

The Impact of the European Union on Party Politics in Central and Eastern Europe**ZSOLT ENYEDI AND PAUL G. LEWIS**

The chapters included in this volume have covered a wide ground, from the place of parties in the accession referendums to the strategies followed by parties in the 2004 EP elections. In this concluding chapter we return to the themes and questions raised in Chapter 1 and discuss those aspects of the parties and party systems on which the EU and processes of European integration, in the light of our theoretical expectations and the country chapters, have exercised or should have exercised, the most decisive impact. We then focus on four areas: changes in the fundamental characteristics of the party systems, the ideological transformation of parties and the role of European party federations in this process, the place of Euroscepticism in electoral competition, and the degree to which EU-related attitudes have received effective representation. In terms of general conclusions and answers to the broad questions raised in Chapter 1 it seems that there has been little *direct* impact of the EU on the party systems of the new member states. The format of the party systems have been hardly affected, similarly to Western Europe (cf. Mair, 2000). Integration proved to be, however, somewhat more consequential for the mechanics of party systems. As with Marks and Wilson (2000), it may be concluded that ‘Europe’ has exerted an influence that is both pervasive and quite profound – but by no means direct. With respect to the overall outcomes of EU involvement, too, there is little sign that ‘populists and demagogues’ (Grzymała-Busse and Innes, 2003) have been significantly encouraged or that predictions of major instability have been borne out. There was, indeed,

pervasive governmental fallout throughout the region after the EP elections of 2004 – but it may be questioned, firstly, how far party or government unpopularity was linked with EU issues and, secondly, how negative the political repercussions actually were. The Czech government did, indeed, fall soon after the elections – but, as pointed out in Chapter 2, a new government was soon formed by the same parties and with most of the same ministers. In Hungary the EP elections also led to the replacement of the prime minister and to conflict within the major governing party – but, as argued in Chapter 4, this might well produce the conditions for long-term government durability rather than presage persistent instability. Broad populist parties and apparently extremist forces generally turned out to be quite restrained in their final response to EU accession and were often receptive to the political opportunities offered by EU membership. It may well be that it is the immediate pre-accession period that provides the greatest opportunities for anti-EU forces – it was the 2001 elections that saw the rise of clearly Eurosceptic parties in Poland and those in Bulgaria during 2005 that saw the rise of the *Ataka* coalition described in Chapter 10. These may also be cases of the ‘anticipated representation’ discussed later in this chapter. But in general anti-EU parties have, as suggested in Chapter 1, tended to cluster on the margins of the party system or, if they have persisted and continued to show serious political ambitions, moderated their outlook and moved towards the political centre. Neither does it seem to be the case that EU accession for the CEE countries has coincided with or caused any general crisis of their party systems (Ágh, 2005). From the evidence of the post-accession elections there were indeed major shocks in Lithuania, with the eruption of the Labour Party, and in Slovenia, with the success of the Democratic Party and the relative failure of the Liberal Democracy. But neither of these developments could be readily linked with any EU influence (Chapters 6 and 9). The Labour Party (together with the Liberal Democrats and Agrarians in the same country) was one in a series of new Baltic parties to threaten the status quo, while Slovenia’s Liberal Democracy had finally come to the end of a long period of political supremacy. The Polish elections of 2005 did indeed bring further elements of instability into play (Chapter 7), but this was hardly a novelty in the

Polish context and was more occasioned by the near-total collapse of the political left in the domestic context than by any direct EU influence. Most chapters in this book, indeed, draw the explicit conclusion that the EU has so far had little direct influence on national party politics and that enlargement has equally had little direct political impact. But this is by no means the whole story, and there is a range of other ways in which the extent of EU influence on CEE party politics can be gauged. The first of these concerns the overall shape and composition of the national party system.

THE CHANGING BOUNDARIES AND STRUCTURES OF PARTY SYSTEMS

As anticipated (Lewis, 2005, p. 196), European integration has generally acted to constrain coalition alternatives more in Central and Eastern Europe than in the West. This has mostly happened through the censure and marginalization of the more radical parties. Mainstream parties are obviously not keen on cooperating with extremist parties anyway. But in some cases domestic logic would probably have led them to consider maintaining or forging closer links with particular parties (Greater Romania, MIÉP in Hungary, HZDS in Slovakia) if the international environment, most obviously the EU, had not made such considerations unfeasible. The gradual strengthening of EU impact is detectable throughout the 1990s in this respect, as radical parties initially participated in the Slovakian and Romanian governments but were later gradually squeezed out of the government arena. The Slovakian case is undoubtedly the most spectacular since, as Vachudova (2005, p.170) points out, the EU used its leverage 'very directly and deliberately to change...policies and to dislodge [the HZDS coalition] from power'.

Cooperation with the EU constrains the policy realm as well. Mainstream parties, particularly those in government, have little opportunity to exploit the political attractions of economic populism. For leftist parties such European, and, surely, global, economic pressures have indeed presented a major challenge. Virtually all have moved to the centre in terms of policy and in consequence experienced serious internal tensions in this respect. The decline in their public support in the Czech Republic, Slovakia, Lithuania, Slovenia and,

more recently, in Poland and Romania as well, may be partly explained by the fact that they became unable to present themselves as credible representatives of the lower classes. It is not accidental that in recent years a new, leftist-populist group of parties has appeared (*Smer*, Self-Defence, the Communist Party of Slovakia, Lithuanian Labour) in a process that parallels the social democratization of the major leftist parties. The position of the extremist parties themselves in CEE party systems has also undergone some change. Although radical nationalist forces have strengthened in Bulgaria and Poland in recent years, the moderation or decline of radical forces has been a more typical trend in the region as a whole. Two large parties, the Slovak HZDS and Romanian PRM, changed their position on a number of sensitive issues and began to present themselves as mainstream, EU-compatible parties. The Hungarian MIÉP, the Slovak SNS and the Czech Republicans (SPR-RSČ) have all weakened. In general, many parties have toned down their nationalism and became more tolerant of minorities, a process that has had particular significance in the Baltic states. But it is also noteworthy that some parties, like MIÉP, have kept their original nationalist orientation. The process of European integration increasingly separates those parties that have a genuine commitment to radical principles from actors that are better described as populist-opportunist parties. It is difficult to detect any robust EU impact on the consolidation or destabilization of party systems. In Poland, Slovakia, Lithuania, Bulgaria and Latvia there seems to be more fluidity and higher fragmentation now than during the 1990s, and even the role of personalities in these countries seems to have increased recently to the detriment of programmatic parties. This can be regarded as a tendency at least partly reinforced by the EP elections (Hrbek, 2005, p. 20). On the other hand, Hungary and the Czech Republic have fewer and more firmly entrenched parties than before, while no clear trend is observable in the case of Romania, Estonia, and Slovenia. Consequently, one cannot speak of any unidirectional impact, at least in the short run. This does not mean, however, that in particular contexts European integration has not contributed to change in the degree of structure and stability. The EP elections brought down

a number of governments¹, recruitment to European structures caused a considerable brain-drain from the CEE political elite², and the focus on the legal changes required by the EU has favoured administrative elites at the expense of party politicians. These developments have had a negative impact on the institutionalization of CEE party systems. But a number of established parties have benefited from the extra information provided by the EP elections, and the transfer of politicians to the European level has often helped parties to solve problems of succession (see discussion of Hungary in Chapter 4). Finally, the moderation and/or decline of extremist parties has definitely helped the consolidation of democratic party politics in some countries. The road to accession and the participation in the consensual decision-making mechanisms of the European Union has not led to substantially less polarized domestic politics, but it has engendered more amicable relations in some instances. Politicians and parties who would otherwise not talk to each other came up with agreed declarations and legislative proposals related to the accession process. In some countries (notably the Czech Republic, Slovakia and, to some extent, Hungary) coalition formulae were facilitated by a correspondence in parties' attitudes towards the EU. Agreement on accession probably contributed also to the rapprochement of NDSV and the BSP in Bulgaria. But in other instances of declining polarization (like Lithuania) it was rather the success of new centrist parties with fuzzy ideologies than the EU-induced convergence of established parties that was the decisive factor.

One potential negative impact on the institutionalization of party politics may emerge from the demobilization that characterized the EP elections. The mean average turnout in the new CEE member states was 31.2 per cent, less than half the turnout at parliamentary elections (see Auers, 2005, p. 750). The Euro-gap, that is, the difference between the turnout in national and EU elections, is larger in CEE than in the West. There is the danger that the experience of these low turnout elections will (further) socialize the CEE electorate into non-participation. This inference is supported by the record low turnout in the elections (parliamentary elections in Slovenia, Lithuania and Poland, and the Slovakian local

elections) that followed the EP elections.

In no case have relations between parties radically changed because of diverging views on the EU. But in Slovakia attitudes towards integration deepened the original central divide in the party system, and in the Czech Republic the split on the right wing of the party spectrum and the collaboration of centre-right and leftist parties has been partly based on different views of European unification.

As already pointed out, the most robust impact of the EU on the new accession countries is detectable in Slovakia (see Chapter 8 and Harris, 2004). Coalition alternatives there, the ideological orientation of the largest party, and even electoral results seem to have been shaped by EU policies. Slovakia can be seen as a vulnerable small country with ambitions of EU membership but whose political structures fell short of EU criteria. Romania also comes close to exemplifying this type. The question is then why EU influence has led to more robust changes in the Slovakian case than in that of Romania. The answer seems to lie in the timing of the encounter with the accession process. The EU required the Mečiar-led HZDS to change in face of the possibility of immediate accession, but by the time HZDS was ready to reprofile itself it was too late. By way of contrast, the Iliescu-led Social Democrats in Romania have had more time to transform themselves and were given further incentives to do so by the timing of critical elections.

STANDARDIZATION OF PARTY IDEOLOGIES AND DOMESTIC ROLE OF THE EUROPARTIES

European integration was expected to hasten the decline of idiosyncratic party ideologies and consolidate the dominance of standard European party families (Enyedi, 2005). Analysis of the CEE countries shows that this expectation, with some notable exceptions, has been met. Because of the amorphous ideology of many CEE parties, and because of their competition for Western sponsorship, the Europarties can exert a larger impact on their political

orientation. Parties increasingly orient themselves towards one of the standard European families. They have adopted the European symbols of their respective party families, and some of them have even changed their name to signify their compatibility with major European ideologies: the Estonian Moderates turned into Social Democrats, the Romanian Humanists became Conservatives, the Lithuanian Democratic Labour party turned into a Social Democratic Party, the right wing Slovenian Social Democrats eliminated the 'Social' from their name. Other parties added 'European' qualifiers to their name: the Hungarian Free Democrats became a 'Liberal Party', the Movement for a Democratic Slovakia and the Greater Romania Party added 'People's Party', while *Smer* adopted the title 'Social Democracy'. All these changes happened in the course of a few years, just before or right after accession.

These developments show the ambition of parties to fit smoothly into the European associations, but they do not provide evidence of ideological or behavioural change. One can, however, also find a considerable degree of genuine ideological borrowing going on, often bridging significant cultural and political gaps. Christian Democracy, originally a product of liberal Catholicism, is imitated in Orthodox countries, while social democracy, particularly in its Third Way variant, is copied by ex-communist parties. Other communist successor parties are on the road to absorbing the ideology of the European radical left, while the anti-immigrant arguments of the Western radical right are sometimes even used by the extreme right of those CEE countries where there is virtually no immigration. The big players that set the standards – the Christian Democrat, Socialist and Liberal federations – were active, of course, well before the accession of the CEE states, but membership strengthened cooperation.

On the basis of individual party profiles, it seems that Slovenia, Hungary, the Czech Republic, Poland and Lithuania have the most 'standardized' or 'Europeanized' socialist parties in organizational and ideological terms. In Estonia, Latvia and Romania it is the Liberals that are the closest to their European counterparts. In Slovakia the Christian Democrats are the most embedded in the European ideological and organizational structures,

with the important difference that here the liberal and the Christian elements of Western Christian Democracy have been organized into two different parties.³ There still exist a number of major 'non-standard' parties, particularly in Slovakia (HZDS), Poland (Self-Defence, LPR) and Lithuania (Labour, Liberal Democrats). The gradual convergence towards European patterns is, too, often upset by the appearance of new parties with vague, typically populist profiles.

Which European federation (Europarty) is joined depends partly on the respective party's ideological profile, partly on the domestic relations among parties (see below), but partly also on which Europarty is more in need of a local partner. When a Europarty does not have a local member, a vacuum emerges in the national political system that may even suck in parties that are already members of other European party federations. When the Christian Democrats fell out of the Romanian parliament three major national parties, the Liberals, Democrats and Humanists, began to gravitate towards the European People's Party. The strength of the vacuum depends on the size of the Europarty and its ideological compatibility with local traditions. But even taking these factors into account, the current success of the EPP and the failure of the Greens is remarkable.

The relationship with the Europarties is not based exclusively on pragmatic principles. The Romanian Democrats have been following right wing economic policies for quite some time, and both Polish Law and Justice and ODS abandoned their relationship with EPP because of opposition to various European initiatives, including the Constitutional Treaty. The change in affiliation of Hungary's *Fidesz* did not precede its ideological transformation but followed it. KDU-ČSL left the European Democrats and joined the EPP on the basis of agreement with its European strategy. Ideological criteria often guide the policies of the Europarties as well. Many CEE parties have either not been accepted (like the Slovak HZDS) or have been expelled (like Hungary's KDNP) because their position was found to be at odds with the norms of the particular party family.

Early contacts with party federations placed some parties in an advantageous position. There have been cases when newcomers were rejected due to the efforts of their better entrenched

domestic rivals: the Bulgarian UDF obstructed the attempts of NDSV to join EPP, while the Slovak Social Democrats tried to block *Smer*'s application to join PES. The 'early birds' were able to act as gatekeepers, regulating the access of other parties to sources of Western legitimacy.

Acceptance by European party federations and the degree of influence within them is largely determined by domestic success. Weak parties are less appreciated even when they are already members. The European Socialists, for example, were more interested in keeping the Romanian Social Democrats in their ranks than the much smaller Democrats. Such minor parties may be unwilling to accept such secondary status and, as the example of the Democrats showed, may consequently switch their membership.

Parties inside the federations may use their influence to help allies in the domestic arena. This was the case in Bulgaria when the DPS (the Turkish party) helped NDSV (the Tsar's movement) join the liberal party family. Small parties that have a 'European' pedigree but lack domestic electoral support become attractive partners for political marriages, particularly in the eyes of large parties with a dubious background. The Social Democratic Party (SDSS) and the Party of the Democratic Left (SDL') in Slovakia, the Lithuanian Social Democratic Party (LSPD) and the Romanian Social Democratic Party (PSDR) were minuscule parties, and yet *Smer*, the Lithuanian Democratic Labour Party (LDDP) and the Romanian Party of Social Democracy (PDSR) were happy to fuse with them because this was the way for them to get into the Socialist federation (and underline their break with communist traditions).

Often, due to the fuzziness of the party's original profile, it was accidental which European federation or which EP faction it became a member of. The Lithuanian Liberal Democrats joined the EFA-DPPE faction, the group of regionalist and ethnic parties, although the party was neither regionalist nor ethnic and had certain nationalist tendencies. Many parties like the Agrarians, Labour and Liberal Democrats from Lithuania, Polish Self-Defence and LPR entered the race for the EP seats not knowing which grouping they would join. While in these cases further changes in international affiliations are likely, there are also instances

when membership of a Europarty has sharpened and consolidated an otherwise amorphous ideological profile (like the Slovenian Youth Party's membership of the Greens).

Being a member of the same European federation and the same EP faction has facilitated closer cooperation between parties in some countries (like the Reform Party and the Centrists in Estonia) but had no observable impact in others where inter-party relations have remained tense. This can be seen in Latvia in terms of relations between New Era and the People's Party, in Hungary with the relationship between *Fidesz* and Hungarian Democratic Forum, and in Lithuania with respect to relations between Labour and the Liberal and Centre Union, which have continued to remain tense.

The presence of Europarties in domestic campaigns is more visible than before, but rarely decisive from the point of view of domestic competition. European legitimacy cannot compensate for the lack of domestic support. In many instances parties that were already well entrenched in a European structure disappeared from the domestic scene. The European Greens have failed spectacularly to consolidate the position of their CEE allies – support for Green parties throughout the region declined throughout the accession process.

THE ROLE OF THE EUROPEAN ISSUE

It is possible to detect a slow process of differentiation across parties with regard to the 'European issue', that is attitudes towards the EU. While public Euroscepticism has increased somewhat during the last years, most of the parties that were against EU membership before accession (like the Slovenian National Party or the Hungarian Labour Party) do not now propose withdrawing. In that sense one can even talk about a general softening of party-based Euroscepticism.

There are only a few cases where attitudes towards the EU have led to significant internal tensions within parties. The Czech ODS and the Estonian Centre Party are exceptions in so far as one of the major reasons for internal conflicts and splits in these cases was the Euroscepticism of their leaders. As a result of such tensions there was even a party in the Czech Republic, the European Democrats, whose establishment was based on the attitude it

took towards the EU. If this party were to consolidate its position (which is unlikely), it would even be possible to speak about the change in the format of the party system as a result of European issues.

Analysis of CEE party systems shows that many parties have complex attitudes towards the EU. The dichotomies or even four-fold tables that are used in the literature to describe the positions of parties in this respect (Kopecky and Mudde, 2002; Taggart and Szcerbiak, 2001, 2004) have often proved to be simplistic. Even the parties that are typically classified as hard Eurosceptic have in fact shown more nuanced views, as the case of the Czech Communists has demonstrated. One of the difficulties of these classifications is that there are parties that are not so much anti-EU as non-EU compatible (like the Greater Romania Party or HZDS). Put differently there are parties which should, given their fundamental values, oppose the EU but do not do so. Obviously, all parties must face the fact that the region will be a net recipient of EU funds for a long time to come. It is logical, therefore, that many CEE nationalist parties (Slovenian National Party, For Fatherland and Freedom/Latvian National Independence Movement, Liberal Democratic Party of Lithuania, Fidesz, PiS and so on) typically shy away from direct opposition to the EU.

In most countries of the region it is still dangerous for a party to be labeled Eurosceptic or an EU non-conformist. Before the accession the accusation of an opponent that a party was endangering integration was (in the countries that have not joined yet, still is) a routinely used political weapon. In those situations where there was very high support for membership and while the country still met with serious obstacles to achieving it (like Romania, Slovakia or Bulgaria) it was very beneficial for parties (and particularly those in opposition) to present themselves as the most pro-European actors: it cost little and brought sympathy both from abroad and from the voters.

There are, however, parties that do not need to bother that much about the general climate of opinion. These are the sectoral parties, more specifically agrarian parties like PSL and Self-Defence in Poland, the Smallholders in Hungary, and the People's Union in Estonia, as well as communist parties like KSČM in the Czech Republic, the Workers' Party in Hungary and

KSS in Slovakia. At the other end of the spectrum there also exists a group of principled liberal Euroenthusiast parties, that is parties ready to support federalist ideas. But these parties (Free Democrats in Hungary, Latvia's Way, Freedom Union – now the Democratic Party – in Poland) are typically small and declining, although at the first EP elections they did relatively well.

In the 1990s the dimensions of Euroscepticism and authoritarianism largely coincided. This has now changed somewhat with the more critical position currently being taken by large mainstream parties like the Czech ODS, the Estonian *Res Publica* and Centrum, and, to some extent, the Hungarian *Fidesz*. The results of the Dutch and the French referendums showed that opposition to various aspects of integration is acceptable in Europe. The CEE public has gradually realized that to be against the EU does not equate with being against the West, and even less against democracy. The liberal policies followed by some of the most economically successful CEE countries (Estonia, Czech Republic, Slovakia) increasingly show the potential for a Euroscepticism based on economic liberalism, although it is only in the Czech Republic that this potential has developed into actual conflict.

The ascendance of tensions based on economic policy orientations does not mean, however, that anti-EU and authoritarian orientations have become completely decoupled. Support for integration at party level correlates with support for a free market economy, democratic transition and positive orientations to other countries just as it does at citizen level (Tverdova and Anderson, 2004). This ideological underpinning of attitudes towards the EU is, however, somewhat crosscut by the government-opposition divide. Opposition parties are often more critical, while those voters who support the government and are satisfied with its performance have more pro-EU attitudes.

But a new position also seems to have crystallized, that of a democratic but somewhat authoritarian EU-criticism. It is most common on the right, which even leads one to speak of a distinct type of party: the EU-compatible but critical ('Eurorealist'), somewhat nationalist and authoritarian right. PiS in Poland, *Fidesz* in Hungary, People's Union in Estonia, ODS in the Czech Republic, TB/LNNK in Latvia, the Liberal Democrats in Lithuania, KDH in

Slovakia and, to a lesser extent, *Pro Patria* in Estonia and the Nationalists in Slovenia all belong to this stream. Their authoritarianism lies within the limits of what is seen as acceptable by the pan-European elite. In the case of most of these parties both the acceptance of membership and a critical orientation to the EU follow from their strong commitment to national interests. They accept European integration but are at odds with the left-liberal cultural mainstream of the European Union. Many of these parties (ODS, *Fidesz*, *Pro Patria*) were keen on westernizing their country during the 1990s, but now often see the Western values they believed in being disregarded by the EU. In case of PiS, *Fidesz* and KDH the criticism is often launched from a traditionalist and Christian platform. It must be emphasized though, that in spite of the cultural debate they engage in with the EU, such parties define themselves as part of the European project, and some of them (like *Fidesz* and *Pro Patria*) may even call for more integration in particular areas.

While these parties may qualify as potential troublemakers from the EU perspective, they may in fact do it considerable service by absorbing the right-wing variant of Euroscepticism (although in the Polish case the absorption does not seem to work). It is partly thanks to them that hard anti-Europe positions continue to be located on the margins of party systems.

Due to the complexity of party positions, it is very difficult to rank the party systems in terms of the level Euroscepticism they embody. The Latvian, Lithuanian and Hungarian party systems have been the least penetrated by anti-EU parties, and Romania and Bulgaria have now also joined this group. Estonia, Slovenia and Slovakia belong to a second group, and in Estonia as many as three parties (*Res Publica*, People's Union and the Centre Party) show a willingness to incorporate Eurosceptic views into their rhetoric. A third group is formed by the Czech and Polish party systems, in which numerous and/or large parties (ODS, SPR-RSČ, KSČM, LPR, Self-Defence, PiS) express varying degrees of hostility towards aspects of the unification process. The most important observation that one can make of this range of countries is that there is no apparent systemic feature of the party systems, their political-institutional regimes or of public attitudes that would correlate with

it. The confidence of the majority of actors about their countries' acceptance to EU seems, nevertheless, to be a prerequisite for the emergence of such Euroscepticism.

In terms of the relationship between Euroscepticism and the left-right ideological continuum, the picture is very complex and embodies, moreover, a complexity different from that found in Western Europe. In the largest group of countries (Slovakia, Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland and, more recently, Estonia) Eurosceptic parties appear on both the right-wing nationalist (SNS, MIÉP, *Ataka*, LPR, to some extent ODS) and radical left (KSČM, Hungarian Labour Party, Association of Workers of Slovakia, Communist Party of Slovakia, Self-Defence) ends of the party spectrum. In the Baltic countries the little opposition there is to the EU mainly comes from organizations representing minorities and the agrarian population, although there also exists a weaker Euroscepticism based on liberalism. In the remaining countries the opposition comes mostly from the right wing of the party spectrum (Slovenia: National Party, New Party; Bulgaria: *Ataka*; Romania: PRM).

On average, and at party level (not at the level of voters!), it is right-wing Euroscepticism that seem to be more robust than that on the left. This conclusion may seem to contradict the recent findings of Garry Marks and his colleagues' (Marks et al. 2006), who report a positive correlation between left-right and pro-EU attitudes. Note, however, that by left-right they refer to economic policies, and a number of parties exist in the region that are right wing in all respect, save the attitudes on economy. Secondly, they give equal weight to all parties above three percent, while parties obviously affect the party systems to a different degree. Leftist Euroscepticism is mainly voiced by isolated communist parties, who lack coalition potential. The middle-sized Polish Eurosceptic parties that are often labeled left wing (Self-Defence and PSL) are in fact very far from belonging to the classical left, as seen in their international affiliations.⁴

We are in perfect agreement with previous research (Kopecky and Mudde 2002, Marks et al 2006, etc.) in finding the liberal party family, the members of which are either on the centre left or on centre right, the most positive about the integration. Compared to the West, however, Euroscepticism is less often coupled with libertarian attitudes or with socialist

concerns, and more typically linked with fears of the dominance of foreign businessmen and the purchase of land by foreigners. These concerns are voiced most emphatically by traditionalist right-wing parties (Slovenian National Party, MIÉP, *Fidesz*, ODS, LPR, PiS), and this gives party-based Euroscepticism a more traditionalist and nationalist face than in the West. The libertarian-authoritarian axis is in most CEE countries a prominent dimension of competition and Euroscepticism is located towards the authoritarian end of that dimension.

POLITICAL REPRESENTATION IN THE EUROPEAN UNION

The contrast of between popular and party-based attitudes towards the EU is indicative of the general quality of political representation in the region although – and this point cannot be emphasized enough – this involves an issue that has at best secondary relevance for voters. Taggart and Szczerbiak (2002) differentiate between four groups of countries: where Euroscepticism is (1) high or (2) low both in public and in the party system, and where there is a greater EU-sceptic orientation (3) in the elite or (4) in the public. The first group comprises Latvia, Estonia, Czech Republic and Poland, the second – Bulgaria, the third – Romania, Slovakia and Hungary, and the fourth – Slovenia and Lithuania⁵. Beichelt (2004) has also analyzed the correspondence between party and mass-based Euroscepticism, labelling the latter two, discrepant groups as ‘over’ and ‘under-mobilized’. His results differ sharply from Taggart and Szczerbiak’s, however. He includes Poland and the Czech Republic in the first group, Lithuania, Hungary, Slovenia and Bulgaria in the second, in the third are placed Slovakia and Romania, and in the fourth Estonia and Latvia.

Our assessment differs from both classifications. It is closer to Beichelt’s, but the Czech Republic appears to us more as a case of over-mobilization while in Slovenia Euroscepticism seems to be rather under-mobilized. Qualitative evaluation of party platforms and behaviour also indicate that party-based Euroscepticism in Slovakia and Romania is weaker than implied in Beichelt’s grouping.

Judging by the result of the referendums, about one fifth of the public was opposed to EU membership in the respective countries. Since typically less than 20 per cent of parliamentary deputies showed such an unequivocally negative attitude, Euroscepticism is under- rather than over-mobilized. From the point of view of electoral behaviour, this happens because Eurosceptic citizens are over-represented among non-voters. The Eurosceptic camp could not organize itself effectively (Taggart and Szcerbiak 2002), although the raw material was there in terms of the sheer number of sceptical attitudes. This case confirms (again), that what matters in politics is not the distribution of opinions, but their salience and intensity. Those who are more pro-EU are typically also more active and find the issue more relevant. In line with this, for pro-European parties the European issue is typically the most salient. Such discrepancies between elite and mass attitudes clearly undermine the quality of political representation. But accurate representation would be a double-edged sword for the relatively fragile CEE democracies. Since most of the anti-EU parties are also critical of liberal democracy, better representation would also mean parliaments more dominated by ant-democratic actors (see Chapter 7 on Poland).

The quality of representation can also be evaluated in relation to the European Parliament elections. The domestic balance of forces has been accurately mirrored in some EP elections but not in others. For example New Slovenia won the Slovenian, and the Moderates the Estonian EP elections, although both were marginal forces in their respective party systems. This divergence was evidently rooted in low turnout, and was directly shaped by the role of particular personalities and idiosyncratic events prior to the elections. In view of the role of such factors, there is little reason to expect the consolidation of EP party systems to be different from that of national party systems (as has happened to some extent in countries like Denmark and the UK). Only in the Czech Republic do we find actors who seem to exist only in the European and not in the national arena, where parties like SN/ED and *Nezavisli* received almost one fifth of the votes).

Given that citizens generally have an amorphous, though largely positive, orientation towards the EU, parties are free to occupy specific positions on the various issues. As

European integration is often perceived as an elite venture, it is surprising to find parties that are more critical towards the EU than their voters. The explanation may be that these parties tend to amplify their criticism of the EU in order to establish themselves as the most likely 'home' of voters who are likely soon to be disappointed with membership. In other words, one can speak of a phenomenon that could be called anticipated representation. This kind of long-term thinking can develop because of a lack of immediate pressure: voters rarely make their vote dependent on parties' exact position on integration.

In a few cases one also encounters blatant misrepresentation, that is, large discrepancies between the party's attitudes and those of its voters. The Czech ODS and Estonian *Res Publica* during its 2003 campaign are cases in point. But while *Res Publica* paid a high electoral price for its attitude, ODS continues to command the support of its base. When voters regard the European issue as secondary (which is typically the case), when the position on this issue is well integrated into the overall ideology of the party and when citizens are not worried about being excluded from the EU, they seem to be willing to tolerate the Eurosceptic rhetoric of party politicians.

CONCLUSIONS

Before summarizing our major conclusions, it must be emphasized that many of the phenomena visible today – only two years after the first CEE countries joined the European Union – may be short-lived while other, longer lasting consequences are not yet discernible. In general we must conclude that in CEE party politics the logic of national competition has overridden other logics, including that of the EU. But the integration process has still shaped party systems in numerous ways. Parties converge, though with significant exceptions, towards the classic European ideological patterns and are rapidly integrating with the European party federations. These European party federations, the Europarties, are the most crucial vehicles of standardization. The claim that parties can survive only if they fit into the party internationals (Ágh, 1998) proved to be too strong. But it is remarkable, and it shows the strength of the European Union, that even parties that have comfortable electoral support

at home, like HZDS, actively seek membership in a Europarty. The pressure seems to be the smallest in Poland, which may have something to do with the sheer size of the country.

The Polish example highlights the contradiction between two meanings of the term 'Europeanization'. On the one hand, Poland is the least 'Europeanized' among the analyzed countries, because a major segment of its party system rejects the ruling norms of European party politics. That is, the EU could not penetrate the Polish parties to the extent it could other party systems. On the other hand, the presence of Eurosceptic parties turns the EU into a more serious issue than it is in other party systems. In this sense 'Europe' is more present in Poland than anywhere else in the region. Note, however, that the same point could be demonstrated with the example of the UK: we are not talking here about some CEE peculiarity.

Coalition alternatives and policy options have generally been constrained by the integration process. CEE party systems have neither radicalized nor become more moderate on average, but this is a case where the average hides more than reveals. There have been prominent examples of parties moderating their position in order to become more electable and acceptable to government partners (Romania, Slovakia). But the tendency to moderation has been somewhat, though not completely, counterbalanced by instances of radical populist backlash (Poland, Slovakia, perhaps Bulgaria). The nature of the discontent also seems to be changing. Anti-minority nationalist populism turned, in some instances, into economic populism as integration progressed. The communist/anti-communist cleavage also seems to have lost ground, and ethnic parties now find themselves in a pivotal position. But evidence for the role of European integration in inducing these developments is often circumstantial and/or anecdotal. More research is necessary using process tracing and statistical methods but, given the nature of the issue at stake and the complex causality involved, one must treat structured narratives (like the chapters in this volume) as equally valid pieces of evidence.

The introductory chapter raised the question of whether the EU has strengthened or weakened the stability of CEE party systems. On the basis of the chapters presented here it is impossible to give an answer that would apply to all the party systems surveyed. The EP

elections injected extra volatility into the CEE party systems by suddenly elevating minor parties and triggering government reshuffles (see the examples of the Czech Republic, Poland, Hungary and Estonia). But only a few extra-parliamentary parties were able to use the EP contest to effect a political breakthrough. Many established parties used the EP elections as a ‘dress rehearsal for the national election: collecting information about the voters’ preferences and experimenting with new campaign techniques’ (Enyedi, 2005, p.6) and managed to improve their position. On the bases of such evidence the conclusion must be that European integration has neither consolidated nor destabilized the party systems.

There are many anticipated impacts that have not – or not yet – materialized: party relations have not become consensual, the European issue has not gained a central role in party competition, and there are few parties that have experienced serious tensions arising from attitudes to Europe. There are some indications in the new member states that the European issue is slowly turning from a valence issue into a positional issue. That is, differentiation between parties on various EU-related policy domains has somewhat increased although, one must hasten to add, integration is still largely a symbolic issue. And it could hardly be otherwise, given that the voters, with the exception of a few specific groups like the peasantry, have similar attitudes. In their case the degree of alienation from the national political systems also seems to be the best predictor of opposition to the EU.

The accession process has infused some degree of cooperation across the board, but there are few signs of an overall decline of polarization. There are probably more coalitional formulae possible today than before in CEE, but party competition has not become less aggressive. In order to make a definitive pronouncement about trends in polarization we would need longitudinal, comparable data on the position of the different parties. But questioning the democratic credentials of a competitor is a tactic still much used in electoral competition. Participation in European integration may well have increased the distance between elites and citizens (although post-communist politics has always been rather elite-driven) and it may have depoliticized certain issues (where the *acquis* left little room for autonomous

politics) but, in contrast to Western Europe, we cannot in this region speak about a 'hollowing out' (Mair, 2004) of party competition because of the EU.

There are still many areas we know little about. Changes in the relations of parties with business groups and with the government, trends concerning the structure of party finance, and transformation of the general status of parties vis-à-vis other political actors in terms of power relations are all topics that definitely deserve further scrutiny. We know a bit more, but still not very much, about trends in internal organizational matters. The EU seems to have had an impact on the internal norms of some parties as far as gender quotas are considered. Otherwise party organizations have not changed spectacularly, although MEPs have often been given representation in the party leadership. Given that many heavyweight CEE politicians were elected or delegated to Strasbourg and Brussels, it is likely that the European component of the parties will play a larger role in the future than in the West.⁶

Whether the integration process has an impact on party systems or on the ideology, organization and civic relations of individual parties is not simply an issue arising from the power of the European Union or the status of the respective party systems. It is rather an outcome of the interaction between the two. It is therefore important to consider the nature of the pressures for change a particular party system is confronted with, and the conditions under which these pressures emerge, at the most intensive period of the accession process. When a party system has more time to adapt, as it has in the case of Romania (in contrast to Slovakia), the impact will be less concentrated and therefore less visible. But as well as observing abrupt changes in party politics scholars must also be able to detect evolutionary processes of adaptation.

To return to Peter Mair's (2000) proposition concerning the impact of the EU on Western European party systems, we can share the conclusion that European integration has not shaped the format of CEE party systems, either. But European Union institutions, and European integration process in general, have been able to strengthen the position of some parties and weaken others. More important, by influencing coalition-making strategies and

facilitating the ideological reorientation (mainly towards moderation) of certain parties, it has contributed to changes in the mechanics of party systems.

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Endnotes

¹ The CEE political class seems to have taken the results of the EP elections more seriously than either their voters or Western politicians.

²Heavy-weight politicians who moved from national to European level include: Jerzy Buzek, Alojze Peterle, Laszlo Kovacs, Borut Pohor, Jelko Kacin, Vladimir Spidla, Guntars Krasts, Toomas Ilves, Dariusz Rosati, Bronislaw Geremek, Siim Kallas, Toomas Hendrik Ilves, Tunne Kelam.

³ The tensions between these two streams concerning the planned national treaty with the Vatican brought down the government in 2006.

⁴ Although in late 2004 two MEPs among the otherwise unaffiliated Self-Defence deputies joined the Socialist party group.

⁵ In an earlier publication Poland belonged to the fourth group and Romania to the second (Taggart and Szczerbiak 2001).

⁶ Somewhat unusually, even the top leaders of two Slovenian parties (United List and Liberal Democracy) are MEPs.