



# More Europe Vs. No Europe: Europarties and Euroscepticism in the 2014 European Elections

Essays by

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## Foreword

In 2013 the Foundation for European Progressive Studies, the Fondazione Italianeuropei and the Rome office of the Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung co-sponsored an international seminar entitled “Democratic Legitimacy and Political Leadership in the European Union. Towards the 2014 European Elections”. On that occasion the discussion, moving from the impact that the economic and political downturn had on the EU citizens’ disenchantment with politics and democracy, both at the national and European levels, focused on the need to politicise the EU dimension and provide the common institutions with that democratic legitimation which they were largely missing.

The discussion focused in particular on two factors that, it was argued, could contribute to the achievement of those goals: the direct election of the President of the European Commission, and the enhancement of the Europarties and the creation of a competitive party system. The underlying assumptions were that only a truly European politics could provide effective answers to the economic and political crisis, that it was necessary to re-establish the primacy of politics over economics, and that one of the problems of the Union was the lack of a real political contention in the European debate and of a genuinely common public sphere. The selection, before the 2014 elections, of a top candidate for the post of President of the Commission by each Europarty has represented an important step in that direction. Moreover, it is a fact that one positive side-effect of the crisis has been the growing awareness of the European citizens that an ever increasing number of decisions are made not in the European capitals but in Brussels.

In 2014 the three foundations agreed that this debate deserved further in-depth analysis. The European people’s disillusionment and dissatisfaction, fuelled by the economic difficulties

that they are still facing and by the inadequacy of the European response, have grown in most EU member states and, as surveys warn, while the electoral turnout will continue to decline – following a constant trend that started in 1979 – the rise of eurosceptic and eurocritical movements and parties seems to be inevitable.

The examination of the wide range of eurosceptical parties, of their different goals, arguments and peculiarities, and of the odds that they will cooperate and establish a common group within the European Parliament was easily chosen, therefore, as one of the topics of the second international seminar, “More Europe Vs. No Europe: Europarties and Euroscepticism on the Eve of the 2014 European Elections”, which has been held on 7 April.

Once again, the need to heighten the EU political dimension and the competition among Europarties was the other main focus of the initiative. Their nature, style and mutual dynamics, the legal changes introduced by the Lisbon Treaty as far as Europarties are concerned, their approach to the European project and, finally, a comparison of their different political manifestos and electoral campaigns were at the centre of the debate.

The results of this seminar and the further analysis made by some of the speakers are now published in the following pages, on the eve of the 2014 European elections, which we expect to be a turning point in the development of European politics and for the future of European integration.

# Eleonora Poli

## Eurosceptic Vs. Europhile Parties: A Scenario of the Next European Parliamentary Elections

### Euroscepticism

On the eve of the European Parliament's elections in May 2014, eurosceptic parties are set to win a large number of seats. Marine Le Pen's call for a pan-eurosceptic group might allow the construction and the functioning of a *de facto* anti-EU coalition and prevent further European integration. Yet, although eurosceptical groups and euroscepticism are not new phenomena, they are rather far from being outdated. Before the mid-1980s no significant political leader had ever defined any of his anti-EU positions as eurosceptic.<sup>1</sup> It was "The Times", on 11 November 1985, that first used the word in reference to the United Kingdom's opposition to an integrated common market.<sup>2</sup> The expression gained further fame in 1988 when Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher used it during her famous "Bruges Speech" at the College d'Europe.<sup>3</sup> Since then, not only the use of the term, but also the strength of eurosceptic groups have continued to grow across Europe.

Generally, euroscepticism has a subjectively constructed nature and its meaning is determined by cultural and regional idiosyncrasies, which may encompass anti-European ideas, europhobic principles or simply disapproval of some European institutions.<sup>4</sup> In other words, opposition to the EU can derive from either a strong scepticism towards the common project as a whole, or it can be embodied in a criticism of the effectiveness of some

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of its institutions.<sup>5</sup> In this respect, eurocriticism might well provide constructive elements for the development of the Union.<sup>6</sup>

First signs of euroscepticism can be traced back to the decline of the “permissive consensus”, which began to dwindle after the ratification of the Maastricht Treaty, when the European Union increased its ambitions for major political integration.<sup>7</sup> Furthermore, the decision by French and Dutch voters to reject the European Constitution in 2005 together with the refusal by the Irish to ratify the Lisbon Treaty in 2008 were also symptomatic of a deeper malcontent towards the European project. The Lisbon Treaty, indeed, led to an exceptional increase of anti-EU resentments as its detractors accused the European Union of promoting further integration without enforcing an adequate check and balance system at national, regional and local levels.<sup>8</sup> Although in the past twenty years euroscepticism has been blooming, what boosted the phenomenon was undoubtedly the rise of an unprecedented Eurozone crisis, which, since 2010, brought an already crippled European legitimacy to its knees. In the past, the EU overcame the oil crises of the 1970s thanks to a renovated system, a neoliberal economic model forged on a European custom-made shape, which allowed an opening of the market together with the maintenance of some of the golden age’s welfare services. At the time, the necessity to fight the loss of competitiveness and face globalisation rallied consensus around a stronger European economic integration<sup>9</sup> and ended up in the promotion of the Single Market. Nowadays, a general consensus over further European integration seems far from achievable, particularly since Brussels’ political economic recipes for the crisis resulted in the implementation of stricter austerity policies. Plans as the Fiscal Compact, Six Pack, Two Pack and banking union engendered a widespread feeling that the EU is actually taking more care of the banking and fiscal systems’ pockets than of those of its citizens. Since the EU bases part of

its legitimacy upon social consensus, the incapacity to tackle the recession by taking into consideration also the needs of the European people has promptly de-legitimised its institutions. The above mentioned incapacity has generated an attitude of disenchantment towards any postulation of a further political and economic integration.<sup>10</sup> This, in turn, has boosted the well known eurosceptic movements, which are using several anti-EU populist discourses to raise electoral support especially in view of the next European elections.

### Eurosceptic parties in Western Europe

The last European Parliamentary elections resulted both in a diminished popular turnout (from 45.5% to 42.9%) and in the ascent of parties holding rather sceptical or critical positions towards the EU.<sup>11</sup> Nowadays, the plot appears to be more challenging, since 69% of Europeans do not trust the EU institutions and 49% do not hold optimistic opinions regarding its future.<sup>12</sup> In this diverse and widening eurosceptic *humus*, anti-establishment parties, from being fringe movements, might take up to 25% of the European Parliament's seats, gaining enough support to play a relevant role in shaping the content of future common policies.<sup>13</sup>

Due to their substantial anti-EU ideas and geographical position, the United Kingdom Independence Party (UKIP) in the UK, Marine Le Pen's Front National (FN) in France, the Party of Freedom (Partij voor de Vrijheid, PVV) in the Netherlands, the True Finns Party (Perussuomalaiset, PS) in Finland, the Alternative for Germany (AfD) and Beppe Grillo's 5-Star Movement (M5S) in Italy are among the most representative movements to analyse. They are all Western European soft populist groups, or as Daniel Smilov and Ivan Krastev put it, they are not expressly antidemocratic. On the contrary, their anti-establishment leaders are asking for more direct democratic means at both the na-

tional and European level.<sup>14</sup> However, unlike UKIP, FN and PVV, which are mainstream eurosceptic parties, running to dismantle the EU, True Finns, Alternative for Germany and M5S are eurocritical protest parties, whose support stems from both electorates' refusal to vote for traditional parties and the conviction that it is necessary to change rather than radically dismantle the EU. In other words, within the eurosceptic wave, but differently from the above mainstream eurosceptic parties, these political groups disapprove the effectiveness of the European institutions, but not the value of the European project *per se*. Nevertheless this distinction may not be relevant enough to prevent them from developing a coalition. For instance, eurosceptic UKIP – which is expected to get 26% of the British votes – and eurocritical True Finns – whose electoral support is set around 16% (2 seats)<sup>15</sup> – have been represented during the last EP legislature by the Europe of Freedom and Democracy group (EFD).

Not all these parties are well established political actors in the European Parliament. For instance, Movimento 5 Stelle, which is supposed to gather from 21 to 25% of the Italian votes,<sup>16</sup> and Alternative for Germany, which, according to German surveys, might score a support of 7% in May European Parliament elections,<sup>17</sup> are new loose cannons in the political arena and might contribute to destabilise the already fragile European political stability. Moreover, the EU has also to take into account the resurgence of the far right French FN and the empowerment of the Dutch PVV. Recent polls have underlined that FN will gain approximately 20-23% of the French votes,<sup>18</sup> and consequently will receive 18 seats in the EP. In terms of growth, this is an extremely worrying trend considering the 6.3% support won by FN in 2009 when it obtained only 3 seats.<sup>19</sup> Similarly, PVV has been credited by opinion polls with 17% to 19% of voting intentions.<sup>20</sup> Those two parties, together with the Austrian Freedom Party (FPÖ), Belgian Vlaams Belang (VB) and Swedish De-

mocrats (SD), are indeed trying to create a coalition (the European Alliance for Freedom, EAF) meeting the two legal thresholds for forming a group at the EP (normally a group must have 25 MEPs from at least 7 member states).<sup>21</sup> Such a coalition, together with other eurosceptic movements, could have the potential to transform both EU policies and politics inside the EU.<sup>22</sup> Still, there are deep ideological differences among eurosceptic/eurocritic parties that must be taken into consideration. For instance, although anti-Euro discourses are the ace in the sleeve of its political propaganda, Movimento 5 Stelle, whose programme is more left-leaning, considers itself neither a right- nor a left-wing party; it is rather an association with a “non-statute”. This will probably hinder any deeper alliance with other radical eurosceptic movements. Even among right-wing parties, the lack of a harmonised eurosceptic agenda might fragment their voting strength and jeopardise any attempt to dismantle pro-European initiatives. On the one hand, Le Pen has distanced herself from European neo-nazi/neo-fascist parties such as the Greek Golden Dawn and the Hungarian Jobbik; on the other, True Finns and UKIP refused to join Le Pen’s alliance because, by holding anti-semitic and anti-gay positions, FN is considered by the latter to be too chauvinistic and racist.<sup>23</sup> Then, a possible AfD cooperation with UKIP might be undermined by the British party’s populist rhetoric and anti-immigration stance.<sup>24</sup> Anti-establishment parties’ opposition to the EU can be defined across some core concerns, mainly focused on national identity, immigration, sovereignty and political economic needs. These four axes can be useful to identify the main ideological characteristics and peculiarities of the above mentioned parties and verify the chance for a widespread collaboration among them. For instance, political campaigns based upon conflicting conceptions of nationalism or self-differentiation from the EU might well hinder greater cooperation.<sup>25</sup> In this respect, in the UK, where part of the very essence of Britishness is euroscepticism,

UKIP's propaganda is backed by a rather widespread British cultural, political and historical self-differentiation from the continent, whose policies are perceived as a hegemonic *diktat*. Even Churchill, who still was one of the promoters of the creation of a European Community, maintained that the British will always choose the wild open sea over Europe.<sup>26</sup> To some extent, the position of the Italian 5-Star Movement is similar to that of UKIP, because the EU austerity measures are depicted as a German imperialistic intervention by M5S.<sup>27</sup> Nevertheless, M5S and AfD's nationalist discourse is constructed more upon the civic need to protect workers and common citizens, rather than on ethnic and cultural idiosyncrasies. Differently, French FN nationalism, as in the cases of Dutch PVV or True Finns, is established upon an ethnocentric attitude. However, according to the vision of FN, this is coupled with the need for France to regain its progressively diluted political and cultural influence over Europe.<sup>28</sup> On the contrary, PVV and True Finns' nationalism is rather based on economic needs and hostility to outsiders than on an idealised version of national identity.<sup>29</sup> Immigration is the second most important issue where anti-EU political campaigns show great divergences. Generally, True Finns, like almost all other eurosceptic parties, accuse the EU of having porous borders, which has caused the rise of immigration, deemed responsible for negatively affecting national economies.<sup>30</sup> Vis-à-vis this issue, French FN has not only suggested to reintroduce tighter border controls as a means of curbing "illegal" immigration, but also to punish anti-French "racism" with criminal charges.<sup>31</sup> In other words, immigration is interpreted not only as a threat to national political economic stability, but also as a challenge to the national culture because it generates discrimination against "real" French people. Immigration in the UK is indicted by UKIP to have brought about 600,000 economically-inactive Eastern Europeans in Britain.<sup>32</sup> However, UKIP's anti-immigration campaigns are based on eco-

conomic calculations and mostly on the opposition to the prospect of a “United States of Europe”.<sup>33</sup> Differently, the 5-Star Movement does not mention immigration in its EU political manifesto, which is however rather limited.<sup>34</sup> AfD, instead, calls for a reform of the immigration legislation, allowing the entry into Germany for skilled workers, who are willing to integrate.<sup>35</sup>

However, the above mentioned differences might well appear quite feeble, as in general all these parties are asking for a more or less radical renegotiation of the EU’s institutional asset to boost national sovereignties.<sup>36</sup> In this respects, UKIP argues that the UK has to regain control over its national democratic constituencies in opposition to the *communautaire* approach, which allows unelected bureaucrats to decide over national institutional establishment.<sup>37</sup> Similarly, M5S asserts that the loss of sovereignty has been aggravated by the lack of democratic means, which excludes Italian citizens from direct participation in the formulation of the economic and political decisions made in Brussels.<sup>38</sup> Likewise, True Finns sustain that all Treaties transferring national sovereignty to the European Union should undergo a national referendum.<sup>39</sup> Then, PVV, together with AfD and FN, believes in a transparent and less bureaucratic Europe, where full budgetary and legislative powers are kept at national level.<sup>40</sup> Thus, the perceived lack of democracy and weakened States sovereignty could be a common denominator for these parties, which might as well allow their pragmatic leaders, willing to yield power, to compromise and pay less attention to ideological differences.

Nonetheless, decisions related to economic policies might hamper any chance for collaboration. Indeed, postulating that the withdrawal from the EU or the dismantling of its assets might eventually be achieved through a process of institutional economic reforms, those parties will hardly be able to shape a common exit strategy because their monetary and economic recipes appear to be rather different. Moreover, the extent of economic

globalisation entails the need to overcome the current recession through harmonised and shared paths. In this respect, anti-establishment movements may be prevented from translating their opposite and radical economic proposals into real policy-making.

For instance, some of those parties, such as FN, UKIP, AfD and PVV, would like the EU to be a free trade association. In this respect, UKIP together with PVV are in favour of free-market neo-liberal policies with minimal government intervention to boost national economies.<sup>41</sup> On the contrary, the French National Front promotes anti-liberal economic ideas based on forms of protectionism, high economic patriotism and welfare chauvinism.<sup>42</sup> AfD, instead, depicts a socioeconomic model built upon greater cooperation between national states and citizens. Similarly, M5S or True Finns, holding more eurocritical, rather than eurosceptical stances, would not disagree on a sort of political economic union, provided that more direct democratic means are set up for citizens. M5S and True Finns are asking for more state investments over national economies and M5S is also campaigning for a referendum on the Euro, the abolition of the Fiscal Compact and the balanced budget clause.<sup>43</sup>

Moreover, divergences between the Northern European anti-establishment parties, representing rather wealthy countries, and southern groups, confronted by the EU austerity policy, may also undermine the possibility for any political coalition over economic policies.<sup>44</sup> For instance, PVV, UKIP, AfD and True Finns maintain that the EU has allowed Southern and Eastern European countries to tap into their national prosperity.<sup>45</sup> FN, instead, believes that austerity policies are formulated to meet the standards set by Germany. Finally, M5S is supporting the creation of a Mediterranean league where a common policy on innovation and new productive activities will be promoted.<sup>46</sup> Apart from different eurosceptic identities, discrepant economic strategies and more or less democratic paths to acquire them,

radical parties' incapacity to form a strong union is already visible in the European Parliament. For instance, EFD's internal cohesion rate for 2009-2014 was 48.97%<sup>47</sup> and newly established EAF's statute underlines that «parties might not necessarily subscribe to the politics and beliefs of other members of the Alliance».<sup>48</sup>

Hence, although eurosceptic groups will probably acquire a greater nominal power (25%), which may be especially useful in the EP committees, when smaller groups of MEPs shall discuss and draft legislative procedures,<sup>49</sup> their effective influence might be inferior to what is expected. Indeed, the different ideological nature of their nationalist discourses and the way they handle sovereignty loss push them to fight against the EU in more or less radical manners. Moreover, parties' extreme focus on their countries' economic interests might prevent them from finding a common ground on economic and fiscal policies. That is because they are also blaming each other's country for the deepening of the recession.

On the other hand, scenarios depicting a catastrophic European dismantling might well lead mainstream parties to collaborate more for the European cause, making any anti-EU proposals hardly successful. Already during the 7<sup>th</sup> EP legislature, the lack of an absolute majority led mainstream parliamentary groups such as EPP, S&D, Greens and ALDE to averagely cooperate 71.5% of the time while debating over legislative issues.<sup>50</sup> Particularly, ALDE (which will probably gain 66 seats)<sup>51</sup> and EPP normally agreed on economic and monetary affairs (90.57%).<sup>52</sup> EPP and S&D, which are believed to respectively win 217 and 208 seats,<sup>53</sup> combined their forces when facing agricultural issues (81.22%).<sup>54</sup> Moreover, their members have been very disciplined in voting according to the general political line settled by their groups (Greens 94.61%, S&D 91.65%, Alde 88.25%, EPP 92.50%).<sup>55</sup> Although cohesion among europhile parties had a random trend and its depth depended on the policy area dis-

cussed, still it was very much relevant. Indeed, in the aftermath of the Lisbon Treaty and the Eurozone crisis, the European Parliament had the chance to enforce a deeper political economic union, which was unimaginable years ago.

## Conclusions

In conclusion, the rise of eurosceptic parties might well not result in the failure of the European integration project. The above mentioned parties have not only ideological but also programmatic divergences, which might prevent them from forming an effective anti-EU coalition, or at least to collaborate. This is very much relevant considering that parties inside the same coalition might not share an equivalent understanding of what the EU should become and which economic reforms should be implemented. On the contrary, the current anti-EU wave may boost a greater cooperation among those mainstream political actors who are committed to the European project.<sup>56</sup> Fear of new radical forces might push traditional parties to find more room for mutual compromises. The enforcement of EU policies, fostering deeper and wider cooperation, common economic growth and thus social welfare, might well undermine populist anti-EU movements' strength. Indeed, as Samuel Huntington suggests, political campaigns postulating radical changes, which are very much abused by anti-establishment movements, are effective only when social dissatisfaction is not appeased.<sup>57</sup>

## NOTES

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<sup>8</sup> L. K. Topaloff, *op. cit.*, p. 19

<sup>9</sup> P. M. Egan, *Constructing a European Market: Standards, Regulation and Governance*, Oxford University Press, Oxford and New York 2001, p. 3.

<sup>10</sup> T. Dokos et al., *op. cit.*, p. 33.

<sup>11</sup> European Parliament's data, *Turnout at the European Elections (1979-2009)*, available on [www.europarl.europa.eu/aboutparliament/en/000cdcd9d4/Turnout-\(1979-2009\).html](http://www.europarl.europa.eu/aboutparliament/en/000cdcd9d4/Turnout-(1979-2009).html); B. Stråth, *Cleaning Up after European Identity. The Consequence of a Failed Political Strategy*, in R. McMahon (ed.), *Post-identity? Culture and European Integration*, Routledge, New York 2013, pp. 106-21.

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<sup>27</sup> See D. Halikiopoulou, K. Nanou, S. Vasilopoulou, *The Paradox of Nationalism: The Common Denominator of Radical Right and Radical Left Euroscepticism*, in "European Journal of Political Research", 4/2012, p. 507.

<sup>28</sup> L. K. Topaloff, *op. cit.*

<sup>29</sup> J. Worth, *The True Finns Followed a Well-known Recipe for Success*, in “The Guardian”, 21 April 2011 available on [www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2011/apr/21/true-finns-nationalist-populists-european-parties](http://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2011/apr/21/true-finns-nationalist-populists-european-parties); A. Van Brugen, *The Rise of Dutch Neo-Nationalism: Three Explanations for the Recent Upsurge in Nationalist Mobilization*, in “The Yale Review of International Studies”, available on [yris.yira.org/essays/311](http://yris.yira.org/essays/311); D. Arter, *op. cit.*, p. 502.

<sup>30</sup> D. Almeida, *Europeanized Eurosceptics? Radical Right Parties and European Integration*, in “Perspectives on European Politics and Society”, 3/2011, p. 241; J. A. J. Evans, *Contrasting Attitudinal Bases to Euroscepticism amongst the French Electorate*, in “Electoral Studies”, 1/2000, pp. 539-61; A. Mammone, E. Godin, B. Jenkin (eds.), *Varieties of Right-wing Extremism in Europe*, Routledge, London and New York 2013, p. 87; C. Mars, *The Rise of Right-wing Populism in Finland: The True Finns*, in “Transform”, 8/2011, available on [transform-net-work.net/journal/issue-082011/news/detail/Journal/the-rise-of-right-wing-populism-in-finland-the-true-finns.html](http://transform-net-work.net/journal/issue-082011/news/detail/Journal/the-rise-of-right-wing-populism-in-finland-the-true-finns.html).

<sup>31</sup> J. A. J. Evans, *op. cit.*

<sup>32</sup> European Parliament, *16. EU Citizens’ Mobility and Member States’ Welfare Systems* (Debate), Strasbourg, 22 October 2013, [www.europarl.europa.eu/sides/getDoc.do?pubRef=-//EP//TEXT+CRE+20131022+ITEM-016+DOC+XML+V0//EN&language=EN&query=INTERV&detail=2-554-000](http://www.europarl.europa.eu/sides/getDoc.do?pubRef=-//EP//TEXT+CRE+20131022+ITEM-016+DOC+XML+V0//EN&language=EN&query=INTERV&detail=2-554-000).

<sup>33</sup> European Parliament, *5. Programme of Activities of the Greek Presidency* (Debate), Strasbourg, 15 January 2014, [www.europarl.europa.eu/sides/getDoc.do?pubRef=-//EP//TEXT+CRE+20140115+ITEM-005+DOC+XML+V0//EN&language=EN&query=INTERV&detail=3-019-000](http://www.europarl.europa.eu/sides/getDoc.do?pubRef=-//EP//TEXT+CRE+20140115+ITEM-005+DOC+XML+V0//EN&language=EN&query=INTERV&detail=3-019-000).

<sup>34</sup> See [www.unita.it/polopoly\\_fs/1.542813.1388753545!/menu/standard/file/7punti.pdf](http://www.unita.it/polopoly_fs/1.542813.1388753545!/menu/standard/file/7punti.pdf).

<sup>35</sup> See [afd-berlin.eu/wp](http://afd-berlin.eu/wp).

<sup>36</sup> M. Le Pen, *Mon projet pour la France et les Français*, 2012, available on [www.frontnational.com/pdf/projet\\_mlp2012.pdf](http://www.frontnational.com/pdf/projet_mlp2012.pdf).

<sup>37</sup> S. Wilks, *Britain and Europe: An Awkward Partner or an Awkward State?*, in “Politics”, 3/1996, pp. 159-65.

<sup>38</sup> T. Dokos et al., *op. cit.*

<sup>39</sup> T. Raunio, T. Tiilikainen, *Finland in the European Union*, Frank Cass, London 2013, p. 50.

<sup>40</sup> See the Party's manifesto at [www.pvv.nl/images/stories/verkiezingen2012/VerkiezingsProgramma-PVV-2012-final-web.pdf](http://www.pvv.nl/images/stories/verkiezingen2012/VerkiezingsProgramma-PVV-2012-final-web.pdf) and [www.pvv.nl/index.php/visie/verkiezingsprogramma-2012.html](http://www.pvv.nl/index.php/visie/verkiezingsprogramma-2012.html).

<sup>41</sup> P. Lisiewicz, *British Euroscepticism. A View from a Classical Liberal in New Europe*, in "Economic Affairs", 3/2007, pp. 96-98.

<sup>42</sup> A. Mammone, E. Godin, B. Jenkin (eds.), *op. cit.*; [www.frontnational.com/2014/02/rapport-annuel-de-la-cour-des-comptes-lechec-de-leurosterite](http://www.frontnational.com/2014/02/rapport-annuel-de-la-cour-des-comptes-lechec-de-leurosterite); J. A. J. Evans, *op. cit.*

<sup>43</sup> L. Mancuso, *Elezioni europee 2014: il programma del Movimento 5 Stelle*, in "Blasting News", 10 February 2014, available on [news.supermoney.eu/politica/2014/02/elezioni-europee-2014-il-programma-del-movimento-5-stelle-0063413.html](http://news.supermoney.eu/politica/2014/02/elezioni-europee-2014-il-programma-del-movimento-5-stelle-0063413.html).

<sup>44</sup> *Brussels' Fear of the True Finns: Rise of Populist Parties Pushes Europe to the Right*, in "Spiegel Online International", 25 April 2011, available on [www.spiegel.de/international/europe/brussels-fear-of-the-true-finns-rise-of-populist-parties-pushes-europe-to-the-right-a-758883.html](http://www.spiegel.de/international/europe/brussels-fear-of-the-true-finns-rise-of-populist-parties-pushes-europe-to-the-right-a-758883.html).

<sup>45</sup> See the PVV's manifesto.

<sup>46</sup> L. Mancuso, *op. cit.*

<sup>47</sup> See [www.votewatch.eu/en/political-group-cohesion.html](http://www.votewatch.eu/en/political-group-cohesion.html).

<sup>48</sup> See the European Alliance for Freedom website ([www.eurall-free.org/?q=node/65](http://www.eurall-free.org/?q=node/65)).

<sup>49</sup> Euractive, *EU Threatened* cit.

<sup>50</sup> Data calculated on 6,408 votes of all policies areas selected by Vote Watch from 14 July 2009 to 31 March 2014. Specifically, ALDE and EPP cooperated 77.6% of the time, ALDE and S&D cooperated 78.7% of the time, ALDE and Greens cooperated 66.9% of the time, EPP and S&D cooperated 43.2% of the time, EPP and Greens cooperated 57% of the time, Greens and S&D cooperated 75.5% of the time. See: [votewatch.eu](http://votewatch.eu).

<sup>51</sup> [pollwatch2014.eu](http://pollwatch2014.eu).

<sup>52</sup> Vote Watch ([www.votewatch.eu/en/epg-coalitions.html/#/0/9/2009-07-14/2014-07-14/3/9](http://www.votewatch.eu/en/epg-coalitions.html/#/0/9/2009-07-14/2014-07-14/3/9)).

<sup>53</sup> [pollwatch2014.eu](http://pollwatch2014.eu).

<sup>54</sup> Vote Watch ([www.votewatch.eu/en/epg-coalitions.html/#/0/2/2009-07-14/2014-07-14/11/9](http://www.votewatch.eu/en/epg-coalitions.html/#/0/2/2009-07-14/2014-07-14/11/9)).

<sup>55</sup> Vote Watch ([www.votewatch.eu/en/political-group-cohesion.html](http://www.votewatch.eu/en/political-group-cohesion.html)).

<sup>56</sup> N. Koukoullis, *European Parliament Elections 2014*, in “Electoral Report”, 10 February 2014, available on [www.electoralreport.com/tag/parliament](http://www.electoralreport.com/tag/parliament).

<sup>57</sup> S. P. Huntington, *Political Order in Changing Societies*, Yale University Press, New Haven 1968.

**Ania Skrzypek**

## **Politicising Europe: Political Leadership and Courage of Europarties?**

The global crisis has been a catalyst of a number of processes. Several of them, if not all, pushed the European Union into an existential deliberation. In their wake, not only the direction for the future but the core sense of continuing within the Community has become widely questioned. This amazing project, which once upon a time stood for a promise of peace and prosperity, seems these days more a shadow of the old ambition. It is appearing weak, incapable to deal with its problems and incomprehensible in its choices for its own citizens.

This means also that familiar, comforting ideas are no longer able to offer sufficient answers. This is clear to the citizens contesting their tangibility, as also to politicians to whom it has become apparent that a stronger appeal is needed in order to offer an explanation to the situation at hand and to keep the Union together at the same time. What illustrates the dilemma that they have been facing is what happened to the pledge “More Europe”. It used to describe the pro-European position of those who believed that further integration is a path to greater social progress for all. Nowadays with “Brussels” being broadly associated with austerity, impoverishment and disempowerment, it is hard to argue that indeed “More Europe” is a panacea to the crisis. In that sense, convincingly articulating the nuance of “More, but different Europe” seems a particularly challenging task. This is because there is a broader understanding that it is impossible to “continue with business as usual”, while at the same time there is a fear that any criticism may further fuel the

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anti-European appeal. Judging from recent polls, the latter is becoming particularly compelling to many.

The challenge can be described therefore as two-dimensional. On the one hand, there is a political contest between those who argue that this is the “end of Europe” and those who believe that it is a project with a future. In the current political scenery, the latter group is dominated by the so-called “traditional political parties”. On the other hand, there are lines of divergences among these parties. There are those who would see the situation stabilised and would argue for the continuation of the post-crisis policies. And there are their opponents who claim that this is yet another path of self-destruction and, hence, an alternative route needs to be pursued, in order not only to safeguard the Union, but to modernise it. This discussion in the context of the European election campaign has become a core of the intra-partisan competition. It focuses on three aspects: mobilising the voters, assuming the leadership (embodied by the post of the President of the European Commission) and steering the EU into another direction.

For all the Europarties standing in this competition it is clear that a crisis, even most horrible in its social and economic consequences, is in fact always presenting itself as a window of opportunity in a political context. This has been the experience of the European Union, leading on the academic ground to the elaboration of the theory that development of the Community is taking place in *sinusoidal loops*. The characteristic of its dynamic is that after reaching new lows, there is substantial progress made. The theory is well exemplified in the history of the EU, which is perhaps what makes politicians be susceptible to claims like the one made by Hillary Clinton: «Never waste a good crisis». This phrase has been repeated by many and in many different contexts. It has turned into an encouragement to “look at the bright side” and strengthen the search for apparent opportunities. What is however frequently overlooked is that Europe

rounded already five years since the crisis took its peak. And in fact, “using the crisis circumstances” to imprint a certain change in the fabric of its policies has already been done by different European political actors, lifting them up to the positions of the current leaders of the European processes. This meant a more or less explicit struggle for power, which brought a shift of balance among the EU institutions and consequently became a fundament on which a new style of leadership could be built.<sup>1</sup>

The interesting question that accompanies the European campaign is what the nature of this new style is. Following the respective theories from within the political sciences, there is a clear distinction between what is called “management” and what an actual “leadership” is. Simplifying, the difference lays between an administrative approach and a political one, which consequently means that it is either about maintenance and balancing or about paving the way for innovations and progress. Translated into the current political dispute between conservatives and socialists, it is in fact also disagreement on to what extent the conservative majority has been exercising management or has been putting in place a new concept for Europe. Conservatives argue for the latter, claiming that they have led Europe to the path of sustainability and solidarity; while the socialists accuse their governing methods to be destructive for Europe and appeal to the electorate for their support to take Europe onto a new, different path. The initial hypothesis, from where this particular paper departs from, is that the new style of leadership developed in the aftermath of the crisis in Europe is, in fact, not an expression of assuming a *European political responsibility for the future*, but in fact a conservative approach to crisis management that lacks political vision. Having that in mind, this paper is divided into three sections. The first one draws from the *distinction between political leadership and crisis management*, and elaborates the hypothesis that the conservative rule in the EU in the last years embodied the second one. Con-

sequently, it examines how far there is “expiration date” for the contemporary crisis management approach. This is why it dwells on the idea that the European elections and the process afterwards could serve as a momentum for a new transformation to take place.

The second section of the paper takes a closer look at the *legal and political variables*, which need to be taken into consideration in order to assess if change is possible. The initial approach refers to the “new” legal circumstances framed by the Lisbon Treaty. The underpinning question is to what extent they may stimulate transformation. Following respective announcements that there would be “no automatism”, the section tries to look at other essential elements that could shift the balance into one or another direction. In addition, while keeping up the differentiation between the crisis management and political leadership, the main issue analysed here is what would mark the actual difference in the post-electoral political landscape. The question to be addressed is essentially to what degree European political families, now consolidated behind their common candidates, can actually pave the way towards a new political direction. These more theoretical reflections find the empirical underpinning in the last section. There the content of the four Europarties’ manifestos are compared. Due to the limited scope of this essay, the focus will be on the character of the respective manifestos (including the connection between them and the so-called “top candidates” campaigns) and the narrative they propose regarding the crisis. The research aims at extracting the major political cleavages among them, as identifying them is key to assess the criteria of success for the Europarties in their attempt to achieve a political leadership that is also an issue(s)-bases one. The ultimate question of this paper is therefore how far the Europarties can hope that the European elections might mark a new turning point for them? It is true that the record of voting in the European Parliament shows gradually growing consistency

within the parliamentary groups. To that end, also the crisis has induced more political consolidation of the European political family – that is at least assessing the respective statements during the predicament. But this new feature should not be taken as a tendency, which will undoubtedly prevail.

Taking into account the initial observation regarding the European Union’s existential crisis, it is also interesting to study if the Europarties succeed in offering a convincing explanation of what the European integration process should be an answer for nowadays. That is at the core of the struggle against anti-Europeanism, but it is also the fabric of the assumed competition between them. They hope that the herewith-exposed differences will translate into “more politicisation” of Europe, allowing one of them to gain the primacy and claim real political leadership.

### **From crisis management to political leadership**

The recent political and institutional developments of the European Union have substantially changed its decision-making processes. Even though it has been, as stated in the introduction, more of a crisis management than a political leadership, nevertheless there are numerous new features that have been established. They should be taken into consideration, especially while deliberating on the possible impact of the European elections. The reason is that lack of their recognition will make the assessment of the campaign and its results potentially incomplete. The threat would appear even more real, while this is the first time that the Europarties run with their top candidates and a lot of expectations have been raised, anticipating what sort of a ground-breaking precedence that would or could create.

First of all, the fact that a top candidate is presented on behalf of the European family was announced to be a step towards the personalisation of European politics. It was frequently explained that it would enable Europe to break out of the old question “if

you want to call Europe, whom do you call?”. Additionally, it would offer a recognisable face to the impersonal, bureaucratic by appearance Europe. Indeed, looking at the campaign and especially the televised debates, popularisation of the campaign leader of the respective political family has been achieved. But, if we look at the entire Union, it should be recognised that their profiles are still measured against that of the German Chancellor, Angela Merkel. It is still her in particular, seen as a *primus inter pares* of the European Council, whom the European media and public look at, while trying to foretell in what way the Lisbon Treaty is going to be applied. It is still against her that demonstrations in Southern Europe are taking place, when people march on the streets to condemn the austerity-driven policies of the EU. That is one of the proofs that the personalisation of Europe had already taken place before. Secondly, there has been a hope for the politicisation of Europe. It has been argued that, with the actual intra-partisan competition taking place, it would be possible to understand how the respective ideological visions of the future of Europe distinguish themselves from one another. This would be a step forward in comparison with the situation at hand, in which all the decisions are being taken on the bases of a multi-tier compromise, running the risk of losing the political flavour of any idea in the course of the negotiations. In that sense politicisation, as the above-mentioned personalisation, has been described as an innovation on the European level. However, also in this case, it is essential to note that politicisation as such had already taken place in one, specific dimension of the EU politics. With the crisis management and the dominant role of the European Council, the intergovernmental pillar of the Union’s institutions have been profoundly strengthened. That is especially clear if one takes into account the subordination of the European Commission; this power shift enabled the realization of some aspects of that “Europe of Nations” which the EPP political family has been always arguing for. This

should be considered as their success, since it is the opposite of what the socialist family has been traditionally striving for, that is, a federal model with a strong communitarian pillar, generally named Social Europe.

The figures of the top candidate are at this point a feature that should enable the politicisation of the Europarties. If they indeed will manage to make a larger impact and have influence in terms of politicisation of the EU institutions remains still in question. On one side, all the top candidates pledged that there can be no other person appointed to the position of the President of the Commission than one of them. If they keep holding this position, they will of course have a majority within the European Parliament, without which it would be impossible to confirm a Commission. But on the other side, there is a floating question on what the Council will do and how the respective national leaders will react to eventual counterproposals. The problem with this debate is that it is being filtered into a merely institutional dispute and does not emerge as a political struggle for one or another institutional model for Europe.

Summarising, personalisation and politicisation of the European politics have been already experienced within the context of the conservative crisis management over Europe. Their emergence was enabled by the nationalisation of the European headship into the hands of German Chancellor Merkel, who pushed for further shift towards the intergovernmental method and the realisation of the Europe of Nation. However, there would be an innovation if the electoral campaign would deliver a new wave of personalisation and politicisation, and if both phenomena would emerge from within the euro-partisan system. This would perhaps be also a way for the re-Europeanisation of the EU decision-making processes. It would then seem that the chance would lay in the new style of political leadership, if through the campaign and vote they had a chance to gain popular legitimacy to establish it.

As signalled before, such a new style of leadership would have to prove profoundly different from the conservative crisis management that the EU has been following in the last years. This would also mean that there is to be a courageous ambition to offer long-term answers, and not only quick solutions, to the most pressing problems. Of course, in times of crisis, the latter approach would be argued for as being a necessity. However, recalling the existential crisis of Europe mentioned above, there can be no doubt that the long-term perspective is becoming equally relevant, even in the course of the short campaign for the European elections. To that end, Europe has always been and remains both a long-lasting idea and a long term project. What is more, there is a need to recognise that moving to a new style of courageous political leadership will also require setting up new evaluation criteria. This is because, at the moment, the main reference point remains the crisis management headship, which explained many of the hard decisions using the well-known TINA (There is No Alternative) rhetoric. Having become the reason behind certain policy choices,<sup>2</sup> it has also turned to be a natural limitation. Within that framework focusing on “ways out of crisis” was seen as politically responsible, while seeking a future perspective would be considered unrealistic and irrational. In these circumstances, it is of course hard to change the trend without risking being discredited, something that all the traditional parties feared during the crisis peak. Hence the Europarties and their national proponents followed, to a certain extent, the pattern set by the conservative headship. From this point of view, the European elections indeed constitute a new opening for the Europarties, at least to try to use the momentum as a transformative one. The possible directions are mirrored in Table 1, which follows the theoretical graph showing the difference between the crisis management and the political leadership.

**TABELLA 1. CRISIS/NEW OPENING.**

CRISIS		NEW OPENING	
MANAGEMENT	EUROPARTIES	LEADERSHIP	EUROPARTIES
ORDER/ CONSTITUENCY	TRYING TO SAFEGUARD THE PRO-EUROPEAN APPROACH	CHANGE/MOVEMENT	CONSTRUCTING A COALITION FOR CHANGE
PLANNING/ BUDGETING	AIMING AT FINDING THE WAYS TO RESTORE THE BROKEN ECONOMY	ESTABLISHING DIRECTIONS	VISION FOR EUROPE

SOURCE: P. G. NORTHOUSE, *LEADERSHIP: THEORY AND PRACTICE*, SAGE, THOUSAND HOAKS 2013, p. 5.

The analyses of the table above leads us to several observations. First of all, the crisis management implied that the Europarties found themselves in extremely defensive positions. Indeed, the first emergency they needed to react to was the question of the preservation of the Union. This meant that they found themselves compelled to accept decisions, which were neither in coherence with their ideological beliefs nor able to guarantee a positive outcome. At the time it was clear that the situation could get worse, but it was not certain it could get better. This was the dilemma of progressive national parties in the respective governments, who had to pursue the line of austerity. It is being argued in the context of the campaign that “austerity-only” is the synonym of impoverishment, while “austerity” itself can equally well stand for sober budgeting. But that may prove also to be a nuance that European citizens may find hard to distinguish or believe in. It follows that, the Europarties and their respective national parties became focused predominantly on the task of defending the idea of Europe. To this aim they needed to iden-

tify the ways to restore the Union's credentials in the short run in order to confront the re-emerging anti-European and frequently anti-democratic tendencies. There have been exceptions to that approach, such as the deliberations around the PES Fundamental Programme or the European Greens' "New Green Deal". But both the projects, rather than being a long-term vision for Europe, mirror the search for these respective parties' ideological identities. As such they play a very important role, nevertheless they are rather far from responding more tangible queries such as: "what should Europe nowadays be an answer to?" and consequently "how to achieve that".

To conclude, there is the hypothesis that, after the crisis management period, it will be possible to cause a new shift of power and establish a new style of political leadership. In that context, as discussed, the European elections could have been an obvious opportunity. Yet, both among analysts and politicians, there is some scepticism about the extent to which the Europarties could forge such a change. This scepticism is connected with a disbelief in the capacity of the Europarties to assume political leadership overall. There is a handful of explanations for this. First of all, Europarties are very peculiar partisan organisations. This is why it is impossible to employ the standard vocabulary used to describe the national parties and their developments.<sup>3</sup> Hence the measure of the success of Europarties in terms of influencing and designing policies should be assessed according to specific parameters (see next section), which cannot just mirror the criteria applied on the national level. The ones on the national level do not really exist, hence there is a real risk that even if they do assume new positions, this will still be evaluated as insufficient. Secondly, both politics and political sciences chronically underestimate this power of the "powerless". This argument underpins the opinions of some authors who believe that the next transformation will no longer feature the traditional political actors, but it will be a transition towards a new, post-Euro-

pean era. Responding to them, it is important to remind that democracy has a lengthy history, full of detours and disagreements. It has meant different things to different people at different times and places. In the case of the European Union, the fact that it was made by democratic states does not make it democratic per definition. But it can be further democratise, shall the Europarties succeed in their ambition to mobilise for the European elections. And in that sense, if the campaigns' focus – such as the one of the PES to “knock the vote” – turns out successful, it might stop the trend of declining turnout of the European elections. This might then translate into greater legitimacy of the Europarties and offer a standpoint on which they can enter the negotiations regarding how to set the dispute around the interpretation of the Lisbon Treaty.

Here one can see where the impulse for the new power shift and the opportunity for the new political leadership to emerge in Europe might come from. Because of anxiety regarding the eventual veto of Chancellor Merkel to any of the current top candidates, and because of fears connected with potential backdoor deals, the argument of respect for the “democratic choice of citizens” is being used frequently in the campaign context. Even though the European Parliament will be elected regardless of the turnout and there will be one group that will turn out to have the largest amount of seats, still the mandate to one of the top candidate can be questioned if it is granted only by a small number of citizens. And it will be an argument easy to make, as the turnout is what “makes the news”.<sup>4</sup> This time it is even more likely to hit a fertile ground, if it will be merged with the revelations about the growing power of the anti-European forces and their increasing numbers within the European Parliament. To respond to this arguments, not a short-term reaction, but a long-term vision, a counterproposal on how to bind the citizens together in a new social deal is needed.<sup>5</sup> And this is where crisis management will always prove insufficient,

while the new political leadership performed by the Europarties may appear the most efficient and obvious avenue to proceed along. As mentioned, the recent headship over the EU has been falling into category of the crisis management. It has been assumed from within the intergovernmental level, causing imbalance in the institutional set up of the Union. Therefore the European elections should not only be seen as a contest for one or another position, but should be understood as a turning point in which the new style of (post-crisis) leadership could be established. In order to do that, it is necessary to prove the difference and show a path that is not only a shorter term analyses on how to go beyond the predicament, but rather on how to bring the EU into a new stage of development. This is especially important nowadays, when the EU is facing such a deep existential crisis.

### **Variables defining a new style of leadership for Europe**

If the Europarties can, as suggested, become the ones to carry those promises through, the campaign and beyond will depend on a number of factors. These can be divided into two groups: legal and political.

Legal variables have changed profoundly since the Treaty of Lisbon was ratified. But even though there has been a significant progress, judicially speaking, there are still many doubts on how far and in what shape the new regulations can be implemented. Full implementation would undoubtedly mean an opportunity for the Europarties to raise and develop, especially if we consider that, as showed in the previous section, there is a vacuum in which they could step in, competing and eventually assuming a new political leadership over Europe. This can be the case, even if the relevant literature continues to describe them as weak organisations and even if many authors would agree that they are in fact following rather than shaping the political

processes on the EU level. In order to conceptualise better the possible transformation, it seems crucial to review respective definitions of political leadership, and evaluate to what extent the new Treaty enables a power shift, essential to the establishment of a new style of leadership.

Within political sciences, but also sociology (and here especially sociology of organisation), there are many ways to explain leadership.<sup>6</sup> It can be done through legal terms, through defining the inner and outer relations of a group, as even also by using metaphor. For the purpose of this paper, the definition that seems to be most helpful as a relatively complete one encloses four elements. These are: leadership as a process; as an issue of influence; as a matter of group dynamic; as emerging from setting common goals. Altogether they translate into an understanding that *leadership is a process whereby an individual influences a group of individuals to achieve a common goal*. This definition is neutral as far as quality or style are concerned. These are determined by additional aspects. This is why one can also use these four elements as indicators of the earlier described crisis management. Then the description would be as follows: in the course of the process, an individual on behalf of a country claimed the supreme position in order to safeguard their own interests and put an end to the overall erosive tendencies. But the question that emerges, even in the context of this phrase, is if such a set-up would indeed be sustainable, especially in transnational organisation that traditionally are characterised by consensual and collective approach. Assuming the potentially negative answer to it, it is worth seeing to what extent the new political leadership could prove to be the way forward and if the Europarties could potentially become the organisations that can claim it.

As argued before, a transformation from the current crisis management towards a new political leadership would require a new shift of power. The nature of that can be better grasped, if

we include a clearer understanding of what power of leadership derives from. The respective literature offers a classification of five bases of power:<sup>7</sup>

TABLE 2. CLASSIFICATION OF BASES OF POWER.	
REFERENT POINT	BASED ON FOLLOWERS' IDENTIFICATION AND LIKING FOR THE LEADER
EXPERT POWER	BASED ON FOLLOWERS' PERCEPTION OF THE LEADER'S COMPETENCE
LEGITIMATE POWER	ASSOCIATED WITH HAVING STATUS OR FORMAL JOB AUTHORITY
REWARD POWER	DERIVED FROM HAVING THE CAPACITY TO PROVIDE REWARDS TO OTHERS
CORRECTIVE POWER	DERIVED FROM CAPACITY TO PENALISE OR PUNISH OTHERS

These five are further being classified into two subgroups, and within them, the literature distinguishes two major kinds of power.

TABLE 3. KINDS OF POWER.	
POSITION POWER	PERSONAL POWER
DERIVING FROM OFFICE OR RANK IN FORMAL ORGANISATIONAL SYSTEM	INFLUENCES THE CAPACITY A LEADER DERIVES FROM BEING SEEN BY THE FOLLOWERS
LEGITIMATE REWARD CORRECTIVE	REFERENT EXPERT

Looking at these two tables, there is a further observation to be made. In the past the Europarties have not been too successful in assuring for themselves any of the five bases of power to the full extent. This has occurred, as neither had there been equipped with *position power* due to the EU institutional set-up, nor were they able to grasp *personal power* because they operate, especially internally, with the system of collective leadership. But with the Lisbon Treaty a change is quite plausible. That pro-

vides a motivation to further explore the legal variables, with the aim of seeking an answer to the following questions: to what extent the constitutional modification may drive the Europarties into power position? Which base would their new power to lead be based on?

To begin with, the Lisbon Treaty brought in an alteration of the operational circumstances for the Europarties. These changes influence not only the position of the singular actor, but they modify overall the character of the entire system. The exemplary theory supporting this claim is the Duverger Law, which stipulates that the electoral system has a direct influence on what in fact is the number of parties competing with one another. This is why it is so relevant that the Europarties have obtained new prerogatives regarding conducting pan-European campaigns ahead of the European elections.

Though the Lisbon Treaty may have been just a catalyst, together with the accompanying regulations, it has offered not only a legal framework, but also the financial tools for the Europarties to assume a new ground. The Europarties could and, in fact, had to step onto it, especially considering that the process of changing their European status has been taking place in parallel and the participation in the campaign would allow them to redefine their operational framework in many new different ways. To that extent, taking an active part in this new exercise, the Europarties gained the chance to set the new terms and re-shape the ways in which the European campaigns have been done so far. It may have not yet been the profound transformation towards a new leadership, but at least it enabled the campaign-leadership of the Europarties to be established for the first time ever.

This also explains why, when talking on the Lisbon Treaty's impact on the Europarties, the reference that is made most frequently concerns the question of a top candidate. Indeed, against many odds, all the main Europarties saw it in the end

essential to nominate the so-called “top candidates”. This change had immediately two implications for the positions of the Europarties vis-à-vis their members, and capitalising on the Treaty on the way to seek respectively a leading position.

To begin with, naming a top candidate – in other words the “head of a European lists” – meant that, for the first time, the Europarties have had the opportunity to gain a small influence regarding the composition of the electoral lists. This has never been the case before. Even if they would call the respective candidates for example “PES candidates in Poland”, *de facto* the PES leadership would have absolutely no influence to determine who those candidates actually were. The significance of this prerogative is great, as it potentially opens new avenues to future discussions regarding ideas such as trans-European lists or European Commission’s shadow cabinet.

Secondly, the fact of engaging the members in a frequently lengthy process – which would require finding common pattern of selecting such a candidate and then effectively approving him/her – was already an element of electoral consolidation for the Europarties. It is common knowledge that the respective member parties abide by different traditions for the selection of their leaders, and frequently they are reluctant even to disclose the details of the actual proceedings.<sup>8</sup> Hence in itself a common process was already an important step forward, giving the Europarties an important leading role.

Thirdly, the process of selecting the top candidates became binding for the national member parties within Europarties. The importance of this innovation is especially clear in the light of this question: what is the guarantee that after the elections the European Council will not decide to appoint someone else than the top candidate of the largest group in the European Parliament? These doubts are especially induced by the experience of 2009, when the socialist leaders lined up in support of the conservative candidate – while no opponent was even identified on

the left side of the European political spectrum. The substantial difference is that this time these leaders and their parties have taken part in a democratic process through which top candidates were elected. Moreover, they have received the top candidates on the national ground throughout the Europarties-led campaign. This constitutes a binding contract, from which it would be quite hard to back-off without risking accusation of breaking the word and undermining the inner party democracy. Consequently, the claim is that the institution of the “top candidate” offers a sort of new legitimacy not only to the Europarties, but also to European politics as such. The emergence of these top candidates is expected to be in fact a catalysing factor for politicisation and personalisation of the EU, especially while competing personalities enter into the final round out of which one of them is eventually going to become the President of the European Commission (the word “eventually” is used here with a full consciousness, as the Treaty remains ambiguous about how the decision is precisely taken in the end). As stated before, it is not exactly the case that these politicisation and personalisation has not taken place yet – in the previous section it was clearly pointed out that it has been already a characteristic of the *crisis management*. Nevertheless a more conscious process may of course alter the ways these two features are to be imprinted into the fabric of the EU politics.

To that end, the fact that the top candidates raised their profiles and became recognisable figures in the context of the national campaigns means also a great difference. Returning for the moment to Table 2, it means also that a new base of power – as a referent point – has been established. To illustrate the change, one can say that a year ago the question was, perhaps, how the heads of states – the Chancellor of Germany – would interpret the Lisbon Treaty after the European elections. Then the image projected was of national leaders acting on behalf of their states on the external, international level. In the course of the Eu-

roparties' campaigns, this has shifted – and what was before an externalised issue has become a domestic one. If Chancellor Merkel will acknowledge the mandate of the top candidate of the “winning” EP group, the Europarties' campaigns will have induced already a definite shift of power by europeanising, to a certain degree, the national campaigns.

The question that follows is how far the top candidates themselves are to be seen as a guarantee of a further change. While the literature on the pan-European leadership has not yet developed, looking at the one examining the national processes, it would seem that there is a doubt on how far the candidates-centred politics is still the trend.<sup>9</sup> This was the case in the 1990s much more evidently, but then if to reiterate that the Europarties are specific organisations and that there is a need to apply not only different vocabulary, but also different standards, the discrepancy between the pan-European and national levels could then easily be explained. Therefore, following again Tables 2 and 3, the personal-expert power base deriving from the top candidate is of significance in the EU context.

Returning for the moment to the issue of the processes in which the Europarties needed to involve their members to select these respective top candidates, it is relevant perhaps to look at the theoretical explanations on how such choices are made in the end. The literature stipulates that within the rational choice (which has been certainly the case here) there are two types of information that the deciding actors care about:<sup>10</sup> the leaders' personal views on the issue (role in defining and defending policies); personal qualifications as leaders (cues for their probable actions).

These are accompanied by the three more characteristics that the deciding actors take into account: socio-demographic (including gender and age), competence and trustworthiness. Since the institution of the top candidates is a very new one, it was not clear at the beginning of the campaign whether it was

to be a symbol of collective leadership of the Europarties within the context of the European campaigns or the top candidate was to embody a quest for a certain position to be gained. Making reference to Table 2 and the hypothesis that the Europarties would benefit from the power shift created through these candidates, it would seem that both are in fact mutually reinforcing. But, though the dividing line between the collective and individual leadership is heavily blurred, there is a certain concern that needs to be raised. On the national level there is a major difference between the leadership within and outside the context of the campaign. The first one is named as “campaign propaganda”, while the second is rather of a political-ideological nature.

That being the case, there is an emerging concern on the extent to which the campaign could be the momentum for the Europarties of presenting new long-term vision and assuming effectively the leadership over the processes. This question remains unsolved, together with that on how far the intra-partisan competition will still be about pro- and anti-European approaches and will not be at the end of the day about different choices about Europe.

In either ways, it is quite obvious that the character of the intra-partisan competition on the European level will change profoundly. And here the Lisbon Treaty should be seen as a catalyst for a new stage in the developments of the Europarties. While stating this, it is however essential to remember that the institutional changes are in fact only one group of variables and they themselves do not produce any transformations yet.<sup>11</sup> The law does not determine policy preferences. These are defined by the political actors, who shape their strategies and ensure that the legal provision do not remain without content. That is even more so the tradition on the European level, where for example the European Parliament would have never reached the position that it enjoys now, if politics would have not been the driv-

ing force to lead its evolution and consequently claim a stronger position within the European institutional system. This is also why the Europarties' manifestos are exciting canvas to look at, as they show the level of ambition that there is among the competing actors.

It is evident that there are two major axes of conflict, through which only a new leadership can pave the way for the Europarties. The first one is the electoral challenge, in which the entire idea of the European integration is being contested. The second is the actual dispute over primacy within the European institutional system between the intergovernmental and the communitarian pillars. In this context, the intra-partisan competition will not be able to remain only on the personal level, but will have to take a more collectivist approach, without which the search for the nomination for the office on the part of the European Parliament and for the support on the part of the Council will not become a coherent process.

It is still unclear whether this means that the competition will at the end be predominantly about office seeking or about policy shift. There is anyhow no clear cut between these two, hence the answer here would be that both the candidate, the Europarty as a political organisation and its programme have to prove to be the answers to the challenges of the contemporary times. This means that, as important as the legal provisions are, the political variables require further attention.

Let's move on to the changing political variables. Even though the Lisbon Treaty is already almost six years old, the legal change has not been fully followed by the political shift. This one may be taking place potentially at this very moment; however, it is still far from what authors describe when writing about the political cleavages.<sup>12</sup> Unlike what happens traditionally on the national level, the eurpartisan competition in its weak form has been taking place in a sort of normative vacuum, rather than being a reflection of the vested socio-political differentiation of

opinions within societies. In that sense it would be even impossible to apply the classic understanding of parties being producers and reflectors of these different conflicts, and this is perhaps the query for the present times, if such a connection could be effectively achieved.

In the national contexts, the parties build in fact (derive from) the existing social conflicts. This is possible if they are embedded in a specific tradition with which certain societal group can identify themselves. So the question here would be if the fact that the Lisbon Treaty effectively induced the intra-partisan competition is more of an artificial nature, especially taking into account that the Europarties are so heavily charged with internal divisions and “on the ground” may even find themselves appealing to different electorates. In the past and on the national level, the cleavage-based identities were a way to set cognitive consensus cues for the voters and partisan elites. They have been the way to reduce the “transaction costs” in the process of information. This has been the case especially in “conditions of uncertainty”, where in fact retrenchment to the “limited information” was opted for. In the EU context, this has been the case even more.

The philosophy according to which the Union is a complex and complicated organization led to an assessment by the party elites that the voters “do not understand” and hence the messages would need to be predominantly simplified. This also explains why the Europarties’ messages come across as rather similar and sometimes even see borrowing of slogans from one another. An example of that is the liberal slogan of 2014 “Europe that works”, which has been in fact used by the PES in several documents regarding the new employment strategy for Europe in the 1990s. These simplifications induced a counter-reaction, which showed disapproval towards the simplistic approach of the politicians and withdrawal from the side of the citizens. They may be intrigued by “punchy” statements, but

they would generally be keen on knowing that there is also a solid content behind.

The simplified appeal meant also that there have not been much space and patience to develop a set of real opportunities for deliberative and participatory democracy even within the Europarties. The debates and disputes have rather been shifted to the intra-partisan area, while within the Europarties there has been a certain dictate of consensus. In a search for convergence and cohesion, the Europarties eliminated the footnotes and disclaimers from the text. Paradoxically, in many ways this forged unity has caused them another complication. This was the accusation that they would always look for the much criticised lowest common denominator, which has been used as a negative argument against the top candidates in the context of the televised debate, where it was argued that they seem to echo each other in their statements. This criticism has not been entirely fair, as the divergences between the Europarties clearly exist; however it should be perhaps a reason to reconsider organisation of these debates and other potential momentums in the campaign, which would facilitate exposing the differences better.

Following the deliberations from the previous sections, and assuming that the European elections would indeed need to be about politicisation, there is a case to make about the extent to which the Europarties could in fact be the actors bringing this change about. In the classical theory within the axiomatic system, the intra-partisan competition assumes three axes: for vote, for office and for policy. The three axes are simultaneous and therefore there is flexibility in terms of emphasis, which also means that there is a potential for certain trade-offs. Here comes therefore the first challenge if the collective leadership of the respective Europarties could eventually be put in place. With the institution of the top candidate, there is a personal and individual campaign-propaganda leadership. Moreover, there is a

narrative of the Europarties which is about alternatives, that is choosing what direction the EU should take. As long as they are within the context of the campaign, both leadership reference points may remain closely tight. But when it comes to the negotiations about positions, this will not necessarily be the case. On the contrary, if the Europarties remain weak, the top candidate will be also the chief negotiator and, in order to reach the goal of the office, may allow much trade-offs in order to accomplish the task of creating a majority to support him/her. Such trade-offs are not unusual, in fact they are frequently observed in the two-round elections (a category in which the two-step process of the European elections and then of choosing the President of the European Commission would fall into).

Political parties are “complex rational actors” and the above mentioned “trade-offs” are but one dimension of the intra-partisan competition. The way to think about that is perhaps that claiming the office is essential in order to be able to achieve a change (and they have to be active in negotiations around them); yet the preoccupation of the Europarties should remain predominantly the policy competition. They should see the European elections as the moment to present real alternatives and try to assume responsibility for formulating the answer on what the EU, as a historical idea, can potentially be nowadays.

This is the question of the strategic interactions, which in the context of the new format of the electoral competition essentially require profound revision. The question is whether the programmatic trade-offs are to be made between the actors on either side of the parliamentary aisle or across it (as it has been frequently the case so far, creating the basis for a grand coalition to rule the EP for decades). Therefore a strategy needs to be put in place to see what the bargaining limits are.

In the current circumstances, the programmatic approaches may differ in details, but it would seem that the Europarties once again have been predominantly pushed into positions focused

on defending Europe (so heavily undermined by the crisis) and mobilising voters to take part in the elections (both in order to invert the tendency of the falling turnout, and because of the fear of populists and radicals). In these circumstances it is pro-Europeanism and anti-Europeanism that become ideologies.

The emergence of the top candidates have had a positive, even if limited, impact on this, personalising the campaign and raising the profile of potential individual leaders. Nevertheless it is questionable how far the criteria of evaluation of potential success of the Europarties in the post-electoral terms can be measured by achieving the goal of appointing one of the top candidates as the President of European Commission or by decisively influencing the EU agenda for the next five years. It can be argued that they are indispensably related. But knowing that the overall institutional set-up will still require a multi-tier compromise to approve the next Commission and its mandate, it is clear that the potential of one or another Europarty to assume political leadership will depend on the costs of the political transactions it will need to bear in the negotiations around it.

### **Identifying political cleavages between Europarties**

The previous two sections focused respectively on the questions of the possibilities for the emergence of a new style of political leadership in Europe, and on the legal and political variables that would enable its realisation, with both personal and political underpinning, the latter referring to the capacity of paving a new direction for the Union and offering a convincing answer to the current existential crisis. Since this brings back the issue on how to assess the distinctions among the initial offers made by the Europarties, it is relevant to complete these deliberations with a short overview regarding the main cleavages among them.

The four major traditional and pro-European political families have adopted their respective manifestos towards the elections 2014. The overview of their general features can be found in Table 4.

	EPP	PES	ALDE PARTY	GREENS
TITLE	"WHY VOTE FOR THE POLITICAL FAMILY OF THE EUROPEAN PEOPLE'S PARTY?"	"TOWARDS A NEW EUROPE"	"A EUROPE THAT WORKS"	"CHANGE EUROPE, VOTE GREEN"
SIZE	12 COMMITMENTS 20 PAGES	3 CHAPTERS 10 PROJECTS 4 PAGES	5 CHAPTERS 8 PAGES	INTRODUCTION 4 CHAPTERS 18 PAGES

From this table, it is possible to draw a first conclusion. Both the EPP and the PES opted for a formula implying that the elections are in fact about closing a certain contract with the voters. This is why their texts in index already emphasize "commitments" and "projects", even if in fact the ALDE Party formulates its proposal also as a set of promises, which are however much more detailed and constitute rather an explanation of how the proposals from the different chapters are to be achieved. A different approach has been adopted by the European Greens, who decided to present a consolidated long text, which outlines a more visionary proposal for Europe, which they refer to as "A New Green Deal". This offers indication on how the Europarties evaluate the available bases of power for their political leadership to emerge (according to the logic presented in this paper in Table 2).

This observation is linked to the question of how far the manifestos reflect the progressing personalisation of the campaign. Also in this case, the Europarties assumed different approaches regarding the question of mentioning the top candidate, etc.

TABLE 5. EUROPARTIES' CAMPAIGN OVERVIEW.				
	EPP	PES	ALDE PARTY	GREENS
TOP CANDIDATES	JEAN-CLAUDE JUNCKER	MARTIN SCHULZ	GUY VERHOFSTADT	SKA KELLER JOSÉ BOVÉ
CANDIDATE'S VISUAL IDENTITY INSIDE OF THE PRINTED MANIFESTO	Yes (QUOTE, PICTURES AND ADVERT)	No	No	No
CANDIDATE'S OWN PROGRAMME	SLOGAN: "EXPERIENCE. SOLIDARITY. FUTURE"	OWN MATERIAL; "TOWARDS A NEW EUROPE"; "10 OBJECTIVES – HOW I WANT TO CHANGE EUROPE" WITH THE PES BRANDING	JOINT CAMPAIGN	ON THE WEBSITE, INFORMATION ABOUT THE CANDIDATES
CANDIDATE'S OWN WEBSITE	Yes	Yes	No	No
CANDIDATE'S POSITION IN THE MANIFESTO		«YOUR VOTE WILL DECIDE ON THE NEXT PRESIDENT OF THE EUROPEAN COMMISSION»		

From this comparison, it is apparent that EPP is the only Europarty that refers to its top candidate by name within the manifesto, while the PES has mentioned the fact of having a top candidate. At the same time, the EPP candidate presents his own slogan, whilst the PES top candidate has also published his “own personal pledges” (which remain however coherent with the PES manifesto as such). As for the ALDE Party and the Greens, the top candidates seem to be much more “incorporated” in the communication around the manifesto, but not essentially in their texts. The communication would rather suggest that the candidates are the faces of the campaigns, and that the voters are welcome to read more about their personalities; however as far as the message is concerned, they have not elaborated separate, personalised materials. As every five years, also 2014 manifestos begin with the respective Europarties’ mission statements, through which they explain their credentials to stand for the elections and their motivations to assume the leading position afterwards.

**TABLE 6. EUROPARTIES’ CREDENTIALS AND MOTIVATIONS.**

EPP	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- POLITICAL FAMILY THAT SHAPED EUROPE (FOUNDING FATHERS);</li> <li>- EPP IS THE LARGEST POLITICAL FAMILY;</li> <li>- EU CAN SOLVE THE CRISIS, EUROPEAN ECONOMY NEEDS TO CREATE NEW GROWTH AND JOBS;</li> <li>- YOUNG PEOPLE MUST HAVE A CONFIDENCE IN THE EU, THEY CANNOT BE CHARGED WITH THE DEBTS OF THE PREVIOUS GENERATIONS;</li> <li>- EPP WORKS TO LEAD EUROPE OUT OF THE CRISIS; EPP-LED GOVERNMENTS PULLED EUROPE BACK FROM THE BRINK OF DISASTER, KEPT EURO AREA TOGETHER AND LAID FOUNDATIONS FOR RECOVERY;</li> <li>- EPP WANTS PEOPLE TO LIVE IN A SAFE AND STABLE WORLD, IN FREEDOM AND WITH DIGNITY, HAS TO MAKE RIGHT CHOICES AND RENEW A SENSE OF SOLIDARITY;</li> <li>- EUROPE HAS RISEN FROM ASHES MANY TIMES BEFORE, AND WILL DO SO AGAIN.</li> </ul>
PES	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- EUROPE MUST CHANGE;</li> <li>- YOUR VOTE WILL GIVE THE PES AN OPPORTUNITY TO DELIVER THE EU</li> </ul>

PES	<p>THAT YOU DESERVE, EUROPE THAT PROGRESSES, PROTECTS AND PERFORMS;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- THE PES POLITICAL FAMILY IS MADE OF PARTIES ACROSS 28 MEMBER STATES;</li> <li>- WE HAVE BEEN FIGHTING FOR A STRONG, SOCIALLY JUST AND DEMOCRATIC EUROPE;</li> <li>- THE PES NEEDS YOUR SUPPORT, YOUR HELP AND YOUR VOTE;</li> <li>- PROGRAMME FOR FIVE YEARS, TO BRING JOB CREATION, PRODUCTIVE ECONOMY, SENSE OF COMMUNITY AND RESPECT FOR PEOPLE;</li> <li>- PUT CITIZEN IN CHARGE, RESTORE YOUTH'S CONFIDENCE IN EUROPE;</li> <li>- MAY IS "THE FIRST TIME" YOU WILL HAVE A SAY IN WHO RUNS EUROPE, YOUR VOTE WILL DECIDE ON THE NEXT PRESIDENT OF THE EUROPEAN COMMISSION;</li> <li>- CHANGE THE RIGHT-WING MAJORITY, VOTE PROGRESSIVES, YOUR VOTE COUNTS.</li> </ul>
ALDE PARTY	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- 2014 AS HISTORICAL OPPORTUNITY TO SHAPE EUROPE, TOWARDS A WEAKER OR STRONGER ONE;</li> <li>- COMMITTED TO BUILDING STRONGER EUROPE, DEFENDING COMMON INTERESTS AND VALUES; EUROPE WITH AUTONOMY ON THE WORLD STAGE, THAT BOOSTS ECONOMY AND CREATES JOBS, THAT IS TRANSPARENT AND ACCOUNTABLE, "A EUROPE THAT PROTECTS THE SAFETY AND SECURITY OF CITIZENS", BASED ON TOLERANCE, EQUALITY, CIVIL RIGHTS AND LIBERTIES, GENUINE DEMOCRACY, LEADS FIGHT ON CLIMATE CHANGE, "A EUROPE THAT WORKS";</li> <li>- EUROPE THAT INSPIRES TRUST, PROMOTES PROSPERITY AND UNITY;</li> <li>- LIBERAL EUROPE: BASED ON CIVIL LIBERTIES AND FREEDOM; EUROPE MUST RESPECT AND ENCOURAGE INDIVIDUAL CHOICES, WHILE KEEPING ITS PROMISE OF OPPORTUNITIES FOR EVERYONE.</li> </ul>
GREENS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- «DEAR EUROPEAN CITIZEN, WE WANT TO INVITE YOU TO PARTICIPATE IN THE EP ELECTIONS»;</li> <li>- 100 YEARS SINCE WORLD WAR I, 57 SINCE THE TREATY OF ROME, EUROPE HAS BEEN A HISTORIC ACHIEVEMENT;</li> <li>- EUROPE IS AT THE CROSSROADS, EUROPE IS OUR HOME AND OUR FUTURE; WE NEED TO PRESERVE AND ENHANCE ITS ACHIEVEMENTS;</li> <li>- IT IS THE TIME FOR FUNDAMENTAL POLITICAL REORIENTATION AND DEMOCRATIC RENEWAL OF THE EU;</li> <li>- SAFEGUARDING THE FUTURE, MEANS WE NEED TO STRENGTHEN EUROPE;</li> <li>- WE STAND FOR MORE SOLIDARITY, SUSTAINABILITY AND JUSTICE;</li> <li>- WE STAND AGAINST POPULISM, NATIONALISM AND ECONOMIC CHAUVINISM;</li> <li>- WE MUST LIVE OUR VALUES, UPHOLDING FREEDOM AND LIBERTIES DOMESTICALLY AND INTERNATIONALLY;</li> <li>- EUROPE IS THE CHANCE TO MEET DAUNTING SOCIAL, ENVIRONMENTAL,</li> </ul>

GREENS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- EUROPE IS THE CHANCE TO MEET DAUNTING SOCIAL, ENVIRONMENTAL, ECONOMIC AND SECURITY CHALLENGES OCCURRING IN THE GLOBAL WORLD;</li> <li>- PROPOSING A GREEN NEW DEAL (ENVIRONMENTALISM IS A MODE OF PRODUCTION, IS A SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY);</li> <li>- EMANCIPATION, FREEDOM AND LIBERTIES UNDER THREAT, LGBT, THE ROMA, GENDER;</li> <li>- DIGITAL BILL, HENCE HOPE TO DEFEAT ACTA;</li> <li>- BANKING UNION, FTT, TAX JUSTICE AND AGAINST TAX EVASION;</li> <li>NEIGHBOURHOOD POLICIES AND KEEPING THE ENLARGEMENT DOOR OPEN;</li> <li>GLOBAL JUSTICE AGENDA;</li> <li>- GREENS MAKE A DIFFERENCE IN THE EP.</li> </ul>
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As Table 6 makes clear, there are eminent differences among the Europarties. As for the motivation, the statements can be grouped into two categories. The first one comprises those who argue that the historical dimension of this election is the reason to take part in the European elections; within this category there are the ALDE Party and the Greens, which enumerate the characteristic of what they claim to be the turning point ahead. The Greens are also making reference to the past and all the “round” anniversaries that mark 2014 with a specific perspective. Their arguments answer the question “why Europe still”. The second category features EPP and PES, who make these elections about continuing or changing direction for Europe. The EPP argues that being the historical and largest political family, they have shaped Europe and in the aftermath of the crisis “worked to lead it out of the crisis”. They warn against entrusting the Union into the hands of socialists. The PES advocates that Europe needs a change and there are the guarantees that a difference can be delivered. The focus on the two is more explicitly responding not only to the question “why Europe”, but also “what Europe” they would like to deliver. The respective motivations are already showing the differences in terms of the narrative assumed by the individual Europarties. That is especially visible in the context of the understandings of the state of the crisis they propose.

**TABLE 7. EUROPARTIES' UNDERSTANDING OF THE CRISIS.**

<p><b>EPP</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- THE EPP WORKS TO LEAD EUROPE OUT OF THE CRISIS; THE EPP-LED GOVERNMENTS PULLED EUROPE BACK FROM THE BRINK OF DISASTER, KEPT EURO AREA TOGETHER AND LAID FOUNDATIONS FOR RECOVERY;</li> <li>- THE EPP MET TOUGH CHOICES, HAVING PROVEN ITSELF A PARTY OF RESPONSIBLE GOVERNMENT, WHEN OTHERS "TALKED";</li> <li>- IT IS «THE SPEND-NOW-AND-PAY-LATER POLICIES OF OUR COMPETITORS [THAT] CAUSED THE CRISIS IN THE FIRST PLACE, AND INCREASE THE RISK OF ANOTHER CRISIS DOWN THE LINE».</li> </ul>
<p><b>PES</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- THE RIGHT-WING CREATED A EUROPE OF FEAR AND AUSTERITY;</li> <li>- FIVE YEARS OF CONSERVATIVE MAJORITY IN THE EU;</li> <li>- THE RIGHT WING HAS USED NEOLIBERAL POLICIES TO CUT PROVISIONS THAT HAVE HELPED PEOPLE BOUNCE BACK AFTER TOUGH TIMES.</li> </ul>
<p><b>ALDE PARTY</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- THE ALDE PARTY'S PRIORITY IS TO BETTER ADDRESS THE SERIOUS ECONOMIC CHALLENGES, THE RECESSION AND RECORD UNEMPLOYMENT;</li> <li>- FOR A STABLE AND PROSPEROUS EUROPE THAT IS «ANSWERABLE TO YOU AND WORKS FOR YOU»;</li> <li>- THE ALDE PARTY WILL CONTINUE TO PURSUE STRATEGIES AND TAKE ACTION THAT WILL LEAD US OUT OF THE CURRENT CRISIS AND WILL CREATE LONG-TERM GROWTH;</li> <li>- IT BELIEVES IN A COMPETITION, REMOVING OBSTACLES TO TRADE AND EFFECTIVE REGULATION OF THE MARKET (HENCE WILL FIGHT PROTECTIONISM AND GOVERNMENT INTERFERENCE WHERE THEY UNDERMINE JOB GROWTH AND HINDER PROSPERITY AT REGIONAL, NATIONAL AND EU LEVEL);</li> <li>- IT BELIEVES THAT THE GREATEST SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC CRISIS NOW FACING EUROPE IS UNEMPLOYMENT, ESPECIALLY AMONG YOUNG PEOPLE. THESE EUROPEAN ELECTIONS MUST BE ABOUT IDENTIFYING OPPORTUNITIES THROUGH EMPLOYMENT, EDUCATION AND TRAINING AND THIS IS THE TOP PRIORITY FOR THOSE ELECTED ALDE MEPS.</li> </ul>
<p><b>GREENS</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- NEOLIBERAL DEREGULATION HAS CREATED THE FINANCIAL MARKETS SOLELY DRIVEN BY SHORT TERM GREED, RESULTING IN THE GLOBAL FINANCIAL CRISIS THAT IS STILL PRESENT;</li> <li>- CRISIS DESTROYED MUCH (SOCIALY ECONOMICALLY AND DEMOCRATICALLY), CHALLENGED THE EU WITH FRUSTRATION, FEAR AND ANGER; GREENS SHARE THE ANGER AND WANT TO TURN IT INTO HOPE;</li> </ul>

GREENS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- AUSTERITY INCREASED DIVISIONS, INJUSTICE, WELL-BEING, CAPACITY TO PROSPER, WEAKENED DEMOCRACY;</li> <li>- THE PRESENT ECONOMIC MODEL IS NOT SUSTAINABLE; ENVIRONMENTAL CRISIS PERSISTS;</li> <li>- EUROPE MUST: TAME FORCES OF FINANCIAL MARKETS AND GLOBAL CORPORATIONS, EFFECTIVELY FIGHT TAX FRAUD AND EVASION, TRANSFORM EUROPE'S ENERGY SUPPLY TO COMBAT RUNAWAY CLIMATE CHANGE; COOPERATION ON THE EU LEVEL IS ESSENTIAL;</li> <li>- DEMOCRACY RE-FOUNDATION IS ESSENTIAL; COMMISSION AND ECB MUST BECOME ACCOUNTABLE;</li> <li>- EU MUST BE A MULTI-LEVEL DEMOCRACY, RESPECTING SUBSIDIARITY AND MAKING ITS DIVERSITY ONE OF ITS BEST ASSETS.</li> </ul>
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There is a clear dissimilarity in the different Europarties' rhetoric. The European People's Party, understandably so, is the one that hopes to benefit from the fact that it was in power and assumed the crisis management in Europe. This is visible in their statement, which would indicate that their understanding is that the predicament is over.

As Table 8 shows, this assertion makes them imply that there is a need of reforms, but that the way out of the crisis is actually already paved. In disagreement with these statements are the Party of European Socialists and the Greens, who point out the socioeconomic and political disaster.

From an assessment of the campaign and the televised debate it is clear that the EPP narrative has not been carried. With the issues debated on both the EU and the national level, such as persistent youth unemployment, it has been clear that the notion that the predicament was over did not prevail. This approach to the crisis and the assessment on its length serve as an explanation of how detailed the Europarties are in proposing the way out of crisis.

**TABLE 8. EUROPARTIES' MANIFESTOS.**

	EPP	PES	ALDE PARTY	GREENS
<b>AUSTERITY</b>		«AUSTERITY-ONLY POLICY HAS HARMED OUR ECONOMIES AND PUNISHED THOSE LEAST RESPONSIBLE FOR CAUSING THE CRISIS».		«INSTEAD OF SOCIALLY DEAF AND ENVIRONMENTALLY BLIND AUSTERITY, WE PROPOSE THREE COHERENT AVENUES TO SUSTAINABILITY (...). WE CALL THIS A EUROPEAN GREEN NEW DEAL».  «WE REJECT THE SO-CALLED PACT ON COMPETITIVENESS AS THIS WOULD ENTAIL WAGE CUTS, THE REDUCTION OF SOCIAL WELFARE SCHEMES AND PRIVATISATION OF PUBLIC GOODS».  «[ON SUSTAINABILITY] AUSTERITY AS IMPOSED IN THE RECENT ECONOMIC CRISIS TAKES US IN THE OPPOSITE DIRECTION».

	EPP	PES	ALDE PARTY	GREENS
<b>PUBLIC SPENDING</b>		«WE WILL BE TOUGH GUARDIANS OF PUBLIC MONEY, ENHANCING THE QUALITY SPENDING, CUTTING OUT WASTE AND DIRECTING THE EXPENDITURE TO GET THE BEST VALUE FOR EUROPE'S PEOPLE».	HEALTHY PUBLIC SPENDING.	«GREENS EXPLICITLY FIGHT WASTEFUL AND ECOLOGICALLY HARMFUL SPENDING SUCH AS FOSSIL FUEL SUBSIDIES OR NUCLEAR PROGRAMMES SUCH AS (...) ITER».
<b>TAXES</b>				«WE WANT TO REDUCE THE TAX BURDEN ON LABOUR AND MOVE TOWARDS TAXING POLLUTION AND WASTE. (...) AS WE WANT LARGE CORPORATIONS AND WEALTHY INDIVIDUALS TO CONTRIBUTE THEIR FAIR SHARE, WE ADVOCATE A MORE COMMON EUROPEAN APPROACH TO CORPORATE AND WEALTH TAXATION INCLUDING MINIMUM RATES».

	EPP	PES	ALDE PARTY	GREENS
<b>WELFARE BENEFITS</b>	«WE ARE AGAINST SOCIAL FRAUD – SOCIAL BENEFITS FOR EU CITIZENS SHOULD ONLY BE AVAILABLE IF THEY HAVE WORKED IN THE COUNTRY WHERE THEY LIVE».			«WE WANT TO MOVE TOWARDS BETTER PORTABILITY OF SOCIAL BENEFITS THROUGH THE INTRODUCTION OF A EUROPEAN SOCIAL CARD, WITH HIGH AND BINDING PRIVACY STANDARD, WHICH STREAMLINES ADMINISTRATIVE PROCESSES ACROSS THE COUNTRIES AND WHICH MAKES A GENUINE EUROPEAN CITIZENSHIP MORE CONCRETE».
<b>DEBTS</b>		«WE WILL BRING DOWN DEFICITS IN A SUSTAINABLE AND FAIR WAY AND MANAGE PUBLIC DEBT IN EUROPE WITH NEW INSTRUMENTS».		«WE DO NOT WANT THE EU AND ITS MEMBER STATES TO RELY ON A LEVEL OF DEBT THAT IS EXCESSIVE AND BURDEN CITIZENS AND FUTURE GENERATIONS. THIS INCLUDES BRINGING FINANCIAL DEBT, BE IT PUBLIC OR

	EPP	PES	ALDE PARTY	GREENS
<b>DEBTS</b>				<p>PRIVATE, BACK TO SUSTAINABLE LEVELS AND MAKING SURE IT FUNDS SUSTAINABLE VALUE-CREATING INVESTMENTS. THIS WILL REQUIRE CASES OF RESTRUCTURING PUBLIC AND PRIVATE DEBT. (...) WE MUST ADDRESS SOCIAL DEBT: REDUCING UNEMPLOYMENT, POVERTY AND INEQUALITIES, IMPROVING HEALTH AND EDUCATION. THIS REQUIRES STRONG INVESTMENT EFFORTS. (...) IT REQUIRES ADDRESSING ENVIRONMENTAL DEBT: TACKLING CLIMATE CHANGE, THE EXHAUSTION OF FINITE RESOURCES AND THE EROSION OF BIODIVERSITY».</p> <p>«MANAGING LEGACY PUBLIC DEBT TOGETHER,</p>

	EPP	PES	ALDE PARTY	GREENS
<b>DEBTS</b>				BY SETTING UP A DEBT REDEMPTION FUND AND GRADUALLY ISSUING COMMON DEBT INSTRUMENTS (EUROBONDS) UNDER CLEARLY DEFINED AND REALISTIC COMMON FISCAL DISCIPLINE (...). RULES».
<b>ECONOMIC AND MONETARY UNION</b>	«WE NEED STRUCTURAL REFORMS, SO THAT EUROPE ATTRACTS PRIVATE INVESTMENT THAT CREATES GROWTH AND JOBS. (...) EPP WILL CREATE CONDITIONS THAT FAVOUR SMEs, FAMILY FIRMS, START-UPS AND ENTREPRENEURS, INCLUDING R&D FUNDING, PRIVATE INVESTMENT, AND MORE	«THE LAST 5 YEARS HAVE SHOWN THAT THE EUROPEAN ECONOMIC AND MONETARY UNION'S CONSTRUCTION IS STILL INCOMPLETE. IT HAS SHOWN THE IMPORTANCE OF MUTUALISING RESPONSIBILITY AND RIGHT WITHIN THE EUROZONE».  «TO CREATE JOBS AND RELAUNCH THE ECONOMY, WE WILL PRIORITISE	«WE WILL PRIORITISE THE COMPLETION AND EXPANSION OF THE SINGLE MARKET, NOT LEAST IN SERVICES, IDENTIFY AND CREATE NEW OPPORTUNITIES FOR ECONOMIC GROWTH AND GREATER INNOVATION, AND BOOST THE EU'S COMPETITIVENESS. ELIMINATING EXCESSIVE NATIONAL RULES AND	«IN ORDER TO REVIVE ECONOMIES IN CRISIS AND PRESERVE THE MONETARY UNION, WE ADVOCATE AN INCREASE IN THE EU BUDGET, PRIMARILY FUNDED BY OWN RESOURCES, AND THE CREATION OF FINANCIAL SOLIDARITY INSTRUMENTS AIMED AT HELPING TO FINANCE THE ECONOMIC RECOVERY».  «WE WANT TO

	EPP	PES	ALDE PARTY	GREENS
<b>ECONOMIC AND MONETARY UNION</b>	ACCESSIBLE LENDING. EPP INVESTS IN EDUCATION, RESEARCH AND TECHNOLOGY, LEADING TO INNOVATION, NEW IDEAS, A COMPETITIVE ECONOMY ROOTED IN KNOWLEDGE AND NEW DIGITAL SERVICES».	INNOVATION, RESEARCH, TRAINING AND SMART REINDUSTRIALISATION POLICY».	REGULATIONS AS WELL AS BORDER CONTROLS, AND ENSURING FREE MOVEMENT OF WORKERS, HAVE HELPED BUSINESS TO BE STRONGER AND MORE COMPETITIVE. HOWEVER, MUCH MORE CAN AND SHOULD BE DONE TO COMPLETE THE SINGLE MARKET AND SIMPLIFY DOING BUSINESS IN EUROPE».	TRANSFORM OUR EUROPEAN ECONOMY INTO A GLOBAL CHAMPION OF ENERGY AND RESOURCE EFFICIENCY».
<b>EU BUDGET</b>			THE BUDGET MUST BE GROWTH-ORIENTED. NEED TO REFOCUS ON INNOVATION, RESEARCH, DEVELOPMENT, EDUCATION; EU MUST SPEND ON JOB CREATION AND “NOT TO SUBSIDISE INCOME”.	

	EPP	PES	ALDE PARTY	GREENS
<b>EU BUDGET</b>			LIBERALS ARE COMMITTED TO MAKING BETTER USE OF “YOUR MONEY” BY CONTINUING TO CUT ADMINISTRATIVE BUDGETS. WASTEFUL SUBSIDIES MUST BE ABOLISHED. SUPPORT CAP REFORM.	
<b>GROWTH AND STABILITY PACT</b>			BETTER CONTROL MECHANISM AND MORE AUTOMATIC SANCTIONS WHEN THE GSP IS BROKEN.	
<b>EUROZONE</b>		«WE WANT TO PUT IN PLACE A REAL COORDINATION OF THE ECONOMIC AND FISCAL POLICIES IN EUROZONE THAT UNDERSTANDS THE SOCIAL EFFECTS OF THOSE DECISIONS».	«WE WANT BOTH EUROZONE AND NON-EUROZONE COUNTRIES TO REMAIN FULLY INVOLVED IN THE UNION’S DECISION-MAKING ON ECONOMIC ISSUES OF COMMON CONCERN, AS OUR ECONOMIC	

	EPP	PES	ALDE PARTY	GREENS
<b>EUROZONE</b>			FUTURES ARE INEXTRICABLY BOUND TOGETHER».	
<b>TROIKA</b>		THE LEGACY OF TROIKA IS A CLEAR FAILURE. AT THE END OF THE MANDATE OF TROIKA, THERE NEEDS TO BE ANOTHER MODEL WITHIN THE FRAMEWORK OF THE EU TREATIES.		
<b>TAX FRAUD</b>		«THE FIGHT AGAINST TAX FRAUD, TAX EVASION (...) AND TAX COMPETITION ARE KEY PRIORITIES FOR JUST TAX SYSTEM. HALVING TAX EVASION BY 2020, AND CRACKING DOWN ON TAX HAVENS ARE KEY PRIORITIES. WE WILL ALSO PROMOTE TAX RULES THAT	«WHILE WE ARE COMMITTED TO THE PRINCIPLE OF TAX COMPETITION, WE ARE CONVINCED THAT WE NEED TO DO MORE TO FIGHT TAX AVOIDANCE AND EVASION».	«THE TAX BURDEN WEIGHS DISPROPORTIONALLY (...) ON LOW AND MEDIUM ENTERPRISES, WHILE (...) €1.000BN ANNUALLY ESCAPES THROUGH TAX EVASION».  «WE ADVOCATE A COMMON OFFENSIVE AGAINST TAX EVASION, TAX FRAUD AND TAX HAVENS, STARTING BY PUTTING END TO BANK SECRECY».

	EPP	PES	ALDE PARTY	GREENS
<b>TAX FRAUD</b>		ENSURE TRANSPARENCY AND PREVENT TAX DODGING».		
<b>FISCAL POLICIES</b>			«THE CURRENCY UNION CAN ONLY BE SUSTAINED IF SOLIDARITY IS COMBINED WITH SOLID FISCAL RESPONSIBILITY. FISCAL SOLIDARITY DEPENDS ON FISCAL DISCIPLINE WHICH AVOIDS MORAL HAZARDS AND DOES NOT REDUCE ECONOMIC INCENTIVES FOR SOUND PUBLIC FINANCE».	FISCAL SUSTAINABILITY MUST GO HAND IN HAND WITH EQUALLY STRONG SOCIAL AND ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY.
<b>FINANCIAL REGULATIONS</b>		MAKE FINANCIAL SECTOR WORK FOR REAL ECONOMY AND CONTRIBUTE FAIR SHARE TO SOCIETY.	«WE WILL REINFORCE THE SINGLE MARKET IN (...) FINANCIAL SERVICES».  SMEs DRIVE PROSPERITY.	AVENUE TO SUSTAINABILITY – THROUGH RE- REGULATING THE FINANCIAL INDUSTRY SO IT SERVES THE REAL ECONOMY.

	EPP	PES	ALDE PARTY	GREENS
<b>FINANCIAL REGULATIONS</b>			«WE WILL FACILITATE JOBS CREATION THROUGH EASIER ACCESS TO FINANCE, SIMPLER RULES FOR INVESTMENT FUNDS TO SUPPORT NEW, INNOVATIVE BUSINESSES ACROSS EUROPE, AND OPPORTUNITIES FOR YOUNG ENTREPRENEURS».	«WE WANT TO ENSURE A PROPERLY SIZED, DIVERSE AND RESILIENT FINANCIAL SECTOR THAT SERVES SOCIETY AND HELPS MOBILISE SUSTAINABLE INVESTMENTS IN THE REAL ECONOMY».  «FINANCIAL SERVICES LEGISLATION MUST NOT SUPPORT FURTHER CONCENTRATION OF MARKET POWER TO THE DETRIMENT OF SMALL SUSTAINABLE BANKS».
<b>FINANCIAL TRANSACTION TAX</b>		SPEED UP INTRODUCTION.		ENACT FTT, DESPITE THE POWERFUL LOBBIES OPPOSED TO THIS PLAN.
<b>BANKING REGULATION</b>		INVESTORS SHOULD TAKE RESPONSIBILITY FOR LOSSES OF BANKS, AND NOT ONLY FOR	«COMMON MECHANISM TO WIND DOWN INSOLVENT BANKS IN ORDER TO	«WE PROPOSE STRINGENT RULES FOR THE SEPARATION OF BANKING ACTIVITIES

	EPP	PES	ALDE PARTY	GREENS
<b>BANKING REGULATION</b>		THEIR GAINS, CURB FINANCIAL SPECULATION AND PUT FIREWALLS BETWEEN COMMERCIAL AND INVESTMENT BANKING. CAP BANKERS' BONUSES.	AVOID COSTS FOR THE TAXPAYER».	INTO THOSE WHICH ARE ESSENTIAL TO SOCIETY AND THOSE WHICH ARE NOT. GREENS HAVE CONTRIBUTED STRONGLY TO ENSURING THAT FINANCIAL PRODUCTS AND ACTIVITIES WHICH PRODUCE NO BENEFITS FOR THE REAL ECONOMY AND HAVE THE POTENTIAL TO DESTABILISE THE FINANCIAL SYSTEM CAN BE BANNED AND TAKEN OFF THE EUROPEAN MARKET. (...) OUR INITIATIVES HAVE OUTLAWED NAKED SPECULATION ON SOVEREIGN DEBT, CURBED BANKERS BONUSES; FORCED BANKS TO DISSOLVE ACTIVITIES IN TAX HAVENS».

	EPP	PES	ALDE PARTY	GREENS
<b>BANKING UNION</b>		CONTINUE EFFORTS TO CREATE A ROBUST BANKING UNION, TO PROTECT CITIZENS AND GIVE FAIR AND EQUAL ACCESS TO CREDIT IN EUROPE.	«FOR RAPID IMPLEMENTATION OF A BANKING UNION IN THE EUROZONE WITH A COMMON LEGAL BASIS FOR SUPERVISION AND RESOLUTION OF BANKS».	«WE ADVOCATE A EUROPEAN BANKING UNION COMBINING A STRONG OVERSIGHT OF OUR BANKS, A COMMON AUTHORITY AND FUND TO RESTRUCTURE FAILING BANKS AND COMMON SYSTEM OF INSURANCE DEPOSITS UP TO €100.000 OR EQUIVALENT».
<b>EUROPEAN CENTRAL BANK</b>				«WE WANT THE ECB TO INCLUDE MACROECONOMIC AND FINANCIAL STABILITY AMONG ITS POLICY OBJECTIVES, WHICH ALSO INCLUDES EMPLOYMENT PROMOTION».  ECB'S BANKING SUPERVISION SHOULD BE SUBMITTED TO MORE DEMOCRATIC ACCOUNTABILITY.

	EPP	PES	ALDE PARTY	GREENS
<b>RATING AGENCY</b>		«WE WILL INSIST ON THE CREATION OF AN INDEPENDENT AND PUBLIC EUROPEAN CREDIT RATING AGENCY».		

In order to grasp the complexity of the proposed policy, it would be necessary to draft a separate section. However, as for the purpose of this article, that is assessing the potential of the Europarties to assume new issue-based political leadership after May 2014, it is important to make just three observations. First of all, there are three clusters in which the Europarties discuss the crisis and its consequences. These are: the issues related to welfare and public investment; those referring to the future of Economic and Monetary Union; and the issues connected with the regulations of the financial sector and the question of the banking union. Secondly, there is a clear difference in the definition of what constitutes “spending” and what is “investment”, and in what are the priorities in terms of allocation and potential sources of income. These cleavages underpin diverse approaches as what should be the reforms to advance within the EMU. Thirdly, and finally, even though three out of four Europarties refer to the need of taming financial capitalism by preventing tax fraud etc., still the proposed policies to achieve this goal remain diverse. With this in mind and looking at Table 8, it is possible to foretell what issues are undoubtedly going to make the EU agenda of the upcoming mandate; however, it is also clear that the way to any compromise will prove to be hard and rocky.

## Are the Europarties on the rise?

The paper took on board a three-step deliberation. It began with describing the existential crisis that the European Union entered in the wake of the global downturn. Looking at the decision-making style of the following years and at the level of political ambition, it was evaluated that the conservative rule adopted more the crisis management approach than a visionary political leadership. The respective leadership theories from within both political sciences and sociology, and here especially the sociology of organisations, offered the normative framework. They clarify, as mentioned before, that the difference lies between an administrative approach and a political one. This means that the first one is about maintenance or balancing, while the second is about paving the way for innovations and progress. The (crisis) management is mostly based on administering and realising certain goals, accordingly to currently available resources. It is about imposing control and monitoring systems. Refraining here from a political evaluation of the crisis management exercised by the conservative majority, the opportunity to put it in place emerged with the crisis. Subsequently, there was no longer a space for a long, collective, consensus-based decision-making process. Decisions had to be taken rapidly, and there was a need for redefining what the “common interest” was, and in which name they were to be imposed. Those in a stronger position made the bid. This explains why the German Chancellor, Angela Merkel, who is seen as a “presidential” figure in Europe, could seize the supremacy position, and why the current system became so misbalanced in terms of power, primacy being given to the intergovernmental method over the communitarian one.

Therefore the European elections should not only be seen as a contest between one or another position, but should be understood as a turning point in which a new style of (post-crisis)

leadership could be established. In order to do that, it is necessary to prove that there are different approaches, and show a path that is not only a shorter term analysis on how to go beyond the crisis, but on how to bring the EU into the new stage of development. The Lisbon Treaty provided the Europarties with a strong mandate to assume a new role, enabling them to campaign. It is quite obvious that the character of the intrapartisan competition on the European level – the election of top candidates – will change profoundly. Thus, the Lisbon Treaty should be seen as a catalyst for a new stage of the Europarties developments. It is however essential to remember that the institutional changes are in fact only one group of variables, and, by themselves, they cannot produce transformations.

Unlike what happens traditionally on the national level, the Europartisan competition in its weak form has been taking place in a sort of normative vacuum, rather than reflect the vested sociopolitical differentiation of opinions within societies. In the national contexts, parties build (derive from) the existing social conflicts. In the current circumstances, although the approaches may differ in details, it would seem that the Europarties, once again, are predominantly focused on defending Europe and mobilising voters to take part in the elections. In these circumstances pro-Europeanism or anti-Europeanism become ideologies, and from this point of view a real competition regarding the issues seems not yet to be the case.

It is true that there has been much criticism of the debates, the campaign and particularly the televised debates. The disappointment evolved mainly around the fact that it was not always “clear for ordinary viewer” what the differences among the Europarties effectively are. It is possible to counter-argue that the format, especially of the three main exchanges, did not allow longer considerations, and policy cleavages remained largely unexposed. Nevertheless, looking at the manifesto and putting the statements of the respective candidates in their perspective,

it is clear that there are solid lines marking cleavages between the narratives and the concrete policy proposals. There is, therefore, a possibility to talk about potential for further politicisation of the European Union beyond the simple pro- and anti-European standpoint. The question remains about the extent to which differences will endure and play a role, should a continuation of pan-EU compromise based on grand coalition persist on the institutional ground.

Hence the measure of the success of the Europarties in the 2014 election and its aftermath, will they seek to assume new quality political leadership over Europe, is triple-folded: criteria of turnout and support for pro-European parties; victory in terms of seeing one of the top candidates as the new President of the European Commission, and, last but not least, the actual influence on the EU agenda in the next years to come.

## NOTES

- <sup>1</sup> J. MacGregor Burns, *Leadership*, Harper & Row, New York 1978.
- <sup>2</sup> A. Skrzypek, *Who Has Abandoned Whom?*, in E. Wallis, A. Skrzypek (eds.), *Back to Earth. Reconnecting People and Politics*, FEPS and Fabian Society, Brussels and London 2014.
- <sup>3</sup> A. Skrzypek, *Standing Tall: Reconnecting with the Social Question of the Contemporary Times*, in E. Stetter, K. Duffek, A. Skrzypek (eds.), *Framing a New Progressive Narrative*, FEPS Next Left Book Series vol. 8, FEPS-Renner Institut-RCF-IGLP-HLS, 2013.
- <sup>4</sup> M. N. Franklin, *Voter Turnout and the Dynamics of Electoral Competition in Established Democracies since 1945*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 2004, p. 2.
- <sup>5</sup> A. Skrzypek, *Standing Tall* cit.
- <sup>6</sup> P. G. Northouse, *Leadership: Theory and Practice*, SAGE, Thousand Oaks 2013, p. 5.
- <sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>8</sup> A. Skrzypek, *Models of (S)Electing a Pan-European Leading Candidate*, FEPS, Brussels 2010.
- <sup>9</sup> K. Aarts, A. Blais, H. Schmitt, *Political Leaders and Democratic Elections*, Oxford University Press, Oxford 2011, p. 3.
- <sup>10</sup> K. Aarts, A. Blais, H. Schmitt, *op. cit.*, pp. 3-4.
- <sup>11</sup> D. Almeida, *The Impact of European Integration on Political Parties: Beyond the Permissive Consensus*, Routledge, New York 2012.
- <sup>12</sup> S. M. Lipset, S. Rokkan (eds.), *Party Systems and Voter Alignments: Cross-national Perspectives*, Collier-Macmillan, New York and London 1967, p. 2.

## **David J. Bailey**

### **On Political Will in the Era of Austerity**

This essay seeks to address some of the issues and arguments raised by Ania Skrzypek in her paper “Political Leadership of the Europarties: The Challenge of 2014”.

In my reading of her paper, Skrzypek focuses on three core lines of argument. First, that the European Union, and especially the European Parliament, needs a greater level of politicisation in order to engage more directly with the European citizenry, and to improve the representativeness, effectiveness and legitimacy of European integration. This means going beyond debates around the scope for European integration – more or less Europe? – and beyond the institutional questions related to the site of decision-making – European Parliament or Council of the European Union? – and instead moving to debates around issues. Do we need a Social Europe or a Free-Market Europe? How (if at all) to regulate the banking sector? How to stimulate economic growth and employment? These are the debates that need to be at the centre of political discussion in the European Union, and which need to be politicised in such a way that the European citizenry engages with them. If this occurs, the argument goes, the European Union will be more able to represent the aggregate preferences of those citizens, thereby improving democratic legitimacy and popular support.

Second, Skrzypek views this sought-after process of politicisation as having been facilitated by two developments: the global economic crisis that struck in 2007-2008 and which morphed into the Eurozone crisis in 2010, and the entering into force of

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the Lisbon Treaty in 2009. The global economic crisis and especially the Eurozone crisis have made socioeconomic questions regarding issues such as the level of public spending, the model of macroeconomic growth, and the approach to be taken towards fiscal balance, revenue and welfare spending, central to political debate. The Lisbon Treaty has created – albeit ambiguously – powers for the European Parliament, and the Europarty groupings within it, to elect the Commission President, a power which has been interpreted by many of the Europarties as an invitation to identify a “top candidate” ahead of the 2014 election. The combination of the personalisation brought about by the Lisbon Treaty, and the increased socioeconomic contestation as a result of the Eurozone crisis, has, Skrzypek argues, resulted in increased opportunity for the politicisation of the EU debate. Third, Skrzypek qualifies her optimism regarding the prospects for heightened politicisation by noting the continued existence of many of the obstacles that have already impeded the more substantive development of a politicised EU up until the present. These include the often-noted difficulties that EU decision-makers and MEPs have in connecting with voters, the hurdle of breaking through the national monopoly of political debate in most EU member states, and the technical nature of EU decision-making (which is, arguably, inimical to politicisation). Thus, whilst we see tentative moves towards politicisation, we should not ignore these real and substantive obstacles and the impact they might have in limiting the extent to which those moves can be taken further. What will be key, Skrzypek argues, is the extent to which political will can be drawn upon to promote and push for greater politicisation of EU politics and policymaking. There is much in Skrzypek’s paper to agree with. She presents a convincing, sophisticated and nuanced analysis, drawing on her extensive research and her close knowledge of the workings and sensitivities of EU politics. She clearly has insight into both the initiatives being developed and considered by the EU’s

key decision-makers, and the obstacles that they face. I agree that the global and Eurozone crises and the Lisbon Treaty both create genuine opportunities for change in European supranational politics, and I also share her caution with regard to the significant obstacles that continue to impede a more substantial politicisation of European integration. Where I am perhaps in least agreement with her, however, is in her discussion of “political will” and the claim that this can shift the terms of the debate. It is on this point, then, that I shall focus, and in doing so I will structure the discussion around four questions and an observation.

### **How to move policy debate beyond austerity as the only option?**

In seeking a politicisation of socioeconomic issues, it should perhaps first be noted that what we are really talking about is the need to make credible policy alternatives other than those which view austerity as necessary. Indeed, there already exists a consensus (or at least a perceived consensus) within “Brussels”, that austerity and reduced public spending are the only ways in which to resolve the Eurozone crisis. The dangers of high levels of public debt and imbalances between the core and periphery countries underpin what (at least from the perspective of the countries of the southern periphery) amounts to overwhelming pressure to cut public spending, reduce welfare provisions and thereby increase social inequality and insecurity. In seeking a politicisation of socioeconomic issues, therefore, we are *de facto* seeking opportunities to propose alternatives to the austerity agenda and to do so in such a way that they represent a viable alternative to the pro-austerity status quo. What is perhaps interesting, then, is to consider which social actors have thus far done most to put anti-austerity politics on the political agenda. I would suggest that, rather than political parties or the

institutions of the centre-left, it is actually social movements and social protest that have contributed most towards this goal. It is Movimiento 15M, the *indignados*, and other austerity protests in places like Syntagma Square that have done most to raise the question of whether austerity politics can be continued, and whether they are socially sustainable. Similarly, in considering the much-feared rise of the radical right, centrist parties have tended to look to limiting austerity politics in the light of concerns that the radical right will capitalise from disaffection arising from impoverishment. Indeed, when Barroso suggested that we might have reached the limits of austerity politics, it was the objections emerging from protest within society, not from the political class, that he looked to. He was quoted in April 2013 as saying that for «a policy to be successful [it] not only has to be properly designed. It has to have the minimum of political and social support». It was this support, he feared, that was not forthcoming. It is not clear, therefore, that the political will of political parties and the political class is the impetus that is required, but rather initiatives that have their roots more firmly within society and amongst those most directly affected by the austerity agenda.

### Which type of power?

Further, in considering *why* we might expect the impetus for an anti-austerity politics to come from grassroots protest rather than from the political will of the political class, we might also build upon Skrzypek's discussion of power. Thus, in her paper, Skrzypek sets out four types of power. She does not, however, consider what might be termed "structural" forms of power. In a paper that I co-authored with Stephen Bates, we consider two types of structural power – one is the capacity provided *to* social actors as a result of their location within a particular set of social relations; the other is the capacity of those social relations *to en-*

*gender* particular types of behaviour by those actors.<sup>1</sup> In understanding the structural power of political parties in the latter sense, political parties face considerable structural power engendering them to combine their ability to represent their electorate at the same time as managing the contemporary economy and society. From this perspective, and especially in terms of managing the contemporary economy, it is not entirely clear that an alternative to austerity *is* feasible at present – given that we currently see ever-rising debt, stagnating growth and an increasingly competitive global economy, questions must be asked regarding whether the contemporary economy can continue to afford alternatives to austerity.<sup>2</sup> Indeed, if it is the case that alternatives to austerity simply are not feasible for those seeking to manage contemporary capitalism, and given the weight of structural power in engendering particular party responses, then it is also not clear that we should or can expect political parties to promote those alternatives.

### **Which social groups are Europarties speaking to, and on behalf of?**

A third question to be considered with regard to the potential development of Europarties is that of social constituencies. In particular, the social constituency which Europarties need to produce, reproduce and represent, remains insufficiently defined. Thus, as Skrzypek rightly points out, the “winner”, at least in terms of political prominence, of the European economic crisis has been Angela Merkel – and we might add that this also applies to member states and, more generally, the intergovernmental model of European integration. The reason, we might suggest, is that member states have developed a strong narrative of the crisis and how it affects a clearly defined social constituency, which they are able to claim to represent: the German government purports to represent the hard-working

German taxpayers; the British government is protecting the economic interests of the City, and also perhaps defending the British national tradition from so-called meddling Eurocrats; and so on. It is not clear, however, who the Europarties are representing? Which social constituency are they constructing?

### What has really changed?

This discussion, then, brings us to a final question: in the light of all that we have discussed, and especially the limits that Europarties face, I wonder if it really is the case that we are witnessing a key opportunity for the development of those parties? From one perspective it seems that, rather than change, what we are instead witnessing is continuity. Thus, turnout in European Parliament elections has been in a constant state of decline since 1979, and there appears no indication that this is unlikely to go on. The Europarties continue to face the obstacle of adopting the “lowest common denominator”. And advocates of Europarties continue to hope that something might be about to change. Indeed, Skrzypek rightly identifies this apparently perennial unrealised ambition for change. As she notes, «naturally, rhetorically all the Europarties claim that this vote is historical and will be unlike any previous – but *this has been repeated in pretty much every election that took place with the European Communities*». What, then, has really changed this time around?

### An observation on political participation

This leads us to a final observation. The discussion herein of politicisation of the European sphere is premised in part upon a concern regarding the lack of popular engagement with the institutions of the European Union. But what is perhaps also noteworthy is that none of the indicators of this lack of engagement – declining turnout, low levels of party identification, scepticism

towards the formal institutions of contemporary democracies – are in any way unique to the European Union or the EU-level. Indeed, these are problems that afflict almost all institutions of representative democracy – in nation states as well as in the European Union. Alongside this trend, moreover, what has also been routinely noted is the emergence of rising levels of political engagement *outside* of the formal institutions of democracy: protests, direct action and support for other forms of direct democratic participation have all been increasing steadily for now several decades.<sup>3</sup>

This is, therefore, perhaps the lesson we might want to learn from the experience of austerity politics. Given that it was argued above that these informal types of political activity have represented the most effective form of opposition to austerity politics, and that Europarties need to identify and speak to a more clearly defined social constituency, then maybe the development of a more politicised, anti-austerity Europarty also requires a more concerted attempt to connect with these newer, more informal, types of social mobilisation and political participation which are currently on the rise.

## NOTES

<sup>1</sup> D. J. Bailey, S. R. Bates, *Struggle (or Its Absence) During the Crisis: What Power Is Left?*, in “Journal of Political Power”, 2/2012, p. 198.

<sup>2</sup> W. Streeck, *Will Expansion Work? On Mark Blyth, Austerity: The History of a Dangerous Idea*, in “Comparative European Politics”, 6/2013, pp. 722-28.

<sup>3</sup> K. Dodson, *The Movement Society in Comparative Perspective*, in “Mobilization”, 4/2011, pp. 475-94.



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EUROPEAN ELECTIONS  
SHOULD BE UNDERSTOOD  
AS A TURNING POINT  
IN WHICH A NEW STYLE  
OF POST-CRISIS LEADERSHIP  
COULD BE ESTABLISHED

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