

DIRECTORATE-GENERAL FOR INTERNAL POLICIES

**POLICY DEPARTMENT** **C**  
CITIZENS' RIGHTS AND CONSTITUTIONAL AFFAIRS



Constitutional Affairs

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# How to create a Transnational Party System

Study





**DIRECTORATE GENERAL FOR INTERNAL POLICIES**

**POLICY DEPARTMENT C: CITIZENS' RIGHTS AND  
CONSTITUTIONAL AFFAIRS**

**CONSTITUTIONAL AFFAIRS**

# **How to create a Transnational Party System**

**STUDY**

## **Abstract**

This study has been prepared by the Observatory on Political Parties and Representation (OPPR), part of the European Democracy Observatory (EUDO) at the European University Institute (EUI). It covers four aspects: 1) An analysis of the political doctrine and programme of major political parties in several Member States. 2) An examination of current procedures applied to political parties to choose leaders for European Office. 3) The development of proposals on how to help a European political party system evolve from national structures strongly influenced by historical traditions and cultural factors. 4) Suggestions regarding the extent to which the European electoral system and different systems of party financing would have to be revised in order to facilitate the above objectives.

This document was requested by the European Parliament's Committee on Constitutional Affairs.

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This report has been prepared by the Observatory on Political Parties and Representation (OPPR), part of the wider European Democracy Observatory (EUDO) which is based at the European University Institute's Robert Schuman Centre for Advanced Studies in Florence, Italy. EUDO's main goal is to produce a permanent and periodic assessment of democratic practices within the EU and to translate scientific and academic research on key issues in European democracy into policy-relevant and publicly-understandable outputs. EUDO develops practical suggestions for improving democratic performance in the EU and offers expertise, information, and policy reports to relevant EU institutions and other actors. The OPPR Observatory, in particular, is devoted to the study of European parties and representative channels, agenda setters and gatekeepers on the possible road towards a full-fledged and effective Euro-party system. The OPPR Observatory is co-directed by Prof. Luciano Bardi and Prof. Peter Mair.

This study is the response to a tender contract awarded in November 2009 by the Committee on Constitutional Affairs of the European Parliament (contract n°IP/C/AFCO/IC/2009-62), for the provision of a study on “How to Create a Trans-National Party System?”. The study covers the four aspects indicated in the tender application guidelines:

- 1) An analysis of the political doctrine and programme of major political parties in as many Member States as feasible.
- 2) An examination of current procedures applied to political parties to choose leaders for European Office.
- 3) The development of proposals on how to help a European political party system evolve from national structures strongly influenced by historical traditions and cultural factors.
- 4) The development of suggestions regarding the extent to which the European electoral system and different systems of party financing would have to be revised in order to facilitate the above.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

|  |            |
|--|------------|
| <b>Introduction .....</b>  | <b>4</b>   |
| <b>1. The Political Groups in the European Parliament: Policy Positions and Ideological Coherence.....</b> | <b>10</b>  |
| 1.1 THE POLICY COHESION OF THE POLITICAL GROUPS .....  | 11         |
| 1.1.1 The formation of the political Groups and their ‘political affinities’ .....                         | 11         |
| 1.1.2 Party families in a changing context.....  | 13         |
| 1.2 PRESENTATION OF THE DATA .....   | 15         |
| 1.2.1 Euromanifesto Project .....  | 16         |
| 1.2.2 EU Profiler.....   | 17         |
| 1.3 EMPIRICAL ANALYSIS.....  | 17         |
| CONCLUDING REMARKS .....   | 29         |
| <b>2. Candidate Selection and Trans-nationalisation .....</b>  | <b>40</b>  |
| 2.1 INTRODUCTION.....  | 40         |
| 2.2 TWO DIMENSIONS OF ANALYSING THE CANDIDATE SELECTION PROCEDURE .....                                    | 41         |
| 2.2 WHO DECIDES IN NATIONAL PARTIES? .....   | 42         |
| 2.2.1 Differentiation by country .....   | 44         |
| 2.2.2 Differentiation by political affiliation .....   | 45         |
| 2.3 IS EUROPEAN INFLUENCE IMPORTANT? .....   | 48         |
| CONCLUSION.....  | 50         |
| <b>3. The Role of National Traditions.....</b>   | <b>53</b>  |
| 3.1 INTRODUCTION.....  | 53         |
| 3.2 THE NUMBER OF PARTIES AT NATIONAL AND EUROPEAN LEVEL .....   | 54         |
| 3.3 LEGAL STATUS OF THE POLITICAL PARTIES.....   | 58         |
| 3.4 INTERNAL ORGANISATION .....  | 60         |
| 3.5 CAMPAIGN PRACTICES.....  | 62         |
| <b>4. The Harmonisation of European Electoral Law and the Financing of PPEs .....</b>                      | <b>66</b>  |
| 4.1 INTRODUCTION.....  | 67         |
| 4.2 THE HARMONISATION OF EUROPEAN ELECTORAL LAW.....   | 68         |
| 4.3 THE FINANCING OF PPEs.....   | 74         |
| 4.3.1 Public financing and organisational change: quid prius? .....  | 75         |
| 4.3.2 Party financing schemes in Europe: a synthetic overview .....  | 78         |
| 4.3.3 Public funding in the Old Europe .....   | 79         |
| 4.3.3 Public funding in the New Europe .....   | 82         |
| 4.3.4 The funding to parties at European level .....   | 84         |
| 4.3.5 Organisation of Political Parties at European Level.....   | 88         |
| 4.4 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE “EUROPARTY STATUTE” .....  | 92         |
| <b>Conclusion: Transnational Parties and a Transnational Party System ...</b>                              | <b>97</b>  |
| <b>Report’s Summary.....</b>   | <b>103</b> |
| <b>REFERENCES.....</b>   | <b>106</b> |
| <b>TRANSLATIONS OF THE EXECUTIVE SUMMARY.....</b>  | <b>114</b> |
| ANSÄTZE ZUR SCHAFFUNG EINES TRANSNATIONALEN SYSTEMS POLITISCHER<br>PARTEIEN.....                           | 115        |
| CRÉER UN SYSTÈME DE PARTIS TRANSNATIONAL.....  | 124        |
| COME CREARE UN SISTEMA PARTITICO TRANSNAZIONALE .....  | 133        |

## Introduction

Parties are multi-faceted actors, whose organisation, strategy and style of competition are primarily embedded in, and defined by, national political settings. They originate and develop either from the organised expression of societal interests (extra-parliamentary origin) or from the organisational and political needs of elected officials (parliamentary origin). In both cases, and even when the two sets of factors play a role, the central organisation of the party is a product and not a cause of these processes.

Transnational parties at European level can, therefore, be expected to develop as a consequence of pressures coming either from their components in the European Parliament, that is to say, EP party groups seeking autonomous organisational structures capable of giving them direct links with European civil society; or from existing grass-roots party structures, that is to say, national parties that are becoming progressively more inclined to privilege the supranational level of government. But even though it is possible to conceive of the emergence of transnational parties – even strongly organised transnational parties – it is quite another question to conceive of the emergence of a transnational party *system* (Bardi and Mair 2008). This last distinction will be elaborated in the final section of this study and underlies the strategy developed in this proposal.

The main part of this study is geared towards an assessment of the degree to which conditions at national and European levels currently favour the consolidation of what Regulation (EC) 2004/2003 (what is sometimes referred to as the “Europarty Statute”) calls ‘political parties at European level’. The study has been prepared by a group of scholars at the new European Democracy Observatory (EUDO), which is based at the European University Institute’s Robert Schuman Centre. As part of the EUDO project; the scholars working on this study are developing a specific observatory on political parties and representation in Europe (OPPR), and hence avail of a considerable amount of relevant data and expertise in the areas identified by the Invitation to Tender.

The study covers the four aspects indicated in the tender application guidelines. First, we report on an analysis of the political doctrine and programmes of the major political parties in the EU Member States, and we look at the degree to which these are consistent and coherent within the different party groups. Second, we look at the current procedures applied by political parties to choose representatives for public office at European level, and we look at the degree to which these vary both from country to country and within the different party groups. Third, we look at the particular obstacles which stand in the way of the emergence of genuine transnational parties and which derive from national structures which have been strongly influenced and shaped by historical traditions and cultural factors. Fourth, we evaluate the extent to which



the European electoral system and the different systems of party financing have developed with a view to furthering the evolution of European political parties, and we include a discussion of the kind of institutional incentives that might be seen to facilitate and promote transnational party activities. Finally, we draw attention to the distinction between transnational parties and a transnational party system, and we discuss how, if deemed desirable, the transition from the former to the latter might be encouraged even while remaining within the current (post-Lisbon) institutional parameters.

These different aspects can, in turn, be profitably grouped into two categories: the first and second items concern empirical aspects of party organisation, programmes and functioning at European and Member-State levels whose in-depth investigation can be seen as a necessary pre-requisite for the rest of the analysis. The remaining items pertain to the more prescriptive aim of the project, and, as such, require a more speculative reflection, albeit based upon a thorough analysis of the existing theoretical and empirical literature.

The main starting-point for this analysis has been the recognition that the organisation, strategy and styles of competition of political parties are both embedded in, and primarily defined by, national political settings. Earlier research (Katz and Mair 1994) also indicated that, far from waning, these national differences have become more pronounced over time, in that the national context in which a party is located – the legal regulatory environment, the national system of party-funding, the particularistic national institutions – is proving increasingly determinant for a party's organisation and culture. In the past, the ideology or support base of a party was often the more important influential factor in defining a party. A Dutch Social Democratic party looked more like a German Social Democratic party, for example, than it looked like a Dutch Christian Democratic party. With time, however, the cultures and organisational styles of parties have tended to converge within each country, and hence diverge within each transnational party family. This suggests that there is now less common ground between different national Social Democrats, or different national Christian Democrats, which would mean that the obstacles faced by transnational parties in the evolution of a European party system would seem to have become more acute.

On the other hand, because of the recent process of *cartelisation* of party competition, and because of the distancing of party organisations from their traditional roots within civil society, party organisations in national settings are now much more élite-dominated than before. This also reflects the long-term ascendancy of the party in public office (Katz and Mair 2002) and the more recent shift towards the presidentialisation of politics (Poguntke and Webb 2005). These developments have allowed parties to become more flexible in a strategic sense, and this may also mean that they are less constrained by historical traditions and cultural factors. In other words, should the incentives towards trans-nationalisation prove strong enough, most parties are probably sufficiently flexible to adapt and respond.

Building from a party family approach (Mair and Mudde 1998), this research evaluates the existing evidence for all of these trends and tensions.

Based to a degree upon secondary literature, but also employing our own *EU Profiler* data (<http://www.euprofiler.eu/>), we evaluate the relative strength of the competing pulls of national context and transnational identity. Based upon an understanding of the process that led from party segmentation to party convergence at national level, we seek to develop proposals about how that process might now be mimicked and extended at transnational level. In this context, we also look at the cultural and institutional incentives towards transnationalisation, as well as at the factors that might still stand in the way of such convergence. By combining both theoretical and empirical considerations, the overall analysis and its results allow us to speculate on the possible normative solutions to help a European party system evolve from the national structures, and/or to offer an alternative explanation.

Most proposals suggesting institutional strategies favouring the emergence of a transnational party system focus on the reform of an electoral law for the elections to the European Parliament, including the proposal for the creation of a transnational list system for a small portion of seats (2007 Duff EP report). More recently, scholars and politicians (for example, Jo Leinen MEP; see, also, Hix 2008) have suggested that each European political party should select its 'top candidate' for the Commission's Presidency already before the election. These proposals are considered in the course of our analysis and the possible related scenarios are outlined and evaluated. It would appear, however, that the conventional wisdom about the beneficial effects of elections is not always confirmed by the empirical evidence. In particular, the presence of different electoral laws at national and EP levels within one polity can also have a negative impact on EP elections, and thereby can prove quite disruptive for transnational party institutionalisation (Bardi 2002).

Regulation (EC) 2004/2003 defines the role of European political parties and the requirements needed for party eligibility to receive funding from the European Union. The provisions of the Regulation may well be able to consolidate more effectively the various party components operating at European level: transnational federations, parliamentary groups and national parties. Two provisions, however, one contained directly in the Regulation and the other in its implementation rules, and respectively pertaining to the conditioning of public funding to co-financing and to the inclusion of public funding in the EP budget, still keep the federations, that is the transnational parties proper, in a subordinate position with respect to their national components and the EP party groups.

Our reflection and research in this section aims at outlining possible solutions to these problems and potential conflicts. The literature on the drafting and harmonisation of European level electoral rules is older than EP elections (Sasse *et al* 1981) and is, by now, extensive. A careful analysis of this body of work permits us to map all the various options for better and more effective harmonisation of electoral rules at EP level. However, since, as already noted, harmonisation at the European level can lead to differences between levels in the national arena, this can prove an even more serious problem than insufficient harmonisation itself. Andrew Duff's proposal to introduce a small transnational

list system into EP elections is certainly potentially capable of favouring transnational party development, but it is also likely to be met with very strong opposition. Our study examines various additional technical features of the electoral system, such as preferential or single transferable voting, that may make such a solution more acceptable.

This part of the analysis also looks at the effect of party financing and its associated regulatory framework. These topics have been studied extensively at the national level, and the evidence suggests that such rules and regulations have a tendency to promote organisational convergence at that level, with parties funded from a common system of party finance tending to adapt their organisations to avail of these subventions. Following the same logic, it can be argued that a strong European level system of financing and party regulation could have a similar effect, and could serve to promote transnational convergence and, hence, transnational party-building. As we have seen, the current provisions for public funding at European level do not guarantee the financial independence of parties at European level from their national counterparts and, indirectly, from the EP party groups. At national levels, however, many different models can be identified, also with different implications for party development and institutionalisation. Our investigation here relies on the development of a typology of party financing schemes at national level.

The final consideration that is developed here emphasises the distinction between the development of transnational parties, on the one hand, and a transnational party system, on the other. Based upon existing theories of party systems, it can be argued that the primary institutional incentive for the development of a genuine transnational party system is that offered by a common structure of competition, and, hence, by a situation in which transnational parties compete for the control of a transnational political executive. This issue is explored more fully in this study, and we also evaluate the different implications of transnational parties competing for purely legislative office, on the one hand, and competing for executive office, on the other hand, as might be the case were the Commission President to be directly elected, or were the Commission to be wholly accountable to the Parliament.

This also serves to underline the final introductory point. In this study, we adduce a lot of evidence to suggest that there is a strong basis for party convergence across most of the countries of the European Union. For a variety of reasons, including the trans-nationalisation and Europeanisation of political issues, communication and debates, but also because of common technologies and campaign techniques, the barriers standing in the way of party communication across national boundaries are falling. This means that, if the will is there, it has now become easier to build a trans-national party which means, more or less, the same thing in each of the polities in which it is active. In short, there are now fewer obstacles standing in the way of the creation of meaningful trans-national parties. But this is not the same as saying that there are also fewer obstacles standing in the way of the creation of a meaningful transnational party system. For this to develop properly, as we suggest below, there will need to be

a European structure of competition in which the emerging transnational parties can contest one another. This means, in practice, that there will need to be a European executive for which the transnational parties compete – a European Presidency, for example, as in France, or a partisan cabinet within a fused system of powers, as in Italy or the United Kingdom, for example. Following this argument to its logical conclusion, therefore, we might argue that the emergence of transnational parties will only lead to the emergence of a transnational party system if and when a new Treaty creates a democratically accountable European executive, and we know that this is not likely to occur in the foreseeable future.

Does this then suggest that the prospects for a transnational party system are completely doomed? While accepting the logic of this argument in theory, our answer in practice is more nuanced. That is, we suggest that, even within the terms of the present Treaty of Lisbon, there is ample scope for transnational party activity and interaction, even if this does not always translate into full-scale electoral competition. In the first place, and most obviously, there is already scope for the implementation of the Duff proposal, which would provide seats in the Parliament for which competition would be more or less wholly at European level. Second, there is the indirect route towards competition at European level, by which the main transnational parties would nominate a preferred candidate for the Presidency of the European Commission prior to the EP elections themselves, and would campaign on the understanding that, if victorious, this is the candidate that the party would promote. This would obviously link the appointment of the Head of the Commission much more closely to the outcome of the European elections and, in this way, albeit indirectly, it would offer a form of trans-national electoral accountability and control. Third, there are the many and growing ways in which the trans-national parties might engage in co-ordinating *activities* between the national polities and the transnational institutions, and thereby interact with one another in a semi-competitive context. Co-ordinating the collection of signatures for – or against – a European Citizens Initiative is one obvious example; co-ordinating the transnational activities of national parliaments is another. Co-ordination can also involve building links and facilitating effective communication between the different European Institutions – the Council, the Commission, the Parliament – in the complex environment of co-decision. None of these activities amounts to creating a trans-national structure of competition or thereby to creating a transnational party system, but they all will help institutionalise and make relevant the activities of the trans-national parties, and will also encourage their mutual interaction.

### *Key Summary*

While it is possible to conceive of the emergence of transnational parties, the emergence of a transnational party *system* is more problematical;

The weight of national political settings on party organisation strategy and styles of competition may represent an obstacle to the emergence of trans-national parties;

Despite conventional wisdom, the reform of an electoral law for the EP's election may not be conducive to the emergence of a trans-national party system;

The present regulatory framework of the European Political Parties still favours the EP party groups and the parties at national level;

A strong European-level system of financing and regulation could serve to promote trans-national convergent party-building;

The creation of a European structure of political competition is a necessary condition to support the institutionalisation of a genuine transnational party system;

The competition for the control of a trans-national political executive would constitute a fundamental institutional incentive for the development of a transnational party system;

In the absence of a system for competition for the control of a transnational political executive, and even allowing for present institutional circumstances, there are a variety of party-building activities open to the trans-national parties, which can help build their standing.

## **1. The Political Groups in the European Parliament: Policy Positions and Ideological Coherence<sup>1</sup>**

This chapter focuses on the policy position and the ideological coherence of the political Groups constituted in the VII<sup>th</sup> European Parliament. By measuring the policy preferences of the national parties composing the parliamentary Groups, it seeks to answer important questions relating to the policy cohesion of the Groups as a whole, and the degree to which each Group takes a distinct position with respect to its competitors. In other words, how sparse and heterogeneous are the constituent member parties within the Groups? And to what extent are the Groups themselves differentiated from one another? If we are to identify a basis for the emergence of genuine transnational parties, then these should be parties that are ideologically coherent and cohesive within themselves, with each group also being capable of being distinguishable from the others. The purpose of this chapter will be to assess the extent to which this is, in fact, the case in the contemporary European political landscape.

There are at least two main reasons why these questions are substantially important. The first pertains to the internal workings and organisation of the European Parliament. Only homogeneous political Groups can pursue a coherent political agenda. If the Groups are too internally divided, they will fail to deliver what they promised to the European electorate (through national parties). It will be impossible for them to state an official policy position and pursue it in the European Parliament, to issue common declarations, and, more importantly, to vote cohesively in the committees and in the plenary. Contingent majorities and random aggregations of deputies will form for each and every vote, making the legislative process hardly manageable.

Even more fundamentally, the ideological coherence of the political Groups is of crucial importance for the prospects of the EU democracy. Although political representation is, in the EU context, still 'filtered' through national parties, it could certainly be argued that when (and if) the national parties coalescing in the same political Group at EU level express similar concerns and values, then common 'European' party cultures and even identities are already in place. What they will still need to realise their potential fully is a stronger institutional and organisational 'infrastructure' at EU level (as argued elsewhere in this report). In brief, the similarity in the policy preferences among the national parties contesting the EP elections and forming the transnational groupings is crucial for providing the European voters with a meaningful programmatic supply, which could be converted in concrete public policies through the EU legislative process (see, especially, McElroy, Benoit, 2010 and Thomassen, 2009).

In order to describe and evaluate the policy positions and coherence of

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<sup>1</sup> This chapter is based on a paper by Edoardo Bressanelli entitled "The European Parliament after Lisbon: the Policy Position and Coherence of the Political Groups" To be presented to the XXIV Conference of the Italian Society of Political Science, Venice, 16-18 September 2010

the EP political groups, this chapter relies on two data sources. First, it makes use of the manifestos issued by the national parties for the European Parliament elections (*EMP data, University of Mannheim*). These manifestos are the most obvious place to look when the purpose is to study (variations in) the position of the EP groupings. They are issued regularly by the national parties contesting the European Parliament elections and seem to convey more precise and meaningful information on Europe than any other source. Furthermore, we can interestingly compare the official manifestos adopted by the Euro-parties with those issued by their member parties (*i.e.*, the national parties). Second, we rely on the EU Profiler data on parties (<http://www.euprofiler.eu/>). The Profiler was an electronic tool by means of which electors could discover which political party was closer to their own preferences, by expressing their position with respect to several policy statements, for the 2009 EP elections. Political parties, answering to an identical questionnaire, were also asked to self-place themselves in a policy space. Overall, the data generated by the EU Profiler is a very specific and updated source of information to study party positions in the EU context.

This chapter is structured as follows. Part I provides the historical and legal background to the requirement of ‘political affinities’ to constitute a political Group in the Parliament, introducing some potential problems for their ideological homogeneity. Part II describes, in more detail, the data employed for the empirical analysis, which is then developed in Part III. Some concluding remarks are finally presented in Part IV. For those interested in issues of methodology and measurement, an appendix presents them in full.

## **1.1 THE POLICY COHESION OF THE POLITICAL GROUPS**

### **1.1.1 The formation of the political Groups and their ‘political affinities’**

Ever since the European Parliament was established, its organisation has been structured upon transnational political Groups. In 1958, the newly born European Parliament inherited from its forerunner, the Common Assembly of the Coal and Steel Community, its rules of procedure and its three political Groups: the Christian-Democrats, the Socialists and the Liberals (and “supporters”). In turn, the Common Assembly was the first international assembly ever to be structured around political Groups. Not long after its creation (in September 1952), the Assembly witnessed the *de facto* formation of the political Groups, which began to structure their workings according to ideological, rather than national, divisions. The earliest version of the formal rules of the Common Assembly still made no mention of ‘political groupings’, while it often referred to the principle of national representation – for instance, in the allocation of some internal positions, as was customary in the other international assemblies. Very soon, however, the distribution of committee seats and chairmanships began to take into account both national *and* party representation, the deputies were no longer seated in the hemicycle in alphabetical order, but according to the political Group to which they belonged. Finally, in June 1953, the new Rules of Procedure

formally recognised that political Groups could be formed according to “*political persuasion*” (see Hix, Kreppel, Noury, 2003: 311-315).

The early Article 33bis, under the title “Political Groups”, listed the conditions to be met by the political Groups in order to be recognised as such. Two criteria were established. First, the minimum number of deputies to establish a political Group was set at nine. Second, the delegates could organise themselves into groups according to their political sympathies. These fundamental requirements for the constitution of the political Groups are still found in the most recent version of the Rules of Procedure. In the 2009 edition of the Rules, Article 30 states: “members may form themselves into groups according to their *political affinities*”. Moreover, the numerical criterion is rephrased as: “a political group shall comprise Members elected in at least one-quarter of the Member States. The minimum number of Members required to form a political group shall be 25” (Article 30.2). The numerical criterion has been constantly modified in order to take into account the expansion in the membership of the Assembly – following, for instance, the introduction of direct elections, or each enlargement wave. However, here, we are especially interested in the second parameter, namely, the ‘political affinities’ of the members. What is the purpose of this article? And what are its concrete implications for the formation of the political Groups?

When it was first introduced, the requirement of ‘political affinities’ was meant to prevent the formation of national groupings. In the early days of European integration, it was broadly felt that the organisation of the Common Assembly in national groupings was fundamentally anti-European. Furthermore, the deputies themselves discovered very soon that they had more in common with their fellows from sister-parties in other ECSC/EC Member States than with their co-nationals. In any case, even though a Christian-Democratic, a Socialist and a Liberal grouping were soon established in accordance with the criterion of political persuasion – the Groups could still be the *de facto* expression of a quite broad, at times very broad, range of political cultures and traditions. An early observer of the Common Assembly describes them:

*“The highest degree of uniformity is undoubtedly in the Socialist group, which, with one exception, is made up of representatives of the Socialist parties in each of the member States. Far less homogeneity exists in the Christian-Democratic group, which combines a majority of Roman Catholics with a minority of Protestants. Each of these groups nevertheless has a certain basic unity of doctrine, i.e., the Socialist and Christian philosophies respectively. In the “Liberals and apparentés” group, there could obviously be no degree of monolithic structure whatsoever [...] We have been unable to find any doctrinal grounds on which to account for the uniting of these divergent tendencies in a political group.” (Van Oudenhove, 1965:27-28)*

According to the above statement, the Liberal (and supporters) Group had little, if any, ideological affinity, and its *raison d’être* was merely ‘negative’: whoever



was unable to identify with a Christian or a Socialist political culture converged into the “Liberal” grouping. Nevertheless, the history of the European Parliament provides us with other – and far more striking – examples of political Groups which failed to meet the criterion of political affinities. The Technical Group for the Defence of Independent Members, constituted in 1979 by the Italian radicals and small Communist parties, by Euro-sceptic Danes and the Belgian and Irish independent deputies, stated in its declaration of constitution that: ‘each member of the Group keeps its own political programme, its freedom of speech and of voting both in committees and in the plenary.’ The only concession to political affinities was represented by the fact that membership of the Group was ‘only’ open to ‘democrats and anti-fascists’.

An even more notorious case regards the Technical Group for Non-Attached Members - Mixed Group, set up in 1999 by deputies of very diverse political backgrounds, from the Italian Radicals to Le Pen’s *Front National*. This case represents a *unicum* in the history of the European Parliament because – for the first (and only) time – the Parliament voted for the dissolution of the Group. One might wonder on what grounds was the TDI dissolved – when the EP had never challenged the political affinities of any of its groupings before? The answer is that the 1999 case had no precedent because the Group *explicitly* denied in its constitutive declaration the pre-requisite of political affinities. Because of this explicit denial, the Parliament was compelled to take action and to specify more clearly *when* a grouping of deputies is *not* a political Group. The new “political Groups” article kept its formal character (‘Parliament need not normally evaluate the political affinity of members of a group’) except when the Members of a Group explicitly deny their political affinities. In short, it was given a *negative* definition of ‘political Group’, considered to be ‘a (sufficiently large) set of deputies who do not explicitly refute political affinities among themselves when deciding to form a Group’ (Settembri, 2004:168).

Thus, despite the formal pre-requisite of the political affinities, the parliamentary rules cannot guarantee that the trans-national groupings will represent coherent political cultures. Each political Group defines its own membership criteria by itself, and its ideological homogeneity (or heterogeneity) will be the result of political choices, rather than legal norms. This is why this chapter presents an empirical catalogue of the priorities and the policy positions of the national parties constituting the political Groups in the VII<sup>th</sup> European Parliament. Before moving to the presentation of the data, the next section identifies some potential sources of turmoil for the programmatic coherence of the political Groups.

### **1.1.2 Party families in a changing context**

The political Groups and the party system in the European Parliament are based respectively upon the parties and the party systems of the Member States of the EU. It has been traditionally emphasised that an EU party system is only feasible if the major lines of political conflict in Europe do not coincide with the national borders, but instead cross-cut national distinctions (*i.e.*, Thomassen, 2002). As

shown in the previous section, with reference to the early days of the Common Assembly, the traditional party families represented a more binding 'glue' for its Members than their national origins. In other words, they had more in common as Socialists or Christian-Democrats than (say) as French or Germans. This is consistent with a reading of European politics based upon a few fundamental social cleavages, which had been 'activated' and interpreted by political actors in a roughly similar fashion throughout (Western) Europe. The social cleavages – between agriculture and labour, the church and the state, the centre and the periphery, the industrial workers and the owners of the capital – 'produced' competing political parties, which could be grouped in distinct party families according to the social groups that they represented and the basic ideological principles to which they subscribed. Out of the main four cleavages originally identified by Lipset and Rokkan (1967), the class cleavage has proven to be particularly important for party competition. Indeed, the class cleavage – together with the religious cleavage – has been subsumed in a more general left-right dimension, which normally represents the foremost reference for both parties and voters.

A 'party family' reading of politics in the European Parliament has been successfully offered by several analysts. For instance, on the eve of direct elections, it was observed:

*"the three genuinely transnational groups – the Socialists, the Christian-Democrats and the Liberals – all contain wide divergences of attitude and outlook [...] but although this is true, it is not the whole truth. There are big differences between the German, British and French socialist parties [...] but no-one is likely to confuse Helmut Schmidt or Willy Brandt with Margaret Thatcher or Giscard d'Estaing" (Marquand, 1978:444).*

A decade later, transnational party co-operation at EC level was said to bring national parties closer and closer together:

*"at the level of party élites, programmes are becoming increasingly similar, and it cannot be denied that the parties are moving closer together. Even without exaggerated optimism, it can be said that the process is strong enough to make the classification of the famille spirituelles less problematical now than it was before the Second World War" (Von Beyme, 1985:137).*

Nonetheless, there are strong reasons to believe that the exercise of identifying the boundaries of the traditional party families has recently become more complex. Western European party systems have witnessed the emergence of new divisions which could not be foreseen decades ago, such as the politicisation of Green issues, or that of the European Union. Besides this, the classic party

families have also witnessed important changes and adaptations through time. The core values and principles upon which they have traditionally centred are often said to be waning. Especially with regard to the most successful party families, it may prove to be more difficult now, than just a couple of decades ago, to identify their core sets of values: the specialised literature often depicts 'catch-all' people's parties, 'cartel' parties and 'electoral professional' parties, seeking to satisfy the short-term demands of pragmatic voters in a context of growing policy consensus (for example, Katz, Mair, 1995). According to some observers, this trend has become fully evident in the post-1989 world, when the 'end of ideologies' left political parties with only a feasible course of action: supporting liberal-market democracy. Thus, it is a widely-heard argument that the concepts of 'left' and 'right' are less-meaningful now and that new categories are needed for the future.

Besides this, a reading of European politics in terms of the traditional party families is also challenged by the continuous enlargements of the EU. While it might have been a relatively easy task to bring together the Socialist or the Christian-Democratic parties in the EC-6, the political Groups faced a much more challenging situation on the eve of the far-ranging expansion to the ten young democracies of Central and Eastern Europe (CEE), which entered the EU between May 2004 and January 2007. Indeed, party family categories appear to be more inadequate the more they are asked to travel beyond Western European boundaries (Benoit, Laver, 2006:133-145). At the time of the "Big Bang" enlargement, the party systems in Central and Eastern Europe were still in a state of flux – with parties suddenly emerging or disappearing in a context of very high electoral volatility. Moreover, political parties used to exploit the label 'liberal', even when they had very little, if anything, to share with the liberal family, some conservative or populist parties ventured to present themselves as Christian-Democrats and the Greens, with a couple of minor exceptions, were practically absent. On the one hand, this clearly suggests the need to apply - with the due care - traditional party family categories to post-communist systems. On the other hand, it might also highlight a tension for the integration of CEE parties in the political Groups, with some risks for the policy coherence of the latter.

## **1.2 PRESENTATION OF THE DATA**

The data used to study the ideological position and cohesion of the political Groups originate from two main sources. Since the objective of this chapter is to map the policy positions of the national parties in as many Member States as possible, we decided to compute – according to well-established techniques – some policy scales where national parties could be usefully located. Even if a qualitative analysis of a few selected parties might have cast more light on the subtleties of political rhetoric, an extensive analysis of the complex reality of the European Parliament (where 751 MEPs, for about 170 national parties, sit in seven political Groups or as independent) required the use of quantitative data and some simple statistical techniques. The data which we employed (described

in more detail both below and in the appendix) originate from the coding of the election manifestos issued by national parties for the 2004 EP elections (*EMP data-set*) and the self-positioning of political parties (cross-checked and, eventually, modified by experts) for the 2009 European Parliament elections (*EU Profiler*).

### **1.2.1 Euromanifesto Project**

The Euromanifestos Project (EMP), based at the University of Mannheim in Germany, applies quantitative content analysis to the election manifestos issued by the national and the European-level parties for the European Parliament elections. The theoretical and methodological foundations of the EMP lie in the Comparative Manifestos Project (CMP), a long-lasting international endeavour, which systematically collected and coded the election manifestos issued by the national political parties for the national elections in the post-World War II period (for an extensive presentation, see Budge *et al.*, 2001).

National (and European-level) parties also issue election programmes for the European Parliament elections: the EMP moved from the idea that these manifestos, conveying meaningful information on the political priorities and positions of the parties, could be coded following the CMP instructions. In order to capture their European content, the original coding-scheme has been marginally modified: without going into the technical details here (but see Braun, 2006), it is sufficient to note that several categories and a new level have been added to the original coding in order to catch the party discourse concerning European integration better.

The aim of quantitative content analysis is to transform words into numbers. In the case of election manifestos, each quasi-sentence – which is the unit of analysis and can be understood as the verbal expression of one political idea or issue – is placed in one of the categories defined by the original dictionary. This dictionary is made up of 69 coding categories (peace, free enterprise, *etc.*) grouped into 7 policy domains (external relations, economy, *etc.*). Let us imagine that an election manifesto states: ‘our party supports the introduction of a tax for the goods imported from China.’ This (quasi-) sentence is coded under the category ‘protectionism: positive’ in the ‘economy’ domain. The coding is repeated for each of the (quasi-) sentences in the manifesto and – at the end of the work – the whole text is transformed into numbers: what we are left with is a table with the number of quasi-sentences falling under each coding category.

From the items obtained from the manifesto coding, a left-right and an anti-pro European integration scale can be computed. The computation of the left-right scale is based upon a slightly modified version of the CMP scale (see again Budge *et al.*, 2001 and Braun *et al.*, 2006), while the EU integration scale is made up from the aggregation of specific EMC category between two poles: positive and negative references to the EU polity and policies (Braun, 2006 *et al.*).

Finally, it is worth observing that very few parties and, in general, small parties, do not issue any manifesto for the European Parliament elections. In this

case, a substitute for the Euromanifesto has been searched for (for instance the European 'chapter' of a corresponding national platform, or a speech of the leader). In other cases, it might also happen that parties adopt the manifesto of the Euro-party where they have membership. However, the vast majority of national parties still adopt their own manifesto for the European Parliament elections.

### **1.2.2 EU Profiler**

The EU Profiler, based at the European University Institute (Florence) conveys information both on voters and on political parties. The Profiler is an electronic tool by means of which voters have the possibility to place themselves in a policy space determined by several dimensions and find out which political party – both in their own country and throughout the EU – is closer to their own preferences.

This chapter only uses the EU Profiler data for political parties. However, two methodological issues are particularly relevant and need to be briefly discussed - first, the coding of the parties. Political parties were asked to answer a questionnaire made up of thirty policy questions. The *self*-placement of the parties – asked to provide empirical evidence, such as manifesto extracts, leader declarations, interviews, *etc.*, to substantiate their answers – was then checked by a group of country experts, who compared the party self-placement with their own information. The experts, like the parties, were asked to support their own coding with documents and, among the sources for the coding, the primary role was assigned to the party manifesto for the EP elections. In cases of discrepancy between the two, the experts had the final word. The second issue concerns the selection of the questions to be included in the survey. After careful analysis of party discourse (based especially upon party manifestos), twenty-eight general and two country-specific questions were grouped into nine policy fields, which represent the main issues for party competition. Out of these groupings: a general left-right scale, an anti-pro EU scale and seven specific policy dimensions were generated (see Trechsel and Mair, 2009 and [www.euprofiler.eu](http://www.euprofiler.eu))

The EU Profiler data presents two important strengths. First, the tool was specifically designed for the 2009 EP elections, thus providing the most updated evidence for party positioning and issue priorities. Second, the data covers all Member States in the EU-27 and almost all parties represented in the VII<sup>th</sup> European Parliament (see the appendix).

## **1.3 EMPIRICAL ANALYSIS**

We begin – drawing on previous work (Klingemann *et al.* 2007:28-50) – by presenting the Euro-manifesto data, which allow us to obtain an overview of the issue priorities of the political Groups. Table 1 shows which themes are most emphasised by national parties in their European election manifestos. The numbers in the table indicate the content code share belonging to each issue category: for instance, 'military strength' indicates the percentage of the manifesto devoted to military issues (such as the need to maintain or increase

military expenditure, re-armament, the need to create an EU army, *etc.*). Each number in the cells could thus vary from 0 (when the party manifesto does not mention the issue at all) to 100 (if the whole manifesto deals exclusively with the issue). The grouping of the policy domains (external policies, constitutional affairs, *etc.*) follows the competences of the EP Committees, while the grouping of the coding categories draws from Klingemann *et al.* 2007, but is adapted to the EMP data. It is important to stress that the table simply indicates the emphasis that parties assign to each policy category (or, if you wish, the amount of text for each policy area): low entries do not necessarily indicate negative positions.

Looking at the entries in Table 1, three main observations can be made. First, the manifestos of the national parties grouping in the EPP and the S&D mainly emphasise the same categories. For both political Groups, the most 'popular' issue is international co-operation (including stronger co-operation in the EU). It is then followed by positive references to the EU institutions (support for a European constitution and positive references to the Parliament and the Commission), ranking second for the EPP and third for the S&D and, finally, by expansion of the welfare state (although the space devoted to expanding the welfare state is almost double in the S&D manifestos: 13.8 % *versus* 7%). For the rest, the EPP parties devote more space to issues of traditional morality (support for a traditional family, religion, *etc.*) and to the market economy. In turn, the S&D parties give a more prominent role to the protection of the environment and to state intervention in the economy.

The second observation concerns the ALDE and the two leftist political Groups (the Greens-EFA and the GUE-NGL). Even though international co-operation still ranks high in their issue priorities, each of them assigns a special prominence to a particular policy category. Thus, the ALDE Group is very supportive of the market economy (11.9%), the Greens-EFA parties devote one-fourth of their manifestos to environmental protection (24%), while the GUE-NGL demands a stronger welfare state and supports an assertive role for the state in the economy. Finally, the ECR and the EFD distinguish themselves with a markedly Euro-sceptic rhetoric: negative references to the EU institutions occupy one-fifth of the ECR manifestos and are ranked second in the hierarchy of priorities of the EFD, where they are accompanied by a very pronounced nationalistic appeal (30.5%). Both Groups devote much space to institutional affairs and support administrative efficiency and strong executives in the Member States. Furthermore, the EFD puts a particular emphasis on the issue of democracy, which becomes a critique of the anti-democratic nature of the EU, and it supports de-centralisation (opposing centralisation at EU level).

**Table 1:** Political Group priorities as revealed by their Euro-manifestos

|                            | EPP      | S&D             | ALDE   | Greens-EFA | GUE-NGL | ECR | EFD |
|----------------------------|----------|-----------------|--------|------------|---------|-----|-----|
| International Co-operation | 12.7 (1) | <b>14.3 (1)</b> | 92 (2) | 8.3 (3)    | 7.8 (3) | 5.3 | 1.8 |

|  | EPP             | S&D             | ALDE            | Greens-EFA    | GUE-NGL         | ECR             | EFD             |
|--|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|---------------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|
| International Co-operation                         | 12.7 (1)        | <b>14.3 (1)</b> | 92 (2)          | 8.3 (3)       | 7.8 (3)         | 5.3             | 1.8             |
| Military Strength                                  | <b>3.8</b>      | 1.4             | 1.6             | 0.1           | 0.2             | 1.2             | 0.3             |
| Peace  | 1.4             | 3.4             | 2.1             | 5.8           | <b>6.6</b>      | 2.7             | 0.6             |
| Nationalism  | 1.9             | 1.1             | 1.9             | 1.3           | 3.2             | 5.3             | <b>30.5 (1)</b> |
| Special Relations                                  | 1.7             | 0.7             | 1               | 0.5           | 1.4             | <b>3.2</b>      | 0.1             |
| Enlargements                                       | <b>3.9</b>      | 1.1             | 2.1             | 0.8           | 0.5             | 0.1             | 2               |
| <b>Constitutional Affairs</b>                      |                 |                 |                 |               |                 |                 |                 |
| EU Positive  | <b>10.2 (2)</b> | 8.1 (3)         | 5.7             | 8.2           | 5.8             | 6.5             | 2.8             |
| EU Negative  | 3.1             | 1.7             | 3.6             | 2.6           | 5.1             | <b>20.8 (1)</b> | 12.7 (2)        |
| Democracy  | 2.8             | 4.3             | 4.9             | 5.4           | 5.9             | 3.3             | <b>7.6</b>      |
| Government   | 3.3             | 4.9             | 2.7             | 1.6           | 2.7             | <b>11 (2)</b>   | 8.2 (3)         |
| Decentralization                                   | 4               | 2.4             | 4.1             | 3.4           | 3               | 1.4             | <b>5</b>        |
| <b>Civil Liberties, Justice &amp; Home Affairs</b> |                 |                 |                 |               |                 |                 |                 |
| Freedom and HR                                     | 2.4             | 2.1             | 3.5             | <b>5.6</b>    | 4               | 1.5             | 3               |
| Traditional Morality & Order                       | 6.6             | 4.3             | 5.4             | 1             | 1.8             | <b>9.8 (3)</b>  | 5.9             |
| <b>Economic and Monetary Affairs</b>               |                 |                 |                 |               |                 |                 |                 |
| Market Economy                                     | 6.4             | 5.4             | <b>11.9 (1)</b> | 2.6           | 3.6             | 7.4             | 4.4             |
| Planned/Mixed Economy                              | 1               | 1.5             | 1               | 1.1           | <b>7.9 (2)</b>  | 1.6             | 1.3             |
| Economic Infrastructure                            | <b>6</b>        | 5.5             | 5.7             | 1.3           | 2               | 1.1             | 2               |
| <b>Social Affairs</b>                              |                 |                 |                 |               |                 |                 |                 |
| Welfare State Limitation                           | 0.1             | 0               | 0.1             | 0             | 0               | <b>0.4</b>      | 0.1             |
| Welfare State Expansion                            | 7 (3)           | 13.8 (2)        | 7.6             | 10.4 (2)      | <b>14.5 (1)</b> | 1.6             | 1.2             |
| Social Group Politics                              | 0.3             | 0.5             | 0.2             | <b>0.6</b>    | 0.3             | 0               | 0               |
| <b>Environment</b>                                 |                 |                 |                 |               |                 |                 |                 |
| Environmental Protection                           | 4.1             | 6.6             | 8.2 (3)         | <b>24 (1)</b> | 7.5             | 3.9             | 4.3             |
| <b>Agriculture</b>                                 |                 |                 |                 |               |                 |                 |                 |
| Agriculture  | 3.1             | 2.5             | 3.6             | 3.7           | 2.1             | <b>5.9</b>      | 0.5             |

**Note:** Entries are means of national parties emphases (% sentences belonging to each category) - weighted per number of MEPs per national party. In bold the highest entry per row. The numbers in parentheses indicate the three most emphasized issues per political Group.

These data seem to indicate that the political Groups are quite clearly

distinguished according to the issues they prioritise. In economic and social affairs, references in favour of a market economy and – although it is hardly mentioned by parties – for a limitation of the welfare state clearly separate the ALDE, the ECR and the EPP (to the right) from the other groupings (to the left). With regard to the support for European integration, a divide emerges between the ECR and the EFD (strongly opposed) *vis-à-vis* the other political groupings, where positive and negative references to the EU lean towards the positive side, moderately so for the GUE-NGL and convincingly so for the other political Groups.

Has the enlargement towards Central and Eastern Europe brought any change to the above picture? Do the parties from the post-communist systems make up a politically distinct sub-group? In order to address these questions (see, also, Klingemann, 2007: 29-32), Table 2 displays the means of the share of the manifesto sentences referring to the usual policy domains, grouping the national parties by region (whether they are from the ‘Old’ EU or from Central and Eastern Europe). The last column lists the total means together with the results of a statistical (difference-of-means) test. It can certainly be observed that, in the majority of categories, there are no important differences between the parties from the two regions. If we limit our focus to those categories highlighted in bold – the most emphasised per policy domain – Central and Eastern European parties are significantly different only in ‘traditional morality, law and order’ and for environmental issues. The latter is easily explained: there are almost no Green parties in our sample (and very few, in general, in Central and Eastern Europe). The difference in the former category is, instead, specifically due to the fact that most CEE parties joining the EPP or the ECR Group – for instance, the Polish Law and Justice, the Latvian People’s Party, the Lithuanian New Era or the Slovakian Christian Democratic Movement – put a very strong emphasis on this category, as no Western European party does.

Looking more broadly at the other categories, significant differences are to be found in the emphasis on “special relationships” (in CEE manifestos, a fairly prominent place is clearly occupied by the relationships with Russia); on “economic infrastructure” (where CEE parties predictably raise their voice more loudly) and on “planned economy”, which post-communist countries – quite understandably – tend to downplay. Overall, the impact of the ‘Big Bang’ enlargement, albeit not negligible, appears to be limited to a few well-delineated issue areas.

In order to present the political cohesion (or heterogeneity) of the political Groups more accurately, the policy positions of the national parties which received at least one parliamentary seat in the 2009 European Parliament elections have been displayed in a bi-dimensional space, in which the horizontal axis represents the left-right position and the vertical axis represents the anti-pro European integration position of the parties. The two axes have been selected for their relevance in European politics: several empirical studies, based upon a wide-range of data and methods, have convincingly demonstrated that the left-right and the integration dimension constitute a parsimonious but fairly accurate

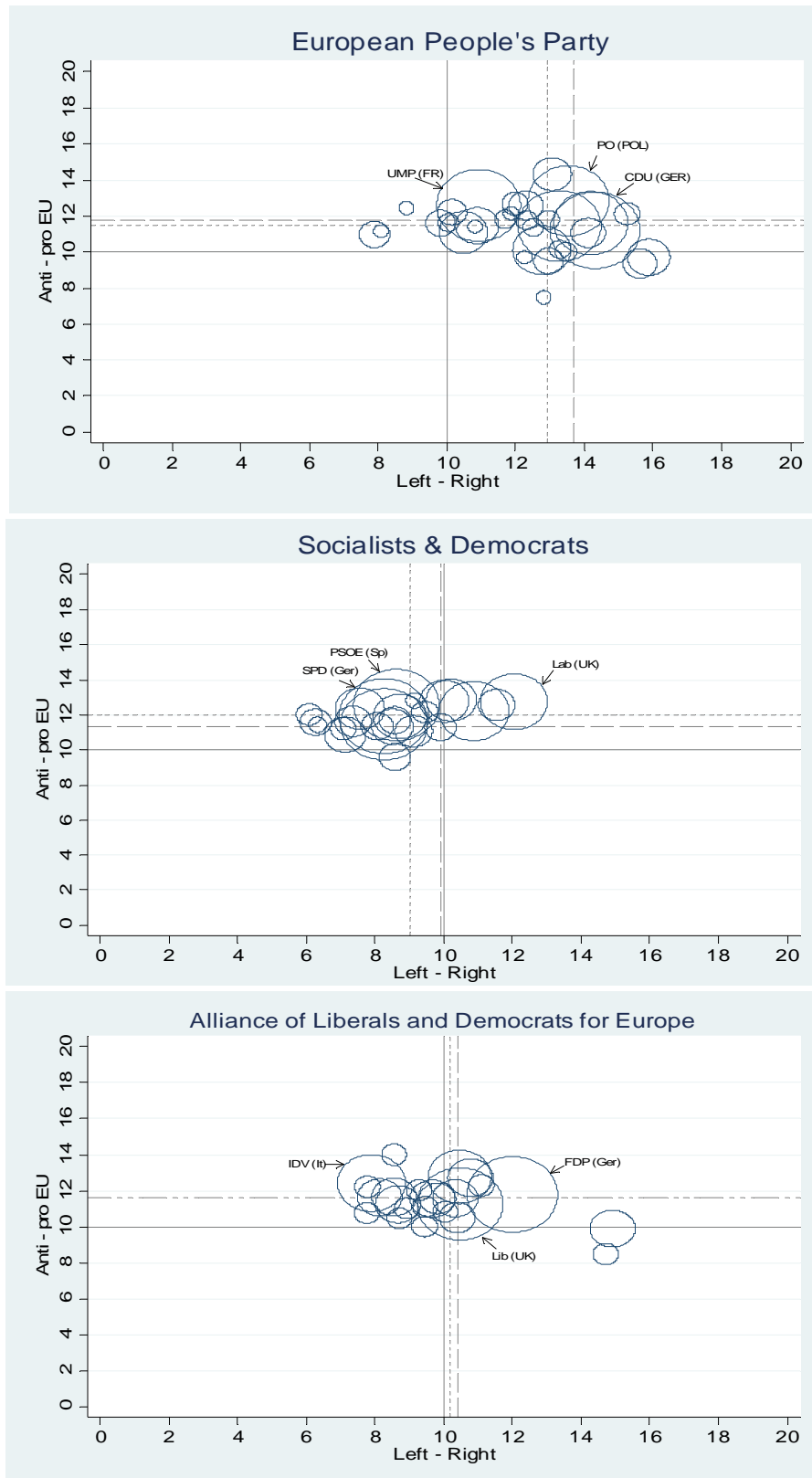
**Table 2:** political priorities in Western and Eastern Europe



|   | Old Europe<br>(93) | New Europe<br>(31) | Total<br>(124) |
|---|--------------------|--------------------|----------------|
| <b>Domains:</b>                                       |                    |                    |                |
| <b>1. External Affairs</b>                            |                    |                    |                |
| International Cooperation                             | <b>10</b>          | <b>9.5</b>         | <b>9.9</b>     |
| Military Power  | 1.1                | 1.2                | 1.2            |
| Peace   | 3.5                | 2.7                | 3.3            |
| Nationalism   | 3.2                | 4                  | 3.4            |
| Special Relations                                     | 0.9                | 2.4                | 1.5**          |
| Enlargements  | 1.8                | 0.6                | 1.5**          |
| <b>2. Constitutional Affairs</b>                      |                    |                    |                |
| EU positive   | <b>7.8</b>         | <b>6.3</b>         | <b>7.5</b>     |
| EU negative   | 4.7                | 4.3                | 4.6            |
| Democracy   | 4.9                | 3.8                | 4.6**          |
| Decentralization                                      | 4.4                | 3.1                | 4              |
| Government  | 4.3                | 3.4                | 4.1            |
| <b>3. Civil Liberties, Justice &amp; Home Affairs</b> |                    |                    |                |
| Freedom and HR  | 3.2                | 2.6                | 3.1            |
| Traditional Morality, Law & Order                     | <b>4.4</b>         | <b>9.4</b>         | <b>5.7**</b>   |
| <b>4. Economic and Monetary Affairs</b>               |                    |                    |                |
| Market Economy  | <b>5.8</b>         | <b>5.7</b>         | <b>5.8</b>     |
| Planned/Mixed Economy                                 | 2.3                | 1.1                | 2**            |
| Economic Infrastructure                               | 3.7                | 5.8                | 4.2**          |
| <b>5. Social Affairs</b>                              |                    |                    |                |
| Welfare State Expansion                               | <b>9.5</b>         | <b>12.8</b>        | <b>10.3</b>    |
| Social Group Politics                                 | 0.2                | 0.6                | 0.3            |
| <b>6. Environment</b>                                 |                    |                    |                |
| Environmental Protection                              | <b>8.6</b>         | <b>4.3</b>         | <b>7.5**</b>   |
| <b>7. Agriculture</b>                                 |                    |                    |                |
| Agriculture   | <b>3</b>           | <b>3.8</b>         | <b>3.2</b>     |

**Note:** Entries are weighted means of national parties emphases (% sentences belonging to each category). \*\* sig. .01 (analysis of variance, robust estimates). In bold the main issue per policy domain.

**Graph 1:** The EPP, the S&D and the ALDE Groups in a bi-dimensional space



**Note:**  $n(\text{EPP})=32$ ;  $n(\text{S\&D})=26$ ;  $n(\text{ALDE})=24$ . The long-dashed lines are for the Euro-party manifesto, the short-dashed lines are for the mean weighted position of the national parties represented in the Group. Each circle represents a national party: the bigger the circle, the larger its number of MEPs.

accurate representation of the EU (and EP) policy space (*i.e.*, Hix *et al.*, 2007; McElroy, Benoit, 2007).

In the scatter-plots (Graph 1 and Graph 2), the short-dashed line graphically represents the weighted mean position of the national parties, the long-dashed line depicts the position of the corresponding Euro-party (when present), while the continuous line is simply the mid-point of the scale. Each Member State party is represented by a circle. The bigger the circle, the more MEPs a party received in the 2009 EP elections. In order to get a measure of the policy position and of the 'spread' of the Groups, we have computed weighted means and standard deviations (reported in Table 3). Starting with the Group of the European People's Party, it can be seen that the vast majority of its constituent national parties are in the top-right quadrant (right-of-the-centre position and pro- European). The mean position of the national parties on the left-right dimension is 12.9 while the position on European integration is 11.5. The EPP appears to be more cohesive on the EU dimension (standard deviation (sd) = 1.1) than on the left-right axis (sd = 1.7).

In the graph, this is visually displayed by the more pronounced overlapping of the circles around the vertical mean than around the horizontal mean. Furthermore, there are a few parties on the left-hand side quadrant and others moderately critical of the EU. Leaning more towards the left-hand side, we have the Italian SVP (indeed, contesting the elections with the centre-left coalition in Italy), the Finnish National Coalition and the Belgian Humanistic Democratic Centre, while the Bavarian CSU and the Italian UDC lean more towards the right-hand side. The Latvian People's Party and a few other parties grouped around the mid-point of the scale seem, instead, more critical towards the EU. It should also be noted that the big five (the German CDU, the Italian PDL, the French UMP, the Polish PO and the Spanish PP) are all quite close in the policy space.

Moving forward, the S&D Group occupies a centre-left position and is in favour of European integration. Its component parties are more cohesive on the anti-pro EU integration dimension (sd = 0.6) than on the left-right axis (sd = 1.4). The UK Labour Party is the furthest to the right, while the Belgian, French-speaking, Socialists occupy the furthest left position. It is interesting to note that the Euro-party (PES) position on the left-right axis (9.9) is fairly more centrist than the national parties' mean (9). Finally, the ALDE Group is placed at the centre of the political spectrum and its constituent parties are pro-European. Here, again, there is almost double the variation on socio-economic policies than on the integration dimension. According to the manifesto estimates, only two parties deviate markedly from this centrist position: the Flemish Open VLD and the Estonian Reform Party, occupying a right-wing position. The position of the ELDR party (one of the two Euro-parties represented in the ALDE Group) almost coincides with the mean position of the national parties.

Overall, these data indicate that the three bigger political Groups can hardly be distinguished from one another and are all internally cohesive on European integration. A wider range of positions is represented on the left-right spectrum, where the political Groups are internally more heterogeneous, but

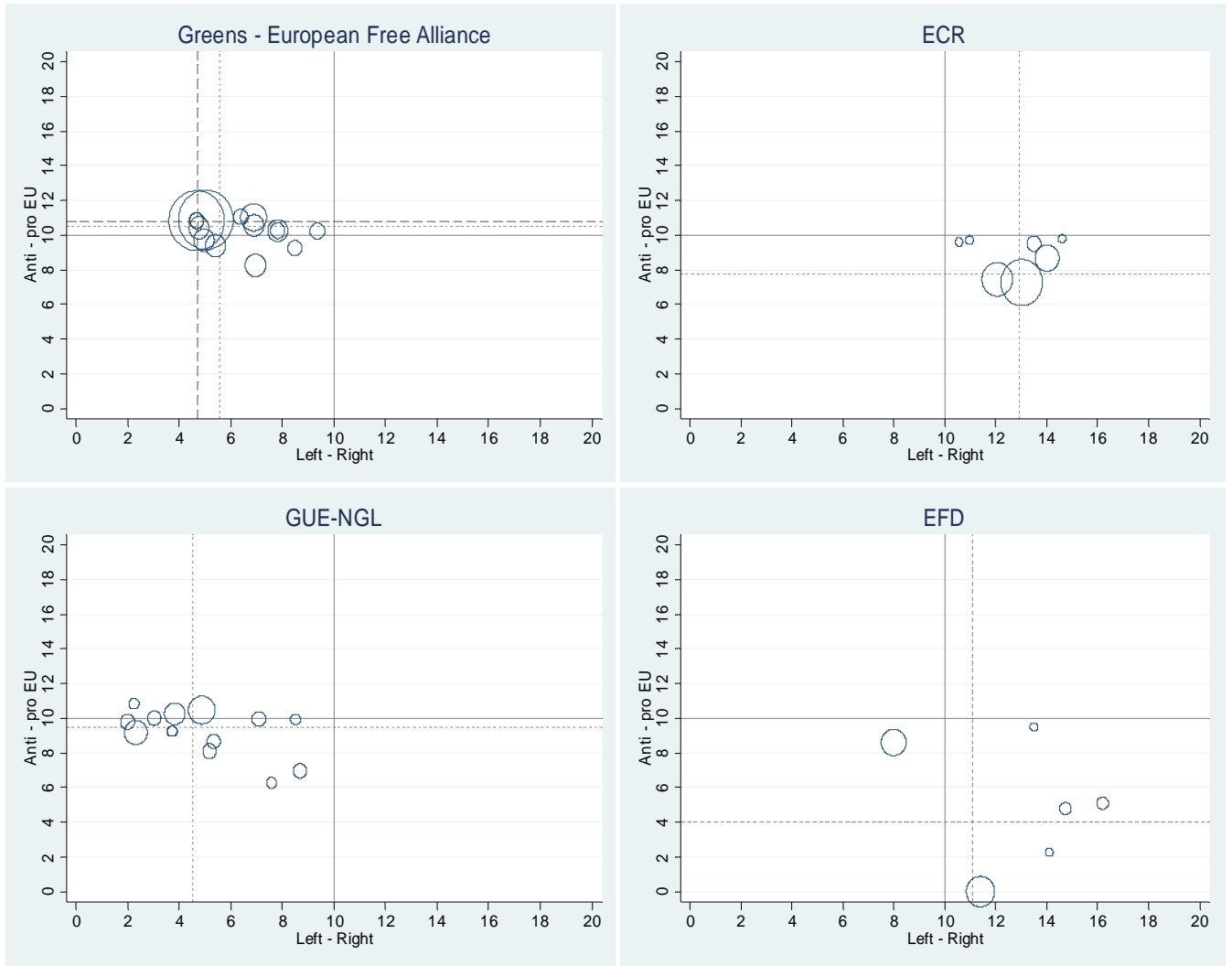
their respective positions are also quite distinct: the EPP occupies a centre-right position, the ALDE is firmly at the centre and the S&D lies at the centre-left of the policy space.

The positions concerning the other Groups are displayed in Graph 2. In line with conventional descriptions of the EP policy space, the Greens-EFA and the GUE-NGL are located on the left-hand side, while the Conservatives (ECR) on the right-hand side of the spectrum. The Europe of Freedom and Democracy Group (EFD) occupies a right-wing position – even if one of its main constituent parties, the Italian Northern League (*Lega Nord*), is placed on the left by its manifesto data regarding economic policy, where the state plays an active role. Both the Greens and the Communist parties are fairly dispersed on socio-economic policy, but the biggest constituent parties are firmly on the left-hand side. The ECR Group is remarkably cohesive on the two dimensions ( $sd = 0.8$ ) and its member parties are all in the bottom-right quadrant (right-wing and Euro-sceptic). However, it is the EFD Group that has the most critical views towards European integration (no party in our sample is as opposed to European integration as the UK Independence Party).

If a two-dimensional display allows for a synthetic and fairly accurate representation of the EU policy space, it is also true that the real policy spaces where parties compete are highly multidimensional. Nonetheless, empirical analyses need to cope with a trade-off: a mono or bi-dimensional space is parsimonious and simple, but, at times, insufficient to grasp the complexity of the political world; in turn, a multi-dimensional space could better represent reality, but further problems could arise in interpretation (for example, Laver, Hunt, 1992:11-15). In this chapter, rather than taking sides in this debate, we decided to explore both paths.

Having already presented the EMP data in a bi-dimensional context, we now turn to a multi-dimensional space, by making use of the EU Profiler data. The EU Profiler team has computed seven policy scales out of the thirty items of the questionnaire submitted to political parties, with reference to: liberal society, the expanded welfare state, economic liberalisation, restrictive financial policy, law and order, restrictive immigration policy and environmental protection. As we have already underlined, they were carefully selected by the EU Profiler researchers after an examination of party discourse and priorities. Table 4 reports the means of the political Groups together with their standard deviations to measure the Group cohesion on the specified dimension. Also, in order to offer a quicker appreciation of the policy spaces occupied by the EP political Groups, spider graphs are displayed (Graph 3). In a spider graph, each spike represents a policy dimension, while the area obtained by connecting the positions of the Groups on each dimension depicts the policy space that each political Group occupies.

**Graph 2:** The smaller Groups in a bi-dimensional space



**Note:** n(G-EFA)=15; n(GUE-NGL)=14; n(ECR)=7, n(EFD)=6. The long-dashed lines are for the Euro-party manifesto, the short-dashed lines are for the mean weighted position of the national parties represented in the Group.

**Table 3:** the political Groups on the left-right and anti-pro EU integration scales

|            | <i>Left-Right</i>     |                   | <i>Anti-Pro EU</i>    |                   |
|------------|-----------------------|-------------------|-----------------------|-------------------|
|            | national parties (sd) | <i>Euro-party</i> | national parties (sd) | <i>Euro-party</i> |
| EPP        | 12.9 (1.7)            | 13.7              | 11.5 (1.1)            | 11.8              |
| S&D        | 9 (1.4)               | 9.9               | 12 (0.6)              | 11.3              |
| ALDE       | 10.2 (1.7)            | 10.4              | 11.6 (0.9)            | 11.6              |
| Greens-EFA | 5.6 (1.2)             | 4.7               | 10.5 (0.7)            | 10.8              |
| GUE-NGL    | 4.5 (2)               | -                 | 9.5 (1.1)             | -                 |
| ECR        | 12.9 (0.8)            | -                 | 7.8 (0.8)             | -                 |
| EFD        | 11.1 (2.6)            | -                 | 4 (4)                 | -                 |

**Note:** entries in the column “national parties” are weighted means (standard deviations)

**Table 4:** policy position and cohesion of the political Groups on seven policy scales

|  | EPP<br>(39)         | S&D<br>(28)   | ALDE<br>(26)         | Greens-EFA<br>(21) | GUE-NGL<br>(16)     | ECR<br>(8)           | EFD<br>(6)           |
|--|---------------------|---------------|----------------------|--------------------|---------------------|----------------------|----------------------|
| <i><b>Liberal Society</b></i>                | 5.4<br>(2.5)        | 12.8<br>(2.6) | 11.5<br>(3.6)        | 17.7<br>(2.1)      | 16.3<br>(2.2)       | 9.7<br><b>(5.1)</b>  | 7.7<br><b>(4.7)</b>  |
| <i><b>Economic Liberalization</b></i>        | 10.3<br>(2.3)       | 4.8<br>(2.1)  | 10.1<br>(4.4)        | 3.1<br>(1.8)       | 4.5<br>(3.2)        | 10.7<br>(2.7)        | 13.4<br><b>(5)</b>   |
| <i><b>Restrictive financial policy</b></i>   | 10<br>(2.6)         | 4.8<br>(2.2)  | 10.6<br>(4)          | 3.9<br>(2.2)       | 5.3<br>(3.3)        | 10.5<br>(4.4)        | 13.2<br><b>(5.5)</b> |
| <i><b>Law and order</b></i>                  | 16<br>(3)           | 8.6<br>(3.1)  | 9.7<br>(3.6)         | 2<br>(2.9)         | 5.3<br>(4.1)        | 12.3<br><b>(4.6)</b> | 14.8<br><b>(4.6)</b> |
| <i><b>Restrictive immigration policy</b></i> | 12.3<br>(4.4)       | 7.9<br>(3.7)  | 9.1<br>(4.2)         | 5.7<br>(2.8)       | 6.8<br><b>(4.5)</b> | 7.4<br><b>(4.9)</b>  | 16.9<br>(2)          |
| <i><b>Environmental protection</b></i>       | 9.1<br><b>(4.5)</b> | 15.2<br>(3.7) | 10.7<br><b>(6.6)</b> | 17.4<br>(3)        | 16.2<br>(3)         | 9.6<br>(3.4)         | 5.3<br>(4.1)         |
| <i><b>Expanded Welfare State</b></i>         | 10<br>(3.9)         | 16.9<br>(2.7) | 10.7<br><b>(5.3)</b> | 17.6<br>(2.7)      | 19<br>(3.5)         | 11.3<br>(2.5)        | 8<br><b>(5.6)</b>    |

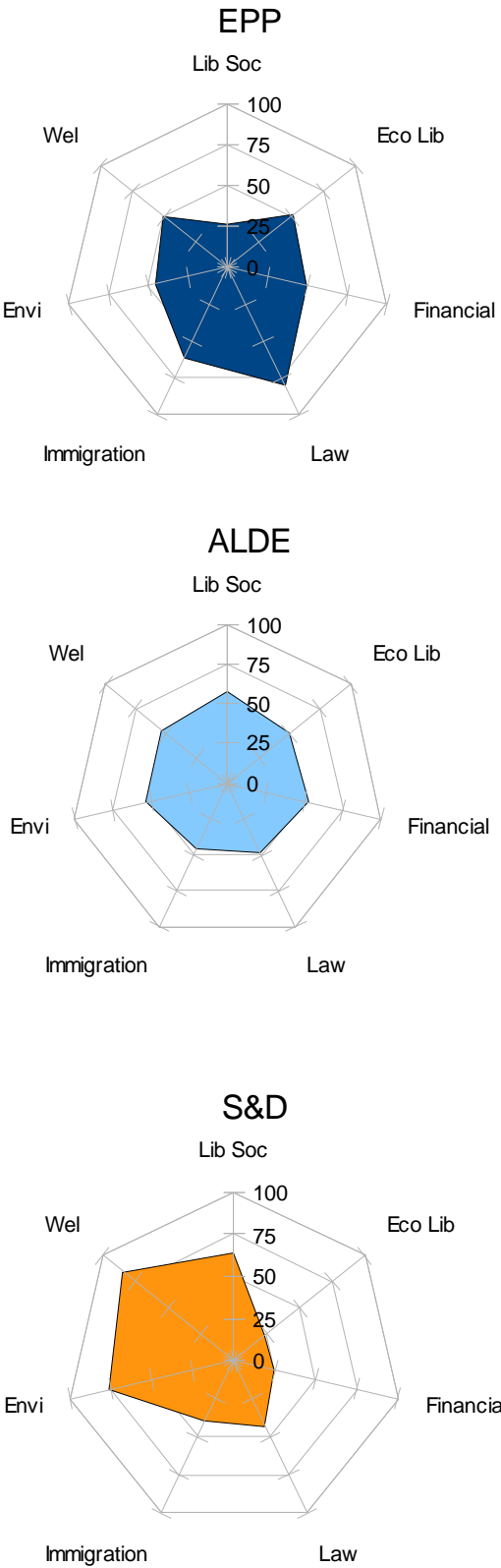
**Note:** entries are weighted means, standard deviations in parentheses. Under the name of the Group, in parentheses, the number of cases. In bold sd > 4.5

Before looking at the spider graphs, let us focus on the dispersion of the national parties. Table 4 highlights, in bold, the standard deviations with particularly high values. Clearly, with high standard deviations, the national party members of a Group occupy a broad range of positions on the selected dimension. Among the political Groups, the S&D and the Greens appear to be the most coherent. On the other hand, both the ECR and, in particular, the EFD appear to be, instead, the expression of a wide range of positions. For instance, the parties in the ECR have very diverse opinions on ‘law and order’ (indicating harsher punishments for criminals and restriction of civil liberties to fight terrorism) and ‘restrictive immigration policy’. However, the EFD is by far the most heterogeneous political Group, with its component parties broadly differing in almost all the dimensions – and only agreeing upon the need for a restrictive immigration policy.

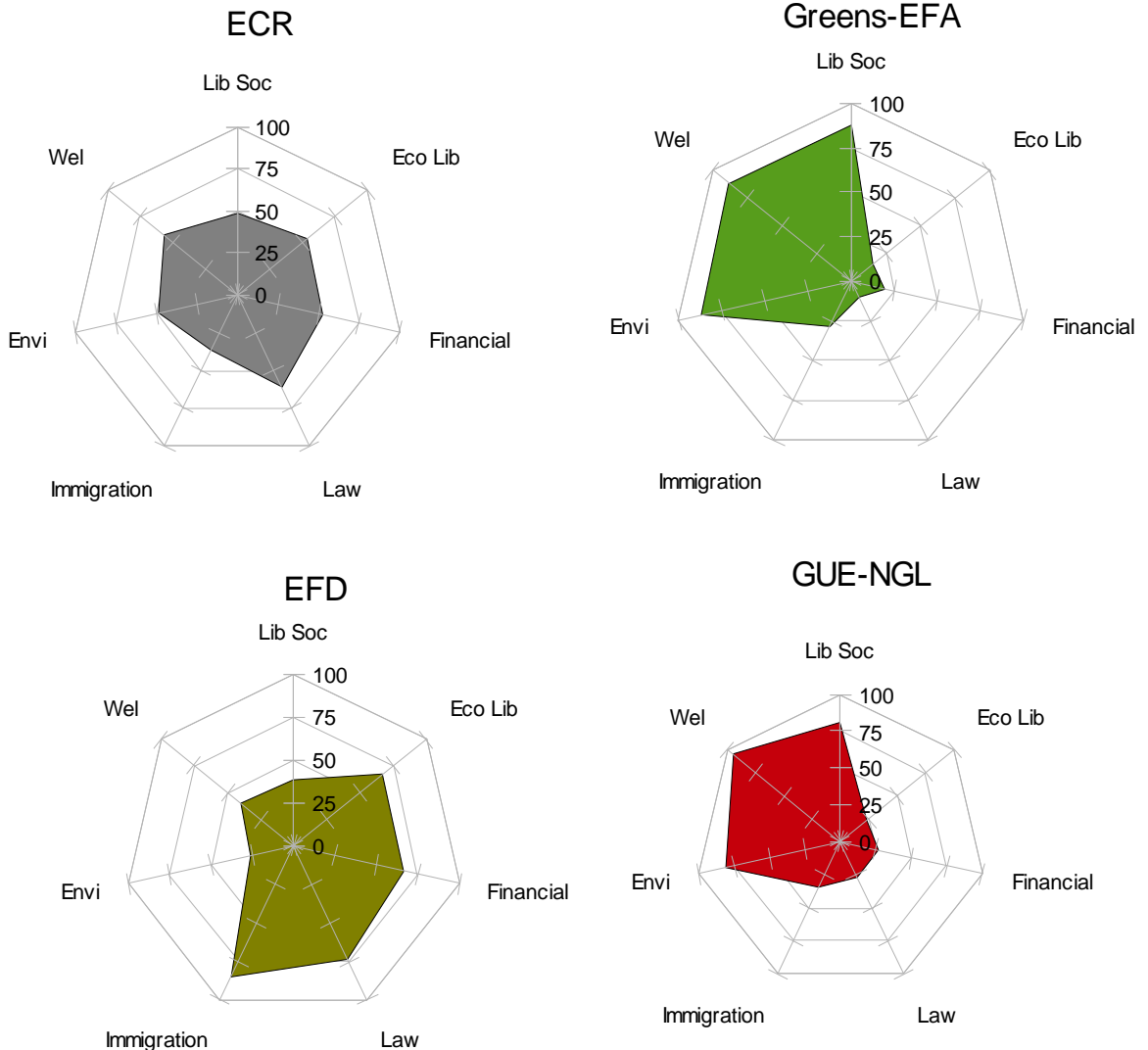
As it has already been pointed out by looking at the EMP data, the cohesion of the S&D stands out among the biggest political Groups, while the EPP appears quite divided on environmental protection (to be more precise, on the need to prioritise the protection of the environment over other economic goals) and on immigration policies. The ALDE parties display a very pronounced variation on environmental protection (sd = 6.6) and on welfare expansion (for example, on the need to increase social programmes, healthcare services and crèches), as was, in any case, easily predictable, given the traditional distinction between social (left-wing) and market (right-wing) liberalism.

**Graph 3: Spiders (EU Profiler)**

a) the EPP, the ALDE and the S&D Groups



b) the smaller political Groups



**Note:** the seven dimensions are: 'Lib Soc' - liberal society; 'Eco Lib' - economic liberalisation; 'Financial' - *restrictive* financial policy; 'Law' - law and order; 'Immigration'- *restrictive* immigration policy; 'Envi' - environmental protection; 'Wel' - *expanded* welfare state. The higher the value on a dimension, the stronger the agreement of the Group on the policies expressed by the specified dimension.

The spider graphs are a very effective way of looking at the policy positions and at the policy differences between the political Groups. As can easily be seen in the graph below, the polygon, delineated by the national party positions on the seven dimensions, occupies an area stretching towards the upper-left corner for the S&D, the Greens-EFA and the GUE-NGL, an area stretching towards the bottom-right corner for the EPP, the EFD and (less so) the ECR and, finally, an area delineated by the mid-point of the scales in the case of the ALDE.



In more detail, the Greens-EFA and the GUE-NGL occupy a very similar (almost identical) policy space, while the S&D Group also ranks high on both environmental protection and the need for further welfare protection. However, it is less in favour (albeit still over the mid-point of the scale) of policies for the recognition of same sex marriages, the legalisation of euthanasia and the decriminalisation of soft drugs (grouped under “social liberalism”).

The ALDE, similarly to what we observed for the Euromanifesto data, neatly separates the left from the right, occupying the mid-point in almost all scales. On economic policies, the ALDE is hardly distinguishable from the EPP or the ECR. They are, instead, distinct in the ‘law and order’ dimension (both the EPP and the ECR are for tougher measures against criminals and tolerate some restrictions of civil liberties in the fight against terrorism) and on immigration (where the ECR is, overall, less restrictive). The EFD resembles the EPP with ‘law and order’, but it supports more restrictive immigration policies and is more in favour of a neo-liberal economic agenda, albeit, as we emphasised in the previous section, with a very wide variation of positions among its constitutive parties.

## **CONCLUDING REMARKS**

This chapter has studied the policy positions and the ideological coherence of the political Groups as they were constituted after the 2009 European Parliament elections. The analysis began with an assessment of the provision – contained in the Chamber Rules of Procedures since 1958 – that political Groups have to be formed according to their ‘political affinities’. It has been shown that this disposition is formal and it is only applicable when a political Group explicitly refuses to acknowledge that it rests on some (even loose) ideological bases. A Group ‘political affinity’ is the result of political choices, rather than legal requirements: Groups remain free to set their own conditions for membership. Thus, an appreciation of the cohesion of the political Groups cannot but be made empirically. This chapter has sought to do so by relying on two different data sources: the Euromanifestos issued by national parties for the European Parliament elections and the self-placement of parties on some well-known policy dimensions. The aim of the empirical analysis was based upon mapping the issue priorities and the positions of the political Groups together with the variations among their constituent national parties.

Following a traditional reading of European party politics, as based upon a small number of well defined party families with core values and identities, the findings have shown that the political Groups (or, to be more precise, the national parties that make them up) emphasise ‘their own’ issues, and, in this sense, are distinguishable from one another. In other words, there are inter-party differences. The liberal ALDE placed its strongest emphasis on the market economy, the Greens on environment, the Communist GUE-NGL on welfare state

expansion, the conservative ECR on law and order, and the EFD on Euro-scepticism and restrictive immigration policies. From the Euromanifestos, it was more difficult to appreciate the differences in priorities between the Christian-Democratic (conservative) EPP and the Social-Democrats. Nevertheless, the EU Profiler data clearly emphasised that the S&D supports liberal society and a stronger welfare state, while the EPP is in favour of a more market-driven economic policy combined with a more traditional orientation towards social-liberal issues. Furthermore, despite all the warnings which accompanied the 'Big Bang' enlargement towards Central and Eastern Europe, its impact on the cohesion and the policy agenda of the political Groups has been moderate. CEE parties have some distinct priorities (especially in foreign and economic policies) but, overall, they are far from constituting a separate sub-group. To re-iterate the EU motto for the political Groups, it could be argued that, even in the EU-27, they are still "United in Diversity", with very diverse Member State parties in terms of their national origin, which are, nonetheless, united in terms of their policy preferences.

The analysis conducted for each political Group has revealed some interesting aspects, including quite strong internal cohesion within each Group. There are exceptions, of course, and the cohesion does not apply to every issue area, but the foundations for coherent transnational parties are clearly identifiable. The EPP occupies a right-of-the-centre policy space – with a position on socio-economic policies similar to that of the ECR. This analysis confirms the shifting towards the conservative pole of the former Christian-Democratic Group – even though some of its constitutive parties still stick to a centre, if not slightly leftist, position. However, the position of the EPP towards European integration is firmly supportive, while the ECR is firmly Euro-sceptical (or, as they prefer, "Euro-realist"). The implication of this finding is that the separation between the EPP and its former ED component (including the UK Conservatives) has enhanced the cohesion of the EPP on this important dimension. The Socialists (S&D Group) are the most cohesive of the three 'historical' political Groups: this finding is confirmed both by the Manifesto and the Profiler data. The classic literature on the EP Groups has traditionally emphasised the relative ideological homogeneity of the Socialists on socio-economic policies. However, the S&D is currently a very unified Group also in terms of its support for the European integration project. The times when it was found to be more divided over the EU than on left-right policies (Hix, Lord, 1997:18) seem to be definitely over. Finally, the ALDE Group is certainly united on its support for European integration, although it is more varied in socio-economic policies. Indeed, this is a classic problem for liberal parties, which are traditionally divided into a left-wing and a right-wing group. Furthermore, all data unambiguously show that the ALDE is occupying the centre of the policy spectrum and its main competitors for this important position appear, at present, to be the Social-Democrats, rather than the EPP.

For the other political Groups, the picture is also clear: on the left, the Greens-EFA has adopted a pro-European position (with little variation among its parties), while the GUE-NGL is more critical of, but not outright opposed to, the EU. On the right, the ECR and the EFD are the strongest opponents of the European project. Furthermore, all data showed that the latter political Group is

the least coherent in policy terms, with very diverse preferences among its national parties on specific policy issues as well as on the left-right scale.

On a more general level, these findings are reasonably favourable for the prospects of EU democracy. The main political Groups have cohesive and well-identifiable positions on left-right policies. Among the smallest political Groups, only the EFD shows a clear lack of ideological cohesion on the socio-economic dimension, but, with all the evidence, it is united by its strong anti-EU perspective. Political Groups can then translate this relative homogeneity into a concrete legislative agenda which, in the post-Lisbon context and with the extension of co-decision, has become more important. Political Groups, with the help of their associated Euro-parties, should become capable of effectively proposing their manifestos and working programmes to the European voters, to confront them with a choice among the alternatives. In order to facilitate this development, some institutional and organisational reforms might be suggested, as other chapters in this report will address.

### *Key Summary*

For the prospect of the EU democracy, homogeneous political groups are crucial in providing the European voters with a meaningful programmatic supply;

The requirement of “political affinities” to form a Group is a necessary but not sufficient condition to guarantee that the transnational groupings will represent coherent political cultures;

The impact of the “Big Bang” enlargement on the cohesion and the policy agenda of the Political Groups has been quite limited;

The main political Groups have cohesive and well-detectable positions on left-right policies, while among the smaller Groups only the EFD reveals a lack of ideological affinity;

### Appendix: Analysis of ideological cohesion

#### A. National parties included in the analysis of ideological cohesion (EMP data-set)

##### Group of the European People's Party

| ID | Country     | Party      | No. Seats | Data | Left-Right | Anti-Pro EU |
|----|-------------|------------|-----------|------|------------|-------------|
| 1  | Germany     | CDU        | 34        | 2004 | 14.3       | 11.2        |
| 2  | Germany     | CSU        | 8         | 2004 | 15.9       | 9.7         |
| 3  | France      | UMP        | 29        | 1999 | 10.9       | 12.6        |
| 4  | Italy       | PDL (FI)   | 28        | 2004 | 13.3       | 11.4        |
| 5  | Italy       | UDC        | 5         | 2004 | 15.6       | 9.3         |
| 6  | Italy       | SVP        | 1         | 2004 | 8.1        | 11.1        |
| 7  | Poland      | PO         | 25        | 2004 | 13.6       | 12.8        |
| 8  | Spain       | PP         | 23        | 2004 | 14.2       | 11.6        |
| 9  | Hungary     | FIDESZ     | 14        | 2004 | 12.8       | 10.1        |
| 10 | Portugal    | PSD/CDS-PP | 10        | 2004 | 10.5       | 11.1        |
| 11 | Greece      | ND         | 8         | 2004 | 10.9       | 11.4        |
| 12 | Austria     | OVP        | 6         | 2004 | 13.1       | 14.3        |
| 13 | Netherlands | CDA        | 5         | 2004 | 12.3       | 12.6        |
| 14 | Sweden      | MSP        | 5         | 2004 | 14.1       | 11          |
| 15 | Sweden      | KD         | 1         | 2004 | 10.8       | 11.4        |
| 16 | Slovakia    | SMK        | 4         | 2004 | 9.8        | 11.6        |
| 17 | Slovakia    | KDH        | 2         | 2004 | 13.3       | 10.1        |
| 18 | Finland     | KK         | 4         | 2004 | 7.9        | 11          |
| 19 | Ireland     | Fine Gael  | 4         | 2004 | 10.2       | 12.2        |
| 20 | Lithuania   | TS-LK      | 4         | 2004 | 13         | 9.5         |
| 21 | Belgium     | CD&V       | 3         | 2004 | 12         | 12.7        |
| 22 | Belgium     | CDH        | 1         | 2004 | 8.8        | 12.4        |
| 23 | Luxembourg  | CSV        | 3         | 2004 | 15.3       | 12.1        |
| 24 | Czech Rep   | KDU-CSL    | 2         | 2004 | 13         | 11.8        |
| 25 | Cyprus      | DISY       | 2         | 2004 | 11.7       | 11.8        |
| 26 | Latvia      | JL         | 2         | 2004 | 10.1       | 11.6        |
| 27 | Latvia      | TP         | 1         | 2004 | 12.8       | 7.5         |
| 28 | Malta       | PN         | 2         | 2004 | 12.3       | 11.7        |
| 29 | Slovenia    | SDS        | 2         | 2004 | 12.5       | 11.3        |
| 30 | Slovenia    | NSI        | 2         | 2004 | 13.5       | 10          |
| 31 | Denmark     | KF         | 1         | 2001 | 11.9       | 12.1        |
| 32 | Estonia     | IL         | 1         | 2004 | 12.3       | 9.7         |

n (parties) = 32; Total seats = 243; Coverage MEPs = 243/265 = 91.7%; Coverage States = 24/26 = 92.3%

### Socialists and Democrats

| ID | Country     | Party    | No. Seats | Data | Left-Right | Anti-Pro EU |
|----|-------------|----------|-----------|------|------------|-------------|
| 33 | Germany     | SPD      | 23        | 2004 | 8.3        | 11.9        |
| 34 | Italy       | PD       | 21        | 2004 | 8.3        | 11.5        |
| 35 | Spain       | PSOE-PSC | 21        | 2004 | 8.6        | 12.5        |
| 36 | France      | PS       | 14        | 2004 | 10.9       | 12.2        |
| 37 | UK          | Labour   | 13        | 2004 | 12.1       | 12.7        |
| 38 | Greece      | PASOK    | 8         | 2004 | 8.7        | 11.9        |
| 39 | Czech Rep   | CSSD     | 7         | 2004 | 10.2       | 12.8        |
| 40 | Polonia     | SLD-UP   | 7         | 2004 | 7.6        | 12.3        |
| 41 | Portugal    | PSP      | 7         | 1999 | 10         | 12.8        |
| 42 | Slovakia    | Smer     | 5         | 2004 | 8.5        | 11.3        |
| 43 | Sweden      | Sdap     | 5         | 2004 | 7.1        | 10.9        |
| 44 | Austria     | Spo      | 4         | 2004 | 9.1        | 11          |
| 45 | Denmark     | SD       | 4         | 2004 | 7.4        | 11.6        |
| 46 | Hungary     | MSZP     | 4         | 2004 | 11.6       | 12.5        |
| 47 | Belgium     | PS       | 3         | 2004 | 6.3        | 11.6        |
| 48 | Belgium     | SPA      | 2         | 2004 | 7.1        | 11.2        |
| 49 | Ireland     | LP       | 3         | 2004 | 8.1        | 11.3        |
| 50 | Lithuania   | LSDP     | 3         | 2004 | 8.6        | 9.6         |
| 51 | Malta       | LP       | 3         | 2004 | 9.9        | 11.3        |
| 52 | Netherlands | PvDA     | 3         | 2004 | 8.6        | 11.7        |
| 53 | Finland     | SDP      | 2         | 2004 | 7.1        | 10.9        |
| 54 | Slovenia    | ZLSD     | 2         | 2004 | 9.5        | 12.2        |
| 55 | Estonia     | SDE      | 1         | 2004 | 6.3        | 11.4        |
| 56 | Luxembourg  | LSAP     | 1         | 2004 | 9.2        | 12.8        |

n (parties) = 24

Total seats = 166

Coverage MEPs =  $166/184 = 90\%$

Coverage States =  $23/27 = 85\%$

### Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe

| ID | Country     | Party       | No. Seats | Data | Left-Right | Anti-Pro EU |
|----|-------------|-------------|-----------|------|------------|-------------|
| 57 | Germany     | FDP         | 12        | 1999 | 12         | 11.8        |
| 58 | UK          | Lib         | 11        | 2004 | 10.5       | 11.2        |
| 59 | Italy       | DiPietro    | 7         | 2001 | 7.9        | 12.4        |
| 60 | France      | MoDem       | 6         | 2004 | 10.5       | 12.7        |
| 61 | Belgium     | VLD         | 3         | 2004 | 14.9       | 9.9         |
| 62 | Belgium     | MR          | 2         | 2004 | 10.4       | 10.5        |
| 63 | Denmark     | Venstre     | 3         | 2004 | 10.8       | 12.7        |
| 64 | Finland     | Kesk        | 3         | 2004 | 8.2        | 11.6        |
| 65 | Finland     | SFP         | 1         | 2004 | 7.8        | 12.2        |
| 66 | Ireland     | Fianna Fail | 3         | 2004 | 8.7        | 11.2        |
| 67 | Netherlands | D-66        | 3         | 2004 | 8.6        | 11.6        |
| 68 | Netherlands | VVD         | 3         | 2004 | 10.4       | 11.6        |
| 69 | Sweden      | FP          | 3         | 2004 | 9.7        | 11.5        |
| 70 | Sweden      | Center      | 1         | 2004 | 8.9        | 11          |
| 71 | Estonia     | K           | 2         | 2004 | 9.8        | 11.5        |
| 72 | Estonia     | ER          | 1         | 2004 | 14.7       | 11.5        |
| 73 | Latvia      | LC          | 1         | 2004 | 9.5        | 10          |
| 74 | Lithuania   | DP          | 1         | 2004 | 10.1       | 10.8        |
| 75 | Lithuania   | LCS         | 1         | 2004 | 9.5        | 11.1        |
| 76 | Luxembourg  | PD DP       | 1         | 2004 | 10.5       | 11.2        |
| 77 | Slovenia    | LDS         | 1         | 2004 | 9.3        | 12          |
| 78 | Spain       | CiU         | 1         | 2004 | 7.8        | 10.7        |
| 79 | Spain       | PNV         | 1         | 2004 | 8.7        | 10.4        |
| 80 | Cyprus      | DYKO        | 1         | 2004 | 11.1       | 12.3        |

Total Parties = 24

Total seats = 72

Coverage MEPs =  $72/84 = 86\%$

Coverage States =  $17/18 = 94\%$

### Greens-EFA

| ID | Country     | Party              | No. Seats | Data | Left-Right | Anti-Pro EU |
|----|-------------|--------------------|-----------|------|------------|-------------|
| 81 | Germany     | Die Grunen         | 14        | 2004 | 4.7        | 10.8        |
| 82 | France      | Europe<br>Ecologie | 14        | 1999 | 5          | 10.9        |
| 83 | Netherlands | GL                 | 3         | 2004 | 6.9        | 11          |
| 84 | Austria     | Die Grunen         | 2         | 1999 | 4.8        | 10.4        |
| 85 | Belgium     | Ecolo              | 2         | 2004 | 7.8        | 10.2        |
| 86 | Belgium     | Groen!             | 1         | 2004 | 7.8        | 10.2        |
| 87 | Denmark     | SF                 | 2         | 2004 | 5          | 9.7         |
| 88 | Finland     | Vihreat            | 2         | 2004 | 6.9        | 10.5        |
| 89 | Sweden      | MPG                | 2         | 2004 | 7          | 8.2         |
| 90 | UK          | Greens             | 2         | 2004 | 5.4        | 9.4         |
| 91 | UK          | PC                 | 1         | 2004 | 6.4        | 11          |
| 92 | UK          | SNP                | 1         | 2004 | 9.4        | 10.2        |
| 93 | Latvia      | LC                 | 1         | 2004 | 8.5        | 9.2         |
| 94 | Luxembourg  | DG                 | 1         | 2004 | 4.7        | 10.8        |
| 95 | Spain       | Verdes             | 1         | 2004 | 4.7        | 10.8        |

Total Parties = 15

Total Seats = 49

Coverage MEPs =  $49/55 = 89.1\%$

Coverage Countries =  $12/14 = 85.7\%$



**GUE-NGL**

| <b>ID</b> | <b>Country</b> | <b>Party</b> | <b>No. Seats</b> | <b>Data</b> | <b>Left-Right</b> | <b>Anti-Pro EU</b> |
|-----------|----------------|--------------|------------------|-------------|-------------------|--------------------|
| 96        | Germany        | Linke        | 7                | 2004        | 4.9               | 10.4               |
| 97        | France         | Gauche       | 5                | 2004        | 2.3               | 9.2                |
| 98        | Czech Rep      | KSCM         | 4                | 2004        | 3.8               | 10.2               |
| 99        | Cyprus         | AKEL         | 2                | 2004        | 7.1               | 9.9                |
| 100       | Greece         | KKE          | 2                | 2004        | 5.2               | 8.1                |
| 101       | Greece         | SYR          | 1                | 2004        | 8.5               | 9.9                |
| 102       | Netherlands    | SP           | 2                | 2004        | 2                 | 9.8                |
| 103       | Portugal       | CDU          | 2                | 1999        | 5.4               | 8.7                |
| 104       | Spain          | IU           | 2                | 2004        | 3                 | 10                 |
| 105       | Denmark        | FB           | 1                | 2004        | 7.6               | 6.3                |
| 106       | Ireland        | Sinn Fein    | 1                | 2004        | 3.7               | 9.2                |
| 107       | Finland        | VAS          | 1                | 2004        | 2.3               | 10.8               |
| 109       | Nor Ireland    | Sinn Fein    | 1                | 2004        | 3.7               | 9.2                |
| 110       | Sweden         | VP           | 1                | 2004        | 8.7               | 7                  |

Total Parties = 13

Total Seats = 33

Coverage MEPs = 33/35 = 94.3%

Coverage States = 13/14 = 92.9%

### ECR

| ID  | Country        | Party            | No. Seats | Data | Left-Right | Anti-Pro EU |
|-----|----------------|------------------|-----------|------|------------|-------------|
| 111 | UK             | Cons             | 24        | 2004 | 13         | 7.2         |
| 112 | Poland         | Law Justice      | 15        | 2004 | 12.1       | 7.4         |
| 113 | Czech Republic | ODS              | 9         | 2004 | 14         | 8.7         |
| 114 | Latvia         | LNNK             | 1         | 2004 | 11         | 9.7         |
| 116 | Hungary        | Democratic Forum | 1         | 2004 | 14.6       | 9.8         |
| 117 | Netherlands    | CU               | 1         | 2004 | 13.5       | 9.5         |
| 115 | Nor Ireland    | UUP              | 1         | 2004 | 10.6       | 9.6         |

Total Parties = 7

Total seats = 543

Coverage MEPs =  $52/54 = 96.3\%$

Coverage States =  $6/8 = 75\%$

### EFD

| ID  | Country     | Party | No. Seats | Data | Left-Right | Anti-Pro EU |
|-----|-------------|-------|-----------|------|------------|-------------|
| 116 | UK          | UKIP  | 12        | 2004 | 11.4       | 0           |
| 117 | Italy       | LN    | 9         | 2004 | 8          | 8.6         |
| 118 | Denmark     | DF    | 2         | 1999 | 16.2       | 5.1         |
| 119 | Greece      | Laos  | 2         | 2004 | 14.7       | 4.8         |
| 120 | France      | MPF   | 1         | 2004 | 14.1       | 2.2         |
| 121 | Netherlands | SGP   | 1         | 2004 | 13.5       | 9.5         |

Seats: 27

Coverage MEPs =  $27/ 31 = 87.1\%$

Coverage States =  $6 / 9 = 66.7\%$

B. EU Profiler Data: summary of the data employed in the analysis

| Group      | No. parties | No. seats | Coverage seats  | Coverage States |
|------------|-------------|-----------|-----------------|-----------------|
| EPP        | 39          | 254       | 254/265 (95.8%) | 26/26 (100%)    |
| S&D        | 28          | 182       | 182/184 (99%)   | 27/27 (100%)    |
| ALDE       | 26          | 80        | 80/84 (95.2%)   | 18/18 (100%)    |
| Greens-EFA | 21          | 55        | 55 /55 (100%)   | 14/14 (100%)    |
| GUE-NGL    | 16          | 34        | 34/35 (97.1%)   | 13/14 (92.9%)   |
| ECR        | 8           | 54        | 53/54 (98.1%)   | 7/8 (87.5%)     |
| EFD        | 6           | 26        | 26/31 (83.9%)   | 6/9 (66.7%)     |

**Note:** ‘No. parties’ is the number of parties included in the sample per political Group; ‘No. seats’ the number of seats expressed by the n parties in the first column; ‘coverage seats’ is the share of MEPs (per political Group) included in the sample; ‘coverage States’ is the share of Member States (per political Group) represented in the sample.

## 2. Candidate Selection and Trans-nationalisation

### 2.1 INTRODUCTION

The selection of political leaders, including candidate MPs, has always been considered one of the fundamental functions of political parties. At the same time, the selection processes involved are often far from being transparent, and in a classic study of the subject have been described as ‘the secret garden of politics’ (Gallagher & Marsh 1988). At European level, such a ‘garden’ is also not particularly transparent, and it is also not clear to what extent national considerations dominate the MEP selection processes of parties. Regulation 2004/2003 clarifies the distinction of duties between EP Groups and Political Parties at the European Level (PPELs) and assigns to the latter the responsibility for the campaign and conduct European elections. PPELs are often not active directly, since national parties are intended to be the instrument through which they should campaign. At the same time, these national parties are often believed to be the main obstacle to the effectiveness of the PPELs, since the elections that they organise and contest are usually national in focus. The evident tensions involved here are also exacerbated by the MEP selection process, since this remains the prerogative of the national parties and leads to an outcome that can have a decisive effect on the functioning of the PPELs.

Candidate selection also has an important impact on the performance of the parliamentarians after being elected. Research has shown that MEPs from national parties that have a centralised method of candidate selection tend to be more likely to defect from EP party group lines (Faas 2002). In contrast, the more de-centralised the candidate selection is, the greater the possibility for the MEPs to act as independent politicians and to vote in accordance with their EP party group, rather than with their national party. This allows us to imagine that true European deputies, selected by European levels and not by national levels, could be even more interested in European issues than national ones. Furthermore, the de-centralised method makes it easier for MEPs to follow the preferences of the voters and not just those of party leaders (Hix 2004).

For these reasons, it is important for us to describe and analyse in this report the procedures applied by national parties to establish their electoral lists of candidates for the elections to the European Parliament. We are concerned with two different questions here. First, we need to know how centralised or de-centralised the national candidate selection processes are, since this will have an impact on the coherence and cohesion of the EP party groups, and hence on the possibilities for the emergence of genuine transnational parties. Second, we need to know the extent to which the practices in the Member States differ from one another, or whether national parties, from wherever in the Union, tend to converge on a common practice. This also means evaluating the extent to which there are currently common practices within each EP Group. This, too, would

mark a favourable indicator for eventual trans-nationalisation. That said, trans-nationalisation is unlikely to require wholesale uniformity in candidate selection procedures across all the national parties that are affiliated to a particular EP Group or federation. Indeed, there is already evidence of tolerance with regard to the diversity of procedures even within the same national party, in cases found both in Europe and in the United States, and this diversity is likely to become even more pronounced with the development of 'cartel' and 'franchise' models of party organisation (Katz and Mair 1995; Carty 2004).

## **2.2 TWO DIMENSIONS OF ANALYSING THE CANDIDATE SELECTION PROCEDURE**

Traditionally, studies regarding candidate selection procedures raise two questions: at which level within the party (**territorial dimension**), and through which method within the party (**exclusion-inclusion dimension**) the electoral lists are drawn-up. Furthermore, the existing literature often divides the selection process with regard to its timing into at least two main phases: the nomination of candidates, on the one hand, and the final decision on the composition of the lists, on the other (Luther 2007, p. 36).

This means that, first, each of the European national parties can be categorised along the territorial dimension upon the basis of which level (the local, the regional or the national) plays the key role in the nomination phase, and which in deciding (and eventually ordering) the electoral lists. Second, each of the parties can be categorised along the inclusiveness dimension upon the basis of which body (the leader, the national executive, the assembly, the members' conference, the members in party primaries, all voters in open primaries) is responsible for the nomination and the final decision. It is upon this basis that the degree of centralisation and de-centralisation will be evaluated, as well as the degree of convergence and divergence across national boundaries.

The data we analyse comes from a wide variety of published sources, and we have also relied heavily on Lehmann 2009. This last volume aimed at analysing the likely impact of Political Parties at European Level (PPEL) on the national parties' selection procedures, and was based mainly upon an analysis of the party statutes and on interviews with party officials. Although little influence from the PPELs was found by the contributors to the volume, the data are very useful for our purposes here.

In order to determine the location of parties along these dimensions, we have assigned a numerical value to each level (for the territorial dimension) and to each party body (for the exclusion-inclusion variable) that plays a role in selecting the candidatures. When a phase of the selection process (the right of proposal or the final decision) lies within the national level, it has been assigned the value 3. When this role is played at sub-national or regional level, we have

assigned it the value 2. All levels lower than “regional” have been defined as “local levels” and been assigned the value 1. When a phase is performed by two different levels, the assigned value is the average value between the two.

A similar operationalisation has been conducted for the exclusion-inclusion dimension. In this case, the values range from 1, which has been assigned to ‘open primaries’ (*i.e.*, primaries open also to non-party members) through to 6 (*i.e.*, the ‘party leader’, being he/she the chairperson, the president, the informal leader or any other monocratic charge). For the purposes of this report, we have tried to code in these terms all the parties that have elected MEPs or that have reached at least 3% of valid votes in the 2009 EP elections, but, unfortunately, some data are missing.<sup>2</sup> Included are 673 MEPs out of 736 (91.44%) and 24 Member States out of 27, for a total of 144 national parties or electoral coalitions. Finally, it is also important to underline that the two variables are completely independent of one another. For example, the assignment of some duties to leaders, executives or assemblies, does not automatically affect the assignment of such a duty to the national level. These specific leaders, executives or assemblies are not necessarily the national ones, but they could respectively be regional or local leaders, executives or assemblies. In general, fixing the list order is considered an important task in those countries with a closed-list electoral system. Where the lists are open, such a task is not so relevant and a body which is delegated this task, and only this task, is not considered as a relevant party organ in selecting the candidatures. In very small countries with a closed-list, the only candidates that have the possibility of being elected are those who occupy the first positions (or just the first one). So, the only body which plays a significant role is that which has the responsibility of choosing the first positions even if other bodies can choose the other, lower, positions. Finally, and for the purposes of coding, when more bodies or more levels in a party play a significant role during the proposal or final decision phase, this party is included more than once in the tabular data.

## 2.2 WHO DECIDES IN NATIONAL PARTIES?

As can be seen in Tables 1, the most common procedure adopted for MEP candidate selection is a proposal coming from the executive to be accepted or ratified by the Assembly (22% of cases). In general, more than 48% of proposals come from the executives, and only 1 case offers a relevant role to the voters (the

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<sup>2</sup> Missing data are as follows: All selection procedures for three small countries – (Malta, Luxembourg and Lithuania); selection procedures for the German community’s parties in Belgium; for Independents in Estonia and Ireland; for the Eco-Greens in Greece; for the PVV in the Netherlands; for the “List Dr. Martin – For Democracy, Control, Justice” in Austria; for the PCP in Portugal; for the PD-L, the PRM and an Independent in Romania; for the Pirate party in Sweden; and for the regional parties and UKIP in the UK. More details of these missing cases and of national peculiarities which are too detailed to be included here are available on request from the authors.

availability of self candidature in Greek PASOK). In 13% of cases, national parties allow their members to propose some candidates or even to nominate themselves. During the final decision phase, party members have much more power than during the proposal phase: 32% of final decisions are made by members through Primaries or Conferences as against only 19% of proposals. In total, unifying the proposal and the final decision phase, the use of these 'open' procedures is quite limited since less than 3% of national parties allow their members to control the entire process through Members' Primaries and even fewer through Members' Conferences (1.5%).

**Table 1:** Exclusion - Inclusion Dimension

|                |                     | Right of Proposal (%) |                  |                     |             |             |             |             |
|----------------|---------------------|-----------------------|------------------|---------------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|
| Final Decision |                     | Voters' Primary       | Members' Primary | Members' Conference | Assembly    | Executive   | Leader      | TOT         |
|                | Voters' Primary     | 0                     | 0                | 0                   | 0           | 0           | 0           | <b>0</b>    |
|                | Members' Primary    | 0.5                   | 2.6              | 1                   | 3.1         | 6.2         | 0           | <b>13.4</b> |
|                | Members' Conference | 0                     | 1,5              | 2.1                 | 6.2         | 7.7         | 1.5         | <b>19</b>   |
|                | Assembly            | 0.5                   | 3.6              | 0.5                 | 2.6         | 22.1        | 3.6         | <b>32.9</b> |
|                | Executive           | 0                     | 4.6              | 1.5                 | 4.6         | 10.1        | 5.1         | <b>25.9</b> |
|                | Leader              | 0                     | 1                | 0.5                 | 2.1         | 2.1         | 2.6         | <b>8.3</b>  |
|                | <b>TOT (n= 195)</b> | <b>1</b>              | <b>13.3</b>      | <b>5.6</b>          | <b>18.6</b> | <b>48.2</b> | <b>12.8</b> | <b>100</b>  |

Source: own calculations

Table 2 shows us the extent of the control of national levels over the final decisions, with more than 86% of all of proposals emanating from the national level. This, however, does not automatically imply executive control of the party since other organs, including both the members' conferences and the members' primaries, if held in the same place (for the conferences) or on the same day (for the primaries), are considered national level bodies. The Irish *Fine Gael* and *Fianna Fáil* are the only two parties that allow local branches to propose the candidates and that stop the procedures at the regional level instead of requiring the local proposals to reach the national level. This is undoubtedly due to the particular demands of the Single Transferable Vote (STV) electoral system applied in 4 sub-national constituencies. Another particular case is represented by the Dutch Christian Democrats (CDA). The proposal, which comes from the National Party Board (the national executive), has to be approved by local assemblies, even if "there are few deviations from the recommended list because it has proven difficult to mobilize enough branches" (Lehmann 2009, p. 214).

**Table 2: Territorial Dimension**

| Right of Proposal (%) |                      |             |             |             |             |
|-----------------------|----------------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|
| Final Decision        |                      | local       | regional    | national    | TOT         |
|                       | local                | 0           | 0           | 0.5         | <b>0.5</b>  |
|                       | regional             | 0.9         | 9.8         | 1.9         | <b>12.6</b> |
|                       | national             | 20.6        | 22.3        | 43.5        | <b>86.4</b> |
|                       | <b>TOT<br/>N=214</b> | <b>21.5</b> | <b>32.1</b> | <b>45.9</b> | <b>100</b>  |

### 2.2.1 Differentiation by country

Table 3 aggregates the values of the different parties by country and gives a first clear indication of the variation across the European Union. When we combine the values for both the proposal and the final decision, we find that Italy emerges as the most exclusive polity (value 5.15). Looking at each phase separately, Italy is also the most exclusive polity, closely followed by France in terms of the proposals, and by Bulgaria and Cyprus in terms of the final decision. The most inclusive country is Germany, with the value 3.5, which suggests that the most common procedure is somewhere between the Members' Conference and the Party Assembly, in both of which it is possible to express different opinions from those of the party leadership. Disaggregating the data, we can see that Greece and Bulgaria seem to be the most inclusive countries during the proposal phase, while the Netherlands is the most inclusive during the final decision. The Dutch score of 2.9 is unrivalled for all phases in all countries.

On the territorial dimension, we can easily see that the variance of values amongst the Member States is quite limited. The only exception is represented by the United Kingdom with an average value for the proposal and the final decision of 2.1. Close to this we find Ireland (2.25), Bulgaria (2.30) and Greece (2.35). In all, 14 of the 24 polities have a value higher than 2.5 (the main decisional level is close to the national level) with the highest value represented by Austria. Although not reported in detail here, there are a number of correlations to this pattern of variation. Parties in large polities tend to be more exclusive than those in small polities, although this is mainly a feature of *proposing candidates*, rather than finalising lists; systems with closed lists tend to be more inclusive than the others, although, in this case, Ireland is exceptional in having very open lists and high levels of de-centralisation. In general, however, the conclusion is clear: though variations exist between polities, they are not very pronounced, and are certainly not at a level which might prove an obstacle to effective trans-nationalisation.



**Table 3: The two dimension in the 24 analysed Member States**

|             | Right of Proposal |                   |  | Final decision     |                    |  | Total              |                    |
|-------------|-------------------|-------------------|--|--------------------|--------------------|--|--------------------|--------------------|
|             | Ex-Incl           | Territorial       |  | Ex-Incl            | Territorial        |  | Ex-Incl            | Territorial        |
| Belgium     | 4.5               | 2.5               |  | 4.80               | 2.90               |  | 4.65               | 2.70               |
| Bulgaria    | <b><u>3.4</u></b> | 1.7               |  | 4.80               | 2.90               |  | 4.10               | 2.30               |
| Czech Rep   | 4.3               | 1.9               |  | 4.00               | 3.00               |  | 4.15               | 2.45               |
| Denmark     | 4.0               | 2.4               |  | 3.90               | 3.00               |  | 3.95               | 2.70               |
| Germany     | 3.7               | 2.3               |  | 3.30               | 2.90               |  | <b><u>3.50</u></b> | 2.60               |
| Estonia     | 4.3               | 2.3               |  | 3.30               | 2.90               |  | 3.80               | 2.60               |
| Ireland     | 4.8               | 2.0               |  | 4.10               | 2.50               |  | 4.45               | 2.25               |
| Greece      | <b><u>3.4</u></b> | 2.2               |  | 4.40               | 2.50               |  | 3.90               | 2.35               |
| Spain       | 5.0               | 2.3               |  | 4.80               | 3.00               |  | 4.90               | 2.65               |
| France      | 5.3               | 2.8               |  | 4.10               | 3.00               |  | 4.70               | 2.90               |
| Italy       | <u>5.4</u>        | 2.8               |  | <u>4.90</u>        | 3.00               |  | <u>5.15</u>        | 2.90               |
| Cyprus      | 4.0               | 2.4               |  | 4.80               | 3.00               |  | 4.40               | 2.70               |
| Latvia      | 3.5               | 1.9               |  | 4.60               | 3.00               |  | 4.05               | 2,45               |
| Hungary     | 5.1               | <u>3.0</u>        |  | 4.00               | 3.00               |  | 4.55               | 3.00               |
| Netherlands | 4.8               | 2.6               |  | <b><u>2.90</u></b> | 2.90               |  | 3.85               | 2.75               |
| Austria     | 5.1               | 2.9               |  | 4.30               | 3.00               |  | 4.70               | <u>2.95</u>        |
| Poland      | 4.9               | <b><u>1.5</u></b> |  | 4.10               | 3.00               |  | 4.50               | 2.25               |
| Portugal    | 5.7               | 2.3               |  | 4.00               | 3.00               |  | 4.85               | 2.65               |
| Romania     | 4.6               | 1.9               |  | 4.10               | 2.90               |  | 4.35               | 2.40               |
| Slovakia    | 4.8               | 2.8               |  | 4.30               | 2.90               |  | 4.55               | 2.85               |
| Slovenia    | 4.7               | 2.4               |  | 4.10               | 3.00               |  | 4.40               | 2.70               |
| Finland     | 4.2               | 1.9               |  | 4.40               | 3.00               |  | 4.30               | 2.45               |
| Sweden      | 4.8               | 2.2               |  | 3.40               | 3.00               |  | 4.10               | 2.60               |
| UK          | 4.8               | 2.0               |  | 3.60               | <b><u>2.20</u></b> |  | 4.20               | <b><u>2.10</u></b> |

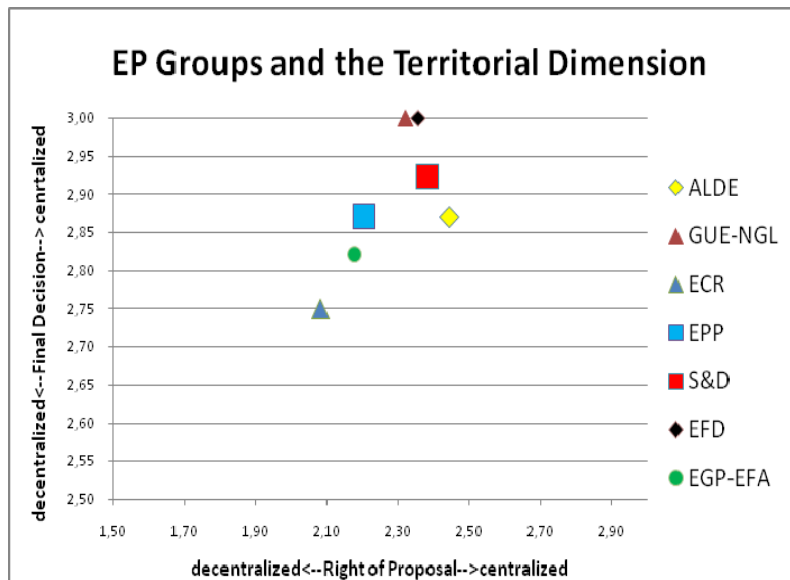
### 2.2.2 Differentiation by political affiliation

Figure 1 shows similar summary figures aggregated in this case by party identity. Here, in particular, it can be assumed that, if there is an obstacle to genuine trans-nationalisation, it is likely to be provoked by a high level of internal differentiation. Although we also report differences between groups, these are less relevant to the issue of trans-nationalisation since there is no expectation that convergence should be expected across the political spectrum. As in previous sections, our concern is to test for cohesion and uniformity within each group. For the purposes of this analysis, we have grouped the national parties according to their EP Groups. Data can also be aggregated according to membership of the PPEs, but the picture is more or less the same as that offered by the Groups.

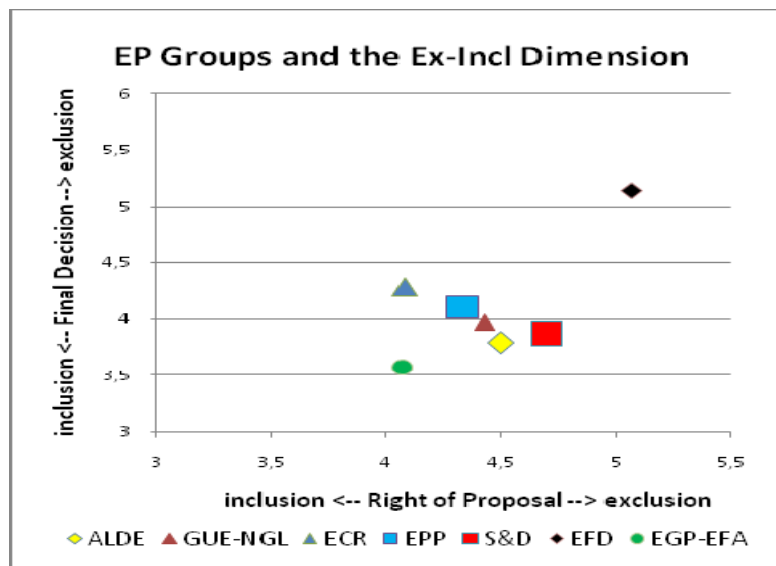
As can be seen from Figure 1, which summarises the Group scores in relation to the territorial dimension, the conservative parties (the ECR group) are

the most de-centralised. Although regional parties are also obviously de-centralised, they are scored in this case together with the Greens, and hence come closer to the middle range. The left-wing (GUE-NGL) and right-wing (EFD) groups are the most centralised, especially during the final decision phase, since their national parties assign the final decision's prerogative to the national level.

**Figure 1: EP Groups and the Territorial Dimension**

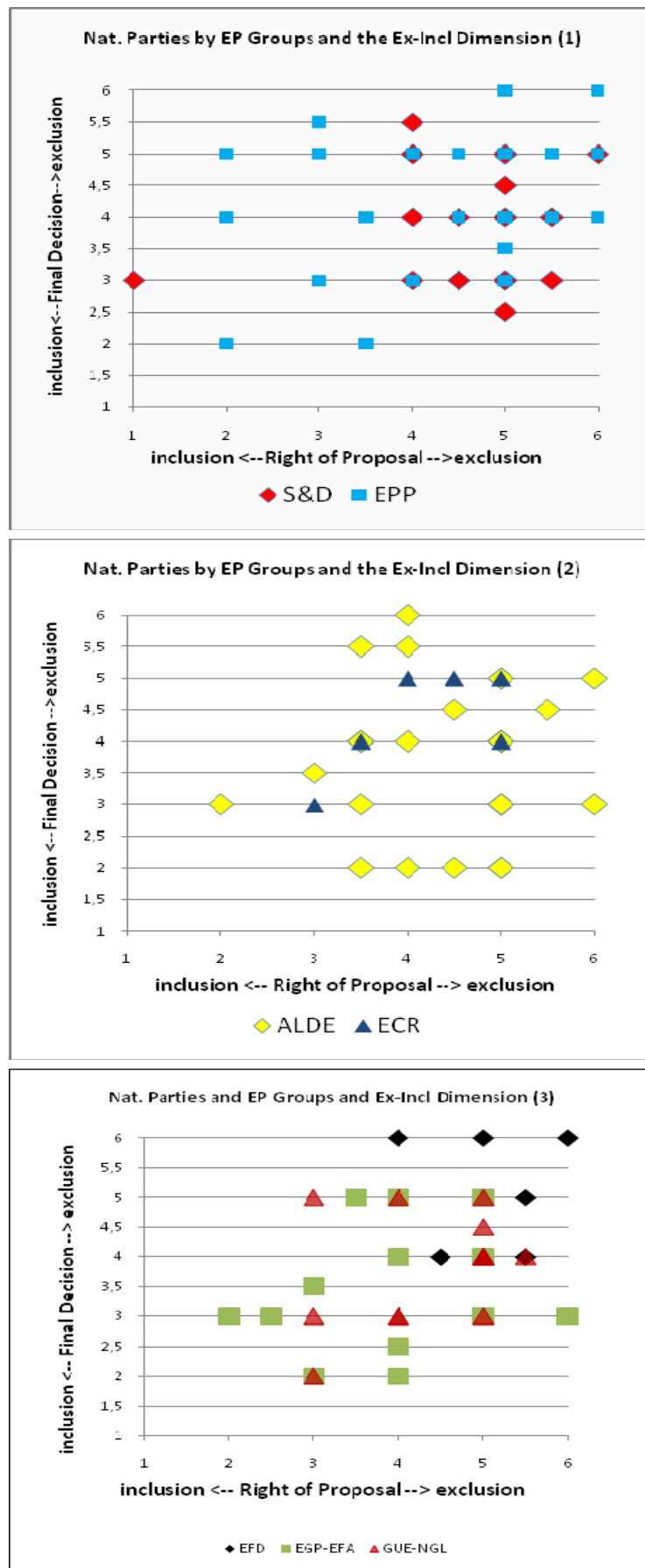


**Figure 2: EP Groups and the Exclusion-Inclusion Dimension**



Equivalent data are presented in Figure 2 with respect to the exclusion-inclusion dimension. In this case, the scale is bounded by the Greens and the Nationalist parties. Again, the pattern is similar to the PPELs, for which the data are not reported here, but less extreme in the case of the EP Groups. This could mean that the EP Groups are less homogenous than their corresponding PPELs. This is also likely in the case of the EGP-EFA since it is a fusion of two different PPELs

**Figure 3:** National Parties in EP Groups and the exclusion - inclusion dimension



with different traditions and political cultures. For the right wing parties, the reason may be different. In this case, nationalist parties that succeed in electing some MEPs can choose to send their deputies into a EP group or to leave them as unaffiliated MEPs. But, since the latter option offers very limited opportunities to the MEPs themselves, there are strong incentives to join an EP group, and this, in turn, can lead to pronounced heterogeneity in the Group itself. Comparable incentives are not present for the formation of the PPEs and it is likely, for this reason, that these are more homogenous than the corresponding EP Groups.

The internal degree of homogeneity and heterogeneity along this dimension is summarised in Figure 3, which shows the different national parties in the Groups to be scattered across almost all the available positions. In other words, there is little sign of cohesion or uniformity here. The parties in the S&D group are more similar to one another than those in the EPP, which is perhaps not surprising given the relative uniformity and diffusion of centre-left traditions in Europe, as compared to the more nationally-specific developmental paths taken by the centre-right. The ECR is also relatively homogenous, especially in comparison to the fragmented ALDE picture, but this is also due to the smaller number of parties involved. Otherwise, however, the Groups reveal relatively heterogeneous profiles, and while this may not weigh heavily in the end, it is nevertheless likely to present a stumbling block in the path towards effective trans-nationalisation and convergence.

## 2.3 IS EUROPEAN INFLUENCE IMPORTANT?

It is difficult to trace any specific influence exerted by the PPEs or EP groups on national parties as far as the process of candidate selection is concerned (Lehmann 2009). In seven countries (Belgium, Italy, Greece, France, the Netherlands, Slovenia, and Finland), there is simply nothing reported in the literature. In other countries (Estonia, Spain, Portugal, Sweden), the parties have been probed on the question, but there are no reports of any European interference. Only in the remaining countries, and even then not in a pronounced way, has there been some substantive evidence of a relationship. These suggest several different patterns (Lehmann 2009).

The first type is an acceptance that **incumbent** MEPs can exert a strong influence in ensuring their own re-selection, and hence, albeit indirectly, the EP Group also exerts an influence. Incumbent MEPS are also reported to have influenced the party programme on European issues. This incumbency effect has been reported by the UK Conservatives and Labour, by the Austrian People's Party, Freedom Party and Greens, and by the Irish Labour party. The German parties present a particularly interesting case. In general, it appears that the European level exerts no influence on the selection process of German parties, but the fact that many German politicians hold some very key positions at European level has been taken into consideration in evaluating the candidate

selection processes: for example, Hans-Gert Pöttering (CDU), president of the European Parliament; Martin Schulz (SPD), president of the EP PES group; Silvana Koch-Mehrin (FDP), deputy leader of the EP ALDE group; and Lothar Bisky (Linke), chairman of the Party of the European Left, have all been confirmed as candidates without any problems.

The second type is represented by a clearly reported **dissatisfaction** on the part of the national party towards the former Group. This is the case of the Polish PiS, which sought to establish contacts with Czech ODS and British Conservatives to create a new EP group (the ECR), and also the Hungarian Conservatives (MDF), which expressed a preference to move from the EPP to the ECR. At the same time, two other parties have moved from a eurosceptic to a more europhile group: the Slovak LS-HZDS moved from the ID group to the ALDE through the previous admission to the ELDR party, and the Irish *Fianna Fáil* moved from AEN to ELDR party and ALDE. The Cypriot DIKO has expressed their intention to leave the Liberal group for the Socialist one, but the other socialist Cypriot party, EDEK, has expressed resistance. Two other parties have faced problems with their EP group or party. The Slovak socialist SMER was suspended from the PES for two years (2006-08) due to their coalition government formed with the extreme right-wing SNS, while the Latvian Greens and peasants were asked to choose definitely between the EGP and the ELDR party.

Other parties have articulated very clear **instrumental reasons** to explain their membership in a group. The Slovak Christian-democrat KDH has declared its participation in the EPP group as instrumental since its priority is national issues. In the same way, the Danish 'Movement against the European Union' has defined its affiliation with GUE-NGL as 'Technical'. The left-wing profile of its MEPs has also influenced this decision. The Danish People's Party, in turn, has given its top candidate (and leader) the right to choose whichever group he wishes.

Several other parties have used their contacts with European levels to improve their **legitimacy** in the eyes of the national voters. The Cypriot socialist EDEK has used the absence of Cypriot MEPs in the second largest EP group (the S&D) as its main reason to ask voters to fill this gap by voting the Cypriot Socialists. The same use of its relations with the PES and the S&D has been pushed by the Latvian LSDSP. The Danish Socialist People's Party has appealed for votes by arguing that voting for them is also voting for something bigger, the European Greens. Even more important is the fact that the Bulgarian Socialist Party, in 2004, ran in the elections under the name of "European Socialists". The experiment, however, was not repeated in 2009.

The only national parties that have confirmed some contacts during the **selection process** have been the Romanian PSD, according to which all its candidatures were reviewed by representatives from the PES; the Czech CSSD, since the PES had signalled that it appreciates the work of the incumbent CSSD MEPs and had indicated its support for their inclusion into the electoral list; the Hungarian Socialists (MSZP), which had had consultations with the PES on the performance of its incumbent MEPs; the Latvian New Era that had invited some

EPP members to its selecting meetings; and the German FDP, according to which the ELDR party had expressed some recommendations regarding the confirmation of some incumbent MEPs. These results are summarised in Table 4. One final note: a Czech communist official is reported as expecting stricter co-operation at European level in order to have a wide portfolio of experts able to meet all the EP committee assignments covered by GUE-NGL deputies (Lehmann 2009, p. 38). He turns out to have been the only politician interviewed that asked for an improvement of the supranational relations amongst parties at European level.

**Table 4:** The role of the PPEs in the selection candidate procedures of national parties

| Type of influence                       | Parties involved (n) | Parties involved (%) |
|---|----------------------|----------------------|
| <b>Nothing reported</b>                 | 54                   | 37.5                 |
| <b>No relations</b>                     | 62                   | 43.1                 |
| <b>Incumbent</b>                        | 10                   | 6.9                  |
| <b>Dissatisfaction/problems</b>         | 7                    | 4.9                  |
| <b>instrumental reasons</b>             | 3                    | 2.1                  |
| <b>legitimizing source</b>              | 4                    | 2.8                  |
| <b>Involvement in selection process</b> | 4                    | 2.8                  |
| <b>TOTAL</b>                            | 144                  | 100                  |

Source: Lehmann (2009).

## CONCLUSION

Hazan and Rahat (2006) have suggested that party members are more inclined to select candidates they know, and therefore they will prefer those who are already active in politics and have been for some years. Conversely, if the lists are drawn up by the party leadership, they will seek a more comprehensive balance by bringing in newcomers and younger people, and by including candidates who are the representatives of sometimes marginalised social categories. Both approaches might favour influence on the part of the European level. On the one hand, when members have a voice in the candidate selection processes, they might favour incumbents, thereby fostering interest in EP careers, and hence in institutionalising support for EP Groups. On the other hand, we might expect leaders to favour 'new' categories of candidates, including those for whom Europe is a priority. This preliminary consideration is important as a means of underlining that there is nothing specifically 'European' or 'Europe-oriented' that can be linked to whether the selection mechanisms of parties are exclusive or inclusive, or whether they are more centralised or more de-centralised. That is to say that, when we have looked at the selection procedures under these headings, we have not been concerned with their Europeanness, as such, but, instead, with

the problems of diversity and uniformity, and with the issue of whether the existing procedures, as practiced, might constitute an obstacle to genuine trans-nationalisation.

In this section, we have addressed the question of whether national parties differentiate themselves in the processes of candidate selection according to their country or according to their political affiliation. The data, crude as they are, underline that both factors play a role, and that there is a lack of uniformity within the party families. This would suggest that procedures of élite recruitment might well constitute an obstacle to effective trans-nationalisation. That said, and as noted at the beginning, the onset of franchise and cartel models of party organisation means that there is often a tolerance of diverse procedures even inside the national parties.

This also suggests that this is one area of activity where the European level – whether through the EP Groups or through the PPELs – could usefully intervene to greater effect. Indeed, this suggests that there is a strong argument for a likely future influence or co-ordination for selecting European candidates at European level. Moreover, the features of the selection procedures that we see here seem to reflect and respect what national parties' ideologies prescribe – at least for those parties which spend more time and resources in publicising their ideas about democracy and internal functioning. Regionalist parties are those which give more prerogatives to the lower party levels, while those parties with a strong national attitude, such as the Socialists, the Leftists and the extreme-right parties, have the highest level of centralisation in selecting the candidatures. On the exclusion-inclusion dimension Green parties, which advocate grass-roots participation and other post-materialistic democratic values, and extreme-right parties, which emphasise the role of the leader and the principle of authority, confirm, through their selection procedures, the practice of their principles.

The theoretical importance of European affiliation rather than the national origin and the practical application of their publicised ideals are both elements which could increase the feasibility of future co-ordination at European level in choosing appropriate and well-prepared European deputies. At this moment, such a positive inclination towards European issues seems quite distant, or, to put it differently, if a pro-European approach is to be achieved in the selection of candidates, it will have to happen at national level, rather than at a European level. In fact, as is clearly demonstrated by Table 4, the direct influence of the European level in national candidate selection is effectively insignificant. Even if nearly 20% of national parties have reported some interaction with the European level during the candidate selection phase (beyond what is involved in preparing the transnational electoral manifestos), in only 14% of cases has this been positively evaluated. It is hardly the case that public dissatisfaction about the relationship between a national party and its corresponding PPEL can be considered as an element that advances the Europeanization process. Indeed, when only 4 national parties (2.8%) report clear and explicit consultations with, and direct involvement of, their European level partner in the candidate selection process, it seems that the path towards effective trans-nationalisation has only recently and timidly begun.

### *Key Summary*

Since the process of candidate selection is one of the fundamental functions of political parties, the lack of uniformity within the party families may constitute an obstacle to effective trans-nationalisation;

The more de-centralised and inclusive the candidate selection is, the greater the possibility for the MEPs to vote in accordance with their EP party group, rather than with their national party;

The most common procedures adopted for MEP candidate selection relies on the role of the party executive and party conference, with more than 86% of all the proposals emanating from the national level.



### 3. The Role of National Traditions

#### 3.1 INTRODUCTION

In trying to shed light on the question of the patterns of evolution of a European party system and its roots in the national party structures, the first question that arises concerns the extent to which these national party structures are, indeed, strong and persistent. While political scientists build various generalising models of political parties; and while some of them suggest an ever growing convergence of party politics across Europe, at the same time, they note a huge variety of the national traditions that not only define the political parties themselves, but which also heavily influence the patterns of party competition and campaign practices. In both cases, however, there is an agreement that political parties are primarily embedded in, and defined by, national political settings. The key question that will guide this analysis is whether these national differences are strong enough to block or hinder the development of trans-national parties and a trans-national party system, or whether, despite the obvious differences between many of the national settings, such parties might still develop in a reasonably robust fashion.

We shall address this question by reviewing four areas which strongly differentiate the way in which the national parties work, which may prove to be serious obstacles to the development of an EU party system. The first area concerns the variety of the national party systems in the EU-27. No matter whether the future EU party system will be modelled on one of the national party systems, or whether it will develop *sui generis* characteristics, it is quite certain that, for some national parties, it will be difficult to find a space in the future EU party system simply because the EU version will be too different from their own party system back at home. Therefore, we will analyse the extent to which the party systems of the EU-27 vary among themselves.

Our second perspective will look into the legal status of political parties. This part of national legislations regulates a number of matters concerning the conditions for recognition, the legal capacity, obligations and rights of political parties as legal persons. However, here, too, the national provisions are quite different, and the valid question is to what extent this variety might be an obstacle to the development of trans-national parties.

Third, from the point of view of the organisation and activities of PPEs, we are concerned with whether PPEs as organisations are open to the different national styles of party organisation. Clear evidence illustrating the objective difficulties of trans-national party co-operation having its sources in the national party traditions can be drawn from a number of examples of the experiences of the major European political parties.

Finally, were the current proposals to introduce a single trans-national constituency to elect a portion of MEPs (the Duff report) to be adopted, PPEs

will be obliged to become engaged as campaign organisations and will be expected to develop a co-ordinated and unified election campaign in a majority (or even all) of the EU Member States. However, given the variety in the national styles of campaigning, which we look at here, how likely is it that this can be achieved? Or might it be that we would have trans-national campaigning organisations which tolerate different national campaign strategies?

### **3.2 THE NUMBER OF PARTIES AT NATIONAL AND EUROPEAN LEVEL**

The literature on parties and party systems has long classified party systems mainly in relation to the number of parties competing and the ideological distance between them (Sartori 1976). In this manner, political scientists have used either some qualitative descriptions (such as ‘two-and-a-half party system’) or, by looking at the vote share or seat share in the parliament, they weighted the number of parties by their relative size and importance. The key criterion driving the latter classification is the need to express quantitatively a number of meaningful parties in a situation in which some parties have many seats and some have only few. Such an index is defined as the effective number of parties, and it is a standard measure of party system size (Laakso and Taagepera 1979, Taagepera 2007, Gallagher and Mitchell 2008). It seems to be very useful in our analysis too, as it allows us to make a cross-national comparison as far as the numerical criterion of the classification is concerned. We rely here on the so-called effective number of parliamentary parties (ENPP). For example, if one party enjoys a huge majority in the parliament, then the effective number of parties will only be a bit higher than 1. Values oscillating around 2 suggest that one party has a steady, but not huge, majority. The higher the number of effective parties, the more fragmented the parliament, and the greater the need for broad coalitions. Table 1 below present the values calculated upon the basis of the most recent election results, presenting the effective number of parties in the EU-27 (as for the national parliamentary elections) compared with the effective number of parties with a seat in the European Parliament (divided by EU Member States).

Table 1 shows a wide variety of the number of parties in the EU national party systems, ranging from 2.00 (both Hungary and Malta) to 6.74 (the Netherlands) and Belgium (8.42), with the average number of effective parties per EU-27 being 4.01. Such a variety is likely to be an important obstacle for the development of a single EU party system. This problem becomes particularly important if there are a few parties in the national party system that represent similar political ideologies (for example, conservatism, liberalism, *etc*) and, as such, are potentially fit for the membership in one single EP political group. For this reason, it quite often happens that in one political group or a PPEL that there are two or even more national political parties. The extreme example is

Table 1: The effective number of parties in the EU-27 compared with the effective number of national parties with seats in the European Parliament

| Member State                                 | Effective number of parties by the seat share in the national parliaments | Effective number of parties by the seat share in the European Parliament | Number of seat-winning parties in the European Parliament elections |
|--|---|--|---|
| Austria                                      | 4.24  | 4.19   | 5   |
| Belgium                                      | 8.42  | 10.08  | 12  |
| Bulgaria                                     | 3.34  | 4.90   | 6   |
| Cyprus                                       | 3.90  | 3.60   | 4   |
| Czech Republic                               | 4.51  | 3.23   | 4   |
| Denmark                                      | 5.33  | 4.83   | 6   |
| Estonia                                      | 4.37  | 4.50   | 5   |
| Finland                                      | 5.13  | 5.83   | 7   |
| France                                       | 2.49  | 3.89   | 7   |
| Germany                                      | *4.83   | 4.55   | 6   |
| Greece                                       | 2.59  | 3.51   | 6   |
| Hungary                                      | 2.00  | 2.18   | 4   |
| Ireland                                      | 3.03  | 4.00   | 5   |
| Italy  | 3.07  | 3.61   | 6   |
| Latvia                                       | 6.00  | 5.33   | 6   |
| Lithuania                                    | 5.78  | 4.50   | 6   |
| Luxembourg                                   | 3.63  | 3.00   | 4   |
| Malta  | 2.00  | 1.92   | 2   |
| Netherlands                                  | 6.74  | 7.35   | 8   |
| Poland                                       | 2.82  | 2.75   | 4   |
| Portugal                                     | 3.13  | 3.72   | 5   |
| Romania                                      | 3.60  | 4.11   | 6   |
| Slovakia                                     | 4.01  | 4.33   | 6   |
| Slovenia                                     | 4.23  | 4.45   | 5   |
| Spain  | 2.36  | 2.55   | 6   |
| Sweden                                       | 4.15  | 5.59   | 8   |
| United Kingdom                               | 2.57  | 4.71   | 11  |
| European Parliament<br>(as for 14 July 2009) | -   | **4.51   | 8   |

\*CDU and CSU treated separately.

\*\* For the aims of this analysis, non-attached members have been categorised as if they were a political group.

Source: Döring and Manow 2010; Gallagher and Mitchell 2008 (an update downloaded from

[http://www.tcd.ie/Political\\_Science/staff/michael\\_gallagher/EISystems/index.php](http://www.tcd.ie/Political_Science/staff/michael_gallagher/EISystems/index.php)).

from the EPP, which includes 5 Bulgarian political parties. After the most recent Bulgarian parliamentary election of 2009, three of these now form a coalition government, whereas the other two failed to enter the parliament. However, a much more troubling situation concerns four Italian parties that are members of the EPP. The two most important ones, the PDL and the UDC, currently stand on two different sides of the Italian political spectrum, the PDL leading the government coalition, and the UDC being one of the most important opposition parties, although a few years ago they formed a coalition government together. The PES has much fewer problems of this kind, because in only five cases does it include two national political parties from one single Member State. The ELDR is, in a sense, more similar to the EPP, as, in many cases, it has two Member Parties from one single state, and 3 Member Parties from both Lithuania and Italy.

Whether such multiplicity can be regarded as a potential obstacle to the development of EU party system depends mainly on the national parties, namely, on the extent to which they perceive themselves as allies and partners, rather than enemies, on the national party scene, and whether they can co-operate together in one PPEL. Without doubt, however, the case of the PDL and the UDC representing two sides of the political spectrum while belonging to one single PPEL is quite alarming, since it is likely to be difficult for citizens to understand how two competing parties on the national scene can belong to the same political family at European level. In this sense, polities with very fragmented party systems may find it difficult to adapt to a trans-national system, and, hence, may prove a source of tension or friction.

However, the table above does not reveal further important obstacles to the development of an EU party system. First, it does not address the question of the relative positioning of the two major parties in each country towards one another. If two major parties in a Member State competing at national level are clearly perceived as the left and the right, as in Spain, Germany or Hungary, for example, then it is much easier for these parties to replicate the same patterns of competition at EU level, given the dominant patterns of the left-right competition between the EPP and the PES. However, if it happens that a party of the left is relatively weak, and two dominant parties are situated on the right of the political spectrum, as in Ireland or Poland, then it might be difficult for the parties from such countries to replicate the patterns of competition from their own country to the EU level. Even if the EPP Group represents a very wide array of centre-right and conservative parties, the membership of two centre-right parties in one single EP political group is very problematical, because usually the first national party in a political group must agree to the enlargement of such a group to another party from the same Member State. For example, although *Fianna Fáil* applied for EPP membership in 1970s, its application was blocked by *Fine Gael*, which was already an EPP member. In the previous legislature, *Fianna Fáil* sat with the UEN Group, while it currently belongs to the ALDE Group; in both situations, it remains without a real home at the level of EU party politics.

Second, from the point of view of the stability of the EU party system, it is important to recognise that the composition of the political groups is re-configured after each election. Certainly, in each political group, particularly with

regard to the four largest ones, there is a core, usually formed by the traditional and oldest representatives of mainstream political tendencies characterising each political group, such as CDU in the EPP, the French Socialist Party in the S&D, the FDP and Liberal Democrats in the ALDE, or Die Grüne in the Greens/EFA Group. It is quite unlikely that these core parties will ever change their group membership. However, with regard to other national parties, not being perceived as such a core, as the history of the EP political groups shows, shifts are much more likely. Such parties constantly look for their place in the EP political spectrum, and are willing to shift their loyalties if better conditions are offered to them. Following the 2009 election, there was a particularly big re-shuffle, with the British Conservatives and Czech ODS leaving the EPP-ED and forming their own political group together with the Polish Law and Justice (a former member of now defunct UEN); with the socialists changing their name into the S&D Group in order to accommodate the entry of the Italian PD; with *Fianna Fáil* leaving the UEN Group and joining the ALDE; and finally, with a new Eurosceptic group being created by UKIP and the remnants of the UEN and IND/DEM groups of the 2004-2009 legislature. To some extent such re-shuffles can be explained by the fact that many parties treat the membership in one of the groups only in technical terms, as the vehicles which allow the organisation of work in the EP and the source of financing, rather than as long-standing political commitment and an expression of belonging to a single political family. However, it might also be that the question of EU party affiliation is an important feature of inter- and intra-party political battles. National political parties often criticise one another at domestic level over their choice of the membership in the EP political groups. This was particularly observable before the 2009 European Parliament elections in Poland, where all the parties tried to compromise one another by showing how badly they had chosen their PPEL affiliation. But a probably more serious situation is one in which a national party is internally divided over its EP group membership. The British Conservative party is a prime example of such a case. The choice of its EP group membership has been always dependent on which internal faction – pro- or anti-European – prevailed. While, in early 1990s, a group of pro-European Conservative MEPs supported by some pro-European national party politicians succeeded in joining the EPP Group, it was subsequently criticised by a more anti-European faction, with the effect that finally the Conservative party left the EPP and created their own ECR Group. Such re-shuffling, and the consequent destabilisation of the EP Groups, is one of the most serious obstacles to the development of an EU party system.

Finally, if a genuine EU party system is to emerge, with EPPLs running their lists of candidates in a transnational constituency, then it is most likely that this will be based upon the extra-parliamentary European political parties, which, in some cases, do not always conform exactly to the composition of the political groups. For example, the ALDE Group is a home for two extra-parliamentary parties (ELDR and EDP), the Greens/EFA Group likewise, and the Italian Democratic Party, although allied to the S&D Group, is not a member of the PES. From the point of view of this report, this is a very important distinction, since it is quite likely that the number of parties in the EU ‘extra-parliamentary’ party system will be greater than in the ‘parliamentary’ one, which will have important

consequences for the patterns of intra-party competition and electoral processes.

### 3.3 LEGAL STATUS OF THE POLITICAL PARTIES

Based upon the freedom of establishing and functioning of political parties, the democratic state regulates their functioning through its public law. Usually, law determines what constitutes a political party, in which form of activities parties may engage, and sometimes also indicate appropriate forms of party organisation and behaviour (Katz 2004). However, it comes as no surprise that motives and even very specific ways of regulating political parties differ significantly. For example, although the constitution in the majority of democratic states includes some rules on political parties, only in some countries are there specific laws (acts) devoted to political parties. In some countries (for example, Belgium, France, Finland and the Netherlands), political parties function according to the law common to all persons of corporate character (for example, as associations), although their financing regime might be regulated separately (Council of Europe, 2004). In Greece, political parties do not possess legal personality. In Germany and Finland, the constitutive element of the definition of political party includes the obligation to participate in elections, though we do not find such a regulation in the Polish legal system, for example. By and large, the extent of, to put differently, the intensity of legal regulation (concerning, for example, the rules on internal party organisation) is often different. In summary, we see here a very rich variety of constitutional and legal regulations in contemporary Europe (van Biezen 2009; Lehmann 2003).<sup>3</sup>

Those differences might be generally attributed to different legal cultures as well as to different notions of the political party common to given countries. The key question is whether a political party should be merely treated, as for most of its history, as a private gathering of individuals; or rather whether parties are state actors, subject to constitutional restraints, obliged to guarantee democracy in their internal affairs as well. Following this distinction, political scientists discuss the notion of the party as ‘the particular mix of “public” and “private”’ (Ware 1987), and sometime they also consider various models of regulating political parties, such as the prescription or the permission models (for a review see Janda 2005; see, also, van Biezen 2009). In the case of the former, formally stated conditions imposed on parties (concerning, for example, widely taken internal structure or conditions for granting them legal personality) are minimal or even non-existent. The prescription model, on the other hand, imposes on parties many more rules stipulated in a more detailed way, especially regarding their internal organisation, for example, the selection of candidates or the rights of the members. The most well-known example of the permission (or liberal) model is found in the English legal tradition, whereas the prescription model corresponds to the German one. Other EU Member States can be

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<sup>3</sup> Details of many of the different constitutional rules are reported at <http://www.partylaw.bham.ac.uk/>

probably placed somewhere in the middle between the two traditions (Council of Europe 2004), though one has to note that a prevailing tendency in recent times is to regulate political parties in law, rather than leave them without such regulation (van Biezen & Kopecký 2007). Nevertheless, Belgium, Ireland and Sweden have been reluctant to legislate on political parties, assuming that the organisation of political parties should be a matter only for the parties themselves to decide upon (Council of Europe 2004).

The key question that we will now address is whether the above variety can have any effect on the development of EU party system and the functioning of PPELs themselves. From the point of view of their legal standing, the Europarties are subject to two bodies of law: one set up by the EU Regulation 2004/2003 (and other EU legal provisions such as the so-called Financial Regulation), and another set up by the legislation of a Member State in which a PPEL has a seat. In order to apply for the status of a political party at EU level, it is mandatory to possess legal personality in the Member State of one's choice before actually applying for recognition as a PPEL. In other words, in the first place either a group of citizens or at least two national political parties have to set up a legal entity and apply for the recognition as a legal person, and only then apply for funding to the European Parliament based upon Regulation 2004/2003. Since such a construction as 'European legal personality' does not exist, they must apply for legal personality in one of the Member States. The choice of seat is very important: for example, if it is decided to create a European political party according to French or Belgian law, then it is enough to simply register an association. However, if somebody wishes to have a seat in Germany, Austria or Poland, a body of law specific for political parties will govern them. In other words, the party must decide for itself where it is more beneficial to have its seat (Gagatek 2008), despite the fact that it seems more natural to be based in Brussels due to the proximity of the EU's institutions.

Except for the EU Democrats (established under Danish law) and European Christian Political Movement (governed by Dutch law), all remaining European political parties do have their legal seats in Brussels. Before the adoption of the EU Regulation 2004/2003, PPELs were practically speaking 'private' organisations, without legal personality, able to structure their internal organisation without any exogenous impact or influence. However, having decided to base their legal activities under the Belgian law, they had to adapt their internal structure to the rules governing political parties in this EU Member State. Here, political parties exist as voluntary associations of citizens, and, in law, are constituted as non-profit associations (i.e. Association Sans But Lucratif, ASBL). The Belgian legislation indicates the elements that need to be present in an association's (party's) statute, that is, its aims, members' rights, organs and their competences, and the procedure to amend the statute. For example, the ASBL are to have at least two organs: an executive organ and a members' assembly. The activities of the PPELs are therefore subject to monitoring, control and enforcement under the Belgian law: for example, they must report their financial activities both to the Belgian authorities, and are also required them to report to the European Parliament under Regulation 2004/2003.

With regard to the PPEs established prior to 2003, these requirements caused some difficulties in finding such a legal construction that would both assure the continuity of the previous mode of their work and would be in accordance with Belgian law. The case of the EPP is a good example of the difficulties in adapting an already structured organisation to the new legal rules. During the transition period before the entry into force of the Regulation, the EPP decided to establish itself as an ASBL. As mentioned above, under Belgian law, an ASBL is to have at least two organs: an executive organ and a members' assembly. This rule created major problems for the EPP. That is, interpreting EPP statutes according to Belgian law, before entry into force of the Regulation, the EPP used to have two members' assemblies: the Political Bureau and the Congress. Although Belgian law does not forbid establishing any other organs than the General Assembly and Executive Board, it seems rather absurd to have two organs serving the same function, that is, two members' assemblies. This is why initially, in the EPP statutes, there was no place for the Congress at all, since the Political Bureau was presented as the 'General Assembly' and EPP Presidency became the 'Executive Board'. Consequently, what the EPP did was to adopt Internal Regulations, in which the Congress and the EPP summit were outlined. However, after the transition period, in August 2005, the EPP was granted the status of International Non-Profit Organisation (AISBL), which enabled it to include the Congress therein. In principle, however, after a short transition period, their general structure and the mode of work remain the same as those just before the entry into force of the EU Regulation 2004/2003 (see Gagatsek 2008).

In practice, all the major PPEs are subject to the same legal regime, being established under Belgian law, and it does not seem to be an obstacle for the development of EU party system for one major reason: the issues related to the legal status of PPEs are perceived by most national parties in only technical, rather than, political terms (Gagatsek 2008). For this reason, most national parties do not pay any attention to these issues, and, as such, the variety of national legislations concerning the legal status of parties does not seem to have any impact on the development of an EU party system or of PPEs themselves.

### **3.4 INTERNAL ORGANISATION**

Since the 1990s, the issue of party organisation has become one of the central elements in the study of political parties. Opinion regarding this has varied between those scholars who argued that party organisations were converging cross-nationally and who made a case for models explaining and illustrating certain universal practices and tendencies, on the one hand, and between those who argued that, far from waning, the national context in which a party is located – the legal regulatory environment, the national system of party funding, the particularistic national institutions – is proving increasingly determinant for a party's organisation and culture, on the other (Katz and Mair 1994; Ware 1995).

With regard to PPEs, the main perspective developed by scholars



following the institutional approach to party organisation was to base explanations of PPEL organisation upon the impact of their institutional environment. Given that all of them operated within the same institution at European level, it was argued that they will tend to develop a very similar internal structure and organisation. This, indeed, was the conclusion of a classic study by Hix and Lord (1997). In this approach, the possible impact of the national differences regarding party organisations is less emphasised. However, based upon an in-depth analysis of both formal and informal organisation of the two largest PPELs, Gagalek (2008) has called into question both the extent of organisational convergence and the primary focus of the literature on the institutional environment, thus bringing to the fore the role of national and ideological differences in how parties organise and the possible impact of these differences on PPEL organisation. He emphasises that the final shape of PPEL organisation is likely to reflect a compromise between competing propositions presented by national Member State parties. Thus, each national political party might not only hold different views concerning ideological matters, as discussed in Chapter 1, but might also hold different views regarding how a European political party should be organised. This would clearly constitute a major obstacle to the way of developing genuine transnational parties. To illustrate this tendency, below we will cite two examples coming from the two major PPELs. These examples relate first, to the structure of the party, and second, to the question of introducing individual membership.

The first example concerns the EPP. After 1995, when the Scandinavian conservative parties joined the EPP in full capacity, they expressed a number of comments which aptly illustrated their different views on the party structure. At that time, the Scandinavian conservatives were not happy about the character of the EPP Political Bureau (a representative intermediary organ comprising some 60-80 members) which, in their view, was too big and operated more like a talking shop; their more familiar principle of 'one organisation – one representative' was not practiced, and the Bureau's work was instead based upon the weighted voting. The Scandinavian members proposed working within a smaller forum, such as a steering committee, more suited to the needs of party leaders. This reform may well have been favoured upon the basis of the Nordic conservatives' experiences of the party leaders' conferences in their national party organisations, and hence they pushed for an equivalent body at EU party level. This led the EPP to create the new organ, the Council, in order to fulfil this role. However, as the subsequent practice showed, it failed to be useful, with a low rate of participation, thereby allowing the Political Bureau to remain the most important intermediary organ of the EPP. What seemed to matter here was that the old Member State parties of the EPP had got used to the way in which the Bureau worked and hence preferred to remain with that structure.

The second example concerns the debates over the introduction of direct individual membership in the Party of European Socialists (PES) which took place in 2005. Because PPELS were created as federations of national political parties, the question of individual membership was rarely discussed. The steps taken in this direction have simply been seen as a function of making the EU federations 'real' political parties, modelled on their national counterparts. For this reason,

the national Member State parties of all the major political families were quite reluctant to agree to establish this kind of membership in order to avoid creating an impression that there were two different clubs of members, but also in order to keep control of their own membership (Gagatek 2008). The whole matter was placed on the agenda only in the early 1990s and only in a symbolic sense. At this time, the EPP formally decided to institute it as a tool to demonstrate that it was something more than just a pure international organisation, without, however, developing it in practice. In the PES, it came onto the agenda when the newly elected president Poul Nyrup Rasmussen made the point a part of his election programme for the PES Presidency in 2004, arguing that the PES should develop some kind of individual or supporting membership. After a contested internal debate, it was agreed, in May 2006, to launch the so called 'PES activists' initiative, which does not provide for any formal rights for such activists within the PES decision-making system, but allows for the inclusion of socialist militants in PES activities. According to PES officials, the idea was to reflect a tradition of openness of social democratic and socialist parties and to transform the PES into a more popular, rather than élitist project. It goes without saying that national member parties who have experience of such openness are more likely to accept it also at the level of European party politics, and this might often reflect the political culture of different countries. In this regard, one can mention the example of the Socialist Parties in Wallonia, which, since 1990s, have started organising workshops for their members, in which they get together and develop policy ideas (the so-called 'Forums'). Similar examples aiming at empowering party members can be found in other parties, including the Dutch PvdA, but they are by no means universal. Hence, if PPELs and their representatives transfer their ideas on party membership to EU-party level, tensions might arise.

In summary, the 30-year long history of the largest PPELs clearly influences the extent to which they are open to new proposals. However, similarly to the case of the legal status, not every national party is so preoccupied with organisational intricacies. When a modification of internal rules is debated, only a few national Member State parties table any amendments to statutes, and the matter of party organisation is usually left with the party secretariat and leadership. Even the PES Presidency – an organ with statutory competences regarding party organisation – decided that it would ratify the decisions of the PES Co-ordination Team (composed of Member Parties' International Secretaries) on organisational matters without debate (PES 2007).

### **3.5 CAMPAIGN PRACTICES**

For many years now, the body of literature collectively labelled as 'political marketing' has been developing a number of recommendations and suggestions on the best campaign practices, which, by assumption, could be applied in all countries, regardless of the national traditions and habits. This knowledge ranges from suggestions on how politicians should speak and gesticulate, to very sophisticated techniques of targeting voters or setting the campaign agenda. It is

assumed that rationally-driven politicians will learn from this world-wide knowledge, and try to copy or adapt some of the ideas to national level. Running an election campaign and winning the election should, more or less, be all about the same thing in all democratic systems. This notion has also been fostered by the employment of US-based election consultants in a variety of different national settings.

But there is also cross-national variety (see Lees-Marshment *et al.* 2009 for a thorough analysis). In Europe, too, as the 2009 elections to the European Parliament (like the previous ones) confirmed, there is substantial variation in the degree of campaign professionalisation across Member States (de Vreese 2009). The organisation of campaigns is also influenced by different electoral and political cultures (Gagatek 2010), and, across European democracies, we observe a large number of persistent differences, both of a legal and a cultural nature, which stand in the way of the convergence and trans-nationalisation. They can be aptly illustrated by analysing the most recent 2009 election to the European Parliament and its campaign patterns. For example, in Denmark and Ireland, paid TV advertisements are prohibited, while in Poland they have become the main organising feature of election campaigning. In Luxembourg, it is forbidden to publish opinion polls less than one month before the election date, while such restrictions are unknown in other countries. Some of these differences originate from the different legal provisions. Others can be attributed to political culture. The UK and Ireland are particularly well-known for putting a high premium on direct personalised campaigns, often based upon door-to-door canvassing, while such forms are less emphasised in other countries of continental Europe. Such differences could be multiplied, and a recent analysis of the 2009 elections to the European Parliament across EU Member States provides sufficient ground for such a conclusion (Gagatek 2010).

At individual level, we can draw useful data from the EPRG 2006 MEPs survey, which analysed MEPs' experiences of the electoral campaign process by which they won election, and, in particular, the degree of effort that they placed on the various types of campaigning. From this data, it is clear that the majority of the respondents put a lot of effort into public and party meetings, as well as in developing media relations, but, at the same time, a significant number of MEPs downgraded such traditional campaign tools such as door-to-door canvassing or direct mailing. When looked at from the national perspective, the latter, generally less popular campaign tools are more likely to be used by British MEPs, and in the Member States that use the STV (Farrell and Scully 2007), thus drawing our attention to the shape of the electoral system, but also to the different perspectives on representation. By the same token, former British MEPs and those not elected on a closed list system are more likely to favour viewing their role as serving the interests of individual citizens, and thus organise their campaign activities with a view to targeting the individual voters (Farrell and Scully 2007).

If the proposal to elect a portion of MEPs from the trans-national single European constituency were adopted, PPELs as such would be expected to run election campaigns as independent political actors. While this proposal seems to

obtain support from the leadership of the main party groups, there is less enthusiasm at the level of the individual MEPs. The EPRG 2006 MEP data (Farrell et al. 2006) revealed that almost half (47.1%) of MEPs were opposed to the proposal, including all Danish and Estonian MEPs, and a large majority of Polish (94%) and British (87%) were also against it. Among those that are mainly in favour are the French (27% against), Germans (41% against), Italians (33% against), and Dutch (38% against). These individual MEP attitudes might not be so crucial for the final decision of the Parliament regarding whether to propose this modification, but it does speak volumes about the attitudes of the politicians in these countries if this proposal were to be implemented. Simply put, it seems reasonable to expect a rather reluctant approach of the party machines in Poland and the UK towards promoting the candidates from the trans-national party lists, regardless of their political group affiliation. This observation also holds true regardless of the fact that British and Polish MEPs have entirely different campaign tools, with the British focusing on a direct campaigning with the citizens, and the Polish giving priority to public meetings and media relations (Farrell et al. 2006).

This variety underlines the likely difficulties that would have to be confronted in attempting to run even moderately co-ordinated pan-European campaigns, suited to all national political circumstances, traditions and contexts. Even before the 2009 EP elections, however, such attempts played a relatively small role within the more general, cross-national features of the EP elections. Once the whole campaign was nationally driven, national political parties needed little help from their EU-level counterpart. For this reason, most of the PPEs have taken a defensive approach to providing services for campaigns, in that they offered potential services (such as preparing materials about the record of the political groups in the EP) to the national parties only if requested. What we have here, indeed, are 27 national election campaigns that are run following the logic of the second-order elections, and with patterns and schemes typical of the national campaigning. The experience of these second-order elections also shows that a single campaign run by any one of the PPEs would also run into the problem of there being 27 separate sets of campaign issues, concerns and peculiarities. Certainly, there are a number of further difficulties relating to the styles of the campaigns, but when there is no agreement on the campaign issues to begin with, these other problems remain secondary.

They would come to the fore, however, if the trans-national constituency were introduced. At this point, the different national traditions of campaigning would play a much more important role in blocking genuine trans-nationalisation. In general, however, there seems to be two logical scenarios regarding the question of whether PPEs can run a single campaign. According to the first one, PPEs would become relatively independent campaign players. Member State parties will still play a leading role in preparing the content of the elections manifesto, but the campaign strategy and content, as well as the running of the campaign (at least in major parts), will be run by PPEs, with only moderate help from their own Member State parties. They will compete with other PPEs for a portion of seats in the EP, with a focus on the EU problems. At the same time, the national Member State parties will still run their own,

nationally driven campaigns for EP elections, while clearly indicating their membership in, and support for, one of the PPEs. We would then have two relatively distinct animals: the national party system and a European one, with two different, although connected, sets of parties – what Andeweg (1995) has referred to as a split-level party system. However, running such a campaign would be very expensive and would likely require a massive increase in the subsidies allocated to PPEs from the EP budget. Second, national Member State parties would need to spend much more time and resources than they do now on actually participating in EU trans-national party politics by attending meetings of the PPEs, taking part and contributing to the working groups, etc.

In the second scenario, if the funds allocated for the campaign to the EU parties do not increase significantly, then PPEs and their national Member State parties will have no choice but to organise a de-centralised campaign for the single, European party lists in which there will co-exist again a large number of nationally-run campaigns. It would be a de-centralised campaign, based upon the same slogans and similar schemes with regard to the candidates, but apart from some general issues, it would have to be adapted in each country to different national concerns; and it would require a much greater effort on the part of the national parties, rather than on the European parties. The latter would prepare a menu, listing the key policy areas, and providing various campaign tools, to be cherry-picked by the parties according to their own particular needs. This was also the strategy applied in the 2009 European Parliament information campaign. The EP prepared a menu of 10 topics, such as border control or food security, from which each Member State had to choose the four which best-suited best its national and political situation (see Meyer 2010).

Any assessment of the question of whether the many national differences might serve to block the development of genuine trans-national parties depends on the issue at stake. With regard to the legal status and party organisation, there is a very low interest on the part of the national Member State parties, and hence we need not expect serious tensions as a result of convergence or trans-nationalisation. Such differences are therefore not likely to present any major obstacles. The one possible exception here concerns the establishment of the supporting memberships (PES activists), since the adoption of such initiatives intrude on the field of the independence of the national Member State parties.

However, the story is different when it comes to campaign practices and the patterns of competition, since these are areas of potentially high stakes, which can play an important role in determining election results. Here, the only way to remove these differences may be to allow for a de-centralised campaign devised and co-ordinated by PPEs, but run together with the national Member State parties.

### *Key Summary*

The wide variety in the numbers of parties at national level can constitute an obstacle for the development of a single EU party system;

The presence of two or even more national political parties within the same EP group hinders the development of a EU party system;

The tendency by many national parties to treat their membership in EP groups only in technical terms weakens the process of trans-national party-building;

The fact that all the major Europarties are subjected to the same legal regime may favour the development of a EU party system;

The building of a trans-national party system is conditioned by the differences in electoral and political cultures and by the perception of the EP elections as second-order contests.

#### **4. The Harmonisation of European Electoral Law and the**

## Financing of PPEs

### 4.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter addresses the issues of electoral law harmonisation and party financing at European level. Both questions are equally relevant, albeit for different reasons, for an assessment of the current development and potential for institutionalisation of PPEs. There is a long-standing argument in the literature that a fully-harmonised European electoral law would be beneficial to EU level democracy and also to PPEL building. In this chapter, we will be looking at specific features of the electoral laws used for the elections of the 27 national EP delegations in order to see how much they differ from the reform proposal currently on the table, the one presented by Andrew Duff MEP, and thus how serious the potential technical/political obstacles to the proposal's approval really are. Beyond this, we also try to assess the proposal's inherent potential impact on PPEs. In particular, we will look at the proposal's most innovative features: the provision for the creation of a transnational constituency and the proposal to give voters the option to vote for closed party lists or to give preferences to specific individual candidates. Both can have an important impact on whether and how PPEs will develop as a result of harmonisation. Will a transnational constituency foster the development of genuine Euro-level campaigning? And will preferential voting free candidates from national party conditioning and allow them to establish more independent and euro-level oriented positions?

The second part of the analysis looks at the effect of party financing and its associated regulatory framework. Here, we will look at the party financing schemes that exist at national level with a view to discussing the implications of the characteristics of such schemes for party organisational convergence and institutionalisation. As the literature points to the existence of different levels of party organisational resilience in countries with different levels of political system development and democratic consolidation, we will examine separately party financing in the "Old Europe" (the consolidated democracies of the older member states) and in the "New Europe" (the younger democracies of the most recent member states). We will then look at the provisions for party financing included in Regulation EC 2004/2003. In particular, we shall try to assess the effectiveness of the measures that appear to have been introduced to favour the mutual integration of the PPEs' three organisational components: the national parties, the Euro-level external organisations (once known as the 'federations') and the EP party groups. Such integration would be, according to the literature on party organisational development and institutionalisation, of fundamental importance for the creation of effective PPEs.

## 4.2 THE HARMONISATION OF EUROPEAN ELECTORAL LAW

In June 2009 elections to the European Parliament (EP) took place in the 27 Member States (MSs) of the EU. Almost 375 millions of voters were thus involved in this political event, whose relevance was further enhanced by the new role and powers assigned to the EP by the Treaty of Lisbon, which came into force in the following December. Despite this (once again) enhanced centrality of the EP, the elections are still administered according to a so-called harmonised electoral procedure which consists of 27 sets of different national rules: this implies differences in the methods for distributing seats, in the adoption of electoral thresholds, in the use of closed slates or forms of preferential voting, in allocating vacant seats, in rules to determine active and passive electorate, in allowing for electoral constituencies, in polling days, and in candidate nomination (OSCE/ODHIR 2009).

However, this situation is not a novel one. In the history of the European Parliament, proposals to fully-harmonise the electoral laws presented by qualified MEPs and committees have always encountered numerous obstacles and even blocks. The never-ending debate on the need for a single European electoral law and on its technical contents is still relevant. Up until now institutional differences amongst the MSs, constitutional limitations and various problems of a more political nature have been entwined with a long-standing lack of a clear institutional design for the EU. As a consequence, only a few basic European level rules are followed throughout EU countries.

In enforcing the Treaty of Rome prescription of direct EP elections, the 1976 Act of the Council of Ministers only set the general principle of universal suffrage and a limited number of electoral criteria: more technical aspects were thus ignored. For more than two decades, all attempts to produce an effectively uniform electoral procedure failed. In the meantime, other aspects were regulated. According to EC Directive 93/109, EU citizens who are eligible voters in their own MS are automatically eligible to vote – with some restrictions – in EP elections in any other MS as long as they reside in that MS: clearly, no voter is allowed to vote in more than one MS, although no clear measures to avoid double voting have been undertaken. The same principle applies for the right to stand as candidates: EU citizens who reside in other EU MS than their own are enabled to stand for EP elections. However, the number of individuals in this category who vote in EP elections is negligible, and the number of those who stand for election is even lower.

The Treaty of Amsterdam (1997) marked some steps forward. However, the call for ‘uniformity’ of national laws turned into no more than a general agreement on common principles. As Toplak (2007) puts it ‘instead of requiring the introduction of a “uniform electoral procedure”, the Treaty of Amsterdam [...] provided instead for the introduction of “uniform electoral procedure or a procedure based on common principles”’ (p. 15) Specifically, these common principles consist of: (1) direct universal suffrage; (2) national apportionment of the seats; (3) proportional representation (party lists or STV; closed or open party lists; preferential voting); (4) the possibility for a minimal threshold to be set, at



national level (max 5% of the votes cast); (5) voters can vote in the place of their residence regardless of their state citizenship. In reality, the only important difference with the past was the general adoption of PR as the method for the apportionment of seats. Council Decision of 25 June 2002 (came into force since April 2004) amended the 1976 Act, also by recognising this basis of common principles.

The lack of supranationality and the “second order” nature of European elections derive from some long standing characteristics, namely: (1) the distribution of seats on a national basis; (2) the adoption of differentiated electoral laws; (3) the nomination of candidates by national parties rather than by transnational federations; (4) electoral campaigns focused on national, rather than European, themes (Hix, Marsh 2007). In particular, the consequences deriving from points (1) and (2) are those which have deeper effects on the structure of the party system and on the relation between voters, parties and parliamentarians. Some scholars argue that modifications in the characteristics of the electoral procedures employed for the EP elections would prove conducive to a better connection between citizens and MEPs (Hix, Hagemann 2008). Thus, the first question that one can, and should, ask has to do with the desirable characteristics of any electoral law and what should be the aim of the election that the law must regulate. Different electoral laws have different institutional and political consequences: in this respect, an electoral law has the power to influence even the characteristics of a political system. It also has been observed, however, that the adoption, made for the sake of EP electoral law harmonisation, of provisions that depart radically from those of the electoral laws for national parliamentary can cause discrepancies that can be very disruptive for the EP party system, and even more so for the national ones (Bardi 2002).

With the affirmation of the principle that seat allocation in EP elections should be done exclusively upon the basis of systems of proportional representation (PR), what was, for two decades, the highest hurdle to the effective harmonisation of the EP’s electoral law, was finally removed. The first-past-the-post system adopted in Great Britain had been accused of being responsible for serious distortions in overall EP representativeness for the first four elections of the EP. For a long time most efforts to harmonise European electoral procedures were concentrated on the imposition of PR as the only principle for the apportionment of seats in EP elections. Once this objective was finally achieved, however, it became evident that the remaining cross-MS differences still represented a serious hindrance to the development of fully-fledged PPELs. The most recent initiative that aims to overcome such differences and to harmonise EP electoral procedures is represented by a proposal by Andrew Duff, MEP, currently being discussed in the EP. To strengthen the European character of EP elections, the proposal relies on the following pillars:

- (a) Territorial constituencies upon a regional basis should be introduced in all those Member States with a population of more than 20 million;
- (b) Electoral procedures in all Member States should enable the elector to choose to vote either for a party list or for an individual candidate

(‘preferential semi-open list system’);

(c) A re-distribution of the 751 seats will take place, if justified objectively by figures authorised by Eurostat, before every election; the re-distribution is to be announced at least twelve months before the end of the mandate;

(d) An additional 25 MEPs will be elected by a single EU-wide constituency; trans-national lists will be composed of candidates drawn from, at least, one third of the Member States, and will be gender-balanced; each elector will be enabled to cast one vote for the EU-wide list in addition to their vote for the national or regional list; voting for the EU constituency will be according to the preferential semi-open list system (whereby votes are allotted either to the party list or to individual candidates within a list); and seats will be allocated according to the Sainte-Laguë method;

(e) Candidates may stand both for the EU-wide and for the national or regional constituencies; candidates residing officially in more than one Member State, and candidates with dual nationality who are registered in the relevant electoral rolls, will be eligible to appear on more than one national or regional list in the same election;

(f) An electoral authority is to be established at EU level in order to regulate the conduct and to verify the result of the election taking place from the EU-wide list; the electoral authority will be composed of representatives of the Parliament, the Commission and the Member States;

(g) Polling days will be limited to Saturdays and Sundays;

(h) The timing of the election will be brought forward from June to May;

(i) The minimum age to be eligible to vote in the European parliamentary elections will be 16; the minimum age to be eligible to stand as a candidate will be 18.

Some of these points (the limitation of polling days to weekends, semi-open slates, and, above all, the EU-wide constituency) are very controversial and have already met with serious resistance in the past legislature. With the exception of the EU-wide constituency, which would be a complete innovation, the likelihood of some of the Duff proposal’s other features being eventually accepted naturally depends on how much they depart from those currently adopted in the 27 MSs’ EP electoral procedures. Table 1 includes information on whether current EP electoral procedures already include the relevant features from the above list - except (c), (d), (f), (h) which are not relevant for purposes of national comparison – or not. As over the years these have been consistently considered important in the debate on electoral law harmonisation, we also included in the table information on the presence/absence of electoral thresholds and a listing of the methods employed for the calculation of seat distribution quotients.

For the purpose of our analysis, not all features of the Duff proposal have

the same implications. Clearly, the likelihood that they may be accepted, assessed upon the basis of their compatibility with the existing national EP electoral procedures, has equal consequences on the proposal's overall success. But their inclusion/exclusion in what will eventually be a new harmonised EU-wide electoral law can have different implications for EU democracy and PPEL building. In our analysis, we will try to address, when appropriate, all three aspects. The data show that, at the moment, we have significant discrepancies between existing electoral laws and the Duff proposal's objectives. Although, for the purpose of cross-country comparison, we included data on nine different electoral law characteristics in Table 1, we all analyse closely regional constituencies and preferential voting, as they seem, in theory, to be most problematical and most conducive to consequences in terms of EU democracy and PPEL building.

Of the seven Member States with a population of more than 20 million, territorial constituencies upon a regional basis are provided for by French, Italian, Polish and British laws: despite members elected in *Land* or Federal lists, German electors vote in a single-national constituency, like the Spanish and Romanian ones, as well as those of other 18 smaller MSs. Although below the Duff proposal's 20 million threshold, Belgium and Ireland also present regional territorial constituencies. Differences on this particular characteristic do not appear to be particularly severe in terms of the proposal's potential success, as what was potentially the biggest hurdle (the French constitutional principle affirming the national territory's indivisibility) has already been overcome, or, at least, bypassed. Naturally, besides the already mentioned three "big ones", there are still eight MSs with population levels which grant them between 18 and 26 MEP seats which do not have regional constituencies. An extension of the prescription to these countries as well would certainly be beneficial for EU democracy, as it would create more cross-country homogeneity in MEP-electorate relations, and, for the same reasons, also for Euro-level party building.

Forms of preferential voting (including STV) recur in 13 countries (only Italy amongst the larger ones). In this case, the distance from the Duff proposal's prescription is much more pronounced and serious, as well as with implications for party-building at EU level and for EU democracy. Empirical research conducted during the early terms of the elected EP (Bardi 1987, 1988) indicated that preferential voting was the only factor that permitted European electors in countries with Proportional Representation to influence, albeit to a limited extent, MEP turnover; this, of course, was at the expense of party apparatuses, more inclined to determine turnover upon the basis of the designation of candidatures and of the positioning of candidates on closed lists. Whilst this can be seen as a feature which enhances EU democracy, it can also be considered a factor of profound discrepancies in national components of would-be PPELs. The Duff proposal's prescription of a full harmonisation of this feature goes in the right direction, but, precisely because of the power it would subtract from national parties' apparatuses, it is likely to be met with great resistance. Preferential voting was considered in the course of the debate in the House of Lords over the new PR-based British EP electoral law adopted for the first time in

**Table 1.** Recurrence of requirements advanced by Duff proposal in EU MSs

| Country     | Sub-national constituencies | Preferential Voting | Threshold | Distribution of seats   | Non restricted franchise | Non restricted candidature | Polling days | Minimum Age EI (16) | Minimum Age Cand (18) |
|-------------|-----------------------------|---------------------|-----------|---|--------------------------|----------------------------|--------------|---------------------|-----------------------|
| AUSTRIA     | 0                           | 1                   | 1         | D'Hondt   | 1                        | 1                          | 1            | 1                   | 1                     |
| BELGIUM     | 1                           | 1                   | 0         | D'Hondt   | 0                        | 0                          | 1            | 0                   | 0                     |
| BULGARIA    | 0                           | 1                   | 0         | Hare-Niemeyer   | 0                        | 0                          | 1            | 0                   | 0                     |
| CYPRUS      | 0                           | 0                   | 0         | D'Hondt/Droop   | 0                        | 1                          | 1            | 0                   | 0                     |
| CZECH REP.  | 0                           | 1                   | 1         | D'Hondt   | 0                        | 0                          | 0            | 0                   | 0                     |
| DENMARK     | 0                           | 0                   | 0         | D'Hondt   | 1                        | 1                          | 0            | 0                   | 1                     |
| ESTONIA     | 0                           | 0                   | 0         | D'Hondt   | 1                        | 1                          | 1            | 0                   | 0                     |
| FINLAND     | 0                           | 1                   | 0         | D'Hondt   | 1                        | 1                          | 1            | 0                   | 1                     |
| FRANCE      | 1                           | 0                   | 1         | D'Hondt   | 1                        | 1                          | 1            | 0                   | 0                     |
| GERMANY     | 0                           | 0                   | 1         | Sainte-Laguë  | 1                        | 1                          | 1            | 0                   | 1                     |
| GREECE      | 0                           | 0                   | 1         | Variant of Hare   | 1                        | 1                          | 1            | 0                   | 0                     |
| HUNGARY     | 0                           | 0                   | 1         | D'Hondt   | 1                        | 1                          | 1            | 0                   | 1                     |
| IRELAND     | 1                           | 1                   | 0         | STV   | 1                        | 1                          | 0            | 0                   | 0                     |
| ITALY       | 1                           | 1                   | 1         | Hare  | 1                        | 1                          | 1            | 0                   | 0                     |
| LATVIA      | 0                           | 0                   | 0         | Sainte-Laguë  | 1                        | 1                          | 1            | 0                   | 0                     |
| LITHUANIA   | 0                           | 0                   | 1         | Hare-Niemeyer   | 1                        | 1                          | 1            | 0                   | 0                     |
| LUXEMBOURG  | 0                           | 1                   | 0         | D'Hondt/Hagenbach–Bischoff                                      | 0                        | 0                          | 1            | 0                   | 1                     |
| MALTA       | 0                           | 1                   | 0         | STV   | 1                        | 1                          | 1            | 0                   | 1                     |
| NETHERLANDS | 0                           | 1                   | 0         | D'Hondt   | 1                        | 1                          | 0            | 0                   | 1                     |
| POLAND      | 1                           | 0                   | 1         | D'Hondt/Hare Niemeyer   | 1                        | 0                          | 1            | 0                   | 1                     |
| PORTUGAL    | 0                           | 0                   | 0         | D'Hondt   | 1                        | 1                          | 1            | 0                   | 1                     |
| ROMANIA     | 0                           | 0                   | 1         | D'Hondt/Droop   | 1                        | 1                          | 1            | 0                   | 0                     |
| SLOVAKIA    | 0                           | 1                   | 1         | D'Hondt   | 0                        | 1                          | 1            | 0                   | 0                     |
| SLOVENIA    | 0                           | 1                   | 1         | D'Hondt   | 1                        | 1                          | 1            | 0                   | 1                     |
| SPAIN       | 0                           | 0                   | 0         | D'Hondt   | 1                        | 1                          | 1            | 0                   | 1                     |
| SWEDEN      | 0                           | 1                   | 1         | D'Hondt   | 1                        | 1                          | 1            | 0                   | 1                     |
| UK          | 1                           | 0                   | 0         | D'Hondt (GB); STV (NI)  | 0                        | 0                          | 0            | 0                   | 0                     |
| TOT         | 6                           | 13                  | 13        | 19 D'Hondt and versions; 3 STV; 2 Hare-Niemeyer; 2 Sainte-Laguë | 20                       | 21                         | 22           | 1                   | 13                    |

1999. Despite the strong favourable argument that preference voting was the only instrument which, in a PR-based system, would give British voters something similar to that personal contact with their MEPs afforded by plurality, in the end, the parties' desire to maintain full control over turnover prevailed. Thus, the British experience, that of the country most likely to be interested in a personalisation of electoral politics, that is, does not bode well, as the same negative attitudes manifested there at the time of the British experience of the EP electoral law can be expected from parties in other countries as well.

Turning to cross-national comparisons and focussing on the core of the Duff proposal (preferential voting, franchise, candidatures, polling days, minimum age) the United Kingdom is the country with the lowest number of matching requirements (1 out of 6, the regional requirement for constituencies): at the other end of the spectrum, Austria is the country which exhibits most matches, as it satisfies all the criteria. On average, the 27 Member States' laws are less than 50% compatible (2.6 matches on average). From this view point, an adoption of the Duff proposal does not look impossible: but it would require very significant adjustments of almost all the 27 MSs electoral laws.

But the most important and controversial point of this proposal lies in the creation of 25 seat strong Euro-wide constituency, in which candidates would be standing in trans-national lists. In fact, smaller MSs are strongly opposed to this hypothesis as, they say, it would greatly favour candidates from the biggest Member States (Toplak 2007). With few exceptions these candidates can be expected to have greater international visibility and also obtain many more votes from their national constituencies than candidates coming from smaller countries, especially the smallest ones such as Malta or Luxembourg, which would, in all likelihood, be totally excluded from the supranational seat apportionment. It has been argued that this perverse effect could be compensated by subtracting the number of seats won in the EU-wide constituency from the total amount of those allocated to the countries whose candidates are elected in that constituency. This would ensure that the EP seat distribution amongst MSs would not be altered by the creation of the transnational constituency. Leaving this and other technical solutions to potential problems aside, the trans-national constituency would definitely foster closer party co-operation at EU level as no party of any significance, even if only at national level, could afford not to engage in the competition and leave 25 seats up for grabs to its adversaries. This would, for the first time, guarantee the holding of a genuine transnational campaign and the development of effective Euro-level party programmes. Finding the right candidates with cross-national appeal might be more problematical, but the challenge would certainly be, in itself, another incentive to PPEL development.

Turning to Duff's other innovative proposal, the open list option, some authors believe that national candidates and parties may be more interested in promoting their specific profiles rather than considering the EU elections as second order ones depending on the list structure and the district size (Samuels 1999; Shugart et al. 2005; Hix, Hagemann 2008). In a competition amongst several candidates, standing in each district for each party, and with citizens

being allowed to cast preference votes for one or more of them as an alternative to voting for closed party lists, candidates will have strong incentives to campaign upon the basis of their own individual programmes or platforms, especially if district size were kept relatively small (about 4 to 10 seats). In fact, under these conditions, candidates would be forced to differentiate their proposals from those of others, not being able to count on the reassuring shelter of closed party list rankings. At the other end of the spectrum, large single national constituencies with closed lists maximise the likelihood of electoral campaigns exclusively conditioned by national issues (Hix, Hagemann 2008). The overall conclusion of this argument is that '[t]he open ballot structure would increase incentives for MEPs and candidates to raise their profile directly with the citizens, which in turn would raise public awareness and participation in European Parliament elections, and so increase the legitimacy of the European Parliament and the EU' (Hix, Hagemann 2008 p. 14). Preferential voting, if implemented at EU level, could thus have a positive impact on the development of PPEs. This could also come as a result of the already mentioned fact that preferential voting is the only instrument that allows voters, rather than the (national) parties, to determine, albeit limitedly, MEP turnover (Bardi 1987, 1988). This would make the choice of candidates with wider Euro appeal (and potential responsiveness) very desirable. It is very likely that the positive effect this could have on citizens' perceptions of EU democracy would also ultimately reflect on the Europarties.

#### **4.3 THE FINANCING OF PPEs**

The development of empirical studies on the impact of political finance regimes and regulations in contemporary liberal democracies constitutes a major vein in political science (van Biezen 2000; Casas Zamora 2005; Nassmacher 2009). Although there is still a shortage of comparative approaches (Scarrow 2006), researchers have been increasingly paying attention to cross-country differences and similarities existing at national level, by focusing on how, and to what extent, different public schemes and laws affect parties and party systems (Pierre *et al.* 2000). Even though broad theoretical reflections are still scarce (Scarrow 2007), a general consensus emerges on the existence of a growing dependence on public subsidies by political parties and on the fact that this reliance sometimes produces organisational change. Actually, the relationship between party financing and party organisational development is rather complex: when parties are first established as organisations, developing financial strategies is a crucial objective for their survival; at the same time, such strategies can influence and/or condition the party organisation. At European level, parties are in very early stage of development and financial factors are likely to be very important.

In fact, the literature on the funding of party organisations at national level suggests that rules and regulations have a tendency to promote organisational convergence, with parties operating within a common system of party finance tending to adapt their organisations to avail of these subventions. This evidence constitutes a good starting-point in favour of the argument that a strong European level system of party financing and regulation could have a

similar effect, and could help promote transnational convergence and hence transnational party-building. It also follows that such convergence is likely to be more visible if public funding prevails over private funding. This will probably continue to happen at European level, where parties, as we shall see, have difficulties in securing substantial private funding.

#### 4.3.1 Public financing and organisational change: quid prius?

In most European countries, political parties rely on public funding. Historically, party organisations depended on private contributions: Socialist and Social-democratic parties on fees paid by their members and transfers coming from ancillary organisations; Liberals and Conservatives survived thanks to donations from private business and wealthy individuals. These differences were perhaps responsible for the different organisational models that characterised parties with different ideological and sociological orientations. But a funding model based upon within-party family-similarities appears to be inadequate to understand the evolution of contemporary party financing and its consequences in organisational terms (Nassmacher 1993; Koole 1996).

In the last fifteen years, academic debate on party organisation focused on the hypothesis of a progressive shift of internal power from the so-called *party in central office* to the *party in public office* (Katz, Mair 1995), at the expense of the grass-roots level (the *party on the ground*). Although no general agreement exists (van Biezen 2000; Poguntke 2006), the tangled processes of centralisation, bureaucratisation and professionalisation of party structures may be partially explained in terms of parties' massive need for public subsidies, which have become indispensable for political parties to survive environmental changes.<sup>4</sup> In fact, politics has become more and more expensive due to the ponderous use of mass media and capital-intensive campaigning techniques and to the ensuing professionalisation of political activities. These tendencies coincided with the parallel decline of labour-intensive organisational models and the constant decrease of parties' internal revenues (membership fees, fundraising activities, social events). In addition, the need to reduce inequalities in political competition – also by limiting the role of external private funding – and to enhance financial transparency – made Member State support an indispensable pillar of party revenues.

However the relationship between party finance rules and party building is not unambiguous. Where parties have a long-standing organisational tradition, their primary interest is to maintain their structural articulation, by adapting their form and functioning to external changes. It seems reasonable that political parties, wearing their policy-maker "hat", will produce financing schemes that are suited to their general goals and organisational needs. But depending on

**Table 1.** Party revenue: a typology

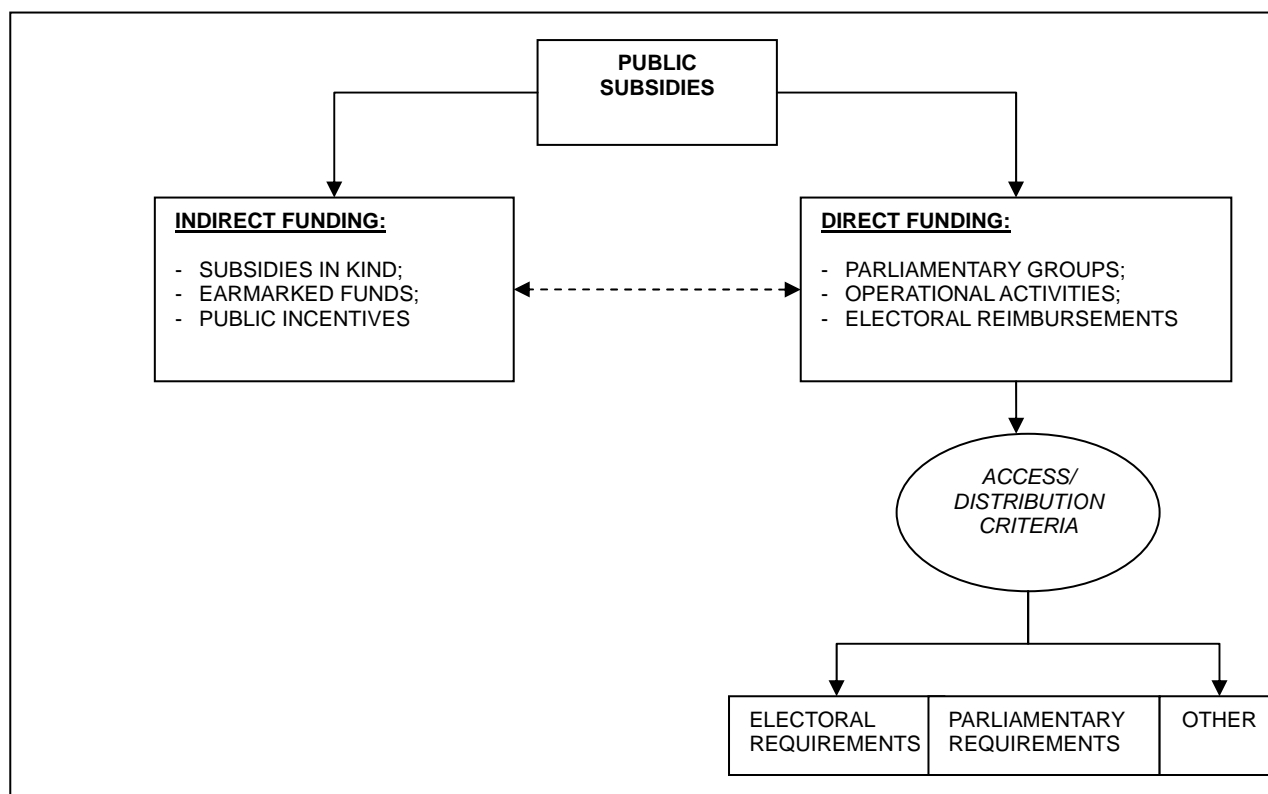
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<sup>4</sup> These positions echo the well known cartel-party thesis (Katz, Mair 1994), according to which parties develop convergent strategies to obtain from the State the resources they need for their survival, also in view of their difficulties in maintaining their ties with civil society.

| Source of revenue          | Main characteristic     | Kinds of contributions   |
|----------------------------|-------------------------|--|
| <i>Grass-roots Revenue</i> | Voluntary contribution  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Membership fees;</li> <li>✓ Profits of party-owned business;</li> <li>✓ Small Private donations;</li> <li>✓ Fundraising events;</li> <li>✓ Intra-party transfers;</li> <li>✓ Foreign Donations</li> <li>✓ Contributions from Interested Money (Institutional fundraising; Contributions from personal wealth; Corporate contributions; Public disincentives;</li> <li>✓ Returns on investments (Party controlled enterprises);</li> </ul> |
| <i>Plutocratic Funding</i> | Interested money        | <p><u>Indirect funding:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Subsidies-in-kind (Access to media; Other support options);</li> <li>✓ Earmarked Funds;</li> <li>✓ Public incentives (tax deduction, tax credit);</li> </ul> <p><u>Direct funding:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Operational activities;</li> <li>✓ Electoral reimbursements;</li> <li>✓ Subsidies to parliamentary groups;</li> </ul>   |
| <i>Public Subsidies</i>    | Law-based contributions |  |

**Source:** re-adapted from van Biezen 2003 and Nassmacher 2009.

**Figure 1.** Public subsidies



their organisational complexity (the number of their national and sub-national governing and administrative bodies; the intensiveness and the extensiveness of



their organisations; their socio-economic pervasiveness – Harmel *et al.* 2004), parties will still also rely on other kinds of revenue. Such alternatives can produce convergence or divergence in organisational models in different party systems. These differences notwithstanding, it seems reasonable that, in transitional regimes or in non-stabilised party systems (such as the EU), where non-institutionalised party organisations exist, party financing schemes will influence party-model convergence and party-building processes.

Up to now, most of the studies devoted to party financing regimes, by focusing on individual national regulations, have provided little cross-national generalisation. To overcome this deficit, we have to introduce an analytical framework for the comparison of different national experiences. To this end, we have developed a typology of party financing schemes (Table 1). The idea being that the different incidence of the various types of party financing is relevant for our understanding of party organisational development.

Political parties and candidates are financed through private or public means. Private means can be either internal (*grass-roots revenues*) or external (*plutocratic funding*) to the party. Although private donations are also regulated by law, in general, Member States tend to avoid excessively strict regulation of such resources, due to the private and voluntary nature of political parties.<sup>5</sup> Most of the time, norms consist of limits to the amounts or even selective bans on donations (*i.e.*, for anonymous contributions; for contributions coming from public or semi-public enterprises), in income tax incentives for donations by organised interests, in obligations for public disclosure of donor's identity, *etc.*

Here, we limit the scope of our analysis to *public funding* of parties as it appears to be most relevant for Political Parties at European Level (PPEs). By considering the three faces of party organisation (Katz, Mair 1995) and its electoral projection, public subsidies may be sub-divided into *indirect funding* – that is, public support to the broader party extra-organisational sphere – and *direct funding*, *i.e.*, public support to party structures and activities (Figure 1).

The most diffused forms of *indirect funding* are: (1) *subsidies in kind*, which consist in non-monetary services that Member States provide to political competition (election material, election officers, polling station facilities) or in government licences to political parties, such as free broadcasting and media access; (2) *earmarked funds*, which are goal-oriented money transfers to parties' affiliated association or to bind activities, such as party press; (3) *public incentives*, which are usually norms on tax deductibility (including membership fees), systems of tax free, tax credit or tax check-off: they are often limited to individuals, and maximum amounts are stipulated to prevent donations from interested money (Nassmacher 2009).<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> As we will see this is not the case at European level where private funding of parties is strictly limited.

<sup>6</sup> Van Biezen (2000; 2003) argues that direct public funding of political parties rests on three pillars, relating to their principal fields of activities: (1) subsidies for the operational cost of parties, that is contributions to maintain and develop their organisational structures and, generally speaking, to promote their extra-parliamentary activities; (2) subsidies for campaign activities, that is a reimbursement for electoral expenses incurred by candidates or parties; (3)

In what follows, we decided to focus on the general criteria set by Member States/states to allocate resources among parties at national level, by underlying differences in procedures for *access* and *distribution* of public funding: in fact, these peculiar aspects seem to be more ‘in touch’ with organisational strategies.

#### **4.3.2 Party financing schemes in Europe: a synthetic overview**

The introduction of public funding in Europe dates back to 1959 (Austin, Tjernström 2003; Casas-Zamora 2005), when the Federal Republic of Germany granted public funding to central parties’ organisations. Some scholars (Nassmacher 1989; 2003) argue that it would be possible to single out different stages in the Member State subventions implementation. This is crucial to assess the different levels of public support to parliamentary and non-parliamentary activities: in fact, the extension of public funding to party activities carried out outside the legislatures also permitted the financing of parties which had no parliamentary representation (Scarrow 2006). One possible element in determining organisational consequences of public financing schemes is the degree of party and party system institutionalisation. Naturally, there are a wide variety of systems in Europe that present different levels of institutionalisation. One can surmise, however, that there may be greater homogeneity within, respectively, the group of established democracies (Old Europe) and that in those of the more recent ones (New Europe). Parties and party systems are likely to be generally more institutionalised in the Old Europe than in the New Europe.

Whilst in the Old Europe ‘most of [the] countries have similar parliamentary systems, and most use some variety of proportional representation electoral rules’ (Scarrow 2006, p. 626) and party systems reflect a number of similarities (in terms of their original cleavages and the timing of their development), in the New Europe institutional and political systems differ, a part from the shared problem of the structural biases in favour of the post-communist parties (Smilov, Toplak 2007). In general, although a number of characteristics recur in different systems of party financing, it would be inappropriate to speak of a cross-national European model of party financing. Likewise, no evident similarities can be observed across the Member States of the Old and of the New Europe. What can be identified as the unifying characteristic of all public funding models is the reliance on party-oriented, rather than candidate-oriented, norms (Nassmacher 2001).

In a first phase, Member State support to political parties was primarily assigned to parliamentary groups (1963-1975). A part the relevant German case (where funds to central organisations were introduced previously), amongst present Western EU Member States, Austria, Belgium, Denmark, Finland, Ireland,

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subsidies to parliamentary party groups. However, the distinction between subsidies for operational costs and those for campaign activities rests on subtle borders and, as Nassmacher (2009) points out, «the dividing line between extra-parliamentary parties on the one hand and [parliamentary groups] on the other hand, has not always been strict» (p. 306). In general, then, it could be difficult to distinguish between payments (Pierre et al. 2000), specially when thinking of the intra-party flows of resources.

Italy, Sweden, the Netherlands and the UK, originally granted state support to parliamentary groups. Most of these countries provided public finance to the central offices of parties later on: only Italy, Finland and Sweden decided to set specific provisions contextually. The 'second wave' of public funding started in the second half of the 1970s and continued until the end of the 1990s: it encompassed the new Southern democracies of Spain and Portugal (1977), Denmark (1986) and France (1989). Belgium and the Netherlands extended public funds to party organisations in 1989 and 1999. Only the UK and Ireland did not adopt specific regulations. During the 1990s, the European enlargement to Eastern countries raised new disciplinary interests in public funding matters. The regulation and the funding of political competition in the New Europe stood out for two main reasons (Smilov 2007). First, especially during the initial stage of the transition process to democratic regimes, both party rules and financial aid to political parties were primarily conceived to help to stabilise and to legitimise the new-born party systems. Secondly, in recent years, increasing attention has been paid to the widespread phenomenon of political corruption. Here, we focus on the first aspect: in fact, strategies adopted to stabilise new party systems may afford helpful cues to the general purpose of this study.

Public funding schemes could be classified upon the basis of a number of criteria. The ones that recur more frequently in the literature are those reflected in Table 2. In particular, we can consider the purpose of direct public funding and the requirements for the access and the distribution of the funds themselves. In reality, we cannot observe any significant variation in the purposes of direct public funding: mixed approaches seem to prevail with funds being provided for operational costs as well as for electoral activities in most countries. More variation is, however, visible in terms of the requirements for access to, and distribution of, the funds. Indirect funding, a possible third criterion for classification, presents no variation at all, in that it is present in all countries. The modalities of indirect funding can, however, vary and will be considered in more detail in the course of the analysis on the systems of Old and New Europe.

#### **4.3.3 Public funding in the Old Europe**

When speaking of *direct funding*, it is possible to distinguish differences in our first criterion, purpose in terms of operational costs and electoral activities. In the Old Europe, as the table indicates, there is a good degree of homogeneity as a result of a prevalence of mixtures of the two modalities. More variation can be observed in terms of access and distribution procedures, which see a prevalence of electoral criteria as opposed to parliamentary ones. Usually, these procedures rely on party size, that is, the number of seats held and/or votes polled, which constitute the most common criteria for funding allocation. However, in many cases (Britain, Belgium, the Netherlands, Austria, Sweden, and Italy until 1993) base amounts are set to be equally distributed among eligible parties.

**Table 2.** The regulation of party funding in Europe

| <b>Country</b>        | <b>Direct Public Funding</b> | <b>Purpose of the Direct Public Funding</b> | <b>Requirement(s) for Access/Distribution</b>                               | <b>Indirect funding</b> |
|-----------------------|------------------------------|---|---|-------------------------|
| <i>Austria</i>        | YES                          | Operational Costs; Electoral activities     | Electoral (current legislature)   | YES                     |
| <i>Belgium</i>        | YES                          | Operational Costs; Electoral activities     | Parliamentary (current legislature)   | YES                     |
| <i>Bulgaria</i>       | YES                          | Electoral activities                        | Mixed Electoral-Parliamentary (current election/legislature)                | YES                     |
| <i>Czech Republic</i> | YES                          | Operational Costs; Electoral activities     | Mixed Electoral-Parliamentary (current election/legislature)                | YES                     |
| <i>Denmark</i>        | YES                          | Operational Costs; Electoral activities     | Electoral (previous election)   | YES                     |
| <i>Finland</i>        | YES                          | Operational Costs; Electoral activities     | Parliamentary (current legislature)   | YES                     |
| <i>France</i>         | YES                          | Operational Costs; Electoral activities     | Electoral (current election)  | YES                     |
| <i>Germany</i>        | YES                          | Operational Costs; Electoral activities     | Electoral (previous election)   | YES                     |
| <i>Hungary</i>        | YES                          | Operational Costs; Electoral activities     | Electoral (current election)  | YES                     |
| <i>Ireland</i>        | YES                          | Operational Costs                           | Electoral (previous election)   | YES                     |
| <i>Italy</i>          | YES                          | Electoral activities                        | Electoral (current election)  | YES                     |
| <i>Netherlands</i>    | YES                          | Operational Costs                           | Parliamentary (current legislature)   | YES                     |
| <i>Poland</i>         | YES                          | Operational Costs; Electoral activities     | Mixed Electoral-Parliamentary (current election/legislature)                | YES                     |
| <i>Portugal</i>       | YES                          | Operational Costs; Electoral activities     | Mixed Electoral-Parliamentary (current election/legislature)                | YES                     |
| <i>Slovenia</i>       | YES                          | Operational Costs; Electoral activities     | Electoral (current election)  | YES                     |
| <i>Spain</i>          | YES                          | Operational Costs; Electoral activities     | Electoral (current election)  | YES                     |
| <i>Sweden</i>         | YES                          | Operational Costs; Electoral activities     | Mixed Electoral (previous election)-<br>Parliamentary (current legislature) | YES                     |
| <i>United Kingdom</i> | YES                          | Operational Costs;                          | Parliamentary (current legislature)   | YES                     |

**Source:** re-adapted from Nassmacher (2009) and Smilov, Toplak (2007).

In some cases, laws set specific electoral threshold(s) to access public funding: from a minimum of 1,000 votes (Denmark) to 4% of votes collected at national level (Austria). In between, lie Germany (from 0.5% to 1% depending on the kind of election) and Sweden. In Italy, law 515/1993 set a 3% threshold to access electoral reimbursements, which was subsequently lowered to 1% in 1999. Single candidates who get a minimum of votes are reimbursed in Ireland. In Sweden, parties without parliamentary representatives but which have obtained at least 2.5% of the votes at national level in either of the two most recent elections receive grants.

Also in terms of parliamentary requirements, a minimum of seats obtained is commonly set. In the Netherlands, all parties represented in Parliament receive public funding, while, in Finland and Belgium, parties access funds if they have been able to elect at least one candidate in both parliamentary chambers. In both Spain and Portugal, subsidies are allocated upon the basis of votes and seats won by the parties: however, criteria for allocation produce higher disproportional effects in the former, as only parties which win at least one seat in a multi-member constituency are eligible (van Biezen 2000; Nassmacher 2003a). The minimum of seats obtained criterion applies also in Italy, for European and Regional elections. In the UK, only registered parties able to win at least 2 seats in Parliament access to the policy development fund. In France, the law set different re-imbursement rates according to the political level to be elected: here electoral and parliamentary requirements couple, since the annual subsidy is distributed both among parties which reach at least 1% of the vote in a minimum of fifty single member districts, and parties with at least one affiliated deputy or senator (Nassmacher 2003a).

Other criteria may regulate the access to, and the distribution of, public funding. In Germany, the Supreme Court established (1994) that parties receive an amount of public resources equal to the funds they have been able to collect autonomously from grass-roots revenues and plutocratic funding (*matching funds*); similarly, in 1995, in France, a new kind of subsidy was introduced, primarily directed at parties which did not pass votes thresholds: if the excluded parties are able to solicit a fixed minimum amount of funds from 10,000 identified persons (including 500 elected officials) then they can access a public matching grant (Nassmacher 2003).

Coming to *Indirect Funding*, free access to media is a prime example, being one of the most important types of subsidies in-kind. In Western Europe, the discipline of this matter varies from country to country (see Table 3). Other kinds of services provided by the public authority may consist of: (1) the coverage of expenses for transportation to and from polling stations (Sweden; Italy); (2) the offer of free space for party posters during campaign periods (especially at local level: Belgium, France, Germany, Italy, the Netherlands, Spain); (3) reduced postal rate (Belgium, Italy, Sweden, Spain; Ireland; UK; (4) free use of public halls (Britain, France, Spain, Italy); (5) reduced rates for the use of public places, public advertisement, billboards (Italy); (6) organising lotteries (Italy, Sweden); (7) preferred treatment in terms of party premises (Italy).

An additional kind of indirect party funding – recently adopted also by the

EU (EC 2004/2003) – consists of public financing of institutes affiliated to parties for goal-oriented purposes, such as research, training, youth (Germany; Austria; the Netherlands until 1999); or the funding of specific activities (Italy, Sweden: support to the party press), generally aimed at reinforcing political participation. Usually, these *earmarked funds* cannot be spent for electoral activities.

Also public *incentives* like tax benefits are conceived to encourage citizen participation (Pinto-Duchinsky 2002). Danish law provides full deductibility for membership dues, while maximum tax benefits are set in France and Germany. Both the Netherlands and Italy provide tax benefits also for contributions coming from corporations. However, in Italy, law 2/1997, which introduced a tax check-off mechanism, failed its goal, as less than 30% of citizens decided to support parties: this failure opened the doors to two governmental “special” reimbursements to political parties.

**Table 3.** Subsidies-in-kind: access to media

| Country               | Norms on Access to media  |
|-----------------------|---|
| <i>Austria</i>        | Parties represented in parliament are allocated free air time on radio and TV   |
| <i>Belgium</i>        | Free airtime to parties in proportion to their previous electoral performance;<br>Paid political advertising unavailable to parties;  |
| <i>Denmark</i>        | Free airtime to all parties;<br>Paid political advertising unavailable to parties;  |
| <i>Finland</i>        | Paid political advertising unavailable to parties;  |
| <i>France</i>         | Paid political advertising unavailable to parties;  |
| <i>Germany</i>        | Free airtime to parties in proportion to their previous electoral performance;  |
| <i>Ireland</i>        | Paid political advertising unavailable to parties;  |
| <i>Italy</i>          | Mixed system of airtime allocation (equal and proportional)   |
| <i>Netherlands</i>    | Parties represented in parliament are allocated free air time on radio and TV   |
| <i>Sweden</i>         | Paid political advertising unavailable to parties (at national level);  |
| <i>United Kingdom</i> | Free airtime to all parties;<br>Free broadcasting time to parties for campaign periods and between elections in proportion 5:5:4 (LB:CP:LD)<br>Paid political advertising unavailable to parties; |

**Source:** re-adapted from Nassmacher 2009.

#### 4.3.3 Public funding in the New Europe

As we have seen, New Europe systems present some clear structural differences *vis-à-vis* those of the Old Europe: the biases in favour of the post communist parties, the threat of “state capture” by private interests (corporations and wealthy donors). All these factors convinced almost all governments to introduce public funding: only Latvia is still lacking public schemes. In general, also in Eastern countries public funding is more party oriented rather than candidate

oriented. While previously substantially unregulated, the party funding sector has become a competitive ground both for those parties which claimed to historical continuity and the new comers: in this respect, the larger parties tried to tailor funding schemes to their own interests. The data in Table 2 indicate that, according to the purpose of financing, in terms of *electoral activities* or *operational costs*, also in the New Europe, there is a good degree of homogeneity, also resulting from the prevalence of mixed systems. Similarly, more variation can also be observed in terms of access and distribution procedures. In this case, however, we have a prevalence of mixed requirements over electoral ones with a total exclusion of exclusive parliamentary requirements.

In the Czech Republic, the discipline of party funding dates back to 1991: in 2000, new provisions were adopted by Parliament (Ondřej, Petr 2007). Czech parties receive an electoral reimbursement (with a minimum threshold set at 3%), a fixed subsidy for their operational activities and a subsidy for each seat won in the two chambers; they also have access to subsidies in kind (revenues from lotteries). National law provides a number of bans and limits for donations, specially for contributions coming from public entities.

In Slovenia, the party-funding regime underwent a major reform in 2000, since the 1994 Political Parties Act was considered too unbalanced in favour of parliamentary parties (Toplak 2007a). The new public scheme set a 10% quota of the entire amount of funds to be allocated to parties which obtain at least 1% of the votes cast at national elections, while the remaining 90% is subdivided proportionally upon the basis of votes. In addition, parties have the right to be refunded of the electoral expenses incurred, even at local level. The Slovenian law also provides parties with paid staff, affiliated into 'parliamentarians clubs'. Indirect funding does not encompass provisions about free broadcasting, while party law grants special premises for party offices.

The Bulgarian case is quite peculiar. In Bulgaria, little attention was paid to the funding of political competition throughout the initial ten years of the transition process (Kanev 2007). Apart from generic restrictions for private and foreign donations, the introduction of subsidies in kind (free airtime) and non-regulated subsidies to parties participating to the elections, it was only in 2001 that new legislation was approved by the Parliament. Since that moment, private donations are the principal source of party-funding: parties receive both direct public subsidies (for campaigning and ordinary activities) and in kind subsidies (in proportion to their parliamentary strength) and they are subjected to limits in campaign spending. To prevent the freezing of the party system, public support is directed both towards parliamentary parties (those which passed the 4% threshold) and extra-parliamentary parties which have more than 1% (*ibidem*). Procedures for fund distribution are complex, *i.e.*, a system of differentiated allocations to parties, party-alliances and independent candidates, based upon different thresholds and different grants (both funds and loans). Finally, a ceiling is set for state subsidies (Walecki 2003).

Hungary seems to be a generous country to political parties. No upper limit on state subsidies is set, while restrictions over contributions from

companies owned by the state and a ban on anonymous donations are provided by the Party Law (Enyedi 2007). Parties receive direct funds in terms of electoral reimbursements and transfers to central headquarters; indirect funding as in kind funds (free broadcasting, reduced prices for media advertising) and earmarked funds (support to parties affiliated organisations). To pass the electoral threshold (5%) is the *conditio sine qua non* to access to public funds: a quarter of the overall amount is equally distributed among parliamentary parties with more than 1% of the votes, while a bigger slice of the budget is sub-divided proportionally upon the basis of votes. Parliamentary caucuses are also subsidised to hire experts. No tax relief for citizens is set but parties are exempt from taxation.

At the beginning of the new Millennium (2002), Poland underwent a substantial reform of its political-funding regime after the numerous scandals and abuses emerged during the transition process, when no clear or lasting rules were set (Walecki 2003; 2007). In addition, as in many other Eastern countries, political competition was conditioned by the post-communist parties, which took advantage of their massive properties: at the initial stage of the transition, state funding was prohibited. However, party organisational weakness and overlapping electoral cycles at presidential, parliamentary and local level forced the state to introduce public aid: from initial electoral re-imbursements (1993) to grants for parties statutory activities and expenses incurred in campaigning (1997). As single candidates are directly involved in the funding of their campaigns, in the absence of a consistent membership and in presence of declining small individual donations, interested money is a primary source of revenue (Walecki 2007). This also implies a tendency to organisational centralisation, as parties have to comply with rigid legal requirements: private firms and banks are also involved in helping parties to prevent irregularities in their campaign finance. Direct public funding is allocated upon the basis of a complicated mixed system, which combines electoral and parliamentary requirements (*ibidem*, pp. 129-130): the biggest parties are clearly favoured. During the electoral campaign period, all the parties also have the right to free broadcasting, as a subsidy in kind.

#### **4.3.4 The funding to parties at European level**

The legal basis of the rules for funding of PPEs is given in Article 10 of the Treaty on the European Union (TEU), in article 224 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (TFEU) and in other regulations. In particular, since Regulation (EC) No 2004/2003 was adopted, PPEs began to receive both direct and indirect funding from the general EP budget. The discipline of party-funding was partially amended in 2007 (Regulation No 1524/2007): in what follows, we will refer to this final setting.

The main purpose of this regulation was to improve the integration process on the political side, by favouring a better structuring of the political actors operating at European level. The aim to guarantee higher level of organisational autonomy for PPEs – *i.e.*, to reduce their dependence on national parties – is clear since the regulation explicitly denied the possibility of financing



(neither directly nor indirectly) national organisations or candidates with funds received from the general budget of the EU. On the other hand, this provision was instrumental for national parties, in order to avoid a potential increasing in the intervention of the PPELs into national politics (Gagatek 2008). However, PPELs may subsidise the financing of campaigns for the EP elections in which they participate.

Private funding (grass-roots revenues and plutocratic) are limited by the regulation. Besides the usual concerns found in emerging party systems (see New Europe) about the dangers of giving private interests an excessive influence in the democratic process, this is probably also a consequence of the great distance that exists between PPELs and European civil society. This, in fact, makes the danger of the affirmation of big private interests, as opposed to ordinary citizens, all the more likely. Be it as it may, PPELs are not allowed to accept anonymous donations, donations from the budget of political groups in the EP, donations from any undertaking directly or indirectly linked to public authorities, donations exceeding EUR 12,000 per year and per donor from any natural or legal person other than the referred undertakings, or foreign donations. PPELs may receive funds from national parties which are members of a PPEL and from individuals who are members of a PPEL: in both cases, contributions may not exceed 40% of the annual budget of that PPEL. Obligations linked to funding include the publicity of PPEL revenues, expenditures and their statements of assets and liabilities, on the one hand, and the specification of donors and the donations received, except those not exceeding EUR 500 per year and per donor, on the other.

To be recognised as a PPEL and to access public funding, a party must comply with a number of conditions, which are a mixture of legal, parliamentary and electoral requirements; the subsequent distribution of funds relies on parliamentary criteria (see Table 5).

Technically, the purpose of direct funding at European level follows similar patterns to individual countries' in Old and New Europe: funding is, indeed, provided for the ordinary functioning of PPELs as well as for electoral campaigns. However, the latter are very limited, and it is clear that facilitating the creation and maintenance of more effective PPELs is the main purpose of the regulation. On the second criterion, we have identified, for the classification of funding schemes, the European level, which not only does not depart from the prevailing mixed model observed in both Old and New Europe, but also presents an additional programmatic requirement, favouring the respect of the basic principles on which EU democracy is be founded. Again, the regulation's preoccupation to favour better linkage between European citizens and EU level institution through political parties is evident. Tables 6, 7 and 8 are included as illustrations of actual party funding at EU level.

**Table 5.** Regulation of party funding at European level

| <i>Criteria for the constitution of</i> | <i>Purpose of the Direct Public</i> | <i>Requirements for access</i> | <i>Distribution criteria</i> |
|---|-------------------------------------|--------------------------------|------------------------------|
|---|-------------------------------------|--------------------------------|------------------------------|

| <i>parties</i>   | <i>Funding</i>   |  |   |   |  |
|--|--|--|---|---|--|
| <i>Legal</i>   |  | <i>Parliamentary</i>   | <i>Electoral</i>  | <i>Programmatic</i>   | <i>Parliamentary</i>   |
| Legal personality in the Member State in which the seat is located;<br><br>Positive decision by the EP on the application for funding; | operational and functioning costs (including Foundations);<br><br>Electoral activities with the exclusion of contributing to national member parties campaigns | Must be represented, in at least ¼ of the MS, by MEP or in the national Parliaments or regional Parliaments or regional assemblies | Must have received, in at least ¼ of the MS, at least 3% of the votes cast in each of those MS at the most recent EP elections;<br><br>Must have participated in elections to the EP or have expressed the intention to do so | Must observe in its programme and in its activities the principles on which the EU is founded (liberty, democracy, respect for human rights and fundamental freedom, rule of law) | 15% distributed in equal share;<br><br>85% distributed proportionally among those which have elected members in the EP |

**Table 6.** Grants from the EP to PPEL (maximum grant awarded)

| Year | AEN     | AIDE    | EUD     | EDP     | EFA     | EGP       | ELDRP     | EPP       | PES       | PEL     |
|------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|---------|
| 2004 | 161.250 |         |         | 340.425 | 165.724 | 306.000   | 618.896   | 1.587.587 | 1.257.000 | 210.275 |
| 2005 | 450.000 |         |         | 459.530 | 217.906 | 568.261   | 894.454   | 2.863.693 | 2.489.175 | 365.868 |
| 2006 | 450.000 | 328.125 | 219.825 | 514.797 | 222.627 | 581.000   | 883.500   | 2.929.841 | 2.580.000 | 518.626 |
| 2007 | 300.000 | 356.250 | 234.000 | 526.148 | 222.541 | 631.750   | 1.133.362 | 3.271.810 | 2.994.603 | 526.148 |
| 2008 | 300.000 | 413.990 | 226.700 | 496.291 | 226.600 | 641.734   | 1.115.665 | 3.354.754 | 3.027.647 | 536.685 |
| 2009 | 577.150 |         | 245.274 | 492.487 | 226.600 | 643.562   | 1.179.191 | 3.485.708 | 3.100.000 | 562.405 |
| 2010 |         |         | 211.125 | 505.617 | 339.965 | 1.054.999 | 1.553.984 | 4.959.462 | 3.395.323 | 708.080 |

**Source:** Directorate-General for Finance; Directorate C – Political Entity Funding and Other Services; Political Entity Funding and Inventory Unit.

**Table 7.** Grants from the EP to PPEL (final grant)

| Year | AEN     | AIDE    | EUD     | EDP     | EFA     | EGP     | ELDRP     | EPP       | PES       | PEL     |
|------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|-----------|-----------|-----------|---------|
| 2004 | 83.964  |         |         | 69.862  | 163.222 | 171.461 | 462.661   | 1.051.469 | 1.093.853 | 120.895 |
| 2005 | 114.330 |         |         | 253.933 | 217.906 | 568.261 | 819.563   | 2.398.941 | 2.489.175 | 365.868 |
| 2006 | 144.809 | 170.064 | 57.763  | 163.571 | 220.914 | 581.000 | 883.500   | 2.914.060 | 2.580.000 | 439.019 |
| 2007 | 159.138 | 239.410 | 226.280 | 152.611 | 215.198 | 631.750 | 1.022.344 | 3.156.414 | 2.992.218 | 524.251 |
| 2008 | 206.376 | 303.051 | 153.821 | 407.693 | 226.600 | 641.534 | 1.115.665 | 3.354.754 | 3.027.647 | 536.539 |

**Source:** Directorate-General for Finance; Directorate C – Political Entity Funding and Other Services; Political Entity Funding and Inventory Unit.

**Table 8.** PPELs' incomes (2006-2009)

| Year        | Party        | Own Resources        | EP grants        | Other        | Total            |
|-------------|--------------|----------------------|------------------|--------------|------------------|
| <b>2006</b> | EFA          | 53,700               | 222,627          | 20,509       | <b>296,836</b>   |
|             | EGP          | 175,650              | 581,000          | 80,000       | <b>836,650</b>   |
|             | ELDR         | 883,500              | 314,227          | 12,812       | <b>1,210,539</b> |
|             | EPP          | 1,099,646            | 2,912,595        | 1,464        | <b>4,013,705</b> |
|             | EUD          | 40,000               | 175,800          | 42,000       | <b>257,800</b>   |
|             | PEL          | 172,875              | 438,648          | 611,523      | <b>1,223,046</b> |
|             | PSE          | 889,649              | 2,580,000        | 43,864       | <b>3,513,513</b> |
| <b>2007</b> | <b>Party</b> | <b>Own Resources</b> | <b>EP grants</b> | <b>Other</b> | <b>Total</b>     |
|             | EFA          | 67,500               | 222,390          | 8,097        | <b>297,987</b>   |
|             | EGP          | 185,000              | 650,000          | 40,500       | <b>875,500</b>   |
|             | ELDR         | 359,304              | 1,021,780        | 13,922       | <b>1,395,006</b> |
|             | EPP          | 1,144,849            | 3,156,201        | 5,325        | <b>4,306,375</b> |
|             | EUD          | 39,000               | 234,000          | 39,000       | <b>312,000</b>   |
|             | EDP          | 184,436              | 553,308          |              | <b>737,744</b>   |
|             | PEL          | 175,386              | 526,149          | 701,535      | <b>1,403,070</b> |
|             | PSE          | 998,416              | 2,994,419        | 38,589       | <b>4,031,424</b> |
| <b>2008</b> | <b>Party</b> | <b>Own Resources</b> | <b>EP grants</b> | <b>Other</b> | <b>Total</b>     |
|             | EFA          | 67,500               | 226,998          | 8,200        | <b>302,698</b>   |
|             | EGP          | 644,640              | 203,000          | 67,202       | <b>914,842</b>   |
|             | ELDR         | 364,374              | 1,113,709        | 19,621       | <b>1,497,704</b> |
|             | EPP          | 1,120,449            | 3,354,754        |              | <b>4,475,203</b> |
|             | EUD          | 30,000               | 226,700          | 45,300       | <b>256,700</b>   |
|             | EDP          | 182,613              | 547,840          |              | <b>730,453</b>   |
|             | PEL          | 163,797              | 536,539          | 10,502       | <b>700,336</b>   |
|             | PSE          | 714,400              | 3,051,000        | 302,600      | <b>3,765,400</b> |

**Source** Official PPELs' accounts

Probably what is really peculiar to the regulation of political funding at European level is the relevance attributed to indirect subsidies to PPELs and, in particular,

to earmarked funds provided to Political Foundations at European Level (PFELs). A PFEL is ‘an entity or network of entities which [...] affiliated with a PPEL, and which through its activities [...] underpins and complements the objectives of the PPEL’ (Reg. No 1524/2007, Article 1). PPELs and affiliated PFELs have to define the modalities of their relationship, by assuring both appropriate governance and management autonomy.

Similarly to most disciplines relating to subsidies to political foundations, the European regulation also sets a number of specific tasks which a PFEL has to follow (*i.e.*, improving the debate and favouring research/support activities on European matters). To be officially recognised by the EP, a PFEL needs to satisfy a number of different requirements (see Table 9).

**Table 9.** Requirements to be satisfied by PFELs

| Requirements   |                                   |   |   |
|--|-----------------------------------|---|---|
| <i>Legal</i>   | <i>Scope</i>                      | <i>Geographical</i>   | <i>Programmatic</i>   |
| Must be affiliated with one of the recognized PPEL, as certified by that party;<br>Legal personality in the Member State in which the seat is located, separate from that of the PPEL with which it is affiliated; | It shall not promote profit goals | Its governing body shall have a geographically balanced composition | Must observe in its programme and in its activities the principles on which the EU is founded (liberty, democracy, respect for human rights and fundamental freedom, rule of law) |

A PFEL receives EP funds through the PPEL to which the foundation is affiliated (see Table 10). The PPEL may grant other kinds of contributions to its affiliated PFEL, and a PFEL may also receive contributions from its affiliated national political foundations: in both cases, contributions may not exceed 40% of the annual budget of the PFEL. In contrast, a PFEL is not allowed to subsidise political parties, nor candidates at national and European level, or foundations at national level. In any case, funding charged to the general budget of the EU may not exceed 85% of those costs of an eligible PFEL. The EU's 2008 budget also included a total of €5 million for new political foundations.

#### **4.3.5 Organisation of Political Parties at European Level**

As already stated, the literature on the funding of party organisations suggests that rules and regulations have a tendency to promote organisational convergence. In this respect, we argued that EU regulations set only a generic organisational pre-requisite for PPELs, which have to indicate the bodies responsible for political and financial management and the bodies/individuals

holding the legal representation in their statutes. For the purpose of our investigation, however, a more in-depth comparative analysis of PPEL statutes and internal regulations in general may raise some interesting questions. Here, we focus on three different aspects of party organisations, *i.e.*, *party membership*, *party deliberative/executive organs*, *financial rules*.

**Table 10.** Grants from the EP to PFELs (2008-2009).

| Foundation  | Affiliated to party                         | Year         | Maximum grant awarded  | Final grant |
|---|---|--------------|------------------------|-------------|
| Center Maurits Coppieters                         | European Free Alliance                      | 2008<br>2009 | 106,608<br>147,929     | 106,608     |
| Centre for European Studies                       | European People's Party                     | 2008<br>2009 | 1,500,208<br>2,294,292 | 1,344,892   |
| Europa Osservatorio sulle Politiche dell'Unione   | Alliance for Europe of the Nations          | 2008<br>2009 | 232,900<br>322,150     | 232,900     |
| European Liberal Forum                            | European Liberal Democrat and Reform Party  | 2008<br>2009 | 233,750<br>725,200     | 172,187     |
| Fondation Politique Europeenne pour la Democratie | Alliance of Independent Democrats in Europe | 2008<br>2009 | 190,746                | 120,501     |
| Foundation for EU Democracy                       | EUDemocrats                                 | 2008<br>2009 | 103,530<br>153,170     |             |
| Foundation for European Progressive Studies       | Party of European Socialists                | 2008<br>2009 | 1,208,700<br>1,950,000 | 1,208,436   |
| Green European Institute                          | European Green Party                        | 2008<br>2009 | 302,678<br>414,895     | 270,836     |
| Institute of European Democrats                   | European Democratic Party                   | 2008<br>2009 | 233,110<br>317,500     | 101,108     |
| Transform Europe                                  | Party of the European Left                  | 2008<br>2009 | 156,400<br>362,575     | 147,090     |

**Source:** Directorate-General for Finance; Directorate C – Political Entity Funding and Other Services; Political Entity Funding and Inventory Unit.

Different levels of *party membership* are generally provided by PPEL statutes. It is possible to distinguish between collective membership (granted to Member State parties, affiliated foundations and organisations, movements) and individual membership (individuals), on the one hand, and between full membership and limited membership, on the other. Collective membership is usually reserved to political parties which comply with a number of pre-requisites (the subscription

of the PPEL's programme; the sharing of the EU's common values; the sharing of specific political values; electoral or parliamentary criteria, *etc.*) or to single MEPs (Table 11).

**Table 11.** Membership of PPELs: a typology

|  | <b>Collective</b>  | <b>Individual</b>   |
|--|--|---|
| <b>Full</b><br>(right of expression; right of initiative; right to vote)     | Member parties, affiliated foundations, organisations, movements | Individual MEPs; Delegates of MEP's who are individual members of the PPEL(EGP) |
| <b>Limited</b><br>(right to attend to general meetings; right of expression) | Observers parties, associations, political organisations         | Observer members (single persons); Honorary members;                            |

The criteria to obtain full membership (the right to speak and to vote) are similar: in some cases, to become a full member of the party, it may be necessary to spend a period of time as an observer, with limited membership. The EPP grants ordinary membership to any Christian Democrat or like-minded party, based in the European Union, which subscribes to the association's political programme and accepts its by-laws and internal regulations; political parties of Christian Democrat or like-minded orientation, based outside the European Union, from states whose applications for membership in the European Union have been introduced and/or states belonging to the European Free Trade Association may become associated member. The EFA grants full membership to parties which subscribe to the programme and on condition that they are politically active; or on condition that they have elected members at European level or state level; or that they have elected members in the organs of the state, region, or local councils. The Party of the European Left allows political organisations which are politically close to the PEL to take part in its activities in a flexible manner: the main criterion here is the political consent with the basic positions of the PEL.

Neither observers nor associated members are generally entitled to vote, while they have the right to attend general meetings and the right of expression. For example, within the PES, associate members have the right to attend meetings to which they are invited with the right of expression and the right of initiative, but without the right to vote; the PEL's statute provides that observer parties or political organisations take part in the meetings, to which they are invited, as consultants: they can make proposals to the Executive Board for examination and decision-making.

Individual membership may be recognised to persons who have held positions within the party or at EU level in the past (honorary membership) as well as EP members belonging to the referring political group (for example, members of the Green Group in the European Parliament are to be considered automatically eligible for the individual membership of the European Green Party as long as they belong to a European Green Party Member State party) and to

people who support the party financially. Generally, individual members have the right to voice their opinion but they do not have the right to vote (except in the relevant case of the EPP), even when they pay a fee to the party (ELDR). Clearly, there is a connection between the type of membership (collective) which characterises PPEL organisations and the almost total reliance on public funding. Individual membership is, in fact, consistent with an organisational model based upon a substantial proportion of private funding.

With regard to the formal organisation of PPELs (*i.e.*, the internal *deliberative and governing bodies* provided by their statutes), we can observe high levels of organisational convergence. It is noteworthy that, in most cases, we have an Assembly, *i.e.*, a deliberative body formed by delegates from collective and individual membership endowed with general decisional powers; an enlarged executive body, usually elected by the assembly; a smaller executive board, within which a Treasurer is nominated or elected (not in the cases of the EUD and the PEL). In addition, one or more political (such as the PES Leaders' Conference), administrative (Secretariat, General Secretary) or financial organs use to support governing bodies' work. The EPP, the ELDR, the EUD, the EDP, the PEL, and the PSE all have this kind of organisation (with limited differences), while the European Green Party' structure is different, as there are two deliberative bodies (the Council and the enlarged Council) and one executive body (the Committee), supported by a Mediation Committee (entitled to settle disputes between persons and bodies of the EGP on Statutes and regulation matters) and a Finance Monitoring Group (which act as an advisory body to the Committee and Council in matters regarding staff, budget and treasury). The internal regulation adopted by the General Assembly of the EFA indicates only three bodies: the General Assembly itself, the Bureau, and the Secretariat (with an administrative support role).

By complying with EC 2004/2003 and further amendments, and considering that many PPELs are governed by the Belgian law of the Non-Profit International Organisations (Gagatek 2008), the PPELs' *financial rules* are very similar. Parties can be financed by membership fees (in actuality collective), donations and other contributions. In general, member parties which do not meet their financial commitments lose all voting rights. The annual subscription may be limited only to collective members: for example, neither individuals nor honorary members of the EFA pay any contributions, while individual members may be required to pay a membership fee within the ELDR. MEPs, members of national parliaments and their salaried staff may pay an annual fee to the EU Democrats. The Treasurer is generally appointed within the executive board (EPP, EFA, ELDR, PEL, and PSE), whose agreement is needed to present the budget drafted for the approval of the deliberative body.

#### **4.4 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE “EUROPARTY STATUTE”**

The party-financing scheme outlined by Regulation 2004/2003 presents one very important difference with respect to all national cases, including those of the New Europe. It is clear that the main concern behind the regulation is the actual creation of fully-organised and effective political parties at European level. In national systems, on the other hand, parties were already in existence in all of their organisational faces, albeit with different level of institutionalisation. Even more importantly, parties at national level were fundamental actors in the drafting and approval of the public funding legislation. In contrast, at European level, only the parliamentary groups (that is, a portion of what we could consider the party in public office), participated in the process. This important difference aside, the effect of the regulation has, indeed, been to facilitate, as has been the case at national level, the convergence of PPELs organisational models.

One could thus argue that, with the approval of the regulation, PPELs obtained their most important formal recognition. The importance of PPELs in shaping a European consciousness and expressing the political will of EU citizens had been recognised, in principle, in the Treaties (Article 10 TEU and 224 TFEU), but the new regulation provided the legal and the financial basis for the effective establishment of integrated political parties at EU level for the first time. Although we are still far from having reached a significant form of EU level ‘party government’, with Council Regulation 2004/2003, the necessary foundations for party-based representation have been laid. The Statute for European Political Parties, as the regulation is ordinarily referred to, is a concise document that defines the role of European political parties and the requirements needed to be able to receive funding from the EU. Much space is dedicated to the aspects directly linked to financing, perhaps also because the Statute was, in part, justified by the need to use public funds to cover the costs of democratic promotion in the newly accessing MSs. The Statute’s provisions may well be able to consolidate the various party components operating at European level more effectively than has been the case up to now: transnational federations, parliamentary groups and national parties. In fact, even if the Statute practically identifies PPELs with the type of structures that were once known as federations, the provisions for their constitution and for their access to financing create a link with the other two components. This is probably the most important result of the Statute from our view point, as the lack of integration among the various PPEL components has always been considered as one of the main reasons of their weakness. The Statute, however, is only a first step in the right direction, but an imperfect one at that. Indeed, some of its provisions and implementation procedures still represent serious hindrances to full Europarty development.

National parties, through their actions in the national governments and in the EU Council of Ministers, clearly took a very active role in promoting the Statute and in determining its approval. Undoubtedly, also the Report of the European Court of Auditors, which found the system of financing PPELs from the budgets of the political groups inadmissible, played an important part. However the role of national parties raises questions about the reasons for their action, as the history of the EP and of PPELs demonstrates that national parties were



always very keen on maintaining their control; or were at least oblivious, as the history of EP elections shows, of the importance of PPEL consolidation. In reality, the Statute's approval was the result of a two-way process that involved the EP party groups, on the one hand, and national party apparatuses, on the other. The acceleration that eventually produced the Europarty Statute, albeit initiated at supranational level, was no doubt made possible by the existence of the particular conditions orienting party strategies and attitudes at national level as well. Beginning with the 1990s, one of the consequences of Europeanisation was to impose new constraints on national politics, and, consequently, on national party actors' perspectives as well. Certainly, Europeanisation posed the necessity for parties at national level to revise and adapt their policies accordingly, something that they did not necessarily see as a positive development. But it can be argued that, as part of this change, parties also became aware of new opportunities for their own organisational adaptation. To a large extent, this can be seen as resulting from a process which originated at least two decades earlier, that is, the progressive affirmation of the cartel party organisational model (as noted earlier in footnote 1). If this is correct, we could conclude that PPELs, in their present form, are the creation of two main processes: the cartelisation of parties and the Europeanisation of national politics. For cartel parties, survival is an organisational imperative: developing supranational organisations could be seen as a relevant element in their strategy aimed at creating the appropriate political instruments for themselves but, even more importantly, at obtaining the necessary resources for their survival from all state-like structures at all levels.<sup>7</sup> In other words, PPELs can certainly be seen as necessary elements in the organisational development of national parties in view of the potentially augmenting responsibilities they are actually facing, and will increasingly be facing, at EU level. But, consistent with the cartel party thesis, they can also be seen as representing a first step in the extension to the EU of the cartel parties' collective strategy to obtain resources from the state, of which the EU increasingly represents a new additional level. The national parties' positive role in the approval of the Statute is thus easier to understand.

A closer look at the Europarty Statute confirms the plausibility of this view. As has been mentioned, the Statute is, in fact, little more than a series of norms for the public funding of political parties at EU level. After listing a few, and not particularly restrictive, conditions for the definition of political parties at EU level, the bulk of the Statute is dedicated to the definition of the norms of parties respecting such conditions.<sup>8</sup> Even if the statute prohibits the financing of national

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<sup>7</sup> It can also be argued that national parties' interest in the development of PPELs may be interpreted as a manifestation of their need to find additional sources of legitimacy in view of the criticism coming from sectors of European society and aimed at stigmatizing national parties' passive acceptance of policy impositions from above. Belonging to PPELs, especially if strong ones, would enable national parties to claim that they are after all "in control". Although we do believe that this view has some merit and that such motivations may indeed have contributed to national parties' changing and more positive attitudes towards the development of supranational organisations, we feel that organisational/survival motives prevail and because of the limited space at our disposal we will not deal explicitly with this argument.

<sup>8</sup> In addition to a desire to participate in the EP elections the main requirements for recognition of PPELs are: a legal personality in the country in which the Europarty has its headquarters (almost

parties with European funds, two elements, in particular, seem to be consistent with the idea of PPEs as EU level extensions of national level cartel parties. An overwhelming share of available resources – 85 percent of the total – are allotted to parties with representatives elected in the EP, in other words, to established parties that are direct emanations of, or already have solid links with, national counterparts. Furthermore, the provision of the statute that conditions the allocation of public funds on 25 percent co-financing from other sources makes national parties, above all the stronger and richer ones, decisive in constituting and maintaining PPEs. In fact, these resources can only be found at national level, in practice only as direct contributions from Member State parties, as the direct contacts of PPEs in society and in the economic sphere are very weak and are not likely to improve in the near future.

The generally positive picture provided by the Statute is counter-balanced by two provisions, one contained directly in the Statute, and the other in its implementation rules, which keep the federations in a subordinate position with respect to their national components and the parliamentary groups. In fact, the latter have been put directly in charge of supervising the management of the funds for party-financing. This was done upon the insistence of the EP since the funds are taken from the EP's budget, rather than from the EU's, as the federations would have preferred (this would have given them greater financial autonomy). Furthermore, the above-mentioned provision of the statute that conditions the allocation of public funds on 25 percent co-financing from other sources makes national parties, above all the stronger and richer ones, decisive in constituting and maintaining PPEs. These resources can only be found at national level, either directly through contributions from Member State parties – up to a ceiling of 40 percent of the total; in any case, more than the amount needed for co-financing – or through the party's contacts in society and in the economic sphere. It is therefore unlikely that the federations, even if more integrated, will play a primary role in PPEs in the future.

On balance, the statute for European political parties can potentially favour a further expansion of PPEs. It is unlikely, however, that this effect will be able to challenge the primacy and reduce the autonomy of national political parties significantly, even at European level. This is destined to be the state of affairs as long as national parties are able to reap the rewards of direct representation of citizens' interests through the intergovernmental institutional circuit and to take the place of federations in linking civil society to European institutions. The biggest shortcoming of the statute is in fact that it does not address the issue of how to link PPEs effectively, and through them, the EU political system to European citizens and their society, beyond the general statement that such linkage is the main reason for their existence. In theory, this function is still performed exclusively through the national parties, who therefore

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inevitably Belgium); representatives elected in the EP, the national or the regional parliaments in at least one-quarter of the member countries or at least three per cent of the votes in the last EP elections in at least one-quarter of member states; respect in the party's platform and actions for the principles of freedom and democracy, respect for human rights, the fundamental freedoms and the rule of law on which the EU is founded.

remain the principal gatekeepers of EU level representation. In practice, however, it is questionable that this is done with sufficient efficacy by the national parties as well or, for that matter, that national parties represent citizens accurately even at national level. But, as is well-known, cartel parties are not interested in representing citizens according to the classic demand-input policy-output model, but rather in acquiring consensus for the way they collectively administer and manage the public good. In conclusion, demands coming from supranational party components for a strengthening of party organisations at the European level seem to have been conditionally accepted by national parties, which, in turn, appear, for the time-being, more interested in the organisational opportunities that the new statute affords them than in the improvements which it can produce for European democracy.

### *Key Summary*

The proposed transnational constituency could foster closer party co-operation at EU level, by promoting genuine transnational campaigning and EU level party programmes;

Preferential voting, if implemented at EU level, could have a positive impact on the development of the PPEs;

A strong EU level system of party financing could promote organisational convergence and hence transnational party-building;

Despite the positive incentives provided by EC Reg. 2004/2003, PPEs remain subordinate to their national components and the EP Groups.

## **Conclusion: Transnational Parties and a Transnational Party System**

A transnational party system requires more than simply the presence of transnational parties. Party systems, following Sartori's (1976: 43-4) classic definition, are 'systems of interactions', which means that they are systems in which parties engage with one another, usually competitively, in defined arenas. In other words, parties create a system when they interact and compete with one another, whether in an electoral, legislative, or governing arena.

It is therefore possible to conceive of situations in which parties exist, but in which there is no party system as such. In Belgium, for example, at electoral level, Walloon parties interact with and compete against other Walloon parties, while Flemish parties interact with and compete against other Flemish parties. At no stage in the electoral process do Flemish parties compete for votes with Walloon parties, however, and, hence, while there is a Walloon party system in the electoral arena, as well as a Flemish party system, there is no Belgian party system as such. It is not until the parties win through to the Chamber of Representative and Senate, or sit down to form a government, that Flemish and Walloon parties begin to interact with one another in the other arenas and create a 'Belgian' party system.

In the same vein, it is possible to speak of there being a multiplicity of party systems in the United States, even though we normally think of the US as having just two main parties. Since power and politics is so de-centralised in the US federal system, each of the state parties is quite autonomous. The parties may use the same Democratic and Republican labels in each of the states, but the leadership and policies of these parties differ substantially from one another. Hence, American scholars like to speak of there being a separate two-party system in each of the states, since each state has its own particular system of interactions. This yields 50 different party systems. And, since there is also a national contest for the Presidency every four years, this yields a 51st system of interactions, which is separate from that in each of the states. This means that there are 50 state party systems, and 1 presidential party system, with some scholars also going on to argue that there is yet another (legislative) party system in the House of Representatives, and another again in the Senate: 53 party systems.

In contemporary Europe, under certain favourable conditions, we have argued that it is possible to conceive of the emergence and consolidation of genuine transnational parties. Indeed, we have argued that the obstacles blocking this development are gradually declining, and, hence, the prospects for transnational parties now look rather good. But this is entirely different from saying that there are also good prospects for a transnational party system. On this issue, our conclusion is much more pessimistic.

As we have noted above, parties make for a system when they can

interact and engage with one another, and they usually do this through competition. That is, they interact with one another by competing with one another for office and for power. They do this in a variety of sub-national, national and supranational arenas, including in elections to the European Parliament. At no stage, however, do they ever compete with parties beyond their own national systems. In other words, and rather like the Flemish and Walloon parties in Belgium, Irish parties interact only with Irish parties, British with British, Dutch with Dutch, Czech with Czech, and so on. This means that, while there is an Irish party system, and a British, and a Dutch, and a Czech, and so on, there is no transnational or *European* party system in the electoral arena. Parties do not interact with one another at European or transnational level, and, hence, do not make for a system at this level.

When the national parties operate within the wider European groups or families in the European Parliament, they do, of course, interact with one another, and, in this sense, we can speak of a European party system in the legislative arena. But even then, the dynamic is very limited, and, barring occasional contests for key positions within the Parliament, they do not compete with one another in the sustained way that national parties in national legislative arenas usually compete with one another. Nor do they compete in the way that Congressional parties in the US increasingly compete with one another, since, in the US, despite the separation of powers, a limited government-opposition dynamic has been created by the competition between the party of the President and its opponent. In Europe, where the Commission is de-politicised and formally party-less, this is not the case, and, hence, the interactions within the Parliament often have little pattern or structure.

In national settings, parties in parliament compete for executive office. Regardless of whether the system is run by single-party government or by coalitions, or by majority governments or minorities, national politics in Europe usually operates through a system of parliamentary government in which the parties in the legislature compete to win and control government, and in which the government is daily contested by a more or less organised opposition.

This is not the case in the European Parliament. Exceptionally for a political system in Europe, the European ‘Government’ – the European Council, the Commission, *etc.*, – is not responsible to the European Legislature. There is no fusion of powers. Instead, the European Parliament is a representative assembly *pour sang*, akin to the US House of Representatives. Therefore, when parties interact or even compete with one another in the European Parliament, they are not competing like national parties for control of executive office, but, instead, for key positions in the Parliamentary structure itself – the President, committee memberships, rapporteurships – which, once allocated, are given. In other words, there is no robust or sustained pattern of competition between the parties in the European Parliament that might offer the foundation for the building of a European party system, not least because much of the party activity in the Parliament is focused on the collective strengthening of the Parliament *vis-à-vis* the other European institutions rather than competing among themselves for control within the Parliament. And even if transnational parties

become more consolidated, this mismatch will persist. The problem is institutional rather than political or developmental. We can also assume this will only be effectively changed through some future treaty which would accord executive control functions to the Parliament or which might institute a directly-elected Presidency for which the transnational parties might compete. In the absence of such a reform, the parties, while continuing to thrive as parties, could never really compete with one another and can never create a genuine transnational party system.

There are two conclusions we can derive from this. The *first* is that we accept the situation as it is, and recognise that it also has a number of advantages that should not be under-valued. In national systems, for example, where parties do compete for executive office, the largely representative role that parties once emphasised has been slowly smothered by the demands of governing and administration. Over time, in other words, parties have lost their capacity to act as representative agencies and have, instead, become almost exclusively oriented to the governing function, and to competing about the governing function, with the result that, when citizens seek to be represented, and to have their voices heard, they often tend to go outside the (mainstream) party system, turning to interest associations, NGOs, and the like. It is also partly for this reason that parties have become one of the least trusted of the democratic institutions in Europe (Mair 2006).

At the European level, in contrast, the representative role played by parties has remained, and seems to have become even more enhanced as the powers of the European Parliament have grown (Thomassen 2009). In other words, and despite the frequent complaints about the democratic deficit in Europe, parties at European level appear to function quite effectively as the representatives of Europe's citizens, particularly as far as their left-right preferences are concerned. As one recent analysis concluded (Mair and Thomassen 2010), although there is no real *process* of political representation at European level, and although there is no transnational arena of electoral competition, the aggregation of the *outcomes* of national processes nevertheless leads to a reasonable congruence between the preferences of the European electorate and those of the MEPs in the European Parliament. In other words, the available empirical evidence suggests that the outcome of the system of representation at European level works much better for many policy issues than is normally believed. This rather positive conclusion on the process of political representation refers, of course, to the outcome of the process, rather than to the process as such, and, in this sense, a fully-fledged system of political representation at the European level could still be seen to require European political parties to compete for the votes of a European electorate. Nonetheless, the positive conclusion still stands. The parties in the European Parliament appear to function relatively effectively as representatives, and one reason for this may be that, in contrast to their national counterparts, they are not overly caught up in the process of governing or opposing government. In this reading, the European Parliament can be seen as a real legislature, and there are plenty of arguments for letting it stay like that.

The *second* conclusion is that we try to modify conditions within the present institutional framework in a way that could enhance the profile of the transnational parties themselves, and bring them to a stage where they could at least engage with one another indirectly, and, hence, engage in at least partial competition with one another. This would not be enough to create a genuine and robust transnational party system, but it would come as close to that goal as current institutional circumstances permit. It would also require the transnational party organisations to become much more pro-active and politically engaged than is currently the case. Over and above the Duff proposal, which we have discussed earlier in this report, there are three areas of potential activity in particular that can be highlighted and that might serve this purpose.

The first of these is potential PPEL involvement in the proposed European Citizens Initiative that was part of the Treaty of Lisbon. According to the provision in Article 11.4 of the consolidated version of TEU, no less than 1 million citizens from a significant number of Member States may petition the Commission “to submit any appropriate proposal on matters where citizens consider that a legal act of the Union is required for the purpose of implementing the Treaties”. Although it is not clear precisely how this initiative will work in practice, and who may be involved in the collection of signatures (EUDO Report), both the transnational and organisational requirements imply that the PPELs could very usefully engage in the process. In other words, this is a transnational activity with political implications which, almost by definition, lends itself to active PPEL involvement and which could encourage more direct PPEL engagement with the European citizenry.

The second area for potential PPEL involvement connects to the new subsidiarity formula within the Treaty of Lisbon, whereby the time allowed for national parliaments to scrutinise Commission draft legislation is raised from six to eight weeks, and whereby provision is made for one-third of these parliaments to object to a draft legislative proposal from the Commission on the grounds of a breach of subsidiarity – the so-called “yellow card”. Moreover, the parliaments are also given the opportunity to show an “orange card” to the Commission, whereby a simple majority of the parliaments can oblige the Commission to refer their objections to the Council and the Parliament. This new provision clearly enhances the role of national parliaments in the EU decision-making process, and thereby also enhances the role of national parties and parliamentarians. But given that the exercise of this provision is likely to require substantial co-ordination and co-operation between the national legislatures, and given that it is also likely to involve a particularly important role for non-governing parties in the national systems, there is no reason why we should not also expect substantial PPEL involvement in the process. To co-ordinate the activities of parties and MPs in at least 9, and possibly 14 national parliaments will not be an easy task, but it is something that might lend itself to the employment of PPEL networks and communication channels. In other words, this provision also offers the potential for greater and more high-profile PPEL activity.

The third area for potential PPEL involvement is possibly the strongest and most direct, and has already been mooted by the parties themselves for some



time. This will involve the competing PPEs entering the European elections with their own candidates for the Commission presidency. As things currently stand, the President of the Commission is nominated by the governments of the Member States following consultations with the newly-elected European Parliament. The Parliament is also required to give its approval to the appointment of the Commission as a whole. This offers some degree of democratic accountability and transparency to the process of appointment, albeit in a very limited and constrained manner. As an alternative, it has been suggested that each of the PPEs, and certainly each of the two mainstream PPEs, the European People's Party (EPP) and the party of European Socialists (PES), should enter the EP election process having already put forward its own candidate for the Commission Presidency. As the PPEs would compete in the election, so too, albeit indirectly, would their candidates, with each being backed by all of the national parties affiliated to the PPEL. Following the election, the candidate proposed by the PPEL winning the most votes across Europe would be formally nominated by the governments of the Member States. In this way, the elections would confer an indirect mandate on the new President of the Commission, thus boosting the democratic legitimacy of the system as a whole, and competition between the parties at the EP elections would acquire a genuine transnational patina. Moreover, it would require the PPEs to be much more active as organisations, not only in their efforts to co-ordinate support for particular candidates in each of the national settings, but also in persuading and co-ordinating the support of their members in the governments that formally control the nomination process in Council. To be sure, this proposal would not lead to a fully-fledged transnational party system, but, given the present institutional constraints, and given that institutional reform by way of a new Treaty is unlikely to be achieved in the foreseeable future, it would probably come as close to this goal as is currently possible.

### *Key Summary*

The development of transnational parties is a necessary but not sufficient condition for the development of a transnational party system;

The problem of the building of a EU party system is institutional, since the process is hindered by the lack of competition between the parties for control of executive office;

A genuine transnational party competition might emerge if future institutional reforms modify the Treaty;

A positive consequence of the lack of executive control functions is that parties in the EP seem to be better able to give voice to the views of European citizens;

Given the current institutional setting, the role of PPELs could be enhanced through activities such as involvement in the ECI; coordinating parliamentary responses in the new procedures regarding subsidiarity violations; proposing and standing by their own candidates for the Commission presidency.

## Report's Summary

While it is possible to conceive of the emergence of transnational parties, the emergence of a transnational party *system* is more problematical;

The weight of national political settings on party organisation strategy and styles of competition may represent an obstacle to the emergence of trans-national parties;

Despite conventional wisdom, the reform of an electoral law for the EP's election may not be conducive to the emergence of a trans-national party system;

The present regulatory framework of the European Political Parties still favours the EP party groups and the parties at national level;

A strong European-level system of financing and regulation could serve to promote trans-national convergent party-building;

The creation of a European structure of political competition is a necessary condition to support the institutionalisation of a genuine transnational party system;

The competition for the control of a trans-national political executive would constitute a fundamental institutional incentive for the development of a transnational party system;

In the absence of a system for competition for the control of a transnational political executive, and even allowing for present institutional circumstances, there are a variety of party-building activities open to the trans-national parties, which can help build their standing.

### 1.

For the prospect of the EU democracy, homogeneous political groups are crucial in providing the European voters with a meaningful programmatic supply;

The requirement of "political affinities" to form a Group is a necessary but not sufficient condition to guarantee that the transnational groupings will represent coherent political cultures;

The impact of the "Big Bang" enlargement on the cohesion and the policy agenda of the Political Groups has been quite limited;

The main political Groups have cohesive and well-detectable positions on left-right policies, while among the smaller Groups only the EFD reveals a lack of ideological affinity;

## **2.**

Since the process of candidate selection is one of the fundamental functions of political parties, the lack of uniformity within the party families may constitute an obstacle to effective trans-nationalisation;

The more de-centralised and inclusive the candidate selection is, the greater the possibility for the MEPs to vote in accordance with their EP party group, rather than with their national party;

The most common procedures adopted for MEP candidate selection relies on the role of the party executive and party conference, with more than 86% of all the proposals emanating from the national level.

## **3.**

The wide variety in the numbers of parties at national level can constitute an obstacle for the development of a single EU party system;

The presence of two or even more national political parties within the same EP group hinders the development of a EU party system;

The tendency by many national parties to treat their membership in EP groups only in technical terms weakens the process of trans-national party-building;

The fact that all the major Europarties are subjected to the same legal regime may favour the development of a EU party system;

The building of a trans-national party system is conditioned by the differences in electoral and political cultures and by the perception of the EP elections as second-order contests.

## **4.**

The proposed transnational constituency could foster closer party co-operation at EU level, by promoting genuine transnational campaigning and EU level party programmes;

Preferential voting, if implemented at EU level, could have a positive impact on the development of the PPEs;

A strong EU level system of party financing could promote organisational convergence and hence transnational party-building;

Despite the positive incentives provided by EC Reg. 2004/2003, PPEs remain subordinate to their national components and the EP Groups.

## **Conclusion.**

The development of transnational parties is a necessary but not sufficient condition for the development of a transnational party system;

The problem of the building of a EU party system is institutional, since the process is hindered by the lack of competition between the parties for control of executive office;

A genuine transnational party competition might emerge if future institutional reforms modify the Treaty;

A positive consequence of the lack of executive control functions is that parties in the EP seem to be better able to give voice to the views of European citizens;

Given the current institutional setting, the role of PPEs could be enhanced through activities such as involvement in the ECI; coordinating parliamentary responses in the new procedures regarding subsidiarity violations; proposing and standing by their own candidates for the Commission presidency.

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## **TRANSLATIONS OF THE EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

## ***ANSÄTZE ZUR SCHAFFUNG EINES TRANSNATIONALEN SYSTEMS POLITISCHER PARTEIEN***

### **1. Fazit: Transnationale Parteien und ein transnationales Parteiensystem**

Für ein transnationales Parteiensystem braucht es mehr als nur transnationale Parteien. Nach Sartoris klassischer Definition (1976:43-4) handelt es sich bei Parteiensystemen um „Interaktionssysteme“, d. h. Systeme, in denen Parteien in bestimmten Bereichen miteinander in einer Wechselbeziehung stehen, zumeist in einem Wettbewerb. Anders ausgedrückt, bilden Parteien dabei ein System, innerhalb dessen sie aufeinander einwirken und miteinander konkurrieren, sei es im Wahlkampf, in der Rechtsetzung oder in der Regierungsführung.

Daher sind auch Situationen vorstellbar, in denen es zwar Parteien, jedoch kein Parteiensystem als solches gibt. So interagieren und konkurrieren, um nur ein Beispiel zu nennen, in Belgien auf Wahlebene wallonische Parteien mit anderen wallonischen Parteien, während flämische Parteien mit anderen flämischen Parteien interagieren und in Wettbewerb stehen. Zu keinem Zeitpunkt des Wahlprozesses ringen jedoch flämische Parteien mit wallonischen Parteien um Stimmen, sodass es zwar auf der Wahlebene ein wallonisches und ein flämisches Parteiensystem, jedoch kein belgisches Parteiensystem als solches gibt. Erst wenn die Parteien ins Abgeordnetenhaus und den Senat gelangen oder gemeinsam eine Regierung bilden, treten flämische und wallonische Parteien in den anderen Bereichen in eine Wechselbeziehung zueinander und bilden ein „belgisches“ Parteiensystem.

Im gleichen Sinne lässt sich von einem Mehrparteiensystem in den Vereinigten Staaten sprechen, obwohl doch in der Regel davon ausgegangen wird, dass in den USA nur zwei große Parteien existieren. Da aber Politik und Macht im föderalen System der USA hochgradig dezentralisiert sind, handeln die Parteien in den einzelnen Bundesstaaten weitgehend autonom. Selbst wenn sich die Parteien in allen Bundesstaaten als „Demokraten“ und „Republikaner“ bezeichnen, sind doch in ihrer Führung und ihrer Politik erhebliche Unterschiede festzustellen. Daher erklären amerikanische Wissenschaftler gern, dass die einzelnen Bundesstaaten jeweils ihr eigenes Zweiparteiensystem besitzen, da jeder von ihnen sein besonderes Interaktionssystem hat. Daraus ergeben sich 50 unterschiedliche Parteiensysteme. Da zudem alle vier Jahre ein nationaler Wettbewerb um die Präsidentschaft stattfindet, bildet dieser ein 51. Interaktionssystem, das sich von dem in den einzelnen Staaten unterscheidet. Somit gibt es 50 Parteiensysteme der Bundesstaaten und ein Präsidentschafts-Parteiensystem, wobei einige Wissenschaftler sogar so weit gehen, dass sie von einem zusätzlichen (legislativen) Parteiensystem im Repräsentantenhaus sowie einem weiteren im Senat sprechen: Damit hätten wir es mit insgesamt 53 Parteiensystemen zu tun.

Wie bereits dargelegt, ist im heutigen Europa unter bestimmten günstigen Bedingungen durchaus die Entstehung und Konsolidierung wahrhaft transnationaler Parteien möglich. Wir haben darauf hingewiesen, dass die Hürden, die dieser Entwicklung im Weg stehen, nach und nach niedriger werden und dass transnationale Parteien daher mittlerweile gute Aussichten haben. Das heißt allerdings keineswegs, dass dies auch für die Entstehung eines transnationalen Parteiensystems gilt. In dieser Hinsicht fällt unsere Einschätzung weitaus pessimistischer aus.

Wie bereits erwähnt, bilden Parteien ein System, wenn sie interagieren und aufeinander einwirken können, in der Regel durch Wettbewerb. Ihre Interaktion erfolgt mithin im gegenseitigen Wettbewerb um Ämter und Macht. Das geschieht auf einer Vielzahl subnationaler, nationaler und supranationaler Ebenen, unter anderem auch bei Wahlen zum Europäischen Parlament. Zu keinem Zeitpunkt treten sie jedoch in Konkurrenz zu Parteien außerhalb ihrer eigenen einzelstaatlichen Systeme. Mit anderen Worten: Ebenso wie die flämischen und wallonischen Parteien in Belgien interagieren irische Parteien nur mit anderen irischen Parteien, britische mit britischen, niederländische mit niederländischen, tschechische mit tschechischen usw. Daraus folgt, dass es auf der Wahlebene zwar ein irisches, ein britisches, ein niederländisches und ein tschechisches Parteiensystem gibt, jedoch kein transnationales oder europäisches Parteiensystem. Die Parteien stehen auf europäischer oder transnationaler Ebene in keiner Wechselbeziehung zueinander und bilden auf dieser Ebene auch kein System.

Wenn die nationalen Parteien innerhalb der umfassenderen europäischen Fraktionen oder Parteienfamilien im Europäischen Parlament tätig sind, interagieren sie natürlich durchaus miteinander, so dass in diesem Sinne von einem europäischen Parteiensystem im legislativen Bereich gesprochen werden kann. Doch selbst dann ist die Dynamik sehr begrenzt, und abgesehen von gelegentlichen Wettbewerben um Schlüsselpositionen im Parlament treten die Parteien nicht in dem Maße miteinander in Wettbewerb, wie es bei nationalen Parteien im einzelstaatlichen Legislativbereich der Fall ist. Auch kann nicht von einer Interaktion in dem Sinne die Rede sein, wie sie von den Kongressparteien in den USA zunehmend betrieben wird, da hier ungeachtet der Gewaltenteilung durch den Wettstreit zwischen der Partei des Präsidenten und der Oppositionspartei eine begrenzte Regierungs-Oppositions-Dynamik entstanden ist. Für Europa, wo die Kommission entpolitisiert und offiziell unparteiisch ist, gilt dies indes nicht, sodass die Interaktionen innerhalb des Parlaments häufig wenig Muster oder Struktur aufweisen.

Auf nationaler Ebene konkurrieren die Parteien im Parlament um Regierungsämter. Unabhängig davon, ob dem jeweiligen System eine Einparteienregierung oder eine Koalition vorsteht, und auch davon, ob eine Mehrheits- oder eine Minderheitsregierung an der Macht ist, wird die nationale Politik in Europa in der Regel über ein parlamentarisches Regierungssystem betrieben, in dem die Parteien in einem Parlament um die Erlangung und Erhaltung der Regierungsmacht konkurrieren und in dem die Regierung jeden Tag von einer mehr oder weniger organisierten Opposition herausgefordert wird.

Dies ist im Europäischen Parlament nicht der Fall. Als einziges politisches



System in Europa ist die europäische „Regierung“ – der Europäische Rat, die Kommission, usw. – der europäischen Legislative gegenüber nicht rechenschaftspflichtig. Es findet keine Gewaltenverschmelzung statt. Vielmehr ist das Europäische Parlament eine rein repräsentative Versammlung, ähnlich dem US-Repräsentantenhaus. Wenn daher Parteien im Europäischen Parlament miteinander interagieren oder sogar konkurrieren, dann konkurrieren sie nicht wie nationale Parteien um die Kontrolle über die Exekutive, sondern um Schlüsselpositionen in der Parlamentsstruktur selbst – das Amt des Präsidenten, die Mitgliedschaft in Ausschüssen und über die Benennung von Berichterstattern – die zuerkannt werden, sobald die Zuteilung entschieden ist. Anders ausgedrückt, gibt es kein beständiges, dauerhaftes Wettbewerbsmuster zwischen den Parteien im Europäischen Parlament, das als Grundlage für die Entstehung eines europäischen Parteiensystems dienen könnte. Dies liegt nicht zuletzt daran, dass ein großer Teil der Parteientätigkeit im Parlament auf die gemeinsame Stärkung der Position dieses Parlaments gegenüber den anderen europäischen Organen und weniger auf den Wettbewerb untereinander um die Kontrolle über das Parlament ausgerichtet ist. Dieses Missverhältnis besteht auch dann weiter, wenn die transnationalen Parteien gefestigter werden. Das Problem ist weniger politik- oder entwicklungsbedingt, sondern vielmehr institutioneller Art. Zudem ist davon auszugehen, dass sich diese Situation erst durch einen künftigen Vertrag wirksam verändert, mit dem Parlament exekutive Kontrollfunktionen übertragen oder eine direkt gewählte Präsidentschaft eingeführt wird, um die transnationale Parteien konkurrieren könnten. Bis zur Einführung einer solchen Reform werden die Parteien zwar weiterhin als Parteien gedeihen, doch können sie nie wirklich in Wettbewerb zueinander treten und nie ein wirkliches transnationales Parteiensystem bilden.

Daraus lassen sich zwei Schlüsse ziehen. Der *erste* ist, dass wir die Situation so hinnehmen, wie sie ist, und einräumen, dass sie auch einige nicht zu unterschätzende Vorteile mit sich bringt. So wurde zum Beispiel in den nationalen Systemen, wo die Parteien um Ämter konkurrieren, ihre einst überwiegend repräsentative Rolle Schritt für Schritt von Regierungs- und Verwaltungsanforderungen überlagert. Es kann daher festgestellt werden, dass die Parteien im Laufe der Zeit ihre Fähigkeit eingebüßt haben, als Repräsentationsorgane zu wirken, und stattdessen fast ausschließlich auf die Regierungsfunktion und den Wettbewerb um diese Funktion hin ausgerichtet sind, was zur Folge hat, dass Bürger, die eine Vertretung suchen und ihre Stimme zu Gehör bringen wollen, dies häufig außerhalb des (etablierten) Parteiensystems tun und sich an Interessenverbände, Nichtregierungsorganisationen oder ähnliche Vereinigungen wenden. Dies ist einer der Gründe dafür, dass die Parteien zu einer der demokratischen Institutionen in Europa geworden sind, denen am wenigsten Vertrauen entgegengebracht wird (Mair 2006).

Auf europäischer Ebene dagegen haben die Parteien ihre repräsentative Rolle beibehalten und konnten diese mit der Ausweitung der Befugnisse des Europäischen Parlaments offenbar sogar noch festigen (Thomassen 2009). Mit anderen Worten scheinen die Parteien auf europäischer Ebene trotz der häufig geäußerten Klagen über das Demokratiedefizit in Europa recht wirkungsvoll als Vertreter der europäischen Bürger aufzutreten, insbesondere was deren Rechts-

Links-Präferenzen angeht. Wie aus einer jüngst erschienenen Studie hervorgeht (Mair and Thomassen 2010), gibt es zwar keinen wirklichen politischen Vertretungsprozess auf europäischer Ebene und auch keine transnationale Wahlkampf Bühne, doch führen die Gesamtergebnisse der nationalen Prozesse dennoch zu einer angemessenen Übereinstimmung zwischen den Präferenzen der europäischen Wähler und denen der Mitglieder des Europäischen Parlaments. Die vorliegenden empirischen Daten legen mithin den Schluss nahe, dass die Ergebnisse des Repräsentationssystems auf europäischer Ebene bei vielen politischen Fragen weitaus besser funktionieren als allgemein angenommen. Diese recht positive Schlussfolgerung zum politischen Vertretungsprozess bezieht sich natürlich auf das Ergebnis des Prozesses und weniger auf diesen selbst, sodass weiterhin davon ausgegangen werden kann, dass für ein vollwertiges System der politischen Vertretung auf europäischer Ebene ein Wettbewerb der europäischen politischen Parteien um die Stimmen der europäischen Wähler erforderlich ist. Nichtsdestoweniger bleiben wir bei der positiven Schlussfolgerung. Die Parteien im Europäischen Parlament scheinen ihre Vertretungsfunktion recht wirkungsvoll wahrzunehmen, was unter anderem darauf zurückzuführen sein könnte, dass sie im Gegensatz zu den Parteien in den einzelnen Mitgliedstaaten nicht über Gebühr in den Regierungs- oder Oppositionsprozess verstrickt sind. Unter diesem Aspekt kann das Europäische Parlament als eine wirkliche Legislative bezeichnet werden, und zahlreiche Argumente sprechen dafür, diesen Zustand beizubehalten.

Der zweite sich anbietende Schluss lautet, dass wir versuchen sollten, die Bedingungen innerhalb des bestehenden institutionellen Rahmens so zu verändern, dass das Profil der transnationalen Parteien selbst gestärkt und diesen die Möglichkeit geboten wird, zumindest indirekt zu interagieren und damit zumindest teilweise in einen Wettbewerb zu treten. Dies wäre zwar nicht ausreichend, um ein tatsächliches und dauerhaftes transnationales Parteiensystem aus der Taufe zu heben, doch käme man damit diesem Ziel so nahe, wie es die derzeitigen institutionellen Umstände zulassen. Zudem müssten die transnationalen Parteiorganisationen um einiges aktiver und politisch engagierter werden, als es derzeit der Fall ist. Über den Vorschlag von Andrew Duff hinaus, der in diesem Bericht bereits Thema war, sind insbesondere drei Bereiche für mögliche Maßnahmen hervorzuheben, die zu diesem Ziel beitragen könnten.

Der erste dieser Bereiche ist die potenzielle Mitwirkung von europäischen politischen Parteien an der vorgeschlagenen Europäischen Bürgerinitiative, die Bestandteil des Vertrags von Lissabon ist. Gemäß der Bestimmungen von Artikel 11 Absatz 4 der konsolidierten Fassung des EUV können Unionsbürgerinnen und Unionsbürger, deren Anzahl mindestens eine Million betragen und bei denen es sich um Staatsangehörige einer erheblichen Anzahl von Mitgliedstaaten handeln muss, „die Europäische Kommission auffordern, im Rahmen ihrer Befugnisse geeignete Vorschläge zu Themen zu unterbreiten, zu denen es nach Ansicht jener Bürgerinnen und Bürger eines Rechtsakts der Union bedarf, um die Verträge umzusetzen“. Wenngleich sich noch nicht genau absehen lässt, wie diese Initiative in der Praxis funktioniert und wer für das Zusammentragen der

Unterschriften verantwortlich sein wird (EUDO-Bericht), legen sowohl die transnationalen als auch die organisatorischen Anforderungen die Auffassung nahe, dass die politischen Parteien auf europäischer Ebene auf sehr wirkungsvolle Weise in den Prozess eingebunden werden könnten. Hier geht es somit um eine transnationale Tätigkeit mit politischen Konsequenzen, die nachgerade zwangsläufig eine aktive Mitwirkung europäischer politischer Parteien nach sich zieht und eine direktere Beziehung dieser Parteien zu den Bürgern Europas begünstigen könnte.

Der zweite Bereich für eine mögliche Beteiligung von europäischen politischen Parteien steht im Zusammenhang mit der neuen Subsidiaritätsformel im Vertrag von Lissabon, mit der die Frist, die den nationalen Parlamenten für die Prüfung von Entwürfen der Kommission von Gesetzgebungsakten zur Verfügung steht, von sechs auf acht Wochen verlängert wird und wonach ein Drittel der nationalen Parlamente den Entwurf eines Legislativvorschlags der Kommission mit der Begründung eines Verstoßes gegen das Subsidiaritätsprinzip ablehnen kann – die „gelbe Karte“. Zudem erhalten die Parlamente noch die Möglichkeit, der Kommission die „orangene Karte“ zu zeigen, mit der die Kommission durch eine einfache Mehrheit der Parlamente verpflichtet werden kann, dem Rat und dem Parlament deren Einwände zu übermitteln. Mit dieser neuen Bestimmung wird die Rolle der nationalen Parlamente im EU-Beschlussfassungsverfahren und damit auch die der nationalen Parteien und Parlamentarier eindeutig gestärkt. In Anbetracht der Tatsache, dass die Umsetzung dieser Bestimmung ein hohes Maß an Koordinierung und Zusammenarbeit zwischen den einzelstaatlichen Parlamenten voraussetzt und dass überdies davon auszugehen ist, dass auch den Nichtregierungsparteien in den nationalen Systemen eine sehr wichtige Rolle zukommen dürfte, besteht kein Anlass, nicht auch mit einer regen Beteiligung der europäischen politischen Parteien an diesem Prozess zu rechnen. Die Koordinierung der Tätigkeiten von Parteien und Parlamentsabgeordneten in mindestens 9, möglicherweise aber auch 14 nationalen Parlamenten wird keine einfache Aufgabe, bei der es sich jedoch anbietet, die Kommunikationskanäle und Netzwerke der auf europäischer Ebene agierenden politischen Parteien zu nutzen. Anders ausgedrückt, bietet diese Bestimmung auch die Möglichkeit einer stärkeren und intensiveren Betätigung der politischen Parteien auf europäischer Ebene.

Der dritte Bereich, in dem sich europäische politische Parteien betätigen könnten, ist vielleicht der einflussreichste und direkteste, der bei den Parteien selbst bereits seit einiger Zeit im Gespräch ist. Er schließt den Vorschlag ein, dass die konkurrierenden Europaparteien bei Wahlen zum Europäischen Parlament jeweils einen eigenen Kandidaten für den Kommissionsvorsitz ins Rennen schicken. Derzeit wird der Präsident der Kommission von den Regierungen der Mitgliedstaaten nach Anhörung des neu gewählten Europäischen Parlaments benannt. Das Parlament muss zudem seine Zustimmung zur Ernennung der Kommission insgesamt geben. Dies erzeugt ein gewisses – wenngleich sehr begrenztes – Maß an demokratischer Rechenschaftspflicht und Transparenz im Zusammenhang mit dem Ernennungsprozess. Ein Alternativvorschlag sieht vor, dass jede der europäischen politischen Parteien und insbesondere die beiden etablierten Europaparteien, die Europäische Volkspartei (EVP) und die

Sozialdemokratische Partei Europas (SPE), vor Beginn des EP-Wahlprozesses ihren eigenen Kandidaten für den Kommissionsvorsitz benennen. Mit der Wahlkampfteilnahme der Europaparteien würden zugleich, wenn auch indirekt, deren Kandidaten in einen Wettbewerb treten und dabei jeweils von den nationalen Parteien unterstützt werden, die den politischen Parteien auf europäischer Ebene angehören. Nach der Wahl würde der Kandidat derjenigen Partei, die die meisten Stimmen in Europa auf sich vereinen konnte, von den Regierungen der Mitgliedstaaten offiziell ernannt. Auf diese Weise würde dem neuen Kommissionspräsidenten mit den Wahlen indirekt ein Mandat erteilt und so die demokratische Legitimation des Gesamtsystems untermauert, und der Wettbewerb zwischen den Parteien bei den Wahlen zum Europäischen Parlament erhielte ein wahrhaft transnationales Gepräge. Darüber hinaus müssten die politischen Parteien auf europäischer Ebene als Organisationen sehr viel aktiver werden, und zwar nicht nur in ihren Bemühungen um eine abgestimmte Unterstützung einzelner Kandidaten in den jeweiligen Mitgliedstaaten, sondern auch beim koordinierten Werben um Unterstützung für ihre Mitglieder bei den Regierungen, die bei dem Ernennungsprozess im Rat offiziell federführend sind. Dies würde ganz sicherlich nicht zu einem ausgereiften transnationalen Parteiensystem führen, doch könnte in Anbetracht der derzeitigen institutionellen Sachzwänge sowie der Tatsache, dass eine institutionelle Reform in Form eines neuen Vertrags in absehbarer Zeit wohl nicht machbar ist, dem Ziel mit dieser Vorgehensweise so nahe gekommen werden, wie es die aktuellen Umstände zulassen.

## **2. Zusammenfassung der Studie**

Während das Entstehen von transnationalen Parteien durchaus vorstellbar ist, gestaltet sich die Herausbildung eines transnationalen *Parteiensystems* problematischer.

Der Einfluss nationaler politischer Gegebenheiten auf die Organisationsstrategie und den Wettbewerbsstil der Parteien könnte ein Hindernis für die Entstehung transnationaler Parteien darstellen.

Entgegen der gängigen Meinung wäre eine Wahlrechtsreform für die Wahlen zum EP für die Entstehung eines transnationalen Parteiensystems möglicherweise eher hinderlich.

In dem gegenwärtigen Rechtsrahmen für politische Parteien auf europäischer Ebene werden die EP-Fraktionen und die nationalen Parteien noch bevorzugt.

Durch ein starkes Finanzierungs- und Regulierungssystem auf europäischer Ebene könnte eine konvergente transnationale Parteigründung gefördert werden.

Der Aufbau einer europäischen Struktur des politischen Wettbewerbs ist eine notwendige Voraussetzung, um die Institutionalisierung eines wirklich transnationalen Parteiensystems voranzubringen.

Der Wettbewerb um die Kontrolle über eine transnationale politische Exekutive wäre ein grundlegender institutioneller Anreiz für die Entwicklung eines transnationalen Parteiensystems.

In Ermangelung eines Systems für den Wettbewerb um die Kontrolle über eine transnationale politische Exekutive und unter Berücksichtigung der derzeitigen institutionellen Gegebenheiten steht den transnationalen Parteien eine Reihe von Aktivitäten für den Parteaufbau sowie zur Stärkung ihrer Position zu Gebote.

## 1.

Für die Zukunft der EU-Demokratie sind homogene Fraktionen eine wesentliche Voraussetzung, da sie den europäischen Wählern ein aussagekräftiges programmatisches Angebot machen.

Das Erfordernis der „politischen Zugehörigkeit“ für die Bildung einer Fraktion ist eine notwendige, jedoch keine hinreichende Voraussetzung dafür, dass sichergestellt ist, dass die transnationalen Gruppierungen kohärente politische Kulturen vertreten.

Die auf einen Schlag erfolgte massive Erweiterung hatte nur geringe Auswirkungen auf den Zusammenhalt und die politische Agenda der Fraktionen.

Die großen Fraktionen vertreten im Bereich der Links-Rechts-Politik geschlossene und eindeutige Standpunkte, und unter den kleineren Fraktionen bekennt sich nur die EFD zur keiner ideologischen Zugehörigkeit.

## 2.

Da die Kandidatenwahl zu den wichtigsten Aufgaben der politischen Parteien gehört, könnte die mangelnde Geschlossenheit innerhalb der Parteifamilien eine Hürde für eine erfolgreiche Transnationalisierung darstellen.

Je dezentraler und integrativer die Kandidatenwahl erfolgt, desto eher haben die MdEP die Möglichkeit, ihre Stimme in Übereinstimmung mit ihrer Fraktion im EP und nicht mit ihrer nationalen Partei abzugeben.

Die gängigsten Verfahren für die Auswahl von MdEP-Kandidaten setzen auf die Rolle des Parteivorstands und von Parteitag. 86 % aller Vorschläge werden auf der nationalen Ebene unterbreitet.

### **3.**

Die jeweils höchst unterschiedliche Anzahl der Parteien auf nationaler Ebene kann für die Entwicklung eines einheitlichen EU-Parteiensystems hinderlich sein.

Auch die Zugehörigkeit von zwei oder mehr nationalen politischen Parteien zu ein und derselben EP-Fraktion behindert die Entwicklung eines EU-Parteiensystems.

Der Prozess des transnationalen Parteiaufbaus wird zudem durch die Tendenz vieler nationaler Parteien geschwächt, ihre Mitgliedschaft in EP-Fraktionen rein technisch zu betrachten.

Der Umstand, dass alle großen Europaparteien denselben rechtlichen Bestimmungen unterliegen, könnte der Entwicklung eines EU-Parteiensystems zuträglich sein.

Der Aufbau eines transnationalen Parteiensystems wird beeinflusst von den Unterschieden in den Politik- und Wahlsystemen sowie dadurch, dass Wahlen zum EP als zweitrangig gelten.

### **4.**

Mit den vorgeschlagenen Wahlen auf transnationaler Ebene könnte die Zusammenarbeit zwischen den Parteien auf EU-Ebene über die Förderung eines wirklich transnationalen Wahlkampfs und EU-weiter Parteiprogramme gestärkt werden.

Die Einführung des Mehrheitswahlrechts auf EU-Ebene könnte positive Auswirkungen auf die Weiterentwicklung der europäischen politischen Parteien haben.

Ein tragfähiges Parteifinanzierungssystem auf EU-Ebene könnte die organisatorische Annäherung und somit den Aufbau transnationaler Parteien fördern.

Trotz der positiven Anreize durch die Verordnung (EG) Nr. 2004/2003 sind die politischen Parteien auf europäischer Ebene weiterhin ihren nationalen Mitgliedern und den EP-Fraktionen untergeordnet.

### **Wesentliche Schlussfolgerungen**

Das Entstehen transnationaler Parteien ist eine notwendige, jedoch nicht hinreichende Voraussetzung für die Herausbildung eines transnationalen

Parteiensystems.

Das Problem des Aufbaus eines EU-Parteiensystems ist institutioneller Art, da der Prozess durch den mangelnden Wettbewerb zwischen den Parteien um die Kontrolle über die Exekutive behindert wird.

Ein wirklicher transnationaler Wettbewerbs zwischen den Parteien könnte durch künftige institutionelle Reformen zur Änderung des Vertrags möglich werden.

Eine positive Folge des Fehlens exekutiver Kontrollbefugnisse ist es, dass die Parteien im EP besser in der Lage zu sein scheinen, die Ansichten der europäischen Bürger zu Gehör zu bringen.

Angesichts der derzeitigen institutionellen Gegebenheiten könnte die Rolle der politischen Parteien auf europäischer Ebenes durch bestimmte Maßnahmen gestärkt werden. Dazu gehören die Beteiligung an der Europäischen Bürgerinitiative, die Koordinierung der parlamentarischen Antworten in den neuen Verfahren zu Verstößen gegen das Subsidiaritätsprinzip sowie das Vorschlagen eigener Kandidaten für den Kommissionsvorsitz, verbunden mit dem damit erworbenen Ansehen.

## ***CRÉER UN SYSTÈME DE PARTIS TRANSNATIONAL***

### **1. Conclusion: partis transnationaux et système de partis transnational**

Un système de partis transnational requiert davantage que la simple présence de partis transnationaux. Selon la définition classique de Sartori (1976: 43-4), les systèmes de partis sont des "systèmes d'interactions", ce qui signifie que ce sont des systèmes dans lesquels les partis s'engagent les uns et les autres, habituellement de manière concurrentielle, dans des domaines précis. En d'autres termes, les partis créent un système lorsqu'ils interagissent et se font concurrence, que ce soit sur un terrain électoral ou législatif, ou dans la sphère gouvernementale.

Il est par conséquent possible de concevoir des situations dans lesquelles des partis existent mais où il n'existe aucun système de partis à proprement parler. En Belgique, par exemple, au niveau électoral, les partis wallons interagissent et sont en concurrence avec d'autres partis wallons, tandis que les partis flamands interagissent et sont en compétition avec d'autres partis flamands. À aucun moment dans le processus électoral les partis flamands ne luttent contre les partis wallons pour obtenir des voix. Or, si un système de partis wallon existe sur la scène électorale, tout comme il existe un système de partis flamand, il n'existe aucun système de partis belge en tant que tel. Ce n'est qu'au moment où ils remportent des sièges à la chambre des représentants et au sénat ou qu'ils s'organisent pour former un gouvernement que les partis flamands et wallons commencent à interagir dans les autres domaines et créent ainsi un système de partis "belge".

Dans le même ordre d'idées, il est possible de parler de l'existence d'une multiplicité de systèmes de partis aux États-Unis, même si l'on pense habituellement que ce pays n'est doté que de deux partis principaux. Le pouvoir et la politique sont si décentralisés dans le système fédéral américain que, dans chaque État, les partis sont quasiment autonomes. Ils peuvent porter la même étiquette – "républicains" ou "démocrates" – dans chaque État, mais leurs dirigeants et leurs politiques diffèrent considérablement les uns des autres. Aussi les universitaires américains aiment-ils parler de l'existence d'un système bipartite séparé dans chaque État, ce dernier possédant son propre système d'interactions. On arrive donc à 50 systèmes de partis différents. L'organisation d'une élection présidentielle tous les quatre ans crée également un 51<sup>e</sup> système d'interactions, distinct de celui de chaque État. Il existe donc 50 systèmes de partis au niveau des États et un système de partis présidentiel, certains universitaires affirmant qu'il existe également un autre système de partis (législatif) à la chambre des représentants et un autre au sénat, soit, au total, 53 systèmes de partis.

Dans l'Europe moderne, certaines conditions favorables ont permis d'affirmer qu'il était possible de concevoir l'émergence et la consolidation de véritables partis transnationaux. En effet, nous avons soutenu que les obstacles



bloquant ce développement déclinaient progressivement et que, par conséquent, les perspectives de création de partis transnationaux semblaient plutôt bonnes. Mais cela ne revient pas du tout à dire qu'il y a également de bonnes chances de voir un système de partis transnational être créé. Notre conclusion sur cette question est beaucoup plus pessimiste.

Comme nous l'avons constaté plus haut, les partis constituent un système lorsqu'ils peuvent interagir et dialoguer les uns avec les autres, ce qu'ils font généralement par le biais de la compétition. C'est-à-dire qu'ils interagissent en luttant les uns contre les autres pour obtenir un mandat ou le pouvoir. Ils le font dans différents domaines infranationaux, nationaux et supranationaux, y compris dans le cadre des élections au Parlement européen. Toutefois, à aucun moment ils ne sont en compétition avec des partis qui ne relèvent pas de leurs systèmes nationaux. Autrement dit, et comme c'est plutôt le cas avec les partis flamands et wallons en Belgique, les partis irlandais n'interagissent qu'avec des partis irlandais, les britanniques qu'avec des britanniques, les néerlandais qu'avec des néerlandais, les tchèques qu'avec des tchèques, etc. Ceci signifie que, s'il existe un système de partis irlandais, un britannique, un néerlandais, un tchèque, etc., il n'existe aucun système de partis transnational ou européen dans la sphère électorale. Les partis n'interagissant pas les uns avec les autres au niveau européen ou transnational, ils ne constituent dès lors par un système à ce niveau.

Bien entendu, lorsque les partis nationaux exercent leurs activités au sein des groupes européens ou des familles européennes – plus larges – au Parlement européen, ils interagissent les uns avec les autres. Il est dès lors possible de parler d'un système de partis européen dans la sphère législative. Mais même à ce niveau, la dynamique est très limitée et, à l'exception de luttes occasionnelles en vue d'obtenir des positions clés au Parlement, ils ne rivalisent pas les uns avec les autres d'une manière aussi soutenue que les partis nationaux sur le terrain législatif national. Ils ne s'opposent pas non plus les uns aux autres comme le font de plus en plus les partis du Congrès américain. En effet, aux États-Unis, malgré la séparation des pouvoirs, la concurrence entre le parti présidentiel et son rival a créé une dynamique limitée d'opposition au gouvernement. Ce n'est pas le cas en Europe, où la Commission est dépolitisée et officiellement non partisane. De ce fait, les interactions au sein du Parlement ne sont souvent que peu structurées.

Sur le plan national, les partis présents au parlement se disputent des mandats exécutifs. Que le système soit dirigé par un gouvernement à parti unique ou par des coalitions, ou encore par des gouvernements majoritaires ou minoritaires, en Europe, la politique nationale s'exerce habituellement par le biais d'un système de gouvernement parlementaire, dans lequel les partis présents au parlement luttent pour gagner et contrôler le gouvernement, et dans lequel le gouvernement est quotidiennement contesté par une opposition plus ou moins organisée.

Ce n'est pas le cas au Parlement européen. Fait inhabituel pour un système politique en Europe, le "gouvernement" européen – Conseil européen, Commission, etc., – ne relève pas du législateur européen. Il n'y a pas de fusion des pouvoirs. Au contraire, le Parlement européen est une assemblée représentative "pur sang", analogue à la chambre des représentants aux États-

Unis. C'est pourquoi, lorsque les partis interagissent les uns avec les autres, ou luttent même les uns contre les autres, au Parlement européen ils ne luttent pas pour le contrôle d'un mandat exécutif, comme le font les partis nationaux, mais pour des positions clés dans la structure parlementaire elle-même – fonctions de Président, de membres de commissions, nominations en tant que rapporteurs – qui, une fois déterminées, sont attribuées. En d'autres termes, il n'existe aucun schéma compétitif solide ou permanent entre les partis au sein du Parlement européen qui pourrait jeter les bases d'un système de partis européen, pas tant parce que la majeure partie de l'activité des partis au Parlement est axée sur le renforcement collectif du Parlement vis-à-vis des autres institutions européennes que parce que ces partis luttent les uns contre les autres pour contrôler des positions au sein du Parlement. Et même dans le cas d'une consolidation des partis transnationaux ce décalage persistera. Le problème est institutionnel plutôt qu'un problème de politique ou de développement. On peut également supposer que seul un futur traité, qui accorderait des fonctions de contrôle exécutif au Parlement ou pourrait instituer une présidence directement élue, mandat que les partis transnationaux pourraient se disputer, changera réellement cette situation. En l'absence d'une telle réforme, les partis, tout en continuant à prospérer en tant que tels, ne pourront jamais totalement s'opposer les uns aux autres ni jamais créer un véritable système de partis transnational.

Nous pouvons tirer deux conclusions de ces remarques. La *première* est que nous acceptons la situation telle qu'elle est et reconnaissons qu'elle présente également un certain nombre d'avantages qu'il ne faut pas sous-estimer. Par exemple, dans les systèmes nationaux où les partis se disputent réellement des mandats exécutifs, le rôle profondément représentatif sur lequel ils insistaient autrefois est lentement étouffé par les exigences du pouvoir et de l'administration. Autrement dit, au fil du temps, les partis ont perdu leur capacité d'agir en tant que représentants; au lieu de cela, ils se sont presque exclusivement orientés vers la fonction dirigeante et vers la lutte pour cette fonction. Résultat: lorsque les citoyens veulent être représentés et souhaitent faire entendre leur voix, il n'est pas rare qu'ils sortent du système de partis (traditionnel) et se tournent vers des groupes d'intérêts, des ONG ou d'autres organisations de ce genre. C'est également en partie la raison pour laquelle, en Europe, les partis sont devenus l'une des institutions démocratiques qui inspirent le moins confiance (Mair, 2006).

En revanche, au niveau européen, les partis jouent toujours leur rôle représentatif, qui a même été renforcé lorsque les pouvoirs du Parlement européen ont été accrus (Thomassen, 2009). En d'autres termes, en dépit des plaintes formulées fréquemment au sujet du déficit démocratique en Europe, les partis au niveau européen semblent jouer très efficacement leur rôle en tant que représentants des citoyens européens, notamment pour ce qui est de leurs préférences entre gauche et droite. Une analyse récente (Mair et Thomassen, 2010) est parvenue à la conclusion que, bien qu'il n'y ait aucun véritable *processus* de représentation politique au niveau européen, et bien qu'il n'y ait aucun domaine transnational permettant une course électorale, en ajoutant les *résultats* des processus nationaux, on parvient néanmoins à une cohérence raisonnable entre les préférences des électeurs européens et celles des députés

au Parlement européen. Autrement dit, les preuves empiriques disponibles suggèrent que le résultat du système de représentation au niveau européen est bien meilleur pour bon nombre de questions politiques que ce qu'on croit habituellement. Cette conclusion, plutôt positive, sur le processus de la représentation politique fait bien entendu référence à l'issue du processus plutôt qu'au processus lui-même et, dans ce sens, il est toujours possible de considérer qu'un système de représentation politique à part entière au niveau européen nécessite que les partis politiques européens luttent pour obtenir les voix d'un électorat européen. Au Parlement européen, les partis semblent jouer leur rôle de représentants d'une manière relativement efficace, l'une des raisons étant peut-être que, contrairement à leurs homologues nationaux, ils ne sont pas impliqués outre mesure dans le processus qui consiste à gouverner ou à s'opposer au gouvernement. En ce sens, le Parlement européen peut être considéré comme une vraie assemblée législative, et de nombreux arguments plaident pour ne rien changer.

La *seconde* conclusion est que nous tentons de modifier les conditions au sein du cadre institutionnel actuel d'une manière susceptible d'améliorer le profil des partis transnationaux et de créer une situation dans laquelle ils pourraient au moins dialoguer indirectement les uns avec les autres et se faire ainsi concurrence, ne serait-ce que partiellement. Ceci ne suffirait certes pas à créer un véritable système de partis transnational, qui serait robuste, mais permettrait de se rapprocher de cet objectif autant que les conditions institutionnelles actuelles le permettent. Les organisations partisans transnationales seraient également tenues de faire preuve de plus de volontarisme et d'un engagement politique plus fort qu'actuellement. Au-delà de la proposition Duff, que nous avons examinée plus tôt dans ce rapport, trois domaines particuliers d'activité potentielle susceptibles de contribuer à la réalisation de cet objectif peuvent être mis en exergue.

Le premier est la participation éventuelle des partis politiques au niveau européen à l'initiative citoyenne proposée par le traité de Lisbonne. Aux termes de l'article 11, paragraphe 4, de la version consolidée du traité UE, des "citoyens de l'Union, au nombre d'un million au moins, ressortissants d'un nombre significatif d'États membres, peuvent prendre l'initiative d'inviter la Commission européenne, dans le cadre de ses attributions, à soumettre une proposition appropriée sur des questions pour lesquelles ces citoyens considèrent qu'un acte juridique de l'Union est nécessaire aux fins de l'application des traités". Bien que l'on ne sache pas précisément comment cette initiative fonctionnera dans la pratique et qui pourra participer à la collecte des signatures (rapport EUDO), les exigences transnationales et organisationnelles impliquent que les partis politiques au niveau européen pourraient participer très utilement au processus. En d'autres termes, il s'agit d'une activité transnationale avec des implications politiques qui, presque par définition, se prête à une participation active des partis politiques au niveau européen et qui est susceptible d'encourager ces partis à s'engager plus directement auprès des citoyens européens.

Le deuxième domaine dans lequel les partis politiques au niveau européen

pourraient s'engager est lié à la nouvelle formule de la subsidiarité prévue par le traité de Lisbonne, qui augmente de six à huit semaines le délai dont disposent les parlements nationaux pour examiner les projets de législation de la Commission et qui prévoit qu'un tiers de ces parlements peuvent s'opposer à un projet de proposition législative de la Commission pour violation du principe de subsidiarité – procédure dite du "carton jaune". De plus, les parlements peuvent également adresser à la Commission un "carton orange": cette procédure permet à une majorité simple de parlements d'obliger la Commission à soumettre leurs objections au Conseil et au Parlement. Cette nouvelle disposition renforce clairement le rôle des parlements nationaux dans le processus décisionnel européen et, partant, celui des partis et des députés nationaux. Sachant néanmoins que l'application de cette disposition exige une coordination et une coopération substantielles entre les assemblées législatives nationales, et étant donné qu'elle est également susceptible de conférer un rôle particulièrement important aux partis non gouvernementaux dans les systèmes nationaux, il n'y a aucune raison de ne pas penser que les partis politiques au niveau européen pourraient également participer de façon notable au processus. Si coordonner les activités des partis et des députés dans au moins neuf, et éventuellement quatorze, parlements nationaux ne semble pas chose facile, cette tâche pourrait néanmoins permettre d'exploiter les réseaux et les moyens de communication des partis politiques au niveau européen. Autrement dit, cette disposition permet également de renforcer l'activité des partis politiques au niveau européen et de mieux la médiatiser.

Le troisième domaine auquel les partis politiques au niveau européen pourraient participer est peut-être le plus fort et le plus direct, et a déjà été longuement débattu par les partis eux-mêmes. Il impliquera les partis politiques au niveau européen concurrents qui se présentent aux élections européennes avec leurs propres candidats à la présidence de la Commission. Dans l'état actuel des choses, le président de la Commission est désigné par les gouvernements des États membres après consultation du Parlement européen nouvellement élu. Le Parlement est également tenu de d'approuver la nomination de la Commission en tant que collège. Cette procédure offre un certain degré de légitimité démocratique et de transparence au processus de nomination, même si ce n'est que d'une manière très limitée et réduite. Il a été suggéré, en lieu et place de cette démarche, que chaque parti politique au niveau européen – et, en tout état de cause, le groupe du Parti populaire européen (PPE) et le groupe de l'Alliance progressiste des Socialistes et Démocrates au Parlement européen (S&D), les deux principaux partis politiques au niveau européen – devrait se lancer dans les élections européennes en ayant déjà présenté son propre candidat à la présidence de la Commission. De la même manière que les partis politiques au niveau européen participeraient aux élections, leurs candidats y participeraient aussi – si ce n'est indirectement –, chacun d'entre eux recevant le soutien de l'ensemble des partis nationaux affiliés au parti politique au niveau européen. Après les élections, le candidat proposé par le parti politique au niveau européen ayant remporté le plus de voix dans l'ensemble de l'Europe serait officiellement désigné par les gouvernements des États membres. De cette manière, les élections confieraient un mandat indirect au nouveau président de la

Commission, ce qui renforcerait la légitimité démocratique du système tout entier, et la compétition entre les partis lors des élections européennes acquerrait dès lors un véritable caractère transnational. En outre, cette procédure obligerait les partis nationaux au niveau européen à agir plus activement en tant qu'organisations, non seulement pour s'efforcer de coordonner le soutien à des candidats donnés dans chaque pays, mais aussi pour persuader les membres de leurs gouvernements qui contrôlent officiellement le processus de désignation au Conseil de soutenir lesdits candidats et pour coordonner ce soutien. Certes, cette proposition ne donnerait pas lieu à la création d'un système de partis transnational à part entière mais, compte tenu des contraintes institutionnelles actuelles, et étant donné qu'il est peu probable qu'une réforme institutionnelle soit opérée par le biais d'un nouveau traité dans un avenir proche, elle permettrait probablement de se rapprocher de cet objectif autant que la situation actuelle le permet.

## **2. Résumé de l'étude**

S'il est possible de concevoir l'émergence de partis transnationaux, la mise en place d'un *système* de partis transnational est plus problématique.

Le poids des paramètres politiques nationaux sur la stratégie organisationnelle des partis et les formes de concurrence entre lesdits partis peut constituer un obstacle à l'émergence de partis transnationaux.

Malgré ce que l'on dit souvent, la réforme de la législation électorale concernant les élections européennes peut ne pas être propice à l'émergence d'un système de partis transnational.

Le cadre réglementaire actuellement applicable aux partis politiques européens favorise toujours les groupes politiques du Parlement européen et les partis nationaux.

Un système de financement et de réglementation fort, mis en place au niveau européen, pourrait contribuer à promouvoir la convergence vers un parti transnational.

La création d'une structure européenne de concurrence politique est une condition indispensable pour soutenir l'institutionnalisation d'un véritable système de partis transnational.

La lutte pour le contrôle d'un exécutif politique transnational constituerait une incitation institutionnelle essentielle à la création d'un système de partis transnational.

En l'absence d'un système impliquant une mise en concurrence pour le contrôle d'un exécutif politique transnational, les partis transnationaux peuvent, même dans le cadre de la situation institutionnelle actuelle, exercer diverses activités qui visent à la constitution de partis et peuvent les aider à se forger une image.

## **1.**

Dans la perspective de la démocratie européenne, des groupes politiques homogènes ont un rôle crucial à jouer: celui de proposer aux électeurs européens des programmes intéressants.

La condition relative aux "affinités politiques" pour former un groupe est nécessaire mais pas suffisante pour garantir que les regroupements transnationaux représenteront des cultures politiques cohérentes.

L'impact de l'élargissement "big bang" sur la cohésion et l'agenda politique des groupes s'est révélé très limité.

Les principaux groupes ont des positions cohérentes et bien repérables sur les politiques de gauche ou de droite, tandis que, parmi les groupes plus petits, seul l'EFD fait preuve d'un manque d'affinités idéologiques.

## **2.**

La sélection de candidats étant l'une des fonctions fondamentales des groupes politiques, l'absence d'uniformité au sein des familles politiques peut constituer un obstacle à une véritable "transnationalisation".

Plus la sélection de candidats est décentralisée et ouverte, plus les députés européens sont susceptibles de voter en accord avec leur groupe politique au sein du Parlement plutôt qu'avec leur parti national.

Les procédures les plus usuelles adoptées pour la sélection de candidats à la fonction de députés au Parlement européen s'appuient sur le rôle de l'exécutif du parti et sur celui du congrès du parti, plus de 86 % de toutes les propositions émanant du niveau national.

## **3.**

La multiplicité des partis au niveau national peut constituer un obstacle à la mise en place d'un système de partis européen unique.

La présence de deux partis politiques nationaux, voire plus, au sein d'un même groupe au Parlement européen entrave la création d'un système de partis

européen.

La tendance de nombreux partis nationaux à ne considérer leur appartenance à des groupes politiques européens qu'en termes techniques affaiblit le processus de construction de partis transnationaux.

Le fait que tous les partis européens majeurs soient soumis au même régime juridique peut favoriser la création d'un système de partis européen.

La construction d'un système de partis transnational dépend des différences entre les cultures électorales et politiques et de la perception des élections européennes comme des compétitions de deuxième ordre.

#### **4.**

La circonscription transnationale qu'il est proposé de créer pourrait renforcer la coopération des partis au niveau de l'Union européenne en encourageant l'organisation de véritables campagnes transnationales et l'élaboration de programmes de partis à l'échelon européen.

Le vote préférentiel, s'il était mis en œuvre au niveau de l'Union européenne, pourrait avoir un impact positif sur le développement des partis politiques au niveau européen.

Un système européen fort de financement des partis pourrait promouvoir la convergence organisationnelle et, partant, la construction de partis transnationaux.

Malgré les mesures d'incitation positives garanties par le règlement (CE) n° 2004/2003, les partis politiques au niveau européen restent subordonnés à leurs composantes nationales et aux groupes du PE.

#### **Conclusions clés**

La création de partis transnationaux est une condition nécessaire mais pas suffisante à la création d'un système de partis transnational.

Le problème posé par la construction d'un système de partis européen est institutionnel, le processus étant entravé par le manque de compétition entre les partis pour contrôler un exécutif.

Une véritable compétition transnationale entre les partis pourrait voir le jour si des réformes institutionnelles futures modifiaient le traité.

L'absence de fonctions de contrôle exécutif a une conséquence positive: les partis présents au Parlement européen semblent être plus à même d'exprimer les opinions des citoyens européens.

Compte tenu de la configuration institutionnelle actuelle, les partis politiques au niveau européen pourraient renforcer leur rôle en participant à l'initiative citoyenne européenne, en coordonnant les réactions parlementaires dans les nouvelles procédures relatives à des violations de la subsidiarité, en proposant leurs propres candidats à la présidence de la Commission et en les soutenant.



## ***COME CREARE UN SISTEMA PARTITICO TRANSNAZIONALE***

### **1. Conclusione: partiti transnazionali e un sistema partitico transnazionale**

Un sistema partitico transnazionale prevede molto più della semplice presenza di partiti transnazionali. Stando alla definizione classica di Sartori (1976: 43-4), i sistemi di partito sono "sistemi di interazioni", ovvero sistemi in cui i partiti si impegnano reciprocamente, di solito in modo competitivo, in arene definite. In altre parole, i partiti creano un sistema quando interagiscono o competono tra loro, nell'arena elettorale, legislativa o di governo.

È possibile quindi concepire situazioni in cui esistono i partiti ma non un sistema di partito in quanto tale. In Belgio, ad esempio, a livello elettorale, i partiti valloni interagiscono e competono con altre organizzazioni politiche vallone, mentre i partiti fiamminghi interagiscono e competono con altre organizzazioni politiche fiamminghe. Tuttavia, in nessuna fase del processo elettorale i partiti fiamminghi si contendono i voti con i partiti valloni e quindi, sebbene nell'arena elettorale esistano un sistema di partito vallone e un sistema di partito fiammingo, non esiste un sistema di partito belga in quanto tale. Solo nel momento in cui i partiti ottengono i propri seggi alla Camera dei rappresentanti e al Senato o si consultano per formare un governo, il partito fiammingo e quello vallone iniziano a interagire reciprocamente in altre arene, creando un sistema partitico "belga".

Analogamente si può parlare di una molteplicità di sistemi di partito negli Stati Uniti, anche se di norma si pensa che nel paese esistano solo due partiti principali. Dal momento che nel sistema federale statunitense il potere e la politica sono molto decentrati, i partiti politici di ciascuno Stato godono di una certa autonomia. I partiti utilizzano gli aggettivi "democratico" e "repubblicano" in tutti gli Stati, ma la dirigenza e gli orientamenti di ciascun partito si differenziano sostanzialmente gli uni dagli altri. Per questo motivo gli studiosi americani parlano in genere di un sistema bipartitico a sé stante in ogni Stato, poiché ciascuno Stato ha un proprio sistema di interazioni peculiare. Questo fenomeno porta ad avere 50 sistemi di partito diversi e addirittura 51 sistemi di interazioni se si considera anche la tornata presidenziale quadriennale, che risulta diversa da quella dei singoli Stati. Ciò significa che esistono 50 sistemi partitici statali e un sistema di partito presidenziale. Alcuni studiosi affermano che esiste anche un altro sistema partitico, di natura legislativa, presso la Camera dei Rappresentanti e un ulteriore sistema al Senato, per un totale di 53 sistemi di partito.

In determinate condizioni favorevoli, nell'Europa contemporanea abbiamo affermato che è possibile concepire la comparsa e il consolidamento di autentici partiti transnazionali. Abbiamo infatti sostenuto che gli ostacoli a questo sviluppo sono in graduale declino e che, quindi, per i partiti transnazionali le

prospettive sono ora piuttosto buone. Tutto ciò è completamente diverso però dall'affermare che ci sono anche buone prospettive per un sistema partitico transnazionale. A tale proposito le nostre conclusioni sono molto più pessimistiche.

Come rilevato in precedenza, i partiti fanno sistema quando sono in grado di interagire e confrontarsi reciprocamente, di norma attraverso la competizione. È un dato di fatto che i partiti interagiscono tra loro, contendendosi incarichi e potere. Queste dinamiche si sviluppano in una serie di arene subnazionali, nazionali e sovranazionali, comprese le elezioni al Parlamento europeo. In nessuna fase, tuttavia, i partiti competono con altre organizzazioni politiche che non appartengono ai propri sistemi nazionali. In altre parole, e in modo analogo a quanto avviene per le organizzazioni politiche fiamminghe e vallone del Belgio, i partiti irlandesi interagiscono solo con partiti irlandesi, i britannici con i britannici, gli olandesi con gli olandesi, i cechi con i cechi e così via. Ciò significa che, sebbene esistano sistemi partitici irlandesi, britannici, olandesi, cechi, ecc., nell'arena elettorale manca un sistema partitico transnazionale o europeo. I partiti non interagiscono reciprocamente a livello europeo o transnazionale e, di conseguenza, non creano un sistema a questo livello.

Quando i partiti nazionali operano all'interno di gruppi o famiglie europei più vasti al Parlamento europeo, essi interagiscono certamente tra loro e, in questo senso, si può parlare di un sistema partitico europeo nell'arena legislativa. Anche in questo caso però la dinamica è molto limitata e, fatte salve le rivalità occasionali per le posizioni chiave all'interno del Parlamento, essi non competono tra loro nel modo prolungato con cui si fanno abitualmente concorrenza i partiti nazionali nelle rispettive arene legislative nazionali. Essi non si confrontano nemmeno seguendo le prassi sempre più competitive dei partiti candidati al Congresso statunitense, poiché negli Stati Uniti, nonostante la separazione dei poteri, la competizione tra il partito del Presidente e l'opposizione ha generato una dinamica limitata di opposizione al governo. In Europa, dove la Commissione è depolitizzata e formalmente libera dall'influenza dei partiti, ciò non avviene e di conseguenza i rapporti con il Parlamento sono spesso poco strutturati.

Nei contesti nazionali, i partiti presenti in parlamento si contendono il ruolo esecutivo. Indipendentemente dal fatto che il sistema sia guidato da un governo monopartitico o da una coalizione, o da governi maggioritari o minoritari, di norma in Europa la politica nazionale si esercita attraverso un sistema di governo parlamentare in cui i partiti presenti nell'assemblea legislativa competono per vincere e controllare il governo e in cui un'opposizione più o meno organizzata contesta quotidianamente l'esecutivo.

Non è questo il caso del Parlamento europeo. In via del tutto eccezionale per un sistema politico in Europa, il "governo" europeo - ovvero il Consiglio europeo, la Commissione, ecc. - non è responsabile nei confronti dell'assemblea legislativa europea. Non vi è una fusione dei poteri, ma piuttosto il Parlamento europeo è un'assemblea rappresentativa *autentica*, affine alla Camera dei Rappresentanti degli Stati Uniti. Di conseguenza, quando i partiti interagiscono o addirittura competono tra loro al Parlamento europeo, essi non si confrontano per il controllo del ruolo esecutivo come i partiti nazionali, ma piuttosto per i ruoli chiave della struttura parlamentare stessa, ovvero il ruolo di Presidente, di

membro di commissione e di relatore, che vengono resi esecutivi una volta assegnati. In altre parole, non esiste un modello definito o consolidato di competizione tra i partiti al Parlamento europeo che possa offrire le basi per la costruzione di un sistema partitico europeo, poiché la maggior parte delle attività delle organizzazioni politiche al Parlamento si concentra sul rafforzamento complessivo di questa istituzione rispetto alle altre istituzioni europee, anziché sulla competizione per il controllo all'interno del Parlamento. Anche se i partiti transnazionali dispongono di un potere crescente, questa discrepanza continuerà a esistere. Il problema è più istituzionale che politico o inerente allo sviluppo. Si può ipotizzare che questa situazione potrà essere realmente modificata solo con un futuro trattato che conceda al Parlamento funzioni esecutive di controllo o che istituisca l'elezione diretta del Presidente, una funzione per la quale i partiti transnazionali potrebbero concorrere. In mancanza di una siffatta riforma, i partiti, pur continuando a prosperare in quanto tali, non potranno mai competere realmente tra loro, creando un autentico sistema partitico transnazionale.

Da qui si possono trarre due conclusioni. La *prima* è che accettiamo la situazione corrente, riconoscendo che essa comporta anche alcuni vantaggi che non dovrebbero essere sottovalutati. Nei sistemi nazionali, ad esempio, in cui i partiti competono per il ruolo esecutivo, la funzione prevalentemente rappresentativa da essi enfatizzata in passato è stata lentamente ridimensionata dalle richieste di governi e amministrazioni. In altre parole, nel tempo i partiti hanno perso la capacità di agire come agenzie rappresentative e si sono orientati quasi esclusivamente verso una funzione governativa e la competizione per essa. In seguito a una simile evoluzione, i cittadini che cercano di essere rappresentati e far sentire la propria voce, tendono spesso a superare il sistema partitico tradizionale, rivolgendosi ad associazioni di categoria, ONG e organizzazioni analoghe. È in parte per questo motivo che in Europa i partiti sono diventati una delle istituzioni democratiche meno fidate. (Mair 2006).

A livello europeo, al contrario, il ruolo rappresentativo dei partiti non è venuto meno, ma sembra invece essersi rafforzato con la crescita dei poteri del Parlamento europeo (Thomassen 2009). In altri termini, e nonostante le frequenti lamentele sulle lacune democratiche in Europa, a livello europeo i partiti sembrano agire in modo piuttosto efficace come rappresentanti dei cittadini dell'Unione, in particolare nella misura in cui sono implicate le loro preferenze di destra o sinistra. Stando alle conclusioni di uno studio recente (Mair e Thomassen 2010), sebbene non esistano a livello europeo un effettivo *processo* di rappresentanza politica e un'arena transnazionale di competizione elettorale, la sintesi dei *risultati* dei processi nazionali porta tuttavia a una conformità ragionevole tra le preferenze dell'elettorato europeo e quelle dei membri del Parlamento europeo. In altre parole, la prova empirica disponibile dimostra che il risultato del sistema di rappresentanza a livello europeo funziona molto meglio su molte questioni politiche rispetto a quanto solitamente si creda. Questa conclusione alquanto positiva riguardo al processo di rappresentanza politica fa riferimento, come è noto, al risultato del processo anziché al processo in sé e, in questo senso, si può sempre considerare che un sistema completamente sviluppato di rappresentanza politica a livello europeo potrebbe chiedere ai

partiti politici europei di contendersi i voti di un elettorato europeo.

Tuttavia, la conclusione positiva resta valida. I partiti al Parlamento europeo sembrano agire in modo relativamente efficace da rappresentanti e ciò potrebbe essere dovuto anche al fatto che, contrariamente a quanto avviene per i loro omologhi nazionali, essi non sono eccessivamente coinvolti nel processo governativo o di opposizione al governo. In base a questa interpretazione, il Parlamento europeo può essere considerato un'assemblea legislativa a tutti gli effetti e ci sono numerose ragioni che portano a mantenere invariata la situazione.

La *seconda* conclusione è che cerchiamo di modificare le condizioni all'interno del quadro istituzionale attuale, in modo da poter migliorare il profilo dei partiti transnazionali stessi, portandoli a un livello in cui possano confrontarsi reciprocamente almeno in modo indiretto e quindi impegnarsi in una competizione reciproca quanto meno parziale. Queste dinamiche non sarebbero sufficienti a creare un autentico e solido sistema di partito transnazionale, ma si avvicinerebbero all'obiettivo nella misura consentita dalle attuali condizioni istituzionali. Sarebbe altresì necessario che le organizzazioni partitiche transnazionali fossero più proattive e politicamente impegnate rispetto a quanto avviene attualmente. Oltre alla proposta di Duff, analizzata in precedenza nella presente relazione, si rilevano in particolare altri tre settori di potenziale attività che possono essere evidenziati e che potrebbero servire a tale scopo.

Il primo è il potenziale coinvolgimento dei partiti politici a livello europeo (Political Parties at European Level - PPEL) nell'iniziativa dei cittadini europei prevista dal trattato di Lisbona. Ai sensi dell'articolo 11, paragrafo 4, della versione consolidata del trattato UE, i cittadini dell'Unione, in numero di almeno un milione, che abbiano la cittadinanza di un numero significativo di Stati membri possono invitare la Commissione "a presentare una proposta appropriata su materie in merito alle quali tali cittadini ritengono necessario un atto giuridico dell'Unione ai fini dell'attuazione dei trattati". Anche se non è chiaro quali saranno modalità pratiche di funzionamento di questa iniziativa e quali soggetti possono essere coinvolti nella raccolta delle firme (relazione EUDO), i requisiti transnazionali e quelli organizzativi implicano che i partiti politici a livello europeo potrebbero impegnarsi in modo vantaggioso in tale processo. In altre parole, si tratta di un'attività transnazionale con implicazioni politiche che, quasi per definizione, si presta al coinvolgimento attivo dei partiti politici a livello europeo e che potrebbe favorire l'impegno più diretto di questi ultimi a livello europeo nei confronti dei cittadini dell'Europa.

Il secondo settore di potenziale impegno dei partiti politici a livello europeo deriva dalla nuova versione del principio di sussidiarietà introdotta dal trattato di Lisbona, che prevede un aumento del tempo concesso ai parlamenti nazionali per esaminare i progetti legislativi della Commissione da sei a otto settimane e la possibilità che un terzo di tali parlamenti respinga un progetto di proposta legislativa della Commissione adducendo la violazione del principio di sussidiarietà, la cosiddetta procedura del "cartellino giallo". I parlamenti hanno inoltre la possibilità di mostrare alla Commissione il "cartellino arancione", procedura con la quale la maggioranza semplice dei parlamenti può costringere

detta istituzione a riferire le loro obiezioni al Consiglio e al Parlamento. Questa nuova disposizione rafforza chiaramente il ruolo dei parlamenti nazionali nel processo decisionale dell'UE, e di conseguenza rafforza anche il ruolo dei partiti e dei deputati nazionali. Considerando che il ricorso a tali provvedimenti probabilmente richiede un coordinamento e una cooperazione notevoli tra i legislatori nazionali, e che probabilmente prevederà anche un ruolo particolarmente rilevante per i partiti all'opposizione nei sistemi nazionali, non c'è ragione per non aspettarsi anche un coinvolgimento sostanziale dei partiti politici a livello europeo in tale processo. Coordinare le attività dei partiti e dei parlamentari in almeno 9, ed eventualmente 14, parlamenti nazionali non sarà un compito semplice, ma è qualcosa che si può prestare all'impiego di reti e canali di comunicazione dei partiti politici a livello europeo. In altri termini, tale disposizione consente attività dei partiti politici a livello europeo più estese e di più alto profilo.

Il terzo settore in cui i partiti politici a livello europeo potrebbero impegnarsi è forse il più forte e più diretto ed è già stato a lungo discusso dai partiti stessi. Tale ambito riguarderà i partiti politici che competono nelle elezioni europee con i propri candidati per la presidenza della Commissione. Allo stato attuale, il Presidente della Commissione è nominato dai governi degli Stati membri, previa consultazione con il neo-eletto Parlamento europeo. Il Parlamento deve inoltre dare il proprio consenso alla nomina della Commissione nel suo insieme. Ciò conferisce al processo di nomina un certo grado di responsabilità democratica e di trasparenza, sebbene in un modo molto limitato e forzato. In alternativa, è stato suggerito che ciascuno dei partiti politici a livello europeo, e certamente tutti quelli appartenenti alle due correnti principali, vale a dire il Partito Popolare Europeo (PPE) e il Partito del Socialismo Europeo (S&D), dovrebbe aver presentato il proprio candidato alla presidenza della Commissione prima di entrare nel processo elettorale europeo. Come i partiti politici a livello europeo competono alle elezioni, lo stesso farebbero, sebbene indirettamente, anche i loro candidati, ciascuno sostenuto da tutti i partiti nazionali affiliati ai partiti politici a livello europeo. A seguito delle elezioni, il candidato proposto dal partito politico a livello europeo che si aggiudica il maggior numero di voti in tutta Europa sarebbe formalmente nominato dai governi degli Stati membri. In questo modo le elezioni conferirebbero un mandato indiretto al nuovo Presidente della Commissione, aumentando così la legittimità democratica del sistema nel suo insieme, e la competizione tra i partiti alle elezioni del PE acquisterebbe un'autentica aura transnazionale. Inoltre, ciò richiederebbe ai partiti politici a livello europeo di essere molto più attivi come organizzazioni, non soltanto per quanto riguarda il coordinamento del sostegno ai particolari candidati in ciascuno dei contesti nazionali, ma anche nella ricerca e nel coordinamento del sostegno ai loro membri nei governi che controllano formalmente il processo di nomina in seno al Consiglio. Certamente questa proposta non porterebbe a un sistema di partito transnazionale completamente sviluppato, tuttavia, considerando gli attuali limiti istituzionali e visto che è improbabile che nel prossimo futuro si realizzi una riforma istituzionale attraverso un nuovo trattato, essa arriverebbe tanto vicina a questo obiettivo quanto è attualmente possibile.

## 2. Riassunto dello studio

Mentre è possibile concepire la nascita di partiti transnazionali, la nascita di un *sistema* di partito transazionale è invece più problematica.

Il peso dei contesti politici nazionali sulle strategie organizzative e sugli stili di competizione dei partiti può rappresentare un ostacolo alla nascita di partiti transnazionali.

Malgrado il pensare comune, una riforma della legge elettorale per le elezioni del PE può non essere utile all'emergere di un sistema partitico transazionale.

L'attuale quadro normativo dei partiti politici europei continua a favorire i gruppi politici del PE e i partiti a livello nazionale.

Un sistema di finanziamento e di regolamentazione forte a livello europeo potrebbe contribuire a promuovere la convergenza verso partiti transnazionali.

La creazione di una struttura di competizione politica a livello europeo è una condizione necessaria per sostenere l'istituzionalizzazione di un vero sistema di partito transazionale.

La competizione per il controllo di un esecutivo politico transazionale costituirebbe un incentivo fondamentale a livello istituzionale per lo sviluppo di un sistema partitico transazionale.

In assenza di un sistema di competizione per il controllo di un esecutivo politico transazionale, e pur mantenendo l'attuale situazione istituzionale, esistono varie attività per la costituzione di partiti aperte ai partiti transnazionali che possono contribuire a costruirne l'immagine.

### 1.

Nella prospettiva della democrazia europea, gruppi politici omogenei sono cruciali per fornire agli elettori europei una base programmatica significativa.

Il requisito delle "affinità politiche" per formare un gruppo costituisce una condizione necessaria ma non sufficiente per garantire che i raggruppamenti transnazionali rappresentino culture politiche coerenti.

L'impatto dell'"allargamento big bang" sulla coesione e l'agenda politica dei gruppi politici è stato abbastanza limitato.

I principali gruppi politici hanno posizioni coese e ben riconducibili alle politiche di sinistra o di destra, mentre tra i gruppi più piccoli solo l'EFD rivela una mancanza di affinità ideologica.

## 2.

Dato che il processo di selezione dei candidati è una delle funzioni fondamentali dei partiti politici, la mancanza di uniformità all'interno delle famiglie politiche può costituire un ostacolo a un'efficace transnazionalizzazione.

Tanto più la selezione dei candidati è decentralizzata e inclusiva, tanto maggiore è la possibilità per i deputati europei di votare in accordo con il loro gruppo politico del PE, piuttosto che con il loro partito nazionale.

Le procedure più comuni adottate per la selezione dei deputati candidati si basano sul ruolo dell'esecutivo di partito e del congresso di partito, con oltre l'86% delle proposte complessive presentato a livello nazionale.

## 3.

La grande varietà di partiti a livello nazionale può costituire un ostacolo per lo sviluppo di un singolo sistema partitico dell'UE.

La presenza di due o anche più partiti politici nazionali all'interno dello stesso gruppo del PE ostacola lo sviluppo di un sistema di partito dell'UE.

La tendenza di molti partiti nazionali a considerare la propria appartenenza a gruppi del PE solo in termini tecnici indebolisce il processo di creazione di partiti a livello transnazionale.

Il fatto che tutti i maggiori europartiti sono soggetti allo stesso regime giuridico può favorire lo sviluppo di un sistema partitico dell'UE.

La creazione di un sistema di partito transnazionale è condizionata dalle differenze di cultura elettorale e politica e dalla percezione delle elezioni del PE quali competizioni di secondo ordine.

## 4.

La circoscrizione elettorale transnazionale proposta potrebbe favorire una più stretta cooperazione a livello UE promuovendo autentiche campagne transnazionali e programmi di partito a livello UE.

Il voto di preferenza, se attuato a livello UE, potrebbe avere un impatto positivo sullo sviluppo dei partiti politici a livello europeo.

Un forte sistema di finanziamento dei partiti a livello UE potrebbe promuovere la convergenza organizzativa e quindi la creazione di partiti a livello transnazionale.

Nonostante gli incentivi positivi forniti dal regolamento (CE) n. 2004/2003, i partiti politici a livello europeo rimangono subordinati alle loro componenti nazionali e ai gruppi del PE.

### **Conclusioni principali**

Lo sviluppo di partiti transnazionali è una condizione necessaria ma non sufficiente per lo sviluppo di un sistema partitico transnazionale.

Il problema della creazione di un sistema di partito a livello UE è di natura istituzionale, dato che il processo è ostacolato dalla mancanza di competizione tra i partiti per il controllo dell'esecutivo.

Potrebbe nascere una vera e propria competizione partitica transnazionale qualora future riforme istituzionali modificassero il trattato.

Una conseguenza positiva della mancanza delle funzioni di controllo dell'esecutivo è che i partiti al PE sembrano essere maggiormente in grado di dare voce alle opinioni dei cittadini europei.

Considerato l'attuale quadro istituzionale, il ruolo dei partiti politici a livello europeo potrebbe essere rafforzato attraverso attività quali il coinvolgimento nell'Iniziativa dei cittadini europei, il coordinamento delle reazioni dei parlamenti nell'ambito delle nuove procedure relative alle violazioni del principio di sussidiarietà, la proposta e il sostegno dei propri candidati alla presidenza della Commissione.



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