

HENRY M. JACKSON SCHOOL OF INTERNATIONAL STUDIES

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Confronting the Democratic Deficit in the European Union:
The Potential of Europarties

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Confronting the Democratic Deficit in the European Union: The Potential of Europarties

*Henry M. Jackson School of International Studies
University of Washington, Seattle
Task Force Winter 2020*

Faculty Advisor

Niko Switek
DAAD Visiting Assistant Professor

Evaluator

Philipp Hansen
Head of the Political Unit ALDE Party Brussels

Coordinator

Ashley Tang

Editors

Oliver Daniels-Pavich
Taylor Jurgens

Authors

Salem Abraha
Delaney Carroll
Tianran Chen
Mariella Dewars
Abigail Gooch
Andrew Jawort
Xinye Li
Isaac Petrie
Miranda Reisman
Jeremy Samos
Daniela Suarez

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Ashley Tang

The European Union is a political and economic organization that symbolizes a unique collaboration between sovereign states. Originally confined to six Western European countries, the EU has since engaged in multiple waves of enlargement and now serves as the transnational governing body for 27 nations and their citizens. The EU is widely considered the cornerstone of European stability and prosperity through the introduction of an integrated market and its aid in democratizing Eastern Europe after the fall of the iron curtain. Nonetheless, in recent years, the EU has begun to experience upsets to the legitimacy of its democratic system. Despite a generally prosperous situation across Europe, the democratic deficit has contributed to the rise of populist, right-wing nationalist, and anti-establishment political parties in the recent EU elections, some of which harbor Eurosceptic sentiments.

One possible answer to the EU's democratic deficit lies in the role of political parties at the EU level— known as Europarties. Commonly considered as 'parties of parties', Europarties consist of national parties grouped along party family lines. Despite being a continuation of European integration, Europarties have been rather invisible and weak. However, in 2014, Europarties demonstrated their untapped potential through the introduction of the *Spitzenkandidaten* (German for 'lead candidate') model that was meant to make EU elections more accessible by associating each party with a single figure. While this model ran into some difficulties and was discarded in the subsequent 2019 elections, this leads us to explore the potential of Europarties to further democratizing the EU.

This Task Force explores the democratic deficit within the EU by analyzing the organization of the EU and the elections to the European Parliament. This report aims to provide a cohesive understanding of the EU organization and party competition at the European level. These recommendations for strengthening the role of Europarties, which thereby enhance intraparty democracy and increase the legitimacy of the EU, are developed under the following three thematic scopes: linking parties to bases, integrating and elevating processes, and addressing a fragmented Europe.

GLOSSARY

AECR	Alliance of European Conservatives and Reformists - Currently known as the European Conservatives and Reformists Party
AEMN	Alliance of European National Movements (<i>Alliance Européenne des Mouvements Nationaux</i>)
ALDE	Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe (<i>Alliance des Démocrates et des Libéraux pour l'Europe</i>)
The Authority	Authority for European Political Parties and European Political Foundations
CDU	Christian Democratic Union of Germany (<i>Christlich Demokratische Union Deutschlands</i>)
EC	European Commission
ECI	European Citizens' Initiative
ECPM	European Christian Political Movement
EDP	European Democratic Party (<i>Parti Démocrate Européen</i>)
EFA	European Free Alliance
EGP	European Green Party
EP	European Parliament
EPP	European People's Party
EU	European Union
Europarty	European political party
IPD	Intra-Party Democracy
Labour	British Labour Party
MENF	Movement for a Europe of Nations and Freedom (<i>Mouvement pour une Europe des Nations et des Libertés</i>) - Currently known as the Identity and Democracy Party (<i>Parti Identité et Démocratie</i>)
MEP	Member of the European Parliament
MP	Member of Parliament

M5S	Five Star Movement
PD	Italian Democratic Party (<i>Partito Democratico</i>)
PEL	Party for the European Left (<i>Parti de la Gauche Européenne</i>)
PES	Party of European Socialists
PM	Prime Minister
PS	French Socialist Party (<i>Partie socialiste</i>)
PSOE	Spanish Socialist Workers' Party (<i>Partido Socialista Obrero Español</i>)
SPD	Social Democratic Party of Germany (<i>Sozialdemokratische Partei Deutschlands</i>)

INTRODUCTION

Oliver Daniels-Pavich

After two world wars had wreaked havoc in Europe, the continent found itself at a precipice. Moving beyond division, the states at the heart of Europe embarked on a project of integration. This was first accomplished in an economic sense, originally with the formation of the European Coal and Steel Community and later with the creation of the single market (Olsen and McCormick 2017, 33-65). But the project developed further, taking on a political dimension, and eventually morphing into a unique supranational and intergovernmental organization (Olsen and McCormick 2017, 14). Today, the European Union is considered highly successful in the context of its original goals: it has brought peace to the continent, harmonized laws and economies in the bloc, and increased prosperity to citizens. Arguably one of Europe's most significant achievements is how the EU has served as a bastion for democracy and democratic values in not only the West, but across the globe. With the fall of Communism came the solidification of the belief that democratic systems would continue on a prosperous trajectory. Forty years later, cracks in this idea have become evident, and the success and efficiency of democracies have come into question.

Europe provides an apt lens for understanding the status of democracy today. There is democratic backsliding in particular nation-states, and an accepted consensus that the bloc as a whole is experiencing a 'democratic deficit' (Olsen and McCormick 2016, 231). The existence of this deficit primarily stems from the views and attitudes of broader society in regards to the EU; it is considered an elitist project and there is an apathy towards supranational politics. Out of the main institutions of the EU (the Parliament, the Commission, and the Council), only the

Parliament stands to directly represent the will of the people. The other organs have been constructed in a manner that means to balance the sovereignty of nation-states with the individual voices of citizens. However, many Europeans see an imbalance in the current dynamic and feel that their voices are not heard. People across Europe contend that Brussels is too far removed from the average person, and many do not concern themselves with European political affairs. The rise of populism and far right-wing rhetoric can be partially attributed to this democratic deficit; some people feel that they are neglected by the civil servants and members of Parliament in Brussels, and they turned to those who will both listen to and empower them. It is clear that there are problems in the democratic system in Europe, that there is a disconnect between the governing and governed, and the uptick in populism provides evidence of this. The democratic deficit has fed the growth of populist rhetoric, with people propping up parties that claim to actually listen to the voices of the people and are staunchly against 'self-serving elites' (Mudde and Rovira Kaltwasser 2017). The right-wing parties that are coming into power are putting into question the furthering and even the current status of European integration, as well as causing upsets to democracy as a whole across Europe. So Europe again finds itself at a precipice, confronting a fragmented electorate that is unsure of its agency in the EU polity and that demands reforms to the democratic system of the EU.

No matter the country, democratic systems are united by the presence of political parties. Parties play a key role in democracies, as they create organized packages of policy positions based on ideology. In doing so, they organize the electorate and make it more feasible for people to navigate the often complex and intricate process of law formation found in democracies (Katz and Crotty 2006). Governments are formed through parties winning

majorities in elections, or through forming coalitions with other parties. Political parties are key in connecting citizens to the government, and are key to the healthy functioning of a democracy. Therefore, it is no surprise that parties can be found on a European Level; these parties are simply termed *Europarties*. These ‘parties of parties’ group national political parties across the EU together by ideology (Lelieveldt and Princen 2015, 169). While finding their place in the fabric of the EP, Europarties have little authority beyond this realm. With the democratic deficit looming, and the role of political parties in mind, the question emerges if Europarties could have a hand in reshaping and revitalizing democracy in the EU. The agency of Europarties in this matter is already becoming perceivable on a substantive level, with the 2014 implementation of the *Spitzenkandidaten* (lead candidate) system showing how the winning party could translate their electoral victory into a successful nomination of the president of the Commission. The initial success of the *Spitzenkandidaten* system sparks a further investigation of the potential of Europarties.

This report seeks to synthesize the intersection of political parties and improve the democratic experience for citizens, specifically in the context of the European Union. The aim of the report is to critically analyze thematic areas that are relevant to this intersection, and to develop possible solutions to the problem at hand through policy recommendations. A few initial questions have guided the scope of the report and reflects a two-pronged approach:

- *How do Europarties function as transnational organizations?*
 - *How do Europarties operate in elections and how is their role significant in shaping the experience of citizens?*
 - *What is the power dynamic between Europarties and national political parties?*
 - *How do national party bases interact with their European counterparts?*

- *How can Europarties play a role in linking citizens closer to Brussels?*
 - *How can European elections ascend to first-order elections?*
 - *What instruments or practices have already achieved this and how can these be expanded by Europarties?*

This report will cover a wide range of actors and levels, including national political parties, Europarties, the system of EU governance, states themselves, and individual people. It will draw from pre-existing secondary literature on the subject of Europarties as well as tying in literature about attempts to improve democracy in Europe in general, including case studies. Primary sources directly from governing bodies or political parties themselves will also be incorporated. The report in general is analyzed with a frame of bringing citizens closer to the EU. While the thematic arenas of this topic are somewhat interconnected, individual chapters will breakdown a certain theme of the topic in the context of a given perspective. Ultimately, this report will show that Europarties have the potential to affect progress on making the EU more democratic. The report's argument is based on the predication that to have a strong democracy there must be strong political parties as well.

CHAPTER 1

EUROPARTY ORGANIZATION

Abigail Gooch

Introduction

The European Parliament is the only body in the institutional setting of the EU that is directly elected by the citizens. Its supranational character is also demonstrated by its organizations: Members of the European Parliament group themselves not by states, but by party families. These groups more or less mirror the political party organizations on the European level. These parties are referred to as Europarties, and are regulated by the EU to ensure they are following democratic principles. These regulations mainly focus on a party's statutes (formal written policy) and serve to promote justice within the European Union while laying the foundation for a party's organization (Gatton 2019). A party's statutes outline topics such as objectives, membership, assembly, and funding. If a party's statutes do not adequately convey the democratic values of the European Union, or if the party does not follow its statutes, that party may face repercussions from the European Union. Party organization is essential in understanding where the intersection of European democracy in the EU and European political parties lie. This system creates the structure of party operation, thus showing both the strengths and limitations of the European parliamentary system.

The European Parliament and Political Parties

Europarties are not confined to the national boundaries of individual member states, but instead transcend nations to act within the realm of European politics. Thus, European parties are comprised of members from many different countries in the European Union. They are not exclusive to individual nations, nor do they align completely with the ideologies of their

national-level counterparts. Europarties have to meet certain criteria to be officially recognized as a party by the European Union and external regulations that have to be followed to keep their party status. Based on the Council Regulation (EC) No. 2004/2003 of the European Parliament (2003):

In order to be qualified as a 'political party at European level', a party must:

- i. have legal personality in the Member State in which its seat is located;
- ii. be represented, in at least one-quarter of the Member States, by Members of the European Parliament (or in the national or regional Parliaments or regional assemblies), or it must have received, also in at least one-quarter of the Member States, at least 3 percent of the votes cast in each of those Member States at the most recent European Parliament elections;
- iii. observe, in particular in its programme and in its activities, the founding principles of the European Union, namely the principles of liberty, democracy, respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms, and the rule of law;
- iv. have participated in elections to the European Parliament, or have expressed the intention to do so.

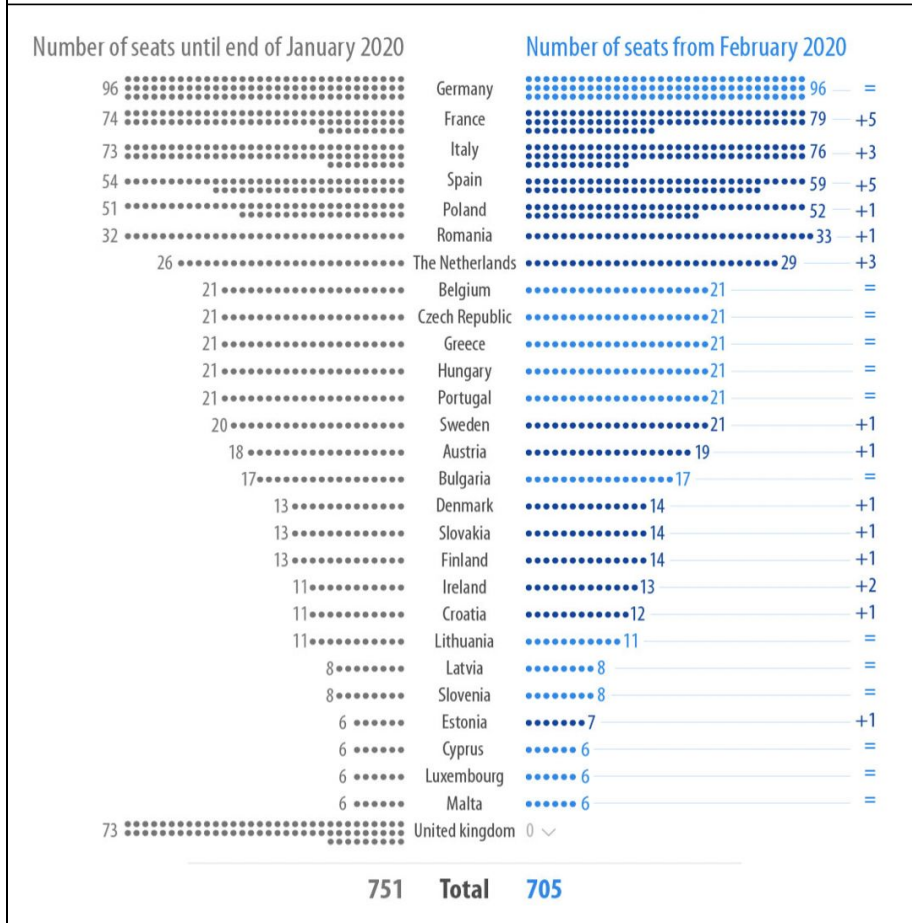
These guidelines mandate that parties promote democracy and represent the beliefs of the people. A Europarty also needs to be sure that they have representation in at least 7 of the 28 member states to prevent a small handful of nations from steamrolling their way onto the Eurostage and dominating legislation.

If Europarties, or the national parties they encompass, do not follow these statutes, they risk suspension or expulsion from the EP. In March 2019, "the European Parliament's main center-right grouping voted... to suspend Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orbán's ruling Fidesz Party until further notice amid concerns that it has violated EU principles on the rule of law" (Dunai 2019). The national Fidesz Party of Hungary is one of the dozens of national parties under the umbrella of the European People's Party. The EPP voted to suspend the Fidesz Party's participation in European party level meetings and discussions, "after calls both from allies, political opponents and rights groups for Orbán's party to be disciplined over its

anti-immigration campaigns and controversial changes to the judicial system” (Dunai 2019). Rather than risk being suspended from the EP, Europarties are held accountable for the actions of not only their own party, but their national representative parties as well, showing, at least in theory, accountability across Europarties and their national-level counterparts to uphold liberal democratic values.

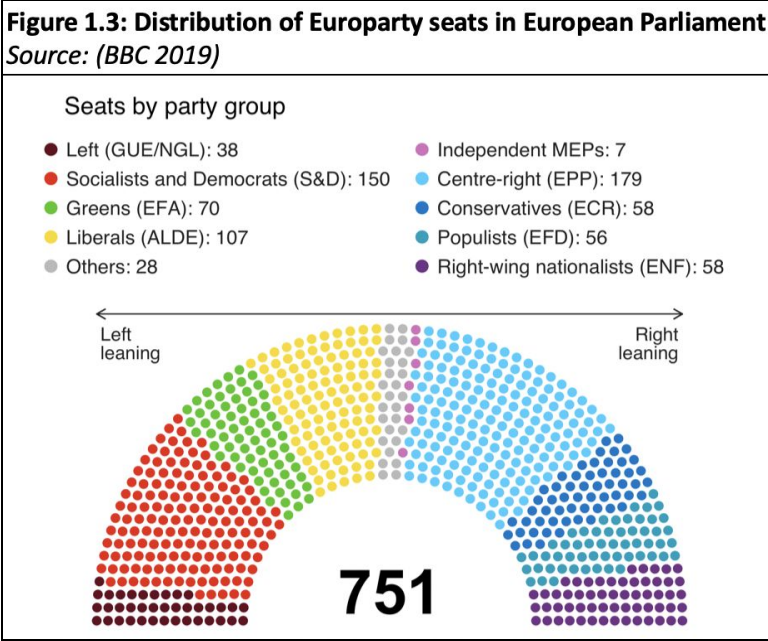
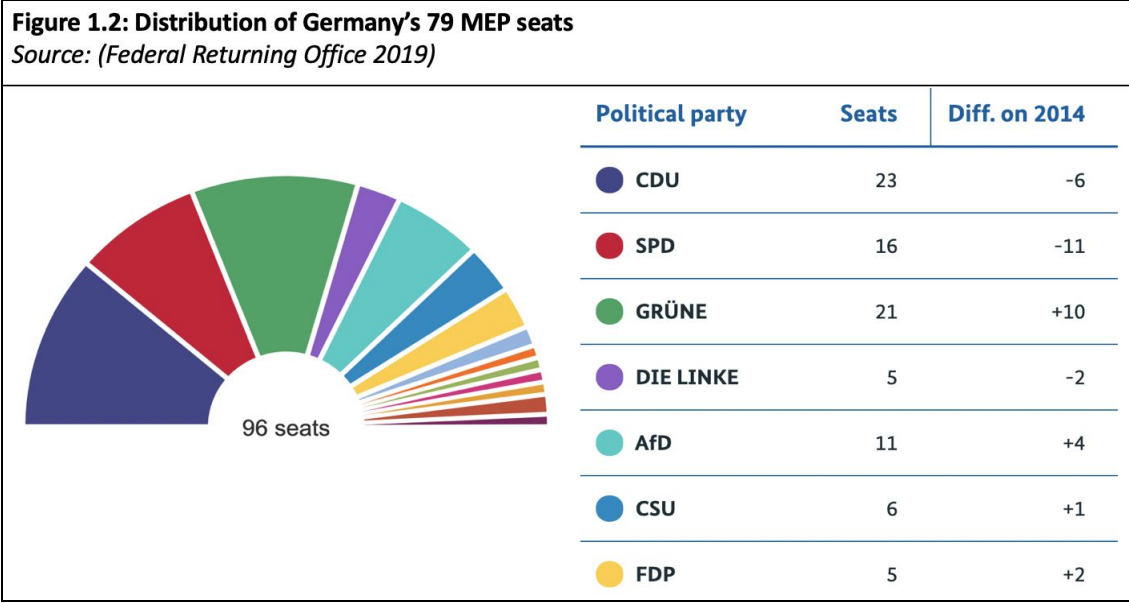
The European Union encompasses 27 countries, and Europarties organize with national parties from many (if not all) of these states in order to promote their agenda. In the EU’s democratic system, each member state gets a specified number of seats in Parliament based on their population. “The seat distribution takes into account the population of member states and follows the principle of degressive proportionality,” in such a way that larger countries such as Germany have more MEPs but a smaller country such as Luxembourg has a stronger presence in Parliament relative to their population size (EU Affairs 2020). This allows the EU to ensure that both large and small countries have fair and meaningful representation. With the departure of the United Kingdom, the number of total seats in the European Parliament dropped from 751 to 705 and a portion of the 73 seats that the United Kingdom had was redistributed to other 27 countries (Figure 1.1). Each member state fills their seats with representatives from Europarties; however, because EU citizens do not vote directly for Europarties, seat distribution is based on the share of votes that national parties receive.

Figure 1.1: Distribution of MEP seats per country before and after BREXIT
 Source: (EU Affairs 2020)



For example, Germany has 96 seats in the European Parliament (Figure 1.2). In the last election, the Christian Democratic Union, Germany’s most popular national political party, was allotted 23 of the 96 seats. However, even if the national-level party, the CDU, fills those seats, they at the same time belong to the Europarty the CDU is affiliated with. In this case, those 23 seats are allotted to the European People’s Party. In addition to the 23 German seats secured, the party gained 156 seats across the whole of the Union from national parties such as France’s Les Republicains and Spain’s Partido Popular (European People’s Party 2019). The EPP took

home a total of 179 seats across all member states, making it the largest party representation in the EP (Figure 1.3). Likewise, the Greens parliamentary group has 74 seats (together with EFA) made up of Green parties across EU states such as Ireland’s Comhaontas Glas and GreenLeft of the Netherlands (European Greens 2019). Of those, 21 came from Germany’s Grüne party, which came in third in the national elections (Figure 1.2).



However, because EP elections are seen as “second-order,” most EU citizens will only pay attention to their national elections and will not know how much representation their party actually has in the EP. For example, while the CDU is the largest national party in Germany, they actually lost six seats compared to the previous national election. Meanwhile, the Grüne party gained 10 seats bringing it up to second place at 21, just two seats short of the CDU’s 23 (Figure 1.2). When examining the breakdown of their corresponding Euro-level parties it becomes clear that the EPP and Greens do not have comparable representation. The EPP, CDU’s family party, has 179 seats while the Greens hold a mere 74 (Figure. 1.3). Thus, while a single nation’s seat distribution may show one trend, the Europarty distribution, which takes into account the large variance of opinions, ideologies, and cultures that span the EU, may show a very different picture. Laws and mandates from both the European and national parliament affect citizens, yet many citizens have serious knowledge deficits when it comes to their representation in the European Parliament. In an effort to make Europarties more accessible to EU citizens, Europarties construct statutes that serve to inform the public on the main tenets of the party.

Statutes

Statutes are internally constructed regulations on a party and encompass topics such as objectives, membership, representation, and political assembly. These chapters come together to weave the fabric of the organization by dictating the rules by which they will govern themselves. This process begins with the formulation of an objective. The objective resembles an abbreviated manifesto, stating their mission and guiding their actions. For example, the Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe Party stated in their statutes that their objective includes, “respect for human dignity, freedom, democracy, equality, the rule of law and respect

for human rights, including the rights of persons belonging to minorities” (ALDE Party Congress 2016). The party’s objective is the heart and soul of its statutes. In the case of the ALDE Party, they have made it clear that their predominant objectives lie in the respect and dignity of all people. Citizens who are interested in getting involved in a Europarty can read the objectives to determine which party best aligns with their own views when considering membership.

Conclusion

The relationship between Europarties and national parties is undoubtedly complex. In the interest of transparency and regulation, Europarties create statutes that govern beliefs and behaviors. These statutes facilitate democracy by enabling citizens to better understand the Europarties their national parties belong to and what commonalities they have. They also help ensure accountability of both the Europarties and national parties that face consequences for straying from the main democratic tenants of the EU. Understanding the structures and processes within the party system allows for a greater analysis of the organization of the European parliament. With these regulations and guidelines, the European Union is meant to function fairly and democratically in representing the desires of its citizens.

CHAPTER 2

EUROPARTY MANIFESTOS

Andrew Jawort

Introduction

Manifestos are declarations of a group's essential ideologies, policy positions, and aims. For European parties, manifestos act as a mission statement and play an important role in summarizing the tenets and beliefs of all national member parties represented by a given Europarty. Unlike statutes, manifestos are specifically linked to elections and expand on statutes, laying out specific priorities for the upcoming term; manifestos are created for every EP election cycle (Dolezal et al. 2012, 891). This chapter explores the way in which manifestos on the European level are created and how they coalesce the views of their various national member parties into one cohesive declaration. Because Europarty manifestoes affect the national-level parties, it must be assured that national-level parties are involved in creating or amending the document. This chapter aims to investigate not only how Europarty manifestos are formed, but also how they involve national parties in order to ensure the process is rightfully democratic. This includes evaluation of the participation and power of member parties in the creation of a manifesto with a specific emphasis on the 2009 PES Europarty elections.

Lifecycle of a Manifesto

The creation of a manifesto begins with select members drafting the main tenets and goals of the Europarty. This is done prior to an EU election; the exact time that the drafting process starts before an election depends on the party, but generally larger parties start drafting earlier. During this time the draft is shared with an official from the party who is tasked

with overseeing its creation to ensure that it accurately depicts what the party stands for. Larger Europarties that are comprised of national parties from most, if not all member states, must negotiate compromises in order to make sure the manifesto covers the most important unifying beliefs of their subsidiaries (Dolezal et al. 2012, 875–76). Thus, for parties like the EPP that hold the largest proportion of seats, this drafting process is often a long and meticulously drawn-out affair. Once a Europarty comes to a consensus as to what policies will be endorsed, a final draft is sent to national-level party leaders for approval. Usually, only a few finishing touches and last-minute changes are made at this time as major points of compromise have already been negotiated. Party leaders then present the manifesto to the Europarty congress to be adopted in a formal ceremony.

Nearly all Europarties will adopt and publish their manifestos between four and eight weeks prior to the election (Dolezal et al. 2012, 891). For the most part, party manifestos have a low readership; the average EU citizen considers a Europarty manifest to be a dry document filled with small print and legalese. Many parties do not expect the ‘average voter’ to read their manifesto; party representatives nearly all said that their readership base included academics, party officers, as well as their political opponents seeking out weaknesses in their positions or pledges (Dolezal et al. 2012, 884). Among the general public, only very interested and politically active voters read them. Manifestos are also geared towards the media in the hopes that they will accurately cover the policy positions of different parties in the hopes of reaching a larger audience. However, the platforms of parties are rarely covered. Media attention tends to focus on specific candidates; “between 40 and 50 percent of the articles include a reference to at least one of the top candidates,” while manifestos were mentioned less than 10 percent of the

time (Dolezal et al. 2012, 887). Manifestos function as contracts between voters and their Europarty. A voter should be able to hold the party they voted for accountable on the priorities they put forth in their manifesto. Because manifestos are written in a language that fails to appeal to a wider audience and are generally unapproachable to most EU citizens, they inhibit democracy by failing to properly inform and engage with the electorate.

Policy Position

Europarties are made up of similar national parties that group together based on similarities in ideology, and policy positions but they do not share all the same philosophies and beliefs. How do these similar but different parties come to conclusions about what will be on their communal manifesto? In what way will intra-party competition resolve itself in a Europarty and how do Europarty policy positions reflect the position of their constitutive national parties?

The Europarty, comprised of a group of rational collective actors, is tasked with working together to pass policies for the EP. In this situation, each national party's interest is to make their Europarty, as closely as they can, reflect their own policy positions (Klüver and Rodon 2013, 633). Within a Europarty, national parties compete to get their own policy positions adopted into the common manifesto. To understand this competition an insight made from studying coalition governments can be used. This insight is "Gamson's Law" which states that "any participant will expect others to demand from a coalition a share of the payoff proportional to the amount of resources which they contribute to a coalition" (Klüver and Rodon 2013, 635). In this case, the payoff for member parties is the proximity of Europarty policy positions to the positions of a member party. The contributions a member party has are

the seats they can offer in the EP. This means that national parties with more members in parliament have more power in determining what positions a Europarty adopts. This trend means that it is not the mean or median policy position a Europarty adopts but the positions closest to its largest contributing parties disproportionately. Because of this, small national parties that are a part of a large Europarty have little say in the process of manifesto creation and the policy positions of their Europarty. Though a manifesto must be unanimously accepted, evidence suggests that the policy positions of a Euromanifesto do not represent the median position among all member parties on a left to right scale but rather skew towards the member parties with the most seats in European Parliament (Klüver and Rodon 2013, 631, 649).

2009 PES Case Study

The Party of European Socialists 2009 election is a useful case study in understanding how national member parties use and treat Europarty manifestos in European Parliament elections. The three main parties that will be examined in this election are the British Labour Party, the French Socialist Party, and the German Social Democratic Party. During the campaign, cleavages began to emerge between these three parties' ideologies, policy positions in national campaigns and treatment of their common Euromanifesto. All three parties focused more on their own national politics and de-emphasized the Europeanness of their campaigns. They localized the PES message to their specific audiences. This was to avoid problems that might come up like in the 1994 EP elections when Labour dropped the PES manifesto because they could not commit themselves to the 35-hour workweek which they were criticized for harshly by the Conservative party and press (Hertner 2011, 329). In 2009, Labour did not use the PES manifesto in their campaign. Manifestos were looked at skeptically and Labour would have

preferred if the PES manifesto was value-based and vague rather than having the policy commitments that it did which were further left than Labour leadership desired (Hertner 2011, 335).

The Labour manifesto largely addressed the same issues that the PES manifesto did but with more emphasis on the political achievements on the EU level and the benefits the United Kingdom could get from EU membership. It was thought that PES material would need to be broken down into more local terms. Manifestos, “don’t play a big role during the election campaign, at least not when you speak to people at their doors,” explained one MEP candidate. Another explained that manifestos were mostly just used as references for when someone or the press ask you what Labour’s policies are (Hertner 2011, 336). Their campaign was largely focused on issues specific to the United Kingdom. The parliamentary expense scandal, for example, dominated much of the political debate at the time and a focus on European economic issues and European structural funds was largely drowned out. The “Social Europe” part of PES campaigns that focused on social legislation on a pan-European level was seen as too controversial at the time and risky as it could lead to a loss of votes and thus was not utilized in the United Kingdom.

The SPD campaign too had its own national manifesto separate from the PES Euromanifesto. SPD MEPs were aware of the PES manifesto and thought it was important that it appealed to all PES member parties and gave a uniquely European perspective however they when questioned by voters and the press they referred to their own SPD manifesto. This national manifesto also called for a “Social Europe”, stricter regulation of financial markets and climate change mitigation policies. However, there was also a focus on specific national

concerns like the principle of subsidiarity, which prescribes that an issue should be dealt with at the most local level possible (Hertner 2011, 336-337).

PS was unlike its peers and exclusively used the Europarty PES manifesto and iconography. This may be because PS was much closer ideologically and on policy positions to PES. As well, PS used PES as the focus to stand boldly by pro-European integration. That PS was a party in opposition could also have been a determining factor as they could more easily commit themselves to ambitious policies. At the time PS also had a lower budget and smaller staff than the other two parties discussed and so using PES material was convenient. In the end, PS did not have a very successful campaign and the European message was largely lost (Hertner 2011, 337-338).

Convergence on policy issues for these reasons did not happen between these three PES parties. It could also be said that because of these conflicting interests and local priorities Euromanifestos that try to speak for a large conglomerate of somewhat heterogeneous groups appeal to the lowest common denominator. This could mean being vague about or omitting topics that might foster disagreement between the member parties. They still do however serve as a platform for transnational values and policy commitments.

This case study highlights the diversity of opinions and challenges of creating unity among member parties of a Europarty. This disparity between member parties shows that PES has very little control over their member parties. This means that constituents of PES from some nations may feel that they are not being properly represented. The national party that represents a PES in one nation will be different than the national party that represents PES in another. This means voters who align with the PES ideology or positions may not feel as though

their national party is properly representing that position. This is even worse for voters who would like to vote for a particular Europarty that is not represented at all in their nation, meaning none of their national parties are a member of their preferred Europarty.

Because there is no consistent use of Euromanifestos across member parties' compromises, values or positions endorsed on the European level can be ignored on the national level. This means that the perspectives of a minority opinion in one nation, that is represented in the Europarty's manifesto, may be ignored in the national context as it is the member parties that have the last say in how to represent their parent party's ideas. Another un-democratic aspect of this disparity is that the Euromanifesto of PES did not equally represent all its member parties. Some member parties like PS, who forwent their own manifesto, were more closely aligned with the PES Euromanifesto than others, in this example SPD and Labour. One contributing factor to this may have been that PS had one of the largest delegations in the PES Europarty, although SPD and Labour did have large delegations as well, this might have been a contributing factor as to why theirs and the PES manifesto were similar.

Conclusion and Recommendations

To make Europarties more democratic, Europarties should adopt a manifesto open-drafting process. Leading up to its 2009 campaign PES held an open consultation process for its manifesto. Here PES activists, trade unions, NGOs, and political foundations could meet and discuss both online and in real life about what they thought was important for a PES manifesto. This forged a direct link between Europarty and electorate both strengthening PES indirectly by giving them legitimacy through public mandate and PES members as they had their voices heard without member parties as an intermediary. To avoid opt-outs as seen in 2009,

Europarties should call on their national parties to halt the use of national party manifestos. National parties should all contribute to their Europarties manifestos and use them exclusively to promote unity and coherence.

Secondly, Europarties should focus on creating manifestos that are more easily digestible by the public, with use of clear and accessible language and graphics of the parties' priorities, how European elections function, and what their local party affiliate is in each nation. Europarties have an opportunity to bring their manifestos to life and start being seen as first-order elections by the people. A voter should be able to hold the party they voted for accountable on the priorities they put forth in their manifesto, but are prevented by doing so as long as manifestos remain inaccessible to their readership. These easier-to-digest "mini manifestos" should be clear cut, simplistic language, with appealing graphics handed out as literature or promoted on social media platforms belonging to both the Europarties and their national subsidiaries. This will allow voters to engage with the core tenets of a Europarty's manifesto, strengthening the democratic ties between Europarties and the people.

CHAPTER 3

EUROPARTY FUNDING

Delaney Carroll

Introduction

Regardless of the type of political system, all political parties need a workable amount of funding to accomplish their key responsibilities, both during and between election periods. The funding of political parties refers both to the ways in which parties finance campaigns as well as how they support their everyday activities. Campaign finance funds indicate specific funding allotments during the election process. Parties at all levels, whether it be local, national, or supranational, have finance regulations that they must comply with. The rules and regulations associated with party finance are vital to ensure the democratic process is efficient and transparent. Without proper regulation, the financial system can fall into the hands of corrupt actors and threaten the democratic values of election systems. This chapter provides an overview of the different types of party funding and the funding structure at the supranational level with Europarties. It looks at the different sources of Europarty funds and the weaknesses of the current financial reporting system that could be addressed to aid in democracy and transparency.

Types of Party Funding

There are three categories for sources of political party funding. First, parties receive contributions from party members and individual supporters, via membership fees, dues, and small donations. Second, organizations donate to parties with similar political views or to parties whose policies will benefit donors. Third, parties are allocated money from the general

revenue fund, financed by taxpayers. This is true at the national level and at the supranational level (OSCE and Europarat 2011). The funds for party activities, whether it be campaign activity or routine operations, can be collected either by "grassroots fundraising," such as party membership dues or other voluntary contributions from individuals, or as "plutocratic funding" from affluent people and/or the business community as corporate donations (Alexander and Federman 1989). Additionally, some party systems employ government subsidies through their tax systems to fund party activity. The primary reason behind state subsidies is to support the parties in their roles of policy formulation, public education, and linkage between society and the government. State backing for political parties is nearly universal in liberal democracies across the world (Caramani 2017). State support is commonly thought to diminish the opportunities for corruption because parties no longer have the need to satisfy the interests of private donors in order to gain funding. On the other hand, public financing can lessen a party's incentive to invite new members and can favor large, established parties.

Rules and regulations on party funding and spending must exist to ensure the political process is democratic and fair. Therefore, party funding rules are implemented by the state, national, or in the case of the EU, supranational legislatures. Rules must be implemented and regulated to guarantee parties remain independent from the influence of large donors to ensure transparency among Europarties. In addition to clear party finance rules, regulation methods must be imposed to ensure party compliance. Funding of political parties through private contributions is also a form of political participation. Thus, legislation should attempt to achieve a balance between encouraging moderate contributions and limiting unduly large contributions. Currently, every EU member state has national legislation regarding restrictions

and limits on political party finance; however, no states have enacted regulations on Europarty financing.

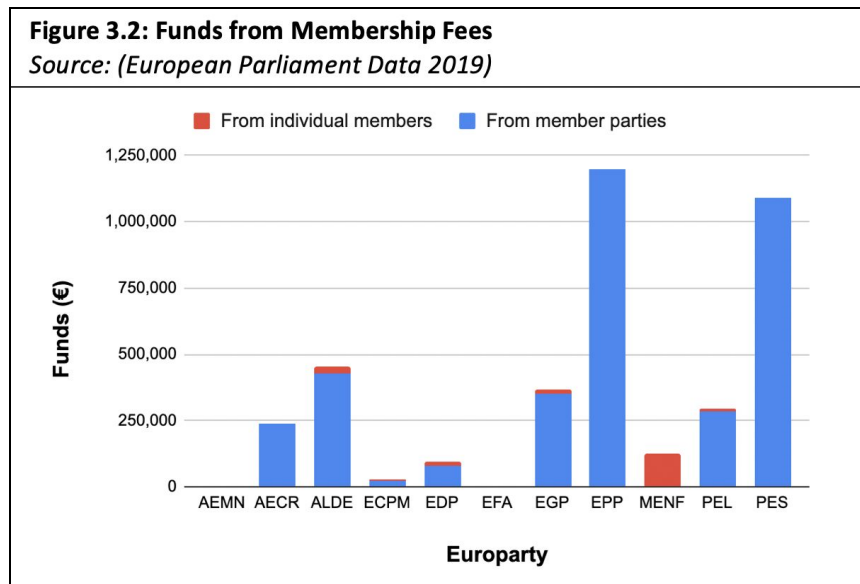
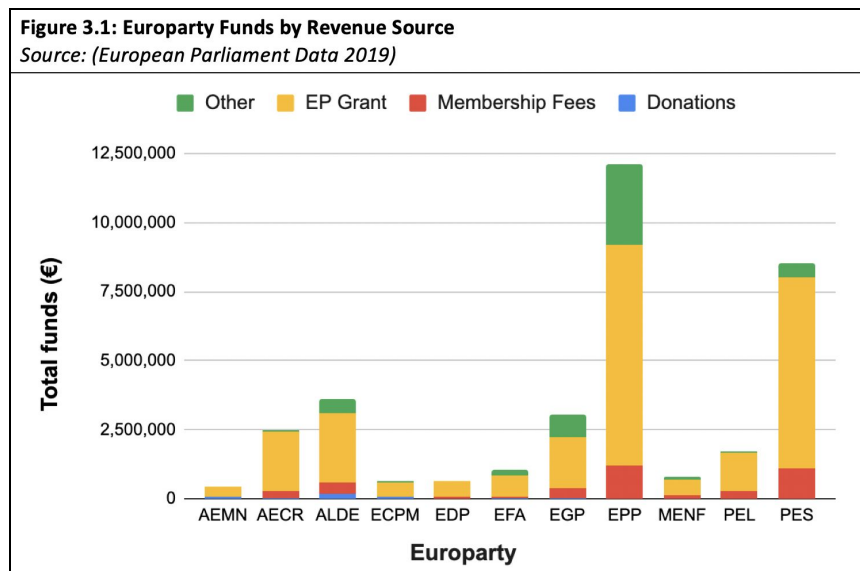
European Union Funds

Europarties have the opportunity to collect annual funding from the European Parliament in the form of an operational grant. These grants can make up to 90 percent of the party's spending (European Parliament News n.d.). The other portion of party funds is covered by each party's own resources, such as membership fees and donations. The purpose of the EP grants is to source the expenditures that are directly linked to the objectives set out in the party's political program, such as: meetings and conferences; publications, studies, and advertisements; administrative, personnel and travel costs; or campaign costs related to European elections (European Parliament News n.d.). The funds from this grant may be used for campaign finance; however, there are a set of restrictions associated with the grant, specifying that funds may not be used for including campaign costs for non-EU elections; direct or indirect funding of national parties, election candidates, and political foundations both at national and at European level; or debts and debt service charges (Official Journal of the European Union 2014).

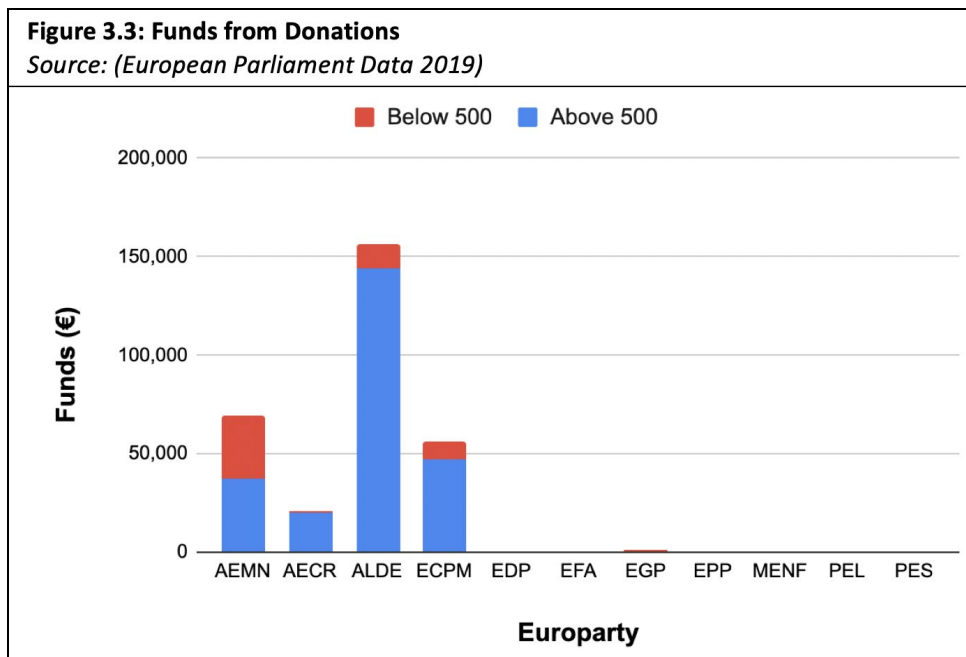
Private Funds

Each Europarty has the freedom to collect private funds however they see fit, so long as it complies with member states' national legislation and with EU financing restrictions. For example, the European Parliament does not allow Europarties to accept anonymous donations or any donation exceeding €12,000 per donor each year. The European Parliament operational grants make up the majority of Europarty funds (Figure. 3.1). Still, private funds are an

important revenue source for Europarties. Most registered Europarties rely on membership fees from either member parties or individuals. Figure 3.2 shows the Europarties' revenues from membership fees. The European People's Party receives the most income from membership fees; the party's statutes state, "ordinary Member Parties, Associated Member Parties, Member Associations, Observer Member Parties, and EPP partners individually pay annual dues of no more than 500.000 (five hundred thousand) euros," (European People's Party 2015, 7). Membership fees can be a steady source of revenues for Europarties but only if their member parties are willing to pay such fees.



Another important source of private funds comes from donations. As discussed above, there are strict restrictions and regulations on receiving private donations. Nonetheless, legal donations make up a key portion of some Europarties' funds. Figure 3.3 provides a breakdown of the donations received by Europarties, clarifying donations of less than €500 and more than €500. The ALDE party receives the highest amount of private donations, the vast majority being donations above €500. Conversely, the two highest funded parties, the EPP and PES, receive little to no funds in donations. A possible explanation for this is that the content of the financial reports varies by Europarty. Because each Europarty self-reports its financial statements, there is the possibility that certain funds are characterized differently across different party reports. The Europarty system as a whole would significantly benefit from the creation of a standardized system for collecting and reporting party finances controlled by an independent regulatory.



Financial Regulation

The legal framework that lays out the ground rules for financing, Regulation (EC) No 2004/2003, covers both funding from the EU and private donations. This framework requires Europarties to apply for EU funding grants, undergo a verification process, and agree to certain compliance rules. These rules stipulate that all political parties at the European level publish their revenue and expenditure, as well as a statement of their assets and liabilities annually (2003). All of these rules and regulations serve to make Europarty elections fair and transparent to the public and, in turn, more democratic.

Looking beyond the law itself, it is important to consider the ability to regulate Europarty finances. Regulation is essential in guaranteeing Europarties remain independent from outside influences, to ensure the equal opportunity for all parties to compete, and to provide for transparency in political finance (OSCE and Europarat 2011). On April 17, 2018, the European Parliament approved new funding rules for Europarties aimed at improving compliance with Europarty finance restrictions. These new regulations directed that Europarties be registered and controlled by the Authority for European Political Parties and European Political Foundations (the 'Authority'), a body that can also impose sanctions on the parties (European Parliament News n.d.). The Authority is independent from the EU parliament; if complaints are made about the expenditures of a party, the Authority is charged to investigate. And if violations are found to have been committed, the Authority then comes to a decision on whether to de-register a party and repossess the funds from people who are guilty of misuse.

Additionally, the new 2018 rules aim to increase transparency by allocating EU funds to help fight fraud and targeting exploitative activities such as the formation of false entities attempting to skim additional EU funding (Council of the EU 2018). Included in the new regulations are narrower requirements for creating a Europarty. Individuals no longer are able to sponsor the formation of a Europarty, instead only national parties have that ability. This does not mean that individuals cannot support Europarties; it only restricts them from creating a new Europarty. Additionally, cross-Europarty membership is prohibited. Another focus of the new legislation is the proportional distribution of funding. The amount that each party receives from the EU budget decreased from 15 percent to 10 percent, leaving a larger portion of the budget to be allocated in proportion to the number of seats in the European Parliament (Council of the EU 2018). The decrease in funds makes the Europarty finance system more democratic because it focuses on allocating funds based on representation in the EP. Europarties now cannot rely solely on European Parliament funds to source their parties, instead they must look to build their membership and thus, increase dues. A final goal of the new laws is increased transparency. Europarties cannot receive funds unless their national member parties display the logo and program of the Europarty on their individual websites. In this way, citizens are more aware of Europarty affiliation and can better understand the ideals of each Europarty.

When discussing regulations for Europarty funding, an important dynamic to consider is the relationship between Europarties and national legislatures. How do Europarties comply with both EU legal framework and national party financing rules? The 2003 legal framework

includes guidelines for Europarty compliance with national legislatures. Regulation (EC) No 764/2008 states:

Within the framework of this Regulation, it remains for each political party and foundation at European level to define the specific modalities for their relationship, in accordance with national law, including an appropriate degree of separation between the daily management as well as the governing structures of the political foundation at European level, on the one hand, and the political party at European level with which the former is affiliated, on the other hand.

In this way, the burden is placed on each individual Europarty to figure out the best way to work as a supranational organization and maintain good relations with national parties and governments. Therefore, because donation limits may vary by state and national party, Europarties must self-regulate donations to ensure they remain in compliance with all national legislation.

Conclusion and Recommendations

Europarty financing rules are organized similar to many national party finance rules. Because European Parliament funding legislation gives the ultimate jurisdiction to national legislatures, there is no conflict between EU and national laws. Though the European Parliament has revised funding rules several times, issues with the Europarty fundings rules and regulations have arisen in recent years. In order to make Europarty activity more democratic, both during and between election periods, there are several reforms that the European Parliament and individual Europarties can implement.

While the creation of the Authority for European Political Parties and European Political Foundations was a significant move, more needs to be done to ensure that the system is not being taken advantage of. Anytime there money mixes with politics, there is potential for

corruption. At the supranational level, The EU should appoint a commission under the Authority to create a comprehensive and standardized financial reporting system in order to maximize public disclosure and transparency, and Europarties play a role in forming this system. As it currently stands, Europarties' audit reports and financial statements are written in different languages, use different frameworks, and include different pieces of information. On top of that, the financial reports are only available in PDF form and many of them are blurry and illegible. A standardized reporting software system would not only make it easier for Europarties to comply with disclosure laws, it would also make the financial statements more accessible to EU citizens. Ideally, all funds and expenditures should be disclosed regularly and available online for anyone to review and report potential violations. Violations would be looked into by the Authority as they do now, with the added benefit of anyone being able to review and report violations. Implementation of this system should go hand in hand with user training so every Europarty is able to transition to this system; this could be done through a series of online videos in all EU languages that teach Europarty treasurers to properly file their financial reports with the online system. This training is essential to ensure that financial reports are standardized across each party. An additional component could be a video explaining the financial reports and how to read them, made available to the public so that they can fully understand the reports.

Individual Europarties will benefit from following the EPP's lead and writing membership fees into their statutes. Member parties could allocate a certain percentage of membership dues to the affiliated Europarty, and automatically sign members up for the privileges that come with Europarty membership; doing so would increase Europarty revenues while tying

citizens directly to the EU-level. Furthermore, by making the Europarty fees a percentage of the national party fees, members are not incurring extra costs that might otherwise keep them from donating. National member parties would also need to include the Europarty member fees in their fiscal reports, thus publicizing their Europarty affiliation. Beyond financial gain, including Europarty fees in national party member fees will also create a stronger link between the national and European levels and counterbalance the strong EP funding influence.

All of these recommendations aim to make the Europarty funding procedure easier, more transparent, and more democratic. If Europarties can better publicize their financial statements, more people will be able to access and digest that information. Furthermore, if member parties include compulsory fees to their Europarty, individual members will have more exposure to their specific Europarty and to the Europarty system as a whole and there will be a stronger connection between the national parties and the Europarties.

CHAPTER 4

MODELS OF EU ENGAGEMENT

Daniela Suarez

Introduction

Political parties have been essential in linking citizens to their government systems. They are present in communities, have individual chapters, and connect citizens to issues that impact them. Traditionally political parties have existed and been effective at the national level; since the creation of the European Union this has allowed for another layer of political parties to take form. These Europarties have contributed to the democratic deficit inadvertently due to the complex supranational level the EU operates on. However, Europarties are still in the early stages of creation, which lends a unique opportunity to curate engagement with citizens through different experimental models. This chapter will explore how national parties' success in engaging with their constituents give insight into how Europarties will be received. Additionally, alternative models of participation will be reviewed within this chapter to understand how Europarties have taken steps to broaden their reach to the EU electorate. Lastly, European political parties continue to reshape themselves in regards to their relationship with national parties; this merits a discussion of the current structure and if it could be improved or changed to better engage directly with the electorate. Circumventing national parties all together holds many challenges that will be later discussed in this chapter. Europarties have an uphill battle attempting to link EU member state citizens to a seemingly perceived bureaucratic institution that is out of reach for the public to engage with.

Intra-Party Democracy: Decline of Traditional Membership

Traditional party membership is defined as opting into a political party whereby an individual pays dues in exchange for access to exclusive newsletters and participatory rights in the form of nominating candidates and influencing party policy. In contemporary European democracies between 1980 and 2000, traditional party membership has largely been on the decline (Table 4.1). A majority of countries have experienced a decrease in the party membership in relation to the electorate levels (M/E ratio). France experienced a 3.48 percent decline proportional to a loss of 1,122,128 members, and Austria exceeded a 10 percent decline (Table 4.1). The data overwhelmingly shows a trend in decline of formal party membership.

Table 4.1: Party membership change, 1980-2000				
<i>*The percentage change is measured relative to the earliest year for which membership is reported</i>				
<i>Source: (Mair and Biezen 2001, 12)</i>				
Country	Period	Change in M/E ratio	Change in number of members	Change in number as percentage of original membership*
France	1978-1999	-3.48	-1,122,128	-64.59
Italy	1980-1998	-5.61	-2,091,887	-51.54
United Kingdom	1980-1998	-2.20	-853,156	-50.39
Norway	1980-1997	-8.04	-218,891	-47.49
Czech Republic	1993-1999	-3.10	-225,200	-41.32
Finland	1980-2000	-6.09	-206,646	-34.03
Netherlands	1980-1999	-1.78	-136,459	-31.67
Austria	1977-1997	-10.82	-446,209	-30.21
Switzerland	1980-1998	-4.28	-118,800	-28.85
Sweden	1980-1998	-2.87	-142,533	-28.05
Denmark	1980-1998	-2.16	-70,385	-25.52
Ireland	1980-1998	-1.86	-27,856	-24.47
Belgium	1980-1999	-2.42	-136,382	-22.10
Germany	1980-1999	-1.59	-174,967	-8.95
Hungary	1980-1999	+0.04	+8,300	+5.02
Portugal	1980-2000	-0.29	+50,381	+17.01
Slovakia	1980-2000	+0.82	+37,777	+29.63
Greece	1980-1998	+3.58	+375,000	+166.67
Spain	1980-2000	+2.22	+808,705	+250.73
Poland	2000	n.a	n.a	n.a

Democracy in any system requires different entry points to allow voices to be heard and acknowledged. A way to combat the deficit in democracy is creating a coalition of EU political parties to administer a campaign that targets countries such as: Slovakia, Slovenia, Croatia, and Latvia that had the lowest voter turnout in the 2019 election (European Parliament and Kantar 2019). In 2019 the EU made a significant achievement increasing voter turnout to 50.66 percent. 40 years had gone by where turnout was decreasing. Looking closely at the voter turnout big countries such as Germany and France propelled the voter turnout percentage to soar. Germany in 2014 went from 48.10 percent to 61.38 percent in 2019; France in 2014 has 42.66 percent of their electorate turnout in 2019 it increased to 50.12 percent (European Parliament and Kantar 2019). France and Germany have big populations; when their population of people voting increased it had a major impact on the overall voter turnout out percentage. Slovenia saw an increase from 24.55 percent in 2014 to 28.89 percent in 2019 and Croatia similarly increased from 25.24 percent in 2014 to 29.85 percent in 2019.

Evolving Party Membership Rights

The decline in membership begs the question: *why are party members not continuing to be formally committed to their party?* There are many factors to consider when describing why there continues to be a decline in formal party engagement. For the purposes of this paper, it will focus on the following three areas: distrust in political institutions, levels of intra-party democracy, and growing behavioral affiliation to a party.

The percentage of people that have no trust in political parties rose from 15.7 percent in 2004 to 21 percent in 2012 (Peters and Tatham 2016, 53). Lack of trust and skepticism in political parties correlates to the withdrawal of party loyalty: there is less of an inclination for

members to continually engage with the party itself and contribute financially, thus weakening the traditional party membership model. Distrust in political parties can also stem from a lack of intra-party democracy and to what degree a party is dedicated to this concept. IPD can be defined differently by parties but in large it indicates participation, inclusivity, centralization, and accountability as measures (Cross and Katz 2013, 8). How inclusive is the party in allowing members to make direct decision making? Which members are these (i.e party elite or regular party members)? Each party decides where the decision making authority lies and who has access to it, the types of organizational structure of delegated powers that can discourage some from participation due ability to influence, and some trust in an indirect approach to participation. For example, German party law specifies parties must have: regional branches, an executive committee of at least three members which are elected at least every two years; an assembly; at least half of the members of which must be allocated on the basis of membership and the rest by proportion of votes obtained through parliamentary election (Cross and Katz 2013, 41).

The correlation between the decline in party membership and citizen dissatisfaction in IPD has academics significantly questioning political parties' unintended involvement in creating this trend by being over-hierarchical and not providing sufficient opportunities for modest members to influence internal decision making (Cross and Katz 2013, 1-48). Due to growing concerns of the traditional membership model and inconsistency of IPD, citizens are seeking alternative means of participation. Behavioral affiliation is an example of an individual not formally wanting to be involved with a party, but still believing they are associated with the party based on their beliefs and irregularly participates in public party events (Ponce and

Scarrow 2016, 6). Behavior affiliation has become a new form of engagement for members seeking light engagement. One form of light engagement may involve turning out for elections, but not having formal participatory rights. Light membership mirrors behavioral with the added benefits of granting observer rights and access to inside party affairs. Light membership is crucial in capturing citizens who want a more casual membership structure than IPD, while still having entry points of engagement. Still, the traditional membership model also needs to be improved and steered away from the party elite driving the majority of decisions. The way a party approaches IPD can have an impact on their formal party membership numbers. This can be strategically either good or bad, depending on if a party is seeking to have members who are consistently engaged or members who only turnout for elections. This can also influence the parties' leadership to make swift changes in policy stance depending on how parties approach membership; if the focus is based on the empowerment or restriction of influence, it would affect the strength of a party's IPD. National parties are the gatekeepers of their base, and because of this, it is crucial that Europarties work with them to cultivate a meaningful membership collective.

Individual Membership Schemes

Parties on the EU level have moved towards exploring individual membership schemes largely to confront the disconnect between EU citizens and the EU institution at large. There is an opportunity for supranational parties to gain power for their organizations. Individual membership schemes are one of many ways to cultivate an EU base. Currently there are four Europarties that have mechanisms in place to engage with their broader electorate: ALDE, PES, EGP, and EPP. These membership models range in resemblance to a traditional membership

model to a light membership model depending on membership rights. Participatory rights are measured by the following metrics: contribution to manifestos, make policy proposals, attend party congress, vote at party congress, and vote in leadership elections (Table 4.2).

Table 4.2: Europarties' individual members and their participatory rights.							
Question: Do individual members have the following right? 0 = no, 1 = yes.							
<i>Source: (Hertner 2018, 11)</i>							
Europarty	Contribute to manifestos	Make policy proposals	Write resolutions	Attend party congress	Vote at party congress	Vote in leadership elections	Overall score
ALDE	1	0	1	1	1	1	5
EGP	0	1	1	1	0	0	3
EPP	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
PEL	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
PES	1	1	1	1	0	0	4


The ALDE party implements the membership scheme that most resembles the traditional membership found at a national level. The ALDE 'individual members' model scores the highest among the Europarties with a score of 5 for the high degree of participatory rights they give to their members with the inclusion of dues (Table 4.2). The ALDE party approaches individual membership as a method of direct engagement and allowing for an entry point into the party. In comparison, the PES Activists model does not include voting at the party congress or in leadership elections, earning it a score of 4 (Table 4.2). Those two key components are considered to be very important to a member looking to be engaged in a traditional membership model. The PES model is a very similar model to the European Green's, however, the PES have narrowed the scope of their membership by creating a precondition to membership being only allowing national member party members to join the EU party. The PES

and Green's model is a middle ground membership model that incorporates part of a traditional model while still limiting the influence and who can join (Table 4.3).

The light membership part of the spectrum conceptualizes membership models that have looser terms. This can be described as supplemental options to the traditional membership style (Scarrow 2015). This version of membership has different benefits to offer, keeping in mind that the traditional structure does not accommodate all forms supporters may wish to engage. The EPP takes a different approach by creating the supportive member structure where members can participate in meetings and activities of the EPP but have no voting rights. The EPP's model has 200 to 300 members while the PEL had 600 members (Table 4.3). Both parties do not require national membership as a prerequisite to join these light membership models.

Table 4.3: Spectrum of European individual membership and their participatory rights

Source: (Hertner 2018, 7-11)

					
Party name	Alliance of Liberals and Democrats (ALDE)	Party of European Socialists (PES)	European Green Party (EGP)	European People's Party (EPP)	Party of the European Left (PEL)
Membership name	Individual members	PES activists	Individual supporters	Supporting members	Individual members
Is national party membership a prerequisite to joining?	No	Yes	Yes	No	No
Membership dues	Under 30: €10 30+: € 20	None	€24	€20	None, voluntary donation encouraged.
Number of members	5670	30,000	1,051	200 to 300	600
Do members have observing rights?	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Do members have influence over party policy and issue stances?	Yes (3 of 4)	Yes	Yes (3 of 4)	No	No
Has party shaping power?	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	No
<p>*Observing rights are defined as members' availability to access party newsletters and attend party events, formalized access. * Influence over party policy and issue stance is quantified by rights available to the member to engage in the following: contribute to manifestos, make policy proposals, write resolutions, and attend party congress. * Party Shaping power is quantified by rights available to the member to vote at party congress and vote in leadership elections.</p>					

Comparatively evaluating the membership models on the spectrum from traditional to light it is evident that different membership models engage certain types of members. This can be very limiting if the type of membership model one wishes to have is not one offered by their desired Europarty. The ALDE structure serves individuals within the EU electorate wishing to participate directly with the EU and not necessarily from a national affiliated party. The strength of this membership type is that robust opportunities for members to participate in the decision-making process of the party are available and accessible. The PES and Greens models

are between traditional and supportive membership ends of the spectrum but skew towards left rather than right. This is largely because of their ability to their participation rights such as: contributing to manifestos, making policy proposals, and ability to write resolutions (Hertner 2018, 11). The difference is they do not have as many formal rights as the ALDE party does. At the right end of the spectrum towards light membership is the EPP and EL, the strength in this membership is the ability to be very casually engaged in EU politics but while being formally recognized as a member that comes with exclusive party benefits. This can also be thought of like a cyber membership because it keeps individuals engaged through newsletters and party updates at a relatively low cost. This allows for anyone to be brought into the party, which in turn furthers the reach and promotion of the party to capture more citizen engagement that can later be translated into an election.

Rethinking the National and EU Party Relationship

The EU on a continuous basis has been under scrutiny for being another layer of political bureaucracy; many conservative politicians argue the EU hinders progress and lessens the ability for a country to keep their autonomy. The deficit in democracy at the EU level is a real challenge for EU citizens; in order to reach EU parties, sometimes that requires being associated with the national party or some parties have policies that circumvent the national-level and engage directly with the citizen. National parties interpret direct democracy as influencing self-nominating for office, proposing a referendum, or voting for a candidate in a primary. Currently, supranational and national parties coordinate in an attempt to bring people from national member states out to vote for EU elections — aside from voting there is little connection to the EU party. National governments already struggle to keep steady membership

numbers and turn out people to vote; they see EU parties as competition for time and energy from their members. However, the relationship between Europarties and their national subsidiaries is key to maintaining influence on the EU level. Circumventing the national parties would pose a significant threat to a Europarty's MEP seats. Sustaining MEP seats are crucial to Europarties because meeting a specific threshold of MEP's coincides with the ability to be publicly funded through EP grants discussed in chapter 3. National parties already have a base; replicating a model that would reach into metropolitan areas and rural areas would require significant funding. Thus, the direct democracy model for EU parties has its merits, but bypassing national parties all together is not a politically viable option for Europarties at this time. A more direct approach would potentially work in the future when a stronger EU base has been cultivated, but until then, it is far more advantageous to work closely with national level parties.

Conclusion and Recommendations

There are three areas in which Europarties can broaden their reach to the diverse electorate they serve. First, Europarties need to create one comprehensive campaign to increase voter turnout to send a message to countries with still relatively low turn out that they too are part of creating a more democratic EU. In order to achieve greater voter turnout amongst all EU countries, there needs to be a coalition created of European parties from the left and the right to administer a voter turnout campaign. This campaign would be translated in all EU member state languages with an emphasis on reaching member states that proportionally have lower voter turnout. Non-partisan civic campaigns are the key to having more democracy; they send a message to voters regardless of their political position or party

affiliation. This would begin in January 2023. Interested Europarties would create an EU centered campaign that strictly focuses on mobilizing people to vote. In 2024, the campaign would reconfigure to organize efforts to connect citizens to their designated place to vote. Ideally, this campaign would involve those on the political left and right to advertise the necessity of citizen engagement.

Another deficit identified within this chapter is having singular membership models that no longer capture all those who wish you engage with political parties. Changing the way membership models are structured is a crucial part of the conversation. There is value in all membership models previously discussed but having a two-pronged approach at membership models would foster a more inclusive attempt cultivating an EU base. The more members, regardless of membership type, increase the power the party has to yield when election season sets in. Each EU political party should have two forms of membership types available to EU citizens: one being a traditional membership model that grants expansive participatory rights and the other, a light or membership model that still grants observer rights to the inner workings of the party while potentially granting powers to influence party policy. For a more traditional membership, the ALDE membership model is recommended. The light model should be closer to the current PES or EL direct membership models. Parties are past the point that a one-size membership structure fits all those wishing to engage. By adopting a two entry point approach, more citizens will be inclined to join a party through this mechanism.

The third deficit identified in this chapter is in need of a reshaping between the national and supranational parties for stronger relationships. This would take the form as “Party Liaisons” funded by both Europarties and national parties. Party liaisons would be members of

the national affiliated party and reside in the country they serve liaisons for. Two positions would be created within each country. By creating two Europarty liaisons for each national affiliated party would harmonize the national and Europarties effects and foster a better working relationship. Liaisons would be required to be citizens of the country they serve and reside in their country. One liaison would be tasked with administering programs and engaging with national party members; their role is funded by the Europarty. The second liaison is centered on coordination between national and transnational relations; this role is funded by the national party. Having an intentional link between parties would bridge their common goals of influence at the EU level and bring more democracy to a lacking system. The senior liaison would be tasked with working with the party leadership on strategic initiatives closely tied to elections such as aiding the primary implementation process, coordinating time for the *Spitzenkandidaten* to visit their country, and coordinating with media companies for increasing coverage on EU elections.

The three recommendations outlined in this chapter are evident the engagement model with the broad electorate is in need of reshaping. Europarties are at a point where they can evolve and become a driving force to enact change. Is it through these mechanisms that Europarties will be able to not only motivate individuals to engage, but also to foster cooperation with the national parties.

CHAPTER 5

MOBILIZING AND ENGAGING CITIZENS IN EP ELECTIONS

Tianren Chen

Introduction

As the chief legislative body and the only directly elected institution of the European Union, the EP plays an important role in solving the current democratic deficit in the EU. The EP has the power to implement legislation that has a direct effect on the EU, thus making its election of significant importance for national parties and their citizens. It also provides an opportunity for the EU to examine its efficiency and to build a pro-integration and democratic bloc. During EP elections, citizens are more exposed to EU news, which facilitates discussions about politics and the EU. Despite its importance, the EP elections still have trouble attracting citizens to participate. This chapter is intended to examine the ways in which parties currently engage with voters, and analyze the efficiency of political debate has on addressing the current problems that result in a low turnout and promoting a pro-integration EU.

Low Turnout in Elections

A high rate of political participation often indicates the strength of democracy. One of the most elemental ways to measure political participation is through voter turnout. Abstaining from voting typically signals that the electorate is disillusioned, apathetic, uninterested or unmotivated; this presents a serious problem for the democratic system (van der Brug and de Vreese 2016). The turnout for EP elections is “on average 30 percent lower than at national elections,” despite efforts to expand engagement with citizens (Franklin and Hobolt 2011, 67). One possible reason for this is that EP elections are considered to be “second-order”, meaning voters tend to believe less is at stake than in national elections and are therefore less motivated

to cast their vote. Another reason is that the complex structure of the EU can perplex voters, further discouraging people to vote in EP elections. A centralized parliamentary system, in comparison, offers less ambiguous voting choices and provides stronger incentives for citizens to vote (Utter 2008, 53). Since voting in EP elections is so convoluted, it eventually becomes a negative electoral experience for voters. However, research is skeptical about the potential to increase turnout, as for the first time in 2019 the trend was reversed (Franklin and Hobolt 2011, 70). In addition, these effects suppress the turnout of not only the EP election but also the subsequent domestic election. Voting in EP elections has negative effects for some people to acquire the habit of voting, which usually needs three successive national electoral experiences to form (Franklin and Hobolt 2011, 75). Moreover, this effect especially depresses the first-time voters. Studies have shown that citizens who are given their first opportunity to vote in a low-salience, low turnout election, such as an EP election, are less likely to vote in that election and in subsequent elections (Franklin and Hobolt 2011, 69). Thus, in order to increase the turnout and address the democratic deficit in the EU, it is important to identify the problems that result in these negative electoral experiences.

Reasons for Low Turnout

One of the reasons for a low turnout is that many citizens do not get enough information on EP elections. A survey suggests that only 23 percent of EU citizens felt that they were well informed about the EP elections. The percentage of those who felt they were very well informed never exceeded 5 percent (Gagatek 2009, 80). This is mainly because the media, the most common way for citizens to get information, only pay scant attention to EP elections. The same survey suggests that the majority of citizens (53 percent) never read, hear or see

anything about the EP in the media (Gagatek 2009, 80). As a result, the visibility of campaigns for European Parliament elections has been very low. The current low turnout at EP elections actually reflects that people still lack the necessary knowledge about the EU to make an informed vote. Moreover, the complicated structure of the EU makes citizens more likely to need this information to help them make sense of the system.

Another factor resulting in the low turnout is that national party campaigns for EP elections are still mostly focused on national issues rather than European issues. For instance, issues relating to economic matters are still primarily discussed within the national realm. Whereas real European policies, such as the austerity measures imposed on southern European countries, are barely mentioned during EP election campaigns. Many researchers explain this phenomenon as the result of the second-order nature of EP elections (Adam and Maier 2011, 434). In other words, according to this argument, national parties do not have an important role in promoting any EU matters.

However, recent research challenges this second-order model and argues that national parties are playing an increasingly important role in bringing up the EU matters in their campaign and mobilizing on EU integration. It argues that the current lack of salience and clear stand on European content in EP elections may be due to an unwillingness or inability of national parties to raise EU matters above a critical salience threshold. Research suggests that it can be attributed to national parties' strategic behavior. Parties that stand to gain from the issue try to emphasize the issue, while parties that stand to lose try to de-emphasize it. These different motivations could lead parties to choose their stress on the EU in accordance with their ideological profiles and strategic consideration. In other words, it is not the case that national

parties do not have the ability to address more EU issues in their campaigns. Rather, parties fight their campaigns on the national-level because they choose to. However, this strategic decision has become one of the major obstacles for the EP election to become a genuine transnational election.

The third reason for the low turnout is that there is a lack of contestation between national parties. Besides being reluctant to fight their campaigns on the European level, the major Europarties (at least the largest four) have usually presented a common stance, especially on questions relating to the political aspects of EU integration (Gagatek 2009, 93). Having difficulties to spot many differences in their policies, citizens become less likely to vote. Research shows that many people do not vote in the EP elections because they feel like their vote does not matter as much, which makes them become less interested in voting.

Introducing Debates

Political debate is one of the best solutions to address all the problems mentioned above. As a form of public campaigning, political debate is used by political parties to generate public support during the election. It is especially important in EP elections because the nature of these elections often gets less attention and result in a low information electoral environment. In 2014, a public debate called “Eurovision Debate” was created and broadcasted across Europe as a form of campaign strategy. It was designed to provide a platform for candidates for the presidency of the European Commission to debate on. In other words, the debate has put candidates for the position of Commission president into an open political contest. It gives the majority of EU citizens an unprecedented opportunity to compare the positions and personalities of the candidates running for Commission president in a campaign

format familiar from the context of national elections. Moreover, it also provides citizens with the opportunity to influence by their votes the direction taken by the team of commissioners that could direct the affairs of the European Union for the next five years.

The debate was proven to be exceptionally salient and has contributed to the increased visibility of Europe in the politics of the European nation-states (Maier et al. 2018, 621). Moreover, it has led to increased cognitive and political involvement and EU support among young citizens. Unfortunately, the effect of debate is limited since they only reach a very small audience (Maier et al. 2018, 622). Some people criticize national parties for displaying little enthusiasm to highlight the importance of debates. As the main actors in the campaign, national parties have the power to choose whether they want to campaign on this platform or not. Thus, in order to let this debate reach a larger audience and create more desired outcomes, it is important for the EU to motivate national parties in directing voter attention to the debate. Although the EU and national parties often have different agenda, one goal they share in common is to increase the turnout in EP elections. Political debates could be effective in solving the three problems mentioned above that result in a low turnout election.

Because of the EP elections' second-order nature and the complicated system of the EU, a public campaign that can increase people's knowledge for elections is crucial at this point. Political debate can provide citizens with electoral information in a clear way. By providing competing political groups an opportunity to debate on their policies, it makes candidates more widely recognizable, enables the public to understand the personal and policy differences between the candidates, and helps them identify the winners and losers of this battle (Maier et al. 2018, 611). It is especially helpful for the EP election since the complicated system makes it

hard for citizens to process enough information to vote. Watching a debate can increase the ability of viewers' to make judgments about the candidates' personal and political profiles. Research shows that recipients usually know more about the issues debated and candidates debating them after watching a debate. Thus, it is clear that watching political debates can provide electoral information to voters, help them get a clearer sense of the election and, therefore, increase turnout in elections.

Although national parties are now still reluctant to focus their campaigns on EU matters (see chapter 8), the politicization of EU issues could be effective in addressing this situation. The politicization of EU issues started because of the emergence of Eurosceptic parties. Eurosceptic parties are more likely than other non-Eurosceptic parties to bring EU issues to the table, with the purpose to mobilize against the EU. Thus, when Eurosceptic parties start to put more focus on EU matters, it drives other parties who are used to downplay European issues to take a stand in this new field. As a result of politicization, European matters could become salient and that different opinions are voiced. This process that the salience of EU matters for a party depends on other parties' articulation strategies called co-orientation. During this process, more national parties start to address and take a stand in EU issues in their campaigns. Thus, it is important for the EU to encourage parties to co-orient themselves towards each other. In this way, more parties make more efforts in exploiting this new conflict potential. Then, parties could attach salience to EU matters and voice their positions in accordance with their ideological profiles and strategic considerations.

As a platform that highlights political competition between parties, political debates could be effective in accelerating the process of politicization of the EU matters. Political

debates are designed for candidates who represent different parties to address their policies and display their differences between other parties. During the debates, if one party wants to address EU issues, then other parties under consideration tend to follow suit. Thus parties appear to be somewhat constrained in determining the emphasis they want to place on the issue. This model was proven to be effective in increasing the salience of EU issues. Research suggests that debate exposure can increase viewers' sense of being informed about the EU and EU politics (Maier et al. 2018, 611).

Once EU issues are addressed in the debate, it enables the contestation between parties. Each party will provide its own solution that differs from other parties in order to let citizens separate it from others. Examining the conditioning effect of party polarization on the EU dimension shows that voters only take EU-specific considerations into account when political parties provide them with clear choices (Hobolt and Spoon 2016, 717). Citizens are likely to be better informed about EU policy objectives when there are competitive elections and higher stakes, they should also be more motivated to participate in EP elections, and possibly confer a higher degree of legitimacy and the EU as a polity (Maier et al. 2018, 608). Moreover, the contestation actually could increase the salience on EU issues. Research has shown that in those member states where political parties disagree in relation to European integration, the media report on the campaign much more intensively (van der Brug and van der Eijk 2007, 128).

This process of politicization is especially important in promoting a pro-integration environment. Now, there is still considerable variance in parties' salience on EU matters, with some placing no emphasis on European integration and others viewing it as a critical issue.

With the politicization of EU matters, more parties have to emphasize on these issues after their competing parties doing so. Research has shown that in those member states where the political parties disagree in relation to European integration, the media report on the campaign much more intensively (Gagatek 2009, 84). Moreover, another study has shown that the more Eurosceptic voices within a country, the more likely EU articulation becomes (Adam and Maier 2011, 437). A high-salience of EU matters can represent the EU, and strengthen the weak electoral connection between EU citizens and EU. Moreover, if more national parties can portray a more integrated EU in their campaigns, there could probably be a change in mass media coverage and voting behavior. Eventually, European integration could become an increasingly important issue in the EP elections and have the potential to reduce the EU's democratic deficit.

Because political debates are effective in addressing the current problem, it is important to put it as an important campaign strategy. However, only national parties have the ability to do so. In fact, for most European citizens, the EU was a distant polity, far removed from their daily life experiences. Thus, it is hard for the EU to gather public attention. Whereas national parties already have established reputation and access to the public. Moreover, although national parties are a part of European parties, they have the freedom to choose their own campaign strategy. It means that national parties have the ability to address something the EU wants to but do not have the ability to.

Thus, national parties need to be provided with more motives to put more emphasis on political debate as part of their campaigns. The EU can use their shared goal, increasing the turnout, to advise national parties to do campaign differently from now. By this way, national

parties could provide more access to information, especially on EU-level, which citizens needed to vote in the EP elections. While creating a higher turnout, the EU can achieve some of its goal such as fostering a pro-integration environment

Conclusion and Recommendations

This chapter has examined how to increase turnout in EP elections by providing voters with access to valuable information and political campaigns with more contestation between parties. National parties can play an important role in achieving all of these goals. Although the EU and national parties often have different agenda, one goal they share in common is to increase the turnout in EP elections. The EU can use this shared goal to advise national parties to incorporate political debate as an important part of their campaigns. In this way, national parties could provide more access to information, especially on EU-level, which citizens needed to vote in the EP elections. Moreover, engaging in political debate encourages parties to co-orient themselves towards each other on bringing up and taking a stand on EU matters in their campaigns, which can result in a high-salience of EU matters and an election with more contestation. Eventually, by putting political debates as part of national parties' campaign, it could not only create a higher turnout, but also allow the EU to achieve some of its goals such as fostering a pro-integration environment.

CHAPTER 6

REFERENDUMS AND EUROPEAN CITIZENS' INITIATIVES

Xinye Li

Introduction

The development of a true democracy is a key challenge for the European Union and the EU cannot achieve it without effectively engaging with its citizens. Currently, there are two mechanisms for direct democracy that promote active citizens' participation in EU politics—national referendums and European citizens' initiatives. In this chapter, these two direct democratic instruments will be critically assessed based on their effectiveness in practicing direct democracy and realizing citizens' participation. Then, the potential roles of political parties at the European level in the direct democratic mechanisms will be addressed. Finally, some recommendations about referendums and ECI will be presented. This chapter argues that referendums and ECI can be more effective when they engage with Europarties to overcome the democratic deficit in the European Union.

Referendums and Initiatives

Referendums in EU member states are direct votes from European citizens on particular proposals of laws and policies related to European issues. They act as part of the broader direct democratic instrument in the EU. Since the 1970s, referendums in EU member states have been a key feature of European integration. For example, citizens are able to vote on whether or not they would like a European country to enter the European Union. Since the mid-2000s, referendums have begun to play an increasingly more central role in the discussion of EU politics in the hopes that they will bring the European Union closer to the citizens by including citizens' opinions. Proponents of the EU-related referendum claim that it is a crucial instrument

of direct democracy that encourages public participation (Mendez 2017, 15-17). However, there are complications in the referendum mechanism and its real effect on direct democracy needs to be carefully scrutinized at the national level.

Scholars debate whether or not European citizens are competent enough to vote in EU-related referendums. Many argue that the average citizen lacks knowledge of EU politics, decision-making processes, and specific referendums (Cheneval & Ferrín 2018, 2-4). In the 2005 post-referendum survey in Spain and the Netherlands, one-third of those surveyed voted “No” because of “lack of information”, while in the survey in France, about one-fifth of French voters cited “very complex issue” as their reasoning for voting against a referendum (EOS Gallup Europe 2005, 15-17). Typically, the issues on the referendum are topics that are less familiar and more complex to citizens, who are more knowledgeable about national or local-level politics (Hobolt 2007, 152). Due to the complexity of EU politics and lack of factual and detailed information, citizens are sometimes incapable of making reasonable votes. In the context of pursuing democracy, citizens’ should not be judged as “right” or “wrong”, “competent” or “incompetent” in their voting behavior and decisions. Nevertheless, it is essential to make sure voters are fully informed about referendums before letting them make decisions, allowing citizens to be more engaged and qualified for political participation in voting for referendums.

National Political Parties in Referendums

National political parties play a crucial role in guiding citizens’ voting behaviors, directly affecting the outcomes of referendums. Citizens rely on their national political parties as cues in deciding how to vote in referendums (Hansen et al. 2017, 9). Because of citizens’ informational shortfalls, it is a shortcut for citizens to rely on their preferred political parties in order to make

their votes due to party endorsement effects (Hobolt 2006, 632). Therefore, with the role of national political parties, it is crucial for citizens to possess the abilities to think independently and critically since political framings could be a mask of a real issue. For example, in the two Danish vs. Maastricht Treaty referendum, the changes of attitudes in voting were attributed to different campaign framing from different political parties. Some parties did a better job to recommend and persuade voters to understand their framing and explanation of the issue-referendum than the others did (Hobolt 2006, 631). As a result, national political parties play pivotal roles in guiding citizens' understanding of referendum in favor of the parties' own goals and somewhat influence the outcomes of direct democracy. In the context of referendums, citizens are still not the dominant actor. National political parties play the heuristic role that overshadows the citizens' real voices in the direct democracy mechanism, which runs counter to the real intention of referendums.

European Citizens' Initiatives

European Citizens' Initiatives are a transnational participatory instrument for direct democracy in the European Union. It enables European citizens from all EU Member States to participate in creating and enacting EU-level legislation to potentially overcome the EU democratic deficits. ECIs were introduced under the Lisbon Treaty in 2007 and the first ECI was registered on May 9, 2012. To create an ECI there must be at least seven organizers from seven different member states. This serves to ensure that issues brought up by ECIs are relevant to multiple nations and do not simply represent national issues. Once the ECI is formalized, organizers need to campaign for the initiative and collect one million signatures in a 12-month period. If the initiative successfully collects more than one million signatures, then the

organizers have the opportunity to present the details of the initiative to the European Parliament in the public hearing and await their final response from the European Commission (European citizens' initiative Portal n.d.).

In the European Commission's report on the citizens' initiatives in 2018, it is claimed that the ECI has involved 9 million citizens through multiple grassroots initiatives and added value to the decision-making process in EU politics and law as well as to bring citizens closer to the EU (Secretariat-General 2018, 1). However, signatures from nine million citizens did not mean that every one of them actually participated in the initiatives in an active way because simply signing the petition is not something that requires a high level of engagement in this digital age.

Current Issues of ECI

The European Commission touts the initiatives as a way for individuals to have a direct hand in the government. However, the EC is the actual decision-maker for an initiative. In reality, the process is far from the direct democracy that the EC claims. The first major hurdle those wishing to create a citizens' initiative must endure is that the initiatives should cover the appropriate legal admissibility of each EU institution. From April 1, 2012 to July 20, 2018, the Commission received 96 registration requests and 25 of them were rejected due to failing the admissibility test. According to Article 11(4) TEU and Article 4(2)b, the initiatives need to demonstrate that "the subject matter falls within the powers of the Commission to propose a legal act of the Union for implementing the Treaties" in order to be successfully registered. Citizens typically have trouble understanding what subject matter falls under the competence of the European Commission or the European Union in general, yet the complications are also

partially attributed to the Commission that it fails to interpret the legal obligation for each European Institution (Athanasiadou 2019, 253-257). Therefore, the Commission should have worked closely with the initiative organizers and given adequate guidance to the organizers for their initiatives beforehand. In the future, the EC could work directly with the initiative organizers before the first submission of documents to make sure that the subject matters of the initiatives fall into the EU's competences and meet all legal requirements so that they qualify for the next stages toward potential legislation.

Second, the Commission's operation of the ECI can be challenged: the ECI has a weak procedure and is a participatory instrument that needs to improve in terms of having more meaningful participation. Indeed, the twelve-month signature collection phase reveals that citizens have the opportunity to show support for initiatives. However, in reality, the successful initiatives in the past years have proven to be entirely up to the discretion of the European Commission. Because of the power of the Commission, the ECI instrument could not work as well as it should be to overcome the democratic deficit. Even though the initiatives have collected more than one million signatures and met all the requirements, the European Commission is still the discretionary power with complete control in deciding whether or not the initiatives will lead to any meaningful change (Longo 2019, 188). The Regulation claimed that the Commission should explain the reasons for its intended action or no action after the initiatives are collected over one million signatures and approved by the EC in a clear and detailed manner (Secretariat-General 2018, 3). The reasons given by the Commission thus far have been vague with minimal justification and have not led to any clear-cut legislations as the organizers originally hoped, which is clearly an unconvincing democratic process (Foltzenlogel

2019). European Citizens’ Initiatives were promulgated as a chance for citizens to have a direct say in shaping the policy that matters most to them. However, the current reality is that the European Commission is the gatekeeper.

Evaluation of Four Successful ECIs

Table 6.1: Evaluation of the First Four Successful ECIs					
<i>Source: (European Union n.d.)</i>					
ECIs	Mission & Goal	Process Period	Number of Signatures Collected	Did EU Institutions act?	Did Europarties participate?
Right2Water	To promote water as human rights and provision of water and sanitation as essential public services for all.	2012/05/10 - 2014/03/19	1,659,543	Answered but no draft or legislation.	No
One of Us	To establish a ban and end the financing of activities which presuppose the destruction of human embryos.	2012/05/22 - 2014/05/28	1,721,626	The Commission did not intend to proceed with the initiative.	No
Stop Vivisection	To promote ethical objections to animal experiments and scientific principles “animal model” prediction	2012/06/22 - 2015/06/03	1,173,730	Answered but would not be adopted.	No
Ban Glyphosate	To ban glyphosate and to set EU-wide mandatory reduction targets for pesticide use.	2017/01/25 - 2017/12/12	1,070,865	Answered but was commented that it lacked sufficient justifications.	No

Because of the weak impact of ECIs, the number of initiatives decreased substantially from 2015 to 2018 (Secretariat-General 2018, 14). Currently, there are more than eighty ongoing initiatives. If nothing is done to improve the ECI, this so-called direct democracy instrument, the hard work by hundreds of thousands of organizers to prepare and campaign for their initiatives will not pay off only furthering the people’s disillusionment with the EU polity.

The Potential Role of Europarties in ECI

The ECI has some inherent administrative and operational issues that have undermined its democratic performance. It is crucial for the European Commission to rethink their original intentions of engaging European citizens and pursuing true democracy in the EU. Existing research shows that the ECI is a weak but visible tool for active citizen participation; even though none of the legislation proposed was successfully implemented so far, the ECI has further potential to be an actor in the European Integration as the ECI can be brought closer to the EU where citizens can make decisions on the politics (Hrbek 2012, 373). Therefore, it is reasonable to believe that the ECI can improve in order to achieve better democratic results by working more closely to political parties on the European level since these parties contribute to raising European political awareness and to expressing the will of the EU citizens.

The first potential role of Europarties in the ECI is an internal consultant and communicator. Also, Europarties can work collectively with the organizers to decide on the potential topics of a citizens' initiative. One of the main reasons that the Commission rejected many of the initiatives in the first place was the legal issue. Citizens do not fully understand the legal basis of the EU as a whole so that they violated some of the legal regulations that the EU stated in the Treaty. As a result, it would be better that there will be some legal experts whom the ECI organizers could consult with to see whether or not their proposed initiatives conform to the Treaty legal rules before they submitted their initiative documents to the Commission (Hrbek 2012, 376). Because Europarties are the political parties at the European level, they can perfectly fill this legal consulting role with knowledge in the parties. With advice from Europarties, the proposed initiatives would be more likely to be successfully approved and

move on to the signature collection phase. Furthermore, Europarties would be an important asset for the ECIs if they play the role of the designated contact representative and connect between citizens and the European Institutions. During the public hearing in the European Parliament, the ECI will be better qualified than the others because its representative is experienced and has already closely affiliated with the EU polity (Hrbek 2012, 377). As a result, when the initiatives are no longer distracted by the legal and network issue, it is more likely for the EU to consider the effectiveness of initiatives to become legislation or other actions for democracy.

Second, another role that Europarties can potentially play is providing transnational communication expertise. During the process of preparing and campaigning for an ECI, huge transnational challenges will likely occur, such as geographic distances, language barriers, and political culture (Berg et al. 2008, 20-21). Due to the fact that an ECI needs organizers from one-quarter of the EU Member States, the internal communication is slowed down because of the organizers' geographic distances, as it is demanding for all the organizers to meet all the time. In addition, during the signature collection process on the transnational level, language barriers are definitely a burden for some citizens; then it is also time- and energy-consuming for the initiative documents and campaign materials to be translated into 20 EU official languages. Therefore, if the Europarty members who are from different Member States in the Europarties can provide communication assistance to the initiatives organizers, the efficiency of running an ECI will be significantly improved. Furthermore, many ECIs were not able to get sufficient support of one million signatures within the twelve-month timeframe so that the initiatives failed even before submitting to the Commission. Transnational communication is required for

such a cross-border democratic instrument in the framework of the EU. Europarties could provide network support in this case; before the campaign has established in certain member states, the party members can give heads-up and educate citizens through influential social networks and their connections with local civic organizations so that citizens will be aware of what is happening and show support specific initiatives that they care about.

In order to successfully launch an initiative by a small group of organizers and receive sufficient citizens' support, it will be more efficient for the initiatives organizers to find like-minded transnational political parties in specific fields of interest as strategic partners. For instance, the European Green Party can collaborate with the ongoing initiative "A price for carbon to fight climate change" and help mobilize citizens in the current signature collection process since they have the same objective for European environmental issues. Such a strategy would help increase citizens' awareness of this specific initiative and also strengthen the political parties' profile as a reliable political authority because of the strategic cooperation (Hrbek 2012, 379). Because the current challenge of Europarties is to achieve more political cohesion and build up efficient organization to promote their ideologies, it is also mutually beneficial for them to get involved in specific one of the initiatives not only to support the same will for the future EU legislation but also to consolidate the parties' internal organization with higher efficiency and in a way to create political cohesion. Since both Europarties and the ECI have not received much publicity these years as both of them are "infant component parts of the EU polity", working closely together will attract increasing attention from the European citizens and engage more active citizens' participation (Hrbek 2012, 381).

Conclusion and Recommendations

Some recommendations for like-minded Europarties to work closely in the European citizens' initiatives are: First, the European Commission could keep more clarity and transparency in the communication process while responding to initiatives organizers regarding ECI matters. The Commission's role of gatekeeper resulted from the particular structure of the EU, which limits the direct citizens' right to the Commission (Kaufmann and Waters 2004, 135). Therefore, distancing the ECI from the Commission while giving more power to the EP and the European Court of Justice can enhance democracy and transparency of the entire procedure (Longo 2019, 199). Europarties can help monitor the process through instant and consistent communication and network with initiatives organizers and EU Institutions since they are political actors for multi-level linkages to pursue democracy and further European integration (Delwit, Külahci, and Van de Walle 2004, 18). To equally distribute the power and to keep transparency in the process, the EC could establish an ECI Committee to hold quarterly conferences with representatives from the EP and the European Court of Justice to discuss their opinions and make collective decisions about whether or not a proposed citizens' initiative could turn into a legislation. At the same time, the initiative organizers and the supported Europarty also have the opportunity to attend the conference to have open discussions about their thought processes of the initiative or other concerns on any decision from the EU Institutions. After each conference, Europarties could work with the EU Institution to draft conference abstracts as official EU documents to keep clarity and transparency of the entire procedure. Second, as argued above, the majority of the initiatives failed because they were not able to meet legal requirements; therefore, Europarties could prepare the legal documents

for the initiatives with the organizers so that it would be efficient for the whole process to move forward more quickly. Third, Europarties could play a role as the framework of communication in the ECI. For instance, Europarties could help translate campaign materials into different EU official languages and mobilize citizens in offline campaigns. Moreover, Europarties could hold workshops on explaining the functions of European citizens' initiatives and the way citizens' can show support in the signature collection process. In addition, Europarties could help increase the visibility of their supported initiatives on their official website and social media, and promote with their EU connections to improve awareness for mutual benefits.

Since 1972, 48 referendums have been held by EU Member States and candidate states, yet there is no legal basis for a European referendum at the European level. It could be a good idea to develop EU-wide referendums from successful citizens' initiatives since unlike the popular initiative rights from countries like Switzerland, Italy, or Slovenia, the European citizens' initiatives cannot trigger any referendums (Kaufmann and Waters 2004, 30). Once the EU Institution successfully approves an initiative, it could be an option of turning an initiative into a referendum if an initiative is not qualified to become an EU legislation. Therefore, citizens from different member states can directly vote on the matter and have an open debate at the EU level. More than 80 percent of the European citizens across 25 member states support the idea of referendums at the national level (Kaufmann and Waters 2004, 132). If initiatives could be transferred into referendums, the majority of citizens would be active in voting for the specific issue based on their interests. Therefore, the result of voting would be more accurate in representation since the topics of initiatives are straightforward and typically reflective of

common wills in comparison to the complexity of topics in national-level referendums. It requires less effort and knowledge for citizens to learn before determining the votes. Then, Europarties, in this case, can play the role of assisting offline campaigns through their networks and digital platforms to raise the awareness of what is happening at the EU level and give citizens motives to participate for the purpose of well being among all Europeans.

The European Citizens' Initiatives 2.0 Conference: Design, Engage, Impact will be held on March 6, 2020 in Brussels. It would be preeminent if the EU could take the initiative to improve this direct democratic instrument and engage with referendums in the new decade. It is strongly recommended that Europarties could be part of the conversation as they can help like-minded people design the initiatives, engage citizens through their networks, and make real impact along with the initiative organizers on EU legislation. The EU's leadership and visions should be clear that the ECI needs to overcome the stage of simply providing proposals for EU policies; rather, it should be a solid living instrument for European citizens to pursue true democracy and to enhance the dialogue between citizens and the European Institutions. Citizens' wills must be put into specific practices in order to give faith to European citizens and show them that the ECI actually works and has positive impacts. By working with Europarties and developing the citizen-initiated referendums at the EU level, the European citizens' initiatives would step into a higher level of functionality for EU law-making in a meaningful way.

CHAPTER 7

DIGITAL DEMOCRACY

Miranda Reisman

Introduction

The Internet and social media have become the hallmarks of the twenty-first century, with the rise of online communication, including the use of instant streaming and messaging. Interaction through the digital world has become an integral part of everyday life for Europeans. Increasing opportunities for direct democracy has become a priority for many European political parties, so moving discussion to online platforms and integrating democratic processes with those platforms are the obvious next steps. Many political parties are creating their own social media platforms so their members are able to have political discussions and debates online. To continue engagement and participation, the European Parliament has even increased its own online presence by updating its Facebook, Instagram, LinkedIn, and Twitter frequently, giving instant news updates and links to European related articles, photos, and live-streamed debates. Online communication increases the capacity for people to engage in democracy by voicing political opinions and policy priorities. Many political parties' response to the increased salience of social media is digital democracy. An alternative democratic platform, digital democracy (also called e-democracy) involves the integration of democratic processes with information and communication technologies. Digital democracy has a hand in quelling the democratic deficit as it will allow for more grassroots participation and will increase accessibility to citizens who do not have active roles in the government (Gerbaudo 2019, 4). There is a need for mechanisms that will increase citizens' confidence in the EU; mechanisms like digital platforms have the potential to give citizens a more direct impact on their parties

and the greater political sphere. Eight out of ten people in the EU have discussed politics with family, friends, or acquaintances in the past month (Flash Eurobarometer 2019, 16). Furthermore, two-thirds of respondents had read something about politics on a news website, 57 percent had read something about politics on social media networks, but 77 percent never discussed politics using a messaging app such as Whatsapp or Messenger (Flash Eurobarometer 2019, 17). These facts demonstrate that people are engaging with political content online and are impacted enough to lead them to in-person discussions. If the majority of people feel passionate enough about politics to bring it up within their communities, it is then conceivable that they would be willing to participate in more discussion, if the barriers to entering discussion are low and easy to use. Online platforms can grow to help lower barriers to discussion and enhance the status of European democracy.

Intra-Party Democracy

One form of party that is bridging the gap between politics and the online world are digital parties, which take advantage of social media platforms combined with policy awareness and decision-making. Increasingly popular among Northern European countries, digital parties gained momentum due in large part to the lack of confidence in the EU as a governing body. A solution offered by these parties is online platforms that allow grassroots legislation to be formed. These platforms allow for discussions, policy proposals, and increase the accessibility to the legislative processes for many people who have previously felt neglected due to physical inaccessibility. These parties offer an alternative way to get more constituents involved in democratic processes as apathy and distrust toward government organizations continues to grow.

Liquid Feedback App

One of the Europarties that is a big proponent of digital integration is the Pirate Party. Founded in Sweden in 2006 by Rick Falkvinge in response to the shut down of Pirate Bay, a file-sharing website that allowed different files such as movies, video games, and books to be pirated and shared among thousands for free, the Pirate Party is one example of a digital party (Gerbaudo 2019, 8). The Pirate Party believes in the protection of the freedom of expression online and net neutrality, and is now the largest political party in Iceland (European Pirate Party 2013). According to the Pirate Party's manifesto, they are passionate about net neutrality which prevents the government and other organizations from blocking, limiting or prioritizing certain content based on the location of the receiver or sender (European Pirate Party 2013). The Pirate Party's mission is to advocate "for real transparency and responsibility in politics, easier access to information, direct democracy, freedom of information, and copyright reform" (Edick 2015, 1). The Pirate Party has had many controversial policies that have had limited success, such as granting asylum for whistleblowers. However, they have created the LiquidFeedback App, which is a platform that increases crowdsourcing for policies. The LiquidFeedback app has functions that allow citizens to discuss and vote on legislation online. One characteristic of LiquidFeedback is that the app facilitates the ability to have liquid authority, which allows users to delegate their votes to a known expert or a trusted friend if they don't know how they would like to vote (Edick 2015, 1). While this application has a lot of potential for civic engagement, this app was not specifically designed for the Pirate Party but also for other civic organizations and corporations. Participation through the app has been stagnant, and the platform has been described as not user-friendly nor compelling to use. The participation rate remains at 15 to 20

users debating over any given issue (Edick 2015,1), which is low considering that the platform was designed for a political party to discuss the advantages and disadvantages of proposed policies for a country or the entire European Parliament.

Rousseau

Another party with digital foundations that has seemingly been able to take the government by storm is the Five Star Movement, which has become one of the largest parties in Italy. The Five Star Movement advocates for direct democracy and e-democracy (Deseriis 2017, 48). The party created a platform called Rousseau, named after the French Philosopher Jean-Jacques Rousseau, to help increase transparency and political mobility. In August 2017, the Rousseau platform claimed to have over 140,000 users. Members of the Five Star Movement are able to register online. In addition, becoming a member of the M5S is simple, as any Italian adult citizen who is not affiliated with any other political parties can sign up online for free. However, trying to register can take up to a few months because many users have complications with uploading their ID images for legitimacy purposes (Deseriis 2017, 53). Rousseau has nine different areas for all users to interact with, a few including “Fund Raising, E-Learning, Sharing, and Call to Action” (Deseriis 2017, 53). There are additional features in Rousseau that allow members to interact, such as a function that allows users to vote for “primaries, approve the party program, or make other political decisions,” (Deseriis 2017, 53). In August 2017, a guest-browsing mode was added which allows viewers who are not members of M5S to see discussions on the platform, but does not allow them to interact and does not allow guests to comment, vote, or submit proposals.

Two of the biggest criticisms of Rousseau is its lack of transparency and limits of productive discussion of legislation. Many are skeptical of the fact that Rousseau has not made its source code available for public inspection. Additionally, the Rousseau system is not based on an auditable voting system, so while the e-voting feature, in theory, is protected from external and internal interference, the actual integrity of votes is hardly guaranteed, and on the whole Rousseau is more of an operational tool rather than a platform for political discussion (Deseriis 2017, 54). In fact, the rate of reply to other comments in discussions is about five percent, certainly not high enough to be able to coordinate and lead a discussion on the formation of a grassroots policy (Deseriis 2017, 56).

DemocracyOS

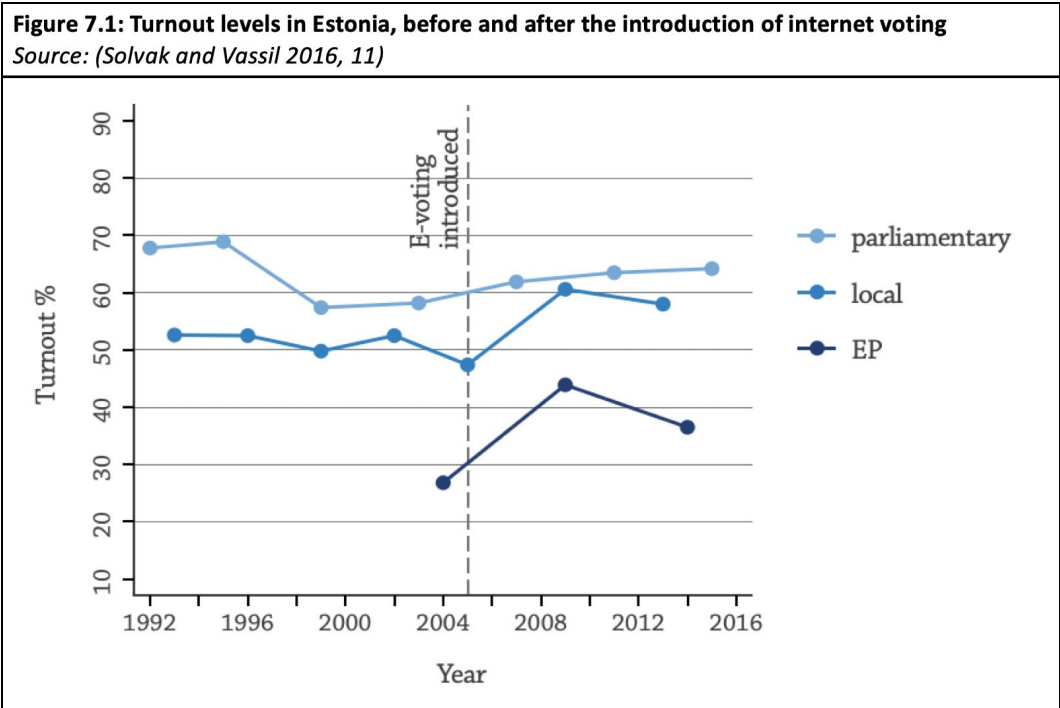
The DemocracyOS app, also known as DemOS, was created with the hopes of working with mainstream parties. While it has not been used in the European Union, it has been implemented by the Argentine Net Party. Unique to the Net Party, any representative elected into the party has to be at the mercy of legislative bills that were voted on via DemocracyOS (Edick 2015, 2). DemocracyOS functions include voting and debating on current policies, as well as the ability for any user to propose their own legislation (Edick 2015, 2). Similar to the LiquidFeedback App, DemocracyOS allows users to allocate their votes to other trusted users whose ideologies reflect what they want to see represented in their elections. Many feel that the platform of DemocracyOS is easier for users to interact with each other, which the LiquidFeedback App does not offer. Within the platform of DemocracyOS the largest debate included about 175 users (Edick 2015, 3). DemocracyOS has a platform that is more user-friendly than the other platforms which many credit to why it has more user interaction.

However, the Net Party is only prevalent in Argentina so there is limited access to constituents as compared to a larger organization. Still, these digital platforms allow more voters to be able to engage with their parties and actively participate in legislation approval and voting.

Organizing Feedback

One common theme across all of these platforms is how the actual number of user interactions tends to be less than expected. Presumed to be an alternative grassroots democracy approach, instead these platforms have served as social media platforms for a few to find others to debate with rather than a new legislative community platform based on political party. New incentives to use these programs are vital in order to drive engagement in direct democracy platforms. One proposed incentive is the addition of long-term feedback loops within party platforms. A long-term feedback loop is a user interaction that allows users to be able to see the impact they make when they interact through the platform via discussion, voting, or other functions that would ultimately lead to their own direct impact on legislation. (Gastil and Richards 2017, 1). In addition, there is a disconnect when users have to interact across multiple platforms if there is no connection or linkage between the actions taken on various platforms. At times there can be instant satisfaction from the individual functions and interactions, but in the long-run, if online platforms cannot integrate into a more singular larger platform, instead of many fragmented online platforms, it will prevent citizens from being able to create a civic identity because of the fragmentation of political interactions across platforms (Gastil and Richards 2017, 1). Some sort of connection to bring significance to apps such as DemocracyOS or LiquidFeedback is crucial to prevent the loss of party coherence of similarly held beliefs, which could lessen their impact on direct democracy.

While the efficacy of online deliberation is still debated, the use of voting through digital means has already been seen in practice. One country that is a proponent of e-voting, and the integration of technology and government, is Estonia. A member of the European Union, Estonia has about 1.3 million people and its education system is completely online. Estonia has been the home of many tech startups and its people believe that universal internet access is a human right. Estonia’s government implemented e-voting to stop declining voter participation. The benefits of introducing e-voting include that it increases the availability of voters through the convenience of being able to vote online, as well as making it more accessible to groups that may be ‘socially excluded’ or have reduced mobility thus preventing any issues from physically being able to reach the polls (Solvak and Vassil 2016, 57). Voter turnout increased steadily after e-voting was introduced, as demonstrated in Figure 7.1.



In addition, further functions in the platform gave voters the ability to cast an unlimited amount of votes over a seven-day period, which would allow any previous votes to be canceled out with the re-vote. Voters also still have the option to vote at a polling station in-person on a piece of paper, which would cancel any e-votes made. Finally, if someone feels like their online vote has been compromised, they have the option of voting in person or on an uncompromised computer. These features are key to Estonia's voting system as it is one of the largest online voting elections in the world.

E-voting in Estonia is a quick process and has shortened the amount of time it takes to vote, and most people return to e-voting in subsequent elections. Between 2013 and 2015, the median time for a session of e-voting was between 1:21 to 1:36 minutes (Solvak and Vassil 2016, 78). As a way to compare the amount of time it takes one to vote, researchers Solvak and Vassil offer up the comparison that e-voting is faster, "than it would take them to hard-boil an egg," (Solvak and Vassil 2016, 78). E-voters had an average of about 80 percent rate of return to the next elections, meaning those voters participated in the following two elections, which is 20 percent higher than non-voters and those who voted on paper. Thus using the e-voting platform is a more compelling voting experience in Estonia than paper voting (Solvak and Vassil 2016, 122). E-voting within Europarties has the potential to increase the number of voters participating in elections, including younger voters, and those who may be limited by mobility or other social factors. Admittedly, there are a few issues that would need to be addressed for e-voting to function as a whole. First, all citizens would need to have access to free internet in order to access the e-voting platform. Additionally, cybersecurity poses a significant threat to the integrity of voting and increases the threat of data manipulation. In a survey done by

businesses in the United States, United Kingdom, Belgium, France, Germany, Spain, and the Netherlands, around 60 percent of businesses had been subject to a cyber attack (Demertzis and Wolff 2019, 3). In order to employ digital mechanisms to revitalize democracy, the security of online platforms must be reinforced.

Conclusion and Recommendations

It is difficult to determine whether grassroots and direct democracy platforms are actually advantageous as spaces to discuss legislation, considering that many of the parties implementing these websites are considered to be populist and on a relatively smaller platform than a Europarty in the European Union. However, in the long-term, there should be some online platform integration for legislative applications (such as LiquidFeedback App, Rousseau, and Democracy OS) that includes the ability for constituents to provide feedback and propose legislation in a productive, efficient, and informative manner. The EU and its political parties should invest and research the development of a universal digital party platform for all Europarties to use. Furthermore, the EU should commit resources to the development of the infrastructure to implement e-voting on a European wide scale; Europarties could do the same to help integrate e-voting into their own electoral systems, and should push for implementation of e-voting and digital democracy on a European scale as a priority in their policy positions. Before any digital democracy can be put into practice on a grand scale, it is paramount that the EU and Europarties first develop a framework for reducing and hopefully eliminating any threat of cyber attacks, in order to safeguard election data and to protect against data manipulation. There is a gap between actual participation in democracy and people's desires to do so. Using e-voting could not only increase the number of people who are able to participate and voice

opinions in the political systems and in elections, but could also increase the rate of return in elections, and ultimately help Europarties accurately represent their members' views. Ultimately, the application of e-voting within Europarties and the long-term investment in e-democracy applications could instill more confidence in the European Union because it allows for greater accessibility to vote and debate policy within the European Union. The world is moving in a technological direction, and the EU and Europarties need to move with it. There is a lot of untapped potential in using technology within Europarties and the Parliament, and it necessary to further research the role of technology in democracy as the digital revolution progresses.

CHAPTER 8

EUROPEAN PARLIAMENTARY CAMPAIGNS

Jeremy Samos

Introduction

Campaigning is an integral part of any election. This is the time when political parties and candidates mobilize their bases and reach out to voters. This is the time when citizens most clearly and concretely engage with the electoral process. Campaigns for the European Parliament are atypical however, as they usually take a back seat in the minds of citizens compared to national elections. With this fact in mind, questions concerning the current status and makeup of EP election campaigns become salient, especially in the context of analyzing and finding solutions to the perceived democratic deficit. This chapter breaks down EP election campaigns and how they interact with the second-order election theory by examining the degree to which they are focused on European issues rather than national or domestic politics, and how this can be changed. This analysis focuses its perspective on the role of political parties at a national and European level, as political parties are the driving force behind these campaigns. Another topic explored is the capacity for media coverage on campaigns to affect the overall degree of ‘Europeanness’ of EP campaigns.

Europarties and National Parties

In a truly European framed European Parliament election campaign, one might typically expect the primary actors to be Europarties. This would entail a constant dialogue between Europarties and their affiliated national parties, exchanging information, ideas, and experience (Hertner 2011, 325). However, in reality, national parties in EU member states tend to dominate EP election campaigns, with Europarties acting more like ‘service providers.’

Europarties participated in the 2004 and 2009 EP elections in the following manner: they “tried to prepare a list of the achievements of their own political groups in the previous EP.... Second, they produced a number of promotional gifts, leaflets, stickers and other materials about themselves.... Third, most of them organized at least one electoral rally, with the presence of national party leaders” (Gagatek 2009, 35-36). In producing campaign supplies and materials for national parties, Europarties can be described as filling a support-role for national parties during these campaigns. National parties, on the other hand, have been reluctant to take the support of Europarties. National parties have still considered these elections to be largely second-order, which contradicted the Europarties’ efforts to promote the elections as a European affair (Gagatek 2009, 36). Thus, Europarties’ attempts to create a more Europeanized EP election have been limited by their national parties, undermining the potential for a truly European campaign.

In order to further examine the roles of national parties and Europarties in EP election campaigns, one must analyze the way in which their advertising efforts characterize these elections; that is, whether the parties portray EP elections in their campaigns as primarily domestic or European affairs. This section will examine how national parties in various EU member states campaigned during EP elections through advertising and debates. Germany’s Social Democratic Party campaigned in 2009 with the slogan “Social Europe,” which implies a focus on Europe rather than just Germany. However, the SPD clearly treated this election as a warm-up to the German federal elections that also took place in 2009, and “Social Europe” was described as a “vague and abstract slogan; one that is difficult to discuss with the voters because of its diffuse meaning” (Hertner 2011, 330-331). France’s Socialist Party framed their

campaign in a somewhat European way when they exclusively adopted the Party of European Socialists' manifesto as their own (discussed in chapter 2). Yet, the campaign itself "focused on attacking incumbent conservative President Nicolas Sarkozy.... In the end, the [French Socialists] did not manage to get its European message across" (Hertner 2011, 332). In the United Kingdom, a "European debate was missing" from Labour's 2009 EP campaign, and "the party leadership did nothing to Europeanize the campaign, which led to an invisible, defensive campaign," although "MPs and MEPs arranged their own local campaign activity around PES campaign days or independently" (Hertner 2011, 330). Despite some efforts to broaden the scope of their campaigns to include a dialogue on European issues, these EP campaigns were unable to provide voters with information and policy positions on a European level because they remained fixated on domestic political concerns.

The focus on domestic politics during EP campaigns is also present in regions of Europe where EU membership is a relatively recent development. In Poland during the 2014 EP elections, rather than campaigning on a European platform, "political parties focused on promoting their regular values and issues, while only a minority (27 percent) of the campaign messages covered in the study included any reference to the EU" (Lilleker et al. 2017, 19). In Poland, Romania, Lithuania, and Slovakia, "European issues represented the exception rather than the rule in election debates... debates remained stuck in the field of domestic policies" (Lilleker et al. 2017, 284). In the Balkans, Croatia's EP election campaigns "focused on national topics and actors, largely ignoring the EU... EU-related topics were mentioned in less than one-third of all posters suggesting that Croatian political actors decided to focus on national actors and topics" (Holtz-Bacha et al. 2017, 165). Throughout the EU, national political parties

have consistently been the dominant political operators in EP elections. Although some campaigns, like that of the SPD, featured some European rhetoric, they largely ignored European issues, treating their campaigns as platforms to advance their domestic political platforms.

Europeanized Campaigns

Bulgaria provides an example of what a Europeanized election campaign could actually look like, should they catch on in other EU member states. Bulgaria is one of the EU's newest members, having ascended in 2007 (Lilleker et al. 2017, 29). Despite having a much shorter history in the EU than other member states, Bulgarian candidates framed their debates and speeches in a much more European way, featuring topics such as "reforms in the EU, EU borders, the rights of European citizens, new members of the EU, European basic income and European bureaucracy, as well as current events and occurrences" (Lilleker et al. 2017, 34). Candidates argued for different positions on these subjects depending on their ideological backgrounds and party alignments. For example, Ivaylo Kalfin, a socialist, "argued that European funds were concentrated in the hands of a few people who benefited from them, and he declared... that the EP should have a social policy in favour of European citizens," while Nikolay Barekov presented a more centrist stance (Lilleker et al. 2017, 34-5). These campaigns to the EP were clearly focused more on European issues and institutions than was the case in other EU states, with candidates choosing to focus on Europe, not as an afterthought, but as the primary focus of their campaigns. However, while there was a considerable amount of Europeanization in campaigns in Bulgaria, national parties were still at the center of these campaigns. In the 2014 Bulgarian EP elections, the candidates who campaigned on European

issues did not do so as part of their Europarties, but rather as representatives of their respective national parties.

However, Europarties have campaigned independently of national parties, although their influence on elections and voters remains limited. One example of such a campaign is the PES' campaign for the parliamentary election in 2009. Hertner writes that "the fact that in 2009 the PES was able to lead an election campaign independently from its group in the European Parliament is a new and important development that is the result of the Europarties' lobbying for constitutional recognition and funding regulation" (Hertner 2011, 326). Prior to a 2004 regulation that explicitly defined their funding, Europarties were neglected by the EP, with only an incomplete contract regulating their funding; this 2004 regulation, in addition to a 2007 regulation that stipulated that "Europarties could use the money from the EP budget to fund their election campaigns," paved the way for standardized Europarty funding, thus helping to remedy their weak institutionalization (Hertner 2011, 326-7). But Europarties like the PES have still been greatly underfunded compared to their national counterparts after the implementation of these campaign finance regulations; the PES "spent €188,521 on the 2009 election campaign," which is quite low compared to the SPD's 9 million euros and Labour's roughly 2 million pound budgets (Hertner 2011, 327-8). This disparity in funding has consequences on Europarties' abilities to effectively campaign, whereas the SPD employed 180 people in its headquarters and Labour employed 80 people, the PES secretariat had only 20 people staffing permanently, which increased during the 2009 campaign to "around 34 (including trainees and volunteers)" (Hertner 2011, 327-8).

Despite the relatively low funding available to the PES, it was nonetheless able to campaign independently in 2009. PES President Poul Nyurp Rasmussen “campaigned in almost all 27 member states alongside party leaders or MEP candidates” (Hertner 2011, 339). In an effort to foster a transnational political community, Europarties have started to offer new forms of individualized membership (discussed in chapter 4). The PES introduced “a kind of individual PES membership, the ‘PES activists’ in 2006,” (Hertner 2011, 339). The PES activists, described by Rasmussen as “the bridge-builder between the national and the European scenes,” were provided with information and “the freedom to organize original campaign events” by the PES during the 2009 EP campaign (Hertner 2011, 339). The extent to which the PES activists had an impact on EP election campaigning differs depending on the national context. In France the PS was more willing to demonstrate its commitment to intra-party cooperation with the PES, having “integrated the PES activist groups into its party structure at regional level through a statute defining the cooperation between the PES activists and the PS” (Hertner 2011, 340). The SPD, on the other hand, “regarded the PES activists with suspicion, worrying about parallel structures outside the party organization,” and participation among German voters remained “limited and the SPD has not yet formally integrated the PES activists into their party structure” (Hertner 2011, 340). In the United Kingdom, the cooperation between the Labour Party and PES activists was similar to the German case, as it remained limited with weak organization (Hertner 2011, 340). In these cases, PES activists’ campaigning efficacy was almost wholly dependent on the degree of cooperation that national parties allowed between their own parties and the PES, further verifying that EP election campaigns are dominated by national parties, not Europarties.

Media Coverage of Elections

While national parties are the main actors in Electoral campaigns, the role of the media is also important in understanding how citizens connect to European elections. This section will examine how the media characterizes EP election campaigns. There are many examples throughout the EU of domesticized media coverage of EP election campaigns, such as in Romania, where there were no TV broadcasts that were dedicated to the 2014 EP elections, but rather, “the regular TV programmes were flavoured with an EU twist,” which is reminiscent of the way that national parties treat their campaigns (Lilleker et al. 2017, 73-4). However, there are some indications that media coverage on the EP elections is shifting its focus to the European sphere. There are two categories of EU media coverage: horse-race coverage, which focuses on opinion polls in elections, and soft-news coverage, which, as the opposite of hard news, “concentrates on personalities or soft issues rather than contemporary political or economic developments” (Hanretty and Banducci 2016, 37). These two types of media coverage are especially important to examine because there is a debate on whether horse-race or soft-news coverage has negative consequences on the quality of journalism, and they “potentially influence the perception of electoral choices, knowledge, and the legitimacy of the electoral process at the European level” (Hanretty and Banducci 2016, 38). In the EU, these forms of media coverage “have *not* been increasing. The potentially negative consequences of these types of coverage, therefore, are no greater now than they were in 1999 when we started systematically collecting data on media coverage” (Hanretty and Banducci 2016, 42, 49-50). These findings bode well for the future of media coverage of EP elections because they reveal that journalism on EU issues has retained a focus on “hard news and substantive policy

coverage,” rather than on forms of news coverage that potentially have a negative impact on the engagement of voters (Hanretty and Banducci 2016, 50). These findings also provide an insight into the differences between media coverage of elections in the United States and in Europe, as an increase in horse-race and soft-news coverage has already been documented in the United States (Hanretty and Banducci 2016, 39). There is a body of literature that suggests that the news media has contributed to a declining interest in politics in the United States, which some argue is caused by an emphasis on horse-race news “at the expense of policy issue stories” (de Vreese 2005, 283-4). While the United States does operate in a different political context, the lack of horse-race and soft-news still holds relevance when considering the interest in politics among EU citizens.

The 2014 EP elections in Denmark provide an example of when the media has had a positive influence of voters’ interest in European issues. There was a significant increase in the number of news stories in Denmark covering the election as it progressed, “culminating in almost 50 percent of stories dealing with the EU in the final week of the campaign” (Beach, Hansen, and Larsen 2018, 799). But most remarkably, during this election “voters became more interested and more knowledgeable about their own and party positions on EU issues, and their vote intention became less determined by their feelings toward the national government and more determined by their position on European integration” (Beach, Hansen, and Larsen 2018, 805). The media in Denmark had a significant impact on how Danish voters conceived the EP election; people began to vote not based on their domestic political stances but rather on their opinions on European issues. This suggests that the media is capable of shifting the framing of EP elections from second-order national contests to issue-based transnational contests.

Conclusion and Recommendations

The campaigning activities of national parties and Europarties during European parliamentary elections, as well as the media coverage on these elections, are important when considering the perceived democratic deficit in the EU. EP elections remain overwhelmingly in the category of second-order national contests, primarily due to the efforts of national parties to keep these elections in the domestic political spheres of their respective countries, as well as the weak institutionalization of Europarties. While media coverage bolsters this domestic framing of EP election campaigns in some member states, in others, it has been shown to enhance voter understanding of European issues. If a greater Europeanization of EP election campaigns is to be ascertained, and if national parties are generally unwilling to increase their cooperation with Europarties, the media should assume a greater role in advancing European issues during EP election campaigns. If voters become increasingly engaged in European issues through increasing media coverage on such issues, national parties would have to accept a greater level of cooperation with Europarties, thus creating a political environment in line with Hertner's idea of "a constant dialogue between Europarties and their national member parties; an exchange of information, ideas, and experience in all directions" (Hertner 2011, 325). Europarties could take the lead on developing their own media, mimicking the practices of the news outlets that have covered EP election campaigns with a dominantly EU lens. Such news networks would continue to cover policy based hard-news, and they could air the same broadcasts across the EU, translated into the various member state languages. Outside of the media, Europarties should continue to act as service providers, pushing national parties to use EU and Europarty branded campaign materials. In addition, they could push to campaign

independently of national parties across the EU on a platform that highlights European political issues. Europarties could use these platforms to actively push for a shift from the widespread second-order national contest paradigm to a European issue-based voting model in order to enable European voters to participate in these elections in a more meaningful manner.

CHAPTER 9

TRANSNATIONAL ELECTIONS AND LISTS

Mariella Dewars

Introduction

The 1976 Electoral Act established a system of direct elections to the European Parliament, introducing the first possibility of a supranational democracy. The goal was to add democratic legitimacy to the EU and allow for deeper European integration through a directly elected body that could “affirm the sovereignty of citizens” and “assert the existence of a European citizenship” (Costa et al. 2016, 12). However, the nature of the EU is such that it “privileges the power of national political elites, while at the same time weakening the power of national systems of democratic control” (Külahci and Lightfoot 2014, 72). This structure leaves little room for everyday citizens to see themselves as represented in this transnational institution, making it difficult to understand the EP as a democratic body for EU citizens.

There are a number of issues regarding the electoral procedures used in EP elections that contribute to the democratic deficit; namely, the lack of a uniform system between member states. This reduces the democratic nature of the EU and the EP because different portions of the European electorate will have different levels of impact in an election. Elections to the EP are not transnational because they are organized and centered around national parties and electoral systems. The EU does not provide a uniform electoral procedure that member states must follow in elections to the EP. Instead, the EU lays out certain fundamental principles that leave a majority of the electoral organization systems subject to national law (Kotanidis 2019, 1). This results in citizens’ experiences with and their influence in European

elections subject to differences depending on their country of origin; for example, there is no EU consensus on the minimum age to vote or methods of voting (Kotaniadis 2019, 1).

Reforming the Electoral Process

Direct elections to the EP are intended to serve three functions: democratization, shaping the identity of the European community, and encouraging deeper European integration (Costa et al. 2016, 21). All of these factors diminish the democratic deficit in the EU. In practice, however, the EP has not gained enough power to justify the decline in power of national member states, and the European elections do not adequately link EU citizens to the representative body making policy decisions (Thomassen 2002, 15). This means that the democratic deficit in the EU has persisted even with the direct elections that would supposedly eliminate it.

There have been recent attempts to reform the electoral process and make it more transnational. In 2018, the EP voted on draft decisions to amend the 1976 Electoral Act. The provisions included attempts to increase the transnational nature of the elections as well as Europarty involvement and visibility (Grosek 2018, 1). Transnational lists were among the provisions included. Under the provision, a portion of the seats vacated after the United Kingdom exited the EU would be left unaffiliated with a particular country, resulting in pan-European MEPs who would represent the EU as a whole (Hardy 2018). Ultimately this provision was rejected by the EP, suggesting that transnational lists in this context will not be added to EU electoral processes in the near future (Hardy 2018).

Other provisions in the draft decision included the addition of new articles providing a deadline for submission of candidate lists prior to the election, and including the name and logo

of the Europarties that national parties are affiliated with on the national ballot (Kotanidis 2019, 2). The provisions that were accepted by the EP in 2018 cannot take effect until they are ratified by all EU member states in accordance with their national regulations; as of the 2019 elections, four countries had yet to ratify the decision (Kotanidis 2019, 2). Regardless, the inclusion of provisions focused on increasing Europarty visibility on the ballots in European elections is a sign of progress towards a more transnational electoral system. Increasing the transnational nature of the elections and harmonizing the European electoral process can help foster the idea of a European citizenship and encourage EU citizens to see themselves beyond just their nationality, while also providing a more direct connection between citizens and the EU.

Forming Candidate Lists

Candidate selection gives parties the power to influence the composition of representative bodies and potentially increase their ability to pursue their legislative priorities (Aldrich 2018, 1283). The nature of elections to the EP is such that national parties are at the forefront of putting together candidate lists. The process used to select candidates varies by party and country, due to the lack of uniform procedural guidelines at the EU-level. Additionally, the selection procedures are often hidden or lack transparency, which can add to the democratic deficit perceived in the EU (Pilet, Haute, and Kelbel 2015, 9). Two key factors in candidate selection that are unique to European elections are candidates' previous experience or potential to positively influence policy-making, as well as the individual financial status of the candidate (Gherghina and Chiru 2010, 534; Pemstein, Meserve, and Bernhard 2015, 1424). When looking at potential candidates, national parties must balance the ability of the candidate

to be influential in the EP in addition to their impact on the electoral success of the national party in elections. These factors must be considered not only due to the specialized environment of the EU, which requires candidates to have some degree of knowledge of how the EU and its institutions work, but also due to the second-order nature of the elections, where the nationalized structure gives candidates with national experience the best chance of electoral success (Pemstein, Meserve, and Bernhard 2015, 1425).

The actual process of identifying potential candidates and compiling them into a candidate list that appears on the ballot can differ in three ways: the level of inclusiveness in the selectorate, the territorial level of organization, and the rules determining candidate eligibility for selection (Pilet, Haute, and Kelbel 2015, 9). The selectorate refers to the group of people that is responsible for choosing the candidates that will form the candidate lists on the national ballot. Occasionally this can be the electorate (the voters), but is often a smaller and more specialized group of individuals. The most common method of selecting candidates is one where party members or party delegates have a strong role in selecting candidates, although there are a number of parties who employ a different selectorate for EU elections than in national elections— often the national party executive or party leader has more influence in European elections (Pilet, Haute, and Kelbel 2015, 12). Throughout member states, the national party is the primary body determining who will appear on the candidate list in the European elections at all stages of the process, from the initiative to the formal approval of the list, although constituency and regional organizations have limited input (Pilet, Haute, and Kelbel 2015, 12).

Beyond the standard process of candidate selection, national parties have specific rules for individual candidates and at a party level that affect the composition of the candidate lists. At an individual level, the most common rule is that a candidate must be a member of the national party whose list they would appear on in the election – however, this is only required by 44.8 percent of the national parties who gained seats in the EP in 2014 (Pilet, Haute, and Kelbel 2015, 18). The fact that European elections are largely centralized at a national level means there is little to no communication between national parties from different member states regarding candidate selection, as shown in the wide range of rules determining candidate eligibility.

Table 9.1: Specific rules of eligibility for individual candidates in party statutes across national parties		
<i>Source: (Pilet, Haute, and Kelbel 2015, 17-18)</i>		
Does that national party include this rule?	% No	% Yes
Endorsement by a minimum number or percentage of the party’s elected officials (legislators, regional officials, etc.)	86.8	13.2
Endorsement of a minimum number or percentage of members	91.7	8.3
Endorsement by an official faction	93.1	6.9
Being a member of the party	55.2	44.8
Payment of a monetary fee or monetary deposit to the party	89.7	10.3
Minimum age	74.5	25.5
Minimum length of membership	86.2	13.8
Prerequisite of previous mandates (incumbency)	97.9	2.1
Incompatibility with other mandates or professions	77.9	22.1
Other	70.3	29.7

While the specifics of these rules vary widely, they can be grouped into four categories. Rules of eligibility often outline a requirement of some form of endorsement of the candidate, a requirement of party membership, an age limit, or a rule determining incompatibility (Pilet, Haute, and Kelbel 2015, 17). Individual rules for eligibility are just one of many ways in which

the candidate selection and electoral process are not coordinated across the EU. Discrepancies between electoral processes at a national versus European level only complicate the relationship between the EU and its citizens, as well as between Europarties and the electorate they aim to reach. This can be considered as contributing to the democratic deficit and as demonstrating the consequences of a disjointed electoral system. Many member states have slight differences in how they run their national and transnational elections (Pilet, Haute, and Kelbel 2015, 23).

The Role of Europarties in Selecting Candidates

There are no references to Europarties in any national party statutes in the context of candidate selection, meaning that currently one of the only ways Europarties influence the candidate lists in EP elections is through informal channels. This is primarily done in cases involving the reselection of incumbent MEPs, where the national party may ask for the Europarties opinion of the MEPs work (Pilet, Haute, and Kelbel 2015, 43). Often this means that power is centralized in the hands of a few key actors in the Europarty, which adds to the perception of a democratic deficit as it negates the key goal of increasing citizen participation in elections to the EP (Pilet, Haute, and Kelbel 2015, 29).

The informal nature of Europarty involvement in candidate selection means that it cannot be codified or publicly enforced by the national parties, and many national parties have either no rules or vague rules directing the process of candidate selection and Europarty involvement. Another consequence of the informal nature of Europarty involvement is that there are common discrepancies in MEPs membership in EP party groups and Europarties, as well as a tendency for MEPs to prioritize national issues over the issues and goals of the

Europarty (Raunio 2002, 88). The complicated, secretive, and centralized process of candidate selection displays the democratic deficit in the EU, as well as an important area of growth for Europarties.

Conclusion and Recommendations

With regards to European elections and their role in the democratic deficit, Europarties could be looking to increase the transnational nature of European elections as well as increasing their involvement in candidate selection through both formal and informal processes. Currently, national parties hold most of the power in the European elections because “they control candidate selection, especially in countries that use closed lists” and national parties run the campaigns, meaning “elections have by and large been dominated by domestic issues” (Raunio 2002, 87-88). It is important to note that elections play a strong role in either promoting or inhibiting a Europarty’s capacity to have an impact (Bardi 2002, 79). As such, continuing to maintain political relevance is another motivating factor that encourages Europarties to get involved in the electoral system and to cooperate with national parties. Europarties have the potential to not only increase the legitimacy of the EU’s democratic system, but also to contribute to the idea of European citizenship through their position in the EP and representation of European citizens.

Europarty organizations could focus on increasing their representation on the ballots and formalizing their input for elections and candidate selection systems. On a European level Europarties could begin submitting reports on the contributions and performance of incumbent MEPs as well as providing an overview of the issues that will be at a high priority for the Europarty in the upcoming EP session, with suggestions as to what qualifiers would make a

candidate most likely to assist in the Europarty's legislative success. Europarties could also work to draft common minimum standards guiding candidate selection for national parties in order to harmonize the candidate selection process amongst the affiliated national parties. These standards could include party membership status, age, or measures of incompatibility (based on other affiliations or profession). When creating these standards, Europarties would need to make sure they are balancing selectiveness with inclusivity, so that they do not create excessive barriers to candidacy.

Additionally, Europarties could assist the EU in determining other forms of transnational lists that could be employed and would be more widely accepted than the previous proposals that were rejected in 2018. For example, the electoral process could be reformed so that the candidates are presented on the ballot as belonging to the Europarty (increasing connectivity with their electorate), but the national parties are still in charge of nominating and selecting the candidates appearing on the list. Under this system, the national parties would still take a primary position in structuring the European elections but the Europarties would gain increased visibility. Consequences of a system like this would involve the decreased visible role of national parties, since they would not be visibly listed on the ballot and this could potentially confuse voters initially if they have a strong allegiance to their national party but not any particular Europarty.

CHAPTER 10
**CASE STUDY: COMPARING THE 2014 AND 2019
SPITZENKANDIDATEN ELECTIONS**

Salem Abraha and Isaac Petrie

Introduction

Europarties understand that there is a democratic deficit in the European Union. They have noticed that the majority of European citizens rarely participated in the EP elections, mainly because they feel disconnected by the bureaucracy of the European Union. As a result, Europarties have leveraged the broad language in the Lisbon Treaty to propose a system that was believed to be the best solution for the democratic deficit. The so-called *Spitzenkandidaten* system was implemented twice, once in 2014 and again in 2019. In short, this system provided Europarties with the opportunity to present the electorate with a single candidate who campaigns on behalf of the Europarty during the EP elections, with the ultimate goal of becoming the next president of the European Commission. The *Spitzenkandidaten* system was intended to shorten the link between the electorate and the European Commission by allowing the voters to indirectly vote for who they wanted as the European Commission president, and in by doing so, increasing democratic participation in the European Union. However, the outcomes of 2014 and 2019 bring into question how successfully the system was used and if it truly helped to bring more democracy to the EU. This chapter is divided between two parts, each analyzing the implementation and outcome of the *Spitzenkandidaten* system in 2014 and 2019. Following this will be recommendations on how the system can be improved in order to build a more democratic European Union.

Spitzenkandidaten in 2014

Spitzenkandidaten: The System

The second-order nature of European elections has been attributed to the fact that citizens generally have little knowledge of policies implemented or promised at the European level by parties (Hobolt 2014, 4). Prior to 2014, voter turnout in European elections was on a steady decline. One key area of focus is the weak linkage between citizens and the selection of the European Commission president. Under the Lisbon Treaty, the EP was given greater power in the selection of the Commission president. This changed the selection procedure so that it required the European Council to nominate a presidential candidate, taking into account the elections to the EP, and the Parliament, in turn, would elect the nominee with an absolute majority (Hobolt 2014, 2). This led to the emergence of a new initiative proposed by Europarties who coined the term *Spitzenkandidaten*, German for 'lead candidates'. The way the *Spitzenkandidaten* system works is that each Europarty presents their lead candidate who simultaneously campaigns for the European Parliament with the hope that their party gains a parliamentary majority in the election, and therefore the party's lead candidate is nominated for the Commission presidency. With the introduction of the *Spitzenkandidaten* system in the 2014 EP elections, the system modified the procedure of the European elections ostensibly and made it similar to parliamentary elections in national democracies, where voters cast for a ballot for a party understanding that it is also a vote for a specific candidate to potentially head the European Commission (Hobolt 2014, 3). Implementing the *Spitzenkandidaten* initiative was an attempt to increase democracy and voter participation by personalizing EP election

campaigns, strengthening the European element, and shortening the perceived distance between the citizens and the Brussels bureaucracy.

Candidate Selection in 2014

In 2014, Europarties presented their leading candidates, providing the electorate with five candidates to select from: Jean-Claude Juncker for the EPP, Martin Schulz for the PES, Guy Verhofstadt for ALDE (in tandem with Olli Rehn for other top positions), the Ska Keller/José Bovéticket for the Greens and Alexis Tsipras for the European Left (Garcia and Priestley 2014, 8). The top three candidates that gained the most traction in the elections were Juncker, Schulz, and Verhofstadt. Although the *Spitzenkandidaten* gained traction among most Europarties, Eurosceptic right-wing Europarties were not in favor of this initiative and refused to nominate any candidate for the 2014 EP election. This marginalized the supporters of right-wing Europarties who may have abstained in the elections due to the lack of a lead candidate from their party.

The method in which these lead candidates were selected by their respective Europarty varied, and the extent of its democratic nature also differed. For the EPP, a lead candidate must have the support of at least three member parties, including the party of origin. The final decision would be taken by the majority in a secret ballot at the party's congress with delegations having weighted votes reflecting several parameters, including their level of representation in both the European and national parliaments (Garcia and Priestley 2014, 6). Although the EPP held a proper nominating convention, the weighted votes of their delegations skewed the results to reflect the wishes of party hierarchies, but not of party members nor voters. This meant that some delegates had greater voting power than others, swaying the

voting outcome to benefit personal objectives and keep power within the establishment, thereby putting into question the democratic nature of the procedure itself and the democratic legitimacy of Juncker as the lead candidate for the EPP in 2014.

Martin Schulz was selected to be the face of the party by the PES. In June 2013, the party agreed that its nominees for the lead candidate needed to be supported by 15 percent of all of its member parties that are constituted as full members. This equated to at least six member parties, where one of the parties nominates the candidate and the remaining five parties support that nomination (Garcia and Priestley 2014, 7). The period of nomination was only for one month and the 15 percent threshold made it unlikely that more than one candidate would be nominated (Garcia and Priestley 2014, 7). This puts into question the democratic nature of the party's selection procedures, considering the process put in place only really allowed for one candidate to emerge above others. According to PES procedures, if a competition developed, "national parties would have been expected to consult their members in 'an open and transparent way' prior to the casting of votes at the election, which might have opened the way for nationally organized primaries"(Garcia and Priestley 2014, 7). However, this situation has yet to play out in actuality.

The ALDE party was initially skeptical of the *Spitzenkandidaten* initiative. Their selection of Guy Verhofstadt came after a council meeting in May 2013 where the party modified its internal rules and included a procedure for selecting a lead candidate. ALDE's Bureau presented a candidate to be endorsed at a special Congress on February 1, 2014 (Garcia and Priestley 2014, 7). There was no election, only a vote on a proposal from the Bureau of the party. Candidates had to be formally nominated by at least two member parties from more than one

member state, or by 20 percent of voting delegates at the ALDE Party Congress. The vote of each delegation was weighted on the basis of their results from both EP and national elections with only delegations from EU Member States able to take part in the secret ballot (Garcia and Priestley 2014, 7).

An alternative to the aforementioned procedures of selecting a lead candidate was that of the European Greens. What they did differently than other Europarties was that they opened up the selection process to all EU citizens. In July 2013, the Greens decided to launch an online primary open to all EU citizens aged 16 and older (Garcia and Priestley 2014, 7). There were three reasons for doing so: first, it was an attempt to reach out to a wider public and push for a European element in campaigns carried out by national Green parties; second, to reinforce democracy and strengthen the linkage between voters and the European executive; lastly, as a way to mobilize green voters (Garcia and Priestley 2014, 7). Moreover, to be eligible candidates needed the support of a minimum of four and a maximum of eight national parties. After a long period of candidates' campaigning across the EU, the online primary lasted between November 2013 and January 2014, with voters able to support one or two candidates (Garcia and Priestley 2014, 7). Theoretically, the Greens had the most open procedure and seemed to align the closest to the initial purpose of the *Spitzenkandidaten* initiative. However, they failed to mobilize their voters in such a way that the process was effectively explained, prepared and organized. For that reason what was presumed to be a more democratic process did not actually increase its voter participation during the elections. The Greens failed to secure a significant voter turnout in the 2014 elections.

Campaigning in 2014

The effectiveness of the lead candidate system was arguably dependent on the campaign strategies of the candidates, and how much the national parties and national media covered their campaigns. On-the-ground visits, social media presence, and the role of national entities influenced voter turnout and voter awareness of the candidates. Large on-the-ground presence by the lead candidates was a strategy that both Juncker and Schulz adopted. In two months, Schulz had 38 campaign visits in 20 countries across the EU, in comparison to Juncker, who covered 17 countries and participated in 34 visits (Schmitt, Hobolt, and Popa 2014, 12). Schulz and Juncker varied in how they used their time during these visits. Schulz had several events where he directly addressed the PES party base. Juncker's strategy, on the other hand, was focused on winning over national governments. He had several meetings with heads of states and other important national and European political figures like the German, Polish, Greek, Portuguese, Finish and Latvian Prime Ministers and the ex PMs of France, Germany, and Malta (Schmitt, Hobolt, and Popa 2014, 12). In addition to the visits of the candidates, the introduction to the American-style televised debates also contributed to the personalization of the leading candidates. These debates were conducted in French, English, and German, and broadcasted on the Internet, on Euronews, and on select national channels (Schmitt, Hobolt, and Popa 2014, 11). These debates generated the most interest in the home countries of the lead candidates. For example, in Luxembourg, the home country of Juncker, 36 percent of respondents reported watching one of the debates, whereas only 6 percent of Dutch and British citizens had seen any of the debates (Schmitt, Hobolt, and Popa 2014, 11).

Although the debates brought attention to the *Spitzenkandidaten* system and generated some awareness of the EP elections, the extent to which the national parties supported these campaigns also played a role in the level of national media coverage. which subsequently impacted voter participation. In the member states with a dominant presence of Eurosceptic parties, there was a lower level of voter participation than in countries with more national parties supportive of the lead candidate system. This can be seen in the case of the United Kingdom. Due to their growing Euroscepticism, British national leaders deliberately disassociated themselves from the candidates and the *Spitzenkandidaten* initiative itself (Hobolt 2014, 9). Consequently, British newspapers and other media outlets hardly covered the *Spitzenkandidaten* campaigns and British voters had little awareness of the *Spitzenkandidaten* system and its functionality. Similarly, in Italy, Martin Schulz's presence was virtually non-existent as the PD, a member of the PES party family, had chosen not to associate Schulz with its campaign (Hobolt 2014, 9). In contrast, Schulz greatly benefitted from the extensive support of the SPD in Germany and PSOE in Spain throughout the entire campaign (Braun and Popa 2018, 3). In both countries there was greater voter participation than in the United Kingdom. This illustrates the importance of having national parties campaign alongside their respective leading candidate. The *Spitzenkandidaten's* impact on national campaigns was therefore largely determined by the extent to which national party leaders and the national media involved the European candidates in their national campaign (Hobolt 2014, 9). Voters need cohesion among the Europarties and national parties, and if national parties are not including their Europarty family's choice for lead candidates in their campaign efforts, then not

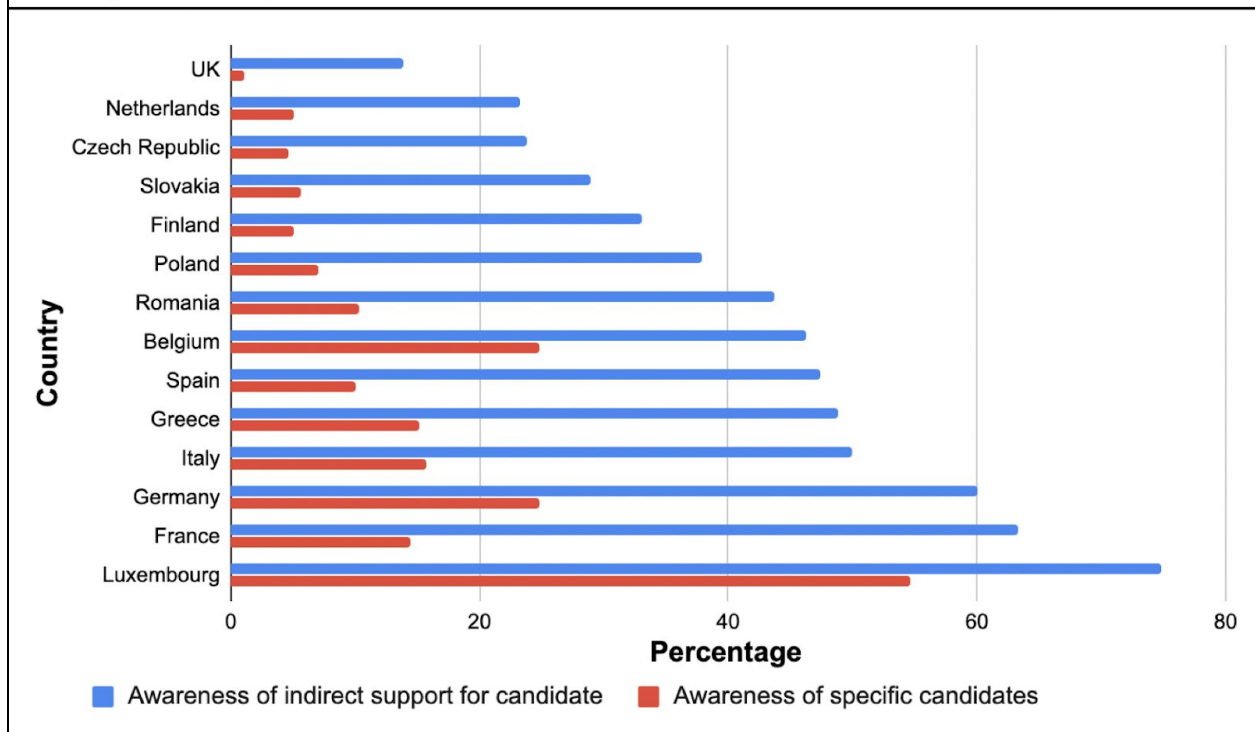
only is voter turnout impacted, but the legitimacy of the *Spitzenkandidaten* system is further put into question.

Public Perception of the *Spitzenkandidaten* System

Following the 2014 elections, Junker secured his position as the president of the European Commission once the EPP secured a majority in the European Parliament. The assessment of the *Spitzenkandidaten* system and its achieved level of success varies depending on the indicators chosen to assess its success. If the indicator is the level of overall voter turnout in the 2014 EP elections, then the system could be categorized as a success. This is because in the 2014 elections the historical rapid downturn of voter turnout had relatively slowed. Between 2009 and 2014, the overall turnout only dropped by 0.4 percent compared to 2.6 percent from 2004 to 2009, and 4 percent from 1999 to 2004, not to mention, in 10 of the 28 countries there was even an increase in turnout (Schmitt, Hobolt, and Popa, 2014, 21). Beyond bridging the gap between citizens and the selection of the Commission president, the *Spitzenkandidaten* system also personalized the election in general. Personalization of the election contributed to the increase in voter turnout because voters were able to identify the *Spitzenkandidaten* and therefore bringing the EP election more in line with national elections. Putting a face to the candidate meant that voters were more willing to participate in the 2014 European elections. However, there are some discrepancies in this fact. Public awareness of the lead candidates varied across countries and, as previously stated, it was most successful in the home countries of the lead candidates and in countries where national parties actively campaigned with the Europarty's lead candidate.

Figure 10.1: Public Awareness of Spitzenkandidaten

Source: (Hobolt 2014)



There were also discrepancies among the voters in the awareness of indirect support for lead candidates. This meant that out of all those who participated in the elections, a certain percentage did not know that their vote for a political party would count as indirect support for a specific lead candidate to be the next president of the European Commission. The discrepancies are demonstrated in Figure 10.1, which highlights public awareness of *Spitzenkandidaten*. In the United Kingdom, where there is high Euroscepticism and a lack of national party support of the *Spitzenkandidaten* system, the overall awareness of the specific candidates was at the lower end of the spectrum with only 1.1 percent. This compares starkly to Luxembourg, where over 50 percent of its citizens were able to identify the leading candidates. This high percentage can be accredited to the fact that one of the lead candidates, Juncker, comes from Luxembourg, and to the higher levels of national media coverage and

campaign participation by the national party. Looking at Figure 10.1, with such high variations among countries, it can be argued that the *Spitzenkandidaten* system put in place in 2014 did not fully solve the democratic deficit.

Spitzenkandidaten in 2019

New Challenges in 2019

At the close of Jean-Claude Juncker's term, the *Spitzenkandidaten* system met an existential crisis with the nomination of Manfred Weber as the lead candidate for the EPP. In contrast to Juncker, who had eighteen years of experience as the head of government in Luxembourg, Weber only had experience as a member of a state government in Germany and fifteen years in the European Parliament. Rather than a seasoned head of state as Juncker was, Weber was a domestic politician with little experience at the top of national government. Additionally, controversy over Weber's support of the Orban government in Hungary caused a significant roadblock to his acceptance, making Weber out of focus with the EP's expectations for qualification and position on democracy in Eastern Europe (Kelemen 2019, 1). Weber's incongruity with the European Parliament's expectations highlights the crux of conflict within the *Spitzenkandidaten* system: the people may vote for a lead candidate who does not meet the wants of a divided EP. Today, Ursula von der Leyen leads the Commission presidency and popular speculation sees the *Spitzenkandidaten* system as de-institutionalized for its inconsistency in Weber as the original leading candidate, yet not receiving the presidency in the end. However, the case of *Spitzenkandidaten* 2019 includes some redeeming elements, namely that it includes lessons from which constructive criticism comes to light.

Voter Participation and Public Perception

The 2019 EP election saw the highest total turnout of eligible voters in 20 years: the second European Parliament election using the *Spitzenkandidaten system* saw more than half of eligible voters turn out and saw increased turnout from the last election in 21 countries. One motivating factor for the higher voter turnout could be the perception of quality in the *Spitzenkandidaten* European Parliament elections: “In a Eurobarometer survey conducted before the 2019 European elections, more than 60 percent of the respondents agreed that the *Spitzenkandidaten* process would bring more transparency and increase the European Commission’s legitimacy” (Fotopoulos 2019, 2-3). This was a continuation of the favorable trend in popular acclimation to the *Spitzenkandidaten* system in the five years after the 2014 election. Selection of the Commission president grew to be seen as more legitimate and transparent as a result of the *Spitzenkandidaten* system (Fotopoulos 2019, 2-3). By attaching their party to a single representative candidate, Europarties enjoyed the benefits of campaigns centered around a singular popular politician rather than a party without a face. The 2019 European Parliament elections saw voter participation benefits carry forward, however, they were also burdened by a mismatch between what the European Parliament wanted in a president and who the party nominated candidate was.

2019 Candidates for the Commission Presidency

The 2019 elections saw three candidates for the European Commission presidency considered, two of which were subsequently dropped from the race. The three candidates were the EPP’s Manfred Weber, the PES’s Frans Timmermans, and finally former German Defence Minister Ursula von der Leyen, who also belongs to the EPP. The failure of Weber’s campaign

characterizes a conflict rooted deeply in the politicization of the *Spitzenkandidaten* system: the candidate with the largest mandate could just as well be a popular but inexperienced politician as a seasoned technocrat. This conflict created a new failure in a new system and resulted in a search for a replacement to the newly-rejected Weber: Frans Timmermans seemed to have the position as a part of the Osaka Deal between French President Macron, Spanish PM Sanchez, and German Chancellor Merkel. But Timmermans was also scuttled by MEPs from Poland, Hungary, the Czech Republic and Slovakia (called the Visegrad 4) and European Parliament members: “[The Visegrad 4 and the Italian Lega Party] also opposed Timmermans because of the strong stand he had taken defending the rule of law as commission vice president. These governments were happy to claim credit for scuttling his candidacy, and the European Parliament was happy to let them take the blame.” (Kelemen 2019, 1) Now with two failed attempts to create executive leadership, Ursula von der Leyen became the front-runner to the European Commission presidency. Apparently, von der Leyen’s candidacy was a suggestion by French President Macron, and she won the Parliament’s approval by a victory margin of nine votes (Kelemen 2019, 1).

Although Manfred Weber was unsuccessful at gaining the Commission presidency, his failed candidacy raises the question of how the *Spitzenkandidaten* system may have institutional weaknesses in its politicization by allowing inexperienced candidates to represent the most popular party. Weber’s failed candidacy drove the selection of the Commission president to be a less publicly transparent method than during the 2014 case. This has led to the perception that the entire *Spitzenkandidaten* system has been “discarded” (Fotopoulos 2019, 2-3) in favor of a less politicized, less transparent system of the past. Although the system

could be used again in the future, the press has labeled it dead (Gray et al. 2019, 1) and without significant change, it is likely that Weber's divisive attempt at the Commission presidency will be the last under the *Spitzenkandidaten* system. Had the EPP's candidate been similar to his predecessor, with Juncker's wealth of experience, the system may have worked smoothly as it had before. However, a lack of experience and tolerance of Orban's government sank Weber's ship before it left port.

The altered allocation of seats in Parliament also impacted the implementation of the *Spitzenkandidaten* system. Since the 2014 EC presidential election the EPP and PES parties controlled an absolute majority in the EP, however after 2019 the landscape did not include a possibility for a grand coalition between two parties; rather than controlling a majority, the EPP and PES parties controlled just 336 seats. While Manfred Weber's incongruity with the expectations of the EP at large caused a roadblock, the surge of elected representation for the Renew Europe group eliminated Weber's chance at acceptance by the EP.

Arriving at von der Leyen

Ursula von der Leyen, while not the first choice, did have an experienced background: she has served six years as the German Defence Minister, four as the Minister of Labor and Social Affairs, and has been a member of the Bundestag for ten years. Although von der Leyen's political bona fides are strong in comparison to Weber, her ascent to power was not without criticism. "The candidate [for Commission president] derives his or her legitimacy first from being chosen by the European Council, where the Member States are represented at the highest level, then by being approved by the directly elected European Parliament" (Cloos 2019, 2-3), which has the effect of creating "double legitimacy" and guaranteeing a democratic

mandate for the Commission president. Although 2014 showed the efficacy of the *Spitzenkandidaten* system by way of Commission President Juncker, the von der Leyen election showed an undemocratic turn in the system, which ties this discussion to the existence of the democratic deficit in the EP. The impact of von der Leyen's election could be interpreted to mean the end of the democratic nature of the *Spitzenkandidaten* system altogether, as it symbolizes a return to a less transparent manner of electing the Commission president and lessens the democratic legitimacy of the leading candidate.

Conflicts within the 2019 *Spitzenkandidaten* System

The *Spitzenkandidaten* system carries with it a set of election practices which conflict with institutional practices within EC presidential elections: these include at their most severe a break from the tradition, held since 1995, of electing a former prime minister. While Juncker's candidacy aided the system in 2014, the conflict between popular European Parliament candidate Manfred Weber and the legacy expectations of the European Commission revealed a de facto requirement to EC presidency: maintaining the standard of experience as a prime minister. While the conflict over Weber's candidacy contributed to his failure, politics within Europarties contributed as well. While the ALDE party had supported the *Spitzenkandidaten* system fiercely in 2014 (Cloos 2019, 2-3), an internal power shift occurred before the addition of Emmanuel Macron's party, La République En Marche!, to Renew Europe. The addition of Macron's party, paired with the vote against the use of transnational lists caused the former ALDE party to oppose the *Spitzenkandidaten* system altogether. This opposition had to do with "the recent vote of the European Parliament against the idea of setting up transnational lists for the European Parliament elections. Macron and the group that was later on renamed 'Renew

Europe' considered that in the absence of such lists the *Spitzenkandidaten* idea was flawed" (Cloos 2019, 2-3).

Connecting to the Democratic Deficit

The backbone of the democratic deficit can be seen in the independent nature of the European Commission and the European Council. To help democratize the EU in this realm, extreme veins of thought would have the Parliament or the citizens themselves be totally responsible for the selection of the EC president. However there must be a balance between the power of nation-states and the people, and the implementation of the *Spitzenkandidaten* system has already worked to create this balance. It is also important to consider the democratic deficit in the context of the recent stumblings of the lead candidate model. The conflict between the proposed Europarty candidates and national heads of state made it so that Timmerman's candidacy came and went, then Ursula von der Leyen's candidacy occurred out of necessity and at the suggestion of Macron, finally producing an executive for the European Commission (Kelemen 2019, 1). Overall, the results of a failed 2019 *Spitzenkandidaten* campaign and the resulting conflict within the EU government resemble an undemocratic process much more than a successful leading candidate campaign. As a result of the failed *Spitzenkandidaten* campaigns, the European Commission has been placed in a more difficult position in attempting to fill its leading executive role.

Conclusion and Recommendations

2014 saw the successful implementation of the *Spitzenkandidaten*, and gave rise to a new link between voters and the Europarties. The increased politicization of the system gave Juncker a larger mandate and continued the trend of having a former head of state in the

Commission presidency. However, the future of the *Spitzenkandidaten* system came under question during the 2019 EP elections. Although the EPP suffered a loss when Manfred Weber was denied the European Commission presidency, the conflict came with the benefit of adding to the perception of increased transparency in the election of the EC president. During the 2014 elections, this benefited Jean Claude Juncker by giving him a larger democratic mandate, however, it is still unclear how the result of 2019 will impact von der Leyen's leadership and legitimacy in her tenure, considering that her ascension came from intergovernmental agreements rather than the *Spitzenkandidaten* system itself. Independent of their resulting leadership selection, the 2014 and 2019 *Spitzenkandidaten* systems began and continued a favorable trend of increased voter turnout, and, initially, the perception of more transparent politics in the European Commission. The *Spitzenkandidaten* system needs to change and adapt to the roadblocks encountered in 2014 and 2019. To avoid conflict over the qualification of the *Spitzenkandidaten*, the European Parliament should formalize its expectations for candidates to the European Commission presidency. Possible requirements include: a language requirement where candidates for the EC presidency will be expected to speak more than a singular European language in order to facilitate communication within the EC, and a professional requirement where candidates for the EC presidency will be expected to have held a ministerial or equivalent position in their past.

A case can be made that the *Spitzenkandidaten* system, in theory, has the potential for resolving the democratic deficit. But it is in need of a few supplemental mechanisms to fully address the deficit. One possible mechanism is the implementation of a primary election system within the lead candidate selection process, similar to that in the United States. Each

Europarty could present a list of possible lead candidates that the party members would then vote on. Europarties should hold their primary on the same day across member states in order to preserve visibility and consistency in the process, as well as fostering a sense of community across the EU. In the months leading up to the primaries, candidates with the financial support of their own fundraising efforts would be encouraged to run personalized campaigns, continue to participate in debates, and make numerous on-the-ground visits. Therefore, once the primaries roll around, voters will be able to clearly identify the candidates and the policies they stand by. This would also be an opportunity for national party leaders to campaign alongside their desired candidate, further strengthening the ties between national parties and their respective Europarty and building voter awareness of the *Spitzenkandidaten* system. The inclusivity of the primaries may vary. Depending on the choice of the Europarties, they could hold open, semi-open, or closed primaries (see chapter 4). This would determine the extent to which voters could participate in the primaries. In an open primary, all citizens eligible to vote can participate. In a closed primary, only registered party members can participate in their party primary. In most cases, to be registered as a party member requires that a monetary fee is paid which can limit the participation of some. A semi-open primary is one in which anyone who is willing to give a formal declaration of support for the party or hand in an application for membership is allowed to vote. The choice of the type of primary could be left for individual Europarties to make. Regardless of the choice, a primary election system could be a great tool for creating a more democratic process of lead candidate selection and for strengthening the linkage between European citizens and the European Commission. The implementation of primaries could “provide both legitimacy and potentially the corrective mechanism of a linkage

to the party base” (Indriðason and Kristinsson 2015, 5). Thus, the incorporation of primaries into the *Spitzenkandidaten* system would legitimize and democratize the Europarty’s selection of the lead candidate as president of the European Commission.

POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

The democratic deficit can be seen throughout European politics: in its institutions, its elections, and its political parties. Europarties are posed to tackle this deficit and revitalize democracy in the European Union. The policies highlighted in this section are targeted for Europarties to implement, and are grouped into three thematic groups, in order to better understand the broader solutions to the democratic deficit.

Linking Parties to Bases

A key cleavage when analyzing the strength of Europarties is the power dynamic between Europarties, national parties, party members, and party bases. Currently, Europarties are only indirectly linked to their bases through national parties. The party base is where the democratic deficit emerges from, as it is the people at the lower levels of political engagement that feel unconnected to the politics of the EU. Creating a stronger link between Europarties, national parties, party members, and party bases is a crucial step in solving the democratic deficit, and needs to be accomplished before any other democratic objectives. Citizens that are only moderately involved in the EU political sphere need to be mobilized and need to feel that Europarties and the EU are open to their participation and voices. To create a strong sense of unity across all groups found under a Europarty would translate to a strong foundation for promoting other goals. *To form a closer link between national parties, party members, and party bases, Europarties should:*

- ▶ Implement a manifesto drafting process that includes an open consultation process and more oversight by member parties through manifesto drafting committees (*Chapter 2*);

- ▶ Use more accessible language in Euromanifestos (*Chapter 2*);
- ▶ Call for member parties to allot a percentage of individual membership dues to their respective Europarty (*Chapter 3*);
- ▶ Create two Europarty liaisons for each national affiliated party: one tasked with administering programs, the other tasked with coordinating national and transnational relations (*Chapter 4*);
- ▶ Focus resources into the development and promotion of a digital democracy platform that can be used for internal affairs as well as across parties (*Chapter 7*);
- ▶ Submit reports of incumbent MEPs' performance to national parties and provide an overview of issues that will be important in the next session of the EP (*Chapter 9*);
- ▶ Incorporate primaries in the *Spitzenkandidaten* system (*Chapter 10*).

Integrating and Elevating Processes

At the heart of the European project is the integration of systems, with the aim of creating clearer and more navigable processes. Currently, practices and standards in a multitude of sectors vary across political parties and member states. To make the political sphere more transparent, more accessible, and more democratic, Europarties need to work to integrate the different processes found in Europe, and to harmonize standards and practices. Democracy needs to be fully integrated into all aspects and operations of Europarties, and creating inter- and intra-party standards will aid in this process. These goals can be achieved in the areas of manifesto creation, party funding, citizen engagement, and EP elections. Through creating stronger and more centralized processes, Europarties will gain legitimacy in the EU, and in the process create a stronger democratic system. However, processes do not just need

to be integrated, but practices need to shift from existing on a national level to the European level. *To strengthen and centralize political processes, Europarties should:*

- ▶ Have member parties adopt the Europarty's manifesto during European elections (*Chapter 2*);
- ▶ Help the EU form a comprehensive and standardized financial report template for all Europarties to use (*Chapter 3*);
- ▶ Create two distinct entry points of membership across Europarties for citizens to choose from: a traditional membership model that grants considerable participatory rights and a light membership model that allows for more casual engagement (*Chapter 4*);
- ▶ Establish party-specific candidate requirements to be used as guidelines by national parties when selecting EP candidates (*Chapter 9*);
- ▶ Work with the EP and the Commission to find other potential ways of implementing transnational lists into the EP elections or other measures that could harmonize the European elections across member states (*Chapter 9*);
- ▶ Establish basic requirements for lead candidates seeking to become president of the Commission (*Chapter 10*).

Addressing a Fragmented Europe

While Europarties are connected national parties, and indirectly to bases, Europarties lack a connection to broader European society. Europeans pose little knowledge of the inner workings of the EU, and even less on the subject of Europarties. A factor contributing to the democratic deficit is the apathy of citizens towards the EU. To foster true democracy in Europe, Europarties need to add to a shared European identity among citizens, and help citizens feel that Europe is important. Europarties need to transform EP elections from second-order into first-order, and to increase voter turnout across the bloc. Europarties are primed in their

position of working across institutions and between groups to be providers of information and coordinators between political actors. They can help to expand and revitalize the mechanisms already in use, in regards to EU programs, technology, and media. Connecting the EU to all citizens is the ultimate solution to the democratic deficit and Europarties. *To reach out to broader society and contribute to a European identity, Europarties should:*

- ▶ Create a coalition of Europarties to administer a voter turnout campaign (*Chapter 4*);
- ▶ Incorporate thematic political debates into Europarty campaigns (*Chapter 5*);
- ▶ Play a stronger role in the creation of ECIs and help increase visibility of their supported initiatives (*Chapter 6*);
- ▶ Help turn initiatives into a referendum if an initiative is not qualified for EU legislation (*Chapter 6*);
- ▶ Develop the infrastructure needed to implement e-voting within Europarties and eventually on a European level (*Chapter 7*);
- ▶ Create Europeanized media outlets within Europarties to cover EP elections (*Chapter 8*);
- ▶ Continue to provide European focused campaign materials to national parties during EP elections (*Chapter 8*).

CONCLUSION

Taylor Jurgens

“It is not more Europe or less Europe that we need. We need a better Europe.”

Jean-Claude Juncker, former European Commission President

Since its inception, the EU has transformed from an economic and political bloc to a symbol of strength in democracy. It is a bastion of the ingenuity of humankind. In the span of a century, Europe went from a collection of warring states, to complete economic and infrastructural decimation during the world wars, to the collective union of peace and prosperity that exists today. It is through collaborations such as the EU that the world will become a more united place for the betterment of all people.

Over the past decade, there has been a rise in populist right-wing agendas across all major EU states. The departure of the United Kingdom is only one instance in a series of anti-EU sentiments taking hold that threaten the very fabric of the European Union. Will the EU prevail? Or will it succumb to the rhetoric of those who believe antagonism is the only way?

The path forward for the EU should be one of strengthening clear and transparent democratic values, particularly in regards to Europarties. The invisibility of the Europarties has inadvertently contributed to the democratic deficit. However, Europarties are still in the early stages of creation and are not beyond the reach of revision. By working with other Europarties, national-level parties, and EU citizens themselves, Europarties can continue on a prosperous trajectory.

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