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Europeanization of Croatian Political Parties

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Summary

The theme of this paper is the Europeanization of Croatian political parties in the context of Croatia's accession to the EU. The first part of the paper deals with the very concept of Europeanization, and it aims at presenting various relevant definitions of the term through showing differences in Europeanization among candidate countries and member states of the EU. For better understanding of the whole process of Europeanization of the parties and party systems, the second part is dedicated to defining the Europeanization of political parties, along with a brief notice on post-communist EU member states that have passed through similar processes. In the third part, a programmatic analysis of five Croatian political parties will be presented, with the emphasis on the Europeanization component.

Keywords: Europeanization, Europeanization of political parties, party programs, political parties

Introduction

The aim of this paper is to contribute to the analysis of the Europeanization of political parties and party systems, with a focus on Croatia. The problem encountered in the process of this research is the lack of literature in the Croatian language dealing with these particular issues, as well as insufficient foreign literature on the matter. Thus, the need for an interdisciplinary approach to this extensive subject arose, which could contribute to the understanding of the process despite the Croatian government's poor communication strategy towards the EU. According to the authors of the book entitled *Europeanization of National Political Parties*, "there has been little research into the effects of European integration on national parties, party systems, elections and voters" (Carter et al., 2007: 1). This book was the "first empirical study to examine the effects of the European Union on the internal organiza-

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tional dynamics of national political parties". Even though there are some articles mentioning Croatia in the context of its Europeanization of political parties, there was no detailed research on the matter, as far as I know. Walecki mentions Croatia in this context, emphasizing that "party funding is becoming an integral part of the anti-corruption reform as the political criteria for prospective EU membership" (see Walecki, 2007: 1-20).¹

Fink-Hafner (2007) conducted a comparative analysis of the link between democratization and Europeanization of party systems in former Yugoslav republics. Maršić (2008) has investigated Europeanization in EU candidate states, but with no detailed research, since this project is not completed yet. Ladrech, on the other hand, presented a very useful, basic methodological framework for analyzing party Europeanization in general (see chapter 2). Conti tried to move his research toward a "theory on the impact of the European integration on domestic parties", and focused on "the attitudes of political parties toward the process of European integration" (see Conti, 2007: 192-207). Sedelmeier posed some interesting theses on Europeanization focused on the new member and candidate states (see Sedelmeier, 2006: 1-33). Öhlén has researched "Europeanization through Trans-national Party co-operation", taking the example of The European People's Party and its (potential) sister parties in Poland, Hungary and the Czech Republic (see Öhlén, 2008: 1-34). When it comes to parties of the European Union, a great accomplishment in this field is certainly *Political Parties in the European Union* (Hix and Lord, 1997).

Europeanization in general has been a quite popular subject-matter among scientists in the last decades, but this paper concentrates mostly on Radaelli (2004), Olsen (2002), Raunio (2002), Featherstone (2003), and Croatian authors Grubiša (2005) and Prpić (2004) (see more in the next chapter). As the President of the National Council for Monitoring of Croatian Accession Negotiations with the European Union said, "Europeanization is the only serious political consensus achieved between Croatian political elites". "The European Union (EU) is run by party politicians" (Hix and Lord, 1997: 1). Thus, Croatian politics is also led by the elites of governing political parties that are responsible for all crucial decisions. This means that it is of the utmost importance to see how political parties adjusted their policies and programmes and how they changed, on both the internal and organizational levels, according to the new circumstances that are present within Croatia's approach towards the EU. It is also important to analyze their current level of internal Europeanization, but it is necessary to be aware of the fact that "Europeanization and Globalization can become catch-all, default, explanations for almost everything that cannot otherwise be explained at the domestic level" (Mair, 2000: 28).

¹ For further information on the matter, see Petak and Mataković, 2010.

1. Europeization / Europeanization / EU-ization² – Discussing the Term

It is very hard to find a proper definition of this term that would satisfy its broadness on the one hand, and be useful as a research tool on the other hand. “The issue raised is not what Europeanization ‘really is’, but whether and how the term can be useful for understanding the dynamics of the evolving European polity” (Olsen, 2002: 921). In this chapter, I will try to present the most common definitions that have been present in the “Europeanization literature”, and also the most accepted ones that have been used by Croatian and foreign scientists in this field. I will also try to determine the difference between all concepts of Europeanization.

According to some authors, the word “européisation is usually used in the French language, but grammatically incorrect” (Ziller, 2006). For this reason, I will not take it into discussion any further, but I will use it as a synonym of the word Europeanization. However, some other authors suggest a more appropriate term – EU-ization, since “most definitions of Europeanization place the European Union at the centre of the debate”; therefore “Europeanization is viewed strictly as ‘EU-ization’” (Anastasakis, 2005: 78). Others assert that “EU-ization is only a small part of a much broader and longer term process that can lay claim to the term Europeanization” (Flockhart, 2007). To minimize the possibility of misunderstanding, for the purpose of this article I will employ the term that is used the most in literature – Europeanization. Europeanization turned out to be “one of the key concepts developed within the European Studies in the last ten years or so, since the adoption and entry into force of the Maastricht Treaty” (Grubiša, 2005: 129). As Sedelmeier sees it, “only by the end of the 1990s did the term Europeanisation come to denote a distinctive research area in EU studies” (2006: 4). “In its broadest meaning, it refers to responses by actors – institutional and otherwise – to the impact of European integration” (Ladrech, 2001: 1). It can also be understood “in terms of European pressure (setting preconditions and conditions for integration with the EU, political pressures on potential candidate states to fulfil the EU’s expectations)” (Fink-Hafner, 2007: 5).

Moreover, if we refer specifically to certain values, it can be seen as “accepting liberal, enlightenment and democratic values in the political culture of Central European and East European peoples” (Prpić, 2004: 49). In other words, it can also be understood as the penetration of the “European system of ruling into domestic institutions, actors, values, and processes”, and “the system of building institutions and common values on the European level” (Grubiša, 2005: 134). In our search for

² The matter of writing Europeanization with “s” or “z” will not be discussed here, though I will be using the term Europeanization. When an original text is quoted, the respective author’s choice will be retained.

an elaborate definition, it is important to mention also Olsen's "list of five", where he separated "different phenomena referred to by the term":

- Europeanization as changes in external territorial boundaries.
- Europeanization as the development of institutions of governance at the European level.
- Europeanization as central penetration of national and sub-national systems of governance.
- Europeanization as exporting forms of political organization and governance that are typical and distinct for Europe beyond the European territory.
- Europeanization as a political project aiming at a unified and politically stronger Europe (Olsen, 2002: 922).

Within the context of this research, especially for the matter of Central and Eastern European countries, it is useful to add the concept of "retrospective Europeanization". This specific form of Europeanization has multiple meanings for CEE countries and it includes two forms of Europeanization from Olsen's list. First, it means "rejecting the communist system of government", second, it means "enabling the penetration of European institutions into the national systems of government", and third, it refers to the "gradual change of national systems through processes of adaptation, harmonization and convergence" for the purpose of accepting the "European, multilevel government" (Grubiša, 2005: 133). Furthermore, while researching the concept of Europeanization, it is necessary to emphasize that Europeanization scholars usually choose one of the two types of Europeanization – top-down or bottom-up. "It has been consistently argued that in many cases neither an isolated top-down nor a bottom-up approach are capable of bringing conceptual clarity to the term" (Maršić, 2007: 3). Therefore, as stressed by Bomerg and Peterson, we could conclude that "Europeanization is a two-way process" (2000: 7). Finally, after mentioning various Europeanization definitions, Olsen aptly said that "different conceptions of Europeanization complement, rather than exclude each other" (2002: 928).

1.1. Europeanization of Candidate Countries

Research into the Europeanization of Croatia as a candidate country, aiming to be the 28th member state of the EU, can be seen as a unique task, different from the Europeanization of some new or old member states. As Sedelmeier put it, the "Europeanisation of candidate countries has distinctive characteristics, which suggest that it can be seen as a particular sub-field of Europeanisation research" (2006: 5). "The Europeanisation of candidate countries has emerged only recently as a separate research area", while former studies were focused mainly on countries that were already member states of the EU. Sedelmeier states that "adjustments to the

EU in non-member states were thus highly selective and did not result from deliberate attempts by the EU to create adjustment pressures. Analysts therefore did not consider such adjustments comparable to the EU's impact on member states – and hence as cases of Europeanisation” (2006: 4). We could clearly conclude that the Europeanization of candidate countries is more similar to the Europeanization of the new member states rather than the old ones.

The case of Croatia is remarkably similar to that of the Central and Eastern European (CEE) countries that entered the EU in the fifth wave of enlargement. Even though Croatia as a part of the former Yugoslavian federation was not a member of the Soviet Eastern block, it still shares a great deal of post-socialist heritage with those countries. “As the Central and East European experience has shown, Europeanization in the preparatory phase of pre-accession is an externally driven process of change defined by the EU centers of power” (Anastaskis, 2005: 80). Furthermore, “what makes the Europeanisation of new members more similar to candidates, rather than longer-standing members, is that the adjustment pressures of membership are different for states that did not participate in the making of the rules” (Sedelmeier, 2006: 6). On this subject Gwiazda adds that “in candidate countries Europeanisation tends to create degrees of adaptational pressures depending on the accession deadline”; nevertheless, “it is expected that in the case of candidate countries adaptational pressures of coercive character will be dominant” (2002: 11).

To conclude, fulfilment of the criteria related to the requirement to Europeanize the domestic national system is getting more and more difficult with the acceptance of each new member state. Thus, Europeanization as a process is getting increasingly complex, and it has transformed over the years. Many things that are not tolerated to some new member states were acceptable for the old member states. So, we could easily say that the “EU itself would hardly pass the test because the democracy of the EU system may be questioned if some harder standards were to apply” (Grubiša, 2006: 144).

2. Europeanization of Political Parties – Introduction of a Concept

If we accept the above-mentioned fact that “the European Union is run by party politicians”, and that “this means that all political parties that are members of a national governing coalition are automatically sucked into the management of the Union”, then we have to pose the question – what does the Europeanization of political parties really mean (Hix and Lord, 1994: 1). It is necessary, however, to define it according to the world's leading authors in this field. “The Europeanization of political parties has emerged only recently as a separate research area”, whereas “it was not until the 1990s that the concept of Europeanization and political party research intersected” (Ladrech, 2009: 4). It is interesting that “the impact of European inte-

gration on national parties, analysed in a comparative perspective, is generally absent from the literature on European integration as well as that on parties, although there is a growing focus on the activities of European Parliamentary groups and transnational party federations” (Ladrech, 2001: 1). In his research, Conti came to an interesting conclusion that “some of the most significant attempts to understand how European integration works for party systems come from the heterogeneous literature claiming that conflict over the EU is largely shaped by the left/right dimension of party competition” (2007: 5). If we would search for a definition, “in the most generally understood sense”, as Ladrech put it, Europeanization, as a concept applied to the study of parties, is “an analysis of the domestic impact of the EU” (Ladrech, 2009: 6). Interestingly, Peter Mair found that there is “no significant impact” of the European integration on the national party systems, saying “that of the many areas of domestic politics which may have experienced an impact from Europe, it is party systems in particular that have perhaps proved to be most impervious to change” (Mair, 2000: 4).

Referring to that statement, Ladrech agreed that “in terms of format and mechanics (other than in the context of a European Parliament election), national party systems appear to exhibit very little in the way of Europeanization” (2001: 5). Some other authors argue that Europe really “does matter for political parties because of the impact of its rules, directives and norms into the domestic sphere” (Walecki, 2007: 3). As it was presented before, it is rather hard to find a proper definition for Europeanization, although it is undoubtedly a difficult tool for research. Ladrech’s “framework for analysis” has been quoted by a large number of scholars and has been used for broader research.

The term ‘Europeanization’ is employed to label a process of adaptation and adjustment by parties to changed conditions within their domestic political systems. I label the various responses by parties ‘Europeanization’ – whether it is organisational change repositioning the role of their EP delegation, programmatic developments signalling a more sophisticated attention to the influence of the EU in domestic policy-making, increased factionalism or even new party formation, an additional dimension in party-government relations, or new linkages with European actors. Five broad areas of investigation are presented: 1) policy/programmatic change; 2) organisational; 3) patterns of party competition; 4) party-government relations; and 5) relations beyond the national party system. (Ladrech, 2001: 2)

It would be useful to add some new questions to the five Ladrech’s areas that could be interesting for further research, such as intra-party democracy (for more, see Prpić, 2004: 1-238, Scarrow, 2005: 1-22), transparency of party policies, and analysis of knowledge level on the EU among the party members. This would be especially interesting in the case of Croatia, since the level of inter-party demo-

cracy of Croatia's currently ruling party is very low. For example, in July 2009 the Croatian prime minister was voted president of the Croatian Democratic Union, unanimously by raising hands of party members. Walecki adds that "an important area of interest to test for evidence of *Europeanization* would be party regulations in general and *political party funding* in particular" (2007: 2).

2.1. *Post-socialist Countries – Experience of Party Europeanization*

When eight Central and Eastern European countries and two Mediterranean states entered the EU, it was its largest single expansion. It is important to briefly observe their particular cases and experiences of party Europeanization, for Croatia is also considered a post-socialist state. The Baltic states will be excluded from this chapter, since there is no accessible literature in English on party Europeanization in these countries.

Mair made a significant distinction between parties and party systems of Western Europe and those in Central and Eastern Europe countries. He suggested three factors that form the context of party life. First of all, the *democratization process*, second, the *character of the electorate*, and third, the *context of competition* (Mair, 1997: 175). Paraphrasing Mair, Öhlén wrote the following about these processes:

The democratization in the post-communist countries took place in a historical context where the electorate was already effectively incorporated, mobilized, activated and politicized... The electorate in CEE is characterized as open with weak loyalties to parties and high volatility... The pattern of competition is also characterized by openness rather than closure. The new party elites have weak organizational loyalties, which leads to many party splits and mergers. Institutional uncertainty and also uncertainty in coalition alternatives serves as a general difficulty for all actors to predict the future. So, parties and party systems in CEE can be summarised as more fluid compared to their western counterparts. (2008: 3-4)

Furthermore, it is hard not to notice two interesting developments in CEE countries considering the question of party Europeanization. First, it was surprising that after the large 2004 enlargement, every single party that led each of the ten new member states into the EU lost the next elections. Another interesting phenomenon in these countries is a very low turnout for the EU elections. "The crisis of the 2004 Euro-parliamentary elections in the transitional countries" is followed by the story of "democratic deficit in the EU", and it reveals that "the percentage of voters that went to elections for the European Parliament (2004) in new member states is dramatically or drastically below the average percentage of voters in the old member states" (see Grubiša, 2007).

"Although we can clearly assume that the first elections to EP in new member countries were second-rank-elections, there are some examples of strong anti-EU

mobilization provided by some political parties (e.g. Poland – League of Polish Families and Self-Defense)” (Hloušek and Pšeja, 2007: 5). In the case of Poland, Öhlén wrote that there is “a ‘cultural’ cleavage competing with the economic”. In the next chapter we will see that in the case of Croatia there was no serious anti-EU campaign. On the other hand, considering the Czech Republic, it can be seen as “the single country in CEE with a dominating ‘western’ socioeconomic cleavage structuring the parties” (2008: 4). However, “the impact of Europeanization on the Czech party system remains very limited, confirming rather pessimistic views on Europeanization effects on domestic party systems” (Hloušek and Pšeja, 2007: 2).

In the case of Slovakia, “the EU intervened in the domestic party system dynamics in such a way that genuinely pro-European political parties (as opposed to the previous government’s only declaratory pro-European orientation) emerged as winners in the elections and enabled Slovakia to remain in the 2004 EU enlargement group of countries”. Furthermore, Fink-Hafner claims that Slovakia was “the only 2004 EU accession country where the EU interfered in domestic politics”, since, apparently, in other countries “the EU membership incentive worked as a sufficient EU instrument” (2007: 5).

Similar to the Czech Republic, in Slovenia the political parties and its party system competition “do not exert a substantial amount of change due to European integration (like most Central European post-socialist countries which became EU members in 2004)” (*ibid.*: 8).

Even though it seems that party systems in these post-socialist/communist countries have not experienced a “substantial amount of change”, and that the Europeanization of party systems has been “limited”, we must not forget the fact that serious party transformation and Europeanization in these countries happened during the 1990s. With regard to that, it is interesting to observe the results from a research conducted in 1993, in which the following question was posed: *Is your situation in the new political system better than in the old one?*

Table 1³ – *Is your situation in the ‘new political system’ better than in the old one?*

| | Better (%) | Not Better (%) |
|----------------|------------|----------------|
| Czech Republic | 56 | 24 |
| Slovakia | 41 | 39 |
| Poland | 34 | 39 |
| Hungary | 19 | 53 |
| Slovenia | 44 | 38 |

³ Table 1 is shortened and taken from Márkus, 1994. In its original form it includes some other post-communist states.

It is interesting to notice that, on the one hand, “a dramatic transformation of party politics and party competition is taking place in post-communist Hungary”, but, on the other hand, Hungary is the least satisfied with the “new political system”, according to the above-presented results. A quite similar situation occurred in Poland at the time, but not to that extent.

Although the Europeanization of parties in CEE countries when entering the EU in 2004 might seem “limited”, we must bear in mind that these countries had to make a historical choice about a decade earlier. Serious Europeanization for all post-socialist countries happened at the time when these countries had a “historic alternative”: whether to choose “the restoration of premodern social relations with the priority of nationhood and ethnicity, or the embarkment on the West European path of development” (Márkus, 1994: 20). To conclude, the “environmental context has had a major constitutive effect on the development of competitive party politics in the former communist region to the extent that the Europeanization of CEE parties is virtually indistinguishable from the general process of democratization” (Lewis, 2008: 153).

3. The Croatian Case of Party Europeanization – Programmatic Analysis

Following Ladrech’s five research areas for party Europeanization, in this paper I shall present only the first step – the analysis of political parties’ programs. Before the analysis itself, I will provide some background information, and afterwards I will present several reasons for including some of the EU values and categories into my research.

3.1. Background before Analysis

At the beginning of this chapter, it is rather important to emphasize that “Croatia is the only postcommunist country in which the process of democratic transition coincided with the process of creating the state by means of a war. These three processes are in a special interaction: the transition enabled the realization of the state-building programme, which triggered off the war which, in turn, jeopardized the completion of both projects” (Kasapović, 1996: 84). Having in mind that the general impression in post-war Croatia was that the European Union showed a great deal of disorientation and disunity regarding the issue of the Croatian war of independence, it is important to point out that all political parties in the Croatian Parliament are declaratory pro-European. As I mentioned in the introduction, a positive attitude towards European integration is certainly a unique, painfully achieved consensus among Croatian political elites. On the other hand, it seems that Croatian politics suffer from some “negative elements that complicate faster Europeanization – consequences of wars, culture of violence and conflicts, nationalistic populism, conse-

quences of corruptive transformation, and negative selection of political and economic elites” (Grubiša, 2009).

Despite all those difficulties, there has been no serious or organized anti-EU campaign in Croatia so far. A few anti-EU campaigns were organized mostly on the Internet, and they were launched by marginal and small political parties or politicians (Jedino Hrvatska, Hrvatski Pravaški Pokret, Boris Mikšić...) that work outside the formal institutions. The problem, however, is the lack of a well-organized pro-European campaign initiated by the state institutions, and this is yet another issue that slows down Croatia’s Europeanization. When observing the public opinion of Croatian citizens towards the EU, one can notice an obvious increase in the negative attitude over the years. Furthermore, recent events of public protests showed a growing trend of Euroscepticism among Croatian citizens. According to the Eurobarometer opinion poll from November 2009, it seems that Croats are certainly among the biggest Eurosceptics; only the Latvians expressed more scepticism towards the EU.

Table 2 – *Do you think that the membership of your country in the EU will be good or bad for your country?*⁴

| Eurobarometer | | Good (%) | Bad (%) | Neither (%) | Don't know (%) |
|----------------------|-------------|-----------------|----------------|--------------------|-----------------------|
| EB 73 | Spring 2010 | 26 | 31 | 38 | 5 |
| EB 72 | Autumn 2009 | 24 | 37 | 35 | 4 |
| EB 71 | Spring 2009 | 24 | 39 | 33 | 4 |
| EB 70 | Autumn 2008 | 23 | 38 | 35 | 4 |
| EB 69 | Spring 2008 | 30 | 25 | 39 | 5 |
| EB 68 | Autumn 2007 | 33 | 25 | 36 | 4 |
| EB 67 | Spring 2007 | 29 | 28 | 40 | 3 |
| EB 66 | Autumn 2006 | 32 | 31 | 31 | 6 |
| EB 65 | Spring 2006 | 34 | 25 | 36 | 4 |
| EB 63 | Spring 2005 | 27 | 29 | 40 | 4 |
| EB 62 | Autumn 2004 | 30 | 24 | 41 | 5 |

The governing political parties, which should have been the leaders of Europeanization of political parties and of the Europeanization process in general, have adopted the “Communication Strategy, aimed at informing the Croatian public

⁴ Table 2 and Table 3 are made according to the Eurobarometer research and have been slightly changed to be suitable for the purpose of this article.

about the European integration process of the Republic of Croatia”, but it seems that it was just a formal act that has never been really implemented in practice.

Furthermore, Croatian citizens trust their political parties less than the EU citizens trust theirs. The last research on the trust in political institutions – in this case, parties – showed that only 4% of Croats trust the political parties, which is basically the percentage of Croats who are actual party members.

Table 3 – *Do you trust political parties?*

| Eurobarometer | Trust | | Don't trust | | Don't know | |
|---------------|-------|-----|-------------|-----|------------|----|
| | EU 27 | RH | EU 27 | RH | EU 27 | RH |
| Autumn 2009 | 16% | 4% | 79% | 92% | 5% | 4% |
| Spring 2009 | 19% | 7% | 76% | 91% | 5% | 2% |
| Autumn 2008 | 20% | 10% | 75% | 86% | 5% | 4% |

For the purpose of this research,, I will analyze five programs of Croatia's most influential political parties. Three of them form the government, while the remaining two are in opposition. HDZ⁵, HSS⁶ and SDSS⁷ form the governing coalition. SDSS is the only Serbian political party that holds seats in the Croatian Parliament. I included SDSS in my research rather than some regional parties, such as IDS (Istrian Democratic Assembly) or HDSSB (Croatian Democratic Assembly of Slavonia and Baranja), even though they all hold the same number of seats in the Parliament. The EU adopted quite a positive attitude towards the fact that the party of Serbs in Croatia is part of the governing coalition. It shows a certain level of Europeanization of Croatian politics when it comes to positive dialogue and cooperation with former “enemies”, and that is why I found SDSS much more relevant for

⁵ Hrvatska Demokratska Zajednica (Croatian Democratic Union, further in the text HDZ) is the main center-right party in Croatia that currently holds 66 out of 153 seats in the Croatian Parliament (further in the text the Parliament). They governed Croatia from 1990 to 2000 and, in partial coalition, from 2003 to 2010. The party is an associate member of Europe People's Party. Their fundamental principals claim that: “HDZ is a people's party that gathers all social classes of Croatian people and other citizens of Croatia and is based on principles of democracy, Christian civilization and tradition, and identity of Croatian society and people”.

⁶ Hrvatska seljačka stranka (Croatian Peasant Party, further in the text HSS) is formally a centrist party based on agrarianism, conservatism and Christian democracy. HSS currently holds 6 seats in the Parliament.

⁷ Samostalna demokratska srpska stranka (Independent Democratic Serb Party, further in the text SDSS) is a social democratic political party of Serbs that live in Croatia, and holds 3 seats in the Parliament.

this research than regional parties. SDP⁸ and HNS⁹ are part of the research as the main opposition parties.

I will not include HSLs (Croatian Social Liberal Party, further in the text HSLs) in my research since this party has recently lost all its political power and influence on the national level. HSLs was the first Croatian democratic party, founded back in 1989 when Croatia was still part of the Yugoslavian Federation. It played an important role on the Croatian political scene over the years, but recently its influence has become marginal. First, HSLs left the governing coalition, second, it no longer has any members of Parliament, and third, the members of this party no longer hold any important positions, functions or duties on the national level.

3.2. *Defining Values and Categories*

For the purpose of this research, I decided to present a qualitative content analysis, but first it is necessary to create a framework of values and categories that the EU is based on. The Second Article of the Treaty on the European Union claims that “the Union is founded on the values of respect for human dignity, freedom, democracy, equality, the rule of law and respect for human rights, including the rights of persons belonging to minorities. These values are common to the Member States in a society in which pluralism, non-discrimination, tolerance, justice, solidarity and equality between women and men prevail.” It is also important to emphasize that “the Union’s aim is to promote peace”, which is especially important for the European Continent after the two World Wars. Public opinion polls carried out by the Eurobarometer usually contain a question prompting people to evaluate which three values from the list (of eleven proposed) best represent the EU. Croats put the *rule of law* at the first place, and this has not changed from 2006 till 2010. Even though the rule of law is undoubtedly among the most important EU values, putting it at the very first place might be explained by Croatia’s specific problems with justice. Deficiencies of the Croatian legal system have been among the most criticized in the European Commission annual Progress Reports. Even though the order of values in Tables 4 and 5 shows the differences in the public opinion in Croatia and the EU, these five values are the most represented by both sides.

⁸ Socijaldemokratska partija (Social Democratic Party, further in the text SDP) is a center-left, social democratic political party that currently holds 55 seats in the Parliament. The party is a member of the Party of European socialists.

⁹ Hrvatska narodna stranka – liberalni demokrati (Croatian People’s Party – Liberal Democrats, further in the text HNS) is a central-left liberal party and has 5 representatives in the Parliament. The party is a member of the Liberal International and the European Liberal Democrat and Reform Party.

Table 4 – EB 2006: *Which three of the listed values best represent the European Union?*¹⁰

| | RH | EU 25 |
|-----------------------------------|-----------|--------------|
| <i>The rule of law</i> | 40% | 24% |
| <i>Democracy</i> | 38% | 38% |
| <i>Human rights</i> | 32% | 38% |
| <i>Peace</i> | 31% | 36% |
| <i>Respect for other cultures</i> | 18% | 19% |

Table 5 – EB 2010: *Which three of the following values best represent the European Union?*

| | RH | EU 27 |
|-----------------------------------|-----------|--------------|
| <i>The Rule of law</i> | 40% | 26% |
| <i>Democracy</i> | 35% | 39% |
| <i>Human rights</i> | 31% | 37% |
| <i>Peace</i> | 29% | 36% |
| <i>Respect for other cultures</i> | 15% | 18% |

Along with these five core values, I will evaluate all eleven values from the Eurobarometer research (see Table 6) in the further analysis of party programs. I will also include my own short list of categories that I find important and interesting for researching Europeanization (see Table 7). The first category is – liberal market economy. In the beginning, the EU was founded on an economic rather than political basis. Therefore, it is of great relevance to mention the “competitive social market economy” that includes four freedoms – free movement of goods, capital, services and people (*Consolidated Version of the Treaty on European Union*). Furthermore, I have listed agriculture because “for more than 40 years, the common agricultural policy has been the European Union’s most important common policy. This explains why traditionally it has consumed a large part of the EU’s budget” (European Commission, 2007: 3).

¹⁰ The results in this table are taken from Eurobarometer 2006 (EB66, 2006: 37) and 2010 (EB73, 2010: 26). This is a shortened and adjusted version with a changed order of values, according to the highest percentage. Other listed values that are not in the table, but that were included in the Eurobarometer questionnaire are: respect for human life, individual freedom, equality, solidarity, tolerance, religion and self-fulfillment (<http://www.delhrv.ec.europa.eu/uploads/dokumenti/d75c2b8103e5bcf33c978caf647eebdd.pdf>).

The cooperation with the Hague tribunal was one of the first conditions and causes for criticism from the EU towards Croatia, so I found it important to include it as a separate category. In March 2005, the accession negotiations between Croatia and the EU were postponed, since it was stated that Croatia was not fully committed to cooperation with the Hague Tribunal. Technology and Scientific research are among the highly important fields within the EU as well, so I decided to include them too. The last category that I chose is the principle of subsidiarity, since it is considered to be one of the basic principles regulating the work of the EU (see *Consolidated Version of the Treaty on European Union*, 2010: art. 5(3)).

3.3. Five Croatian Political Parties – Program Analysis

Table 6 – Does the party program mention/contain a certain value?

| | HDZ | HSS | SDSS | SDP | HNS |
|-----------------------------------|-----|-----|------|-----|-----|
| <i>The rule of law</i> | + | + | + | + | + |
| <i>Democracy</i> | + | + | + | + | + |
| <i>Human rights</i> | + | – | + | + | + |
| <i>Peace</i> | + | – | + | + | + |
| <i>Respect for other cultures</i> | + | – | + | + | + |
| <i>Respect for human life</i> | + | – | + | + | + |
| <i>Individual freedom</i> | + | – | + | + | + |
| <i>Equality</i> | + | – | + | + | + |
| <i>Solidarity</i> | + | – | + | + | + |
| <i>Tolerance</i> | + | – | + | + | + |
| <i>Religion</i> | + | – | + | + | + |
| <i>Self-fulfilment</i> | + | – | + | + | + |

+ mentions/contains (in)directly a certain value

– does not mention/contain a certain value

Table 7 – Does the party program mention/contain a certain category?

| | HDZ | HSS | SDSS | SDP | HNS |
|---|-----|-----|------|-----|-----|
| <i>Liberal social market economy</i> | + | + | + | + | + |
| <i>Agriculture</i> | + | + | + | + | + |
| <i>Hague Tribunal</i> | + | + | + | + | + |
| <i>Technology and scientific research</i> | + | + | + | + | + |

| | | | | | |
|--|-------|-------|---|-------|-------|
| <i>Subsidiarity</i> | + | – | + | + | + |
| <i>Mentioning the EU</i> ¹¹ | + (3) | + (2) | – | + (4) | + (5) |

+ mentions/contains (in)directly a certain category

– does not mention/contain a certain category

The structures of party programs are quite different, which is why, along with the analysis, I will also shortly present the form of each program. It was very hard to compare programs at a certain level, but I will focus on those points in the programs that in some way refer to the EU.

HDZ's program is divided into seventeen chapters. At the beginning of its program, HDZ defined freedom as its fundamental principle. The last chapter deals with the relationship between Croatia and the rest of the world, and comprises one paragraph entitled "Croatia and Europe". Similarly to SDP, HDZ often wrongly uses in its program the terms Europe and the EU as synonyms. All chapters are quite short and present only general principles with no detailed mentioning of specific measures or instruments of certain policies, which should determine how to achieve desired aims. For example, the chapter on democracy consists of only two superficial sentences: "HDZ strongly advocates the fundamental democratic principles and encourages free expression of all ideas regarding problem-solving. However, it also advocates subordination to decisions made by the majority. All forms and levels of social and state life, as well as interrelations of state subjects, should be impregnated with the principle of democratic decision-making."

SDP, on the other hand, has a special paper entitled *Policy of European Integration* that was prepared for the 2007 Croatian parliamentary elections. Throughout this special program, SDP is comparing their attitude towards the EU with the attitude of their main opponent HDZ. Besides this one, they provided another program called "New force – Security, Solidarity, Prosperity", also written for the 2007 Parliamentary elections. It has eight chapters divided into specific policies and it is more detailed when it comes to mentioning actual measures. However, these measures are too generic and have no real basis in elaborate, serious study. One of the chapters deals with *Croatia in International Relations; External Policy* and has a special paragraph dedicated to Croatia and Europe – (*Croatia in Europe – Europe in Croatia*), where SDP states the importance of "what kind of Croatia will enter Europe", and "what kind of Europe will enter Croatia". Although SDP, just like

¹¹ The *Mentioning the EU* category is subjectively graded with numbers, where number 5 represents the relative highest grade. HNS got the highest grade, since their programs contain most measures for better EU-Croatia relations. Furthermore, it is updated, it does not use terms Europe and the EU as synonyms and it includes the most detailed analysis of the EU policies.

HDZ, wrongly uses the term “Europe” as synonymous with the European Union, a sufficient part of their program is dedicated to the EU. Furthermore, the entire last chapter is about human rights and social democratic values, and this makes SDP the only researched party that has a special chapter dedicated to human rights.

SDSS has a rather short program with twelve chapters, and it is mainly focused on the position of Serbs in Croatia. Thus, it is interesting that all values presented throughout this program are based on one main focus – Croatia as a multicultural and multiethnic society. As far as democracy is concerned, SDSS mentions in their program two types of democracy – liberal and social democracy, stating that individual freedom is a requirement for “a free nation and a free state”.

Furthermore, the one particular value mentioned only in SDSS’s program (and briefly in SDP’s) is antifascism. An entire chapter is dedicated to this value, which SDSS sees as its “permanent political identity”.

In the last chapter, called *International Relations*, it is interesting to notice that there is no direct mention of the EU, except just one sentence which indirectly states that SDSS will support “Croatian integration in all international organizations and associations that are of interest to all its citizens”.

We may conclude that SDSS’s party program is mainly focused on the position of Serbs in Croatia and the core of its interest is the minority policy.

As far as HSS is concerned, it has by far the shortest program with nineteen chapters, each chapter being elaborated in the form of notes. Even though it is stated on their web-site that it is just a “Program summary”, the alleged full version of their program is not published, so it will not be taken into account. HSS’s program was prepared for the 2007 Parliamentary elections and it has not been changed since. Therefore, some points are quite outdated. For example, in the first chapter, *External Policy and Integration Processes*, there is one note that states: “– to organize a referendum on Croatia’s possible entry into NATO Alliance”, while Croatia has been in the NATO for more than one year now. All points from HSS’s program state “what needs to be done”, but again with no or very little specific ideas or measures on how they intend to do “what needs to be done”, or how they would manage to achieve certain goals.

For example, the chapter about agriculture, that has been the main interest of HSS throughout their history, proposes in short notes “to create favourable conditions for work and payment in rural areas, to increase investments, to build infrastructure...”

It is rather difficult to compare this program with all other programs since it is written in a different form and does not comprise the listed values as all other programs do. According to Table 6, we can conclude that HSS’s program contains the minimum amount of Europeanization.

HNS, on the other hand, has achieved the highest level of Europeanization in its program. HNS's program has a different structure and it is divided into two sections: *Programs* and *Projects*. There are six programs and three projects. This is the longest and the most detailed program with the highest number of proposed measures, although these measures also do not contain elements necessary for actual implementation. One of the chapters is called *Croatian Reforms according to European Standards*, and in this chapter HNS explains quite precisely and thoroughly what benefits Croatia draws from entering the EU. Furthermore, in HNS's program the EU institutions and the EU funds are mentioned, and some other parts of the program can be considered as educational material about the EU. HNS has provided a special *Program 2008-2012*, which makes them the only political party with a program for the future period. This program has four strategic aims, the last one being entitled *Croatia in the EU*. It says that "membership in the EU is the main short-term strategic goal and Croatia's long-term interest". It also contains some measures for achieving the desired goals and more specific suggestions than any other researched program.

It is interesting to notice that none of these parties has translated their program or web-site into English or any other European language. However, some political parties in the European Union also failed to do so, and it would not be fair to pose this as a criterion of Europeanization. It would certainly be desirable to do so in the near future, the more so because all the parties claim to be highly pro-European.

We can conclude that all parties, except HSS, have passed the declaratory test of program Europeanization. As shown in Tables 6 and 7, the parties have more or less included in their programs all basic values and categories that I proposed for defining the amount of program Europeanization. Nevertheless, the left-wing opposition parties (SDP and HNS) have better defined the values and measures for achieving the aim of EU accession, and they pay more attention to writing elaborate programs. One could question the real importance of party programs, since they are often just formal acts that bear little relation to reality. As we can see, most of the programs are usually prepared for pre-election propaganda, while afterwards no one really pays attention to what was written or whether it has actually been achieved. We can conclude that the programs of Croatian political parties are more or less formal and quite irrelevant documents. The political parties should put much more effort into creating an agenda that they would be obliged to follow afterwards, because only in this way would they show real maturity for proper Europeanization.

Conclusion

The Europeanization of political parties "has emerged only recently as a separate research area" (Ladrech, 2009: 4), while in Croatia there is still no serious scientific work on the matter. The starting point of this research was the claim that "Europe-

anization is the only serious political consensus achieved between Croatian political elites”. However, it is important to note that Croatian politics suffer from some “negative elements that complicate faster Europeanization” (Grubiša, 2009). Thus, I found it important to research the level of Europeanization that Croatian political parties have achieved. Comparing Croatia to other post-communist states, it became quite obvious that the Europeanization of candidate countries such as Croatia is more similar to the Europeanization of the new member states than to the Europeanization of the old ones. Following Ladrech’s framework, I analyzed the programs of five main political parties in Croatia. After defining the basic values and categories for program analysis, my research led to the conclusion that four out of five researched parties have reached a certain level on the declaratory basis of program Europeanization. What is more, the left-wing – in this case, opposition – parties have better defined the values and measures for achieving aims related to the EU accession, and they also pay more attention to writing detailed programs. But none of the parties has shown a significant level of maturity that would present their own program as an important formal act with concrete proposals and measures.

Finally, it is important to note, as Mair said, that Europeanization could “become a catch-all, default explanation for almost everything that cannot otherwise be explained at the domestic level” (2000: 28), but it is also important to be aware that even though it sometimes might seem that the EU has a “limited impact” on the domestic party system, there are some slow but deep changes taking place in the EU candidate countries, in this case Croatia.

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