

# Transnational intra-party dynamics on European democratic reforms: the case of the Europarties

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## Abstract

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One of the core elements of the European Union's (EU) democratic deficit is the lack of a genuine supranational political competition. Some processes were intended to mitigate these effects, such as the introduction of the *Spitzenkandidaten* (SK) and the possibility of creating Transnational Lists (TL) for European Parliament (EP) elections. These processes would be accompanied by a strengthening of the role of the European political parties (henceforth, Europarties) as the only transnational party federations capable of mobilising their national members in decisions beyond the EP. Europarties would thus be able to promote transnational candidates to the European institutions and become true political parties at the EU-level. However, Europarties are heterogeneous organisations of national parties, where ideological dynamics of these transnational parties can be subject to party dissidence, with differentiated positions on European democracy during EU elections. By adopting a principal-agent model of party organisation, the aim of this research is to analyse what effects did Europarty internal dynamics have had on the creation of a common position on the SK and TL. Based on evidence from Europarties, we suggest that supranational intra-party dissidence is low regarding EU democratic reforms.

**Keywords:** European democracy; Intra-party dynamics; Europarties; Democratic deficit; EU elections; Competitive factionalism.

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**Resumen.** *Dinámicas transnacionales intrapartidistas en las reformas democráticas europeas: el caso de los europartidos*

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Uno de los elementos centrales del déficit democrático de la Unión Europea (UE) es la falta de una auténtica competencia política supranacional. Algunos procesos pretendían mitigar estos efectos, como la introducción de los Spitzenkandidaten (SK) y la posibilidad de crear Listas Transnacionales (TL) para las elecciones al Parlamento Europeo (PE). Estos procesos irían acompañados de un fortalecimiento del papel de los partidos políticos europeos (en adelante, europartidos) como las únicas federaciones transnacionales de partidos capaces de movilizar a sus miembros nacionales en decisiones más allá del PE. Los europartidos podrían así promover candidatos transnacionales a las instituciones europeas y convertirse en verdaderos partidos políticos a nivel de la UE. Sin embargo, los europartidos son organizaciones heterogéneas de partidos nacionales, donde la dinámica ideológica de estos partidos transnacionales puede estar sujeta a disidencia partidaria, con posiciones diferenciadas sobre la democracia europea durante las elecciones de la UE. Adoptando un modelo de organización partidaria de principal-agente, el objetivo de esta investigación es analizar qué efectos han tenido las dinámicas internas de los europartidos en la creación de una posición común sobre los SK y las TL. Con base en la evidencia de los europartidos, sugerimos que la disidencia intrapartidaria supranacional es baja con respecto a las reformas democráticas de la UE.

**Palabras clave:** Democracia europea; Dinámica intrapartidista; Europartidos; Déficit democrático; Elecciones europeas; Faccionismo competitivo.

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**Resum.** *Dinàmiques transnacionals intrapartidistes a les reformes democràtiques europees: el cas dels europartits*

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Un dels elements centrals del dèficit democràtic de la Unió Europea (UE) és la manca d'una autèntica competència política supranacional. Alguns processos pretenien mitigar aquests efectes, com ara la introducció dels *Spitzenkandidaten* (SK) i la possibilitat de crear Llistes Transnacionals (TL) per a les eleccions al Parlament Europeu (PE). Aquests processos anirien acompanyats d'un enfortiment del paper dels partits polítics europeus (d'ara endavant, europartits), com les úniques federacions transnacionals de partits capaços de mobilitzar els seus membres nacionals en decisions més enllà del PE. Els europartits podrien així promoure candidats transnacionals a les institucions europees i esdevenir veritables partits polítics a nivell de la UE. Tot i això, els europartits són organitzacions heterogènies de partits nacionals, on la dinàmica ideològica d'aquests partits transnacionals pot estar subjecta a dissidència partidària, amb posicions diferenciades sobre la democràcia europea durant les eleccions de la UE. Adoptant un model d'organització partidària de principal agent, l'objectiu d'aquesta investigació és analitzar quins efectes han tingut les

dinàmiques internes dels europartits en la creació d'una posició comuna sobre els SK i les TL. Amb base a l'evidència dels europartits, suggerim que la dissidència intrapartidària supranacional és baixa respecte a les reformes democràtiques de la UE.

**Paraules clau:** Democràcia europea; Dinàmica intrapartidista; Europartits; Dèficit democràtic; Eleccions europees; Faccionisme competitiu.

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## Summary

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## 1. STATE OF THE ART

A functioning democracy, more specifically a representative democracy, requires the existence of political parties and party competition (Sartori, 2005). In theory, party and electoral competition is an essential requirement for an ideal democracy. However, in a transnational democracy, the existence of transnational parties that aggregate the interests of a wide range of citizens from many different cultures follows in questioning their own integrity and political action. This is even more evident when analysing the role of existing transnational party structures in the European Union.

The study of political parties is essential to understanding the political and democratic functioning of the European Union (EU). The EU is run by party politicians, where the three branches of its political leadership —the European Commission, the Council of the EU (or the Council of Ministers) and the European Council— are predominantly recruited through political parties (Hix & Lord, 1997). Even the individuals with the greatest decision-making power or influence over the decision-making process within the EU, such as the German Chancellor, the French President, or the President of the Commission, are party politicians (Johansson & Raunio, 2019). Thus, it can be said that European democracy is a party democracy (Hix et al., 2007; Hix & Høyland, 2022; Johansson & Raunio, 2019).

The activity of political parties in the EU is represented in three interconnected dimensions (Ladrech, 2006): firstly, the national parties that select candidates for the European Parliament (EP) lists; secondly, the political groups in the EP that select cabinet members such as internal committee chairs, rapporteurs, and participate in the legislative process in EP plenary votes; and thirdly, by the European political parties — or Europarties— that organise extra-parliamentary activities such as summits of national party leaders, who make up these organisations, at transnational level. The formation of political parties within the European Union was the result of an evolution in the representativeness of the interests of the Member States that would go beyond the typically technocratic model of the Union by establishing a model of representative democracy (Hix & Lord, 1997). A prerequisite for the democratic and electoral

development of the Union would be the creation of transnational political parties (Bardi & Calossi, 2009).

This research will focus on the Europarties as actors of political competition on a transnational level. Europarties are transnational federations composed of national political parties of the Member States based on a common political ideology and coordinate exchanges of information and dialog between political elites of the Member States (Johansson & Raunio, 2019; Lelieveldt & Princen, 2011). Theoretically, Europarties have a unified identity, a common ideology (provided in a party statute), and a coordinated policy platform, where members from various national parties across the EU establish coordinated activities and summits, such as Europarty congresses, which can lead to a pan-European perspective on issues (Charvát, 2019; Johansson, 2017). Within the principal-agent model, Europarties act as transnational advocacy coalitions, that is, they are groups of like-minded actors representing various organisations who share beliefs and engage in coordinated activities and try to influence policy (Raunio & Johansson, 2024). In this sense, Europarties act as agents of their national political parties, which act as principals that delegate their resources to these transnational structures (mainly members and political decisions).

Additionally, Europarties have affiliated political groups in the EP, allowing MEPs to coordinate their actions and influence EU policies more effectively (Hix & Høyland, 2022). Although Europarties and political groups in the EP have very close ties in EU policymaking, an Europarty is not the same as a political group. The former is a pan-European organisation that coordinates policies and networks between member national parties and has its own bureau structure; whereas a political group is a group formed within the EP made up of MEPs with “common ideologies and policy preferences and has its own leadership and structure” (McCormick, 2011, p. 259).

Perspectives from neo-functional theory place Europarties as important actors in combating the European Union's democratic deficit, mainly thanks to their function of cooperation and communication between national parties at the transnational level such as making agreements and exchanging ideas and solutions when problems arise (Witkowska, 2013). Studies on Europarties, notably on their influence and participation in decision-making processes (Delwit et al., 2004; Hecke, 2010), European treaty reform (Johansson, 2016, 2017; Lightfoot, 2003), EU institutional reform mechanisms (van Hecke et al., 2018; Wolfs et al., 2021), and, recently, the impact of Europarty finance on their institutional development (Wolfs, 2022), have increased significantly over the years. However, there is a gap in the research on Europarties regarding their positioning around institutional processes and what influences these positions.

## 2. RESEARCH DESIGN

Europarties are heterogeneous organizations of national parties, whose members and their individual positions can impact their internal organizational structure and

Europarty ideology (Bardi & Calossi, 2009; Bressanelli, 2014) and, in effect, can influence the choice of a common position (Klüver & Rodon, 2013; van Hecke et al., 2018). Thus, the internal organizational and ideological dynamics of these transnational parties are subject to the creation of intra-party disagreements, dissent, polarized and centrifugal party opinion —also known as “competitive factionalism” (Boucek, 2009).

These intraparty subgroups are transformed on the basis of institutional incentives (*ibid.*). At the European level, two EU institutional mechanisms aimed to promote greater visibility of Europarties in the electoral arena and legitimise their participation in decision-making processes in the legislative arena (Lefkofridi & Katsanidou, 2018; van Hecke et al., 2018): the process of electing the President of the European Commission through the *Spitzenkandidaten* (SK, hereinafter) during the 2014 and 2019 European Parliament (EP, hereinafter) elections, and the possibility of introducing a European-wide constituency through Transnational Lists (TL, hereinafter) in 2018 and, more recently, in 2024 alongside the SK.

Despite being mechanisms that were intended to combat the effects of the democratic deficit, research suggests that there are intra-party discrepancies within the Europarties in their position on the SK and the TL. This was verified when some members of the Europarties contested the mechanisms: the very nomination of SK was marked by ideological differences between factions within the Europarties (Wolfs et al., 2021), and positions around the TL were marked by the support of many Member State representatives, but not so much by members of, for example, the European People's Party (EPP), a pro-European party but whose members against were more Eurosceptic and nationalist (Charvát, 2019).

It is essential to understand that the introduction of processes designed to deal with the European democratic deficit requires consensus among the elites in the European space. To fully understand how party competition works at the European level, we need to understand the formation of positions within Europarties, because at the transnational level “national parties cannot pursue their individual political goals but must reach a common position with the national parties of other Member States” (Klüver & Rodon, 2013, p. 649). Thus, this research aims to analyse the internal dynamics of the Europarties and whether they have generated a common position around European institutional processes —in this case, around SK and LT. The analysis of the dynamics focuses on the possible existence of subgroups in their organization during the adoption of the *Spitzenkandidaten* and the discussions and plenary voting in the European Parliament on the Transnational Lists.

This research aims to analyse the effects of the intraparty dynamics of the Europarties on the common positioning on the processes of the *Spitzenkandidaten* and the introduction of Transnational Lists. The methodological elements present in the detailed description aim to answer the following question: “What is the effect of the Europarties’ internal dynamics on their positioning towards the *Spitzenkandidaten* and the introduction of Transnational Lists?”.

There has been little research demonstrating the effect of EU level intraparty organisation and structure on voting and positioning on EU democratic reforms. To this end, the main objective seeks to analyse the dynamics of the Europarties and how they have led to the position of these transnational party federations on certain key points that could alter and evolve the European political structure.

Specifically applied to the processes of SK and TL, I expect Europarties' internal dynamics to impact position outcomes differently from one another. The main reason is that, on the one side, the SK process was an informal and barely institutionalised process that, although it was applied since the 2014 EP elections, it is not present in the European treaties (Heidbreder & Schade, 2020); and on the other side, the TL was the only main EU democratic and electoral reform that was voted in the EP twice —one in 2018 and another in 2022. Even though both processes intended to “upgrade” the Europarties into true political parties competing for an executive position in the EU, the normative implications may vary depending on the political culture of each national delegation. For example, TL might be supported by national delegations that are more familiar with this process and possess a similar electoral system (e.g. open lists / preference voting). As such, reactions between national delegations may vary.

To study internal party dynamics, we will research the existence of possible intraparty friction within the Europarties regarding EU democratic reforms. It is important to know, however, that the concept of “faction” is not applicable to the Europarties, since, on the one hand, they lack grassroots members where there are no individual members in the structures, only national party members (Hertner, 2019); and on the other hand, potential “subgroups” with different opinions and positions inside an Europarty come from its national delegations, from each EU member-state. As such, intraparty friction, that may come particularly from national party members, are exemplified by the different positions taken by party members surrounding policy choices. In this research, Europarty position around the SK and TL is the dependent variable, where the internal party dynamics, that will be established below, will be the independent variables.

## **2.1. Hypotheses**

### **2.1.1. Intraparty rules and regulations**

Firstly, when discussing intraparty democracy, one fundamental concept needs to examine: inclusiveness (Von Dem Berge et al., 2013). Inclusiveness corresponds to the circle of party decision-makers and the extent to which individual party members have the possibility to express their opinion or participate in intraparty decision-making (ibid.). This concept is applied through a party regulation, like a statute, which sets out all the rules for the hierarchical and organisational structure and decision-making bodies. Through its bylaws, a party usually decides on the criteria for membership and whether to limit intraparty voting rights to members in certain decision-making areas

or whether, alternatively, to allow a wider range of supporters with different positions to participate (Cross & Katz, 2013).

Inclusiveness enacts the right to participate in decision-making within the party, as well as the right to form subgroups that support different positions within the party (Von Dem Berge et al., 2013). The very existence of dissidence is jeopardised if intraparty rules limit or even prohibit the creation of subgroups. An intraparty regulation (such as a statute) provides “formal, as well as informal, rules for the organisation of the party that can limit or expand the existence of internal factions” (Ceron, 2019, p. 66).

However, each political party makes choices about the way it organises itself, reflecting its vision of appropriate internal democratic practices, undoubtedly influenced “by its self-interest and its conception of the political party itself” (Cross & Katz, 2013, p. 4). In this case, Europarties have different regulations to their national counterparts. Europarties are made up of several national delegations from different national parties which, although ideologically cohesive, have certain ideological divergences based on their more national than European experience (Johansson & Raunio, 2019). Also, as stated previously, they lack individual membership (Hertner, 2019). While Ceron (2019) believes that more restrictive regulations allow for more cooperative behaviour on the part of insiders, Europarties are expected to instigate the development of more flexible or, applying the concept of Vom Dem Berge et. al (2013), more inclusive regulations, which allow for a broad political positioning field due to the affiliation of various party members from each EU member state.

H1 – Europarties create more flexible regulations / statutes that lead to more cooperative behavior in taking a common position on SK and TL.

### **2.1.2. Intraparty consensus formation**

Initially, the Europarties were created as “children of the groups in the European Parliament” and that “this parenthood has from the outset ensured the groups’ strong influence on party life” (Jansen, 2001, p. 25). However, it is crucial to recognize that Europarties have sought, from the very beginning of their institutionalization, to create a distinct path that would allow them to develop an organizational presence and collective identity separate from their counterparts in the EP (Day, 2005).

As such, consensus-seeking requires extensive contacts within the multi-level membership of Europarties —national parties and MEPs. According to Boucek (2009), multi-level party subgroups can be conceived as a supranational form of co-operative factionalism in which MEPs belonging to many different but ideologically linked national parties agree to co-operate on EU legislative policy. Choosing and voting a lead candidate for the EP elections, according to Wolfs et al. (2021), was marked by friction within the Europarties that made it difficult, for example, to reform the intraparty candidate selection process. Additionally, discussions on the introduction of



Transnational Lists also caused divisions even in more pro-European Europarties such as the EPP (Charvát, 2019).

If the existence of friction within parties stems by the existence of institutional incentives (Boucek, 2003, 2009), then contact between the various internal members is fundamental to achieving internal consensus. Indeed, if the very internal organisational structure of the Europarties and the presentation of institutional incentives in European politics such as the SK and TL lead to the creation of subgroups, then it is important to analyse how national delegations interact with each other and whether this interaction has influenced the positioning of the Europarties around the two processes.

H2A – The greater the contact between Europarties and national parties (members) and MEPs in political groups in the EP, the easier it was to reach a common position on SK and TL.

Additionally, research suggests that more stable and institutionalized Europarties, such as the EPP and PES, appear to reach a level of consensus more easily than other Europarties (Bressanelli, 2014). This can be steamed from either ideological cohesion or a bigger historical and political background, since both these Europarties have existed ever since the 1980s (Bressanelli, 2015; Hix & Lord, 1997). Other Europarties, such as ALDE, can be more fluid, erratic and diverse, with a considerable number of smaller parties with different ideological positions (Bressanelli, 2014, p. 76).

H2B – Sub-groups within more stably organized Europarties such as the EPP and PES showed greater cooperation in reaching a common position on SK and TL than other Europarties.

## 2.2. Methodology

As it is exposed on Table 1, this research analyses nine Europarties that have been institutionalised under the Authority for European Political Parties and European Political Foundations (APPF): European People's Party (EPP), Party of European Socialists (PES), Alliance of European Liberals and Democrats party (ALDE), European Democratic Party (EDP), European Green Party (EGP), European Free Alliance (EFA), Party of the European Left (PEL), European Conservatives and Reformists Party (ECR Party) and Identity and Democracy party (ID Party). The classification of Europarty ideology takes into account data from Europarty manifestos and data from the “Parties and Elections in Europe” project, coordinated by Wolfram Nordsieck, which provides an extensive database of the political orientations of parties across Europe, as well as basic data on these parties, their foundation years, political orientations, membership of Europarties and European Parliament groups (Nordsieck, 2023).

**Table 1. Europarties, their affiliated political groups, and ideology-attitudes**

European political parties	EP political group	Party ideology	EU attitude
<b>European People's Party (EPP)</b>	Group of the European People's Party	Centre-right / right	Europeanist
<b>Party of European Socialists (PES)</b>	Progressive Group of Socialists and Democrats (S&D)	Centre-left / left	Europeanist
<b>Alliance of Liberals and Democrats (ALDE)</b>	Renew Europe	Liberal / centre	Europeanist
<b>European Democratic Party (EDP)</b>		Centre	Europeanist
<b>European Green Party (EGP)</b>	Greens/European Free Alliance Group (Greens/EFA)	Ecologist / centre-left	Europeanist
<b>European Free Alliance (EFA)</b>		Regionalist / centre-left	Europeanist
<b>Party of the European Left (PEL)</b>	The Left in the European Parliament (GUE/NGL)	Left / radical left	Eurosceptic
<b>European Conservatives and Reformists party (ECR Party)</b>	European Conservatives and Reformists (ECR)	Conservative / right to radical right	Eurosceptic
<b>Identity and Democracy Party (ID Party)</b>	Identity and Democracy (ID)	Nationalist / radical right	Eurosceptic

This research is based on a qualitative research analysis and the data in analysis was collected from 2023 to the last two weeks before the 2024 EP elections. In order to assess intraparty impacts on internal position-taking on a given issue, direct contact with its internal members is required through semi-structured interviews. Selected members for interviews were bureau Europarty members (e.g. presidents, secretaries-general, vice-presidents, and committee members), MEPs from the EP political groups with a portfolio on Constitutional Affairs (AFCO), as well as assistants to these MEPs in case they were not available. Ten interviews were conducted from all Europarties, with the exception of the ECR Party. Due to lack of availability of their members, data on the ECR Party was retrieved from already existing interviews with board members and MEPs present in both literature and media content (media sources are presented below).

Perhaps the biggest constraint surrounding interview analysis is the general low number of interviews conducted. However, this research supports depth over breadth, whereby focusing on a smaller number of participants, I was able to conduct in-depth interviews that explore the complexities of intraparty dynamics in greater detail. While it is entirely true that a sample size of one or two members from each Europarty might not be representative of the entire structure, it is also important to consider the depth of insight one can gain from in-depth interviews. Information that was gathered provided rich, nuanced information that might not be possible to capture with larger and more superficial expert or elite surveys.

For the purposes of data triangulation, additional data was taken from European media content sources. Information from online European media platforms on political issues at European level were taken from *Politico.eu*, *EURACTIV.eu*, *EUObserver.com*, *TheParliamentMagazine.eu*, and *Euronews.com*. These media channels provide vital information for analysing internal party positions, notably reports from Europarty members about voting outcomes from a congress that it is not available on the webpage of the Europarty nor the political group. This method is also important in the event of one of the following unforeseen events during the data interpretation phase: if the interviewees did not provide the necessary answers / lack of clarity in their answers to the questions; the unavailability of potential members for interviewing before and after the 2024 EP elections; and voting percentages and/or support for the SK and TL processes that the interviewees are not aware of.

Additionally, data from the Europarties' statutes was also collected to specifically test the internal rules hypothesis (H1). For the same hypothesis, I will combine data from the Europarties' statutes with interview and / or media information, since some aspects of Europarty membership suspension or, worst, expulsion may not be fully present in the statutes, or they are left rather ambiguous. Table 2 summarizes the applied methodology and Table 3 showcases the Europarties' statutes analysed for this research.

**Table 2. Methodology**

Method	Data	Source	N
<b>Content analysis</b>	European news media	Politico Europe; Euronews; EUObserver; EURACTIV; The Parliament	111
<b>Interviews</b>	Semi-structured	Europarty bureau members: Presidents, secretaries-general, vice-presidents and committee members.  MEPs from the political groups in the European Parliament.  MEP assistants	10

**Table 3. Statutes of the European political parties and year of their latest adoption**

Europarty	Statute – official title	Latest adoption
EPP	Statutes & Internal Regulations: EPP - International Non-Profit Association	2015
PES	PES Statutes – adopted by the 11th PES Congress	2018
ALDE	Articles of Association of the Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe Party - adopted by the ALDE Party Congress in Stockholm	2023
EDP	<i>Parti Démocrate Européen: Adaptation des statuts de l'association aux dispositions du Code des sociétés et des associations. Adoption de nouveaux statuts</i>	2021
EGP	Statutes of the European Green Party, European political party (PPEU)	2017
EFA	Statutes of the European Free Alliance. Adopted by the General Assembly of the European Free Alliance on 01.06.2004, modified by the General Assembly from time to time and most recently on 12.05.2022	2022
PEL	Statutes of the Party of European Left	2023
ECR Party	ECR Statutes	2022
ID Party	<i>Statuts – Identité et Démocratie parti</i>	2019

Source: Authority for the European Political Parties and European Political Foundations

### 2.2.1. Operationalization

Our first independent variable, intraparty rules (H1), requires data from two sources: Europarty congresses and/or statutes, and semi-structured interviews. The congresses and statutes of political parties are a viable source for analysing the degree of voting congruence (for, against or abstention) on internal party processes and reactions to political, legislative and electoral processes that affect the political system (Ceron, 2019). Interviews provide data not found in documents by obtaining a more in-depth perspective from each Europarty leader on their field of action within the political party.

The next independent variables, contact between internal members (H2A) and consensus stability (H2B) requires data mainly from interviews and European media content. In order to analyse internal dialogue in Europarties in greater detail, the most reliable data will be provided by members who testify to internal relations and contacts within their Europarty as well as at the level of the political group in the EP. As applied to the SK process, certain interviews were carried out before the nomination of a leading candidate for the 2024 EP elections. Thus, a news content analysis is again employed on the most recent news of the nomination of the SK by each Europarty and, if available, to verify the level of intraparty support for the candidate in question.

A narrative discourse analysis is used throughout data interpretation. For H1, to measure the degree of flexibility of intraparty rules on different positions and attitudes inside the Europarty, I operationalized the independent variable “restrictive”, “tolerant”, and “flexible”. “Restrictive” applies to an Europarty statute that prohibits the creation of separate positions, “tolerant” limits the creation of separate positions,

and “flexible” allows very flexible rules for the creation of distinct positions inside the Europarty.

Applied to the independent variables found on H2A and H2B, I established an analysis based on the levels of consensus inside the Europarty. To this end, intraparty consensus is based on three logics: “little to no consensus”, “majority consensus” and “unanimous consensus”. Applied to the last two logics, even though the key word in intraparty relations is “consensus”, we may see Europarties that prefer to reach a consensus on internal decisions by majority vote, since it can be difficult to reach a common position or vote on a policy unanimously given the sensitivity of the topic in question. Therefore, an analysis is made by each Europarty of the result of their interactions between members, and whether there has been a constant dialogue to reach a common position on SK and TL.

Additionally, I added three more levels of intraparty consensus focused on positions around SK and TL based on “High”, “Medium”, or “Low” degree of cohesion. “High” cohesion applies to a unanimous decision reached by all members; “Medium” cohesion is when there is a majority side supporting or contesting; and “Low” cohesion is achieved when Europarty members are split 50/50 on the topic. Furthermore, I applied a distinction between (Euro)party and group level in terms of cohesion. The reason for this is that, unlike Europarties, who are composed by national member parties, MEPs from political groups are affiliated with different Europarties inside its structure that take part on internal decision-making (e.g. the liberal Renew Europe group has ALDE and EDP Europarties). As a result, cohesion at the group level is different when a political group has to take into account the positions of national parties from all affiliated Europarties (Bowler & McElroy, 2015), while cohesion inside an Europarty takes into account only the positions of its member parties.

### **3. EUROPARTY INTERNAL DYNAMICS: FRICTION OR COOPERATION?**

To test the existence of internal consensus/dissent in the Europarties, I first analyze the internal regulations, whether they allow for flexibility of different positions within the Europarties, and whether the freedom of divergent positions can jeopardize intraparty unity (H1). Afterwards, I analyze if internal dialogues between members of the Europarty (H2A), that is, between its bureau members, their MEPs and national party members, is important for internal congruence inside the Europarties and if such congruence stability is different from each Europarty (H2B). Data from my analysis is in full display in Table 3.

#### **3.1. Intraparty rules**

As we can see in Table 4, in general, there is a wide agreement that the internal regulations of each Europarty allow for flexibility of different opinions and positions,

but that these positions do not exactly jeopardize the integrity of the Europarty. The key word of the Europarties under analysis is “consensus”, particularly applied in a space with multiple national actors (all interviews). Europarties allow for dynamic and flexible positions within their structures. In regard to the internal workings of their affiliated Europarty, members consider that party regulations do not limit intraparty positions on many EU policies (Interviews #2, #5, #8, #9). Members, whether from the Europarty bureau, national parties or MEPs from various delegations, are free to discuss and dialogue with each other about their political positions, and the main tendency is towards consensus-building rather than the generation of centripetal positions (all interviews). As such, members apply the term “pluralism” or “pluralistic party” to describe their internal organization (Interviews #4, #5, #6).

**Table 4. Europarty internal dynamics: intraparty rules, contacts, and cohesion**

Europarty	Intraparty rules	Contact between bureau members	Contact between MEPs	Consensus objective	Consensus around SK		Consensus around TL	
					Party level	Group level	Party level	Group level
<b>EPP</b>	Flexible	Medium	High	Majority	High	Medium	Medium	Low
<b>PES</b>	Flexible	Low	High	Unanimity	High	High	Medium	Medium
<b>ALDE</b>	Flexible	High	High	Unanimity	Medium	Medium	High	High
<b>EDP</b>	Flexible	Medium	High	Majority	High	Medium	High	High
<b>EGP*</b>	Flexible	Low	-	Majority	High	High	High	High
<b>EFA</b>	Flexible	Low	High	Majority	High	High	High	High
<b>PEL</b>	Flexible	Medium	High	Unanimity	Low	Low	Medium	Low
<b>ECR Party*</b>	Flexible	-	High	Majority	Medium	Medium	High	High
<b>* ID Party</b>	Flexible	Low	High	Unanimity	High	High	High	High

\* No information regarding the degree of contact between MEPs of the EGP and bureau members of the ECR Party

### 3.1.1. Europarty rules: statutes and “red lines”

When it comes to rules applied to the Europarties, their statutes are the most important documents that establish the parties' ideological position, criteria for membership, formal and informal party structures (e.g. congress, assembly, council, committee reunions, etc.), intraparty bureau and delegation voting procedures, and membership expulsion. All Europarties present flexible regulations that allow different positions, emphasizing the pluralistic character of these structures. However, I will analyze if the criteria of suspension and expulsion present on each Europarty statute, since they may present an obstacle for an effective intraparty democracy at the EU level. As Von Dem Berge et al. (2013, p. 27) suggested, a party statute can provide contradicting information if one says: “each member has the right to express his/her opinion freely” followed by “members who digress from the party line will be expelled”. In other words, flexibility may exist, but there are certain “red lines” to not cross in order to maintain party unity.

For said effect, I carefully analyzed the criteria for membership suspension and expulsion<sup>1</sup> from each Europarty statute. This strict measure occurs when a member (or member party) commits illicit acts that go against the Europarty's rules present in its statutes and declarations. I established four criteria that were predominantly mentioned in (most) Europarty statutes: (dis)respect for the principles and values in the statute / charter; failing to fulfil financial obligations; not a viable political force (e.g. not represented in a parliament for two consecutive terms); and not abiding party directives / disobeying party leadership. I have added one more criterion: forming electoral coalitions with national parties beyond the Europarty's ideological position. This aspect is not clearly specified in Europarty statutes, but, according to interview data, this is a common red line that members tend to agree that should not be crossed. As we see on Table 5, in all Europarty statutes, respect for the Europarty's principles and values is the most important aspect to avoid intraparty conflict. However, while the practice of these values is present on both EPP and ID Party, it is not mentioned in their statutes if disrespecting these values can lead to membership suspension / expulsion. For example, in the EPP, the respect for the rule of law, Christian democracy and pro-Europeanism is highly important, and misalignment with these values may lead to “internal instability” (Interview #4). This happened in 2021, when the Fidesz party, led by Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Órban, was excluded from the EPP structure for violating Hungary's rule of law and the Europarty's pro-integrationist laws.<sup>2</sup> An even more recent case happened in ID, where, in May 2024, the Alternative for Germany (AfD) member party was expelled from the ID structure all together due

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<sup>1</sup> Membership suspension refers to a suspension of rights (such as voting rights) from a member or member party, but, eventually, after many formal procedures and dialogue, such member can regain its rights inside the party structure. Expulsion refers to a member or member party that was expelled from the party structure and cannot re-join under strict penalty laws from the party's regulation.

<sup>2</sup> [Órban's Fidesz leaves EPP Group before being kicked out – Euractiv](#)



to internal scandals involving spying for Russia and China,<sup>3</sup> which did not align with the Europa

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<sup>3</sup> [Far-right ID group expels Alternative for Germany – POLITICO](#)

Table 5. Europarty statutes: Criteria for suspension / expulsion of Europarty members

<b>Criteria for suspension / expulsion – ‘A Europarty member is suspended / expelled if...’</b>					
	<b>Does not respect the principles and values in the statute / charter</b>	<b>Fails to fulfil its financial obligations</b>	<b>Not a viable political force (e.g. not represented in a parliament for two consecutive terms)</b>	<b>Does not abide party directives or disobeys party leadership</b>	<b>Forms electoral coalitions with national parties beyond the Europarty’s ideological position</b>
<b>EPP</b>	Yes – Not mentioned	Yes	Yes	No	No
<b>PES</b>	Yes	Yes	No	No	Yes – not mentioned
<b>ALDE</b>	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	No
<b>EDP</b>	Yes	No	No	Yes	No
<b>EGP*</b>	Yes	Yes	No	No	No
<b>EFA</b>	Yes	No	No	Yes	No
<b>PEL</b>	Yes	No	No	No	No
<b>ECR Party</b>	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes – not mentioned
<b>ID Party</b>	Yes – not mentioned	Yes	No	No	No

Note: “Yes – Not Mentioned” refers to a suspension / expulsion of a member party based on criteria that is not mentioned in the statute.

\*The EGP statute has withdrawal and suspension criteria but does not mention “expulsion”

An important aspect of intraparty unity is fulfilling their financial obligations inside the political party. In the case of Europarties, the dominant source of private revenue has been membership contributions from member parties, such as membership fees, which constitutes at least two-thirds of Europarties' total resources (Wolfs, 2022). Regulations from the EPP, PES, ALDE, EGP and ECR Party clarify that failure to fulfill these membership contributions may lead to membership suspension. However, the EDP, EFA, PEL, and ID Party's statutes make no mention of this possible suspension.

Although not present in most Europarties, perhaps the most peculiar criteria found on some Europarties' statutes is the suspension and expulsion of a member party that is a lackluster nation-wide political force in the sense that it has not been represented in a parliament<sup>4</sup> for two consecutive parliamentary terms. Such is the case of the EPP and ECR parties, where this criterion is present as a cause for member exclusion. Articles 9 and 10 from the EPP and ECR's statutes, respectively, consider that a member who has not been represented in a legislative chamber for two consecutive parliamentary terms may lead the board to recommend the member's suspension or exclusion.

As for the next two criteria, firstly, disobeying party leadership and party directives may lead to punishment. These are explicit in the ALDE, EDP, EFA, and ECR Party's regulations. In all other cases, this criterion is not mentioned in their statutes. And secondly, forming alliances (e.g. national electoral coalitions) between member parties with parties beyond the ideological spectrum is not present in the Europarties' statutes, though two notable examples are the PES and ECR Party where this practice leads to internal conflict. In the PES, in October 2023, two Slovak member parties, the Direction (SMER) and Voice (HLAS) parties, were suspended from the Europarty and political group due to forming a government coalition with a radical right-wing and nationalist party, the Slovak National Party (SNS).<sup>5</sup> As for the ECR Party, there was tension inside the Europarty and group when Viktor Órban and his Fidesz party expressed willingness to join the ECR after the 2024 European elections,<sup>6</sup> though the Civic Democratic Party (ODS) in the Czech Republic and the Swedish Democrats (SD) threatened to leave the ECR if Fidesz joined because of its pro-Russia stance.<sup>7</sup>

Ultimately, H1 is confirmed since all Europarty rules allow flexibility inside their structure. There is no co-relation between the levels of flexibility with the levels of intraparty dissidence. In fact, all Europarties must oblige to EU rules in order receive funding, but there is no restriction on different positions taken at the intraparty level, be it in voting procedures at a congress or during day-to-day dialogues. Additionally, the Europarties' statutes and regulations do not limit intraparty flexibility, though the most important red lines to not cross, that are present in most statutes, are respecting

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<sup>4</sup> Can be national, subnational, and European parliaments

<sup>5</sup> [European socialists suspend Robert Fico's Smer party and its ally Hlas – POLITICO](#)

<sup>6</sup> [Internal cracks loom as ECR makes new friends – Euractiv](#)

<sup>7</sup> [Le Pen, Meloni must 'shepherd' EU's far-right out of divisions, AUR says – Euractiv](#)

the Europarties' ideological and political values, fulfilling their membership financial obligations, and non-coercion towards party directives and party leadership.

### 3.2. Contacts between Europarty members and intraparty consensus

Regarding contacts between party members, heading back to Table 4, contacts between MEPs are very constant since, according to some Europarty members, they work daily to organize their plenary sessions on the EP (Interviews #1, #2, #3, #4, #5, #6, #7). Contacts between MEPs of all political groups are on a daily basis (Interview #2).

At the Europarty level, reunions between bureau members are less frequent, as well as contacts between them and MEPs at the political group. Some members meet once per month, such as the case of the EPP and PEL (Interviews #4, #5), and once per two months, like the PES, EGP, EFA, and ID Party (Interviews #2, #8, #9, #10). The EDP is quite a different one, since, even though meetings between bureau members also take place once every two months, the treasurer frequently meets with MEPs of the political group almost every day (Interview #6). Nevertheless, the Europarty with the highest contacting degree between bureau members and MEPs comes from ALDE. According to an ALDE MEP, MEPs from the Renew Europe political group and ALDE members meet the Europarty co-president<sup>8</sup> every day, as he is also an MEP, while other members, such as ALDE's Secretary General, take part in various meetings, though not in every meeting of the EP group, where there are "several occasions for dialogue" (Interview #1).

When it comes down to consensus objectives, some Europarties prefer to establish to establish consensus —be it through policy positions or voting procedures— by large majorities (EPP, EDP, EGP, EFA, and ECR Party) while others seek to establish unanimity for most, if not all, decisions (PES, ALDE, PEL, and ID Party). However, according to the data, it is not possible to establish a correlation between the contact frequency between Europarty members and MEPs from the political groups with the level of consensus around the processes of SK and TL. As seen on Table 4, there is a tendency for a higher degree of cohesion at the Europarty level than the political group level around topics of EU democratic reforms even from Europarty members who do not have much contact with each other such as the PES, EGP, EFA and ID Party. One reason for this is that Europarty congresses are the main decision-making bodies that allow national delegations, from different member parties, to vote on many EU-related topics. Such voting outcomes showcase the level of consensus inside the Europarty. Another explanation is that meetings between Europarty bureau members, as well as with MEPs, tend to generate a high number of agreements around topics of EU democracy, be them in favor of applying the SK and TL reforms (Interviews #2, #6, #8, #9, #10) or contesting such reforms (Interview #3). I will analyze with more detail

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<sup>8</sup> ALDE's presidency is led by two co-presidents. One of them is an MEP.

from the most internally cohesive Europarties around the SK and TL to the least cohesive.

### 3.2.1. High intraparty cohesion – EGP, EFA and ID

As seen in Table 4, the EGP, EFA, and ID Party are the Europarties where the degree of intraparty consensus around the process of SK and introduction of TL were equally high on both (Euro)party and group levels. The EGP is very favorably disposed towards both processes, whereby all members have reached a common agreement on supporting this system and electing lead candidates ever since 2014 for the EP elections (Interviews #8, #9), as well as releasing a full resolution defending the implementation of TL for the EP elections.<sup>9</sup> According to the EGP members, there are different positions within the member parties on certain and more sensible topics, such as positions around the supply and financing of arms to Ukraine (Interviews #8, #9) and some delegations being more pro-nuclear energy, such as the Finnish members, than others (Interview #9). But on the principle of SK and TL, there is total agreement with all national members (Interview #8), and the member parties do not even question both processes in intraparty reunions (Interview #9).

The EFA, who belongs in the same political group as the EGP, also adopted a unanimous decision around supporting both SK and TL. One member suggested, although she considers that unanimous votes are undemocratic and prefers to reach high majorities during voting procedures, the SK and TL processes were the exception (Interview #10). There was unanimity on the use of the SK figure to give visibility to the party and unanimity on the choice of its leading candidate. One member regrets that the EU political system, and European democracy in general, “makes it impossible for there to be no TL, for Europarties not to be able to contest elections directly”, and both the bureau and member parties of the EFA will work actively on the next EP elections to adopt both processes (Interview #10). Additionally, and similar to their Greens counterparty in the group, the only major topic for dissent, up until recently, was the use of nuclear energy, where, during the last Congress, there was a narrow majority of those who support it (Interview #10).

In the ID Party, following the more Eurosceptic and nationalist line, all members adopted a common position on contesting the use of SK and voting against the introduction of TL (Interview #3). According to an ID member, members from both the Europarty and group have a unanimous consensus regarding their opposition to both processes, while classifying the SK as a “peace of theatre” and a “comedy”, and that TL “was invented to avoid the real blame that we send to the European institutions” (Interview #3). There was, however, some internal talks on suggesting the election of a lead ID candidate for the Commission presidency and to represent the Europarty and group's opposition to the SK. However, in the end, ID did not intend to nominate any

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<sup>9</sup> [On Transnational Lists | European Greens](#)

candidate as “it could give the impression that we continue to want to play this game, therefore there would be a paradox” (Interview #3). Potential intraparty friction in the ID revolves around fiscal policy and immigration, where, from time to time, the ID Party does not find common ground when discussing the Eurozone and the possibility of transferring debts from Southern to Northern Europe (Interview #10), and some national member parties, such as Alternative from Germany,<sup>10</sup> have different perspectives on controlling illegal immigration than delegations from the French National Front.<sup>11</sup>

### 3.2.2. Medium to high intraparty cohesion – PES, ALDE, EDP and ECR

Members of the PES, and the S&D group in the EP, are in favor of using the SK system. According to one PES member, one of the Europarty's central ideas is that the Commission president should be elected through the SK process, and that the positions of both the PES and the S&D “are pretty equal”, though the MEPs are stronger on this issue (Interview #2). Another member argues the SK is important from the point of view of democratic transparency and is also important for organizing the debate at European level and “systematizing a debate at European level that is more than a confrontation between national parties, which in itself is important” (Interview #7). However, positions around TL required more internal discussion. On the one hand, majority of PES members supported the implementation of TL and voted in favor of its introduction in EP plenary session of May of 2022 (Interview #2). On the other hand, there are national PES and S&D delegations, such as the Portuguese one, who oppose the introduction of these lists (Interview #7). The opposite delegations considered that the very concept of the TL is “artificial”, as it requires asking citizens to vote for and evaluate candidates they do not know and cannot know, and that the TL would favor large countries over medium-sized ones (Interview #7).

Nevertheless, friction inside the PES does not stem from EU democratic reforms, such as the SK and, especially, the TL. This is more applicable to the disrespect for the Europarty's social-democratic values, where, as mentioned in the PES case in chapter 3.1, rifts inside the Europarty and group come from members who decide to distance themselves from the center-left and left ideology and enter in coalitions with more conservative and right-wing governments (Interview #7).

Shifting the attention to the Liberal family, both ALDE and EDP, who are Europarties from the Renew Europe group, share their position on supporting the implementation of TL (Interviews #1, #6). On the one side, in ALDE there was little, if any, internal contestation regarding the creation of TL, where a vast majority of ALDE members favors the introduction of a single European constituency for a limited

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<sup>10</sup> As of today, Alternative from Germany (AfD) is no longer a member of ID. The article was written before AfD's expulsion from the ID Party and group.

<sup>11</sup> [Future of far-right group in EU Parliament threatened by Franco-German rift – Euractiv](#)

number of MEPs (Interview #1). On the other side, the EDP fully commits to the implementation of TL, so much that, according to one member, both bureau members and national delegates support this measure to be combined with SK (Interview #6).

However, the topic of SK divided members from both sides of the political group. On ALDE's side, the Europarty appointed its lead candidate for both 2019 and 2024 EP elections, though members of the structure, such as former Renew Europe leader Guy Verhofstadt, claimed that the SK would only work if it would be combined with TL.<sup>12</sup> More recently, there was a split in the EP group over the nomination of a lead candidate for the 2024 EP elections. Stéphane Séjourné, a Renew Europe MEP and leader of the French delegation of the *Renaissance* national party in the group, has come out against the nomination of a lead candidate and proposed a list of candidates for the EU top jobs instead.<sup>13</sup> However, ALDE has united to safeguard the SK system by proposing the election of a lead candidate for the 2024 EP elections.<sup>14</sup> One member of the other Renew Europe component, the EDP, suggested that ALDE nominates its candidates for the position of President of the Commission based on its statute, therefore there is greater interest on ALDE on nominating a lead candidate than the EDP (Interview #6).

In the EDP, there is no intention on supporting the SK without the introduction of TL (Interview #6). The Europarty, unlike ALDE, is very cohesive in regard to support TL but contesting the SK system. According to an EDP member, ultimately, the existence of intraparty division regarding these topics "depends on the group membership": between EDP members and non-affiliates, there is a high degree of convergence, while members who belong to ALDE, "it depends on the country they come from" (Interview #6).

As for the ECR Party, there was a common and generally unanimous agreement on contesting the introduction of TL for the EP elections. According to an interview with MEP Jacek Saryusz-Wolski, TL would violate the principles of subsidiarity and proximity "by forcing elections to be centralized around European political entities", and that transnational candidates "would weaken the link between MEPs and their constituents".<sup>15</sup> Not only is consensus managed at Europarty level, but during the TL voting process, there was a vast majority of the ECR group that voted against, generating no internal division over the process.<sup>16</sup>

In regard to the SK, the Europarty nominated a leading candidate, MEP Jan Zahradil, for the 2019 EP elections, despite opposing the system itself. Zahradil's nomination was an opportunity to communicate the ECR's program, principles and plans to the public.<sup>17</sup> In a way, the ECR accepted that SK would represent a good

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<sup>12</sup> [Verhofstadt denies 'flip-flopping' over Spitzenkandidaten \(theparliamentmagazine.eu\)](#)

<sup>13</sup> [Liberals divided over 2024 EU election campaign strategy – POLITICO](#)

<sup>14</sup> Resolution "One Spitzenkandidat for a strong European democracy", adopted at the ALDE Congress in Stockholm on 23 May 2023

<sup>15</sup> [ECR Group celebrates no transnational lists in new distribution of European Parliament seats // ECR Group](#)

<sup>16</sup> Results of roll-call votes: Election of the Members of the European Parliament by direct universal suffrage - A9-0083/2022 - Domènec Ruiz Devesa - Article 1/1. Tuesday, 3 May 2022 - Strasbourg

<sup>17</sup> [ECR puts forward Czech MEP as their Spitzenkandidat nominee – Euractiv](#)

publicity opportunity for the Europarty and the group through the TV debates (Steven, 2020). However, more recently, unlike the other Europarties and groups in the EP, which held large congresses and press conferences to announce their leading candidate and their election manifesto, the ECR's final decision took place behind closed doors and in secret.<sup>18</sup> The majority preferred to stay away from the SK system. Former lead candidate Jan Zahradil suggested that having SK is "not worth it", because EP elections' campaigns and their candidates "have to focus on national debates".<sup>19</sup> However, the co-president of the ECR group, Nicola Procaccini, was in favor of nominating a leading candidate for the ECR Party, in the hope that it would ensure that the Europarty has a coherent voice during the election campaigns.<sup>20</sup>

### 3.2.3. Medium to low intraparty cohesion – EPP and PEL

In regards for the SK system, there is a consensus in the EPP's support for this process, because members believe that one of the main democratic deficits of the EU's current way of functioning is that "there is no visible and clear link to voters on how they can influence EU policy" (Interview #4). However, there were rifts among EPP members on the SK based on two problems: structural and candidate nomination. The structural problem of the SK, according to an EPP member, is that the German term "*Spitzenkandidaten*" is always used, and this is something that is foreign to the political culture of many member states because they possess different national cultures (Interview #4). As for candidate nomination, the nomination of the current European Commission president, Ursula von der Leyen, as the EPP's lead candidate for the 2024 European elections, was divisive: 89 of the 489 valid votes cast in the ballot rejected her candidacy, giving von der Leyen a support rate of 82 %, a division coming mainly from the EPP's French and Slovenian delegations.<sup>21</sup>

Regarding the TL, opposition within the EPP came from member-states that are not used to having two votes on a ballot paper, which is something completely foreign to their national political culture (Interview #4). In other countries, such as Germany, this mixed system of party lists and candidates is perfectly normal (Interview #4). It is not surprising that there was substantial support, for example, from the German delegation for the TL that allowed it to be approved in the EP, but other delegations, such as the Portuguese one, were against its introduction. With the last proposal to introduce TL for 2024 EP elections, part of the group led the attempt to get as many EPP members as possible on board, but lately the group has remained divided (Interview #4).

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<sup>18</sup> [ECR adopts manifesto but snubs lead candidate pick amid rifts – Euractiv](#)

<sup>19</sup> Ibid.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid.

<sup>21</sup> [Europe's centre-right party clears path for von der Leyen's re-election, despite some objection | Euronews](#)



As for the PEL, while different positions within the PEL are not frequent, the institutional structure of the EU, in other words, the extent to which the integration process should advance, led to “many differences between the member parties and even among the deputies of our group in the EP” in relation to the topic in question (Interview #5). Such was the case for the SK and TL processes, where there was division among PEL and their group members. On the one hand, members who support the SK consider it an appealing instrument to allow citizens to understand “who comes from the left, who comes from the Christian Democrats, who comes from the Social Democrats and the Greens”, and to know who the candidates for a top position are in the EU such as in the Commission or as President of Parliament (Interview #5). On the other hand, choosing a lead candidate was not an easy task. There was a lot of internal discussion about who would be the PEL's lead candidate, who could persuade the candidates to obtain as many votes as possible, to what extent is known within the parties, but also in public life, as a leftist person who fights for certain values (Interview #5). At the last General Assembly, the PEL nominated Walter Baier to be the Europarty's lead candidate for the 2024 European elections,<sup>22</sup> although his own national party, the Austrian Communist Party, was not willing to place the same trust in the candidate since he was not his party's main candidate at national level for the EP elections.<sup>23</sup>

Regarding the European Left's position on TL, the GUE/NGL group was divided on the topic. There were around 50/50 who were in favor and against (Interview #5). MEPs from the group that contested the TL in the past feared the increase in personalism of transnational candidates to the detriment of solutions and policies in the EU.<sup>24</sup> More recently, one member considers that the existence of TL would automatically reinforce “awareness about the situation of candidates for top positions in Europe”, in which each Europarty should compete with the others in a transnational constituency instead of limiting themselves to a list (Interview #5).

So far, H2A is confirmed, since consensus-building, both at the level of Europarties and their groups, requires extensive contacts between members. Although, in general, contacts between members of the Europarty umbrella are less frequent, Europarties receive more feedback during dialogues with MEPs at group level, and there is therefore a tendency to conclude major agreements. However, H2B is not confirmed, because the largest Europarties, the EPP and PES, still have some friction regarding SK and TL, namely the EPP more than the PES. Instead, the most internally convergent Europarties are the smaller ones, such as the EGP and the ID Party. This suggests that the size of a Europarty, such as the number of member parties and MEPs, does not reflect intraparty consensus building, but rather the level of

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<sup>22</sup> [European Left elects Walter Baier as lead candidate, wants working class to drive green fight – Euractiv](#)

<sup>23</sup> [European Left to pick no-name lead candidate amidst lack of appetite for role – Euractiv](#)

<sup>24</sup> Speech by MEP Marie-Christine Vergiat, Thursday, 22 November 2012 – Strasbourg, Motion for a resolution: B7-0520/2012

influence of national delegations and their contact results within the transnational structure.

#### 4. CONCLUDING REMARKS

So far, the existence of competitive factionalism inside Europarties do not stem from the institutional incentives provided by the SK and TL. National delegations cooperate with each other to reach consensus to reach a common Europarty strategy for EU democratic reforms. While there are some divergences regarding sensitive particular policy areas that provoke a greater internal debate such as EU economy (for the EPP) and immigration (for the ID Party), EU electoral / institutional policies do not seem to create a big friction inside the Europarties. Perhaps the only exception is the PEL, where it remains the only Europarty that is much divided in terms of support / contestation around the SK and TL.

Our research results are in line with Boucek's (2009) view around the Europarties: their internal dynamics are a supranational form of cooperative rather than competitive factionalism whereby MEPs belonging to many different, but ideologically connected, national parties agree to cooperate in EU legislative politics. In this sense, Europarties provide freedom of internal party positions by their national members. As we have observed, Europarties allow this flexibility as long as it does not contradict the party's ideals, where some Europarties heavily punish their members by removing them from the structure all together. To quote an interviewed PEL member: "[...] the existence of different points of view generates a divergence in knowing to what extent the members prefer to be their own structure and how they want to have their own leader to maintain the serenity of each member party as a precondition for cooperation" (Interview #5).

While these findings are important to study supranational intraparty dynamics, there are some constraints in my research. Regarding the methodology, data should be further collected after the 2024 EP elections to obtain more evidence regarding the outcome of these elections for the institutional structure of both the Europarties and the EU in general. While the analysed dynamics manifested important results regarding the intraparty relations during important EU level decisions, I suggest other intraparty dynamics that can be covered to analyse intraparty competition at the EU level such as the degree of Europarty leadership and ideological left-right differences.

Ultimately, Europarties are still embryonic political structures that emulate national political parties. We cannot deny that these transnational federations are still portrayed as "party of parties" at the EU level, but democratic incentives such as the SK and TL, the former will once again be adopted during the 2024 European elections, can provide leverage for an electoral development of Europarties. Only when these parties can fully develop into real political parties such as their national counterparts with the ability to nominate MEP candidates through TL, creating extensive electoral programs, political debates and campaigning, and being able to influence EU level

decision-making processes beyond the EP, then perhaps their internal party dynamics may also generate a more competitive form of intraparty behaviour.

## 5. INTERVIEWS

Interview #1 – Member of the Alliance of Liberals and Democrats in Europe (ALDE), MEP of Renew Europe (RE).

Interview #2 – Member of the Party of European Socialists (PES), MEP of the Progressive Group of Socialists and Democrats in the European Parliament (S&D).

Interview #3 – Member of the leadership of the Identity and Democracy Party (ID Party), MEP of the Identity and Democracy Group (ID).

Interview #4 – Member of the European People's Party (EPP), Parliamentary Assistant to the MEP of the European People's Party Group.

Interview #5 – Member of the Party of the European Left (PEL), MEP of the Group of the Left in the European Parliament (GUE/NGL).

Interview #6 – Member of the leadership of the European Democratic Party (EDP), MEP of Renew Europe (RE).

Interview #7 – Member of the Party of European Socialists (PES), MEP from the Group of Socialists and Democrats in the European Parliament (S&D).

Interview #8 – Committee member of the European Green Party (EGP).

Interview #9 – Committee member of the European Green Party (EGP).

Interview #10 – Bureau member of the European Free Alliance (EFA)

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