



BALTIC JOURNAL OF LAW & POLITICS

A Journal of Vytautas Magnus University

VOLUME 13, NUMBER 2 (2020)

ISSN 2029-0454



Cit.: *Baltic Journal of Law & Politics* 13:2 (2020): 76-108

DOI: 10.2478/bjlp-2020-0012

EUROPEANIZATION BY EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT POLITICAL GROUPS: THE CASE OF LATVIA 2004-2019

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Received: July 6, 2020; reviews: 2; accepted: December 30, 2020.

ABSTRACT

This article assesses the top-down Europeanization of national political parties by the political groups of the European Parliament. Based on the premise that the national political parties alter their agendas and argumentation because of ties to their respective European Parliament political groups, the paper presents a case study of Latvia in the period from 2004 to 2019. The analysis focuses on the agendas of three political parties whose continuity can be clearly traced during the fifteen years – the “New Unity”, the “National Alliance” and the “Latvian Russian Union”. It concludes that the small number of members of the European Parliament elected from Latvia, migration of individual politicians from party to party, and low durability of Latvian parties themselves has limited the sustainability of Europeanization and impeded downloading of EU topics and principles to the national party level. Meanwhile, party programs of all three observed parties have Europeanized since 2004 in terms of the number and depth of the EU issues addressed.

KEYWORDS

Europeanization, political parties, European Parliament, European Parliament political groups, Latvia

NOTE

This publication has been prepared as a part of the Latvian State Research Program Project No. VPP-IZM-2018/1-0013 “Values in action: towards a responsible, secure and educated civic society with research and research models.”

INTRODUCTION

Europeanization is a multifaceted process. Whenever this notion is applied, it implies multiple processes and interactions. Although the concept had its heyday at the turn of the millennia during the notable transformation and the European Union (hereafter – EU) norm absorption process by the Central and Eastern European countries, the phenomenon is still very much alive. Downloading of norms and values from the EU level into national legislation continues, as does the uploading of the norms and values by national structures to the EU level.

The Europeanization of Latvia is still a heavily under-researched topic even though one-and-a-half decades have passed since its accession to the EU. Research gaps remain, including on Latvian political parties and their activity at the EU level. Therefore, this article endeavours to contribute to discourses related to top-down post-EU-accession Europeanization of political parties in the member states at large and more specifically to those that acceded in 2004.

Based on the premise that the national political parties alter their agendas and argumentation because of the ties to their respective European counterparts, this research presents a case study of Latvia in the period from 2004 to 2019. Emphasis is placed on political party engagement with the respective political groups of the European Parliament (hereafter – EP).

Therefore, based on conceptualizations of Europeanization of political parties and by using semi-structured interviews and extensive analysis of party programs and other documents, the aim of this article is to assess the Europeanization of Latvian political parties as a result of their interaction with the EP political groups from 2004 to 2019. The term of Europeanization is used to refer to the downloading of EU agenda and argumentation from the EP political groups to national parties.

Analysis focuses on party programs of three political parties whose continuity can be clearly traced during the fifteen years – the “New Unity”, the National Alliance “Everything for Latvia!” – “For Fatherhood and Freedom/LNNK” (hereafter – the “National Alliance”) and the “Latvian Russian Union” (the parties here are referred to their last title – that of the 2019 EP election and the 2018 Saeima election). The timeframe of the analysis is limited to the fifteen years – from the first EP election in Latvia taking place in 2004 until 2019, though excluding the current term. One-and-a-half decade provides an abundant amount of data to conceptualize and assess the Europeanization effects on the agendas of the political parties and political and societal landscapes.

The first section of the paper engages in a conceptual outlook on Europeanization and Europeanization of political parties, including their motivations

and argumentation for adopting the EU-level agenda and principles. The second section outlines the methodological approach of the empirical analysis. The third section summarizes the fifteen years of EP elections from the point of view of durability of Latvian political parties in their respective groups and institutional sustainability of Europeanization. The fourth part of the paper provides a comparative outlook of the three aforementioned political parties' programs, investigating the transposition of the European agenda and topics to the national level.

1. A CONCEPTUAL OUTLOOK ON EUROPEANIZATION OF POLITICAL PARTIES

The Europeanization concept developed by Robert Ladrech¹ has obtained popularity beyond academic writings and has penetrated the political discourse. Europeanization provides a concept allowing to investigate and analyse the process of transfer of norms and values from one structure to another, from one actor to another. Europeanization should not be seen as a theory but rather a process of transfer of norms, values, and principles. As Claudio Radaelli sees it, Europeanization is a phenomenon to be explained.²

The understanding of the Europeanization for this research is also borrowed from the definition by Radaelli,³ but concentrates on the transposition of EU-level agenda and topics onto the national-level and institutional sustainability of Europeanization within the iteration between the EU-level political parties and national parties. This paper also seeks to use the conceptualization of top-down Europeanization by Tanja Börzel and Thomas Risse,⁴ while seeing the EP political groups as a source of Europeanization of the Latvian national level political parties.

Research on the transfer of norms among political parties has been substantial. Peter Mair being among the most prominent researchers of Europeanization in the context of political parties and the European Parliament, identifies three strands of research on emergence, role, and functioning of the political parties at the EU level.⁵ In addition to the extensive writings of Mair on

¹ Robert Ladrech, "Europeanization of Domestic Politics and Institutions: The Case of France," *Journal of Common Market Studies* 32(1) (1994).

² Claudio M. Radaelli, "Europeanisation: Solution or problem?" *European Integration online Papers* 8(16) (2004) // https://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=601163.

³ Claudio M. Radaelli, "Whither Europeanization? Concept Stretching and Substantive Change," *European Integration online Papers* 4(8) (2000) // https://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=302761.

⁴ Tanja A. Börzel and Thomas Risse, "Conceptualizing the Domestic Impact of Europe"; in: Kevin Featherstone and Claudio M. Radaelli, etc., *The Politics of Europeanization* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003).

⁵ Peter Mair, "Political Parties and Party Systems"; in: Paolo Graziano and Maarten P. Vink, eds., *Europeanization. New Research Agendas* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008).

political parties, including the EU's effects on national party systems,⁶ or interaction between the democratic process and the EU integration process,⁷ also the research of Ladrech on the Europeanization of political parties,⁸ and others on, for instance, the EU-level parties in the context of the EU's Eastern enlargement,⁹ on Central and Eastern European domestic party reactions to the Europeanization process,¹⁰ the Europeanization of electoral politics and EU's emergence as supranational democratic space,¹¹ Europeanization of party programs¹² and many other topics has contributed to the field.

Although the political parties and their role in Europeanization have been acquiring a significant standing in academic literature, the place and role of the Latvian political parties and their integration into the EU-level political groups has been omitted. The effects of the Europeanization process and the European Union on the Latvian political parties and direct democracy have been limited to the overall evaluation of how the EU shapes Latvia's formal institutions and policy,¹³ Europeanization in Latvia by the foreign banks,¹⁴ Europeanization of the Latvian society,¹⁵ Europeanization of direct democracy trends in Latvia,¹⁶ as well as overall evaluations of Europeanization of social and political processes in Latvia.¹⁷ Hence, this paper addresses only one of very many missing pieces of the Latvian Europeanization history, its decision-makers and institutions, but also allows

⁶ Peter Mair, "The limited impact of Europe on national party systems," *West European Politics* 23(4) (2000); Peter Mair, "The Europeanization Dimension," *Journal of European Public Policy* 11(2) (2004).

⁷ Peter Mair, "Popular Democracy and the European Union Polity," *European Governance Papers* C-05-03 (2005).

⁸ Robert Ladrech, "Europeanization and Political Parties," *Living Reviews in European Governance* 4(1) (2009) // <http://europeangovernance-livingreviews.org/Articles/lreg-2009-1>.

⁹ Giorgia Delsoldato, "Eastward Enlargement by the European Union and Transnational Parties," *International Political Science Review* 23(3) (2002).

¹⁰ Conor O'Dwyer, "Reforming Regional Governance in East Central Europe: Europeanization or Domestic Politics as Usual?" *East European Politics and Societies* (20)2 (2006).

¹¹ Daniele Caramani, "The Europeanization of electoral politics: An analysis of converging voting distributions in 30 European Party Systems, 1970–2008," *Party Politics* 18(6) (2011).

¹² Paul Pennings, "An Empirical Analysis of the Europeanization of National Party Manifestos, 1960–2003," *European Union Politics* 7(2) (2006).

¹³ Edgars Eihmanis, "Latvia and the European Union," *Oxford Research Encyclopedia of Politics. The Oxford Encyclopedia of European Union Politics* (2019) // <https://oxfordre.com/politics/view/10.1093/acrefore/9780190228637.001.0001/acrefore-9780190228637-e-1039#acrefore-9780190228637-e-1039-div1-4>.

¹⁴ Kārlis Bukovskis, "Ziemeļvalstu privāto banku ietekme uz Latvijas iestāšanās Eiropas Savienībā procesu no 1995. līdz 2004. gadam" (Impact of the Nordic Private Banks on Latvia's Accession to the European Union from 1995 to 2004), *Rīgas Stradiņa universitātes Zinātniskie raksti 2017 (Scientific Articles of Rīga Stradiņš University 2017)* (2018).

¹⁵ Dace Akule, "The Europeanization of Latvia: Becoming good Europeans?" *Providus* (2007) // http://providus.lv/article_files/1286/original/Akule_v1.pdf?1328603457.

¹⁶ Kārlis Bukovskis and Elizabete Vizgunova, "The Europeanisation of Latvia's Direct Democracy: Not There Yet, Direct Democracy in the EU"; in: Steven Blockmans and Sophia Russack, eds., *The Myth of a Citizens' Union* (Brussels and London: CEPS and Rowman & Littlefield International, 2018). http://aei.pitt.edu/94991/1/EU_Direct_Democracy_CEPS_RLI_paperback_Blockmans_Russack.pdf.

¹⁷ Zāneta Ozoliņa and Tālis Tisenkopfs, "Eiropēizācijas sociālie un politiskie procesi mūsdienā Latvijā" (Social and Political Processes of Europeanization in Contemporary Latvia); in: Zāneta Ozoliņa un Tālis Tisenkopfs, eds., *Latvija eiropēizācijas krustceļos (Latvia in the Crossroads of Europeanization)* (Rīga: Latvijas Universitātes Akadēmiskais apgāds, 2005).

drawing new material on the international socialization process that has been taking place between the national and the EU level.

Research on modernization and standardization of Estonian social democratic parties, resembling the intention of this paper,¹⁸ sheds a light on the problematic of engagement between the Baltic domestic parties and the EU-level counterparts. Similarly, useful is the comparative analysis by Milada A. Vachudova on political parties before and after the EU accession.¹⁹ However, neither of these papers comprehensively addresses the complexity of membership in the EU-level political parties and their effects on national parties. The existing research deals with an important aspect of international socialization and bringing political parties into the EU, but the Europeanization of Latvia is still an under-researched phenomenon.

The international socialization process is essential in researching the interaction and effects of the EU-level political parties on the Latvian parties in question. Adoption and absorption of EU norms continue after the initial accession to the EU. The learning curve on the operation of the EU institutions starts only after the EU accession is complete and the conditionality is loosened. The research of Frank Schimmelfennig²⁰ and Ulrich Sedelmeier²¹ is helpful in dealing with the post-accession conditionality problematic. The conditional rule transfer²² before accession is efficient for transposition of norms and embedding them into the constitutional and legal system of the accession country. But it is the process after the accession that causes the greatest challenges as the accession-carrot is taken off the agenda. It could be even argued that post-accession Europeanization reveals the real face of norm and value adoption by the new member state.

The norm and value absorption after accession into the EU must be investigated separately as nominally, the state actors become not only equal to other state actors but also a part of the decision-making process. After the accession, the new member states, institutions, and their decision-makers should be regarded as equal partners. Meanwhile, the learning curve to become an efficient and trustworthy member of the EU countries' community just starts at that point. Proving that the new member state is ready to fulfil its obligations, its capacities to be reliable and supportive to the common project becomes the new way forward. This situation of learning how the EU functions "from the within"

¹⁸ Karl M. Johansson, "External Legitimization and Standardization of National Political Parties: The Case of Estonian Social Democracy," *Journal of Baltic Studies* 39(2) (2008).

¹⁹ Milada A. Vachudova, "Tempered by the EU? Political parties and party systems before and after accession," *Journal of European Public Policy* 15(6) (2008).

²⁰ Frank Schimmelfennig, "EU political accession conditionality after the 2004 enlargement: consistency and effectiveness," *Journal of European Public Policy* 15(6) (2008).

²¹ Ulrich Sedelmeier, "After conditionality: post-accession compliance with EU law in East Central Europe," *Journal of European Public Policy* 15(6) (2008).

²² Frank Schimmelfennig and Ulrich Sedelmeier, "Governance by conditionality: EU rule transfer to the candidate countries of Central and Eastern Europe," *Journal of European Public Policy* 11(4) (2004).

becomes a new momentum for the Europeanization of the decision-makers, diplomats, and politicians of newcomers.

The EU newcomers continue the Europeanization process during the post-accession phase. The classical top-down Europeanization can continue because of the learning curve and familiarization with the EU institutions, their functioning, and the intricacies of decision-making. And it is not only the formal but also the informal structures that the new member states should be entering when in the new status. Among the structures and the decision-making processes are also membership, integration, and continuous interaction with the EP political group that the politician and/or politician's party belong to. As the members of the EP (hereafter – MEPs) from the new member states belong to national parties that are usually successful also on the national level, this Europeanization effect can be cascaded further onto the national level.

The ruling parties and their politicians are expected to be interested in joining the EP political groups and becoming active partners. Political parties and individual politicians with long term plans in domestic and EU politics are seeking partnerships for improved access to the political process both structurally and informally. The EP political groups provide this. The self-interest in joining EP political groups stems not only from the logic of being better represented and acknowledged on the EU level and increasing overall influence in decision making. The ability to defend national interests via participation in formal and informal political structures allows parties to potentially gain additional prominence and success with voters. Being among the EU-level decision-makers and party structures means being part of decisions made on various issues in the interests of the national state, the party, or the politician individually.

The elements of prestige and acknowledgment can play an important role in the self-interest of the new MEPs and their parties in joining the EU-level political parties. Prestige and legitimization of the parties on the EU level as well as national level can be a significant driving force. This naturally provides an opportunity to create an environment in which the party and its members should fulfil specific criteria or tasks before being allowed to change the status and become a full member of the EU-level political party. The prestige of becoming a legitimate and universally accepted political force not only provides additional financial and political access gains but also advertisement opportunities on the domestic level. The importance of being accepted by the prominent EU-level politicians and parties can play a role also with the third country politicians. Increased access to decision-making centres and the prestige related to that facilitates the recognition of

politicians and parties and their ability to project influence both nationally and internationally.

Both the access and presence in the decision-making centres and being part of the information loop allows for active participation in political agenda-setting. This comes of use when the political parties and politicians seek to influence the decision-making process in their or their country's interests. Moreover, participation in the EU-level political groups provides with an opportunity to be informed on the latest political trends, positions, and overall discourse. That can even result in copy-pasting the EU-level political ideas into national-level politics. Learning the latest trends in politics or aligning with an EU-level political party position can improve the ideational presence of new MEPs. Finally, it also allows socializing the respective new members via pressuring them into taking the EP political group approach to the issues on the agenda.

The process of "learning to behave" in the EU institutions and among peers within the EU-level group and the adoption of the respective political positions are the most significant parts of the international socialization process²³ of the national political parties of the new EU member states. If those are the ruling political parties, then immediate effects and direct influence options become available to the EP political group. The influence on the domestic decision-making process and on the domestic political discourse can be an important path or an instrument of Europeanization of post-accession EU member states. Fear of being left out of the political process or expelled from the group could give additional pressure points to the EP political group to require political allegiance and compliance regarding such principles as the rule of law and good governance in the daily functioning of national parties and their politicians. It is an addition to the very standards and requirements for the accession of politicians and political parties to the EP political group.

Legitimization of the political parties among peers in other EU member states and providing access to international political networks can be of value not only for the career mobility of individual politicians but the overall place and presence of the political party – often also its future survival capacities after failures in national elections. Some of the political parties can continue existing on the EU level while not being represented on the national level in their respective country for prolonged periods of time. Membership in the political group can allow the respective parties to bring the domestic issues and domestic positions on the EU level and

²³ Anja Neundorf and Kaat Smets, "Political Socialization and the Making of Citizens," *Oxford Handbooks Online* (2017) // <https://www.oxfordhandbooks.com/view/10.1093/oxfordhb/9780199935307.001.0001/oxfordhb-9780199935307-e-98>.

internationalize “their struggle”. The ability to bring the national problems upwards adds additional incentives to be a compliant member of the EP political group. These bonus political instruments and opportunities can therefore be of essence to the national political party, making it susceptible to the overall Europeanization.

Lastly, the opportunity to seek common solutions and peer support during the “political recession” of the national party in question can be important for the integration of individual politicians and whole political parties into the EU-level political party structures. The ability to share common positions, use partner organizations and politicians for advertisement purposes, or demonstrate the high-level political recognition on the international arena are important gains for politicians and their party structures to keep the ties to the EU-level political parties and listen to the suggestions, values, and principles of the political process. Initial self-interest in being a rule-abiding member of the EU-level political party structures gradually can turn into an embedded understanding of how the system should function, and what the acceptable behavioural patterns are both on the EU-level and domestically. The very acquisition of a sense of belonging and participation in solving common problems and seeking common solutions both in the political process and on the issues of collective concern can provide significant loyalty and adjustment to the accepted values and actions in the party and domestic politics.

2. THE RESEARCH DESIGN FOR THE EMPIRICAL ANALYSIS

Based on the conceptualization outlined in the first section, this research is further set to empirically investigate the Europeanization of the Latvian parties as part of the EP political groups. Within the next two sections, the paper looks at how sustainable the above-conceptualized engagement logic can be in practice from the point of view of political parties and their relationships as institutionalized political entities. The following sections seek to establish and summarize the findings on the party engagement and the actual transposition of agendas onto the national party level and into party programs both at the domestic and EU levels. Thus, the Europeanization will be primarily referred to the downloading of the EU agenda and argumentation from the EP political groups to the Latvian national parties.

More specifically, the third section assesses the sustainability of the Europeanization of Latvia’s political parties: how durable have the national parties been and, thus, how durable and sustainable has the link between the national and EP levels been? The section conceptualizes and summarizes the fifteen years between 2004 and 2019 EP elections from the point of view of durability of the

Latvian political parties in their respective groups and thus the institutional sustainability of Europeanization. Statistics of the three elections of the EP (2004, 2009, and 2014) and five elections of Saeima, the national parliament (2006, 2010, 2011, 2014, and 2018) are analysed and benchmarked. Resulting from this review, also the evolution of the parties and their links to EP political groups are mapped (please see Table 2).

Based on the conclusions of the section three, namely, that continuity during the fifteen years can be clearly traced only of three political parties – the “New Unity”, the “National Alliance” and the “Latvian Russian Union” – Europeanization of these three (including their predecessors) are assessed. The assessment is based on in-depth analysis of 29 pre-election programmes, both for the EP and Saeima, as well as semi-structured interviews. As for the interviewees, the representativeness of the sources was given priority over other quantities. Three interviewees cover alignment to all three political parties, while two of them – Roberts Zīle and Tatjana Ždanoka – have served in all three EP terms in question. Furthermore, another former MEP Valdis Dombrovskis, currently, serves as the Executive-Vice President of the European Commission. Interviews allow not only to compare and benchmark the results of document analysis, but also reveal additional insights and perceptions of the Europeanization process.

Analysis of the Latvian parties’ agendas and reflections of current and former MEPs allows us in section four to trace the similarities and differences in parties’ national and EP election agendas, the level of attention given to the EU issues at both levels, the evolution of positions towards the EU agenda and principles by the Latvian parties, as well as other Europeanization instances resulting from the interaction of Latvia’s political parties and their EP counterparts.

3. SUSTAINABILITY OF EUROPEANIZATION OF LATVIAN POLITICAL PARTIES

The Europeanization process of Latvian political parties explicitly began after Latvia’s EU accession in 2004. Political parties engaged in a contest over seats of the EP and made their choices of political affiliation within the Parliament. This essentially created Europeanization agents shaped the top-down Europeanization process of Latvian parties and contributed to the political and societal fabric of the new member state. The newly elected MEPs obtained significant potential for being socialized, i.e., Europeanized, given their visibility and status in the political party and society at large and their interaction with the political groups of the EP in various capacities. However, the institutional sustainability of Europeanization must

be evaluated when analysing the Europeanization process of Latvian political parties, MEPs, and their interaction with the political groups of the EP. Hence, this section provides a summary and several central examples of the research findings on institutional relationships between the Latvian parties and their EU-level counterparts.

The Latvian political parties were represented by a limited number of MEPs. Initially (2004-2009 and 2009-2014), nine MEPs from Latvia were elected (in the latter period, the number was eight until the Lisbon Treaty entered into force).²⁴ Later (2014-2019), the number was reduced to eight MEPs from Latvia (please see Table 1).²⁵

Table 1: Latvia's political parties in the EP elections

Indicator	2004 EP election ²⁶	2009 EP election ²⁷	2014 EP election ²⁸
Number of lists of political parties running	16	17	14
Number of lists of political parties elected	5	6	5
Number of candidates running	245	186	170
Number of MEPs elected	9	9 ²⁹	8

In most cases, an elected political party would only gain a single seat in the EP (11 times out of 16 times when a party list was elected).³⁰ Therefore, the limited number of MEPs means that the correlation between domestic-level parties and EP political groups should not be overestimated. However, the agents of Europeanization cannot be limited to the MEPs only, as multiple assistants from

²⁴ Centrālā vēlēšanu komisija (Central Election Commission), *Eiropas Parlamenta un pašvaldību vēlēšanas 2009. gada 6. jūnijā* (Election of the European Parliament and Municipalities of June 6, 2009), 8 //

https://www.cvk.lv/upload_file/EPunpasvaldibuvelsanurezultatugramata2009.pdf.

²⁵ Eiropas Parlaments, Birojs Latvijā (European Parliament, Office in Latvia), "Eiropas Parlamenta iepriekšējie sasaukumi" (Previous Terms of the European Parliament) //

https://www.europarl.europa.eu/latvia/lv/latvijas-deput-ti/ep_ieprieksejais_sasaukums_2004-2009.html.

²⁶ Centrālā vēlēšanu komisija (Central Election Commission), "Eiropas Parlamenta vēlēšanu rezultāti" (Results of the Election of the European Parliament) // https://www.cvk.lv/cgi-bin/wdbcgiw/base/eiro.veles_rez04c.sak; Centrālā vēlēšanu komisija (Central Election Commission), "Balsis par kandidātiem" (Votes on the Candidates) // https://www.cvk.lv/cgi-bin/wdbcgiw/base/EIRO.veles_Rez04c.pers_statist?sec=7.

²⁷ Centrālā vēlēšanu komisija (Central Election Commission), "2009.gada Eiropas Parlamenta vēlēšanu rezultāti" (Results of the 2009 European Parliament Election) // https://www.cvk.lv/cgi-bin/wdbcgiw/base/eiro9.veles9_rezult.sak; Centrālā vēlēšanu komisija (Central Election Commission), "2009.gada Eiropas Parlamenta vēlēšanas. Balsis par kandidātiem" (2009 Election of the European Parliament. Votes on the Candidates) // https://www.cvk.lv/cgi-bin/wdbcgiw/base/eiro9.Veles9_Rezult.pers_statist?sec=7.

²⁸ Centrālā vēlēšanu komisija (Central Election Commission), "Eiropas Parlamenta vēlēšanas 2014" (2014 Election of the European Parliament) // <http://ep2014.cvk.lv/>; Centrālā vēlēšanu komisija (Central Election Commission), "2014. gada 24. maija Eiropas Parlamenta vēlēšanu deputātu kandidātu saraksti" (Lists of the Candidates of May 24, 2014 European Parliament Election) // <http://ep2014.cvk.lv/saraksti/>.

²⁹ Eight before the Lisbon Treaty entered into force (Centrālā vēlēšanu komisija, *Eiropas Parlamenta un pašvaldību vēlēšanas 2009. gada 6. jūnijā*, supra note 24).

³⁰ Please see Table 1 and Table 2 for full statistics and sources.

political parties are employed in the offices of MEPs, and also parties not elected to the EP undergo various levels of Europeanization.

A relatively small number of MEPs have been elected from Latvia into the EP, and also few of them have retained their original party ties. Altogether 21 persons have served in the capacity of MEP from Latvia from 2004 until 2019 (including those not having served a full-term). But only three people have served as MEPs in all three parliamentary terms, and only one of them has served three full terms.³¹ This does not mean that most or all of the MEPs have not been Europeanized by their respective European level political party or the EP in general and have not cascaded it further to their national peers and institutions. Moreover, it is safe to say that their assistants and advisers have been exposed to this Europeanization path as well.

At the same time, the linkage between the represented national parties and the political groups within the EP has not been straightforward and unequivocal. Some of the elected MEPs have changed their political affiliation, while some political parties have been subject to influences of different EP political groups (for an overview, please see Table 2).

Table 2: Latvia's political parties and EP political groups

6th parliamentary term of the EP (2004-2009) ³²		7th parliamentary term of the EP (2009-2014) ³³		8th parliamentary term of the EP (2014-2019) ³⁴	
Political party <i>EP political group affiliation</i>	No of MEPs	Political party <i>EP political group affiliation</i>	No of MEPs	Political party <i>EP political group affiliation</i>	No of MEPs
"New Era" <i>Group of the European People's Party (Christian Democrats) and European Democrats</i>	2	"New Era" <i>Group of the European People's Party (Christian Democrats)</i>	1	"Unity" <i>Group of the European People's Party (Christian Democrats)</i>	4
		"Civic Union" <i>Group of the European People's Party (Christian Democrats)</i>	2 ³⁵		
Union "For Fatherhood and Freedom"/LNNK <i>Union for Europe of the Nations Group</i>	4	Union "For Fatherhood and Freedom"/LNNK <i>European Conservatives and Reformists Group</i>	1	National Alliance "Everything for Latvia!" – "For Fatherhood and Freedom/LNNK"	1

³¹ Eiropas Parlaments, Birojs Latvijā, "Eiropas Parlamenta iepriekšējie sasaukumi," *supra* note 25.

³² Centrālā vēlēšanu komisija, "Eiropas Parlamenta vēlēšanu rezultāti," *supra* note 26.

³³ Centrālā vēlēšanu komisija, "2009.gada Eiropas Parlamenta vēlēšanu rezultāti," *supra* note 27.

³⁴ Centrālā vēlēšanu komisija, "Eiropas Parlamenta vēlēšanas 2014," *supra* note 28.

³⁵ Three after the Lisbon Treaty entered into force (Centrālā vēlēšanu komisija, *Eiropas Parlamenta un pašvaldību vēlēšanas 2009. gada 6. jūnijā*, *supra* note 24), though at this point "Civic Union" had merged in "Unity".

				<i>European Conservatives and Reformists Group</i>	
Union of Political Organizations "For Human Rights in the United Latvia" <i>Group of the Greens/European Free Alliance</i>	1	"PCTVL – For Human Rights in the United Latvia" <i>Group of the Greens/European Free Alliance</i>	1	"Latvian Russian Union" <i>Group of the Greens/European Free Alliance</i>	1
		Union of Political Parties "Harmony Center" <i>Confederal Group of the European United Left - Nordic Green Left</i> <i>Group of the Progressive Alliance of Socialists and Democrats in the European Parliament</i>	2	Social democratic party "Harmony" <i>Group of the Progressive Alliance of Socialists and Democrats in the European Parliament</i>	1
People's Party <i>Group of the European People's Party (Christian Democrats) and European Democrats</i>	1				
Union "Latvia's Way" <i>Group of the Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe</i>	1	"LPP/LC" <i>Group of the Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe</i>	1		
				Union of Greens and Farmers <i>Europe of Freedom and Direct Democracy</i> <i>Group / Non-attached members / Group of the Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe</i>	1

On one occasion (2009-2014), each of two MEPs from the same party list were admitted to two different EP political groups: one of the MEPs from the Union of Political Parties "Harmony Center" was admitted to the Confederal Group of the European United Left – Nordic Green Left, while the other to the Group of the

Progressive Alliance of Socialists and Democrats.³⁶ Furthermore, during the 2014-2019 term, the MEP elected from the "Union of Greens and Farmers" was initially admitted to the Europe of Freedom and Direct Democracy Group, which the MEP left, and, after a period in a non-attached member status, the MEP served in an ideologically different group: the Group of the Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe.³⁷ This episode testifies to the divergent and often impaired links between the MEPs and both their political parties and EP political groups. Two of the MEPs during the 2014-2019 term left their national political parties while they still continued serving in the EP. These were MEPs from "Harmony"³⁸ and from the "Union of Greens and Farmers".³⁹ Both were also the only MEPs of their political party at the EP at that time. Hence, their moves significantly impaired the link between their respective political parties and EP political groups.

Most importantly, it is essential to take into account that Latvia's political parties and the party system have been undergoing constant transformation and adjustment. No single principal political party has lasted with the same name from 2004 to 2019 due to frequent splits, mergers, and rebranding. This has impacted the continuity, political integrity, and value systems of the parties. At the same time, this reveals a personality-oriented political party system domestically and at the EP level in particular. Besides the national party transformations, three MEPs have been elected to all EP terms in question.

Few rather complex examples of party splits and rebranding must be mentioned to demonstrate the aforementioned trend (please see Table 1 and Table 2 for full statistics and references to the sources). Out of the parties elected in the EP, initially the "New Era" (elected to EP both in 2004 and 2009) merged with the "Civic Union" (elected in 2009) to form the "Unity" (elected in 2014), and later the "New Unity" (elected in 2019); the "For Fatherhood and Freedom"/LNNK" (elected in 2004 and 2009) merged with the "Everything for Latvia!" to form the National Alliance "Everything for Latvia!" – "For Fatherhood and Freedom/LNNK" (elected in 2014 and 2019); the Union of Political Organizations "For Human Rights in the United Latvia" (elected in 2004) evolved as the "PCTVL – For Human Rights in the United Latvia" and the Union of Political Parties "Harmony Center" (both elected as

³⁶ European Parliament, "Alfreds RUBIKS" // https://www.europarl.europa.eu/meps/en/96988/ALFREDS_RUBIKS/history/7; European Parliament, "Alexander MIRSKY" // https://www.europarl.europa.eu/meps/en/96999/ALEXANDER_MIRSKY/history/7.

³⁷ European Parliament, "Iveta GRIGULE-PĒTERSE" // https://www.europarl.europa.eu/meps/en/124745/IVETA_GRIGULE-PETERSE/history/8.

³⁸ Andrejs Mamikins, "Mamikins pametis Saskaņu, jo apnikuši Ušakova meli un partijas divkosība" (Mamikins Has Left Saskaņa Because of Getting Tired of Lies of Ušakovs and Hypocrisy of the Party) // <https://twitter.com/andrejsmamikins/status/980885555893473280>.

³⁹ Latvijas Zemnieku savienība (Union of Latvian Farmers), "Latvijas Zemnieku savienības valde izslēdz Ivetu Griguli no LZS biedru saraksta" (The Board of Latvian Farmers' Union Expels Iveta Grigule From Members' List) // <http://www.lzs.lv/aktualitates/latvijas-zemnieku-savienibas-valde-izsledz-ivetu-griguli-no-lzs-biedru-saraksta>.

separate entities in 2009), further, the former continued as the "Latvian Russian Union" (elected in 2014 and 2019), while the latter as the Social Democratic Party "Harmony" (hereafter – "Harmony") (also elected in 2014 and 2019). Finally, the now-dissolved People's Party was elected in 2004, while another now-dissolved party – the "LPP/LC" was elected in 2009, and the Union "Latvia's Way" before the merger with the "Latvian First Party" was elected in 2004.

The challenges to coherence and continuity notwithstanding, clear trends and political affiliation can be identified and analysed in the context of the Europeanization process. Continuity on the level of individual politicians during all three EP terms can be traced only in cases of three political parties: 1) the "New Unity" (previously the "New Era", the "Civic Union" and the "Unity") in the EP Group of the European People's Party (Christian Democrats) and European Democrats; 2) the "National Alliance" (previously the "For Fatherhood and Freedom"/LNNK" and the "Everything for Latvia!") in the European Conservatives and Reformists Group (previously, in the Union for Europe of the Nations Group); 3) and the "Latvian Russian Union" (previously the "PCTVL – For Human Rights in the United Latvia" and the Union of Political Organizations "For Human Rights in the United Latvia") in the Group of the Greens/European Free Alliance (the parties are referred to their last title – that of 2019 EP election).

In what follows, the remaining section of the article focuses on the Europeanization processes of the three political parties that represent broadly three out of seven political parties/associations that have ever been elected from Latvia to the EP. These political parties also account for 14 persons out of 21 serving at the EP during the three (2004-2019) EP terms. Furthermore, all three have been elected to all three parliamentary terms from 2004 to 2019, and one MEP from each of these parties has served in all three terms (please see Table 1 and Table 2 for full statistics and sources).

4. EUROPEANIZATION IN THE AGENDAS AND PRINCIPLES OF LATVIAN POLITICAL PARTIES

Changes in the party programs since Latvia's EU accession and over the last 15 years allow for tracing the evolution of the national agenda and argumentation. The most substantial change is related to party programs and especially the approximation of national party agendas to the agendas of the EP political group. The interviews, along with analysis of documents and available data on the accession process, are of high informative value in this case. Therefore, this section addresses the programs for both the national and EP elections of the three

indicated parties: "New Unity", "National Alliance," and the "Latvian Russian Union". The aim is to reveal if and how much the party agendas and their underlying principles have absorbed the EU topics and argumentation.

4.1. THE NATIONAL LEVEL

The national programs of Latvian political parties in the form of their programs from 2004 to 2018 domestic (Saeima) parliamentary elections (2006, 2010, 2011, 2014, and 2018)⁴⁰ reveal recurring trends. First, the overall attention

⁴⁰ All programs addressed in the text:

Latvijas Vēstnesis (Official Gazette of Latvia), "PCTVL priekšvēlēšanu programma" (Pre-election programme of PCTVL) // <https://www.vestnesis.lv/ta/id/141749>; Centrālā vēlēšanu komisija (Central Election Commission), ""PCTVL - Par cilvēka tiesībām vienotā Latvijā" priekšvēlēšanu programma. 2010.gada 2.oktobra 10.Saeimas vēlēšanas" (Pre-election programme of "PCTVL – For Human Rights in United Latvia". 10th Saeima Election, October 2, 2010") // <https://www.cvk.lv/cgi-bin/wdbcgiw/base/komisijas2010.CVKAND10.progr?NR=2>; Centrālā vēlēšanu komisija (Central Election Commission), ""PCTVL-Par cilvēka tiesībām vienotā Latvijā" priekšvēlēšanu programma. 2011.gada 17.septembra 11.Saeimas vēlēšanas" (Pre-election programme of "PCTVL – For Human Rights in United Latvia". 11th Saeima Election of September 17, 2011) // <https://www.cvk.lv/cgi-bin/wdbcgiw/base/komisijas2010.CVKAND11.progr?NR=7>; Centrālā vēlēšanu komisija (Central Election Commission), "2014. gada 4. oktobra 12. Saeimas vēlēšanu deputātu kandidātu saraksti. 10. "Latvijas Krievu savienība"" (Candidate Lists of 12th Saeima Election of October 4, 2014. 10. "Latvian Russian Union") // <http://sv2014.cvk.lv/saraksti/d9c8c88b78.html>; Centrālā vēlēšanu komisija (Central Election Commission), "13. Saeimas vēlēšanas. 1. "Latvijas Krievu savienība"" (13th Saeima Election. 1. "Latvian Russian Union") // <https://sv2018.cvk.lv/pub/CandidateLists/CandidateList?id=DN5vWqSOS8KQeMIHjPzmqA%3D%3D>; Apvienība "Tēvzemei un Brīvībai"/LNNK (Alliance "For Fatherhood and Freedom"/LNNK), "Apvienības "Tēvzemei un Brīvībai"/LNNK 9. Saeimas priekšvēlēšanu programma" (Alliance "For Fatherhood and Freedom"/LNNK Pre-election Programme of 9th Saeima Election) // <http://www.tb.lv/id-9-saeimas-velesanas/articles/id-9-saeimas-prieksvelesanu-4000-zimju-programma>; Centrālā vēlēšanu komisija (Central Election Commission), "Nacionālā apvienība "Visu Latvijai!"-"Tēvzemei un Brīvībai/LNNK" priekšvēlēšanu programma. 2010.gada 2.oktobra 10.Saeimas vēlēšanas" (National Alliance "Everything for Latvia!" – "For Fatherhood and Freedom/LNNK" Pre-election programme. 10th Saeima Election of October 2, 2010) // <https://www.cvk.lv/cgi-bin/wdbcgiw/base/komisijas2010.CVKAND10.progr?NR=10>; Centrālā vēlēšanu komisija (Central Election Commission), "Nacionālā apvienība "Visu Latvijai!"-"Tēvzemei un Brīvībai/LNNK" priekšvēlēšanu programma. 2011.gada 17.septembra 11.Saeimas vēlēšanas" (National Alliance "Everything for Latvia!" – "For Fatherhood and Freedom/LNNK" Pre-election programme. 11th Saeima Election of September 17, 2011) // <https://www.cvk.lv/cgi-bin/wdbcgiw/base/komisijas2010.CVKAND11.progr?NR=4>; Centrālā vēlēšanu komisija (Central Election Commission), "2014. gada 4. oktobra 12. Saeimas vēlēšanu deputātu kandidātu saraksti. 7. Nacionālā apvienība "Visu Latvijai!"-"Tēvzemei un Brīvībai/LNNK"" (Candidate's List of 12th Saeima Election of October 4, 2014. 7. National Alliance "Everything for Latvia!" – "For Fatherhood and Freedom/LNNK") // <http://sv2014.cvk.lv/saraksti/d1c00ea367.html>; Centrālā vēlēšanu komisija (Central Election Commission), "13. Saeimas vēlēšanas. 4. Nacionālā apvienība "Visu Latvijai!"-"Tēvzemei un Brīvībai/LNNK"" (13th Saeima Election. 4. National Alliance "Everything for Latvia!" – "For Fatherhood and Freedom/LNNK") // <https://sv2018.cvk.lv/pub/CandidateLists/CandidateList?id=axC8x4iKXxa2gCU9m7iC2A%3D%3D>; Latvijas Vēstnesis (Official Gazette of Latvia), "Jaunais Laiks 9.Saeimas priekšvēlēšanu programma" (9th Saeima Pre-election Programme of New Era) // <https://www.vestnesis.lv/ta/id/142503>; Centrālā vēlēšanu komisija (Central Election Commission), "VIENOTĪBA priekšvēlēšanu programma. 2010.gada 2.oktobra 10.Saeimas vēlēšanas" (Pre-election Programme of UNITY. 10th Saeima Election of October 2, 2010) // <https://www.cvk.lv/cgi-bin/wdbcgiw/base/komisijas2010.CVKAND10.progr?NR=5>; Centrālā vēlēšanu komisija (Central Election Commission), "VIENOTĪBA priekšvēlēšanu programma. 2011.gada 17.septembra 11.Saeimas vēlēšanas" (Pre-election Programme of UNITY. 11th Saeima Election of September 17, 2011) // <https://www.cvk.lv/cgi-bin/wdbcgiw/base/komisijas2010.CVKAND11.progr?NR=2>; Centrālā vēlēšanu komisija (Central Election Commission), "2014. gada 4. oktobra 12. Saeimas vēlēšanu deputātu kandidātu saraksti. 4. Partija "VIENOTĪBA"" (Candidates' List of 12th Saeima Election of October 4, 2014. 4. Party "UNITY") // <http://sv2014.cvk.lv/saraksti/bf9f085446.html>; Centrālā vēlēšanu komisija (Central Election Commission), "13. Saeimas vēlēšanas. 13. Jaunā VIENOTĪBA" (13th Saeima Election. 13. New UNITY) // <https://sv2018.cvk.lv/pub/CandidateLists/CandidateList?id=OsZ8k8LdxvFTNYno4Tf1Ww%3D%3D> [please note that in relation to party programs "supra note" link will not be used onwards; instead, abbreviated data of the programs will be provided if a reference is repeated].

to the EU issues is low compared to other issues addressed, and on most of the occasions it amounts merely to a single sentence or a reference.⁴¹ This is understandable, as the national parliamentary elections are mainly about the domestic issues and paramount external issues (the EU has not been considered as a fundamentally problematic issue that requires extensive debates with the voters, opposed to other external policy issues such as those related to Russia). Second, the EU (or Europe) is used as a point of reference in benchmarking the national issues such as to achieve the EU average level in certain spheres, e.g., in social guarantees, in life expectancy, in living standards, in (in)equality levels, in governance efficiency, or in education.⁴²

Third, the EU is primarily seen in the terms of the perceived national interests or the interests of the electoral base of the party (or both). Most notably, this refers to how policy and instruments of the EU should be used for the good of those interests, e.g., the use of EU funding at large and to specific areas (agriculture and the direct payments to farmers are often mentioned) or projects (the "Rail Baltica" project is often mentioned), accession to the Euro area (with varying positions among the three parties), relations of the EU with other external powers (predominantly with Russia, also with varying positions).⁴³

Fourth, the attention devoted to EU issues tends to increase from election to election. On later occasions, the "New Unity" and the "National Alliance" also include a vision of the EU. For both, the future EU model is seen as a union of nation-states, though the "New Unity" supports further integration across different areas and Latvia's place in the "core" of the EU,⁴⁴ while the "National Alliance" positions itself as opposed to federalization.⁴⁵

⁴¹ *Ibid.*

⁴² Latvijas Vēstnesis, "PCTVL priekšvēlēšanu programma"; Centrālā vēlēšanu komisija, "13. Saeimas vēlēšanas. 1. "Latvijas Krievu savienība"; Centrālā vēlēšanu komisija, "Jaunais Laiks 9.Saeimas priekšvēlēšanu programma"; Centrālā vēlēšanu komisija, "VIENOTĪBA priekšvēlēšanu programma. 2010.gada 2.oktobra 10.Saeimas vēlēšanas"; Centrālā vēlēšanu komisija, "VIENOTĪBA priekšvēlēšanu programma. 2011.gada 17.septembra 11.Saeimas vēlēšanas"; Centrālā vēlēšanu komisija, "2014. gada 4. oktobra 12. Saeimas vēlēšanu deputātu kandidātu saraksti. 4. Partija "VIENOTĪBA"; Centrālā vēlēšanu komisija "13. Saeimas vēlēšanas. 13. Jaunā VIENOTĪBA."

⁴³ Centrālā vēlēšanu komisija, "PCTVL priekšvēlēšanu programma"; Centrālā vēlēšanu komisija, "PCTVL - Par cilvēka tiesībām vienotā Latvijā" priekšvēlēšanu programma. 2010.gada 2.oktobra 10.Saeimas vēlēšanas"; Centrālā vēlēšanu komisija, "PCTVL-Par cilvēka tiesībām vienotā Latvijā" priekšvēlēšanu programma. 2011.gada 17.septembra 11.Saeimas vēlēšanas"; Centrālā vēlēšanu komisija, "2014. gada 4. oktobra 12. Saeimas vēlēšanu deputātu kandidātu saraksti. 10. "Latvijas Krievu savienība"; Centrālā vēlēšanu komisija, "13. Saeimas vēlēšanas. 1. "Latvijas Krievu savienība"; Centrālā vēlēšanu komisija, "Jaunais Laiks 9.Saeimas priekšvēlēšanu programma"; Centrālā vēlēšanu komisija, "VIENOTĪBA priekšvēlēšanu programma. 2011.gada 17.septembra 11.Saeimas vēlēšanas"; Centrālā vēlēšanu komisija, "2014. gada 4. oktobra 12. Saeimas vēlēšanu deputātu kandidātu saraksti. 4. Partija "VIENOTĪBA"; Centrālā vēlēšanu komisija, "13. Saeimas vēlēšanas. 13. Jaunā VIENOTĪBA"; Centrālā vēlēšanu komisija, "Nacionālā apvienība "Visu Latvijai!"-"Tēvzemei un Brīvībai/LNNK" priekšvēlēšanu programma. 2011.gada 17.septembra 11.Saeimas vēlēšanas"; Centrālā vēlēšanu komisija, "2014. gada 4. oktobra 12. Saeimas vēlēšanu deputātu kandidātu saraksti. 7. Nacionālā apvienība "Visu Latvijai!"-"Tēvzemei un Brīvībai/LNNK".

⁴⁴ Centrālā vēlēšanu komisija, "VIENOTĪBA priekšvēlēšanu programma. 2010.gada 2.oktobra 10.Saeimas vēlēšanas"; Centrālā vēlēšanu komisija, "VIENOTĪBA priekšvēlēšanu programma. 2011.gada 17.septembra 11.Saeimas vēlēšanas"; Centrālā vēlēšanu komisija, "2014. gada 4. oktobra 12. Saeimas

The number of EU-related issues reflected in the programs has grown over time, especially in the election programs of the "New Unity", e.g., in 2018, it addressed issues ranging from funding of the EU at large and to certain projects, and covered different policy areas (from export support to cultural heritage).⁴⁶ An interview with one of the former MEPs (current Executive-Vice President of the European Commission) from this party revealed that beyond these, the issues downloaded from the EU also include a more active approach to the climate-friendly economy, EU economy at large, topical events in Europe, single digital market, strengthening of cyber security and regulation of the EU digital space.⁴⁷

The outlook of the parties regarding a wider EU agenda has been visible. As current and former MEPs admit in the interviews, the interaction with the EP has had a considerable effect in this sense.⁴⁸ However, this cannot be entirely attributed to the EP and the political groups alone because, as admitted by one of the interviewees, also the "governmentalization" of political parties is significant because parties gain more experience – among other things, ministers participate in the Council of the EU and other EU affairs.⁴⁹

Finally, most of the principal issues (often seen as a part of the mainstream "liberal European agenda"), such as migration and family values, are void of impact from the EU level.⁵⁰ This can be attributed, first, to the parties' membership to ideologically closer EP political groups, thus limiting the impact of EU-level policy downloading to a minimum because the positions are already similar from the outset. Secondly, as admitted by interviewees of all three political parties assessed, policies and approaches are usually not forced upon the political parties but rather based on exchange of opinions and argumentation, also leaving space for divergent votes on issues significant to the national parties.⁵¹

Some major exceptions to the non-intervention policy of the EP groups observed have been the merger of the "For Fatherhood and Freedom"/LNNK" with the "Everything for Latvia!" It was admitted in the interview that the former was initially "demonized" in the EP. Nevertheless, the merger took place, and, furthermore, it resulted in both "mainstreamization" and Europeanization of the

vēlēšanu deputātu kandidātu saraksti. 4. Partija "VIENOTĪBA"; Centrālā vēlēšanu komisija, "13. Saeimas vēlēšanas. 13. Jaunā VIENOTĪBA."

⁴⁵ Centrālā vēlēšanu komisija, "13. Saeimas vēlēšanas. 4. Nacionālā apvienība "Visu Latvijai!"-"Tēvzemei un Brīvībai/LNNK".

⁴⁶ Centrālā vēlēšanu komisija, "13. Saeimas vēlēšanas. 13. Jaunā VIENOTĪBA".

⁴⁷ Valdis Dombrovskis, written answers for the purposes of this article, October 11, 2019.

⁴⁸ Valdis Dombrovskis, written answers, *supra* note 47. Roberts Zīle, interview for the purposes of this article, Rīga, Latvia, August 26, 2019.

⁴⁹ Roberts Zīle, interview, *supra* note 48.

⁵⁰ Tatjana Ždanoka, interview for the purposes of this article, Rīga, Latvia, September 27, 2019.

Roberts Zīle, interview, *supra* note 48.

⁵¹ Valdis Dombrovskis, written answers, *supra* note 47. Roberts Zīle, interview, *supra* note 48. Tatjana Ždanoka, interview, *supra* note 50.

merged party.⁵² Another exception was the name-change of the "PCTVL – For Human Rights in the United Latvia" to the "Latvian Russian Union" where the Group of the Greens/European Free Alliance is said to have had a considerable influence (given the difficulties of understanding the represented subject the previous name entailed, compared to other national parties in the group).⁵³

Furthermore, though this does not relate to the parties in question here, much-debated has been the abdication of a cooperation agreement between the Social democratic party "Harmony" and the "United Russia", governing party of Russia, which supposedly was a prerequisite for a full admission of the party to the Group of the Progressive Alliance of Socialists and Democrats.⁵⁴

4.2. THE EU LEVEL

The European Parliament election programs (2004, 2009, 2014, and 2019) reveal a set of similar trends to the political party agendas at the domestic level.⁵⁵

⁵² Roberts Zīle, interview, *supra* note 48.

⁵³ Tatjana Ždanoka, interview, *supra* note 50.

⁵⁴ Latvijas Sabiedriskie mediji (Public Broadcasting of Latvia), "Ušakovs: "Saskaņas" līgums ar "Vienoto Krieviju" vairs nav aktuāls" (Ušakovs: Agreement between "Unity" and "United Russia" is no More Relevant) // <https://www.lsm.lv/raksts/zinas/latvija/usakovs-saskanas-ligums-ar-vienoto-krieviju-vairs-nav-aktuals.a252978/>.

⁵⁵ Centrālā vēlēšanu komisija (Central Election Commission), "Politisko organizāciju apvienība "Par cilvēka tiesībām vienotā Latvijā" priekšvēlēšanu programma 2004.gada Eiropas Parlamenta vēlēšanām" (Pre-election programme of Union of Political Organizations "PCTVL – For Human Rights in United Latvia" for 2004 European Parliament Election) // <https://www.cvk.lv/cgi-bin/wdbcgiw/base/eiro.ekand.programma?NR1=2>; Centrālā vēlēšanu komisija (Central Election Commission), "PCTVL – Par cilvēka tiesībām vienotā Latvijā" priekšvēlēšanu programma 2009.gada Eiropas Parlamenta vēlēšanām" ("PCTVL – For Human Rights in United Latvia" Pre-election programme of 2009 European Parliament Election) // <https://www.cvk.lv/cgi-bin/wdbcgiw/base/eiro9.EiroKand09.programma?NR1=14>; Centrālā vēlēšanu komisija (Central Election Commission), "2014. gada 24. maija Eiropas Parlamenta vēlēšanu deputātu kandidātu saraksti. "Latvijas Krievu savienība"" (Candidate Lists of European Parliament Election of May 24, 2014. "Latvian Russian Union") // <http://ep2014.cvk.lv/saraksti/b2c4844d50.html>; Centrālā vēlēšanu komisija (Central Election Commission), "EIROPAS PARLAMENTA VĒLĒŠANAS. 1. "Latvijas Krievu savienība"" (EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT ELECTION. 1. "Latvian Russian Union") // <https://epv2019.cvk.lv/pub/kandidatu-saraksti/latvijas-krievu-savieniba>; Centrālā vēlēšanu komisija (Central Election Commission), "Apvienība "Tēvzemei un Brīvībai"/LNNK priekšvēlēšanu programma 2004.gada Eiropas Parlamenta vēlēšanām" (Pre-election programme Alliance "For Fatherhood and Freedom"/LNNK for 2004 European Parliament Election) // <https://www.cvk.lv/cgi-bin/wdbcgiw/base/eiro.ekand.programma?NR1=3>; Centrālā vēlēšanu komisija (Central Election Commission), "Apvienība "Tēvzemei un Brīvībai"/LNNK priekšvēlēšanu programma 2009.gada Eiropas Parlamenta vēlēšanām" (Alliance "For Fatherhood and Freedom"/LNNK Pre-election programme of 2009 European Parliament Election) // <https://www.cvk.lv/cgi-bin/wdbcgiw/base/eiro9.EiroKand09.programma?NR1=1>; Centrālā vēlēšanu komisija (Central Election Commission), "Partija "Visu Latvijai!" priekšvēlēšanu programma 2009.gada Eiropas Parlamenta vēlēšanām" (Party "Everything for Latvia!" Pre-election Programme for 2009 European Parliament Election) // <https://www.cvk.lv/cgi-bin/wdbcgiw/base/eiro9.EiroKand09.programma?NR1=17>; Centrālā vēlēšanu komisija (Central Election Commission), "2014. gada 24. maija Eiropas Parlamenta vēlēšanu deputātu kandidātu saraksti. Nacionālā apvienība "Visu Latvijai!"-"Tēvzemei un Brīvībai/LNNK"" (Candidate Lists of European Parliament Election of May 24, 2014. National Alliance "Everything for Latvia!" – "For Fatherhood and Freedom/LNNK") // <http://ep2014.cvk.lv/saraksti/dfd6b39247.html>; Centrālā vēlēšanu komisija (Central Election Commission), "EIROPAS PARLAMENTA VĒLĒŠANAS. 11. Nacionālā apvienība "Visu Latvijai!"-"Tēvzemei un Brīvībai/LNNK"" (EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT ELECTION. 11. National Alliance "Everything for Latvia!" – "For Fatherhood and Freedom/LNNK") // <https://epv2019.cvk.lv/pub/kandidatu-saraksti/nacionala-apvieniba-visu-latvijai-tevzemei-un-brivibai-lnnk>; Centrālā vēlēšanu komisija (Central Election Commission), "Jaunais laiks" priekšvēlēšanu programma 2004.gada Eiropas Parlamenta vēlēšanām" ("New Era" Pre-election Programme of 2004 European Parliament Election) // <https://www.cvk.lv/cgi-bin/wdbcgiw/base/eiro.ekand.programma?NR1=8>; Centrālā vēlēšanu komisija

First, the EU is primarily seen in terms of the interests of the perceived national interests and/or the interests of the electoral base of the party. If, in the case of domestic parliamentary elections, the interests were much more condensed and closely oriented to funding, then the programs for EP elections reflect on a much broader set of issues of domestic importance determining the goals at the EP.

All three observed parties have been promising to seek more funding and support Latvia's economy, as well as an equal distribution of welfare. All three have been underlining ethnic and cultural issues – whereas the "Latvian Russian Union" has spoken on behalf of the perceived interests of the Latvian (and also Estonian and EU at large) Russian-speakers (especially the status and situation of the Russian language, culture and education, political rights of non-citizens),⁵⁶ the "National Alliance" and the "New Unity" have been vocal in enhancing the role of the Latvian language and culture, seeking condemnation of both Nazi and Communist totalitarian regimes⁵⁷ (the first has been clearer in its intentions by underlining that it will represent the interests of the ethnic Latvians and "loyal" citizens, and has used stronger language on these issues⁵⁸). Along similar lines, the "Latvian Russian Union" has said to seek an improvement of relations between the EU and Russia (seeking "a common political and economic space from Lisbon to Vladivostok"),⁵⁹ while the other two have been seeking stronger EU's counteraction

(Central Election Commission), ""Jaunais laiks" priekšvēlēšanu programma 2009.gada Eiropas Parlamenta vēlēšanām" ("New Era" Pre-Election Programme of 2009 European Parliament Election) // <https://www.cvk.lv/cgi-bin/wdbcgiw/base/eiro9.EiroKand09.programma?NR1=4>; Centrālā vēlēšanu komisija (Central Election Commission), ""Pilsoniskā savienība" priekšvēlēšanu programma 2009.gada Eiropas Parlamenta vēlēšanām" (Pre-election Programme of "Civic Union" of 2009 European Parliament Election) // <https://www.cvk.lv/cgi-bin/wdbcgiw/base/eiro9.EiroKand09.programma?NR1=3>; Centrālā vēlēšanu komisija (Central Election Commission), "2014. gada 24. maija Eiropas Parlamenta vēlēšanu deputātu kandidātu saraksti. Partija "VIENOTĪBA"" (Candidate Lists of European Parliament Election of May 24, 2014. Party "UNITY") // <http://ep2014.cvk.lv/saraksti/bda1035237.html>; Centrālā vēlēšanu komisija (Central Election Commission), "EIROPAS PARLAMENTA VĒLĒŠANAS. 16. Jaunā VIENOTĪBA" (EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT ELECTION. 16. New UNITY) // <https://epv2019.cvk.lv/pub/kandidatu-saraksti/jauna-vienotiba>.

⁵⁶ Centrālā vēlēšanu komisija, "Politisko organizāciju apvienība "Par cilvēka tiesībām vienotā Latvijā" priekšvēlēšanu programma 2004.gada Eiropas Parlamenta vēlēšanām"; Centrālā vēlēšanu komisija, ""PCTVL - Par cilvēka tiesībām vienotā Latvijā" priekšvēlēšanu programma 2009.gada Eiropas Parlamenta vēlēšanām"; Centrālā vēlēšanu komisija, "2014. gada 24. maija Eiropas Parlamenta vēlēšanu deputātu kandidātu saraksti. "Latvijas Krievu savienība"."

⁵⁷ Centrālā vēlēšanu komisija, ""Jaunais laiks" priekšvēlēšanu programma 2004.gada Eiropas Parlamenta vēlēšanām"; Centrālā vēlēšanu komisija, ""Jaunais laiks" priekšvēlēšanu programma 2009.gada Eiropas Parlamenta vēlēšanām"; Centrālā vēlēšanu komisija, ""Pilsoniskā savienība" priekšvēlēšanu programma 2009.gada Eiropas Parlamenta vēlēšanām"; Centrālā vēlēšanu komisija, "2014. gada 24. maija Eiropas Parlamenta vēlēšanu deputātu kandidātu saraksti. Partija "VIENOTĪBA""; Centrālā vēlēšanu komisija, "EIROPAS PARLAMENTA VĒLĒŠANAS. 16. Jaunā VIENOTĪBA."

⁵⁸ Centrālā vēlēšanu komisija, ""Apvienība "Tēvzemei un Brīvībai"/LNNK priekšvēlēšanu programma 2004.gada Eiropas Parlamenta vēlēšanām"; Centrālā vēlēšanu komisija, "Apvienība "Tēvzemei un Brīvībai"/LNNK priekšvēlēšanu programma 2009.gada Eiropas Parlamenta vēlēšanām"; Centrālā vēlēšanu komisija, "Partija "Visu Latvijai!" priekšvēlēšanu programma 2009.gada Eiropas Parlamenta vēlēšanām"; Centrālā vēlēšanu komisija, "2014. gada 24. maija Eiropas Parlamenta vēlēšanu deputātu kandidātu saraksti. Nacionālā apvienība "Visu Latvijai!"-"Tēvzemei un Brīvībai/LNNK""; Centrālā vēlēšanu komisija, "EIROPAS PARLAMENTA VĒLĒŠANAS. 11. Nacionālā apvienība "Visu Latvijai!"-"Tēvzemei un Brīvībai/LNNK"."

⁵⁹ Centrālā vēlēšanu komisija, "Politisko organizāciju apvienība "Par cilvēka tiesībām vienotā Latvijā" priekšvēlēšanu programma 2004.gada Eiropas Parlamenta vēlēšanām"; Centrālā vēlēšanu komisija, ""PCTVL - Par cilvēka tiesībām vienotā Latvijā" priekšvēlēšanu programma 2009.gada Eiropas

to Russia⁶⁰ (the "National Alliance" has been bolder in its calls⁶¹). In addition, it can be underlined that the "National Alliance" and the "New Unity" have emphasized the energy and transport infrastructure independence from Russia and integration in the EU energy market and infrastructure,⁶² while the latter has also emphasized the fight against corruption.⁶³

Second, the attention devoted to EU issues tends to increase from election to election. If the first programs, especially those of 2004, focused on which national interests (or those of the respective electorate) should be pursued, the later ones offer more substance on the future of the EU. It can be summarized that the "Latvian Russian Union" has evolved from underlining the negative effects of the EU membership and blaming the EU for them to nominally accepting the EU as an instrument for its policy objectives; in the later elections, it has positioned itself on such issues as the EU's role in the global financial system and the international

Parlamenta vēlēšanām"; Centrālā vēlēšanu komisija, "2014. gada 24. maija Eiropas Parlamenta vēlēšanu deputātu kandidātu saraksti. "Latvijas Krievu savienība"; Centrālā vēlēšanu komisija, "EIROPAS PARLAMENTA VĒLĒŠANAS. 1. "Latvijas Krievu savienība"."

⁶⁰ Centrālā vēlēšanu komisija, "Apvienība "Tēvzemei un Brīvībai"/LNNK priekšvēlēšanu programma 2004.gada Eiropas Parlamenta vēlēšanām"; Centrālā vēlēšanu komisija, "Apvienība "Tēvzemei un Brīvībai"/LNNK priekšvēlēšanu programma 2009.gada Eiropas Parlamenta vēlēšanām"; Centrālā vēlēšanu komisija, "Partija "Visu Latvijai!" priekšvēlēšanu programma 2009.gada Eiropas Parlamenta vēlēšanām"; Centrālā vēlēšanu komisija, "2014. gada 24. maija Eiropas Parlamenta vēlēšanu deputātu kandidātu saraksti. Nacionālā apvienība "Visu Latvijai!"-"Tēvzemei un Brīvībai/LNNK"; Centrālā vēlēšanu komisija, "EIROPAS PARLAMENTA VĒLĒŠANAS. 11. Nacionālā apvienība "Visu Latvijai!"-"Tēvzemei un Brīvībai/LNNK"; Centrālā vēlēšanu komisija, "Jaunais laiks" priekšvēlēšanu programma 2004.gada Eiropas Parlamenta vēlēšanām"; Centrālā vēlēšanu komisija, "Jaunais laiks" priekšvēlēšanu programma 2009.gada Eiropas Parlamenta vēlēšanām"; Centrālā vēlēšanu komisija, "Pilsoniskā savienība" priekšvēlēšanu programma 2009.gada Eiropas Parlamenta vēlēšanām"; Centrālā vēlēšanu komisija, "2014. gada 24. maija Eiropas Parlamenta vēlēšanu deputātu kandidātu saraksti. Partija "VIENOTĪBA"; Centrālā vēlēšanu komisija, "EIROPAS PARLAMENTA VĒLĒŠANAS. 16. Jaunā VIENOTĪBA."

⁶¹ Centrālā vēlēšanu komisija, "Apvienība "Tēvzemei un Brīvībai"/LNNK priekšvēlēšanu programma 2004.gada Eiropas Parlamenta vēlēšanām"; Centrālā vēlēšanu komisija, "Apvienība "Tēvzemei un Brīvībai"/LNNK priekšvēlēšanu programma 2009.gada Eiropas Parlamenta vēlēšanām"; Centrālā vēlēšanu komisija, "Partija "Visu Latvijai!" priekšvēlēšanu programma 2009.gada Eiropas Parlamenta vēlēšanām"; Centrālā vēlēšanu komisija, "2014. gada 24. maija Eiropas Parlamenta vēlēšanu deputātu kandidātu saraksti. Nacionālā apvienība "Visu Latvijai!"-"Tēvzemei un Brīvībai/LNNK"; Centrālā vēlēšanu komisija, "EIROPAS PARLAMENTA VĒLĒŠANAS. 11. Nacionālā apvienība "Visu Latvijai!"-"Tēvzemei un Brīvībai/LNNK"."

⁶² Centrālā vēlēšanu komisija, "Apvienība "Tēvzemei un Brīvībai"/LNNK priekšvēlēšanu programma 2004.gada Eiropas Parlamenta vēlēšanām"; Centrālā vēlēšanu komisija, "Apvienība "Tēvzemei un Brīvībai"/LNNK priekšvēlēšanu programma 2009.gada Eiropas Parlamenta vēlēšanām"; Centrālā vēlēšanu komisija, "Partija "Visu Latvijai!" priekšvēlēšanu programma 2009.gada Eiropas Parlamenta vēlēšanām"; Centrālā vēlēšanu komisija, "2014. gada 24. maija Eiropas Parlamenta vēlēšanu deputātu kandidātu saraksti. Nacionālā apvienība "Visu Latvijai!"-"Tēvzemei un Brīvībai/LNNK"; Centrālā vēlēšanu komisija, "EIROPAS PARLAMENTA VĒLĒŠANAS. 11. Nacionālā apvienība "Visu Latvijai!"-"Tēvzemei un Brīvībai/LNNK"; Centrālā vēlēšanu komisija, "Jaunais laiks" priekšvēlēšanu programma 2004.gada Eiropas Parlamenta vēlēšanām"; Centrālā vēlēšanu komisija, "Jaunais laiks" priekšvēlēšanu programma 2009.gada Eiropas Parlamenta vēlēšanām"; Centrālā vēlēšanu komisija, "Pilsoniskā savienība" priekšvēlēšanu programma 2009.gada Eiropas Parlamenta vēlēšanām"; Centrālā vēlēšanu komisija, "2014. gada 24. maija Eiropas Parlamenta vēlēšanu deputātu kandidātu saraksti. Partija "VIENOTĪBA"; Centrālā vēlēšanu komisija, "EIROPAS PARLAMENTA VĒLĒŠANAS. 16. Jaunā VIENOTĪBA."

⁶³ Centrālā vēlēšanu komisija, "Jaunais laiks" priekšvēlēšanu programma 2004.gada Eiropas Parlamenta vēlēšanām"; Centrālā vēlēšanu komisija, "Jaunais laiks" priekšvēlēšanu programma 2009.gada Eiropas Parlamenta vēlēšanām"; Centrālā vēlēšanu komisija, "Pilsoniskā savienība" priekšvēlēšanu programma 2009.gada Eiropas Parlamenta vēlēšanām"; Centrālā vēlēšanu komisija, "2014. gada 24. maija Eiropas Parlamenta vēlēšanu deputātu kandidātu saraksti. Partija "VIENOTĪBA"; Centrālā vēlēšanu komisija, "EIROPAS PARLAMENTA VĒLĒŠANAS. 16. Jaunā VIENOTĪBA."

system at large, the Lisbon Treaty, and has argued for a bigger EU role at the domestic level, e.g., in education.⁶⁴

Although it addressed a rather broad range of EU issues from the beginning, the "National Alliance" can be seen as having advanced from countering the Lisbon Treaty and advocating for national protectionism (in the case of the "Everything for Latvia!" before the merger) to defending closer cooperation at the EU level in energy and transport issues, law enforcement, supervision of the financial sector and money laundering, security of cyber and information space, competition policies and external borders.⁶⁵ The program of the "New Unity" in terms of EU related issues addressed may be understood as the most extensive from the outset, still, the party has expanded its outlook towards more environmental issues, gender equality issues, more emphasis on education and science, the role of the three main EU institutions (including the role of the Latvian Presidency of the Council of the European Union in 2015), common digital market, and common foreign policy and the rule of law.⁶⁶

Third, the programs show consistent alignment with the vision of the respective EP political groups. In other words, there is no single vision of the EU to which the engagement with the EP would have brought Latvia's parties. The "Latvian Russian Union" has emphasized the primacy of regions, autonomies, ethnic and linguistic groups; it has called for a development of the EU as a federation of regions (with less powers for governments and more for the regions), and more integration in some spheres such as social policy and education, with such calls being clearer since 2014.⁶⁷ The "National Alliance" has underlined its support to the EU as the only choice in the existing geopolitical reality. It has advocated a vision of the EU as a union of nation-states, has rejected federalization, and thus has countered further EU integration in such areas as migration and defence.⁶⁸ The "New Unity" has also underlined its vision of the EU as a union of nation-states;

⁶⁴ Centrālā vēlēšanu komisija, "Politisko organizāciju apvienība "Par cilvēka tiesībām vienotā Latvijā" priekšvēlēšanu programma 2004.gada Eiropas Parlamenta vēlēšanām"; Centrālā vēlēšanu komisija, "EIROPAS PARLAMENTA VĒLĒŠANAS. 1. "Latvijas Krievu savienība"."

⁶⁵ Centrālā vēlēšanu komisija, "Apvienība "Tēvzemei un Brīvībai"/LNNK priekšvēlēšanu programma 2004.gada Eiropas Parlamenta vēlēšanām"; Centrālā vēlēšanu komisija, "Partija "Visu Latvijai!" priekšvēlēšanu programma 2009.gada Eiropas Parlamenta vēlēšanām"; Centrālā vēlēšanu komisija, "EIROPAS PARLAMENTA VĒLĒŠANAS. 11. Nacionālā apvienība "Visu Latvijai!"-"Tēvzemei un Brīvībai/LNNK"."

⁶⁶ Centrālā vēlēšanu komisija, "Jaunais laiks" priekšvēlēšanu programma 2004.gada Eiropas Parlamenta vēlēšanām"; Centrālā vēlēšanu komisija, "EIROPAS PARLAMENTA VĒLĒŠANAS. 16. Jaunā VIENOTĪBA." Valdis Dombrovskis, written answers.

⁶⁷ Centrālā vēlēšanu komisija, "2014. gada 24. maija Eiropas Parlamenta vēlēšanu deputātu kandidātu saraksti. "Latvijas Krievu savienība"; Centrālā vēlēšanu komisija, "EIROPAS PARLAMENTA VĒLĒŠANAS. 1. "Latvijas Krievu savienība"."

⁶⁸ Centrālā vēlēšanu komisija, "EIROPAS PARLAMENTA VĒLĒŠANAS. 11. Nacionālā apvienība "Visu Latvijai!"-"Tēvzemei un Brīvībai/LNNK"."

however, it has been sympathetic towards further cooperation and integration of the EU across various areas, including the common foreign and security policy.⁶⁹

Finally, and related to the previous point, Latvia's political parties have, with various results, embraced the liberal values that have dominated the EU agenda. Both the "Latvian Russian Union" and the "National Alliance" have retained a conservative position on immigration and family values issues,⁷⁰ while the "New Unity" has been and remained more liberal on such issues.⁷¹ All three parties in question have remained nationalistic in regard to language, culture, and history,⁷² though to a different extent and in different directions.

CONCLUSIONS

The Europeanization concept has been widely used in the academic and non-academic analysis of the process of transfer of norms and values between structures and actors in the context of the EU. This article contributes to a comparatively lesser-addressed part of the concept: the top-down post-EU-accession Europeanization of political parties in the post-2004 accession period. Moreover, this article has looked at the role of the EP political groups in the Europeanization of the national parties in one of the member states. It analysed how the agendas of Latvia's political parties have evolved in their interaction with the EP and its political groups. Even though this is a single country case study, the conclusions contribute to the general understanding of the Europeanization processes of political parties.

The main conclusions arising from the analysis of the national and EP election programs of the political parties and semi-structured interviews with current and former MEPs demonstrate that the small number of MEPs (as Europeanization agents), migration of individual politicians from party to party (also at EP level), and low durability of Latvian parties themselves have limited the sustainability of Europeanization and impeded downloading of EU topics and principles to the national party level. Meanwhile, party programs of all three observed parties have Europeanized since 2004 in both the number and depth of the EU issues addressed.

⁶⁹ Centrālā vēlēšanu komisija, "EIROPAS PARLAMENTA VĒLĒŠANAS. 16. Jaunā VIENOTĪBA."

⁷⁰ Centrālā vēlēšanu komisija, "EIROPAS PARLAMENTA VĒLĒŠANAS. 1. "Latvijas Krievu savienība"; Centrālā vēlēšanu komisija, "EIROPAS PARLAMENTA VĒLĒŠANAS. 11. Nacionālā apvienība "Visu Latvijai!"-"Tēvzemei un Brīvībai/LNNK"."

⁷¹ Centrālā vēlēšanu komisija, "Jaunais laiks" priekšvēlēšanu programma 2004.gada Eiropas Parlamenta vēlēšanām"; Centrālā vēlēšanu komisija, "EIROPAS PARLAMENTA VĒLĒŠANAS. 16. Jaunā VIENOTĪBA."

⁷² Centrālā vēlēšanu komisija, "2014. gada 24. maija Eiropas Parlamenta vēlēšanu deputātu kandidātu saraksti. "Latvijas Krievu savienība"; Centrālā vēlēšanu komisija, "EIROPAS PARLAMENTA VĒLĒŠANAS. 11. Nacionālā apvienība "Visu Latvijai!"-"Tēvzemei un Brīvībai/LNNK"; Centrālā vēlēšanu komisija, "EIROPAS PARLAMENTA VĒLĒŠANAS. 16. Jaunā VIENOTĪBA."

Latvia's political parties have not necessarily become more similar in their perceptions of the EU and its underpinning values and principles. The overall short durability of political parties and Latvian MEPs over the first 15 years of the country's membership in the EU demonstrates the inability for the most to generate a systemic attachment to their respective groups and be Europeanized by them. Only three parties – "New Unity", "National Alliance" and "Latvian Russian Union" – have demonstrated long-standing and continual ties to their EU-level counterparts. Hence, one cannot speak of the whole Latvian party system being Europeanized via the EP. Lack of institutional sustainability impedes Europeanization.

At the same time, agendas of Latvia's political parties have been Europeanized. Though the parties still see the EU primarily from their national perspectives (the perceived interests of their electorates), more EU-related and EU-inspired issues have been downloaded to the domestic agendas, and the spectrum and depth of EU-issues addressed has grown since the first EP election in Latvia in 2004. Agendas of the parties that held less favourable view towards the EU, especially the "Latvian Russian Union", have at least nominally become more EU-friendly: from criticizing and blaming the EU to supporting further EU integration and federalization. Interestingly, the party in its current and preceding legal form has not been represented in the national parliament in the last four parliamentary terms, and, thus, the EP has largely underpinned its existence. For different reasons, none of the parties analysed reject the idea of the EU, and each has found and supported a certain vision of the EU which corresponds both to their electorate and the EP political group.

In the end, this research underscores the limitations to the analysis of Europeanization of political parties in small EU member states. In spite of the conceptual logic defined in the first section, there is no conclusive evidence that national parties have necessarily become closer to the EU-level political parties and have been Europeanized. The limitations include the small number of MEPs as Europeanization agents in the national political parties, the small number of MEPs with a steady and lengthy link to the EP and the respective EP political groups, the brief lifespan of political parties, as well as the divergent and often intermittent links between the MEPs and both their political parties and EP political groups. The informal and indirect effects of Europeanization, i.e., the socialization process, are more complicated to trace. Changes in self-perception, self-evaluation of party leaders and the elected members of the EP from Latvia are an aspect to be investigated in order to further understand the influence of the EU-level political group on the views and understandings of the politicians.

The second effect of Europeanization that needs to be further addressed in future research is the shifts in approach to the political process and political culture. This entails inclusion and acceptance of new ideas into the national political process, changes in attitudes towards such principles as the rule of law and good governance. Shifts in these are investigated via inquiries if the party sees itself as becoming more European and what this aspect includes. What would be the character and policies of the party had they not been elected into the EP and accepted into the respective EP political group needs to be addressed. And vice versa – if the politicians see that they have made changes to their EU-level political party.

Finally, the altered value system of the party, especially in attitudes towards the rule of law and good governance, needs to be addressed as they reveal the deeper layers of the socialization process taking place via interaction with the respective EP political group. Changes in behaviour and approach to the political process among the Latvian parties with membership ties in the EU-level political groups are essential for Europeanization to have had a lasting effect on further democratization and good governance principles of Latvia. Contributions of the Latvian representatives in these groups and their capacities to influence the group are examples of a genuine acceptance of the party. This is the way towards drawing strong conclusions not only regarding the actual Europeanization of Latvian political parties but also about the capacity of the parties to interact and support the existence and sustainability of a responsible, secure, and educated civic society in the country.

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