

Abstract of the Thesis

My research seeks to address the question: what impact has the 'Big Bang' Enlargement towards Central and Eastern Europe (CEE) had upon the process of institutionalization of the European parties and party system? The expansion of the European Union towards Central and Eastern Europe, carried out in two steps in 2004 and in 2007, provoked a widespread debate, both among academics and practitioners, about the capacity of the EU to 'survive' its enlargement. Would 'old' institutional rules be effective in the EU-27? Would the Commission, the Council and the European Parliament maintain some efficiency in the post-enlargement world, with more delegations, languages and workload? However, the attention of the scholarly community has seldom concentrated on the European parties – despite their role being officially recognized in the Treaties and their importance in the EU legislative politics. This research seeks to contribute to overcome this neglect, placing its analytical focus on the effect of (Eastern) enlargement on the organizational consolidation and the policy cohesion of the Euro-parties. Conceptually, it moves from the classic literature about party and party system institutionalization, and seeks to make these concepts 'travel' to the European Union. More specifically, it identifies two main dimensions in the concept of 'institutionalization': a 'structural' dimension referring to the party organization and an 'attitudinal' dimension referring to the party value-system and distinctive culture. Treating enlargement as an 'external shock', and relying on the literatures on party formation and development, two main propositions are then advanced: enlargements promote the structural institutionalization of the Euro-parties, but they undermine Euro-party ideological/policy cohesion. Empirically, the validity of these propositions is assessed by combining different data and several analytical techniques. On the one hand, the evaluation of the impact of CEE enlargement upon the Euro-party ideological cohesion is made through attitudinal (a new data-set – made available by the University of Mannheim - consisting of codified Euro-manifestos) and behavioural data (roll-call votes) and employing statistical techniques. On the other, its impact upon the organizational structure of the Euro-parties is assessed through an analysis of their 'official stories' (Statutes and internal regulations) supplemented by interviews with party elites and administrators.

Main Publications

Peronaci, M., Bressanelli, E., “La politica nella Unione Europea all'Orizzonte 2009: gruppi e partiti in azione”, *La Comunità Internazionale*, Vol. 4, 2009, pp. 607 - 628

Bressanelli, E., Calderaro, A., Piccio, D., Stamati, F., “Italy”, in W. Gagatsek (ed.), *The 2009 Elections to the European Parliament - Country Reports*. Florence: European Union Democracy Observatory, 2009.

Bressanelli, E., Giraud, F., “Un'analisi reputazionale”, in N. Bellini, N. Delai (ed.), *Merito, Ambizione, Collegalità*, ETS, Pisa, 2009, pp. 181 – 198

Bressanelli, E., “E' finita la luna di miele? La contestazione dell'Unione Europea nell'opinione pubblica e nella classe politica italiana”, in M. Campopiano et al. (eds.), *Dialoghi con il Presidente*, Edizioni della Normale, Pisa, 2008, pp. 401 – 415