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Europeanization of election manifestos in Montenegro

To which extent political parties acknowledge European policies?



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Introduction

This study aims to assess the so far track record concerning Europeanization of political parties in Montenegro, aspiring state to European Union (EU) full membership. More precisely, Montenegro is a candidate for membership into EU, and by opening the 24 negotiating chapters, out of which two were temporarily closed, Montenegro positioned itself as leading amongst Western Balkan states in the European integration process. As in the majority of European states, political parties in Montenegro play crucial role in internal political processes, thus affecting the subsequent political shaping of the society. Hence, the focus of this research lies on the reach and outcome of EU's influence with regards to political parties in Montenegro by observing the "top – down" approach of European integration process to actors of representative democracy, as generators of extensive internal changes, but also by noting the changes between relevant parties, and their acting in terms of the EU's influence on domestic political agents.

Therefore, subject of research focuses on providing the replay to question: *whether the interest for the concept of Europeanization increased or decreased amongst Montenegrin political parties during the Parliamentary elections 2016*, especially taking into account the progress Montenegro made in the European integration process. Based on the defined methodological framework, study tends to answer to a research inquiry: *whether European policies come to fore within the election manifestos of political parties in Montenegro, during the Parliamentary elections 2016?* As a result, the contribution of this research will be reflected in the identification of current level of Europeanization of political parties in Montenegro based on the analyses of election manifestos in context of European integration. Furthermore, objective of this research is to encourage the development of academic literature on the Europeanization of candidate states for the membership in EU, and in specific through case study of Montenegro and dynamics of Europeanization of political parties in Montenegro.

Parties are crucial and imminent factors of political sphere in every country, including Montenegro, where the creation of state and individual public policy is practically impossible without their full participation. By laying out party's views, beliefs and opinions concerning the issue of EU membership, parties in Montenegro affect the opinions of citizens to the great extent. Likewise, they pose one of the important channels of informing the public on the current EU policies and values, and the advantages and deficiencies transposed by the accession process. Henceforth, it is important to determine the level of transformative power of EU within domestic political parties, given that in the upcoming period they will influence the pace and quality of Montenegrin accession negotiations, as well as the rise or decrease of citizens' support for that process.

General overview

Among the academia and political structures, there is a generally accepted view that the process of Europeanization of Western Balkan countries¹ has become much more challenging, demanding and complex than it was the case of Central and Eastern Europe (CEE). Unlike the “*Eastern enlargement*” policy, which can be evaluated as a successful EU foreign policy activity, the Western Balkan states are facing more abundant and severe, both internal and external, challenges, which prevent smooth reforms of their political, economic and social system. The historical legacy, ethnic and religious issues, border issues, return of refugees, secessionist movements, rise of nationalism based on ethnic differences, strengthening of national identities, contested states, limited statehood, weak state capacities, clientelism, corruption, organised crime, as well as the dysfunctional economy, are just some of the issues which impede the development of Western Balkan states (Elbasani 2013; Börzel 2011; Börzel and Risse 2012; Keil 2013; Beiber: 2011; Noutcheva and Aydin-Düzgit 2012; Freyburg and Solveig 2010; Dzihic and Wieser 2008). These obvious internal political and socio-economic problems to a large extent call into question the peace, stability and security of the region, thus opening the possibility for the EU to engage more actively when it comes to consolidation of democracy and development of liberal economy in Western Balkans.

The literature on Europeanization demonstrates concern regarding the future of the Western Balkans, due to the limited impact of EU on domestic policy, underlining that Europeanization of Western Balkans is too fragmented, shallow and unequal (Borzel and Risse 2012: 193). Although the EU adopted a certain number of strategic documents at the beginning of 21st century, thus confirming the prospect of membership of the Western Balkans, the impression is that this initiative has not been sufficiently recognised by the states of region. More specifically, considering the integrational dynamics of each state individually, we assume that Western Balkan states have not adequately met the accession conditions stipulated by the Stabilisation and Association Agreement (SAA), as the integral part of the Stabilisation and Association Process (SAS), especially in part of the implementation of related *acqui communautaire*. Moreover, problematic democratic reforms have become a commonplace through “*complying inconsistently with membership criteria, rather than flatly refusing to fulfil them*” (Freyburg and Solveig 2010:264).

Apparently, the EU has demonstrated certain discrepancies in terms of fulfilling the promise of the European future for the Western Balkans. Firstly, the EU has proven not to be an effective state building actor due to the lack of experience in state building processes, absence of clear criteria within the *acqui communautaire*, as well as notable disagreements which exist between EU institutions and member states concerning this issue (Beiber 2011:1785, 1793; Keil: 2013:349; Börzel 2011:11; Keil and Arkan et al. 2015:16). Secondly, a complex system of EU accession conditions – “*highly asymmetric, and partially hierarchical relation*”, and their incomplete harmonisation

¹ Western Balkan states refer to a group of countries of Southeastern Europe which are not EU members, but that have expressed their willingness to join the EU. The Western Balkans include Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Macedonia (FYROM), Montenegro, Serbia and Kosovo

are additional reasons due to which Western Balkan states stagnate in the European integration process. Though countries of region promote EU membership as one of their main foreign policy priorities, precisely the “issue of statehood” (limited statehood) presents the basic obstacle which greatly reduces the possibility of harmonisation with Copenhagen criteria and the efficient implementation of *acquis communautaire*. Also, strict accession criteria defined by the EU, along with weak and underdeveloped state and institutional capacities of states of region, diminish the will and strength necessary to harmonise with Copenhagen criteria - prescribed through SAP. Therefore, the progress of WB states in European integration depends solely on meeting the conditions placed on three different levels, and defined through different documents of EU:

- 1) *general conditions* which relate to every state which expressed the need for EU membership, defined under the Copenhagen and Madrid criteria (1993 and 1995),
- 2) *conditions specific or common for Western Balkan states* (respect of peace agreements and cooperation with the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia), and
- 3) *specific conditions for each individual state of region*.

However, EU’s strategy of conditional external initiatives, based on the “principle of stick and carrot”, undermines the EU’s credibility as a normative power, as well as the willingness and motivation of countries of region to implement the EU norms (Mišćević 2009: 151; Börzel 2011:12-15; Börzel and Risse 2012:203; Notcheva 2009:1081; Elbasani 2013:8; Keil 2013:348; Beiber 2011:1791). Further, in the light of the previous EU enlargement waves from 2007 (Bulgaria and Romania) and 2013 (Croatia), there is a lack of consensus about the future of enlargement process, the so called “enlargement fatigue”, which gravely affects the continuation of alignment with the Copenhagen criteria and efficient implementation of *acquis communautaire* among Western Balkan states during the processes of integration. While, on one hand, EU offered these states the prospect of membership in order to stabilise the region and overcome the issues caused by weak and contested statehood, on other, precisely the limited statehood of WB states acts as the main agent which reduces their compliance with EU standards (Börzel 2011:5).

Evidently, the limited EU impact on domestic politics is the result of a lack of commitment of both sides – i.e. the EU’s and the WB completion of the effective democratic transition and consolidation. Despite different integration dynamics which exist among the WB, Montenegro is one of the countries in the region (with the exception of Croatia) which stands out as a positive example of the European integration process based on the observable EU impact on domestic changes.

From the period of restoration of independence in 2006 up to date, Montenegro made progress in the domain of meeting the Copenhagen criteria and harmonisation with *acquis communautaire*. It positioned ahead of the Western Balkan states in the process of European integration. As of 30 June 2016, it opened 24 negotiating chapters, including the negotiations on rule of law – chapter 23 (Judiciary and fundamental rights) and 24 (Justice, freedom and security), and provisionally closed two (25 – Science and research and 26 – Education and culture). It also established the benchmarks to open chapter 11 (Delegation of the European Union to Montenegro 2016).

Still, Montenegro’s progress towards the EU membership does not depend entirely on the capacity of domestic actors to initiate and implement structural changes. Naturally, it is a completely driven project in which the EU positioned itself as major factor of domestic change (Keil and Arkan et el 2015. 83). Consequently, Montenegro, as the smallest country among the post-Yugoslav states, suffers from the issue of limited statehood, i.e. weak state capacities due

to a lack of resources (staff, expertise, funds), as well as institutionally entrenched structure of corruption and clientelism (Börzel 2011:10).

By using the external incentive models as a tool of transformative power, the EU has influenced the process of democratisation and consolidation of statehood in Montenegro, and slightly empowered institutional capacities in order to comply with the EU norms and standards. Correspondingly, the EU transformative power was visible at least two cases in Montenegro: during the visa liberalisation process and recommendations stipulated through the EU's Opinion on the preparedness of Montenegro for EU membership (Keil and Arkana. et el 2015: 96; Radeljić et el 2013. 125). As it is the case in other WB states, the Montenegrin political elite often very uses EU initiatives (policies and institutions) to ensure the survival of the current governing authority, promote its own party's programme, satisfy the voters or remain in power. The extent to which the EU and domestic initiatives influence each other largely depends on the prominence of certain EU polices (visa liberalization, recommendation for opening accession talks, judicial reform, rule of law, corruption and organized crime etc.) for voters. In the absence of public interest for certain EU policies, norms or rules, the EU will face a limited impact on domestic institutional change in the WB (Borzel and Risse 2012:200; Keil and Arkan et. el 2015:97).

Europeanization of political parties in candidate states is becoming one of the most significant issues within the framework of European studies during the period prior to fifth and sixth enlargement wave from 2004 (Sedelmeier 2011:7). Still, within that framework, academic community paid little attention to potential candidate states from WB region (Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro, Kosovo, Macedonia and Serbia). In case of Montenegro, academic community showed limited interest for the influence of EU on internal changes and policy, thus losing the opportunity to determine the presence or absence of European values in the internal policy of Montenegro. Naturally, few researchers dealt with the Europeanisation of Montenegrin system of parties (Stojarová and Emerson et al. 2010; Fink-Hafner 2008; Fink-Hafner and Ladrech 2008; Vujović and Komar 2008), and even fewer with the analysis of process of Europeanisation of Montenegro based on the examination of political parties and their election programmes. Considering the abovementioned, this study will aim to reduce the level of existing investigative blank, thereby emphasising the analysis of domestic political subjects and their election manifests during the parliamentary elections for 2016 and thus secure new study findings on the topic of influence of EU on Montenegrin parties.

Operationalisation of research

Ladrech (2002:396-400) defines five areas of research to obtain the evidence of Europeanization in parties, which could be used as a suitable theoretical framework for providing qualitative insight into the EU impact on Montenegrin parties. Following Ladrech's five areas for indicating the phenomena of Europeanization of political parties (programme changes, organisational changes, patterns of party competition, party-government relations and relations beyond the national party system), first area will be used for the purpose of this study – programme content, as one of the documents most frequently exposed to changes and EU impact.

Namely, the change of manifest within the EU context was a regular occurrence among Montenegrin parties from the restoration of independence in 2006. Once Montenegro resolved its status, state and legally wise, the issue of statehood, for the most part, no longer presented the centrepiece of domestic parties. Instead, it was mostly supplemented or substituted by the issue of European integration, as one of the most important programme contents in the internal political discourse. Apart from that, internal programme party changes were perceived as a result of Montenegrin progress on the path to EU membership, especially within the ruling coalition, by using the EU prospect of membership as a powerful tool for the introduction and certain unpopular political measures as solutions.

Following the case study of the Europeanization of political parties in Montenegro, Komar and Vujović (2007) and Vujović (2015) provided a credible analysis of visible EU impact on domestic parties, where they presented apparent internal changes (party rhetoric changes, mentioning the EU in party manifestos) and the consensus of all domestic parties on the EU membership issue. In addition, the authors provided the contribution in the identification of institutional influence of EU on domestic parties as the result of party participation in Stabilisation and Association Parliamentary Committee (SAPC). However, apart from the institutional aspect, the authors did not provide more reliable results on the influence of EU on domestic parties starting with the in-depth analysis of the content of election manifestos. Thus, due to the focus placed merely on the identification of party consensus related to EU integration, the authors' findings touched upon the Europeanization of political parties only tangentially. This raised the question: whether our parties have been, more or less, Europeanized and whether parties used the prospect of EU membership in order to improve their visibility?

Hence, this study seeks to examine the impact of the process of Europeanization on political parties in Montenegro throughout the course of parliamentary elections in 2016 with the emphasis on the depth of the content of election manifestos of eight relevant parties and coalitions. Parliamentary elections year 2016 were chosen because these represents the point at which Montenegro progressed in accession negotiations with the EU, with 24, out of 35, opened negotiating chapters. Empirical analysis was conducted on the basis of primary sources – election manifestos. The relevant parties are those

political associations that won at least two parliamentary seats on previous parliamentary elections in 2014 (CMP/MARPOR 5TH revised edition 2014: 2). In this regard, the study will not include the analysis of election manifestos of certain civic and ethnic-minority parties (FORCA, Albanian Coalition (AC) – Coalitional Shqiptar (CS), Croatian Civic Initiative (CCI) and Liberal Party (LP)), as well as of other election actors who did not have such parliamentary representation so far.

Abbreviation	Full name	Title in English	Elections
DPS	Demokratska partija socijalista	Democratic Party of Socialists	2016.
DF	Demokratski front ²	Democratic Front	2016.
Ključ	Velika koalicija KLJUČ ³	Grand Coalition KEY	2016.
SDP	Socijaldemokratska partija Crne Gore	Social Democratic Party of Montenegro	2016.
DCG	Demokratska Crna Gora	Democrats of Montenegro	2016.
SD	Socijaldemokrate	Social Democrat	2016.
PCG	Pozitivna Crna Gora	Positive Montenegro	2016.
BS	Bošnjačka stranka	Bosniak Party	2016.

Graph 1. List of analysed political parties and coalitions in Montenegro⁴

The rules applied to measure the EU policy positions of all relevant Montenegrin political parties and coalitions will be conducted based on handbook of *Manifesto Project* (CMP/MARPOR 5TH revised edition March 2014) along with the use of self-defined categories. In addition, the study will use MARPOR's definition of relevant political parties as main indicator of those parties or coalitions which have won at least two seats in the Parliament of Montenegro (Ibid. 2014:2). In addition, the use of the central question of the manifesto coding, defined by CMP/MARPOR, will present a special contribution to the research: *What are the statements of the party candidates? Which policy positions does the party candidate convey?* (Ibid. 2014: 9).

Manifesto Project developed a system of 56 standard categories grouped in seven major policy areas. However, due to the specificity of the WB states, along with the stated intent to particularly measure the prominence of EU policies (not the entire political and socio-economic context) within Montenegro's election manifestos, it can be assumed that the defined coding procedures within MAPOR may generate difficulties and potential ambiguities instead of obtaining qualitative insights and outcomes in the assessment of political positions of relevant Montenegrin parties. In that regard, the study relies on the content analysis Montenegrin parties' election manifestos with the use of eleven self-invented categories.

The SAA has been used as the basis for defining the methodological framework of the research (integral part of the SAP as contractual relationship between the EU and WB). Hence, Montenegro's progress towards the EU membership entirely depends on the fulfilment of the accession conditions which are set on three different levels: 1) the Copenhagen criteria, or general conditions (stability of democratic institutions, rule of law, respect and protection of human and

²DF is a coalition composed of political parties: New Serbian Democracy (NOVA), Movement for Changes (MfC), Democratic People's Party of Montenegro, Labour Party, Democratic Serbian Party, Movement for Pljevlja, Serbian Radical Party, Yugoslav Communist Party of Montenegro, Party of Associated Disabled and Retired Persons of Montenegro, Civic Movement Resistance to hopelessness.

³Grand Coalition KEY is composed of political parties: DEMOS, Socialist People's Party (SPP) and United Reform Action (URA).

⁴Source: 2014 CHES candidate (scheme available at: <http://chesdata.eu/>)

minority rights and functioning market economy), 2) conditions specific or common for WB (cooperation with the International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia in Hague, regional cooperation and strengthening of good neighbourly relations, the return of refugees, ethnic and religious reconciliation, protection of minorities, freedom of the media, judicial reform), and 3) specific conditions pertaining to Montenegro (decisive fight against corruption and organised crime, state institution reform, judicial reform, free and fair elections, protection and improvement of human and minority rights (Mišćević 2009: 151, 168; Đurović 2012: 324-327).

However, it is important to mention that this research will not consider certain EU requirements embedded in the SAA. Apparently, some EU's policies appear in all three levels, while in the case of Montenegro's cooperation with Hague Tribunal, return of refugees and ethnic and religious reconciliation, the state meets all of the conditions stipulated by SAA (European Commission Montenegro Report 2015:21, 57). Therefore, the three (3) abovementioned conditions will be left out, and the established scheme of categories will employ to eleven (11) defined categories that relate to meeting the political and economic criteria for the membership in EU (democracy, rule of law, human rights, minority rights, regional cooperation and strengthening of good neighbourly relations, free elections, freedom of media, corruption and organised crime, judicial reforms, state institution reforms and liberal market economy).

Based on the Manifesto Coding Instructions, every positive category contains all the references of the negative category. As an example, "democracy positive" is a shift to "democracy negative" (CMP/MARPOR 5th reversed edition 2014:16). Hence, positive references to these categories will be marked with "yes", while negative statements will be labelled as "no". Furthermore, the use of direct quotations of election manifestos will provide special contribution to the content analysis.

Outcome of research

Content analysis of election manifestos of political parties and coalitions for parliamentary elections 2016

	DPS	DF	Ključ	SDP	DCG	SD	PCG	BS
Democracy	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	Yes
Rule of law	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Human rights	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes
Minority rights	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	No	No	Yes	Yes
Regional cooperation	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Free elections	No	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	No	No	No
Freedom of media	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	Yes
Corruption and organised crime	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes
Judicial reform	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
State institutions reform	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	No	Yes
Liberal market economy	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes

Graph 2. Relative emphasis of European integration in election programems
 Yes – Positive or favourable references to particular EU policy
 No – Negative or no reference to particular EU policy

Democratic Party of Socialists of Montenegro (DPS)



DPS offered the election manifesto in 2016 on 34 pages. Even though it states that party strongly supports the membership of Montenegro in EU, DPS demonstrates the emphasis of European policies and values only in general: “Primary goal, by the end of the term of next Government, will be to finalise the negotiation process on membership into EU and to make the preparations for the signing of the Agreement on the accession to European Union” (DPS 2016: 24). Apparently, in addition to EU’s values and policies, the election manifesto of DPS is characterised with the use and prominence of “restoration of independence” and “thousand years of statehood”, even though the issue of state and legal status of Montenegro was resolved 10 years ago.

Election manifesto of DPS is marked with the existence of certain level of visibility of party Europeanization. More specifically, the manifesto indicates an increased raise of promotion of EU values (democracy, rule of law, human and minority rights, regional cooperation, freedom of media, corruption and organised crime, judicial reform and state institution reforms, and liberal market economy), through party’s declarative support to membership of Montenegro into EU. Namely, even though DPS’s programme contains a

separate chapter dedicated to European integration (“Steady pace to European family”), rule of law (“DPS for the society of rule of law”) and set of human and minority rights (“Human rights and fundamental freedoms for the safe democratic development”), essentially the party manifests represents general prominence of EU values and policies, without elaborated explanations as to how that values will come to life in Montenegrin society, or how certain European policies will be implemented in Montenegro. Instead, DPS in its election manifesto greatly underlines the achievements of Government of Montenegro within European integration process. *“Out of 33 chapters of *acquis communautaire*, 24 have been opened, out of which 2 were provisionally closed. 29 negotiating positions were adopted and submitted, and the initial benchmarks have been met in 11 out of 13 chapters”* (DPS 2016: 24). Interestingly, for the first time in post-referendum election cycle, one party (DPS) highlighted particular rights that Montenegro will achieve after the full membership into EU, especially given that state is currently halfway through the process of negotiations, and that EU documents hold no clearly defined dates of future accession of new member state. In doing so, DPS states, in a rather vague and general manner, that: *“workers from Montenegro will be able to compete on labour markets of other member states and employ themselves freely in EU states without special approvals or working licences”*; that it will provide the possibility of *“direct placement of Montenegrin catch, breeding and fish processing, so that Montenegrin fishermen will be able to place their product equally on the market, based on the accession to EU, while preserving the traditional tools and manners of catch and etc.”* (DPS 2016: 24-26).

Compared to election manifesto from 2009 (Coalition for European Montenegro) and 2012 (Coalition European Montenegro), electoral manifesto 2016 is a step forward in linking with the EU policies. In addition, latest DPS election manifesto is more substantial, systematic and serious, notably in the area of European integration, whereby it dedicated five pages to this topic. As a reminder, previous coalitional programmes were composed of two pages, whereby 143 to 224 words were dedicated to EU affairs and values (Vučković 2016: 46, 48). Overall, considering the expressed declarative support to Montenegrin process of EU integration, the DPS election manifesto can be assessed as general, brief and insufficiently elaborated, without the invested effort to indicate which of the specific measures or actions will be undertaken in order to meet the political conditions for the EU membership.

Democratic Front (DF)



In the election manifesto of DF, which has 96 pages, there is no clear coalition position which adhere to membership of Montenegro into EU. In fact, coalition election manifesto underlines the evident dose of Euro-scepticism with regards to membership and future of EU. In addition, there are indications that DF can be characterised as single Euro-sceptic structure (out of those analysed in this study), which is a novelty in the parliamentary life of Montenegro. *“European Union is in a state of deep crisis, reflected in the problems of European democracy, monetary policy, debt crisis, decrease of productivity, migration crisis, issues of defence and security, unprincipled and unprofessional administration, enlargement policy. Outcome of referendum in the United Kingdom and the strengthening of right-winged parties throughout the majority of EU member states reaffirm the level of crisis. Future of European Union will depend entirely on the objective overview of overall state and adequate reforms”* (DF 2016: 72).

Though politically affiliated as Euro-sceptic, it is interesting that DF’s manifesto reflects the impact of EU transformative power on domestic political actors through qualitative prominence of EU policies. Such programme public policies (in the area of rule of law, human and minority rights, free elections, freedom of media, corruption and organised crime, reform of judiciary and state administration and liberal market economy) provide specific measures and directions of action aiming to resolve identified problems, thereby harmonising with EU’s requirements. Thus, the principle of Europeanization *de facto* exists in the DF electoral manifesto.

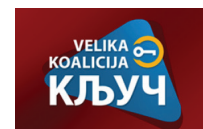
Chapter “European integration” underlines that the support of citizens for EU accession has been decreasing, and that this is a result of ineffective and inefficient policy of current government. The level of euro-scepticism seems obvious even in the provision of insignificant number of measures in the area of European integration (7 out of the total of 707 suggested), especially when considering the election manifesto from 2012 where DF suggested more than 13 (out of the total of 595 suggested) significant and unusual measures for the acceleration of accession negotiations of Montenegro with the EU (Vučković 2016: 49). Proposed measures of DF’s manifesto for 2016 are mostly identical to those from previous election cycle for this area, and relate to: *adoption of strategic documents of European integration which would rely on an objective analysis of state and optimisation of reforms...; creation of Cost-benefit analysis of process by each segment, and cumulatively; permanent monitoring over the state of affairs in European Union, and adapting to new situations, and notifying the public on same; referendum on membership of Montenegro in European Union* and etc.; (DF 2016: 72-73).

Within the part on “foreign policy”, DF makes a major turning point in terms of foreign policy orientation towards Russia. It highlights that government of DF will abolish the sanctions to Russia, run a balanced foreign policy, and maintain good relations with both EU and Russia, which is a long-running reliable partner of Montenegro, and rectify “*many historical foreign-political errors and omissions, caused in last two decades, which directly contradict national interests of Montenegro*” (DF 2016: 70). These foreign political programme measures were not identified in the election manifesto of DF for 2012.

In general, the 2016’s election manifesto “Make Montenegro work”, compared to manifesto “Programme of 595 measures” from 2012, brings no significant changes in terms of content or concept, in other words, the majority of measures from the domain of EU have been reiterated.

Even though the manifesto reflects a visible Euro-sceptic tendency concerning the EU integration process, it is important to mention that the EU transformative power is evident in the DF election manifesto, through the proposed measures in direction of compliance with the EU political conditions.

Grand Coalition KEY



Grand Coalition KEY (DEMOS-SNP-URA) states that it is fully supporting European integration and future membership of Montenegro into EU. “*We advocate the complete integration of Montenegro in European Union which requires a serious reform work on the domestic field so that we could be able to adopt necessary standards that apply in the European community*”, (Grand Coalition KEY 2016:10). Content-wise, even though it is written on just 16 pages, coalitional election manifesto is characterised with high level of representation of EU values and policies, mostly partially offering solutions and measures for the purpose of harmonisation with the conditional political criteria of EU.

Based on the content analysis, the election manifesto of Grand Coalition KEY, on one hand, suggests credible plans of action to address certain EU political conditions (rule of law, fight against corruption and organised crime, judicial reform) thus demonstrating great level of EU impact on domestic political agents. Hence, in the domain of compliance with the EU policy issues, Grand Coalition KEY promises that it will: adopt laws on President, Parliament and Government of Montenegro, then review laws on Judicial Council and judges and State Prosecution (rule of law); pass special Law on the protection of state employees and servants who report the cases of corruption, execute immediate audit and termination of privatisation and other contracts that have caused obvious damage to state and citizens, as well as confiscate complete assets of officials for the sake of the compensation of damage caused on the basis of proven guilt, and etc. (fight against crime and corruption) (Grand Coalition KEY 2016: 8, 9). On the other hand, in some of the segments, the manifesto differs with general or declarative absorption of EU values

and policies (human and minority rights, regional cooperation, free elections, freedom of media, reform of state administration), but it does not provide clear and specific measures and action plans regarding the resolution of issues or implementation of certain EU policies. For instance, Grand Coalition KEY stresses: *“guaranteed gender equality must translate to practice in every area”*; *“we will prevent the discrimination of minorities in the employment in public administration, judicial and representative bodies”* (human and minority rights); *“we will pay special attention to regional cooperation and good neighbourly relations, through the resolution of current issues and promotion of regional projects of development”* (regional cooperation); *“will of citizens is the foundation of state power and as such should be stated on free elections”* (free elections); *“we will advocate the victory of principle of truth as the foundation of professional journalism”* (freedom of media) (Grand Coalition KEY 2016: 8, 10, 15). Based on the aforementioned, one can get an impression that Grand Coalition KEY supports future membership of Montenegro in EU still in declarative sense, which is demonstrated by the content of election manifesto where the area of European integration is briefly comprised in chapter *“foreign policies”* (Grand Coalition KEY 2016: 10).

In general, Grand Coalition KEY did achieve visible, yet insufficiently profound, level of Europeanization, as the result of EU's impact on domestic political actors through the presence of EU values into manifesto, but with partial recommendation of specific solutions and measures for alignment with EU conditional political requirements.

Democratic Montenegro (DCG/Democrats)



As far as the *Democrats* are concerned, full membership of Montenegro in EU represents one of the most important foreign policy priorities, and in that context they strongly support the continuation of European integration processes. European affairs are at the top of the party's programme priorities, or election manifesto, emphasising the importance of termination of process of consolidation of EU values in the society. Consequently, that influence of Europeanization with the application of *“top – down”* approach on Democrats is visible. *“What is of special importance for citizens, especially for young people, is that the membership in European union implies opportunities for life without borders. This further implies free exchange of ideas and knowledge, free movement of people, schooling, employment under equal conditions in EU member states. Hence, it is important for Montenegro to join the community of European states, but even more important is that European values start living in Montenegro”* (Democrats 2015: 5).

Generally speaking, the manifesto abounds with prominence of EU values and policies, but it is equally evident that party only partially provides the measures and action plans which could be used in the compliance with EU conditional political requirements. Similar to the example of Grand Coalition KEY, on one hand, Democrats in their manifesto dedicate special attention to individual EU policy issues (reform of judiciary and state administration, fight against corruption and organised crime, freedom of media and etc.) which ultimately results in the creation of explicit, meaningful and credible solutions with the aim of harmonisation with the *acquis communautaire*. In doing so, Democrats point out that *special significance during the judicial reform have creation of conditions for the introduction of specialised (special) administrative courts, as segments of administrative judiciary or judicial departments in administrative court for the purpose of application of new and complex branches of law (primarily of anti-monopoly law, tax law); improved position of parties in civil and criminal proceeding through the amendments of procedural laws...; change in the manner of election of president and members of State commission for the protection of rights in public procurement proceeding – the election should be performed by the Parliament, to which they should be accountable for their work, with the obligation of declaration and Government (reform*

of state administration); that we should affirm the example of one of the Asian countries, Singapore for instance, which saw extremely high economic growth rate once it got rid of corruption, which classified it as one of the so called Asian economic tigers; that it shall insist to award journalists the status of official staff in order to increase the level of their safety especially in light of the frequent attacks on public word, as well as to use Criminal Code to introduce criminal acts with the aim of prevention of assaults on journalists and etc.; (Democrats 2015: 14, 16, 20, 87). Contrary to that, in other cases, the promotion of certain EU values (human and minority rights) is only in declarative sense without clear and precise action plans. Hence, in the minority rights area, Democrats state: "Montenegro does not pay enough attention to minorities regarding their education, especially in the part of education of Roma population" (Democrats 2015: 70).

To conclude, this party achieved a recognisable level of Europeanization as confirmed by significant prominence of EU policies in the election manifesto. Still, the reach of EU impact on Democrats is limited. Proposed particular, but partial, measures related to specific policies of EU indicate that the EU transformative power in relation to party *de facto* exists, and that it penetrates, slowly but continually, thus creating favourable conditions for the continuation of overall Europeanization of this party.

Social Democratic Party of Montenegro (SDP)



In the context of Europeanization of domestic political parties, the election manifesto of SDP does not reflect particular interest for the compliance with the requirements of European Union, mainly reducing its programme to proclamation of realisation of economic and social objectives, without the essential insight in relation to EU policies.

Even though SDP claims that it strongly supports further continuation of European integration process, the manifesto is brief in content, insufficiently precise and inconsistent, demonstrating limited impact of EU transformative power on domestic political changes. Content-wise, SDP does not dedicate single part of its programme to European integration issues, thereby defining its attitude on this matter through formal and common support: "Montenegro became an independent state, we are on our way of accession to European Union..." (SDP 2016: 1).

Also, apart from the relative prominence of certain EU policies (rule of law, human rights, corruption and organised crime, reform of judiciary and state institutions, liberal market economy) in declarative and insufficiently elaborated manner, the electoral manifesto does not provide appropriate solutions and measure with the aim of solving these political problems. Hence, the content of manifesto mainly relates to proclamation of general political principles: "We will establish an uncompromised political will for the fight against corruption and organised crime, especially against that on high level" (fight against corruption and organised crime); "we will ensure full independence, autonomy, efficiency and accountability of judges and prosecutors" (judicial reform); "Further improvement of human rights and gender equality.." (human rights); "We will free state administration of party influence" (reform of state administration); (SDP 2016: 3, 7, 20).

Accordingly, based on the aforementioned, we can conclude that the election manifesto of SDP reflects an extremely low level of EU impact on this party, thus the low level of Europeanization, primarily due to the insufficient level of representation of EU policies in the analysed election manifesto.

Positive Montenegro (PCG)



Among the analysed parties, PCG provided the shortest version of election manifesto. PCG firmly supports further continuation of reforms during the course of integration by stating: *“Accession and full membership in European Union is the main priority of Montenegro. Integration which would imply the adoption of European values and standards, would be the most significant achievement of foreign policy of Montenegro in its history, hence it should invest every effort possible to achieve that goal”* (PCG 2016: 3). Though short, election programme of PCG contains a particular chapter *“European integration”* which highlights certain benefits that Montenegro could gain by gaining the right to full membership in the EU. *“Membership in EU is the greatest guarantee of implementation of advanced legal solutions adopted based on the framework of EU, thereby of development of Montenegro in economic, political, cultural and social context, hence we are ought to invest all of our social potentials to that end”* (PCG 2016: 3). It is interesting that the manifesto of PCG, same as that of DPS, prejudices the final outcome of membership of Montenegro in EU, even though there are no adequate claims to support this claim. In such a way, it states the following: *“And once we become a member state, Montenegro’s priority will remain its acting within the Union and its institutions, as well as the organisation in a manner in which it is recognised as constructive and efficient for citizens of Montenegro, as well as for Europe”* (PCG 2016:3).

PCG identifies the need for the *“adoption of European values and standards”*, however its programme does not provide the answers to such significant matters. In general, the manifesto is greatly general judging by its content, insufficiently clear and simple, without the specific solutions and measures for the implementation of proposed public policies.

However, the manifesto did achieve a visible level of Europeanization through the promotion of almost every EU policy (rule of law, human and minority rights, freedom of media, corruption and organised crime, reform of judiciary and state administration, liberal market economy). Still, by analysing the defined values of EU, the conclusion is that little was done in the production of defined strategies and action plans, which reduces this election manifesto to vague proclamation of political, economic and social principles. *“What is of special importance for the continuation of accession negotiations is the fight against corruption and organised crime. Rule of law presents the cornerstone of European Union and its consolidation, along with the reform of judiciary, presents one of the main priorities during the accession process of Montenegro to Union”* (corruption and organised crime, rule of law) (PCG 2016: 3).

Compared to previous election cycle, PCG made progress in the process of Europeanization, by bettering its programme in content and by enriching it with the majority of EU political requirements. However, the provided general party measures aimed to meet the political requirements for membership in EU indicate that the limited intensity of EU transformative power in relation to PCG.

Social Democrats (SD)



Primarily, the election manifesto of SD reflects an extremely low level of Europeanization. By focusing only on economic policy development and improvement of living standard in Montenegro, this election manifesto demonstrates an apparent lack of concern for European integration processes.

Election manifesto of SD do not provide adequate solutions, measures or action plans aiming to solve certain political issues which greatly hinder the progress of Montenegro on its path to membership in EU. Hence, party’s stand in relation to EU values is marginal, reducing mostly to declarative support to European integration process and proclamation of default objectives. Hence, the last chapter of their manifesto *“Consistent for European Union and NATO”* states that the *“...integration of Montenegro to European Union and NATO Alliance is of importance in the*

preservation of territorial integrity, political stability and creation of conditions for economic and social development in the community of European states and nations” (SD 2016: 57).

Manifesto of SD unambiguously indicates on partial and relative prominence of EU values and policies amongst the programme principles, thus indicating that the programme is very limited, incomplete and unspecified content-wise, while simultaneously affiliated for declarative support to European integration process as its fundamental programme pillar.

Finally, apart from the obvious support to Euro-Atlantic political processes, the election manifesto is characterised with the absence of EU transformative power, hence it can be assumed that the process of Europeanization in this political subject is fragmented and of low-intensity.

Bosniak party (BS)



The election programme of BS “We do not function like others, we do things the right way” demonstrates the prominence of EU policies, but its content is limited, permeated with declarative dedication to EU requirements. Bosniak party strongly advocates the policy of open doors in terms of the EU integration through chapter “Integration”: *“Integration of our space in EU is an objective on which we have been working and hopefully we will be able to achieve it short enough in order to be in the same society as other modern developed European states. Regardless of Brexit and Euro-scepticism which, from time to time, appear in some parts of EU, our path to EU according to the opinion of BOSNIAK PARTY should be constant” (BS 2016: 11).*

Election manifesto of BS pays special attention to the majority of EU’s policies (democracy, rule of law, human and minority rights, regional cooperation, freedom of media, corruption and organised crime, reform of judiciary and state institutions, liberal market economy), though in a general and unspecified manner, without the specific solutions, measures or strategies as to how to execute the compliance with European standards. For the most part, BE programmes come down to general proclamation of party’s goals in the part closely related to public policies. *Regulated system creates the assumptions for an equal, fair and secure life where each individual will be able to create a family and provide it with proper conditions of life (rule of law); We believe that human rights and freedoms, guaranteed under the Constitution, should be the supreme social interest. That social interest will be achieved if all of the pillars of government perform their job (human rights); Independent and transparent judiciary, which purges itself of poor judges and prosecutors. This can be achieved only with clear criteria for the assessment of their work, as well as with equal judicial practice and etc. (reform of judiciary); ... we advocate the quality of bilateral cooperation with countries in region and wider, based on the resolution of opened issues, upgrade of economic, cultural and economic relations (regional cooperation) (BS 2016: 2, 12).*

Compared to previous election manifesto from 2012, this manifesto is evidently more quality, substantial and encompassing content-wise by emphasising almost every political issue imposed by the EU (Vučković 2016: 48). Consequently, one can conclude that BS defined only the general principles in its manifesto that correspond to EU policies, but maintained the declarative level.

Conclusions

Research results indicate that the influence of European Union on political parties in Montenegro is visible, but limited in terms of scope and range. Certain level of EU transformative power can be identified in relation of parties and coalitions with regards to process of European integration. However, new election manifestos bring change in the perception of European policy, and EU as a whole, compared to previous elections, especially in the case of DF, thereby making a distinct turn from the moderate continued approach to process of European integration to reflections of Euro-scepticism (Vučković 2016:49).

Even though the majority of relevant parties in Montenegro marked a noticeable level of Europeanization within their own election manifestos, findings reveal that the majority of given measures, solutions or promises was provided only generally and that the same are insufficiently developed. There is a dominant support from relevant political actors for the continuation of European integration reforms, but it is not always accompanied with specific and detailed action plans and strategies, which renders the support mostly as declarative. What is interesting based on the analysed, is that the highest level of Europeanisation is marked precisely by the political group (DF) that was identified as Euro-sceptic based on the same analysed programme content. In case of other political subjects (DPS, KEY, SDP, DCG, SD, PCG, BS), which state that they strongly support the continuation of European integration processes, the influence of EU varies from party to party. In such a way, it ranges from those parties (KEY, DCG), where the EU transformative power resulted in the introduction of specific and appropriate measures that have been aligned with the EU political conditions, but this does not apply to every EU policy, only partially, all the way to those subjects (DPS, SDP, SD, PCG, BS) who did not make an effort, or were not able to do so, to provide specific plans of action and strategies which involve the standards of EU, thus leaving the voters without a clear view on the majority of policies of EU.

Reasons that limited the EU transformative power in terms of the internal political processes can be regarded from several different points of view. First of all, there is an evident lack of interest by the parties in the domain of harmonisation with political conditions of EU. Fact that Montenegro opened 24 negotiating chapters during a short period of time, presents the capital integrational progress on the path to full membership. It seems that this did not motivate the majority of political parties to comprehensively imbue their election manifestos with focal topics of EU, or to bond the Europeanization with the democratisation of Montenegrin society. Additionally, in an attempt to address the obvious poor socio-economic situation, which unquestionably encumbers the development of entire socio-political system in Montenegro, we witnessed a turn in the selection of priorities, hence the choice came down to internal burning issues, but also on those in which the existing party elites claim they function the most. The segment of manipulation was not omitted in these, and issues related to them. In that manner, former coalitional partners – DPS and SDP – (mis) use the issue of “restoration of independence and statehood” and “progress of Montenegro in the field of European integration” as important leverage to gain further support from voters for the purpose of continuation of reforms in the area of economy and social policy. Another important factor is the steadfast tremor of Montenegrin political ground, which comes as the result of frequent emergence of new political parties on domestic political scene. Instead

of them harmonising with the policies of EU, newly formed parties fight for the majority of support of voters in order to ensure their parliamentary status, and in that segment the daily-political and socio-economic issues are far more beneficial in short-term. It should be highlighted that similar “pre-election attitude” was noted in the case of “old” parliamentary parties”, which questions the capacities of those who have been “playing the game” for so long.

Finally, key challenge which impedes a more purposeful influence on the internal political processes and actors is the lack of political will, but all the more are capacities of political elites to adequately solve current reform political issues through the harmonisation with EU standards. Even though Montenegrin public strongly supports the accession to EU (63% of the population believes that EU membership would be beneficial for Montenegro), party political elites declaratively advocate the membership in EU as most important foreign policy priority, simultaneously demonstrating limited effort to systematically and adequately address political conditions laid in accession negotiations (Eurobarometer Report 84 2015: 100).

Consequently, we witness the situation where political elites emphasise strong declarative support to process of accession to EU, while in practice, strategic party orientation of solving specific political and economic criteria for membership in EU is not visible. More specifically, areas crucial for fight against corruption and organised crime, rule of law, reform of judiciary and state institutions, protection of human and minority rights and freedom of media, saw insufficient progress in the provision of clear and precise strategy and measures for their implementation, as well as of mechanisms for determining the responsibility for (not) done.

Further, in the domain of relative promotion of EU’s policies, analysis determined that the level of Europeanisation increased between this and previous election cycle, but that the number of specific measures, strategies and directions of acting remained nearly the same (Vučković 2016: 48-50). Apart from the Euro-sceptic stand of DF, as well as of continued detailed programme, there were no other greater changes among other relevant political parties between two last election cycles, except in particular cases in terms of content (DPS, DCG, SD, PCG, BS), which are not closely related to process of harmonisation with the conditions of accession to EU. Party opinions in relation to European standards appear mostly in general and vague sense of the word, simultaneously indicating on insufficient transformative power of EU in the shaping of policies within the political parties.

Based on the stated results of research, the conclusion is that *the EU transformative power with regards to relevant Montenegrin parties is visible within the general framework, but limited in specific range and outcome*. EU, so far, influenced Montenegrin domestic affairs to certain extent, i.e. the policy, institutions, actors and processes, primarily due to the existence of strong influence of “old habits” of running the internal policy, but also the failure to recognize all advantages of accession to EU from this aspect, leaving its transformative power insufficiently used by political parties. Given that the majority of political parties functions based on the principle of pyramid hierarchy (“top down”), it would appear that there is a lack of interest of party leaderships to accept the wave of changes introduced precisely by the process of European integration. Namely, although Montenegrin political elites define the EU membership as a strategic priority of our country, they resist the change of discourse and habits, which basically renders their support on the level of declarative one, while the awarded “prospect of membership” by the EU is used to strengthen the influence in the society. The level of implementation of EU policies, rules and norms in Montenegro mostly depends on the interest of Montenegrin public for certain policy, which consequently succumbs to strong public pressure to harmonise with the political requirements of EU, more compulsory rather than actively. In other cases, the interest of political elite for meaningful and adequate harmonisation with standards of EU is marginal. Ultimately, it is expected that the influence of Europeanisation on internal changes will remain limited in the following period, unless the political elites decide to change their approach and demonstrate genuine political will, as well as the capacity, to fully harmonise with the conditions for the accession to EU.

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