Pro-Europeans and ‘Euro-Realists’: The Party-Voters Linkage and Parties’ Political Agendas in Poland, 2004–2019

Michał Dulak

1 INTRODUCTION

After the parliamentary election in autumn 2015, the coalition government under the right-wing Law and Justice (Prawo i Sprawiedliwość—PiS) party’s leadership undertook several decisions that put Poland’s government at loggerheads with the European Commission. Conflicts arose on a wide range of issues including the government’s attempts to curb the media, the logging of Europe’s oldest forest and the refugee relocation scheme. Among them, the most profound and widely commented on was the judiciary reform that led to triggering the Article 7 procedure of the Treaty on European Union and the rule of law related infringement procedures.

Such developments suggest that the EU rule violations are not isolated cases but rather reflect a strategy of transforming Poland from the model of a pro-integration East Central European (ECE) member state into

M. Dulak (✉)
Jagiellonian University, Kraków, Poland
e-mail: michal.dulak@uj.edu.pl

another ‘trouble-maker’ in the time of crises rocking the EU boat. Put in the broader context of democratic backsliding in ECE countries (Rupnik 2007; Ágh 2014, 2015; Berend and Bugarcic 2015; Hanley and Dawson 2016; Krastev 2018), it can be hypothesised that the illiberal turn in Poland is linked with a process of de-Europeanisation which is being forced by the PiS government. This chapter examines if party manifestos are de-Europeanised and if this reflects the parties’ electorates attitudes.¹

In representative democracies, the political agenda is, *inter alia*, shaped by voters’ preferences. Since parties are interested in attracting a maximum of votes, the concept of party-voters linkage suggests that they are influenced by societal attitudes to de-Europeanise their political agendas or restrain from doing so. To test this assumption, this study covers Poland’s EU membership period from 2004 to 2019 and the two main political parties which were the leaders in governing coalitions since 2005, the liberal-conservative PO and the conservative PiS. Particular attention will be paid to the period of the conflicts with the EU during the second PiS government in 2015–2019, which so far has not been thoroughly analysed by political scientists. Interpreting the data with reference to the previous majority cabinets, when the Platforma Obywatelska-Polskie Stronnictwo Ludowe (PO-PSL) centre-right coalition government was at the helm, allows us to gain broader comparative evidence of the illiberal trends among political parties and societal attitudes in the last several years in Poland.

The first section lays down the conceptual ground of the study. It argues that the de-Europeanisation of parties’ political agendas can take different forms and theorises how parties react to societal preferences. Therefore, it uses a mainly qualitative approach to analyse the party-voters linkage. The second section sketches the development of party positions on various aspects of European integration and explains how far they reflect the preferences of the parties’ respective electorates. The third section does the same for the time since 2015 when the conflicts between the Polish governments and the EU increased. The chapter concludes with a summary of the main findings.

¹For further reflections on the linkages between parties and voters, see Chapter 3.

2 FORMS AND RATIONALE OF PROGRAMMATIC DE-EUROPEANISATION

The party-voters linkage is one of the fundamentals of representative democracies. In such systems, the political parties are the carriers of the representation and deliberation in parliaments. Voters express their expectations towards given political issues either in opinion polls or by casting their votes during the elections. Since the parties seek societal support for their political agendas, the voters' preferences can to some extent shape their programmes. The political agenda serves then as a code of conduct for the representatives in the legislature while deliberating, voting or controlling the government. This follows the standard rational choice explanation of human behaviour in democratic systems, which underlines that voters choose representatives that can maximise their preferences (Downs 1957). It can also be easily applied to political positions on European integration.

Democratic backsliding is marked by the weakening of political institutions of a democratic system, a decrease of quality in policy-making and the reshaping of political procedures in order to serve the objectives of an even more centralized and authoritarian government (Cianetti et al. 2018; Karolewski and Benedikter 2017; Sadurski 2018). As these developments collide with the EU's foundational principles, it seems likely that democratic backsliding affects Poland's European policy. In order to test this assumption, we can use the concept of de-Europeanisation. Originally, this term referred to changes in direction and content of the foreign policy of neighbouring EU countries, which turn their backs on the association or accession process. Today, de-Europeanisation has also become identified with the broader phenomenon of EU disintegration in the face of crises (Vollaard 2014, 2018; Schmitter and Lefkofridi 2016; Rosamond 2019).

It is commonly accepted that de-Europeanisation is not a simple linear process of reversing the achievement of Europeanisation (see also Chapters 6 and 12). The following analysis of de-Europeanisation of the political agenda pursued by parties, therefore, focuses on specific forms of de-Europeanisation (Jańczak 2010) and how they may influence a commitment of the member states regarding policies and decision-making in the EU (Schmitter 1970; Schmitter and Lefkofridi 2016). Following Jańczak (2010, pp. 102–106), de-Europeanisation is not limited to decreasing the current level achieved in a given field or the 'withdrawal'

from the EU, but can also include a refocusing, customisation and a new priority setting as distinct forms of de-Europeanisation (Jańczak 2010, pp. 104–106).

Refocusing refers to the reduction of public interest in EU matters. It occurs when parties succeed in putting other issues on the political agenda. They can do it by channels of communication like manifestos or media. The second form mentioned by Jańczak—customisation—relates to bottom-up Europeanisation. By forcing national rules and norms into EU policies and legislation, member states weaken the Europeanisation process. This form, however, does not necessarily mean withdrawal from pursuing the integration objectives of the whole EU or reducing the state's commitment. The customisation would be primarily used by a ruling party as the government has the power to coordinate European policy of a given country. The third form—modified priority setting—refers to the already successfully Europeanised fields where new solutions proposed by a member state collide with European ones or are a return to the old solutions. This form of de-Europeanisation can be implemented either by the opposition parties or by ruling parties; nonetheless, the latter are again more privileged as their proposals are often taken by the media and other politicians as a formal position of government.

When the de-Europeanisation of the ruling parties' political agendas influence the commitment of the member states regarding policies and decision-making in the EU, we are facing what neo-functionalists call a 'spill back' of integration, i.e. the withdrawal of a political actor from the original objective and downgrading its commitment in integration structures (Schmitter 1970, p. 840). Eventually, 'spill back' can end up with leaving the participation in a given policy and even with the voluntary exit of a member state from the EU. As Schmitter and Lefkofridi (2016, p. 3) argue, "(...) such 'spillbacks' are fervently advocated by parties on the radical left and right (albeit for different reasons)". De-Europeanisation connects with 'spill back' in such a way that the former precedes the latter.

Therefore, the milder forms of de-Europeanisation proposed by Jańczak (2010, pp. 102–106) can nevertheless ultimately result in parties' activities which eventually impede the commitment of the member states regarding EU policies. However, before the parties decide to pull the public interest away from EU matters (refocusing), to re-nationalise the European agenda (customisation) or to propose a new agenda which collides with already existing European solutions (priority setting), they will probably try to find societal support for such activities.

Hitherto, empirical studies have shown that in the field of European integration the party-voter link is not a one-way street and that the connection between party positions and voters' opinions is dependent on certain conditions. The party's responsiveness to changes in voters' opinions in EU-related issues (bottom-up relation) dominates when electorates have systemic and predictable preferences (Carruba 2001; Tillman 2004). Even if the voters' rationality is bounded by little information or disinterest, their positions on the EU are clearly guided by the extent to which they benefit from European integration (Gabel 1998; Gabel and Palmer 1995).

As European integration embraces more and more policy areas, it becomes increasingly complex and harder to understand by the public. In such a situation, a 'top-down' relation between parties and electorate dominates. Voters have limited ability to gain information on technical issues, and in consequence, to formulate structured positions on European integration. In this situation, voters can choose based on their left-right positions or using other shortcuts to make sense of the EU policy issue or take cues from the parties on what to think about a given issue (Carruba 2001; Van der Eijk and Franklin 2004; Gabel and Anderson 2004, pp. 13–31; Hellström 2008; see also Chapter 3).

Given these 'bottom-up' and 'top-down' relations between party positions and voters' opinions, we can identify three factors explaining the de-Europeanisation of the parties' political agendas. The first is based on a pragmatic approach. When voters do not care about EU issues, i.e. if an issue is within the electorate's 'zone of acquiescence' (Carruba 2001), parties do not compete on that issue (De Vries 2007, pp. 363–385). The second factor is rational. According to this approach, parties deemphasise EU issues if their party position is far from the average voter's attitude (Steenbergen and Scott 2004, pp. 165–192). EU issues are also neglected in the party's political manifesto when the voters are divided on EU-related questions (Hellström and Blomgren 2016, pp. 269–270). The third factor affecting whether or not parties emphasise EU issues is the scope of a party's voters' disunity on the given EU issue (Hellström and Blomgren 2016, pp. 265–282). When a party encounters severe internal conflict, or is split on the EU issue (Steenbergen and Scott 2004, pp. 165–192), and at the same time a parallel division does not occur among party voters, the party leadership can deter internal debate on EU issues.

All three above-mentioned situations lead to excluding or deemphasising EU issues from their political agendas, which are examples of the de-Europeanisation of parties' programmes. This elucidates that profound analyses of the parties' strategies must necessarily go into the details of a national context and interpret the data against the background of the national debates and domestic political processes. This is done in the following analysis which uses two types of qualitative data. First, the national social surveys on attitudes towards the EU in Poland. They have been conducted by one of the main social research centres—Centrum Badania Opinii Społecznej (CBOS)—since the beginning of Poland's EU membership. CBOS collects data annually, using the same questionnaires which provide detailed data referring to the specific EU issues dividing party electorates. The second type of data used in this section is the parties' political manifestos issued since 2004. These data are contextualised by more complex observations of the parties' actions and interplay.

3 PARTIES' POLITICAL AGENDAS AND VOTERS' ATTITUDES REGARDING THE EU IN POLAND UNTIL 2015

Political parties in Poland started to be more interested in specific EU matters with a delay, and their attention was dependent on the phases of the integration process. During the 1990s and until 2004, all parties generally declared that they fully support Poland's EU membership. The closer to the accession, the more the divisions between parties over the EU issues have become apparent. At the beginning of the twenty-first century, Polish politicians started commonly using labels such as Euro-enthusiasts, Eurosceptics or 'Euro-realists' in public debates. As the project of the Constitution for Europe failed and the following debate over the institutional reform proceeded, political parties in Poland also started to formulate more precise positions on specific EU policies. Since 2007, the parties' views on European integration and EU policies have been incorporated into the manifestos usually as a separate issue of the parties' political agendas but with strong links with internal policies as well as with foreign ones (Paczeński 2013).

Figure 1 shows that in 2007 the positive attitude of Polish society towards the country's EU membership was one of the highest. Since then, the percentage of declared supporters is between 80 and 90% no matter whether the government was conservative (PiS) or liberal-conservative

Fig. 1 General attitude of Polish society towards Poland's EU membership 2004–2019 (*Source* Own study based on data from Centrum Badań Opinii Społecznej—CBOS [Social Opinion Research Centre], www.cbos.pl/. Survey question: What is your attitude to Poland's membership in the EU?)

(PO-PSL). The only drop, where sceptical opinions for membership presented one-fifth of Poles, was visible between 2010 until the second half of 2013 (a decrease by 14 percentage points). One potential explanation for this drop is the increasing unemployment rate between July 2010 (11.5%) and February 2013 (14.4%). After this period, the situation on the labour market stabilised, the unemployment rate started to fall and the level of support for Poland's EU membership came back to the previous level.

A deeper analysis of the parties' electorates and specific issues which concerned them reveals that the PiS electorate is more diverse regarding their opinions on Poland's EU membership than the PO electorate. In the case of PiS (Fig. 2), attitudes correspond with the general trend displayed in Fig. 1. Since 2007, there was a slow decline of the number of EU supporters among the PiS electorate, which probably can be explained in this case either by the 'unemployment factor' or by being the opposition in the years 2007–2015. In comparison, the PO electorate's opinion on Poland's membership in the EU is more steady with a very modest rise

Fig. 2 Attitudes towards Poland's EU membership in PiS electorate 2005–2019 (*Source* Own study based on data from Centrum Badań Opinii Społecznej—CBOS [Social Opinion Research Centre], www.cbos.pl. Survey question: What is your attitude to Poland's membership in the EU?)

of opponents in the years 2012–2013, which can be explained by the aforementioned increase in the unemployment rate (Fig. 3).

The analysis of the electorate attitudes towards four specific issues regarding European integration and the EU—further deepening, national sovereignty, the future vision of Poland and the EU, and joining the EMU—shows that the PiS electorate is generally more divided (Figs. 4, 5, 6, and 7). The PO electorate, in contrast, is unequivocal in supporting the deepening of EU integration. PO voters obviously do not regard integration as a limitation for Poland's sovereignty. The only issue causing reservations in the electorate of PO is joining the EMU and accepting the Euro currency.

Between 2004 and 2015, the status of the European agenda in the political manifestos of PO evolved from a barely mentioned topic to the issue that intertwined all aspects of political and social life (Master 2014, pp. 48–57). In its first programmes before the accession, PO viewed the EU not as something limiting national sovereignty but as a chance to protect and consolidate it (Master 2014, p. 49). In the 2005 and 2007 programmes, the party declared that the protection of national

Fig. 3 Attitudes towards Poland's EU membership in PO electorate 2005–2019 (*Source* Own study based on data from Centrum Badań Opinii Społecznej—CBOS [Social Opinion Research Centre], www.cbos.pl. Survey question: What is your attitude to Poland's membership in the EU?)

Fig. 4 Attitudes of PiS and PO electorate towards European Integration, percentage of average answers 2013–2019 (*Source* Own study based on data from Centrum Badania Opinii Społecznej—CBOS [Social Opinion Research Centre], www.cbos.pl; Question asked: Some believe that Europe should unite even more. Others think that the integration of Europe has already gone too far. And what is your opinion?)

Fig. 5 Attitudes of PiS and PO electorate towards state's sovereignty in the EU, percentage of average answers 2014–2016 (*Source* Own study based on data from Centrum Badania Opinii Społecznej—CBOS [Social Opinion Research Centre], www.cbos.pl; Question asked: Which of the statements regarding the state's sovereignty in the EU do you agree with?)

Fig. 6 PiS and PO electorate's attitudes on the Euro, percentage of average answers 2017–2018 (*Source* Own study based on data from Centrum Badania Opinii Społecznej—CBOS [Social Opinion Research Centre], www.cbos.pl; Question asked: Would you agree to replace the Polish currency (złoty) with the Euro common to many EU countries?)

Fig. 7 Visions of PiS and PO electorate about the future of Poland and the EU, percentage of average answers 2017–2018 (*Source* Own study based on data from Centrum Badania Opinii Społecznej—CBOS [Social Opinion Research Centre], www.cbos.pl, Question asked: Which of the possible visions of the future of Poland and the European Union you personally most like?)

sovereignty is the main purpose of the Polish foreign policy, which could be achieved by Poland's membership in NATO and the EU (Instytut Państwa i Administracji 2005). Moreover, PO underlined the need for creating a new concept of Poland's sovereignty within the EU, which would strengthen the state's position and allow them to realise the *raison d'état* (PO 2007, pp. 10f., 74f.).

In both programmes, PO generally declared that Poland would join the EMU because of its positive impact on the national economy but simultaneously underlined that the country had not fulfilled all convergence criteria. Interestingly, the 2005 programme proposed a timetable for joining the EMU, while in the 2007 programme, PO resigned from fixing a specific date for accepting the Euro currency.

In both previously mentioned programmes, as well as in the 2011 programme, there was no concrete vision of the EU in the future. Such issues were mentioned only in speeches and declarations of members of the government, which are not analysed here (Master 2014, p. 53f.). In the 2011 PO political programme, no separate EU issues were highlighted and generally all proposals referring to national public policies were presented from Poland's perspective as an EU member (PO 2011; Master 2014, p. 52).

During the first two years of Poland's membership in the EU, the second party analysed in this chapter presented a more detailed vision of the national European policy and future of the EU than PO. In 2004, PiS adopted two manifestos especially prepared for the election to the European Parliament. According to them, the EU should be a strong association of sovereign nation states. Such a 'Europe of Nations' should be based on solidarity and Christian values which were also underlined by the founding fathers of the European Communities (Staszczuk 2016, p. 178).

In the 2005 manifesto, PiS presented a complex vision on EU matters, which were included in the chapter on foreign policy. It criticised the proposal of deepening integration presented in the Constitutional Treaty in 2004 and underlined the primacy of national law over European law. More precisely, PiS articulated six goals of European policy: accepting that NATO is a fundamental guarantee of Europe's security, the inviolability of Poland's sovereignty, maintaining the Nice system of voting in the Council, maintaining unanimity when deciding on treaty changes, maintaining the independence of Poland's economy within the common

market and maintaining the financial solidarity in regional policy of the EU (PiS 2005, pp. 38–53).

Those positions clearly put PiS in a neorealist paradigm (Staszczyk 2016, pp. 169–183). The party defined itself as a supporter of intergovernmental cooperation within the EU, who argues for the elimination of economic inequalities between 'old' member states and those which joined in 2004. The following manifestos from 2007, 2009 and 2011 did not refer extensively to EU issues. They generally repeated the political line exposed in previous programmes. Contrary to PO which saw the EU as a community, PiS perceived it as an international organisation: "The European Union and similar international organisations, although they can pursue various purposes for good, for obvious reasons are not able to become democratic structures replacing national member states; these countries must remain a strong anchor to prevent the abuse of European institutions for bureaucratic manipulations, forcing ideological utopias or for protecting strong nationalisms" (PiS 2009, p. 10).

Thus, PiS opposed all federalist tendencies within the EU, which should be rather the union of sovereign states (PiS 2011, p. 219). Despite this general intergovernmental stance, the party also stated that it is Poland's interest that the European Commission stays as independent as possible, serving as a decision centre which can resist the pressure from the strongest European players (PiS 2011, p. 223).

In its 2014 political programme, PiS again embedded EU issues within the broader context of Polish foreign policy but simultaneously tried to draw a new strategy for Poland in times of EU crisis. The core position was, however, unchanged and referred to the rule of solidarity among cooperating nation states under the international law and within the framework of national constitutions (PiS 2014, p. 155). PiS also presented a future model of the EU according to which the answer to the problems of European integration cannot be an urge for more integration, or more centralisation, but instead a call for more freedom and solidarity. The EU should strive to become polycentric with many regional centres, not the core one within the Eurozone where peripheries are dependent on it. The EU should be composed of equal nation states and the law should be deregulated. The EU should be democratic, open to new members and solidary, which for PiS means that the EU evolves with the pace of its weakest member. Finally, the EU should be built "(...) on the roots of civilisational identity, not social constructivism" (PiS 2014, pp. 158–159).

The Euro currency was addressed in all political programmes of PiS since 2005. The position, however, evolved from careful scepticism to hard rejection of any possibility to join the EMU. In 2005, PiS argued that Poland's economy was still adapting to the competitiveness conditions within the EU and that accepting the Euro currency would not be recommended until the benefits would be higher than the costs (PiS 2005, p. 62f.). In the 2011 programme, joining the EMU was no longer considered, and in 2014, the party made clear that Poland under the PiS government will keep the Polish Zloty and a quick decision on joining the EMU would be a political mistake and irresponsible for the Polish economy (PiS 2014, p. 74).

4 PARTIES' POLITICAL AGENDAS AND VOTERS' ATTITUDES REGARDING THE EU IN POLAND SINCE 2015

In 2015, a new issue dominated the political programmes of both parties. Migration to the EU hit its peak in October that year, causing pressure to the external borders of the EU and its asylum system. In Poland, the migration crisis coincided with the campaign for the parliamentary election. The positions on how Poland should commit to this issue were one of the main lines of political rivalry between PO and PiS. At that time, the polls showed that PiS had a growing chance to form a government after the elections in autumn.

PO chose a dual strategy. On the one hand, it defended the government decision on the relocation scheme from September 2015 underlining the need for solidarity among member states facing the humanitarian crisis in the Mediterranean. On the other hand, it emphasised that the national government should keep control over separating the legal and illegal migrants (PO 2015, p. 66f.).

In sharp contrast to its former programmes, EU issues formed one of the priorities for the PO in its 2015 programme. It straightforwardly declared itself as a pro-European party (PO 2015, p. 65) and stated that the EU organisational structures enable Poland to realise its national strategic interest: "We believe that effective pursuit of the implementation of Polish strategic goals does not consist in contesting the achievements

of a united Europe, but in efficiently putting our reasons into an all-European interest and maximising our impact on the course of events” (PO 2015, p. 65).²

PO generally supported intensifying European integration and opposed the Europe of a different speed or two-tier Europe. But instead of presenting a future vision of Poland and Europe, the proposal for deepening political integration referred mainly to the deepening of the integration of the common market and to limit protectionism (PO 2015, p. 66f.). A more integrated EU in those fields was also presented as a protection from outside threats. In 2015, PO described its position towards the Euro as ‘reasonable’, underlining that Poland should take care that the Eurozone will be open in the future for new members but at the same time emphasising that both sides need to be ready for joining the EMU.

In 2015, the PO position on the Euro currency highly corresponded with its electorate attitudes presented in Fig. 6. Generally, the call for deepening the integration in the common market is coherent with almost 60% of their voters. But at the same time, PO did not want to discourage the rest of their voters who were reluctant, ambivalent or supported the status quo. Similarly, PO followed its voters’ attitudes towards the concept of national sovereignty within the EU, although not using this term literally. The party stated that there is no contradiction between pursuing the national interest and supporting European integration.

It is worth highlighting that PO did not mention any proposal of deeper political integration, focusing instead on intensifying cooperation in the common market. This may be intentional as, since 2004, the party has not presented in its manifestos a precise and unequivocal position on a direction of political integration of the EU. Such ‘balance strategy’ seems to be a nod to the almost one-fourth of party supporters who are ambivalent whether Europe should further integrate.

In the election campaign of 2019, PO formed a broader political coalition named Citizens’ Coalition, but still it has been the biggest party within. The 2019 Citizens’ Coalition’s political programme called for a pragmatic European policy of Poland. Contrary to the 2015 manifesto, PO and the other smaller coalition parties did not label themselves as pro-European. Instead, they proposed that Poland needs to become again one

²All quotes from party manifestos are own translations. There are no sources in English.

of the leaders in the EU, because only in this way would it be possible to pursue Poland's interest and form alliances for the sake of the EU. Therefore, Poland's European policy should not be driven by "(...) ideological phobias and devastation of the rule of law as the PiS government does it nowadays" (PO 2019, p. 43). According to PO and Citizens' Coalition, Poland should closely cooperate with Germany and France, which would allow Poland to become a linkage for the Baltic countries, states from East and Central Europe and the Danube region. Similarly, as in previous years, in the programme from 2019 more detailed EU issues were interwoven in the sectoral agenda.

In the PiS political programme from 2019, Poland's European policy was presented as a part of broader foreign policy, similar to the programme from 2014. PiS for the first time labelled itself in a manifesto as a "Euro-realistic" party. This means, according to PiS, that "(...) Europe will be stronger thanks to the sovereign and dynamic Poland, but at the same time membership in any international organisation cannot infringe Polish statehood" (PiS 2019, p. 177). Following this rule, PiS has adopted a hard position regarding the relocation mechanism, sustaining Polish national currency, renegotiation of the energy and climate package in accordance of Polish interests and protecting the trade of Polish land from the speculation of foreign investors (PiS 2019, p. 178). According to PiS, Poland's membership in the EU is a historic chance to accelerate the country's development. Due to this fact, the PiS government in the years 2015–2019 struggled to dynamise the EU based on "(...) solidarity rule and cooperation of member states within the Lisbon treaty legal framework and basing on Poland's constitutions" (PiS 2019, p. 178).

Similarly to PO, PiS also seems to be consistent with its voters' opinions on EU-related issues. The strong focus on strengthening the identity and position of the nation states within the EU, which corresponds with the electorate's stances (Fig. 7), led the party to support de Gaulle's concept of a "Europe of Nations". This proposal, however, does not speak to those party voters who call for a more integrated Europe and do not see the EU as a threat to Poland's sovereignty. Instead, they can find in the last party manifesto, as well as in previous ones, proposals for a decentralisation of the EU, more solidarity referring to the cohesion policy and fostering the intergovernmental cooperation based on freedom. A strong connection between a party's position and its voters' opinions is most visible in the case of the Euro currency. Between 2012 and 2017, the opponents of joining the EMU among PiS voters rose by 10 percentage

points—from 74 to 84% and finally reached 87% in 2018. This was already mapped in the firm position presented in the 2014 manifesto.

In general, both PO and PiS try to maintain consistency between their political agendas regarding the EU or they focus only on the general aspects without going into the details of European integration and EU policies, both of which seem a safe solution either for the party majority or the majority of the electorate. However, one can also observe deviations from voters' preferences.

PO urged for more economic integration, although the majority of the party's voters support a more in-depth political integration, which, seeing as this party is labelled as pro-European, can be understood almost as consent for more federal solutions in the EU. PiS called for stronger cooperation of sovereign nation states based on freedom and solidarity, avoiding this way to show concrete areas where such type of cooperation will be implemented. This approach seems to be a nod to the 25–35% of PiS voters but does not include the positions of around 60% of the party's voters who are supporters of a status quo of European integration or who declared themselves as supporters of a more integrated EU.

While PiS does not label itself as a pro-European party, its current self-positioning as a "Euro-realistic" party includes the maintenance of EU membership. The only issue which put the party's proposal on divergent trajectories with the rest of the EU is the rejection of adopting the Euro currency. While such a position is coherent with the party's electorate attitudes, it is an example of 'spill-back', as it goes against accession treaty obligations Poland has previously agreed on.

Other examples of de-Europeanisation of PiS policy agenda are customisation and refocusing of EU issues. PiS in its manifestos supports deregulation of EU law, more democratic solutions, openness to new members, references to the Christian roots of European civilisation, rejecting social constructivism and advocating more solidarity in the EU, which for PiS means that the EU in its political objectives should take into consideration a different level of development of some of the member states. Such an agenda is an example of introducing new topics into mainstream narration regarding the EU.

5 CONCLUSIONS

Starting from the observation that illiberal trends have deteriorated EU-Polish relations, the aim of this chapter was to examine whether these

developments went along with a de-Europeanisation of the programmes of the two main parties in Poland and whether this reflected their voters' attitudes towards the EU.

The contribution first described the theory of party-voters linkage and different forms of de-Europeanisation that go beyond the mere call for an EU exit as well as different strategies to respond to the voters' preferences. To capture these nuances, a qualitative study for the Polish case was conducted which focused on the party programmes and societal attitudes and embedded their interpretation in the deeper domestic political context.

The analysis has shown that in general, both PO and PiS try to correspond to their voters' attitudes be it by particular preferences or by formulating vague general goals concerning European integration and EU policies. PO positioned itself as pro-European while avoiding this term since 2015. PiS called for stronger cooperation of sovereign nation states based on freedom and solidarity and, in 2019, started to coin its position as 'Euro-realistic'. The only issue where the government openly rejects further integration is the Euro currency.

The data indicate that this restraint regarding further integration and the refusal to participate in another policy arena at the EU level is coherent with the party's electorate attitudes. Only PiS de-Europeanised to some extent its political agenda, which was related to differentiated positions among the party's electorate over EU issues. Examples of its customisation and refocusing of EU issues are its support for deregulating EU law, openness to new members, references to the Christian roots of European civilisation, rejecting social constructivism and taking into consideration different levels of development of some of the member states.

These findings suggest that as long as the support in Polish society for the EU membership is high, radical de-Europeanisation of parties' political agendas—like calls for withdrawal from the EU—seem to be rather unlikely. Instead, de-Europeanisation will be limited to customisation and refocusing of EU issues within the political manifestos. But this is only the rhetorical dimension of supply and support in the narrower set of EU-related issues. In practice, the mainly status quo-oriented EU programme by PiS went hand in hand with a confrontational policy by its governments vis-à-vis EU institutions. Thus, even pro-European declarations in parties' programmes do not restrain parties from running a policy of a different character (for differences between rhetoric and action,

see Chapters 5 and 6). In the long run, such a policy of confrontation might foster Eurosceptical attitudes in society with party-programmatic de-Europeanisation as a response (see Chapter 3). But so far, we have not found the respective empirical evidence.

REFERENCES

- Ágh, Attila. 2014. Decline of Democracy in East-Central Europe: The Last Decade as the Lost Decade in Democratization. *Journal of Comparative Politics* 7 (2): 4–33.
- Ágh, Attila. 2015. De-europeanization and De-democratization Trends in ECE: From the Potemkin Democracy to the Elected Autocracy in Hungary. *Journal of Comparative Politics* 8 (2): 4–26.
- Berend, I.T., and B. Bugaric. 2015. Unfinished Europe: Transition from Communism to Democracy in Central and Eastern Europe. *Journal of Contemporary History* 50 (4): 768–785.
- Carrubba, Clifford J. 2001. The Electoral Connection in European Union Politics. *The Journal of Politics* 63 (1): 141–158.
- Cianetti, L., J. Dawson, and S. Hanley. 2018. Rethinking “Democratic Backsliding” in Central and Eastern Europe—Looking Beyond Hungary and Poland. *East European Politics* 34 (3): 243–256.
- De Vries, Catherine E. 2007. Sleeping Giant: Fact or Fairytale? How European Integration Affects National Elections. *European Union Politics* 8 (3): 363–385.
- Downs, Anthony. 1957. *An Economic Theory of Democracy*. New York: Harper & Row.
- Gabel, Matthew. 1998. Public Support for European Integration: An Empirical Test of Five Theories. *The Journal of Politics* 60 (2): 333–354.
- Gabel, M., and C.J. Anderson. 2004. The Structure of Citizen Attitudes and the European Political Space. In *European Integration and Political Conflict*, ed. G. Marks and M.R. Steenbergen, 13–31. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Gabel, M., and H.D. Palmer. 1995. Understanding Variation in Public Support for European Integration. *European Journal of Political Research* 27 (1): 3–19.
- Hanley, S., and J. Dawson. 2016. East Central Europe: The Fading Mirage of the ‘Liberal Consensus’. *Journal of Democracy* 27 (1): 20–34.
- Hellström, Johan. 2008. Who Leads, Who Follows? Re-examining the Party–Electorate Linkages on European Integration. *Journal of European Public Policy* 15 (8): 1127–1144.

- Hellström, J., and M. Blomgren. 2016. Party Debate over Europe in National Election Campaigns: Electoral Disunity and Party Cohesion. *European Journal of Political Research* 55: 265–282.
- Instytut Państwa i Administracji. 2005. *Państwo dla obywateli. Plan rządzenia 2005–2009*. Warszawa. <http://www.capitalstrategy.pl/wp-content/uploads/2015/08/PG-Pa%C5%84stwo-dla-obywateli-2005-12-07-Oddane-do-dru-karni-corrected.pdf>. Accessed 19 March 2020.
- Jańczak, Jarosław. 2010. De-Europeanization and Counter-Europeanization as Reversed Europeanization: In Search of Categorization. In *Policies and Politics of the European Union*, ed. Jarosław Jańczak, 99–110. Poznań: Wydawnictwo Naukowe WNPiD UAM.
- Karolewski, I.P., and R. Benedikter. 2017. Poland's Conservative Turn and the Role of the European Union. *European Political Science* 16 (4): 515–534.
- Krastev, Ivan. 2018. Eastern Europe's Illiberal Revolution: The Long Road to Democratic Decline. *Foreign Affairs* 97 (3): 49–56.
- Master, Beata. 2014. Unia Europejska w programach głównych polskich ugrupowań politycznych po 2004 roku. *Studia Politicae Universitatis Silesiensis* 12: 42–77.
- Pacześniak, Anna. 2013. Europeizacja partii politycznych jako reakcja na integrację europejską. In *Partie polityczne w Polsce i Europie*, ed. A. Pacześniak and M. Winclawska, 15–34. Wrocław–Toruń: Echo Sp.
- PiS [Prawo i Sprawiedliwość]. 2005. *IV Rzeczpospolita. Sprawiedliwość dla Wszystkich. Program wyborczy Prawa i Sprawiedliwości*. Warsaw.
- PiS [Prawo i Sprawiedliwość]. 2009. *Nowoczesna, solidarna, bezpieczna Polska. Program Prawa i Sprawiedliwości*. Krakow.
- PiS [Prawo i Sprawiedliwość]. 2011. *Nowoczesna, solidarna, bezpieczna Polska. Program wyborczy Prawa i Sprawiedliwości*. Warsaw.
- PiS [Prawo i Sprawiedliwość]. 2014. *Zdrowie, praca, rodzina. Program wyborczy Prawa i Sprawiedliwości*. Warsaw.
- PiS [Prawo i Sprawiedliwość]. 2019. *Polski model państwa dobrobytu. Program Prawa i Sprawiedliwości*. Warsaw. http://pis.org.pl/files/Program_PIS_2019.pdf. Accessed 19 March 2020.
- PO [Platforma Obywatelska]. 2007. *By żyło się lepiej. Wszystkim! Program wyborczy Platformy Obywatelskiej*. Warsaw.
- PO [Platforma Obywatelska]. 2011. *Następny krok. Razem. Program wyborczy Platformy Obywatelskiej*. Warsaw.
- PO [Platforma Obywatelska]. 2015. *Polska przyszłości. Program wyborczy Platformy Obywatelskiej*. Warsaw.
- PO [Platforma Obywatelska]. 2019. *Twoja Polska. Program Koalicji Obywatelskiej*. Warsaw. <https://koalicjaobywatelska.pl/program>. Accessed 19 March 2020.

- Rosamond, Ben. 2019. Theorising the EU in Crisis: De-Europeanisation as Disintegration. *Global Discourse: An Interdisciplinary Journal of Current Affairs* 9 (1): 31–44.
- Rupnik, Jacques. 2007. From Democracy Fatigue to Populist Backlash. *Journal of Democracy* 18 (4): 17–25.
- Sadurski, Wojciech. 2018. How Democracy Dies (in Poland): A Case Study of Anti-Constitutional Populist Backsliding. *Sydney Law School Research Paper* 18 (01).
- Schmitter, Philippe C. 1970. A Revised Theory of Regional Integration. *International Organization* 24 (4): 836–868.
- Schmitter, P.C., and Z. Lefkofridi. 2016. Neo-Functionalism as a Theory of Disintegration. *Chinese Political Science Review* 1 (1): 1–29. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s41111-016-0012-4>.
- Staszczyk, Artur. 2016. Wizja Unii Europejskiej w koncepcjach Prawa i Sprawiedliwości w świetle teorii międzyrządowych i ponadnarodowych. *Polityka i Społeczeństwo* 3 (14): 169–184.
- Steenbergen, M.R., and D.J. Scott. 2004. Contesting Europe? The Salience of European Integration as a Party Issue. In *European Integration and Political Conflict*, ed. G. Marks and M.R. Steenbergen, 165–192. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Tillman, Erik R. 2004. The European Union at the Ballot Box? European Integration and Voting Behavior in the New Member States. *Comparative Political Studies* 37 (5): 590–610.
- Van der Eijk, C., and M. Franklin. 2004. Potential for Contestation on European Matters at National Elections in Europe. In *European Integration and Political Conflict*, ed. G. Marks and M.R. Steenbergen, 32–50. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Vollaard, Hans. 2014. Explaining European Disintegration. *Journal of Common Market Studies* 52 (5): 1142–1159.
- Vollaard, Hans. 2018. *European Disintegration: A Search for Explanations*. London: Palgrave Macmillan.

Open Access This chapter is licensed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>), which permits use, sharing, adaptation, distribution and reproduction in any medium or format, as long as you give appropriate credit to the original author(s) and the source, provide a link to the Creative Commons license and indicate if changes were made.

The images or other third party material in this chapter are included in the chapter's Creative Commons license, unless indicated otherwise in a credit line to the material. If material is not included in the chapter's Creative Commons license and your intended use is not permitted by statutory regulation or exceeds the permitted use, you will need to obtain permission directly from the copyright holder.