

BONES
PRÀCTIQUES
LA CATALUNYA
INSTITUCIONAL I
ADMINISTRATIVA

08/14

A PRESIDENT FOR EUROPE?

The elections of 2014 in response
to European democratic crisis
EUROPEAN GOOD PRACTICES

ALBERT AIXALÀ I BLANCH



VERSIÓN EN **CASTELLANO** EN EL INTERIOR **ENGLISH** VERSION INSIDE



Albert Aixalà i Blanch

Degree in Political Science and Master in European Integration. He has been an analyst at the CIDOB Foundation, director at the Rafael Campalans Foundation (2005-2013), associate professor of political science at Universitat Autònoma of Barcelona and academic collaborator at ESADE. He is currently program's director at the Catalunya Europa Foundation and associate professor of political science at Universitat Pompeu Fabra. He has published several articles and studies on international and European policy, including "Euro scepticism and economic crisis (2007-2014)" and "The Transformation of the Presidency of the European Council as a result of the Lisbon Treaty".

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FUNDACIÓ CATALUNYA EUROPA

Mallorca 272, 9è 1a,
08037 Barcelona
info@catalunyaeuropa.net
www.catalunyaeuropa.net

AUTHOR:

Albert Aixalà Blanch

COVER IMAGE:

Jon Worth

(<https://flic.kr/p/kWZGh8>)

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0. INTRODUCTION

The European Parliamentary elections are the world's second largest, behind only those to the parliament of India. Around 400 million Europeans are called to the ballot boxes, nearly twice as many as those who elect the President and Congress of the United States of America.

Despite a low level of participation (about 43%) in 2014, more than 160 million Europeans exercised their right to vote. This exceeds the number of US citizens who voted in the US presidential elections of 2008 and 2012—between 125 and 135 million. At both those elections, the winning candidate, Barack Obama, received between 65 and 70 million votes. In May 2014, Jean-Claude Juncker was supported by more than 41 million voters in a strongly multi-party context, despite the fact that in one of the four largest countries in the Union—the United Kingdom—no party championed his candidacy. 41 million votes is more than double the number received by Chancellor Angela Merkel in the September 2013 German elections. That is to say, the new president of the European Commission has been invested with

twice the popular support given to the German chancellor.

So can we now speak of a genuine European electoral campaign? Did the parties and the candidates act with a European perspective? Did the national media cover the elections with a European perspective? And were the citizens aware of what was at stake? In short, has it really been different this time, as the European Parliament's institutional campaign promised?¹

At stake in the May 2014 European elections was the extent to which it is possible to democratise and politicise the European Union and its institutions, and the extent to which the European political parties choosing common candidates for the presidency of the Commission strengthened the legitimacy of those candidates and created a new political dynamic that was more ideological and less national at the heart of the European institutions. One of the candidates, European Parliament President, Martin Schulz, published a book a few months before the elections in which he presented them as the "last opportunity" to change the institutional system of the EU in order to give democratic legitimacy to its decision-making process². In this study, our aim is to investigate the extent to which the opportunity these elections provided was taken.

Faced with a political context that is key for the European integration process, this study aims to analyse, first of all, the processes employed by the European political parties to select the candidates for the leadership of the European Commission. We intend to analyse the institutional instruments that have made it viable and the political will that has made it possible, taking as our starting point a theoretical framework defined by various authors who have raised the question of how to give greater democratic legitimacy to the European Union and clearer political leadership.

1 *The 2014 European Elections: This time it's different.* <http://www.europarl.europa.eu/news/en/news-room/content/20140210BKG35568/html/THE-2014-EUROPEAN-ELECTIONS-THIS-TIME-IT%E2%80%99S-DIFFERENT>

2 Schulz, Martin (2013): *The Chained Giant: Europe's Last Chance*, Rowohlt, Berlin.

To that end, the objects of our study will be the five main European parties: the European People's Party (EPP), the Party of European Socialists (PES), the Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe (ALDE), the European Green Party (EGP), and the Party of the European Left (EL). In particular, we will consider the extent to which the parties' processes of selecting common candidates for the presidency of the European Commission reinforced them as authentic political parties at a European level as well as in their relationships with the national parties.

In the second part of the study, we will analyse the European electoral campaign and its media coverage. Precisely, we will study the electoral campaigns of the five common candidates and their coverage in national media in order to judge the extent to which a process of "politicisation" of the elections at a European level has been generated, as well as the "Europeanisation" of the elections at a national level.

In the first chapter, we will begin with the European legislation that covers the creation and functioning of the European parties, and the European Commission Recommendation of March 2013 developing Article 17.7 of the Treaty of Lisbon on the election of the president of the Commission by the European Parliament, in order to establish the European political party regulatory framework in which these elections took place. We will also conduct a review of the academic literature published in recent years on the workings of the European parties and their potential for "political competition" in the European arena as agents of the "politicisation" of the European Union, beginning with an academic analysis of the "democratisation" of the European political system and, specifically, the election of the president of the European Commission directly or via European Parliament elections.

In the second chapter, we analyse the internal selection processes used by the main European parties to select the candidates to lead the European Commission by comparing the

methods employed by each party and the role of the national parties and the European political parties—along with those of their parliamentary groups—in the election of these candidates and in the development of the common electoral platform.

In the third chapter, we analyse the European campaign fought by the main parties' candidates, starting from the number of public events and press conferences given by each one in each EU country, the debates between the candidates, and the interviews granted to the main organs of the written press, in order to evaluate whether we can really speak of a campaign at a European level. Accordingly, in the fourth chapter we will evaluate the real impact of the campaign on the European electoral process by looking at the degree of participation at European and national levels, the results by political group, and the capacity of these groups to elect the winner of the elections as new president of the European Commission and, thereby, determine the scope of the European Council's decision-marking.

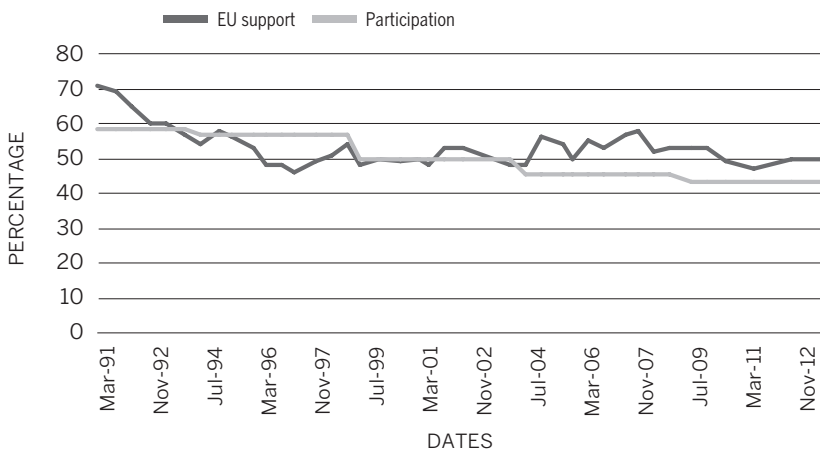
Finally, we will offer some conclusions about the role of the European political parties in the politicisation and personalisation of the 2014 European elections, the degree of Europeanisation of the campaigns at a national level, and the impact of the electoral process in defining a new institutional balance in the European Union.

1. THE EUROPEAN POLITICAL PARTIES AND THE PROCESS OF DEMOCRATISATION OF THE EU INSTITUTIONS

1.1. EUROPEAN UNION DEMOCRATIC POLICY AS A RESPONSE TO THE “DEMOCRATIC DEFICIT”

Since the discussion surrounding the ratification of the Maastricht Treaty in the early nineties, there has been a recurring debate about the “democratic deficit” in the European Union. This has been accompanied by

GRAPH 1. SUPPORT FOR THE EU AND ELECTORAL PARTICIPATION



SOURCE: PRODUCED BY THE AUTHOR USING DATA FROM THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT AND THE EUROBAROMETER.

high levels of abstention in European elections and growing Euroscepticism among European citizens.

This debate centres around three perspectives. The first school of thought believes the EU has a problem of “input legitimacy”. As a consequence, the EU is not democratic because its decision-making processes are closed to citizen participation by means of organs of representative democracy such as those that exist at national level. In this case, the “democratic deficit” would be solved by granting more powers to the European Parliament and “politicising” its elections by setting them within the framework of a debate between the European political parties, which would create a government-opposition dynamic similar to those at national level (Hix, 2008; Mair, 2006).

A second school of thought, developed at the end of the nineties, considers that the EU has a problem of “output legitimacy”. That means that the EU would be more legitimate if it ensured a system of effective government and provided public goods to Europeans. According to this argument, if we want to make the EU legitimate, EU institutions need to resolve the economic problems of Europeans (Scharpf, 1999; Moravcsik, 2002).

Finally, a third school—that of the communitarians—takes a very different approach to the other two and defends the idea that the EU’s legitimacy problem arises from the lack of a European *demos*. Without the prior existence of this *demos* there can be no democracy, no democratisation and no majority rule in the European arena (Lord and Wallace, 2004).

In this study, we will focus on providing a response to the problem of “democratic legitimacy”, as we consider that a European *demos* under construction *does* exist, and that the questioning of the “legitimacy by results” that characterised the European edifice throughout its first decades does not obstruct advances in the “legitimacy of choice”, as, even if the current European institutions offered better results to Europeans, it would be necessary to legitimise them democratically. We will

begin, then, with the premise that European citizens are the holders of a dual identity and see themselves as members of a European people, with “shared sovereignty—shared between Europeans in their role as EU citizens and their role as members of one of the participating nation states”³. That is to say that we accept the idea of a European *demos* that is compatible with national identities and based on the concept of European citizenship and on the theory of deliberative democracy developed by Habermas (2001).

In line with this position, Simon Hix (2012) notes that one of the main causes of the “democratic deficit” in the European Union is that until now there has been no true “democratic politics” at a European level because the citizens have been unable to elect those who govern them and the policies they put in place. According to this concept, democracy only exists where there is a real possibility of choosing between “politicians” and “policies” in competition, and where there is a reasonable possibility of alternation in the government (Hix, 2012:131). Therefore, given the end of the “permissive consensus”⁴ of the citizens in relation to the European Union, and facing growing Euroscepticism and distrust of EU institutions, Hix puts forward the necessity of “politicising” the process of European integration.

In his opinion—which we share—democratic politics at a European level would require (Hix, 2012:132): a) genuine competition between parties and political leaders to control the European political agenda and fill the main political positions in the EU (such as president of the Commission); b) voters’ decisions to be reflected in European Parliament elections based on rival political programmes and candidates competing for political positions; and,

3 Interview given by Francis Fukuyama to Jürgen Habermas in *The Global Journal*, 18th May 2012 <http://theglobaljournal.net/group/francis-fukuyama/article/695/>

4 The “permissive consensus” is a concept created by David Easton (1975) to define the diffuse—and poorly informed—support of European citizens for the process of European integration led by national elites.

c) the results of the winners of the elections to be translated into legislative and executive measures by cohesive political parties.

In the absence of these conditions, the European Union has today become a system of «policies without politics» according to the political scientist Vivien Schmidt (Schmidt, 2013), in the sense that it is a system that produces a great number of outputs, of «policies» without prior political debate, that is, without «politics» in the sense that it is understood at a national level. Significant public policy decisions, above all at an economic level, are taken without prior political deliberation that goes beyond national interest. By contrast, at a national level, the reverse phenomenon is produced: a system of «politics without policies». Which is to say, a political system that has lots of discussions but which lacks the tools to convert that political debate into effective public policy, in so far as it finds itself limited by the European superstructure. This double dynamic creates a double democratic crisis, at both national and European levels, which can only be resolved by a new democratic politics in the European Union.

It is in this sense that Hix (2008) asserts that without political debate at a European level we cannot know what the majority preferences of Europeans are, and, therefore, we cannot know whether the current policies of the European Union align with these preferences or not. The only way to solve the equation is through competitive democratic elections that: a) guarantee that the policies and elected officials correspond to citizens' preferences, incentivising elites to develop rival political ideas and propose alternative candidates; b) encourage the formation of coalitions within the institutions to allow governance to centre around a programme, thereby overcoming the dynamics of institutional deadlock; c) offer incentives to media outlets for covering European politics, with identifiable personalities who win and lose; d) generate a mandate to bring about a change of politics through the public recognition of the winners and the «losers' consent»; and e) encourage a gradual evolution of European political identities.

It is a process that involves the «politicisation» of the European Union—«Europarties could better concentrate on the articulation of interests and, therefore, better perform their representative function» (Katz and Mair, 1993). Since the approval of the Maastricht Treaty, the European political parties have had the mandate to «contribute to forming a European awareness and to expressing the political will of the citizens of the Union»⁵ but until now they have had very limited instruments with which to do so.

Through the groups of the European Parliament, the European political parties have contributed to ensuring that the preferences of their voters prevail in the exercise of their power as European co-legislators, as well as introducing the most relevant issues of their electoral platforms to the European agenda. But until now they have had no capacity to influence the selection of candidates for the European Parliament, which remained in the hands of the national parties. For this reason we can say that, though the influence of the European parties had increased throughout the legislatures via parliamentary groups whose cohesion is growing and whose leaders are ever stronger (Hix and Noury, 2009), they had not managed to exert influence on the electoral campaigns and the selection of candidates.

The objective of this study is to evaluate the extent to which the European political parties have had a more relevant role to play in these areas in the 2014 European elections. In order to do this, we will follow Hix's (2008) five criteria that competitive elections at a European level should fulfil and analyse how the political parties responded to them.

⁵ Article 138b of the Treaty on European Union, approved in 1991.

1.2. THE TREATY OF LISBON AND THE ELECTION OF THE PRESIDENT OF THE EUROPEAN COMMISSION

The entry into force of the Treaty of Lisbon on the 1st of September 2009 began a new phase in European integration. One of the main institutional changes—the permanent presidency of the European Council—came into effect immediately, with the election of Herman Van Rompuy. The 2014 European elections gave the opportunity to set in motion the second large institutional change: the parliamentary election of the president of the European Commission.

Article 17.7 of the Treaty (Council of the European Union, 2007: 33) establishes that: «taking into account the elections to the European Parliament and after having held the appropriate consultations, the European Council, acting by a qualified majority, shall propose to the European Parliament a candidate for President of the Commission. This candidate shall be elected by the European Parliament by a majority of its component members».

That is to say, the new Treaty makes the European Council «head of state» in the EU political system, with the capacity to propose a candidate for «prime minister» to the Parliament, taking into account the results of the elections. Just as if it were the president of the Federal Republic of Germany or the Italian Republic, who has the obligation to consult the parliamentary groups before proposing a candidate for Chancellor or President of the Council of Ministers, respectively. The candidate for president of the Commission would have to receive the support of an absolute majority of the chamber: 376 MEPs of the 751 who make up the Parliament from July 2014. If the proposed candidate does not obtain the majority, «the European Council, acting by a qualified majority, shall within one month propose a new candidate who shall be elected following the same procedure».

In addition to the letter of the Treaty of Lisbon, the intergovernmental conference that drew it up considered it pertinent to add an annexed declaration, number 11, relating to the election of the President of the Commission, in order to make it clear that «the European Parliament and the European Council are jointly responsible for the smooth running of the process leading to the election of the President of the European Commission. Prior to the decision of the European Council, representatives of the European Parliament and of the European Council will thus conduct the necessary consultations in the framework deemed the most appropriate. These consultations will focus on the backgrounds of the candidates for President of the Commission, taking account of the elections to the European Parliament» (Council of the European Union, 2007: 254).

The European Parliament, therefore, not only has the last word, but it must also be consulted on the candidate that the Council proposes to Parliament. Not only is it impossible to elect a President of the European Commission who does not have the support of the majority of the Parliament, the Council may not propose a candidate without having previously consulted the representatives of the European Parliament, that is to say, with the representatives of the political groups in the European Parliament. Therefore, we find ourselves facing a major change in the institutional structure of the EU, which could reinforce the democratic legitimacy and political independence of the President of the Commission and transform the relationship between the Council, the Commission and the Parliament.

This was the institutional framework of the 2014 elections to the European Parliament. But in order to «politicise» the election of the President of the Commission, it was necessary for the European political parties to present candidates for the Commission presidency prior to the elections. To this end, the European Commission published a recommendation on the 12th of March 2013, «enhancing the democratic and efficient

conduct of the elections to the European Parliament» (European Commission, 2013). In this recommendation, the Commission states that «European and national political parties should make known, ahead of the elections to the European Parliament, the candidate for the function of the President of the European Commission they support and the candidate's programme», while they «should ensure that their political broadcasts in view of the European Parliament elections are also used to inform citizens about the candidate». This commitment to the politicisation of the Commission has been criticised by some authors, who say that the President of the Commission must «act as referee in the political game, not as captain of one of the teams» (Grabbe and Lehne, 2013: 2) and warn of the danger that a President of the Commission elected by the political groups of the European Parliament could generate institutional battles between the Parliament, the Commission and the Council.

In any case, the European political parties could decide whether to follow this recommendation or not, just as the national parties were able to decide whether or not to make the identity of their candidate for the presidency of the Commission known. But the debate on the need to present a common candidate had already taken shape in some European political parties and in their parliamentary groups since 2009, and in 2013 the time arrived to decide whether they would put forward common candidates or not, and, in the case if they did, how they would choose them. This is the subject of our analysis in the second chapter. First, however, we'll briefly go over the characteristics of the European political parties.

1.3. THE EUROPEAN POLITICAL PARTIES

The European political parties have worked independently since 2003, when “The regulations governing political parties and rules regarding their funding at European level” were approved (European Parliament and Council, 2003). Though they had existed since the entry into force of the Maastricht Treaty, until 2003 their operation depended exclusively on the respective political groups of the European Parliament.

According to this regulation, in order for the European political parties to be recognised, they must fulfil four conditions: a) have legal personality in the member state where their seat is based; b) have representation in at least a quarter of member states through members of the European Parliament or national or regional parliaments, or have obtained at least 3% of the votes in a quarter of the member states; c) respect the principles on which the EU was founded (liberty, democracy, respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms and of the rule of law); and d) have participated in the European Parliament elections or have the intention to do so.

The parties that satisfy all these requirements may receive funding from the European Union via the European Parliament, which will have the responsibility to annually check, in the moment of awarding the grant, that each one fulfils the requirements to be legally considered a political party at European level.

Subsequently, in 2007, new regulations were approved (Regulation (EC) no. 1524/2007) on the operation of the “Europarties”, allowing them to develop electoral campaign activities with two limitations: that they do not finance national political parties and that they do not finance pre-referendum campaigns in any European Union country. Therefore, even with limitations, the new regulation made the European political parties co-responsible for the development of European

democracy, allowing them to communicate directly with their potential voters.

Currently, the Parliament recognises 13 parties or party alliances at a European level. They are, from greatest to least representation in the Parliament prior to the 2014 elections: the European People's Party (EPP), the Party of European Socialists (PES), the Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe (ALDE), the Alliance of European Conservatives and Reformists, the European Green Party (EGP), the Party for the European Left (EL), the Movement for a Europe of Liberties and Democracy, the European Democratic Party, the Europe Free Alliance, the European Alliance for Freedom, the Alliance of European National Movements, the European Christian Political Movement, and Europeans United for Democracy (European Parliament, 2014).

Half of these parties or party alliances represent Eurosceptic political forces with representation in Parliament that have created these alliances in order to receive financing, but which do not operate with the will to present a common political platform or a common candidate for the presidency of the European Commission. Neither the European Democratic Party nor the Europe Free Alliance put forward "common candidates", despite writing clearly pro-European programmes. Instead they gave support to the candidates proposed by the parties with whom they share parliamentary groups: ALDE and the European Green Party, respectively. In this study, therefore, we will only analyse the five political parties with the will to defend a common political project who put forward a candidate for the presidency of the Commission: the EPP, the PES, the ALDE, the EGP and the EL.

In 2009, some of these parties, such as the EPP, expressed their preferences about their candidate to lead the European Commission (José Manuel Durao Barroso, in this case) while others, such as the PES, were unable to agree, despite a part of the organisation pressuring for the election of a candidate. But by June 2009 the Treaty of Lisbon had still not entered into force

TABLE 1. POLITICAL PARTIES RECOGNISED BY THE PARLIAMENT

POLITICAL PARTY	PARLIAMENTARY GROUP
Alliance of European Conservatives and Reformists	ECR
Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe Party (ALDE)	ALDE
European Alliance for Freedom	Non-attached
European Alliance of National Movements	Non-attached
EU Democrats	Non-attached
European Christian Political Movement	ECR
European Democratic Party	ALDE
European Free Alliance	Greens
European Green Party (EGP)	Greens
European's People Party (EPP)	EPP
Movement for a Europe of Liberties and Democracy	EFDD
Party of European Socialists (PES)	S & D
Party of the European Left (EL)	GUE-NGL

SOURCE: PRODUCED BY THE AUTHOR USING EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT DATA.

and no party openly began a European election campaign, even though the PES and the Greens did put together participative processes with the support bases of their respective national parties in order to draw up their manifestos and create a network of pan-European activists (Skrzypek, 2010).

We can, therefore, say that the European political parties had not had an opportunity, before 2014, to «run a campaign». Their low visibility at a national level did not allow them to develop political activity of their own and it is in this sense that the entering into force of the Treaty of Lisbon and the new formulation of the election process for the President of the Commission has allowed the European parties to begin to exercise a new role. To what extent the possibility of electing a common candidate to the presidency of the Commission has strengthened the European political parties in relation to the national political parties will be the subject of analysis in the second chapter of this study.

1.4. THE ACADEMIC DEBATE ON THE FUNCTION OF THE EUROPEAN POLITICAL PARTIES IN THE POLITICISATION AND DEMOCRATISATION OF THE EUROPEAN UNION.

All debates on the “Europarties” begin and end with the same question: “are those organisations true political parties?” (Skrzypek, 2013). The answer is not simple. Academic literature exists on both sides, defending and attacking their status as political parties on different criteria. Naturally, one of the main functions of political parties is to channel citizens’ demands through competitive elections and to represent them in Parliament, and one of the main characteristics of competitive elections is their capacity to change the government. It is in this manner that the possibility of European citizens electing the President of the European Commission through political parties becomes relevant.

Before analysing this process, however, we will address the singular characteristics of the system of European political parties and their importance to the progress of the European integration process. In the opinion of Bardi, “The future of political parties at European level is at the core of the question of the European Union’s survival as a viable system of government” (2013: 2). But, until very recently, analysis of the democratic control of the European institutions placed greater emphasis on parliamentary control—European and National—of the executive organs of the EU than on analysing how citizens can control and intervene in the decisions of these institutions. To do this we have to take as a starting point what citizens consider to be «normal» democracy, and the «normal» democracies of the European states are based on a party system, on the «party government» (Bardi, Katz i Mair, 2011), despite the increasing difficulties parties have in representing citizens in the national political systems.

In this sense, until now the EU political system did not conform to the characteristics of a «normal democracy» based on level of

representation and the government of political parties elected by citizens according to their preferences. In fact, the political decisions of the European Union have had the objective of «producing effective solutions, and not necessarily of responding to citizen's wishes and inclinations» (Bardi, 2013: 5).

The European political parties benefit from a central office in Brussels, but they do not have structures on the ground, because while their foundations are in the national political parties, they do not have a hierarchical relationship with them. Neither can they act as «parties in government» because the executive institutions and the executive positions of the European Union are not based on belonging to a party. As a consequence, there has not been a party system at a European level that competes in the three key arenas: electoral, parliamentary and governmental (Bardi et al. 2010). The European political parties only compete in the parliamentary arena, through their respective political groups, but until now they have not competed in the electoral arena, and much less the governmental. This has prevented them from executing one of their principal functions: linking institutions with society to structure the relationship between the governors and the governed.

Webb, Farrell and Holliday (2002) defined three main roles held by political parties in the advanced democracies: structuring the vote through mass communication; articulating and aggregating citizens' interests; and encouraging citizen participation. The European political parties do not fulfil any of these roles. The structuring of the vote and communication is in the hands of the national political parties and the independent members of the European Parliament. The articulation and aggregation of interests at a European level is made by the European Commission through interest groups. And there is no direct participation of the citizens in these parties because a European civil society as such does not exist (Bardi and Calossi, 2009).

Nevertheless, in recent years various reports have been published on how to create a system of European parties with diverse proposals that include pan-European electoral lists, the most relevant of which were made by the British MEP Andrew Duff (2010 and 2013). But of them all, the only viable proposal that does not require reform either of the treaties or electoral laws of member states is the choice of common candidates for the presidency of the European Commission. That is why, later on, we will analyse the potential capacity of the new electoral process to aid the European political parties to fulfil the roles exercised by the national political parties set out above: structuring the vote, articulating demands and interests, and citizen participation.

The potential of «political competition» among the European parties must be based, therefore, on the capacity of the new leaderships to unite wills, articulate demands and effectively represent the electorate. In this sense, Poguntke (2013: 22) asserts that the parliamentary election of the President of the Commission would allow European voters not only to identify their candidate and the political programme they are defending, but «would create a strong incentive to form pre-electoral alliances, maybe even with a common platform, in order to reach the necessary majority of seats in the EP», and, in any case, it would allow clarification of the positions and political mandates of the different parties and candidates who will have to negotiate the investiture of the new President and the political programme of the new Commission.

The political battle for the presidency of the Commission is a battle to control the political agenda. Historically, the European agenda has been set by a Commission President who enjoyed the favour of the large EU states. In the past five years, the emergence of a permanent President of the European Council has meant that control of the agenda has again fallen to this institution, made up of the EU heads of state and government (Aixalà, 2013). Now, the parliamentary election of the President of the Commission, following competitive European elections in which political debate

between the three different candidates has been generated, may, for the first time, give control of the agenda to a democratically elected politician with a clear mandate conferred by the ballot box.

Thus, and, to paraphrase Simon Hix once again, the means of choosing the Commission President, and the unexpected side effects of the competition for this role on the workings of the EU will probably determine the viability of a more directly democratic system for Europe (Hix, 2012: 160). We shall move on to the importance of this political and institutional innovation in the next chapter.

1.5. THE PROCESSES USED BY THE EUROPEAN POLITICAL PARTIES TO ELECT THE CANDIDATES FOR THE PRESIDENCY OF THE EUROPEAN COMMISSION

In the debates around the European Convention of 2001-2003, the possibility of electing the President of the Commission by means of direct suffrage on the part of European voters was raised. But the possibility was rejected in the unborn Constitutional Treaty, as in the later Treaty of Lisbon. The decision was made, therefore, for a “parliamentary strategy” in the election of the President (Poguntke, 2013). This system is much closer to the political tradition of most European countries, that is highly parliamentary, and it is based on a system of proportional representation (Lijphart, 2007).

Nevertheless, the democratisation of the European Union by the personalisation of the elections could have an “unintended consequence”—the “presidentialisation” of the parliamentary system of the European Union, to follow the process of “presidentialisation” that national parliamentary systems have undergone. The strategy of “*mettre des visages aux clivages*” (Bertoncini, 2013: 4)⁶ may turn out to be a winner, if, as the

6 That is to say, of “personalising” the ideological debate.

authors cited above claim, its aim is to attract the attention of the electorate and the media.

Ania Skrzypek gives two political reasons and one strategic for defending the election of a “top candidate”—*Spitzenkandidaten*, as they say in German—at the European elections. “The two political ones are: creating circumstances for progress in a process of strengthening democracy on the EU level and being a core element in the reinforcement of the political party system at the EU level. The strategic one is to give the political agenda a face, who can polarise [the] electorate (...) expose the differences among the parties, help voters understand them and provoke emotions, which are necessary for people to go, vote and support.” (Skrzypek, 2010: 8).

A common candidate, moreover, would oblige the national political parties to conduct a campaign for them, to explain their programme, defend their positions with arguments that are comprehensible to their public and explain the existence and usefulness of the European political parties. However, two conditions must be fulfilled in order to consider the process a success: cohesion and competition (Thomassen, 2002). That is to say, internal discipline within the European political parties and competition among parties -especially between the two largest, the EPP and the PES-. Without internal cohesion, or if one of the large parties fails to choose a candidate, it would detract from the process.

But before producing a campaign among candidates for the presidency of the European Commission, the political parties had to choose them. The way to do this was not clear, not by a long stretch. They had never done it before and the European party congresses held since 2009 had to think through the procedures they would use. So, what were the options? Skrzypek (2010) developed the possible alternatives especially for the Party of European Socialists (PES), but her models are applicable to the rest of the political parties.

In the first place, it is necessary to evaluate the process of nomination, not only that of selection. Who has the capacity to “nominate” who can be a candidate? A first option could be that only the bureau of the European political party has the capacity to nominate candidates (Option A). The bureau is the parties’ main political and executive organ and, traditionally, has played a key role in the elaboration of the manifestos and common political platforms of the parties approved by the respective councils and congresses. In this case, it is highly probable that only a limited number of candidates would be in a position to be nominated.

The second option would be for only the national party leaders to be able to act as nominating body (Option B). The European political parties hold regular meetings of their national leaders, normally these take place before the European Council meetings. These informal meetings serve to firm up political positions on relevant issues or even to propose candidates for EU institutional posts that are later negotiated with the other political families at the heart of the institutions, especially in the case of the two main parties. Therefore, the nomination of candidates -or even the nomination of the party candidate for the presidency of the Commission- could be decided in this informal framework.

A third option would be for the nomination process to fall to the party members (Option C). In this case, the risk would be run of every national party wanting to put forward their own candidate. To avoid this, a minimum level of support from national parties would have to be necessary to become a «candidate to be candidate», that is to say, in order to be nominated and able to run in the electoral process. This process would allow the national organisations space for participation -not just for their leaders- and it would promote the creation of alliances between different national political parties to give support to certain candidates who would automatically transcend their national character and become transnational European candidates.

Finally, the fourth option (D) proposed by Skrzypek -the nomination of candidates by PES activists- is not applicable to all the European political parties as only the PES and the European Green Party have created the figure of «individual members» of the party linked directly to the European party and not to the members of the national political parties. This would make it a necessary condition to be a European party member without creating an automatic link between national and European activism. In the case of the PES, more than 20,000 socialist activists from around Europe are also PES activists, while the Greens have more than 1,500 members of the «Individual Supporter's Network» of the European party (Hertner, 2013).

The second phase of the selection process -once the eligible candidates have been nominated-is the election, which may be competitive or not, depending on the number of eligible candidates and the electoral body. Here, Skrzypek also sets out various possible options.

In the first option (1) the party bureau chooses the candidate from among those put forward by either the member parties or the members of the bureau itself. It would then submit its choice to the approval of the party's council or congress. In this case, the electoral body would be greatly reduced and there would be no real competition between the candidates.

A second option (2) would give the decision to the leaders of the national parties, who would choose the top candidate either from a shortlist put together by the bureau of the European party or from the candidates proposed by the member parties. Here there would be no real competition either, instead there would be negotiation between the leaders to favour one candidate or another.

The third option (3) would make the party council or congress the electoral body. This would allow the members of the council or the delegates of the congress to choose the candidate from among the names put forward for the presidency by the European party or the national parties. This would be a

competitive process in which the nominated candidates would have to win the favour of the congress delegates, enlarging the electoral body to 400 or 800 people.

Finally, the fourth option (4) would involve a process of primaries between the candidates nominated by the bureau or the national political parties. The decision would be left in the hands of the individual party members (only applicable to the PES and the Greens), of all the members of all the national parties, or, in the case of open primaries, of all the voters who want to participate in the process. This, evidently, would be the most open, participative process, with a wider electoral base and a more uncertain competitive dynamic.

The European political parties had to choose between these nomination and election options when selecting their candidate for the presidency of the Commission. As we shall soon see, each party approved a different set of rules (whether ad hoc or established in their respective statutes), which were open and participative in varying degrees.

With the analysis of the formulas used by the five large parties for the nomination and selection of candidates, we will attempt to respond to the two hypotheses put forward in this study, which are: whether the election of the candidates for the presidency of the Commission has strengthened the European political parties, making them relevant political actors and intermediary agents between the citizens and EU institutions; and whether this «personalisation» of European politics has strengthened the «politicisation» of the elections at a European level and the «Europeanisation» of the elections at a national level.

2. ELECTION PROCESSES FOR THE COMMON CANDIDATES FOR THE PRESIDENCY OF THE COMMISSION

2.1. THE ELECTION PROCESS OF THE PARTY OF THE EUROPEAN LEFT

The Party of the European Left, made up of 26 member parties and 7 observer parties which leads the European United Left group, did not foresee itself proposing a candidate for the presidency of the European Commission. At its third congress, held in Paris in December 2010, they did not prepare for this possibility⁷, and their statutes did not envisage it. The convention of the 4th Congress, approved in January 2013 and focussed on “the preparation of the elections to the European Parliament and the decision to present a common Electoral Platform”, also made no reference to it⁸.

Nevertheless, on the 18th of October 2013, the Council of Chairpersons of the member parties (the body of political impetus that links the leadership of the national parties with that of the European party), meeting in Madrid, took the decision to nominate Alexis Tsipras as common candidate for the European

7 Motions of the 3rd EL Congress: <http://www.european-left.org/positions/congress-motions/documents-3rd-el-congress>

8 Convention of the 4th Congress of the Party of the European Left. Approved by the Executive Board at a meeting on the 11th and 12th of January 2013. <http://www.european-left.org/positions/news/convention-4th-congress-party-european-left>

Left and to submit the decision to the approval of the congress to be held on the 13th and 14th of December. That is to say, the Council of Chairpersons granted itself the power to decide whether to present a common candidate and propose a name to the congress.

This power, though not established in the statutes, is consistent with the Council of Chairpersons' functions, which include the "rights of initiative and of having objection on important political issues" as well as that of "adopting resolutions and recommendations" that are passed to the Executive Board and the Congress" (art. 15 of the statutes)⁹. Using these prerogatives, the Council of Chairpersons proposed that the congress approve a resolution to agree upon the presentation of a "common candidate" in the European elections and, if approved, the candidate to be proposed would then also be submitted to a vote. Between the decision to present a candidate and the congress, no period for the presentation of alternative candidates was opened. Rather, the mandate was given to the party president, Pierre Laurent, to open a process of consultation between the member parties and the political forces that make up the United European Left/Nordic Green Left group to assess whether a majority of party members were in agreement with this new strategy and Tsipras' candidacy.

The Council of Chairpersons took the decision to present a new "common candidate", asserting that, "The EL does not believe this new measure is likely to democratize the EU". Despite this, they considered that there was no reason "to leave the monopoly of speaking to forces responsible for the crisis" during the electoral campaign, who must not be allowed to "hide, as European leaders and the troika hope, their authoritarianism". They proposed that "peoples, workers, all those who struggle against austerity and for a refoundation of Europe must have a megaphone". With this

⁹ Statute of the Party of the European Left. <http://www.european-left.org/propos-de-la-ge/documents>

objective, they decided to put to the congress the decision on the candidature of Alexis Tsipras, as a “symbol of hope for Europe”¹⁰.

The Party of the European Left held its 4th Congress in Madrid under the name “*Change Europe. For a Europe of Work*” from the 13th to the 15th of December 2013. 350 delegates attended, representing 26 member parties and 7 observer parties in order to approve a new political document and the strategy of the party to face the European elections in May 2014, with a common electoral platform, under the name, “Escaping austerity, rebuilding Europe”¹¹.

The president put a motion for the submission of a “common candidate” for the presidency of the Commission to a vote, which received majority support (79,6% of the delegates), although 20% made clear that they did not agree with the strategy of presenting a candidate. The following day, 84% of the delegates gave support to Alexis Tsipras’ candidature, showing that a large majority of the party felt represented by the leader of the Greek left. That support was greater than that received by the re-elected president of the party, who received 76%¹².

In his closing speech, Pierre Laurent emphasised that Tsipras’ candidacy would, “give a powerful voice to the EL”, making it “an essential player on the political fight”¹³. Tsipras, for his part, reaffirmed that his candidacy was not only symbolic for the Greek people, nor did he want to represent only the peoples of the south, but “all the forces of the left in the continent” united in the conviction that in Europe “there are no geographical

10 European elections: concerning the submission of an EL candidacy for the presidency of the European Commission. Council of Chairpersons, Madrid, 19th October 2013. <http://www.european-left.org/4th-el-congress/european-elections-concerning-submission-el-candidacy-presidency-european-commission>

11 EL Manifesto for 2014 European Elections. http://www.european-left.org/sites/default/files/final_platform_en_7.pdf

12 Tsipras, Nominated by the European Left: <http://www.european-left.org/4th-el-congress/tsipras-nominated-european-left-voice-denounce-policies-troika-european-commission>

13 Closing speech by Pierre Laurent: <http://www.european-left.org/4th-el-congress/pierre-laurent-we-are-hope-europe-exhausted-because-neoliberalism>

boundaries, but ideological and programmatic boundaries”. Tsipras, the symbol of the Greek resistance against the austerity policies imposed by the troika, would, thus, be converted into the leader of the European left, “against those who have built this European Model” referring to “the hegemonic forces of the right and socialdemocracy”¹⁴.

The election of Tsipras as candidate for the presidency of the European Commission, despite coming without internal competition and without clear rules for the nomination of candidates, might be referred to as model B2 (nomination and election by the leaders of the national parties) being, as it is, an example of the most closed and restricted models of election set out by Skrzypek (2010). It is also a clear sign of the political and strategic power of the commitment to politicising the European Commission by personalisation through candidates who are able to represent differentiated political programmes and ideological frameworks.

The fact that the Party of the European Left, one of the most refractory of all the parties about the proposal to elect a «common candidate» was the first to choose one and had the audacity to present an outstanding political leader who is well-known throughout Europe for his clear opposition to the austerity policies driven by the European Council and applied by the European Commission, shows that the commitment to “*mettre des visages aux clivages*” is a winning political gamble that may serve to mobilise the electorate itself and attract media attention.

¹⁴ Election speech by Alexis Tsipras: <http://www.european-left.org/4th-el-congress/speech-tsipras-iv-congress-party-european-left>

2.2. THE ELECTION PROCESS OF THE EUROPEAN GREEN PARTY

The European Greens are one of the parties with the longest tradition in running a common campaign in the European elections. Those held in 2014 were the third European elections to which they have put forward a campaign and a common candidate. In 2004 and 2009 their visible leader was Daniel Cohn-Bendit, the legendary French student leader of May 1968, who has epitomised the parliamentary group of the Greens over the past 10 years. What was new about the latest campaign was their innovative process for electing the top candidates of the party: primaries open to all citizens of the Union who sympathise with Green values, via an online platform.

The process began at the party council held in Madrid from the 10th to the 12th of May 2013, a year prior to the elections, where they decided to set in motion a process of open primaries to be held in the autumn. The Madrid council gave a mandate to the committee to develop a plan for electing a candidate, which was informally approved at the meeting of the leaders of the national parties on the 3rd of September. Finally, on the 4th of September, a process for the nomination of candidates in two phases, which was supposed to culminate in a party council on the 8th and 9th of November in Brussels, would open the campaign and the primary ballots. The process was perfectly planned out and the access and transparency of documents on their website was almost total¹⁵.

The candidates were obliged to present their candidacy by the 20th of October and to have the support of their own party or organisation in order to reach the second phase of the process, which consisted of receiving support from other organisations.

¹⁵ At www.europeangreens.eu all the documents on the process of nomination and election of the candidates was available along with the timetable of the process prior to the November Council that would set the primaries in motion.

This process blocked any candidate that did not have the support of their organisation and, therefore, left the control of the nomination in the hands, principally, of the leaders of the national parties. The only body at a European level who had the right to nominate a candidate was the Federation of Young European Greens, and it is significant that the parliamentary group of the greens in the European Parliament did not have this power. According to Skrzypek's typology, the power of nomination was in the hands of the party members.

Within these parameters, six candidates came forward: José Bové, the farmer leading the anti-transgenic movement and member of the European Parliament for *Europe-Écologie*; Monica Frassoni, co-president of the European Greens and member of the European Parliament for the Italian Green Party; Rebecca Harms, co-leader of the Parliamentary Group of the Greens-European Free Alliance and MEP for *Die Grünen*; Ska Keller, a young German MEP proposed by the Federation of Young European Greens; Ulrike Lunacek, Austrian MEP proposed by the Austrian Greens; and, Jolanda Verburg, consultant specialised in environmental questions proposed by *De Groenen*, one of the two Dutch green parties.

Between the 21st of October and the 4th of November, the 33 member parties had to express their support for one of the six pre-candidates, who, in order to become official candidates in the primaries, needed the support of between four and eight member parties. In the end, only four candidates received the necessary support¹⁶.

José Bové, nominated by *Europe Ecologie-Les Verts*, had the support of the two Belgian parties—the Walloon *Ecolo* and the Flemish *Groen*, the Luxembourg *Déi Gréng*, the Catalan *Iniciativa per Catalunya-Verds*, the Scots of the Scottish Green Party, the Hungarians of *Lehet Más a Politika* (LMP) and the

16 "Bové, Frassoni, Harms and Keller to contend Green Primary". European Greens, 7th November 2013.

Cyprus Green Party. In all, they were eight parties of highly diverse geographical origin representing more than 30% of the party in terms of the vote¹⁷.

Monica Frassoni, nominated by the *Federazioni dei Verdi*, received the support of the Spanish *EQUO*, the *Partido Ecologista "Os Verdes"* of Portugal, the Croats of *Zelena Lista* and the Danish *Socialistisk Folkesparti*. Five parties in total, all, basically, from southern Latin Europe, but all of which have very little representation. The sum total of the five, in terms of weight within the European party, was less than 5%.

Rebecca Harms, nominated by the Germans of *Die Grünen*, got the support of the Dutch in *Groen Links*, the Poles in *Partia Zieloni*, the Romanian *Partidul Verde*, the Bulgarian *Zelenite*, the Greeks in *Ecologoi-Prasinoi*, and the Latvians of *Latvijas Zala Partija*. A total of 7 parties with a majority presence in Eastern Europe, all centred around the decisive support of the German and Dutch greens. Together, they added up to more than 20% of the party in terms of the distribution of the vote.

Finally, Ska Keller—nominated by the Young European Greens, but without the support of the leaders of the German greens—received the support, basically, of the Nordic and Anglo-Saxon green parties: the Swedish *Miljöpartiet de Gröna*, the Finnish *Vihreät-De Gröna*, the Estonian *Erakond Eestima Rohelised*, the Green Party of England and Wales and the *Comhaontas Glas* from Ireland. To these five parties were added the Green Party of Bulgaria and the Maltese *Alternativa Demokratika*. In total, eight parties that represented 25% of the organisation, thereby exceeding the support received by Monica Frassoni and Rebecca Harms. Ulrike Lunacek (despite having the support of the Austrian greens), and Jolanda Verburg, with the support of the smaller of the two Dutch green parties (*De*

17 The sum of the representation of the parties giving support to each candidate has been made according to the updated distribution of European Green Party votes, provided by the organisation: "Allocation of Votes and Delegates. Green Electoral Convention", Brussels, 22nd February 2014.

Groenen), did not reach the minimum level of required support.

The Council of the European Greens held on the 8th and 9th of November 2013 ratified the four candidates and opened the primaries campaign and the ballot process, via the website www.greenprimary.eu, with the slogan, “You decide Europe”, putting the accent on the fact that the decision on the candidates and the future President of the European Commission was in the hands of the citizens¹⁸.

Between the 10th of November and the 28th of January, any European citizen over the age of 16 who said they supported green values could vote in the online primaries through a voting mechanism linked to a mobile telephone number in order to avoid double-voting. Each voter had two votes, as the objective of the primaries was to choose the two co-leaders of the European Greens in accordance with the statutes of the party which—in order to guarantee equality—has two co-presidents and two co-leaders of the parliamentary group. It was an innovative experience, and one without precedent for comparison, but the European Greens organised a noteworthy campaign to make both the process and the candidates known, under the slogan, «Green Primary. *Decide Europe*”.

Between November and January, debates between the candidates were held in 10 European cities: Athens (24th November), Cologne (1st December), Gothenburg (15th December), Madrid (16th December), Berlin (10th January), Prague (17th January), London (18th January), Rome (20th January), Paris (21st January) and Brussels (23rd January), and two internet debates were even organised on the 19th of November and the 27th of January with the collaboration of “Debating Europe”. According to data from the party itself, the first debate was followed by more than 1300 unique users from 43 countries, who asked hundreds

18 EGP launches Green Primary to select the two Leading Candidates for European elections 2014. European Greens, 10th November 2013. <http://europeangreens.eu/news/egp-launches-green-primary-select-two-leading-candidates-european-elections-2014>

of questions and generated more than 700 tweets¹⁹. The second, in contrast, had many fewer followers. On Twitter, the hashtag *#greenprimary* was used daily throughout the process by users from the 28 countries of the European Union.

Participation in the events was uneven, but averaged around 150 people, according to party sources²⁰. In Berlin and Cologne, for example, 200 people attended, and at the second debate in Madrid, about a hundred. Not all of the candidates were present at every debate, and in some cases absentees participated via the Internet. José Bové, for example, did not take part in the debates in Cologne, Gothenburg and Berlin, while Rebecca Harms, who was also absent from the Gothenburg debate, made contributions via Skype from Kiev, where she was giving support to the citizens' mobilisations. All the debates were streamed live on the European Greens website, <http://greenprimary.europeangreens.eu>. The Berlin debate, in the second week of January, was followed by around 300 people from 19 countries²¹.

The organisation of the primaries also promoted chats with the four candidates on the European Greens Facebook page²², which had lower participation, though each was followed by at least fifty users²³. The first of these was held on the 3rd of December with Ska Keller, who received around twenty questions. It was shared by about ten users. In the second, on the 10th of December, José Bové answered around fifteen questions and about twenty questions were registered for the chat with Monica Frassoni on the 15th of January, which was shared by a dozen users. Finally, the last chat -with Rebecca Harms- had fewer followers.

19 First online debate with Green Primary Contenders a huge success. European Green Party, 19th November 2013, <http://europeangreens.eu/news/first-online-debate-green-primary-contenders>

20 Debates followed via the updates published on the website: europeangreens.eu

21 5th Green Primary debate in Berlin, European Greens, 14th January 2014. <http://europeangreens.eu/news/5th-green-primary-debate-berlin>

22 See <https://www.facebook.com/EuropeanGreens?fref=ts>

23 Based on the number of likes received by each of the chats.

In addition to this, the candidates attempted to campaign in certain countries through visits, but their levels of engagement varied widely. By consulting their websites, we can see that the two most active candidates in their campaigns were Rebecca Harms and Ska Keller, who set up websites dedicated specifically to the primaries²⁴. José Bové's website²⁵, dedicated to his parliamentary activity made practically no reference to the primaries campaign, which is consistent with a campaign of extremely low intensity in which he presented no personal electoral manifesto. Monica Frassoni's website²⁶, which is also dedicated to her parliamentary activity, made several extra entries referring to her candidacy -above all in the final weeks- but she did not reach the level of Keller and Harms.

Finally, on the 29th of January, the results were revealed. A total of 22,676 people voted and the elected candidates were Ska Keller with 11,971 votes and José Bové with 11,726 votes. In third place, quite a distance behind, was Rebecca Harms, the candidate who was thought to be the favourite early on, and who received 8,170 votes. In last place was Monica Frassoni with 5,851 votes. 22,676 people voted but 37,538 votes were recorded. This means that nearly 8,000 voters -more than a third of the total- decided to vote only for one candidate without using their second vote.

The winner, Ska Keller, emphasised that her task as top candidate was «to bring a European dimension to the national Green campaigns» and that she hoped to «keep the enthusiasm and motivation that I have experienced during the Green Primary going», placing the accent on the alternatives proposed by the Greens: «a fair and Green way out of the crisis, putting youth unemployment on the top of the agenda, protecting the rights of refugees and migrants, fair trade not free trade, more ambitious

24 #SkaforYOUrope, at ska-for-europe.eu; and *Rebecca for Europe* at <http://r4e.rebecca-harms.de>

25 See the website jose-bove.eu

26 See the website monicafrassoni.it

climate targets, and more democracy». It was an agenda that was more social than green, and was shared by José Bové, who, when giving thanks for his election, called for a campaign to «defend a Europe that protects women and men from the globalisation that is destroying jobs and the environment» and pushes «for the Green New Deal with an appropriate budget»²⁷.

The leadership of the European Greens avoided setting itself participation goals for the primaries process, but it seems clear that the results were far below those expected, as the Green campaign manager, Johannes Hillje, acknowledged²⁸. The low level of participation was criticised by the German press. Nevertheless, Hillje highlighted the fact that the European Greens had never enjoyed as much media attention as during the months of the primaries process, and the co-president of the party, Reinhard Bütikofer, said that the “democracy experiment” set a “new democratic standard” for European politics, recognising that they had “entered new territory” and “not followed well-trodden paths” with the objective of sending a clear message: “in the decision about selecting leaders, citizens should have a greater say”²⁹.

If we put the 22,000 voters in the context of the number of members of the European green parties (around 150,000) or the number of votes received at the previous European elections (more than 9 million), the level of participation does indeed seem very low. But if we refer to the number of individual members of the European Green Party -1500 in 2012- or the number of followers of the European Greens Facebook page at the end of December 2013 (around 35,000), the figure of 22,000 voters begins to look

27 PRESS RELEASE: Ska Keller and José Bové will lead the Greens in their European campaign, European Greens, 29th January 2014 <http://europeangreens.eu/news/press-release-greens-select-leading-candidates>

28 HILLJE, Johannes: “Green Primary - pioneering work is hard, but worth it!” Europe Decides, 5th February 2013 www.europedecides.eu

29 PRESS RELEASE: Ska Keller and José Bové will lead the Greens in their European campaign, European Greens, 29th January 2014 <http://europeangreens.eu/news/press-release-greens-select-leading-candidates>

different. From this perspective, we may consider that nearly two thirds of the followers of the party website voted. That is to say, two thirds of the potential online activists of the European Green Party voted in the primaries.

If we evaluate the results of the four candidates based on the number of votes cast (37,538), we see that Ska Keller received 31,4% of the votes, which is higher than the percentage represented by the parties and organisations who supported her (25%), showing that Keller received a level of mobilisation superior to the other candidates among their activists. Bové received 31,2% of the votes, a very similar percentage to that of the eight parties who supported him (30%), and this relationship continued in the case of Rebecca Harms, who received 21,7% of the votes thanks to the support of seven parties who represent 20% of the organisation. Finally, Monica Frassoni received 15,6% of the votes, way above the level of representation of the five parties that backed her: this was most likely due to the mobilisation of Italian and Spanish activists.

Information about the number of voters in the primaries by country would give us the data with which to validate these hypotheses, but this information is not available. But we do know, through sources at the organisation itself, that the three countries where most votes were recorded were Germany, France and Spain. This would explain, in large part, the support for Bové in the case of France and Catalonia, the large number of votes Frassoni received in Spain, mobilised by EQUO activists, and the division -probably generational- of the German vote between Rebecca Harms and Ska Keller.

In fact, the process of the primaries strengthened Ska Keller, who managed to overcome Rebecca Harms, *Die Grünen's* official candidate, thanks to youth vote mobilisation and by making herself the most active candidate -and the most visible in the national campaigns- of the Greens' European campaign. Keller's candidacy broke the tacit pact between José Bové and Rebecca Harms to share the leadership and provoked protest voting in the

support base of the German Greens from those who wanted to make a commitment to renewal. But this commitment to renewal did not make it to the *Die Grünen* conference held in Dresden from the 7th to the 9th of February. Harms and Keller faced each other again, this time for the leadership of the Greens' electoral list in Germany and Harms came out on top by a distance, with 477 votes. Keller received 248 and finished in third place³⁰.

From this perspective, the primaries process introduced an element of renewal to the candidature of the European Greens that probably would not have resulted from a more restricted election between delegates at a party council or congress. In large part, this was thanks to the organisational capacity of the Young European Greens, who attracted the support of seven national parties to their candidate and mobilised their activists to secure the most votes for Keller in the open primaries process. The means of election of the candidates by the European Greens was one of the most open, therefore, according to Skrzypek's typology. It was a model C4: nomination by the national parties and elections through open primaries.

Finally, the electoral convention of the party on the 21st, 22nd, 23rd of February formally elected the candidates, approved the electoral manifesto and presented the campaign for the European elections with the slogan, «Change Europe, Vote Green». The manifesto proposed a «European Green New Deal» to overcome the current crisis, re-invigorating European democracy, solidarity and justice within and between European countries, the defence of civil liberties in the digital age and working for Europe to accept its responsibility for promoting global justice and peace»³¹.

30 Bündnis 90/ Die Grünen select their list for the European elections. <http://europeangreens.eu/news/b%C3%BCndnis-90-die-gr%C3%BCnen-select-their-list-european-elections>

31 Greens adopt Common Manifesto and kick off third common European campaign. European Greens, 22nd February 2014: <http://europeangreens.eu/news/greens-adopt-common-manifesto-and-kick-third-common-european-campaign>

2.3. THE ELECTION PROCESS OF THE ALLIANCE FOR LIBERALS AND DEMOCRATS FOR EUROPE

The Alliance for Liberals and Democrats for Europe (ALDE), until 2012 called the European Liberal Democrat and Reform Party, has historically been characterised by its Europeanism and for defending the progressive politicisation and democratisation of European politics from within the European Parliament. One of its British MEPs, Andrew Duff, is the author of two significant reports that propose creating pan-European electoral lists to make European political debate between the parties possible. He was also one of the first to formally propose the nomination of candidates to the presidency of the Commission by the European political parties (Duff, 2010). The leader of the liberals in the European Parliament, Guy Verhofstadt, has also defended the democratisation of the European Union, alongside the leader of the Greens, Daniel Cohn Benditt (Cohn-Bendit and Verhofstadt, 2012).

The party statutes, approved in 2004, gave, as one of their main objectives, “the construction of a united European democracy”, and their internal regulations, approved in May 2013, established “the discussion and approval of an electoral manifesto for the European parliamentary elections”. But they make no mention of the election of a common candidate for the European Parliament elections³².

Nevertheless, the party bureau announced on the 14th of October 2013 that the ALDE would open the process to elect its candidate for the presidency of the Commission. In this announcement they established the timetable to be followed³³. At the party congress to be held in London from the 28th to the

32 Statues of the Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe Party, ALDE Party: <http://www.aldeparty.eu/en/about/the-alde-party>

33 ALDE Party candidate for Commission President to be announced 1 February, ALDE Party, 14th November 2013: <http://www.aldeparty.eu/en/press-releases/alde-party-candidate-commission-president-be-announced-1-february>

30th of November, the electoral manifesto was to be approved and the process of nomination of the pre-candidates begun. The main candidates began campaigning for their nomination at the congress itself with two significant speeches meant to rally their support. Olli Rehn's speech was very economics-heavy, focussing on liberal values and free enterprise, while Guy Verhofstadt made a strongly Europeanist speech, calling for the Union to be saved from those who want to break it up or call a halt to it.

At the congress in London, the ALDE became the first political party to approve their manifesto and programme for the May 2014 elections³⁴. Under the slogan "A Europe that works", the manifesto put the accent on: creating jobs and business opportunities via the liberalisation of the economy and international commerce, and the facilitation of access to credit for small and medium-sized companies; the implementation of the freedom of movement of knowledge, researchers and students; the reinforcement of the single market for energy, digital technology, transport and health; and the reform of European budgetary priorities in order to reduce subsidies (primarily agricultural) and increase investment policies. They also wanted to reform the European Commission, cutting departments and eliminating agencies in order to make it more efficient, while proposing the definitive elimination of the second seat of the European Parliament at Strasbourg.

In order to be nominated, the candidates need the support of a minimum of 2 member parties of the Alliance -from more than one member state- or of 20% of the delegates with a right to vote at the party congress. The support for nomination was to be submitted by the 20th of December, but before that, on the 19th, the leaders of the national liberal parties were to meet to "discuss the nominations" and, if necessary, to promote the presentation of new candidates. Considering that the ALDE is made up of 55 member parties from 33 countries, the nomination

³⁴ ALDE Party election manifesto. 'A Europe that Works', ALDE Party, 30th November 2013: <http://www.aldeparty.eu/en/news/alde-party-election-manifesto-europe-works>

criteria seemed very open, but it did not establish a proportional relationship between the two ways of being nominated and in the end only the two main candidates who had already been put forward at the London congress received the support necessary for nomination.

The two candidates were Guy Verhofstadt, former Prime Minister of Belgium and leader of the liberals in the European Parliament, and Olli Rehn, the Finnish Vice-President of Economic Affairs at the European Commission. Verhofstadt had the support of the liberal parties from the three Benelux countries (the Netherlands, Belgium and Luxemburg), the new Austrian liberal party NEOS, the National Liberal Party (PNL) of Romania, the Italian parties *Italia dei Valori* and *Partito Radicale*, as well as other smaller parties, like *Convergència Democràtica* (CDC) from Catalonia. The support of these parties added up to approximately 110 delegates of the party congress that was to decide upon a candidate³⁵. To that number, we could probably add ten or so British delegates -mainly MEPs- and the external support of the French MEPs from the parliamentary group, who do not form part of the ALDE party.

Olli Rehn -European Commissioner since 2004 and Vice-President of Economic Affairs of the European Commission since 2009- got the support of 14 party presidents from nine different countries, who signed a letter endorsing his candidacy on the 17th of December. Among them were the leader of the British Liberal Democrats, Nick Clegg, the president of the German FDP, the presidents of the three Finnish parties (*Äländsk*), the Center Party and the party of the swedish minority (*Folkpartiet* and *Centerpartiet*), the two Danish parties (*Venstre i Radicale Venstre*), the prime minister of Estonia and leader of the Estonian Reform Party, and the presidents of the Movement for Rights and

³⁵ Taking as a reference the distribution of delegates with a right to vote, based on the results of the previous European elections as established in the internal regulations of the party.

Freedoms in Bulgaria and of the Cypriot United Democrats³⁶.

In the letter they pointed out that the liberals should feel “proud of the milestones reached in the last five years and of the positive influence they have exercised on the EU” and that the ALDE had to prioritise the challenges of financial stability and of building a stronger economy, for which they had to choose “a candidate for the presidency of the Commission who could confront these problems directly”³⁷. In consequence, they considered that Rehn was “ideally placed” to face these challenges as Commission President.

These parties -including the majority of the British delegation- would have added up to approximately 120 delegates at the congress. So, even though the media had Rehn down as favourite, it was highly likely that the extraordinary congress of the 11th of February in Brussels would come around in a situation of effective stalemate that would need unlocking by the twenty or so small parties from a dozen countries -mainly outside the EU- who had not given support to any candidate, principally because they do not participate actively in the party’s political activity.

The leaders’ meeting on the 19th of December was used to confirm that the two candidates had sufficient support for election and that neither of them wanted to stand down. At the end of the meeting, the president of the party, Graham Watson, announced that, “As liberals, we are not afraid of democracy. We are lucky to have two extremely well-qualified candidates in the frame, either of whom would do an excellent job as President of the European Commission”³⁸. Nevertheless, according to internal sources, at the heart of the organisation and among the party leaders the conviction began to grow that while Olli Rehn might

36 Rehn in pole position to lead EU liberals in 2014 election campaign, EurActiv, 18th December 2013: <http://www.euractiv.com/eu-elections-2014/rehn-surpasses-verhofstadt-favou-news-532421>

37 Letter of support to Rehn, signed in Helsinki, 17th December 2013.

38 EU liberal leaders meet to discuss election campaign and common candidate, ALDE Party Press release, 19th December 2013: <http://www.aldeparty.eu/en/press-releases/eu-liberal-leaders-meet-discuss-election-campaign-and-common-candidate>

do a magnificent job of applying their economic programme as Commission President, Guy Verhofstadt might be a better candidate for the electoral campaign.

That is how they finally reached an agreement, made public on the 20th of January, which meant the ballot at the congress on the 1st of February was avoided³⁹. The agreement proposed that the two candidates “jointly lead the campaign”, but that Verhofstadt would be the common candidate to lead the European Commission, while Olli Rehn would become the liberals’ candidate to occupy “one of the other senior posts in the EU, in particular in the field of economic affairs and foreign policy”. That meant that Verhofstadt became the electoral candidate to lead the party during the campaign and was likely to continue as president of the group of Liberals and Democrats in the European Parliament, and Rehn agreed to be the liberal candidate for Vice-president and High Representative of European Foreign Policy, or, instead, to become president of the Eurogroup in the division of responsibilities to take place after the summer, once the President of the Commission was elected. In the same press release, the party president announced that he would propose to the bureau that a resolution to accept the agreement should be put to a ballot at the congress.

And, in turn, at the congress on the 1st of February, the resolution received the support of 79,3% of the votes with 14,2% of the votes against and 6,5% abstention⁴⁰. The majority of votes against came from the British Liberal Democrats, led by Nick Clegg, who had given support to Rehn, and who did not accept a candidate with such a pro-European, federalist profile as Verhofstadt. The abstentions were probably due to the disappointment on a part

39 Agreement between Olli Rehn and Guy Verhofstadt - statement by ALDE party president, 20th January 2014: <http://www.aldeparty.eu/en/press-releases/agreement-between-olli-rehn-guy-verhofstadt-statement-alde-party-president>

40 Guy Verhofstadt and Olli Rehn to lead election campaign for European Liberals: <http://www.aldeparty.eu/en/press-releases/guy-verhofstadt-and-olli-rehn-lead-election-campaign-european-liberals>

of the Nordic delegations at the missed opportunity to have a Scandinavian candidate.

At the congress to elect the candidate, Verhofstadt reinforced the idea that both would form a “unique ticket that will help to grow the liberal family”, a complementary ticket, with a “more rational” candidate from the north and a “more emotional” candidate from Latin Europe, who made a speech against the “easy solutions” offered by nationalism, populism and Euroscepticism, and in favour of a Europeanism capable of dealing with a “crisis [that] is not over” and which would continue working to respond to it with concrete solutions⁴¹.

For his part, a conciliatory Olli Rehn asked for unity from the whole party in order to work “towards the same common goal” and “come together, like Simon and Garfunkel, to build a bridge over troubled waters”⁴². The call for unity did not, however, have any effect on the British, who did not accept the agreement and would not campaign for Verhofstadt. This attitude, refusing to accept the decisions made by their party colleagues is, as we shall soon see, what the British Labour party also did.

In the end, then, the liberals did not vote, even though the nomination process had led them to a competitive dynamic that could have ended with a secret ballot with delegates electing one of the two candidates. This is a process that, according to Skrzypek’s typology (2010), we might consider to be relatively open and competitive, a model C3 (nomination by the party members and election by the party congress or council), which eventually became a model C2, as, ultimately, the delegates had no option to choose between the candidates because of the prior agreement between them as promoted by the national leaders and the party bureau.

41 <http://www.aldeparty.eu/en/news/verhofstadt-olli-and-me-are-unique-ticket-we-are-winning-team>

42 <http://www.aldeparty.eu/en/news/rehn-we-come-together-simon-and-garfunkel-build-bridge-over-troubled-waters>

In any case, the liberals' process showed that there was real interest in the nomination of the candidate by the national parties and their leaders. The national parties openly showed their personal and ideological preferences in order to influence the election of a candidate who was closer to their own position. They did not want to leave the decision in the hands of the central structures of the European party or parliamentary group, even if, in the end, the most Europeanist candidate won with the support of the majority of the parliamentary group.

2.4. THE ELECTION PROCESS OF THE PARTY OF EUROPEAN SOCIALISTS

The Party of European Socialists (PES) was one of the first to commit to choosing a candidate for the Presidency of the European Commission, announcing at the party congress in December 2009⁴³ that it had decided to elect a candidate in a “democratic, transparent and inclusive” process⁴⁴. At the end of 2010, it created a working group to discuss and propose a selection process, to be further discussed and approved during the second term of 2011. Finally, the PES council meeting of November 2011 approved a complex election process that was the result of the negotiation between the party members, whose positions on openness and the participation of the party members in the candidate election process varied greatly.

The final resolution -starting from the principles of openness, transparency, coherence and competition- established a clear nomination process in October 2013 that would end in the election of the candidate at a PES electoral congress to be held in February 2014. Between the months of December 2013 and January 2014, each party was allowed to make the decision to support

43 A new way forward. A stronger PES. PES Congress Resolution, Prague, December 2009.

44 PES Council Resolution, A democratic and transparent process for designating the PES candidate for the European Commission Presidency, Warsaw, December 2010.

one candidate or another using the mechanism they preferred, respecting the principles of «Direct or indirect consultation of members, and ratification of the result by a democratically-elected body»⁴⁵. This formula allowed primaries to be held by the national parties who wanted to, or the selection of a candidate via the democratically-elected party bodies.

Then, following the decisions taken by each national political party, the national delegations would vote at the PES electoral congress, according to their weight in the organisation, but also proportionally to the amount of internal support each candidate received in the decision-taking process at a national level. This meant, for example, that if within a party with ten PES congress votes one candidate received 60% of the votes and another 40%, six votes would go to the first and four to the second. In the case that no candidate received the absolute majority of votes, a secret ballot of the delegates would follow to decide which of the two candidates had most support. This slightly complex process of aggregating wills could have brought about significant problems in its application and is an example of how the internal divergences in criteria for selecting a candidate -and the desire to create an absolutely proportional and representative system that avoids delegate discretion- may give rise to ineffective electoral systems.

The nomination process began, as planned, on the 1st of October 2013. From the 1st to the 31st of October, the potential candidates needed to gather the support of 15% of the 33 member parties and five member organisations that make up the PES. This meant that it was only necessary to secure nomination by one party or organisation and the support of five more parties or organisations. Only Martin Schulz, President of the European Parliament and ex-president of the parliamentary group, who was nominated by his party, the German SPD, received this support, and the nomination of no other candidate was recorded. The possibility was raised of the prime minister of Denmark, Helle

⁴⁵ PES Council Resolution. Selecting our common candidate in 2014. 24th November 2011.

Thorning-Schmidt, and the leader of the Portuguese socialists, António José Seguro, presenting their candidacy, but neither of them did.

There was, therefore, no competition in the nomination process because only one person received the support necessary to be a candidate. Thus, paradoxically, the party that most reflected, argued and negotiated over the methodology of candidate election in order to make it open, democratic and competitive ended up as one of the parties with the least democratic competition in their candidate selection process.

Martin Schulz received the support of the socialists, the social democrats and the labour parties of 20 member parties as well as the support of the Socialists and Democrats Group in the European Parliament. He was, chiefly, the candidate of the south and east of the continent, receiving, as he did, the support of the socialists from Spain, Portugal, France, Belgium and Luxembourg, of the Labour Party in Malta, of the PASOK in Greece and the Cypriot EDEK, along with the Polish SLD, the Czech CSSD, the Slovak Smer, the Slovenian Social Democrats, the Hungarian MSzP, the Romanian PSD and the BSP from Bulgaria, added to which was the support of the German and Austrian social democrats and the labour parties in Ireland and Norway. Grouped together, these political forces added up to 265 of the 364 delegates with the right to vote at the electoral congress⁴⁶. Furthermore, he also counted on the support of the Italian *Partito Democratico*, who share the parliamentary group with the PES at the European Parliament but who are not part of the party structures.

But Schulz did not, on the other hand, receive the support of the British or Dutch labour parties, the Scandinavian social democrats (Danes, Swedes and Finns), of the Baltics (Estonians and Lithuanians), or of the Croats. Neither did he receive the support of the Youth European Socialists or the organisation of

46 Delegates to the 2014 PES Election Congress on the basis of article 25 of the PES Statutes.

socialist women. In any case, the organisations who withheld their support or were openly against him -such as the British Labour Party- only came to a hundred or so congress delegates.

Martin Schulz, therefore, emerged from the process greatly strengthened and from the 6th of November, when his candidacy for the PES was confirmed, he began to act as candidate *in pectore* of the European Socialists, even though his candidacy still had to be ratified by the member parties in December and January and by the congress in Rome on the 1st of March. This is how a process conceived to correspond to a C3/C4 model -nomination by the national political parties and competitive election by the party congress after ensuring the participation of party supporters at a national level- became, in practice, a model C1 in which the «designation» of the candidate was made from the party bureau after the national parties' nomination process.

In fact, Schulz began his campaign on the same day on which he was confirmed as «candidate designate»⁴⁷, criticising those who “say that Europe ‘doesn’t need a face that people can vote for’, or that ‘the Commission shouldn’t be politicised’» and affirming that, «the best way to get the EU working for people again is to first involve them» by giving 390 million citizens their say in the election of the Commission President. From November onwards he behaved like a candidate, meeting, among others, with the general secretaries of the national parties to prepare the campaign and with the PES activists.

Finally, at the Rome congress on the 1st of March, Schulz was elected as candidate with 91% of the delegates' votes⁴⁸, which is to say, practically all except the 33 delegates from Britain and Northern Ireland, who positioned themselves as openly against

47 PES ratifies nomination of Martin Schulz as ‘Candidate designate’, PES, 6th November 2013, http://lsdp.lt/en/news/foreign_policy/id/873/pes_ratifies_nomination_of_martin_schulz_as_candidate_designate_

48 European Socialists Elect Martin Schulz as Candidate for Commission President, <http://www.pes.eu/en/news/european-socialists-elect-martin-schulz-candidate-commission-president>

his election⁴⁹. Voting against him, using harsh arguments -labelling Schulz an “arch-federalist and fiscally irresponsible”-could have had serious political consequences, as the British Labour Party was considering leaving the European Socialist Party (while remaining inside the parliamentary group)⁵⁰ and not giving support to Schulz as candidate in the voting in the European Parliament to elect the President of the Commission, because “Martin Schulz’s political priorities in Europe do not represent those of the Labour party”. In the end, the electoral victory of Juncker made their opposition to Schulz irrelevant (though they did not support his candidacy for President of the European Parliament either). But if Schulz had won, the British Labour party would have put the election of the new President of the Commission at risk.

In any event, the British Labour party’s refusal can be linked to the discomfort of the British Liberal Democrats about the election of the also “federalist” Verhofstadt and it must be placed in the context of the British Conservatives’ exit from the EPP group five years ago and the unstoppable rise of UKIP, which has forced the prime minister, David Cameron, to agree to hold a referendum in 2017 on Britain’s staying in the European Union.

Apart from this, the European socialists and social-democrats managed to construct a solid candidacy with a large majority of support around an electoral manifesto, “Towards a New Europe”, which was built around the creation of jobs, and included an ambitious investment plan to create 7 million over the next legislature as a response to the 27 million unemployed Europeans. It also prioritised the fight against fraud and tax evasion and the speedy introduction of the financial transactions tax, the construction of a social Europe that protects rights, liberties and internal diversity, and the stimulation of democratic participation in the control of decision-making in European institutions.

49 Labour rejects left’s candidate for next European Commission president. The Guardian, 1st March 2014.

50 UK Labour Party may quit PES over opposition to Schulz. European Voice, 20th March 2014.

2.5. THE ELECTION PROCESS OF THE EUROPEAN PEOPLE'S PARTY

The European People's Party, made up of 74 parties from 40 European countries, pools a significant part of the political power in the European institutions. Before elections, it was the main group in the European Parliament, with 278 seats, has 13 of the 28 members of the Commission, formed part of the government in the majority of member states, and, within its political family it had 12 of the 28 heads of government who make up the European Council. The decision on the European People's Party's candidate was, therefore, at once the most significant and the most complex. Most significant because, a priori, this was the political party with the best chance of winning the European elections, and most complex because the majority of heads of state and of government—who had, until then, proposed the President of the Commission—belonged to this political family.

In 2009, the European People's Party presented a clear candidate for the elections -then President of the Commission, José Manuel Durao Barroso- though he did not lead a real electoral campaign. In 2012, at their last congress in Bucharest, a resolution was approved which promised that the new presidency elected at the congress “should agree on a procedure and start an internal nomination process of a common candidate for the President of the next European Commission, as allowed for by the Treaties, to be presented to the electorate as an EPP frontrunner during the election campaign”⁵¹.

Notwithstanding this, the European People's Party was the last to decide whether to present a common candidate for the

51 Resolution adopted at the EPP Congress in Bucharest, 17th to the 18th October 2012 on the nomination of a common candidate for the presidency of the European Commission: <http://www.epp.eu/sites/default/files/content/documents/1.%20All%20resolutions%2C%20EN.pdf>

presidency of the European Commission before the elections in May, owing to the severe pressure of the 12 conservative prime ministers, including Chancellor Angela Merkel, not to choose a candidate before the elections. There were two good reasons for this pressure.

The first is that most of the heads of government did not want to leave the capacity to choose and legitimate a candidate for the presidency of the European Commission in the hands of the European Parliament. This is because their interpretation of the Treaty of Lisbon is that, while the European Council was obliged to propose a candidate “bearing in mind the results of the Parliamentary elections”, that did not mean that the parties were obliged to present a common candidate in advance of the elections. For this reason, a large number of the members of the European Council preferred to have European elections that were no different to those held before, and that, once the results were known, the Council had the freedom to choose a candidate to lead the Commission.

The second reason was that some heads of government hoped, themselves, to be elected President of the Commission, but did not want to give up their responsibilities in national government to stand as EPP candidate. They therefore applied pressure to avoid the selection of a candidate before the elections. Among them, we may highlight the Polish Prime Minister, Donald Tusk; the President of Lithuania, Dalia Grybauskaitė; the Swedish Prime Minister, Fredrik Reinfeldt; the Prime Minister of Finland, Jyrki Katainen, the Latvian Prime Minister, Valdis Dombrovskis, and the President of Ireland, Enda Kenny. Of them all, the one who seemed to have the best chance was Donald Tusk, but he ended up ruling himself out in June 2013⁵².

The European party bureau and a large number of the parliamentary group were in favour of beginning a candidate

52 PM Tusk won't be standing as EC president candidate: <http://www.thenews.pl/1/10/Artykul/138172,PM-Tusk-wont-be-standing-as-EC-president-candidate>

selection process during 2013⁵³, but the pressure of the prime ministers and leaders of the respective parties impeded the process. In June, the leaders met in Vienna and agreed to hold a congress to begin the European electoral campaign on the 6th and 7th of March in Dublin and the secretaries general of the party met to begin to coordinate the campaigns, but they did not decide whether to elect a common candidate or not, and, if they were to do so, what process they would follow⁵⁴. At that time, the other names on the table were the European commissioners, Viviane Reading and Michel Barnier, the managing director of the IMF, Christine Lagarde, and the prime minister of Luxembourg and former president of the Eurogroup, Jean-Claude Juncker, who was sounded out by various leaders after Tusk ruled himself out⁵⁵.

In November, after Angela Merkel's re-election as chancellor of Germany and the death of the party president, Wilfried Martens, the new president -the Frenchman, Joseph Daul- reconfirmed «the commitment of the EPP, made at the congress in Bucharest, to launch an EU-wide campaign led by our common candidate, who will be chosen at the Dublin congress on 6 and 7 of March 2014»⁵⁶. He managed to get the leaders, meeting in the Belgian municipality of Meise on the 19th of December to approve the timetable and the selection procedure of the EPP candidate for the presidency of the European Commission which included⁵⁷: a

53 EPP President on Europe Day: "2014 European elections, a chance for people to choose the next Commission President": <http://www.epp.eu/epp-president-europe-day-2014-european-elections-chance-people-choose-next-commission-president-o>

54 Vienna: EPP leaders prepare for 2014 European Elections. EPP, 20th June 2013: http://www.epp.eu/sites/default/files/content/press_releases/pdf/viennapr.pdf

55 Bidding Begins for European Commission. Der Spiegel, 7th October 2013: <http://www.spiegel.de/international/europe/european-parties-debate-candidates-to-lead-european-commission-a-926770.html>

56 Joseph Daul elected as the new EPP President: <http://www.epp.eu/joseph-daul-elected-new-epp-president-enfr>

57 EPP leaders unveil the selection procedure and timetable for the EPP's candidate for President of the European Commission. EPP, 19th December 2013: <http://www.epp.eu/epp-leaders-unveil-selection-procedure-and-timetable-epp%E2%80%99s-candidate-president-european-commission>

presentation period for candidatures from the 13th of February to the 5th of March, the day before the Dublin congress; candidature validation on the 6th of March by the political assembly of the party, followed by submission to the congress for a vote; and a vote by congress delegates to choose the candidate and the subsequent proclamation of the candidate on the 7th of March. To be nominated, the candidates needed the endorsement of “his or her own member party, plus the endorsement of two member parties from two EU countries other than the country of origin of the candidate”. Meaning that to be a candidate the support of three parties from three different countries was needed.

In this sense, we may say that the EPP chose a relatively open nomination process -one that was very close to that chosen by the liberals- in contrast to the greater requirements of the European Socialist Party (six member organisations) and the European Green Party (four organisations), although in the last case this did not stop them from presenting four candidates.

In the end, three candidates stood: the prime minister of Latvia, Valdis Dombrovskis, the former prime minister of Luxembourg, Jean-Claude Juncker, and the French European commissioner, Michel Barnier. Dombrovskis presented his candidacy on the 18th of February with the support of his party, Unity, the Lithuanian Homeland Union (TS-LKD) and the Estonian party, IRL. As such, it was a Baltic candidacy that brought together just 20 delegates with a right to vote at the Dublin congress. Jean-Claude Juncker presented his candidacy on the 27th of February with the support of his party—the CSV from Luxembourg, as well as that of Angela Merkel’s powerful German CDU and New Democracy, the Greek party of Prime Minister Samaras. Juncker’s candidacy gathered 134 delegates thanks to the support of the main delegation, the German, which brought 101 CDU and CSU delegates. Michel Barnier was the last to come forward. He counted on the support of this party, the UMP, *Fidesz* of the controversial Hungarian President, Victor Orban, and the Slovenian NSI. In total, 118

delegates, making him a candidate with the capacity to compete with Juncker.

Jean-Claude Juncker made his intentions public in a German radio interview on the 9th of January⁵⁸ and began as favourite thanks to the endorsement of Angela Merkel, which was made public on the 6th of February⁵⁹, in advance of the opening of the candidature presentation period, which was probably an attempt to avoid other candidates putting themselves forward. But Barnier did not throw in the towel and on the 13th of February he made his candidature public and demanded the support of his party—the UMP—who until then had been reluctant due to his «too federalist» profile⁶⁰.

The EPP's decision-making process shows how the desires of the leadership of the European political parties and their parliamentary groups, and of the political leaders with extensive European scope like Juncker and Barnier, ended up, with a certain reticence, prevailing over that of the national party politicians and their leaders, which included heads of state and government. It could be said that in this process—just as in the election of the candidates by the socialists, the liberals and the greens—the will of the «Brussels politicians» got its way over that of the «national politicians». Even the all-powerful Angela Merkel, who until December rejected the election of a common candidate and preferred to wait until after the election and choose someone of Christine Lagarde's profile⁶¹, ended up giving her support to a candidate in Juncker with whom she had disagreed loudly when he was president of the Eurogroup. Merkel's support was for a

58 Juncker steps forward for Barroso's job. EurActiv, 10th January 2014, <http://www.euractiv.com/eu-elections-2014/juncker-steps-forward-barroso-jo-news-532686>

59 Merkel backs Juncker to lead conservatives in EU elections. Reuters, 6th February 2014, <http://www.reuters.com/article/2014/02/06/us-eu-juncker-merkel-idUSBREA151H520140206>

60 Paris ponders betting on Barnier for top EU job. EurActiv, 3rd January 2014, <http://www.euractiv.com/eu-elections-2014/michel-barnier-hope-france-get-t-news-532580>

61 Why Merkel doesn't support Juncker for Commission President. EurActiv, 10th January 2014, <http://www.euractiv.com/eu-elections-2014/merkel-support-juncker-commission-news-532695>

lesser evil, a second best, as she felt obliged by the pressure of the European People's Party to put forward a common candidate prior to the elections.

The EPP's decision to choose a candidate (with the agreement of all of its members) was highly significant. Without their participation, the European election campaign would have been totally devalued as a mechanism for the election of a President of the European Commission, as it would have failed to fulfil the two necessary conditions that we noted in the first chapter: "[internal] cohesion and competition [between parties]" (Thomassen, 2002).

The Dublin Congress began on Thursday the 6th, with Jean-Claude Juncker as the favourite. Just the day before Dombrovskis had stepped aside in his favour. Juncker had the support of a CDU that was convinced of winning a clear majority. The challenger, Michel Barnier, rolled out a highly active personal campaign *in situ* and on Twitter in the two days of the congress, with the slogan, "If you dream it, you can make it. Vote Barnier 2014". His campaign gave out blue stickers to the pro-Barnier delegates, which included the 68 French delegates and the 37 Hungarians, making them highly visible in the room and on the internet using @votebarnier2014. Barnier resisted repeated attempts to pressure him to step aside, and sought support until the final moments of the vote, going as far as to give out campaign leaflets that contained the five points of his programme⁶².

Juncker made a speech -in German, English and French- taking stock of the handling of the crisis since 2008 and his extensive experience as a member of the European Council for over 16 years and as president of the Eurogroup from 2005 and 2012, "I offer my experience, my determination and my enthusiasm" reminding people that he had done everything to avoid catastrophe. Barnier, by contrast, spoke of vision and the future: «Europe needs a vision

62 Barnier, Juncker, deux approches de la démocratie européenne. Contexte, 6th March 2014, <https://www.contexte.com/article/elections-europeennes-2014/barnier-juncker-deux-approches-de-la-democratie-europeenne.html>

and I think I can help deliver this (...) I believe we can propose a new horizon to the people of Europe"⁶³, he said, attempting to generate excitement among the delegates and persuade them to vote against the instructions handed down by the leadership of their parties, which in the main favoured Juncker.

The majority of the heads of the delegations who spoke during the day of the vote did not declare which side their delegation would vote for, except for Jean François Copé from France and the Hungarian, Víctor Orban, who were Barnier's main supporters. Other leaders, such as Jirky Kaitanen of Finland and the Cypriot Nicos Anastasiades also appeared to give him their implicit support. Via Twitter, it was possible to see how various delegates from Slovenia, Poland, Finland, Slovakia, Ireland and Cyprus supported Barnier, who explicitly sought the support of the Poles and the Spanish, who, with 68 and 60 delegates, respectively, were the two delegations who could tip the balance, along with the 44 Romanian delegates. But while many Spanish delegates were more sympathetic to Barnier than to Juncker, their President, Mariano Rajoy, negotiated his support for Juncker with Merkel in exchange for the presidency of the Eurogroup in the division of institutional responsibilities negotiated in the summer and autumn of 2014⁶⁴.

In the end, Juncker beat Barnier by 382 votes (62,7%) to 245 (38,9%) of a total of 629 votes cast, among which only two blank ballot papers were counted, though more than 180 of the 812 eligible to vote chose not to. It is very difficult to make an assessment of the result in terms of national delegations. Possibly, this high level of abstention came from delegates who did not want to follow party orders or who felt themselves over-pressured by CDU delegates -who may have gone as far as to threaten to deny significant responsibility in the parliamentary group of

63 Juncker beats rival in centre-right race for EU presidency. EurActiv, 7th March 2014: <http://www.euractiv.com/eu-elections-2014/beat-top-contender-lead-eu-comm-news-533995>

64 Rajoy ordena a sus delegados votar a Juncker, el candidato de Merkel. *El País*, 7th of March 2014.

the next legislature to certain smaller delegations⁶⁵ and chose to demonstrate their discontent by not voting. In any case, the result of the vote was much closer than expected, and showed how competitive processes could be unpredictable, even among the European conservatives.

When announcing the result, the president, Joseph Daul, emphasised the importance of their democratic mechanism as a contrast to the almost plebiscitary election of Schulz and reaffirmed that if the EPP won the elections their candidate would become President of the Commission, to counter the rumours that Juncker was more interested in being President of the Council than of the Commission. Juncker himself, at the press conference that followed the congress, made it clear that he aspired to be President of the Commission. Although he did explain that he would not present himself as a candidate for the European Parliament for Luxembourg, “because his objective was not to be a member of the European Parliament”⁶⁶. He stated that, “*Je ne suis pas vexé qu’on pense à moi à la fois pour les présidences de la Commission et le Conseil*” making clear that, for him, aspiring to the presidency of the Commission was not incompatible with aspirations to lead the European Council; it would depend on the results of the European elections and the new balances between the ideological families.

In any case, the EPP emerged from the Dublin congress with a common candidate, chosen by its delegates, who quickly began his campaign with the support of the European party organisation his election posters –and a website for his candidacy– were ready from the morning of the election.

Under the slogan, “Experience. *Solidarity*. Future”, the congress also approved its manifesto and programme of action⁶⁷. The

65 Le retour de Jean-Claude Juncker dans l’UE. *Contexte*, 7th March 2014: <https://www.contexte.com/article/elections-europeennes-2014/le-retour-de-jean-claude-juncker-dans-l-ue.html>

66 Press conference given by Jean-Claude Juncker following his election as EPP candidate, Dublin, 7 of March 2014. Broadcast via streaming at: <http://dublin2014.epp.eu/>

67 Electoral Platform. EPP Dublin Congress. <http://dublin2014.epp.eu/documentation/>

manifesto, a brief electoral text, put the accent on the reforms that lead to economic growth and on the combination of the free movement of “Europeans within Europe” while “controlling immigration into Europe to ensure internal security”. The manifesto also made a priority of fighting organised crime and gave guarantees about data protection “as a human right”. Their intention was to be “more prudent about EU enlargement” while at the same time committing to “spreading democracy and the rule of law in our immediate neighbourhood”. It was a clear, concise manifesto that contrasted greatly with the Action Programme, which was much larger, had a more constructive tone and looked to the future. It was presented as their programme of government for the years 2014-19 and included their model for European integration and made clear their ambition to remain the largest party in the three European institutions: the Parliament, the Commission and the Council.

2.6. CONCLUSIONS ON THE CANDIDATE NOMINATION AND ELECTION PROCESSES

Now we have analysed the five processes of nomination and selection we can draw the first conclusions. First, it should be said that the five main parties made a highly significant step in the process of “politicisation” of the European elections by selecting a “common candidate” for the presidency of the European Commission. It was neither an obvious decision, nor one that could have been taken for granted. In fact, the European People’s Party did not take the decision until the month of December 2013, when the other four candidates had already chosen or opened their candidate selection processes. So, it is necessary to acknowledge the value of this decision. If one of the two largest parties had decided not to endorse a common candidate, there would have been no process. In this way, we can say that the first condition of the

process was completed.

Secondly, it is necessary to highlight the importance of the fact that four of the five parties—all except the Party of the European Left— set up candidate nomination and election processes that transcended national political concerns, giving way to real competition among political leaders at a European level to win nomination and to be elected. The processes themselves may be characterised in different ways depending on the extent to which they promoted the participation of the national political parties in the nomination process and left the definitive selection of the candidate in the hands of the European political bodies.

We may, therefore, conclude that the most open and participative candidate selection process was that used by the European Green Party, whose system of nomination by the national parties and of election by primaries was open to the voters. The most closed system was the Party of the European Left's, where nomination was not competitive and selection was made by the national leaders, even if the election was approved by the party congress. Somewhere between these two, the three main parties opted for a mixed model of nomination by the national parties and election by the European party congress delegates, though it was only in the case of the European People's Party that the final choice was competitive.

These selection processes had two characteristics in common. The first was the will of the European political leaders (presidents of parties and parliamentary groups, MEPs and commissioners) to ensure that European concerns and the general interest of the political family prevailed over national concerns and interests. The second was the willingness of the national political parties (and their leaders) to actively participate in the nomination of candidates, favouring the candidate they believed was closest to their values and interests and thereby ensuring that the Europeanisation of political parties at a national level was consolidated.

TABLE 2. CANDIDATE SELECTION MODELS

NOMINATION	ELECTION	EUROPEAN PARTY BUREAU (1)	NATIONAL PARTY LEADERS (2)	EUROPEAN PARTY CONGRESS (3)	ACTIVISTS OR VOTERS (4)
European Party Bureau (A)					
National Party Leaders (B)			Party of the European Left (EL)		
National parties (C)				Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe (ALDE) Party of European Socialists (PES) European People's Party (EPP)	European Green Party (EGP)
Activists (D)					

SOURCE: AUTHOR, ACCORDING TO THE TYPOLOGY PROPOSED BY SKRZYPEK (2010)

It is, thus, important to point out that all the candidates in all the parties, with the exception of Alexis Tsipras, were political leaders of European institutions (MEPs, members of the Commission, former presidents of the Eurogroup), and that they managed to insist on the nomination of a common candidate despite the opposition of the leadership of the national political parties (in particular those that were heads of state or government), and, in some cases, despite majority opposition.

Martin Schulz, European Parliament spokesperson for the Socialists for ten years, overcame the scepticism of various members of the PES -such as the British and Dutch labour parties and the Nordic social democrats- with a clearly social democratic

and Europeanist discourse. The four green candidates ran individual campaigns that transcended the support received from the national parties, and Ska Keller's victory was won thanks to the pan-European network of the Young European Greens. Verhofstadt and Rehn took part in a duel that continued right up to the doors of the liberal's congress only to end up making an agreement that favoured the president of the parliamentary group, Guy Verhofstadt, who best represented the Europeanism that characterises the European liberal democrats. And, finally, the selection process of the European People's Party can be considered the success of two politicians with long European track records -Juncker and Barnier- who had to fight the opinion of 12 prime ministers who wanted to have a free hand to choose a candidate after the elections.

As we have previously noted, it is also necessary to point out that the candidate selection processes highlighted the "Europeanisation" of the national political parties that had to position themselves in relation to the candidates and participate in a selection process that transcended their traditional national thinking. On the one hand, the national political parties who find themselves in opposition in their countries -above all those on the European periphery most affected by the crisis- saw the selection of a common candidate as an opportunity to connect their national project to a larger one at a time when many parties have lost the capacity to influence government policy, being heavily under the influence of decisions taken by the European institutions. On the other hand, the national political parties with governmental responsibilities became, in the end, involved in the process, willingly or otherwise, and made clear commitments to particular candidates in the nomination processes and accepted political defeat when it occurred. Even if, as we shall see in the next chapter, not all the national political parties campaigned with the same intensity for the "common candidates" and some -the British parties, for example- refused to accept the European

democratic dynamic, locating themselves, once more, outside the majority consensus.

We can, therefore, say that the candidate selection process reinforced the “politicisation” of the European political parties -generating dynamics of political debate and internal competition- and the “Europeanisation” of the national political parties, which were obliged to set the elections in a European perspective. In the next chapter, we will see how these dynamics were accentuated during the electoral campaign and we will be able to assess the extent to which there was a genuine process of “politicisation” and “Europeanisation” of the elections which might clear the way for the establishment of mechanisms characteristic of a “democratic politics” in the institutional system of the European Union.

3. THE CANDIDATES' CAMPAIGNS FOR THE PRESIDENCY OF THE COMMISSION

In the previous chapter we analysed how the five main European parties chose their candidates for the presidency of the Commission. In this third chapter we will analyse the European election campaigns from a double perspective: first, we will look at each of the candidates' electoral campaigns, and then we will analyse the electoral debates and impact the campaign had in the national media and on the election results.

We will begin by analysing the campaign of each of the candidates, focussing on the countries they visited and the interviews they gave to the national news media as an indicator of the Europeanisation of the electoral campaign. Then we will analyse the debates held between the five candidates and their impact, followed by the general coverage of the electoral campaign in the national news media in order to assess whether substantial differences in the level of Europeanisation of the electoral campaign were produced at national levels.

The information we have in relation to the campaign visits of the candidates is exhaustive and is based on the systematic following of primary sources -the websites and social media profiles of the European parties and their candidates- which we then duly contrast. We cannot say the same, however, about the presence of the campaign in the news media. In this case, our work is based on two sources: in the case of the candidate interviews, we obtained the information from the European political parties

themselves and they do not provide exhaustive information. In order to examine the electoral campaign in the national news media, we have used digital news aggregators that systematise the information that appears in the press in various European countries along with a study made by the DG of Communication of the European Parliament.

Using this data as a foundation, we have attempted to evaluate the degree of Europeanisation of the election campaigns at European and national levels in order to validate our hypothesis about the impact of the candidates in the Europeanisation of the electoral campaign. That is to say, whether a greater presence of candidates for the European Commission in a given country contributed to the Europeanisation of the electoral campaign at a national level.

3.1. ANALYSIS OF THE CANDIDATES' CAMPAIGNS

3.1.1. JEAN-CLAUDE JUNCKER'S CAMPAIGN

The People's Party candidate, Jean-Claude Juncker, elected on the 7th of March, presented his candidature in the first two weeks by giving interviews in the main French and German newspapers, on German public television and on the Greek television station, MEGA. The order could be seen as a sign of his priorities: Germany, France, Greece. They are priorities that fit with the support he received in order to be elected as a candidate. We may recall that Juncker was nominated by the German CDU and New Democracy from Greece, and his adversary at the EPP congress in Dublin was French (Michel Barnier).

Throughout March, April and May, Juncker gave more than forty interviews to the media of nine countries:

Over eight weeks, Juncker made 25 campaign trips to 16 EU countries: seven to Germany, three to France and one each to Belgium, the Netherlands, Finland, Latvia, Poland, Bulgaria, Malta, Cyprus, Slovakia, Austria, Spain, Portugal, Greece and

TABLE 3. INTERVIEWS GIVEN BY THE CANDIDATE JEAN-CLAUDE JUNCKER

COUNTRY	NO. OF INTERVIEWS	MEDIA
Germany	13	Der Spiegel, Die Welt, Süddeutsche Zeitung, Handelsblatt, ZDF TV, Stuttgarter Zeitung, Hannoversche Allgemeine Zeitung, Neue Zürcher Zeitung (...)
France	8	Le Monde (2), Le Figaro, L'Express, ARTE, AFP, France 2 TV, Europe 1
Spain	7	El País (2), ABC, El Mundo, La Vanguardia, El Correo, Cinco Dias.
Greece	6	MEGA TV, Kathimerini, Emea, Skai, To Vima
Italy	3	La Stampa, Il Secolo XIX, Linkiesta
United Kingdom	2	The Guardian, The Independent
Belgium	1	Le Soir
The Netherlands	1	De Standaard
Romania	1	Calea Europeana
Hungary	1	Magyar Hírlap

SOURCE: AUTHOR.

Luxembourg, invited by the respective political member parties of the People's Party family.

He participated in more than 65 campaign events in more than 30 European cities, the majority of which were public conferences, institutional events, press conferences and company visits. In Madrid, Vienna, Bratislava and Poznan (Poland), his visits were just a single day, but in France, Portugal, Greece, Cyprus and Latvia he made two-day visits, campaigning in various cities. In Portugal, for example, he participated in events in Lisbon, Porto and Mafra, while in France he took his campaign to Paris, Bordeaux, and Strasbourg. In Germany, he campaigned in five cities (including Berlin, Munich and Düsseldorf).

It is worth pointing out that he did not campaign in two of the largest countries in the Union: Italy and the United Kingdom. In Italy, this was due to a bad relationship with Silvio Berlusconi's party, which did not invite him to campaign there. While in the United Kingdom, it was because there is no member party of the European People's Party.

The data indicates, therefore, that Juncker's campaign mainly focussed on Germany and most sought to be visible in the countries with member parties of the European People's Party at government, above all, those on the European periphery: Spain, Portugal, Greece, Cyprus, Malta, Poland, Latvia and Slovakia. We may say that Juncker made a tour of the presidents and prime ministers who supported him at the EPP congress and who were to put him forward him at the European Council.

His campaign messages centred around two main ideas: promoting growth without debt and reunifying a Europe divided by the consequences of the crisis. He claimed that Europe should focus on what was important, "a big Europe for the big things", and he defended the reforms and adjustments made in the country's most affected by the crisis, emphasising the courage of their leaders and Europe's capacity to save the unity of the Euro and to overcome those who bet against the Euro's success. In his trips he participated in various institutional events that celebrated 10 years since the expansion. In Cyprus and Slovakia, where he took the opportunity to hail the expansion process a "win-win situation", he committed himself to working to help the process continue to be "a success story"⁶⁸.

68 "A brave Europe" speech in Bratislava. EPP Press Release, 6th May 2014.

3.1.2. MARTIN SCHULZ'S CAMPAIGN

The Socialist candidate began his campaign before Juncker. Martin Schulz began campaigning immediately after his election, on the 1st of March, in Rome. Over 12 weeks, he made 45 campaign trips to 20 EU countries: fourteen to Germany, six to France (Paris, Lyon, Strasbourg, Brest), three to Spain (Madrid, Malaga, Barcelona) and Italy (Verona, Trieste, Piombino), two to Portugal (Lisbon and Porto), Belgium and Austria, and one each to Greece, Slovenia, Denmark, Finland, the Czech Republic, Luxembourg, Bulgaria, Romania, Ireland, Northern Ireland, Poland, Malta, Sweden and Croatia. The only countries he did not visit were: Lithuania, Latvia, Estonia, Hungary, Slovakia, Cyprus, the Netherlands and Great Britain. He did not visit the last two because of strong disagreement with the labour parties of each country.

Schulz participated in more than 67 campaign events, the majority of which were party meetings, in more than 40 European cities. The most significant electoral events, and those with the largest attendance were held in Athens, Paris, Sofia, Bucharest, Dortmund, Malaga, Barcelona and Lyon. It was a classic campaign of large meetings and supporter mobilisation, but one which had few press conferences and media interviews⁶⁹.

Schulz's campaign, while also greatly focussed on Germany, where he was head of the national list, also sought to have high visibility in France and, to a lesser extent, in the two large countries of the south, Spain and Italy. The Socialist candidate visited the majority of countries who suffered most in the economic crisis (Portugal, Greece, Ireland, Slovenia) and put on campaign events in the main countries of eastern Europe (Poland, Romania, the Czech Republic, Bulgaria) and in the three Scandinavian countries (Sweden, Denmark and Finland) with a long social democrat tradition, but who had not given their support to his candidacy.

⁶⁹ And in contrast to the other candidates, we do not have a list of the interviews given by Martin Schulz during the campaign.

In general, it was a campaign that centred on the Franco-German axis and on the countries in the east and the south of Europe who were the main supporters of Schulz's candidacy and from where he received most of his votes, as we shall see later on.

The campaign messages focussed on fighting the economic crisis and unemployment -above all, youth unemployment- with policies of investment and growth at a European level. Job creation was his main priority and he argued for the reindustrialisation of Europe and a minimum wage system for all European workers. On the other hand, it also put emphasis on the equality of European countries, going beyond the fissure separating northern and southern countries and he spoke strongly against the anti-European populism that exploits citizens' frustrations, especially in France.

3.1.3. GUY VERHOFSTADT'S CAMPAIGN

The Liberal candidate began his campaign at the start of March and in 12 weeks he made 28 campaign trips to 17 countries: three to Belgium, France (Paris and Lyon) and Italy (Rome, Milan and Florence), two to Greece (Athens), Austria (Vienna), Poland (Katowice and Szczecin), the Czech Republic (Prague), Sweden (Uppsala and Stockholm) and Spain (Bilbao and Barcelona), and one each to Great Britain (Manchester), Slovenia (Ljubljana), the Netherlands (the Hague), Croatia (Zagreb), Romania (Bucharest), Germany (Karlsruhe), Ireland (Dublin) and Luxembourg.

It is significant that he did practically no campaigning in Great Britain and Germany, where the majority of the MEPs of the previous legislature's parliamentary group came from. Neither the German FDP nor the British Lib Dems wanted him as a candidate, and they did not invite him to campaign. He only gave a conference at the University of Manchester and a single electoral event in Baden-Württemberg.

Just as in the cases of Juncker and Schulz, his campaign focussed on the countries that had given him support as a candidate above

TABLE 4. INTERVIEWS GIVEN BY GUY VERHOFSTADT

COUNTRY	NO. OF INTERVIEWS	MEDIA
France	12	France 2, Europe 1, France 24, France Culture, France Info, TV5 Monde, Le Monde, Libération, Europe Hebdo, France Ouest, L'Opinion, atlantico.fr
Belgium	10	Le Soir (2), De Standaard, RBTF, VTM TV, Echo, Dag Allemaal, International Onderneme, HUMO.
Greece	4	ERT TV, TVXS, Protothema, Kathimerinī
The Netherlands	3	De Morgen, De Standaard, noordhollandsdagblad.nl
Italy	2	Sky TV, Linkiesta
Spain	2	La Vanguardia, El Mundo
United Kingdom	1	LSE Europp Blog
Austria	1	Format
Germany	1	Baden TV
Sweden	1	TheLocal.se
Estonia	1	Arvamus
Denmark	1	Raeson.dk

SOURCE: AUTHOR.

and beyond the electoral weight of the liberal parties at a national level. For this reason, he did practically no campaigning in the Scandinavian and Baltic countries who had supported Olli Rehn in the liberal candidate selection process.

By contrast, Verhofstadt was highly visible in Belgium, where he headed the list, in France, where he received and gave support to the centrist electoral list *L'Alternative*, and in Italy, where a centrist list, *Scelta Europea*, was drawn up with Verhofstadt's name on the campaign materials, but which had little electoral success. His presence in Greece was also more testimonial than

effectual. Finally, it is worth noting his support for the new Austrian liberal party NEOS and the new Czech party ANO 2011, as well as his presence at the launch of the electoral campaign in the Netherlands, where the three parties of the liberal group ended up winning the elections clearly. In total, he participated in more than 44 campaign events in 25 European cities, the majority of which were public conferences, press conferences and party events.

Beyond his presence on the ground, the liberal candidate put a lot of effort into being visible in the news media. He was interviewed by 39 news outlets (printed press, radio, TV and digital) from 12 EU countries, principally France and Belgium. Nevertheless, it was only in France, Belgium, Greece, the Netherlands and Spain that he had access to national news media.

His campaign messages focussed on two key points: the need to give new impetus to European integration, reclaiming the function of the leadership of the Commission presidency, reaffirming its independence in relation to the governments and the will to set in motion his “Plan 4 Europe”, an economic growth plan based on a combination of investments at a European level and profound structural reforms at a national level. In this sense, he harshly criticised the handling of the crisis in Greece as much by EU institutions as by the two main Greek political parties—New Democracy and the PASOK—whom he accused of making neither genuine reforms nor taking responsibility in the management of the crisis.

3.1.4. SKA KELLER AND JOSÉ BOVÉ'S CAMPAIGN

The Greens' campaign attempted to base itself on the “participation, transnationalisation, our Common Manifesto and personalisation”—making Ska Keller and José Bové «the faces and the voices» of the campaign in support of the member parties—and offered the activists their

own material and online tools to make the digital campaign⁷⁰. In line with the Greens' commitment to gender equality, Ska Keller and José Bové shared campaign leadership, but in practice, Keller's was the more visible face, the "*spitzenkandidaten*" of the European Greens, as much in the debates with the other candidates as in the campaign trips.

Keller, over twelve weeks, made 24 campaign trips to 11 EU countries: five to Germany (Berlin (two), Leipzig, Brandenburg, Halle) and Spain (Barcelona (three), Madrid and Ceuta), four to France (Limoges, Strasbourg, Toulouse, Agen, Lille), two to Belgium (Brussels) and Denmark (Copenhagen) and one each to Croatia (Zagreb), Sweden (Stockholm), Austria (Vienna), the Czech Republic (Prague), Finland (Helsinki) and Great Britain (London). José Bové only campaigned in France, except for one campaign trip to Rome. Keller participated in more than 30 campaign events and Bové in more than 10. In total, more than 20 cities were visited. That means that the Greens' candidates campaigned in 12 countries that make up the central core of the European Green Party—the Franco-German axis and the Scandinavian countries, with special support given to countries where green representation could grow significantly, such as Spain, the Czech Republic and Croatia.

Between the two of them they gave at least 15 interviews, the majority in France (*Le Monde*, *La Tribune*, *Yahoo.fr*, and two to *Libération*) and Spain (*La Vanguardia*, *El Periódico*, *El Confidencial*, *El Punt Avui*, Canal 3/24). Ska Keller, despite being an MEP candidate for Germany, gave only one interview in Germany, to *Deutsche Welle*. This was probably because of her confrontation with the *Die Grüne* candidate, Rebecca Harms.

The Greens' campaign messages centred around a European "Green New Deal", that developed a growth model based on renewable energy, and strongly criticised the Transatlantic Trade

⁷⁰ Greens present their common European campaign, European Greens, 19th February 2014: <http://europeangreens.eu/news/greens-present-their-common-european-campaign>

and Investment Partnership (TTIP), approved by the European Parliament with the votes of the People's Party, the Socialists and the Liberals. The Greens presented themselves as an option that was clearly European but one that did not participate in the agreements of the three parties of the European establishment, and which were especially critical of the accords made by the socialist candidate, Martin Schulz, with the European People's Party.

3.1.5. ALEXIS TSIPRAS' CAMPAIGN

Like Jean-Claude Juncker, Alexis Tsipras was not a candidate for the European Parliament. He led the campaign for the European Left in tandem with his campaign with *Syriza* to win the elections in Greece, which he did. For this reason he campaigned relatively little outside Greece⁷¹.

Nevertheless, between February and May, Tsipras made 13 campaign trips to 8 countries: five to Italy (Rome, Milan, Palermo, Turin, Bologna), two to France (Paris) and one each to Slovenia (Ljubljana), Ireland (Dublin), Portugal (Porto), Spain (Santiago), the Czech Republic (Prague) and Germany (Berlin). In all, he participated in 21 campaign events in 12 European cities.

He participated above all in party electoral meetings, the most important of which were in Paris and Bologna, where a symbolic public meeting took place in the historic city of the old Italian Communist Party. In fact, the geographical distribution of his campaign shows that he followed in the footsteps of the main communist parties of the Latin countries. Only in Spain did he not have a significant presence, owing principally to the reservations of the Spanish Communist Party (PCE) about campaigning with the leader of a party, in *Syriza*, which is the competition in Greece for the historic Greek Communist Party. The response to this curious reserve was clear. The leader of *Podemos*, Pablo Iglesias—direct

⁷¹ We do not have data for Tsipras' participation in *Syriza* electoral events in Greece, but neither do we consider them relevant to this study, as his presence inside or outside his country did not turn out to be at all balanced, as it was in the case of Martin Schulz.

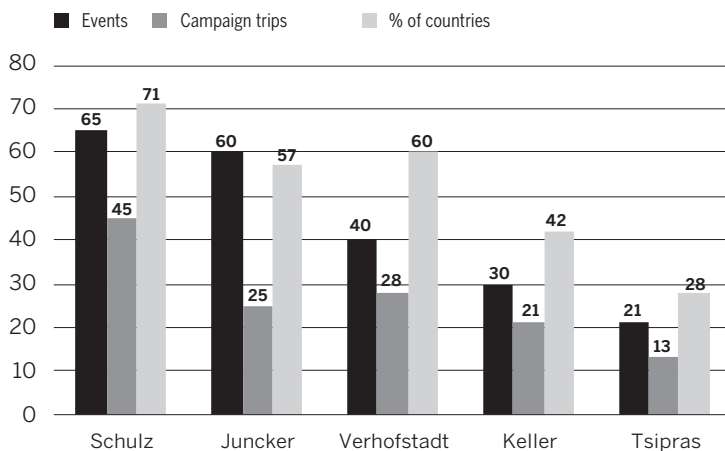
competition of the United Left, led by the PCE—became the new leader of the parliamentary group of the European left.

In terms of news media, Tsipras gave more than ten interviews, mostly in France (*NouvelObs*, *Le Monde*, *L'Humanité*) and Italy (*La Repubblica*, *La Sette TV*), but also in Slovenia, Sweden, the United Kingdom (*The Guardian*) and Germany (*Neues Deutschland*).

Tsipras' campaign messages were built around the total rejection of the policies of economic austerity “imposed” by the European “troika” and the criticism of the handling of the economic crisis by the EU institutions and the European governments. In multitudinous electoral meetings he railed against “the government of the banks” and warned of the need to choose “austerity or democracy” calling for “new alliances to be built”, to make a “Europe of solidarity” claiming that the Party of the European left is “the only real, feasible alternative” in Europe, distinguishing them as much from the establishment parties as from Beppe Grillo in Italy⁷².

Using the data that we have, it may be said that the campaigns of the five candidates for the presidency of the European Commission were certainly uneven. The candidate who attended the most electoral events in the most EU countries was Martin Schulz (more than 65 campaign events in 45 trips to 20 countries), followed by Jean-Claude Juncker (more than 60 events in 25 trips to 16 countries) and Guy Verhofstadt (more than 40 events in 28 trips to 17 countries). From a certain distance, Ska Keller (more than 30 events in 21 trips to 12 countries), and, finally, Alexis Tsipras (21 events in 13 trips to 8 countries).

That is to say that Schulz visited 71% of EU countries in twelve weeks, Verhofstadt 60% in twelve weeks, while Juncker visited 57% in just eight weeks. The Greens, for their part, only campaigned in 42% of the countries and Tsipras in 28%, a notable difference when compared to the first three.

GRAPH 2. CAMPAIGN EVENTS, VISITS AND % OF COUNTRIES VISITED BY THE CANDIDATES

SOURCE: AUTHOR.

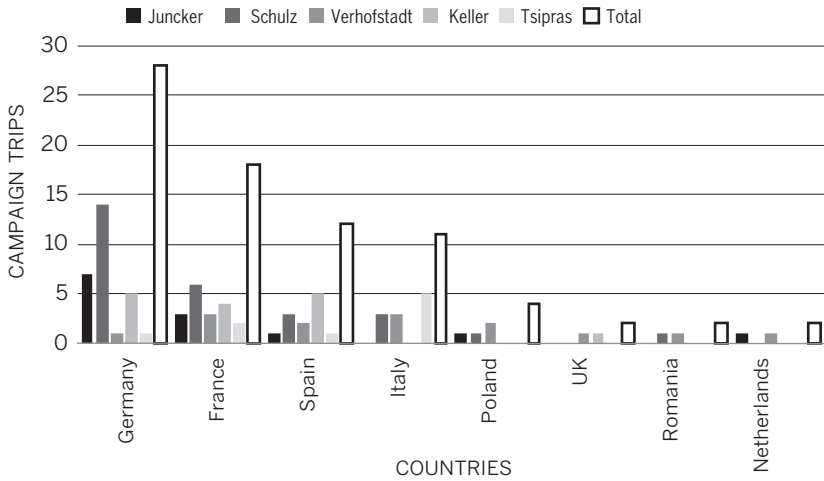
3.1.6. THE EUROPEAN CAMPAIGN BY COUNTRY

The three countries most visited by candidates were Germany (28 visits), France (18) and Spain (12). In fact, these were the only three countries where all five candidates campaigned. Italy was visited on eleven occasions by four candidates (Tsipras, Schulz, Verhofstadt and Bové) and Belgium was visited on eight occasions by four candidates (Verhofstadt, Schulz, Keller and Juncker).

If we take the other large EU countries into consideration, at the other extreme we find Poland, who only received four visits from three candidates (Verhofstadt, Juncker and Schulz); the UK, which only received two visits from two candidates in events that were not strictly electoral (Verhofstadt and Keller); Romania with two visits from Schulz and Verhofstadt; and the Netherlands which only received visits from Verhofstadt and Juncker.

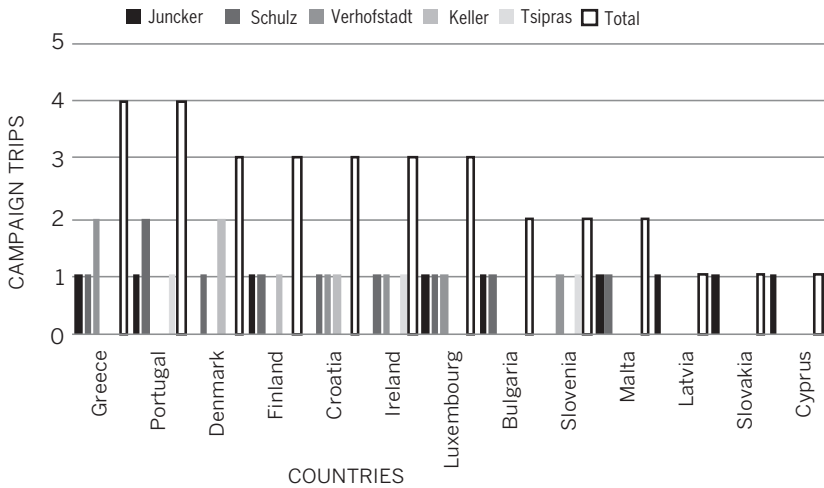
We can confirm, therefore, a dynamic that differentiates the four big countries of the eurozone (Germany, France, Italy

GRAPH 3. CAMPAIGN VISITS OF THE CANDIDATES TO THE LARGE EU COUNTRIES



SOURCE: AUTHOR.

GRAPH 4. CAMPAIGN VISITS OF THE CANDIDATES TO MEDIUM-SIZED AND SMALL EU COUNTRIES



SOURCE: AUTHOR.

and Spain) from the United Kingdom and the largest Eastern European countries, which were less connected to the European campaign, as was the Netherlands, one of the founding countries of the EU, and where Euroscepticism has grown significantly over the last decade.

Among the medium-sized and small countries, we again see a certain fissure between the countries that joined before and after 2004. The candidates visited Belgium, Austria, Greece, Sweden, Portugal, Denmark, Finland and Ireland more than Bulgaria, Latvia and Slovakia. Of the newer member states, only the Czech Republic, Croatia and Slovenia stand out as countries that hosted a number of electoral events for the European candidates similar to the countries of the same size but which have been members of the EU club for longer. Finally, three countries that were not visited by any candidate stand out: Hungary, Lithuania and Estonia.

3.2. THE ELECTORAL DEBATES BETWEEN THE CANDIDATES AND THEIR MEDIA COVERAGE

The 2014 electoral campaign began without clear guidelines. It was the first time candidates for the presidency of the European Commission were able to run an electoral campaign comparable to national electoral campaigns. The European political parties had never run a campaign with these characteristics and neither had the European Parliament, as an institution, ever faced one.

The first significant decision, the objective of which was to organise an electoral campaign as similar as possible to a national electoral campaign, was to agree to hold a debate between the candidates. The debate was to be organised by the European Parliament at its headquarters in Brussels and to be broadcast via the European Broadcasting Union (EBU), the public television network who organise and broadcast the Eurovision song contest

each year. The decision was made public in February⁷³.

The plan was to organise two debates. One, on the 15th, between all the candidates, and the other on the 20th of May, which would be a face-off between the candidates of the two main parties. To the first, the candidates of those European political parties that were officially recognised by the Parliament that had chosen a candidate for the presidency of the Commission would be invited. That would open the door to Europhobe or Eurosceptic parties who wanted to participate in the debates, although in the end, none of them chose a candidate so as not to “legitimate” the process.

The objective of the debate, encouraged by the European Parliament, was clearly that the personalisation and politicisation of the electoral campaign should stimulate electoral participation and serve to strengthen the democratic legitimacy of the European Union. The decision to organise an official debate encouraged academic organisations and television channels from various countries to organise other debates between the top candidates, generating an incremental dynamic.

In the end, the EBU only organised the 15th of May debate—the only one in which the five nominated candidates participated—but another four debates of four were organized (without Alexis Tsipras) in English and French to take place in Maastricht, Florence and Brussels, as well as four face-offs between Martin Schulz and Jean-Claude Juncker in Paris and Berlin, broadcast on German and French television.

The first debate was scheduled for the 10th of April in French and broadcast by the French television station TV5 Monde and the Belgian radio and television station RTBF. Jean-Claude Juncker, Guy Verhofstadt and José Bové all participated, but in the end Martin Schulz did not. In his place he sent the MEP and French candidate, Pervenche Berès. It was, therefore, a very

73 “Officials seek greater EU election turnout with televised ‘presidential debate’” EurActiv, 26th February 2014: www.euractiv.com

Franco-Français debate with little repercussion beyond France.

The first real presidential debate took place, as announced, on the 28th of April in Maastricht and was held in English. It was organised by the university and the city council, jointly with the Youth European Forum, and broadcast live by the news channel, Euronews. The debate was held in front of an audience of more than 700 young people, mostly university students, who asked varied questions of the candidates. The atmosphere recalled that of the US presidential debates held in large universities. Jean-Claude Juncker, Martin Schulz, Guy Verhofstadt and Ska Keller took part.

It was a lively debate, with direct questioning of the candidates and a format that obliged them to give short answers of less than a minute. This first attempt at a debate between four of the five candidates was followed by more than 70,000 users of the Euronews website. We do not have the audience figures for the conventional television channel, but Euronews viewing figures are typically around 2,7 million daily viewers⁷⁴. In any event, the debate was also widely followed on Twitter, with the hashtag #EUDebate2014 trending at one moment of the debate in six EU countries: Belgium, Germany, the Netherlands, Ireland, Austria, Italy and France, with peaks of up to 10,000 tweets per minute⁷⁵.

The debate also received notable coverage in the written press the following day. According to a study made by the European Parliament of a total of 1,800 national and regional news sources from around Europe⁷⁶, during April more than 400 weekly references were made to the debates between the candidates broadcast by Euronews, Euranet and France 24.

On the 29th of April, a third debate with the same protagonists was held at the European Parliament headquarters and was

74 Euronews media kit 2012: http://www.euronews.com/media/download/mediapack/euronews_media_kit_2012_English.pdf

75 Information available on the debate website: www.eudebate2014.eu

76 *Media Monitoring EE14*. Media Services and Monitoring Unit, Media Directorate, DG COMM European Parliament.

broadcast on the radio network EURANET with very limited impact. Finally, on the 9th of May, the fourth and final debate between four candidates (Juncker, Schulz, Verhofstadt and Bové) took place in Florence, organised by the European University Institute. The audience was eminently academic and it was broadcast by RAI 24 Ore.

The debate on the 15th of May, when Juncker, Schulz, Verhofstadt, Keller and Tsipras participated, was held in the European Parliament chamber, which was converted into a large set and press room from where the broadcast media could cover the event. It was a slightly different debate to the previous ones in that the use of different languages made it less agile (Tsipras spoke in Greek, Juncker combined French and German) and the questions the candidates asked each other—above all Tsipras, Keller and Schulz to Juncker—were more direct.

In contrast to the other debates, it was broadcast in 24 languages—facilitating its following by all interested European citizens—on 31 television channels, 14 general information websites and five radio channels in 25 countries, including Canada and Ukraine. In fact, the only countries in the EU that did not have media coverage of the debate were: Estonia, Latvia, Hungary, the Czech Republic and Cyprus⁷⁷.

Most countries broadcast it via information television channels rather than general channels, and the majority of connections by streaming were through the websites of regular newspapers. Nevertheless, it is worth noting that the debate was broadcast live on 29 television channels in 14 of the 28 EU countries: Austria, Belgium (2), Bulgaria (2), Croatia (5), France (3), Germany (2), Ireland, Italy, Luxembourg, Portugal (2), Romania (3), Slovakia, Spain (2), and the United Kingdom, as well as two international news channels, in English (Euronews) and German (*Deutsche Welle*).

77 EUROVISION Debate Participating Broadcasters, available at: www.eurovisiondebate.tv

The debate about the channels that should broadcast the 15th May debate between the five candidates arose in various countries. In Germany, where they had already broadcast the Juncker-Schulz debates, the five-candidate debate was shown on a secondary channel, Phoenix, specialised in event broadcasting, which has a daily audience share of 4 million viewers, 1,1% of the audience, a decision that was criticised by the German Cultural Council⁷⁸. Criticism was also provoked in France where, at first, the management of the public channel wanted to show the debate on the 15th only via the internet. Protests by citizens, MEPs and the government itself led to the criteria being changed.

In Spain, the debate was broadcast on Spanish Canal 24h (TVE) and Catalan 3/24 (TVC). The debate between the two leading Spanish candidates was also shown on the same Spanish news channel, but they had very different audiences. The European debate took place at 9pm—evening news time—and was followed by 0,9% of the audience. The Spanish debate, by contrast, at 22.30—just after the news—was watched by more than 9%⁷⁹. The problem, therefore, was not only the channel, but the importance the news gave to the debate. The debate between Miguel Arias Cañete and Elena Valenciano was spoken about for weeks in the press and on TV because of the disagreement of the big two parties about the format, among other things. Almost nothing was said, however, about the European debate. The media created no news interest and the debate was less followed than the debate between the national candidates. Though it did enjoy notable coverage from the media a posteriori. According to the study made by the European Parliament, the Eurovision debate got coverage of more than 250 articles per week during May⁸⁰.

78 German public TV downplays EU presidential debate. EurActiv.com, 30th April 2014.

79 Spanish television audiences on the 15th of May 2014 available at: <http://www.formulatv.com/audiencias/2014-05-15/>

80 Media Monitoring EE14. Media Services and Monitoring Unit, Media Directorate, DG COMM European Parliament.

A significant number also followed on Twitter using the hashtag #TelleEUROPE, with 153,739 tweets on the day of broadcast (127,670 during the debate itself) with an average of 24 tweets per second, and at a rate of more than 3200 per minute in the moments of largest audience. The debate was tweeted about by a total of 35,404 unique users, 33% of whom used English, 22% French and 20% Spanish, far above the levels of Italian (11%) and German (7%) used. The debate was heavily followed in Greece, meaning that 6% of all tweets were written in Greek. This data also helps us to understand why the most referenced candidate was Alexis Tsipras (25%) followed by Martin Schulz (23%), Juncker and Verhofstadt (19%) and Ska Keller (14%).

It is also significant that the debate on the 15th of May was much more greatly followed and commented on via Twitter in French and Spanish than in German. This fact may lead us to think that members of the public interested in the debate in Germany focussed on the face-to-face debates as we shall soon see, while the French and Spanish saw in the five-person debate the possibility of expressing their opinions.

Finally, four face-to-face debates took place between Jean-Claude Juncker and Martin Schulz in French and German: on the 9th of April, from Brussels in French, broadcast by France Info; on the 9th of May from Berlin in German, broadcast by the German channel, ZDF and the Austrian channel, ORF; on the 13th of May, again in French from Paris, broadcast by LCI and RTL; and, finally, on the 20th of May, in German from Berlin on ARD.

The first debate in French was broadcast on Wednesday at 5pm in the afternoon. The second, a Tuesday at 6.30pm. On the other hand, the debates in German were broadcast at prime time, at 8.15pm, by two major channels in the presence of an audience. The first on the night the campaign began. The second, three days before the campaign ended. The German debates, therefore, had much greater impact than the French debates between the two principal candidates, as can be demonstrated

by the analysis of the German and French press of the previous days. In fact, the debates in German were picked up by the Italian and Spanish press, among others, something that did not happen in the French debates.

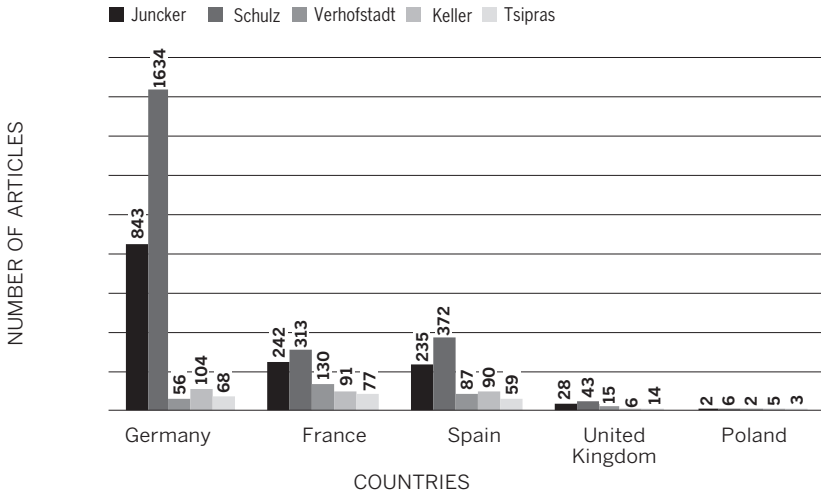
3.3. THE MEDIA COVERAGE OF THE CAMPAIGNS OF THE CANDIDATES TO LEAD THE EUROPEAN COMMISSION

The debates aside, it is worth noting the media coverage of the candidates' campaigns in the national media as an indicator of the "Europeanisation" of the electoral campaigns in each of the countries of the European Union. In this sense, a relevant indicator (though not an exhaustive one), of the resonance of the candidates' campaign in the media is the number of times they were mentioned in the national press during the electoral campaign. If, as a reference, we take the data offered by the website www.pressdisplay.com, analysing a significant quantity of the written press of the main EU countries (except Italy), we are able to draw relevant conclusions.

The media presence of the candidates for the presidency of the Commission was much greater in Germany than in France or Spain. By contrast, their presence in the UK and Poland was insignificant. If we add the media impact of the five candidates together, we find that, in Germany, during the 15 days of the campaign, media impact was made 2,705 times, in France, 853, and Spain, 843. The number of impacts made in the UK, by contrast, was only 106 (fewer than ten a day) and in Poland it was only 18 (which means one daily impact in the written press).

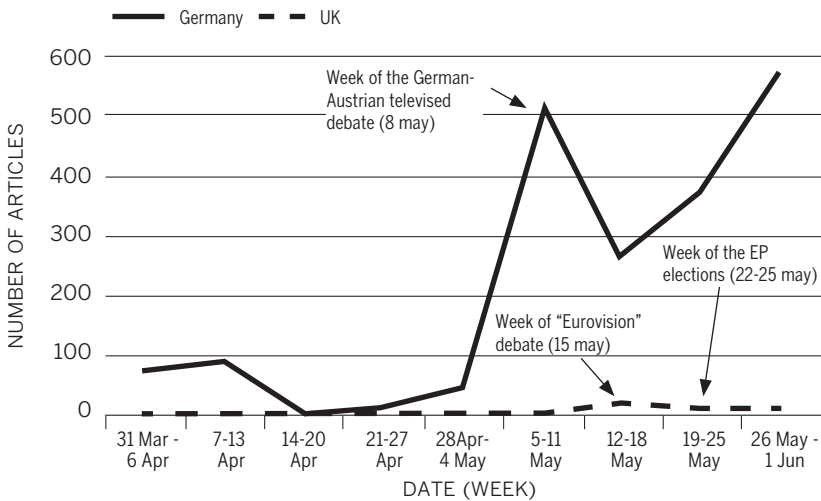
This analysis fits with the work done by the British political scientists, Simon Hix and Stuart Wilks-Heeg, who emphasise the difference in the media coverage of the candidates for the

GRAPH 5. PRESS ARTICLES REFERRING TO THE FIVE CANDIDATES BETWEEN THE 9TH AND THE 25TH OF MAY



SOURCE: PRODUCED BY THE AUTHOR USING DATA FROM WWW.PRESSDISPLAY.COM

GRAPH 6. NUMBER OF ARTICLES REFERRING TO JUNCKER AND SCHULZ IN THE BRITISH AND GERMAN PRESS.



SOURCE: HIX AND WILKS-HEEG (2014).

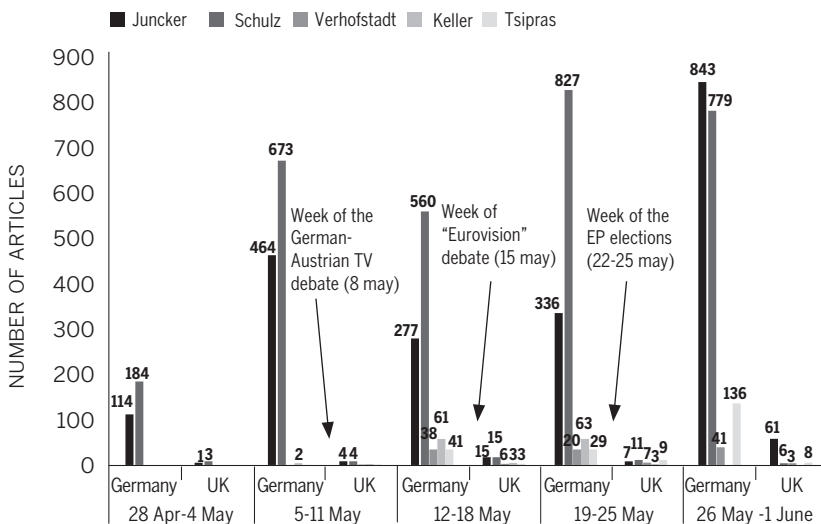
presidency of the Commission between Germany and the UK⁸¹. The number of weekly articles in the British press referencing one of the two main candidates was insignificant—around ten a week—during the months of April and May. In Germany, by contrast, an average of more than 300 weekly articles were recorded, peaking at 500 in the week of the first Juncker-Schulz face-to-face debate.

In the case of Germany, this data shows the wide media coverage that the first televised debate between Juncker and Schulz received. It was significantly more than that for the debate between the five candidates on the 15th of May and for the second face-to-face on the 20th of May. The graph 6, which includes a week-by-week comparison of the number of references to the five candidates made in the British and German press, confirms the data that we previously gave about the greater «Europeanisation» of the electoral campaign in Germany.

As we shall see in graph 7, in Germany, the significant increase in references to Martin Schulz is also important to note, as is the constant presence of Juncker, whose visibility in the media grows substantially in the week before the elections, with more than 800 articles mentioning his name. In the UK, by contrast, there is only significant increase in the number of articles referring to Juncker the week before the elections, and, even so, it is only 10% of the number of articles that refer to the winner of the elections in the German press. This data shows the self-marginalisation of the UK in this candidate election process. It is a self-exclusion that helps to explain the incapacity of the British government to re-enter the debate surrounding the election of the new President of the Commission in the weeks following the European elections, as we shall see below.

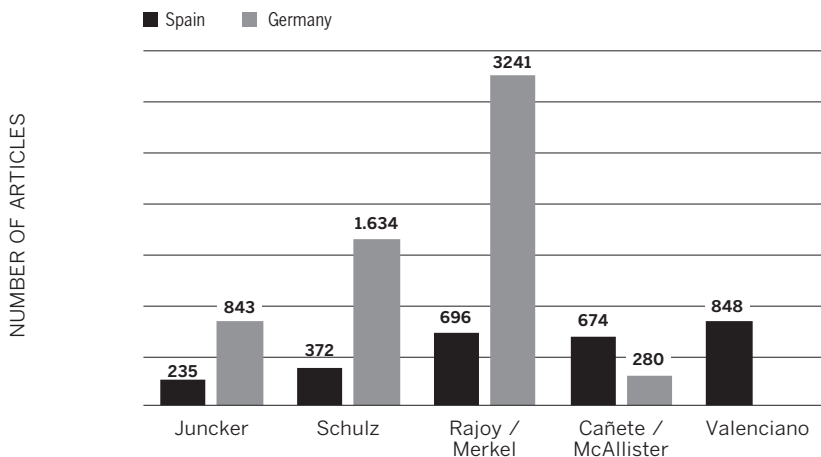
81 Media coverage in Germany and UK shows why both countries have radically different views over who should be the next Commission President, *LSE Europblog*, June 9th 2014: <http://blogs.lse.ac.uk/europblog/2014/06/09/media-coverage-in-germany-and-the-uk-shows-why-both-countries-have-radically-different-views-over-who-should-be-the-next-commission-president/>

GRAPH 7. NUMBER OF ARTICLES REFERRING TO EACH OF THE CANDIDATES IN THE BRITISH AND GERMAN PRESS



SOURCE: HIX AND WILKS-HEEG (2014).

GRAPH 8. ARTICLES REFERRING TO THE CANDIDATE AND THE HEADS OF GOVERNMENT IN SPAIN AND GERMANY



SOURCE: PRODUCED BY THE AUTHOR USING DATA FROM WWW.PRESSDISPLAY.COM

Finally, as another point of comparison of what this media impact in the national press means, we can compare the media impact of the European heads of lists with that of the national heads of lists and the heads of government. Take, for example, the examples of Germany and Spain. In this case, we can see how the media impact between the national and European candidates in the written press during the 15 days of the campaign is not as large as it might seem. In Spain, Martin Schulz is mentioned on 372 occasions, more than a third of the number of references made to the Spanish socialist candidate, Elena Valenciano (848). Juncker (235) is also mentioned no more than a third as many times as the Spanish People's Party candidate Miguel Arias Cañete (674). In Germany, however, a singular phenomenon was produced. Schulz was, at the time, head of list for the European Socialists and the German social democrats and is referred to on 1634 occasions, a number only exceeded by the chancellor, Angela Merkel (3241). Juncker, however, appears three times as much as the CDU candidate, David McAllister (843/280), showing that Juncker—in Germany—was an authentic political rival to Martin Schulz.

We may conclude, therefore, that the presence in the national media of the candidates to lead the European Commission is also a good indicator of the Europeanisation of the electoral campaign in each of the member states. According to this indicator, as in the case of the campaign visits of each of the candidates, Germany is again the European country where the campaign is most Europeanised, thanks to the wide coverage the media gave to the campaigns of the main candidates, Jean-Claude Juncker and Martin Schulz, and the debates in which they appeared. It is evident, however, that Schulz's being also head of the SPD list aided him and we cannot know how the French electoral campaign might have been affected if a candidate for the Commission presidency had been head of the national list, as might have been the case with Michel Barnier.

Nevertheless, France was the country where the candidates received the second largest amount of coverage, above all in the written press, followed by Spain and probably Italy⁸². But in France the scarce media presence of the two face-to-face debates between Juncker and Schulz in French did not help the “Europeanisation” of the campaign as much as it might have. On the other hand, in France there are seven constituencies in the European elections and no head of list also headed a national list. So there was no debate between head of lists either, which did not favour the “personalisation” of the campaign.

The only candidate who played the “personalisation” card was Marine Le Pen, and, probably, this helped make her party, the *Front National* into the one that received the most votes in France. Maybe the existence of an antagonist like Michel Barnier—a Europeanist French candidate facing a German social democrat and confronted by an anti-Europe French candidate—would have been able to act as a counterweight to presence of Le Pen, but this hypothesis cannot be proven.

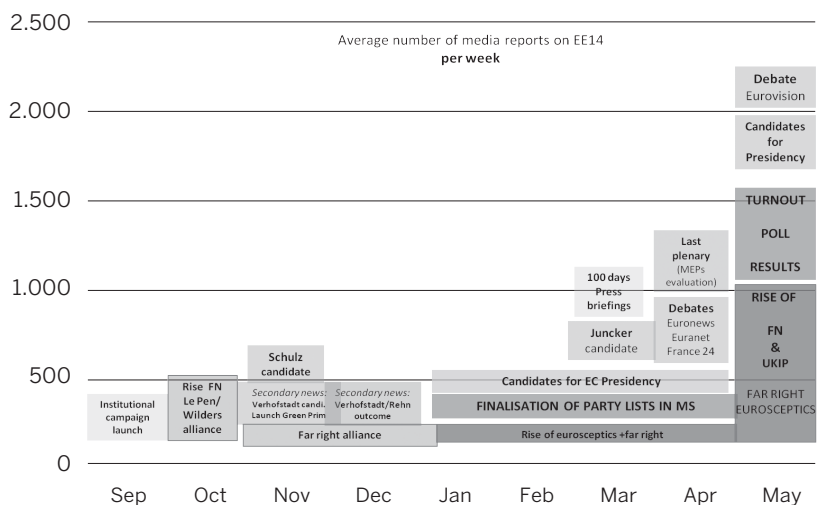
Finally, and to close the media analysis of the campaign, we will look at the results of a study commissioned by the DG of Communication of the European Parliament, carried out via the European Media Monitor platform on 1,800 media sources from around the continent⁸³. Based on these sources, the change in the media coverage from autumn 2013 to May 2014 can be clearly seen in the subjects that most caught media attention and the notable growth as the campaign progressed.

As Graph 9 shows, the election of the socialist and liberal candidates, Martin Schulz and Guy Verhofstadt, already had significant presence in November and December, along with the new alliance of the extreme right. News about the election of the candidates continued to be present during the months of January

82 On the website www.pressdisplay.com, they do not have sufficient data on the Italian press to make the comparison.

83 European Media Monitor, www.emm-newsbrief.com

GRAPH 9. MEDIA COVERAGE OF THE 2014 EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT ELECTIONS



SOURCE: DG OF COMMUNICATION FOR THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT.

and February, reaching peak coverage with Juncker’s election on the 7th of March, which made media impact more than 200 times, almost as many as those that for the election countdown, promoted by the European Parliament. In April, the first debates between the candidates featured most, with more than 400 weekly impacts, along with the last session of the Parliament. Finally, in May, the more than 300 weekly impacts of the five-candidate debate stand out, along with the more than 400 a week of the candidates’ campaign for the presidency of the Commission.

We are able, then, to conclude that beyond the logical importance given to the electoral results at the end of May—especially the victories of UKIP in the UK and the *Front National* in France, the processes of electing the candidates to the presidency of the Commission and the debates between them—and above all the debate of the 15th of May—received notable coverage on the part of the national and regional media.

3.4. CITIZENS' PERCEPTION AND KNOWLEDGE OF THE CANDIDATES

Having analysed the candidates' campaigns and their impact in national media, we will now look at the impact of the campaign and of the new process of electing the President of the European Commission on the citizens. There are no official surveys on citizens' knowledge about the candidate and the election process. This level of knowledge is likely to have influenced their electoral participation and will influence the perceived legitimacy of the election process for the new President, creating differences between national public opinions, as was clearly shown by the negative -and, in fact, aggressive- reaction of the British press to the election of Jean-Claude Juncker. We do, though, have access to a post-election survey commissioned by the Alliance of European Conservatives and Reformists (AECR)⁸⁴, the Eurosceptic political group led by the British Conservatives, which provides some interesting clues.

According to the survey, the differences between countries in the knowledge of the political election process of the President of the Commission and of the candidates standing and the European political parties they represented are notable. While 60% of the German and French people who voted in the elections knew that the vote for a particular party meant indirect support for a particular candidate to lead the Commission, only 14% of British voters were aware of that fact. In Italy, Spain, Greece and Belgium the percentage of knowledge of the workings of this process among voters was also high (47-50%), while in countries such as Finland (33%), Denmark (25%) and the Netherlands

⁸⁴ "Post EU election polling project", Advanced Market Research (AMR), Düsseldorf, 25th and 26th May 2014. Survey made in 15 European countries on a sample of 12,132 respondents (6083 voters and 6049 non-voters): <http://www.aecr.eu/media/AECRAMR-European-election-poll.pdf>

(23%) the level of knowledge was noticeably inferior. Romania had the highest level of knowledge among the eastern countries, with 43%, followed by Poland (38%).

Nevertheless, only 13,6% of those questioned were able to spontaneously give the name of one of the candidates. But while in Germany and Belgium the percentage able to give the name of a candidate rose to 25%, it sank to 7% in the case of Poland, 5% in the Netherlands and an insignificant 1% in the United Kingdom. In the middle were the French and Italians with 15% and the 10% of Spaniards and Romanians who could name one of the candidates. This data is largely consistent with the levels of Europeanisation of the electoral campaigns in each of the countries that we previously analysed, and, as such, could validate our working hypothesis about the impact of the candidates' campaign on the Europeanisation of the electoral campaign.

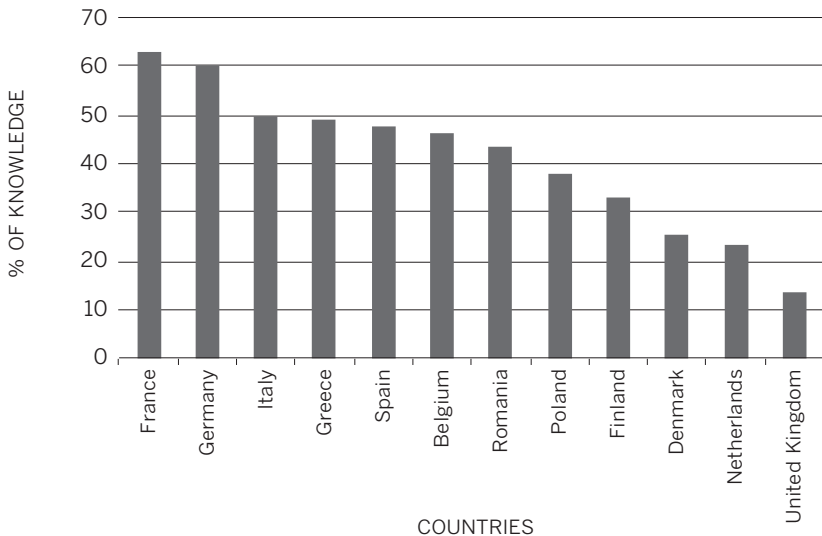
The survey also validates the success of the personalisation of the campaign, in as far as more of the people interviewed were able to name a candidate for the presidency of the Commission (13,6%) than could name a European political party (8,8%). In some cases, such as Germany, the difference was as large as 20 points (25% were able to name a candidate while only 4,4% could name a political party). In France, only half of those able to name a candidate (15%) were able to name a political party (7,8%), a similar percentage to that in Spain. In Italy, by contrast, 17,4% of those asked were able to name a European political party, a slightly higher percentage than those who were able to give the name of a candidate.

When the interviewer directly mentioned the name of the candidates in order to enquire about people's knowledge of them, we find, once again, that the country where the two main candidates (Juncker and Schulz) were best known was Germany with close to 50%, followed by Greece, France, Italy and Belgium -with percentages of between 30% and 40%-. Spain was next with a level of knowledge around 25%, and then came Romania with

greatly uneven knowledge of the two candidates. By contrast, only 6-7% of British people confirmed that they knew one of the main two candidates.

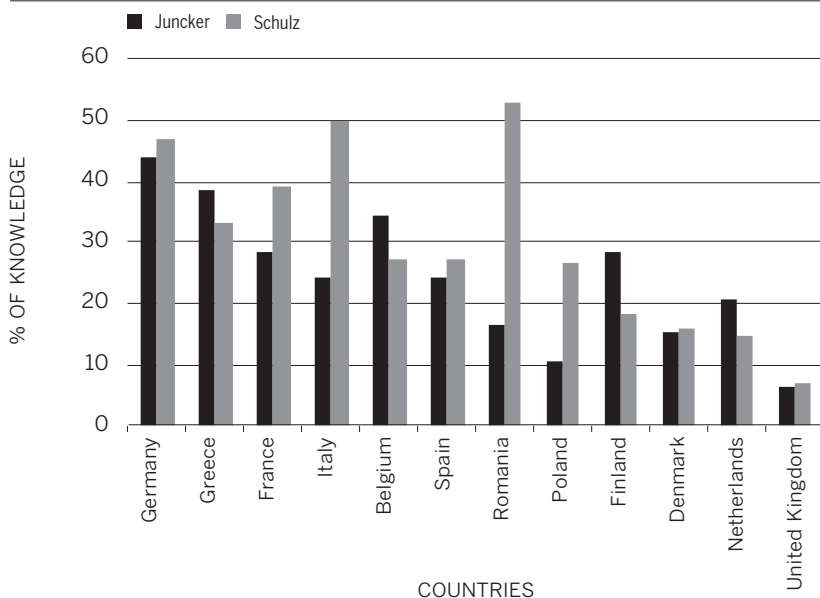
In relation to this question, it is relevant to point out that the difference in knowledge of Juncker (44%) and Schulz (47%) in Germany is not significant, even though one was German and head of the national list and the other was not. This data strengthens the idea that if an electoral campaign is run with a transnational perspective and appears regularly in the media voters can recognise and identify themselves with the candidates, whether they are national politicians or not. Another piece of data to bear in mind is the difference in knowledge in Italy between Juncker (24%) and Schulz (50%), showing how Schulz is noticeably better known in Italy after being much more visible during the election campaign, as we saw earlier.

GRAPH 10. KNOWLEDGE OF THE ELECTION PROCESS OF THE PRESIDENT OF THE COMMISSION



SOURCE: "POST EU ELECTION PROJECT", ADVANCED MARKET RESEARCH (AMR).

GRAPH 11. KNOWLEDGE OF THE CANDIDATES, JUNCKER AND SCHULZ, BY COUNTRY



SOURCE: "POST EU ELECTION PROJECT", ADVANCED MARKET RESEARCH (AMR).

In contrast, when the interviewer gave the name of the European political parties, 82% of Spaniards, 67% of Italians, 58% of French people and 54% of Germans confirmed that they knew of their existence. By contrast, 72% of the Dutch, 66% of Danes and 52% of Brits said that they knew of none of them. In this last case, the result is noticeably distorted by the knowledge of the existence of a European Green Party (33%) because the number of British people who stated that they did know of the EPP or the PES was less than 10%.

Finally, the study asked how many people followed the debates between the candidates to lead the Commission. The country where most people followed the debate was Greece, with 26%, followed by Spain (19,8%), Italy (18,7%), Germany (18,1%) and France (17,7%). On the other hand, the following

was much smaller in the Netherlands (5,9%), the United Kingdom (6,7%) and Finland (7,2%). In Poland, 12,9% of those interviewed said they had followed it, and in Romania, 16,9%. According to Simon Hix and Stuart Wilks-Heeg (2014), the interpretation of the answer to this question shows a positive correlation between the knowledge of the candidates and the following of the European debates, although there were significant differences between countries.

In any case, and leaving aside the credibility of some extremely high percentages compared to audience levels recorded (in Spain the debate had an audience of 0,9%), the survey confirmed the data on the knowledge of the candidates and the presence of the European campaign in the media. That is to say that in the four large eurozone countries—Germany, France, Italy and Spain—the Europeanisation of the campaign was greater than in the United Kingdom, the Netherlands, Scandinavia and the countries to the east of the continent.

Therefore, the survey commissioned by the Alliance of European Conservatives and Reformists, the objective of which (according to the Alliance itself) was to question the legitimacy of the election of the President of the Commission via European Parliament elections, has become a useful tool for understanding a little better what the impact of the campaign in different European countries was, and complements the data presented earlier on the candidates' campaign and their media coverage.

It is data that confirms that we find ourselves in a more «Europeanised» campaign than those held previously, with notable resonance for the campaign and the debates held between the five candidates for the presidency of the Commission. So it is that, to paraphrase the institutional campaign of the European Parliament, we may conclude that «this time it has been different». But the relative success of the campaign in the media must be compared with the political and electoral impact of the elections. That is to say, the extent to which it contributed to

increasing electoral participation and conditioned the election of the President of the European Commission and the institutional balance of the EU between the Parliament and the Council. That is the subject of our next chapter.

4. THE POLITICAL AND ELECTORAL IMPACT OF THE 2014 EUROPEAN CAMPAIGN

4.1. THE INFLUENCE OF THE EUROPEAN CAMPAIGN ON PARTICIPATION AND ELECTION RESULTS

To what extent did the European electoral campaign influence the level of participation and the election results? One of the objectives of the “Europeanisation” and “personalisation” of the campaign was that “the personalisation and politicisation of the election campaign will stimulate turnout and serve to deepen the democratic legitimacy of the EU”, as one of the main promoters of the campaign, Andrew Duff, the British Liberal Democrat MEP, said when defending it⁸⁵.

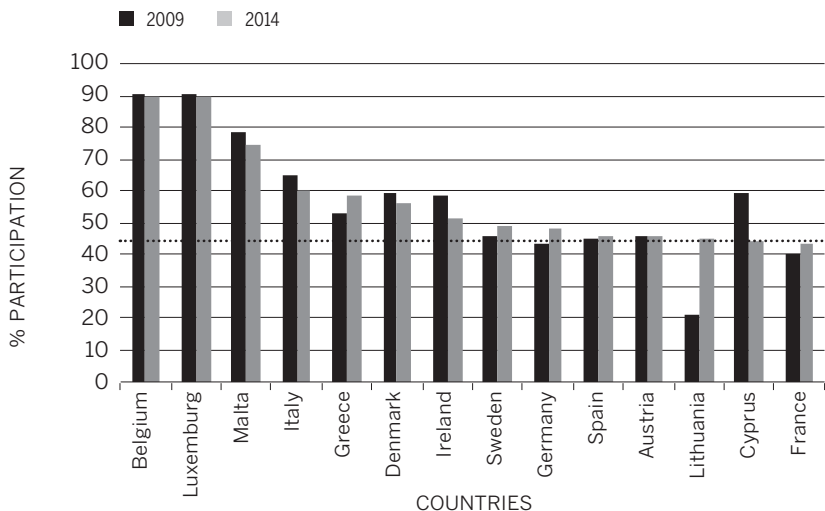
If, in the previous chapter, we showed that the interest in the electoral campaign on the part of the media was greater than at previous elections, the interest of the citizens did not grow in the same proportion, even if, according to the Eurobarometer, 55% of Europeans declared themselves more inclined to vote if that was a way to choose the new President of the Commission⁸⁶. The overall participation remained around 43%⁸⁷, though the pattern of change was highly diverse, and even divergent, in different

85 Duff: Polarisation will boost turnout in European elections. EurActiv, 4th July 2013: <http://www.euractiv.com/future-eu/duff-polarisation-eu-election-ca-interview-529070>

86 Standard Eurobarometer no. 79. European Commission, 2013.

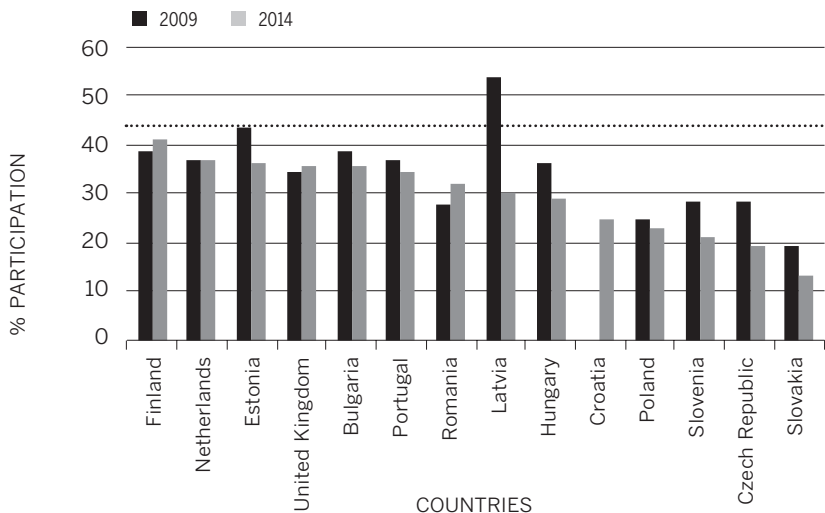
87 Overall participation declined from 43% to 42,54%.

GRAPH 12. COUNTRIES WITH HIGHER THAN AVERAGE PARTICIPATION IN 2014



SOURCE: EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT.

GRAPH 13. COUNTRIES WITH PARTICIPATION LOWER THAN THE EUROPEAN AVERAGE IN 2014



SOURCE: EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT.

countries. Participation grew in Germany (+4,6), France (+2,9), Greece (+5,6), Spain (+1), the UK (+1,3), Sweden (+3,3), Finland (+2,3), Romania (+4,5) and Lithuania (+24). It was more or less unchanged in Belgium, Luxembourg, Austria, and the Netherlands and it fell in the rest of the countries.

Therefore, while we can affirm that the “Europeanisation” of the campaign had no effect on increasing overall participation levels, we can draw conclusions about its impact on electoral participation country by country. In this way we can confirm that the country in which the campaign was most Europeanised, Germany, was one of the countries where participation grew most. This phenomenon also occurred, to an extent, in Greece, where the candidacy of Alexis Tsipras for the presidency of the Commission had great impact. In France and Spain, where the campaign was well followed, a slight increase in participation was registered. And in Italy, where the European campaign was also important, a high level of participation was maintained, despite a decrease of more than 4%.

Nevertheless, the participation differential between EU countries did not change, revealing a gap that has become permanent between the member states that joined the Union before 2004 and those who did so afterwards. In Graphs 12 and 13 we can see how 11 of the EU-15 countries recorded above-average participation, while only three of the 13 countries who joined the Union afterwards registered similar percentages.

A second element of evaluation is the impact of the European campaign on the electoral results. Evidently, it is very difficult -if not impossible- to define indicators that reveal the impact on the results of the main parties in each country, or in the main countries. Nevertheless, we are able to evaluate the extent to which the campaign created consciousness of “political competition” at a European level. That is to say, the extent to which the citizens were aware that, beyond the “political competition” between parties at a national level, a “political competition” also existed

at a European one. In this sense, it is relevant to analyse the publication of the final results aggregated at a European level on the night of the election itself, as well as the publication of the aggregated projected results -based on the evolution of the polling made at a national level- over the three months leading up to the election date.

Among the polls, it is worth highlighting those made by TNS, commissioned by the European Parliament, as well as those made by organisations such as Electionista⁸⁸ and VoteWatch, which used its own model created by the British political scientist, Simon Hix⁸⁹. The three series of projections were the closest equivalent to the polls held before a national election, creating a common reference space for considering who the winning party in the European elections might be. The projections were useful in order to provide “a range of aggregated results” with the objective of “creating media demand”, and a degree of tension about the uncertainty of the winner. That means to say that the mere existence of these surveys and their publication was a source of the Europeanisation of the campaign in the media, bringing an extra newsworthy element to the process, which was added to the already existing national surveys. A question that did not exist in previous elections was created: “Who will win the European elections?”

In February, the first projections saw a virtual stalemate between the EPP and the PES with 200 and 210 predicted seats, respectively. From there, they evolved to give a clear victory to the EPP with more than 215 seats, while the PES remained around 200. In the end, the results confirmed the last predictions, at both national and European levels. In the three cases, more than 97% of seat distribution by political group in the European Parliament

88 The projections made by *Electionista* are available via their Twitter profile @electionista and on the blog run by one of its founders, Alberto Nardelli: <http://albertonardelli.tumblr.com/post/86303987115/the-final-eu-election-polls-in-6-charts>

89 The results projections of Poll watch 2014 are accessible at: <http://www.election2014.eu/pollsandsenarios/polls>

was correctly predicted, and 90% of the distribution of seats by political party at a national level.

The final results allow us to address the success of the personalisation and Europeanisation of the campaign from another perspective: to what extent did the five political groups who committed to the “personalisation” of the campaign by presenting common candidates see their position strengthened in relation to the various national parties and the Eurosceptic and Europhobic European political groups?

If we focus on the political groups formed in the first session of the European Parliament, it is clear that the three main parliamentary groups -People’s Party, Socialists and Liberals- lost seats to a greater or lesser degree. The European People’s Party -despite winning the elections- suffered a strong decline, owing principally to the significant loss of representation in the large EU countries -France, Italy, Spain and Poland-. The group of Socialists and Democrats did not grow as expected, in fact it lost five MEPs, owing to the poor results of the French and Spanish socialists, among others. This made it impossible to capitalise on the strong growth of the *Partito Democratico* in Italy, Britain’s Labour and the German social democrats, among others. Finally, the Liberals also got a scare as a consequence of the bad results of the German Liberals and the British Liberal Democrats, among others, which were only partially compensated by the growth of new parties in Spain and the Czech Republic who have joined the group.

On the other hand, the Greens lost seven seats owing, principally, to the defeat of the French greens and the falling away of the German Greens, which were only compensated by the growth of the new green parties in some countries in the east of Europe and the member parties of the European Free Alliance (EFA) in Spain and the UK. Lastly, the only of the 5 groups whose representation grew -from 35 to 52 seats- was the Group of European United Left (GUE), the least clearly Europeanist of all five and the one that «Europeanised» their campaign the least.

TABLE 5. COMPOSITION OF POLITICAL GROUPS BEFORE AND AFTER THE 2014 ELECTIONS

POLITICAL GROUP	1ST APRIL 2014	1ST JULY 2014	% NEW PARLIAMENT	DIFFERENCE
EPP	274	221	29,4%	- 6,3
S & D	196	191	25,4%	- 0,2
ECR	57	70	9,3%	+1,9
ALDE	83	67	8,9%	- 1,9
GUE - NGL	35	52	6,9%	+2,3
Greens - ALE	57	50	6,65%	- 0,8
EFD	31	48	6,39%	+2,3
NI	33	52	6,9%	+2,6
TOTAL	766	751		

SOURCE: EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT.

From this perspective, it is relevant to point out that the four political groups who committed most clearly to the personalisation and politicisation of the election to the presidency of the Commission lost representation in the new Parliament. The groups of the People's Party, the Socialists, Liberals and Greens lost 81 seats, falling from 610 to 529 and from representing 80% of the Parliament to representing 70%. They remained clearly in the majority, but the Eurosceptic and Europhobe political parties gained ground and ended up representing more than 22% of the new Parliament, 7% more than before.

The Group of European Conservatives and Reformists (ECR) managed to grow to 70 MEPs, despite the decline of the British Conservatives, thanks to the growth of the Polish party, «Law and Justice», and of the Nordic parties that, in the previous legislature, were part of the group Europe of Freedom and Democracy (EFD) led by UKIP. For their part, the EFD managed to increase its representation thanks to the growth of UKIP and the incorporation of the *Movimento 5 Stelle* from Italy in a new political group called Europe of Freedom and Direct Democracy (EFDD). Finally, the European Alliance for Freedom (EAF) led by the French *Front National*, despite not managing to form its own group, grew significantly to have more than 35 MEPs, who join a

group of non-attached of more than 50 members. In total, there are 170 Eurosceptic or Europhobe MEPs. As early as the day of the opening of the new Parliament they made their presence felt by refusing to stand or turning their backs to the rostrum in the solemn moment when the European hymn played.

In any case, the overall results -with the participation of 163,940,803 European citizens- gave victory to the parties who supported Jean-Claude Juncker, with a total of 41,516,000 votes (25,3%), followed by the parties that supported Martin Schulz, with 40,674,000 votes (24,8%). The parties who gave support to Guy Verhofstadt's candidature received 13,528,000 votes (8,25%), and then came those supporting Ska Keller and José Bové, with 12,166,000 votes (7,4%), and those backing Alexis Tsipras, who received 11,968,000 votes (7,3%)⁹⁰.

But these results, in absolute number of votes, provide us with another significant piece of data: more than 30 million Europeans voted for Eurosceptic or Europhobe political forces who made up the groups ECR and EFDD or the group of the non-attached. Specifically, the parties in the group Europe of Freedom and Direct Democracy (EFDD) -UKIP and *Movimento 5 Stelle* among others- received more than 12 million votes, while the parties of the group of European Conservatives and Reformists (ECR) received more than 10,700,000 votes and the parties of the European Alliance for Freedom more than 8 million votes. If we add the votes received by these parties to those of the other forces of the far right present in Parliament, the total rises another two million more.

Therefore, we can conclude that the results -while legitimating the parliamentary election process of the new President of the Commission- cannot be read as a success of the process of politicising, Europeanising and personalising the 2014 European elections, as it did not manage to significantly increase participation

90 Results gathered and put together by the team of political scientist Simon Hix and made available via his Twitter profile @simonjhix. The European Parliament does not release aggregated results in absolute numbers about the parties or the European political groups.

in global terms and the parties who committed to politicisation did not see an increase in their parliamentary representation, despite retaining their majority. In fact, the opposite is true, these 2014 elections brought significant growth for Eurosceptic and Europhobic forces, who received the support of 22% of EU citizens, showing that a minority is strongly mobilised against the project of European integration. It is data that may condition the evolution of the European construction process.

This group of political forces may become real political opposition to the European political project. It is an opposition that is difficult to articulate from the European Parliament, but which may be crystallised in the national politics of two large EU countries: France and the United Kingdom. The British parliamentary elections of spring 2015, with the prospect of a referendum to decide whether to continue as a member of the EU in 2017, may be a significant turning point in the growing disaffection of British public opinion towards Europe. This may be worsened by the political situation in France, where the 2017 presidential elections will be held amid the uncertainty generated by the strong electoral prospects of Marine Le Pen. In this sense, the 2014 European elections may signify the beginning of a period of profound transformations, the protagonists of which will be two of the victors of 2014: UKIP and the Front National.

4.2. THE IMPACT OF THE 2014 EUROPEAN ELECTIONS ON EUROPEAN GOVERNANCE AND INSTITUTIONAL EQUILIBRIUM

The commitment to the politicisation and personalisation of the 2014 European elections had as its objectives the strengthening of the European political parties as actors in the political process of the European Union and the provision of a central role to the European Parliament in the election of the President of the Commission, to the detriment

of the European Council. From this point of view, the success of the operation was clear and the political impact of the campaign in the new institutional design has been diaphanous.

The main objective of the European political parties was to influence the election of the Commission President. To achieve that, it was necessary for all of them to elect their own candidates before the elections, and for those candidates to campaign throughout the Union as candidates to lead the EU executive arm. The campaign was meant to allow a beneficial and pertinent measure to be introduced to the European Union mainstream (and above all to the European mainstream media), in order to “democratise” the EU institutions and give the presidency of the Commission new democratic legitimacy.

The parties, as we analysed in the second chapter, managed to get their way in the candidates’ elections despite the reticence of many national political parties and leaders, including several heads of government, such as Chancellor Angela Merkel. But the members of the European Council continued to want to influence the election of the EU executive and the President, Herman Van Rompuy, called an extraordinary Council meeting on the 27th of May, only two days after the elections, in order to act quickly and propose his candidate, whether they were one of those who had made an electoral campaign or not. But the three main political groups -the People’s Party, the Socialists and the Liberals- did the same and assembled on the morning of the 27th of May with a very clear objective: to give support to the winning candidate of the elections.

That is to say, the three main European political groups decided to give support to the winning candidate -Jean-Claude Juncker- in order to force him to be the name put forward by the Council. The Socialist and Liberal candidates, Martin Schulz and Guy Verhofstadt, recognised Juncker’s victory and on Tuesday 27th they informed the Council President, Herman Van Rompuy, that they would only give support to Juncker’s candidacy. The

parliamentary groups acted with autonomy -despite the new Parliament not yet being constituted- protecting themselves with the mandate of the European political parties that elected them and the millions of European citizens who had voted for them. They communicated to the Council President -in his function as head of state of a parliamentary system- the candidate for «prime minister» who would secure the necessary parliamentary majority.

The Parliament's commitment was not shared, evidently, by the Council, who wanted to reserve the capacity to nominate another candidate. President Van Rompuy had made clear, even in the midst of the electoral campaign, that -according to the Treaty- the European Council possessed the capacity to choose the person they considered most convenient «taking into consideration the electoral results», and that that person might not be one of the five candidates⁹¹. In fact, in May, Van Rompuy visited various heads of state and government in order to prepare for the European Council meeting of the 27th of May at which they were meant to discuss the affair.

In this setting, the British prime minister, David Cameron, showed his clear opposition to Juncker's election and was backed by the prime ministers of the Netherlands, Sweden and Hungary⁹². Cameron's objective was to force a blocking minority in the Council, which had to elect by qualified majority. The UK Prime Minister's strategy was accompanied by a campaign of running down and delegitimising Jean-Claude Juncker by the British press, which provoked widespread rejection on the continent. Cameron's opposition strengthened the commitment of the leaders of the main countries to Juncker's candidacy and reinforced the decision-making process by qualified majority,

91 "No commitment from Van Rompuy to choose one of the five candidates for Commission Presidency". *EU Voice*, 19th May 2014, <http://www.europeanvoice.com/article/no-commitment-from-van-rompuy-to-choose-one-of-five-candidates-for-commission-presidency/>

92 "Merkel takes boat trip with Juncker opponents". *EUobserver*, 10th June 2014, <http://euobserver.com/eu-elections/124529>

as his strategy of confronting the candidate with most support strengthened the majority-minority, government-opposition dynamic. Cameron left the United Kingdom in the minority opposition, alongside Hungary.

The German chancellor, Angel Merkel, played an important role, however, in the Council's decision. As we noted in the second chapter, Juncker was not Merkel's favoured candidate (that was Christine Lagarde) and she did not want the EPP to elect a candidate for the presidency of the Commission before the European elections, so as to leave the European Council free to choose a candidate. But in December 2013 Merkel was forced to give in and accept that the EPP had a candidate. She then gave explicit support to the candidacy of Jean-Claude Juncker. Merkel committed -willingly or not- to the *spitzenkandidaten* mechanism, and public and published opinion in Germany took up the process as we explained in chapter three. In fact, in a pre-electoral poll made by the weekly magazine, *Der Spiegel*, 78% of Germans considered that the election of the President of the Commission should correspond to the votes cast by Europeans as a whole, and this opinion -used by the mainstream media as a means of putting pressure on Angela Merkel- was a key element in her final decision to give clear support to Juncker as Commission President during the debates between members of the European Council that followed the elections⁹³.

Alongside the negotiations developing between the heads of state and government and the European Council on the 27th of May and the Council of the 27th of June, the main parliamentary groups agreed their own accords: to elect Juncker as President of the Commission, Schulz as President of the Parliament, and the development of a "grand coalition"⁹⁴ with a defined programme that included a member of the social-democrat family as vice-president

93 An exercise in democracy? Toby Vogel, *European Voice*, 5th June 2014.

94 "Centre-right to strike deal with centre-left on Juncker, Schulz" *EUobserver*, 23rd June 2014, <http://euobserver.com/eu-elections/124688>

of economic affairs in the Commission⁹⁵. The agreement between the two main parties, formalised on the 24th of June, which the Liberals joined three days later, forced the European Council to vote on the 27th of June strongly in favour of proposing Juncker as President of the Commission (26 votes in favour and 2 against) even though they did it questioning the *Spitzenkandidaten* election process and committing themselves to revising the procedure for 2019, “respecting the European treaties”⁹⁶.

The first step of the agreement between the three large political groups materialised on the 1st of July with the election of Martin Schulz as President of the European Parliament after receiving 409 votes in favour (60 fewer than the sum total of the three political groups) and 111 abstentions, half of which came from part of the People’s Party and Liberal groups along with the British Labour party, which did not give him support. In this vote, the group of the Greens and the European Left presented their own candidates -Ulrike Lunacek from the Netherlands and Pablo Iglesias from Spain- who received the support of their respective MEPs. The Conservatives and Reformists group presented Sajjad Karim, who received 101 votes, that is to say, 30 more than those of his group.

The second part of the agreement materialised with the election of Jean-Claude Juncker as President of the Commission on the 15th of July, with 422 votes in favour, 20 against, 47 abstentions and 10 blank votes. He received the votes of the European People’s Party group, the vast majority of the Socialists and Democrats group and of the Liberals group, along with part of the Green group. That is to say, he received the transversal support of the 4 most Europeanist political groups, with some notable exceptions. The 12 MEPs from the Hungarian group, *Fidesz*, voted against his candidacy -they had already rejected him in the EPP candidate election process- along with 40 Socialist MEPs from Britain, Spain

95 “Juncker: Economics commissioner will be a socialist” *EUobserver*, 8th July 2014, <http://euobserver.com/institutional/124898>

96 European Council Conclusions, 26-27th June 2014. *EUCO* 79/14 p.11.

and Sweden, and finally, twenty or so Green and Liberal MEPs. The 47 abstentions also came, in the majority, from these two groups, along with the 13 French socialist MEPs. The bloc opposing Juncker's candidature was led by the European Conservatives and Reformers Group (ECR) and counted on the support of Europe of Freedom and Direct Democracy in Europe (EFDD) and the non-attached MEPs.

Juncker's election was preceded by a series of meetings between the candidate and all of the parliamentary political groups on the 8th and 9th of July in order to present and discuss his programme, which allowed him to receive the support or the abstention of the MEPs who were most critical of his candidacy, especially in the Socialist and Green groups. In this line, it is also necessary to understand his commitment to a European economic stimulus package of more than €300 billion to encourage the creation of "jobs, growth and investment" and appear self-critical, saying that saving the Euro "was necessary, but was weak on the social side"⁹⁷.

And, finally, the third part of the agreement was firmed up with the election of the new European Commission. It is a Commission that responds more to the agreement made by the two large parties -People's Party and Socialists- than to the negotiation between governments. A balanced Commission, with 13 portfolios for the People's Party (one fewer than the previous mandate), eight for the Socialists (three more than in the Barroso Commission) and five for the Liberals (three fewer), and with greater political weight for the second-largest group in the chamber. The Socialists received the first vice-president (Frans Timmermans), the vice-presidency of external affairs (Federica Mogherini) and the commissioner of economic affairs (Pierre Moscovici). This rebalancing of forces cannot be explained exclusively by the change of political colour of the governments, but by the parliamentary agreement between the political groups, who managed to engineer a sharing out of

⁹⁷ "Parliament elects 'politically ecumencial' Juncker as Commission President", EurActiv, 15th July 2014.

portfolios and who have become key actors in the negotiations, which were previously developed almost exclusively between governments. In fact, the main difference between the election of this Commission and the previous is that, until now, the Parliament only had the power of veto on the commissioners proposed by the governments. Now, by contrast, the parliamentary groups have participated in the formation of the proposed Commission that is submitted to a Parliamentary vote.

This three-stage agreement between the People's Party, Socialist and Liberal parliamentary groups, with the more or less ambiguous support of the Greens, is the culmination of the process that we have described in this study, which was begun in 2013 with the Commission's recommendation to the European political parties that they elect and campaign for common candidates for the presidency of the Commission, with the commitment on the part of these parties to put in place competitive election processes for choosing their candidates.

In fact, we may say that the 2014 elections signify a step -perhaps definitive- towards the "parliamentarisation" of the European Union, even if it is not possible to call it a step towards their "democratisation"⁹⁸. The parliamentary majority managed to install the candidate who was the most voted head of list and influenced the composition and structure of the Commission, where the balance of power between the two most important political groups corresponds more to the will of those groups than to that of the governments who nominated their candidates for commissioner. Even the election of the Vice-president and High Representative for Foreign Policy and Common Security, a traditional prerogative of the Council, was in part due to the electoral results. Federica Mogherini was chosen because the Italian premier, Matteo Renzi, managed to prevail in the negotiations, given that his party, the *Partito Democratico* (PD), constitutes the largest national delegation in the Socialist and Democrats group

98 "The day we got EU parliamentarianism", Jens-Peter Bonde, *EUobserver*, 15th July 2014.

in the European Parliament -with 32 MEPs- and was the national party that received the most votes in these elections, more than 11 million, a million more than the CDU-CSU of Angela Merkel.

So, we can conclude that the process of electing the President of the Commission through the European political parties is creating a new institutional balance in the European Union, strengthening the powers of the Parliament in detriment to the Council. Now it will be necessary to see if this new balance is transferred to the daily governance of the Union and if the new Commission is capable of setting the agenda of the European Council. It is an analysis that can only be made in 2019, when the mandate that has just begun ends.

5. CONCLUSIONS.

The politicisation and personalisation of the European elections campaign as a response to EU democratic and institutional crises

In the first chapter we began from the necessity to establish a democratic politics in the EU in order to respond to the democratic deficit in decision-taking at a European level and the growing Euroscepticism of the citizens. In order to do this, we established as a hypothesis the politicisation and personalisation of the European elections as an instrument for the reconstruction of a new democratic politics that would guarantee genuine competition between political parties and leaders to set the agenda, allowing the citizens to be able to choose, at the elections to the European Parliament, between different “politicians” and “policies”, the results of which would be translated into legislative and executive measures via unified political parties (Hix, 2012).

The first condition for the generation of this process was that the European political parties should be able to stand at the next European elections with a clear political programme and candidates to lead the Commission willing to apply it from the European Union executive, if they won the elections. Only in this way could the European political parties become authentic “political parties” with the capacity to structure the vote

through communication, articulating and aggregating citizens' interests and encouraging citizen participation via the parties as "intermediary agents".

This process, as we saw in the second chapter of this study, took place. The five main European parties took important steps in this direction, using the election of "common candidates" for the presidency of the Commission and the establishment of processes by which to select those candidates that transcended national politics, giving way to real competition between political leaders at a European level in to obtain the nomination of their party. The selection processes had two characteristics in common. The first was the will of the European political leaders (presidents of parties and parliamentary groups, MEPs and commissioners) to ensure that European concerns and the general interest of the political family prevailed over national concerns and interests. The second was the willingness of the national political parties (and their leaders) to actively participate in the nomination of candidates, favouring the candidate they believed was closest to their values and interests and thereby ensuring that the Europeanisation of political parties at a national level was consolidated.

In the third chapter of this study we analysed the electoral campaigns of the five candidates, focussing on the number of countries they visited in their campaign trips and we evaluated the various levels of Europeanisation of the electoral campaigns by country, based on the presence of the candidates to lead the European Commission in the media. In this analysis, we also evaluated the media impact of the debates between the candidates and the level of knowledge that citizens had of the new election process for the President of the European Commission.

The principal conclusion we have drawn from this analysis concerns the stark contrast between the process of Europeanisation of the campaign in certain countries -Germany, especially, but also France, Spain, Italy, Greece and Belgium- and the complete absence from the national media of the "top candidates" in other

countries, such as the United Kingdom, the Netherlands, Poland and Finland. We can, therefore, conclude that the 2014 campaign was, to a significant extent, «politicised» and «Europeanised» thanks to personalisation generating greater media coverage, but that this process of Europeanisation occurred unevenly, depending on the country.

Finally, we asked ourselves if the European electoral campaign had an influence on the level of participation and the electoral results themselves, to the extent that one of the objectives of the «personalisation» of the campaign was to stimulate participation in order to strengthen democratic legitimacy. In this regard, we must conclude that the campaign did not encourage participation, which remained stable at around 43% and which, in any case, deepened the already-existing democratic fissure between the old EU-15 countries and those that joined the EU after 2004: participation in the EU-15 picked up slightly, but it continues to fall in the rest of the countries.

The «politicisation» and «personalisation» of the campaign also failed to aid the parties who supported it most. If we look at the aggregated results of the four political groups who most personalised their campaign -the EPP, the PES, the ALDE and the Greens- we see that they suffered a notable loss in electoral support, adding up to more than 90 MEPs in total. In the new Parliament, these four groups will occupy 70% of the seats, 10 points less than during the previous legislature. That is to say, the “politicisation” of the campaign did not favour the more pro-European political forces, but, instead favoured the Eurosceptics and Europhobes, who won 170 seats, 22% of the new Parliament. We can, therefore, conclude that there was no “stimulus effect” or “political premium” for those parties who committed to presenting “common candidates”.

Thus, we can say that if the electoral campaign of the five principal parties produced a certain “positive Europeanisation” of the political debate in certain countries, where the European

candidates and their proposals were most visible, the election results show a partial victory for the “negative Europeanisation” that the Eurosceptic and Europhobe political forces that have grown in certain countries, especially France and the United Kingdom, represent. It is a “negative Europeanisation” that not only debilitated the bipartisanship between the EPP and the PES, but also weakened the four political groups that defended clearly Europeanist positions: the People’s Party, the Socialists, the Liberals and the Greens. The politicisation of the elections, then, seems to have weakened the main political forces and given centre stage to new actors.

But what has been produced as a result of the dynamic of political competition between European parties and candidates is a process of political rebalancing between the EU institutions. The candidate selection process of the European political parties, the media resonance of the European campaign and of the debates between the candidates created a new political situation at the European Union, converting the European elections into “parliamentary elections” oriented to choosing a head of government and an executive who correspond to a determined parliamentary majority. The European political parties gained unprecedented importance and strengthened their capacity of influence over the European decision-making process, conditioning the election of the candidate to lead the European Commission, which was, up to now, a prerogative for the heads of state and government through the European Council. The agreement of the three main parties -People’s Party, Socialists and Liberals- to endorse the winning candidate and to forge a “coalition agreement” to guarantee the parliamentary stability of the executive forced the European Council to accept some new rules of the game that arose from a determined “political interpretation” of the Treaty.

The election of Jean-Claude Juncker, European People’s Party candidate and eventual winner of the elections, introduces a new

political and party dynamic into the heart of the Commission, turning it into a body that is closer to an executive grown out of a parliamentary majority than the executive body of an international organisation controlled by member states.

We may, therefore, conclude that the “personalisation” and “Europeanisation” of the elections via common candidates for the Commission presidency did not manage to “democratise” the EU and strengthen its democratic legitimacy to the extent that it did not manage to increase participation and the link of the citizens to the European project. But it did manage to “parliamenatarise” and “politicise” the political system of the European Union, bringing it ever closer to a confederal state system with a political dynamic of its own -one which overlays national political dynamics- and distancing it from the model of an international organisation with an executive body that is technocratic in character and whose membership is national in composition.

Nevertheless, the challenge of the new President will be how to respond best and most effectively to the political demands of the citizens, bearing in mind their political preferences as expressed in the new Parliament. If he manages to reinforce his own “input legitimacy” with a new “output legitimacy” we will be looking at a new phase of European integration, one that is more political and more democratic and which will need to be consolidated in the 2019 electoral process.

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