



In the Name of Political Union – Europarties on the Rise

With foreword by:
Alfred GUSENBAUER

Edited by:
Ernst STETTER
Karl DUFFEK
Ania SKRZYPEK



 **Renner**Institut

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**Dr. E. Stetter, Mag. K. Duffek, Dr. A. Skrzypek
with the organisational assistance of I. Graus**

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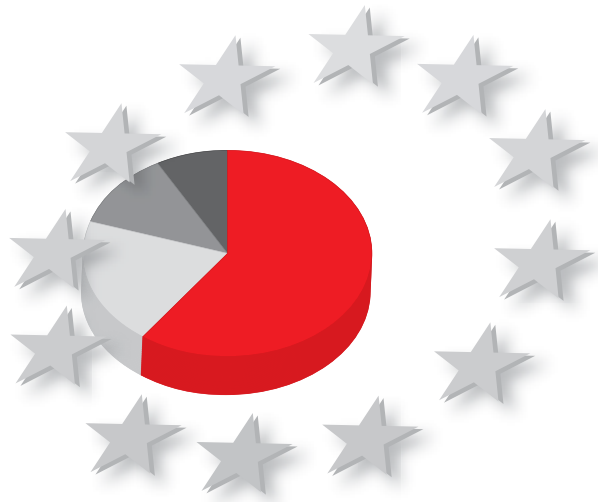
Introduction





Ernst STETTER, Karl DUFFEK & Ania SKRZYPEK

Editors' Foreword



The upcoming European elections are generating a buzz of excitement, but also some anxiety. Following over three decades of old rituals, the Brussels-related circles emerge from what is seen as a political backstage and seem to try even too hard to grasp a momentum. The usual rhetoric about “historical junction” is back, together with a typically reoccurring message of rather euro-cratic elites to “talk to (or rather educate) ordinary people”. As ever before, the time seems to have come for all of them to spell out their actual *raison d’être* and seek to gear enthusiasm for the European Union.

Naturally, there is a temptation to be somewhat cynical about that. Especially that all the previous votes showed consecutively the tendency for a dropping turn out on one hand, and also for ending with results that contribute to further fragmenting and polarising of the European political scene. The European Parliament, which is just about to round up its legislative term, has seen the largest number of factions, odd coalitions and also astonishing almost in its size group of independent members. With the overall decline of so called “traditional political parties”, which is visible both in weakening of partisanship structures and dropping polling numbers, it would seem inevitable that the trend would continue also after May 2014. This relates to another worry, which is that the post-crisis Europe keeps on losing its credibility in the eyes of the European citizens. It used to be a scapegoat of the national rhetoric, while now it seems a convict of popular anger with austerity and bail-out practices.

Furthermore, there are as many hopes, as concerns regarding the Lisbon Treaty. It is true that it is envisaging new prerogatives for the European parties, thanks to which they are empowered to campaign and also can claim more resources to do so. The institution of the so called “top candidate” is expected to be a game-changer as well – allowing personalisation of the campaigns. This shall not only introduce a new style of political (campaign) leadership, but also be an incentive for further consolidation of the europarties in general. On the abstract level, these elements seem quite obvious steps to take in order to forge political Union further. In theory however they cause much of distress on all the sides of the political spectrum. There is a tension connected with

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the interpretation of the rule, leading to bargaining on who is stronger in influencing the appointment of the Commission's President: the Parliament or the Council? Then there is an anxiety if indeed all the europarties will come up with strong candidates – which would be essential for a more of a “real” political competition among the europarties to start. Not to mention, that many actors on the national level pose themselves questions in how far the campaign led around such “top candidates” can influence positively or negatively their respective national political landscape. The query is profound and especially relevant for parties, who stand in parallel or in the near future for national or regional and local elections. If the vote is no longer to be treated as the “second order”, but it is not yet resembling the “first order” – there is of course much confusion of how that all will play out.

Although these lines may sound disparaging, the fact remains that the elections always create a political momentum. If the actors involved manage to use those wisely, they can in fact be not only announced as “historical” but actually go down into the history books marking a time of a change. This is why the progressive family should not be shy in becoming enthusiastic and feisty. The time from now till May 2014 especially is a period when new ideas and new practices can be put in place. Of course, political precaution is always necessary. Seriousness deriving from an ideological mission and awesome responsibility that progressive family wants to assume to change the direction of Europe obliges to keep in mind at all times. But at the same time, with so many new factors – one can't avoid experimenting. Trying different ways may help the movement advance and is consistent with the political message of this year's effort. Social democrats call for a change of course that the Union is taking – hence they themselves need to readapt their strategies and ways of concluding processes in order to get a popular mandate they aspire to seize.

The alteration can be imposed by the conditions (as already mentioned Lisbon Treaty to give an example) or can be a conviction driven. For a political movement the second one is when it gains self-confidence in facing political challenges in a new organisational framework. Hence there is a need for a bolder debate and more engagement in the ongoing processes. Next to finding the most suitable ways to bridge the EU-level campaign and the national, there is also a need to think in a different way about the europartisan manifesto. From a symbol of unity for an overall vision for Europe, it is becoming now more of a governing platform. Hence it should be seen not as an ideological denominator, but as a commitment of all signatories for delivering on key projects for the Union. That is a ground breaking change – and as such, it is as good a reason for all those implicated to be excited in seeing that happen.

Last but not least, there is a need to think about the voters in another manner. For too long European circles were telling the story that citizens do not take part in the European

elections because they “do not understand them”. Well, perhaps the claim can be turned around as a question if that is not the politicians, candidates and representatives that talk about the Union in an incomprehensible and uninterested manner? This campaign is a time to change this – put aside blaming and shaming. It is a time to assume that all the individuals should no longer be called with diminutive names of “ordinary” – but shall be seen as through the prism of their extraordinary hopes and support that they can offer, if the effort is made to make Europe about substance-based politics that they can relate to.

This 7th volume of the FEPS Next Left Book Series show that all the opportunities signalled above and connected with the upcoming European Elections can be grasped easily by the progressive movement. The potential for it is already there. Even more, what in previous paragraphs may have come as revolutionary is also in fact already imprinted at the transformative processes taking place already now. In that sense “In the Name of Political Union: Europarties on the Rise” represent a great inventory of possibilities and tools, which the movement has at its disposal as far as politicising and democratising the EU on one hand, and consolidating and developing the europartisan system on the other.

The articles presented in this book result from a year long work of the FEPS Next Left Working Group (WG) on eurodemocracy and europarties. The WG was established initially upon the 20th anniversary of the Treaty of Maastricht, uniting in its framework outstanding academics researching the themes related to European partisan system. This discipline remains still seriously overlooked, which is also why the explorations of this circle are so profoundly important. The nature and the scope of deliberations has quickly proven that continuous exchange would be most desired. Hence FEPS together with its partner in the Next Left Research Programme - Renner Institut has been delighted to enable the transition between what started out as a pilot project developed into a permanent working group and to maintain the privilege of steering the process within this vibrant intellectual circle. Though all the WG's members are to be thanked for their commitment and engagement, the very special words should herewith be addressed to Simon Lightfoot and Isabelle Hertner for having supported the process of this groups creation.

This publication is divided into three chapters. The first one “The Role of Europarties in shaping the Union” focuses on the questions on how the process democratisation of the EU can be forged through an ongoing consolidation of the europarties. A. Skrzypek looks therefore at how the Lisbon Treaty and specifically new prerogatives of the europarties can influence further deepening of cooperation between the national parties. Within this dimension she examines in how far European level could be a stage for a new style of campaigning in the midst of which a new style of European partisan

leadership can emerge. These deliberations link closely with the topics raised by D. Bailey, who looks at the question of collective participation in politics at the EU level. His exploration of the dilemmas around legitimacy of the Union and representativeness of its institutions gives a solid, analytical base to make a call for more democratisation. The chapter is closed with the contribution by S. Van Hecke and K.M. Johansson, who make a case study on the summitries of political parties at the European level. By analysing over two decades experience with the leaders' conferences, they try to answer the question in how far a further consolidation of europarties can be a product of a top-bottom approach.

The second chapter included four articles, which all deliberate on the "Progressive strategies for overcoming the crisis". R. Ladrech continues therefore a thread about democratic legitimacy, looking at coherence and diversity of progressive answers to the predicament as given respectively on the European and the national levels. His hypothesis is that the crisis induced a situation in which sister parties needed to refer to the europarties, seeing in them a potential bridge in between domestic and pan-EU discussions – which in itself contributed to strengthening of those organisations. This theory is echoed further by M. Holmes and S. Lightfoot, who also argue that the transformation of the recent years is obvious. Having analysed the PES responses and proposals, they show in how far it shifted from consensus based to confrontational style of politics. E. Kūlahci's article is therefore very complimentary to that, bringing in the analyses of the ideological approach of the PES towards the monetary integration. His focus is hence more detailed, as it primarily examines the PES vis-à-vis euro-crisis. Last but not least, G. Moschonas closes the chapter with his deliberations on the crisis as a catalyst for the PES profound renewal. He claims that in the last year it clearly has been evolving from 'politically unstructured politics' towards 'a policy seeking party'.

The third and the last chapter supplements these deliberations. It looks at the europarties in through a prism of their relations with their members and eventual supporters. I. Hertner presents there a pioneer study on direct and individual membership within the europarties. She asks the question in how far their own identification and involvement can translate into their mobilisation in the times of the European elections' campaign. That links her research with an overall query regarding the decline of the traditional parties. Linking with that, A. Krouwel together with J. Reis Santos and M. Wall complete this book's section researching the electoral vulnerability of traditional parties. Breaking the case studies into countries and showing the developments in the course of different years, the authors try to extract what groups could be still a social democratic stronghold among voters in Europe.

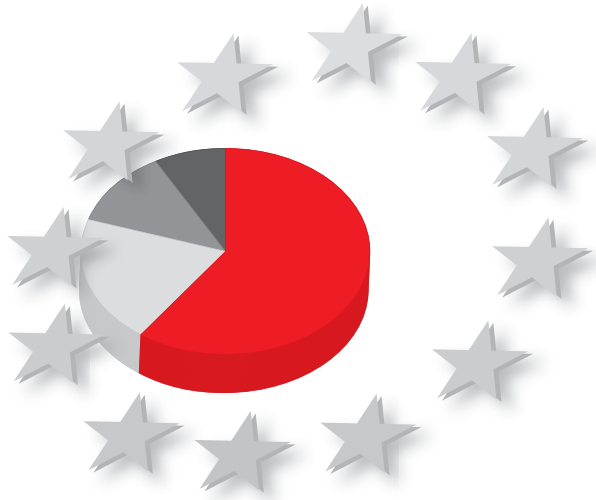
"In the Name of Political Union: Europarties on the Rise" constitutes therefore a great collection of analyses, which paint an accurate panorama of political and partisan landscape on the European level. The deliberations are anchored in original research, which links

both academic methodology and empirical studies. Thanks to this interdisciplinary and pan-European character they make a strong case that there is a potential for further development of the europarties and that the progressive family has a full potential to make the upcoming elections historical ones indeed.



Alfred GUSENBAUER

Opening New Avenues, While serving to build a Better Society



Walking the streets of Santiago de Chile on 11th September of this memorable year, one can't resist recalling the last speech of the late Salvador Allende¹. His final address left the future generations with a following encouragement: (...) *Workers of my country, I have faith in Chile and its destiny. Other men will overcome this dark and bitter moment when treason seeks to prevail. Go forward knowing that, sooner rather than later, the great avenues will open again where free men will walk to build a better society.* Though those words were pronounced in one of the most dramatic moments of the contemporary history of Chile, the message they convey seems nevertheless so incredibly hopeful. It mirrors a profound belief that democracy, human rights and social justice will win through simply because the fight for them will be carried by the movement.

The lesson to be learnt this year, during which the progressives across the globe honour the memory of Salvador Allende and also the legacy of Willy Brandt, is therefore quite evident. Though the history books and jubilee speeches are relevant, bringing back the memory of those whom we all owe for this movement's perseverance and development, they are focused on the past. The mission of the contemporary should however be foremost about continuity and hence about daring more of solidarity, equality and democracy. In order to accomplish that social democracy must go beyond the lethargy of reasoning in terms of the global crisis and inferiority of its own, well-diagnosed predicament. It is high time to overcome the stagnation of political thinking, laying out a new agenda and a new strategy. They both must reflect that the movement has regained energy and that it is not afraid to go beyond the limitations of the crisis mantra on 'no alternatives'. Its new, long awaited narrative must respond to the longings for a better society, decent work and lives. These weighty hopes have been historically entrusted in social democracy.

The challenges at hand are consequently enormous. They must be faced in parallel, as resolution to any of them is dependent from resolving the others. To begin with, social democracy must restore the sense of politics. It must break out of the appearance of

¹ Parts of this article have been inspired by the speech held at the Symposium organised by Salvador Allende Foundation in Santiago de Chile on 6th and 7th September 2013.

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being an activity for a few professionals; whose overall influence shrinks the stronger financial capitalism grows. On the contrary, it must regain the power deriving from its democratic legitimacy through which a mandate for change should be obtained. Secondly, the civic participation should be addressed. Too frequently the analyses pointed out that the withdrawal of citizens from politics is determined by their disenchantment and discouragement, while they offer no real choices upon subsequent elections. This is true; however the argument stays incomplete, as long as the contemporary socio-economic circumstances, in which the societies live, remain unaddressed. The recent crises increased the number of people both in Europe and beyond, who live in poverty or on the edge of it, who fear losing jobs and thread bills for their respective rents, electricity or insurance. These people live in resignation, not feeling empowered to make decisions about their households in perspectives longer than a couple of days. Their drift to the margins of political participation is consequential and will remain a trend, as long as democratic participation is not re-linked in conceptualising with socio-economic empowerment. But for that there is a need for a shift to abandon a great theatre and story-telling style, and refocus on issues that so profoundly matter. And finally, there is a question on partisanship. With the declining politics and shrinking civic participation in institutionalised democracy practises, there is a question to be posed about what service and on whose behalf the parties perform.

Restoring sense of politics, proposing an alternative

In the last two decades the sense of politics has been questioned by the number of occasions. In the end of the 1990s the discourse on the inevitability of changes carried by globalisation induced doubts in how far it may be a tool to regulate different processes. Though it was quite obvious that it was impossible to carry on thinking about politics in the same way as before, still there was no overall consensus in what ways it could be transformed. In this context, within the social democracy the debate on modernisation took a course that divided its members into those, who aimed at focusing politics on protection and regulation vis-à-vis those, who emphasised rather its transformative powers and mission to empower people to be able to face whatever the new times were to bring about. Though by today all the core arguments around which these disputes circulated have been altered, the essential question still echoes in the contemporary hesitations about which path to choose. With the neo-liberal logic imprinted all over the political discourse there is somehow a quasi-instinctive belief that there must be a trade off between the two. Even more than in the 1990s, following all the post-crisis deliberations on how limited (financial and economic) resources predetermine the scope of potential actions, it would seem that one has to choose between ensuring protection and ensuring empowerment, as also

between forging equality and offering societal mobility and emancipation. The sole idea that the choice would be so narrow and would not be about determining circumstances, but on the contrary – would be determined by them – this is the core of the problem why politics seem to be able to offer so little. With the borders of political imagination shrinking, its power of appeal bleaches. It is then more about moves that deserves nothing more but small, short-living announcements on the news agencies websites and that no longer makes it into grand debates which would have the power to shake societies to their cores.

Though it would seem that the described above “politics of politics” is the first and largest obstacle on the path towards “greatness of politics”, there are of course other factors enhancing its powerless appearance. The recent crisis has proven that politics lacks foot to stand in order to measure itself face-to-face with the mighty financial capitalism. It had failed to prevent it, it fell short in cushioning its impact and furthermore it seems to disappoint while seeking ways out of the predicament. Despite the fact that there are calls, especially amongst the progressives, to seek an alternative – still it is austerity and impoverishment that people experience. The harshness of the individual battles being led daily by those who can no longer afford their living costs and who can no longer hope for a better future at least for their children, remains in an appalling contrast to what the preoccupations of the politics captured in the television studios seem to be about. There, especially after the elections or any crucial decisions, one can hear commentaries “oh, let's see what markets will say about that!”. These astonishingly seem to have established much stronger judgement powers than even all the voices of people united in protests on the streets across the world in the course of mobilisations such as “Occupy” or “Indignados”.

What makes the televised political reality and the societal ones so far apart furthermore, is the fact that they seem ruled by different logics. With professionalisation of politics, it has become divided into compartments – where certain areas appear to be somewhat “reserved for experts”. To give an example, economy or European politics belong are portrayed quite arrogantly as domains where “ordinary people lack proper orientation”. This is being argued for in the times, when the world has become so complex and when, with the popularisation of for instance internet, one deals with the most informed voter ever. At the same time, the process of mediatisation pushed politics from “art of transformation” towards “art of performance”. There is even an entire new domain of political science labelled as “political marketing” that aims at encapsulating this understanding, where what counts is the attractiveness of candidates and their smart campaign packaging. While the criteria of “niceness” of personalities and “catchiness” of slogans are the ones to determine a political success, there is no reason to be surprised that such a political world seems not even parallel, but quite apart from the reality that people live and work in.

What is desperately needed is a new quality of politics. This should become once again a mission, where participating actors (parties, movements, citizens) step in being driven

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by a strong conviction that it carries a transformative potential. Even if at the beginning it may sound naive, it is indeed high time to step in and start leading political processes by example. The standards of values, and urge to bring a change and to earn societal trust should serve as guidelines – obeying which consequently may be the key to altering the criteria according to which politics is being evaluated. Realism and responsibility should not be handed over to those, who repeat the slogans of “TINA” and focus on the “limitations of resources”. On the contrary, both should be translated into courage to strive for a profound change that is broadly demanded by the societies. The current generations are not less than previous ones longing for grand ideas or projects, in which they could join efforts to make their times worthwhile. Not being casual about that is the first step to restore this unique connection based on passion and beliefs, through which mandate to act and power and hence also sense of politics can be restored.

Empowering citizens, rethinking partisanship

Historically social democracy has been quite clear that its programme is based evenly on the struggle for social justice and for democracy. That meant that emancipation of individuals would need to take place in both social and economic spheres in order to empower them toward political participation. This understanding has been cultivated for decades; having remained a backbone of the logic that there are numerous ways in which one can influence politics: through trade unions, through elections, through civic activism. The complexity of this concept was also the reason for a close cooperation that social democracy has always tried to forge with both the unions and also civil society organisations.

Regardless of these traditions, the subsequent waves of social mobilisations have seen social democracy less and less capable to uphold the old and build the new links. As for the traditional partners, what used to be more of a common agenda became a framework with numerous unspoken, uncomfortable conversations. Between the trade unions and the parties, the debates were held in ways so that they would not touch upon the challenges of modernisation of both, as also so that they would not address the issue of whom they both aim to represent. Polarising labour market together with growing divisions in between the labour market outsiders and insiders on one hand, and erosion of “core working class electorate” on the other, seem to have been posing a question mark on what issues they still share in common. Both sides were trapped in nostalgic images of their glorious past, not willing to risk being too bold regarding the future. With the overall political labelling, being accused of political treason was more than an obvious danger – in light of which preserving at least an image seems to have been already a gain.

As for the new connections, social democracy seem to have been quite successful in the 1960s, while using the momentum of protests then and demanding on their wave for more emancipation and more civil liberties. That would, however, seem the last time for the last half of the century. When the “new social movements” were born in the 1990s out of citizens’ cry against globalisation, social democracy remained somehow indecisive as far as the strategy towards them. On one hand, of course it shared the view that “another world is possible” and it sympathised with the demands, on the other it could not really define its place within the European or World Social Forums. Some of the sister parties did join, the others stayed away – but altogether the relationship remained somewhat unconsumed. What perhaps was already symptomatic then and became evident later is that social democracy started thinking about itself in strict categories of a traditional, well established political party. As such, it could envisage therefore only either embracing those movements by incorporating them within the structures or denouncing them in a hope that the momentum soon would be over. While struggling in between both the strategies, it missed the historical in fact opportunity to raise the spirits and already then question the nature of global capitalism. The incapacity to deal therefore with “occupy” or “indignados” was hereditary therefore. In comparison the ability to thrive in the mood of the 1960s and the failure to benefit from the recent ones, present themselves as a proof of a certain “*calcification* of social democracy within the traditional partisan system.”

An understanding that makes “social democracy” (or as currently more frequently used “progressives”) synonymous to the term “social democratic party” is bound to prove to be an inadequate strategy for the new times. The arguments to support this hypothesis are numerous. To begin with, the decline of the partisanship and the erosion of so called “core electorates” make any party, which tries to imagine itself in strict organisational terms, appear simply out of touch. The nature of intrapersonal and also societal relations have changed, hence it would be illusionary to expect that the philosophy of joining or supporting a political party would not. Furthermore, there is a certain tendency of falling electoral turnout on one hand, and rising fragmentation of the political sphere on the other. This derives from the fact that smaller, more radical, more populist or simply protest parties tend to enjoy growing support. While at the same time, more traditional parties note clear demur – noting recently quite frequently ‘the worst’ or ‘second worst’ results. In subsequent elections, social democracy measured in “political discipline of the parties” reaches only about one fourth of the electoral votes cast, which makes it either a junior coalition partner or a leader of a divided and shaky coalition. In such conditions, of course even electoral victory can prove to have a bitter taste and governing turns frequently rather to managing.

These are the reasons why the historical search for a new narrative, as argued for in the first chapter, must be completed with a new understanding of organisational concept

that social democracy (progressives) would like to put in place. A new formula must be found, so that a larger participation of individuals is enabled. The greater openness and flexibility that instead of a party would rather imprint a new thinking about an alliance, should also anticipate the ways in which it can enable better connections between politics and society.

Succeeding in renewal, making a European bid

These two arguments – in favour of a new, distinctive narrative and of a modern, innovative organisational concept have been broadly deliberated upon within the FEPS Next Left Research Programme. It has been almost five years since it was launched, following a remarkable defeat experienced by social democracy in Europe in the course of the EP elections 2009. Throughout this time many studies and many debates have been concluded, as also many bridges have been created to link better respectively the national, European and international debates. A handful of proposals have been made, some of which have been considered and made their way into real politics.

With the next European elections coming in just a few months, there is much excitement geared within the progressive family. Great hopes are connected with the personality of the top candidate, as also with the fact that the Lisbon Treaty empowers and equips the europarties to run “a real European campaign”. It may indeed become a historical junction, when social democracy succeeds in changing the conservative tide and reversing the trends leading towards a “Europe of nations”, putting in place a real political Union. This wish is shared by many – and by all means, as authors in this volume show, there is a great potential to accomplish that. Looking at the undoubtedly already proud legacy of the Next Left however, there is one more essential lesson still to be learnt.

Social democracy (progressives) must be able to offer an alternative, through which they would open the political discourse towards new possibilities. This mission falls into what quoted at the beginning Salvador Allende categorised as “opening the new avenues”. But in order not to walk those paths alone, social democracy must aspire to regain trust and support of the citizens. For that it is not merely enough to admit that mistakes have been done and after a reflection “all will be different, better now”. There is, as argued, a need for a new way of thinking – which both the ideological and the organisational concepts have to mirror. Realising both, it must prove that it has liberated itself from impasse and is not circumstances-driven. On the contrary, it must appear as a self-conscious, pluralist and open movement, which has concluded the time of reflection and steps back fully into the game, ready to push once again the historical horizons of political possibilities.

**IN THE NAME OF
POLITICAL UNION
- EUROPARTIES
ON THE RISE**

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**IN THE NAME OF
POLITICAL
- EUROPAN
ON THE RISE**

The Role of Europarties in Shaping the Union

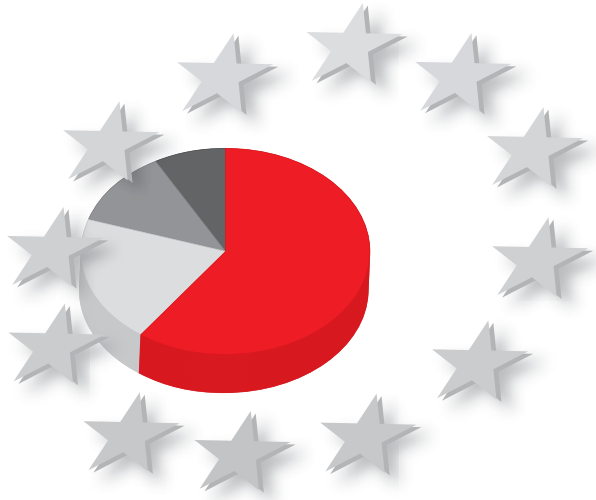
THE UNION PARTIES





Ania SKRZYPEK

Ideology, Politicisation and Identification. The role of Europarties in providing citizens with a democratic choice



Key words

**Evolution of Europarties – Europeanisation of National Political Spheres
– Euro-Campaigning – Consolidating Partisanship – Politicising Europe**

Abstract

The phenomenon of progressing europeanisation of the national political spheres within the last two years have been described by numerous academics with a great excitement. Paradoxically, while the institutional developments show rather retreat towards the idea of “Europe of Nations” and related to this emphasis on the inter-governmental method, the political discourse within the member states seem to indicate new openings. The issues of integration are no longer deliberated within narrow perspective of “for” or “against”, but start being anchored in a broader, politicised context. This seem to give reasons to expect that the upcoming European election may witness a break through, allowing them to go beyond the entrapment of the “vote of the second order”. With the Lisbon Treaty in place and the europarties enjoying new prerogatives, much is expected from the upcoming months of campaigning in the name of a new style-Manifestos and with the lead of so called “top candidate”. This article takes therefore a challenge to look at those developments from methodological perspective, trying to see if on the academic level a new sub-discipline in between the European studies and political marketing could eventually emerge.

The turnout in the European elections shows a decisive tendency to decline since 1979¹. This has two major implications. First, the legitimacy of the European Parliament is weakened. Being the only EU body elected directly by the citizens, it has evolved taking strength from a popular mandate and on its bases has acquired increased powers throughout the years. Hence the damage is likely to harm its political potential. Secondly, the falling turnout can be seen as a symptomatic to an overall detachment between politics and society, which has been noticeable on different levels². This growing gap in the EU dimension has led to subsequent proclamations that there is a democratic deficit and consequently also democratic crisis.

The most recent democratic calamity was announced in year 2005, when the voters of France and the Netherlands rejected in the respective national referenda the Treaty establishing Constitution for the European Union. In order to recuperate, European Council called for the pause (period) of reflection (18th June 2005)³. Following the European Commission, the EU embarked afterwards on a strategy called “Plan D – for Democracy, Dialogue and Debate”⁴ (13th October 2005). The objectives of the later one were: to “stimulate a wider European Debate between European Union’s democratic institutions and citizens” and “to reinvigorate European democracy and help the emergence of the European public sphere, where citizens are given information and the tools to actively participate in the decision making process and gain ownership over the European project”⁵. Despite the fact that much of resources and efforts were allocated to it, the following European elections noted further decline in turnout. Furthermore, next to civic deactivation, there was also an element of fragmentation – as the European Parliament elected then included the largest so far number of political groupings. Simultaneously the three traditional political families have been weakened in absolute

1 http://www.europarl.europa.eu/archieve/elections2009/en/turnout_en.html

Year	1979	1984	1989	1994	1999	2004	2009
Turnout	61,99%	58,98%	58,41%	56,67%	49,51%	45,47%	43%

2 See for example: *Sh. Berman, The Primacy of Politics: Social Democracy and the Making of Europe's Twentieth Century.*, Cambridge University Press 2006.

3 <http://euobserver.com/institutional/19351>

4 *The Commission's contribution to the period of reflection and beyond: Plan-D for Democracy, Dialogue and Debate*, Brussels, 13.10.2005, COM(2005) 494 final <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=COM:2005:0494:FIN:EN:PDF>

5 *Ibidem*, pp. 2 – 3.

and relative terms⁶ (conservatives, socialists, liberals). The low electoral participation is certainly a paradox, as never before in the history the European Parliament has held such a strong and prominent position in the EU institutional set up and never before were the europarties entitled to campaign⁷.

This traditional approach, which anchors the issue of democratic deficit and hence also democratic crisis predominantly in the question of the turnout in the European elections, served well in the context of the debates predeceasing introduction of the direct elections and then also around the Treaty of Maastricht. Nevertheless, currently it seems to be an insufficient explanation for creating a conceptual framework for deliberating on the future of European Union after the crisis. There is at the moment still a lack of literature that would enable assessing direct consequences, which the global crisis has had on the political dimension of the European integration. Nevertheless, for instance the debates on enhanced cooperation within the euro-zone and subsequently the ideas on creating separate institutional system to govern the euro-zone, pose a challenge to political and institutional thinking.

Furthermore, there are new tendencies emerging in the crisis aftermath. First of all, the popular mobilisations induced a certain political climate, in which there was a chance for alterations to the political discourse⁸. Though by now the mobilisations faded away, they forced a search for new understanding on public sphere and also on which criteria allow describing an interaction within this sphere it as political. And this marks perhaps a relevant transition from the temporary relapse to an era of the citizen activist to an era of informed citizen⁹. The likely consequence for the EU politics is that **the times of saying that the citizens do not vote, because EU is too technocratic, complex and incomprehensible are over. There is a need to provide distinctive political alternatives also there and enable a real choice through a vote, which matters. This¹⁰, rather than anything else, seems to be the key to involve citizens in a deliberative, political process again.**

6 The support for traditional parties is declining, while their singular powers are also crippled in the multi-parties ambience.

7 The provision allowing the europarties to lead campaigns was introduced by Lisbon Treaty. <http://www.consilium.europa.eu/documents/treaty-of-lisbon?lang=en>

8 A. Gusenbauer, *Towards a New Narrative – Reconciling Progress and Emancipation.*, [in:] *Building New Communities. Notes from the Transatlantic Dialogue of Dialogues.*, E. Stetter, K. Duffek & A. Skrzypek (eds.), Next Left Book Series vol. 5, FEPS and IGLP HLS, Brussels 2012, pp. 20 – 28.

9 After: R. Osborne, *Of the People, By the People. A New History of Democracy.*, The Bodley Head, London 2011.

10 V. A. Schmidt, *From Social Movements and Citizens; to Policies, Processes and Politics in European Governance: The Need for New "Next Left" Ideas and Discourse.*, [in:] *Building New Communities. Notes from the Transatlantic Dialogue of Dialogues.*, E. Stetter, K. Duffek & A. Skrzypek (eds.), Next Left Book Series vol. 5, FEPS and IGLP HLS, Brussels 2012, p. 129.

Secondly, paradoxically due to the crisis, **European Union themes have entered into national politics**¹¹. There are, generally speaking, two ways the EU is being perceived nowadays: as a chance to elaborate common solutions or as a reason of further deterioration due to the austerity measures it appears to impose. In either way, this creates relatively hostile environment, which allows a space for tendencies such as ‘protective’ nationalism to reoccur. They are not of the same nature as the ones from the past. Nevertheless they carry a dangerous possibility of return to the concept of Europe of Nation States in a modernised version¹². This makes it probable that the upcoming months will enhance the

The upcoming European elections in 2014 are likely to become a census between over 30 years of electoral practice of the “second order” into a new chapter of the European democracy.

debate on what sort of Europe shall there be – allowing further polarisation of views. It is questionable if those divergences will be anchored in an intergovernmental or in a federal dimension of the Union. The determinant will be where the political will and hence political conceptualisation comes from.

These two points on new criteria of civic politicisation and new ambiance of the European discourse lead to a conclusion that the upcoming European elections in 2014 are likely to become a census between over 30 years of electoral practice of the “second order” into a new chapter of the European democracy. Different surveys on public opinions in Europe seem to indicate that the citizens’ will have expected by then clear political choices¹³.

Having that in regard, this article aims at analysing the space for the europarties to use this momentum. It looks at the possibility for their further ideological consolidation and herewith politicisation of the issue of the future of the European Union. Focusing on the European elections, it explores the new way of thinking about framing European democracy and herewith also the public deliberative process through a pan-European campaigning. Last but not least, it implies that as europarties remain specific organisations and require being described through a-typical vocabulary (which is different to the one used vis-à-vis national political parties). Also the euro-campaigning requires a specific methodological approach and understanding. All these deliberations are completed in the context of the PES (Party of European Socialists) and exemplified through its practices

11 An example of that are the recent electoral campaigns in France and the Netherlands. See: A. Skrzypek, *Next Left. Gagner pour durer. Les 10 dilemmes à surmonter par la gauche pour bâtir l'Europe.*, FEPS, Brussels 2012, p. 3.

12 U. Beck writes for instance about emergence of “German Euro-Nationalism”. See: U. Beck, *Twenty Observations on a world in turmoil.*, Polity Press, Cambridge 2012, pp. 66 – 68.

13 See: C. De Vries, *Ambivalent Europeans.*, [in :] *FEPS Queries Scientific Magazine*, N°03 (09)/2012 – 2013, pp. 78 – 82.

of pan-European campaigns in years 2007 - 2012¹⁴. The article is composed of three chapters and conclusions. The three chapters are: Framing a new chapter in the history of eurodemocracy and the europarties; Enabling Europarties to perform the role of electoral centres; and Consolidating partisanship in the name of new political challenge.

1. Framing a New Chapter in the History of Eurodemocracy and the Europarties

There are numerous definitions of what democracy is. The multitude derives from the fact that democracy is a dynamic concept, which has a lengthy history and its meanings have been altered throughout years in parallel with political and societal developments¹⁵. This understanding stipulates that therefore also democracies must continually create new ways of working if they are to survive, and new democracies must invent their own structures and practices without undue interference if they are to endure. (The second truth), learned through a century of unimaginable cruelty, is that, when we give up democracy – through the seductions of demagogues or at the point of a gun – our lives are inconsolably diminished¹⁶.

Research results show that democracy can be seen as an ideal, as an institutional set up and as a process¹⁷. Some authors refer to democracy as to a form through which power is legitimated and the manner in which it is exercised. This definition is anchored in two respective areas: juridico-political and economic-managerial. This suggests that it encompasses the two areas of conceptualisation of social contract, which should be a guarantee of reconciliation of both of them¹⁸. This is being echoed by those, who claim that democratic politics is a form of social engagement and moral activity at the same time, which through collective endeavours and decisions makes sure that a societal vision is being implemented through an adequate allocation of resources¹⁹.

14 The period was chosen as the one in between the time when europarties gained the right to lead pan-European campaigns and the year in which this article was completed. The author would like to thank Philip Cordery, PES Secretary General in years 2004 – 2012 and Brian Synnott, PES Adviser on Media and Campaign Strategy for sharing the relevant documents and expertise that allowed completing this article.

15 See: R. A. Dahl, *On democracy.*, Yale University Press, New Haven and London 2000, p. 3

16 R. Osborne, *Of the People, By the People. A New History of Democracy.*, The Bodley Head, London 2011, p. 289.

17 A. Skrzypek, *FEPS Study – A comparative analyses of core values of PES member parties and the ideological evolution within the PES.*, [in:] *Progressive Values for the 21st century.*, E. Stetter, K. Duffek & A. Skrzypek (eds.), Next Left Book Series vol. 4, FEPS, Brussels 2011, pp. 267 – 276.

18 G. Agamben, *The introductory note on the Concept of Democracy.*, [in:] *Democracy in what state?*, A. Allen (ed.), Columbia University Press New York 2011, p. 1

19 M. Flinders, *Defending politics. Why democracy matters in the twenty first century.*, Oxford University Press 2012, p. 5

On this basis there are three observations to be made regarding the European Union. First of all, the discussions about democracy or democratic deficit should be framed in a more holistic manner. Though the European Community has been set up by democratic states, it does not make it by default democratic. Europe effectively has suffered since the beginning from both social and democratic deficits, being supranationally, apolitically regulated market, where social policies can be characterised as soft power and the market ones as hard²⁰. Its institutional set up includes only one directly elected institution (EP), which is under a very specific scrutiny conditions. At the same time, there are also numerous institutions that are not at all legitimised in a democratic manner and which are not even majority-ruled bodies²¹. The contemporary debate on the shape of the institutional system and the eventual extraction of a new pillar “for euro-members only” is therefore in fact at the heart of the debate on the future of European democracy. In fact this offers a new opening. It creates a space for proposing an idea on what Union is desired, with what institutions and how a deliberative process can accompany an evolution towards it. Such a concept can come from both the national or European levels – and this is up to the political families, and hence europarties if they are able to use this window of opportunity.

Secondly, definitions underline that democracy is a dynamic concept. Hence, even if principles remain the same, its practices alter. Within the European Union, democratic practices are not developed on the bases of historical or anthropological framework. They are being created in an environment, which still for many seems artificial and underdeveloped – namely the European public sphere²². In the contemporary circumstances, it is perhaps more important than ever that this evolutionary process is being enhanced – and herewith the europarties again can play a vital role, organising, consolidating and mobilising. Through those efforts the senses of some concepts, such as representation, legitimacy and political responsibility, have to be re-established. Progressives stand particular chance herewith to put forward a new way of thinking about governance and especially about economic governance in the EU. Their role has to go further than offering a common symbol, a denominator as the manifestos have been until now. They need to consolidate further and acquire new strength in proving that on the European level they know how to bring about primacy of politics over economy and also bring about a balance in the EU construction²³.

20 Th. Persson, *Unfinished Polity*, [in:] *How Unified is the European Union. European Integration Between Visions and Popular Legitimacy*, S. Gustavsson, L. Oxelheim, L. Pehrson (eds.), Springer, Berlin Heidelberg 2009, pp. 11-26.

21 P. Ginsborg, *Democracy. Crisis and Renewal*, Profile Books Ltd., London 2008.

22 *After: Mediated Politics. Communication in the Future of Democracy*, W.L. Bennet & R. M. Furman (eds.), Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 2011, p. 2

23 C. Crouch makes an argument on a need of such a symmetry on theoretical level in his recent book: *The strange non-death of neoliberalism*, Polity Cambridge 2012, p. 52.

Thirdly, seeing democracy as a deliberative process requires being able to elaborate commonly with citizens a proposal, which then emerges as a feasible and supportable alternative²⁴. In the context of the EU, that would require a decisive shift of approach. Nowadays, citizens are mostly reacting on the EU (through votes, protests, abstention). Hence the actors involved in the European elections are mostly focusing on the question of defending or criticising the EU. Establishment of a different pattern, which would allow formulation of a public opinion, would be both a constitutive process and would make European citizenship a tangible concept. Bringing about such a fundamental transformation from liberal democracy to republican democracy²⁵, and herewith putting society at the heart of the process is a task that none of the apolitical European institutions can effectively accomplish. But this is what above mentioned era of informed citizen would most naturally require. And here, in reaching a new stage of empowerment, the role of the europarties becomes in fact historical.

These three observations explain why there are preconditions for a new chapter in the history of eurodemocracy and how europarties could be essential in the transformative process. The question of course is why to believe that the europarties are capable of doing so. The scepticism can come from many areas, including the fact that on the national level there is rather a phenomenon of a decline of the political parties and collapse of partisanship²⁶.

The europarties exist as self-standing political organisations since 2003²⁷, however the history of their existence is naturally longer. In case of the PES (Party of European Socialists) the founding date was in fact 1957, when the Liaison Bureau of Socialist Parties of the European Community was established. Back then it had a task to coordinate the policies of the SI (Socialist International) members, who came from the countries of the European Community of Steel and Coal. This very basic organisation was developing parallel to the progressing European integration and the phases of its evolution have reflected the stages of transformation of the European Communities²⁸. The transition between different organisational stages has always been an expression of a political will to expand the cooperation through expanding consolidating structures.

24 For the theory of normative models of democracy, please see: J. Habermas, *Three normative models of Democracy.*, [in:] *Democracy and difference. Contesting the Boundaries of the Political.*, S. Benhabib (ed.), Princeton University Press 1996, pp. 21 – 30.

25 Understood as a set of ethically defined rights and responsibilities.

26 See: U. Jun, O. Niedemayer & E. Wiesendahl (eds.), *Die Zukunft der Mitgliedparteien.*, Barbara Budrich Opladen & Farmington Hills, Leverkusen 2009.

27 Until that year the europarties (as established on the bases of the Treaty of Maastricht in 1992) were using the offices and resources of respective groups in the European Parliament. Accordingly to the rules, europarty can be created by those political families, which members gained seats in the national and regional elections in at least ¼ of the member states and which reached at least 3% of support in the previous European elections.

28 A. Skrzypek., *Partia Europejskich Socjalistów 1957 – 2009, Geneza – organizacja – możliwości.*, Aspra 2010, p. 9.

European Unification	Euro-party formation
EEC (European Economic Community)	Liaison Bureau of Socialist Parties of the European Community
European Communities (EEC and EFTA)	Confederation of the Socialist Parties of the European Community
European Union	Party of European Socialists

The European Parliament's Report of Jo Leinen MEP, which was adopted on 23rd march 2006²⁹ inspired a process, that made the European Council work on the new regulations (1524/2007) on functioning of the europarties. They allow parties to organise electoral campaign, with a limitation that these may not mean financing the national member parties or the pre-referenda campaigns³⁰. Perhaps in the spirit of already quoted before European Commission's "Plan D" – the europarties became herewith at least formally co-responsible for development of European democracy.

The evolution of the PES as a europarty has been marked in the last decade with the two major reforms³¹. Especially the last one was to make sure that the agenda and proceedings of the PES are better related to the overall EU agenda, as also that there is a further opening towards the members of the member parties (on the bases of which thinking the mechanism of the individual membership – so called PES Activists – was introduced). Though both the reforms were profound and one should not underestimate the efforts behind, nevertheless they did not anticipate on the new responsibilities introduced by the Lisbon Treaty. Those were embraced in fact only by the last PES Congress in September 2012 in Brussels, which introduced to the statutes, among the others, an institution of a leading candidate and provision for campaigning³². This brings new prospects of strengthening, even if there is still a large criticism that the europarties as such remain weak organisations³³. The question is if there is to be enough political will among the members to make the step forward in assuring further consolidation and empower the PES to hold a say in a European deliberative processes.

The preconditions connected with the aftermath of the global crisis and its echoes on the European level provoked a situation, in which certain political choices have to be made. Looking at the history of the European integration, in which any major progress has been

²⁹ Report on European Political Parties, A6-0042/2006, www.eur-lex.europa.eu

³⁰ K. M. Johansson, *The Emergence of Political Parties at European Level: Integration Unaccomplished.*, [in:] *How Unified Is the European Union. European Integration Between Visions and Popular Legitimacy.*, S. Gustavsson, L. Oxelheim, M. Pehrson (eds.), Springer, Berlin – Heidelberg 2009, p. 166.

³¹ Adopted at the PES Congress in Berlin (2001) and at the PES Council in Vienna (2006).

³² http://www.pes.eu/sites/www.pes.org/files/pes_statutes_2012_en.pdf

³³ J. Sloam & I. Hertner, *The Europeanisation of Social Democracy: Politics without Policy and Policy without Politics.*, [in:] *The Future of European Social Democracy. Building Good Society.*, H. Meyer and J. Rutheford (eds.); Palgrave Macmillan, Mondon 2012, p. 33 and next.

induced by a respective predicament³⁴, it is possible to predict that a major shift can be expected. **The chance for the europarties is to use the mandate given by the Treaty of Lisbon and ensure that in the spirit of democracy, there are diverse scenarios available for the European citizens to choose from in 2014. The competition among different ideologies has to be transposition into the European party system, following the good practice of the European Parliament³⁵. For that europarties can use the pre-campaign period to open up and engage in a more deliberative process of developing such initiatives.** Serious political debate would be about going beyond symbols. Furthermore, the cohesion among europarties members and internal order must occur not only on great programmatic, but also on legislative issues. And they must show a newly acquired ability of a well coordinated, cohesive and collective action³⁶.

In the times of regular mobilisations towards the national elections, even the most pluralistic national parties manage to concentrate on one, unified message and common efforts. The question is if this will be possible also for europarties, who so far did not directly take a stand (even in 2009) and whose members in fact battled in 27 different elections³⁷. Better understanding requires acquiring an understanding of specificity of pan-European campaigning and analyses of what potential the europarties to face the challenge of participating in them fully.

2. Enabling Europarties to Perform the Role of Electoral Centres

Eurocampaigning should be classified as a new category within political marketing studies. Their specificity is predetermined by the fact that they are led by europarties, which nature is vastly different to the national parties. Also the environment of campaigning, being a complex European Union's set up and still a very under-developed European public sphere, is a unique one. Traditional research, which predominantly focuses on the electoral campaigns of the first order (national) as opposed to second order (European)³⁸, has not elaborated sufficient methodology yet to analyse this particular phenomena. The underpinning reason of that was also that the European elections have been until now in

34 See: F. McGowan, *Social Democracy and the European Union. Who is changing whom?*, [in:] *Social Democracy – Global and National Perspectives.*, Palgrave, London 2001.

35 S. Hix, A. G. Noury & G. Roland, *Democratic Politics in the European Parliament.*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 2007, p. 3

36 Ibidem., pp. 218 – 219.

37 J. Priestley, *European political parties: the missing link. Les partis politiques européens: le chaînon manquant.*, Notre Europe, Paris 2010, p. 8.

38 See: R. Corbett, F. Jacobs & M. Skackleton, *The European Parliament.*, 6th edition, John Harper Publishing, London 2005, p. 9.

fact the sum of 27 different elections³⁹ and hence were analysed rather through a prism of comparative studies.

Political marketing grew as a special discipline within political sciences predominantly in the last two decades⁴⁰. This development is usually associated with the transformation of the world politics. There are internal factors that occurred, such as professionalization; and external, such as cyber revolution and change of logic of mass-communication, through which 24 media cycle was developed. Therefore the focus of researchers also broadened, going beyond analyses of the political cleavages among the respective parties. Since the 1990s⁴¹ equally much attention is given to the process of running campaigns and strategies of political communications⁴². Among the outcome of these studies is the thesis that all the campaigns are framed by electoral law and partisan system. And that their impact is predetermined by political culture, practise of disseminating information and communication infrastructure (mass-media)⁴³. This methodological apparatus also explains the comfort of comparative research of respective national campaigns in the context of the European elections rather than analysis devoted to a pan-European campaign⁴⁴. Still evolving EU partisan system, lack (or very weak) pan-European media, diverse rules as far as the voting procedures and non-existent common EU political culture among voters – would also fully legitimise such a choice.

The provisions of the Lisbon Treaty provide a space for this new type of eurocampaigning to develop. It should be seen as a strengthening element of the European democracy, especially as far as its representativeness is concerned. The campaign is still the most feasible tool to inform the voters about competing programmes, parties and candidates⁴⁵.

The available classifications from within the political marketing divide the campaigns according to the criteria concerning their respective subject(s) and actors. This is illustrated by the scheme below⁴⁶:

39 J. Priestley, *European political parties: the missing link. Les partis politiques européens: le chaînon manquant.*, Notre Europe, Paris 2010, p. 8.

40 See: F. Plasses & G. Plasser, *Global Political Campaigning. A Worldwide Analysis of Campaign Professionals and Their Practices.*, Praeger Publishers, Westport 2002, p. 7.

41 *Political Campaign Communication. Principles and practices.*, 7th edition, J.S. Trent, R.V. Friedenbergl and R.D. Denton Jr., Rowan and Littlefield Publishers, Plymouth 2011, p. 107

42 *Campaigns and political marketing in political science context.*, W. P. Steger, S. Q. Kelly & J.M. Wrighton (eds.), [in:] *Journal of political marketing*, vol. 5, 1/2, 2006, p.2.

43 F. Plasses & G. Plasser, *Global Political Campaigning...*, *op.cit.*, p. 107

44 *Political Communication in the European Parliamentary Elections.*, M. Maier, J. Strömbäck & L.L. Kais (eds.), Ashgate, Farnham 2011, p. 4.

45 *Ibid.* P. 4

46 After: *Do Political Campaigns Matter. Campaigns effects in elections and referendums.*, D. M. Farrell & R. Schliedt-Beck, Routledge, New York 2004.

Scheme 2.1

Subject of a campaign			
		One idea	Many ideas (programme)
Constellations of the campaign's actors	Competing actors	Referendum's result	Won elections
	One actor	Dissemination of information Raising interest about the theme	Constructing / improving image

However this classification encompasses well the character of the national elections, its transposition onto the European level meets certain difficulties. First of all, because of the "second order" character of the European elections, they are usually taking shape of a referendum on two matters: EU on one hand, and the parties governing on the national level on the other. Secondly, the respective europarties' manifestos have until now had predominantly significance as symbols of unity. Though this seems to be changing (especially if one looks at the PES Manifestos of 2004 and 2009⁴⁷, which are written in much more polarising manner) – they still remain rather declarations, that effective governing programmes. The last has of course to do with the specific constellation of the European institutions and the fact that any decision on the EU level requires a multilayer consensus and compromise, becoming herewith apolitical in fact. Taking that into consideration one could suggest modifying the scheme in a following manner:

Scheme 2.2

Approach towards the European integration			
		Positive	Negative
Europarties / members of the europarties	Parties in the government	Legitimising the government, and here the politics of the EU per extension	Legitimising the government, and here also anti-EU movements
	Parties in the opposition	Chance to run a positive campaign „pro-Europe“ and highlighting the potential issues towards the next European campaign	Legitimising of the demands, including against the EU and consolidation of forces.

There are few comments to be drawn from the two schemes. First of all, **it is still impossible to apply the existing understanding of political campaigning onto the eurocampaigning and europarties.** This is because until now europarties do not perform in the European elections. Even if the voters would have known about their existence, they cannot vote them – as it is national parties and not europarties that are on the respective

47 www.pes.eu

ballots. Secondly, it seems that the parties that have a true chance to propose radically distinctive, positive visions of a pro-European character are the national parties that remain in the opposition. This would in fact be a factor in favour of social democracy nowadays and would prove that it has a potential to consolidate around a message promoting different Europe, than the one at hand. The third and last question is the actual meaning of pro-Europeanism. What one member party can consider as its own euro-enthusiasm can be seen by another party from within the same political family as euro-scepticism. Hence it would seem that while consolidating, also PES, will need to revisit this difficult, but fundamental debate. One can hope that currently performed process leading to creating the very first PES Fundamental Programme may provide an adequate set up for it.

The Lisbon Treaty should enhance the need for change and induce developments of eurocampaigns. It is most likely going to be a lengthy process, but the number of elements it brings about encourages optimism. The leading among them is the introduction of the institution of a “top candidate”⁴⁸. Until now, the europarties have remained without any influence on the lists of candidates, which their respective members were presenting in the context of the European elections. That means that the member parties have been free in establishing criteria and framing the process leading towards setting up the lists. That meant that respective candidates have had to be primarily loyal to the national parties, and in case they were elected – primarily remain loyal to the party of origin and the group in the European Parliament that they chose to sit in. Their approach towards a europarty has been a matter of a good will – even though the group in the EP remains at least theoretically an emanation of a europarty (here understood as a European ideological family). The research has proven that MEPs have rarely instinctively identified themselves with a europarty therefore⁴⁹. This had a harming effect on any attempts of a europarty to “exist” in the context of a European campaign.

Even though the institution of a common candidate is not such a far going change as for example transnational, pan-European lists⁵⁰ could potentially be, it introduces an important element for further development of the eurocampaign. Its personalisation can lead to establishment of a new sort of pan-European political leadership for the electoral times⁵¹. He or she will be the symbol and his/her performance will become a measurement of the European political family success. It will

48 A. Skrzypek, *Models of (s)electing a pan-European leading candidate*, FEPS 2010, http://www.feps-europe.eu/en/news/204_models-of-selecting-a-pan-european-leading-candidate

49 S. Hix, A. G. Noury & G. Roland, *Democratic Politics in the European Parliament*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 2007, p. 136 and next.

50 See: A. Duff proposal <http://www.europarl.europa.eu/news/en/headlines/content/20110415STO17908/html/A-big-step-forward-for-a-United-European-Democracy>

51 P. Norris, as also W. Loer and H. Thomer write that during a campaign, there is next to a political-ideological leadership, also a campaign-propaganda leadership emerging. See: W. Loer, H. Thomer, *Schröder'98 – Kampa und Kanzlerkandidat*, [w:] *Neue Gesellschaft – Frakfurter Hefte*, Bonn, 2007/7/8, s. 455

require full mobilisation behind that. This link can only be properly established and mended if europarties step into the action and fulfil this role.

The fact that the Lisbon Treaty requires that the President of the European Commission originates from a political family that gained the largest number of seats in the European Parliament is a major change. Until now the provisions required for all the members of the European Commission to remain apolitical⁵². It will undoubtedly change therefore an internal dynamic of a campaign creating a new reference point for all parties and their respective candidates. It will also, externally, personify the cleavages among the europarties – enhancing the political competition among them.

As stipulated before, there is also a need for the europarties to review the very sense of electoral manifestos in the light of the new eurocampaign provisions. This relates to the conclusions that also were drawn in the first chapter regarding democracy and a need for europarties to engage with its members and per extension with the citizens in a deliberative process, which would lead to formulation of an alternative political proposal. Only then the approach towards euro-democracy can change. Also herewith the europarties can gain new significance and operational grounds. Additionally such a process can involve many members, giving them a possibility of feeling an ownership over the agenda and herewith help building identification with a europarty. A good example of how such a process could be run was the PES strategy of 2008 – 2009. Back then instead of a traditional editorial team, the process was opened to all – from activists, through partners to parties. Even though in the end of the day it perhaps did not lead to a full mobilisation, it made Manifesto more known and herewith the europarties closer to the individual members.

Summarising, the new type of eurocampaigning is likely to alter the role and significance that the europarties have held until now. It will require europarties to evolve beyond offices of sharing information. With an introduction of a leading candidate they are likely to become, at least temporarily, more empowered electoral centres of political coordination and acquire leadership over the campaigns' coordination. In this context, also the process of writing and the final shape of the manifesto needs to be reconsidered – to become more tangible electoral offer. With the existence of PES Fundamental Programme there will not be risk of giving up ideology in this context. As for academic side, these processes are opening a new field on the fringe of three research areas: political marketing, political thought and European studies. The way they cross-cut with one another will require a different methodology, which if develops, will enable improved studies over the EU partisan system.

⁵² See: M.Cini, *European Union politics*, Oxford University Press, Oxford 2007.

3. Consolidating partisanship in the name of new political challenge⁵³

The second chapter presents specific deliberations on the challenges and opportunities that the europarties face in their current phase of evolution. The focus was mainly on the overall dimension of the partisan and institutional system of the EU; however the available techniques on practical level have not yet been explored. This is the ambition of the chapter below. The examples are taken from existing practices of the PES in years 2007 – 2012, both as far as thematic and as pre-European elections campaigns are concerned.

3.1 Inspiring Lessons from 2009

The campaign of 2009 was predeceased by a process of writing Manifesto, which was finally adopted at the PES Council in Madrid in December 2008⁵⁴. The choice of the location was not a coincidence, as the PES wished to adopt its Manifesto in a country in which the party was in a government. This usually brings both: attention to the event itself, as also is an additional reason for leaders of different member parties to travel to the meeting. It remains still under-researched on how much attention in such a momentum is given to the europarty holding its statutory meeting or in how far it is primarily reported and broadcasted as the hosting party's European event. Those two are not exclusive of course, but influence potential presence of europarties on the national level. The fact that the leaders of the respective parties are still more likely to come, when the other leaders are present, shows also the tendency to consider PES still rather an enabler of cooperation and exchange framework for its members, than a political being of a high relevance in itself.

The adopted Manifesto "People first. A new direction for Europe"⁵⁵ consisted of 15 pages, which were composed of 6 chapters and 71 proposals. It is not in the scope of this article to analyse the content of the text; however there are few observations on it to be made. Firstly, the Manifesto was a lengthy text. Its detailed character entangled in a specific EU discourse made it very difficult for any potential translation, and hence it was to be a challenging task – if that was to serve as a document to be distributed among the voters during the campaign. Secondly, the variety of proposals and themes mirrored the fact of how many actors were involved in its drafting and subsequent consultations. This requires special underlining, as it on one hand was a certificate of openness of the

53 This part of the texts corresponds to an earlier study of A. Skrzypek, *Współczesna egzegeza Europy. Analiza asortymentu kampanii politycznych europartii na przykładzie Partii Europejskich Socjalistów w latach 2007 – 2012.*, in print by Warsaw University in 2013.

54 The PES Council took place on 1st and 2nd December 2008. The Manifesto can be found at: <http://www.pes.eu/en/about-pes/how-does-pes-work/-council/madrid>

55 http://www.pes.eu/sites/www.pes.org/files/pes_manifesto_2009-en.pdf

writing process, and on the other also of a pluralist character of the movement. Thirdly, the title in itself was not a very controversial one. Hence it is likely that as a message in a campaign, it would not be instinctively associated with one or another political family. Of course, secondary to that translation into different languages, additionally complicates the matter – as in such a process there is no guarantee that a good slogan sounds similarly well in all the languages.

These three remarks are relevant in the context of reconsidering what role the Manifesto should have in the context of the new campaigns. It has served as a symbol of unity among the members of the PES and as such has been the highest ranking ideological document of PES⁵⁶. Once compared with the manifestos of conservatives and liberals, and extracting common issues – it also has given a solid feeling of what the leading themes of the European agenda for the next five years would be⁵⁷. But it seems in the light of necessity to consolidate, provide a common purpose for a collective, electoral action – the ambitions behind Manifesto may evolve into making it a proper, electoral platform.

The electoral campaign of the PES in 2009 was historical from a perspective on how ambitious it was. The aim was to reach as many citizens as possible⁵⁸. This is why there were 5 pan-European action days planned⁵⁹, each of which would be devoted to a different theme. Both the member parties and the PES activists were to unite and promote the PES Manifesto. Accordingly to the campaign summary, there were altogether more than 220 actions, of which reports and photos were available at the special PES website www.elections2009.pes.org It is very probable that some of those had been planned primarily as the events within the national campaign, nevertheless the fact that they were Europeanised in the course should be seen as a success. This made logo and manifesto of the PES present in the different places all over Europe. What is important to underline is that the activists taking part in those actions across the EU were aware that herewith they are participating in something larger, European – and though there are no data available, it certainly must have induced certain identity building.

The gadget of the campaign was a box, which had on its sides: logo of the PES, electoral slogan and the address of the internet page. The graphical concept was based on the fact that such an accessory, which is easy to produce, is the most useful. Furthermore, it can easily be used in a campaign without distracting from visual identity of the respective member parties. The colours of the box were the PES colours – red and white. The

56 This changed with adoption of the *PES Declaration of Principles*.

57 A. Skrzypek, *Studium oferty programowej konserwatystów, liberałów i socjalistów przygotowanej z myślą o kampanii wyborczej do Parlamentu Europejskiego 2009 roku.*, [in:] *Przegląd Europejski* 1 (18) 2009 Zakład Instytucji Europejskich Instytutu Nauk Politycznych Uniwersytetu Warszawskiego, Warszawa 2009, pp. 85 – 122.

58 *PES : European Parliament Election Campaign 2009*.

59 These were : Gender equality (7th March), New Social Europe (9h May), Climate Change (16th May), Economic Recovery (23rd May) and People first (30th May).

gadget was popularised in different ways, starting from stress-block finishing as a motive of a photo-competition. In order to take part in the competition, one should produce a box and take a photo of it, featuring also an important European venue or monument. The competition seems to have been relatively popular, and as in case of action days, brought some sense of communitarian feeling among the activists. It is again hard to judge on how far the passers-by were involved in any debate observing the photo-taking, but one can assume that also these sorts of reactions were provoked. This could have raised at least awareness of the PES existence.

The most important tool of the campaign was nevertheless internet and the website. Taking into account the geographical area, where the campaign took place, only internet in fact gave a possibility to connect different actions and also to illustrate different stages of the campaign. The portal was also used for blogs by the PES leaders. Naturally, using of internet had certain limitations – the website was run in 4 languages. So both the question of accessibility of internet and the linguistic criteria predetermined, who effectively could mobilised through this campaign.

The 2008 – 2009 PES campaign was certainly a proof of a certain evolution. The plan of campaign was the most ambitious ever – and following the spirit of the Lisbon Treaty indeed focused on promoting Manifesto and mobilising the members. If to try to judge the campaign accordingly to the standards applied on the national level, it is probable that the evaluation would be a critical one (especially if one would for example seek to assess it through how much the PES managed to be present in different media). Nevertheless here the point of the Chapters 1 and 2 shall be reiterated – that the eurocampaigns can't be analysed through the same lenses as the national campaigns.

3.2 Politicising Europe through Content Messages in years 2007 – 2012

Next to politicising the office of the European Commission's President, the Lisbon Treaty introduced one more significant instrument. This so called "European Citizens' Initiative"⁶⁰. For the European citizens it opens an opportunity to present to the European Commission a legislative proposal. In order to submit one, the citizens have to gather a million of signatures from at least 7 EU member states. The EC is then obliged to organise a public hearing on it. The Initiative does not have a binding character, but nevertheless its revolutionary character is defined otherwise. First, it has to have a transnational character. That means that the citizens in at least 7 states have to come to a conclusion that they wish to unite in the name of one or another idea. Secondly, it broadens the civic rights within the EU. Thirdly, it can be an inspiration to introduce new theme to a pan-European

⁶⁰ <http://ec.europa.eu/citizens-initiative>

debate, even if they should remain outside of the scope of the EU politics now. This is regardless of the fact that the rules stipulate that the theme has to belong to legislative portfolio of the EC – because it is hard to imagine that if one million signatures would effectively be gathered, it could easily be dismissed because of rules.

It is hard to predict what would be the mutual relation between this mechanism and the europarties, outside of what is included in the existing regulations. A mobilisation of citizens may push the parties to formulate an opinion. Or even the europarties could inspire certain initiatives to occur, even if themselves they should not lead mobilisations. Perhaps then their role would be about creating a certain political mood. These deliberations have naturally speculative character only, as they are not researched yet. Nevertheless they create a bridge to understanding what role the thematic campaigns of the europarties could play.

In years 2007 – 2012 PES run 5 pan-European thematic campaigns.:

- Child Care Campaign (2007) ⁶¹
- My Body, My Rights (2010)⁶²
- Financial Transaction Tax (2011 – 2012)⁶³
- Women and Pension (2012)⁶⁴
- Youth Guarantee – Your future is my future (2012)⁶⁵

Elaborating on each of them would go beyond the scope of this article. Therefore it will limit itself only to general remarks, which shall capture characteristic features relevant for deliberations on eurocampaigning.

The themes of the pan-European campaigns are selected by the PES Presidency. Suggestion is usually formulated by the Secretariat on the bases of the political report, which had been elaborated within one or another network and was also adopted by the PES Presidency. The campaign slogan becomes herewith a leading message of the europarty for the subsequent year. This is a very important feature, as it allows easily communicating what the PES agenda is about and hence what the added value of a europarty is (in other words: what is the cause it brings about).

The campaigns concern relevant social issues, proposing the solutions. Naturally, due to the character of the institutional system, the possibility to influence a radical change of any situation within the EU is extremely limited. Nevertheless, selection serves also other

61 <http://www.pes.org/en/news/closing-child-care-campaign-almost-year-road>

62 <http://www.pes.org/en/about-pes/how-does-pes-work/pes-women/my-body-my-rights>

63 <http://www.pes.org/en/pes-action/political-initiatives/financial-reform-economic-policy/financial-transaction-tax/documents>

64 <http://www.pes.org/en/node/46861>

65 <http://www.pes.org/en/news/pes-major-report-youth-unemployment-calls-progressive-european-youth-guarantee>

purposes – such as awareness raising, coalition building and proving utility of the PES. This is a challenging task, which none of the member parties are in fact faced with.

The decision on the campaign does not have a fundamentally binding character. Member parties are not obliged to get involved, though the principle of political responsibility for the decisions taken within the PES should mean that they would abide by. There is no data available to analyse in how far different campaigns have been carried on within the i.e. regional or local levels, however it seems that this is still a sphere to be improved.

This is also why there are other instruments in use, allowing to promote the campaign. The fact that PES decides on one, means also that its slogan is going to be used as a point of the agenda of all its meetings that year (from Leaders to Activists) and will become a background for all political debates. Continuous exchange of opinions allows acquiring better understanding of different countries specificities and herewith enhances possibility to promote more unifying, and more tangible positions.

Last but not least, the campaign allows creating a better internal cohesion among the PES and its member organisations. To give an example, the campaigns of 2010 and 2012 served to support PES Women and raise its profile, while the current one is a flagship for both PES and ECOSY (Young European Socialists). Externally, the campaigns have an impact as a pretext to engage in a conversation with potential partners and form an alliance in the name of one or another cause. Such an understanding is a fundament towards any eurocampaign in the electoral context.

In the contrast to the national thematic campaign occasionally run by the parties, the pan-European ones do not mobilise opposition. It is disputable if the reason is because they still remain very general or because the political stage is not very consolidated. Perhaps also the fact that the legislative process on the EU level is a lengthy and complicated one, it is also assumed that even if the themes will make it into pan-European proposal – they will require becoming a compromise and herewith they will nevertheless become apolitical at the end of the day. Hence no need to strike against them before.

Conclusions

The aim of this article was to analyse the potential of the europarties to use the post crisis momentum and basing itself on the new provisions of the Lisbon Treaty evolve to become more relevant actors of the European Union's politics.

The first Chapter examined in what sort of an understanding of the nature of European democracy is required in order to break out of the narrow analytical approach, which sees democratic deficit almost exclusively in the dimension of the citizens' participation in the European elections. The Chapter finishes with a proposal on more holistic approach, stipulating the role and chance of the europarties in both organising a democratic

deliberative process and elaborating here through feasible alternatives. The Chapter looks also closer at the political and institutional conditions, which introduced by the Lisbon Treaty are likely to induce a new stage of development of the europarties.

The second Chapter examines a potential laying in eurocampaigns. It shows that the fringe of the political marketing, party systems and European studies remain an under-researched domain. The pledge that is made there is that there is a need for a new methodology to be able to comprehend specificity of eurocampaigns. It also underlines that they remain very dynamic phenomena and their character is changing. This leads to a conclusion that with the introduction of an institution of a top candidate on one hand, and with the changing role of pan-European Manifesto – there can be an expectation that the campaign in 2014 will be of a different nature than traditionally analysed campaigns of the second order.

Finally, the third Chapter offers a glimpse of the campaigns that the PES has run in years 2007 – 2012, both before the European elections as also the thematic ones. It points out different characteristic features, stipulating potential space for further developments. Among the conclusion is that especially thematic campaigns may boost further political and organisational consolidation, as also raise the political profile of the europarties.

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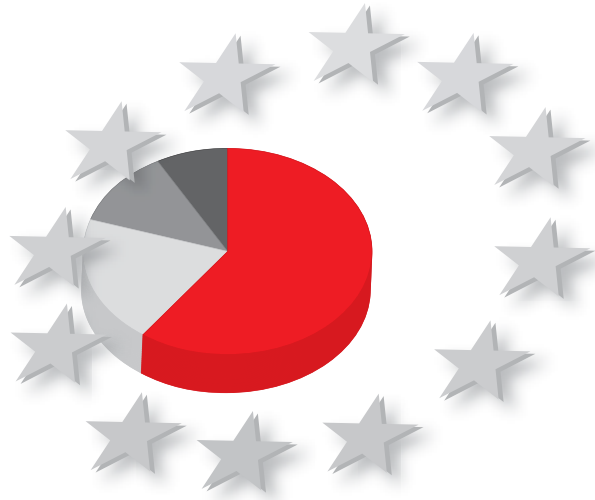
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David J. BAILEY

European Democracy after Social Democracy: conceptualising the role of transnational parties



Key words

Democracy – Social Democracy – Transnational Parties – Party of European Socialists – European Union

Abstract

This paper seeks to engage with the ongoing debate surrounding the democratic legitimacy of the European Union, from a perspective that considers European democracy to be characterised by a tradition of (relatively substantive) solidarism and collective participation. The paper argues that European social democracy has historically been central to European democracy, and that the decline in European social democracy witnessed in recent decades therefore raises a number of important questions for contemporary democratic institutions within Europe. How we understand the decline of European social democracy can therefore inform our understanding of the role (and potential role) of contemporary European democratic institutions with regard to their scope for representation, redistribution and the facilitation of collective action. More concretely, the paper argues that we should see the widely-noted decline of social democracy as central to the broader process of de-democratisation that has been commonly noted across Europe, and that we can group contending explanations for this decline in social democracy in terms of those which focus on institutional obstacles, politico-ideological changes, and/or socio-economic processes. Building on this discussion, and focusing on the inter-relationship between each of the processes highlighted by these contending explanations, the paper argues that the role of representative political institutions within contemporary European democracies has become focused on attempts to dampen political contestation, to challenge the legitimacy of citizens' claims, and/or to ensure that popular ideas cohere with wider socio-economic pressures for austerity and enhanced commodification. These tendencies are subsequently discussed with reference to transnational parties and the specific case of the Party of European Socialists.

The state of European democracy continues to be a source of ongoing debate within the literature^{1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6}. Much of this focuses on the extent to which democracy across the European Union – both at the national and supranational levels – has become less democratic, or ‘de-democratised’⁷, over recent decades. According to this commonly-held analysis, European democracy has witnessed a decline in citizen participation (especially in the form of declining participation within formal institutions), a reduction in the range of both policy and ideological options available to voters and decision-makers, and an increase in the institutional constraints placed upon policymakers seeking to implement public policy goals. The result of these developments, so the analysis goes, has been to institute a qualitatively different form of European democracy. Of particular concern, the new form of European democracy is considered less participatory, less *solidaristic*, more unequal and more technocratic^{8, 9, 10, 11}. This paper argues that, rather than view this solely in terms of changes to contemporary European democracy, we should instead view these changes to European democracy through the lens of the decline of European social democracy. That is, that **the qualitative changes noted with regard to European democracy are in part a result of the decline of social democracy within Europe**. In this sense, therefore, we can draw upon the ‘decline of social democracy’ literature in order to understand the changes noted to European democracy more generally.

1 C. Lord & E. Harris, *Democracy in the New Europe*, Basingstoke, Palgrave, 2006.

2 A. Follesdal & S. Hix, *Why there is a Democratic Deficit in the EU: A response to Majone and Moravcsik*, [in:] *Journal of Common Market Studies*, Vol. 44(3), 2006.

3 C. Skelcher & J. Torfing, *Improving democratic governance through institutional design: Civic participation and democratic ownership in Europe*, [in:] *Regulation and Governance* 4(1): 71-91, 2010.

4 V. A. Schmidt, *Democracy in Europe: The EU and National Politics*, Oxford University Press, 2006.

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6 F. W. Scharpf, *Governing in Europe: Effective and Democratic?*, Oxford University Press, 2006.

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European Democracy and European Social Democracy

What is perhaps historically and geographically unique about European democracy between the post-WW2 and mid-1970s period is the extent to which the following three phenomena co-existed: (a) an historically high level of participation by non-elites in the decision making machinery of the democratic state and the day-to-day operation of the private sector economy, particularly in the form of trade union input into both policymaking and wage-setting^{12,13}, (b) the achievement of redistributive policy outcomes that would produce a level of social equality in most states that had otherwise been unreplicated from the 19th century onwards¹⁴; and (c) a level of economic growth that was able to engender the continued production and reproduction of the capitalist economy throughout the period¹⁵. This unique combination of outcomes is largely (and, it is assumed in the present paper, correctly) considered to be the result of the mobilisation of widespread workers' movements during the early stage of capitalist industrialisation from the mid-19th century onwards, along with an attempt by political elites to incorporate the demands voiced during the course of this mobilisation, and an opportunity identified by social democratic party leaders to pursue the demands of those workers within the institutions of the state and the partial ability of mobilised non-elites to effectively express demands outside of those institutions^{16, 17, 18}. Understood in this way, therefore, **the historically and geographically unique form of democracy that existed for parts of the post-war period in Europe should be understood largely as a result of the ability of social democratic parties to channel working class organisation and unrest into an institutionalised form of dissent that could be (only partly) contained through promises of redistribution.** Thus, participation co-existed with solidaristic policy outcomes *in the policy sphere* as a result of the co-existence of social mobilisation and political conviction in the possibility of achieving socio-economic reforms through public policy *in the socio-economic sphere*.

12 C. S. Allen, *Trade Unions, Worker Participation, and Flexibility: Linking the Micro to the Macro*, [in:] *Comparative Politics* 22(3), pp. 253-72, 1990.

13 W. Streeck, *The Rise and Decline of Neocorporatism, Labor and an integrated Europe*, [in:] L. Ulman, B. Eichengreen & W.T. Dickens (eds.), Washington D.C., Brookings Institute, 1993.

14 E. Huber & J.D. Stephens, *Welfare State and Production Regimes in the Era of Retrenchment*, [in:] *The New Politics of the Welfare State*, P. Pierson (ed.), Oxford University Press, pp. 107-45, 2001.

15 A. Glyn, *Capitalism Unleashed: Finance, Globalization, and Welfare*, Oxford University Press, 2006.

16 D. Bailey, *The Political Economy of European Social Democracy: A Critical Realist Approach*, London, Routledge 2009.

17 S. Berman, *The Primacy of Politics: Social Democracy and the Making of Europe's Twentieth Century*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2006.

18 D. Sassoon, *One Hundred Years of Socialism: The West European Left in the Twentieth Century*, London, Fontana Press 1996.

Explaining the ‘Decline of Social Democracy’, and implications for European democracy

Since the mid-1970s, however, social democratic parties have seemed increasingly unable and/or unwilling to assert their ‘traditional’ social democratic programme of macroeconomic regulation, fiscal redistribution and/or widening democratic participation. In its place, social democratic parties have moved towards what many have described as ‘Third Way’ social democracy¹⁹, including a move away from class as the basis for electoral mobilisation²⁰, the centralisation of internal party decision-making²¹, an acceptance of the neoliberal view that private markets are more efficient than the public sector at allocating resources²², a move towards minimal, or more means-tested and ‘prioritarian’ welfare provisions, and a focus on pro-employment (or ‘productivist’) support for those disadvantaged in the labour market²³. Given the downscaling of redistributive goals, and the reduction in the attempt to ensure the decommodification of their working class-oriented constituency, a number of commentators have viewed this process as a ‘de-social democratisation’ of social democratic parties^{24,25}. Due to the centrality of social democracy to the development of twentieth century European democracy, moreover, explanations for the decline in social democracy will also have implications for our understanding of European democracy, and should therefore also inform our understanding of contemporary democratic institutions. Alternative accounts for the decline of social democracy are considered in turn below.

Institutional obstacles. The limits generated by European integration, and particularly its impact upon the feasibility of social democratic outcomes, are commonly considered to have contributed to the contemporary decline of European social democracy. Thus, Scharpf²⁶ argues that social democratic policy ambitions have been curtailed as a result of the pro-market nature of European integration, combined with the limits that European integration places upon the adoption of counter-market policy alternatives at the national

19 A. Giddens, *The Third Way: The Renewal of Social Democracy*, Cambridge, Polity Press, 1998.

20 H. Kitschelt, *The Transformation of European Social Democracy*, Cambridge University Press, 1994.

21 G. Moschonas, *In the Name of Social Democracy: The Great Transformation: 1945 to the Present*, London, Verso, 2002.

22 A. Przeworski, *How Many Ways Can Be Third?*, [in:] *Social Democracy in Neoliberal Times*, A. Glyn (ed.), Oxford University Press 2001, pp. 312-333; and S. Thomson, *The Social Democratic Dilemma: Ideology, Governance and Globalization*, London, Macmillan, 2000, pp. 156-7.

23 J. Huo, *Third Way Reforms: Social Democracy after the Golden Age*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2009.

24 G. Moschonas, *In the Name of Social Democracy: The Great Transformation: 1945 to the Present*, London, Verso, 2002.

25 S.C. Motta & D. Bailey, *Neither Pragmatic Adaptation nor Misguided Accommodation: Modernization as Domination in the Chilean and British Left*, [in:] *Capital and Class*, 92, pp. 107-36. 2007.

26 F. W. Scharpf, *Governing in Europe: Effective and Democratic?*, Oxford University Press, 1999.

level. The process of European integration has created a 'joint decision trap', whereby the institutional configuration of the multi-level European Union prevents decisions other than those that consolidate market integration from occurring at the supranational level *and* prohibits extra-market intervention from occurring at the national level²⁷. Faced with such an institutional context, social democratic parties have been forced to adapt and postpone their ambitions for redistributive policy outcomes, witnessing a re-channelling of those ambitions within the institutions of the European Union (see, for instance, Strange 2006).

Politico-ideological changes. The second, what we might term 'politico-ideological', type of explanation for the decline of social democracy focuses on the ideational lenses through which social democratic actors – including voters, party members and party elites – perceive the contemporary context within which they operate. From this perspective, central to the process of social democratic decline was the emergence of a common perception (held by both social democratic voters and social democratic political actors) that international economic constraints impinged upon social democratic parties' scope for activity following the demise of the Bretton Woods system to such an extent that a significant range of social democratic policy options became unfeasible. Indeed, for many of the proponents of this line of analysis, there is a mismatch between the perception of the constraints that result from the contemporary structure of the international political economy, and the nature of those constraints themselves. Thus, Colin Hay²⁸ argues that 'the idea that globalization entails neo-liberalization has become something of a self-fulfilling prophecy and, as such, an independent driver of neo-liberalization in contemporary Europe'. Indeed, for those adopting such a perspective, this is in large part a misperception promoted by actors who are ideologically committed to the erosion of 'traditional' social democratic policies, combined with the unnecessary readiness of certain social democratic actors to internalise and endorse such a view (Hay 2004 and 2006).

Socio-economic processes (1): the post-Fordist context. A third set of explanations within the literature refers to what we might term broader 'socio-economic processes'. These processes can in turn be distinguished in terms of the degree of historical particularity that they address. Thus, one approach focuses on the post-Fordist socio-economic context, and the way in which this is inimical to more traditional social democratic policy ambitions. From this perspective, the shift to a post-Fordist economy – including more disaggregated production techniques, the internationalisation of finance and trade, the shrinking of the organised manual working class, and the diversity, flexibility and complexity of contemporary organisational practices - have each reduced both the viability and the desirability of 'traditional' social democratic goals. This process, it is argued, has created

27 F. W. Scharpf, *The Joint-Decision Trap Revisited*, [in:] *Journal of Common Market Studies*, Vol. 44(4), pp. 845-64, 2006.

28 C. Hay, *What's Globalization Got to Do with It? Economic Interdependence and the Future of European Welfare States*, [in:] *Government and Opposition*, Vol. 41(1), p. 20, 2006.

a shift in the political opportunity structure faced by social democratic parties, resulting in a narrowing of the range of feasible policy options available to those parties; so that feasible policy options are now restricted to the supply-side policy options that Third Way social democratic parties have tended to focus on, such as training and education, gender and racial equality, citizens' rights and civil liberties, and efficiency-oriented market reforms which seek a more viable welfare state^{29, 30, 31, 32, 33}. Michael Klitgaard, for instance, claims that 'if social democratic strategists have reason to perceive particular policy problems as a threat to welfare state legitimacy, they may be prepared to implement market-type reforms if these are believed to prevent loss of legitimacy and declining welfare state support'³⁴. According to this account, therefore, 'new' social democratic parties have moved towards the promotion of those policies that remain feasible within the current (international) political economy, in order to remain electorally viable, and so that those more long-standing goals that do remain practicable can continue to be implemented.

Socio-economic processes (2): capitalist reproduction, expansion, the pursuit of relative surplus value, and commodification. A final approach adopted by scholars of social democracy is to address more longstanding socio-economic processes. In particular, scholars have argued that the decline of social democracy is associated with attempts to secure a more sustainable reproduction of capitalist social relations. Thus, the decline of social democracy has had the effect of removing constraints upon profit-making that became increasingly problematic for capitalist reproduction from the 1970s onwards. Social democratic parties' traditional support for labour market regulation, neo-corporatist industrial relations, secure employment relations, redistributive fiscal policy, regulation of cross-national financial speculation and trade, and an expansion of the welfare state, each created limits upon the scope for profit-making^{35, 36}. As a result, the reduction and/or removal of many of these social democratic initiatives is viewed as an attempt to render European democracy more profitable in order to respond to the decline in growth experienced across most European capitalist economies during the 1970s (see: D. Bailey: ch. 9 for an overview of this transition and its relation to capitalist crises).

29 H. Kitschelt, *The Transformation of European Social Democracy*, Cambridge University Press, 1994.

30 J. Pontusson, *Explaining the Decline of European Social Democracy: The Role of Structural Economic Change*, [in:] *World Politics*, 47, pp. 495-533, 1995.

31 A. Giddens, *The Third Way: The Renewal of Social Democracy*, Cambridge, Polity Press, 1998.

32 M. B. Klitgaard, *Why are they doing it? Social democracy and market-oriented welfare state reforms*, [in:] *West European Politics*, Vol. 30(1), pp. 172-94, 2007.

33 Merkel et al. 2008)

34 M. B. Klitgaard, *Why are they doing it? Social democracy and market-oriented welfare state reforms*, [in:] *West European Politics*, Vol. 30(1), pp. 173-74, 2007.

35 A. Glyn, *Capitalism Unleashed: Finance, Globalization, and Welfare*, Oxford University Press, 2006.

36 D. Harvey, *The Enigma of Capital: And the Crises of Capitalism*, London, Profile Books; 2010.

In outlining these alternative explanations, we might seek to develop an explanation which integrates each of these causal processes (for a similar approach, see Bailey³⁷). Put more concretely, we might consider the decline of social democracy to be a phenomenon that emerged from the institutional configuration of the contemporary European polity, which in turn resulted from (or was facilitated by) the establishment of a particular politico-ideological consensus, itself generated by post-Fordist socio-economic relations, which are a form of capitalist socio-economic relations with their own pressures and tendencies to expand and pursue opportunities for increased profit-making. **We are therefore able to explain the decline of European social democracy in terms of each of the explanations introduced above, with capitalist social relations ultimately creating a number of constraints with which contemporary institutions and political actors must contend.** In keeping with such an account, we might expect that contemporary democratic institutions seek to ensure a coherence between policy goals, voter expectations and socio-economic constraints; and that pursuit of this coherence might (particularly during times of heightened economic constraint) require political elites (including social democratic elites) to seek to dampen the expectations, demands and mobilisation of their own constituents. In contrast, those accounts which focus solely on institutional or politico-ideological factors will tend to view the political options facing social democratic institutions and actors as being less constrained. They are also therefore likely to view contemporary democratic institutions in terms that emphasise their representative role, as the correlation between popular demands and the institutional representation of those demands is considered less problematic when the impact of socio-economic constraints is downplayed.

European Transnational Parties in the New European Democracy

In seeking to conceptualise contemporary European transnational parties, the present paper focuses on the response of the Party of European Socialists to the current global economic crisis (the so-called Great Recession). This is of interest, both due to the ambivalent position that social democratic parties have taken towards existent opposition to neoliberalism (sometimes fuelling opposition and sometimes seeking to quieten it), and (therefore) due to the potential that the PES has to represent those opposed to austerity measures. The PES might therefore be expected to conform to each of the conceptualisations of contemporary democratic institutions outlined above, and therefore represents a good choice of case study through which to explore the pertinence of each

37 D. J. Bailey, *Explaining the underdevelopment of 'Social Europe': A critical realization*, [in:] *Journal of European Social Policy*, Vol. 18(3), pp. 232-45, 2008.

of these descriptions (i.e. those that highlight the repressive and the representative roles of contemporary democratic institutions).

The response of the PES to the Great Recession can be sketched by examining the documents produced by the *Party of European Socialists* (PES) in the light of the crisis. Thus, in the wake of the Lehman Brothers collapse the PES Leaders adopted a 'plan of action', *Taking Europe out of financial and economic crisis*, which depicted the crisis as one of neoliberalism - *[t]his crisis is the great defeat of neo-liberal capitalism' – and aspired to use the opportunity to promote a social democratic alternative through 'energetic and coordinated action from the EU and its Member States'*³⁸. A year later the 8th PES Congress adopted a resolution, *People First: A Progressive European Agenda*, in which European social democrats again echoed their support for a *supranational* social democratic resolution to the Great Recession, claiming, *[i]n today's globalised world, no single nation can shape the future for its people. We believe that through cooperation and democratically shared sovereignty, the European Union can give our countries and our people the power we have lost to global forces*. This resolution went on to make a number of proposals, each of which would seek to promote a more redistributive and regulatory agenda to be realised at the European level, including: a European recovery plan that would focus on job creation and social cohesion; financial market regulation that would end tax havens, prohibit excessive risk-taking, protect workers' interests and pursue a financial transaction tax; the promotion of a welfare state to ensure 'high social standards and protection in the long term' (in the form of 'needs-based social welfare benefits for all those who are retired, unemployed or unable to work', and the promotion of decent minimum wages, improved worker participation and more substantive employment legislation); and improved gender equality (PES 2009). These proposals which, if realised, would amount to a substantive process of supranational re-social democratisation, were firmed up further still in 2010 with the PES' document '*A European Mechanism for Financial Stability*', which called for the forthcoming EU bailout fund to avoid an excessively disciplinary approach and to take into account the need for social cohesion amongst other factors, whilst (in contrast to the centre-right agenda) focusing explicitly on increasing tax revenues (of capital rather than labour) rather than reducing expenditure³⁹. Similarly, in 2011 the PES Presidency sought to oppose 'a culture of sanctions and punishment' which it claimed was being promoted by the centre-right, instead advocating a focus on jobs, growth, democratic accountability and the role of social partners⁴⁰. Finally, the PES Ministers for Social Affairs

38 PES, *Taking Europe out of financial and economic crisis: An Urgent European Plan of Action*, PES Leaders' declaration adopted by the PES Leaders on 5th November 2008.

39 PES, A "*European Mechanism for Financial Stability*": *A Progressive response to the Euro-zone sovereign debt crisis*, Adopted by the Prime Ministers' and Leaders' Conference on 25th March 2010.

40 PES, *PES statement on European economic governance*, Adopted by the PES Presidency, 24 February 2011, and PES, *From Economic Chaos to Economic Governance: A Call to the European Council for an alternative strategy based on investment and modernisation*, Adopted by the PES Leaders conference in Brussels 23 June 2011.

and Employment agreed in October 2012 that they would call for a 'Social Union' that would focus on jobs and social cohesion, in order 'to strengthen the support for the European integration project amongst workers and those citizens which have been hit hard by the crisis'⁴¹. The PES has, therefore, consistently set out an agenda for supranational 're-social democratisation', in the light of the Great Recession, to be achieved through coordinated EU-level activity that utilises the expanded scale and therefore opportunities afforded at that level (in contrast to the constraints experienced at the national level). **The PES therefore seeks to coordinate social democratic action at the supranational level, in accordance with those who view the PES in terms of its representative role vis-à-vis European society and European social democrats^{42, 43, 44}. Clearly this contrasts with our alternative conceptualisation of contemporary democratic institutions developed above, which places much more focus on the role of contemporary political institutions in managing (and lowering) citizens' expectations.** Yet it also obviously begs the question of the extent to which the goals being pursued are feasible, achievable and/or have been achieved.

EU-Level Developments: Prospects for Re-Social Democratisation?

What follows is a survey of three core policy areas - financial regulation, economic governance, and social policy – in an attempt to assess the extent to which substantive redistributive and/or regulatory policies have been achieved through supranational-level coordination. The analysis suggests that there has been an absence of substantive social democratic policymaking, despite the clear moves towards transnational party advocacy of social democratic policy goals by the PES. Finally, the implications of this mismatch between goals and outcomes, in terms of our conceptualisation of the role of transnational parties and the PES, are subsequently discussed.

With regard to financial regulation, in the light of opposition – especially from the UK – to proposals for more stringent forms of regulation, a number of bodies and legislative proposals, including the European Systemic Risk Board, European System of Financial Supervisors, Alternative Investment Fund Managers Directive, and Capital Requirements

41 PES, *Towards a Social Union: Declaration of the PES Ministers for Social Affairs and Employment*, Adopted 4 October 2012.

42 R. Ladrech, *Social Democracy and the Challenge of European Union*, Colorado, Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2000.

43 M. Gabel & S. Hix, *Defining the EU Political Space: An Empirical Study of the European Elections Manifestos, 1979-1999*, [in:] *Comparative Political Studies*, Vol. 35 (8), pp. 934-64, 2002.

44 S. Hix, A.G. Noury & G. Roland, *Democratic Politics in the European Parliament*, Cambridge University Press, 2007.

Directive were each significantly watered down before they could finally be agreed to at the EU-level. The ESRB and ESFS were both limited to the coordination of *national* supervisors and systems of regulation, rather than the creation of substantively new supranational regulations, thereby enabling the initiative to be agreed to by those member states such as the UK that favoured 'light-touch' regulation^{45,46}. The ESRB was created with 37 voting members, which significantly impeded its ability to undertake a firm and coherent supervisory role (i.e. soft governance)⁴⁷. Further, the new 'European Supervisory Authority' was designed so that it would not impinge too greatly upon domestic regulations⁴⁸. Similarly, in setting a *maximum* liquidity coverage ratio, the Commission acted to appease German and French concerns over what were perceived to be potentially excessively restrictive banking regulations under the new CRD4⁴⁹. Finally, whilst we have recently witnessed an agreement between 11 member states to draft an EU financial transaction tax was reached in January 2013, the failure to include all member states (with the UK, Sweden and the Netherlands being most opposed) suggests that any tax agreed will likely be limited in impact by both the opt-out of the 'non-FTT' 16 and the competitive pressures that this will create within the single European market⁵⁰. Substantive attempts to regulate financial markets, one of the core goals of the PES in the wake of the global financial crisis, has therefore experienced significant obstacles resulting in large part from internal divisions between member states.

In the area of economic governance, policymaking has almost universally moved away from a redistributive agenda. This is most clearly the case in the response of the European Union to the sovereign debt crisis, with the Article 126(9) recommendations to Greece in February and May 2010, under the terms of the Stability and Growth Pact, being increasingly prescriptive on the need for austerity measures⁵¹. The so-called '6 pack' of legislation proposed in the autumn of 2010 sought to implement a plan for economic governance that would limit borrowing by Eurozone member states, including the punitive measure of suspension from voting rights for those exceeding budget deficit guidelines (although

45 J. Buckley & D. Howarth, *Internal Market: Gesture Politics? Explaining the EU's Response to the Financial Crisis*, [in:] *Journal of Common Market Studies*, vol. 48 (special issue 1), pp. 119-41.; J. Buckley & D. Howarth, *Internal Market: Regulating the So-Called 'Vultures of Capitalism'*, [in:] *Journal of Common Market Studies* 49(s1), pp. 123-43, 2011.

46 *Ibidem*, pp. 139-40.

47 D. Hodson, *The EU Economy: The Eurozone in 2010*, [in:] *Journal of Common Market Studies* 49(s1), pp. 231-49, 2011.

48 <http://euobserver.com/19/30749>

49 J. Buckley, D. Howarth & L. Quaglia, *Internal Market: The Ongoing Struggle to 'Protect' Europe from Its Money Men*, [in:] *Journal of Common Market Studies* 50: Annual Review, pp. 99-115, 2012.

50 <http://euobserver.com/news/118810>

51 *The EU Economy: The Eurozone in 2010*, [in:] *Journal of Common Market Studies* 49(s1), pp. 240-48, 2011.

this was later dropped)⁵². The measures that were eventually adopted (including the '6-pack' and the Treaty on Stability, Coordination and Governance, or 'Fiscal Compact') were largely oriented towards ensuring reduced government spending and fiscal constraints. As a result, Udo Bullmann MEP, speaking on behalf of the Socialist group, criticised the legislation, claiming that, 'there exists another path out of the crisis. The reform is an austerity pact'⁵³. It would appear, therefore, that **EU-level fiscal or monetary policies have failed to produce, and are highly unlikely to result in the future formation of, a redistributive supranational economic governance regime, and have at the same time imposed significant restrictions on such policies at the national level. This clearly stands in stark contrast to the proclaimed aims of the Party of European Socialists.**

In the area of EU social policy, few achievements have been made at the EU-level following the onset of the global economic crisis. For instance, in April 2009 the Council and European Parliament failed again to agree on a resolution to the long-running dispute over attempts to revise the Working Time Directive and remove the national opt-out that has significantly hampered the impact of the Directive⁵⁴, with commentators continuing to believe that the prospects of a resolution were low two years later⁵⁵. The so-called 'fourth' anti-discrimination directive has also been blocked since its proposal in 2008 as a result of opposition from a number of member states, led by Germany⁵⁶. Opposition within the Council, therefore, continued to hamper the scope for more substantive labour market regulation to be introduced throughout the period of the Great Recession. With regard to pro-employment and anti-poverty policies, the most headline-grabbing developments were the two flagship initiatives included within the EU's 10-year strategy, *Europe 2020*, which was adopted in June 2010 - *An agenda for new skills and jobs* and the *European platform against poverty and social exclusion*. Whilst much of *Europe 2020* was given a wary reception by those seeking a more substantive 'Social Europe', on the grounds that for many it consolidated a model focused solely on a market-based model of growth, the inclusion of the two social initiatives did at least represent a formal reincorporation of headline social targets following their removal from EU economic strategy in the 2005 review of the Lisbon Process⁵⁷. That said, neither of these initiatives appear particularly focused on securing a 're-social democratisation' agenda. Thus, the '*Agenda for new*

52 <http://www.euractiv.com/euro-finance/lawmakers-near-breakthrough-economic-pack-news-507458> and <http://euobserver.com/19/113639>

53 <http://euobserver.com/economic/113761>

54 <http://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=157&langId=en&newsId=498&furtherNews=yes>

55 <http://www.euractiv.com/socialeurope/gloomy-prospects-working-time-directive-talks-news-504242>

56 <http://euobserver.com/social/114856>

57 B. Vanhercke, *Is the 'Social dimension of Europe 2020' an oxymoron?*, *Social developments in the European Union 2010*, [in:] C. Degryse & D. Natali (eds.), Brussels, ETUI, pp. 155-157, 2011.

skills and jobs' is focused on increasing the proportion of the working-age population in work to 75%, largely through greater flexibility and incentivisation within the labour market, and improving information available to people with regard to the skills needed for employment⁵⁸. With regard to anti-poverty policies, the European platform against poverty and social exclusion, which aims to lift at least 20 million people out of the risk of poverty and exclusion, has been criticised on the grounds that it resulted from a downscaling of ambitions at the EU-level following the inability of member states to agree on ways in which to measure poverty⁵⁹.

A Critical Conceptualisation of the Role of the PES: Blame-displacement and Faith-retention

In sum, despite the adoption of a wide range of redistributive and pro-regulation policy goals by the Party of European Socialists in promoting a coordinated social democratic agenda within the European Union, the concrete policy outcomes witnessed have tended to be either minimal or (particularly in the case of redistributive goals) antithetical to the redistributive goals pursued. The question that this paper has posed, in drawing on our discussion of the decline of social democracy and social democratic achievements across European democracies, is whether to conceptualise transnational parties, and in this case the Party of European Socialists, in terms of their having a largely representative or repressive role within contemporary European society. The track record outlined can be summarised: divisions between member states have produced institutional obstacles to substantive redistributive or regulatory EU-level policymaking that have inhibited the achievement of the PES's proclaimed agenda at the EU-level (and, indeed, witnessed outcomes that were entirely opposite to those being sought). The paper therefore argues that we might consider the role of the PES in terms that highlight the repressive role of contemporary political institutions. In particular, that the stated policy ambitions of the PES, combined with the failure to realise those goals, can be considered part of a process, discussed above, whereby political elites (including social democratic elites) seek to dampen the expectations, demands and mobilisation of their own constituents, in order to ensure a coherence between policy goals, voter expectations and socio-economic constraints.

From this perspective, the Great Recession can be considered to have resulted from a number of global economic imbalances associated with the a shift in production to regions with low-cost labour (most obviously, China), and a concomitant rise in connected problems such as financial bubbles, rising debt, and increases in unemployment within the

58 <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=CELEX:52010DC0682:EN:NOT>

59 B. Vanhercke, *Is the 'Social dimension of Europe 2020' an oxymoron?*, *Social developments in the European Union 2010*, [in:] C. Degryse & D. Natali (eds.), Brussels, ETUI, pp. 155-157, 2011.

advanced industrial democracies^{60, 61, 62}. In order to respond to these challenges and secure a more stable mode of capital accumulation within the European Union it has become necessary to seek opportunities for more intensive exploitation - particularly through an increase in productivity – in part so that it might be able to improve competitiveness vis-à-vis those regions with lower costs of production. Given that this competitiveness cannot be secured through currency depreciation within a currency union such as the Eurozone, moreover, economic pressure to undertake austerity measures and reduce the (social) wage is heightened further still. Thus, as Carlin⁶³ puts it,

For countries to prosper in a currency union with a low inflation target, they must be able to sustain the competitiveness of the tradeables sector of the economy without relying on periodic depreciation. This requires adequate productivity growth and institutions that keep control over nominal wage growth.... The focus of supply-side reforms must be on the twin objectives of measures that raise productivity growth and that allow the growth of nominal wages to be controlled.

Renewed capital accumulation in the light of the Great Recession therefore requires enhanced labour market discipline, wage repression, a reduction in the wage share of GDP, and/or austerity measures in the form of diminished public services and public employment. Indeed, such measures have already begun, with Clark et al.⁶⁴ noting that,

the position of labour has been further weakened as national governments have sought to re-establish fertile conditions for accumulation by slashing public spending, diluting employment and social protections, strengthening the workfare orientation of employment policies, attacking pensions and cutting public sector wages and jobs.

Each of these measures seeks renewed opportunities for profit-driven growth. This is, therefore, clearly a difficult context for transnational parties, and especially parties such as the PES, which are committed to a redistributive agenda, to operate within – witness, for instance, the defeat of the PES in the 2009 European Parliament elections, at a time when the global economic crisis should arguably have rendered the centre-right political project bankrupt.

In this context, we might interpret claims by the PES to be seeking a form of supranational re-social democratisation in terms of the opportunities that such claims have to conceal or

60 D. Harvey, *The Enigma of Capital and the Crisis This Time*, [in] *Business As Usual: The Roots of the Global Financial Meltdown*, C. Calhoun and G. Derluguian (eds.) New York University Press, 2011.

61 C. Crouch, *The Strange Non-Death of Neoliberalism*, Cambridge, Polity, 2011.

62 D. M. Kotz, *Contradictions of Economic Growth in the Neoliberal Era: Accumulation and Crisis in the Contemporary U.S. Economy*, [in:] *Review of Radical Political Economics*, 40(2): 174-88, 2008.

63 W. Carlin, *10 questions about the Eurozone crisis and whether it can be solved*, (UCL European Institute). Available here: http://www.ucl.ac.uk/european-institute/comment_analysis/eurozone/2011_09_WCarlin_Eurozone_layout.pdf

64 I. Clark, J. Heyes & P. Lewis, *Varieties of Capitalism: Neo-liberalism and the Economic Crisis of 2008-?*, Paper presented at the 6th ECPR General Conference, University of Iceland, 25-27 August 2011.

obfuscate - and thereby depoliticise – the *inability* to represent its constituents' demands for greater redistribution or market regulation. Thus, if we adopt the more critical account of contemporary democratic institutions developed above, (i.e. with a focus on the need to repress, limit or contain constituents' demands) the poor record of the PES in terms of outcomes achieved can be understood as an attempt to reconcile popular demands with contemporary socio-economic constraints. Adopting such a perspective, the PES's pursuit of core social democratic goals, in a context that is apparently inimical to their realisation, might be considered an attempt to aide this reconciliation in two key ways. First, the claim to be seeking *re-social democratisation* at the EU-level enables the PES to focus on institutional obstacles to those goals (most obviously, the continued prevalence of member state divergence, and the intransigence of the centre-right, the UK, and Germany to a more redistributive/regulatory agenda), thereby displacing attention away from the socio-economic constraints which (arguably) render the social democratic agenda more fundamentally unfeasible than social democratic actors would otherwise prefer to acknowledge⁶⁵. Second, we might consider the process whereby transnational social democratic party actors pursue core policy goals at the supranational level to be an act of social democratic 'faith retention'. According to such an interpretation, social democratic party actors must seek to retain the conviction of social democratic constituents, despite the apparent unfeasibility of social democratic goals. In pursuing such goals within the institution of the European Union, social democrats seek to send a message to their constituents that, provided that they are able to coordinate their activity at the supranational level *then* the social democratic project will continue to be pertinent and feasible. The virtue of the European Union in terms of 'faith retention', moreover, is that any failure to realise such initiatives can be portrayed as a problem relating to the institutional difficulties and obstacles already noted – and not related to the more fundamental problems associated with the need for recommodification and the failure this represents for social democracy more generally. Witness, for instance, German Socialist MEP Mechtild Rothe's (who chaired the parliament's delegation in the relevant talks) response to the failure to reach a deal on the Working Time Directive in April 2009 - thus, whilst noting that the parliament had come forward with proposals, she claimed, '*it was not possible to agree with the Council. There was nothing forthcoming from the Council, we were bitterly disappointed by that*'.⁶⁶

To conclude, therefore, this paper has argued that the often noted 'de-democratisation' of European democracy can be considered in part to result from the decline of social democracy and erosion of social democratic policy achievements over the previous three to four decades. These processes are typically understood to have resulted from

65 D. J. Bailey, *Explaining the underdevelopment of 'Social Europe': A critical realization*, [in:] *Journal of European Social Policy*, Vol. 18(3), pp. 232-45, 2008.

66 <http://euobserver.com/851/27898>

institutional, politico-ideological, or socio-economic challenges to social democracy, with each type of explanation eliciting an alternative conceptualisation of the role of contemporary democratic institutions. The alternative perspectives developed in this paper range from those which view contemporary democratic institutions as continuing to play a broadly representative role, to those which highlight the need for democratic political elites to limit and contain their constituents' demands. In discussing contemporary transnational parties, and specifically the Party of European Socialists, in terms of this debate, we have highlighted the large disparity between the redistributive and regulatory goals pursued by the PES, and the concrete policy outcomes achieved. As such, it has been argued, rather than view the PES as a vehicle for a supranational reassertion of core social democratic goals, we might instead interpret transnational social democratic activity as an attempt to both displace blame for a failed and failing social democratic agenda, and simultaneously seek to retain the faith of remaining social democratic constituents that core goals might be rendered feasible through a *long term* process of supranational coordination. In doing so, the paper suggests, social democratic party actors seek, through an EU-focused strategy, the perpetuation of social democratic goals in such a way that achieves a reconciliation of constituents' demands, policy outcomes, and socio-economic pressures. We should not, therefore, expect transnational parties, or the PES, to achieve a process of re-social democratisation through the European Union, not least because the PES's current approach (at least as interpreted here) is designed largely to perpetuate a continued focus by social democratic party constituents on an EU-level policymaking process that is *unable* to realise the goals pursued (but which nevertheless acts to secure the appearance of feasibility for social democratic party policy, at least in the longer term).

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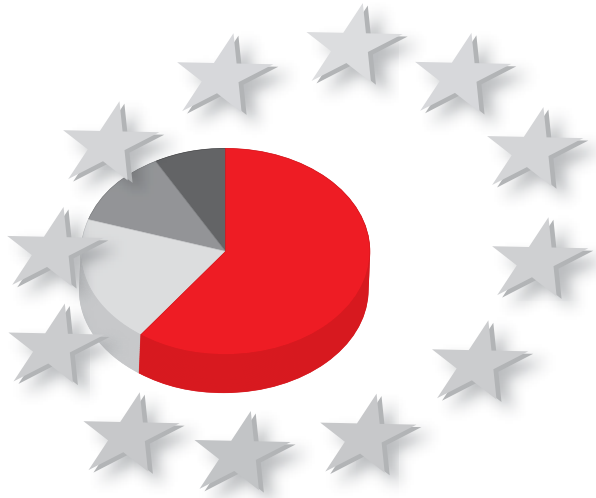
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Steven VAN HECKE and Karl Magnus JOHANSSON

Summitry of Political Parties at European Level: The Case of the PES Leaders' Conference¹



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Key words

**Europarties - National Political Leaders - European Council - Elite
Networking - Soft Policy Coordination**

Abstract

Europarties regularly organise summit meetings of party and government leaders prior to the European Council. So far only specific cases have been studied, with a focus on policy impact with regard to European Council meetings. By contrast, this article investigates Europarty summits – particularly the PES Leaders' Conferences – empirically and systematically through a comparison across time and cases. On the one hand the focus lies on the organisation of and participation in pre-European Council meetings. On the other hand the article also explores the reasons why senior politicians from various political parties (do not) attend these summits. This article shows that Europarty summits (PES Leaders' Conferences) have been increasingly institutionalised, that there is significant variation both within and across cases as far as participation is concerned, and that they serve different functions: elite networking, intra-party decision-making, soft policy coordination, bilateral contacts and media performance.

Introduction

Since more than 25 years, political parties at European level or Europarties organise meetings of national and European politicians on the eve of the European Council. These party leaders' summits as they are sometimes called in the literature are composed of national party presidents and government leaders as well as members of the European Commission, the chairperson of the group in the European Parliament and of the Europarty, the latter acting as a host.¹ Within each political family, Europarty summits gather opposition and government leaders from both the executive and the legislative branch at the level of the member states and the level of the European Union (EU). They normally discuss what is at stake in the European Council but sometimes also intra-party affairs are on the agenda. Three party families organise these summits on a regular basis: the European People's Party (EPP), the Party of European Socialists (PES) and the European Liberal, Democratic and Reform Party (ELDR)/Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe Party (ALDE Party).²

Although these Europarty summits are explicitly referred to in reviews of research on party politics at European level, the phenomenon is still under-researched.³ Raunio, for instance, acknowledges that “we know relatively little in comparative terms about how Europarties operate and coordinate policy among the national member parties”.⁴ This is remarkable since Europarty summits are said to have gained in significance over the last couple of years.⁵ There have been some studies, however, on Europarty summits

1 See, e.g.: R. Ladrech, *The European Union and Political Parties*, in: *Handbook of Party Politics*, (eds.) R. S. Katz and W. Crotty, Sage 2006, p. 496. Unless we mean the PES Leaders' Conference, we prefer to use the term Europarty summits because the role of Europarties in organising them distinguishes these summits from other high-level meetings at national or European level. With government leaders (who in some countries are not party leaders), opposition leaders, members of the European Commission etc. as participants, we consider the term party leaders' meetings not entirely appropriate.

2 For reasons of simplicity we do not refer to the Confederation of the Socialist Parties of the European Community neither the ALDE Party but to its successor (the PES) and to its predecessor (the ELDR) respectively.

3 S. Hix, *Party Politics in the EU*, in: *Handbook on Multi-Level Governance*, (eds.) H. Enderlein, S. Wälti and M. Zürn, Edward Elgar 2010; R. Ladrech, *The European Union and Political Parties*, [in:] *Handbook of Party Politics*, (eds.) R. S. Katz and W. Crotty, Sage 2006; T. Raunio, *Political Parties in the European Union*, [in:] *The Sage Handbook of European Union Politics*, (eds.) K. E. Jorgensen, M. Pollack and B. J. Rosamond, Sage, 2006.

4 *Ibid.*, p. 252.

5 See, e.g.: T. Poguntke, N. Aylott, R. Ladrech and K. R. Luther, *The Europeanization of National Party Organizations. A Conceptual Analysis*, [in:] *European Journal of Political Research*, 46 (6) 2007, p. 763.

but as far as data and recent developments is concerned some have gone out of date; other studies have been limited to one party family, one policy domain or a combination of the two.⁶ These studies have mainly focussed on the policy impact of particular Europarty summits on decisions made by the European Council. So far, however, systematic and comparative research is lacking. By providing empirical data from different Europarties and from different periods, this paper provides “the bigger picture” of these Europarty summits and therefore provides us with a more complete view of the ways in which national and European political parties operate at the European level.⁷

The purpose of this article is to fill this gap by analysing Europarty summits empirically and systematically through a comparison across time and cases. Since not much is known about Europarty summits, we first of all look at the key features. How are they composed? How regularly do they take place? And what is on their agenda? Second, we focus on its development over time and across parties. Have these Europarty summits become institutionalised parallel with the increased importance of the European Council? If so, in which way(s) and does this equally apply to all three main Europarties? Third, we distinguish the various functions of Europarty summits. What, if anything, do Europarty summits have to offer to national political parties operating at the European level? And do these summits strengthen the institutionalisation of Europarties? We address these questions within the overarching institutional framework of the EU, specifically the European Council, and by focussing on the role of Europarties therein.

The answers to the questions raised are based on a unique dataset of more than 250 Europarty summits organised since the early 1980s until December 2012: around 100 organised by the EPP and the PES and 50 by the ELDR. For this purpose a lot of primary, mainly non-public documents such as lists of invitations and lists of participants, agendas and press releases have been consulted. Moreover, we conducted multiple semi-structured elite interviews with participants of Europarty summits, including prime ministers. These interviews have especially been helpful for answering the question of the functionality of Europarty summits. Problems of variation in the position of the interviewees and in the timing of the interviews have been balanced by the mutual control of the statements made by the interviewees.

6 S. Hix & C. Lord, *Political Parties in the European Union*, Macmillan 1997; E. Külahci, *Explaining the Absence of a Genuine European Social-Democrat Consensus. The Case of ‘Une Stratégie pour la Solidarité’*, European Integration Online Papers, 6 (4) 2002; K. M. Johansson, *Tracing the Employment Title in the Amsterdam Treaty. Uncovering Transnational Coalitions*, Journal of European Public Policy, 6 (1) 1999; K. M. Johansson, *Party Elites in Multilevel Europe. The Christian Democrats and the Single European Act*, Party Politics, 8 (4) 2002; K. M. Johansson, *Another Road to Maastricht. The Christian Democrat Coalition and the Quest for European Union*, Journal of Common Market Studies, 40 (5) 2002; S. Lightfoot, *The Party of European Socialists and the Treaty of Amsterdam. Really a policy-seeking party?*, Perspectives on European Politics and Society, 4 (2) 2003.

7 S. Van Hecke, *Do Transnational Parties Matter? (... and Why Should We Care?)*, Journal of Contemporary European Research, 6 (3) 2010.

Key features

The first meetings date back to the 1970s. For instance, **the first Socialist (leaders) meeting took place in 1974 in The Hague**. In the 1980s Europarty summits of the EPP and the PES took only place occasionally. Meetings were rather rare in the early 1980s whereas at the end of the decade the frequency increased. The latter had certainly to do with the acceleration of the European integration process and the role played by the European Council therein. In the 1990s also the ELDR started to organise summits. In the same period they became a more regular party meeting for the EPP and the PES. But it was only in the first decade of the new millennium that the frequency increased from 2 or 3 per year to 3 or 4 per year. Since 2010 the number has risen even more due to the increased summity (European Council and Eurogroup) in the framework of the governance of the Eurozone.

Originally party summits were hosted by one of the member parties of the Europarties. Most often this was the member party from the country that held the presidency of the European Union. **Since 2003 the bulk of the Europarty summits take place in Brussels.**⁸ **It is only exceptionally that the whole party leadership travels to the capital of one of the Member States. Europarty summits organised outside Brussels are often linked to party congresses – where party and government leaders are expected to show up anyway – or national election campaigns. A Europarty summit then serves the international credibility of one of the member parties.** Rather than the agenda it is the photo opportunity – the incumbent or candidate government leaders aside other government leaders of EU Member States – that matters.⁹

Figures with regard to participation do not offer a very clear picture, as with the frequency. In absolute terms the number of people that attend Europarty summits has risen. This applies to all three Europarties. The enlargement of the EU has caused an increased membership basis for Europarties. The more member parties, the more party and government leaders attend Europarty summits, at least in theory. In reality, the number of people attending PES summits is lower than one might expect. This has certainly to do with the fact that some party leaders – British Prime Minister Tony Blair and German Chancellor Gerhard Schröder being the most notable examples – refused to attend party

8 Declaration No. 22 annexed to the Treaty of Nice provides that “as from 2002, one European Council meeting per Presidency will be held in Brussels. When the Union comprises 18 members, all European Council meetings will be held in Brussels”. This Declaration concerns only the formal European Council meetings; the presidencies are free to organise the informal European Council meetings wherever they choose.

9 One of the most clear and recent examples took place in early 2011. On 4-5 March the PES organised its Leaders’ Conference to support Giorgos Papandreou (PASOK) in the Greek Euro crisis. Also the EPP organised its summit in the run-up to the informal meeting of heads of state and government of the Euro zone of 11 March. They did so in Helsinki to support Finance Minister Jyrki Katainen to become Prime Minister in the Finnish national elections that took place on 17 April.

summits.¹⁰ This often triggers other party and government leaders not to attend either. In other words, the relative figures of the PES – total number of party and government leaders that take part compared to the number that has been invited – are lower than those of the EPP and the ELDR. With regard to seniority the PES did not always manage to involve all leaders on a regular basis. If we look at government leaders only (i.e. prime ministers of EU member states), the same pattern pops up. Since François Hollande was elected President of France in May 2012, however, we see a clear rise in the number of party and government leaders that attend the PES Leaders' Conferences.

A large number of people that participate is not always an advantage, however, as there exist a trade-off between input legitimacy (representation, participation) and output legitimacy (efficiency, effectivity). German Chancellor Helmut Kohl, for instance, insisted that EPP party summits would be restricted to government leaders. That formula had proven to be effective with regard to institutional reform and Kohl wanted to continue on this track. From time to time he invited his EPP colleagues in Bonn for an informal meeting, organised exclusively for government leaders.¹¹ And at his request the EPP started to make a distinction between regular and “mini-summits” (in the period 1996-1999). Keeping the distinction between these two types of party summit failed, however, from the moment Kohl stepped down as chancellor and party leader. Whereas government leaders from the EPP family felt less the need to meet when there was no German chancellor at the table, party chairmen and leaders of the opposition opposed the mini-summits as they felt excluded.

In 2012 the PES also started to make a distinction between “regular” Leaders' Conferences that have a basis in the party's statutes and European Council preparatory meetings for PES Prime Ministers and Deputy Prime Ministers.¹² This distinction has the same rationale as in the case of the EPP: organising an informal but more effective meeting in the run-up to the European Council only with those who are directly involved with its agenda.

Development

Europarty summits were first established as informal gatherings of party and government leaders. Later on they were made official as party bodies. The EPP, for instance, introduced the ‘Conference of party and government leaders’, as was the party

10 Obviously, this problem affects all Europarties. While German Chancellor Angela Merkel, for instance, is always present, Polish Prime Minister Donald Tusk was absent in a number of EPP party summits during 2010. This was rather embarrassing for the EPP since Poland took over the Council Presidency in 2011.

11 W. Martens, *Europe: I Struggle, I Overcome*, Springer 2009, pp. 142-144.

12 See Chapter VIII of the PES Statutes adopted by the 9th Congress, September 2012.

summit then called, in the party's statutes in 1990.¹³ In 1995 the term 'EPP Summit' was officially introduced. Membership comprised the President and the Secretary General of the EPP; the Chair of the EPP Group in the European Parliament (EP); Chairs of member parties (party leaders); the President of the EP, where he or she belonged to a member party and the President or a Vice-President of the European Commission, representing those who belong to member parties. The statutes, however, did not say much about the tasks of the conference, merely stating that the President should report to the Political Bureau, now the Political Assembly, on such meetings and the directions to be followed as a result of them.

The PES referred to the Party Leaders' Conference for the first time in its founding statutes of 1992. The term is maintained throughout the 1990s. Then, since the 2001 Berlin Congress the statutes refer to either the PES Leaders' Conference or simply the Leaders' Conference. Like in the case of the EPP, its current statutes do not say much about its competences, its powers and its membership. The organisation is relatively flexible in terms of agenda, frequency and composition.¹⁴

In case of the EPP, there exist a long tradition of sending official invitations, drafting agenda's and circulating minutes among the participants.¹⁵ In the PES, however, party summits create less traces on paper as, for instance, there are no official minutes. In contrast to the EPP, the PES has a tradition to release declarations of common positions on specific topics at the end of its Leaders' Conferences.

In all party families, the increased frequency and number of participants has triggered a lot of formalisation. Whereas in the early years party summits were organised when government leaders felt the need to have an informal, open discussion about one or the other urgent matter, in recent years they have started to resemble party conferences. Europarties have staff to support the organisation of party summits and the proceedings are very well thought over. There is also more attention to the PR (press releases, family picture etc.). The question is, however, whether party summits are currently as efficient and effective as they used to be.

Party summits have been established to discuss general topics of European integration. By the end of the 1980s, however, dossiers became much more detailed, especially in the framework of institutional reform. **In recent years Europarty summits have almost mirrored the agenda of the European Council meetings.** Long term strategies and visions about EU policy areas seem to have been banned to working groups and party conferences. The EPP has also the tradition of dealing with intra-party affairs during its

13 T. Jansen & S. Van Hecke, *At Europe's Service: The Origins and Evolution of the European People's Party*, Springer 2011, p. 152.

14 See, e.g., article 38.3 of the 2012 PES Statutes: "The President may invite guests to the Leaders' Conference."

15 In cases of very sensitive issues there even exist transcriptions of verbal discussions.

summits. Contentious issues such as party membership are often approved by the party and government leaders before the official decision-making process takes place.

Functions

Despite dangers of inefficiency and infectivity, party and government leaders still invest a lot of time in their participation. So we assume it serves their interests or the interests of the Europarties' members. First, party summits offer the possibility of networking among European politicians from the highest level, whether in government or opposition, whether at national or European level. This is especially true for governments leaders from non-EU member states (often applicant countries) and for party leaders that are also leader of the opposition (and are likely to become government leader at one moment in time) and therefore cut off from important domestic and EU information channels. It also works for sharing and exchanging information (on substance and on people).¹⁶ At a more personal level, party summits teach participants the "savoir faire" of EU politics and its main protagonists. Newcomers to the scene might consider it to be a "stage" (traineeship, with the real job being member of the European Council).¹⁷ The more the European Council becomes exclusive, the more important this function becomes.¹⁸ As mentioned above, party summits also function as a party body in which sensitive issues can be discussed and, if necessary, are decided. In this way, summits have become substitutes for other party bodies that cannot decide because the issue is too salient, too sensitive or too urgent. For instance, the EPP's rapprochement with the British Conservatives, particularly the way it went up and down, has been a regular topic on the agenda of the EPP party summit during the 2000s. One of the main advantages is obviously that the meeting takes place behind closed doors which makes it for everyone possible to speak more freely. In case of the EPP and the British Conservatives, it even meant direct and open discussions with party leaders Michael Howard and Ian Duncan Smith, both known for their euroscepticism.¹⁹ By contrast, David Cameron, like his immediate forerunner William Hague, never attended an EPP summit, not even during the time when the British Conservatives were still affiliated to the EPP Group in the European Parliament.

As has the literature on party summits shown, pre-meetings of the European Council offer excellent opportunities to coordinate policy strategies, preferences or proposals within the same political family. Sometimes party summits are successful in influencing (or

16 A lot of the current government leaders have during a long time participated as party or opposition leader. For instance, the PES Leaders' Conference of 19 June 2008 was attended by, inter alia, Elio Di Rupo (now PM Belgium), Helle Thorning-Schmidt (now PM Denmark) and François Hollande (now President of France).

17 Interview with José Manuel Barroso, President of the European Commission, Brussels, 2 December 2010.

18 With the Lisbon Treaty Foreign Ministers are excluded from the European Council meetings.

19 W. Martens, *Europe: I Struggle, I Overcome*, Springer 2009, pp. 159-160.

preparing) decisions taken by the European Council (e.g. the appointment of José Manuel Barroso as President of the European Commission in 2004 and 2009); sometimes the functionality is limited to taking stock of the divergent opinions on different matters within one political family.²⁰ Generally speaking, **Europarty summits offer their participants a mechanism that serves to reduce transactions costs of EU decision-making. Furthermore, party summits are also a means to show unity through the media in advance of the European Council, hence the family picture that is often taken and the press conference that is given by the president at the end of the gathering. Finally, participants of Europarty summits have the possibility to get in touch with each other in a direct and informal way.** This is especially interesting for EU and non-EU government leaders since European Council meetings are crowded and short of time and lack the presence of representatives of applicant countries. Indeed, sometimes government leaders leave the Europarty summit to another meeting room to have fringe meetings in which bilateral issues are discussed.²¹

As the table below shows, some functions are internal; others are external; some functions can be fulfilled by other party bodies too (like the party congress) while other functions depend exclusively on the party summits. The distinction between exclusive and non-exclusive functions is important since it means that for non-exclusive functions one does not necessarily need Europarty summits. This is important since not all Europarties, likes the Greens or the far Left, do organise summits for their party and government leaders. The functionality of Europarties also varies between the party leadership and the other participants, especially the government leaders that attend the European Council meetings.

Table: Different functions of party summits

	internal	external
exclusive	elite networking	soft policy coordination
non-exclusive	intra-party issue discussion	bilateral contacts; media performance

Conclusion

We can conclude that there is significant variation both within and across cases on a number of variables. Variation over time can easily be explained by the effects (in terms of size) of EU enlargement, the growing agenda of the EU itself (both in terms of quantity

²⁰ One of the constraints has to do with the timing of the summits. While in the 1990s summits were often organised a couple of days or even weeks in advance of the European Council, nowadays they take place a couple of hours in advance of the European Council meeting. This short time span leaves not much room for negotiations etc. Moreover, draft conclusions of the European Council have by then already been written.

²¹ Interview with Yves Leterme, Prime Minister of Belgium, Brussels, 6 June 2011.

and quality), and its institutional development. It is clear that the institutionalisation of party summits has followed events and developments at EU level (and not the other way around). Variation among cases seems to be due to differences in political tradition, the presence or absence of government leaders from big EU Member States, and the question whether intra-party dissent (or more generally: intra-party issues) need to be discussed at the level of party and government leaders. In this way, the absence of Tony Blair and David Cameron, for instance, can be explained by the fact that British parties traditionally do not play a primary role in Europarties, that they have distinct views on a lot of issues with their counterparts in the European Council (not least on institutional issues) and that as representatives of one of the big EU member states they have direct access to any of the other members of the European Council. The same applies to some degree to Gerhard Schröder. Like Blair he had different views about what socialism should be at the European level (different from, for instance, French Prime Minister Lionel Jospin and from the mainstream within the PES) and therefore did not feel the need to attend the PES' Leaders' Conferences.

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A totally different attitude by German Chancellor Angela Merkel, for instance, might be explained by her presence at EPP summits during her difficult time when she was leader of the opposition and cut off from government leaders in other member states and crucial information about EU developments. The same might apply to French President François Hollande. In any case, **the rise of Europarty summits and its large participations, with, indeed, some notable exceptions, is also a clear indication of the growing politicisation of the EU.** Representatives of member states, non-EU member states and opposition leaders meet regularly at partisan basis to engage in European and party-lined issues.

The simple fact that this happens points at the uniqueness of Europarty summits: it gathers representatives from the European Parliament, the European Commission and the European Council into one single body for which there is no alternative within the institutional architecture of the EU. Like national parties are responsible for the smooth functioning of a democratic political system (especially the relationship between the legislative and the executive branches), Europarties might ease the complex institutional set-up of the EU (and the need for coordination). In this way **Europarties are not only arenas but also actors when it comes to the functioning of the EU. In this way, researching Europarty summits does not only contribute to a better understanding of how European and national political parties both operate at European level, it has also a relevance that goes beyond party politics, i.e. the functioning of the EU itself.**

Annex: List of PES Leaders' Conferences

No	Date	City	Country	No/Year
1	11/1974	Den Haag	Netherlands	1
2	01/1976	Helsinki	Finland	1
3	23-24/06/1978	Brussels	Belgium	1
4	06/1979	Brussels	Belgium	1
5	28/04/1981	Amsterdam	Netherlands	1
6	06/1984	Brussels	Belgium	1
7	06/1985	Rome	Italy	1
8	23/10/1987	Paris	France	1
9	06/1988	Rome	Italy	2
10	06-07/11/1988	Berlin	Germany	
11	06/1989	Paris	France	
12	10/1989	Milan	Italy	3
13	14/11/1989	Lisbon	Portugal	
14	23-24/03/1990	Vienna	Austria	
15	05/06/1990	Dublin	Ireland	3
16	10/12/1990	Madrid	Spain	
17	01/1991	Brussels	Belgium	
18	03/06/1991	Luxembourg	Luxembourg	3
19	03-04/12/1991	Brussels	Belgium	
20	15-16/06/1992	Lisbon	Portugal	
21	10/10/1992	Brussels	Belgium	3
22	05/06/1992	Marienburg	Denmark	
23	19-20/06/1993	Copenhagen	Denmark	
24	04-05/09/1993	Arrabida	Portugal	3
25	09/12/1993	Brussels	Belgium	
26	06/1994	Corfu	Greece	2
27	07-08/12/1994	Essen	Germany	
28	06/1995	Valbonne	France	
29	11/11/1995	Madrid	Spain	3
30	12/1995	Madrid	Spain	

31	9-10/03/1996	Sintra	Portugal	
32	28/03/1996	Torino	Italy	
33	20/06/1996	Florence	Italy	6
34	05/10/1996	Dublin	Ireland	
35	26/10/1996	Budapest	Hungary	
36	12/12/1996	Dublin	Ireland	
37	04/1997	The Hague	Netherlands	
38	05/1997	Noordwijk	Netherlands	
39	06/1997	Amsterdam	Netherlands	5
40	11/10/1997	Luxembourg	Luxembourg	
41	12/1997	Luxembourg	Luxembourg	
42	03/1998	London	UK	
43	07/04/1998	London	UK	
44	14/06/1998	Cardiff	UK	6
45	05/10/1998	Vienna	Austria	
46	24/10/1998	Pörschach	Austria	
47	09/12/1998	Vienna	Austria	
48	01/1999	Vienna	Austria	
49	14/04/1999	Brussels	Belgium	
50	02/06/1999	Cologne	Germany	
51	16/06/1999	Brussels	Belgium	7
52	29/06/1999	Brussels	Belgium	
53	14/10/1999	Tampere	Finland	
54	09/12/1999	Helsinki	Finland	
55	22/03/2000	Lisbon	Portugal	
56	06/2000	Porto	Portugal	4
57	10/2000	Biarritz	France	
58	12/2000	Nice	France	
59	03/2001	Stockholm	Sweden	
60	06/2001	Göteborg	Sweden	4
61	10/2001	Ghent	Belgium	
62	12/2001	Laken	Belgium	

←NEXT LEFT→

63	14/03/2002	Barcelona	Spain	
64	09/10/2002	London	UK	3
65	12/12/2002	Copenhagen	Denmark	
66	30/03/2003	Brussels	Belgium	
67	22/05/2003	Berlin	Germany	4
68	15/10/2003	Brussels	Belgium	
69	11/12/2003	Brussels	Belgium	
70	24/03/2004	Brussels	Belgium	
71	17/06/2004	Brussels	Belgium	4
72	27/11/2004	Madrid	Spain	
73	16/12/2004	Brussels	Belgium	
74	24/02/2005	Lisbon	Portugal	3
75	24/06/2005	Vienna	Austria	
76	26/10/2005	London	UK	
77	10/03/2006	Prague	Czech Republic	3
78	15/06/2006	Brussels	Belgium	
79	08/12/2006	Porto	Portugal	
80	08/03/2007	Brussels	Belgium	4
81	24/03/2007	Berlin	Germany	
82	21/06/2007	Brussels	Belgium	
83	18/10/2007	Lisbon	Portugal	3
84	13/03/2008	Brussels	Belgium	
85	19/06/2008	Brussels	Belgium	
86	05/11/2008	Brussels	Belgium	3
87	19/03/2009	Brussels	Belgium	
88	24/04/2009	Toulouse	France	3
89	18/06/2009	Brussels	Belgium	
90	10/02/2010	Brussels	Belgium	
91	25/03/2010	Brussels	Belgium	
92	16/06/2010	Brussels	Belgium	5
93	16/09/2010	Brussels	Belgium	
94	02/12/2010	Warsaw	Poland	

95	04-05/03/2011	Athens	Greece	2
96	23/06/2011	Brussels	Belgium	
*97	30/01/2012	Brussels	Belgium	8
*98	01/03/2012	Brussels	Belgium	
99	23/05/2012	Brussels	Belgium	
100	28/06/2012	Brussels	Belgium	
101	28/09/2012	Brussels	Belgium	
*102	18/10/2012	Brussels	Belgium	
*103	22/11/2012	Brussels	Belgium	
*104	13/12/2012	Brussels	Belgium	

Number of meetings until 31 December 2012

* European Council preparatory meetings with PES PMs and Deputy PMs

Sources: Primary documents from former PES Secretary General Anthony Beumer; Hix 2000; Skrzypek 2010; and the PES website (<http://www.pes.org/en/about-pes/how-does-pes-work/leaders-conference>)

Some observations: No Leaders' Conferences in early years 1975, 1980, 1982, 1983 and 1986. Average number rises over the years with a peak period in 1996-1999 (when the Socialists had the majority in the European Council) and since 2010 (due to the rising number of European Council meetings dedicated to the euro crisis), except for 2011. Average number (104 summits in 38 years) is 2.7. Average number in the period 1989-2012 is 4.1. More than one third (38/104) of the summits took place in Brussels. Since the coming into force of the Nice Treaty (1 February 2003) more than half of the summits are organised in Brussels (27/48 = 56%). In cases like the Netherlands (1997), Luxembourg (1997), Austria (1998) and Denmark (1998), there is a clear and exclusive parallel with the presidency of the European Council. The average rate per EU member state is 36% (Belgium), 9% (Portugal), 6% (Austria and France), 5% (Germany, Italy, the Netherlands, Spain and the UK), 3% (Denmark, Finland, Ireland and Luxembourg), 2% (Greece and Sweden) and 1% (Czech Republic, Hungary and Poland). With a total number of 3/104 (or since 1 May 2004 3/34) the new member states are clearly underrepresented.

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**IN THE NAME OF
POLITICAL UNION
- EUROPARTIES
ON THE RISE**

**IN THE NAME OF
POLITICAL
- EUROPAN
ON THE RISE**

**Progressive Strategies
for Overcoming the Crisis**

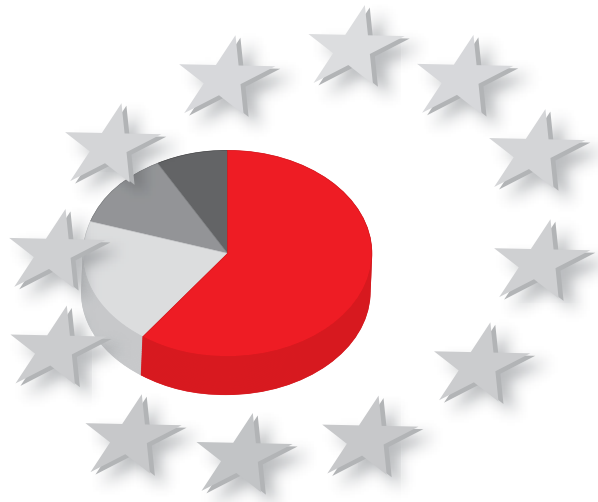
**UNION
PARTIES**





Robert LADRECH

**Economic Crisis, Democratic Legitimacy:
Transnational parties
as a potential bridge between
Member States and the EU**



Key words

Transnational Parties – Legitimacy - Social Democracy - European Parliament - Elections

Abstract

Due to the economic crisis, the EU is now more than ever intertwined with the domestic politics of many member states. It makes the policy relationship between national governance and EU policy-making much more explicit, and again because of the crisis, demonstrates the constraints on national policy-making. This has had a significant impact on national parties, especially social democratic parties who must find a policy position between citizen demands and those of the EU, ECB and IMF. Into this potential disconnect between citizens and the EU, this chapter argues that transnational parties such as the Party of European Socialists may find an opportunity to at least partially redress this gap by acting as a bridge between member states and the EU, ushering in a new dimension of truly European politics.

Introduction

The economic crisis involving the sovereign debt of several EU member states has prompted a response from European (EU) and international (IMF) organizations. On the one hand, there are specific financial interventions such as bailouts to allow the member states in question to manage their debt in order to prevent defaults and further speculative attacks undermining economic confidence. In these cases, the EU has created mechanisms to

The PES and its member parties should exploit the vacuum between the European and national political systems, and in so doing help structure European political space in a format more understandable to ordinary voters as well as helping to influence the necessary tasks that are required to restore economic growth and democratise EU decision-making.

meet the needs of member states in such financial straits and the IMF has also adjusted its relationship to countries as regards debt, repayments, and national budgetary ability to sustain or encourage economic growth. On the other hand, and more focused within the EU, policy and institutional change has been proposed, much of it heavy with implications for democracy and legitimacy, for both the national and European level. The proposed Fiscal Treaty and accompanying austerity policies have generated domestic responses in variety of forms and formats, ranging from protests in the streets of Athens, Madrid and Lisbon, to efforts to promote economic growth as a complement to budgetary discipline, especially highlighted during the French presidential election campaign of François Hollande. A crisis can also be an opportunity to make advances in a particular direction that normally the rules of the day – and associated behaviour – render difficult to impossible. **The current crisis could be understood as exactly such an opportunity in which national and transnational social democratic parties develop new forms of interaction as a response to the need for democratic legitimation in the unfolding institutional landscape of the EU. This article argues that the PES and its member parties should exploit the vacuum between the European and national political systems, and in so doing**

help structure European political space in a format more understandable to ordinary voters as well as helping to influence the necessary tasks that are required to restore economic growth and democratise EU decision-making.

A European and National Crisis

One of the principle features of the Eurozone financial crisis and the economic policy response brought by the EU is the eruption of the EU itself as a salient issue in domestic politics. Whether in recent parliamentary elections in Greece, Spain, Portugal, the Netherlands, France or Lithuania, the EU has become an integral yet unstable factor in the domestic politics of the member states. But even before the present crisis, the EU, many argue, had had an indirect effect on domestic politics, namely by generating a form of de-politicisation¹. This refers to the rise of popular indifference and disengagement from politics as the EU is seen to lead or direct domestic policy-making. Certainly the presence of anti-system and protest parties is not completely attributable to the EU; rather, growing euro-scepticism in many EU member states may be a symptom of a broader malaise in which the certainties of the national community are challenged by supra-national decision-making. This de-politicisation refers specifically to what one might term 'mainstream' politics, because into the void left by the perception of ineffective – if not inconsequential – parties of the centre-left and centre-right are extreme populist parties of the left and right, many of which, especially on the extreme right, contain vigorous anti-EU positions and sentiments (thus more strident than what is conveyed by the term euro-'sceptic'), and this can contribute to an undermining of national governmental legitimacy. This popular perception of a remote EU, 'dictating' policies to the member states also includes national elites, and therefore popular mobilisation – for example in votes for extreme populist parties – can be understood as a reaction to the perception of a gap between citizens and their political leaders. **What the present crisis exacerbates is this perception of distance between citizens and their elected representatives and the unaccountability of EU decision-making.**

The direct impact of the euro-zone crisis in domestic politics is highlighted by the relative lack of 'national' measures to control the crisis, especially the ability to prevent it from spreading to other heavily indebted countries, the so-called contagion. The national level appears to lack adequate resources or even a framework to deal with capital flows influenced from beyond the EU itself. This manifestation of the crisis, though, brings another perspective into relief, that is, the lack of a public space with which to address the problems in a legitimate and comprehensible manner to the general public. On the one hand, the crisis has been 'managed' so far in a technocratic manner. This technocratic response, however, also appeared to be inextricably bound together with the policy prescription of austerity. The response by Hollande on the other hand, as well as the protests by demonstrators in Athens, Madrid and elsewhere, suggests a potential

¹ See, i.e. P. Mair, *Political opposition and the European Union*, Government and Opposition, vol. 42, no. 1, 2007.

opposition dynamic might be constructed that channels the policy preferences away from straightforward opposition to the EU, i.e. sovereignty-oriented political mobilisation, and instead to an alternative policy allowing political contestation to link the national with the European level. In other words, a left vs. right policy competition that is multi-level but coherent across national boundaries may be struggling to emerge. This is precisely the political opportunity where the role of transnational parties should be focused. In a recent article, Cramme and Hobolt ² argue that in the context of building a political union, three objectives of a debate should include: *find better ways for aggregating, channelling and responding to divergent policy preferences across Europe; second, outline constitutional and institutional innovations which can overcome the often conflicting demands for more sovereignty and more democracy; third, propose serious and far-reaching reforms to our national political systems so that they truly integrate a European dimension.* Political parties have historically functioned as a linkage mechanism between citizens and government, and the heritage of socialist parties at the turn of the twentieth century was to mobilise the masses of workers and other citizens to support an alternative to the restricted franchise and economic policies of the day. So, too, do parties today have the potential to provide the linkage between citizens and national and supranational governance; they are the missing actors in the Cramme and Hobolt sketch of what is required for any movement toward European political union if indeed this is a potential outcome of the present crisis.

EU in domestic politics

Much of the political science literature concerning the relationship between the EU and domestic politics falls under four categories. First, public attitudes toward the EU and its institutions have been tracked since the early 1970s, most notably through the biannual Euro-barometer series. This and other surveys have highlighted, since the mid-1990s, the emergence of what has come to be labelled 'euro-sceptic' attitudes. Second, since direct elections to the European Parliament in 1979, a literature analysing both campaigns and elections in the member states to the EP has become well established. Third, and the preserve of a smaller group of researchers, the emergence and development of transnational party federations has developed, analysing both the 'euro-parties' as a unit of analysis and the relations with member parties. Finally, the most recent development in political science, the so-called Europeanization approach, has explicitly focused on the influence of the EU in domestic politics, including party politics. This approach to understanding the EU and national political system relationship has concerned itself primarily with the impact on party programmes, party organization and the patterns of

2 O. Cramme & S. Hobolt, *Political Union: A critical companion, not a federal message*, Policy Network paper, www.policy-network.net/ 2012.

domestic party competition; this also includes the impact of EP elections and campaigns on national parties. The weight of evidence – at least up until the financial crisis hit in 2008 – pointed to very little EU-related direct impact on the content or patterns of domestic party competition. Even euro-sceptic parties were of such small size in terms of votes and national parliamentary seats that their presence did not have much influence on the policies contested between the mainstream parties of the centre-left and centre-right. Indirectly, as noted above, it may have been contributing to a type of de-politicisation, but in general, amongst citizens and a large percentage of national MPs, the EU has been *foreign*, not *domestic*, policy (the UK has been an exception to this pattern).

If the EU is now explicitly a part of the domestic political landscape, the danger is that there is an absence of a national context to argue the merits of financial and economic rescue plans apart from a general rejection, and this plays into the hands of extremists, from the Greek Golden Dawn to the Hungarian Jobbik to more straightforward euro-sceptic parties such as True Finns. Whereas policy and institutional change to accommodate the crisis might be complex, there are certainly political choices to be made, and normally this has meant that complex policy packages have had the short-hand of left and right. So the situation at present, apart from the emphasis given by Hollande in the French presidential election campaign and in subsequent summits, is a political vacuum, a ‘disconnect’ between citizens of EU member states – especially those in financial straits – and their governments and EU institutions. The implications for democracy and national and EU legitimacy are profound. It is not simply the absence of choice, it is the perception that there is no choice but one, i.e. the austerity policies that many countries – desiring to remain in the euro-zone – have been obliged to pursue. The consequences of this policy choice are reverberating throughout these countries but also in other member states where some parties object to the ‘solidarity’ dimension of the rescue mechanisms, e.g. in Finland and Germany. The balance between supranational ‘solidarity’ and intergovernmental ‘sovereignty’ is dangerously tilting toward the latter³. Into this extraordinary situation transnational parties, and in particular the Party of European Socialists (PES), may have an opportunity to provide a linkage between citizens and government (national and supra-national). Before outlining the possibility, it is necessary to first understand the role of these euro-parties and in particular that of the PES.

To even consider how euro-parties might play a constructive role in the unfolding political and institutional drama within the EU, it is instructive to understand how they contribute in general to European politics. Emerging a few years before direct elections to the EP (1979), transnational party federations were created in anticipation of a European level party system. In a sense, they were organised at a low level of institutional development because there was no actual parliamentary system for them

³ See: i.e. J. Hayward & R. Wurzel, *European Disunion*, Palgrave, Basingstoke, 2012.

to occupy. Indeed, it would be, arguably, until Maastricht and more so the Amsterdam treaties before the EP itself began to achieve some level of parity with other EU institutions, notably the Council of Ministers. Euro-parties can be compared to national parties in an organizational sense if they are considered as the extra-parliamentary wing of a party, with the parliamentary wing present as a party group in the EP. The development of the EP since the Single European Act in the late 1980s witnessed party groups assert a role for themselves in the EU decision-making process, but mostly independent of the party federations. The development of the so-called 'exchange of views' between the EP and Council of Ministers highlights party groups' leadership role in particular. The party federations, for their part, initially organised themselves as a forum for contact between the member national party leaders. Following the treaty changes of the 1990s, the PES and EPP especially, improved their internal organizational structures such that one could say they had evolved from 'contact' to vehicles for party leader 'cooperation' on various issues⁴. Indeed, it has been noted that the (then) exclusive membership of the EPP by Christian democratic parties in the period leading to the summit which established the Single European Act allowed these leaders – sans the British Conservative party leader – to prepare their common position during their own party leaders' summit. In general, though, a European party system – which would necessitate a further deepening of the euro-parties themselves in terms of organization (integration) but also in relation to their national member parties, has not transpired. The general reason for this is that the EU remains only partially 'parliamentary' in a systemic sense, as there is no selection of the 'executive' – whether president of the Commission or Council – by virtue of election, EP or otherwise. But second, euro-parties are assets to national parties in the sense that they act to lower the transaction costs of a single party interacting with other in the European party family. They are, in a sense, 'tools' of the member national parties. This means that just as national governments are extremely careful of which policies are transferred to the competence of the EU, so too are national party leaders extremely cautious in allowing their respective euro-party to achieve active autonomy from national control. The key actor within the euro-party structure is the national party, and even more so the party leadership, as EU affairs in most national parties is remote from everyday work. Therefore euro-parties serve a useful function – sharing of perspectives, EP manifesto development, organising thematic conclaves, co-ordinating policy positions at a general level but non-binding, etc., but in principle-agent terminology, they remain an agent. It is this somewhat zero-sum perspective of the national/euro-party relationship that together with the institutional architecture of the EU, explains the relatively modest place of party federations in European politics.

4 See: i.e. K. M. Johansson & P. Zervakis (eds.), *European Political Parties between Cooperation and Integration*, Nomos Verlagsgesellschaft, Baden-Baden, 2002.

With this background on euro-parties, we can turn the analysis to what role they may occupy in the context of an accelerated evolution of the EU in the present crisis conditions. First of all, **euro-parties have been suggested in the past as part of the means to democratise the EU.** Hix⁵ proposed a politicisation of certain EU issues in a left vs. right format which would have required euro-parties to help channel them into their national political systems, thus making them understandable to most citizens, already accustomed to this political dichotomy. The key difference today is that politicisation without a meaningful structure is precisely what is occurring. In fact, one of the criticisms of Hix's proposals – which were also tied to election of an EU executive – was that politicisation may not conveniently manifest or express itself in a left vs. right format, but possibly euro-sceptic vs. pro-EU, but essentially a cleavage that emphasised sovereignty rather than policy orientation, which again is the state of play today in some member states such as the UK.

Second, and with a focus on the PES, **one must take into account the capability of transnational parties to offer a credible alternative. In this respect, the experience from the late 1990s is instructive for today's deliberations.** In 1999, eleven of the (then) fifteen member states had a social democratic prime minister, and a further two had a social democratic party in the government coalition. At least from a numerical and electoral standpoint, social democracy seemed dominant, a 'magical return' after the so-called end of the golden age in the 1980s. Yet, in terms of an achievement that reflects a 'lowest-common denominator' of social democratic policy, only the European Employment Strategy (EES) was produced. So here we have social democratic governments representing a vast majority of governments in the EU, but no lasting and effective legacy came from this experience. It is also worth noting that this particular assortment of social democratic-led governments represented, for the first time, centre-left governments in the UK, France and Germany simultaneously. This makes it all the more puzzling why a social democratic imprint on EU policy did not occur. In order to apply lessons from this period to today's situation, understanding why a simple alignment of social democratic governments was not enough of a factor to engender significant policy change is crucial. Four factors together explain the seeming modesty or reticence by these governments to construct a European-level social democratic policy framework.

First, there were, undoubtedly, policy differences among social democratic parties that contributed to the problem of agreeing on a single orientation. Certainly at the 1997 PES Leaders Summit, attended by recently elected Jospin of France and Blair of the UK, the gulf between the two national political leaders was obvious. A more rigorous assessment of comparative differences in social democratic government policies, focusing on fiscal, employment and social policy, demonstrates that in addition to national specific

5 S. Hix, *What's Wrong with the European Union and How to Fix It*, Polity, London, 2008.

considerations such as the structure of party competition, behaviour of trade unions and institutional veto points, the very nature of the role of the state in socio-economic matters varied. Merkel et al.⁶ studied social democracy in power, in particular a focus on the policies listed above in the UK, France, Germany, the Netherlands, Sweden and Denmark. On the basis of the goals and tools in which the social democratic party in power developed and pursued policies, they identified three clusters, which they labelled traditional, modernized, and liberalized. It is not surprising, then, that from a transnational perspective, agreement on the role of markets and state power to achieve certain goals would be difficult, even within the same party family⁷.

Second, although social democratic parties in Western Europe as a whole have been pro-EU throughout the 1990s⁸, support for European integration is not synonymous with extension of EU competence in areas that parties find critical for domestic electoral support, such as employment policy. In fact, national electoral success in itself obviates consideration of alternatives to national state action, thereby making suggestions of EU competence in such areas of policy *unnecessary*. The European Employment Strategy itself is more a soft policy initiative intended to 'promote' rather than 'protect' employment in member states⁹.

Third, although individual social democratic government leaders may have suggested a more ambitious European level economic policy at one point or another, and certainly Jacques Delors had only recently left his post as Commission president and was active in PES activities, the lack of an authoritative proponent – or *sense of urgency* – to focus attention on finding a solution to a problem meant that rhetorical support for a 'social Europe' was the extent of national party elite support.

Lastly, many social democratic parties when in government have been in coalitions with parties to their right, so government policy will be a compromise thereby constraining the degree to which a social democratic party-led government can assert bold policy changes.

The 'social democratic moment' came and went by the early 2000s, and the electoral fortunes of social democratic parties over the past ten years have been challenging, to say the least. What lessons can be taken from this experience to inform the present? It is clear that policy differences, especially between the 'traditional' (e.g. SPD and French PS) and 'liberalized' (UK Labour and PvdA) social democratic parties, was a key factor preventing

6 W. Merkel, A. Petring, C. Henkes, & C. Egle, *Social Democracy in Power*, Routledge, London, 2008.

7 See: i.e. J. Sloam & I. Hertner, *The Europeanization of Social Democracy*, [in:] *The Future of European Social Democracy*, H. Meyer & J. Rutherford (eds.), Palgrave, Basingstoke, 2012.

8 See: i.e. R. Ladrech, *Political Parties and the problem of Legitimacy in the European Union*, [in:] *Legitimacy and the European Union*, T. Banchoff & M. Smith (eds.), London, Routledge, 1999.

9 M. Rhodes, *Employment Policy*, [in:] *Policy-Making in the European Union*, H. Wallace, M. Pollack and A. Young (eds.), 6th ed., Oxford University Press, Oxford, 2010.

anything but the most innocuous initiatives at a European level, including a stronger role for the PES. These differences are a large part of the explanation of why a European level partisan division pitting centre-left parties on one side (regulatory capitalism) and centre-right parties on the other (liberalized capitalism) never truly structured EU policy-making (at most, it is expressed in certain legislative dynamics within the EP). This understanding of how European level politics would evolve¹⁰ was based on an assumption that national government positions in the Council of Ministers would be co-ordinated and in alliance with the socialist group in the EP. Though increasing party group discipline in the EP has been noted¹¹, the same was not true from the late 1990s onward regarding Council-EP political relations. The 2006 Services Directive episode, which did see a more clear left vs. right mobilisation take place, was more an exception rather than the rule.

The contemporary challenge

The present situation differs from the late 1990s in several respects. First, though policy differences are surely still present, it may be the case that on certain issues the space between them has narrowed, this probably being the case in terms of re-thinking positions within the liberalized social democratic parties, e.g. British Labour Party and (perhaps) the Dutch Labour Party. On the question of the relationship of the state and markets (regulation), the vast differences between parties may now be at least more flexible. Second, the structure of party competition in some Western European party systems has changed to the extent that there are now credible competitors to the left of social democratic parties, that is, electorally significant radical left parties¹². This is the case in Denmark, the Netherlands, Greece, and to a certain extent France and Sweden. This might influence electoral and coalition strategy (e.g. Denmark is a case of the SD in coalition with the Socialist People's Party to its left). Related to this is the current predicament of those social democratic parties that were in power over the past few years during the unfolding financial/economic crisis – who are now in opposition – struggling to re-define their general orientation away from the image, rightly or wrongly, of irresponsibility. This is the case in Portugal, Spain and to a limited extent the UK. Although varied, PES member parties in Central and Eastern Europe are also re-evaluating their seemingly uncritical support for liberalization¹³.

10 G. Marks & L. Hooghe, *The Making of a Polity*, [in:] *Continuity and Change in Contemporary Capitalism*, H. Kitschelt, P. Lange, G. & J. Stephens (eds.), Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1999.

11 See: S. Hix, A. Noury, and G. Roland, *Democratic Politics in the European Union*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 2007.

12 See: i.e. L. March, *Radical Left Parties in Europe*, Routledge, Abingdon, 2011.

13 See: i.e. J.-M. De Waele & S. Soare, *The Central and East European Left*, [in:] *What's Left of the Left*, J. Cronin, G. Ross & J. Shoch, eds., Duke University Press, Durham, 2011.

Second, as noted above, the current crisis emboldens far right and euro-sceptic parties, who push a 'sovereigntist' solution to problems, even exit from the EU. This leaves pro-EU parties defending membership, but at the same time highlights a corresponding need for a policy solution that a) justifies continuing support for the EU and even extension of EU competences and institutional development, and b) can differentiate themselves from the centre-right's prescription of austerity-only policy. This state of affairs is made manifest by the fact that the EU is now implicated in both the human fall-out from austerity policies in Greece, Spain, etc, as well as being seen as part of, if not the leader in (along with the German government), bringing some type of solution. This has made the EU a salient factor in domestic politics across the Union, which in turn impacts EU-member state political relations.

Third, and related to the second point, and again different from the late 1990s, a policy solution to national problems – economic and debt crisis – as well as participation in a new EU economic supervisory regime, now explicitly links domestic fortunes with EU governance. Any partisan dimension to this reality necessitates a level of co-ordination that should bring a new attention to the possible roles that euro-parties – in this case the PES – can play in such a new European architecture. This applies not only in the technical sense of a means to facilitate co-ordination across boundaries – the lowering of transaction costs to individual national parties – but also highlights a possible means of addressing the democratic accountability and legitimacy issues that naturally arise from the Fiscal Treaty's provisions. This implies that both wings – S & D group and the PES – co-ordinate their work.

Before concluding, it is necessary to weigh the still formidable barriers to an emerging partisan dimension linking domestic and EU politics. First, there is the division between parties in government and those in the opposition. The difference means that those in opposition may be open to innovative solutions – at least in principle – while those in government, especially in a coalition, will be much more conservative as they look to the next election. Second, an effective left vs. right economic orientation in EU decision and policy-making goes against the consensual nature of EU policy-making to date, and could confront the Council of Ministers and European Council against the European Parliament, precipitating an EU 'constitutional crisis'¹⁴. Lastly, the complexity of domestic political coalitions and the EU policy-making style would suggest that the most that could be hoped for from a more distinct partisan orientation in EU politics would be to provide a) more legitimacy in broad policy terms at the EU level, and b) force domestic mainstream parties to commit more explicitly to a broad EU policy position in ways that become part of domestic politics.

14 R. Dehousse, *Constitutional reform in the European Community*, [in:] *West European Politics*, vol. 18, no. 3, 1995.

The vacuum that exists at the moment in terms of a public space that could provide citizens with the ability to evaluate the politicized yet technical issues of the day in familiar terms – left vs. right – is exactly what euro-parties have the potential to contribute, i.e. acting as channels between the governed and the government. Although this does not necessarily equate with the requirement of EU institutional change in the direction of majoritarian government, and as many member state governments are themselves coalition governments, it does potentially de-mystify EU level policy-making. Coupled with the ever increasing possibility of an elected Commission president, pressure could be building to fashion a unique enhancement of euro-parties role in European politics and governance. Ultimately, it is still the prerogative of national party leaderships to instigate change, but as economic – especially budgetary – maneuverability shrinks further and in a public manner, construction of a positive European political space begins to appear as an opportunity rather than a distraction. In this respect, **planning for the 2014 EP election campaigns offer an early test case of political will and imagination.**

Planning for the 2014 EP election campaigns offer an early test case of political will and imagination.

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**IN THE NAME OF
POLITICAL UNION
- EUROPARTIES
ON THE RISE**



Michael HOLMES and Simon LIGHTFOOT

The PES and the Financial Crisis: the revitalisation of social democratic politics



Key words

**Social Democracy – the Party of European Socialists – Eurozone –
Financial Crisis – European Union**

Abstract

This article examines the response of the Party of European Socialists (PES) to the financial crisis. It argues that the PES's response has shifted from a consensus-based approach to a confrontational style of politics. The reaction was not immediate, but the PES has moved to a critical position, and in doing so has strengthened the social democratic approach to Europe – and, indeed, the overall political health of the EU.

This paper examines the response of the Party of European Socialists (PES) to the financial crisis. The paper argues that **the PES's response has shifted from a consensus-based approach to a confrontational style of politics. This reflects a renewed sense that politics in Europe needs a much more clearly differentiated left-right structure.** This new position emerged gradually after the crisis broke out, but has contributed to a revitalisation of social democratic politics at the European level. The change in approach was driven both by external factors – in particular, a response to growing public disquiet with EU policy – and internal factors – recognition that the consensus-based approach was no longer bearing fruit.

For a considerable time, the PES adopted a consensus-based approach in the European Parliament, working with the centre-right European People's Party (EPP). This made a lot of sense, particularly when the Parliament was trying to exercise leverage over the Council – a strong EP voice was more effective than a divided one. It produced an incremental strategy built on strong support for European integration. As Hout argues *the dominant tendency among European social democrats is to play along with what they take to be the only game in town, while at the same time trying to change the rules of that game by emphasizing regulation, regional and global governance, and accountability and democracy.*¹

The financial crisis threw down a major challenge to the “normal” way of conducting business in the European Parliament. Suddenly, an incremental and consensual policy style and a pro-EU reflex seemed less appropriate. The reaction was not immediate, but the PES has moved to a much more critical position, and in doing so has strengthened the social democratic approach to Europe – and, indeed, the overall political health of the EU.

The PES response to the Financial Crisis

At the start of the crisis, the initial response of the PES was built around an existing campaign. The PES had been calling for the introduction of stronger regulation of hedge and private equity funds for a number of years, and in the wake of the crisis it intensified these demands. At a meeting of the Council of the PES in Sofia in November 2007,

¹ W. Hout, *The only game in town? European social democracy and neo-liberal globalization*, [in:] *IPG*, 2 2006, p. 20.

delegates unanimously endorsed a set of measures designed to strengthen regulation of these funds, calling for:

- greater transparency of private equity and hedge funds;
- minimum reporting standards for them;
- limits on leverage to lower the risk of default;
- effective taxation of fund managers;
- greater consideration of workers' rights and protections.²

While a positive step, these measures were rather broad and undefined. But they did contribute significantly to a report of the EP's Committee on Economic and Monetary Affairs, with PES President Poul Nyrup Rasmussen as rapporteur. The "Rasmussen Report" was passed in September 2008, introducing:

- a harmonised EU approach to legislation of private equity and hedge funds;
- the introduction of mandatory capital requirements for all financial institutions;
- alignment of reward packages to reflect losses as well as profits;
- full transparency of remuneration packages for senior executives and managers;
- greater disclosure, identification and transparency in the sector;
- allowing greater information and consultation for employees;
- measures to counter 'unreasonable' asset stripping in buy-outs;
- action to avoid excessive debt caused by leveraged buy-outs;
- greater transparency in relation to the investment of employee pension funds.³

The outcome was a somewhat watered-down compromise. The PES was still operating in quite a consensus-based manner, striking a deal with the EPP and ALDE. Rasmussen himself noted that *it could only be achieved with the agreement of all major political parties in the European Parliament. I am very satisfied that we have got everyone on-board with this compromise. It is a fair compromise and a first real step for better regulation.*⁴ The tone was more one of improved management rather than any radical overhaul of systems. Nonetheless, the PES had taken *the first big step to reduce the risk of further financial crises. But it is only a first step. The debate and the fight for better regulation will not stop here.*⁵

² PES, *European Socialists vote for action on hedge and private equity funds*, Brussels: PES press release, 22 November 2007. Available online at <http://www.pes.org/en/news/european-socialists-vote-action-hedge-and-private-equity-funds> [accessed 27 August 2011]

³ European Parliament, *Report with recommendations to the Commission on hedge funds and private equity*, EP Committee on Economic and Monetary Affairs, rapporteur Poul Nyrup Rasmussen, doc A6-0338/2008.

⁴ PES, *Strauss-Kahn right on fiscal policy change says Rasmussen*, Brussels: PES, 28 January 2008. Available online at <http://www.pes.org/en/news/strauss-kahn-right-fiscal-policy-change-says-rasmussen> (accessed 27 August 2011)

⁵ *Ibid.*

By this stage, the PES was acknowledging that the crisis was more than simply inadequate regulation of financial services. The party's attention was shifting to include increasing reference to the need for concerted action to counter the growing threat of recession. In October 2008, Rasmussen appealed that *action is needed to prevent financial crisis turning into a recession. People are already worried about their savings, their pensions and their insurance. We don't want people in fear for their jobs too.*⁶ And by November, the PES was arguing that *there is no debate on whether or not to invest in fiscal stimulus to counter the recession – every government is planning its investments. Today the real debate is the scale of the investment and who benefits.*⁷

At the end of November 2008, the Commission published its European Economic Recovery Plan (EERP). This was based on a core principle close to the hearts of the PES – one of *solidarity and social justice. In times of hardship, our action must be geared to help those most in need... to work to protect jobs.*⁸ This in turn gave rise to two key pillars for action. The first was that there should be a major financial injection in order to boost demand and stimulate confidence – the EERP envisaged investment of up to €200 billion over a two-year period. The second was to try to steer that investment towards smarter and greener productive enterprises.

PES leaders had met in advance of the Brussels summit, and had issued a declaration calling for coordinated investment programmes across all EU states. Therefore, they were in general agreement with the thrust of the plan. However, they also had two significant concerns. First, they were fearful that the EERP would be insufficient – the PES leaders were advocating a greater budgetary stimulus that would be sustained over a longer period of time. Secondly, they feared the EERP would be undermined by conservative governments, who would divert or derail the project.

The PES approach to the worsening recession was based on three elements. First, there was a strong commitment to using investment to try to trigger growth and to mitigate the worst recessionary impacts. In April 2008, the PES proposed setting up a European Growth Initiative to be funded by special European Growth Bonds in order to try to achieve this. Second, there was a strong commitment to work through European channels, arguing that *Europe could create more jobs and kick-start its sluggish economy through*

6 PES, *Summit needs to open three fronts to fight crisis*, Brussels: PES press release, 3 October 2008. Available online at: <http://www.pes.org/en/news/summit-needs-open-three-fronts-fight-crisis> [accessed 27 August 2011]

7 PES, *Today's choice: what sort of recovery plan, asks Rasmussen*, Brussels: PES press release, 20 November 2008. Available online at: <http://www.pes.org/en/news/todays-choice-what-sort-recovery-plan-asks-rasmussen> [accessed 27 August 2011]

8 European Commission, *A European Recovery Plan*, Communication from the Commission to the European Council, Brussels 26 November 2008. COM(2008) 800 final. Available online: http://ec.europa.eu/economy_finance/publications/publication13504_en.pdf (accessed 3 October 2011)

*making more investments together.*⁹ Third, there was a developing concern that there was a danger that recession would be met by austerity.

The PES had clearly recognised that the crisis had moved beyond an issue of salvaging a number of financial institutions to become a significant threat to growth and prosperity. The party expanded its demands from simply a tightening of financial regulation procedures to a call for an EU-wide investment strategy to stave off recession. While the approach was still integrationist, a less consensual policy style was already becoming evident. The PES was contrasting its interventionist and reflationary social democratic strategy with the obsession with austerity among parties of the right.

By 2009, the PES was acknowledging that *we are now facing a crisis of an unprecedented nature*, one which threatened to *undermine European integration*.¹⁰ As the Greek crisis unfolded, the PES emphasised solidarity amongst member states. The PES Presidency declared that *the principle of European solidarity is a financial and moral necessity. The Euro-zone Member States must grant the required financial assistance to Greece immediately. Any further ambiguity is unacceptable*.¹¹ Three core measures to deal with the crisis were identified: further regulation in the sphere of Credit Default Swaps on sovereign debts; the creation of a “European Mechanism of Financial Solidarity”; and the introduction of a Financial Transactions Tax.

The PES was determined that *Greece's economy will not fail... partly because the EU is based on interdependence and solidarity*.¹² However, that solidarity was hard to construct, given the different stances in the PES's member parties. The PES had to develop a nuanced position, acknowledging the interests of all of its member parties. Thus, despite some talk of *put[ting] a gun on the table for all financial speculators to see*¹³ they also accepted the need for the introduction of the Greek austerity programme. This

9 Rasmussen, [in] PES Strauss-Kahn right on fiscal policy change says Rasmussen

10 PES, *A matter of urgency: a new progressive recovery plan for the European Union – the need for a new effort*. Brussels: PES, 19 March 2009

11 PES, *Immediate European solidarity is a financial and moral necessity*, Brussels: Declaration on the Greek and Euro-zone crisis adopted by the PES Presidency, 29 April 2010. Available online at: http://www.pes.org/en/system/files/Adopted_PES_Presidency_Declaration_on_the_Greek_and_Eurozone_crisis29042010_EN.pdf [accessed 4 October 2011]

12 PES, *Do they ever learn? The Greek crisis tells us to regulate hedge funds*, Brussels: blog by P. N. Rasmussen, 23 February 2010. Available online at:

<http://www.pes.org/en/blogs/pouls-blog/do-they-ever-learn-greek-crisis-tells-us-regulate-hedge-funds> [accessed 26 August 2011]

13 Stavros Lambinidis, Pasok MEP, quoted in PES, *Stabilization Plan' for Greece and Euro-zone 'would put a gun on the table for all speculators to see'*, Brussels: press release, 2 March 2010. Available online at: <http://www.pes.org/en/news/pes-stabilization-plan-greece-and-euro-zone-would-put-gun-on-table-for-all-speculators-to-see> [accessed 4 October 2011]

is perhaps unsurprising, given that the government initially charged with implementing the plan – the PASOK administration of George Papandreou – was a PES member.

Once again, the PES used the Parliament as a major channel through which to promote its policies. The “Berès Report” provided a comprehensive analysis of the financial crisis, emphasising the importance of European solidarity and insisting that punitive measures alone could not be the basis for successful cooperation among European economies. The report also raised the prospect of strengthened EU competences in some areas, notably in relation to tax harmonisation. It also included a proposal that the EU's budget should be significantly increased to give the Union greater capacity to promote growth.

Again, the change in approach is clear. **The PES was still determined to work within the framework of European integration, but wanted to push that integration much further.** The rapporteur, French Socialist MEP Pervenche Berès, argued that *we can't ask member states to implement strict austerity measures and never raise the question of tax receipts*, acknowledging that this would move the EU towards further Treaty reform.¹⁴ But the desire to present a real alternative is also evident, with Berès accepting that the call for the EU to promote growth was *a message out of step with the mood in the Council*.

By this stage, the PES had clearly shifted from working within a pro-EU consensus. This was most evident in their growing challenge to the policies being advocated by the ‘troika’ of the European Commission, the European Central Bank (ECB) and the International Monetary Fund (IMF). From 2011 onwards, the troika was insisting on severe austerity programmes in Portugal, Ireland and Greece as the condition for bailing out their economies. In early 2012, the PES responded by sending an ‘alternative troika’ to Greece. This was intended to explore possibilities for a different approach, one that would attempt to balance debt alleviation with an economic stimulus programme.

The language now being deployed was now much more critical of the centre-right orthodoxy in the EU, as is evident in the words of Hannes Swoboda, the Austrian leader of the S&D group. *We have seen what locusts like hedge funds can do in the economic world. We cannot allow another swarm of locusts such as the Troika... to descend on the country and impose their ideas. This would amount to a dictatorship and not co-operation with a country which is part of the European Union.*¹⁵ The principle of pro-European solidarity was now being used as a reason for criticising EU policy. As one member of the ‘alternative troika’ put it, *Greece is an old European country. We must show our solidarity*

14 European Parliament, *Pervenche Berès: To get out of this crisis we need to work together*, online interview with Pervenche Berès available online at <http://www.europarl.europa.eu/en/headlines/content/20110324STO16431/html/Pervenche-Ber%C3%A8s-To-get-out-of-this-crisis-we-need-to-work-together> (accessed 4 October 2011)

15 PASD, *Hannes Swoboda: 'We do not want another swarm of locusts destroying Greece'*. Brussels: PASD press release, 15 February 2012. Available online at: http://www.socialistgroup.eu/gpes/public/detail.htm?category=NEWS&id=136688&request_locale=EN§ion=NER [accessed 21 February 2012]

and Greece has to remain not only European but inside the eurozone. This is not only vital for Greece but for all Europeans.¹⁶

This more critical position was apparent not just in relation to Greece. As discussions began on an EU fiscal treaty, the PES continued to argue that the EU was taking the wrong approach. Thus, PES President Sergei Stanishev declared that a *fiscal compact on its own will not provide solutions*, while PES Secretary-General Philip Cordero dismissed an early draft of the compact for being *so biased towards austerity only*.¹⁷ The evident concern of the PES was that the EU was becoming unequivocally identified with a right-wing agenda, and that this was alienating an increasing number of citizens across Europe. If it becomes no more than a mechanism to “institutionalise austerity”, then *the EU is at risk of being seen as part of the problem, imposing only pain through cuts and austerity. This is a breeding ground for populist anger*.¹⁸

The PES demands were similar to what they had been arguing throughout the crisis – the use of the EU to promote growth to try to solve the financial crisis – *Improved growth and jobs means clear public and private investment – full stop. This must become the new golden rule of EU policy – without this, the treaty proposals remain unsatisfactory*.¹⁹ This came alongside the long-standing PES calls for the introduction of financial reforms, involving tighter regulation of financial services and the introduction of the Financial Transactions Tax. In addition, the PES now began to call for the creation of euro-bonds to help deal with the euro-zone crisis, and also advocated the establishment of an independent European Credit Rating Agency.

The PES response had clearly moved away from consensus to a more confrontational and political stance. Several key developments took place in 2012 that cemented this move. First of all, Martin Schulz was elected President of the Parliament in January 2012. He immediately emphasised the more confrontational style, beginning his term by declaring *I will not be a convenient President, and stating I'm a fighter. I am trying to put the European Parliament in a confrontation with the heads of government*.²⁰ He called for Parliament to

16 Elisa Ferreira in PASD 2012.

17 PES, *PES Prime Ministers meeting call on European Council to recognise need for investment*. Brussels: PES press release, 30 January 2012. Available online at: <http://www.pes.org/en/news/pes-prime-ministers-meeting-call-european-council-recognise-need-investment> [accessed 21 February 2012]

18 PES, *PES President calls for 'concrete action' from Commission after meeting with Barroso*. Brussels: PES press release, 26 January 2012. Available online at: <http://www.pes.org/en/news/pes-president-calls-concrete-action-commission-after-meeting-barroso> [accessed 21 February 2012]; PES, *PES verdict of European Council: an attempt to institutionalise austerity*. Brussels: PES press release, 13 December 2011. Available online at: <http://www.pes.org/en/news/pes-verdict-european-council-attempt-institutionalise-austerity> [accessed 21 February 2012]

19 PES, *PES to tell Barroso that for EU growth and jobs increase, public and private investment should be the new 'golden rule'*, Brussels: PES press release 25 January 2012. Available online at: <http://www.pes.org/en/news/pes-tell-barroso-eu-growth-and-jobs-increase-public-and-private-investment-should-be-new-golden> [accessed 21 February 2012]

20 M. Schulz, *Ich werde kein bequemer Präsident sein*, 17 January 2012, at <http://www.martin-schulz.info/index.php?link=4&bereich=1&details=1&id=692> [accessed 1 May 2012] & Schulz, quoted in EU Observer, 8 March 2012.

be given greater rights to supervise budgetary powers of eurozone countries, a demand that has a particular resonance given the manner in which countries like Greece and Italy have seen their national parliamentary and electoral systems by-passed of late. Schulz has also talked in terms of giving the Parliament greater say in relation to the Commission Presidency, a move that would give EP elections much greater competitive edge and profile.

A further important development came in the election of the Socialist Party's François Hollande as President of France in May 2012. Hollande came to power challenging the orthodoxy of the austerity programmes in place around Europe and calling for a re-examination of the terms of the Fiscal Treaty in order to try to find a means of promoting growth. Not surprisingly, Hollande's success was viewed with great enthusiasm. The PES's clear alternative political vision is evident in these statements. The result was a readiness to challenge the dominant policies in the EU in relation to the proposed fiscal treaty. PES President Stanishev set out the PES position as: *It is time to recognize that improved growth and jobs means clear public and private investment – full stop. This must become the new golden rule of EU policy. Without this, the treaty proposals remain unsatisfactory.*²¹ The PES position called for a significant and sustained investment programme focusing especially on green technology and development of sustainable infrastructure projects. The party's position was that *the so-called 'fiscal compact' is an attempt to institutionalise austerity. It is far from being a comprehensive plan enabling the EU to get out of the crisis. The key concepts that are missing are growth and solidarity.*²²

=Clearly, a debate has opened up about whether a continuing emphasis on neo-liberal financial orthodoxy and austerity was appropriate or not. In policy terms, a very clear left-right division has emerged, arguing at very least for some form of growth strategy to go alongside the Fiscal Treaty, if not even a more thorough re-working of the ideas contained in the treaty.

Analysing the PES response

The PES has adopted a coherent approach to the financial crisis, one that reflects a gradual evolution from its existing policies. The immediate response to the banking crisis was to assert the importance of stronger financial regulation, and this has remained a cornerstone of PES policy. In some ways, **the financial crisis has renewed a sense of**

²¹ PES, *PES to tell Barroso that for EU growth and jobs increase, public and private investment should be the new 'golden rule'*.

²² PES, *PES verdict of European Council: an attempt to institutionalise austerity*. Brussels: PES news report, 13 December 2011, available online at <http://www.pes.org/en/news/pes-verdict-european-council-attempt-institutionalise-austerity> [accessed 25 April 2012]

common purpose among social democratic parties. In the past, there were accusations of a lack of coherence within the PES.²³ However, the response to the financial crisis shows a broad consensus in support of PES policy. Some differences emerged among member parties, but these were muted. There was strong commitment to the idea of **European solidarity**. Thus, while a potential cleavage existed between the so-called ‘creditor’ nations and ‘debtor’ nations, all parties sought to abide by the ‘solidarity’ message of the PES despite their potential domestic political pressures. So the SPD did not go round PES meetings picking fights with its PASOK counterparts, nor vice versa. Indeed, there was a clear feeling that the SPD had adopted a principled European stance to the Greek crisis, refusing to make political capital out of the difficult position Chancellor Merkel found herself in.

The financial crisis has renewed a sense of common purpose among social democratic parties.

Interestingly, the social democratic parties from Central and Eastern Europe were relatively quiet on the subject. This might be due to the weak state of social democratic parties in the region, especially in Poland and Hungary. However, it also indicated that while parties in the Central and Eastern European states were quite happy preaching austerity and fiscal rectitude in principle²⁴, in practice there was an awareness that their own countries’ economies were not in a particularly strong condition.

However, the PES had to face certain obstacles. Most notably, the period immediately after the start of the financial crisis saw social democratic parties suffered a series of electoral set-backs. The PES itself lost 34 seats and saw its combined vote fall by almost 3% in the 2009 EP election result. In addition, social democratic parties suffered serious electoral reverses in many EU states during the same period. In 2007, social democratic parties were in power (either on their own or as senior or junior partners in coalitions) in 15 out of the 27 member-states. But by mid-2011 the social democratic presence in EU governments had declined to just eight out of the 27. The German SPD, the Swedish SAP, the Spanish PSOE and the British Labour Party all suffered particularly severe electoral defeats.

For those social democratic parties that did hold on to power, they were gripping something of a “poisoned chalice” as a result of the financial crisis.²⁵ In two countries where social democratic parties won elections, the victories proved pyrrhic. The Portuguese PS under José Socrates retained power in 2009, but this was short-lived, with the government lasting less than two years before losing power. Similarly, the PASOK government elected in

23 M. Holmes, & S. Lightfoot, *The Europeanisation of Left political parties: limits to adaptation and consensus*. [in:] *Capital & class*, no. 93, 2007, pp. 141-158.

24 M. Holmes, & S. Lightfoot, *Limited influence? The role of the PES in shaping social democracy in Central and Eastern Europe*, [in:] *Government and opposition*, Vol. 46 (1), 2011, pp. 32-55.

25 D. Sassoon, *Response to David Miliband*. *The political quarterly*, Vol 82 (2), 2011.

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Greece in 2009 was superseded by a technocratic administration in 2011. In both cases, the financial crisis was the cause. The PS government was defeated over its austerity plan; while PASOK leader George Papandreou was forced to step down to make way for a national unity government to implement an austerity programme.

This in turn significantly weakened the ability of the PES to engage in the EU. They were less influential at the EP level, and the dearth of social democratic parties in government also made it more difficult to convey PES ideas at Council level. Just as the PES was articulating a different vision of Europe, it found it harder for its voice to be heard in the EU's institutions. However, European social democrats have subsequently seen a recovery. Electoral victories in Denmark and Slovakia were the prelude for Hollande's success in France, suggesting an upturn for social democracy and the PES as they have continued to argue for an alternative solution to Europe's crisis.

Conclusion

For European social democrats, the financial crisis was an immense policy challenge, but one that has served to revitalise their approach in the EU. Policies and programmes that had seemingly been confined to the history books made a sudden dramatic return to fashion. The economic policy landscape was altered, with a return to Keynesian measures being proposed to deal with the crisis. The policy opportunities and possibilities for left-wing parties opened up again after a long period of retrenchment and constraint.

The PES response to the financial crisis was built on existing party policies, but also quickly developed to respond to the escalation of the crisis. Thus, the initial focus on regulation of financial services has been joined by advocacy of growth and investment programmes. However, **the main shift for the PES has been in relation to strategy. It has clearly moved away from a policy of collusion with the EPP in the European Parliament, and instead has adopted a distinctive and different policy agenda, challenging the approach of the right.** However, this has been met with a re-assertion of neo-liberal governmental economic policy prescriptions, heralding a counter-movement towards austerity and retrenchment on the part of the right, imposing severe cutbacks in wages, employment and in public sector provision, and privatisation of state assets.

Furthermore, not only were such policies being pursued at national level, they were also being championed within the EU. This posed a particular challenge for the PES. It has traditionally been a strong advocate of deeper European integration. But the financial crisis has led it to amend its view. It is still strongly pro-European – indeed, much of its policy agenda for responding to the financial crisis is predicated on strong European cooperation and solidarity. But it is now less likely to automatically assume that the interests of the EU and of Europe are necessarily synonymous. Instead, it recognises that the EU is a vital

arena for political debate. The general resolution of the 2012 PES Congress notes that *the direction the EU takes is defined by which political party is in a majority* and sets the party the challenge that *we must change the perception that the EU is a monolith.*²⁶

The PES has argued that *our social democratic way is the solution to the crisis – the well-regulated social market economy. In recent years, the conservative ideology of deregulation and neo-liberalism has been dominant. They argued that government was bad and the market was good. But markets without adequate rules are bound to fail. This crisis is the final proof.*²⁷ The PES can point to ideas such as the Financial Transactions Tax being adopted at the European level as an indicator of success.

But the PES needs still to go a step further if it is to be more than just a Cassandra, prophesying with great accuracy but doomed to be ignored. First of all, the EU works on the basis of building coalitions, so the PES needs new coalitions to replace its worn-out collusion with the EPP. The natural direction is to move towards a broad left alliance, working with the greens and with other left-wing groupings. These groups already share principle and policies that are very close to the PES. Of course, there are challenges to this, but the economic, political and social circumstances in Europe mean that it is important to try to overcome those challenges. There is much common ground here already – the principle of solidarity, the commitment to democracy and social justice. **Social democracy has traditionally been at its best when it is a very open house, knitting together a wide range of opinions around a heart of shared values.**

Perhaps the biggest challenge lies in relation to attitudes towards Europe. While the PES and Europe's social democratic parties have become strongly pro-EU, there are still very critical voices among European Greens and those on the wider left. However, this is far from being an irreconcilable difference. First of all, both the Greens and the wider left have been moving steadily towards a more pro-integration position. Secondly, the PES's parties have become prepared to criticise the EU project as well.²⁸

Thus, there is the promise of common ground and cooperation. There are two challenges in the near future for this. First of all, the 2014 EP elections are an opportunity for the PES to continue to mark itself out as a distinct and different voice in the EU, but to do so in a manner which highlights the fundamental left-right split in Europe today. The PES has already committed itself to a much stronger political identity in the campaign, agreeing to present a single agreed candidate for the presidency of the European

26 PES, *Together for the Europe we need*, Brussels: PES Congress Resolution, 28-29 September 2012, available online at http://www.pes.eu/sites/www.pes.org/files/pes_congress_2012-resolution_en.pdf [accessed 20 October 2012]

27 PES, *Taking Europe out of financial and economic crisis: an urgent European plan of action*. PES Leaders' declaration, 5 November 2008. Available online via <http://www.pes.org/en/news/socialists-demand-ambitious-recovery-plan> [accessed 21 February 2012]

28 See: M. Holmes & K. Roder, *The Left and the European Constitution: from Laekene to Lisbon*, Manchester University Press, 2012.

Commission. This highlights the more assertive and confrontational political approach that has developed, and offers possibilities for seeking support from and cooperation with like-minded progressive parties.

Secondly, the Fiscal Treaty will be a further opportunity to develop the distinctive approach of the PES and to develop cooperation with other progressive parties. The PES has already set out distinctive agenda, calling for an employment pact and a social pact to go hand-in-hand with any fiscal treaty, leading towards a social union. These are based on its core values of solidarity, social justice and democracy, and again offer the opportunity to build productive bridges with progressive parties that share such values.

The **PES has responded to the financial crisis effectively and innovatively. It has built on its existing policies, but has also devised new policies to meet the unusually intense challenges of the crisis.** It has adapted its strategic approach very significantly, moving away from a reflex of cooperation with the EPP when it became clear that the two parties had fundamentally incompatible stances on how to solve the crisis. It has moved towards a much more activist, political position, and that is one that in turn should see it aiming to develop leadership of a progressive alliance in the EU.

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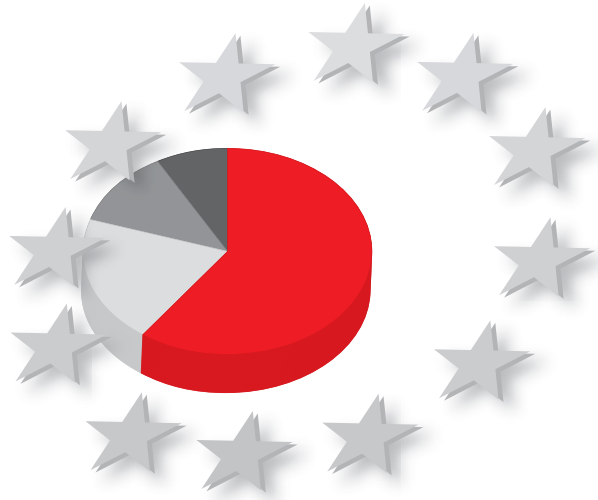
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Erol KÜLAHCI

The Party of European Socialists from Euro to Crisis



Key words

**„Party of European Socialists - Eurozone Policies - Monetary Integration
- PES Summits - Politicisation of the Crisis”**

Abstract

Some academic circles have pointed out that the European Union and its Member States suffer from a legitimacy deficit closely linked to the current monetary policies and Eurozone crisis. This contribution analyses the position of domestic member parties of the Party of European Socialists (PES): Labour, Socialist and Social Democratic Parties in the Member States' governments and in opposition. It tries also to explain these positions by paying attention to (dis)incentives related to self-economic interests, domestic institutional settlements, electoral calculus, ideological preferences as well as globalisation and europeanisation”.

The relation between EMU (Economic and Monetary Union) and the response of the PES (Party of European Socialists) has not yet been deeply investigated by researchers. This paper is intended to contribute in filling the gap by analysing the debate between domestic parties on monetary integration within the PES. I adopt a multi-disciplinary approach combining history, political economy and political science to analyse the determinants of party positions. In addition, I will show striking continuities of party positions during the present Euro crisis which has gained momentum as the current impact of Euro on the domestic conflicts animating party systems is now visible within and outside EU. Regarding the contemporary period, I will review the main positions formulated by the PES itself.

The leaders of the PES have met regularly since Willy Claes's Presidency (1992-94). Under the PES Presidency of Rudolf Scharping (1995-2001), the PES EcoFin brought together EcoFin Ministers, Socialist Commissioner and representatives of the Socialist Group of the EP and of the PES member parties-in-opposition responsible for economic and fiscal matters^{1,2}. It prepared the meetings of the Economic and Financial Council of Ministers – EcoFin³. Since its first meeting in 1996, the PES EcoFin met at least twice a year before the EcoFin Council. It was also useful to debate and attempt to influence EU policies. The PES' elites met particularly *à huis clos* at the levels of leaders (PES-Summit) and the ministers to debate EMU. In that respect, the role of the Secretariat is more than important in connecting them and in ensuring the informal and non-public character of the debates^{4,5,6,7}. Additionally, the PES Presidency and the S&D Group in the European Parliament played significant role within the European social democratic family in terms of

1 S. Hix & C. Lord, *Political parties in the European Union*., London, MacMillan 1997, p. 182.

2 S. Lightfoot, *Europeanising Social Democracy: The Rise of the Party of European Socialists?*, Oxford, Routledge 2005, p. 44.

3 A. Beumer & B. Tuytens, *Etat actuel des réunions pré-Conseil des Ministres PSE et porte-parole des partis*., Brussels 1999.

4 G. Devin, *L'internationale socialiste: Histoire et sociologie du socialisme international*, Paris, Presses de la FNSP 1993.

5 S. Hix, *The Party of European Socialists*, [in:] *Social Democratic Parties in the European Union*, R. Ladrech & Ph. Marlière (eds.), London, MacMillan 1999, pp. 204-217.

6 R. Ladrech, *Social Democracy and the Challenge of European Union*., Boulder and London, Lynne Rienner 2000.

7 P. Delwit, J.-M. De Waele, E. Külahci & C. Van de Walle, *Les fédérations européennes de partis: des partis dans le processus décisionnel européen?*, [in :] *Le nouveau modèle européen. Vol. 1. Institution et gouvernance*, P. Magnette & E. Remacle (eds.), Brussels, Editions de l'Université de Bruxelles 2000.

official position taking and public communication on Euro crisis. It is not possible in this paper to analyse in deep enough the economic and social dimensions which deserve additional analysis and papers.

This article therefore focuses on the puzzle of consensus formation in 'PES-in-government' as a window into the positions of domestic parties' responses to EMU. First, I'll briefly summarise the EMU history. Then, I will present quickly the conceptual framework. Next, I'll mainly analyse social democratic party positions within the PES. Finally, I'll study the contemporary PES formal positions regarding some of the main issues of the Euro crisis.

A brief overview of the EMU

The Treaty of Rome had scarce legal resources to bind the economic policies of the Member States⁸. Until the end of the 1960's, there was almost no serious political willingness for a European regional currency. While the Bretton Woods system provided the international framework, the US dollar was the undisputed and dominant currency⁹. It was also the golden age of Keynesian policies in various Western European countries.

Nevertheless, the leaders of the 'Six' declared their intention for a common European currency in the 1969 Hague Summit. In October 1970, the committee presided by Pierre Werner proposed a plan for EMU. However, the project did not resist to external challenges such as the collapse of the Bretton Wood system; the oil chocks and the diverging economic and monetary policies of the Member States. In the 1970's, EMU became « *the biggest non-event of the decade* »¹⁰.

However, some of the EMU ideas were put into practice in 1979 with the European Monetary System (EMS) and its Exchange Rate Mechanism (ERM). It was initiated and supported mainly by the British President of the European Commission Roy Jenkins, the French president Valéry Giscard D'Estaing and the German social-democrat Chancellor Helmut Schmidt. It is interesting to observe that the mechanism of the system « *functioned as a platform for policy transfer and policy learning, based on three variables: on emulation of Germany as a monetary policy model in the 1980s ; on elite socialization through the EMS ; and on an ideational leadership role for EU central bankers* »^{11, 12}.

8 L. Tsoukalis, *Economic and monetary Union. Political Conviction and Economic Uncertainty.*, [in:] *Policy-Making in the European Union*, H. Wallace and W. Wallace (eds.), Oxford University Press 2000, p. 151.

9 Ibidem.

10 Ibidem, p. 152.

11 K. Dyson, *EMU as Europeanization : Convergence, Diversity and Contingency.*, [in:] *Journal of Common Market Studies* 38, 2000, p. 649.

12 See also: C. Crouch, Introduction : 'The Political and Institutional Deficits of European Monetary Union', [in:] *After the Euro. Shaping Institutions for Governance in the Wake of European Monetary Union*, C. Crouch (ed.), Oxford : Oxford University Press 2000, pp. 3-4.

This opened the avenue for a renewed EMU with the Maastricht criteria and its three progressive phases. The adoption of this new treaty agreement was eased by economic, political and diplomatic factors¹³. Price stability is the central objective. Following the Euro crisis and a decade later, Delors added that the second central objective should be controlling private and public debt¹⁴.

The EMU's legitimacy has been questioned by political forces and citizens. For instance, it misfits ideologically with main European ideological forces as, on the one hand, *"for neoliberals it was an imperfect EMU. Equally, the EMU agreement failed to address traditional and deeply entrenched Social Democratic and Christian Democratic concerns about solidarity"*¹⁵. Indeed, this paper will show that a large number of social democratic parties are worried about its constraining character in terms of socio-economic policies. On the other hand, EMU has also some differentiated and constraining effect on other domestic policy areas such as employment, fiscal and social policies ^{16,17,18}. It has narrowed the range of political choice. According to one observer, EMU *"did (...) rob the nation-state of many of the macroeconomic policy tools on which the success of European social democracy in the post-war period rested"*¹⁹.

Determinants of party position

Marks and Wilson have observed that variation within the social democratic family *"is a function of the achievements of social democracy at the national level, the costs imposed by European economic integration, and the prospects for Euro-Keynesianism"*²⁰.

In particular, Notermans distinguish three approaches to analyse social-democratic positions on monetary integration:

(1) functional ('response to the internationalisation of economic relations'),

13 K. Dyson & K. Featherstone, *The Road to Maastricht: Negotiating Economic and Monetary Union.*, Oxford University Press 1999, pp. 752-8.

14 J. Delors, *Entretien. Jacques Delors dénonce le 'coup de poker' de Sarkozy et Merkel*, *Le Monde*, 18 October 2011.

15 K. Dyson & K. Featherstone, op. cit. 1999, p. 747.

16 L. Tsoukalis, op.cit, 2000, p. 175.

17 C. Crouch, Introduction : 'The Political and Institutional Deficits of European Monetary Union', [in:] *After the Euro. Shaping Institutions for Governance in the Wake of European Monetary Union*, C. Crouch (ed.), Oxford : Oxford University Press 2000, pp. 18-22.

18 K. Dyson, *EMU as Europeanization : Convergence, Diversity and Contingency.*, [in:] *Journal of Common Market Studies* 38, 2000.

19 T. Notermans, *Social Democracy and Monetary Union*, Berghahn Books, Oxford 2001, p. 3.

20 Marks and Wilson (2000)

- (2) ideational (the convergence of ideas in the following terms: 'the void left by the failure of Keynesianism happened to be filled by views which pointed out towards the advantageous effects of monetary integration'), and
- (3) federalist (EMU is 'an economic means to a political end').

Evidence gathered by Notermans *et al.* regarding nine social-democrat parties 'can be integrated in all three approaches'²¹. These approaches are important. Nevertheless I will point out that analysis of social democratic parties' positions on monetary integration within the PES shows, in particular, strong influencing factors such as: electoral calculus, domestic economic self-interests, opposition or participation in government as well the variety of social democratic ideologies.

Secondly, the case that I analyse indicates the expression of numerous domestic social democratic views expressing positions and, often, progressive answers close sometimes to Euro-Keynesianist prospect.

Accordingly, I also argue that these positions are explained by various external and internal factors at the level on which the social democratic parties operate. I identify these factors mainly from the extremely useful literature on European integration, Europeanisation and party politics^{22, 23}. In this contribution, it is not possible to develop in-depth each of these factors. The ones particularly relevant are:

- (1) the perspective of an agreement within the Europarty to influence EU decision-making;
- (2) the impact of world-economy and European economy encompassing to an extent functional approach^{24, 25, 26}
- (3) the electoral calculus in terms of advantage vs. disadvantage^{27, 28, 29};
- (4) the domestic economic self-interest³⁰

21 T. Notermans, *op.cit.*, 2001, pp. 5-8.

22 Th. Poguntke *et al.*, *The Europeanization of National Political Parties. Power and organizational adaptation*, London and New York, Routledge, 2007.

23 E. Kūlahci, *Conclusion: Country Comparison*, [in:] *Europeanisation and Party Politics. How the EU affects Domestic Actors, Patterns and Systems*, E. Kūlahci (ed.), Colchester, ECPR Press - Studies in European Political Science 2012, pp.157-170.

24 D. Hanley, *Christian Democracy and the Paradoxes of Europeanization*, [in:] *Party Politics*, Vol.8, N°4, 2002, pp. 467.

25 P. Delwit, *Les partis socialistes et l'intégration européenne: France, Grande-Bretagne, Belgique*, Brussels, Editions de l'Université de Bruxelles 1995.

26 T. Notermans, *Social Democracy and Monetary Union*, Berghahn Books, Oxford 2001.

27 L. Hooghe & G. Marks, *A postfunctionalist theory of European Integration: From Permissive Consensus to Constraining Dissensus*, [in:] *British Journal of Political Science*, 39, 2009, p. 19.

28 P. Mair, 2000;

29 Krouwel *et al.*, *The Limited Impact of Europe on National Party Systems*, [in:] *West European Politics*, Vol.23, N°4., 2012.

30 F. Scharpf, *Governing in Europe : Effective and Democratic ?.*, Oxford University Press 1999, pp. 78–81.

- (5) the variety of social democratic ideologies within the PES encompass to an extent ideational and federalist approaches^{31, 32, 33, 34, 35, 36}. In addition, the social democratic family is also divided between defenders of sovereignty and supporters of monetary integration. The reluctance of UK, Denmark and Sweden to join EMU is a strong domestic force accounting for positions of the British Labour Party (BLP), the Danish *Socialdemokratiet* (SD) and the Swedish *Socialdemokraterna* (SAP) within the PES,
- (6) the opposition or participation in government³⁷. The period of the late twentieth century coincides with the strongest presence of social democratic parties within EU member states' government with a 13/15 rate around 2000 while, nowadays, the PES has been experiencing the weakening of social democratic forces in EU27 domestic and European parliaments. Without being sarcastic, it is possible to distinguish respectively *strong* 'PES-in-government' in contrast to *weak* 'PES-in-government'.

Debate on monetary integration within the PES

The 1996 PES Summit: Importance of World-Economy, Electoral Costs and Ideology

On the basis of the 1995 PES leaders' declaration, Ladrech observed that there was a consensus on the EMU timetable and criteria³⁸. One year after this declaration, it was again important for the PES to support publicly the timetable and criteria as Jospin pointed out during the 1996 PES Summit that there is no rational to discuss in public the criteria and the timetable because it would be interpreted as an attack against EMU. Considering pressure from world economy, he pointed out that it is necessary to have a monetary union against speculation and to compete with Japan and the United States of America. Nowadays, it is astonishing to observe that additional contemporary competitors such as

31 S. Hix & C. Lord, *Political parties in the European Union*., London, MacMillan 1997, p. 23-49.

32 T. Notermans, *Social Democracy and Monetary Union*, Berghahn Books, Oxford 2001.

33 G. Moschonas, *In the Name of Social Democracy*., London, Verso 2002.

34 P. Delwit *et al.*, *The Europarties: Organisation and Influence* (Brussels: CEVIPOL/ULB). Available freely at : https://dipot.ulb.ac.be/dspace/bitstream/2013/24493/1/en_bookefpp.pdf, 2004.

35 P. Delwit, *Social Democracy in Europe: A Future in Questions*., [in :] *Social Democracy in Europe*, P. Delwit (ed.), Brussels, Editions de l'Université de Bruxelles 2005.

36 S. Bartolini, *The Strange Case of the European Parties*, [in:] *Europeanisation and Party Politics. How the EU affects Domestic Actors, Patterns and Systems*, E. Külahci (ed.), Colchester, ECPR Press - Studies in European Political Science 2012, pp.157-170.

37 Ibidem.

38 R. Ladrech, *Social Democracy and the Challenge of European Union*., Boulder and London, Lynne Rienner 2000, p. 75.

Brazil, China, India and Russia were not considered during the PES debate – indicating probably the ‘quickness’ of change in circumstances.

Within the same Summit *à huis clos*, it appeared that the Dutch Wim Kok and the Danish Poul Nyrup Rasmussen supported the timetable and the criteria although Denmark will reject the Euro referendum four years later (2000). In particular, Kok was against any softening of the criteria.

In contrast, other leaders such as the Portuguese Antonio Guterres nuanced their support. He was of the opinion that the European currencies are overvalued and the interest rates are more important than outsiders' one. As the ECB controls the interest rates, he wondered if the central banks should also be responsible for economic growth and employment. Joining the PSP, Rasmussen considered it important to influence the ECB so that it brings down interest rates to contribute to economic growth. Nevertheless, Lafontaine (SPD) admitted that the *Bundesbank* has the power to take decisions regarding European bonds and diminution of interest rates. Implicitly, this SPD position suggest a very important limit to any PES initiative regarding the *acquis* of the ERM, the EMS and the EMU.

In addition, the Belgian Philippe Busquin proposed to add a criterion of two per cent growth stressing the importance of recovery. Seventeen years later, recovery is advocated by the socialist Elio Di Rupo, Belgian Prime Minister since early 2012. In brief, he advocated for ending the crisis in the Eurozone, to go on with budgetary and financial austerity and to favour economic recovery in terms of an European New Deal which regain progressive focus³⁹. He stresses the importance of coordinated action at the Eurozone level as he argues that EU27 coordinated action is unrealistic. As an alternative, he proposes convergence between Eurozone17 on budgetary, political, scientific and economic terms⁴⁰.

During the PES 1996 Summit, Lafontaine suggested completing the EMU, namely, by Delors' idea of an economic government to contribute solving the unemployment problem. Indeed, Lafontaine considered that economic policy could not be successful to fight unemployment if it does not mobilise monetary policy. Completing EMU with an economic government at the European level would help creating jobs.

Last but not least, Delors added that it is necessary to strengthen the EU institutions by transferring power from national to European level. Next, he suggested adopting strict rules in order to have fair competition between the EMU member countries and the non-members.

39 A. Skrzypek, *The Next Social Contract: A new vision for European Society*, Paper presented at the Conference *Strengthening Democracy and Ensuring Social Progress in Europe of 21st Century* (coorganised by FEPS, Renner Institut and SPD within the Next Left Research Programme), Berlin, 8-9 November 2012.

40 E. Di Rupo, *Faire battre le Coeur de l'Europe*, Rentrée académique ULB, 21/9/2012.

The PES-EcoFin: European monetary centre, domestic economic self-interest and social democratic ideologies

Following the 1996 PES Summit, the social democratic family debated the 'Growth and Stability Pact'. Interesting interaction occurred between the PES Leaders, the PES EcoFin, the Socialist Commissioners and the Political Group in the European Parliament. Nevertheless, it is important pointing out this Euro social democratic initiative was led by a strong involvement of Pro-European and pro-Left British Labour Party at the EP and the European Commission.

Alan Donnelly, Member of the European Parliament (MEP) from the Labour Party, presented his paper pointing out that the monetary stability pact mainly supported by the CSU German finance minister Theodor Waigel would have tough negative implications in increasing domestic taxes and/or reducing domestic budgets⁴¹. It is important to point out that this minister was one of the leading personalities of the strongest country at the *centre* of European monetary policy.

In particular, the Labour MEP considered as an issue the 'Waigel definition' of *temporary* and *exceptional* circumstances. As this would affect public investments with negative consequences on economic growth and reduction of unemployment, the socialist group in the EP proposed, as a solution, that the pact should take into account the distinction between the deficits generated by capitals and the deficits generated by public spending and investment. Accordingly, the political group defended the idea that the definition of excessive deficits should not encompass expenses generated by public investment.

In this respect, the Socialist Group in the European Parliament suggested the following process to improve the Growth and Stability Pact: the Member States report on public investments; the European Commission evaluates them; the Council of Ministers decides if the public investment of any Member State is allowed; then the Member State could deduce it from the calculation of the domestic excessive deficit. Accordingly, the political group believed that this idea would help avoiding or reduce the risk of deflationist economic policies⁴².

On 9 October 1996, the Group tried to draw attention of the PES Commissioners to support the idea of public investment against restrictive deflation of temporary and exceptional circumstances⁴³. According to Pauline Green, president of the group (1994-9), « *the Commission – thanks to the insistence of our Socialist Commissioners- has retreated*

41 A. Donnelly, *A Pact for Stability and Growth in Europe. The stability pact and public investment.*, Brussels 1996.

42 PES Group, *Background Paper on the PES Group Proposal for a "Pact for Stability and Growth"*., Brussels 1996.

43 A. Donnelly, *Letter to the PES Commissioners.*, Brussels 1996.

from proposing a precise and strict figure- based definition to what 'exceptional' should stand for »⁴⁴.

Moreover, the Group liaised with Ruairi Quinn, member of the Irish Labour Party, who was at that time also finance minister and president of the EcoFin Council as well as the PES EcoFin. Donnelly asked Quinn to support the proposal of the European Commission⁴⁵ within the Ecofin Council and to try ensuring that the Council would not challenge the proposal of the European Commission⁴⁶. He hoped that the Commission might support the idea of flexible national budgets to act quickly and efficiently against the growth of unemployment and the decline of economic growth.

On 13 October 1996, the PES-EcoFin expressed a general agreement on the necessity of the pact⁴⁷. However, the definition of 'temporary and exceptional circumstances' remained to be an important issue. In particular, some social-democrats within the PES EcoFin criticised the pact because it is tougher than the EMU criteria. They wondered why should the socialists accept the deflationist proposal and monetary approaches. They pointed out the need to balance the pact by economic and fiscal governance. This indicates that the pact was challenging the domestic self-economic interest of social democratic parties. Chris Boyd from the cabinet of European Commissioner Neil Kinnock (Labour Party) was asked to prepare a report.

The report focused on the public investments and the definition of exceptional and temporary circumstances⁴⁸. Regarding the definition of 'exceptional circumstances', it informed the PES that the centre-right commissioners, such as the President Jacques Santer and Yves-Thibault de Silguy, proposed a negative growth of one and a half per cent quite close to the Waigel position of negative growth of at least 2 per cent during two years. As far as the definition of temporary was concerned, the Commissions' proposal insisted that, unless exceptional circumstances prolong, correction measures should be taken the next year. The informal report did not support this position of the Commission because there is a potential to deepen the recession. Accordingly, it proposed involving the Council of Ministers to give its approval to a stability program allowing the deficit adjusting with the necessary time period. Thus, the report proposed amending Commission's position in favour of public investment.

In addition, the Socialist Group tried to make aware the PES leaders by writing them that « *there is a high risk that Finance Ministers - largely under the influence of Germany-*

44 P. Green, *Letter to the PES leaders*, Brussels 1996.

45 A. Donnelly, *Letter to Ruairi Quinn*. Brussels 1996.

46 European Commission, *Proposition de règlement (CE du Conseil visant à clarifier la mise en oeuvre de la procédure concernant les déficits excessifs*, Eur-Lex 1996.

47 B. Lynch & B. Tuytens, *Report of the third PES EcoFin meeting, chaired by Ruairi Quinn*. Luxembourg 1996.

48 Office of Neil Kinnock, *PES position on the "Stability Pact" (Draft)*., Brussels 1996.

might go back to a restrictive figure-based definition of «exceptional», overriding the achievements obtained in this respect in the Commission. This is a major area where Socialist Ministers and parties should act together to support the commission proposal for a more reasonable definition»⁴⁹.

Notwithstanding this remarkable attempt from the social democratic family, the European Council adopted the pact following very strong pressure from the German Christian-Democrat Chancellor Helmut Kohl⁵⁰. In particular, the Councils at the European level decided in favour of the negative growth of at least 2 per cent and did not consider process in favour of public investment^{51, 52}.

The PES in the Euro crisis

Since the end of the late twentieth century, important evolution materialized at the EU and PES levels in the context of the bank and sovereign debt crisis. At the EU level, these include the materialization of the Euro, the development of economic governance rules, the budgetary discipline, the creation of the financial solidarity mechanism and the launching of the banking union, the Fiscal Treaty proposal^{53, 54} as well as the Euro crisis.

Before the crisis hits the Eurozone, the PES Leaders stressed the importance of counteracting recession and of reforming financial markets⁵⁵ and declared that the “euro has been a stabilizing factor in the crisis for eurozone members and the European Central Bank should continue to pursue a pro-growth monetary policy”⁵⁶. It is wishful thinking that the PES expects growth from monetary policy. However, the global crisis quickly destabilised the EU and the Eurozone, including the social democratic parties. Then, the social democratic family recommended a way out of the Eurozone crisis by taking some

49 P. Green, *Letter to the PES leaders*, Brussels 1996, pp. 2-3.

50 L. Tsoukalis, *Economic and monetary Union. Political Conviction and Economic Uncertainty.*, [in:] *Policy-Making in the European Union*, H. Wallace and W. Wallace (eds.), Oxford University Press 2000, p. 168.

51 Council of Ministers, *Règlement (CE) n°1467/97 du Conseil du 7 juillet 1997 visant à accélérer et à clarifier la mise en oeuvre de la procédure concernant les déficits excessifs*, Eur-Lex 1997.

52 European Council, *Résolution du conseil européen relative au pacte de stabilité et de croissance*, Eur-Lex 1997.

53 L'Echo Magazine, *L'Eurozone, Creuset de l'Intégration*, 2012

54 R. Ladrech, *Economic Crisis, Fiscal Governance, and Democratic Legitimacy: Transnational parties as a potential bridge between Member States and the EU*, Paper presented at the Conference *Strengthening Democracy and Ensuring Social Progress in Europe of 21st Century* (coorganised by FEPS, Renner Institut and SPD within the Next Left Research Programme), Berlin, 8-9 November 2012.

55 PES Leaders, *Taking Europe out of financial and economic crisis: An Urgent European Plan of Action*, PES Leaders' declaration adopted by the PES Leaders on 5th November 2008.

56 PES Leaders, *PES Leaders Summit Declaration on the Economic Crisis. The need for strong leadership and action to promote growth and jobs and to counteract the deepening economic crisis 2009*.

positions on various emerging issues. I'll brief review successive PES positions to solve debt issues in the Eurozone.

To begin with, the PES Presidency and the S&D Group have insisted on the importance of protecting "governments' access to finance from speculation through the establishment of a European Mechanism for Financial Stability"⁵⁷.

Regarding the Greek crisis, the PES Presidency "urge(d) the European Council to take three clear steps; the establishment of a European Mechanism of Financial Solidarity, as agreed by the PES Prime Ministers and Leaders' Conference of 25 March; the establishment of a European Union Financial Transaction Tax (FTT) and stronger financial regulation, in particular on Credit Default Swaps on sovereign debts and the banning of naked short-selling"⁵⁸. As Delors put it, there is a rationale to save the Hellenic member as 'Saving Greece is to save Euro'⁵⁹. In terms of economic self-interest, this indicates that helping this country fits with interests both at the Eurozone and domestic levels.

As a third example, the PES Presidency considered as a priority the design of an efficient 'rescue mechanism for the eurozone'. In addition, it proposed "to consider the following actions: the European Stability Mechanism must be allowed to intervene directly on the market and purchase sovereign bonds; the level and quality of the guarantee it provides must be developed to reach the targeted stabilizing effect; the very logic of the conditionality it applies must be transformed, from imposing austerity to ensuring growth, jobs and responsible public finances; and the IMF participation to the stability mechanism must be reorganized"⁶⁰. It is interesting to note that demand of the PES regarding the transformation of conditionality is rather coherent with its ideological profile.

Another example, the PES Presidency also criticised credit rating agencies (Moody's, Standard and Poor's, Fitch) for worsening the debt crisis in the Eurozone and proposed both regulatory measures and a European independent credit rating agency – EICRA. Nevertheless, the British Labour Party has not joined this position. This implies likely that this PES position misfits with the British economic self-interest as perceived by the Labour Party.

A fifth example, the PES Leaders tried to support public investment next to the European Council⁶¹. Considering the previous analysis on the PES-EcoFin and the stability pact where I have showed the attempts to integrate measures in favour of investment in

57 PES Presidency Declaration on the Greek and euro-zone crisis. Immediate European Solidarity is a Financial and Moral necessity 2010.

58 PES Presidency and S&D Group, *A Progressive Way Out of the Crisis. Joint Declaration adopted by the PES Presidency and the S&D Group in the European Parliament, 2010.*

59 Delors, 2011.

60 PES Presidency, *PES statement on European economic governance. Adopted by the PES Presidency, 24 February 2011.*

61 PES Leaders, *From Economic Chaos to Economic Governance. A call to the European Council for an alternative strategy based on investment and modernisation, Brussels, 23rd June 2011.*

the stability pact, one can expect that the contemporary PES leaders will have extreme difficulties in promoting substantial public investment considering the reluctance of heavy institutional supporters of pro-austerity monetary policy.

Last example but not least, the cleavage between defenders of sovereignty and supporters of monetary integration is operating within the PES. Remarkably enough, domestic parties from the Eurozone want to build more on monetary integration. This is confirmed by statement coming from the 'Eurozone' PES Leaders. To date and quantitatively, there is only one public statement of the Eurozone PES Leaders⁶². All the more so since some domestic social democratic parties in government (Di Rupo in Belgium, Hollande in France) ask and attempts for reinforced cooperation in the Eurozone in favour of economic recovery. Accordingly, it indicates that there is a potential for a stronger collective action within the PES based on the Eurozone members to promote a collective socio-economic agenda or a socio-economic democratic agenda.

In the meantime, its domestic parties are constrained to experience adaptation and management of fiscal and monetary austerity to which they try to resist – if possible.

Conclusion

Social democratic parties experience austerity monetary policy although most of them wish to promote alternative policies and, sometimes, attempt to do so. **From debating the early stages of the Euro at the end of the last century to the current crisis, the environment of social democratic parties has dramatically changed. The PES offered critical positions, confrontational style and high quality innovative proposals, while reinforcing itself as an organisation. This happened despite limits impressed due to the weakening of social democratic forces in respective domestic and European parliaments in contemporary EU27^{63, 64}.** In other words, the PES tends to follow the agenda of other powerful actors although it tries hard to set the agenda.

In conclusion, the **PES has helped to bring about important debates within the social democratic family on monetary integration, to attempt changing the nature of the austerity parameters and to recommend progressive proposals on Eurozone crisis.**

62 PES Leaders, *From Economic Chaos to Economic Governance. A call to the European Council for an alternative strategy based on investment and modernisation*, Brussels, 23rd June 2011.

63 M. Holmes & S. Lightfoot, *The PES and the financial crisis: the revitalisation of social democratic politics*, Paper presented at the Conference *Strengthening Democracy and Ensuring Social Progress in Europe of 21st Century* (coorganised by FEPS, Renner Institut and SPD within the Next Left Research Programme), Berlin, 8-9 November 2012.

64 G. Moschonas, *One Step Forward, One Step Back: Debt Crisis, the PES, and the Limits of Social Democracy*, Paper presented at the Conference *Strengthening Democracy and Ensuring Social Progress in Europe of 21st Century* (coorganised by FEPS, Renner Institut and SPD within the Next Left Research Programme), Berlin, 8-9 November 2012.

Important enough, various factors account for social democratic party positions in a context characterized by the relative strength of social democratic forces in domestic and European parliaments in EU15 which looks also relevant when analysing the weak PES-in-government in relation to the contemporary Euro crisis.

This paper has showed that the position of social democratic parties within the PES can be explained by factors identified in the conceptual framework. In particular, the divide between defenders of sovereignty and supporters of integration on the Eurozone basis becomes more visible within the PES. To remind, some domestic social democratic parties in government (France, Belgium) ask for reinforced cooperation in the Eurozone.

Nevertheless, there is much more to ascertain in a context of global crisis and further dividing line between social-democrats of the Eurozone¹⁷ and other EU members. Provided that they agree on a common socio-economic concept and strategy in a difficult context of increasing austerity, would the Eurozone socialists help first the Economic Government and, then, the Social Europe to emerge in the multilevel European governance and politics?

PES has helped to bring about important debates within the social democratic family on monetary integration, to attempt changing the nature of the austerity parameters and to recommend progressive proposals on Eurozone crisis.

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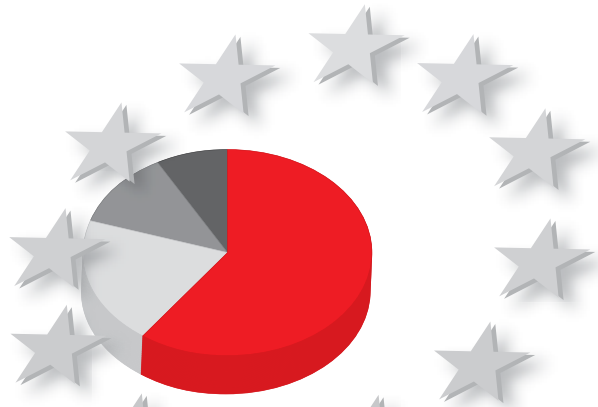
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**IN THE NAME OF
POLITICAL UNION
- EUROPARTIES
ON THE RISE**



Gerassimos MOSCHONAS

One Step Forward, One Step Back? Debt Crisis, the PES, and the Limits of Social Democracy¹



¹ This paper is based on the examination of the official documents and resolutions of the PES and on a large number of interviews with cadres of the PES and members of the Group of the Progressive Alliance of Socialists & Democrats in the European Parliament. These interviews began during 2011 and continued up to the time of the writing of this essay (February 2013). The paper presents the first conclusions from a work still in progress. It is a greatly revised version of Gerassimos Moschonas' article *Trapped in Europe? "Problematic" Reformism, the PES and the Future, Queries*, No 2 (8), 2012, pp.80-88. The units entitled 'The articulation of an "alternative policy" by the PES' and 'The Limits of Social Democracy: when a programmatic success story ends up as a poor goal achievement' originate from the above text with minor changes, the rest of the units are new. This work in progress and still uncompleted is part of a chapter to be published in *European Social Democracy During the Global Economic Crisis: Renovation or Resignation?*, D. Bailey, J.-M. De Waele, F. Escalona & M. Vieira (eds.), Manchester Univ. Press (forthcoming).

Key words

PES – Social Democracy – Europarties – Debt Crisis – European Crisis

Abstract

The financial crisis, on the one hand, and the sovereign debt crisis, on the other, have restored the possibility of European reform. EU, having been an accelerating factor in the social-democratic crisis, was now providing a window of opportunity for the Left. The scale of the crisis, the strong resurgence of interest in Europe and the theatre of operations (the fact that socialists were in opposition) had created a context conducive to strengthening the organisation and visibility of the PES.

Faced with the crisis of the European project, the PES of the Rasmussen – Corderoy period tested its potentialities to the (extreme) limits. It has taken major steps in restructuring its programme and has responded to the new challenges. Nevertheless, the social-democratic family as a whole has not been able to take centre-stage or 'remedy' the deficit in the European imaginary of socialism. Given the general frenzy of the period, this mediocre result is a cause for surprise, especially considering the programmatic progress that has been made. The 'paradox' of the PES's success and the family's semi-failure (positive programmatic balance sheet, weak political performance) is crucial in this respect: it demonstrates the extent to which social-democratic reformism has become difficult in a system where the logic of institutions and the inconsistencies of left actors combined reinforce, in effect, the regime's conservative rationale. Furthermore, this paradox makes it possible to understand both the limits and the potential of the development of transnational parties at a European level.

The Crisis as a Window of Opportunity

It was neither European unification, nor the sudden spell of neo-liberal ideas, that led social-democratic parties in government in the mid-1970s to abandon expansionist policies in favour of restrictive policies during their mandates. Policy liberalization long predates the Single Act and Maastricht, and extends beyond the borders of Europe (Labourism in Australia and New Zealand is evidence enough). The programmatic mutation and identity crisis of social democracy likewise long predate the establishment of the European Union. From a chronological standpoint, Europeanization is not the cause of neo-liberalization (any more than globalization)¹. To a large extent, the very opposite is true. The gradual adoption of liberal solutions at a *national* level – and especially their (relative) effectiveness² – influenced and, in a subsequent phase, partly fashioned European integration.

Nevertheless, the EU acted as an independent variable by reinforcing, structuring and generalizing tendencies that were already operative. The major impact of European reforms, writes Nicolas Jabko, '*was the consolidation of national reforms that would doubtless not have gone as far without the European Union*'. Through a snowball effect, the EU led governments 'much further than they wanted to go at the outset'.³ This not only ratcheted up the spread of liberalism, but also functioned as a factor of *programmatic homogenization* in the socialist universe. On account of Europe, the process of policy liberalization grew in coherence, audacity and universality.

In social democratic rhetoric the European Union was projected, among other things, as an answer to globalisation – a structure meant to alter the liberal course of globalisation and, as a result, liberate social democracy from the constraints created by the latter. In practice, despite social democratic aspirations (political Europe as a counter-weight to the market), the politicisation of integration (through a dense, rigid

1 G. Moschonas, "*La panne des voies réformistes en Europe. La social-démocratie à l'épreuve de la gouvernance européenne*" [in] Daniel Cohen and Alain Bergounioux, *Le socialisme à l'épreuve du capitalisme*, Paris, Fondation Jean-Jaurès / Fayard, 2012.

2 Converting traditionally less liberalized sectors (telecoms, education, health, public services, etc.) into objects of competition, neoliberal policies opened up new areas for private activity and capitalist accumulation. The result was a rise in profit rates that breathed new life into the economy. But this 'second wave' never really approximated the growth rates of the 1945–73 period.

3 N. Jabko, *L'Europe par le marché, Histoire d'une stratégie improbable*, Paris, Presses de Sciences Po, 2009, pp. 130-32.

institutional apparatus) consolidated and solidified the economic liberalisation of Europe, as opposed to counteracting it. We have shown elsewhere⁴ that in its institutional and economic aspects European integration has created a context which is not conducive to a policy of 'strong reformism'. A reduction in the *actual perimeter* of social democratic action constitutes the hard core of the influence exercised by Europe, putting in question the vitality and impact, even the relevance, of 'old-style' reformist policies. Consequently, **the European dilemma of socialism over the last two decades can be encapsulated as follows: either destabilise the European Union or further destabilise social-democratic identity.**

The European dilemma of socialism over the last two decades can be encapsulated as follows: either destabilise the European Union or further destabilise social-democratic identity.

With the financial and economic crisis triggered in 2007–8, which soon became a crisis of the European project, the terms of this dilemma were for the first time posed more favourably for the left. **If Europe was an accelerating factor in the social democratic crisis, the same Europe, thanks to its own deep crisis, was now providing a major window of opportunity for a left that had been having a rough ride.** The financial crisis on the one hand, and the sovereign debt crisis on the other, have restored the possibility of European reform. Faced with the crisis of the European project, socialists had a great and unique opportunity to revitalize their European strategy.

In particular, for the *first* time in its history, the Party of European Socialists (PES) was naturally well placed to become the organic framework for coordinating socialist action. The minority participation of socialists in European institutions, particularly taking into consideration that two central parties, the French Socialist Party (PS) and the German Social Democratic Party (SPD) were in opposition, favoured such a role, which would have consisted of steering the socialists' political and programmatic activity through the PES and the leaders' conference. The scale of the crisis, the strong resurgence of interest in Europe and, above all, the theatre of operations (the socialists's oppositional position) had created a context conducive to strengthening the PES's organisation and visibility. Under such prism, the crisis constituted a moment of truth not only for the social democracy but for the PES as well. In reality, the crisis was a critical juncture that could contribute to the reinforcement of the 'Europarties'. If not now, then when?

4 G. Moschonas, *Reformism in a 'Conservative' System: The European Union and Social democratic Identity*, [in:] *In Search of Social Democracy: Responses to Crisis and Modernisation*, John Callaghan et al. (eds.), Manchester, Manchester University Press, 2009

The Articulation of an 'Alternative Policy' by the PES

The initial phase of the crisis began with the Greek collapse and ended in the beginning of May 2010 with the signing of the first Greek rescue plan on 2 May 2010. During this period, socialists were conspicuous by their virtual absence. It would, however, be unjust not to point out that during this phase a number of specific proposals were formulated – proposals that left behind the kind of soothing generalities of which the Europarties are past masters. Three of them are particularly significant: the insistence on a 'firm policy for regulating financial markets'; a European tax on financial transactions;⁵ and, particularly since March 2010, a proposal to establish a 'European mechanism for financial stability'⁶ (the PES has been a pioneering force in promoting this mechanism). Moreover, the PES adopted a more partisan and confrontational style in contrast to its traditional discourse, which tended to be formulated in an equivocal, imprecise, and irresolute manner.

Nevertheless, **despite the progress made, social democracy's marginalisation in the initial phase of the crisis has no precedent in the history of the European integration over the last forty years.** Social democracy as a whole has not succeeded in promoting its agenda. The failure, however, lay less with the PES than with the national parties (or, at least, the most influential of them), which failed to cooperate effectively and to promote a distinctive social-democratic vision for the resolution of the debt crisis and the reform of the EU. Without a coordinated and powerful message focused on the issue of the moment (the Greek problem), the programmatic 'offer' of the social-democratic family lacked political distinctiveness and intellectual force.

The second phase opened with the agreement to the Greek rescue package and extends to the time of writing (February 2013). It must be said that, having lost the first battle, socialists then rallied, albeit only partially and gradually. There is now a significant body of socialist programmatic thought concerning European reform. Even if it is sometimes fleeting and vague about the measures proposed, it is both more concrete (when compared with the traditional idle chatter of the Europarties) and more left-wing than past programmes. In addition, the thematic range is much broader, and a tough tone and alarmist accents dominate. The PES has demonstrated that it is not an 'empty shell'.

The new political-programmatic formula has been developed around four major themes:

5 See: PES document: *Economic Coordination and Financial Reform for a Stronger and Fair Recovery*, Agreed by PES Prime Ministers and Deputy Prime Ministers, 10th February 2010. The "establishment of a European Union Financial Transaction Tax (FTT) and stronger financial regulation, in particular on Credit Default Swaps on sovereign debts and the banning of naked short-selling" are central in the strategy of the PES (PES Presidency Declaration on the Greek and euro-zone crisis, Brussels, 29 April 2010).

6 See: the document of the PES: *A "European Mechanism for Financial Stability", A Progressive response to the Euro-zone sovereign debt crisis*. Adopted by the Prime Ministers' and Leaders' Conference on 25th March 2010.

- a) The first, regarded as a 'matter of urgency' and a central priority, is focused on financial regulation - the strengthening of European supervisory authorities; a stricter control over derivatives and speculative funds; the regulation of private ratings agencies; and the creation of an independent European ratings agency. This initial series of proposals is highly prominent in the PES's new rhetoric, and constitutes a central element in the distinctive new brand of European socialism.
- b) The second theme, which is concerned with solving the debt problem, revolves around the establishment of a 'European mechanism for financial stability'. It should be noted that the proposal for Eurobonds (initially intended to finance long-term investments)⁷ has been progressively integrated into the strategy of establishing a 'European Stability Agency' that would issue Eurobonds for the purposes of common management of a specified portion of cross-border public debt and investment.⁸
- c) The third theme is articulated around the 'European pact for jobs and social progress with a view to equitable growth'. This involves a European pact for a minimum wage above the poverty threshold; more aggressive use of European structural funds; active employment policies; inclusion of a social clause in every piece of European legislation to better protect the rights of workers faced with a jurisdiction that prioritises economic liberties; an active European industrial policy for sustainable and qualitative growth; and a strengthening of the financial resources of the European Investment Bank.⁹ This section of the PES's formulations frequently confines itself to stating and juxtaposing policy-oriented ideas without the requisite 'costed' articulation. It is a road map containing a vision and many good ideas, but not a real programme.
- d) The fourth theme concerns repairing public finances and it advocates the use of new financial instruments, both fiscal and non-fiscal. Obviously the tax on financial transactions is the *flagship measure*, serving as an emblem of the new brand image of

7 *Sortie de crise: notre réponse progressiste*, Joint Declaration of the PES and the S&D Group in the European Parliament, adopted by the PES Presidency, June 10, 2010.

8 According to the PES 'the issuance of debt securities tied to investment projects at the European level - Eurobonds - can raise additional funds for growth related investments and provide a real European added value. [...] In the longer run Eurobonds could also provide Member States with breathing space in pooling part of their national debts together and convert it in a common bond that would lower interest payments, enhance financial stability in the monetary Union, create a liquid and unified European bond market and strengthen budgetary surveillance (*A European Employment and Social Progress Pact for fair growth*, PES Policy Paper adopted by the PES Council in Warsaw on 2 December 2010). See also the important - and politically more confrontational - joint press statement by Poul Nyrup Rasmussen, President of the PES and Martin Schulz, President of the Socialists and Democrats Group (S&D) in the European Parliament, December 13, 2010 (<http://www.pes.org/en/news/eurobonds-and-european-stability-agency-are-gps-eurozone-ship-desperately-needs>).

9 See: among others: *A European Employment and Social Progress Pact for fair growth*, PES Policy Paper adopted by the PES Council, Warsaw, 2 December 2010; *A Progressive way out of the Crisis, Recovery vs. Austerity: PES strategy to resolve the dilemma*, PES Policy Paper, annexed to the political statement adopted by the PES Prime Ministers' and Leaders' conference, 16 June 2010; *Europe is in the wrong hands*, Declaration adopted by the PES Leaders conference in Athens, 4 March 2011.

post-financial-crisis socialism.¹⁰ Alongside this pet theme, a green tax and resolving the issue of tax evasion and fraud through European cooperation, among other measures, round off this set of objectives.

In general, it might be noted that the programmatic strategy we have just briefly summarized marks a *political break*, despite being at times cursory when it comes to the measures proposed. **The PES now counts among its assets a more elaborate, solid and rich discourse, a more systematic agenda, and a significant number of policy proposals. The PES has gradually brought *renewal* to the European strategy of the left, with the emphasis placed on the articulation of an ‘alternative policy’.**

The Limits of Social Democracy: when a Programmatic Success Story ends up as a Poor Goal achievement.

Nevertheless, the PES (and the social-democratic family) has neither been able to take centre-stage nor to ‘remedy’ the deficit in the European imaginary of socialism by restoring the credibility of the narrative of reform. Given the general frenzy of the period, this mediocre result is cause for surprise, especially considering the important programmatic progress that has been made. Extenuating circumstances are certainly not wanting. Out of necessity, the pace of the crisis has given governments and, as a result, parties of the centre-right, a decisive role. Yet the balance of forces does not explain everything.

The mediocre result stems from three main causes:

- a) Socialist strategy contained *certain key ideas*, as well as certain concrete measures, for reforming Europe, however these ideas remain mainly on paper. In practice, the PES, bereft of a centralised structure and an institutionally powerful elite, has not transformed its ideas into an offensive and powerful message.¹¹
- b) National social-democratic parties have not really taken things up. For want of solid relays in national societies (and the European Council), the PES has found itself without structured political and institutional support. A link between the policies proposed, on the one hand, and European citizens and institutions, on the other, has never been established. National parties, acting as gate-keepers and selecting which messages and policies would be brought to the attention of national electorates or of European institutions, did not play the game. Only at a later stage - mainly after June 2011,

¹⁰ For a detailed description of the PES’s stance on this matter see: *A European FTT, For a fair contribution from the financial markets*, Declaration adopted by the PES Presidency, 14 April 2011. Also: the two reports promoted by PES MEPs, Pervenche Berès (PS, France) and Anni Podimata (PASOK, Greece).

¹¹ The policy of the PES, as it emerges from official texts, indicates that the positions adopted by the PES’s Leaders’ Conference are invariably more timid and qualified than those of its President or Council.

given the failure of European policies concerning the debt crisis - have national social-democratic parties adopted more convergent policies and have reduced the divergence between the programmatic statements of PES and the policies of its member parties (via the emphasis on growth strategies and the severe criticism of austerity policies).

- c) With the unprecedented austerity measures they have adopted, the socialist governments of southern Europe (and, in the first instance, the Greek government) have significantly contributed to a further loss of bearings within the socialist family. The discrepancy between the economic strategy of socialist governments and that of the PES (geared to growth) – two strategies *highly unequal* in their visibility – has shattered the discursive unity of European socialism's strategy. As a result of circumstance, the PES has not been able to establish itself as a powerful actor, just as during the 2009 European elections it proved itself incapable of proposing an alternative candidate to José Manuel Barroso.¹² Once again the moderate left has become lost amidst its own contradictions.

In sum, the PES 'failed' even as it assumed its role: such is the 'paradox' brought on by the crisis management. This paradox is apparent: if socialism does not succeed in more successfully imposing or promoting its agendas and options, fault should not be laid at the door of the PES. In fact, the crisis has dramatically illustrated something that was already known: **the multi-level, polycentric structure of the European regime is reproduced, albeit not in identical fashion, within European party families.** The multiplicity of levels and centres of power and influence *within* the socialist family (both inside and outside the PES) has created an enormous problem of effectiveness – and practical coherence.¹³ It has posed a significant problem of *collective coordination and strategic centre and leadership*. The 'paradox' of the PES's success and the family's semi-failure (positive programmatic balance sheet, weak political performance) illustrates this basic fact. Ironically, what began as a real success story (the programmatic leap forward of the PES) ended up as a very poor 'goal achievement'.

PES's Renewal: the Crisis as a Catalyst

The basic thematic of the new programmatic discourse, however interpreted, are the pillars of a new agenda. We will call it a *post-third-way* agenda because its key components (focused on the strategy of market regulation) go beyond the programmatic elaborations

¹² See: I. Hertner, *Are European Election Campaigns Europeanized? The Case of the Party of European Socialists in 2009*, [in:] *Government and Opposition*, Vol. 46, No. 3, pp. 342-343.

¹³ The 'arms-length policy' adopted by Spanish and Portuguese socialists towards their Greek counterparts, particularly during the first months of the crisis (when Greece was not reputable company), is an excellent example both of the problem of effectiveness and of that of collective coordination in the socialist family.

and governmental actions of social democracy in the decades of the 1990s and 2000s.¹⁴ How has the PES arrived at this point?

The evolution of the PES into a more “programmatically party” occurred gradually. The great turn towards the new orientation took place in 2008 and 2009 and was expressed through the programme for the European elections of the same year. For the first time, the party presented a programmatic document covering a wide thematic spectrum and with a very evident emphasis on left-wing mottos and proposals and, for the first time, the PES described, albeit somewhat vaguely, the features of a ‘progressive Europe’. The programme published in the run-up to the 2009 European elections already reflected a qualitative change in the programmatic building of the PES. The tendency was reinforced through the first half of 2010 in the light of the special conditions generated by the debt crisis, a crisis moreover focused on the socialist governments of southern Europe.

In actual fact, the debt crisis has energized the PES, accelerating, enriching and refining a process of programmatic construction that had already been initiated in the past. Although, in one guise or another, they had been formulated in the previous months, the basic features of the new programmatic profile were presented in full at the PES Council in Warsaw on 2 December 2010. Since then the PES has been producing quite detailed analyses, well focused overall and making strong political points. The new programmatic stance represents a break not only in terms of the programmatic history of the PES but also by comparison with the programmatic profile of the other Europarties.

The influence of many actors and factors contributed to the ultimately favourable outcome. The Rasmussen leadership and the elite surrounding the secretary general of the party Philip Cordery made a decisive contribution to formulating the new orientation. The president of the PES pursued policies of activation and empowerment of the party, buttressed moreover by a dynamic and ebullient personal style of action. **Rasmussen’s long-term (2004-11) presence at the head of the PES (he was the longest-serving party president) contributed to the emergence of stable operational rules, to elite cohesion, and to a reinforcement of supranational (as opposed to interpartisan) functioning of the party.** Furthermore, and perhaps paradoxically, the unsatisfactory degree of participation by national leaders at the Conference of Leaders de facto reinforced the role of Rasmussen and the Brussels mechanisms and so, indirectly, the supranational operational logic of the PES.

¹⁴ Enhancing the dynamism of the market rather than of curbing it was a central component of the Third Way ideology, see: J. Callaghan, *Old social democracy, new social movements and social democratic programmatic renewal, 1968-2000*, [in:] *Transitions in social democracy*, J. Callaghan and I. Favretto, Manchester and New York, Manchester University Press, 2006, pp. 191-192. On this ‘tension-ridden project’ (p. 149), see: the important work of J. Andersson: *The Library and the Workshop: Social Democracy and Capitalism in the Knowledge Age*, Stanford, Stanford University Press, 2010.

However, the programmatic progress in question would never have been possible had it not received the green light from two centrally important parties: the French Socialist Party (PS) and the German Social Democratic Party (SPD). Notwithstanding the reservations of German public opinion, the German Social Democrats have been adamant in their implementation of the line that solution of the debt problem presupposes 'more Europe'. With the passage of time, the German social-democratic stance has acquired greater weight and coherence, and the failure of the austerity policies imposed on Greece has played a role in this. The voluntaristic stance of the French PS, according central importance to activation of the EU in the direction of market regulation, has had a positive effect and has greatly contributed to the programmatic leap that can be seen in the party. The French PS has to a significant extent undertaken the role of *entrepreneur*, to employ David Hanley's term.¹⁵ Furthermore, the action of George Papandreou within the PES¹⁶, but also of the PASOK delegation within the Socialists and Democrats group, without being central, should not be underestimated. During the first period of the crisis, PASOK had a vital interest in activating both the Socialists and Democrats group and the PES in the direction of a social-democratic response to the debt crisis. In addition, the crisis has introduced, for the first time in such a conspicuous manner, a division of roles: the PES has assumed the role of 'thinking strategically', with the parliamentary group attending to day-to-day tasks of parliamentary work.

In the final analysis, the very sound programmatic work was the collective result both of the action of specific national parties and of an 'endogenous' elite that has slowly established itself and gradually come to co-ordinate and lead the programmatic upgrading of the party. The fact that the great majority of socialist parties have been in opposition has not only made it easier for the party to be mobilized but has also imparted a greater freedom of movement to the PES leadership. Without the constraints of governmental management, without the commitments entailed by greater socialist participation in the European Council, it has been easier for left-oriented ideas to be adopted.

Towards a Policy-seeking party? The End of 'Programmatically Unstructured Politics'

As Simon Lightfoot argues, *'the evidence in the literature that Europarties can be seen as policy-seeking parties is based upon two premises: the ability to create common policies*

¹⁵ D. Hanley, *Beyond the Nation State, Parties in the Era of European Integration*, Palgrave Macmillan, 2008, pp. 204-205. What is certain is that the centre of gravity of the PES and, even more so, of the socialist group's leadership was not structured around the Franco-German axis.

¹⁶ George Papandreou's participation in the Conference of Leaders was systematic, in contrast to the option taken by other leaders of 'opportunistic' participation (or no participation at all), particularly in the case of the Spanish and Portuguese prime ministers.

for the EU and the ability to influence the outcome of EU policy making'.¹⁷ To these we will add a third premise - namely, the ability to affect the policy orientation of member parties and to influence policy-making at the national level.¹⁸ Now, **the PES has evolved from a party able to define *policy-oriented ideas* (designated by Lightfoot as 'policy orientation') into a party able to define 'specific policy proposals'.**¹⁹ This evolution undoubtedly represents a step forward towards a *policy-seeking* model of partisan construction. Nevertheless, the discrepancy between the programmatic statements of the PES and the policies of its member parties in government clearly shows that the real degree of influence of the PES, both at the European and at the national level, is still limited.

Consequently, however loosely and broadly one defines the term 'policy-seeking party', the PES, like the other Europarties, still falls short of being a real policy-seeking party. Without full collaboration from the national parties that constitute it, it is not in a position to promote its policies and "to move from the status of agenda-follower to the one of

agenda-setter'.²⁰ In essence, the stance of the member parties, particularly while in government (governments with a socialist majority have voted for all the decisions of the conservative European Council) has been the real measure of the power and the programmatic integration of the PES.

The debt crisis has contributed to the inauguration of a new phase in the development of Europarties. With its programmatic leap forward, the PES crossed a threshold: the period of 'programmatically unstructured politics' seems now definitely over.

Our analysis of the debt crisis therefore serves to confirm both old and less old (but not for that reason invalid) arguments, such as the one formulated by Lightfoot in 2005 that '*domestic policy imperatives and ideological differences between the member parties hindered the development of a true policy-seeking party*'.²¹ If the PES has, from 2004 on, taken important steps towards strengthening its organizational capacities and internal cohesion and if, moreover, from 2009 onwards, it has made significant moves toward programmatic integration, it nevertheless remains a 'second-order' party.²² The Europeanization of programmatic content in the sense of real 'programmatic convergence' among

17 S. Lightfoot, *Europeanizing Social Democracy? The rise of the Party of European Socialists*, London-New York, Routledge, 2005, p. 9.

18 Take for example the strong, and ultimately successful, pressure exerted by the Leaders of the EPP on the Greek centre-right New Democracy party, obliging it to participate in a grand coalition government with PASOK.

19 S. Lightfoot, *op.cit.*, pp. 15, 19.

20 E. Külahci, *Europarties: Agenda-Setter or Agenda-Follower? Social Democracy and the Disincentives for Tax Harmonization*, *JCMS*, 2010, Vol. 48, n 5, p. 1302.

21 S. Lightfoot, *Europeanizing Social Democracy? The rise of the Party of European Socialists*, London-New York, Routledge, 2005, p. 144.

22 Term of Knut Heidar, see: *Parties and Cleavages in the European Political Space*, Arena Working Papers, 07/2003, p. 3.

the PES member parties remains very limited.²³ For a number of national party leaderships, 'the price of supporting stronger Europarties does not seem justified by the benefit'.²⁴

So did nothing at all important occur in the course of this eventful period? Any such interpretation would be mistaken. **The debt crisis has contributed to the inauguration of a new phase in the development of Europarties. With its programmatic leap forward, the PES crossed a threshold: the period of 'programmatically unstructured politics' seems now definitely over.**²⁵ But inaugurating a new phase does not mean that a new era - and a new game - has begun. It rather means that programmatic strengthening is now to be carried to a higher level. The PES has opened the door to new possibilities, and our hypothesis is that now other Europarties might have to walk through it.²⁶

Conclusions: Between Transnationalism and Realism

The exogenous shock of the economic crisis acted as catalyst both for the ideological defeat of the Third Way strategy and for promotion of a large-scale programmatic revision within the PES. The leadership of Poul Nyrup Rasmussen, whose capacity for promoting programmatic reform was strengthened by the financial and fiscal crisis and by the crucial fact that the majority of socialist parties were in opposition, was favoured by the circumstances: programmatic creation and renewal would be enacted chiefly via the PES, as was our hypothesis. The period of programmatic innovation commencing in 2008, in the run-up to the European elections of the following year, was accelerated, and took on the character of intensive change, from March 2010 to the end of the same year, to be followed by a phase of stability, that is to say, small changes in the framework of the new programmatic equilibrium that had been forged.

Compared to other Europarties, the PES is a programmatic pioneer. It has transcended the old practice of 'programmes without a programme' - this having been a hallmark of the historic building of the Europarties. The PES paved the way for 'parties at the European level' to become programmatic parties, but also to become less consensual and more confrontational. It would nevertheless not be wise to

23 See: I. Hertner, Are European Election Campaigns Europeanized?, [in:] *Government and Opposition*; vol. 43 Issue 3, 2011, p. 344.

24 R. Ladrech, *The promise and reality of Euro-parties*, [in:] *European View*, Vol. 3, Spring 2006, p. 76.

25 We borrow the term 'programmatically unstructured politics' from H. Kitschelt et al., *Latin American Party Systems*, New York, Cambridge University Press, 2010 p. 306. The writers have used the term in the context of their study of the party systems of Latin America.

26 During the same period, under the pressure of the crisis, other European parties also improved their programmatic analyses (indicatively: the party of the European Left and the European Green Party). This has not however occurred, or has occurred to a much lesser extent, with the European People's Party. On the party of the European Left see: G. Moschonas, *The European Union and the dilemmas of the radical Left: Some preliminary thoughts*, [in:] *Transform!*, 09/2011.

overestimate the value of this 'programmatic renewal'. The crisis, the remarkable response of the PES, and, notwithstanding that response, the (relative) ineffectiveness of its action, have shown that there is a major – and structural - disparity between transnational party actors, national parties, and the structure of European decision-making. The major lesson of the crisis is that the PES, despite the innovative activism of its leadership team, has not acquired the requisite influence and has not proved capable of going beyond the congenital weaknesses of the 'Europarty' form. In a sense, the PES of the Rasmussen – Cordery period was a Europarty that tested its potentialities to the (extreme) limits. It confirmed its autonomous role by shaping to a great extent its own reformist agenda. What was the result of such a game? On the one hand, the PES widened the horizon of the Europarties' actions. On the other hand, it revealed how limited such horizon is in the current phase of the European integration. No theory about the nature and dynamic of the Europarties can underestimate or neglect this basic fact; nor can any theory underestimate the real success story of programmatic consolidation of the PES. Reality is both composite and stubborn. And it furnishes strong arguments against the simplistic views of optimists and pessimists alike towards the dynamics of Europarties.

The programmatic leap forward of the PES contributed to the renewal, even if that was limited, of the politics of the European social democracy. If it returns to power, today's social-democracy is better prepared and more coherent than that of the 1990s. The important step forward taken by the PES creates a favourable programmatic context. But confronted with the constraining logic of institutions and the complexity of the European machinery, the fine programmes and chic soirées of the social-democratic European elites are insufficient. Furthermore, the emphasis often placed on transnationalism underestimates the Union's evolution towards inter-governmental solutions and ignores the extreme pressure of events and the reality of intra-socialist divisions. The 'nation' is still a magnificent (and intellectually puzzling) identity-event that largely determines European developments. While contemporary socialism represents the most *Europeanised* political current on the continent,²⁷ and the PES constitutes a more coherent transnational pole than the forces represented by the European People's Party, the 'nationalization of socialist consciousness',²⁸ that has taken place since the end of the nineteenth century, still remains predominant and undermines any social-democratic offer or strategy that does not use national vocabularies and does not aim at national electorates. If the future of Europe is in the 'transnational', then that future seems remote.

The electoral victory of the French socialists opens a small window of opportunity, but

27 D. Caramani, *The Europeanisation of Electoral Politics: An Analysis of Converging Voting Distributions in 30 European Party Systems, 1970–2008*, National Centre of Competence in Research (NCCR), Working Paper No. 42, 2010.

28 S. Berger, *Social Democratic Trajectories in Modern Europe: One or Many Families?*, [in:] *The future of European social democracy*, H. Meyer and J. Rutherford (eds.), Palgrave 2012, p. 13.

the huge electoral defeat of PASOK (June 2012) dramatically underlines, above and beyond any Greek responsibilities or idiosyncrasies, the consequences for social democracy of harsh austerity policies. If social democracy is to offer a better solution to the problems of the EU, this 'better solution' will be largely inter-partisan or intergovernmental rather than the product of a transnational type evolution. This is the reality of the current balance of forces, this is the lesson learned from the ongoing crisis of European governance and the weak political performance of the Social-democratic family. Parties at the European level will long remain – despite their clear reinforcement - weak structures hardly likely to function as a true political force.

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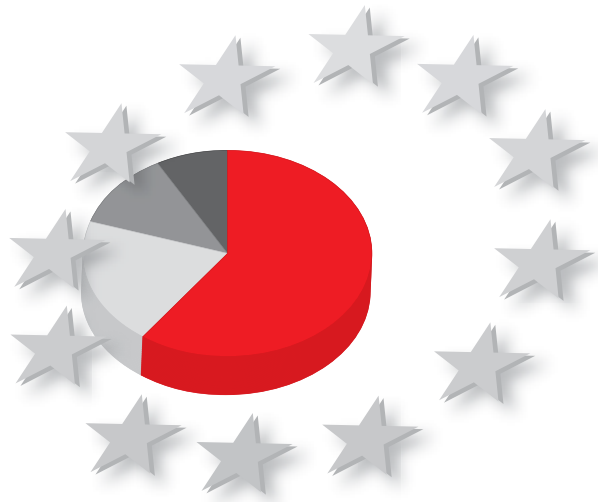
**EUROPEAN UNION
PARTIES**





Isabelle HERTNER

**Running the show?
Europarty members as election
campaigners for the Party of European
Socialists and the European Green Party**



Key words

**Europarties – Party of European Socialists – European Green Party –
Grassroots Members – Election Campaign**

Abstract

As the 2014 European parliamentary elections are in the offing, European parties will need to think about how to mobilize the voters. This paper assesses the potential of the Europarties' individual members as election campaigners. Taking the Party of European Socialists and the European Green Party as examples, this study concludes that whilst Europarty members have the potential to lead transnational, Europeanized campaigns, they need to be integrated into national political parties and be granted real decision-making power at the European level.

As the 2014 European parliamentary elections are in the offing, European parties will need to think about how to mobilize the voters. This paper assesses the potential of the Europarties' individual members as election campaigners. Taking the Party of European Socialists and the European Green Party as examples, this study concludes that whilst Europarty members have the potential to lead transnational, Europeanized campaigns, they need to be integrated into national political parties and be granted real decision-making power at the European level.

The 2014 European elections are approaching fast and many political parties across Europe have started planning their campaigns. For the mainstream parties of the centre-left and centre-right, the biggest challenge will be to mobilize their voters. In the academic literature, European parliamentary elections are often described as 'second-order national contests' about national political issues, national parties, and national government office¹. The second-order and national character of European elections has two important effects: first, because second-order elections are less important than first-order elections (such as national parliamentary elections), there is less incentive for people to cast their vote. As a result, turnout in European elections is approximately 20 per cent lower than in national parliamentary elections². The average turnout in the 2009 European elections was 43 per cent. The second effect of second-order elections is different voting behavior: Many people vote differently in European elections than they would if it were national elections. Small parties tend to perform well whilst large governing parties lose votes. In the last three European elections, socialist parties have performed worse than their size and government status would predict³. **For the 2014 European parliamentary election campaign, then, socialist parties will have to find new ways of engaging with the voters.**

So far, European election campaigns were primarily fought by national parties who had the funds, expertise, and manpower to do so. During these campaigns, little tribute was paid to the party federations at the European level (hereafter 'Europarties'). National parties used their own manifestos and logos rather than the common European ones.

1 K.-H. Reif & H. Schmitt, *Nine second-order national elections – a conceptual framework for the analysis of European election results*. [In:] *European Journal of Political Research* (1980): 8 (1), pp. 3-44; or: H. Schmitt, *The European Parliament Elections of June 2004: Still Second-Order?* [In:] *West European Politics* (2005): 28 (3), pp. 650-679.

2 S. Hix & B. Høyland, *The Political System of the European Union*, 3rd ed., Palgrave Macmillan 2011, p. 147

3 S. Hix & M. Marsh, *Second-order effects plus pan-European political swings: An analysis of European Parliament elections across time*. In: *Electoral Studies*, March 2011.

National parties acted as gate-keepers. Also, Europarties lacked the resources to engage in large-scale election campaigns. But not only did they lack the resources; they also lacked the direct linkage with European voters: Membership of a Europarty was restricted to national parties and certain associations, while individual citizens had no opportunity to join directly. However, the Europarties' membership policy has changed in recent years. Most importantly, the implementation of the European Parliament's Regulation 2004/2003 has led to organizational consolidation in the main Europarties⁴. The regulation clarifies their funding situation and allows them to engage in European election campaigns or activities with a clear European political focus. Perhaps as a consequence of their organizational consolidation, all major Europarties have introduced some form of individual membership scheme, allowing individuals to join.

This paper explores the potential of these individual Europarty members as European election campaigners. After all, it is common knowledge that party members can play an important role in running election campaigns at the grassroots level and mobilizing the voters⁵. Their activities include: door-knocking, organizing telephone banks, distributing leaflets, putting up posters. The case studies chosen for this paper are the Party of European Socialists (PES), and the European Green Party (EGP) for the simple reason that out of the four major Europarties they have the most developed membership schemes.

The remainder of this paper is divided into four sections. The next section will introduce and compare the PES' and EGP's individual membership policies. The second section will discuss the members' potential as organizers of transnational campaigns, drawing on their campaign exchange experiences during the 2009 European elections and a number of national parliamentary elections. This will be followed by a discussion of the members' EU-savvy and their potential in Europeanizing the campaign. The concluding section will point to the challenges that the Europarties and their member parties will have to overcome if they want the individual members to become effective campaigners.

Individual Membership of the Party of European Socialists and the European Green Party

Before introducing individual membership, Europarties had very little means to engage directly with ordinary citizens – this was seen as the prerogative of national parties. More importantly perhaps, Europarties lacked the financial resources and institutional weight to run campaigns and involve citizens into their activities. Policy was made 'in the intimacy

4 S. Lightfoot, *The Consolidation of Europarties? The Party Regulation and the Development of Political Parties in the European Union.*, [in:] *Representation*: 42 (4), 2006, pp. 303-314.

5 P. Whiteley & P. Seyd, *Party Election Campaigning in Britain: The Labour Party*, [in:] *Party Politics* 2003, Vol. 9 (5).

of a narrow circle often restricted to the “international affairs” specialists of the national parties’ Moschonas (2002: 271) writes about the PES,⁶ but this applied to all Europarties. Arguably, through the introduction of individual membership, Europarties have become more inclusive and are trying to establish themselves as ‘real’ parties. After all, a large membership provides parties with legitimacy. The PES and EGP have introduced individual membership under different names, terms and conditions (for a brief overview see table 1 below).

The Greens introduced individual membership in 2004. Their members are called ‘supporters’. Article 6 of the EGP party statutes (2008) clarifies that ‘the status of supporters is open for every person who wishes to join Green structures on this European level and accepts the Green Charter of the European Green Party’. Yet it has to be kept in mind that any person wishing to join the EGP has to be a member of a national Green party. Supporters are entitled to regular information on policies of the EGP and ‘on application they may attend the meetings of the European Green Party and regional networks with a limited possibility to participate in discussions and without voting rights’ (EPG statutes, 2008). The EGP has set up the ‘Individual Supporters Network’ in March 2009 as an online platform for exchange. It was a bottom-up initiative, following a meeting held by members of the Green parties of Belgium, Germany and the Netherlands in January 2002. This network has both grassroots’ representatives (two thirds) and EGP committee nominees in its coordinating team. According to the supporters network’s website⁷ the introduction of individual membership was not without controversy:

Some EGP member parties turned out to have serious doubts about the idea, fearing that individuals might undermine their position within the EGP, or that political enemies might join en masse through the European door and harm their position back home. Others were afraid that energy put into European action would sap forces needed for their own programme. And yet others, the majority, were simply not interested or put the issue at the bottom of their priority list.

This quote goes to show that some national parties regarded the Europarty membership schemes with suspicion, fearing competition. It is for this reason that only individuals who are already members of a national green party are allowed to join the EGP. In 2012 the EGP had approximately 1500 supporters. Plans to increase their numbers included a more interactive website through which supporters and friends of the party could discuss party policies and participate in surveys.

6 G. Moschonas, *In the Name of Social Democracy. The Great Transformation: 1945 to present*. Verso 2002, p. 271.

7 See: <http://www.greenyeurope.net>

The PES introduced individual membership, the 'PES activists', one year after the Greens, in 2005. All members of the PES member parties are automatically members of the PES, but have to register first online. Already during the 1990s the PES had introduced a form of individual membership, namely local associations with the aim to establish networks of activists who could facilitate the identification of European nationals and encourage them to vote in European elections. One example was the PES-London Association, which however lacked funding and official recognition⁸. The PES then re-introduced individual membership under Poul Nyrup Rasmussen's leadership in 2005. Article 15 of the PES statutes (2009) reads as follows:

All members of PES member parties are automatically members of the PES. Those who wish to be active in the PES can register as PES activists. PES activists must be members of their national Party. PES activists can set up city groups. The PES Presidency adopts operating rules for PES activists.

Hence, the PES' individual membership scheme, like the EGP's, is only open for members of PES member parties. The activists can take part in PES Congresses and Councils but have no voting rights. According to the activists' website⁹ over 130 city groups have emerged across Europe (February 2013). Each city group has a leader who is the PES' point of contact. In 2012 the PES had over 15.457 registered activists across Europe, with a growth rate of approximately 100 new activists per month. The majority of activists lived in France, Romania, Sweden and Portugal. Especially the French Socialist Party (PS) and the Swedish Social Democrats (SAP) have integrated the PES activists into their local party branches, so interaction between the activists and the party is tight. It is however up to each party to decide whether and how it integrates the PES activists, which means that there is a lot of variety across Europe, and some national parties remain suspicious towards the idea of individual PES membership.

The examples of the PES and EGP show that the number of individual members is still very small compared to the membership of some of their member parties and the size of the European electorate more generally¹⁰. Yet, in an era when most parties across Europe lose members, Europarties cannot be expected to become mass parties. Nevertheless, as the 2014 European elections are on the horizons, both the PES and EGP can be expected to increase their membership.

8 S. Day & J. Shaw, *Transnational Political Parties.*, [in:] *Making European Citizens.*, R. Bellamy, D. Castiglione and J. Shaw (eds.), Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan (2006), p. 113.

9 See: <http://www.pes.org/en/pes-activists>

10 For an overview of party membership across Europe, see: I. van Biezen et al., *Going, going,.... gone? The decline of party membership in contemporary Europe.* [in:] *European Journal of Political Research* 2011, Vol. 51, pp. 24-56.

Table 1: Europarties' individual membership schemes

Europarty	Individual members	Date	Is national party membership a precondition for joining?	Number of registered members (June 2012)
EGP	Supporters	2004	Yes	1500
PES	PES Activists	2005	Yes	15.457 ¹

1 This was the number of officially registered PES activists in June 2012. The unofficial number was higher (approximately 22.000).

2. Transnational Campaigning – Strengthening the links at Grassroots level?

The Green supporters and PES activists are still relatively young initiatives, dating back to 2004 and 2005. Hence, the 2009 European parliamentary elections were their first real opportunity to organize pan-European campaigns at the grassroots level. Their activities included campaign exchanges between sister parties from neighbouring countries or across the EU, which were organized by the members themselves, with some logistical help from the Europarties.

For instance, in the case of the PES activists, campaign exchanges were organized between city groups (e.g. between Berlin and Paris, or Bucharest and Lisbon) during the 2009 European elections. Activities were communicated via *Twitter* and *Facebook* and posted on the PES campaign blog¹¹. The PES organized five 'European Days of Action' in the months leading to the elections on topics such as 're-launching the economy'. Activists were given campaign material (the 'election toolkit') by the PES and organized a variety of events.

Furthermore, PES activists from across Europe have supported each other in national election campaigns. For example, a number of activists from across Europe joined their Irish counterparts during the 2007 general election campaign in Ireland, the 2012 general elections in Romania, and the 2012 presidential election campaign in France. In general, the PES sees its role as a coordinator, leaving it to the activists to organize their events – as long as this is done in coordination with the member parties.

Likewise, the Green supporters have organized pan-European campaigns on cross-border issues such as nuclear waste storage or noise pollution caused by airports. The EGP secretariat's role is to link the supporters network to the local and regional branches of the member parties, and for the 2014 European elections the EGP intends to use some of its supporters as 'Euro-ambassadors' to help lead the European election campaigns

¹¹ See: <http://elections2009.pes.org>

at grassroots level. The party will also try to bring the supporters and friends together to do some canvassing, which has already been tried successfully in the Netherlands. The Green supporters plan a 'cross-border European Elections Campaign' for 2014. On their website it reads:

Together with local and European actors, GreenYourope organises a pan-European Cross Border Campaign for the European Elections 2014 along as many borders as we can manage. The campaign links the European Greens' message to local issues. An international pool of activists assists local groups, and literally brings the EU to people's doorsteps. MEPs and local politicians add visibility¹².

Hence, one of the added values of PES activists and Green supporters to the 2014 European election campaign could be their well-established transnational linkages. It is true that campaign exchanges are no novelty for social democratic and green parties: sister parties from Western Europe have organized them for many decades. Yet, as the European Union is increasing in size and power, bilateral exchanges of local party branches might no longer be sufficient. Many party activists now move between European countries and speak several languages. Why not make use of their potential and involve them in transnational election campaigns?

3. Europeanizing the Election Campaigns?

We still know relatively little about the Europarties' individual members. Who are they, and why did they decide to join? A very small-scale, non-representative survey of 27 PES activists from eleven EU member states was carried out by the Brussels-based think tank *Eurocité* in November 2011 on the occasion of the PES Convention¹³. Asked why they had decided to become PES activists, many respondents mentioned:

the need to build or develop a European or an international political "mind" or "identity", including the need not to see the EU as an economical union only. Other respondents were more specific and mentioned work they are doing in structured European political networks (e.g. ECOSY), or their will to "europeanise" national parties or to make political life develop in a European party/frame.

So far, no such survey has been conducted amongst Green supporters, but on their website they vaguely describe the reasons why they set up their network¹⁴:

Each [member] had his own reason to attend. Some dreamt of a borderless Europe in which Europeans are organised in European parties and vote for nation-less lists.

¹² <http://www.greenyourope.net/about-us/strategy-and-time-table-for-2014/> (accessed on 15/02/2013).

¹³ The results of the survey are available at: http://www.eurocite.eu/index.php?option=com_content&Itemid=27&catid=26&id=186&view=article

¹⁴ See: <http://www.greenyourope.net/about-us/history/>

Others saw social movements increasingly cross borders, gather in social forums, counter summits and international protests, and regretted that the Greens, who have their roots in those movements, still had nation-state based strongholds. And yet others wanted to share views and practices with Greens from other countries or were already living in an international world.

Whilst we still lack representative, comparative data indicating the members' motives for joining the Europarties, the two quotes above demonstrate the members' interest in EU affairs and the opportunities European integration offers for cross-border party political activities. It also seems that many activists can strongly identify with the European Union. We can therefore expect the PES activists and Green supporters to be EU-savvy. In this context, EU-savvy translates into a strong political awareness, a familiarity with the workings of the European Union in general, and with the policies proposed by their party families in particular. Due to this knowledge, Europarty members can engage in EU debates with 'ordinary' national party members and voters during and outside of election campaigns, thereby Europeanizing the debate. Karp et al. (2003) show that averagely politically engaged citizens base their opinions on EU politics mainly on their satisfaction or dissatisfaction with national politics, whilst more engaged voters command more EU information and use this information to evaluate the EU¹⁵. EU-savvy campaigners could therefore be an added value for national parties.

4. Discussion

In the past decade the European Green Party and the Party of European Socialists have introduced individual membership in an effort to enhance their status as real parties and establish direct links with the electorate. This paper has compared their membership policies and discussed the members' potential to lead transnational and Europeanised campaigns. Whilst the members have the potential to mobilize the voters, their size is still too small to make a real impact. **Increasing the membership will be a challenge for the Europarties at a time when party activism declines all over Europe. But two factors could be crucial in incentivizing people to join. The first one is to give the members more decision-making power within the Europarties.** A first step in this direction has been taken. Both the PES and EGP have gradually given their individual members more powers.

The PES, for instance, has started to involve the activists into the policy-making process. They contributed to the writing of the PES 2009 election manifesto through an open consultation process, and will be invited to contribute to the 2014 election manifesto.

15 J.A. Karp et al., *To know it is to love it? Satisfaction with democracy in the European Union.*, [in:] *Comparative Political Studies*, 363 (2003), pp. 271–292.

PES activists gather in annual forums organized by the PES to give them the opportunity to meet, exchange their views and strategies, and to attend workshops. Since the European elections of 2009, the PES has strengthened and clarified the role of the activists. In a resolution (A New Way Forward, A stronger PES) published after the 2009 European elections, the PES declares:

PES activists have led a tremendous campaign during the European elections. Party members are vital for building a genuine European Party, so we will provide more tools for them to get involved. This is why we have decided to recognize their role in the PES statutes and create a 'PES activists initiative' in order to build a true European activism, and be heard by PES bodies. PES activists are fantastic multipliers that give PES member parties the opportunity to raise awareness amongst all party members on European politics. We must nurture their involvement.

In February 2010, the PES Presidency then adopted a document entitled 'the PES activists initiative' which is based on the concept of the European Citizens Initiative: if a certain number of PES activists sign a political proposal or a comment on PES policies and a minimum threshold is exceeded, the initiative is tabled at the PES Presidency. This 'PES activists initiative' could help the PES to 'sound out grassroots opinion and to develop new policies'— a role normally fulfilled by national party members¹⁶. Yet, organizing such an initiative is a challenging undertaking: it needs to be on a topic that can mobilize the activists, and it needs to be within the realm of the PES Presidency. Furthermore, the initiative needs to be translated into a number of European languages if it is supposed to reach grassroots activists across the EU. The 'activists initiative' is still in its experimental phase, and it would therefore be too early to assess its overall impact on the PES' internal policy-making processes.

Increasing the membership will be a challenge for the Europarties at a time when party activism declines all over Europe. But two factors could be crucial in incentivizing people to join. The first one is to give the members more decision-making power within the Europarties.

The EGP's supporters can issue resolutions that the EGP leadership needs to take into consideration, which grants them agenda-setting power. Furthermore, they can make amendments to policy documents drafted by the EGP leadership, which gives them a say in the policy-making process. However, none of the two Europarties grant their individual members voting rights in the parties' formal policy-making bodies where the member parties and organization remain the gatekeepers. In the long term, if the PES and EGP want to attract more activists and supporters, they might have to empower them by

¹⁶ K. Heidar, *Party membership and participation*, [in:] *Handbook of Party Politics*, R. S. Katz and W. Crotty (eds.) London: Sage Publications 2006, p. 304.

granting them voting rights. This, however, can only happen with the agreement of the national member parties.

A second factor that could motivate individuals to join the PES or EGP would be the national member parties' willingness to actively promote Europarty membership. It appears that many national party members know little or nothing about the EGP supporter network or the PES activists. National parties could also formally integrate the PES activists and Green supporters into their parties, thereby enhancing their visibility and drawing from their EU expertise. Actively promoting individual Europarty membership could therefore be a win-win solution for the Party of European Socialists, the European Greens, and their member parties.

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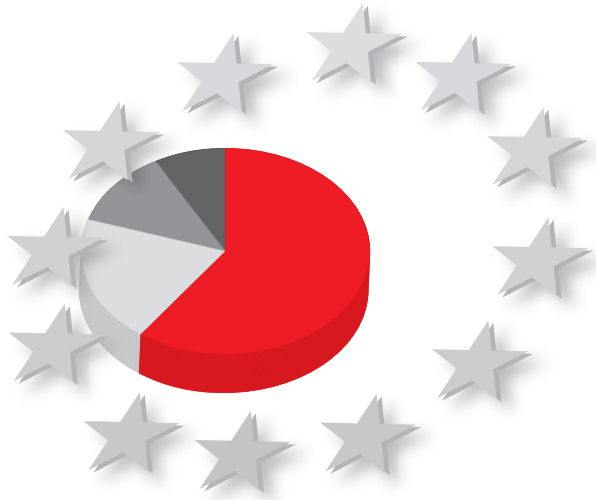
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André KROUWEL, José Reis SANTOS and Matthew WALL

The Electoral Vulnerability of Social Democratic Parties in Europe



Key words

Social Democrats - Voting Behaviour - Political Parties - Electoral Volatility - European Elections

Abstract

Despite the pervasive myth that the major political parties in Western Europe are forming powerful and stable party cartels and are closing the electoral market, the opposite seems to be occurring. The mainstream centre-left and centre-right – the social democrats and Christian democrats – have become electorally more vulnerable and seem to have mounting problems in mobilising their former core electorates. Our study examines the extent to which ‘core electorates’ of social democratic parties have declined. After an overview of the post-war electoral results of social democratic parties in comparison to other party families, we closely examine the results of the 2009 European election. PES members lost substantially compared to the previous election, and we chart which voter groups (still) belong to the core supporters of social democratic parties across Europe. We use national election studies, the European Elections Studies and data from online opt-in samples to chart the opinion structure of voters. These various data sources are used to estimate the extent to which the different social democratic parties across Europe have become electorally vulnerable.

Introduction: the Triple Challenge of Social Democracy

Established parties of Social Democratic, Christian Democratic and Conservative origin are facing a triple challenge. **For Social Democrats this triple challenge first consists of the fact that traditional core voters from the lower and middle classes are increasingly mobilised by (populist) right-wing parties.** Social Democrats seem less able to politicize the class struggle and economically emancipate the working classes, as the latter have partly disappeared through upward social mobility and the remnants have fragmented in terms of ethnic background (immigrants), age (pension-less elderly), and labour market position (the working poor, part-timers and illegal workers). The proliferation of new parties has profoundly transformed long-lasting partisan alignments and dominance of traditional parties.

The second challenge is the gradual de-legitimisation of the Social Democratic ideology of solidarity and state intervention by a dominant neo-liberal discourse that also undermines the possibilities of centrist coalition formation. The political discourse in Europe has shifted from the economic to the cultural dimension, which increases the salience of issues traditionally “owned” by the Right (law and order, immigration, nationalism and social conservatism), while the saliency of traditionally left-wing economic issues diminishes. Social Democrats seem to have difficulty in coming up with credible alternatives to right-wing austerity politics in the face of the current economic crisis.

The final challenge is the ideological polarisation between the progressive Left and the conservative Right, which complicates coalition formation with Christian Democrats, Conservative and Liberal parties. This bipolarization has resulted a juxtaposition of two party blocs, which both are internally fragmented and subject to severe inter-bloc volatility. Social Democratic parties are competing within their own party bloc with direct rivals such as radical left and green parties, while at the same time centrist Social Democratic parties cannot stray too far outside what most voters would regard as the mainstream. Moreover, the decline of centrist Christian Democrats and increasing appeal of more radical right-wing and neo-conservative parties, makes stable centrist coalition formation with right wing parties more difficult. This reshaped landscape of popular support for traditional and new party families across 15 European countries is presented in table 1 and figure 1.

Figure 1. Popular support for party families across 15 European countries

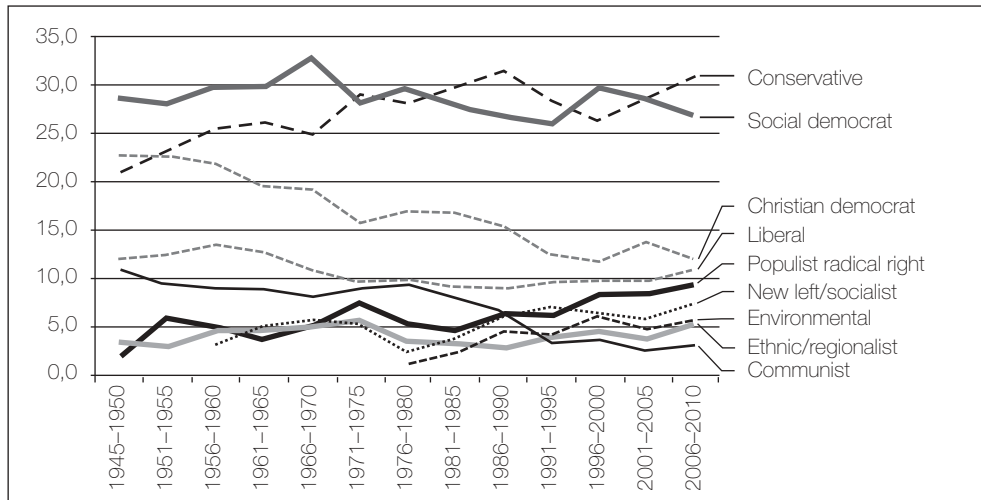


Table 1. Levels of popular support of party families

Party/Family	1945-1950	1951-1955	1956-1960	1961-1965	1966-1970	1971-1975	1976-1980	1981-1985	1986-1990	1991-1995	1996-2000	2001-2005	2006-2010	Mean
Communist	10.7	9.4	8.8	8.7	8.1	8.8	9.3	7.8	6.5	3.3	3.7	2.5	3.0	7.6
New Left/socialist	-	-	3.1	5.0	5.5	5.2	2.5	3.7	6.0	6.9	6.2	5.6	7.3	5.7
Social democrat	28.5	27.9	29.9	29.7	32.5	28.2	29.4	27.9	26.5	25.9	29.6	28.5	26.9	28.4
Christian democrat	22.6	22.5	21.7	19.4	19.1	15.7	16.8	16.6	15.2	12.6	11.5	13.5	12.0	16.6
Liberal	12.0	12.4	13.4	12.6	10.7	9.8	9.9	8.9	8.8	9.5	9.8	9.7	10.6	10.5
Conservative	20.9	23.3	25.3	26.0	24.9	28.9	28.0	29.7	31.4	28.3	26.1	28.6	30.5	27.2
Ethnic/regionalist	3.2	3.1	4.6	4.3	5.1	5.5	3.4	3.3	2.8	3.8	4.3	3.7	5.1	3.9
Environmental	-	-	-	-	-	-	1.1	2.1	4.3	4.2	6.0	4.8	5.7	4.5
Populist radical right	2.0	5.8	4.8	3.7	5.1	7.5	5.2	4.7	6.2	6.1	8.4	8.3	9.2	7.0

Figure 1 clearly shows the fragmentation of European party systems and the steep electoral decline of communist and Christian Democratic parties^{1,2,3,4,5,6}. Social Democratic origin also

1 D. Hanley, *Christian democracy in Europe. A comparative perspective.*, London, Pinter 1994.

2 K. Van Kersbergen, *Social capitalism: A study of Christian-democracy and the welfare state.*, London, Routledge 1995.

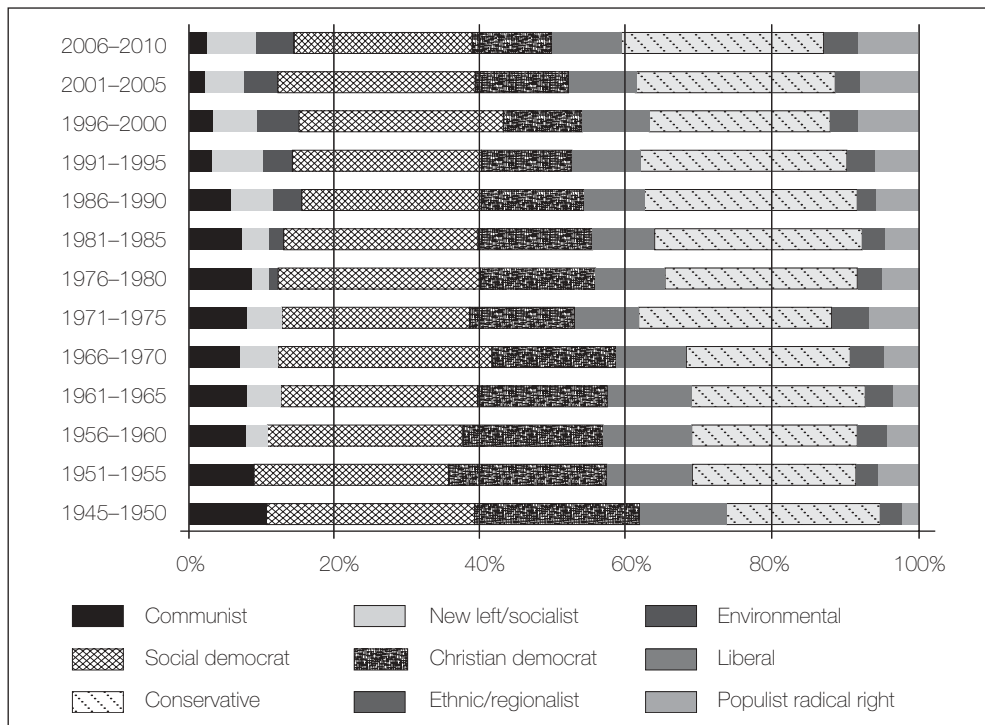
3 A. Agosti, *Bandiere rosse. Un profilo storico dei comunismi europei.*, Roma, Editori Riuniti 1999.

4 S. Bartolini, *The political mobilization of the European Left, 1860-1980: The class cleavage.*, Cambridge University Press 2000.

5 M. Bull & P. Heywood (eds.), *West European communist parties after the revolutions of 1989.*, London, Macmillan, 1994;

6 M. Lazar, *Fin-de-siècle communism in Western Europe.*, [in:] *Dissent*, 2000, pp. 62 – 65.

Figure 2. Relative strength of party families along the Left-Right dimension



lost electoral support, from a steadfast average of around thirty per cent until the 1980s to less than 25 per cent in the most recent decade^{7,8}. After a short revival in the 1990s, electoral decline of Social Democrats sharply increased in the early 21st century. This demise is part of a wider process of electoral corrosion of traditional left-wing parties.

Traditional party families on the centre right have either remained relatively stable (liberals) or have increased their vote share (Conservatives). The Conservative party family has now surpassed the Social Democrats in electoral appeal and due to the simultaneous growing strength of the radical populist parties; the (centre) Right has become the dominant force across Europe.

The core vote for traditional parties has declined across Europe and citizens show less loyal voting behaviour^{9,10,11}. New voter groups (younger generations,

7 H. Kitschelt, *The transformation of European social democracy.*, Cambridge University Press 1994.

8 F. F. Piven, *Labor parties in postindustrial societies.*, Cambridge, UK: Polity 1991.

9 R.J. Dalton et al., *Democratic publics and democratic institutions.*, [in:] *Democracy transformed? Expanding political opportunities in advanced industrial democracies.*, B. Cain, R. Dalton & S. Scarrow (eds.), Oxford University Press 2003.

10 see also: M. Franklin, *Os Enigmas da Participação Eleitoral.*, [in:] *Análise Social* 167, 2003, pp. 321–33.

11 R. L. Dalton, *Citizen politics: Public opinion and political parties in advanced industrial democracies.*, 3rd ed., Chatham, NJ: Chatham House 2002.

de-industrialized labour and immigrants) enter the electorate with even less party-political socialisation and encapsulation^{12,13}. These findings of a general weakening of the left and the confessional parties flies in the face of the 'party cartel thesis', which suggested that Christian Democratic and Social Democratic parties would stabilise the electoral market. In fact, we can clearly see the 'crowding-out' of the centre-left and centre-right by the more extreme fringes of the political spectrum.

The fragmentation of European party systems occurred in four waves of electoral de-alignment, where voters became decoupled from various traditional parties: the first is the wave of new-left parties emerging in the 1960s and 1970s, the second is the green wave of environmentalist parties of the 1980s, thirdly the upsurge of regionalist-ethnic parties since the 1970s and finally the upsurge of populist parties in the 2000s¹⁴.

New voter groups (younger generations, de-industrialized labour and immigrants) enter the electorate with even less party-political socialisation and encapsulation

Social Democratic decline in European elections

The steady decline of Social Democratic parties can be observed throughout Europe, both in national and European Parliament elections.

As Table 2 shows, **Social Democratic parties perform much better in national elections than in EP elections, with an average score of 6 per cent below the average vote share in national elections.** In Southern Europe Social Democratic parties enjoy the highest level of support in EP elections, while in Eastern Europe they perform much worse compared to their North and South European counterparts. This is partly because most East European Social Democratic parties are successor parties of the former Communists that governed the region after the Second World War. Strong anti-Communist sentiments in the former socialist countries have turned public opinion against left-wing politics. East European Conservative and Liberal parties have very successfully exploited popular dissatisfaction with previous totalitarian rule and managed to transfer the blame to the left as a whole. The backlash from the experience of Communist rule produced a situation in which ideas of solidarity, redistribution and public property became less appealing than conservative values such as individualism and, in some cases, extreme nationalism.

12 H. Kitschelt, *European party systems: Continuity and change.*, [in:] *Developments in West European Politics*, M. Rhodes, P. Heywood, and V. Wright (eds.), Basingstoke: Macmillan 1997, pp. 131–50.

13 R. J. Dalton, op.cit. 2002.

14 See: D. Caramani, *The Europeanization of electoral politics: An analysis of converging voting distributions in 30 European party systems, 1970–2008.*, [in:] *Party Politics* (March) 2011, pp. 1–21.

Table 2. Electoral results of Social Democratic parties

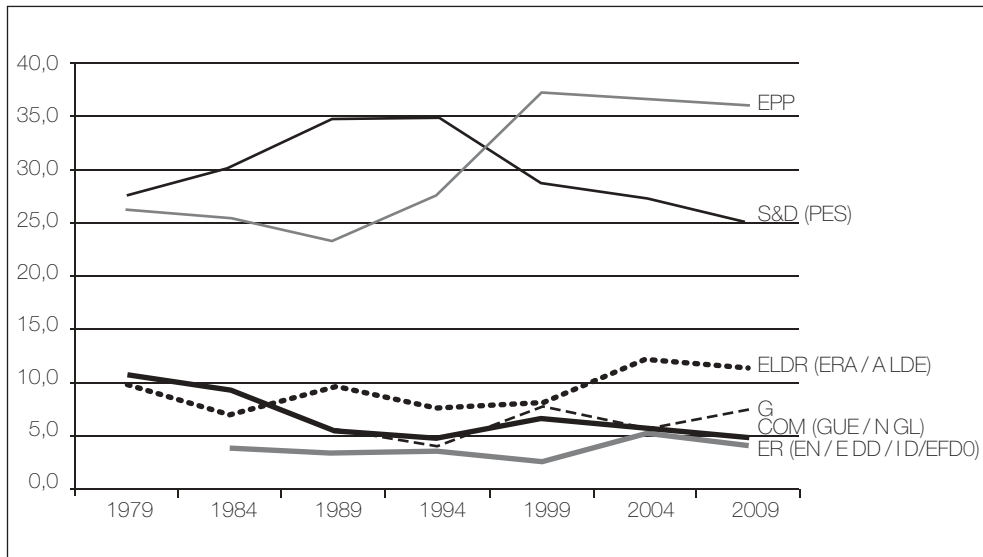
Country	Party name	Year of last elections	Percentage in last national elections (%)	Percentage in last European elections (%)	Mean percentage postwar national elections (%)	Mean percentage European elections (%)
Western European States					Average (%)	Average (%)
					28.3	21.9
Austria	SPO	2008	29.3	23.7	42.03	29.4
Belgium	SP – VL (BSP/PSB)	2010	14	10.9	14.6	11.9
Belgium	SPA – FL (BSP/PSB)	2010	9	8.2	14	11.6
Denmark	SD	2011	24.9	20.9	34.4	21.5
Finland	SDP	2011	19.1	17.5	24.2	19.5
France	PS	2012	29.4	16.5	22.3	21.4
Germany	SPD	2009	23	20.8	36.1	31.5
Ireland	LAB	2011	19.4	13.9	11.9	10.9
Luxembourg	LSAP	2009	21.6	19.4	29.9	23.8
Netherlands	PvdA	2012	24.7	12.1	27.06	24.7
Sweden	SAP	2010	30.7	24.6	43.09	25.7
UK	LAB	2010	29	15.7	40.1	31.6
Southern European States					Average (%)	Average (%)
					29.1	31.4
Cyprus	EDEK	2011	8.9	9.9	8.6	10.3
Greece	PASOK	2012	12.3	36.7	35.4	36.9
Italy	PD (PSI)	2008	33.2	26.1	14.7	18.6
Malta	PL	2008	48.8	54.8	46.4	51.6
Portugal	PS	2011	28.1	26.6	31.7	33.3
Spain	PSOE	2011	28.7	38.5	37.9	38.1
Eastern European States					Average (%)	Average (%)
					21.9	19.3
Bulgaria	BSP	2009	17.7	18.5	30.2	19.9
Czech Republic	CSSD	2010	22.1	22.4	21.9	15.6
Estonia	SDE	2011	17.1	8.7	10.9	22.7
Hungary	MSzP	2010	19.3	17.4	30.2	25.8
Latvia	SC (PCTVL)	2011	28.4	19.6	16.7	15.15
Lithuania	LSDP	2012	19.8	18.6	11.7	16.5
Poland	SLD-UP	2011	8.2	12.3	21.3	10.8
Romania	PSD	2008	33.1	30.8	31.1	26.4
Slovakia	SMER	2012	44.4	32	30.4	24.4
Slovenia	SD	2011	10.5	18.5	14.7	16.3

Parties that ceased to exist, merged with, or were renamed to contemporary Social Democratic parties are in brackets.

Given the widespread anti-Communism, the number of people identifying with the left has decreased steadily.

As a result, the entry of the Eastern European states into the European Union contributed in terms of electoral support to a decline of overall for Social Democratic parties in the European Parliament. Conservative and Liberal parties performed substantially better than Social Democrats in Eastern Europe after the region's democratization, as Figure 3 shows.

Figure 3. Electoral support for party groups in European Parliament



Obviously, Social Democratic parties have become more vulnerable in both first and second order elections, particularly in elections for the European Parliament. So, who is abandoning the centre left and who are still likely to vote for social democracy?

Estimating the Likelihood of Voting for a PES party

To determine the likelihood of citizens voting for a Social Democratic party, we need to examine each voter's feelings with regard to a given party, relative to all of the others. If we want to adequately understand electoral behaviour, and specifically ultimate party choice, an ipsative expression of preferences does not tell us enough about voter preferences. For our study we need non-ipsative measures of party preferences (utilities) of voters, which are in essence ratings for each of the parties of a political system. These exist in different forms, known as thermometer ratings or feeling scores, likes and dislikes scores, or support propensities. Van der Eijk and Marsh have shown that the propensity to vote for a party is by far preferable if one wants to explain voters' actual party choice behaviour.

Providing respondents with the possibility to sympathise or agree with more than one party is also a more accurate portrayal of their actual decision-making in multiparty democracies. Most voters in multiparty systems have an attachment with multiple political parties since their identification is often with social groups and ideological tendencies, rather than with a particular party organisation¹⁵. When a variety of ideologically similar parties are on offer, voters may identify with more than one party and need to choose between them on Election Day. Thus we asked voters to evaluate all national parties on an 11-point scale ranging from 0 (low propensity) to 10 (high propensity). The EU Profiler asks '*how probable is it that you will ever vote for the following parties?*', while in the EES an identical formulation was used: '*If you think of (Party X): what mark out of ten best describes how probable it is that you will ever vote for (Party X)?*'

We use voters' responses to this 'probability to vote' (hereafter PTV) question to estimate the likelihood that they would ever vote for the PES group party that was running in their country. In countries where more than one PES-affiliate runs, we examined PTVs for the largest party.

Three Voter Groups: PES Rejecters, PES Contemplators and PES Sympathizers

Based on vote propensities for PES parties, we break respondents into the three groups represented. **PES 'Rejecters'** are voters with a low likelihood of ever voting for a social democratic party – a score between 0-4 on the 11-point scale. **PES 'Contemplators'** are voters who rate their likelihood of ever voting for social democrats at between 5 and 7. Finally, **PES 'Sympathizers'** with a likelihood of voting for social democrats between 8 and 10. Table 3 provides the distribution of European voters in each of the groups.

Table 3 shows that about half of the European voters (48.6 per cent) indicate that it is highly unlikely that they will EVER vote for a Social Democratic party (PTV between 0 and 4), with almost 28 percent of the European electorate indicating that they will never, ever vote for a Social Democratic party. Social Democratic parties are not very likely to appeal to an overall majority of European voters.

Around a quarter of the European electorate can be considered a PES contemplator with a propensity to ever vote for a Social Democratic party between 5 and 7. These voters mostly have a higher vote propensity for another party, but they do not rule out to vote for social democrats. Interestingly, more than 12 percent of European voters give their national social democrats a PTV score of 5.

15 H. Schmitt, *Partisanship in Western Europe and the US: Causes and consequences.*, Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Political Science Association, Boston, August 29-September 1, 2002.

Table 3. EU-wide vote intention (PTV) for PES affiliated parties.

PTV PES party	Frequency	Percent	Group for Analysis
0	7,036	27.99	
1	895	3.56	
2	1,373	5.46	PES 'Rejecters' 48.6%
3	1,429	5.68	
4	1,491	5.93	
5	3,204	12.75	
6	1,417	5.64	PES 'Contemplators' 25.3%
7	1,727	6.87	
8	2,137	8.50	
9	1,047	4.17	PES 'Sympathizers' 26.1%
10	3,381	13.45	
Total	25,137	100.00	

Data are from the European Election study 2009. For the full list of PES member parties see the Appendices.

Table 4. Reported Actual Voting Behaviour by PTV score for PES parties.

PTV score for PES party by Voter type	Did not vote for PES party	Voted PES party	% of Group voting S & D	Total
0	4162	36	0,9%	4198
1	474	4	0,8%	478
2	813	19	2,3%	832
3	829	17	2,0%	846
4	819	28	3,3%	847
Rejecters	7,097	104	1.4%	7,201
5	1516	168	10,0%	1684
6	725	98	11,9%	823
7	845	173	17,0%	1018
Contemplators	3,086	439	12.4%	3,525
8	869	462	34,7%	1331
9	294	377	56,2%	671
10	533	1967	78,7%	2500
Sympathizers	1,696	2,806	62.3%	4,502
Total	11,879	3,349	21.9%	15,228

The N is smaller than in table 1 because less respondents reported actual voting behaviour than those that gave their voting intention (PTV).

Table 5. Voting probability groups for PES in Member States.

	% 'Rejecters' (PTV 0-4)	% 'Contemplators' (PTV 5-7)	% 'Sympathizers' (PTV 8-10)
Austria	42.1	30.1	27.8
Belgium	45.6	32.9	21.4
Denmark	40.6	24.7	34.7
Finland	45.9	30.3	23.8
France	43.6	33.1	23.4
Germany	39.8	31.4	28.8
Greece	53.3	18.7	27.9
Ireland	30.3	36.4	33.1
Italy	51.7	24.2	24.2
Luxembourg	29.5	38.7	31.7
Netherlands	36.6	39.9	23.5
Portugal	51.0	24.3	24.7
Spain	42.3	30.4	27.2
Sweden	47.2	23.1	29.7
UK	51.4	26.5	22.1
Pre-2004 countries	43.3	29.7	27.0
Bulgaria	68.1	10.8	21.2
Cyprus	58.6	24.4	17.0
Czech Republic	53.6	21.9	24.5
Estonia	53.0	29.9	17.1
Hungary	74.8	11.8	13.4
Lithuania	54.1	25.3	20.6
Latvia	59.4	13.5	27.1
Malta	35.1	24.6	40.3
Poland	72.3	14.9	12.8
Romania	53.4	15.9	30.7
Slovenia	43.4	21.9	34.7
Slovakia	39.6	19.2	41.1
Post-2004 countries	57.0	18.6	24.4

Finally, roughly a quarter of the European electorate is highly likely to vote for a Social Democratic party. Note, however, that only 13.5 per cent of European voters give a PTV score of 10, who can be considered the core electorate of social democracy. This means that the 'heartland' for social democratic parties consist of only one in every

seven European voters. If we analyse the extent to which these voting intentions are converted into an actual vote for a social democratic party - by comparing the PTV score of voters with their actual party choice in the European Election - see that nearly two-thirds of reported PES party vote is comprised of sympathizers.

Among those that indicate the maximum PTV-score, nearly eight out of ten actually voted for the PES party in their respective country. This proportion drops rather steeply for voters that rate their PTV for a PES party at 9: of this group only 56 percent actually cast their vote for a PES party. When a voter rates their voting intention for a PES party as '8', the chance of actually voting for a Social Democratic party drops further to one in three. Among PES contemplators (PTV 5-7) only 12.4 percent actually vote for a social democratic party. With a vote propensity of 7, less than 2 out of ten actually vote social democrat and this proportion drops to one in ten with a PTV of 5 or 6. Only one in a hundred rejecters - 1.4 per cent – actually voted for social democratic parties. Most of these rejecters are typically right wing and Conservative voters, who are highly unlikely to be persuaded to vote for a Social Democratic party.

When we break down the three voter groups by country and compare results from 'new' member states (those that joined the EU in 2004 or later) with 'old' member states, a clear difference emerges.

In the 'old 15' members states voters have more favourable voting intentions for social democratic parties compared to 'new' Central and Eastern European member states. The percentage of PES sympathizers (PTV 8-10) is three percent higher and the proportion of PES contemplators (PTV 5-7) is eleven percent higher in countries that entered before 2004. The most substantial difference, however, is found among those voters that are highly unlikely to ever vote for a PES party. There is an almost 20 per cent gap between the 'old' and 'new' member states with regard to the average proportion of the electorate that is unlikely to ever vote for social democrats. Particularly in the larger newcomer countries (Hungary, Poland and Bulgaria) large voter populations exist that reject social democracy.

There are clear limits to the proportion of European electorates that can be persuaded to actually vote for a Social Democratic party. Only in a few member states can social democrats reasonably hope to attract more than one in three voters. In most countries, their core vote group are closer to a quarter of the electorate. Below, we will analyse the social background of these core supporters.

Profiling the Three Voter Groups

In what follows, we profile the three voter groups (PES-Rejecters, Contemplators and Sympathizers) in terms of their demographics and their opinion structure. For the latter, we aggregate individual issue positions into an average on two main issue-dimensions:

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a socio-economic left-right cleavage and a moral-cultural progressive-conservative cleavage. As can be seen from table 6, **the PES-Rejecters are basically centrist voters with a moderate pro-EU stance, while PES-sympathizers are far more to the left on socio-economic issues and strong supporters of European integration.** PES contemplators are closer to the sympathizers than to the rejecters: they are also moderately left wing and pro-European integration.

Table 6. Average position on two main dimensions of party competition

Cleavage dimension	Rejecters	Contemplators	Sympathizers
Left-right	0,000	-0,317	-0,453
Pro-Anti EU integration	0,248	0,403	0,473

Average issue position in the political spectrum. Both running from -2 (= completely left or anti EU integration) to +2 (= completely right or Pro EU Integration)

Social Democratic parties cannot hope to appeal to the rejecter-group of voters, since they constitute the core electorate of the centre-right and more Euroskeptic political opponents. While 'PES Contemplators' resemble 'PES Sympathisers' with regard their average Left-Right and Progressive-Conservative stance, only a small proportion (roughly 12 per cent) actually cast their vote for social democrats.

Social Background of the Three Voter Groups

In the table below we compare the three voter groups – rejecters, contemplators and sympathisers – on several core basic demographic characteristics (age, income, education, gender, social status, unionization and religiosity).

Table 7 illustrates that **sympathisers of Social Democracy comprise more women, have a small overrepresentation of those who identify themselves as working/lower middle class and are more often unionised than PES rejecters.** This 'feminisation' of the left is also visible in other parts of the world¹⁶. Voters with high vote propensities for Social Democracy are also slightly older than the rest of the population, yet they do hardly differ from the rest of the population with respect to education. Despite a clear overrepresentation of 'working class' and 'lower middle class' identifiers, **actually fewer voters in this groups consider themselves as low income earners.** This suggests some inclusion of 'social climbers' that have maintained their working class identity, despite a rise in education and income. Likely Social Democratic voters are more urban than the rest of the population, indicating that centre-left support is still skewed

16 L. Edlund & R. Pande, *Why Have Women Become Left-Wing? The political Gender Gap and the Decline in Marriage.*, [in:] *The Quarterly Journal of Economics*, 117 (3), 2002, pp. 917-961.

Table 7. Demographic characteristics of three voter groups

Group Characteristic	Rejecters	Contemplators	Sympathisers
% Female	54.5 %	53.8 %	58.3%
Average Birth year	1958.4	1960.7	1957.8
Average age when finished education	19.9	20.5	20.0
% Still in Full-time Education	5.5 %	7.0 %	5.7%
% Working/lower middle class	38.9 %	36.2 %	43.3%
% Lower income (1-3 on 7 point)	29.6 %	24.6 %	28.1%
% Unemployed	6.9 %	6.6 %	6.6%
% 'Rural Area'	31.8 %	33.8 %	30.6%
Average religiosity (10 point scale, 10 = 'very religious')	5.0	4.6	4.7
% Self-reported Union members/family members in a union	22.6 %	30.8	33.3%

towards city-dwellers, although still one in three PES sympathizers live in a 'rural' area. Note that religiosity does not vary significantly across all voter groups, indicating that the religious cleavage has weakened substantially in explaining voting behaviour.

Voters that contemplate voting for social democracy (PTV 5-7) are on average somewhat younger than the rest of the population and include a larger number of males and more educated citizens, in terms of both time spent in education and the proportion still in full-time education. Thus, this group includes larger numbers of students and younger voters that do not have a strong party affiliation. These PES-contemplators see themselves more often as part of the middle class, with fewer 'working class' and 'lower middle class' self-identifiers than the rest of the population. In addition, they place themselves less frequently on the low end of the income scale or as unemployed. This all suggests that a significant section of the young and professional middle class has some sympathy for Social Democratic parties, of which only a few actually vote for PES parties.

Interestingly, PES rejecters are more likely than the rest of the population to place themselves on the low end of the income scale and are slightly more likely to be unemployed than members of the other voter groups. Thus, **the centre left does not have a monopoly on representing the unemployed, the less well-to-do and the working class. Low income and working class-identification are no longer strong predictors of voting for Social Democratic parties.** Or to put it in another way: centre right and radical populist parties have been very successful in appealing to the lower socio-economic strata. A substantial section of the lower income brackets will most likely never vote for a Social Democratic party. Union membership, on the other hand, is a strong predictor of voting social democracy and

among those who reject centre-left politics we find very few union members (or those with family members in a union). The remaining relevance of the class cleavage in terms of class-identification and unionisation is explored further below.

The Decline of Class Voting

While Social Democratic parties have been crucial in developing and safeguarding social rights for workers and wider emancipatory policies for the less well off in society, European Social Democratic parties never solely expressed and represented the interests of the working class, but needed to coalesce and collaborate with Christian Democrats of centrist representatives of rural interests to implement redistributive policies that benefitted the (lower) middle classes. Particularly Christian Democratic parties wooed the working class voters with a social doctrine that obligated Christians to help the poor in order to maintain a fair and stable social order¹⁷.

As a result, Social Democrats manage to attain a substantial part of working class votes: currently close to a third of their electorate consists of working class voters. While overall working class voting is down, left-wing parties still have distinctly higher levels of working class support than right-wing parties. **Those who still identify as working class are far more likely to support left-wing parties than their right-wing liberal and conservative competitors. It is the gradual disappearance, not the desertion of the lower classes that transforms the electoral make-up of left-wing parties.** Substantial sections of the working class have switched their support to other parties and working class support for the traditional left declined, while and relative support from the middle classes increased structurally as can be seen in Figure 4.

For each national election we calculated the relative proportion of middle class voters minus the level of working class support. As Figure 4 shows, most European Social Democratic parties gradually transformed from basically working class parties into parties with more middle class support. This relative decline in working class support is at least partly explained by shifts in class-identities, not only by changes in voting behaviour. An ever-increasing number of people previously self-identified as working class were melded into the white-collar service sector, diminishing the class differences of the electorate of most European parties, thus contributing to an overall decline of working class voters for all parties.

When we look at the class structure of support during EP elections, we see a similar pattern.

Figure 5 shows the transforming voter base of European Social Democratic parties since the late 1980s. Already during the 1960s and 1970s social democratic parties

17 See: K. van Kersbergen & P. Manow, *Religion, Class Coalitions, and Welfare States.*, Cambridge University Press 2009.

Figure 4. Middle class support for Social Democratic parties

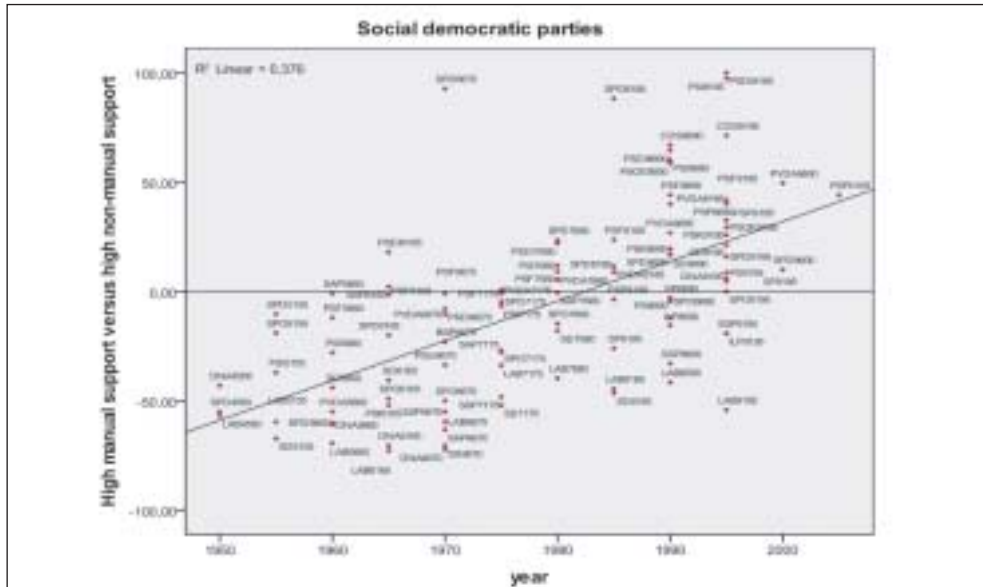
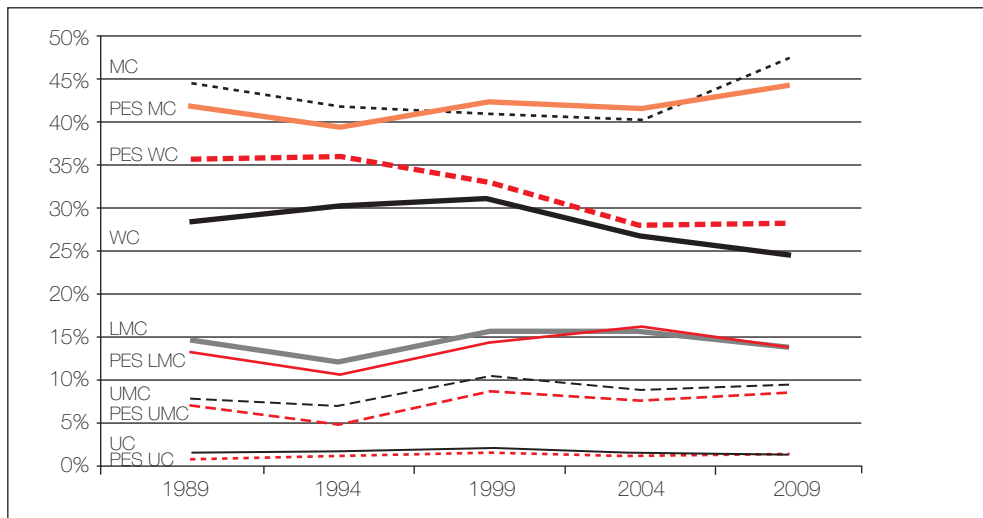


Figure 5. Class support for Social Democratic parties in EP elections



had transformed from ideological working class parties to catch-all parties, increasingly appealing to middle class voters by downgrading their traditional ideology. Partly this was a reaction to the structural expansion of the middle class Europe, while Social Democrats also deliberately adopted policies that would cater to the needs of middle classes. While continuing to collude the working class interests with those of the middle class – the quintessential pro-democratic class coalition - gradually the proportion of middle class

voters surpassed the share of working class voters. The disappearance of large sections of the old working class has simply watered down, not totally transformed the differences between the left and right in terms of their voter base in terms of social class.

Conclusion

In most European democracies, the Social Democratic core vote is small, decreasing and vulnerable. In most countries their core vote hovers around the 20 percent and it the room for expansion is limited as very few potential voters are persuaded to actually support social democracy. Possibly, the centripetal movement of many Social democratic parties has weakened them electorally as they drift away from the preferences of their core electorates. For many left-wing voters, Social Democratic parties are simply not sufficiently left, progressive and green enough, making them opt for more radical left and Green competitors. Most centrist voters cannot be easily persuaded to vote for social democracy, as they are closer to Liberal, Christian Democratic or Conservative parties with regard to their political preferences. Thus, centripetal competition will not necessarily increase the electoral appeal of social democrats, while it will reduce their electability among core left-wing, progressive voter groups. Attempts to occupy the centre-space reduces the likelihood of attracting left-wing voters, without dramatically increasing the likelihood of attracting mainstream centrist voters switching. In sum, possible electoral gains in the political centre do not outweigh the loss of support on the progressive-left. Centrist voters have, on average, stronger attachments to the traditional centre-right parties of conservative, liberal and Christian democratic origin.

Social Democratic parties face an increasingly stronger and more hostile right-wing party block, which is consistently pulled to the conservative right by the popularity of anti-immigrant mobilisation, particularly among working and middle class constituencies. The embrace of libertarian ideas by the 'new left' created a fundamental ideological crisis for social democracy as this undermined the traditional drivers of left-wing politics: worker solidarity and state interventionism. The combination of libertarian views on societal relations and statist views of economics became mutually untenable. This ideological crisis of the left empowered right-wing conservatives, who had always preferred individual responsibility to public arrangements and now no longer faced an ideological challenge to that idea. Individualisation also dramatically reduced class identities. Despite persisting and even growing income inequality, there was a mental homogenization within western societies. **Social democrats lost their core ideology and supporters group and have been unable to ideologically and electorally challenge re-orientate the growing popularity of liberal and conservative ideas. The right-wing political revolution not only undermined the concept of a capable state, but also the idea of social engineering through the redistribution of wealth, knowledge and power.** With declining

support for social and economic state interventionism and the end of the Cold War, social democrats were plunged into an existentialist crisis. Now that the state-interventionism was discredited and society denied, social democrats re-oriented themselves towards liberalism and developed the 'Third Way' ideology, which further de-legitimises left-wing politics and state interventionism. Now, social democrats need to re-invent themselves in order to stop the electoral haemorrhage, the loss of connections with crucial social allies such as trade unions and the waning of coalition potential.

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Appendix 1. Databases and methodology

This paper uses two datasets: the 2009 European Election Study (EES) and the 2009 EUProfiler dataset. The EES uses random sampling methods, with approximately 1,000 respondents per country (i.e., 27,000 respondents in total), identical questionnaires in each country, allowing for EU-wide as well as country specific analyses. The survey asks respondents a likelihood of voting for each party allowing us to profile and categorise voters. The EUProfiler data is an opt-in, non-representative bulk sample, where users in all 27 member states (in total 906.088 respondents) were asked to give their attitudes on 28 salient issues as well as background information and vote propensities for all main parties. While this generates a less representative sample than the EES did, it provides far greater depth of voters' policy positions and party preferences.

Number of EU-profiler users per country (lower limit 5000)

		# EU Profiler users	%	n sample
Finland		5065	0.6	254
Bulgaria		6319	0.7	459
Hungary		6622	0.7	247
Czech Rep.		7175	0.8	224
Greece		8926	1.0	296
Austria		13628	1.5	246
Spain		24576	2.7	1070
Poland		31389	3.5	840
UK	England	36957	4.1	990
	N. Ireland	640	0.1	9
	Scotland	3055	0.3	86
	Wales	732	0.1	26
France		48853	5.4	1630
Italy		51947	5.7	1221
Belgium	Flanders	20353	2.2	492
	Wallonia	40861	4.5	1975
Portugal		80408	8.9	2813
Germany		98644	10.9	1935
Netherlands		194287	21.4	3911
Sweden		225651	24.9	3131
Total		906088	100.0	21858

After providing their issues positions, users were matched with policy preferences of parties, extracted from their party manifestos. Issues were considered to belong to one of the main issue-dimensions in Europe: a socio-economic left-right dimension and a pro EU-integration versus Anti EU-integration (including moral-cultural issues).

The EU Profiler questionnaire and direction of scaling

1. Social programmes should be maintained even at the cost of higher taxes (LEFT)
2. Greater efforts should be made to privatise healthcare services in (.country) (RIGHT)
3. State subsidies for crèches and childcare should be increased substantially (LEFT)
4. Immigration policies oriented towards skilled workers should be encouraged as a means of fostering economic growth (GAL)
05. Immigration into (... country) should be made more restrictive (TAN)
06. Immigrants from outside Europe should be required to accept our culture and values (TAN)
07. The legalisation of same sex marriages is a good thing (GAL)
08. Religious values and principles should be shown greater respect in politics (TAN)
09. The decriminalisation of the personal use of soft drugs is to be welcomed (GAL)
10. It is good that euthanasia is legalised in the Netherlands (GAL)
11. Government spending should be reduced in order to lower taxes (RIGHT)
12. The EU should acquire its own tax raising powers (GAL Pro EU)
13. Governments should bail out failing banks with public money
14. Governments should reduce workers' protection regulations in order to fight unemployment (RIGHT)
15. The EU should drastically reduce its subsidies to Europe's farmers (RIGHT)
16. Renewable sources of energy (e.g. solar or wind energy) should be supported even if this means higher energy costs (LEFT)
17. The promotion of public transport should be fostered through green taxes (e.g. road taxing) (LEFT)
18. Policies to fight global warming should be encouraged even if it hampers economic growth or employment (GAL)
19. Restrictions of civil liberties should be accepted in the fight against terrorism (TAN)
20. Criminals should be punished more severely (TAN)
21. On foreign policy issues, such as the relationship with Russia, the EU should speak with one voice (GAL Pro EU)
22. The European Union should strengthen its security and defence policy (GAL Pro EU)
23. European integration is a good thing (GAL Pro EU)

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24. (...country) is much better off in the EU than outside it (GAL Pro EU)
25. The European Union should be enlarged to include Turkey (GAL Pro EU)
26. The European Parliament should be given more powers (GAL Pro EU)
27. Individual member states of the EU should have less veto power (GAL Pro EU)
28. Any new European Treaty should be subject to approval in a referendum in (country)
(none)

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- EUROPARTIES
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Biographies



David J. BAILEY is a lecturer in politics in the Department of Political Science and International Studies, University of Birmingham. He completed his PhD at the London School of Economics in 2005. The PhD was supervised by Professor Simon Hix and explored the changing position of social democratic parties towards the process of European integration. The thesis was published as a book with Routledge in 2009 – *The Political Economy of European Social Democracy: A Critical Realist Approach* and in a series of articles in journals such as the *Journal of European Social Policy*, *British Journal of Politics and International Relations*, and the *Journal of International Relations and Development*. His current research focuses on left parties and protest movements within the European context – and has argued that we are experiencing an upturn in new materialist politics, including both autonomous-oriented protest movements and a growing focus on class- and resource- based issues – claiming that these have been the most effective forms of opposition to the recent wave of austerity measures being implemented across the advanced industrial democracies. He has recently published articles presenting versions of this argument in the *Journal of Political Power*, the *Journal of Critical Globalisation Studies* and in a forthcoming article in *British Politics*. He also has a forthcoming co-edited book on social democratic parties' responses to the global economic crisis, to be published with Manchester University Press, and titled "European Social Democracy During the Global Economic Crisis: Renovation or Resignation?". In addition to his teaching and research, David is also an active trade unionist with the Universities and College Union (UCU) and is the branch chair of the University of Birmingham branch of the union, which has been a vocal critic of current reforms being imposed upon the management and finance of the UK Higher Education sector.



Karl DUFFEK, born in 1962, is *Director of Renner Institut and Vice President of the Foundation for European Progressive Studies (FEPS)*. Mr Duffek finished his studies of German Language and Literature, English and American Language and Literature, Political and Social Sciences at the University of Vienna, Austria and the University of Hagen, Germany. In 1986 he graduated as Mag. Phil. In the years 1985 – 1987 Mr Duffek served as Member of the Representative Body of the Department of Humanities of the University of Vienna, chairing its work in the years 1985 – 1986. From 1988 till 1992 Mr Duffek was a fellow of Renner Institut (the Political Academy of the Sozialdemokratische Partei Österreichs (SPÖ)), in charge of education policy and social sciences. In 1992 he became Deputy Director of this Institute, which function he held for six years. Since

1997 till 1998 Mr Duffek was Secretary of the Programme Committee and Coordinator of the new Political Platform of the SPÖ and following that he served as the SPÖ Federal Secretary for Education. Since 1999 Mr Duffek has been Director of Renner Institut and a Special Advisor to the SPÖ party leadership on the Programme and Ideological issues, and currently he also serves as SPÖ International Secretary. He published several books, among which there are: *"Social Democracy and Education"*(eds.) F Becker, K. Duffek, T. Morschel, Amsterdam 2008/Graz-Wien 2007; *„Sozialdemokratische Reformpolitik und Öffentlichkeit"*, F. Becker, K. Duffek, T. Morschel, Wiesbaden 2007; *"Moderne Österreich"*, (eds.); P. Filzmaier, P. Plaikner, K. Duffek, Wien 2007; *"The EU – A Global Player?"*, R. Cuperus, K. Duffek, A. Froschl, E. Morschel, Wien-Berlin 2006.



Alfred GUSENBAUER, born 1960, was federal Chancellor of the Republic of Austria and member of the European Council between January 2007 and December 2008. He led the Sozialdemokratische Partei Österreichs (SPÖ) between the years 2000 and 2008. Dr. Guesenbauer studied law, philosophy, political sciences and economy

at the University of Vienna and there obtained Ph. D. in political sciences in 1987. Dr. Gusenbauer began his political career in the Sozialistische Jugend Österreichs (SJÖ), of which he was President from 1984 till 1990. Dr. Gusenbauer was Member of the Austrian Parliament from 1993 till 2007; Member of Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe from 1991 till 2007; and was Chairman of the Social, Health and Family Affairs Committee of the Council of Europe from 1995 till 1998. He has been actively engaged in the Party of European Socialists (PES), as the party's Vice-President and in the Socialist International as its Vice President since 1989. Dr. Gusenbauer was Professor-at-Large at the Brown University in Providence, Rhode Island; is a Visiting Scholar at Harvard University and James Leitner Fellow for Global Affairs at the Columbia University of the N.Y.C. Furthermore, Dr. Gusenbauer is President of the Renner Institut, President of the Austrian-Spanish Chamber of Commerce, CEO of Gusenbauer Projektentwicklung und Beteiligung GmbH and chairs several boards, as i.e. STRABAG SE. Dr. Gusenbauer holds a honorary doctorate of the Hertzliah University of Israel and is Senator of the European Academy of Sciences. Since the beginning of the initiative in June 2009, Dr. Gusenbauer chairs the Next Left Research Programme of the Foundation for European Progressive Studies (FEPS).



Steven Van HECKE is assistant professor at the University of Leuven where he teaches comparative and EU politics. Previously he was a senior research fellow at ACIM (Antwerp Centre for Institutions and Multilevel Politics) and a visiting fellow at the Robert Schuman Centre for Advanced Studies of the European University Institute in Florence (Italy).

His research focuses on Europarties, EU institutions and political ideologies. He published in journals such as *Acta Politica*, *Journal of Common Market Studies*, *Journal of European Public Policy*, *Regional and Federal Studies*, *Journal of International Iberian Studies* and *Journal of Contemporary European Research*. He recently co-edited 'Readjusting the Council Presidency: Belgian Leadership in the EU' (ASP, 2011).



Isabelle HERTNER, Dr., is a lecturer in German and European Politics and Society at the University of Birmingham. She is also the deputy director of the Institute for German Studies at Birmingham. Isabelle did her PhD, which focused on the Europeanisation of social democratic party organisations, at the University of London (Royal Holloway). Before

moving to Britain, Isabelle completed her MA at the College of Europe (Bruges) and worked for a social welfare NGO in Brussels. Her research interests include: Europarties, national parties and their positions on the EU, the politics of party membership, the welfare state, and social democracy.



Michael HOLMES is a Senior Lecturer in Politics at Liverpool Hope University. He is the author of *The Development of the Irish Labour Party's European Policy: From Opposition to Support*. Mellen Press, 2006 and co-editor of *The Left and the European Constitution: from Laekene to Lisbon*, Manchester University Press, 2012, with K. Roder.



André KROUWEL, Dr., (1964) teaches comparative political science and communication science at the Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam and is Academic Director of Kieskompas (Election Compass). Krouwel's research focuses on political parties and elections and he wrote his PhD on the transformation of political parties in Western Europe. His

most recent book is *Party Transformations in European democracies* published by SUNY Press (<http://www.sunypress.edu/p-5605-party-transformations-in-europe.aspx>). Krouwel

has published articles and book chapters on parliamentary and presidential elections, voting behaviour, political parties, social movements and Euroskepticism. He also wrote on political institution-building processes and democratisation in East and Central Europe after the fall of the Berlin Wall and is now conducting research in Arab Spring countries to chart the political transformation of countries across the MENA region.



Erol KÜLAHCI, Dr., is an associate member of the Centre d'étude de la vie politique (CEVIPOL, Université libre de Bruxelles). He co-created and chairs the standing group on Europeanisation of the ECPR (European Consortium for Political Research). His research centres on comparative European politics, especially domestic and European political parties.

His publications include recent books and articles on comparative multi-level party politics. He has recently edited «Europeanisation and Party Politics. How the EU Affects Domestic Actors, Patterns and Systems» (Colchester, ECPR Press, 2012) It includes eight deep domestic case studies (France, Germany, Italy, United Kingdom, Greece, Spain, Poland and Romania) and a stimulating comparative conclusion.



Robert LADRECH is Professor of European Politics in the School of Politics, International Relations and Philosophy, Keele University, UK, and Visiting Professor in the Department of Political and Administrative Studies, College of Europe, Bruges. He has also been a visiting professor at the University of Lille and the University of Ljubljana. Professor

Ladrech is a member of the executive committee of UACES (University Association for Contemporary European Studies) as well as a member of EUSA (European Union Studies Association). Recent books include *Europeanization and National Politics* (Palgrave 2010) and *Europeanization of National Political Parties* (Routledge 2007, along with Poguntke, Aylott, Carter and Luther). In 2012 he was awarded a research grant by the UK Economic and Social Research Council for a two-year project on Political Parties and Climate Policy, which investigated the internal politics of climate policy-making in centre-left and centre-right parties in six Western European countries.



Simon LIGHTFOOT is a Senior Lecturer in European Politics at the University of Leeds. He was awarded his PhD, which he wrote on the PES, in 2002 from Nottingham Trent University. Before Leeds, he worked at Liverpool John Moores University. He has been a visiting

fellow at the National Europe Centre, Australian National University and the Corvinus University of Budapest. He is author of *Europeanising Social Democracy: The Rise of the Party of European Socialists?* Oxford: Routledge as well as a number of articles on the PES in academic journals. With Natalia Timus he has edited a special issue of *Acta Politica* on 'Europarties: between the processes of 'deepening' and 'widening' which will be published in 2014. He has an interest in learning and teaching issues. In 2009 he won the Political Studies Association's Bernard Crick Prize for Outstanding Teaching and in 2013 was awarded a National Teaching Fellowship by the Higher Education Academy in the UK.



Karl Magnus JOHANSSON is a professor of political science at Södertörn University, Sweden. He joined the new Södertörn University in 1998 from Lund University and the Swedish Institute of International Affairs. He was educated at Lund University and the London School of Economics and Political Science. He has held visiting positions at the

Center for European Integration Studies in Bonn and at Stellenbosch University, South Africa. His primary research interests are the European Union, European integration, Europeanization, political parties, and transnationalism. He teaches in these areas. He has published widely on various aspects of transnational party cooperation within and throughout the European Union and on European Union politics, as well as on questions related to Sweden's membership in the European Union. He has published in journals such as *Comparative European Politics*, *European Journal of Political Research*, *Government and Opposition*, *Journal of Common Market Studies*, *Journal of European Public Policy*, *Party Politics*, *Public Administration*, and *West European Politics*. Among other projects he is working on, he is looking at transnational influence on social democratic and conservative parties in the Baltic States.



Gerassimos MOSCHONAS, PhD (Doctorat d'Etat), University of Paris-II, is currently an associate professor in comparative politics in the Department of Political Science and History, Panteion University of Political and Social Sciences, Athens, Greece. He is the author of *In the Name of Social Democracy*, *The Great Transformation: 1945 to*

the Present (London: Verso, 2002) and *La Social-démocratie de 1945 à nos jours* (Paris: Montchrestien, 1994). His current research is focused on the European Union and political parties, with particular emphasis on the parties of social democracy and the radical left, the Europarties, the theory of the party phenomenon, and the Greek debt crisis.



José REIS SANTOS, (n. 1974), Historian and Political Scientist, Guest Research Fellow at Central European University and Researcher at New University of Lisbon Contemporary History Institute. His main areas of research are Comparative History and Comparative Politics, and has published and lectured - as an historian - in the fields of Comparative Fascism Studies, Transitions to Authoritarianism and Interwar Intellectual History. As a political scientist his main areas of research are Transitions to Democracy, Comparative Party Politics and European Politics.



Ania SKRZYPEK, (Skrzypek-Claassens), born in Warsaw in 1979, is Senior Research Fellow at the Foundation for European Progressive Studies (FEPS). She holds Ph.D. cum laude in political sciences from the University of Warsaw, which degree she obtained for her thesis "Cooperation of the socialist and social democratic parties in uniting Europe. From Liaison Bureau to PES. 1957 – 2007." (also published in book format in 2010). Before joining FEPS in 2009, A. Skrzypek worked as younger researcher at the Faculty of Journalism and Political Sciences at the University of Warsaw (2003 – 2009) and also served as twice consecutively elected Secretary General of Young European Socialists (ECOSY, 2005-2009). Among her responsibilities at FEPS, she is in charge of the Next Left Research Programme, she co-coordinates FEPS Young Academics Network (FEPS YAN), is a co-editor of the Next Left Book Series. She was a Managing Editor of FEPS Scientific Magazine "Queries" in years 2009 – 2012. She is an author of over 50 published articles and reviews, and among her latest publications are: "Winning For Real. The Next Left taking the Chance to Shape Europe for the 21st century. 10 fundamental challenges" (issued in English and French in November 2012), "Unleashing Competitive Spirit. The Role of Europarties in Politicizing Europe" (published by FEPS and Italiani Europei in February 2013) and "Europe. Our Common Future. Celebrating 20 years of the Party of European Socialists" (presented at the PES Jubilee in February 2013).



Ernst STETTER, born in 1952, was nominated as Secretary General of the newly created Foundation for European Progressive Studies (FEPS) on January 30th 2008. He is also a regular commentator on EU affairs in the media. In 1976 Ernst Stetter began his professional career as a lecturer in economics at the DGB Trade Union Centre for Vocational Training in Heidelberg. From 1980 to 2008 he worked for the Friedrich

Ebert Stiftung (FES) in various positions. He spent the first four years at the FES as a Consultant in Dakar, Senegal. In 1988, Ernst Stetter was appointed as Head of the Africa Department. In 1994 he started working as Head of the Central Europe Unit. In 1997 he moved to Paris and became the Director of the FES Office in France while in 2003 he was appointed as Director of the EU-Office of Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung (FES) in Brussels. Ernst Stetter is an economist and political scientist. He studied in Tübingen and Heidelberg (Germany) focusing on international trade, finance, economic and social policy as well as development issues. In 1980 he obtained his PhD in political science for his dissertation entitled The Association of ACP-Countries (Lomé I and II) to the European Community and the STABEX-System. In 2003 he received the French decoration of Chevalier de l'Ordre national du Mérite.



Matt WALL, Dr., is a lecturer in politics at Swansea University. Prior to coming to Swansea, Dr. Wall worked as a postdoctoral research fellow at the Université Libre de Bruxelles as part of the Electoral System Change in Europe Since 1945 (ESCE) research project. He is a Marie Curie research fellow, having completed a year's postdoctoral research as part of the ELEODEM initial training network at the Free University, Amsterdam. He completed his PhD thesis on African electoral and party systems at Trinity College Dublin. His research interests include Vote Advice Application (VAA) websites; online politics; electoral campaigns; electoral system effects and reform; comparative politics and Irish politics. Dr Wall has published several research articles on these topics in journals including Electoral Studies, Party Politics, Parliamentary Affairs, Irish Political Studies, the Journal of Electronic Governance, the Journal of Information Technology and Politics and the Journal of Elections, Public Opinion and Parties.

**IN THE NAME OF
POLITICAL UNION
- EUROPARTIES
ON THE RISE**

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FEPS Publications

←NEXT LEFT→

“Next Left – Renewing social democracy” is the first volume of what has become a popular series of publications. This part is specifically devoted to analyses of the crisis (as evaluated in the aftermath of the 2009 European Elections) and to identifying the elements which, reviewed and renewed, could transform social democracy into a movement capable to shape the 21st century.

Volume I opens with the reflections by Poul Nyrup RASMUSSEN, President of the PES and former Prime Minister of Denmark; and of Dr. Alfred GUSENBAUER, Chair of the FEPS *Next Left* Research Programme and former Chancellor of Austria. Their conclusions bridge with the unique collection of interdisciplinary reflections from all across the continent, which features the main disputants of the think tanks’ renewal debate on both European and national levels. After a successful launch at the PES Congress in Prague in December 2009, the book was also presented at numerous national Round Tables held by FEPS together with its member foundations in 2010. Last but not least, it also became an inspiration for a debate organised the same year at Brown University in Providence, US.



“Next Left – The Leaders’ Visions for Europe’s Future” is the volume II of the series, presenting a unique collection of 28 groundbreaking speeches of progressive European leaders. Composed of 6 chapters (*“Time for a New Direction”, “Enduring Values, Enduring Virtues”, “Breaking down Neo-Liberal Myths”, “Together we are stronger”, “Jobs, welfare and prosperity”, “Beyond the Nation State”*), the book mirrors the social democratic responses to the world and European crisis, indicating also the path ahead for the left.

Featuring

Sigmar GABRIEL, Martine AUBRY, Zita GURMAI, Martin SCHULZ, Mona SAHLIN, George PAPANDREOU, Jose Luis RODRIGUEZ ZAPATERO, Poul Nyrup RASMUSSEN, Alfred GUSENBAUER, Borut PAHOR, Jutta URPILAINEN, Eamon GILMORE, Caroline GENNEZ, Elio DI RUPPO, Jens STOLTENBERG, Werner FAYMANN.



←NEXT LEFT→

“Towards a new strategy” constitutes the 3rd Volume of the *“Next Left”* Books’ Series. Presenting a handful of stimulating ideas, this book part represents a decisive shift of the focus: from critical analyses of the crisis of social democracy to a proposal on what it could become in order to be a leading political force in the 21st century.

The articles gathered here provide a solid synthesis of a year-long research, of which outcomes became an inspiration for progressive movement on both the national and the European levels. The material reflects the main threads of the 4 colloquiums, organized by FEPS together with Renner Institut, which took place in Brussels and gathered more than 150 high level participants. At the same time it also echoes 14 round tables that FEPS held in respective EU member states thanks to the cooperation with its member foundations, involving more than 2000 academics, politicians and experts. As such therefore, this book presents itself as a unique compilation of the points raised about the renewal of social democracy on all levels and across the continent.



"Towards a New Strategy" opens with a foreword by Dr. Alfred GUSENBAUER, Chair of the "Next Left" Research Programme. Further the volume covers four chapters: *"Responding to Contemporary Society"*, *"Our Values in a Changing World"*, *"A New Socio-Economic Paradigm"* and *"Mobilizing International Solidarity"*. Coherently to diverse profiles of the authors and their various expertise, the structure and the tone of the respective texts differ: from longer elaborations to short and sharp statements; and from theoretical deliberations to concrete policy recommendations. This diversity is a very interesting character of the "Next Left" series, proving that a multifaceted approach is the key to success in ensuring the future for the progressive alliance in the 21st century.

Featuring

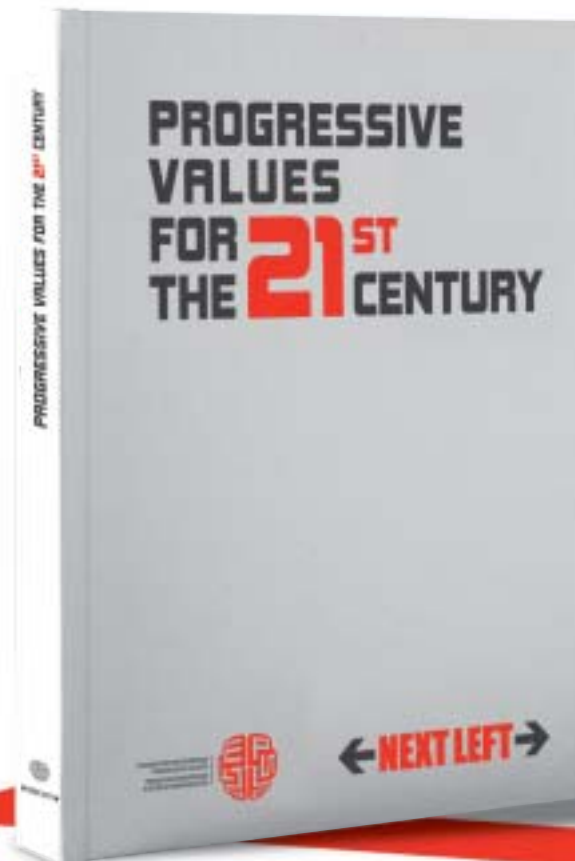
Irene RAMOS-VIELBA, Catherine de VRIES, Laurent BOUVET, Jan ČERNÝ, René CUPERUS, Florin ABRAHAM, George SIAKANTARIS, Attila ÁGH, Daša ŠAŠIĆ ŠILOVIĆ, Klaus MEHRENS, Rocio MARTÍNEZ-SAMPERE, Anne JUGANARU, Sunder KATWALA, Tim HORTON, Eric SUNDSTRÖM, Gero MAAß, Jan Niklas ENGELS, Carlo D'IPPOLITI, Kajsa BORGNÅS, Björn HACKER, Paul DE BEER, Dimitris TSAROUHAS, Carles RIVERA, Jens ORBACK, Ingemar LINDBERG, Conny REUTER, Cosimo WINCKLER, Tomáš PETŘIČEK, Patrick DIAMOND, Trinidad NOGUERA, Andrew WATT.



←NEXT LEFT→

“Progressive values for the 21st century” is the 4th Volume of the popular “Next Left” book series, which since 2009 features noteworthy contributions to the pan-European debate on the renewal of social democracy. This new Volume represents a bold attempt of the *Next Left* Focus Group to offer a progressive ideological framework that would adequately shape the policy agenda and our movement in modern times.

The articles gathered mirror the results of a one year long academic debate. In its course, respective members of the Focus Group deliberated on what the progressive values are, how they are explained and what their meaning is in both party internal, but also societal context. The diverse profiles, fields of expertise and origins accumulated in the Group, ensured that the endeavour upheld an interdisciplinary character and had been representative for different streams of social democracy. This debate on substance was accompanied by a solid work that provided a suitable methodology for such a research, which gives the collection exceptional



potential to become the first step towards establishing a new, progressive European school of thought. While striving for it, authors enjoyed revisiting concepts that may have been taken for granted, as also reclaiming notions that may have been unjustly monopolised by other political families.

What makes this Volume unique is that it succeeds in translating the complex, philosophical, and hence relatively abstract deliberations into audacious policy recommendations. Herewith authors enact a new character of the ideological dispute, which impose leaving a safe haven of internal discussions and placing it in the heart of societal debate. Challenges to frame the next social deal and new socio-economic paradigm, as also to build potential for strategic alliances to establish a prevailing progressive majority remain therefore the integral part of the respective contributions.

Featuring

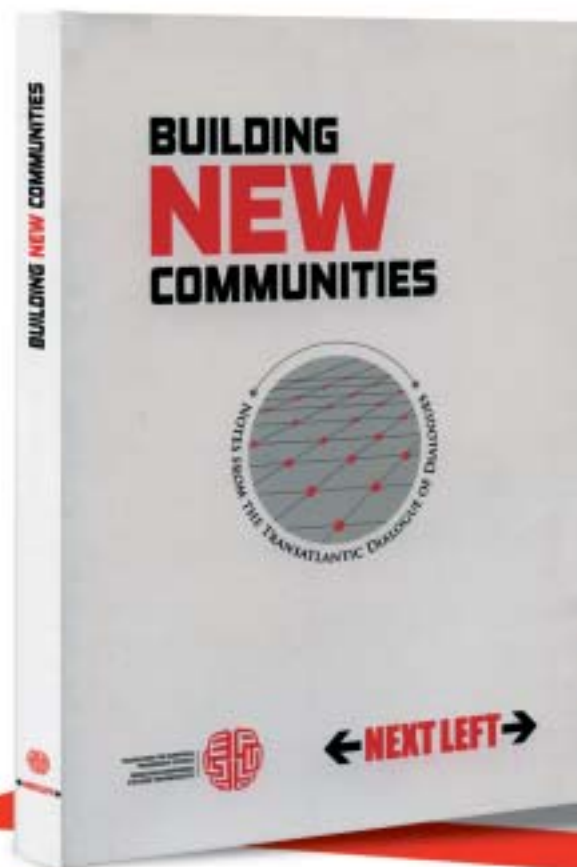
Julian NIDA-RÜMELIN, Gustav-Adolf HORN, Christine FÄRBER, Gesine SCHWAN, Ania SKRZYPEK, Rémi BAZILLIER, Patrick DIAMOND, Pim PAULUSMA, Eric SUNDSTRÖM, Dimitris TSAROUHAS, John HALPIN.



←NEXT LEFT→

“**Next Left: Building New Communities. Notes from the Transatlantic Dialogue of Dialogues**” captures the leading threads of the inspiring debate on the future of progressivism from three continents. Being an outcome of a high level workshop, which was held in April 2012 at **Harvard Law School** and which marks the establishment of cooperation between FEPS, Renner Institut and IGLP – Institute for Global Law and Policy of HLS, this book constitutes an important reading for all those seeking a progressive alternative worldwide.

The contributions gathered in this **5th volume of the Next Left book series** mirror a new focus of the renowned FEPS research programme. The two year intellectual exchange with academics at the Watson Institute of Brown University (Providence, Rhode Island) and the new dialogue built upon that with the IGLP HLS, subsequently led to founding of the “*Next Left – Dialogue of Dialogues*”. This scholarly framed conversation reflects a common aspiration to contribute to framing a new, prevailing global narrative.



The volume encompasses 6 sections. The first one features prefaces of Professor David KENNEDY, Director of IGLP HLS and of Professor Michael KENNEDY of Watson Institute at Brown University – both of whom played a fundamentally important role in making this *Dialogue* possible. Their introductory remarks are followed by the introductory words of the *Dialogue's* initial architects, Dr. Alfred GUSENBAUER (former Chancellor of Austria and Chair of the Next Left Research Programme) and Dr. Ricardo LAGOS (former President of Chile and Head of Chilean Fundación Democracia y Desarrollo). Their remarks frame the tone of the debate, offering diagnoses of the contemporary times and naming the principal challenges ahead. The next four chapters: *A New Progressive Vision*, *A New Cosmopolitan Movement*, *A New Socio-Economic Paradigm*, and *A New Approach to Work and Employment* include 14 articles by outstanding academics and experts from both sides of the Atlantic. What makes this collection especially recommendable is the exceptional quality of the contributions, which are anchored in the multilayer analytical framework. They feature interdisciplinary analyses and argue for innovative policy proposals from the local up to the global levels. Their strong embedding in the assessment of the crisis aftermath and the climate of the new social mobilisation exposes the vacuum that authors argue to use for a new intellectual construct and new quality politics.

Featuring:

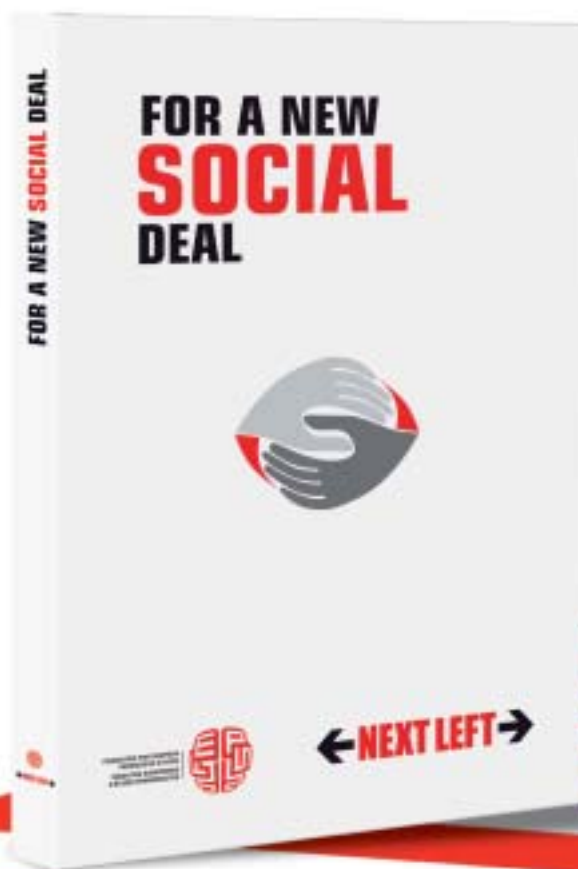
Gianpaolo BAIOCCHI, Cornel BAN, Rémi BAZILLIER, Patrick DIAMOND, Yannis Z. DROSSOS, Karl DUFFEK, Ernesto GANUZA, Paolo GUERRIERI, Alfred GUSENBAUER, José ITZIGSOHN, David KENNEDY, Michael D. KENNEDY, Ricardo LAGOS, Oscar LANDERRETICHE, Roger LIDDLE, Vivien A. SCHMIDT, Juliet SCHOR, Ania SKRZYPEK, Ernst STETTER, Dimitris TSAROUHAS.



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“**Next Left: For a New Social Deal**” presents a new way of thinking about the relations that should be forged between the world of financial capitalism and politics, so that the path can be paved towards a better, fairer society. Deriving from previous deliberations on the modern understanding of progressive values, the FEPS Next Left Focus Group Members take herewith a challenge to seek their translation into a new narrative. The objective is therefore to reach beyond the crisis-induced confinement of politics, and while stretching the borders of political imagination point at new horizons of a historical mission for social democracy.

The New Social Deal that emerges on the pages of this book is about constructing new equilibriums. Therefore, the concept of “welfare state” is being carefully examined in the light of the double-folded criticism it is currently facing. The criteria of its efficiency as a tool for societal transformation, as also the public support for its contemporary features



are being discussed in details. Hypothesis emerging lead to a conclusion of inevitability of modernisation, of which course should be steered by principles of empowerment. Hence the concept of “equality of autonomy of individuals” is carefully examined as an essential condition enabling people to actively participate in socio-political life. The demand for fair distribution of income, wealth and power gains herewith a tangible political character. To that extent, the traditional commitment of the movement to the values of solidarity and social justice is being seen as a motivation that may lay fundamentals for a new progressive coalition that would need to constitute to gain power of breaking the prevailing neo-liberal logic and bring about the change that the contemporary polarised, fragmented and impoverished societies aspire to.

The **“Next Left: For a New Social Deal”** is 6th volume of the FEPS Next Left Book Series. It is composed of 3 Chapters: **“Shaping A New Social Contract”, “Ensuring Fair Distribution of Income, Wealth and Power” and “Building Progressive Alliances”**. It illustrates the outcomes of the work of the FEPS Next Left Focus Group within the year 2012, which herewith is being presented for consideration of the progressive movement.

Featuring:

Rémi BAZILLIER, Andrius BIELSKIS, Patrick DIAMOND, Karl DUFFEK, Alfred GUSENBAUER, John HALPIN, Ania SKRZYPEK, Ernst STETTER, Dimintris TSAROUHAS, Ignacio URQUIZU.



←NEXT LEFT→

“Winning for Real: the Next Left taking the Chance to Shape Europe for the 21st century - 10 fundamental challenges”

by Dr. Ania Skrzypek

By the end of 2012, it seemed that the political tide in Europe was changing. The elections in Slovakia, France, the Netherlands and Romania encouraged social democrats to think that the worst was over; the centre-left was re-emerging to govern. Even though some of the results came as a surprise, the centre-left has not wasted a moment in devising a convincing explanation. It is the consequent message of *change* that has convinced people to lend their trust and invest their hopes in social democrats again. Social democracy retrieved its spirit of raising opposition against the unjust and per extension against the current, conservative-ruled system. While discrediting the enemy, they upheld to a strategy: *no visionary promises, we will just tell you how we are planning to manage*. Then, although it may be politically un-patriotic to ask, one can't help but wonder: are we there yet, really?

There are therefore several reasons for cautious optimism. This approach should be seen, however, as a pragmatic assessment and not as an attempt to spoil the festive spirit. The challenges, which had been identified in the course of the debates on the renewal



of social democracy, are more profound than *just* winning next elections. The results of the elections show that there is a synergy between what both the majority of citizens and social democracy denounce. But it is not yet equal to an agreement on what sort of a new narrative should replace the contemporary neo-liberal order.

This pamphlet undertakes consciously a very hazardous task. Remaining in the ambiance of delight connected with electoral performance of various sister parties, it dares to remind about the broader, historical challenge. Social democracy still has to develop a new narrative and redefine its own mission for the 21st century. Herewith this pamphlet is challenging the views that nowadays people do not need grand ideological visions and that an honest governing manual is enough. There is no reason to believe that contemporary societies became so disenchanting that they would not seek something more substantial than a framework for existence; that they would not long for a dream that they could jointly pursue. On the contrary, in the era of an overwhelming multilayered crisis, developing the idea of a *New Social Deal* is in fact indispensable if the centre-left wants to win for real.

Expressing a hope that it is possible, this pamphlet is written from a perspective assuming that social democracy has indeed the potential to win for real. It makes a point that the necessary ingredient for such a victory is a vision for a tangible political alternative in Europe, which should become the *Next Social Contract*. What is standing in the way between now and truly reaching the position to take a *Chance to Shape Europe* are the ideological dilemmas it still needs to resolve. This analysis examines closer 10 of them, which seem most relevant at the beginning of the new century.

1. How to explain good capitalism and make it prevail as a backbone of economic integration?
2. How to bring sense to the European politics and Europeanise social democracy?
3. How to resuscitate European values and ensure that their progressive interpretation is a mainstream?
4. How to make progress meaningful and put it at the heart of an agenda for European prosperity?
5. How to frame the labour debate and put Europe back to work?
6. How to legitimise the welfare state concept and empower the European Social Model?
7. How to make social democracy, and Europe, projects for the young generation?
8. How to politicise Europe and bring sense to European political cooperation?
9. How to overcome the democratic crisis and enable citizens' ownership of the EU integration?
10. How to Win for Real?