‘EUROPEANISATION OF POLITICAL PARTIES AND THE INTRODUCTION OF PARTY PRIMARIES IN EUROPE’

“Europeanization from the mid-XIXth Century to the Present: Mixing National, International and Transnational approaches”

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Abstract

L’intégration européenne est longtemps restée pour les partis politiques un enjeu périphérique. Cependant, les effets qu’elle produit apparaissent de plus en plus structurants pour les systèmes partisans au sein de l’UE, tout en demeurant une dimension relativement peu explorée par la science politique.

En parallèle, l’introduction progressive de primaires au sein de plusieurs partis d’Europe occidentale au cours de la dernière décennie s’apparente également à des bouleversements, tant sur le plan interne (organisationnel) qu’externe (électoral, relations inter-partisanes). Un phénomène emprunté outre-Atlantique et encore limité, mais qui présente certaines spécificités en Europe, liées notamment aux systèmes politiques et au rôle du militantisme.

Cet article explore la relation complexe qui se noue entre ces phénomènes en tentant de démontrer que l’organisation de primaires reflète en filigrane et entre autres un processus d’Européanisation des partis politiques. Si les causes et conséquences de l’introduction des primaires peuvent être théoriquement reliées à ce processus, les illustrations empiriques restent limitées. Des initiatives d’organisation de primaires à l’échelle des partis politiques au niveau européen illustrent néanmoins le potentiel de la question.
Introduction

The relationship between political actors and citizens is slowly but surely fading in modern representative democracies. Among these political actors, for political parties such decline has in particular translated into a loss of both members and votes. More inclusive processes of leaders and candidate selections have sometimes been presented as the panacea for restoring their organisational (internal) and electoral (external) dynamics.

Indeed, political parties appear as largely privileged actors in the study of political science, directly participating in the electoral competition, and bearing specific organisational features in the conquest and exercise of power within the political system1. Further definitions interestingly include the concern of seeking popular support through elections or by any other way2.

Primary elections try to fulfil this aim by opening-up the selection of party leaders or candidates for elections to party members (‘one member, one vote’, ‘party primaries’ or ‘closed’ primaries) or even to all voters (‘non-party’ or ‘open’ primaries)3. Thereby, primaries are often described as the most inclusive method for such selection. While originating from the United States and still being relatively marginal in Europe, primary elections have gained considerable ground (and consequently attracted growing scholarly attention) over the last decade.

The concept of ‘Europeanisation’, the process through which national policies and institutions incorporate the European Union (EU) dynamics into their own logic4 or put more simply become “more European like”, has been largely used in the literature in an attempt to explain changes or resistance to changes, as influenced by the European integration process. But only recently has the Europeanisation of political parties been explored. Parties have indeed brought challenges to the study of Europeanisation, not least because of the difficulty to assess any effective or direct impact of the EU on the variety of national and local parties throughout the continent.

What is the role of the EU on intra-party democratisation as assumed by the introduction of primary elections? More precisely, to what extent can primaries reflect and illustrate a Europeanisation process of political parties? This paper will argue that the EU's impact on political parties has (at least indirectly and partly) influenced the successive introduction of primaries throughout Western Europe. It shall be established that the mobilisation dynamics of the parties, in other words the causes and consequences of the introduction of primaries, correspond to the opportunities offered by the Europeanisation process.

This article thus looks beyond the Europeanisation of political parties into a hypothesised sub-product of the process within the parties; it ambitions to establish a link between the various impacts of the EU on political parties and the introduction of primaries in Western Europe.

After having presented within the theoretical framework of the ‘Europeanisation’ of political parties relevant aspects to the study of primaries (Part I), our analysis will subsequently bring the focus more precisely on the link between political parties’ changes deriving from the Europeanisation process and the introduction of primaries in Europe (Part II).

I. The ‘Europeanisation’ of political parties – a relevant framework to the study of primaries?

“The incremental creation of a European polity cannot be a neutral phenomenon for political parties.”

I.1. Conceptual framework - Europeanisation of political parties in (Western) Europe: looking beyond the relationship between the European integration process and national parties...

The factors of change identified in studies on Europeanisation for policies and institutions do not necessarily correspond to those for political parties. Explanations include first the lack of ‘opportunity structures’. Whereas for instance, interest groups and sub-national actors retain the possibility to transfer resources or exploit domestically alliances created at the EU level, only the recent developments of the ‘Statute on Political Parties at European level’ and material means granted to EP groups might constitute such incentive for parties. Second, there is no legal obligation to interact with EU institutions or operate at the EU level. In a ‘classic’ Europeanisation perspective, a bottom-up (the (non-)emergence of a European party system) and a top-down (the role EU issues play in national parties’ positions and actions) dimensions could be distinguished.

Belot and Cautrès encapsulate the influence of the European integration process on political parties and party systems in a threefold scheme: the EU appears as a new source of cleavage within the political arena; the European integration contributes to the emergence of new matters structuring the ideological space of the member states, and the EU is deemed to offer parties from various member states an institutional framework for their relations. A more detailed analysis of the Europeanisation of political parties would entail direct and indirect impacts.

Direct impacts of Europeanisation can be reduced to the creation of new political parties and the introduction of a new dimension in party competition, the pro- v. anti-integration axis (along which the position of different parties might vary along time). Indeed, while Lipset and Rokkan have established that parties and their corresponding electoral support are historically essentially based on social cleavages (social class, religious and linguistic groups), an increased number of challenges to this traditional cleavage structures have emerged. The EU could thus be considered as a new possible cleavage. Limited empirical evidence however exists as to a

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7 Ibid.
realignment of the party system(s) based on the attitude towards European integration\textsuperscript{13}. In parallel, new parties have emerged, created notably around sovereignty issues, such as De Villiers’ Mouvement pour la France (MPF)\textsuperscript{14}.

Besides, EU’s direct impact on the national political environment and the conditions in which political parties operate only indirectly impacts the parties. It can occur through changes in public opinion (e.g. how parties respond to Eurosceptic attitudes), but also through changes in the national political system and policy-making (which in turn affects features and behaviour of parties)\textsuperscript{15}. Indirect effects of the EU can translate into: ‘programmatic changes’ (convergence among parties); ‘organisational changes’ (leadership autonomy, creation of EU-related posts); evolution in ‘patterns of party competition’; reshaped ‘party-government relations’ (given the increased competence of the EU); and ‘relations beyond the national political system’ (addressing the question of why a national party becomes involved in its corresponding transnational party)\textsuperscript{16}.

\textbf{Figure 1:} Europeanisation of political parties

\begin{figure}
\centering
\includegraphics[width=\textwidth]{figure1.png}
\caption{Europeanisation of political parties}
\end{figure}

\begin{itemize}
\item Direct effects
  \begin{itemize}
  \item creation of new political parties
  \item pro- v. anti-integration axis
  \end{itemize}
\item Indirect effects
  \begin{itemize}
  \item 'programmatic changes'
  \item 'organisational changes'
  \item evolution in 'patterns of party competition'
  \item reshaped 'party-government relations'
  \item 'relations beyond the national political system'
  \end{itemize}
\end{itemize}

\textbf{Source:} Own compilation from R. Ladrech, ‘Europeanization and political parties’, \textit{Living Reviews in European Governance}, nr.4, 2009

\subsection*{1.2. Pertinence of the theoretical framework to the study of primary elections:}

To what extent is the Europeanisation framework adequate to study the introduction of primaries in Europe?

Party organisational structures and party membership constitute the main point of focus of the (limited) existing literature on primaries in Europe. More precisely, primaries are often deemed to represent a further step for political parties in their organisational evolution\textsuperscript{17}. Primaries are therefore part and parcel of a reorganisation of the parties, while such reorganisation is also possibly influenced by a Europeanisation process, as explained above.

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{14} \textit{Ibid.}, p.122.
\item \textsuperscript{15} R. Ladrech, ‘Europeanization and political parties’, \textit{op.cit.}, pp.6-8.
\item \textsuperscript{16} \textit{Ibid.}
\item \textsuperscript{17} G.Sandri & A.Seddone, ‘Primaries and political parties in Europe – A proposal for a tailored analytical framework’, \textit{ECPR Joint Sessions of Workshops}, Antwerp, 10-15 April 2012, p.1.
\end{itemize}
Primaries also entail new internal dynamics, revisiting the relation between the party, its office holders, activists and voters. By questioning the party models, primaries entail changes in ‘patterns of party competition’ and ‘party-government relations’, as does the EU on political parties according to the Europeanisation framework.

While ‘programmatic changes’, essentially through a convergence of the political messages, are associated with the Europeanisation of political parties, a similar analysis can be drawn for the primaries, which introduction brings to the debate on party models the issue of the ‘median voter’, i.e. whether the political message should be designed for the activists the voters or the whole electorate. A “strategic-positioning dilemma [emerges]: should they align themselves with their general – or primary – election constituencies”?

‘Relations beyond the national political system’ are particularly relevant to the study of methods of candidates’ and leaders’ selection as trans-national networks have started to consider projects of EU-wide primaries (the Party of European Socialists for the designation of their next candidate for the position of President of the European Commission). Notwithstanding the rapid dissemination of the practice within European national parties, which could reveal an ‘imitation’ phenomenon or ‘best-practice’ transfer, possibly facilitated by political parties at European level.

Primaries furthermore seem to reflect direct effects of the EU on political parties. They can be associated with the (questioned) emergence of a pro- v. anti-integration axis, but also with the creation of new political parties. Considering the EU as a new source of cleavage is relevant to the study of primaries, as despite fierce academic debate on the issue, parties having organised primaries in Europe in the recent years all can be considered to be rather pro-integration.

**Figure 2: Positions of the party families and primaries in Europe**

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19 See : Figure 1.
Overall, the Europeanisation framework seems relevant to the study of primaries elections as their characteristics in Europe can be associated with the main effects of the EU on political parties. Primaries question the same dimension as the Europeanisation framework does. Nevertheless, this does not (yet) substantiate a direct link between the Europeanisation of political parties and the introduction of primary elections.

**II. The introduction of primaries in Europe: the outcome of a Europeanisation process?**

**II.1. Primaries in Europe: a specific case**

Primaries of several different types (closed, semi-closed, open, semi-open) and combined with other means such as caucuses and conventions have been held in the United States since the 1910s, as part of the nominating process for various public offices. In Europe, if the phenomenon is more recent and still relatively underdeveloped, it has become increasingly widespread over the past ten years, hence leading to growing scrutiny. Both their relative late emergence and the corresponding timeframe across several member states, coupled with the EU-wide project put forward by the Party of European Socialists suggest that primaries in Europe correspond to a different context and background than in the US.
### Table 1: Major primaries in the EU

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Political party</th>
<th>Date - type of election or position</th>
<th>Type of primary</th>
<th>Other specifications</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Belgium</td>
<td>sp.a</td>
<td>Closed</td>
<td>Closed</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>PS</td>
<td>Closed</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cyprus</td>
<td>ΕΔΕΚ</td>
<td>Closed</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Denmark</td>
<td>SD</td>
<td>Closed</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>France</td>
<td>UMP</td>
<td>2007 - presidential election *</td>
<td>Closed</td>
<td>One candidate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>PS</td>
<td>1995 &amp; 2007 - presidential elections + local and legislative elections</td>
<td>Closed</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(+ Parti Radical de Gauche)</td>
<td>2012 - presidential election</td>
<td>Open</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Greece</td>
<td>PASOK/ΠΑΣΟΚ</td>
<td>2004 &amp; 2007 - internal party election</td>
<td>Open</td>
<td>2004: One candidate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ireland</td>
<td>LP</td>
<td>Closed</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Italy</td>
<td>Democratic Party (PD)</td>
<td>Since 2005 – internal party election / designation of candidates for Prime Minister</td>
<td>Open</td>
<td>Enshrined in the PD’s statuses</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(+ centre-left coalition)</td>
<td>2010 - regional elections</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Netherlandes</td>
<td>PvdA</td>
<td>Closed</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Portugal</td>
<td>PS</td>
<td>Closed</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UK</td>
<td>Conservative Party</td>
<td>2010 – general election (Totnes constituency)</td>
<td>Open (postal vote)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Labour Party</td>
<td>2010 – general election</td>
<td>Closed</td>
<td>3 electoral colleges**</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Internal polls were also organised to designate UMP candidates for local ballots such as the 2008 municipal elections in Paris or the 2010 regional election in Île-de-France.

** 1) Party members; 2) Labour members of Parliament and of the European Parliament; 3) Members of affiliated organisations such as trade unions - each accounting for one third of the votes.

Source: Own compilation

In fact, the features of both internal party functioning and inter-party competition make the primaries in Europe very different from those of the United States, despite clear differences between individual EU member states. The choice of candidates’ designation mode is, on the one hand, intrinsically linked to the issue of intra-party democracy; it embodies the relationships between parties, eventual public office holders, and the civil society. On the other hand, inter-party competition within specific political systems also largely determines such designation mode. In parliamentary democracies, it is the party leader and not per se the ‘candidate’ who is designated, as governments emerged from a majority in the Parliament with the head of government usually being the leader of the winning party.
Table 2: Major differences in EU/US primary systems

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Modalities</th>
<th>United States</th>
<th>European Union (member states)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Mandates’ nominating procedure</strong></td>
<td>Electoral mandates (presidential, statewide, local)</td>
<td>Party internal mandates: party leaders nomination Ex.: PS in France</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Types</strong></td>
<td>Closed, semi-closed, open, semi-open, run-off + mixed systems</td>
<td>Closed or open*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Regulation</strong></td>
<td>State law</td>
<td>None or parties’ statuses</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Organisation</strong></td>
<td>External bodies (e.g. State agencies, local governments)</td>
<td>Political parties</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Link with subsequent election</strong></td>
<td>Direct</td>
<td>Indirect or latent Ex.: PS in France</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Election process</strong></td>
<td>Indirect (delegates)</td>
<td>Direct</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* The party may however require primary voters to express support to the party’s values and/or to pay a small contribution to the costs of the primary’s organisation.

Source: Own compilation from G. Sandri & A. Seddone, ‘Primaries and political parties in Europe – A proposal for a tailored analytical framework’, *ECPR Joint Sessions of Workshops*, Antwerp, 10-15 April 2012, pp.4-5.

If primaries in Europe retain a number of specificities, the extent to which the above-mentioned effects of the EU on political parties affect their introduction and development remains to be explored. Theoretically, it is assumed that the EU can influence the introduction and development of primaries in Europe if the different dimensions of the Europeanisation of political parties apply to or impact the causes and consequences of the organisation of primaries.

II.2. Assessing the EU’s potential influence: causes and consequences of the introduction of primaries in European political parties

To what extent can the European issue be disruptive in the choice of the mode of designation of parties’ candidates and such choice affect the political parties internally and externally in return?

- ‘Democratisation’ and the ‘Europeanisation’ of political parties: towards electoral gains?

“Primary elections can be considered as a tool used by parties in order to compensate the loss of legitimacy towards the electorate, to regain political credibility and to attract new supporters”.

The core rationale for the introduction of primary elections is the enhancement of democracy and transparency within parties (as to better the party image and public opinion). The relations between parties and voters are often blurred, marked by anti-politics or anti-party perception among citizens. Primaries are intended to lessen this gap, through a renewed party image and an increased legitimacy. To that end, the selection of candidates and leaders is often

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20 G. Sandri & A. Seddone, op.cit., p.3.
underlined in the literature as crucial to the functioning of the party\textsuperscript{22}, thus conferring a central role and particular powers to the actors in charge. To that extent, primaries appear as the most comprehensive method for such selection\textsuperscript{23}.

The issue of strengthened democracy and transparency can be linked to the impact of the EU on political parties on several grounds. First, these questions are particularly salient in the EU context notably under the ‘democratic deficit’ debate, and they also reflect values of the EU\textsuperscript{24}.

Besides, this seems intrinsically linked to the issue of Europeanisation as such negative feelings are often expressed on EU issues; \textbf{new political parties are created} around sovereignty issues, claiming to be outside the system, and often correspond to \textit{anti-integration} or Eurosceptic parties. Primaries can thus be analysed as a reaction against negative voters’ perception, part of which concern European issues. Furthermore, since the EU’s impact in terms of the ‘\textbf{evolution in patterns of party competition}’ concerns the reduced spectrum of choice because of the convergence of the main centre-right and centre-left parties\textsuperscript{25}, primaries could constitute a reaction against this reduced spectrum for the voters through a differentiation between these parties, affecting mainly centre-left parties so far.

To what extent does the introduction of primaries contribute to a more democratic image of the parties and translate into better electoral performances? In fact, if electoral gains in promoting primaries are expected, they are to be balanced with a number of costs. Buquet and Chasquetti have identified possible costs of the primaries system\textsuperscript{26} based on the Uruguay example. More generally, there might be differences between the (ideological) positions of the whole electorate (deciding in the actual election) and of the reduced selectorate (deciding in the primary)\textsuperscript{27}. Furthermore, the loyalty and stability of the electoral support acquired though primaries can be questioned\textsuperscript{28}. Besides, several authors such as Djupe and Peterson have underlined possible negative effects of primary campaigns whereby internal conflicts are brought to light and de-legitimisation of candidates within the same party threatens the latter\textsuperscript{29}. The concept of ‘divisiveness’ even predicts that supporters of primaries’ loser candidates could refuse to support the winner in the upcoming election following the primary\textsuperscript{30}.


\textsuperscript{25} R. Ladrech, ‘Europeanization and political parties’, \textit{op.cit.}, p.7.


\textsuperscript{30} The most recent analyses of the concept include:
Membership and changes in organisational structures constitute one of the main dimensions of primary politics. Indeed, the most widespread analyses of the introduction of primaries interpret these organisational transformations as new dynamics and mobilizations logics following shifts in party models. In particular, the mutation from ‘mass’ to ‘catch-all parties’, theorised by Kirchheimer, is posited as a widening of the political message to the overall electorate to increase legitimacy and electoral performance in a context of reduced social and ideological cleavages, and thus designed for the ‘median voter’. This restructuration can at least partly explain the parties’ subsequent search for corresponding intra-party democracy through more inclusive methods of designating candidates and leaders.

This catch-all strategy having shifted the balance of power between parties, members and holders of public offices, primaries can also be analysed in the light of such shift. Katz and Mair argue that mass membership has been replaced in its organisational role by the party in public office. Without encroaching on the question of leadership, complementary to this suggestion is the Europeanisation literature’s assumption that increased EU competence “may lead to tensions between the party in public office and the party on the ground, with the party in central office playing [...] a mediating role”. These reshaped ‘party-government relations’ and ‘organisational changes’ emerging from the EU context (witnessed in particular for the former through support to governments in inter-governmental bargaining, and for the latter through the creation of specialised EU-related posts within parties) seem to have largely contributed to such shift, although they constitute only part of the picture.

Second, the impact of the EU in terms of ‘relations of parties beyond the national political system’ seems coherent with a widening of the selectorate. While membership retains essentially a national dimension, transnational party networks at the EU-level bring a considerable challenge by the absence of members as such, which well corresponds to open primaries, where a widened selectorate and not the members is granted the pivotal role.

Third, regarding ‘programmatic changes’, the Europeanisation literature underlines the increased references to the EU in the parties’ documents and convergence among parties. While the former would necessitate an analysis of parties’ documents related to the primaries, the latter entails “an incremental interdependence and growing policy convergence between national parties of the same ideological ‘familles spirituelles’.” Thus, having already posited the pro-integration position of the parties organising primaries, it could also be argued that primaries themselves constitute a converging policy in the EU context, along which parties have aligned, following the same catch-all strategy. This is supported in particular by a widespread introduction over a

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- J. Speht, op.cit., p.192.
To what extent does the introduction of primaries affect parties’ membership (new members, mobilization)? The introduction of primaries questions the link between party elites and members. In ‘Les Primaires socialistes - la fin du parti militant’, Rémi Lefebvre raises one of the main concerns associated with the introduction of open primaries\(^\text{39}\). Parties’ activists become part of the selectionate on an equal-footing with any other party voters (or even voters of rival parties). This is analysed as a decreased incentive for party membership and political activism and thus as a deterioration of the elites-members relations, Raniolo even arguing that primaries’ voters will not transform into activisits\(^\text{40}\).

- **Leadership and the ‘Europeanisation’ of political parties: the end of ideologies?**

  Other explanatory factors of the introduction of primaries deriving from the catch-all strategy concern the personalisation of politics and the growing role of strategies (\textit{vs.} ideologies), which are extremely entangled with the membership issue:

  “The process of party personalization and professionalization in communication strategies [...] are argued to have replaced party ideological strength in its role of main instrument of inter-party competition.”\(^\text{41}\)

  In this context, coping with the decline in membership and activism, primaries should allow political parties to appeal to a larger support basis.

  This factor is again very specific to the European sphere, where activism has historically been at the core of parties’ ideologies, despite differences between individual countries: “le temps où l’on avait de vrais débats sur le monde, l’époque des intellectuels organiques issus du monde ouvrier, qui se formaient sur le tas, devenaient des leaders d’opinion.”\(^\text{42}\)

  In addition, the convergence among parties on EU issues is described as a ‘programmatic change’. Primaries could reflect such change as they are not ‘ideologically’ oriented and constitute a policy on which many parties have converged in Europe. They are centred however on a person and not a project (and thus make it difficult to assess further ‘programmatic changes’), based on personal appeal rather than policy characteristics\(^\text{43}\). Nevertheless, they do retain an ideological dimension; aligning with the wishes of their core electorate rather than their party members only could be argued to correspond to anchoring the party in a specific ideological space\(^\text{44}\). One assumption often found in the literature is that “primaries may pull candidate towards extremist ideological positions”\(^\text{45}\). In the same vein, one of the impacts of the EU on political parties also address the convergence of the main centre-right and centre-left parties (due to policy constraints); such ‘evolution in patterns of party competition’ can be interpreted as a decline of ideology, cause of the introduction of primaries through the personalisation of politics. In the United States, specific cross-cutting effects have however been identified such as the replacement of inter-party


\(^{41}\) G. Sandri & A. Seddone, \textit{op.cit.}, pp.1-2.


\(^{45}\) G. Serra, \textit{loc. cit.}
competition by intra-party contest. In the so-called ‘safe districts’, where one party historically or sociologically dominates, primaries indeed constitute the major confrontation point.

As regards ‘organisational changes’, the increased autonomy of leaders as part of the Europeanisation process of the parties can lead to the introduction of primaries, which is precisely based on the restructuration of the leaders-members relation and the personalisation of politics. The eventual creation of EU-related posts further illustrates a specialisation and professionalization of politics, away from the ‘party on the ground’.

To what extent does the introduction of primaries bring a redistribution of power within the organisational structures of the party (strengthened party leadership, weakened party cohesion, etc.)? An evolution of leadership-party relations is foreseen. Pennings and Hazan point out at the candidates’ autonomy and possible loss of loyalty to party policies, induced by party’s lack of control on the recruitment process. This could lead to internal divisions (decrease in party cohesion) as candidates become liable in front of the larger pool of selectorate and not directly to the party.

In conclusion, the entangled causes of the introduction of primaries correspond to the effects of the EU on political parties (although to different extents) as underlined by the Europeanisation literature, revealing a potential influence. The link however is often limited; by no means can primaries be considered as the outcome of the sole Europeanisation of political parties, but of several factors, including such Europeanisation. The EU affects political parties and at a sub-level the choice of the mode of designation of parties’ candidates, while such choice reflect on the parties themselves.

**Figure 3**: Causes and consequences of the introduction of primaries in Europe

Direct effects
- creation of new political parties
- pro- v. anti-integration axes

Indirect effects
- ‘programmatic changes’
- ‘organisational changes’
- evolution in ‘patterns of party competition’
- reshaped ‘party-governments relations’
- relations beyond the national political system

Source: Own compilation

47 R. Lefebvre, *loc. cit.*
**Table 3:** Linking the causes of the introduction of primaries and the Europeanisation of political parties

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Main causes of the introduction of primaries</th>
<th>Membership issues</th>
<th>Leadership issues</th>
<th>Party image / public opinion / democratisation / electoral gains</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>creation of new political parties</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>&gt; reaction against new (Eurosceptic) parties created around sovereignty issues</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>pro- v. anti-integration axis</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>&gt; reaction against anti-politics/party perceptions, incl. EU issues (translated into anti-integration/EU perceptions)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>‘programmatic changes’</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>&gt; compensation of the lack of legitimacy perceived (vs. party decline and disengagement, vs. low participation rates)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>‘organisational changes’</td>
<td>&gt; policy convergence among parties belonging to networks at EU level on the catch-all strategy</td>
<td>&gt; convergence of parties in Europe: primaries as a policy centred on strategies v. ideologies and the professionalisation of politics BUT &lt; absence of a project as such</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>evolution in ‘patterns of party competition’</td>
<td>&gt; redistribution of power within the organisational structures of the party following increased EU competence (creation of specific EU-related posts within parties, distant from ordinary members)</td>
<td>&gt; evolution of leadership-party relations: increased autonomy of leaders and professionalisation (new role of leaders as specialists incl. on EU issues)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>reshaped ‘party-government relations’</td>
<td>&gt; decline of ideologies due to the convergence of the main-stream parties (due to policy constraints)</td>
<td>&gt; public office holders and leaders as the central organizational entities</td>
<td>&gt; differentiation between main-stream parties as to increase the spectrum of choice for the voters.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>‘relations beyond the national political system’</td>
<td>&gt; decreased role of membership and activism &gt; focus on public office holders</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Own compilation
Conclusion

The dynamics of the political parties in Western Europe and the way they integrate the ‘Europeanisation’ process to redefine their logics demonstrate the opportunity offered to the study of primary elections.

The modalities of the organisation of primaries reflect the peculiarities of the political systems and actors in Europe. Besides, the various dimensions of the Europeanisation of political parties (organisational and programmatic changes, reshaped party-government relations, relations beyond the national political system, etc.) correspond to some of the parties’ characteristics affected by the instauration of primaries. Finally, the causes of the introduction of primaries can be linked to the changes brought by the Europeanisation of political parties, although to different degrees, and the consequences of such introduction feedbacks into the parties’ organisational features. Such link however is tenuous; other processes are to be accounted for such as changing party models that underlie the parties’ apparent ‘democratization’.

As such, the introduction of primaries theoretically and partly reflects and illustrates a Europeanisation process of political parties. The EU constitutes a potential vector of democratic innovation such as the introduction of primaries. Empirical research on how specific parties have integrated the EU dynamics into their own logic could focus on the Party of European Socialist’s initiative to introduce primaries to designate its candidate for the next Commission President. At the crossroads between internal (multi-level party system, membership issues) and external (wider institutional system, low voting turnout in EP elections, public opinion, coalitions-building) challenges, will the Europeanisation of political parties translate into an EU-level democratisation of the mode of designation of candidates?
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