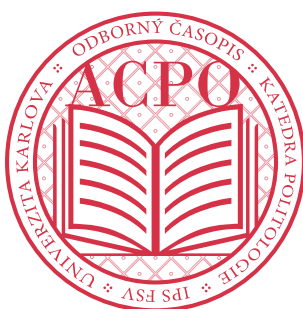


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From the Return to Europe to Easy Money: Europeanization of Party Manifestoes in the Czech Republic¹

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Abstract:

The article is focused on the Europeanization of political parties in the Czech Republic with special attention paid to two areas of research. First, based on an original dataset, the authors examine the salience of the European issue and identifies the context by which the issue is framed. Second, the attitudes of Czech political parties towards European integration over time are scrutinized. Two main conclusions can be drawn from the Czech experience. In contrast to the pre-accession period when European integration was presented mainly in the context of EU membership and the general direction of European integration, the membership period is typical by focus on EU policies and financial subsidies that the Czech Republic gets from the EU budget. European integration constitutes an issue cross-cutting the most important economical division in Czech party politics, with a high conflict potential influencing the dynamics of party competition in the country.

Key words: Czech Republic; political parties; euroscepticism; Central Europe

Introduction

The Czech Republic became a member of the European Union (EU) in 2004 during the “Eastern Enlargement” phase, and entry and membership itself have had a significant influence on almost every aspect of life in the country. European integration has thus become a political topic, and not only in the form of the debate on entry into the European Union. The Czech Republic, in contrast to other countries of the post-communist bloc such as Slovenia, Slovakia, and the Baltic States, has a relatively high level of Euroscepticism. Alongside the Eurosceptic stance of some political parties was one of the most visible critics of the European integration process, former President Václav Klaus (Hloušek, Kaniok 2014; Eibl et al. 2013; Taggart, Szczerbiak 2013), which resulted protracted delays, and the Czech Republic becoming the final country to ratify the Lisbon Treaty. The battle over the Lisbon Treaty (Beneš, Karlas 2010; Haughton 2009; Havlík, Pospíšil 2010) thus confirmed the potential for conflict on European issues in the Czech political space; similarly, this can be seen in the persistent absence of a schedule for adopting the single European currency, even though

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this is a condition of the Czech Republic's accession treaty. The economic crisis and debates connected to it on the future of the Eurozone, as well as the European Union as a whole, have only exacerbated these tensions in the Czech political system.

It is therefore surprising that – apart from a few comparative studies focused on Central and Eastern Europe (Rohrschneider, Whitefield 2007), studies using older data (Kopecký 2004), texts focusing specifically on party Euroscepticism (Hanley 2008; Kopecký 2004; Havlík 2009 and 2011; Kaniok 2009), or analysing the socio-demographic or attitudinal profile of a typical Czech Eurosceptic (Havlík, Hloušek, Kaniok 2017) – the Czech Republic has not been given systematic attention. The goal of this text is thus primarily to fill this lacuna in the research of relations of Czech political parties, by using an analysis of empirical data mapping the significance of European issues for Czech political parties, including their respective positions on European integration. We thus attempt to answer the call of Rohrschneider, Whitefield (2007) among others for systematic research of the specific Czech case of a country with atypically Eurosceptic political parties. This text thus performs an important function in adding a necessary tile to the mosaic of studies on Central and Eastern Europe, thereby enabling scholars to develop a complex comparative study examining the Europeanization of party systems of countries in the region. We answer the following research questions:

- 1) How important is the topic of European integration for Czech political parties?
- 2) Why do individual parties view this topic with varying degrees of importance?
- 3) In what context do Czech political parties discuss the topic of European integration?
- 4) How do Czech political parties position themselves regarding European integration, and how are their positions in the Czech political space defined by European issues respectively?

An understanding of the specific Czech case is important from a comparative point of view. As mentioned above, the Czech Republic has an unusually high level of party Euroscepticism for the region of Central and Eastern Europe. Finding an explanation for Eurosceptic party politics in the Czech Republic thus can help us explain why the situation differs from other countries in the region. In addition to providing a comprehensive view on the Europeanization of political parties and the party system in the Czech Republic that has been lacking up to this point, the text offers an original dataset (and an innovative coding scheme) accounting for the specifics of the Eastern Enlargement of the EU in 2004 and may be inspiring for further research on the region of Central and Eastern Europe.

Data and Methods

One of the ways to determine the relevance of an issue for a political party is to analyse its election platform. While party platforms are by no means an unproblematic source of data, they serve as authoritative and official positions of political parties, which serve to transmit information not only to external actors (voters, media), but also within the party (as information for candidates). In other words, election platforms serve as a basic source for the formulation of the discourse of a political party regarding a specific political issue. Moreover, party platforms are by their very nature documents that can be compared over time and among parties.

In previous research on the Europeanization of the programmes of political parties, party platforms regarding European Parliament elections have been used as a data source (Kovář 2013). This selection obviously makes sense, as it is in documents for electoral competition on the European level that we can expect the clearest expression of political parties' positions on Europe. On the other hand, it is also true that the passing of European legislation is not only in the hands of the European Parliament, but also in the hands of the Council of Ministers, whose members act *de facto* on the basis of a programme presented in national elections. Due to the specific nature of the EU's political system, it is thus necessary to offer voters a platform regarding European issues both in elections to the European Parliament as well as in national elections. In the context of our research, we have decided to focus on parties' platforms for the elections to the Chamber of Deputies of the Parliament of the Czech Republic (the lower house), for the following reasons. With elections to the European Parliament having a "second order" character (Reif, Schmitt 1980), national elections are a more important arena for political parties, and party platforms presented during these campaigns more clearly define the identity of political parties. As a result, national party platforms, in which parties present their complex ideas of how a society should function, serve as a more important source of data for the evaluation of the relative importance of European issues in the context of other topics that the party addresses. Moreover, it is not possible to look at the EU separate from national politics; indeed, the EU's effects on domestic politics serve as the most visible phenomenon of the European integration process. Focusing on national campaign platforms also allows for a comparison of the importance of European issues before and after Czech accession to the EU.

We measure the relative importance of European issues for political parties using the number and proportion of natural sentences³ in the platforms of political parties for elections to the Chamber of Deputies. Natural sentences have been shown to be approximately as reliable as the quasi-sentences used in the Comparative Manifesto Project (Mikhaylov et al. 2012). In addition to higher reliability and in contrast to the CMP, the selection of entire sentences is also justifiable by the goal of the analysis, identifying sentences related to European integration. These we define as sentences those which clearly (explicitly or in context) refer to the European Union. Sentences referring to integration processes generally or to a general reference to "Europe" were not considered as signs of Europeanization. These included phrases such as "We endorse integration processes", or "It is necessary to implement a European education policy", or "We endorse the values of the European Social Model". At the same time, sentences were also counted when it was unmistakably clear from context that it was about the Union, even if only the word "European" ("evropské") was present. We therefore work with two values of the variable: European and non-European sentences. The analysis included electoral manifestoes of political parties which at the time of the election were either represented in the Chamber of Deputies or subsequently entered it on the basis of these elections. Altogether, this meant 36 campaign platforms from the years 1996–2013.⁴

³ For the definition of "natural sentences" we follow Mikhaylov et al. in which a "natural sentence delimiter" was defined as the following characters: ":", "'?', '!', and '.;'. Bullet-pointed sentence fragments were also defined to be "natural" sentences, even if not ending in one of the five previously declared delimiters. Platforms' table of contents pages were not included in the analysis.

⁴ There were used following election manifestoes: ANO – 2013, ČSSD – 1996, 1998, 2002, 2006, 2010 and 2013, Coalition of KDUČSL and US – 2002, KDU-ČSL – 1996, 1998, 2006, 2010 and 2013, KSČM – 1996, 1998,

To determine in what context European integration is mentioned in platforms of Czech political parties, we performed a quantitative content analysis. We thus defined eight categories reflecting possible contexts of the occurrence of European issues. The first four categories refer to positions of political parties regarding the form of European integration, either on its general direction (Cat. 1), or more specific aspects of its functioning in the sphere of policies (Cat. 2), or its polity or institutions respectively (Cat. 3). The topic of the single European currency has been a particularly important and specific policy theme from the point of view of the Czech economy (as well as of the whole Eurozone), and therefore a special category (Cat. 4) was created. The other categories reflect topics which are not directly related to EU-level affairs, yet nonetheless are connected to the Union in some way. This includes the EU serving as a frame of reference, when the EU or its Member States function as an entity to which the Czech Republic belongs or to which it is or should be compared (Cat. 5). The category of EU funds (Cat. 6) includes the use of resources from the structural funds, i.e. the EU seen as a financial source. In some cases, the EU is also discussed in connection with policies that are clearly domestic; Category 7 addresses this EU impact on domestic politics. The final category (Cat. 8) refers to Czech membership in the EU, be it regarding EU membership as a general campaign priority, the advantages and disadvantages connected to membership, or, more generally, what membership in the Union should mean for the Czech Republic (Table 1).

Table 1: Category of coding schemata

Category	Description
General Position on the Direction of the EU (1)	Position on the general direction of European integration (typically leaning toward some integration paradigms) View on EU enlargement Position on changes to primary law (Lisbon Treaty, etc.) General statements on the relationship to the EU
EU Policies (2)	Position on the functioning of specific EU policies Czech involvement in specific EU policies General stance on economic and monetary union (not including of Czech adoption of the euro) Euroregions and conceptions on their functioning Position of Czech agriculture in the EU
EU Institutions (3)	Position on the form and functioning of EU institutions Position of the functioning of EU decision-making processes
The Euro (4)	Party position on Czech adoption of the euro Fulfilling the convergence criteria in reference to euro adoption
Frame of Reference (5)	The EU seen as a space in which the Czech Republic belongs or should belong The EU as a means to compare The EU as a group of countries the Czech Republic can compare itself with The EU and its Member States as general inspiration The EU as a geographical frame
EU Funds (6)	The EU understood as a source of money that CR must utilize Use of resources from EU funds without reference to a specific policy EU funds seen as a means of solving a specific problem Development of mechanisms and ensuring efficiency of accessing funds on the domestic level

2002, 2006, 2010 and 2013, ODA – 1996, ODS – 1996, 1998, 2002, 2006, 2010 and 2013, SPR-RSČ – 1996 and 1998, SZ – 2006 and 2010, TOP09 – 2010 and 2013, US – 1998 and 2006, Úsvit – 2013, VV – 2010.

Category	Description
National Policies (7)	EU seen as a guide for changes on the domestic level Harmonization of domestic policies with EU law – national policies influenced by EU policies Accepting or rejecting changes in national policy in the context of EU actions
Czech Membership in the EU (8)	Support or rejection of Czech membership in the EU Emphasis of the positive or negative aspects of membership The Role of the CR in the EU (active vs. passive membership)

Source: The authors.

All platforms were coded by the article's authors. The pilot test included coding of seven randomly selected campaign platforms (VV 2010; KSČM 2002; ODS 1998; ANO 2013; KSČM 2006; KSČM 2010; SPR-RSČ 1998 and ODS 2010; with a total of 34.5% „European” sentences) with both authors showing a high level of coding reliability (Krippendorff's alpha = 0.8). In the case of disagreement, codes were assigned a “*mastercode*” on the basis of a discussion between the article's authors. Coding of the remaining platforms was allocated based on random selection among coders due to the high degree of reliability and to save time.

To analyse positions of political parties on European integration, it is possible to use various types of data, from campaign platforms to other printed materials to speeches of party leaders. For the purposes of our analysis, we used data from a regular expert survey conducted by researchers from UNC-Chapel Hill. This type of data is helpful for our purposes for the following reasons: it allows for the option of long-term comparison (though at the time of the finalization of the text this was limited to the years 2002–2014), and additionally contains a wide range of information related to the European integration process and other political topics. Last but not least, it permits using the conclusions taken from the Czech case and putting them in a broader context in the future. In our analysis of the positions of Czech political parties (only parties represented in the Chamber of Deputies), we focused on both the general position of parties regarding European integration (using the question in the CHES on overall orientation of the party leadership towards European integration, ranging from strongly opposed to strongly in favour on a 7-point scale), as well as on party positions defined economically (position on the internal market) as well as politically (position on powers of the European Parliament). The political space so defined is based on the form and historical development of the European Union originally defined primarily as an economic project embodied by the internal market, but later taking on a political dimension with a marked shift towards strengthening the supranational character of the Community (the change in the role of the European Parliament is thus from this perspective symbolic).

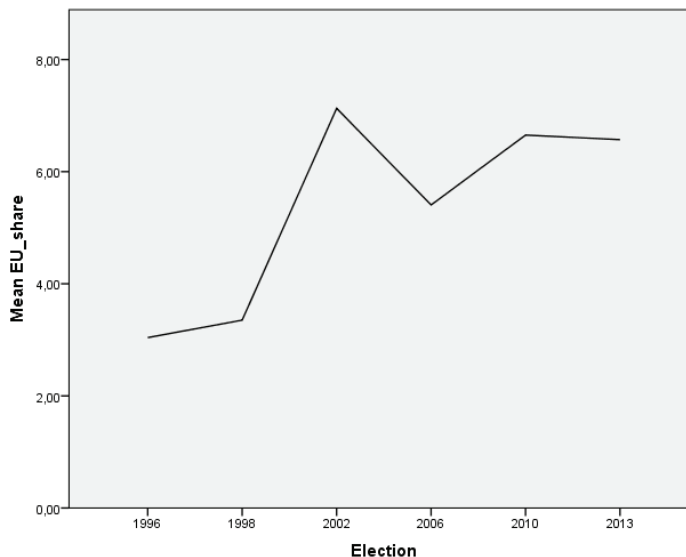
The Importance of European Issues

When characterizing the relationship of political parties and European integration, alongside a party's position is the importance it attaches to the issue. In other words, the importance of differences in positions among individual parties regarding a specific issue (both for the decision of voters as well as the actions of party representatives) varies hand in hand with the emphasis a political party places on that issue.

We thus focus on answering a few sub-questions. First, we are interested in how the importance of European issues have developed in the party system as a whole (defined by

relevant political parties⁵) as measured by the average share of European sentences in the election platform of political parties in a given year (Figure 1).

Figure 1: Importance of European issues in the platforms of political parties, 1996–2013 (% of sentences on Europe)



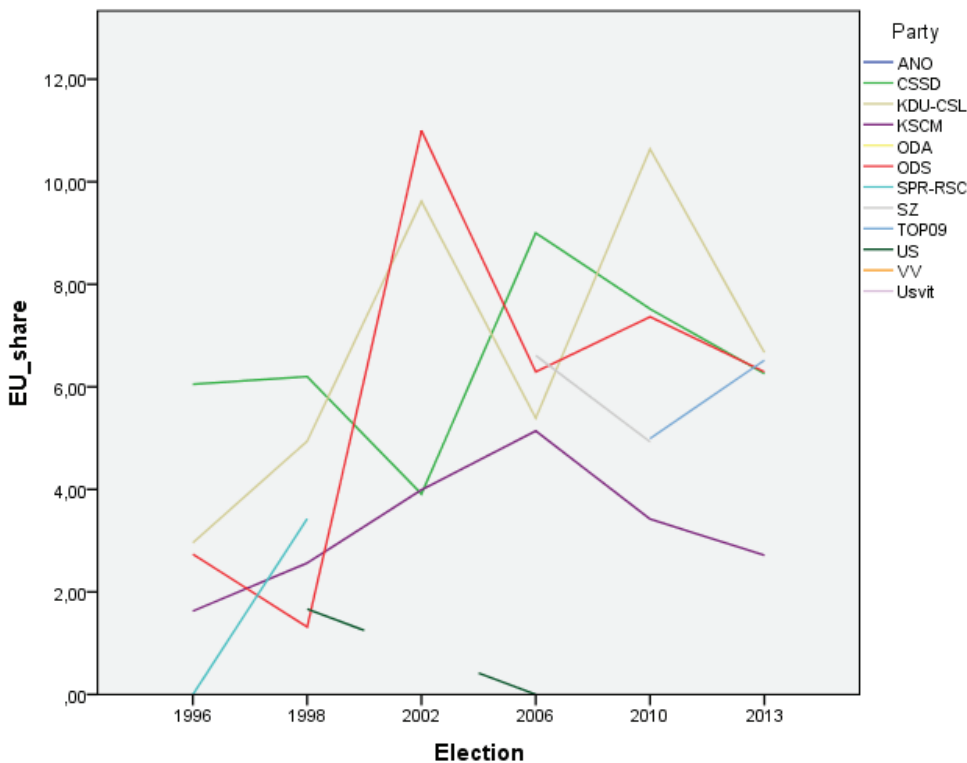
Source: The authors.

The graph shows a shift taking place during the elections of 2002, before which party platforms placed very little emphasis on the topic of European integration, but significantly increased during the 2002 campaign. While before 2002 “Eurosentences” represented just 3.2% of platform content on average, after 2002 such sentences doubled to 6.4%. From the point of view of the platform content of relevant political parties, it is possible to describe 2002 as the most Europeanized election. This can be explained by the fact that the election was held less than a year before the signing of the accession treaty and a referendum on Czech entry to the EU. The issue of Europe played an unprecedented role throughout the election campaign as well as in the context of possible coalition combinations, when the Euroscepticism of ODS (see below for details) significantly limited its coalition options with centre-right parties (during the campaign, the chairman of KDU-ČSL at the time ruled out entering into a government with ODS, “*which doesn’t want [to join] the EU*”). The increase in the importance of European issues in 2002 is not particularly surprising and confirms the conclusions of other similarly oriented studies pointing out the effect of exceptional events on the increase in the importance of European topics. Ken Benoit e.g. explains the increase in the importance of European issues for Irish political parties during the referendum on the Lisbon Treaty (Benoit 2009). Since then, the importance of Europeanization in Czech party platforms has on average experienced a slight drop, though this topic has been markedly more important compared with in the 1990s, now that Czech membership in the Union is an “*everyday reality*.”

⁵ We define relevant political parties as those which at the time of an election either were represented in the Chamber of Deputies or as a result of that election won seats in the Chamber.

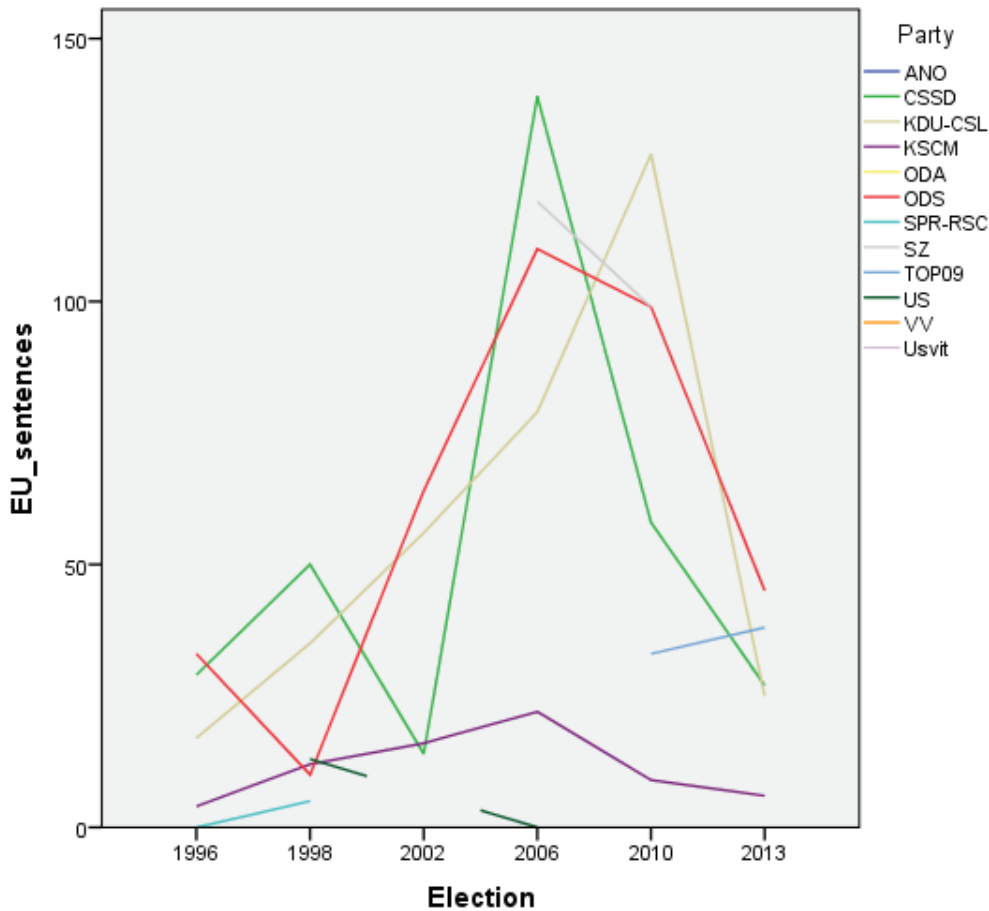
The aforementioned growth in importance of European topics in party platforms since 2002 is observable across political parties (Figures 2 and 3), though it is necessary to take into account the variability caused by the saliency of European issues. One exception was ČSSD, which presented a rather unconventional party platform in 2002. This document did not take the form of a single cohesive text divided into various thematic chapters, but instead consisted of essays by fictional citizens of different social backgrounds presenting their problems and the party’s proposed solutions. In ČSSD’s case, since 2002 there has been a slight increase in Europeanization of the platform (6.1% compared to 6.7%). However, if we view the election platform of the 2002 Social Democrats as an outlier, then even ČSSD shows a significant increase in the importance of European integration in party platforms since 2002 (to 7.6%). On the other hand, ČSSD’s campaign platforms from the 1990s already demonstrated an above-average level of Europeanization. This was likely one way to define itself against the somewhat Eurosceptic ODS at the time; even so, issues related to the EU never represented a cleavage in the party system.

Figure 2: Importance of European issues – comparison of political parties 1996–2013 (% of sentences on Europe)



Source: The authors.

Figure 3: Importance of European issues – comparison of political parties 1996–2013 (number of sentences on Europe)



Source: The authors.

On the other hand, KSCM dedicated the least amount of space to European issues (only 3.2% on average).⁶ Czech Communists have long searched for consensus on European issues. While the party elite has managed to develop a united EU position on the direction and role in the Czech Republic (after some initial ideological disputes), the situation is complicated by the relatively heterogeneous membership of the party base, which has either an opposing or fractured view. Only a very general and sparse position on the direction of integration (both qualitatively and quantitatively regarding the frequency of European references) is possible for there to be a minimum of consensus (interview with Jiří Dolejš, 5 June 2014).

In sum, entry to the European Union has meant a significant increase in the importance of European issues in the platforms of Czech political parties. On the other hand, it cannot be stated that this increase occurred linearly (after the elections directly leading up to Czech accession, the average importance parties placed on European issues in their platforms fell slightly); moreover, observable differences exist between individual parties which are explainable primarily by the specifics of individual actors, but also in the form

⁶ In our comparisons, we did not include US or its electoral platform, which became a symbol for an unsuccessful and to a certain extent desperate attempt of a party facing a steep decline in public support to try to transform itself into an anarcho-libertarian organization; the platform did not contain a single sentence on European integration.

the campaign platform takes. General data on importance, however, only gives a basic idea about the relationship between parties and European integration. A content analysis of “Europe” in the platforms of Czech political parties allows us a more detailed view.

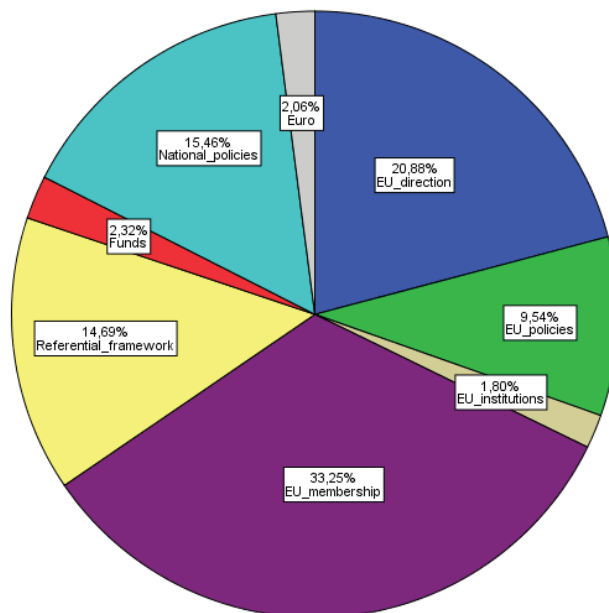
The Issues

Political parties are key agents of public discourse. It is they who play a critical role in determining how and which topics are discussed in the public sphere. As such, the way European integration is understood by the public (and potentially for support in the area of European integration) provides crucial context to how the EU is presented. It is not enough to speak only of how much European integration is discussed, but in what way it is discussed.

It is clear from looking at the overall shares of individual categories (see Table 2 below) that for the entire period under review, the topic of Europe has dominated Czech party platforms in two contexts: in connection with issues of specific EU policies (almost a quarter of all Eurosentences) and in the context of EU funds (almost a fifth of such sentences). These two are followed by sentences dedicated to the general direction of the European integration process and the EU serving a frame of reference. Platforms give surprisingly little attention to the issue of the adoption of the single European currency (not quite 4% of all Eurosentences), and political parties give almost no thought to the issue of the form and role of EU institutions (less than 1% of all clauses).

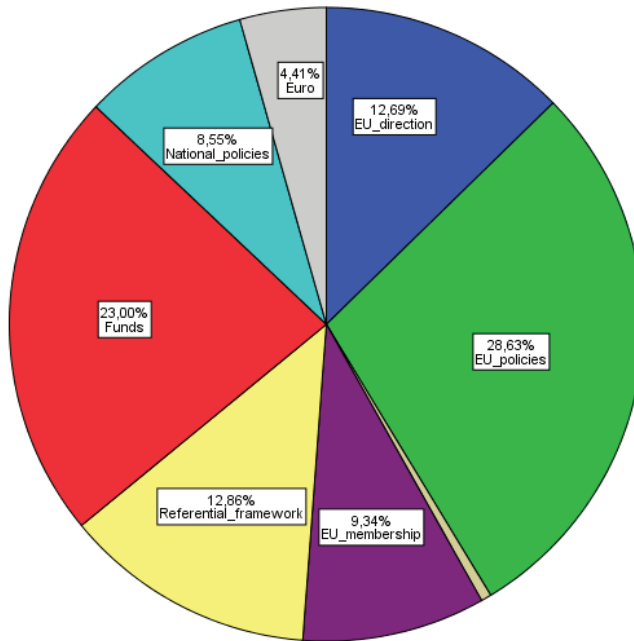
As in the case of importance of European issues for Czech party platforms, changes occur over time as well as in the case of the context in which parties mention European integration. Graphs 4 and 5 demonstrate a substantial shift in the means by which parties have referred to the EU.

Figure 4: Occurrences of individual EU categories in platforms of political parties (1996–2002)



Source: The authors.

Figure 5: Occurrences of individual EU categories in platforms of political parties (2006–2013)



Source: The authors.

Before 2006, the most frequent context regarding European issues was logically discussion surrounding Czech membership in the European Union (about every third Eurosentence) followed by sentences regarding the general direction of the European integration process and evaluations thereof (every fifth Eurosentence). EU policies were only given about one-tenth of sentences on Europe, while financial aid from the EU side was practically non-existent (about 2% of Eurosentences), even though the Czech Republic, like other candidate countries from Central and Eastern Europe, was a recipient of subsidies from EU programmes (PHARE). However, from 1993–2003, this only amounted to approx. 25 billion CZK (less than 1 billion euros), much less than in the period after Czech accession. It is also possible that this financing did not resonate with the media as much as it did later on. After 2004, the country was included as a “*net recipient*” of funding from EU budgets; since then (up to the end of 2014), almost 30 billion euros have been allocated to the Czech Republic, used for among other things infrastructure improvements, economic development, support of employment, etc.

Entry to the EU significantly changed how references to European integration occurred. The category of EU funds recorded the largest growth (approx. 20%). In other words, every fourth EU reference in Czech party platforms since the country’s accession has concerned obtaining funding from the EU; this trend has only increased over time (22.3% in 2006; 22.8% in 2010; 25.3% in 2013; see Table 2 below). EU policy has become the most common category (with almost 30% or Eurosentences), while only about one in eight Eurosentences in party platforms address the general direction of the European integration process and an evaluation of it.

Table 2: Share of individual categories of Eurosentences, 1996–2013 (percentages in columns)

	1996	1998	2002	2006	2010	2013	Total
EU_direction	23.4	19.8	19.9	10.1	18.1	4.9	14.8
EU_policies	4.5	9.5	13.2	24.7	32.2	29.1	23.8
EU_institutions	1.8	0.8	2.6	0.6	0.4	0.5	0.9
EU_membership	29.7	34.9	34.4	11.4	5.5	14.3	15.4
Referential_framework	23.4	13.5	9.3	15.9	10.3	12.1	13.3
Funds	0	1.6	4.6	22.3	22.8	25.3	17.7
National_policies	16.2	19.8	11.3	13.1	5.7	4.4	10.3
Euro	0.9	0	4.6	1.9	4.9	9.3	3.8
N	111	126	151	466	487	182	1523

Source: The authors.

The lack of space given to questions of the single European currency illustrates Czech parties' evasiveness regarding a euro adoption date. Exceptions to this occurred in 2002, when euro adoption was discussed in the platforms of ODS and KDU-ČSL, and in 2010 and 2013 (after the onset of the Eurozone crisis), during which the euro appeared in platforms across the party spectrum; it was especially important for TOP 09 (see below). The „frame of reference” category was most observable in the first half of the 1990s, at a time typified by slogans about the “return to Europe” (Havlík, Vykoupilová 2008), yet before the Czech Republic fully began negotiations on its accession to the EU.

It is also possible to see differences in how the platforms of political parties have referred to the EU (Table 3). In light of how political parties have referred to European integration, for purposes of analysis the categories of EU institutions and of EU policies have been merged.

Table 3: Share of EU categories in platforms of individual political parties (percentages in rows)

	EU_direction	EU_policies_and_institutions	EU_membership	Referential_framework	Funds	National_policies	Euro	N
ANO	0	25.0	11.1	16.7	30.6	16.7	0	36
ČSSD	8.9	15.2	18.4	20.9	20.3	10.8	5.7	316
KDU-ČSL	10.7	25.4	17.2	11.5	18.6	12.1	4.4	338
KSČM	18.8	26.1	23.2	8.7	13.0	7.2	2.9	69
ODA	62.1	10.3	24.1	0	0	0	3.4	29
ODS	18.5	27.0	18.8	10.9	12.0	9.8	3.0	367
SPR-RSČ	0	0	100.0	0	0	0	0	5
SZ	18.7	29.7	1.9	14.8	24.9	10.0	0	209
TOP 09	8.7	29.0	8.7	15.9	15.9	5.8	15.9	69
US	15.4	0	38.5	0	0	46.2	0	13
Úsvit	60.0	0	20.0	0	20.0	0	0	5

	EU_direction	EU_policies_and_institutions	EU_membership	Referential_framework	Funds	National_policies	Euro	N
VV	17.9	44.8	3.0	6.0	22.4	6.0	0	67
Total	14.8	24.6	15.4	13.3	17.7	10.3	3.8	1523

Source: The authors.

In the Czech context, the issue of the general direction of the European integration process, as well as specific topics, has for a long time been addressed primarily by the two Eurosceptic parties of ODS and KSČM; SZ has offered positive attitudes since 2000. On the other hand, the other two long-established parties, KDU-ČSL and ČSSD, only deal with the general direction of European integration (and in the case of ČSSD, also regarding EU policies) to a limited extent. The Social Democrats generally present the EU through the prism of financing from EU funds and as a frame of reference in their platforms – as an example that the Czech Republic should follow or compare itself to. The topic of EU funds is also important for SZ as well as KDU-ČSL, though ANO’s 2013 platform gave the most attention of all to funding on the European level. Interestingly, the topic of EU funds also was among the most important topics for new protest-oriented parties such as VV in 2010 and Úsvit in 2013 – parties which did not have a clearly articulated programme (not only) from the point of view of their own position on European integration.

In sum, European integration has become a fixed element of Czech parties’ platforms, with the country’s accession marking a key point. One notable shift occurred in the way the European integration process has been discussed: initially, the EU was chiefly mentioned regarding the general direction of the EU or as a frame of reference that the Czech Republic could utilize to become a full member; later, political parties gave markedly more space to questions of specific EU policies and at the same time, the EU has been increasingly seen as a source of financial support to be used on the national level.

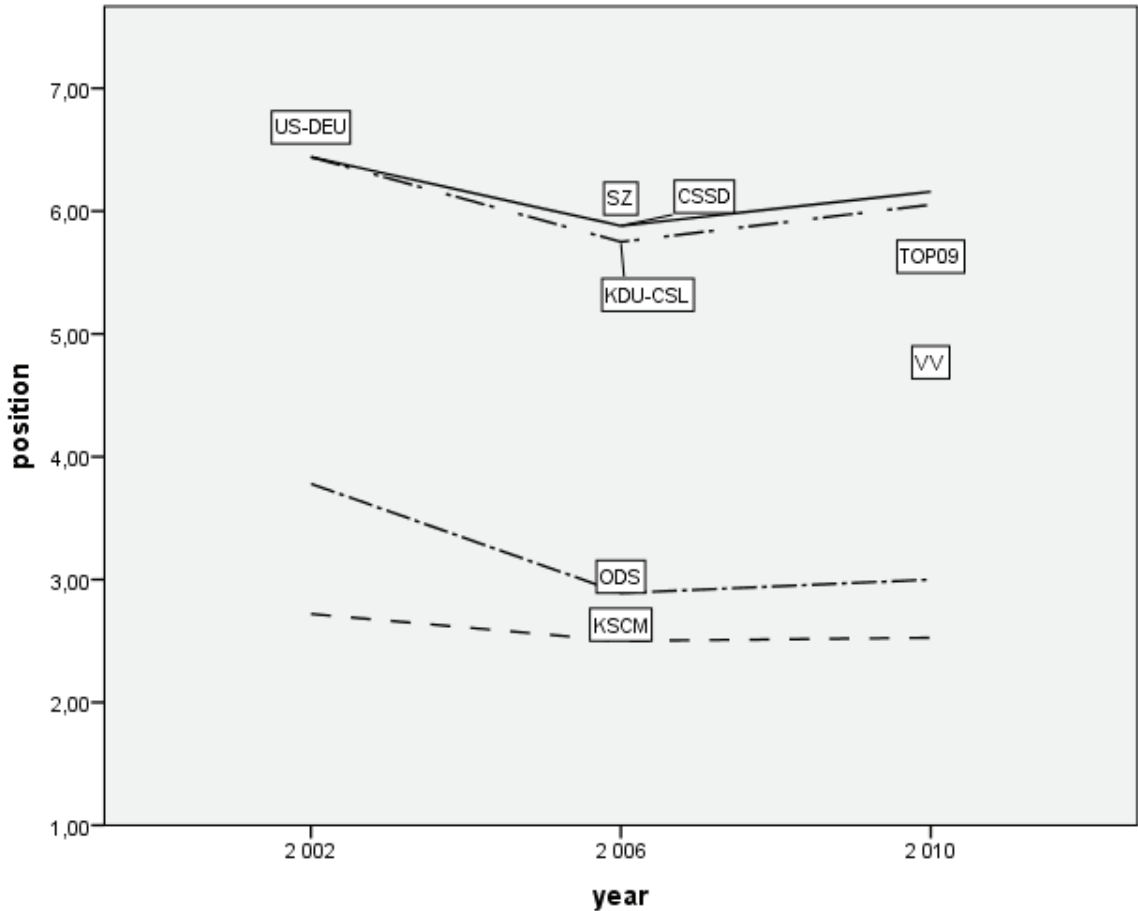
Positions on European Integration

We have already pointed out how the importance of European issues changed for Czech political parties. Equally important for an understanding of the role of the EU in party competition are the positions of political parties regarding European integration. Previous comparative studies, as well as some case studies, have noted the remarkable role Euroscepticism plays in the Czech party system (Rohrschneider and Whitefield 2008). The goal of this chapter is thus to map parties’ positions on the European integration process including shifts over time, as well as to explain the setting for the relatively prominent role of Euroscepticism in the Czech party system.

Figure 6 illustrates the development of general stances of Czech parties regarding European integration. This graph shows the division of political parties into two groups – a pro-European group (ČSSD, KDU-ČSL, TOP 09, and SZ), whose members are possible to characterize quite similarly as having a positive attitude to the direction of the European integration process. The duo of KSČM and ODS on the other hand belong to the Eurosceptic

group of parties (comp. Kopecký 2007; Havlík, Vykoupilová 2007; Hloušek, Kaniok 2014; Hanley 2008), with the stance of KSČM in regard to European integration even more critical than that of ODS. One party with rather vague positions was the populist VV, which failed to provide particularly specific programme elements in other policy spheres as well (Havlík 2012). European integration has thus been a constant topic, sharply dividing Czech political parties and adding potentially polarizing elements to Czech party politics.

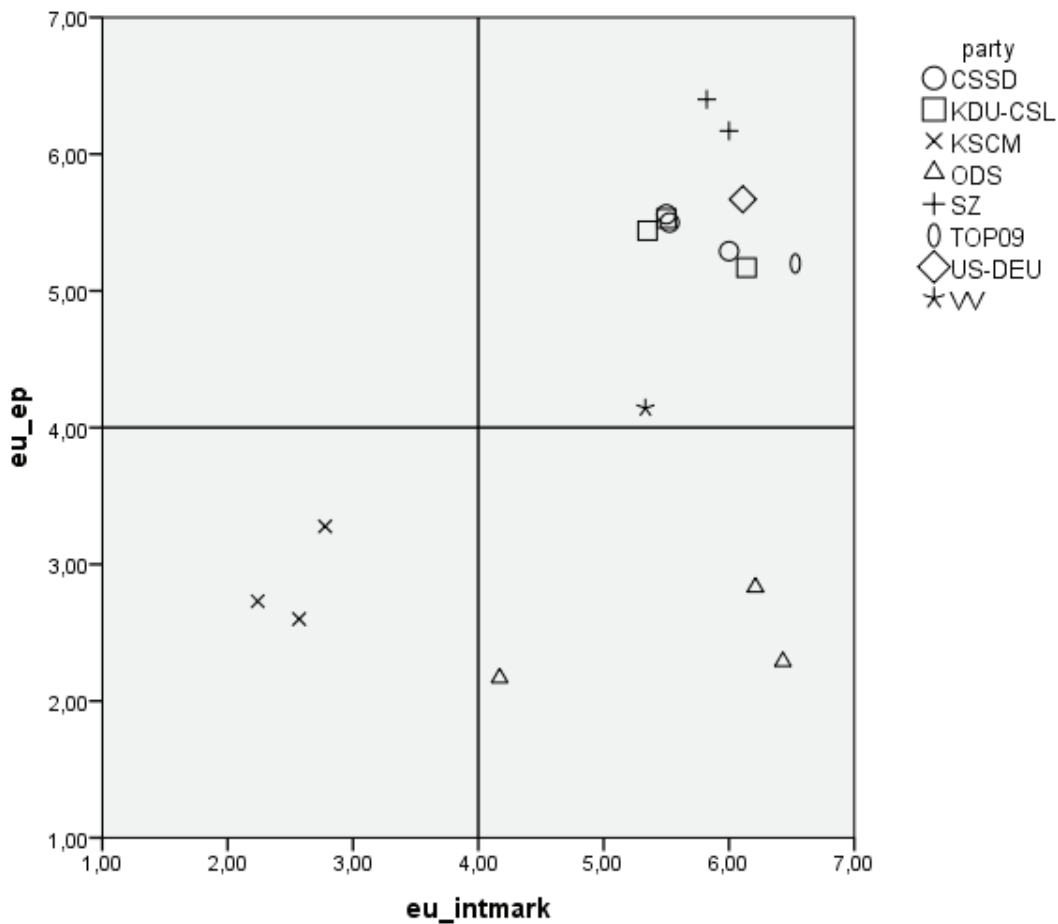
Figure 6: Evolution of positions of political parties regarding European integration (2002-2010)



Source: The authors, based on CHES data.

Figure 7 offers a more detailed look at the stances Czech parties take on European integration, in which political parties are placed in a two-dimensional political space, with one axis representing a party's position on the powers of the European Parliament, and the other axis regarding the EU's internal market.

Figure 7: Positions of political parties in political space (powers of the EP and support for the internal market)



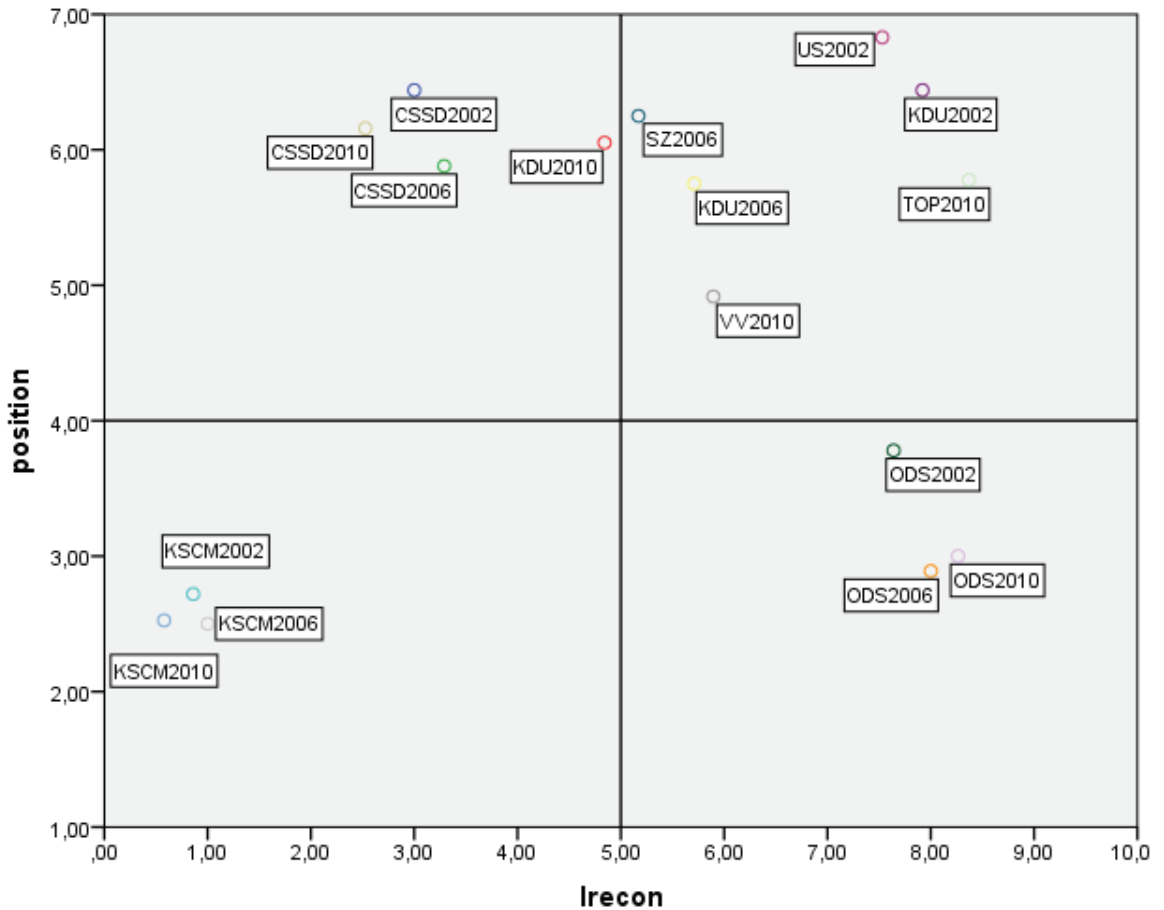
Source: The authors, based on Bakker et al. 2015a; Bakker et al. 2015b; Hooghe et al. 2010.

The figure indicates that dividing Czech political parties into “pro-European” and “anti-European” or Eurosceptic camps may oversimplify things. Along with a group of parties that hold a positive stance to increasing the powers of the European Parliament as well as strengthening the internal market (ČSSD, KDU-ČSL, SZ, TOP 09, US-DEU, and to a limited extent VV as well), a stark discrepancy can be seen between KSČM and ODS. While KSČM has adopted a critical stance towards political as well as economic integration, ODS shows support for economic integration associated with the forming of the internal market. Placing the political parties in a “European” political space in any case confirms the relevance of the “Europe” issue for increased potential for conflict in party competition.

This potential for conflict is further documented in Figure 8, which shows the position of Czech parties in a political space defined by their overall stance on the European integration process on one axis, and their general positions on the economy (left-right) on the other; this left-right axis has long been the dominant cleavage of Czech party politics (Hloušek, Kopeček 2008; Linek 2013). Stances on European integration sharply divide both the right and left parts of the political spectrum. In other words, parties that are close on economic questions nevertheless strongly differ in their attitudes to the European integration process, whether it be on the left with the pro-European ČSSD and the Eurosceptic

KSČM, or on the right, in the case of the Eurosceptic ODS and the centre-right, pro-European parties of US, KDU-ČSL, and TOP 09.

Figure 8: Location of parties on in the political space (position regarding European integration and the economic dimension)



Source: The authors, based on Bakker et al. 2015a, Bakker et al. 2015b, Hooghe et al. 2010.

This means not just the potential for conflict on European issues, but also important effects on the functioning of the Czech political system. Clashing points of view on European issues greatly influenced the formation of a coalition after the 2002 elections, when even before the election KDU-ČSL ruled out any possible coalition with ODS due to the latter's Euroscepticism; in the end, the resulting government of otherwise ideologically distant political parties (along with the Christian Democrats were the Social Democrats and economically liberal US-DEU) is defined primarily as a "pro-European government" (Havlík 2009). It should briefly be noted that differing views on European integration were not the only reason hampering cooperation among ODS, KDU-ČSL and US-DEU, as personal animosities between the new chairman of KDU-ČSL and former ODS chairman Václav Klaus, and the way in which US emerged (as a splinter group of ODS) defined the relationship on both sides. The issue of Europe later also has functioned as a dividing line of the Czech right, such as in 2010 when one of the key aspects of the campaign was when the newly-formed centre-right TOP 09 explicitly defined itself as a *pro-European* centre-right alternative to ODS.

Conclusions

According to expectations, the platforms of Czech political parties have notably Europeanized since the country's entry into the EU. While the 1990s saw few references to the European Union in the programmes of individual parties – about 3% of total statements – and generally regarding the costs and benefits of Czech accession, we see significant growth of “European” issues leading up to the 2002 elections, which immediately preceded entry into the Union. Thus, from a quantitative point of view, Czech party platforms Europeanized to a similar degree as platforms of parties in other Member States.

Research reveals rather significant differences in the subtopics that parties emphasized in their context of their European plans. A higher observed difference is clear to see in the case of individual parties, depending on if the parties gave more attention to European affairs (thus mainly Categories 1 and 2) or to European funding (Category 6), and thus the material advantages that EU membership offers. While parties must actively address the content of European issues in the first two categories, in the case of the “funding” category, they more or less see the EU as a cheap and quick source of cash, which can be used on practically anything, but especially for fulfilling promises concerning national politics. It is shown that the dominant party of the Left, the ČSSD, understands the EU to a marked extent as “easy money”. This situation therefore has some similarities with Slovenian and Hungarian cases, and demonstrates just how EU funds have played an important role in the Europeanization of the countries of Central and Eastern Europe. The Czech 2013 election campaign subsequently amplifies the aforementioned research results, namely in terms of further increasing the importance of the topic of Structural Funds, while debate regarding the single European currency in the country was virtually non-existent. In connection with the oft-discussed issue of the EU's democratic deficit, it is noteworthy that at a time when the European continent has been plunged into economic crisis and the EU began a wide-ranging discussion on its own future, this has been largely ignored in the platforms of Czech parties. Indeed, relevant parties have even avoided more detailed visions of future EU development. In the future, it would be interesting to undertake a similarly focused comparative study. As agents of public discourse, political parties have a key role to play, among other things in the public's perceptions of European integration. The roots of the relatively low awareness of European integration and the low trust in the EU (particularly in the context of Central and Eastern Europe) may spring not only from the low importance that political parties attach to European issues in crucial (national) elections, but also the frames through which parties discuss the EU with the public. In other words, the absence of a debate on the form and direction of European integration on the one hand, and the EU's relegation to a source of finance on the other, is not the best path towards the construction and strengthening of a European *démos*.

The second portion of the text looked at the issue of the position of Czech political parties regarding European integration. The Czech Republic is a unique case in the region as a country with long-lasting, relevant Eurosceptic political parties. The results of our analysis point to a substantial potential for conflict on European topics, flowing not only from party differences in attitudes in the context of European integration, but also in the wider context of the political space. In other words, it is not just that it is possible to identify Eurosceptic and pro-European parties in the Czech arena, but also that the issue of Europe divides political parties that are otherwise relatively close from an ideological point of view. Both within

the right side as well as the left side of the party spectrum, we see divergence in the perceptions of the European integration process. Up to this point, in practice this potential for conflict has never played a role in the formation of a governing coalition, with the exception of in 2002 (just before Czech accession to the EU, the most important moment regarding Europe up to that point since 1989). The Czech case thus illustrates that under specific circumstances (the differences between party positions, as well as sufficient importance of the topic), European issues may play a crucial role in the functioning of party systems.

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