

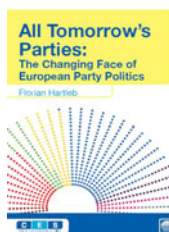


All tomorrow's parties: the changing face of European party politics

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Political parties are continually under pressure, due to changes in societies, technologies and politics as a whole. At the moment Europe is on the threshold of a new environment that is changing the face of political parties themselves. The picture has both optimistic (concerning the possibilities of 'virtual' activism) and negative (concerning 'real' membership and stable voting) elements. In general, parties have to transform the tools of organisation and participation to tackle their declining memberships. New types of populist parties—virtual, 'flash', 'couch' or 'one seat' parties in which members fit on a single couch or in the case of Geert Wilders even on one chair—only arise during electoral campaigns. It is possible to observe two extreme positions or models that are attributable to the parties: one form is a strictly authoritarian leadership; the other is a more even, unfiltered participation based on a 'virtual community'. In spite of this development, strongly principled parties based on values and stable commitments could still take the lead, provided they do not embrace a loose societal modernisation.



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This is an executive summary of a research paper published by the CES. The full version can be found at www.thinkingeurope.eu.