

### The radical right in Europe, between slogans and voting behavior

Coni, Nicolò

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# The Radical Right in Europe, Between Slogans and Voting Behavior

Nicolò Conti



INSTITUT FÜR HÖHERE STUDIEN  
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# **The Radical Right in Europe, Between Slogans and Voting Behavior**

Nicolò Conti

July 2011

**Institut für Höhere Studien (IHS), Wien  
Institute for Advanced Studies, Vienna**

**Contact:**

Nicolò Conti  
Assistant Professor  
Unitelma Sapienza University of Rome  
Faculty of Law  
Viale Regina Elena, 295  
00161 Rome, Italy  
☎: ++390669190797  
email: nicolo.conti@unitelma.it

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Founded in 1963 by two prominent Austrians living in exile – the sociologist Paul F. Lazarsfeld and the economist Oskar Morgenstern – with the financial support from the Ford Foundation, the Austrian Federal Ministry of Education, and the City of Vienna, the Institute for Advanced Studies (IHS) is the first institution for postgraduate education and research in economics and the social sciences in Austria. The **Political Science Series** presents research done at the Department of Political Science and aims to share “work in progress” before formal publication. It includes papers by the Department’s teaching and research staff, visiting professors, graduate students, visiting fellows, and invited participants in seminars, workshops, and conferences. As usual, authors bear full responsibility for the content of their contributions.

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## **Abstract**

The paper analyzes the radical right's attitudes toward the EU focusing in particular on the level of congruence between the programmatic statements of the central office and the voting behavior of their MEPs. It shows that although radical right parties represent a source of opposition to the EU, within the EP they express their dissent making use of the rules of the game, voting with the opposition more than the other forces do, but voting almost as much with the majority. The party public office in the EP is inserted in the legislative process and even more collusive with the other parties of both sides of the political spectrum than the Eurosceptical rhetoric and statements of central office makes the public believe.

## **Keywords**

Radical right parties, attitudes, EU, Euromanifestos, MEPs.

**General note on content**

The opinions expressed in this paper are those of the author and not necessarily those of the IHS

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## I. Introduction

Many studies show that Euroscepticism has become an ideological pillar of radical right parties. It is a theme that has acquired greater salience within the political discourse of this area, to the point that these parties have become the main stronghold of EU-pessimism (Mudde 2007). Particularly, their political discourse has largely internalized the EU issue, making the radical right the political area where this issue has become more salient (Kriesi 2007). In this paper, I analyze the radical right's attitudes toward the EU focusing in particular on the level of congruence between the programmatic statements and the voting behavior of their MEPs. Notably, the aim of the paper is to describe the problem along the following lines:

- 1) an analysis of the level of congruence of party positions *within* the programmatic supply of these parties, as well as *within* the voting behavior of their MEPs;
- 2) an analysis of the level of congruence *between* the political discourse of the party central office and the voting behavior of the party in public office.

It is an approach that aims at integrating several dimensions of party attitudes toward the EU examined by earlier studies, such as the dimension of the political discourse that was examined through the party manifestos for the European elections (Gabel & Hix 2004), and of the institutional behavior of politicians that was examined through the voting behavior of MEPs (Hix et al. 2007). In sum, through the analysis of party Euromanifestos and roll-call votes in the European Parliament, I will produce a description of what radical right parties *say* about Europe, what their MEPs *do* in order to translate the party rhetoric into concrete political action, and how *congruent* these two dimensions of the party stance on the EU are.

From the theoretical point of view, the paper will contribute to understanding politics and the behavior of the radical right in different ways. Firstly, the results of the comparative analysis will allow us to determine whether the radical right behaves cohesively enough to present the character of a real party family. Or, alternatively, it will determine whether the empirical evidence supports the argument – maintained by the founder of the German Republicans Franz Schönhuber among others (in Mudde 2007: 159) – that a genuine European radical right does not really exist.

Secondly, assessing the level of congruence between the attitudes of different faces of party organization is a relevant problem that current research has just started to address (Conti, Cotta & Tavares de Almeida 2010). Particularly, assessing the extent to which the official party stance on the EU overlaps with that of party officials holding public office is meaningful for a comprehensive understanding of the broad phenomenon of party attitudes toward the EU. Recent research shows that citizens are way less pro-European than politicians (Best, Lengyel & Verzichelli forthcoming). Given the gap in the support for the EU between citizens and politicians, it is particularly relevant to study

whether the party central office pools together with the party in public office or whether it takes more cautious positions. In other words, does the stance of the MEPs within the European Parliament (EP) reflect the party discourse on the EU developed for usage in the electoral market? The comparison between the attitudes of the party central office and those of the MEPs presented in this paper will allow us to answer this question.

## II. The Contents of Euroscepticism: What the Radical Right Says About the EU

In order to analyze the attitudes of radical right parties toward the EU and to describe the main components of these attitudes (dissatisfaction with the defense of national interests, opposition to EU policies, protest against loss of sovereignty) I will examine the party positions on a set of specific issues. I will start my analysis with a study of party Euromanifestos, the programs that the national parties present for the EP elections. These documents provide a useful representation of the ideological structure and of the policy preferences of parties. Radical parties tend to have a particularly good electoral performance at the EP elections given the second-order nature of the scrutiny, and thanks to the PR nature of the electoral system. Their visibility in these elections tends to be high and their programmatic assertiveness is consequently also high. It is important to note that Euromanifestos are usually issued by the party central office and they present the overall party line for use with the party rank and file and with the electorate. Thus, these documents reflect a unitary vision of the party and do not offer much evidence of any eventual intra-party division. This limitation that is intrinsic to any manifesto analysis is also the starting point for an interesting research question: Is a party cohesive enough in its stance on the EU? As was mentioned in the introduction, this paper begins to address the problem by means of a comparison between the analysis of party manifestos that I present in this section, and that of the voting behavior of the MEPs in the following section.

Given the level of complexity and the increasing number of policy areas where the EU is involved, it seems useful to break-down party attitudes across many aspects of European integration. This attempt allows for a disentanglement of party attitudes across different dimensions of the EU process and a determination whether the same stance is confirmed across such dimensions. For this purpose, I will focus the analysis in particular on the dimensions of *representation* and *policy*. It is a research strategy that aims at including several functional aspects of supranational integration in the analysis. In the recent past, the theoretical debate (Bartolini 2007; Benhabib 2002; Cotta e Isernia 2009) as well as some empirical studies (Conti & Memoli 2010; Hooghe, Marks & Wilson 2004; Hubé & Rambour 2010; Gabel & Hix 2004) have defined these dimensions as relevant for the analysis of the EU impact on member states and of the response of political actors to such an impact.

**Table 1 – The coding scheme: dimensions, themes and positions in the analysis**

<i>Dimension</i>	<i>Theme</i>	<i>Position (short)</i>	<i>Position (extended)</i>
<i>Representation</i>	Membership	Favourable opportunities	Europe has mainly brought benefits and improvements to the country. European integration has mainly produced good results for the country. Agreement and consensus towards European processes are expressed
		Negative constraints	Europe has mainly been limiting and constraining the country without bringing positive results. Discontent is expressed towards European integration processes
		Mixed	Features of both categories
		No reference	Lack of reference to the theme
	National action in the EU	Leadership	A desire to influence, guide and direct European processes and major decisions dominates. Willingness to be at the forefront of bargaining and decision-making and not to stand on the sidelines
		Cooperation	Predominantly pledges in favour of working together to achieve a common aim, even taking an active part in Europe decision-making
		Defense/rejection	Preference for opting-out/withdrawing the EU or some of its building-block policies (eg. Monetary Union, Common Market). Strong protection of national interest(s) seen as threatened by the EU
		Mixed	Any two or more categories
		No reference	Lack of reference to the theme
<i>Policy</i>	Foreign policy	Supranational only	For each policy area the favourite level of competence was coded. Combinations of different levels were coded only when explicitly mentioned.
	Defense policy	National only	
	Immigration pol.	Sub-national only	
		Supranat. + national	
		Supranat. + sub-nat.	
	Supra. + nat. + sub-nat.		
		National + sub-nat.	
		No reference	

The data base used for this part of the analysis was created by the IntUne project.<sup>1</sup> A group of national experts coded 298 Euromanifestos<sup>2</sup> of all political areas in fifteen member states.<sup>3</sup> Although these documents refer to the 1979-2004 period, the large majority actually refer to 1994-2004.<sup>4</sup> One could claim that parties may have changed their attitudes over this period. In fact, this does not seem to be the case for radical parties, as the empirical analysis has already shown that a change in the attitudes toward the EU can be found mainly in the moderate parties (Gabel & Hix 2004). On the contrary, radical parties are not inclined to change their attitudes on the EU, they tend instead to be rather stable in their opposition (Szczerbiack & Taggart 2003, 2008) that, over time, has only become more salient, especially in the case of the radical right (Kriesi 2007). We expect, therefore, variations across time to be quite limited in scope, but I will report them anyway when they are deemed relevant.

The analysis starts with an examination of the level of occurrence of the selected themes within the Euromanifestos. In table 2, we find evidence of the fact that, in their documents radical parties generally refer to such themes as often as (or even more often than) mainstream parties do. Certainly, the table does not contain any information about the direction of the positions expressed on the specific issues in the documents. However, it was relevant to find confirmation that the analyzed themes do play an important role in the party discourse on the EU. They are important components of the party stance on the EU. Although across parties some differences can be found in terms of frequency of occurrence, overall, the selected themes recurred frequently in the Euromanifestos (in between 51.7 and 88.8 per cent of Euromanifestos, depending on the theme). Hence, we can be confident that they represent good empirical referents for the analysis of party attitudes toward the EU as they really structured the programmatic supply provided in the Euromanifestos.

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<sup>1</sup> INTUNE (Integrated and United: A quest for Citizenship in an ever closer Europe), an Integrated Project financed by the VI Framework Programme of the European Union (CIT3-CT-2005-513421). The research in this paper was also supported by the Italian National project "*Il processo di integrazione europea in una fase di stallo istituzionale: mutamenti nelle sfere della rappresentanza politica, dei processi decisionali e della cittadinanza sociale*" financed by the Ministry of Education (PRIN 2007).

<sup>2</sup> Among these documents there are thirty Euromanifestos of the radical right.

<sup>3</sup> The countries included in the analysis were the following ones: Austria, Belgium, Czech Republic, Estonia, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Italy, Lithuania, Poland, Portugal, Slovakia, Spain and United Kingdom.

<sup>4</sup> In particular, only two Euromanifestos of the radical right date from 1989, the other Euromanifestos date from 1994-2004.

**Table 2 – Euromanifestos that mention the analyzed themes (percentages)**

<i>Theme</i>	<i>Mentioned in % of Euromanifestos</i>		
	All parties	Mainstream parties	Radical parties
Membership	88.8	87	95.3
National action in Europe	77.2	77	78.1
Foreign policy	71.3	71.7	69.8
Defense policy	71.4	73.5	64.1
Immigration policy	51.7	50	57.8

Source: INTUNE project, University of Siena, Circap

The analysis moves now to a more in-depth examination of the direction of party positions. For this purpose, I applied multinomial logistic regression models for the analysis of the content analytic variables drawn from the Euromanifestos. This technique allowed me to estimate the likelihood for radical parties to express Eurosceptical positions as compared to mainstream parties. Subsequently, within the radical party category I separated left from right. The comparison of attitudes between parties of different ideological orientations allows us to understand the phenomenon of Euroscepticism comparatively and to insert these attitudes within the broader context of inter-party competition and of contestation of the EU issue. Precisely, multinomial logistic regression models estimate the likelihood of different cases to belong to each category of the dependent variable when compared to a reference category. For example, in table 3, the ExpB coefficient estimates the likelihood of each category of the dependent variable 'membership' to occur compared to the reference category 'favourable opportunities'. In other words, the model estimates how likely it is to find in the Euromanifestos (of the mainstream and radical parties respectively) 'no reference', a 'mixed' or a 'negative' evaluation of the country membership, compared to the reference category 'favourable opportunities'. I found that in their Euromanifestos, radical parties have almost eleven times (ExpB=10.75) greater a likelihood to represent membership as a negative constraint than to represent it as a positive opportunity. On the contrary, such likelihood is almost null (ExpB=0.2) for mainstream parties.<sup>5</sup> In particular, I found that 70% of the Euromanifestos of the radical right (and 64.7% of those of the radical left) expressed a negative evaluation of the country membership. Consequently, the expectation of a broad Euroscepticism rooted in the radical parties is confirmed by the data.

<sup>5</sup> I considered mainstream parties to be those belonging to the following party families: Christian democrats, socialists, liberals, conservatives, regionalists (with the exception of the Northern League), greens and some other moderate parties on indication of the national experts involved in the research. I categorized Communists, extreme left, nationalists and the extreme right as radical parties.

**Table 3 – Party positions on membership**

<i>EU Membership evaluated as</i>		<i>B</i>	<i>Std. Error</i>	<i>Exp(B)</i>
Mixed favourable/negative	Mainstream parties	-.81	.16	.44***
	Radical parties	1.25	.56	3.50**
No reference	Mainstream parties	-1.38	.20	.25***
	Radical parties	-.28	.76	.75
Negative constraints	Mainstream parties	-1.49	.20	.22***
	Radical parties	2.37	.76	10.75***
<i>Reference category: favourable opportunities</i>				
$\chi^2$		148.222		
Sig.		.000		
R <sup>2</sup>		.42		
N		298		

Note: \*\*\* significant at 0.001 level \*\* significant at 0.01 level

Source: INTUNE project, University of Siena, Circap

With this negative evaluation of membership on the side of radical parties follows their strong emphasis on the necessity for the national government to oppose decisions at the EU level that could constrain the member states. In order to find evidence of this, I analyzed how parties think the national government should behave in the EU arena. In table 4, 'defence/rejection' is the reference category. I found that mainstream parties are eight times ( $ExpB=8.18$ ) more likely to express a preference for a cooperative behavior, thus for an *acquiescent* conduct of the national government. Furthermore, they are over five times more likely ( $ExpB=5.63$ ) to prefer the leadership of the national government within the EU arena, hence to be in favor of a *voice* option. In the end, as it was easy to predict, mainstream parties are divided on the assertiveness and the role that the national government should have within the EU. On the contrary, the category of radical parties is more focused on the 'defence/rejection' solution, while the likelihood for the Euromanifestos of these parties to fall in any other category is not significant.<sup>6</sup> However, it is important to highlight the differences in the attitudes of the two extremes. The 'defence/rejection' category occurs in 43.3% of Euromanifestos of radical right parties as compared to 6.7% of those of the radical left whose most recurrent category (38.2%) is instead that of cooperation<sup>7</sup> (occurring in only 6.7% of Euromanifestos of the radical right). These results show that, although Euroscepticism is deeply rooted in the radical parties under the form of a broad attitude, for instance when they evaluate country membership, when we break-down the broad stance into more specific attitudes we find that Euroscepticism is definitely more pronounced in the radical right.

<sup>6</sup> Changing the reference category does not change the result, as radical parties have a tendency to concentrate their preference in the 'defence/rejection' category.

<sup>7</sup> In particular, Izquierda Unida and Synaspimos are the main advocate of this solution within the radical left.



**Table 4 – Party positions on *national action in the EU***

<i>The national government should prioritize</i>		<i>B</i>	<i>Std. Error</i>	<i>Exp(B)</i>
No reference	Mainstream parties	1.57	.33	4.81***
	Radical parties	-.40	.34	.66
Leadership	Mainstream parties	1.72	.32	5.63***
	Radical parties	-.74	.38	.47*
Cooperation	Mainstream parties	2.10	.31	8.18***
	Radical parties	-.33	.33	.71
Mixed	Mainstream parties	-.09	.43	.90
	Radical parties	-3,04	1.02	.04***
<i>Reference category: defense/rejection</i>				
$\chi^2$		207.827		
Sig.		.000		
R <sup>2</sup>		.52		
N		298		

Note: \*\*\* significant at 0.001 level \* significant at 0.05 level

Source: INTUNE project, University of Siena, Circap

Moving the analysis to the policy dimension, we find the same pattern. In particular, we find the same tendency for attitudes toward foreign and defense policy. In table 5, mainstream parties show 9.9 and 9.2 times greater likelihood respectively for the exclusive EU competence and a shared EU-national competence, as compared to the reference category of the exclusive national competence. So, mainstream parties are rather divided in terms of degree of involvement of the EU in foreign policy, something that could explain the difficulties in integrating the ex-Second Pillar of the EU. However, they agree overwhelmingly on some kind of involvement of the EU, while they voice a preference for the exclusive national competence only very rarely. The same tendency can be found for defense policy (tab. 6) as the preference of mainstream parties for the exclusive European competence and for the shared EU-national competence is 12.3 and 10.3 times greater than for the reference category of exclusive national competence. For both policies, values for the radical parties are instead not significant. The reason can be found in the dispersion of their preferences across different categories. Dispersion occurs between radical left and radical right, as well as across countries. Overall, the preference of radical parties for the exclusive national competence exceeds that for any other option. They voice this sovereigntist stance in foreign and defense policy in 27% and 25% of their Euromanifestos respectively, without any particular distinction between left and right. However, somewhat unexpectedly, the share for the other categories is also similar. Notably, over time the radical left – but not the radical right – becomes more supportive of the EU competence, until a peak in 2004 when 66.6% of

the Euromanifestos of the radical left supports the EU competence (either exclusive or shared) in foreign policy and 53.9% in defense policy<sup>8</sup>.

In sum, differences between mainstream and radical parties are remarkable since the EU involvement in these two policy areas is much less popular with radical parties. However, only a minority of radical parties rejects the EU involvement in principle, while on this issue the radical left has become increasingly aligned with mainstream parties over time. In the end, the radical right is the main stronghold of opposition against the communitarisation of foreign and defense policy. However, even for these parties, Euroscepticism is not absolute. Although integration of these policies deeply challenges one of the core values of the radical right, namely the defense of national sovereignty, its national components are divided on what is the best level of competence. In some countries, radical right parties support some EU competence in foreign and defense policy<sup>9</sup> as they see the EU as a potential barrier against globalization and U.S. dominance that they oppose more fiercely: against both forces, any national scale action would be powerless, especially from countries of small size or reduced strategic power. Ultimately, although at various degrees and certainly more to the left than to the right, the EU has acquired some legitimacy as a level of governance even within the programmatic supply of radical parties. Euroscepticism in this sphere prevails in the radical right, but as we have seen, not unanimously.

**Table 5 – Party positions on *foreign policy***

<i>Favorite level of competence</i>		<i>B</i>	<i>Std. Error</i>	<i>Exp(B)</i>
No reference	Mainstream parties	2.09	.37	8.12***
	Radical parties	.11	.33	1.11
Exclusive European	Mainstream parties	2.29	.37	9.87***
	Radical parties	-.26	.36	.76
Shared European/national	Mainstream parties	2.22	.37	9.25***
	Radical parties	-.19	.36	.59
<i>Reference category: exclusive national</i>				
$\chi^2$	285.127			
Sig.	.000			
R <sup>2</sup>	.64			
N	298			

Note: \*\*\* significant at 0.001 level

Source: INTUNE project, University of Siena, Circap

<sup>8</sup> The German PDS and the Greek Synaspimos were particularly in favour.

<sup>9</sup> Among radical right parties, the MSI/National Alliance in 1994 in Italy (then coded as mainstream party in the following years), the Flemish Vlaams Belang and the Francophone National Front in 2004 in Belgium supported the EU involvement in both policies.

**Table 6 – Party positions on *defense policy***

<i>Favourite level of competence</i>		<i>B</i>	<i>Std. Error</i>	<i>Exp(B)</i>
No reference	Mainstream parties	2.16	.39	8.71***
	Radical parties	0.36	.32	1.43
Exclusive European	Mainstream parties	2.50	.39	12.28***
	Radical parties	-.06	.35	.93
Shared European/national	Mainstream parties	2.33	.39	10.28***
	Radical parties	-.47	.40	.62
<i>Reference category: exclusive national</i>				
$\chi^2$		296.252		
Sig.		.000		
R <sup>2</sup>		.65		
N		298		

Note: \*\*\* significant at 0.001 level

Source: INTUNE project, University of Siena, Circap

We move now to the analysis of immigration policy. On the one hand, the likelihood of a preference for the exclusive EU competence or the shared EU-national competence on the side of mainstream parties is almost eight ( $\text{ExpB}=7.75$ ) and five ( $\text{ExpB}=5.13$ ) times greater than it is for exclusive national competence (reference category). However, a lack of reference to immigration issues is the most likely possibility for mainstream parties ( $\text{ExpB}=14.38$ ). On the other hand, the preferences of radical parties are again dispersed among different categories. Even more than for foreign and defense policy, such dispersion is to be attributed mainly to the radical left. As a matter of fact, the position of radical right parties is more univocal as 42.9% of their Euromanifestos support the exclusive national competence in immigration policy. It is evidence of the fact that radical right parties make their programmatic supply on this issue very distinctive from that of the other parties and characterize their stance along the lines of a more openly nationalistic posture. Although less than half of the Euromanifestos of the radical right really favor the most nationalistic solution, the other more recurrent category is the *no reference* one, especially in the new member states<sup>10</sup>, while a preference for the EU involvement in the immigration policy is only residual among radical right parties.<sup>11</sup>

<sup>10</sup> For example, in 2004, the Lithuanian National Centre Party and Party of National Progress, and the League of Polish Families did not make any reference to the issue of the favourite level of competence in immigration policy.

<sup>11</sup> Only the Italian MSI-National Alliance in 1994 and the German Republicans in 1999-2004 supported the involvement of the EU in this policy.

**Table 7 – Party positions on *immigration policy***

<i>Favorite level of competence</i>		<i>B</i>	<i>Std. Error</i>	<i>Exp(B)</i>
No reference	Mainstream parties	2.67	0.37	14.38***
	Radical parties	0.52	0.32	1.69
Exclusive European	Mainstream parties	2.05	0.38	7.75***
	Radical parties	-0.47	0.40	0.62
Shared European/national	Mainstream parties	1.63	0.39	5.13***
	Radical parties	-0.58	0.42	0.56
<i>Reference category: exclusive national</i>				
$\chi^2$		219.542		
P-value		.000		
R <sup>2</sup>		.54		
N		298		

Note: \*\*\* significant at 0.001 level

Source: INTUNE project, University of Siena, Circap

To conclude this part of the analysis, I can summarize that I found confirmation of the fact that the radical right is the main stronghold of party-based Euroscepticism. However, this attitude is broad more than it is absolute, and most importantly, it is not univocal across the European countries. Although still very criticized, the EU has acquired legitimacy by radical right parties in some member states where its role as a policy-maker is relatively welcome. The very existence of the EU is therefore not questioned by these parties. The Euroscepticism of the radical right is still quite strident, especially if one compares their attitudes to those of mainstream parties and even of radical left parties whose opposition against the EU has become more nuanced over time. Still, it would be difficult to talk about a principled opposition of the radical right against the EU when parties are so divided about the role the EU should play in the European system of governance.

### III. How Radical Right Parties Vote in the European Parliament

The paper now moves to the analysis of the institutional behavior of the MEPs of the radical right. Specifically, I will examine whether they vote cohesively within the EP. As a matter of fact, in the previous section it has already been shown that the programmatic supply of the radical right is characterized by some common positions, as well as by some important differences. We now investigate whether these differences also translate into a diverse behavior of radical right MEPs within the EP. In addition, this part of the analysis allows us to shed a light on the problem of the level of coherence existing between the protest-based rhetoric of radical right parties in the election campaign (however mitigated by specific policy positions that, as we have seen, are not so much opposed to the EU) and their institutional behavior after the elections.

For the analysis, I have selected the EP group 'Independence/Democracy' (IND/DEM) of the 2004-2009 legislature. The group was created in 2004, when parties from the Eurosceptical 'Europe of Democracy and Diversities' group made an alliance with some parties from the new member states. The most important parties of IND/DEM were the following<sup>12</sup>: the UK Independence Party (UKIP), the League of Polish Families, the Italian Northern League (suspended in 2006 and then expelled from the group after the scandal of the t-shirt worn by the party member Calderoli showing anti-Islamic cartoons), and the Movement for France. Additionally, some MEPs from Czech Republic, Denmark, Greece, Ireland, Netherlands and Sweden also took part in the group. However, other important radical right parties such as the French Front National and the Vlaams Belang did not join IND/DEM and decided instead to belong to the 'Non Attached' group. By the end of the legislature, especially after the expulsion of the Northern League, the group could rely on just 2.8 per cent of the seats in the EP. Definitely, this lack of unity within the EP of radical right parties gives evidence of a lack of cohesion of their intents and strategy. So the argument of whether they could be considered a genuine party family finds negative evidence here. At least, these parties are not transnationally organized as most other party families are and this, in turn, creates an impediment for the establishment of greater coherence of action within this political area. This lack of transnational organization also creates a problem for the analysis carried in this paper: due to dispersion of the radical right MEPs in various groups, any result on IND/DEM only partially represents the radical right as a whole. Furthermore, the empirical referent considered in the two parts of the analysis is not identical, as the Euromanifesto data examined in the previous section referred to a larger number of radical right parties than the data on the voting behavior of the MEPs of Independence/Democracy. However, I will show that in spite of these limitations, it is still possible to produce some considerations and to advance some tentative conclusions about the phenomena under analysis.

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<sup>12</sup> The group ceased to exist in 2009 when some of its components united with the remnants of the 'Union for a Europe of Nations' group to create a new group called 'Europe of Freedom and Democracy'.

The first problem that I am going to explore concerns the internal cohesion within IND/DEM. For this purpose, in table 8 I have reported a measurement elaborated by Hix and Noury of the internal cohesion of the EP groups in the period 2004-2009 based on the roll-call votes (all data in this section are available on-line at <http://www.votewatch.eu>).<sup>13</sup> It clearly emerged that within the EP context, IND/DEM was the group with lower internal cohesion, comparatively as low as the Non-Attached group. To be more precise, their level of cohesion was about half the average level (0.8) of all party groups with the exclusion of IND/DEM and the Non-Attached. On the other extreme of the political spectrum, the European United Left/Nordic Green Left group (GUE-NGL) showed a level of internal cohesion in line with the above mentioned average. Hence, the radical right was internally divided along its national components much more than any other group of the EP was. Indeed, we only need to recall that some ideological diversity also emerged in the Euromanifesto analysis, but strikingly wide divisions emerged in the way the radical right MEPs voted in the EP. It is interesting to note that the low level of internal cohesion of the IND/DEM is also confirmed when we disaggregate votes by policy areas, as scores tend to be close to the overall cohesion rate:

- 0.5 for budgetary policy, economics, foreign and defense policy, culture and education;
- 0.4 for justice and home affairs, unemployment, social policy, development, transportation, tourism, fishery, equal opportunities;
- 0.3 for agriculture, environment, industry, energy, research, internal market.

Precisely, among the parties in this group, the UKIP voted against the party line one out of three times and the League of Polish Families one out of five.<sup>14</sup> Hence, among the larger parties that formed the group, the latter was the one that contributed more to determine the party line. However, its defection rate of one fifth should not be ignored and it is the sign of a rather undisciplined conduct and lack of leadership within the political group. Since we registered an extremely low level of internal cohesion, this could not be explained by the defections of the British and the Polish MEPS alone. It follows that the other MEPs of the group representing even smaller parties have all together defected the party line more frequently.

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<sup>13</sup>For each vote, the group cohesion was calculated using the index of Rice:  $(Y-N)/(Y+N+A)$ , where Y = nr. of votes in favour, N = nr. of votes against and A = nr. of abstentions. The cohesion rate of each group is the mean score of all roll-call votes.

<sup>14</sup>The other parties of IND/DEM have less than five representatives in the group. It is not possible to calculate loyalty scores for national groups with less than five MEPs. A national group is made up by MEPs from the same member state who join the same European Political Group.

**Table 8 – Cohesion index of the EP political groups (2004-2009)**

	EPP	PSE	ALDE	UEN	Greens	GUE- NGL	IND/ DEM	NA
Cohesion index	0.88	0.91	0.89	0.76	0.91	0.85	0.47	0.44

Source: <http://www.votewatch.eu>

Having established that radical right parties within the EP are not cohesive, it is now interesting to analyze how they behave *vis a vis* the other parties. One underlying characteristic of radical right parties is indeed their anti-system rhetoric. For this reason, they have alternatively been labeled as populist, extreme right, fascist, or protest-based organizations (Mudde 2007, 29). Indeed, at the national level, they often reject the system from its constitutional foundations. At the same time, the system tends to exclude them; at the national level several institutional barriers such as those coming from the electoral rules have been built in order to marginalize these parties. So, with only some exceptions and contrary to mainstream parties, radical right parties are usually rooted on the ground of the society more than they are in public office. As a consequence, they are also largely excluded from public resources - consisting mostly of state financing - that are instead largely available to cartel parties (Katz & Mair 1995). Hence, at the national level radical right parties can successfully represent themselves as separate from the system and their distinctiveness as a form of non-collusion and disinterestedness. They can do so especially when they criticize the state elites, one of the main arguments in their rhetoric. What happens then when we shift the focus of the analysis to the EU system? Is their anti-system protest also transferred to the EU level? We found that the Euromanifestos are rich in criticisms to the country membership in the EU. (table 3). Now we analyze whether such a broad stance also corresponds to an institutional practice of outsiders within the EP.

In reality, the tendency of IND/DEM, as well as of the radical left, to a participatory and even collusive behavior within the EP should not be underestimated (table 9). Although the number of times this group was part of a majority in the EP was the lowest among all party groups, the total rate (46.2 per cent) is still considerable and certainly higher than we could expect from any anti-system force. Hence, in almost half of the cases, IND/DEM was part of a parliamentary majority. To be sure, their votes only converged with large majorities composed of at least two large parties (the European People's Party [EPP], the European Socialist Party [PSE], or the Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe [ALDE]). Therefore, their vote was not necessary to build minimum winning coalitions, and consequently their blackmail potential and coalition power remained very limited even when they joined a majority. Just as at the national level (where only few exceptions can be found in countries such as Austria and Italy), also in the EP the radical right is largely non-influent for the formation of coalitions. For this reason, it is surprising that they voted along the lines of a parliamentary majority so many times. Especially when we consider that only a fraction

of the votes of IND/DEM converged with those of parliamentary majorities of centre-right leaning parties (either EPP, ALDE or Union for the Europe of Nations [UEN]) and could therefore be justified on the bases of some common ideological inclinations. In most cases, the majority also included (to a greater or lesser degree) the PSE, the Greens, and the GUE-NGL. An in-depth analysis of the contents of the bills passed with the support of IND/DEM would be necessary in order to discover the motivations for their institutional behavior – one that could certainly not be labeled as the behavior of outsiders. It is, however, a research goal that goes beyond the scope of the analysis presented in this paper, but one that future research should consider in order to shed light on this interesting phenomenon concerning the institutional behavior of the public office of radical right parties.

**Table 9 – Times when EP political groups were part of a winning majority (percentages)**

	PPE	PSE	ALDE	UEN	Greens	GUE-NGL	IND/DEM
Part of a winning majority	86	81.2	85.7	75.3	60.2	51.9	46.2

Source: <http://www.votewatch.eu>

Certainly, convergence with the EP majority is also due to the consensual nature of the EP where decisions are often lowest common denominator agreements among the different forces that are represented in this assembly. However, even from this perspective, we could not avoid defining the strategy of the radical right in the EP as either one of voice, or one of acquiescence. Being that their votes converged with those of large coalitions and were therefore not necessary to form a majority, we can hypothesize that the blackmail potential of IND/DEM was really limited on those occasions, as well as their capacity to influence the final outcome in the decision-making process. Hence, their strategy should really be characterized by acquiescence more than by a real capacity to voice their preferences and force the other parties to compromise with them. In the end, it seems that radical right parties are rather maximalists on the EU in their rhetoric (although even in this respect the analysis of Euromanifestos has shown that in some countries they accept the EU as a level of governance) but they tend to exclude the most maximalist option of *exit* when they operate within the EU institutions. This result is also confirmed by the attendance rate (82.5%) to the plenary sessions of the EP by the MEPs of IND/DEM, a rate that is very close to the average of the other (mostly mainstream) groups (84.6%). As we have seen, a vote with the majority corresponds to this high attendance rate in almost half of the cases and a vote against (or abstention) in the remaining part. Only when they vote against the majority do they express their protest against the main groups, usually by voting with parties on the extremes of both left and right (Hagemann 2009). It is evident that radical right parties collect votes in the



European elections based on a broad Eurosceptical stance (with policy specific positions that are sometimes not as much Eurosceptical). However, once in the EP, it is important to note that they express their dissent making use of the rules of the game, voting with the opposition more than the other forces do, but voting almost as much with the majority. If these figures were known by the larger public, it would not be surprising if the protest-based electorate of these parties felt dissatisfied with their institutional conduct.

It seems that the public office of these parties is way less anti-EU than the political discourse of their central office. There may be several explanations for this behavior. On the one hand, there might be a search for legitimacy on the part of these parties. They want to participate in the decision-making process and they want to be considered credible coalition partners. This could be achieved more easily in an assembly such as the EP where coalitions are formed on an issue-by-issue basis, rather than following pre-arranged coalition agreements between either the groups or the national delegations. On the other hand, radical right parties might be aware of the advantages which come with representation in the EP. They can have a public office that is often lacking at the national level where they are frequently excluded from institutional representation due to electoral rules, the impact of strategic voting in first order elections, or the marginalization by mainstream parties. The advantages of representation in the EP are not negligible, especially for small radical parties. Notably, from a financial point of view, parties represented in the EP have access to public financing, which has become so relevant for the survival of parties in contemporary times (Katz & Mair 1995, Aucante & Dézé 2008). Such funds come directly from the EU budget, in order to allow the organizational functioning of the EP. As well, they come from the national budget under the form of ordinary contributions or reimbursements of the electoral expenses. Ultimately, either directly or indirectly, the EP is doing a lot for the financial and organizational survival of small radical parties. Alternatively, we could look for other non-strategic explanations of the institutional behavior of radical right MEPs. Just like any other actor who is inserted in the European decision-making system, they become gradually socialized to the practices and principles of the EU governance, through forms of interaction oriented toward consensualism that in the long term create a sense of trust and identification with the institution and with the system at large (Schimmelfennig 2000). This could also explain why the radical right often takes a more pragmatic stance in the EP than the rhetoric of their central office would anticipate. None of these potential explanations can be examined in-depth in this paper, but certainly knowledge on the radical right, as well as on EU politics, would greatly benefit from the analysis of these possible determinants of the party conduct in the EP. In the meanwhile, although it is not yet possible to talk about a radical right in the EU that is *anti-establishment but open to government* it seems there is already enough evidence to talk about a radical right that is *anti-establishment and part of the system*.

## IV. Conclusion

The analysis that was carried out in this paper shows that the radical right is the party block characterized by the lowest levels of internal cohesion in the whole context of the European party families. This finding holds true both in the analysis of ideology that was examined through party Euromanifestos, and in that of institutional behavior shown by the data on the roll-call votes of the MEPs. The Euroscepticism of the radical right is well-known, however after an accurate analysis, it showed that it is discontinuous and lacks a common vision across its national party components. If this diversity was verified not only with respect to the European issue but to other issues as well, there would be reason to question whether the radical right could be defined as a party family, or if it should instead be considered a disordered aggregation of national parties of erratic ideological positions.

The analysis of two different arenas, namely a second-order national electoral arena and the EP institutional arena, very clearly show that the radical right in Europe is divided into a plethora of stances and policy preferences and by reciprocal enmities and political antagonism. From the analyses, it emerged that their ideological foundations, programmatic supply and organizational features are so diverse that it even seems hard to group them under a distinctive party family name. This finding reinforces Mudde's (2007) argument about the necessity to classify parties that common wisdom tends to pinpoint within the radical right with more accuracy. Certainly, this paper shows that in Europe, a *famille spirituelle* grouping the main parties of this political area is, in reality, hardly discernible and even the use of the concept of party family could be incorrect when referring to the radical right.

At the same time, a clear tendency toward a greater pragmatism and moderation of the MEPs of the radical right emerged in the paper as compared to the party programmatic announcements. Although radical right parties represent a source of opposition within the EP, some of them also take part in parliamentary majorities in almost the same proportion. This phenomenon shows that there is a remarkable distance between the central office and the public office of these parties, at least in terms of coherence between the statements of the former and the institutional conduct of the latter. Whether this is a conscious, or even a strategic game played by these parties, is a question that this paper has not addressed. Certainly, their conduct raises many questions that future research may address. Overall, the party public office in the EP is more institutionalized, more inserted in the legislative process and even more collusive with the other parties of both sides of the political spectrum than the rhetoric and statements of central office makes the public believe. The paper documented the ambivalence between a more Eurosceptical party central office and a more collusive EP public office. This conflicting valence between central office and public office could be a sign of difficulty for these parties in playing the role of legislators and, at the same time, represent a protest-based electorate. Especially in an assembly like the EP where there is not a clear government to oppose and so the temptation to collude with the other parties can be

amplified. Whether or not this phenomenon limits the capacity of radical right parties in the EP to represent their electorate - as they fail to deliver firm opposition against the mainstream parties - is an interesting problem. At the same time, however, the level of information of citizens about the activities in the EP is so low that a disappointing behavior of the MEPs would hardly result in a sanction vote in the following elections. So, it was interesting to document that in an assembly characterized by limited popular scrutiny as is the EP, the conduct of some radical right parties is not one of principled opposition, it is actually less extreme than many would expect.

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