THE EUROPEANIZATION OF NATIONAL POLITICAL PARTIES
Power and organizational adaptation

Edited by THOMAS POGUNTKE, NICHOLAS AYLOTT, ELISABETH CARTER, ROBERT LADRECH AND KURT RICHARD LUTHER
The Europeanization of National Political Parties

This book offers a detailed exploration of how national political parties have responded to the increasing relevance of European governance.

This is the first empirical study to examine the effects of the European Union on the internal organizational dynamics of national political parties. It draws on the results of a major, cross-national project and is based on documentary analysis and some 150 interviews with senior party actors in six EU member states (Austria, Britain, France, Germany, Spain and Sweden).

Situated in the context of the debate on Europeanization, this book illustrates that national political parties have been surprisingly well equipped to handle the challenges of the increasing importance of multi-level governance in Europe. Following a rigorous analytical framework set out in the introductory chapter, the country studies examine all relevant national political parties (a total of 30) and systematically address a clearly defined set of empirical questions. The volume ends with two comparative chapters that analyse the findings from a cross-national perspective and offer theoretical insights into the problems of party government amid increasing European integration.

This text will appeal to all those researching in the fields of European Studies, Political Science and Comparative Politics.

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Contents

List of tables vi
List of contributors viii
Preface and acknowledgments x

1 European integration and internal party dynamics 1
   ELISABETH CARTER, KURT RICHARD LUTHER AND THOMAS
   POGUNTKE
2 Structural adjustment and incumbent elite empowerment: Austrian parties’ 26
   adaptation to European integration
   KURT RICHARD LUTHER
3 Government change, organizational continuity: the limited Europeanization of 53
   British political parties
   ELISABETH CARTER AND ROBERT LADRECH
4 Continuity amidst political system change: why French party organization 80
   remains immune to EU adaptive pressures
   ROBERT LADRECH
5 Europeanization in a consensual environment? German political parties and 100
   the European Union
   THOMAS POGUNTKE
6 European integration and Spanish parties: elite empowerment amidst limited 124
   adaptation
   LUIS RAMIRO AND LAURA MORALES
7 A long, slow march to Europe: the Europeanization of Swedish political 149
   parties
   NICHOLAS AYLOTT
8 Some things change, a lot stays the same: comparing the country studies 175
   NICHOLAS AYLOTT, LAURA MORALES AND LUIS RAMIRO
9 Europeanization and national party organization: limited but appropriate 195
   adaptation?
   ROBERT LADRECH

Index 213
Tables

2.2 Candidate selection for European Parliament elections in Austria 33
3.1 Elections to the European Parliament in Britain: votes, seats and turnout, 1979–2004 57
4.1 Elections to the European Parliament in France: votes, seats and turnout, 1979–2004 84
5.1 Elections to the European Parliament in Germany: votes, seats and turnout, 1979–2004 105
5.2 Candidate selection for European Parliament elections in Germany 111
6.2 Candidate selection for European Parliament elections in Spain, 2004 135
6.3 Ex officio positions of MEPs in Spanish party organs, 2005 137
7.1 MPs and party sympathizers in the Swedish referendum on EMU, 2003: percentages voting Yes to EMU 153
7.3 Candidate selection for European Parliament elections in Sweden, 2004 157
7.4 Swedish parties’ affiliations to European parliamentary groups and Europarties, 2005 162
8.1 Formal incorporation of MEPs into party executive organs 179
8.2 Relative degree of integration of EU specialists, especially MEPs, into party 181
8.3 Relative degree of influence of EU specialists in drafting of national election manifests 182
8.4 Degree of national party leadership influence in candidate selection for elections to the European Parliament 184
8.5 Relative degree of active political coordination between MEPs and national parties
8.6 Relative degree of national party control over ministers’ actions in EU bodies (governing parties)
8.7 Relative change in accountability of EU specialists, especially MEPs, to their parties
8.8 Relative change in influence of EU specialists, especially MEPs, in their parties
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Preface and acknowledgments

Political science has witnessed several ‘growth industries’ over the years. Research on postmaterialism and neo-corporatism comes to mind, as does the literature on new social movements, and, more recently, on social capital, to name but a few. What sets European integration research apart from these is the fact that there can be very little doubt about the existence and relevance of the phenomenon. Furthermore, the phenomenon itself, i.e. the European Union, has been rather proactive in stimulating research through a series of funding initiatives. Hence, when we began to investigate how increasing European integration might have influenced the internal dynamics of national political parties, we were surprised to find that very little had been written on this aspect. While almost every conceivable feature of Europeanization had been covered in the literature, virtually no attention had been given to how the central political actors in nation states, that is, national political parties, had adapted organizationally to the challenges of multi-level governance. Therefore, when we set out to investigate how the growing importance of the EU might have changed the internal balance of power in national political parties, we were largely exploring new territory.

The original research proposal was formulated by Nicholas Aylott, Robert Ladrech, Kurt Richard Luther and Thomas Poguntke (principal investigator), who were all based at Keele University at the time. We were joined by Elisabeth Carter at Keele, and Laura Morales and Luis Ramiro, who took care of the Spanish case study. Over the years, several members of the group have changed institutional affiliations and even countries of residence: Nicholas Aylott first moved to Umeå University in Sweden and will now soon take up a post at Södertörn University College, Huddinge/Stockholm; Laura Morales and Luis Ramiro moved from Madrid to the University of Murcia; and Thomas Poguntke moved down the road from Keele to Birmingham.

Despite geographical distance, we succeeded in collaborating very closely, and the coherence of this book testifies to this. Supported by a grant from the British Economic and Social Research Council (Grant No. R000 23 9793) and additional funding from the Keele University Research Investment Scheme, we were able to coordinate systematic research on all relevant parties in six EU member states following a common framework of analysis. Key to our success was the possibility of meeting twice a year since early 2003 in order to discuss and refine our theoretical perspective and make sure that our interviews were conducted according to a unified set of guidelines. In the end, we completed about 150 interviews with leading party politicians in 30 parties in Austria, Britain, France, Germany, Spain and Sweden and, most importantly, we are confident that our results are comparable across countries and parties.

Along the way, we have received generous help from a large number of colleagues. Many of them assisted us with a mail survey of all relevant parties in the 15 pre-2004 enlargement EU member states, the results of which will be reported elsewhere. The meeting to discuss the questionnaire was held in Murcia in May 2004 and was generously supported by the Spanish Ministry of Education and Science (Acción Especial
SEC2002–11872-E). Clearly, the present volume has benefited tremendously from the stimulating discussions in Murcia. Others joined us at subsequent presentations of initial results, like at the ECPR general conferences in Marburg and Budapest, while many attended our end of project meeting in Brussels in May 2006. The European Policy Centre hosted an event in which we were able to discuss our results with practitioners, and the Fondation Universitaire provided us with a wonderful environment for a concluding panel and a round table. Not only did we benefit tremendously from the insights of many colleagues, but we were also reassured by our friends that our endeavours were indeed worth the effort. We are deeply grateful to Luciano Bardi, Stefano Bartolini, Marina Costa Lobo, Kris Deschouwer, Patrick Dumont, David Farrell, Karl Magnus Johansson, Ruud Koole, Sylvia Kritzinger, Christopher Lord, Gail McElroy, Alessia Mosca, Gerassimos Moschonas, Karina Pedersen, Philippe Poirier, Tapio Raunio, Martine van Assche, Edwin van Rooyen and Alberto Vannucci for their inspiration, help and support along the way.

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1
European integration and internal party dynamics

Elisabeth Carter, Kurt Richard Luther and Thomas Poguntke

Academic research on ‘Europeanization’ has become a veritable growth industry over the last decade. The number of works that have addressed this theme in one form or another has soared (see Featherstone 2003; Mair 2004) and the numerous doctoral studies on the subject suggest that this trend will continue for some time to come. And little wonder: on the one hand, over this time period, European integration has grown both in terms of the number of policy areas now affected by the European Union (EU) and in terms of the number of member states which are now part of the Union. On the other hand, the concept of Europeanization is sometimes understood so broadly that this research agenda is incredibly wide, allowing for a whole range of subfields of political science and international relations to be potentially examined through the lens of Europeanization.

Within this body of work, scores of studies have investigated the Europeanization of domestic institutions, including central government and national administrations, local government and territorial institutions, national parliaments, national courts, and trade unions. Others have examined the influence of the European Union on policy-making in the member states (including monetary policy, transport policy, telecommunications policy and environmental policy), while still others have explored the impact of European integration on national interest intermediation, political contention, business-government relations, domestic news coverage, and public understandings of citizenship and of nation state identities.

In spite of such activity, there has been relatively little research into the effects of European integration on national political parties, party systems, elections and voters. Gabel (2000) has analysed whether issues of European integration influence national electoral behaviour, and Mair (2000) has examined the impact of Europe on national party systems. Similarly, in regard to political parties, Ladrech (2002) has put forward a useful framework for analysis that identifies five possible areas of investigation for evidence of Europeanization, some of which have since been examined. Indeed, Raunio (2002) has considered the impact of European integration on the autonomy of party leaderships, and Pennings (2006) and Dorussen and Nanou (2006) have investigated the influence of integration on national party manifestos. A number of works have also examined the European policy of individual parties (for example Gaffney 1996; Daniels 1998; Raunio 1999; Sloam 2004; Smith 2005). But this list remains relatively short, and it is still the case that this area of research is underdeveloped.

Indeed, in a review of two influential volumes on Europeanization, Mair bemoaned this very fact, arguing that ‘the politics of Europeanization…continues to be neglected’ (2004:345), a point he later repeated when he claimed that ‘far too little systematic
attention has been paid to analyzing the indirect impact of Europeanization on parties and party systems, especially at the domestic level where it is likely to be more important’ (2006).

The lack of attention paid to the domestic level is particularly striking when one considers how much research has been devoted to electoral and party developments at the supranational level. After all, numerous studies have concerned themselves with elections to the European Parliament (EP), while many others have explored the dynamics of party competition and the composition and behaviour of party groups within the EP, and a further body of work has focused on the development of extra-parliamentary parties at the European level, i.e. Europarties.2

The fact that so little work has examined the impact of European integration on national political parties is all the more remarkable given that, after all, political parties provide the essential link between government and electorates in modern parliamentary (and to a lesser extent semi-presidential) democracies (Lawson 1988; Poguntke 2002). Furthermore, it is somewhat surprising that, of the few studies that have investigated the relationship between political parties and European integration, with the exception of the conceptual framework put forward by Poguntke et al. (2007 forthcoming), none has explored the possible effects of increasing European integration on how parties organize. This is a notable omission because parties are organizations that, to varying degrees, pursue the classic goals of office, votes and policy, and at the heart of party organization lies the formal and informal distribution of power that shapes how these goals are prioritized and pursued. And these goals are (in theory) affected by European integration since decisions made at the EU level increasingly shape national policies, and hence directly mould the environment within which national parties operate. Growing European integration should therefore influence the ability of parties to achieve their desired goals and, in turn, it is reasonable to expect party organizations to adapt to such thorough changes in their environment so as to minimize potentially disruptive effects of European integration and exploit new opportunities that such environmental changes might offer.

In light of this, this volume focuses its attention on the impact of European integration on the internal organizational dynamics of national political parties. It investigates both formal and informal changes in national party organizations that arise from European integration and, in so doing, it examines the extent to which European integration has altered the distribution of power within national political parties. As well as filling an important gap in the research on parties and European integration, through its theoretical foundations and its research design it seeks to answer Mair’s call for more studies that provide ‘robust comparative evidence concerning the impact of Europe at the national level’ (2006).

Given that this study is located within the wider literature on Europeanization, the next section of this chapter turns its attention to how this multi-faceted concept has, to date, been defined and understood. The chapter then moves to examine why and how European integration might have induced change in national political parties, and it then considers factors that may explain variation in this change. It concludes with an overview of the research design of the study.
The meaning of ‘Europeanization’

Europeanization has become a fashionable term in contemporary political debate and in political science research. However, the concept to which the term refers is a contested one, with scholars using it to point to a number of different processes and phenomena. As a result, many maintain that there is no ‘theory of Europeanization’ (Olsen 2002:944; Featherstone and Radaelli 2003:333; Bulmer and Lequesne 2005:11), while others have even questioned the usefulness of the term as an organizing concept (Kassim 2000:238).

In reviewing the literature on Europeanization, authors have highlighted different definitions of the term. Particularly useful is Olsen’s list, which identifies five possible uses of the term: (1) changes in external boundaries; (2) developing institutions at the European level; (3) central penetration of national systems of governance; (4) exporting forms of political organization; and (5) a political unification project (2002:923–4). Of these five uses, the third, which points to a ‘top-down’ process whereby domestic political actors or institutions have adapted to the pressures of European integration, has been particularly widespread and influential, especially in the field of comparative politics. One of the first definitions of Europeanization seen from such a perspective, and one which has since been widely cited, is that offered by Ladrech, who characterizes Europeanization as ‘an incremental process re-orienting the direction and shape of politics to the degree that EC political and economic dynamics become part of the organizational logic of national politics and policy-making’ (1994:69). In a similar fashion, Héritier et al. define Europeanization as ‘the process of influence deriving from European decisions and impacting member states’ policies and political and administrative structures’ (2001:3).

With the reservation that these two definitions obscure the role of individuals and policy entrepreneurs, Radaelli offers a more detailed definition of Europeanization as ‘processes of a) construction b) diffusion and c) institutionalization of formal and informal rules, procedures, policy paradigms, styles, “ways of doing things” and shared beliefs and norms which are first defined and consolidated in the EU policy process and then incorporated in the logic of domestic (national and subnational) discourse, political structures and public policies’ (2000:4). By putting forward this definition Radaelli first broadens the definitions offered by Ladrech and Héritier et al.

In addition, however, by arguing that these processes are first defined and consolidated at the EU level, Radaelli touches on the second use of the term in Olsen’s list, namely the ‘developing [of] institutions at the European level’. This notion is even more explicit in the work of Risse et al., who define Europeanization as ‘the emergence and the development at the European level of distinct structures of governance, that is, of political, legal, and social institutions associated with political problem-solving that formalizes interactions among the actors, and of policy networks specializing in the creation of authoritative European rules’ (2001:2).

Thus, unlike Ladrech, Héritier et al., Radaelli and others, Risse et al. do not understand Europeanization as encompassing domestic change brought about by the impact of the influence of ‘Europe’. Instead, they view Europeanization as an institutionalization of the European political system, and they then proceed to examine the impact of this institutionalization on the domestic structures of member states (see Mair 2004:339–40). Risse et al. have come in for some criticism for their usage of
the term. In particular, questions have been raised over the extent to which their concept of Europeanization differs from, or overlaps with, the concept of European integration (Bomberg and Peterson, 2000:3–4; Radaelli 2000:3; Howell 2004:8; Bulmer and Lequesne 2005:13). That said, they remain very aware of the differences between European integration and (their concept of) Europeanization, arguing that ‘much of the literature on European integration …treats the process of integration as the end point of a causal process beginning with domestic and transnational societal interests and ending with European outcomes’ (2001:12), whereas their approach focuses on the post-ontological stage of research, namely explaining processes and outcomes of European integration (see also Caporaso 1996; Radaelli 2000:6).

Despite differences in definitions, there are similarities in the studies mentioned above, in that all focus on a ‘top-down’ process of Europeanization, since all are concerned with the impact of European dynamics, decisions, processes, institutions and/or policy networks on domestic politics, policies or polities. That said, however, some studies have also pointed to the existence of so-called ‘bottom-up’ Europeanization by acknowledging that member states are not only affected by ‘Europe’, but may also seek to shape institutions, processes and policies. Indeed, Risse et al. recognize that their approach ‘rests on a circular flow, a system of causal relationships closed by feedback loops’ (2001:12). Similarly, Bomberg and Peterson explicitly point out that ‘Europeanization is a two-way process’ and go on to define it as ‘a shorthand term for a complex process whereby national and sub-national institutions, political actors, and citizens adapt to, and seek to shape, the trajectory of European integration in general, and EU policies in particular’ (2000:7; see also Börzel 2002:193–4).

Some of the relatively early studies of Europeanization mentioned above implicitly viewed European integration as an independent variable, and identified the change in domestic structures or processes that came about in response to integration (or the Europeanization of these domestic structures or processes) as the dependent variable (Hix and Goetz 2000). However, the interconnectivity of the ‘top-down’ and ‘bottom-up’ dimensions of Europeanization has, to some extent, meant that a reconceptualization of the relationship between European integration and Europeanization is required. Indeed, as Howell argues, ‘the relationship between European integration and Europeanization is interactive and the distinction between the dependent and independent variable obscured’ (2004:3; see also Bulmer and Burch 2001:78).

This review of (some of) the different definitions of Europeanization and the discussion of the various ‘dimensions’ of Europeanization are important, in the first instance, because they provide an overview and an assessment of the literature on the subject. Yet it has also been appropriate to provide a (short) literature review in this introductory chapter to the volume so as to place the present project in the wider ‘Europeanization framework’.

Since the aim of the present project is to examine the ways in which and the extent to which national political parties have adapted their organizations in the face of growing European integration, this volume is very much concerned with the ‘top-down’ dimension of Europeanization. In this sense, it adopts a definition of Europeanization akin to those put forward by Ladrech (1994) and Héritier et al. (2001). In short, it conceptualizes Europeanization as intra-organizational change in national political parties that is induced by the ongoing process of European integration. This in turn means that,
throughout the volume, European integration is indeed treated as the independent variable, and change or adaptation in the organizations of national parties is treated as the dependent variable. This said, however, the chapters that follow do not lose sight of the fact that Europeanization is a two-way process and that various ‘feedback loops’ between the domestic and the supranational level exist. Indeed, the country study chapters that follow and the concluding chapters to the volume spend considerable time discussing the finding that party elites, especially when in office, have become further empowered as a result of European integration and thus are able to attempt to upload their preferences onto the supranational level. Thus, while the research underpinning the volume focuses squarely on the ‘top-down’ dimension of Europeanization, the implications of the findings are very much discussed with both dimensions of the concept in mind.

Before turning to outlining the theory on which the project is based and presenting the hypotheses it advances, two further points should be made about Europeanization. Firstly, it is worth emphasizing that the literature on Europeanization fully acknowledges that the impact of European integration on domestic actors and the extent to which these actors may or may not engage in any adaptation is likely to be non-uniform, within countries, across countries, and over time. Börzel has examined this issue in some depth and suggests that the ‘differential impact of Europe is explained by the “goodness of fit” between European and national policies, institutions, and processes, on the one hand, and the existence of “mediating factors” or intervening variables that filter the domestic impact of Europe, on the other hand’ (2005:50; see also Ladrech 1994; Börzel and Risse 2000; Risse et al. 2001).

Institutional variables are perhaps the most obvious of these intervening variables, but authors have also drawn attention to the importance of ‘systems of policy beliefs’ (Radaelli 2000:24), and of values, discourses and identities (Dyson 2000; Checkel 2001). Furthermore, as Mair (2004) has pointed out, even though to date much of the academic literature has largely ignored them, the political preferences of actors, the extent to which European integration (and indeed Europeanization) may create political or partisan contestation, and the extent to which this may then be mobilized should also be considered as crucial intervening variables. This question of intervening variables will be picked up later in this chapter when the intervening variables judged most important to the study will be discussed. In their quest to explain any variation in the extent to which national parties have adapted their organizations in response to European integration, the country chapters will also pay attention to these variables. Similarly, Chapter 8 will explore the effect of intervening variables in some depth, given that it focuses its attention squarely on the issue of variation.

The second point to be made about Europeanization concerns its measurement and centres around the question of isolating the effects of European integration on domestic actors. As Goetz has warned, European integration ‘is but one of several “drivers of change”’ (2000:225), and hence, as Bulmer and Lequesne explain, ‘there is the very clear risk that Europeanization studies may attribute all empirical findings of adjustment to EU-effects’ (2005:14). This issue will be returned to in some detail later in the chapter when the study’s research design is explained, since, as will become clear, if an appropriate and careful research strategy is pursued, it does indeed become possible to isolate the effects of European integration on domestic actors.
Before the chapter can turn its attention to outlining the types of party organizational changes it expects to have taken place, and before its hypotheses can be presented, it is necessary to briefly discuss the most relevant institutional changes of the EU so as to appreciate the environment in which national political parties exist today.

**How European integration has changed the environment of national parties**

A series of treaty revisions since the late 1980s has fundamentally altered the fabric of European governance. Essentially, these treaties have expanded the powers of the European Parliament, and in so doing have strengthened some of the supranational elements of the EU and widened the Union’s scope. The EP has gained power through various waves of institutional reform. The Single European Act, which came into force in 1987, brought in the cooperation procedure, which gave the EP the right to a second reading over certain legislation. The Maastricht treaty then established the co-decision procedure, which makes legislation subject to a third reading by the EP before it can be adopted by the Council of Ministers, and which allows the EP to prevent legislation from being adopted should an absolute majority of its members oppose it. The Amsterdam treaty then extended the use of co-decision, meaning the EP has increasingly become a veto-player in European law-making.

In addition to gaining power as a result of changes in the legislative process, the EP has also become stronger vis-à-vis the Commission. At Maastricht it won the right to confirm an incoming Commission (en bloc), while at Amsterdam it became able to vet the President of the Commission and subject individual commissioner-candidates to parliamentary hearings (Bache and George 2006:297). The EP used its newly acquired rights in 2004 when it forced the designated President of the Commission, José Manuel Barroso, to withdraw the controversial Italian candidate Rocco Buttiglione.

The supranational logic of the EU was further strengthened after Amsterdam when qualified majority voting (QMV) in the Council of Ministers was extended to most policy areas in the EC pillar (Nugent 2003:77), although clearly, if disagreements do exist between states, proposals are not normally pushed to a vote. Furthermore, the treaty of Amsterdam saw visa, asylum and immigration policy move into the EC pillar of the Union, and hence fall under QMV, and also introduced QMV to the Common Foreign and Security Policy pillar for adopting and implementing joint actions and common positions.

At the same time, the scope of EU legislation greatly expanded and an increasing portion of legislation is now shaped in Brussels (Börzel and Risse 2000:3). The Single European Act widened the scope of European-level jurisdiction to many economic areas, and the Maastricht treaty brought consumer protection policy, public health policy, transport policy and education policy under the jurisdiction of the EU. It also extended the EU’s competencies in areas of social policy, the environment, and economic and social cohesion (McCormick 2005:71–8).

Taken together, these institutional changes have had three effects. First, the substantial extension of the powers of the EP has enhanced the supranational elements of the EU. Second, the widened possibilities for QMV have, albeit gradually, shifted the logic of
decision-making in the Council of Ministers towards a supranational logic. And third, the overall scope of EU decision-making has been extended considerably, thereby increasing the immediate relevance of decisions made by the Council of Ministers, the European Council and the EP for national politics.

The strengthening of the EP through both institutional reform and through its increased policy remit raises important questions concerning the goodness of fit between the organization and decision-making routines of national political parties on the one hand, and the need to integrate the increasingly important activities of Members of the European Parliament (MEPs) into the political routines of national political parties on the other (Raunio 2000). After all, even though EP party groups are composed of national delegations, the organizing principle of the EP is ideological families, not national delegations. The EP does mix both logics since it requires that a certain number of nations be represented in party groups, and national representation and ideological affinity will compete with each other when it comes to the internal dynamics of EP groups. But how national parties deal with this question, and how much room for manoeuvre MEPs are accorded, have become increasingly relevant issues for national political parties.

The increased use of QMV in the Council of Ministers raises equally important questions about how national political parties accommodate the fact that party politicians in executive office participate in policy decisions which are binding for the nation state without being able to veto them. Although QMV is only invoked in rare cases, its very existence and the ‘threat’ of its use may shield politicians from criticisms from their national constituency because they may claim that they had to agree to a compromise in order to avoid QMV being applied (Kassim 2005:288). Likewise, national parties and national parliaments have little ability to scrutinize decisions made in the European Council (where QMV is not employed), even though it is here that the most important choices about the EU’s direction are usually made.

In short, since EU decision-making has become far more important for national politics it is only reasonable to expect that national political parties are likely to have come under pressure to adapt. In the past, parties controlled national legislation and had developed mechanisms which would keep their government ministers in check and ensure a reasonable degree of implementation of their programme goals once in power (Klingemann et al. 1994). Furthermore, traditionally, the spheres of domestic politics and foreign relations were clearly distinguishable, even though there were limits to controlling a government when it was engaged in foreign policy. Today, however, the emigration of a considerable portion of policy-making to the European level has muddied the waters and, in theory, national political parties should have developed new mechanisms with which to cope with this challenge.

From the perspective of party theory, European integration constitutes a system-level trend that provides stimuli for political parties to adapt their organizations. At its simplest, this means the state-centric paradigm in which political parties have traditionally operated is gradually being replaced by a system of ‘unbounded territories’ (Bartolini 1999). Moreover, the supranational level impacts directly upon in particular two of the three key goals that the party literature (e.g. Müller and Strom 1999) ascribes to political parties, namely votes and policy. Since 1979, parties need to organize to compete for votes in elections to the EP, and issues related to European integration can
also shape interaction within and between parties competing for votes in national (and even regional) elections. In addition, European integration impacts on parties’ pursuit of policy. Not only has the EU led to the establishment of intergovernmental and supranational arenas in which policy-seeking occurs (including above all the EP, the Council of Ministers, the European Council and intergovernmental conferences (IGCs)), but the extended scope of EU-level decision-making might further stimulate parties to adapt their internal processes of manifesto formulation and intra-party decision-making on policy priorities, not least to incorporate EU-level party actors.

Indeed, European integration has created new categories of party actors and caused changes in the roles that some party actors play. The new categories of party actors it has generated include MEPs, who function predominantly at the supranational level. Other party actors continue to operate for the most part at the national level, but are now charged with maintaining regular links between the national and supranational levels. Over time, both these categories of actor develop expertise in EU-related issues and processes. In 1988, Panebianco identified another category of party expert whose intra-organizational position, he argued, had been privileged by system-level change. These were ‘electoral professionals’ (Panebianco 1988:262–7), whose value to their parties derived from their mastery of technologies that became increasingly indispensable for vote-seeking. As party actors with a specialization in EU-related issues and processes are nowhere near as indispensable for the pursuit of political parties’ key goals, they are unlikely to acquire the same degree of intra-party influence as electoral professionals. Nonetheless, given the importance which the EU level has assumed, so-called ‘EU specialists’ may well see some increased influence.

In line with party organizational theory, it is therefore reasonable to expect parties to have engaged in formal or informal organizational adaptation given that European integration has greatly increased the complexity of the environment within which parties operate. Yet, as the literature on party organizational change also makes clear (e.g. Harmel and Janda 1994), parties tend to be averse to organizational change. Hence it cannot be assumed that external stimuli will necessarily lead to organizational change. Furthermore, if change does occur, it may be neither identical nor irreversible. This can be attributed in part to the conservative nature of all organizations, but also highlights the importance of taking a number of potentially intervening factors into account. In the language of Panebianco, ‘organizational innovation’—especially of the formal variety—is most likely to occur when exogenous stimuli coincide with internal pressure on a party’s ‘dominant coalition’ (Panebianco 1988:239–50).

In his recent evaluation of approaches to explaining party organizational change, Harmel points out that the focus on system-level trends is best suited to explaining general processes of cumulative or incremental organizational change that arise from gradual environmental change (2002:132–3). By contrast, what he labels the ‘discrete change approach’ focuses mainly on explaining abrupt organizational change, which exponents of this approach (e.g. Janda 1990; Harmel and Janda 1994) often attribute to some sort of internal or external ‘shock’. The discrete change approach thus appears prima facie ill-suited to explaining organizational change resulting from the slow-moving processes of European integration. However, this assumes that parties are exposed to the external stimulus of European integration over a long period of time, which is an assumption that may be less appropriate for parties in countries that only recently joined
the Union. For them, the need for rapid adjustment to the exigencies of European integration might well be considered a form of ‘external shock’.

**European integration as a cause of party change**

Parties are likely to have adapted to European integration in a number of ways. They might have changed their policy preferences and the content of their manifestos, and they might have adapted the way they organize European election campaigns. In turn, the structure of party competition might have also changed. As mentioned above, a number of studies have already addressed these issues. Significantly, however, the impact of European integration on the organization of national political parties has so far been largely neglected. This is therefore the object of the present empirical investigation.

Essentially, party organization is about the informal and formal distribution of power within a party that will give power-holders the authority to pursue their preferred goals relating to office, votes and policy. Following Max Weber, power is conceptualized here as the ability to achieve a desired outcome, even against resistance (Weber 1980:28). In other words, those who have power within a party can decisively influence what a party stands for, how it competes in different electoral arenas, and who will be elected to party and public offices. This power can flow from direct control over these aspects, that is, from the autonomy to decide without outside interference, or it can be the result of access to resources that can be used to overcome resistance by others. Party politicians ‘who enjoy greater autonomy have a larger sphere of action in which they are protected from outside interference. To this extent they can effectively ignore other actors. Their overall power is, then, the combination of the scope of this protected area and their ability to use all their power resources to overcome potential resistance by others outside this protected area’ (Poguntke and Webb 2005a:7).

Clearly, there is never complete autonomy in a democracy because politicians need to anticipate the mechanisms of democratic accountability, which, at the very least, make themselves felt at the next election. In addition, democracies have developed a set of ex ante and ex post mechanisms in order to restrict the size of these zones of autonomy or, in other words, facilitate accountability (Bergmann et al. 2000; Strem 2000; Strem et al. 2003). However, politicians need to have freedom to manoeuvre in order to conduct their business of bargaining and achieving compromise. The very nature of EU decision-making with its strong bias towards negotiation and compromise inherently requires large zones of autonomy and restricts the feasibility of keeping those acting in EU institutions on a tight leash (Hix and Goetz 2000:11).

Consequently, the general expectation is that increasing European integration has induced organizational adaptation within national political parties which has led to a power shift in favour of two partially overlapping groups: (1) party elites and (2) those specializing in EU affairs. These two groups should have gained formal competences and de facto freedom of manoeuvre (i.e. autonomy) and access to resources (e.g. access to and control over information, expertise, money, staff). This in turn should have given them stronger leverage in intra-party power games. These power gains are likely to have occurred mainly at the expense of ordinary MPs and middle-level party elites.
The growing importance of EU politics has increased the relevance and the frequency of involvement of national party politicians in European-level arenas. Mainly, this relates to the institutions of the EU, but it also includes participation in Europarty politics. Party elites, that is, the inner party leadership and, when in government, cabinet members, are increasingly involved in EU-level decision-making that produces binding outcomes for national parties and national politics.

To a limited degree, this applies to party elites participating in the leadership bodies of Europarties since they partake in decisions that may have some bearing on how their national parties position themselves programmatically and strategically, particularly in European election campaigns (Hix and Lord 1997; Bardi 2002; Poguntke and Pütz 2006). Normally, membership in Europarty leadership bodies depends on a prior senior position within the national party and will not add much to an incumbent’s national political weight because Europarties still play a limited role in European party politics. That said, a leading position in a Europarty may well strengthen party elites from smaller parties and smaller countries where easy access to international networks might otherwise be less readily available.

First and foremost, however, the above-mentioned involvement in binding decision-making for national politics applies to the Council of Ministers and the European Council (and IGCs). Essentially, it is the logic of intergovernmental negotiations which prevails here: those present in negotiations need to have sufficient autonomy in order to be able to achieve compromise, and this restricts the scope for effective *ex ante* controls by relevant party or parliamentary actors considerably. Those engaged in these negotiations also enjoy greater resources since they have access to the expertise provided by governmental bureaucracies, at both the national and the European level (Hix and Goetz 2000:13).

When it comes to *ex post* control it is usually very difficult, if not inconceivable, for parliamentary parties that support a government to veto decisions in which their ministers, or even heads of government, have participated. In the first instance, this applies to the ‘grand’ decisions reached by European summit meetings where heads of government often find themselves locked into marathon meetings attempting to break deadlocks, but the intrinsic logic applies also to regular policy-making by the Council of Ministers where national cabinet members are increasingly involved in nationally binding legislation. To be sure, there is some national variation as regards the strength of European affairs committees (Raunio and Hix 2000; Raunio 2005) and there is more scope for detailed scrutiny in the ongoing process of policy-making by the Council of Ministers. Nevertheless, it is undeniable that EU policy-making has a strong ‘executive bias’, favouring members of the government and giving them more power vis-à-vis national legislatures and national party arenas to determine policies.

This inherent imbalance is augmented by the fact that those involved in negotiations have considerable control over the *ex post* presentation of which options were available, because Council meetings take place behind closed doors (Raunio and Hix 2000:145). As mentioned above, the extension of QMV may have strengthened the autonomy of individual negotiators vis-à-vis their principals even further. Although this is not a one-way process because the growing relevance of European governance is likely to have induced the creation of countervailing mechanisms designed to limit power gains by party elites, it is nonetheless reasonable to expect a power shift to have occurred in favour
of party elites as a result of ongoing European integration. These power gains flow from the changes in EU decision-making and, above all, from the greatly widened scope of EU governance. On this basis, the following hypothesis may be advanced:

**Hypothesis I**

European integration has resulted in a shift of power within national political parties in favour of national party elites.

**EU specialists**

EU specialists are a heterogeneous group of actors who are characterized by the fact that a considerable part of their political activity is related to the process or substance of European governance. They share a specific expertise in the functioning of the EU as a multi-level system. This is often reflected in the fact that they will meet more or less regularly across the functional divisions within their party and their national political system. In other words, they represent an identifiable group within parties. EU specialists include MEPs, members of national parliamentary EU affairs committees, EU spokespersons, members of the party head office staff who are involved in EU affairs, EP group staff and so on. It is important to keep in mind that party politicians (and even staff) often combine several functions. This is particularly true for smaller parties in which, for example, a deputy head of the parliamentary party may also be the senior member of the national parliamentary EU affairs committee and the link person to the Europarty. Despite this overlap, it is still quite possible to distinguish analytically between these roles. Elite interviews in the context of this study have shown that politicians are normally acutely aware about which particular hat they wear in a specific political situation.

Three main groups of EU specialists are identified in this study: MEPs; national politicians with an EU brief (such as members of national parliamentary EU affairs committees and party spokespersons on EU affairs); and party staff who are concerned with the management and organization of EU-related activities. As their roles in the political process differ substantially, they might have benefited from ongoing European integration in different ways. Each group is discussed in turn.

**MEPs**

The institutional changes outlined above have had three interrelated effects on the political role of MEPs. First, as the powers of the EP have grown, MEPs have now collectively attained considerable power in the legislative process of the EU. Second, as these powers have been extended to a larger number of policy areas, the frequency with which MEPs can exert power has grown. And, third, as EU decision-making has become so much more relevant for national politics, there is likely to have been a growing demand for the expertise of MEPs in national politics. While expertise on European matters should be an important resource which MEPs might be able to use in intra-party discussions and power games, the increasing power of the EP has also considerably