3. THE ROLE OF EUROPEAN ELECTORAL PROGRAMMES

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The European electoral programmes, also known as "Euromanifestos", are the most visible expressions of the existence of "European political parties" (or "Europarties" as I will call them from now on). But the publication by most Europarties of a Euromanifesto for every European election does not mean, of course, that these Euromanifestos have the same relevance for European elections as national manifestos do for national elections. This paper aims to ascertain the exact relevance of these programmes. Although this work takes into account all ten existing Europarties, it will focus more specifically on the six main groupings[1]: the European People's Party (EPP); the Party of European Socialists (PES); the European Liberal Democrat and Reform party (ELDR); the European Democratic Party (EDP); the European Green Party (EGP); the Party of the European Left (EL).

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[1] The other four Europarties have not the same relevance for our purpose although they are going to take part in the next European elections: the Alliance for the Europe of Nations (AEN); the European Free Alliance (EFA); EU-Democrats - Alliance for Democracy in the EU (EUD); *Libertas*, the new Europarty created by the Irish millionaire Declan Ganley in order to fight against the ratification of the Lisbon treaty by his country and which has been recognized by the EP Bureau on the 2nd of February of 2009 (although there is still a doubt about the validity of their political credentials). Another Europarty, the Alliance of Independent Democrats in Europe (AIDE) has just been disbanded (31st of December 2008) and some of its members are going to enter *Libertas* (for instance the French MPF of Philippe de Villiers).

1. What is a Euromanifesto And Why Does it Matter?

Scholars like Olivier Ihl have underlined the theoretical relevance of electoral programmes as '*major elements of the democratic theory of mandate*" (Ihl, 2005). His argument, based on previous work by other scholars (Rose, 1980; Rallings, 1987; Budge, 1994) stresses that electoral programmes in a democratic polity have two main functions: "*to prove that the measures adopted by party members have become a real "policy programme" "* and "*to give the voters a guarantee that these measures are meant to be put down on the government agenda, in case of victory*". But Ihl also notes that electoral programmes have another far more pragmatic function: they allow voters to choose between parties and politicians.

Since 1979, the European Parliament (EP) has been elected by direct universal suffrage. In order to take part in these elections, the federations of political parties operating at the European level (now known as "European political parties" or "Europarties") have been encouraged to issue specific electoral programmes for these European campaigns.

The last European election (2004) was a good example of this apparent consensus among European Politicians about the importance of having this kind of electoral platform, as almost every Europarty issued a "Euromanifesto" on that occasion. The "Euromanifestos Project", directed by Professor Hermann Schmitt from the MZES of the University of Mannheim,[2] gives an interesting overview of the manifestos issued by the main Europarties since the first direct election of the EP in 1979. According to this research, the main Europarties have all issued a specific Euromanifesto for each European election since their creation.[3]

Thus, national and European politicians appear to be well aware of the important functions of manifestos at the national level and have thus tended to imitate this practice at the European level. But a question still remains: are these Euromanifestos real and effective political tools or is this mere gimmickry?

Scholars like Oskar Niedermayer (Niedermayer, 1983) have suggested that the mere existence of Euromanifestos does not in itself mean that these

[2] http://www.mzes.uni-mannheim.de/projekte/manifestos/. The «Euromanifestos project» covers five of the six Europarties taken into account in this paper, which means all of them but the EDP. The project takes into account European elections from 1979 to 2004.

[3] Considering that the EGP has been created in March 1984 and the EL in April 2004, it can be assumed that their first true European campaign was respectively that of 1989 and that of 2009. Both of them issued a Euromanifesto for these campaigns. The EPP, the PES and ELDR have all issued a Euromanifesto on each European election since 1979.

organizations are truly integrated. Niedermayer has built a theoretical model for European party organizations which posits three stages of interaction between national parties at the European level: "contact", "cooperation", and "integration". According to this model, Euromanifestos are one of the criteria required for Europarties to be considered as something more than simple "umbrella organizations" for national parties. But Niedermayer underlines that the mere existence of Euromanifestos doesn't mean that Europarties have reached their last stage of development: these documents could be purely symbolic. Indeed, the interaction stage reached by a Europarty depends on the preciseness of its Euromanifestos.
In order to contribute to the further integration of Europarties and thus to a better involvement of citizens in the European integration process, Euromanifestos have therefore to be: 1) well-defined; 2) taken into account by national parties during European electoral campaigns; and 3) effective, which is to say capable of reaching concrete implementation through parliamentary work in the EP.

2. The Insufficient Definition of Euromanifestos

Though today it might seem impossible for a big "Europarty" to take part in European elections without a presentable "Euromanifesto", there is but scant mention of these electoral programmes in the statutes of these party organizations. This lack of rules concerning the existence, elaboration, and use of Euromanifestos gives the members of Europarties a great deal of room for manoeuvre on that matter. But it also supposes that most of these rules remain informal and that the content and effectiveness of Euromanifestos actually rests on the goodwill of national party leaders.
As shown in table 1, there are only two Europarties which explicitly mention "Euromanifestos" in their statutes: the PES and the ELDR. Other Europarties don't mention any electoral programme for the European elections at all (the EPP, the EGP and the EDP), or mention only vague "common guidelines" (the EL).
Despite of the fact that three Europarties have changed their statutes since 2004 (the EPP in March of 2006; the PES in December of 2006; and the EGP in June 2008), none of them has added any new mention or further details on the question of Euromanifestos in their statutes. This may be indicative of a lack of political will and/or difficulties in achieving political compromises among national parties on this question.

Only the PES has changed one minor detail: in 2004, the Council was meant to adopt "a_manifesto" whereas now it is meant to adopt "the PES Manifesto", which seems to presuppose that this Manifesto has become, for the Socialists, an obvious obligation for every single European election. Thus, this Euromanifesto appears to be the sole programme of European socialists rather than one of many.

Not only are Euromanifestos practically ignored in the statutes but they also tend to be very vague in their content. Generally, they might be described as brief ideological platforms presenting some of the main principles, ideals and/or aims shared by national party members. Given the heterogeneity of these members and also the need to reach a consensus, these platforms remain mostly in the abstract and suggest few (if any) concrete proposals. That is why some scholars consider these Euromanifestos *"bland, offering little more than platitudes* […] *and little in the way of hard policy proposals*" (Smith, 1999).

The 2009 election could be somewhat different on this matter if we consider those Euromanifestos adopted already, particularly the PES Manifesto. The PES adopted its new Euromanifesto on a Council Meeting in Madrid (1st and 2nd of December 2008). The elaboration of this Manifesto was something of a novelty. The PES launched in October 2007 a European "Manifesto Campaign",[4] which lasted more than a year and allowed individual activists to participate for the first time in the preparation of the common electoral programme for 2009. This could be the first step towards a new approach to Euromanifestos by Europarties and could represent an interesting means of better involving of activists in "Europolitics".[5] It must be stressed, also, that the PES Manifesto for 2009 tries to appear more precise and therefore presents 71 numbered proposals for the coming legislative term of the EP.

Nevertheless, these novelties shouldn't be overestimated, for at least three reasons:

- Members of the PES themselves recognized that national parties remain the ultimate "agenda makers".[6] There is no political proposal

[4] For further details, see the website of this campaign: http://elections2009.pes.org/

[5] There is an obvious connection between this fact and the recent possibility given to national activists by the PES to become Euro-activists through the PES website (May 2006). There are today about 12000 PES registered Euro-activists (including 4000 French activists of the PS).

[6] See the MCSinfo's special report on «Europarties» and above all the articles: "Au PSE les militants se cherchent une place" and "Dans le cambouis des europartis". A PES administrative employee stresses that "*No political position has been adopted without approval of our parties […]. During the elaboration of the Manifesto […], the Secretariat was permanently in close touch with national parties in order to reach compromises*". For further details see: http://mcsinfo.u-strasbg.fr/europartis/

in the PES Manifesto which hasn't first been agreed upon by all national parties.
- Individual activists still scarcely involve themselves: in the end the PES received only 13 contributions for the Manifesto, some of which were collective.
- Most of the 71 proposals within the Manifesto remain evasive, failing to define clear legislative measures that could lead to implementation.

Therefore, the first condition for Euromanifestos as real electoral programmes is not quite fulfilled. There is no specific stipulation in most Europarties' statutes about their elaboration and they remain, for the most part, vague in nature. The 2009 election may see some changes in this respect. But even if these changes occur, a second condition must be met before Euromanifestos can be considered effective political tools: they must be taken into account by national parties during European election campaigns, which has not been the case thus far.

3. National Parties and Euromanifestos during the 2004 European Electoral Campaign

Every Europarty considered in this paper (except the EL) issued a specific Euromanifesto for the 2004 European election. Yet, as underlined by the "Euromanifestos Project", national parties appeared reluctant to accept these Euromanifestos as their own manifestos for the 2004 European elections.
Actually, most of the national parties issued their own national manifesto in spite of using that of their Europarty. Whether these national manifestos were a mere adaptation of the Euromanifestos or completely new ones is a question that needs further research. But for the moment, the preliminary results of the aforementioned "Euromanifestos Project" already flag up an interesting point. An analysis of the tables provided shows that, in 2004, there were only seven national parties all across Europe that adopted the Euromanifesto of their correspondent Europarty as their own manifesto for the European election. These national parties were part of four different Europarties:
- Three of them were part of the European Greens (the German "*Bündnis 90/Grüne*"(Greens/Alliance 90); the Spanish *Los Verdes - Partido Verde Europeo;* the Green Alternative of Luxembourg (DGA - *Déi Gréng Alternativ*).

- Two of them were part of the ELDR (the Hungarian SZDSZ (*Szabad Demokraták Szövetsége* - Alliance of Free Democrats); the Dutch VVD (*Volkspartij voor Vrijheid en Democratie* - People's Party for Freedom and Democracy).
- One of them was part of the EPP (the Italian *Forza Italia*).
- One of them was part of the PES (the Maltese Labour Party (MLP - *Partit Laburista*).

It is worth stressing that, with the relevant exception of *Forza Italia*, most are small parties, from small countries. That could suggest that Europarties are a more important resource for small countries and small parties (or parties in difficulty) than for bigger ones. Europarties can provide useful assistance and programmatic ideas to their smallest members, but bigger member parties prefer to retain the right of issuing manifestos of their own. Nevertheless, big parties can sometimes use Europarties and Euromanifestos as a legitimization resource: it is certainly true that *Forza Italia* (*FI*) cannot be considered a "small party" or a party from a "small country", but the arrival of *FI* to the EPP is recent (1998) and has been criticized by EPP members themselves, making *FI* a party in difficulty within the EPP and possibly explaining their goodwill in endorsing the common Euromanifesto in 2004.
The lack of relevance of the specific Euromanifestos for the overwhelming majority of national parties has been confirmed by qualitative research, for instance an empirical inquiry made by the author in 2005-2006 in France.[7] The political actors interviewed during this research (French MEPs, members of the International Office of national parties, members of the Europarties) were all convergent. According to them, the Euromanifestos are merely "symbolic".[8] These Euromanifestos are particularly useful to small parties in small countries which value the synthesis provided by the common organization.[9]

[7] Roa Bastos, Francisco. *Des "Fédérations européennes de partis" aux "europartis": une approche du phénomène partisan au niveau européen. Etude des interactions entre partis français, fédérations européennes de partis et groupes politiques*. Dissertation for Master's degree, IEP de Paris, 2006.
[8] See for instance the interview held with the French MEP Alain Lamassoure the 24th April of 2006: "*Alain Lamassoure: For the European elections, we laboriously prepare a sort of manifesto or electoral programme […] that nobody reads and nobody uses, but we still need to make the thing. Question: Would you say that is something symbolic? A.L.: Yes. It's something symbolic.*"
[9] Interview held with Arnold Cassola (former Secretary General of the EGP) in Bruxelles, the 26th of November 2008, during a Conference organized by TEPSA ("Electing the European Parliament"). For further details, see also the article mentioned above, "Dans le cambouis des europartis".

National Parties have no incentives to adopt Euromanifestos as their own electoral programme and are not compelled to do so. Indeed, the power and influence of Europarties over their national members is still very weak. For instance, national parties are completely free to choose their candidates to European elections without referring to their correspondent Europarty. Europarties are powerless and can't supervise the electoral activities of their members. Neither can they compel them to adopt and use the common manifesto. Besides, national parties have no incentives or interest in fighting a truly "European" campaign: political research has pointed out that European elections are, above all, "second order" national elections (Reif & Schmitt, 1980). And according to recent declarations from national party members, this is unlikely to change in 2009.[10]

Thus, Euromanifestos seem to remain mostly "symbolic" platforms "for the parade". National party leaders are well aware of the image benefits they can obtain from this public display of consensus, but such vague manifestos are far too limited to give Europarties real programmatic substance.

4. Parliamentary Coordination and Legislative Work as a Manner to Define Concrete Policy Programmes

Since the beginning of European integration, parliamentary groups have been the main locus of political coordination. Parliamentary work in the EP can claim many concrete achievements, above all since the introduction of codecision procedure established by the Maastricht Treaty (art. 251). For instance, the recently adopted "REACH" or Services Directives have been influenced in large part by the legislative work of political groups in the EP. And many scholars (Hix, 2001; Hix & Kreppel, 2003; Hix, Noury & Roland, 2005) have noted the increasing cohesion of EP political groups. But recent examples have demonstrated that there are still huge differences between MEPs of different countries and that EP groups can split on important votes (See for instance the French defection within the PES group on the Services Directive, 15 of November of

[10] See for instance the MCSinfo's special report and the article "Avant tout une élection nationale pour l'UMP": an UMP official declared for instance that "*the European elections are a national election with a European thematic*".

2006). Besides, some EP groups, such as the UEN, remain only "technical groups" and can't be seen as homogeneous groupings. This heterogeneity and these localized disagreements are simultaneously a cause and a consequence of the lack of effectiveness of Euromanifestos. If European party leaders want to move towards a more integrated stage of interaction for their Europarties, they need to foster better cooperation within the EP groups during the coming legislative term.

As was noted at the beginning of this paper, manifestos are supposed to define policy agendas for the executive power (Ihl, 2005). This programmatic role is one of the most important functions they have at the national level. However, Euromanifestos as we know them today could hardly serve as concrete policy programmes: they are but short declarations with few concrete proposals. The EPP manifesto for 2004, for instance, was only three pages long. It addressed 13 issues but presented only 11 concrete proposals (5 issues out of the 13 didn't lead to any concrete measures. *For further detail, See Table 3 in the appendix*). And the same could be said about other Europarties and their platforms. It is not surprising that there is no obvious connection between these manifestos and the annual "Legislative Programmes" of the European Commission, which can't rely on Europarties to define the policies to be implemented. Further research on this matter would therefore be interesting in order to conduct a systematic comparison of the manifestos of political majorities in the EP and the "Legislative Programmes" of the Commission for each legislative term.

Thus, there is no real political platform at the European level and European citizens have no possibility to check at the end of the EP legislature whether Europarties have been active or not. This could play a large part in the persistent, or even growing, criticism levelled against the so-called "democratic deficit" of the EU and the lack of accountability of European political actors. Yet, there is room for this possible influence and for a relative politicization of the European executive function. The election of the President of the European Commission by qualified majority vote since 2004 and demands for the selection of a candidate for the Commission Presidency before the European elections could lead to a closer connection between political programmes and executive action.

Visibility and accountability would certainly be better ensured if Europarties were to present detailed electoral platforms endorsed by every single national party member and heralded by a candidate for the

Commission Presidency, nominated by each Europarty before European elections. But are national parties and national party leaders ready to reach an agreement on these matters?

5. Towards More Effective Euromanifestos

This paper aimed to consider the question of Euromanifestos and to assess their possible contribution to greater involvement of European citizens in the European integration process. Its final assessment is not very positive for the period between 1979 and 2004. Firstly, Euromanifestos are not sufficiently well-defined and remain for the most part mere symbolic platforms which are far from compelling for national parties. Secondly, national parties barely use the specific Euromanifestos issued by their respective Europarties, as it is shown both by quantitative and qualitative research. And thirdly, the persistent heterogeneity of these groups does not encourage Euromanifestos to be more precise and constraining.

There are some elements though, which suggest possible evolutions towards a more "integrated" stage of interaction between Europarties.

Some Europarties appear to have devised new dynamics regarding the elaboration of Euromanifestos. The PES Manifesto for 2009 has been prepared in association with individual members of national parties. Although the participation of individual members remains very limited, it could turn out to be a lasting innovation and also a good incentive for other Europarties to do the same.

This direct inclusion of individual members in the elaboration of Euromanifestos has been made technically possible by the increasing use of the Internet. Thanks to this new technology, Europarties are now technically able to hear the voices of individual members from the 27 member States of the European Union, having them collaborate on concrete projects like the elaboration of Euromanifestos at a very low cost. What's more the Internet makes individual membership a new challenge for Europarties, a question which has never been seriously addressed.

Crucially, the new regulation for Europarties adopted in December 2007[11] has created interesting possibilities for Europarties:

[11] Regulation (EC) No 1524, 2007 adopted by the Council and the EP on the 18th of December of 2007.

- Firstly, Europarties are now able to create **"European political foundations"**. These European Foundations are meant to be the official "*Think Tanks*" of each Europarty. These new political organisations could come to provide a great number of legislative proposals, becoming major actors in the elaboration of more precise and effective Euromanifestos.
- Secondly, **this new regulation allows Europarties to finance truly European campaigns** for the European elections. This could herald a major shift in terms of the role of Europarties during European electoral campaigns, provided national parties accept this new role for their European party organizations.

Future changes largely depend on one question: how well-disposed are national parties and national party leaders towards these possible evolutions? There is, although, room for manoeuvre in order to encourage political actors to produce more detailed platforms and to conform to them. This could be made principally by publicizing more widely their programmes, even if these platforms remain vague. Citizens, scholars, journalists but also party activists themselves may make Euromanifestos more compelling for political actors only by taking them into account. The spreading and broadcasting of Electoral platforms is a good means to make them count because it makes possible contradictions visible. There is also plenty of room to watch and supervise how these programmes are implemented. Some initiatives have been taken in order to publicize parliamentary work in the EP for the next legislature. For instance, the European Policy Centre has launched a Project called "Vote Watch EU" (http://www.votewatch.eu/) which is meant to provide updated information on all MEPs' voting records during the next legislature. This initiative is a good example of what can be done by those who want to make European legislative work more accountable. A systematic comparison of these voting behaviours with the relevant Euromanifestos theoretically endorsed by each MEP could give an interesting overview of the true influence of these platforms on concrete legislative work. This is one of the research prospects for the next EP legislative term that could also prove of great benefit for political actors.

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- *Euromanifestos Project* of the Mannheim Centre for European Social Research (MZES)
  http://www.mzes.uni-mannheim.de/projekte/manifestos/
- Project *Vote Watch Eu* of the European Policy Centre (EPC), under construction
  http://www.votewatch.eu/

Appendix

Table 1 - Statutes Stipulations on Euromanifestos (1st of January of 2009).

Mention of a "Euromanifesto"	Europarty	Details
Explicit mention	**PES**	Art. 3.3: "*More specifically, the aims of the PES are:* […] *to* ***adopt a common manifesto*** *for elections to the European Parliament*". Art. 20.3 : "*The Council adopts* ***the PES Manifesto*** *for the European elections"*
	ELDR	Art.10: "*The following powers are restrictively reserved to the Congress: […] 4. Approval of* ***the common political programme*** *for the European elections."* Art. 15: "*The following powers are restrictively reserved to the Council: […] d. preparation of* ***the common political programme*** *for the European elections to be approved by the Congress*
Indirect mention	**EL**	Art. 10 : "*The Congress: […] elaborates* ***common guidelines*** *for the elections to the European Parliament"*
None	**EPP**	
	EGP	
	EDP	

Table 2 - Euromanifestos for 2009: the Current Situation

Europarties	EP Group	Current Status of the Euromanifesto for 2009
EPP	EPP-ED	**"Draft EPP Election Document 2009"** Approved by the EPP Political Bureau on 29-30 January 2009 Has to be formally adopted at the Warsaw Congress (April 2009)
PES	PES	**"People first – A new direction for Europe"** Adopted by the Council Meeting in Madrid, 1st- 2d of December of 2008 http://www.pes.org/downloads/PES_manifesto_2009-EN.pdf
ELDR	ALDE	**"European Liberals' Top 15 for EP Elections"** Adopted by the Stockholm Congress, 31st of October 2008 http://www.eldr.org/images/upload2/adopted_manifest_fr.pdf
European Free Alliance (EFA)	Greens/EFA	*Currently in preparation*
EGP	Greens/EFA	**"A Green New Deal For Europe"** Has to be formally adopted at the Brussels Congress (March 2009) http://europeangreens.eu/menu/egp-manifesto/
Alliance for Europe of Nations (AEN)	UEN	
European Left	GUE-NGL	**"Together for change in Europe"** Adopted by the Berlin Congress de Berlin, 29th-30th of November of 2008 http://www.european-left.org/english/news/electoral_platform/
EDP	ALDE	"Résolution du PDE – Bâtir sur les décombres de la crise" Not officially a Manifesto : this document is made up of 2 political resolutions adopted at the Brussels Congress, 5th of December of 2008 http://www.mouvementdemocrate.fr/actualites/europe/telechargement/MANIFESTO-PDE-051208.pdf
Alliance of Independent Democrats in Europe (AIDE)	ID	This Europarty has been disbanded on the 31st of December of 2008. The main national party of the AIDE (the "Mouvement pour la France" - MPF) will be campaigning in France under the banner of the new Europarty *Libertas*.
Libertas		*Currently in preparation*
EU Democrats (EUD)	ID	*Currently in preparation*

By Maria Pallares, Notre Europe. Situation as of the 1st of February 2009.

Table 3 - Issues Addressed by The EPP Manifesto in 2004 And Concrete Proposals

Issues addressed by the 2004 EPP Manifesto	**Orientation and main lines of EPP Manifesto**	**Concrete Proposals or Measures**
Europe of citizens	Develop mobility through Europe	Extend SOCRATES and ERASMUS programmes
Social market economy	Develop "*free enterprise, a stable currency and efficient national social security systems*"	
Unemployment	Develop free enterprise ("*more- and more secure-jobs by ensuring favourable conditions for free enterprise throughout Europe*")	
Health and pension systems	"*Reforms in these areas are needed to consolidate our social security*"	
Economic growth	"*Reducing trade barriers and liberalising markets*"	
Research and Innovation	"*Supporting research in innovative and future-oriented technologies like biotechnology, and information and communication technologies*"	
Education	"*Education and training systems in EU Member States need to be developed".*	*"We recommend to the Member States to alter their education system so that the teaching of two foreign languages becomes a reality"*
Political Stability and Security in Europe	"*The EU should speak with one voice on all key foreign and security matters.*"	*"This includes making European Security and Defence Policy in close cooperation with NATO"*
Terrorism	"*International terrorism must be met with suitable strategies, new mechanisms of conflict prevention and management, as well as a reassignment of our defence capabilities*"	- *"Europol should be given more competencies"* - *"Eurojust should be developed to become a genuine communication and early warning network linking national prosecution authorities";* - *"Definitions of crimes such as trading in enslaved women, drug trafficking, Internet crimes, money laundering and acts of racism should be harmonised in all national legal systems to establish common EU minimum standards";* - *"We support the creation of a European Public Prosecutor"*
Immigration	"*Master and manage immigration and combat illegal immigration, crime and trade in enslaved women [...]Illegal immigration must also be nipped in the bud through improved*	- "*A European border police corps should be available if requested to assist colleagues in Member States in reinforcing the EU's external borders"* - "*We support harmonised asylum procedures to be dealt with within six*

	cooperation with source and transit countries"	*months"*
Sustainable policies	*"We support consistent environmental protection on the basis of strict rules throughout the EU..."*	*"...rules based on the principle that the polluter pays, and that the rules are strictly policed"*
Climate change	"*To stop climate change should remain a top priority. [...] We want to reach this goal by supporting renewable energies, the use of innovative technologies, and by transport policies which mean less damage to the environment*"	*"A European road map for more rapid implementation of the Kyoto Protocol is intended to make the EU a world leader in this area*"
Food safety	*"Food security needs to be given top priority"*	*"Ensuring agricultural production which is more sensitive to the environment, through greater transparency, and through effective monitoring of the entire food chain*"