

### An integrated model of national party response to European integration

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Veröffentlichungsversion / Published Version

Forschungsbericht / research report

#### Empfohlene Zitierung / Suggested Citation:

Lefkofridi, Z. (2008). *An integrated model of national party response to European integration*. (Reihe Politikwissenschaft / Institut für Höhere Studien, Abt. Politikwissenschaft, 115). Wien: Institut für Höhere Studien (IHS), Wien. <https://nbn-resolving.org/urn:nbn:de:0168-ssoar-245711>

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# **An Integrated Model of National Party Response to European Integration**

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# **An Integrated Model of National Party Response to European Integration**

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May 2008

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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.

Das Institut für Höhere Studien (IHS) wurde im Jahr 1963 von zwei prominenten Exilösterreichern – dem Soziologen Paul F. Lazarsfeld und dem Ökonomen Oskar Morgenstern – mit Hilfe der Ford-Stiftung, des Österreichischen Bundesministeriums für Unterricht und der Stadt Wien gegründet und ist somit die erste nachuniversitäre Lehr- und Forschungsstätte für die Sozial- und Wirtschaftswissenschaften in Österreich. Die **Reihe Politikwissenschaft** bietet Einblick in die Forschungsarbeit der Abteilung für Politikwissenschaft und verfolgt das Ziel, abteilungsinterne Diskussionsbeiträge einer breiteren fachinternen Öffentlichkeit zugänglich zu machen. Die inhaltliche Verantwortung für die veröffentlichten Beiträge liegt bei den Autoren und Autorinnen. Gastbeiträge werden als solche gekennzeichnet.

## **Abstract**

Developments in the policy and polity dimensions of European integration constitute the 'European context' of national politics. The present paper contributes to the broader debates on Europeanization by exploring whether and to what extent this context induces political party (policy and/or organizational) change. To date, research on the Europeanization of political parties has not yet been sufficiently linked to the general theories of party change. Hence, the paper theoretically embeds the study of political party Europeanization into extant theories of party change. It constructs a model accounting for variation in party response to the institutional and policy challenges brought about by European integration. The model distinguishes between different levels of party Europeanization (*Awareness* and *Action*) and stresses the role of intra-party power relations as well as primary party goals as important mediating factors.

## **Zusammenfassung**

Institutionelle und rechtliche Veränderungen im Rahmen der Europäischen Union bilden den 'europäischen Kontext' nationaler Politik. Vor dem Hintergrund der Europäisierungsdebatte untersucht der vorliegende Beitrag, inwiefern dieser Kontext zu Veränderungen in der politischen Programmatik und/oder im organisatorischen Aufbau nationaler politischer Parteien führt. Studien zur Europäisierung politischer Parteien sind bislang nicht ausreichend mit allgemeinen Theorien zum Wandel politischer Parteien in Verbindung gebracht worden. Der Beitrag zieht daher solche Theorien heran, um die Europäisierung politischer Parteien theoretisch zu fassen. Er entwirft ein theoretisches Modell, das erklärt, wie politische Parteien auf die institutionellen und rechtlichen Herausforderungen der europäischen Integration reagieren. Das Modell unterscheidet verschiedene Ebenen der Europäisierung politischer Parteien (*Bewusstsein* und *Handlung*) und hebt die Bedeutung innerparteilicher Machtbeziehungen sowie unterschiedliche Arten von Parteizielsetzungen als vermittelnde Faktoren hervor.

## **Keywords**

Party Change, Party Goals, Europeanization

## **Schlagwörter**

Wandel politischer Parteien, Parteizielsetzungen, Europäisierung

**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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## Introduction<sup>1</sup>

European integration alters the ‘structure of political opportunities’ (Schlesinger, 1985), by providing national political parties with a new policy arena and a new institutional environment (Hix and Goetz, 2000). How are political parties affected by the process of European integration? This research question is inevitably located within a blooming area of inquiry, which studies the effects of European integration on national political systems as well as on the institutions and actors therein (Europeanization). Scholars interested in the impact of European integration on political parties mainly investigate the salience of Europe in party platforms and campaigns (e.g. Netjes and Binnema, 2007; Pennings, 2006; Kriesi, 2006; Steenbergen and Scott, 2004), party attitudes to EU membership (e.g. Kritzinger and Michalowitz, 2005; Kritzinger *et al.* 2004; Dardanelli, 2003) and party organizational aspects (e.g. Poguntke *et al.* 2007a; Poguntke *et al.*, 2007b; Hines, 2003; Raunio, 2002; Burchell, 2001; Raunio, 2000).

More specifically, the focus of this paper is on whether political party change may be induced by European integration and if so, how and to what extent. Thus, it makes part of an older debate regarding why, how and to what extent political parties change. Yet, political party analysis only recently began to acknowledge the EU as a potential environment bearing consequences for political parties (Ladrech, 2002: 290). As a result, the impact of European integration on parties and party systems, “whether direct or indirect”, has not yet been adequately integrated into the more general theories of party change and development; this is important, however, to ensure that the European Union does not become a “*deus ex machina*” accounting for thousands of different effects (Mair, 2006: 15). Therefore, two questions arise: What do theories of party change tell us about the potential impact of European integration on parties? Also, how does Europeanization research contribute to our knowledge of party change? On the one hand, adapting extant theories to the EU context can shed light on the complex ways in which Europe may affect parties. On the other hand, making sense of whether and how observed patterns of Europeanization fit in more general theories of party change helps (dis-)confirm older assumptions regarding party change.

Hence, the purpose of this paper is to construct a more robust theoretical bridge between

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<sup>1</sup> Whilst full responsibility for the contents of this paper remains with the author, advice and support has been received from a number of colleagues: Very special thanks to Sylvia Kritzinger, with whom I have discussed at length the ideas and structure of this paper – since its very conception. I am also grateful for comments and suggestions made by Amie Kreppel, Peter Mair and Anton Pelinka on earlier versions of this paper. Last but not least, I am very thankful to Oliver Treib for his constructive and meticulous review of the present paper’s final draft. The research on which this paper is based has been supported by the following grants: Doctoral Studies’ Grant, Institute for Advanced Studies, Vienna (10/2004-09/2007), Research Grant, Institute for Advanced Studies, Vienna (10/2007-12/2007) as well as FNR.324 Forschungsstipendium der Universität Wien (01/2008-07/2008).

two important bodies of literature, namely the theories of party change and the growing research on the Europeanization of political parties. As Europeanization is neither a uniform nor a linear process (Carter *et al.* 2007; Ladrech, 2002), it calls for a probabilistic model with in-built variation of potential party response to the challenges posed by European integration.

The paper is structured as follows: Building on previous works, I refine the general concept of Europeanization and distinguish between different levels of party Europeanization (*Awareness* and *Action*). Drawing on the “integrated theory of party goals and party change” by Harmel and Janda (1994), I identify the conditions under which different types of response are likely to occur. I focus on the ways the European context may bring about party change, by affecting parties’ goals (Strøm, 1990; Müller and Strøm, 1999), while taking into account factors endogenous to the party (e.g. leadership and dominant faction).

## What is Party Europeanization?

Contrary to scholarship theorizing European integration, ‘what happens at the EU level’ constitutes the independent variable of Europeanization research. The EU level becomes a point of departure for the exploration of top down effects directed at the national polities, policies, and politics.<sup>2</sup> What does the concept of Europeanization<sup>3</sup> signify for political parties and what kind of change does it imply? Mair (2006: 3-4) understands Europeanization as a factor that is “external to the national experience or as occurring when ‘something in national political systems is affected by something European’”. In his seminal article, Ladrech (2002: 393) considers party Europeanization a response to a challenge, “whether of marginal degree such as developing or building relationships with recently introduced actors and institutions, or more significantly to the relevance of an existing organization and its ability to attain certain indispensable goals”.

Indeed, political parties define their interests and pursue their goals according to a given setting. Stated policy positions of actors, for example, are located in “a practical political and institutional context” (Laver, 2001: 69). Moreover, according to Strøm (1990) a party’s strategy to achieve its goals is influenced by the institutional environment in which it operates. Consequently, developments in the policy dimension of European integration (e.g. EU-wide harmonization of a policy, new EU competences in a policy sector) as well as in the polity dimension (e.g. the introduction of qualified majority voting or increased powers of the European Parliament) constitute the ‘European context’ of politics in the member states. By affecting the environment in which party organizations operate (Ladrech, 2002), European integration provides conditions for modifying “the logic of political interaction at home” (Radaelli and Pasquier, 2006: 37). The further the European integration process moves on, strategic parties should define their interests and goals by taking into account events at both national and European levels – and increasingly so. Nevertheless, the points raised by

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<sup>2</sup> Yet, as Ladrech (2002: 393) explains, the response of domestic actors to European integration may, in turn, influence the supranational level so that there is a reflexive relationship. In addition, EU policies are, in principle, the result of political action by domestic actors (e.g. parties in government) which shift issues to the European level (Vink, 2003) through bottom-up processes. Other scholars (e.g. Carter *et al.*, 2007: 5; Goetz and Dyson, 2003: 20) also acknowledge that Europeanization is a two-way process and that ‘feedback loops’ between the supranational and the domestic level exist. Thus, when studying the Europeanization of political parties, we should be aware that parties as political actors both “adapt to, and seek to shape, the trajectory of European integration in general and of the EU policies in particular” (Bomberg and Peterson, 2000: 7). However, in the absence of a theoretical model to account for party Europeanization, this paper focuses on the top-down arrow between the EU and the national level. This choice preserves the distinction between the independent and dependent variables, thereby ensuring analytical clarity.

<sup>3</sup> Due to limited space, I consciously omit the broader debate on Europeanization (see for example: Bulmer, 2006; Radaelli and Pasquier, 2006; Vink and Graziano, 2006; Vink, 2003; Featherstone and Radaelli, 2003; Olsen, 2002; Ladrech, 2002; Radaelli, 2000; Hix and Goetz, 2000; Ladrech, 1994) and concentrate on the application of the concept to research investigating parties.

Ladrech (2002) above imply that individual parties are challenged by European integration in varied degrees. Thus, I make a more pronounced distinction between different levels of Europeanization and define '*party Europeanization*' as the by-product of a dynamic relationship between European integration and domestic politics, which manifests itself in different degrees across time and parties, ranging from party awareness of the European context (Europeanization I) to specific action induced by this context (Europeanization II).<sup>4</sup>

Party responses to EU stimuli will vary depending on the way parties perceive these stimuli. Mair (1985: 415) points out that "in so far as we are concerned with the responses of parties to change, and with their ability to adapt to that change, then it is the perception of the change that becomes of crucial importance" (for a relevant account of misperception, see: Norris and Lovenduski, 2004). Dardanelli (2003: 273) also highlights that "parties act on their own perceptions of the EU strategic environment". I assume that the more the EU policy scope expands and the further the EU institutions are empowered, the more the European context attracts parties' attention so that they take notice of the new policy and institutional environment (Europeanization I: Awareness). Within this level, therefore, awareness should increase across time. Furthermore, Dardanelli (2003: 273) argues that party perception of the EU environment is influenced by "the amount of information about the EU available at a given point in time". Hence, awareness should vary across parties. While some national parties may make vague references to Europe and the European Union as "another issue" in domestic politics, others may appear more informed, sophisticated and concrete. The information parties have at their disposal is related to the overall exposure of the party at the EU level, and parties within and across systems are exposed to the EU in different degrees. In particular, while opposition parties' presence at the EU level is limited to the EP, participation in government at the national level grants parties access to more than one institution at the EU level. Thus, parties in government should in principle have more information about how the system works and what kind of issues are debated; as a result, incumbency should affect awareness. In this respect, awareness may also vary within the party organization, with party representatives exposed at the EU level being more aware of the European context than the rank-and-file (Ladrech, 2007b: 225). In general, parties highly aware of 'what happens at the EU level' are more likely to develop concerns regarding the ways these events enable or restrain their action.<sup>5</sup>

If parties realize that European integration affects their interests and goals, they are likely to engage in discussions on how to respond to the EU challenges. Parties may (re-)define their

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<sup>4</sup> Regarding the choice of words for the different levels of Europeanization, I draw on an older discussion concerning class voting, where Sartori (1969: 83) distinguishes between class "conditions", "awareness", "consciousness" and "action".

<sup>5</sup> It should be made clear that Europeanization so defined does not mean that parties adopt a positive stance towards Europe. For instance, by expressing its opposition to Europe in general/specific European policies, a party integrates Europe in its political discourse and defines its interests taking into account the European context.

interests vis-à-vis the European context and change so as to pursue their goals more effectively given this context (Europeanization II: Action). Nonetheless, parties will pursue specific action provoked by the EU context (e.g. change of policy positions and/or use of the EU level for the pursuit of policy goals) depending upon the intensity of pressure exerted on them. For this reason, the differential impact of the EU context across parties (or within parties across time) is crucial in the present understanding of Europeanization. However, the challenge faced by Europeanization research is to identify the mechanisms that determine parties' path towards action and explain variation in party response to European integration. Primarily, we need to show how and to what extent we expect European integration to induce party change and which theoretical tools are best suited to account for this change. In search of such tools, I now turn to extant theories of party change.

## Extant Theories of Party Change

Party change in the broadest sense is any alteration, variation or modification in party behaviour, ideology/policy, structure or resources (Harmel and Janda, 1994: 275). The literature identifies two sources of explanation for party change, namely environmental and internal factors. Studies of party change have approached the topic from various angles, which could be divided into three broad categories (Harmel, 2002): the 'life-cycle' (Harmel and Svåsand, 1993; Michels, 1911), the 'systems-level' (e.g. Katz and Mair, 1995; Kirchheimer, 1966; Duverger, 1951) and the 'discrete-change' approach (e.g. Harmel and Janda, 1994; 1995; Wilson, 1980). These narratives are complementary rather than competing or mutually exclusive (Harmel and Tan, 2003; Müller, 1997) as they focus on different aspects of change (Harmel, 2002: 128).

Firstly, the 'life-cycle' approach (Whetten, 1987) emphasizes the party's internal workings. According to Michels (1911), intra-party organization eventually leads to a division between a directing minority and a directed majority. Furthermore, this hierarchical structure is vital for the 'political elasticity' of any party, its capacity to achieve speedy decision-making and act in alliance with other actors. Secondly, the system-level approach highlights the role played by the environment (Harmel and Janda, 1982). For example, Katz and Mair (1990: 18) state that while the "immediate source of changes" lies in the internal politics of the party, the "ultimate source" is in the party's environment; this dynamic, they argue, "aggregates to the observation that parties adapt to changes in their environments" (*ibid.*). Interested in patterns of party adaptation to system-level trends, major works in the field study the emergence and decline of specific types of parties: the elite/cadre party, the mass-party, the catch-all party and the cartel party (e.g. Katz and Mair, 1995; Kirchheimer, 1966; Duverger, 1951). Lastly, the discrete-change approach builds on insights gained from both 'life-cycle' and 'system-level' scholarship. Wilson (1989) points out that intra-party factors play a role when combined with external pressures. In addition, Harmel and Janda (1994: 261-2) state that:

"a successful effort to change the party usually involves both a good reason (which, granted, often does involve the need to take account of environmental changes) and the building of a coalition of support."

For example, factors exogenous to the party can "set the stage" by indicating whether "political space exists for political parties to move in the political spectrum" (Samuels 2004; 1001) while the internal dynamics of the party can shed light on the reasons why the party reacted the way it did (change/no change). By moving away from the system level towards the individual party level, this third party research strand explores the role played by internal factors (Harmel and Tan, 2003; Harmel *et al.*, 1995) such as leadership (Bille, 1997) and the dominant party faction (e.g. Panebianco, 1988) in preventing or promoting change.

On the one hand, changes in party leadership personnel may be “part of a broader commitment to change” but they may also be “incidental to intentions to change” (Harmel and Janda, 1994: 266). For instance, external shocks (e.g. an electoral failure) often result in party leadership change. Undertaking the party leadership after such an event gives the new leader the clearest mandate for change so that the party ‘does better’ in the future. On the contrary, leaders filling vacancies (e.g. due to retirement or death) have less potential for fundamental change. Leaders taking charge of the party “by virtue of being the head of a victorious faction after a bloody internal dispute” are likely to pursue the changes favored by their faction but may leave lots unchanged, so that they preserve intra-party harmony (ibid.). In any case, irrespective of the leader’s “good intentions” for change, her proposals are most likely to be met by a wall of resistance because parties are conservative organizations, which avert change (Müller, 1997; Panebianco, 1988; Wilson, 1980).

On the other hand, the dominant coalition constitutes the power center of the party and controls “the most vital zones of uncertainty [e.g. professional knowledge, environmental relations, communications, rules, financing and recruitment]” (Panebianco, 1988: 38). Panebianco (1988) draws our attention to two important features of the dominant coalition: its conformation and its composition. The first refers to the distribution of power relationships among party factions and leaders of party divisions.<sup>6</sup> For instance, Harmel and Tan (2003: 410) argue that “for substantial identity or organizational change to result from conformation change, there must be both a clear reason for change *and* a power configuration that facilitates the change”. Thus, when studying party change, we should explore whether there exists a dominant coalition that is firmly in control of the party and what is its attitude towards change (ibid.). The second element underlined by Panebianco (1988) is the composition of the dominant coalition, i.e. who serves as top leader/middle-level leader/factional leader. Harmel and Janda (1994: 274) point out that, even if the conformation of the dominant coalition remains unaltered, changes in its composition may affect party change.

The “integrated theory of party goals and party change” (Harmel and Janda, 1994) builds on three key concepts: *intra-party power relations*, *party environment* and *party goals*. Harmel and Janda (1994) model party change as a result of changes in two internal variables (leadership, dominant faction) and one external variable (environment). The party’s age constitutes an additional internal variable which diminishes the impact of all other variables (Harmel and Janda, 1994: 266). The older (and thus more institutionalized<sup>7</sup>) parties are, the more resistant they are to change. The most fundamental assumption underlying this framework is that party organizations will pursue alterations only under pressure (Harmel

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<sup>6</sup> To illustrate: the greater the power dispersal among factions, the weaker the conformation of the dominant coalition (Harmel and Janda, 1994: 274).

<sup>7</sup> Age is understood as an indicator of the party’s institutionalization. Institutionalization, in turn, refers to the process by which organizations and procedures acquire value and stability (Huntington, 1965; Janda, 1980).



and Janda, 1994: 278), as change entails costs, such as the consumption of human and material resources. Moreover, parties are assumed to avoid change because it may alter the conformation of the dominant coalition (Panebianco, 1988) within the party. Even so, Harmel and Janda (1994: 278) suppose that, when change occurs, it is imposed by the dominant coalition at the time of change. This coalition will pursue modifications only when it estimates that benefits exceed the costs of change.

The first source of change arises from challenges to the conformation of the coalition; as a result, the coalition will pursue change “when it sees change as consolidating or preserving its power” (Harmel and Janda, 1994: 278). The second source of pressure for change is goal-related: the dominant coalition will engage in modifications when “it sees change as advancing the party goals”, i.e. the goals that the coalition perceives as important (Harmel and Janda, 1994: 278). At this point, Harmel and Janda’s work bridges the literature on party change with that on party goals (Strøm, 1990) and the respective models of party behavior. Parties pursue multiple goals (vote maximizing, office maximizing, policy/ideology advocacy) but prioritize one goal, which is termed ‘primary’. The concept of the “primary goal” is crucial in this theory, as it specifies the causal mechanism through which the environment may affect parties: parties achieve their goals by reacting to the environment; if they fail to accomplish their primary goal they need to modify the way they interact with the environment (Harmel and Janda, 1994: 282) thus resulting in party change. Subsequently, the nature of this goal determines the criteria based on which party actors evaluate the party’s performance in achieving its goal. By distinguishing between different party goals, Harmel and Janda (1994: 262) seek to account for “differing impacts of different external stimuli, based on the fit of the stimulus” to a party’s ‘primary goal’. In what follows, I briefly review the party goals included in the Harmel and Janda (1994) framework by specifying the external stimuli that have the potential to affect each of the goals, and, as a consequence, stimulate party change.

## Party Goals and Party Change

Rational choice models of party behavior assume that parties' goals consist of maximizing their preferences regarding votes/office/policy.<sup>8</sup> These ideal types are analytical constructs, which aim at building mental maps. When dealing with concrete cases, researchers can then ascertain similarities and deviations from these maps. In the real world, parties pursue multiple goals at the same time. For instance, vote maximization is an intrinsic goal while office can have an intrinsic or an instrumental, electoral, or policy value (see: Budge and Laver, 1986; Müller and Strøm, 1999). However, thinking in terms of 'pure types' is useful in situations of goal conflict. Indeed, there is often tension between two or three different goals – such that parties face trade-offs regarding the pursuit of these goals, and need to prioritize (Mueller and Strøm, 1999). Rational choice models of party behavior help identify the exogenous stimuli that may affect vote-, office- and policy-seeking parties respectively. As will be shown below, different party goals are vulnerable to different types of external stimuli.

According to Downs' (1957) economic theory of democracy, parties behave similarly to competitive firms. Just like firms seek to maximize profit, parties seek to maximize votes. The underlying assumption of this model is that parties are flexible ideologically: "parties formulate policies in order to win elections rather than win elections in order to formulate policies" (Downs, 1957: 28). In this model, policy plays "a purely instrumental role in politics and parties are willing to shift policies any distance to win elections" (Mueller, 2003: 278). For the purposes of the present analysis, if votes/seats constitute the primary goal of parties, the criterion according to which these parties judge their own performance is winning votes or seats. So, electoral concerns, such as shifts in public opinion, and especially electoral defeat (or a series of electoral failures) are considered to be the mother of party change (Downs, 1957; Panebianco, 1988; Harmel and Janda, 1994; Janda *et al.*, 1995).

Office-seeking parties seek to maximize their control over political office, rather than the share of votes they get in elections (Strøm, 1990: 567).<sup>9</sup> As Müller and Strøm (1999: 6) illustrate, "the lure of office begins with the spoils that constitute cabinet portfolios". In this respect, the willingness of other parties in the system to form a coalition with the office-seeker is crucial (Harmel and Janda, 1994: 270). Hence, when office-seekers design their strategy, they also take into account the positions of potential allies. In search of coalition partners, party leaders may choose to temper their policy commitments (Müller and Strøm 1999: 9) and "change policies to join cabinets" (Mueller, 2003: 280). With regard to party

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<sup>8</sup> Rational choice scholarship assumes that political actors are self-interested and tend to maximize utility; in the case of parties, utility can be translated as votes+office+policy.

<sup>9</sup> It should be noted that in majoritarian systems with two-party competition, such as Greece and the UK, we cannot distinguish between vote-seeking and office-seeking parties (Harmel and Janda, 1994).

change, if office is the primary goal of parties, the criterion according to which they assess their performance is participation in the cabinet. So, office-seekers suffer due to the loss of power, understood in terms of office benefits (Deschouwer, 1992: 16) rather than due to electoral losses or compromises regarding their policy goals. Consequently, external stimuli impacting their ability to enter coalition governments will push office-seekers towards change. For example, social changes and/or changes in potential allies' positions may alter the acceptability of an office-seeking party as a partner; potential allies may find new partners which render the office-seeker's participation in the coalition redundant; or former coalition partners may collapse so that the office-seeker must look for new allies (Harmel and Janda, 1994: 270).

The policy-seeking model<sup>10</sup> (e.g. Axelrod, 1970; de Swaan, 1973) challenges the assumption that all parties are equally possible coalition partners (Mueller and Strøm, 1999: 7). Although participation in the government is an important prerequisite of effective policy pursuit, loyalty in the party's policy position appears sometimes as the optimal choice for party leadership.<sup>11</sup> Similarly, votes are valuable for policy-seekers in that they indicate how many citizens support the policies (Smirnov and Fowler, 2007) they believe to be wise (Kessel, 1980). So, despite their desire to win, strong policy advocates are willing to lose elections, if they cannot convince the electorate to endorse their policies (Bruce *et al.* 1991) and/or other parties to ally with them. Therefore, electoral losses and exclusion from the coalition cabinet will not constitute shocks for such parties. Regarding change, if policy advocacy is a party's 'primary goal', then this party would be most upset when an external stimulus challenges its policy position and ideology (Harmel and Janda, 1994: 270). According to Harmel and Janda (*ibid.*):

“such as shock may cause even purists within a party to consider changing the party's identity, not primarily because of electoral considerations, but rather because of losing confidence in the correctness or importance of key positions.”

Last but not least, Harmel and Janda (1994: 271-3) add a fourth goal of party behavior, namely the implementation of intra-party democracy. In this model of party behavior, emphasis is put on representation, participation and diffusion of power; party members are important actors as they are enabled by the party structure to have a say in decision-making. The inclusion of intra-party democracy in the party goals by Harmel and Janda (1995) aims at conditioning the behavior of 'new politics' (e.g. Green) parties, which value highly grass-root participation and diffusion of power (Harmel and Janda, 1994: 273). For instance,

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<sup>10</sup> The policy-seeking model is the least developed model of party behaviour (Strøm 1990, Harmel and Janda, 1994; Mueller and Strøm, 1999).

<sup>11</sup> For this reason, this model is consistent with cleavage theory, which views parties as organizations with historically rooted orientations (Lipset and Rokkan, 1967), through which parties channel their response to new issues (Hooghe, 2007; Marks and Wilson, 2000).

demands for more (or different kinds of) participation and representation could spur organizational as well as policy change. However, the pressure for change here comes from below. In this respect, changes at the level of party base (e.g. size of membership, see: Allern and Pedersen 2007) are critical for democracy-maximizers, as they constitute “shocks” for the party and may force a rethinking of intra-party mechanisms for interest aggregation and articulation (Harmel and Janda, 1994: 271).

To summarize, while some parties are intra-party democracy maximizers, the majority of parties pursue simultaneously votes, office and policy.<sup>12</sup> More often than not, parties face trade-offs with regard to these goals (Strøm, 1990: 572-3), and they need to prioritize accordingly. According to Harmel and Janda (1994), when external stimuli affect the party’s primary goal, the ground is fertile for change to occur; yet, change is the result of the interaction between goal-related factors and intra-party power factors. Going back to the fundamental premises of the theory, the external push toward party change will be tempered ‘from inside’. Using Panebianco’s (1988) terminology, crucial issues such as the direction, type and magnitude of change will depend on the dominant coalition and on changes with regard to its conformation and its composition. Decisions will be made according to the relevant costs and benefits accompanied with the change. These insights can help Europeanization research detect varied degrees of intensity with regard to the impact of European integration on parties’ vital objectives.

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<sup>12</sup> Some parties are not office-seeking because they lack coalition potential to participate in a multi-party government (see: Sartori, 1976) or they may be third parties in two-party systems with single-party governments.

## Party Change and European Integration

Surprisingly, however, the literature has not sufficiently utilized the potential of the Harmel and Janda (1994) integrated model when studying the impact of European integration on parties. Ladrech (2007b: 221-223) does address the ways in which the EU may impact on party goals. By solely focusing on organizational change, however, he dismisses the theoretical point regarding the impact of European integration on party goals because he expects a specific type of change, namely change in the balance of power within the organization.<sup>13</sup> Yet, party-change is multi-faceted (Mair, 1997: 16) and it should be theorized as such.

Taking Ladrech's (2007b) analysis as my point of departure, I adapt the Harmel and Janda (1994) theory to the study of party Europeanization and construct a probabilistic model theorizing varied responses to an EU environment that changes over time. Following Harmel and Janda (1994), the model developed here incorporates the concepts of *party goals*, *intra-party power relations* and the party's *environment*. Party age is considered here as a feature that may reduce the effects of the aforementioned factors. Like Harmel and Janda (1994), I assume all parties pursue multiple goals but due to trade-offs they face, one of these goals becomes 'primary'. Parties achieve their goals by reacting to the environment, and if they fail to accomplish their primary goal they need to modify the way they interact with the environment (Harmel and Janda, 1994: 282). In line with the aforementioned definition of party Europeanization, awareness and action are understood as two possible outcomes of the party's interaction with the EU environment. Europeanization I (Awareness) is not goal-related whereas Europeanization II (Action) is, as it results from the interface between exogenous (EU stimuli) and endogenous (leadership and dominant faction) factors with respect to the party's primary goal. It should be underlined that party change occurs within the second level of Europeanization (Action, see: Figure 1). The extent to which the party will pursue change is determined by the nature of the primary goal *and* by intra-party factors, i.e. how the leadership and/or the dominant faction of the party perceive the EU environment vis-à-vis the party's primary goal and their own structural position within the party.

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<sup>13</sup> Moreover, the integrated theory of party change and party goals incorporates intra-party relations as important causal factors. In other words, they are not themselves explained by the theory (Harmel and Janda, 1994: 266). Hence, the explanans in Harmel and Janda (1994) constitutes the explanandum in Poguntke *et al* (2007a).

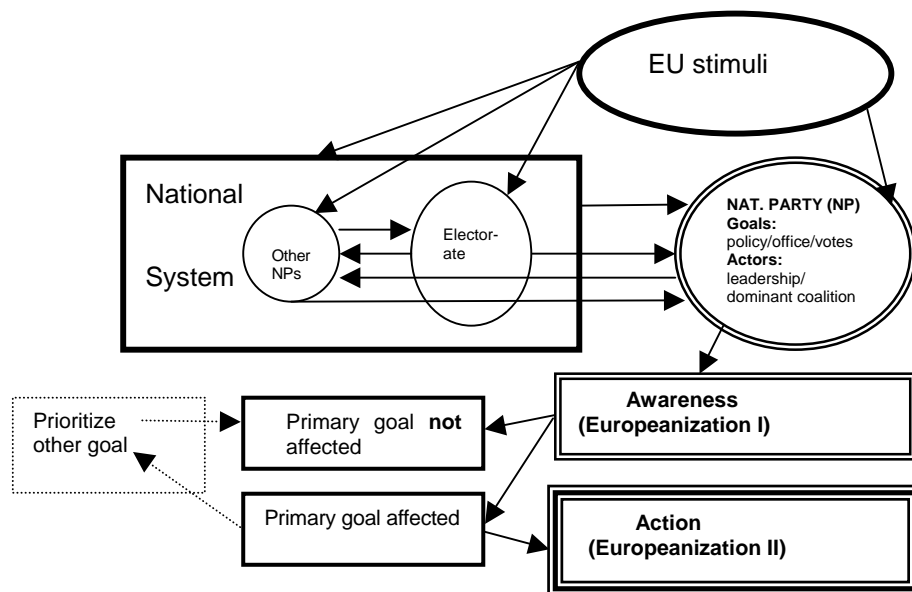


Figure 1: An Integrated Model of National Party Response to European Integration

Regarding the ways EU stimuli may be received, the path may be direct, through parties' exposure at the EU level and their participation in EU institutions, and/or indirect, through changes in parties' national environment (see Figure 1). In this regard, the party may receive the EU stimulus via its effect on the national system and/or its effect on other parties in this system. To illustrate, when national parties in government participate in EU-level decisions to harmonize policies across Europe, subsequent government alternation at the national level cannot 'cancel' these decisions. In other words, incumbent parties in the EU member states may be able to 'un-do' or reform national legislation and/or policies decided by previous governments at the national level, but they can hardly change laws and policies decided by previous governments at the EU level. Furthermore, parties can make neither law nor policy that goes against EU law. Last but not least, the EU stimulus may reach the party via its impact on the public opinion.<sup>14</sup>

For party change to occur because of an EU stimulus, the stimulus has to be first attended by "someone in the party who would see fit to argue that adaptive change would be needed in order for the party to do better in some way than it would otherwise do" (Harmel and Janda, 1994: 267). Therefore, if we recognize the EU as an environment that has the

<sup>14</sup> As recent evidence supports that mass-elite linkages in the context of European integration are running in both directions (see: Steenbergen *et al.* 2007), Figure 1 depicts this reciprocal nature of the relationship between parties and public opinion.

potential to shape parties, we also need to take into account inner causes of continuity/change. Changes will not “‘just happen’ either randomly or in automatic response to external stimuli;” while the reason (stimulus) for change may be externally induced, the design and implementation of the responsive change will be highly dependent upon internal factors (Harmel *et al.* 1995: 2). In this respect, internal party factors matter in two ways: on the one hand, important party actors (i.e. the leadership and the dominant faction) are responsible for evaluating the party’s performance to achieve its primary goal. On the other hand, these party actors are functioning within a specific power structure. The dominant coalition will only change this structure under pressure and in ways that can consolidate/preserve its power. Hence, to explain the party’s response to EU stimuli, we need to know how these actors perceive the stimuli vis-à-vis the party’s primary goal and their own position within the party.

For these reasons, I focus on the perception of exogenous pressures by the leadership and the dominant faction. Firstly, these actors evaluate party performance based on the party’s primary goal and decide whether the party is in need of change; so, what matters is how these actors perceive the environmental stimulus as well as its influence on party performance (Deschouwer, 1992: 17). Thus, changes in leadership and/or the dominant faction may impact upon the way EU stimuli are perceived and processed. Different leaders<sup>15</sup> may alter the party’s attitude towards the EU environment because they assess it differently (Harmel *et al.* 1995: 4).

Secondly, if the party’s leadership and dominant coalition decide that change is necessary, they will avoid changing the structural arrangement that provides them with power. The work of Poguntke *et al.* (2007a) is illuminating in this regard, as it explores the question whether the EU empowers party elites and whether it causes intra-party power shifts in favor of MEPs and EU specialists. By studying organizational change and specifically elite and EU specialists’ empowerment, Poguntke *et al.* (2007a; 2007b) explore the possibility that environmental change affects intra-party relations. They specifically hypothesize that “increasing European integration has induced party organizational adaptation within national political parties which has led to a power shift in favour of two partially overlapping groups: (1) party elites and (2) those specializing in EU affairs” [...] “at the expense of ordinary MPs and middle-level party elites” (Carter *et al.* 2007: 10). This major work reports that party elites are empowered as a result of increased European integration but mainly insofar as this power is associated with national government; also, little evidence supports the empowerment of EU specialists within party organizations (Ladrech, 2007b: 212). The findings of this study relate to one of the present model’s core assumptions, namely that the

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<sup>15</sup> Nonetheless, not all leaders have the same opportunities for changing their parties as intra-party structures and rules vary across parties (Harmel *et al.* 1995: 6).

leadership and the dominant coalition will respond to environmental stimuli in ways that help them preserve/consolidate their power.

In the present model, continuity and change are associated with the stability of the dominant coalition's conformation and with its composition. What is more, structural transformation will occur if the power distribution in the dominant coalition changes. A subsequent proposition is that *the more intra-party tensions regarding adequate responses to the EU context there are and the greater the change in the conformation of the dominant coalition, the more likely the party will change (P1)*. In other words, in case an EU stimulus causes conflict among party factions: if the distribution of power relationships among party factions and leaders of party's divisions changes, the party is likely to change. The direction of change will depend upon the novel coalition, which will seek to consolidate its power by changing the party's rules or structure (Harmel and Janda, 1994: 280).

A second proposition of the model relates to the composition of the dominant coalition: *the more intra-party tensions regarding adequate responses to the EU context there are and the greater the change in the composition of the dominant coalition, the more likely the party will change (P2)*. While it is difficult to identify the specific factional composition of parties, European integration has been undoubtedly a source of intra-party conflict, with different factions perceiving the EU context in different ways (see, for example: Ladrech, 2007a; Sowerimo, 1996). In this respect, simultaneous change in the party's leadership and its dominant faction would create the circumstances under which party change is more likely to occur. If those who serve as top/middle-level/factional leaders of a winning coalition are in favor of change in response to the EU context, then European integration is likely to induce change. Keeping in mind that changes in the conformation and/or composition of the dominant coalition are likely to alter the way the EU context is perceived, I now turn to the relationship between the party's primary goal and European integration.



## Party Goals and European Integration

The focus in this section is on how the EU system may affect parties' tendency to simultaneously seek votes, office and policy as well as their capacity to pursue each of these goals separately. This impact is crucial in our understanding of party change in response to EU stimuli. Firstly, the trade-offs parties face with regard to votes, office and policy (Strøm, 1990) may be affected by the EU's institutional structure. In other words, specific systemic properties of the EU may systematically push parties towards particular types of behavior. Strøm (1990: 579) refers to different ways in which institutions affect party behavior by conditioning parties' mix of objectives: on the one hand institutions have a direct influence on parties, as parties "regardless of their organizational characteristics, face different incentives in different institutional settings". On the other hand, there is also an indirect effect of institutions through different types of organizations (*ibid.*). For instance, intra-party democracy (diffusion of power and decentralization of policy decisions) enhances policy pursuit at the expense of votes and office (Strøm, 1990: 579). Two further organizational properties identified by Strøm (1990: 577-8) are recruitment structures and personnel accountability. Policy pursuit is more likely in the case of parties where higher officers and candidates are recruited from lower levels within the party. Personnel accountability refers to the capacity of party activists and members to replace officeholders and party leaders. This organizational trait encourages party leadership to concentrate on short-term benefits; vulnerable elites, Strøm (1990: 578) explains, "discount future benefits more heavily and show less concerns about future elections". In addition, accountability may advance "a greater extent of policy orientation at the expense of office benefits, since leaders must show greater concern with the policy preference of their followers" (*ibid.*). Thus, with regard to intra-party organizational structures, I expect party organizations possessing such characteristics to be more inclined towards seeking policy, whereas parties lacking these characteristics to be more likely to pursue votes or office. It follows that, in case parties are under pressure, these party organizational characteristics impact on parties' flexibility to switch from policy to office/votes.

In this respect, I depart from Harmel and Janda (1994), in that I do not treat intra-party democracy-seeking as a goal. Instead, following Strøm (1990: 577), I recognize intra-party democracy as an organizational property that further conditions party behavior, by systematically affecting the trade-offs between votes, office and policy. Parties with high levels of intra-party democracy are concerned with the representation of their members' wishes as well as with the participation of their members in the intra-party democratic procedures (e.g. primaries, congresses). Since most parties in the EU member states also run in EP elections, parties which value intra-party democratic procedures are likely to establish primaries for the selection of MEPs. Also, if such parties participate in government

and hence also in the Council of Ministers, they are likely to experience serious difficulties in achieving deals which would also keep their members satisfied.

Secondly, the nature of parties' primary goal determines the criteria according to which party actors assess the party's performance in achieving its goals. What is more, different party leaders prioritize different goals over time (Mueller and Strøm, 1999). As goals differ across parties and/or within parties across time, the perception of the EU stimuli by the respective party leadership will vary according to whether (and to what extent) the party's primary goal is challenged. Accordingly, a third proposition of the theoretical model developed here is goal-related: *the more EU developments affect the party's performance in achieving its goals, the greater the pressure for party change (P3)*. In what follows, I discuss this general proposition regarding the relationship of the exogenous stimulus to vote-/office-/policy-seeking behavior, by referring to goal-motivated models in their pure types.

### ***Vote-seeking in the EU***

Vote-seekers will be under pressure when the EU stimulus affects the electorate. Van der Eijk and Franklin (2004: 33) argue that voters' orientation in favour or against the EU and its policies

“constitutes something of a ‘sleeping giant’ that has the potential, if awakened, to impel voters to political behaviour that (because of its degree of orthogonality with left/right orientations) undercuts the bases for contemporary party mobilisation in many, if not most, European polities”.

To the extent that “Europe” plays a role in national elections, vote-seeking parties are likely to use EU stimuli in ways that enhance their vote-maximizing strategy. The strategic maneuverability of parties, the scarcity of resources, the time and communication channels as well as the limited attention span of voters (Sjöblom, 1985: 390) determine parties' choices regarding the priority of some issues over others. Vote seekers, then, would ‘invest’ in the EU issue(s) only if this seems a promising electoral strategy. Then, it is unlikely that they will develop concerns over Europe during an electoral campaign if they do not perceive European integration (policy and polity) as affecting their vote maximization. For instance, vote-seekers have incentives to engage in a campaign opposing Europe in general (or specific European policies), if a considerable share of the social base is (or becomes) Eurosceptic. Alternatively, a vote-seeker in disagreement with an EU policy is likely to moderate its stance if there is wide public endorsement of this EU policy. In this case, the EU environment impinges on the party through the effect it has on the electorate. DeVries (2007:

365) argues that the “level of EU issue voting<sup>16</sup> is conditional on the degree of EU issue salience among voters *and* the extent of partisan conflict over Europe” and she expects the sleeping giant to be woken up by parties at the extreme poles of the political spectrum.

Last but not least, the EU environment is in flux and in the future it may also have the potential to affect vote-seeking by challenging the party’s organizational capacity to maximize votes; for instance, in the hypothetical event of a pan-European ballot, vote-seekers would be forced to structural change.

### ***Office-seeking in the EU***

The way European integration affects office-seekers is manifold. Firstly, incumbent parties at the national level hold the most lucrative offices at the EU level (Council of Ministers, European Council as well as the national seat in the Commission).<sup>17</sup> For this reason, Moravcsik (1998; 1999) argues, European integration strengthens national executives (incumbent parties) vis-à-vis other domestic actors and institutions, such as national parliaments (and consequently, parties in the opposition). The EU system, then, provides additional incentives for parties to ensure a place in the national cabinet; so, EU membership should enhance office-seeking behavior. That being said, the importance parties attach to offices at the European level depends upon the competences of posts at that level. In the process of integration, as more competences are transferred to the EU level and European institutions acquire more power, parties as office-seekers will be more and more interested in gaining offices at both national and EU levels. Due to the specificities of the EU system, to achieve both levels’ posts, however, office-seekers need to focus on the national contest. So, for office-seeking leaders, EP elections should be perceived ‘second-order’ elections functioning as nothing more than “markers for the standing of their parties and their programs” (Franklin, 2005: 11).

The second way European integration can challenge office-seekers is to challenge their potential to gain power. If the party’s primary goal is office, the EU stimulus can influence the party through its effects on potential coalition partners. As Harmel and Janda (1994: 264) put it, “if you are going to be invited to join them in government, you’d better not only look and act like them, but even think like them to be considered acceptable”. If potential allies change their positions so that the distance between them and the office-seeker becomes

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<sup>16</sup> De Vries (2007: 365) defines ‘EU issue voting’ as the “process in which attitudes towards European integration translate into national vote choice”.

<sup>17</sup> In the past, large countries (e.g. Germany) could appoint not one but two commissioners so that not only parties in government but also parties in the opposition could be represented in the Commission. In the enlarged EU of 27 member states this is no longer the case.

“unacceptable”, the pressure on the office-seeking party increases. In other words, parties as office-seekers will be affected by the EU as far as their coalition potential (and hence, participation in the government) is challenged. Thus, in the case of office-seeking parties, the way other parties in the system perceive (and respond to) the EU stimulus is crucial.

There is, however, a further constraint on office-seekers in the EU system, namely the pressure for change in the direction of ‘conformity’ with the ‘norm’ (Harmel and Janda, 1994: 264; see also: Mair, 2007). A case in point is the decision of 14 EU member states to impose sanctions on Austria due to the inclusion of the extreme-right wing FPÖ in the coalition cabinet. This party was considered acceptable for gaining office at the national level, but it was unwanted as a partner at the EU level. The pressure for change did not come from within the national system but from parties in other countries of the EU. Although EU member states do not share a common vision for what exactly the EU should be, they felt that Haider in office was against the Union’s values and questioned the FPÖ’s coalition potential. In essence, Haider was considered anti-systemic because of his nazi-friendly and/or anti-immigrant views, despite the fact he was backed by electoral support. If extreme-right wing anti-immigrant rhetoric is a threat to unity in diversity or the free movement of labor in the EU, so is extreme left wing anti-capitalist rhetoric to the free movement of capital and the single market. Hence, when a party’s policy positions are far from the status quo established at the EU level, the party is under pressure to conform if it wants to gain office.

### ***Policy-seeking in the EU***

If policy advocacy constitutes a party’s ‘primary goal’, then this party would be most upset when the EU stimulus challenges its ideology and policy positions. Using the examples of the Communist parties faced with the collapse of Soviet communism and the success of Green parties in reducing Europe-based nuclear weapons, Harmel and Janda (1994: 271) expect that such shocks will stimulate parties to rethink their policy priorities and, to some extent, the party’s identity. However, the two examples brought up by Harmel and Janda (1994) refer to two qualitatively different types of shocks. On the one hand, the challenge faced by the Greens was caused by their own policy success: nuclear weapons, a core issue for the Greens, were rendered less important because of successfully negotiated reductions of Europe-based nuclear arsenals. But neither the environment as an issue, nor the Greens as a movement/party were rendered “irrelevant”. The Greens had fought for influencing policy towards that direction, and after they succeeded in fulfilling their ‘primary goal’, they had to revitalize their purpose of existence by defining new policy goals, i.e. voicing different environmental concerns (or other concerns in general).

On the other hand, the challenge facing Communists across Western Europe in the early 1990s was neither caused by their own policy success nor by their own policy defeat. The ‘shock’ came from outside their system. So, the Communists in Western Europe had to

conduct politics while watching the various real-world applications of their doctrine collapse and convert to “laissez faire” economics. In the historical past, the Communists were banned, exiled, etc. and nonetheless survived in the hope of a socialist revolution. Suddenly, communism as a doctrine was perceived as “irrelevant” by the post-Perestroika world, due to the victory of market capitalism. Within the EU, communist ideology became ‘abnormal’ and essentially anti-systemic, as communist parties were faced with constitutionalized capitalism due to launch of the single market. Moreover, former Soviet satellites strove to join the EU as fast as possible – even if, in most old EU members, the free movement of labor would not apply for almost a decade to the newcomers. The stimulus directed against communists is not just quantitatively greater than the challenge facing the Greens. It is qualitatively different due to the ways it attacked the central tenets of the party ideology but also due to the fact that this ideology had very deep roots in European political history.

In any case, the policy-seeking model provides a good argument in favor of considering the internal dynamics of the party and exploring the attitudes of the leadership and the dominant coalition, as well as their strategies to achieve the party’s goal. Firstly, if an EU stimulus challenges the party’s ideology, the party’s leadership and dominant coalition will be under pressure to choose between adaptation/change of its ideology and stability of its policy positions. As noted by Strøm (1990), policy-seeking behaviour is associated with organizational characteristics which constrain leaders significantly. In order to draw a stronger distinction between the pure policy- and office-seeking types, I argue that pure policy advocates would not easily abandon their policy commitments, unless of course, they switch to another primary goal (office/votes). Nonetheless, the potential for goal-switching can be conditioned by specific organizational properties such as intra-party democracy and personnel accountability. If the leadership and the dominant coalition opt for change and engage in re-prioritizing and re-defining policy goals or even identity change, they may alienate supporters and/or intra-party actors (e.g. a non-dominant party’s faction). Intra-party conflicts on European integration may undermine the party’s cohesion (Ladrech, 2002). In the worst case scenario, an ideological conflict within a policy-seeking party may even threaten the party organization’s survival. Consequently, the costs entailed in a policy or ideological change may, in some cases, exceed the benefits of adapting to environmental stimuli. Therefore, despite EU developments affecting their primary goal, party leadership may still opt for remaining faithful to their ideology.

Secondly, before the launch of the Single Market in the 1990s, policy-seeking parties may not have perceived European integration as impacting on their policy goals to the extent that they would today. Moreover, in the EU-27 polity, no single party can unilaterally affect any policy outcome, irrespective of the size and power of the member state. If the leadership and the dominant faction perceive the EU stimulus as challenging the party’s policy goals, they are likely to change its organizational structure so as to be active at the EU level and ‘do better’ regarding their policy goal. For an effective pursuit of their policy goal, policy-seeking parties are likely to forge trans-national links with parties in other member states so as to

promote their interests through a common front at the EU level. Since more and more policy areas are transferred to the European level, police-seeking parties will have more and more incentives to be active at that level with aspirations of influence over policy outcomes.

## Conclusion

In the beginning of this paper, I elaborated on the concept of party Europeanization, and distinguished between different levels of Europeanization: *Awareness* (Europeanization I) and *Action* (Europeanization II). I then reviewed theories of party change and, following Harmel and Janda (1994) and Strøm (1990), I constructed a model to explain variation in party response to the EU stimuli. To summarize, the more *aware* parties are of Europe (Europeanization I), the more likely they are to perceive the European context as affecting their primary goal, in a positive/negative way. Only if party leadership and/or the dominant coalition perceive Europe as challenging their primary goal, they are likely to pursue changes (Europeanization II). However, as the primary goal varies across parties, response to the EU context and consequent change will vary accordingly. Also, the primary goal may vary within parties across time, and in this respect changes in leadership and in the dominant faction may be catalytic for alterations in the perception of the relationship between the EU context and the party's primary goal. When parties encounter difficulties in pursuing their primary goal they may even switch to prioritizing another goal. In a nutshell: the pressure exerted on a party by the EU environment is goal-specific but the way this pressure is perceived and how the party responds are dependent upon the leadership and the dominant faction.

A goal-oriented analysis reveals that, if parties pursue all three objectives (votes, office and policy), they face significant trade-offs; firstly and most importantly, the most risky strategy given the EU context is to prioritize policy advocacy when the EU stimulus affects the party's ideology. Indeed, according to Mair (2000; 2007), the process of European integration contributes to the hollowing out of political competition among political parties at the national level by limiting the policy space, the policy instruments and the policy repertoire at their disposal. What is more, policy-seeking is enhanced by specific party organizational properties such as intra-party democracy, impermeable recruitment structures and personnel accountability. Parties with such features will be particularly under pressure in the EU system, whose institutional properties demand high levels of 'political elasticity' (Michels, 1911) and therefore push parties towards more centralization of power, leadership autonomy (Raunio, 2002) and decreased leadership accountability (Ladrech, 2007b). Secondly, vote- and office-maximization appear as safer strategies. Also, avoidance of the EU issues appears to be a risk-minimizing strategy for vote- and office-seeking parties, as they can avoid electoral costs or loss of coalition partners respectively – until anti-EU protest-vote seekers or anti-EU policy-seekers effectively mobilize them. The exploration of the above propositions requires an empirical examination of individual parties' response to EU stimuli over time. Only after an in-depth investigation can we begin to assess the normative implications of this behavior for our democracies.

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Author: Zoe Lefkofridi

Title: An Integrated Model of National Party Response to European Integration

Reihe Politikwissenschaft / Political Science Series 115

Editor: Oliver Treib

Associate Editor: Elisabeth Torggler

ISSN: 1605-8003

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