

Europeanisation of EP Election Manifestos: An Application of a New Approach on the Case of Slovak Political Parties

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Abstract

This article investigates the Europeanisation of EP election manifestos prepared by Slovak political parties over the course of Slovakia's decade-long membership in the European Union. To this aim, it conducts a content analysis based upon a novel coding scheme in which Europeanisation is measured primarily as EU issue salience and secondarily as the discussion of different EU-related (policy) issue areas. The results show that, in contrast to election manifestos prepared for other elections, the salience of EU issues is quite high in these Euromanifestos. On the other hand, average relative EU issue salience has decreased with each EP election held in the country. In terms of party EU political agenda, we provide evidence of relatively high convergence in terms of party EU political agenda, measured as the five most prominent issue categories in individual party Euromanifestos, particularly in 2004 and 2014. We also show that the five most prominent issue categories in the party EU political agenda represent almost half the natural sentences referring to the EU political level in the Euromanifestos analysed.

Keywords: Europeanisation; Euromanifestos; content analysis; political parties; Slovakia.

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1. Introduction

Europeanisation has assumed a prominent role as a theoretical approach for the study of European integration.¹ It has been less than two decades since Europeanisation became a distinctive research field within the broader area of European Studies (Sedelmeier 2011; Zemanová, Druláková 2012), but its effects may be traced back to the start of European integration in the 1950s. In the broad sense, Europeanisation is a label applied to the impact of European integration on the politics, policies and polities of EU member states. In this sense, Europeanisation is an incremental process that redirects and reshapes politics to the point that

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European integration and the EU become part of the organizational logic of national politics and policy-making (Ladrech 1994). Europeanisation is also used to describe how national (political) actors build and enhance European-level political institutions (Ladrech 2002; Hanf, Soetendorp 1998; Hloušek, Pšejka 2009).

According to Börzel and Risse (2000), Europeanisation as a research agenda may be utilized in all three standard dimensions of political science research: politics (Damgaard, Jensen 2005; Kovář 2013; Havlík, Vykoupilová 2008; Mair 2000; Hloušek, Pšejka 2009), policy (Featherstone, Radaelli 2003: 7–13; Baudner, Bull 2013; Aydin, Kirişci 2013; Knill, Lehmkuhl 2002; Schmidt, Radaelli 2004; de Flers, Müller 2011) and polity (Knill 2001; Winn, Harris 2003; Albi 2005). The purpose of this paper is to contribute to research on the Europeanisation of the political dimension in general and political parties in particular, using an empirical, comparative investigation of EU issue salience and the EU policy agenda in Slovak party manifestos for EP elections from 2004–2014.

To be succinct, we are primarily interested in *whether and to what extent* parties discuss EU issues in their manifestos; secondarily, we investigate *what parties are saying when they discuss* EU issues? To this aim, this paper conducts a content analysis based on a novel coding scheme applied to five Slovak parties' Euromanifestos. The reason for selecting Slovakia is the limited number of scholarly publications written on the Europeanisation of Slovak party manifestos (Ondroušek, Havlík 2010; Kovář 2014). The structure of the paper is as follows: the next section reviews the literature on the Europeanisation of political parties, with a focus on the party programmatic documents. The third section clarifies the research design and related methodological concerns. The fourth section presents the results of the content analysis and the final section is a conclusion that places the findings in the broader context of the literature on the Europeanisation of political party programmatic documents.

2. Europeanisation of Political Parties and Election Manifestos

From the theoretical perspective, there continues to be considerable debate over how Europeanisation should be defined (Börzel, Risse 2003; Cowles et al. 2001; Featherstone, Radaelli 2003; Ladrech 2010; Radaelli 2000; Falkner 2003; Mair 2004). In the most basic sense, the literature uses the concept as shorthand for the 'domestic impact of the EU' or the 'influence of the EU' (e.g. Börzel 2002; Börzel, Risse 2000; Sedelmeier 2011; Vink 2003; Ladrech 1994, 2002; Poguntke et al. 2007b). While the concept has enjoyed wide application, Europeanisation has only recently been applied to political parties, party systems, and interest groups (Ladrech 2009; Mair 2006; Carter et al. 2007: 1–2; Poguntke et al. 2007b; Ladrech 2010; 2002; 2007; Poguntke et al. 2007a; Fink-Hafner 2007). This is particularly true in relation to the Central and Eastern European EU Member States, as well as the candidate countries of Eastern Europe and the Balkans, given their historical detachment from the European integration process (Sedelmeier 2011: 20–21; Fink-Hafner 2007; Haughton 2011; Fink-Hafner, Ladrech 2008; Haughton 2009; Enyedi 2007; Hughes et al. 2002).

Nevertheless, a considerable amount of research into the Europeanisation of political parties has been generated within a rather short timeframe. Following the pioneering work of Ladrech (2002, 1994), most studies have focused on one or more areas in which evidence

of Europeanisation might be apparent: (1) programmatic change; (2) organizational change; (3) party competition patterns; (4) party-government relations; and (5) relations beyond the national political system. Building on previous research, we follow this categorisation, while focusing only on the first of the five categories proposed by Ladrech (2002, 1994). The area of programmatic changes is, according to Ladrech (2002: 396), one of the most obvious and explicit areas in which the impact of European integration may unfold (see also Haughton 2011).

The Europeanisation of party programmatic documents may be assessed empirically using both quantitative and qualitative research designs and may be traced in manifestos drafted for various types and levels of election ranging from supranational EP elections through to national parliamentary and local or municipal contests. The research done so far reports ambiguous results when it comes to the Europeanisation of party programmatic documents. On the one hand, some scholars conclude that elections manifestos tend to embody only limited Europeanisation (Holmes, Lightfoot 2007; Havlík, Valterová 2007; Hloušek, Pšejka 2009; Kritzinger et al. 2004; Pennings 2006; Smrčková, Hloušek 2011; Havlík, Vykoupilová 2008; Cabada, Hloušek 2009; Ladrech 2008). A different stream in the literature, by contrast, reports much more intensive EU-related changes in political party programmatic documents (Baun et al. 2006; Lahj, Krašovec 2007; Orlovič 2007; Havlík 2010; Deželan 2007).

In any case, the Europeanisation of election manifestos varies across electoral levels: studies on the Europeanisation of EP election programmes report more intensive changes traceable to the EU than does research into national parliamentary and/or local election manifestos (Wüst 2009; Lederle 2007; 2005; Wüst, Schmitt 2007; Kritzinger et al. 2004; Wüst, Roth 2005; Kritzinger, Michalowitz 2005; Kovář 2013; 2014; Libbrecht et al. 2009). The extent of Europeanisation in programmatic documents also varies across time, by political party, by country, as well as by policy domain (Pennings 2006; Lahj, Krašovec 2007; Orlovič 2007; Deželan 2007; Kritzinger, Michalowitz 2005; Spoon 2012). For instance, while Pennings (2006) documents a modest rise in references to the EU in party manifestos, these references are often general and vague and election manifestos rarely involve specific policy-domain and/or institutional proposals (see also Smith 1995; Havlík, Valterová 2007; Sikk 2009). Put differently, the Europeanisation of party manifestos remains limited to the referential level with much less evidence for substantial policy-related changes (Hloušek, Pšejka 2009; Cabada, Hloušek 2009; Klepač Pogrmilović 2010; Smrčková, Hloušek 2011).

Finally, important differences in the Europeanisation of election manifestos exist among individual parties, particularly in relation to the party's status within its party system. Said otherwise, mainstream, established parties – either in government or in the opposition – include EU issues in election manifestos more often than do other parties (Havlík, Vykoupilová 2008: 184). Moreover, the salience of EU issues depends upon factors such as intraparty dissent, public Euroscepticism, the party's ideological position, and its stance on European integration (Spoon 2012; Pennings 2006). Altogether, while Europeanisation and EU issue salience in party election manifestos has increased over time, important differences still obtain among political parties, types of election manifestos and policy domains (Havlík 2010; cf. Procházková, Hloušek; Havlík, Vykoupilová 2008; Hellström 2009).

3. Research Design and Methodology

Against the backdrop of the preceding discussion, this paper aims to answer the following two research questions: 1) *Towhat extent is Europeanisation present in relevant Slovak Euromanifestos, and how has it changed over time?*², and 2) *Which EU-related issues are cited as part of the parties' EU political agenda in their Euromanifestos?* Building on the traditional top-down approach, Europeanisation will be understood here as a process by which domestic actors adapt to the institutional framework and logic of the EU. In other words, it is understood in terms of responses by national actors to the impact of European integration and its reflection in the national political discourse (e.g. Ladrech 2002; Radaelli 2000; Cowles et al. 2001).

We include only relevant political parties in the analysis. Our criterion mandated that parties must have gained representation in the European Parliament at least twice since Slovakia joined the EU in 2004. In order to investigate the growth dynamic of programmatic Europeanisation over time, the party must have had continuous relevance in the EU electoral sphere for a significant portion of the time period investigated. The selected criterion of relevance is thus justified on the grounds of allowing for cross-temporal comparison of the Europeanisation of Euromanifestos (there must be at least two time periods in the analysis). In other words, if a party prepares only one Euromanifesto or has only been relevant during a single term of office, the dynamics of change in the level of Europeanisation are not subject to investigation. Moreover, we include only parties that are, or were, relevant to the EU electoral sphere for a period exceeding a single electoral term. This means that we exclude, for example, Freedom and Solidarity (SaS), as it won representation only during the 2014 EP elections, and the Most-Híd party, as it also won representation only in 2014 and prepared no Euromanifestos for these elections.

On a practical level, this means that we will analyse the Euromanifestos of the following parties: the Christian Democratic Movement (KDH); the Direction – Social Democracy (SMER-SD); the Hungarian Coalition Party (SMK-MKP); the People's Party – Movement for a Democratic Slovakia (ĽS-HZDS); and the Slovak Democratic and Christian Union – Democratic Party (SDKÚ-DS). Three sets of EP elections have taken place over the course of Slovak membership in the EU. This analysis is concerned with Euromanifestos prepared by the parties chosen for each EP election that has been held in the country since 2004.

Following a robust tradition in election manifesto research, we conducted a content analysis to empirically assess the Europeanisation of Slovak party Euromanifestos (Havlík 2008: 352–354). Let us, at the outset, discuss why, in researching the Europeanisation of Euromanifestos, we do not rely on previously developed coding schemes for analysing election manifestos, the most prominent examples of which are the Comparative Manifesto Project (CMP) and the Euromanifestos Project respectively (EMP). Unfortunately, the coding schemes developed within these projects are not suitable to answer our research questions for several reasons. First of all, the schemes were constructed to (eventually) measure party positions on different dimensions that structure political conflict in Europe, not to measure the Europeanisation of election manifestos. The EMP coding scheme thus groups 170 different issue categories into seven major policy domains, in order to scale them subsequently to measure party positions on dimensions of political conflict. Unfortunately, the number of policy domains is insufficiently low to capture parties' EU policy agenda in detail (Baumgartner et al. 2008). Second, the CMP

and EMP coding schemes also suffer from problems of low reliability in the coding procedure, due to the complex nature of the coding schemes and because the manifestos were coded only by a single expert (Volkens 2007; Mikhaylov et al. 2011; Gemenis 2013).

Because of these problems with the CMP and EMP coding schemes, we decided to create an innovative coding scheme to research the Europeanisation of political party documents, in particular election manifestos. In this effort, we nevertheless build on the EMP coding scheme and improve it, since, as Gemenis has noted, it ‘could benefit from adjustments or revisions’ (Gemenis 2013: 32). Key is that instead of coding quasi-sentences – a source of low reliability (Däubler et al. 2012) – we will code natural sentences in a bid to increase the reliability of the coding procedure. Once the natural sentences have been identified, each is coded using a hierarchical two-step approach.³ Within the first stage, Europeanisation is measured in terms of the (relative) salience of EU issues with respect to other issues. In other words, each natural sentence is coded for the policy level to which it refers. The first step thus mirrors the coding procedure of the CMP/EMP coding scheme and each natural sentence must be coded into one – and only one – of the following categories: (1) the national/subnational level of government, (2) Europe or the EC/EU as a level of governance, (3) the global or worldwide level of government or (4) neither (Wüst, Volkens 2003; Braun et al. 2007; Braun et al. 2010). Accordingly, each manifesto is classified in terms of relative salience devoted to each level of government, with Europeanisation understood as the relative proportion of natural sentences that refer to the EU level of governance.

In the second stage, natural sentences referring to the EU level of governance are assessed in terms of the policy issue/domain to which they refer, creating a measure of the parties’ EU policy agenda. Within the second stage, Europeanisation is assessed as party EU policy agenda, with the political agenda defined as consisting of the EU issues that parties foreground (Baumgartner et al. 2008; Green-Pedersen 2005; Bevan 2014). According to the Comparative Agendas Project, the party political agenda ‘emerges as the result of the attention that political parties pay to different issues’ (Green-Pedersen 2005) and can be best measured using material such as party documents, speeches, press conferences, parliamentary questions, and media commentaries. In creating the coding scheme to categorize policy issues, we rely on the codebook of the European Union Policy Agendas Project, which systematically traces the attention given to policy issues in the EU and its institutions (Alexandrova et al. 2013; Alexandrova et al. 2014).

Since the codebook focuses on the EU policy agenda, it is appropriate to the analysis of Euromanifestos, where parties may be expected to discuss issues related to European integration, given that EP elections ‘should be about European politics and the questions of Europe itself’ (Mair 2000: 43). While we deviate slightly from the EU Policy Agendas Project in the unit of analysis chosen (natural sentences vs. quasi-sentences), the rest of the coding procedure remains the same. Each natural sentence referring to the EU level of governance must be assigned to one and only one of the 21 issue categories (see Appendix 1). Accordingly, each election manifesto is classified in terms of the relative salience of individual policy issue categories, which together create the EU policy agenda of parties’ Euromanifestos. Having done this for each manifesto, Europeanisation is assessed comparatively across time and political party.

4. Results

We conducted a content analysis of five Slovak party Euromanifestos prepared for the 2004, 2010 and 2014 EP elections to investigate the extent of their Europeanisation. Some of the parties in question, however, did not prepare Euromanifestos for every EP elections that has so far been held in the country: the SMK-MKP and LS-HZDS in 2004, and the LS-HZDS⁴ in 2014. We begin by presenting the results from the first stage of the content analysis, aimed at assessing Europeanisation in terms of the (relative) EU issue salience in Slovak parties' Euromanifestos between 2004–2014. We then consider results from the second stage of the content analysis, aimed at assessing Europeanisation in terms of party EU policy agenda in the Euromanifestos.

4.1. Salience of EU in Euromanifestos

Content analysis was performed on a total of 12 Euromanifestos prepared by five Slovak parties for the 2004, 2009, and 2014 EP elections. Table 1 presents the descriptive statistics and results from the analysis on the salience of EU issues versus national/subnational, global, and other issues (Braun et al. 2010). In other words, Table 1 classifies each Euromanifesto drafted during the 2004–2014 period according to the relative salience devoted to each level of government: EU, national/subnational, global, or other. This measure of EU issue salience is then used as a proxy to measure the Europeanisation of Euromanifestos quantitatively. The more salient the EU level of governance, the more Europeanised the Euromanifesto. To increase the clarity of presentation of the results, Figure 1 compares EU issue salience in individual party Euromanifestos by election year. The relative salience of EU issues in Euromanifestos prepared by the established Slovak political parties is notably high, considering the notion of the limited impact of the EU on party systems and the party politics of EU Member States (Mair 2000).

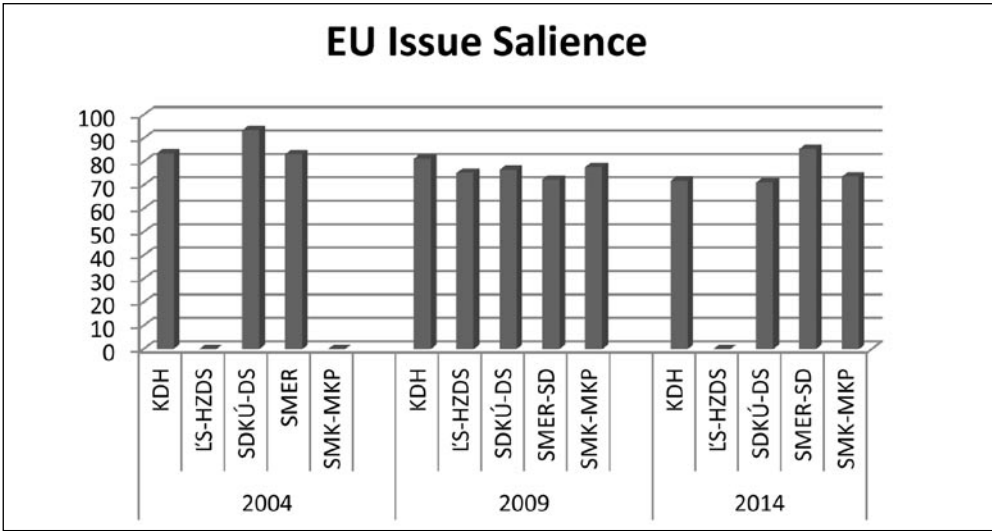
Table 1: Relative Salience of Issues according to the Level of Government

2004	EU level	National level	Global level	N/A	Total
KDH	83.5	12.5	1.1	2.9	100
LS-HZDS	–	–	–	–	–
SDKÚ	93.4	4.6	0.8	1.2	100
SMER	83.2	14	0.2	2.6	100
SMK-MKP	–	–	–	–	–
2009	EU level	National level	Global level	N/A	Total
KDH	81.3	17.2	0.6	0.9	100
LS-HZDS	75.2	23.5	0.2	1.1	100
SDKÚ-DS	76.5	21.1	0.8	1.6	100
SMER-SD	72.4	24.8	0.9	1.9	100
SMK-MKP	77.7	19.8	1.2	1.3	100

2014	EU level	National level	Global level	N/A	Total
KDH	71.8	24.5	0.5	3.2	100
IŠ-HZDS	–	–	–	–	–
SDKÚ-DS	71.2	24.7	1.3	2.8	100
SMER-SD	85.4	12.8	0.7	1.1	100
SMK-MKP	73.6	23.1	1.1	2.2	100

Source: Author on the basis of the content analysis.

Figure 1: Relative Salience of EU Issues by Party and Election Year



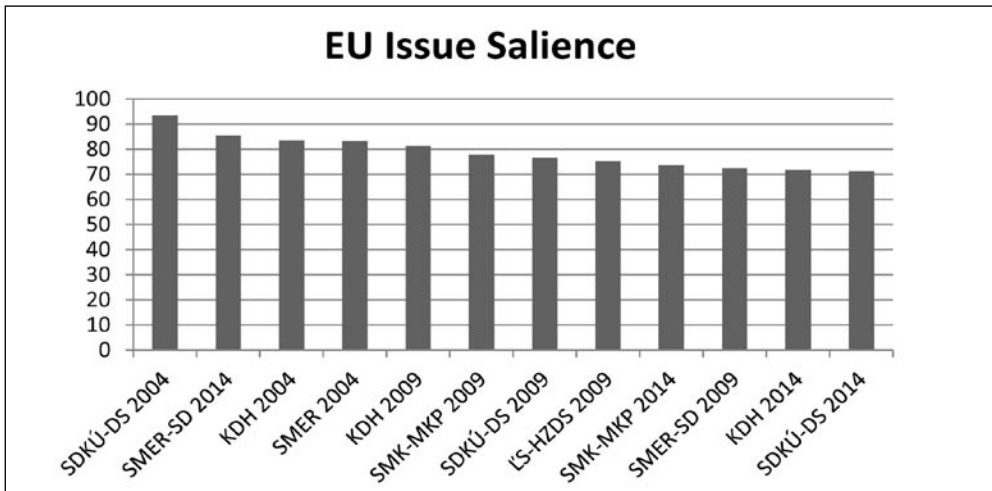
Source: Author on the basis of the content analysis.

In none of the twelve Euromanifestos subjected to content analysis did the relative EU issue salience fall below 70%. To put it another way, more than 70% of natural sentences included in Euromanifestos make explicit reference to the EU level of government. Although these results may seem counterintuitive in the light of an extensive literature documenting the limited influence of the EU on political parties and the election manifestos they prepare for national parliamentary elections, they are in line with research into the Europeanisation of election manifestos drafted for EP elections. These report a more intensive impact by the EU and the Euromanifestos make many more references to EU-related issues (Wüst 2009; Lederle 2007; 2005; Wüst, Schmitt 2007; Kritzinger et al. 2004; Wüst, Roth 2005; Kritzinger, Michalowitz 2005; Kovář 2013; 2014; Lefkofridi, Kritzinger 2008; Kovář 2014).

Our next concern is with patterns among the five parties and across election years. Figure 2 thus ranks individual Euromanifestos according to the relative level of EU issue salience. At first glance, we may observe an interesting pattern. The highest relative EU issue salience comes in the SDKÚ 2004 Euromanifesto; the lowest – omitting parties that did not draft Euromanifestos – in the Euromanifesto of the very same party drafted for the most recent EP

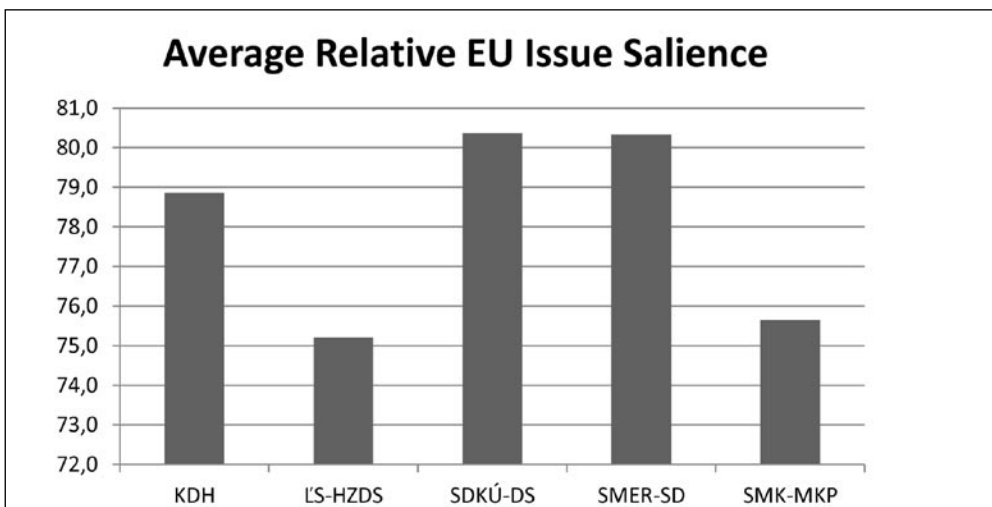
elections in May 2014. Overall, only relatively small differences obtain between the parties. As noted above, the Euromanifesto with lowest relative EU issue salience is the SDKÚ-DS 2014 manifesto, with 71.2% of natural sentences referring the EU level of governance. The highest relative EU issue salience is found in the SDKÚ-DS 2004 manifesto, where 93.4% of natural sentences refer to the EU political level. In most cases, however, EU issue salience in Euromanifestos ranges from 72%–85% of natural sentences.

Figure 2: Relative Salience of EU Issues by Party and Election Year Sorted from Highest to Lowest Values



Source: Author on the basis of the content analysis.

Figure 3: Average Relative EU Issue Salience by Party, (2004–2014)



Source: Author on the basis of the content analysis.

Figure 3 provides the average EU issue salience by party aggregated for the entire analysed period (2004–2014). The lowest average EU issue salience is found in the Euromanifestos of LS-HZDS, though the party only produced a single election programme for the EP elections during this timeframe. Second from the bottom come the Euromanifestos of SMK-MKP, which prepared election manifestos only for the 2009 and 2014 EP elections. Finally, the highest average EU issue salience was in the Euromanifestos of KDH, SMER-SD and SDKÚ-DS, in that order. In the case of the latter two parties' Euromanifestos, the average relative EU issue salience over the analysed period was greater than 80% of natural sentences. The logic behind Figure 4 is to capture EU issue salience across election years. Therefore, Figure 4 provides the average relative EU issue salience for each election year aggregated for all analysed parties. A clear trend is immediately visible: the average EU issue salience in Slovak mainstream party manifestos decreases over time, most notably between the 2004 and 2009 EP elections, but a further decrease took place between 2009 and 2014. Obviously, we cannot draw conclusions applicable to the entire Slovak party system, since we have analysed only five Slovak parties. But for these parties there is a continuous decrease in EU issue salience in their Euromanifestos during the period of investigation.

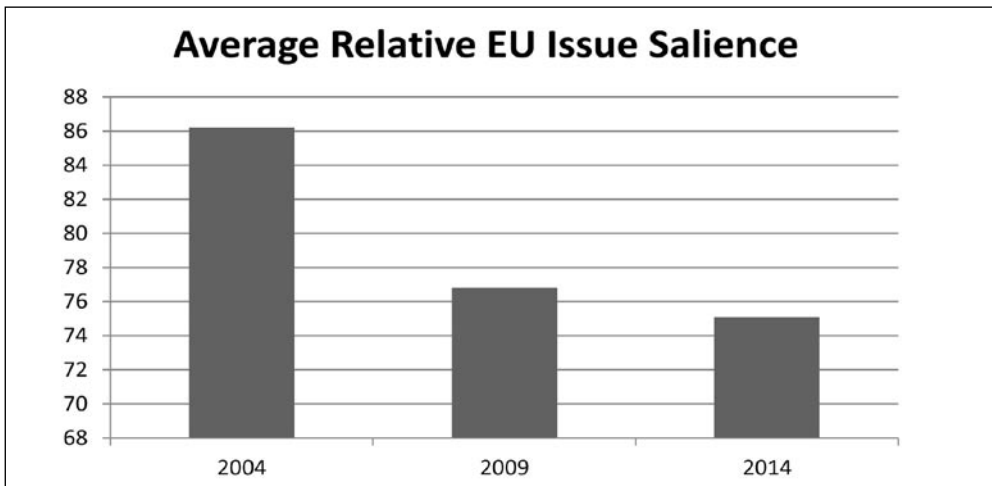
This contradicts something that is common knowledge in the literature: that the number of mentions of EU integration in election platforms for national elections has risen (Hloušek, Pšejka 2009; Pennings 2006). On the other hand, studies conducted on election programmes in the region report a similar trend whereby a significant, rapid increase in EU issue salience occurred during the pre-accession period (1998–2004) and then declined as time elapsed after accession to the EU. A possible explanation for such a trend may be offered by Issue Ownership Theory (Petrocik 1996). Under this theory, parties attempt to mobilise voters by emphasizing issues on which they hold a reputation of competence. Since capabilities and resources are limited and investment in one issue should imply fewer resources left over for other issues, parties must strategically decide which issues to campaign on. In other words, the scarcity of resources, time and communication channels, and limited voter attention spans are associated with the parties' choices to prioritise some issues over others (Petrocik 1996; Sjöblom 1983). The (perceived) importance of EU issues for parties' electoral fortunes may be low and may be reflected in the issue structure of Euromanifestos.

In summary, looking at the three EP elections held so far in Slovakia, it is evident that the salience of EU issues in Euromanifestos varies considerably, and perhaps surprisingly, it is high. All party Euromanifestos included discussion of EU issues most of the time. In these Euromanifestos, more than 70% of natural sentences made reference to the EU political level, in stark contrast to those drafted for national parliamentary elections by political parties in the region. Using a similar categorisation, a recent study reports that an average of 3%–3.5% of quasi-sentences make reference to the EU level of governance in Czech mainstream political party election programmes for national legislative elections (Procházková, Hloušek 2014). Comparing these findings to other results related to the Europeanisation of party campaign materials for EP elections substantiates this conclusion.

Generally speaking, the literature portrays EP elections as having a predominantly national, rather than European, flavour, with election campaigns hardly touching on European/EU issues and concerns. In other words, most EP election campaigns are dominated most of the time by national first-order political issues and concerns rather than issues related to the EU

level of politics (Auers 2005; Belluati, Bobba 2010; Chan 2004; Kauppi 2004; Pitrová 2007; Raycheva, Róka 2011; Cutler 2008; Irwin 1995; Lodge, Herman 1980; Reif 1985; Hix, Marsh 2007; Pinder 1994; Smith 1995; Kovář, Kovář 2013). On the other hand, there is a discernible decrease in average EU issue salience through the analysed period: the average relative EU issue salience was 86.2% in 2004, it had dropped to 75.1% by 2014. Of course, these aggregate figures mask important individual-level differences, yet they point to a potentially interesting falling trend in the amount of discussion devoted by Slovak mainstream parties to the EU in their Euromanifestos.

Figure 4: Average Relative EU Issue Salience for all Parties by Election Year



Source: Author on the basis of the content analysis.

4.2. EU Policy Agenda in Euromanifestos

To explore which EU (policy) issues parties discuss in their Euromanifestos, we present descriptive statistics and results from the analysis of the EU policy agenda. Put differently, Table 2 classifies each Euromanifesto drafted during the analysed period according to the relative salience devoted to each of the 21 categories of the EU Policy Agendas Project Codebook (see Appendix 1; Alexandrova et al. 2013; Alexandrova et al. 2014). As noted above, the project understands the political agenda to be ‘the issues that politicians, and in a parliamentary context political parties, pay attention to’ (Green-Pedersen 2005: 2). Each natural sentence coded in the first stage of the content analysis is thus coded secondarily for the (policy) issue area to which it refers. The measure of the EU policy agenda is, consequently, used as a proxy to measure what might be called the qualitative Europeanisation of Euromanifestos. However, we do not postulate that discussion of a certain issue (i.e. agriculture) indicates higher Europeanisation for that issue than others (i.e. education). Rather, we are interested in examining which issues the parties discuss when they talk about EU issues, and what kind of agenda they hence create?

Table 2: Relative Saliency of EU Issues according to Main Policy Issue Areas

Policy Area	2004	KDH	LS-HZDS	SDKÚ	SMER	SMK-MKP	2009	KDH	LS-HZDS	SDKÚ-DS	SMER-SD	SMK-MKP	2014	KDH	LS-HZDS	SDKÚ-DS	SMER-SD	SMK-MKP
Macroeconomics		0.8	-	3.1	4.7	-		2.7	4.9	7.5	7.1	3.5		4.5	-	10.1	2.3	3.2
Civil Rights and Liberties		4.2	-	5.3	2.1	-		4.8	3.3	5.4	2.2	7.2		7.6	-	2.3	5.8	14.5
Health		1.7	-	1.2	1.5	-		4.9	5.3	1.0	1.9	0.0		2.3	-	0.0	2.2	1.8
Agriculture		9.7	-	5.8	8.4	-		5.8	5.7	6.8	5.1	4.9		4.5	-	5.2	3.1	8.2
Labour and Employment		4.1	-	3.9	5.8	-		6.9	4.8	6.4	8.4	4.5		7.9	-	2.2	7.6	5.4
Education		5.4	-	2.5	5.8	-		5.9	3.5	2.5	5.3	6.4		6.2	-	5.3	2.8	5.2
Environment		5.2	-	3.1	4.4	-		4.7	4.7	2.3	1.8	0.8		3.2	-	3.1	1.5	2.1
Energy		7.3	-	4.2	6.9	-		10.9	5.2	7.5	7.8	7.3		3.6	-	4.2	3.3	1.0
Immigration		4.2	-	5.9	4.7	-		5.9	6.4	4.8	3.9	4.5		4.0	-	3.2	2.5	1.2
Transportation		4.4	-	2.3	4.0	-		5.1	2.7	1.4	3.8	3.6		2.1	-	3.6	1.8	4.2
Law and Crime		3.7	-	2.1	2.3	-		0.4	2.6	0.8	2.1	5.9		2.2	-	1.1	2.4	1.3
Social Policy		1.0	-	1.8	4.5	-		2.1	1.2	3.2	6.1	5.8		4.2	-	2.2	4.5	1.2
Regional and Urban Policy and Planning		8.8	-	8.6	8.1	-		4.8	8.2	8.3	7.9	7.2		7.3	-	5.3	6.9	7.9
Banking, Finance and Internal Trade		8.2	-	8.3	1.3	-		3.2	3.5	10.8	3.8	3.8		11.9	-	12.7	12.4	9.8
Defence		3.1	-	8.1	2.5	-		4.7	7.4	4.6	3.7	3.6		1.3	-	2.3	2.5	1.1
Space, Science, Technology and Communications		1.2	-	2.0	2.9	-		1.4	2.8	2.3	3.8	2.3		3.2	-	2.1	2.8	1.2
Foreign Trade		2.1	-	2.1	3.3	-		1.8	2.4	2.6	1.2	2.4		0.8	-	6.2	4.5	2.3
International Affairs and Foreign Aid		8.5	-	7.7	6.1	-		7.4	8.5	5.9	5.3	9.2		5.1	-	8.4	7.5	7.7
EU Governance and Government Operations		13.4	-	20.9	19.3	-		14.3	16.1	14.2	17.4	14.8		14.7	-	13.9	21.6	19.8
Public Lands, Water Management/ Territorial Issues		0.0	-	0.3	0.0	-		0.1	0.0	0.2	0.1	0.9		0.0	-	4.5	1.2	0.0
Culture and Media		3.0	-	0.8	1.4	-		2.2	0.8	1.5	1.3	1.4		3.4	-	2.1	0.8	0.9
Total		100	0	100	100	0		100	100	100	100	100		100	0	100	100	100

Source: Author on the basis of the content analysis.

Discussion of the relative salience of each of the 21 policy issue areas is beyond the scope of this paper. Instead, we focus on the most prominent issues on the party agenda. But this immediately raises the question of how to define issue prominence. Building on Green-Pedersen (2012) and the agenda-setting literature (Dearing, Rogers 1996: 1–5), we use the relative salience/prominence of individual (policy) issue areas and compare across issues. We therefore consider only the five most important issues on the party agenda in the detailed presentation of results. Based on the descriptive statistics presented in Table 2, Figure 5 shows the five most prominent issue areas aggregated for all analysed Euromanifestos for each election year, as well as for the entire 2004–2014 period. It is clearly evident that the issue category ‘EU Governance and Government Operations’, which includes references to EU institutions, appointments and nominations, EU treaties and their reform, is clearly the most salient issue for both individual elections years and for the entire period. On average, the relative salience of this issue area is 16.4% for the entire period; it never falls below 15% in any election year.

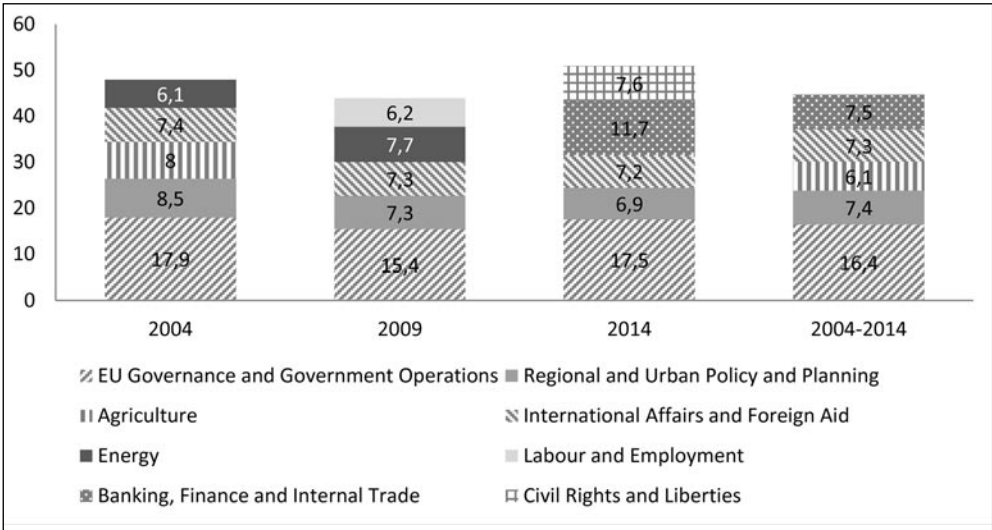
Another interesting observation relates to issue areas that are prominent throughout the period. There are three categories whose relative issue salience ranks them among the five most prominent issue areas for each election year, as well as for the entire period of investigation. These are: ‘EU Governance and Government Operations’, ‘Regional and Urban Policy and Planning’, and ‘International Affairs and Foreign Aid’. These findings are not wholly surprising in the light of previous literature. Among other things, the first category encompasses general references to the future of the EU, as well as references to EU Treaties and their reform. As we know that parties in the CEE region often provide general references to the EU system of governance, its reform and the EU’s future (Havlík, Vykoupilová 2008; Havlík 2010; Hloušek, Pšejka 2009; Kovář 2013; Lederle 2005; Haughton 2014; Pennings 2006), it is not wholly surprising to find long-term dominance by this particular issue category in the Euromanifestos. Since the middle category includes references to the Cohesion and Structural Funds, and the countries in the region are net recipients of EU Funds, it is not unnatural to find that parties consistently talk about EU funding in their Euromanifestos over the period of investigation (see Haughton 2014; Hloušek, Pšejka 2009; Chan 2004; Havlík 2014).

Finally, EU issues are often conflated with foreign policy issues, appearing in that section of the election manifestos (Havlík 2010; Procházková, Hloušek 2014), which may corroborate our finding of the high salience of the ‘International Affairs and Foreign Aid’ issue category. In any case, parties constantly discuss these issue areas to a large extent in the Euromanifestos analysed, and an interesting pattern emerges from the table on closer inspection. The five most prominent issue areas together represent around 50% of all natural sentences in the Euromanifestos referring to the EU level of governance. These figures are as high as 47.9% in 2004, 43.9% in 2009, and 50.9% in 2014. This may be surprising given that the coding scheme contains 21 issue categories. In this light, it seems parties probably focus on issue areas that are also salient for the public, potentially to increase their competency on these issues and, as a result, win votes as Issue Ownership Theory would suggest (Petrocik 1996; Budge, Farlie 1983). Nevertheless, our study provides no evidence to substantiate this claim.

To get back to our aim, the aggregate data provided in Figure 5, however, masks important differences at the individual, party level. Moving to the individual level, Figures 5–7 show the five most prominent issue areas for each political party and election year. Figure 6 shows that in 2004, parties differ slightly in terms of the five-most prominent issue areas in their

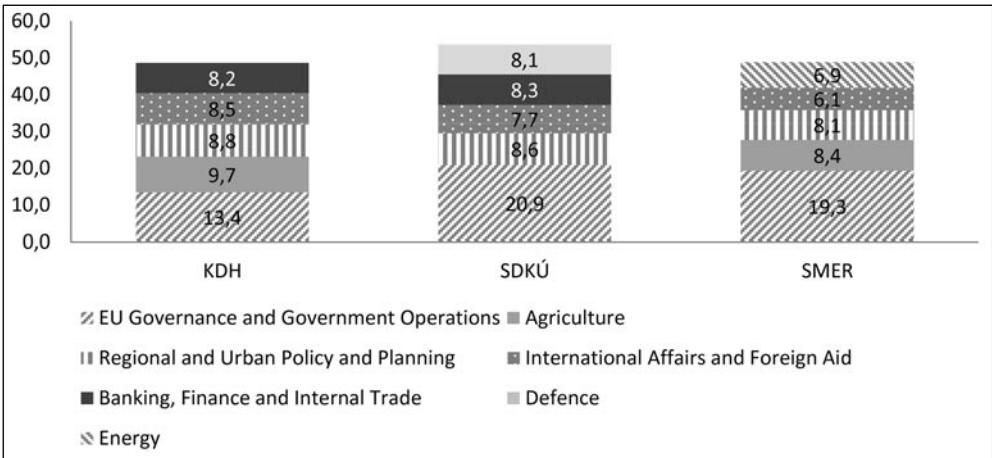
Euromanifestos. But by contrast there is notably high convergence among the parties in terms of the five most salient issue areas. Only seven different issue categories cover the five most prominent issue areas for all parties combined. In other words, parties talked about the same policy issue areas to a large extent when they discussed EU issues in their Euromanifestos in 2004. Compared to 2004, there was high variance in terms of the five most prominent issue

Figure 5: Relative Salience of the Five Most Prominent Issue Areas on Party Political Agendas in Slovakia (2004–2014)

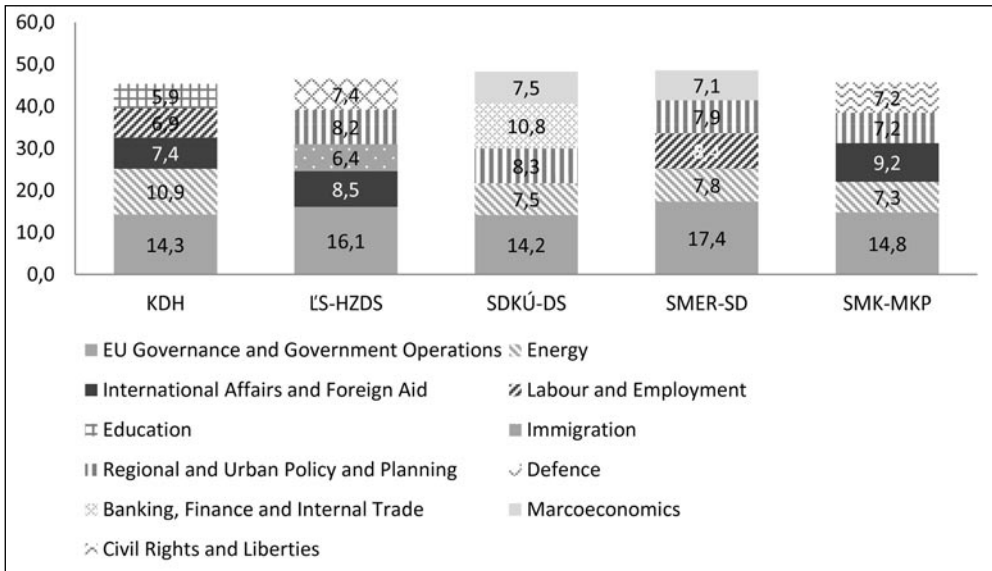


Source: Author on the basis of the content analysis.

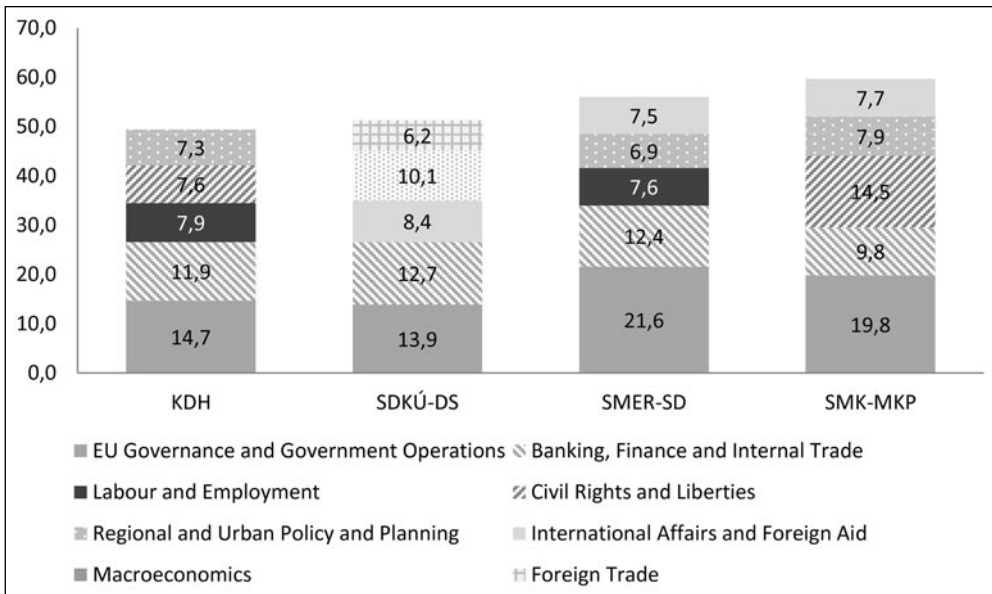
Figure 6: Relative Salience of the Five Most Prominent Issue Areas in 2004



Source: Author on the basis of the content analysis.

Figure 7: Relative Salience of the Five Most Prominent Issue Areas in 2009

Source: Author on the basis of the content analysis.

Figure 8: Relative Salience of the Five Most Prominent Issue Areas in 2014

Source: Author on the basis of the content analysis.

areas in individual parties' Euromanifestos (see Figure 7). More specifically, for all parties combined, the five most prominent issue areas are covered by eleven different issue categories – compared to seven in 2004 – of the 21 included in the coding scheme. Put another way, different parties talked about different issue areas when they discussed EU issues in their Euromanifestos in 2009, creating much more divergent party EU political agenda in these versus previous EP elections.

Finally, Figure 8 shows that in 2014, the divergence of party EU political agendas decreased versus 2009, roughly to 2004 levels. Combining all five Euromanifestos prepared in 2014, the five most prominent issue areas are covered by eight of the 21 issue categories included in the coding scheme (versus seven in 2004 and eleven in 2009). This implies that, to a large extent, different parties consider identical issues salient in 2009, suggesting convergence in terms of party EU political agendas. Even at the individual level, we may observe the trend that the five most prominent issue areas combined represent around 50% of all natural sentences in the Euromanifestos referring to the EU level of governance. In the 2014 EP elections, this trend is even more pronounced compared with the two previous election years. In 2014, the five most prominent issue areas combined represented up to 49.4% for KDH, 51.3% for SDKÚ-DS, 56% for SMER-SD, and 59.7 for SMK-MKP. This suggests that in approximately 50% of the natural sentences referring to the EU level of governance, individual political parties discuss similar issue areas and, consequently, their political agendas are characterised by relatively high level of convergence considering the parties' varying ideological profiles and position on European integration.

In summary, we may state that, in terms of the salience of different EU issues, there are only slight differences among the parties. One of the 21 issue categories included in the EU Policy Agendas Project Codebook, namely 'EU Governance and Government Operations', is clearly the most prominent issue category throughout the period as well as for each party, being found in an average of 16.4% of the natural sentences referring to EU level of government. Moreover, there is relatively high convergence in terms of the party EU political agenda, measured as the five most prominent issue categories in individual parties' Euromanifestos, particularly in 2004 and 2014. Finally, the five most prominent issue categories represent, on average, 44.7% of the natural sentences referring to the EU level of governance in each Euromanifesto. This suggests that parties mostly discuss those EU issues they consider most salient and pushing discussion of other EU issues to the margins.

5. Concluding Remarks

This paper continues the tradition of work conducted on Europeanisation of political parties and their programmatic documents since the mid-1990s. Since this work is characterised by heterogeneity in terms of the specific methodological approaches employed, this paper presents a novel approach to comparative study of the Europeanisation of election programmes, particularly those drafted for EP elections. Within this novel research design, Europeanisation is measured in terms of EU issue salience and EU political agendas, and it is used to investigate *whether and to what extent* parties talk about EU issues in their Euromanifestos and *which political issues* parties discuss when they talk about EU politics?

Drawing on a content analysis of Euromanifestos prepared by five mainstream Slovak political parties, we find evidence that parties discuss EU issues to a surprisingly high degree. Average relative EU issue salience oscillates between 75%–86% in the Euromanifestos from the period analysed. On the other hand, we also find that average relative EU issue salience in Slovak mainstream parties' manifestos decreases over time, most notably between the 2004 and 2009 EP elections, decreasing from 86.2% in 2004 to 75.1% in 2014. In relation to party EU political agenda, we provide evidence of relatively high convergence measured in terms of the five most prominent issue categories in individual parties' Euromanifestos, particularly in 2004 and 2014. We also show that the five most prominent issue categories in party EU political agendas represent almost half the natural sentences referring to the EU political level in the Euromanifestos. Taken together, election manifestos drafted for EP elections by Slovak political parties exhibit a substantial level of Europeanisation, which trend is consistent with the reduced number of analyses of Euromanifestos in other countries in the literature (Wüst 2009; Brunsbach et al. 2012; Kritzinger et al. 2004).

In addition, the reported high degree of Europeanisation in Euromanifestos may be less relevant when we consider other types of party documentation and campaign materials prepared for EP elections. These often show much less Europeanisation than election manifestos (Deželan 2007; Wüst 2009; Maier et al. 2011; Tenscher 2005; de Vreese 2009; Tenscher, Maier 2009). In other words, Euromanifestos may be a positive exception rather than the rule in EP election campaigns. In any case, scholars and researchers are invited to adopt the proposed content-methodological coding scheme to analyse manifestos prepared for EP elections beyond the single case analysed in this paper. Application of a uniform coding scheme cross-nationally may greatly improve on the current state, when we must usually rely on cross-national comparison of findings based on different methodological procedures. This practice certainly does not improve on the external validity of conclusions based on these findings.

Appendix 1: Major Policy Issue Areas; EU Policy Agendas Project

Policy Issue Areas	Code
Macroeconomics	1
Civil Rights and Liberties	2
Health	3
Agriculture	4
Labour and Employment	5
Education	6
Environment	7
Energy	8
Immigration	9
Transportation	10
Law and Crime	12
Social Policy	13

Regional and Urban Policy and Planning	14
Banking, Finance and Internal Trade	15
Defence	16
Space, Science, Technology and Communications	17
Foreign Trade	18
International Affairs and Foreign Aid	19
EU Governance and Government Operations	20
Public Lands, Water Management and Territorial Issues	21
Culture and Media	23

Source: Compiled from the European Union Policy Agendas Project Codebook (Alexandrova et al. 2013), available online at: <http://www.policyagendas.eu/> (accessed on 15 September 2014).

Notes:

1. It should be noted here that the use of the term Europeanisation in relation to the EU is problematic. According to the ‘maximalist approach’, Europeanisation is not limited to the processes related to European integration. The ‘minimalist approach, by contrast, regards the process of European integration as the sole referential framework (Featherstone 2003; Flockhart 2010). In this sense, the proposed term to be used is EU-isation (Wallace 2000). To put it differently, EU-isation is predominantly concerned with ‘political encounters and as such is a ‘small, but important part of the much broader and longer term process of Europeanization, which is predominantly concerned with ‘cultural encounters’. Europeanisation is then broadly understood as ‘everything that is, or has been, widely regarded as ‘European’ in a former present’ (Flockhart 2010: 791–792).
2. Obviously, we are only able to analyse the change in the extent of Europeanisation over time for those parties that drafted manifestos for each EP election held so far. Even for those parties that did not produce manifestos for each EP election, we can draw conclusions about their Europeanisation, since the fact they did not produce manifestos for EP elections may be considered non-Europeanisation, even if we take into account the limited resources and capabilities of the parties.
3. We applied Krippendorff’s alpha to test inter-coder reliability (Krippendorff 2004). Under the test-retest condition (Krippendorff 2004: 214–215), we reached the following values: 0.93 for the coding of the policy level; 0.86 for the coding of EU policy issues.
4. The reason is that in January 2014, the party perished after 22 years of political existence.

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