

***Continuities and Changes in Party Positions Towards Europe in Italian  
Parties: An Examination of Parties' Manifestos.***

*Sylvia Kritzinger\**, *Francesco Cavatorta*<sup>°</sup> and *Raj S. Chari*<sup>◇</sup>

Department of Political Science\*  
Institute for Advanced Studies, Vienna (IHS), Austria

Department of Politics<sup>°</sup>  
University College Dublin, Ireland

Department of Political Science<sup>◇</sup>  
Trinity College Dublin, Ireland

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## ***Introduction***

Over the last decade, scholars of European politics have increasingly analysed the concept of ‘Europeanisation’. Their focus has been on the Europeanisation processes of EU public policies (Cowles, Caporaso and Risse, 2001; Börzel, 1999; Tallberg, 2002; Radaelli, 1997) and of party structures within the European political space such as party groups in the European Parliament (EP) and their policy positions (Gabel and Hix, 2002; Hix and Lord, 1997; Raunio, 1996). Despite the strengths of these works, absent in the literature is a cogent analysis considering the ‘Europeanisation of national political parties’. National policy-making actors and institutions such as political parties are left unconsidered and unexplored (Ladrech, 2002), and have not fully been analysed as active actors in European integration, neglecting the possibility that the EU is also structuring parties’ national political space. Furthermore, they also fail to examine how national parties are affected by, and adapt to, supranational level developments.

Seeking to transcend these insufficiencies in the literature, this study aims to provide a deeper understanding of national political parties in the integration process and to offer a substantial contribution to the Europeanisation debate by fully incorporating analysis of the role of political parties. The aim is to combine the two major strands in the recent literature and, thus, to examine the Europeanisation processes in an institutional environment situated at the national level. The broad understanding of Europeanisation to be developed, which we argue extends upon the top-down approach in the existing Europeanisation literature, is that political parties are increasingly extending the boundaries of the relevant political space beyond the national level (Kohler-Koch, 1999) while, simultaneously, incorporating the European dimension in their domestic discourse and structures (Radaelli, 2000) allocating more importance to it. In other words, our definition of Europeanisation entails both a positional dimension, which reflects the parties’ position towards Europe, and a salience dimension, which reflects the importance that parties’ attribute towards integration. By our definition, then, if Europeanisation of political parties is fully occurring, one would expect that Europe leads both to a change in parties’ EU-positions and to an increase of parties’ EU-salience.

The data analysed consists of Italian parties’ manifestos for national and European elections. We analyse the manifestos from 1979 to 1999 with the ‘Wordscore’-programme (Laver, Benoit and Garry, 2003) in order to gauge whether or not Europeanisation of salience and the national political space has occurred.

This article has three sections. The first reviews in more depth the theoretical debates on Europeanisation of political parties and shows where our study is embedded. This section also details the objectives of this study and illustrates the peculiarities of Italian political parties and their commonly assumed positions towards Europe. The second section introduces the method of analysis and deals with the research design. The third discusses the study's results, highlighting its contribution towards the Europeanisation debate.

### ***Political Parties and European Integration***

#### *A theoretical overview*

Our study is situated in the two main theoretical debates that analyse party developments in context of the EU. The first downplays the importance of dynamics between integration and parties, while the other points to, although it does not fully develop or compellingly demonstrate, its significance.

The first, clearly pre-dominant, view undermines the importance of Europeanisation and national parties, arguing that parties are not influenced by EU-level developments. This literature has been concerned exclusively on EP election dynamics, approximating only descriptive analysis that is not comparative in its examination. For example, examining electoral campaigns for EP elections over twenty-five years, some argue that national issues are dominant: in order to obtain citizens' votes and modify favourably the domestic political situation, parties give privilege to national themes over topics of general European interest, resulting in EP elections being labelled as 'second-order elections' (Hix and Lord, 1997; Van der Eijk and Franklin, 1996; Marsh, 1998; Reif, 1997). Although citizens decide on the composition of the EP and therefore European legislation, national issues are thought to determine election winners and losers. Moreover, parties are thought to interpret election results according to the national political situation.

The second view, in contrast to the first predominant one, contends that European parties have responded to the impact of integration, ultimately influencing the direction of the European integration process (Ladrech, 2002). EU policies are increasingly affecting domestic policy-making agenda setting, and a European identity is slowly developing among some European citizens. As such, it would not seem unreasonable to hypothesize that political parties are also becoming increasingly Europeanised: parties may have

slowly changed and utilised the EP elections to state their stance on Europe, to put forth their goals for Europe-wide policies, and therefore to omit or at least draw less reference to the debate of national issues. A different economic environment, a more intense competition for votes and party cohesion may be the explanatory factors for such changes (Harmel and Janda, 1994; Müller, 1997; Kitschelt, 1999), but it could also be argued that a European party system, together with a European electorate, are slowly emerging with parties that are adapting (Andeweg, 1995; Mair, 1999). Hence, the dynamics between integration and national parties have to be re-evaluated. As a consequence of integration, parties change and adapt to a newly developing political landscape (Ladrech, 2002), even to the point where Europeanisation has resulted in the ideological ‘mellowing out’ and increasing ‘professionalisation’ of some parties’ politics as seen in European Green parties (Bomberg, 2002). However, a main insufficiency in the literature remains because there is not one study that satisfactorily deals with political parties as actors in this process.

### *Objectives of the Study*

Seeking to better understand how parties are affected by the European integration process, and how they adapt to this new political situation, this study is situated in the context of a Europeanisation process of national political systems as a whole and aims to measure the changes derived from European integration with respect to parties. The paper’s specific objectives are three-fold.

First, through analysis of developments in Italy, we examine whether or not political parties deem the European topic as more important for their party politics. Noteworthy here is the salience of ‘Europe’ and whether or not European issues are incorporated more dominantly into party discourses over time. If Europeanisation occurred, one would see a change in the dimensionality of the national political space precisely because the added European dimension gains importance. Hence, we assume that this new dimension has an impact on the parties’ perceptions of Europe, which leads to the observation of a Europeanisation process in terms of higher European salience.

Based on findings relating to this first objective, the second objective is to contribute to the ‘second-order-election’ debate. As aforementioned, EP-elections are considered of secondary importance as they do not focus on European issues, policies, institutions and political parties but, rather, are contests on national governments’ performance. However, one may hypothesize that EP-elections have gained in importance since 1979, being reflected also in parties’ manifestos. Thus, the more the salience

‘Europe’, the more reflective this would be of the idea that EP-elections have moved from second- to first-order elections.<sup>1</sup>

A third related objective is to examine party positions towards European integration *per se*, analysing whether or not changes in policy positions have occurred based on the Europeanisation process. This objective is therefore not a descriptive outline regarding parties’ stances regarding European integration, but, rather, an analysis of the degree of influence that participation in EU processes has on their policy positions expressed at the national *and* European levels. Actors locate themselves differently in the political space because the multi-dimensionality of both national *and* European space has to be taken into consideration. The dimensionality of a political space includes several dimensions, which constrain the policy position of political actors (Gabel and Hix, 2002). Thus, as the European dimension becomes more dominant in the national space through discourses and actions, it is assumed that parties are now paying increasing attention to their policy position towards Europe. This could result in a revision of their previously superficially articulated stances on European policy, arguably the result of low voting benefits. The direction of policy positions may have changed or may have absorbed a European dimension because of the increasing relevance of the European integration process. Variations within parties and amongst parties regarding their policy positions towards Europe will thus be analysed carefully. One may argue that the European ‘dimension’, in particular, not only shapes party positions, but also represents ‘constraints’ on the policy position of political actors, potentially forcing parties to change platforms. The idea here is that party positions can be broadened due to the introduction of a new European dimension where parties not only have to locate themselves, but also differentiate themselves from others.

### *Italian Parties and Europe*

The literature accepts that Italy, as one of the founding members of the Community, has traditionally been a strong supporter of closer union. Furthermore, opinion poll data indicates that there is widespread support among Italian citizens for the EC/EU. However, closer scrutiny reveals the impreciseness of this view. Rather, there is considerable evidence suggesting that parties have held quite dynamic views towards a united Europe. This section briefly examines the major parties stances on EU integration. This overview also seeks to serve as a basis to evaluate the results obtained in our later analysis and better determine whether experts’ estimates on party positions are valid.

Examining active Italian political parties that can trace their roots to those belonging to the First Republic, one sees that current positions towards the EU may actually not reflect stances taken in the past. There is the perception that left leaning parties today are more pro-European than their conservative counterparts. However, the very positive attitude of the left towards the EU is by no means all encompassing nor has a solid history. The heirs of the old PCI are a primary example of this.

Far from being enthusiastic about the European project, the Communist party held negative views when the integration process started. This rather sceptical attitude was due to both the international context and ideology. European integration was seen by the PCI as another move towards locking Italy into the West to the detriment of an autonomous and possibly changeable position. Like membership to NATO, EU membership meant further obstacles regarding a rapprochement to the Soviet Union. This attitude changed in the late 1960s and by the 1970s the party started to move in the opposite direction, although it opposed acts aimed at solidifying the Union such as the European Monetary System and the Single European Act. Despite this negative posture, EU membership *per se*, just like acceptance of Italy's membership to NATO, no longer posed a problem to the PCI even if in disagreement with the Community's economic policies. Rather, the PCI saw in Europe an opportunity to strengthen its domestic and international profile. The heirs of the PCI are perceived to hold opposing views to the EU, with the DS being strong supporters and Rifondazione Comunista (RC) being antagonistic to it. It should be underlined, however, that RC basis its opposition on the neo-liberal economic model of development and not on a nationalistic platform (Salvadori, 1999).

Unlike the PCI, the Christian Democrats have always supported the EC/EU. Further, international constraints were a major factor in DC's supporting the integration process. EU Membership was seen as a step towards locking Italy into a multilateral and Western based institution, providing a complementary economic 'lock' to the 'military' one offered by NATO. This tradition of Community support continued until the final days of DC and the heirs of that tradition are probably the most pro-European actors within the two coalitions. It is probably no surprise that a 'member' of the Italian Christian Democratic family is today the Head of the EU Commission.

Consistency in attitudes, albeit with moderate changes, is also a trait of the right wing party Italian Social Movement – National Alliance (MSI – AN). While the MSI recognised at the early stages of integration that membership was a solid insurance policy for the country against the risk of sliding 'eastward', it has never been an enthusiastic

supporter. Reasons for this are found in the party's belief in national autonomy and independent decision-making. Like many other conservative parties across Europe, the MSI-AN saw increasing EU legislative and regulatory powers as a dangerous threat to national independence. While recognising the importance of co-operation in a new globalised world, the heir of the MSI has not dramatically changed its position and remains moderate in its enthusiasm for increased integration.

Considering that the Northern League (LN) is a right-wing regionalist party, it is striking how it differs from the consistency of MSI-AN. A significant trait of the LN since its inception was its positive attitude towards the Community (Cavatorta, 2001). The reason for such an enthusiastic support was based on the LN leadership's view of the necessity to strengthen a supranational entity in order to weaken the central government and increase regional power vis-à-vis increased Brussels led delegation of power to the regions. LN also supported a drastic change in economic policies and emphasised the need for neo-liberal reforms to favour small and medium enterprises in the North. Given this strong support for Europe, the U-Turn from Europe in 1998 was a surprise (Iltanen, Kritzinger and Chari, 2004). The leadership outlined the reasons for the dramatic shift in attitude, stressing the overbearing bureaucracy, senseless regulations, and the loss of cultural identity to a disliked 'European' one tainted with multicultural tones.

Finally, the attitudes of Forza Italia (FI) are of significance. As the once Euro-positive LN, FI was strongly pro-European, specifically focussing on Euro entry. However, this enthusiasm recently diminished because the party has become more traditional, rather than a movement with a charismatic leader (Pasquino, 2001). There is in fact a faction within FI that does not share the strong positive attitude initially outlined by Berlusconi. This faction, led by Finance Minister Tremonti, is sceptical of the integration process and advocates more autonomy in foreign, economic and social policy-making. The rift within the party over Europe, accompanied by the LN criticism of the EU, was manifest in the resignation in 2001 of the strongly pro-European Foreign Minister Ruggiero.

In conclusion, the notion of Italy and Italians being very much supportive of the EU and integration process is subject to some qualifications. It has not always been true that all political movements had a favourable perception of Europe. Today, as in the past, political parties are not necessarily unanimous in their enthusiasm for the EU and its policies. Our following empirical analysis will capture these stances and the changes occurring over time.

## ***Empirical Framework***

### *Method*

In order to better understand the Europeanisation process of Italian political parties, we use a new technique recently developed: the Laver-Benoit-Garry (2003) ‘Wordscore’-programme for coding party manifestos. Its strength is its ‘objectivity.’ In fact, the technique does not depend on human coders and therefore eliminates potential subjective interpretations. This allows researchers to draw conclusions on the Europeanisation of parties from official documents and not from vague policy declarations or pre-conceived ideological positions. In applying this technique to this project, we also hope to contribute to its improvement, thereby increasing its scientific validity.

Problems associated with previously employed methodologies are two-fold. First, there is the practical problem of current text analysis being very resource intensive, involving large amounts of skilled labour. These techniques are conventionally summarized as ‘hand coding’ techniques (also for computerized coding schemes) using traditional methods of content analysis. Within the Comparative Manifestos Projects this technique was applied to code party manifestos. The second main methodological problem derived from the first are the potential bias and the mistakes of human coders. The novelty with the Laver-Benoit-Garry approach is that texts are not treated as discourses “but as collections of word data containing information about the position of the texts’ authors on predefined policy dimensions” (Laver *et al.*, 2003: 312). In other words, this technique counts word frequencies of texts about which something is known. Thereafter, this information allows to make assumptions about texts for which nothing is known. Hence, prior information is used to make estimations on the policy position of a consequent text. This is a novel approach that does not rely on personal coding schemes, as it was the case in the ‘Comparative Manifestos Project’ (Gabel and Huber, 2000; Laver and Budge, 1992), resulting in more objective coding and less value-laden results.

Of course, this technique does not allow one to make a purely inductive analysis of party manifesto policy positions. It works on a few previously established assumptions about the dimensionality and the meaning of the underlying policy dimensions. In more detail, unknown positions (‘virgin texts’) are estimated on known scales (‘reference texts’) and more objectivity can be approximated (Laver *et al.*, 2003). New texts are compared with reference texts of which we know the policy positions. Reference texts can be



regarded as a basis that provides assumptions about the policy positions of future party manifestos. Based on this knowledge we can estimate the likelihood of finding a particular word in a particular references text. That is, a particular “score” is given for each word, which allows us to give any text a certain policy position and to place virgin texts on policy dimensions (Laver *et al.*, 2003: 313). Hence, scores do not have any subjective interpretation but are treated exclusively as data. Each ‘score’ extends the information on the policy dimension of a particular text leading to reliable estimations of parties’ policy positions.

The advantages of this method can be summarized as follows: “Because this technique treats word unequivocally as data, our technique not only allows us to estimate policy positions from political texts written in any language but, uniquely among the methods currently available, it allows us to calculate confidence intervals around these point estimates” (Laver *et al.*, 2003: 312). This technique will therefore permit analysis of substantive differences between texts, transcending previous concerns of potential measurement errors due to different sources such as ‘hand-coding’.

Based on this technique this project measures differences in salience degrees and in party positions regarding the EU. Furthermore, this technique gives the necessary information to draw conclusions on the direction of policy dimensions. For example, we will be in a better position to answer questions regarding changes or stability in policy positions towards the EU.

In order to employ the technique, we use as reference texts the Euro-manifesto and also a national manifesto from one election to estimate the positions in the party manifestos in the following elections. We use then *a priori* positions of references texts on party’s European dimension assuming that these are valid references at point  $t$  allowing us to draw conclusions on party manifestos at point  $t+1$  (Laver *et al.*, 2003: 314). The context of point  $t$  is used to estimate the context of  $t+1$ . The *a priori* policy positions are taken from expert surveys carried out by Ray Leonard (1999). The expert surveys include evaluations of party positions towards integration for the years 1984, 1988, 1992, 1996 along a seven-point scale from ‘strongly opposed to European integration’ to ‘strongly in favour of European integration’ (party position objective), and evaluations of salience degrees along a five-point scale from ‘no importance’ to ‘most important issue’ (Ray, 1999). In 1984 experts were asked to evaluate parties’ positions towards the status quo of the EC and the proposal to add a security aspect to the EC’s competencies. In 1988, parties’ positions considering the Single European Act were of interest, while in 1992 the

positions on the Maastricht Treaty were evaluated. Finally, the 1996 positions focused on the EMU and future political integration steps. The reliability of these expert surveys is slightly lower for the early years, but analysis of standard deviations demonstrates its comparability to the estimates of former expert surveys. Validity is also given as principal component factor analysis carried out over the expert surveys, the Comparative Party Manifesto data and the Eurobarometer-survey from 1988 indicates (Ray, 1999).

### ***Research design***

The research deals with two types of official party documents. First, it analyses the Euro-manifestos published by a range of Italian parties<sup>2</sup> for each EP election since 1979. Secondly, it examines the manifestos published for the Italian parliamentary elections from 1976 onwards. Through analysis of the manifestos evidence demonstrating either increasing importance of European issues for political parties, or not, can be gathered. Manifestos allow for derivation of the position political parties have taken on EU issues at different conjunctures. Thus, through the analysis of a form of political competition we seek to explain a possible Europeanisation of political parties in Europe.

Manifesto-texts are quite difficult to obtain from parties. Consequently, we were not able to receive the national manifestos for MSI and PCI in 1979, for RC in 1994, and for PDS in 1996.<sup>3</sup> Regarding the Euro-manifestos, we were unable to collect the documents from both the MSI and the PCI for the 1979, 1984 and 1989 elections.<sup>4</sup> However, it is significant to note that at times parties did not publish manifestos for EP-elections. For our analysis' purposes, the absence of these documents does not pose a major problem for 'Wordscore'. We decided to omit the national elections of 1979 and the EP-elections of the 1980s for both the MSI and PCI in order to produce consistent estimators.<sup>5</sup>

To perform our research objectives we analyse Euro-manifestos and national manifestos in two stages. First, we analyse whether the word frequency related to the EU, such as 'Europe', 'European Parliament', 'European Commission', and 'Single Market', has increased and can be pinpointed. Using the context of the EU increasingly and with higher density provides a first impression of how parties use the European context. At this stage, we also analyse the degree of importance a political party assigns to the EU, and whether change can be observed. Increased importance would indicate 'Europeanisation' in terms of salience. Table 1 indicates the importance that parties attribute to European

integration according to experts' views (*a priori* positions). In general, experts rate the importance political parties give to European issues as average. On the one hand parties do not regard the EU as absolutely unimportant, but, on the other hand, parties do not place it as their top priority. It is rated as those myriad of issues that parties deal with, albeit only generally.

-- TABLE 1 ABOUT HERE --

In a second stage, we seek to explain the positions single parties have adopted towards European integration and whether or not these positions have changed over time. The expert survey estimations in Table 2 provide the *a priori* party position along the European dimension for each year. These two tables should be kept in mind, as references will be made when analysing the results.

-- TABLE 2 ABOUT HERE --

On the basis of experts' estimates, we can analyse whether changes in salience degrees and party positions have occurred applying them to our reference texts, the manifestos. For the analysis of national manifestos we start with the 1984 *a priori* positions applying them to the national manifestos of 1983.<sup>6</sup> Based on these scores we calculate party politics' developments and thus use the other expert survey estimates only as control scores. Regarding the Euro-manifestos, we start our analysis in 1994 due to the data problem faced, using both 1992 and 1996 estimations. Hence, in the next section we analyse European party positions in manifestos based on the dimensions of expert surveys.

## ***Analysis and Results***

### ***Importance of Europe for Political Parties***

Have political parties used the European context more frequently in recent years compared to when EP elections first occurred in 1979? Table 3 provides an initial impression of how political parties use European issues. Results illustrate the percentage of words, related to European integration,<sup>7</sup> that political parties have used in their manifestos.

-- TABLE 3 ABOUT HERE --

The results indicate that parties differentiate between European and national elections. While in national manifestos European issues are hardly considered, European manifestos are more focused on the election topic. This indicates that political parties do not consider European issues important for national election success. European topics are far from being a priority; however, EP-elections are connected with European issues and one can observe that political parties subsequently focus more on the topic at hand.

Another relevant finding is that we cannot observe a change in word-frequencies over the years pertaining to national elections. There is a slight increase in the national election of 1994, but this trend cannot be observed for the following election in 1996. With the exception of LN, a decrease is noticed. Interestingly, FI did not mention European topics at all. The 1996 contest seems to have been focused almost entirely on domestic issues.

European elections offer a similar picture. In the 1994 elections all parties dedicated virtually the same percentage of words to European integration. Particularly, the centre-right parties dedicated considerable space to the European level. In the 1999 elections this changes: parties differ among each other, with the PPI focussing more than twice as much words on European integration than RC, whereas FI and AN witnessed a concomitant fall in word frequencies.

We now consider comparison of these results with scores on the degree of importance parties assigned to European issues. The average importance as indicated in expert estimations in Table 1 does not seem to have changed. Table 4 illustrates the results for the Euro-manifestos and indicates that importance scores have changed slightly. But, this does not change the overall, average importance parties allocate to the European issues. Moreover, there is no consistent picture for all parties: while importance slightly increases for RC, PPI, FI and AN, scores for LN and PDS decrease. Hence, Europeanisation of political parties in terms of salience cannot be observed. The scores for the DC in the 1980s confirm the average importance parties assign to Europe.<sup>8</sup>

-- TABLE 4 ABOUT HERE --

Do importance scores differ in national manifestos? Table 5 shows that national manifestos do not indicate a change in EU-importance: only slight changes can be

observed since the 1970s and they do not modify the overall trend. Interestingly, however, importance scores are very similar to the ones for the Euro-manifestos. This validates our chosen method: regardless of Euro- or national manifestos, ‘Wordscore’ captures the overall importance a party associates to a certain political issue and it is not sensitive to the amount of words a party dedicates to the EU in national and in Euro-manifestos.

-- TABLE 5 ABOUT HERE --

In conclusion, our results do not indicate a Europeanization in terms of salience of political parties over the last 20 years. Parties dedicated only limited space in their manifestos to European issues and, more importantly, they do not attribute more importance to the European integration process in 1999 than they did in 1976. National and Euro-manifestos still remain a forum where stances on Europe are of secondary importance and hence, EP-elections can still be considered as second-order elections. This suggests that national issues and national concerns are of major importance. It also means that national political parties have yet to recognize the importance of the EU, having weakly responded with the necessary ‘saliency’ regarding the impact of the integration process.

#### *Party Positions towards Europe*

Having observed that Europeanization of political parties in terms of salience did not take place in Italy, we turn to analysis of party positions towards the EU. As previously mentioned, radical and also not so-radical changes in positions indicate that parties consider the new European level of governance and recognize the need establish a posture towards it. As the European dimension is new, parties might not have fixed positions and may still need to find suitable ones. Thus, changes express parties’ ‘dedication’ to this new dimension and its efforts to ideologically absorb it. It follows that parties do not perceive the European integration process as self-evident, but are aware of the impact of integration on the national-level and the party itself. Changes in party positions are a sign that the European topic is present and parties address ‘new voters’ through positional modifications. Only topics that are considered important will undergo changes and variations are indications that parties become aware of this new dimension and try to adapt towards it in order to be competitive. In other words: parties shape their attitudes towards Europe based on the Europeanization process.

What changes in parties' positions are observed? Based on Euro-manifestos, Table 6 shows changes for almost every party. Parties have become more pro-European since EP-elections of 1994. Even parties that were quite anti-European moved towards the middle ground (value 3).

-- TABLE 6 ABOUT HERE --

The most interesting results feature FI and PDS. In 1999 FI is much more pro-European (4.81) than experts have estimated (4.00, see Table 2), while the PDS is considerably less pro-European (4.24) than assumed (6.50, see Table 2). Rather, the PDS has almost the same position than FI. This might be due to the fact that the PDS was the largest party within the Olive Tree coalition government and therefore focused more strongly on national rather than European issues. However, it is interesting to note that the two major Italian parties roughly show the same position on Europe, even though the general perception is that FI is closer to the anti-European camp, whereas PDS is closer to the pro-European one.

AN delivers another interesting result: evaluated as a rather anti-European party, it changed its position from 1.88 (see Table 2) in 1994 to 3.17 in 1999. The explanation is found in its changes in the 1990s. After its change from MSI to AN in 1994, AN worked hard to abandon its 'fascist' legacy and reshape many of its policies in order to become a more respectable conservative movement. It is conceivable that one of the measures adopted was to become more pro-European with a view of being recognized as a democratic political actor by other European parties.

A validation of our method is certainly the result of the LN. As repeatedly stated in the literature (Gabel, 2000; Cavatorta, 2001; Iltanen, Kritzinger and Chari, 2004), the LN performed a U-turn away from Europe. Our result captures this U-turn very precisely: the LN dropped from 5.88 (see Table 2) to 3.76. This is almost the same level as AN and more anti-European than FI, its future coalition partners.

The PPI and RC results did not yield any surprises. Both parties behaved as expected: the PPI being a very pro-European party and RC being more critical of the EU. This critical position is due to the perceived neo-liberal integration process the EU is pursuing to the detriment of social rights and the expansion of the Welfare state.

Are the same changes reflected in the national manifestos? Our analysis offers a slightly different picture, but this is explained through the almost exclusive manifesto's

focus on national issues. Furthermore, there is a time lag to consider between the two analyses: Euro-manifesto scores capture developments in the late 1990s, whereas national manifestos deal with changes in the 1980s/early 1990s. Thus, later changes could not have been tracked by national manifestos. Finally, it should also be noted that for the first time since post-World War II, the 1994 elections saw the parties competing with a radically different electoral system. The resultant 'coalition game' had effects on parties' positions on a number of issues. The results are interesting and somehow also surprising, as Table 7 shows.

-- TABLE 7 ABOUT HERE --

Concerning the DC/PPI, results are as expected: it remains a very pro-European party throughout the years. However, a small decrease in 1994 and 1996 is noticed. Comparing these figures with those obtained for the Euro-manifestos, shows a development in the opposite direction. The explanation for this apparent contradiction is found both in the diverse focus of national manifestos and in the different political environment the party was operating into in the mid 1990s. The elections of 1994 and 1996, a short time after the *Tangentopoli*-scandal, demanded a major re-positioning of the DC/PPI in the national political space. This included leaving European issues, perceived as being of little interest to the electorate, clearly on the side.

Results also confirm the pro-European position of FI. Although the score slightly declines in 1996, FI is clearly a pro-European Italian political actor contrary to many experts' perceptions. Moreover, the results suggest that major political parties in Italy need to be pro-European in order to be successful, as most of their voters favour European integration (see different Eurobarometer-surveys).

The LN behaves exactly as we assumed: it is the most pro-European political party in Italy up to 1998 and confirms former research results. And scores for AN underline the trend observed in the Euro-manifestos: moving steadily away from anti-European positions towards more moderate ones. In 1992 we notice a move back to rather negative positions, which can however be explained through the major changes occurring on the national political stage and through the overall re-orientation of the political parties. This did not include any major re-positioning towards Europe.

The same argument holds for the PCI/PDS, which was generally pro-European save in 1994. Ideological and administrative confusion due to the changes the party had

gone through, as well as the focus on national policies and institutions, eclipsed the European level.

RC offers another interesting result. Contrary to our expectations, RC proves to be pro-European and this contradicts expert estimates. A possible explanation is found in the party's documents: RC proves to be in favour of European integration *per se* while it is opposed to an integration based on neo-liberal economic criteria and to a union, which also incorporates military defence. RC, opposite to right-wing parties with anti-European positions, does not fear losing national sovereignty and autonomous nationally based decision-making. Rather, it favours unifying Europe in order to internationalise the solutions for problems affecting workers. To this end, RC clearly indicates that social policies should be regulated at the European level as for one country alone it would not be suitable to pursue such changes. Thus, RC might be labelled as anti-European, but only if one believes that European integration is a neo-liberal process.

So, can we observe a Europeanisation of parties based on the position changes towards Europe? Contrary to the results analysed in the section on importance, the figures in this section indicate that a Europeanisation process is occurring. Parties do indeed change their positions towards Europe. Thus, the topic 'Europe' becomes a dynamic dimension within political parties, one which parties try to position themselves, to distinguish themselves from other parties, and to attract other political actors and voters. Figures were very stable during the 1970s and 1980s and only in the 1990s the dynamic changed, indicating that in earlier years the European dimension was not sufficiently important to merit significant time and political 'discourse' or even to trigger the need to change its positions towards it. The 1990s altered this pattern. Given this, it seems that the *permissive consensus* that characterised the opinion of European citizens towards Europe throughout the 1970s and 1980s (Lindberg and Scheingold, 1979) is also applicable to political parties. Much like citizens withdrew their permissive consensus in the 1990s, political parties did the same, becoming much more active actors and taking ideologically into account the European dimension.

## ***Conclusion***

Europeanisation of political parties is an under-explored field in the Europeanisation debate and our study contributes to the visibility of such scholarly investigation. We have argued that Europeanisation of political parties can be understood



and examined in two ways: first, as an impact on the importance political parties assign to the European dimension (salience), and second, on the positions that parties take up towards European integration (content).

Our results indicate that the leading Italian political parties experience different impacts. Europeanisation in terms of increase in importance (salience) could not be observed. Europe is ranked of average importance and has not experienced radical change over the years. However, Europeanisation in terms of influence on positions has taken place in the 1990s, leading one to conclude that political parties have extended the boundaries of relevant space. Parties attempt to find their positions within the European space and therefore 'Europe' helps to shape their attitudes.

Hence, we observe only a partial Europeanisation process of political parties, where the content becomes slowly Europeanised and the permissive consensus of national political parties comes to an end, but where major European salience is not yet developed within national political parties. This leads us further to conclude that EP-elections still remain in the shadow of national issues and that European issues do not become salient during national elections. In order to overcome this problem, which also leads to the allegation of a democratic deficit in EP-elections, it is necessary that parties pay more attention to the European dimension and thus increase their salience towards Europe. Only then, the Europeanisation process of political parties will be complete.

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<sup>1</sup> We are only interested in analysing whether political parties have changed their attitudes towards EP-elections and do not implement public opinion in our analysis.

<sup>2</sup> The parties are: DC/PPI, PCI/PDS, RC, LN, FI, MSI/AN.

<sup>3</sup> Dr. Paul Pennings, Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam, Comparative Electronic Manifestos Project, in cooperation with Science Center Berlin, Research Unit Institutions and Social change (A. Volkens; H.-D. Klingemann), the Zentralarchiv für Empirische Sozialforschung, Universität zu Köln (E. Mochmann) and the Manifesto Research Group (Chairman I. Budge), website: <http://home.scw.vu.nl/~pennings/ECPR.htm>, made available most of the national manifestos.

<sup>4</sup> The Euro-manifesto research group at the University of Mannheim made available all analysed Euro-manifestos.

<sup>5</sup> The research institution Circap at the University of Siena assisted in completing the manifesto collection.

<sup>6</sup> For the LN we will introduce the experts' estimation in the 1994 analysis. As we do not have any estimation for FI for 1994, we will calculate it based on the scores of the other parties.

<sup>7</sup> The list of words that have been counted through Linux are available from the authors on requests.

<sup>8</sup> A priori positions are taken from 1984.

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Table 1: Expert survey estimates on parties' importance of European Integration

	Importance of issue			
	1984	1988	1992	1996
<i>Christian Democrats – Popular Party (DC/PPI)</i> <sup>a</sup>	3.75	3.75	3.75	3.63
<i>Forza Italia (FI)</i> <sup>b</sup>	--	--	--	2.38
<i>Northern League (LN)</i> <sup>c</sup>		2.80	3.00	3.14
<i>Italian Social Movement – National Alliance (MSI/AN)</i> <sup>d</sup>	2.63	2.63	2.63	2.63
<i>Italian Communist Party – Democratic Party of the Left (PCI/PDS)</i> <sup>e</sup>	3.00	3.00	3.25	3.25
<i>Refounded Communists (RC)</i> <sup>f</sup>	--	--	2.43	2.43

Notes: Values are means of experts' estimations on a 5 point scale from 'European Integration is of no importance' to 'European Integration is the most important issue for the party'.

<sup>a</sup> The *Christian Democrats* changed their name into *Peoples Party* in 1993 after the corruption scandal 'manipulite'

<sup>b</sup> *Forza Italia* ran for elections in 1994 for the first time.

<sup>c</sup> The *Northern League* did not yet exist in 1984

<sup>d</sup> The *Italian Social Movement* changed its name into *National Alliance* for the 1994 elections.

<sup>e</sup> The *Italian Communist Party* changed into *Democratic Party of the Left* after the collapse of communist regimes in Eastern and Central Europe.

<sup>f</sup> The *Refounded Communists* are a splinter of the *Italian Communist Party*, which did not want to change into the *Democratic Party of the Left*.

*Table 2: Expert survey estimates on parties' position on European Integration*

	<b>Position on European Integration</b>			
	<b>1984</b>	<b>1988</b>	<b>1992</b>	<b>1996</b>
<i>DC/PPI</i>	6.38	6.38	6.38	6.38
<i>FI</i>				4.00
<i>LN</i>		5.80	5.88	6.00
<i>MSI/AN</i>	1.63	1.63	1.88	2.25
<i>PCI/PDS</i>	5.80	6.00	6.25	6.50
<i>RF</i>			2.43	2.14

*Notes:* Values are means of experts' estimations on a 7 point scale from 'Strongly opposed to European Integration' to 'Strongly in favour of European Integration'.

*Table 3: Frequencies of Words related to the European integration process in National and European Manifestos (in percentage)*

<b>%</b>	<b>1976</b>	<b>1979</b>		<b>1983/84</b>		<b>1987/89</b>		<b>1992</b>	<b>1994</b>		<b>1996/99</b>	
<i>Parties</i>	<b>NP</b>	<b>NP</b>	<b>EP</b>	<b>NP</b>	<b>EP</b>	<b>NP</b>	<b>EP</b>	<b>NP</b>	<b>NP</b>	<b>EP</b>	<b>NP</b>	<b>EP</b>
<b><i>DC/PPI</i></b>	0,479	0,483	0,479	0,251	3,253	0,366	3,376	0,633	0,806	2,589	0,532	4,279
<b><i>MSI/AN</i></b>	0,139	--	--	0,312	--	0,257	--	0,004	0,605	3,712	0,413	2,485
<b><i>PCI/PDS</i></b>	0,282	--	2,146	0,401	--	0,233	--	0,149	0,578	3,054	--	3,400
<b><i>LN</i></b>	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	0,314	3,334	0,753	3,527
<b><i>FI</i></b>	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	0,506	3,638	0	2,754
<b><i>RC</i></b>	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	2,528	--	1,671

*Notes:* NP = National Manifestos; EP = European Manifestos

Table 4: Parties' importance scores on European Integration based on 1992 and 1996 expert survey estimates (EP-elections)

<b>Party Importance Estimates</b>							
	<i>FI94</i>	<i>FI99</i>	<i>RC99</i>	<i>PPI99</i>	<i>PDS99</i>	<i>LN99</i>	<i>AN99</i>
<i>Transformed Europe Policy text scores bases on 1992 expert surveys</i>	<b>2.93</b>	<b>3.27</b>	<b>2.60</b>	<b>3.84</b>	<b>2.75</b>	<b>2.77</b>	<b>2.79</b>
<i>SE</i>	0.108	0.095	0.031	0.138	0.068	0.038	0.067
<i>Transformed Europe Policy text scores bases on 1996 expert surveys</i>	<b>2.92</b>	<b>3.22</b>	<b>2.61</b>	<b>3.80</b>	<b>2.80</b>	<b>2.82</b>	<b>2.81</b>
<i>SE</i>	0.107	0.095	0.032	0.134	0.069	0.038	0.067
<b>Party Importance Estimates for DC in 1980s</b>							
	<i>PCI80s</i>			<i>DC1984</i>	<i>DC1988</i>		
<i>Transformed Europe Policy text scores</i>				--	<b>3.03</b>	<b>3.78</b>	
<i>SE</i>					0.168	0.010	



Table 5: Parties' importance scores on European Integration based on 1983 expert survey estimates (national elections)

	<b>Importance of European Integration Issues</b>					
	<b>1983 (E.S.)</b>	<b>1976</b>	<b>1987</b>	<b>1992</b>	<b>1994</b>	<b>1996</b>
<b>DC/PPI</b>	3.75	3.57 (S.E. 0.034) % 88.8	3.49 (S.E. 0.021) % 87.4	3.75 (S.E. 0.025) % 87.8	3.43 (S.E. 0.064) % 87.8	3.65 (S.E. 0.115) % 92.3
<b>FI</b>	--	--	--	--	2.97 (S.E. 0.046) % 90.0	2.95 (S.E. 0.148) % 91.0
<b>LN</b>	--	--	--	--	3.00 (E.S.)	2.87 (S.E. 0.032) % 91.2
<b>MSI/AN</b>	2.63	2.47 (S.E. 0.068) % 86.4	2.45 (S.E. 0.111) % 85.0	2.67 (S.E. 0.145) % 87.5	2.46 (S.E. 0.058) % 86.7	2.74 (S.E. 0.026) % 90.0
<b>PCI/PDS</b>	3.00	3.27 (S.E. 0.034) % 90.8	3.39 (S.E. 0.038) % 90.2	2.89 (S.E. 0.082) % 83.1	3.46 (S.E. 0.092) % 88.8	--
<b>RF</b>	--	--	--	--	--	(3.16)

Notes: E.S. = Expert survey estimates; % words scored

Table 6: Parties' Positions Scores on European Integration based on 1992 and 1996 expert survey estimates (EP-elections)

<b>Party Position Estimates</b>							
	<i>FI94</i>	<i>FI99</i>	<i>RC99</i>	<i>PPI99</i>	<i>PDS99</i>	<i>LN99</i>	<i>AN99</i>
<i>Transformed Europe Policy text scores bases on 1992 expert surveys</i>	<b>3.83</b>	<b>4.81</b>	<b>2.79</b>	<b>8.33</b>	<b>4.24</b>	<b>3.76</b>	<b>3.17</b>
<i>SE</i>	0.605	0.621	0.192	0.805	0.439	0.241	0.433
<i>Transformed Europe Policy text scores bases on 1996 expert surveys</i>	<b>3.94</b>	<b>5.14</b>	<b>2.72</b>	<b>8.42</b>	<b>4.24</b>	<b>3.87</b>	<b>3.33</b>
<i>SE</i>	0.611	0.605	0.194	0.782	0.440	0.240	0.423
<b>Party Position Estimates for DC in 1980s</b>							
	<i>PCI80s</i>			<i>DC1984</i>	<i>DC1988</i>		
<i>Transformed Europe Policy text scores</i>				--	<b>5.82</b>	<b>6.40</b>	
<i>SE</i>					0.130	0.077	

Table 7: Parties' position scores European Integration based on 1983 expert survey estimates (national elections)

	Position on European Integration					
	1983 (E.S.)	1976	1987	1992	1994	1996
<i>DC/PPI</i>	6.38	6.04 (S.E. 0.114) % 88.8	5.79 (S.E. 0.074) % 87.4	7.37 (S.E. 0.010) % 87.8	5.60 (S.E. 0.233) % 87.8	5.12 (S.E. 0.558) % 92.3
<i>FI</i>	--	--	--	--	5.46 (S.E. 0.226) % 90.0	5.01 (S.E. 0.739) % 91.0
<i>LN</i>	--	--	--	--	5.88 (E.S.)	7.18 (S.E. 0.163) % 91.2
<i>MSI/AN</i>	1.63	1.45 (S.E. 0.249) % 86.4	1.47 (S.E. 0.423) % 85.0	2.62 (S.E. 0.609) % 87.5	1.55 (S.E. 0.220) % 86.7	2.44 (S.E. 0.131) % 90.0
<i>PCI/PDS</i>	5.80	5.82 (S.E. 0.119) % 90.8	6.11 (S.E. 0.132) % 90.2	3.21 (S.E. 0.344) % 83.1	6.37 (S.E. 0.335) % 88.8	--
<i>RF</i>	--	--	--	--	--	(5.38) (S.E. 0.382) % 91.5

Notes: E.S. = Expert survey estimates; % words scored