European Union and Political Parties: the case of the Party of European Socialists (PES)

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Abstract: The Party of European Socialists was established according the Article 138 A of the Maastricht Treaty in order to contribute to the European unification process, having a decisive role on shaping the European conscience and becoming the political expression of the European citizens.

In the prospect of the European Integration, we have to take into consideration three contradictions a) the crisis of political parties b) that national parties have to build a supra national party and c) that the parties are called to contribute to a European consensus while their tradition is based on the expression of social cleavages. The present analysis focuses a) on the so-called crisis of the political parties, b) on examining the political effects of the globalization process and c) on the role of the parties since the foundation of the European Community.

Also, the present analysis argues that in order to comprehend the politics and government of European Union through political parties, we have to connect the so called crisis of the political parties due to economic, political and social changes which influenced their political and ideological orientation leading to structural and organizational inefficiency, with the European integration procedures and the globalization process.

Introduction

When the Treaty on European Union was signed on 7 February 1992, Article 138a stated that "*Political Parties at the European level are an important factor for integration within the Union. They contribute to forming a European awareness and to expressing the political will of the citizens of the Union*". This statement is the result that democracy in Europe is connected almost exclusively with the existence, the growth and the operation of political parties. That is to say, it is "party democracy" and for that reason the political parties are called to play an important role in the growth of democratisation in the European Union.

Thus, the Party of European Socialists was found in 1992. According to Article 1 of its Statute, the official name of the party is Party of European Socialists (PES).[1] However, the next paragraph gives the right for a different term (name) of the party in

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[1] Article 1, Statutes of the Party of European Socialists, 7th PES Congress, 7-8 December 2006, www.pes.org.

the official languages of the European Union,[2] which is not owing to the differences in languages, but rather to the diversity in the political and ideological tradition of parties - members.

Thus, the political parties are called to play a crucial role in the prospect of the European political integration as the European Union is characterised mainly as an economic union, while the political union has not been yet accomplished. The result is that priority is given to economic and monetary aspects, while the social character of the Union and the representation of the European citizens has been undermined, or has become the subject of bureaucratic mechanisms, creating the well-known "democratic deficit" and indicating the weakness of the European Union to become an important political actor in international political scene.

Hence, in the prospect of the European Integration, the European Union and the political parties have to overcome three major contradictions:

a) The so-called crisis of the political parties which constitutes the common ground in the relative research analyses of the last 20 years which influences the political parties and the party systems. Therefore, the creation and the growth of European political parties are attempted by the national political parties in a time when the role of the parties seems to become controversial.

b) The tradition of the parties, their action and their operation are focused mainly on the national level, acting within the limits of the nation-state. Thus, it is not obvious that the nationally based political parties are in a position to play an efficient role in the formation of super national political parties, since neither their tradition guarantees it, nor is based on certain theoretical development.

c) According to the Treaty of Maastricht, the super national European parties (Article 138 A) should move towards on their participation in the European Integration, on their contribution on the configuration of common European conscience and on the political expression of the European citizens. This political choice does not lie within many socialist, social democratic and labour parties which are members of the PES, since their political tradition is based on the emergence and expression of social differences and cleavages and in some cases their anti-European orientation.[3]

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[2] Partya na evropeiskite socialisti in Bulgarian, Evropska Strana Socialně Demokraticka in Czech, De Europaiske Socialdemokraters Parti in Danish, Partij van de Europese Sociaaldemocraten in Dutch, Party of European Socialists in English, Euroopa Sotsiaaldemokraatlik Partei in Estonian, Euroopan Sosialidemokraattinen Puolue, in Finnish, Parti Socialiste Europeen, in French, Sozialdemokratische Partei Europas, in German, Ευρωπαϊκό Σοσιαλιστικό Κόμμα, in Greek, Europai Szocialistak Partja, in Hungarian, Pairti na Soisialach um Eoraip, in Irish, Partito del Socialismo Europeo, in Italian, Eiropas Socialdemokratu Partija, in Latvian, Europos Socialdemokratu Partija, in Lithuanian, Parti tas-Socjalisti Ewropej, in Maltese, De Europeiske Sosialdemokraters Parti, in Norwegian, Partia Europejskich Socjalistow, in Polish, Partido Socialista Europeu, in Portuguese, Partidul Socialistilor Europeni, in Romanian, Strana Europskych Socialistov, in Slovakian, Stranka Evropskih Socialdemokratov, in Slovenian, Partido Socialista Europeo in Spanish, Europeiska Socialdemokraters Parti, in Swedish, Statutes of the Party of European Socialists, Ibid.
[3] Spourdalakis, M., (ed.), Botopoulos, C., Tassis, C., Xeros, T., *Ευρωπαϊκό Σοσιαλιστικό Κόμμα: Προκλήσεις και Προοπτικές, [The Party of European Socialists (PES): Challenges and Future Prospects]*, Athens, ISTAME, 2001, p.19.

Moreover, the Treaty of Maastricht does not refer to any specific model of "party system", since it is concerned mainly with the connection of the parties on European affairs and not with the creation of European political parties. This leads to a contradiction because it is determined that the creation of European parties is a subject of the political will of the national political parties and can also explain the slow process for the creation of 'real' supranational parties in the European level. PES is in the centre of this evolution.

In order that we comprehend the frame in which the European political parties are built, we are going to examine the challenges and the problems that the socialist, social democrat and labour parties face in three dimensions: a) at the so-called "crisis of parties", b) at the process of globalisation and c) at the process of the European integration. Particularly, for the parties that belong to the Socialist, Social democratic and Labour tradition, these factors appear to have a considerable influence, since it appears that the historical and political environment that encouraged their growth and their emergence as basic levers of political representation, faces substantial changes.

A. The crisis of the political parties

The formation of the PES takes place in a time that is characterized by the so-called crisis of the national political parties and national party systems as well. So, when we want to examine the prospect of the political integration of the European Union via political parties, we have to focus on this evolution.

The skepticism on the role of the political parties has its origins on the first approaches to the political parties and more specifically to their intra-party democracy and their institutional perspective.[4] However, in their historical route, political parties have achieved to be considered as the most important element for politics and government in the modern democratic states,[5] since they have accomplished to emerge as the institutions that express the cleavages, the interests and the competitions of society, while at the same time they influence the state through the formation of governments.

However, in the last two decades there were serious questions about the role of the political parties, due to substantial changes in economic, social, cultural, ideological and institutional level, which influence both political parties and party systems. Therefore, the so called crisis of the political parties is expressed by low rates of peoples' confidence in political parties, reduction of the traditional political demarcation lines, phenomena of party indiscipline, new powerful poles (Mass Media, NGO's, social movements) which dispute the operations of political parties,

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[4] Michels, R., *Political Parties,* London, 1964, Ostrogorski, M., *Democracy and the Organization of Political Parties*, London, 1964.
[5] Lipset, M. S., "Party System and the Representation of Social Groups", *Archives of the European Sociology*, 1, 1960, p.53, Bendix, R., (ed.), *State and Society*, Berkeley, 1973, pp.276-294.

appearance of antiparty attitudes[6] and intense programmatic convergence of traditionally opposite political parties.[7]

The reason for this phenomenon, seems to lie on the double character of the political parties, because they appear to have on one hand a radical character as they organise and express the social cleavages, thus extending the limits of democracy and on the other hand a political and social integration character because they put the social demands and interests within the existing political and institutional frame.

Also, the double character of political parties is based on two classical approaches: **The institutional approach** argues that the appearance and the growth of political parties is the result of the development of democracy, of the extension of the right to vote (suffrage) and of the formation of governments which give account to parliamentary processes.[8] **The sociological approach** considers that the creation and growth of political parties is the result of a complex development which is based on social, ideological, political and geographic cleavages.[9]

The result of the configuration of the institutional and sociological approach leads us to the comprehension of the double character of the political parties in three dimensions a) the party in power (in the parliament, in the government), b) the party in the social field (members, organisations, voters), c) the party as an organised presence in social institutions.[10]

Thus, as P. Mair indicates, the fundamental cause for the crisis of the political parties is the result of the imbalance of their double character, since it appears that their radical character recedes, while their integrating character strengthens. Moreover, we could determine more precisely that the crisis appears not in all dimensions of political parties, but in certain aspects, such as their capacity to represent the society, while at the same time it appears that their relation with the state and their ability to govern strengthens.[11]

Therefore, political parties are moving away from being voluntary organisations of the civil society and political representatives expressing the social interests and cleavages and they have been transformed almost exclusively to "state parties", whose power comes from their capacity to govern.[12] This evolution seems to be undermined by the classical approaches of the political parties which focus either on their relation

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[6] Poguntke, T., & Sxarrow, E., "The Politics of Anti-Party Sentiment", *European Journal of Political Research*, 29, 1996, pp.257-262, Mudde, C., "The Paradox of the Anti-Party Party", *Party Politics*, Vol. 2, No. 2, April 1996, pp.265-276.

[7] Spourdalakis, M., «Το κομματικό φαινόμενο. Εξέλιξη και συγκυρία», [The Phenomenon of Political parties. Conjuncture and its Origins], in Tsatsos, D., & Kontiadis, X., (eds.), *The Future of Political Parties*, Papazisi, Ahtens, 2003, pp.40-1.

[8] Duverger, M., *Political Parties*, London, Menthuen, 1954, pp.4-60.

[9] Lipset S. M., & Rokkan, S., "Cleavages Structures, Party Systems and Voter Alignments: An Introduction", in Lipset S. M., & Rokkan, S., *Party Systems and Voter Alignments: Cross-national Perspectives*, New York, Free Press, 1967.

[10] Mair, P., "Party Organizations: From Civil Society to the State", in Katz, R. S., & Mair, P., (ed.), *How Parties Organize*, London, Sage, 1994, p.4.

[11] Mair, P., "Political Parties, Popular Legitimacy and Public Priveledge", *West European Politics*, Vol. 18, No. 3, July 1995, pp.40-57.

[12] Mair, P., "Party Organizations: From Civil Society to the State", in Katz, R. S., & Mair, P., (ed.), *How Parties Organize*, London, Sage, 1994, p.8.

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with the society, or on their structure, undermining their relations with the state.[13] This tendency seems to explain why, despite the fact that they are in the middle of a crisis, political parties do not disappear and are considered as a substantial factor of the democratisation process[14] within European Union, as referred by the Treaty of Maastricht.

Moreover, this particular development of party politics in national level influences decisively the construction of the European political parties and especially the Party of the European Socialists. That is because the prospect of the European political integration comes via the political parties. Therefore, the maintenance of the double character of the political parties seems to be the answer in the perspective to create a real supranational political party, because the restoration of the relationship between political parties and the European society would be a decisive contribution in the reduction of the democratic deficit and a step towards the political Union.

B. The globalization process

The formation of the European political parties and the creation of the European Union take place in an external environment which is characterized by the tendency for globalisation. No matter how anyone can accept this process depending on different approaches, all seem to accept the fact that the driving force is the market economy. More precisely, the tendency for globalisation seems to be expressed in three levels:
a) **In the level of production,** where the necessary goods were produced for national or local societies by the population of a specific country, but now they are produced by the population of many countries for the global market.
b) **In the level of financier system** where the necessary credits were ensured at national level, but now they are determined at global markets, while local, regional or national markets become frailer to the fluctuations of world economy.
c) **In the level of culture** where the reduction of the information cost and the tendency on production and reproduction of ideas and models, lead to a particular tendency for homogenisation. In particular, while the maintenance of particular cultural differences is encouraged, at the same time the individual preferences are influenced by the very tendency for homogenisation.[15]

The domination of the economic dimension in the globalisation process has as a consequence all phenomena to be explained almost exclusively with economic terms and the market economy seems to provide all the "appropriate solutions". This fact has led to the reduction of the power of the political dimension, since the mapping out of policy and strategy of the political parties is determined by the "necessities" and the priorities of the market economy. Within this frame, substantial programmatic differentiations are presented as "non acceptable" and only marginal differentiations

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[13] Michels, R., *Political Parties,* London, 1964, Duverger, M., *Political Parties*, London, Menthuen, 1954, Epstein, D. L., *Political Parties in Western Democracies*, New York, 1967, Alford, R., *Party and Society*, Chicago, 1963, Lawson, K., *The Comparative Study of Political Parties*, New York, 1976, Sartory, G., *Parties and Party Systems*, Cambridge, 1979, Panebianco, A., *Political Parties: Organization and Power*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1988.
[14] Spourdalakis, M., «Το κομματικό φαινόμενο. Εξέλιξη και συγκυρία», [The phenomenon of political parties. Conjuncture and its origins], in Tsatsos, D., & Kontiadis, X., (eds.), *The Future of Political Parties*, Papazisi, Ahtens, 2003, pp.41-42.
[15] Strange, S., "The Erosion of the State", *Current History*, November 1997, pp.365-369.

"are allowed" because the solutions have been "neutralised" and are based, as we stressed before, on the market economy with the support of the technocratic rhetoric.[16]

On the contrary, the creation of the European Community took place only few years after the end of the 2nd World War. This period was characterised by the Fordist model of production with basic characteristics such as the Teyloristic Labour relations, the negotiations between the employers' organisations and the Trade Unions which were based on high salaries, high rates of productivity and full employment, the expansion of the role of the state in economic policy, the Keynesian welfare state which was based on the principle of universality (in health and education).[17]

Therefore, in party politics, the **catch-all party** was the result of this particular model which was adopted by the Western European countries and expressed the ideological and political consensus which was based on the economic prosperity and on increasing rates of economic growth. The basic characteristics of the catch-all parties were the programmatic convergence of the political agenda, the emphasis on the electoral effectiveness, the relative autonomy of the leadership from party members, the reduction of the political rhetoric and the role of members and the reduction of expressing the interests of a specific social class.[18]

However, since the mid 70's the contradictions of the Fordist model of social organization and the empowerment of the "neo-liberalism" led to substantial changes such as the flexibility in the production, the downsizing of the labour marker, the privatization of the public sector and the reduction of the universally principle in the functions of the welfare state.[19] The result of this development is the differentiation of the relations of the political parties with the state and the society.

Thus, the catch-all party seems to be replaced by the so called "**cartel party**". The basic characteristics of the "cartel party" are that parties are now based financially almost exclusively on state resources and not on the members' contribution; electronic Media substitute the political and social operations of the party which undermines its ideological background; there are no substantial differences between members and non members; the leadership enjoys bigger autonomy and the party organisation is mobilized only in order to confirm the initiatives of the leadership; the governmental affairs become the basic mean for the parties' reproduction; the policy

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[16] Spourdalakis, M., (ed.), Botopoulos, C., Tassis, C., Xeros, T., *Ευρωπαϊκό Σοσιαλιστικό Κόμμα: Προκλήσεις και Προοπτικές, [The Party of European Socialists (PES): Challenges and Future Prospects]*, Athens, ISTAME, 2001.

[17] Camiller, P., "Beyond 1992: The Left and Europe", *New Left Review*, No. 175, May – June 1989, p.7.

[18] Kirchheimer, O., "The transformation of the Western European Party Systems", in J. LaPalompara and M. Weiner, (eds.), *Political Parties and Political Development*, Princeton University Press, Princeton, 1966, pp.184-200, Wolinetz, S., "Party System Change: The Catch-all thesis Revisited", *West European Politics*, vol.14, No.1, January 1991, pp.113-128, Smith, G., "Core Persistence: System Change and the 'People's Party", *West European Politics*, vol. 12, No. 4, October 1989, pp.157-168, Mair, P., "Continuity, Change and the Vulnerability of Party" *West European Politics*, Vol. 12, No. 4, October 1989, pp.169-187, Dittrich, K., "Testing the Catch-all Thesis: Some Difficulties and Possibilities", in H. Daalder, & P. Mair, (eds.), *West European Party Systems*, Sage, Beverly Hills, 1983, pp.257-266.

[19] Camiller, P., "Beyond 1992: The Left and Europe", *New Left Review*, No. 175, May – June 1989, p.7.

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of the party emphasizes mainly on communication technicians, for whom the party organisation is almost not essential.[20]

Moreover, in the 80's and 90's the progress of the European integration was based on the consensus between the socialist, social democratic and labour parties with the Christian democratic parties; the result was the Treaty of Maastricht.[21] The outcome of this choice, supported by the fall of the communist regimes, seemed to lead to the change of the ideological and political identity of the national socialist, social democratic and labour parties as they were influenced by the political hegemony of the "neo-liberalism". Thus, when these parties came to power in the mid 90's they faced the contradictions of the fordist model and when PES was formed, the national party members had already (though not in the same tense) adopted policies which were away from their political tradition: a) the priority is given to the market economy, b) a technocratic orientation of the economic policy, c) the selective intervention of the state in economic policy, d) the policies of the welfare state are based on the international competitiveness, e) they have abandoned their policy of full employment and have accepted high rates of unemployment and their policies focus on flexibility of the labour market.[22]

This political orientation was expressed on the Social Charter. Although it is considered as the great contribution of the European socialist, social democratic and labour parties in European integration process, reflecting their will to defend the "European social model", the protection of the employees was expressed rather in individual and not in a the collective level.[23]

They adopted the politics of the "Third Way" in order to combine the European obligations with their political moderation, in a restrictive international scene,[24] in

[20] Mair, P., "Political Parties, Popular Legitimacy and Public Priveledge", *West European Politics*, Vol. 18, No. 3, July 1995, pp.40-57, Katz, S. R., & Mair, P., "Changing Models of Party Organization and Party Democracy: The Emergence of the Cartel Party", *Party Politics*, Vol. 1, No.1, January 1995, pp.5-28.

[21] Ross, G., "Turning Technocratic Euro-socialists and 1992", *Socialist Review*, Vol.21, No.2, April – June 1991, p.149.

[22] For an analysis of this matter see among others Anderson, P. & Camiller, P. (eds.), *Mapping the West European Left*, London, Verso, 1994, Landrech, R., & Marliere, P., (eds.), *Social Democratic Parties in the EU*, London, Macmilan, 1999, F. F. Piven, F., (ed.), *Labour Parties in Post-Industrial Societies*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1991, Padgett, S., & Paterson, W., *A History of Social Democracy in Post-War Europe*, London, Longman, 1991, Kitschelt, H., *The Transformation of European Social Democracy*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1994, Lemke, C., & Marks, G., (eds.), *The Crisis of Socialism in Europe*, Durham & London, Duke University Press, 1992, Maravall, J. M., et al., *Socialist Parties in Europe*, Barcelona, Institute de Cience Politiques I Socials, 1992.

[23] Stirling, J., "The Great Europe of ours: Trade Unions and 1992", *Capital & Class*, No.45, Autumn 1991, pp.15-16.

[24] For the context and the critics about "Third Way" see Giddens, A., *The Third Way*, Polity Press, Cambridge, 1998, Giddens, A., "After the Left's Paralysis: The Third Way Can Provide a Framework for Political and Economic Thought that Cuts Across the Old Divides of Social Democracy and Neoliberalism", *New Statesman*, No. 127, May 1st, 1998, Giddens, A., *The Third Way and its Critics*, Polity Press, Cambridge, 2000, Giddens, A., *The Global Third Way Debate*, Polity Press, Cambridge, 2001, Albo, G., & Zuege, A., "European Capitalism Today: Between the Euro and the Third Way", *Monthly Review*, Vol.51, No.3, July 1999, Petras, J., "The Third Way: Myth and Reality", *Monthly Review*, Vol.51, No.10, March 2000, Leys, C., "The British Labour Party's Transition from Socialism to Capitalism", *Socialist Register 1996*, Merlin Press, London, 1996, pp.7-32, Seyd, P., "The Political Trade-offs in Labour's Quest for Power", in Merkel, W., et al., *Socialist Parties in Europe II: Of Class, Populars, Catch All?*, Institut de Ciencies Politiques i Socials, Barcelona 1992, pp.231-246.

many cases they tried to justify their political moderation referring to the necessities and the obligations that come from the European Union and as a result, they abandoned their redistributing policies and came closer to the state and to the governmental necessities, a tendency which contributed to the "crisis of the parties" that we have already indicated.

C. European integration and socialist, social democratic and labour parties

The cooperation between socialist, social democratic and labour parties in Europe began in 1864, with the founding of the First International.[25] However, during the period between the two World Wars, the history of the socialist international was characterised mainly by the focus of these parties on "national interest". Thus, the most decisive factor for the cooperation of those parties seemed to be the first steps for the European economic and political integration. Examining the cooperation of the European socialist, social democratic and labour parties in a historical route from the proposals of Robert Schuman until the creation of the European Union, we can distinguish four periods:

i) **Evolution within the Socialist International 1950 – 1957:** When Robert Schuman proposed his plan for the European Coal and Steel Community (ECSC), in 1950, the Socialist International was re-establishing itself indicating its international character: "*Democratic socialism is international because it recognises that no nation can solve all its economic and social problems in isolation. Absolute national sovereignty must be transcended*".[26]

In preparation for discussing the Schuman Plan, the Socialist International set up a Study Group on European Unity. Thus, in the new Common Assembly of the European Community of Steel and Coal, a Socialist Group was formed in September 1952 by the national parties of the six member states. In 1953 a bureau and a permanent secretariat were set up in Luxembourg and Guy Mollet was elected as President of the Group. This situation remained unchanged until 1957, rather because of the collapse of the creation for a European Defence Community in 1954, which seemed to slow down the European integration process.[27]

ii) The socialist parties of the European Communities: This period (1957-1979) is characterised as optimistic because the perspective of direct elections for the European Parliament created great expectations among the political and party elites for a formation of a "new democratic Europe". In January 1957, the socialist parties of the European Community of Steel and Coal member states[28] organised their first party Congress in Luxembourg which concentrated on the negotiations on European

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[25] Marliere, P., "Introduction: European Social Democracy", in Landrech, R., & Marliere, P., (eds.), *Social Democratic Parties in the EU*, London, Macmilan, 1999, p.2.

[26] *The Aims and Tasks of Democratic Socialism*, adopted by the Socialist International at the Frankfurt Conference, 1951.

[27] Hix S., & Lesse U., *Shaping a Vision. A History of the Party of European Socialists, 1957-2002*, Brussels, PES, 2002, pp.9-10, www.pes.org.

[28] Parti Socialiste Belge / Belgische Socialistische Partij (PS/SP), Section Franɲaise International Ouvriere (SFIO), Sozialdemokratische Partei Deutschlands (SPD), Partito Socialista Democratico Italiano (PSDI), Parti Ouvrier Socialiste Luxembourgeois / Letzeburger Sozialistiche Arbechter Partei, (POSL/LSAP) and Partij van de Arbeid (PvdA).

Economic Community and European Atomic Energy Community and on the proposal of the Dutch Labour Party, PvdA, for a closer cooperation.[29]

On the economic issue of the European integration they supported the free trade with the abolition of trade barriers, along with the protection of European workers and the European self-sufficiency on the agriculture sector.[30] Moreover, they stressed their will to cooperate. The resolution of the 3rd Congress confirms that "*the aim of this cooperation is to strengthen relations between the parties and to freely reach common agreement in particular on the problems arising from the existence of the European Communities*".[31] Thus, they focused on the adoption of a common European programme and this was the main topic of the fourth Congress in Strasbourg in May 1960, in which it was agreed that "*in the present stage of European integration, it is necessary that the socialist parties... work out a common European programme which should define the principles that must serve as a guiding line to the socialist parties and to the Socialist Group in the European Parliamentary Assembly in the formulation of their opinions regarding the problems of European integration*".[32]

Furthermore, defining the context of the European Integration the socialist parties decided on the 5th Congress that their political goal was to be "*the creation of a 'United States of Europe*".[33] Even though they asserted their political will for cooperation, this would be very difficult to achieve. On one hand, because during the 60's there was no progress in the European integration process as the French government vetoed the entrance of United Kingdom in European Communities both in 1963 and 1967. On the other hand, in 1968 the national parties contradicted to the proposal by the Dutch PvdA for the creation of a federal European Socialist Party, a fact which indicates to the priority that these parties gave to the national level.

Even when United Kingdom and Denmark became full members of the European Communities in 1973 and in the 9th Congress a common declaration was adopted under the title 'Towards a Social Europe', there were substantial political differences among them on the issue of workers participation,[34] a fact that rely on the different political tradition and orientation of the member-parties. Moreover, the different approaches among the socialist parties will extend after 1975 when the British Labour Party which was known for its euro scepticism, joined the European socialist parties as United Kingdom entered the European Communities.

In order to face these problems, the socialist parties decided to found the Confederation of the Socialist Parties in the European Community and to adopt a common election manifesto for the first European elections. Thus, during the leaders' summit on 23 and 24 June 1978 in Brussels, they signed and presented a common Declaration but at the same time they stressed that it would only be a general

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[29] Hix, S., "The European Party Federations: From Transnational Party Cooperation to Nascent European Parties", in J., Gafney, (ed.), *Political Parties and the EU*, London, Routledge, 1994, p.10.
[30] Hix S., & Lesse U., *Shaping a Vision. A History of the Party of European Socialists, 1957-2002*, Brussels, PES, 2002, p.12, www.pes.org.
[31] Ibid.
[32] Ibid., p.13.
[33] "Common Programme of Action for the Socialist Parties of the European Community", *5th Congress of the Socialist Parties of the EC*, Paris, November 1962.
[34] *Towards a Social Europe*, resolution adopted in the 9th Congress of the Socialist Parties of the EC, Bonn, April 1973

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framework and a statement of basic principles, because each party would have the right to propose a national election manifesto.[35]

iii) The Confederation of the Socialist Parties in the European Community: The main characteristics of this period (1979 – 1992) are the increasing role of the Party Leaders' Summits in comparison to the Confederation of the Socialist Parties in the European Community, the intensive political differences among the parties which constituted the Confederation, their emphasis on the nation – state system and the acceptance to the priority of the economic and monetary union.

The first Congress of the Confederation of the Socialist Parties in the European Community focused on the common programme. In the election campaign, the Programme was used by all national parties, except for the British Labour Party, either as an appendix to their national manifestos or separately as an official party document. From the election process, it came out two important conclusions: a) a real common programme could come out only as a result of a gradual convergence of national parties' European positions and b) the direct elections did not help the formation of a real European socialist party, because each party focused primarily on national issues.

Therefore, in the 11th Congress of the Confederation of the Socialist Parties in the European Community in Luxembourg, on 2-3 March 1980, there was an attempt to find a common political agenda which focused on the join action of the Confederation against both the dictatorial regimes in Spain, Portugal and Greece and the New Right forces in United Kingdom, France, Germany and Scandinavia. But the political scene has changed, since the 'social democratic consensus of the 50s and 60s had come to an end and neo liberal forces gained power". At this point, the socialist, social democratic and labour parties did not focus on their cooperation on European-level in order to face the negative results of the economic crisis and the empowerment of the new liberalism. In contrast, the resolution of the Congress stated that '*the Confederation is not, and has no intention of becoming, a European super-party, nor will it ask the member parties to relinquish part of their sovereignty for its benefit*',[36] giving priority to the nation – state system.

The political and ideological differences between the Confederation were expressed on the manifesto for the second direct elections of the European Parliament (14 and 17 June 1984), which was adopted by a declaration of the socialist leaders at a summit in Brussels on 1 June 1984. Several national parties refused to sign-up the manifesto as the British and Danish parties opposed on monetary policy coordination and the increasing role of the European Parliament, and the Italian PSI and PSDI declared that their election campaigns would be based "on their support for the European Parliament's draft 'European Union Treaty". [37] Finally, at the CSPEC leaders' summit in Rome on 10 June 1988 priority was given on the economic policyand as a result at the summit on 29 June 1989, they declared unanimously that they 'support

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[35] Hix S., & Lesse U., *Shaping a Vision. A History of the Party of European Socialists, 1957-2002*, Brussels, PES, 2002, pp.28-29, www.pes.org.

[36] Ibid., p.34.

[37] Ibid. p.38.

the objectives of the J. Delores Report for the creation of the economic and monetary union'.[38]

iv) The Party of European Socialists: The basic characteristics of this period (1992 – 2007) are that the majority of the European socialist, social democratic and labour parties are in government, all parties have unanimously accept the European integration process and the priority of the economic aspect, although the political differences among them have not disappeared.

Thus, when the Party of European Socialists (PES) was founded at the Hague Congress on 9 and 10 November 1992, the European socialists had to deal with the rejection of the Treaty of Maastricht by the Danish people. Instead of focusing on the social and political reasons of the referendum, with the exception of the Danish Social Democrat Poul Nyrup Rasmussen, they declared that "*the process of ratification of the Treaty should continue and that European Political Union and Economic and Monetary Union can be implemented as soon as possible*".[39] Moreover, they adopted a document which determines their orientation on the European issues such as "*Common Strategy for Employment, Economic and Social Cohesion*, *Social, Environmental, Democratic, Tolerant and People's Europe*, *Adequate Funding for the Union*, *Common Foreign and Security Policy and Community Enlargement*".[40] This fact indicates that the parties of the PES have unanimously adopted a European orientation.

In 1998, with the exception of Spain and Ireland, the member-parties of the PES held governmental positions. However, we can distinguish two different ideological approaches among them. The new labour Party adopted the "Third Way" with the "modernisation" process, which was based on the non-implementation of the Keynesian economic model and the restriction of the welfare state, giving emphasis on the domination of the market economy and focusing on the competitiveness of the economy through liberalisation of the labour market. On the other hand, the French socialists under the leadership of L. Jospin, adopted a political and economic programme which was based on the reduction of working time and on an extension of public sector employment, which seems to lie more in the socialist tradition. At the end of the day, the majority of the socialist, social democratic and labour parties have adopted the "Third Way" process, which gave the new labour party the chance of winning three elections on end.

Therefore, we see that the PES parties give priority to the economic issue, undermining the social character of the European Union, as they failed, when in government, to face the negative results of the neo liberal globalisation process on the European societies (increase of unemployment rates, restriction of the welfare state) and to promote the democratisation process, which leads to the "democratic deficit" of the European Union. Moreover, they could not adopt a common European policy which could play an alternative role to the political hegemony of the USA in the

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[38] Ibid., p.44.
[39] The resolution of the 1st Congress of PES, Hague, 9-10 November 1992, www.pes.org.
[40] Ibid.

international politics, a fact that is confirmed by the last 7th Congress in Porto in 7-8 December 2006.[41]

Conclusion

The Party of European Socialists consists of 32 Full Member Parties, 6 Associate Parties and 7 Observer Parties (see appendix 1). However, fifteen years after the Treaty of Maastricht when political parties were founded, the European political parties are far from been characterized as political parties in comparison with the national political parties. The most substantial deference lies on the fact that the European political parties are mainly Confederations of national political parties as the individual membership is not provided. This could be explained by the character of the European Union itself, which is mainly an economic and monetary union, while European Union is not a federal state but a union of sovereign nation – states.[42]

The European Union faces democratic deficit since democracy in European level has historically connected with the existence and the growth of the political parties and political parties are called to play the crucial role for the further democratization of the European integration process; especially, the socialist, social democratic and labour parties which in their historical tradition have played the most important role in the process of democratization.

To comprehend the politics and government of European Union through political parties, we have to connect the so called crisis of the political parties due to economic, political and social changes which influenced their political and ideological orientation leading to structural and organizational inefficiency, with the European integration procedures and the globalization process.[43]

Therefore, in order to democratize the political integration process of the European Union, the political parties which constitute the Party of European Socialists should solve the problems both in national and international scene.

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[41] The resolution set the target of the promotion of the New Social Europe, but their political goals a under the restrictions of economic and monetary policy: "*a) to ensure cohesion on the modern welfare state, b) full employment as the basis for the future, c) investing in human capital emphasizing on education and training, d) social protection of those who face the results of the globalization process, e) universal child care, f) equal rights for woman and men, g) promote the social dialogue between trade unions and employers' organization, h) tolerance in diversity, i) tackling climate change, j) an active Europe for people with competition among companies, cooperation which will allow member states to regain part of their national sovereignty lost to globalization and solidarity ensuring cohesion, social and labour rights within our nation states*", New Social Europe. Ten Principles for our Common Future, Adopted Resolution on 7th PES Congress, Porto 7-8 December 2006, www.pes.org.

[42] Papadopoulou, L., «Ευρωπαϊκά πολιτικά κόμματα: υποκείμενα πολιτικής ενοποίησης ή γραφειοκρατικοί μηχανισμοί; », [European Political Parties: Subjects of Political Integration or Bureaucratic mechanisms?] in Tsatsos, D., & Kontiadis, X., (eds.), *The Future of Political Parties*, Papazisi, Ahtens, 2003, p.406.

[43] Spourdalakis, M., (ed.), Botopoulos, C., Tassis, C., Xeros, T., *Ευρωπαϊκό Σοσιαλιστικό Κόμμα: Προκλήσεις και Προοπτικές, [The Party of European Socialists (PES): Challenges and Future Prospects]*, Athens, ISTAME, 2001, pp.125-130.

In order to face the crisis of politics, the political parties have to restore their double character emphasizing on the expression of the civil society, through the connection with social movements in order to represent the interests of the society. Thus, the Party of European Socialists should try to give a specific context to the "democratic deficit" and focus its policy on the European integration process, creating a social Europe, with social cohesion for the European citizens.

In order to face the negative results from the globalization process, the Party of European Socialists should give priority to redistribution policies, to built a new "European consensus", with a new "social contract" between the employees' organizations and the European Trade Unions, based on full employment with satisfactory wages and a new Welfare State as an instrument for economic development, giving at the same time emphasis on the integration process. The target should be a real federal European state with a European government. In that direction the process of the European elections should be homogenized, the European political parties should gain more autonomy from the national political parties and promote the individual membership, creation of a Bureau of the Party of European Socialists in every country for the direct information of the European citizens and the founding of a research institute to deal with the problems of the socialist, social democratic and labour parties.[44]

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[44] Ibid., p.250.

Appendix 1

Full member parties

Sozialdemokratische Partei Osterreichs	Austria
Parti Socialiste	Belgium
Sociaal Progressief Alternatief	Belgium
Bulgarska Sotsialisticheska Partiya	Bulgaria
Kinima Sosialdemokraton EDEK	Cyprus
Ceska strana socialne demokraticka	Czech Republic
Socialdemokratiet	Denmark
Sotsiaaldemokraatlik Erakond	Estonia
Suomen Sosialidemokraattinen Puolue	Finland
Parti Socialiste	France
Sozialdemokratische Partei Deutschlands	Germany
Panellinio Sosialistiko Kinima	Greece
Magyar Szocialista Part	Hungary
Magyarorszagi Szocialdemokrata Part	Hungary
An Lucht Oibre / The Labour Party	Ireland
Democratici di Sinistra	Italy
Socialisti Democratici Italiani	Italy
Latvijas Socialdemokratiska Stradnieku Partija	Latvia
Lietuvos Socialdemokratu Partija	Lithuania
Letzebuerger Sozialistesch Arbechterpartei	Luxembourg
Partit Laburista	Malta
Partij van de Arbeid	The Netherlands
Det Norske Arbeiderparti	Norway
Sojusz Lewicy Demokratycznej	Poland
Unia Pracy	Poland
Partido Socialista	Portugal
Partidul Social Democrat	Romania
Socialni Demokrati	Slovenia
Partido Socialista Obrero Espanol	Spain
Sveriges Socialdemokratiska Arbetareparti	Sweden
The Labour Party (	United Kingdom
Social Democratic and Labour Party	Northern Ireland

Associate parties

Partiya Bulgarski Socialdemokrati	Bulgaria
Socijaldemokratska Partija Hrvatske	Croatia
Socijaldemokratski Sojuz na Makedonija	Former Yugoslavian Republic Of Macedonia
Sozialdemokratische Partei der Schweiz /Parti Socialiste Suisse	Switzerland
Cumhuriyet Halk Partisi	Turkey
Demokratik Toplum Partisi	Turkey

Observer parties

Partit Socialdemocrata	Andorra
Socijaldemokratska partija Bosne i Hercegovine	Bosnia & Herzegovina
Samfylkingin	Iceland
Israel Labor Party	Israel
Meretz-Yachad	Israel
Partito dei Socialisti e dei Democratici	San Marino
Demokratska stranka	Serbia

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