How Europe hits parties… or not?

Europeanisation of party programmes in the Netherlands and the United Kingdom

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Abstract

Over the last few years, Europeanisation has become increasingly popular in the literature on European integration. In most of these studies, Europeanisation is defined as the domestic impact of EU regulation. This paper will follow that ‘mainstream’ conceptualisation, by focusing on the top down effect. Whereas most attention has been paid to changes in national policy, due to a ‘misfit’ with EU regulation, this paper considers the effect on politics, in particular party programmes. The most recent election programmes of the main parties in the Netherlands and the United Kingdom are analysed, based on a threefold categorisation of references to the EU. These categories include the institutionalisation of the EU, the division of competences between the national and the EU level, and the penetration of EU policy into national politics. The results show that parties tend to focus on EU policy and institutions, whilst paying little attention to the impact of Europe and the limits set to national party agendas. Moreover, there is a clear difference in the way in which Europe has become an integral part of the party programme. Finally, the paper offers two suggestions for further research. First, to see to what extent party positions on the EU have an effect on policy competition and electoral competition. Second, to expand the research on EU and parties, by including the impact on party organisational aspects.

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1. Introduction

Over the last ten years, Europeanisation has obtained a prominent place in the literature on European integration. This increasing popularity is not entirely unproblematic, as can be seen in the variety of definitions and conceptualisations that exist. In this paper, I will not dwell on this painstaking discussion, although I cannot entirely ignore the issue. For the sake of clarity, I will present a rather limited and strict notion of Europeanisation. The core of this paper will be the empirical evidence that links European integration and party programmes. This paper proceeds as follows: first, I will discuss the main arguments and problems of the Europeanisation literature. The central message will be that the term Europeanisation should be reserved for the EU impact at the domestic level. Second, I will describe how EU and parties can be linked, and how this has been done in the literature so far. Although it is incorrect to state that this link has been ignored in the academic debate, very little of this specifically involves Europeanisation. The third and final issue will be to analyse how parties are affected by Europeanisation and how this fits in the general debate on the effects of Europe, or, to be more precise, the so-called top down approach (cf. Börzel 2001).

A quick view on the literature shows that most of the rapidly expanding research on Europeanisation has focused on policy change, arguably the area in which the effect of European integration has been most profound (cf. Héritier 2001). As a result, changes in national politics have been somewhat neglected. One of the reasons may be that the EU seems to have little effect in this area. This paper seeks to fill part of that gap. In particular, I will try to show which effects of European integration on political parties can be discerned. The specific application will be a comparative analysis of the most recent election programmes of the main political parties in the Netherlands and the UK.

2. Europeanisation

EU studies have been marked by a shift in the focus of research: from the classic issue of integration to polity-building or institutionalisation. One of the upshots of this change has been the growing attention for Europeanisation, i.e. analysing the effects of Europe on national politics and policy-making instead of studying how national politics determine the process of European integration (Knill and Lehmkuhl 2000; Radaelli 2000; Cowles et al. 2001; Olsen 2001; Börzel and Risse 2003).

According to Haverland (2003), this Europeanisation research can be divided into three phases. In the 1970s, 1980s and early 1990s, we find a number of - rather idiosyncratic - implementation studies, which were mostly a-theoretical. Moreover, the emphasis was on the EC as a dependent variable. In the second phase, from the mid-1990s on, Europeanisation studies became more comparative and theoretically informed, and the term Europeanisation was more generally used. The diverging outcomes in different countries and in different policy areas led to several hypotheses about the effect of Europe. Most prominently among
these is the ‘goodness of fit’ hypothesis: the misfit between EU rules and national policy leads to adaptational pressure. Much of this literature is based on a (neo-) institutionalist logic, in which existing national arrangements explain why the effects of Europe are dissimilar. Finally, in the third phase - which is the current agenda - we find studies that are guided by theoretical assumptions: from induction to deduction. In contrast to much of the earlier work, which was somewhat isolated, several authors explicitly incorporate insights from International Relations and Comparative Politics in their research and try to test alternative hypotheses. The search for logics or mechanisms of (domestic) change has become a central issue. As Börzel and Risse (2003: 60) state:

‘The issue is no longer whether Europe matters but how it matters, to what degree, in what direction, at what pace, and at what point of time.’ (my italics)

In other words, it is taken for granted that Europe has an impact on the politics, policy and polity of national states. The main question becomes how to link developments at the European and the national level. Knill and Lehmkuhl (2002) distinguish three mechanisms - positive integration, negative integration and framing - which all have their impact on the scope and direction of domestic change. Cowles et al. (2001) and Börzel and Risse (2003) build on the idea of a ‘misfit’ between European regulation and existing national practices, which forms a pressure for change. All of these accounts are based on a neo-institutionalist logic, which claims that the national context - institutions and actors - matters. As a result, Europeanisation will not be the same in all countries; therefore it cannot be equated with harmonisation or convergence.

One matter still very much unresolved concerns the definition of Europeanisation. In a recent overview article, Harmsen and Wilson (2000) list as much as eight different conceptualisations: 1) new forms of European governance, 2) national adaptation, 3) policy isomorphism, 4) problem and opportunity for domestic political management, 5) modernisation, 6) ‘joining Europe’, 7) reconstruction of identities, 8) transnationalism and cultural integration. Other overview articles, like Radaelli (2000), Olsen (2001), Blair (2002) and Featherstone (2003) present a similar picture of a fuzzy, ill-determined concept. It is worthy of note that despite several years of conceptualising and reformulating, there is no common definition agreed upon (yet). As a matter fact, many would consider the original definition of Ladrech (1994: 69) still very useful:

“...an incremental process reorienting the direction and shape of politics to the degree that EC political and economic dynamics become part of the organisational logic of national politics and policy-making”

Despite these conceptual problems, Europeanisation enjoys an increasing popularity and the literature is booming. Almost every article dealing with this subject will contain the inevitable remarks on ‘a recent shift in the literature’ from the bottom-up perspective (intergovernmentalism vs. neo-functionalism) to the top-down perspective. Or, put in a different way: the EU as a
dependent variable or *explanandum* which has become the independent variable or *explanans* (Jachtenfuchs 2001). Moreover, most authors will point at the similarity with the debate in IR known as the ‘second image reversed’ (Gourevitch 1978; cf. Vink 2003).

In this paper, I will follow the ‘mainstream’ understanding of Europeanisation. This implies that Europeanisation is located at the domestic level: the top-down effect. Although I acknowledge that there is a bottom-up process going on as well - which might be important to understand the ‘shaping’ and the ‘taking’ - I would not call this Europeanisation. Looking at how national preferences collide and coincide at the European level falls within the traditional European integration debate. To me, Europeanisation should be an intentional isolation of a certain aspect of EU policy making, namely its domestic impact.

3. EU and parties

Even a quick scrutiny of the recent Europeanisation literature already shows that an overwhelming amount of studies has focused on policy change (an overview can be found in Börzel and Risse 2003). Having said that, it would definitely be incorrect to argue that the link between EU and politics or parties has been completely neglected. An edited volume by Gaffney (1996) looked at the positions of several national parties on European integration, and the difference between party families and countries in this respect. In addition, several case studies have focused on the way in which various parties have positioned themselves vis-à-vis European integration (e.g. Cole 2001; Heffernan 2001). A lot of stimulating work has been done by a group of scholars around Liesbet Hooghe and Gary Marks (Marks and Wilson 1999; Ray 1999; Marks and Wilson 2000; Hooghe *et al.* 2002; Marks and Steenbergen 2002; Marks *et al.* 2002). These authors try to explain party positions on European issues with the help of existing patterns of competition. Explanatory variables included are left-right positioning, traditional/authoritarian vs. post-materialist/libertarian politics and domestic cleavages.

Bartolini (1999) argues that European integration is challenging the dominant role of parties in channelling the demands and interests of citizens. In Bartolini’s view, three channels of representation have traditionally existed: territorial, corporatist and politico-electoral. Over time, the latter form has become dominant over the other two, or, to put it differently: the politico-electoral channel (parties!) has incorporated the two former. What European integration does, is to challenge this dominance of the politico-electoral channel. Even more, it implicates a renewal of both corporatist and territorial representation. Parties have not attained the same dominant position in European decision making as they have at the national level. As a consequence, the role of parties is limited and they are able to perform their linkage function to a limited extent only.

Considering the understanding of Europeanisation outlined in the previous section, these studies do not qualify as Europeanisation however. The first group of literature examines the impact of existing (national) patterns of competition on EU positions, instead of the effect of EU policy on national party positions. The other group of literature concerns itself with
the role of parties at the European level, sometimes including a comparison with the role of national parties. It seems important to separate the topic ‘Europeanisation and parties’ from the broader literature which links EU and parties. Therefore, I now turn to those authors that have worked within that particular focus.

Mair (2000) has examined the impact of European integration on national party systems, looking at two basic features: format (number of relevant parties) and mechanics (interaction of parties). When it comes to the format, he finds a growing fragmentation in many party systems. More than 140 new political parties emerged to contest domestic elections. But these developments cannot be linked directly to European integration. Also, the mechanics of the party system have not changed very much. Considering the electoral success of pro- and anti-Europe parties, Mair finds that the anti-Europe bloc does not perform too well. Moreover, those parties that do gain substantial levels of support, often ‘have other powerful string to their bows’. However, he does suggest an indirect effect: the hollowing out of the competition between parties with governing aspiration, and the depoliticisation of the European issue:

‘… European integration increasingly operates to constrain the freedom of movement of national governments, and hence encourages a hollowing out of competition among those parties with a governing aspiration. As such, it promotes a degree of consensus across the mainstream and an inevitable reduction in the range of policy alternatives available to voters.’ (Mair 2000: 48-9)

This probably is one of the main challenges for the EU-cum-parties literature: which is the effect of EU integration on party competition? First, to see to what extent the transfer of policy making to the EU level indeed limits parties in their programmes and second, whether the EU issue becomes politicised or is ‘taken out’ of competition?

The most extensive and sophisticated attempt to link EU and parties has been made by Ladrech, who suggests a research agenda for the study of Europeanisation and political parties, consisting of five dimensions (2002):

1. **policy change**: an increased mention of EU policy and domestic policy areas where Europe has its influence, together with an emphasis on the possibilities of co-operation with transnational organisations
2. **organisational change**: change of party rules and statutes to arrange the role of the European delegation within the national party; besides, the relations with the European federations to which a party belongs
3. **party competition**: politicisation of the European issue; new parties that emerge based largely on their pro- or anti-EU position, and the way in which existing parties use Europe in their (electoral) strategy
4. **party-government relations**: due to participation of cabinet ministers in EU forums, the relation with the party basis may become strained; parties will ‘push’ for a position that is close to their programme and at the same time ‘pull’ to keep policy areas in national hands
5. **relations beyond the party system**: transnational activities, co-operation with other parties from the same federation may be enhanced; emergence of a form of transnational party organisation
These changes will affect both the relations between voters and parties – mobilisation, electoral success, articulation and integration of interests – and between parties – ideologies, programmes and platforms, government formation. True, few voters seem to judge parties on their view on enhancing the powers of the European Parliament or the need for a common defence and security policy. But there are signs that voters are no longer indifferent about the EU policy of political parties.

In the remainder of this paper, I will single out two of these dimensions: policy change, the first item of Ladrech’s listing, and I will take up the third issue - party competition - in the concluding section. Policy proposals, put forward in electoral manifestos, can be considered as defining characteristics of a party. Voters form their opinion about parties mostly on the basis of these programmes; moreover, programmes play a crucial role in the competition with other parties. If EU integration would indeed lead to policy change (reflected in change of the party programmes), this might have important implications.

I have chosen to compare two countries, which show clear differences in terms of public opinion about Europe. The Netherlands, which has traditionally been a Europhile country, and the United Kingdom, where public opinion displays outspoken Euroscepticism. Assuming that parties are – to some extent – responsive to voter preferences, we would expect a larger impact of EU integration in the case of the United Kingdom. First, because playing the European card could be electorally rewarding, second because parties will be forced to be more specific in their ideas about the EU. In the Netherlands, we would expect a lower salience of the EU issue and perhaps less outspoken visions on the EU too.

The guiding question for the empirical sections will be: **to what extent do we witness the impact of European integration in the programmes of the main parties in the Netherlands and the United Kingdom?** This impact should be visible in the fact that ‘EC political and economic dynamics’ have become part of the logic of national parties (cf. definition on page 4). Are parties aware of the EU context in which they have to formulate their desired policies? The effect of Europe on parties is not generally framed in terms of ‘misfit’ or ‘goodness of fit’ which is of central importance in most of the other Europeanisation literature. Although it can be argued that a certain misfit exists between EU policy and national party agenda’s, there is no formal requirement for parties to adapt. In other words, the way in which parties deal with Europeanisation is of a far more voluntary nature. The supposed misfit does not necessarily function as a trigger for change. Below I will attempt to capture the logic at work in the relation between European integration and party politics.

### 4. Method and cases

Those who are familiar with the work of the Manifesto Research Group (Budge and Farlie 1983; Budge et al. 2001), and in particular with the coding scheme that is used, will understand that these data are not very adequate for the question I wish to address in this paper. From a total of 56 categories, only 2 deal with Europe: one scores positive references to the EU,
other scores negative references. This will only give a very general picture of party positions. Certain authors have sought to repair this deficit, by developing their own coding schemes for European manifestos (Hix 1999). Another attempt has been made by a research team steered by the University of Mannheim\(^3\). However, for the purpose of my analysis these coding categories are again too detailed. In other words, I have to find a position somewhere between the very rough indicators of pro- and anti-Europe\(^4\) and the many empty cells I would end up with in a sophisticated coding. After all, we are talking national programmes, which parties use to contest national elections. Although these programmes surely cannot (and do not) ignore Europe, they will probably not give a very detailed and extensive vision on the EU, for which they have a European platform.

My categorisation consists of three types of Europeanisation that I expect to find in national programmes. I have distinguished three categories: 1) policy and institutions, 2) transfer of decision making, and 3) opportunities and constraints. The first category includes those references that deal with the EU level, i.e. both the desired EU policy and the role of the Commission, Parliament and Council. The second category alludes to the interplay between the national and the EU level: which is the proper level for which area? In this debate, the principles of subsidiarity and proportionality will often occur, as well as the quest for a Kompetenzkatalog, which would make clear what is to be European policy and what is not. Finally, ‘opportunities and constraints’ deals with the effects of Europe at the national level. When the EU is gaining policy making authority, the autonomy and influence of national governments decrease. As a result, parties at the national level will have to be more ‘modest’ in what they offer in their programmes. In certain areas, they can only present solutions that are conditional upon the co-operation of other countries and their respective governments. On the other hand, EU regulation may also be beneficial for certain parties, when it fits in the party ideology (and consequently can be used for domestic competition). Table 1 summarises these three types of reference and illustrates them through citations from various party programmes.

**Table 1. References to the EU in party programmes**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Example</th>
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<tr>
<td>Policy and institutions</td>
<td>Which ideas does a party have about EU policy and the architecture of the EU political system?</td>
<td>‘D66 wants a directly elected president of the European Commission.’ (Netherlands 2002, D66)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transfer of policy making</td>
<td>Which issues should be tackled at the European level, and which at the national level?</td>
<td>‘The EU should focus its policy-making only on those area for which EU-wide action is indispensable.’ (United Kingdom 2001, LDP)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Opportunities and constraints</td>
<td>To what extent does EU policy limit parties in their policy choices and to what extent does it offer new chances?</td>
<td>‘The health care system has to be in agreement with the European principle of free movement and freedom of choice’ (Netherlands 2002, CDA)</td>
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To be sure, these categories should not be seen as specific issues which will be coded, analogous to the examples cited above. Rather, they serve as stepping-stones for interpreting the references to Europe in the manifestos. In my view, one of the advantages of using these three categories is that they comprise different forms of Europeanisation distinguished in the literature. First, the
notion of rules, norms and practices developed at the European level, which is the way Cowles et al. (2001) interpret Europeanisation. The second type refers to the division of competences between member states and the EU, and includes the possible transfer of policy areas to the European level. This is in line with the understanding of Europeanisation as transnational co-operation or as new forms of governance (cf. Harmsen and Wilson 2000). Finally, the impact of European rules at the national level fits very well with the idea of a domestic reaction to EU integration, which is the most common understanding of Europeanisation (cf. Vink 2003).

In addition, the three types also follow Mair (2002), who sees Europeanisation as involving two elements: penetration of European regulation into domestic arrangements (type 3) and institutionalisation (type 1) of an EU political system (type 2 is the interface between the two). Both types of Europeanisation create patterns of conflict and opposition; in the former case, it is about the scope of European influence, in the latter case the structure of the European political system itself is concerned. In the next sections I will examine to what extent the three types of reference can be found in the party programmes of the main political parties in the Netherlands (2002) and the United Kingdom (2001).

5. How the EU affects parties

Obviously, the first place to look for mentions of Europe, is the ‘European’ or ‘international’ section of the party programme. By now, every party includes such a section in its manifesto. But this is certainly not the only place where references to the EU can be found. It turned out that the other sections of the manifesto also contain quite some European content. My focus is on the impact of European integration on party programmes. That is, how much attention do parties pay to the European issue and how do they relate to Europe? Can we see clear differences between parties that give Europe a prominent place in their programme and other parties that more or less ignore the issue? Is there a clear difference between Euro-enthusiasts and Euro-sceptics? Table 2 gives a brief overview of party positions on Europe. The scores for ‘position’ can vary from 1 - strongly opposed to European integration, to 7 - strongly in favour of European integration. Concerning salience: this scale ranges from 1 - no importance, never mentioned by the party, to 5 - the most important issue for the party. I will not discuss these figures in detail, since this has already been done in Ray (1999) and Hooghe et al. (2002). Rather, my aim is to give a short impression of where parties stand and how important the European issue is to them. This serves as a prelude to the analysis below.
Table 2. Party position and salience of EU issue

<table>
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<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Position</th>
<th>Salience</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>United Kingdom</td>
<td>LAB</td>
<td>4.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>TORY</td>
<td>3.38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>LDP</td>
<td>6.63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Netherlands</td>
<td>PvdA</td>
<td>5.78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>VVD</td>
<td>6.11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>CDA</td>
<td>6.44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>D66</td>
<td>6.44</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Data set Gary Marks and Marco Steenbergen, available at http://www.unc.edu/~gwmarks

In the United Kingdom, the Liberal-Democrats have consistently been the most pro-European party since 1984: judging by the scores of 6.63 and 6.62 respectively, this party is strongly in favour of European integration. The Conservatives have hardened their stance on Europe, becoming an outspokenly Eurosceptic party (2.15 in 1999). Finally, the Labour party, starting from a rather neutral position, has recently receded somewhat from its Euro-enthusiasm of 1992. Together with this drop, the salience of the issue for Labour has also gone down. In contrast, we find that the Tories and the LDP have gradually adopted Europe as one of their most important issues. Parties in the Netherlands tend to agree on a pro-Europe position: the mutual differences are marginal. Over time, the VVD becomes less positive about Europe, but its score of 5.45 is still far away from Euroscepticism. In 1999, D66 takes over from the CDA as the most pro-European party. Although we can see an increase between 1984 and 1999, salience is still low for all parties: only in 1999 the VVD reaches a score of 3.00, meaning that the issue is ‘important’.

All in all, these figures confirm the thesis of Hooghe et al. (2002) that parties in the political centre tend to converge towards a pro-Europe position, whereas opposition to Europe is located at both extremes of political spectrum. Having said that, it is also clear that the British situation does not fit entirely into this picture: the Tories are more Eurosceptic than might be expected. Second, these figures suggest that the potential for party competition over the European issue is higher in the UK. In the Netherlands, salience is low and the range of opinions is very small. In the UK, party positions differ radically and the EU issue is more salient too.

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Before proceeding to the analysis of the party programmes more in detail, I will first make some short remarks on those references to Europe that are not included in the threefold classification. Here we are dealing first of all with references that do not present a particular vision on Europe or European policy, but rather position one’s own country within the Union. To illustrate this, two examples from British programmes:
‘The UK is ninth per head of population among European nations for asylum applications’ (Labour 2001, p. 34)
‘Britain has the highest road user taxes in Europe and the worst traffic jams’ (Conservatives 2001, p. 38)

In other words, many parties use the comparison with other countries in the EU, as an underpinning for their policy proposals. This kind of ‘benchmarking’ can be very useful for party competition.

The second group concerns those statements that do not reflect the opinion of a party on certain matters. These can be ‘factual’ remarks, in which parties merely provide dates or figures related to the EU, e.g. that the EU consists of 15 member states and may expand to include 25 in the near future. The other situation is where parties make ‘moral’ statements, such as: ‘the EU has brought peace and prosperity’. Although these references deal with Europe, they can not be fitted into one of the categories, because they do not really reflect a party position.

5.1 United Kingdom 2001: in Europe, not run by Europe

There is one guiding principle for the Conservatives, Labour and the Liberal Democrats alike in their positioning vis-à-vis Europe: the British national interest. Although it is formulated in somewhat different ways, the recurring idea in all three documents is that European integration has to be a process led by Britain and which is good for Britain. Moreover, all parties share the idea that Britain is an important world player. However, how can this national interest best be brought about? This is where ideas go in very different directions: whereas the Conservatives state that the national interest is best protected by abstaining from further European cooperation, Labour and the Liberal-Democrats believe they can serve the national interest by actively participating in Europe.

The central message of Labour’s EU policy is captured in its ten goals for 2010: ‘British ideas leading a reformed and enlarged Europe’ (p. 2). The Labour aspiration is for Britain to be both a leader in Europe and an important world player, closely allied with the USA. Therefore, Britain cannot afford to turn away from Europe. Actually, more or less the same image is put forward by the Conservatives, who want to ‘lead the debate in Europe about its future, promoting our own clear and positive vision’. However, their aim is to be ‘in Europe, not run by Europe’ (p.30). Ironically, the LDP’s conclusion is that ‘neither Conservative nor Labour governments have made the most of Britain’s potential as a core member of the EU’ (p. 48).

* Policy and institutions

Interestingly, the Conservatives’ programme seems more moderate than their public stance and their Eurosceptic image (cf. table 1 above) would suggest. Although the Conservatives insist on keeping the pound and maintaining the national veto, they do not entirely reject European integration:
ʻThe alternative is a Europe of nations coming together in different combinations for different purposes and to differing extents. In other words, a network Europe.’ (…) At the same time, we are willing to support the principle of ‘reinforced co-operation’ in Europe, under which small groups of countries can become more closely integrated if they wish to do so, providing it does not damage Britain’s national interests.’ (p. 29, my italics)

In addition, the enlargement of the EU in 2004 (including Cyprus) is welcomed. In other areas the programme does show a Eurosceptic view: the Nice treaty has to be renegotiated, and a law on ‘reserved powers’ is suggested, to make sure that the will of Parliament is not superseded by EU law. Also, the Tories aspire to maintain the national veto on European legislation and they want the EU to cut the budget by abandoning ‘ill-considered programmes’ (p.30).

In other words, the Conservatives do not want to keep other countries from co-operating more closely, but they prefer to stay where they are. The picture presented in the Conservatives’ programme is one of a ‘flexible’ Europe, or a Europe of several speeds, in which countries can choose to intensify their co-operation in certain areas and to preserve other areas in national hands. This almost sounds like a very modern conception of European integration: it reminds us of ‘new governance’ (cf. Kohler-Koch and Eising 1999) or Schmitter’s (1996) model of ‘condominio’, in which territory and function can be variable and dispersed. In political practice, it will probably be more like a continuation and confirmation of the ‘opting out’ position Britain has taken in the past. Examples of this policy include the initial refusal to sign the Social Charter of the Maastricht Treaty and the decision not to join the Euro.

Labour promotes an active engagement in Europe, but they make it clear that national governments should be ‘in the driving seat’, which implies that

ʻ(…) national governments should be seen to be setting the agenda of the EU, with the European Council setting the EU’s priorities, a strong independent Commission ensuring that the European interest is heard and enforced, and an effective European Parliament improving draft legislation and holding the Commission to account’ (p.38)

The prospect of the EU developing into a ‘United States of Europe’ is not supported, but the EU should consist of a ‘unique blend of intergovermental co-operation where possible and integration where necessary’. Moreover, the main goal for Europe is to become ‘the most competitive knowledge-based economy in the world’. The benefits of trade and business are mentioned several times to justify Britain’s involvement in the EU. Finally, Labour hints at some kind of European social model, although it remains unclear in what kind of European co-operation this policy on the reform of welfare states and the advancement of social inclusion is to be accomplished.

In contrast to the more general points put forward by the Conservatives and Labour, the LDP has a more detailed and coherent set of ideas concerning EU institutions. First, they present an agenda for reform, aimed at increasing the role of citizens:

ʻWe want a Europe where the interests of people, not bureaucrats, come first; a Europe that seeks to empower people, not impose upon them; an where European institutions concentrate on what they do best.’ (p.48)
Most of the actual measures have to do with the role and function of European bodies. Next to the general aim of making EU policy making more transparent, the LDP pledges for accountability of the Commission - including a ‘State of the Union’ speech by the President - openness of the European Central Bank and an increasing effectiveness of EU regulation. The veto is to be maintained in areas of ‘vital interest’ for Britain, such as defence, tax matters and social security. This listing is quite extensive, comparable to that of Labour, although this party uses a more broad formulation linked to ‘matters of national sovereignty’. To end with, the LDP supports a Common Foreign and Security Policy which is ‘consistent with our membership of NATO’.

* Transfer of policy making

In this category, the goal of the Conservatives is straightforward: no further transfers of power ‘from Westminster to Brussels’ (p.28). The big issue here is the Conservatives’ opposition to the Euro and their determination to keep the pound. This position obviously implies that there is no reference whatsoever to policy areas that might better be taken to the European level. Inversely, there is also no clear agenda which policy should be regained by the British government. The one exception concerns the Common Agricultural Policy, which the Tories want to renegotiate so that the national governments are in charge again.

Again, it is the LDP which refers to Europe in the most detailed and elaborated way. In particular, the possibilities for ‘Green Action’ are acknowledged. The LDP suggests further EU policy for the reduction of energy use, air pollution and greenhouse gas emissions. In addition, further police co-operation within Europol is advanced. There is also a more fundamental consideration of the division of competences, which is part of the so-called ‘priorities in Europe’:

‘Establish a Constitution for the European Union to define and limit the powers of the EU ensuring that decisions are made at the most appropriate level. It would set out the roles, responsibilities and power of EU institutions in relation to member states. (…) A standing scrutiny committee in the European Parliament should be established to ensure that EU proposals meet the criteria of subsidiarity and proportionality.’ (p.48-9)

Labour proposes a similar idea, although they suggest an Intergovernmental Conference to address the issue of ‘what should and what should not be done at the European level’ (p.38). Next to that, a second chamber of the European Parliament, consisting of members of national parliaments, should keep an eye on the division of competences. The aims of Labour regarding the transfer of decision making to the EU level are rather modest. In most cases, they concern rather technical measures, such as patents for innovation. The first exception is defence policy, where Labour advances a European Defence Initiative, which allows EU military operation outside NATO. The second concerns the hotly debated topic of joining the Euro: the formulation is extremely cautious, and membership will depend on public assent.
* Opportunities and constraints

In this category, the ‘splendid isolation’ of the Conservatives is most striking. There is no reference at all to the restrictions imposed by Europe on national policy. The only formulation we can find is about the implementation of EU law:

‘The next Conservative Government will not enforce European regulation any sooner or more zealously than other countries.’ (p.37)

Labour has a comparable lack of attention for the effects of EU policy. The only reference to be found concerns European funding for tourism, which would be particularly helpful for the impoverished seaside resorts.

The LDP refers to anti-discrimination law and the protection of privacy thanks to EU legislation, and welcomes the incorporation of this regulation in UK law. But, fairly similar to the Tories, it wishes to stop

‘the practice of ‘goldplating’ EU regulations, whereby the UK government unnecessarily adds requirements to minimum EU standards’ (p.49)

Finally, the programme speaks of improving the scrutiny of national parliaments: ministers, including the PM, will have to give evidence before the European Affairs Committee. This may also improve the control over the effects of EU regulation on British politics.

* Synopsis

Table 3 gives a sketchy overview of the coverage of the three categories in the programmes of the British parties. It will come as no surprise that the LDP scores highest overall. This programme has the most extensive and detailed coverage on all aspects of Europeanisation. Both Labour and the Tories directly compete with each other on the European issue in the first and second category. The main aim is to show what is wrong about the other’s European policy. Whereas the Conservatives claim that the Labour government has ‘lost confidence in our ability to govern ourselves’ and is ‘taking us down a route’ which leads to a ‘fully integrated superstate’ (p.29), Labour’s reproach is equally clear:

‘So we chose to engage constructively in Europe, not to shout abuse from the sidelines. (…) Standing up for Britain means fighting for Britain’s interests in Europe, not leaving Europe - which threatens our national interest.’ (p.4-5)

**Table 3. Coverage of EU issues, United Kingdom**

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<th>Policy and institutions</th>
<th>Transfer of decision making</th>
<th>Opportunities and constraints</th>
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<td>LAB</td>
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<td>TORY</td>
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<td>High</td>
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Whereas clear views can be found on EU policy and institutions, all three parties - with the partial exception of the Liberal Democrats - pay far less attention to the second and third category. This is especially the case when we look at the ‘opportunities and constraints’: it seems as if all parties suggest that there is still a lot of national policy autonomy left.

5.2 Netherlands 2002: indifference or lack of vision?

Altogether, the main parties in the Netherlands tend to be positive about European integration. Although critical remarks can sometimes be heard from the VVD, this is more of a latent and ‘irregular’ Euroscepticism which does not show in their party programme. The slight differences are in line with the picture of table 1: CDA and D66 are most Euro-enthusiast, the PvdA follows at close distance. None of the parties presents the EU issue as an important one: the VVD in particular hardly mentions it. The PvdA has the most extensive coverage, but this is also due to the very large size of the programme as a whole.

Unlike in the United Kingdom, no guiding principle for EU policy can be distinguished. None of the parties speak of the EU in terms of the national interest. But it becomes clear when reading between the lines that one of the main reasons for supporting European integration is the economic benefit for an open economy like the Netherlands. The drawback of a lack of vision and the fact that both the political and the public debate on Europe are practically non-existent, is that most of the programmes are rather superficial and uncommitted. The absence of a Eurosceptic challenger party makes most of the EU content rather predictable.

* Policy and institutions

For the VVD, the main goal of European integration is to promote economic growth and free trade. Consequently, further co-operation, and the upcoming enlargement, has to be judged from this perspective. In terms of policy, the main proposals are the reform of agricultural policy and cuts in the budget for structural funds. The CFSP has to be improved within the context of NATO, which implies that the VVD is against a separate European military infrastructure. Second, the programme is very brief on EU institutions: it only contains very general remarks on the importance of transparency and openness and the usual statement about the need for enhancing the role of the European Parliament.

As could be seen in the example cited above, D66 makes an explicit choice for a federal Europe. It has to be added that the programme does not tell us more about the desired type of federalism they propose or the time span in which this has to be achieved. Furthermore, the focus is on a reform of the Union’s internal structure. Among their measures are the evaluation of the structural funds, a radical change in agricultural policy and an end to money ‘flowing around’ through national and European bureaucratic channels. According to D66, Europe has to mean more than just ‘one currency’: democratisation should be one the main goals. Their proposals are: direct election of the Commission President, budgetary rights and the right of initiative for the Parliament, plus the right to dismiss individual Commission members.
The PvdA emphasises the need for more democracy in the EU, and the involvement of citizens in EU politics. Most of the specific measures to attain these goals concern an increasing role for the European Parliament. One of these measures is the election of the Commission President by the EP, which in turn will ‘strengthen the position of the European Commission vis-à-vis national governments’. Next to that, the introduction of European candidate lists, EU-wide referenda and a kind of European ‘poldermodel’ are proposed. In other words, the PvdA wishes to switch the balance from intergovernmentalism to the community method, from national governments to Commission and Parliament. This also implies that national vetoes should be limited:

‘(The veto) was a reasonable instrument to give self-confidence to six founding countries. In a Union of fifteen countries it has become a serious hindrance. In other words, when less and less is decided nationally and more and more in commonality, the European institutions should be organised less along national lines and more along community lines.’ (p.65)

Turning to EU policy, the PvdA - like most of the other parties - wishes a reform of the CAP. Moreover, the development of a knowledge society and the role of the EU (Commission) as a global actor are supported.

In the CDA programme, Europe is described as a ‘federal union of states’, based on core values such as justice and solidarity: its democratic character is of vital importance. For that purpose, the European Parliament obtains the right to dismiss individual Commissioners and the areas for which co-decision applies, have to be expanded. But the focus is on the Commission and its right to initiate policy making in all three pillars. The main policy choices concern the reform of agriculture towards income subsidy, the use of structural funds in the light of enlargement and the reinforcement of the internal market.

* Transfer of decision making

The VVD is not in favour of formally establishing the division of competences, since European integration is considered a ‘dynamic process’ which can not be based on a certain ‘final model’. A three step approach is outlined to deal with the question as to which tasks can be transferred to the EU level:

a) does this measure contribute to the promotion of the free movement of persons, goods, services or capital? b) does this measure concern a cross-border problem which cannot be solved at the national level? c) does European co-operation contribute to economies of scale benefits? (p.47)

As a result, the VVD only supports additional EU involvement in very specific policy areas. These include EU-wide liberalisation of gas and electricity supply and harmonisation of the regulation on technological development. Also, the need for a common EU asylum and immigration policy is put forward. According to D66, the European Constitution has to formalise the division between national sovereignty and European competences. Further European regulation is welcomed in the areas of defence and security, asylum policy, and environment.
Subsidiarity is the keyword for the CDA to achieve a

‘(…) clear and concise demarcation of competences and tasks of the European Union and its member
states.’ (p.25)

The Christian Democrats argue for an increasing role for the EU in several areas. To name a few: the approach of cross border crime, the need for European criminal law, and reduction of CO2 emissions. Furthermore, there is a demand for a number of more specific and sometimes technical EU regulations.

The PvdA follows the CDA when it comes to the division of competences:

‘Of course, this does not mean that all decisions should be made at the European level. On the contrary, our point of departure will be: what can be arranged at the national, regional or local level, will not be done by the European Union (the principle of subsidiarity) (…) Also, a better balance between national governments and the European Union is required’ (p.65).

Moreover, a European intervention army has to be built up, in close co-operation with NATO and the UN. Other policy areas in which European competence should increase include harmonisation of tax regimes, defence and security policy, legalisation of soft drugs (!) and development aid. Like the Labour Party, the PvdA is very cautious when it comes to social policy at the EU level.

* Opportunities and constraints

In the VVD programme, which is rather modest in its coverage of EU issues as it is, the third category plays practically no role. The only two references concern European tender rules that should not be violated, and how the protection of animals against diseases has to be in line with EU legislation. The same can be said of D66, who pay even less attention to the effect of Europe. Their programme refers to the role of the Secretary of State in co-ordinating ‘Europe’, a statement that gets no further explication.

This need for co-ordination is recognised by the CDA as well, but this party adds a number of other issues. On several occasions, the CDA points at the fact that national legislation has to conform to EU laws. National security policy has to fit within the framework of the EU and NATO, and the sickness scheme has to be adapted to EU principles of free movement of persons and the freedom of choice for the insurant.

In the PvdA programme the clearest statements about European impact can be found, summarised as follows:

‘Europe has become interior and is going to be even more so in the future’ (p.64)

The PvdA alludes to the consequences of enlargement for the national labour market, and the impact of imports from the EU for food safety. Moreover, there is a focus on the public debate about Europe, which the PvdA aims to stimulate.
Table 4 depicts the coverage of the three categories by the Dutch parties. It is striking that the third category scores low in all cases, except for the PvdA. Again, parties do not explicitly mention the context in which national policy is made. Overall, the VVD seems least interested in EU affairs, whereas the programme also shows a certain euroscepticism. Both CDA and D66 present themselves as pro-European parties and emphasise the federal character of the EU. Finally, the PvdA proposes an increasing role for the community method, at the expense of intergovernmental decision making. But the overall picture is that the EU is not a salient issue and that competition over EU policy hardly takes place.

5.3 Europeanisation comparatively speaking

First of all, the fact that we have found references in all three categories hints at a certain congruence between the academic and the political notion(s) of Europeanisation. Then again, the third category ‘opportunities and constraints’, which corresponds to the common understanding of Europeanisation, is clearly underrepresented. It seems as if parties are unwilling to admit that their room to manoeuvre has been seriously reduced over the last fifteen years.

The overview presented above offers some noteworthy insights. First, it is interesting to observe the differences between the Netherlands and the UK, specifically when it comes to the extent to which Europe has become an integral part of the programme, but also in the type of references to Europe. To begin with, Europe has been far more politicised in the UK, which in turn leads to clearer statements on the architecture of the EU political system and the way in which national interests can be served in the EU. The third category is practically absent in the UK – showing the ‘self-confidence’ of particularly Labour and the Conservatives. This may represent the difference between large and small countries: the ‘world leader’ claims of these parties sharply contrast with the modest attitude of Dutch parties.

Second, there are some remarkable parallels. The lion’s share of all references deal with EU policy and institutions: some parties even present a very detailed view on the role of the various EU bodies, which is comparable to what other parties present in their Euro manifestos. In addition, almost all parties somehow deal with the division of competences: either through the application of the subsidiarity principle or through a more formal Kompetenzkatalog. Finally, there is a number of issues where basically all parties wish to intensify European co-
operation: the fight against crime, environmental measures and defence and security. To be sure, the exact policy proposals may vary substantially, but there is a shared feeling that the EU level is more appropriate for regulation.

6. Discussion

Europeanisation has become a buzzword in the literature on European integration. As I have briefly explained, this is not unproblematic, since it has led to a lot of conceptual confusion. Europeanisation has been described both as a process of intensifying integration - the emergence of rules and norms at the European level - and as the domestic impact of EU regulation. I have followed the mainstream approach, which is the latter version, by looking at the way in which ‘Europe hits home’. Subsequently, I have argued that the effect of EU integration on political parties has been somewhat overlooked in the literature hitherto and therefore deserves further attention. This paper has focused on the way in which party programmes display a certain level of Europeanisation. Due to the fact that the literature on this topic is relatively sparse, no mechanisms or logics of change comparable to the ‘goodness of fit’ have been established as yet. In other words, this part of the Europeanisation literature is still in the second, exploratory phase (cf. section 2). My contribution has been to come up with a threefold categorisation to map adaptation of national party programmes.

I have presented the differences between the Europeanisation of programmes in two countries, assuming that national context matters, and this turned out to be the case. For that reason, I have not paid explicit attention to the differences between parties. This might be an interesting next step for research. To give one example: there is quite some variation between the Dutch (PvdA) and the British Labour Party, both members of the Social Democratic party family. Whereas Labour emphasises the role of national governments and the national veto, the PvdA propounds a larger role for Commission and Parliament and an increasing use of qualified majorities. As a result, the PvdA is also less reluctant than Labour to transfer several policy areas to the EU level.

Mair (2000; 2002) argues that political parties engage in the wrong debate at both the national and the European level. On the hand, European parties focus on changes in European institutions, although their capacity to achieve change is very limited. In particular, Treaty changes are discussed mainly in national parliaments, which have to ratify them. On the other hand, national parties continue to discuss all kinds of policy issues, which are only to a limited extent decided upon at the national level. Most of the rules which guide our every day life are made in Brussels and not in the national capitals. Mair suggests that European parties should focus more on day-to-day policy, whereas national parties would shift their attention to the architecture of the EU.

To what extent does the analysis confirm or refute this argument? Since I have focused on national parties, I can only take up that part of the argument. First, it is remarkable that most of the parties hardly mention European influence, even in those areas where it is obvious
that the EU sets the conditions for national policy. Second, it shows that most of the European references have to do with the policy and institutions of the EU. In other words, although national parties continue to focus on day-to-day policy, perhaps ignoring too often the EU context, their main attention for Europe is in the proper direction.

It can be seen from various studies that parties come to pay more attention to the European Union and that internal dissent is growing. It also turns out that parties themselves consider the EU issue more important. Finally, different forms of Europeanisation have found their way into the party programmes, as has been demonstrated in the analysis presented above. However, does this actually make any difference for party competition and for the relation between parties and voters? This is were citizens (voters) come in: e.g. which is the public opinion about Europe? In the Netherlands we find a much more positive attitude towards European integration than in the United Kingdom, judging from the results of the bi-annual Eurobarometer. On the other hand, this ‘permissive consensus’ may also lead to a lack of interest in EU issues and consequently a low profile public debate. For parties, it is not very rewarding to emphasise European policy in their competition with other parties.

In sum: parties have to challenge each other and this ‘manifestation of a conflict of interest between politicians’ (Laver and Hunt 1992: 43) has to be recognised and appreciated by voters. Therefore, establishing party positions is not enough. These findings should be linked to data about the contents of election campaigns and parliamentary debates, to know which is the impact on electoral and policy competition.

Finally, it seems worthwhile to study other aspects of party life as well, as Ladrech (2002) has argued convincingly. This paper has considered the impact the EU has on the programme of parties and briefly touched upon the aspect of party competition. But European integration may also have an impact on party organisation. Apart from some evident matters, such as selecting candidates and drawing up a European manifesto, there are more fundamental questions about the role of EU specialists (including MEPs) within the party or the extent of transnational party activity and national control over MEPs. In many cases, European integration will be an additional factor, possibly enhancing developments that were already taking place (cf. Ladrech 1999). But it will turn out to be a factor that cannot be ignored. To a large extent, the abundant literature on party change or party decline has turned a blind eye to European influences until now. It is about time to take up the gauntlet of this research agenda.
Notes

1 Interestingly, some recent articles have pointed at the need to re-incorporate the bottom-up perspective in Europeanisation literature (Beyers and Trondal 2002; Börzel 2003)
2 To be sure, the authors cited do not claim that their work falls within this literature.
3 A description of this project can be found at http://www.euromanifestos.de
4 In addition, pro- or anti- Europe positions do not tell very much about the extent to which parties are Europeanised. Pro- EU parties are not by definition more Europeanised than anti-EU parties. Unfortunately, the literature so far has focused too narrowly on the issue of euroscepticism, whereas I seek to look at programmatic change in a broader perspective.
5 The latter example is perhaps a bit questionable, because it does reflect a (very) positive statement about the EU, i.e. about what the EU has brought so far. However, what I mean to say is that it does not contain a concrete policy proposal or statement. In addition, as mentioned earlier, the issue of pro- or anti-EU is not my main concern.
6 More research is needed to understand why parties are so reluctant to admit their limited scope of policy action. My hunch would be that they have a self-interest not to portray themselves as weak actors with little influence, but there may be other factors as well.
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