

Towards a revision of the Regulation on the statute and funding of European political parties and foundations¹

This study, commissioned by the European Parliament's Policy Department for Citizens' Rights and Constitutional Affairs at the request of the AFCO Committee, provides an in-depth analysis of the key proposed changes to Regulation 1141/2014 on the statute and funding of European political parties and foundations. It assesses the extent to which the reformed regulation strengthens, as per art. 10(4) TEU, the capacity of Europarties to contribute to forming a European political awareness and expressing the will of EU citizens.

The role of European political parties (in brief: Europarties) is set out in Article 10(4) TEU and Article 12(2) of the EU Charter of Fundamental rights, stipulating that they "contribute to forming European political awareness and to expressing the will of citizens of the Union". Europarties and their associated political foundations can significantly contribute to representative democracy in the EU, enhancing the European dimension of public debates and electoral competition in the run-up to the European Parliament (EP) elections.

Europarties were first recognised by the Treaty of Maastricht in 1992 and, in the following thirty years, have gone through a remarkable process of legal consolidation. Regulation 2004/2003 introduced a funding regime providing them with financial resources from the EU budget. Regulation 1524/2007 created political foundations to complement the activity of Europarties. Regulation 1141/2014 gave them EU legal status, created the Authority for European Political Parties and Political Foundations (APPF), and reformed the funding system. The latter regulation was amended further in 2018 – in relation to registration and funding criteria – and in 2019 – regarding protection rules for breaches of personal data.

The current regulation on the statute and funding of Europarties and political foundations included a revision clause (art. 38), according to which the EP was expected to publish a report on the application of the regulation by 31 December 2021. No more than six months after the publication of this report, the European Commission was also expected to present its own assessment on the application of the regulation accompanied, if appropriate, by a new legislative proposal to amend the regulation. In a plenary sitting on 11 November 2021, the EP amended and approved the report prepared by the EP Committee on Constitutional Affairs (AFCO) on the application of the regulation, while the Commission followed suit with its own evaluation report and legislative proposal on 25 November 2021.

¹ Full study in English: [https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/STUD/2022/729741/IPOL_STU\(2022\)729741_EN.pdf](https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/STUD/2022/729741/IPOL_STU(2022)729741_EN.pdf)



The aim of this study is to provide the EP with background information and policy recommendations for the forthcoming AFCD legislative report on the revision of Regulation 1141/2014 on the statute and funding of European political parties and political foundations. It provides an in-depth analysis of the key provisions included in the legislative proposal, comparing them with the recommendations provided by the EP in its report on the application of the regulation. It assesses how the new legislative proposal strengthens, as per art. 10(4) TEU, the capacity of Europarties and their associated foundations to contribute to forming a European political awareness and to expressing the will of EU citizens.

The study is structured in three main chapters. Chapter 1 places the reform of the party regulation in context. It reviews the key milestones in the historical development of Europarties and presents the current regulatory framework. Chapter 2 begins with a puzzle: why is it that – notwithstanding the organisational consolidation described in the previous chapter – the Europarties are still scarcely recognised by EU citizens and enjoy limited visibility? The chapter discusses the nature of Europarties – ‘parties of parties’ with emerging but still rather weak links to civil society and citizens in EU member states – and the key steps leading to the new legislative proposal, with a focus on EU policy-makers.

Chapter 3 is the core of this study. It systematically compares the Commission’s legislative proposal with the EP’s evaluation report, the key issues that emerged from the consultation with stakeholders and the public debate around the reform of the Europarty statute and funding. The chapter focuses on six themes which were expected to be the targets of reform: membership; relations with national parties; funding; respect for EU values; internal party organisation and gender; administrative issues. It shows that the legislative proposal took several of the EP’s recommendations on board, from Council of Europe member country membership to administrative simplification, from an increase of the quota of EU funding to an extension of the value compliance mechanism to the member national parties.

Yet, as the conclusive chapter of this study (Chapter 4) argues, the new proposed regulation addresses targeted issues and closes some loopholes, but it does not radically change the regulatory framework for Europarties and their associated foundations. A few limited changes have been made on issues such as individual membership and internal party democracy, while further provisions on the Europeanisation of national member parties (e.g., including the logo of the Europarty on the ballot paper for the EP elections) or on the role of Europarties in the electoral arena (i.e., selecting candidates in transnational constituencies) should be dealt separately by the European Electoral Act. While most of the introduced changes were demanded by stakeholders in the context of a close dialogue with them, the proposal strengthens Europarties mainly as transnational party alliances, rather than as political actors expressing the will of EU citizens.

In terms of methods, this study relies on a wealth of different sources – documents from EU institutions, policy papers and academic studies – as well as empirical data extracted from the websites of the APPF and the EP, or from other studies conducted by think tanks or academics. In addition, it relies on several non-attributable interviews with key stakeholders – in Europarties, the Parliament and the Authority – who were asked to elaborate their views on the reform of the regulation. Interviews were conducted either in person in Brussels or online, most were recorded but, to guarantee the full anonymity of the interviewees, they are only reported in aggregate form.

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External Author:
Edoardo BRESSANELLI, Sant'Anna School of Advanced Studies, Pisa

Research Administrator responsible: Alessandro DAVOLI Editorial assistant: Ginka TSONEVA

Contact: poldep-citizens@europarl.europa.eu

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