EUROPEANIZED EUROSCEPTICS?

The Impact of European Integration on the Strategies and Programmatic Profiles of the Radical Right

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ABSTRACT

As a potential catalyzer of political dissent, European integration has provided radical right parties with a new and powerful issue to compete on. Notwithstanding their nation-centred profile and their ideological propensity towards Euroscepticism, radical right parties have been able to draw political capital from the developments promoted by the emerging European polity. The analysis reveals that despite the increasing use of Eurosceptic positions by radical right parties and their mobilization at European elections, these parties have failed to establish themselves as relevant actors at the European level. The limited Europeanization of the radical right is explained by the non-involvement in European policy-making and the inability to engage in durable paths of transnational cooperation resulting from divergent domestic party strategies.

The mobilization of radical right parties at the European level raises relevant and so far unexplored questions related to research on the Europeanization of national political parties: Were the short-lived attempts to form a common political group in the European Parliament only a means to gain additional resources? Do radical right parties expect to draw symbolic capital (e.g. increased legitimacy) from their membership in transnational coalitions? How far have radical right parties attempted to shape policy outcomes at the European level?

The paper analyzes the impact of European integration on radical right parties by examining the adaptive strategies deployed by the radical right in order to operate within a multilevel polity. The paper builds upon the premise that the Europeanization of domestic partisan actors constitutes a dual process whereby political parties develop programmatic and
organizational responses to European integration while simultaneously seeking to maximize their influence within the European polity by attempting to shape policy outcomes (Hix and Goetz 2000; Bomberg and Carter 2006). The European level is thus considered both as an independent variable of party change and as an additional arena in which political parties pursue domestic policy goals and strategies.

Valuable theoretical insights on the adaptation of the radical right to European integration can be drawn from the broader comparative literature on party-based Euroscepticism. A first set of studies has focussed on the function of Euroscepticism as a demarcation line between peripheral and established partisan actors. Drawing on the premise that party-based Euroscepticism represents a ‘touchstone of dissent’ (Taggart: 1998), opposition to European integration is conceived as an instrument for anti-establishment actors to consolidate a constructed opposition between ‘established elites’ and the ‘ordinary citizens’ ascribing themselves the spokesmanship for the latter (Harmsen 2005; Schedler 1996). A second strain of research has concentrated on the phenomenon as an expression of ideological compatibilities and misfits between cleavage-based identities and the political centre of gravity of the integration process (e.g. Hooghe et al. 2002). A third, more heterogeneous strand of analyses has studied the dynamic aspect of Euroscepticism by emphasizing the impact of office-seeking and opposition strategies as structuring variables for explaining the softening of Eurosceptic party positions (e.g. Sitter 2003).

The aforementioned studies have contributed to shedding a light on the independent variables structuring party positions on the EU. However, findings on radical right parties have been insulated from the general analysis of national parties’ ‘adaptive responses’ to a changing environment characterized by new exit-options (Ladrech 2002; Hix and Goetz 2000). With the exception of Fennema’s and Pollmann’s (1998) study on anti-immigrant parties in the European Parliament, the radical right has aroused little interest in the growing scholarly literature on Europeanization. The weak research output in this particular field is understandable considering the apparent paradox of assessing the Europeanization of vehemently Eurosceptic actors. The following analysis seeks to move beyond this paradox by integrating the radical right into the wider research agenda on the Europeanization of political parties.

Europeanization represents a complex and multiform phenomenon. I derive a working definition of the term by drawing on Ladrech’s (2002) definition of Europeanization as a process whereby political parties respond to the impact of European integration. The
broadness of the definition implies a wide array of dimensions for investigating the responses of political parties to the EU level. The first and most manifest dimension is programmatic change. Considering the ever-growing importance of the European level, political parties are expected to increasingly define their goals within the context of European multilevel governance. The second dimension of Europeanization relates to organizational change conditioned by the European level. Indicators for the adaptation of political parties to the European polity include the degree of mobilization at European elections and the emergence of transnational cooperation platforms to coordinate policy goals and obtain additional resources at the European level. Organizational adaptation tends to be subordinated to the overarching goal of maximizing influence at the European level. Hence, the second dimension of Europeanization is inextricably linked to the question whether political parties attempt to shape decision-making processes in the European polity.

The term ‘radical right’ is applied to parties sharing a common location at the right-wing periphery of the societal left-right dimension and displaying the following ideological correspondences:

(i) A self-proclaimed identity as ‘genuine’ representatives of the people against the ‘political establishment’ (Mudde 2004; Schedler 1996);
(ii) The defence of an essentialist conception of the nation;
(iii) A conspiracy-centred approach towards socio-economic issues based on ‘sympathetic’ causalities and the blaming of ethnically, politically or sexually defined minority groups.

As this paper analyzes the Europeanization of radical right parties and their behaviour at the European level, the focus lies on parties which have been represented in the European Parliament. The research builds on the qualitative analysis of radical right manifestos as well as on data on legislative behaviour within the European Parliament. The findings were complemented by a series of semi-structured interviews with eight MEPs from radical right parties conducted by the author between February and October 2007.

**Programmatic Responses: From Ethno-Europeanism to Hard Euroscepticism**

Both actor-centred and historical institutionalist approaches in the study of party-based Euroscepticism predict a high degree of compatibility between radical right parties and Eurosceptic positions. As anti-establishment actors tending to pursue a course of ‘irresponsible opposition’ (Sartori 1976: 139), radical right parties are expected to
fundamentally oppose European integration as a project driven by the ‘established political class’ (Taggart 1998). Similarly, the programmatic profile of radical right parties tends to constitute a natural barrier against support for a process which is at odds with the exclusive sense of national identity fostered by these parties (Hooghe et al. 2002: 977-980). Without contradicting the foregoing premises, the empirical evidence from a number of radical right parties suggests that the programmatic responses to European integration have been considerably more complex than commonly assumed.

In this section, I focus on the development of radical right party positions to European integration since the mid 1980s. Considering the outstanding position of the Front National, the German Republikaner and the Austrian Freedom Party in terms of electoral relevance during the foundational period of contemporary radical right parties, special consideration is given to the three aforementioned cases.

Since the early 1990s, European integration has been described by the FN as a plot against the nation inspired by the ‘Marxist-technocratic plans’ of Jean Monnet and carried through by mainstream parties as a first step toward the ‘foreign submersion’ and ‘globalist decomposition’ of France (Le Pen 1998). During the 2002 presidential election campaign, the FN clearly put forward France’s withdrawal from the EU as one of its major political aims, stating that ‘the European Union, like the Soviet Union, will join the cemetery of vanished empires’ (FN 2001: 158-160). The FN should thus be classified as a hard Eurosceptic party rejecting the basic principles of European integration. Yet, prior to Maastricht, the FN apparently expressed a different position:

‘The European Union is to remain a utopia as long as the Community will not dispose of sufficient resources, of a common currency and of a political will inseparable from defence capacity.’ (Le Pen 1985: 191)

European integration was perceived by the FN as a means for Europeans to ‘seek power and influence in fidelity to their roots’ (Le Pen 1985: 189) and – more prosaically – as a potential counterweight to the US and the Soviet Union.

The apparent pro-integrationist stance initially defended by the FN was, however, less motivated by the striving for institutionalized cooperation between European states than by the diffuse will to establish a culturally and racially defined European entity; an entity in which France would be able to regain its political and cultural influence in world affairs. The ideological roots of this exclusive pan-European ‘nationalism’ can be found in the doctrines of the French far-right expressed in the 1960s and 1970s by the neo-pagan and racist
organizations *Europe-Action* and the *Groupement de Recherches et d’Etudes pour la Civilisation Européenne* (GRECE) which drew on Oswald Mosley’s ‘Europe a nation’ doctrine (Duranton-Crabol 1991: 34-39).

The early European policy of the German *Republikaner* displays common traits with the substantialist Europeanism of the FN. Since its creation from a faction of the Bavarian Christian Social Union opposed to the GDR policy of Franz Josef Strauss in 1983, the party has sought to position itself in the tradition of the so-called Conservative Revolution (Fieschi et al. 1996: 237) or – in a less perilous exercise – as a true heir of the *Hambacher Fest* and the 1848/49 Revolutions (Republikaner 2002: 3). Despite the party’s rhetorical efforts to distance itself from the first post-1945 wave of German right-wing extremism, the demarcation line between the *Republikaner* and other extreme right parties is tenuous. Not only does the party draw on an essentialist concrescence of the people and the homeland (*Volk* and *Heimat*), but it also regularly advocates a return to the German borders of 1937 (e.g. Republikaner 1990: 59).

The revanchist claims of the *Republikaner* are reflected in its early programmatic statements on European integration. According to the party, the enhanced cooperation between European states should provide Germany the opportunity to renegotiate a peace treaty as a basis for a ‘renewed German nation state’ (Republikaner 1987: 2). Alongside the party’s instrumental support for cooperation, the early approach of the *Republikaner* to European integration builds upon the ethno-Europeanism theorized by the *nouvelle droite*. The French GRECE provided the model for similar organizations such as the *Thule Seminar* and the *Deutscher Nationalrat*. The latter constituted the party’s unofficial think tank (Jaschke 1994: 113) and had a decisive influence in its early responses to European integration. In their first manifesto, the *Republikaner* expressed a barely restrained support for a European federation (*Bundesstaat*) functioning by majority voting (Republikaner 1983: 33). In 1987, the party’s stance on European integration underwent a shift with the *Republikaner* professing a ‘Europe of fatherlands’ (Republikaner 1987: 4). However, the party’s Eurosceptic turn did not occur before the negotiation of the Maastricht Treaty, a treaty described by party leader Schönhuber as ‘a Versailles [treaty] without war’ (cited in Bergsdorf 2000: 295). Since then, the *Republikaner* have developed a strongly anti-integrationist profile centred on anti-immigrant shibboleths and a return to the German Mark (Republikaner 2002: 11).

In contrast to other radical right parties, the programmatic profile of the Austrian Freedom Party (FPÖ) was the result of a shift from national ‘liberalism’ to the right-wing fringes of the Austrian party system following Jörg Haider’s election as a party leader in 1986.
In spite of its different genesis as a radical right party, the development of the FPÖ’s stance on European integration displays a pattern similar to the trajectories of the FN and the Republikaner. However, in the Austrian case, the party’s European policy of the 1980s went far beyond the vague ethno-Europeanism of its French and German counterparts. Since its foundation in 1956, the FPÖ constituted the most fervent supporter of EC accession. The FPÖ’s populist shift did not have any immediate consequences on the party’s pro-EC stance as the FPÖ continued to profess EC-membership until the late 1980s (von Livonius 2002: 187). However, as the prospect of membership became reality, the FPÖ’s European policy witnessed a radical change. In 1991, the party still maintained a pro-accession line but qualified its position with criticism against the perceived bureaucratic and centralized character of the European polity. On the eve of the 1994 Referendum on EU-accession, the FPÖ finalized its shift towards Euroscepticism as the majority of the party’s MPs voted against the constitutional amendment on EU-accession in the Nationalrat. Although the party did not officially campaign for a No vote, 59 percent of the party’s supporters voted against accession (Plassner and Ulram 1994: 99). As a coalition partner of the Austrian People’s Party, the FPÖ was forced to tone down its Euroscepticism by agreeing to commit to a pro-integrationist agenda. The FPÖ’s return to opposition in 2005 after the creation of the Bündnis Zukunft Österreich from a secessionist faction led by Haider fostered a renewed course of hard opposition to the EU.

The deepening of European integration in a new geopolitical context combined with the increasing systemic salience of the issue in party competition constituted the main factors structuring the post-Maastricht Eurosceptic agenda of radical right parties. Until the beginning of the 1990s, European integration remained a foremost technical foreign policy project with a divisive potential at the elite-level but featuring a low degree of salience in the public debate of most West European countries. The post-Maastricht breaches in the ‘permissive consensus’ represented a change of paradigm in the dynamics of party competition over European integration (Hooghe and Marks 2008). To be sure, radical right parties were not exogenous to the emergence of inter-party dissent over European integration as their newly found Eurosceptic fervour represented one of the main symptoms of the diagnosed politicization of European integration. However, the discovery of Euroscepticism as a stance from which political capital could be gained was conditional upon an increased systemic salience of the issue in national party competition. National debates over the ratification of Maastricht provided the opportunity structure for the positional realignment of radical right parties.
The development of a radical right-wing Euroscepticism must thus be analyzed within the broader context of the politicization of European integration and the introduction of Euroscepticism as a demarcation line between core parties and peripheral anti-establishment actors (Taggart 1998). In the case of France, it was not until the 1992 Referendum on the Maastricht Treaty that political parties began to treat European integration as a salient issue and to incorporate it in party competition. While the Socialist Party had abandoned the soft Euroscepticism of the *programme commun* to embrace a broad pro-integrationism in 1983, Chirac’s *Rassemblement pour la République* was beginning to emancipate itself from an orthodox Gaullist interpretation of the European integration project. Thus both the PS as well as significant parts of the RPR converged on a pro-EU stance and supported the Treaty. Strong opposition to Maastricht and to European integration in general became a means for the FN to reinforce its identity as an anti-establishment party. Similarly, for the *Republikaner*, the debate over the TEU combined with the French *petit oui* to the Treaty allowed the party to denounce Germany’s European policy and to profess a transfer of sovereignty to the people through the means of direct democracy.

The development of a radical right hard Euroscepticism correlates closely with the deepening of European integration itself. The strengthening of the supranational dimension implied by the TEU was radically opposed to the FN’s conception of a ‘Europe that builds upon the fatherlands of the EEC’ (Le Pen 1985: 189). As Fieschi et al. (1996: 239) observed, the FN’s appeal for a ‘European patriotism’ expressed in the 1980s faded away when confronted with the political reality of the EU.

An additional reason that led radical right parties to temper their calls for a ‘European patriotism’ and move towards hard Euroscepticism was the disappearance of communist regimes in Europe. In the eyes of the radical right, the fall of the Iron Curtain meant the loss of one of the main *raisons d’être* of the European integration project, namely the creation of a common fortress against the ‘communist threat’ posed by Moscow.

Since the early 1990s, the ethno-Europeanism imported from the *nouvelle droite* ceased to provide the major doctrinal benchmark for determining the desirability of the integration process and gave way to the incorporation of the European issue into a broader anti-establishment repertoire. To be sure, reminiscences of the *nouvelle droite* still surface in the programmatic profiles of radical right parties as for example in the FN’s proposal to establish a Latin union comprising countries sharing a ‘common Latinity’ (FN 2001: 145) or in the FPÖ’s obscure appeals in favour of ‘Europe’s spiritual and cultural advancement’ (FPÖ...
However, the elitism and doctrinaire intellectualism of the *nouvelle droite* provided a poor basis for radical right parties to extend their electoral appeal beyond a limited reservoir of convinced nationalists and disenchanted rightist voters. Since the 1990s, the vast majority of radical right parties began to draw a considerable share of their electoral support from working-class constituencies (Ignazi and Perrineau 2002; Falter 1994). This reconfiguration of radical right party support was in part a product of radical right parties’ ability to position themselves as tribunes of the common people against the political establishment after the decline of party-based communism. At the same time, this development constituted a driving force for radical right parties to downplay doctrinaire elements in favour of a more appealing anti-establishment profile.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Party/ Country</th>
<th>Percentage of Respondents Stating that EC/EU Membership of their country is a 'Bad Thing' (N in brackets)</th>
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<tr>
<td>FN</td>
<td>3.81 (105)</td>
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<tr>
<td>France</td>
<td>4.56</td>
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<tr>
<td>REP</td>
<td>11.22 (107)</td>
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<td>(West) Germany</td>
<td>9.07</td>
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<tr>
<td>MSI-DN</td>
<td>4.65 (43)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LN</td>
<td>5.06 (79)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Total Italy</td>
<td>1.68</td>
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<tr>
<td>VB</td>
<td>10.75 (93)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Total Flanders</td>
<td>6.36</td>
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<tr>
<td>FPÖ</td>
<td></td>
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<td>Total Austria</td>
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Notes: 1984: by probability of vote for an extreme right party in general as dichotomous yes/ no variable; 1989, 1994, 1999 and 2004: by probability of vote for party X on 1-10 scale; 1= not probable, 10=very probable; only respondents choosing the category 8 to 10 were included. 2004: In Italy and Flanders by intention of vote in next national elections.

Table 1 draws on public opinion on European integration amongst potential radical right party voters in order to illustrate how most radical right parties have developed a distinguishable profile as Eurosceptic parties in the post-Maastricht years. The table entries represent the share of potential supporters of radical right parties stating that the membership of their country to the EC/ EU is a ‘bad thing’. Given the fact that the proportion of radical
right party voters is consistently underestimated in public opinion surveys resulting in non-representative samples, I use the probability of vote for a radical right party as an indicator for party support. However, only few surveys entail this question and in most cases, the sample size is too small.

While the percentage of Eurosceptics tends to be higher among potential radical right party voters when compared to the national samples, the differences are barely significant in the 1980s. Yet, from the early 1990s onwards, the probability to vote for a radical right party becomes a powerful predictor for Euroscepticism. In 1984, the percentage of Eurosceptics within the group of potential supporters of the FN is slightly below the national level. However, two decades later, the same proportion is three times higher than the national level. In contrast, the Vlaams Blok (since 2004: Vlaams Belang) displays a constantly higher share of Eurosceptics among its potential supporters. Again, the survey results reflect the party’s anti-integrationism centred on the need to preserve the Flemish cultural identity against a perceived European super-state (Marks et al. 2007: 31). In the case of the Italian Social Movement – National Alliance, the figures mirror the party’s general pro-integrationist stance. Similarly, the 1994 figures for the Lega Nord are in line with the party’s initial pro-EU position. For the following years, the LN’s Eurosceptic trajectory is illustrated by the significantly higher share of Eurosceptics within the circle of potential supporters. As an opposition party between 1996 and 2001, the LN developed an extensive Eurosceptic stance and strong opposition to a common currency (Albertazzi and McDonnell 2005: 965). The EU was no longer presented as a catalyzer of regional development but as a centralized and undemocratic polity interfering with Padania’s independence and promoting mass immigration.

Opposition to European integration tends to be the rule in other radical right parties. The Italian Movimento Sociale Fiamma Tricolore, a splinter of the MSI opposed to the party’s rupture with neo-fascism, expresses a diffuse rejection of the EU. The party stands in favour of a wide ‘Community of the People of Europe’ (comprising Russia but excluding Turkey) which would be the antithesis to the ‘European Union of the merchants and the banks of Maastricht and Brussels’ (MSFT 2005: 3-4). Similarly, Azione Sociale, led by the granddaughter of the Duce, Alessandra Mussolini, contrasts European traditions and Christian values with a ‘soulless Europe’ represented by the EU (AS 2006). Both parties emphasize their opposition to Turkey’s EU-accession, but fail to develop any stance on other European policy fields. Specific statements on European integration are likewise absent from the policy
preferences of the Greater Romania Party (*Partidul România Mare*, PRM). Apart from general remarks on national sovereignty and the *grandeur* of European civilization, the party’s stance on the EU is ambiguous and lacks a clear position. In 1995, the party supported Romania’s EU application by co-signing the Declaration of Snagov. Similarly in February 2008, the party’s MPs voted in favour of the ratification of the Lisbon Treaty. However, in June 2007, the party’s delegate MEPs voted against the EP’s resolution on the roadmap for the Union’s Constitutional Process. In contrast to other members of the radical right, the aforementioned parties have not developed extensive positional responses to European integration.

Notwithstanding the latter exceptions, the general findings corroborate the hypothesis that radical right parties have increasingly placed Euroscepticism at the core of their programmatic profiles. By emphasizing their opposition to European integration, radical right parties have been able to strengthen their self-proclaimed identity as defenders of the people against a supranational political establishment united in its will to dissolve European nations. Additionally, radical right parties use the European issue in order to bundle and reframe programmatic leitmotifs such as immigration, globalization, anti-Americanism or opposition to central government in the cases of the ethno-regionalist *Vlaams Belang* and *Lega Nord*.

Thus far, the adaptation of radical right parties to European integration has been analyzed through the prism of positional responses and realignments. The following sections focus on the mobilization of radical right parties at the European level by isolating the following four areas of adaptation to the impact of European integration:

(i) Mobilization at European Parliament elections;
(ii) Intensity of ties between MEPs and national parties;
(iii) Transnational party cooperation;
(iv) Involvement in policy-making at the European level.

Previous research on the Europeanization of political parties in terms of organizational responses has focused primarily on parties represented in national executives (Raunio 2002; Poguntke et al. 2007). Considering the scarcity of national cases featuring a radical right party in public office, these findings are difficult to transfer to the radical right. However, it is precisely because of their overall low governing potential that radical right parties are expected to use the European level as an exit-option for pursuing domestic strategies.
Mobilization at European Elections

European elections have provided radical right parties with an additional arena to gain public visibility and mobilize voters. The electoral record of the West European radical right has been strongly shaped by electoral performances at European elections. The French *Front National* achieved its first national breakthrough one year after the by-election of Dreux in the 1984 European elections by gaining 10.95 percent of cast votes. In the case of the *Republikaner*, the 1989 EP election was the sole supra-regional contest in which the party was able to pass the five percent threshold and gain representation. Similarly, the Greek People’s Orthodox Rally (LAOS, literally *people*) was able to elect its first national representative in the 2004 EP election. Even smaller radical right parties, which failed to position themselves as relevant actors in their respective party systems, have been able to mobilize a larger share of voters at European elections. This was the case of the short-lived Greek EPEN, which elected one MEP in the 1984 before disappearing from Greece’s political landscape. In Luxembourg, the now defunct National Movement, while scoring under one percent in national elections, polled 2.9 and 2.4 percent of cast votes in the EP elections of 1984 and 1989 respectively. Similarly, the Dutch *Centrumpartij* obtained its best national election result at the 1984 European election with 2.5 percent of votes.

The electoral breakthroughs achieved by the radical right at the European level suggest that these parties face a more favourable opportunity structure in the context of EP elections than in national first-order contests. Several factors pertaining to the specific character of European elections as second-order contests (Reif and Schmitt 1980) support this hypothesis: Not only do European elections provide (successful) peripheral parties with additional funds, but European election campaigns also tend to give smaller parties a share of media coverage that is disproportionate to their national electoral weight (Reif 1997). The increased public visibility of parties located at the left and right-wing fringes can be explained by their radical policy preferences on European integration as opposed to the general pro-integrationist consensus between established parties (Marsh and Norris 1997). Additionally, because European elections do not translate into the formation of a European executive, voters might be more willing to support smaller parties than in national contests (Ferrara and Weishaupt 2004: 286). Moreover, radical right parties are expected to profit from the overall losses of governing parties when European elections are held in the midterm of national electoral cycles (Reif 1984; Schmitt 2005). Furthermore, the system of proportional representation at European elections may benefit radical right parties from countries featuring plurality voting
systems by increasing the incentives to vote for parties that are unlikely to obtain representatives at the national level. Finally, the general low turnout at European elections tends to favour extremist parties in general and radical right parties in particular. Thus, it is precisely the second-order character of European elections that makes these elections appealing contests for radical right parties.

To what extent do radical right parties perceive European elections as an alternative arena to gain political representation and increase their public visibility? A valuable indicator for assessing the importance of the European level as a core arena for political parties acting in multi-layered systems is campaign spending (Deschouwer 2003: 218). If radical right parties invest more financial resources in European elections than in national first-order contests, this would suggest a considerable degree of adaptation to European integration. Data accessibility and heterogeneous reporting requirements for campaign spending impose serious limitations on systematic cross-national comparisons. However, the few countries from which data could be retrieved display a similar pattern: While governing-oriented parties invest significantly less resources in European election campaigns than in national legislative contests, right-wing populist Eurosceptic parties in general and radical right parties in particular tend to display higher levels of campaign spending in the context of European elections. The differences are striking in the British case: As a result of the first past the post system at general elections, minor parties tend to disengage from the national electoral arena and to concentrate their financial efforts on European elections. Thus both the UK Independence Party and the British National Party invested considerably larger sums in the 2004 European elections when compared to the 2005 general elections (plus 264.3 and 104.2 percent respectively). Unsurprisingly, the difference is negative for the three major parties, with the Labour Party (minus 90.5 percent), the Conservative Party (minus 82.5 percent) and the Liberal Democrats (minus 72.5 percent) investing their financial resources primarily in general election campaigns.¹ The figures are similar in Germany. When compared to the Bundestag elections of 2002, all major parties allocated significantly less resources to their European election campaign (CDU: minus 58.9 percent; SPD: minus 55.4 percent; FDP: minus 80.4 percent; Grünen: minus 52.0 percent). In contrast, the neo-Nazi Nationaldemokratische Partei Deutschlands and the Republikaner spent respectively 67.7 and 1.0 percent more funds in the context of the 2004 European elections.² In Belgium, strict

¹ Figures as reported by the UK Electoral Commission 2006.
² Figures for the Republikaner and the NPD as reported to the author by the party central. Estimates for the remaining parties from Tenscher (2005: 39).
limits on campaign expenditures lead to barely significant differences at national and European elections. Once again, however, when the 2003 federal elections and the 2004 European elections are compared, radical right parties appear as the sole partisan actors spending more funds in their European election campaigns with plus 0.3 percent in the case of the *Vlaams Blok* and more impressive plus 338.2 percent for the *Front National*.\(^3\) The foregoing cases suggest that radical right parties do indeed tend to perceive European elections as first-order contests. However, given the limited number of cases covered by the analysis, further research is needed in order to investigate the mobilization of radical right parties in European elections in terms of campaign spending.

How far has the mobilization of radical right parties at European elections paid off in terms of electoral support? The second-order character of European elections should provide radical right parties with a competitive advantage in this electoral arena. Yet empirical evidence to sustain the hypothesis that radical right parties are more successful at European elections than in national first-order elections is scant. Table 2 shows the electoral performances of radical right parties at European elections since 1984 and includes the differences to the results obtained in the national legislative elections most prior to the EP elections under scrutiny. In some cases, radical right parties have been able to obtain significantly larger shares of votes at European elections. This was the case for the French FN in 1984, the FPÖ in 1996, the British National Party in 2004 and the Bulgarian *Ataka* in 2007. In the German case, even small differences in electoral performance have considerable financial consequences for the parties under scrutiny: While the *Republikaner* and the NPD failed to pass the 0.5 percent threshold entitling them for public funding in the 2002 Bundestag elections, the results of the 2004 EP elections allowed both radical right parties to obtain 412,821 and 205,482 Euros respectively in state funding.

Notwithstanding the foregoing exceptions, the overall picture does not indicate that radical right parties have been able to mobilize larger shares of the electorate in European elections. In most cases, the differences between the scores obtained at European and national elections are insignificant. While previous research on European elections confirmed that smaller parties tend to fare better in European elections than in first-order elections in Western Europe (Schmitt 2005), radical right parties do not appear to profit from these dynamics. The results are consistent with Ferrara’s and Weishaupt’s analysis (2004) of party

\(^3\) Figures as reported in Chambre des Représentants et Sénat de Belgique (2005a; 2005b).
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<td>Austria</td>
<td>Freiheitliche Partei Österreichs (FPÖ)</td>
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<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>27.5</td>
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Sources: National Electoral Commissions

4 Belgium: Results as national share of votes.
5 Germany: National election results are calculated as the shares of second votes.
6 Italy: National election results are weighted means of uninominal and proportional shares of votes, except for the LN and AN in 1994 (proportional votes only).
performances at EP elections which comes to the conclusion that the radical right does not obtain higher results in European elections. The failure of the radical right to translate its situational advantage at second-order elections into higher vote shares can be partially explained by the emergence of right-wing Eurosceptic parties that concentrate their campaign efforts at European elections. In France, the FN has faced strong competition by the sovereignist and anti-immigration lists lead Philippe de Villiers since 1994. In Denmark, the Dansk Folkeparti is confronted with an overcrowded right-wing Eurosceptic space dominated by the JuniBevægelsen. Similarly, potential support for the British National Party is highly constrained by the UK Independence Party.

In short, while radical right parties do appear to be strongly mobilized in the context of European elections, the shares of votes obtained by the radical right do not suggest that these parties are more susceptible to mobilize voters at European elections than at first-order elections. This in turn does not mean that radical right parties do not benefit from European elections. Besides media coverage during European election campaigns, state funding on campaign expenditures and the reallocation of financial and human resources to the party’s central office provide incentives for a stronger mobilization of radical right parties at EP elections.

**Intensity of Ties between MEPS and National Parties**

Interactions between MEPS and their national parties are of crucial importance for assessing the Europeanization of political parties. Formal and informal ties between national parties and their EP representatives can contribute to a more adequate coordination of national and European party policies (Raunio 2000). More specifically, the involvement of MEPS in central party organs is expected to improve the quality of policy preferences on European integration.

Assessing the influence of MEPS in national political parties is a straightforward exercise in the case of the radical right as most national delegations in the EP are identical with their respective party leaderships. Ten out of the fourteen radical right parties with elected MEPS were represented in at least one legislature by the party’s president or secretary general. However, in most cases, including the Republikaner, the French FN, the Greek LAOS, the neo-fascist AS and MSFT, the presence of the party leadership in the EP is most likely a product of the lack of representatives in national legislatures. Whenever radical right parties were able to gain access to representation at the national level, MEPS with high-ranking positions in their national party tended to leave the EP and to opt for a seat in the national parliament instead. This was the case of the FN after the 1986 legislative elections in which the party secured 35 seats in the
Assemblée Nationale given the one-off use of the proportional system. Although party leader Jean-Marie Le Pen cumulated a national and EP mandate, most of the FN’s MEPs represented in the party’s executive bureau opted for a national mandate and their seats in the EP were allocated to second-order party officials. Similarly, the president of LAOS left the EP after his party obtained national representation at the 2007 Greek Parliament election.

Although similar career patterns apply to other party families, the findings suggest that the high proportion of leading party personnel within radical right delegations in the EP is a result of a limited access to representation in national legislatures rather than a symptom of Europeanization. The European level thus appears, faute de mieux, as the primary arena for radical right parties to allocate posts.

Transnational Party Cooperation

With the enhanced role of the European Parliament in the EU’s institutional architecture, political parties have come to play an ever growing part in European policy-making beyond the level of national executives. Political groups in the EP constitute the primary locus of party politics at the European level (Hix and Lord 1997). Political groups have become a key variable for explaining voting behaviour in the EP and are thus central actors in shaping policy outcomes (Hix et al. 2007). Additionally, political groups in the EP play a pivotal role in the election of the EP’s Bureau and in the allocation of committee chairmanships, rapporteurship and speaking time. Finally, political groups ensure that there is a cross-partisan majority for the investiture of the Commission. If – as this paper argues – the maximization of bargaining weight within the European polity is to be understood as a central dimension of Europeanization, attempts to engage in durable paths of transnational cooperation aiming at establishing a political group in the EP provide an essential indicator for the degree of Europeanization of political parties.

The formation of a common parliamentary party at the European level has proven to be a difficult exercise for radical right parties. The first signs of transnational cooperation between radical parties go back to the Eurodroite group, a temporary alliance for the first EP elections between the French Parti des Forces Nouvelles and the Italian MSI, which included other radical right groupuscules from Belgium and Spain. However, with the exception of the MSI, the Eurodroite failed to gain representation in the EP’s first legislature. The numerical insignificance of the radical right, composed of Italian neo-fascists and Greek junta-nostalgics, made the formation of a political group impossible.
This situation changed with the FN’s breakthrough in the 1984 European elections and the subsequent creation of the Group of the European Right (GER, cf. table 3) with the MSI, the Greek EPEN and the Ulster Unionist Party. In 1989, the lack of radical right MEPs from the more recent member states was compensated for by the election of six MEPs from the Republikaner. Again, the FN provided the strongest national delegation of the radical right and played a leading role in the negotiations for establishing a common party group. Notwithstanding the increased number of seats held by radical right parties, the establishment of a party group was a complex task. The creation of an overarching group with the MSI was an unlikely prospect as both the Republikaner and Karel Dillen’s Vlaams Blok refused an alliance with the Italian neo-fascists. While the pan-Germanism of the Republikaner collided with the MSI’s stance on the Alto Adige, the Flemish radical right was opposed to the MSI’s position on minority rights. Le Pen thus opted for a common party group with the German and Flemish radical right. Surprisingly, Dillen was able to overcome the programmatic incompatibility with the FN resulting from the VB’s ideal of a Greater Flanders comprising Dunkirk and Lille (Fennema and Pollmann 1998). The resulting structure – the Technical Group of the European Right (TGER) – was more homogenous than its predecessor in terms of European policy and anti-immigrant positions given the absence of the rather pro-integrationist MSI which did not feature a strong anti-immigration policy. However, fundamental divergences over nationhood prevented an agreement on a common programmatic base and the group remained a pragmatic arrangement.

The 1994 European elections witnessed a climax in the paradox of the European radical right. Although radical right parties obtained a record number of seats in the EP, they were unable to form a common group. After the short-lived coalition within Berlusconi’s first cabinet, the MSI-DN sought to distance itself from its post-fascist identity under a new existence within the Alleanza Nazionale. The AN’s efforts to gain national and international legitimacy prohibited any alliance with the FN and the divorce with Le Pen was overtly presented as a proof of the party’s newly found moderation (e.g. Fini 1998). The strategy of non-alliance with the FN became also an efficient instrument for other parties to refute the label radical right. While Haider’s FPÖ recognized that an alliance with the French radical right would have devastating effects on the party’s legitimacy, the Vlaams Blok excluded the prospect of a common party group with the FN’s Walloon sister party. As for the Lega Nord, it preferred to join the more consensual European Liberal, Democrat and Reform Party. With the exception of the Lega Nord, the radical right was thus composed of non-attached MEPs in the fourth legislature. This status had several consequences for the national party delegations under scrutiny,
### Table 3
Radical Right Parties in the European Parliament

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|        | % of Total MEPs |        |        |        |        |        |        |

Sources: Ignazi and Perrineau (2002: 162); http://www.europarl.eu

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7 1994-1998
8 1989.
9 1989-1990: *Lega Lombarda – Alleanza Nord*
10 One of the four LN MEPs did not join the TGIM.
11 Until the November 2007 EP elections, the Greater Romania Party had 5 delegate MEPs.
including less speaking time, no right to put questions for oral answer with debate to the Council or the Commission, restricted staff and material resources, no voting right in the Conference of Presidents and consequently a limited prospect of obtaining reports, committee vice-chairmanships and let alone committee chairmanships.

The 1999 European elections did not bring about significant improvements in the transnational coordination of radical right parties. Given the unwillingness of the FPÖ and, a fortiori, the AN to engage in any alliance with Le Pen, the FN was forced to seek for new allies. During the 1999 election campaign, the FN granted financial and logistic assistance to the radical right Sweden Democrats (Sverigedemokraterna) and supported other radical right groupuscules in Spain and Finland. Yet, these efforts did not pay off as none of the latter parties gathered sufficient votes to gain representation in the EP. The misfortunes of the FN were aggravated by the party’s poor electoral showing in the context of a law suit for Holocaust denial against Le Pen and internal leadership disputes. With less MEPs and the continual refusal of the FPÖ to cooperate with the FN, the solution envisaged by Le Pen was the creation of a technical group without a common program which would include most non-attached members. The resulting Technical Group of Independent Members (TGI) was a heterogeneous conglomerate of national party delegations with a strong radical right component. The TGI comprised the FN, the VB, three MEPs from the LN and one member of the neo-fascist MSFT. The largest party delegation was provided by the Lista Emma Bonino led by the former Italian Commissioner. The mere technical nature of the TGI and its ideological incongruence motivated the EP’s decision not to recognize the group. After an appeal to the Court of First Instance on November 1999, the TGI was able to subsist until October 2001 when the Court finally rejected its appeal.

The 2004 European elections brought mixed results for the radical right. On the one hand, both the FN and the VB were able to increase the size of their respective delegations. In Greece, the radical right resurfaced with the Popular Orthodox Rally sending one representative to the EP. On the other hand, the FPÖ witnessed a dramatic electoral setback and lost four of its five seats. Additionally, radical right parties in the new member states, in particular the Hungarian Justice and Life Party and the Slovakian National Party, which had developed links with the FN, failed to obtain seats.

With the second eastwards enlargement in January 2007 and the presence of non-elected MEPs from the Greater Romanian Party and the Bulgarian Ataka, the creation of a radical political group became numerically feasible. In order to avoid the misfortunes of the
previous legislature, the resulting structure – Identity, Tradition, Sovereignty (ITS) – was built upon a vague catalogue of political affinities which included the ‘recognition of national interests’ and a ‘commitment to Christian values […] and the traditions of European civilisation’ (Gollnisch 2007). The existence of the ITS group was short-lived and ended ten months later after the withdrawal of the Romanian delegation, leaving the group with insufficient members for group recognition. Officially, the PRM invoked denigrating remarks against Romania by ITS member Alessandra Mussolini (Vadim Tudor 2007). However, the party’s decision was most likely motivated by the concern that cooperation with other radical right parties would have a negative impact on the party’s scoring at the European elections of November 2007. The strategy was unsuccessful as the PRM failed to obtain representation.

Drawing on the empirical evidence from radical right party behaviour at the European level, three basic patterns of horizontal interactions between radical right parties in the EP and their implications can be delineated: (i) institutionalized ties with radical right parties; (ii) institutionalized ties with other parties and (iii) isolation.

The first strategy implies a public disclosure of political affinities with other radical right parties. While membership to a radical right political group opens the possibility to frame policy preferences in a European context and to maximize resources and visibility in the EP, it represents a costly strategy in terms of legitimacy at the domestic level.

In an attempt to stay within the ‘region of acceptability’ (Rabinowitz and Macdonald 1989), a number of radical right parties have opted for membership in less controversial groups. This was the case of the Danish People’s Party whose aspiration to incumbency (Pedersen and Ringsmose 2004) would have been incompatible with membership in a radical right group. In 2004, Georgios Karatzaferis, president of the Greek LAOS, made a similar decision by joining the Independence/Democracy group. This decision forced the party to present a de-radicalized profile at the European level purged of the racist and anti-Semitic positions characteristic of its domestic discourse. Similar attempts were undertaken by Umberto Bossi in an effort to present his Lega as a ‘federalist’ and ‘liberal’ ‘antithesis of Le Pen’ (Lega Nord 2002: 1). However, the failure to undergo a course of moderation led to a series of group expulsions beginning with the LN’s exclusion from the Rainbow group in 1994, from the European Liberal, Democrat and Reform Party group in 1997 and finally from the Independence/Democracy group in 2006.

The third pattern – isolation – resulted in most cases from the failure to create a common radical right group. However, in the case of the Alleanza Nazionale in the fourth
legislature, refusal to cooperate with the FN was instrumental for the party’s post-fascist trajectory. The same option was taken by Jörg Haider after Austria’s EU accession. The FPÖ consequently refused any ties with the FN until the party’s return to opposition in 2005.

In their analysis of the Technical Group of the European Right in the third legislature, Fennema and Pollmann (1998) argued that the lack of cohesion between radical right MEPs was a product of ideological heterogeneity, personal rivalries and conflicting nationalisms. However, the foregoing findings provide little support for this hypothesis. To be sure, the radical right parties under scrutiny strongly diverge in terms of ideology and programs. Additionally, they display very different types of Euroscepticism ranging from overt EU-rejection to EU-apathy. However, ideological differences and dissenting views over European integration are also a prime feature of other coalitions in the EP particularly the Christian democratic and conservative EPP-ED and the Union for Europe of the Nations (UEN) group. Similarly, incompatible nationalisms did not prevent the emergence of transnational ties between the ethno-regionalist Vlaams Blok and the statist Front National or between the Greater Romania Party and the Bulgarian Ataka. Rather than the result of incongruent ideologies and policy preferences, the main reason for the repeated misfortunes of the radical right in terms of transnational cooperation stems from constraints operating at the domestic level. As Johansson (2004: 29) pointed out: ‘When the activities of political parties cross state borders their representatives are not suddenly transformed into free-floating elites. They remain constrained by politics related to the arenas in which they perform.’ Notwithstanding their strongly centralized organizations, radical right parties are not immune to these constraints. Incumbent or office-seeking radical right parties, such as the pre-2005 FPÖ, the Dansk Folkeparti, the Lega Nord or the MSI/AN, use the European level as a strategic arena in order to enhance their legitimacy by relinquishing potential alliances with other radical right parties. The incompatibility between strategies of moderation and horizontal interactions with other radical right parties casts doubts over the prospect of a coordinated mobilization of the radical right. Future attempts to form a radical right political group will most likely be limited to marginalized parties facing a cordon sanitaire in their respective political system. The convergence between domestic trajectories and types of horizontal interactions suggests that radical right parties perceive alliances forged at the European arena as an important element of their national strategy. However, given the inability of the radical right to form durable coalitions in the EP, the potential for Europeanization through cross-national coalition-building remains low.
Involvement in policy-making at the European level

To what extent do radical right parties compensate for their lack of transnational cooperation by attempting to shape policy outcomes in the European Parliament? At the first glance, considering the barely significant share of seats held by radical right parties (cf. table 3), the votes of the radical right are a negligible quantity in garnering winning floor coalitions. The bargaining weight of radical right MEPs remains low in the context of ad hoc coalitions with anti-integrationist MEPs from the radical left, the British Conservative Party, the Eurosceptic Ind/Dem group and parts of the UEN group.

The numerical insignificance of the radical right in the EP is increased by the low attendance record of MEPs from radical right parties. Faas et al. (2004) calculated on the basis of roll-call data that between 1999 and 2001 the Technical Group of Independent Members displayed by far the lowest attendance record among political groups with attendance levels below 50 percent. In general, MEPs from radical right parties are more prone to absenteeism and non-voting (Noury 2002: 50).

The assertion of a non-impact of radical right MEPs also applies to the European Parliament’s committees. The latter constitute a core decision-making arena with rapporteurs playing a key role in shaping deliberation in the plenum and the Conciliation Committee (Tsebelis 1995; Bowler and Farrell 1995; Mamadouh and Raunio 2003; Benedetto 2005). Reports are typically allocated through a bidding system where each political group has a number of points proportional to its representation in the EP and in the respective committee (Whitaker 2001). The rules for report allocation and the fact that rapporteurs face the challenge of mobilizing cross-partisan majorities contribute to an over-representation of the European People’s Party and the Party of European Socialist in report distribution. However, smaller political groups can enhance their chances of being granted reports through MEP specialization (Hausemer 2006) or through the pooling of points (Benedetto 2005). Available data on report distribution suggests that MEPs from radical right parties do not fare well in terms of rapporteurship. Mamadouh and Raunio (2003) calculated that the Technical Group of the European Right in the third legislature (1989-1994), while representing 3.3 percent of total MEPs, were allocated only 0.7 percent of reports. In comparison, the smaller radical left GUE received 0.9 percent of reports in the same period. The access of radical right MEPs to rapporteurship was even more restricted between 2004 and February 2008. For this period, a total of 13 reports were allocated to MEPs which can be considered as belonging to parties of
the radical right. Of these reports, only four were codecision reports, three of them featuring the same rapporteur of the *Lega Nord* and one being granted to a member of the FN. None of these reports pertained to salient areas of radical right programmatic profiles. The constitution of the ITS group did not improve access of radical right MEPs to policy-making in the EP. During its short existence, the ITS group was not granted a single report. Additionally, unlike other political groups, ITS members were excluded from committee vice-chairmanships.

The factual lack of input channels for radical right MEPs can be explained by two interdependent factors: exclusion and self-exclusion. Given the need for rapporteurs to build cross-partisan, mostly centrist coalitions, political group coordinators and committees are expected not to allocate reports to MEPs displaying a maximal distance from the median legislator. At the same time, it is unclear whether radical right MEPs actually sign up for reports. Of the eight interviewed MEPs, only one mentioned the occurrence of a report with no points in the bidding system being denied to him. Five interviewees mentioned that they were unwilling to sign up for reports which did not pertain to the programmatic profiles they were elected upon.

An alternative indicator for the policy input of MEPs is the number and quality of amendments submitted in the committees. Radical right MEPs might compensate their inactivity as rapporteurs by attempting to shape reports in their respective policy areas through amendments. Again, empirical evidence suggests a limited involvement of radical right MEPs as co-legislators. In quantitative terms, the number of amendments submitted by MEPs from the radical right is significantly below average. In the sixth legislature until February 2008, the average MEP had submitted around 80 amendments in committees on legislative procedures and EP resolutions and initiatives. This value drops to an average of 22 amendments in the case of radical right MEPs. Of the total 479 amendments submitted by representatives of the radical right, 80.60 percent stemmed from the same MEP of the Italian neo-fascist MSFT in the Committee of Transport and Tourism and in the Committee of Fisheries. The remaining 93 amendments were submitted by MEPs from the *Vlaams Belang*, the FPÖ and the *Lega Nord*. However, only three of the latter amendments were considered in the resulting reports submitted to plenary vote. The vast majority of unsuccessful amendments related to policy areas at the core of radical right programmatic profiles, such as the refusal of Turkey’s EU accession (30 amendments), calls for stricter immigration and asylum policies (16), the condemnation of anti-discrimination policies (10) and opposition to the European Constitution and the Lisbon Treaty (8).
The failure of amendments submitted by radical right MEPs to pass committee deliberation is not surprising inasmuch as their contents and tone are a direct reproduction of positions articulated at the national level. The VB MEP, Koenraad Dillen, submitted for example a series of amendments to the draft report on the Application of Directive 2000/43/EC implementing the principle of equal treatment stating *inter alia* that the problem of discrimination on the grounds of ethnic origin has been ‘greatly exaggerated’ and that anti-discrimination laws have lead to ‘far-reaching restrictions on freedom of expression, in particular in relation to the problems of Islamisation, immigration and asylum.’

While the non-allocation of reports and committee vice-chairmanships to radical right MEPs indicates that there is *cordon sanitaire* enclosing the radical right at the European level, the latter variable does not fully explain the non-involvement of radical right MEPs in policy-making in the European Parliament. In his first plenary speech as President of the ITS group, the FN’s vice-president – Bruno Gollnisch – defined the radical right coalition as ‘Parliament’s bad conscience, its eagle-eyed critic, the unstinting defender of the European peoples and nations’ (Gollnisch 2007). The failure of most radical right party delegations in the EP to undergo a course of moderation and their general absenteeism suggest instead that the majority of the radical right pursues a paradoxical course of an extra-parliamentary opposition in Parliament unable to mobilize durable cross-national coalitions and unwilling to accommodate to the role of an opposition in the system.

**Conclusions**

The foregoing findings provide little evidence to support the hypothesis of the emergence of a Europeanized radical right. To be sure, most radical right parties have drawn political resources from the issue of European integration by emphasizing their self-ascribed role as tribunes of the people against the ‘political establishment’. Notwithstanding their programmatic adaptation to the European issue and their mobilization at European elections, radical right parties have failed to position themselves as relevant actors at the European level. In addition to the numerical insignificance of the radical right in the European Parliament, disparate domestic strategies have hampered the emergence of lasting cross-national coalitions. Both factors, combined with the general non-involvement of the radical right in the legislative activities of the EP, result in a low degree of Europeanization in terms of influence in European policy-making. In this paper, I concentrated on direct channels of influence through the EP leaving aside the bargaining weight of radical right parties at the domestic
level or through the Council. Given the inability of the radical right to forge durable transnational alliances, the domestic arena appears as a more appropriate locus for radical right parties to pursue their policy preferences and eventually influence policy outcomes at the European level. The primary channel of influence for radical right parties might not be direct participation in national executives. Instead, the agenda-setting capability of the radical right results from its potential to alter the parameters of national party competition and to force mainstream parties into developing programmatic responses to the positions articulated by the radical right (Minkenberg 2001).

In light of the findings presented in this paper, the potential benefits of European integration for radical right parties are at most indirect. European integration has introduced patterns of governance in which political parties tend to matter less. Joint decision making, transfers of competence to non-majoritarian institutions at the European level and self-imposed constraints in a series of policy fields have drastically narrowed the room to manoeuvre for national party competition and have enfeebled parties’ abilities to compete over clearly distinguishable policy platforms (Mair 2007). European integration has furthermore strengthened non-partisan channels of representation by institutionalizing alternative sources of policy input stemming from domestic pressure groups (Beyers and Kerremans 2004). The context of a constrained space of political competition opens a favourable opportunity structure for partisan actors engaged in anti-establishment or anti-system strategies. While radical right parties can be expected to profit from these dynamics, at the European level, the radical right is unlikely to move beyond the status of a loud, but diffuse and uncoordinated opposition to the European polity.

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References


**Party Documents and Partisan Texts**


**Interviews**

In order to conduct the interviews, anonymity was guaranteed to the interviewees. Given this constraint, specific illustrations that would allow for an identification of the interviewed MEPs could not be provided.