

The Founding of the EPP

The first steps towards creating the European People's Party (EPP) were taken by the Christian Democratic Group in the European Parliament (EP). In order to meet the challenge of establishing a European party organisation in the run-up to the first direct elections of the EP, a Political Committee was established within the European Union of Christian Democrats (EUCD). It functioned as a bridge between the parliamentary groups and the parties of the Christian Democratic family. It was within that committee that decisions were taken about the programme, the internal organisation and, not without dispute, the name 'European People's Party'. The ambition and first realisations of this new party federation went beyond similar initiatives of other European parties, but were overshadowed by the founding of the European Democratic Union (EDU).⁵⁴

Building Parliamentary Groups in the European Assemblies

The first European assembly created after the Second World War was the Council of Europe (CoE). Its Consultative Assembly was founded in 1949, only four years after the end of the war. However, it was not until much later, in the early 1960s, that like-minded parliamentarians from the different member countries united in groups. One reason was that the Con-

⁵⁴ On the founding of the EPP, see also Wilfried Martens, *Europe: I Struggle, I Overcome* (Brussels, 2009), 35–42 and Steven Van Hecke, 'On the Road towards Transnational Parties in Europe: Why and How the European People's Party Was Founded', *European View* 3 (Spring 2006), 153–60.

sultative Assembly met infrequently, and cooperation imposed few obligations on anyone. Besides, the CoE's role in matters such as democratic development, the rule of law and human rights was not something about which traditional political families held opposing views, and neither did the founding Member States and their representatives. The incentives for close cooperation along party lines were insufficient or simply non-existent.

Initially, that kind of close cooperation was not expected in the General Assembly of the European Coal and Steel Community (ECSC), either. The basic treaties of the European Communities distributed seats to parliamentarians exclusively by Member State. The mandate of those deputies, who were nominated by their national parliaments, came from voters in Member States. Accordingly, it was assumed that the General Assembly would in practice divide along national lines. The grouping together of parliamentarians by political groups in the General Assembly in 1952 was therefore rather revolutionary. Given the ECSC's specific competences, as well as the debate about the European Defence Community (EDC), opinions within the different Member States differed considerably. Much more affinity and understanding was found within the political families.

The establishment of parliamentary groups in the ECSC General Assembly was formally recognised in a resolution of 16 June 1953.⁵⁵ The first official meeting of the Christian Democratic Group took place on that day. The declaration that created it was lodged on 23 June. Christian Democrats had gathered several times since their first meeting on 11 September 1952, one day after the Assembly's inaugural sitting.⁵⁶ The Group was composed of 38 members out of a total of 78 Assembly deputies. When in 1958 the General Assembly also became the parliamentary organ of the European

⁵⁵ Published in the *Official Journal of the European Coal and Steel Community*, 21 July 1953. An additional clause in the rules of procedure allowed for the legal possibility of establishing parliamentary groups and made this formally dependent on a declaration that such a group was being founded, which in turn required a quorum of nine members (about 12%).

⁵⁶ Pascal Fontaine, *Voyage to the Heart of Europe (1953–2009): A History of the Christian-Democratic Group and the Group of the European People's Party in the European Parliament* (Brussels, 2009), 43; Hans M. ten Napel, 'Van het continentale naar het angelsaksische model van christen-democratie? Over de problematische europeanisering van de christen-democratische politiek', in *Jaarboek Documentatiecentrum Nederlandse Politieke Partijen* (Groningen, 1997), 233.

Economic Community (EEC) and the European Atomic Energy Community (EAEC), it changed its name into 'European Parliament' (EP). Article 36 of the rules of procedure explicitly included the right to form parliamentary groups. The Christian Democratic Group, which then consisted of 66 deputies, stated in its own rules of procedure that membership was open to those belonging to a Christian Democratic party (according to the group's definition of 'Christian Democratic' and the party's values).

In turn, the EP fostered an increasing desire to improve inter-party co-operation. The national parties that had come together at the European level did not automatically pursue the same policies, even if they agreed ideologically. The constant effort to find common positions led to the discovery of common fundamentals and a recognition of their importance to common action. It also led to better information, increased understanding and finally to an appreciation of how different the parties were from each other. Joint debates with opponents or competitors encouraged the feeling of affinity. For the first time, the experience of belonging to a family of parties was not only the privilege of the party leadership but could also be shared by parliamentarians.

At the same time, European parliamentarians were exposed to the danger of remaining isolated in Strasbourg and Luxembourg. Their dual mandate, which meant they had to be present at both national and European levels, placed a huge burden on everyone, in intellectual, practical and physical terms. When something important was going on in a national parliament, the member might often be absent from the EP. For the most part, national problems overshadowed European issues because they were more urgent and because they directly impinged on a deputy's position in his or her constituency, party or parliamentary group. Colleagues in national parliamentary groups or parties were rarely in a position to deal with the complexity or range of European problems. Dialogue between European parliamentarians and their national parties and groups was the exception, not the rule.

The Christian Democratic structures were not yet adapted to these new developments and challenges. The *Nouvelles équipes internationales* (NEI), founded at a time when there was not yet talk of a European assembly, lacked a connection with the Christian Democratic Group in the EP. What made things worse was that inside the NEI, there was much less cooperation between the parties from the mid-1950s onwards. Therefore, the Christian Democratic Group found itself in a very unsatisfactory and in-

effective position. It had no organic connection with an appropriate party organisation to support and encourage it. Its members and leadership had to operate without any solid or clear organisational framework from the party family.

The creation of the EUCD in the mid-1960s completely changed that situation. The EUCD made increasing efforts to support the group in the EP in facing up to the new tasks of the European Community (EC) as it developed and grew in importance.⁵⁷ Close contact with the EUCD was maintained through Alain Poher, President of the EP from 1966 to 1969, and Hans August Lückner, Chair of the Christian Democratic Group from 1969 to 1975. At the same time, EUCD bodies were being properly established by its President, Mariano Rumor. Cooperation between the parliamentary group and the EUCD was eventually given institutional form with a new statute on 18 July 1971.

Linking the Groups with the Parties: The Political Committee

The constant improvement of integration within the EC and the simultaneous and growing need to reach agreements between Member States meant there had to be closer cooperation between their representatives. The next development, in April 1970, was an informal conference of leading figures from EUCD member parties from EC countries. In April 1972, a special body was set up in the context of the EUCD: the Political Committee of Christian Democratic Parties from Member States of the European Communities. Its goal was to establish 'a permanent link between the parties and parliamentary groups at national and European levels, as well as a basic political consensus about the deepening and further development of European integration'.⁵⁸ According to Arnaldo Ferragni, the Secretary

⁵⁷ See Karl Josef Hahn and Friedrich Fugmann, 'Die Europäische Christlich-Demokratische Union zwischen europäischem Anspruch und nationalen Realitäten', in Karl Josef Hahn (ed.), *Zusammenarbeit der Parteien in Westeuropa: Auf dem Weg zu einer neuen politischen Infrastruktur?* Institute for European Politics (Bonn, 1976), 304–31.

⁵⁸ Article 1 of the by-laws of the Political Committee of Christian Democratic Parties from the Member States of the European Communities, 7 April 1972, reproduced in *Zusammenarbeit der Parteien*, 338ff.

General of the Christian Democratic Group, the Political Committee's task was to develop 'an organisational structure . . . appropriate to use as a "structure d'accueil" for a possible future European Christian Democratic party'.⁵⁹

The presidents of the EUCD and the Christian Democratic Group co-chaired the executive of the Political Committee. This consisted of leading figures from parties in the EC and members of the Group's executive in the EP. Soon there was more and more contact and cooperation, which in turn encouraged unified political action. Joint conferences of the Christian Democratic Group and representatives of national Christian Democratic parliamentary groups were organised. Working groups were set up involving a mixture of representatives of the Christian Democratic Group, EUCD bodies and/or member parties. Together they elaborated political programmes, forged a consensus in every area relevant to European policy and clarified the main points of Christian Democratic ideology.

The leader of the Christian Democratic Group in the EP was ex officio on the EUCD executive committee as well. This offered the permanent possibility of consulting the EUCD leadership and of maintaining contact with chairs of national parties and parliamentary groups, and with Christian Democratic heads of government and ministers. Lückner was adept at exploiting all these possibilities to achieve the breakthrough formation of a 'European party'. This had been his goal, shared by a number of others.⁶⁰ On his re-election as chair of the Christian Democratic Group in 1974, Lückner assured his audience 'that in the course of his new mandate he would continue to devote himself wholeheartedly to the interests of the parliamentary group and the European Union of Christian Democrats so that a European Christian Democratic Party could be founded, a party with a single political programme'.⁶¹

⁵⁹ Letter from Ferragni, Secretary General of the Christian Democratic Group, to Karl Josef Hahn, Deputy Secretary General of the EUCD, 4 January 1972, IX-004-081.

⁶⁰ See articles by Egon Klepsch (pp. 31–33), Ferragni (pp. 84–88) and Josef Müller (pp. 111–13) in *Fraktion der Europäischen Volkspartei, Liber Amicorum: Erinnerungen an Hans August Lückner zum 70. Geburtstag* (Bonn, 1985).

⁶¹ Minutes of the meeting of 12 June 1974 in Strasbourg, ACDP IX-001-008/1.

The organic cooperation between the Christian Democratic Group and the EUCD was deepened and intensified during the presidency of Kai-Uwe von Hassel, who in 1973 succeeded Rumor as leader of the EUCD. However, the EUCD was still a relatively loose association of parties, many of them from non-EC countries. The founding of the Political Committee had already underlined the fact that the EUCD was not an adequate organisation as far as the promoters of a true European federation were concerned.⁶² Members of the EP were particularly dissatisfied. They sorely missed an active party organisation at the Community level.

Direct elections to the EP were being discussed, and the EC's political system was taking shape. The heads of state and government, at their meeting in Paris in 1972, had given notice that they intended to 'transform the totality of relations between Member States . . . into a European Union before the end of this century'. The Community admitted three new members on 1 January 1973: the United Kingdom, Ireland and Denmark. European Political Cooperation (EPC) was put in place, and discussion began on establishing an economic and currency union. A new EC financial statute was to be agreed upon, and in this connection, too, it was argued that there should be 'no federal treasury without federation'; in other words, any reforms should give Community institutions a federal character.

The Prospect of Direct Elections and European Parties

As early as 1970, during a study conference of European deputies from the Dutch Christian Democratic *équipe*, Tjerk Westerterp had recommended the founding of a European Christian Democratic party as both possible and necessary.⁶³ He explained that European parties were needed for much

⁶² Walter Hallstein, former President of the EEC Commission (1958–68), published a book about his experiences and the political philosophy underlying his work in the Community, under the significant title *Der Unvollendete Bundesstaat* [The Unfinished Federal State] (Düsseldorf, 1969). It was translated into English by Charles Roetter and published as *Europe in the Making* (London, 1972).

⁶³ The Dutch parties represented in the Christian Democratic Group – the Catholic People's Party (Katholieke Volkspartij, KVP), the Christian Historical Union (Christelijk-Historische Unie, CHU) and the Anti-Revolutionary Party (Anti-Revolutionaire Partij, ARP) –, who were competitors at home and who generally did not follow the same political line, worked together more and more after

the same reason as national parties, to enable citizens to participate, to formulate alternatives, to choose candidates and to serve as a channel for new ideas: 'All pre-conditions for the foundation of European parties will have been met at the latest by the time of the general election of the European Parliament in all Member States.'⁶⁴

In the Dutch parliament a few days before the 1970 study conference, Westerterp had proposed the prompt introduction of direct elections for national deputies to the EP, as provided for in the Community treaties. The matter was becoming ever more urgent, both for European and for democratic reasons, he said. Soon afterwards, a parallel initiative for direct election of German European deputies was proposed by several Bundestag parliamentarians from the German Christian Democrats (Christlich Demokratische Union/Christlich-Soziale Union, CDU/CSU). In several other countries, there were similar attempts to ensure that direct elections to the EP should follow national electoral laws until such time as European regulations had been agreed upon. There was evidently another motive for all these proposals: to put pressure on governments to get moving on the issue of direct elections and democratisation.⁶⁵

On 1 January 1973, Lückner, as Chair of the Christian Democratic Group, sent EUCD President Rumor a note concerning 'the political activity of the CD [Christian Democratic] Political Committee of the European Community in connection with the decisions of the October 1972 Paris Summit'. In this note, he demanded

an intensification of cooperation in the Political Committee as well as in the Christian Democratic Group's communication with groups in the national parliaments . . . But this alone will not be enough. Such work must be pursued more systematically, make a far more effective impact on the activities of national parties and parliamentary groups, and eventually be carried into popular political consciousness. This is impossible without appropriate personnel and financial re-

1967, and as a result of their common membership in the EUCD established a 'contact committee' on 17 June 1972. A strategy paper was presented to this committee calling for 'the formation of a single party'. This project was realised in 1977 with the founding of the Christian Democratic Appeal (Christen Democratisch Appèl, CDA). See ACDP IX-004-100/8.

⁶⁴ The text was published in various languages by the Christian Democratic Group of the European Parliament in *CD-Europa* (published by the Christian Democratic Group in the EP, Luxembourg) on 16 July 1970. See ACDP IX-001-055/2.

⁶⁵ See Karl-Heinz Nassmacher, *Demokratisierung der Europäischen Gemeinschaften* (Bonn, 1972).

sources. It is true that the existing organisational structures can be used, but not that they take on the whole of this new task, for which the organisation was not intended, and for which it is not equipped. [A political programme has to be elaborated] whose declarations on all the important areas in political life can be jointly presented by parties across the Community as their joint election manifesto for the direct elections to the European Parliament. [To get through the work needed to prepare for the European elections] the Political Committee must engage its own secretary-general, based in Brussels. The rule that the parliamentary group's secretary-general should double as secretary-general of the Political Committee is also less and less sustainable: increasing demands are being made of the parliamentary group. [The Christian Democratic Group also] intends to create a political institute in the form of a foundation, which might be given the honorary designation of, for instance, the Robert Schuman Foundation.⁶⁶

The idea of giving the Political Committee its own secretary general in order to take a further step towards independence and the creation of a European party was not put into practice. The move was vetoed by the parliamentary group's Secretary General, Alfredo De Poi, who saw a threat to his own political function and a risk of damaging coordination between the two bodies. All in all, Lückner's proposals proved premature. But they did show the way things were intended to develop, even if the realisation of those plans was to be delayed for a while.

It was indeed 'already in the logic of things that Christian Democrats were thinking of building a European Christian Democratic party – it emerged from all the forms and processes of their European cooperation . . . and the external impulse for this' would be 'the direct elections to the European Parliament'.⁶⁷ From the start, however, there was not enough agreement about how to proceed with constructing this European party, and particularly about its political and ideological profile. The European Union of Young Christian Democrats (EUYCD), for instance, took the revolutionary position that national Christian Democratic parties should be replaced by 'one large Christian Democratic party'. This emerged from a declaration made at their meeting in Malta on 15 May 1972, in which they proposed a 'party which will give popular expression to political participation in the framework of free, communal institutions; it should be marked by a progressive spirit and find coherence in the anti-fascist tradition. This

⁶⁶ ACDP IX-004-082 [translated from the 1998 version of the book].

⁶⁷ Hahn and Fugman, 'Die Europäische Christlich-Demokratische Union', 329.

party will solve current problems which national political forces cannot deal with because they are too small.⁶⁸

The dominant doctrine, by contrast, was expressed in a contribution by Robert Houben, head of the Belgian member party's research institute, the Centre for Economic, Political and Social Studies (Centrum voor Economische, Politieke en Sociale Studies, CEPESS):

Both political integration of the kind we are striving for and the fact that the European Parliament exists pose the question of forming parties at European level . . . At the same time, to be realistic, we must assume that a party at European level will only take shape gradually, and in fact will start from what exists; just as European union can probably only come about through the development of the Common Market to an Economic and Currency Union, and then on to political integration, which will have to take into account a transition period and a great deal of patience . . . Building a party at European level and the further development of European integration have to develop in parallel and at the same pace.⁶⁹

The final incentive to realise this project came from the EC's heads of state and government, who decided in December 1974 to fix the date of the first direct elections to the EP for 1978.⁷⁰ The Political Committee of Christian Democratic Parties from European Community Member States began talking about the practical preparations for these elections as early as spring 1975. Various ideas were discussed. In Bonn, for instance, acting on behalf of EUCD President von Hassel, Heinrich Böx, head of the CDU's office for foreign relations, headed up a small study group.⁷¹ With the founding of a European party in its sights, the group discussed ques-

⁶⁸ 'Dossier sur la formation d'un parti européen', Doc 16/10.9.1975, ACDP IX-004-096 [translated from the 1998 version of the book].

⁶⁹ Robert Houben, 'La formation d'un parti européen', ACDP IX-004-096 [translated from the 1998 version of the book].

⁷⁰ As there was a lot of delay in the preparation for the first direct elections, the European Council finally decided at its meeting in Copenhagen (7–8 April 1978) to fix the dates at 7–10 June 1979.

⁷¹ The group consisted of Meinhard Ade (CDU planning staff), Hans Herbert Holzamer (CDU department of foreign relations), Thomas Jansen (personal representative of the then CDU party and CDU/CSU parliamentary Group Chair Rainer Barzel MP) and Hubertus Dessloch and N. Obermeier (both CSU members and senior officials in the Bavarian Land Representation). See Eva-Rose Karnofski, *Parteienbünde vor der Europa-Wahl 1979: Integration durch gemeinsame Wahlaussagen?* Institute for European Politics, vol. 59 (Bonn, 1982), 191ff.; and Thomas Jansen, in *Fraktion der Europäischen Volkspartei, Liber Amicorum*, 115.

tions of strategy, a political programme and an organisational structure, and prepared documents for the German delegation in the Political Committee. This group also proposed the name European People's Party.

Establishing a European Party

In September 1975, an ad hoc European party working group was set up and chaired jointly by Wilfried Martens, President of Belgium's Flemish Christian People's Party (Christelijke Volkspartij, CVP), and Lücker, Chair of the Christian Democratic Group in the EP.⁷² Members were the Deputy Secretary Generals of the EUCD, Karl Josef Hahn (Netherlands) and Böx (Germany); the Secretary General of the Christian Democratic Group, De Poi (Italy); and the Executive Secretary of the EUCD, Josef Müller (Germany). The working group was given the task of 'elaborating the basic documents for founding a Christian Democratic party with reference to direct elections to the European Parliament', in other words, a constitution and a programme. The working group met several times between November 1975 and January 1976, and in Paris, on 20 February 1976, was able to present the Political Committee with a draft constitution.⁷³ Having checked the draft, which was rapidly accepted, the Political Committee meeting in Brussels on 29 April 1976 decided to found the European People's Party: Federation of Christian Democratic Parties of the European Community, and adopted the constitution.⁷⁴

The formal founding of the EPP took place in the context of a meeting of the EUCD Political Bureau in Luxembourg on 8 July 1976, in fact, the first and constitutive meeting of the Political Bureau of the EPP.⁷⁵ Representatives of the following parties took part: the Flemish CVP and the French-speaking Christian Social Party (Parti social chrétien, PSC) from Belgium; the CDU and CSU from Germany; the Democratic and Social Centre (Centre des démocrates sociaux, CDS) from France; the Family of the Irish (Fine Gael, FG) from Ireland; Christian Democracy (Democrazia

⁷² Decision of the Political Committee meeting, Luxembourg, 26 September 1975.

⁷³ ACDP, KAS IX-004-096.

⁷⁴ Published in *Programm und Statut*, EPP Dokumentation Series, vol. 1, 2nd ed. (Brussels, 1984), 45ff.

⁷⁵ Documented in *CD-Europa 2* (1978).

Cristiana, DC) from Italy; the Christian-Social People's Party (Chrëscht-lech-Sozial Vollekspartei, CSV) from Luxembourg; and the Catholic People's Party (Katholieke Volkspartij, KVP), the Anti-Revolutionary Party (Anti-Revolutionaire Partij, ARP) and the Christian Historical Union (Christelijk-Historische Unie, CHU) from the Netherlands.

Leo Tindemans, Prime Minister of Belgium and former Secretary General of the EUCD, was unanimously elected President. In accordance with the rules of procedure, the EUCD President, von Hassel, and the Chair of the Christian Democratic Group in the EP, Alfred Bertrand, became ex officio Vice-Presidents of the EPP. Further Vice-Presidents were elected: Norbert Schmelzer (Netherlands), André Colin (France) and Dario Antoniozzi (Italy). Former Bundestag and EP member Müller, who had been the EUCD's Executive Secretary in Brussels since 1973 when the EUCD General Secretariat was in Rome, was given the task of building up the EPP General Secretariat. He would, for the time being, run things in tandem with the Group's Secretary General, Giampaolo Bettamio.

The process of founding the party also involved agreement on the political programme at the EPP's first Congress in Brussels on 6–7 March 1978. The proposal elaborated by rapporteurs Martens and Lückner was accepted without amendment: it had already been agreed on by the EPP's Political Bureau, which had discussed it several times.⁷⁶ On the margins of the Congress, at the initiative of the President, the EPP's Political Bureau also elected a Secretary General, Jean Seitlinger. A member of the French National Assembly, in the early 1960s he had served as the last secretary general of the NEI. Bertrand had meanwhile been succeeded as Group Chair by Egon Klepsch and was elected Treasurer, completing the leadership. One week later, on 14 March, the Christian Democrats in the EP added to its name Group of the European People's Party. The structure of the EPP was now complete.

⁷⁶ Published in *Programm und Statut*, 6ff. See also the following two publications, which provide further details about the development of the programme, with comments and explanations: Karnofski, *Parteienbünde*, 387ff.; Martin Bangemann, Roland Bieber, Egon Klepsch and Horst Seefeld, *Programme für Europa: Die Programme der europäischen Parteibünde zur Europa-Wahl 1979* (Bonn, 1978), 181ff.

Controversy over the Name

Agreement had quickly been reached about the structure of the new party and how it would be built up. From the outset, there was consensus about the goal – the creation of a political party. But naming the organisation was more difficult. The draft constitution put before the Political Committee in February 1976 had not resolved the issue. The name had not yet been discussed at this point, and it remained contentious, as it would define the party's ideology, alignment and political profile. A name signals not only the message to be conveyed; it also gives an idea of who is delivering the message and whom the message is for.

The row was set off by the strategic question of whether or not the British and Danish Conservative parties, whose deputies in the EP had formed their own group, should be invited to join the future European People's Party.⁷⁷ Those in favour of the invitation argued for a name that avoided the description 'Christian Democratic', which they felt was too narrow and exclusive. Those against the invitation – in other words, those who wanted to give the new party an unambiguously Christian Democratic character – argued that the character should be reflected in the name. In that way, there would be no possibility of confusion.

Above all, the Germans favoured a 'strategy of openness'. Their arguments were evidently based on their own experience and tradition. Both the CDU and CSU owed their own strength, relative to affiliated parties elsewhere in Europe, to being able to integrate Conservative (and Liberal) forces. Against them, the Italian DC, along with the Dutch and Belgian parties, insisted on emphasising a Christian Democratic identity. They saw this as important to the party's *raison d'être* and political direction, and essential if their action in helping to found a European party were to be successful in their own countries. The party's identity, its political profile and therefore its whole coherence and effectiveness would, it was argued, be hopelessly compromised if the Conservatives were allowed to join at this crucial early stage. The other founding parties from Luxembourg, Ireland and France agreed.⁷⁸

⁷⁷ In 1973 a Conservative Group was established. In 1979 it was renamed into European Democratic Group (EDG). It ceased to exist in 1992, following the entry of British and Danish Conservatives in the EPP Group. See chapter three of the present volume.

⁷⁸ The case against the pro-Conservative position is argued by P. H. Kooijmans in 'La Démocratie chrétienne en Europe' (translated from a contribution to 'Anti-

To reach a compromise with the Germans, it was agreed that soundings would be taken among other like-minded parties in order to establish a common platform, the 'Democratic Centre committed to European unity and social progress'. This was not meant to be a party:

What we had in mind was, rather, an association like a political club, to provide the framework for meetings and discussions between the leading political figures in member parties and parliamentary groups. The final impulse for these ideas was the political alliance of the Socialists with the French Communist Party, as well as the development of some EC Communist parties into 'Euro-Communism'. These were plainly efforts to achieve a joint political structure involving both Socialist and Social Democratic parties.⁷⁹

Under no circumstances was such an initiative to be pursued at the cost of the effectiveness of the European party of Christian Democrats. In September 1975, following a proposal by Lückner, a working group with the name 'Democratic Centre' was set up alongside the European Party working group. The efforts of the new working group, however, were fruitless.

Ultimately, there was a clear majority against bringing in the Conservatives, but as far as the name was concerned, a compromise was found. The idea of a 'People's Party' signalled both the openness the Germans wanted and a connection to the Christian Democratic tradition that was important to the others. Numerous past and present Christian-inspired parties and parties with a Christian Democratic or Christian Social orientation had similar names. For example (to mention only parties in the then EC Member States), there was the Italian People's Party (Partito Popolare Italiano, PPI); and in France, the Popular Democratic Party (Parti démocrate populaire, Pdp) and the Republican People's Movement (Mouvement républicain populaire, MRP); the Belgian CVP; the Dutch KPV and the CSV in Luxembourg. To safeguard the new party's identity and guarantee it, the official name European People's Party was followed by a descriptive subtitle: Federation of Christian Democratic Parties of the European Community. This subtitle was, however, rarely used and consequently soon forgotten.⁸⁰

revolutionaire Staatskunde', Den Haag, March 1973), in ACDP IX-004-096.

⁷⁹ Hans August Lückner and Karl Josef Hahn, *Christliche Demokraten bauen Europa* (Bonn, 1987), 130.

⁸⁰ Note that at the time the NEI was founded, the same idea – avoiding the term 'Christian Democracy' – was very strong and supported by the French (with reference to the French Christian Democratic parties that had never had 'Christian Democracy' in their names). See chapter one of the present volume and

A Federative and Open Party Organisation

Apart from its character of compromise, the name expressed a bold challenge and an honest judgement by the party's founders. It was bold because they were aiming high by calling the EPP a party and setting a goal whose realisation seemed to many, at the time, a chimera. It was honest in that the subtitle expressed what it was really about, namely an association of parties. There was a dynamic tension between that forward-looking claim to being a European party 'in the making' and the realistic insight that it could for the moment be no more than a European association of national parties. And it was out of that fruitful tension that, over the coming years, the EPP was to develop.

As a European party, the EPP could not – and did not want to – copy any national model. Unlike national parties, no single model informs every part of its organisation. The EPP respects the existing, established and valued structures of its member parties. It builds on them and depends on them. In other words, the EPP was founded as a federative party which organises common action by its members at European level and seeks to ensure they are politically supported. This orientation is also expressed in the party's constitution.

Two categories of membership were foreseen for the various party bodies, such as the Executive Committee, the Political Bureau and the Congress. One sort of member would be the representatives of member parties or, where there was more than one member party in a country, the national *équipe*. Their number would be determined by the proportion of national deputies in the EPP Group. The other category would consist of elected deputies or office holders belonging to member parties in the EP, the European Commission, the EPP Group and associations recognised by the EPP, as well as, obviously, the president of the EPP itself, its vice-presidents, treasurer and secretary general. Every decision would require an absolute majority of members present, a rule which reflected the party's supranational and democratic character.

The Political Programme

The political programme decided by the EPP's first Congress in 1978 evinced considerable consensus on almost all European political issues,

many of them with profound socio-political implications. The programme expressed a joint intention to develop and complete integration in the context of the EC, leading to a political union equipped with federal and democratic institutions.

The rapporteurs, Martens and Lücker, had been able to base their draft on productive preparatory work and agreed, documented common positions. The years prior to the founding of the EPP had been fruitful for the Christian Democrats in terms of developing political programmes. Nearly all European parties had discussed both basic and action programmes, and had either decided on them or were in the process of doing so. The reasons can be traced, above all, to the general change in the socio-political climate resulting from the revolt of 1968. This especially affected Christian Democratic parties, because those parties had generally been in government since the war. At the same time, new questions were being raised by developments in European politics and their cultural, economic and socio-political implications.

Beyond that, domestic circumstances, in Germany and the Netherlands, for instance, necessitated intensive – and extensive – efforts. In Germany, where the CDU and CSU had been in opposition since the autumn of 1969, it was a matter of a radical new direction. In the Netherlands, the three Christian confessional parties (ARP, CHU and KVP), looking ahead to uniting as one Christian Democratic party, had conducted an intensive debate about the inspiration and contents of their policy.⁸¹

All these multifaceted labours yielded the raw material for the rapporteurs and for everyone else involved in developing the policies of the EPP or participating in the debate. This raw material included specialised programmes, as well as important statements on key issues, election programmes, and – not least – work done by the Christian Democratic Group in the EP. Thanks to the work of the Konrad Adenauer Foundation, synopses and comparative analyses were available.⁸² The ‘Manifesto of European Christian Democrats’, adopted by the EUCD Political Bureau in

⁸¹ ‘Plichten en perspectieven. Aanzet voor een profielschets van het CDA’, Centrum voor Staatskundige Vorming (The Hague, 1975).

⁸² Eggert von Petersdorff (ed.), *Synopse der Parteiprogramme der Christlich-Demokratischen Parteien Westeuropas*, Politische Akademie Eichholz (Weseling, 1971). See also Bernhard Gebauer, *Die europäischen Parteien der Mitte: Analysen und Dokumente zur Programmatik christlich-demokratischer und konservativer Parteien Westeuropas*, Handbücher der Politischen Akademie Eichholz, vol. 6 (Bonn, 1978).

Paris on 21 February 1976, served as the basic document. The 'Political Manifesto of the World Union of Christian Democrats' was also helpful. This had been passed by the EUCD Political Bureau in Rome on 16 July 1976. Both texts, which Lückner had personally helped to draft, contained detailed expositions of basic precepts of Christian Democratic policy; they also set out the basic conceptual framework.⁸³

The EPP Political Programme declarations were arranged in five chapters under the slogan 'Together for a Europe of Free People'. The chapters were entitled 'Our Guidelines for Europe', 'Europe in the World', 'European Community Policy', 'The Community's Institutional Framework' and 'Our Goal: A United Europe'.⁸⁴ Starting from a consensus on principles about the individual and society, the chapters contained an action programme that, given that the exercise had never been tried before, was already unusually concrete and detailed.⁸⁵

Compared with equivalent texts passed at the same time by the European organisations of the Social Democratic and Liberal parties, the EPP's Political Programme was unique in its attempt to respond fully and in detail to relevant issues. The Social Democrats' 'Appeal to the Electorate', approved by the federation's congress in Brussels in January 1979, 'does not go . . . beyond a brief presentation of global aims'. As for the Liberals' election programme, voted through by their federation's congress in Brussels in November 1977, 'only general theses [are] binding . . . Statements offering detailed proposals and solutions to political problems are, as far as the parties are concerned, optional and subject to interpretation.'⁸⁶

The EUCD Crisis

The German CDU and CSU delegates had failed to win adequate support from other parties for 'opening up' the EPP, though they had reached a compromise on the question of the party's name. But this was not the end of the matter. The Germans sought other ways to unite centre forces in

⁸³ Texts published in *Programm und Statut*, 27ff. and 33ff.

⁸⁴ See the first annex of this volume.

⁸⁵ The story of the EPP's conception, founding and content are set out in detail in Egon Klepsch, 'Das Programm der EVP', in Bangemann et al., *Programme für Europa*, 77ff.

⁸⁶ Karnofski, *Parteienbünde*, 245, 248.

Europe. Within both the EUCD and the EPP, they called for a dialogue to be established with Conservative parties, reactivating the 'democratic centre' idea. A working group to foster such a dialogue held two meetings, in December 1977 and April 1978, chaired by the EUCD President (and EPP Vice-President), von Hassel. A draft dialogue paper submitted by the CDU/CSU delegation stipulated that member parties had to pledge primary support to the EPP, since this was the only Europe-wide federation of parties to which they belonged. It was proposed that a working group be set up in parallel to the EPP to provide a platform for cooperation among all non-socialist, anti-collectivist, centre-right parties across the whole of Europe.⁸⁷

Once the EPP had been founded, a degree of pressure to establish relatively formal links between Christian Democratic and Conservative forces was also exerted by EUCD parties that felt excluded from the EPP. An explicit stipulation had been made in the EPP constitution to the effect that only parties from EC Member States were eligible to join. On 28 October 1976, the EPP's Political Bureau decided that no other parties should be granted associate membership or even observer status. In this matter, too, the parties that set particular store by their Christian Democratic identity proved to be the most determined. They were against any dilution of the supranational and federalist approach that had inspired the formation of the EPP as a party designed to operate in the EC system.

The Austrian People's Party (Österreichische Volkspartei, ÖVP) and the Swiss Christian Democratic People's Party (Christlich Demokratische Volkspartei der Schweiz/Parti démocrate-chrétien suisse, CVP/PDC) responded by drafting a joint memorandum on 23 November 1976.⁸⁸ They wanted a revision of rules and decisions that they regarded as discriminatory, and they wanted a mechanism allowing EUCD parties to work with the EPP. Their bid, however, was turned down. Apart from the negative psychological effects this had, there was the practical consequence that the EUCD developed into a 'waiting room club'.⁸⁹ The result was that some of those affected – not only the Christian Democratic parties from Austria and Switzerland but also those from Portugal, Spain and Malta – felt the need to look for an alternative. They found it in the EDU, whose champions commended it as an alternative: 'The downgrading of the EUCD to a

⁸⁷ ACDP IX-004-095.

⁸⁸ ACDP IX-004-096.

⁸⁹ Kai-Uwe von Hassel, note to CDU Chair Helmut Kohl, n.d., *ibid.*

rump could be averted by the creation of the EDU, which would include Conservative and other centre parties alike. The EUCD could operate under the EDU umbrella as a grouping of Christian Democratic parties.’⁹⁰ The awkward result was that the hard insistence on a federal European ideal helped ensure that the EDU model, the very model the opponents to Conservative involvement were trying to resist, had a real chance of success.

The Founding of the EDU

The EDU project of developing closer cooperation between Christian Democrats, Conservatives and other ‘like-minded parties’ was in the tradition of so-called inter-party conferences. These had convened regularly since the 1960s, informally bringing together leading personalities from interested parties. The ÖVP was particularly keen on fleshing out this idea and creating an organisation; it was to play a leading part both in founding the EDU and in developing it. The German parties were very enthusiastic too, as was the British Conservative Party.

On the basis of their own experience, the Germans were trying to ‘normalise’ things at the European level. No doubt they thought it utterly perverse that they were not able to work together in the same grouping as their natural partners, the British Conservatives. The Tories were a party from a Member State which was a key player in both European policy and the ‘German Question’. The principal British goal was to break out of its isolation, but in the end, Britain, too, was looking for a new order, one consonant with the adversarial nature of their system of government – an order that would bring anti-socialist forces together. A resolution at the 1975 British Conservative Party Conference called for the party to cultivate European allies: ‘Recognizing that the United Kingdom is now a permanent member of the European Community . . . [the party] should work more closely with our political allies in Europe with a view to forming a moderate centre-right alliance (a “European Democratic Party”) which

⁹⁰ Christoph Brüse, official in the CDU foreign relations department, report on the meeting of EPP/EUCD bodies in Brussels, 20–23 October 1976.

could effectively counter Socialist coalition tactics in the European Parliament, and take positive initiatives on European construction.⁹¹

Immediately after the EPP was established, preparations were put in place to found the EDU as an 'association of Christian Democratic and other non-collectivist parties'. The constitution was agreed on at a meeting in Munich in October 1977; December of the same year saw agreement on the issue of finance at a meeting in Vienna, and the EDU officially came into being at Schloss Klessheim, near Salzburg, on 24 April 1978.⁹²

Once the EDU was in place, it became pointless for the EPP member parties to make any further attempt to agree on a joint strategy for organised dialogue with the Conservatives. Belgian, Dutch, Italian and French members of the EPP felt basic mutual trust had been put in question, and protested. There was a 'time-consuming and heated discussion about the EDU' at the May 1978 meeting of the EPP Political Bureau in Dublin, where the final version of the Political Programme was supposed to be decided on the basis of the EPP congress debates and resolutions. It was true that the founding of the EDU, within a few weeks of the EPP's successful first Congress, had an extraordinarily 'negative, divisive effect, tarnishing the image of the EPP'.⁹³

'Simultaneous membership of the EPP and the EDU is bigamy', was the view of the Belgian PSC leader, Charles-Ferdinand Nothomb.⁹⁴ Henning Wegener, head of the CDU department of foreign relations from 1977 onwards, quoted Nothomb back to his party leadership. 'The formation of the EDU has caused serious ill-feeling in the EPP,' he said. 'Patient, painstaking explanation will be required to dispel it.' Addressing EPP bodies, he

⁹¹ Cited in Gebauer, *Die europäischen Parteien der Mitte*, 154.

⁹² On the founding of the EDU and its philosophy of Christian Democracy and Conservative community, see especially Franz Horner, *Konservative und christdemokratische Parteien in Europa: Geschichte, Programmatik, Strukturen* (Vienna and Munich, 1981), 79, and specifically on the founding and aims of the EDU, see Andreas Khol, 'Europäische Demokratische Union (EDU): Die europäischen Parteiengruppe der fortschrittlichen Mitte', in *Österreichische Monatshefte: Zeitschrift für Politik*, 5 (1978), 4ff.

⁹³ Joint meeting of the EPP and EUCD Political Bureaus, 6 June 1978, Berlin, Procès verbal: 'la réunion de Salzburg a eu un effet négatif de division, entamant l'image du PPE', ADCP IX-004-095 [translated from the 1998 version of the book].

⁹⁴ ADCP IX-004-095 [translated from the 1998 version of the book].

defended his party's view that the CDU considered the creation of the EDU to be necessary

- to forge links with like-minded parties in European countries where, for historical reasons, the Christian Democratic movement had not taken root;
- to pave the way for solid, non-collectivist majorities in the future European Parliament; and
- to offer a home to sister parties from European countries that did not yet belong to the European Community.⁹⁵

The advent of the EPP as a specifically Christian Democratic European party with supranational ambitions led to a crisis within the EUCD, from which the EPP had sprung. It also led to the founding of the EDU, which was intended as both an alternative and a complement to the EPP. Subsequently, the EPP, EUCD and EDU – as was to be expected given their common origin – behaved like communicating bodies. By their nature, international political organisations, like national ones, strive for autonomy, a distinct identity and dominance. They invariably find subordination to, or dependence on, rivals hard to bear. In practice, a balance of sorts was struck, based, generally, on respect for a division of responsibilities. This is not to say, however, that things went as efficiently and as effectively as they should have. Eliminating the anomaly of having three transnational organisations within the political spectrum of the centre-right would turn out to be a rather difficult and long-term challenge.

⁹⁵ Ibid.

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