European Parliament Political Groups and European Political Parties:

Development and relationship between two faces of the EU political system

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### 1. Introduction: the party system at EU level

Political parties have been important actors of the European integration. As soon as the borders between European countries have become more porous, the relations amongst national parties of similar political orientation have become stronger. This process has led to the creation of several organisations at the European level, of which the most relevant are the Political Groups in the European Parliament (EPPGs) and the European Political Parties (EuPPs), formerly known as Political Parties at the European Level (PPELs). These structures have progressively increased their resources, becoming less dependent, functionally and politically, from the national parties. Most of the literature has concentred its efforts in analysing the Europeanisation of the national political parties, while few have been devoted to analyse the tensions between the national actors and the European actors and practically no effort has been done to study the relations between the two Euro-level party organisations.

According to Bardi (2006), the Richard Katz's and Peter Mair's (1993) three-face scheme[1] can be analytically applied to study party politics also at the European level, where the Party in Public Office is represented by European Parliament Political Groups and the Party in Central Office by the European Political Parties. The main difference is that at the European Level the Party on the Ground is usually represented national parties, rather than by individual members. The relations between these three faces then would be the "Europarty", here used to indicate the comprehensive structure of the European party system, as elaborated by Figure 1.

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[1] Political parties can be studied dividing their organisation in three different faces: the Party in Public Office (PPO), the Party in Central Office (PCO), the Party on the Ground (PoG).

Figure 1: the Europarty structure as the three faces of party organization
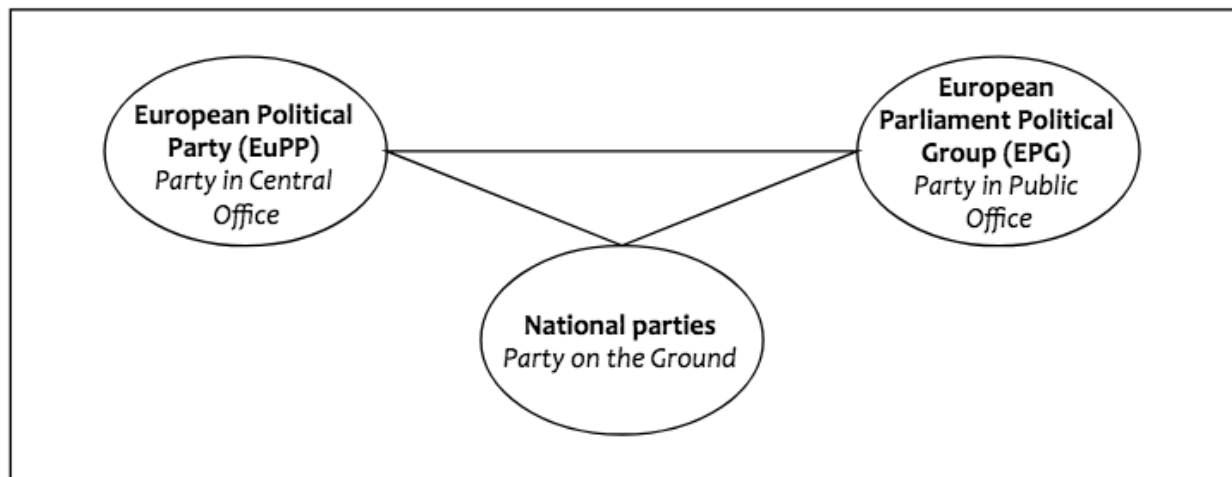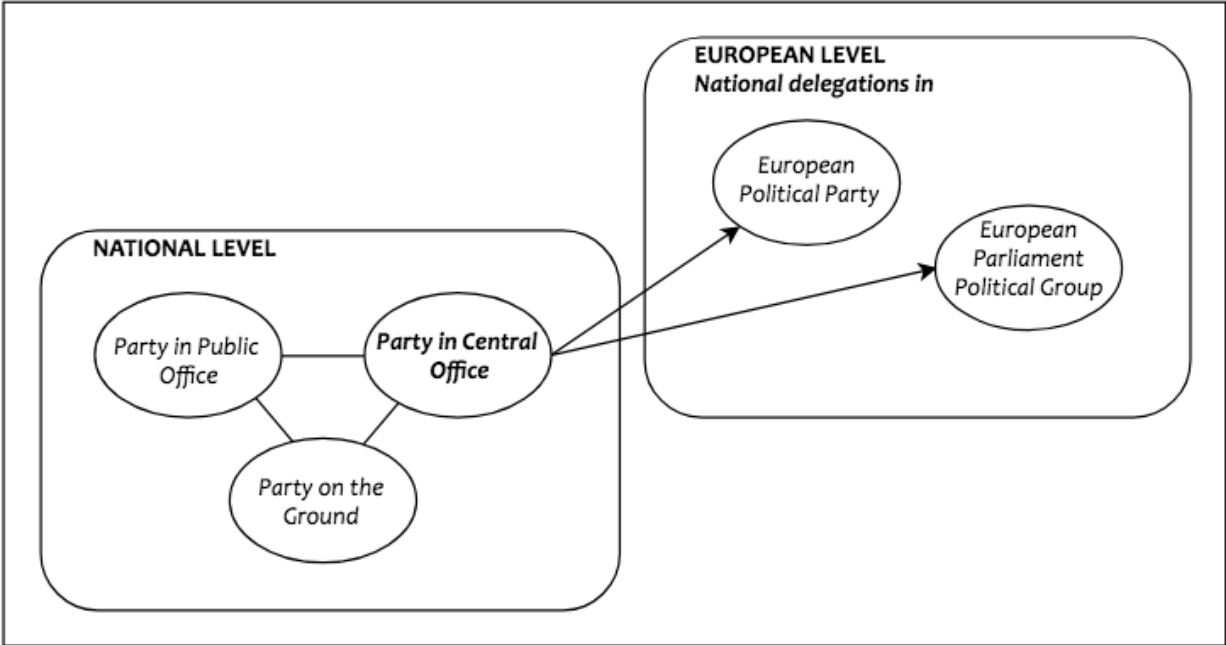

Source: Calossi (2016, 26)

This model is useful to study the level of integration of the three faces for those European political families that consider the European integration as a long-term objective and a not-reversible process, such as the Christian-Democrats/People's Party, the Socialists, the Liberals or the Greens. According to this perspective the full integration between the three faces is an objective of political actors. In addition, for those political parties that advocate to the evolution of the European Union in a quasi-statual entity, the three-face scheme, useful to study the national parties, should be used simply to analyse at what extent European parties have become more similar to national parties.

Many European political actors do not agree with this pro-integration perspective: for them, the European integration should be slowed down (according to a Eurosceptical, Euro-Realist or Euro-Critical perspective), or even completely reversed (Anti-European perspective). Amongst this diverse *congerie* of parties, many seek however forms of cooperation at the European level. The alliances of those parties do not function as and neither aim at functioning as national parties do. Therefore, they cannot be analysed through conceptual models that have been created in order to analyse national parties, such as the Katz and Mair's one. In these cases, it would be more useful to interpret the European level of party activities as a European face (the "*fourth face*") of national party organisation (Sozzi 2011). According to this model, national parties rather than being a face of the Europarty (the PoG) are still at the heart of the EU political system; on the contrary,

the European structures are merely a weak and dependent face of the national party (Figure 2).

Figure 2: the European dimension as the "fourth face" of party organization

2. The development of the euro-party structure

From a historical perspective, the extra-parliamentarian cooperation amongst political parties begun even before that in the European institutions. In fact, the first transnational associations of political parties were external to the institutions. These so-called "internationals" allowed socialist parties, until the First World War usually opposition parties, to coordinate their activities with sister parties, while the bourgeois counterparts, which were ruling parties, could do that through institutional and official diplomatic channels. Thus, the first partisan transnational association was the Second International (also known as Socialist International) in 1889. Communist parties established their own International in 1919. Later, other political movements, as a consequence of the more general organisational "contagion from the left" (Duverger 1953), formed their own political Internationals. Among the most relevant, there were the International Secretariat of Democratic Parties of Christian Inspiration (formed in in 1925 and become the Christian

Democrat World Union in 1961), the Liberal International (in 1947), the International Democrat Union (in 1983), and finally the Global Greens (in 2001). So, also before the establishment of the European Community at least four political families already had their own International. However, even if the majority of the member parties of the Internationals were European, the European integration was at the centre of their interests and activities. So, if we limit our scope to a purely European scenario, we have to notice that during the first phase of the integration the only supranational structures active in Europe were the political groups inside the Parliamentary assembly of the European Community.

2.1. The European Parliament Political Groups

It was only after the establishment of the European Coal and Steel Community (ECSC) that European parties began to cooperate within the European space through specific European organizations. Already in 1953, the ECSC Common Assembly decided to regroup its members along ideological lines, rather than by nationality, thus being the first European institution that saw the emergence of transnational cooperation amongst European national political parties (Marquand 1979).

Through the years, two concurrent processes, the widening and the strengthening of the EP, have characterized its evolution (Hix *et al*. 2007). Concerning the widening, this has happened both for the number of the Members of the European Parliament (MEPs) and for the number of political groups. About the former, the first elected EP had only 410 members. In 1980, 24 new MEPs arrived from the 10th MS (Greece). Its size reached 518 members after the 1986 enlargement and 567 after the German reunification. Quota 626 was reached after the Nordic enlargement in 1995. After the two phases of the "Big Enlargement", MEPs became 736, even if it reached temporarily the maximum of 785 until the 2009 EP elections. In 2007, the Lisbon treaty fixed the number to 750, which will become 705 starting from the after-Brexit 2019–2024 legislature[2]. Concerning the number of political groups, their increasing was due both to the entrance into the EP of national

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[2]   http://www.europarl.europa.eu/sides/getDoc.do?language=en&type=IM-PRESS&reference=20080226BKG22350 #title3 (accessed 28 February 2019).

parties with political backgrounds different from those of the original three political families (as it was the case with the Gaullists from France and the Conservatives from the UK), and for the abandonment of the anti-European stance of some political families (as it was the case of the communist parties, which sent their MEPs to the EP only in the early seventies). Tables 1 and 2 show the evolution of the EP group linked to the corresponding party family.

Table 1: Evolution of groups in the European Parliament (1/2)

Spiritual Family	Name of Group				
	Before 1979	**1979**	**1984**	**1989**	**1994**
Christian Democrats	Christian Democrat	European People's Party (EPP)			European People's Party and European Democrats (EPP-ED)
Social Democrats	Socialist				European Socialist Party
Liberals	Liberal and Democrat			Liberal Democrat and Riformist	ELDR/ Radical European Alliance (REA)
Conservatives	European Conservative	European Democrats			EPP-ED / Forza Europa
Left	Communists and Allies			Gauche Unitaire Européenne / Coalition des Gauches	Gauche Unitaire Européenne - Nordic Green Left (GUE/NGL)
Nationalists	European Progressive Democrats		European Democratic Alliance (EDA) / European Right (ER)		EDA
Greens	.	.	Rainbow	Greens	Greens
Regionalists	.	.	Rainbow		Radical European Alliance
Euro-sceptics	.	.	.	.	Europe of Nations
Technical Groups	.	Technical of Independents	.	.	.
Groups	6	7	8	10	9

Source: Calossi 2016, 29

Table 2: Evolution of groups in the European Parliament (2/2).

Spiritual Family	Name of Group			
	1999	2004	2009	2014
Christian Democrats	European People's Party and European Democrats (EPP-ED)		European People's Party	
Socialist Democrats	European Socialist Party	Socialist	Progressive Alliance of Socialists and Democrats (S&D)	
Liberals	European Liberal Democratic and Reformist Party (ELDR)	Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe (ALDE)		
Conservatives	EPP-ED		European Conservatives and Reformists (ECR)	
Left	Gauche Unitaire Européenne - Nordic Green Left (GUE/NGL)			
Nationalists	Union for Europe of Nations (UEN)	UEN	.	Europe of Nations and Freedom (ENF)
Greens	Greens – Free European Alliance			
Regionalists	Greens – Free European Alliance			
Euro-sceptics	Europe of Democracies and Diversities	Independence and Democracy	Europe of Freedom and Democracy	Europe of Freedom and Direct Democracy
Technical Groups	Technical of Independents	.	.	.
Groups	8	7	7	8

Source: Calossi 2016, 30

As for the strengthening, since the direct election of its members in 1979, the EP has continuously increased its powers and prerogatives, at the expenses of national legislatures but also of other EU organisms (especially of the Council of Ministers). Many factors incentivize the MEPs to become members of an EPPG, rather than remaining non-attached members. Some stem from the EP's rules and procedures, as well as by the EP's day-to-day functioning. Belonging to one of the main groups of the EP is very important for individual

national party delegations: this helps obtaining material resources and to acquire political advantages, such as the allocation of positions (rapporteurships and chairs) in the EP and its committees (Attinà 1997).

With regards to their internal functioning, at the time of the appointed MEPs (1957-1979), little or no centralization of decision-making powers existed. Later (1979-1987), groups' organization became more complex and internal rules were formalized. In the so-called "law-making EP" (1987-2004), instructions for monitoring MEPs behaviour were also adopted (Bartolini 2005; Kreppel 2002). After the 2004 Big Enlargement, EPP, S&D and ALDE further strengthened their organizational complexity (Bressanelli 2014).

2.2. European Political Parties

If we only consider coordination outside the EP, alliances of national parties at the European level existed even before Regulation 2004/2003, which in 2003 clearly expressed the existence of the Political parties at European Level (PPELs). Although the concrete implementation of direct elections was delayed until 1979, in the seventies the first "Transnational Party Federations" were formed in anticipation to the forth-coming direct elections. This was at the base of pro-European party families' choice to establish supranational structures to deal primarily with the elections or, at least, the coordination of national parties' electoral campaigns. These party organizations were: the Confederation of Socialist parties of the European Community, founded in April 1974, the Federation of Liberal and Democrat parties of the European Communities, established in March 1976, and the "European People's Party - Federation of Christian Democratic parties in the European Community", created in June 1976. The conservative "European Progressive Democrats" and the "Communists and Allies" did not create such extraparliamentary structures (Hanley 2008).

Before the introduction of the funding of the PPELs only other two party families decided to establish their own extraparliamentary organisation: the Greens, which in 1984 established the "European Green Coordination" (EGC), and some regionalist progressive parties, which in October 1994 established the "European Free Alliance" (EFA). The federations seemed therefore to be born as "emanation of the political groups in the

European Parliament, who felt necessary to rely on party organizations present at the European level" (Coosemans 2000). In the same period, nominal changes prepared some federations to become closer to proper political parties. In 1992, the Confederation of Socialist parties got the name of "Party of the European Socialists" (PES); In 1993, the Green Coordination became the "European Federation of Green Parties" (EFGP); in the same year, the Federation of Liberal Democrat and Reform Parties took the name of "European Liberal Democrats and Reformists" (ELDR).

In 2004, the introduction of the public funding to PPELs acted as a stimulus for even Euro-sceptic families to establish their own PPEL. The increase in the number of EuPPs has been paralleled by the expansion of parties' competences: initially limited to solely proposing vague and broad electoral platforms for the European elections, parties have gradually become more important to prepare and train candidates for the EP (Bardi et al. 2010), and even to put forward candidates for the Presidency of the EU Commission, better known as *Spitzenkandidat* (Tab. 3).

Table 3 : European political parties, EP Political Groups and Spitzenkandidaten

Full name European Political Party (EuPP)	Acronym	Year of recognition (dissolution)	Closest EPPG	Spitz. 2014	Spitz. 2019
Party of European Socialists	PES	1974	S&D	M. Schulz	F. Timmermans
European People's Party	EPP	1976	EPP	J.C. Juncker	M. Weber
Alliance of Liberals and Democrats in Europe	ALDE	1976	ALDE	G. Verhofstadt	None
European Green Party	EGP	1984	G-EFA	S. Keller & J. Bové	S. Keller & B. Eickhout
European Free Alliance	EFA	1994	G-EFA	S. Keller & J. Bové	O. Junqueras
European Democratic Party	EDP	2004	ALDE	G. Verhofstadt	None
Party of the European Left	EL	2004	GUE-NGL	A. Tsipras	V. Tomic & N. Cue
Alliance for Europe of the Nations	AEN	2004 (2009)		NA	NA
Europeans United for Democracy	EUD	2006 (2017)	GUE-NGL	None	NA
Alliance of Independent Democrats in Europe	AIDE	2006 (2008)		NA	NA
Alliance of Conservatives and Reformists in Europe	ACRE	2010	ECR	None	J. Zahradil
European Christian Political Movement	ECPM	2010	ECR	None	NA
European Alliance for Freedom	EAF	2011 (2017)	ENF	None	NA
Movement for a Europe of Liberties and Democracy	MELD	2012 (2016)		None	NA
Alliance of European National Movements	AENM	2012 (2017)	ENF	None	NA
Alliance of Direct Democracy in Europe	ADDE	2015 (2017)	EFD[2]	NA	NA
Mouvement pour une Europe des Nations et des Libertés	MENL	2015	ENF	NA	None
Alliance for Peace and Freedom	APF	2016 (2017)	None	NA	NA
Coalition pour la Vie et la Famille	CVF	2017 (2017)	None	NA	NA

Source: Parties' and groups' websites; http://www.europarl.europa.eu/pdf/grants/funding_amounts_parties_01-2019.pdf

3. The relationship between EPPGs and EuPPs

Most authors underline the importance of groups by emphasizing their greater force than the EuPPs (Attiná 1990; Bardi 1994; Hix and Lord 1997; Kreppel 2002; Hix, Noury and Roland 2007; McElroy and Benoit 2010) others have focused on the latter (and previously on federations) emphasizing parties' progressive consolidation and their potential for further development (Hix 1996, 2002; Ladrech 2002, 2007; Bardi and Calossi 2009; Gagatek 2009). However, in the literature there is a general consensus in considering the relation between the two Eurostructures as an unbalanced distribution of resources and responsibilities, with the Groups in a dominant position with respect to the EuPPs (Hanley 2008; Calossi 2011; Bressanelli 2014).[3]

As for the affiliations to these two Eurostructures, they are mutually independent: a national party can have membership of a EuPP without belonging to the corresponding Political Group, or its MEPs can belong to a group without being affiliated to any EuPP.

3.1. Membership overlap

One crucial element of the relationship between these two European structures is therefore the degree of overlap between the EuPP and the EPPG. This can be measured by the percentage of MEPs belonging to the EPPGs who are also members of a national party that is officially registered as a member of the corresponding EuPP[4]. National parties represent the core membership of political groups and EuPPs, even if some of them allow also the individual membership. Tables 4 and 5 show the degree of overlap of EuPPs over EPPGs for the last two legislatures. All EPPGs are taken in consideration; as for the EuPPs, considering the high number of them (some of which are almost unknown, are not politically active and have no or very few elected MEPs), we have considered only those that are composed of at least four "relevant" national political parties. The relevance

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[3] The most appropriate indicator to measure the "strength" of EPPGs is indeed their revealed cohesion in voting (among others, Hix 2002, Cicchi 2016, Bardi et al 2014). However, due to the lack of a similar indicator for EuPPs, we have opted to omit this element.

[4] For instance, the overlap of the Party of European Socialists over the S&D group is measured by the percentage of S&D MEPs who are part of a national party that has membership in the Party of European Socialists

criterion for inclusion is the same of the Euromanifesto project (Braun et al. 2010; Schmitt et al. 2016).

Table 4: EuPPs' overlap with EPPGs, Seventh legislature (2009-2014)

EuPP	MEPs from NPs affiliated to EuPP	EPPG	MEPs belonging to EPPG	Ratio
EPP	263	EPP	265	99.2%
PSE	161	S&D	184	87.5%
ELDR	75	ALDE	84	89.3%
EDP	9			10.7%
EGP	46	G-EFA	55	83.6%
EFA	6			10.9%
EL	24	GUE-NGL	35	68.6%
AECR	54	ECR	55	98.2%
n/a	0	EFD	30	0.0%

Source: authors' own calculation

In the 7th legislature, the four oldest political families had a high level of identification between their EuPP and their own group. With the partial exception of the PES that - due to the Italian PD, at that time not affiliated to the PES - represents only the 88% of MEPs of the S&D group, the People's Party, the Liberals and the alliance between Greens and Regionalists represented more than 90% of their respective groups. Similarly, the ECR group presented a high degree of identification with the European party AECR. On the extreme left the levels of Europeanisation were rather weak, while for the Eurosceptic right they equalled to zero, as there was not a corresponding EuPP to the group Europe of Freedom and Democracy.

Table 5 : EuPPs' overlap with EPPGs, Eight legislature (2014-2019)

EuPP	MEPs from NPs affiliated to EuPP	EPPG	MEPs belonging to EPPG	Ratio
EPP	206	EPP	213	96.7%
PSE	181	S&D	189	95.8%
AECR	55	ECR	73	75.3%
ALDE	50	ALDE	68	73.5%
EDP	7			10.3%
EGP	37	G-EFA	50	74.0%
EFA	7			14.0%
EL	29	GUE-NGL	52	55.8%
MENL	28	ENF	40	70.0%
ADDE	27	EFDD	42	64.3%

Source: authors' own calculation

It is interesting to notice that in the 8th legislature most EuPPs reduce their overlap with their respective EPPGs. In the case of EPP, this is a marginal decrease (from 99% to 96%), in all other cases the reduction is more considerable. AECR, or instance, reduces its overlap with the ECR group from 98% to 75%, due to the entrance at the beginning of the 8th legislature of independent MEPs and others linked to different EuPPs (the European Christian Political Movement and European Free Alliance).[5] The two exceptions from this trend are the already mentioned PES (after the Italian PD joining the PES) and the Eurosceptic EFDD, finally witnessing the creation of a corresponding, full-fledged European political party, which is to be considered as an "emanation" of pre-existing parliamentary group.

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[5] Despite being a member of the EuPP EFA, the Flemish conservative N-VA preferred to join the ECR group rather than the G-EFA group.

3.2.   Balance of organizational strength

So far, we have looked at the development of EPPGs and EuPPs and the formal relationship that exists between them, measured in terms of membership overlap. In this paragraph, we turn our attention to measuring the relationship between the organizational strength of EPPGs and EuPPs. As experts in organization studies maintain, two significant indicators of the strength of organizations are represented by economic and personnel's resources of the organization (Scott 2013). Political parties, seen as organizations, are not alien to this perspective, even if also the membership plays an important role (Katz and Mair 1994; Hix 2002). The case of the party politics at the EU level is, however, different from the national level, as there is not any direct affiliation of ordinary members to groups or EuPPs. Therefore, the availability of funds and staff are the best indicators to make comparison between the two kinds of EU actors.

Figure 5: Aggregate trends in EP funding to EuPPs, EPPGs and foundations at European level (2005-2015)
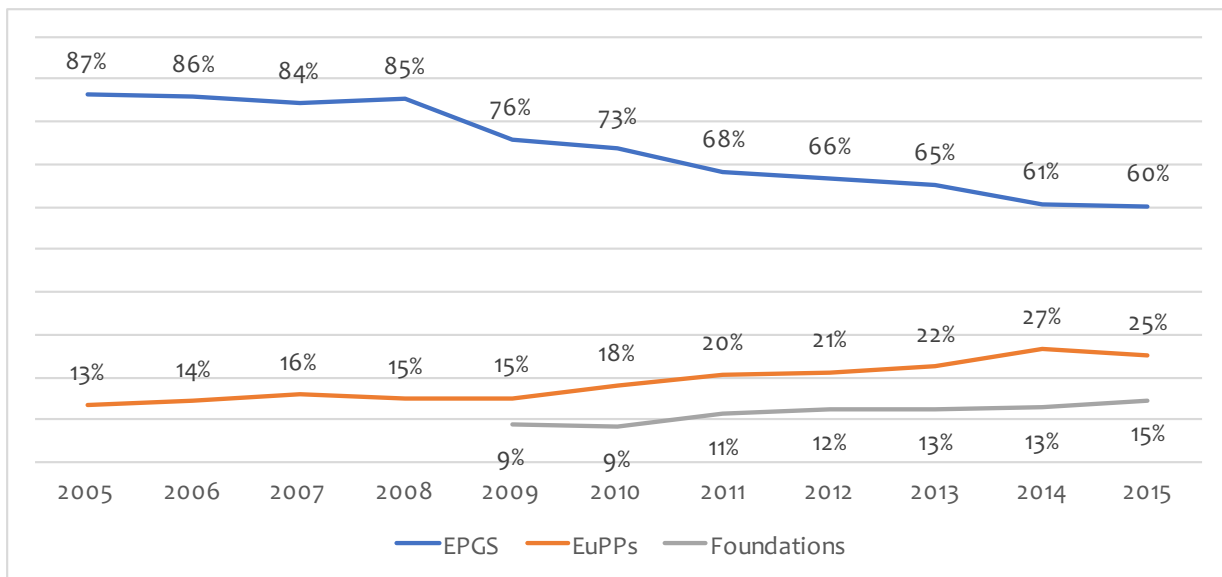
As for the funding, a valid indicator to measure the balance of powers between groups and parties is by comparing the financial resources that come from the European Parliament. The EP funds are up to 85% of EuPPs' expenses: this means EuPPs need to find at least other 15% of their total expenditures, which is usually represented by member parties' fees. The EP funds, thus, are not the only ones political parties collect - but certainly

represent a significant proportion of total revenue. In addition, as the two Eurostructures are funded by the same institution this allows us to understand which of the two is considered by the European institutions as the most important. Figure 5 above also includes the funds which since 2009 have been received also by the political foundations at European level (Bardi et al. 2014; Gagatek and Van Hecke 2011). As it can be seen, in 2005 political groups were receiving the large majority (86%) of funds the EP devolved to partisan activity at the European level. At that time the groups' funds were more than six times higher than those of parties. This amount has decreased significantly in the years due to increase share of funds given to the parties (up to 25%) and to the beginning of funding in 2009 for the political foundations. However, the latest figures show that still the 60% of the funds allocated by the EP are devoted to the political groups. Nowadays these resources are still around two times and half bigger than those received by EuPPs.

Table 5 below shows the disaggregated data and the ratio between EuPPs and EPPGs in terms of economic resources for the two legislatures taken into consideration[6]. As it can be seen, the group always has more economic resources than the party. Not surprisingly, those small European political parties (EPD, EFA), which share the same group with a bigger EuPP, have a particularly high ratio. In line with the trend highlighted by previous figure, it can be noted that all the ratios decrease between the 7th and the 8th legislature. Finally, the Conservative dyad shows a particularly skewed trend (from 11.2 to 3.0).

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[6] For the economic resources, figures considered are those of the first year of the new terms (thus, the 2010 and 2015 official budget), as published by the European Parliament website.

Table 6: Economic resources of EPPGs and EuPPs and ratio, expressed in thousands of €

European Political Parties			European Parliament Groups			Ratio EPPG/EuPP	
	EP7	EP8		EP7	EP8	EP7	EP8
PES	3,395	5,828	S&D	14,011	15,265	4.1	2.6
EPP	4,959	8,053	EPP	19,990	17,439	4.0	2.1
ALDE	1,554	2,093	ALDE	6,262	5,603	4.0	2.7
EPD	424	.				14.7	.
AECR/ACRE	327	1951	ECR	3,648	5,959	11.2	3.0
EGP	1,055	1,665	G-EFA	3,896	4,152	3.7	2.5
EFA	339	635				11.5	6.5
EL	708	1,484	GUE-NGL	2,530	4,304	3.6	2.9
ADDE	.	820	EFDD	.	3,842	.	4.7
MENF	.	400	ENF	.	1,586	.	3.9

Source: authors' elaboration from budget data available on www.europarl.europa.eu

As for the staff[7], even if EuPPs have progressively increased the number of their employees[8], these figures are still very far from those given by the Political Groups, as it can be seen in table 6. In addition, we have to consider that Political Groups can also exploit EP's staff resources for some functions.

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[7] For the staff, data for EP7 comes from Calossi (2014) and refers to 2013, while data for EP8 comes from the official websites of EuPPs and EPPGs, accessed in 2017.

[8] In 1984 the People's, Liberal and Socialist parties had in total 14 employees; in the current legislature they have 77 employees out of a total of 98 for the EuPPs taken into consideration.

Table 7: Staff of EPPGs and EuPPs and ratio

European Political Parties			European Parliament Groups			Ratio EPPG/EuPP	
	EP7	EP8		EP7	EP8	EP7	EP8
PES	25	29	S&D	240	278	9.6	9.6
EPP	28	32	EPP	129	132	4.6	4.1
ALDE	12	16	ALDE	94	95	7.8	5.9
EPD	6	.				15.7	.
AECR/ACRE	3	5	ECR	72	110	24	22
EGP	12	12	G-EFA	80	95	6.7	7.9
EFA	3	4				26.7	23.8
EL	4	5	GUE-NGL	53	81	13.3	16.2
ADDE	.	13	EFDD	.	31	.	2.4
MENF	.	2	ENF	.	n/a	.	n/a

No information on ENF's staff could be retrieved for the current legislature, therefore it has been recorded as "not available" (n/a) and the ratio could not be calculated.

Source: Political Groups' and EuPPs' websites

All EuPPs have staff resources many times less prominent than those of the correspondent political group. In the 7th legislature, the range varied from the People's Party EPPG which has a number of staff employed 4.6 times higher than that of the EPP party, to the Conservative group staff which was 24 times higher than that of AECR. However, at that time AECR was still quite young in comparison with the other parties. Four years later the figures have slightly changed, almost all in the direction of the moderate strengthening of the EuPP in comparison to the EPPGs. The only exceptions to this are represented by the European Left and the European Green Party, that between EP7 and EP8 actually "lost" power in comparison to their corresponding EPPG. In the current legislature, in the Popular family the equilibrium between the party and the group is the less unbalanced, while on the contrary in the Conservative family the group is still by far stronger than the correspondent party, as well as the small EFA party. This is not surprising,

as for a small EuPP that shares the same EPPG with a bigger EuPP, the unbalance is necessarily high.

One final element making EPPGs stronger than the EuPPs that needs to be considered is the presence of stricter requisites for their formation. In details, both for parties and groups there are two qualitative/political criteria ("sharing the same values" or "respecting the EU values") applicants need to match in order to be recognized. In both cases, the control by the European Parliament and the recently established Authority for European Political Parties is not ex-ante but only ex-post, on request of a certain number of other MEPs. Therefore, we can affirm that qualitative criteria are not relevant to limit the establishment of new groups or parties, and the difference between the two processes of recognition must be analysed through the quantitative criteria. For political groups, there is the need of at least 25 MEPs coming from at least one fourth of member states (i.e. seven). For parties, the quantitative criterion is easier to be matched. Parties must have representation from at least one quarter of the Member States (i.e. seven), and one or both of the following: "(a) it must have received at least 3% of the votes cast in each of those Member States at the most recent European Parliament elections (b) or it must already be represented by Members, whether Members of the European Parliament for those states, or Members of the national Parliaments of those states, or Members of the regional Parliaments of those states, or Members of the regional Assemblies of those states". In practice, as minimum criterion, seven regional parliamentarians can form a EuPP.

In conclusion, while one of the main interests of the already established political parties and political groups is to render difficult the recognition of new actors (because new actors would participate in the division of resources given by the Parliament), the fact that EPPGs managed to do this in a more "efficient" way shows at what extent political parties are weaker than political groups in defending their main funding source. Because they are unable to limit the accession of new competitors into the political scene of new recognized (and funded) political parties (Calossi 2014).

4. Conclusions

This chapter focuses on party politics at the EU level, trying to fill some of the existing gaps in literature and empirical research. Even if many studies on the organizational aspects

of the European Parliament Political Groups (EPPGs) and the European Political Parties (EuPPs) have been carried out, literature is still scarce for what concerns the relationship between the two organizations. First of all, we have briefly described the institutionalization route of the EP groups and of the EuPPs (starting from their ancestors, the supranational party federations and the political parties at the European level); the presentation of the trends in funding to the groups, the parties and the so-called Euro-foundations, and in staff composition, which have all been updated to the eighth EP legislature. The blatant result of our analysis it that the European Parliament Political Groups are, from all the point of views (resources, staff, and possibility to limit the establishment of new competitors), stronger the corresponding European Political Parties. This surely still represents a shortcoming that limits the emergence of a proper party system at the European level and weakens the European Democracy.

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