

# The Enduring Low Levels of Europeanization of Slovenian Political Parties: Evidence from Election Manifestos

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## Abstract

The Europeanization of national political parties is one of the most important topic areas in the Europeanization literature. Slovenian parties have slowly started to act in the arena of the European Union (EU) since the 1990s, and questions regarding the degree of their Europeanization have become increasingly relevant. In light of Ladrech's conviction that the clearest types of evidence of Europeanization may be found in programme changes, we focus our research on party manifestos.

By conducting a computer-assisted content analysis of 65 manifestos between 1990 and 2014, we were able to examine the presence of EU-related topics and the frequency of reference to these topics, utilizing a quantitative measure of party Europeanization. We conclude that the presence of Europe in Slovenian parliamentary party manifestos is a consequence of an incremental process that intensified with the turn of the millennium and peaked with Slovenia's accession to the EU. In addition, we observe that the interaction of variables has an important effect on the salience of Europe in manifestos, with the variables involved in a mutual feedback process, thus indicating that size, governmental status and EU party links matter. In the case of fringe parties, party family proved relevant as well.

*Keywords:* election manifesto; Europeanization; Slovenia; political parties; party programmes

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## 1. Introduction

Political scientists throughout history have demonstrated the importance of political parties for democracy. A significant research interest in political parties in the age of modern democracy is therefore not surprising. While in the past parties were treated as vital for democracy at the national level, their importance is now believed to stretch beyond that to the development

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of democracy in broader contexts, such as the supranational level of the European Union (EU). The combination of the new competencies acquired by the EU over the last three decades and the place of prominence held by European integration has prompted questions to do with the effect integration has on the national level, primarily in the form of Europeanization. This article focuses on the Europeanization of Slovenian parliamentary party manifestos from 1990 until 2014. It begins with theoretical background on party changes and Europeanization. This is followed by an analysis of the importance of the EU arena in Slovenia, and the characteristics of Slovenian parties and the Slovenian party system. The article's empirical focus is on the use of computer-assisted content analysis to examine sixty-five manifestos for signs of EU-related topics and determine the frequency of references to these topics. Several party-specific factors of Europeanization that have been developed are then used to explain differences in Europeanization among Slovenian parties.

## 2. Political Parties and the European Union

The concept of Europeanization has been constructed in different ways and assigned a variety of meanings; it is therefore not surprising that scholars have used this concept to point to a number of different processes (Bomberg 2002; Carter et al. 2007), particularly processes of transformation (Ladrech 2002). On the one hand, the term 'Europeanization' describes and analyses the development of the EU-level institutions together with the EU's new system of governance. On the other hand, scholars such as Bomberg and Peterson (2000) define Europeanization as a two-way process whereby national actors and institutions are affected by European integration and the EU as such. But the same national actors and institutions are reciprocally attempting to shape the EU, its processes, and policies. It is nonetheless obvious that the most frequent understanding and use of the term 'Europeanization' concerns the EU's impact in terms of policies, structures and processes at the national/domestic level (Bomberg 2002; Binnema 2003; Pennings 2006; Carter et al. 2007; Poguntke et al. 2007). Some would say Europeanization concerns the penetration of the European dimension into the national arena, which means national actors', policies' and institutions' ability to adapt is at the heart of the term. This also entails that Europeanization must be treated as a top-down process and the EU as an independent variable<sup>1</sup> (Binnema 2003; Carter et al. 2007; Kūlahci 2012). While no one can deny that bottom-up processes occur as well, such processes can hardly be called Europeanization, especially if we take into account Ladrech's (1994) original, widely adopted definition of Europeanization.

Europeanization research and the Europeanization literature expanded when it became obvious that the EU impacts the policy, politics and polity of national states (Binnema 2003). This final realization came with Börzel's and Risse's statement (2003: 6) that the issue is no longer whether Europe matters, but how it matters, to what degree, in what direction, at what pace and at what point in time.

Although the Europeanization literature is extensive, Carter et al. (2007), Poguntke et al. (2007) and Kūlahci (2012) have noted that the Europeanization of national party systems and parties remains under-researched; Binnema (2003) even argues that it has been neglected altogether.<sup>2</sup> In particular, it is remarkable, given the role played by parties in modern democracies,

that the effect of the EU on national parties has scarcely been researched (Carter et al. 2007: 2). One reason for this might be the lack of a solid theoretical framework on Europeanization to help in conducting research. It was not until 2002 that Ladrech managed to extensively and systematically stress the adaptive response of national parties to Europeanization with his analytical framework for investigating the impact of the EU on national parties. In 2002, he developed an analytical framework for understanding Europeanization as a process in which European integration influences the operating arenas, or environments, of national parties (Ladrech 2002: 394) and that treats the Europeanization of parties as a clear dependent variable. Ladrech (2002: 396) proposes five research dimensions for the potential impact of Europeanization processes on national parties:

- 1) programmatic change;
- 2) organizational change;
- 3) change in patterns of party competition;
- 4) change in party-government relations; and
- 5) change in relations beyond the party system.

Bomberg (2002: 31) observed the EU may have different effects across different ‘domains’ or dimensions of party activity. As Ladrech (2002: 396) pointed out, clear evidence of Europeanization is provided by programmatic change, that is, modifications to party programmes. In the opening years of the twenty-first century, only limited empirical confirmation of this notion was presented (Binnema 2003; 2009; Deschouwer, van Assche 2005; Pennings 2006). Further steps were taken later to some extent towards Europeanizing party programmes (Kūlahci 2012). Modification to party programmes can be measured quantitatively in terms of increased mention of the EU in European policy discussions and references to other policy areas, normally those considered to be domestic policy. But qualitative measurements may also be brought to bear on these modifications in terms of references to the EU as an additional factor in the pursuit of policies traditionally considered domestic, e.g., employment, immigration and asylum (Ladrech 2002: 396).

In the last decade, many empirical studies on the Europeanization of party programmes have been conducted that point to the impact of the EU both within and across countries on the comparative level (Kūlahci 2012). Over the years, however, some studies in particular have proven themselves key additions to the initial literature on the Europeanization of parties. Ladrech (2012: 574), for one, warns that most of the effort in these studies has gone into describing the effect rather than the cause of EU-related changes in political parties. According to Ladrech, to state that a particular change in parties has occurred simply because the EU is influential in domestic political systems risks misattributing that change to the EU, and potentially leaves the researcher unable to explain resistance to change or variability (Ladrech 2012: 574). As Ladrech pointed out (2012: 575), more effort has been expended in the last decade in the search for evidence of change than in trying to adequately explain how the EU is responsible for that change.

Additionally, Mair (2000) has warned that both national party systems and parties may be affected directly or indirectly by European integration, arguing that far too little systematic attention has been paid to analysing the indirect impact of Europeanization on parties and party systems (Mair 2007: 161). Mair (2007: 162) also claims the impact of Europeanization on

parties and party systems, whether direct or indirect, needs to be integrated more closely into more general theories of party change and development, since this is the only way the potential impact of Europe may be assessed against other factors also known to impact parties in Europe and elsewhere. In light of Mair's conviction, theories of the importance of the environments within which parties operate seem appropriate tools.

Political parties operate simultaneously in different (internal and external) environments by which they are also directly influenced (Panebianco 1988). But only since the 1990s have political scientists begun to perceive the EU environment and the national environment as an interdependently functioning network of more or less relevant party environments. As its powers have increased, the EU has recently become a challenge that must be faced by national parties (Binnema 2009: 7). As various political scientists have noted (Harmel, Janda 1982; Panebianco 1988; Wilson 1994; Strøm, Svåsand 1997), parties are organisations which frequently adapt<sup>3</sup> to challenges and changes within their operating environments, which by definition, are potentially variable (Panebianco 1988). Given the development of the EU over the last several decades, this is true as well for the EU environment, although the EU has only recently begun to be acknowledged as an environment that holds potentially significant consequences for national party functioning (Poguntke et al. 2007). Nevertheless, the ways in which parties respond to the EU environment are similar to the ways in which they have adapted to previous challenges (Binnema 2009: 7).

Still, it is not possible to say party changes/adaptations 'just happen' or 'must happen'; in the vast majority of cases, party changes are a consequence of external pressures together with pressures present in internal party environments (Panebianco 1988; Harmel, Janda 1994). Additionally, the relevance for parties of any particular environment may also vary over time (Panebianco 1988: 206, 208). Nonetheless, it is also up to individual parties to estimate the importance of different environments and to decide whether (and if so, how) to respond to environmental pressure. It is hence no surprise if some parties decide to respond to a particular pressure or development in their environments, while others decide not to do so.

Taking into account the above provisos, particularly the absence of any formal requirement that parties adapt to the EU (adaptation is voluntary), the Europeanization of any particular party may or may not happen; and when party change does take place, parties tend not to respond to the EU environment stimulus in a uniform manner (Bomberg 2002; Carter et al. 2007; Binnema 2009). Or as Külahci (2012: 2) ascertained, the adaptation of parties to the EU environment is likely to be non-uniform within countries, across countries and over time. Binnema (2009: 11) additionally believes that any individual party will respond and adapt to Europe in the way that best suits its strategic aims. Not surprisingly then, some authors have identified particular party-specific and country-specific factors tied to Europeanization. Since our focus in this article is on Slovenia, potential differences among parties in the country will be highlighted, making party-specific factors of Europeanization more significant. We have identified the following party-specific factors in the existing literature (Johansson, Raunio 2001; Netjes, Binnema 2006; Carter et al. 2007; Binnema 2009; Külahci 2012):

- a) level of internal party consensus or division over EU-related issues (a party with internal divisions over the EU will try to de-emphasise the issue);
- b) party size (large parties can draw attention to a large array of issues, including the EU, although this is definitely not the most important issue for national parties; small parties

- are likely to have limited capacity to engage in extensive functional differentiation and therefore unlikely to have the scope for an EU specialist to ensure the party pays more attention to the EU environment);
- c) the party status of a government or opposition party (incorporating the EU perspective into all policy areas is indispensable for a party with aspirations to govern; government responsibility means regular participation in the work of the EU institutions; deeper, broader-based involvement in EU-related processes hence demands more attention to EU-related issues and more developed positions/stances on these issues);
  - d) party family (historically, certain party families have taken a more internationalist or supranationalist integration position, while others have chosen a more isolationist/nationalist position; integrationist parties are expected to pay more attention to EU issues);
  - e) the transnational/EU links of a party (national parties with longer-term EU links are expected to have had greater exposure to the EU environment);
  - f) party position in the system (mainstream parties will try not to politicize EU issues, while parties on the margins of the political spectrum might find it beneficial to discuss EU issues to a greater extent).

It is also necessary to discuss two additional factors of Europeanization that are as important as potential party-specific factors. First, consensus on the EU among national parties can be an important determinant of their level of Europeanization (Johansson, Raunio 2001; Netjes, Binnema 2006); in the Europhile party system (Kūlahci 2012), the EU tends to be de-politicized (Mair 2007), which leads to low salience (or no salience) for the EU in party competition. If parties see no added value in competing on EU-related issues at the national level, they will pay no attention to these issues. Second, the salience of the EU and therefore the Europeanization of parties will be greater when other parties within the party system highlight the issue – this means an issue's salience is largely determined by the behaviour of other parties, as parties cannot risk removing themselves from the mainstream political debate (Netjes, Binnema 2006: 43).

Last but not least, Europeanization does not take place in one fell swoop. It is a process; it must therefore be tracked from a long-term perspective (Deschouwer, van Assche 2005; Pennings 2006).

### 3. Contextual Background

Slovenia experienced its first 'brush' with the EU before its independence, since EU membership had become a strategic goal of Slovenian foreign policy even before the country formally declared independence (Lajh, Fink-Hafner 2002). The European theme was also integrated into party politics very early in the transition to democracy, when the reformed former Slovenian League of Communists adopted the document 'Europe Now – for a European Quality of Living', prepared for its autumn 1989 congress. A highly similar slogan ('Europe Now!') was adopted for the first multiparty democratic elections held in the spring of 1990 (Balažic 2002). In addition to the former Slovenian League of Communists, a majority of other

political parties competing in these first multiparty elections included 'integration or co-operation with the EU, approaching European standards, and using the EU as a reference point in several policy fields' in their manifestos (Krašovec, Lajh 2009: 501). Despite this mostly very broad, undefined or instrumental use of the EU (as well as Europe and European standards) in the early manifestos and opinion papers, by the end of the 1980s and the beginning of the 1990s, Europeanization had 'become a kind of substitute for the old ideology' in Slovenia (Fink-Hafner 1999).

However, Krašovec and Lajh (2009) discovered that later, as in the 1990s, the parties had mainly stressed the importance of the EU *per se* at the same time they leaned on European standards and policies. Their use of the EU was thus predominantly instrumental, while at the beginning of the new century it had still been very difficult, generally speaking, to reveal the parties' standpoints on specific EU policies. Still some differences among Slovenian parties were visible. This prompts us to employ party-specific Europeanization factors to explain these differences.

Kūlahci (2012: 185) has described the Slovenian party system as a Europhile system. This should come as no surprise, due to the parties' broad consensus on European integration. In 1997, the Slovenian parliamentary parties even formally agreed EU membership to be an ultimate Slovenian goal, and all parliamentary parties (except the Slovene National Party) signed the Agreement on Cooperation in the Accession Process with the EU. This also meant that all major EU-related topics in Slovenia were defined as national projects (Krašovec, Lajh 2009). This consensus led to EU-related issues having a high degree of salience for national politics in Slovenia, but only low salience for interparty politics; competition between parties on the topic is thus limited (Krašovec, Lajh 2009: 501). The parties clearly missed significant potential gains to be had from playing the EU card during the elections, first due to the highly favourable public opinion evident in polls on the EU and Slovenia's accession, and second because playing the EU card (and indeed the Eurosceptic card) was not rewarded in the elections (Krašovec et al. 2006). Some small and/or non-parliamentary parties and occasionally the parliamentary Slovene National Party did try to play the Eurosceptic card, but were unable to trump the competition in the electoral competition (Krašovec, Lajh 2009). This broad consensus among parties on the EU somehow fell apart only during the 2014 parliamentary elections, when an important debate topic concerned how the different parties would tackle the country's economic and financial difficulties. This theme was linked to EU politics, particularly to the European Commission's recommendations to Slovenia (accompanied by compliance deadlines) to tackle the country's debt and economic woes. During the campaign, the United Left coalition directed the majority of its criticism at the EU and its austerity policies; ultimately, its candidates entered the parliament for the first time with 5.9% of the vote (Krašovec, Haughton 2014). In addition to these party Europeanization factors, one might expect a higher degree of manifesto Europeanization for the 2014 parliamentary elections than had been present for previous elections.

We have seen that part of the Europeanization of an individual party's story may be tied to the evolution of contacts and co-operation between national parties and European party federations/parties (Pridham 2001; Enyedi, Lewis 2006). As Krašovec and Lajh (2009) and Krašovec and Malčič (2014) discovered, the developmental dynamics of relations between the parliamentary Slovenian parties and European party federations/parties in the 1990s and

in the new millennium differed in both their timing and in the depth of co-operation present. Since the mid-1990s, almost all parliamentary parties have formally entered the EU sphere by establishing official contacts with their European counterparts. The exception is the new parties that have become especially important in Slovenian politics since the 2011 parliamentary elections. We may therefore anticipate that, due to lacking cooperation or only short-lived cooperation with their EU counterparts, the least Europeanized will be some of the more 'distinct' parliamentary parties, such as the Democratic Party of Retired Persons of Slovenia and the Slovene National Party, and new parties such as Zares, Positive Slovenia, Civic List, the Party of Miro Cerar, the United Left Coalition and the Alliance of Alenka Bratušek.

**Table 1: The Evolution of Formal Membership by Slovenian Parties in European Parties**

	observer	associate member	full member
New Slovenia – NSi (EPP)	2001	2003	2004
Liberal Democracy of Slovenia – LDS (ELDR/ALDE)		1994	1998
Slovene Democratic Party – SDS (EPP)	2001	2003	2004
Social Democrats – SD (PES/S&D)	1996	1999	2003
Slovene People's Party – SLS (EPP)	2001	2003	2004
Youth Party of Slovenia (SMS) European Greens (EFGP/EG)	2003		2006
Zares (ELDR/ALDE)	2008		2008
Civic List – DL (ELDR/ALDE)	2013		2013
Positive Slovenia – PS*			
Party of Miro Cerar – SMC (ELDR/ALDE)			2014
United Left coalition – ZL			
Alliance of Alenka Bratušek – ZaAB (ELDR/ALDE)			2014
* At the end of January 2014, the PS decided to apply for full membership in ALDE. Due to the party's split after a leadership battle at the end of April 2014, the PS withdrew its application for ALDE membership just before the ALDE congress at the beginning of May.			

Source: *Krašovec and Malčič (2014); ALDE data.*

Slovenia has all main party families represented (Conservatives, Christian Democrats, Social Democrats, Liberals, Greens). As Johansson and Raunio (2001), Binnema (2009) and Kūlahci (2012) have pointed out, due mainly to historical reasons (i.e. the development of the European integration), it might be expected that the biggest effect of Europeanization would be recorded in conservative/Christian democratic parties – of Slovenian parties, the Slovene Democratic Party, New Slovenia and the Slovene People's Party are EPP members.

As Krašovec and Lajh (2010: 137) discovered, no divisions exist internally within the parliamentary parties on EU-related issues; the level of internal party consensus on EU issues can thus hardly serve as an explanatory factor in the story of Europeanization.

Upon classifying party size in electoral terms (Blondel 1978), one sees that it is difficult to speak of large parties in the Slovenian party system. Differences among parties are visible as regards electoral size (strength), but the more important question for Europeanization seems to be the party's organizational size (Carter et al. 2007). Slovenian parliamentary party

membership levels are not low, comparatively speaking (van Biezen et al. 2012), but the number of people employed in parties is indeed very small (between 1 and 7 people in parliamentary party groups and between 1 and 15 in parties in central offices; Starič 2010). This data may be combined with the number of EU specialists charged with being the first to ensure an individual party pays more attention to EU issues in its (electoral) programme. Generally speaking, in Slovenian parties only a handful of people may be considered EU specialists (Krašovec, Lajh 2010: 131). A group of EU specialists in an individual party is predominantly formed by (former) MEPs<sup>4</sup>, their assistants, international secretaries of parties and people professionally interested in EU issues but not employed by the parties (academicians and civil servants who deal with the EU on a daily basis as part of their jobs). As Krašovec and Lajh (2010: 131) have argued, parties with a handful of EU specialists may be differentiated from those (almost) lacking such specialists based on two criteria: a) parties for which there are MEPs vs. parties without them and b) government vs. opposition parties. In particular, parties in government or that led the government when Slovenia acceded to the EU and/or when the country held the Presidency of the Council of the EU in 2008 ‘took advantage’ of the fact that many of their governmental representatives were simply forced to engage in EU issues to a much greater extent than previously (Krašovec, Lajh 2010). On the basis of functional EU differentiation, therefore, one would expect that Europeanization would find its maximum presence in the Liberal Democracy of Slovenia, the Slovene Democratic Party, the Social Democrats and New Slovenia.

In line with another proposition mentioned above, a partial explanation of the differences in level of Europeanization among parties seems connected as well to their position — or lack thereof — in the government. Although all Slovenian parliamentary parties except the Slovene National Party have taken part in some form of cooperation within the government (Krašovec, Krpič 2012), they may still be differentiated on the basis of the scope of their governmental experience. Liberal Democracy of Slovenia led the government for 12 years; the Slovene Democratic Party led two governments, while the Social Democrats led one government and was in several other governments. New Slovenia and the Slovene People’s Party, as well, were in several coalition governments. Democratic Party of Retired Persons of Slovenia participated in almost all governments. All of these parties enjoyed a stable, long-term presence in the EU sphere thanks to their governmental positions, which ‘forced’ them to co-operate (more) actively in EU policy processes. One might therefore expect that these parties would devote more attention to EU-related issues and develop more elaborated positions on the issues, all of which should also be visible in their (electoral) programmes.

#### **4. Europeanization of Manifestos in Slovenia: Rationale Behind the Analysis of Manifestos**

Given that Ladrech (2002) has predicted that programmatic changes or modifications to party programmes are clear evidence of Europeanization, we will analyse the extent to which Slovenian parties have been Europeanized. Competing political actors show a wealth of differences between them, both in Europe and elsewhere. To formulate electoral programmes (i.e. manifestos) is one among the many functions of political parties — since these formal docu-

ments are presented to voters and party members (Klingemann et al. 1994). Usually, parties not only very clearly identify their strategic goals, values, ideology, priorities and policies in their (electoral) programmes, they also offer an opportunity for party members and sympathisers to identify themselves with the party (Klingemann et al. 1994).

Despite the fact that some authors (e.g. Budge 1987; Bara 2006) are convinced that only a small number of voters read manifestos, they are still an important feature of party competition because they attract the attention of the mass media. The media present manifestos to the public, and consequently these programmes shape public opinion. Since parties are usually careful to follow the interests, demands and expectations of the public, they are capable of adapting their programmes and re-presenting them to voters (Klingemann 1994; Caul, Gray 2000; Bara 2006). By following public interests, demands and expectations, parties are not only able to adapt their (electoral) programmes but can also add relevance to some topics.

#### 4.1. Data and Method

Given the way the EU has developed, data and evidence on the Europeanization of political parties must capture the effects of longitudinal change (de Winter, Gomez-Reino Cachafeiro 2002). Since manifestos are an ‘authoritative statement of a party reflecting its programmatic profile for an election’ (Merz, Regel 2013: 149), even at this stage large differences between political contestants must be clearly evident. To be precise, few manage to satisfy electoral manifesto criteria (see Merz, Regel 2013) by appropriately naming the prepared documents to reflect the position of the party together with its programmatic profile as a whole and relating these documents to each specific electoral race. In addition, it is vital when analysing manifestos to be aware that Slovenian political parties habitually wait until the very last moment to launch their manifestos. Their launch, if it takes place at all, is very rarely in line with the official start of the election campaign (30 days prior to election day) and is also undertaken only tentatively. Even parties that manage the launch appear to validate the so-called ‘bandwagon effect’ – i.e. they producing manifestos for the sake of having one and forestalling a situation in which they might be the only party without a manifesto. This is reinforced by the evasive nature of electoral manifestos; within two months of the elections, few parties still offer full-text versions of their manifestos for citizens to read or download.

As a result, despite manifestos being a rich source of information on party positions and candidate slates, it is quite difficult to systematically discern the programmatic positions of the contesting actors due to the gaps created by candidate lists lacking a manifesto or just translating programme positions from other associated organizations. Because of this, we have supplemented the information gathered from manifestos with information from other programme documents by parties or candidate slates.

To analyse the selected programme documents, we employed a computer-assisted quantitative text analysis technique known as thematic text analysis (see Popping 2000).<sup>5</sup> To perform the analysis, it was necessary to operationalize the Europeanization of manifestos. We operationalized concepts, concept categories, and systems of categories that correspond to theoretical conceptualizations of the Europeanization of political parties. The initial concepts, concept categories and systems of categories were fine-tuned on the basis of an in-depth ‘inductive’ examination of selected programme documents. We analysed 65 manifestos or

party programmes that functioned as manifestos between 1990 and 2014. Documents from all parliamentary parties were selected for the analysis, including those of parties elected to the parliament for the first time in the election in question, and documents of incumbent parties whose reelection efforts failed. This set of 65 documents was coded automatically with the text analysis program Wordstat and cross-tabulated to seek any patterns that emerged (see SaldanBa 2009: 50) using the meta-variables assigned to the documents (e.g., year of publication, party family, political party, programme document type). For presentation purposes, we utilized bubble charts, which are graphic representations of the contingency tables of identified categories and display the frequencies with which codes occurred in the documents investigated.

Finally, we computed similarity across cases based on the content category, using concept maps that provide a graphical representation of the proximity values computed for all included keywords by means of multidimensional scaling. The distance between two content categories indicates the likelihood of them appearing together. The size of each data point reveals the observed frequency of each item.

## 5. Findings

In general, when mapping Europe in party programme documents, several predominant issues linked to Europe are present within and across party manifestos. To be precise, parties most frequently tried to compare Slovenia with particular EU member states, or with the EU itself. This feature appeared in 50 out of 65 documents analysed, for a total of 428 references in this category (see Appendix 1 and 2). Other issues that stood out in the party manifestos included references to European standards and principles (present in 36 manifestos, with 93 references), European (cultural, economic, legal, civilization) space (present in 34 manifestos, referred to 110 times), EU membership (present in 32 documents with 148 references) and EU policies (present in 26 manifestos and referred to 171 times). By contrast, EU-related topics that tend to divide the political arena appeared only sporadically. For example, EU problems and EU membership obligations as well as uncertainties about the future of the EU were found in fewer than 10 manifestos (see Figure 1).

From a diachronic perspective, we may observe a pattern that was anticipated by scholars knowledgeable in the field. Specifically, although the manifestos examined did make reference to the European Communities and the EU as early as 1990 — with most referring to Europe as a benchmark and a common goal (14 references in 1990) — Europe became omnipresent in manifestos only at the turn of the millennium. The year 2000 marks a clear point of expanding reference to Europe in manifestos, with 162 mentions. The point of culmination came in 2004, a year when the first EP election, accession to the EU and national elections all coincided: Europe was referred to 413 times in the manifestos of the competing parties and was a feature common to almost all examined programme documents. This accession euphoria was replaced with a Europe ‘hangover’ evident in the results that have been attained since Europe was largely removed from the manifestos, particularly in terms of the frequency of references to the costs and benefits of membership and comparisons to other EU Member States (see Appendix 4). As the membership goal had been achieved and the ‘horse race’ with



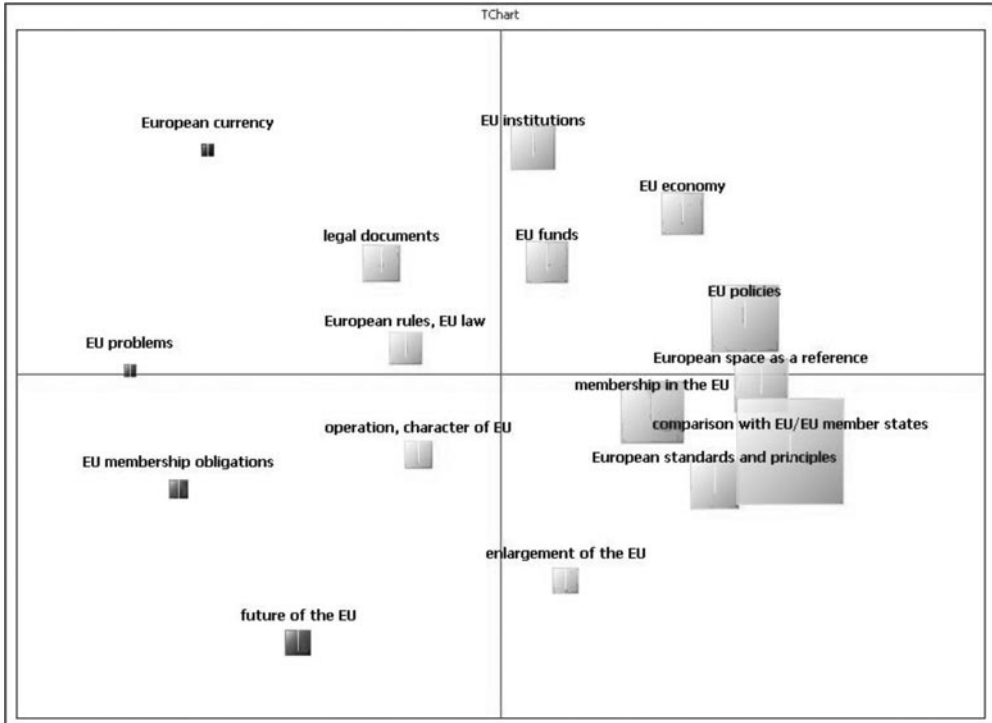
Figure 2: Bubble Plot of Category Occurrence by Year of Document Publication

Case Occurrence for YEAR													
	1990	1992	1994	1995	1996	2000	2002	2004	2007	2008	2009	2011	2014
comparison with EU/EU member states	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
enlargement of the EU		○	○	○		○		○		○		○	○
EU economy						○		○		○		○	○
EU funds			○			○		○		○		○	○
EU institutions		○	○			○		○		○	○	○	○
EU membership obligations								○		○		○	
EU policies		○	○	○	○	○		○		○	○	○	○
EU problems								○		○			
European currency								○		○			
European rules, EU law						○		○		○	○	○	○
European space as a reference	○	○	○	○	○	○		○	○	○	○	○	○
European standards and principles	○	○	○	○	○	○		○		○	○	○	○
future of the EU	○					○		○				○	
legal documents			○			○		○		○	○	○	○
membership in the EU	○	○	○	○	○	○		○		○	○	○	○
operation, character of EU			○			○		○		○	○	○	○

Source: Authors based on their own data.

have limited capacity to engage in extensive functional differentiation. To be precise, the three main parties of the late nineties/early millennium (Liberal Democracy of Slovenia, the Slovene People's Party and the Slovene Christian Democrats), as well as the main two parties in the most recent era (the Slovene Democratic Party and Social Democrats), who arguably had the most resources in terms of personnel and finances, do in fact exhibit the largest number of European topics in their manifestos and the highest frequencies of reference to these topics.

Examination of the third thesis, which argues that incorporating the EU perspective into all policy areas is indispensable to a party that aspires to govern, also reveals interesting, if expected, results. It is difficult to decouple the variables of size (particularly in terms of resources) and governmental status/aspirations. However, this thesis may be examined in the case of smaller parties that acted as a governmental partner despite their fringe status. Here, we may confirm this assumption, as these parties do have higher occurrence levels of EU topics and make more frequent reference to these topics. This is particularly evident in the case of the Democratic Party of Retired Persons of Slovenia and the Civic List (see Figure 1). Both, despite their size, reveal a relatively high European presence in their programme documents. This is clearly partially due to their governmental responsibilities, which entailed regular participation in the work of EU institutions (both had or still have governmental ministers

**Figure 3: Two-Dimensional Concept Map of EU Topics in Programme Documents**

Source: Authors based on their own data.

occupying important portfolios – e.g. the Ministry of the Interior, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs). By contrast, another fringe party, the Youth Party of Slovenia, displays an even higher European presence in its manifestos. But the explanation for this lies in its membership in the European Greens (including the ideological properties of this group) and in this party's special association agreement with the 2000–2002 Drnovšek government. Hence, it had strong European ties to a party family prone to intense international partnership as well as clear quasi-governmental aspirations.

The fourth assumption present in the literature – that parties from party families nurturing more integrationist positions are expected to pay more attention to EU issues – is also related to internationalist/supranationalist positions. As has been noted, this assumption proves relevant in the case of smaller parties, particularly nationalist (i.e. Europe-rejecting) and integrationist parties. Nevertheless, when examining this assumption, it becomes clear that larger parties that have or have had governmental aspirations discuss Europe regardless of party family. To be precise, conservative and Christian Democratic parties with governmental aspirations are those that most frequently refer to Europe across the most diverse set of topics (see Figure 1).

This feature of Christian Democratic and conservative parties may also be discussed with regard to the fifth assumption – that parties with older EU links focus more on these topics.

This may be confirmed straightforwardly as follows: parties with links to European party federations dating back to the 1990s also exhibit a higher European presence in their manifestos. Nevertheless, we need to reiterate that this variable interacts with governmental status: parties with stronger, longer-term EU links are also the largest parties, those that have most frequently formed Slovenian governments.

Regarding the sixth assumption that mainstream parties will try not to politicize EU issues, while fringe parties will potentially find greater discussion of EU issues beneficial, we see evidence in the affirmative. Discussion of problems related to EU membership obligations did appear to a greater degree in the manifestos of fringe parties, and this is particularly true when one takes into account the much reduced presence of EU topics overall in the manifestos of these smaller parties. The same is true with regard to problems relating to the future of the EU. In fact, it is clear that despite the European issue having only marginal salience (thus confirming the system-specific assumption), the politicization of Europe takes place mainly within the fringe parties on topics focused on the negative effects of EU membership (see Figure 3). Despite the restricted scope of these topics, particularly in terms of their occurrence in party manifestos and the frequency of reference to these topics, it is clear that European issues possess some nascent salience, particularly for fringe parties, primarily as a consequence of the post-accession period (see Figure 2).

## 6. Conclusion

As the EU became an additional environment for Slovenian parties at the beginning of the 1990s, questions regarding its effect on these parties have become increasingly relevant. In this article, we utilized Ladrech's analytical framework, which identifies five dimensions of possible impact of the Europeanization process on national parties, and focused on programme changes, since the clearest types of evidence for Europeanization are believed to lie within this dimension. In our analysis, we employed several factors that, in previous studies in various European countries, have served as relevant explanations for differing levels of Europeanization among parties in a single country.

After thoroughly examining the presence of Europe in the manifestos of Slovenian parliamentary political parties, several conclusions may be put forward. As expected, the process of the Europeanization of manifestos did emerge incrementally, visibly intensifying at the turn of the millennium and culminating in the accession years. This is even more evident when we look at the inclusion of a broad span of topics related to the EU, which were clearly integrated into the manifestos we examined from 2004. Europeanization is mainly a feature of established parties with governmental aspirations; however, parties politicizing the EU proved to be those on the fringe. Overall, that it was the interaction of variables that proved relevant when examining the salience of Europe. As indicated, size matters — the parties that discuss Europe most frequently are the main political parties. As these parties are usually the main governmental players, their governmental status plays an important role, since they are inherently more deeply, more broadly involved in EU-related processes. The variables in this set — party size, governmental status and EU party links — feed each other. The largest parties are the main governmental players and the parties with Members of the European Parliament

in their ranks (and that have EU party links). But party family is also relevant, since the fringe party linked to the European Greens, in particularly, included frequent discussion of Europe in its manifestos.

## Appendix

### Appendix 1: Presence of observed categories in manifestos across political parties

	LDS	SSS	SDZ	SKD	ZSMS	SLS	ZELENI	SDS (SDSS)	SNS	SD (ZL/ZLSD)	DeSUS	SMS	ZARES	DL	PS	SMC	Združena levica	ZaAB
comparison with EU/EU member states	5	1	1	7		6	1	7	2	7	3	3	1	2	1	1	1	1
enlargement of the EU	2			2		4		4		3				1				1
EU economy				2		4		3		2		1			1	1		
EU funds	2			3		3		3	1	3	2			1	1	1		1
EU institutions	3			6		2		3		1		1		1			1	
EU membership obligations	1							1	1	1		1		1				
EU policies	4			3		4	1	4		5		2	1		1	1		
EU problems	1							2		1								
European currency				2				1				1						
European rules, EU law	2			4				3	1	2		2				1		
European space as a reference	5	1		4	1	5	1	4		5		2	1	2	1	1		1
European standards and principles	4	1		8		4	1	6	1	4		2	1	1	1	1		1
future of the EU	2	1							1									
legal documents	3			4		1		2	1	2	2	1						
membership in the EU	4		1	4	1	6		5	2	4		2	1		1		1	
operation, character of EU	3			2		1		2		2		2						1

Source: Authors based on their own data.

## Appendix 2: Frequency of referring to observed categories in manifestos across time

	LDS	SSS	SDZ	SKD	ZSMS	SLS	ZELENI	SDS (SDSS)	SNS	SD (ZL/ZLSD)	DeSUS	SMS	ZARES	DL	PS	SMC	Združena levice	ZaAB	
comparison with EU/EU member states	99	1	1	57		30	2	97	7	63	9	30	1	12	2	4	8	5	428
EU policies	20			22		17	1	27		61		12	2		6	3			171
membership in the EU	44		4	12	1	9		33	4	22		15	1		1		2		148
European space as a reference	31	1		10	1	7	2	21		23		6	1	2	2	1		2	110
European standards and principles	11	1		23		4	1	23	1	16		6	1	1	1	1		3	93
EU institutions	13			17		4		15		6		3		1			12		71
EU economy	3			28		6		10		5		5			4	2			63
EU funds	11			7		8		15	2	7	2			4	2	3		2	63
legal documents	13			11		4		8	4	6	2	2							50
European rules, EU law	14			7				7	1	4		6				1			40
operation, character of EU	13			4		1		2		5		3						1	29
enlargement of the EU	5			2		4		7		7				1				1	27
future of the EU	22	1							1										24
EU membership obligations	1							1	7	1		1		1					12
EU problems	3							2		1									6
European currency				2				1				2							5

Source: Authors based on their own data.

**Appendix 3: Presence of observed categories in manifestos across political parties**

	1990	1992	1994	1995	1996	2000	2002	2004	2007	2008	2009	2011	2014
comparison with EU/EU member states	4	5	3	1	1	5	1	5	1	5	1	9	9
enlargement of the EU		2	1	1		1		4		2		3	3
EU economy						2		2		3		5	3
EU funds			1			1		4		3		6	6
EU institutions		1	1			1		3		4	1	3	4
EU membership obligations								3		1		2	
EU policies		1	1	1	1	3		5		5	1	5	3
EU problems								2		2			
European currency								2		2			
European rules, EU law						1		4		3	1	4	2
European space as a reference	2	2	2	1	1	3		4	1	5	1	6	6
European standards and principles	2	4	3	1	1	5		4		4	1	5	6
future of the EU	1					1		1				1	
legal documents			2			1		3		4	1	3	2
membership in the EU	2	3	3	1	1	2		5		5	1	7	2
operation, character of EU			1			1		3		1	1	3	3
	11	18	18	6	5	27	1	54	2	49	9	62	49

Source: Authors based on their own data.

**Appendix 4: Frequency of referring to observed categories in manifestos across time**

	1990	1992	1994	1995	1996	2000	2002	2004	2007	2008	2009	2011	2014
comparison with EU/EU member states	4	7	9	2	7	58	3	143	1	68	14	53	59
enlargement of the EU		2	1	1		4		7		6		3	3
EU economy						4		6		15		9	29
EU funds			1			3		23		10		12	14
EU institutions		1	1			4		19		17	3	10	16
EU membership obligations								3		1		8	
EU policies		1	1	1	1	7		55		57	7	27	14
EU problems								4		2			
European currency								3		2			
European rules, EU law						9		10		7	5	6	3
European space as a reference	2	3	7	4	4	11		31	1	26	3	11	7
European standards and principles	2	4	4	3	3	11		26		19	4	8	9
future of the EU	1					21		1				1	
legal documents			2			1		18		19	2	6	2
membership in the EU	5	3	5	5	6	27		52		25	3	14	3
operation, character of EU			1			2		12		4	2	5	3
	14	21	32	16	21	162	3	413	2	278	43	173	162

Source: Authors based on their own data.

## Notes:

1. As Binnema (2003: 3) notes, the EU was in the first phase researches mainly treated as an dependent variable.
2. Much more attention was paid, for example, to the Europeanization of policies, administration and some other actors.
3. As Panebianco (1988: 11) noted, a political party tends to adapt itself to its environment, though it can also tend to dominate its environment, i.e. to adapt and transform it in accordance with its own needs. However, it seems Europe (as the party's environment) is less suitable for the party's potential dominance over it for several reasons (Binnema 2009).
4. Slovenia altogether has only eight MEPs (prior to implementation of the Lisbon Treaty, this number was seven).
5. We employed the WordStat v5.1 text-analysis software package on a platform using QDA Miner v3.2.3 methodological software.

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