

Title: The Europeanization of national political parties

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Outline of Topic and Relation to Existing Research:

Peter Mair (2008: 162) recently stated that ‘we need to know more about how Europe actually plays in national political discourse, as well as about the way in which it is conceived: is Europe usually cited as a constraint by parties at the national level, for example, or is it seen as an opportunity, or do these parties scarcely cite it at all?’ In fact, we still know relatively little about how and to what extent European integration impacts on national political parties. Ladrech (2002) offered a framework with which to structure research on the impact of the EU on political parties, highlighting five areas of party activity susceptible to change (programme, organization, party system, party-government relations, and relations beyond the national political system). There have since been a number of studies analyzing the ‘way Europe actually plays’ with regard to parties, ranging from the impact of the EU on internal party organization (Poguntke et al. 2007), changes in manifestos (Pennings 2006), relations with transnational party federations (Hanley 2008), and influence on the development and consolidation of parties in post-communist member states (Lewis and Mansfeldova 2006). If a summary of the general findings to date can be asserted, it would suggest a) the EU has had limited direct effect on mainstream parties in western Europe; b) European integration has had indirect and limited direct effect on parties in post-communist member states, with the causal link mainly traced to the EU’s political conditionality and role of transnational party federations (Pridham 2005); and c) the extent to which most national parties have any direct engagement with EU institutions and decision-making, apart from their MEPs (Raunio 2000), is through party leaderships, primarily through occupation of national government executive positions.

The Ladrech party Europeanization framework was based on the assumption that observable changes may be traced to their causal origin, that is, one may be able to isolate the EU factor in changes in party manifestos, organizational format, etc. One criticism of the Ladrech framework is that it does not allow for dynamic interactions within parties that are not reflected in easily observable empirical change. For

example, the modest degree of change in party manifestos over time may mask dissent within parties over certain EU policies. This dissent may be ‘contained’ for a variety of reasons, including strategic manipulation of manifesto content by party leaderships for competitive electoral advantage; actual change – i.e. more critical references to EU policies (qualitative), or more coverage of EU matters (quantitative) – would therefore be absent in manifestos. Social democratic parties for example, as a party family, are usually described as pro-EU, yet the politics surrounding the rejection of the EU Constitutional Treaty in 2005 or the 2006 Services directive demonstrated deep policy-oriented misgivings within a number of these parties about the current and future ideology of integration. In terms of organizational dynamics within parties, the ‘presidentialization’ thesis (Poguntke and Webb 2005) notes the international environment as a possible factor in empowering prime ministers. Might the monopoly of control over EU affairs in national parties by party leaders - the lack of organizational change in this regard is a general finding reported in Poguntke et al. – reflect similar organizational tendencies (Raunio 2002)? The point is that evaluating the impact of the EU on national parties’ structure and processes may require adjusting our analytical lenses in order to explain the apparent lack of outward signs of Europeanization.

The directors of the workshop feel that this is an appropriate time to reflect on these matters. There is both the need to critically evaluate our current understanding of how EU affects national parties and, more importantly, to examine this Europeanization with the help of new empirical data or theoretical frameworks. We therefore feel that specific topics to be covered in this workshop should include, but are not restricted to:

- The appropriate research methodology for party Europeanization analysis.
- A critical reflection on the findings that have been produced so far in party Europeanization studies.
- Case studies that explain the actual ‘politics’ within parties related to EU issues. This might be reflected in:
 - The EU as a party management issue
 - The existence and nature of dissent within parties over EU issues, i.e. policy-based or anti-integration, and change over time

- Substantiate the notion of de-politicisation as a by-product of policy transference to the EU, etc.
- Cross-national research that can reveal similarities absent from single party case studies.

Participants:

We would like to invite both established and the emerging researchers of this field from Eastern and Western Europe. Having both categories participating and representing different cases and types of cases, enabling possible patterns to emerge that might not ordinarily do so, would be a bonus.

Type of Paper:

We welcome papers that cover the items mentioned above, either theoretical or empirically driven. Our preference is to have papers tabled that deliberately combine both theory and evidence from a comparative perspective (be it comparable case studies, cross-national or cross-time analyses).

Finally, it should also be noted that this workshop has the support of the ECPR Standing Group on Political Parties.

Funding:

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Biographical Notes:

Robert Ladrech is Senior Lecturer in Politics at Keele University, UK. His research interests include Europeanization and parties, the development of Europarties, social democracy and European integration, and French politics. He has published articles in journals such as *West European Politics*, the *European Journal of Political Research*, *Party Politics* and *Living Reviews in European Governance*. He has also recently co-edited the volume *The Europeanization of Political Parties: power and organizational adaptation* (2007).

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