

The Attitude of the European People's Party towards the Eurozone Crisis

By

Panagiotis S. Theodorou (Student ID: MPE17002)

Supervisor: Professor Nikos Marantzidis

The dissertation has been submitted as a requirement for the completion of the *Master of Arts in Politics and Economics of Contemporary Eastern and South-eastern Europe* programme.

Word count: 17,397



Department of Balkan, Slavic, and Oriental Studies

School of Economic and Regional Studies

University of Macedonia, Thessaloniki

2017/18

Declaration Form

The work I submitted is my own effort. I certify that all the material in this dissertation, which is not my own work, has been identified and acknowledged. No materials are included for which a degree has been previously conferred upon me.

Signed

Panagiotis S. Theodorou

Date

30/12/2017

Abstract

Since 1999, the European People's Party has been the party with the largest majority in the European Parliament, and in the European Council since 2002. Regarding the significant presence of the European People's Party in many of the European Union major institutions, it would be academically and politically interesting to examine its role in the Eurozone crisis. Several Eurozone Member States were incapable to serve or refinance their government debt or to bail out over-indebted banks. The attitude of the European People's Party towards the Eurozone crisis could be considered as a very promising research topic for several academic fields because of the topic's multi-level nature. The completion of the current study aims to add some useful insights about the Europarties' (European People's Party in the case) procedures and general political approaches, and how the Eurozone crisis was faced and challenged by a leading Europarty in the European Union. The ideological traits and political and party background of the European People's Party would evaluate the Eurozone crisis from another angle, and not from a regular national party one. Last but not least, the evaluation of the attitude of the European People's Party towards the Greek debt crisis offers some useful views on the parties' ideological conflicts and affiliations.

Keywords: European People's Party, Eurozone, debt crisis

Table of Contents

	Abstract	4
	Table of Contents	5
1.	Introduction	8
2.	Literature Review	10
2.1	Europarties in Theory	10
2.2	Politics in the European Parliament and Europarties	11
2.3	Christian Democracy and the European People's Party	13
2.3.1	An Outline of the European People's Party	14
2.3.2	Centre-right Wing in Eastern, Central-eastern, and South-eastern Europe	16
2.4	An Analysis of the Eurozone Crisis	18
2.4.1	Single Currency: Macroeconomic Diversities and Capital Flows	19
2.4.2	Bailout Expectations	20
2.4.3	Resolving the Crisis in the European Union: Conflicts among the Member States	21
2.4.4	Resolving the Crisis in the European Union: Conflicts within the Member States	21
2.4.5	Anti-Crisis Policies in the Debtor Member States	22
2.4.6	Anti-Crisis Policies in the Creditor Member States	23
2.5	Aims and Objectives	24
3.	Presentation and Analysis of the Findings	27
3.1	Description of the Data	27
3.2	Presentation and Analysis of the Data	29
3.2.1	Competitiveness	29
3.2.2	Research and Innovation	31
3.2.3	Reforms in the European Union	33
3.2.4	European Central Bank and European Banking System	36
3.2.5	Troika	37
3.2.6	Solidarity	39
3.3	Semantic Linkages Framework	42

3.4	European People's Party Official Press Releases Ratios in Coding	43
3.5	The Case of the Greek Economic Crisis	49
4.	Conclusions and Recommendations for Future Studies	53
	References	56
	Appendices	63

Acknowledgements

First, I would like to thank my supervisor, Professor Nikos Marantzidis, for his expert advice and encouragement throughout this demanding topic, as well as for his extraordinary support in overall. His guidance has been valuable for the smooth completion of my dissertation.

Then, the rest of the instructors of the master's programme managed to enlighten all students and provided us with significant knowledge of their expertise.

Also, I would like to thank Ms Tanja Neskovic who contributed to minimising any potential challenges during the academic schedule.

I need to mention that this thesis would not have been possible unless my academic and professional mentor, Professor Stavros Sindakis, recognised all my efforts during the past one-and-a-half year, and continuously motivated me to complete all my academic and professional tasks punctually and assiduously.

Last but not least, I would like to thank all my family for the strong support all over the duration of the programme. Specifically, I would like to show my gratitude to my parents, my brother and his family, and to my uncle.

1. Introduction

The topic of the current study is about the European Peoples' Party (EPP) and its attitude towards the Eurozone crisis. Since 1999, the EPP has been the party with the largest majority in the European Parliament, and in the European Council since 2002. Also, it is the largest party in the current European Commission. It also needs to be mentioned that the Presidents of the European Council, the European Commission and the European Parliament all come from the EPP. Apart from the European Union, the Europarty also controls a majority in the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe. Additionally, several of the founding fathers of the European Union were also from parties that later formed the EPP. All these brief and descriptive characteristics of the EPP define it as an essential contributor to the European Union actors for policy and decision-making.

Regarding the EPP's significant presence in many of the European Union major institutions, it would be academically and politically interesting to examine its role in the Eurozone crisis. Specifically, the Eurozone crisis, or else the European debt crisis, is a multi-year debt crisis that has been occurring in the European Union since the end of 2009. Several Eurozone Member States (Greece, Portugal, Ireland, Spain and Cyprus) were incapable to serve or refinance their government debt or to bail out over-indebted banks under their national supervision without the assistance of third creditors like other Eurozone countries, the European Central Bank, or the International Monetary Fund.

The EPP's attitude towards the Eurozone crisis could be considered as a very promising research topic for the fields of political economy, political parties theory, public administration, comparative politics, macroeconomics and microeconomics, and other fields. However, in this study, there is a simplified approach to the fields of political economy, theory of political parties and economics to some extent. The limitations of the current study are (i) the limited pool of various qualitative material to collect, the (ii) limited available time for primary data collection and the absence of relevant resources to do so – especially in case of qualitative research methods with primary data, and (iii) the limited and not up-to-date literature regarding the EPP. Nevertheless, the completion of the current study aims to add some useful insights about the Europarties' (EPP in the case) procedures and general political approaches, and how the Eurozone crisis was faced and challenged by a leading Europarty in the European Union. The EPP's ideological traits and political and party background would evaluate the Eurozone crisis from another angle, and not from a regular national party one.

The researcher has collected secondary data for the study and has proceeded to their analysis and interpretation using the ATLAS.ti 8 qualitative research analysis software, in addition to the relevant literature. It should be clear that, even though there is a secondary data research analysis, the researcher reflects on this academic project as a conceptual study.

Finally, the structure of the study includes a literature review in which the concepts of Europarties and their role in the European Parliament, a theoretical outline of the EPP, and an adequately detailed description of the Eurozone crisis in the literature review. Then, the presentation and analysis – discussion of the collected data follow. Several implications have been identified due to the collected data, and useful conclusions and recommendations for future studies have been developed in the final chapter.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Europarties in Theory

Since the commencement of the study on Europarties, there has been a dynamic dispute about how to label them in conventional terms of party politics, and if this is possible, what representations could best designate their overall characteristics and functions. These two sets of issues had a more general background: do transnational political parties matter, and how do we measure their partisan influence. In this framework, one of the most critical queries to occur was whether Europarties could be defined by referring to the vote-seeking, office-seeking, and policy-seeking models of party behaviour. In short, a vote-seeking party primarily focuses on maximising the vote and winning the election, a policy-making party is primarily interested in the pursuit of policy goals, and the primarily office-seeking party is to achieve safe access to several levels of political office (Gagatek & Van Hecke, 2011). One of the dominant questions is whether a political party can attempt to trail the three goals at the same time and if it chooses to prioritise one of the three goals, what deliberations does it take into account when making such choices. In the literature of Europarties, the so-called “pessimists” claim that since the Europarties are deficient on fundamental features of political parties, namely that they do not run in elections (vote-seeking) and cannot regulate the political office in the European Union (office-seeking), they are not genuine political parties and therefore any comparisons with the typical representations and categorisations of political parties are dubious (Bardi, 1994; Smith, 1989). The other school of thought that emerged prominently in the 1990s (and sometimes it was referred as the “transnationalists”) sought to find parallels with party behaviour in any institutional atmosphere. Hix and Lord (1997) claimed that the fact that Europarties do not run in elections and do not strive for the control of the European Union political office comes from the nature of the political system in the European Union, and not from their (strategic) choice. If by definition, Europarties cannot run in the elections of the European Parliament, then nobody can criticise them for not doing it.

This is why Hix and Lord concentrated their academic interest on these areas in which Europarties had an active role, attributing the main driving force of party competition and the most important forum of Europarties' activities to be the summit meetings of the party and the government leaders, which were organised to exchange views and to attempt to adopt a shared strategy on the beginning of successive European Council meetings. Hence, the actual importance of Europarties and a fact for comparison with

national parties is when first, they are capable of forming common policies for the European Union and second, they can influence the agenda and outcome of the Intergovernmental Conferences (IGC). This latter activity is managed by harmonising the positions of their heads of state and government, as was made through the Maastricht IGC (Johansson, 2002), for example. Henceforth, using the example of the Party of European Socialists (PES), the policy-seeking description fits best Europarties' real area of influence and activities. In contrast, in the early 2000s, Lightfoot criticised Hix and Lord's approach by emphasising the "demand" side, i.e. the degree to which PES member parties were capable of influence the PES final position (Lightfoot, 2003). He claimed that due to the arithmetical majority of Social Democratic governments, but also via the actions of the PES – both at the level of joint programme formation and then management of joint attempts through the IGC – the PES should have influenced the result of the Amsterdam IGC, but it was unsuccessful to do so because of the domestic policy imperatives and ideological variances among the member parties, which sequentially stalled the development of a real policy-seeking party.

2.2 Politics in the European Parliament and Europarties

The European Parliament is essential for the future of the European Union and a factor of governmental democracy in Europe. The European Union was probably the most significant institutional innovation in the organisation of politics anywhere in the globe in the second half of the twentieth century (Hix et al., 2007). However, the recent years, the notion of the democratic deficit has become, together with subsidiarity, or transparency, one of the most popular subjects for conferences on the European Union. Although almost all and sundry seem to agree that a democratic deficit exists, it is far from sure that there is a general understanding of what is meant by it (Schmidt, 2013; Mair & Thomassen, 2010). The most accurate approach would be that the European Union is undemocratic and its decision-making does not resemble democratic standards. Very often when national governments have to clarify unpopular decisions of the European Union, responsibility for these tight situations is credited to a faceless monster, the "Brussels bureaucracy" (Neunreither, 1994). The assumption is that a reliable central authority exists and it represents the authority of decision-making and that democratic accountability of this central authority either does not exist or at least is not adequately definite (Jachtenfuchs, 1998; Schmitter, 2003; Borrás & Jacobsson, 2004). In other words, the European Union

institutional system does not comply with democratic standards. This is by far the most extreme definition of a democratic deficit.

Politics in the European Parliament is dominated by transnational “political groups” (Hix et al., 2007). The centrality of the political groups is not a new phenomenon. Already at the first meeting of the European Assembly in 1952, the members of the assembly chose to sit by political orientation rather than by nationality (Haas, 1958). The membership of political groups has evolved. Group membership based on a traditional European “party family” has proved most stable. The main centre-left group, currently labelled the Progressive Alliance of Socialists and Democrats (S&D), is composed of the social democratic or labour parties for each of the Member States. Its membership has been more stable than that of the main centre-right group, the EPP, where tension between Christian Democratic and conservative parties has led to repeated mergers and splits over time. Ideology understood as an aggregate of national parties’ policy positions, is a strong predictor of political group membership (McElroy & Benoit, 2012). This suggests that the purpose of these political organisations is policy oriented (Van Oudenhove, 1965; Hix & Høyland, 2011). This policy orientation is also reproduced in the outlines of coalition creation in the parliament. Past research on roll-call voting has revealed three main types of winning coalitions (Kreppel & Tsebelis, 1999; Marshall, 2015) in legislative votes: (a) a “grand coalition” of the EPP and S&D, often with the centrist Alliance of Liberals and Democrats (ALDE) joining these two parties in a “super grand coalition”; (b) a “left coalition” of S&D, ALDE, and the two groups to the left of the socialists, the Greens/European Free Alliance (Greens/EFA) and the radical left European United Left–Nordic Green Left (EUL-NGL); and (c) a “right coalition” of EPP, ALDE, and the main group to the right of the EPP, which is currently the European Conservatives and Reformists (ECR). When deciding which coalition to form, the leaders of the groups trade off the incentive to present a unified front, which maximises the European Parliament’s impact vis-a-vis the other European Union institutions, against the desire to take a clear stand on an issue (Kreppel & Tsebelis, 1999; Kreppel & Hix, 2003). Due to the absolute-majority requirement (in the second reading stage of the co-decision procedure), and the prerequisite to finding resolutions tolerable by the oversized majority of the Council as well as the Commission, while at the same time operating as a chamber for contestation between competing for political ideas, there is a tension between forming a grand coalition and challenging along political lines. Indeed, Kreppel & Hix (2003) find that a grand coalition was more likely to form on legislative votes where the institutional rules required an oversized majority, and more

liable to form on final votes, thereby sending a strong signal to the Council and the Commission. Meanwhile, Hagemann & Høyland (2010) question the ability of the European Parliament to present a united front if the Council is divided, finding that the European Parliament is less likely to be able to pass second-reading amendments when at least one government is opposed to the “common position” of the Council.

2.3 Christian Democracy and the European People's Party

Christian Democracy is a political movement that has a close association with the Roman Catholicism and its viewpoint of social and economic justice. It combines both traditional church and family values and progressive values such as social welfare. Social Democracy and command economy are not criticized deeply by Christian Democrats, as it happens by liberals or the American conservatives. Christian Democrats generally pursue the principles of a universal health care, unemployment insurance and welfare states provided by the state's operation structures and resources – the latter is highly supported and promoted by Christian Democrats because it is considered as ethically right, and also underlines the substance and the strength of the society (Huber et al., 1993; Van Kersbergen, 2003). Regarding economic issues, Christian Democrats see the economy as a tool on humanity's hands in order to ensure a good service for humanity. The support to capitalism and its economic system is opposite to ideologies with similar social prospects and expectations like communism or Social Democracy (Huber et al., 1993; Van Kersbergen, 2004; Kalyvas & Van Kersbergen, 2010). Christian Democrats acknowledge the care and secureness of the state to the society as one of the most fundamental values of their ideological ecosystem, either for generating the incentives for a civil society to prosper or establishing more directives from the state to the citizens. In recent decades, there are some incidents of Christian Democratic parties adopting policies for economic issues viable from an economically liberal spectrum, but still retaining the values of a regulated economy and the presence of a diligent welfare state (Huber et al., 1993; Kalyvas & Van Kersbergen, 2010). On the contrary, several other Christian Democratic parties still possess rhetoric similar to Christian Socialism or economic distributism. The formation of corporatist welfare states throughout the world until today is based on the advancement of the Christian Democratic concepts of sovereignty and subsidiarity. Preserving the Christian Democratic values of the cultural mandate and the favoured option for the poor populations, fairness for Christian Democrats is provided and the welfare of all people –

focusing on poor and vulnerable – must be shielded because every human being should be recognised with dignity. There are also several occasions in countries in which Christian Democrats organised labour unions that competed with the Communist and Social Democratic ones. Such a case is opposite to the conservatism attitude towards worker organisations and unions.

2.3.1 An Outline of the European People's Party

“In the aftermath of the Second World War, a handful of political leaders had the foresight and the courage to start a peace endeavour like no other. Robert Schuman, the French Foreign Minister, Konrad Adenauer, the German Chancellor, Alcide de Gasperi, the Italian Prime Minister, all of them belonging to the EPP family, were among the Founding Fathers that took the first crucial step in making the idea of a united Europe a reality. It is fair to say that it was Christian Democrats in particular who began reconciliation and integration in Europe. The European Coal and Steel Community was created, motivated by a desire for peace and to rebuild Europe on a sound economic footing. Most of the representatives that participated at that First ECSC Assembly belonged to the same generation of pioneers who wished never to see the events of the Second World War re-occur. Founded as the Christian-Democratic Group on 23 June 1953 as a political fraction in the Common Assembly of the European Coal and Steel Community, our Group has always played a leading role in the construction of Europe. The path of the European Parliament from Assembly to a fully-fledged Parliament accompanied the building of the EU. The generation that followed the pioneers was determined to bring about practical European integration that would enable Europe's economy to modernise and develop into a single, large marketplace. As Europe became more integrated, its institutions developed in order to cope with arising challenges. The European Parliament introduced direct, universal elections for the first time in 1979. On that occasion, our Group changed its name to the Group of the European People's Party (Christian-Democratic Group).

The EPP family once again took centre-stage as a spearhead for European integration after the fall of the Berlin Wall and the imminent demise of totalitarian communism across Central and Eastern Europe. Inspired by the idea of reunification, the EPP stood behind and supported the emergence of pluralist democracies in the formerly communist countries and strongly advocated that the continent torn in half must again be united. Non-communist parties that subscribed to centre-right values won

across Europe. The people gave support to our vision of a re-united continent in the European elections in July 1999. We have been the biggest Group in the European Parliament since then.

Our openness and inclusiveness also meant that our political family adapted to encompass the centre-right in the broad term. The Christian Democratic parties that formed the core of our Group in the post-war years adjusted their political philosophy to take stock of the changing electorate and the Group grew to include moderate and Conservative political groups in Scandinavia and Central and Eastern Europe. The Group also changed its name to the Group of the European People's Party (Christian Democrats) and European Democrats in the period 1999-2009. It again became the Group of the European People's Party (Christian Democrats) in June 2009.”

(Derived from the *EPP Group in the European Parliament* official website)

In the 1970s, the EPP was founded endeavouring the conception of a federal Europarty. This concept of cooperation was debated, as the German Union parties advocated a broader cooperation with non-Christian democrats as a counter weight to the Socialist group that came out stronger after the British Labour party joined forces in 1975.

There is a genuine consensus among researchers (Jansen, 1998; Gagatsek, 2008; Hanley, 1994), who have touched upon the history of the EPP, that it has had a linear evolution from 1976 till present. They broadly agree that the EPP today is the step-by-step evolution from 1976 of the Christian Democrats' cooperation with the enlargement in the 1990s with the Conservatives. The EPP achieved a high level of party coordination, reaching the stage of integration, following Niedermayer and Westle's typology (1995), from the outset. The enlargement of the EPP was not a result of its success; instead, it was a strategy to avoid political and ideological shrink. Christian Democracy in Europe, the representative of a dozen political parties in the 1970s, was becoming extinct as ideological movement two decades later. French and Italian Christian democracy imploded, Benelux parties faced substantial decline and together with the Germans and Austrians moved to the conservative right, keeping the name as a symbol of history (Hanley et al., 2008). The “enlargement issue” has always been there since the 1960s and the discussions in the EUCD about opening up to the conservative parties. The debate was among the core Christian Democrats and the periphery (Germans). In the 1960s and 1970s, they were too weak anymore, and the EPP was facing decline (Jansen, 1998). This time the approach of the German Union parties prevailed. There are a lot of similarities of this evolution with the ideological repositioning of

political parties on the national level as a means to save or increase their popularity. The EPP is no different from that (Van Hecke & Gerard, 2004).

The EPP has preserved its compact europartial status with appropriate reforms (Pegklis, 2016). Although, there is not any observation of deepening the integration status and that could not be based on the decline of its Christian Democratic fundamental rationale. It is also due to the direction the decision-making in the European Union has moved to in the recent years, namely the rise of the intergovernmentalism in the decision-making (Hanley et al., 2008; Bressanelli, 2014). The effective strengthening of the Council and the European Council for the management of the European crisis in combination with the decreasing trust among the Member States of the European Union, the Eurozone, in particular, has given intergovernmentalism the principal role in the decision-making (Tuori & Tuori, 2014; Fabbrini, 2015). Part of this was founded on the need for new institutions to be created, while part of it was also due to the reluctance towards the European Commission to handle this problem, that was not on its core competence, to manage the Single Market.

2.3.2 Centre-right Wing in Eastern, Central-eastern, and South-eastern Europe

Centre-right parties in Eastern and Central-eastern Europe have been numerous and susceptible to splits, to mergers and the formation of micro-parties more intensively than parties of the left. They have also been more difficult to identify among the many nationalist, conservative, Christian, liberal and populist groupings that may take very different stands on economic and social issues (von dem Berge & Poguntke, 2013). The development of centre-right parties is the same critical as in left parties in shaping national party systems. Definitely, their accomplishment looks to be a “sine qua non” of liberal democratic consolidation (Hanley & Sikk, 2016; Schimmelfennig, 2007).

Amongst the excess of new parties and the fluidity of voter preferences characteristic of Eastern and Central-eastern Europe European party politics of the early 1990s, it is perhaps surprising that in many post-communist states just a minor number of parties – indeed, occasionally a sole party – dominated the national political system. Political parties using right-wing rhetoric such as nationalism, law and order and social conservatism won elections and governed in all Central-eastern European states after the first free (or mostly free) elections in 1989 or 1990. Only in a few states, however, did moderate centre-right parties become strong and coherent enough to wield substantial political power. In most states, they were eclipsed by other parties using nationalism and other traditionally right-wing appeals, often in a

more extreme form and accompanied by measures to restrict the access of other parties to the political arena (Afonso, 2015; Pacek & Radcliff, 1995). Nevertheless, we could consider that in South-eastern Europe (i.e. Greece and Cyprus), the structure and the ideologies of the centre-right parties are more pro-European than in Central-eastern and Eastern Europe.

Even though, in general, Europarties are relatively weak players in the European Union political system, they play a crucial role in integrating Central-eastern European parties into European Union party politics in the process of the European Union enlargement (Pegklis, 2016). Similar to what happens between the European Union and nation-states, Europarties exert influence on Central-eastern European partners in the wake of their Eastern enlargement in which they include new parties into their ranks. Between the collapse of the Soviet bloc and 2008, a total of 29 parties from Central-eastern European countries that are European Union members joined the two major Europarties, the EPP and the PES - 18 entered the EPP and 11 the PES (Gagatek, 2008). Also, further parties from other (South) Eastern European countries that are not (yet) European Union members established organisational contacts with these Europarties as “observer parties” or “associated members”. Europarty influence should lead to changes in national party systems, policy change and intra-party reforms. When it comes to party system change, it is well documented in the archives of the EPP and PES that they attempted to bring about fusions and alliances of like-minded parties in Central-eastern Europe. In Bulgaria, for example, the EPP threatened to deprive its smaller partners of their observer status should they not merge with the two major parties BANU (Bulgarian Agrarian National Union) and DP (Democratic Party). In general, Spirova (2008) shows that the EPP and PES promoted several mergers and electoral alliances in Bulgaria. Similarly, the Slovak Social Democrats united in 2005 following firm persuasion by the PES, which initiated and promoted this merger intensively since the 2002 elections. Several scholars argue that Europarties have influenced the policy positions of Central-eastern European partners, mainly on general aspects like the commitment to democracy, the rule of law, European integration, federalism, the social market economy, and minority rights (Dakowska, 2002; Pridham, 2005).

Nevertheless, Europarties also work towards the transfer of more specific policies on subjects such as energy supply and environment. While systematic evidence of the effects is still missing, Europarties always require that applicant parties eventually subscribe to the policy fundamentals of the Europarty,

which, in some cases, amounts to substantial policy change (Jansen, 1998; Gagatsek, 2008). While the attempts by Europarties to influence the way their new partners organise internally are well documented (Dakowska, 2002; Pridham, 2008), relatively little is known about the precise effects of these efforts. However, it is evident that Europarties attach high significance to the aspect of internal party organisation. The EPP, for example, always requests that each applicant party attach its statutes to the application, which implies that internal rules play a decisive role in the admission process (Gagatsek, 2008).

All in all, the collapse of communism at the end of the 1980s was an unprecedented incident to manage in the European status quo. It unlocked a zone of several new countries that would seek, over time, their track towards the European integration. It also brought dilemmas to the EPP dealing with prospective members. At the end of the 1980s, the EPP under the presidency of Jacques Santer was still a “European party of Christian Democrats”. A political organisation with the key objective to build up a federal Europe and to thrive for the Christian Democratic ideals (Pegklis, 2016). The deterioration of Christian Democracy as a federalist set of political ideals is another factor especially composite with increasing Euroscepticism, even within the EPP. It is not by accident that the political objective to create the “United States of Europe” has been decreasing from the EPP documents in recent years.

2.4 An Analysis of the Eurozone Crisis

On January 1, 1999, eleven Member States proudly introduced a single currency, the euro. The Economic and Monetary Union capped 40 years of hard work to generate a single market. Goods, capital, and people could move and be distributed freely now. With a common currency, that movement was actively facilitated. Ten years later to its introduction, the leaders of the Eurozone celebrated what seemed to be the efficacious introduction of a new European currency (Fabbrini, 2013). However, within a year after the celebration of the common currency’s tenth anniversary, the Eurozone was entered into a newly-met crisis - and the Eurozone crisis has, over the successive years, resulted in one of the severest crises in the history of European integration (Schimmelfennig, 2014).

In its essence, the crisis in the Eurozone is a classic debt and balance-of-payments (BOP) crisis. Member States in the Eurozone borrowed heavily, mainly to finance current consumption, as financial institutions in the rest of Europe were willing to lend (Schimmelfennig, 2014). Large current account imbalances developed, as capital and goods run out of countries with account surpluses into countries

with account deficits. Borrowing nourished economic expansion, which skyrocketed, and then a bubble created, mainly in housing markets. When the bubble burst, lending dried up, and the heavily indebted countries found themselves incapable of servicing their debts, incapable of making up for the downfall of domestic demand by exporting, and powerless to borrow supplemental funds so as to cover their continuing payments deficits (Jones, 2016). As with all debt and BOP crises, the result was economic distress and political conflict.

2.4.1 Single Currency: Macroeconomic Diversities and Capital Flows

In the late 1990s, the Economic and Monetary Union was finalised, and the euro was a reality. The monetary authorities of a single currency area - including a nation-state - must adopt a single monetary policy. This can be economically and politically tough when diverse regions, and dissimilar groups within regions, are under different circumstances (Mundell, 1961). Once the formation of the Eurozone finalised at a primary level, there were significant deviations amid the macroeconomic conditions of its constituent Member States. These countries varied importantly regarding growth and inflation, as well as in their institutional outlines and growth models.

The cases of Germany and Spain are characteristic. Between 1998 and 2007, inflation in Germany was on average around 1.5% a year, while it was 3.2% in Spain. During these ten years, such a fact led to a considerable divergence in prices. Besides, German labour-market institutions led to limitations in wage amounts, which was not the same as in Spain, so that wages deviated even more; in those ten years, unit labour costs in Germany fell by 3.9% whereas in Spain they increased to 30.4% (Frieden, 2015). The European Central Bank had to invent one monetary policy despite this deviation in national economic circumstances. Not unexpectedly, it leaned towards choosing an interest rate somewhere between what would have been suitable to slow-growing countries such as Finland, Germany, France, Benelux, and Austria and what would have been favoured by the fast-growing periphery in Ireland and Southern Europe (Frieden & Walter, 2017; Bulmer, 2014). This interest rate did a few things to contest slow growth in the core, where domestic investment opportunities were inadequate, and shaped strong stimulation to invest abroad both in the Eurozone and outside it (Moro, 2014). Simultaneously, low or negative real interest rates in the periphery gave these countries essential stimulation to borrow. The modification in underlying settings thus interacted with monetary policy to encourage capital flows. Nearly directly, financial institutions in slow-growing northern European countries pursued higher-

yielding prospects in the growing periphery in Eastern, Central, and Southern Europe, and capital began flowing from the North to the periphery. Most of the loans went into the periphery's expanding housing market and the related construction industries. In Portugal, and especially in Greece, the government also utilised low-level interest rates to finance growing public deficits (Frieden & Walter, 2017; Tsoukalis, 2011).

2.4.2 Bailout Expectations

These activities were further powered by investors' expectation that, in case of a crisis enduring in one of the debtor states, the other Member States would be required to interfere. It was already clarified that contagion from a financial crisis in one country would be unpleasantly rapid, and potentially extra harmful, within a common currency area. The anticipation was that the Economic Monetary Union made each Member State "too connected to fail". Thus, a country in economic sorrow would be bailed out. Governments understood that this bailout problem generated moral hazard. The conception that the other Member States would be probable to bail out another country in financial problems could cause a kind-of-aggressive behaviour. In front of this moral hazard, the governments of the first Member States of the Eurozone announced that there would be no bailout, but this intention did not reach to any ears. There should a proactive attitude towards such events about what policies and mechanisms should be adopted so as to to create an institutional structure to cope with financial problems in a Member State: a very conditional fund patterned on the International Monetary Fund, a plan to recover troubled banks, an approach to restructure debts. However, some of the core Member States were likely to believe that any discussion of ways to face a financial crisis would only emerge fear among the European population. So, Member States never considered prepared a strategy more practical and realistic than simply saying denying to face the devil. The outcome was that the "no-bailout" assurance was not credible. Bailout outlooks meant that even the least creditworthy Member States were able to borrow at rates coarsely correspondent to those charged to Germany (Chang & Leblond, 2015). This was particularly evident in the case of Greece, which joined the Eurozone in 2001. There would be no normal witness who considered Greece as a credit risk correspondent to Germany. Nevertheless, the expectation was that if Greece got into trouble, Germany and other highly creditworthy Member States would bail it out. Moreover, of course, the ability of the Greek government to borrow at unprecedentedly low interest rates encouraged to a sound extent the government to borrow far more than was prudent.

2.4.3 Resolving the Crisis in the European Union: Conflicts among the Member States

Theoretically, all debt crises end with some kind of compromise as both sides in the table have their arguments and negotiation tools: creditors threaten to block access to credit in the future, debtors threaten to stop service their debt. In the case of the Eurozone crisis, creditors threatened to expel debtor countries from the European Union or the Eurozone. However, the legal basis for this argument was ambiguous. On the other side, debtors knew that if one Member State defaulted there was likely to cause chaos on bond markets that would affect all Member States - including the creditors as well.

All the above modify the Eurozone debt crisis to a peculiar case in which the Member States, and the institutions of the Eurozone, have fled from finding common ground and deciding on the most common reply to a debt crisis: debt restructuring. Even though there has been some debt restructuring in the cases of Greece and Cyprus. Spain, Portugal, and Ireland did not have such a policy applied. There have been financial rescue packages to help debtor governments follow their payments in the middle of massive recessions, but there has been no important debt relief (Basu, 2016). This is a strange fact because – theoretically in economic history - all debt crises eventually result in some kind of debt relief. Likewise, corporate bankruptcies proceed to restructure its liabilities. As with corporate bankruptcies, it is widely recognised that debt relief can be beneficial to both debtors and creditors, in as much as it puts problematic debts on a sound equilibrium. Debt restructuring, indeed, is widely regarded as a prevalent Pareto improvement. The fulfilment of a contributing and effective debt relief for the three main Eurozone debtors made this crisis really uncommon – even outstanding cases - amid sovereign debt crises (Sánchez, 2014).

2.4.4 Resolving the Crisis in the European Union: Conflicts within the Member States

Regarding how the costs of crisis resolution should be shared, the crisis has also been characterised by sharp distributive conflict within the Member States. Both debtor (deficit) and creditor (surplus) states are affected. These conflicts have not been faced as conflicts about the proper adjustment strategy but mostly as conflicts about how to apply and promote an internal adjustment strategy (in deficit/debtor Member States) and how to offer to finance and dodge internal adjustment (in surplus/creditor Member States). This is because of external adjustment - which means leaving the euro currency, making one country to leave the euro currency, or ending the Eurozone - has hardly been regarded as a feasible approach. Backing the euro currency has remained remarkably high in all Eurozone Member States

throughout the crisis years (Hobolt & Wratil, 2015; Roth et al., 2016). Although in deficit Member States most people fond to highly unrealistic crisis strategy of keeping the euro as a currency and ending austerity at the same time (Clements et al., 2014), they have shown a strong fondness for the euro when pushed into choosing between the two (Dinas et al., 2016). Only populist political parties have called for their country to leave the Eurozone or for a dissolution of the Eurozone altogether so far (Heinen et al., 2015). Among the creditor states, the Dutch Partij voor de Vrijheid, the German Alternative für Deutschland, the French Front National, and the Austrian Freiheitliche Partei Österreichs have expressed their political position for a controlled dissolution of the Eurozone. On the contrary, the True Finns in Finland taking a crucial but more careful position towards that direction. Also, among the deficit Member States, there has been a solid political line for a referendum about staying or leaving the Eurozone in Italy, supported by Beppe Grillo's Five Star Movement, the Lega Nord, and Forza Italia; and in Greece, the Communist Party and the leftist splinter group Popular Unity have expressed their political position for leaving the euro. However, in addition to virtually all nonpopulist parties, there are also two critical populist parties who are not in favour (currently) of leaving the Eurozone: Podemos (Spain) and SYRIZA (Greece). Therefore, we can assume that the external adjustment option is considered off the table in most of the cases for the time being. National political conflicts have focused on how to manage the euro crisis within the favoured strategy of internal adjustment in deficit Member States, supplied by some financing aid from surplus Member States.

2.4.5 Anti-Crisis Policies in the Debtor Member States

The struggle has been most intense in debtor Member States, which were hit toughest by the economic crisis. In front of a possible exit from the Eurozone, they have been assigned to apply domestic/internal reforms: spending cuts, demand compression, structural reforms. Like in other cases of economic and financial crises, this approach has formed political complications, distributive conflicts, and confusion on the question of how the capitals essential to service debts should be mobilised, and which reforming policies should be promoted and implemented to rebalance the current account (Thimann, 2015; Baldwin & Giavazzi, 2015). Considering that surplus countries have been unwilling to share the burden of adjustment, politics in deficit countries has centred on who would bear the consequences and crisis' costs: taxpayers, unemployed, consumers, government employees, investors, pensioners, the export sector, the nontradable sector, and others. Although the fallout from the crisis in

deficit Member States has been tremendous, its effect has varied importantly on all social groups. For instance, even though overall unemployment and poverty rates have extremely increased across these countries, the young population have been hit toughest. Youth unemployment rates tripled up in Ireland between 2007 and 2012, and between 2012 and 2014 more than half of the economically active people under age 25 in Greece and Spain were without work (Eurostat). In more detail, unemployment has affected the young, male, and less educated people mostly (Gutierrez, 2014). The same poverty rates in young ages went up in Italy, Portugal, and notably Spain and Greece. Remarkably, inequality has only increased in some countries (most notably, Greece), but anti-crisis policies did not have an important outcome or an inequality-decreasing effect in the other Member States (Matsaganis & Leventi, 2014). Both anti-crisis policies and the overall effect of the economic crisis in deficit states have thus varied in how they have affected diverse socioeconomic groups (Avram et al. 2013). To a wider extent, austerity measures – fiscal consolidation and tax increases - has been the frequently chosen policy approach, whereas structural reforms have been implemented more cautiously. Likewise, banks and other financial market actors have mostly been able to socialise their capital deficits, burdening taxpayers (Blyth, 2013).

As already discussed, debtor-country governments resulted in considering that many of the bad debts of their banks converted private into sovereign debts. Hence, entrenched insider-outsider structures (Bentolila et al., 2012) and clientelistic politics (Afonso et al., 2015) have protected politically influential groups to a great extent. Due to the phenomena of the Eurozone crisis, governments have shielded their voter base from the economic crisis consequences as much as possible (Walter, 2016). All conflicts about how to manage the crisis have reformed party systems in some crisis-affected countries and paralysed politics in others. In countries like Greece, dominant populist and anti-establishment political parties have arisen or been reinforced, i.e. SYRIZA, because of the economic crisis. Overall, incumbents and mainstream political parties have been “penalised” in elections, and the crisis has had a destabilising influence on these countries’ political party systems (Bosco & Verney, 2016; Katsanidou & Otjes, 2016).

2.4.6 Anti-Crisis Policies in the Creditor Member States

Creditor Member States states have also been conflicted from inside about how to face and resolve the Eurozone crisis, similarly dealing with the question of who should bear the primary burden. Should

financial institutions be made to absorb the losses from the loans they made? Alternatively, should taxpayers intervene, either to hold up the domestic financial systems or to provide funding to aid the debtor countries to serve their debts? Should surplus countries engage in internal macroeconomic adjustment to boost domestic consumption and hence lower the adjustment burden on deficit states? One of the most critical and burning questions that faced creditor Member States early on was whether they should (a) allow their financial system absorb the economic crisis' costs by defaults or debt restructuring in the debtor Member States, or (b) transfer them onto taxpayers by providing public funds to the debtor Member States that would enable them to service their debts (Frieden & Walter, 2017). Once it should be decided whether to bail out Greece in 2010, it was apparent that the alternative choice - a Greek default - could cause analogous defaults in other debtor Member States, which sequentially would entirely threaten the stability of banks in the creditor Member States. It should be noted that the stability of banks in the creditor Member States was still deteriorated from the global financial armageddon of 2007–2009. Not only could this have triggered a Eurozone-wide financial crisis and severely damaged the single-currency project, but also, bank bailouts were intensely unpopular among people in creditor countries (Goerres & Walter, 2016,) and hence politically costly. Such an incident made it politically easier to support domestic banks indirectly through a bailout of a Eurozone debtor Member State (Ardagna & Caselli, 2014).

2.5 Aims and Objectives

The EPP can be considered as one of the most pro-European Europarties in the European Parliament, additionally to its rich political history. Also, it leads the majority in Europarty representation in the European Parliament. It needs to be mentioned that the impenetrable factor as the ideological transformation of the EPP towards a moderate centre-right profile, the integration of several parties that do not share federalist ideas in combination with the decline of the federalist concept of Christian Democracy, the rise of intergovernmentalism in the European Union despite the integration steps, the enduring economic crisis in the European Union are the key reasons to study on this Europarty and examine its attitudes in challenging times. Comparing some essential outlook characteristics could point to the direction that the EPP has lost some of its integration force today compared to its history (Pegklis, 2016)). On the other hand, managing an inflated number of Prime Ministers and Ministers with several EPP Ministers' meeting certainly complicates the conclusions (Lynch & Whitaker, 2007). The

EPP today is a different organisation than it was in the early days. The party's smooth adaptation and transformation without breaking apart are to its credit. However, consolidating its identity and performance ever since has reached a new balance at its integration status, while the party – theoretically - is dedicated to the conception of a federal Europe, and its platform highlights the principle of subsidiarity (i.e., that decisions should be made at the lowest appropriate level).

Moreover, the European economic crisis arose during a period in which more than a few European countries confronted the collapse of financial institutions, high government debt and hastily growing bond yield spreads in government securities (Mody & Sandri, 2012). The European sovereign debt crisis started and extended mostly to Greece, Ireland and Portugal during 2009. This financial and fiscal crisis led to a crisis of confidence for European businesses and economies. The controversy surrounding how the European Union dealt with the aftermath of the financial crisis involves more than just wrangling over money. When the repercussions of the crisis struck the Eurozone, the problem was not just the European Union's ability to take decisions but also the ability to get democratic approval for tough choices. The quality of democratic governance in the European Union has long been a vexing topic, with accusations that the European Union has a fundamental democratic deficit countered by arguments seeking to absolve European Union governance of such blame (Glencross, 2013; Bratcher, 2015). The sovereign debt crisis posed this question in much starker terms than ever before. This is because administrations in some countries are pledging public funds to make up fiscal underperformances in the budgets of other countries in response to significant socio-economic reforms beyond anything directed by regular European Union legislation. However, a broad domestic opposition arises: citizens from creditor countries were unconvinced about the insight of providing bailouts while mass protests break out contrary to the socio-economic reforms being imposed in recipient countries such as Greece and Spain.

All the above is up to academic and political interpretation. So, the research aim of this study is to discuss the attitude of the EPP towards the Eurozone crisis. It would be interesting to evaluate the attitude of the EPP (politics), considering it as a part of a democratic system, a pro-federal Europe Europarty (in principle terms) -and a leading Europarty- towards challenging issues in the European Union, such as the Eurozone crisis (economics). Also, it would be useful to check the EPP's attitude

towards the Greek case to some extent, because the Member State is one of the most and still cruelly affected countries by the economic and financial crisis in South-eastern Europe.

According to all the above, the two primary objectives of the current study are:

- To identify the EPP's suggested policies to overcome the Eurozone crisis;
- To evaluate the EPP's attitude towards Greece during the Eurozone crisis.

Additionally, the propositions that derive from the objectives of the current study are:

- To define the pillars on which the EPP's suggested policies to overcome the Eurozone crisis are based on;
- To define the correlations among the EPP's suggested policies to overcome the Eurozone crisis;
- To check whether the EPP's attitude towards the Greek governments during the Eurozone crisis is positive or negative and why.

3. Presentation and Analysis of the Findings

To conduct this study, the researcher collected 104 official press releases from the official website of the *EPP Group in the European Parliament* website (<http://www.eppgroup.eu>). The number of press releases collected was not predetermined. The researcher selected from the EPP European Parliament Group's official website press releases related to the crisis in the Eurozone. These 104 press releases were directly related to the causes, consequences, situations of the economic crisis as described in the literature review. It needs to be mentioned that the time range of published press releases was limited, starting from 2012 because there are not any official press releases available prior to that year. Therefore, the time of the press releases collection process was from January 2012 to September 2017 – the month when the researcher began the data collection process.

Taking into account the analysis of the data, qualitative research comprises aiming to uncover and comprehend the big picture - by using the data to describe a phenomenon and what this means. Both qualitative and quantitative analysis involves labelling and coding all of the data in order that similarities and differences can be recognised. Secondary data analysis enables researchers to provide high-impact data. In our case, there is an attempt to conceptualise the attitude of the EPP towards and during the Eurozone crisis via its official press releases from 2012 to 2017. The researcher of the current study utilises the collected secondary data to critically analyse and discuss them in order to address the research aim and objectives derived from the literature review in the “Conclusions and Implications for Future Research” chapter.

3.1 Description of the Data

The collected data (press releases) were coded into six main coding categories (codes): Competitiveness, Research and Innovation, Reforms in the European Union, European Central Bank and European Banking System, Troika, and Solidarity. These categories were defined according to the press releases' content which was related to causes, consequences, and situations met due to the Eurozone crisis. Each of these categories includes the most discussed topics within the main concepts-codes. From the 104 press releases collected, 149 quotations were connected to the six codes. That means that some of the press releases were correlated to more than one codes sometimes – up to 3 in a couple of cases.

The data collection process led the researcher to the following actions and provide relevant discussion:

- To develop a figure with detailed information about the collected data - codes, grounded quotations, densities, keywords and key phrases (sub-codes);
- To develop a Semantic Linkages figure;
- To develop a figure which displays EPP Official Press Releases from 2012 to 2017 by coding per year.

Specifically, in Figure 1 (see Appendices), there is a visualisation of the analysed codes and the main keywords and key phrases (sub-codes) which surround the broader subject areas. This figure delivers lists of the hot topics which the EPP got involved within the European Parliament about the Eurozone, and demonstrates issues and cases that could help the European Union to overcome the challenges of its economic crisis. In Figure 2 (see Appendices), there is a framework which illustrates the connections among the generated codes and what are the types of these connections. Such a figure provides us with the rationale behind the EPP approaches towards the Eurozone crisis, and the Europarty's connected tensions and initiatives towards the resolution of the crisis as well. However, as it is given in the data analysis section, it is noteworthy to mention some controversial relations among the different codes, and positive contributions, too. In Figure 4 (see Appendices), there is an accumulative illustration of the coded press releases from 2012 to 2017, in order to show the trends of the EPP policies and political intentions based on the Eurozone crisis case. Lastly, in Figure 3 (see Appendices), there is an interesting illustration of the EPP press releases from 2012 to 2017 by coding per year. In this figure, we can underline which code was discussed more on an annual basis; we can interpret and analyse the trends of the data according to various circumstances in each case. This figure promotes to us the primary fields on which the EPP focused on that period, and it also enlightens us with elements from the Europarty's parliamentary debates. Detailed information is provided in the data analysis section for all figures.

In summary, there is a rich compilation of collected data (104). Considering that the main purpose of all press releases is to promote something significant and specific by their direct readership publicity, the following data analysis aims to assess the collected data through qualitative analysis. Moreover, the quoted press releases that have been included in the chapter have been selected randomly from the data collection pool in relation to the particular code in each case.

3.2 Presentation and Analysis of the Data

Regarding the data analysis results, first we can realise that the previous section refers to - six main subject areas were identified in order to demonstrate the EPP's attitude towards the Eurozone crisis. Numerous press releases were included and used in this research so as to reflect on the Europarty's approaches to the economic crisis resolution.

3.2.1 Competitiveness

In more detail, the fundamental pillar on which the EPP reflected on its policy was competitiveness. 51 coded quotations are related to that concept while several subjects are connected to it. The implementation of the Single Market is one of the sound EPP interventions to boost the European economy and accomplish recovery after and during the Eurozone crisis. Also, the sustainable economy has been prosperous attainment for the EPP economic principles (i.e. Roadmap 2020). Those can be confirmed by the following press release on 22.05.2012, 22.01.2015, and 31.01.2012 respectively:

“If we really want to achieve growth, let us truly deliver the Internal Market to citizens and businesses because it is the single most important European stimulus for growth... Lately, we have been asking our citizens to make a lot of sacrifices to ensure that our economies survive the current climate. But, we have the Internal Market which is the best way of delivering growth and economic prosperity for our citizens and businesses...”

Economic Growth: the Internal Market is the answer – 22.05.2012

“A well-functioning Single Market in the European Union is vital for future growth and job creation... The priority should be the completion of the European Single Market which can be reached through the adoption and implementation of measures boosting sustainable and inclusive growth...”

Better governance in the Single Market will boost growth – 22.01.2015

“...For a successful transition to a low carbon economy we need to take into account the current poor state of the economy...”

Roadmap 2050: Transition to low carbon economy until 2050 - 31.01.2012

Additionally, the interest for the establishment of an efficient Internal Energy Market was evident since 2013:

“Energy makes energy. I am convinced that the Internal Energy Market will boost our economy’s energy. We should make it our exit strategy from the crisis before it is too late. Energy prices in Europe are high and keep rising, whereas in the US or China they are falling. Europe is losing its competitive edge and the ones footing the bill are the consumer and businesses. The remedy is the Internal Energy Market. It is a precondition for EU competitiveness, and thus for growth, for the creation of new jobs, and for an increase of the welfare of EU citizens”, said Jerzy Buzek MEP, former President of the European Parliament, opening the EPP Group Hearing on the European Internal Energy Market...”

Internal Energy Market is the exit strategy from the crisis - 06.06.2013

Furthermore, it needs to be mentioned that the EPP has established the SME Europe – an official business organisation which represents as a network for pro-business politicians and political organisations. The support to Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) for creating jobs, and building an entrepreneurial culture for youth so as to eliminate the youth unemployment are also tools for the recovery of the European economy as stated:

“...Today more than ever, political decisions need to be fast. Growth and savings go hand in hand. We need to invest all our efforts into the growth of our economy, which heavily relies on Small and Medium-Sized Enterprises and on entrepreneurs...”

Beating the economic crisis: we need to have a global view - 15.11.2012

“...Relatively speaking, the EU suffers from a deficiency of entrepreneurial culture. Our young people must be helped to find employment but they should also be strongly encouraged to start their own businesses and create employment for themselves...”

Youth Employment: building an entrepreneurial culture is key - 17.09.2014

Along with structural funds (i.e. European Regional Development Fund and European Social Fund), social investments, and the Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership in-favour-vote are several of the sound EPP interventions to boost the European economy and accomplish recovery during and after the Eurozone crisis.

Nevertheless, competitiveness and intentions for growth are not sufficient on their own in order to help the economy to recover. Therefore, there should be a distinction. According to the collected press releases, it is possible to divide the idea of competitiveness into two cores - one with broad implications for the current study and one without.

3.2.2 Research and Innovation

Research and innovation is the one core which, even though is crucial for economic and technologic development, it is not a research code that contains broad extensions to other ones for the current study. However, for EPP, competitiveness depends on projects for innovation and technology progress. EPP still backs growth and employment policies especially in fields such as research, entrepreneurship and employment, as well as co-creation and industrial leadership, like the programme “HORIZON2020” (2013-2020):

“...We are going to fight for an ambitious research budget. After three years of continuing economic crisis in Europe, it is obvious that Europe's economy needs sustainable solutions. Not hundreds of billions of one-off funds, but investment in research and innovation is the way forward. Parliament is willing to stand firm on its commitment to double the Horizon 2020 budget compared to present levels...”

Research and innovation are the best way to overcome the crisis - 23.01.2012

“...I firmly believe that Europe and its policies are the way out of the crisis”, said Giovanni La Via MEP, the European Parliament's Rapporteur on the EU Budget for 2013...”

EU Budget: European policies are the way out of the crisis - 04.10.2012

“...The aim of the European Parliament is to focus on the resources for growth and employment policies especially in fields such as research, entrepreneurship and employment...”

EU Budget: European policies are the way out of the crisis - 04.10.2012

“Innovation is the best way to lead Europe out of the crisis. New products will create new jobs and growth. Innovation therefore should form a core part of the 300-billion-euro growth plan that the European Commission will soon present...”

Innovation should be core part of Juncker's 300-billion growth plan - 19.11.2014

Particular examples of those directions to growth and employment policies can be found on the Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF), and in the European Long-Term Investment Funds (ELTIFs) which are to contribute on the development of infrastructure, machinery and equipment, education and research results:

“We have turned the financial framework 2014-2020 into an investment fund for growth and jobs, by ensuring European money will be used where it is most needed and where our policy priorities lie...”

Multiannual Financial Framework: final green light for investment budget - 19.11.2013

“...to attract the savings of both individual and professional investors to finance long-term investments in the European Union... European Long-Term Investment Funds (ELTIFs) will channel funds into long-term projects only, with a focus on infrastructure, machinery and equipment, education and research results...”

European Long-Term Investment Funds to finance the real economy: the EU is moving fast - 26.11.2014

Regarding the first core about research and innovation, we can confirm that there is a keen perception of their role for EPP about the implementation of ambitious projects which will benefit several aspects of the European Union community.

3.2.3 Reforms in the European Union

Apart from that core, though, there is another core as we said, and it embraces a lot of structural economic – mainly – reforms. The code for this area is “European Union Reforms”. Many press releases have been showing that the EPP is quite diligent about EU budget management issues and necessary reforms mainly in economic terms – procedures on the financial ecosystem of the European Union. However, incentives for political reforms were not missing. In general, the EPP considers that responsible management and use of the budgets of the European Union can ensure growth and jobs and courageous reforms which lead to sustainable growth:

“...We are convinced that the European budget is indispensable for getting out of the crisis. We must therefore invest in Europe...”

Budget: EU long-term budget - we cannot have more Europe with less money - 07.11.2012

“The new European Commission is clearly oriented towards reforms, jobs and growth. Its structure and organisation will be more political and more efficient to meet the challenges ahead and to deliver. This is a good proposal by Commission President-elect Jean-Claude Juncker”, said Manfred Weber MEP, Chairman of the EPP Group in the European Parliament...”

Reform Commission will focus on growth and jobs - 10.09.2014

“With this high-level team, Europe will be in good hands. The new Commissioners are experienced politicians, not bureaucrats. We are glad that with 14 Commissioners with important portfolios, the EPP political family is at the core of the European Commission’s agenda of reforms towards growth and jobs. The European Commission will focus on what is most important and reduce bureaucracy and red tape. This is what our voters expect from us...”

Reform Commission will focus on growth and jobs - 10.09.2014

“...Once again, we see that reforms are indispensable. The EPP Group strongly supports public deficit reduction, coupled with sustained growth and job creation. This growth can only be achieved by a competitive economy...”

Commission's economic recommendations: no sustainable growth without courageous reforms - 30.05.2012

“...Consolidation of public budgets is the first step to re-start growth. Consolidation should be carried out while having the least possible impact on European citizens and future generations. But consolidation alone is not enough. We need national governments to make structural reforms to initiate a genuine process of economic growth...”

European Public Finances: we need fiscal consolidation, reforms for growth and rationalisation of public spending - 06.12.2012

In 2015, there is still a motivation for reforms so as to recover the economy and attain growth:

“...Reforms and fiscal consolidation are the only way to reduce unemployment and poverty in the countries most affected by the financial crisis and to help the Euro Area to return to sustainable growth...”

EPP Group: no growth without reforms - 11.03.2015

In accurate detail, the EPP expressed its budgetary and financial reforming concerns, as well as about tax reforms, transparency and fairness in the economic context of the European Union as follows:

“We do not believe in a crisis budget for seven years”, said the Chairman of the EPP Group, Joseph Daul, commenting on the adoption of the Multiannual Financial Framework 2014-2020 Resolution.

“The European Parliament is now a co-legislator and will play its full part in the upcoming negotiations by defending the European interest...”

EU Budget 2014-2020: we want a responsible budget for growth and jobs - 13.03.2013

“...The EPP Group is in favour of the most strict application of EU competition rules and considers totally unacceptable any attempt to manipulate global interest rates benchmarks... The collusion of certain banks to manipulate benchmark interest rates in Euros (Euribor) and in Yen (Libor and Tibor) creates mistrust in the financial sector and serious damage to many citizens and companies with contracts referred to those indices, therefore fines must be in line with the damage caused and they must also be a deterrent for avoiding future manipulation...”

Record fine for benchmark interest rate rigging cartel - 04.12.2013

“...The EPP Group wants new initiatives for more transparency in Member States' tax regimes...”

Tax rulings: EPP Group strongly supports Commission initiatives for more transparency and fiscal fairness - 12.11.2014

“...The problem of tax avoidance in Europe is not the problem of a specific country, but a structural problem of tax policy across Member States. Mismatches between national tax systems create loopholes...”

EPP Group: tax avoidance is a structural problem in Europe - 26.10.2015

Further, extra attention has been paid to banking reforms and intentions for improvement:

“Europe will now get modern legislation on the management of a bank in crisis and of banking crises...”

Rules for banking resolution to stabilise financial markets - 20.05.2013

“New EU rules on financial markets will provide stability and transparency... The new rules will remedy the weaknesses of the financial markets which had become apparent in the worldwide crisis...The new rules apply to all market operators, such as stock exchanges or other trading

platforms, banks, investment companies and funds or other service providers related to financial products. The requirements relate to transparency and investor protection obligations...The MiFID is the main piece of EU regulation in financial markets...

MiFID: EU rules on financial markets provide stability and transparency - 15.01.2014

“...We want a deal that will restore confidence and protects taxpayers from failing banks...The EPP Group wants a SINGLE resolution mechanism with a truly SINGLE Fund. Banks need to be treated irrespective of in which Member State they operate and free from political bargaining, both with regard to the strict application of bail-ins as well as access to the Fund when needed...”

EPP Group calls for speeding up of negotiations on final part of Banking Union - 04.02.2014

3.2.4 European Central Bank and European Banking System

It is evident that the most suggested reforms by the EPP lie to financial and banking cases. For that reason, the European Central Bank and the general European Banking System has been defined as another code which could be acknowledged as the dominant reform rhetoric of EPP. The promotion to complete the economic and monetary union, transparency in shadow banking, European banking supervision, failing banks, and the general climate of supporting the Eurozone are several of the EPP positions on the advancement of the European Central Bank and European banking. Also, Troika is one of the met-terms in regard to reforms and ECB activities and actions:

“...We need to renew trust in the Euro and put the EU on the road to an economic upturn this autumn... Only if we have a banking union, can we end the vicious cycle between banks and governments and prevent that taxpayers pay the bill if banks fail. In addition, a completely operational European supervisory system will also enable banks to be financed directly from a European emergency fund...”

Completion of the economic and monetary union: consultation with ECB President Draghi and EU

Commissioners - 03.09.2012

“...The tightening up of Europe's banking regulations in the last couple of years must not lead to certain activities drifting into less-regulated areas as shadow banks. That is why shedding light on shadow banks is so important...”

EPP Group wants more transparency in shadow banking - 24.03.2015

“...We need one effective and single mechanism to resolve failing banks in Europe in an equal way, independent from the Member State in which they are located...The Single Resolution Mechanism for failed banks is indispensable for finalising the banking union and making sure that taxpayers don't have to pay to save banks in difficulty. It should make it possible for Europe to make progress in competitiveness, growth and jobs...”

Failing banks: no EU agreement yet - 19.12.2013

“...The almost unanimous approval of this Report is a clear signal to the Council. Bearing in mind the lessons of the Euro crisis, we need to reinforce the EMU's four pillars - i.e. its financial, budgetary, economic and democratic pillars...”

Towards a stronger Economic and Monetary Union - 15.10.2012

“...The Troika institutions were deeply involved in key decisions for Ireland throughout the banking crisis, particularly through engagement with the Irish Government and the Irish Central Bank...The EPP Group supports the full cooperation of all Troika institutions - the ECB, the European Commission and the IMF...”

EPP Group supports cooperation of ECB, IMF and Commission with Irish Banking Inquiry -

05.02.2015

3.2.5 Troika

During the interpretation of the collected data about the European Central Bank and European banking, the term “Troika” arose – European Central Bank was part of the Troika (European Central

Bank, European Commission, and International Monetary Fund). This term plays a controversial role according to the EPP. Obviously, the Troika's contribution to reforms in the affected Member States due to the Eurozone crisis is evident. Eventually, such reforming policies under supervision to these countries had a positive impact on the competitiveness of the European Union. However, the EPP did not hesitate to underline the necessity for more effective control of the Troika's actions - transparency, legitimation and democratic control of the Troika. The following quoted parts from the EPP press releases demonstrate this climate around the Troika:

“The Chairman of the EPP Group in the European Parliament, Joseph Daul MEP, has welcomed the positive outcome of the crucial vote on the painful austerity measures Greece has to take in the framework of its debt restructuring programme and the €130 billion bailout...”*Nea Demokratia, our sister party, has shown a very high sense of responsibility”, added Mr Daul. “Antonis Samaras, the party leader, played a very constructive role in the successful conclusion of the negotiations with the troika. Of course, the situation in general is serious. The positive vote, however, creates the opportunity to move forward in the right direction”, concluded Chairman Daul.”*

Greece: result of vote in Greek Parliament welcomed by EPP Group Chairman Joseph Daul MEP - 13.02.2012

It needs to be mentioned that the proposal for a European Monetary Fund in order to replace Troika was given by the EPP:

“...We will propose an instrument to organize solidarity in Europe, which will be based on Community law. The Troika has been an interim solution which was necessary and right. But for the future we need long term solutions...”

Troika was necessary but it needs democratic legitimation, control and transparency - 30.01.2014

“...We cannot ignore the fact that the social situation in the four countries visited by the Troika was already very difficult, as they were facing bankruptcy, and inaction would have had drastic consequences...”

Troika: Socialist inaction cause of high unemployment - 13.02.2014

“...In the short-term the Troika needs internal rules of procedure to increase the transparency of decision-making. In the long-term, Troika's work should be carried out by a new European Monetary Fund on the basis of EU law. This ensures that European decisions on the reform and aid programmes are democratically legitimised and subject to parliamentary scrutiny...”

Troika prevented worse but still needs fixing - 24.02.2014

“...The Troika must not be made the scapegoat for the problems. She prevented a disaster. For the future she must be made better, more transparent and more democratic...In the short-term, the Troika needs internal rules of procedure to increase the transparency of decision-making. In the long-term, Troika's work should be carried out by a new European Monetary Fund on the basis of EU law. This ensures that European decisions on the reform and aid programmes are democratically legitimised and subject to parliamentary scrutiny. Only in this way will the citizens' acceptance increase...”

Troika is not the scapegoat - Parliament calls for European Monetary Fund - 13.03.2014

3.2.6 Solidarity

Thus, there is a direct effect on European Union's solidarity because of austerity measures and strict fiscal policies to the Member States. The EPP, though, provided adequate approaches towards the conservation of solidarity within the European Union, and its progression as a proactive factor in any future challenges. Focus on promoting solidarity, the "Living Proof" campaign, the cohesion of the political action of the European Parliament and national parliaments in shaping European policy-making, better intra-EU donor coordination, proper monitoring and practical enforcement of the human rights clause (derived from the economic crisis), the Third Health Programme (2014-2020), and the conception that financial stability is a precondition for social welfare are several of the EPP's official positions on protecting and promoting solidarity during and after the Eurozone crisis. The parts below instruct us about it as:

“The Chairman of the EPP Group, Joseph Daul MEP, has welcomed the goals of the 'Living Proof' Campaign to be presented today in the European Parliament by Bill Gates, co-chair of the Bill &

Melinda Gates Foundation...The economic crisis is not an excuse for not showing solidarity with the poorest...We will tackle poverty by offering a hand-up, not a hand-out, by giving the people in need the fishing rod to fish and not the fish itself. We aim, therefore, to assist developing countries to reach a stage of economic development where a free market of goods and services can operate freely within the broad parameters set by the State and according to basic international norms of trade. It is for the benefit of both developed and developing countries.”

Fight against poverty: We offer a hand-up not a hand-out - 24.01.2012

“...the major role of national parliaments together with the European Parliament in shaping European policy-making...We must continue to ensure the cohesion of the political action of the European Parliament and national parliaments...”

EAN: European Affairs Network - the EP together with the National Parliaments are natural allies in fighting the economic crisis - 01.10.2012

“...The EU is not credible and capable of acting if Heads of State decide on reform measures behind closed doors which they don't implement in the end. The measures have to be democratically legitimated and implemented without exceptions. National parliaments and the European Parliament have to pull together...”

Budgets in the EU: Coordination alone is not enough - 29.01.2013

“...It is really the developing countries who are suffering most from the crisis: their exports are shrinking, they are highly indebted, there is a risk of reduced foreign direct investments and declining Official Development Assistance. All this leads to difficulties in the realisation of human rights...”

In times of crisis, we cannot forget about human rights - 18.04.2013

“...Against the backdrop of the financial crisis, it is important that the EU demonstrates effective development aid spending. Better intra-EU donor coordination would not only achieve economies of scale but would also significantly contribute to the EU's primary development assistance goal - poverty eradication...”

EU development aid: new measures for effective donor coordination - 05.11.2013

“Prevention, protection of citizens from cross-border health threats, innovation for our healthcare systems and finally an improved access to better and safer healthcare for all EU citizens: these are the four priorities that we have set out in this new EU programme for health...”

Third Health Programme (2014-2020): €450m and specific goals to meet health challenges of the 21st century - 26.02.2014

“...Burkhard Balz MEP, EPP Group Spokesman in Parliament's Committee on Economic and Monetary Affairs, called on the stability of public finances as a precondition for social welfare...Only through the consolidation of public finances and fiscal systems and applying structural reforms can we prepare a proper future for younger generations, hence we need to continue on the path of fiscal responsibility and enhancing our competitiveness. But to do so, economic stability is required. We cannot just cut and throw away our existing policies and the efforts of Europeans, especially those who received financial assistance”, concluded Ribeiro.”

Financial stability is precondition for social welfare - 24.02.2016

Altogether, we can conclude that the EPP has maintained a coherent and dynamic line in boosting competitiveness in the European Union. In addition, in the terms which were encoded and linked through the data analysis, we can also distinguish their densities. In Figure 2 (see Appendices), which will be discussed in Section 3.3, there is Semantic Linkages framework that shows us the connections between the terms of data gathered from the data analysis.

3.3 Semantic Linkages Framework

To summarise up, we could form a framework with the semantic linkages of the data analysis, and identify the correlations among the generated codes of the study. The six main codes – Competitiveness, Research and Innovation, European Union Reforms, European Central Bank and European Banking System, Troika, and Solidarity – are connected to each other in various ways, and useful conclusions can be made according to the collected data and the relevant analysis of them. In Figure 2 (see Appendices), we could first check that the main code related to the EPP attitude towards the Eurozone crisis was “Competitiveness” and “Solidarity”. The boost of the economy and the promotion of growth policies were in the centre of the EPP’s agenda in order to overcome the crisis. However, the term about competitiveness consists of two main cores which were parts of “Competitiveness” - “Research and Innovation” and “EU Reforms” are the pillars on which the competitiveness concept was based on and credited.

The first one reflected on innovative initiatives of the European Union and relevant programmes which contain research mostly (i.e. HORIZON2020). The second one included several reforming proposals for effective and efficient operations of the European Union – mainly for tax, financial, and banking issues. An essential parameter of the reforms was the suggested actions that should be taken for the European Banking System and the European Central Bank. So, as a specific code on its own, the EPP presented through it the Europarty’s positions for supporting the existence of euro, structural reforms of the European Central Bank, completion of the monetary union, plans and suggestions for the failing banks of the European Union Member States. This is an incentive for federal economic policies, which the Europarty strongly supports (Johansson, 2016). In general, the EPP intensely claimed that the European Central Bank should exercise its independent role responsibly. Based on the latter argument, we could recognise that some activities related to the European Central Bank did not have a positive impact on the European Union (Nuti, 2014; Cohen et al., 2015). Thus, the researcher continued its research and found out that the role of Troika could be linked with that view of the EPP. Even though the Troika helped with reforms (as a necessary cause of the reforming climate for economic survival) in the affected by the economic crisis Member States and helped to recover the competitiveness in the European Union (as a decisive contributing actor which prevented the worse for those Member States), needed some reviews and fixations in its procedures as the EPP supported. Transparency issues and

better control (democratically natured) of the Troika were two of the fundamental pursuits for the EPP. These demands, though, were associated with solidarity issues within the European Union, showing the contradiction of the Troika's actions to the Member States (Morgan, 2015; Theodoropoulou, 2016).

Austerity measures and harsh economic policies brought suffocating conditions for the Member States in which Troika had an active involvement. The researcher once identified such a contradiction generated the "Solidarity" code which embraced several initiatives and intentions from the EPP for representing a social sensitiveness for the European Union population affected by the crisis. The EPP, in this case, confirms its pro-European, federalist direction for Europe. The Europarty's commitment and grown initiatives to transform Europe into a federal union – even since the European Community years of existence – justifies the great influence that Christian Democracy still has in the Europarty in its hardcore (Jansen, 1998), despite the alteration it has been under after the massive insertion of Eastern European parties to its bay (Pegklis, 2016).

Last but not least, regarding the analysis framework and its densities, we could assume that the "Troika" presents some controversies because of its limited grounded quotations (see Figure 1 in Appendices), and its high level of density.

3.4 The European People's Party Official Press Releases Ratios by Coding

The European crisis is a multi-year debt crisis that has been taking place in the European Union since the end of 2009. All the Member States of the European Union were affected by this crisis. Nevertheless, it is worthy to identify the yearly ratios in which the main-coding process took place, and interpret these frequencies of the EPP's press releases. In Figure 3 (see Appendices), there is an illustration of the collected data and their distribution based on each year from 2012 to 2017 – derived from the availability of the data pool (press releases) from the official website of the EPP Group in the European Parliament.

First, it is easy to observe that on 2012, 2013, and 2014 there is a considerable accumulation of press releases related to all main codes apart from "Research and Innovation", "Solidarity", and "Troika" – the latter was most discussed during 2014. In that year, the effect of the austerity measures under the Troika's supervision were recognised vastly, and the EPP adopted relevant rhetoric to solidarity issues – the solidarity issues were discussed almost equally in all years from 2012 to 2017.

“Research and Innovation” is code that did not attract the attention of the EPP intensely, but it was confirmed as a valuable pillar for competitiveness and growth renaissance.

The three best performers codes can be interpreted though if we examine an important macroeconomic indicator which determines the growth rates in national and regional levels. In Figure 4 (see Appendices), there is a depiction of the real GDP growth rate in volume for the European Union and the Eurozone countries from the beginning the crisis until 2016. “Gross domestic product (GDP) is a measure of the economic activity, defined as the value of all goods and services produced less the value of any goods or services used in their creation. The calculation of the annual growth rate of GDP volume is intended to allow comparisons of the dynamics of economic development both over time and between economies of different sizes. For measuring the growth rate of GDP in terms of volumes, the GDP at current prices are valued at the prices of the previous year and the thus computed volume changes are imposed on the level of a reference year; this is called a chain-linked series. Accordingly, price movements will not inflate the growth rate” (<http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/web/products-datasets/-/tec00115>).

The data derive from Eurostat, and it is outstanding the fact that from 2009 to 2013 – with a “boosting-break” in 2010 – the growth rate is under 0 (2009, 2012, 2013 for Eurozone countries). Also, for the 28 countries, the average real GDP growth rate in volume is 0.57 on 2012, 2013, and 2014. Respectively, the same indicator is 0.06 for the Member States of the Eurozone. So, it is straightforward that the need for boosting the economy and promote competitive policies towards growth was indispensable for a leading party as the EPP is.

On the other hand, it is essential to identify the reasons for which the EPP did not show the same desire for competitive policies after 2014. In Figure 4 (see Appendices) again, there is a good increase in the GDP growth – around 2 – for both the European Union and the Eurozone Member States in overall. Moreover, it should not be ignored that since the beginning of 2014 until today several issues have arisen for Europe, and almost all the executive and legislative bodies of the European Union averted their attention to them – including the EPP. Specifically,

- **Crimea War and the Russian Factor**

The European Union replied to Russia's involvement in Ukraine in March 2014, imposing sanctions that have been consecutively tautened since. Germany was an active member in the procedure. Sanctions have become a conversant instrument of the "foreign policy" of the European Union in recent years (Kreutz, 2015). Nonetheless, the measures applied counter to Russia are unprecedented in both target and scope. Moreover, they have tangible repercussions on economically stricken EU Member States. These sanctions characterise the European Union's reply to Crimea's secession from Ukraine and its takeover by the Russian Federation, which was finalised between late February and late March 2014 (Tsakiris, 2015).

Recently it has become common to depict the European Union as overwhelmed by the economic crisis, affected by an apparent inability to respond efficiently to a number of considerable challenges of both internal and external. Within the European Union, there are economic woes, rising populism and a sense of democratic deficit that have been combined and have weakened solidarity within the European Union. Externally the most significant test has come from a revanchist Russia heartened enough to in 2014 wing Crimea and occupy eastern Ukraine, in doing so hastening a security crisis to which the European Union struggled to respond (Browing, 2018; Smith, 2017). These challenges have material, organisational and political elements.

"...In the absence of Russian willingness to de-escalate the Crimean crisis, the EU must impose travel bans and asset freezes on leading Russian officials, impose an arms and dual-use technology embargo and, in the end, economic sanctions..."

Crimea: sanctions against Russia necessary - 12.03.2014

"The EU is in need of a new strategy for its relations with Russia following the Russian occupation of Crimea, the continuing military aggression in Eastern Ukraine as well as the blunt violation of international agreements which are putting EU-Russia relations at a crossroads..."

EU needs change in its relations with Russia after Putin's aggression - 09.06.2015

- Terrorist Attacks

The sequence of recent terrorist attacks, as well as the numerous failed terrorist plans on European soil, have more than ever strengthened the general consciousness of the susceptibilities that go hand-in-hand with the open democracies in the European Union. The fact that these attacks tracked each other with short pauses, but mostly because of they every so often did not fit the outline and modus operandi of past attacks, have meaningfully contributed to the struggle for security agencies to indicate the threats as they appear (Durac, 2017; Rekawek, 2017). The modi operandi used exhibited a multiplicity of targets selected, were committed by a diversity of actors plus foreign fighter returnees, home-grown jihadist extremists, and lone individuals, and were executed with a variation of weapons or explosives.

Governments, policy-makers, and politicians in most of the European Union Member States feel the pressure of the population who call for suitable answers to these terrorisations. Likewise, the various actors of the European Union on their own accord, or the European Council driven by (some) Member States, have underlined the necessity of operative replies to these augmented threats, and have explicitly underlined the necessity of sharing of information and good collaboration as well (Cross, 2017).

“...The EPP Group’s position paper on the Future of Europe advances without reservation to a European Defence Union with real operational capabilities and in cooperation with the UN and NATO. It also calls for the development of military capacities for the European Border and Coast Guard and the European Civil Protection Body and a new generation of counter-terrorism measures...”

Our vision for a better Europe - 15.02.2017

“...Many people are afraid of terrorism. Many say that Islam is a danger. No, this is not a conflict between Christians and Muslims. It is a conflict between humanity and barbarism, between values and terrorism, between our way of life and the madness of the terrorists. We must stand together, even closer. The European way of life protects the freedom of religion. It does not know national egoism when fighting together against the terrible acts of the terrorists...”

Today is about asserting and defending the European way of life - 13.09.2017

- Refugee Crisis

Schengen lacked a robust insurance mechanism against the risk that sudden increases in refugee numbers overwhelmed the capacity of border states to process and protect, or the willingness of popular host states to accept asylum seekers. When refugee numbers rapidly increased in 2015, there was no mechanism for spreading the burden from the directly affected border and host states to the more fortunate rest of the Schengen area (Harteveld et al., 2018; Guirandon, 2017).

The Eurozone crisis and the refugee crisis are vitrines of the difficulties related to the EU's swing from market integration to the integration of core state powers (Genschel & Jachtenfuchs, 2018). The integration of core state powers retorts to parallel functional demand factors to market integration (interdependence, externalities and spill-over) but its supply is more firmly controlled by a high inclination to zero-sum conflict, a functional prerequisite for centralised fiscal, coercive and administrative capacities, and high political salience. Therefore, the need for political interference and initiative has been apparent. The European Union was unprepared and had to develop coping strategies on the go.

“...We have shown our commitment to making full use of the EU budget to address the current refugee crisis, proving the existence of de facto solidarity from the European Union...”

Refugee Crisis: Parliament approves additional €401.3m in the 2015 EU Budget - 12.10.2015

“...The European Commission today unveiled an emergency aid plan providing financial assistance to Greece, and to any other EU state in the same predicament as Greece, to deal with the refugee crisis. The EPP Group welcomes this initiative... We have called on Europe to act and to act quickly to deal with the humanitarian crisis in Greece caused by the huge influx of refugees fleeing the war in Syria. Words are not enough...”

EPP Group supports emergency aid plan for refugees - 02.03.2016

- **Brexit and Nationalist Economies**

The vote by a majority of the United Kingdom electorate to withdraw from the European Union is an incident that poses a severe threat to the definite sixty-year course of economic integration in Europe. The elimination of walls to trade goods and services, the advancement of competition in product and service markets, and the free movement of capital in Europe has served the European and world economies sound (Alogoskoufis, 2017).

Moreover, this is a time when economic nationalism has been acting a political retaliation in several of the advanced economies, as suggested by the reappearance of nationalist parties in various of countries in the European Union (Alogoskoufis, 2017). In addition to the latter, the political line and tendencies of the winner during the 2016 presidential election in the United States triggered concerns around the liberal economy.

“...We need to respect the Brexit decision of the British people. The framework for the forthcoming negotiations is clear. The internal market is fully connected with the basic freedoms of the EU such as the freedom of movement. The UK now faces a lack of leadership...”

We need responsible and accountable politicians who don't hide behind national concerns - 05.07.2016

“...There is growing unease in the EPP Group in the European Parliament on the progress in the Brexit negotiations between the EU and the UK: "I welcome the fact that further progress has been made in the fifth round of the Brexit negotiations and that the discussions took place in a good atmosphere. At the same time, I regret the fact that sufficient progress in the negotiations has not yet been achieved and that the second phase of the negotiations cannot be started in October", said Elmar Brok MEP, who is in charge of the Brexit negotiations for the EPP Group...”

Brexit talks: UK government must get a grip on exit bill - 12.10.2017

Undoubtedly, there have been several other issues and events that the EPP expressed its opinion and promoted relevant policy suggestions, i.e. environmental issues, but they did not meet an adequate number of press releases in order to be included in the analysis or illustrated in a graph.

3.5 The Case of the Greek Economic Crisis

Greece is one of the Member States of the European Union which has been facing severe challenges due to the Eurozone crisis. The Greek debt crisis is the dangerous amount of sovereign debt the Greek government owes. It became dangerous when a possible debt default threatened the European Union. Since 2008, EU leaders have struggled to agree on a solution. During that time, the Greek economy shrank 25 percent thanks to spending cuts and tax increases demanded by creditors. Greece's debt-to-GDP ratio grew to 179 percent (Jordan, 2017; Elliott, 2017; Andreou et al., 2017).

The Greek case can be considered as one of the most difficult ones in order to proceed to prosperous highways in fiscal and financial terms. Furthermore, the attitude of the EPP towards Greece presents some interest for two reasons. The first one is that, during the Eurozone crisis, Greece was led to elections several times, and there was a dynamic debate in the public opinion about austerity measures. In May 2010, the social-democratic government of PASOK signed a memorandum of understanding with the International Monetary Fund in order to have Greece provided with financial aid and be rescued from the severe heft of its external public debt and fiscal deficits (Moschonas, 2013). Nevertheless, it was not so easy then to predict that the political identity and perception for the national political parties would change so radically in years coming for the domestic population regarding this economic and financial robust change.

Nea Dimokratia, the main conservative party in Greece then, was in the opposition of the social-democratic PASOK, committed to renegotiating the first memorandum of understanding once it is elected in the forthcoming elections (Moschonas, 2013; Plakoudas, 2016). In 2012, once Nea Dimokratia got elected, was under pressure by Greece's creditors to reject its initial populist rhetoric and decided to follow a consensus line and form a coalition government with its old chief-rival party, PASOK, and the far-right LAOS. In March 2012, Nea Dimokratia – as the leader of the coalition government – signed the second economic adjustment programme for Greece with the International Monetary Fund and the European Union. However, the political cost of it was coming. There was a split in Nea Dimokratia, and a new populist right-wing party was created, Anexartitoi Ellines. The sundown of the two-party system in Greece ended in May 2012. New elections took place and PASOK and Nea Dimokratia, which alternately formed one-party governments since 1974. SYRIZA and other minor leftist and rightist political parties led the way to anti-austerity populism. In January 2015, when the

Greek national parliament failed to elect Stavros Dimas as the new President of the Hellenic Republic, new national elections took place in the country and SYRIZA came into power. Along with Anexartitoi Ellines, the new coalition government attempted to follow their pre-elections policy and rhetoric about anti-austerity and to negotiate an end of the adjustment programmes with the countries' creditors due to their dramatic social and economic consequences. The new government adopted a confrontational attitude to Germany (as the main creditor Member State) and the European Union stance in overall. The new government put on the table even the issue of war reparations of Germany due to the Second World War. From January to June 2015, the contradiction among Germany, the European Union, and the Greek government had been crucial. At the zenith of such a continuous and unprecedented for the European Union history conflict, the Greek government chose the road of the referendum in July of the same year (Halikiopoulou & Vasilopoulou, 2015; Plakoudas, 2016). The central line of the government for the Greek people was "No" to the new austerity measures which the Juncker's deal package included. This guideline was to address the social classes affected by the austerity policies of previous adjustment programs and was promoted by the government as a resembling case of the "No" which dictator Metaxas' response to the Italian ultimatum in October 1940. On the contrary, the supporters of the 'Yes' decision were stigmatised as "mouthpieces of the foreign usurers" and "collaborators of Berlin", generating a contemporary division among Greek people after decades. However, the conceit rhetoric of the Greek government did not last long. Greece was in front of a stark dilemma by its creditors, either leaving the Eurozone or signing a new harsh bailout accord.

In July 2015, the Greek government signed a new adjustment programme, the third memorandum of understanding in sequence. Under strict conditions, the government forced to sign for the implementation of very severe austerity measures. Due to that development in the Greek political framework, the political movement counter to the adjustment programmes and in favour of independence from the Eurozone suffered a shock from which it will probably never recover. This new adjustment programme generated turmoil in SYRIZA's cohesion, and several party members left the party. New elections took place in September 2015, in which SYRIZA triumphed again even though the party drop off all its populist political lines. This new triumph of SYRIZA and the formation of a new coalition government, once again with Anexartitoi Ellines, maybe indicate the permanent deterioration of anti-austerity ideology in Greece (Plakoudas, 2016).

Based on the collected data of the study (since 2012), the two governments with initially different ideological political approaches to austerity measures elected in the country, and the EPP demonstrated different approaches to each one:

“...Nea Demokratia, our sister party, has shown a very high sense of responsibility”, added Mr Daul. “Antonis Samaras, the party leader, played a very constructive role in the successful conclusion of the negotiations with the troika. Of course, the situation in general is serious. The positive vote, however, creates the opportunity to move forward in the right direction”, concluded Chairman Daul.”

Greece: result of vote in Greek Parliament welcomed by EPP Group Chairman Joseph Daul MEP - 13.02.2012

“...Following a two-day visit to Athens, the Chairman of the EPP Group in the European Parliament, Manfred Weber MEP, said: “The EPP Group fully supports the course of reforms and economic recovery pursued by the government of Antonis Samaras. I have told the Prime Minister that he can fully count on the solidarity of the EPP Group in the European Parliament. I have great respect for the difficult work done by the Greek Government but also for the readiness of the people to support necessary cuts. Greece is an example for other EU Member States where courageous reforms are also needed...”

EPP Group Chairman fully backs Samaras' reforms - 27.08.2014

Nea Dimokratia, the centre-right wing party, received the credits of the EPP for its reforms and general policy implementations in Greece during its government years. Also, the leader of the party, Antonis Samaras, was acknowledged as a successful reformer by both Joseph Daul and Manfred Webber.

On the other hand, once SYRIZA (left-wing party) took office in Greece, there is not only a cautious approach to the party and its populist ideological trends, but even an aggressive style is adopted by the EPP to express its criticism towards SYRIZA governance.

“...The Chairman of the biggest political group in the European Parliament warned Syriza on its choice of government coalition partner: “I find it very worrying for our common European future

that Syriza is building an alliance with a populist party which regularly takes clear anti-Jewish positions”, he said...”

Greece: EPP Group calls on government to respect commitments - 11.02.2015

“...The bad news is that the government is not consistent and effective in pursuing the agreed policies. As a result, the social cost of government policies is going up without producing any tangible economic results. Finance Minister Euclid Tsakalotos agreed in Brussels on an ambitious privatisation programme, but in Athens he reassured left wing SYRIZA supporters that as long as he remains Minister of Finance no privatisation will take place. The international community should be aware of that political double dealing...”

EPP Group criticises Greek government's slowness and double dealing - 04.10.2016

To end up, we could assume that despite the SYRIZA's decline to populist anti-austerity rhetoric since July 2015, the EPP did not hesitate to criticise the Greek coalition government's reforming policies and its momentum in implementing reforms.

4. Conclusions and Recommendations for Future Studies

Concluding the current research, we draw some useful conclusions that address the objectives of the study, as well as its propositions, as they have been developed in the literature review. In general, through the search for and evaluation of the EPP press releases, several useful conclusions have been drawn for us to seize the Europarty's ideological structure on issues like solidarity in the European Union, economic and financial policies, and political practices at the party level. The crisis in the Eurozone, and more generally in Europe, proved to be a good reason for the EPP to manifest its positions officially on issues that are of high concern to the European acquis. In addition, drawing conclusions from the current study can also lead us to implications and recommendations for future research. Terms and concepts that emerged within the overall context in which the current study was focused on could be also utilised for future academic ventures.

The monetary and economic crisis that erupted in the European Union, as well as its consequences throughout its duration, led the EPP to adopt views and suggested policies that could commit it - and confirm its ideological orientations in principle - to the logic and route of European cohesion and integration. It is also possible to outline its current ideological approaches in the economy for the establishment of a flexible and independent liberal economic policy through the Eurozone and the European Union. In addition, the need to implement important reforms in the European context sets the official and public political line of the Europarty on the basis of party consensus and cohesion. Starting with the evaluation of the objectives of the study, as well as its propositions, we are driven to receive valuable outcomes about the EPP's attitude towards the Eurozone crisis.

The EPP has promoted, argued for and strengthened its approaches to competitive policies to combat and effectively resolve the Eurozone crisis. According to the study, competitive policies contain two pillars of economic growth in the Member States: (i) reforms in the European Union and (ii) research and innovation. Member States can face light or severe debt problems as a result of weak competitiveness. Competitive industries, flexible labour markets, the confidence of financial market actors, and support to SMEs development are some of the clusters in which the EPP concentrated on to highlight the areas for advancement. Further, by investing in technology, education and human capital and by attracting foreign firms while countries with high deficits and sovereign debt reduce spending on new technologies and education, this could be an advantage eventually for the Member States in the

European Union. At the national level, innovations can contribute to economies considerably and help pull economies from crises. Unemployment could be reduced and poverty rates could be eliminated. For all the above, the EPP expressed its political positions clearly and recognised competitiveness as the locomotive of the recovery of the European economy. Additionally, the suggested reforms in several parts of the European Union, both in politics and economics, revealed the significant need for better coordination among the European Union's institutions, and the appropriate adjustment of the European banking system in overall to the modern capitalist era. The adoption of specific policies to (i) confront tax evasion, (ii) ensure transparency, (iii) protect individuals' property and capitals, (iv) approve fiscal consolidation policies, and (v) encourage fiscal reforms for debtor countries in order to achieve better in their national economies can prove that this Europarty supports an overall rhetoric towards a liberal economic climate in the union with several federalist points.

Even though all Europarties could support these elements, there is a major difference with the EPP. The pro-integration and pro-federalist status of the EPP can be justified by its intention to back and strengthen the Eurozone concept in regards to improve all Member States' conditionality. As it is already discussed, the European Central Bank requires some responsible management for efficient contribution to the advancement of the European Union. The current stabilisation of the euro currency is a result of an ongoing but fundamental review of the institutional architecture – a liberal conservatism beginning from the economy with a centrally-planned economy and a common economic policy. The special liberal characteristics are the low taxation, the encouragement of the advancement of the European Central Bank role, and the embracement of free-market principles. Such incentives could enrich the European background of solidarity among the Member States in the end, and improve the conditionality standards for all the Member States towards economic and social/political integration as well, by attempting to interpret the EPP's suggested policies.

Moreover, it is evident that the Christian Democracy values are still present. The findings have brought concepts and ideas for promoting welfare states. Of particular importance is the combination of aiding the poor European population with the adoption of entrepreneurial and research innovation policies to secure decent social standards. It should not be ignored that aspects on (i) reducing state expenditures and public deficits, (ii) consolidating public budgets, and the (iii) rationalisation of public spending set the EPP's approaches for social welfare in a modern liberal economic basis. There are more

progressive principles than the traditional of Christian Democracy in economic issues, but still Christian Democratic. It can be defined that there is still a rejection of secularism, and an emphasis on the fact that the individual is part of a community and has duties towards it. Undoubtedly, the power and the presence of Germany in the Europarty ensures some strict Christian Democratic lines. It could be included that the criticism towards Troika's operations on debtor Member States and the harsh effects of it in them are indicators of a socially-responsible party, acknowledging the role of Troika necessary for the reforming structures in those Member States though.

Last but not least, the EPP's attitude towards Greece should could be regarded neither positive nor negative. Although the EPP supported Antonis Samaras' reforms and his coalition government, the initial anti-austerity rhetoric of Nea Dimokratia was not in line with the EPP's positions on facing the Greek debt crisis. It needs to be mentioned that there have not been any press releases nor other material found about whether there was a negative approach or not to Nea Dimokratia's arguments before 2012 by the EPP. Quite the opposite, the Samaras' coalition government and reforms were highly praised by the EPP. On the other hand, the SYRIZA's coalition government received strict criticism during its populist rhetoric, and even during the years of its "sensible" governance. The latter could be justified by the fact that SYRIZA does not belong to the same party family, not even to S&D, but to the EUL/NGL.

Finally, based on the current study's findings, it would be useful to propose some recommendations for future study. Specifically, considering that there was quite a limitation in this study, it would be interesting to examine the current research objectives with more reliable and sophisticated data. Transcripts, quantitative research through questionnaires to EPP officials and individuals elected in the European Parliament, and qualitative research through personal interviews would enrich the content of the current study either by confirming its conclusions or rejecting them. The same research objectives could be examined through the other Europarties' spectrum, too. Additionally, it would be interesting the evaluate the EPP's views on issues like terrorist attacks, refugee crisis, Brexit, Crimean war and the Russian factor, as they have been identified in the study. All in all, the limited literature on the EPP nowadays may offer great opportunities for research in both the political, social and economic fields.

References

- Afonso, A., 2015. Choosing whom to betray: populist right-wing parties, welfare state reforms and the trade-off between office and votes. *European Political Science Review*, 7(2), pp.271-292.
- Afonso, A., Zartaloudis, S. and Papadopoulos, Y., 2015. How party linkages shape austerity politics: clientelism and fiscal adjustment in Greece and Portugal during the eurozone crisis. *Journal of European Public Policy*, 22(3), pp.315-334.
- Alogoskoufis, G., 2017. The European Union Economy, Brexit, and the Resurgence of Economic Nationalism. *Fletcher F. World Aff.*, 41, p.27.
- Andreou, A., Andrikopoulos, A. and Nastopoulos, C., 2017. Debt Markets, Financial Crises, and Public Finance in the Eurozone: Action, Structure, and Experience in Greece. In *Handbook of Investors' Behavior During Financial Crises* (pp. 3-28).
- Ardagna, S. and Caselli, F., 2014. The political economy of the Greek debt crisis: a tale of two bailouts. *American Economic Journal: Macroeconomics*, 6(4), pp.291-323.
- Avram, S., Figari, F., Leventi, C., Levy, H., Navicke, J., Matsaganis, M., Militaru, E., Paulus, A., Rastringina, O. and Sutherland, H., 2013. The distributional effects of fiscal consolidation in nine EU countries (No. EM2/13). *Euromod Working Paper*.
- Baldwin, R.E. and Giavazzi, F., 2015. *The Eurozone crisis a consensus view of the causes and a few possible solutions*. London: CEPR Press.
- Bardi, L., 1996. Transnational trends in European parties and the 1994 elections of the European Parliament. *Party Politics*, 2(1), pp.99-114.
- Basu, K., 2016. The Economics and Law of Sovereign Debt and Risk Sharing: Some Lessons from the Eurozone Crisis. *Review of Law & Economics*, 12(3), pp.495-506.
- Bentolila, S., Cahuc, P., Dolado, J.J. and Le Barbanchon, T., 2012. Two-tier labour markets in the Great Recession: France versus Spain. *The Economic Journal*, 122, pp.562.
- Blyth, M., 2013. Austerity as ideology: A reply to my critics. *Comparative European Politics*, 11(6),
- Borrás, S. and Jacobsson, K., 2004. The open method of co-ordination and new governance patterns in the EU. *Journal of European public policy*, 11(2), pp.185-208.
- Bressanelli, E., 2014. Necessary deepening? How political groups in the European Parliament adapt to enlargement. *Journal of European Public Policy*, 21(5), pp.776-792.
- Browning, C.S., 2018. Geostrategies, geopolitics and ontological security in the Eastern neighbourhood: The European Union and the 'new Cold War'. *Political Geography*, 62, pp.106-115.
- Bulmer, S., 2014. Germany and the Eurozone crisis: Between hegemony and domestic politics. *West European Politics*, 37(6), pp.1244-1263.

- Chang, M. and Leblond, P., 2015. All in: Market expectations of eurozone integrity in the sovereign debt crisis. *Review of International Political Economy*, 22(3), pp.626-655.
- Clements, B., Nanou, K. and Verney, S., 2014. 'We no longer love you, but we don't want to leave you': the Eurozone crisis and popular Euroscepticism in Greece. *Journal of European Integration*, 36(3), pp.247-265.
- Cohen, S., Guillamón, M.D., Lapsley, I. and Robbins, G., 2015. Accounting for austerity: the Troika in the Eurozone. *Accounting, Auditing & Accountability Journal*, 28(6), pp.966-992.
- Cross, M.A.K.D., 2017. Counter-terrorism in the EU's external relations. *Journal of European Integration*, pp.1-16.
- Dakowska, D., 2002. Beyond conditionality: EU enlargement, European party federations and the transnational activity of German political foundations. *Perspectives on European Politics and Society*, 3(2), pp.271-296.
- Dinas, E., Jurado, I., Konstantinidis, N. and Walter, S., 2016. Keeping the euro at any cost? Explaining preferences for euro membership in Greece. URL (consulted 16 June 2017): <http://www.zora.uzh>, p.1.
- Durac, V., 2017. Counterterrorism and democracy: EU policy in the Middle East and North Africa after the uprisings. *Mediterranean Politics*, pp.1-19.
- Elliott, D.L., 2017. The Greeks Know Anger: The Causes and Consequences of the Continuing Crisis of Capitalism in the Eurozone South. *Understanding Angry Groups: Multidisciplinary Perspectives on Their Motivations and Effects on Society*, p.287.
- Fabbrini, S., 2013. Intergovernmentalism and Its Limits: Assessing the European Union's Answer to the Euro Crisis 1. *Comparative Political Studies*, 46(9), pp.1003-1029.
- Fabbrini, S., 2015. *Which European Union?*. Cambridge University Press.
- Frieden, J. and Walter, S., 2017. Understanding the Political Economy of the Eurozone Crisis. *Annual Review of Political Science*, 20.
- Frieden, J., 2015. The political economy of adjustment and rebalancing. *Journal of International Money and Finance*, 52, pp.4-14.
- Gagatek, W. and Van Hecke, S., 2011. Towards policy-seeking Europarties? The development of European political foundations. *EUI Working Papers*, Robert Scuman Centre for Advanced Studies.
- Gagatek, W., 2008. Political parties at the European level: their organization and activities: the case of the European People's Party and the Party of European Socialist, *EUI PhD Thesis*, European University Institute, Florence.
- Genschel, P. and Jachtenfuchs, M., 2018. From market integration to core state powers: the Eurozone crisis, the refugee crisis and integration theory. *JCMS: Journal of Common Market Studies*, 56(1), pp.178-196.

- Glencross, A., 2013. The EU response to the eurozone crisis: Democratic contestation and the New Fault Lines in European Integration (No. 3/13). Discussion Paper, Europa-Kolleg Hamburg, Institute for European Integration.
- Goerres, A. and Walter, S., 2016. The Political Consequences of National Crisis Management: Micro-Level Evidence from German Voters during the 2008/09 Global Economic Crisis. *German Politics*, 25(1), pp.131-153.
- Guiraudon, V., 2017. The 2015 refugee crisis was not a turning point: Explaining policy inertia in EU border control. *European Political Science*, pp.1-10.
- Gutiérrez, R., 2014. Welfare performance in Southern Europe: employment crisis and poverty risk. *South European Society and Politics*, 19(3), pp.371-392.
- Haas, E.B., 1958. *The uniting of Europe: Political, social, and economic forces, 1950-1957* (No. 42). Stanford University Press.
- Hagemann, S. and Høyland, B., 2010. Bicameral politics in the European Union. *JCMS: Journal of Common Market Studies*, 48(4), pp.811-833.
- Halikiopoulou, D. and Vasilopoulou, S., 2015. Syriza won with a radical left programme, but keeping the middle class on side may be key to retaining power. *LSE European Politics and Policy (EUROPP) Blog*.
- Hanley, D., 1994. *The European People's Party: Towards a New Party Form?. Christian Democracy in Europe: A Comparative Perspective*, London: Pinter Publishers, pp.185-201.
- Hanley, S. and Sikk, A., 2016. Economy, corruption or floating voters? Explaining the breakthroughs of anti-establishment reform parties in eastern Europe. *Party Politics*, 22(4), pp.522-533.
- Hanley, S., Szczerbiak, A., Haughton, T. and Fowler, B., 2008. Sticking Together: Explaining Comparative Centre—Right Party Success in Post-Communist Central and Eastern Europe. *Party Politics*, 14(4), pp.407-434.
- Harteveld, E., Schaper, J., De Lange, S.L. and Van Der Brug, W., 2018. Blaming Brussels? The Impact of (News about) the Refugee Crisis on Attitudes towards the EU and National Politics. *JCMS: Journal of Common Market Studies*.
- Hecke, S.V. and Gerard, E., 2004. *Christian Democracy in Europe since the End of the Cold War*.
- Heinen, N., Kreutzmann, A.K., Böttcher, B., AG, D.B. and Hoffmann, R., 2015. A profile of Europe's populist parties. *Ann-Kristin Kreutzmann*, 49(69), pp.910-31705.
- Hix, S. and Høyland, B., 2011. *The political system of the European Union*. Palgrave Macmillan.
- Hix, S. and Lord, C., 1997. Parties Beyond the Parliament. In *Political Parties in the European Union* (pp. 167-197). Palgrave, London.

- Hix, S., Noury, A.G. and Roland, G., 2007. *Democratic politics in the European Parliament*. Cambridge University Press.
- Hobolt, S.B. and Wratil, C., 2015. Public opinion and the crisis: the dynamics of support for the euro. *Journal of European Public Policy*, 22(2), pp.238-256.
- Huber, E., Ragin, C. and Stephens, J.D., 1993. Social democracy, Christian democracy, constitutional structure, and the welfare state. *American journal of Sociology*, 99(3), pp.711-749.
- Jachtenfuchs, M., 1998. Democracy and governance in the European Union. In *Democracy and the European union* (pp. 37-64). Springer, Berlin, Heidelberg.
- Jansen, T., 1998. *The European People's Party: origins and development*. Springer.
- Johansson, K.M., 2002. Another road to Maastricht: The Christian democrat coalition and the quest for European Union. *JCMS: Journal of Common Market Studies*, 40(5), pp.871-893.
- Johansson, K.M., 2016. Europarty Influence and Its Limits: The Case of the European People's Party and the Amsterdam Treaty. *Journal of European Integration*, 38(1), pp.79-94.
- Jones, E., 2016. Competitiveness and the European financial crisis. *The Political and Economic Dynamics of the Eurozone Crisis*, pp.79-99.
- Jordan, J., 2017. *Global restructuring and resistance in an age of austerity: a critical political economy of the Eurozone crisis in Greece and Portugal* (Doctoral dissertation, University of Nottingham).
- Kalyvas, S.N. and Van Kersbergen, K., 2010. Christian democracy. *Annual Review of Political Science*, 13, pp.183-209.
- Katsanidou, A. and Otjes, S., 2016. How the European debt crisis reshaped national political space: The case of Greece. *European Union Politics*, 17(2), pp.262-284.
- Kreppel, A. and Hix, S., 2003. From "Grand Coalition" To Left-Right Confrontation: Explaining the Shifting Structure of Party Competition in the European Parliament. *Comparative Political Studies*, 36(1-2), pp.75-96.
- Kreppel, A. and Tsebelis, G., 1999. Coalition formation in the European Parliament. *Comparative Political Studies*, 32(8), pp.933-966.
- Kreutz, J., 2015. Human rights, geostrategy, and EU foreign policy, 1989–2008. *International Organization*, 69(1), pp.195-217.
- Lightfoot, S., 2003. The party of European socialists and the treaty of Amsterdam: Really a policy-seeking party? 1. *Perspectives on European Politics and Society*, 4(2), pp.217-242.
- Lynch, P. and Whitaker, R., 2007. A loveless marriage: The Conservatives and the European People's Party. *Parliamentary Affairs*, 61(1), pp.31-51.

- Mair, P. and Thomassen, J., 2010. Political representation and government in the European Union. *Journal of European Public Policy*, 17(1), pp.20-35.
- Marshall, D., 2015. Explaining interest group interactions with party group members in the European parliament: Dominant party groups and coalition formation. *JCMS: Journal of Common Market Studies*, 53(2), pp.311-329.
- Matsaganis, M. and Leventi, C., 2014. The distributional impact of austerity and the recession in Southern Europe. *South European Society and Politics*, 19(3), pp.393-412.
- McElroy, G. and Benoit, K., 2012. Policy positioning in the European Parliament. *European Union Politics*, 13(1), pp.150-167.
- McGowan, L., 2018. A Union in Crisis or a Union United After June 2017?. In *Preparing for Brexit* (pp. 109-125). Palgrave Macmillan, Cham.
- Mody, A. and Sandri, D., 2012. The eurozone crisis: how banks and sovereigns came to be joined at the hip. *Economic Policy*, 27(70), pp.199-230.
- Morgan, G., 2015. Greece and the Limits of European Solidarity. *Phenomenology and Mind*, (8), pp.50-65.
- Moro, B., 2014. Lessons from the European economic and financial great crisis: A survey. *European Journal of Political Economy*, 34, pp.9-24.
- Moschonas, G., 2013. A New Left in Greece: PASOK's Fall and SYRIZA's Rise. *Dissent*, 60(4), pp.33-37.
- Mundell, R.A., 1961. A theory of optimum currency areas. *The American economic review*, 51(4), pp.657-665.
- Neunreither, K., 1994. The democratic deficit of the European Union: towards closer cooperation between the European Parliament and the national parliaments. *Government and Opposition*, 29(3), pp.299-314.
- Niedermayer, O. and Westle, B., 1995. A typology of orientations. *Public opinion and internationalized governance*, pp.33-50.
- Nuti, M., 2014. The Euro-Area: Premature, Diminished, Divergent. In *Poland and the Eurozone* (pp. 13-22). Palgrave Macmillan, London.
- Pacek, A. and Radcliff, B., 1995. The political economy of competitive elections in the developing world. *American Journal of Political Science*, pp.745-759.
- Pegklis, M., 2016. The evolution of the European People's Party after the integration of parties from Western and Eastern Europe: lessons to be learned for European Integration and the development of Europarties.

Plakoudas, S., 2016. The debt crisis and Greece's changing political discourse. *Byzantine and Modern Greek Studies*, 40(2), pp.307-314.

pp.737-751.

Pridham, G., 2005. *Designing democracy*. Palgrave Macmillan.

Rekawek, K., 2017. Referenced but Not Linear? Counterterrorism in Central-Eastern Europe in Theory and in Practice. *East European Politics and Societies*, 31(1), pp.179-200.

Roth, F., Jonung, L. and Nowak-Lehmann, D., 2016. Crisis and public support for the euro, 1990–2014. *JCMS: Journal of Common Market Studies*, 54(4), pp.944-960.

Sánchez, A.H., 2014. *Financial integration in the Eurozone: The case of the the Banking Union* (Doctoral dissertation, Central European University).

Schimmelfennig, F., 2007. European regional organizations, political conditionality, and democratic transformation in Eastern Europe. *East European politics and societies*, 21(1), pp.126-141.

Schimmelfennig, F., 2014. European integration in the euro crisis: The limits of postfunctionalism. *Journal of European Integration*, 36(3), pp.321-337.

Schmidt, V.A., 2013. Democracy and legitimacy in the European Union revisited: Input, output and 'throughput'. *Political Studies*, 61(1), pp.2-22.

Schmitter, P.C., 2003. Democracy in Europe and Europe's democratization. *Journal of Democracy*, 14(4), pp.71-85.

Smith, G., 1989. A system perspective on party system change. *Journal of Theoretical Politics*, 1(3), pp.349-363.

Smith, K.E., 2017. A European Union global strategy for a changing world?. *International Politics*, pp.1-16.

Spirova, M., 2008. The Bulgarian socialist party: The long road to Europe. *Communist and Post-Communist Studies*, 41(4), pp.481-495.

Theodoropoulou, S., 2016. What solidarity in the Eurozone after the Greek crisis of 2015?. *Social policy in the European Union: state of play 2016*, p.33.

Thimann, C., 2015. The microeconomic dimensions of the Eurozone crisis and why European politics cannot solve them. *The Journal of Economic Perspectives*, 29(3), pp.141-163.

Tsakiris, T., 2015. The energy parameters of the Russian–Ukrainian–EU impasse: dependencies, sanctions and the rise of 'Turkish Stream'. *Southeast European and Black Sea Studies*, 15(2), pp.203-219.

Tsoukalis, L., 2011. Greece in the euro area: odd man out, or precursor of things to come?. *Resolving the European Debt Crisis*.

Tuori, K. and Tuori, K., 2014. *The Eurozone crisis: a constitutional analysis*. Cambridge University Press.

Van Kersbergen, K., 1994. The distinctiveness of Christian democracy. *Christian democracy in Europe*, pp.31-47.

Van Kersbergen, K., 2003. *Social capitalism: A study of Christian democracy and the welfare state*. Routledge.

Van Oudenhove, G., 1965. *The Political Parties in the European Parliament: The First Ten Years, September 1952-September 1962 (Vol. 18)*. Leyden, Sijthoff.

Verney, S. and Bosco, A. eds., 2016. *Protest elections and challenger parties: Italy and Greece in the economic crisis*. Routledge.

von dem Berge, B. and Poguntke, T., 2013. The influence of Europarties on Central and Eastern European partner parties: a theoretical and analytical model. *European Political Science Review*, 5(2), pp.311-334.

Walter, S., 2016. Crisis politics in Europe: Why austerity is easier to implement in some countries than in others. *Comparative Political Studies*, 49(7), pp.841-873.

Appendices

Competitiveness

Grounded: 51, Density: 3

- Single Market implementation
- Growth policies related to EU budget for investments
- Structural Funds
- Sustainable Economy & Growth
- Support SMEs
- Internal Energy Market
- Cultural and creative industries
- Youth Employment
- The 3 Es: Employment, enterprises and entrepreneurship
- TTIP vote

Troika

Grounded: 7, Density: 4

- Prevented the worse
- Transparency, legitimation and democratic control of the Troika
- European Monetary Fund

Solidarity

Grounded: 10, Density: 1

- Focus on promoting employment and solidarity
- "Living Proof" campaign
- Cohesion of the Eur. Parliament and national parliaments
- Rejects to reduced EU budget – bad for Europeans
- Human rights (related to the economic crisis)
- Better intra-EU donor coordination
- Third Health Programme (2014-2020)
- Financial stability: Precondition for social welfare

Reforms in the European Union

Grounded: 47, Density: 3

- Responsible budget for growth and jobs
- No sustainable growth without courageous reforms
- Record fine for benchmark interest rate rigging cartel
- MiFID: EU rules on financial markets provide stability and transparency
- Hercule III Programme Tax rulings: more transparency and fiscal fairness

European Central Bank and European Banking System

Grounded: 23, Density: 2

- Completion of the economic and monetary union
- European banking supervision to break vicious cycle between banking crisis and government debts
- Stronger Economic and Monetary Union – boost Eurozone
- Move towards a banking, fiscal and tax union
- Failing Banks
- ECB must exercise its independent role responsibly
- More transparency in shadow banking

Research and Innovation

Grounded: 11, Density: 1

- EU research framework programme "Horizon 2020"
- Growth and employment policies especially in fields such as research, entrepreneurship and employment
- Co-creation and industrial leadership
- European Long-Term Investment Funds - infrastructure, machinery and equipment, education and research results

Codes, Grounded quotations, Densities, Keywords and Key Phrases (sub-codes)

Data source: EPP Group in the European Parliament (<http://www.eppgroup.eu/press-releases>)

Figure 1: Codes, Grounded quotations, Densities, Keywords and Key phrases (sub-codes)

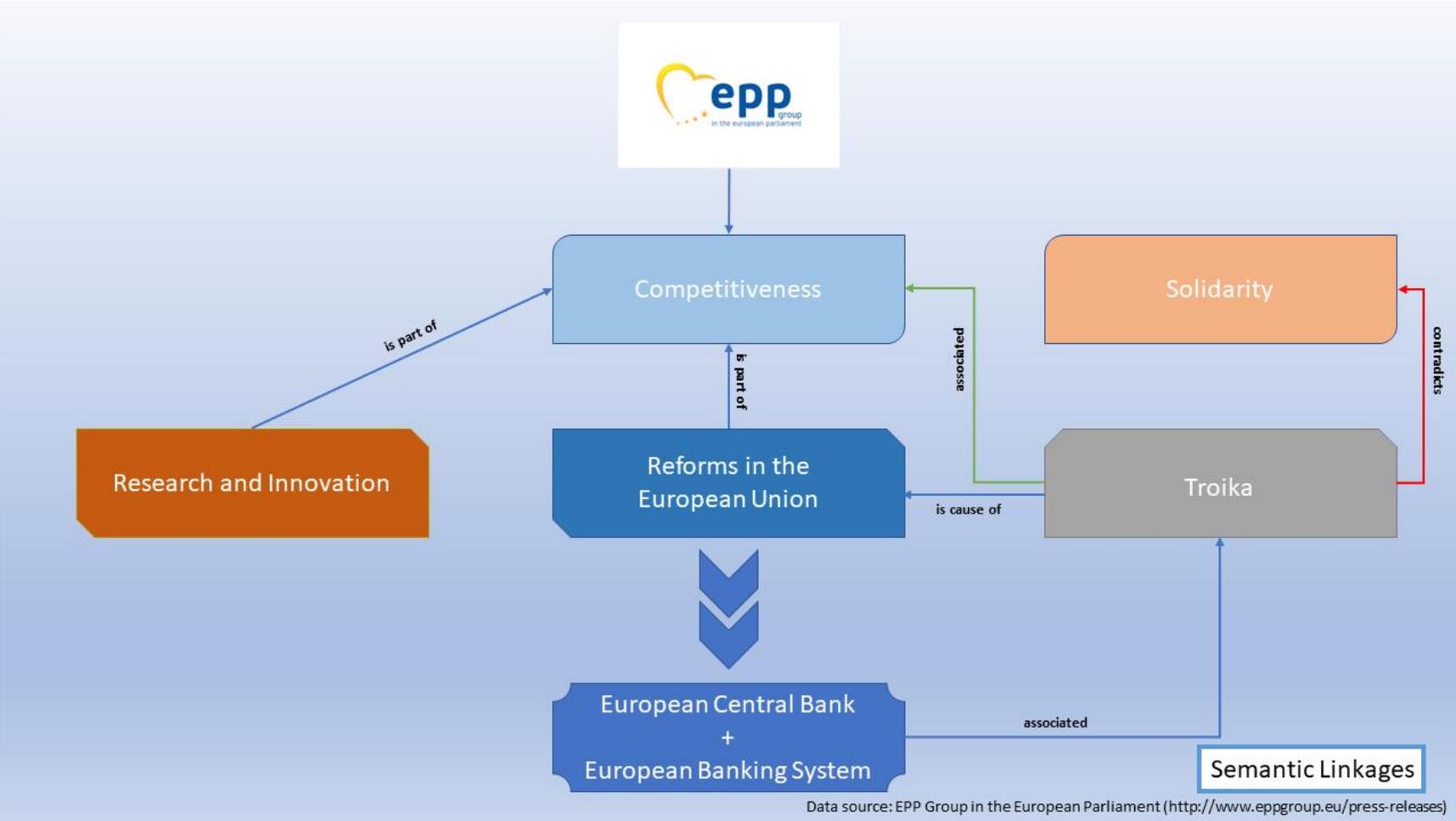


Figure 2: Semantic Linkages

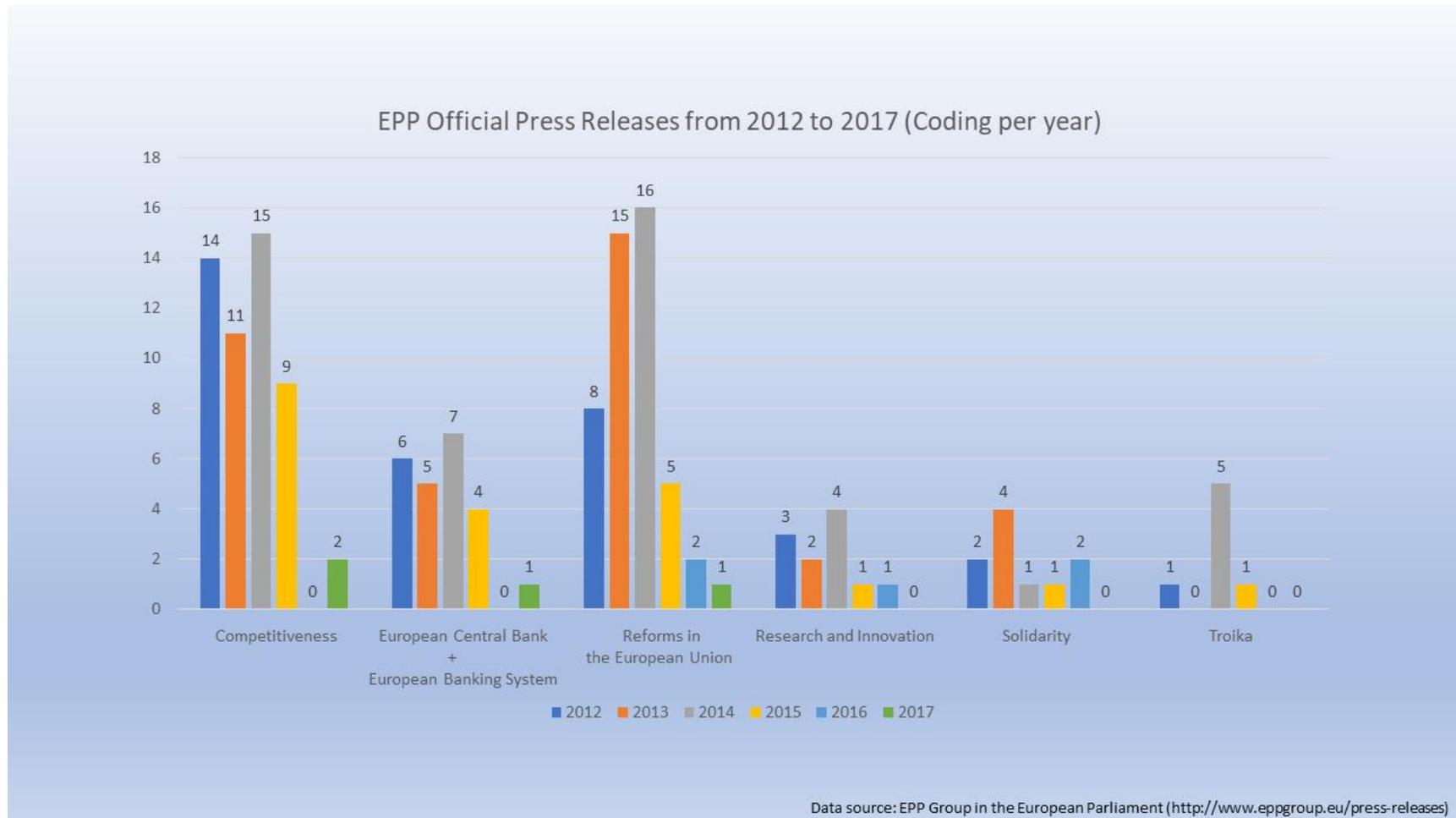


Figure 3: EPP Official Press Releases from 2012 to 2017 (Coding per year)

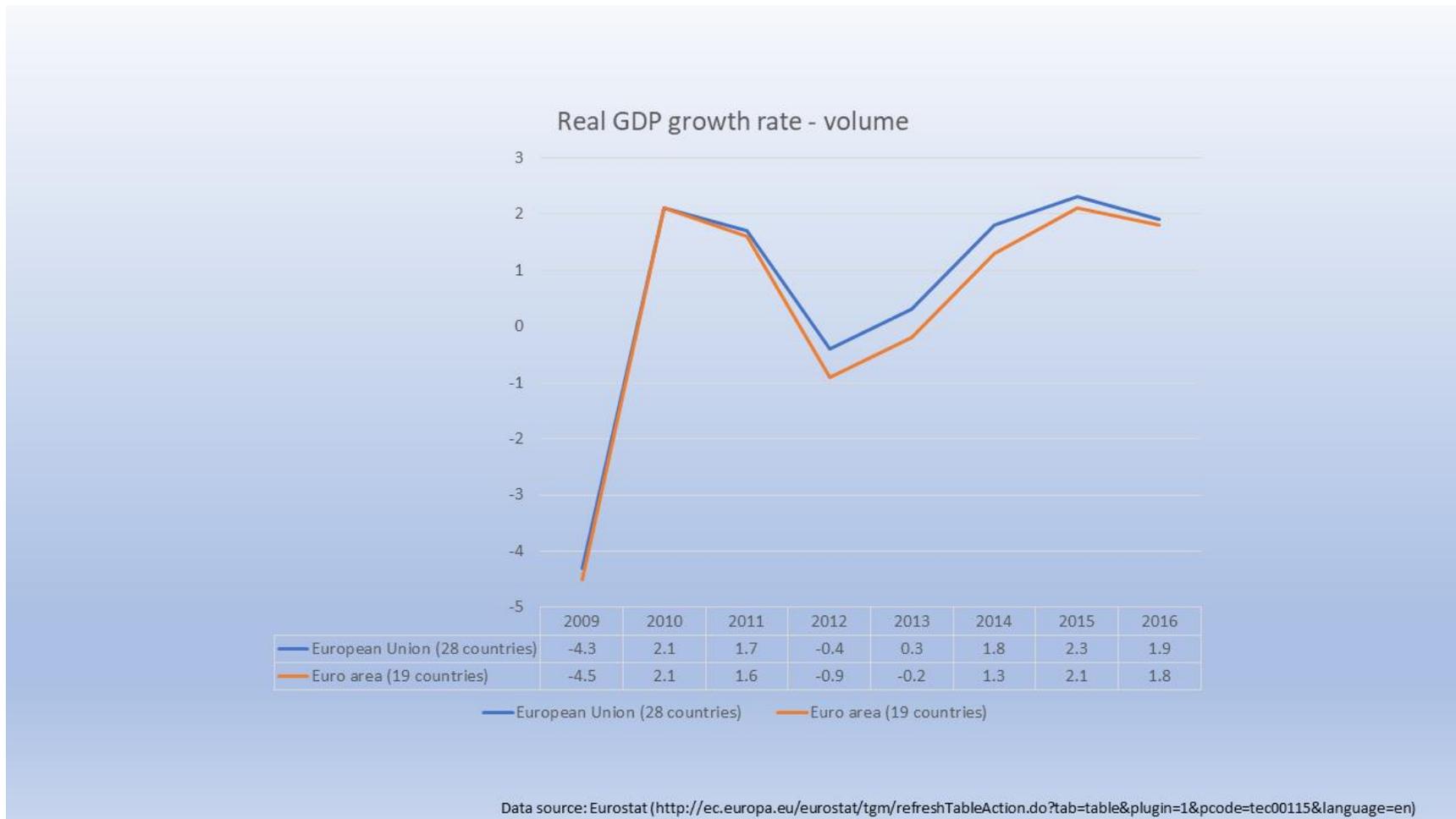


Figure 4: Real GDP growth rate - volume

