

*Conceptions of European integration in manifestos and policies of political parties at
European level*

Keywords: Parties at European level, European integration, European manifestos, European People's Party, Party of European Socialists, Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe Party, European Green Party.

This study sets out to analyse the concepts of European integration that appear in manifestos and policy objectives of European political parties. The study also intends to identify the tools that European political parties can use to exert influence on the EU's decision-making process. Four European political parties were included in this research project: the European People's Party, the Party of European Socialists, the Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe Party, and the European Green Party.

Three hypotheses were examined as a part of this study:

H1: The EPP, PES, ALDE, and EGP promote the concept of a federal EU in their manifestos.

H2: The European political parties have the necessary systemic tools that allow them to influence the EU's decision-making process. Nevertheless, they do not work together to implement their shared visions on European integration.

H3: European political parties seek to compile joint manifestos. However, member parties remain a major hurdle in implementing manifestos because they primarily look after national interests.

This doctoral thesis is based on various research methods—the institutional and legal analysis, the behavioural method, the comparative method, and qualitative methods, such as content analysis, in-depth and semi-structured interviews, as well as direct and participant observation, which was both overt and covert, structured and unstructured.

The thesis is divided into four chapters. Chapter 1 discusses the methodological framework, defines key terms used in the study, and states the purpose of the study. The chapter also explains the reasons for choosing specific research designs and methods for collecting and analysing data.

Political parties cannot be studied without taking into account the political system they function in. This is why Chapter 2 examines the role of European political parties in the EU's political system. In order to explain how international cooperation between European political parties was established, the chapter investigates cooperation between parties within the framework of political internationals. The chapter also addresses the question of how the role

of European political parties in the EU's political system has evolved over the years. Last but not least, a literature review, interviews, and observations are used to analyse what functions European political parties perform within the EU's political system.

Chapter 3 discusses the concepts of European integration outlined in the manifestos of EPP, PES, ALDE and EGP. The chapter is based on a qualitative content analysis. The manifestos were analysed with the help of a coding system generated using the inductive approach. Since ideology was the driving force behind the cooperation between European political parties, liberal, socialist, Christian democratic, and green ideologies are also described in the chapter. The chapter then presents the findings made upon analysing the political manifestos of PES (1979-2014), EPP (1979-2014), ALDE (1979-2019), and EGP (1999-2019). Furthermore, the chapter applies the developed coding system to compare the approaches of European political parties toward specific issues, e.g., a common foreign policy, a common defence policy, and the roles of the EU institutions. Finally, the chapter interprets data collected during interviews with Members of the European Parliament to give an overview of their opinions on political manifestos.

Chapter 4 investigates the role European political parties play within the EU's decision-making process. Conclusions from a literature review and the author's own findings are drawn to present the links between European political parties and political groups in the European Parliament, the European Commission, and the Council of the European Union. The chapter describes how European political parties have taken active part in negotiating amendments to the EU's Treaties at Intergovernmental Conferences (IGC). Cooperation between European political parties and political groups is another issue addressed in the chapter, which presents the results of the author's empirical research carried out as part of the research project funded by NCN¹. The chapter also looks into how EPP, PES, and ALDE have shaped the EU's relations with Georgia and Moldova by using their influence with member parties. Finally, the chapter analyses how European political parties have used the *Spitzenkandidaten* process during the election campaign in 2014 and partly in 2019.

¹ The thesis mentions some of the findings from Research Project No.2016/23/N/HS5/00391 funded by the NCN [Polish National Science Centre].

11.03.2019r., Włocławek Paula Łwiszewska