

ABSTRACTS

Rudolf Hrbek

European Elections 2014: Continuity and New Elements

Prior to the European elections in 2014 expectations and fears were great. Some authors hoped that the elections would result in a democratic revolution establishing EU-level parliamentary democracy, as a result of the “front-runners,” which were presented by the European parties. Others feared that a high number of EU skeptic and non-aligned MEPs would obstruct the functioning of the new European Parliament. The article begins by discussing the basic conditions that allowed for such different expectations. It then presents the content of the European electoral manifestos and an analysis of the electoral campaigns, before comparing the predictions to the final results of the European elections. The article concludes that shifts in some national party systems could result in different national EU policies if it is a stabilizing trend. Considering the EU political system, the article presents a continuity thesis: it observes a tentative pragmatic evolution of the EU political system, in which the intergovernmental pillar does not lose its relevance to legitimize the EU.

Jo Leinen and Fabian Pescher

From Party Alliances to “Real Parties” at European Level? Background, Content and Implications of the New Rules Governing European Political Parties

Parties on the European level so far have not been able to sufficiently fulfil their mission under art. 10 par. 4 TEU to “contribute to forming European political awareness and to expressing the will of citizens of the Union.” Although European parties have been able to receive funds from the budget of the European Union since 2004, they lacked the legal basis, competences and resources to effectively fulfil the traditional functions of political parties. Based on a critical review of the existing regulatory framework governing European parties stemming from the years 2003 and 2007, an analysis of the new regulation on the statute and funding of European political parties and European political foundations is made. The new regulation was adopted by the European Parliament in May 2014 and will, for the first time, provide a European legal personality for European parties from January 1, 2017. Moreover, possible further steps to improve the conditions for European parties are examined, particularly the need to develop the European electoral system.

Stefan Lehne

Lessons Learned – Recommendations for Reforming European External Policy

The European Union is faced with mounting challenges in both the Eastern and Southern neighborhood. At the beginning of this new institutional cycle, it should, therefore, adjust its foreign policy toolbox to meet the new challenges. In concrete terms this would involve establishing a functional “Relex Cluster” led by the High Representative in the new European Commission, clarifying the division of work and improving coordination between the members of the new EU leadership team, implementing substantial reforms in the context of the review of the European External Action Service scheduled for 2015, elaborating a new foreign policy strategy of the Union and fundamentally renewing of the European Neighborhood Policy.

Kai Oppermann

Debating the Crisis in the Euro zone. An Analysis of the Merkel Government's Discourse in the German Bundestag 2009-2012

The European sovereign debt crisis is widely perceived by the German public as a dangerous threat and has great potential for domestic political mobilisation. The German Federal Government, therefore, faces particular pressures to explain and justify its crisis policy in the public arena. An important instrument for this purpose is the speeches of government representatives in the German Bundestag, which can be understood as a strategic discourse in order to affect the framing of government policy in the broader public debate. Against this background, this article examines the parliamentary discourse about the Euro zone crisis of the CDU/CSU-FDP coalition government between 2009 and 2012. The analysis points to five basic lines of argument, which speak to the attempt of the Federal Government to maintain sufficient domestic leeway to pursue its preferred policy in the crisis.

Oliver Bruttel

European Integration and the Crisis in the Euro zone. Support and Rejection of the EU in France, Germany, Spain and the United Kingdom

Against the background of the ongoing crisis in the euro zone over the past several years, the Institut für Demoskopie Allensbach conducted a series of four representative surveys in Germany, France, Spain and Great Britain in order to examine these population's opinions and attitudes on the issue of European integration. The citizens of the EU countries included in the survey are generally ambivalent when it comes to both their country's membership in the EU and to the Euro. However, at the same time, the majority of people in all four countries do not fundamentally question their country's membership in the EU – yet they do wish that many EU competences are transferred back to the national level.