



***After the Eastward Enlargement :
the institutionalization of the Europarties***

EDOARDO BRESSANELLI

Ph.D. thesis defence on 15 March 2012

Abstract

In the long debate about the EU constitutional and institutional reform which accompanied the Central and Eastern enlargement of the Union, political parties at the European level – in brief: Europarties – have rarely featured. This research, acknowledging the growing role played by political parties in the EU polity and their importance for its legitimization, addresses the following question: what impact has the mega-enlargement of the Union had upon the process of institutionalization of the Europarties and the EU party system?

Theoretically, this work draws from the literature on party and party system institutionalization in the developing polities, and makes these concepts 'travel' to the European Union. More specifically, it identifies two main dimensions in the concept of party institutionalization: a 'structural' dimension, referring to party organizational consolidation, and a 'value' dimension, capturing the party value-system and ideology.

By treating enlargement as an 'external shock', and relying on the literatures on partisan formation and development, three main propositions are then advanced. In sum, enlargement is expected to have a positive effect on the party structural dimension, but a more negative impact on the value dimension of institutionalization and on the competitiveness of the EU party system.

Empirically, the validity of the above propositions is assessed by combining qualitative and quantitative research strategies. On the one hand, the impact of enlargement upon the Europarty organizations is evaluated through an analysis of their 'official stories' and by interviewing Europarty elites and administrators. On the other, its impact on the value dimension is tested by using descriptive and inferential techniques on different data: attitudinal and textual data (Euromanifestos and EU Profiler data) are combined with behavioural data (roll-call votes).



Jury: Richard Rose (University of Aberdeen), Alexander H. Trechsel, EUI (Supervisor), Edoardo Bressanelli (candidate), Adrienne Héritier, EUI (replacing Peter Mair), Luciano Bardi (University of Pisa).

Bio:

Edoardo Bressanelli holds a BA and a MA degree in Political Sciences (International Studies) from Pisa University and the «Sant'Anna» School of Advanced Studies. Between January 2009 and April 2010, he spent a period of training and research in the European Parliament and worked for the Italian Permanent Representation in Brussels. While at the EUI, Edoardo collaborated in a research project on the Informal Politics of Co-Decision in the EU, and co-authored the OPPREUDO report on “How to Create a Transnational Party System”, commissioned by the European Parliament. His research interests include political parties, EU institutions and decision-making, and Italian politics. His work has been published in peer-reviewed journals such as *Comparative Political Studies*, *Journal of European Public Policy* and *Polena-Rivista Italiana di Analisi Elettorale*.