democratic Centre (CDS), it was excluded. The CDS was founded by Diego Freitas do Amaral. It embodied the Christian Democratic trend in the Portuguese right, alongside the liberals of the Social-Democratic Party. Gradually surpassed by the latter, it acquired new leadership in 1992, headed by Manuel Monteiro. The latter wanted to turn the party into a conservative group in the image of the British Tories.

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European People's Party, *En route vers le 21<sup>e</sup> siècle (Underway towards the 21<sup>st</sup> century)*. *EPP 1999-2004 Plan of action adopted by the XIII<sup>e</sup> Congress of the EPP*, 1999, p. 2.

Adopting a nationalist profile and taking on an anti-European direction, the CDS was expelled from the European People's Party and suspended from the European Union of Christian Democrats. The measure was odd given the enlargement process underway during this period (Durand, 1993). In reality, one has to comprehend it in comparison to the entry of the Social Democratic Party, the chief Centre-Right party in Portugal, which left the European Party of Liberals, Democrats and Reformers (ELDR) to join the EPP.

The enlargement of the EPP also resulted in the dissolution of its political identity. Initially, the EUCD and the EPP had an identity and a project based on ideological knowledge of Christian Democracy. The ideology of the EPP is now more vague. The party constitution continues to refer to this identity dimension. Article 1 thus specifies that "The Christian Democratic parties of the member states of the European Union and their Group in the European Parliament make up the "European People's Party-Christian Democrats" (EPP)"<sup>14</sup>. The reality is different. The Spanish People's Party or, to mention more recent memberships, Forza Italia, for example, are clearly not Christian Democratic groups. The observation is even much more striking at the European Parliament. The result is a discrepancy between the form and the content. An adjustment will have to be made sooner or later. May we add, it is already underway. For example, the tone of the EPP Manifesto for the elections of 1999 was frankly 'right-wing' in a context of Social Democratic domination of the main governments. From this angle, the question of positioning regarding the European Union is decisive. Since its creation, there has been a reasserted attachment of the EPP and its group to the advent of a Europe that is quintessentially federal. Will this position be able to be perpetuated even though some groups clearly do not take on these political leanings? It is an open question.

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<sup>14</sup> European People's Party, *Statutes*, 1999, pp. 1-2.



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## **The European Liberal, Democrat and Reform Party. From co-operation to integration**

Camilla SANDSTRÖM, University of Umeå

### **Introduction**

Political parties has played an important role as 'agents of integration' in the context of the nation state why it is hardly surprising that politicians as well as scholars have raised the same expectations when it comes to the role and development of political parties at the European level (see for example Pridham & Pridham 1982). Although the first direct elections of the European Parliament in 1979 were disappointing in this respect, it provided the three major political families in Europe, the socialist, Christian-democrat and liberal, with incentive to establish embryonic party organisations in the 1970s. The establishment of party organisations marked the start of a transnationalisation process of party politics in Europe. The initially rather slow process was given new impetus by the completion of the European Single market and the ratification of the Maastricht Treaty which eventually led to the establishment of European political parties in the early 1990s. Another stage in the development of the European parties is expected to take place now with the introduction of the European party statute including EU-funding of the parties in the Nice Treaty.

Despite the organisational development, the European parties have not yet been able to fulfil the main function spelled out in the Maastricht Treaty i.e. as agents of integration in a traditional sense. The link between the European electorate and the parties are weak. There are of course several factors that can explain this weakness. The lack of parliamentarism, which impedes normal channels of party activities in the EU system is just one example. But just like the nation-state has proved to be more tenacious than many have expected, the national parties has also been eager to preserve their autonomy in relation to the European parties. Consequently, when compared to its national counterparts the European parties have been lacking both the homogeneity and cohesiveness which are usually considered to be decisive in discussions about the adequacy of European parties. (Hrbek, 1998: 466, Bardi, 1994: 359)

According to many scholars this has been especially problematic for the European party in focus in this chapter. Due to the history of European liberalism and its various individualistic versions, shown for example by the existence of several parties in a single state, the ELDR party is usually considered to be more heterogeneous than the PES and the EPP. Since the mid-1970s the party has however made internal organisational changes in order to be able to deal with these internal ideological differences. These changes have in turn promoted the internal integration process and at the moment the leadership of the ELDR are preparing statutory changes to further deepen this process. Relying on the theoretical assumption that party organisational progress is dependent on the institutional and constitutional development of its environment as well as the history and initial goal of the creation of the party, the purpose of this chapter is to describe and analyse the organisational development of the ELDR. The main question is the following. To what extent has the ELDR been able to integrate the different dimensions of the European party organisation – the national party organisations, the EP party group and the transnational party organisation, in order to be able fulfil the main function of political parties at the European level i.e. to contribute to the European integration process?

### **1. External and internal factors contributing to party organisational development**

The development of national political parties has been closely related to the institutional and constitutional development of their respective environment. (Katz and Mair, 1994: 10)

The electoral system, voting regulations, rules for financing, how power are distributed between the parliament and the government are all examples of conditions that constitute a framework to which parties has to adapt in order to control their environment. It is therefore reasonable to expect that European party organisation and activity are shaped by the structure of the political system of the European Union. This gives rise to the question of what kind of political system the EU actually is? Formally the EU has both intergovernmental and supranational features. The formal structures of the EU do however not seem to reflect how the EU actually functions. Informally the EU appears to be more of a multi-level structure, characterised by a “network mode of governance”, where “formal powers are overshadowed by multi-layered negotiations and consultations” (Kohler-Koch and Eising,

1999:269). Given that the EU is characterised by this network mode of governance it provide an importantly different environment for political parties than does a unitary state. What we can expect is thus that these external factors are reflected somehow in the parties' way of organising at the European level, and consequently on party functions.

Apart from the external factors that the European parties has to adapt to there are several internal factors that exert influence over the parties' organisational structure and thus the internal coherence. According to Angelo Panebianco "Every organisation bears the marks of its formation, of the crucial political- administrative decisions made by its founders, the decisions which "molded" the organization" (1987: 50). If the initiatives to establish a party were directed from a centre (territorial penetration) we can for example expect a more cohesive party from the start. If the initiative was directed from the periphery (territorial diffusion) we can instead expect more decentralized and federal structures with for example internal leadership conflicts (Eliassen & Svåsand, 1975). The presence or absence of external sponsor institutions is another factor which not only has relevance for the internal coherence but also for the legitimacy of the party. Although Panebianco mainly had trade unions in mind, external institutions like for example party Internationals may have relevance in the case of the European parties (1987: 50).

Ideology plays of course a crucial role during the formative phase of the organisation as it lay as basis for the collective identity. However ideology is not enough for a party to guarantee its own survival. According to Panebianco the party also must be able to distribute both selective ("prestigious positions, "internal" career possibilities") as well as collective incentives ("sense of belonging") for its members and supporters in order to develop organisational interests. This process of consolidation or institutionalisation of the organisation means that the party is no longer only a tool in order to realise certain goals but that it becomes valuable in itself (*ibid*: 53-4). This process involves at least some degree of autonomization of the party in relation to the party's environment and may therefore change the power balance between the internal sectors of the party. In order to be able to measure the institutionalisation process or the degree of autonomy of the party the model which Oscar Niedermayer presented in 1983, and later developed by Thomas Dietz (1997) will be applied. In the model it is possible to distinguish the development of party co-operation

from the initially very loosely organised interaction between the member parties to a fully integrated political body. The model distinguishes between three phases of interaction: the contact stage, the co-operation stage and finally the integration stage. The indicators measuring the frequency of interaction and thus the level of integration shows to what extent the autonomy of the national parties has been reduced in favour of a European party. The first indicator show with what frequency permanent communication is maintained. The second indicator takes into account the organisational development of the party. It is presumed that the introduction of individual membership, a federal decision-making structure, and the use of common symbols affect the power-balance between the ELDR and the national parties. Another important indicator which Thomas Dietz (1997) added to the Niedermayer model is how the party is financed i.e. to what extent the party has got own financial means. The third indicator deals with the degree of common policy formulation within the party. What is not considered in the Niedermayer/Dietz model is the degree of correspondence between a party's statutory norms and actual power structure. According to Panebianco the correspondence should be higher in a more integrated party "although this doesn't mean that the statutes accurately describe the actual power distribution but rather that actors in dominant party positions are there because their authority is formally recognised and not because they for example play important roles outside the organisation" (1988: 57).

*Table 1. Indicators measuring the level of integration*

<b>1. Permanent Communication</b>
<b>2. Permanent Organisation</b>
- Permanent organisation
- Possibility of individual membership
- Existence of subunits
- Incorporation of subunits into decision-making
- Composition of Congress Council Bureau (Managing board) Leaders' Meeting
- Decision-making in Congress Council Bureau (Managing Board) Leaders' Meeting
- Area of Competence
- Use of Common Symbols
- Own financial means
<b>3. Common policy formulation</b>

The indicators are first dealt with one at a time, thereafter are the relations between the internal sectors of the party analysed i.e. I here focus on the links between the ELDR party, the EP group and the national parties.

## **2. ELDR: Background and development**

The roots of the ELD/ELDR can be traced to the Liberal International and the Mouvement Libéral pour l'Europe Unie, MLEU, but also to the liberal group (or rather individuals in the group) that was formed in the predecessor of the European Parliament. The Liberal International, LI, which despite the name consisted of mostly European parties, had in the 1960s started to promote direct elections to the European Parliament and consequently the establishment of closer links amongst liberal parties from the EC countries. As direct elections to the European Parliament approached the initiative to form an organisation of liberal parties was taken at the 1972 LI congress (ELDR Short History, see also Pridham & Pridham, 1982 and Hrbek, 1988). The initiators of the federation however faced a dilemma, which has been

more or less present ever since. A dilemma steaming from the ideological heterogeneity that characterises the liberal forces in Europe. To invite one party in order to gain in numbers and weight might not just offend another potential member party but also lead to a loss in ideological coherence. As the history of the ELD/ELDR is as much the history of its member parties, the problems concerning the composition of the ELD serves as an illuminating example of this dilemma.

Debates concerning the identity of the federation, i.e. whether it should be a left-liberal or centrist organisation characterised the constituent congress and were a recurring theme during the initial years, a debate that was even reflected in the choice of the name. At the launching meeting in Stuttgart March 1976 the word “democratic” was added to the original title, with the intention to open up the federation to a larger number of parties, and especially those with doubts about the word liberal (Steed & Humpreys, 1988: 405). As this also meant a more centrist or right-liberal position, parties that were more oriented to the left hesitated or even decided not to take up membership in the federation. Of the 14 parties invited by Mr Gaston Thorn, Liberal International president, and Luxembourg prime minister and the FDP party leader and foreign minister of the Federal Republic of Germany Mr Hans-Dietrich Genscher, to Stuttgart, five decided not to join the federation immediately due to these ideological controversies but also due to national interests. The French left-liberal MRG (Mouvement des Radicaux de Gauche) decided for example to withdraw its application in protest to the acceptance of the French Parti Républicain, PR, as a member party. The MRG joined later but decided to leave the ELD in 1978 as the party was in opposition to the PR under the lead of President Giscard D’Estaing. The British liberals did also feel unease belonging to the same federation as the PR, a party who had links with the British conservatives and in addition was not a member of the LI and was ideologically close to the French neo-Gaullism (Pridham & Pridham, 1981, Hrbek, 1988). Another example of the ideological dilemma of the ELD/ELDR was the reluctance of the Dutch left-wing party D66 to join the federation as it was in opposition domestically to the more right-wing Volkspartij voor Vrijheid and Democratie, VVD. D66 didn’t take up membership until 1994. Yet another party who had problems with the ideological position of the ELD was one of the founding parties, the Danish Det Radikale Venstre, DRV, which left in 1977 of political reasons, mainly because of differing views concerning the development of the EC and the party’s pacifist background (Pridham & Pridham 1981). Det Radikale



Venstre however rejoined in 1992 after long and careful internal deliberations. In sum, the wish to be as large as possible and present in all member-states of the EU on the one hand, and the need to form an ideologically cohesive force on the other has thus been a delicate act of balance since the start, influencing the debates as well as the composition of ELDR.

In 1979, the year of the first elections to the EP, the ELD had 11 members: two parties from Belgium, two from France, and two from Italy and one from the other member states with the exception of Ireland. With the enlargement of the Community to include Greece, Spain and Portugal, the minuscule Liberal Party of Greece – Eleftherios – became a member, in 1984, and the Spanish PRD (Democratic Reform Party) joined the federation in 1986. After some vacillation the Portuguese PSD (Social Democratic Party) also decided to take up membership in 1986. As the PSD was larger in terms of its share of the national vote than any existing member party it became a dominant force in the ELD. A dominance that requested some changes in the ELD to accommodate itself to its new member. Once again this was reflected in the name. With the word ‘reformist’ added, the new name Federation of European Liberal, Democrat and Reform Parties was adopted at the 1986 congress. (ELDR congress 1986) The enthusiasm over this new large member however soon turned into disappointment as the PSD left the ELDR in favour of the much larger Christian-democratic EPP. Consequently, member parties for example the Dutch D66 and the Belgian PRL proposed to the congress that the epithet “Reform” should be deleted in favour of a simpler label; the European Liberal and Democratic Party, ELDP (ELDR congress 1997). Although the proposal was rejected, the party presented itself in the election campaign of 1999, simply as the European Liberal Democrats.

With the prospect of the third enlargement of the European Community, the ELDR started to make early contacts with the liberal parties in the former EFTA-countries. As a result the liberal parties from Austria, Finland and Sweden joined the Federation after the accession of their countries. Once again the enlargement added to the complexity of the composition of the federation, as two of the parties, the Swedish and Finnish Center parties, with their underlying agrarian background and internal split over membership in the EU, brought a Eurosceptic branch into the ELDR.

With the approaching Eastern enlargement of the EU the ELDR has undertaken a similar strategy. But if there were difficulties identifying liberal parties in the western parts of Europe, it has been an even harder task in the newly democratised countries in Eastern Europe. Early contacts, an annual East-West conference, an “Outreach Programme” aiming at keeping track of liberal visits and initiatives in Central and Eastern Europe among other things has however resulted in new members or affiliated members from all the applicant Countries, except from Poland (ELDR Activity Report 1997-99). One of the early prerequisites of membership in the federation was that the country of the member party should be a member in the European Community. In 1995 the ELDR decided to open up the possibility for affiliated parties to apply for full membership after two years, a decision that should be perceived as a reflection of the ideological commitment to the enlargement process of the EU. A commitment that also includes countries from the Balkans that have not yet applied for membership in the EU.

When it comes to sub-units, the ELDR provide in its statutes for a youth branch, the Liberal and Radical Youth Movement of the European Union. LYMEC was founded 1976 as an autonomous EEC organisation out of the European Pillar of the World Federation for Liberal and Radical Youth, WFLRY, later IFLRY. LYMEC has the status equivalent to a member party in internal party affairs (ELDR statutes 1999). A network of Liberal Women was also established in the late 1990s.

After the ELDR Congress 2000 the ELDR has 38 member and affiliated parties. Of these parties, 9 have been members from the start, forming a rather stable and influential core of members<sup>1</sup>. However as table 2 shows, one problem of the ELDR is the lack of members from several large EU countries, with most of its members coming from smaller countries in Northern Europe. For example in 1999 the only French member party, Parti Radical, left the ELDR in favour of the EPP. The ELDR has tried to re-established contacts with other French parties but apparently with no success. The ideological overlap with the EPP in combination with the possibilities to influence the EU agenda which the much larger EPP can offer might be one of the reasons which can explain the weak representation of the ELDR in France and the other countries in southern Europe.

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<sup>1</sup> The founding members are marked with an \* in table 1

Table 2. The Member and affiliated parties of the ELDR (September 2000)

Country	Party	Abbreviation	Member since
Austria	Liberales Forum	LF	1995
Belgium	Parti Réformateur Liberal	PRL	1976*
	Vlaamse Liberalen en Democraten	VLD	1976*
Bosnia-Herzegovina	Liberal Party of Bosnia Hercegovina	LPBH	1997
Denmark	Det Radikale Venstre	DRV	1992
	Venstre	V	1976*
Estonia	Eesti Reformierakond	ERF	1997
Finland	Suomen Keskusta	KESK	1995
	Svenska Folkpartiet	SFP	1995
Germany	Freie Demokratische Partei	FDP	1976*
Hungary	Szabad Demokraták Szövetsége	SZDSZ	1996
Kosovo	Partia Liberale e Kosoves	PLK	1999
Ireland	Progressive Democrats	PD	1988
Italy	Partito Repubblicano Italiano	PRI	1976*
	Partito Liberale Italiano <sup>2</sup>	PLI/FdLi	1976*
	Lista Di Pietro	Di Pietro	2000
Lithuania	Lietuvos liberalu sąjunga	LLU	1997
Luxembourg	Demokratesch Partie	DP	1976*
The Netherlands	Democraten 66	D66	1994
	Volkspartij voor Vrijheid en Democratie	VVD	1976*
Romania	Partidul National Liberal	PNL	1999
Slovenia	Liberalna Demokracija Slovenije	LDS	1998
Sweden	Folkpartiet Liberalerna	FP	1995
	Centerpartiet	C	2000
Switzerland	Freisinnig-Demokratische Partei des Schweiz	FPD	1997
United Kingdom	Alliance Party of Northern Ireland	APNI	1986
	Liberal Democrats	Lib Dem	1976*
<b>Affiliated members</b>			
Albania	Partia Aliance Demokratike e Shqiperise	DAP	1999
Andorra	Partit liberal d'Andorra	PLA	1996
Bulgaria	Liberal Democratic Union	LDU	1999
Croatia	Hrvatska Socijalno Liberalna Stranka	HSLS	1994
	Liberalna Stranka	LP	1999
Cyprus	Dimokratikon Komma	DIKO	1996
	United Democrats	UD	1996
Lithuania	Lietuvos centro sąjunga	LCU	1997
Macedonia	Liberalno-Demokratska Partija	LDP	1993
Norway	Venstre	Venstre	2000
Slovakia	Democratická Únia Slovenska	DU	1995

Sources: ELDR, Short History, ELDR 1976-1998, "Milestones – The progress of European Liberalism", Congress documents year 2000.

<sup>2</sup> Partito Liberali Italiano rejoined as Federazione dei Liberali Italiani, FdLi in 1994

The history of the ELDR, with parties joining and leaving, is an example of a consolidation problem of the organisation. As the ELDR is a relatively small party at the European arena it has not been in a position where it has been able to distribute selective incentives to any larger extent. The organisational interest, which according to Panebianco (1988) is a guarantee for the organisations survival, thus seems to be weak. The internal debates over the parties' ideological identity especially during the early years have also undermined the possibilities to create a common identity. Nevertheless, over the years the number of member parties and affiliated parties of the ELDR has steadily increased. And with a growing convergence between identity and membership in the ELDR as well as other liberal organisations like for example the Liberal International has played an important role in constituting a system of mutual recognition, "which decide what national parties themselves see as their equivalents across frontiers thereby maintaining if not indeed creating the collective self image of a family of parties" (Steed & Humphreys, 1988: 397). At the moment the ELDR is also in a better position in the European Parliament where it has the possibilities to claim the right to political posts. Although, the ideological identity has been strengthened over the years – the forthcoming enlargement of the EU might cause problems in this sense. One way of dealing with this is to establish an organisation which can handle these problems. To what extent the ELDR has managed to do this will be analysed in the following section.

### **3. Organisational structure of the ELDR**

If the Liberal International and the MLEU, the forerunners to the ELDR, in the terms of Niedermayer provided the framework for contact and consultation the degree of interaction increased when the ELD was founded in 1976. The liberal party co-operation thus moved from the contact stage to the co-operation stage. The ELD federation was established with the aim of developing a party organisation adapted to a future European Union with federal characteristics. (Stuttgart declaration 1976) Already from the beginning the ELD thus applied a federal structure, allowing first qualified majority decisions and from 1991 and onwards simple majority decisions to be taken. This is according to the model of Niedermayer an indicator of a rather advanced level of integration. However as the federation only had possibilities to recommend the member parties to stick to common policy goals, the federal structure was never fully put to use. Instead negotiations

between the parties in order to reach consensus became the primary method to arrive at common agreements. The possibilities to use majority decisions have contributed to a more efficient decision-making procedure as it is better for each one of the actors to reach a compromise than to be out-voted. Although formal voting rules were relevant the consensus culture that permeates EU decision-making in general was and still is reflected in the ELDR party.

With the Maastricht Treaty and the party article giving new incentives to the ELDR to transform the federation into a party in 1993 the federal structure of the organisation, lead to the conclusion by the leaders of the member parties, that the statutes of the ELDR were more than adequate to meet the requirements of the Maastricht Treaty (ELDR Newsletter no 2/93). The only proposition to the congress in Torquay in 1993 was thus to replace the word "Federation" with the word "Party" in the statutes. At that time no further transfer of power from the national parties to the European party was expected. Although the transformation from a federation to a party seemed to be just a change of names the party has continued to incrementally undertake organisational changes, and put into practice already established rules which according to Niedermayers' criteria, has promoted the level of interaction, and consequently the institutionalisation of the party.

The political aim of the ELD federation was rather detailed in the constituent statutes from 1976, where the primary goal was to co-ordinate the European elections. Over the years it has been expanded to include an ideological commitment i.e. to strengthen the liberal, democratic and reform movements in the EU and throughout Europe. Also the organisational objectives, to foster communication on European affairs, has been set out more in detail, in order to develop close working relationships among the national parties, the national parliamentary groups, the ELDR group in the European Parliament and liberal groups in other transnational parliamentary fora.

Initially the ELD had only two official organs, the congress and the executive committee. In 1993 the council had replaced the executive committee and a new organ the bureau had been established. To meet the growing importance of the European Council meetings the informal meetings of the party leaders were formalised in 1995 through the establishment of the ELDR party leaders' meeting.

### 3.1. The Congress

The activities of the congress remain the same as under the original statutes. The congress can make decision on all matters within the competence of the European Union. It can also decide on all matters, which the members have unanimously recognised as falling within its competence. Furthermore it can deliberate on all proposals submitted to it by a member party and may deliver an opinion on such a proposal. As the congress meets annually it is closely involved in the policy formation process. Between the European elections it usually focuses on a variety of specific issues, like for example unemployment or information technology. In the run up to the elections it amends and votes the European election manifesto. Despite the formal role of the congress, the long and careful preparations required, particularly because of the large number of delegates (437 at the congress 2000) and the many languages involved, makes it difficult to fulfil the scrutinising role carried out by national congresses.

If the activities of the congress remain the same, the composition of the congress has changed to include affiliated parties and the liberal caucuses in other parliamentary fora, and thus opened up the congress to all liberal actors in Europe (ELDR statutes, 1999). The number of representatives at the congress is based on six representatives from each country. If there is more than one party, these representatives are allocated to each party according to the proportional strength they achieved at the last European elections. The allocation of the rest of the national representatives is based on a proportional rule in relation to the number of votes. Furthermore may all members of the ELDR group of the European Parliament, the members of the Council, and ten representatives from the youth branch, LYMEC, participate at the congress. The affiliated parties and Liberal Democrat and Reform groups in other European parliamentary assemblies are represented with two and one delegate respectively. Also the Liberal International has the right to one delegate but only with the position as observer.

What can be noticed over the years is that more decisions are made by simple majority. That the members accept this method to be used is in turn an indication of a new step in the internal integration process. At the congress in Berlin in 1999, where the representatives voted on the election manifesto, the principle was used on several occasions also when the vote's concerned sensitive issues like for example the Common Agricultural

Policy. As a consequence one party, the Finnish Keskusta decided to vote against the whole manifesto at the end of the congress, and some of the other parties verbally expressed their dissatisfaction of the discrepancies between the negotiated and the final version. On the one hand one might say that the use of simple majority was accepted and respected by all the parties, except for one. On the other hand the common electoral manifesto is rarely used in the election campaigns at the national level, and the relevance of the document has been put to question. But as the manifesto to a growing extent has started to serve as the basis for the ELDR group in the European parliament it has become more and more important and should thus not be underestimated (Sandström, 1999).

An announced statutory change concerns the voting system of the congress. As some parties can't afford to send all of its delegates at every congress of the ELDR, they have proposed the ELDR to introduce a system of transferable votes instead of the present one-man-one vote system. In such a system one delegate can cast more than one vote and would if introduced according to the council "thereby aiding the democratic process and leading to improved cost benefits" (ELDR, Congress 2000). The change does not only indicate that running a European party is an expensive affair but also that the member parties find it important to make use of their formal power at the congresses.

### **3.2. The Council**

The congress elects the council, which consists of the President, two members from each member party, one additional member for each 500 000 votes obtained by the last European elections, the members of the Commission of the EU who belong to a member party, one member from LYMEC, members of the bureau ex-officio, one member from each affiliated party and finally one representative from the liberal caucuses as well as one from the LI as observer. The Council meets at least three times a year, and is empowered to speak and act on behalf of the party, between the congresses (ELDR statutes, 1999). Although it has a political role, the Council has not been able to assert influence with any efficiency due to the very large number of delegates (72 in the year 2000) in combination with very few meetings a year, which are the primary reasons why a new organ, the bureau, was established.

### 3.3. The Bureau

Between the congresses and the council meetings, the bureau carries out executive functions. The bureau thus has a political role and possibly one of influence as it is empowered to represent the party between the congresses and the council. It comprises as voting members: The president, four vice-presidents, the treasurer, and the president of the ELDR group. As non-voting members, the Honorary President(s) of the ELDR party and the secretary-generals of the ELDR party and the ELDR group and the President of LYMEC.

In sum, there have been some changes, which point in the direction of a further transfer of power from the national to the supranational level, especially the extended use of majority voting, but there have also been changes, that point in the opposite direction. With the growing importance of the European Council as the supreme decision-making organ when it comes to the medium and long term EU agenda, the party has started to organise leaders meetings prior to the Council. Although liberal party leaders used to meet since 1964 it was not formally institutionalised until 1995. The ELDR leaders' meetings have thus emerged as a significant decision-making body co-ordinating policy on European issues. However, unlike the other decision-making organs of the party, which are ruled by a federal principle, i.e. majority decisions, the decisions that are made at the leaders meetings are normally made by unanimity. This is indicating, not only the importance of the decisions made by the liberal leaders but also the reluctance of the member parties to give up national party sovereignty. In comparison with the EPP and the PES, where the leaders meetings in practice has become the supreme co-ordinating body due to their influence in the European Council, the ELDR leaders meeting has not played the same important role within the ELDR. As liberal parties are relatively small parties and therefore seldom in a position to appoint a prime minister, the liberal presence at and consequently the possibilities to influence the European Council has been rather low. The incitements of the liberal party leaders to attend the leaders' meetings have thus been weak. The different attempts to 're-launch' and 'breath new life into' the leaders meetings has resulted in an increasing number of liberal leaders attending the meetings since 1998.



### ***3.4. Individual membership***

Despite the party label the ELDR is, at least until now, more transnational than supranational; which means that it is not composed of individuals and local branches, but of national parties. This has implications on the balance of power between the whole and the parts, which is different from parties in the national context. Since the transformation from a federation to a party in 1993, there has been a discussion of opening up the possibility for individual membership. The youth branch, LYMEC has already created such a possibility. In 1996, the German FDP and the Dutch D66 together with the ELDR Council proposed to the congress in Vienna to open up for individuals to become members. The Belgian VVD and the Austrian Liberales Forum however claimed that it was an issue of too much importance to accept the proposal without a broad discussion on all its implications. The proposal was thus rejected but raised again at the congress in Brussels in 1997. A workshop discussed the item and the workshop leader, Lord Alderdice concluded: "It was quite clear that there were two quite divergent sets of views by the question of individual membership... There were very considerable anxieties for example that such development would undermine the member parties, that it would weaken them in some way, that perhaps there would be wild elements who would might put themselves forward for individual membership, people who had been ejected from a member party, or people who could not get any backing for their ideas and views" (ELDR congress Documents, 1997). A clear example of how national parties are reluctant of reducing their autonomy in favour of the ELDR. Those promoting the idea have suggested a separate section for individual members to be set up, especially to reach people of liberal disposition in countries where there is no member party. But also to be able to include for example individual MEP's such as the ELDR group leader Pat Cox, who has run to the parliament as an independent and is thus not actually a member of the ELDR in the kind of sense that is described in the statutes. Although the internal split over the item it was discussed once again at the ELDR congress 2000, with the prospect that the congress 2001 will vote on the statutory changes needed. (ELDR Congress, 2000)

### 3.5. Financial means of the ELDR

Another important indicator which according to Dietz (1997) speaks to a party's degree of integration is the way that the party is financed. Up until now the financial resources of the ELDR mainly comes from two sources. The member parties are required to pay yearly submissions, a fixed amount equal to all member and affiliated parties. The member parties then contribute in proportion to their number of delegates in the council, which in turn is built on the number of votes cast for the party at the last European elections. The other main source is the yearly contribution from the ELDR group in the European Parliament, which in the year 2000 were approximately 42 % of the total budget. In addition to these two main sources there's also a small amount of donations. Compared to the early years of the ELDR the budget has grown considerably. The total budget of the ELDR has increased from 1982 (Hix, 1995: 118) with sparingly E 87 000 into slightly more than E 342 000 in the year 2000, thus, almost four times higher, than in the beginning of the 1980s. This should however be seen in relationship with the increased number of member parties. Compared to the budgets of national parties the ELDR budget is relatively small, for example too small to allow for the establishment of a larger and more efficient secretariat. The ELDR shares the offices and organisational resources with the ELDR group in the European Parliament building in Brussels and currently employs four peoples, two directly and two others via the Centre d'études<sup>3</sup>. The lack of recourses is thus a restriction, which affects the routine work considerably and especially the possibilities of maintaining a bureaucratic structure that can manage the party's structural coherence. This is one of the reasons why the party has to make some internal organisational changes to "better adapt the party to a tighter financial situation" (ELDR Congress 2000). As most member countries use a system of public support for parties, the European parties has proposed that they should be partially financed from the EU budget. Political financing is seen as one way in which the parties can strengthen their role in relation to other political groups in the society and especially the groups in the European Parliament.

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<sup>3</sup> Le Centre d'Etudes libérales was established by the ELDR in 1987 with the purpose of "propager et disséminer l'idéologie et les politiques libéraux du Groupe Libéral, Démocratique et Réformateur au Parlement Européen". ELDR Activity Report 1988-1990.

#### 4. Political profile and programme of the ELDR

According to Simon Hix and Christopher Lord, the strategic environment in which party politics in the EU are conducted, has two fundamentally irreconcilable dimensions. First the traditional (and well known to the national electorate) left-right dimension and second the integration-sovereignty dimension concerning attitudes towards the European integration process. In order to minimise internal conflict between member parties of the same party family, the EPP and the PES seems to prefer to compete on the left-right dimension (Hix and Lord, 1997, see also Hooghe & Marks, 1998). This has however caused some problems for the ELDR. As there are different profiles of political liberalism, a more radical branch emphasising social and political freedom, and a more right-wing branch, emphasising economic freedom (Smith, 1988) – left-right issues has been a source of internal conflict weakening the internal cohesion of the ELDR. When it comes to the second dimension the majority of the member parties of the ELDR has always been in the forefront, cohesively promoting a federal European political project. But as mentioned before, the Nordic Center parties, with their underlying agrarian background and reluctance to the integration process, have brought a Eurosceptic branch into the ELDR, and thus increased the heterogeneity along the integration dimension.

The basic ELDR ideas concerning the European Union and the integration process on which all member parties has to agree were adopted at the constituent congress in Stuttgart. The Stuttgart Declaration (1976) stipulates five points;

1. The guarantee of political human and civil rights
2. A free democratic constitution based on the principals of separation of powers, majority voting and protection of minorities
3. A steady and balanced economic growth
4. A common foreign and security policy
5. Freedom of individuals, equality of opportunities for all and free competition of ideas and parties as indispensable components of a democratic society.

When analysing the programs, congress statements and election manifestos the basic ideas of the Stuttgart declaration are constantly recurring in the texts. The Stuttgart declaration has thus served as a common point of departure when setting up political programmes and manifestos. The election

manifestos do not only include statements about actual EU issues, but also basic Liberal guiding principals, which means that, at least a couple of them, can be regarded more as all embracing political programmes than just as election platforms.

However, the divergent ideological tendencies within the liberal party family can be seen, especially in economic and social issues. If the statements concerning for example the institutional development of the European Union are precise enough to serve as party political guidelines, declarations concerning economical issues have been rather vague or even ambiguous. Internal discrepancies in left-right issues is however not so unusual. Normally there are two dominant ideological wings in parties at the national level as well. The clash between the two wings in the ELDR party has been wider than in national parties. However when comparing the manifestos and the debates at the congresses in Torquay 1993 and Berlin 1999 congresses which voted on election manifestos, the two wings of liberalism were apparent, but to a much larger extent at the former congress than the latter. This in turns point to the fact that there has been a convergence not only in questions concerning the development of the European Union but also in traditional left-right issues. The ELDR has thus to a large extent reached consensus on important issues concerning EU developments. What also becomes clear when comparing the preparations of the manifestos and the debates at the congresses is that the party has developed a remarkably sophisticated consensus building mechanism contributing to the internal cohesion of the party (Sandström, 1999).

##### **5. ELDR: From co-operation to integration**

As table 3 shows, the degree of interaction within the ELDR has increased – although moderately. The party has moved from contact to co-operation and has now entered the integration phase. The party has however not yet fulfilled all the criteria's in the Niedermayer/Dietz model. But the party is estimated to open up for individual membership at the congress 2001, and it is also looking into the possibilities to increase the awareness of the party by using the common party label not only on the internet but also on for example membership cards. When it comes to the common policy formulation criteria we can see a similar development. The election manifestos and other policy programs has started to serve as the basis for the EP-group and is consequently spilling-over to the national level in order to

keep a common policy line on both the national and European levels. This development was facilitated by the fact that the initiators did choose a federal and not a confederal organisational model from the start.

Table 3. The degree of interaction between 1949 and 2000

	LI/MLEU 1948/1952- 1976	ELD/ELDR 1976-1993	ELDR 1993-
<b>1. Permanent Communication</b>	Yes	Yes, with higher frequency	Yes, with higher frequency
<b>2. Permanent organisation</b>			
- Permanent organisation	Yes	Yes	Yes
- Possibility of individual membership	No	No	No
- Existence of subunits	Yes	Yes	Yes
- Incorporation of subunits into decision-making	No	Yes	Yes
- Composition of Congress Council Bureau (Managing board) Leaders' Meeting		Proportional Proportional No rule Equality	Proportional Proportional No rule Equality
- Decision-making in Congress Council Bureau (Managing Board) Leaders' Meeting		Qualified Majority until 1991  No rule	Simple Majority Simple Majority Simple majority  Unanimity
- Area of Competence	To some extent restricted	To some extent restricted	To some extent Restricted
- Use of Common Symbols		Yes	Yes, to some extent
- Own financial means		Yes	Yes
<b>3. Common policy formulation</b>	Yes	Yes a common manifesto, and political programs	Yes, more far- reaching programs

On a general level, the characteristics of the ELDR do resemble parties in federal states. And at least formally the party organisation has become more autonomous in relation to the national parties. It is however evident that the internal power structure still is quite different when compared to national parties, but also here it is possible to identify changes. The extent to which these power relations have changed will be analysed in the following sections.

## 6. The ELDR and the group in the European Parliament

One of the purposes with the establishment of the ELD/ELDR was that it would provide the liberal group in the European Parliament with a political base in order to strengthen the legitimacy of the group and thus increase its possibilities to influence the integration process. For several reasons the federation had problems fulfilling this role of an 'extra-parliamentary' organisation. First and foremost the Liberal and Allies group, the forerunner of the ELDR group was established already in 1953. Although it was a rather incongruent group, the financial and organisational means of the European Parliament had over the years contributed to the establishment of a rather independent and cohesive liberal force within the parliament. The creation of a federation, with its relatively few meetings and thus lack of continuity in comparison with the day-to-day involvement in EC affairs of the liberal group therefore didn't affect the independence of the group to any larger extent. Already from the outset the ELDR was thus in an inferior position to the group, weakening the role of the federation.

According to Rudolf Hrbek, another problem contributing to the weakness of the federation is that two of the largest liberal parties have had a relatively loose connection to the liberal group in the European Parliament (1988: 467). The British Liberal Democrats has due to the electoral system in Britain hardly been represented in the European Parliament. The German FDP has, especially during the 1990s had problems passing the five-percent threshold in the German electoral system, and hasn't been represented in the parliament since 1994. The fact that two of the largest parties have been more or less outside the parliament, but at the same time having a large influence at the ELDR congresses has created disturbances in the internal power balance between the party and the group. The ambitions of the party to take the lead over the group giving political guidelines have therefore been debilitated. However, with the introduction of a uniform electoral system in the European election 1999, the LibDems managed to increase their representation from two to ten MEPs and are for the time being the largest national delegation in the ELDR-group. This is a position corresponding to the representation of the LibDems at the ELDR congress.

In addition the loyalty of the MEPs to the ELDR party is relatively weak, as they are selected by their respective national parties and elected by a national electorate. The more institutionalised the party tends to get, the more loyalty

conflicts may arise, as the MEPs will be exposed to cross pressure from divergent party interests, i.e. national and supranational. Furthermore, the MEPs are often expected, not at least in the media, to represent national interest, which is in stark contrast to the supranational perspective that dominates the European Parliament (Gidlund, 1992).

This weak link between the two organisations and the relative independence of the group was reflected in the first statutes of the ELDR, in which the group was considered as a separate body and not at all subordinated to the party. This has however changed, at least formally. The present statutes explicitly specify that the group is representing the ELDR party in the European Parliament. When the party was created the name of the group was changed to the ELDR group in order to demonstrate a stronger connection between the two. Moreover different efforts have been made to strengthen the links through for example publishing a common newsletter and programmes as well as organising joint conferences and meetings. But most important, it is now the party and not the group alone who approve which parties and individuals that should form the group. The group can thus not decide the composition by itself, and not let anyone in who doesn't fulfil the requirements of the ELDR statutes.

In addition, the common election manifesto has begun to serve as the basis for common action in the European parliament. The ELDR has thus to some extent started to serve as an extra-parliamentary organisation that was the intention from the start. Still however the role of the party can not be compared with the role of extra-parliamentary parties at the national level. And although the ELDR party leaders' meeting has become an important site of decision-making, the lack of political influence in the European Council, means that the parliament is the institutional focal point of the ELDR. To a large degree the ELDR and its member parties thus has to rely on the liberal group in the European Parliament in order to influence the development of the European Union.

## **7. The ELDR and national parties**

If the link between the ELDR party and the group to some extent has got stronger, to what extent has the party managed to reinforce the links with its member parties? One of the prime tasks of the ELDR-party secretariat is to strengthen the contacts with the ELDR-group and the member parties.



Traditionally it does so by attending member party congresses and organising international conferences and seminars, which involve member party representatives. It also brings together, on a regular basis the secretaries general and desk officers responsible for specific policy areas. By now the ELDR is a familiar feature at the congresses of the member parties, with the effect that rank-and-file members also are aware of the existence of the ELDR.

In order to strengthen the link between the ELDR party and the national parties the ELDR has on several occasions also organised seminars in order to promote closer contacts especially between national parties and the ELDR group. In January 1993 the Presidents of the liberal democratic and reform groups in national parliaments met in Brussels on the invitation of the former president of the ELDR-group in the European Parliament Yves Galland and of the President of the ELDR Federation Willy De Clercq. Several proposals were adopted about how to improve the co-operation between the European and national level, with the view to initiate common actions and to ensure a permanent flow of information. However due to the lack of financial and organisational resources, as well as the interest and time of those involved the adopted proposals were only put to practice to a limited extent. A new attempt was made in May 1997 to introduce a 'new partnership' between representatives from the national and European level, this time with a greater achievement. The ELDR has in co-operation with the group also initiated a parliamentary visitors program allowing ten MPs from the member parties in central and Eastern Europe to annually follow the work in Brussels and Strasbourg. A programme, which has been successfully implemented.

In the light of the ongoing integration process, with the growing interlinkage of the national and European political arenas, it has become all the more important to the national parties to be able to co-ordinate political standpoints all through the emerging European political system. The ELDR has to some extent been able to assist the national parties in this process, with the establishment of a forum in which the national parties can co-operate. In this sense the ELDR party has started to be respected as a political body at the European level.

A further sign of the growing importance of the ELDR as a party unit is the increasing interest that the party leaders have started to pay to the transnational party activities. This in turn might be a consequence of the lack

of influence that liberal parties have on the national level. In the year 2000 liberal parties are only represented in government in 5 EU countries. As opposition parties they enjoy more time which they may allocate to more of party co-operation. For the same reason they are, at least to a certain extent, freer to adjust to the activities of the ELDR. The European party co-operation thus provides an arena in which they have the possibility to make up for the lack of influence when being out of government.

Several factors thus points to the fact that the ELDR over time has been able to exert some influence on national member parties and to a growing extent has been accepted as well as respected as a party unit at the European level. Despite all of this the contacts between the two levels are still very much an elite project, and to a large extent secondary to the activities of the national parties.

### **8. The ELDR linking liberal movements together**

An interesting phenomenon that has started to emerge is the link that the ELDR party and the group has established with other parliamentary assemblies, i.e. the Council of Europe, the Nordic Council, and the ELDR caucuses in the parliamentary assemblies of the WEU and NATO. This is in line with the ideological aim of the party to “strengthen the liberal democrat and reform movement throughout Europe” (ELDR statutes, 1999) or with the words of the ELDR group leader, Pat Cox “it must be possible to arrive at a better co-ordination of agendas in order to be able to join hands more often and to strive for our common ideas” (ELDR Online News, n° 3/98). However, as there are a clear distinction between the structure of the ELDR group and the other liberal organisations, for example the LDR group in the Council of Europe who only meets four times a year and has a very high turnover of members per year, this makes it difficult to carry out a coherent and effective policy line. With closer co-operation between the different liberal organs this could be prevented and the ambition is hence to arrange meetings of all liberal caucuses annually in connection to the LI or ELDR congresses. Another example of the attempt to link liberal movements together is the transnational network of regional and local councillors which has been set up by the ELDR group in the Committee of the Regions and the ELDR party. The purpose of the network is to gather more specific information about the effects of EU-legislation at the local and regional level, but also with the

perspective of contributing to “better root the ELDR in the member parties” (ELDR Work Programme, 1999-2004).

### **Conclusions**

Internal cohesion is considered to be a prerequisite for a party’s possibility to contribute to the integration of the society as a whole. In the case of the ELDR, the lack of internal cohesion has been regarded as one of the main problems of the party. There are several factors that might explain why the ELDR at least initially had this problem. For example the initiative to establish the ELDR wasn’t directed from a single centre but rather from several sources why the organisation already from the start was decentralised. The very structure of the organisation, with a weak centre, was thus a factor impeding the possibilities to internally integrate the party. The decisions by the initiators to open up the ELD for members who didn’t define themselves as liberals in order to become as large as possible was another decisive factor – and an example of a classical dilemma between ideology and strategy. The choice to widen the ideological span clearly had consequences not only for the composition of the party, but also for the possibilities to establish a collective identity. In addition the member parties of the ELDR are relatively small why the ELDR has not been in a position neither in the European Parliament nor in the European Council where it have been able to distribute selective incentives and thus to create an organisational interest among its members.

This chapter has shown that the ELDR over the years has been able to overcome some of its weaknesses and has been able to provide both collective and selective incentives, thus strengthening the organisation and the internal cohesion. Although the party, according to the Niedermayer/Dietz model, does not yet fulfil all the requirements of an integrated party at the EU-level the ELDR has now entered the integration phase and is in a process of integrating the different dimensions of the party even further. The party has started to resemble parties in federal states. This organisational process to a large extent coincides with the institutional and constitutional development of the EU. However it is impossible to understand the progress of the European Union only by looking at the formal elements, and transnational party co-operation cannot be understood only by looking at the organisational and statutory changes. The formal characteristic of the party is of course important but it does not yet seem to play the same role as

within national parties. Although the extended use of single majority decisions are accepted and to a large extent respected by the member parties of the ELDR it is still used as a last resort. Instead the party co-operation, like the EU, is first and foremost characterised by a consensus culture, where the party has had to develop a sophisticated negotiation system in order to bring different opinions into line with each other – all through the political system of the EU. The formal rules seem to work more as a frame to which the ELDR can fall back on when negotiations breaks down. The statutes give the impression of an internal hierarchical order, but the different dimensions of the party are linked to each other in a network-like structure, where the national parties play the most important role. How the ELDR actually works thus more seems to reflect the “network mode of governance” of the European Union, than any formal features. Although it might be considered as a weakness that the correspondence between the formal and informal elements of the party is low – this doesn’t necessarily have to be the case. The interplay between formal and informal elements instead seems to give rise to a certain dynamic which in turn may lead to innovations in organisational design. Consequently the present organisation seems to be, at least in the eyes of the ELDR, of a transitory kind in the anticipation of the more federalised European Union that the ELDR is aiming for.

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## **The European Federation of Green Parties: Rather a European than an ecologist organisation?**

Cédric VAN DE WALLE, Free University of Brussels (ULB)

The history of the Green parties in Europe reveals that most of them were riddled by conflicts when a debate started up within what was then only associative environmentalist, pacifist, feminist, anarchist, anti-nuclear, etc. movements, regarding the strategy to adopt in order to influence most effectively the political course. This confrontation opposed pragmatic groups, inclined to form partisan structures in order to penetrate the traditional political world to reform it better, to more dogmatic groups that believed that the political system should instead be transformed by pressure from social movements outside the parliamentary arenas.

We could expect to encounter this strategic conflict when different Green movements attempted to create co-operation structures at European level.

Heavily marked by transnationalism, the ecologist doctrine is going to favour the development of contacts between green groups from different political horizons right from their start. Amongst others, it is for this reason that the ecologist family was quickly present within the European Parliament<sup>1</sup>. Even if the rifts between environmentalists and radical libertarian checked its initial developments, permanent co-operation structures were created at first within a political group of the European Parliament (EP) and then, extra-parliamentary, first in the shape of a loose co-ordination body and then of a more integrated federation. Today, it is striking to see the resemblance, in organisational terms, between this European Federation of Green Parties (EFGP) and the partisan structures set up at European level by the other party families (Dietz, 2001).

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<sup>1</sup> Moreover, the European elections can serve as springboard for the small political groups, young and without great financial means, in order for them to make themselves known by large electoral districts. In some States, the voting system is also more favourable than the one used for national elections because it introduces doses of proportional representation.. P. Delwit, J.-M. De Waele, *Le mode de scrutin fait-il l'élection*, Brussels, Editions de l'Université de Bruxelles, 2000.

It is this homology that we shall attempt to analyse in this chapter. We shall see which organisational principles governed the establishment of this partisan structure at European level. Whether it concerns principles specific to the Green parties<sup>2</sup> or if the Green federation shares in a general model for partisan groups specific to the European party federations. Right from 1983, O. Niedermayer (Niedermayer, 1983) proposes a model for the development of European political parties on the basis of a progressive transfer of national party sovereignty towards a European partisan organisation<sup>3</sup>. As for L. Bardi, he will propose a development model more centred on the creation of European parties starting from their parliamentary basis (Bardi, 1994). R. Ladrech, also stresses this parliamentary basis while at the same time focusing on the networking patterns of these European partisan groups (Ladrech & Brown-Papamikail, 1995; Ladrech 1998). Finally, S. Hix and C. Lord suggest a model very similar to Niedermayer's, for they take up as criteria the evolution of the internal organs of European party federations, but they add their more or less extended relationships with the other institutions of the European political system (Hix & Lord, 1997). All apply their models to the different party families and the Greens are no exception. What about the organisational principles specific to the Green parties, didn't they exert any influence on the structuring of the Green federation?

We shall try to show that, following the examples of the other European party federations, the main organs of the European Federation of Green Parties are more the fruit of the constraints of the European institutional

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<sup>2</sup> Numerous comparative studies on green parties in Europe have highlighted specific organisational principles on the basis of which the ecologist political family organises their partisan structure. The concept of "grass roots democracy" was highlighted by T. Poguntke, "New Politics and Party Systems: The Emergence of a New Type of Party?", *West European Politics*, n° 1, pp. 76-88 and "The "New Politics Dimension" in European Green Parties" in Müller-Rommel F., *New Politics in Western Europe*, Westview Press, Boulder, 1989, pp. 175-94; Kitschelt H., *The logics of party formation. Ecological politics in Belgium and West Germany*, London-Ithaca, Cornell University Press, 1989; Müller-Rommel F., "Green Parties and Alternative lists under cross-national perspective" in Müller-Rommel F., *New Politics in Western Europe*, Boulder, Westview Press, 1989, pp. 5-22; Richardson D. & Rootes C., *The Green Challenge. The development of Green parties in Europe*, London/New York, Routledge, 1995; Bomberg E., *Green Parties and Politics in the European Union*, London/New York, Routledge, 1998.

<sup>3</sup> See the contribution of Camilla Sandström in this volume.



environment than of the “grass roots democracy” principles that founded the organisation of green parties at national level. Nevertheless, if the EFGP structures are similar to those of other European partisan groups, the operational procedures specific to “grass roots democracy” are found in certain forms in the functioning of the Green federation.

To develop this idea, we shall retrace the broad lines of the Federation’s organisational evolution in order to bring out the main stages and to explain the causes of these changes. We shall then present the Federation’s current organisation (its organs and operational rules) in order to compare it to organisations set up by the other political bodies at European level on the one hand, and on the other, to the operating principles that can be brought out with regard to the environmental organisations at national level<sup>4</sup>.

### **1. The organisational evolution of the European Federation of Green Parties**

Unlike other party families, the Greens do not have the benefit of the pre-existence of an International or an EP party group prior to the first direct European elections in 1979. Their relative youth does not bring them sufficient parliamentary representation for the development of concrete partisan structures. It is therefore in an extra-parliamentary manner that the initial forms of co-operation between Green parties or movements were established.

In spite of the meetings of various European ecologist associations during the anti-nuclear demonstrations of the early 70’s and their transnational approach to environmental problems, the attempts to create an organisation grouping Green parties were to fail until 1984<sup>5</sup>. Several causes can be put forward, such as the weak degree of internal structuring of member parties, the low number of elected representatives obtained by the member parties of

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<sup>4</sup> Aware of the different fundamental realities that cover the European party federations and the national parties, we are not looking for characteristics specific to national parties, but rather organisational principles specific to all Green parties in Europe.

<sup>5</sup> There were various attempts such as ECOROPA in the mid-1970’s or an electoral platform (PEACE) at the run-up to the first direct European elections in 1979, or even the Co-ordination of Green and Radical parties in Europe in 1980.

this Co-ordination group (Bennhamias & Roche, 1992: 87), as well as the internal conflicts regarding its political identity<sup>6</sup>.

In the run-up to the 1984 European elections, nine Green parties set up the European Co-ordination of Green Parties. They agreed on a minimum common programme and a declaration of co-operation, but they had to wait another year for the statutes defining the rules of membership and procedure to be adopted. The General Assembly was then the only decision-making body and its decisions are made unanimously. A co-secretariat and a political secretariat assured permanent management and took decisions by qualified majority. The Green Co-ordination held a Congress once a year, but its activities were virtually non-existent because of internal tensions.

The election success for various Green lists (30 MEP's) on the occasion of the 1989 European elections, as well as the desire to affirm a European Green identity pushed the Green parties to unite in a distinct political group within the EP. The formation of the Green Group in the EP (GGEP) was vital for the Co-ordination because it benefited from much greater material resources. Moreover, it announced a stronger ideological coherence between the members of a political group that no longer counted any radical or regionalist parties like the "Rainbow" political group of the previous legislature. An information office of the Co-ordination with two employees was opened in the offices of the political group. In spite of its embryonic structure, the 17 member parties adopted a series of common policy declarations on topics of European policy.

Starting in the early '90's, the European party federations were going to experience the deepening and integration of their organisation following the various changes of their environment. The different European party federation specialists all agree that the geo-political upheavals in Europe, the expansion of EP prerogatives (following the Single Act and the Maastricht Treaty), politicisation of the European construction triggered by the negotiations and the ratification of the Maastricht Treaty as well as the formal recognition of "political parties at European level" in the Treaty on

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<sup>6</sup> "The German Greens wanted to widen the co-ordination to parties that consider themselves as alternatives, other parties preferring to restrict the memberships to environmentalist parties", Delwit P., De Waele J.-M., *Ecolo: Les Verts en politique*, Brussels, De Boeck Université, 1996, p. 119 [our translation].

European Union accelerated the development of partisan organisations at European level. They adopted new statutes making their decision-making organs more complex, specifying their procedures, changing their name in order to integrate the term “party”, developing their affiliation policy and intensifying their relationships with their party groups in the EP<sup>7</sup>.

Under the influence of this new environment and the inadequacy between its structures and the growing number of members (26 in 1992), the Green Co-ordination adopted new statutes in 1993.

## 2. The actual organisation of the EFGP

Gathered at the Congress in Helsinki in 1993, the Green parties adopted the statutes of the EFGP. They define its objectives, the composition and the functioning of its bodies and its affiliation policy.

These statutes were amended on several occasions, it didn't involve fundamental changes. Before comparing the bodies and the operational method to the principles of “grass roots democracy” which govern the functioning of national parties, we shall detail them somewhat in order to compare them briefly to those of other European party federations.

The **objectives** that the EFGP assign itself are quasi similar to those of other partisan federations. The Federation “[...] ensures a close and permanent co-operation among member parties in order to accomplish the common policy laid down by the Congress, stimulates and organises initiatives and activities on a European level under the supervision of the Council and the Committee, devotes itself to an open, active, constructive and critical approach to the ongoing integration processes in Europe towards a world wide co-operation”<sup>8</sup>.

Unlike the statutes of the PES, EPP or the ELDR, there is no reference to the European elections, neither to the EU nor to policy co-ordination. This is explained by the choice of the Green parties, right from the start, not to limit their action to the European Union, but to a wider Europe, if not to the planet. This absence also reflects the lack of consensus on the idea to co-

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<sup>7</sup> Hix S., Lord C., *op. cit.*, pp. 55-76.

<sup>8</sup> EFGP, *Statutes and Standing Orders as amended at Helsinki, 27-29 March 1998*, art. 2.

ordinate their electoral programmes or to be involved in the European institutions.

The **organisational structure** differs somewhat from that of the other federations. The statutes establish 5 organs: the Congress, the Council, the Committee, the Mediation Committee and the Finance Monitoring Group.

Every three years, the *Congress* brings together around 400 delegates. The seats are allocated to each party according to the rules of proportional representation and with a minimum representation of 4 seats. It decides on statutory amendments (3/4 of the votes) and on the Federation programmes with a 2/3 majority vote of those present. This organ is found in the other federations but its composition differs and it meets once a year for the 3 main party families. The inadequacy of financial means keeps the green parties from this sort of frequency.

The *Council* meets once or twice a year. It is made up of at least one delegate per member party and of additional delegates allowed according to the number of members or to percentages of votes obtained on the occasion of the last national elections. This rule enables a representation that takes into account the different relevance of Green parties in their national framework<sup>9</sup>.

Also present, but without right to vote, are the Committee members, the parties delegates, movements or organisations that have observer status and members of the Green Group Bureau in the EP.

In accordance to the general lines established by the Congress, it co-ordinates the initiatives and activities. It elects, supports and assesses the Committee and the Mediation Committee (by 2/3 majority). It also decides on the entry or exclusion of members and observers (by 3/4 majority) and advises (after consultation with Green party concerned) the Green group on the admission of MEP's not belonging to a member party of the Federation<sup>10</sup>. It approves the budget, the finances and proposes the statutory changes.

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<sup>9</sup> van de Walle C., "L'influence des participations gouvernementales sur la construction identitaire de la fédération européenne des partis verts" in Delwit P., De Waele J.-M., *Les partis verts en Europe*, Brussels, Editions Complexe, 1999, pp 239-261.

<sup>10</sup> EFGP, *op. cit.*, art. 10b.

The *Committee* is similar to the Presidency of the EPP and to the ELDR or PES party Bureau in so far as it is guarantor of the Federation's permanent political representation, of the execution of the Council decisions and of the activities of the General Secretariat<sup>11</sup>. Its members (a general secretary, two spokespersons, a treasurer and five other people) are elected by the Council for a period of three years, renewable once. The standing orders define very precisely the role of each of the members. It meets at least 4 times a year and its members consult frequently by phone or by e-mail. Unlike the other federations, there are formally no representatives from the GGEP, it meets less often and is more limited. As the Federation has no Party Leaders' Meeting<sup>12</sup>, it is the Committee and in particular its secretary general, who is the main player of the executive body within the federation.

Without an authority for settling conflicts between organs or persons concerning statutes or internal rules, such as the leaders' meeting in the other federations, the Green parties have set up a *Mediation Committee*. It is elected by the Council on the Committee's recommendation. Its decisions are binding<sup>13</sup>.

The statutes also provide for the possibility to create ad hoc *working groups* and permanent commissions. Their recommendations shall be submitted to the Council.

Finally, the articles establishing the *membership policy* of the EFGP emphasise a basic difference compared to the other European party organisations. The Pan-European approach decided on in 1993 by the Federation's member parties, does allow 31 parties from 29 countries, members or not of the European Union, to be granted the same rights of representation and vote, irrespective of the matters being considered<sup>14</sup>.

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<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, art. 11b.

<sup>12</sup> For details about this, see the contribution by Thomas Dietz in this work.

<sup>13</sup> EFGP, *op. cit.*, art. 20.

<sup>14</sup> A damper can perhaps be introduced in response to the constitution of a Standing Committee on European Union Affairs, grouping solely the Green parties from member countries of the Union, with the goal to establish, in co-operation with the Green group in the EP, an electoral manifesto for the 1994 European elections. Nevertheless, this group may be seen as one of the regional groupings recognised by the Federation. Moreover, this approach was abandoned in the writing process of the

Since the recent attempts with the European institutions to be granted their own budget “lines”, the other European party federations are also trying to include parties from applicant countries to EU membership in their decision-making process. They feel this request to be all the more legitimate since they feel then fulfil the role that was explicitly assigned to them in Article 191 of the Treaty on European Union<sup>15</sup>.

Statutory provisions also establish the sources of **financing** and the practical terms for financial control. These disposals have been detailed on several occasions by various amendments in order to enable an internal audit and to clarify the scope of necessary needs.

Amended almost once a year during Council meetings, the statutes of the EFGP have not experienced any fundamental changes. They stemmed from the will to adapt the practical rules from the experience of past years much more than from internal political conflicts. Amongst the main innovations:

- The provisions concerning male/female equality have been itemised. At the Congress, a parity of at least 40% men and women is required among each delegation. At the Council, if the delegation has two representatives, one of them must be a woman. At the Committee, at least 40% of the elected members must be men and 40% must be women<sup>16</sup>.
- The Council is only convened at least once a year by the Committee. But it can hold an extraordinary meeting at the request of a simple majority of member parties. Having had organisational difficulties (five Council meetings between 1993 and 1998), they had to give preference to limiting the fixed number of planned meetings and facilitating the extraordinary meeting<sup>17</sup>.
- Regarding the financing, it is specified that “the Federation is financed by membership fees, donations and other legal contributions”<sup>18</sup>. It should be

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1999 electoral manifesto. See van de Walle C., “The EFGP Common Manifesto: Disclosing Distinctive Views of European Integration”, *Cahiers du Cevipol*, vol. 2000, n°4. <http://www.ulb.ac.be/soco/cevipol>

<sup>15</sup> The latter provides that “The political parties at European level are important as factor of integration within the Union [...]”.

<sup>16</sup> EFGP, *op. cit.*, art. 8c.

<sup>17</sup> It suffices that a simple majority of member parties requests the holding of a Council meeting. *Ibid.*, art. 10d.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, art. 17.

noted that the contribution of the GGEP, which is equivalent to half the budget, is not mentioned.

- Finally, a new article is integrated in order to establish the practical terms for a possible liquidation of the Federation (at the request of three-quarters of member parties <sup>19</sup>).

Except for the absence of the party leaders' meeting and the Pan-European approach that opens the Federation's doors to parties coming from countries not members of the EU, the main organisational components of the Green federation are therefore quite similar to those of its Socialist, Christian-Democratic/Conservative, Liberal and Regionalist counterparts. So what about the principles of "grass roots democracy" that one finds in the functioning of ecologist parties at the national level?

### **3. Comparison with the operating principles of the Green Parties**

Parallel to the defence of ecological matters, the desire to reform political practices has also been a major preoccupation put forward by the Greens right from their first steps in politics. Developing themselves notably in reaction to traditional parties that they accuse of operating in a bureaucratic, hierarchical and centralised manner, the ecologists propose setting up partisan structures favourable to closer and more egalitarian relationships between citizens and politics.

The participative, anti-hierarchical and anti-bureaucratic desires of the founders and activists of Green parties have led to the adoption "[...] of a specific blend of organisational rules and procedures centring around the concept of "grass roots democracy" or «*Basisdemokratie*»<sup>20</sup>. Different practical terms are provided for in order to monitor the decision-making machinery and the representatives:

- Banning the plurality of mandates,
- Job rotation (to avoid professionalisation),
- Binding mandate (monitoring of representatives),

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<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, art. 22.

<sup>20</sup> Paul Lucardie and Benoît Rihoux have compiled a group of characteristics peculiar to "grass roots democracy" in view of an ECPR workshop at Warwick in 1998. *Workshop proposal*, 8 April 1997, p. 2.

- Transparency of operations (direct access to information, right of vote, access for non-members),
- Collective leadership (to avoid personalisation),
- Pre-eminence of the smallest units: principle of subsidiarity allocating powers to the lowest possible level of power according to the decisions to be taken.
- Equal and proportional representation within the party organs,
- Salary restrictions,
- Finally, special attention is paid to the participation of members in the decision-making process, especially in the carrying out of programmatic functions and in the selection of candidates.

Nonetheless, these models are constructed from a relatively short history of Green parties in Europe. It have already undergone modifications in response to the constraints of political life (political agenda, national political culture, financial means), to developments in their electoral results, in the number of their members, in their parliamentary or governmental participation.

To what extent these characteristics, these general principles developed at the national level, are found or not in the functioning of the EFGP? How the national political parties have tried to transpose their practices to the European level? In order to answer to these questions, we used the following data: the statutes, the guiding principles<sup>21</sup> (sort of political programme), the standing orders, the Federation's archives and interviews with EFGP leaders in order to detect the way in which they are formalised and applied.

### **3.1. Collective leadership**

The decision-making set up enables the sharing of executive and legislative functions (the Committee and Council, respectively) and a monitoring of the different organs by means of the transmission of reports and of votes.

The absence of a President or vice-presidents can be explained by the distrust of the national elite regarding this level of power that they perceive

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<sup>21</sup> EFGP, *The Guiding Principles of the European Federation of Green Parties*, as agreed upon during the conference at Masala, Finland, June 20th 1993, Brussels.



too often as centralised and opaque. A collective executive will be preferred, administrated by the secretary general.

In addition, a broad representativeness is in place within the three main organs of the EFGP. As we have seen, the Congress awards seats according to proportional rules and the Council is formed according to the same rules. The Committee, the executive body, is more restricted, but besides the secretary general, the Treasurer and two spokespersons, five other people represent the dominant factions of the Congress <sup>22</sup>.

Therefore it seems that by means of proportional rules and by the high majorities required for almost all decisions, an effective sharing of power exists within the Federation. Nonetheless, given the slowness of decision-making procedures (the lack of financial resources prevents the holding of weekly meetings of the executive, as in the case and of the national parties), the short-term policy of the EFGP leaves a lot of room for the initiatives of the Committee and in particular, to those of the secretary general who is often led to take decisions, to resolve day to day problems.

### **3.2. The control of administrative staff and representatives by the members**

The Guiding Principles express this priority more explicitly: “Greens are campaigning for greater democratic control and openness in institutions of power, recognising the need to actively involve all sections of society in the decision-making process” <sup>23</sup>; or further, “Z-Executive political institutions on every level must be subordinated to democratic elected parliamentary bodies who are equipped with sufficient powers and instruments to fulfil their legislative and controlling functions” <sup>24</sup>.

It is stated that the secretary general will make at least one annual report of his/her activities to the Council. Besides, it is difficult to speak about a control of the representatives because, strictly speaking, there are no elected representatives from the EFGP. The latter only having partisan organisations

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<sup>22</sup> The Committee members must also implicitly represent the main regional European areas (Europe of the founding countries, Mediterranean, Scandinavian, Eastern ... countries).

<sup>23</sup> EFGP, *op. cit.*, 1993, art. III.1.3.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, art. III.3.2b.

as members. Some monitoring of the MEP's can exist however, because, most of the time, they stem from a member party of the EFGP. On top of that, it is established in Article 6 of the Federation statutes that "in the EP, the Federation can only be represented by the Green Group[...]". It is therefore more appropriate to speak of a co-operation between the EFGP the Green Group<sup>25</sup>, but the control of European representatives remains the prerogative of the national parties. Moreover, it is the latter that, via their delegates within the different organs, exercise a real control over the activities of the Federation. Indeed, the high majorities needed for adopting decisions enable member parties to easily form a blocking minority.

### **3.3. The rotation of offices and posts**

No rule specifies the rotation of mandates within the Congress and the Council. It remains a national responsibility. Concerning the Committee, on the other hand, the provision has been made that no member can be elected for more than two consecutive terms (of 3 years each). Here one finds a common practice within Green parties, decreed in order to avoid the professionalisation of political life.

### **3.4. The opening up to members and non-members**

"Structures must be set up to bring openness and democratic participation to political decision-making and administrative processes"<sup>26</sup>.

The transparency and accessibility of information have long been part of the basis of the organisation of the EFGP; they are mentioned on several occasions in the Guiding Principles and the statutes.

The Federation specifies the various statutes of members and observers to promote memberships and contacts among greens of the different continents<sup>27</sup>. Observers do not have any right to vote, but they do have the right to speak.

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<sup>25</sup> For a more detailed account of the co-operation between the Green group with the European Parliament and the Green federation, see the contribution by Thomas Dietz in this work.

<sup>26</sup> EFGP, *op. cit.*, 1993, art. III.3.1a.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*, "Foreword"; EFGP, *op. cit.*, 1998, art. 5

Moreover, the Committee can invite whomever it wishes to the Congress<sup>28</sup> or to the Council<sup>29</sup>. The standing orders also make the provision that all meetings are public, excepting the one on finances (art. 17). Hence one finds a rather strict application of the principle of transparency. This rigour is made all the more necessary for member parties since this level of power, difficult to grasp through its technical, elitist, highly centralised and far removed from the activists nature, gives rise to a great deal of questioning, if not to say distrust on their part.

### 3.5. The pre-eminence of the smallest units.

“[...] In order to extent the influence of people over the decisions which control their lives, appropriate levels of power must be decentralised from the nation states to communities, districts and regions”<sup>30</sup>.

In the organisation of the Federation, this subsidiarity principle results in the importance of

- the Congress, which groups the largest number of national representatives and decides the major orientations of general policy and of the programme, as well as the statutes,
- and the Council, which decides on the membership and exclusion of the members and the co-ordination of initiatives or activities planned by the Congress.

Nonetheless, the infrequency of meetings of the Congress (once every three years) and of the Council (twice a year) does not allow the members of national parties or the leaders of these parties to exert a determining influence on EFGP decisions. Instead, it is the delegates of the member parties, relatively autonomous from their national partisan leadership, who are able to influence the Federation decisions. They do so either by participating in one of the many working groups on specific issues or by taking part in Committee meetings.

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<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, art. 9g.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, art. 10e.

<sup>30</sup> EFGP, *op. cit.*, 1993, art. III.1.4.

### 3.6. Parity of genders and quotas

The Guiding Principles defend gender equality and notably the “[...] quotas and positive actions for the participation of women in public and private fields until both genders reach equality”<sup>31</sup>.

In concrete terms within the EFGP, the rules are very strict as much in the composition of the Congress and Council as in that of the Committee.

- In the Congress, the 4 member delegations must include at least two women, the others can be either men or women; the larger delegations must include 40% men and at least as many women;
- In the Council, there is no imposed choice if there is only one representative; if there are two, one must be a woman and the other can be either man or woman;
- In the Committee, at least 40% of elected members must be men and at least 40% must be women<sup>32</sup>.

### 3.7. The limitation of salaries

The financing comes from the GGEP and from the fees paid by the member parties, the latter can easily check the budgets made public every year. Nevertheless, no rule, either in the Guiding Principles or in the statutes, provides for a limitation of salaries, even if in practical terms, they are limited by the scarce budget of the EFGP.

### 3.8. The participation of members in the decision-making process.

As we have already noted, the member parties formulate and co-ordinate the initiatives and activities of the Federation. The proportionality of the representation again guarantees each one’s right of vote and the right to speak.

On the other hand, the Federation not having any candidates in the European elections, the Federation members do not have the responsibility of their selection. The Federation has simply given itself the objective to collaborate with the GGEP in order to back in particular the parties not having any MEP’s,

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<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*, art. III.2.4.b.

<sup>32</sup> EFGP, *op. cit.*, 1998, art. 8c.

as well as the small parties. Another way for having the member parties participating is the multiplication of working groups that meet on a regional basis (Green East-West Dialogue, Baltic Greens, Mediterranean Greens, North Sea Greens, Alpine Greens) or topical (working group for the election manifesto, socio-economic working group, working group on eco-taxes, working group on Common Foreign and Security Policy). The members of these working groups are either national experts on the topics being dealt with, or international secretaries of member parties... hence they are often “elite” or permanent staff rather than member party activists.

After this quick survey, we see that the transposition of “grass roots democracy” to the functioning of the Federation has been carefully researched by the member parties, even if this level of power is difficult to apprehend by the Green parties.

Indeed, as E. Bomberg brought up<sup>33</sup>, the European Union is, on the one hand, an intermediary level between local and global (the two levels favoured by political ecology) and on the other hand, its functioning as well as its general political orientation are far removed from ecological objectives. The frequent amendments on very specific points of the statutes show the importance that member parties give to the procedures of this organisation. Its operations based on the principles of “grass roots democracy” perhaps also allow some member parties, critical towards the European integration or to the European institutions, to participate in the work of the Federation, even if the organs that make it up are not identical to national ones.

#### **4. Rather a European than an ecologist organisation?**

After having discussed the organisational characteristics of the EFGP, having compared them to those of other party federations and finally analysed them with regard to the principles of grass roots democracy that have governed the structuring of the Green parties, we can try to assess the extent of the influence of the institutional context and of member parties on the organisational structure and the functioning of the Green federation.

The resemblance of organisational structures set up by the different European party federations remains striking. They all have an executive

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<sup>33</sup> Bomberg E., *op. cit.*, pp. 78-9.

bureau, a legislative Council, a Congress, but the Green federation has no President, avoiding putting a strain on the principles of “grass roots democracy” so dear to ecologist activists. The reality of the political life of the Green federation does nonetheless give the secretary general, like his/her counterparts in other European partisan federations, implicit powers on short-term policy management. The lack of the Party Leader’s Meeting in the Green organigram, difficult to reconcile with a strict application of the principles of “grass roots democracy”, only reinforces this phenomenon.

Political scientists who looked into the organisation of European party federations agree on the decisive influence of the European institutional context. The latter’s new distribution of powers and in particular its parliamentary model, forces the partisan structures to adapt themselves. The access to the executive body is not made on the basis of a parliamentary majority; consequently the parties change their strategy in order to influence policy decisions and to this end, they adopt new organisations. In the multi-level structure of European decision-making, the European party federations serve as forum in which the partisan elite meet, exchange ideas, influence one another, build coalitions.

Like the other party families, the Greens have adapted to this new context. They have developed a new way of constructing relationships between their elite, the parliamentary groups and the European decision-making authority by creating the EFGP as interface via which the different partisan players can meet together and eventually co-operate.

In spite of a similar institutional context, the EFGP nonetheless presents a less integrated organisation than the other federations (in particular fewer centralising organs and higher majorities). This is explained by different factors such as limited resources not favouring the multiplication of activities or meetings; the absence of a Green International sponsoring its initial developments, and the different degree of *relevance* between Green parties at the national level. The strict principles of organisation linked to “grass roots democracy” present in the functioning of the Green federation, have also slowed down its integration. The member parties have transposed at the European level their operational rules. On the one hand, this has enabled the Green federation to underline its difference with regard to other European party federations (the EFGP literature often stresses its Pan-European character for example). On the other hand, the principles of “grass

roots democracy” have enabled some member parties or ecologist activists critical towards European integration and the European institutions to accept this partisan structure removed from the local level, the other privileged side of ecologists’ political action.

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## **The Democratic Party of the Peoples of Europe (DPPE-EFA)**

Daniel-Louis SEILER, Institute of Political Studies of Aix

*In memory of Jean-Michel Rossi*

One of the research hypotheses formulated by the organisers of the Colloquium is to cross the contribution of international relations with that of comparative politics in order to shed light on these peculiar subjects of studies that they sensibly refer to as “European party federations”.

The point of view that structures this paper is that of comparative politics and this for two reasons. The first is that, far from scorning the international relations approach or from considering it as not pertinent for understanding the EU system, we are opting for the comparative approach because ... you can't change the way you are! For a long time, we have been using the comparative politics theory and methods for political developments; again for a long time, we have been endeavouring to apply them to the analysis of political parties in the Western world. What's more, it must be stated that from 1977 on, this interest came to us from the perspective of the European Parliament elections by universal suffrage (Seiler, 1978). The second reason is that it is important to take into account the progressive autonomization of studies on European integration within political science: from now on, the latter constitute a department in the same way as comparative politics or international relations, even if both of them do have something to say on the European Union. It concerns a process prior to 1958, which starts with the seminal and classic works of Haas, Deutsch – to name the oldest – Lindberg or Sidjanski and which manifests itself as much in the academic diplomas and programmes as in Journals, Work Groups, *Workshops*, *Standing Groups* and others. In addition, one finds the same trend with lawyers, proof that it corresponds to the nature of the subject itself, a sort of interspace between politics – Federal State – and diplomacy – international organisation – and does so without coming under the conventional category of confederations. Whereof record.

So it will be the theoretical and methodological tools of comparative politics that will be brought into action here and, especially, the Rokkanian theory of cleavages and the conventional one of partisan organisations. Indeed the

impact of the DPPE-EFA on the elaboration of European public policies has proven to be next to nothing. Hence the only attempt in which the parties that it groups together seemed to have had a response from some governments as well as from relays by the executive bodies of the Lander and autonomous Communities, i.e. the idea of second Chamber of the European Parliament – which would have been composed of representatives from the “regions” – resulted in a crushing defeat during the negotiations of the Maastricht Treaty. The unitary States, the government heads mistrustful with regard to their own fringe as well as the supercilious sovereigntists, made short work of the project: they only agreed to the founding of a Committee of the Regions, short-winded body destined to share the fate of the Economic and Social Committee; and so, “the mountain created a molehill”, *next to nothing!* (Loughlin & Seiler, 1999).

Therefore we shall first examine the theoretical framework used in order to, then, apply it to the DPPE.

## **1 Cleavages and constellation of political forces in the EU**

If the European Union constitutes a political system which itself is confronted with systemic demands of the secret political control of cleavages, logically *ipso facto*, and this, even if it suffers from a lack of democracy. Otherwise, the partisan alliances would only be pleasant associations, devoid of interest for political science because [they would be] without power. Therefore the study in terms of socio-political cleavages precedes and influences the analysis of organisations. On the one hand we shall examine the existence of political party-creating “channels” and on the other, the similarity of the pretenders to the title of Europarties with the political science concept of political party.

### **1.1. European cleavages and cleavages in Europe**

The eldest member of the European Parliament of the “democratic era”, Madame Louise Weiss – historic feminist, leading member of the French Resistance and Gaullist from the very beginning – punctuated the introduction of her 1979 opening speech by ironically shouting to her colleagues. “My darling Europeans” she cried out, “admit that your electoral campaigns have often appeared more fraught with partisan ulterior motives than with European concerns”. One could not state things better and things

have hardly changed since 1979: the European elections remain “elections with a European pretext” marked by “partisan ulterior motives”; partisan being meant in the sense of national or regional parties (De La Serre, 1979). As for self-proclaimed “European parties” or party federations, during electoral campaigns, they retain an ornamental function, a kind of guarantor of the clear European conscience of national parties, which summon them when it may be of use and put them back in the cupboard when it is about using the European vote to mobilise on national issues.

How could things go otherwise when one knows that the main federations and, particularly the oldest of them, were formed in the same line as the Parliamentary Groups whose origins go back to the Common Assembly of the ECSC? Well, from enlargement to enlargement, from six, then to ten, to twelve and to fifteen while waiting for even better, the latter have not stopped increasing their incoherence. Considering the diversity of cleavages and of party systems, the number of groups and the degree of fragmentation of the parliamentary landscape should have been greater than it now is, as is the case in Switzerland, at the Austrian *Reichrat* before 1918 and, as a general rule, in all multinational or multi-ethnic parliaments. This perceptible evolution at the level of “minor” groups was thwarted by the EP rules and the desire for power of the EPP Group which, faced with a Socialist group sociologically more consistent, embarked on a frantic hunt for members going as far as preferring the friends of Berlusconi to those less numerous of Romano Prodi.

Hence the Portuguese PSD first of all wooed the Socialist International in order to, jilted, sit at the Liberal group and leave the latter for the EPP, more influential. The architecture of the European groups illustrates to perfection the struggle for class order theorised by Pierre Bourdieu. Indeed, there are (sometimes) national issues to be recognised as “liberal” rather than as ultra-nationalist and it is always more satisfying, on the Continent, to find oneself attributed the Christian-Democratic label with its discrete humanist fragrance than to endure the label of “Conservative” which sounds “behind the times”.

The Parliamentary groups were formed according to the logic of national cleavages, and in so doing they exposed themselves to suffering the effect from national differences between brother parties. The progressive coincidence of the EU limits with those of Europe clearly showed a reality

very well known by political scientists and sociologists: that the Christian Democracy represents a phenomenon limited to the “Germano-Lotharingian” party of Catholic Europe, that a British-Scandinavian variant version of Conservatism exists and a Franco-Iberian one, that the Greens are making inroads especially on historical Christian Democratic territory, that the agrarians are Scandinavian, etc. It is obvious that politicians cared nothing about this type of problem which, perhaps, they did not even perceive. The groups or federations that did not have any guarantors in the new member States made some up by adding unnatural alliances to the heterogeneity that already existed between national groups. In this game, the Socialists, represented in all EU countries, came out the best but the opening up of the EU to States from the defunct “East Block” – where Social Democracy, often weak in the pre-war era, was eradicated by the Communist powers – risks losing this lovely coherence by integrating post-Communist parties as well as groups outside the working-class movement.

However, the application of the Rokkan paradigm of four basic cleavages to the decision-making field covered by the EU political system reveals a precise quadrapolar configuration founded on the interlacing of two main cleavages and the presence of a third incomplete one. We had the opportunity to pinpoint the presence of some in 1979 and today they are much more prominent. They are expressed and negotiated in the Council, during the “summits”, in the Opinion and at the EP when one focuses on the vote, not of groups, but that of national subgroups existing within them as well as on MEP’s.

These splits are the socio-economic cleavage opposing the supporters of a liberal deregulated Europe to those who oppose it on the one hand and on the other, like in every political system being formed, the Centre/Fringe cleavage that opposes Federalists against Sovereignists (Hix & Lord, 1997; Seiler, 1979). It should be noted that only the Sovereignists were capable of getting Euro representatives elected on the basis of strictly European issues and lists, in Denmark and France. For the remainder, these splits cleavage European groups and federations more than they favour them; their tactical interest therefore is aimed at obscuring them and not at making them into vehicles. The fact remains that the EU system has political cleavages that reveal a pentapolar structure because one has to add the incomplete territorial economic cleavage with the Greens, consistent but very much in the minority. The European party federations are organised on the basis of

national groups and not on European issues, with the exception of the Greens who, the latest to arrive on the political scene, adopted a more European approach from the start. This reality does not prevent the parliamentary groups from existing and even inconsistent, the federations could be parties. What about this?

### **1.2. The partisan organisations**

As a general rule, the act precedes the law and the political parties existed well before they saw themselves acquiring legal status. Europe illustrates the opposite case: the Treaty of Maastricht granted them a status before their existence, virtual parties, as it were. The self-proclaimed European parties come under *Wishful Thinking* more than *Self-fulfilling Prophecy* because since the oldest of them – the EPP – decided to cross the semantic Rubicon, soon joined by others, nearly a quarter century has passed and the word “party” still remains as little appropriate a name by which to refer to them.

One therefore understands the wisdom of the editors who resorted to the term “federation”. But even cautious, is it appropriate to resort to this term? In political science, the words have to translate concepts and that of federation simultaneously implies the existence of a centre of power and one of a double majority. Obviously, this is not the case: the national parties still hold the upper hand. In the ‘70’s P.-H. Claeys and N. Loeb-Mayer dealing with three most senior members – Liberals, EPP, Socialists and Social-Democrats – noted that it was a question of confederations and not federations (Claeys & Loeb-Mayer, 1977 & 1979). What’s more, as they belong to a particularly weak variety of confederations and that the half-academic, half-dilettantish folklore that characterises them serves as meeting place where informal relationships are woven between men of power, numerous authors today prefer to study them as *networks*. This last term only applies for meetings between governmental parties or those dedicated to government.

### **2 The DPPE-EFA: Founding split and organisation**

The Democratic Party of the Peoples of Europe cannot be compared to Liberal, Socialist or EPP networks. The parties that are members of it are not governmental groups, at the level of State-nation at least. In addition, they do not proceed a pre-existing parliamentary group. On the other hand, as

compensation for its weakness, it shows great ideological, sociological and political coherence (Dorget, 1999).

The European Free Alliance and the Office of nations under State that proceeded it existed before the election of MEP's who claimed it. The latter took part, in 1979 in the group for technical co-ordination, then in the Rainbow Group with the Greens (1984), in a "Maintained Rainbow Group" – after the creation of a Green group (1989) – in 1994 in that created by Bernard Tapie and since 1999, in the Green Group-EFA. Except with the second style Rainbow Group, the EFA was never able to form a specific group, for want of satisfying the requirements of an EP rule that favoured the size and geographic diversity, not the coherence. Then, and with the exception of the *Volksumie* none of the member parties had the benefit of governmental experience. Besides, the latter took decisive action in the organisation of courses of action for defending the fringe in general and the DPPE-EFA in particular. In the same way, Maurits Coppieters then Jaak Vandemeulebroucke, Euro MEP's from the *Volksumie*, displayed considerable efforts in the setting up of successive parliamentary groups<sup>1</sup>.

The sociological and historical foundation of the parties that are members of the DPPE-EFA is clear and solid: it is a question of parties that defend the fringe. A partisan body located from the Faro islands up to Corsica and Sardinia in the maritime outskirts of the European continent as well as in the "interface peripheries" that had become the countries and regions of the Europe of City-States; i.e. Belgium, the East of France, Switzerland, the Alpine regions, the North of Italy. The prospect of membership of the countries of Central and Eastern Europe in EU, should still strengthen its presence. The member states of the EU in which the parties defending the fringe exert the most influence are Belgium, Spain, the United Kingdom, Italy and Ireland. At regional level, France is learning to know them on account of Corsica, but Alsace and Rhône-Alpes have elected representatives from these parties in the Regional Council and at infra-regional level, Brittany and the Basque party of the Pyrénées-Atlantiques department have elected municipal representatives from these leanings. In the case of "the Spain of the self-governed" if one no longer focuses on the Cortes results, but on those from the autonomous Communities, one notes

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<sup>1</sup> These MEP's just like Willy Kuypers and Nelly Maes – the current president of the DPPE – belonged to the left wing of the *Volksumie*.

that few of them have no autonomous group and that, since the return to democracy, Catalonia and Euskadi are led by parties that defend the fringe.

It involves a partisan body, which is outside the right/left cleavage, like the Christian Democracy for example, and of which the socio-historical substance is as consistent as for the latter. It is about an old phenomenon since it represented a considerable force at the Viennese Parliament under the Habsburg Empire or, hardly less, at the *Reichstag* under the Empire. Their appearance depends on the presence of the Centre/Fringe cleavage and the latter, following complex cycles, is currently in an ascending phase: the cultural effects of economic globalisation lead to a particular withdrawal to identity and the “little fatherland”. For its part, the European integration process generates a necessary redeployment of power to the benefit of neo-regionalism, whilst the independence gained by the Baltic Countries, Slovenia or Slovakia interpellates more important “regions” like Euskadi or Flanders while Catalonia is as populated as Sweden! Contrary to the vocabulary used, by the French press for example, one rarely comes across “micro-nationalisms” when one studies the parties that defend the fringe.

Unlike their centralist rivals – the state-nationalists and sovereigntists – who practice “every man for himself” and are adverse to organising at international level, except when it concerns promoting a “pan something”, from the start of the 1960’s the defence groups of the fringe practice active solidarity with the peoples who are suffering “national oppression”, with the “Nations without State”. An active solidarity that filters through into the co-operation that became established for a time between the “hard-liners”, IRA, ETA and FLNC who set up a central purchasing department for arms, greatly helped by the East Block countries or Libya. A solidarity which also existed with the “peace-lovers” and the Flemish *Volksunie* played a role of driving force in the setting up of networks; a task performed by the VU representative to the Belgian Parliament, Willy Kuijpers, very active and whose contacts included the Herri Batasuna of the 1970’s. In 1977, the MEP of the left wing of the VU, went and demonstrated, in Spain, in front of the prison, where had been imprisoned – the *Transición* was not as serene as one claims nowadays –, Telesforó de Monzon, former minister of the Basque government at the time of the Spanish Civil War and HB candidate to the Senate.

The action by the VU, not lacking in lyricism, contributed in weaving a network that expressed itself through organisations with increasingly affirmed ambition but whose reality remained modest for want of financial means like those that mobilise the powerful German *Stiftungen*. Hence, successively created were the “European Bureau for nations without State” (1977) the “European Free Alliance” (1978) set up in the perspective of the first European elections by direct universal suffrage and in that of the 1998 elections, the posting by the EFA of its desire to become a “Europarty” by adopting the title – or by adding it – of Democratic Party of the Peoples of Europe. The great weakness of the DPPE-EFA compared to the three dominant networks or to the democratic European Union is due to the patent weakness of its organisation, it must not conceal these strong points.

The undeniable trump that the DPPE-EFA benefits from resides, on the one hand, in its coincidence with a real socio-historical party group – we’ve seen it – but also with a European cleavage. Indeed, unlike the Liberals-Democrats- Reformers, etc and the EPP, – true “you only get out what you put in” – but even the PES, the EFA only includes the parties stemming from the peripheral pole of the Centre/Fringe cleavage, up to and including the observer parties. This reality, not necessarily always desired, translates a “virtuous effect” of the weakness in numbers and means. Indeed, the most opportunist parties were subjected to, more willingly, the attraction of the “large” groups, the EFA – federated at the EP with the Greens – and consequently, the DPPE-EFA only recruits those already won over.

Nevertheless, not content with expressing the same national cleavage, the reticular organisation of separatists also corresponds to the Centre/Fringe cleavage such as it exists at the level of the European Union and to shedding light on the, by all appearances, paradoxical character that marks the relationships between the state-national signs of the cleavage on the one hand and European on the other. At State level, the configuration is relatively simply and was systematised by Stein Rokkan: at the centralist side, one finds the state-nationalists, xenophobes or not, as well as the unitarists that are opposed to the peripheral side with ethno-nationalists, regionalists or federalists. Well, one notes, at European level, an interesting inversion of signs. Hence in the “EU system”, Centre/Fringe cleavage shows up in two antagonistic poles that we shall call – borrowing the terminology of Hix and Lord – as “integration pole” and “sovereignty pole”, sovereignty being understood as state-national (Hix & Lord, 1997). So, put in front of the



progress of the integration process, a French or Danish state-nationalist, for example, will only be able to adopt the position of finicky guardian of state sovereignty and whether he be national Republican like the RPF, xenophobe like the DF, para-fascist like the FN or even post-fascist like the AN of Gianfranco Fini. In a conflicting configuration where the opposite sign poles repel each other, one sees the defenders of the fringe – at state-national level- go along with the number of the most determined supporters of European integration.

There one has to see more than the play of forces where “the enemy of my enemy becomes my friend”. It stems from the internal dialectics of the body of parties defending the fringe. We have dealt with this subject on many occasions and proposed, in order to give an account, three ideal types – in the meaning of Weber – in order to define the differences as much intra-partisan as extra-partisan that exist with the defenders of the fringe. We have put forward, more or less, three types of sensibility: the ethno-nationalists, the neo-centralists and the nationalists (Seiler 1989 & 1994). The ethno-nationalists represent the oldest of the three forms: mirror nationalism – in the meaning of Yves Person –, particularist who combines rather well conservative and progressive traits, in a still democratic centrism which brings it close to Christian Democracy. The neo-centralist type constitutes a case in which a given State, centre politico-military and economic *core* are disjoint, the fringe being historically more developed than the Centre: nationalists these parties, or leanings, are liberal in socio-economic terms but this type is not exempt from extremist drift of which the *Vlaams Blok* incarnates the most paroxysmal form but in this domain, the *Lega* isn't doing badly either. Last form, the nationalist nationalist type that rejects any idea to reproduce the centralist model of the nation-State and which is accompanied by “left-wing” socio-economic programme. It is this duality that leads Lieven De Winter and Ferdinand Müller-Rommel to refer to them as “leftist libertarians” (De Winter, Müller-Rommel, 1994).

The nationalists are embodied in the two sub-types. One, the third-worldists, more radical, want to include their conflict in the struggle of peoples oppressed by colonialism on the one hand and on the other, assure the decline of the State announced by Marx and Engels. This movement manifests itself in the *Nacionalismo radical* where the players of the armed struggle are recruited: IRA, ETA, descendants of the FLNC. It is represented by legal showcases – SF, HB, *Corsica Nazione* – but also by a party non violent

in its acts, the Galician BNG. More moderate and older, the other nationalist trend, the neo-regionalists possess a coherent ideology, the integral federalism long ago theorised by Alexandre Marc or Denis de Rougemont and which intends to assure the decline of the State by means of the Europe of the regions. Hence Europe was inscribed from the start in the heart of the regionalist political agenda as indispensable vector of the political, economic and cultural emancipation of the peoples of the Old Continent. Marc and de Rougemont remaining among the tireless propagators of the European idea; likewise, the organisation, the society of thought, the most Europeanist and “Euro-enthusiast” was the European Federalist Movement founded by, amongst others, Alexandre Marc.

Up to now, we have stressed the leading role played by the *Volksunie* in the attempts of the European organisation of the parties defending the fringe. One must add the intellectual party taken by the Valdôtaine Union in the doctrinal structuring of nationalist parties around European Federalism, through the work of the College of federalist studies supported by the Aosta Valley regional government, controlled by Valdôtaine Union generally in power in the valley. The EFA will be born from the co-ordination, chiefly between Flemish from the VU and Valdôtains from the UV<sup>2</sup>.

The list of the founding fathers of the EFA is unequivocal. Alongside tiny splinter groups as charming as they are insignificant, one finds the two above-mentioned, the Welsh *Plaid Cymru* as well as the PDB – German-speaking Belgians – who play a role within its Community. All belong to the category of neo-regionalists. What’s more, the CDC of Jordi Pujol, present in 1978, will leave the EFA and join the Liberal group when the neo-centralist elements take over the control of the party. They will be replaced by the *Esquerra Republicana de Catalunya*, separatist and radical in its aims, moderate in its means. Likewise, the *Liga Veneta* and the *Lega Lombarda* of Bossi, helped in the beginning by the Valdôtains, will be expelled – having become *Lega Nord* – and will join the extreme right, not without a small detour via the Liberal group. Conversely when the nationalist sensibility gains influence over the ethno-nationalists and neo-centralists – *in illo tempore* anti-European – within the SNP, this party will rejoin the alliance, ceasing its wandering amongst the groups of the European Parliament.

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<sup>2</sup> One must emphasise the theorising and doctrinal role of the College of Federalist studies, located at Saint-Vincent in the Aosta Valley.

The DPPE-EFA therefore constitutes a doubly coherent whole. Coherent from the point of view of national cleavages that beget affiliated parties – defenders of the fringe belonging in the majority to the nationalist-neo-regionalist type – but also very coherent opposite cleavages of the EU system: all are located at the integration pole. This does not prevent the congenital weakness of that which claims to be a Europarty.

In fact, the organisation is weak for two reasons: the weak state influence of member parties and the nomadism of parties outside the tripartition that characterises groups stemming from the Common Assembly of the ECSC.

Firstly, the parties defending the fringe are usually markedly minority at state-national level; by definition they mediatize the political will of “territory minorities” and do so even if they are in the majority in the Community or region, separatist or not. Only the Volksunie has the benefit of ministerial experience at the two levels of government. The Valdôtaine Union and the PNV have, on the other hand, a position of dominant party in their region or community. Other affiliates are none the less represented in the parliaments of the EU: ERC, EA, BNG, PA in Spain, *Plaid Cymru* and SNP at Westminster, PsdA (.....) in Italy. Finally, others have regional elected representatives of whom the newcomer on the scene, the Savoy League, created a surprise by going over the “5% mark” electing Patrice Abeille to the Rhône-Alpes Regional Council.

Secondly, and as consequence of this weakness of means, the “peripheralist” elected representatives arriving at the European Parliament are characterised by a nomadism positioned by the fields of attraction of Eurogroups with large numbers of members. First of all there were the very old parties which, before the creation of the ECC had, for want of something better, integrated a historic International of parties. Hence the Swedish speakers of Finland, the SFP, chose by way of compromise to join the Liberal International. Likewise, reasons of efficiency pushed the SVP – German speakers of Alto Adige – to join the EPP; it gave in to the allure of the Italian DC. More ideological reasons, tied to its *Weltanschauung* and its socio-economic outlook, motivated the membership of the PNV of Euskadi – hundred year old party – in all the international bodies of Christian Democracy. The case of the PNV-EAJ, a “historic” one of the New International teams, shows evidence of the right-wing and opportunist drift of the EPP. The breaking off with the latter

took place when the conservatives integrated into the ex-Christian Democratic group and especially when the Spanish conservatives of the PP of J.-M. Aznar, stemming, lest we forget, from the progressive wing of Francoism, were admitted to the EPP as fully functioning member. Member of the “Green-EFA Group” at the European Parliament, up to present day, the largest of the Basque parties only has observer status in the DPPE-EFA. Last “historical separatist party” not to have joined its “sociological family”: the South Tyrolean People’s Party, SVP, that sits with the Christian Democrats since the beginning and does not seem to feel any qualms, in spite of the interest that it’s youth organisation shows towards the EFA. One then encounters major parties that conceal their identity under exteriors of known international ideologies, thus thinking to gain a certificate of “European normality”. So the SDLP of Northern Ireland, party of Irish-Catholic identity, of national sensibility, was integrated, from 1973 on, into successive Socialist networks. Stemming from the merger of the old nationalist party, the civil rights movement of John Hume and the Labour Republicans of Gerry Fitt, from the start, this party announced a leftist tendency. The choice of the Democratic Convergence of Catalonia, the CDD of President Pujol, was much more strategic and its going over to liberalism is not irrelevant to the action of *Friedrich Naumann Stiftung*. In 1999, it was joined by the Canarian Coalition.

Finally, there remain the parties from which the DPPE-EFA separated or whose membership was rejected the membership. Thus the *Lega* of Bossi, participant at the start, found itself excluded due to its increasing xenophobia and its agreement with the *Aleanza Nazionale*: it sits in the same group as the FN and the *Vlaams Blok*. Likewise, the Basque *Herri Batasuna*, party participating in the gestation of the EFA, was removed because of its unconditional support of the ETA.

The DPPE which was in keeping with the line opened by the Maastricht Treaty introducing a policy of encouragement and support to virtual Europarties defines itself as gatherer of “separatist and regionalist” parties. This peaceful institutional framework presents two strategic drawbacks in spite of the official “recognition” attached to this choice. On the one hand, it limits itself to a fraction of the political body of parties defending the fringe and thus goes without the real dynamics that hold the co-operation between “hard-line” groups as has been shown during annual meetings of Corte, devoted to “radical nationalism” (Letamandia, 1997). On the other hand,

officiality *oblige*, the claimed “party” status forces on the pretenders the respect of a protocol and a rather heavy ritual that apes the functioning of national parties: congresses, committees, bureaux, etc. That is to say, the instillation of a dose of rigidity in the structures whose effectiveness rests on the flexibility of a functioning in network; an effectiveness attested by the success met by the actions and demonstrations of the anti-globalisation movement. The least of the paradoxes is certainly not the European trend most present on the battleground of concrete struggles which is the one established by the member groups of the Parliamentary group called “European unitary Left-Nordic Green Left”, that does not extend into any self-proclaimed “Europarty”.

Article 136 of the Treaty of Maastricht, copied exactly from Article 4 of the Constitution of the *V<sup>ème</sup> République*, describes a virtual reality<sup>3</sup>. Its objective aimed at giving increased legitimacy to the two main European organisations stemming from the party internationals, Socialist on the one hand, Conservative-Demochristian on the other and to give a legal foundation to their financing (Devin, 1993; Donneur, 1983; Papini, 1988). It is true that most of the protagonists and signatories of the treaty belonged to one or the other of the two dinosaurs – EPP or PES – via the national parties which have nothing virtual about them. It remained for the other party alliances to put on overalls that had not been tailor-made for them and which favours, spurning socio-historical realities of Europe, the huge conglomerates covering a maximum of EU territory, with what amount to the backing of large countries and especially of large parties of large countries. The carrying off of such an exercise, among the imposed figures, has the active implication of German party endowed with a generous *Stiftung*.

In that game, the separatists of the DPPE-EFA start off weighted down by a serious handicap: the EPP-PES model is very expensive and backers are sorely missing. In fact, since the disappearance of the *Bayerische Partei* at the end of the 1950’s, the Federal Republic no longer has any parties for the

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<sup>3</sup> Art. 138A TUE specifies, amongst others: “They [the European parties] contribute [...] to the expression of the political will of the citizens of the Union”. The French Constitution recognises that the political parties “contribute to the expression of the vote”. A structural homology is built on the word *expression* and the derivation of related terms starting from the Latin *cum* which establishes the limit and the non monopolitical character of the act of expressing which thus becomes, under the pen of the distrustful constituent or contracting party, a sort of co-expression ....

defence of the fringe, except for the Peoples Party of South Schleswig, which only has one MP at the *Landtag* in Kiel and no elected representative either in the *Bundestag* or, of course, at the European Parliament; furthermore, this party does not belong to the DPPE. This weakness, considering its rival Conservatives, Socialists and Liberals is translated in terms of financial means and is not compensated by the membership of the Scottish and Welsh Nationalists of the SNP and *Plaid Cymru*. The membership of the Basque PNV, which besides being master of the political game in the autonomous community of Euskadi and backed by the Sabino Arana Foundation, constitutes one of the best organised parties in Europe, should add a bit of butter to the Spartan brew (i.e. add funds) that is usually served at the DPPE-EFA; this, without enabling, however, the latter compete with the affluent EPP and PES.

The will to conform to the virtual European party model led the oldest political movement in Europe, Liberalism, to dilute its identity in a strange potion in which it finds itself with groups – CDC, SFP – whose vocation is supposedly to be in the DPPE-EFA. Saturated by *irrelevant* groups, according to Sartori, that latter has, up to now, kept its sociological and identity coherence. The concern for conformity that it shows is translated by a sort of Purgatory imposed on candidate parties even in the case of *relevant parties* or by the distrust towards parties of radical *nacionalismo* like HB. Hence in France, one of the major parties defending the fringe, the Savoyan League, has just been accepted as ex officio member, as separatist as it may be, whilst no official relations exist with *Corsica Nazione* whose importance is greater but which refuses to condemn political violence<sup>4</sup>.

Indeed, the incentives contained in the Treaty of the European Union do not come out in a positive way and push the large national parties to create organisations that appear just as so many homages that Sovereigntist vice makes to European virtue. “The experience of the European Parliament in which the large political persuasions co-operate within the transnational

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<sup>4</sup>The Savoyan League, created in 1995, is a well-organised party and one that uses militant activity at local level. It demands the independence of the Savoy region and on this very radical subject, in 1998 it obtained an elected representative to the Rhône-Alpes Regional Council. Apart from Corsica, it is the only party defending the fringe to have accomplished this feat in France. Unless one considers the Alsatian separatists, stemming from the FN and tinged with xenophobia.

groups, has difficulty in extending beyond the Community framework. The MEP's, often regarded by their parties as second-rate representatives, hardly manage to interest their parties' national executives in their experience. Apart from a few high-masses at the summit, the two main European groups, which are the European Peoples Party (EPP), at the right, and the Party of European Socialists (PES) at the left, serve no "useful purpose" (de Bresson, 2000).

We couldn't have put it better... To forget this reality, the specialists of European integration and especially those who devote themselves to Europarties, end up by treating them as if they were genuine parties itemizing in great detail their organisation chart, forgetting their character of light if not evanescent structures. The European Parliament, its groups, the party federations that emanate from it, all suffer from an aquarium complex: i.e. like fish swimming in an air-conditioned aquarium, "the Euro environment" looks at the barges that gaze upon it and its universe through the double distorting lens made up of water maintained at an ideal temperature and the tinted glass of the partition wall that separates them from the world outside. It is very difficult for the highly specialised political scientist feeling empathy for his research subject not to give in to the amniotic tranquillity that reigns "inside" the European system, all the more so since it concerns a protected universe, having its own sociability areas and the artificial haze that it gives off essentially derives from the self-intoxication of the players who live there.

Since the 1979 European elections, one "Europarty" has, from election to election, won increasingly greater majorities: the Abstentionist Party. That says that the European citizens undervalue the importance that the Maastricht Treaty conferred European Parliament. It also says that the electors don't give a toss about these "Europarties" of which the majority don't even know of their existence and which, just this once, only have a derisory importance. Their only attraction has to do with their status of club where government leaders meet out of the supposed affinities they have for one another. However in 1997, thirteen of the 15 cabinets included members of the PES and, at the end of 2000, "Pink Europe" had only lost one unit, Luxembourg. Nonetheless, the achievement of a social Europe has hardly progressed as to the defence of public service or its integration at Community level, the less said the better. What's more, the reluctance still comes from the United Kingdom, even though it swung "to the left". Hence

the ultra-liberal pole of the European Council is made up of the Labourite Tony Blair (PES) and the Conservative J.-M. Aznar (EPP). Mini Hispano-British summits officially sanction this "liberal" dialogue. Marvellous proof that the Europarties serve no purpose or, according to us, that they correspond to artificial groupings that do not reflect the reality of the cleavages.

Measured by this yardstick, the tiny DPPE-EFA does not do badly. Actually grouping together Euro-enthusiasts, it reflects a clear cleavage. But its chief function remains to give credibility to small national groups or new ones to which it brings additional legitimacy. After all, the EPP and the PES do nothing else in the new democracies of Central and Eastern Europe, but so do displaying many financial means used more or less well.



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## **The Party of European Socialists and the question of unemployment**

Erol KULAHCI, Free University of Brussels (ULB)

### **Introduction**

For two decades, the problem of unemployment was a burning issue in the European Union (EU) (Scharpf, 1999: 87). It was during this period that the Party of European Socialists (PES) was crystallised (Delwit, 1995: 282-283). Stemming from the Confederation of Socialist and Social-Democratic parties of the European Community (CSPEC), the PES was created in 1992.

From the CSPEC to the PES, the issue of employment has always been considered as important. As proof of the place occupied by this subject, in the different appeals and manifestos produced since 1979 and by the many internal activities concerning it. From this point of view, it is interesting to examine the relation of the PES to employment in the European decision-making process (Quivy & Van Camphenhoudt, 1995).

At first in the paper, we shall take a quick look at the scientific literature devoted to these issues.

### **1. The state of the question**

The chief writings dealing with the influence of PES on European decision-making as far as unemployment is concerned are the works of Simon Hix and Christopher Lord, of Robert Ladrech and of Karl-Magnus Johansson.

In *Political Parties in the European Union*, Hix and Lord mobilise the comparative politics approach that they test against that of international relations (Hix & Lord, 1997: 192-193). In the latter, the accent is placed on national interest, sovereignty, relationships of power between the States, economic interdependence, international institution building and transnational political regimes. These elements are analysed from the perspective of other examples of international co-operation in the international or European system.

On the other hand, in the comparative politics approach, the structure of society, the dimensions of partisan and ideological conflicts, the institutional framework of the political system, the behaviour of political players in the political system and public policies are the explanatory information mobilised.

For Hix and Lord, the European political party federations contribute in establishing the medium-term agenda of the EU. For the PES, specifically, they do not present any situation where this influence has been realised. On the contrary, on the question of employment, they show to what extent the European Council has remained indifferent to the Larsson report on the *Initiative for European employment*.

In his 1998 paper, Ladrech puts forward the idea that the process with a view to influence the EU agenda by the players is insinuated by a logic varying from that of the work in the national context (Ladrech, 1998: 81). From this point of view, “party network” appears as the key element. It covers two dimensions.

The *party-to-party networks* are the interaction between the political parties outside the assemblies – the meeting of leaders, for example.

Moreover, the EU institutions serve as contact places between delegations from the same political persuasion. The political groups at the European Parliament (EP) are the most striking illustration of this.

The limit of the influence of European political party federations on the EU political agenda would have to do with external factors – absence of a uniform electoral law, predominance of national parties in the election campaigns, the unusual character of the EU institutional environment – and to internal factors – weak financial resources and the need to find a consensus.

For his part, Johansson combines the approach of building transnational coalitions and the approach of the EU policy-making process (Johansson, 1999: 86-88). A transnational coalition is a system of transmission or a belt binding the national level to the supranational level. The ties vary depending on the policy matters and enable requests to be linked together. Using the concept of *EU policy-making* borrowed from Neil Nugent, Johansson refers

to two processes: at European level and a process linking the European level to the national level. Their cohabitation is one the conditions allowing the existence of transnational coalitions.

Following this brief review, three conclusions emerge.

First, the reading matter most in keeping with the initial issue is the reference work by S. Hix and Ch. Lord. In particular, their research on the Larsson report and the theory he presents on the positioning of European party federations. They classify the PES on the left-right and intergovernmental-supranational axes. The Johansson article is also in close connection with the question at the heart of our paper considering its developments on the PES and Title VIII of the Amsterdam treaty. Ladrech's work is more centred on the PES and its influence on the EU policy agenda.

Secondly, the leads that these books suggest are varied: positioning of the PES on the left-right and intergovernmental-supranational axes, analysis of the PES influence on the EU policy agenda or analysis of the PES influence on European decision-making.

Thirdly, a lot of fieldwork remains open and needs to be done.

## **2. Analytical framework**

The issues of this article are implied by three guidelines. The first is identified as the main question. To what extent does the PES influence the evolution of the employment dossier in the EU decision-making process? The second considers that the main concepts around which the analysis is structured are the PES position and the EU decisions. Finally, and with a view to determine if the PES influences the employment dossier in the EU decision-making process, the following are the hypotheses that will guide the analyses:

- it is necessary to picture to what extent the PES has developed an activity on the employment dossier.
- it is advisable to observe to what extent the EU has initiated actions on this issue,
- finally, it is essential to cross the observation of the result of these to preceding activities with a view to describing and explaining to what extent the PES contributes to formulating decisions of the EU on the subject of employment.

In conceptual terms, the article refers to the paper by Elizabeth Bomberg and John Peterson (Peterson & Bomberg, 1999: 10-11 & 16-21). In the strict sense, the paper by the American political scientists comes down to three types of analytical distinctions regarding EU decisions: *history making decisions*; *policy setting decisions* and *policy-shaping decisions*, which are essentially of “detail”. On employment, it appears that there are no links between the PES and the last category. We therefore focus on the historical dimensions and the setting of policies.

There are three indicators from which Bomberg and Peterson comprehend the historic dimension:

- The decisions made during the Intergovernmental Conferences (IGC) constitute the first indicator,
- The decisions of the European Council, including the decisions of the subgroup of Member States that had specific integration problems.
- The legal decisions handed down by Court of Justice of the European Communities (CJEC).

The relation between the PES and the CJEC cannot be analysed from the angle of decision-making influence. Consequently, the building of indicators of the historic dimension of European decisions hinges on decisions of the intergovernmental conferences (IGC) and the European Council. The decisions setting the policies are the result of the interaction between the European institutions. And yet, Bomberg and Peterson do not specify the indicators. Nonetheless, we assume that their concept implies a reference to the dichotomy of informal and formal decisions – directives, regulations, decisions, recommendations and opinions – and of the nine major standards in the EU.

In contrast, no analytic distinction has been developed by academic circles on the position of the European party federations in their connection to European decisions. Consequently we have opted to bring out the dimensions of cohesion and divergence of the PES decisions. Likewise, it is about specifying the components and indicators of these two dimensions. The cohesion has been raised by Luciano Bardi, Simon Hix and Christopher Lord, amongst others. The former tackled it for the PPE in terms of “common positions” (Bardi, 1994: 360-361). As for Hix and Lord, they use the term “common party policies” (Hix & Lord, 1997: 73). With a view to precision,

it is useful to propose the following construction. The cohesion component of the PES is understood from the cohesion of PES representatives in the European decision-making process. There are three indicators enabling to recognise this component. The emergence of cohesion during their own meetings constitutes the first indication. The adoption of the conclusions of working groups or leaders' representatives is number two. Their support for a compromise project of the EU constitutes the third indicator.

If the cohesion therefore becomes important in the concept structure of PES positions, divergence is equally as important. In this sense, it is also important to measure it in order to put into the impact of the PES into perspective. In other words, it contributes to measuring the limits of the function of legitimising EU decisions by the PES. There are also three indicators starting from which it is possible to measure this dimension:

- The emergence of differences during meetings of PES representatives in the European decision-making bodies,
- The non-adoption by these same representatives of the conclusions of working groups or of leaders' representatives,
- The lack of cohesion vis-à-vis a EU draft decision.

### **2.1. The construction of the hypotheses**

What are the key deductive working hypotheses of the model to be tested?

First of all, it is necessary to establish if there is cohesion within the PES with regard to the dossier. In the broad sense, Bomberg and Peterson consider that the theories enabling to understand the first category of decisions, underlain by the method of intergovernmental negotiation, are liberal intergovernmentalism and neo-functionalism. As for neo-institutionalism, it is the most interesting model to apply with a view to analysing the decisions relating to the second category underlain by an inter-institutional as well as an intergovernmental type of negotiation. The analysis of political networks suits the last category of decisions, depending on a negotiation of a formal nature. Anyway, there won't be any reason to refer to it since "The overabundance of theory may be a simple consequence of modern academic pressures to publish and the reality that it is easier to 'construct' theory than to go out and conduct rigorous, detailed empirical research" (Bomberg & Peterson, 1999: 3) and consequently that these theories have been elaborated without taking into account the practice of European party federations. That makes it pointless to use them.

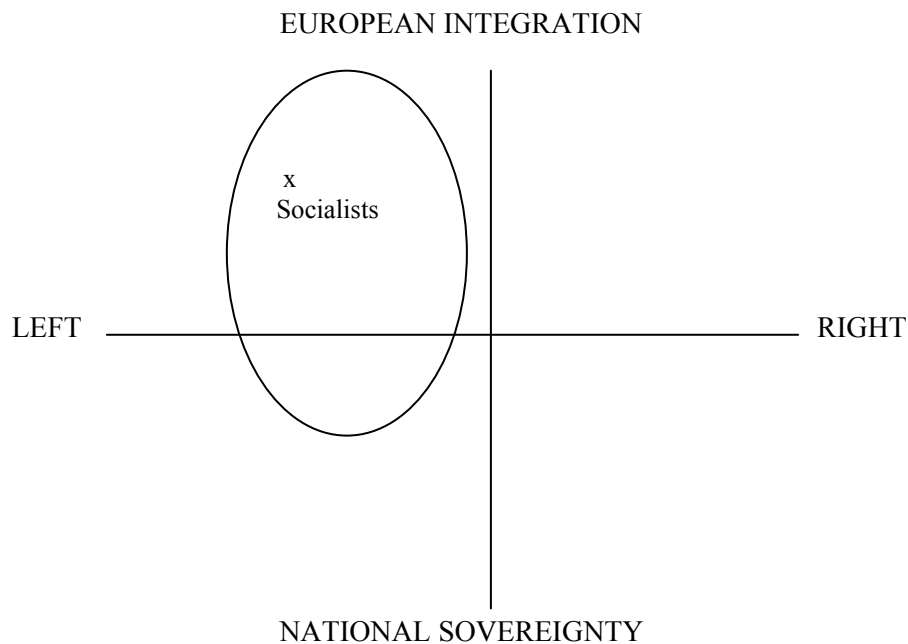
On the other hand, regarding the implicit comparative politics approach<sup>1</sup>, Simon Hix and Christopher Lord stress that the PES is coherent on the left-right axis but divided on the sovereignty-integration axis. There is however supposedly a stronger influence of the integration dimension compared to the sovereignty dimension.

Likewise, it is a good idea to check the following contrasting implication. In the EU decision-making process on questions of employment, the PES is supposedly a relatively coherent federation on the left-right axis. On the other hand, it is supposed to be divided on the European integration-national sovereignty axis. The majority of its member parties is supposed to be driven by the logic of European integration faced with a minority in favour of national logic.

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<sup>1</sup> Cf. Leonardo Morlino and the distinction he makes between “traditional comparative politics” and “implicit comparative politics” where national frameworks are applied in the case of the European Union (EU). *Third European Summer School in Comparative Politics*, Sienna, 10 July 2000.

*Political position of the PES according to the left-right and sovereignty-integration axes as indicated by Hix and Lord (Hix & Lord, 1997: 18). The ellipse represents the positioning of the PES member parties. The x represents the mean of the PES positioning.*



How does the PES project this contrasting position onto the European decision-making process? The research hypothesis first of all implies realising the presence of the PES in the decision-making process. Following that, it will be about revealing the moment and the intensity with which the PES influences the dossier on employment. Finally, it is important to analyse the evolution of the subject in the European decision-making process.

These questions to be dealt with will enable establishing the extent of the PES contribution to the evolution of the dossier on employment in the European decision-making mechanism.



The research is constructed from two main sources: the primary documents of the PES and the EU and from interviews carried out. The cross-section of people interviewed is made up of political advisers, general secretaries, presidents who are or were in office on the side of the PES, and persons working or having worked at the General Secretariat of the Council, at the European Commission, at COREPER, but also the Prince's counsellors in European affairs.

### 3. The analysis

Several key moments are viewed in our research: the Larsson report; the employment chapter from the 1996-1997 IGC, the conclusions of the Dutch presidency of the EU, the extraordinary meeting of the European Council in Luxembourg, directives, the European Employment Pact and the extraordinary meeting of the European Council in Lisbon.

#### 3.1. The Larsson report and the European Council in Essen

With in the PES, the initial discussions on a joint representation for tackling the delicate problem of unemployment during the leaders' meeting on 4 and 5 September, which took place under the chairmanship of Willy Claes. The Social-Democratic leaders put Carlsson, representative of the Swedish Social-Democratic party (SAP), in charge of the dossier. Allan Larsson, who had already started a similar work at Swedish level, was in charge of the work.

On 23 June 1994, at the end of a laborious process, the PES leaders, meeting in Corfu, adopted a background text: *European employment initiative*. For the Social-Democratic leaders, the message was meant to be simple and direct: "Europe must offer work and not the present mass unemployment" (PSE, 1994). The strategy was called *New Deal for Europe* and an action programme/policy plan was set up.

To tell the truth, *European employment initiative*, probably too ambitious, only received a lukewarm response in the Social Democratic parties. The national route remained favoured, as was shown in the conclusions of the German presidency at the Essen Summit in December 1994.

The non-quantitative assessment in five domains regarding employment (investing in professional training, increasing the intensity of the use of

growth, reduce the non-wage labour costs so in such a way as to not affect the hiring of workers, to increase the effectiveness of the labour market policy and to strengthen the measures in favour of young people, the long-term unemployed, older workers and unemployment amongst women) is the minimum programme that emerges from the conclusions of the German presidency (Press Release, 1994).

### **3.2. The Title on Employment of the Amsterdam Treaty, the conclusions of the Dutch and the PES**

To what extent does the PES influence the Amsterdam results? For Ladrech, there is a visible link between the chapter on employment of the Treaty and the PES in terms of agenda (Ladrech, 2000: 110-113). In spite of the differences of opinion between the PES leaders, Johansson defends the hypothesis that they influenced the European decisions taken at Amsterdam.

During the summit of PES leaders on 10 and 11 March 1996 at Lisbon, the disagreements emerged. The chief line of fracture opposed the supporters of the EMU to the partisans of economic government advocated by Jacques Delors. The latter position was supported by Oskar Lafontaine, then leader of the German Social-Democratic Party (SPD), and by Philippe Busquin, president of the Belgian socialist party (PS – Belgian).

Furthermore, two differences of opinion divided the supporters of the European Monetary Union (EMU). The first concerned both the timetable and the criteria of the EMU. Achille Occhetto, leader of the left-wing Democrats (DS –Italian), and Lionel Jospin, First Secretary of the French Socialist Party (PS), maintained the importance of keeping to them. The Dutch Prime Minister Wim Kok, leader of the Dutch Labour Party (PvDA), opposed a relaxation of the criteria. While pointing out that the PES members have no control over the EMU timetable, the Portuguese Prime Minister Antonio Guterres (PS), expressed his opposition to relaxation and his preference for postponement. Louis Tobback, leader of the Socialistische Partij (SP – Belgian) is supposed to have preferred an implementation ahead of schedule.

The second division had to do with additional tools to be used and to implement. For Hellstöm, it was about co-ordinating employment policies and investing in the trans-European networks and in the environment. The Portuguese and Dutch Prime Ministers pleaded in favour of the issuing of

European bonds; Wim Kok added the necessity to reduce agricultural subsidies expenditure in the EU. While Guterres was asking if the central banks also had to take an interest in growth and employment, Jospin and Kok were defending the independence of the European Central Bank (ECB). Poul Nyrup Rasmussen, Danish Prime Minister (S) judged it important to define the tools. Jacques Delors, followed by Ochetto, proposed drawing inspiration from the *White Paper*. As for Tony Blair, leader of the British Labour Party (LP), he proposed to back the EMU by specific measures with a view to facing the challenge of unemployment and technological change.

Later, the meeting of the intergovernmental conference opened its work during the European Council at Turin of 29 March 1996 (Press Release, 1996). The most significant objections to the employment chapter were expressed by Helmut Kohl and John Major. They very nearly lasted until the end of the intergovernmental conference. That blocked all progress on the dossier and so there was still no agreement during the Irish presidency and in particular during the Dublin European Council.

During the conclave attended by the leaders which was held at The Hague on 26 April 1997, the voicing of differences on employment was repeated. The tool favoured by the Dutch presidency was co-ordination. More precisely, Guterres emphasised the “necessity for a co-ordination of the economic recovery” and Busquin underlined that one had to at least “defend the chapter on employment proposed by the Irish Presidency”. For him, “the new technologies bring about a new concept of work and alter the socio-economic relations, they will lead to a reduction of the overall working hours”.

More critical, the Norwegian representative questioned the usefulness of a stable currency when unemployment is high. That earned him an immediate reply from Ad Melkert (PVDA) on the incertitude that investors are allergic to. As for the representative of the Finnish Social-Democratic Party (SDP), he stressed the necessity of European competitiveness and the importance of completing the internal market. On the other hand, the PASOK representative, Akis Tsochatzopoulos, judged it essential to show that “employment is our priority”. Lena Hjelm-Wallen (SAP) insisted on the necessity of human investments and on training in particular.

After the conclave, a change of influence in favour of the chapter for employment took place within the intergovernmental conference. Following the May 1<sup>st</sup> elections in Great Britain, the Labour Party came into power after eighteen years as Opposition. A few weeks later, it was the turn of the French PS to take over the “reins of government” (*rennes du pouvoir*) in the framework of a left-wing alliance. The initial positions of the British and French governments were affected by this as soon as Blair and Jospin affirmed right from the outset their support of the chapter on employment.

The co-ordination meeting of the socialists participating in the European Council was held prior to the European Council of Amsterdam.

Kok informed the participants that the chapter on employment in the Treaty, as well as a paragraph that went further into the conclusions in order to send a political message, would be the compromise proposed by the Dutch Presidency of the EU. This approach was backed by all the participants.

During the Amsterdam European Council, German chancellor Kohl had to face up to political pressure. He gave in under the guarantee that there'd be no financing of the chapter on employment. Likewise, a significant amount of pressure was directed towards Jean-Claude Juncker, Luxembourg Prime Minister, for him to organise a European Summit on Employment during his Presidency.

### **3.3 The PES and the Luxembourg European Summit on Employment**

To what degree did the PES leaders influence the result of the European Summit in Luxembourg? According to Ladrech, a link seems to exist between the PES and this summit in terms of agenda. As it just so happened, the PES leaders did influence the decisions of the summit.

Following the PES Congress at Malmö, it was decided to “create an *ad hoc* working group on ‘Employment policy’, composed of representatives of the leaders of member parties of the PES”. This decision is linked to the conclusions of the Dutch Presidency to put together an extraordinary summit on employment during the Luxembourg Presidency given that, according to its general secretary Jean-François Vallin, the working group will not only aim at clarifying the positions but also even arrive at a synthesis on the eve of the Luxembourg European Council.

At the same time, Juncker, simultaneously occupying the key posts of Prime Minister, Minister of Finance and Minister of Labour and Employment, played a very important co-ordinating role. He not only sent a personal letter to all the heads of State and of the EU government, but also summoned the EU Employment Ministers.

Furthermore, he was in permanent contact with the Director-General of the DG “for employment and social affairs”, A. Larsson. The European Commission drafted the first moulding of the guidelines for the employment policies of the Member States in 1998 (European Commission, 1997). It presented its proposal to the Employment and Labour Market Committee (ELMC) and to the Council of Ministers of Labour and Social Affairs (LSA) and of Ministers of Economy and Finance (Ecofin). The reaction was negative with regard to the quantification of objectives so that Juncker did not hesitate to call the summit.

In the meantime, the *ad hoc* working group met on four occasions. The result was a consolidated text that took up the themes of social dialogue, the redistribution of work, youth unemployment, long-term unemployment, education, vocational training, learning throughout life, the construction of indicators, co-ordination of economic policies, taxation on companies and capital and financing for new investments.

Well, this text does not explicitly bind the PES participants in the European Council who met on the eve of the Luxembourg European Council. In addition, the draft compromise of the Luxembourg Presidency, which was essentially inspired from the European Commission proposal, also figured amongst the working papers of the PES leaders. After the presentation of the draft compromise, Jacques Poos, Luxembourg Minister of Foreign Affairs (POSL), Jospin was very insistent that he be given the backing of the PES. This proposal was adopted.

The next day, the European Council accepted the draft presented by the Luxembourg Presidency. The European Commission guidelines received the blessing of the European Council (Press Release, 1997). Afterwards, they were adopted by the Council of Ministers (Council, 1997).

### 3.4. The 1999 and 2000 guidelines

Given that Title VIII of the Treaty of Amsterdam formally provided for using a qualified majority<sup>2</sup> and that the PES representatives potentially had it at the LSA Council and, since the victory of the SPD, to a somewhat lesser degree in the Ecofin Council, to what extent was the PES able to bring out a convergence of views in order to force the decision? Two obstacles can be identified in this prospect.

First of all, let's point at the institutional procedure. Formally, the qualified majority is all that's needed. In practice, things happen differently. The Member States use a consensus. As it happens, the employment issue is so sensitive that no Member State wants to find itself in the minority on this dossier through a coalition of other Member States.

The difference of opinion between socialists represented the second constraint. The issues brought up during the LSA<sup>3</sup> and Ecofin<sup>4</sup> meetings revealed internal disagreements, which were also shown by the employment debates during the leaders' meetings. On the occasion of the conclave of PES leaders in London on 7 April 1998, the Social-Democratic leaders were incapable of reaching an agreement for changing the guidelines. From the very beginning, the poor standard of the Luxembourg result was due to Massimo D'Alema (DS). The responsibility of employers was pointed at by Rudolph Scharping, the President of the PES and Kok whilst Guterres

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<sup>2</sup> See the article 128 of the Amsterdam Treaty in *Les traités de Rome, Maastricht et Amsterdam. Textes comparés* (1998), Paris, La documentation française, p. 127.

<sup>3</sup> The Working Party on LSA brings together the Labour, Socialist and Social-Democratic ministers as well as the representatives of accredited opposition parties in the EU Member States as well as the members of the European Commission and of the Socialist political group at the European Parliament. These persons are typically responsible for employment and social affairs dossiers. The first meeting took place on 23 September 1996. Since then, two meetings a year have been organised by the Presidency.

<sup>4</sup> The Working Party on Ecofin brings together the Labour, Socialist and Social-Democratic ministers as well as the representatives of accredited opposition parties in the EU Member States as well as the members of the European Commission and of the Socialist political group at the European Parliament. These persons are typically responsible for dossiers on economy and finance. The first meeting took place on 10 March 1996. Since then, two meetings a year have been organised by the Presidency.

stressed the role of the ECB. Different visions on the reduction of working time confronted each other. In particular, “Employability” was highly controversial. The Portuguese, Danish, Italian, Austrian and Dutch leaders pondered the meaning of the concept while the Swedish and French leaders quickly made the connection between the concept and creation of work.

During the meeting of participants in the European Council of 24 October 1998, Gerhard Schröder and D’Alema affirmed the priority status of employment in their respective countries. Viktor Klima, Austrian Chancellor and representative of the Austrian Social-Democratic Party (SPÖ), wondered about the necessity for additional measures on employment. He suggested a “*policy mix*” effort for growth and employment.

The PES participants at the Vienna European Council met on 9 December 1998. Wim Kok referred to the unemployment figures, which were under the 10% mark for the first time in a long while. Rasmussen defended the idea according to which employment can be generated by a better co-ordination of national budgets and national education policies, structural investment.

Nonetheless, the Vienna European Council blessed the 1999 employment guidelines of the European Commission without the *input* of the PES (Press Release, 1998). A Council of Ministers resolution followed (Council, 1999). Likewise, the Helsinki European Council gave its blessing to the results of the joint session of the Ecofin and LSA Councils (Press Release, 1999). At the same time, the European Commission made its formal proposal after the European Council, the results of which were endorsed by the Council of Ministers (Council, 2000).

### **3.5. The PES and the European Employment Pact**

Does the PES influence more the European Employment Pact? In the opinion Robert Ladrech, a connection seems to exist between the PES and the pact. According to our research, there’s nothing of the sort.

The September 1998 elections in Germany enabled the SPD to return to power, in a coalition with the Greens. Right from the outset, the German Finance Minister, Oskar Lafontaine proposed a draft European Employment Pact. According to him, the high rates of the central banks constituted the real problem that was curbing growth and employment. It was therefore

necessary to lead the ECB to reduce its interest rates. However, the Oskar Lafontaine initiative came up against opposition from the ECB and other Member States.

At the PES leaders' summit at Vienna in January 1999, the Portuguese Prime Minister Antonio Guterres was asked to work on a "European Employment Pact" in terms of the March 1999 Milan Congress. The "Guterres Group" worked hard in February 1999, which enabled the PES to adopt a background paper in Milan.

The European Employment Pact contains "a European strategy for growth and employment background paper" the idea of which is underpinned by sustainable development, the improvement of innovation and growth potential and the creation of a more active and inclusive society (PES, 1999). Qualitative measures, and not quantitative, are singled out in order to promote employment.

In mid-March however, the PES was shaken by the resignation of Lafontaine. Schröder considerably modified the proposals and projections of his fiery Finance Minister. For the German Chancellor, the rates of salary increases could not exceed the increases in productivity.

Thus, the European Employment Pact initiative reviewed and corrected by the PES collapsed. The European Employment Pact adopted at Cologne only represents the agglomeration of Luxembourg, Cardiff and Cologne (Press Release, 1999a) processes. Quite simply, the Cologne process only consisted of a macro-economic dialogue whose objective was limited to the exchange of information and experiences.

### **3.6. The PES and the Lisbon European Council**

To what extent did the PES influence the result of the Lisbon European Council? To be sure, this European Council was marked most of all by a joint initiative from Great Britain and Spain. Tony Blair and José-Maria Aznar presented in October 1999 a text putting forward some economic reforms of the EU. Regarding this paper, the Portuguese Presidency launched a call to organise an extraordinary summit. During a meeting of PES leaders in December 1999, Guterres presented the broad lines of his draft.



In order to have the dossier put forward, the Portuguese Prime Minister set up a working party of Prime Ministers' advisers. The Portuguese Presidency created this working party out of fear of encountering a lot of obstacles in the context of a normal procedure, i.e. by going through the Council of Ministers subordinate bodies (working group, COREPER, and Councils of Ministers). On the other hand, by establishing new working procedures clearly closer to the heads of State and government, Guterres felt it possible to arrive at significant results.

In spite of this new procedure, there was some national-level resistance expressed. On the eve of the Lisbon European Council, Guterres informed the PES participants of the national reservations against the project of the Portuguese Presidency. As a result, he asked for the support of his socialist colleagues. A compromise was obtained on the basis of the Portuguese text.

It was backed the next day in European Council. New quantitative objectives were expressed. In particular, it was specified: "The European Council considers that the overall objective of these measures should, on the basis of available statistics, consist in bringing the employment rate (currently at 61% on average) to a level close to 70% between now and 2010 and to see to it that the proportion of active women (currently at 51% on average) exceeds 60% between now and 2010" (European Council, 2000). The European Commission proposal for guidelines for employment policies of Member States in 2001 again took up this objective. This proposal was adopted by the Council of Ministers (Council, 2001).

## **Conclusions**

A crucial question has constantly cropped up throughout this paper: to what extent did the PES produce the opinions that in turn were projected with success into the European decision-making process, thus contributing to shaping the evolution of the Employment dossier?

What emerges from the comparison of the results observed and the results expected? For that which is related to an analytical framework, the contributions are the following.

First, the hypothesis of PES positioning according to Hix and Lord comes up against the following obstacles. On the one hand, the British authors do not

specify the dimensions, the constituents and the indicators of the left, the right, of national sovereignty and of European integration. Hence, that makes it difficult for any measure attempt short of reconstructing these concepts. On the other hand, the centre of gravity of the PES position easily gives the illusion of coherence of the left and European integration. As it happens, the reality is definitely more complex. Serious demarcation lines have underpinned the position of member parties, most in power at national level. One can highlight more than one positioning centre within the federation for a given policy question.

Secondly, the research conducted shows that one has to take into account the very active role of personalities in the influence of the PES on European decision-making.

As for what affects contributions in terms of knowledge relating to the subject, several observations emerge, mainly around three issues:

- The terms of the consensus or of the disagreement,
- The factors that influence the positioning within the federations,
- The sources enabling to explain to what extent the federations act effectively or not on the decision-making issues.

How is there convergence or divergence within the PES? The importance of the convergence and divergence of political positions of the member parties within the PES is emphasised on many occasions. It conditions the influence of the PES on European decisions as far as employment is concerned. It is possible to establish the differences. This is the case for the 1999 and 2000 guidelines. Afterwards, the European Employment Pact put forward by the German Presidency did, at first, follow the Lafontaine logic. Following Lafontaine's resignation, the Schröder logic dominated rather than the European socialist logic crystallised in the European Employment Pact adopted during the PES Milan Congress.

In spite of the differences, let us note that a compromise was observed on three occasions: in Amsterdam concerning Title VIII on employment in the Amsterdam Treaty and the conclusions of the Dutch Presidency on the holding of summit devoted to employment during the Luxembourg Presidency; in Luxembourg relating to the implementation of guidelines put forward by the Luxembourg Presidency; and in Lisbon, around the draft compromise of the Portuguese Prime Minister.

Why is there consensus or disagreement amongst the member parties within each of the European party federations?

Four sources determine the main divergences within the PES. The supporters of the EMU come up against supporters of economic government. The latter were weakened after the departure of Lafontaine. The ex-president of the SPD occupied a marginal position within Ecofin Council and in the PES. The partisans of a national approach are in competition with the supporters of a common approach and even with supporters of a dual approach. Here too, one notes opposition between those who advocate clear, precise and ambitious objectives with a timetable and those who advocate a more flexible approach. The final break has to do with the means. It divides the partisans of ECB independence and the supporters of the theory of ECB responsibility.

What about the consensus? The regular meetings amongst the principal elite under the aegis of the PES is a factor that has been identified. In the PES, the most important organ is the leaders' conference bringing together primarily party presidents and Prime Ministers. By building a consensus within, the practice of the PES challenges the intergovernmental mode of operation of the European governance. The individual or concerted role of national parties is also emphasised. In spite of major internal differences, the pressure from French Prime Minister Lionel Jospin during the meeting of leaders prior to the Luxembourg European Council was significant considering the fact that the Ecofin and LSA Council of Ministers had refused the proposal of J.-C. Juncker. The sense of persuasion of the Portuguese Prime Minister Guterres during the leaders' meetings prior to the Lisbon European Council was also decisive for resulting in a compromise within the ranks of the PES and then during the European Council.

The relations that the European party federations maintain with the European institutions are identified as one of the key elements. The relationship of the PES with the European Council is decisive considering the Social-Democratic influence in the national governments. A second group of hypotheses confirms the fact according to which these relations are intimately linked to the presence of member parties in the different EU institutions. This presence is conditioned by their electoral result during national elections and, partially, during European elections. Hence, following the victory of the Labour party in the United Kingdom and of the PS in France, the balance of power was restored in favour of the Amsterdam

decisions on employment, to which John Major and Helmut Kohl had been opposed. In the case of the PES, the fact of having a largely majority representation of parties in the government at the European Council is crucial. Hence, the influence of the PES materialised essentially during the presidencies of the European Council.

To conclude, one can imagine two scenarios: the scenario of the *status quo* and the optimist scenario. Following what has just been developed, there will be no reason to write any longer on the *status quo* scenario. On the other hand, in the conjecture of the optimist scenario, the employment policy of the member states will be stronger. In a context in which the member parties of the PES are in power, it will involve imagining that the positions of the different parties that go to make up the PES finish by focussing on the same goal, that of substantially solving the delicate problem of unemployment in Europe. A minimum precondition towards this path seems to be a combination of national approach and European approach with regard to economic, monetary, fiscal and employment policies. Let us add clear and precise objectives, the comparison of statistical data, the giving a sense of responsibility to the players involved in the problem, such as the European Central Bank, the firms as well as the head of State and government; and the allocation of means and in particular, of financial means.

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## **At the heart of the decision-making process? The European People's Party in the European Union**

David HANLEY, University of Cardiff

### **1. The European decision: a vague concept?**

In order to deal with the influence of the EPP on the decision-making institutions of the European Union (EU), it is necessary to touch upon the intricacy of its political processes. As a constantly evolving political system (Hix, 1999), the EU makes its decisions through an interaction between its different institutions, which is without doubt more difficult to define than the processes within a classical nation-state. European policy is in fact drawn up by the negotiations between the three main bodies – the Council, the Commission and the Parliament.

Taking decisions that are made on a strictly “European” level is a matter for elsewhere. With the EU, being an amalgamated structure of “multi-level governance” (Marks et al., 1996), all national governments are constantly in the process of combining national and European decisions. By the very nature of their behaviour within EU institutions, they are trying to influence these decisions. This supranational activity is based upon a policy developed by a government at home and which aims to modify European policy to make its activities easier on a national level. However, at the same time, this national policy is also strongly marked by a European perspective, or, if you like, influenced by decisions already taken “in Brussels”, an influence which can greatly help to justify its activities at home, as is evoked by Moravcsik (1993). There is, therefore, constant intrusion between the two levels, “a game of two levels”. We will not be talking about all the decisions made at a sub-national level, although these do have a link, if somewhat indirect, to the European example.

The decision-making structure within the European Union is therefore constantly fluctuating between the different levels. Stopping an analysis of the decisions at a basic European level can thus easily congeal or freeze and therefore become an essentially dialectic process. Yet, one does not know to aim at a moving target. This seclusion at a European level therefore appears



necessary as a practical measure if we are going to be able to grasp the importance of Europe and the policy of a transnational party at this level.

With this point noted, it is useful to follow the type of European decisions established by J. Peterson and E. Bomberg (1999:10ff) which reflect well the amalgamated reality of the EU. These authors distinguish between super systemic, systemic and under systemic decisions. The former are of a historic nature, presenting a new obstacle for the Union (such as the EMU). They are classically the result of IGC's or European council summits. Systemic decisions lay down a broad outline of the policy to be followed in a particular sector and are mainly due to the negotiations between the European Parliament and the Council. Under-systemic decisions, on the other hand, are the result of work done by the European Commission and the European Parliament committees, which aim essentially to give a concrete layout of the main arguments, defined by the systemic decisions. From the point of view of Party analysis, there would be a lot more to do to establish the role of the groups in the fine tuning process, than there would be with the under-systemic decisions; the stakes can be important and the political fight can be played wholeheartedly. However, as Peterson and Bomberg point out, decisions made at this level are strongly divided. The different sectors are watertight in relation to one another and have a tendency to be dominated by policy networks where technical skills are rigorous. That does not of course exclude a role for the parties, especially working through their experts, who take part in the work done by the various committees; but this activity is very specific and not very well known.

At the risk of simplifying things somewhat, we are therefore going to emphasise the first types of decision, because they illustrate better, in our opinion, the role of transnational political forces in the decision-making process.

## **2. The Institutions in the decision-making process**

Even if we do not have all the theoretical tools of "neo-institutionalism" (Hall and Taylor, 1996), the structure of the Union allows us to reflect upon the role played by the key institutions in explaining the decisions that have been made. There is no reason to go over known analyses in this article; we are essentially going to hold back from the dialectic nature of the decision-making process, which is characteristic of the institutions within the

community. These institutions are however, occupied with different bodies, including political parties. It is thus advisable to touch upon the connections, in principle, that one would imagine there are between the parties and the institutions within the EU.

The Council is often perceived, by much of the literature on the subject, to be an embodiment of state or governmental interests. This is true to a certain extent, but it must not be forgotten that the governments that make up the Council stem from political forces, without any particular exception. If governments are supposed to defend the concept of national interest in front of their counterparts within the Council, then the concept of national interest is also a political concept. It expresses the demands made by the important sectors of the society in question or, more commonly, the compromises that exist between them (Moravcsik, 1993). In trying to influence the community's decisions, a government is constantly thinking of its re-election at home, thus victory for the party or the coalition. Anyway, it is also difficult to distinguish between national interest and political interest, insofar as the latter often defines the former.

The Commission is also made up from politicians, chosen by the political forces, even (and especially?) when commissioners claim to be above the policy. In accordance with the treaties, they are supposed to discard all national and political positions and work as a European. Many experts note that commissioners tend to have a very distinct political profile (one often thinks of L. Brittan) to go native, meaning to take a community perspective. Marc Abeles talks, more graciously, about "new interdependencies", which occur when an elected member makes a policy, which is based upon "deterritorialisation" (1992:154). All that said, these men and women have a known political past and in principle perhaps, they could be subjected to a certain amount of political pressure on certain issues more than others could. That will however depend on the strength of the relationship and the nature of the issue in question.

The European Parliament (EP) is structured around the political life (Corbett and al., 1995), although an expert such as Westlake (1994) hardly mentions it in his piece. For R. Ladrech, it is "the most obvious setting for the political process at a European level" (1996:291). This, therefore, seems the ideal starting point to examine the influence of political parties in the decisions being made. We do however, immediately come up against a major

stumbling point. The parties who move around Strasbourg or Brussels are not the same parties who promote national political life of the 15 member states. They are similar insofar as transnational federations, along the lines of the famous political families, assemble the parties within the European Parliament almost entirely (Seiler, 1980). However, there are differences. First, the political personnel are not the same as in the European Parliament (and appear less likely to be one of them, as double mandates are declining). Then, these “European parties” are meant to be precisely transnational forces thus are liable, at any given moment, to hinder the objectives of their national counterparts. The connection between a national party and a European party should be looked at more closely. This is because transnational does not mean that there is not any link with national politics (Ladrech, 2000). T. Janson (1997:167) recalls, “A European party is no better or worse than the members of which it is composed.” However, as far as European parties are concerned, these members are in fact, national parties; they are set up to respond to specific needs and to pursue the objectives of the founding parties within the designated institutions (the European Parliament). That does however assume a number of things. First of all that the founding parties can come to some sort of agreement over the objectives to be pursued; then, that any agreement that has been reached can last over time; finally that the system that is thus created remains under the control of the founding parties (a sort of dutiful Frankenstein). Other transnational initiatives that have taken place in the past, such as the Socialist International, lead us to think that these conditions are going to be somewhat difficult to fulfil, at least if the new organisation has to operate differently from the plan already set out.

As we already know, European parties were created mainly as a result of the decision to have direct elections to the European Parliament. The literature on the subject has a real tendency to highlight their progressive growth, implying an undeniable rise. From being mere electoral campaign coordinators for their founding parties (and later on, its electoral platform), these organisations are equipped with apparent political and administrative facilities. One thinks particularly at this point about the strengthening of the party executive (the Presidency of the European People’s Party being such an example), which allows increased contact between the founding parties (or more precisely, their leaders). One has every right to ask whether these events indicate a real strengthening of European parties at the expense of the founding parties. Janson brings up the weak powers held by the secretariat of

the EPP (1997: 134ff.) – an organisation which has however been strongly reinforced under its leadership – in relation to the resources that the Parliamentary group have. Bardi also notes the deficiencies within the infrastructure (1994). As well as that, the financial weaknesses of the European parties are well known. Their dependence upon the parliamentary group will not decrease as long as a European Parties' Act does not come into fruition. This would supply a similar amount of support to that received by French political parties, for example, where the amount of support given is proportional to the number of votes received (Johansson and Zervakis, 2000). In the motion submitted to the leadership of the French Socialist Party during its conference in November 2000, it can be noted that the Party of European Socialists is only “a cartel of party and government leaders. It must become a real organisation with a radical democracy.” (SP, 2000). Thus, it creates a certain doubt over the reliability of European parties.

The relationship between European MPs and European parties is what holds the key to this problem. MPs came long before European parties, which creates certain resentment among some of the latter. Janson recalls the disputes that occurred during the creation of the EPP in order to find out whether MPs should be considered as founders of the new party *pari passu* along with the parties within the different states (1998: 172). However, who in fact are these MPs? They are members who have been elected nationally from the electoral roll, drawn up solely by national parties. These transnational parties possess power similar to that of a King, such as the power to expel a party member (which is in fact hardly ever used). However, they do not have the power to choose the MPs they want to represent them in Strasbourg. MPs are thus a representation of different national parties within the European Parliament. One cannot help noticing however that the European public also see it like this, since it is common in European Parliamentary elections, elections of a “second order”, for them to vote solely as they would in national elections (Smith, 1996). Like the white wolf, the famous “European demos” are often characterised by their non-existence. What does it matter anyway, if European parties, in general, disagree (although since the end of the 1980s, this has only happened over certain issues) over a common text and the use of a common logo, left-wing with a hand held out (which doesn't always feature among the main campaign objectives of every country). The MPs, who end up in the European Parliament are primarily national commodities.

The consequences of the reality are evident. The behaviour of European parties can only be a sort of lowest common denominator. These parties can only mirror the existing agreements between the founding parties; and as it happens, this can be rather significant, as we are going to see. However, the shape of the party, which has a pyramid structure going from bottom upwards, should not be mistaken. Unlike traditional parties, where a duly accepted, strong centre can define the party policy (giving up being challenged by certain sectors within the party), the European parties have an ephemeral centre, which is sometimes difficult to see. It is the base of the party (i.e. the founding national parties), which gives it its impetus – or which slows it down – and which defines the framework of the actions taken by the European authorities (or the centre, if you prefer). We believe that we have found an analogy to sum up this situation within the French political system. You could be led to consider the Socialist Party as a party, which has a strong base but a weak centre, mainly due to the well-known divisions within the party. That would be a mistake however, because the centre of the SP has both the means and the authority to define the policy that the rest of the party is thus going to follow. What the other sectors must do is to take a hold of this central authority in order to impose their own policy to be followed. The UDF, on the other hand, appears fairly similar to that of a European party (at least, when it was in coalition with A. Madelin's liberal party), to the extent where the founding parties laid down the law to the confederate party as far as applications and jobs etc are concerned and to an extent which makes it easy to check (Hanley, 1999). In short, where the periphery was strong and the centre was weak.

In view of the associative nature of the European parties, what is significant in their development can be understood. Since 1979, it has often been claimed that there has been a strengthening of transnational organisations, such as the secretary general, conferences, presidency etc. Yet few critics argue the fact that the most important organisation within the European parties (although to varying degrees) is the meeting between government and/or party leaders, which tends to occur more and more at the same time as EU summits (Hix and Lord, 1997: 183-95). As far as T. Jansen is concerned, it is clear that (1998: 92) “in practice, the executive (of the EPP) has far more respect for party leaders than is the case the other way round”. By giving official status to an organisation, which before 1990 met in an official capacity, the EPP was just confirming what everyone had already suspected: politically, the EPP works from the impetus coming from below, which

express agreements between the main national parties (especially at the beginning, the CDU/CSU and the DC, before its implosion – see Abélès, 1992 : 159). If it is, as Jansen claims, that the EPP has gone further along the road to becoming a trans- or supranational, than the socialists, liberals or greens, it can only be because it's founding elements have more in common with such a party than their equivalents in the other political families.

This idea can in fact be very easily confirmed. Christian democracy has long since developed a philosophy, which distinguishes it from traditional conservatism (Dierickx, 1994). Without going over every part of this philosophy, note simply that for this particular argument, integrationist or more bluntly, federalist views, tend to be located within the same school of thought, which is mainly due to the adaptable concept of identity upon which Christian democracy is conveyed. As you would expect with any philosophy which is strongly influenced by its links with a church which claims to be complete (and which has got into trouble with nation-states precisely because of this), Christian democracy has always refused to think of identity solely on a national scale. For Christian democrats, a nation is one of numerous identities, which assume the individual compared to its existence within towns, its religious or associative membership etc; Europe is just another further level of these many identities and which provides no threat whatsoever to national identity. It is just as the EPP can clearly set out its federalist policy at the beginning of its programme (EPP, 1992). This clashes ardently with the route taken by the other transnational parties (Delwit, 1999). It can also be noted that the greens and social democrats have always experienced problems with European issues, where more often than not, political integration seemed an obstacle to what they wanted to do on a domestic level. Nevertheless, for the EPP, integration is an essential part of its political plan. If you consider the only time that the party (its European leaders) has ever excluded a party member, as was the case with the Portuguese CDS party, it is exactly because this party had broken the first rule of the founding agreement between the party members of the EPP, i.e. they had held nationalist and anti-integrationist views. In short, the national parties which comprise the EPP have long since decided that the gains from an integrationist policy far outweigh the drawbacks arising from a loss of hypothetical national sovereignty.

With regard to the influence upon the decision-making system within the EU, we can thus expect to see European parties work along the lines of the liberal

intergovernmental model (Moravcsik, 1993), in the sense that common principals agreed beforehand will be transferred into the European arena. Just like regime theory in International Relations, parties often decide to share a certain number of policies or principals at a supranational level, in order to achieve their own political objectives at a domestic level. The cost of following such a policy, alone and only within a domestic context, exceeds the ultimate disadvantages which would arise from the agreement of a common supranational stance. We are now going to examine in turn, the Council and the EP in order to illustrate this argument.

### **3. The EPP within European Institutions**

#### **3.1. The Council**

At Council level and with the “historic” decisions, which according to Peterson and Bomberg, come under its authority, a certain effectiveness with the EPP can be noted. Hix and Lord (1997: 188 ff.) draw up a notable table, which highlights the co-ordination achieved by the EPP before the key events. Before Maastricht, in December 1991, the conference of party leaders created an agreement, which insisted upon a co-decisional power for the EP, the extension of the QMV and the granting of new domains within the Community. Their agreement had benefited from prior discussions with R. Lubbers, leader of the CDA, head of the Dutch government and President of the Council at that time. The other transnational parties agreed over the objectives but also had other various stipulations (the liberals wanted a sole electoral system for the EP throughout the EU, whilst the socialists recommended the famous criteria for socio-economic union, and not simply financial, for the EMU). Only the ideas of the EPP, however, were retained at the end of the conference, which demonstrates the coordinative force of the EPP. However, this victory also relied on the fact that at the end of 1991, Christian democrats or their partners were in power in a number of states (Germany, Netherlands, Belgium, Portugal, and United Kingdom.) whereas since then, they have lost the power. In 1991, the leaders were permanently situated within the Council. In other words, the EPP can always organise its policy much better than any of the others; but for organisation to influence political decision, then there must be good relations within the Council. More simply, a majority of founding parties must be in power in their respective states.

During the following meetings, Hix and Lord note that the EPP seems to be losing a certain amount of influence, linked without doubt to their loss of power within certain countries. In particular, they note a certain adjustment by the Council toward more liberal solutions to economic problems; and that the EPP is aligning itself more and more with the ELDR party to advocate market solutions, at the expense of interventionism, which is preferred by the Socialists (197: 194 ff). Previously, the EPP were talking more about social justice and the inclusion of social associates, which has a suspicion of neo-corporatism that characterise social relations within countries with a Christian democrat tradition (van Kersbergen, 1995). This shows not only a decline of the Christian democrat movement within the countries but also a change in direction. Christian democracy has recently become more open toward the liberal market philosophy (EPP, 1999; ELDR, 1998; EDU, 1998) and has associated itself with the political representatives of this ideology. This development fits to certain extent realism (an awareness of the dynamics of the capitalist market and consciousness of the weaknesses of the social democrat, Keynesian or corporatist alternatives) and is not exempt from a strong amount of political opportunism. This issue is widely acknowledged (Johansson, 1997; Hanley, 2000; Hanley and Ysmal, 2000), and we are certainly not going to go on about the changes that have been undertaken by Christian democrats in their heart of hearts. The debate continues between the pragmatism of T. Janson and the militant promises of Michael Fogarty (1999). Jansen's argument lacks any fire because for him, there have never been many differences between conservatives and Christian democrats (not right-wings rivals when they are face with their rival on the left). For Fogarty however, the "Trojan horse" of liberalism was introduced into the Christian democrat sphere even if it meant a profound change in their make-up. It suffices to say that we would be a lot closer to the latter. Of course, the Christian democrat movement in general and the EPP, in particular, are always blaming the effects caused by this division, as we have been able to notice during successive disagreements over the entry of different conservative groups or during the creation of the Schuman group etc. What is most important for this article is to demonstrate how this ideological development has changed the role of the EPP within the decision-making system of the EU.

We would say that this development has once again led to a course starting at the bottom and moving upwards. Within their respective countries, Christian democrats have learned, due to their time in power, how difficult it



is to manage national economies during an era of globalisation whilst trying, at the same time to maintain traditional methods. It is becoming more and more difficult to move away from a model prioritising competition, which itself needs a decrease in regulations. The Christian democrats, in tandem with social democrats were favouring regulation, aiming for a model, which is distinct from that of “social capitalism”, to quote that of K. van Kersbergen. National parties are bringing this experience to the EPP. What is more, their experiences have been reinforced by their proximity to one another within the party group. Like the British Tories, this group has never believed in models such as the rhenan model or stakeholder capitalism model, which are favoured by Christian democrats such as Will Hutton. Thus, it is not surprising that during the 1990s, the EPP started to lean toward a more liberal policy. It was however, difficult at that point, to talk about the influence on political decisions within the EU, so we have the impression that both the EPP and the Union are themselves being influenced by the global liberal programme instead of defining a real alternative to it.

To sum up, the EPP is continuing to influence the decisions of the European council especially by the coordination of its representative positions within the Council, during the conference of the party leaders before Council meetings. If during the 1980s and the beginning of the 1990s, the EPP has seemed to have contributed to the materialization of historic decisions around the time of Maastricht, its influence has decreased considerably since then, and today the party is only in government in Spain, Austria and Luxembourg and is in opposition elsewhere. What remains to be seen however, is if the social democrats, who replaced them in government, have followed a different route and whether what emanates from the Council will be entirely different than the rhetoric used when it was under the leadership of the EPP. Yet, to understand the relationship between the socialists and the EPP, it is necessary to examine the other decisional institution within the EU, namely the Parliament.

### **3.2. The European Parliament: a single decisional structure**

As is often remarked upon (Delwit, De Waele and Magonette, 1999), the EP is an assembly *sui generis*. Classic parliamentarianism contrasts between a majority government and an opposition, which is supposed to pass judgment on its performance, in order to present a politically viable alternative to the electorate. The left/right division is the basic expression of this polarity. It is

more or less the same in pluralist political systems where the coalition is in power. However, these classic systems have the advantage of being easy for the public to understand; those who form the government have decision-making powers and certain activities they can do, that the opposition want to take over. The area of this power is localised, theoretically, within the Parliament.

The EU, on the other hand, offers a blurred system, which is characterised by a scattering of the power. The Council claims more and more to be the decisional force, at the expense of the Commission on which the federalists have pinned all their hopes, but the latter still maintains the creative power and plays a key role in the decision-making process. These two institutions, the Council and the Commission, do not stem directly from the parliament and thus do not belong to the classic model of the relationship between the executive and the legislation. For Moravcsik, this “democratic deficit” is exactly the reason for the success of the EU, which essentially works through negotiations between leaders, who are for the most part, shielded from direct control over the deputies. During the power struggle between the three main institutions, the EP has had to work hard to obtain, bit by bit, the instruments against the other two poles. We tend to believe that the power of the EP is growing, with the granting of the co-operational and co-decisional powers, although we, along with G. Garrett (Garrett, 1995; Tsebelis and Garrett, 1997) believe that the latter power is rather misleading because it actually tends to reinforce the Council (essentially because the power of veto given to the EP risks becoming a sort of nuclear weapon, a hollow threat, which once used, means everything is destroyed).

This situation has affected the way in which the EP intervenes in the decision-making process. P. Delwit and his colleagues are right when they suggest there is a valid clash there. On one hand, all issues have the potential to create a left/right division between the political powers within the Parliament. However, at the same time, these powers are well aware of the need to use to the fullest extent, all the means at the Parliaments disposal because it will influence the final decision reached during the inter-institutional negotiations. Since, in general, the strongest powers (co-decision, co-operation) require an absolute majority (which is consistent to, including abstentions, two-thirds of those present); there is a strong incentive to search for an agreement. That does not mean there are no debates and tough amendments and as L. Bardi (1996) recalls, EP elections are exactly

the moment when there is competition, which could disturb this agreement. However, in general, the goal must be to find agreement with all partner institutions.

The EPP, having always been one of the most important powers, inevitably finds itself at the heart of finding an agreement. One is aware that before 1999, it was accused of being in collaboration with the PES (Hix (1999: 79) talks about a “large official coalition”).

The first sign of this intricacy could be found within the administrative arrangements of the EP. When looking at the choice of President, the nominations of commission members and reporters, as well as the agenda, it is possible to see two different formations taking the part of the lion (Hix, 1999: 76 ff.). It can also be noted that this would happen come what may since these questions are regulated, in general, by inter-group agreements based upon proportional representation. Nevertheless, one can see a strong union between the big two.

Hix supplies an indication of the consistency of the votes for the groups within the EP (1999: 177-8). We already know that the consistency of the groups has always been strong and that when a group splits, it is more often than not, along national positions, a particular commission voting on mass against the rest of the group. By using the signals from the Attina accord (1990), Hix demonstrates the strong internal cohesion within the EPP between 1984 and 1994 (on average between 84% and 88%, while the socialists were lingering between 62% and 78%). We will come back to the question of internal cohesion, but what is without doubt more important, is the cohesion between the votes for the PES and EPP. This is because, if this growing internal cohesion within the groups can imply a growing awareness of their position within the left/right split, then this suggests there is less desire to form a united front in the name of a complete parliament. Hix demonstrates that the most frequent coalition is between the EPP, the PES and the ELDR. According to the results, produced during the first few years of the Parliament between 1994 and 1999, the EPP achieved a score of 74.6% with the socialists and a score of 74.9% with the liberals (the socialists in coalition with the liberals received a score of 81.4%). It is interesting to note that the cohesion between the socialists and the Christian democrats is slightly better than that of the latter in coalition with the liberals, which tends to quash, a little, Hix’s idea that these two parties would be the two most

natural allies. Without doubt, one must not under-estimate the understanding there is between socialists and liberals on everything that touches upon “cultural liberalism” and on the other hand, everything that separate Christian traditions with those of free thought (Portelli, 1995). We can nevertheless accept Hix’s analysis that “the dominant coalition....includes both the left and the centre-right”.

We have repeated S. Hix’s experiences in order to see if these tropisms continued in the elected Parliament in 1999. At first glance, there were reasons to think the contrary. The EPP had finally reached the level that it had been dreaming about for 20 years. Thanks largely to its enlargement policy as well as decline in interest among the European electorate, whilst socialist parties were in power, the EPP started the new term with 233 MPs against 180 socialist MPs. The leader of the party H.G. Pöttering promised a more aggressive approach against the left (an interview with EPP News, 16<sup>th</sup> July 2000). Without doubt, according to the MPs that we have been able to talk to, the atmosphere during debates is going to be far more antagonistic than ever before. It remains to be seen if there is a change in the number of votes given to European parties with the form not always parallel. We have taken at random sixty votes from a plenary meeting, where certain amendments were made, whilst knowing the practical uncertainties that threaten all attempts to consider the performances from this type of exercise (De Waele, 1999: 138 ff.); nevertheless, this can give an indication as to the long-term trends.

Our sample, which dates from July 1999 to October 2000, reveals that 71.5% of the votes support the PES and EPP together. The most striking statistic, however, concerns the internal structure of the EPP; 44% of the time, the EPP splits. In 6% of the cases, the rebels even ally themselves with the socialists against their own party. Who are these rebels? It is a question of 30 or 40 MPs, whose names have quickly become familiar with those who read the polls. They are in effect, British Conservative MPs with one or two others from Scandinavia. The Tories do not miss an occasion to protest against anything. This promotes increased integration, breaching the founding conditions of the party that they want to rejoin, but which has refused, as one understands, to give them membership to the level of the parliamentary party. We have even counted cases where Tories have found themselves in opposition with the Reverend Ian Paisley, who is not well known for his pro-

European views, but who votes with the large majority of the Parliament, including the EPP and PES.

There is thus, more basic agreement between the EPP and PES than within the EPP. The internal divisions of the latter simply reflect the power of national policies. In the United Kingdom, the current position of the Conservative Party is based upon a separatist principal and it is clear that since William Hague took over the leadership of the Conservatives, the following policies will be more anti-European. What this also explains in part is that the new group of European MPs are younger, greedier and more sceptical than the preceding group. These young wolves have been chosen, as a result of the internal struggles within the British Conservative Party, to counter the policy line taken by former MPs (Clarke, Heseltine), who were generally pro-European. There is also less chance of them being “persuaded” like many of their predecessors.

This dress should not obscure the fundamental reality. Christian democrats and social democrats have always shared an integrationist views, which will enable them to work together for a little longer. The Tories are an example of a national exception within their political family (an adopted family and reluctantly at that). It demonstrates the strength of the national aspect in the behaviour of europarties. Thankfully, for Europe, a large number of its members have reached a significant level of agreement.

#### **4. Preparing decisions for the future**

Up until now, we have looked into the current methods of the EU. This organisation is fully self-motivated however, notably as far as enlargement is concerned. It is apparent that the party associations are interested in Central and Eastern European Countries (CEEC). As they are constructing democratic systems after the collapse of Stalinism, supranational parties and the International parties are constantly prevailing throughout (Delwit and De Waele, 1998). It is a question of a screening process. The europarties are trying to identify the powers that are close to them, surround them and indeed creating them. Sometimes it is a question of mediating between the rival claims or aggravating a combination between the similar parties, sometimes even pronouncing their exclusion. The aim of this activity is to have stronger party alliances, during and after the integration of new member states into the EU. This will take place in the EU institutions.

The EPP is seen to be perhaps, the most vigorous in this field. Its list of member, associates and observers has increased greatly during the 1990s. The same, somewhat adaptable principals, which have governed the relationship between the EPP and the centre-right parties (notably member of the EDU) over the last decade, can be applied. Consequently, the EPP appears well placed to grow in ascendancy, especially within the EP, when enlargement of the EU comes into fruition.

Evidently, the EPP has attached great importance to enlargement because for the EPP it is without doubt, the next most important decision that the EU is going to have to take. We can interpret the way in which the EU has dealt with the Haider issue, within this framework. When a few of its members (including the UDF of F. Bayrou, who is not known for his hard line stance) demanded the omission of the ÖVP in order to form a coalition with the FPÖ, the EPP reacted quickly. The ÖVP were persuaded to accept a voluntary suspension during which a commission led by W. van Velzen, who is an expert on the subject, examined this awkward issue. Thus, a parallel operation to that conducted by the EU itself.

To nobody's surprise within the Commission, van Velzen found that there was nothing to worry about and that all bilateral sanctions should be lifted immediately. His report is typified more by criticisms of the left, than an analysis of the Haider issue (EPP News, 6<sup>th</sup> June 2000). What does prevail however, is the admission of the Austrian government that it will not veto EU enlargement, as Haider himself, had said at that very point. The impact of this act is significant. It is recognised that within the Union, the Christian democrats and right-wing powers have formed an alliance that up until now, was considered unacceptable. Yet, the Haider issue is not just a localised problem, because tomorrow, there could just as well be similar issues in Italy or even Belgium, not to mention the situation within an enlarged Europe. One can scarcely exaggerate the influence that it would represent on the decision-making process within the EU. The EPP has contributed to the definition (or the reduction) of the politically acceptable boundaries within the EU. An effect has gone beyond a particular compromise over secret regulations after numerous battles for amendments within the EP. This particular policy is acceptable within the EPP because, as you will recall, of the 60 or so members of the Party Executive, only two (Belgian and French and both women) have voted against this policy.

As for its recruitment policy as well as its encouragement of larger cooperation (to be courteous), the EPP is going to be influenced by future decisions.

### **Conclusion**

The influence of the EPP on the decision-making process can be understood on several levels. Within the Council, it is clear that the party has had to force through a number of historic decisions, by organising the actions of party or government members, who are ready to take these steps in order to satisfy the interests, which personify them. Within the EP, the party works in tandem with the socialists to carry on with “systemic” issues. In addition to the Union and in anticipation of the future, the party is looking to strengthen and enlarge its current organisations, whilst continuing its work. Up until now, the EPP has been based upon cooperation, while at the same time forcing its own particular issues. It should be asked however, if this new right-wing direction, embodied in questionable alliances, is going to make agreement more difficult to achieve.

As well as all of that, the nature of the transnational party must never be forgotten. It reflects an agreement between party members, who are ready to agree to common actions, but essentially to help and rationalize their actions within the party. Imagine, what would have happened if the strictly budgetary measures needed for the creation of the single European currency had been easily agreed to without any intervention from above? The national party, which accepts a certain alliance, finds its worth, obtaining stability and certainty and in the future, by exchanging a certain largely artificial autonomy.

Transnational parties will continue to exist for a long time to come. Otherwise, what would it be like without a directly elected government faced with an opposition with a similar authority? The EU, on that particular point, is not quite there yet. It remains a mix, but which has created very efficient procedures. The transnational parties have found a reasonable role within the EU, essentially through co-ordination. There is nothing dishonourable in that, even if the truth of the EPP and its counterparts falls necessarily below the hopes, invested in it by even the most ardent pro-Europeans.

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## **Do the European Greens matter? The problems of influencing the decision-making process in the European Union**

Dr. Thomas DIETZ

The growing electoral success of green parties since the end of the nineteen-seventies has rendered the youngest among the European party families to an important political factor on the national level in most countries of the European Union. Only twenty years after their first emergence the Greens are represented in the national parliaments of eighteen European countries. They are participating in five governments on the national level (in Finland, Italy, Germany, France and Belgium) and in Sweden they are supporting a minority government. Also on the European level the greens have achieved remarkably good results at the elections to the European parliament, making them the fourth strongest political power in the current European Parliament. Taking finally into account the growing importance of their transnational party federation, the European Federation of Green parties (EFGP; also called the European Greens), one could expect the Greens to play an important role on the European level as well. But up to what extent does the EFGP really matter here?

In the following sections we shall see, that in spite of a more efficient internal decision-making process compared to its predecessor, enhancing a common policy formulation, the EFGP has only just begun to influence the decision-making process in the European Union. We shall take a look at the reasons for that, at possible strategies to expand their influence but also at some limits, the EFGP faces in that respect. These limits make it improbable that the EFGP will ever play a role as important as the big players on the European level, the Christian-democrats and the socialists.

### **1. How to influence the decision-making process in the European Union**

Like every modern democracy the European Union – not as a state but as an institution *sui generis* – has a political system that is based on the principle of separation of powers. Not always resembling the political system of the member states the Council, the European Commission (by its right to initiate legislation processes) and the European Parliament share legislative and the

Council and the Commission executive powers in a more or less balanced way. The European Court of Justice fulfils juridical functions.

The way how the decision-making process on the European level is influenced by transnational party federations, in a sense that decision-makers change their mind or reinforce their point of view on a certain topic due to convincing arguments or pressure from such a federation is not easy to observe, never mind to measure. Has a prime minister, for example, in a session of the European Council primarily changed his mind because of transnational party or national coalition interests? And what if both run parallel? I shall therefore concentrate on the presuppositions for influencing these decisions, postulating the following:

Influencing the decision-making process on the European level by transnational party federations is the easier

- 1) the more party members or at least partisans can be found in the administration of the European Parliament, the Council of Ministers and the European Commission
- 2) the more members belonging to one and the same party family can be found in the Council, the Commission and the European Parliament
- 3) the more these members are incorporated into a transnational party organisation by informal or formal structures
- 4) The easier the decision-making process in the federation itself is.

## **2. The organisational and programmatical features of the EFGP**

The first permanent transnational green party organisation, the “European Green Coordination” (EGC), was founded in autumn 1983. In summer 1993 the EGC adopted a new basic program (“The guiding principles”) and new statutes and transformed itself into the “European Federation of Green Parties”<sup>1</sup>. At the end of the year 2000 the EFGP had 31 member parties and three parties with an observer status, coming from all over Europe (see table 1).

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<sup>1</sup> For the history of the European Greens see more detailed DIETZ (1997, 2000)

*Table 1: The member and observer parties of the EFGP (October 2000)*

<b>Member parties</b>	<b>Country</b>
AGALEV	Belgium
Alternattiva Demokratika	Malta
Bulgarian Green Party	Bulgaria
Comhaontas Glas	Ireland
De Groenen	Netherlands
De Grønnes Informationskontor	Denmark
Dei Gréng	Luxemburg
Die Grüne Alternative	Austria
Bündnis 90/Die GRÜNEN	Germany
ECOLO	Belgium
Eesti Rohelised	Estonia
Federazione die Verdi	Italy
Georgian Greens	Georgia
Green Party of England and Wales	Great Britain
Groen Links	Netherlands
Les Verts	France
Confederacion de Los Verdes	Spain
Miljöpartiet de Gröna	Sweden
Miljøpartiet de Grønne	Norway
Os Verdes	Portugal
Grüne Partei der Schweiz	Switzerland
Strana Zelenych na Slovensku	Slovakia
Vihreä Liitto	Finland
Scottish Green Party	Scotland
Ukrainian Greens	Ukraine
St. Petersburg Green Party	Russia
Zöld Alternativa	Hungary
Prassini Politiki	Greece
Strana Zelenych	Czek Republic
Politiki Oikologon	Cyprus
Federatia Ecologista din Romania	Romania
<b>Total</b>	<b>31</b>

<b>Observer parties</b>	
Federation of young European Greens	-
Socialistisk Folkeparti	Denmark
Forum Ekologiczne Unii Wolnosci	Poland

The congress is the most important political body of the EFGP. It meets at least once every three years and decides on the policy formulation and on changes of the statutes. The most important tasks of the board, called Council, are

- the coordination of initiatives and activities in line with the Programme, the general policy and the Statutes of the Federation
- the election of the managing board, the so-called Committee
- The decision on the application and exclusion of Members and Observers.

The Committee is responsible for the permanent political representation of the Federation, the execution of the Council's decisions and the activities of the Secretariat-General. It usually meets four times a year and holds some additional phone conferences.

The seats in the EFGP Council, which meets at least once a year, are distributed according to a principle of restricted proportionality, granting bigger parties more delegates and votes than smaller parties <sup>2</sup>.

As far as the decision-making process is concerned, a qualified majority principle is applied in connection with votes in the Council, the Congress and the Committee. In the corresponding bodies of the EGC votes still had to be taken unanimously. Thus, since the establishment of the EFGP the conditions for an efficient policy formulation – a necessary condition for a successful transmission of political requirements of the greens on the European level into the EU-decision-making process – have improved substantially.

Where would we primarily expect the greens influencing the decision-making process? As new politics parties <sup>3</sup> the greens have always put a

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<sup>2</sup> For the exact rules of distribution see DIETZ (1997).

strong emphasis on questions of the environment, the third world, nuclear energy, decentralisation, genetic engineering, women's liberation, peace, disarmament and human rights. Since the 1994 platform for the European elections the EFGP has also put forward concrete requirements concerning the enlargement, the institutional architecture of the EU, especially the extension of the rights of the European Parliament, and the common foreign and security policy of the EU.

### **3. The EFGPs influence on the Green groups in the European Parliament**

With the introduction of the so-called Co-decision procedure in the Maastricht Treaty the European Parliament has managed to become a legislative body having the same rights and importance as the Council of Ministers, at least in most policy-fields of the so-called first pillar of the EU-Treaty.

Thus, at the latest since the coming into force of the Maastricht Treaty decisions taken in the European Parliament influence decisions taken in the EU.

How has the EFGP managed to influence the decision-making process in the Green groups in the European Parliament? To answer this question let us first have a look at the strength of these groups since 1984.

In 1984 the Belgian and German greens were the first green parties to gain seats in the European parliament. Together with two deputies from a Dutch alliance of small left parties and two deputies from small Italian left parties they founded the first green (-left) political grouping in the European parliament, called Green Alternative European Link (GRAEL). Since the GRAEL was too small to gain group status in the European parliament it had to work together with the Danish People's movement against the EC and some regionalists in the so-called Rainbow group.

At the next elections the greens could achieve a big breakthrough, bringing greens from France, Italy and Portugal to the European parliament. As a result, the greens could establish a group of their own then, called the "Green

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<sup>3</sup> For the concept of a "new politics party" see POGUNTKE (1987).



group in the European parliament” (GGEP), encompassing 28 green members. After mixed results in 1994 and 1996, where the French and Portuguese greens lost all their seats, but on the other hand the Irish, the Swedish, Finnish, Austrian and Luxembourg greens entered the parliament for the first time, the greens could even top their 1989 success in 1999, raising the number of their seats from 27 to 38<sup>4</sup>.

Table 3 gives a detailed survey of the respective results, also under a longitudinal perspective.

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<sup>4</sup> For the history of the green groups in the European Parliament see more detailed DIETZ (1997).

Table 3: European Election results for the green parties (1979-1999)

Country	Party	1979	1984/87 <sup>5</sup>	1989	1994/95 <sup>6</sup>	1999
		% Seats	% Seats	% Seats	% Seats	% Seats
Austria	Grüne Alternative	-	-	-	6,8 (1)	9,3 (2)
Belgium	ECOLO	5,1 (0)	9,9 (1)	16,6 (2)	13,0 (1)	22,3 (3)
	AGALEV	2,3 (0)	7,1 (1)	12,2 (1)	10,7 (1)	12,0 (2)
Denmark	De Grønne <sup>7</sup>	-	-	- (0)	- (0)	- (0)
Germany	Die GRÜNEN/B'90	3,2 (0)	8,2 (7)	8,4 (8)	10,1 (12)	6,4 (7)
Finland	Vihreä Liitto	-	-	-	7,6 (1)	13,4 (2)
France	Les Verts	4,4 <sup>8</sup> (0)	3,4 (0)	10,6 (9)	2,9 <sup>9</sup> (0)	9,7 (9)
Greece	Politiki Oikologia	-	-	1,1 (0)	0,3 <sup>10</sup> (0)	- (0)
Great Britain	Green Party	0,1 (0)	0,1 (0)	14,9 (0)	3,2 (0)	6,2 (2)
Ireland	Comhaontas Glas	-	0,5 (0)	3,7 (0)	7,9 (2)	6,7 (2)
Italy	I Verdi	-	-	3,8 (3)	3,2 (3)	1,8 (2)
	Verdi Arcobaleno	-	-	2,4 (2)	-	-
Luxembourg	Die Greng	1,0 <sup>11</sup> (0)	6,1 (0)	10,4 <sup>12</sup> (0)	10,9 <sup>13</sup> (1)	10,7 (1)
Netherlands	Groen Links	-	5,6 <sup>14</sup> (2)	7,0 <sup>15</sup> (2)	3,8 (1)	11,9 (4)
	De Groenen	-	1,3 (0)	-	2,4 (0)	-
Portugal	Os Verdes <sup>16</sup>	-	- (0)	- (1)	- (0)	- (0)
Spain	Los Verdes	-	0,6 (0)	1,1 <sup>17</sup> (0)	- <sup>18</sup> (0)	1,4 (0)
Sweden	Miljöpartiet	-	-	-	17,2 (4)	9,4 (2)
Total		(0)	(11)	(28)	(27)	(38)

Although, like in 1989 und 1994, there would have been enough deputies to establish a “pure” green group, the newly elected MEPs decided to enlarge

<sup>5</sup> In Portugal and Spain the first European elections were held in 1987.

<sup>6</sup> In Finland, Sweden and Austria the first European elections were held in 1996.

<sup>7</sup> Part of the list “People’s movement against the EC”.

<sup>8</sup> Result for the list “Europe Ecologie”.

<sup>9</sup> Result for the common list of Les Verts, Société protectrice des animaux (SPA) and Ecologie Autrement.

<sup>10</sup> Result for the “Federation of ecological-alternative organisations”.

<sup>11</sup> Result for the “Alternative Lescht - Wehrt Ich” (AL-WI).

<sup>12</sup> Results for GAP and GLEI

<sup>13</sup> Common list of GLEI und GAP.

<sup>14</sup> Result for the “Groen Progressief Akkoord” (GPA).

<sup>15</sup> Result for the list “Groen Links/Regenboog”.

<sup>16</sup> Contesting the elections on the list of the CDU (communists) respectively.

<sup>17</sup> Result for the “Lista Verde”, consisting of Los Verdes and Confederacion de Los Verdes.

<sup>18</sup> Los Verdes didn’t contest the elections nationwide that year.

their group by 10 MEPs from regionalist parties (four from Spain, two from Belgium, two from Scotland and two from Wales), with which they established a group called The Greens/European Free Alliance. This new group has become the fourth strongest political force in the European Parliament.

In contrast to the Christian-democrats, the liberals and the socialists there has been no personal overlap between the Council delegates or the Committee-members of the EFGP and the members of the green groups in the European Parliament, although some former members of the EFGP committee have become MEPs after their term of office (for example Patricia McKenna from the Irish or Heidi Hautala from the finish greens).

Although no incompatibility provisions can be found in the EFGP statutes whatsoever, there has been an unofficial agreement accepted by all member parties since the beginning of the eighties, that no member of the Green group in the European parliament should become a member of the Committee or a delegate in the Council. Thus, in contrast to the other party federations, an important tool of informal consensus building between the group and the party federation is missing.

Of course, although personal overlaps facilitate mutual cooperation considerably, they are not really necessary to establish close links between a party federation and its parliamentary group in the European Parliament. The group's decisions can be influenced by other informal ways of cooperation (for example common seminars on certain topics), by mutual participation in the respective managing board or by formal guidelines of the party federation.

As far as the latter is concerned in the nineteen-seventies some theoretical considerations concerning European party cooperation predicted that European party federations would develop political guidelines for their respective parliamentary groups in the European Parliament, thus accelerating the emergence of a European party system similar to the systems on the national level (HRBEK 1978:299). Such guidelines might refer to the organisational (composition of the group and its staff, financial means for the party federation) or the programmatic level (statements of accounts, elaborating of political initiatives based upon common declarations of the party federation).

The acceptance of guidelines or efficient mutual cooperation are necessary conditions for a party federation to be able to influence the decision-making process in the parliamentary group. To influence the decision-making process in the European Parliament it is additionally necessary that the group is needed to reach a majority in a voting procedure or that the group has influenced the opinion-forming process of the other groups prior to the voting process.

Since we are describing only the prerequisites of influencing the decision-making process we can concentrate on the relationship between the European Greens and the Green group(s) and renounce on taking a closer look at the actual influence of the green groups in the last legislatures.

Between 1984 and 1989 there was no institutionalised relationship between the GRAEL and the EGC at all. No provisions could be found in that respect, neither in the statutes of the EGC nor in the statutes of the GRAEL. There was no political consultation between the two organisations, never mind a right of intervention for the EGC as far as political or organisational decisions of the GRAEL or the acceptance of new group members are concerned. The GRAEL even refused to accept the common platform of the EGC for the European elections as a programmatical basis for the political work in parliament. All in all the relationship between the EGC and the GRAEL was a more competitive than a cooperative one<sup>19</sup>.

In the next legislature things had changed fundamentally. The different composition of the group, now with a “green” instead of a left majority, more financial means and the increasing importance of the EGC (in terms of the number of member parties it was representing in the meantime) made new and closer forms of cooperation possible. The relationship was institutionalised in the respective statutes by the following provisions:

According to the GGEP statutes the electoral platform of the EGC was the political basis for the work in parliament, representatives of the EGC were entitled to participate in group or board sessions, by a conceded “alarm-bell-procedure” the EGC could theoretically make the group revise positions already adopted and the GGEP made a certain amount of the group budget at the EGC’s disposal. Finally, in an annex to the GGEP-statutes some principles

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<sup>19</sup> The reasons for that are described in detail by DIETZ (1997).

of the mutual cooperation, that should be as complementary as possible, were laid down.

Vice versa, the GGEP board was granted an observer status in the EGC statutes and the GGEP was accepted as the only group being entitled to represent the European Greens in the European Parliament. Until the end of 1992, however, their concrete cooperation was restricted to the exchange of information and the common preparation of several seminars and conferences, because the majority of the EGC member parties reproached the GGEP with being not critical enough concerning further EC-integration. This caused tensions that made the initially desired elaboration of common positions and common initiatives impossible.

Since the GGEP was especially interested in deepening the relations to the green parties coming from EC-member states, it started an initiative to prepare the European elections together with these parties in autumn 1992. For that purpose the EGC agreed upon the establishing of a subgroup called Standing Committee on European Union affairs (SCEUA), consisting only of EU parties<sup>20</sup>.

Together with the SCEUA the GGEP elaborated the most detailed platform for the European elections ever. Moreover, GGEP and SCEUA could agree upon an "Agreement on the re-establishment of the GGEP". This agreement had been the first attempt from green parties on the European level to exert permanent political and organisational influence on a green group in the European parliament exceeding the group building process and to make the green group accountable at least to the EU parties.

Before that time there was a thorough dispute between the EFGP-member parties if further steps in the European integration process should be taken within the framework of the EU or if it should be preferable to build up new structures of European integration being less committed to economic growth. One of the impacts of this struggle was that initiatives from the Committee to influence the decision-making process in the EU were not taken into consideration. Only in spring 1994 when the EFGP elaborated a common electoral manifesto together with the GGEP the majority of the EFGP member

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<sup>20</sup> The reasons for the establishment of the SCEUA are described in detail by DIETZ (1997).

parties had committed themselves irreversibly to a pan-European integration within the framework of the EU.

Therefore it was not before the middle of the nineties, that the Committee of the European Greens has started to establish efficient cooperation structures aiming at influencing decision-making processes in the EU with the help of the GGEP.

After the 1994 elections, however, the third green group in the European parliament took over only parts of the agreement and institutionalised their relationship to the EFGP in a "Protocol concerning the cooperation between the GGEP and the EFGP". In this protocol the common platform was accepted as the group's political basis for the work in the European parliament and the matters of cooperation were described much more detailed than in the proceeding legislature. As far as the group statutes are concerned the provisions related to the EFGP (alarm-bell-procedure, financial support) were taken over from the proceeding green group and according to the EFGP statutes the green group was supposed to consult the Committee before admitting MEP's who did not belong to a member party of the Federation. Moreover, members of the Bureau (board) of the Green group could take part in the Congresses and Councils, although without voting rights.

But not only the formal, also the concrete cooperation between the second GGEP and the EFGP had improved. Right from the beginning there were common seminars and several common press releases could be agreed upon. During 1996, for example, the cooperation had mainly focussed on the EU Intergovernmental conference process and in 1997 the GGEP and the EFGP organised a green employment summit in Luxembourg and a conference on the EU-enlargement process in Warsaw. In May 2000 the EFGP and the Greens/EFA hosted an "Assise" in Brussels, where representatives of green and regionalist parties from every EU country and several applicant countries discussed the future of the EU (enlargement, Intergovernmental conference, written constitution for the EU).

In 1999 both had cooperated once again in the preparation of the European elections, although the GGEP was not as much involved as five years ago.

Finally, an eco-tax proposal, that was prepared by a common working group of the GGEP and the EFGP and adopted at the Berlin Council of the EFGP in

1997, was used as a basis for a corresponding plenary motion of the GGEP. Together with a common declaration of the EFGP on the IGC process in 1996 this has only been the second time, however, that the EFGP has put a common policy document to the Green group for presentation in the European parliament.

As far as the future cooperation between the Greens/EFA group and the EFGP is concerned, there is no reason to assume, that – in spite of the fact, that one fourth of the members of the new group does not come from EFGP-member parties – this cooperation could be reduced within the next five years. On the contrary, the forthcoming enlargement of the EU and several other topics will make this cooperation more necessary than ever. The group has already signalled, that it is very much interested in a continued close cooperation, especially as far as the enlargement process is concerned. For example, another common declaration of the European Greens on the Common foreign and security policy shall be used as a basis for a corresponding motion of the Greens/EFA group.

So, after a very difficult relationship in the beginning (i.e. the 1984-1989 legislature) the coordination and cooperation activities of the Green group in the European parliament and the European Greens have been extended continuously since 1989. This cooperation was concentrated on matters of common interest and on programmatical issues, however. There has been no accountability of the GGEP to the EFGP and, taking into account previous experiences, it is rather improbable, that in case of differing opinions the EFGP could assert itself in the exception of political guidelines, especially because of the different composition of the two organisations (EU centred group versus pan-European federation) and the different member party interests within the EFGP. Another important reason for this is probably, that the EFGP gets considerable financial support from the GGEP. This situation probably won't change unless party federations will decide on the composition of transnational electoral lists for the European elections.

With the new group's composition the conditions for executing political guidelines have got worse, since now there are two ideological party families within the same group, both having their own party federation.

Since July 1999 the EFGP has also started to cooperate more closely with the other transnational party federations in Europe and with most of the other

groups in the European Parliament, especially as far as the European party statute is concerned. Together with the party federations of the socialists, the Christian-democrats and the liberals they presented a common proposal for such a statute. This proposal had a decisive influence on the later proposal of the European Commission, resulting in the adopted amendment of Art. 191 EU-treaty at the European summit in Nice.

#### **4. The EFGP's influence on the Council of Ministers and the European Commission**

Until the middle of the nineteen the EFGP had shown no engagement whatsoever as far as influencing the decision-making process in the Council is concerned. On first sight, the reason for this seems to be easy to understand, since until 1995 the European Greens had no representative to talk to in the Council of ministers. The greens have started participating in governmental coalitions in 1985 when Joschka Fischer, the current German minister of foreign affairs, had become environmental minister of the German state Hessen. If Francesco Rutelli, the current mayor of Rome, who held the post of the environmental minister in the Italian government for 24 hours in 1992 (he dismissed the second day protesting against the non-lifting of Bettino Craxis parliamentary immunity by the Italian parliament) is not taken into account, it took another ten years, until Pekka Haavisto, from the finish greens, became the first green minister on the national level in the EU, being the environmental minister of the finish "rainbow-coalition".

In April 1996 Edo Ronchi, environmental minister of the Italian government, became the second green minister, in 1997 the French greens became part of a coalition with the socialists and the communists, in 1998 the German red-green coalition was established and the Belgian greens have participated in a national coalition since autumn 1999. The next EU-country, where a green governmental participation is expected is the Netherlands.

The second reason, already mentioned above, should not be neglected, however: the non-commitment of the European Greens to EU-integration before 1995. By trying to influence decisions in the Council the European Greens would have given the EU a legitimation, some important member parties of the EFGP could not have given their consent to.



Table 4 gives a survey of the green ministers at the national level at the end of the year 2000 and of the number of votes these ministers are holding in the Council of ministers.

*Table 4: Green representation in the Council of Ministers*

Country	Name	Ministry of	Council votes
Finland	Satu Hassi Osma Soininvaava	Environment and developmental co-operation Health & social services	3
Italy	Alfonso Scario Gianni Mattioli	Agriculture and Forestry EU Affairs	10
Belgium	Isabelle Durant Magda Aelvoet	Transport and Mobility Health, consumer protection and environment	5
Germany	Joschka Fischer Andrea Fischer Jürgen Trittin	Foreign affairs Health Environment	10
France	Dominique Voynet Guy Hascot	Environment Solidary Economy	10

There are two possible strategies in the Council of ministers to safeguard political interests of national governments or political parties. The first is to strive for a constructive majority to implement certain measures. The second is to look for a destructive minority to avoid the implementation of these measures. Decisions in the Council are either taken by unanimity or by qualified majority. If decisions are taken by qualified majority the whole number of votes equals 87. Pursuant to section 205, subsection 2 of the Amsterdam treaty 62 votes are needed for a qualified majority in those cases, in which the decisions are based upon a proposal of the European commission. In all other cases a supplementary majority of at least ten out of the 15 member states is necessary.

One can recognize rather easily, that there will hardly ever be enough green ministers to get a qualified majority in the Council of ministers on their own. However, in the Council of environmental ministers the greens have, at least theoretically, already now a “minorité de blocage” (which is 26 votes) at least in the case where decisions are based upon a proposal of the Commission. In the Council of the health ministers there are still 8 votes missing.

But is it realistic to expect the green (environmental) ministers to vote en bloc?

From a theoretical (and practical) point of view the ministers in the Council act on behalf of their government and by that on behalf of their country, not

on behalf of their party, although they remain of course party politicians, too. A striking example for the priorities set here was delivered by the German environmental minister Jürgen Trittin in June 1999. Initially in favour of a certain solution concerning the obligation for the car industry to take back used cars, he was instructed by the German chancellor Gerhard Schröder to vote against his own proposal (elaborated by the German and the French ministry of environment – headed by the green Dominique Voynet) in the corresponding Council session.

Apart from the dominance of national coalition interests the green ministers have not very well been incorporated into the organisational structure of the EFGP so far. They are neither council delegates nor Committee members. The first promising exception to this rule is Pekka Haavisto, the former Finnish environmental minister, that recently became one of the speakers of the EFGP.

Moreover there is no regular green “party leader”-meeting, that would be part of the organisational structure of the EFGP. The only comparable kind of meeting that has taken place up to now was when along with the Council meeting of the EFGP in Berlin in May 1997 the national party leaders, the speakers of the respective green groups in the national parliaments and the green environmental ministers of Italy, Finland, Georgia and some of the German states (*Länder*) had met. Up to now this has been the only meeting of such a kind, however.

In this context one has to take into account that permanent “party leader” meetings of the greens will never have the same importance as the corresponding meetings of the two big transnational party federations. On one hand this is due to the grass-root-orientation of the greens (containing the decentralisation of power), on the other due to the fact, that these meetings would have another purpose compared to the socialists and the Christian-democrats. There are (and there will be) no green members in the European Council<sup>21</sup>, so that one important task of the party leaders’ meetings of the big party families, the coordination of the separate points of view concerning the European Summits, has not been at stake (at least not up to now).

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<sup>21</sup> Since the foreign ministers are invited to take part at the European summits the greens have one representative there at the moment (Joschka Fischer from the German greens). The foreign ministers are not entitled to vote, however.

The EFGP has tried to incorporate the green ministers into the structures of the EFGP by informal means of cooperation, however.

In 1998, for example, the EFGP committee talked to the green environmental ministers at the session of the environmental Council in Sofia. Moreover, since 1999 the EFGP has tried to get at least one minister holding a speech or presenting a key note at Congress or Council meetings. At the Paris Congress in February 1999, for example, a roundtable of Green ministers discussed the future of Europe and Joschka Fischer and Pekka Haavisto had both given a longer speech. Another example of a more advanced cooperation of the EFGP with the green ministers is given by a common declaration of the "European Green Ministers" on the participation of the FPÖ in the Austrian government in February 2000, which was elaborated and coordinated by the EFGP committee.

Since July 1999, when the secretary-generals of the ELDR, the PES and the EPP approached the EFGP in order to elaborate a common European party statute, the EFGP has extended their contacts to politicians from other party families, too.

In October 2000, for example, the EFGP committee met the Greek deputy foreign minister Elisabetta Papazoni, debating the institutional reforms of the European Union and the question of EU enlargement.

So the European Greens seem to have realized, that it is helpful for their work to build a proper structure for coordination between the green (and other) ministers in government and to link them to the EFGP and the GGEP. A performant coordination by the EFGP could not be achieved yet, however, since the organisation is understaffed. So the Green group has taken over the task to coordinate at least their activities with those of the green ministers by establishing a special group post being responsible exclusively for this coordination. By the participation of the secretary-general of the EFGP in the Greens/EFA board sessions the EFGP is at least informed about these activities.

Resembling the situation concerning the Council of ministers the EFGP had shown no engagement whatsoever to influence the decision-making process in the Commission until the middle of the nineties. Again, however, one has

to take into account that green members of the European Commission have been a rather scarce phenomenon up to now. In 1993 the ex-environmental commissioner and ex-environmental minister Ripa di Meana, initially a socialist, became speaker of the Italian green party. Seven years later Michaele Schreyer from the German greens became the first green Commissioner, being responsible for the EU-budget, budget control and anti-fraud measures. Up to now, just like in the case of the green ministers, Michaele Schreyer has not really been incorporated into the EFGP structure yet, although there have been first attempts to improve the mutual cooperation.

During an EFA/Greens meeting in Seville in September 2000, for example, Michaele Schreyer was a guest speaker in the debate on enlargement. Mr. Enek Landaburu, the Commission's enlargement director general was also present. Beside that the EFGP had written a letter to Michaele Schreyer, in which it was asking for her support for the European party statute.

As far as the Council or the Commission administration is concerned, the EFGP has not established regular contacts so far. Contacts like that lie almost completely in the responsibility of the green group, that, in the meantime, tries to use this channel of information very extensively. This has not always been the case, however.

As far as the GRAEL is concerned, one could not really say, that there were no contacts to the European Commission or the Council of Ministers, but in the nineteen-eighties they had a very sporadic character. They were depending on coincidences and the energy of single deputies and their assistants, in the beginning primarily aiming at getting money to finance grassroots-movements. At that time the GRAEL was striving for a speaker function for the new social movements which were trying to build up European networks. There was no institutionalised level, regular contacts could have been based upon. Moreover, for most of the GRAEL-members the more promising strategy to change EU-policies were lying in the sensibilisation and mobilisation of the public instead of the classical lobbying at the Commission.

This situation had changed fundamentally in the first GGEP, which came away from the pure speaker-function, engaged itself more in parliamentary work and was not that reluctant any more to look for compromises with

other parliamentary groups. Moreover, the GGEP was looking for regular contacts to Council and Commission members and their administration in order to bring in the political requests of the social movements more efficiently. The GGEP was represented in the bureau, the enlarged bureau and in interinstitutional commissions of the EP, so that contacts to the Council and the Commission were for the first time institutionalised then. Beside that these contacts had a more regular character not exclusively aiming at only getting money any longer. Since the parliamentary work played an important role in the GGEP (which it didn't in the GRAEL) the green MEPs were looking for contacts to representatives of the European Commission to improve their work in the commissions of the EP, to initiate legislation and to influence certain proposals of the Commission.

So it's only since 1990 that green groups in the European Parliament have looked for closer contacts to the Council-, Commission- or Parliament's administration. This was facilitated by the presence of Carlo Ripa di Meana, the former environmental commissioner, as an MEP in the green group between 1994 and 1999. Until that time the absence of green-minded assistants in the Commission- or the Council-administration was an eminent problem for the greens. In the meantime, the situation has changed considerably, as the case of Paul van Buitenen has shown. Being a member of the Flemish greens (AGALEV), he was the one in the Commission's administration delivering the green group the necessary information to reveal the nepotism and corruption scandal in the European Commission at the beginning of 1999. Since a former assistant of the GGEP has joined Michaele Schreyer into her cabinet and a former personal assistant of a German green MEP did so, too, the chances for the Green group to get important information from the Commission and to influence the Commission's point of view on certain topics has further improved.

## **5. Summary and conclusion**

Although there was no green group in the European Parliament before 1984 and although the greens have not had a "Green international"<sup>22</sup>, both institutions that helped the other party families in Europe to establish their European party federations in the seventies, the transnational cooperation of

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<sup>22</sup> For the attempts to establish such an organisation see more detailed DIETZ (1999).

the Greens in Europe has reached a considerable level in the meantime. Although there remain some important differences in comparison to the other party federations (no EU-centred party federation, the lack of a permanent “party-leader” meeting) and although they are lagging behind a bit concerning the degree of interaction reached, one cannot convincingly argue, that the greens would not play in the same league as the socialists, the liberals and the christian-democrats<sup>23</sup>.

In consideration of the scarcity of their financial resources (about 125.000 Euro in the year 2000) and due to their internal conflicts related to questions of European integration their influence on the European agenda is still very limited, however.

Until the middle of the nineteen’s there had been no attempts of the EFGP to bring common statements via its parliamentary group into the European Parliament nor had there been institutionalised contacts to the Council or the Commission. Hence, especially in absence of a permanent party-leader meeting and in absence of political guidelines of the EFGP the leading green organisation on the European level has been the green group in the European Parliament.

The green groups have had far more organisational and financial resources and a better access to the gate-keepers in the European parliament, the Commission and the Council, facilitating considerably their policy formulation compared to the European Greens. Moreover, the members of the green group have worked together more intensely and with higher personal continuity than the delegates of the party federation. Finally the permanent pressure of every day work within the parliament calls for more efficient mechanisms of decision making. Another advantage of the group in that respect is that two of the current green ministers (Magda Aelvoet and Dominique Voynet) and the former Italian environmental minister Edo Ronchi had been members of the green group once, whereas no former delegates of the EFGP have become ministers so far. Therefore efficiently structured political cooperation processes on the European level and transmissional functions in the political system of the EU are still focussed on the green group and not on the EFGP.

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<sup>23</sup> More arguments for this can be found at DIETZ (2000).

In the last years the EFGP has begun to take over more transmissional functions in the political system of the EU, however, and it has tried more seriously to influence the EU decision-making process by reinforcing its cooperation with the green ministers and the green commissioner Michaela Schreyer.

But, if the ministers' role at a council or congress meeting shall not only be restricted to the presentation of an opening speech or a key note, the EFGP has to increase programmatical discussions on relevant and current European issues. To be able to really exert a certain influence, the delegates must meet more often and more transnational working groups must be established.

For example, the most important issue on the European level in the year 1999, the Agenda 2000, could not be found on the agenda of the EFGP (except for the EU-enlargement), since other things were discussed (for example the European Monetary Union or the electoral platform for the European elections). The necessary financial means to meet, for example, four times a year (like the liberals, the socialists and the Christian-democrats), especially for the small parties, could be granted by the bigger parties more easily, if more programmatical discussions on up-to-date issues would take place. This shows the experience of several discussions on that topic during the last years.

One could also think of the establishment of a permanent party-“leader” meeting with the green ministers, (forthcoming) green members of the European Commission, the heads of the national parties, the speakers of the EFGP-committee and the speakers of the board of the green group in the European Parliament, although such a meeting would probably have the same problems of finding an appropriate role in the transnational party structure as in the ELDR and would surely not have the same importance as in the EPP or the PES.

If the EFGP does not manage to adapt itself to this new situation, it will lose more and more of its only recently gained new influence. The newest example for this is the failed effort to establish a permanent coordination of the activities of the national green ministers, making the green group in the European parliament taking over this task.



Up to now the European Greens have avoided a thorough discussion about their future role in Europe. By networking and supporting newly emerging or the weak existing green parties in Europe and around the globe they have basically transferred their main activities from the eighties and nineties into the new millennium. If the European Greens can't find a consensus to use the new opportunities to influence the European agenda more efficiently and to adapt their organisational structure in an adequate way (especially extending the frequency of meetings) they will simply remain a networking institution. Further steps towards a real European party, towards a better linkage between the national and the European level by EFGP activities and towards a more important role compared with the GGEP cannot be expected then.

In this context one has to take into account, that there are certain limits, however, that even under an extended cooperation make it improbable, that the EFGP will play the same role on the European level as their competitors from the socialists and the Christian-democrats: their low representation in the Council and the Commission, the scarce financial and organisational resources of the EFGP and the decentral orientation of the greens, seeking to avoid a concentration of power, thereby losing a lot of political influence compared to its competitors from the socialists, the liberals and the Christian-democrats.

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## **The influence of the Democratic Party of the People of Europe-European Free Alliance on decision-making at European Union level**

Jean FANIEL, Sorina SOARE, Free University of Brussels (ULB)

### **1. Introduction**

The analysis of the place of European political parties in the Community decision-making process has often been confused with that of the action of parties and “major” parliamentary groups such as the EPP, the PES, the ELDR or the European Federation of Green Parties. On the other hand, the transnational activity of the regionalist movement <sup>1</sup> has often been left to one side by researchers, mainly because of its lack of electoral visibility.

It is clear that the regionalist parties have less political weight inside the borders of their State than their Social-Democratic or Conservative counterparts. Does this mean one has to consider them as ineffective, if not to say useless, and therefore turn away from studying them? This question has fed the theoretical study on the category of “small” parties. The contributions of this work are significant <sup>2</sup>. Thus it was legitimate to analyse the European federation of “least important” parties: The Democratic Party of the Peoples of Europe-European Free Alliance (DPPE-EFA).

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<sup>1</sup> In this contribution, we have chosen to use chiefly the term “regionalist” to define the parties it will be about. Other terms do exist however (peripheral regionalists, sub-national regionalists, peripheral nationalists, sub-state nationalists, minorities, minority nationalists, peripheral-ethnic nationalist, ethno-nationalists or even ethno-regionalists) as was underlined by Huri Türsan in her introduction to the collective work she edited with Lieven De Winter, *Regionalist Parties in Western Europe*, London, Routledge, 1998, p. 5. Also see the contribution of Daniel-Louis Seiler in the present work.

<sup>2</sup> See Maurice Duverger, *Les partis politiques*, Paris, Armand Colin, 1976, especially Chapter 2 of the second part (pp. 381-402); Giovanni Sartori, *Parties and party systems. A framework for analysis*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1976; Jean Charlot, “Du parti dominant”, in Jean Charlot, *Le phénomène gaulliste*, Paris, Fayard, 1970, p. 239 or, more recently, Annie Laurent, Bruno Villalba, *Les petites partis: de la petitesse en politique*, Paris, L’Harmattan, 1997.

What influence can the DPPE-EFA exert on decision-making at European level? In this contribution, we shall analyse the means that it manages to mobilise in order to *effectively* have an influence on this decision-making process. Because our research is on a relatively untouched domain (Lynch, 1994 & 1998), our conclusions can only be but provisional.

On a methodological level, we shall put the *relevant party* (Sartori, 1976) concept of G. Sartori to the test with the DPPE-EFA. This notion was conceived in order to define a precise situation at national level. Therefore it is a matter of adapting the Sartori tool to the subject of our study.

Through this approach, we shall try to see whether or not there is any significant impact on the European decision-making process by the DPPE-EFA and the regionalist parties that make it up. In order to carry out this work, we started by examining which are the institutions that are likely to facilitate regionalist influence on European policy. We especially looked into the action of this formation and its elected representatives within the European Parliament by analysing in particular the minutes of meetings that this gathering of regionalist parties held between 1981 and November 2000<sup>3</sup>. These reports constitute the “raw material” on which our empirical research is based. Various meetings with the leaders of this party complete our information.

This documents will allow us not only to understand how the DPPE-EFA has structured itself and expanded, but also and especially what its standpoints were before and even more, after certain major stages in the building of Europe such as the adoption of the Single Act, the Maastricht Treaty or the Treaty of Amsterdam. This will give us the possibility to briefly go back over the type of institutional system that these regionalist parties want to see implemented on a European scale in order to show to what extent their demands have been met up to now.

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<sup>3</sup> We would like to thank here the office of the DPPE-EFA for having given us access to these archives and in particular, Mr José Luis Linazasoro, Secretary General of this group, for the kindness with which he received us on several occasions.

## **2. Political parties and the building of Europe**

The building of Europe started in the fifties in the shape of co-operation especially centred on economic problems. Starting from The Hague Summit, the necessity for a politicisation of Community decisions opened a new phase. This implied the setting up of dialogue structures having democratic legitimacy and therefore the creation of partisan structures that go beyond the limited discussions within the Internationals on European affairs. The 1979 elections – the first with direct suffrage – acted as catalyst for the formation of the first partisan structures at European level (Dorget, 1999). These structures thus made their entry at European level by trying to give a partisan organisation to the parliamentary groups already in existence. The opening-up was made possible by the 1973 enlargement as well as by the increasingly animated debate on the question of *democratic deficit*. If the large party federations were created between 1974 and 1976, one had to wait until 1981 to witness the creation of a federation grouping regionalist parties under the name European Free Alliance.

The partisan construction thus received support through the building of Europe, above all enabling to establish contacts between leaders of national parties. At the same time, the small parties (at national level), up to then often excluded from European matters, tried to straddle this dynamic in order, through European party federations, to adopt other positions than those developed by the main parties of their country (G. & P. Pridham, 1981). Was this process crowned with success?

### **2.1. The European political party: between theoretical concept and empirical reality**

Defining a political party is a complex task that for a long time was limited to the national context. All the same, similar structures have been developed for several years at European level. Their development was accompanied by a debate on categorisation of these structures: are they enlarged replicas of national parties, do they fit the same logic, do they have the same ideological coherence?

Our goal here is not to go back over the elements of this discussion. Nonetheless, let us retain as starting point the definition of party by J. LaPalombara and M. Weiner<sup>4</sup>. Our research therefore touches one of the constitutive elements of this classic definition of the political party: its connection with exercising power.

J. LaPalombara and M. Weiner define political party as “an organisation that is locally connected, which interacts with the electorate and tries to attract the support of this electorate, which plays an important role in political recruitment and which intends to gain and hold onto power, alone or in coalition” (Weiner & Lapalombara, 1967). They have thus been able to bring out four characteristics peculiar to a partisan organisation: (1) the continuity of the organisation – i.e. its independence with regard to the longevity of its leaders; (2) the visible and probably permanent character, at local level, of the organisation; (3) the conscious determination of its leaders to conquer and retain the power of decision, alone or in coalition with others, both at local and national level, and not just to influence the exercising of power; (4) the concern of organising with a view to win supporters during elections or at least try to obtain popular support.

Our research focuses on the third of these characteristics: the conquest and the retention of the power of decision at European level, beyond simply influencing the decision-making process. Already at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, Max Weber described the political party as “an association built on a (formally) free commitment having as goal to obtain for its leaders the power within a group and for its active militants, ideal or material opportunities to pursue objective goals to obtain personal advantages or to achieve both of them put together” (Weber, 1995). The main question of this instrumentalist vision is therefore that of the will and the ability to exercise power.

Once present at European level, the political parties receive increased legitimacy. Most affirm their readiness to gain access to the decision-making process at this level. Yet the parties that are represented at European level do not all participate in the executive power leading their country. Some of

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<sup>4</sup> Definition that D.-L. Seiler does not hesitate to qualify as “smallest common denominator” to most of the researchers. See Daniel-Louis Seiler, *Les Partis Politiques*, Paris, Armand Colin, 1993, p. 11.

them don't even have political representation in their national legislative assembly (-ies). One could therefore qualify them as *irrelevant* at national level. Nevertheless, group all the parties that "don't count at national level" into the same category, makes one lose sight of another aspect: several of them are represented, sometimes even quite impressively, at national level. One consequently sees the appearance of great heterogeneity amongst groups having elected representatives at the European Parliament, heterogeneity having an effect on the European parties. The latter, who share the willingness to participate in the exercising of Community power, enjoy therefore a real ability to influence decision-making that differs so very much from one to the other, all not having the same access to national governmental responsibilities.

Amongst the aspects that are worth discussing in this respect is the question of elections. G. Sartori considers that a political party is a "group that presents candidates to elections and which, via the elections, is capable of appointing candidates (having candidates appointed) to civil service posts" (Sartori, 1976: 63). This definition raises two questions. At European Union level, the executive power is not exercised in the same way as at national level. On the other hand, the European elections are essentially "managed" by the national parties and very little by the transnational organisations. From this point of view, it is difficult, even theoretically, to put national and European political parties on equal footing.

More specifically, what is the situation of the DPPE-EFA regarding the exercising of European power? Gathering together parties that are minority parties at national level, but which sometimes occupy more comfortable positions on the regional political scene, the DPPE-EFA has difficulties in consolidating its identity. This is due to the weakness of its parliamentary representation at European level. In order to have some visibility, the elected representatives of the DPPE-EFA have entered collaboration agreements with the Greens or the Radicals, depending on the periods. The difficulties are also due to the quasi-absence of its members in national governments, and hence in the Councils of the European ministers<sup>5</sup>.

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<sup>5</sup> To date, not many States of the European Union associate the ministers of the federated bodies to the exercising of European power in the matters that affect them. For example, such is the case, according to distinct modes, of Germany and Belgium. However, the DPPE-EFA does not have German member party and the *Volksunie*, Flemish party that is one of the kingpins of the DPPE-EFA, does not have,



The heterogeneity of the different parties is also implicated. The DPPE-EFA counts amongst its members parties that are important at regional or national level: the Volksunie in Belgium or the Scottish National Party. But there are also groups with very limited: the Occitanie party, the Fryske Nasjonale Partij or the Partei Deutschsprachigen Belgier. Conversely, some major regionalist parties are not in the DPPE-EFA: Convergència i Unió in Catalonia or the Südtiroler Volkspartei in Italy <sup>6</sup>.

One constituent serves as ideological foundation of the DPPE-EFA: the promotion of the fringe and the quest for recognition of diversity. It is difficult to ascertain the position of the DPPE-EFA on a left-right cleavage <sup>7</sup>. On the other hand, it is rather obvious that it comes under the “fringe” aspect of the centre-fringe cleavage shown by S. Rokkan and S.M. Lipset. This favours the construction of its identity, but does not yet inform us on its relations with the institutional system of the European Union.

Therefore we have to consider the relations of the DPPE-EFA with the ruling “regime” at European level. In spite of their often anti-authority/establishment origin, most of the member parties of the DPPE-EFA are systemic parties. They want to get into the system in order to change it. The politisation of ethnic or regional cleavages is therefore not symptomatic

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at the level of Belgian Federal entities, any ministerial portfolios that would allow it to participate in certain specific meetings of European councils. On the other hand, such is the case of two Spanish parties (the Partido Andalucista in Andalusie and Eusko Alkartasuna in the Basque country). But the Constitution of this country (i.e. Spain) does not provide for the representation of its autonomous communities in Brussels. Which explains the willingness of the DPPE-EFA to change the Spanish situation, or even impose mechanisms of regional representation at the European Councils to all the Member States of the Union. Cf. José Luis Linazasoro, *The European political parties. Democratic Party of the People of Europe-European Free Alliance, DPPE-EFA*, Presentation document written by the Secretary General 1996, p. 6.

<sup>6</sup> On this account, it is interesting to point out the path of the Partido Nacionalista Vasco (PNV) which for a long time kept away from the EFA and got involved in the EPP before recently asking to be able to sit as observer within the DPPE-EFA.

<sup>7</sup> Especially because of the fact that some members of the DPPE-EFA are located to the left nationally speaking, whilst others are classed more to the right.

of an anarchist or anti-systemic movement. All depends on the tradition of the parties and their birth<sup>8</sup>. Generally speaking, the parties affiliated to the DPPE-EFA have abandoned their radical positions and with one exception<sup>9</sup>, have declared themselves in favour of a federal Europe based on the existence of regions and peoples and not Nation States.

In his analysis of party systems, G. Sartori sought a new way to approach the influence the parties can have in a given political configuration. The “relevance” of political parties is “the key concept. This notion incorporates the electoral and parliamentary influence of parties, as well as their relation with the governmental coalition.

For this last point, the relevance includes two elements: the potential for coalition or blackmail<sup>10</sup>. The possibility for party to be included in a majority government coalition makes it a *relevant party*. But in certain cases, a political group which is systematically excluded by the others of the coalition group can nevertheless be considered as *relevant* because of its ability to blackmail, its power of intimidation towards these other parties which are forced to unite in order to block its access to executive power.

The absence of participation in a national executive therefore imposes some limit to the notion of relevance to the European party federations. Nonetheless, it does not forbid looking into the influence that the DPPE-EFA could exert on the European Commission or on the Council, institutions which have the bulk of Community executive power.

What about the parliamentary force of the DPPE-EFA at the European Parliament? We shall examine its ability to form an independent political

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<sup>8</sup> Hence, the Scottish National Party is traditionally a supporter of independence, whilst its Welsh counterpart, the Plaid Cymru, often hesitates between autonomy and independence.

<sup>9</sup> Only the SNP has adopted a different position being favourable to an intergovernmental Europe in which the States, and not the regions, occupy a pre-eminent place. This is obviously to be placed in connection with the pro-independence tendencies of this party. Cf. Peter Lynch, “Co-operation between regionalist parties at the level of the European Union: the European Free Alliance”, *op. cit.*, p. 198.

<sup>10</sup> *Governing potential and coalition potential. Id.*, p. 122.

group within this assembly and its ability to blackmail: compared to the other groups and inside those of which it is (was) a member.

### 3. The political means of the DPPE-EFA

The agglomeration of regionalist parties at European level shows their willingness to access decision-making at European level. In addition, the DPPE-EFA constitution clearly formulates this willingness: the “Federation [... aims to] facilitate participation in European politics by parties which [...] would find themselves inevitably excluded”<sup>11</sup>. But this same text also makes the point that it is not an easy thing for the member parties of the DPPE-EFA. How does this group try then to attain the goal it has set for itself?

There is no choice but to accept that the means that the DPPE-EFA has at its disposal are relatively limited. They essentially come down to the activity of the elected representatives of member parties of this federation at the European Parliament.

No European Commissioner comes from a member party of the DPPE-EFA. Neither does the latter have any national and/or regional representatives sitting in a Council of Ministers<sup>12</sup>. The only forces it can mobilise at institutional level are therefore at the level of its elected representatives to the European Parliament<sup>13</sup>. The DPPE-EFA is very conscious of this fact

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<sup>11</sup> Article 2, al. 4.

<sup>12</sup> To be sure, parties like the Volksunie or the Partido nacionalista vasco are regularly included in regional coalitions and even if their ministers do not have access to the different European Councils of Ministers, they can influence the policy followed by the executive bodies of which they are members. If this influence can have repercussions on decision-making at Community level, it is only in a rather indirect manner, however, and because of this, very difficult to assess. Moreover, it does not seem that in this case, these parties express themselves on behalf of the DPPE-EFA members and by defending the stands defined by this European party federation, but more by following their own political programme.

<sup>13</sup> The Committee of the Regions, which could *in principle* seem to be an institution favourable to regionalist parties and consequently, to their transnational structure, remains first and foremost a consultative organ. The DPPE-EFA also bases little hope of this institution influencing European decision-making, even if it is not completely disinterested as such.

since its constitution mentions in its general assemblies that only “the members of the European Parliament and of the Committee of the regions present reports on the activities”. They make no provision regarding potential commissioners or ministers sitting in a council or at the European Council.

### **3.1. Increase its ability to influence at the European Parliament**

Aware that the European Parliament is as such the only Union institution to which the DPPE-EFA has access, the party is seeking to increase the powers of this assembly and to increase its visibility and its force within it.

The DPPE-EFA considers that the powers of the European Assembly are too reduced compared to those of the Commission and the Council. Consequently, it wants a rebalancing of the balance of power between these two institutions. But the formula it proposes reflects its regionalist character. Since 1987<sup>14</sup>, the EFA has been demanding the creation of a second chamber within the European Parliament. The “Senate of the Regions”, idea still defended by the DPPE-EFA, would be set up on a regional basis and should “be able to play a part so that the autonomous communities and the regions can exert influence on the policy and building of Europe”<sup>15</sup>. In concrete terms, this two-chamber system would be made up of the current assembly elected by direct suffrage and a chamber formed on the basis of “the present

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<sup>14</sup> See the report of the meeting that the EFA held on 12 and 13 February 1987 at Leeuwarden (Friesland, Netherlands) – document ARC-EVA/87-062, pp. 3-5 – and the official statement of views that followed: *European Free Alliance Leeuwarden 11-14 February 1987. Resolution on the European Act*, p. 2, point 6.

<sup>15</sup> See José Luis Linazasoro, *The European political parties. Democratic Party of the People of Europe-European Free Alliance, DPPE-EFA*, Presentation document written by the Secretary General, 1996, p. 3. Cf. more recently the *Declaration of Brussels: The nations and the regions of Europe in the government of Europe*, adopted by the DPPE-EFA on 9 November 2000 during the “First DPPE-EFA Summit of ministers, heads of party and MEP’s”.

Council of Ministers and the present Committee of the Regions”<sup>16</sup>. That would considerably diminish the powers of the Council and that would open up this second chamber to regional(ist) demands. Nevertheless, such a reform is not on the agenda of the European Union institutional negotiations.

Failing to impose an increase in Parliament prerogatives<sup>17</sup>, the DPPE-EFA is trying to strengthen its delegation. In order to do so, it is seeking to increase the number of elected representatives its member parties have and to allow its representatives to form a parliamentary group inside the European assembly.

Several member parties of the DPPE-EFA are small groups at national level. Therefore it is vital for them to stand for the European elections in cartel lists in order to secure one or another elected representative. On various occasions, the DPPE-EFA has served as framework for setting up such electoral lists gathering together several of its members present in different regions of the same State (these lists were not only created for the European elections, but they also facilitated grouping on the occasion of national elections<sup>18</sup>). And so several separatist parties grouped around the Partito Sardo d’Azione and the Valdôtaine Union presented themselves to Italian voters on the same list when they ran, successfully, in the 1984 European

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<sup>16</sup> *Les positions européennes de l’Alliance Libre Européenne - Parti Démocratique des Peuples d’Europe dans la perspective de la Conférence intergouvernementale de 1996*, p. 11.

<sup>17</sup> It must be noted that the major institutional changes that touch European architecture result quasi exclusively the work of Intergovernmental Conferences (IGC) and of the Commission. Well, the DPPE-EFA has no intermediary not in the first ones or within the second. This can perhaps explain in part why the demands of this party were hardly ever translated into the major reforms of the past few years (Single European Act, Treaties of Maastricht and Amsterdam). It is also interesting to notice in this respect that after the adoption of these different texts, the discussions conducted within the DPPE-EFA have emphasised that the proposals of this party had not been heard. See for example *EFA 12 and 13 February 1987. Institutional Affairs*, document ARC-EVA/87-062, 6 pp. after the adoption of the Single European Act and *Meeting of the Bureau of the European Free Alliance, Strasbourg, 10-11 February 1992* as well as *General Assembly of the EFA, 4-5 May 1992, Brussels*, document ARC-SECT 92/463 after that of the Maastricht Treaty.

<sup>18</sup> See in 1992 the list Federalismo in Italy, and the list Corsica Nazione in France.

elections<sup>19</sup>. Five years later, new experiences of this type were attempted, which is shown by the discussions conducted within the EFA regarding France, Italy and Spain. During this election, the representative of the *Unione di U populu Corsu* was the third elected representative on the list of the French Greens. In Spain, several nationalist/regionalist parties got together on the *For Europe of the People* enabling the election of a representative from the *Esquerra Republicana de Catalunya*; the same type of situation allowed the election of a Canarian candidate. At the same time, in Italy, the representative from the *Partito Sardo d'Azione* held onto the seat won in 1984 thanks to the participation of his party in the *Federalismo* list. In 1993-1994, Italian regionalist parties again wanted to run together, but they finally renounced forming an alliance with the *Lega Nord*, excluded shortly afterward from the EFA because of its participation in the Italian government alongside the *Alleanza Nazionale*<sup>20</sup>. Finally, in Spain, a common list united the groups *Eusko Alkartasuna*, *Esquerra Republicana de Catalunya* and the *Bloque Nacionalista Galego* at the time of the 1999 European elections. Up to then, programmatic differences had prevented such a grouping. The alliance created with the help of the DPPE-EFA enabled these three parties to increase their electoral influence in the Spanish legislative elections that followed.

Besides this contribution to the setting up of cartels, the DPPE-EFA also supports its members by supplying them with election propaganda materials. In the past, it has also occurred that some EFA meetings took place in regions where elections were going to be held that involved some of its members<sup>21</sup>.

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<sup>19</sup> On the preparation and the results of the regrouping, see the reports of the EFA meetings prior to and following the vote: *Report of the meeting of the EFA on 6 April 1984 at Brussels*, pp. 2-3 and *Report of the meeting of the European Free Alliance from 22 to 25 November 1984 at Saint-Vincent*, p. 2.

<sup>20</sup> It is nevertheless interesting to note that during the discussions that followed this decision, the Italian members of the DPPE-EFA such as the *Partito Sardo d'Azzione* and the *Union Valdôtaine* were the ones most in favour of the reintegration of the *Lega* within the European party. See the reports of the meeting of the DPPE-EFA policy-making committee on 14 October 1996 (DOC\_FR/CR/311/3211165.cb) and of the General Assembly held at Barcelona on 8 November 1996 (DOC\_FR/ARE/313/313672.hd).

<sup>21</sup> This was the case of the meeting of the EFA bureau which was held in Friesland on 6 March 1982 in order to support the *Friesian National Party (FNP)* with a view to the elections of the following 24 March. See *Minutes of the meeting of 21 September 1981*, p. 2 and *Meeting of the EFA policy-making committee on 6 March 1982*, 7 pp.

### 3.2. Forming a political group

The other means used by the DPPE-EFA to strengthen its presence at the European Parliament is to form a political group enjoying the benefits (material, financial, etc.) that this assembly grants to this type of structure. Nevertheless, alone, this party has never been in a position to meet the requirements imposed for setting up such an organ, its number of elected representatives being too small. Consequently after each European election, it has had to form alliances with other groups represented in the Parliament. Hence its objective of creating an exclusively regionalist political group has not been met up to now.

The political groups in which the DPPE-EFA has been involved these past twenty years have not all grouped the same participants and therefore have not *a fortiori* followed the same ideological line. The DPPE-EFA itself has not always had the same influence with these successive groups.

First (1979-1984), several regionalist parties were members of the technical group at the European Parliament. This was very mixed, but although it didn't group together all the regionalist parties with seats at the European Assembly, it did serve as base (by the contacts and meetings that were established through the regionalist parties that were members) for the constitution of the European Free Alliance (EFA) in 1981. The initial members of the EFA were parties that were signatories of the Declarations of Bastia (1979) and of Brussels (1981) which stressed European decentralisation, the autonomy and co-operation among parties.

Under the ensuing legislature (1984-1989), the regionalist parties formed, alongside the Green parties, the second "pillar" of the Rainbow group.

The 1989 elections increased the parliamentary representation of the EFA member parties, but also that of the Greens, which led them to create their own group and to break away from the Rainbow Group. The Partido Andalucista having joined the EFA and the Scottish National Party being

close, the regionalists established themselves as main constituent of this second Rainbow.

The insertion of Article 138A into the treaty of Maastricht led the EFA to form a European political party during its General Assembly at Cardiff on 18 and 19 October 1993. However, the EFA remains in fact more a federation of parties than an actual political party, which the first Article of its constitution highlights<sup>22</sup>. Two years later, General Assembly at Brussels conducted a reform of the constitution<sup>23</sup>. A new name was attached to the old one. The EFA became the Democratic Party of the Peoples of Europe- European Free Alliance (DPPE-EFA)<sup>24</sup>.

In the meantime, the elections of 1994 again strengthened the Green representation at the European Parliament. The Green then decided to not allow the EFA members to form an autonomous structure within their group. So the three elected regionalist representatives chose to become members of the European Radical Alliance alongside the Energie Radicale group of the Frenchman Bernard Tapie (13 elected representatives) and the Italian list, Panella (2 seats). In the same period, the Welsh Plaid Cymru, which left the EFA at the beginning of 1994, expressed its desire to reintegrate the regionalist structure<sup>25</sup>. However that did not enable the EFA to exercise *leadership* within this parliamentary group. The EFA had some financial stability during this period, which allowed it to maintain meetings of its members at regular intervals. In the course of this legislature, the discussions conducted inside it were essentially on its enlargement to include other parties<sup>26</sup> and on the question of a possible reintegration of the Lega Nord. This question put the very existence of the DPPE-EFA at risk.

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<sup>22</sup> “European Free Alliance is a federation of Political Parties”.

<sup>23</sup> The Congress held on 2 and 3 October 1995.

<sup>24</sup> The name thus adopted is the result of a debate focussed around not using names with too strong a nationalist or regionalist connotation that could be misinterpreting in some Member States.

<sup>25</sup> See the report of decisions made by the European Free Alliance policy-making committee, Brussels, on 19 and 20 September 1994 (DOC\_FR/DV/259/259586.cha).

<sup>26</sup> Especially with a view to forming a strictly regionalist Parliamentary group, as shown by the retranscribed exchanges in the report of the DPPE-EFA meeting at Cardiff on 12 June 1998 (DOC\_FR/PV/356/356681).



The elections of June 1999 gave a boost to the DPPE-EFA representation at the European. The ten elected representative from this group joined the thirty-eight Green representatives to form what is presently the fourth largest political group at the Parliament. At the same time as that, the Basque national party (PNV) left the EPP and started to get closer to the DPPE-EFA, in which it today has observer status. The Partido Andalucista saw its request for membership in the DPPE-EFA unanimously approved by the Alliance members.

The DPPE-EFA experienced an evolution in three phases similar to that experience by the other European party federations. The 1970's saw the creation of co-operation structures between national parties, essentially from the angle of the development of European issues and European integration (Hix, 1996). That is the case of the transnational activities of regionalist parties prior to the creation of the EFA<sup>27</sup>. Secondly, the 1979 direct election was followed by a period, often described as *a failure*, of building a functional European partisan network. It is the period in which the EFA was created and in which it had its first activities. After that, it had to wait for the 1990's and the explicit recognition of the European political parties in the texts of the Treaty on European Union in order to witness the relaunch of this process. It is on this legal and political basis that the European federations transformed themselves into political parties and that the EFA became the DPPE-EFA.

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<sup>27</sup> One notes already in 1949 the appearance of the European Congress of Regions and Nations, set up on the initiative of the Union bretonne des fédéralistes (UBF) as well as Scottish and Welsh representatives. Its objective was to involve these entities more in European issues, but the experience quickly failed, notably because of the struggles that opposed federalist and intergovernmentalist factions. In 1973, the UBF launched a new initiative through the constitution of a Policy-making Committee for non-represented European Nations. In 1976, the latter adopted an emblematic programme of its ideological leanings: the Declaration of Principles – Charter of the people and national communities that took up the main points of the programme of the regional Congress. The essence of this programme was the right to political, cultural and linguistic self-determination of peoples as well as a more decentralised view of European structures. It is on the basis of this policy-making committee that the European Free Alliance was born following the changes made at the level of the European Parliament.

Although not succeeding in imposing increased powers for the European Parliament in a line favourable towards regionalists, the DPPE-EFA has at least succeeded, in a limited way to be sure, to strengthen its delegation within the European Assembly. One cannot speak of “conquest of power”, but can one allude to an *influence* on the European decision-making process?

### 3.3. The action of the DPPE-EFA in the European Parliament

The activity of the DPPE-EFA in the Parliament leaves its mark in different manners. Since 1981, elected representatives of the EFA member parties take the floor in the European Assembly on behalf of this federation of parties and no longer just on behalf of their national political group. This event, seemingly insignificant, has taken on a certain importance for this organisation. These representatives were able to bring to the Parliamentary agenda the demands decided on during the in the EFA meetings on such varied subjects as the participation of the regions in Community decision-making and institutional reforms, European Union energy policy or further the ‘mad cow’ crisis.

Moreover, for nearly two decades, the EFA elected representatives introduced resolution proposals to the European Parliament in several domains (particularly that of minority languages and cultures<sup>28</sup>). Besides that, the main stands taken by the regionalists, even if they did not always find any response in the Parliament, affected, as time went by, regional policy, security policy and foreign affairs (the regionalists were amongst the first to want to recognise the independence of Croatia and Slovenia, long before the European Union Member States actually did so), social policy, transport, tourism or the use of renewable energy sources.

The DPPE-EFA is active in several parliamentary committees, in line or not with matters concerning the rights of regional minorities. At present, it holds a vice-presidency and three posts of committee co-ordinators<sup>29</sup>. During

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<sup>28</sup> See in this connection the preamble of the European Parliament Resolution on minority languages and cultures. *Official Journal of the European Communities* n° C 318 of 30 November 1987, pp. 160 *et seq.*

<sup>29</sup> See in this connection the monthly *newsletters* of the DPPE-EFA. Each month, these electronic newsletters take up the remit of this party’s elected representatives in the different Parliamentary committees and with the Green/EFA parliamentary group.

votes in plenary sitting, it has at its disposal the votes of the elected representatives of its member parties.

Finally, DPPE-EFA representatives meet the elected representative of other parties, which enables them to establish contacts, or even sometime exert an influence on these representatives. For this reason, the work inside the political groups of which the DPPE-EFA has been successively a member may prove important.

Nevertheless, what is the concrete impact of these different forms of action? It would seem that in terms of influence on the decision-making process, the results are very meagre indeed. Thus the texts adopted by the European Parliament at the instigation of the DPPE-EFA are not generally restrictive for the Commission and the Council and do not even have a great impact on the Parliament itself<sup>30</sup>. On the other hand the DPPE-EFA is far from being able to constitute majorities in Parliamentary committee and even less so during votes in plenary sittings. As a rule, the large political groups can even do without its support in order to have the texts adopted that they support. Finally, this transnational structure has never even had the majority inside the political group in which it is sitting. Therefore, the influence it can exert on its partners must be the result of consensualism more than of a balance of power in its favour.

### **Conclusion**

The objective of this research was to see to what extent the Democratic Party of the Peoples of Europe-Free European Alliance has, up to now, shown itself capable of influencing the decision-making process at European Union level. For this, we have been interested in the study of the European party federations in general. Having gone over the different conceptual tools for the study of political groups and their influence on decision-makings, we then looked into the specific case of the DPPE-EFA.

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<sup>30</sup> In this respect, one can examine for example the above-mentioned text on minority languages and cultures.

First, we examined the different political means this party has at its disposal for influencing the Community decision-making process. Amongst the three Union institutions sharing legislative power, only the Parliament gives the DPPE-EFA the possibility to have its voice heard, the regionalist group not having any relay neither at the Council nor within the Commission. Thus one cannot consider it as *relevant* as far as the executive goes. Hence we focussed our study on the activity of this structure within the European Assembly. That allowed us to show that the Parliamentary influence of the DPPE-EFA is rather limited and that its ability to blackmail with regard to other political groups, and even its Green partner inside the present Greens-EFA group, is weak.

At the end of this course, we therefore arrived at the conclusion that the DPPE-EFA only plays a relatively limited role in decision-making at European Union level. After having examined the relevance of this European federation of parties, we have no choice but to note that as things stand at present, this group must be considered as *irrelevant party*, since it only has a few seats, it is not needed for the establishment of coalitions during decision-making and that it has no real ability to blackmail other European parties. In that, the DPPE-EFA finds itself on the European political scene in a situation that a lot of member parties are familiar with at national or even regional level. Nevertheless, things could well change in the future. For example, during the next change in the presidency of the European Parliament, the majorities that will emerge to back candidates could be weak. In this case, it is probable that the ten elected representatives of the DPPE-EFA will be wooed a great deal. On the other hand, if the representation machinery of federated entities (regions, autonomous communities, etc.) were to change during councils of European ministers, the DPPE-EFA could also play an increased role on the European political scene.

Must one conclude as such that this regrouping of regionalist parties serves no purpose at present time? Obviously not. During its first two decades of existence, the DPPE-EFA had several positive effects on the parties that played a part in its establishment or entered its ranks. In the first place, it enabled the establishment of contacts between these different groups. Solidarity was thus created amongst parties with a view to developing a common defence of minorities and not a generalised turning in on themselves, as shown by the DPPE-EFA statements of views. Indeed, another function of this organisation has been to bring together different regionalist

parties with a view to matching their view on a certain number of questions, relating or not to the building of Europe, often going beyond the themes purely linked to the defence of minorities and of “nations without State”<sup>31</sup>. Several joint texts bear witness to this. Its elected representatives were then able to officially convey these positions outside this party. We have also mentioned the support that this structure has been able to give to its members in order for them to increase their chances of electoral successes. Lastly, it clearly appears that for most of the groups that make up this part (and even, if not especially, for those that want to enter it), the membership in a transnational structure recognised within the European Union imparts a certain legitimacy at internal level, with regard to its members and at external level, vis-à-vis other regional and national parties<sup>32</sup>.

What are ultimately the prospects for this organisation? They have to be analysed from two points of view: the evolution of its political influence and its influence at European level. Since its creation at the beginning of the 1980's, the European Free Alliance has gradually taken shape and acquired some stability, in spite of rather weak political, human and financial means compared to other European party federations. From what seemed to be a lot at the beginning, like the “creation” of the Belgian Volksunie<sup>33</sup>, as time went by, this organisation changed into an alliance of more than twenty parties<sup>34</sup> through successive enlargements. It has succeeded in attracting to it a significant proportion of “large” West European regionalist groups

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<sup>31</sup> According to the terminology often used by the DPPE-EFA itself.

<sup>32</sup> Besides, it is striking to see that several presidents of member parties of DPPE-EFA that we were able to meet during the “First Summit” of this party suggested this element themselves as being one of the main ones having pushed them to request membership in this organisation.

<sup>33</sup> Jaak Vandemeulebroucke, himself member of this party and former president of the DPPE-EFA, declared in 1984: “up to here, the EFA has been too much under the thumb of the Volksunie”. See the *Report of the meeting of the European Free Alliance of 22 to 25 November 1984 at Saint-Vincent*, p. 3.

<sup>34</sup> During the general assembly held on the occasion of its “First Summit” (9 November 2000), the DPPE-EFA welcomed four new members (Veneti d'Europa, Libertà Emiliana-Nazione Emilia, the Ligue Savoisiene and Vinhozito-Rainbow, party defending the Macedonian minority in Greece), thus bringing its numbers to 23 members and 1 observer (the PNV). The Partit Socialista de Mallorca-Entesa Nacionalista and the Bloc Nacionalista Valencià asked to be given observer status.

(Volksunie at the start, Plaid Cymru and Scottish National Party along the way, Partido Nacionalista Vasco today). At the same time, it has given its smallest members the opportunity to be closely associated to the debates driving European policy<sup>35</sup>. As time went by, its stands became more well-founded, reflecting a strengthening of the unity of views within this group<sup>36</sup>. For that matter, the recent organisation of its “First Summit of ministers, party leaders and members of Parliament” shows its current health. The DPPE-EFA will very likely continue its route and strengthen its structure in the coming years and do so even if one of its historic “pillars” were to disappear<sup>37</sup>.

If the DPPE-EFA has, up to now, only been able to exert a relatively limited influence on the decision-making process at European Union level, an evolution is conceivable nevertheless. Indeed, the ten DPPE-EFA members of the European Parliament are today members of the fourth largest political group at the European Parliament, together with the Greens. As it happens, it seem that via this structure, the regionalist parties could talk their Green partners into taking into account some of their demands and thus benefit from the political relays the Green groups have at their disposal<sup>38</sup>. Moreover, the absence of a majority-opposition logic in the European Parliament like one finds at national level, will probably give this parliamentary group the possibility to use its political influence to influence decision-making at European level. In this case, the efforts of the DPPE-EFA

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<sup>35</sup> On this point, our report joins the analysis made by Peter Lynch of advantages that the regionalist parties who are members of it have been able to draw from the creation of the EFA. See Peter LYNCH, “Co-operation between regionalist parties at the level of the European Union: the European Free Alliance”, *op. cit.*, pp. 191-192.

<sup>36</sup> One can also compare the *Second Bastia Declaration. 11 and 12 November 1982* (2 pages) and the very recent *Brussels Declaration: The nations and regions of Europe in the Government of Europe* (4 pages), adopted on 9 November 2000.

<sup>37</sup> Here we are thinking of the Volksunie in particular, whose internal debates as to its survival, its transformation or its disappearance regularly shake the Belgian political scene. For example, see the interview of Patrik Vankrunkelsven, former president of this organisation, who feels that his group has “a one in three chance” of remaining as a “full-fledged” party. A few weeks later, the outgoing president of this party, Geert Bourgeois, spoke of a 10% chance. See respectively *Le Matin*, 4 November 2000 and *Le Soir*, 5 February 2001.

<sup>38</sup> Besides, the members of the DPPE-EFA are indeed aware of this possibility, as was confirmed to us by their president, Mrs Nelly Maes, 9 November 2000.

to form, alone or in coalition, a political group in the Parliament will then be rewarded.

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## **European Party Federations' Perspectives**

Luciano BARDI, University of Pisa

### **1. Introduction**

The obvious purpose of a book on parties at the European Union (EU) level (Europarties henceforth) is to monitor Europarty development as an important analytical focus for an assessment of the EU's political system's evolution. The obvious purpose of the final chapter of a book on Europarties is then to summarise the most important findings emerging from the analysis in the previous chapters, and perhaps even more importantly, to address the question of what perspectives exist for the development of Europarties and for that of their ability to perform party functions. This could be done through an enumeration and discussion of the main constraints and stimuli that, on the basis of the findings emerging from the previous chapters, appear to shape and condition such processes. For example: political and institutional developments such as those that have led to some Treaty of Nice provisions; or those that might be consequences of the Treaty itself, such as: the continuing aspirations on the part of at least a portion of European elites and, to a lesser extent, of the European citizens, for more advanced institutional reforms of the EU; or, more specifically, the projected Europarty statute. But also: the prospect of EU enlargement; the growing abstentionism of European electorates; the continuing democratic deficit of the EU. All of these can be seen as positive or negative factors of Europarty development and their potential impact can be the object of discussion and assessment. But what appears to be a rather simple exercise is unfortunately complicated by a serious conceptual and methodological problem that is well known in the literature and that has been confirmed in several chapters in this volume (Johansson, Lord, Magnette, Dorget): the definition of Europarty and the choice of the best approach to study Europarties. Europarty contours remain undetermined from a legal, institutional, political viewpoint and in terms of the relationships of Europarties with the various national and supranational systems with and within which they interact. This last aspect has led Karl Magnus Johansson to describe Europarties as structurally complex institutions, whose study requires a multiplicity of approaches. Ideally all the various Europarty components should be included in an integrated study and all relevant approaches should be used.

Unavoidably most studies are the result of choices that limit empirical investigation to one particular Europarty aspect and one analytical approach. Whilst this maybe perfectly understandable and acceptable, it is important to know what are the implications and consequences of these choices. In this volume a choice has been made for the study of transnational federations as Europarty components through what is to a large extent a comparative politics lens. Before we try to discuss Europarty perspectives we must understand the conceptual and methodological implications of this choice.

## **2. The definition and the study of Europarties**

Political parties have always been considered as important actors in the European Community's (EC) and subsequently in the EU's development. Especially after the European Parliament's (EP) first direct elections in 1979, scholarly interest in the development and potential role of Europarties has been conspicuous. Europarty studies and EU studies in general have long been at the centre of a very heated theoretical debate that was sparked off by the respective supporters of International Relations (IR) and Comparative Politics (CP) and was then extended to other approaches. This debate is part of a wider discussion on the adequacy of the two disciplines for the study of the relationship between the international and domestic political systems. Its contents and significance are brilliantly outlined elsewhere in this volume (Johansson) and need not be repeated here. It will suffice to note that the IR approach, by privileging the study of national actors' behaviour and of its effects certainly contributes to the explanation of why the EU has progressed, through the identification of the reasons why member states find it convenient and want it to happen, but cannot grasp the reasons of the EU's and of its institutional components' internal evolution (something that often takes place according to modalities that elude member state control). These latter aspects are on the other hand the object of CP EU studies. The EU is seen as a developing domestic political system, whose components are compared to their national state counterparts, in terms of their developmental process, functions and overall performance. The IR approach is most apt for the study of the conditions that permit discrete advances in EU development and legislative innovations that occur respectively through the signing and ratification of new Treaties and the reaching of decisions in the various Councils. In other words we could describe IR's intergovernmentalist approach as particularly useful for our understanding the reasons for the development of the EU, rather than the modalities and the extent of that

development. The latter aspects can on the other hand be better understood by studies based on the CP approach. In fact the CP approach is better suited for observing and understanding developments that continuously take place between, or irrespective of, Treaties, and for evaluating the impacts, even undesired ones, of intergovernmental decisions. Ideally a complete study of the EU should combine both approaches. But the interactions between the various levels and arenas that contribute to EU development and politics are so complex as to suggest that the alternatives posed by the simple theoretical and methodological dichotomy we have discussed so far may be insufficient. Johansson indeed suggests that for their understanding it is necessary to resort to network and multilevel nested-games approaches. Even discounting the limits of the rational choice paradigm at the basis of the latter, the risk with all the more complex approaches is that they are more apt to produce highly formalised models than workable research designs. Even Risse-Kappen (1996, pp. 62-63) after describing “the EU as a multilevel structure of governance where private, governmental, transnational and supranational actors deal with each other in highly complex networks of varying density, as well as horizontal and vertical depth» agrees that more limited approaches (in his case the intergovernmentalist one) may be «more appropriate... than overly complex network models”. Obviously choosing a more limited approach implies accepting more limited objectives in terms of knowledge of the «beast». This volume follows more closely in the tradition of CP studies of the EU. As such it must be seen as an effort apt at producing results concerning aspects related more to the *how* and *how much* than to the *why* of EU and Europarty development.

This characteristic is reinforced by the other decision to privilege the study of transnational federations rather than other Europarty components. In fact, political parties are present at the EU level with two types of Eurospecific structures: EP party groups and extra-parliamentary organisations. National parties are also relevant in that they directly and actively engage in EU politics, but, above all because they still constitute the only Europarty link with civil society. Article 138a of the Maastricht Treaty stresses the importance of parties at the European level for integration in the Union, as they “contribute to forming a European awareness and to expressing the political will of the citizens of the Union”. This suggests that Europarties should develop education and linkage functions, but so far national parties have maintained a monopoly over the latter and genuine Europarty development has suffered as a result.

The three types of structures can be seen as the “three faces” of Europarty organisations: national parties are equivalent to the “party on the ground”<sup>1</sup>, extra-parliamentary organisations correspond to the “party in central office”, whereas EP party groups can be seen as the party in “central office” (see: Katz and Mair, 1993). An integration of the three faces appears to be necessary for full Europarty development<sup>2</sup>. This is an unlikely short-term prospect as long as national parties have a privileged relationship with European societies and use it in competition with rather than for the benefit of Europarties. For the time being, however, this tripartite distinction can be very useful relatively to the study of two intimately connected Europarty aspects: origins and analytical focus.

The literature is divided on the issue of which is the best focus for the study of Europarty development: EP party groups or federations. Subscribers to the two opposing views have stressed potential for performance as a dominant criterion. Transnational party federations are still very underdeveloped organisations. Conversely, EP party groups have proven capable of great advances because of the important incentives (material resources as well as better committee and EP leadership positions) for party group formation and operation in the EP (see, for example, Attinà, 1990; Jacobs, Corbett, and Shackleton, 1995; Raunio, 1997). Conversely, other authors stress the fact that in recent years transnational federations have seen their importance enhanced by the role taken in inter-governmental conferences (IGCs) (Ladrech, 1993, Hix, 1995, 2001) and point out that EP party-groups are not the only providers of incentives towards Europarty development. Transnational federations (and their leaders’ meetings) have proven capable of attracting potential new members, whose leaders are eager to join the Europarty elite. Europarty assessments in this volume, as we shall see, have provided non conclusive evidence on their real strength and on that of their components.

Distinguishing analytically the three faces of Europarty organisation allows us to shift the discussion from empirical evidence, which remains contradictory and subject to arbitrary interpretation and judgement, to the development of hypotheses based on the discussion of party origins (Duverger, 1954). Parties either originate and develop from the organised

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<sup>1</sup> National party delegations represent transnational federations’ only *de facto* membership even if individual membership is formally permitted (Bardi, 1994).

<sup>2</sup> This is implicit in Panebianco’s (1988) notion of systemness.

expression of societal interests (extra-parliamentary origin) or from the organisational and political needs of elected officials (parliamentary origin). In either case, and even when both sets of factors are relevant, a possibility Maurice Duverger himself admits (1954, XXX), the central organisation of the party is a product and not a cause of these processes. Central organisations are then useful foci for observing the extent of party development, or even how parties are organised and perform their functions, but they appear to be inadequate to explain the causes and origins of party development and to help us predict whether and how full development will occur. In other words looking at transnational federations can only reveal the extent of Europarty development, something that can only originate from EP party groups or, alternatively or jointly, from national parties. As the empirical studies presented in this volume all concern transnational federations, all considerations on Europarties' prospects for future development will necessarily be based on speculations.

### **3. Europarty federations: the state of the art**

The creation of specific Europarty federations in the expectation of the first EP direct elections was hailed as a very important event for the EC's democratic development. It was felt that this would eventually lead to the formation of fully fledged Europarties capable of performing vital functions for the developing EC political system. So far, these expectations do not seem to have been met. Transnational party federations, appear to be very weak institutions if regarded from the point of view of media access, membership, staffing, finance, and overall internal organisation (Bardi, 1994). Data reported in Hix (2001), even if indicating increases in transnational federation funding and staffing, to a large extent confirms the findings from earlier research, as absolute levels in both departments remain very low. Hix's own interpretation is however more positive at least in terms of the financial aspects. He in fact considers transnational federations' budgets adequate as he compares them to national parties' central offices' budgets rather than to the total national party budgets. But overall, in Hix's own words, transnational "federations remain... dependent on the resources, support and commitment of the national member parties" (2001). Similarly disheartening impressions are in general suggested by other works specifically dedicated to individual Europarties.

All five existing Europarty federations have been considered in this volume. The PES is no doubt the one that emerges with the best rating from recent

analyses. Robert Ladrech (2000) gives the most positive assessment of the PES. According to his analysis, the progress of the federation is a successful example of national party adaptation to the EU. This is in turn an important factor in enhancing party influence in EU agenda setting and could prefigure the emergence of stronger Europarties. This rather positive and in many ways persuasive argument is however based on different assumptions as to nature and tasks of Europarties from those that prevail in the literature and that are at the basis of this volume. The PES, according to Ladrech (p. 132) is an “entity that serves [national party leaders’] interests domestically by focusing its attention at the supranational level” and not one whose “developmental trajectory is a reproduction of national party functions at the European level”. The extent to which such interests are satisfied through the PES is a demonstration of its success. In other words Ladrech sees as strengths Europarty characteristics other authors would see as weaknesses. The additional evidence provided by contributions in this volume confirms that the mixed impression one gets of the PES is to a large extent a function of view points. The PES’ political influence has indeed increased, but this is largely through the national leaders’ conference, but as an institution capable of performing at the EU level party functions it remains rather weak (Moschonas). Looking mostly at the PES’ ability to influence the EU’s agenda setting and with particular reference to the question of unemployment Erol Kulahci reaches similarly ambivalent conclusions. The EPP suffers from all of the same problems and is moreover affected by a dilution of its ideological homogeneity. This is very visible in the EP party group where, as David Hanley points out in this volume, internal dissent is greater than that between the whole group itself and the PES! And even if the party has managed to maintain its influence, “the nature of the transnational party must never be forgotten”. Il reflète l’accord de partis membres, prêts à consentir des actions en commun, mais essentiellement pour faciliter et légitimer leur actions chez eux”. Again it could be argued that the value of such observations is determined by one’s point of view. What Hanley seems to see as a negative Europarty feature would score as a positive one in Ladrech’s book. Overall, however, the two largest Europarties still appear to be rather far from receiving in the literature a clean bill of health.

The diagnosis is similarly contradictory for the other three, smaller, federations, even if some of the more recent studies try to highlight the positive elements in their evolution. This is quite understandable given their relative initial underdevelopment. Thomas Dietz (2000) has a fairly positive

view of the EFGP as he thinks that it meets most of the formal criteria of transnationalisation. Moreover, as he argues in this volume, the party has become more active, if not clearly influential in trying to influence the EU agenda. But unless the new opportunities are not used to strengthen the EFGP's organisation, "[f]urther steps towards a real European party... cannot be expected". In fact the federation it <sup>is still</sup> pan-European (open to sister parties from all of Europe) and not EU-specific. Ultimately, this is the feature that prevents the EFGP from being considered a European party. The green parties' "*anti-bureaucratic and decentralised... approach*" appears to have made them "very reluctant to give up national party sovereignty in favour of any transnational party organisation" (Dietz, 2000, p. 205, emphasis in original). Cédric Van De Walle in this volume has a different reading of this EFGP characteristic, as he sees it a consequence of the green preoccupation with the respect of the principles of "grass roots democracy". This interpretation is implicitly more positive for the prospective development of a party capable of linking European society to the EU level of government. Finally, Elizabeth Bomberg (1998) dedicates to the EFGP only a few lines of her book on green party activities at the EU level. This in itself could be taken as an indication of her scarce consideration of the federation's relevance. Moreover, her explicit view of it is rather negative: "the Federation's remit allows its members to sidestep the dilemma of working within (EU) structures that are incompatible with green aims... [but the Federation] remains relatively ineffectual in terms of influencing European policies and structures. In short, it is pure but powerless (p. 175)".

The ELDR seems to have made substantial, even if not definitive, formal and organisational progress, but it is still affected by serious shortcomings. Lack of cohesion, due to a multi-centric origin, and of political relevance of its national components even in the respective domestic contexts are the ELDR's main weaknesses (Sandström in this volume). These may be reduced owing to the fact that the British Liberal Democrats should permanently become a cornerstone of the ELDR EP group (and possibly, as a consequence, a stronger actor in the federation as well) as a result of the UK's EP electoral law reform. But, similarly to what has happened for the EPP, "[t]he choice to widen the [party's] ideological span clearly had consequences... for the possibilities to establish a collective identity". The DPPE-EFA, finally, represents a case apart. As a party responding to a "clear cleavage" (Seiler in this volume) it fulfils its function, giving legitimacy to small and otherwise marginal national formations. But its small size and its condominium in the



Green EP group have made it rather irrelevant in terms of political influence. Although perspectives for further development are encouraging (Faniel and Soare in this volume), it is not from this party that we can expect a propelling impulse for the Europarty system.

#### **4. Europarty federations' development: constraints and factors**

The preceding recapitulation of the more recent contributions in the literature illustrates the difficult evolution of Europarty federations. As we have pointed out, this information can only be seen as a demonstration of the state of Europarty development in general but not as an indication of its factors. Europarties can in fact be expected to develop as a consequence of pressures coming either from their components in “public office”, that is to say EP party groups that seek autonomous organisational structures capable of giving them direct links with civil society, or from European society, as expressed, our previous discussion indicates, by «party-on-the-ground» structures, that is to say national parties that are becoming progressively more inclined to privilege the supranational level of government. The former, as we have seen, come from institutional incentives within the EP, whereas the latter are more likely to occur as a consequence of national party elite perceptions of the EU's increasing relevance than of grass-roots' demands for more Europe, a prospect denied by mass-survey trends. In fact, so far national parties have contributed to Europarty development, as Simon Hix has repeatedly pointed out, mostly through the institutionalisation of party leaders' summits in order to be better prepared for the increasingly important decisions made at the EU level, especially in European Council meetings and Intergovernmental Conferences (IGCs)<sup>3</sup>. EP institutional incentives have had, and will continue to have, important effects, but it is unlikely that these will be able to give Europarty federations a new and fundamental impulse. We now have larger, more inclusive, EP party groups as a result, but as the EP party system is reaching an advanced level of consolidation, internal institutional incentives are more apt to be important for its maintenance than for its further extension. On the negative side, the apparently decreasing legitimacy of Europarties demonstrated by progressively more disappointing levels of turnout in EP elections has been indicated as a powerful obstacle to the creation of the necessary political momentum for those institutional reforms that beyond the already mentioned

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<sup>3</sup> This only applies to the EPP, the PES, the ELDR and not to the EFGP (Dietz, 2000).

incentives and pressures can alone give Europarties a new status. Whilst this problem concerns all of the EU institutions and not only the parties, most negative factors of EP party group development appear indeed to be connected to elections. The fragmentation of the electoral arena permits the survival at the European level of practically every relevant, and sometimes even not-so relevant, component of most national party systems. This feature makes the EU party system very sensitive to individual national party system realignments and to member state specific voter opinion trends. Technically this is facilitated by the fact that EP elections are second-order elections, generally deserted by many electors because of their perceived irrelevance but also used to express political positions they hope will be responded to in the first order arena. (Reif and Schmitt: 1980). National governments, and the parties that support them, are asked to interpret negative electoral results in second-order elections as stimuli meant to improve governmental response. But it is also plausible that political parties may have a similarly instrumental approach to second-order elections. Less important electoral arenas may be seen as the ideal grounds to test electors' reactions to novel electoral strategies. Parties having very close ideological positions and appealing to very similar electorates, may consider fusion an option to be tried in secondary electoral arenas, and individual components of very factionalised parties may present independent lists under similar circumstances. EP elections are often perceived as being even less important for their political effects than most sub-national (the prototypical second-order) elections. If then EP elections should prove to be ideal opportunities for nationally motivated electoral experiments, their results, and the consequent composition of national EP delegations, would inevitably reflect party and electorate behaviour that is dysfunctional for the EU party system. As long as this is true it is very unlikely that citizens will become motivated to vote in EP elections and, more importantly, that national party leaders will try to enhance, beyond the presentation of perfunctory electoral manifestos, the role and organisational relevance of Europarty federations.

Both sets of negative and positive factors of Europarty development thus appear to be constants that can only be altered by formal or institutional innovations capable of inducing changes in elites' and citizens' attitudes. This is indeed a description of the near deadlock that has characterised Europarty development since the first EP elections. At present there are only two short to medium term factors that can have an impact on Europarties: EU enlargement and the projected Europarty statute. The former could be at the

same time a negative and a positive factor for Europarty development. As I have argued elsewhere (Bardi, 2001) EU expansions can have negative effects on Europarties as they expose them to disturbances coming from arenas not yet socialised to EU rules and procedures. This danger so far has not materialised probably because of a certain homogeneity of the economic systems, and therefore of the main social cleavages, of new entrants with those of the established members. This may have been more important than differences concerning pre-accession political experiences, as in the case of the Southern European expansion in the 1980s. In fact the incorporation of more recent member states' delegations has not proven to be more difficult than that of the original ones'. But "[f]or the first time, instead, new actors are about to be integrated which voice an unprecedented amount of difference" and whose "representatives will defend positions of countries whose institutions, politics, mentalities and needs have a radically different history and connotation". These differences, that might even be as severe as to reflect specific value based cleavages in some countries (Delsoldato, 2002), could produce isolated national party delegations or permit their integration into existing Europarties only at the price of further dilutions of their ideological homogeneity, policy orientation cohesion, and overall party identity. In other words, Eastward enlargement is likely to have more problematic consequences for Europarties than all previous ones.

Enlargement, however, gives Europarties in general and federations in particular incentives and opportunities. Europarties see prospective member states' sister parties as elements capable of giving them greater strength in the future, definitively expanded EP, and even, at least prospectively, financial advantages. The prospected distribution in the Treaty of Nice's Final Act of the 732 seats the EP should have in a 27 member state EU, would give the new entrants a combined strength of 191 seats, that is over 26 percent of the total. This is something no existing Europarty can afford to ignore. Whilst this is nothing more than a further manifestation of the usual institutional incentives to Europarty integration, qualitatively different stimuli may come as a consequence of the Nice Treaty. In fact, the Treaty and the attached "Proposal for a Council regulation on the statute and financing of European political parties" prefigure direct and indirect financial benefits that would accrue to the parties themselves as a consequence of enlargement. The direct benefits should come from the fact that the principle itself of EU party financing is based, among other things, on the need "to cover... the cost of promoting democracy in the countries

applying for accession". The amounts actually financed by the EU would then be also a function of the albeit limited resources that could come from the new member states' national party delegations<sup>4</sup>. Moreover and more specifically, the federations will have an unprecedented incentive, besides the financial advantages that should come directly to them and not to the EP party groups as a consequence of the statute, in that they are and will continue be at least until accession the most relevant Europarty components in establishing and maintaining links with prospective member parties. This could in itself result in a permanent strengthening of the federations and even constitute a sufficient reason to induce national party leaders to give them better organisational structures. Finally, enlargement will probably force Europarties to re-think their national party leaders' meetings based decision making system. Such conferences will become more and more plethoric and difficult to run. If the solution to this potential problem should be the creation of smaller, permanent, representative, albeit collegial, decisional bodies, it would be a step towards the creation towards stronger Europarties.

The proposal for a Council regulation, besides the already mentioned provisions for Europarty financing, has other important implications for Europarty development but also for Europarty definition. In fact, party financing transforms the sentence, already included in article 138a of the Maastricht Treaty and repeated in article 191 of the Nice Treaty, that parties "contribute to forming a European awareness and to expressing the political will of the citizens of the Union" from a generic statement to a clear definition of party functions. Moreover, one of the conditions that Europarties must meet to access the bulk of EU financing (85 percent of the total) is to be part of an EP party group. This could create the basis for the creation of a more balanced and integrated relationship between the two Europarty components and end the dependence of the federations on the EP groups. This could give Europarties a higher level of systemic integration that, Panebianco (1988) *docet*, is one of the prerequisites for party institutionalisation.

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<sup>4</sup> The proposal is for EU contributions equal to 75 percent of the party's total budget. In practice this means that the EU should contribute amounts equal to three times those obtained by the parties through other sources, including national parties' contributions.

## 5. Conclusions

Europarty development has been constrained by relatively constant conditions that, whether providing incentives or obstacles to Europarty strengthening, have not respectively furnished or permitted the discrete qualitative leaps that are necessary for the development at the European level of those party functions that are implicitly prescribed in the CP model of the EU. This justifies positions, such as Ladrech's (2000) that recognise the prevalent importance of national parties in EU decision-making. As radical transformations in national elites' attitudes are needed for the sweeping institutional reforms that would once and for all change this situation, this scenario is very likely to last. But the history of the EU has taught us that change can occur in certain areas as an unintended or unanticipated consequence of acts or reforms having different original aims and purposes. Or alternatively as a result of greater than anticipated effects of acts and reforms having more limited intended objectives.

In this chapter we have examined two areas of prospective change in the European Union that could have an impact on Europarty evolution. The possible negative or positive sign and the extent of this impact can only be the object of speculation. Certainly the most crucial question concerns whether the new statute, if and when approved in a form similar to the current proposal, will be sufficient to stimulate the development of party functions at the European level. It would be very positive, as several contributors in this volume have pointed out and the Treaty of Nice has implicitly reiterated, for Europarties to become better equipped to perform the function of political representation. This of course could only take place in a relationship of subsidiarity with parties at the national level. Research has shown that the areas in which parties at the European level are potentially more representative can be identified (Bardi, 1989). All that is needed is for national leaders to accept this reality and act consequently.

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