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## **Are Polish Political Parties Really Europeanized?**

**Abstract:** *This paper is the result of research conducted over several years on four Polish political parties: Civic Platform (Platforma Obywatelska ‘PO’); Law and Justice (Prawo i Sprawiedliwość ‘PiS’); Democratic Left Alliance (Sojusz Lewicy Demokratycznej ‘SLD’); and the Polish People’s Party (Polskie Stronnictwo Ludowe ‘PSL’). The purpose of the research was to determine whether the processes occurring within these parties as a result of Europeanization are substantial and affect their values, internal culture and organisational model. The intensity of each parties’ Europeanization was analysed in three dimensions: structure and organisation, political agendas, and culture. The research encompassed a period of ten years, spanning from before Poland’s accession to the EU to the most recent years.*

**Keywords:** Europeanization, Polish political parties, democracy, EU accession, EU integration

### **Introduction**

The ‘Europeanization’ of political parties is defined in a number of ways. The broadest definition, adopted for the purpose of this paper, describes it as parties’ reaction to the changes in their environment resulting from progressing European integration. Europeanization occurs in national political parties regardless of their attitudes toward the process. This does not imply, however, that it takes on the same shape and intensity in all parties. Parties adapt to the changing environment in terms of their agendas, structures and culture. The analysis presented here encompasses four Polish parties: Platforma Obywatelska (Civic Platform – ‘PO’), Prawo i Sprawiedliwość (Law and Justice – ‘PiS’), Sojusz Lewicy Demokratycznej

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(Democratic Left Alliance – ‘SLD’) and Polskie Stronnictwo Ludowe (Polish People’s Party – ‘PSL’). All these formations enjoy a fairly stable position on the Polish political scene – since 2001 they have been constantly present in the Sejm (the lower chamber of the Polish Parliament). Since 2004, they have also had their deputies in the European Parliament. As a result, it was possible to conduct a long-term comparative research spanning the period of ten years, encompassing both a comparison between these parties and an in-depth analysis of their individual formations.

The article is structured around the dimensions of Europeanization which are established and described in section 1. Sections 2–4 contain a synthetic analysis<sup>1</sup> of the entire process, differentiating several areas: organisation (2), agendas (3) and culture (4). The subject covered in most detail is the structural adaptation of political parties – in other words, the organisational dimension of Europeanization. The final section is devoted to general conclusions and identifying possible directions of further research on the Europeanization of political parties (including in countries other than Poland).

## **1. Dimensions and scope of Europeanization of political parties**

The Europeanization of national political parties is a multi-dimensional process. Although Robert Ladrech<sup>2</sup> suggested five areas of their Europeanization (programmatic change, organizational change, patterns of party competition, party-government relations and relations beyond the national party system), my analysis selects and examines three key dimensions of the process: structure, agendas and internal culture of the party. The others areas mentioned by Ladrech deal more with the systemic rather than the party level.

In terms of structure and organisation, political parties adapt their functioning not only to the national or regional scene (as was the case before Poland acceded to the EU), but also to the supranational level. The process of adaptation occurs in aspects both formal (reflected in the parties’ statutes and official documents) and informal (i.e. the influence of partisan experts on European issues, such as deputies to the European Parliament or other people responsible for international cooperation). As Tapio Raunio pointed out, Europeanization can also strengthen

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<sup>1</sup> For readers interested in a broader analysis, I recommend my book: *Europeizacja polskich partii politycznych* (*The Europeanization of Polish Political Parties*), Warszawa 2014.

<sup>2</sup> R. Ladrech, *Europeanization and Political Parties: Towards a Framework for Analysis*, “Party Politics”, No. 8/2002, pp. 389–403.

the autonomy of party leaders and spur the centralisation of power within parties.<sup>3</sup> This additional sphere of party activity is also sometimes a source of new challenges and organisational issues. These stem from the weakening of links between the national leadership of a party and its representatives in the European Parliament (EP), or from the distorted coordination and communication between politicians operating within and outside their country. In some cases, such problems leave a party divided into factions or even lead to a full-blown rift. However, the supranational area can also have quite the opposite effect – it can help a party maintain internal organisational equilibrium, for example if politicians considered *enfant terrible* (or otherwise ‘dangerous’) are ‘shipped out’ as candidates in an EP election in order to permanently remove them from national politics.

The Europeanization of political parties also occurs in the realm of party agendas. This has been confirmed by numerous qualitative and quantitative analyses focused on the content of documents released by parties with regard to their political and electoral agendas. As Mikołaj Czeński emphasised, one advantage of analysing electoral agendas is that these documents refer directly to the party’s official position on various issues. Electoral manifestos contain statements which the party, as a collective actor in the political process, wishes to convey to its voters. If one uses the vocabulary of communication sciences, one might describe the electoral manifesto as a type of message that the sender (a party) conveys to the recipients (the electorate) in order to convince them to act in a specific way (i.e. support that party in an election).<sup>4</sup> The most common criticism of such research points to the fact that the manifestos and programmes presented by parties in their agendas often have little or no bearing on their actual actions. Furthermore, it is stressed that voters actually possess a limited knowledge of party agendas, hence one has to conclude that such agendas have little impact on actual voting decisions.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> T. Raunio, *Why European Integration Increases Leadership Autonomy Within Political Parties*, “Party Politics”, No. 4/2002, pp. 405–422.

<sup>4</sup> M. Czeński, *Zawartość programów wyborczych polskich partii politycznych – zastosowanie metody MGR do ilościowej analizy treści (The Content of Electoral Agendas of Polish Political Parties – the Use of MGR Method for Quantitative Analysis)* in: *Wybory 2007. Partie i ich programy (The 2007 Election: Parties and Their Agendas)*, I. Słodkowska and M. Dołbakowska (eds.), Warszawa 2011, p. 11.

<sup>5</sup> M. Cichosz, *Pozycjonowanie wyborczej oferty partii politycznych jako mechanizm strategiczny (Positioning of parties’ political agenda as a strategic mechanism)* in: *Wybory do Parlamentu Europejskiego w 2009 roku w okręgu dolnośląsko-opolskim. Uwarunkowania kształtowania strategii wyborczych (The 2009 European Parliament election in the Lower Silesia and Opole constituencies. Determinants affecting partisan strategies)*, R. Alberski and R. Solarz (eds.), Wrocław 2011, pp. 85–106; R. Wiszniowski, *Europejska przestrzeń polityczna. Zachowania*

The last dimension of Europeanization is related to political culture. Moderate constructivists and sociological institutionalists believe that socialisation mechanisms are written into Europeanization due to the increasing interdependence between actors on the European and national levels. Socialisation occurs through continuous interactions among and within several groups: deputies to the national parliaments and the deputies to the European Parliament (MEPs), experts, lobbyists and officials. Discussions and debates held in various European bodies provide a space within which these groups can shape their preferences together.<sup>6</sup> Their presence in the European Parliament constitutes the most effective way in which politicians from all EU member states can undergo the process of political socialisation toward broader acceptance of European norms. The mechanism of MEPs' socialisation has been described by, among other scholars, Tomasz G. Grosse.<sup>7</sup> With reference to Polish politicians, Grosse confirmed a pattern observed by other researchers: the European Parliament is a place where their attitudes, behaviours, values and political culture are shaped in accordance with norms commonly appearing in European politics. Some researchers claim that the same process occurs much earlier and is effective enough to make politicians running for EP seats comply with the views and preferences they adopted while active in national politics.<sup>8</sup> This would imply that for deputies holding pro-European views, adaptation to the political culture of the European Parliament is noticeably easier. Meanwhile, politicians coming from Eurosceptic parties are more distanced from the idea of conciliation and integration. This implies they are more likely to choose those European parties which the literature describes as less relevant. Conversely, they rarely join the political mainstream in the EP, and so are slightly removed from the process of socialisation that is shaped mostly by the biggest political groups within the EP.<sup>9</sup>

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*elektoratu w wyborach do Parlamentu Europejskiego (The European Political Space. Electoral Behaviour during the EP Elections)*, Wrocław 2008, pp. 208–214.

<sup>6</sup> A. Kreppel, *Moving in the Other Direction? The Impact of Domestic Party System Change on Italian MEPs*, "Journal of European Public Policy", No. 6/2004, pp. 975–999.

<sup>7</sup> T.G. Grosse, *Eurodeputowani jako 'agenci' europeizacji (MEPs as Agents of Europeanization)* in: *W objęciach europeizacji. Wybrane przykłady z Europy Środkowej i Wschodniej (Embraced by Europeanization. Selected Examples from Central and Eastern Europe)*, T.G. Grosse (ed.), Warszawa 2012, pp. 193–221.

<sup>8</sup> R. Scully, *Becoming Europeans? Attitudes, Behaviour and Socialization in the European Parliament*, Oxford 2005, pp. 100–101.

<sup>9</sup> T.G. Grosse, *op.cit.*, p. 202.

**Table 1. Dimensions and intensity of the Europeanization of political parties**

<b>Dimension</b>	<b>High intensity</b>	<b>Medium intensity</b>	<b>Low intensity</b>
structural-organisational	Experts on European issues are involved in formulating the party's position with respect to all major EU policies	Experts on European issues are involved only in the party's EU policy	Experts on European issues have only marginal impact on the formulation of the party's policies and positions
	MEPs are among the most influential members of the party – both formally and informally	Due to their function, MEPs are included in the party's governing bodies	MEPs are absent from the party's governing bodies
Agenda	European issues are among the key points on the party's agenda; the EU is referred to on many occasions	The party's agenda contains a separate chapter devoted to the EU	EU-related issues only occasionally appear in the party's agenda
	European issues are among the ten most thoroughly covered subjects in the agenda	In terms of percentages, European issues are covered to a lesser extent than the ten most frequently mentioned subjects	European issues are among those subjects only marginally mentioned in the party's agenda
Cultural	European parties and groups present in the EP exert noticeable influence on the party's behaviour, declarations, positions and norms adopted at both the European and national level	European parties and groups present in the EP exert influence on the party's behaviour, declarations and positions only at the European level	European parties and groups present in the EP exert very limited influence on the party's behaviours, declarations and positions
	Cultural norms are transferred from the EU to the national level	Party adopts different cultural norms when acting on the EU level and on the national level	EU norms are not accepted by the party; instead, the party attempts to transfer its own national culture to the European level

Source: Author's own research, with reference to: T. Haugton, *Driver, Conductor or Fellow Passenger? EU Membership and Party Politics in Central and Eastern Europe*, "The Journal of Communist Studies and Transition Politics", No. 4/2009, p. 417.

In researching the Europeanization of national political parties, more interesting than the process of socialisation itself is the potential impact can have on their party colleagues. MEPs are treated as a link between European actors and party circles in their home countries. However, different politicians perform this function in different ways. Some MEPs loosen relations with their domestic parties as soon as they are elected. Hence, they have limited opportunities to transfer the customs and principles of behaviour learned in the EP to the national level. Another group – namely those who are eager to run for re-election – is much more interested in maintaining close ties with their national party structures. As a result, the mutual influence of the party on its MEPs and vice versa is substantially stronger. On the one hand, the party can expect to have a say in how its MEPs behave in the EP, and thusly to participate in shaping EU policies and law. On the other hand, MEPs can exert more influence on the norms and behaviours adopted by their national parties and circles. This turns these MEPs into, as Grosse put it, potential '*agents of Europeanization*'.<sup>10</sup>

By operationalising the research into the Europeanization of national political parties, one can specify how intense the interactions stemming from European integration are. This is, of course, possible only to a certain extent and is based on the assumption that Europeanization is not a permanent state, but rather an ongoing process. Table 1 provides a synthetic representation of the three dimensions of Europeanization, juxtaposed with three degrees of intensity specified for this process.

## **2. The structural-organisational dimension of the Europeanization of Polish political parties**

The research contained in this paper on how political parties changed their structure and organisation due to Poland's accession to the EU was based on the analysis of party statutes and other internal documents (mostly resolutions). This analysis was supplemented with empirical research, based on individual in-depth interviews and surveys with members of party elites and MEPs, conducted between 2010 and 2013. This allowed for the juxtaposition and comparison of the formal rules adopted within the party (the so-called 'official story') and opinions of its members (the so-called 'real story').<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> Ibidem, p. 196.

<sup>11</sup> See also: *The Europeanization of National Political Parties. Power and Organizational Adaptation*, T. Poguntke, N. Aylott, E. Carter, R. Ladrech and K.R. Luther (eds.), London–New York 2007, p. 17.

The most important changes stemming from Poland's accession to the EU occurred in the period shortly before and after the accession itself. This was when parties adopted rules referring to the conduct of EP electoral campaigns, implemented mechanisms allowing for the inclusion of MEPs into their work (also with regard to their presence in the national parliament), and/or introduced new organisational structures (such as commissions, committees or working groups dealing with European issues). In some cases, parties went a little further and changed the rules for electing their governing bodies, so as to acknowledge the importance of the parties' EU experts. Some parties also created new posts for the purpose of handling their (prospectively more frequent) European contacts and relations.

The analysis of the changes the four major Polish political formations introduced into their statutes in the period before and after Poland's accession to the EU revealed that all examined parties adapted their internal regulations to the changing reality. In the case of PO, stipulations on the subject were included in the party statute adopted by its National Convention on 1 June 2003.<sup>12</sup> However, initially they only encompassed party members who served as observers to the EP. The newly adopted statute guaranteed them seats on the party's National Council, as well as county and regional councils. Further changes, this time referring to actual MEPs, were included in the document adopted by PO's III National Convention on 21 May 2006 – nearly two years after PO candidates had successfully run for MEP seats.<sup>13</sup> PiS was equally slow to introduce regulations on EP electoral campaigns and the place of MEPs in the party's structure – the amendments to its statute were made on 3 June 2006.<sup>14</sup> SLD Europeanized its statute on 6 March 2004, when its National Convention decided to include the following statement in the introduction to the document: *'The Democratic Left Alliance will also propagate the above goals and values on the international forum, in the Socialist International and the Party of European Socialists, by coordinating its policy on this matter with other social-democratic parties'*. This was also when the Alliance adopted the rules to be followed in the process of forming the SLD's 'MEPs Group'. The Chairman of the Group was to be included in the party's National Governing Body. The above-mentioned amendments to the statute were confirmed by SLD's III National Convention on 18 and

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<sup>12</sup> Statut Platformy Obywatelskiej Rzeczypospolitej Polskiej (Statute of the Civic Platform of the Republic of Poland), Warszawa 2003.

<sup>13</sup> Statut Platformy Obywatelskiej Rzeczypospolitej Polskiej (Statute of the Civic Platform of the Republic of Poland), Warszawa 2006, [http://www.malopolski.platforma.org/files/files/6/34286/statut\\_po.pdf](http://www.malopolski.platforma.org/files/files/6/34286/statut_po.pdf) (last visited 17.05.2013).

<sup>14</sup> Statut Prawo i Sprawiedliwość (Statute of Law and Justice), Warszawa 2006.

19 December 2004.<sup>15</sup> PSL also implemented certain EU-related changes to its statute. However, these referred neither to the party's functioning on the European level, nor to the role of MEPs in its organizational structure. The amended statute was adopted on 14 April 2007<sup>16</sup> – even later than in case of PO or PiS.

In summary, all four parties encompassed by the within research eventually introduced some (more or less elaborate) party regulations referring to the European dimension of their activity. These are presented in Table 2 below.

**Table 2. European dimensions included in the statutes of Polish political parties**

	References to the party's activity on the international or European arena	Guarantees given with regard to MEPs' participation in the party's governing bodies	Restrictions as to MEPs' participation in the party's governing bodies	Other privileges granted to MEPs	Regulations referring to the party's representation in the EP
PiS <sup>1</sup>	yes	yes	yes	no	yes
SLD <sup>2</sup>	yes	yes	no	no	yes
PO <sup>3</sup>	no	yes	no	yes	no
PSL <sup>4</sup>	no	yes*	no	no	no

\* Understood as guarantees identical to those granted to deputies to the national parliament.

<sup>1</sup> All the information is derived from Statut Prawa i Sprawiedliwości (Statute of Law and Justice), adopted during the IV PiS Congress in Warsaw on 29.06.2013.

<sup>2</sup> All the information is derived from Statut Sojuszu Lewicy Demokratycznej (Statute of the Democratic Left Alliance), as adopted during the V SLD Congress in Warsaw on 28.04.2012, [http://www.sld.org.pl/nawastrona/public/ckfinder/userfiles/files/Statut\\_2012.pdf](http://www.sld.org.pl/nawastrona/public/ckfinder/userfiles/files/Statut_2012.pdf) (last visited 06.09.2014).

<sup>3</sup> All the information is derived from Statut Platformy Obywatelskiej Rzeczypospolitej Polskiej (Statute of the Civic Platform of the Republic of Poland) valid as of 29.06.2013, [http://www.platforma.org/media/dokumenty/2013-06-29\\_-\\_statut\\_po\\_tekst\\_jednolity.pdf](http://www.platforma.org/media/dokumenty/2013-06-29_-_statut_po_tekst_jednolity.pdf) (last visited 06.09.2014).

<sup>4</sup> All the information is derived from Statut Polskiego Stronnictwa Ludowego (Statute of the Polish People's Party), a unified version with amendments adopted during the X PSL Congress on 8.11.2008, [http://www.psl.org.pl/upload/pdf/dokumenty/Dokumenty\\_X\\_Kongres\\_PSL/Statut\\_PSL.pdf](http://www.psl.org.pl/upload/pdf/dokumenty/Dokumenty_X_Kongres_PSL/Statut_PSL.pdf) (last visited 06.09.2014).

Source: Author's own research, based on the statutes of PO, PiS, SLD and PSL valid as of September 2014.

<sup>15</sup> Statut Sojuszu Lewicy Demokratycznej (Statute of the Democratic Left Alliance), a unified version with amendments adopted during the III SLD Congress on 18–19. 12.2004, <http://www.sld-wlkip.pl/pleszew/index.php?name=Statut> (last visited 17.05.2013).

<sup>16</sup> Historia Kongresów PSL (The History of PSL Congresses), <http://pslplock.pl/historia-kongresow-psl/> (last visited 17.05.2013).



All parties included in this research guarantee their MEPs access to the party's governing bodies (typically, collegial bodies tasked with adopting resolutions and other internal regulations), albeit to a varying degree. PiS MEPs are automatically entitled to participate in the party Congress – a body described by the statute as the highest authority within the party. They are also given seats on the Policy Council, which is the highest regulatory body of PiS in periods between sessions of Congress. Furthermore, they are included in the party's regional councils in the constituencies where they obtained their mandates to the EP. As members of the Policy Council, they are also delegated to the regional conventions in their constituencies, being automatically seated in the governing bodies of their respective regional structures. Therefore, PiS members who are elected to the European Parliament co-decide on matters of their party's statute, agenda and ideological declarations. They also participate in electing the Chairman of PiS and deciding whether the party should merge with another political formation (as these decisions are taken by the Congress). Moreover, they have a say in choosing the party's candidate for presidential elections, in specifying the rules by which electoral lists for regional elections are created, as well as those by which the party's authorities are chosen. As they are granted access to the Policy Council, they also decide about the party's formal disciplinary procedures and ethical standards. Finally, as members of the party's regional councils, they determine the lists of candidates for local and regional elections and approve candidates to the national parliament and the EP.

In case of PO, MEPs automatically become members of the county and regional councils in their home constituencies. If a given constituency encompasses more than one county or region, they are allowed to choose the county and region where they wish to hold the above-mentioned positions. MEPs are also included in the National Council – an organ which constitutes the highest authority of PO in between its National Conventions. Being seated on the county councils, they approve candidates' lists for local elections and decide about forming or dissolving coalitions for the purpose of these elections, or later on forming coalitions in local self-government bodies. They participate in the creation of the party's regional agenda and the formation of its local governing bodies. Due to their presence in regional councils, they are given similar competences with regard to the regional level of local self-government. Furthermore, they can suggest lists of candidates for both the national parliamentary elections and the European Parliament elections. MEPs' participation in the National Council is, of course, also related to a number of other competences, such

as approving the party's agenda and forming electoral or governing coalitions. MEPs take part in electing the Vice-Chairman of PO, its Secretary General, Treasurer and members of the National Governing Body. Finally, they approve candidates' lists for national and European parliamentary elections.

In SLD, MEPs, just like deputies to the national parliament, are automatically included in the party's National Council. Stipulations to this effect were introduced into the party statute in April 2012. This of course, provides them with a number of competences. First of all, they are formally involved in: shaping of the electoral agenda, as well as rules and procedures for choosing party candidates for public offices; specifying personnel policy; approving candidates' lists for national and European parliamentary elections; forming the party's Policy Council. The Chairman of the SLD MEPs Group automatically becomes a member of the National Governing Body. However, MEPs are not automatically delegated to the Congress, National Convention or regional conventions. Except for the National Council, they do not hold positions in any organs responsible for adopting internal regulations. Before the 2012 amendments, SLD was the only one of the four parties analysed here not to guarantee its MEPs seats on the National Council. They could be elected to this position only through a regular internal procedure, identical for all party members. Such a relatively low-level position of deputies had not always been the case in SLD. In the first party statute, adopted in December 1999, members of the national parliament were given substantially more influence – they were made delegates to the Congress, National Convention and regional conventions, albeit to participate in the National Convention they had to obtain the approval of their respective regional conventions.<sup>17</sup> All the above-described stipulations were removed from the statute by the National Convention's decision of 6 March 2004. As a result of this timing, the earlier more privileged provisions never encompassed MEPs.<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> Ujednolicony tekst Statutu Sojuszu Lewicy Demokratycznej ze zmianami uchwalonymi przez II Kongres SLD 30 czerwca 2003 roku (A Unified Version of the Statute of the Democratic Left Alliance, with Amendments Adopted During the II SLD Congress on 30 June 2003) in: *Zbiór podstawowych dokumentów z działalności Sojuszu Lewicy Demokratycznej w okresie lipiec-grudzień 2004* (*The Collection of Key Documents of the Democratic Left Alliance in the Period from July to December 2004*), Warszawa 2004, p. 97.

<sup>18</sup> Statut Sojuszu Lewicy Demokratycznej, tekst ujednolicony ze zmianami uchwalonymi przez Krajową Konwencję SLD 6 marca 2004 roku (Statute of the Democratic Left Alliance, a Unified Version with the Amendments Adopted During the SLD National Convention on 6 March 2004) in: *Zbiór podstawowych dokumentów z działalności Sojuszu Lewicy Demokratycznej w okresie lipiec-grudzień 2004* (*The Collection of Key Documents of the Democratic Left Alliance in the Period from July to December 2004*), Warszawa 2004, p. 125.

Of all the parties analysed here, PSL was the one to make the fewest changes to its statute with regard to the status of MEPs. One might even get the impression that this party acted as though it operated in a non-EU country. The statute makes only one reference to the European Parliament – it stipulates that the competences of the PSL High Council include ‘*adopting the rules of co-operation between PSL’s Parliamentary Club and other parliamentary clubs, both in national and European Parliament, as well as adopting procedures for establishing a joint parliamentary club*,’ The statute does not contain any regulations specific to MEPs. Therefore, their right to participate in the party’s governing bodies should be viewed as identical to that given to the deputies to the national parliament. In this respect, the statute states that PSL’s representatives in the national parliament are members of county electoral conventions in their respective constituencies. They also form regional candidates’ conventions and electoral conventions, which in turn decide on the candidates’ lists for the parliamentary elections. Finally, deputies to the national parliament participate in the Congress, which the statute designates as ‘*the highest authority within PSL*’.

It is fairly rare for Polish political formations to formally limit national or European Parliament members’ access to some positions within the party. The only noticeable exception to this rule was introduced by PiS in September 2009, when the party decided that MEPs elected to the EP as PiS members would be forbidden (by statutory regulations) to act as chairmen of the party’s regional councils. Jarosław Kaczyński, the Chairman of PiS, offered the following explanations for such a decision: ‘*An MEP, if he is a responsible professional, starts his work on Monday morning already in the European Parliament, and returns home on Friday evening or Saturday morning*’.<sup>19</sup> By saying that, he apparently wanted to emphasise that, in his opinion, reconciling the mandate of an MEP with the daily work in the party’s regional structures is simply impossible. Despite numerous media reports suggesting that the decision was, in fact, aimed at removing certain individuals from internal party positions, a representative of PiS governing bodies declared it was a technical decision aimed at streamlining the work of internal structures which, when led by MEPs, proved dysfunctional.<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>19</sup> As cited in: D. Uhlig, *Imperium PiS kontratakuje* (*The PiS Empire Strikes Back*), “Gazeta Wyborcza” (on-line edition) 28.09.2009, [http://wyborcza.pl/1,76842,7084578,Imperium\\_PiS\\_kontratakuje.html](http://wyborcza.pl/1,76842,7084578,Imperium_PiS_kontratakuje.html) (last visited 28.05.2013).

<sup>20</sup> D. Uhlig, *Zmiany w PiS: Bielan traci głos, Kurski traci Gdańsk* (*Changes in PiS: Bielan Loses the Microphone, Kurski Loses Gdańsk*), “Gazeta Wyborcza” (on-line edition) 25.09.2009, [http://wyborcza.pl/1,76842,7080986,Zmiany\\_w\\_PiS\\_Bielan\\_traci\\_glos\\_Kurski\\_traci\\_Gdansk.html](http://wyborcza.pl/1,76842,7080986,Zmiany_w_PiS_Bielan_traci_glos_Kurski_traci_Gdansk.html) (last visited 28.05.2013).

Among the four formations encompassed by the research, PO is the only one to have introduced any regulations with regard to MEPs who are not party members, but were elected to the EP from that party's lists. Such individuals can expect some minor privileges if they decide to actually join PO. For instance, they become party members automatically upon filing a membership declaration, as opposed to all other prospective members, who need to wait for the approval of the governing body of appropriate local structures. An analogous solution has been in place since 2001 (in the original statute of PO) with regard to the deputies to the national parliament.<sup>21</sup> Other formations considered here do not have any similar regulations on this subject.

Regulations as to the party's representation in the EP are included in the statutes of two parties: PiS and SLD. The statute of PiS includes a statement that candidates elected from the party's lists (or lists recommended by the party based on an agreement with other formations), as well as PiS members running for EP seats from other lists (with the party's consent) form the PiS MEP Group. Participation in the Group is obligatory. The statute makes one mention of the Group's prerogatives: it entitles the Group to call for a session of the Policy Council. Interestingly, the work of the Group is directed by the party's Chairman, who does so with the *Chairman of the Group* acting as an intermediary. Any member of the Group who is also on the European Parliament's Bureau automatically earns a seat on the Policy Committee – a body representing the party in external relations. The Committee, among other responsibilities, approves the list of candidates for the EP elections presented to it by the Chairman.

Similarly to PiS, the SLD statute also stipulates that the party's MEPs form a Group, headed by one of its members (who must be a member of SLD). Unlike in PiS, however, participation in the Group is not compulsory. The Group adopts its own rules and regulations, which must be agreed to by the party's National Governing Body. The statutes of PSL and PO also contain chapters regulating the matter of party parliamentary groups, but these do not provide any rules referring exclusively to MEPs.

The analysis of formal solutions adopted by the four political parties examined in the research allows one to conclude that in all of them MEPs, who represent their respective parties in public office, are included in the central party structures. Three of the four parties (with SLD being the exception) also involve MEPs in their local and regional structures.

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<sup>21</sup> Statut Platformy Obywatelskiej Rzeczypospolitej Polskiej (Statute of the Civic Platform of the Republic of Poland), Warszawa 2001.

The empirical research carried out (in the form of surveys and individual in-depth interviews) was aimed at gathering the opinions of PO, PiS, SLD and PSL members about the impact of Europeanization on the organisation of their respective parties. Some scholars familiar with the subject claim that Europeanization strengthens centralisation of internal decision-making processes within parties.<sup>22</sup> My research suggests rather that both these processes occur simultaneously. Respondents from all four political formations pointed to the party leader as the most influential person within their party, with 87 per cent stating that the leader's influence was very significant; nine per cent claiming it to be significant, and the remaining four per cent saying it was of average importance. Such results are hardly surprising – it would be difficult to imagine a party in which its leader (usually a chairperson) has little impact on the party's functioning. All respondents from PiS and all but one from PO assessed the influence of their leader as very significant. In the case of SLD, the same answer was given by nine out of every ten members, while among PSL politicians – by three out of 10. As the research sample for PSL was not particularly large, one should remain cautious about drawing firm conclusions from this result.

I do not describe here in detail the respondents' assessment of the influence exerted within their parties by deputies to the national parliament and leaders of national parliamentary groups, as this topic is largely outside the scope of this paper. It is worth mentioning, however, the respondents' comparison of the importance of the members of national parliament as opposed to MEPs. The MEPs' impact on their parties was described as similar to that of Senators.<sup>23</sup> Forty-five per cent of respondents assessed it as average, and every third respondent said it was low or very low. Among PiS and SLD members, three out of 10 respondents described MEPs' influence as high or very high. One notable exception to this rule concerned the leaders of party delegations to the EP, whose importance is viewed as somewhat greater than that of a 'regular' MEP (43 per cent of respondents from all parties stated it was average, but over 30 per cent believed it was high or very high). The role of members of national party executive bodies was also perceived differently than that of persons who hold similar functions in European parties. Sixty per cent of respondents described the former group as having a large influence, and 13 per cent as having a very large influence. For those holding similar functions in European

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<sup>22</sup> See: T. Raunio, *Why European integration increases leadership autonomy within political parties*, "Party Politics", No. 4/2002, pp. 405–422.

<sup>23</sup> Senators are the deputies to the upper chamber of the Polish parliament.

parties, the most common answers were low influence (35 per cent) and average influence (26 per cent). Twenty-two per cent said their influence was insignificant or even non-existent.

The next set of questions referred to the influence of persons holding specific functions within parties with respect to their EU policies, including on issues such as: choosing the person responsible for EU matters, approving candidates for EP elections and selecting the leader of the party's EP delegation. According to all respondents, the person having the greatest impact on EU policy within their party is, unsurprisingly, its leader. Seventy-nine per cent assessed his or her role as very important, and the remaining 21 per cent as important. Once again PSL seems to be something of an exception, as the proportion of these two answers was reversed: only three out of 10 PSL members assessed the impact of their leader on EU policy as very important, while seven out of 10 assessed it as important. It's also worth noting here is that the respondents' opinions on this particular matter were rather unequivocal – all of them chose between only two of the answers, i.e. either very important or important.

A party leader also has the greatest impact on the choice of EP delegation leader – 61.5 per cent of respondents specified it as very large, while 32 per cent described it as large. Other persons with a significant voice in this particular decision are the MEPs themselves. Their influence was estimated as very large by 38 per cent of politicians, as large by 36 per cent, and as average by 17 per cent. Finally, there is the role of the narrow collective party leadership – its impact was assessed as very large by 17 per cent of respondents, as large by 27.5 per cent, and as average by 34 per cent.

The leader of a party's delegation in the EP is the second most-influential person in the process of formulating its EU policy. In this respect, members of all examined parties gave very similar answers. Forty-five per cent of respondents stated the EP delegation leader's influence was significant, 30 per cent claimed it was very significant, while 25 per cent saw it as average.

In attempting to assess the importance of politicians having various functions within a party (e.g. the leader of the parliamentary group, a member of internal governing bodies) for the formulation of its EU policy, the research points to a certain specialisation. Namely, the impact of politicians present in EU bodies is substantially greater than that of those who only act on the national scene. This is clearly visible in the respondents' answers about the influence of deputies to the national parliament vs. MEPs. The former group was most commonly described as having

average (42.5 per cent) or little (34 per cent) impact on their parties' EU policies. In contrast, MEPs were said to exert substantial (57 per cent), very substantial (12.5 per cent) or average (23.5 per cent) influence in this field. MEPs seem to enjoy the largest role in the shaping of EU policy in PiS and PSL – all respondents from PiS and nine out of 10 from PSL described it as significant. Politicians who took part in the survey were also convinced that members of governing bodies of the European parties exert more influence than their colleagues seated in the governing bodies at the national level. The former group's impact is very significant according to 55 per cent of respondents, while for the latter the same answer was given in 38 per cent of cases.

The choice of a particular person as responsible within a party for its European issues is mostly up to the leader, and it is the leader who effectively makes the final decision on the matter (90 per cent of respondents claimed his influence was large or very large). In the view of party members, the decision is consulted with other people, only within the narrow party leadership. The voice of this narrow group was said to be significant (53 per cent of respondents) or very significant (25.5 per cent). Another group having a say in choosing the party's top EU expert are the MEPs themselves. Their impact was assessed as significant (38 per cent of respondents) or very significant (32 per cent). Finally, the party leader takes advice from the leaders of the national parliamentary club, whose influence was estimated as average by 32.5 per cent of politicians and as significant by 28 per cent. In this instance, differences between particular parties were negligible.

The next part of the survey was designed to find out the extent to which Polish parties utilise the expertise and experience of people who, at least in theory, are highly qualified with respect to European issues. One trend that emerges from the results and is common across all parties is that political formations are more likely to use the help of Polish, rather than foreign, external experts. The assistance of Polish experts is employed to a substantial degree according to 42.5 per cent of politicians, and to an average degree according to 32 per cent. Meanwhile, foreign experts are asked for help to only to an average extent in the opinion of 30 per cent of respondents, while as many as 47 per cent claimed that such help is used only occasionally or not at all. It should be noted that the use of external experts (and, hence, their impact on the party's EU policy) varies between the examined party formations. Answers given by the respondents indicate that the party least likely to employ external experts on EU matters is PSL – six out of 10 PSL members stated that their party does so rarely or very rarely, and two out of ten had no clear opinion on the subject. Half of

all respondents coming from PSL said their formation does not turn for help to foreign experts. Another 30 per cent indicated it happened very rarely, while the remaining 20 per cent did not have an opinion. At the other end of the spectrum is PiS – eight out of 10 members of this party said they made substantial use of external experts on EU matters. This contradicts the common opinion that PiS is a rather hermetic group, distrustful toward other people and entities. Another party that is thought to exhibit a high degree of trust in external expertise is PO. In this case, 60 per cent of respondents claimed the party used the knowledge and experience of outside entities to an average or large extent. SLD came in a little lower on this particular scale – here, the analogous answers were given by four out of 10 party members.

In formulating and conducting their EU policies, the parties use most of all the competences and experience of their MEPs. Seventy six per cent of respondents declared that they do so to a large or very large extent. The other persons involved in the process are: leaders of parties' delegations in the EP (74.5 per cent of respondents gave the same answers as above), party leaders (69 per cent) and the members of European parties' governing bodies (56 per cent). The latter group is particularly influential in PiS (where seven out of 10 politicians claimed the competences of the members of European parties' governing bodies are used to a large or very large extent) and PO (where identical answers were given by six out of 10 politicians). A relatively wide group of respondents (41 per cent) claimed their parties could make better use of their MEPs' skills and contacts, while 35 per cent believed their party was acting appropriately in this respect. Again, some differences can be noted between the parties. PiS and SLD are the two parties which claim to make the most frequent use of their MEPs' experience and knowledge (nine out of 10 given answers were *'to a large'* or *'very large'* extent). Meanwhile, PSL turns to its MEPs far less often – only three out of 10 members said their party used their competences to a large or very large extent. Furthermore, the knowledge and experience of party delegations to the EP is also largely unused. The most common answers in this respect were that they were employed rarely or sometimes.

When asked about the importance of MEPs within their parties, politicians pointed to several various relevant aspects. One is the MEPs' position and function in the internal party structures; another concerns personal criteria as relevant for executing their European mandates, and the issue of loyalty as a criterion for being selected as a candidate in EP elections. Opinions on the MEPs' position and importance were widely varied, and the differences do not seem to be correlated with any of the typical



independent variables such as party membership, age, sex or seniority within the party. As this was an open question, I grouped the answers into several categories. The largest group of respondents (62.5 per cent) believed the importance of holding an EP seat was perceived within their party as substantial, while 12.5 per cent stated it was average, and every fourth politician declared that it was of minor importance. Twenty-five per cent of respondents claimed personal criteria were most relevant to assessing the importance of being an MEP for particular individuals (*'for young politicians it is a chance to advance their careers and obtain a high income'*; *'it is a realisation of personal plans for the development of a political career'*; *'the importance of MEPs for national politics is insignificant, but for some individuals the fact of holding such a function may be crucial'*). Approximately 20 per cent of respondents pointed to loyalty as an important criterion for selecting party members to run for EP seats (*'it is a reward for loyalty to the party and its leader'*; *'it is a way of rewarding someone for their engagement on the national level'*; *'an EP mandate can only be entrusted to a loyal party member with close ties to the leader'*). As the research sample was relatively small (some respondents did not answer open questions), one should be careful in drawing firm conclusions from this part of the survey. It can be said that loyalty was mentioned most often by politicians of SLD and PiS, while people associated with SLD and PO pointed to the fact that MEPs are often excluded from the decision-making process at the national level.

Respondents were also asked about the shaping of electoral agendas and the involvement of specific internal bodies and groups in this process. The data collected on this subject is presented in Table 3 below.

As can be seen, the respondents' assessment of the impact of specific groups within the party depends on whether the agenda is being prepared for a national or European election. Not surprisingly, the biggest difference occurs in the assessments of MEPs. Their input during the shaping the EU-related agenda is considered as substantial or very substantial by 66 per cent of politicians from all examined parties, which makes them the second most influential group in this respect, after party leaders and their close associates, who in turn are slightly more important for the shaping of national agendas than those for EP elections. However, the difference between the two fields is fairly insignificant and this, combined with their great degree of influence, points to a progressing centralisation of decision-making processes in Polish political parties.

**Table 3. The level of influence of various internal bodies and groups on shaping electoral agendas (collective results for PO, PiS, SLD and PSL)**

Bodies and groups	Significant or very significant influence on shaping the party's agenda:	
	in national elections	in EP elections
External experts	40.5%	55.3%
Leaders and their closest associates	100%	91.4%
Parliamentary group	53.1%	29.8%
MEPs	23.3%	65.9%
Governing bodies of parties at the national level	48.9%	41.3%
Special working groups / programme committees	74.4%	57.4%
Organs responsible for introducing internal regulations	48.9%	25.5%
Governing bodies at the regional level	23.4%	10.6%
Basic units of local party organisation	6.3%	8.5%
European parties	no answer	29.8%

Source: Author's own research.

In analysing the responses collected during the research, one may (albeit cautiously) draw the conclusion that parties tend to professionalise the process of creating their European agendas a little more than it is the case with respect to their programmes prepared for national or regional elections. This is reflected in the broader involvement of external experts, as well as the more limited influence of regional bodies and entities responsible for internal party regulations. Preparations for EP elections are also less likely to involve the establishment of special working groups or programme committees – this suggests that a large portion of work on the agenda is assigned to the persons serving as the party's MEPs at the time. The broader involvement of external experts and lesser impact of domestic political circles can be explained by the concept of 'second-order elections', according to which both voters and parties consider EP elections as less important.<sup>24</sup>

While MEPs can offer support to their parties with their additional competences, on some occasions they can become a source of organisational

<sup>24</sup> K. Reif and H. Schmitt, *Nine Second-Order National Elections. A Conceptual Framework for Analysis of European Elections Results*, "European Journal of Political Research", No. 8/1980; J.R. Koepke and N. Ringe, *The Second-Order Election Model in an Enlarged Europe*, "European Union Politics", No. 7(3)/2006.

challenges. One reason for this lies in their multilevel membership status – they are simultaneously members of national parties and European parties. Being subjected to socialisation and Europeanization, they can develop views and opinions noticeably different from those officially adopted by their parent parties. Sometimes, their involvement in the daily work of the EP and maintenance of good relations with their national party can even become mutually exclusive. Such conflicts basically have two solutions: either an MEP accepts the national party's position, thus confirming that party loyalty trumps the European mandate he or she is exercising, or attempts to approach other groups and form new political connections, most likely at the expense of loyalty to his or her parent party.<sup>25</sup> Some MEPs have gone so far as to engage in open conflicts with their national formations and, ultimately, left them (either on their own, or as a result of expulsion). In such situations they may change their European party affiliation or become independent MEPs. These rifts and departures originating from the European Parliament can be perceived as a specific manifestation of the Europeanization of parties' structural-organisational dimension. They have been experienced by three of the four parties analysed here (PSL during the 2004–2009 term of office, as well as PiS and SLD during the 2009–2014 term of office).<sup>26</sup>

However, while serving in the EP can cause conflicts and problems for parties, the supranational venue can also provide a party with a way of maintaining an internal organisational equilibrium. Even though in most cases Polish parties perceive EP mandates as a way of recognising their members' contribution by rewarding them with prestigious positions, one cannot exclude the possibility of a completely opposite approach. Politicians considered *enfant terrible* (or otherwise viewed as a risk to a party's image and unity) may be placed as candidates in EP elections with the hope that, if elected, they will be temporarily or permanently removed from national politics. This seems to be confirmed by the opinions offered by some of the respondents: approximately 20 per cent stated that obtaining a seat in the EP means exclusion from the party's decision-making process ('it is a way of being sidelined on good terms', 'a political retirement', 'supposedly, it is a reward, but, in fact, it is often a way of getting inconvenient people out of the country', 'a political exile').

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<sup>25</sup> W. Beauvallet, *Institutionnalisation et professionnalisation de l'Europe politique, le cas des eurodéputés français*, "Politique européenne", No. 1/2003, pp. 116–117.

<sup>26</sup> I have purposefully omitted the case of Paweł Piskorski, who, while acting as an MEP, was expelled from PO, as well as rifts that occurred within the League of Polish Families (Liga Polskich Rodzin) and Self-Defence (Samoobrona) parties.

### **3. Europeanization of Polish parties in terms of their political agendas**

Typically, a political agenda is announced upon the establishment of a given party, and then is adapted to the ongoing changes in the social and political environment, or to reflect ideological shifts occurring within the party. In an electoral democracy, almost every parliamentary election spurs political formations to publish their manifestos. These either constitute shortened versions of parties' full agendas, or are loosely connected to the party's general programme but put special emphasis on selected issues in the current political debate. By comparing the electoral agendas of the parties examined in the research, we can answer several questions: To what extent are they similar? Do they refer to the same subjects? Are there more similarities between the agendas prepared by various parties for the same election, or rather between agendas of the same party announced over the course of the entire decade? Since the research presented in this paper is devoted to the phenomenon of Europeanization, the analysis presented below is focused on those parts of party agendas that refer to EU-related matters.

The Europeanization of Polish political parties with regard to their agendas is here defined as the inclusion of issues related to European integration into the party's debates and positions. It is important to note that this 'Europeanization' does not imply an affirmative attitude toward the EU. Eurosceptic formations can (and frequently do) have programmes that are more Europeanized (albeit opposing (further) European integration) than those of parties supporting integration. In this analysis I chose to focus only on the manifestos prepared before national parliamentary elections, and omit those published before local, presidential and European elections. It is worthwhile explaining the reasons for this decision.

Although linking presidential candidates to a specific party supporting them would not be difficult, agendas championed by individuals should not be treated as necessarily identical to those proposed by their parent formations. Hence, they should not be used to measure the extent of Europeanization exhibited by parties. The reason for excluding local elections is different. In local campaigns in Poland, EU-related issues are usually touched upon only the context of EU funding – the need to secure money available from structural funds. This means that insofar as European matters are concerned, the manifestoes for local elections are most likely to be limited to proposing plans for distributing EU funds among particular units of regional and local self-government. Therefore it is hard to discern any relevant ideological differences between the various party formations. Besides, as local elections are less dominated by

national political parties, one may encounter substantial problems when trying to link each local candidates' committee with a specific party – not least because in some cases their tactics are based on deliberately hiding their political affiliation.

On its face, perhaps the most surprising omission is the decision not to analyse the manifestoes prepared before European Parliamentary elections. However, it can be seen that their quantitative analysis is unlikely to reveal anything meaningful as, by definition, they are focused on European issues: the future and major problems of the EU, its desirable model, as well as positive and negative implications of membership.

This decision was also dictated by the responses to the research survey carried out among the members of the examined parties. In their opinion, European issues are most important for electoral agendas (as well as parties' internal debate and media releases) which are prepared for national parliamentary election – 85 per cent of respondents declared EU-related matters held an important or very important place in national electoral programmes. Sixty-seven per cent gave the same answers with respect to presidential elections, while 61 per cent so answered with respect to all sorts of media releases. In comparison, European issues were considered far less vital in local and regional elections (39 per cent of respondents specified their significance as average). The subject of the EU was said to be considered the least in the internal party discourse or during party conventions. Every third respondent assessed its importance in the internal debate of the party as low, very low, or even negligible. The respondent politicians were also asked to what extent the significance of European issues has changed over the course of the last decade. In their opinion, the biggest increase in significance has occurred in the agendas prepared by parties for national parliamentary elections, as well as in media releases (respectively, 85 and 77 per cent of respondents answered that the importance of EU issues increased moderately or significantly). As for other types of agendas, most politicians claimed that European problems have not grown in importance, or have done so only to a very limited extent. It should be noted that there were no answers indicating that the importance of EU issues has decreased.

As for the differences between particular parties, the responses indicate that European issues are viewed most seriously within SLD and PO. In striking contrast, PSL appears to be almost completely indifferent to this subject. The vital importance attributed to Europe in the agendas of SLD and PO seems to confirm the common hypothesis<sup>27</sup> that parties which are

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<sup>27</sup> K. Benoit and M. Laver, *Party Policy in Modern Democracies, Expert survey scores of policy positions of political parties in 47 countries, 2004–2005*, [http://www.tcd.ie/Political\\_Sci](http://www.tcd.ie/Political_Sci)

perceived by the public and experts as pro-European tend to pay more attention to the Union and its issues in their agendas. The evolution of the EU's importance for party programmes is also viewed as most dynamic by the respondents from the same two parties. In PO, 60 per cent politicians believed the Union has become significantly more vital for the agendas prepared before the national parliamentary election, and 50 per cent thought it has grown in significance in media releases, while only 20 per cent answered that it has become more important for local and regional elections as well as in the internal discourse of the party. In SLD, 80 per cent politicians said the EU has been growing in importance in the agendas prepared for national parliamentary elections, while 40 per cent gave analogous answers with respect to presidential elections and 20 per cent with regard to local and regional elections.

As far as party agendas are concerned, the scope of Europeanization has been dynamically changing over the course of the last decade. The table below presents the results of qualitative<sup>28</sup> and quantitative analysis<sup>29</sup> of agendas prepared by the four parties in question (or the coalitions they were part of) before four consecutive national parliamentary elections.

In this analysis PiS emerges as the party which has maintained the most constant level of interest in European issues. Since its formation in 2001, it has consistently placed average importance on EU-related subjects in its agendas prepared for the parliamentary elections. Before the first two elections considered above, PO's manifestos had been Europeanized only to a very limited extent. The party's strategy significantly changed afterwards, and in the two subsequent elections it included European policy in its internal discourse. This was clearly visible in the amount of EU-related content that found its way into the electoral agenda – both in a chapter specifically devoted to the subject, as well as in references placed within other areas of PO's political programme. In the case of SLD, all three agendas prepared for elections after 2004 (when Poland acceded to the EU) exhibit a high degree of Europeanization, both in terms of the amount of content and the way the subject is discussed. In the latter aspect, the manifestos contain numerous references to

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ence/ppmd/PPMD\_11apr2006.pdf; *Public Opinion, Party Competition and the European Union in Post-Communist Europe*, R. Rohrschneider and S. Whitefield (eds.), Houndmills, Basingstoke 2006; J.-M. De Waele and A. Paczeński, *The Europeanisation of Poland's political parties and party system in: Europeanisation and Party Politics. How the EU affects domestic actors, patterns and systems*, E. Kūlahci (ed.), Colchester, UK 2012, pp. 125–144.

<sup>28</sup> Research conducted in the General Polish Electoral Study (PGSW – Polskie Generalne Studium Wyborcze) project.

<sup>29</sup> Quantitative analysis of electoral manifestos.

EU policies, directives and the consequences of their implementation for national policies. Meanwhile, the example of PSL shows that the amount of EU-related content in party agendas has both increased and decreased. In terms of its agenda, PSL reversed the pattern observed in case of PO. The two earlier electoral programmes were relatively rich in EU-related material, while the two most recent ones were Europeanized only to a minimal extent.

**Table 4. Dynamics of Europeanization with respect to political agendas**

Party	High degree of Europeanization	Average degree of Europeanization	Low degree of Europeanization
Agendas for the 2001 election			
PiS			
PO			
SLD			
PSL			
Agendas for the 2005 election			
PiS			
PO			
SLD			
PSL			
Agendas for the 2007 election			
PiS			
PO			
SLD			
PSL			
Agendas for the 2011 election			
PiS			
PO			
SLD			
PSL			

Source: Author's own research.

The quantitative and qualitative analysis of electoral agendas presented by Polish political parties disproves the commonplace assumption that the intensity of Europeanization correlates with a party's positive attitude toward European integration. Although the pro-EU SLD emerged as the formation with the most Europeanized programme, the same pattern was absent in the case of PO – another party that has been clearly in favour of European integration. Meanwhile, the *euro-realism* of PiS (as the party members refer to their own approach) did not result in a low degree of Europeanization in its electoral agendas. The case of PSL also shows that a shift from ambivalent to affirmative attitudes toward European issues does not always lead to increased intensity of Europeanization. In this specific case, the correlation was exactly the opposite: even though PSL

became more supportive of European integration, its agendas were increasingly devoid of references to this subject. This could be explained by the fact that it was a minority party in a governing coalition (PO-PSL) that was clearly pro-European.

#### **4. The impact of the transnational environment on the Europeanization of party culture**

The within analysis of the cultural dimension of Europeanization is based on a specific understanding of this phenomenon. For the purposes of this research I have approached Europeanization as a process which includes socialisation mechanisms. Political socialisation in the transnational and international environment is something that affects both parties as organisations and their members as individuals (especially party leaders and members responsible for transnational co-operation). As cross-border interdependencies deepen and various party ‘families’ (gathered together, for instance, in European parties) face the need to agree on common positions with respect to numerous issues, both parties as organisations and their leaders as individuals experience intensified relations with their peers and colleagues across Europe. During the pre-accession period, the same socialisation mechanism applied to some national parliamentary deputies (for example those sitting on commissions dealing with European matters) and members of governments who negotiated the conditions of accession. Following a country’s accession to the Union, this group broadened to include newly elected MEPs. Hence, it is clear that although socialisation begins long before a given state joins the EU, in the pre-accession period it is limited to party and government elites. It is only after a new member state holds its first European Parliament election and national parties achieve representation in the supranational EP that the process accelerates substantially in both pace and scope.

When examining the Europeanization of national political parties, I focused less on the socialisation of MEPs themselves than on their (potential) influence on their colleagues and the organisational structures of their parties. In this sense, MEPs are treated as links between the European actors and national party circles. When one looks at the work schedule of the EP it turns out that, *in theory*, MEPs can only spend approximately 25 days a year working in their own constituencies. The rest of their time should be spent in working in their EP committees or in plenary sessions, meetings within political groups, or representing the EP as members of international delegations. However, in the case of a number of Polish MEPs, this is clearly just a theoretical sketch. Many of them spend much



more time in Poland – a fact reflected by how often they appear in national media (and not while being interviewed in Brussels or Strasbourg), and how much they engage in national electoral campaigns or the internal affairs of their parties.

The relations between a political party formation and its representatives in the EP are regulated by several factors, which determine their potential influence on the organisational culture and opinions presented by the party. These factors include politicians' positions within the internal party structure and their importance in the EP, as expressed in any of a number of functions they may be entrusted with. An excellent example of this is the case of Janusz Onyszkiewicz, who for two and a half years acted as a Vice-President of the European Parliament (representing ALDE) and subsequently worked as a Vice-Chair of one of the most prestigious committees in the EP.<sup>30</sup> Simultaneously, in March 2006 he was elected Chairman of the Democratic Party in Poland. It is therefore hardly surprising that European issues were crucial to his domestic party's political agenda, and his contacts with the leadership of his political group in the EP were perceived as exemplary.<sup>31</sup> However, the four parties analysed in my research had no representatives in the EP that were this high in the internal party structure. This is easily understandable, as the research encompassed party formations that have been playing major roles on the national political scene. It would be impossible for leaders of such parties to reconcile their leadership in the party with the duties of an MEP.<sup>32</sup> This does not mean that none of the PO, PiS, SLD or PSL MEPs have held high positions in the internal structures of their parties (for instance, sitting on their party's governing bodies). Polish MEPs have also been chosen for vital functions on the supranational venue, working on the EP Bureau or as Chairs and Vice-Chairs to the committees. They have also been positioned highly in the structures of their respective European parties.

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<sup>30</sup> Committee on Foreign Affairs.

<sup>31</sup> Such opinion was stated on numerous occasions by the leadership of ELDR/ALDE during the implementation of a project funded by the European Parliament, of which I was the national co-ordinator from 2011 to 2013. See: *The Liberal Parties in Central and Eastern Europe: Weaknesses and Potential*, B. Cholova and J.-M. De Waele (eds.), Bruxelles 2013, [http://pasos.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/05/ALDE\\_Book\\_2013.pdf](http://pasos.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/05/ALDE_Book_2013.pdf) (last visited 09.08.2013).

<sup>32</sup> One exception is Janusz Wojciechowski, who, for half a year acted simultaneously as an MEP and a Vice-Chairman of PSL. In January 2005, he resigned from the latter function after PSL rejected the offer of forming a coalition with ZChN and the candidates' committee 'Zgoda'. In February 2006, he changed his affiliation in the EP and joined the Union for a Europe of the Nations, without obtaining permission from his national party. For this, he was expelled from the ranks of PSL.

It is difficult to discern, much less empirically measure<sup>33</sup>, the impact of MEPs on their national political party formations. It seems that in order to balance the need to formulate objective, measurable typologies and the need to present the examined phenomenon accurately, one needs to resort to interpretation. Therefore, I developed my analysis concerning how MEPs influence the organisational and political culture in Polish parties based on interviews with selected members of parties' leadership and the MEPs themselves. The key goal of the interviews was to gather the opinions of people engaged in the organisation of their party's structures, so as to learn their point of view on the position and impact of MEPs on the internal functioning of their parties.

None of the interviewees stated outright that after being elected to the EP they decided to loosen their ties with the national parties that put them forward as candidates. To the contrary, some politicians who had previously not been affiliated to these party formations decided to join them.

For their part, the MEPs spoke more about experiences, observations and good practices they would like to transfer to their national parties and the national parliament than about their impact on national party structures. Several interviewees stated that the extent of influence one exerts on his or her party depends most of all on his or her prior activities and position(s) within the party, relations with the leader and his close associates, as well as on knowledge and having a go-getting attitude that the party can benefit from. The fact of being an MEP is in itself far less relevant.

Both MEPs and national deputies mentioned numerous differences between how politics works in Poland and in the EP. They perceived these differences as factors limiting the possibility of transferring customs, norms and behaviours between the two environments. While national politics are dominated by attitudes of confrontation, the prevalent approach in the EP is co-operation. Still, the interviewees did not question the fact that MEPs can influence the organisational culture of their national parties. Neither did they deny that some norms and behaviours commonly accepted at the European level could also be adopted in Polish political life. However, most of them said that the impact of MEPs on the Europeanization of national parties was a relatively slow process and that a lot of time was required to bring about significant results.

As indicated by the responses of interviewees, as well as media releases referring to parties' organisational culture, the Europeanization of Polish parties in this aspect is relatively low. Even if the transfer of cultural norms

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<sup>33</sup> R. Corbett, *The European Parliament's Role in Closer EU Integration*, London 1998, p. 73.

from the EU to national level does occur, it affects specific individuals who undergo socialisation in the transnational environment rather than entire party organisations. The impact of European parties and political groups in the EP is limited to the behaviours, declarations and positions presented by Polish parties at the European level. It should be noted that this process does not proceed at equal pace in all parties. Institutional norms (both formal and informal) are adopted faster by large political parties (EPP in the case of PO, and PES in the case of SLD). Meanwhile, the influence of Christian democrats and EPP on PSL is described by the party's members as superficial and insignificant. As for PiS, the intensity of its cultural Europeanization is moderate. On one hand party members declare their understanding of the rules and norms adopted at the EU level, while on the other hand they maintain it is impossible to transfer these norms to the national political scene. It is difficult to determine whether such view is a result of the fact that PiS members exercise their MEP mandates in a specific European party, or rather of PiS's overall sceptical attitude toward European integration. It is also possible it stems from some other factors I have omitted when conceptualising the research.

## Conclusions

The research conducted resulted in several general conclusions. First of all, the Europeanization of Polish political parties does not constitute a substantial, qualitative change in any of the three aspects considered in this paper. As a result of European integration, Polish political formations have found themselves in a situation that requires creating a new level of structures and adding a new area to their political agendas. This, however, has not disturbed their party structures as a whole, decision-making mechanisms, or the internal balance of power within particular parties. As it turns out, the traditional party structure is not easily eroded, and any evolutionary changes that may have occurred over the past few years have been fairly superficial, albeit probably permanent. Such a conclusion is very significant, as it forces us to reconsider the concept of Europeanization and its usefulness in examining national political parties. An inherent caution and reluctance to form definitive answers prevents me from rejecting altogether the relevance of Europeanization to party organisations. However, my earlier convictions as to the impact it may have on national parties withered somewhat upon examining the results of the empirical research.

These conclusions provide a stimulus to choose a new area of exploration. The research on how national political parties change when

subjected to the influence of the evolving European reality should, in my opinion, now be focused on finding other factors that either streamline or slow down the process of Europeanization. Another important question is: what makes the extent of Europeanization in various parties so different? As it seems that the party's attitude toward European integration, its choice of a specific European party federation, and the resulting transnational socialisation have only a limited impact, what other elements can explain the divergence? Is it a matter of the motivation that party elites have due to the internal situation in a given country? Perhaps the decisive factor lies in the organisational model adopted by a given party, or its relations with the electorate and rank-and-file members? The position held on the national political scene may also prove vital. In any case, it seems that these questions, along with many others, deserve thorough examination in future research.