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Multilayer democratic reforms as a response to European crisis



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INDEX

Abstract	2
Authors	3-4
Multilayer democratic reforms as a response to European crisis	
1. The democratic deficit in the EU: an historical perspective	3-7
2. “Europe with the Regions”: Cohesion policy after 2020	7-12
3. The reform of the political parties of the mainstream left as a precondition for increased democratic capacity in Europe	12-16
4. Using the foreign and security policy as a tool of stronger EU and enlargement policy	17-20
Policy recommendations	20
Bibliography	20-23



ABSTRACT

*“It’s a very strange situation:
this crisis should be ideal for the Left,
but it doesn’t have any answers”*

Gathered in Vienna in the early autumn of 2017, a group of academic enthusiasts within the FEPS YAN have focused their research on multilayer democratic reforms as a response to European crisis. Although all of them had different starting points of research, the “reform” was the cut crossing edge that collected them for joint work. At the beginning of this project, we have all been aware that saving Europe out of the crisis is little bit over ambitious. However, that was not the aim of this research: this research aimed to provide some of the answers to the main questions that have arisen in the fog of enriched Euroscepticism that came out during the ongoing crisis. Being aware that, as Ivo Andric said, all the rivers in this world are curved, but it is ours not to stop straighten them, we have worked on some of the issues that each of us considers crucial, or can be used as an effective tool for making stronger and better Europe, and a stronger left. For the research, authors have used different methods from the social sciences spectrum. The scope of the research are the four areas that have been agreed upon consensus of the working group. Those are: the democratic deficit in the European Union (EU), the Europe of the regions, the reforms within the political parties and the foreign policy and neighbourhood relations. We have allocated the grassroots of the crisis in those areas, taking into consideration all the aspects that matter such as for example the economic crisis and the migrant crisis. We believe that the aspects and the questions that we are examining, have not been explored enough so far, so we hope to bring them into the light of the wider debate through this paper.



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CONTENT OF THE PAPER

1. The democratic deficit in the EU: an historical perspective

1.1. Introduction

The European Communities were founded by six countries in the 1950s. There have been many innovations and changes in many fields from the European Coal and Steel Community to the Treaty of Lisbon and the EU has expanded its authority. The EU reached 28, soon 27, member states and a population approximately of 500 million people. However, nowadays, the EU is criticized for lacking democratic structures although it keeps on expanding its authority. Indeed the EU has suffered for the lack of democratic legitimacy, whilst most of countries are trust in respect of democracy in the EU. If the EU is not democratically legitimised solely through the member states, as it happens with the traditional international organisations, it is also true that the EU should not be interpreted as a state since it lacks some of the basic competences of a state, such as an army, a tax policy, etc. Nonetheless, the EU democracy debate is always seems rather vague. Its vagueness derives from the fact that the EU, as a polity, represents a unique case, because it EU has evolved as a sui generis organization, on account of its unique system of supranational institutions such as the European Parliament (EP), the European Commission, the European Central Bank (ECB), and the European Court of Justice (ECJ). For that reason, the EU is far from being a classical nation-state formation. On the other hand, the member states possession of territory, the EU flag, common currency and anthem, and the EU citizenship bring the EU closer to nation-states. In this context, for more than two decades, the question has been raised whether the currently designed EU is a democratically legitimate system or not.

The question of democratic legitimacy has to be understood within the context of the EU, which means constitutional framework of the EU. The question of how should democracy be represented at the EU level and how decision-making process should be more democratic under this condition should be raised and asked. These concerns are the reasons why the EU suffers from democratic deficit. Many political scientists consider the EU as the first example of transition from an economic union to a political union. According to Marcus Höreth, the issues regarding democratic legitimacy gained visibility with the Single European Act (1987) and Maastricht Treaty (1992). These treaties forced the transfer of political decisions and attributions from the national to the European level. This has weakened the democratic



influence and control at the national level without having been rewarded by equally strong democratic institutions and processes at the European level.

However, from an historical perspective, the EU has improved its transparency and democratic accountability, at least till the recent economic crisis.

1.2. Historical overview

Going back to the roots of the European integration process, some scholars attribute to Jean Monnet the existence of today's democratic deficit, specifically on his vision based on the involvement and conversion to the European cause of the elites rather than the masses. He admitted that «We believed in starting with limited achievements, establishing de facto solidarity, from which a federation would gradually emerge. I have never believed that one fine day Europe would be created by some great political mutation, and I thought it wrong to consult the peoples of Europe about the structure of a Community of which they had no practical experience. It was another matter, however, to ensure that in their limited field the new institutions were thoroughly democratic; and in this direction there was still progress to be made....the pragmatic method we had adopted would....lead to a federation validated by the people's vote; but that federation would be the culmination of an existing economic and political reality, already put to the test». Moreover, Monnet recognized a peculiar role to experts and interest groups in the formulation of supranational policies, favouring and promoting a «government with the people, rather than by the people». The importance of interest groups, especially in the initial phase of the formation of the legislative proposal, was such that they were even compared with political parties, since «the economic interest group is essential to the functioning of the European integration system like it is the political party compared to national democratic systems».

Along the last decades, the EU institutions and European leaders have conceived practices designed to enhance legitimacy, transparency and accountability as well as the independence of the regulative processes, which are normally considered a step towards more democratic institutions. These practices, possibly, would have brought citizens close to the institutions and empowered the consumers who would otherwise be at risk of domination by the other stakeholders, such as the industry. This was not the case, at least according to the general opinion, which still perceives a lack of democratic legitimacy of the European institutions, even if significant progress has been made from an institutional perspective.

Theoretically speaking, a regime must at least possess basic elements to be qualified as democratic such as universal suffrage, free and recurring elections, presence of more than one party, alternative and different sources of information. It has to be recognized that, nowadays, the EU possess such basic elements. Surely, the most substantial improvement of



the democratic legitimacy of the European Communities was the first direct elections of the European Parliament in 1979, which has since then constantly increased its role till becoming

an equal actor with the Council of Ministers in the legislative process in almost every topic foreseen by the treaties.

One of the first initiatives to improve the transparency of the European Communities was the regulation concerning the opening to the public of the historical archives, a legislative act opening the Communities' documents to the public 30 years from the date that the document or record was issued. Later, in 1992, at the European Council in Birmingham, European leaders recognized that, «as a community of democracies, we can only move forward with the support of our citizens». For this reason, European leaders decided to increase the transparency of European institutions, specifically through open debates on work programmes and major legislative proposals, public votes when the Council of Ministers was acting as legislator, increased information on the role of the Council of Ministers and its policies, simplification of and increased access to Community legislation.

The process which began with the adoption of Single European Act (1986) was completed by implementation of the Maastricht Treaty (1993), after a long debate on the democratic legitimacy of the decision-making process, when the European Communities were officially transformed into the European Union. Truthfully, until the mid-1980s, the problem of democratic legitimacy of the EU did not exist: it was believed, in fact, that his legitimacy was indirectly provided by the member states and their parliaments. At that time, leading European politicians felt the urge to create a new democratic legitimisation which would fit the upcoming events. The Declaration 17 on the right of access to information of the Treaty of Maastricht recognized that the «transparency of the decision-making process strengthens the democratic nature of the institutions and the public's confidence in the administration».

In May 1993, the European Commission published a communication entitled "Public Access to the Institutions' Documents" with its proposals to increase transparency, even if it had already updated some of its own practices, foreseeing more extensive use of Green Papers to promote discussion on possible legislative proposals, earlier publication of its Annual Work Programme and better public distribution of key documents. The Commission elaborated some general guidelines, expecting that also the other institutions and the member states would comply with those. Soon, in October 1993, the Council of Ministers, the European Parliament and the European Commission adopted an Interinstitutional declaration on democracy, transparency and subsidiarity, with which the three institutions reaffirmed their attachment to the principle of openness and each set out the steps they proposed to take or



were already taking in its favour. Finally, in December 1993, the Council of Ministers and the Commission agreed on a Code of conduct concerning public access to Council and Commission documents, based on the general principle that «the public will have the widest possible access» to such material: this was the first legally binding instrument establishing the right of access to documents of the Council. Lately, in 1997, the Treaty of Amsterdam enshrined in the treaties the right of any natural or legal person residing or having its registered office in a member state to access to the documents of the EU institutions and the obligation of the Council to make public its votes and explanations of votes on the adoption of legislative acts. Rules governing the exercise of the right of access were to be adopted within two years of the Treaty of Amsterdam entering into force. Furthermore, the Treaty was also amended in order that «decisions are taken as openly as possible and as closely as possible to the citizen», as Maastricht had provided.

At the European council in Laeken, in December 2001, the European leaders recognised that «the European project also derives its legitimacy from democratic, transparent and efficient institutions», questioning how to «increase the democratic legitimacy and transparency of the present institutions». The document recalled also the Declaration on the future of the Union, annexed to the Treaty of Nice, which stressed the need to examine the role of the institutions in the European integration process but, more generally, the question was inherent to «what initiatives we can take to develop a European public area».

The Laeken declaration and the constitutional convention sought to address concerns about the EU democratic output: the question of the democratic deficit was meant to be solved by initiating a process of constitutional and institutional redesign. However, the project failed with the Dutch and French referenda which rejected the European Constitution but, at least, they stimulated a wider debate and promoted also a European-wide public discussion about the future of the EU.

In 2001, the Council and the European Parliament adopted a regulation regarding public access to the European Parliament, the Council and the Commission documents, which was the first legislative act regulating public access to documents of the EU institutions.

The Treaty of Lisbon, which entered into force in December 2009, strengthened the civic democracy of the EU, contemplating the European citizens initiative, reaffirming the subsidiarity principle and empowering the European Parliament, which is now an equal actor with the Council of Ministers in the legislative process in almost every topic foreseen by the treaties. Furthermore, the Treaty of Lisbon extended the right of access to documents of the EU institutions, bodies, offices and agencies, whatever their medium, whilst stating that among the additional organisations covered, the European Court of Justice, the European Central Bank and the European Investment Bank (EIB) were subject to this requirement only when exercising their administrative tasks.



1.3. Conclusion

In the last decades, the EU has widened and deepened its scope, while the treaties that mold its institutions forced the transfer of political decisions and attributions from the national to the European level. This has dragged the perception of a weakening of democratic influence and control at the national level without establishing equally strong democratic institutions and processes at the European level. However, from an historical perspective, the EU has improved its transparency and democratic accountability, at least till the recent economic crisis. The question of democracy in the EU is intertwined with its form of government since, from an institutional perspective, the European Parliament can qualify as a real parliament, while the Council of Ministers cannot be considered a real second Chamber of the EU. The latter, in fact, according to Nicola Lupo, despite having predominantly legislative functions, suffers from some structural weaknesses as it never sees the plenary meeting since it always meets only in committee, it has a binding mandate on European citizens, it has little publicity of its work and within it the technical component prevail over the political one. For these reasons, the Council of Ministers does not possess sufficient legitimisation in the eyes of European citizens, who should instead be the first to feel part of the whole of Europe. Another question is the perception of the sense of European political community. Essentially, according to Ulrike Liebert, despite the differences between North and South, despite the mistrust in the possibility of a process of integration, despite the conflict between Europeans and anti-Europeanists, it is undeniable that the EU is in a process of federation. Even so, citizens are not aware of it, not because of their own shortcomings, but because of the lack of participatory involvement which entails an absence of public opinion in the EU. Moreover, EU citizens found very difficult to intervene in the political debate at the European level, even if the Treaty of Lisbon has empowered them to intervene in the legislative debate, with the European citizens initiative.

2. “Europe with the Regions”: Cohesion policy after 2020

Cohesion is the primary – political, economic and social – objective of the European integration , and the cohesion policy of the European Union (EU) has become the most important tool in achieving it. The appropriations relating to this aim have constituted the largest figure in the EU budget since 2010. Since the years 1989 - 1999 their nominal amount has been constantly growing and in the period 2002 – 2006 it reached EUR 225 billion, and in the years 2007 – 2013 EUR 347 billion, which equalled one-third of the total EU budget. This was the result of the compromise agreed on during the Council of Europe meeting in December 2005. Under the provisions of the current financial perspective for 2014 – 2020 this amount may even reach EUR 351,8 billion.



The traditional cohesion policy was aimed at reducing regional and social disproportions on the territory of the entire European Union, i.e. seeking to reach the so-called convergence in the levels of development. Since 2007 its aims have also included regional competitiveness and employment, as well as territorial cooperation. A. Faludi and J. Peyrony note that, according to J. Delors's idea, the EU cohesion policy should not be of a countervailable character but rather pro-developmental, encouraging investment in 'hardware' and putting emphasis on 'software' in the form of building the ability to coordinate and cooperate not only between the least-developed regions, but all the regions in the entire European Union. By adding the notion of territorial cohesion to economic and social cohesion, the Treaty of Lisbon confirmed the significance of the European debate on the role of the area and territory for the promotion of competitiveness and combating regional and social disproportions. From this point of view, it is crucial to establish the position and role of local authorities in the territorial-oriented EU cohesion policy, their activities in obtaining and spending the funds from the budget of the EU and institutional environment responsible for territorial organisation of a state.

In the new paradigm of regional development, a local authority creates the dynamics of local economy which is a set of businesses operating in a given area. Various relations and interdependencies between these businesses arise, among others, from spatial relations, jointly owned infrastructure, local economic, social and spatial policies, participation in the local labour market, cooperation and exchange of goods and services, as well as from mutual competition on the local market.

The issue of local governments, their position in external environment, with a particular focus on decentralisation processes and the ongoing European integration, is an extremely important subject of research on the grounds of economic and social studies. New challenges facing the European Union countries: globalisation, demographic problems and ageing societies, population migration as well as the recent economic crisis or the concerns about public finance imbalance in numerous member countries, all encourage questions about the future of the European Union and the effectiveness of cohesion policy in the context of regional development.

Due to the change in the approach to cohesion policy on the European level, local self-governments have become a significant element of effective cohesion policy. The outlook on public authorities is moving away from the linear hierarchy, based on the leading role of a country's authorities, to horizontal cooperation and networking in the institutional, economic and social spheres. Local action groups, non-governmental organisations, and local self-governments are becoming important players constituting a link in cohesion policy. Their successful connection and inclusion in the realisation of the Europe 2020 strategy objectives forms the basis for a new approach to regional policy whose aim is to stimulate inter-regional development potentials (both economic and socio-cultural).



To meet all requirements posed by the progress of civilization and increased competition in the economic, social and cultural spheres, calls for selecting appropriate - territorial - policy aimed also at attaining the objectives of the Europe 2020 strategy. The need for development policy territorialisation was indicated in the Territorial Agenda adopted in 2011 in Gödöllő, where it was pointed out that the successful implementation of the Europe 2020 strategy depended on taking into account its territorial dimension. The territorialisation in such terms can be understood in two ways: the first is the coordination of policies and differentiation in space, the second is the use of specific, territory-relevant capital, which according to the concept of R. Camagni, should be stimulated by local authorities. This justifies the need to present Multi-level governance concept as a possible way to define the role of State.

Europe has been locked in a debate over its community management model, because the multiplicity of legal regulations, customs laws, decision-making procedures, and the institutional system require adequate cooperation mechanisms, organized in such a way as to bring maximum effects consistent with declared objectives. This outcome could be achieved, for instance, if the EU chose to communitarize all its activities within the integration process and discard the intergovernmental model, which would basically imply full integration within a political union. While such a solution may seem attractive in terms of decision-making and efficiency of action, it is unlikely to ever be accepted by member states. A more realistic solution is to be found in the multi-level governance (MLG) model, based on a basic assumption that the EU is composed of multiple centers and decision-making entities that form a “management network” and need to cooperate with one another. The MLG approach does not exclude the nation-state from the decision-making process, nor does it threaten its role; rather, it calls for the cooperation between individual levels of public authority, recognizing the state as the fundamental actor in the integration process.

Literature on territorial development frequently brings up the concept of multi-level governance, first laid out in the White Paper of the European Commission on European Governance released in 2001 . The fact that the White Paper of the Committee of the Regions published eight years later and the subsequent special opinion of the Committee continue to mention the idea as a postulate illustrates how difficult it is to put into practice . On 3 April 2014, to advance this goal, the Committee of the Regions adopted (in the form of a resolution) a Charter For Multi-Level Governance in Europe, in which it proposes and encourages various levels of administration to implement the MLG model [CoR, 2014] .

The best example of multi-level governance in practice, according to S. Piattoni, is the empowerment of European regions and their active involvement in cohesion policy. However, until the latter have emancipated themselves from the supervision of central authority and gained complete freedom to act, there can be no real talk of “Europe of the regions”. At this juncture, S. Piattoni quotes L. Hooghe and G. Marks, who explain that the MLG model does not lend support to the scenario of “Europe of the regions” but rather to that of “Europe with



the regions”. In sum, however, she takes a positive view of multi-level governance as a way to democratize the European Union and lists the following advantages of the model: 1) including peripheral regions in decision-making processes that directly affect them; 2) creating loose connections to avoid stalemates related to the exercise of veto power in the last phase of decision-making; 3) supporting the creation of more relationships between territorial authorities and their constituencies.

In December 2013, the Council of the European Union approved new laws and provisions concerning the next round of investment in the framework of the EU cohesion policy for 2014-2020, meant, for the first time, to apply to all funds. A Regulation of the Council of the European Union (EU, 2013, Art. 32, Ch. 2) reaffirmed the territorial dimension of cohesion policy by introducing a new instrument, Integrated Territorial Investment (ITI), and the concept of Community Led Local Development (CLLD). ITI is designed to help implement territorial strategies in an integrated manner. It is neither an action, nor a subpriority, of any single operational program, but allows member states to implement operational programs across the board and receive funding from various priority axes, which ensures well-integrated strategy implementation throughout a given territory.

The application of ITI and CLLD mechanisms in European policy is an example of the MLG model in the management and spending of EU funds on the regional level. The example goes to show that the move towards coordinated action and decision-making that involves not only local and regional authorities but also local action groups, social and non-governmental organizations, is irreversible.

2.1. Findings:

Brexit, budget tensions, recentralisation processes and the rise of Euroscepticism and populist ideas. European economic, social and territorial cohesion being tested on several fronts. These tests cast new doubts on the future of the European Union and the added value it brings to its citizens. It is said that in this period of uncertainty, the commitment to a territorially balanced and locally relevant cohesion policy for all European regions is more important than ever . What is more cohesion policy makes the EU visible to its citizens. It is an instrument that demonstrates to the people that the EU cares about them, as it allows us to reduce inequalities and to focus funding on EU priorities, such as sustainable development, employment and solidarity.

Nevertheless, in the European Commission's reflection papers on the future of the European project, this policy seems to be a way to balance the EU budget. But for Europe’s towns and regions, cohesion policy should remain the main investment, solidarity and development policy of the EU and its territories. The debate on the future of European cohesion policy



should take into account the postulates of representative bodies of local and regional authorities such as CEMR and the Committee of the Regions, such as:

1. The future cohesion policy should involve the local level to a greater extent than it has until now, not only for the consultation or the selection of the funding projects, but especially when choosing the investment priorities. The elements in the current "code of conduct" which concern the partnership principle should be a legally binding part of the future regulation and be included in the regulation.
2. The priorities of cohesion policy are often out of touch with the real needs of municipalities and cities. Priorities should be clearly identified according to local specific needs. For example, a municipality might need funds for social inclusion through sport and culture, and not just technological innovation.
3. Also, to increase the impact of the funds and the money being used, the EU should focus on strengthening the capacity of all municipalities and regions (and not only Managing Authorities).
4. What is more the European Commission is now examining a number of different budget reduction scenarios for the cohesion policy beyond 2020, as well as in the social and employment fields. According to a recent article published by the press agency Agence Europe, these cuts could be as much as 30% compared to the current 2014-2020 budget. "A reduced budget would have a very negative impact on the capacity of towns and regions to finance territorial development projects, but also to address the social challenges of their territories, such as long-term unemployment, youth unemployment or the need for new skills in innovative sectors."

2.2. What should be done:

1. Regional funds should not be used as a way to balance the EU budget.
2. The expenditure on the cohesion policy should be increased and the rules for classifying the regions eligible to receive aid should be changed due to Brexit, and future change the average GDP per capita in regions.
3. The investment priorities should be determined according to local and regional needs.
4. The next cohesion policy should include more flexible rules to adapt the choice of investment to each territorial context.
5. The cohesion policy should help local authorities to play an active part in the global agenda.



2.3. What can be done to make EU more democratic: to establish second chamber of the European Parliament as a self-government forum - greater empowerment of the Committee of the Regions. CoR could be such a second chamber of the EP and be a part of EU legislative process, especially in a case of the EU Cohesion Policy.

2.4. Present discussion on EU Cohesion Policy:

In the ongoing debate on the future of EU Cohesion Policy, it does not become a tool for putting pressure on the Member States. Cohesion policy is more economical than political issue. Member states not abiding by EU norms and values (i.e. Hungary, Poland) should not be punished by cutting funds. It is essential to underline that “Cohesion Policy is the EU’s main investment policy It targets all regions and cities in the European Union in order to support job creation, business competitiveness, economic growth, sustainable development, and improve citizens’ quality of life”.

3. The reform of the political parties of the mainstream left as a precondition for increased democratic capacity in Europe

A Forbes article of May 2017 states: “These are not easy times for center-left parties in Europe. The candidate representing France’s Socialist Party, which had won the presidency in 2012, finished fifth in the first round of the recent French presidential election. In the United Kingdom, the Labour Party, once a mighty force in British politics, has been in the opposition for almost a decade and is struggling to form a coherent position on Brexit. Spain’s Socialist Party, which controlled most Spanish governments between the 1980s and the 2000s, found its support dropping to record lows in the past two general elections. In Germany, the popularity of the Social Democratic Party has dwindled over the past 12 years. Italy’s Democratic Party is still in power, but it is fragmented and under threat from the rise of populist opposition groups (Forbes.com, 2017) ”.

Thinking about the general crisis of social democracy over the last decade, it looks like everything is already redefined and already examined. However, that led me to question myself, as a scientist but as well as a comrade, what is the last thing to reform after we have questioned every very different aspect of our policies and perspectives. The organizational structure of the political parties is a precondition that reflects the power-sharing in wider context. If we take, for example, how are the women and youth organizations positioned within the party structure, we would come, more or less, to similar conclusions in different political and socio-economic context. Globalization, Europeanization, and the increasing heterogeneity of European societies have challenged the future of social democracy .Two features of the party stand out: It has a corporatist structure but lives in an era of participating



democracy, and it is based on 50% union affiliation, though unions now play less of a role in the consciousness of the working class- in other words, too few individuals from too narrow a political base are in the dominant position and will need to be convinced that change is needed (Anon, 2017) .

The relationship between the left and the European Union continues to demand our attention. Opposition to the European Union has come to be associated with nationalism; whilst the embrace of European integration, or at least the promise for internationalism, multinationalism, cosmopolitanism, and/or transnational solidarity that it contains, is considered axiomatic by most progressives, despite the consistently un-progressive nature of actual European policy output .

On the crossroads between home and Europe, social democratic leaders do have a hard task.

Getting back to the roots-the origin of the political parties of the left and their true power was laid down in syndicates, more than two centuries ago. Those were the mass parties, the workers class. The shift of environment shifted their political success, and this especially goes for the region of South-Eastern Europe, where the EU enlargement was used as a foreign policy tool of pacification. However, the constant crisis of the newly emerged social-democratic parties in the SEE region, is still hard to be diminished. Those problems have deep roots in the political culture, and are strictly affected by clientelism, nationalism, and populism.

More than ever, citizens are not in favor of becoming party members. The social movements have filled their place. The French presidential elections brought a relief by the Macrons victory, but also the taste of bitterness when taking into consideration of how many votes Marie Le Pen took in comparison to her father. The radicalization is rising, and for the right-wing parties, it is much easier to pour their rhetoric into ideological narrative.

On the other hand, it is also very hard to preach what you priest in times of crisis. Take for example, the inclusion of the youth and women in the effective power sharing within the political parties and their representation into the national and EU institutions.

Although engendering politics is a decades long debate, transposed into many international documents and actions plans, starting from the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), Beijing Platform (1995) and UN Millennium Goals, it looks like it is indeed, a never-ending hurdle. This is due to many external and internal factors: cultural, historical, social, economic, religious, etc.

Looking at the PES Members map, it can be easily noticed that most of the head of the member organization are men, more or less all coming from a similar age group. The same goes for the head of delegations at the EU Parliament.



The 2011 UN General Assembly resolution on women’s political participation states that ,
“Women in every part of the world continue to be largely marginalized from the political
sphere, often as a result of discriminatory laws, practices, attitudes and gender stereotypes,
low levels of education, lack of access to health care and the disproportionate effect of
poverty on women.”

Reform of the political parties stands as one of the main priorities for the future for
improvement of the process of engendering politics (NDI, 2013). Political parties are the
primary and most direct vehicle through which women can access elected office and political
leadership. Changing the way political parties function and increasing women’s leadership in
them, many of the barriers would be addressed simultaneously (NDI 3013).

The experts noted that the structure and organization of political parties can be an obstacle
to the participation of women. The impact of different types of party organizations and their
internal culture, including clientelist parties, patronage-based parties and programmatic
based parties, affect the influence of women within the party. Clientelist and patronage
parties tend to have internal procedures that are poorly defined with rules that are likely to
be ignored, and decision-making is dominated by a cadre of party elites who are, for the most
part, men. Clientelism and patronage politics, therefore, make it difficult for women members
to influence party policies. In addition, rather than seeing women as decision makers and
leaders, party leaders tend to treat their female members instrumentally, to secure women’s
votes and to involve them in the party’s lobbying and organizational activities. (UN Women,
2005).

Those trends still differ geographically, culturally and historically. Nothing the PES members
map, there are more women leaders as the cruiser goes north. The case of New Zealand has
been interesting lately, since Jacinda Ardern seems to know what exactly is she doing. After
decades of conservative and neo-liberal run, the Labor got back on the scene, Little, who had
taken on the listlessness of a ghost haunting the empty halls of a mansion in a suit of armor,
admitted to the press as Labour plunged to embarrassing new lows that he had thought about
resigning, which, somewhat comically, led to his ouster. Jacinda Ardern became the new
Labour leader eight weeks out from the election. The ascension of the thirty-seven-year-old
Ardern , led to a surge in donations and volunteers for Labour. Ardern stressed her concerns
about poverty, environmental degradation, and the country’s housing crisis. It is a clear
example of how the general spirit and urge for change can lead towards real effects.

German social democrats followed the example, electing the first female leader Andrea
Nahles in a century and a half after the party was formed.

In the paper “From equality without democracy to democracy without equality? Women and
transition in south-east Europe” author remarks that “the political under-representation of



women is caused by several factors: first of all, most parties share a distaste for active emancipation policies, and gender equality is not regarded as important for the legitimization of the new liberal-democratic regimes – and, of course, even less so as far as nationalist regimes are concerned.” However, deeper research on the political parties and their internal structure and dynamics in conjunction with gender gaps, are currently missing. Such research would provide essential knowledge and bases for improvement both on the democratic capacity of the parties, and women’s political participation.

So the issue is wider than parties on the left, and more societal, but however, it is a corner stone of the idea of the left. Besides, getting back to the ideological milestones may help as a response towards ongoing crisis in the European left. There are also national rules and regulations at each national context that have some influence on parties, especially party financing, and so change may be needed in certain countries through legislation, not just with in parties. But, the parties are the very initial form of the political organizing, and the power of the party leadership usually effectuates with position of state leadership. The process of engendering political leadership may help essentially internal operability and democratization of the political parties. Although someone may say that ‘the more democratic internally a party is, the greater the likelihood to lose elections’, it looks like that the reversal process and idea to copy the conservative authoritarian rule, does not really help either.

Differences in the proportion of women parliamentarians (MPs) have been explained by two clusters of factors: country level conditions – institutional settings, cultural or socioeconomic conditions – and the inner life of political parties

Internal party organization is one of the entry points for promoting women’s participation. Two things are important on this occasion:

- To be ensured that legal framework and governing documents are gender sensitive, and
- Measures to be taken to promote women’s participation in governing boards and decision-making structures.

And, the most important thing is of course the political will for engendering of the power sharing, otherwise each of the mechanism provided as affirmative actions will be misused and will produce countereffects. The organizational structure is the channel through which political will brings the policy into politics(NDI, 2013).

Even if it is the case that main documents are gender sensitive and ensure tools for political empowering of women, such as quotas and guaranteed percentages, what matters more is their implementation and political will of empowerment. For example, how will be the quotas fulfilled? Many politicians forget that quotas are more than numbers: and that the quality



criteria implies on first place, not the general notion of women who are “in line” with the party leadership.

Political parties are often referred to as the gatekeepers of democracy. For an individual, man or woman, to run for political office, he or she must be selected and supported by a political party.

As gatekeepers, political parties can influence the level of women’s political participation as members as well as candidates, thereby directly contributing to more representative political processes. Direct or indirect gender-based discrimination in political party legislation as well as in internal party procedures can create a barrier to women’s participation (OSCE 2011). And this conclusion can be multiplied also for youth participation.

The political party structure reflects the democratic capacity or the democratic deficit of a political party. Pressured by the notion that “EU does not speak one voice” and the conservatives success, national leaders have started pushing for “speaking at one voice” while forgetting that it is not the way of “how social-democrats do so”.

The party structure reflects the ideological focus of the party itself. The way the leadership has been elected, the way policies have been created, the way all stakeholders and interest groups are addressed, the decisions are brought: all of above mentioned issues reflects the democratic capacity of the party, that latter on, when party is in power, brings the institutional democratic capacity under question, since people and policies are, or at least should be (more or less) the same. The idea for improving European democratic deficit cannot be addressed without addressing the democratic deficit of the political parties, since the political parties are the actors of the system, not the individuals. Although the system has a lot of limitations and imperfections, there is a lot of space between the minimum and the maximum it can bring.

So, faced with the multilayer crisis, the political parties of the mainstream left should, both on national and EU level, reconsider the very base of their existence: the organizational structures and the way of work in dramatically changed circumstances.

Wider inclusion of different target groups is highly recommended. Getting back to the roots can make them grow- both figuratively and literally. Support for stronger syndicates, empowering women and youth, enhancing with academia, marginalized group and real social policies, and doing that more eager and self-confident is a way out of the crisis. It should be kept in mind that the political parties are usually the very first “HR agencies”-and through the election of leadership, they provide also political leaders for the society and institutions. Political parties are the principal agents of democratic consolidation not only because they are the key strategic actors shaping democracy’s emergence (Capocia and Ziblatt 2010).



What should be done:

1. Review of the statutory and organizational issues in the PES Members;
2. Reconsidering the effectiveness of the current organizational settlement upon the Statute of the member organization;
3. Improving the democratic capacity of the political parties of the mainstream left through imposing systematic communication channels for the academia, syndicates, civil sector and social movements;
4. Imposing strong control mechanisms within the political parties for implementation of the proposed inclusion;
5. PES and FEPS should prepare best practices over the issue.

4. Using the foreign and security policy as a tool of stronger EU and enlargement policy

Nowadays, we face a historical moment for the very existence of the European integration project. The Brexit process has significantly modified the EU leaders's political agenda priorities and the European security and defense policy returned as never before to their concerns.

Britain's departure does not have inevitably to mean in practice a negative impact on the EU foreign and security policy. In this sense, the EU will lose a country that counts with a privileged relationship with the US and nuclear capacity, one of its two permanent seats on the United Nations Security Council and one of the countries whose expenditure (EUROSTAT, 2017) and capabilities on defense are one of the major ones of the related to the member States. But, as British commitment to the Common Security and Defense Policy-CSPD (Faleg, 2016) has been considerably limited over the years, its leave from the EU may definitely enable the way towards a stronger EU CSDP (accompanied by a coherent foreign policy).

4.1. The EU dependence on the US

The European security and defense are dependent on the US support (Thomson, 2017), so Donald Trump's reiterated statements about that the European Union needs to pay its own security (Haberman and Sanger, 2016) added to the US President's volatile positions so far and his admiration for leaders as the Russian President Vladimir Putin facing the gravity of the challenges defying the European continent, rang alarm bells with respect to the European



security and defence future. In this regard, it is unclear what kind of policies will implement Trump's Administration towards European security and defence and the NATO funding.

President Trump (BBC, 2017) has repeatedly asked to the NATO EU member States to pay their NATO bills, to fulfil the 2% GDP defence spending target and to pay the money they owe from past years to the Alliance.

According to NATO's 2016 annual report, only five countries met the 2% GDP (NATO, 2016) defence spending commitment: The US, the UK, Greece, Poland and Estonia. This is a key point of concern due to the volume of the US defence expenditure effectively represents 72% of the defence spending of the Alliance as a whole, so the US's involvement in NATO (NATO, 2017) is essential for the European continent security and defense.

It should be highlighted that Trump seems so far to be committed to defeat his office predecessor's legacy attacking former President Obama's landmarks, as the related to Obamacare, to the Paris Agreement on Climate Change or the Iran Nuclear Deal and to fulfill his electoral promises. In this sense, Trump carried out a very harsh presidential electoral campaign against his political opponents, setting his priorities in case he was elected President.

Taking into account those precedents, it should be reaffirmed the significance of the EU unity on foreign and security policy.

The EU member States are the world's second largest military spenders (after the US). However, the EU Armed Forces do not count with autonomous effectiveness and defense budget funds are frequently inefficiently used (European Council, 2017) due to the European defense market fragmentation, the costly duplication of the military capabilities, an insufficient industrial collaboration and a lack of interoperability. Considering the circumstances and the traditional lacking of a common political project on security and defense affairs in a context of lack of solidarity, political will, increasing populism and euroscepticism, geopolitical instability and shared crisis, the need of cooperation between EU countries is totally indispensable.

The EU leaders need to put their heads together to make progress in the European integration process. In the current unstable global and regional situation, any UE member State can't deal by itself with the internal and external risk and challenges.

4.2. The need of the strategic autonomy for the EU. The way forward towards the EU hard power.

The single option to prioritise the European security and defence and to promote the EU as an outstanding global actor is to unify efforts and to drive political and institutional reforms towards the cooperation in the EU framework.



The EU member States must make an effort for overcoming the political challenges (Cameron, 2017) that the Union faces after the post-Brexit crisis advocating for a multilateralism and common interests in key affairs as the related to the foreign and security and defence policy. It will be indispensable that the current 25 member States participating at the Permanent Structured Cooperation (PESCO) voluntarily continue advancing and building a reliable and real strategic autonomy, capacities on security and defence affairs through a strong political cohesion. This will be essential to count with a coherent foreign policy.

Furthermore, during the post-Brexit negotiations, both sides will have to be responsible and give priority to a common position that allows them to ensure the European security (Black, Hall, Cox, Kepe and Silfversten, 2017).

Another point of interest is referred to that political parties and governments are mainly focused on short-term policy topics in order to manage not unpopular results to present to citizens in electoral contests. But foreign policy and security and defence affairs are medium to long term policies. In this respect, there is a need of political will and a sense of high policy from political leaders to build the required tools to make the EU as a key global and autonomous actor on security and defense affairs. Furthermore, a strong political cohesion and solidarity are needed above national and party interests.

4.3. Challenges for the social democrat parties

Social democrat parties have to manage foreign, security and defense affairs in a context of a lack of citizen and political interest in these topics (foreign, security and defense policies are not popular for voters), in a situation of economic crisis, in a context of the widespread belief that security and defense affairs are a typical topic of “the right wing political parties” or the commitment acquired by EU NATO countries to achieve the 2% GDP on defense expense.

It is well known that foreign, security and defense affairs are not a central point for the European social democrat agendas but it is also true that in a context of a high geopolitical instability and big crisis in our nearest neighbourhoods, the institutional and political reforms to advance towards a closer cooperation in foreign and security policy are totally necessary to achieve by our leaders.

Actually, as stated before, the EU member States can not address yet by themselves the common risks and challenges that face in the current security context we live in. The seriousness of those challenges is so significant that their resolution requires a common approach from the EU member States, not they only to prevail their national interests. This should be the aim of the recently revitalised Permanent Structured Cooperation on security and defence (PESCO), resulted from the outcome of the EU political leaders’ raising awareness of our strategic vulnerability. Because of this, EU social democrat parties will have to deal rightly with these topics.



What should be done:

How are the European social democrat parties going to deal with this context in order to build a progressive Europe and to ensure the European global leadership, peace and the leading role to diplomacy?

- Social democrat parties need to show to the public that security and defense policy should not be a typical commitment of the right wing political parties. The security and defense policy must be explained as a State policy and also, it should be highlighted that security and defense are not definitely only about armed forces.
- Security and defense policies (accompanied by a coherent foreign policy) are also necessary for ensuring human rights and achieving the Sustainable Development Goals and the 2030 Agenda. Foreign and security policies also are aid and development cooperation programmes designed to improve human security and build a culture of peace.
- The European social democrat parties should send convincent messages to people explaining that this kind of policies are necessary for the mere existence of our democracy. Foreign and security and defense policies are for example about big data, economic intelligence, cybersecurity or data protection. But also, they are about some of the core values of the social democracy, as solidarity, democracy, human rights, gender equality and the fight against inequalities and poverty.
- For instance, a key progressive policy on foreign and security policy is the related to Women, Peace and Security and the implementation of United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 through National Action Plans. Women, Peace and Security matters must be positioned as a focal point of the progressive agenda on foreign and security policy with the aim to raise international community awareness about the risks and challenges for women and children in conflict zones and about the required increase of more women leadership in international security positions and Armed Forces. Women, Peace and Security is about gender equality, one of our core values as social democrats.
- To conclude, communication and pedagogy on those topics will be essential to advance towards a progressive EU foreign and security policy.



POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

- The EU democratic deficit is both cause and effect to many outcomes we are facing today: it is a circulus vitulus;
- However, the structure of the EU itself is very specific and in any case, it would be very hard to make it more democratic through legislative changes, keeping in mind the founding principles of sovereignty and equality of all member states;
- That's why, greater integration and participation should be ensured through other existing mechanisms, such as the foreign and security policy that has been long used as a tool of durable peace at the borders;
- Also, the effective leadership is very important, and this vacuum may be fulfilled through the reform of political parties on European and national level;
- New tools that support political decisions that make citizens participate should be conceived, investing in their capacities, promoting public deliberations, eliminating inequalities and creating a well-informed majority.



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