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## EU and political parties: are EP elections and EU presidency parties' priorities?

### Introduction

The presidency of the Council of the European Union is often defined in the context of a nationwide challenge requiring amicable cooperation all the actors on the political scene. A different logic governs elections to the European Parliament in which political parties are required to use competitive strategies.

Is the expectation of all-party agreement in the member state which takes over the EU presidency based on rational foundations? There are a lot of signs in favour of that. It is hard not to have an impression that the central administration responsible for planning, preparation and efficient execution of the six-month presidency in the EU fails to notice that the participation of domestic political parties in this process is a must. This attitude does not provoke any great disappointment among the party elites, perhaps due to the fact that they do not aspire to affect the selection of priorities or a model of the presidency. It is worth considering whether it is a unique characteristic of new member states which results from their lack of experience in preparing the presidency or maybe in this process, like in hardly any in the contemporary politics, the role of the party is unusually modest.

Elections to the European Parliament provide a definitely much better space for use by political parties than preparation of the presidency of the Council of the EU. However, it shall be taken into consideration that the competitiveness of these elections is definitely lower than that of elections to national parliaments, which was proved by numerous studies. Political parties regard them as a matter of secondary importance, which is reflected in moderate election campaigns, lower expenditures on election promotion, lower media coverage. Nonetheless, it will not be an overstatement to say that for the parties EP elections are the most important event in the European political arena.

### The role of political parties in setting priorities for EU presidencies – initiator, commentator or a fifth wheel?

The EU presidency is connected with the necessity to establish the most important areas of the EU activity and to set the priorities of the presidency in this regard. When setting the priorities a lot of factors shall be taken into consideration as apart from the

interest of the state holding the presidency other significant elements are the progress of the EU works in each area of interest, challenges and needs which the EU faces both internally and externally, the current situation on the international and community political scene, as well as interests and objectives of the states forming the trio presidencies. "The EU Presidency is not a »one state show in Brussels«"<sup>1</sup> and the autonomy in setting priorities for the EU presidency is relatively limited.

The term of the presidency is only six months, therefore the member state presiding over the Council of the European Union should focus on a very short list of strategic priorities, not ignoring the necessity to win the support for them from the other EU member states. Usually the areas of activity are selected in such a way that it is possible to make significant progress in the fields chosen. Initial decisions regarding the direction of the presidency are usually made two years beforehand in order to have time for putting them on the agenda of the EU works<sup>2</sup>.

In the case of the Polish EU presidency (the second half of 2011), the logic of dates and the international situation shows that the priorities of the EU presidency shall include negotiations on a new financial perspective of the European Union for the years 2014-2020 and the energy policy. It would also be in Poland's interest to intensify the EU activities regarding the Eastern Partnership as a part of the European Neighbourhood Policy, especially because so far that has been the only Polish initiative (strongly supported by Sweden) unanimously, although not always enthusiastically, accepted by other member states.

The government plenipotentiary for coordination of preparations and execution of the Polish EU presidency announced at the beginning of 2009 the appointment of a programme team which – in accordance with what he said – would have to be open to

the non-governmental environment. Earlier, he declared in interviews that: „all Polish brains in law, economy, and education shall be engaged in the process of preparing the Polish EU presidency.”<sup>3</sup> At the beginning of November 2008, he was talking in the Sejm about the need for consultations and agreements regarding the presidency at local government level and about the principle of openness and dialogue, in the spirit of which this task is to be performed. So far, neither his statements nor declarations of other government representatives contained any suggestions about potential participation of political parties in analytical and conceptual works.

Preparation and then execution of the presidency of the Council of the European Union provide a challenge mainly for the central administration: the President of the Council of Ministers and the Council of Ministers and ministers and central offices serving them, the European Committee of the Council of Ministers. Important entities preparing presidencies are Permanent Representations of member states to the European Union in Brussels. The central administration usually counts also on the support of local government authorities, local governments and business entities. The fact is that at all levels of administration there are representatives of political parties, however, in the context of the presidency they act mainly as officers and not representatives of their respective political parties.

When analysing the member states' presidencies of the EU to date and participation of political parties in preparations for this event, we shall not expect great involvement on their part. In the so-called old member states the rotating presidency of the Council of the European Union is something usual, almost banal. It is a task for the government and central administration and not for political parties. Media do not show either any special interest in the presidency rotating

every six months and only critical situations can attract their attention for a longer time. That was the case with the presidency of France in the second half of 2008 when Nicolas Sarkozy – to a large extent due to a conflict in Georgia – became the media hero presented as a tough representative of the European Union. In March 2009, the interest in the presidency grew again, this time due to the fall of Mirek Topolánek's government in the Czech Republic presiding over the Council of the European Union. In other member states holding the presidency has not been a media event so far, which is another argument for political parties against getting involved. New member states differ a little bit as regards interest of the media in the EU presidency from the EU-15 Member States as every initiative – also regarding politics – attracts attention. That could be observed in Slovenia in the first half of 2008 and now in Hungary where preparations for the presidency in the first half of 2011 are in progress.

Polish political elites do not seem to be interested in setting priorities for the Polish presidency of the Council either. One exception is the chair of SLD (Sojusz Lewicy Demokratycznej – the Democratic Left Alliance) who in January 2009 suggested to the Prime Minister that following the example of the debate on Poland joining the Euro Zone he should invite all heads of the parties and parliamentary groupings to discuss preparations for the EU presidency and that he should present his proposition of the political calendar for this event, consulting it with all political parties. Earlier, the parliamentary grouping the Left had initiated a discussion in the Sejm about the preparations for the EU presidency. So far, these were the only manifestations of a „presidency-related” activity of political elites. The chair of the Left not without reason noticed in November 2008 during a debate in the Sejm about the Polish presidency in 2011 that:

This is not a subject which invokes great emotions today, there are not many debates on it, it does not provoke political discussions which would stimulate politicians and journalists but it is of the utmost importance.<sup>4</sup>

The EU presidency is not an arena for political games also because political elites are aware that by attacking each other, criticizing priorities set by the government, questioning organisational competences they would harm the national interest which is a six-month opportunity to lead the EU policy, and weaken the negotiating position of their government in the moment in which it should be particularly strong. During the presidency, disputes between the ruling and opposition parties usually die down, politically difficult decisions are postponed until „after the presidency”. An example is provided by the Swedish presidency in 2001 when all the opposition parties constructively cooperated with the government despite their critical opinions about the government's policy.<sup>5</sup> The case of the Czech Republic and dismissal of Topolánek's government during its term of the presidency is an isolated incident in this context. Despite declarations of the social democratic opposition in the beginning of 2008 and promises of „a truce” for the term of the Czech EU presidency, in March 2009 Jiri Paroubek's CSSD called for a vote of no confidence and early parliamentary elections. Internal political disputes proved to be stronger than building prestige of the Czech Republic on the international scene and within the European Union.

Since national political parties do not try to influence the formation of the priorities of the presidency, maybe such attempts are initiated at above-national level by transnational federations of political parties? Europarties<sup>6</sup> indeed express their opinion about successive presidencies, work out common positions on them. A change in the EU presidency is always an opportunity to organise so-called conferences of party leaders

during which common program platforms are established before the most important meetings of the heads and chairs of state governments as part of the meeting of individual councils of the Council of the European Union. However, it does not mean that political parties play any significant role in the operations of the Council, that is rather about demonstrating party organisations as coordinating entities from the point of view of programme interests.<sup>7</sup> It is not, either, that transnational party federations try to influence the setting of national priorities of the presidencies, they do not initiate debates in member states at the preparatory stage, taking rather the position of a commentator of the presidencies which are currently being executed.

## The wish list or political parties about the priorities of the Polish presidency

The analysis of the Polish political parties' strategy towards the preparations for the Polish EU presidency is a risky task in the second quarter of 2009, as this matter has never been subject to public debate. Excitement is caused only by the coincidence of the term of the EU presidency and parliamentary elections, which will be discussed later in this article.

Materials which might provide an answer to a question about the political parties' positions on the priorities of the presidency are very limited and their content is little coherent. The opinions expressed by the politicians from the same party for the media and during the Sejm sessions often create confusion as they are full of contradictions and prove the spontaneity of the persons who express them rather than a well-thought-out strategy of the party. There are no official party documents about the Polish presiden-

cy in 2011, there are no local internal party debates, parties' websites do not look ahead into such a distant future either. Therefore my analysis of the political parties' positions is based on stenographic record of the 28th meeting of the Sejm of the Republic of Poland which was held on 6th November 2008 and in some part was dedicated to the Polish EU presidency. Representatives of all parliamentary parties took part in the discussion, which may give a small idea about their positions on the priorities of the EU presidency.

None of the parties question the fact that the efficient preparation and execution of the presidency in 2011 requires unanimous cooperation. The Leftist politician – Wojciech Olejniczak pointed out that: "During the presidency, Poland will work out and present a stance on behalf of the whole European Union. Therefore above-party commitments to carry out technical preparations are needed"<sup>8</sup>, and in conclusion he said that it is "a challenge which we shall meet together today overcoming divisions."<sup>9</sup> Also Andrzej Grzyb representing PSL (Polskie Stronnictwo Ludowe – the Polish People's Party) was talking about the need for above-party cooperation. In his opinion, the team spirit shall be present when discussing the formal preparation, forming Poland's position on the priorities and the manner in which they are to be implemented<sup>10</sup>. His party colleague, Mieczysław Kasprzak, added that: "the Polish presidency is a very important national event. This matter requires agreement above political divisions otherwise we cannot imagine how we could make a good use of this term for our country."<sup>11</sup>

As regards the priorities for the presidency, the members of the parliament showed great inventiveness, although also here the representatives of individual parties did not torpedo their opponents' ideas. The most often raised issue which shall be the main objective of the Polish EU presidency in the second half of 2011 was the Union's eastern

policy and the energy policy. Here are some quotations:

In accordance with the Polish People's Party (the PPP) such priority is the eastern policy. It will be one of the most important opportunities to improve the relations with our neighbours, both Poland's and European Union's. It is also about the context of energy security (Mieczysław Kasprzak representing the PPP);<sup>12</sup>

the need for working out the Polish concept for the cooperation between the European Union and the Eastern European countries which today are outside the EU, discussing appropriate agreements, including trade agreements which could be signed in 2011 (Wojciech Olejniczak of the Left);<sup>13</sup>

The European Union is facing such challenges as: the issue of the EU enlargement, energy security, relations of the EU with Russia, relations of the EU with the United States, and the global warming issue. [...] The most important tasks are the first two items, that is the enlargement of the EU towards the East, including mainly the Ukraine and Georgia, as well as energy security. [...] How in its term of the presidency Poland would like to protect the EU against monopolisation of oil and gas supplies by Russia? (Adam Cwierz of the PPP)<sup>14</sup>;

Working out a common energy policy for Poland and also for the European Union shall be one of our most important priorities (Mirosława Nykiel of Platforma Obywatelska – the Civic Platform);<sup>15</sup>

The most important matter for Poland is energy security and a common policy of the European Union on this issue (Zbigniew Giżyński of Prawo i Sprawiedliwość – the Law and Justice).<sup>16</sup>

During the Sejm debate also other propositions were put forward. MPs of the Left stressed the need for actions related to social policy, education and democratisation of the European Union. Tadeusz Tomaszewski asked, for example:

Is “the partnership for institutionalisation of support for social economy” also taken into account as an important issue, in particular for all member states which acceded to the European Union as part of this great enlargement but also for new members, in the light of openness and dialogue and the announced consultations and dis-

cussions with the society about our priorities in the presidency?<sup>17</sup>

Krystyna Łybacka of the Left regretted that “all these [...] important priorities are dehumanised”<sup>18</sup> and suggested to think about a human dimension of the European integration during the term of the Polish presidency.

Could not it be the characteristics of Poland that we suggest as an important political objective the discussion on demographic issues – the ageing of society. Another big issue, that is the education of young generation which shall oppose the impact of the IT civilisation era, cold, emotionless world of the Internet.<sup>19</sup>

Stanisław Stec of the Left suggested that our priority should be a different attitude towards the participation of European Union societies in economic growth in order to reduce disproportions in income, increase the participation in growth of people with low income, so that “[they – A.P. note] could feel satisfaction from our presidency.”<sup>20</sup> The need for greater democratisation of the Union was also brought up by a representative of the Law and Justice:

What actions the Polish government intends to take during the presidency in order to increase democratisation of life in the European Union? The point is to make it possible for national societies to participate more widely than so far in decisions which are of strategical significance for them.<sup>21</sup>

Not all suggestions regarding the Polish presidency in 2011 were articulated during the Sejm debate in a direct and straight manner. The suggestion of PO (Platforma Obywatelska) about one of the objectives of our EU presidency could be read from the question asked by Anna Zielińska-Głębocka, MP, about the need to change relations between the Community regulation and liberalisation.

How much freedom, liberty will be provided in the internal market programme and how many new regulations or what additional strengthening of the current regulations and whether our priorities already include these issues?<sup>22</sup>

However, it would be difficult to combine a liberal demand for deregulation of the internal market with an intention to keep strongly interventionist mechanisms, such as current principles of the common agricultural policy and direct farming subsidies, the need for which was brought up by Stanisław Stec of the Left.<sup>23</sup> None of the MPs joined the discussion on this issue, which may prove the fact that political parties are aware of the unimportant role they play in setting the priorities for the EU presidency.

The parties through the mouths of their members raised also concrete issues „to be resolved” in the second half of 2011. A politician of SLD was talking about the need to liquidate the British Rebate during the Polish presidency<sup>24</sup>, a representative of PSL – about the need to simplify applications and procedures for acquiring EU funds.<sup>25</sup> Also ambitious demands of a general nature were made. A member of PiS noticed that:

[...] it would be justified to create an opportunity for citizens to express their comments and opinions. It would be a disaster if, during our term of the presidency, we would not work on raising our society's awareness, and the public would store only the memory of lunches and summit meetings of European leaders.<sup>26</sup>

Thus, the presidency of the Council of the European Union would be an opportunity to achieve an ambitious goal, namely teaching the Poles deliberation, participation and civic virtue.

Unlike the process of setting potential priorities for the Polish EU presidency, the coincidence of the Polish EU presidency and the parliamentary elections resulting from the election calendar arises much more emotions among the elites of national political parties. The debate over this issue has been going on for some time already. Two main proposals are discussed: shortening of the term of office of the Sejm and the Senat and holding elections in spring 2011 or exchanging the term of the presidency with

another member state. In the beginning also a suggestion was made to extend the term of the parliament so that the presidency would be held by the same government who prepared it but in a short time it was evident that no political party is interested in supporting this solution.

The government's stand on this issue was presented in November 2008 during the Sejm session by the secretary of the European Integration Committee, who said that:

As regards an exchange of the term of the presidency with another member state, the time for taking this decision was in the last year. I understand that the former government [led by the Prime Minister Jarosław Kaczyński – A.P. note] was carrying on certain concept works on whether to exchange the term with someone or not. Donald Tusk's government decided not to exchange the term of the presidency with anybody. The reason for this decision is that we want to be the leader of this trio. If we resigned from this, we would also give away certain political capital which we win. The current calendar is the most favourable for us to effectively execute the presidency, effectively implement our priorities.<sup>27</sup>

This declaration has not exhausted the discussion and has not discourage some of the parties from attempting to force through a change of the six-month term of our presidency. The Democratic Left Alliance in the middle of January 2009 publicly suggested such exchange with Denmark. Jerzy Szmajdziński persuaded:

Presiding over the United Europe is for Poland an epoch-making event. Poland has not played such a role since the Congress of Vienna when Sigismund I, Vladislavus II, and Maximilian I decided about the future of the Central Europe. The chance that Poland is facing must not be ruined or rather sunk in the ocean of election leaflets.<sup>28</sup>

In the SLD opinion, Poland should therefore strive to start its term of the presidency not on 1st July 2011 as it was decided previously, but on 1st January 2012. This would

not be the first such case, as in the years 2005/06, due to the election calendar, Germany exchanged its term of the presidency with Finland. The rub is that in the same six-month period elections are to be held in both Denmark and Poland.

Political parties seek agreement regarding parliamentary elections in spring 2011. And they are very likely to find it as the majority of politicians consider this idea reasonable. The management of the Law and Justice signalled in the media that it might give its consent to early parliamentary elections as "it is practically impossible to execute the presidency under the internal election campaign conditions"<sup>29</sup>. The head of the Civic Platform parliamentary grouping was also in favour of spring elections.

It may be deemed that early parliamentary elections would solve the issue of inter-party disputes during the term of the Polish EU presidency. However, it seems that this assumption is too optimistic. The post-election political emotions will die down slowly and the consequences of the campaign ran in the first half of 2011 are most likely to leave their imprint on the presidency held in the second half of the same year.

## EP elections as policy priority of political parties

The political parties are national "organisms", therefore it is the national level which determines their programmes and decides about strategies and behaviours in the political space. The European Union level is not a completely neutral area for effective and efficient pushing of their own ideas and working out positions on the parliamentary arena, thus also in elections to the European Parliament national political parties apply pioneering strategies for acting and developing election programmes.

In the classic democracy canon parties are seen as organisations playing a significant role in political life. Parties motivate voters, recruit staff, control the centres of power, prepare election programmes, participate in ideological dispute and political conflicts. These actions are typical, but only in the national context of political parties operations. In the European political space political parties do not compete to seize power as power is „located” somewhere else. Despite the lack of this powerful drive, national political parties from the member states take over the burden of duties related to an election campaign, nominate candidates for MPs and incur costs of an election campaign. After elections are completed, MPs representing such parties are usually separated from national affairs and the issues of the voters. As part of multiparty parliamentary fractions completely different functions are assigned to them. National political parties think of the European Parliament rather in terms of prestige, thus persons running as party candidates are often individuals the party wants to honour, appreciate and prise. There are also opposite strategies where the purpose of putting someone on the list of candidates is to separate an inconvenient individual from the main stream of the national policy.<sup>30</sup>

In European elections political parties follow the models of national political competition: the entities which try to win a significant political position in their respective countries also compete for seats in the European Parliament, and the election campaign concerns the main (national) political issues. Despite the common opinion, domination of national over European issues in the EP election battle does not mean that the Euroelections are underestimated by the entities taking part in the political competition. They are aware that the national context, even during such elections, plays the main role and is the primary way to introduce their own programme manifestos when ad-

addressing European issues which play a “supplementary” role. The fact of putting emphasis on the national issues and not on the issues of a strictly European importance determines an increase in public approval for the unification processes in Europe and an increase in the support for the parties running for the Parliament.<sup>31</sup> Such distribution of emphases is rational also for the reason that political parties do not fully regulate the European political space, they have a narrowed (as compared with the national space) scope of competences in this regard. Therefore, directing the political agenda of the party towards the national government’s policy is a dominant tactic in the case of elections to the European Parliament.

## Conclusion

Although the presidency of the Council of the European Union and elections to the European Parliament are linked with the European political space, preparations for them are made on the national arena. Priorities of the political parties, however, are not the same in the case of these two events. Preparations for the EU presidency is not a field for ideological and party involvement as it is governed by different logic than national policy. A mosaic of different interests and variables which shall be taken into consideration (including but not limited to the necessity of working out common priorities by

the member states forming the trio of presidencies, taking into account the current international situation, finding a place on the EU calendar, respecting the EU’s progress in concrete policy areas) makes the interparty battles rank low on the list. Theoretically, attempts to torpedo preparations for the presidency by the (parliamentary or non-parliamentary) opposition parties are realistic, but the probability that they occur in new member states is close to zero. Taking into account the fact that for the first time they will become head of the European Union for six months and a sense of national pride involved in it, creation of a conflict over the EU presidency would be a political suicide for the national political party elites.

Elections to the European Parliament have been “domesticated”, “tamed” by the national political parties, political competition realities from the national level have been adapted for the level of European elections. However, the importance of these elections is not the same for individual political parties. The importance is affected by many factors: position held by, a given political party in the national political system, relations towards power wielding (a ruling or opposition party, a parliamentary or non-parliamentary party) and the national election calendar which makes the EP elections a specific popularity contest of the parties before the main game, that is before parliamentary, president or local government elections.

<sup>1</sup> I. Slosarcik, *The Czech Republic in 2009: Low Profile Presidency with High Profile Challenges?*, [in:] A. Agh, J. Kis-Varga (eds), *New Perspectives for the EU Team Presidencies: New Members, New Candidates and New Neighbours*, “Together for Europe” Research Centre, Budapest 2008, p. 90.

<sup>2</sup> F. Foret, Y.S. Rittelmeyer, *Les présidences de l’Union européenne en redéfinition: Quelle légitimité? Quelle efficacité? (EU-Presidencies in redefinition: which legitimacy, which efficacy?)*, “Les Cahiers du Cevipol” 2008, no. 4.

<sup>3</sup> M. Dowgilewicz, J. Pawlicki, *Wawel, budżet, bigos – jak porządzymy w UE (Wawel, budget, gallimaufry – how will we govern in Europe)*, “Gazeta Wyborcza” 2008, no. 169, p. 6.

<sup>4</sup> W. Olejniczak, *Sprawozdanie stenograficzne z 28 posiedzenia Sejmu Rzeczypospolitej Polskiej w dniu 6 listopada 2008 (Stenographic record of the 28th meeting of the Sejm of the Republic of Poland on 6th November 2008)*, Sejm Rzeczypospolitej Polskiej, Kadencja VI, Warszawa 2008, p. 176.



<sup>5</sup> F. Langdal, G. von Sydow, *The Swedish 2009 Presidency and the Trio – A Preview*, [in:] A. Agh, J. Kis-Varga (eds), *op. cit.*, p. 151.

<sup>6</sup> The term “europarty” is not a synonym of the term “transnational federation of parties”, but in this case these two terms were used interchangeably.

<sup>7</sup> R. Wiszniowski, *Europejska przestrzeń polityczna. Zachowania elektoratu w wyborach do Parlamentu Europejskiego (European political arena. Electoral behaviours in EP elections)*, Wrocław 2008, p. 82.

<sup>8</sup> W. Olejniczak, *op. cit.*, p. 177.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 190.

<sup>10</sup> A. Grzyb, *Sprawozdanie stenograficzne...*, p. 181.

<sup>11</sup> M. Kasprzak, *Sprawozdanie stenograficzne...*, p. 186.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 186.

<sup>13</sup> W. Olejniczak, *op. cit.*, p. 177.

<sup>14</sup> A. Ćwierz, *Sprawozdanie stenograficzne...*, p. 182.

<sup>15</sup> M. Nykiel, *Sprawozdanie stenograficzne...*, p. 187.

<sup>16</sup> Z. Giżyński, *Sprawozdanie stenograficzne...*, p. 188.

<sup>17</sup> T. Tomaszewski, *Sprawozdanie stenograficzne...*, p. 181.

<sup>18</sup> K. Łybacka, *Sprawozdanie stenograficzne...*, p. 182.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>20</sup> S. Stec, *Sprawozdanie stenograficzne...*, p. 184.

<sup>21</sup> G. Masłowska, *Sprawozdanie stenograficzne...*, p. 189.

<sup>22</sup> A. Zielińska-Głębocka, *Sprawozdanie stenograficzne...*, p. 185.

<sup>23</sup> S. Stec, *Sprawozdanie stenograficzne...*, p. 184.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>25</sup> F.J. Stefaniuk, *Sprawozdanie stenograficzne...*, p. 185.

<sup>26</sup> E. Siarka, *Sprawozdanie stenograficzne...*, p. 187.

<sup>27</sup> M. Dowgielewicz, *Sprawozdanie stenograficzne...*, p. 191.

<sup>28</sup> J. Szmajdziński, *Przełożmy polską prezydenturę w UE (Change Polish presidency in EU)*, “Gazeta Wyborcza” 2009, no. 13.

<sup>29</sup> P. Gosiewski, statement for TVPInfo, 17th January 2009.

<sup>30</sup> R. Wiszniowski, *op. cit.*, pp. 354–358.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 351.

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## EU and political parties: are EP elections and EU presidency parties' priorities?

### Summary

Although the presidency of the Council of the European Union and elections to the European Parliament are linked to the European political space, preparations for them are made on the national arena. Priorities of the political parties, however, are not the same in the case of these two events.

Preparations for the EU presidency is not a field for ideological and party involvement. A mosaic of different interests and variables which shall be taken into consideration (including the necessity of working out common priorities by the member states forming the trio of presidencies, taking into account the current international situation, finding a place on the EU calendar, respecting the EU's progress in concrete policy areas) makes the interparty battles rank low on the list. When analysing the member states' presidencies of the EU to date and participation of political parties in preparations for this event, we shall not expect great involvement on their part.

Elections to the European Parliament have been "domesticated", "tamed" by the national political parties, political competition realities from the national level have been adapted for the level of European elections. However, the importance of these elections is not the same for individual political parties and is affected by many factors: position held by a given political party in the national political system, relations towards power wielding (a ruling or opposition party, a parliamentary or non-parliamentary party) and the national election calendar.