

EUROPEANIZATION OF THE POLITICAL PARTY SMER-SD

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Abstract

Europeanization is a phenomenon that contains several possible roles of exploration, while the study of the Europeanization of political parties according to the five dimensions defined by Robert Ladrech is considered to be one of the most important. The aim of the paper is to map the changes in the program rhetoric of the political party SMER-SD which since its inception has become one of the most important opinion-forming entities within the Slovak society. SMER-SD was an important political player already in the period before Slovakia's accession to the EU, being present at all important milestones connected with the integration of Slovakia into the European structures. The paper seeks to explore the extent to which the SMER-SD party's program has been Europeanized since its establishment to the present.

Key words: *Europeanization, European Integration, Political parties, SMER-SD*

INTRODUCTION

In order to understand the importance of Europeanization as such, it is important to clarify its main types, but especially its importance in the field of the European integration. Europeanization is most often perceived in terms of the impact of the EU, its policies or processes on the EU Member States. The first part of the article brings a comprehensive overview of the most important theoreticians of Europeanization, which will contribute to the understanding of the studied issue. As we decided to choose the Europeanization of political parties, the second part of the paper is more extensively devoted to the theories of Robert Ladrech and Peter

Mair. They are considered to be pioneers in exploring Europeanist tendencies within political parties but for our research we consider Ladrech's theory to be more relevant since Mair has been focused on party system as whole. Our attention will be therefore dedicated to the five dimensions of political parties that Ladrech considers to be fundamental areas revealing the degree of Europeanization. In the third part of the article, we chose to examine the SMER-SD political party and reveal the degree of Europeanization of its political program.

1. EUROPEANIZATION AND DIFFERENT VIEWS ON ITS EXPLORATION

The concept of Europeanization is a truly interesting phenomenon that has become a serious subject of interest for academics since the beginning of the new millennium, though scientific papers exploring Europeanization can be noted in the 1980s and 1990s. According to many experts, it cannot be considered as a new theory, because it combines and links existing theories of international politics, the theory of political processes, or the theory of governance [Radaelli; Exadaktylos, 2010]. John Borneman, along with Nick Fowler, came up with an interesting notion according to which the process of Europeanization appeared after the Cold War and replaced the processes of Western European Americanization and Eastern Europe Sovietization. The collapse of the Soviet Union and the weakened dominance of America, in their opinion, meant for Europe the need to define itself towards an international environment [Filipec, 2017]. Europe, however, can be understood much more widely than just from the perspective of the creation of the European Union. Right from the beginning there are many views on how to examine the Europeanization. We could even talk about diametrically opposed approaches to understanding this concept. Europeanization is, in general, a dynamic process that binds to the European continent and the individual historical integration processes associated with it. Kevin Featherstone and Claudio Radaelli clarify that the original work drew attention to four broad categories of Europeanization processes. The first type of so-called historical Europeanization is linked to the imperial demands of former naval powers that have exported the European values, authorities, norms, institutions, or cultural values and behaviors mostly outside Europe. Transnational cultural diffusion looks at Europeanization through the prism of cultural identities of standards and patterns across the different European nations. This can be understood very broadly, whether from the point of view of social activities such as education, or political culture and ideology. The third category of the institutional adaptation is one of the most widespread forms of the Europeanization research. Generally speaking, we are talking about domestic adaptation with the pressure of the European integration, and thus coming directly or indirectly from EU membership. In other words, it is a change of institutional players in the domestic political environment resulting from European integration and its associated processes. The division closes the so-called adapting Policies and Policy Processes, which is clearly the widest category. This may be the case for the two-way process, although surveys mapping individual policy shifts outweigh the impact of EU membership. [Featherstone, 2003]

For a clear understanding of Europeanization it is necessary to realize that European integration as such is only one of its elementary parts, but most

academics perceive euro- top-down process that captures changes at the domestic level of politics caused by building European institutions and policies. For a proper analysis of Europeanization we need to realize that this is a two-way process, it means they are not only the players acting on the national scene, but they are also involved in shaping European policies and institutions. Even though the top-down strategy is more widely recognized, which means the higher number of theorists consider the EU's impact on the Member States to be significantly more pronounced than the national actors towards the EU, it is still unclear who is the initiator of the change. One of the most frequently cited definitions of Europeanization comes from Robert Ladrech who sees it as a gradual reorientation of domestic policy to such an extent that the dynamics of European political and economic development become a part of its organizational structure as well as of policy making [Ladrech, 1994]. Equally important is the definition of Claudio Radaelli that describes Europeanization as the process of formation, institutionalization and diffusion of formal and informal policy rules and procedures, as well as shared values that are first created and consolidated at the European level and subsequently incorporated into the domestic political scene, general discourse, as well as public policies [Radaelli, 2003]. The Radaelli's definition is rather complex because it describes Europeanization of polity, policy and politics. In terms of polity occurs an institutional change, but also a change in judicial structures, intergovernmental relations, public administration or state traditions and collective identities, as well as relations between the state and society. Within the limits of the policy there is an individual national policy to be changed, which involves changing the standards, approaches and tools to solve the problems. In terms of politics, there is a change of mutual political interactions, thus the overall processes of formation, aggregation and representation of interests, as well as public discourse [Börzel; Risse, 2003]. The EU as such, but in particular the implementation of individual European policies brings about a number of changes in each Member State, especially the changes in the behavior of actors, their strategies, and institutional changes.

The theory of Europeanization and processes associated with it has been dealt with by other recognized authors, such as Featherstone. He sees this concept as a process of structural change influencing the actors, as well as institutions or ideas and interests. He argues that Europeanization is a change in the behavior of elites, but it is not a shift in the thinking of elites towards deepening integration as assumed by neofunctionalism. He concludes with his conviction that Europeanization has typically increased intensity, but its effects cannot be considered as permanent or imminent [Featherstone, 2003]. The impact of Europeanization may not even be regular and becomes asymmetric in time and space. This view is also supported by Risse, Cowles and Caporaso who state that countries or regions, along with their actors, may differ in their acceptance of European standards and the extent to which they are willing to change their domestic rules and patterns of behavior. On the other hand, we can also distinguish between the degrees of pressure imposed by the European institutions on the adoption of strict rules. They define Europeanization as the creation and development of different governance structures at the European level on the one hand and the political, legal and social institutions created to solve problems and formalize interactions between actors. They clearly perceive Europeanization in

particular from the perspective of European integration, thus the creation of transnational institutional structures generating universally binding standards, which are subsequently transferred to the national level. From this point, according to them, there is a further phase of Europeanization [Risse; Caporaso; Cowels, 2001]. Risse et al. follow up Checkel who adds that Europeanization involves, on the one hand, the strengthening of organizational capacity for collective action and, on the other hand, deepening the development of common ideas, standards, or collective understanding [Checkel, 2001]. Many other authors approach Europeanization very similarly, and their definitions could be compared to the theories of European integration. Many of the other theorists have blamed them for not being applicable to all areas of Europeanization.

Tanja Börzel understands Europeanization as a two-dimensional theoretical concept, and the process of European policy-making can be conceptually perceived as a "reciprocal relationship" between political negotiations at home and at the European level. This approach of the so-called two-tier game says that domestic political actors are exerting pressure on national executives to make changes at the European level that are in their interest. On the other hand, the representatives of the national governments are trying at the European level to push for changes that satisfy the domestic pressure while minimizing all potential adverse consequences [Börzel, 2002].

Johan Olsen [2002] recognizes five possible uses of Europeanization: (1) When it comes to changing external borders in order to achieve the degree of governance by which Europe has become a united political arena. 2) Development and establishment of common European institutions responsible for collective action. 3) Division of power between several levels of government- multilevel-governance. 4) Export of political organization and its principles outside Europe. 5) The European Unification Project which takes into account several factors - the unifying territory, the domestic adaptation but also how is the emerging political entity influenced by the system of governance or by international political processes.

2. THEORETICAL DEFINITION OF THE EUROPEANIZATION OF POLITICAL PARTIES

I consider political parties that are a part of so-called politics within the political system of the nation state as important players at all levels of politics as they are one of the decisive opinion mobilizers that are the bearers of change in society. National political parties and their leaders are often perceived as an important intermediary standing between citizens and for them the unknown European policy that is reflected by their statements and activities. Through the creation of European institutions, European integration has created a space for transnational cooperation between national political parties which has evolved and strengthened over the years. The parties worked together, in particular, within the European Parliament, which, each Treaty adopted, strengthened its position and its influence on the decision-making on European policies and on the overall direction of the EU. National parties have been organized within the emerging European political parties with a broad membership base, in which they cooperate to exchange opinions, learn

from each other and this in principle creates scope for modifying the national party [Anderson, 2002].

Already in the 90s, some works emerged that were marginally devoted to the Europeanization process within the national party systems. However, the crucial breakthrough came to the beginning of the new millennium. One of the earliest authors was Peter Mair [2000] who saw only a small influence of European integration in this area and focused on the research of the party system as a whole. Robert Ladrech [2002], whose theory of Europeanization of political parties is considered to be a pioneer, examined rather political parties as independent players instead. Similarly to Mair, he perceives a party system as an area that is very difficult to change. Ladrech's exploration is based on the important divisions and conclusions of Hix and Goetz [2000] that examined the domesticization of domestic actors and found that domestic actors aspire to act and promote at the European political level, and also the European integration has an impact on the domestic political system that is changing. In this respect, they considered two different types of impacts on domestic actors: a) the transfer of competences to the European level can have several consequences, such as limiting elections or strengthening and changing the direction of institutional and overall political development in the country, b) creating new transnational institutions can provide new opportunities for national actors to open a new policy area and hence scope for circumvention of national policy.

This new political space also gives national players some benefits in terms of access to information. Robert Ladrech, in particular, relied on the fact that the increasingly widespread delegation of competences to the European Union in a certain sense involved the emptying of domestic politics. Thus, the ability of national actors is weakened, and this greatly affects the behavior of political parties and changes their ideology or program. [Ladrech 2002]

According to Robert Ladrech, the dimension of politics in the sense of Europeanization is an insufficiently invasive area, which has not been given sufficient attention for many years, especially to domestic political parties and their relationship towards European integration. Similar research has mostly mapped the coalitions, legislative or executive institutions, or impact on the legal system. [Ladrech, 2002]

Europeanization of Political Parties according Peter Mair

As I have outlined above, Peter Mair was primarily dealing with research of the Europeanization of national party systems, which, in the framework of one of the surveys (2000), compares each other since the introduction of direct elections to the European Parliament. Western democracies have become more fragmented since then. His aim was to find out to what extent can be demonstrated the impact of European integration on national political systems, but his conclusions were rather skeptical. The basic feature of Mair's methodology is the two-dimensional structure of the Europeanization of party systems. The first dimension is the so-called format of the party system that denotes the exact number of relevant political parties in the selected system. In this case, he tried to find out whether Europeanization as such had an impact on the number of relevant system parties. The second dimension is

the mechanics of party systems, in which Mair distinguishes between the ways in which the parties interact, that may involve a change in the ideological distance that separates the selected parties or promotes the emergence of a new type of competition based on the European dimension. This is basically about how the party system works and what its interactions are. Consequently, it is assessed whether individual dimensions of party systems reflect the direct or indirect impact of the EU. He concludes that in terms of format and party participation mechanism within national party systems, there has been no or only a negligible direct impact of European integration. Also in the case of parties whose main feature of the program was the EU's support or rejection, since only a negligible percentage of them managed to maintain their positions in a longer time horizon. Therefore, it cannot be argued that the European cleavage line would be profiled. Most of the emerging European-oriented political parties then remain oriented towards the European level of elections. Since, according to Mair, there is no European party system, it is not possible for domestic party systems to be influenced by the European level of politics. Even according to him there is no evidence of the emergence of new alliances or hostility between the parties. [Mair, 2000]

On the other hand, the indirect impact of European integration cannot be denied. It refers to the depoliticization of party systems, with the possibility of some deterioration of the democratic process. In his view, the situation of the ever-increasing limitation of the freedom of the national governments is, in fact, supported by the emptying of electoral subjects and overall competition. European themes are emphasized mostly at the time when the country faces significant European decisions. In other cases, political leaders are not very happy to open up European themes. [Mair, 2000]

In the 2007 study, Mair supplemented his original conclusions, adding two more forms of Europeanization to direct/indirect influence. The first is the institutionalization of the EU political system, which deals firstly with the direct effects of the EU, namely the cohesion and strength of European political parties, as well as the difference between European and national elections. Indirect effect produces the emergence of alternative representative clusters such as lobbying and other types of interest groups. The second plane is the so-called penetration of European standards in the domestic political scene. Its direct variant speaks of the emergence of new sides on both levels - both European and national. [Mair, 2007]

The indirect effect of Europeanization in terms of penetration is seen by Mair as a shrinking political competition at national level, coupled with less space for party rivalry or the capacity of national governments [Mair, 2007]. In principle, however, the conclusions of both Mair's studies speak of Europeanization as a variable the effect of which is very difficult to prove within the party system and, if it exists, it is mostly an indirect influence.

Europeanization of political parties according Robert Ladrech

The second and for our research the most important theorist of the European political parties is Robert Ladrech. In his work he is engaged in a detailed investigation of the political parties, not the party systems as a whole, as the above-mentioned Mair. Ladrech's concept is currently the most cited in the field of

Europeanization of political parties. It can be said that he partly follows Peter Mair's work, nevertheless, he tried to come up with a more revolutionary and deeper analysis of political parties. Similarly to Mair, Ladrech acknowledges that Europeanization has a direct influence on political parties, which means that Europeanization pressure does not necessarily have to trigger a fundamental change of the party system. The empowerment of political competition, often referred to by Mair, has, according to Ladrech, a significant influence on the Europeanization of political actors. Political parties, as an important subject of the political system, are thus undergoing a fundamental change in their traditional functions, such as government roles, aggregation and subsequent articulation of interests, as well as electoral campaigns of individual parties and the recruitment of new members. However, a different situation may arise if the parties become part of a transnational party area, which in most cases brings new opportunities of different character, leading in particular to changes in the behavior and organizational structures of political parties. However, the overall impact of national parties at European level is very limited as they are not in contact with the European executive and therefore do not engage. By contrast, cross-border cooperation between national parties is not excluded. [Ladrech, 2002]

The 2002 breakthrough study of the Ladrech defines five key areas of research in which the political parties are being Europeanized. In comparison with Mair it outlines more of the impact of Europeanization providing a comprehensive and clear framework for an analysis in this area. Like many other academics studying Europeanization, I also consider Ladrech's concept as appropriate because it reflects a truly broad range of impacts of European integration on national party systems. According to Robert Ladrech [2002], under the influence of Europeanization, the following changes are taking place within the political parties:

1. Changes in the Political Party Program - One of the most bourgeois manifestations of Europeanization is the changes in party programs, in other words, the embedding of European issues in the party's programming documents. Methodologically, we distinguish in this context two different ways of determining the degree of Europeanization. This can be a quantitative change, reflecting the increasing number of references to EU policies and overall references to the EU and related topics. By qualitative research, we find out when the EU is referring to programs in the sense of a complementary factor in addressing policies that have traditionally been fully under the control of national governments. These changes therefore reflect the widening European integration into several areas. In the programs we will find more and more sophisticated references to the EU and its activities and with the space for party competition to be shrinking while increasing the demands on program experts of the parties. This requires the parties in general to strengthen their competences in the knowledge of European policies. On the contrary, the parties are beginning to refer to the EU also when referring to domestic policy and are increasingly reflecting transnational cooperation with the EU institutions.
2. Organizational changes - The gradually evolving relationship with the European institutions gradually brings about a number of structural and organizational changes within the party. In this sense, there may be several major changes,

such as the change of internal rules following the role of party representatives in the European Parliament. However, not all organizational changes are always found in official documents and party guidelines. Individual organizational changes can also be derived from linking the party and its actors to transnational organizations such as the European parties or the transnational party federation.

3. Patterns of Party Competition - Based on the degree of Europeanization of the parties in terms of the politicization of European themes, the voters take a pro-European or, on the contrary, Eurosceptic stance. On the one hand, the party's dynamics changes, the parties are transformed, which can generate the emergence of the new European cleavage, so the character of the competition is changing. Even new parties are emerging on the basis of a stance towards the EU.
4. Relationship between the parties and the government - this is based on the assumption of governmental participation in European negotiation and institutional negotiations, which can vary considerably their position within the party, as the change in their conviction often leads to bigger distance from the party's program positions.
5. Relationship of the party above the level of the national party system - Europeanization can lead to transnational cooperation between parties from different member countries, leading to mutual influence of party organizational structures or changes in the program. This is often about the party's participation in one of the European parties.

3. EUROPEANIZATION WITHIN THE POLITICAL PROGRAM OF SMER-SD

As part of the research on the Europeanization of political parties in the Slovak Republic, I see the current governmental party SMER - SD, the first party in the history of Slovakia to have created a one - color government and, since its inception in 1999, it has shaped the social discourse in the most significant way. The Europeanization of political parties, according to Robert Ladrech, contains up to five dimensions, but the most relevant one is the first one to examine the Europeanization of the program of the selected political party. So I will examine to what extent the program rhetoric, especially on the basis of its official program documents, has been Europeanized since the emergence of SMER - SD. The situation on the Slovak political scene during establishing the party SMER was characterized by a tense situation and the existence of two blocs, among which it was impossible to reach a consensus at the level of the government. The main cleavage was the line of Marxism - anti-mečiarism, which caused that classical ideological middle-left division of political parties was weakened. The Prime Minister Vladimír Mečiar, who filed an EU application for Slovakia in 1995, caused the international isolation of Slovakia [Leška, 2015]. As a result of several undemocratic practices, Slovakia was not invited to join the EU and NATO. Although HZDS was not against accession to the EU, its coalition partners proclaimed skeptical beliefs in this respect, with a fundamental rejection of NATO membership. Therefore, all actors from the international environment also perceived the HZDS as an opponent of the European project, and Slovakia did not see them as potential partners. The

opposition parties then opposed not only the HZDS, but the new cleavage line began to emerge, related to integration into Euro-Atlantic structures [Marušiak, 2006]. Shortly after the creation of the pro-European the so-called "big coalition" that brought Slovakia back to the negotiating table on the EU accession, the political party SMER was formed. Robert Fico, one of the most ambitious a popular politicians, had, as the former SDL Deputy Chairman at that time, really broad public support, and he therefore decided to establish a party that was initially profiled as a center-oriented with leftist rhetoric. Robert Fico, however, was seen from the beginning as a populist who presented himself and his party as the only alternative to Mečiar and as his preferences continued to rise, several parties sought to cooperate with him. [Octavian, 2008]

In general, it can be argued that after the 1998 elections, the Slovak political parties started to give a clear idea and indications of commitment towards the EU. Similarly, also SMER declared its Euroatlantic orientation in 1999, hence the support of Slovakia's accession to the EU and NATO. [Octavian, 2008]

In the general election campaign 2002 SMER took the opportunity to criticize the quick negotiation and the speedy conclusion of several chapters of the negotiations regarding the accession to the EU. Similar to nowadays, before the accession to the EU, SMER called for greater sovereignty of Slovakia within its structures. It can be said that they led the campaign with several negative attitudes towards the EU and expressed conviction that Slovakia was not ready to join the EU. Nevertheless, the party subsequently supported the integration of Slovakia into the EU and led the "YES" referendum campaign for entry and subsequently voted in favor of ratification of the Accession Treaty. Political scientists, for example, their pre-election billboard referring to the EU considered as bizarre and vulgar, as it depicted the bare background and with slogan: "To Europe, but not with bare asses". [Húsková, 2016] Thus, in its pre-election manifesto, SMER was profiled as a pro-European Central Party which, since its formation in 2002, has been profiled as the "third way", the party following the model and program of the British Labor Party or the German SPD, but paradoxically initially rejected their core socio-democratic values [Marušiak, 2008]. In the electoral program entitled "Choose Order and Decent Life!" they called for the guarantee of Slovakia's invitation to the EU and NATO, and declared their duty to do everything in order to join both transnational structures. They mentioned the EU just in terms of integration of individual aspects of public policy (education, transport, agriculture, etc.) into the European space, including the common market, without a separate chapter that would pay attention to the EU and the foreign policy of the Slovak Republic itself [SMER, 2002]. SMER did not win the election 2002 and was not as successful as predicted by the polls, and European integration as such was the main factor that influenced the party's decision not to join the HZDS coalition in 2002 and to act as its alternative.

After 2002, the program orientation of SMER can be seen as diverting from the "Third Way" and strengthening social democratic elements. SMER has changed its name to SMER – SD (social democracy), and later declared the effort to join the Party of European Socialists (PES) which clearly demonstrates the Europeanization changes within the party. In the election it was provided with the support of PES. The SMER-SD Manifesto for the first-ever election to the European Parliament was called "Stronger Slovakia in Welfare Europe," with Monika Beňová as the leader of

the Euro-list of candidates. The program is divided into seven main areas, while the party itself considered as the most significant of them, the general promotion of the struggle to create social Slovakia and Europe, with a significant impact on energy security or diversification of resources. The program can be viewed positively in terms of reflecting European themes, because its overwhelming majority is made up of European themes. The Party continued to insist on the promotion of Slovakia's own national interests. They strongly emphasized the importance of issues such as the Cohesion and EU agricultural policy. The party considered it necessary to allocate funds to socially less developed regions, as well as to promote direct payments for farmers, as we have negotiated the least favorable conditions among the Visegrad Group countries. They also declared efforts to remove earlier restrictions on work permits in several member countries for Slovak citizens. Interestingly, SMER – SD supported the adoption of the Constitutional Treaty for Europe in the manifesto [SMER-SD, 2004]. According to Jan Kovář, the election manifesto for qualitative aspects of important topics connected with European integration was discussed by the party very generally in particular the picture of its long-term goals within the EU membership, with many important topics covered only to a very limited extent [Kovář, 2014]. According to Marušiak, SMER-SD has put the European elections in great importance because they felt a chance to show themselves to voters or foreign partners as a stable pro-European party, an alternative to the current government coalition to become a full member of the PES and gain international respect. [Marušiak, 2004]

The 2006 electoral program entitled “Towards people” contains significantly fewer references to the EU, basically containing only a few references to it and all of them can be considered very general. It briefly refers only to the need to actively fulfill the obligations arising from the EU and NATO membership, and it mentions the same main themes as in the previous European manifesto. The most important element of the program in the sense of Europeanization can be considered as an indirect reference to support for the integration of Slovakia into the Eurozone when it talks about the need for political steps that will not endanger the planned adoption of the euro. [SMER-SD, 2006]

Tim Haughton and Marek Rybář, the period when the SMER-SD created a government together with SNS and HZDS is considered from a European perspective as significant. But, according to them, it was more about Europeanization affecting the political agenda of the government than the parties themselves. And since SMER-SD was a crucial part of the government coalition, it had to deal more with all the major issues behind the European integration that Slovakia was facing at the time. In particular, many preparations were made for joining the Eurozone and Schengen, whereby Robert Fico more publicly presented European themes and proposed that the governments should take part in day-to-day consultations at the European level which increasingly influence them more and more. [Haughton; Rybář, 2009]

Although the program for elections to the European Parliament cannot be found, according to Ján Kovář it can be based on very general topics related to the EU. In particular, SMER-SD traditionally mentioned building of a social Europe with emphasis on solidarity and security. It devotes a lot of space to national issues and criticism of the previous government, which, according to him, has caused a

financial crisis and has poorly prepared Slovakia for the euro adoption and joining the Eurozone. [Kovář, 2014]

Government participation in 2006-2010 and day-to-day European Affairs discussions probably caused that the SMER-SD's 2010 election program was considerably more comprehensive in terms of reflecting European issues a a separate chapter entitled "Strengthening the Position of the Slovak Republic in the European Union and in the World" is devoted to the EU [Drizová, 2011] In addition to classical issues such as stability or cohesion policy, the focus is on the need for active implementation of the Lisbon Treaty and the need to bring the EU closer to citizens. In this respect, it aims to regularly bring citizens closer to European issues and thus help them understand better functioning of the EU and its processes. Many times, in the other chapters of the program, they refer to the Lisbon Treaty and the Europe 2020 Strategy in relation to several national policies. Based on these facts, we can clearly observe the Europeanization trends in the SMER-SD program which is increasingly being presented as a pro-European one. [SMER-SD, 2010]

The program focus of the SMER-SD in 2012 was largely identical to the previous program due to unexpected early elections. It is also divided into seven chapters, with the EU part already appearing to be second and not last as before. This change can be justified by the events that caused the fall of the government, and thus the refusal to accept the European stability mechanism. Robert Fico was clearly aware of the importance of this issue, since the further developments within the EU and fixing the stability of the Eurozone depended on the decision of the Slovak Parliament. In any way, we can generally see a constant shift in SMER-SD's rhetoric appealing to the European themes. [SMER-SD, 2012]

Similarly to the previous elections to the European Parliament, it is not possible to find the SMER-SD manifesto. What is interesting, however, in connection with Europeanization, is the 2016 parliamentary election program, which cannot be called a program, but only a program priority, as the party itself entitles it. Out of five shortcomings, the EU document only mentions the use of European financial resources for regional development and wage increases in health and education. [SMER-SD, 2016] Thus, the European issues are significantly absent in the document compared to the previous ones. Robert Fico has changed his rhetoric, particularly with regard to the migration crisis, especially in connection with the radical rejection of the allocation of asylum seekers' according quotas. This was accompanied by an action against the Council of the European Union, which is in high contrast with the previous pro-European rhetoric of SMER-SD. Robert Fico began to use Islamophobic rhetoric and was for instance in favor of the adoption of a controversial measure to monitor Muslims living in Slovakia as a possible threat. In this regard, Pavol Baboš and Darina Malová believe that Eurosceptical rhetoric was highly connected with election campaigning, but according to them SMER violated humanitarian European standards which in principle can help reduce EU support and thus strengthen Euroscepticism. [Baboš; Malová, 2016]

CONCLUSION

Europeanization is indeed a phenomenon which touches the political system of every European country, especially a Member State of the EU at all of the levels of the political system with a significant impact on policy, polity and politics. Among the world's academics we can find a large number of theorists dealing with the Europeanization of the political system as such, but I consider Ladrech's Europeanization of political parties as one of the most groundbreaking and acknowledged one. Political parties are clearly Europeanized under the influence of European integration, which we have partly proved in the case of the current Slovak governmental party SMER-SD. We have studied it within the first of five dimensions defined by Robert Ladrech. We have mapped the changes in the program rhetoric of SMER-SD since its inception to the present, in particular by analyzing its program manifestos in parliamentary elections and European elections. Since its inception the party has been profiled as a pro-European one and, despite several euro-skeptic statements, it has supported Slovakia's accession to the EU. It expressed its skepticism in particular about the unpreparedness for joining the EU and criticized the conditions been negotiated by the previous government. However, SMER-SD was more pro-European in the following periods that many analysts saw as a consequence of their efforts to join PES. The most obvious Europeanist tendencies in the party were visible in manifestations for the elections to the National Parliament from 2010 and 2012 when there was a significant attention dedicated to the EU and its subjects, even a separate chapter. The turnaround occurred before the 2016 elections, after the outbreak of a migration crisis when Prime Minister Fico vigorously rejected the migration quotas and regularly criticized the EU which, according to some experts, helped mobilize Eurosceptic forces, even the extremist ones. This is in line with some of the previous research dedicated to the political development in Slovakia [Mihálik, 2015] Subsequently we were able to monitor almost smooth implementation of the program priorities for the Slovak Presidency in the EU Council which was personally represented by Robert Fico himself as the newly elected Prime Minister.

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