The European Parliament Elections of 2014

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Introduction[1]

Lorenzo De Sio, Vincenzo Emanuele and Nicola Maggini

This book is dedicated to the European Parliament (EP) elections of 22–25 May 2014. Elections that were expected to be the first truly European elections, rather than a collection of second-order elections, focused on national issues as had happened in all previous elections (Reif and Schmitt, 1980; Hix and Marsh, 2011).

There were good reasons for such expectations. After 2008, the financial and sovereign debt crisis has impacted Europe, with important, and sometimes dramatic, consequences in economic, social, and political terms. Indeed, the crisis did not have an immediate impact, in terms of economic policies that would affect the everyday life of ordinary people. As a result, the 2009 EP elections—held almost nine months after the Lehman Brothers default—did not show particularly clear effects of the crisis (De Sio and Legnante, 2010). But in subsequent years, the reaction to the crisis has seen the emergence of the European Union, its institutions, and other international institutions as key players in terms of economic policy of the Euro member states. Several of the states that were most impacted by the sovereign debt crisis had to negotiate bailout deals with the "Troika" committee (European Commission, European Central Bank, and International Monetary Fund) that strongly limited, if not temporarily cancelled, their economic policy sovereignty. Also, most other eurozone countries had to take economic measures with a strong impact on the everyday life of ordinary people.

It is in this context that according to many observers, the European Parliament elections of 2014 would become much more relevant than in the past—a first, key test to assess the response of European citizens to the austerity policies decided in Brussels. With the expected consequence of citizens becoming aware that what is decided in Brussels is not abstract, it is something with a strong and immediate impact on their real life.

[1] This text is original for this book.

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Finally, further expectations of increased relevance were due to the new provision, after the entry into force of the Lisbon Treaty, that—for the election of the President of the European Commission—the European Council would have to "take into account" the election results and thus the balance of power among different groups in the European Parliament. This represents a reinforcement of the connection between popular vote and the election of the President of the Commission, leading to an expectation of higher voter mobilization.

Based on these considerations, several commentators, in the months preceding the elections, suggested that the 2014 elections could seriously challenge the consolidated theoretical framework that identifies EP elections as *second-order elections* (Reif and Schmitt, 1980) compared to the more important national elections. For the first time since 1979, the 2014 elections could become the first truly European elections, with campaigns disputed on European (more than domestic) issues, albeit filtered and declined through national points of view. In other words, a general expectation was that these elections might be closer to *first-order* elections.

Yet, a more careful and articulated theoretical reflection suggests that in terms of pre-electoral expectations, more articulated and specific results should have been expected such as the following:

1) First and foremost, a differentiation within the European Union, between Euro and non-Euro countries. If a higher relevance of the elections was a consequence of the austerity policies, such higher relevance should be observed only in Euro countries.
2) In Euro countries, there was the expectation of a politicization of the conflict over the importance of Europe in regulating national economies—a politicization that would obviously boost Eurosceptic parties.
3) Still, even in this case, a differentiation might be expected. Our pre-electoral hypothesis was that the success of Eurosceptic parties would have been stronger in two (albeit very different) subgroups of Euro countries. On the one hand, debtor states that had to sign a *memorandum of understanding* with the Troika (Greece, Cyprus, Spain, Portugal, and Ireland) and on the other hand, the richest creditor countries (Germany, Austria, Luxembourg, and the Netherlands). In the former, austerity policies have created a strong social malaise, preparing fertile terrain for populist and anti-EU parties; in the latter, conversely, a populist and Eurosceptic protest could collect the resentment of citizens "forced" to finance debtor countries, fearing the loss of their prosperity. There is finally a third, intermediate group that includes countries with macroeconomic indicators (per capita GDP, yearly GDP growth, public debt-to-GDP ratio, and unemployment) mostly in line with EU averages. It is a very heterogeneous category, ranging from those closer to the creditor group (France, Belgium, and Finland) to those closer to the debtor group (Italy). These countries, albeit in a situation of crisis, did not surrender their economic sovereignty to the Troika; at the same time, unlike the richest group, they do not perceive the Euro as a dampening factor for their economic development. In this third, residual category, we expected a less strong success of Eurosceptic parties and a general lower salience of European issues.
4) Finally, we expected a symmetrical differentiation—in terms of overall salience of European issues—among non-Euro countries. In particular, it is necessary to distinguish between Western European countries with a high economic status (UK, Sweden, and Denmark) and Central Eastern European countries, which strongly benefit from EU structural funds since their entry into the EU, being now almost economically dependent from them. It was then plausible to expect that Euroscepticism would find more fertile terrain in the former group, whose countries joined the EU to exploit the economic advantages of the single market, but would fear further integration because of the economic difficulties of the Eurozone. While in the latter group, the EU is still a fundamental engine of economic development.

So far on the main hypotheses on the general trends in the 28 EU countries. But of course, we dedicated a special attention to Italy. Partly because it is our home country and the main focus of the CISE activity and partly because—shortly after the elections—Italy would take the presidency of the Council of the European Union so that elections results in Italy might have an indirect impact on the negotiations for the President of the Commission and on the general policy priorities of the first semester of the new EP legislature.

The 25 May election in Italy represented a key electoral test for several political actors. First and foremost for the Democratic Party (PD), the main party in office. Such election came little more than a year after the previous general elections but in a completely different political context.

After the lack of a clear victory by the PD in 2013, its leader Bersani resigned—after failing to form a government. Complex negotiations led then to the formation of a cabinet led by Enrico Letta, with an oversized majority including Berlusconi's PDL. Political tensions continuously surrounded the life of the Letta cabinet: first, with Berlusconi passing to the opposition (but a splinter from his party, forming the government-loyal Ncd—*Nuovo Centro-Destra*—led by Angelino Alfano, allowed the government to survive); and secondly, with the election of the new secretary general of the PD, seeing in December 2013 the triumph of Matteo Renzi. As a result, the Letta cabinet was in crisis already at the beginning of 2014, and a new Renzi cabinet was already in office in February 2014.

For Renzi, and for the popularity of his newly-formed cabinet, such election was a crucial test. The PD is a particular case of a mainstream party which,

through innovative procedures (open primaries) was able to radically change its leadership and public image. The question before the election was then whether the use of an innovative strategy (which also in part borrowed some communication strategies from populist parties) would pay off in electoral terms, especially for a party in office, which is usually penalized in second-order elections. While it is true that as stated by *electoral cycle* theory (Van der Eijk and Franklin, 1996), government parties are less disadvantaged when EP elections are held shortly after the last general elections (during the so-called "honeymoon" period), however, Renzi came to office without an electoral legitimation and, moreover, in a time of economic crisis and extremely low trust in political parties and the political class in general. As a result, the context for Renzi's PD was not extremely favourable.

In the centre-right camp, the other large mainstream party, Silvio Berlusconi's *Forza Italia* (the old label revived by Berlusconi after the splinter from the Pdl of the pro-government Ncd led by Alfano), was in an extremely difficult time of its political history, with Berlusconi not only banned from public office and thus not running but also facing severe campaign limits due to its alternate-punishment social work obligations.

For the Five Star Movement (M5S), on the contrary, the context of the EP election was extremely favourable. For the first time in a large European country, a nonmainstream party had arrived, in February 2013, on the verge of joining a government, after obtaining 25.6% of votes. As an antiestablishment, opposition party, it would enjoy in an EP election a particularly favourable arena, according to *second-order elections* theory. Yet, after more than a year of hard opposition (and of a total refusal of any collaboration with the whole party system), the election would be an interesting test of the popular approval of such strategy.

Finally, due to the austerity measures adopted in Southern Europe (including Italy), support for EU institutions in Italy had strongly decreased. Thus, yet another crucial aspect would be to observe the electoral performance of Eurosceptic parties (not only the M5S but also the Northern League and Brothers of Italy, which openly support exiting the Euro) and finally of those parties that had clearly focused their campaign on a radical critique of the EU-imposed austerity measures (Lista Tsipras).

In this book, we confront these research questions from a variety of viewpoints, in looking for an overarching interpretation of the 22–25 May vote. The book is structured as follows: Part I presents a set of pre-electoral analyses, dedicated to various aspects of the EP election (a brief history of the EP and of its functions, electoral systems across Europe, the selection of the newly-introduced potential candidates to the presidency of the EU Commission, and finally, a brief electoral history of the five main EP groups). The book then moves on

to the election results, starting in Part II with a quick spotlight on Italy, while Part III is dedicated to all other 27 EU countries, with concise reports covering the campaign, the results, and providing first interpretations. Finally, Part IV analyses the overall result at the European level, in terms of turnout, results of different EP groups, and the structuring of different party systems.

Once again, we need to state clearly the scope of this book. In offering a pack of analyses just few weeks after the election, we aim at providing an agile, essential tool able to deliver basic, essential—yet accurate—information on the 22–25 May EP election results, covering all 28 EU countries. With this contribution, as in the previous CISE book in English on Italian elections, we target an audience that is well beyond the academia, aiming at spreading greater knowledge and data on the functioning of electoral democracy in Italy and across Europe.

In terms of the group of scholars involved, this book marks a strong discontinuity with the previous books published by the CISE, both in Italian and in English. Just until a few days before the elections, our project was still aimed at covering essentially Italy, with some reflections about the general results at the EP level. Then we thought it might be interesting to also cover some other European countries, perhaps by local scholars, in order to provide information and insights both on the campaign and on the general interpretation of the results. We then first contacted our Italian colleagues (and friends) working abroad—a lively, well-connected and technically skilled community of young, brilliant scholars of elections and public opinion. Even more, they would be able to comment in Italian shortly after the election. We received an unexpected, enthusiastic response from *all* of them, who accepted to write short reports to be immediately published on the CISE website, in a matter of few days after the election.

This changed the whole picture and inevitably whetted our appetites; we then moved on to the goal of covering all 28 EU countries, by tapping into our broader international network of young friends and colleagues from all around Europe. Needless to say that the response was just as enthusiastic, if not more. As a result, we think we did something pretty unique. In a matter of few days after the elections, we published on the CISE website a set of concise yet informative reports, both in Italian and English, covering elections in *all 28 EU countries*. Together with the contributions prepared by CISE researchers, this external contribution forms an important part of this book. This is why we want to reward with a special thank you all those external scholars whose enthusiasm made this possible. It's all your fault (!): Konstantinos Athanasiadis, Marcello Carammia, Mikołaj Cześnik, Patrick Dumont, Marta Fraile, Vlastimil Havlík, Andrija Henjak, Henrique Hernández, David Johann, Raphaël Kies, Michał Kotnarowski, Sylvia Kritzinger, Simona Kustec-

Lipicer, Nina Liljeqvist, Marco Lisi, Roderick Pace, Carolina Plescia, Lukas Pukelis, Luana Russo, Sorina Soare, Peter Spáč, Laura Sudulich, LiisaTalving, Federico Vegetti, Tom Verthé, and Kristian Voss.

We also wish to thank Luca Carrieri, Luigi Di Gregorio, Federica Izzo, Bruno Marino, Rocco Polin, Stefano Rombi, and Michail Schwartz. They were all involved early on in the project (or even volunteered to join) to cover specific aspects of the election, and their contribution was vital for this book. Last, but obviously not least, a big thank you is due to Andrea De Angelis and Davide Morisi, who accepted to translate to English a number of articles in record time, and finally to Riccardo Petrini, whose precise visual craftsmanship (performed in unimaginably short time) has allowed us to deliver this book just few weeks after the election.

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Part 1
Before the elections

Towards the European elections: An introductory framework

Vincenzo Emanuele and Nicola Maggini

26 March 2014[1]

In about two months, precisely between the 22nd and the 25th of May depending on the country, voters from 28 member states of the European Union will be called to the ballot boxes to elect the new members of the European Parliament.

Traditionally considered "second order" elections (Reif and Schmitt, 1980) with respect to the more important national ones, the 2014 European elections appear to have acquired centrality and wider importance compared to the past. This does not depend exclusively on the growing importance of the European Parliament and of its legislative functions in the Union but especially on the consequences of the economic crisis that hit sovereign debts across Europe since 2008, leading the EU to emerge as the main decision maker regarding the political economy of member states.

The next European elections can thus be deemed as the "first" true European elections, in which the electoral campaigns in the various states is not connected to domestic politics but rather to the European policy orientation proposed by the national actors. The reform introduced with the Lisbon Treaty (coming into force in December 2009) is also contributing to push towards the Europeanization of the electoral campaign. For the first time, it is stated that the President of the Commission will be practically elected by the European Parliament while the European Council would maintain exclusively a control role. In practice, the relationship between popular vote and the election of the highest charge in the EU (the head of the executive branch) will be strengthened.

[1] This article was originally published in Italian on the CISE website. It appears in English for the first time in this book.

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In the last weeks, the main political groups in the European Parliament (EP) have indicated their own candidates to the presidency of the Commission. The European political group that will achieve the relative majority of the seats in the EP will have its own candidate to the presidency obtaining the charge, and this will introduce an element of electoral competition closer to that characterizing competitive parliamentary democracies. The two main candidates are the Luxembourgian Jean-Claude Juncker for the European People's Party (EPP) and the German Martin Schulz for the Party of European Socialists (PES). The other candidates include the Belgian Guy Verhofstadt for the Liberals, the Greek Tsipras—leader of Syriza—for the European Left, and the co-candidates Keller and Bovè for the Greens. The group of European Conservatives and Reformists (ECR)—that includes the British conservatives—will not present any candidate to the presidency of the Commission. The group of Eurosceptic parties (Europe of Freedom and Democracy, EFD)—led by the National Front of Marine Le Pen—shared the same decision. The Northern League and the Brotherhood of Italy-National Alliance represent the group in Italy.

Further than choosing indirectly the President of the Commission, European voters will vote to select the members of the EP. As a consequence of the entrance of the 28th member state—Croatia, which joined the Union in July 2013—the number of EP members will increase from this election to 751 (from 736). Table 1 resumes the changes in the seats for each state with respect to 2009. As we can see, Germany loses three seats, reducing to 96; Italy gains one seat increasing its number to 73, the same as the U.K.; France and Sweden obtain two additional seats; and Spain even four while Croatia will have 11 seats assigned. It is interesting to notice how the two basic principles of representation on which all democratic parliaments are grounded—namely the one of people's representation usually concerning a lower chamber and the one of territorial representation expressed by a higher chamber—are present and act as counterbalancing forces. The representatives assigned to each MS in fact depend on the ratio between the country's resident population and the population in the EU. However, would this principle be entirely applied, smaller countries such as Malta, Luxembourg, Cyprus, or Estonia would have very few representatives. To safeguard territorial representation—i.e., member states—the Treaty establishes that no country can have less than six representatives. Thus, while Germany obtains an additional representative every about 860,000 citizens, in case of Malta, the same amount reduces to 69,000.

Each member state can decide the electoral system for the election of the European Parliament although with the Treaty of Amsterdam, it has been established that member states are constrained to adopt a proportional system and to apply electoral thresholds up to a maximum of 5%.

Table 1 – Seats' distribution in the EP and changes between 2009 and 2014

Country	Seats 2009	Seats 2014	+/-
Austria	17	18	1
Belgium	22	21	-1
Bulgaria	17	17	0
Croatia	n/a	11	n/a
Cyprus	6	6	0
Czech Republic	22	21	-1
Denmark	13	13	0
Estonia	6	6	0
Finland	13	13	0
France	72	74	2
Germany	99	96	-3
Greece	22	21	-1
Hungary	22	21	-1
Ireland	12	11	-1
Italy	72	73	1
Latvia	8	8	0
Lithuania	12	11	-1
Luxembourg	6	6	0
Malta	5	6	1
Netherlands	25	26	1
Poland	50	51	1
Portugal	22	21	-1
Romania	33	32	-1
Slovakia	13	13	0
Slovenia	7	8	1
Spain	50	54	4
Sweden	18	20	2
United Kingdom	72	73	1
Total	736	751	15

For voters in traditionally majoritarian countries, as France or the United Kingdom, the possibility to vote with a proportional system represent an important change that generally produces an underrepresentation of the main political actors with an advantage of the political options in the minority, typically marginalized in the national political system. To a similar extent, however, also in the other countries, the "second order" competition dynamic

Table 2 – Composition of the EP after the 2009 elections

Group	N seats	% seats
European People's Party (EPP)	265	36.0
Progressive Alliance of Socialists and Democrats (S&D)	184	25.0
Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe (ALDE)	84	11.4
Greens (Greens-EFA)	55	7.5
European Conservatives and Reformists (ECR)	54	7.3
European United Left (GUE-NGL)	35	4.8
Europe for Freedom and Democracy (EFD)	32	4.3
Non-Inscrits (NI)	27	3.7
Total	736	100

characterizing the European elections—namely the smaller relevance of the charges at stake—implies patterns recurring over time: turnout decrease with respect to the national elections, a loss in the support for incumbent parties, and growing vote shares for smaller parties. More broadly, the consequence is a fragmented electoral contest and the smaller room for strategic[2] considerations for vote decisions compared to domestic electoral arenas.

Notwithstanding these tendencies to favour smaller parties over governing parties, the larger European party families of the Populars and the Socialists have always been largely majoritarian within the EP. In the 2009 elections, these two groups have collected more than 60% of the seats jointly considered. As reported in Table 2, the leaving parliament presents a relative majority of the EPP (36%) while the PES with no more than 25% of the seats, the lowest share ever. In 2009, the EPP achieved its third victory in a row, and since 1999, it outperforms the PES as a consequence of its effective policy of integration of political parties that has expanded to include almost all the conservative political parties and not merely those identified with a Christian-social and Christian-democrat tradition as originally pursued. Moreover, with the Eastern Enlargement of 2004, the advantage of the EPP on the PES has further crystallized given the weakness of socialist parties in Central and Eastern European countries while the EPP has benefited from the support of the stronger conservative parties in those countries.

[2] On the concept of strategic voting, see Cox (2005).

Far from the position of the EPP in the EP, the Liberals (ALDE) represents the third European political group. Having collected 11% of the seats in 2009, they outperformed the Greens (7.5%) and the group of Conservatives and Reformists (7.3%). The latter group has been formed by the decision of the British Tories to leave the EPP, given the growing anti-Europe stance. Then we find the two most extreme political groups, namely, the radical left and the anti-Europe and anti-Euro one. In 2009, they both achieved less than 5% of the seats although they are likely to expand their support in the next elections under the weight of the economic crisis and the strong leadership of political figures as Tsipras and Marine Le Pen. Finally, 27 members in 2009 were simply "non-inscrits" to any political group. This process is in constant decline, given the increasing "institutionalization of the European party system" (Bardi, 2002).

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Life of EP: History of the empowerment of the European Parliament

Rocco Polin

17 April 2014[1]

The Parliament that European citizens have elected in May 2014 is a very different assembly from the one that convened for the first time in September 1952 under the name of "Common Assembly." The 78 original MPs have now become 750, and they are no longer nominated by six national parliaments but rather elected by 400 million citizens from 28 different countries. Together with the number of its members, the European Parliament (EP) has significantly increased also its powers, to the extent of becoming an equal partner with the European Union Council in almost all policy areas (Hix and Hoyland, 2013, p. 172). The goal of this short article is to review the evolution of the European Parliament, from a small and almost irrelevant second-order assembly to a fundamental pillar of European democracy and of the function of the EU.

Infancy: The Common Assembly of the European Communities (1952–1979)

The Schuman declaration of May 9, 1950, today rightly celebrated as the founding act of the European Union, does not make any reference to the need of a representative assembly. Such need was however felt by Jean Monnet, worried about the democratic legitimacy of the European Coal and Steal Community (ECSC) of which he was set to become the first president. Article 20 of the 1951 Paris Treaty hence mandated the creation of a "Common Assembly" whose only power was that of voting a no-confidence motion against the ECSC High Authority.

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Few months after its creation, however, the newborn Assembly gave an early proof of its high ambitions. Taking the name of "*Ad hoc* Assembly," it engaged in the drafting of a treaty for a new European Political Community, a project that quickly failed after the French Parliament rejected the European Defence Community. The hypothesis contained in this project, that of transforming the Common Assembly in a powerful chamber directly elected by European citizens, continued however to linger on until it eventually found a gradual but more and more effective realization.

Once the federalist great leap forward failed, the project of European integration regained the slow but steady pace of Monnet's functionalist approach. In 1957, the Rome treaties established the European Atomic Energy Community (Euratom) and the European Economic Community (EEC), later merged together with the ECSC in the European Communities (Brussels Treaty of 1965). The Common Assembly, which in 1962 renamed itself European Parliament (a name officially adopted by the Single European Act of 1986), became a shared institution for all three communities. In its first meeting after the Rome Treaty, the Common Assembly elected Robert Schuman as its president and structured its parliamentary groups according to their political positions rather than their national affiliations. Such decision, taken on May 13, 1958, is since then considered the founding act of the modern European Parliament. As for the functions and the powers of the assembly, the Rome Treaty introduced the obligation for the EEC Council to consult the Assembly before adopting any legislative act. This was the first recognition of the European Parliament's legislative role, a role that the EP will be called to fulfil with ever increasing powers in the following decades.

After a long stalemate in the years of De Gaulle, in the 70s, the European project and the Parliament gained new dynamism. In 1970, the EP obtained the first powers over the budget albeit initially limited to the so called "non-compulsory expenditures" (which excluded the substantial agriculture budget). Already in 1975, however, such powers were extended, and the Parliament was given the power to reject the budget as a whole and to discharge its implementation. In the subsequent decades, the control of the budget becomes a formidable instrument of pressure in the hands of the EP, and it was often used during interinstitutional negotiations to obtain further powers in other domains.[2]

[2] See, for example, the power struggles over the creation of the European External Action Service (Wisniewski, 2013).

Childhood: A Parliament Elected by the People (1979–1992)

In 1979, the introduction of direct popular elections marked an important step in the life of the European Parliament.[3] While such innovation was not accompanied by any formal increase in power and functions, the new democratic legitimacy significantly increased the authority of the Parliament and its political ambitions. Its prestige was then further increased by the election of Simone Veil as its first president—a holocaust survivor and a woman who fully embodied the deep values and profound historical reasons of the European integration project.

In the 80s, the European Parliament thus started to view itself as the driving force of the integration process and to fight with ever stronger vigour for increasing its powers. An important victory was obtained in 1980 when the European Court of Justice annulled a regulation approved by the Council without consulting the Parliament. Even if—according to the Rome Treaty—the Parliament's opinion was not binding, it was nevertheless a mandatory part of the legislative process. In 1985, to underline and reinforce its centrality in the government of the EU, the EP, which until then had convened in Strasburg, moved some of its works in Brussels.[4] Finally, in 1986, the approval of the organic treaty reform that goes under the name of Single European Act owned much of its ambition and federalist afflatus to the "Spinelli Plan" that was adopted by the EP in 1984.

The Single European Act introduced two new legislative procedures. The first one, known as "cooperation procedure" (abolished by the Lisbon Treaty in 2002) increased the Parliament's influence by allowing for a second reading of legislative proposals. The second, known as "assent procedure," and still used under the name of "consent procedure" (e.g., for the approval of international treaties), gave full veto power to the EP over proposed legislative acts.[5] Even more significant in terms of legislative empowerment was however the codecision procedure, introduced by the Maastricht Treaty in 1992. According to this procedure, if the Parliament and the Council are unable to reach a compromise during the second reading, a special Conciliation Committee is set up and tasked with agreeing on a common text, which then needs to be approved by both institutions in a third reading.

[3] Such possibility was already envisaged by the Rome Treaty of 1958.

[4] Even if an initial compromise was reached in 1992, the issue of the double seat is still subject to heated debates. The opposition of France notwithstanding, it is reasonable to hope that the definitive relocation of all parliamentary activity to Brussels is only a matter of time.

[5] On the role of the European Parliament as a powerful veto player, see Tsebelis 1994 and 2002.

The Maastricht Treaty also introduced other important innovations in terms of legislative initiative and control over the executive bodies. As for the former, Maastricht gave the Parliament the right to invite the Commission to introduce the legislative proposals that it deems necessary for the full implementation of the treaties. While the EP, unlike most national parliaments, still lacks the full right of initiative, the Treaty also obliges the Commission, in case of refusal to follow up on the Parliament's requests, to fully justify its decision. As for the powers of control over the executive, the Parliament obtained the right to be consulted in the choice of the Commission's president, to vote the confidence to the incoming Commission (but not to the single commissioners), to set up temporary committees of enquiry, and to name important officials such as the head of the European Central Bank, the Ombudsman, and the members of the Court of Auditors.

Adolescence: From Maastricht to Lisbon (1992–2009)

With the approval of the Maastricht Treaty, the European Parliament essentially acquired its current functions: it has relevant powers of control over the Commission and other executive agencies, it acts as co-legislator with the Council in an increasing number of policy areas, and it holds the power to approve and discharge the community budget. The expansion of powers in the two following decades thus proceeded along already consolidated directions.

The Amsterdam Treaty of 1997 formalized the veto power that the Parliament holds over the nomination of the Commission president and increased from 15 to 32 the number of policy areas that fell under the codecision legislative procedure (they became 37 with the Nice Treaty in 2001). The Amsterdam Treaty also strengthened the position of the EP in the codecision procedure by eliminating the possibility for the European Council to reintroduce its original proposal as a "take it or leave it" offer in case of failure of the Conciliation Committee. It is however interesting to notice how such innovation was in fact a mere ratification of a *de facto* situation—in its internal rules of procedure, the Parliament had already committed itself to reject any text proposed by the Council in a take-it-or-leave-it form (Hix, 2002). Generally speaking, it is important to keep in mind how the gradual empowerment of the European Parliament was due to the amending of internal procedures and to innovations in the political practice as much as to treaty reforms (Kappel, 2002).

Over the last few decades, particularly important victories have been secured by the EP in its efforts to create a more binding relationship with the European Commission. In 1999, the Parliament obtained the resignation of the Santer Commission, first by refusing to approve its budget and then by

menacing a no-confidence vote. Furthermore, albeit the treaties do not foresee individual confidence votes for each commissioner, the Parliament became able to exercise considerable influence over their nominations, vetoing those of Mr. Buttiglione in 2004 and Ms. Jeleva in 2009. In the course of such arm wrestling with the Commission, the Parliament was also able to extract other important concessions, later formalized in *ad hoc* interinstitutional agreements. These included the rights to receive periodical reports, to question the Commissioners, to be consulted during the drafting of legislative proposals, and to take part in international negotiations.

The last far-reaching reform of the European treaties so far was signed in Lisbon in 2007. It extended the codecison procedure to most policy areas, transforming it in the standard procedure under the new name of Ordinary Legislative Procedure. Furthermore, according to the Lisbon Treaty, the president of the Commission is now "elected" by the Parliament albeit on the base of a proposal made by Council taking into account the results of the parliamentary elections (art. 17.7, TEU). This latest innovation, together with the fact that this year, for the first time, each one of the main European political parties has indicated a presidential candidate, suggests that the 2014 elections will mark a new important step in the empowerment of the European Parliament. Indeed, the treaties themselves now recognize how the functioning of the Union shall be founded on representative democracy (art. 10, TEU) and thus the essential role of the European Parliament. It is then possible that after a long and difficult adolescence, the European Union and its Parliament will finally reach a full and responsible maturity.

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The evolution of turnout in European elections from 1979 to 2009

Nicola Maggini

7 April 2014[1]

The European elections to be held between 22 and 25 May 2014 (depending on the country) may acquire, according to many observers, a centrality and significance much wider than in the past. To understand it, it is worth looking at how many Europeans go to the polls to elect their representatives in the European Parliament. In fact, in the field of electoral studies, European elections have always been regarded as "second-order" elections (Reif and Schmitt, 1980), i.e., elections where the stakes are lower—or perceived as such—than in the general elections—when the competition aims at the formation of a government of their own country—and consequently, the turnout is lower than in national elections.

To understand the results in terms of electoral participation of the upcoming European elections, it is therefore necessary to have a clear picture of the historical evolution of turnout levels in the course of the seven European elections, which were held between 1979 and 2009. Figure 1 shows, diachronically and in percentages, the turnout at each election in the EU countries. As it appears, there is a clear downward trend over time in the rates of participation; it goes from 62% of voters in 1979 to 43% in 2009, namely, a decline of more than 19 percentage points. The biggest drop is recorded between the elections of 1994 and those of 1999 when the percentage of voters in the EU declined from 56.7% to 49.5%. Therefore, since 1999 onwards, the absolute majority of Europeans have deserted the polls, further weakening the democratic legitimacy of the European institutions. This trend regarding the overall decline in turnout rates—yet not starting from particularly high levels— may actually

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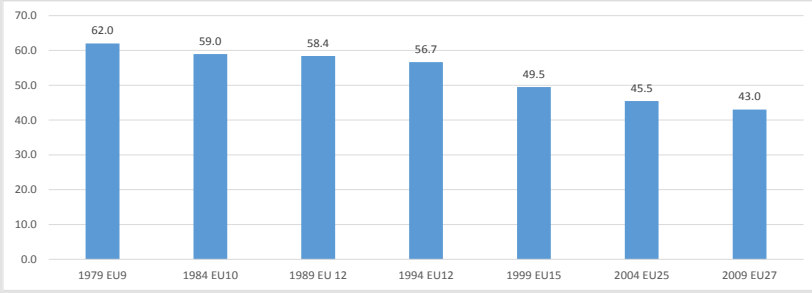
hide highly heterogeneous levels and trends of participation characterizing the different countries. In fact, it has to be emphasized that as during the historical period taken into account, the European Union has been enlarged to a growing number of member states, each carrying its own "tradition" in terms of voter turnout. At the first election of 1979, there were nine member states: Germany, France, Italy, the Netherlands, Belgium, Luxembourg, United Kingdom, Denmark, and Ireland. Since the 1984 elections, Greece—who had joined the EU in 1981—also joined the group. At the elections of 1989 and 1994, 12 member states participated, given the entrance into the EU of Spain and Portugal in 1986. Member states then increased to 15 in the 1999 elections, thanks to the entry into the EU of Austria, Sweden, and Finland in 1995. Finally, since 2004, the citizens of Eastern European countries also took part in the European elections. In particular, 10 countries have joined the EU in 2004 (Poland, Hungary, Slovenia, Slovakia, Czech Republic, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Cyprus, and Malta) and two in 2007 (Bulgaria and Romania). Hence, from the initial nine countries in 1979, the number has increased to 27 countries in 2009; as a consequence, political heterogeneity—also in terms of electoral participation—has increased in the EU in the time series considered here.

Table 1 reports turnout rates in each EU country over time. As it appears, the heterogeneity is very high; turnout values range from very high levels in certain countries to particularly low levels in other ones. Among the former find their place without any doubt Belgium and Luxembourg, with a turnout rate always around 90% between 1979 and 2009. This circumstance is undoubtedly due to the fact that in both countries, voting is compulsory. Quite high levels of turnout albeit with a decreasing trend over time are registered also in Greece—particularly until 1994—and, especially, in Malta and Italy. The second group of countries is contained most of the Eastern European countries: Poland, Romania, Slovenia, and Slovakia; in particular, the participation ranges from 17% to about 30%. Low levels of voter turnout are registered also from the beginning in one of the countries that during the first EP elections was already part of the EU, namely, the United Kingdom (which stood always below 40% of the voters). In general, there is a downward trend in voter turnout over time, but this trend seems to have stabilized in the 2000s: most of the countries have reached a historic minimum in 1999 or 2004. There are some exceptions: France, Italy, Portugal, Malta, Cyprus, Hungary, and Lithuania have reached their historic minimum in 2009 (we do not consider countries with few decimal points of difference compared to 2004, and it should be noted that Malta, Cyprus, Hungary, and Lithuania took part in only two European elections). It should be noted, however, that the long-term trend seems to be that of a homogenization towards lower turnout levels. Finally, regarding the Italian case, it stands out the fact that until the European elections of 1989 (included), participation is very high, above 80%.

Figure 1 – Turnout rates in the EU countries (1979–2009)



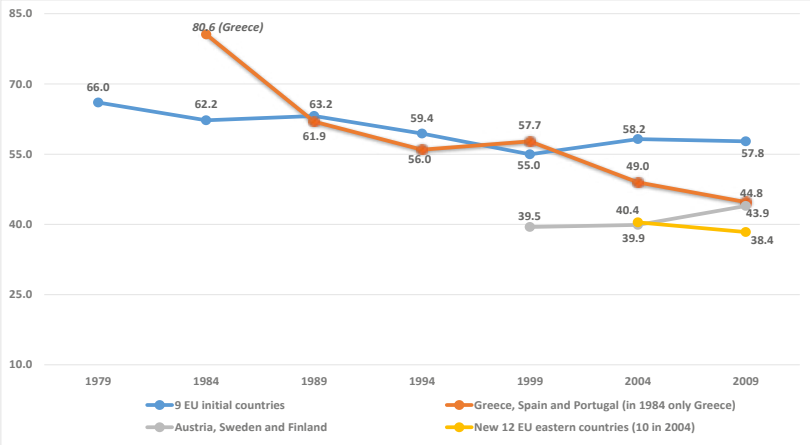
Italy in general, as mentioned earlier, is among the countries characterized by higher levels of turnout.

According to what has been said insofar, the value of electoral participation calculated in the European Union—as presented at the beginning of the article— was conflating levels and trends of participation differing sharply across countries. As further evidence of this fact, we reported the average turnout in the European elections separated by groups of countries. Figure 2 shows the average turnout across time, for four groups of countries: the nine initial countries (all being part of Western Europe), the three Southern European countries that joined the EU in the 1980s (Greece, Spain, and Portugal), the three countries of Central and Northern Europe that joined the EU in the 1990s (Sweden, Austria, and Finland), and, finally, the 12 Eastern European countries that joined the EU in the early 2000s (counting in this group Malta as well though not being in the East). The first fact that emerges is that looking at turnout rates for separate groups of countries, the almost linear decrease shown in Figure 1—considering the whole EU—cannot be detected. The nine initial countries register a starting average turnout of 66% in 1979 and reach their historic minimum not in 2009 but in 1999 (55% turnout); after 1999, turnout increases slightly, standing around 58%. The countries of Southern Europe (excluding Italy) start from a level of electoral participation very similar to the initial values of the first nine countries, namely, 62% in 1989 (in 1984 instead, there was only Greece, with a rate of 80.6%, well above that of the group of nine countries). During the 1990s, the average turnout in the three Southern countries considered is quite similar to that of the nine countries and in 1999 becomes even higher (57.7% vs. 55%). The gap between the two groups of countries in terms of electoral participation spread in the last two elections: in 2004, the participation in the three Southern countries is lower by almost 10 percentage points compared to the nine countries, and in

Table 1 – Turnout rates by EU country across time (%)

	1979	1984	1989	1994	1999	2004	2009
Belgium	91.4	92.1	90.7	90.7	91.1	90.8	90.4
Denmark	47.8	52.4	46.2	52.9	50.5	47.9	59.5
Germany	65.7	56.8	62.3	60.0	45.2	43.0	43.3
Ireland	63.6	47.6	68.3	44.0	50.2	58.6	58.6
France	60.7	56.7	48.8	52.7	46.8	42.8	40.6
Italy	85.7	82.5	81.1	73.6	69.8	71.7	65.1
Luxembourg	88.9	88.8	87.4	88.6	87.3	91.4	90.8
Netherlands	58.1	50.9	47.5	35.7	30.0	39.3	36.8
United Kingdom	32.4	32.6	36.4	36.4	24.0	38.5	34.7
Greece		80.6	80.0	73.2	70.3	63.2	52.6
Spain			54.7	59.1	63.1	45.1	44.9
Portugal			51.1	35.5	39.9	38.6	36.8
Sweden					38.8	37.9	45.5
Austria					49.4	42.4	46.0
Finland					30.1	39.4	40.3
Czech Republic						28.3	28.2
Estonia						26.8	43.9
Cyprus						72.5	59.4
Lithuania						48.4	21.0
Latvia						41.3	53.7
Hungary						38.5	36.3
Malta						82.4	78.8
Poland						20.9	24.5
Slovenia						28.4	28.3
Slovakia						17.0	19.6
Bulgaria							39.0
Romania							27.7
EU Total	62.0	59.0	58.4	56.7	49.5	45.5	43.0

Figure 2 – Average turnout rate at the European elections by group of countries (1979–2009)



Note: Reported turnout rates represent non-weighted averages of eligible voters at country level.

2009, it is smaller by 13 percentage points (touching the lowest level of 44.8%). The other group of three countries considered (Austria, Sweden, and Finland) starts from a very low level of participation (39.5% in 1999) and is significantly lower both than the group of nine countries and the three Southern countries (a difference of nearly 20 percentage points). However, the turnout trend in this group of countries is a slight increasing, reaching 43.9% in 2009, and then actually equalling the average turnout of the three Southern countries. Finally, the average turnout rate of the group of Eastern European countries is the lowest and decreases slightly between 2004 (when 40.4% was almost equal to that of the group consisting of Sweden, Austria, and Finland) and 2009 (the lowest value, 38.4%). In 2009, the difference between the group of countries with the highest turnout rate (the nine initial countries) and the group of countries with the lowest turnout (Eastern European countries) reached 19.4 percentage points. In conclusion, it can be argued that the sharp decline in turnout occurred since 1999 in the EU; it is caused particularly by the decline in the participation of the three Southern countries that joined the EU in the 1980s and—even more—by the entry into the EU of countries with low turnout levels at the European elections (Austria, Sweden, Finland, and Eastern European countries in general). In contrast, the average participation rate of the group of the nine initial countries remains fairly stable over time.

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Proportional representation with variable-geometry: Here is how to vote in the 28 member states

Vincenzo Emanuele

1 April 2014[1]

The electoral system represents a fundamental contextual variable to be taken into account when studying an election. In fact, the electoral system can have an influence on the competitive strategies of political actors as well as on voters' voting behaviour (these are the so-called "psychological effects") further than clearly affect the transformation of the votes cast by the electorate into seats (the so-called "mechanical effect"). This is an element to shed light on since we are about to undertake the analysis of European elections.

What is the electoral system for the European Parliament elections? Is there a common system or each member state has its own system? With a decision of the Council (n. 772/2002) approved by the European Parliament (EP) in May 2002, the European Union has introduced some common principles to harmonize the elections for the EP, previously regulated under the jurisdiction of the member states. Undertaking this decision (that incorporates a legislative position already present in the treaty of Amsterdam), the EU has established that the members of the EP have to be elected with a system of proportional representation, using either the party list vote or the single transferable vote system. Member states may decide in the adoption of an election threshold albeit inferior to 5% on national basis. Member states can also decide how to subdivide the electoral areas although this cannot generally affect the proportional nature of the voting system. Based on these general principles, the electoral systems in the 28 member states have become more

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homogenous albeit they leave a lot of room for discretionary measures of the member states. Further than the number of electoral areas and the adoption of an election threshold, the states are allowed to decide on the age of eligible voters and candidates, the electoral formula (namely, the mechanism transforming votes into seats), the election method of single deputies, and the presence of sanctions for those who decide to abstain. Table 1 resumes the main features of the electoral systems for the EP in the 28 member states. Overall, it represents a proportional system with variable geometry and 28 national variants. This produces chaos of formulas and election thresholds that in turn offer different incentives and constraints in the various national contexts.

As we can see, the minimum age to be attained to become eligible voters is 18 years in Europe with the exception of Austria where voting age is 16. Greater variability can be observed for the minimum age of candidates, set at 25 years in Italy, Cyprus, and Greece. All the other countries have set a lower age of candidacy, granting eligibility for candidates at the age of 23 (Romania), 21 (Belgium, Ireland, and the majority of Eastern European countries), or even 18 (fifteen countries, among which France, Germany, the Netherlands, Spain, and Sweden). Moreover, in four countries (Belgium, Cyprus, Greece, and Luxembourg), voting is compulsory although any formal sanction is applied with the exception of Luxembourg. Here, abstainers receive a fine between 100€ and 250€ in case of first offence while for repeat offenders, the fine is increased up to 500€–1,000€.

Besides the different eligibility criteria for voters and candidates and the rules on compulsory vote, the most interesting differences dealing with the evaluation of voting systems refer to the number of electoral districts, the electoral formula, and the election threshold. A comparative analysis of these elements allow us to classify the various systems based on their expected degree of "disproportionality" (Gallagher, 1991), namely of the distortion they are able to introduce in the transformation of votes into seats. A further variable to be taken into consideration for its marked ability to affect expected disproportionality is the number of available seats: the smaller this number, the greater the implicit disproportionality in the electoral system.[2]

[2] More precisely, what has to be considered is the ratio between the number of electoral districts and the number of seats to be assigned, namely the magnitude of the district (M), given that the seats are allocated with respect to the district-specific result. If in one district, 100 votes are cast and 20 seats are to be assigned (M=20), the maximum implicit threshold of the system would be 5% (100/20=5); maximum five votes are needed to grant one seat. If the seats to be assigned are only 4, then the maximum implicit threshold will be 25% (100/4=25); to receive a seat, maximum 25 votes are needed. We are referring to the concept of maximum threshold because the real implicit threshold will depend on the specific distribution of the votes among the various candidates/parties.

Based on the characteristics mentioned insofar, it is possible to classify electoral systems on an ideal continuum ranging between proportionality and disproportionality. One end of the continuum (proportionality) represents systems with many seats to be assigned in a single national electoral district (very high M) using the Hare quota method without election threshold; the other end of the continuum represents electoral systems characterized by fewer seats to be assigned in many electoral districts (very low M) using D'Hondt formula and high election threshold.

In the vast majority of EU member states, representatives are elected with a unique national electoral district. Exceptions are represented by some big countries as Italy, the United Kingdom, France, Poland, and by two small but culturally heterogeneous countries as Belgium and Ireland where the seats are allocated through various electoral districts to protect local representativeness. Table 1 further reports the average magnitude values (M) in each country. This value is given by the ratio between the total available seats and the number of electoral districts. It can be observed a rather high degree of variability in the average value of M as it ranges between 2.75 registered in Ireland and the 96% computed in Germany. An additional difference can be detected in the electoral formulas. The mechanism of transformation of votes into seats characterized by the widest adoption is the D'Hondt method, used in 17 countries; the Hare quota method (and its variants Hagenbach-Bischoff and Droop) is the most proportional one and has been adopted by six countries; the Sainte-Lague method has been adopted by three countries; and finally, Ireland and Malta adopted the Single Transferable Vote (STV) method for their respective political elections as well. Only half of the countries have introduced an election threshold, generally set at 5% (9 cases[3]) or in fewer cases 4% (Austria, Italy, and Sweden), 3% (Greece), or 1.8% (Cyprus). For what concerns the selection of candidates, about two-thirds (18 out of 28) of the countries introduced a preference vote in their system, although following different specific procedures (open list, flexible list, or even panachage as in Luxembourg), while eight countries vote with a closed list (in which the order of candidates is decided by party officials).

In conclusion, it is possible to categorize the 28 electoral systems based on the previous considerations in terms of expected disproportionality in the transformation of votes into seats. As previously recalled, the electoral system represents a crucial variable to understand a specific party systems and its competitive dynamics. A relatively disproportional system will tend to overrepresent big parties and underrepresent smaller ones. As a conse-

[3] In France, the election threshold of 5% is applied at the district level.

Table 1 – The electoral system for the election of the EP in the 28 member states

Country	N seats	Eligible voters	Eligible candidate	N electo-ral consti-tuencies	Average M	Electoral formula	Election threshold	Election of sin-gle deputies	Compulsory vote	Expected didisproportionality
Austria	18	16	18	1	18	D'Hondt	4%	Preference	NO	Average
Belgium	21	18	21	3	7	D'Hondt	NO	Preference	YES	Average
Bulgaria	17	18	21	1	17	Hare	NO	Preference	NO	Low
Cyprus	6	18	25	1	6	Hare	1.8%	Preference	YES	High
Croatia	11	18	18	1	11	D'Hondt	5%	Preference	NO	High
Denmark	13	18	18	1	13	D'Hondt	NO	Preference	NO	Average-Low
Estonia	6	18	21	1	6	D'Hondt	NO	Preference	NO	High
Finland	13	18	18	1	13	D'Hondt	NO	Preference	NO	Average-Low
France	74	18	18	8	9.25	D'Hondt	5%	Closed list	NO	Average-High
Germany	96	18	18	1	96	Sainte-Laguë/ Schepers	NO	Closed list	NO	Very Low
Greece	21	18	25	1	21	Droop	3%	Closed list	YES	Average-Low
Ireland	11	18	21	4	2.75	STV	NO	STV	NO	Very High
Italy	73	18	25	5	73*	Hare	4%	Preference	NO	Average-Low
Latvia	8	18	21	1	8	Sainte-Laguë	5%	Preference	NO	High
Lithuania	11	18	21	1	11	Hagenba-ch-Bischoff	5%	Preference	NO	Average-High
Luxembourg	6	18	18	1	6	D'Hondt	NO	Preference	YES	High
MHigh	6	18	18	1	6	STV	NO	STV	NO	High
Netherlands	26	18	18	1	26	D'Hondt	NO	Preference	NO	Low

Country	N seats	Eligible voters	Eligible candidate	N electo-ral consti-tuencies	Average M	Electoral formula	Election threshold	Election of sin-gle deputies	Compulsory vote	Expected didisproportionality
Poland	51	18	21	13	3.9231	D'Hondt	5%	Preference	NO	Very High
Portugal	21	18	18	1	21	D'Hondt	NO	Closed list	NO	Low
United kingdom	73	18	18	12	6.0833	D'Hondt**	NO	Closed list*	NO	High
Czech Republic	21	18	21	1	21	D'Hondt	5%	Preference	NO	Average
Romania	32	18	23	1	32	D'Hondt	5%	Closed list	NO	Average
Slovak	13	18	21	1	13	Hagenba-ch-Bischoff	5%	Preference	NO	Average-High
Slovenia	8	18	18	1	8	D'Hondt	NO	Preference	NO	Average
Spain	54	18	18	1	54	D'Hondt	NO	Closed list	NO	Very Low
Sweden	20	18	18	1	20	Sainte-Laguë	4%	Preference	NO	Average
Hungary	21	18	18	1	21	D'Hondt	5%	Closed list	NO	Average

* In Italy seats
** The system adopted in the electoral district of Northern Ireland is the single transferable vote (STV).

quence, these incentives will promote strategic behaviours both on the supply side (creation of electoral cartels and merges among small parties) and on the demand side (voters will tend not to support small parties and to prefer suboptimal political options with concrete possibilities of winning seats). We have thus quantitatively evaluated the 28 electoral systems in terms of their expected disproportionality by making use of a 7-points scale (ranging from "very high" to "very low"). A case of extreme proportionality is represented by Germany, whose 96 representatives in the EP are elected in a unique electoral district without election threshold. The electoral systems of Spain and—to a lesser extent—Netherlands, Portugal, and Bulgaria result highly proportional as well. On the other end of the scale, we situated Ireland, whose average M of 2.75 makes this system particularly disproportionate even in the absence of an election threshold. Similarly to Ireland, Poland results as a highly disproportionate system, considering its average M of 3.9, the adoption of the D'Hondt formula to assign the seats, and the national election threshold of 5%. Further countries characterized by a highly disproportionate system are Cyprus, Estonia, Malta, and Luxembourg. These countries elect only six deputies in the EP, and thus, the implicit threshold is so high to make irrelevant the adoption of an explicit one. France and the United Kingdom present respectively a "medium-high" and a "high" degree of disproportionality for a different reason. In these two countries, the high number of available seats is allocated in the various electoral districts (average M of about nine for France and six for the U.K.); moreover, the election threshold has been set at 5% (at the district level in France and at the national level in the U.K.), and the formula to allocate the seats is the D'Hondt method. Far less disproportionate results the Italian system: in this case, notwithstanding the territorial subdivision into five electoral districts, the allocation of the seats is conducted on national basis, and the election threshold is set at 4% with the Hare quota method.

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Europarties' choices — Who are the candidates for the presidency of the European Commission and how have they been selected?

Bruno Marino

12 May 2014[1]

One of the biggest European Union's problems is the so-called "democratic deficit" (Norris, 1997; Majone, 2008; Katz, 2001). This is a political and, most importantly, a legitimacy-related problem. In other words, since within the European Union the classical democratic processes do not really work, why should we believe European decisions to be morally right and suitable, i.e., legitimate (Dahl, 1963, 72–73)?

EU politicians have decided to address this issue in an interesting way. Quoting the website europarlamento24,[2] "We are expecting […] with an Italian-politics-related logic, that the candidate for the presidency of the European Commission, supported by the European party which will gain the highest number of seats within the European Parliament, will be the first to be considered in order to understand whether he/she will be available to obtain the support of the absolute majority of the European Parliament."

Who are these candidates? How have they been selected? This article will be devoted to answer these questions. I will use two dimensions of analysis devised by Hazan (2002) and by Hazan and Rahat (2010), i.e., the "candidacy" and the "selectorate." The first dimension will address the questions on who

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[2] http://www.europarlamento24.eu/elezioni-2014-sceglieremo-chi-guidera-la-commissione-europea/0,1254,106_ART_3549,00.html

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can stand as a candidate and whether there are some conditions to present the candidacy. On the other hand, the second dimension will be related to the issue of who can select a candidate.[3]

European People's Party

EPP's candidate is Jean-Claude Juncker, former Luxembourg's Prime Minister. On his website,[4] Juncker presents his five political priorities. First, devising reforms to create jobs and economic growth (for example, via the creation of a digital European market); second, implementing policies that will favour a European energy union, to deal with political troubles in some areas of the world and to foster the development of renewable energy production; third, negotiating a trade agreement with the USA; fourth, devising a Euro area reform that will limit ECB's powers, increasing the weight of the European Commission and of the Eurogroup[5]; moreover, Juncker wants to give more power to the Eurozone within the IMF; and fifth, it has been proposed to negotiate an agreement with the United Kingdom, in order to give more autonomy to English politicians, provided that they will not try to weaken single market's hallmarks and future Eurozone's reforms.

Candidacy – the candidate must have been prime minister. Moreover, he/she needed to get the support of his/her national party and at least of other two parties coming from different countries. Two people stood as a candidate: Jean-Claude Juncker and Michel Barnier, member of the European Commission.

Selectorate – EPP's congress, held in Dublin last March, selected Juncker as the candidate for the presidency of the European Commission. There were several congress delegates with voting rights, including the EPP national parties' presidents and delegates and also European Commission's and Council of Europe's members who were also members of the EPP.[6] To summarise, there

[3] Unless otherwise specified, information on candidacy and selectorate for each candidate is taken from this website: http://europedecides.eu/candidates/european-political-parties/

[4] http://juncker.epp.eu/

[5] On the alleged necessity to have an independent Central bank to avoid that monetary policy decisions are controlled by politicians' short-term electoral necessities, see Stiglitz (1998); Drazen (2002); McNamara (2002).

[6] See also EPP's regulations, http://dublin2014.epp.eu/wp-content/uploads/2014/02/Voting-regulation-Dublin-2014-EN.pdf

were more than 800 people with voting rights (Piedrafita & Renman, 2014, pg. 5). Six hundred and twenty-seven votes were cast. Juncker obtained 382 votes while just 245 votes supported Michel Barnier.[7]

Party of European Socialists (PES)

PES has decided to present the candidacy of Martin Schulz. He has been a member of the German party SPD since the 1970s and has been a European member of Parliament since 1994. In 2012, he was also elected as president of the European Parliament. On his website,[8] Schulz puts forward some proposals on minimum wages, on the devising of policies to fight unemployment and fiscal evasion in Europe and to support education.

Candidacy – parties and organisations that were members of the PES could present a candidate, who needed the support of 15% of full member PES' parties and organisations. Only Martin Schulz obtained the necessary support and, therefore, in November 2013, he became the "candidate designate" of PES.

Selectorate – within each PES national party, there has been a voting to confirm the "candidate designate," according to national statutes and regulations. Results should have been ratified by each party's national board that had been democratically elected. PES' election congress held in Rome from 28 February until 1 March 2014 confirmed Schulz's candidacy.

Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe Party (ALDE)

The ALDE Party has presented the candidacy of Guy Verhofstadt, who is a Belgian liberal politician and was a prime minister for 10 years before being elected as a member of the European Parliament in 2009 and, later on, as a president of the ALDE group in the Parliament. On his website,[9] he puts forward a "Plan for Europe,"[10] which is based on the following main points: de-

[7] http://www.epp.eu/jean-claude-juncker-elected-epp-candidate-president-european-commission

[8] http://martin-schulz.eu

[9] http://www.guyverhofstadt.eu/

[10] http://www.guyverhofstadt.eu/uploads/pdf/Plan%20for%20Europe.pdf

vising European economic reforms (such as the implementation of the banking union and the creation of a "European energy community"), protecting civil rights (thanks to the creation of a European privacy regulation, an anti-discrimination law and a European immigration policy), and reforming the European Commission.

Candidacy – people were required to present their candidacy within 20 December 2013, when ALDE Party's congress would have ratified them. In order to stand as a candidate, a person needed either the support of at least two parties coming from more than one country or the support of 20% of ALDE Party's delegates with voting rights.[11] It seemed that two people were ready to present their candidacy, Guy Verhofstadt and Olli Rehn.

Selectorate – ALDE Party's election congress, held in Bruxelles in February 2014, was supposed to select the candidate, but an agreement between Verhofstadt and Rehn was reached. The latter renounced to the candidacy in exchange for a high-profile seat within European Union.[12] Therefore, the congress simply ratified the agreement between the two politicians.

Party of the European Left

The European Left's candidate is Alexis Tsipras, leader of the Greek party SYRIZA. Despite his relatively young age (he was born in 1974), Tsipras has been a politician for many years. He was local councillor in Athens, and he has been a member of the Greek Parliament since 2009. On his website,[13] we can find his electoral manifesto,[14] based on many points, such as a radical change of European austerity policies, the elimination of the Fiscal Compact and the renegotiation of the treaties, the creation of a European Conference on Public Debt, the regulation of financial activities, the pursuing of full employment, and the change of immigration legislation in favour of migrants.

[11] http://www.aldeparty.eu/en/news/alde-party-candidate-commission-president-be-announced-1-february

[12] http://www.aldeparty.eu/en/news/olli-rehn-and-guy-verhofstadt-reach-agreement-lead-candidacy

[13] http://www.alexistsipras.eu/

[14] http://www.european-left.org/sites/default/files/final_platform_en_7.pdf

Candidacy and Selectorate – In October 2013, the Council of the European Left's Presidents (made up of 30 people[15]) decided to present the candidacy of Alexis Tsipras to the Congress of the European Left. In December 2013, Tsipras was officially nominated as a candidate. The proposal of Tsipras' candidacy obtained the approval of 138 delegates out of 164.[16]

European Green Party

European Greens have decided to present a joint candidacy. The two candidates are José Bové (a French no-global leader and a member of the European Parliament since 2009) and Ska Keller (a German member of the European Parliament since 2009). The two candidates' manifesto[17] is based on some key points: a reform of the financial services industry, a more equal taxation system, the development of a green industry, the implementation of an effective action against climate change, and, finally, reforming the food industry.

Candidacy – Perspective candidates needed the support of at least four and of a maximum of eight parties which were members of the European Green Party. Each party could support one candidate. Four candidacies were presented on 4 November 2013: José Bové, Ska Keller, Monica Frassoni (an Italian member of the European Parliament since 1999), and Rebecca Harms.

Selectorate – In November 2013, the Party decided to propose an online primary election. All European citizens who were at least 16 years old were entitled to vote. The primary election lasted for two months and a half and approximately 22,000 people cast a vote. Bové and Keller won the consultation.[18]

[15] http://www.european-left.org/about-el/council-chairpersons

[16] http://european-left.org/4th-el-congress/tsipras-nominated-european-left-voice-denounce-policies-troika-european-commission ; http://european-left.org/positions/congress-motions/documents-4th-el-congress

[17] http://campaign.europeangreens.eu/change-europe-vote-green-0

[18] http://europeangreens.eu/news/press-release-greens-select-leading-candidates

Conclusions

In this article we have analysed the choices of European parties regarding the candidacy for the presidency of the European Commission.[19] It is interesting to notice that different methods were implemented to select the candidates. Some parties have presented to their selectorates a single candidate (therefore making the selectorate's action a simple ratification of a decision taken somewhere else). On the other hand, European Greens have decided to give European citizens the power to select their candidate(s). Even if not so many people voted in the Greens' online primary election, this could be the first step towards the creation of European parties' primaries, partly compatible with American parties' ones.

2014 European election is becoming more and more attractive for European media, also thanks to the presentation of European parties' candidates for the presidency of the European Commission. This is something potentially important for European institutions because it could bring many people to the ballot boxes, avoiding a dangerous low turnout. Let us hope this expectation will become reality.

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Piedrafita, S., and Renman, V. (2014). *The "Personalisation" of European Elections: A Half-Hearted Attempt to Increase Turnout and Democratic Legitimacy?* EPIN Paper, n. 37, April.

[19] Notice that the European Conservatives and Reformists and the European of Freedom and Democracy, coherently with their eurosceptic or even anti-EU stances, decided not to present a candidate.

McNamara, K. R. (2002). Rational Fictions: Central Bank Independence and the Social Logic of Delegation. *West European Politics, vol. 25*(1), pp. 47–76.

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Expansion and electoral success: The winning strategy of the EPP

Vincenzo Emanuele

10 April 2014[1]

With the presentation of symbols and lists, the election campaign for the elections to the European Parliament (EP) has now begun. It seems therefore appropriate to engage in an analysis of the protagonists of European politics, the European parties. Although, as noted by Bardi (2002, p. 252), using the famous classification of Katz and Mair (1993) on the three "faces" of parties (party in the territory, party as organization, and party in public offices) one face clearly predominates over the other two—that of the party in the territory—represented by the national parties, the Europarties have greatly strengthened in recent decades, acquiring a status and a major prestige, thanks to the consolidation of the role of the EP in the decision-making process of the EU. In this and subsequent articles, we will dedicate ourselves to the analysis of electoral history and composition of the main political groups within the EP.

The EPP (European People's Party), since 1999, has the relative majority in the Parliament. In the last European elections, it obtained 265 seats, representing 36% of the EP, neatly outperforming the rivals of the PES (200 seats corresponding to 25% of the EP). The EPP, along with socialists and liberals, is one of the three historical groups within the EP.[2] Even before the direct election of the EP (1979), the representatives of the parties of the Christian-democrat tradition of the six European founding countries (the Italian Christian Democracy, the German CDU-CSU, and the Christian-social and Christian-

[1] This article was originally published in Italian on the CISE website. It appears in English for the first time in this book.

[2] The overlap between the European group and the party is not complete. Some national parties belong to a parliamentarian group in the EP even though they are not formally part of the European party. In our analysis, we will consider the political groups.

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democrat parties of Benelux) had begun to develop some forms of international coordination. The party itself was created in July 1976 and was initially led by the then Belgian Prime Minister Leo Tindemans. The EPP included the Christian-democrat parties of the six European countries, plus the Irish Fine Gael Party, as Ireland had entered in European community in 1973. Yet, this initial composition, although capable of making the EPP an ideologically coherent and politically solid group,[3] made it weak against rivals PSE so that the EPP lost both the elections of 1979 and those of 1984 (see Figure 1).

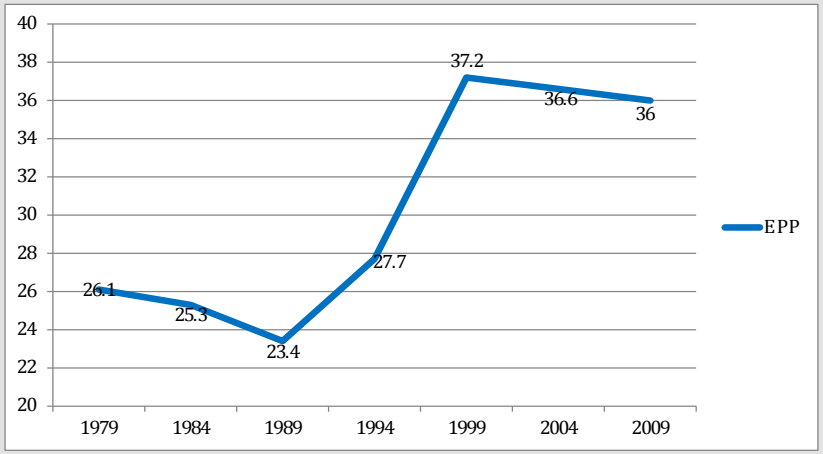
Already at the beginning of the 1980s, a heated internal debate was opened within the EPP. The German component had indeed realized that with the entry of Great Britain and Denmark in the community, and especially with the perspective of further enlargements to other countries that were lacking a strong Christian-democrat tradition, the EPP would have weakened substantially with respect to the PES (Delwit, 2001). It was therefore necessary to open the party at the entrance of conservative and liberal forces, that despite not being part of the Christian-democrat tradition, they were however political forces competing against the left in their respective countries. This revolutionary idea was not appreciated by the Benelux parties nor by the Italian Christian Democracy, which used to create alliances with moderate governing parties of the left but systematically refuse to accept alliances with other right-wing parties.

Despite of the internal resistance, the strategy of opening the EPP "to the right" pursued by the CDU-CSU was recognized as necessary to respond to the gradual erosion of support among traditional Christian-democratic forces. The EPP´s political strategy of opening begun in 1981 with the entry of the Greek conservative New Democracy, to continue then at the end of the 1980s with the arrival of the Portuguese conservatives and the Spanish People´s Party, heirs of Franco regime. Despite these inclusions in the Euro-party, the electoral outcome did not improve; in 1989, the EPP reached the lowest point in its history, getting only 23.4% of seats against the 34.7% of the PES.

The beginning of the 1990s was marked by a further strengthening of the enlargement policy; in 1992, the British Tories and the Danish conservatives, openly Eurosceptic parties, were allowed to become part of the Parliamentary Group of the EPP. These new inclusions have the effect of a permanent change in the nature of the party and in its internal balance of power as—due to the disappearance of the Italian Christian Democracy—the Christian Democrat-

[3] On this point, see the analysis of Hix (2002) regarding the voting behavior of political groups in the EP.

Figure 1 – Evolution of the electoral outcomes of the EPP. Percentage of seats in the EP (1979–2009)



ic parties become minority[4] with respect to the other "right-located" parties (Hix, 2002). From the point of view of the electoral outcome, the 1994 European elections mark a reversal in the trend, as the EPP rises up to 27.7% of the seats, although still far from the 34.9% of the PES. During the 1994–1999 legislative term, the EPP takes the decisive step to bridge the historic gap against the rivals PSE: the Italian representation—which had lost the Christian-democratic components—is strengthened by the entry of *Forza Italia*. At the same time, also the main centre-right parties of Portugal and France, namely the Portuguese social democrats and the French Gaullist Party (RPR, then UMP) join in the European group. The enlargement of Austria, Sweden, and Finland finally allowed the inclusion of the Austrian Christian-democrats of the ÖVP, the Swedish conservatives of *Moderata* and the Finnish KOK.

Armed with this powerful strategy of inclusion, the EPP manages to win the 1999 elections, winning 233 seats against the 180 of the PES and reaching the historic maximum (37.2%). The victory was made possible by the extraordinary growth of the group in some key states (see Table 1). These countries include Italy, in which the members of the EPP increased from 13.9% to 38.1%

[4] To be precise, the "overtaking" takes place only during the legislature with the entry of the deputies of *Forza Italia* as reported in Van Hecke (2003).

Table 1 – Electoral results of EPP in the member states (1979–2009)

Paese	% Totale di voti dei partiti membri del PPE						
	1979	1984	1989	1994	1999	2004	2009
Austria				29.7*	30.7	32.7	30
Belgium	37.7	27.4	29.2	24.2	18.7	23.1	19.5
Bulgaria						30.8*	32.3
Cyprus						28.2	35.6
Croatia							36.8**
Czech Republic						39.6	7.7
Denmark	0	6.6	8	18.9	14.9	12.6	12.7
Estonia						10.5	12.2
Finland				23*	27.7	23.7	27.4
France	8.9	9.4	7.8	12.8	22.1	16.6	27.9
Germany	49.1	46	37.7	38.8	48.7	44.5	37.9
Greece	31.3*	38	40.5	32.7	36	43	32.3
Hungary						52.7	56.4
Ireland	33.1	32.2	21.6	24.3	24.6	27.8	29.1
Italy	37.1	33.5	33.4	13.9	38.1	29.7	41.8
Latvia						26.4	33.7
Lithuania						15.3	26.2
Luxembourg	36.1	34.9	34.9	31.5	31.7	37.1	31.3
Malta						35.5	37.3
Netherlands	35.6	33	34.6	30.8	26.9	24.4	20.1
Poland						30.4	51.4
Portugal		11.8*	14.2	12.5	31.1	25,9	40.1
Romania						34.3*	38.6
Slovakia						46.6	39.2
Slovenia						41.2	46.8
Spain		26.9*	23.7	42.6	41.9	41.2	42.7
Sweden				27.1*	28.4	23.9	23.5
United Kingdom	0	0	0	27	35.8	26.7	0

* Elections held during the legislative term, due to the entry of the country in the EC
** Elections held in 2013

of the vote share; France (from 12.8% to 22.1%); the United Kingdom (from 27% to 35.8%); and Germany (from 38.8% to 48.7%). This pattern of growth was also favoured by the general retreat of incumbent political forces in these countries, all socialist-led, consistently with the predictions of the "second

order elections" theory (Reif and Schmitt, 1980). The victory, however, happens at a price of paradoxical ideological contradictions, as in the emblematic Italian case, in which parties competing in rival domestic political poles, like Forward Italy and the Italian Popular Party, were both members of the EPP.

Since 1999, the EPP has pursued a policy aimed at consolidating its leadership within the EP, proceeding forward on the road of the inclusion of conservative forces of the right and preferring the electoral success at the expense of the internal coherence of the group.[5] With the sizable eastward enlargement of the community (2004), the EPP parliamentary group in the EP includes parties from all the states of the new Europe-25, eager to become part of the EPP for the powerful democratic legitimacy deriving from it internationally. In particular, to the political forces already present in the group will be added the conservative or liberal parties from Hungary, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Malta, Poland, and the Christian-democratic parties of Slovakia and Slovenia. Stronger for this expansion and leveraging on the substantial absence of a social-democratic tradition in Eastern Europe, the EPP triumphs it to the EP elections getting 268 seats (36.6%) compared to the 200 of the socialists. With the exception of small countries as Estonia and Malta, the EPP outperforms the socialists in all the new member states, resulting in nearly 53% of the vote in Hungary and percentages equal to or greater than 40% in the Czech Republic, Slovakia, and Slovenia.

In 2009, finally, the entry of Romanian and Bulgarian delegations compensates the loss of seats in the UK, due to the leakage of the British Conservatives, incompatible with the group for their growing Euroscepticism.[6] The EPP remained essentially unchanged at 36% of the seats (265), further widening the gap with respect to the PSE (25%) and reconfirming as president of the Commission Barroso.

On the eve of the forthcoming elections of May 22 to 25, the EPP can count on 52 parties from 27 member countries, 10 of which is in charge a prime minister or a president adhering to EPP (Table 2). The only exception consists of the United Kingdom, the only state without representation in the EPP, while even the new member Croatia is represented in the group of the People's Party with two parties (HDZ and HSS).

The elections of 2014 are full of risks for the EPP, presenting the Luxembourgish Jean-Claude Juncker as a candidate for president of the Commis-

[5] About the transformation of the EPP's policy platform, see Hanley (2002); on the declining cohesion within the parliamentary group, see Bardi (2002) and Hix (2002).

[6] Since 2009, the British Conservatives have formed the group of the European Conservatives and Reformists (ECR).

Table 2 – List of the members of the EPP on the eve of the 2014 European elections

Country	Members of the EPP
Austria	*Österreichische Volkspartei (ÖVP)*
Belgium	*Christen-Democratisch en Vlaams (CD&V); Centre Démocrate Humaniste (CDH)*
Bulgaria	*Grazdani za Evropeisko Razvitiena Balgarija (GERB); Demokrati za silna Bulgaria (DSB);* *Sajuz Na Demokraticnite Sili (SDS); Demokraticeska Partija (DP)*
Croatia	*Hrvatska Demokratska Zajednica (HDZ); Hrvatska Seljacka Stranka (HSS)*
Cyprus	***Dimokratikos Synagermos (DISY)***
Czech Republic	*Top 09; Křesťanská a demokratickáunie-Československástranalidová (KDU-ČSL)*
Denmark	*Det Konservative Folkeparti (C); Kristendemokraterne (KD)*
Estonia	*Isamaa ja Res Publica Liit (IRL)*
Finland	***Kansallinen Kokoomus (KOK)**; Kristillisdemokraatit (KD)*
France	*Union pour un Mouvement Populaire (UMP)*
Germany	***Christlich Demokratische Union (CDU)**; Christlich-Soziale Union in Bayern (CSU)*
Greece	***Nea Demokratia (ND)***
Hungary	***Fidesz-Magyar Polgari Szovetseg (FIDESZ)**; Kereszténydemokrata Néppárt (KDNP)*
Ireland	***Fine Gael (FG)***
Italy	*Forza Italia (FI); Nuovo centrodestra-UDC (Ncd-Udc); Südtiroler Volkspartei (SVP)*
Latvia	*Vienotība (V)*
Lithuania	*Tėvynėssąjunga-Lietuvoskrikščionysdemokratai (TS-LKD)*
Luxembourg	*Chrëschtlech Sozial Vollekspartei (CSV)*
Malta	*Partit Nazzjonalista (PN)*
Netherlands	*Christen Democratisch Appel (CDA)*
Poland	***Platforma Obywatelska (PO)**; Polskie Stronnictwo Ludowe (PSL)*
Portugal	***Partido Social Democrata (PSD)**; Centro Democrático e Social-Partido Popular (CDS-PP)*
Romania	*Partidul Democrat Liberal (PDL); Romániai Magyar Demokrata Szövetség/Uniunea Democrată* *Maghiarădin România (RMDSZ/UDMR); Partidul Naţional Ţărănesc Creştin Democrat (PNŢCD)*
Slovakia	*Kresťanskodemokratickéhnutie (KDH); Most-Híd; Slovenskádemokratická a kresťanskáúnia-Demokratickástrana (SDKÚ-DS); Strana Maďarskej Komunity/Magyar Közösség Pártja (SMK/MKP)*
Slovenia	*Slovenska demokratska stranka (SDS); Slovenska ljudska stranka (SLS);* *Nova Slovenija-Krščanski demokrati (N.Si)*
Spain	***Partido Popular (PP)**; Unió Democràtica de Catalunya (UDC)*
Sweden	***Moderata samlingspartiet (MD)**; Kristdemokraterna (KD)*
United Kingdom	

Note: Parties reported in bold font are those in which the leader of the party is also in charge as PM (or president in Cyprus).

sion. Will the EPP be able to maintain a relative majority in the EP as it has been for the last 15 years? On the one hand, the neat success obtained in the last two elections in Central Eastern Europe and the simultaneous weakness of the PES in the new member states would suggest that the electoral advantage has become structural and can hardly be affected. On the other hand, one cannot underestimate the fact that the EPP is now perceived more than any other political force as the governing party in the EU as well as the political force that is responsible for the policies of fiscal rigor and austerity in the public accounts pursued in recent years by the EU, especially due to the hegemony on rest of the group exercised by the CDU led by the Chancellor Merkel. Being perceived as an incumbent in a time of a harsh economic crisis could have a negative impact on the election results of the EPP, threatened to the right-wing by the growth of the anti-European parties group led by the National Front of Marine Le Pen.

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United but loser? The PES between party cohesion and electoral decline

Michail Schwartz

14 April 2014[1]

The group of the Progressive Alliance of Socialists and Democrats (S&D) represents in the European Parliament the socialist, the labour, the social democratic, and the progressive forces present in the 28 states belonging to the European Union. It pertains to the Party of European Socialists (PES), and is currently the second political force in Parliament, backed up by 195 MEPs (184 after the vote in 2009), coming from all the 28 member countries of the Union.

The name is only the latest in a long series (see Table 1) and owes its "complexity" to a compromise that has been reached close to the last European elections (June 2009). The choice changing its name was in fact a direct consequence of the entrance in the group of parties only in part related to the Socialist and Social Democratic tradition, including the Italian Democratic Party (PD), the Democratic Party of Cyprus (Edek), and the Party Latvian National Harmony (TSP). As these parties present in their internal components political areas proceeding from the centre (as catholic, liberal, or environmentalist) and being the representatives of these currents reluctant to adhere in a group labelled socialist, a compromise had to be found to make reference to the new enlarged and more heterogeneous nature of the group.

The history of the S&D Group begins well before the creation of the European Parliament and of the introduction of direct elections in 1979. Already a group of socialist parties belonging to the "six" founding countries had come to form, in September of 1952, inside the Assembly of the European Coal and Steel Community (ECSC). Initially, the socialist family found itself deeply

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Table 1 - Denomination of the socialist group in 1953–2013

pre-1979	1979–1984	1984–1989	1989–1993	1993–1999	1999–2004	2004–2009	2009–2013
Socialist Group				Group of the European Socialist Party		Socialist Group	Progressive Alliance of Socialists and Democrats

Fonte: http://www.europe-politique.eu

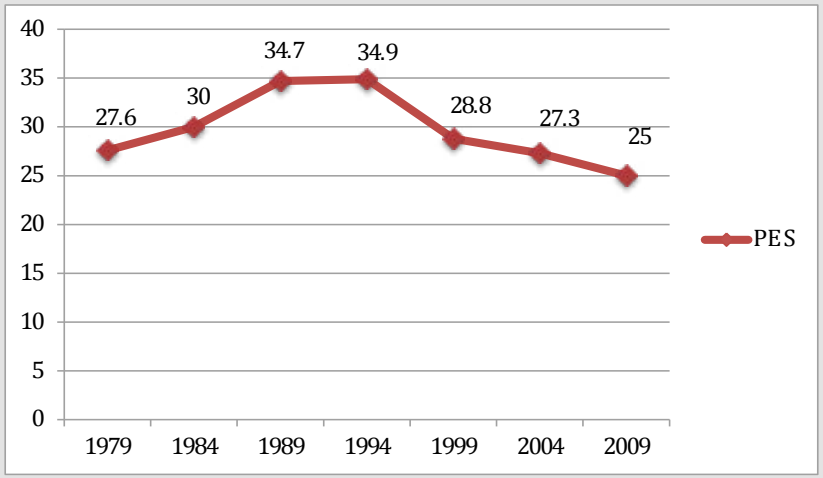
divided in the early stages in supporting of the process of European integration, counting among its ranks a number of opponents (such as the German SPD or the Italian PSI). It was thus created "an immediate division between those who considered European integration as essential to control markets and complete the creation of national welfare systems and those who thought it could only interfere with this goal" (Hix and Lord, 1997).

With the enlargement of the EU from six to nine states (1973), additional parties were added to the initial group, and in 1979—with the introduction of direct elections to the European Parliament—a proper parliamentarian group was structured. To the parties belonging to the "six" were added also parties with a labour political root, such as the British Labour Party, as well as a Scandinavian one as the Danish Social Democratic Party. Election results were favourable to the socialist group that had won 27.6% of the votes, thus becoming the first group in terms of number of seats in the first European parliamentary assembly directly elected. However, the considerable heterogeneity of the group, together with the marked Euroscepticism of some of the new members as the British Labour Party and the Danish Social Democrats, greatly undermined the internal cohesion of the group, particularly on matters relating to the deepening of the European integration path (Ladrech, 2006).

In the next three elections (see Figure 1), the leadership of the socialists in the EP not only remained intact but also grew steadily, reaching its peak with the 1994 elections when the newly-created group of the Party of European Socialists obtained 34.9% of the vote (against the 27.7% won by the second parliamentary group, the European People's Party).

Meanwhile, with the enlargement of the European Community (now European Union in 1992), first to 10 members—with the accession of Greece in 1981—and then to 12 members—with the entry of Spain and Portugal in 1986—the socialist group grew in its composition. In 1994, the social democratic parties of the new members Austria, Finland, and Sweden also joined.

Figure 1 – Electoral performance of the socialist group, (1979–2009)



Source: http://www.europe-politique.eu

A turning point in the history of the socialist group took place between the late 1980s and early 1990s. The dissolution of the two blocks at the international level and the creation in Europe of a Single Market (ESM) backed by a monetary union (EMU) pushed much of the socialist group leader to look for a redefinition of its political identity (Ladrech, 1996). This effort also brought with it an expansion of its internal composition with the entry, among others in October 1992, of the Italian PDS. The socialist group also contributed in a decisive way (pushed by the new Article 138a "about the parties" in the Maastricht Treaty) to the deconstruction of the old Confederation of the Socialist Parties of the European Community (CSPEC) and the creation, in November 1992, of the new Party of European Socialists (PES), in an attempt to unite the fragmented social democratic front and find new solutions to social challenges posed by the acceleration in the monetarist sense of the process of European integration.

The positive trend began with the first elections of 1979 came to an end in 1999. At that elections, the group of the Party of European Socialists suffered a decline of 6% and was outperformed by the group of the European People's Party, which became (and still remains) the first party within the hemicycle of Strasbourg.

From this point onwards, the European Socialists experienced a period of steady decline, who led them in the fall of 2009 to obtain only 25% of the

vote (almost 10 points less than in the golden days of the early 1990s) and "the most meager representation in the European Parliament after the elections of 1979" (Hix, 2009).

Precisely because of this steady decline in the electoral support (marked by the enlargement to East, where the strongest parties were conservative or Christian-popular) and with the looming of the European elections of 2009, the socialist group has changed strategy, opening to new political forces proceeding from other experiences within the field of the left, in an attempt to close the gap with the predominant group of the European People. Obviously, the focus fell on the newly-formed Democratic Party, which at the time represented the second Italian party. From the entrance of the latter, as mentioned before, derives the name change in the "Group of the Progressive Alliance of Socialists and Democrats"[2] as well as the change of the historic symbol of a rose surrounded by 12 stars. All this was not enough, though, to avoid a sharp loss for the socialists in 2009. The group lost in the vast majority of EU countries, and that led to a result well below their stronger adversary, the European People's Party.

On the eve of the European elections in May, the socialist proposed as a candidate for the presidency of the European Commission the German Martin Schulz. Despite the merciless debacle of 2009, they can now rely on several prime ministers and heads of state (Matteo Renzi and François Hollande in particular) and a group in the European Parliament that despite being clearly in a minority condition is in good health. The 21 MEPs, elected by the PD in 2009, in fact helped the S&D Group count among its ranks at least one party for each member country, thus, registering a maximum level of "inclusiveness," both "parliamentarian"[3] and at the "party-level"[4] (Calossi 2011, 165).

Inclusiveness is not the only factor that indicates the good state of health of the S&D group, though. Taking into account the indicators proposed by Calossi to measure the degree of institutionalization and strengthening of groups within the European Parliament, the S&D Group also presents a high degree of "persistence"[5] and a high degree of "voting cohesion" (the highest between the various parliamentary groups (see Table 3).

[2] Initially, the name proposed was the "Progressive Alliance of Socialists and Democrats" (PASD), but it was soon dismissed preferring the reported one.

[3] With "inclusiveness," it has to be intended the "number of EU countries that support the group with at least one deputy" (Calossi 2011, 165).

[4] With "inclusivity at the party-level," it has to be intended the number of countries in which national parties are linked to the group in the EP (*Ibid.*).

[5] With "persistence," it has to be intended the "time period of existence of the parliamentarian group, computed in terms of EP legislative terms' number" (*Ibid., 165).*

Table 2 - Parties members of the S&D Group in the 28 EU countries

Country	Party
Austria	Sozialdemokratische Partei Österreichs (SPÖ)
Belgium	**Parti Socialiste (PS) Belgique**
	Socialistische Partij.Anders (SP.A)
Bulgaria	**Bulgarian Socialist Party (BSP)**
Croatia	**Socijaldemokratska partija Hrvatske (SDP)**
Cyprus	Eniea Dimokratiki Enosis Kyprou (EDEK)
Czech Republic	**Česká Strana Sociální; Demokratická (ČSSD)**
Denmark	**Socialdemokraterne (SD)**
Estonia	Sotsiaal demokraatlik Erakond (SDE)
Finland	Suomen Sosialidemokraattinen Puolue (SDP)
France	**Parti Socialiste (PS)**
Germany	Sozialdemokratische Partei Deutschlands (SPD)
Greece	Panellinio Sosialistikó Kínima (PA.SO.K)
Hungary	Magyar Szocialista Párt (MSZP)
Ireland	Labour Party
Italy	**Partito Democratico (PD)**
Latvia	Tautas Saskaņas Partija (TSP)
Lithuania	**Lietuvos Socialdemokratų Partija (LSDP)**
Luxembourg	Lëtzebuerger Sozialistesch Aarbechterpartei (LSAP)
Malta	**Partit Laburista (PL)**
Netherlands	Partij van de Arbeid (PvdA)
Poland	Sojusz Lewicy Demokratycznej (SLD)
	Unia Pracy (UP)
Portugal	Partido Socialista (PS)
Romania	Partidul Social Democrat (PSD)
Slovakia	**Smer–sociálnademokracia, Smer (SD)**
Slovenia	Socialni Demokrati (SD)
Spain	Partido Socialista Obrero Español (PSOE)
	Partit dels Socialistes de Catalunya (PSC)
Sweden	Arbetarepartiet-Socialdemokraterna (SAP)
United Kingdom	Labour Party

Source: http://www.socialistsanddemocrats.eu/
The bold font signals that the PM or the Head of the Executive is member of the party.

Table 3 – Vote cohesion in the first 18 months of the VII legislature

EPP	**S&D**	ALDE	G/EFA	ECR	EUL-NGL	EFD	NA
0.93	**0.94**	0.90	0.96	0.86	0.84	0.49	0.43

Source: Hix, Noury, and Roland (2013)

Table 4 – Degree of "party concentration": A=takes into account the first party; B=takes into account the two biggest parties

	EPP	**S&D**	ALDE	G/EFA	ECR	EUL-NGL	EFD
MEPs	275	**194**	85	58	56	35	32
A	15.8	**12.5**	14.2	31.8	44.6	22.8	40.6
B	26.7	**23.9**	27.3	61.3	71.4	35.1	65.6

Personal elaborations of the author; source: http://www.socialistsanddemocrats.eu

If we also consider the low "party concentration,"[6] the lowest in both cases (A and B) within the Parliament (see Table 4), which is also a sign of a clear independence from the national parties, however, is still very strong and influential in the decision-making process of the Union.

That considered, it has to be observed that the socialists find themselves at a crossroads. The last elections saw them succumb in all the key states of the Union. The Labour Party and the French socialists have recorded the lowest vote shares, collecting respectively 16% and 17%. The Italian Democratic Party found itself nearly 10 percentage points below the PDL while in Finland, the Netherlands, Poland, and Ireland, the parties pertaining to the S&D Group were even third rank in their respective elections. Also, the losses in Austria, Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Hungary, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Portugal, Slovenia, and Spain should be considered. These results, combined with the almost ubiquitous presence of right-wing governments in EU countries, led the socialists to be in minority also in the other two main political institutions of the EU (Commission and Council). Thus, it will be interesting to observe to what extent the candidacy of Martin Schulz (single candidate, supported by

[6] "Party concentration" refers to the "percentage of deputies in the EP group corresponding to the deputies in the biggest national party and the percentage of EP deputies corresponding to the two biggest national parties" (Calossi 2011, 165).

virtually the entire PSE) can stimulate the rise in the electoral support for the socialists. This is particularly important as this time, to be at stake for the first time in the history of the European Union, there will be a fully legitimized chair of president of the Commission.

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The Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe Group: Towards an inevitable decline?

Bruno Marino

22 April 2014[1]

The Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe Group (from now on, ALDE Group) is the third most numerous group within the European Parliament, after the European People's Party group and the Party of European Socialists group. The ALDE group is made up by Members of the European Parliament (from now on, MEPs) coming from two different European parties, i.e., the European Democratic Party and the Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe Party.

The liberal democratic group[2] has had a very interesting historical development. In the 1960s, after the exit of the Gaullist MEPs, the liberal group formed within the Common Assembly of the European Coal and Steel Community started a long path of change and inclusion of new members as the European integration went on. Analysing the history of the liberal democratic group also means analysing the change of its name.

From 1979 until 1985 within the European Parliament, there was the Liberal and Democratic Group, in which there were different parties, such as the French UDF, the Italian PRI and PLI, or the German FDP. From 1985 until the mid-1990s, the liberal democratic group changed its name, becoming the Liberal and Democratic Reformist Group. In this period, parties coming from different countries (like the Portuguese Social Democratic Party) joined the group. In 1994, there was another change; the Group of the European Liberal

[1] This article was originally published in Italian on the CISE website. It appears in English for the first time in this book.

[2] I will use this term in a very broad way, referring to all the groups formed within European parliamentary institutions in the last decades—therefore, both to the groups that were the predecessors of the ALDE group and to the ALDE group itself. I will also use this term to refer to the parties that have been connected to the ALDE (group).

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Democrat and Reform Party was born. The group kept this denomination until 2009, and in these years, the British Liberal Democrats joined the group.[3] In 2004, there was the last change. After the inclusion of the MEPs coming from the European Democratic Party, the ALDE group was created.

These name-related changes have also been influenced by the inclusion of different parties, which can be all considered as "liberal" ones. It is well known that this adjective can have different meanings (see, for example, the difference between social liberalism and liberal conservatism) and can be used in different ways by parties coming from different areas of the political continuum. Think about Mr. Berlusconi's promises to foster a "liberal revolution" in Italy in the 1990s and 2000s or about the attempt by sectors of the Italian Left to be recognised as "liberal" in order to put away their communist heritage.

Quoting Ladrech (2006, p. 494) on the European Liberal Democrat and Reform Party, in the ALDE group there is a bigger heterogeneity than in the PES or in the PPE groups. The flexibility of the word "liberal" can help us understand this phenomenon. It is interesting to notice the extremely diverse parties that are or were part of the liberal democratic group (therefore implicitly admitting they are or were "liberal"): the moderate PRI and the right-wing PLI (which, despite its name, on some political stances, was more right-wing than the Christian democrats), the British Liberal Democrats and the Basque Nationalist Party, the post-Christian-Democratic Italian party "Daisy-Democracy is Freedom,"[4] and the anticlerical Italian Radicals.

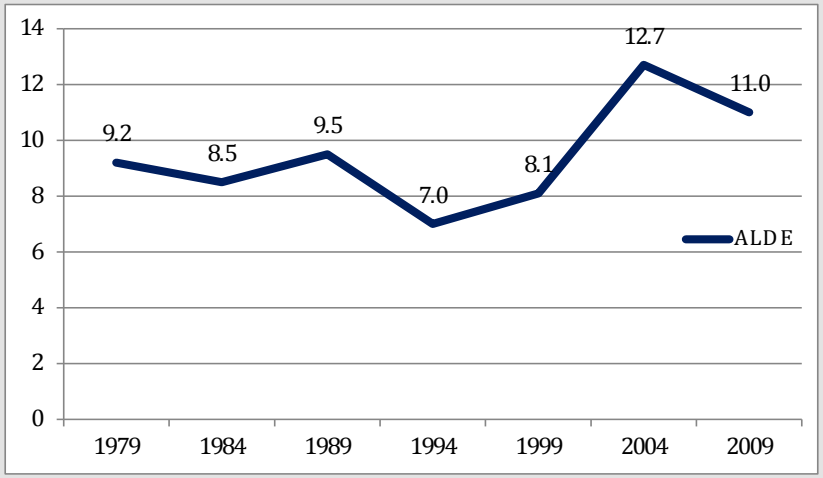
Despite the above-quoted differences and transformations, liberal democratic MEPs have always had a noticeable strength within the European Parliament. At the last European election, they got more than 80 seats (with an important contribution from the British Liberal Democrats and the German FDP, which obtained 24 seats in total, approximately 30% of the liberal democratic seats). This was an interesting result for a group that aims at being an alternative to both the socialists and the populars.

Analysing Figure 1, we can see that electoral performances of liberal democratic parties in European elections follow a fluctuating pattern. A decrease

[3] In the last years, this party has had an interesting development, having formed a coalition government with the British Conservative Party. The Liberal Democrats were created at the end of 1980s, after two parties (the Liberal Party and the Social Democratic Party) merged. See also Webb (2000).

[4] Which was formed in the 2000s by the merging of several parties that had stemmed in the 1990s from the Christian-Democratic breakup. Notice that, basically, no big liberal democratic party was involved in the creation of this party. For further information, see the useful contribution by Baccetti (2007).

Figure 1 – Electoral results of liberal democratic parties. Percentage of seats in the European Parliament (1979–2009)



Data source: http://www.parties-and-elections.eu/eu2.html

in the percentage of seats in 1984 is followed by an increase in 1989. To add more, in 1994, the liberal democratic parties suffer from a weakening while, on the contrary, 1999 and 2004 European elections are very positive. Indeed, after 2004 European election, the liberal democratic group gets the highest percentage of seats in the European Parliament since 1979. This positive trend is stopped by the results of 2009 European election, after which the ALDE group loses several MEPs. Looking at the results from 1979 until 2009, it can be said that liberal democratic parties have been able to survive many transformations (like European Union enlargement), maintaining a noticeable electoral support along many years. This is even clearer if we analyse electoral performances of liberal democratic parties at national level.

Taking a look at Table 1, it is clear that support for liberal democratic parties is more or less stable and relevant in some countries (such as Belgium, Bulgaria, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, the Netherlands, Slovenia, and Sweden) and very fluctuating in other countries (such as Hungary, Luxembourg, Slovakia, and the United Kingdom). Italy, as explained in the footnote, is a very specific country regarding liberal democratic parties, since very different parties have been part of the liberal democratic groups in the European Parliament along more than 30 years, and this can explain the highly variable performances of liberal democratic parties in Italian European elections.

Table 1 – Electoral performances of liberal democratic parties in European Parliament elections at national level (1979–2009)

	1979	1984	1989	1994	1999	2004	2009
Austria				4.3*	2.7		
Belgium	9.4	18.1	17.8	20.6	23.6	23.9	22.5
Bulgaria						26.5*	22.1
Croatia							
Cyprus						17.1	
Czech Republic							
Denmark	14.4	12.4	16.6	27.4	33.1	25.8	20.2
Estonia						29.7	41.4
Finland				30.1*	28.1	29.1	25.1
France	27.6	43	28.9	25.6		12	8.5
Germany	6	4.8	5.6	4.1	3	6.1	11
Greece							
Hungary						7.7	2.2
Ireland			12				24.1
Italy	6.2	6.1	4.4	7.3	8.3	35.5	8
Latvia						6.5	7.5
Lithuania						41.4	19.7
Luxembourg	28.1	22.1	19.9	18.8	20.5	14.9	18.7
Malta							
Netherlands	16.1	18.9	19.6	29.6	25.5	17.4	22.7
Poland						7.3	
Portugal		37.4*	32.7				
Romania						16.4*	14.5
Slovakia						3.2	9
Slovenia						21.9	21.2
Spain		4.4*	11.3	4.7	7.6	5.1	5.2
Sweden				12*	19.8	16.1	19
United Kingdom	12.6	19	6.2	17	12.7	14.9	13.8

*Elections held in the year when the country entered the EEC or the EU.
Note: As for Ireland, the percentages in the table are the ones obtained by parties which took (take) part in the liberal democratic groups in the European Parliament after 1989, 2009, and 2014 European elections; from 1984 until 1994, the French UDF formed an electoral list with Gaullist parties; in 1999, the Belgian Liberal Reformist Party formed an electoral list with the Democratic Front of the Francophones; in 1999, the Spanish Convergence and Union formed an electoral list with the European Coalition; and finally, regarding the percentage of votes obtained by liberal democratic lists in 2004 Italian European election, I h ave added together the votes of the United in the Olive Tree list (which included Daisy-Democracy is Freedom and the European Republicans Movement), the votes of the Bonino list, and the votes of the Civil Society of Di Pietro-Occhetto list.
Data source: http://www.parties-and-elections.eu/eu2.html

Table 2 – ALDE member parties before 2014 European election

Country	Parties
Austria	/
Belgium	Open VlaamseLiberalen en Democraten (VLD); Mouvement Réformateur (MR)
Bulgaria	Dvizheniezapravaisvobodi (DPS); Nacionalnodvizeniezastabilnosti-vazhod (NDSV)
Croatia	/
Cyprus	/
Czech Republic	/
Denmark	Venstre, Danmarks Liberale Parti (V)
Estonia	Eesti Keskerakond (KESK); **Eesti Reformierakond (RE)**
Finland	Suomen Keskusta (KESK); Svenskafolkpartieti Finland (SFP)
France	Mouvement démocrate (MoDem); Citoyenneté Action Participation pour le 21ème siècle (Cap21)
Germany	Freie Demokratische Partei (FDP)
Greece	/
Hungary	/
Ireland	Fianna Fáil
Italy	Italia dei Valori (IDV)
Latvia	Latvijas Pirmā Partija/Latvijas Ceļš (LPP/LC)
Lithuania	Darbo Partija (DP); Lietuvos Respublikos Liberalųsąjūdis (LRLS)
Luxembourg	**Parti démocratique (DP)**
Malta	/
Netherlands	**Volkspartijvoor Vrijheid en Democratie (VVD)**; Democraten 66 (D66)
Poland	/
Portugal	/
Romania	Partidul Naţional Liberal (PNL)
Slovakia	Ľudovástrana-Hnutiezademokratické Slovensko (L'S-HZDS)
Slovenia	Liberalnademokracija Slovenije (LDS); Zares-socialno-liberalni (Zares)
Spain	Convergència Democràtica de Catalunya (CDC); Partido Nacionalista Vasco (PNV)
Sweden	Folkpartietliberalerna (FP); Centerpartiet (C)
United Kingdom	Liberal Democrats (LD)

Parties in bold are the ones from which the head of a national government comes from; the Latvian party LPP/LC has disappeared at national level.

The ALDE group has published on its website[5] the five priorities that will inspire its future actions: a fight against discriminations and a stronger civil rights protection; a push towards a greener economy, in order to deal with climate change; a more effective European Union influence in the world, especially regarding democracy promotion; a reform of the European Union budget and a strong support for "fiscal rectitude" (for example, by defending the stability and growth pact); and a strong and clear regulation of European financial markets, paired with the implementation of a new economic governance by the European Commission.

The next European election is a fundamental challenge for European liberal democratic parties. On the one hand, the widespread opposition to European and German austerity policies could favour extremist parties in many European countries. On the other hand, pre-electoral surveys seem to show that some ALDE parties (such as the Liberal Democrats in the United Kingdom or the Italy of Values) could lose many seats compared to 2009 European election. In May, we will see whether this is just a pessimistic idea or a more realist forecast.

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[5] http://www.alde.eu/

From the Italian Communist Party to Tsipras: The path of Europe's radical left

Federica Izzo

25 April 2014[1]

This essay is aimed at analysing the history of the Confederal Group of the European United Left/Nordic Green Left (GUE-NGL). The group, formed by the Party of the European Left and by the Nordic Green Left, gathers the communist, socialist, and ecologist parties represented in the European Parliament (EP). Its member parties are inspired by the ideals of international solidarity that are characteristics of the communist ideology. Indeed, the group's constituent declaration states that despite being opposed to the Union institutional structure, it is actively committed to fostering European integration. In other words, without characterising themselves as Eurosceptic parties, the members of the GUE-NGL aim at modifying the structure of the EU, in order to increase its democratic character and promote polices in line with their reference ideology.

The communist and socialist parties represented in the European Parliament have been cooperating since 1973 when the Communist and Allies Group (GCA) sanctioned the collaboration of the French and Italian communists in Brussels. With the first European parliamentary elections in 1979, the group won the 11.1% of the seats. The GCA, with Italian, French, and Danish delegates, was therefore the fourth largest group in the EP. Its expansion continued when Greece joined the EU in 1981. Both the Greek radical left parties (Greek Communist Party and *Synapsimós*), in fact, joined the group. At the European elections in 1984, the Communist and Allies Group confirmed its positive performance, obtaining the 9.5% of the preferences. With 41 members, the group confirmed itself the fourth largest in the parliament.

[1] This article was originally published in Italian on the CISE website. It appears in English for the first time in this book.

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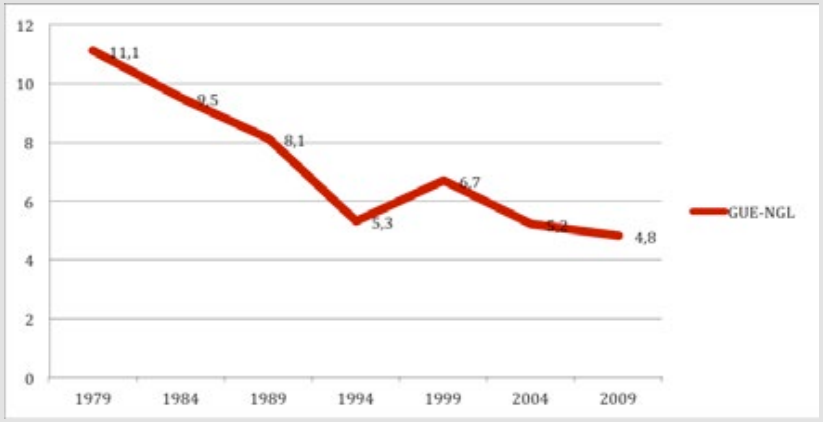
The arrival of Spain and Portugal in the Union, in 1986, triggered a process that would have led, three years later, to the birth of two new parliamentary groups. The Italian Communist Party, the Spanish *Izquierda Unida*, the Greek *Synapsimós*, and the Danish People's Party formed the group European United Left (*Gauche Unitaire Européenne* or GUE). On the other hand, the communist parties of France, Portugal, and Greece, together with one delegate from the Irish Worker's Party, formed the *Coalition Des Gauches*. In 1989, the two groups obtained, respectively, the 5.4% and 2.7% of preferences, almost matching the result of the GCA in the previous elections.

The history of the groups hit a turning point at the beginning of the 1990s, also due to the radical changes occurring within the Italian party system. The newborn *Partito Democratico della Sinistra* (PDS), willing to remove every legacy of its communist roots, abandoned the GUE in order to join the Party of European Socialists (PES). The exit of the PDS had a heavy repercussion on the results of 1994 elections. The Coalition des Gauches was not represented in the new parliament, and the European United Left (GUE) obtained a mere 5.3%, with its members falling to 28. The exit of the Italian PDS from the group was, virtually, responsible for the loss of 16 delegates (this is the number of members of the PDS who entered the EP and joined the PES). Such electoral defeat was probably the decisive incentive to start the process of gathering together all the forces within the nonsocial democratic European left. Such process started with an enlargement of the European United Left (GUE). Besides the original members (the communist parties of Italy, Spain, and Greece), the *Parti Communiste Francaise*, the *Partido Comunista Portugues*, and the Greek *Synapsimos* joined the group. The second decisive step was the "EU northern enlargement," on January 1, 1995. Austrian delegates joined the GUE while the Swedish and Finnish parties, together with the Danish socialists, formed the Nordic Green Left. Finally, on January 6, 1995, the Confederal Group of the European United Left-Nordic Green Left (GUE-NGL) was born. In 1998, following the arrival of the British Ken Coates, former member of the PES, and of the Italian Carlo Ripa di Meana, previously in the Green party, the group counted 34 members. However, the GUE-NGL had its electoral debut only in 1999. The group, presided by the Spanish Alonso José Puerta (*Izquierda Unida*), obtained the 6.7% of the seats, improving the result of the *Coalition Des Gauches* in 1994. All the parties adhering to the group in the previous term were able to obtain representation in the new parliament. To these, added themselves the German Party of the Democratic Socialism and a third Greek party, the DIKKI (Social Democratic Movement). Finally, five members of the French *Lutte Ouvrière* also joined. The GUE-NGL arrived thus at 42 members, once again representing the fourth largest group in the EP. If we analyse the electoral trend of the communist and socialist parties from 1979 to 2009 (see figure 1), it is apparent that the birth of the GUE-NGL produced

Figure 1 - Electoral trend of communist and socialist groups within the EP. Percentage of seats within the EP (1979–2009)



For 1979 and 1984, the figures refer to the GCA while for 1989, to the total of the preferences of the European United Left and the Coalition des Gauches. For 1994, the data refer only to the European United Left. Finally, for 1999, 2004, and 2009, the figures refer to the GUE-NGL

positive electoral results, with a partial inversion of the negative trend recorded in previous years. Nonetheless, it is also evident that such results were quite ephemeral and, moreover, that the figures do not even get close to the ones registered in the period antecedent to the fall of the Berlin Wall.

Nevertheless, the group continued its expansion during the fifth legislature, counting 49 members in 2009. Moreover, following the arrival of 10 new EU member states, in 2003, the group welcomed observers from Cyprus, Czech Republic, Lithuania, and Slovakia (who became full members in May 2004). In the meantime, the French Francis Wurtz (French Communist Party) was elected to the presidency of the group. This positive trend, however, was abruptly interrupted with the elections in June 2004. The GUE-NGL settled with a mere 5.2% of the preferences, and its members went down to 40. The Northern Irish *Sinn Féin* and a second Portuguese party joined the group with one member each. It seems clear that the expansion strategy, while successful, was not enough to compensate the losses the European communists and socialists inevitably were to suffer in a post-ideology era.[2] In fact, analys-

[2] On this point, see Hay (2007).

Table 1 - Electoral results of the GUE-NGL in the member states (1999–2009)

Country	GUE-NGL member parties, total % of votes		
	1999	2004	2009
Austria	0.73	0.78	0.66
Belgium	0	0	0
Bulgaria			0
Czech Republic		20.26	14.2
Croatia			5.8*
Cyprus		27.89	34.8
Denmark	7.3	14.17	7
Estonia		0	0.8
Finland	9.1	9.13	5.9
France	12	8.44	6
Germany	5.8	6.13	7.5
Greece	20.8	13.64	13
Hungary		0	1
Italy	6.3	8.93	7
Latvia		0	19.6
Lithuania		0	0
Luxemburg	0	2.86	3.4
Malta		0	0
Netherlands	5	6.97	7.1
Poland		0	0.7
Portugal	10.7	14	21.3
Romania			0
Slovakia		4.55	1.65
Slovenia		0	0
Spain	5.9	4.71	3.77
Sweden	15.8	12.79	5.7
UK	1.1	0.85	0.6

*Elections held on April 14, 2013.

ing the data by country (see Table 1), we can notice that the new members (the Czech, Cypriot, Irish, and Northern Irish parties) brought the GUE-NGL 10 new parliamentarians. At the same time, however, the poor electoral performance of the older member parties caused the loss of 12 delegates.

The electoral decline of the group continued with the 2009 elections, with a poor 4.8% (see Figure 1). In this case, however, the disastrous performance

Table 2 - GUE-NGL member parties' list on the eve of 2014 European Elections

Country	GUE-NGL members
Austria	
Belgium	
Bulgaria	
Cyprus	Progressive Workers' Party
Czech Republic	Komunistickástrana Čech a Moravy
Denmark	Enhedslisten - De Rød-Grønne
Estonia	
Finland	
France	Parti communiste français; Parti de Gauche; Parti Communiste Réunionnais; Marie-Christine Vergiat
Germany	Die Linke
Greece	Synapsimos (Syriza); Partito Comunista Greco
Hungary	
	Socialist Party
Ireland	
Italy	
Latvia	Latvijas Sociālistiskāpartija
Lithuania	
Luxemburg	
Malta	
Netherlands	Socialistische Partij
Poland	
Portugal	Bloco de Esquerda; Partido Comunista Português
Romania	
Slovakia	
Slovenia	
Spain	Partido Comunista de España
Sweden	Vänsterpartiet
UK	Sinn Féin

of the Italian member parties is mainly to blame for the disappointing results. Three parties adhering to or affiliated with the GUE-NGL ran in European Elections in Italy: *Rifondazione Comunista*, *Sinistra e* Libertà, and the *Partito Comunistadei Lavoratori*. None of them went above the 4% threshold, necessary to obtain representation in the EP. Because of this, the GUE-NGL lost seven members. This brought the count to 35 members from 17 states (this

includes the loss of the Finnish delegate and the new member from Latvia). The group thus became the sixth, and penultimate, for number of members in the EP.

During the last term, first, the German Lothar Birky (Party of the Democratic Socialism) and then his conational Gabriele Zimmer (Party of the Democratic Socialism) presided the group.

The elections that will be held in May represent a precious occasion for the GUE-NGL. Radical left parties have always adopted a critical attitude towards the economic management on the part of EU institutions. The current European system, accused of pursuing excessive economic liberalism, is considered the agent of the current economic and financial crisis rather than its victim. The declared goal of the GUE-NGL is therefore to reform the EU institutions, and promote policies in line with its reference ideology, thus improving the life of European citizens.[3] Therefore, it is easy to understand why these parties may benefit from the current economic situation and from the anti-Europe climate, which is also fuelled by the national media. Moreover, the GUE-NGL is betting on the charisma of the young leader of the Greek *Syriza*, Alexis Tsipras. Indeed, an article published by the think tank *Notre Europe*, by Bertoncini and Kreilinger (2013), foresees a particularly positive electoral performance for the Spanish *Izquierda Unida*, for *Syriza*, and possibly for the French and German parties as well. This would substantially increase the group's membership. The authors go as far as hypothesising 50 members in the next term. If such previsions were to be confirmed, it would be the best electoral result for the socialist and communist parties in Europe since the birth of the EP. The challenge is hard, but it is possible that the GUE-NGL will be able to reverse the negative electoral trend observed in over a decade.

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[3] On this point, see the official GUE-NGL website (http://www.guengl.eu).

The populist and Eurosceptic right: The evolution of its electoral success

Nicola Maggini

29 April 2014[1]

The campaign for the elections to the European Parliament (EP) has now begun, and at this point, it becomes undoubtedly necessary to undertake the analysis of the protagonists of European politics, the Europarties, and the political groups in the EP.

In this article, we analyse the electoral history and composition of the group Europe of Freedom and Democracy (EFD), a political group that collects right-wing populist and Eurosceptic parties—when not explicitly anti-Euro and anti-EU—in the EP. The EFD is born as a political group in July 1, 2009, and in the last European elections won 32 seats, corresponding to 4.3% of the EP. Currently, it can count on 31 MEPs from 13 parties of 12 EU Member States. In particular, the major parties are the Northern League (LN), the United Kingdom Independence Party (UKIP), LAOS (Greek Orthodox-Christian party), the Danish People's Party, the Movement for France, the Reformed Political Party of the Netherlands (SGP), the Finns Party (formerly known as the True Finns), and the Slovak National Party (Table 1). The EFD has two cochairs, Nigel Farage (UKIP) and Francesco Speroni (Northern League), which correspond to the two most important delegations of the group (8 and 7 MEPs, respectively). The new group was formed by the dissolution of the Independence and Democracy Group (IND/DEM) and the Union for Europe of the Nations (UEN). Some delegations of the EFD (the English, Danish, French, and Finnish) have actively participated in the campaign against the ratification of the Lisbon Treaty in the second referendum in Ireland (October 2009). Between 2009 and 2011, the Austrian Freedom Party (FPÖ) has been

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negotiating its entry in the EFD, however, encountering the veto by different parties of the parliamentary group including the SGP, UKIP, and the Slovak National Party. However, further MEPs have joined the EFD during the term, such as the Italian Magdi Allam (currently member of the Brothers of Italy National Alliance) in December 2011, after having left the Union of Christian Democrats, being part of the EPP. Also, four MEPs of United Poland left the group of European Conservatives and Reformists (ERC) on 26 December 2011, thus joining the EFD. Finally, in September 2013, the National Front for the Salvation of Bulgaria (party formed in 2011) joined the group. In addition to the new entrants in the course of time, there have been also some expulsions and defections, especially towards the group of Conservatives and Reformists (ECR).

Most of the parties in the EFD are part of the Europarty Movement for a Europe of Liberties and Democracy (MELD), except the UKIP. In November 2013, the Northern League (which used to be part of the MELD) has joined the Europarty European Alliance for Freedom (EAF), consisting of populist and anti-Euro right-wing parties as the French National Front led by Marine Le Pen, the Flemish *Vlaams Belang*, the Austrian FPÖ (all these parties do not belong to any group in the EP), and the Swedish Democrats (who has no elected MEPs). The EAF was founded in 2010 and has been recognized by the EP in 2011. The role and the importance of the party is likely to expand in the next European elections in May 2014 when it will count on the support of the National Front, the Party for Freedom (PVV) led by the Dutch Geert Wilders, the Flemish *Vlaams Belang*, the Austrian Freedom Party (FPÖ), the Swedish Democrats, the Slovak National Party, and the Northern League. The Danish People's Party, UKIP, and Alternative for Germany (AFD) have refused to join the new alliance, while more radical and anti-Semitic nationalist parties in Europe as the National Democratic Party of Germany, the British National Party, the Greek Golden Dawn, and the Hungarian *Jobbik* were not allowed to join the alliance. Besides, here we are not concerned with the parties of the extreme right and neofascist. The least common denominator of the parties adhering to the MELD and EAF consists of the conservative political orientation, the aversion towards Europe, and the populism (Mudde, 2007; Szczerbiak and Taggart, 2008), aiming to exploit electorally the distance that has arisen between the rulers and the citizens in many European countries, and the popular discontent that has been generated as a result of epochal phenomena such as the globalization of markets, mass migration, and the global economic crisis after the collapse of Wall Street in 2008. The populist challenge brought forward by these parties usually grounds on communication skills and on a charismatic leader to coagulate around a single political project the lack of confidence that the average citizen feels facing the difficulties typical of modern democracies. This is namely the challenge that a leader, placed at

Table 1 – List of the parties members of the EFD or adherent to the EAF at the eve of the 2014 European elections

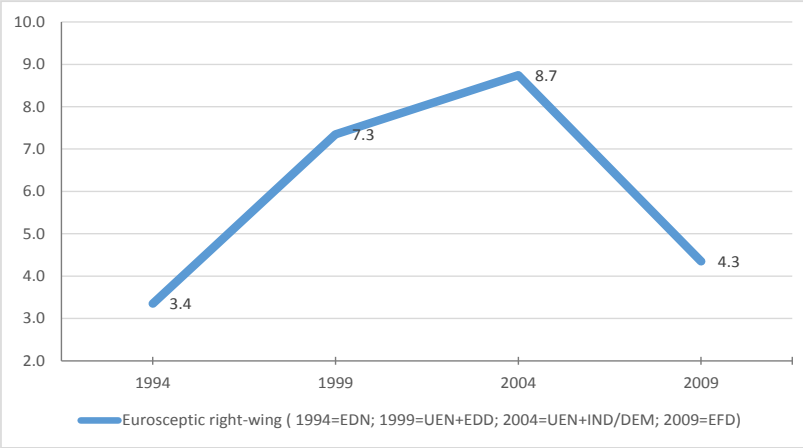
Country	Name of the party	English name	Acron.	Group or European party
Austria	Freiheitliche Partei Österreichs	Austrian Freedom Party	FPÖ	European Alliance for Freedom
Belgium	Vlaams Belang	Flemish Interest	VB	European Alliance for Freedom
Bulgaria	Natzionalen Front za Spasenie na Bulgaria	National Front for the Salvation of Bulgaria	NFSB	Europe of Freedom and Democracy
Denmark	Dansk Folkeparti	Danish People's Party	DF	Europe of Freedom and Democracy
Finland	Perussuomalaiset	Finns Party	PS	Europe of Freedom and Democracy
France	Front National	National Front	FN	European Alliance for Freedom
France	Mouvement pour la France	Movement for France	MPF	Europe of Freedom and Democracy
Greece	Laikós Orthódoxos Synagermós	Popular Orthodox Rally	LAOS	Europe of Freedom and Democracy
Italy	Fratelli d'Italia-Alleanza Nazionale	Brothers of Italy National Alliance	FdI	Europe of Freedom and Democracy
Italy	Lega Nord	Northern League	LN	Europe of Freedom and Democracy
Lithuania	Tvarka ir teisingumas	Order and Justice	TT	Europe of Freedom and Democracy
Netherlands	Partij voor de Vrijheid	Party for Freedom	PVV	European Alliance for Freedom
Netherlands	Staatkundig Gereformeerde Partij	Reformed Political Party	SGP	Europe of Freedom and Democracy
Poland	Solidarna Polska	United Poland	SoPo	Europe of Freedom and Democracy
Slovakia	Slovenská národná strana	Slovak National Party	SNS	Europe of Freedom and Democracy
Sweden	Sverigedemokraterna	Sweden Democrats	SD	European Alliance for Freedom
United Kingdom	United Kingdom Independence Party	United Kingdom Independence Party	UKIP	Europe of Freedom and Democracy

the head of a people, considered the repository of all virtues, aims at a palace considered the house of every flaw (Tarchi, 2003).

As mentioned earlier, the EFD comes from the dissolution of the Independence and Democracy Group (IND/DEM) and the Union for Europe of the Nations (UEN). The Union for Europe of the Nations was a political group in the European Parliament that was created in 1999 and collected until June 2009 the MEPs inspired by the values of the national conservative right and who belonged to the European political party Alliance for Europe of the Nations (AEN). To the UEN belonged, among others, the Italian National Alliance. The UEN was itself the heir of the Union for Europe (UPE), European parliamentary group formed on 6 July 1995 as a result of the confluence of two distinct political groups: the European Democratic Alliance (national conservative orientation, whose main political party was the French Rally for the Republic) and *Forza Europa* (liberal conservative and Christian democratic orientation consisting of *Forza Italia*). Both the FRR and FI then abandoned the UPE to join the EPP between 1998 and 1999. The Independence and Democracy group gathered instead the deputies with a Eurosceptic nationalist or democratic inspiration. The group was born in 2004, heir of the group Europe for Democracy and Diversity, grouping regionalist or nationalist Eurosceptic parties (including the Northern League and UKIP), making reference to the European parties EU Democrats and the Alliance of Independent Democrats in Europe. The Europe for Democracy and Diversity in turn was the heir of the Europe of Nations (EDN), a European parliamentary group that included parties inspired by Euroscepticism and conservatism. Founded by 19 members, among which figured the Movement for France, the Reformed Constitutional Party, the Movement of June, and the People's Movement against the EU. The group was born in 1994 and took over in 1996 the name of Independents for a Europe of Nations. Finally, in 1999, it gave rise in fact to the group Europe for Democracy and Diversity. From what has been said so far, the right-wing Eurosceptic parties have a proper coordination at the EP level only since 1994, with the foundation of the EDN. Figure 1 shows the electoral trend—measured as the percentage of seats obtained in the EP—of right-wing Eurosceptic parliamentary groups appeared over time: Europe of Nations (EN, then the group of Independents for a Europe of Nations), Europe of Democracies and Diversities (EDD), Independence and Democracy (IND/DEM) and the Union for Europe of the Nations (UEN), and finally the Europe of Freedom and Democracy (EFD).

As it appears, the Eurosceptic right-wing groups (obtained 3.4% of the seats in Parliament in 1994), show a net increase in its electoral performance between 1999 and 2004, more than doubling its seats in the EP (7.3% in 1999 and 8.7% in 2004). At the last European elections in 2009, however, the Eurosceptic right halves their seats compared to five years ago, obtaining the 4.3%. This fact, however, can be misleading for two reasons: 1) in 2009 are not part

Figure 1 – Electoral trend of the EFD and its predecessors in percentage of seats in the EP (1994–2009)

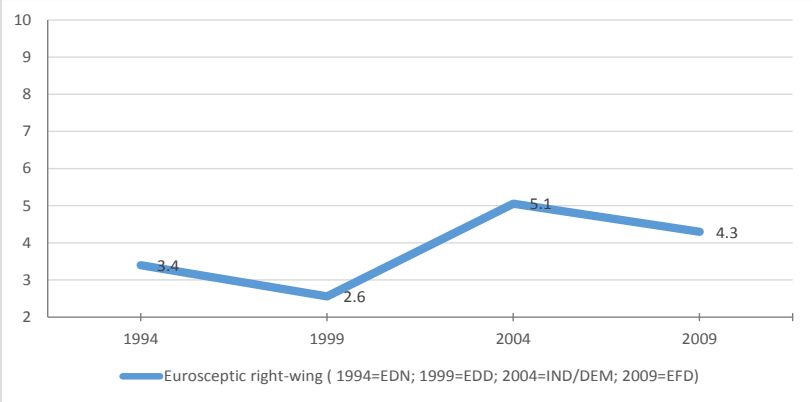


of the EFD some important populist and anti-Euro parties of the right wing including the National Front of Marine Le Pen, the Flemish *Vlaams Belang*, the Austrian Freedom Party, and the Dutch PVV, as all these parties were not members of any group in the EP; 2) in Figure 1, we reported for the elections of 1999 and 2004 also the UEN seats. However, in this group there were also parliamentary parties such as the National Alliance, the Republican Irish party *Fianna Fáil*, the Portuguese Social Democratic Centre-People's Party, and the Polish Law and Justice party (since 2004), which will later become part of the parliamentary groups belonging to traditionally pro-Europe political families or in any case only moderately Eurosceptic. In 2006, the CDS joined the EPP group. In 2009, the *Fianna Fáil* joined the Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe; National Alliance merged into the People of Freedom adhering to the Group of the European People's Party, and the Law and Justice formed—with the Czech and British Conservatives—the group of the European Conservatives and Reformists (ECR).

For the reasons set out above, Figure 2 reports the same data as Figure 1 but excludes the seats of the UEN.

As can be noticed, after the exclusion of the UEN group, the electoral performance of the groups of the Eurosceptic right results as more constant over time. In this case, in 1999, the percentage of seats is less than in 1994 (2.6% vs. 3.4%), and the maximum share obtained (5.1% in 2004) is not too far from the percentage of seats of the EFD in the last election (4.3% in 2009).

Figure 2 – Electoral trend of the EFD and its predecessors in percentage of seats in the EP (1994–2009) (UEN excluded)



At this point, in order to have a more complete picture of the electoral strength of populist right-wing Eurosceptic and anti-Euro (when not anti-EU) parties in Europe, we report the election results in the European elections—expressed in percentage terms—of the parties that are currently members of the EFD or adherent to the EAF for each of the EU member states (Table 2).

The data show that the parties of the populist and anti-European right wing reach considerable percentages in some countries since the 1990s when they exceed 22% in Austria and France (in this case only in 1994); in 2004, the highest votes shares range between 14% and 17% in Belgium (14.3%), the UK (15.6%), and France (17.4%); finally, the last European elections of 2009 percentages between 12% and 24% are achieved in Austria (12.9%), Denmark (15.3%), Lithuania (12.2%), the Netherlands (23.8%), and the United Kingdom (15.9%). Among the countries which are part of the Union since 1979, the Netherlands and Belgium are the ones by the longest presence of populist and Eurosceptic right-wing electoral forces (since 1979 in the Netherlands and in Belgium since 1984). In the Netherlands, the last 2009 European elections registered a sharp success for these parties, especially due to the success of the PVV. France also has a similar electoral tradition, with percentages around 11% in 1984, while in the UK the success of UKIP in the European elections is more recent (since 2004). Finally, the greatest electoral share in Italy has been reached by the Northern League in the last 2009 EP elections with 10.2%.

In conclusion, the next European elections could be a turning point for the parties of the populist and anti-Euro right wing since there are some im-

Table 2 – Electoral results of the EFD parties and of the populist anti-Europe right (adherents to the EAF) in the EU member states at the European elections (1979–2009)

Country	% total votes for EFD and/or EAF						
	1979	1984	1989	1994	1999	2004	2009
Austria				27.5*	23.4	6.3	12.9
Belgium	0	1.3	4.1	7.8	9.4	14.3	9.9
Denmark	0	0	0	0	5.8	6.8	15.3
Finland[1]				0.7*	0.8	4.3	9.8
France	0	11	11.7	22.8	5.7	17.4	11.1
Greece	0	0	0	0	0	4.1	7.2
Italy	0	0.5	1.8	6.6	4.5	5	10.2
Lithuania						6.8**	12.2
Netherlands[2]	3.2	5.2	5.9	7.8	8.7	5.9	23.8
Slovakia						2	5.6
Sweden				0	0.3	1.1	3.3
United Kingdom	0	0	0	1	6.5	15.6	15.9

*Elections held in 1996, after the entry of the country in the EC
**Elections held in 2007
[1]In Finland in 2004, the TF (True Finns) is part of the SKL (Finnish Christian League).
[2]In the Netherlands in 2004 and in 2009, the SGP is in alliance with the CU (Christian Union).

portant conditions that may favour their electoral success. In the first place, European elections traditionally represent a context favourable to opposition parties as stated by the theory of the "second order elections" (Reif and Schmitt, 1980). Namely, in the European elections, the stakes are lower (or are perceived as such) than in the general election (when the prize is represented by the government of the country). Voters thus feel freer in their electoral choices, and punish at the ballot box incumbent parties more easily when they perceive that they are not carrying out policies effective and appropriate to their expectations. According to this perspective, then, the elections for the EP electoral arena are particularly favourable for protest opposition parties while government parties are usually disadvantaged on the basis of the theory of electoral cycle (Reif and Schmitt, 1980; Van der Eijk and Franklin, 1996). Moreover, in the wake of the toughest economic crisis since the Second World War, in several European countries, there has been a rise in antiestablishment parties that openly oppose the austerity policies of the EU and the European integration. Also, at the next European elections in May 2014, these parties have the goal of bringing the anti-EU protest directly within the institutions of the European Union, primarily the EP. Paradoxically, it may be the first

European elections in which issues concerning the European Union are at the heart of the campaign, thanks to the anti-Europe parties. From being second order, the EP elections could thus become first order also by virtue of a vote against Europe in Europe.

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Part 2
The results: Italy

Electoral results: The PD from the "majoritarian vocation" to its realisation

Nicola Maggini

27 May 2014[1]

The result of European Parliament (EP) elections is unambiguous: the Democratic Party (PD) led by Matteo Renzi has obtained a neat success reaching a record share of 40.8% of the votes. No centre-left party had previously achieved a similar result. Since the EP elections are held in 1979, the PD is overall the Italian political party that has obtained the highest share of votes ever. If we look at general elections, only De Gasperi in 1948 and Fanfani in 1958 had achieved greater electoral successes in terms of vote shares. Clearly, the same does not hold if we take into account the absolute votes: the PD has obtained about one million votes less in the present EP elections compared to the PD led by Veltroni in 2008 (counting only 33.2% in terms of percentages). The reason lies in the fact that the turnout level registered for those political elections was the 80.5% whereas for the EP elections, the turnout value registered for resident Italian citizens was 58.7%. Whenever the difference in turnout rates becomes so relevant, it is more appropriate to take into account percentage measures to evaluate the electoral performances of a political party in relative terms. The consideration of electoral results by geopolitical area[2] (Table 1) reveals some interesting patterns. For the first time, the PD reveals a rather homogeneous electoral strength nationwide: if on the one hand, the PD confirms its traditionally highest vote share in the area of the (formerly) Red Belt with the 52.5% (among which stands out the 56.4% obtained in Tuscany),

[1] This article was originally published in Italian on the CISE website. It appears in English for the first time in this book.

[2] The areas that have been considered include North-West (Piedmont, Liguria, and Aosta Valley), North-East (Lombardy, Veneto, Friuli-Venezia Giulia, and Trentino Alto Adige), the Red Belt (Emilia-Romagna, Tuscany, Marche, and Umbria), and the South (Lazio, Molise, Abruzzi, Campania, Basilicata, Apulia, Sicily, and Sardinia).

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on the other, the PD reaches vote shares beyond 35% also in other geopolitical areas. In particular, it achieves a vote share of 41.1% in the North-West, the 39.1% in the North-East, and the 36% in the South (the area in which the PD registered the worst results). Therefore, the PD remains overrepresented in the regions of the Red Belt and underrepresented in the South. Notwithstanding, it should be acknowledged the superb results obtained in the Northern regions. In particular, the fact that the PD stands out as the first political party in the North-East of the country—namely, in the "white area" formerly dominated during the First Republic by the Christian Democracy and thereafter by "forzaleghismo" (Berselli, 2007) [TN: this expression refers to electoral alliance of *Forza Italia* and the "Northern League"]—is unprecedented. In the North-West, the PD has become the first political party, and the votes it obtained exceed the number of votes collected by all the centre-right political parties: 39.1% versus 35.3%.

To bring the analysis one step further, it is needed to compare the results of the PD with those obtained by the other two main Italian political parties: the Mr. Grillo's *Movimento Cinque Stelle* (Five Star Movement, M5S) and Mr. Berlusconi's *Forza Italia* (Go Italy, FI). Grillo's M5S has achieved 21.2% of the votes at the national level, and the area where its performance has been better is the South of the country (25%). In particular, the regions where the M5S proved to be most successful have been Abruzzi (29.7%), Molise (27.3%), and in the big islands, reaching 30.5% of the votes in Sardinia and 26.3% in Sicily. In the North-West, the Movement has won 22.7% of the votes whereas the areas in which the M5S reported the least satisfactory results include the Red Belt (19.1%) and especially the North-East (17%). For what concerns *Forza Italia*, Mr. Berlusconi's party has achieved almost 17% of the votes at the national level, characterised by a geographical distribution closer to the one of M5S than to PD's one. As for Grillo's Movement, FI also registers its best performance (20.6%) in the South: particularly high vote shares have been achieved by Berlusconi's party in Campania (almost 24%), in Apulia (23.5%), in Molise (23.4%), and in Sicily (21.3%). Regarding the other geographical areas, FI has become by now a party with average dimensions within the Red Belt (12.2%) although its results are fairly disappointing also in the North-West (15.2%) and in the North-East (15.6%). The result in the North-East is particularly informative because it includes the area of "lombardo-veneto" [TN: area consisting of Lombardy and Veneto], namely, the economically most dynamic part of the country, formerly characterised by the electoral strength of Berlusconi's party. In this area of the country, neither FI nor M5S obtains satisfying vote shares. Analysing the geographical distribution of the votes, it becomes clear that both the M5S and FI are characterised by a process of "meridionalizzazione" [TN: Southernisation] of the electorate compared to Renzi's PD. As for the remaining political parties, only the Northern League (LN) led by Matteo

Salvini, the New Centre-Right in alliance with the Union of Christian Democrats (NCD-UdC), and the left-wing list "the other Europe with Tsipras" have passed the 4% threshold, thus obtaining seats in the European Parliament. The Northern League, riding Euroscepticism as similarly done by the *Front National* of Marine Le Pen in France and the UKIP of Nigel Farage in the United Kingdom, has obtained a satisfying 6.2% of the vote share nationwide, with the following geographical distribution: 7.1% in the North-West, 14.1% in the North-East (almost achieving the 20% of the votes in Veneto), 3.6% in the Red Belt, and 1% in the South (where its list was presented anyways). The NCD-UdC has collected 4.4% of the votes, benefiting especially from its electoral strength in the South, where it collected the 6.2% of the votes. Differently, the Other Europe with Tsipras, managing to obtain seats in the European Parliament with its 4%, is the most geographically homogeneous list, considering its vote distribution across the various areas of the country.

To depict more completely the frame of the European elections' results, I compared the result obtained by the main political parties in the 2014 EP elections with those obtained in the 2009 EP elections and in the general elections of 2013. Table 2 and Table 3 report both absolute vote differences, as well as percentage variations, presented by geographical area. Between 2009 and 2014, the Italian party system is affected by deep changes: new political actors enter the political scene, primarily the M5S; others have changed their name while others still originated from party splits; and so on and so forth. For instance, a split with the People of Freedom (PdL, after renamed with the previous "*Forza Italia*") has created the NCD led by Alfano. This new party has presented its list in an electoral alliance with the UdC. To produce a meaningful comparison, it has been thus decided to aggregate some political parties belonging to the same political block (Chiaramonte, 2007) taking into account the electoral supply at the 2014 EP elections. Hence, the votes received by FI at the recent EP elections have been summed to the ones collected by the NCD-UdC: in this manner, it becomes possible to compare the votes of the wider political area of FI with those obtained in the past by the PdL and the UdC.[3] A similar procedure has been considered for European Choice (*Scelta Europea*), namely, an electoral cartel supporting the ALDE candidate at the EU Commission Guy Verhofstadt and formed by the Democratic Center (*Centro Democratico*), Stop the Decline (*Fare per Fermare il Declino*), and

[3] In particular, for the 2009 EP elections, it has been considered the sum of the votes for PdL and UdC, for the 2013 general elections the sum of the votes for the PdL, UdC, *Grande Sud*, and the MIR (the latter two political parties have included their candidates in the FI's lists at the 2014 European elections).

Table 1 – Electoral results at the EP elections 2014 by geographical area, in absolute and percentage values

Geographical area	North-West		North-East		Red Belt		South		Italy	
	Votes	%	Votes	%	Votes	%	Votes	%	Votes	%
FdI	119514	3.9	247492	3.0	181239	3.3	455792	4.3	1004037	3.7
FI	467074	15.2	1292033	15.6	665210	12.2	2181014	20.6	4605331	16.8
IdV	20955	0.7	46177	0.6	26201	0.5	86360	0.8	179693	0.7
Northern League	218300	7.1	1163819	14.1	198177	3.6	106260	1.0	1686556	6.2
M5S	697326	22.7	1405113	17.0	1045847	19.1	2644579	25.0	5792865	21.2
MAIE	6075	0.2	15238	0.2	8814	0.2	18323	0.2	48450	0.2
NCD-UdC	95692	3.1	295897	3.6	150070	2.7	658044	6.2	1199703	4.4
PD	1262153	41.1	3236590	39.1	2871363	52.5	3802755	36.0	11172861	40.8
European Choice	22335	0.7	56379	0.7	26470	0.5	90973	0.9	196157	0.7
SVP	0	0.0	134881	1.6	2567	0.0	0	0.0	137448	0.5
The Other Europe with Tsipras	131877	4.3	286329	3.5	243021	4.4	441976	4.2	1103203	4.0
Greens	30884	1.0	91747	1.1	46660	0.9	76152	0.7	245443	0.9
Valid votes (turnout)	3072185		8271695		5465639		10562228		27371747	
Entitled voters	5013279		13459754		8342625		22440511		49256169	
Actual voters	3272584		8640217		5689835		11305368		28908004	

Table 2 – Electoral gains and losses for the main political parties by geographical area, at the 2014 EP elections and 2013 general elections (absolute and percentage values)

Party	Differences 2014 EP elections – 2013 General elections									
	North-West		North-East		Red Belt		South		Italy	
	Diff.	Var. %	Diff.	Var. %	Diff.	Var. %	Diff.	Var. %	Diff.	Var. %
FdI-AN	40172	33.6	100946	68.9	70537	63.7	126347	38.4	338002	50.7
Northern League	74076	33.9	38835	3.5	103381	109.1	80108	306.3	296400	21.3
FI + NCD-UdC	-163296	-29.0	-496243	-23.8	-363864	-30.9	-1342945	-32.1	-2366348	-29.0
European Choice	-391200	-1751.5	-1255327	-95.7	-569375	-95.6	-1119478	-92.5	-3335380	-94.4
PD	359555	28.5	861672	36.3	624515	27.8	682932	21.9	2528674	29.3
SVP + others centre-left	_	_	-11923	-8.1	_	_	_	_	-9356	-6.4
Tsipras + IdV + Greens	5010	2.7	42380	11.1	-35314	-10.1	-338351	-35.9	-326275	-17.6
M5S	0	-44.3	-781736	-35.7	-586616	-35.9	-1219014	-31.6	-2896303	-33.3
Others	-12310	-202.6	-173504	-91.9	-80445	-90.1	-242505	-93.0	-508764	-91.3

Table 3 – Electoral gains and losses for the main political parties by geographical area, at the 2014 EP elections and 2009 EP elections (absolute and percentage values)

Party	Differences 2014 EP elections – 2009 EP elections									
	North-West		North-East		Red Belt		South		Italy	
	Diff.	Var. %	Diff.	Var. %	Diff.	Var. %	Diff.	Var. %	Diff.	Var. %
Northern League	-242421	-52.6	-983177	-45.8	-238117	-54.6	28139	36.0	-1435576	-46.0
FI + NCD-UdC	-697705	-55.4	-1826031	-53.5	-1330551	-62.0	-3103606	-52.2	-6957893	-54.5
PD	416174	49.2	1294736	66.7	646276	29.0	833633	28.1	3190819	40.0
SVP + others centre-left	–	–	-13229	-8.9	234	10.0	–	–	-21727	-13.6
Tsipras + IdV + Greens	-286901	-61.0	-605174	-58.8	-541136	-63.1	-1463638	-70.8	-2896849	-65.5
Others	-175426	-96.7	-410209	-96.4	-297124	-97.1	-444982	-96.0	-1327741	-96.5

Civic Choice (*Scelta Civica*). Therefore, the votes for European Choice have been compared to the sum of the votes obtained in 2013 by the parties that have joined this electoral cartel (adding also the votes for Future and Freedom for Italy (FLI), Mr. Monti's ally in 2013). Finally, another political block is the one formed by the parties on the left of the PD, including the votes for the Other Europe with Tsipras, the Greens, and the IdV.[4]

The turnout level at the past year general elections has been 75.2%. As for the 2014 European ones, the turnout remained slightly below 60%. Almost 6.5 million voters decided to stay at home. Notwithstanding, Renzi's PD has improved its past electoral performance not only in percentage terms, passing from the 25.4% to the 40.8%, but also in absolute terms as it collected 2.5 million votes more. Considering the marked reduction in turnout, it would have been sufficient for Renzi to collect the same votes gained by Bersani to attain a greater vote share. Instead, he managed to increase that number. Hence, the PD's success can be deem "historical," also considering that the distance with the party ranked second (the M5S) results of about 20 percentage points. Compared to the votes obtained at the general elections, the PD has enlarged its electorate by 29.3%. The geographical area in which the PD has experienced the most significant expansion is the North-East where the Renzi's party has increased the general elections' result by 36.3%. Once again, it has to be acknowledged the unprecedented electoral success obtained by the PD in the most productive area of the country where in the past, the left had never accomplished electoral successes. In the South, the registered electoral expansion was 21.9%, smaller than in the other areas of the country. Considering the 2009 EP elections as basis for the comparison, the improvement of the PD becomes even clearer, with an increase of about three million votes (+40%). Also, in this case, the North-East stands out as the area with the most sizable increase in the vote share collected by the PD, +66.7%.

The M5S has lost about three million votes compared to the 2013 general elections, namely, -33.3%. The North-West represents the area in which the electoral loss of the M5S has been more pronounced: in this area, 308,937 voters have abandoned Grillo's party, namely, 44.3% of those who had previously decided to support the Five Star Movement in this area of the country. Smaller electoral losses have been registered in the South of the country (-31.6%). The political block of FI (FI + NCD-UdC) has lost almost two and a

[4] For the 2009 EP elections, this block corresponds to the votes for the Communist Refoundation Party (PRC), the Italian Communists' Party (PdCI), Left and Freedom (SEL), and IdV; for the 2013 general elections, the votes for SEL and Civil Revolution (*Rivoluzione Civile*).

half million votes, namely, 29% of its votes in 2009. The most sizable shrinkage can be observed in the South where the decrease in the number of votes equals 32.1%. Therefore, the South represents the area in which the centre-right political block reports the best electoral performance but also the area in which the losses with respect to the previous general elections are more pronounced. Considering the 2009 EP elections as basis for the comparison, the loss becomes even neater with a reduction of almost seven million votes (-54.5%). Overall, the most sizable electoral shrinkage reported by the centre-right block is registered in the Red Belt, given by -62%.

Among the other parties, the Northern League is the only one to report satisfying results. It has increased its votes both in percentage and absolute terms, respectively, by 2.1 percentage points and 300,000 more votes. This implies an increase by 21.3% compared to the 2013 elections' result. In particular, sizable increases are registered in the Center (+109.1%) and in the South (+306.3%) although the vote shares in these areas remain quite low. Notwithstanding, this could represent how the Northern League campaigned against the Euro to extend its traditional areas of support, adopting an issue proven to be sensitive at the national level further than at the regional one. *Fratelli d'Italia-AN* (Brothers of Italy-National Alliance) led by Giorgia Meloni have campaigned on Eurosceptic positions as well, but they were unable to reach the entrance threshold of 4% (they reported only 3.7%). However, they were able to increase their votes compared to the 2013 general elections (+50.7%), with the greater increase registered in the North-East (+68.9%) and in the Red Belt (+63.7%).

Among the other political parties, the heavier loss has been experienced by European Choice. It has obtained only 200,000 votes, which means a loss of about three million of votes—namely, -94.4%—and a complete debacle in the North-West. The radical left block has lost 17.6% of its previous 2013 general elections' votes, registering more sizable losses in the South (-35.9%), while it has slightly increased its votes in the North-West (+2.7%). Compared to the 2009 EP elections, the electoral loss experienced by this political block becomes more evident with three million votes less (-65.5%).

Figure 1 reports the electoral gains and losses for the various political parties between the political and EP elections in absolute terms to help the reader. The success of the PD results even more evident. Moreover, this success was achieved in an electoral context unfavourable for the PD. In fact, the EP elections represent second-order elections (Reif and Schmitt, 1980), in which the stake is smaller than in the national elections, where the national government is at stake. Under such circumstances, voters feel more autonomous in their political choices and may decide to punish mainstream parties in case of underperforming political actions. Following this perspective, the EP elections represent an electoral arena particularly favourable to opposition and protest parties. Governing parties (like the PD) are usually disadvantaged based on

Figure 1 – Gains and losses 2013–2014 in absolute terms

the theory of the electoral cycle (Reif and Schmitt, 1980; Van der Eijk and Franklin, 1996) unless the EP elections are held during the honeymoon period between the government and the electorate, close to the previous general elections. On the one hand, it is true that the Renzi's government has taken charge about two months ago, and thus, it is still highly trusted by the public, but on the other, this government was formed without any popular legitimation, especially in times of economic crisis and high unemployment. In the rest of Europe, the theory of second-order elections has been confirmed, considering that governing parties performed badly (with the partial exceptions of Orbán's *Fidesz* and Merkel's CDU). In Italy, the opposite was true. The PD did not only win but it also increased its votes with respect to the general elections, thus becoming the first party in terms of seats within the socialist group in the EP (31 seats out of 191, namely, 16% of the European reference party) and the first party in Europe in absolute values. The Italian paradox is represented by the fact that the M5S—who received three million votes less than in the general elections in a potentially favourable electoral arena as suggested by the second-order elections' theory for the EP elections—still represents the first antiestablishment party in Europe. Italy thus represent an interesting and peculiar case in the European context. The uncontestable and historic electoral success for the PD represents a strong legitimation for the government led by Renzi, who managed to lead the PD to a result beyond expectations. This does not mean that the PD has settled the victory for the next general elections. As the last 2013 general elections have demonstrated, uncertainty

and electoral volatility represent the salient trait of Italian politics nowadays. The votes, once obtained, have to be maintained, and this will depend on the effectiveness of the government's political action and its reforming ability.

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High fidelity and new votes for Renzi

Roberto D'Alimonte

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Two factors contributed to the success of Renzi's PD in a decisive way. The first one was Renzi's ability to bring to the polls those who voted for PD in 2013. And that was a different PD. The second was his ability to widen the consensus for his party even if this is a difficult task for an incumbent party in a period of crisis. The first factor was more relevant than the second one.

As the number of votes for parties in each polling station become available, it becomes clearer how things have gone in reality. Given these data, so far, the vote shifts among parties and from voting to nonvoting can be calculated for five cities. The baseline are last year's general elections. That was clearly an election different from European elections, but this is not particularly relevant for the purpose of this analysis. It is well known that the turnout for European elections is lower than the turnout for general elections, and this has been the case also this time. However, this fact doesn't modify the analysis on the vote shifts because this analysis includes also the shifts from voting to nonvoting and vice versa.

In the end, it is not very difficult to explain why Renzi won. In a context in which there were 6,500,000 voters less than in the 2013's general elections, PD gained 2,500,000 votes. Turnout went down while Renzi went up: this is simple. Explaining why this has happened is more complicated. Is it due to other parties' loss of votes—apart from the Northern League that gained around 300,000 votes—and Renzi's increase of votes? What do vote shifts in these five cities tell us about? Where do votes for PD come from?

These votes come primarily from PD itself, and this is the clearest finding. The loyalty rate of PD's electorate in these elections is extraordinary. Almost all of those who voted for PD in 2013 voted for it again in 2014. This is a very ef-

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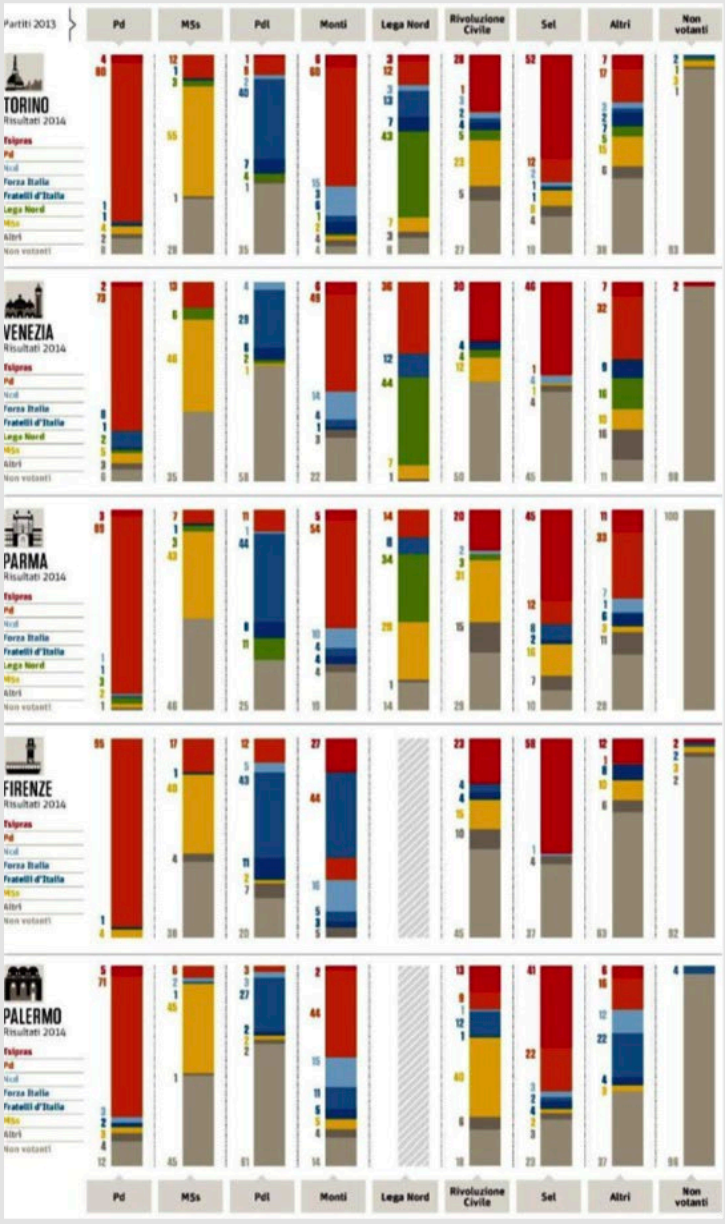
fective mobilisation, and it is even more surprising since these were European and not general elections. Even if we take into account the fact that PD's electorate has a higher propensity to vote also at European elections, such a high loyalty rate is unusual. This is Renzi's first credit and the principal reason for his success. Indeed, bringing your voters to the polls is the first—and most important—rule for winning. Renzi was able to do this while the others were not.

In Florence, PD gained the votes of an astonishing 95% of his previous electorate—and, incidentally, this result explains the extraordinary success of Dario Nardella, the just elected mayor of Florence. The lowest loyalty rate has been registered in Palermo—and this is not a surprise—but still is 71%. The comparison with the other parties is pitiless. In Venice, PDL lost 58% of its electorate towards abstention and 61% in Palermo. Things are better—so to say—in Turin with a loss of 35% and in Florence with a loss of 20%, but only because in these cases, the previous consensus was lower. A similar thing has happened to the M5S. In Venice, 25% of those who voted for this party in 2013 didn't go to vote for it again. In Florence, they were 38%, in Palermo 45%, and so on.

This phenomenon goes under the label of "asymmetric abstention." Renzi would have won even with this phenomenon only. However, he has won even better because of an additional mechanism. In order to win—or to win "well"—you need to conquer new voters and not only to keep the old ones. And here, the results of the prime minister's ability to attract voters are evident. As already mentioned yesterday, and as it becomes clear in today's data from the five cities, PD has picked up voters from almost all other rival parties' electorate in different degrees. And among all these vote shifts, there is one that is particularly significant and is the one coming from *Scelta Civica*. The old Mario Monti's party has almost disappeared. A relevant part of its previous voters switched to PD, but many of them didn't turn out at the elections. In Turin, 60% of its 2013's voters switched to PD while 15% went to the party lead by Alfano. In this city, the shift towards abstention is minimum. Almost the same thing happened in Florence while something different happened in Palermo. In this case, in addition to voters switching to PD and NCD, there is also a vote shift towards *Forza Italia* (11%) and towards abstention (14%). So, thanks to *Scelta Civica*, a share of moderate voters has been gradually brought to the centre left, firstly to Monti, then to PD. But this wouldn't have happened without Renzi.

Vote shifts towards PD don't stop here. In addition to *Scelta Civica*'s voters, there are also M5S and FI voters. In this case, it seems that the vote shift is less relevant, but every vote counts. On the whole, it seems that Grillo's movement has been "more generous" towards Renzi's party. In Florence, 17% of those who voted M5S chose PD while 12% of previous PDL voters did the same thing. In Turin, the figures are respectively 12% and 9%. Even some voters of

Figure 1 – Destinations of the electorates at the 2013's general elections and 2014's European elections



Lega have "betrayed" the party and contributed to increase PD's share: 12% in Turin, even 36% in Venice, and 14% in Parma. All these tributaries have allowed Renzi to reach a historical 40.8%.

These elections were a difficult and delicate transition for Renzi, who wanted to face them without even putting his name on the election ballot. European elections are risky elections for big parties and especially for incumbent parties. Apart from the case of Germany—in which Merkel actually gained fewer votes compared to the previous general elections—it is clear what has happened in almost all countries of the European Union.

Consolidating this success now represents Renzi's challenge. If he succeeds, we will remember these elections as a historical landmark towards building around PD a new social and electoral coalition that will tend to be a majority. Time also plays on Renzi's side. Until 2018, there won't be another national election. Once upon a time, there were regional elections—who has forgotten D'Alema's resignation after the bad result for the centre left at the 2000's regional elections?—but by that time, almost all regions went to vote the same day. Next year, it won't be so since there are nine regions where there won't be elections due to early resignations of the regional governments. This time frame represents a big chance to carry on a mid-term government program without electoral distractions. In a country where governing is very difficult, this helps too.

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Vote shifts in Rome and Milan confirm the frame of Renzi's victory

Aldo Paparo and Matteo Cataldi

13 June 2014[1]

On the basis of electoral data for some regional capitals that were already made available a few hours after the end of the ballots, in a previous article, we have tried to reconstruct the movements of voting occurred between the European elections of May 25 and the general elections of February 2013 (D'Alimonte, 2014). With this article, we extend the same type of analysis to Rome and Milan, the two largest Italian cities. Together, the two "capitals" of Italy—the financial and political—sum up to approximately 7% of Italian voters. These two cities are different on various aspects, especially in terms of their electoral history. Milan—since 1994—has been the capital of the phenomenon that Berselli (2007) called "forzaleghismo" that (used to) bring together politically and electorally the Northern League (LN) and *Forza Italia* (Go Italy, FI). And Rome has more often exhibited a situation of greater balance between the two political sides and where the traditional right-wing represented for many years by National Alliance (AN) had greater weight compared to the capital of Lombardy as represented by the candidature of Fini and its access to the second round against Rutelli in 1993. Also, to remain in more recent years, it is sufficient to remind Alemanno's victory in 2008.

Between 2013 (House of Deputies) and 2014 (European Parliament), the Democratic Party (PD) is the only one (along with FDI) to increase its votes in absolute terms in both cities. In terms of percentages, Renzi's party—who started with the same share of votes in both capitals—ends up reporting two additional percentage points in Milan.

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A significant difference that is found between the two capitals can be detected instead in the votes that have converged on the Five Star Movement (M5S) and (of course) on the Northern League. In Italy's capital, the party led by Grillo and Casaleggio has been voted by one voter out of four (24.9%). This confirms its second rank behind the Democratic Party. In Milan, the M5S reaches 15%, almost 11 percentage points less than in Rome, outvoted also by *Forza Italia*. In fact, it should be kept in mind that—with the exception of Trentino Alto Adige—Lombardy had been the Italian region in which the M5S had already got fewer votes in the general elections of 2013. Since then, it further loses 40,000 votes passing from 17% to 14.2%. In Rome, the decline in percentage points compared to 2013 is roughly in line with that of Milan.

As for FI, we have said that in Milan, it gets the second place; this is not only due to the weakness of the M5S but also to the better result registered in Rome (+3 points).

The left, united in support of Tsipras as the candidate to the Commission, get good results in both cities reaching over 6%. Finally, it is interesting to note that the New Centre-Right (NCD) led by Alfano exceed 5% in Milan while in Rome, it achieves a much more modest result (3.7%) outperformed by *Fratelli d'Italia* (Brothers of Italy, FDI), with their 5.3% in the capital.

Turning now in detail to the analysis of vote shifts, we first show how the structure of the movements of voters occurred in the two cities between 2013 and 2014 appears very similar.

The first thing that you notice is the high loyalty of the Democratic Party's voters. As can be seen in Tables 1 and 2, the rate of those who confirmed their vote for the PD is about four out of five voters in both cities. Both in Milan and Rome, we note the same defections, all rather small but still significant: towards the Tsipras list, towards abstention, and also towards the M5S. This first element, i.e., the significantly higher loyalty of the voters of the Democratic Party, is in line with what was observed in the other cities for which we have presented the vote shifts as the rate varies between 70% and 90%.

Still referring to the centre-left coalition—and always in continuity with other cases already analysed—it looks like voters of Left, Freedom and Ecology (SEL) have chosen the list of Tsipras much more than the PD while a share even more significant has taken refuge in the abstention.

The differences between the two cities are also minimal as for the M5S. Grillo's voters in 2013 are split quite evenly: about half confirmed his 2013 voting decision while the remaining decided instead to abstain. The lack of any significant electoral shift towards the other political forces, even towards the real winner of these European elections, i.e., the Democratic Party, should be emphasised. Only in Milan can we observe a barely significant vote shift from the Movement towards the Northern League. As regards to the Grillo's party, the vote shifts in the two major Italian cities confirm what has been pre-

viously observed: loyalty rates between 40% and 50% of the voters in 2013 and sizable loss towards the abstention (30%–45%). In some cities, such as Florence and Turin, the Movement has also succumbed to the Democratic Party. Here is a difference with respect to Milan and Rome where the electorate of the M5S was particularly recalcitrant to Renzi's pledges.

Regarding the Berlusconi's 2013 political coalition, the loyalty rate is really low. In Milan, about four out of 10 voters have chosen FI in 2014, in Rome, only one out of three. In the latter case, the larger group of centre-right voters decided to abstain in 2014: 42%. In Milan, "only" 30% of 2013 Berlusconi's voters decided to abstain. In addition, both cities register significant losses towards the Democratic Party of Renzi, as well as towards the NCD of Alfano (that has led the scission with FI), and also towards the League in Milan. Even in this case, Milan and Rome are in line with the rest of the vote shifts presented. Loyalty is always between 30% and 45% of the vote in 2013. We observe a greater variability in the coefficients towards abstention: between 20% and 60%. Milan and Rome are consistent also on this aspect, given the significant difference observed. Finally, even spills of votes toward the Democratic Party had already been found almost everywhere: between 6% and 17% of the vote for Berlusconi in 2013.

Voters who had chosen at the general elections the area amalgamated around the candidacy of former Prime Minister Mario Monti have moved in majority (more than half) towards the party of Matteo Renzi. Both in Rome and Milan, the second largest group—following the one that voted for the Democratic Party—is the one of those who abstained although with significant differences: in Milan, about one out of four voters, in Rome one out of seven. A very small proportion of these 2013 voters—between 10% and 13%—has chosen in 2014 the NCD of Alfano. It has to be kept in mind that this party presented himself together with the UDC, one of the members of the Monti's coalition in 2013. Also, with regard to the behavior of Monti's voters, Milan and Rome report the same phenomena already observed in the previous analyses. The only city in which less than 40% of this group has converged towards the Democratic Party is Florence where the largest group chose FI.

Let's now look at the sources—expressed in terms of 2013 electorates—of the various parties' electorates for the European elections (Tables 3 and 4). As can be seen—and easily expectable at the light of the polls' results—between the three main parties, the Democratic Party is the one that has been better able to go beyond its original 2013 pool of voters. In both cities, approximately one-third of this sub-electorate is not constituted by voters for the Bersani coalition last year. The more sizable inflows were recorded from the Monti coalition, which are estimated between one-sixth and one-fifth of the Democratic Party in 2014. Approximately one voter of the Democratic Party out of 15 had voted for the Berlusconi's coalition in 2013.

Table 1 – Vote shifts in Rome: Destinations of the electorates of the 2013 general elections in the 2014 European elections

European elections 2014	General elections 2013							
	RC	SEL	PD[1]	Monti	PDL[2]	M5S	Others	Nonvote
Tsipras	24%	43%	4%	4%	0%	0%	1%	0%
PD	12%	14%	77%	52%	10%	1%	6%	1%
NCD	3%	1%	1%	13%	4%	0%	1%	0%
FI	3%	2%	3%	4%	32%	0%	5%	2%
FDI	4%	2%	2%	8%	7%	2%	6%	0%
M5S	17%	5%	6%	1%	3%	50%	14%	2%
Others	9%	5%	1%	4%	2%	1%	7%	0%
Nonvote	28%	29%	6%	14%	42%	46%	59%	94%
	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%

[1] PD included also the 2013 votes for Democratic Center.
[2]PDL included also the votes for the other components of the coalition: Northern League, FDI, The Right, Big South-Mpa, Mir, and the List of Retired.

Table 2 – Vote shifts in Milan: Destinations of the electorates of the 2013 general elections in the 2014 European elections

European elections 2014	General elections 2013								
	RC	SEL	PD[1]	Monti	PDL[2]	LN	M5S	Others	Nonvote
Tsipras	31%	35%	7%	2%	0%	3%	2%	5%	0%
PD	2%	10%	81%	53%	7%	10%	2%	12%	0%
NCD	1%	2%	0%	10%	8%	6%	0%	5%	0%
FI	2%	0%	2%	3%	43%	18%	0%	2%	2%
FDI	2%	1%	1%	2%	4%	4%	1%	2%	0%
LN	7%	1%	1%	0%	6%	46%	5%	1%	1%
M5S	30%	7%	4%	1%	3%	6%	43%	2%	2%
Altri	7%	5%	1%	3%	1%	0%	1%	5%	0%
Nonvote	17%	40%	2%	26%	28%	7%	47%	66%	94%
	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%

[1]PD included also the 2013 votes for Democratic Center.
[2]PDL included also the votes for the other components of the coalition: Northern League, FDI, The Right, Big South-Mpa, Mir, and the List of Retired.

Votes for *Forza Italia* for more than three-quarters proceed from those of the centre-right coalition in 2013. The "new" Berlusconi's party has not proved able to break in through other parties' constituencies even though in both cities is

Table 3 – Vote shifts in Rome: Sources from the electorates of the 2013 general elections of the votes in the 2014 European elections

European elections 2014	General elections 2013								
	RC	SEL	PD[1]	Monti	PDL[2]	M5S	Others	Nonvote	
Tsipras	15%	45%	29%	8%	1%	1%	1%	1%	100%
PD	1%	2%	71%	16%	7%	1%	1%	1%	100%
NCD	3%	2%	5%	47%	37%	0%	2%	3%	100%
FI	1%	1%	9%	4%	78%	0%	2%	6%	100%
FDI	3%	2%	16%	20%	40%	13%	5%	2%	100%
M5S	3%	1%	10%	1%	3%	76%	2%	4%	100%
Others	11%	9%	14%	17%	23%	12%	9%	4%	100%
Nonvote	1%	2%	3%	2%	17%	21%	3%	51%	100%

[1]PD included also the 2013 votes for Democratic Center.
[2]PDL included also the votes for the other components of the coalition: Northern League, FDI, The Right, Big South-Mpa, Mir, and the List of Retired.

Table 4 – Vote shifts in Milan: Sources from the electorates of the 2013 general elections of the votes in the 2014 European elections

European elections 2014	General elections 2013									
	RC	SEL	PD[1]	Monti	PDL[2]	LN	M5S	Others	Nonvote	
Tsipras	12%	30%	41%	5%	0%	4%	6%	4%	0%	100%
PD	0%	1%	68%	22%	5%	2%	1%	1%	0%	100%
NCD	1%	2%	4%	36%	44%	9%	0%	4%	0%	100%
FI	0%	0%	6%	3%	76%	9%	0%	0%	6%	100%
FDI	1%	2%	11%	16%	44%	12%	10%	3%	0%	100%
LN	2%	1%	5%	0%	22%	49%	13%	1%	7%	100%
M5S	5%	3%	9%	1%	7%	4%	65%	1%	6%	100%
Others	6%	10%	23%	27%	12%	2%	6%	10%	5%	100%
Nonvote	1%	3%	1%	7%	12%	1%	15%	5%	56%	100%

[1]PD included also the 2013 votes for Democratic Center.
[2]PDL included also the votes for the other components of the coalition: Northern League, FDI, The Right, Big South-Mpa, Mir, and the List of Retired.

registered a small but significant incoming flow from the 2013 vote for the Democratic Party, approximately estimated between 5% and 10% of the votes of FI.

The same applies to the M5S in Rome: three-quarters of the votes in 2014 derive from its 2013 pool. In Milan, however, is registered a deep turnover

within the Grillo's electorate. In the capital of Lombardy, in fact, over a third of the votes for the M5S do not originate from those who had already voted the Movement in 2013. These inflows derive from all the other pools of 2013 votes but the most numerically important ones derive from PD (approximately one-tenth of the 2014 votes for the M5S); followed by those coming from the centre right and from abstainers, each weighing one-fifteenth of the votes in 2014.

Also in Milan, we emphasise the Northern League's result. More than half of its votes derive from those who had not voted for this party a year ago. In particular, over a quarter of its votes come from voters of the PDL and other centre-right parties in 2013 and one out of eight from the M5S 2013.

In conclusion, we can emphasise that the framework of moving voters that we have described with reference to the two most populous cities in Italy appear in line with the one previously shown deriving from five other major cities of our country, variously characterised from the point of view of their geography and of their electoral traditions. The key points that are common to all the cities analysed can be briefly summarised as follows. The success of the Democratic Party led by Renzi derives from two elements. On the one hand, the loyalty of 2013 voters: the PD records indeed very high loyalty rates even considering the significant decrease in turnout levels (Emanuele, 2014). On the other hand, it has to be signalled its ability to intercept votes outflowing from all the other political fronts. Table 5 shows the relative weigh, in various cities, on the electorate of the Democratic Party at the European elections, of the various electoral constituencies in 2013. As you can see, about a third of those who voted for Renzi's Democratic Party had not voted Bersani a year ago. The only exception is Florence where, however, one-fifth of the votes for the party led by Renzi are new for the party. The most sizable inflow comes from Monti's coalition, whose voters have heavily moved toward the Democratic Party: so, in the various cities, between one-tenth and one-fifth of the electorate that has voted for the Democrats today had previously voted for Monti's coalition. Also, electoral shifts toward the PD are recorded from the Berlusconi's centre right although to a lesser extent. The Northern League in all the cases analysed gives at least one-tenth of its electorate to Renzi's party, but PDL also—with a few exceptions—does record significant direct outflows. In the various cases, an amount varying between 5% and 7% of the total votes for the PD comes from Berlusconi's coalition of 2013. Instead, in contrast with what was observed in other cities, in Rome and Milan, a very little share of votes comes from M5S: however, these are the only two cases in which this coefficient is smaller than 1% of voters. The electorate of the M5S proves in fact the less uniform in its flows among the various cities: its contribution for the total votes in favour of the Democratic Party is virtually nil in Milan and Rome but is about 10% in Turin, Venice, and Palermo. As easily predictable considering the low turnout,

Table 5 – Sources from the 2013 electorates of the votes for the PD at the 2014 European elections in various cities

	General elections 2013									
	RC	SEL	PD[1]	Monti	PDL[2]	LN	M5S	Others	Non-vote	
Turin	0%	2%	63%	21%	5%	1%	8%	1%	0%	100%
Milan	0%	1%	68%	22%	5%	2%	1%	1%	0%	100%
Venice	0%	0%	65%	16%	0%	5%	11%	3%	0%	100%
Parma	0%	1%	72%	14%	4%	1%	5%	3%	0%	100%
Florence	0%	0%	81%	9%	4%		6%	0%	0%	100%
Rome	1%	2%	71%	16%	7%		1%	1%	1%	100%
Palermo	2%	3%	65%	16%	4%		9%	1%	0%	100%

[1]PD included also the 2013 votes for Democratic Center.
[2]PDL included also the votes for the other components of the coalition: Northern League, FDI, The Right, Big South-Mpa, Mir, and the List of Retired.

there were no recoveries from the pool of abstainers. It is very interesting, however, to notice how almost none of the votes for the Democratic Party comes from SEL or Civil Revolution (RC): in Palermo, only one out of 20 of 2014 Democrats had voted for one out of the two left-wing parties at the General elections 2013.

Methodological Note

The analyses of vote shifts shown here were obtained by applying the Goodman model correct by the Ras algorithm to the election results of 2,600 electoral districts in Rome and over 1,200 in Milan. As for Rome, 10 matrices of data considering homogeneous units have been constructed, taking into account aggregations of smaller local units, and then aggregated—after proper weighing—in the city-level matrices reported. In Milan has been followed an analogous procedure constructing six separated matrices taking into account the single-member district for the Senate identified by the old Mattarella electoral law.

The VR coefficient was found to be always satisfying in all the units of analysis of the two cities, with a mean of 10.4 and 10.8 respectively in Rome and Milan.

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The Italian party system between change and stabilisation on new basis

Alessandro Chiaramonte and Vincenzo Emanuele

29 May 2014[1]

The Italian party system since few years has entered into a state of fast deinstitutionalization[2] (Chiaramonte and Emanuele, 2014) characterised by the dealignment between parties and voters and thus by a high volatility of voting behaviour (and of nonvoting). Striking evidence for this was provided at the 2013 general elections. The Five Stars Movement (M5S) has outnumbered the mainstream parties collecting eight million and a half new voters. We have received further confirms for this trend at the 2014 European elections, which are undoubtedly deeply affected by domestic political dynamics, although they are clearly not general elections.

After the crushing electoral result of 2013, it could have been expected a consolidation of the electoral results or a return to the previous *status quo*. The first hypothesis would have foreshadowed a sort of "re-institutionalisation" of the party system on different basis with respect to the past and therefore far from the typical bipolar structure of the Second Republic. The second hypothesis would have instead characterised the 2013 results as a sporadic, as a kind of temporary deviation from an established political track. None of the two hypotheses hold at the empirical test even taking into account the different stakes, the different turnout levels, and the different electoral system between the European and the national elections. In fact, the electoral strength of the main political parties has been newly and profoundly affected although it did not reverse to the pre-2013 *status quo* condition. The M5S has indeed seen its

[1] This article was originally published in Italian on the CISE website. It appears in English for the first time in this book.

[2] See Huntington (1968) on the concept of deinstitutionalization. For a specific reference to deinstitutionalization of party systems, see Casal Bertoa (2014).

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electoral support slightly reduced, but collecting 21% of the votes, it has reaffirmed its considerable role in the Italian party system. The centre right has managed to preserve about the same share of votes obtained the previous year, although divided and lacking a common political perspective, especially because of the criteria of proportional representation in the European electoral system. The Democratic Party (PD) has considerably increased its electoral support both in absolute terms (2.5 million votes more) and in percentage terms (+15.4%). Therefore, it was able to overcome the 40% threshold previously achieved only by three political parties in the national elections (Christian Democracy in 1948, 1953, and 1958). Conversely, Mr. Monti's European Choice has fallen below the 1% starting from the 10% registered at the last 2013 general elections.

A set of indicators will be employed to emphasise the features of the new party system and to measure the extent of the change compared to the past. The first element to be considered is clearly the index of volatility, measuring the net aggregate change in the votes between two successive elections (Pedersen, 1979; Bartolini, 1986). This index can be measured by summing the percentage differences of the vote shares obtained by political parties between one election and the following one. Volatility is thus a measure of stability (and instability) of a political system. In the last 20 years, the value of the index of volatility has followed a swaying pattern, reaching for two times in critical elections[3] impressive values (1994 and 2013), to decrease in the central phase (1996–2008) of restructuring of the party system it has emerged after 1994. Table 1 shows the values for the index of total volatility computed from the comparison of the 2013 national elections and the 2014 European ones and then between the latter and the 2009 European elections. The value of net aggregate change that is produced by comparing the two European elections is extraordinary high (35.2) reproducing the record value registered between the 2008 and the 2013 general elections.[4] Between 2009 and 2014, our system has changed considerably for at least three reasons: the appearance of the M5S, the process of fragmentation involving the Italian right and specifically the People Freedom's Party (PDL), and the opposite process of concentration of the votes on the PD (with the disappearance of the IDV). The most significant evidence is provided by the volatility index from the comparison between 2013 and 2014: in only one year, the change in volatility has been 18.2%. This value would be deemed explosive in other political systems. Compared to the "electoral earthquake" (Chiaramonte and De Sio, 2014) produced one year

[3] On the concept of "critical elections," see Key (1955).

[4] On this point, see Chiaramonte and Emanuele (2013, 99).

ago, the most significant change involved the expansion of the PD and the simultaneous shrinkage of the centre political pole. In fact, the high value of the index of block volatility (15.7%) shows that almost the whole change in the vote shares depends on the shifts between blocks rather than among parties within them. CISE has performed an analysis of electoral flows in various cities confirming that the two processes are in fact connected: Renzi managed to acquire the electorate previously supporting Mario Monti without losing the support from the left (Tsipras, Greens, and Idv hold the same amount of votes obtained by Left and Freedom and Civic Revolution in 2013, namely, remaining in a marginal political position) and thus bringing the PD towards the centre of the political system. The PD is now a centre-left party that can potentially dominate the system (although it might be too early to advance such an interpretation). To be safe, its two oppositions (Grillo and Berlusconi) cannot find a common ground, and even within the right wing, it looks quite unlikely the aggregation of the various political areas (Northern League, Brothers of Italy, *Forza Italia*, and the NCD-UdC).

A further indicator signals the level of "de-structuring" beyond the extremely high values of electoral volatility. This is represented by the rate of innovation in political parties, measuring the vote shares obtained by new political parties, or electoral lists associated with symbols and denominations not available for the previous elections. This second aspect relates to the volatility on the political supply side, and it is quite commonly observable in the Italian case. The instability in the system is thus produced by this volatility of the supply joint with the volatility of the demand side (voters' electoral choices). In 2014, the vote share for "new" political parties has been 31.4% higher than in 2013 while the increase compared to 2009 reaches even the 52.5%, especially due to the contribute of the M5S. In other words, political parties older than five years collect less than the half of total votes.

If the volatility index and the rate of political innovation confirm the historical change, other indicators show a reversal in the trend with respect to the recent past. The unprecedented success of the PD brings back the index of bipolarism to the values registered in 2009 (62%), following the plunge to 51% in 2013. More than six out of 10 votes flowed to the two major parties, a value that is comparable to those observed for the other European democracies. Conversely political fragmentation, a historical malaise afflicting the Italian party system, results quite moderate. The effective number of parties (Laakso and Taagepera, 1979) provides us a synthetic measure of the number of parties in the electoral arena. The indicator is particularly effective to provide a count of the political parties while taking into account their electoral strength. For instance, in a perfect two-party system and the two lists obtaining both 50% of the votes, the index would assume value 2. In 2014, the index equalled 4, with a sharp decrease with respect to the 5.3 reported in 2013 (and much

Table 1 – Indicators of the party system: comparing 2009, 2013, and 2014 elections

Indicators of party system		
Total volatility	2014-2013	18.2
	2014-2009	35.2
Block volatility	2014-2013	15.7
Rate of political innovation	2014-2013	31.4
	2014-2009	52.5
Index of two-party system	2009	62.4
	2013	51.0
	2014	62.0
Effective number of electoral parties (ENEP)	2009	4.5
	2013	5.3
	2014	4.0
Number of lists with at least 1% vote share	2009	9.0
	2013	10.0
	2014	7.0
Index of vote nationalisation (sPSNS)	2009	0.829
	2013	0.859
	2014	0.868

Source: Authors' elaboration on official data.

smaller than the record value of 7.6 reached in 1994). Contemporaneously, the number of electorally relevant lists (> 1%) decreases to 7, with respect to the 9 presented in 2009 and the 10 in 2013.

The last indicator that has been taken into account to analyse the characteristics of the Italian party system is the level of territorial homogeneity in the political support for the various parties. The aim is to understand whether political parties are able to represent the interests and the preferences of voters throughout the nation or rather if their action tends to be constrained within smaller territorial units, thus favouring a geographically differentiated electoral competition.

To evaluate this aspect, it is useful to make reference to the concept of nationalisation of the vote. This element can be defined as the degree of homogeneity characterising the electoral support for political parties across different geographical units. It can be measured through the standardised Party System Nationalization Score (sPSNS) developed by Bochsler (2010). The index ranges between 0 and 1. Higher values represent a situation of greater territorial homogeneity of vote choices. At the bottom of Table 1 have been

reported the values of the index for 2009, 2013, and 2014. It can be acknowledged a clear trend of homogenisation of electoral support. In 2009, the Italian party system appeared particularly regionalised, especially due to the presence of the Northern League, contributing to the decrease of the territorial homogeneity of the index with its 10.2% of vote share. In 2013, the sPSNS increases especially for the effect of the M5S, emerging as a big national party receiving electoral support nationwide. Its nationalisation value is extremely high (0.912) while the main local party—the Northern League—fall to 4.1% of the votes. Notwithstanding the fact that the *Forza Italia* (0.877 vs. 0.916 reported by the PDL in 2009) and the M5S (0.895) are especially capitalising on Southern votes, the index has further increased for the present elections. The reasons underlying this pattern are essentially two. In the first place, the PD exhibits an extraordinary degree of territorial homogeneity. This is particularly true if we consider that the main party of the left has traditionally concentrated its electoral support in the area formerly known as the Red Belt while it was particularly weak in the other areas of the country (particularly in Sicily and the North-East). The 0.919 value reported by the PD (with respect to the 0.878 registered five years ago) has only two precedents in the Second Republic (*Forza Italia* and the post-Christian Democratic Party *La Margherita* in 2001). The second reason explaining the high level of nationalisation of the European vote is the decreasing local character of the electoral support for the Northern League. The main Italian regionalist party has in fact presented its electoral lists in all the Italian electoral districts, reporting a moderate success also outside of its traditional Northern areas (2.1% in the Center and 1% in the Southern Islands). The party led by Matteo Salvini is characterised by a value of 0.524, markedly greater to the 0.403 in 2013.

In conclusion, the 2014 European elections provide us contrasting evidence about the rugged path undertaken by the Italian party system in the last years. On the one hand, a reducing fragmentation and an increasing nationalisation lead us to the consideration that a further deinstitutionalisation of the party system linked to the atomisation of its constitutive elements and the centrifugal territorialisation of the electoral support seems unlikely. On the other, the enduring volatility in voting behaviours leads us to exclude the hypothesis of a (incipient) reinstitutionalisation. The process of change undertaken by the party system is thus still ongoing and in a state that does not allow to foresee its outcome.

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Where does Renzi's victory come from?

Lorenzo De Sio

3 June 2014[1]

Where does Renzi's victory come from? Most analyses presented in the aftermath of the elections have essentially focused on the description of Democratic Party's success: dealing with its cross-class character, with its ability to increase its support in the Northern areas of the country (and especially in the North-East, so far the Achilles' heel of PD), and so on and so forth. Nothing has been hypothesised about a possible explanation of this success. How has it been possible, for a party achieving 25% of vote share only last year, to reach more than 40% of the votes in the EP elections, traditionally favouring anti-establishment parties? It is true that its renewed leadership played a role. But what is crucial among the various elements differentiating Renzi's PD from the one led by Bersani?

Two possible strategies

My effort here aims at advancing an explanatory hypothesis grounded on few theoretical considerations and some piece of data: in particular, data from the "Issues, leaders and priorities" survey conducted by the CISE (through CAWI methodology[2]) in the first week of May 2014.

The theoretical argument is straightforward: parties and leaders can attempt to undertake two different strategies in order to aim at electoral success.

[1] This article was originally published in Italian on the CISE website. It appears in English for the first time in this book.

[2] The sample collected in the survey consists of 1,600 respondents' representative of the Italian voting age population by gender, age, and geographical area. Weighing is performed by sociodemographic and political variables. The interviews have been collected between the 29th of April and the 9th of May 2014.

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1. The first strategy consists of focusing on *divisive* issues. The choice may fall on issues like same-sex marriages or tax cuts (which imply welfare cuts). Such issues usually divide public opinion between supporters and opponents. On such divisive issues, parties typically adopt *positional* strategies: they give prominence to that issue, by advertising their position, if they assess that they have a favourable position on the issue. In general, parties will choose issues satisfying three conditions: a) party supporters more or less agree on the party's position; b) a large number of voters outside the party base also share that position, thus creating a potential electoral gain; and c) other important parties do not play on that same issue (De Sio, 2010; De Sio and Weber, 2011). Based on this model, it is possible to identify the most favourable issues for each party. For instance, based on our survey, the issues satisfying these criteria for a party like the Northern League (LN) are restrictions on immigration and the introduction of welfare restrictions for immigrants; for the Five Star Movement (M5S) they are budget cuts for F-35 fighters, and the adoption of a different model of economic development; for the Democratic Party (PD), key issues are the permanence in the Euro area, and the redistribution of wealth favouring the poorer; and for *Forza Italia* (FI), a key issue is the principle that tax cuts should precede a harsh fight of tax evasion.
2. There is an alternative strategy. It is to focus on issues that almost *unify* the electorate and that are thus essentially considered as *problems to be fixed*. Typical examples are to promote economic growth and the creation of new jobs, to renew the political class and to cut the costs of public administration, and to defend more effectively the Italian interests at the EU level. On these issues, all political parties essentially have the same position (who might disagree?): notwithstanding, parties do not share the same *credibility* in dealing with them. These issues, technically known as *valence issues* (Stokes, 1963; Stokes, 1992) trigger a different kind of competition where parties focus only on issues where they are perceived as more *credible* than other parties (De Sio, 2011). Obviously, this strategy can be pursued only insofar as the political party is considered more credible than the others on at least one issue.

The data: which strategies were possible?

Taking the two strategies into account, we can now analyse what potential the various political parties had at the beginning of the electoral campaign, by looking at our data. As for the *positional* issues strategy (strategy 1), we can argue that there were no striking differences among parties, as for all of

them, some key issue was available: these are represented by those issues listed above in this article. The only party in a disadvantaged position seemed *Forza Italia*, with the tax cuts as the only issue potentially effective. With reference to the second strategy (problem-solving credibility on valence issues), we already anticipated (in a CISE blog post published on May 9) that our respondents' evaluations about the credibility of political parties were strongly favouring the Democratic Party. For each of 17 shared goals that are relevant for Italy today, we asked respondents to report which party was deemed most credible. In 10 out of 17 cases, the Democratic Party resulted neatly more credible than the other ones (outperforming the second most credible party by 10 percentage points). The M5S resulted the most credible party in only three goals, but also in these cases, the Democratic Party followed at a short distance in the ratings.

However, the key aspect involved those issues considered by respondents as most important: economy and jobs (these were deemed the most important problems by 61% of respondents while only 26% considered a priority to cut the costs of the political class). On both of these economic issues, the M5S ranked even third, after FI; and the distance between PD and FI was 14% ("creation of new jobs") or even 19% ("boost Italian economy"). As a consequence, the PD resulted particularly advantaged in terms of credibility and for the cross-cutting nature of such credibility advantage.

How is credibility built?

This is a key point, especially when considering that several commentators have pointed out the problems caused to the M5S by a too aggressive campaign. The data show quite clearly that the reputation of better credibility for the PD was already present *before the start of the electoral campaign*. The reason is straightforward: it is widely recognised that the campaign is essentially permanent (Blumenthal, 1980); all actions performed in the political realm contribute to the creation of a reputation of credibility and efficacy.

From this perspective, the weak credibility of the M5S in dealing with the country's problems may originate from the start of the legislature. In fact, in this phase, the strongly noncooperative attitudes towards the other political groups in the parliament and towards a potential government with Bersani suggested that the M5S's priority was more electoral success and ideological purity rather than facing the problems of the country. An ideological attitude on some key issues (even refusing Renzi's proposal to overcome the bicameral legislature—a typical M5S issue—essentially only because it was proposed by Renzi); finally, the almost exclusive attention paid to the fight against the political establishment—ranking first only for a minority of voters—while leav-

Table 1 – Respondents' evaluations about the credibility of the various parties in dealing with the main Italian problems

Who is most credible to…	None really credible (%)	Most credible party (%)		Second most credible (%)		Credibility gap between the first and the second party (% points)	(N)
Issues favourable to the PD							
Promote the role of women in politics and society	36.9	PD	35.2	M5S	10.3	+25.0	(1575)
Boost Italian economy	46.1	PD	28.6	FI	10.0	+18.6	(1575)
Support the Italian education system	47.5	PD	26.7	M5S	8.3	+18.4	(1576)
Better represent Italian interests in the EU	42.1	PD	27.6	M5S	10.5	+17.1	(1576)
Create new jobs	49.6	PD	24.2	FI	9.9	+14.2	(1574)
Reduce delayed payments of the public sector to private businesses	51.6	PD	22.5	M5S	10.0	+12.5	(1576)
Facilitate access to credit for firms and households	46.8	PD	23.3	M5S	12.1	+11.2	(1579)
Reduce bureaucracy	41.5	PD	26.7	M5S	15.6	+11.1	(1570)
Push Europe towards growth rather than austerity	49.2	PD	22.2	M5S	11.3	+10.9	(1576)
Protect the cultural and artistic heritage	53.7	PD	19.8	M5S	9.4	+10.5	(1570)
Issues favourable to the M5S							
Cut the costs of public administration and political class	39.0	M5S	26.8	PD	22.1	+4.7	(1579)
Renew the political class	39.2	M5S	26.6	PD	23.7	+3.0	(1576)
Protect the environment	51.4	M5S	14.8	SEL	14.3	+0.6	(1576)

ing in the background (and without convincing proposals) employment and economic issues.

On the other side, it is easy to understand Renzi's frantic, hectic activism—e.g., widely advertising the anticipation of his first PD staff meeting at 7:30 in the morning—as it was oriented since the very first days as the PD leader, and then as prime minister, to show Renzi's ability to make a difference with concrete actions, as a first example, by building a feasible agreement to change the electoral law and the Senate or by performing an income redistribution effort towards the poorer (a measure reducing taxes for low-medium-income employees by 80€). Finally, by paying attention to the issue of gender discrimination in the formation of the government (Renzi is the first Italian government with a 50% gender balance among ministers) and in the electoral lists. It is not surprising that on this specific issue, the PD is in fact 25% more credible in the score than the M5S. Such effort—as we will observe shortly—has paid off in electoral terms.

Does credibility really matter for the vote?

Of course, a focus on this strategy would not work if voters do not take into account credibility for their political decisions, i.e., vote ideologically or decide on other reasons. As a consequence, we need to assess to what extent credibility-related considerations have affected vote decisions. This implies the estimation of various linear regression models, whose results are concisely reported in Table 2. In a nutshell, this analysis enables us to evaluate the relative weight of various aspects on the propensity to vote for a certain political party.

In short, Table 2 shows that credibility evaluations had a (surprisingly) high importance. The first column reports the general model, considering estimates for all the political parties (including the smaller ones). In this case, the set of variables included in the analysis allows to "explain" about half (49%) of the variance in propensities to vote each political party reported by each respondents.[3] The key points are quite simple:

1. Sociodemographic characteristics play only a very limited role (about 3% of the variance), confirming what is already known in the literature.
2. Voters' long-term political predispositions (left-right self-placement; closeness to a political party) still represent the most important factor (30%).

[3] Respondents are asked—for each party—how likely it is that "he/she will ever vote in the future for that party" (on a scale ranging from 0 to 10). Considering that these are individual scores, 49% of explained variance is quite a good result.

Table 2 – Weight of various explanatory factor on the propensity to vote respectively for a party in general and for specific parties

	General model (all parties included)	Specific models		
		PD	M5S	FI
Sociodemographic characteristics (geographical area, town size, gender, age, educational attainment, and occupational status)	3%	4%	6%	3%
Ideology (self-placement on the left-right continuum) and closeness to a political party	30%	32%	31%	49%
Credibility evaluation for dealing with problems	16%	22%	21%	9%
Positioning on specific issues	1%	4%	2%	3%
Total variance "explained" by the model	49%	61%	60%	63%

Note 1: The model estimates the effect of credibility evaluations in a conservative way as it assumes that the closeness to a political party is causally antecedent with respect to the evaluation of credibility while further—omitted—statistical tests suggests the relationship might work the other way around.
Note 2: The dependent variable is a Propensity-to-Vote measure for each political party (PTV) ranging from 0 to 10; the percentages reported in Table 2 represent the differences in the R-squared values between each model and the model including only the previous blocks of—causally antecedent—variables.

3. The fundamental finding is that—quite surprisingly for Italy—credibility evaluations explain a 16% of variance, namely, *more than half of long-term political predispositions*. This is undoubtedly an unprecedented fact for a country that after the fall of the Berlin Wall has been still ideologically polarised by Berlusconi's ability to revive the fear of communists.
4. Attitudes towards specific issues—linked to strategy 1 previously exposed—appear to have played only a marginal role.

The results produced separately for the three main political parties are even more interesting: credibility becomes even more important to explain individual vote propensities—higher or lower than the average—for the PD and the M5S (respectively 22% and 21% of the explained variance) while FI clearly corresponds to a more ideological profile: scores assigned to this party are driven essentially by previous political predispositions, with an extremely marginal relevance of credibility (or lack of credibility) attributed to FI in dealing with specific problems.

Concluding remarks

Ultimately, credibility did matter a lot and in an unprecedented way. On the one hand, this gives us a reason to explain Renzi's success (as well as the M5S's neat loss).[4] On the other hand, these results suggest the limited impact of the electoral campaign: reputations of credibility are built mainly through facts, and as a consequence, they are harder to change during the campaign. Following this perspective, the determination of Renzi to provide tangible evidence of his governing activity—e.g., the €80 tax cut and the formation of a gender-balanced government—appear to have made a difference. Differently, the harsh electoral campaigning by the M5S appears to have reinforced the previous perceptions of the M5S's lack of credibility, if any.

At the same time, the evidence presented here allows to better identify Renzi's challenges and problems. He was successful in transmitting the idea that economic and political choices are not necessarily constrained but require choices, effort, and determination: this has induced voters to carefully consider the criterion of credibility in problem-solving.[5]

The problem yet is that credibility can be volatile; it has to be systematically and continuously consolidated with facts and results. Therefore, if Renzi will not maintain his pledges of discontinuity and effectiveness by the next general elections, his political support would be seriously undermined. A partial solution to his problem might be represented by a future consolidation of his electoral result through the construction of an ideological and political profile of the Democratic Party, in a way that would secure ideological support even in case of a crisis of credibility. But this is another story.

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[4] Even neater if we take into account the fact that this was a second-order election in which political parties similar to the M5S should be favoured as suggested by previous international research (Reif and Schmitt, 1980).

[5] This is not self-evident. For instance, in those countries who have signed deals with international financial institutions to release financial aids, the room for manoeuvre in economic policies has vanished to the point that economic issues (thus including the perceptions of competence and credibility) have become almost irrelevant for voting decisions (Magalhães, 2014).

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Part 3
The results across Europe

Austria: No one loses, all win?

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5 June 2014

Introduction

Austria went to the polls on Sunday, May 25 to elect 18 members of the European Parliament, one fewer than in 2009 due to the European Union (EU) membership of Croatia. The electoral system used for the European elections is the same as for the national elections, but instead of 39 constituencies there is only a single national constituency. The electoral system is a proportional system with a threshold of 4% and the possibility for the voters to express a preference vote for a single candidate, a possibility that has been rarely used by Austrians (Müller et al., 2001). Finally, Austria is still the only country in Europe where citizens can vote at the age of 16 in nationwide elections.

The election campaign

Besides the two main parties that have dominated Austrian politics over the last decades, the *Social Democratic Party of Austria* (SPÖ) and the *Austrian People's Party* (ÖVP), both currently forming a grand coalition, voters found three other well-known parties on the electoral ballot: two Eurosceptic parties, the *Freedom Party of Austria* (FPÖ) and the *Alliance of the Future of Austria* (BZÖ) and the pro-European party, *The Greens* (Grüne). Alongside these parties, four new parties contested the European elections for the first time: the pro-European *The New Austria* (NEOS) and three Eurosceptic parties, *Another Europe* (Europe-Anders), *The Reform Conservatives* (REKOS) and the *EU-Stop*. The big winner of the European elections in 2004 and 2009, the EU-critical *List Hans-Peter Martin* (List HPM), decided not to run in this election and in fact disappeared from the Austrian political scene. Another notable absent is the *Team Stronach*, which ran for the first time in national elections in September 2013, gaining 5.7% of the vote share.

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While it was quite clear before the election that only the parties currently represented in the Austrian Parliament (SPÖ, ÖVP, FPÖ, Grüne, NEOS) would get enough votes to send their representatives to Strasbourg, a series of political scandals that hit the two government parties, SPÖ and ÖVP, made the election outcome less predictable. Generally speaking, the electoral campaign was characterised by a pervasive sense of disappointment with how the EU has addressed the financial and economic crisis without taking into account the social repercussions of the austerity policies; with the increasing inflation attributed to the euro, the alleged excessive bureaucratisation of the apparatus in Brussels and immigration. The anti-European campaign of the FPÖ focused exactly on this sense of disappointment with the EU. Meanwhile, the other parties focused their campaigns more on policies they will pursue in the European Parliament, if elected.

The results

Of nearly 6.5 million voters, less than half turned out to vote: approximately 45.4% against 46.0% in 2009; this is a rather low percentage when considering that the turnout in national elections in Austria is generally very high (75% in 2013), although it has been decreasing in recent years.

Preelectoral expectations about the electoral results have been all confirmed: only parties represented today in the Austrian Parliament have managed to overcome the 4% threshold. In addition, the two ruling parties, the SPÖ and ÖVP, were able again to retain the majority of the votes, although narrowly.

The ÖVP defended its electoral record confirming itself as the first party in European elections with 27% of the votes; however, the party loses 3 percentage points and one seat compared with the previous European elections. Despite this small loss, the ÖVP claimed victory, having actually gained 3 percentage points compared with the national elections in September 2013. The SPÖ gained 24.1% of the vote, improving slightly its performance compared with the last European elections when it obtained 23.7% of the votes.

The FPÖ earns many votes compared with what they had in 2009 (19.7% of the vote, + 7 percentage points), doubling its seats (2–4 seats) The FPÖ secured the 19.7% of the votes, 7 percentage points more than the previous European election, doubling its seats (from 2 to 4 seats). Notwithstanding this, the FPÖ failed to match, albeit slightly, the result of the last national elections when this party got 20.5% of the vote share.

The Greens party confirmed itself fourth party in Austria, increasing its vote share by 4.6 percentage points when compared to the previous European

Table 1. Results of the 2014 European elections – Austria

Party	EP Group	Votes (%)	Seats	Votes (change from 2009)	Seats (change from 2009)
Austrian People's Party (ÖVP)	EPP	27.0	5	–3.0	–1
Social Democratic Party of Austria (SPÖ)	S&D	24.1	5	+0.4	+0
Freedom Party of Austria (FPÖ)	NI	19.7	4	+7.0	+2
The Greens (Grüne)	G-EFA	14.5	3	+4.6	+1
Alliance of the Future of Austria (BZÖ)	NI	0.5	0	–4.1	–1
The New Austria (NEOS)	ALDE	8.1	1	-	-
The Reform Conservatives (REKOS)	NI	1.2	0	-	-
Another Europe (ANDERS)	NI	2.1	0	-	-
EU-STOP		2.8	0	-	-
Others		0.0	0	-	-
Total		100	18		
Turnout (%)		45.4		–0.6	
Legal threshold for obtaining MEPs (%)		4%			

Source: http://www.bmi.gv.at/cms/BMI_wahlen/europawahl/2014/Wahlkarten.asx
EP group abbreviations: EPP, European People's Party; S&D, Progressive Alliance of Socialists and Democrats; ALDE, Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe; G-EFA, The Greens–European Free Alliance; ECR, European Conservatives and Reformists; GUE-NGL, European United Left–Nordic Green Left; EFD, Europe of Freedom and Democracy; NI, Non-Inscrits.

elections. The very good performance of the Greens is surprising in light of the fact that pre-election polls gave the Greens only a tiny advantage over the NEOS. Instead, the Greens surpass the NEOS by 6 percentage points. Meanwhile, the NEOS party, which has contested the European elections for the first time, obtained a remarkable 8% of the vote and an important seat in the European Parliament. This result helps the NEOS to establish itself as a strong and viable party.

No other party was able to obtain seats. It should be noted in this regard that the BZÖ is almost disappearing from the Austrian political scene; the party lost 3 percentage points when compared with the last national election and 4.1 percentage points since the last European elections in 2009. The replacement of the well-known leading candidate—the daughter of the famous Jörg Haider, Ulrike Haider-Quercia—with a little-known candidate during the election campaign certainly did not help the BZÖ. Also, the other Eurosceptic parties were not able to pass the 4% electoral threshold. Despite this,

the performance of the EU-Stop party deserves to be mentioned: the party, in fact, obtained a significant 2.8% of the vote share. It called for a referendum to leave the EU, a return to the Austrian former currency, the Schilling, and the introduction of a Swiss-style direct democracy.

Discussion of the results

Two considerations deserve attention. First, the pro-European parties have won the 2014 European elections in Austria. These parties have in fact obtained almost 75% of the total vote share. Second, despite the fact that all parties consider themselves winners of these European elections, their performances appear less impressive if one takes into account that 18% of the votes of the List HPM were 'freely available' on the electoral market.

The two mainstream parties were able to stop, to a certain extent, the electoral losses they continuously experienced over the last years. However, the result of the SPÖ hides that the party leaders have chosen the wrong leading candidate: Eugen Freund is a famous TV journalist but with no experience in politics and, moreover, not a party member of the SPÖ. This choice had repercussions on the electoral campaign at the local level with party members not canvassing as strongly as necessary for their party. The party leadership was also more concerned with national issues, such as the budget for the next two years, rather than the electoral campaign. Concerning the ÖVP, its leading candidate, Otmar Karas, was probably the reason why the party did not lose more votes and remained the strongest party in the European elections. Karas' long experience and competence at the EU level surely paid off at the polls, with the national party contributing very little to his success.

The Eurosceptic party FPÖ rightly claims victory, but its alleged success is below expectations if one considers that some pre-election polls predicted that the FPÖ would become the first party in Austria, surpassing both the SPÖ and the ÖVP, a result that however, it failed to achieve. In addition, considering that the EU-critical list HPM did not run for the 2014 elections, the success of the FPÖ is even much less obvious. It appears as if the FPÖ failed to mobilise Eurosceptical voters in general and the Euro-critical list HPM voters in particular.

Thus, in the end, only the success of the Greens and NEOS can be labelled as clear electoral victories: these two parties were particularly successful amongst the young, urban and well-educated voters with a strong pro-European attitude. These two parties focused their electoral campaign on European issues that appear to be increasingly important to Austrian citizens, at least to those who turned out to vote.

Finally, with regard to the Austrian experience with the European elections considering the level of turnout, the country surely follows the model of the second-order national elections (Reif and Schmitt, 1980): the participation rate is always much lower than the national average. Still, the performances of the two government parties, the ÖVP and the SPÖ, and the opposition parties do not follow unambiguously the second-order elections model. In detail, while the SPÖ is often punished by voters in the European elections (except in the 2014 election), the ÖVP almost always performs better during the European elections. Opposition parties have never gained vote shares when compared with national elections, but the 2014 European elections indicate that this trend might be reversing.

Conclusions

Broadly speaking, one of the central issues of these European elections in Austria has been whether and to what extent the two mainstream parties would have been able to gain yet again an absolute majority of the votes. In fact, many wondered if there would have been a massive shift of the votes towards the FPÖ. The two ruling parties were able to hold, and these European elections send a strong message to all pro-EU parties. Despite this, considering that many Eurosceptic voters seem to have remained at home this time, only the next election will determine whether Europe is considered by Austrians the future or a threat.

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The Baltic states: Mixed results for incumbents

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30 May 2014

Estonia

The third European Parliament (EP) elections in Estonia were considered a preview of upcoming general elections in spring 2015, above all providing insight to power relations in domestic political scenery. Implementing open party lists as opposed to the 2009 elections enabled the heavy artillery of Estonian politics to go against each other in competing for the title of the most popular politician in the country. Amid the low overall turnout (36.4%), the proportion of e-voters notably increased compared with that in 2009, reaching to 11.45% of those eligible to vote and to 31% of actual voters (in 2009, 6.5% and 14.7%, respectively). Estonia introduced electronic voting in 2007 when it held the world's first general elections with the possibility to cast the vote over the Internet and has since then successfully used e-voting in parliamentary, local, as well as EP elections.

During the otherwise drab and eventless electoral campaign, the opposition Center Party attempted to undermine the trust in the Estonian e-voting system by initiating a media attack against it only a few days prior to the elections. The team of international experts, brought in by Center, criticised the "serious security vulnerabilities" of the system, with the party then requesting its immediate cancellation. These accusations were publicly announced unconstructive and politically loaded, and the voting procedure went on to take place as planned. The social liberal Center Party has been long known to oppose e-voting, claiming that using it leads to politically biased results by structurally favouring some parties over the others. No scientific evidence has been found to support this claim (Vassil, 2014). Ultimately, the campaign against e-voting failed and roughly twice as many people as in previous EP elections voted electronically, showing their support towards the system.

Somewhat unexpectedly, the winner of the elections was the ruling Reform Party, gaining 24.3% of total votes and claiming two of six seats allocated to Estonia in the EP. The centre-right Prime Ministerial party profited from recent

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changes in the government, having replaced their longtime coalition partner centre-right The Pro Patria and Res Publica Union (IRL) with the ideological rival social democrats just two months prior to the EP elections. Although most preelection public opinion polls predicted the victory to the opposition Center Party, the latter seems to have failed to mobilise their voters. Traditionally known to be more popular among the Russian minority, Center is further reinforcing its image as a party for Russian speakers. The only Member of the European Parliament (MEP) elected from the Center Party, an ethnic Russian, Yana Toom, has previously evoked wide public reaction with her radical statements towards Estonia. To the surprise of many, the longtime leader of Center, Edgar Savisaar, did not get elected. The largest opposition party seems to be losing touch with its Estonian voters, which has likely to do with ethnic divide among the electorate following the Ukraine crisis.

Various opinion polls indicate that voting in Estonia is typically more candidate- than party-oriented. Support can be found from the fact that the second popular politician right after the recently resigned Prime Minister Andrus Ansip is the independent candidate Indrek Tarand. Despite a more

Table 1. Results of the 2014 EP elections – Estonia

Party	EP Group	Votes (%)	Seats	Votes (change from 2009)	Seats (change from 2009)
Estonian Reform Party (ERe)	ALDE	24.3	2	+9.0	+1
Estonian Center Party (EK)	ALDE	22.4	1	–3.8	–1
The Pro Patria and Res Publica Union (IRL)	EPP	13.9	1	+1.7	+0
Social Democratic Party (SDE)	S&D	13.6	1	+4.9	+0
Indrek Tarand (independent candidate)	G-EFA	13.2	1	–12.6	+0
Others		12.6	0		
Total		100	6		0
Turnout (%)		36.4%		+7.5	
Legal threshold for obtaining MEPs (%)		none			

Candidates are elected using PR system in one national electoral district. Seats are allocated using the d'Hondt formula. As opposed to 2009, the EP elections in 2014 in Estonia were held using the open party lists.
EP group abbreviations: EPP, European People's Party; S&D, Progressive Alliance of Socialists and Democrats; ALDE, Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe; G-EFA, The Greens–European Free Alliance; ECR, European Conservatives and Reformists; GUE-NGL, European United Left–Nordic Green Left; EFD, Europe of Freedom and Democracy; NI, Non-Inscrits.

modest result than in the 2009 election, 13.2% of votes firmly ensured Tarand a seat in the EP. Large support for independent candidates is generally not a widespread phenomenon in party-centred Europe but has been considered voting for an "informal opposition" in Estonia. Although many other countries face protest voting through the rise of right- or left-wing extremes or Eurosceptics, it has been argued that Estonian voters rather punish the incumbent by voting independent in second-order elections (Ehin and Solvak, 2012). While the relative victory this time was gained by the incumbent, voters' strong support for independent candidates does indicate an ongoing frustration with party politics.

Latvia

The overall election results in Latvia signal widespread support to incumbent government parties and satisfaction with government policies, despite persisting difficulties in the aftermath of financial crisis. Very low election turnout (30.04%), however, is a serious cause for concern and sends out a clear message that Latvian voters consider EU-level issues a distant second to domestic politics.

The firm winner of the elections is the centre-right Prime Ministerial party Unity, receiving 46.2% of all votes and yielding four of eight seats in the EP. The overall vote share of Unity rose by approximately 15% compared with that in the 2009 elections, although because of the formula by which MEP mandates are allocated in Latvia, this did not result in more seats. Keeping in mind the low turnout, it must still be stressed that Unity kept but did not gain a lot more votes compared with what they had in 2009 when looking at absolute numbers. Unity's electoral campaign was run on the basis of economic growth. Party leadership has emphasised the necessity to continue the present-day governmental policies of austerity and fiscal discipline, underlining this as the best way to preserve economic growth and reduce unemployment. Similar with Estonia, in Latvia as well, the popularity of party leaders is considered one of the reasons for its success.

Unity's coalition partner, National Alliance, remained a distant runner-up, receiving just over 14% of votes and getting one seat in the EP. Just like Unity's, the vote share of National Alliance has increased since 2009 but did not result in more mandates. With only 6% support predicted in most preelection polls, the overall performance of National Alliance comes as a bit of a surprise. The reason behind the success might be the prevailing anxiety in Baltic states over the events in Ukraine. The right-wing National Alliance has earned a reputation as always taking a hard stance against Russia and has

Table 2. Results of the 2014 EP elections – Latvia

Party	EP Group	Votes (%)	Seats	Votes (change from 2009)	Seats (change from 2009)
Unity (V)	EPP	46.2	4	+15.4	+0
National Alience (NA)	ECR	14.3	1	+6.8	+0
Union of Greens and Farmers (ZZS)	N/A	8.3	1	+4.5	+1
Harmony Center (SC)	S&D	13.0	1	–6.5	+0
Latvian Russian Union (LKS)	G-EFA	6.4	1	–3.2	+0
Others		11.8	0		
Total		100	8		0
Turnout (%)		30.04%		–23.4	
Legal threshold for obtaining MEPs (%)		none			

Candidates are elected using PR system in one national electoral district. Seats are allocated using the highest averages (d'Hondt) formula.
EP group abbreviations: EPP, European People's Party; S&D, Progressive Alliance of Socialists and Democrats; ALDE, Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe; G-EFA, The Greens–European Free Alliance; ECR, European Conservatives and Reformists; GUE-NGL, European United Left–Nordic Green Left; EFD, Europe of Freedom and Democracy; NI, Non-Inscrits.

based their electoral campaign on a wide array of security issues, ranging from energy security (i.e., the need for the European Union [EU] to have a unified energy policy) to tougher foreign policy and the need to strengthen the EU's Russia sanctions over the annexation of Crimea. The Latvian party system is characterised by ongoing friction between ethnic Latvians and Latvian Russian speakers (Pabriks and Stokenberga, 2006), and National Alliance seems to have managed to turn the security issues into electoral gain. The third partner in Latvian incumbent coalition government, the agrarian Union of Greens and Farmers, received 8.3% of the votes and is entering the EP for the first time.

The main losers of the elections in Latvia were the parties supported by the Russian minority. The largest party for Russian speakers and currently also the largest party in the national parliament, Harmony Center, received just over 13% of the votes (6 points less than that in 2009) and Latvian Russian Union 6.4% (3 percentage points less than that in 2009), both ending up with one seat in the EP. The result is even more unexpected since the leftist Harmony Center was predicted high numbers in the preelection polls, now leaving the party wondering why it failed to mobilise its electorate. Many experts

attribute Harmony Center's failure to the dominance of the topic of Ukraine crisis in Latvian domestic political debate.

Lithuania

In Lithuania, the EP elections were somewhat overshadowed by the second round of presidential elections taking place on the same day. This prompted a notably higher electoral turnout than in other two Baltic states (44.91%). Although the largest proportion of votes and 6 of 11 MEP positions went to incumbent coalition parties, the actual winner of the elections by a narrow margin was a conservative Homeland Union, currently in opposition in the national parliament. Receiving 17.4% of the votes ensured the opposition party two seats in the EP. Coming in a close second was the Prime Ministerial Lithuanian Social Democratic Party with 17.27% of the votes and two seats. These two were followed by the Liberal Movement (16.5%) and right-wing Order and Justice Party (14.3%), receiving two mandates each. The remaining three seats were divided between the leftist-populist Labor Party, Coalition—the party representing local Russian and Polish minorities—and the agrarian Lithuanian Farmers and Greens Union (12.8%, 8.1% and 6.6%, respectively). The latter is entering the EP for the first time.

Prior to the elections, the incumbent coalition parties ran rather similar campaigns on the basis of more socially responsible policy, ending austerity measures imposed by the previous government and vowing to get more EU structural funding to Lithuania. Order and Justice demanded a popular referendum on whether or not Lithuania should adopt euro (Lithuania will join the Eurozone on the January 1, 2015), whereas the party Coalition emphasised issues related to ethnic minorities. The ethnicity question, however, is not nearly as polarising in Lithuania as it is in Latvia or Estonia due to different national composition, broad citizenship opportunities and favourable legal framework (Jurkynas, 2004).

The relative proximity of coalition parties' platforms resulted in the fact that during the second round of the presidential elections, incumbent parties rallied behind Zigmantas Balcytis, a presidential candidate of the ruling Social Democratic Party and also a number one candidate on the party's EP elections list. The opposition parties Liberal Movement and Homeland Union supported the incumbent president Dalia Grybauskaite, who, in turn, expressed her indirect support for these parties in the EP elections. The relative success of the two opposition parties in the EP elections came as a bit of a surprise but Grybauskaite's victory in presidential elections with a fair margin would allow speculating that a substantial share of her electorate also

Table 3. Results of the 2014 EP elections – Lithuania

Party	EP Group	Votes (%)	Seats	Votes (change from 2009)	Seats (change from 2009)
Homeland Union (TS-LKD)	EPP	17.4	2	–8.3	–2
Lithuanian Social Democratic Party (LSDP)	S&D	17.3	2	+1.3	–1
Lithuanian Liberal Movement (LRLS)	ALDE	16.5	2	+9.1	+1
Order and Justice (TT)	EFD	14.3	2	+2.0	+0
Labor Party (DP)	ALDE	12.8	1	+4.0	+0
Coalition (K)	ECR	8.1	1	–0.3	+0
Lithuanian Farmers and Greens Union (LVZS)	N/A	6.6	1	+4.8	+1
Others		7.0	0		
Total		100	11		–1
Turnout (%)		44.91		+26.3	
Legal threshold for obtaining MEPs (%)		none			

Mandates are allocated proportionally in one national electoral district, to all the lists that received more than 5% of the votes using the method of largest remainders (Hare method). EP group abbreviations: EPP, European People's Party; S&D, Progressive Alliance of Socialists and Democrats; ALDE, Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe; G-EFA, The Greens–European Free Alliance; ECR, European Conservatives and Reformists; GUE-NGL, European United Left–Nordic Green Left; EFD, Europe of Freedom and Democracy; NI, Non-Inscrits.

expressed their support for the opposition candidates who had backed her presidential bid. Furthermore, the general tendency in Baltic States in these EP elections points to the fact that centre-right parties have managed to mobilise their electoral base better than their competitors on the left side of the political spectrum.

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Belgium: Far beyond second order

Tom Verthé

30 May 2014

In Belgium, the elections for the European Parliament (EP) have in the past always been held together with the regional elections. Because of this particularity, the European elections have long since been considered second-order elections in Belgium (Reif and Schmitt, 1980; Van Aelst and Lefevere, 2012). Because of the split in the party system since the '70s, the regional elections in Belgium are clearly a first-order election since, for the larger part, there is no difference in terms of voting population and party offer between the regional and federal elections (Russo and Deschouwer, 2014). Federal (and even European) elections in Belgium are—at least from an institutional and organisational perspective—almost entirely regional (see the additional note under Table 1 for a more detailed description of the electoral system used for the European election). Another reason for its first-order character is the absence of a link between the regional elections and the federal government formation (Schakel and Jeffery, 2013).

The campaign

All of this holds for the period up to 2014. On May 25, however, Belgium went to the polls for three elections instead of two. As a result of the sixth state reform by the Di Rupo government, the federal, regional and European elections will from now on always be held on the same day. For this reason, the federal elections will be held every five years, instead of every four, to match the European election cycle. In case the federal government is prematurely toppled, new national elections can be held, but the resulting government can only stay on until the next European election and will then automatically have to resign.

Belgians thus voted not only for the European and regional parliaments but also for the federal one. This is an extremely important difference knowing that the last federal elections took place when the government fell in 2010

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and the resulting coalition negotiations took no less than 541 days, an absolute world record.

In the 2012 municipal elections, the Flemish nationalists of the New Flemish Alliance (N-VA) scored big in Flanders (the northern, Dutch-speaking part), and the preelection polls showed that they would easily become the biggest party in Flanders this time around as well and even continue to grow bigger. The incredible rise of N-VA has raised serious concerns for the feasibility of the next federal coalition formation. It was feared that their continued success would test the limits of the Belgian federal construction. The entire campaign was thus dominated by the federal election and what would happen with the postelection coalition negotiations, overshadowing even the regional elections. The European one came third in line, and at quite a distance. Stating that the European election served as a third-rate election (Irwin, 1995) is not an exaggeration. Europe was almost completely absent from the run-up to the elections. Apart from the obligatory television debate, Europe was not an issue in the campaign.

This might sound strange for a country that was a founding member of the European Union (EU) and is the host of the Commission and the EP (for three quarters of the time at least). Belgium also provides the president of the European Council, Herman Van Rompuy, and unlike the vast majority of the EU member states, it also had one of the official candidates for the Commission presidency: former Belgian prime minister Guy Verhofstadt of the Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe.

Yet, despite all that, Europe never surfaced as a full-fledged campaign item. Media mostly focused on the national issues, and when they did turn their eyes to the EU, it was mostly to assess the chances of Guy Verhofstadt becoming president of the Commission.

An additional reason for the absence of the EU in the electoral campaign can be found in the lack of anti-European parties. The only anti-European party that cleared the threshold is the extreme-right Flemish Interest (Vlaams Belang). They want to get rid of the EU because it infringes upon the right of individual countries to regulate (i.e., restrict) immigration and uphold their borders. They promote the idea of a confederation of nation-states as an alternative for the EU, rather than moulding the EU into a more federal framework. In 2009, there was another Belgian Eurosceptic party that got into the EP, List Dedecker (LDD). The party was only popular for a short while and the polls showed they would have great difficulty conquering a single seat in the federal or Flemish parliament this time around. The party president therefore decided to stand in just one province for the federal election, which was regarded as the best strategic choice. Its EP seat was thus vacated before the elections even took place. None of the other parties could profit from this though, since Belgium (and more specifically the Dutch-speaking electoral college)

lost one seat by default in the reshuffling because of the EU expansion and the new cap on the number of MEPs.

The results

As you can see from the results, there was one very clear winner. The New Flemish Alliance gained almost 17 percentage points and conquered one third of the seats in the Dutch-speaking electoral college. This is completely thanks to its success at the federal and regional level. N-VA's views on Europe are quite blurry. On the one hand, they question whether the EU should keep all of the competences it currently owns, but on the other hand they claim that Flemish independence—their core issue—will only be possible within the context of a stronger EU. The EU thus only served (marginally) as an abut for its nationalist agenda and not as a separate campaign item. It suffices to say that rallying voters around a European theme does not drive their current success. During the campaign, they also made it clear they want to leave the Greens—European Free Alliance party group—but refused to say which other party group they would be joining after the election.

The traditional parties that made up the outgoing federal government—social democrats, Christian democrats and liberals—largely managed to stand their ground, which is quite remarkable in the current political climate. Apart from a small loss for the Flemish Christian democrats (CD&V), it seems it was mostly the extreme-right Flemish Interest (Vlaams Belang) that paid for the victory of N-VA. On election night, it was even unclear for a while whether they would still be represented in the EP at all. In the end, it turns out they will, but it was a close call.

Another remarkable decline is that of the French-speaking ecologists (ECOLO), especially when compared with the fact that their Dutch-speaking sister party gained almost 3 percentage points (even though this did not result in an extra seat). These results also mimic the federal and regional ones. Some have stated that a green party that scored over 22% in the 2009 EP elections had no way to go but down. A probable explanation could also be found in the fact that they—at least in part—paid for the rise of the communist left (PTB-go!) in Wallonia and Brussels. These allegations will have to be verified by other means, but it is quite clear that the answers should not be sought at the European level.

The single EP seat in the German-speaking electoral college (with a population of roughly 77,000) has been held by the Christian Social Party (CSP) since 1994 and remains quite firmly in their possession.

Table 1. Results of the 2014 EP elections – BELGIUM

Party	EP Group	Votes (%)	Seats	Votes (change from 2009)	Seats (change from 2009)
Dutch-speaking electoral college					
Open Flemish Liberals & Democrats (OPEN VLD)	ALDE	20.4	3	–0.16	=
New Flemish Alliance (N-VA)	G-EFA	26.67	4	16.79	+3
Flemish Christian Democrats (CD&V)	EPP	19.96	2	–3.30	–1
Greens (GROEN)	G-EFA	10.62	1	2.72	=
Socialist Party Different (SP.A)	S&D	13.18	1	–0.05	–1
Flemish Interest (VLAAMS BELANG)	NI	6.76	1	–9.11	–1
Labour Party (PVDA+)	–	2.4	0	1.42	=
List Dedecker (LDD)	ECR	–	0	–7.28	–1
French-speaking electoral college					
Socialist Party (PS)	S&D	29.29	3	0.19	=
Reform Movement (MR)	ALDE	27.1	3	1.05	+1
Ecologists (ECOLO)	G-EFA	11.69	1	–11.19	–1
Christian Democrats & Humanists (CDH)	EPP	11.36	1	–1.98	=
Popular Party (PP)	–	5.98	0	5.98	=
Belgian Workers' Party (PTB-go!)	–	5.48	0	4.32	=
Others		9.11	0		
German-speaking electoral college					
Christian Social Party (CSP)	EPP	30.34	1	–1.91	=
Ecologists (ECOLO)	G-EFA	16.66	0	1.08	=
Party for Freedom & Prosperity (PFF)	ALDE	16.06	0	–4.31	=
Socialist Party (SP)	S&D	15.12	0	0.49	=
Pro German-speaking Community (PRO DG)	–	13.23	0	3.15	=
Others		8.6	0		
Total		100	21		–1
Turnout (%)		89.7		–0.70	
Legal threshold for obtaining MEPs (%)		none			

Note: The 21 Belgian MEPs are elected in three separate electoral colleges: the Dutch-speaking (12), French-speaking (8) and German-speaking (1) electoral colleges. These colleges represent the three language communities, and they have geographically distinct electorates. Only in Brussels voters have the option to vote as a member of the Dutch- or French-speaking community. It is impossible for any voter to vote as a member of more than 1 electoral college. Because of this, it would be quite confusing to report the election outcome for the country as a whole, since the fixed number of seats per community is distributed within each electoral college. The party scores thus total 100% for each electoral college separately.
EP group abbreviations: EPP, European People's Party; S&D, Progressive Alliance of Socialists and Democrats; ALDE, Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe; G-EFA, The Greens–European Free Alliance; ECR, European Conservatives and Reformists; GUE-NGL, European United Left–Nordic Green Left; EFD, Europe of Freedom and Democracy; NI, Non-Inscrits.

Conclusion

There have been quite some shifts at the last European elections in Belgium. The traditional parties making up the outgoing federal government managed to hold more or less steady. The bigger shifts can be found a bit more left and right on the ideological spectrum. Unlike for other European countries, it would, however, be a mistake to interpret this in the light of some anti- or pro-European sentiments. In Belgium, the elections for the EP were never part of parties' campaigns, nor were they a hot topic during any of the debates in any of the media. The most important cause of this is probably the coincidence of federal, regional and European elections. The federal and regional elections took precedence over the European one, which comes at no surprise given the recent Belgian political history. The question as to what caused these vote fluctuations obviously needs to be further investigated on the basis of election data, voter surveys, and others, and it is possible that some part of the population did indeed cast its vote for the EP with European motives in mind. But most of the answers will for sure not have to be sought at the European level. And if from now on the regional, federal and European elections will be held on the same day—as has been agreed upon—chances are the EP election will have a very hard time moving up from its third-rate status in Belgium.

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Bulgaria: To support or not to support the government in power, this is the dilemma

Sorina Soare

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Bulgaria, which formerly belonged to the Communist bloc, entered the European Union (EU) in 2007. Nevertheless, compared with the other countries of the former Warsaw Pact, the Bulgarian process of European integration was carried out with three years of delay; as emphasised by Noucheva and Bechev (2008), the reasons Bulgaria as well as Romania lagged behind in meeting the EU accession criteria had to do with a set of domestic factors, a tortuous democratisation process, with relevant veto players and institutional structures that obstructed democratic and market reforms for almost a decade. Despite the acceleration of political and economic reforms beginning in the 2000s, the 2005 Accession Treaty signed with Bulgaria contained a number of safeguard clauses as well as specific post-accession benchmarks and the monitoring system under the Cooperation and Verification Mechanism (CVM) for Bulgaria and Romania with biannual progress reports upon accession to the EU (Gateva, 2010, Trauner, 2009, Spendzharova and Vachudova, 2012, Bechev, 2013). Seven years after obtaining the status of a member state, Bulgaria held its third European elections with 15 political parties, 6 coalitions, and 6 independent candidates competing for the 17 seats available. The competition involves two main actors (Rashkova, 2013): on the one hand, the heir of the former communist party, the Bulgarian Socialist Party (BSP), and on the other hand, the representative of the centre-right, the Citizens for European Development of Bulgaria (GERB) party.

The results

As in all postcommunist countries, the specter of a high level of abstention was hovering over the Bulgarian European elections; the adoption of a proportional system through preferential voting for national lists was sup-

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posed to give voters more power over which party candidates win office and increase voter turnout. Significantly, since the beginning of the campaign, the outcome of 2014 has been predicted in reference to GERB's ability to mobilise voters, where the BSP electoral results seemed to be favoured in the case of low participation. In the end, with a higher level than the initial estimate, the electoral participation was 36.15%, slightly lower than that in 2009 (–1.34%) and definitely inferior to the EU average. The preference was expressed by approximately 25% of the voters, not without some confusion, as in the case of the BSP: the socialists' voters ticked not only the 15th list corresponding to the party, but also the candidate with the 15th position in the list, the young Momchil Nekov, who eventually displaced the party leader Sergei Stanishev from the top position on the ballot.[1] In the case of the Reformist Coalition, the preferential vote sends to the European Parliament (EP) the second name on the list, Svetoslav Malinov, replacing the list's leader, former commissioner Meglena Kuneva, for the only EP seat the coalition won.

All in all, the centre-right party, GERB, got six seats in the EP, thereby defeating the current ruling BSP who only obtained four seats (-11.46% votes in comparison with the GERB). The remaining seven seats were divided as such: four seats for the BSP coalition partners from the Turkish-ethnic Movement for Rights and Freedoms (DPS), two seats for the recently created party led by the journalist-turned-politician Nikolai Barekov—Bulgaria Without Censure (BBT)—and one seat for the centre-right coalition of the Reformist Bloc (RB).[2] The biggest Bulgarian delegation joins the European People's Party (EPP) (six GERB Members of the European Parliament [MEPs]), the four BSP MEPs join the S&D alliance, and the DPS mandates reinforce the ALDE group. The recently created BBT still has to define the EP affiliation. Most probably, the RB will affiliate with the EPP.

Election campaign and the main political parties

A simple glance at the election campaign allows us to see that beyond the billboards with EU logos and images, the election debate was mainly framed by domestic issues—in particular, the performance of the 2013 born rainbow coalition government, formed by the socialist BSP (within the Coalition for Bulgaria

[1] "25% of Bulgarian Voters Cast Preferential Ballot in the EU Elections", Sofia News Agency, May 27, 2014.

[2] Central Election Commission: Final results of Bulgaria's May 2014 European Parliament elections", May 28, 2014.

Table 1. Results of the 2014 EP elections – Bulgaria

Party	EP Group	Votes (%)	Seats	Votes (change from 2009)	Seats (change from 2009)
Citizens for European Development of Bulgaria (GERB)	EPP	30.4	6	+6.04	1
Coalition for Bulgaria (KB)	S&D	18.9	4	+0.4	0
Movement for Rights and Freedoms (DSP)	ALDE	17.3	4	+3.1	1
Coalition Bulgaria without Censorship (BBT)	NI	10.7	2		
Reformist Block (RB)	EPP	6.5	1		
Alternative for Bulgarian Renaissance (ABV)		4.0	0		
National Union Attack (Ataka)	NI	3.0	0	–9.0	–2
Others		9.2			
Total		100	17		
Turnout (%)		36.15		–1.34	
Legal threshold for obtaining MEPs (%)	Implicit threshold – the national quota				
Additional notes on the electoral system	Proportional system through preferential voting for national lists in a single multimember constituency				

Source: Central Electoral Commission Source: Idea Voter Turnout Data, Central Electoral Commission
EP group abbreviations: EPP, European People's Party; S&D, Progressive Alliance of Socialists and Democrats; ALDE, Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe; G-EFA, The Greens–European Free Alliance; ECR, European Conservatives and Reformists; GUE-NGL, European United Left–Nordic Green Left; EFD, Europe of Freedom and Democracy; NI, Non-Inscrits.
* Probably ECR (Mudde 2014)

with other smaller parties) and Turkish-ethic minority representatives (DPS), a coalition without a parliamentary majority and hence forced to rely on the radical nationalist party Ataka's support. The lack of a clear parliamentary majority and the highly criticised alliance with Ataka were somehow overshadowed by the protesters storming the streets after the appointment of the shady Delyan Peevski (DPS) as the head of the State Agency for National Security. Protesters called for the resignation of Peevski and the government. Antigovernment protesters complained about poverty, corruption and organised crime. In this context, the European elections appeared to be a test for the government from

the very beginning. Moreover, the president of the socialists declared that if the coalition government had received fewer votes than the opposition, then the government would resign and new elections would be held by the end of 2014. In light of the May 2014 results, a weakened BSP seems to open the gate for a new period of political instability, although according to the latest statements of the socialists' leader Sergey Stanishev, there is no intention to hold early elections.[3]

In brief, as in 2007 and 2009, national issues shaped the themes covered by the electoral campaign (Bechev, 2013), recalling Reif and Schmitt's (1980) observations concerning simultaneous national elections held in each of the EU member nations without institutionally binding consequences on government or opposition policies. More specifically, for Reif and Schmitt, EU elections have appeared to be second-order elections from the very beginning where voters tend to cast their votes on the basis of the main political arena dynamics instead of in relation to the specific context of these elections (EU-related topics). The Bulgarian 2014 European election shares striking features with this assumption that are congruent with their lower level of participation, the brighter prospects for new political parties and alliances, as well as the penalisation of the government parties. Through the lenses of this assumption, the outcome of the May 25 elections was mainly crafted by a socioeconomic cleavage concerning the pace of the economic management opposing the centre-right (represented primarily by the former prime minister Boyko Borisov's party—GERB) to the centre-left (represented by the leading governmental party, the BSP). For the BSP, the May 2014 electoral competition was also a personal challenge for its leader—Sergey Stanishev—elected in 2012 for president of the PES. The BSP's position in the head-to-head race with the GERB was weakened not only by its position in government but also by the challenge of a separate alternative left-wing ballot launched by the former socialist president Georgi Parvanov, Alternative for Bulgarian Renaissance Movement (ABV), whose lists were led by MEP Ivaylo Kalfin, Bulgaria's Former Minister of Foreign Affairs (2005–2009) and leader of the Bulgarian socialist delegation in the EP in 2009–2014. Note that Kalfio was known to be strongly critical of the BSP alliance with the radical nationalists of Ataka. Last but not least, circumstantial elements have to be taken into account such as the vote-buying scandal in the Bobov Dol mine (votes in exchange for investments and better working conditions).[4] In the end, the BSP was a distant second to the GERB opposition party, whereas the ABV

[3] A. Bivol, "European elections 2014: Bulgarian socialists refuse to admit failure", *Sofia Globe*, May 26, 2014.

[4] "Bulgaria's Prosecution Launches Probe into Bobov Dol Vote Affair", Sofia News Agency, May 21, 2014.

failed to pass the implicit electoral threshold. As such, the undisputed winner of the May 25 election was the GERB, who already came in first in the European elections of 2007 and was the ruling party from 2009 to 2013. In line with these results, in the statement issued after the publication of the first official results, Borisov saluted the victory and boasted about the outcome of a 'heroic party' that not only had severely defeated its main domestic competitor, the BSP, but also its European counterpart, the PSE. Ironically, Borisov invoked God in order to maintain Stanishev as BSP's leader for many more years in order to easily win in the next round of elections.[5]

Although initially estimated as making up 8% of the vote, the Reformist Block (RB) registered a rather fragile success, weakened not only by the head-to-head race between the BPS and the GERB but also by the choice to let Meglena Kuneva to top the coalition's lists.[6] This constellation of five small conservative political factions is supposed to join the EPP delegation as well (one seat). Note that due to the electoral system, voters' preferences replaced list leader Meglena Kuneva with the runner-up Svetoslav Malinov. Considering the electoral results, the project of a centre-right alternative seems to have an unpromising future.

Confirming the permeability of the Bulgarian party system to newly created parties (Spirova and Rashkova, 2012), there are several new faces promoted by these European elections, including Bulgaria Without Censorship (BBT)—a party created by the television journalist, Nikolai Barekov, whose main political tribune was settled by the protests against the government's policies after June 2013. He uses a populist rhetoric that combines a critique of the establishment and the fight against corruption in the name of a vaguely defined 'capitalism and a market economy with a human face'.[7] The BBT took part in elections in alliance with other smaller parties. Under these conditions, the electoral market of the nationalist parties became particularly competitive and the biggest loser of the elections seems to be Volen Siderov's Ataka with a Russophile and Europhobic discourse.

The Bulgarian delegation in the EP also includes the four representatives of the Turkish minority, whose success lies primarily in the characteristics of its constituencies, linked to the ethnoreligious minority in Turkey.

[5] "Bulgaria's GERB to Request EPP Deputy Chair Seat—Boyko Borisov May 26, 2014".

[6] Kuneva entered Bulgarian politics in 2001 and was appointed as Minister of European Affairs in two consecutive governments – first under the National Movement for Stability and Progress (NDSV) with Prime Minister Simeon Saxe-Coburg-Gotha from 2002 to 2005 and then under the BSP that eventually nominated her to be the EU Commissioner in the end of October 2006.

[7] "A controversial newcomer could be kingmaker", *The Economist*, March 4, 2014.

Concluding remarks

After all that has been said, in an electoral campaign monopolised by the head-to-head race between the BSP and the GERB and, in particular, the clash between their leaders, the main conclusion stresses that the interest of the Bulgarian voters for EU elections remains relatively low. The domestic issues prevail over the EU ones. Plagued with political instability, polarisation and incertitude (Rashkova, 2013_b), Bulgarian politics seem to be a perfect breeding ground for new parties and sparkling political entrepreneurs such as Nikolai Barekov, who succeeded in assembling a party and sending it to Strasbourg in less than a year.

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Croatia: Negative results for the government coalition

Andrija Henjak

11 June 2014

European parliament (EP) elections in Croatia took place only a year after the special EP elections held in 2013 just before Croatia's accession to the European Union (EU). Croatian entry into the EU, unlike the accession of other countries of Central and Eastern Europe in 2004 and 2007, was not an event market by palpable enthusiasm and high expectations, but rather, it was a market with subdued optimism or indifference. It was seen by the public both as a chance to change the direction of the stagnant economy and improve the functioning of institutions and as an inevitable development with uncertain prospect for the country that might not be fully prepared to take the benefits of membership. The first year of membership in the EU was marked by Croatia's relatively peripheral position in most important developments in the EU related to dealing with the fallout of the euro crisis. While affected by the Eurozone crisis, Croatia is not a member of the Eurozone and its economic problems started well before the accession and are unrelated to the EU. Therefore, Croatia was mainly an observer in debates about response to crisis and future directions of the EU economic governance. Furthermore, the first several months of membership were characterised by the dispute that the Croatian government had with the EU over the implementation of the European arrest warrant, which resulted in government humbling if not humiliating climbdown after six months of argument with the European Commission. But in general, the Croatian public was neither sufficiently informed about current developments in the EU, nor was it informed about the debates regarding the future direction of the EU. As a result, EU and European questions in general featured very little in public debates before the EP elections.

The context

In the year after the accession, Croatian politics was characterised by persistent attempts of the opposition coalition led by Croatian Democratic Union

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(HDZ) to challenge the government and mobilise their political base through heavy emphasis on symbolic politics and identity issues. Leader of HDZ Tomislav Karamarko relied heavily on radical nationalist rhetoric aimed at delegitimising the government led by the Social Democrat Party (SDP) as 'people who never wanted and never loved Croatia' and stating that government policies are undermining independence of the country. Radicalisation was fuelled by the dispute over the introduction of the Cyrillic script, mandated by the Constitutional Law on the Rights of the National Minorities, in the city of Vukovar, a place that is heavily symbolically loaded, being besieged and destroyed by the Yugoslav Army in 1991. An organisation called Headquarters for the Defence of the Croatian Vukovar challenged government authority and repeatedly disrupted the implementation of the law, receiving substantial support from HDZ leadership in the process and for their attempts to collect signatures to overturn the provision mandating the introduction of the minority language in the city if the minority population reaches one-third share in the city. Radicalisation was further supported also by the referendum on the constitutional definition of marriage, which took place in December of 2013.

While main opposition parties attempted a radicalisation strategy, the government parties were beset by conflicts and internal division taking place in SDP and the second strongest member of the government coalition Croatian People's Party–Liberal Democrats (HNS-LD). At times, it appeared as if SDP leader and prime minister Zoran Milanović is more preoccupied with fighting his critics and opponents within the party rather than running the government, at times even undermining ministers in his own government. This led to a general perception that the government is ineffectual and directionless with no discernable long-term policies. In this context, a dynamic figure of SDP minister of finance Slavko Linić dominated the government agenda with his focus on fiscal discipline, until he was forced out of office by the prime minister just a week before the European elections. The work of other government ministers was more or less characterised by apparent lack of coordination, fixed policy priorities and clear policy measures.

Despite aggressive attacks on the government and radicalisation strategy used by HDZ and its minor coalition partners, the government maintained slight advantage in the polls for most of the preceding year. However, combined support for both government coalition led by SDP and opposition coalition led by HDZ slowly declined to approximately 50%. At the same time, a number of new parties contesting political space out of the main left-right division emerged based on identity and symbolic issues. Slow decline of support for the government and persistent weak support for the opposition, as well as rising support for new political parties and coalitions indicated that a significant share of Croatian citizens cannot be still electorally mobilised with symbolic and identity issues based on divisions formed in the Second World

War and after, attitudes towards history, religion and views about the role of Croatia in wider political unions, which dominated Croatian politics since first democratic elections. This does not necessarily mean that old political identities based on these factors are losing their strength and the ability to shape political identity of citizens. But the decline of support for the left and the right bloc in opinion polls indicates the possibility that for a large share of the electorate party, choice is separated from dominant political identities of the left and the right, or at least that political identities are not anymore identified with parties of the left and the right coalitions so clearly.

The campaign

Before the elections, opinion polls predicted that the left and the right coalitions will fight for electoral support with four other parties and electoral coalition groups. The oldest of these emerging in 2011 parliamentary elections is the Labour Party. Characterised by strong left-wing rhetoric and criticism of past and present government policies as implementation of neoliberal economic model, the Labour Party had close to 10% of support in opinion polls. The second group is a centrist group formed from a newly emerged National Forum Party formed by successful businessmen and medical doctors on the platform calling for government of experts, and what is left from the Croatian Social Liberal Party (HSLS), which for most of 1990s was the main opposition to HDZ government and which tried to establish itself as an alternative to left and right in previous parliamentary elections. The third group is Alliance for Croatia formed from Croatian Democratic Assembly of Slavonia and Baranja (HDSSB), a regional party that split from HDZ in 2005, taking most of HDZ support in the eastern region of Slavonia, and several smaller conservative and nationalist parties. The alliance was formed most likely with a rationale of increasing the likelihood for HDSSB to win a seat in the EP by aggregating votes from small parties on the nationalist and conservative right nationally, or out of its regional base. The fourth group formed just before the elections was ORAH (Sustainable Development of Croatia), a party of left and green orientation, formed by a former SDP environment minister Mirela Holy after she was expelled from the party a year ago after a conflict with the prime minister. A party identified by voters mostly for its leader, ORAH gained support quite quickly, offering disgruntled voters of the left coalition led by SDP a credible alternative on the left. Support for this new party grew very quickly, reaching more than 10% in national opinion polls just before the European elections.

The position of the left government before the elections was further complicated by the developments in SDP after Prime Minister Zoran Milanović

initiated a conflict with finance minister Slavko Linić and forced his resignation from the government just a week before the elections, which could only damage the electoral prospects of the left coalition. The position of the opposition in the preelectoral period was supported by an apparent unity of HDZ and its coalition partners, by the abandonment of the radicalisation strategy a few months before the European elections, and by the greater shift on economic issues in the campaign and its political discourse. Although the campaign was relatively subdued, hampered by strict campaign finance regulation and lack of resources all parties face, HDZ was mostly able to focus their messages on the relative failure of the government to absorb structural funds and on economic issues. HDZ could also rely on efficient party organisation capable of mobilising a large number of activists. European issues were largely absent from the campaign, and domestic issues dominated campaign and electoral behaviour of Croatian voters. Four challengers to the left and the right coalitions tried to mobilise support by criticising established parties and trying to establish themselves as alternatives to old political actors. The already-subdued campaign was suspended after the floods hit east of the country and 11,000 people were evacuated from the affected area. At the same time, the focus of media shifted to floods and its consequences while parties pledged to stop campaigning and donate remaining funds to flood relief. Thus, in the last week before the elections, there was virtually no campaigning.

The results

Elections for EP in Croatia are conducted with proportional (PR) system where 11 seats are allocated between party lists. Voters can also indicate a preference for a particular candidate, but this affects the order of candidates only if 10% of the voters of a particular list indicate a preference for an individual candidate.

The turnout in 2014 EP elections in Croatia was approximately 25%, were more than 950,000 of 3.7 million voters turned out to vote. This represents a significant increase from 20% turnout (780,000 voters) in special EP elections in 2013. While the difference in support of HDZ and SDP electoral lists in 2013 elections was less than 6,000 votes, this time, increased turnout mostly benefited HDZ. Since HDZ has far stronger party organisation than other parties capable of more effectively mobilising its voters and it is more stable and has a loyal electoral base, it was in any case more likely to benefit from lower turnout. This result may also indicate that new party leadership after a significant period of turbulence and lacklustre performance managed to consolidate party organisation and give it a renewed sense of purpose. HDZ-led

coalition won more than 100,000 more votes than SDP-led coalition, ending with six Members of the European Parliament (MEPs) to four MEPs of SDP-led coalition. Furthermore, the SDP leader and the prime minister suffered a personal rebuke from voters when 48% of SDP voters cast a preferential vote for an SDP MEP Tonino Picula, initially placed by the party leader on the fifth place on the party list, propelling him to the top of SDP list of elected MEPs. Given that Tonino Picula is in a low-level conflict with the party leader and presents a calm and competent image in opposition to arrogant and combative, but not particularly effective, prime minister, this was interpreted as a vote of censure for the prime minister. The final Croatian MEP was won by ORAH, which won more than 85,000 votes and of which party leader Mirela Holy won more than 60,000 preferential votes. Given that Mirela Holy was expelled from SDP after a conflict with the prime minister after being forced to resign as an environment minister, the good result of ORAH and its party leader personally was also considered as a sign of criticism of Prime Minister Zoran Milanović.

The big loser of these elections is Labour Party, which failed to gain more voters than in previous EP elections and lost their only MEP. Alliance for Croatia gained close to 7% of the vote and came very close to gaining one MEP, whereas the coalition of National Forum and HSLS failed to gain sufficient support despite strong showing in the polls and is most likely heading into political oblivion. The support for Labour Party, being the oldest of the new parties, suffered most likely because their voters did not find sufficient motivation to vote in elections, which were clearly not considered important in the national context and since they support a party that is already established as an alternative to the left and the right in national parliament. Similarly, ORAH benefited from the surge of support from voters who wanted to register their support for this new alternative on the left.

In conclusion

The results of the EP elections in Croatia led to a swift resignation of the Labour Party leader Dragutin Lesar. Given that Lesar was an efficient and energetic parliamentary performer, his resignation might have an effect on party support and reception of it as a credible alternative to the left and the right bloc. However, since he stays in parliament, Labour Party might recover their fortune by next elections. The elections stabilised HDZ and its support and gave it a new sense of confidence for parliamentary elections due in late 2015. Given that results were interpreted as a failure of the SDP leader and prime minister Zoran Milanović, and as a success of his critics, relatively weak result

Table 1. Results of the 2014 EP elections – Croatia

Party	EP Group	Votes (%)	Seats	Votes (change from 2013)	Seats (change from 2013)
Croatian Democratic Union Alliance (HDZ, HSP-AS, HSS, BUZ)	EPP (HSP-AS in ECR)	41.4	6	+8.6	0
Social Democrat Party Alliance (SDP, HNS-LD, IDS, HSU)	S&D	29.9	4	–2.1	–1
Sustainable Development of Croatia (ORAH)	G-EFA	9.4	1	+9.4	1
Alliance for Croatia (Savez za Hrvatsku—HDSSB, HRAST, HSP…)		6.9	0	+3.9	0
Labour Party (Hrvatski laburisti – stranka rada)	GUE-N-GL	3.4	0	–2.4	–1
Others		9.0	0		
Total		100	11		–1
Turnout (%)		25.3			
Legal threshold for obtaining MEPs (%)		5%			

EP group abbreviations: EPP, European People's Party; S&D, Progressive Alliance of Socialists and Democrats; ALDE, Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe; G-EFA, The Greens–European Free Alliance; ECR, European Conservatives and Reformists; GUE-NGL, European United Left–Nordic Green Left; EFD, Europe of Freedom and Democracy; NI, Non-Inscrits.

of SDP, which after coalition partners won two MEPs, down from five won in 2013, is likely to further tension in SDP and may even turn into a full-blown conflict, in which case the stability of government majority might come into question and new elections might take place.

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Cyprus: Disapproval through abstention in the European Union's remotest 'outpost'

Konstantinos Athanasiadis

30 May 2014

Abstention ruled supreme in the European elections held on the divided island of Cyprus (divided between the Republic of Cyprus and the so-called Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus recognised only by Turkey). According to the Ministry of the Interior, more than half of the electorate (56%) (Ministry of the Interior, 2014) opted for abstention from the electoral process as a token of growing discomfort against the political system and the austerity measures put forward since last year. Paradoxically though, the high abstention rate provided a crucial lifeline to the political system of Cyprus as it enhanced the rather meagre results of almost all political formations on the island.

The results

In particular, the governing centre-right party of the Democratic Rally (DISY) managed to hold its ground despite the unpopular reform package implemented as part of the rescue plan between Cyprus and the European Union (EU). Thus, the party of the currently serving president of the Republic of Cyprus (Cyprus has a presidential system), Nicos Anastasiades, gained 37.8% of the votes, increasing by 1.8% its share in comparison with the last European elections of 2009. Interestingly, this figure reflects the highest score achieved in the European elections for the party of the Cypriot centre-right.

Yet, it should be noted that DISY was joined in this campaign by the European Party (EVROKO), which in the last 2009 elections received 4.2% of the Cypriot vote. Interestingly, EVROKO has actually 'repatriated' since it seceded from DISY in 2004, due to the latter's support for the island's reunification plan sponsored by the then-serving UN Secretary General Kofi Annan (2004).

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The former Communists of the Progressive Party of the Working People (AKEL) came at the second place, attaining 27% of the votes, which represented a diminution of 8 percentage points of its political influence since 2009. Both DISY and AKEL won two seats of six that Cyprus is allotted in the European Parliament. Moreover, the centre-left leaning Democratic Party (DIKO) also saw its forces slightly diminishing in comparison with the 2009 elections for the European Parliament (–1.5 points) as in the meantime it struggled to overcome internal frictions that reflected differences of opinion related to its participation in a coalition government with DISY (it won one seat). The social democratic party of EDEK secured the last seat, whilst losing 3.8% of its 2009 share (Table 1). Finally, Symmachia Politon (Citizens' Alliance) led by Giorgos Lillikas—former foreign minister and candidate in the last presidential elections (2013)—failed to elect any representative gaining 6.8% of the votes.

Ironically, the face-saving value of abstention is mirrored clearly if the electoral results are translated into absolute terms (number of votes gained in 2009 elections). The conservative ruling party of DISY loses 14% of the popular vote, AKEL 35.5%, DIKO 25% and EDEK43% (Persianis, 2014).

Table 1. Results of the 2014 European Parliament elections – Cyprus

Party	EP Group	Votes (%)	Seats	Votes (change from 2009)	Seats (change from 2009)
Democratic Rally (DISY)	EPP	37.8	2	+1.8	+0
Progressive Party of the Working People (AKEL)	GUE-N-GL	27.0	2	–8.4	+0
Democratic Party (DIKO)	S&D	10.8	1	–1.5	+0
Movement for Social Democracy EDEK–Green Party (KS/EDEK)	S&D	7.7	1	–3.8	+0
Citizens' Alliance (Symmachia Politon)		6.8	0	+6.8	
Others		9.9			
Total		100	6		_
Turnout (%)		44.0		–15.7	
Legal threshold for obtaining MEPs (%)		none			

EP group abbreviations: EPP, European People's Party; S&D, Progressive Alliance of Socialists and Democrats; ALDE, Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe; G-EFA, The Greens–European Free Alliance; ECR, European Conservatives and Reformists; GUE-NGL, European United Left–Nordic Green Left; EFD=Europe of Freedom and Democracy; NI, Non-Inscrits.

The campaign

Public discussions in the period that preceded the elections were dominated by the so-called national issue—that is, the renewed effort towards reunification—and the struggle to overcome the effects of the financial crisis. Related to attempts of economic recovery is the endeavour by the government of Cyprus to turn the country into a transit point of energy networks that bind together the Middle East and the EU in consistency with the latter's policy of energy diversification. Hence, public discourse was captured to a great extent by the endeavour to extract natural gas from the Cypriot continental shelf that aims exactly at underlining the island's geostrategic value for the EU. The official visit paid by US Vice President John Biden in Cyprus just a few days before the European elections and the results ensuing from it did contribute further to 'displace' discourse on the EU elections to the fringes of public dialogue.

Equally preponderant to the discussions on energy security is the impact of the financial crisis that badly hit the island's thriving services' sector. Cyprus has signed in March 2013 a bailout agreement with the Eurogroup, the European Commission, the European Central Bank and the International Monetary Found (IMF) that entailed a €10 billion funding package in exchange for significant reforms in the banking sector, increased scrutiny over money laundering and privatisations that endangered the country's status as a tax haven. Therefore, the debate on the role of the EU was framed also in connection to the ramifications of the Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) and the consequences associated to it such as the rising unemployment, the deconstruction of the welfare state and reduced salaries.

It is against this background that the low turnout should be interpreted. Cypriots chose to demonstrate their disapprobation to the political system by turning their backs to the elections for the European Parliament. Low turnout should also be evaluated as a sense of dissatisfaction and injustice committed against the citizens of Cyprus as reflected in the painful bailout plan.

It is noteworthy that according to the latest Eurobarometer, Cypriots show an immense distrust to their political parties (91%), thus revealing a raging latent institutional crisis. Pessimism regarding the prospects of the national economy is also pervasive since Cypriots evaluate as 'bad' the state of the national economy (97%) coming second after the Greeks. Regarding the EU, Cypriots feel that it is responsible for the austerity (77%), whilst the vast majority (86%) expresses its reluctance whether Brussels takes into serious consideration its preoccupations (Philelefttheros, 2014).

An interpretation

In conclusion, the conservative Democratic Rally shines as one of the few examples of ruling parties that managed to increase their share in the European elections. Although its share in absolute numbers followed the general decreasing trend as mentioned above, its gains in proportional terms must be appraised as an indication of support for reforms and recovery by a significant segment of the electorate. Besides, the opposition leftist AKEL is undergoing a process of reorganisation that followed its defeat in the 2013 presidential elections, which is to be attributed partially to the controversial management of the national economy by the then serving leftist president of the republic, Demetris Christofias.

Therefore, the results of the European elections in Cyprus do not imply an earthquake of the magnitude observed elsewhere. Yet abstention confirms that Cypriots feel disillusioned with the EU, and ultimately with their political system. Moreover, abstention rings the bell of a looming social crisis, which for the time being remains latent as the Republic of Cyprus tries to tackle the challenges of reunification, economic recovery and energy security.

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The Czech Republic: Where have all the voters gone?[1]

Vlastimil Havlík

30 May 2014

Twenty-one Members of the European Parliament (MEPs) representing the Czech Republic (one MEP less in comparison with the 2009 European Parliament [EP] election) were elected on 23–24 May. An electoral system of proportional representation with closed lists, one nationwide electoral district and 5% threshold is applied in the Czech Republic. The D'Hondt divisor is used for the allocation of seats amongst political parties (Chytilek et al., 2009).

Electoral campaign

The term *invisible* is perhaps the best descriptor for the campaign that preceded the election. It does not mean that the political parties (and the media) ignored the election at all but the intensity of electoral campaign (in terms of number of party billboards, posters and media coverage) was much lower in comparison with the early general election that had taken place in October 2013. Another important feature of the campaign was its Europeanisation. For the first time since the Czech Republic entered the European Union (EU), the vast majority of political parties focused on European issues and did not use the EP election as just another arena of national political contestation and an opportunity to attack the national government (as it was the case of the 2004 EP election in particular). This may have been related to the fact that the last general election was held just seven months before the European elec-

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tion and the national government consisting of ČSSD, ANO and KDU-ČSL was formed not earlier than in the end of January. Having been in the office just a few months, the government did not pass any controversial measures (actually hardly any at all). Therefore, there was only limited space for protest voting, which is usually seen as an important motivation for voting in so-called second-order elections (Reif and Schmitt, 1980). Therefore, it is hardly surprising that according to an opinion poll conducted just before the election, the EP election was perceived as 'meaningless' by 50% of voters (Česká televize, 2014). Moreover, the presence of European issues in the campaign did not mean that the political parties presented complex and detailed visions of the European integration process.

ANO, a new successful populist party founded by the billionaire Andrej Babiš, the latter winner of the EP election, published a manifesto full of general valence statements best expressed by the main electoral slogan of the movement: 'For Our Children to Have a Chance in Europe'. Similarly, the title of the ČSSD election manifesto in which the party emphasised especially social issues, was 'Together in Europe'. In addition, the party wanted 'to play the first fiddle in Europe'. KDU-ČSL, the old Christian democratic party, with the motto 'We Protect the Czech Interests', did not fall behind the other parties in this respect. Conservative TOP 09 tried to present themselves as a clearly pro-European party (a slogan 'I am an European' under the picture of the chairman of the party Karel Schwarzenberg clearly expresses the positive attitude of the party towards the EU) and persuaded the voters about the importance of the EU with the slogan 'Don't give up on Europe'. What got substantial media attention (even abroad) was the anti-immigration campaign ran by The Dawn of Direct Democracy, a populist political party chaired by a Czech Japanese businessman, Tomio Okamura. The party 'borrowed' a well-known sheep poster first used by the Swiss People's Party. The Eurosceptic camp included liberal-conservative ODS and The Free. The main issue of the ODS campaign was the rejection of the entrance of the Czech Republic to the European Monetary Union. The party organised a petition against the euro during the campaign and managed to collect more than 40,000 signatures. The campaign of the libertarian Free party was also based on criticism of—in their words 'Euro-nonsenses' including not only the euro but also, for example, the regulation of bulbs or flushing of toiletes; KSČM, usually labeled as a Eurosceptic party (Kopecký, 2004; Havlík, 2011), did not invest much effort and money into the campaign and relied on its usually very disciplined voters (Linek, 2006). All in all, the campaign preceding the election was hardly visible, lacking any contentious issues.

Table 1. Results of the 2014 EP elections – the Czech Republic

Party	EP Group	Votes (%)	Seats	Votes (change from 2009)	Seats (change from 2009)
ANO 2011 (ANO)	ALDE	16.1	4	+16.1	+4
Coalition of TOP 09 and Mayors (TOP 09)	EPP	16	4	+16.0	+4
Czech Social Democratic Party (ČSSD)	S&D	14.2	4	–8.2	–3
Communist Party of Bohemia and Moravia (KSČM)	GUE-NGL	11	3	–3.2	–1
Christian and Democratic Union – Czechoslovak People's Party (KDU-ČSL)	EPP	10	3	+2.3	+1
Civic Democratic Party (ODS)	ECR	7.7	2	–23.8	–7
Party of Free Citizens (The Free)		5.2	1	+3.9	+1
Tomio Okamura's Dawn of Direct Democracy (The Dawn)	EFDD	3.1	0	+3.1	0
Others		16.7	0		
Total		100	21		–1
Turnout (%)		18.2		–10.1	
Legal threshold for obtaining MEPs (%)		5%			

EP group abbreviations: EPP, European People's Party; S&D, Progressive Alliance of Socialists and Democrats; ALDE, Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe; G-EFA, The Greens–European Free Alliance; ECR, European Conservatives and Reformists; GUE-NGL, European United Left–Nordic Green Left; EFDD, Europe of Freedom and Direct Democracy; NI, Non-Inscrits.

The results

The low intensity of the campaign and its unusually high level of Europeanisation may have been the main reasons for the lowest turnout in the history of the EP elections in the Czech Republic. The turnout record of 18.2% was more than 10 percentage points lower than that in 2009, which made the Czech Republic the country with the second lowest electoral turnout amongst all member states (see Table 1; for a detailed comparison with the 2009 EP election, see Hloušek and Kaniok, 2009).

The election brought a narrow victory for ANO with Pavel Telička, a former member of the EU Commission, on the top of the party list. TOP 09, led by a former vice governor of the Czech National Bank, Luděk Niedermayer, ended as the runner-up. Having taken into consideration the traditionally low discipline of social democratic voters, 14.2% of votes (and four seats) can be interpreted as a success for ČSSD led by a sociologist, Jan Keller. KSČM, with MP Kateřina Konečná as the leader of the party list, ended on the fourth place, closely followed by KDU-ČSL. Both the parties will be represented by three MEPs. Only 7.7% of voters cast their votes far ODS led by MEP Jan Zahradil, which meant a decrease of support of the party by more than 20 percentage points since the 2009 EP election. The Free, with 5.2% of votes and one seat for the leader of the party, Petr Mach, was the last political party that managed to pass the threshold. The Dawn did not win any seat in the EP and ended with 3.1% of votes.

Interpretation

The low electoral turnout made any substantial interpretation of the results hardly possible. Nevertheless, several subtle comments can be made. The result of just a little bit more than 16% of votes showed that the populist ANO was able to mobilise voters even after it entered the government. On the other hand, the result was disappointing for ANO, which was predicted to win up to 30% of votes. The pro-European campaign of TOP 09 may have played an important role in the success of the party, which may have been attractive to the mostly pro-European right-centre voters who did not agree with the Eurosceptic attitudes of ODS. Nevertheless, one should mention that the success of TOP 09 was probably also driven by the candidacy of Jiří Pospíšil, a former ODS minister of justice who joined TOP 09 just few months before the election. With more than 77,000 of preferential votes, Pospíšil became the most successful candidate in this respect. Almost 10% of votes and three seats for KDU-ČSL seem to be a big victory for the Christian Democrats. However, taking into account the level of turnout and traditionally high discipline of the KDU-ČSL voters, the result of the party could have been even better. After the fall of the cabinet led by the former chairman of ODS Petr Nečas in 2013, which was caused by Nečas's and his wife's corruption allegation, and after a huge slump of popularity of the party, almost 8% of votes for ODS signals that the party still has a small but stable electoral base. On the other hand, the success of the Free, who present themselves not only as a Eurosceptic party but also a subject "purifying" the right side of the Czech political space, limited the electoral renaissance of ODS. The success of the Free may be seen as another piece of puzzle of the undergoing transformation of the right-centre part of political space in the Czech Re-

public. The worst result of KSČM since the 2004 EP election means that even the communists should not take their electoral support for granted.

Conclusion

The lowest electoral turnout since 2004 was perhaps the most important part of the story of the 2014 election in the Czech Republic. The lack of additional stimulus to vote with the newly formed government limiting the possibility to cast protest votes and an almost invisible campaign full of valence "European" statements issued by almost all political parties were probably the most important reasons for the fact that less than one fifth of voters finally participated in the election. Therefore, one can make only a few basic observations concerning the results of political parties: the populist ANO was able to mobilise voters even after it entered the government, and ODS retained some 'hard-core' voters. ČSSD, usually having problems to mobilise voters in the EP elections, recorded an average result. A significant share of voters decided to vote for a more pro-European right-centre party (TOP 09) and also for a purifying right-centre Eurosceptic alternative (The Free). KSČM was not able to attract as many voters as it had in the past, and KDU-ČSL did not use the potential of a disciplined voter base.

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Denmark and Finland: (not always) a success for the far-right

Nina Liljeqvist and Kristian Voss

30 May 2014

Finland

Populist and European Union (EU)–critical Finns Party (PS) was expected to pose a serious challenge to the established parties in the Finnish election to the European Parliament last Sunday. Having achieved tremendous success in the national elections in 2011 and continuing to ride high on the Eurosceptic sentiments this spring, the PS aimed to increase their number of seats in the European Parliament from one to three, with polls having predicted that the party would receive as much as 21% of the votes. However, the Eurosceptic sensation never happened in Finland. This may be partly explained by the fact that the party did not have a prominent top candidate, or rather, by the fact that this top candidate was not charismatic party leader Timo Soini, who has decided to focus on domestic politics instead. PS did increase their support compared with the 2009 election, scoring 12.9% and consequently gaining one seat, but this result is obviously far from what they were hoping for. Instead, the Finnish electorate favoured established parties in this year's European election. The liberal conservative National Coalition Party (KOK), which is the party of current prime minister Jyrki Katainen, kept its grip on the electorate with 22.6% of the votes, thereby securing the three seats it currently has in the parliament. One explanation for this success is the vote magnet Alexander Stubb, current minister for European affairs and foreign trade, who single-handedly got the party 8.6% of the vote share. Although Finnish elections to the European Parliament do tend to become candidate centred due to the use of open party lists, Stubb's achievement is nonetheless remarkable. As a former Member of the European Parliament (MEP) with a PhD in international politics and a previous career as an EU civil servant, KOK top candidate Stubb has added expertise and know-how to the campaign without making the party overly pro-European. Vis-à-vis European equivalents on

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the centre-right, the KOK is rather less pro-Europe, including preferring a freer internal market from bureaucratic red tape and opposing debt sharing and the transformation of the EU into a military alliance.

The four coalition partners of KOK had less of a successful election. The biggest disappointment might be the Social Democrats (SDP), having failed terribly at mobilising its voters, despite taking a pragmatic position insisting on improvements to the EU, including the continuation of free and fair trade and opposing joint liability of cross-country debts, in addition to typical social democratic positions. Expecting to increase its share of votes thanks to a revamped party leadership, the SDP instead lost over 5 percentage points to garner only 12.3%, a disappointing result for a party that averaged 20% of the votes in the 1990s. Despite this, the party managed to secure two seats in parliament. The other coalition party that self-reportedly sits on the centre of the political spectrum, the Green League, also lost several percentage points since 2009, and now enjoys only 9% of the vote share, thereby losing one of its two seats. The situation looks better for the liberal-centrist coalition partner, the Swedish People's Party, which is intensely pro-Europe. Despite low polls this spring, the party managed to hold on to their one seat in the Parliament by securing just under 7% of the votes. The other coalition partner on the right, the Christian Democrats, suffered a bittersweet election as it lost its one seat in the parliament despite increasing its vote share by one percentage point to 5.2%.

The situation is not bleak for all parties of the political centre. Opposition party the Centre (KESK) had an impressive election as it received 19.7% of the votes, thereby easily surpassing both the PS and the SDP. Suffering from internal divisions on the issues of European integration, the party offers voters a homespun mix of pro- and anti-Europe policies. On the one hand, it favours a more practical and pragmatic cooperation with subsidiarity as an important principle, especially for the issue of agriculture. On the other hand, KESK advocates returning the EU to more of its supposed original role as promoting free trade and peace, which is also the rhetoric of many parties expressing elements of Euroscepticism. With this combination of messages, KESK managed to keep up the positive wave the party has been riding lately, as it came fourth in the 2011 general election, third in the recent local election, and now emerges as the second largest Finnish party represented in the European Parliament. In addition, the Left Alliance (V), which left the 'six-pack' cabinet in March, had a remarkable election as it won back votes lost in the 2009 election. With an increase by 3 percentage points, the party now enjoys over 9% of the vote share and one seat in the parliament. Although V leader Merja Kyllönen regrets that the success of the left has happened at the expense of the SDP, as was indeed the case in large parts of Europe, she is satisfied about the party's comeback in the political arena in Finland, as in Europe at large.

Table 1. Results of the 2014 European Parliament elections – FINLAND

Party	EP Group	Votes (%)	Seats	Votes (change from 2009)	Seats (change from 2009 post-Lisbon)	Röster 2009	Platser
National Coalition Party (KOK)	EPP	22.6	3	–0.6	+0	23.2	3
Centre Party (KESK)	ALDE	19.7	3	+0.7	+0	19	3
Finns Party (PS)	EFD	12.9	2	+3.1	+1	9.8	1
Social Democratic Party (SDP)	S&P	12.3	2	–5.2	+0	17.5	2
Green League (VIHR)	G-EFA	9.3	1	–3.1	–1	12.4	2
Left Alliance (V)	GUE-NGL	9.3	1	+3.4	+1	5.9	0
Swedish People's Party (SFP)	ALDE	6.7	1	+0.6	+0	6.1	1
Christian Democrats (KD)	EPP	5.2	0	+1.0	–1	4.2	1
Others	n/a	2	0	+0.1	+0	1.9	0
Total		98.0	13		–	100	
Turnout (%)		40.9		+0.6			
Legal threshold for obtaining MEPs (%)		none					

Note: The 13 seats are distributed in proportional elections, using the open list d'Hondt method, where voters vote for an individual, but the individual's vote is counted primarily for the party and secondarily for the candidate. The entire country is a single electoral constituency without legal threshold.
EP group abbreviations: EPP, European People's Party; S&D, Progressive Alliance of Socialists and Democrats; ALDE, Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe; G-EFA, The Greens–European Free Alliance; ECR, European Conservatives and Reformists; GUE-NGL, European United Left–Nordic Green Left; EFD, Europe of Freedom and Democracy; NI, Non-Inscrits.

Cannibalism on the left flank aside, it may be said that the Finnish election contains few political sensations. Despite an absolute loss of votes, the five-party cabinet is performing surprisingly well in a context where the political elite has received a severe bashing from the public. In neighbouring EU member states Sweden and Denmark, government parties performed much worse, and while the left camp in Finland did not do as well as its Swedish colleagues, the real underperformer was the nationalist PS. It is underperforming as three major tendencies in Finnish politics theoretically should have

worked in its favour. First of all, there is a strong Eurosceptic trend in Europe, as indeed in Finland. With six extraparliamentary parties fighting for seats in the European Parliament on the basis of EU critiques, several flavours of Euroscepticism were on the menu. Second, compared with PS's previous election results in the national election in 2011 in which the party experienced a significant success, many expected the PS to maintain this momentum. With national elections usually focused on national issues and not the EU, it did not appear far-fetched to expect the PS to improve in this arena. In addition, the PS campaign has been absent of any overt blunders. Third, the presence of the euro(crisis) should play in their hands. One might therefore think that it would be in Finland that the far-right will advance and not in the Nordic neighbours in the west. Instead, Finnish voters defied this trend and rewarded parties on the centre-right and far-left.

Denmark

This stands in particular stark contrast to the election results in Denmark, where the far-right Danish People's Party (DF) undoubtedly secured an overwhelming victory to almost double its vote share. With 26.6% of the votes and four of Denmark's 13 seats, DF emerges as the largest Danish party in the European Parliament. Morten Messerschmidt, DF's top candidate and the Danish politician to receive the most personal votes in history, interpreted the victory as follows: 'I see it as a clear indication that the Danes want the EU back on track . . . Around Europe we are some democratic, civilised but EU critical parties . . . who now try to steer back the EU to what it is all about.' For the DF, as for the Swedish Sweden Democrats, the EU is all about the inner market, which they both favour and wish to have full access to. However, the European project becomes uncomfortable when it starts regulating issues that they see as national. Hence, the anti-immigration and pro–law and order DF laments the decline of Danish sovereignty, or the increase in the power of the EU regarding foreign policy, social welfare, or immigration, and particularly views open borders as having led to a significant increase in crime committed by EU citizens from Central and Eastern Europe.

The second largest party is the Social Democrats, party of Prime Minister Helle Thorning Schmidt, and comparably received 19.1% of the votes and three seats, which is a decrease by 2%. This is a disappointing result, but not as disappointing as that of the Liberals, the party of government from 2001 to 2011 that suffered a relatively humiliating decline to 16.7% of the votes and two seats, prompting a lot of soul searching. The Conservative People's Party and Socialist People's Party both presumably lost votes to the DF, respectively

Table 2. Results of the 2014 European Parliament elections – Denmark

Party	EP Group	Votes (%)	Seats	Votes (change from 2009)	Seats (change from 2009)
Danish People's Party (DF)	EFD	26.6	4	+11.3	+2
Social Democrats (S)	S&D	19.1	3	–2.4	–1
Liberals (V)	ALDE	16.7	2	–3.5	–1
Socialist People's Party (SF)	G-EFA	11	1	–4.9	–1
Conservative People's Party (K)	EPP	9.1	1	–3.6	+0
People's Movement against the EU (N)	GUE-N-GL	8.1	1	+0.9	+0
Radical Liberals (RV)	ALDE	6.5	1	+2.2	+1
Liberal Alliance (LA)	NI	2.9	0	+2.3	+0
Total		100	13		–
Turnout (%)		56.4		–1.3	
Legal threshold for obtaining MEPs (%)		none			

Note: The d'Hondt method of proportional representation is used. The country is one single constituency.
EP group abbreviations: EPP, European People's Party; S&D, Progressive Alliance of Socialists and Democrats; ALDE, Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe; G-EFA, The Greens–European Free Alliance; ECR, European Conservatives and Reformists; GUE-NGL, European United Left–Nordic Green Left; EFD, Europe of Freedom and Democracy; NI, Non-Inscrits.

declining in support to 11% and 9.1% of the votes and one seat each. The only other successful parties included the left-of-centre and government party the Social Liberals and right-of-centre Liberal Alliance, as both increased their vote shares by over 2%. Yet this was only enough for the former to reenter the European Parliament for the first time since the 2004 election. Finally, cross-political People's Movement against the EU managed to maintain its support of over 8% and one seat, although this result pales in comparison with the great successes achieved in elections in the 1980s, as the far-right has taken control of Euroscepticism.

In other words, while established parties are overrun by the far-right in relatively well-off Denmark, we see a different picture in euro crisis–stricken Finland. With a closer look at these cases, however, it is not very surprising. In Denmark, as in probably most European countries, the socioeconomic left-right dimension is increasingly overshadowed by a different dimension, namely, that of the international versus the national. Either you consider Eu-

rope as a possibility or you consider it as a threat. Danish People's Party masters the art of capitalising on this development, whereas traditional parties do not. To this, there is a related evolution regarding how parties cater to voters' Eurosceptic sentiments. There is considerable movement across the left-right spectrum here. In the 1970s, 80s and even 90s, it was the left, or centre-left, in Denmark that provided voters with an EU critical alternative to the pro-European centre and centre-right. The first MEP of the Progress Party, which the Danish People's Party split from in 1995, was Mogens Camre, who was an Member of Parliament (MP) for the Social democrats in the early 1970s and voted against European Community (EC) membership along with several other social democrats. As the European project shifted, however, bringing about change that appealed to the left camp, the opposition against the EU shifted. And voters, and indeed partisans as Camre, followed it over there. With the decline of cross-party People's Movement against the EU, which co-operates with any party on the left-right apart from the far-right, the DF is consequently the most easily perceived alternative for Eurosceptics. But (and that is a big but) here, Euroscepticism is nested in a far-right ideology.

Conclusion

The comparison of the Danish and Finnish cases tells us that the success of the far-right may be explained by economic factors, noneconomic Euroscepticism, how well the far-right party campaigns, as well as the response of other parties to their presence. Essentially, how mainstream parties answer to the challenge of the far-right plays an important role. In Denmark, other parties have not effectively replied sufficiently to the Eurosceptic views of voters, neither by offering policy options nor by addressing the debate, so the DF remains as either the more genuine or the more distinct regarding Euroscepticism. In Finland, a quite different development has taken place over the last few years. Cognisant of the appeal of the PS and Euroscepticism, the Finnish government has hardened their stance on EU negotiations, such as demanding unanimity for decision making of the European Stability Mechanism and blocking the entry of Rumania and Bulgaria into the Schengen area. That is, as voters' Euroscepticism became clear for anyone to see due to the success of the PS in 2011 national election, the government parties have shifted their stance in national EU policies. It is too early to say if this marks the beginning of a fundamental change in Finnish integration policy, but at least it seems as if this shift towards the EU has absorbed some of the Eurosceptic sentiments, which only three years ago seemed so profuse. Again, this goes to show that the success of Euroscepticism and far-right parties is partially explained by

the nature and degree to which the established parties on the centre-left and centre-right respond. Traditionally thought of as a very homogenous group of countries, this story also indicates how different the political landscapes in the Nordic corner(s) of Europe actually are.

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France: The historic victory of the *Front National*

Luana Russo

30 May 2014

France went to the polls on Sunday, May 25.[1] France elected 74 Members of the European Parliament (MEPs) (two more than in 2009) using a proportional system with a 5% electoral threshold and closed lists.[2] Political parties establish the order of candidates on the lists; voters can only cast a vote for the list and not for individual candidates. Seats are thus attributed according to the order in which the candidates are presented on the list. The national territory is divided up into eight constituencies (including one for all of the overseas territories).

The election campaign

In France, as in several other European countries (e.g., the Netherlands, UK or Italy), the electoral campaign has been influenced by the strong presence of a Eurosceptic party—*Front National* (FN)—the extreme-right party headed by Marine Le Pen. Beforehand, the preelection polls already captured the unprecedented result FN was heading for, estimating (correctly) that FN would become the largest party in France.

The fervently anti-European FN campaign was supported on the national level by the strong economic crunch that heavily affected President François Hollande's popularity (which went from 61% in March 2012 to 18% at the be-

[1] With the exception of the overseas departments that started voting on Saturday, May 24.

[2] The closed-list system for the European elections is used in France, Germany, Hungary, Portugal, Romania, Spain and the United Kingdom (except Northern Ireland).

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ginning of May 2014[3]) and that of his party, the *Parti Socialiste* (PS), in power since 2012.

FN did not meet strong opposition, not even on the right, even though the *Union pour un Mouvement Populaire* (UMP, the main conservative party) gave it a try by reintroducing ex-president Nicolas Sarkozy into the political fray and in turn launching an unequivocally anti-European campaign by using slogans that talked about the suspension of the Schengen treaty and the transfer of half of the European Union's (EU) competences back to member states.

In general, it was FN that dictated the terms and issues of the campaign to the two large moderate parties, who did not succeed in imposing a different agenda nor managed to sufficiently mobilise voters. In fact, according to the preelection polls, abstention would reach a new record high, beating the already historical level of the 2009 European elections (59.9%).

Besides the issues, the tone of the campaign was way calmer compared with that of other countries. Marine Le Pen conducted a campaign void of shouting matches, merely pointing to the simple nature of its program and the clarity of its message: no Europe, more France, exit from the Euro and abolition of the Schengen treaty.

The results

Forecasts did not lie: according to official results, FN confirmed expectations by becoming the largest party in France, with a whopping 25%, whereas the two big moderate parties (PS and UMP) underwent a substantial erosion of their popular mandate compared with the 2009 European elections, as illustrated in Table 1.

As far as the PS is concerned, the loss is dramatic, especially when compared with the results of the 2012 presidential elections in which Hollande won the second round with 58.5% of the votes (in the first round, he scored 35.4%). The day after the election, the prime minister of the current socialist government, Manuel Valls, described the 2014 electoral results as being 'an earthquake', declared that the government will not change its course, but that they already scheduled a tax reduction.[4]

[3] Baromètre OpinionWay: http://www.opinion-way.com/pdf/opinionway_-_le_barometre_clai_metro_lci_du_changement_dans_l_action_politique_mai_2014.pdf

[4] Le Monde: *Après la débâcle électorale, Valls veut « de nouvelles baisses d'impôts »* http://www.lemonde.fr/politique/article/2014/05/26/apres-la-debacle-electorale-valls-veut-de-nouvelles-baisses-d-impots_4425913_823448.html

Table 1. Results of the 2014 European Parliament elections – France

Party	EP Group	Votes (%)	Seats	Votes (change from 2009)	Seats (change from 2009)
National Front (FN)	NI	25.0	24	+18.6	+21
Union for a Popular Movement (UMP)	EPP	20.8	20	–7.1	–9
Socialist Party (PS)/Radical Leftist Party (PRG)	S&D	14.0	13	–2.5	–1
Alternative (Alt)	ALDE	9.9	7	+1.4	+1
Ecology Europe–The Greens (EELV)	G-EFA	8.9	6	–7.4	–8
Leftist Front (FG)	GUE-N-GL	6.3	3	–0.1	–1
Different Left (DVG)	NI		1		
Others		15.1	–		
Total		100	74		+2
Turnout (%)		43.5		+2.9	
Legal threshold for obtaining MEPs (%)		5%			

EP group abbreviations: EPP, European People's Party; S&D, Progressive Alliance of Socialists and Democrats; ALDE, Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe; G-EFA, The Greens–European Free Alliance; ECR, European Conservatives and Reformists; GUE-NGL, European United Left–Nordic Green Left; EFD, Europe of Freedom and Democracy; NI, Non-Inscrits.
Note: Vote totals have been calculated, as is customary in France, by taking into account metropolitan France (thus excluding the overseas departments)
Source: French Ministry of Interior (http://www.interieur.gouv.fr/Elections/Les-resultats/Europeennes/elecresult__Resultats-des-elections-europeennes-2014/(path)/Resultats-des-elections-europeennes-2014/index.html)

Also for the UMP, the comparison with the presidential elections shows a net decline: in 2012, Sarkozy got 26.1% of the votes in the first round and 41.5% in the second one. FN not only quadrupled its vote share in comparison with the 2009 European elections, but they also gained 15 percentage points compared with the 2012 presidential one in which they got 10.1%.

Among the other parties, the centre-right party *Alternative* (a union of the two centre parties: the *Union des democrats et independents* founded by Jean-Luis Borloo in 2012 and the *Mouvement Démocrate* of the centrist leader François Bayrou) is the only one that—together with FN—managed to increase its vote share compared with that in 2009. The good result of *Alternative* and the hard loss suffered by its natural ally UMP could lead to a readjustment of the power balance within the centre-right. We also see a net decline

for *Europe* Écologie *Les Verts (EELV—the left-wing, ecologist party)* that goes from 14 MEPs to 6. At the 2009 European elections, it scored exceptionally well (16.3%) under the leadership of the famous French-German writer Daniel Marc Cohn-Bendit (who officially withdrew from politics in April 2014).

Jean-Luc Mélenchon, the leader of *Front de Gauche* (FG), which hoped to clear the 10% threshold but instead stayed level compared with 2009, declared they were disappointed by the results.[5] Finally, one seat also went to the candidate of *Divers Gauche*, who got elected by the overseas departments. *Divers Gauche* is not a party per se, but rather a group that includes left-wing candidates that are members of minor parties or do not belong to any party.

An interpretation

The main result of the election, however, remains the fact that FN for the first time in its 30-year existence managed to become the largest party at the national level, beating its eternal rival UMP. For the European level, it is also worth remembering that FN presented itself to the voters not being part of any EU party group. When asked which party group they would join after the elections, Marine Le Pen answered that she wants to found a new party group.

Apart from being the largest party in France, FN is also the largest extreme-right party in all Europe in which the expansion of the right-wing Eurosceptics is undisputable[6]: the Eurosceptics now hold 142 seats compared with 64 in 2009.

Concerning the levels of participation, contrary to the predictions of a new abstention record, the level of abstention actually even diminished slightly: 56.5% compared with 59.5% in 2009.

Several scholars have underlined the second-order nature of the European elections, which means that instead of being an expression of preferences concerning European issues, it tends to assume the role of a referendum on the national government in power (see, for instance, Reif and Schmitt, 1980). In this sense, considering the low levels of appreciation for the current socialist president François Hollande, a good result for the opposition should not have

[5] Le Nouvel Observateur: *Européennes : le Front de gauche échoue à capter les mécontents et finit 6e* http://tempsreel.nouvelobs.com/elections-europeennes-2014/20140526.OBS8461/europeenne-le-front-de-gauche-echoue-a-capter-les-mecontents-et-finit-6e.html

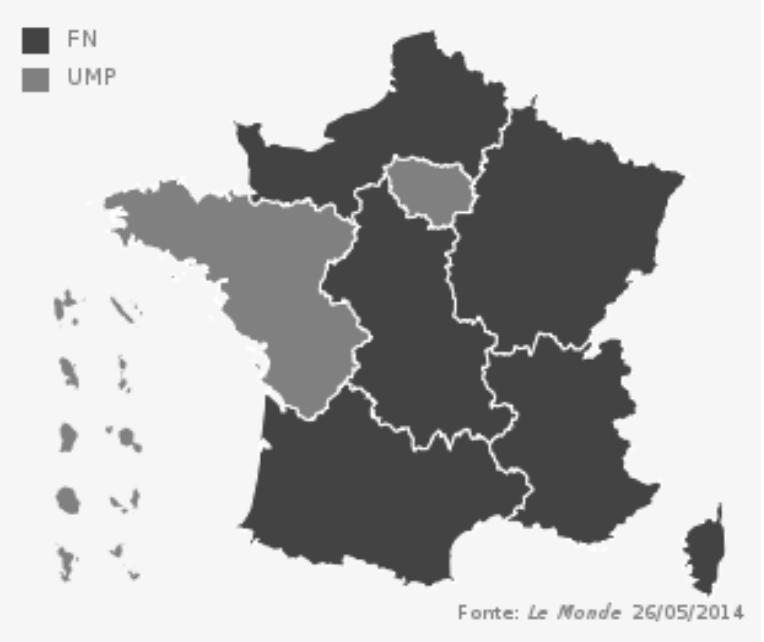
[6] Results of the extreme-right parties at the 2014 European elections: France 25%; Denmark 23%, United Kingdom 22%; Austria 20%; Hungary 15%; Finland 13%; Greece 12%.

come as a big surprise—if it would not be for the fact that traditionally this result should have been achieved by the moderate, conservative UMP party and not, as has been the case, the extreme-right.

Notwithstanding the fact that the victory of FN was largely forecasted, the width of the gap between FN and the centre-right UMP remains an impressive result. If we look at the result of the 2009 European elections, in five years, the balance of power on the right-hand side of the French political spectrum has radically changed and the roles have been reversed: looking at the 6% FN vote share in 2009, it has practically quadrupled its support (24%), whereas UMP lost 7 percentage points and got 21% (down from 28%) and has thus become the second right-wing party in the country instead of the leading one.

The PS debacle (and to a lesser extent that of the UMP as well) and the success of FN become even more evident when we look at the geographical distribution of the votes. Figure 1 shows the largest political party in each of the eight electoral constituencies for the European elections.

Figure 1: Largest political party by constituency



The map of the votes shows the picture of a country that is skewed to the right. FN is the largest party in five of the constituencies. In the other ones, the UMP leads the way.

When we take a look at the role of age groups, FN—differently from PS or UMP—is characterised by a young electorate. According to Ipsos-Steria, FN scores best among voters younger than 35 years (approximately 30%), while with the electorate, older than 60 years, the results are below the national median (21%).

On the contrary, the UMP is remarkably more popular among those older than 60 years, with a vote share of 25%, which is approximately 4% more than the national median. Also the PS cannot claim it was successful amongst young voters: only 15% of voters younger than 30 years chose PS.

Finally, it is interesting to note that it is amongst lower social strata that FN gets its best scores: in the last European elections, 43% of the workers voted FN, whereas only 8% voted PS.[7]

In conclusion

European Parliament elections are not general elections, which is why we should be very careful in interpreting these shifts in popular support at the polls. It has in fact been remarked that because it is in the very nature of European elections that they do not have a direct national effect and that voters therefore tend to express their votes free from considerations on government formation and favour smaller parties (Reif and Schmitt, 1980). However, the French result clearly carries weight on the European level, but especially on the national one. It suffices to refer to the fact that it were in fact the 1984 European elections that marked the historical rise of FN in the first place (Hainsworth, 2004).

Interpreting the victory of FN solely as an anti-European vote would definitely be a mistake. The European elections in France were held in a context of economic crisis, high unemployment levels and low support levels for President Hollande. These elements could have played an important role in reinforcing the tendency to use the European elections as an opportunity to voice protest (Pertusot and Rittelmeyer, 2014). This interpretation appears to be plausible in the light of some results recently put forward by the Pew Research Center (2014) according to which the majority of French is in favour of the European Union and supports the common currency (i.e., the euro).

[7] Le Monde, *Le FN obtient ses meilleurs scores chez les jeunes et les ouvriers* http://www.lemonde.fr/politique/article/2014/05/25/le-fn-obtient-ses-meilleurs-scores-chez-les-jeunes-et-les-ouvriers_4425625_823448.html

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Germany: Merkel does not stand out but holds

Carolina Plescia and David Johann

5 June 2014

Introduction

Germany went to the polls on Sunday, May 25 to elect 96 members of the European Parliament, by far the country in Europe that elects most delegates. The 96 members were elected by a pure proportional electoral system, a real novelty for nationwide elections in Germany, where the minimum threshold has always been 5% for the national elections and 3% for the European elections. This change was the result of Constitutional Court's decision last February to eliminate the electoral threshold.

The election campaign

Despite Germany's leading role in Europe and the importance of Europe for Germany, only a quarter of German voters said that they were interested in the European elections during the campaign (http://www.thelocal.de/20140523). The main reasons for voters' apathy are to be found in a very sober election campaign and the lack of disagreement among mainstream parties. The *Christian Democratic Union/Christian Social Union* (CDU/CSU), headed by Angela Merkel and Horst Seehofer, respectively, and the *Social Democratic Party* (SPD), headed by Sigmar Gabriel, govern together in a grand coalition, and although both major parties indicated and supported their own candidates, these were not able to mobilise the electorate. Both candidates for the position of the president of the European Commission, the candidate preferred by the CDU/CSU, Jean-Claude Juncker of the *European People's Party* (EPP), and the candidate preferred by the SPD, Martin Schulz of the *Alliance of Socialists and Democrats* (S&D), found it extremely difficult to find topics on which they disagreed.

This lack of debate and disagreement between the two major parties could have offered a great opportunity to opposition parties to mobilise the electorate.

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In addition, the Constitutional Court's decision to switch to a pure proportional system could have given to all the supporters of smaller parties, who did not want to 'waste' their vote (Cox, 1997) during the national elections due to the 5% threshold, the incentive to vote for their preferred party. In fact the legal change translates even less than 1% of votes into one seat. Despite all this however, the expectations for the performance of small extreme right and extreme left parties remained very low during the election campaign. The *Alternative for Germany* (AfD) party was the exception, perhaps the only real novelty of this low-profile European election in Germany. Indeed, it was expected that the AfD, standing for the dissolution of the common currency, would perform better than the last national elections in 2013 but not as strong as first polls had predicted.

The results

The turnout for the elections was 48.1%, almost 5 percentage points more than that in 2009 but far lower than the last national elections when the turnout has been 71.5%. The results confirmed Angela Merkel's party (the CDU) as first party in Germany almost equaling the 2009 result (–0.6 points) but losing approximately 4 percentage points when compared with the national elections in 2013. The CDU thus obtained only 29 seats, 5 less than the last European elections. Taking into account all the European elections, the joint performance of CDU and CSU on May 25 was the worst ever. The CSU, which operates exclusively in Bavaria, received only 5.3% of the votes and lost considerably when compared with the last national elections (–2.1 points) and with the previous European elections (–1.9 points).

The SPD obtained 27.3% of the votes, improving by as much as 6.5 percentage points from the last European elections and greatly reducing the distance from the CDU/CSU, its current partner in government. The Greens lost 1.4 percentage points and as many as three seats when compared with the last European elections; the party gained 10.7% of the votes and 11 seats in total. The far-left party (*Die Linke*) lost slightly in comparison with the previous national and European elections and it got 7.4% of the votes and seven seats.

The AfD, who contested the European elections for the first time 2014, got as much as 7% of the vote and seven seats, which is an increase of 2.3 points compared with its share of votes at the last national elections in 2013. The *Free Democratic Party* (FDP), which adopted quite pro-European positions during the election campaign, obtained only 3.4% of the votes. This is a decline of 7.6 percentage points compared with the last European election in 2009. One might thus conclude that the demise that has already loomed at the last national election in 2013, when the FDP achieved the worst result ever after World War II, continues.

Table 1. Results of the 2014 European elections – Germany

Party	EP Group	Votes (%)	Seats	Votes (change from 2009)	Seats (change from 2009)
Christian Democratic Union of Germany (CDU)	EPP	30.0	29	–0.6	–5
Christian Social Union (CSU)	EPP	5.3	5	–1.9	–3
Social Democratic Party of Germany (SPD)	S&D	27.3	27	+6.5	+4
Alliance '90/The Greens (Grüne)	G-EFA	10.7	11	–1.4	–3
The Left (Die Linke)	GUE-N-GL	7.4	7	–0.1	–1
Alternative for Germany (AfD)	(forse ECR)	7	7	–	+7
Free Democratic Party (FDP)	ALDE	3.4	3	–7.6	–5
Free Voters (FREIE WÄHLER)		1.5	1	–0.2	+1
Pirates	G-EFA	1.4	1	+0.6	+1
The Animal Protection Party (Tierschutzpartei)		1.2	1	+0.1	+1
Family Party of Germany (FAMILIE)		0.7	1	–0.3	+1
National Democratic Party of Germany (NPD)		1	1	–	–
The Party (Die PARTEI)		0.6	1	–	+1
Ecological Democratic Party (ÖDP)		0.6	1	–	+1
Others		1.9	0		
Total		100	96		–
Turnout (%)		48.1		+4.8	
Legal threshold for obtaining MEPs (%)		none			

Source: http://www.bundeswahlleiter.de/de/europawahlen/EU_BUND_14/ergebnisse/bundesergebnisse/
Abbreviations for EP groups: EPP, European People's Party; S&D, Progressive Alliance of Socialists and Democrats; ALDE, Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe; G-EFA, The Greens–European Free Alliance; ECR, European Conservatives and Reformists; GUE-NGL, European United Left–Nordic Green Left; EFD, Europe of Freedom and Democracy; NI, Non-Inscrits.

In this first German nationwide election without electoral threshold, also some small parties that until now had been excluded from the national parliament (Bundestag) were able to get seats. However, they did not stand out. Germany will send a total of seven delegates to Strasbourg, representing seven

different political parties that have all obtained approximately 1% of the vote. In particular, Germany will send one deputy for the Pirates, one for the far-right party NPD, one for the Party, one for the Animal Protection Party, one for the Ecological Democratic Party, one for the Free Voters, and one for the Family Party of Germany.

Discussion of the results

The AfD is undoubtedly the winner of these European elections in Germany. The Eurosceptic party led by Professor Bernd Lucke during the campaign declared itself against the euro. Professor Lucke in fact has repeatedly stated that they do not want to be part of the Eurosceptic group in Strasbourg but instead they will seek dialogue with the conservative parties. Despite this however, the 7% of the votes cast for the AfD makes a stir in Germany. The result of the AfD clearly indicates to the two mainstream parties, the SPD and the CDU/CSU, that they can no longer ignore the AfD, which might well be able to enter the German parliament in the next elections scheduled to take place in 2017. The AfD has reached the impressive figure of 14.5% in its stronghold, in Pforzheim, Baden-Württemberg. It seems that the AfD managed to obtain the support of disappointed voters of the FDP. In fact, in Pforzheim in 2009, the FDP had collected almost 16% of the votes, but during the latest election the party scored a catastrophic 4.6%. The AfD has probably benefited not only from the weakness of the FDP but also from the bad economic conditions in some areas of the country. In regions such as Brandenburg, where the unemployment rate is comparably high, the AfD has obtained far above the national average of votes.

Merkel's union, the CDU/CSU, obtained 35.3% of the votes, and it remains the largest delegation of Germany in Strasbourg. This delegation is, however, much smaller than it was in 2009, and domestically, this result counts as a setback (or nearly so). A great deal of the losses of Merkel's union can be ascribed to the bad result of the CSU in Bavaria. Here, the CSU recorded a stirring decline of votes going from 48.1% to 40.5%. A good portion of the former CDU/CSU voters seems to have been gained by the SPD and the AfD. Horst Seehofer, the CSU leader, speaks of "great disappointment" in the aftermath of the elections, but he argues that the meager result of the CSU derives mainly from the low turnout (http://wahl.tagesschau.de/wahlen/2014-05-25-EP-DE/analyse-wanderung.shtml).

The SPD obtained a good election result compared with the 2009. The increase of 6.5 percentage points has been the largest ever in nationwide elections for the SPD. During the election campaign, the SPD had repeatedly

stressed that a strong result of the SPD would have increased the chances of having a German president of the European Commission (referring to Martin Schulz), and perhaps this has contributed to the good performance of the SPD in this election. Meanwhile, both mainstream parties, the CDU/CSU and the SPD, will have to deal with the result of the AfD.

The loser of the 2014 elections is, yet again, the FDP. The FDP continues its decline, and it might be that the FDP disappears almost completely from the German political scene in the near future.

Conclusion

Despite Germany's leading role in Europe and the importance of Europe for Germany, few voters were interested in this European election. In addition, the results of the elections in Germany were not characterised by any political earthquake or shock that have instead occurred in many other European countries, France and Britain at the forefront. Indeed, the results in Germany, if on the one hand provide some rumblings of change (a small vote loss for the CDU/CSU, a small comeback of the SPD and new parties entering the political scene), on the other hand, they suggest that the real changes will not happen for several more years.

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Greece: Historic change or alarm bell?

Konstantinos Athanasiadis

30 May 2014

The elections of May 25 in Greece were realised amidst pronounced polarisation, deep fragmentation and collapse of partisan identities. Interestingly, the elections coincided with the 40th anniversary of the collapse of the military junta that ruled Greece for seven years (1967–1974) and the subsequent consolidation of democracy as inculcated in the era of Metapolitefsi (change of regime / new ethos in the conduct of politics).

The 2014 European elections hallmark a historic victory for the Greek Left, since for the first time a party residing in the left fringes of the political spectrum, the Coalition of the Radical Left (SYRIZA)—whose leader Alexis Tsipras ran also as a candidate for the presidency of the European Commission for the European Left—won an election. Simultaneously, the 2014 European elections will be evoked for the continuous rise of the neo-Nazi party of Golden Dawn (GD). Finally, the results nurture conflicting interpretations regarding their exact meaning: is it the Left that will drive the ship of Greece far from the murky waters of austerity and the memoranda? Or is it rather a ringing bell of frustration by the Greeks to the ruling coalition of New Democracy (centre-right/ND) and the Panhellenic Socialist Movement (PASOK) with an eye to the upcoming legislative elections (formally 2016)?

The results

Greece marches since 2009 (bipolarity's last stand given the emergence of the pro- and anti-memorandum cleavage) towards party system transformation (Mair, 1997) in the form of polarised pluralism (Sartori, 1976), expressed in terms of intense ideological polarisation and a fragmented parliament (seven effective parties). This transformation is coupled with a deep institutional crisis (Verney, 2014), albeit latent before 2010 (adoption of the first Memorandum of Understanding), which was articulated as anger and distrust vis-à-vis the political system at large under the catalysing pressure of the austerity measures.

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In this context, serious contradictions became embedded in the political and social landscape that emerged also in the period that preceded and followed the European elections. First, 42 lists competed for the 21 seats Greece is allotted in the European Parliament, which is translated into 1299 candidates (News.gr 2014). Greece is thus first in the per capita number of candidates in the European Union, and third in absolute numbers behind France (3753) and Italy (2106). Second, the closed party list, preferred until the last European elections, was replaced by the open one as a means to contain abstention (the 3% threshold remained in place). The turnout was indeed quite satisfactory (60% against 53% in 2009), as Greeks voted for the runoff of the local elections too. Yet a significant segment of the electorate has paradoxically cast its ballot in favour of representatives of the old political class, who were to be found on almost all winning lists but also in favour of famous TV personalities (Margomenou, 2014).

The Coalition of the Radical Left (SYRIZA—umbrella organisation for 12 political groups of the Left) achieved a historical victory (26.58% of the votes and six seats in the European Parliament). This share is very close to the percentage gained in the June 2012 legislative elections, when SYRIZA came second with 26.89%, whilst by far exceeding its 2009 European elections' share of 4.70 percentage points. The conservative centre-right party of ND, on the other hand, major pillar of the coalition government since June 2012, saw its political influence dropping by 9.6 points since 2009 (and losing three seats), and by almost 7 points since the last legislative elections held two years ago.

The performance of the neo-Nazi party of GD still confirmed a shared fear: the party has indeed acquired a solid basis of support. Its meteoric rise continues (9.4% and 3 seats, 0.46% in 2009, 6.92% in 2012) against the background of an ongoing judicial investigation that likens the party to a 'criminal gang' (Kathimerini, 2014).

Moreover, the socialist party of PASOK, which ran under the rubric of the Olive Tree (inspired by the respective Italian scheme) together with various PASOK splinter groups, gained 8.02% in stark comparison with the 36.65% of 2009 and the 12.28% of 2012. Yet, the party leadership evaluated the share as face-saving given the adverse conditions of the participation in the coalition government. The centre-left/liberal 'To Potami' (The River), founded some months before the elections, fared impressively (6.60%) as its leader, a prominent journalist, speaks for a new way of conducting politics, whilst expressing his volition to share part of the responsibility in a future coalition government (Kathimerini, 2014).

The Communist Party instead, whilst slightly ameliorating its share from the 2012 elections (+1.5 points), lost 2.3 points in comparison with the 2009 European elections. The rightist Independent Greeks (Anexartitoi Hellenes), an ND splinter group that argues against the Memoranda and the loss of national sovereignty, whilst debuting in these European elections and securing one seat (3.46%), lost significant part of their dynamic amassed in 2012 (7.51%). Finally, special reference should be made to relevant parties that did not reach the 3% threshold. The ultraconservative Popular Orthodox Rally (LAOS) made a significant comeback (2.70%) after it has hit rock bottom in

Table 1. Results of the 2014 European Parliament elections – Greece

Party	EP Group	Votes (%)	Seats	Votes (change from 2009)	Seats (change from 2009)
Coalition of the Radical Left (SYRIZA)	GUE-N-GL	26.6	6	+21.9	+5
New Democracy (ND)	EPP	22.7	5	–9.6	–3
Golden Dawn (GD)		9.4	3	+8.9	+3
Elia/Panhellenic Socialist Movement (PASOK)	S&D	8.0	2	–28.6	–6
To Potami (The River)	S&D	6.6	2	+6.6	+2
Communist Party (KKE)	GUE-N-GL	6.1	2	–2.3	+0
Independent Greeks (Anexartitoi Hellenes)	ECR	3.5	1	+3.5	+1
Popular Orthodox Rally (LAOS)	EFD	2.7	0	–4.5	–2
Greek European Citizens (Hellenes Evropaioi Polites)		1.4	0	+1.4	+0
Democratic Left (DIMAR)	S&D	1.2	0	+1.2	+0
Union for the Homeland and the People (Enosi gia tin Patrida kai to Lao)		1.0	0	+1.0	+0
Greek Hunters' Party (Komma Hellenon Kinigon)		1.0	0	–0.3	+0
Green Party / Pirates (Ecologoi Prasinoi/ Peirates)	G-EFA	0.9	0	–2.6	–1
Others		8.8			
Total		100	21		-
Turnout (%)		60.0		+7.4	
Legal threshold for obtaining MEPs (%)		3%			

Abbreviations for EP groups: EPP, European People's Party; S&D, Progressive Alliance of Socialists and Democrats; ALDE, Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe; G-EFA, The Greens–European Free Alliance; ECR, European Conservatives and Reformists; GUE-NGL, European United Left–Nordic Green Left; EFD, Europe of Freedom and Democracy; NI, Non-Inscrits.

the 2012 general elections (1.58%) and its short participation in the coalition government of Lucas Papademos (technocrat, former vice president of the European Central Bank). Moreover, the Green Party lost its unique seat although joining forces with the Pirates. Last but not least, the party of the Democratic Left (DIMAR)—splinter group of SYRIZA–which portrayed itself as the 'Left of responsibility', occupying the ground between SYRIZA (radical Left) and PASOK (social democracy) utterly failed (1.20% from 6.26% in the 2012 general elections), revealing a sort of 'existential crisis' since DIMAR left the coalition government (the party is on the verge of dissolution).

The campaign

The campaign was in line with the pattern established in the June 2012 national elections. It essentially revolved around the dominant cleavage of pro- and anti-memorandum, which in turn denotes a particular posture vis-à-vis Europe. Thus, Alexis Tsipras likened the elections to 'a historic referendum' (Ethnos, 2014) as choice between two options: change 'that will close the book of Metapolitefsi' (Antoniou 2014) or continuation of austerity.

On the other hand, the Greek prime minister, Antonis Samaras, played the card of stability conveyed by the coalition government, whilst posing the dilemma of being with Europe or against Europe (Athanasopoulos, 2014), blaming SYRIZA for sheer populism. Both coalition partners, ND and PASOK, tried to emphasise the achievement of surplus in the national budget (Naftemporiki, 2014) as the first breakthrough towards recovery.

An extra point of controversy emerged a few days before the elections regarding a segment of the electorate that voted for GD in the first round of the local elections. Alexis Tsipras invited them to 'return to the road of democracy' as being deeply convinced that 'those people are not in their vast majority neo-nazis' (Antoniou, 2014). This was in turn reciprocated by members of the coalition government, who characterised 'flirting with GD' as 'a disgusting act' (Imerisia, 2014).

Interpreting the oracle

The electoral result in Greece followed the general pattern remarked elsewhere in Europe: ruling parties crumbled. Indeed, the former three parties (DIMAR included) of the coalition lost in absolute terms 1.2 million votes since 2012 (Zoulas, 2014). SYRIZA has undoubtedly achieved a historic victory at least at the symbolic level. It managed to gain almost the same result it has scored in the first-order national elections of 2012, although losing 140,000 votes (Ibid.).

Yet this victory will not imply a subversion of the government in the short and medium term as the party discourse had it. The outcome of the May 25 elections underlined the fact that even if SYRIZA wins the next general elections, it will need coalition partners (coalition governments will be the rule of the day after the collapse of bipolarism). Unless the party moves to the centre, finding partners on the Left would require some adept brinkmanship given the negative stance of the Communist Party (Mailis, 2012) and the broader rearrangements taking place within the Greek centre-left. On the right, SYRIZA and Independent Greeks have already established a front against the Memoranda (in.gr, 2013). The meagre results of last Sunday's elections are not very promising though for the party of the populist Right.

On the other hand, the electoral result is a clear indication of frustration by the vast majority of the Greek electorate against the continuing policies of austerity and fiscal discipline by the coalition government of ND and PASOK. The process of internal devaluation has hit fatally the middle class and the lower strata of the population giving rise to extreme unemployment and limited spending. Given that the much promised growth is yet to come, and the results of the fiscal discipline are not immediately felt, the coalition partners will attempt to take some initiatives in the short and medium term. First, cabinet reshuffle is to be expected (Terzis, 2014). Second, ND plans to endorse constitutional reform that among others will entail the direct election of the president of the republic (Ravanos, 2014). National elections will be avoided at the moment as both ND and PASOK interpret the result as not condemning for the coalition, whilst the majority of Greeks are contemptuous of a new electoral Odyssey (Express, 2014).

Finally, the worrying resilience of GD shows that the party has been squarely entrenched in the electorate. This implies that the vote for GD was intentional. Greeks have henceforth no excuse since they now know for what this party stands for.

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Hungary: The stability of Fidesz's domain

Federico Vegetti

10 June 2014

Introduction

The result of the European elections of 2014 in Hungary is all but surprising. The government party Fidesz got the absolute majority of the votes, the left-wing opposition appears to be more and more fragmented, while the far-right Jobbik remains fairly stable, far from the peaks of popularity obtained by ideologically similar parties in other European countries. However, this apparent calm conceals a quite discouraging political climate, from both a national and a European perspective. The turnout went down to 28.9%, 7 points lower than the previous European Parliament (EP) election in 2009, and about half of the turnout registered at the national elections in April. The electoral campaign kept a relatively low profile, although this was mainly due to the difficult media access for the opposition, rather than to an actual lack of conflict. Moreover, despite the few seats obtained by the 'official' Eurosceptical party Jobbik, as readily reported by the Economist,[1] the vote to Prime Minister Viktor Orbán's Fidesz is not at all to be regarded as an 'euroenthusiastic' choice.

The political context

Hungarian citizens voted on May 25 to elect their 21 representatives to the EP. However, the important event of the year for Hungarian politics has been the national parliamentary elections on April 6. The closeness to the national appointment further accentuated the 'second-order' character of the EP elections, where strictly European issues usually play a less important role

[1] See the *Graphic Detail* post from May 26: http://www.economist.com/blogs/graphicdetail/2014/05/daily-chart-16?fsrc=scn/fb/wl/dc/acertainideaofdisunion

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in respect to national issues (see Reif and Schmitt, 1980). The latter included direct attacks between members of different parties, with no great emphasis on substantive policy differences. While concepts such as 'left' and 'right' are quite widely used in Hungarian politics (Todosijevic, 2004), these terms are mostly used to address political groups in conflict to one another, rather than to describe substantive ideologies (Palonen, 2009). In such a context, more focused on the political actors than on the issues, the long campaign for the two elections in 2014 has not been an exception.

After a decisive victory in 2010, the right-wing Fidesz—born at the end of the 1980s as a libertarian student movement and turned over time into a national conservative party—obtained the control of two thirds of the Hungarian national parliament.[2] This result granted Viktor Orbán's party the power to modify the constitution and, during the last four years, change several rules of the game to its own advantage.[3] As a consequence, the new electoral victory in April led Fidesz to control two thirds of the parliament for the second time (see also Toka, 2014).

At the same time, the political landscape on the left went through some major changes, all pointing to a greater fragmentation. The defeat of the Hungarian Socialist Party (MSZP) in 2010 led to the formation of other two brand-new left-wing parties, both starring former MSZP members. The first, Democratic Coalition (DK), is led by former prime minister Ferenc Gyurcsány, who was at the lead of the left-wing government from 2004 to 2009. The second, Együtt-PM, is led by Gordon Bajnai, who became prime minister after Gyurcsány's resignation during the last year of MSZP's rule from 2009 to 2010. The three parties joined forces in April in a coalition led by MSZP's leader Attila Mesterházy mainly prompted by a strongly majoritarian electoral system but ran separately for the EP elections in May, which have been held under a proportional system (PR) with 5% threshold. Finally, another left-wing party worth mentioning is 'Politics Can Be Different' (LMP), more focused on environmental issues. Despite its relatively small size, the party managed to get enough votes to obtain parliamentary seats in both elections.

[2] Since 1998, Fidesz runs every election in coalition with the Christian-conservative party KDNP, including the two elections of 2014. However, given the marginal importance of KDNP within the coalition, in this article, I will follow the rather common norm to refer to both parties naming only Fidesz.

[3] For a detailed explanation of the new rules and how they favoured Fidesz at the parliamentary elections in April, see the post in five parts by Kim Lane Scheppele on Paul Krugman's blog on the *New York Times'* page: http://krugman.blogs.nytimes.com/2014/02/28/hungary-an-election-in-question-part-1/ (link for the first part)

Another important actor in the Hungarian political arena is Jobbik, a rather extreme right-wing and nationalist party, whose members have been repeatedly accused to hold antisemitic views. The first relevant result for Jobbik was exactly five years ago, at the European elections of 2009, where the party obtained 14% of the valid votes. This result was followed by a 16% at the national elections in 2010 and by an impressive 20% at the elections last April. However, in mid-May, the party was involved in a political scandal, as one of its incumbent candidates for the European Union (EU) parliament, Béla Kovács, was accused to be a spy for Russia. While both the candidate and the party rejected the accusations, the news has been reported by several media and might have had an impact on Jobbik's result on May 25. Among all Hungarian parties, Jobbik is the only one taking clear Eurosceptical positions.

The campaign

The campaign for the European elections in Hungary was conducted in a rather passive manner by most of the parties. Fidesz and MSZP did not even bother publishing an electoral program, as an indicator of how low was the interest of the two parties for a substantive debate after the elections in April. In fact, the protagonist of the campaign was Viktor Orbán and his government, to the obvious advantage of his own party Fidesz. This has been the case to a large extent because of the new law on election procedures, which restricts the media access during the campaign for all parties, but not for the government.[4]

Orbán's strategy during the campaign aimed at presenting an image of the government as the defender of the interests of the Hungarians against an EU that is unable or unwilling to understand the needs of the country. In this way, from its power position, Fidesz tried to appeal to the Eurosceptical electorate, entering in direct competition with Jobbik.

Two issues where Orbán followed this strategy have been the cuts to the gas and utility costs for the households,[5] and the new restrictions on land ownership to foreign farmers, mostly coming from the neighboring Austria.[6] Both issues are rather an 'echo' of the national campaign, where they have

[4] See: http://krugman.blogs.nytimes.com/2014/02/28/hungary-an-election-in-question-part-5/

[5] See: http://online.wsj.com/news/articles/SB10001424052702303448204579342602038266352

[6] See: http://www.reuters.com/article/2014/03/07/us-hungary-farmland-idUSBREA260UH20140307

been discussed maintaining, among other things, that the EU would certainly oppose the government's struggle to pursue the interest of its citizens.[7]

After 'neutralizing' the left at the elections in April, Orbán redirected his attacks against the Eurosceptical right-wing of Jobbik, trying to profit from Béla Kovács' espionage scandal by talking about 'treasonous activities' of 'a party that considers itself national'.[8] This can in part explain Jobbik's loss, compared with the result in April, and Fidesz' success at an election where Eurosceptical parties obtained significant results in several other European countries.

The results: Stability on the right, fragmentation on the left

Orbán's strategy seems to have paid out. Fidesz got 51.5% of the valid votes, approximately 5 percentage points less than in 2009, but 7 points more than at the national elections in April. This seems to go to Jobbik's disadvantage, as the party drops from 20.5% in April to 14.7% in May, a quite similar result to the EP elections five years ago.

The left-wing opposition obtains a slightly better result compared with what they obtained in the national elections. This essentially confirms the suspicion that the forced cohabitation in the same coalition did not help the three parties, which gain in total 27.9% of the valid votes, compared with 26% obtained in April by the coalition (inclusive of the liberal party MLP, which did not run for the European elections). However, what is more interesting to point out is the relative similarity of the shares of the three parties. MSZP is still the strongest party of the trio, although its 10.9% represents a quite large loss after the 17.9% obtained in 2009. However, DK is only 1 percentage point below, on 9.8%, and Együtt-PM follows closely with 7.2% of the votes. This result suggests that the post-MSZP left is passing through a moment of transition characterised by a reorganisation of the supply. While the outcome of this process is not yet easy to foresee, it might result into a new left-wing coalition leader different from MSZP. To be sure, the new electoral law, heavily majoritarian, was conceived by the party in government to profit exactly from this fragmentation, at least forcing the three parties to join unenthusiastic coalitions. However, the European elections might have work as an 'internal

[7] See: http://www.politics.hu/20140525/hungarys-ruling-party-scores-majority-in-european-parliament-vote-as-far-right-eclipses-divided-left/

[8] See: http://hungarianspectrum.wordpress.com/2014/05/19/evidence-is-presented-in-the-jobbik-espionage-case/

Table 1. Results of the 2014 European elections – Hungary

Party	EP Group	Votes (%)	Seats	Votes (change from 2009)	Seats (change from 2009)
Hungarian Civic Union / Christian-Democratic People's Party (Fidesz/KDNP)	EPP	51.5	8	+5.0	+1
Movement for a Better Hungary (Jobbik)	NI	14.7	3	–0.1	+0
Hungarian Socialist Party (MSZP)	S&D	10.9	2	–6.5	–2
Democratic Coalition (DK)	S&D	9.8	2	+9.8	+2
Together 2014 / Dialogue for Hungary (Együtt-PM)	G-EFA	7.2	1	+7.2	+1
Politics Can Be Different (LMP)	G-EFA	5.0	1	+2.4	+1
Others	–	0.9	0		
Total		100.0	21		–
Turnout (%)		28.9		–7.4	
Legal threshold for obtaining MEPs (%)		5			

Abbreviations for EP groups: EPP, European People's Party; S&D, Progressive Alliance of Socialists and Democrats; ALDE, Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe; G-EFA, The Greens–European Free Alliance; ECR, European Conservatives and Reformists; GUE-NGL, European United Left–Nordic Green Left; EFD, Europe of Freedom and Democracy; NI, Non-Inscrits.

headcount', questioning the predominant role of MSZP within the coalition and showing the potential of the two new parties. A case apart within the left-wing block is LMP, which does well enough to pass the 5% threshold and send one candidate to Brussels. Despite the party's efforts to propose itself as a different take on left-wing politics, compared with the rather traditional image of MSZP, left-wing Hungarians seem not to be fully convinced of its relevance.

A final remark is about the turnout, which drops 7 points since 2009, reaching the all-time low of 28.9%. This might be in part due to the redundant campaign or to the lack of interest of Hungarian voters in expressing themselves so soon after a so-clear result as the one in April. However, such a low turnout might also reflect the alienation of the electorate from the current political offer, in a political climate where Fidesz is likely to stay in power for long time.

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Luxembourg: The first European Parliament–only vote

Patrick Dumont and Raphaël Kies

30 May 2014

The context

For the first time since 1979, European elections were held separately from national elections in Luxembourg. The simultaneity of elections decided on before the first direct European elections (as Luxembourgish Members of Parliament were already elected for a five-year mandate and that the next scheduled election was to be held in 1979 anyway) and government stability made all seven previous national and European elections fall on the same day, with a number of consequences ensuing. For instance, as European elections are fought on a unique, nationwide constituency until 2009, all party heavyweights used to be present on both lists to ensure a good result for their European list (in Luxembourg, voters can cast a vote for a party, one or several candidates on the same or on *different* lists, what is termed *interparty panachage*). As their leaders were elected on both accounts, they would subsequently decide on which mandate they would choose according to the expected results of the national government formation. In 2009, it was decided among the main parties that there would be no more double candidacies (the smaller parties kept on practicing it, however). A second consequence was that the European election campaign was continuously eclipsed by the concurrent national one, making the election even more of a second-order type.

This context changed for the coming 2014 elections, as the Christian democrat–Socialist (CSV) government led by Prime Minister Juncker (who had been prime minister since 1995) collapsed in July 2013—for a series of affairs concerning, among others, the lack of governmental control of the national intelligence—leading to the first anticipated elections since the late 1950s. Not only this made the elections bound to be distinct, opening for the possibility of a genuinely 'European' campaign for the May 2014 elections, but these anticipated elections held in October 2013 led to the formation of a coalition excluding the largest party of the country that had only been out of government for

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five years (1974–1979) in the postwar era. The CSV electoral losses (from 26 to 23 seats of 60) allowed for the formation of an alternative coalition made of the Liberals (13 seats), the Socialists who had triggered the government crisis by not supporting the Christian democrat PM (13 seats) and the Greens (6 seats), leaving Juncker the experienced and European-wide known leader (often cited as potential president of the European Commission and chairmain of the Euro group for eight years) in the opposition (Dumont, Kies: forthcomming).

The 2009 national elections had been a high for the CSV who also kept its three seats of six at the European Parliament (EP), for only one for the LSAP (Socialists), the DP (Liberals) and the Greens despite losing approximately 6 percentage points at the EP election compared with their 2004 score (in 2004, Prime Minister Juncker headed the CSV list for EP election as well as the list of his party for the national election in the South constituency; in 2009, he was only candidate for the national election). In a country where there has never been a real cleavage amongst parties and voters on European issues, the main stakes of this first separate European election are (1) again the fate of ex–prime minister Juncker chosen by the European People's Party as lead figure and potential president of the European Commission despite not being candidate for the EP election and (2) the electoral fate of the new coalition parties and whether or not one of the largest of these three (the DP or the LSAP) will manage to gain a second seat to the detriment of the CSV. The few opinion polls published since the national elections are not quite informative regarding the likely distribution of seats after the May 25 election. They, however, show that despite this campaign, being the first 'Europe-only' one,[1] and that their previous prime minister is candidate for the presidency of the Commission (more than 80% support this candidacy and his party is still, by far, considered to be the most credible to represent the interests of Luxembourg in the EU) about a third of respondents are not interested in it.

Campaign strategies

Altogether, no less than nine parties compete for the six Luxembourgish Memeber of the European Parliament (MEP) seats, most of which without

[1] But short, as the five main parties decided to devote only three weeks to the campaign, and limit their expenses to 65,000 euros each. The lower interest shown by parties themselves can also be seen in the size of their manifestos, which are for the most less than 50 pages long (a couple of the smaller and less Euro-enthusiastic parties devote some more pages to their electoral programme), and therefore much shorter than for the national elections.

any hope of getting any of these but with the only ambition of displaying their continuous presence on the political scene after national elections where all of these small parties fared relatively well. This is the case for the Party for Integral Democracy (PID) that wants to reach the 2% it almost got at the October 2013 election, the Pirate Party that had managed to reach almost 3% then, and the KPL (Communist Party, 1.5% at the national election). The Left (on the rise in 2013) and the sovereignist ADR (which always fared worse at European elections than in national ones and is continuously losing votes since 1999) cannot expect to score the double-digit result that would allow them to dream about being allowed to express their less Euro-enthusiastic stances in Brussels and Strasbourg. These five parties, that altogether make for 5 of 60 seats in the national parliament, are indeed the less Euro-enthusiastic: for instance, the Left competes under the slogan 'Basta! Rebuild Europe' (a critique of the neoliberal conduct of the current Europe), ADR under 'Less Europe, more Luxembourg' (with a Europe of sovereign nation states, stricter immigration policies) and the PID would want the euro to be abandoned and national currencies reintroduced. Surprisingly, for a Luxembourgish party (as it would lead to a move of the general secretariat from Luxembourg to Brussels), the Pirate Party campaigns for a single site of the EP, Brussels, and for the abolishment of any form of veto rights in the council. The four larger parties see in a stronger Europe the possibility of a stronger Luxembourg. The CSV campaigns along these lines and on its image of competence outside of the borders of the Grand Duchy, acquired in part by its quasipermanence at the helm of the national government and capacity for seeking consensus in European spheres under the slogan 'For Europe, for Luxembourg'. Together with the Socialists, the Christian democrats want a more social and solidary Europe (a message brought by Juncker as well in his campaign for the presidence of the EU Commission, which fits with his home party message but may fit less with the rest of the EPP) and highlight the Community method. The DP and the Greens largely share the latter stance but also campaign for a more democratic and transparent Europe. The first would like a convention followed by a European-wide referendum held on the same day to revise the treaties and to give the EP a real right of legislative initiative. The Greens also want to keep on enlarging EP powers but also support more recourse to popular initiatives. Finally, a number of parties (Greens, The Left, PID, Pirate Party and KPL) oppose TAFTA and would cancel its negotiation (Esch-sur-Alzette, the second-largest city of the Grand Duchy, even adopted a motion supporting this goal). The other parties consider that we are only at an early stage of the negotiations and await for further information, while declaring that they will devote a great attention to its scrutiny. Viviane Reding, outgoing commissioner and currently on leave for the electoral campaign, declared she would suggest a pause of TAFTA negotiations to inform citizens and stakeholders.

Results

The CSV is by far the winner of the 2014 European elections with over 37.6% of votes, 6.3 percentage points more than the 2009 elections, and even beating its record established at the 2004 election when Prime Minister Juncker was pulling the EP list. For the first time, it was the plurality winner in all municipalities of the country. This exceptional and largely unforeseen score is due to the participation of Juncker for the presidency of the European Commission (also defined as the seventh candidate of the list), to the good personal score of their chief candidate and incumbent European commissioner Viviane Reding and probably as well to the frustration of some voters that the CSV had been excluded from the outgoing national government despite remaining by fact the first party of the country at the unscheduled 2013 national election.

Another surprise was the score of the LSAP, which fell to 11.8%, losing 7.8 points over 2009, a score that corresponds to exactly half of its average result in the preceding seven direct EP elections (it had already lost 3.5 percentage points in 2009 compared with 2004, making its worst score at EP elections by crossing for the first time the 20% thresholds). With this score, the Luxembourg Socialists became only the fourth political force in the European elections, behind the Greens and the DP, while they had been the second force from 1984 to 2009. This important drop can be explained not only as a reaction of some voters to the coalition change after the anticipated national election but also, and probably more essentially, by the good score of the Left party (5.8%; +2.4 percentage points) and the absence of strong candidates on the LSAP list. Their six candidates competing for the election were all indeed newcomers in the European arena, and their leading candidate, Mady Delvaux-Stehres, a well-known figure in the country, had lost in terms of popular appeal by undertaking a controversial reform of the national education while minister in the government that collapsed in 2013.

The elections were finally characterised by the fact the Green party, despite also losing votes, became this time the second largest party with only 15%, bypassing the LSAP but also the Liberals, party of the new PM, who lost approximately 4 percentage points. This change in rankings of the parties was made possible by the good personal result of their leading candidate and incumbent MEP Claude Turmes, and conversely the disappointing personal score of the liberal head of list and also MEP candidate Charles Goerens.

Overall then, the parties of the new coalition lost no less than 13 percentage points compared with the previous EP election, a result as explained above that must be read as a reaction against the composition and first months of the new government as well as due to the usual better result of the CSV at the EP election when its leader is either candidate on the list or as this time competing to become president of the European Commission. The CSV gains do not however correspond to the losses of the coalition parties (and the CSV result is only half a percent higher than the one obtained in 2004 and was its record until 2014). The other winners are the smaller parties who competed for the EP election. With their much less Euro-enthusiatic stances, and without much hope of reaping one seat, these all (except the Communist KPL) gained in votes in 2014: the sovereignist ADR reached 7.5% (+0.1 points, still far for its 9.0% of 1999), Déi Lénk progressed to 5.8% (+2.4 points) and the Pirate Party made a successful first appearance with 4.3%.

Despite these changes in the score of the parties, the distribution of MEPs' seats remained the same. CSV kept its three seats, while DP, Déi Gréng and LSAP managed to keep their seat.

Table 1. Results of the 2014 European Parliament elections – Luxembourg

Party	EP Group	Votes (%)	Seats	Votes (change from 2009)	Seats (change from 2009)
Christian Social Party (CSV)	EPP	37.7	3	+6.3	+0
The Green Party (déi Gréng)	G-EFA	15.0	1	–1.8	+0
The Democratic Party (DP)	ALDE	14.8	1	–3.9	+0
Luxemburgish Social Worker Party (LSAP)	S&D	11.8	1	–7.7	+0
Alternative Democratic Reform Party (ADR)	ECR	7.5	0	+0.1	+0
The Left (Déi Lénk)	GUE-N-GL	5.8	0	+2.4	+0
Pirate Party		4.2	0		+0
Party of Full Democracy (PID)		1.8	0		+0
Communist party (KPL)		1.5	0	–0.1	+0
Total		100.0	6		-
Turnout (%)		90		–0.8	
Legal threshold for obtaining MEPs (%)		None			

EP group abbreviations: EPP, European People's Party; S&D, Progressive Alliance of Socialists and Democrats; ALDE, Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe; G-EFA, The Greens–European Free Alliance; ECR, European Conservatives and Reformists; GUE-NGL, European United Left–Nordic Green Left; EFD, Europe of Freedom and Democracy; NI, Non-Inscrits.

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Malta: Hidden change?

Marcello Carammia and Roderick Pace

9 June 2014

Introduction

On Saturday, May 24, the third European election since Malta joined the European Union (EU) was held. Malta elected six Members of the European Parliament (MEPs), one more than in 2009. The electoral system is the same as the one used in national elections, the major difference being that the 13 electoral districts are merged into one. It is a proportional system based on the single transferable vote (STV), which permits voters to enumerate as many preferences as the candidates listed on the ballot sheet (Katz, 1984).[1] The small dimension of districts,[2] the fact that the 'extra' votes obtained by party candidates are not transferred to a national pool, and acute bipartisanism have produced an almost perfect two-party system that, together with other features of the political system, makes Malta a textbook case of majoritarian democracy (Lijphart, 1999). No party apart from the two main ones—the *Partit Laburista* (PL) and the *Partit Nazzjonalista* (PN)—has ever obtained representation in the Maltese parliament since 1966, nor in the European Parliament (EP) since 2004, although the greens of *Alternattiva Demokratika (*AD) occasionally came close to the objective.

[1] If the candidate who got the first preference is elected, the vote is transferred to the candidate who was indicated as second preference, and so on until the vote is made 'useful', that is, it is assigned to a candidate who has not yet passed the election threshold.

[2] Malta has a population of approximately 420,000 inhabitants and an electorate of approximately 330,000 voters. For the national elections, the territory is divided in 13 districts, each one electing five MPs. To the total of 65 MPs, a number of seats is added to make reward the party that got more 'first preferences', and make sure that the majority of seats is actually conferred to the party that received more votes. Each district has an average of approximately 25,000 voters.

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The election campaign

The EP election took place 14 months after the 2013 national elections, which confirmed alternation in the government following a long period of Nationalist rule. The NP was in government since 1987, except for the short-lived Labour government of 1996–'98. Preparations for the election campaign started in July 2013 with the opening of nominations for potential MEP candidates; the lists were closed on January 2014. Some controversial decisions taken became quite polemical during the campaign.[3] The most controversial one was probably the PL's decision to present its former leader and one time prime minister, Dr. Alfred Sant, as a candidate.

Dr Sant led the party when it won the 1996 election but also when it lost those of 1998, 2003 and 2008. He had actively campaigned against Malta joining the EU and doggedly refused to recognise the result of the 2003 membership referendum. His candidature is illustrative of a certain ambiguity in the PL's EU position. The advent of a new leadership in 2008 shifted the party towards more pro-EU positions, which was part of a broader change in the party's political platform and a rapprochement with the EU that had started in 2004. Notwithstanding that many Labour supporters are critical of Sant's past European stance, he enjoys overwhelming support within the European Socialist family. Sant's popularity among Labour supporters and opinion polls constantly showed that he was likely to be elected first from among all the candidates, which was confirmed by the election results.

The short time span that separated the European election from the national election meant that political campaigning went on unabated for almost 14 months, punctuated only by short truces. This was one of the reasons why European issues had only intermittent relevance. In summer, the government's attempt to implement a pushback of migrants at sea was criticised by the Opposition. Following the harsh criticism of the European Commission, and the launch of *Mare Nostrum* by Italy, the pushback policy was eventually dropped. In a rather Orwellian fashion, the government claimed that it has threatened push back only to force the EU to 'smell the coffee'.

On November 2013, the opposition mounted a campaign against a 'citizenship scheme' launched by the government, which saw the sale of Maltese passports to affluent investors. The scheme was not stopped, but the polemics and, again, strong criticism by European institutions forced the government

[3] The PN rejected the candidacy of a popular TV presenter in the light of a pending court case, whereas the PL approved a candidate who also had pending judicial issues, which later forced him to retire from the race, much to the embarrassment of his party.

to introduce major amendments on at least four occasions. The scheme was the *avant propos* of the main European campaign—whose pace really started picking up in April 2014.

With the intensification of the campaign and with the official opening two months before the elections, national issues regained full centrality. The PN openly and repeatedly appealed to voters to use their votes to show their disappointment with the way the prime minister was running the country. In turn, the PL responded with claims that it was keeping its electoral promises. The centrepiece of its campaign was the reduction of energy prices for households. Energy prices were one of the main issues on which the LP had won the 2013 national election, and the price reduction was timed to occur in March 2014 just before the start of the last phase of the electoral campaign.

Another relevant issue was the Civil Unions Bill approved on April 2014. This act permitted civil unions with same rights, responsibilities and obligations as marriage, including the right of joint adoption and recognition of foreign same sex marriage. The enactment of the law had been promised by both parties in their respective 2013 national electoral programmes, but the NP abstained on the bill because it included the right of adoption by gay couples. The NP abstention was not greeted well, neither by the LGBT community nor by a sizeable majority of the public.

In sum, the election campaign in Malta followed the script of second-order elections (Reif and Schmitt, 1980), with national issues dominating and European themes confined to the periphery. The only 'moments' when ample space was afforded to European issues was when Martin Schultz and Jean Claude Junker addressed meetings during their visits to Malta to campaign as the presidential candidates of their respective political groups, although the saliency of these events in comparison with the rest of the campaign was rather circumscribed.

However, to conclude that the EU was entirely absent from the electoral campaign would be misleading. The contested path towards EU membership, sanctioned by the 2003 referendum, left a deep footprint in party competition, and the 'usage of the EU' (Garcia, 2014) occasionally recurred in this campaign. Notwithstanding the pro-EU turn of the new PL leadership, the EU retained some relevance in electoral competition, though declined in domestic terms.

The results

Approximately 258,000 voters went to the polls, 74.8% of those entitled to vote. This is considered as a remarkable participation rate in the European context, but it is less so in the Maltese, one which is used to 'near-universal

Table 1. Results of the 2014 European Parliament elections – Malta

Party	EP Group	Votes (%)	Seats	Votes (change from 2009)	Seats (change from 2009)
Labour Party (PL)	S&D	53.4	3	–1.4	–1
Nationalist Party (PN)	EPP	40.0	3	–0.5	+1
Democratic Alternative (AD)	G-EFA	3.0	0	+0.6	0
Europe Empire (IE)	–	2.7	0	+1.2	0
Others	–	1.0		0	0
Total		100.0	6	100.0	0
Turnout (%)		74.8		–4	
Legal threshold for obtaining MEPs (%)		35.975 votes			

Note on the electoral system: the 'quota' for electing a candidate is based on the number of valid votes cast. The Droop Quota is used to establish the number of votes that candidates need to poll to secure a seat: Q=((Valid votes)/(Total number of seats + 1)) + 1
*In the 2009 European election, Malta elected five MEPs, two PN e three PL. Following the entry into force of the protocol to the Lisbon Treaty on December 2011, a sixth seat was added, which was obtained by the PL. Since the sixth seat was attributed based on the results of the 2009 election, the table includes it in the comparison between the 2009 and the 2014 elections.
Abbreviations for EP groups: EPP, European People's Party; S&D, Progressive Alliance of Socialists and Democrats; ALDE, Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe; G-EFA, The Greens–European Free Alliance; ECR, European Conservatives and Reformists; GUE-NGL, European United Left–Nordic Green Left; EFD, Europe of Freedom and Democracy; NI, Non-Inscrits.

turnout' (Hirczy, 1995). Turnout in the 2013 national elections was 93%, similar to that of 2008 but lower than the 96% of the 2003. This decline has raised some concern among several commentators. Even in comparison with the previous European elections, the four-point downturn was significant (for a discussion of past European elections, see Pace, 2005 and 2009).

Once again, the 2014 European election rewarded the PL. Running for the first time as the incumbent, it managed to gain 54.3% of 'first preferences'. This was 1.5 percentage points less than what it obtained in the 2009 EP elections and was similar to the result of the 2013 national elections.

With 40% of first preferences, the NP went 3.5 points below the 2013 national elections. The Nationalists replicated the performance of last EP elections - when, however, they were still in government. The gap between the two main parties enlarged from 11.5 to 13.4 percentage points.

The vote essentially consolidates the realignment of the Maltese electorate, as shown by the PL's progress in all the electoral districts, including the traditionally Nationalist ones. The PN's defeat, however, was alleviated by the effect of transfer of voting preferences among the candidates, which turned a remarkable deficit in first-count votes into a draw in terms of seats. Following the allocation of the first seats, which happened relatively quickly, it appeared certain that Labour would elect three seats and the Nationalists two, while the sixth one could go to either party. The complex transfer of voters' preferences completed four days after the election finally gave the seat to the NP with a meagre margin of 206 votes. For the first time, the NP had managed to win three seats at the EP.

The share of votes gained by the two main parties remains very large, amounting to 93.4% of suffrages and all seats. However, this share is significantly less than that of last year's national elections. The space left free by the PL and PN reserved some surprises. The greens of AD gained a half point on the last European election—and almost one point on the 2013 national elections. But with a total tally of 3%, they confirmed their inability to achieve parliamentary representation at both the domestic and the EU levels. Not surprisingly, given the swing to the right in the whole of Europe, it was the growth of the neofascist extreme right *Imperium Europa* (IE), which almost doubled its votes in comparison with the 2009 European elections with a jump from 1.5% to 2.7%, a result that is very close to AD's. In the context of Malta's bipolarism consolidated around PN-PL duopoly, AD is no longer the only outsider or 'third party'.

Conclusions

Apparently, the results of the European elections did not reserve any surprise. The six MEPs elected by Malta are equally divided by the two main parties, which once again gained the majority of votes and kept smaller parties away from parliamentary representation. However, traces of change loom behind the apparent stability.

The elections consolidate the realignment of voters along the main parties, deepening the Labour's hold on the country and extending it to traditionally Nationalist areas. Abstention increased, with turnout 20 points down from the recent national elections, 4 points below the last EP elections, and 8 points down from those held in 2004.

Because of the STV electoral system, the two main parties send three members each to the EP despite the large gap in votes that separates them. This confirms once again the disproportional effects of the system, with hardly predictable consequences (Doron, 1977). This time, the losers benefit.

A relevant change is the number of elected women, higher than men (4 vs. 2) despite that the STV has traditionally been considered to penalise them (Lane, 1995). Malta had not elected women to the EP until one year ago, when three women replaced the MEPs who resigned after being elected to the national parliament. The prevalence of women can be read against the context of the broader societal change of the last years, culminating in the 2011 divorce referendum and in the 2013 Civil Unions bill.

Although the success of the extreme-right Imperium Europa surprised observers, no explicitly Eurosceptic party elected members to the EP. In this respect, the Maltese vote departs from the outcome of the elections in most EU member countries, notably from those of the other southern member states, compared with which, however, Malta was only marginally touched by the economic crisis.[4] However, to conclude from this that Euroscepticism is not represented might be misleading. Dr Alfred Sant may have gathered the EU-critical vote, which explains why he was the most voted candidate.

This outcome is indicative of the ability of the two main parties to represent a wide range of positions, thus neutralising the challenge of smaller parties. Yet the great success of the Eurosceptical candidate Alfred Sant may indicate the persistence of a considerable share of Eurosceptical voters, particularly among Labour supporters. So long as the EU leads to a clear positive sum game, it is highly probable that the main parties will manage to absorb and internalise opposition to the European project. However, an economic or political crisis could trigger latent tensions, and awaken the 'sleeping giant' (Van der Eijk and Franklin, 2004).

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[4] The crisis brought an economic slowdown, but GDP growth turned negative only in 2009 and regained a sustained pace in the past two years, with positive projections for the next years. Unemployment remained relatively low, approximately 6.5%. The public debt is currently slightly above 70%, but the deficit is at 2.8% and is projected to contract to 2.5%. Last year's result was achieved at the expense of €370 million in national debt. Malta has been under the excessive deficit procedure since 2012, when it was given two years to put its finances back on to a sustainable path.

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Poland: Old turnout and new right

Mikołaj Cześnik and Michał Kotnarowski

30 May 2014

Introduction: The context

The European Parliamentary (EP) election held on May 25 was the third EP elections in the modern history of Poland. The first was held in 2004, just after Poland joined the European Union (EU), and the second was in 2009. The main characteristics of previous Polish EP elections were low voter turnout and relatively good results of small and radical parties.

Voter turnout in the 2004 EP elections in Poland was 21%, and it was the second lowest rate among EU countries in the 2004 EP elections. The only country with a lower voter turnout was Slovakia (17%). The voter turnout in 2004 EP elections was also low in relation to the closest-in-time elections on the national level. The voter turnout in national parliamentary elections held in 2005 was 41%, and in the presidential elections held in the same year, it was 50%. Voter turnout was also relatively low in the 2009 EP elections—25%. It was one of the lowest turnout rates in Europe in the 2009 EP elections. Voter turnout in the closest-in-time national elections was also substantially higher—54% in the parliamentary election held in 2007 and 55% in the presidential election held in 2010. As one can see, voter turnout in Polish EP elections was low in comparison with both EP elections in other EU countries and national level elections.

In the first Polish EP elections (held in 2004), small parties achieved relatively good scores. They were either anti-EU parties such as League of Polish Families (16% vote share) and Self-Defence (11%) or pro-EU parties such as Freedom Union (7%) and Social Democrats of Poland (5%). Small parties did not attain a good score in the second EP election (2009), and election results were very similar to national parliamentary results held two years before. This lack of difference could be caused by relative stabilisation of the Polish party system and weakness or absence of small parties at that time.

Because of low turnout and relatively good results of small and radical parties (only in the 2004 case), Polish EP elections could be classified as second-

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order elections, the term introduced by Reif and Schmitt (1980). It means that EP elections in Poland were viewed by voters as less important and dependent on first-order elections, which are national elections.

The important contextual information about EP elections in Poland is high public support for European integration among Polish citizens. Approximately 60% of Poles supported joining EU in June 2004, whereas 30% was against European integration in the survey conducted a few weeks after joining the EU and a few weeks before the first Polish EP elections. Public support for the EU was growing in subsequent years until mid-2008, when European integration was supported by almost 90% of Poles. From the second half of 2008, the share of supporters of integration slightly decreased; however, it still remained on high level. Almost 75% of Polish citizens supported European integration at the beginning of 2014. Massive support for European integration is probably related to huge financial support from the Structural Funds and the Cohesion Fund of the EU. Almost every person could notice in his/her surrounding many investments cofinanced from EU funds. One point should be mentioned here. While Poles in general support the presence of Poland in the EU, their opinions are divided as far as further and deeper integration with EU is concerned. In May 2013, one third of Poles supported strengthening European integration, another one third declared that integration already gone too far, and the remaining one third did not have an opinion in this matter.

There is important contextual information. The 2014 EP election was the first election in Poland after a four-year period without any election (excluding local elections or local referenda in a few places). The last nationwide elections before the 2014 EP ones were local ones held in November 2010. Moreover, this year, EP elections are first in the 'four-election marathon', which is taking place from spring 2014 to autumn 2015. The next will be local elections planned for autumn 2014, then the presidential election on spring 2015 and the last one, national parliamentary elections, which will be held autumn 2015. Such a long period without elections could make media as well as political parties yearning for important political events. On the other hand, as a first election in this 'four-election marathon', the EP elections could be treated as a first skirmish before a serious battle in first-order elections (national one), which will be held next year.

Main issues in the campaign

The main topic of the campaign was Ukraine. Because of geopolitical reasons, Ukrainian issues have always been a central topic in Polish politics.

Therefore, the last crisis in Ukraine has been very closely monitored in Poland from its very beginning. In the campaign, 2–3 months before the EP election, the issue of Ukraine dominated political discussions and public discourse.

Obviously, most of the discussions focused on safety issues, including predominantly military and external security. Poland is a country bordering Russia, exposed to its imperial attempts. Ukrainian crisis provided evidence that the previous Polish security policy (which was intercorrelated with the politics of the EU towards Russia), characterised by spirit of cooperation and agreement and focused on rapprochement with Russia, was ineffective. The prime minister, Donald Tusk, who was 'the face' of this policy, has been heavily criticised during the campaign, especially by the main opposition party Law and Justice. Moreover, during the crisis (and the campaign), he changed quite importantly his position and accepted a more militant attitude towards Russia.

Another important issue raised in the campaign was the topic of energy's security. Main directions of the country's energy policy have been thoroughly discussed. Poland is the biggest hard coal producer in the EU, and nearly all of its generated electricity (approximately 92%–94%) comes from coal-fired power plants fuelled principally by hard coal and lignite. But Poland imports nearly 90% of its crude oil and 66% of its natural gas. Its main supplier remains to be Russia. This heavy reliance on external supplies of gas and oil to Poland remains a threat to the security of energy supply to the nation. The Russian-Ukrainian conflict (including gas disputes) undoubtedly endangers the security of gas and oil supply to Poland.

In general, the campaign was rather rational and programmatically structured (at least for the Polish standards). Meritocratic and programmatic discourse prevailed; political quarrels, scandals and clashes were relatively infrequent (especially in comparison with previous electoral campaigns in Poland).

Election results

Voter turnout in the 2014 EP election in Poland was 23.8%. The turnout rate is similarly low as in previous EP elections held in Poland. The fact that in three other EU countries voter turnout level was even lower (Slovakia 13%, Czech Republic 19.5% and Slovenia 21%) is not very heartening.

Polish voters elected 51 Members of European Parliament (MEP). The best result in the elections was won by senior incumbent party Civic Platform (Platforma Obywatelska – PO, EPP group in European Parliament)—32.1% votes. However, very close results were won by the main opposition party Law and Justice (Prawo i Sprawiedliwość – PIS, ECR in group in European Parliament)—31.8%. In fact, this result could be treated as draw. Apart from a

very similar vote share, both parties gained 19 seats in the EP. The third place in the election race was taken by Left-Democratic Alliance (Sojusz Lewicy Demokratycznej – SLD). This party received 9.4% of votes and won five seats in the EP. SLD is a member of the S&D group in the EP. The real surprise of these elections was the fourth result of New Right (Nowa Prawica Janusza Korwin-Mikke – NP). This party got 7.2% of vote shares and four seats in the EP. This party is strongly against the EU. One of the points of its manifesto is dissolution of the EU. The leader of the party (Janusz Korwin-Mikke) is a person with a strong charismatic personality, who quite often used populist slogans. This is the best results of the leader of this party ever—the party is not present in national parliament. The fifth position in the election race was taken by Polish Peasants Party (Polskie Stronnictwo Ludowe – PSL, EPP group in EP). PSL won 6.8% vote shares and four seats in the EP. PSL is a junior incumbent party and belongs to the EPP group in EP.

According to the Polish electoral system, there is 5% electoral threshold in EP elections. Among parties that did not cross the threshold, the best result is won by Solidary Poland (Solidarna Polska – SP)—4%. SP was established by former PIS politicians—all SP members of national parliament were elected from PIS electoral lists. The next position in the electoral race was taken by Europe+ Your Move (Europa + Twój Ruch – E+TR)—3.6%. E+TR is a liberal-left coalition of different parties or groups, but a base of it was Palikot Movement, the third power in national parliament. In the last national parliamentary elections, Palikot Movement got 10% vote share. The result of this coalition is a surprise at least for three reasons. First, E+TR was one of the left alternative for the rightist parties, which are dominant in the Polish party system (rightist or centre-rightist parties got together at least 69% of votes in each election since 2007). Second, the former president of Poland, Aleksander Kwaśniewski, who is still popular in Poland, officially supported E+TR and was presented as patron of this coalition. Last, a group of popular politicians with leftist or liberal origins run in EP elections as leaders of electoral lists of E+TR.

Likewise, in other elections held in Poland, there is a strong and clear territorial diversification of results of the 2014 EP elections. The highest support for PO is observed in the north and west part of Poland. These are former German territories incorporated to Poland after the Second World War and settled mainly by people from former Polish territories on the east, which became part of Soviet Union after the war. High support for PO was also present in Silesia region (southwest part of Poland). People living there have strong local identification and cultural identity. PO won very good results in the capital, Warsaw, and other big cities. On the other hand, high support for main opposition party PIS was noted mainly on the east part of Poland. People living on these areas did not experience strong migration movements—they are mainly settled there for generations. People from east regions of Poland are

Table 1. Results of the 2014 European Parliament elections – Poland

Party	EP Group	Votes (%)	Seats	Votes (change from 2009)	Seats (change from 2009)
Civic Platform (PO)	EPP	32.1	19	–12.3	–6
Law and Justice (PIS)	ECR	31.78	19	+4.4	+4
Democratic Left Aliance (SLD)	S&D	9.44	5	–2.9	–2
New Right (NP JKM)	new in EP	7.15	4	+6.1	+4
Polish Peasants' Party (PSL)	EPP	6.8	4	–0.2	+1
Solidary Poland (SP)	EFD	3.98	0	+4.0	+0
Europe+ Your Move (E+TR)	ALDE	3.58	0	+3.6	+0
Others		5.15	0		
Total		100.0	51		-
Turnout (%)		23.83		–0.7	
Legal threshold for obtaining MEPs (%)		5%			

EP group abbreviations: EPP, European People's Party; S&D, Progressive Alliance of Socialists and Democrats; ALDE, Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe; G-EFA, The Greens–European Free Alliance; ECR, European Conservatives and Reformists; GUE-NGL, European United Left–Nordic Green Left; EFD, Europe of Freedom and Democracy; NI, Non-Inscrits.

also more religious and attached to traditional values. High support for PIS, which is a conservative party, is understandable from this perspective. PIS got high vote shares also in smaller towns and villages.

Conclusions

Polish MEPs are going to constitute the sixth largest group in the EP. PO and PSL MEPs are going to join the EPP group; SLD MEPs will join the S&D group. Still rather unknown is the future of the right-wing parties; PIS MEPs will most probably join the ECR group; the NP MEPs can form an anti-EU group with other Eurosceptics. It is worth noting that the Polish MEPs are going to constitute the second largest group in the EPP.

Unquestionably, the 2014 EP elections results are going to influence Polish politics. In the context of previously mentioned 'four-election marathon', they have provided a new impetus for all the political parties. The winners—

PO and PIS—have strengthened their hegemonic role in electoral politics of Poland. Without a doubt, they are going to dominate the upcoming electoral campaigns (local elections in fall 2014, presidential election in late spring or early summer 2015, parliamentary election in fall 2015). SLD and PSL have fortified their positions; NP has grown as an important player on the right-wing of Polish politics. The losers of the 2014 EP election in Poland—SP, E+TR, and others—need to rethink their political appeals, in order not to be annihilated in the next elections.

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Portugal: Between apathy and crisis of mainstream parties

Marco Lisi

12 June 2014

Portugal is experiencing a huge economic and social crisis that has not triggered—at least until now—significant changes in the political system, as it happened in Greece or Italy. The financial default of the Portuguese state led the three main parties—the Socialist Party (PS), the Social Democratic Party (PSD)[1] and the Social Democratic Centre–People's Party (CDS-PP)—to sign in April 2011 a three-year bailout with the so-called troika (International Monetary Fund, European Commission and European Central Bank). The memorandum of understanding established the implementation of structural reforms based on a neoliberal agenda in exchange for a 78-billion-euro bailout (Moury and Freire, 2013). The program terminated just when the electoral campaign took off (May 4) and inevitably influenced not only party programmatic orientations but also the political debate and the main issues of competition. The 2014 European elections were thus the opportunity for Portuguese voters to evaluate the austerity policies adopted by the right government (PSD and CDS-PP) led by Prime Minister Pedro Passos Coelho (in office since June 2011).

The electoral campaign

The electoral campaign started with the debate about the 'post-troika' scenarios, that is, whether Portugal would follow the Irish example with a 'clean exit' from the external intervention or whether the government would request a program of financial assistance. While the government announced

[1] The Social-Democratic Party is a conservative-liberal party affiliated to the European Popular Party.

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the decision to reject additional aids, the electoral competition focused on the responsibility of the two main parties to cause the external intervention and the austerity policies that followed the bailout (see Magalhães, 2014). The PS' strategy aimed to make the European elections a referendum against the government, blaming the right coalition to aggravate the economic and social situation with its neoliberal orthodoxy. On the other hand, Passos Coelho emphasised the successful exit from the program and the socialists' bad management of the 2008 crisis, considering the PS the only responsible for the troika intervention. The campaign developed towards an increasing personalisation around the former socialist Prime Minister José Sócrates (in office from 2005 to 2011), who was addressed by right parties as the main blamable for the economic and financial crisis.

Radical left parties campaigned more on European issues than governing parties. The Portuguese Communist Party (PCP)—one of the most orthodox communist parties in Europe (March 2011)—has always adopted Eurosceptic stances, severely criticising both the political and the economic dimensions of European integration (Lobo and Magalhães, 2011). In the electoral campaign, this criticism assumed clear nationalist tones due to the external intervention. Besides this, the communists accused the three main governing parties (PS, PSD and CDS-PP) to represent the 'domestic troika'. On the other hand, the Left Block (BE) adopted a relatively positive position towards the political integration of the European Union, although it severely criticised the economic and social dimensions (Fernandes and Pereira, 2014).

While the right coalition presented a preelectoral alliance through a joint list of candidates under the label 'Portugal Alliance', the left was much more fragmented. Two new forces emerged from the BE: the MAS (Socialist Alternative Mouvement) and the LIVRE, led by the ex–Member of the European Parliament (MEP) Rui Tavares. The first is an extremist left party with strong Eurosceptic positions, whereas the second displays a positive—but critical—stance towards the EU and a more open attitude towards the socialists.

The results: a bitter victory or a sweet defeat?

Portugal elects 21 MEPs, one fewer than in the previous European elections. The vote is based on a proportional system with a national district and closed party lists.

The first important aspect to notice is the increase in the abstention rate. In these elections, the abstention achieved a historical 66.1%, almost 3 percentage points more than the 2009 score (63.2%). The level of turnout has steadily decreased over the years (it was 72.4% in 1987), but in these elections,

Table 1. Results of the 2014 European Parliament elections – Portugal

Party	EP Group	Votes (%)	Seats	Votes (change from 2009)	Seats (change from 2009)
Socialist Party (PS)	S&D	31.5	8	+5.0	+1
Portugal Alliance (AP)	EPP	27.7	7	–12.4	–3
Democratic Unitarian Coalition (CDU)	GUE-N-GL	12.7	3	+2.1	+1
Earth Party (MPT)	ALDE	7.1	2	+6.4	+2
Left Block (BE)	GUE-N-GL	4.6	1	–6.1	–2
Others		9.3	0		
Blank ballots		4.4			
Invalid votes		3.1			
Total		100	21		–
Turnout (%)		33.9		–2.9	
Legal threshold for obtaining MEPs (%)		none			

Note: The difference of votes and seats of the Portugal Alliance (AP) has been calculated considering the sum of votes and seats of the Social Democratic Party (PSD) and of the People's Party (CDS–PP) in the 2009 elections.
EP group abbreviations: EPP, European People's Party; S&D, Progressive Alliance of Socialists and Democrats; ALDE, Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe; G-EFA, The Greens–European Free Alliance; ECR, European Conservatives and Reformists; GUE-NGL, European United Left–Nordic Green Left; EFD, Europe of Freedom and Democracy; NI, Non-Inscrits.

the abstention rate has been substantially higher than previous legislative or presidential elections.

The second interesting aspect is the marginal victory of the main opposition party. Taking into account the expectations of the socialist leadership, the result obtained by the PS (31.5%) had a bitter taste, especially if we consider that the competition presented ideal conditions for an excellent performance of the opposition. The extremely high levels of government dissatisfaction, high rates of prime minister's unpopularity, as well as high levels of unemployment (more than 15%) and a difficult economic recovery were all factors playing in favour of the PS.

Actually, the 'perfect storm' for the right government did take place, and this is confirmed by the results of the right coalition: 27.7% of the votes and the election of seven MEPs (three less than the 2009 elections). The final results were disappointing, even considering the worst scenario prospected be-

fore the elections. The two right parties lost votes throughout the country, especially in the north, which is their traditional stronghold.

Despite the collapse of the government, the PS was not able to benefit from voters' dissatisfaction towards the austerity policies. Who won then the elections? Two contenders were particularly successful. The first is the PCP, which increased both its number of MEPs (from two to three) and its vote share. However, the main surprise came from the MPT, an ecologist party that has always had a poor performance in both European and legislative elections (below 1% of the votes). In the 2014 elections, the MPT obtained 7.1% of the votes, electing two MEPs. This success was due, in the first place, to its top candidate Marinho e Pinto, an ex-journalist and well-known lawyer. In addition, this excellent result was based on its antiestablishment discourse: the MPT campaigned not only in favour of the renewal of the political elite but also against Brussels' technocracy, its disproportionate bureaucracy and the lack of legitimacy of its political elite. Many observers did not hesitate to criticise the populist nature of this discourse, although deprived of the direct democracy component typical of populist parties. Despite this, the MPT rejects the Eurosceptic position adopted by the two radical left parties, displaying a rather vague orientation on this topic. The distribution of the vote is relatively homogeneous, which reflects the gains of the votes from the two main moderate parties. The MPT performed very well in some districts in the north and the coast (Porto, Aveiro, Viana do Castelo, Coimbra), whereas in the south, its vote share is above the national average.

To conclude the analysis of election results, we need to emphasise the defeat of the BE (just 4.6% of the votes) and the poor performance of the LIVRE (2.2%). The protest vote against the austerity policies inflated blank and invalid votes, which achieved significant figures (4.4% and 3.1%, respectively).

Conclusions

The results of the 2014 European elections will certainly influence the next legislative elections (scheduled for 2015). The poor performance of the socialists has strengthened internal criticism towards the leader, and a competition for the leadership is taking place. António José Seguro, the PS secretary-general, will compete against António Costa, the mayor of Lisbon, who seems more popular and more effective than the current leader. On the other hand, the results of the right coalition, although negative, seem to give them some chances for the next electoral contest, especially if we take into account the relatively positive evolution of the economy forecasted for the next year. However, it is still unknown whether the two parties will present separate

lists or whether they will form a preelectoral alliance as what happened in the last European elections. Radical left parties are also expected to change their strategy, especially the BE and the LIVRE, with the aim to consolidate their popularity and increase their competitiveness with regard to the PCP.

The main lesson that we can draw from these elections is the crisis of the main parties to maintain their basis of support, while dissatisfaction towards the political elite is growing fast. The high levels of mistrust towards parties, the lack of clear alternative programs and the growing distance between parties and citizens are some of the main problems that moderate parties have to solve in order to avoid a political earthquake. The semipresidential system, the significant impact of leaders on voters' choice and the mass media personalisation are some of the elements that pose serious threats to the hegemony of the main governing parties. Portuguese voters have already displayed their availability for new solutions and alternatives. It remains to be seen whether traditional parties will learn the lesson or whether they will ignore the need of change that comes from civil society.

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Romania: A preview of the 2014 presidential elections?

Sorina Soare

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Over the past 25 years, Romania has experienced a complex process of democratisation with moments of crisis, economic stagnation, radical nationalism and extreme polarisation (Bunce and Wolchick, 2006; Soare, 2011). Despite Romania's admission into NATO in 2004, and into the European Union (EU) in 2007, the political situation remained unstable (Levitz and Pop Elecches 2010, Spendzharova and Vachudova 2012, Sedelmeier 2014), with recurrent institutional clashes between the president, prime minister and parliament, such as in 2007 and 2012 (Gherghina and Mişcoiu, 2013), and tough austerity measures that fuelled social tensions.

The results[1]

The European elections in Romania confirmed the Social Democratic Party's (PSD) upward wave, which was already visible in the 2012 legislative elections. With over 37% of the votes, the PSD and its two small allies received half of the seats available for the Romanian delegation (16/32 seats). If it is easy to recognise the winner of the elections, looking for the 'losers' seems to be an easy task too. First, the populist parties were kept out of the European Parliament (EP). In the previous European elections, the nationalist Greater Romania Party had three seats, whereas in May 2014, they received only 2.7% of the votes, well below the electoral threshold. In the 2012 legislative elections, the People's Party—led by Dan Diaconescu (PP-DD)—obtained 14.7%

[1] Electoral results available on the National Electoral Commission (Biroul Electoral Central)

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of the votes in the Senate and 14.0% in the House. However, the European elections demonstrate the political deadlock of a party born and bread on the television network of its founder, which has been banned from broadcasting since January 2014 by the National Audiovisual Council. Deprived of its most incisive electoral tribune, the PP-DD obtained only 3.7% of the votes. The other big 'losers' are the two main centre-right parties: the Democratic Liberal Party (PD-L) with 12.2% of the votes and the liberals (PNL) with 15%. Although in rough terms, the number of liberal Members of the European Parliament (MEPs) increased from five to six in comparison with the 2009 EU elections, the electoral results have been generally understood as a major failure, not only in comparison with the PSD triumph but also and mainly in view of the presidential election scheduled for the end of 2014. In the case of the PD-L party, the electoral defeat is even more visible considering that the party lost half of its previous delegation in the EP. Part of this failure can be connected to the relative success obtained by the recently created People's Movement Party (PMP), which gathered 6.2% of the votes (equating to two MEPs). Still, the PMP result can only be considered as a partial success; the party scored less than the independent candidate Mircea Diaconu and the Hungarian Alliance (UDMR) and well below the preelection expectations.[2] Last but not least, an independent candidate succeeded in reaching the EP. Similar successes were registered in the 2007 and 2009 EU elections. In 2007, the Hungarian pastor László Tőkés was elected with 176,533 votes (3.4%), and in 2009, President T. Băsescu's daughter, Elena Băsescu, was elected with 204,280 votes (4.2%). In 2014, following various judicial vicissitudes, a new independent candidate managed to attract the spotlight and a broad electoral support. Mircea Diaconu, a well-known theatre actor, as well as a former PNL senator and Minister of Culture, found himself out of the lists of his party and decided to stand alone. The outstanding result goes beyond the success of collecting the necessary number of signatures (100,000 signatures) in order to register as a candidate, considering that he did not benefit from the financial and logistical support of his former party. Diaconu received indirect support not only from the PSD prime minister, Victor Ponta, but also from the media trust Intact Media Group directed by the PC's founder—Dan Voiculescu.[3] Devoid of a real electoral program, Diaconu sought to establish direct contact with the voters and preached in favour of a restored relationship between Europe and the Romanians, the latter being too often and unfairly seen as second-class citizens. Hence, the slogan of his campaign was 'I speak the truth about our country'.[4]

[2] "PSD e la scor maxim. PMP nu e in situatia de a impune prezidentiabilul dreptei. Interviu cu Cristian Preda", May 27, 2014, www.ziare.com

[3] For more details on this issue, see M. Bird e S. Candea "Romanian renegate bids for EP seat", *EuObserver*, May 19, 2014.

Table 1. Results of the 2014 EP elections – Romania

Party	EP Group	Votes (%)	Seats	Votes (change from 2009)	Seats (change from 2009)
Electoral Alliance Social Democratic party + National Union for the Progress of Romania + Conservative Party (PSD+UNPR + PC)	S&D	37.6	16	+6.5	+5
National Liberal Party (PNL)	ALDE/ EPP	15.0	6	+0.5	+1
Democratic Liberal Party (PD-L)	EPP	12.2	5	–17.5	–5
Mircea Diaconu (indep.)	NI	6.8	1		
Democratic union of Hungarians in Romania (UDMR)	EPP	6.3	2	–2.6	–1
People's Movement Party (PMP)	EPP	6.2	2		
Great Romania Party (PRM)		2.7	0	–6.0	–3
Dan Diaconescu–People's Party (PP-DD)		3.7	0		
Others		9.5			
Total		100	32		–1
Turnout (%)		32.4		+4.8	
Legal threshold for obtaining MEPs (%)		5%			

Note on electoral system: Proportional representation, closed lists, one national constituency. EP group abbreviations: EPP, European People's Party; S&D, Progressive Alliance of Socialists and Democrats; ALDE, Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe; G-EFA, The Greens–European Free Alliance; ECR, European Conservatives and Reformists; GUE-NGL, European United Left–Nordic Green Left; EFD, Europe of Freedom and Democracy; NI, Non-Inscrits.

The election campaign and its main players

In a political landscape in turmoil, for the third time in seven years, the Romanian voters are being asked to cast their preferences for the EP. Fifteen

[4] According to the official internet site of the candidate - http://www.mirceadiaconu2014.eu/

political parties and electoral alliances and eight independent candidates have officially registered.[5] Although Europe has been a constant reference on the main election billboards or in the main parties' official programs, internal issues have prevailed in the electoral debates. Since the beginning, the electoral competition has been marked by a polarisation around the personality of the incumbent president, T. Băsescu. On the one side, there are the two parties directly related to the political career of the current president of Romania: the Liberal Democratic Party (PD-L), the party T. Băsescu was leader of before his first election to the Romanian presidency in 2004, and the new PMP. On the other side, there is the winning coalition of the 2012 legislative elections, whose members were in government until recently: the PSD, the PNL, the small Conservative Party (PC) and the National Union for the Progress of Romania (UNPR). In February 2014, the PNL leadership decided to break the Social Liberal Union (USL) and to withdraw from the government following regular clashes with the PSD. On the eve of the European elections and in preparation of the upcoming presidential elections, the PNL's decision was an open bet, eventually lost. The representatives of the Hungarian minority in Romania (UDMR) occupy a pivotal position with interchanging alliances between the two polls.

In the context of the 2014 campaign, the issue most covered by the media was that of the controversial photos of President Băsescu wearing a T-shirt with the PMP logo, one of the parties registered in the campaign. These pictures were posted by the PML leader on her Facebook account under a symbolic heading 'Traian Băsescu with the young men and women of PMP'. In those pictures, the president was wearing a T-shirt with the slogan 'Vote for PMP'. According to the Romanian Constitution, the *president* is defined as 'a mediator between the powers in the State, as well as between the State and society' (art. 80, 2), while according to art 84§2, 'during his term of office, the President of Romania may not be a member of any political party, nor may he perform any other public or private office'.[6] In line with these constitutional dispositions, the prime minister asked the constitutional court to clarify if the president overpassed his prerogatives. Meanwhile, President Băsescu denied a violation of the constitution since 'he is entitled to wear whatever clothes he wishes', provokingly adding that 'he will vote for the People's Movement Party because voting is not illegal'. 'I will vote for the People's Movement Party. You asked. If you hadn't asked me, I wouldn't have answered. (…) I'm voting for the People's Movement Party'.[7] Four days before the election date, the president eventually won the dispute between President Băsescu and Premier Ponta when the constitutional court ruled on President Băsescu's involvement in the EP campaign.

In parallel, the European elections' campaign was seen as a test run of the presidential elections scheduled for November 2014. Symbolically, a lot of electoral posters reproduced the images of the main parties' potential candidates for the presidential elections. In this context, beyond the forecasted candidacy of Prime Minister Ponta on behalf of the socialists, a major player was the PNL and, in particular, its leader Crin Antonescu. The PNL's sudden decision to exit the coalition government in February 2014 was a prelude to the candidacy of its leader in the presidential elections. However, the 15% electoral result (–22.6 percentage points in comparison with the PSD) was attributed to lack of strategy. It is also interesting to note that the PNL leadership decided to reassign its MEPs from the ALDE group to the European Popular Party. This political realignment was interpreted as a last strategic attempt to fight back the PSD on the European battlefield by hampering the chance of a socialist candidate to be appointed as the head of the European Commission.[8] This move was also interpreted as a first step ahead for an alliance for the presidential majority with the PD-L, former coalition partner in 2004.

In this electoral landscape, we can find elements of the founding cleavage the Romanian postcommunist political life: the opposition between ex-communist versus anticommunists. This issue has often been used by the PMP and the PD-L to distinguish themselves from the PSD whose origins led to the former PCR (Pop Eleches, 2008). The exhortations of one of the most well-known representatives of the PD-L MEPs, Monica Macovei, are quite significant. To motivate a vote in favour of the PD-L, Macovei criticised the alleged betrayal of the interests of Eastern Europe by the social democrat Martin Schultz—the socialist candidate for the presidency of the European Commission. Schulz was also criticised for his attempts to calm the tensions with Russia, as well as for blocking the criminal investigations of corruption being conducted on the Romanian MEP, Ovidiu Silaghi (then PNL, today PSD). According to a syllogism that is fairly rudimentary but symbolic for its anticommunist rhetoric, in synthesis to vote for the PSD lists was equated with voting against the interests of Romania and in favour of a pro-Russian president of the European Commission.[9]

[5] "Proces verbal privind rimanerii definitive a candidaturilor la alegerile pentru membrii din Romania in Parlamentul european din anul 2014".

[6] Constitution of Romania (2003).

[7] Raluca Tonita, "President Basescu: I'm voting PMP!", May 4, 2014.

[8] "Romania's second largest party PNL moves from ALDE to EPP", May 27, 2014.

[9] "Monica Macovei: Suntem sub amenintarea Federatiei Ruse; europarlamentarii polon-

The UDMR is in a quite different position; its constant electoral successes are largely due to the characteristics of the ethnic vote. The EU was also not the core of the electoral campaign. At the opening of the election campaign, the UDMR president symbolically declared that the vote on May 25 would have contributed to the dearest objective of 'bringing Südtirol and Catalonia[10] in Transylvania', an implicit support for the UDMR's aim to obtain regional autonomy for its ethnic basis. He continued on the same line, 'Our interests can only be represented by Magyars MEPs (...). If we do not enter (na—the EP), our place will be taken by the Romanian MEPs. This is about our future.'[11] Consistent with these positions, European issues such as multilingualism and decentralisation were present in the UDMR's electoral statements.

Among the participants in the May elections, there were also the representatives of the national populist family: the PRM and the PP-DD. Rather peripheral in the public debates, both parties promoted a discourse focused on issues such as the defence of national unity and dignity, criticisms over the political establishment and a tougher fight against corruption. The PRM's slogans were quite symbolic: 'Vote with the Patriots, not the mafia!' or 'Patriots vote the PRM!' The PP-DD slogan followed the same tune: 'On May 25th vote with a Romanian soul!' However, both parties' election results placed them below the electoral threshold.

Final remarks

Rather than a campaign of ideas or a debate between different visions on Europe, the 2014 election campaign has been a tribune for the potential presidential candidates with elections scheduled for November 2014. This gives us a certain sense of déjà vu: European elections with a low participation and a strong emphasis on national issues like in 2007 and 2009. Given the results, Romanians have cast a vote of confidence for the current coalition government and penalised the two main representatives of the centre-right, the PD-L and the PNL. The shockwave of the results was immediately felt by the latter: Crin Antonescu and the PNL direction resigned, and an

ezi si cei din tarile baltice vorbesc despre pregatiri pentru aparare in caz de razboi", April 12, 2014, Ziarul de Iași o "Ce vrea Macovei de la Schulz privind anchetarea lui Silaghi", HotnewsRo, May 22, 2014.

[10] UDMR si-a lansat candidatii pentru europarlamentare. Kelemen Hunor: "Sa aducem Catalonia in Ardeal", Mediafax, March 29, 2014.

[11] *Ibid.*

extraordinary congress was scheduled for the end of June 2014. Without the direct support of the President Băsescu, the PD-L halved its mandates (from 10 to 5), although the total number of Romanian in the EPP group will most likely be strengthened by the two MEPs from the PMP and the six liberal MEPs. The success of the PSD also has a European consequence, which goes beyond the fact that the PSD's two smaller allies obtained half of the mandates available: the Romanian socialists are the strongest delegation coming from a postcommunist country. Note that the electoral participation registered a slight increase (+4.8 compared with that in 2009) but remains lower than the European average.

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Slovakia: Record holder in the lowest turnout

Peter Spáč

30 May 2014

On May 24, the election to European Parliament (EP) was held in Slovakia. This election was the third since the country's entry to the European Union (EU). As in the previous contests, the turnout was extremely low, and in 2014, it reached its historical minimum as only 13% of the Slovak citizens participated on the polls.

The elections to EP in Slovakia are held under a proportional electoral system with a single nationwide constituency where all 13 Members of the European Parliament (MEPs) are elected. Originally, Slovakia had 14 MEPs, but after Romania and Bulgaria entered the EU, this number was slightly reduced. In the election, only political parties may compete and the country applies a 5% threshold what limits the chances for smaller parties. This system was adopted before the country's first European election in 2004 and has not been modified so far.

The campaign

The election to European parliament was affected by the presidential election, which was held in March 2014. Since 1999, Slovak citizens choose their head of state directly and the president's term lasts for five years.[1] This means that the presidential elections in Slovakia always precede the competition to European parliament as the former are held only about two months before the latter.

[1] The president was originally elected by the parliament, but the high polarisation of the party system in the second half of the '90s eliminated any chance to choose the head of the state in this way. As a result, until the adoption of direct election, Slovakia had no president for nearly one year (Henderson, 2002).

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The main consequence here is quite straightforward. The contest for the head of state is of great importance in the domestic politics and the one in 2014 was no exemption. At least two factors played a role here. First, the campaign was very intensive and lasted for a long time. Some of the candidates started with their presentation during summer 2013, and such, the campaign lasted for nearly a whole year. Second, the presidential election in 2014 received great attention as the prime minister and the leader of dominant party Smer–Social Democracy (Smer-SD) Robert Fico entered the competition. The race thus provided a strong rivalry between the candidate of the ruling party with nominees of the opposition and a few independents. The presidential contest ended in the end of March, leaving citizens tired from the long lasting campaign.

Until the new head of state was decided, the topic of European election in fact did not exist in Slovak politics. Even in the following days, it did not become the prime question as the media were more occupied with the victory of nonpartisan Andrej Kiska and even more with the failure of the prime minister. This was an important point as it was less than two months before the election to EP and the campaign for it did not even start.

Based on the aforementioned, the campaign for the European election was not intense in Slovakia and it was not far from being invisible. The main political parties did not open any conflicting debate, and they presented rather moderate views on the EU and its function. The valence issues as the importance of the country's position in the EU, lower bureaucracy, support of education and research, and so on, ruled the campaign what was quite striking when compared with previous presidential election, which included repeated clashes between candidates.

From the relevant parties, only the right-wing liberal Freedom and Solidarity (SaS) presented itself as the only true advocate of Slovakia in Europe. With the main campaign quote *All for Brussels, we for you!* it tried to visibly distinguish itself from the remaining mainstream parties by claiming that it only protects the country's economic interests.[2] Although SaS is the parliamentary party with the most reserved opinion on the EU, it is still far from stances held by the British UKIP led by Nigel Farage. For example, it criticises the adoption of the Euro by Slovakia as premature, but as a solution, it does not call for its abandoning and return to previous currency, but only for a higher responsibility of the member states.

[2] In 2011 SaS was the only party which refused to support the bailout rescue programs and thus laid down the government of Iveta Radičová of which it was a member.

Results

The election was won by the ruling social democratic Smer-SD, which got 4 of 13 seats. Although the party won with a fairly high margin, its result of 24.1% was rather a disappointment. When compared with the European election in 2009, the party lost nearly 8 percentage points and one seat in the European parliament as it dropped from five to four mandates.

The remaining nine seats were divided between seven parties. The strongest oppositional party, the Christian Democratic Movement (KDH), slightly increased its vote share from 2009 (+2.3 percentage points) and equaled its seat gain, as it got two mandates. On the other hand, a more liberal Slovak Democratic and Christian Union–Democratic Party (SDKU-DS) lost more than half of its support from the previous European election, but due to the formula of the system, it was able to remain at two seats.

Table 1. Results of the 2014 EP elections – Slovakia

Party	EP Group	Votes (%)	Seats	Votes (change from 2009)	Seats (change from 2009)
Smer–Social Democracy (Smer-SD)	S&D	24.1	4	–7.9	–1
Christian Democratic Movement (KDH)	EPP	13.2	2	+2.3	+0
Slovak Democratic and Christian Union–Democratic Party (SDKU-DS)	EPP	7.8	2	–9.2	+0
Ordinary People and Independent Personalities (OLaNO)	NI	7.5	1	+7.5	+1
NOVA, Conservative Democrats of Slovakia (KDS), Civic Conservative Party (OKS)	ECR	6.8	1	+6.8	+1
Freedom and Solidarity (SaS)	ALDE	6.7	1	+2.0	+1
Party of Hungarian Community (SMK)	EPP	6.5	1	–4.8	–1
Bridge (Most)	EPP	5.8	1	+5.8	+1
Others		21.5	0		
Total		100	13		–
Turnout (%)		13		–6.6	
Legal threshold for obtaining MEPs (%)		5			

EP group abbreviations: EPP, European People's Party; S&D, Progressive Alliance of Socialists and Democrats; ALDE, Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe; G-EFA, The Greens–European Free Alliance; ECR, European Conservatives and Reformists; GUE-NGL, European United Left–Nordic Green Left; EFD, Europe of Freedom and Democracy; NI, Non-Inscrits.
Source: Statistical Office of the Slovak Republic.

All the other parties were able to secure one mandate each. Of this group, only the party of the Hungarian Community (SMK), representing the Hungarian minority living in southern parts of Slovakia, had MEPs even before election 2014. The other four subjects contested in the European election for the first time as they were mostly created after 2009. Most of them may be labeled as centre-right, and their vote shares were quite similar as they ranged between 5.8% and 7.5% of votes.[3]

Despite the anticipated trends in recent Europe, the far-right parties failed in election 2014 in Slovakia. The once popular nationalist Slovak National Party (SNS) secured only 3.6% of votes and lost its only MEP from the previous term. Even lower result was gained by the continuously rising extreme right People's Party–Our Slovakia (LSNS), whose leader succeeded in regional election in 2013 when he got the office of a regional president. The party, however, got only 1.7% of votes and was not even close to obtain a seat. The Slovak far right will thus be not represented in EP for the following five years.

Interpretation

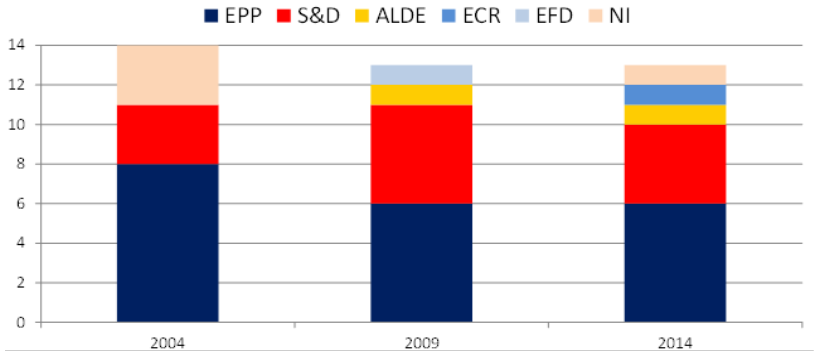
The European election 2014 in Slovakia provided several interesting insights. First of all, for the third time, the parties grouped in European People's Party (EPP) gained the most seats. Although they were not able to match their success in 2004, when they acquired nine mandates, their share remained the same as in 2009 with six seats. As before the Progressive Alliance of Socialists and Democrats (S&D), represented by Smer-SD, ended as second with one lost seat when compared with election 2009.

As for the results of respective political parties, the victory of Smer-SD was clear but rather unsatisfying for the party. Since its emergence in 1999, the party of Robert Fico became the dominant subject of the party system with hegemony of the centre-left ideological axis (Leška, 2013). It won all general elections since 2006, continuously increasing its results. In the last parliamentary election in 2012, Smer-SD got more than 44% of votes, thus receiving a majority in Slovak parliament, which allowed it to form a government without any need for coalition partners (Spáč, 2014). However, in recent years, some signals indicating the party's decline have been shown, i.e. the regional elec-

[3] One of these parties, the Ordinary People and Independent Personalities (OLaNO), is a specific subject. It profiles itself as a platform for independent candidates and has strong antiestablishment sentiments. As such, the party has only four members who are its founders (Spáč, 2012).

tion in 2013 and presidential contest in March 2014. The European election in 2014 confirmed this potential trend.

Figure 1. MEPs of EP groups in Slovak elections



Note: In 2004, Slovakia had 14 MEPs; in 2009 and 2014, only 13 MEPs.
Source: Statistical Office of the Slovak Republic.

The election also showed that important discussions regarding potential increase of far-right and populist parties in Europe have avoided Slovakia so far. Both far-right parties have failed to secure any seat. The potential explanation lies in the fact that these parties typically mobilise their voters on domestic topics. This is especially true for the extreme LSNS, which is oriented strongly negatively against Roma minority in Slovakia while the EU and its aspects are of secondary importance to it.

However, the most striking result of the election 2014 was the extremely low turnout. Despite fairly high support of EU institutions in Slovakia, only 13% of citizens participated on the polls, thus creating a negative record in the history of European elections.[4] This outcome may be partly attributed to the crucial presidential race held only two months earlier, as this competition took enormous attention and led to some fatigue of voters. The weak and short campaign before European election only supported this contrast. Although the poor turnout may be rated as a negative factor, it opened discussions about

[4] Turnout in elections 2004 and 2009 was also the lowest in the EU when it reached 17% and 19.6%, respectively.

a possible change of the electoral system to mobilise more voters in later contests. In 2014, a grand codification of all electoral laws is being prepared in Slovakia, thus creating a chance to modify the current system and its parts.

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Slovenia: Internal political crisis and the success of the opposition

Simona Kustec Lipicer

11 June 2014

The European Union (EU) was almost completely absent from the third Slovenian elections to the European Parliament (EP). In times when official campaign for the EP elections took place, domestic political crisis finally erupted in its whole complexity, although even before no really visible signs of European elections atmosphere could be detected either within political parties, publics, or even media.

At the end, election results in a way confirmed a typical second-order character of EP elections in a part that is related to the opposition and new alternative parties' election success (Reif and Schmitt, 1980), although 2014 EP election results in a country primarily needs to be related to the highly idiosyncratic national political circumstances through the whole preelectoral period. The prism of national parties' micro level conditions as well as the state's macro level circumstances seem to be central in explaining the determinants of the Slovenian electoral atmosphere.

Domestic political circumstances as predeterminants of EP elections

In general, the attitudes of Slovenian parliamentary parties towards EP elections were very much reserved. Both coalition and opposition parties had not officially declared neither their election intentions nor even the list of the candidates competing almost until one month before the elections, when the official deadline for the submission of the candidates' lists needed to be submitted. Therefore, parties did not initiate any comprehensive EU-related election identities and even those parties that had their representatives in the EP 2009–2014 session quite rarely referred to their own MPSs and their work.

The preliminary analysis of the already mentioned party attitudes could be—although very partially—explained with the generally low public satis-

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faction with the EU and demands from Brussels towards the country that had been for a long time regarded as one of the most matured candidates for the 'troika visit'. On the other hand, internal crisis in (*a*) domestic political parties, (*b*) parliamentary as well as (*c*) governmental arena, together with a low level of political culture that was especially seen through low political trust and satisfaction (Toš et al., 2014) explained the distant and calm attitude towards the EP elections inside the country.

In the beginning of 2014, serious internal crisis in Positive Slovenia (PS), the leading coalition party, was officially disclosed, pointing to the division of the party in two blocks. One block was close to the PM Bratušek and governmental coalition agenda, and the other to the party's founding father Janković, mayor of the capital city of Ljubljana, who needed to step down from the position of the party president because of the set of corruption accusations.

Further on the second biggest coalition party of Social Democrats (SD) similarly fought their internal party leadership struggles that ended with almost self-nomination of the party leader as a holder of the party list for the EP elections. The third coalition member, Democratic Party of Retired Persons of Slovenia (DeSUS), in the beginning of the election year officially declared their non participation in the elections because of their internal party austerity measures and related own internal cost-benefit calculations for nonsuccess. However, later on, the party gave its name to the ex–For Real (Zares) EP MEP Vajgl, who lost its party base in the middle of the EP 2009–2014 term because of the instability of the party structure.

Similarly, the main opposition party Slovenian Democratic Party (SDS) faced their internal party crisis mainly because of the trails of their party president Janša, accusing him of taking bribes in the procurement of military equipment from Finland's Patria Oyj. The other two opposition parties, centre-right Slovenian People's Party (SLS) and Christian democratic New Slovenia (NSi) decided to form preelectoral coalition and attended the EP elections with a joint list. This was the first attempt of that kind for the EP elections on the right end of the political spectrum so far. Citizens List (DL) as the fourth opposition party, and alike the coalition government member Positive Slovenia (PS), a highly successful new comer of the national 2011 parliamentary arena, had in times of EP elections fought with their internal party democracy problems that affected their capacities and chances to compete at the EP elections as well.

Because of the civil society protest movements that took place at the end of 2013, also a couple of new political parties were formed afterwards (such as Solidarnost), one completely new party that was leader-focused (Believe, run by ex-president of the Court of Auditors, Šoltes) and a new alliance party run by EP MEP Kacin (ex–Liberal Democracy of Slovenia (LDS) in term 2009–2014, now a candidate on its own list Kacin Specifically), who lost his party

identity because of the disappearance of LDS from the political scene in times of his EP MEP's term of office.

The campaign

It is no surprise that in such confused circumstances, Slovenian EP electoral campaign experience was nonstructured, very much blurred, without any visible image and short termed as well. It remainded to a mixture of various types of campaigns, from premodern, modern to postmodern (Farrell and Schmitt-Beck, 2002; Whiteley and Seyd, 2003). The winning party SDS's campaign was recognisable through its direct interpersonal communication and support from other European politicians; the campaign of the second best party NSI-SLS, by its USA-driven campaign model approach, whereas SD, which gained one MEP, was, except some negative campaign inputs, similar to SDS's approach. Igor Šoltes's list Believe campaign was, in particular, branding Šoltes as a new, fresh and positive political actor on the political scene (Rtvslo, 2014; Siol, 2014). Party campaigns were mainly led through their homepages and also parties' and candidates' own social networks, such as Facebook and Twitter. Traditional forms of applied campaign techniques and material were used in very limited scope.

Almost all competing parties prepared by scope short electoral programs, which were available online on their web pages. The main issues emphasised in the programs referred either to the EU-related democratic deficit topics as well as national EU-related topics, concerning the role of the country in the EU and specific actual financial, economic, employment, social justice and youth policy issues. Except DeSUS and Believe, which are not yet members of any European party group, all the other winning parties closely referred their programs also to their European party group's manifestos.

Media interest for the campaign was, compared with other past electoral campaigns, very limited and focused on a couple of confrontations on the national television and radio and short contributions in printed and Web media. The campaign was moderate and quite 'peaceful', with only slight negative campaign issues, mainly addressed towards Igor Šoltes's list Believe, which at the end won one MEP seat, and in the SD campaign speech towards SDS party leader Janša due to his Patria trials. Media-related campaign issues quite atypically for the existing Slovenian circumstances closely referred to the parties' election program contents. In addition, Eurosceptic-related topics and national political crisis were emphasised, but mainly in the frameworks of media-driven campaign.

The results

Voting is based on the proportional system with preferential votes. The country as a whole constitutes a single electoral district. The division of seats is performed for the country as a whole, with seats being allocated to candidate lists under the d'Hondt method. No fixed threshold for obtaining MEP's position is defined in such electoral system (DVK, 2014).

Turnout at the 2014 EP elections was 24.55%, which is almost 4% less than at the 2009 elections and in general one of the lowest in the whole EU.

As seen from the election results in the table, right-centred parties of SDS and SLS-NSi, both members of EPP won the majority seats of Slovenian quota of eight MEP seats in the EP. Although successful, the 2014 results were quite relative compared with the 2009 EP elections—SDS gained even less votes than in 2009, while also NSi and SLS together gathered less votes than in 2009. Established left-centred parties faced a huge election failure with approximately 20 percentage points less than the 2009 score. In addition, the leading coalition party of PS was not even able to collect enough votes to win at least one seat. A kind of a surprise of the elections are a new party Believe and so far not on the EU political floors active coalition party DeSUS, both gaining their first success at the EP elections. In addition, the voting results also pointed to an increase in the number of votes for 'other' parties, which can be explained with the fact that also the number of competing parties from 2009 to 2014 increased from 12 to 16.

Table 1. Results of the 2014 EP elections in Slovenia

Party	EP Group	Votes (%)	Seats	Votes (change from 2009)	Seats (change from 2009)
Slovenian Democratic Party (SDS)	EPP	24.78	3	–1.88	0
New Slovenia–Christian People's Party (NSi) + Slovenian People's Party (SLS)	EPP	16.60	2	+3.6	1
Believe! Dr. Igor Šoltes List	none	10.33	1	+10.3	1
Democratic Party of Retired Persons of Slovenia (DeSUS)	none	8.12	1	+0.94	1*
Social Democrats (SD)	S&D	8.08	1	–10.35	–1
For Real (ZARES)	ALDE	0.95	0	–8.8	–1
Positive Slovenia (PS)	none	6.63	0	+6.6	0
Civic List (DL)	ALDE	1.14	0	+1.1	0
Others		23.37	0	+5.57	–1**
Total		100	8		0
Turnout		24.55		–3.82	
Legal threshold for obtaining MEPs (%)		none			

Source: DVK (2014a).
*The seat was won by Vajgl, who was the holder at DeSUS list, and the EP MEP of the party Zares in 2009–2014 term.
** One seat for others in 2009 for LDS, which did not compete at the 2014 elections.
Abbreviations for EP groups: EPP, European People's Party; S&D, Progressive Alliance of Socialists and Democrats; ALDE, Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe; G-EFA, The Greens–European Free Alliance; ECR, European Conservatives and Reformists; GUE-NGL, European United Left–Nordic Green Left; EFD, Europe of Freedom and Democracy; NI, Non-Inscrits.

Final remarks

The preliminary analysis of the Slovenian elections to the EP 2014 shows a quite clear pattern of Reif and Schmitt's (1980) national second-order election character, despite that some later analytical conclusions pointed that the applicability of the second-order election theory in 'new' member states, particularly those joining in 2004 (e.g., also Slovenia), may not be as straightforward as it is in 'old' member states (Hix and Marsh, 2011). At the same time, 2014 Slovenian experiences clearly confirmed also a three-decade-old finding from 'old' member states that the EP second-order election results are significantly influenced by the situation in the first-order arena at the national level (Reif, 1984).

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Spain: The beginning of the end of bipartisan rule?

Enrique Hernández and Marta Fraile

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Once more, and as is typical in Spain (see, for instance, Font and Torcal, 2012), the main messages and discourses of the electoral campaign were made in national (and not in European) terms. Elections took place when the incumbent government (Partido Popular, PP: conservative) was in the middle of its mandate and had already implemented a number of controversial political decisions. On top of that, there was a general climate of distrust and disaffection with political elites and traditional political parties without precedents in Spain.[1]

The electoral campaign

The most relevant topic of the campaign (and again in national terms) has been the beginning of the end of bipartisan rule. Citizens' levels of disaffection with traditional political parties and elites have reached their maximum in the history of the Spanish democracy. Especially after a long period of social mobilisation and protest that since the organisation of the 15M movement (los indignados) in 2011 has constantly promoted protest initiatives during the PP mandate.

European elections constitute the best scenario for small parties to obtain a higher percentage of representation since the use of only one nationwide electoral district favors a higher level of proportionality, and the number of

[1] According to the latest wave of the European Social Survey in Spain, the average trust on political parties is of 1.87 (and for a scale that ranges from 0 to10 where 0 means a complete lack of confidence).

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votes required to obtain a seat is smaller than in general elections. Despite the fact that the majority of small parties have based their campaigns on critics towards Spain's nearly bipartisan party system, the two main parties (the incumbent PP and the main opposition party: PSOE, social democrats) agreed upon organising a television debate only between their respective candidates but not including any other candidates.

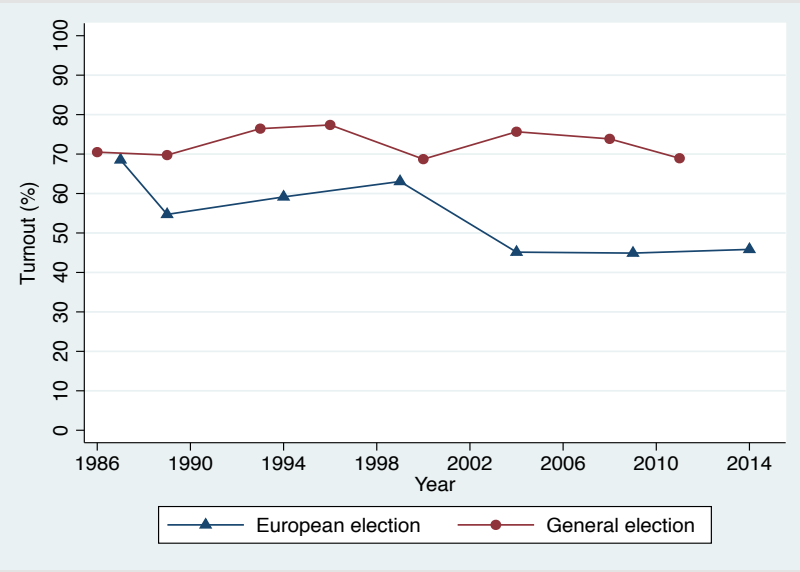
This debate, again, focused on Spanish national problems (basically a discussion about who should be blamed for the deep economic crisis in Spain and its consequences), with a complete lack of discussion about potential projects for the future of Spain in Europe. Another topic that was debated extensively during the electoral campaign was the independence of Catalonia and its potential consequences for the inclusion of Catalonia in the European Union.

The results

Turnout projections were very pessimistic, since they predicted the highest level of abstention since the first 1986 European elections in Spain. Consequently, all parties called for participation in their campaigns. Finally, participation has been similar to previous elections. More specifically, electoral turnout in European elections gradually decreased during the 1986–2002 period. Since then, it has been stable approximately 45% (Figure 1). This figure, however, is significantly lower than turnout at the general (national) elections where, for example, in 2011, 69% of electors participated. This suggests that even if all parties campaigned on the importance (and need) to participate in the European elections, Spanish citizens still consider the latter as 'second-order' elections (Reif and Schmitt, 1980).

Figure 2 shows a decrease in electoral support for the two main parties in Spain: PP and PSOE. In absolute terms, both lost approximately 2.5 million of votes, which implies a decrease of 15% of the total vote. Indeed, this has been the worst result obtained by the PSOE in a European election since 1986. The fact that that the socialists conceived this election as a plebiscite of the incumbent's mandate and of their own performance as the main opposition party motivated the resignation of the main party leaders, which was announced the day immediately after the elections. In contrast, the incumbent PP has positively interpreted these results, pointing out the fact that they have obtained the highest percentage of electoral support and seats in the European Parliament. In fact, they are one of the few European political parties (together with CDU in Germany and PD in Italy) that, while being the incumbent, has won the elections.

Figure 1. Electoral participation in European and national elections. Spain (1986–2014)

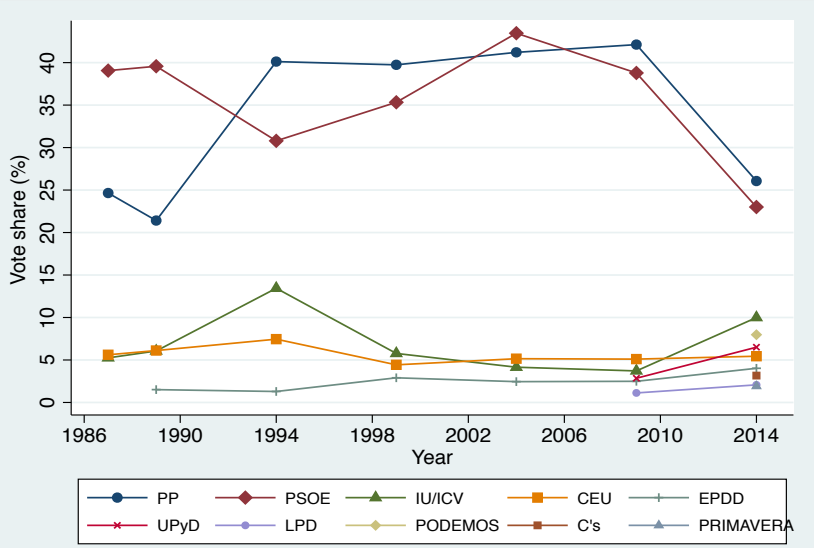


Source: Own elaboration on data from the Ministerio del Interior

Overall, left wing parties have enjoyed greater support in this election. The vote share of PSOE, Izquierda Unida / Iniciativa por Cataluña (IU/ICV), Podemos, Los Pueblos Deciden (LPD) and Primavera adds up to more than 50% of the valid votes. At the regional level, it is also worth noting that in Catalonia, the main nationalist left-wing party (L'esquerra pel dret a decidir) received 4% of the votes, defeating, for the first time, the main nationalist right-wing party Convergència i Unió (CIU).

A possible interpretation of the results of this election is that large traditional mainstream parties have been the main losers, whereas small parties (some traditional and some new) have widely benefited from these losses. On the one hand, the party located at the left from PSOE: IU/ICV has tripled its vote share. On the other hand, relatively new parties such as UPyD have doubled their vote share. At the same time, newly created parties, such as Ciudadanos or Podemos, won more than 3% of the votes. The most remarkable success has been that of Podemos, which won 8% of the vote in the first election the party had ever contested. This party was created only four months before the elections and campaigned on a simple critical message against the political system and its main parties and institutions, focusing on issues such

Figure 2. Percentage of vote to different parties in European Elections. Spain (1986–2014)



Source: Own elaboration on data of the Ministerio del Interior

as corruption, lack of internal democracy, or politicians being out of touch with citizens. That is, a discourse, which was clearly at odds with mainstream politics and focused on reinvigorating citizens' political engagement through a new style of politics very much against the establishment. In fact, Podemos intended to be the political choice not only of those electors who were willing to punish mainstream left parties, such as PSOE or IU, but also of those who had abstained in previous elections but wanted to participate again as a consequence of the politicisation experienced through the increase of political conflict since the onset of the Great Recession in Spain.

Another peculiarity of the Spanish case is that, even if nonmainstream parties have enjoyed increasing support, none of these parties can be classified as overtly anti-European. This clearly contrasts with other European countries where parties clearly opposed to European integration, such as UKIP in the UK, the FN in France, or AfD in Germany, enjoyed great support.

Table 1. Results of the 2014 European Parliament elections – Spain

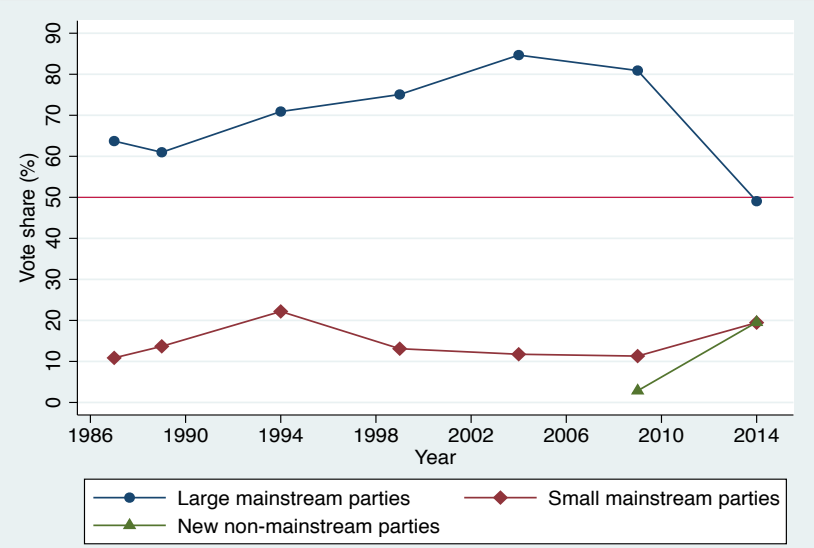
Party	EP Group	Votes (%)	Seats	Votes (change from 2009)	Seats (change from 2009)
POPULAR PARTY (PP)	EPP	26.1	16	–16.1	–8
SOCIALIST PARTY (PSOE)	S&D	23.0	14	–15.8	–9
UNITED LEFT (IU/ICV)	GUE-N-GL & G-EFA	10.0	6	+6.3	+4
PODEMOS (PODEMOS)	GUE-N-GL	8.0	5	+8.0	+5
UNION FOR PROGRESS AND DEMOCRACY (UPyD)	ALDE	6.5	4	+3.7	+3
COALITION FOR EUROPE (CEU)	ALDE	5.4	3	+0.3	+0
LEFT FOR THE RIGHT TO DECIDE (EPDD)	G-EFA	4.0	2	+1.5	+1
CITIZENS (C's)	NI	3.2	2	+3.2	+2
THE PEOPLE DECIDE (LPD)	G-EFA	2.1	1	+1.0	+1
EUROPEAN SPRING	G-EFA	1.9	1	+1.9	+1
Others		7.5	0		
Blank ballots		2.3			
Total		100	54		35
Turnout (%)		45.8			
Legal threshold for obtaining MEPs (%)		none			

Note: PODEMOS, C's, and European Spring did not run in the previous European elections. LPD did not obtain representation in the previous European election when it run as II.
EP group abbreviations: EPP, European People's Party; S&D, Progressive Alliance of Socialists and Democrats; ALDE, Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe; G-EFA, The Greens–European Free Alliance; ECR, European Conservatives and Reformists; GUE-NGL, European United Left–Nordic Green Left; EFD, Europe of Freedom and Democracy; NI, Non-Inscrits.

Conclusion

In sum, small nonmainstream parties (Podemos, Ciudadanos, UPyD, Primavera) have won approximately 20% of the votes (see Figure 3), whereas traditional small parties (IU/ICV, CEU, EPDD) have increased their vote share winning also 20% of the votes. The great support of these parties, together with the fact that traditional mainstream parties have received, for the first time, less than 50% of the votes, has generated a debate among political commentators and leaders of small parties about the end of bipartisan rule. However, even if we cannot predict the results of future elections, it is

Figure 3. Evolution of support for mainstream and nonmainstream parties in European elections in Spain (1986–2014)



Source: Own elaboration on data of the Ministerio del Interior

worth pointing out that European elections have certain particularities that differentiate them from general elections. First, European elections are usually considered 'second-order' elections. This might increase the likelihood of citizens' voting new parties, or parties that, a priori, have less chances of gaining representatives, such as Primavera, Ciudadanos, or Podemos. Second, the use of a single national district in European elections increases the degree of proportionality in the translation of votes into seats. Hence, some electors who do not live in densely populated provinces may choose to vote for these parties in European elections, but they might vote strategically for larger parties in national elections because these are the parties more likely to gain seats in low-magnitude districts.

Although it is still soon to predict the end of bipartisan rule in Spain, the capacity of new parties to address the demands of the average citizen through a new style of politics implies a great challenge for mainstream parties. The latter seem to be aware of this challenge, since PSOE leaders have already argued for the need to revitalise and reform their party through a process of open primaries. In this regard, the results of the European elections can

be considered a manifestation of citizens' dissatisfaction with the economic crisis and its related consequences such as unemployment or evictions, but more importantly, as an expression of citizens' political disaffection and their critical stance towards mainstream politics. Hence, it seems that these elections might represent the start of a new era in Spanish politics: an era where political elites might need to change their strategies and get closer to their representatives.

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Sweden: An escape from mainstream parties

Nina Liljeqvist

30 May 2014

In the 2009 European elections, Swedish voters favoured government parties on the centre-right and gave the cold shoulder to alternatives on both the far-left and far-right. Come 2014, things could not be more different. This is the fifth European Parliament election for Swedish voters, and while voter turnout is on the up, support for the mainstream parties on both the centre-left and centre-right is decreasing.

From the campaign to the result: The winners

The voters are instead rewarding those that have emphasised specific issues and concrete alternatives in the campaign, namely, green politics, feminism, and nationalism. The Green Party (Mp) achieved an impressive election result, receiving an unprecedented 15% of the votes (Table 1) to become the second largest Swedish party in the European Parliament. Mp considers that this success is the result of focusing on the 'right' issues, that is, on issues that are regulated at the European level and where the party knows how to make a difference. Media has paid attention to how Green Member of the European Parliament (MEP) Isabella Lövin has single-handedly managed to bring about a fundamental change of the European Union's (EU) fisheries policies in the last few years, which arguably has had considerable traction with voters.

The other two parties that have advanced this year are located at both extremes of the political spectrum. As in several other countries in Europe, the far-right is also experiencing a surge in support in Sweden. The Sweden Democrats (SD), with its anti-immigration and Eurosceptic stance, received 10% of the votes and thereby enters the European Parliament for the first time with two seats. Despite the SD having to cancel a number of public election meetings because of violent protests—or, perhaps rather because of this—the party has almost tripled support received in the 2009 election. Besides the Left Party (V), which openly argues for an eventual exit from the European Un-

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ion, the SD certainly offers voters an alternative EU-stance compared with the centre parties. The party wishes to renegotiate Swedish EU membership, reinstate national border controls, remain outside the European Monetary Union (EMU), but also ensure free trade with the rest of Europe. In other words, the party wants to keep Swedish access to the inner market, although without complying with the corresponding regulations. How the party intends to work to advance these issues, which are all regulated at the national level, is uncertain to say the least. There is also uncertainty surrounding what parliamentary party group they will join, which is essentially a question of whether the SD will shift even further right by joining Marine Le Pen's proposed more extreme far-right group. Possibly for strategic reasons to avoid 'guilt by association', party leader Jimmie Åkesson has refused to discuss potential affiliations, and it is reasonable to expect that the SD will not reveal what group to sit in until after the national elections this September.

The second Swedish newcomer is located at the opposite end of the spectrum. For the first time in Swedish history, as indeed European, Feminist Initiative (Fi) enters the European Parliament. A new type of political movement based on feminism, the party's ideology cuts across the socioeconomic left-right dimension, but is probably best positioned on the far-left. Having scored approximately 2% in the 2009 election, thereby falling far below the 4% threshold, the party just garnered 5% of the votes. Although the one seat this grants Fi may sound meagre, it is monumental because feminism has entered the political landscape for real. Party leader Gudrun Schyman has run a remarkable campaign over the last few months, getting considerable media attention by pressing ministers and party leaders on the importance of gender equality and human rights. Their slogan 'Out with the racists, in with the feminists!' has found particular traction with voters in urban areas with higher education. At the time of writing, it is still not revealed whether Fi will join the group of the Nordic Green Left or European Free Alliance in the parliament.

From the campaign to the result: The losers

A loser in this election is the Pirate Party (PP), the Swedish initiative that has spread to over 30 countries worldwide. As transparency of state administration has become a key issue for the party, along with free communication and personal integrity on the Web, the Snowden affair put wind in the sails of the PP throughout last year. However, the party just scored only 2% and thereby loses its two seats in the parliament. While not as catastrophic as for the PP, parties on the centre-left and centre-right all had a mediocre election. The Social Democrats (S) attracted a disappointing 24% of the vote share, one

Table 1. Results of the 2014 European Parliament elections – Sweden

Party	EP Group	Votes (%)	Seats	Votes (change from 2009)	Seats (change from 2009)
Swedish Social Democratic Party (S)	S&D	24.4	6	+0.0	+0
Moderate Party (M)	EPP	13.6	3	–5.2	–1
Green Party (Mp)	G-EFA	15.3	3	+4.3	+1
Liberal People's Party (Fp)	ALDE	10	2	–3.6	–1
Centre Party (C)	ALDE	6.5	1	+1.0	+0
Sweden Democrats (Sd)		9.7	2	+6.4	+2
Left Party (V)	GUE-N-GL	6.3	1	+0.6	+0
Christian Democrats (Kd)	EPP	6	1	+1.3	+0
Pirate Party (PP)	G-EFA	2.2	0	–4.9	–2
Feminist Initiative (Fi)		5.3	1	+3.1	+1
Others	n/a	0.7	0	–3.1	+0
Total		100.0	20		–
Turnout (%)		48,9		+5.1	
Legal threshold for obtaining MEPs (%)		4%			

The 20 seats are distributed in proportional elections, using a modified form of the Sainte-Laguë method of party lists. The entire country is a single electoral constituency with a threshold limit of 4%.
EP group abbreviations: EPP, European People's Party; S&D, Progressive Alliance of Socialists and Democrats; ALDE, Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe; G-EFA, The Greens–European Free Alliance; ECR, European Conservatives and Reformists; GUE-NGL, European United Left–Nordic Green Left; EFD, Europe of Freedom and Democracy; NI, Non-Inscrits.

of their worst results, which grants the party six seats. The S thereby remains the largest party in Sweden and, together with the 6% vote share of the armour bearer Left Party (V) and the 15% of possible coalition partner Mp, they easily bested their rivals on the centre-right. This includes the Alliance of four centre-right parties that have formed the government since 2006. The liberal conservative Moderate Party (M), the party of current Prime Minister Fredrik Reinfeldt and finance minister Anders Borg went 'all in' during the last few weeks of the campaign, but perhaps too little, too late. Instead, the Moderates slumped to its worst European Parliament election to date, with support dropping from 19% to 13%, and the number of seats decreasing from four to only three. The situation is not much better for its coalition partner, the Lib-

eral People's Party (Fp), which, as the most pro-EU of the bunch, is fighting against the EU-critical winds of the time. While the winners in the 2009 election, the Fp lost almost 4 percentage points, reduced to a measly 10% and two seats. Things do not look as grim for the Centre Party (C) and the Christian Democrats (Kd), both improving their results with about 1 percentage point each. As both parties have been hovering around the 4% threshold for the last few months, there was first and foremost a sense of relief in the C and Kd camps Sunday evening as they secured 6.5% and 6% of the votes, respectively, thereby keeping one seat each in the parliament.

In conclusion

Overall, Swedish voters rewarded the Greens and parties on both extremes of the left-right continuum, thus leaving the established parties at the centre in an unattractive state. It is true that parties in government position usually perform badly in European Parliament elections and that the centre-left has traditionally been poor at mobilising its voters in this election. It is also true that voters cast their ballot more expressively and with fewer calculations in mind in European vis-à-vis national elections. However, a lot was at stake in this year's European election campaign, and it is obvious that established parties failed to rise to the occasion. For the first time ever, the European Parliament party groups have put forward candidates for the next president of the European Commission, a democratic experiment that Swedish parties have remained surprisingly indifferent to. Neither the parties nor the media paid any real attention to this in their campaigns. In addition, with the particular situation Europe finds itself in, and with voter dissatisfaction with the political elite, new policies and ideas are called for. Parties have had ample opportunity to politicise the EU more than in previous elections. Instead, a large part of debates tend to focus on issues that the European Parliament does not legislate, or a confusing set of goals for the EU in the future. Mainstream parties in Sweden have settled on a meaningless mantra perhaps summarised as 'a slimmer, but sharper Europe', without any coherent policy programme to go with it: the social democrats want common rules to avoid competition over minimum wages but at the same time want to keep the right to protect Swedish wages and workers' conditions. The Moderates want to cut red tape and decrease bureaucracy, but they also want to set up a new commissioner portfolio for an improved surveillance of national implementation.

A lot was at stake in this election also because it coincides with national elections in September. Parties have one big campaign this year with extra money to splash. One possible spillover effect that the European election will

have on the national one is more focus on individual MPs rather than on parties, which was very much the case this spring with top candidates attracting a lot of attention in TV and radio. With regard to actual election results, we can only speculate. The fiasco of M and Fp does not bode well for the survival of the Alliance. Conversely, Mp and Fiare cheered on with this recent success in the next few months of campaigning, if not at least psychologically. At the same time, voters behave differently in national elections, and the success of Mp is not very likely to be repeated at the national level. In addition, the SD's 10% vote share yet again reminds us of the fact that nationalism has entered the Swedish political arena and that is seems here to stay. However, the situation is not all bleak. With the success of environmentalism and feminism, at least it looks as if new ideas and new visions are back on the scene.

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Netherlands, Ireland and UK: Euroscepticism does (not) triumph

Laura Sudulich

30 May 2014

On Thursday, May 22, citizens in the Netherlands and the United Kingdom (UK) voted to elect national delegates to the next European Parliament (EP). Irish citizens voted on the following day, Friday, the 23rd. In the UK, the electoral system in use is a closed list system with regional districts. In the Netherlands, the system is ordered (belonging to the group of open list systems), and there is one constituency for the whole country to choose the 26 Members of the European Parliament (MEPs), one more than in 2009. Irish voters elected their 11 MEPs, (one less than in 2009) through proportional single transferable vote (PRSTV),[1] a proportional system that allows voters to give ordered preferences to each and every candidate in the list. PRSTV is also used Northern Ireland, where 3 of the 73 UK representatives are elected. The possibility of given preferences to every candidate and the consequent transfer of votes result in a slow tally process that lasts for days after the polls close.

In the Netherlands, turnout was 37%, and in the UK, 36%, while Ireland was among the few member states where turnout was above 50% (51.6%). Turnout figures are important to a fuller understanding of the elections' results. The Netherlands and the UK are two key arenas to sense the strength of Eurosceptic right-wing parties. In the former, the Party for Freedom (PVV) of the Europhobic Geert Wilders gained popularity and votes over the past few years. Wilders calls for a limit on the number of immigrants and the defence of national culture against the alleged threats of multiculturalism. In the UK, Nigel Farage's UK Independence Party (UKIP) voices a similar position, but Farage's discourse focuses on the economic implications of immigration far

[1] Farrell, David. 2011. *Electoral Systems: A Comparative Introduction*. Houndmills, Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.

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more than on the cultural ones. Many observers see these two parties as a signal of a growing anti–European Union (EU) movement that comprises also the French Front National. However, such a movement crucially lacks a transnational dimension and appears deeply fragmented. Moreover, the electoral fortunes of the UKIP and the PVV were very different last week.

Netherlands

We begin analysing the results of the 2014 elections by looking at what happened in the Netherlands. The PVV lost 3.5 percentage points from the EP elections of 2009 (–2 points when compared with the 2012 general elections) but managed to secure four MEPs, as many as in 2009.

With regard to government parties—a coalition formed by Labourists (PvDA) and Liberals (VVD)—both the PvDA and the VVD maintain the same number of MEPs, three each, than in the past European Parliament. The Christian Democrats lose 5 percentage points but keep their five seats, while

Table 1. Results of the 2014 European Parliament elections – Netherlands

Party	EP Group	Votes (%)	Seats	Votes (change from 2009)	Seats (change from 2009)
Christian Democratic Appeal (CDA)	EPP	15.0	5	–4.8	+0
Democrats 66 (D66)	ALDE	15.4	4	+4.0	+1
Party fo Freedom (PVV)		13.3	4	–3.5	+0
Labour Party (PvDA)	S&D	9.4	3	–2.6	+0
People's Party for Freedom and Democracy (VVD)	ALDE	12.0	3	+0.6	+0
Green Left (GL)	G-EFA	6.9	2	–1.9	–1
Socialist Party (SP)	GUE-N-GL	9.6	2	+2.5	+0
Christian Union–Reformed Political Party (CU-SGP)	ECR/ EFD?	6.8	2	+0.9	+0
Party for the Animals (PvdD)		4.2	1	+0.6	+1
Others		7.4	0		
Total		100	26		+1
Turnout (%)		37.0		+0.3	
Legal threshold for obtaining MEPs (%)		none			

the centrist D66 gains one MEP, sending to Strasbourg four representatives. On the left side of the political spectrum, the Green Party and the Socialist Party win two seats each, while the former loses 2 percentage points and the latter gains 2.5 points. The remaining three seats go to the Animals Party (1) and the Christian Union (2). Table 1 shows very little change from 2009 and that the most remarkable element of this election remains to be the low level of turnout. Dutch commentators point at a low intensity campaign as one of the key determinants of such low turnout.

United Kingdom

Voters' apathy has also characterised the election in the EU. However, unlike in the Dutch case, quite a lot has changed in the UK when we look at the electoral results (Table 2). The government coalition—Conservatives and Liberal Democrats—lost 17 seats (–10 for the Liberal Democrats and –7 for

Table 2. Results of the 2014 European Parliament elections – United Kingdom

Party	EP Group	Votes (%)	Seats	Votes (change from 2009)	Seats (change from 2009)
UK Independence Party (UKIP)	EFD	27.4	24	+11.0	+11
Labour Party	S&D	25.4	20	+9.7	+7
Conservative Party	ECR	23.9	19	–3.8	–7
Green Party of England and Wales	G-EFA	7.8	3	–0.8	+1
Scottish National Party (SNP)	G-EFA	2.4	2	+0.3	+0
Liberal Democrats	ALDE	6.8	1	–6.9	–10
The Party of Wales (Plaid Cymru)	G-EFA	0.7	1	–0.1	+0
British National Party (BNP)		1.1	0	–5.1	–2
Others		4.2	0		
Total		100	25		
Turnout (%)		36.0		+1.7	
Legal threshold for obtaining MEPs (%)		none			

Note: The results of Northern Ireland are not included.
EP group abbreviations: EPP, European People's Party; S&D, Progressive Alliance of Socialists and Democrats; ALDE, Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe; G-EFA, The Greens–European Free Alliance; ECR, European Conservatives and Reformists; GUE-NGL, European United Left–Nordic Green Left; EFD, Europe of Freedom and Democracy; NI, Non-Inscrits.

the Conservatives). Liberal Democrats suffer a dramatic loss in terms of vote share, losing half of the votes when we compare it with the outcomes of the 2009 election. The Labour party gains 10 percentage points and registers a +7 in terms of elected representatives. All in all, the UKIP emerges as the clear winner of the election, and Farage, commenting on the results, claimed that his party's performance represents an earthquake in British politics. The UKIP wins 4 million votes, 27% of vote shares, and sends 24 Eurosceptic MEPs to the new European Parliament. Clearly, UKIP emerges from the election as a key domestic and European actor.

Importantly, the notorious British Euroscepticism seems to be stronger than ever. Over 50% of voters gave their preferences to parties that want 'less Europe' and promise to British voters an in/out referendum. Farage pushes for a referendum to be held before the 2015 general election and the conservative Prime Minister David Cameron promised to hold a referendum in 2017[2]—given that his party gets to lead a government after the 2015 election, which at the moment seems unlikely.

Ireland

With regard to Ireland, where voters on May 23 also cast a vote for local elections, results led quickly to the resignation as party leader of the labourist Eamon Gilmore, who is also deputy prime minister (Tánaiste). The Labour Party is in government with Fine Gael since March 2011. Both parties performed poorly: Fine Gael, the party of Taoiseach (prime minister) Enda Kenny, lost 7 percentage points, while the Labour party lost 9 points and, notably, did not secure any MEP. Gerry Adams's Sinn Féin makes a large gain (+8 percentage points) and secures three seats. Adams—a key player in designing the Good Friday Agreement of 1998, which brought peace to Northern Ireland after decades of violence—has been at the centre of media attention in the past few weeks. The Northern Ireland police recently questioned him—and then released him with no charges—for several days, in relation to an execution perpetrated by the IRA over 40 years ago. Despite such a controversial event, Sinn Féin's campaign succeeded in attracting a large number of votes and gaining a strong position in the Irish political system. The other key element of this election regards the electoral performance of Fianna Fáil,[3]

[2] http://www.theguardian.com/world/2014/may/11/david-cameron-european-union-referendum-pledge

[3] Fianna Fáil is also known as the Republican Party for its opposition to the 1921 Treaty

Table 3. Results of the 2014 European Parliament elections – Ireland

Party	EP Group	Votes (%)	Seats	Votes (change from 2009)	Seats (change from 2009)
Family of the Irish (Fine Gael)	EPP	22.3	4	–6.8	0
Soldiers of Destiny – The Republican Party (Fianna Fáil)	ALDE	22.3	1	–1.8	–2
We ourselves – Independence Party (Sinn Féin)	GUE-N-GL	19.5	3	+8.3	+3
Labour Party	S&D	5.3	0	–8.6	–3
Independent candidates	Others	25.7	3		+2
Others		4.9	0		
Total		100	11		
Turnout (%)		51.6		–7.0	

EP group abbreviations: EPP, European People's Party; S&D, Progressive Alliance of Socialists and Democrats; ALDE, Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe; G-EFA, The Greens–European Free Alliance; ECR, European Conservatives and Reformists; GUE-NGL, European United Left–Nordic Green Left; EFD, Europe of Freedom and Democracy; NI, Non-Inscrits.

the most successful party in the history of the Republic of Ireland. Fianna Fáil led coalition governments between 1997 and 2011, when suffered a major electoral defeat (–24 percentage points) at the February 2011 general election.[4] The management of the economic crisis by Fianna Fáil's ministers and Taoiseach was both questionable and unpopular, but the party seems to have now remerged as a key actors. At the local election of May 23, Fianna Fáil won the largest share of votes despite losing two MEPs.

Finally, we note the presence, and success, of a large number of independent candidates. This defining trait of Irish politics[5] appears even more promi-

signed with Great Britain. The treaty while formally guaranteed independence to the Republic of Ireland established British control over the six counties of Northern Ireland. Republican therefore connotes the position of those who support the idea of a united Ireland completely independent from British rule (Fianna Fáil and Sinn Féin) versus those who accepted the treaty (Fine Gael). Over the years Fianna Fáil has deemphasised the Northern Ireland issue and established itself as centrist party.

[4] Michael Gallagher and Michael Marsh, eds, How Ireland Voted 2011: The Full Story of Ireland's Earthquake Election, Dublin: Palgrave McMilland, 2011.

[5] Liam Weeks, We Don't Like (to) Party. A Typology of Independents in Irish Political

nent at the 2014 EP election, where of 11 newly elected MEPs, three do not belong to any party.

In conclusion

In summary, the electoral results of the Netherlands, the UK and Ireland tell three different stories: in the Netherlands, the parties in government did not suffer any significant loss with respect to the 2009 European elections; on the contrary, the sitting governments of Ireland and the UK were severely punished by voters. Geert Wilders did not manage to secure large support, while in the UK, Nigel Farage succeeded in bringing anti-EU concerns at the top of the political agenda. Turnout was low, in line with the 2009 elections, in both the UK and the Netherlands; on the contrary, turnout in the Republic of Ireland was 8 percentage points higher than the European average, while lower than in 2009 (–7 points). These three different stories confirm the second-order nature of EP elections,[6] with domestic considerations outweighing European ones.

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Part 4
The results: an overview

A turnout like in 2009 but with many "Europes" within the EU

Nicola Maggini

29 May 2014[1]

The European Parliament (EP) elections that took place between the 22nd and the 25th of May 2014 (depending on the country) have gained a much higher relevance than in the past. This can be understood by looking at how many European citizens turned out to choose their representatives at the EP. In the field of electoral studies, EP elections have always been considered as a second-order elections (Reif and Schmitt, 1980), i.e., elections in which the stakes are lower (or are perceived as lower) compared to general elections (in which the formation of the national government is at stake). As a consequence, turnout is lower compared to national elections. As already mentioned in a previous article,[2] over time, there has been a decrease in the turnout: in 1979, 62% of the voters went to the polls while 43% turned out in 2009, with a decrease of 19 percentage points. The first figure of these elections is that this decreasing trend in the turnout has stopped. In the entire European Union, the turnout has been 43.1%, which is almost identical to the percentage in 2009 (see Figure 1). This figure represents already a signal of how these EP elections have triggered an interest among EU citizens. However, the average figure at the EU level might conceal very different situations. It is therefore necessary to look at the turnout in the single EU countries and to compare it with the 2009 percentages.

Table 1 shows turnout rates for each EU country in 2009 and 2014, in addition to the difference in the turnout between the two elections. The first figure is the high heterogeneity, ranging from countries with very low levels of

[1] This article was originally published in Italian on the CISE website. It appears in English for the first time in this book.

[2] See Maggini in this volume.

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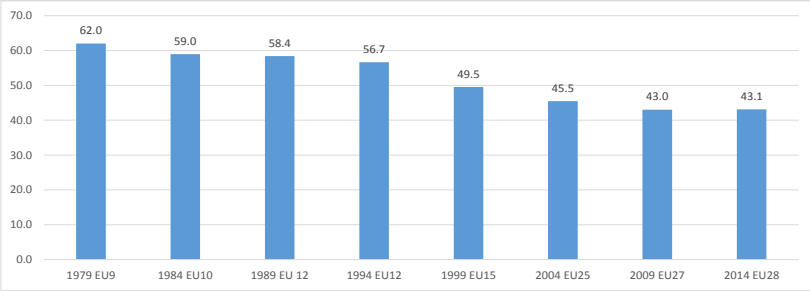
turnout to countries with very high levels. With regards to 2014, turnout levels significantly above the European average are highlighted in bold. Among the countries with the highest turnout levels, Belgium and Luxembourg stand out with around 90% of voters going to the polls, in line with the levels of 2009. These figures are certainly linked to the fact that voting is compulsory in these two countries, but fairly high levels of turnout can be observed also in Malta (74.8%), Greece (60%), and Italy (57.2%). Clearly above the average EU turnout are also Denmark, Ireland, Germany, and Sweden.

Among the countries with a low turnout (significantly below the average of 43.1% at the EU level) are most of the Eastern European countries, in particular, Czech Republic, Latvia, Hungary, Poland, Slovenia, Slovakia, and Croatia (a country that was not member of the EU in 2009) with turnout levels ranging from 13% to 30%. Low turnout levels can be observed also in Romania, Bulgaria, Estonia, Portugal, the Netherlands, and in one of the countries that during the first EP elections was already part of the EU, namely, the United Kingdom. In these countries, the turnout ranges from 32% to around 37%.

A comparison with 2009 confirms this high level of heterogeneity. There are countries in which turnout increases and others in which it decreases. Germany, France, the Netherlands, Greece, Spain, Sweden, Finland, Lithuania, and Romania belong to the first case. In some of these countries, however, turnout has increased only by few decimals of percentage points, thus remaining substantially stable. The countries in which the increase has been substantial are Sweden (+3.4 percentage points), Romania (+4.5), Germany (+4.8), Greece (+7.4), and especially Lithuania, where turnout has increased by a staggering 23.9 percentage points. In all other countries, turnout has either remained stable or decreased. In particular, decreases higher than 5 percentage points can be found in Slovakia (-6.6), Ireland (-7), Hungary (-7.4), Estonia (-7.4), Italy (-7.8), Czech Republic (-10), Cyprus (-15.4), and Latvia (-23.7). Thus, among the founders of the European Union, only Italy reveals a significant decrease in the turnout although it still remains among the countries where more citizens go to vote not only to national but also to European elections. The decrease in the turnout in Italy might be linked to the growing disaffection and disenchantment of the Italian electorate towards politicians—a trend that has been confirmed by numerous opinion polls. In this sense, over time EP elections in Italy tend to converge towards what has been postulated by theories of second-order elections with regards to turnout.

In line with what has been stated so far, the average turnout figure at the EU level concealed highly different levels of turnout for each country compared to 2009. As an additional evidence, the average turnout at the last two EP elections divided by country groups has been provided. Figure 2 shows

Figure 1 – Turnout in the European Union from 1979 to 2014 (%)



the average turnout for four country groups: the nine original members[3] (all from Western Europe), the three countries from Southern Europe that joined the EU in the 80s (Greece, Spain, and Portugal), the three countries from centre-north Europe that joined the EU in the 90s (Sweden, Austria, and Finland), and, finally, the countries from Eastern Europe that joined the EU in the early 2000s (in this group, Malta has also been added even if it doesn't belong to the Eastern part). The first figure that comes out is the fact that the nine original members of the EU show in both elections a significantly higher turnout in comparison to the other groups: in 2009, the average turnout was 57.8% and in the recent European election has remained substantially stable (56.6%).

As already mentioned in another article,[4] turnout in the Southern European countries (Italy excluded) has declined since 1999, thus widening the gap with the nine original members. Nowadays, this declining trend has stopped, and the average turnout has increased by 2 percentage points, reaching 46.6%. This result has been certainly driven by the significant increase in the turnout in Greece, which is one of the European countries most hit by the economic crisis and the austerity policies imposed by the EU. The impact of austerity policies decided in Brussels on everyday life has probably heightened the perception of the importance of the stakes in these EP elections, in which radical-left party Syriza—whose leader, Alexis Tsipras, run for the presidency of the European Commission to challenge austerity policies—has succeeded.

[3] At the first elections in 1979, the country members were Germany, France, Italy, the Netherlands, Belgium, Luxembourg, United Kingdom, Denmark, and Ireland.

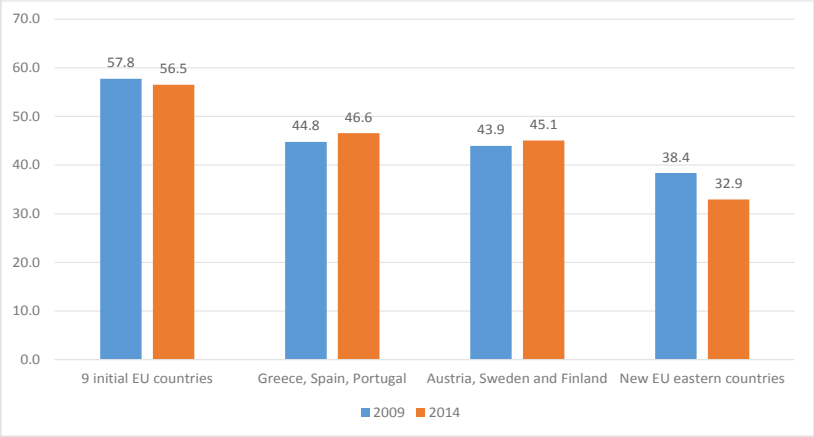
[4] See Maggini in this volume.

Table 1 – Turnout rates for each EU country over time (%)

	2009	2014	Diff.
Austria	46.0	45.4	-0.6
Belgium	90.4	**90.4**	0.0
Bulgaria	39.0	35.5	-3.5
Croatia	_	25.2	_
Cyprus	59.4	44.0	-15.4
Czech Republic	28.2	18.2	-10.0
Denmark	59.5	**56.4**	-3.1
Estonia	43.9	36.5	-7.4
Finland	40.3	40.9	0.6
France	40.6	43.5	2.9
Germany	43.3	**48.1**	4.8
Greece	52.6	**60.0**	7.4
Hungary	36.3	28.9	-7.4
Ireland	58.6	**51.6**	-7.0
Italy	65.1	**57.2**	-7.8
Latvia	53.7	30.0	-23.7
Lithuania	21.0	44.9	23.9
Luxembourg	90.8	**90.0**	-0.8
Malta	78.8	**74.8**	-4.0
Netherlands	36.8	37.3	0.5
Poland	24.5	23.8	-0.7
Portugal	36.8	33.9	-2.9
Romania	27.7	32.2	4.5
Slovakia	19.6	13.1	-6.6
Slovenia	28.4	21.0	-7.4
Spain	44.9	45.8	0.9
Sweden	45.5	**48.9**	3.4
United Kingdom	34.7	34.2	-0.5
EU Total	43.0	43.1	0.1

Source: TNS/Scytl in cooperation with the European Parliament and Ministries of Internal Affairs

Figure 2 – Average turnout at the EP elections by country groups (%, 2009–2014)



N.B. Percentages are unweighted averages of turnout at country level.

The average turnout in the other three-country group (Austria, Sweden, and Finland) is almost the same as the turnout in the Southern European countries, and has fairly increased compared to 2009, in line with an increasing trend started in 2004. Finally, the average turnout in the Eastern European country group is clearly the lowest (32.9%) and has gone down in comparison to 2009 (when the group didn't include Croatia), with a decrease of 5.5 percentage points. In 2014, the difference between the group with the highest average turnout (the nine original members) and the group with lowest average turnout (the Eastern European countries) accounts for a remarkable 23.6 percentage points (while in 2009, it was 19.4 percentage points). Therefore, it can be stated not only that there is a significant gap in the turnout between the group of the original members and the group of the new Eastern European countries but also that this gap has widened compared to 2009.

In conclusion, the analysis conducted so far has shown that there are different "Europes" within the EU when it comes to electoral participation. In some countries, turnout has increased compared to 2009. This can represent a signal of citizens' increased interest in EP elections, which, over time, might lose their feature of second-order elections and approach the turnout levels of general elections. In other countries, however, not only turnout is very low but it has even diminished also compared to previous EP elections. EU politics continues to be perceived by many Europeans as something that is not worth mobilizing for when the day of the elections for the European Parliament comes.

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EPP loses votes and seats but remains the first party in the European Parliament

Vincenzo Emanuele

30 May 2014[1]

In the end, the European People's Party (EPP) made it. It is the first political party in Europe for number of votes, in addition to being the group with the relative majority in the European Parliament (EP). The 2014 European elections appeared as a very difficult challenge for the EPP. After 10 years of Barroso's presidency and three consecutive legislatures with the relative majority in the EP, EPP is now considered as the incumbent party of the EU. Given the extremely low consensus for the austerity policies carried out by the EU, many were foreseeing a change in the lead of the EU. As written in another article before the election day, being perceived as the incumbent in a time of harsh economic crisis could have led to disastrous consequences for an EPP that was threatened both on the right by the growing support for the group of the anti-Europe parties and on the left by its historical rivalry, the PES, this time running with Martin Schultz, a strong and influential candidate to the European Commission. Even the choice of a candidate like the Luxemburgish Jean-Claude Juncker—who represented a perfect continuity with the austerity policies carried on so far—could appear as a losing option. In brief, all the premises were there for an overturn among the leading forces in Europe and for a socialist victory.

Yet, the EPP succeeded in maintaining the relative majority in the EP. It gained 214 seats, which might soon become 220 since the Romanian National Liberal Party—so far member of the ALDE—asked to join the group, bringing six precious, additional seats. The 214 seats gained in these elections represent a clear step back compared to 2009 when seats were 270 (265 plus five seats

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when Croatia joined the EU in 2013). A 56-seat loss mirrors the slight increase of the PES (191 seats, seven more compared to 2009). Thus, the gap between the two big European parties has now shrunk to 23 seats. This result makes even more indispensable the necessity to find an agreement for the government of the Union— an agreement that presumably will end up with the formation of a big EPP-PES coalition, with the EPP leading again the Commission.

As figure 1 shows, in terms of percentage of seats, the EPP has gained 32% of the seats in the new parliament. This is the lowest result in the last 15 years. Since the enlargement to other conservative and liberal forces extraneous to the Christian-democratic tradition was completed (Delwit, 2001; Hanley, 2002; Hix, 2002), the EPP has always obtained around 36%–37% of the seats. However, the competition both at the national and the European levels was almost always configured as a challenge between the Populars and the Socialists, with a very few exceptions that included some liberal forces (Estonia). With these elections, the scenery has radically changed. In five countries, parties that are not linked to the two big popular and socialist groups have won (Estonia, France, UK, Denmark, and Belgium). The aggressive advance of the Eurosceptic parties (and even anti-Europe parties) could have damaged especially the EPP, given the far-right position of most of these parties. However, in many contexts, the Socialists also suffered the consequences of this advance (such as in France).

Table 1 shows for each country the percentage of votes gained by the parties closed to the EPP, the total number of seats gained by the group, and the

Figure 1 - Electoral trend for the EPP. Percentage of seats in the EP (1979–2014)

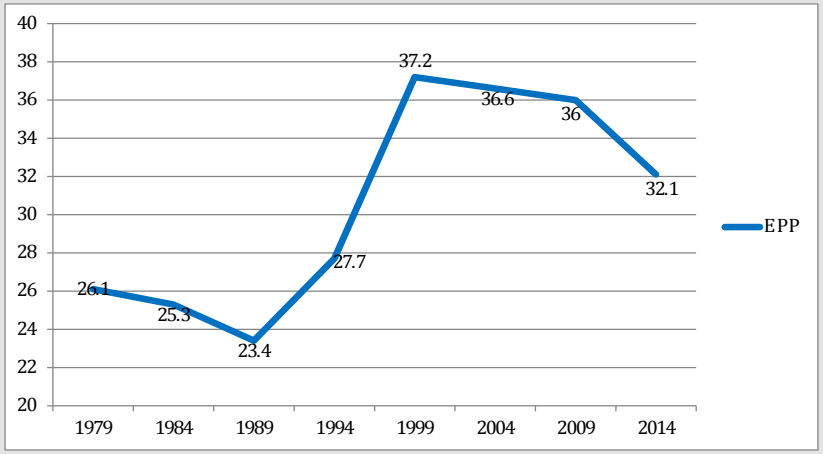

Table 1 – Electoral results (votes percentage and seats) for the EPP in the member states and differences with 2009

Country	2014		Differences from 2009	
	% Votes	Seats	Votes	Seats
Austria	27	5	-3	-1
Belgium	16.9	4	-2.6	-1
Bulgaria	30.9	6	-1.4	0
Croatia*	41.4	5	4.6	0
Cyprus	**37.8**	**2**	**1.8**	**0**
Czech Republic	26	7	18.3	5
Denmark	9.1	1	-3.6	0
Estonia	13.9	1	1.7	0
Finland	**27.8**	**3**	**1**	**-1**
France	20.8	20	-7.1	-9
Germany	**35.3**	**34**	**-2.5**	**-8**
Greece	**22.7**	**5**	**-9.6**	**-3**
Hungary	**51.5**	**12**	**-4.9**	**-2**
Ireland	**22.3**	**4**	**-6.8**	**0**
Italy	21.7	17	-20.1	-18
Latvia	46.2	4	12.5	1
Lithuania	17.4	2	-8.3	-2
Luxembourg	37.7	3	6.3	0
Malta	40	3	2.8	1
Netherlands	15	5	-4.8	0
Poland	**38.1**	**23**	**-12.5**	**-5**
Portugal	**27.7**	**7**	**-12.4**	**-3**
Romania**	24.7	9	-13.9	-5
Slovakia	33.2	6	6	0
Slovenia	41.4	5	-5.4	2
Spain	**26.1**	**17**	**-16.1**	**-6**
Sweden	**19.6**	**4**	**-3.1**	**-1**
United Kingdom	0	0	0	0

*The total share of votes for the 2014 elections refers to a joint list where it is also included a party that belongs to the ECR group. The differences in votes and seats compare the 2014 elections with the elections held in 2013 after Croatia joined the EU.
**The result does not include the total share of votes and the total number of seats gained by the National Liberal Party (PNL), an ALDE Group member that has asked to enter the European People's Party Group.

differences (percentage points and seats) compared to 2009. It's easy to notice a predominance of negative signs, which refer to a loss of votes (and seats) compared to 2009. In total, the EPP grows in nine countries and steps back in 16 while the UK still doesn't have any representatives. With the exception of Luxembourg, all the countries that joined the EU after the big enlargement in 2004 are those in which the EPP grows more (Czech Republic, Latvia, Slovakia, Croatia, and Malta). On the other hand, the biggest losses are mostly in Western Europe, and, in particular, in Italy (-20.1 percentage points), Spain (-16.1), Portugal (-12.4), and to a smaller degree Austria, Belgium, Denmark, France, Germany, Greece, Ireland, the Netherlands, and Sweden. Compared to five years ago, in the old Europe-15, the EPP gained votes only in the tiny Luxembourg. Yet, even in the two main Eastern European countries—Poland and Romania—the EPP significantly steps back (-12.5 and -13.9 respectively). In some of these cases, due to the low number of seats assigned to a country, the electoral system, and the party system, a loss of votes doesn't result in a loss of seats. From this point of view, the EPP literally collapses in Italy (-18 seats) as result of the debacle of *Forza Italia* compared to the success of the PDL in 2009.

Significant losses occur in Germany, France, and Spain (-8, -9, and -6) while the most relevant growth happens in Czech Republic, in which the Populars move from two to seven deputies. The relative majority in the group firmly remains in the hands of Chancellor Merkel and her party (the CDU-CSU), with 34 seats (corresponding to 15.9% of the total seats in the group). On the whole, the internal power relations are shifting towards the Eastern countries, which now have 85 representatives accounting for almost 40% of the total of the group (in 2009, they also had 85 representatives, but they corresponded to 32% of the group). In sum, if the EPP still remains the first European political force, this is due mostly to the contribution of the Central and Eastern Europe.

With regards to the results in terms of percentage votes, the unweighted average of the votes is 27.6% (-3.5 points compared to 2009). The sensational performance of the Hungarian FIDESZ that, notwithstanding a decrease of 5 points, manages to remain above the absolute majority of consensus (51.5%) stands out. In addition, the EPP almost reaches 40% in three other Eastern countries (Croatia, Latvia, and Slovenia) while the worst results regard the representatives from Denmark (9.1%), Estonia (13.9%), and the Netherlands (15%).

Finally, incumbents' performances—meaning those countries in which the EPP supports either the prime minister or the president—deserve conclusive notes. These are 10 countries out of 28, highlighted in bold in table 1. In eight cases out of 10, the EPP has lost votes, in some cases, in a consistent way (Spain, Portugal, and Poland), meaning that, according to the predictions,

the combination of an economic crisis and a second-order election (Reif and Schmitt, 1980) has led to a punishment towards incumbent parties. Only in two cases—Cyprus and Finland—the governing party hasn't lost votes, but has even grown, even at a small degree.

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The Party of European Socialists: Stability without success

Luca Carrieri

1 June 2014[1]

In the last European elections, the progressive alliance between the Socialists and the Democrats (S&D) gained a narrow increment of seats (seven more in 2009) and remained stable at 25% of the consensus in the Eurozone. The gap with their historic rivals of the EPP has considerably shrunk. While in 2009, the Populars had 265 MEPs against 184 of the Socialists (a gap of around 80 seats), in 2014, the power relations are much more balanced, and the gap between the two main Euro-parties has decreased to 23 seats, still in favour of the Populars. The percentage of seats for the Socialists and the Progressists has moved from 25% to 25.4%.

Notwithstanding the trend in the stabilisation of the votes for the Socialists in Europe and the consistent losses of the Populars, this cannot be described as an electoral success for the PES. The candidacy of former president of the EP, the German Martin Schulz (SPD), to the presidency of the European Commission (EC) was supported by all parties of the Socialist and Progressive alliance with the aim to steal the lead of the government of the Union from the Populars by pursuing moderately anti-austerity policy but didn't have an effect of attraction. Evidently, PES members have also been perceived as real incumbents as their popular rivals. Indeed, the European Socialists also have important positions of power and responsibility in the EC, and the boundary with the EPP has often appeared blurred. It is no surprise then that the anti-Europe wave has swamped the Socialist too, who have been considered—either truly or not—as part of the EU establishment. It is likely that in the near future, a big EPP-PES coalition will be formed, with a member of the EPP taking the lead of the EC.

[1] This article was originally published in Italian on the CISE website. It appears in English for the first time in this book.

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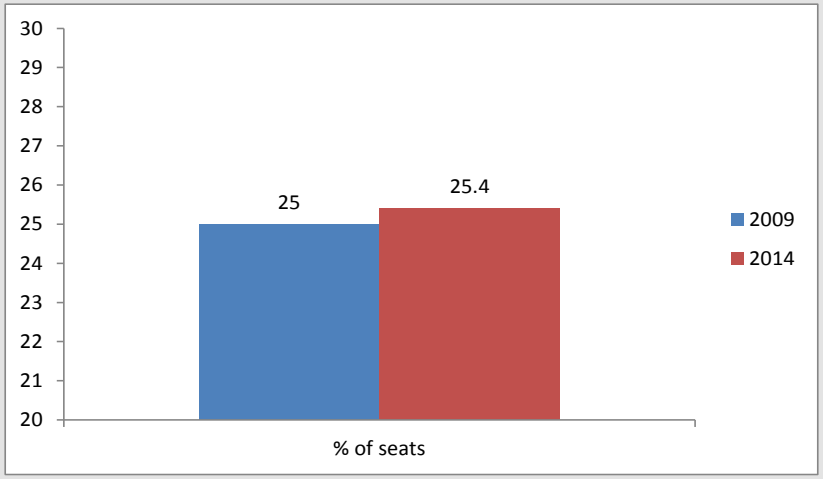
Figure 1 – Percentage of seats of the S&D at the European elections in 2009 and 2014



In four countries, the S&D parties registered a significant increase both in votes and seats. Firstly, in Italy, the PD lead by the Italian Prime Minister Matteo Renzi gained 31 seats (10 more in 2009) and will constitute the biggest delegation within the S&D in the next European Parliament. For sure, this is a historical and unexpected result for PD. Although not being directly elected, the prime minister could count on a very high "popularity capital," almost as if it were a "honeymoon" with the Italian electorate. SPD also registered a significant increase compared to previous European elections (four more seats), probably maximising the electoral campaign centred on Schulz's candidacy to the presidency of the EC. In the UK, the Labour has advanced by almost 10 more percentage points compared to 2009, gaining 20 seats (seven more in 2009). However, both British Labour and German Social democrats have remained the second party at the national level.

Another positive result for the S&D comes from Romania where a fairly heterogeneous coalition of parties built around the Social democratic Romanian party, gained 37.6% and 16 seats (five more seats). The Romanian delegation in the S&D will be more numerous than the French and the Spanish delegations even if these countries weigh much more in terms of population. In general, the elections in Romania represent a positive signal for the Socialists and the Progressists, who succeeded in an Eastern European country in which they have historically lagged behind. At present, the Socialists and the Progressists can count on 94 seats in these four countries—that is an impor-

Table 1 – Electoral results (percentage of votes and seats) for the S&D in the member states and differences with 2009

Country	2014		Changes from 2009	
	Votes %	Seats	Votes	Seats
Austria	24.1	5	0.4	1
Belgium	**19.2**	**4**	**0.1**	**-1**
Bulgaria	**19.1**	**4**	**0.6**	**0**
Croatia	**29.9**	**3**	**-2.1**	**-1**
Cyprus	18.5	2	-3.6	0
Czech Republic	**14.2**	**4**	**-8.2**	**-3**
Denmark	**19.1**	**3**	**-1.8**	**-1**
Estonia	13.6	1	-4.9	0
Finland	12.3	2	-5.2	0
France	**14.0**	**13**	**-2.5**	**-1**
Germany	27.3	27	6.5	4
Greece	14.6	4	-22	-4
Hungary	19.7	4	2.31	0
Ireland	6.0	0	-7.9	-3
Italy	**40.8**	**31**	**14.7**	**10**
Latvia	13.0	1	-3.6	0
Lithuania	**17.3**	**2**	**-1.3**	**-1**
Luxembourg	14.8	1	-4.7	0
Malta	**53.4**	**3**	**-1.4**	**0**
Netherlands	9.4	3	-2.6	0
Poland	9.5	5	-2.8	-2
Portugal	31.5	8	4.9	1
Romania	37.6	16	6.5	5
Slovakia	**24.1**	**4**	**-7.9**	**-1**
Slovenia	8.0	1	-10.5	-1
Spain	23.0	14	-15.5	-7
Sweden	24.4	6	0.0	1
United Kingdom	25.4	20	9.7	7

tant share (48%) of their total representatives.

In Portugal, Austria, and Sweden, the S&D gain one more representative than in the previous legislature. In particular, it is a remarkable result that the Portuguese party that is at the opposition has become the first national party, brining eight representatives to Brussels. In Sweden and Austria, the

result is less impressive. Although they gained more seats, the Swedish social democrats remained stable compared to the last legislature (the seats assigned to Sweden have moved from 18 to 20). The Austrian Spö also slightly increased even if it remains the second party at the national level after the Övp.

The Socialist and Progressive parties have remained stable in nine countries: Bulgaria, Cyprus, Estonia, Finland, Latvia, Luxembourg, Malta, the Netherlands, and Hungary. This stability doesn't need to be interpreted as an encouraging result though. Among these countries, only Malta has the Labour as its first party, and Bulgaria is the second. In all other countries, the results of the parties linked to the S&D are much more modest, and none of these parties have passed 20% of the votes. In Luxembourg, Finland, and Estonia, the parties from this group have reached the fourth place and fifth in the Netherlands. In Hungary and Cyprus, two parties linked to the S&D were running, and they reached respectively the third and the fourth place. It can be noticed how in these national contexts these parties are in a condition of high political and electoral weakness.

In the remaining countries, PES parties experienced a loss of seats. Although the French socialists experienced a spectacular debacle plummeting to 14% of the valid votes, this defeat needs to be reconsidered. PS has lost only one seat compared to 2009. The incumbent President Francois Hollande has been swamped by the economic crisis and had to face a difficult mid-term election. It has to be mentioned that the European context has historically been a difficult arena for the two main French parties, which rarely manage to obtain the same consensus as in the national elections. The real losers among the Socialists and the Progressists is the Spanish Psoe, which has collapsed to 23% (15 points less than in 2009) and has confirmed only 14 out the 21 members elected in 2009. The seven seats less in Psoe might have a relevant impact on the political equilibrium within the Union. Parties linked to the PES in Greece also obtained a quite catastrophic result compared to 2009. The Pasok-Elia and the River (*To Potami*) gained four seats in total, and the Greek socialist delegations has halved. The Irish Labour, who had three representatives in 2009, have completely disappeared from the EP. In Poland, the sixth European country in terms of population with 51 seats, the Socialists are under the 10% vote threshold and lost two seats. The result in Poland represents the weakness of the Socialist and Progressive alliance in many Eastern European countries.

In Belgium, Croatia, Demark, Lithuania, and Czech Republic, Socialists were either supporting the president or the prime minister. In all these national contexts, the results of the European elections seem to have punished the incumbent government. In Belgium, European elections had been held at the same time as the elections for the national Parliament, and the government delegation that was supported by the two Belgian socialist parties (PSB

and SPA) was defeated. In Denmark, the Social democrats have lost one seat, appearing profoundly destabilised by the huge growth of the Danish People's Party. Czech Republic and Slovakia losses have been massive also. In Czech Republic, the Prime Minister Botoska's party has experienced a severe loss, losing 8 percentage points and three seats less, and becoming the third national party. In Slovakia, losses have been relevant (7.9 points less in 2009) even if the social democrats still remain the party with the relative majority.

Although reaching a fairly positive result in terms of gained seats, on the whole, the PES parties have confirmed the same weakness that was registered in the 2009 European elections. Certainly, the excellent result of the Socialist and Progressive parties in some big and medium countries (such as Italy, Germany, the UK, and Romania) has given PES an important boost in terms of seats in the whole Eurogroup, allowing it to go past the 2009 result. In any case, it cannot be forgotten that only in six countries out of 28 (Italy, Malta, Portugal, Romania, Slovakia, and Sweden), a party linked to the PES is the first national party. In addition, when these parties support either a president or a prime minister (with the exception of Italy and Malta), they encounter general losses. The Romanian case seems particularly important because former communist party has become the fourth delegation within the S&D. The PES stability cannot be intended, however, as a real electoral success. Yet, given the massive step back of the Populars, the Socialists might increase their political and bargaining weight even without managing to impose one of their candidates to the presidency of the EC.

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German and UK's Liberals collapse and ALDE loses ground

Bruno Marino

7 June 2014[1]

2014 European Parliament election seems to be not so relevant anymore both in Italy (because of different Italian-related issues that have been setting media's agenda) and in European institutions (because the selection of the president of the European Commission has been a difficult problem for many European politicians).[2] Actually, it is very interesting to analyse the results of 2014 European election in regard to the Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe Group (from now on, ALDE Group).

Let us analyse liberal democratic[3] parties' results. Analysing Figure 1, it can be seen that the ALDE group has lost some seats compared to 2009 European election. Indeed, Figure 1 tells us something more. The 2014 electoral result is the worst since 1999 for the liberal democratic group. We must go back to 1999 to find a liberal democratic group that was less numerous (in percentage) than the one emerged after 2014 European election.

Obviously, aggregate data is important when dealing with a general trend. Nevertheless, if we want to analyse results in a more detailed way, performances of liberal democratic parties at national level must be taken into consideration.

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[1] This article was originally published in Italian on the CISE website. It appears in English for the first time in this book.

[2] It seems that the next president of the European Commission could be chosen after more or less private negotiations among European politicians and parties. There is, therefore, the concrete risk of putting away pre-electoral promises about the necessity to partly overcome the European Union's democratic deficit via the creation of a more competitive and more transparent process to select the president of the European Commission.

[3] As similarly explained in another contribution, I will use this term when dealing with the ALDE Group (and with its predecessors) and with the parties that have been connected to the ALDE Group.

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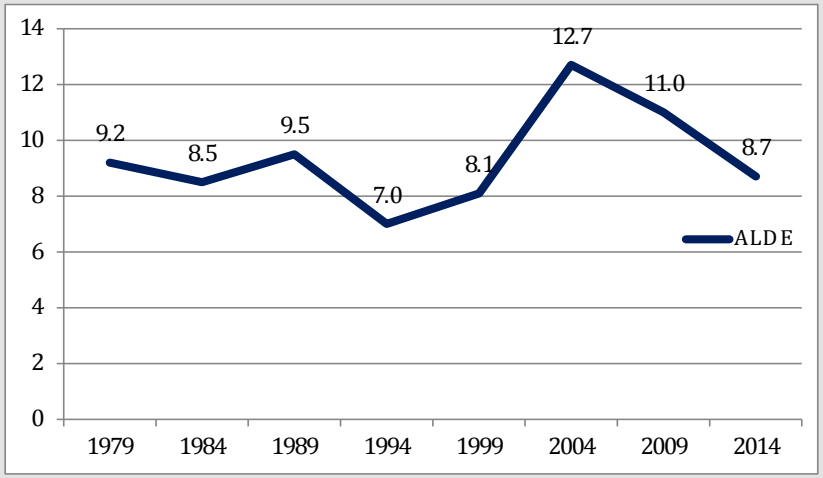
Figure 1 – Electoral results of liberal democratic parties. Percentage of seats in the European Parliament (1979–2014)



Data source: for 1979–2009 data, see http://www.parties-and-elections.eu/eu2.html; for 2014 results, see http://www.results-elections2014.eu/en/election-results-2014.html; see further details on national results and on seats calculus in Table 1's footnote.

Taking a look at Table 1, a preliminary consideration can be made. Being incumbent at national level seemed not to have punished liberal democratic parties. This is an interesting element to consider even if it is related to just three countries. The Estonian party *Eesti Reformierakond* has increased its share of votes compared to the results of 2009 European election while Luxembourgian DP has suffered from some vote losses even if it has not lost any parliamentary seat in Europe. Finally, the Dutch VVD has slightly gained some votes (in percentage) compared to 2009 election. To sum up, liberal democratic prime ministers have not been punished by electors in European "second-order election" (Reif and Schmitt, 1980).

Analysing Table 1 in a more detailed way, liberal democratic defeat is strongly connected with poor performances of parties in some European countries, that is, Germany, Italy, and the United Kingdom.

To begin with, in Germany, the collapse of FDP has brought about an eight-seat loss for the ALDE Group. This could have dire consequences for liberal democratic politicians in Germany, given the increased political fragmentation in the last years and the relevant changes regarding post-electoral alliances (see the interesting contribution by Poguntke, 2012).

Table 1 – Electoral performances of liberal democratic parties in 2014 European election at national level and differences from 2009 (percentage of votes and number of seats)

	2014		Differences from 2009	
	% Votes	Seats	Votes	Seats
Austria	8.1	1	+8.1	+1
Belgium	22.8	6	+0.3	+1
Bulgaria	17.3	4	-3.8	-1
Croatia	29.9	2	+29.9	+2
Cyprus				
Czech Republic	16.1	4	+16.1	+4
Denmark	23.5	3	+3.3	0
Estonia	**46.7**	**3**	**+5.3**	**0**
Finland	26.5	4	+1.4	0
France	9.9	7	+1.4	+1
Germany	4.9	4	-6.2	-8
Greece				
Hungary			-2.2	
Ireland	22.3	1	-1.8	-2
Italy	1.4	0	-6.6	-7
Latvia		0	-7.5	-1
Lithuania	29.4	3	+9.7	+1
Luxembourg	**14.8**	**1**	**-3.9**	**0**
Malta				
Netherlands	**27.5**	**7**	**+4.8**	**+1**
Poland				
Portugal				
Romania		0		-5
Slovakia	6.7	1	-2.3	0
Slovenia	8.1	1	-13.1	-1
Spain	11.9	6	+6.7	+4
Sweden	16.5	3	-2.5	-1
United Kingdom	6.7	1	-7.1	-10

Data source: for 2009 (unless otherwise specified), see http://www.parties-and-elections.eu/eu2.html; for 2014 (unless otherwise specified), see http://www.results-elections2014.eu/en/election-results-2014.html; regarding 2014 Irish data, I have put data on the party that will join ALDE Group; regarding Romanian data, I have decided to include the National Liberal Party's results, an ALDE Group member, which has asked to enter the European People's Party Group; the Latvian LPP/LC has disappeared from national political landscape; regarding Spanish results, I have not considered the Union, Progress and Democracy's results (6.5% and four seats) that could join the ALDE Group in the near future; and finally, I have indicated in bold the countries in which the prime minister comes from a liberal democratic party.

Secondly, in Italy, the party that has been founded by Antonio Di Pietro, the former *Mani Pulite* prosecutor, called *Italy of Values* has basically disappeared from political landscape, having obtained just 0.7% of ballots. Moreover, the electoral coalition called *Scelta Europea* got less than 1% of votes. This coalition was formed by three political formations, i.e., *Scelta Civica*, founded by Mario Monti, former Italian Prime Minister; *Fare per Fermare il Declino*, a liberal democratic and pro-market formation founded by some Italian economists such as Michele Boldrin and Sandro Brusco; and *Centro Democratico*, led by Bruno Tabacci. *Scelta Europea*'s results have had a noticeable echo in Italian media, both because *Scelta Civica* was founded in order to be the fulcrum of Italian politics in 2013 Italian general election and because the electoral coalition had strong pro-Europe stances (on the relationship between Italian politics and pro-Europe rhetorical arguments, see Hay and Rosamond, 2002, pg. 161–162).

Thirdly, and possibly most importantly, let us deal with Liberal Democrats' defeat in the UK. Nick Clegg, leader of the party, tried to challenge Nigel Farage, leader of the xenophobic and anti-European UKIP, in two public debates focused on the relationship between United Kingdom and European Union. The leaders of the Conservative party and of the Labour party decided not to take part in these debates. Unfortunately, for Liberal Democrats, Clegg and his pro-Europe ideas and policy proposals were defeated. At the end of May, European and local elections in the UK confirmed the results of the debates. Liberal Democrats lost many councillors at local level and were almost swept away from European Parliament, having being able to confirm just one member of the European Parliament (from now on, MEP) out of 11.

Liberal democratic results in Germany, Italy, and UK are fundamental to understand the decline of ALDE Group after 2014 European election. Indeed, in these three countries, liberal democratic parties lost 25 seats. This means that good performances of liberal democratic parties in other countries (such as Netherlands, Croatia, and Czech Republic) have not been able to compensate the strong losses in the three abovementioned countries.

Moreover, looking at the power relations within the ALDE Group, French, Belgian, and Dutch MEPs represent more than 30% of ALDE MEPs. Conversely, British and German influence with the liberal democratic group has been strongly reduced.

In a contribution written before 2014 European election, I imagined that European and German austerity policies and the pre-electoral leap of anti-Europe and extremist parties could have fostered a defeat for liberal democratic parties. Indeed, 2014 European election were a dire moment for liberal democratic politicians. ALDE Group, possibly the most pro-Europe group within European Parliament, is less numerous (in percentage) than 2009 and 2004. This means that liberal democratic leadership and parties must deal with a

hostile environment at European and at national level. We often say that European Union must change in order to survive. It may be the same phrase, *mutatis mutandis*, is useful for ALDE Group as well.

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The radical left grows but only in the South of Europe

Michail Schwartz

31 May 2014[1]

The European elections of 22–25 May 2014 were expected to be disruptive and changing elections, especially for the parties that deeply criticized the idea of Europe carried in so far by the main European political groups.

The European Left Party (GUE-NGL) was one of these. However, differently from the Eurosceptic parties, the most lefty group in Strasbourg led by the Greek Alexis Tsipras was not against the Euro and the project of European integration but proposed a vision completely alternative to the neoliberal and predominant one, which was blamed not only for being the cause of the strong economic and financial crisis that hit the Union but also for offering totally insufficient answers to this situation. On these premises, many were foreseeing a positive result for the GUE-NGL—a result that would have inverted the decreasing trend that has affected the radical left in Europe.[2]

A first glance at the aggregate result (see figure 1) immediately reveals that this inversion of tendency has actually took place. GUE-NGL has moved from 4.6% in 2009 to 6% in 2014—a clear leap of 1.4 points. This result certainly doesn't lead the GUE-NGL to the levels of the first European elections, in which the radical left group was made up of mainly communist parties but still approaches the result of 1999 when the group obtained 6.7% of the electoral consensus.

This result has accompanied an increase of GUE-NGL's presence in the European Parliament (see figure 2), moving from 35 seats of 2009 to 45 seats of 2014, corresponding to an increase of 10 seats.

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[1] This article was originally published in Italian on the CISE website. It appears in English for the first time in this book.

[2] With this regard, see the article in this volume: "From the Italian Communist Party to Tsipras: The path of Europe's radical left."

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Table 1 – Electoral results for the GUE-NGL in 2009 and 2014 by countries

Country	Votes 2009	Votes 2014	Seats 2009	Seats 2014
Austria	0.66	/	0	0
Belgium	/	/	0	0
Bulgaria	/	/	0	0
Croatia	5.8*	/	0	/
Cyprus	34.8	26.9	2	2
Czech Republic	14.2	11	4	3
Denmark	7.0	8.0	1	1
Estonia	0.8	/	0	0
Finland	5.9	9.3	0	1
France	6.0	6.3	5	4
Germany	7.5	7.4	8	7
Greece	13.0	32.6	3	8
Hungary	1.0	/	0	0
Ireland	2.8	17.0	1	3
Italy	7.0	4.0	0	3
Latvia	19.6	/	1	0
Lithuania	/	/	0	0
Luxembourg	3.4	5.7	0	0
Malta	/	/	0	0
Netherlands	7.1	9.6	2	2
Poland	0.7	/	0	0
Portugal	21.3	17.2	5	4
Romania	/	/	0	0
Slovakia	1.7	/	0	0
Slovenia	/	/	0	0
Spain	3.8	10.0	1	5
Sweden	5.7	5.7	1	1
United Kingdom	0.6	0.6	1	1
Total	4.6	6.0	35	45

*Elections held on 14 April 2013
Source: www.elections2014.eu/it

Green Group—has gained an excellent result, gaining 10% of the votes, 6.23 percentage points more than the 3.77% of 2009. This had resulted in an increase of four Spanish members of the European Parliament in the GUE-NGL group, moving from one to five members.

Italy represents a particular case, in which, even if the percentage level has decreased by 3 percentage points, GUE-NGL has gained three more members of the European Parliament compared to the previous elections, in which the radical left did not succeed to elect a representative. The explanation lies in the fairly high electoral threshold (4%) in the Italian electoral system. This has led to the fact that in 2009, the two parties linked to GUE-NGL—the list including the "*Partito della Rifondazione Comunista*" and the "*Partito dei Comunisti Italiani*" and the list "*Sinistra e Libertà*"—both remained below the threshold, reaching respectively 3.38% and 3.12%, thus not being able to elect any representatives. In these elections, the radical left has gathered into one list—"*Un'altra Europa con Tsipras*"—managing to breach the threshold (gaining 4.03%) and consequently to elect three MEPs.

The case of Croatia is similar to Italy's. At the elections of 14 April 2013, the two lists linked to GUE-NGL reached respectively 3.5% and 2.4% and didn't manage to breach the threshold of 5% necessary to gain a seat.

It is useful to notice also the increase of some parties linked to GUE-NGL in some Central-Northern Europe states, such as the Netherlands, where the "*Socialistische Partij*" has gained 9.6% of the votes—2.5 percentage points more in 2009—obtaining however the same number of elected Eurodeputies. An increment can be observed also in the tiny Luxembourg where "*DéiLénk*" reaches 5.8% of the consensus, increasing by 2.3 percentage points, without nonetheless managing to gain any seats. Among the Northern countries with an increased consensus, Ireland clearly stands out—a country also strongly hit by the economic crisis and by the policies implemented by the *Troika*. In Ireland, the "Sinn Féin" has reached 17% of the consensus, with an astonishing increase of 14.2 percentage points compared to 2009, thus gaining three Eurodeputies, two more than in the previous elections. In addition, also in Denmark and Finland, the parties linked to GUE-NGL have grown, especially in the second case, in which the Left Alliance has increased its result by 3.4 percentage points.

The performance of the parties linked to GUE-NGL in France and Germany has remained stable while in Czech Republic, similarly to Cyprus and Portugal, there has been a decrease of 4 percentage points, but the consensus and the numbers of Eurodeputies still remain high (11% and 3 Eurodeputies).

With the aim to provide an explanation to these results, it can be stated that GUE-NGL surely has benefited from the climate of protest against the austerity policies that have hit different countries of the Union. It is no coincidence that most relevant successes in percentage points—and in some cases also in terms of gained seats—come from the countries that have suffered the most from the cuts imposed by Brussels (Greece, Spain, and Ireland, above all, but also Portugal and Italy). However, the general impression is that the growth of radical left parties has not been as general as the growth of popu-

list and Eurosceptic parties—only eight countries out of 28 have registered a percentage increase in the consensus. If we add up what previously mentioned with regard to the longstanding low representation of GUE-NGL in Europe—only 16 countries out of 28 had a list linked to GUE-NGL—and the problem of the electoral thresholds—which mostly seems to be a problem of vote dispersion, as in 2009 in Italy and 2013 in Croatia—the result begins to show a clear logic and still remains below many expectations.

In any case, it is necessary to underline the importance of an inversion of tendency for GUE-NGL compared to the last elections. This inversion tendency, however, will have to consolidate during this legislature and gather around a well-defined programmatic platform, in order to build a project with a solid foundation for 2019. An important part of the increment registered in these elections can be linked to the feelings of protest against the current status quo of the Union. In five years, it might be much more difficult to see the same context. It is therefore urgent to strengthen the party at the European level and its network of parties in each member state. This is the only way to give a sense and a future to the radical left in Europe.

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The electoral progress of the populist and Eurosceptic right

Nicola Maggini

30 May 2014[1]

The 2014 European elections have now ended with the consequent allocation of the seats among the various parties at the national level. The national parties will then have to gather into political groups[2] within the European Parliament (EP). In this article, I will firstly analyse the electoral results of the parties that belonged to the Europe of Freedom and Democracy (EFD) group in the previous parliament. This political group gathers the populist and Eurosceptic parties and, in some cases, even some explicitly anti-Euro and anti-EU parties in the EP (Taggart, 1998; Taggart and Szczerbiak, 2004; Szczerbiak and Taggart, 2008). As Figure 1 shows, the EFD gained 38 seats[3] out of 751—which correspond to 5% of the total EP seats—increasing its presence in the parliament by seven seats compared to 2009 (when it gained 31 seats).

As already mentioned in a previous article[4], the EFD was born as a political group on 1 July 2009, and in the previous legislatures, it was made of 13 parties from 12 member states of the EU. In particular, the most important parties were Northern League (*Lega Nord*), the United Kingdom Independence Party (UKIP), the ultra-conservative Greek LAOS, the Danish People's Party,

[1] This article was originally published in Italian on the CISE website. It appears in English for the first time in this book.

[2] European groups and parties do not completely overlap as underlined by Bardi (2002). Some national parties belong to a parliamentary group in the EP although they are not member of the Euro-party.

[3] It is worth mentioning that each political group has to be made of 25 Eurodeputies coming from at least seven different member states. At present, the EFD gathers deputies from six countries. In order to remain in the parliament, it has to convince at least one Eurodeputy from another country to join the group.

[4] See Maggini in this volume.

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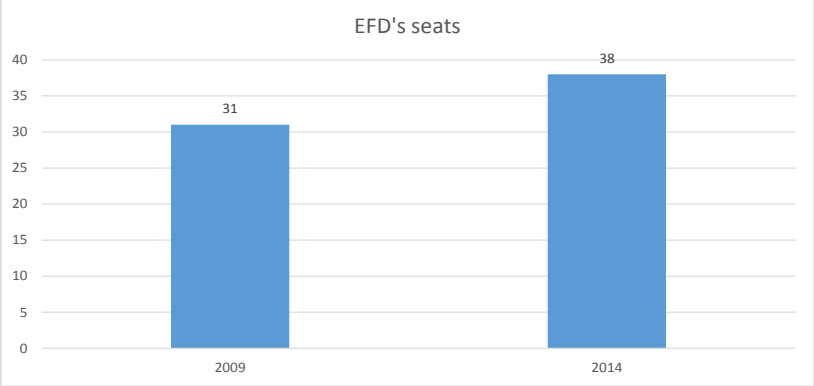
Figure 1 – Seats in the European Parliament for the Europe of Freedom and Democracy Group (2009 and 2014)



the French *Mouvement pour la France*, the Dutch SGP, the "True Finnish" Party in Finland, and the National Party in Slovakia.

At present, the EFD parties that had gained seats have shifted[5] from 13 to six, belonging to the same number of countries (see Table 1). Within the EFD, the party that has gained more seats (24) is Nigel Farage's UKIP, which has conquered 27.4% of the consensus, thus becoming the first party in the UK and with a staggering increase of 11 percentage points and 11 seats compared to 2009. One of the aims of Farage's party is to call for a referendum for Great Britain to leave to EU. With five seats in the EFD, the second national delegation is Matteo Salvini's *Lega Nord*, which has gained a satisfactory 6.2%, even if it has lost 4 percentage points and three seats compared to the 2009 EP elections. The Danish People's Party is the third national delegation with four seats (three more than in 2009), and with 26.6% of the votes and an increase of 11.8 percentage points compared to 2009 is now the first party in Denmark. Two seats each have been assigned to the Lithuanian Order and Justice—which maintains the same seats of 2009 and increases its consensus by 2.1 percentage points reaching 14.3%—and the Finnish Party that is now around 12.9% with one more seat and increases by 3.1 percentage points compared to previous EP elections. Finally, the Dutch cartel made of the Re-

[5] Among those who have been surprisingly excluded from the parliament are the Greek Laos and Slovak National Party.

Table 1 – Electoral results for the EFD parties that have gained seats in the EU member states at the EP elections (vote differences and seat differences between 2009 and 2014)

Country	Party name	Votes (%)	Seats	Votes (change from 2009)	Seats (change from 2009)
Denmark	Danish People's Party	26.6	4	+11.8	+3
Finland	Finns Party	12.9	2	+3.1	+1
Italy	Northern League	6.2	5	-4	-3
Lithuania	Order and Justice	14.3	2	+2.1	0
Netherlands	Reformed Political Party[1]	7.6	1	+0.8	0
United Kingdom	United Kingdom Independence Party	27.4	24	+11	+11

In the Netherlands in 2014 and 2009, SGP is allied with CU (Christian Union) gaining two seats. Only the SGP seat belongs to the EFD.

formed Political Party and the Christian Union (SGP-CU) has gained 7.6% of the votes and two seats as in 2009—one of these seats, the one belonging to the SGP, is part of the EFD.

As already mentioned in a previous article,[6] the majority of the EFD parties belong to the Europarty Movement for a Europe of Liberties and Democracy (MELD) apart from UKIP. Also, *Lega Nord* doesn't belong to MELD anymore but belongs to the Europarty The European Alliance for Freedom (EAF), made of populist right-wing and anti-EU parties such as the French *Front National* of Marine Le Pen, the Flemish *Vlaams Belang*, the Austrian Freedom Party (FPÖ), the Dutch Freedom Party (PVV) of Geert Wilders (these are all parties that are not linked to any EP group), and the Swedish Democrats (which have never had any EP members until the 2014 EP elections).

Alternative for Germany (AFD) gained seven seats with 7% of the votes, but it refused to join the new alliance and will probably join the European Conservatives and Reformists (ECR) while the most radical and anti-Semite national parties, such as the German National Democratic Party, the Greek Golden Dawn, and the Hungarian *Jobbik*, have not been allowed to join the alliance. In any case, in this article, extreme-right and neofascist parties are not taken into account. The common features of the parties belonging to the MELD and the EAF are the conservative and xenophobic political orientation, the aversion towards Europe, and the populism (Mudde, 2007; Pirro and

[6] See Maggini in this volume.

van Kessel, 2013). Often, charismatic politicians, who consider themselves as leader of a community full of virtues, engage in a populist challenge against an establishment considered as full of vices (Tarchi, 2003).

Table 2 illustrates the results of the EAF parties who don't belong to any political group in the EP, by showing the differences in seats and votes (in percentage points) compared to previous EP elections. Parties that didn't gain any seats are excluded. The party that conquered more seats (24) is Marine Le Pen's *Front National*; with 25% of the votes, it is now the first party in France, overcoming the Gaullist and the Socialists, with an increase of 18.6 percentage points in the votes and 21 seats compared to 2009. The Austrian FPÖ performed well too, gaining 19.7% and conquering four seats (two more in 2009), with an increase of 7 percentage points in its consensus compared to previous EP elections.

The Eurosceptic and anti-immigration Swedish Democrats (SD) obtained 9.7% of the votes, thus making it to the EP for the first time with two seats. In the Netherlands, the populist party (PVV) led by the anti-Europe Geert Wilders has lost 3.5 percentage points compared to 2009 EP elections, going down to 13.3%, but still managing to elect four representatives in the EP like in 2009. Finally, in Belgium, the Flemish populist right party *Vlaams Belang* has suffered from a significant loss of 9.1 percentage points, managing to obtain only one seat with 6.8% of the votes.

After adding up the seats of the EAF parties that don't belong to any groups to the seats of the EFD, the populist and Eurosceptic right can count on 73 seats in the EP (without including either the most moderate Eurosceptic parties that will join the ECR or the extreme neofascist parties). In addition to these 73 seats, there have to be considered also the four seats gained by the Eurodeputies of Korwin Mikke's Polish New Right that made it for the first time to the EP with 7.2% of the votes; the two seats conquered by the Bulgarian nationalists of Bulgaria Without Censorship (BBT), which have reached more than 10% of the votes; and the seat conquered by the Greek Independents (ANEL) with 3.5% of the votes. With these extra seats, the populist and Eurosceptic right can count on around 80 deputies.

After the elections, Marine Le Pen gathered in Brussels with Matteo Salvini from the *Lega Nord*, the Dutch Geert Wilders from PVV, and the delegates from the Austrian FPÖ, the Swedish Democrats, and the Flemish *Vlaam Belang*. The aim is to give birth to the Alliance for Freedom, a new EP Eurosceptic group that Le Pen had already announced in March. What are new are the possible inclusion of the Eastern Europe nationalist movements and the definition of a series of joint initiatives, such as the request to call for anti-Euro referendums in each member state and the stop to the Free Trade Agreement between the EU and the US. Being Eurosceptic, however, hasn't reached the expected high level of consensus. Apart from the unquestionable success of

Table 2 – Electoral results for the EAF parties that are not enrolled in any group in the countries where they obtained seats at the EP elections (differences in votes and seats between 2009 and 2014)

Country	Party	Votes (%)	Seats	Votes (change from 2009)	Seats (change from 2009)
Austria	FPÖ	19.7	4	+7.0	+2
Belgium	VB	6.8	1	-9.1	-1
France	FN	25.0	24	+18.6	+21
Netherlands	PVV	13.3	4	-3.5	0
Sweden	SD	9.7	2	+6.4	+2

the *Front National*, the excellent result of the FPÖ, and the good results of the Swedish Democrats and the *Lega Nord*, the consensus for the other Le Pen's allies has severely shrunk while the Slovak Nationalist didn't even make it to the EP. As already mentioned before, a parliamentary group can be built only with at least 25 Eurodeputies elected in at least seven member states. So far, Marine Le Pen has 35 Eurodeputies, but they have been elected only in six nations. Nigel Farage's UKIP has refused to join the group. Now, the only possible ways lead to Eastern Europe. Korwin Mikke's Polish New Right, the Bulgarian Nationalists, and some Hungarian Independents elected in Viktor Orban's *Fidesz* party are ready to join the Alliance for Freedom. Nothing has been decided yet, and negotiations are still ongoing. In any case, when it comes to single parliamentary initiatives, this group will have the support of the Eurodeputies of EFD led by Farage, who is also trying to join force with Beppe Grillo's Five Star Movement.

In conclusion, in the recent EP elections, populist and anti-Europe parties have been moving forward on the whole even if this move has not happened in an even way within the EU. As already mentioned, in some countries, the parties belonging to the Eurosceptic right have stepped back compared to 2009. On whole, in any case, even if only the EFD is taken into account, the presence of these parties in the EP has strengthened. The reasons for this fact lie, on the one hand, on the fact that the EP elections traditionally represent a favourable context for opposition and protest parties in line with the "second order elections" theories (Reif and Schmitt, 1980). According to this theory, at EP elections, stakes are minor (or are perceived as minor) compared to general elections, and the electorate feels less constrained in its electoral choices, with the eventual punishment of traditional parties when they are not supposed to pursue effective policies. On the other hand, following the toughest economic crisis since the Second World War, antiestablishment parties that are

openly against EU austerity policies and European integration have increased their consensus in many countries. By gathering such a relevant share of votes in Europe against Europe, these parties have made these elections closer to *first-order* elections.

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A "revolutionary" election: The Italian party system is the most simplified in Europe

Luigi Di Gregorio

5 June 2014[1]

The Italian party system has always been described as characterized by an excessive number of political parties. This feature is considered as one of the main causes of the poor performance of Italian democratic institutions. In a parliamentary democracy, as Italy is, parliament has the last word. If in parliament (moreover with two chambers with equal powers) there are too many parties, coalition governments are the rule (often coalitions too large and heterogeneous), and this slows down, if not paralyzes, the decision-making because of blackmail, veto players, and the like.

Several party leaders have argued for years—Berlusconi more than others—to be slowed by "small parties" and that Italian people "must learn how to vote," favouring larger parties and not expressing their vote for minor parties. Grillo says more or less the same thing when he states his movement should get to 51% of the vote. His movement (Movimento 5 Stelle) does not want to be in coalition with any other party: it points to the majority of votes (and of seats) to have a single party government. If Grillo fails to achieve 51%, as for Berlusconi, it's because Italians do not know how to vote unlike the voters of other established democracies: this is their thesis.

The last European elections, however, tell us that everything is changing. While Italian political leaders—but also the most part of comparative politics books—tell us that Italy should point to the reduction of the parties, possibly up to a two-party system, "as is the case in other Western countries," in those countries, the two-party system—or even the "limited and moderate multiparty system" (Sartori, 1982)—is more and more a "distant memory" and as a result, the number of relevant political parties is growing dramatically.

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Going beyond public statements and impressions, let's analyse data of the latest European elections. How can we calculate the number of relevant parties in a political system?

A first elementary (but impressionistic) way is to take a quick look at the election results. That would make us understand that in other countries historically characterized by a few large parties, the scenario has changed completely. But we need more precise and synthetic indexes to go beyond the simple "look" at the results.

The index of fractionalization

The first index that we will use is the index of fractionalization, proposed by Douglas Rae (1971). It is a relative index that gives us a first picture of how concentrated (or fractionalized) the consensus is among the political parties competing in the elections. When the index value approaches 1, this means that the party system is highly fractionalized; when it is close to 0, the party system approximates the maximum concentration, i.e., the single-party system. The intermediate value of 0.5 is obtained in a perfect two-party system. This index measures the relative strength of parties. In other words, in a system in which there are 10 political parties, we can face different situations: one party could get 90% of the vote, or the first two parties could get 45% of the vote each, or even all 10 parties could get respectively 10% of the vote. Therefore, with the same high number of parties, we have completely different systems: single-party system, two-party system, and up to a highly fractionalized party system. This is exactly what the Rae's index measures: if the result is 0, that means we have a political party that get 100% of vote. If the result is 0.5, we have two parties with 50% of vote. If the result is 0.9, we have 10 parties with 10% of vote each. It's possible to calculate this index at electoral level, i.e., on the basis of the percentage of votes obtained by the parties, and at parliamentary level, i.e., on the basis of the percentage of seats obtained by parties after the reduction made by the electoral system.

The case of the European elections is particularly suitable to compare European party systems because all 28 EU Member States have to adopt a proportional formula. Furthermore, the disproportionality of different systems is minimum (an electoral threshold that never exceeds 5%), and therefore, the voting behaviour should tend to be similar from one country to another, favouring sincere voting rather than tactical voting.

Let's see what happens if we apply Rae's index at the results of last European elections, in Figure 1.

Figure 1 - Index of fractionalization EU-28 MS

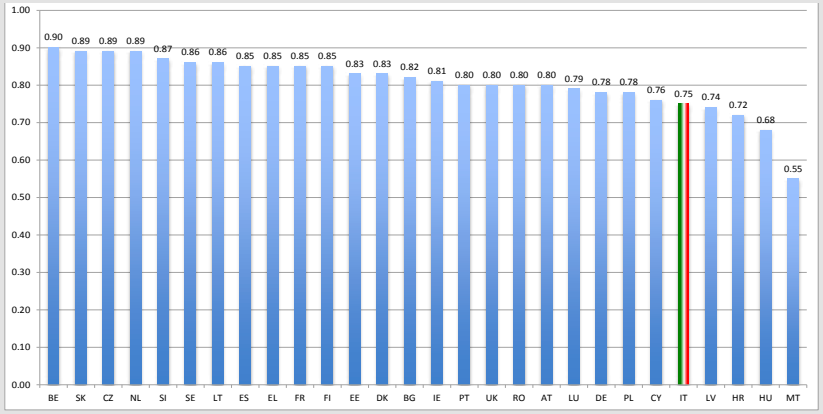
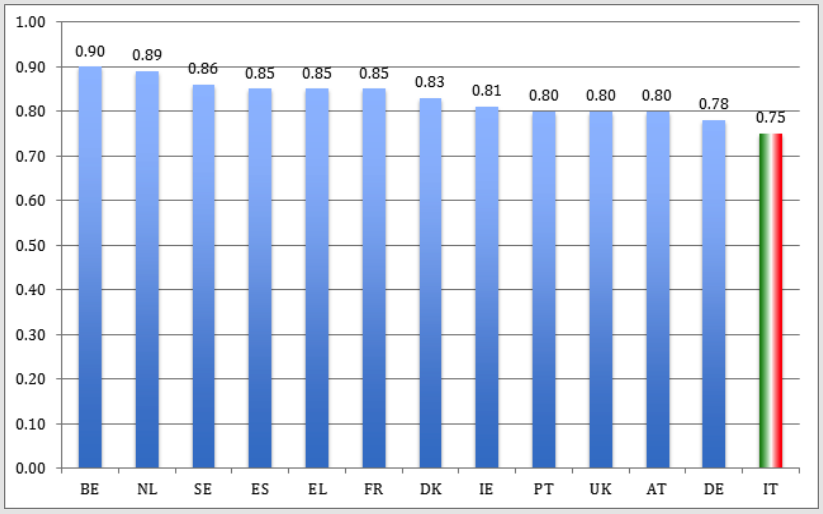


Figure 2 - Index of fractionalization EU-13 MS



As can be seen easily from the graph, Italy has the fifth less fractionalized party system among the 28 EU Member States: only Malta, Hungary, Croatia, and Latvia have party systems more concentrated (i.e., with a small number of relevant political parties) than the Italian one. Moreover, these four cases are

not usually compared to Italy. Let's see then what is the ranking when comparing Italian data with those of 12 more comparable countries, in Figure 2.

If we do not consider new (or less mature) democracies and small countries such as Malta or Luxembourg, the result is that Italy has the party system less fragmented in Europe. The one in which the relative strength among political parties is more concentrated. This outcome is somehow "revolutionary" and could make obsolete almost all comparative political systems books.

The effective number of parties

There is another, newer, and more effective index that can give us a realistic picture of Italian and European party systems. It is the "effective number of parties" (Laakso-Taagepera, 1979): an index with a good approximation guarantee, concerning the number of relevant parties in every country, again on the basis of the concentration/dispersion of the vote. Figure 3 illustrates the situation in the EU-28 scenario, and Figure 4, the one in the EU-13, reduced to the most "comparable" cases to Italian party system.

With an effective number of parties equal to 4.0, Italy for the first time has a lower number of relevant parties than UK, which has always been the emblem of two-party system, or than Austria, which was, according to Giovanni Sartori, a two-party system despite adopting a proportional representation formula. Today, Italy, which has always been the symbol of ungovernability due to an excessive number of parties, is the country with the lowest number of relevant parties, in the group of comparable EU Member States.

The index of bipartisanship

The last index we use is the index of bipartisanship, which is obtained by summing votes of the two main parties in a single election. In Figure 5 and Figure 6, we can see respectively the comparison in EU-28 Member States and in EU-13, respectively.

Even the latter figure confirms the "redemption" of Italy in the ranking of European simplified party systems. Or, maybe, it shows that European party systems are all crumbling, giving rise to proliferation of new political subjects, often with occasional leaders and with electoral programs that are attractive today, but tomorrow, who knows . . .

These data show a very fluid political context. Since the end of ideologies and consequent decline of the ideological vote—that is, the party faithful vote—we face with voters who feel free to decide "if and how to vote,"

Figure 3 – Effective number of parties EU - 28 MS

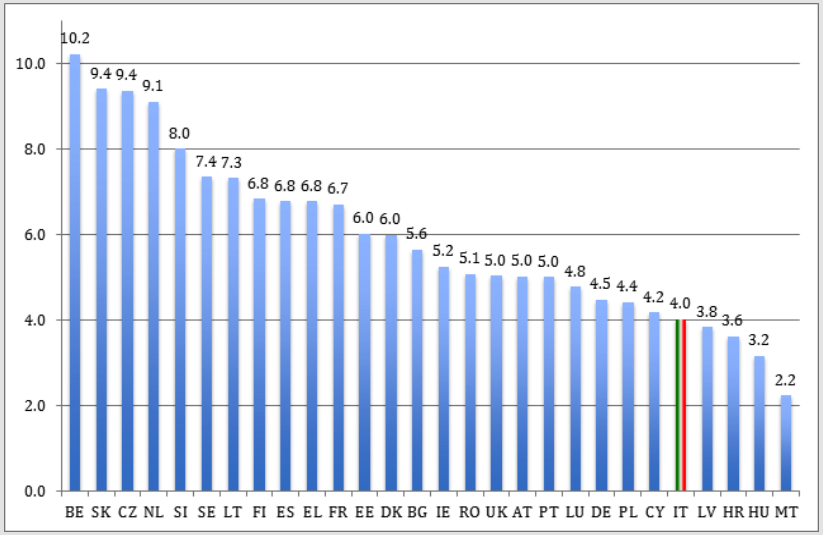


Figure 4 - Effective number of parties EU-13 MS

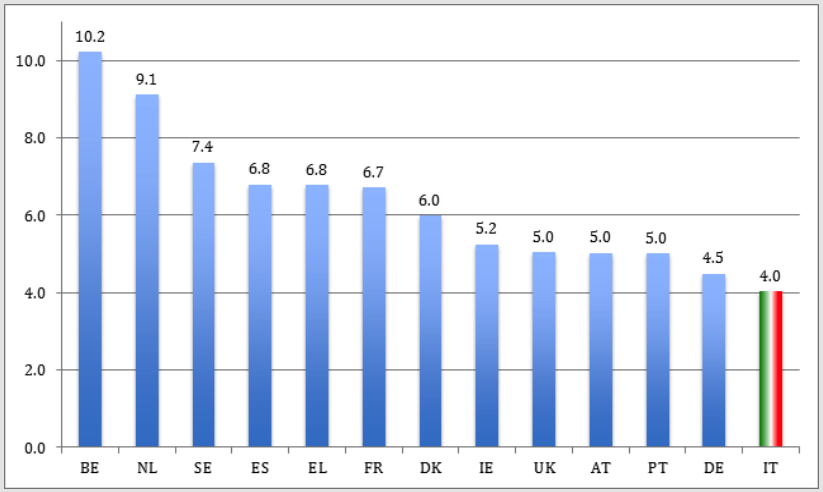


Figure 5 - Index of bipartisanship EU-28 MS

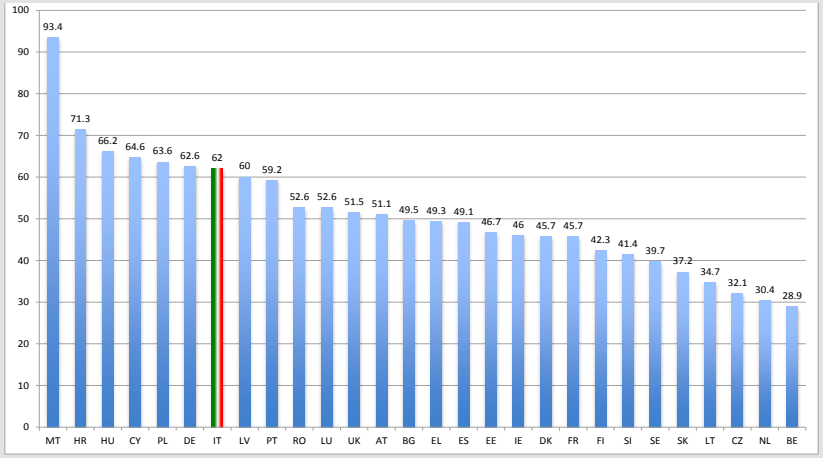
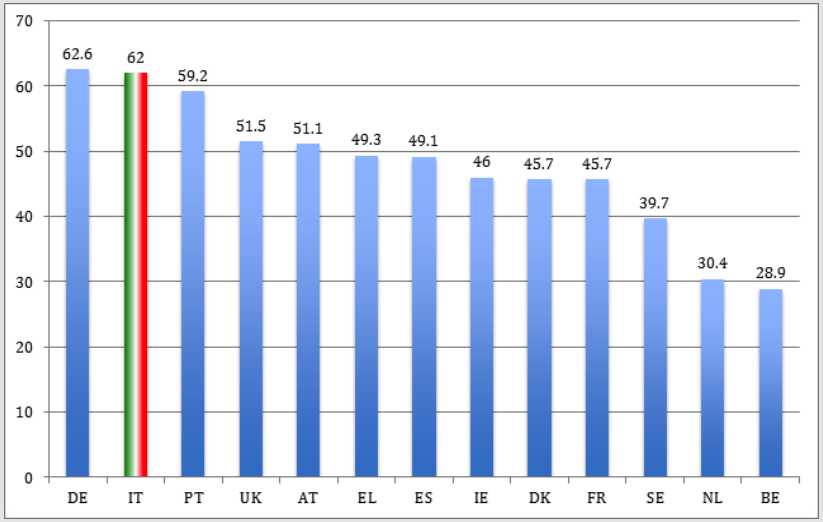


Figure 6 - Index of bipartisanship EU-13 MS



and therefore, we see highly unstable and unpredictable electoral results. This freedom to decide if and how to vote has also been one of the drivers of the progressive political disaffection that has generated steady declines of political participation in Europe.

Today's politics is completely different from 20th century politics. The electoral volatility (i.e., the degree of changing in voting behaviour between elections) is increasing, and the voters' loyalty to political parties looks like a distant memory. It seems that the main drivers of loyalty, which once were ideologies and social class identities, are missing whereas a generalized deinstitutionalization of political parties and a very high fluidity of electoral behaviour are increasing.

In liquid society where perceptions and emotions seem to prevail, leaders are most important than political parties, and the voters' trust is based on pre-political "feelings" more than on ideas and organizations. In this scenario, anything can happen, even the unexpected: even that Italy will become the country closer to the two-party system in Europe.

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Conclusions[1]

Lorenzo De Sio, Vincenzo Emanuele and Nicola Maggini

We opened this book with a number of research hypotheses, in order to outline an interpretation of the results of the 2014 EP elections. Has the economic crisis (together with the strengthening of the European Parliament following the Lisbon Treaty) challenged the well-established *second-order elections* theory (Reif and Schmitt, 1980)? Are the 2014 EP elections the *first truly European elections*, understood as elections where the national campaign in each member state is more focused on European issues than on domestic issues? An overall answer to these hypotheses would require further analysis, also definitely requiring individual-level data. However, the pieces of research included in this book, based primarily (though not exclusively) on aggregate data, allow us to say that the answer to the hypothesis of the 2014 EP elections as *first-order* elections is complex. It is not a single answer, and it is geographically differentiated.

As a first point, second-order elections theory claims that the level of voter turnout of EP elections will be lower than in general elections as the stake in EP elections is lower (the national government is not at stake). From this point of view, overall turnout has not changed compared to the previous EP elections. Nonetheless, looking at overall, EU-wide turnout tells us little as there is wide internal variability among countries. In some countries, turnout has *increased* compared to 2009 (Lithuania, Greece, and Germany) while in others, it has decreased (Cyprus, Latvia, and Czech Republic). This variability seems to suggest that the importance of these elections is mediated by the national economic and political context, as well as by other long-term characteristics, like voters' electoral and turnout habits in each individual country (especially when comparing Western with Central and Eastern Europe).

As a second point, second-order elections theory deals with the electoral performance of governing parties: they are expected to lose votes compared to

[1] This piece is unpublished.

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general elections, especially when EP elections fall towards the middle of the national electoral cycle (Reif and Schmitt, 1980; Van der Eijk and Franklin, 1996). With respect to this point, the 2014 EP elections are not an exception but rather a confirmation of the theory. In the vast majority of countries, ruling parties have lost ground. In some cases, they have experienced a real electoral collapse (as in France, United Kingdom, and Denmark).

As the analyses on individual countries show, even the salience of European issues has been differentiated throughout EU countries. In some cases, European issues have been almost entirely absent from the campaign (Belgium, Croatia, Bulgaria, and Hungary) while in other contexts, they have played a prominent role (Greece, Czech Republic, and France). Yet, it has to be observed that in the majority of countries, European issues—even when at the centre of the debate—have been politicised mainly with a *negative emphasis*: those who have mentioned Europe often have done it by indicating the negative consequences of the membership to the EU or to the Eurozone. As a consequence, parties of the populist and Eurosceptic right have taken centre stage, experiencing a general increase of their support as expected. Therefore, these parties have been the most capable to politicise the European issues—in a negative way and in terms of anti-system protest—taking advantage of the widespread discontent caused by austerity policies. On the contrary, Europhile mainstream parties, fearing to move on a slippery ground, have generally preferred not to emphasise but rather depoliticise the issues related to the EU, preferring to shift the attention of voters on national issues.

Indeed, it should be strongly emphasised that the success of Eurosceptic parties has not been homogeneous in the 28 member countries. In the *Introduction*, we had hypothesised that the performance of Eurosceptic parties would have been linked to the macroeconomic features of individual countries. In particular, the electoral success of these parties would have been greater—inside the Eurozone—both among debtor states (namely, those put under the Troika's economic control) and among the richest creditor states, forced to finance debtor countries, while outside the Eurozone, we expected a stronger success of the Eurosceptic parties in those more developed Western European countries, whose economy is stronger and less dependent from EU structural funds. The results tell us that there has been actually an internal differentiation of the electoral performance of Eurosceptic parties, but their success has not followed the suggested pattern.

Rather than linked to the features of the economic context, the emergence of European issues in the national electoral campaigns (mainly with a negative emphasis) seems to be instead closely related to the structure of the *political supply* in the individual countries. With this term, we refer to all the main characteristics of the whole set of parties contesting the election, along with their electoral strategies (i.e., the issues parties have chosen to emphasise in

their campaign). In other words, an economic problem or a social conflict of any kind is not enough: to become a salient issue, it requires political actors who decide to politicise and electorally exploit it. And in this pattern, we see a new relevance of old theories: as in the traditional Rokkanian scheme, based on a series of social cleavages (Lipset and Rokkan, 1967), in any given country, a cleavage can emerge as relevant and structure the party system only provided that it is politicised by a party.

Through these lenses, we believe we can interpret the possible emergence of a new dimension of political conflict based on issues related to the European Union. This dimension of conflict, just like old social cleavages, needs to be politicised to emerge and structure party systems. Hence, what becomes crucial is the role of those political entrepreneurs who, only in some countries, have used Euroscepticism as a key strategic asset for electoral purposes. This allows to understand the success of Eurosceptic parties even in economic contexts such as France that were in an intermediate, less polarising position in terms of the debtors/creditors dichotomy. At the same time, in contexts that were potentially favourable to the success of Eurosceptic parties, such as Spain and Portugal, there has been no innovative, dynamic, populist political entrepreneurship able to negatively exploit European issues from an electoral standpoint. Finally, the importance of parties' competitive strategies has been confirmed by the lack of success of Eurosceptic parties in those contexts where some mainstream parties have partly absorbed the Eurosceptic issues. This was the case in Finland and Hungary where there were already right-wing populist parties with a sizeable electoral base (respectively Finns Party and *Jobbik*). This notwithstanding, their electoral advance has been successfully contained by mainstream political parties in government, which have been able to strategically focus on some Eurosceptic issues.

Finally, in the European context, Italy is an interesting and peculiar case. The result of the European elections in Italy is unequivocal: the Democratic Party led by Matteo Renzi has won, and it is the only party in government that has increased its votes with respect to the general elections (the CDU-CSU in Germany and *Fidesz* in Hungary have won clearly, but they have lost votes with respect to the general elections). The Democratic Party's electoral success has been clear-cut reaching a record share of 40.8% of the votes, thus becoming the first party in terms of seats within the Socialist Group in the EP. No centre-left party had previously achieved a similar result in Italy. Since the first EP elections in 1979, the PD is the Italian political party that has obtained the highest share of votes ever. As shown by the analysis of vote shifts from the previous 2013 general election, the Democratic Party led by Matteo Renzi has been extremely efficient in keeping its voters and gaining new ones, especially by hollowing out the former centrist coalition led by Mario Monti.

The Five Star Movement has lost about three million votes compared to the 2013 general elections, falling to 21.2%. This result is certainly a defeat for the party led by Beppe Grillo, especially if we take into account that, according to second-order elections theory, EP elections are a very favourable electoral arena for opposition, antiestablishment parties like the M5S. This disappointing result may be explained by the relatively noncooperative attitudes of the M5S towards the other political groups in parliament, combined with the M5S obsession with the privileges of the political class, which may have weakened the credibility of the movement on facing the country's economic problems. And Beppe Grillo's harsh, aggressive electoral campaign certainly has not improved this perception. However, it should be stressed that the M5S—whose performance has been disappointing—still represents, in absolute values, the first antiestablishment party in Europe.

Even Berlusconi's *Forza Italia* has faced a neat loss, falling to 16.8% compared to 21.6% of the general elections and to 35.3% of the 2009 EP elections. In the case of Mr. Berlusconi's party, however, many factors could predict an outcome of this kind, if we consider the split of the New Centre-Right led by Mr. Alfano and the personal situation of Berlusconi himself (sentenced to social services and ineligible). Indeed, *Forza Italia* has managed to retain only its most ideological electorate, being particularly damaged by the strong growth of abstention (-7.8 points). It is also interesting to note that the Northern League has managed to report satisfying results, compared to the disappointing performance of the 2013 general election. Mr. Salvini's party has obtained 6.2%, as result of a campaign centred on the "Stop Euro" slogan, where the historical issues of federalism have been overshadowed by Euroscepticism, seen as a strategic resource for electoral purposes. Not surprisingly, thanks to this new Le Pen-style campaign, the party has also received votes in the central-south regions of the country.

In conclusion, the Italian case—in its specificity—suggests a common interpretation with the other European cases, stressing very strongly the importance of the available *political supply*. Indeed, our initial analyses show the importance of the competitive strategy adopted by the Democratic Party led by Matteo Renzi: a strategy that avoids ideological issues, and clearly focuses on *valence issues*, i.e., on the party's ability to be perceived as credible to address the main problems of Italy. And, last but not least, by using a deliberately simplified and ordinary language, with frequent populist tones. The results show that—confirming the importance of the political supply—an innovative strategy can produce significant vote shifts, being able to challenge and beat Eurosceptic parties on their very ground. Historically—from Mussolini to Grillo, through Berlusconi—Italy has produced political innovations that have often been partially imitated and replicated in many other (not only) European countries. At this point, an interesting question for the future is

whether the particular competitive strategy of Renzi's Democratic Party will have a similar fate—especially if political success will follow the electoral one. We will see.

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The European Parliament Elections of 2014

edited by Lorenzo De Sio, Vincenzo Emanuele and Nicola Maggini

The European Parliament elections of 22-25 May 2014 had already been anticipated, before the vote, as potentially so relevant to become the first "true" European elections. Not only because of the economic crisis – which in recent years has seen the emergence of EU (and international) institutions as key players of economic policy for Euro member states, with relevant effects for the everyday life of citizens – but also due to the entry into force of the Lisbon Treaty, which has reinforced the link between the popular vote and the election of the President of the EU Commission. In this context, several commentators had anticipated a potential inadequacy of the consolidated theoretical framework that conceptualizes EP elections as second-order elections. In particular, European issues could be expected to gain a substantial importance in electoral campaigns, with a potential success of Eurosceptic parties due to their ability to politicize – in a negative direction – issues related to Europe and the Euro. A further question is then related to Italy: the third Eurozone economy, on the eve of assuming the Presidency of the EU, and with a government led by a young and energetic Matteo Renzi, but lacking an electoral legitimation. Also, a country that in 2013 saw the largest success of an anti-establishment party ever recorded in Europe. This leads to the main questions behind this book. What were electoral outcomes across Europe? Are we observing the first true first-order European elections? What factors might explain the heterogeneous electoral fortunes of Eurosceptic parties? And how should we interpret the success of the Renzi government in Italy? This book addresses these questions by presenting analyses performed by a large, international research group: for the first time, the CISE has expanded beyond its core group of Italian researchers, by assembling an additional research group of 26 young, brilliant electoral scholars from all across Europe. This allowed us to publish on the CISE website – few days after the elections – concise electoral reports about all 28 EU countries, which are now collected in this book, together with other analyses by the CISE core group. The result is a unique effort, providing – few weeks after the vote – fresh and detailed data, along with first interpretations of electoral results in all EU countries, in order to help practitioners, citizens and scholars develop a first impression – and overall interpretation – of these crucial European elections.

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Directed by Roberto D'Alimonte, the CISE – Centro Italiano Studi Elettorali (Italian Centre for Electoral Studies) is an inter-university research center established jointly by the LUISS Guido Carli University of Rome and the University of Florence. Its activity focuses on the study of elections and their institutional framework. The CISE carries out a range of research activities with different points of view on the electoral process: from the analysis of individual voting behavior (investigated through an independent, regular series of CATI surveys) to analyses of election results based on aggregate data (also including the study of vote shifts and of electoral geography), to research on electoral systems and their related legislation. The CISE research activity is also carried out through partnerships with other Italian and international scholars, as well as with national and international research centers and research programmes.
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