

**CHRISTIAN DEMOCRAT  
INTERNATIONALISM**

**ITS ACTION IN EUROPE AND WORLDWIDE  
FROM POST WORLD WAR II  
UNTIL THE 1990s**

**Volume III: The European People's Party  
Continental and Social Cooperation**



**P.I.E. Peter Lang**

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## **CHRISTIAN DEMOCRAT INTERNATIONALISM**

### **ITS ACTION IN EUROPE AND WORLDWIDE FROM POST WORLD WAR II UNTIL THE 1990S**

**Volume III: The European People's Party  
Continental and Social Cooperation**

Jean-Dominique Durand (ed.)

**In memory of Wilfried Martens**  
Former Prime Minister of Belgium  
President of the European People's Party  
President of the Centre for European Studies



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INTRODUCTION

## A European People's Party for a Europeanist Conscience

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The following presentation intends to offer food for thought concerning some stages of the development of a Europeanist conscience, of which the European People's Party has become both mouthpiece and interpreter; with particular reference to the party's parliamentary group – leaving aside other components such as youth or women, to which other specific contributions collected in this volume are dedicated.

The proposed reconstruction will necessarily be brief, and will take for granted various elements that have already been developed by a consolidated historiography and are partly contained in two previous conferences, the proceedings of which have recently been published<sup>1</sup>. The presentation will focus on three moments: the founding stage of the party; the conceptual second thoughts announced in the early 1990s; some questions that remained open at the beginning of the third millennium.

### The Origins of the European People's Party

As is widely known, the EPP was born under the presidency of Belgian Prime Minister Leo Tindemans as a federation of Christian Democratic parties, inspired by Europe's founding fathers, with the aim of strengthening their relations within the European community, especially in view of the 1979 universal suffrage elections<sup>2</sup>.

<sup>1</sup> See J.-D. Durand (ed.), *Christian Democrat Internationalism. Its Action in Europe and Worldwide from post World War II until 1990s*, Vol. I: *The Origins* and Vol. II: *The Development (1945-1979). The Role of Parties, Movements, People*, Brussels, P.I.E. Peter Lang, 2013.

<sup>2</sup> For a wide historical framework see T. Jansen, *Il Partito Popolare Europeo. Origini e sviluppo*, it. ed., Brussels, 2006; P. Fontaine, *Voyage au cœur de l'Europe 1953-2009. Histoire du Groupe des Démocrates-Chrétiens et du Parti Populaire Européen au Parlement européen*, Brussels, Editions Racine, 2009, it. ed., 2010; T. Jansen, S. Van Hecke, *At Europe's Service. The Origins and Evolution of the European*

The party's political programme, unanimously adopted during the first congress – which took place in Brussels in March 1978 – indicated its goal from the outset: "We, the European People's Party, Federation of Christian Democratic Parties of the European Community, desire a United Europe"<sup>5</sup>. A statement about the strong will to continue the successful policies of Schuman, De Gasperi and Adenauer – to continue their work and bring it to completion by founding a European Union that would attain completion in a European federation – as set out by Robert Schuman, immediately followed on 9<sup>th</sup> May 1950<sup>4</sup>.

Truth be told, as Philippe Chenaux observed in the two decades before the party was founded, namely through De Gasperi's death and the failure of the EDC in 1954 and the 1976 "Tindemans report", it cannot be said that the Christian Democrats had taken "les initiatives que l'on pouvait attendre d'eux pour relancer la mise en oeuvre de leur grand dessein fédéraliste"<sup>5</sup>. The almost ritual reference made to the legacy of

<sup>4</sup> *People's Party*, Heidelberg, Springer, 2011 and the essay by S. Van Hecke, "The Fracious Foundation of the European People's Party", in J.-D. Durand (ed.), *Christian Democrat Internationalism. Its Action in Europe and Worldwide from post World War II until 1990s*, Vol. II, pp. 173-184. These studies are also a reference for the more distant origins of the party (from the International Secretariat of Democratic parties of Christian inspiration to the Nouvelles Équipes Internationales and the European Union of Christian Democrats) as well as for the discussions that accompanied the choice of the name. For one of the first reflections on the features and goals of the new political entity, see the monographic issue of the magazine *Panorama démocratique chrétien*, 1978, No. 2-3, with the enclosed party programme.

<sup>5</sup> *Programma politico del Partito Popolare Europeo*, Rome, Spes, 1979, p. 1. The text of the programme was repeatedly referred to, recently in the volume by T. Jansen, S. Van Hecke, *At Europe's Service*, pp. 253-281. The programme took into consideration two earlier documents: the *Manifesto of European Christian Democrats*, drawn up in Paris by the political office of the European Union of Christian Democrats in February 1976 and the *Political Manifesto of the World Union of Christian Democrats*, adopted in Rome in July of the same year: T. Jansen, *Il Partito Popolare Europeo*, p. 78.

<sup>6</sup> *Programma politico del Partito Popolare Europeo*, p. 1; also see P. Fontaine, *Voyage au coeur de l'Europe*, pp. 44-47 of the original French edition from which the following quotations are taken.

<sup>7</sup> P. Chenaux, "Les démocrates-chrétiens au niveau de l'Union Européenne", in E. Lamberts (ed.), *Christian Democracy in the European Union (1945-1995)*, Leuven, Leuven University Press, 1997, p. 455. In his report "Leo Tindemans propose de renforcer les institutions existantes afin de les rendre plus efficaces, d'élargir les pouvoirs de la Commission, de conférer le pouvoir législatif au Parlement européen et de développer le vote à la majorité au Conseil. Le rapporteur propose que le Conseil accepte de déléguer à la Commission les compétences exécutives qui lui permettraient de remplir à nouveau sa tâche. Leo Tindemans suggère aussi de renforcer le pouvoir du Parlement européen, qu'il espère voir élu au suffrage universel dès 1978, en lui confiant un pouvoir d'initiative jusque-là réservé à la Commission". P. Fontaine, *Voyage au coeur de l'Europe*, p. 152.

the founding fathers masked "le vide des objectifs et la prudence des attitudes"<sup>6</sup>.

Similar concerns had been voiced, among others, by the Italian Christian Democrats through some of their party journalists, during the first political debate to which the European People's Party was called, where a twofold founding aspect of an authentically Europeanist conscience was highlighted. On the one hand, the need was reiterated for Europe to strengthen its union: only around the prospect of unity would Europe be able to "preserve its identity, its right to self-determination and at the same time its ideals: freedom, solidarity, justice, peace and democracy"<sup>7</sup>. On the other hand it was clearly stated that "the vague Europeanism, the emotional consensus" were no longer enough, but that there was a need for "clear ideas, political projects, daily commitment"<sup>8</sup>. Convinced that Europe should be built on a federal basis, they believed that "the formulas of state alliances, intergovernmental cooperation, purely confederal structures were completely outdated"<sup>9</sup>. A strong popular and democratic vocation would have been the best way "to continue the work of the precursors – Schuman, De Gasperi, Adenauer – avoiding their transformation into harmless sources of quotations and reverent but sterile memories"<sup>10</sup>.

The party programme intended to move within this perspective. I am not going to dwell on the various programmatic points: I will just point out the general framework. The programme was mainly organised around a few large areas. The first – concerning the general guiding principles – made reference to the Christian conception of the human being and society, claimed the safeguarding of fundamental rights and freedoms, indicating community personalism, pluralism and participation as the essential foundations of democracy<sup>10</sup>. Political action had to find its realisation within a non-denominational, lay context. In this respect, it was observed that the programme

<sup>6</sup> P. Chenaux, "Les démocrates-chrétiens au niveau de l'Union Européenne", p. 455.

<sup>7</sup> *Programma politico del Partito Popolare Europeo*, p. 1.

<sup>8</sup> "Insieme per una Europa di uomini liberi", in *Il Punto. Quindicinale Spes Democratica Cristiana*, No. 45-46, 1979, p. 4.

<sup>9</sup> G. Martini, "L'azione comune dei democratici cristiani in Europa: da Sturzo alle 'Nouvelles Équipes', dall'UEDC al PPE", *ivi*, p. 55. The essay (pp. 45-55) referred to the monographic of the journal *Vita e Pensiero*, No. 4-6, 1978, "Sul rischio Europa", where it had been published with the title of "Il coordinamento continentale dei democratici cristiani. Tappe storiche ed orientamenti ispiratori".

<sup>10</sup> In this respect, see the considerations by R. Papini, "Pour une doctrine du PPE", in *Panorama démocratique chrétien*, pp. 41-54.



strongly rejected the hypothesis that seemed to be supported by other political parties – for example the Socialists – of a Europe on which a certain ideological and social model was imposed. Indeed, if Christian Democrats rejected a “socialist Europe”, which was repeatedly advocated by Mitterrand, they did not consider themselves as the mouthpieces of a “Carolingian” or “Vatican” Europe (which was frequently mentioned – out of context – in the 1950s), either. Europe will build its unity with the contribution of its various ideological, political and cultural components; this is its wealth and strength. After all, this union is not an emotional or generic aspiration, but it has a European Federation as its ultimate goal<sup>11</sup>.

The second programmatic area concerned the guidelines for the contents to be developed, with reference to the economy, security, relations between Peoples and domestic and international solidarity. The third area involved the dynamics of community political institutions. The advocated Federation had to be organised around the classic institutional scheme: “a directly elected Parliament to express the free will of the Peoples; an assembly of the Member States representing their legitimate interests; a European government that intends to govern and may actually do so”. When Europe can avail itself of these political institutions – the programme concluded – “it will be able to act in a unitary, vigorous and convincing way”<sup>12</sup>. After all, from all these guidelines “the will emerged to favour the continuation and completion of the integration process within the framework of the European Community, aimed at achieving political union through federal and democratic institutions”<sup>13</sup>.

Therefore, the programme of the new party appeared to be an attempt at offering wide-ranging and exhaustive answers to the multiplicity and complexity of the problems of that time. Thomas Jansen noted that this planning approach differentiated the EPP from the programme guidelines adopted in the same period by the other political organisations, such as the liberal and social democratic parties, which confined themselves to enunciating general arguments or overall objectives<sup>14</sup>.

Beginning with the first elections in 1979, the EPP increasingly asserted itself “comme l’une des premières forces politiques transnationales (avec les socialistes) représentées au sein de l’Assemblée de Strasbourg”<sup>15</sup>. Over and above the stages that distinguished and engaged the party in the 1980s – with particular reference to the review of the statutes and the discussions on the new structure involving all European parties with a Christian Democratic orientation<sup>16</sup> – between the end of the decade and the beginning of the 1990s the party found itself involved in a process of in-depth revision and reformulation of its nature and role, which certainly involved – in more general terms – its own Europeanist conscience.

### A Programmatic Redefinition

The years that witnessed the 1989 breakthrough, the crisis of international communism and the ideological conflicts between East and West, the unification of Germany and the gradual shift from European Community to European Union started by the Maastricht Treaty, meant new challenges for the EPP, and inevitably pushed it towards the redefinition of its own policy. The issue became particularly significant and critical when the party was faced with the prospect of welcoming other political forces into the party – especially conservative ones – which could have called into question its Christian Democratic identity, its function as People’s party and its being a Centre political force. Furthermore, the Europeanist and Federalist planning that the party declared itself to be an expression of should also be taken into consideration.

The issue became particularly controversial and crucial in the early 1990s, with the progressive approach by the Spanish People’s Party as well as the British and Danish Conservatives, which ended up with the admission of their respective MEPs in the EPP group at the European Parliament<sup>17</sup>. In itself, the problem was not a new one, as somehow it had accompanied EPP history from the outset and had expressed itself in conflicting views especially between the German component – which

11 G. Martini, “L’azione comune dei democratici cristiani in Europa”, p. 53. For a more in-depth analysis of this issue please make reference to the study by P. Chenaux, *Une Europe vaticane? Entre le Plan Marshall et les Traités de Rome*, Brussels, Éditions Citeo, 1990.

12 *Programma politico del Partito Popolare Europeo*, p. 32. On the goals of the party also see L. Tindemans, “Le Parti Populaire Européen: finalités et perspectives d’action”, in *Panorama démocratique chrétien*, pp. 5-10.

13 T. Jansen, *Il Partito Popolare Europeo*, p. 77. “Or, il n’y a de véritables solutions à nos problèmes – Tindemans wrote – que dans le renforcement de nos solidarités, que dans la prise de décisions sur un plan supranational et donc dans la réalisation de l’union politique de l’Europe”. L. Tindemans, “Le Parti Populaire Européen”, p. 8.

14 T. Jansen, *Il Partito Popolare Europeo*, p. 78.

15 P. Chenaux, “Les démocrates-chrétiens”, p. 455.

16 T. Jansen, *Il Partito Popolare Europeo*, pp. 133-140.

17 *Ivi*, pp. 153-158. By the same author also see “The Dilemma for Christian Democracy. Historical Identity and/or Political Expediency: Opening the Door to Conservatism”, in *Christian Democracy in the European Union*, pp. 459-472 e P. Delwit, “Démocraties chrétiennes et conservatisme: convergences subtiles ou volontaires?”, in *Id.* (ed.), *Démocraties chrétiennes et conservatismes en Europe. Une nouvelle convergence?*, Brussels, Éditions de l’Université de Brussels, 2003, pp. 7-24. On the various stages of enlargement, see D. Pasquucci, A. Landuyt (eds.), *Gli allargamenti della CEE/UE 1961-2004*, 2 Vols., Bologna, Il Mulino, 2005; R. Scartezzini, J. O. Milanese (eds.), *L’allargamento dell’Unione Europea nello scenario geopolitico europeo*, Milan, Angeli, 2005.

had always been in favour of "welcoming Conservative parties into the Federation of the European Union's Christian Democratic parties" and the member parties of Italy and Benelux, which "believed that this admission would compromise the Christian Democratic identity of the EPP".<sup>18</sup> With the new and more radical enlargement prospects, it appeared that the need to rethink the party's essential programme could not be postponed.

This moment came at the IX party congress, which took place in Athens in November 1992. The importance of this appointment was clear, especially for the goal that was pursued: to rethink the Europeanist project of Christian Democracy, especially in the light of the profound recent changes occurring in Eastern Europe. The declaration adopted by the congress, called "The responsibility of Christian Democrats in a changing world", met this demand. The congress drew up a "Basic Programme" that tried "pour la première fois d'articuler la vision personnaliste et communautaire de la société de la Démocratie chrétienne avec son projet fédéraliste européen" ("for the first time to articulate the tailored and community view of society by Christian Democracy with its European federalist project")<sup>19</sup>.

The programme was introduced by a preamble by Wilfried Martens, which analysed "the social situation in Europe and the relevant challenges", taking a stance "against the different ideological temptations (old and new), underlining at the same time the dangers that could materialise today and tomorrow"<sup>20</sup>. These scenarios where contrasted by the opportunity for a lasting peace and the significant potential within the "western consensual model that connects social market economy to democracy". "Christian Democracy" – Martens concluded – "on the basis of its political tradition, seeks to appeal to what is 'best', to the 'constructive' aspect which exists in each human individual, and to give contemporary expression to the ideals of social Christian personalism"<sup>21</sup>.

<sup>18</sup> T. Jansen, *Il Partito Popolare Europeo*, p. 152; also see W. Kaiser, *Christian Democracy and the Origins of European Union*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2007, pp. 316-317.

<sup>19</sup> P. Chenaux, *Les démocrates-chrétiens*, p. 456. The text of the programme is published as an appendix to the volume by T. Jansen, S. Van Hecke, *At Europe's Service*, pp. 283-317. For the Italian edition see *Europa 2000. L'unità nella diversità*, Knoth, 1994.

<sup>20</sup> T. Jansen, *Il Partito Popolare Europeo*, p. 146; T. Jansen, S. Van Hecke, *At Europe's Service*, pp. 284-287. Martens indicated among them "those coming from the demographic revolution, the growing worldwide economic interdependence, the differences between the rich and the poor, the depletion of natural resources, the media technology revolution, the increase in crime and the resurgence of racism and nationalism"; *ibidem*.

<sup>21</sup> *Ivi*, p. 287.

The Athens programme was divided into two chapters. The first was dedicated to the enunciation of fundamental principles and values; the second to the shift from European Community to European Union. Starting from the Christian conception of the human being, the values that are at the basis of Christian Democratic thinking and the models that should result from it in order to work within society and the political system were reiterated. The subsidiarity principle was strongly highlighted; meaning that power "must be exercised at the level which corresponds to the requirements of solidarity, effectiveness and the participation of citizens, in other words where it is both most effective and closest to the individual"<sup>22</sup>; furthermore, the subsidiarity principle "must henceforth be expressly applied to the activities of all the Community institutions"<sup>23</sup>.

The part of the document dedicated to the European Union offered a programme for its democratic and federal Constitution. A prominent place was given to the EPP's federalist European creed and its view of the community system after the Maastricht Treaty, considered to be a starting point for every further development and which was at the centre of various debates with particular reference to the difficulties that emerged in many countries during its ratification process<sup>24</sup>.

The Christian Democratic identity on the one hand, the European federalist programme on the other were therefore reiterated in a pressing debate, accompanied by frequent tensions, which saw two opposing groups; one more openly in favour of a significant enlargement of the EPP, the other more critical and more inclined to claim an urgent need for a detailed analysis<sup>25</sup>.

Starting with Athens' "Basic Programme" and followed by Brussels' "Action Programme" the next year, the contrast between the two orientations (enlargement – further details) dialectically appeared many times in the years that followed and would mark out the pathway of the EPP, ending up conditioning its nature, its strategic and organisational choices and ultimately its very Europeanist conscience. Within this framework, the predominance of the German component established

<sup>22</sup> *Ivi*, p. 293.

<sup>23</sup> *Ivi*, p. 298.

<sup>24</sup> T. Jansen, *Il Partito Popolare Europeo*, pp. 145-146.

<sup>25</sup> Already during the debate on the Maastricht Treaty Leo Tindemans had said: "Pas d'élargissement donc tant qu'une Constitution pour l'Europe n'aura pas été adoptée, une Constitution définissant la structure à venir de l'Union européenne, son caractère démocratique, confirmant qu'elle entend être une union de droit, en précisant ce que cela implique: l'acceptation, en tant que principes fondamentaux, de la subsidiarité et de la solidarité, une définition claire de la finalité de l'Union européenne ainsi que des droits de l'homme tels que nous le concevons"; P. Fontaine, *Voyage au coeur de l'Europe*, p. 320.



itself more and more, counterbalanced by the exit from the political scene of one of the main characters of the popular Europeanist cause, Italian Christian Democracy, which concluded its 50-year-old political history in 1994<sup>26</sup>.

The topic of enlargement to conservative-oriented parties and forces raised many issues, among them in particular the loss of the specific Christian Democratic ideals in favour of components that were alien to this history and its school of thought. These differences had inevitable repercussions on the very idea of Europe, where traditional Europeanist and Federalist feelings coexisted with Euroseptic views.

Various analyses have been dedicated to this issue, especially to highlight the strategic goals for building a considerable Parliamentary group within the European Parliament, able to contrast and win against the socialist group. Indeed, this strategy led to an electoral success at the June 1999 elections, when the EPP-ED group won against the socialists and – for the first time in its history – became the largest group. On that occasion, next to the success of the German CDU-CSU (53 seats), there was the victory of the British Conservatives, who doubled their representatives (36) and became the second national component of the EPP group, to which the addition of the caption “European Democrats” was imposed next to the group’s name.

The success of Forza Italia with 22 seats was a flattering result, too. In the meantime, other international organisations merged into the EPP (EUCD and EDU).

Therefore, a new European bipolarity was being built. It was already strongly supported by Helmut Kohl’s Germany and that – as Jansen wrote – was configured as the two-way Europeanization of the political system:

Two large groups, namely the one with a social-democratic orientation and the one with a Christian Democratic orientation, will continue to be very attractive for similar groups. The political forces that tend to move from the left towards the centre will gradually merge into the ESP, while the political forces that tend to move from the right towards the centre will gradually merge into the EPP<sup>27</sup>.

Over and above the renewal of strategic choices, there was still the issue of being faithful to an identity. Intense integration efforts translated into a long series of meetings, debates, conferences that greatly increased

between the late 1990s and the first years of the new millennium<sup>28</sup>. It was not easy to have a common Europeanist conscience emerge from contrasting positions. The alternative was a recurring one: personalism or pragmatism? Preferring boundaries or goals as the values that define the European civilisation? Accommodating those who are nostalgic for national sovereignty or the heirs to the Federalist movement? Being content with bringing down the Christian Democratic requests to the human face of a large conservative party or rigorously safeguarding the genuineness of the original sources, running the risk of leaving room for the right to be the most conservative and anti-Europeanist forces?

At the Berlin Congress held in January 2001 (XIV congress), an effort was made to summarise this. Its policy document, significantly called “A Union of Common Values”, highlighted the coexistence of the two aspirations, the Christian Democratic and the Liberal-Conservative ones<sup>29</sup>.

The large document – divided into six chapters – lists 617 points with a wide range of objectives to submit to the party’s attention. Compared with Athens’ Basic programme – of which it was meant to be the continuation of – the document

Emphasises less the philosophical-theological component concerning the description and the explanation of the principles on which the EPP must base its action. In Berlin the EPP expressed itself in a rather decisive way. This is essentially due to the principles and values that must guide its work. However the term “values” is meant in a very wide sense and encompasses a wide spectrum of objectives – also of a material, economic and social nature – the achievement of which is important for the attainment of good living conditions and the fulfilment of the individuals as well as the European Community<sup>30</sup>.

With reference to the Italian prominent figures who were at the Conference, it was observed that “Silvio Berlusconi est présenté et traité comme l’un des leaders déterminants du PPE, au détriment bien évidemment des dirigeants des autres partis démocrates chrétiens

<sup>28</sup> *Ivi*, pp. 211-223.

<sup>29</sup> The document is reproduced as an appendix to the volume by T. Jansen, S. Van Hecke, *At Europe’s Service*, pp. 319-352.

<sup>30</sup> T. Jansen, *Il Partito Popolare Europeo*, p. 217. Durand wrote on this topic: “The XIV EPP Congress, which took place in Berlin in January 2001, highlighted the coexistence of the two inspirations, the Christian Democratic and the liberal conservative, with the adoption of a programmatic document – *A Union of Values* – that maintains a firm stance on abortion, the use of embryos for scientific research, cloning, genetic manipulations, euthanasia, but appears to be open with reference to the evolution of society, when it recognises as well as the family ‘other forms of life communities and their needs’”. J.-D. Durand, *Storia della Democrazia Cristiana in Europa. Dalla Rivoluzione francese al postcomunismo*, it. ed., Milan, Guerini e Associati, 2002, p. 285.

<sup>26</sup> On the Italian Christian Democracy and its epilogue see A. Giovagnoli, *Il partito italiano. La Democrazia Cristiana (1942-1994)*, Rome-Bari, Laterza, 1996.

<sup>27</sup> T. Jansen, *Il Partito Popolare Europeo*, p. 196.

italiens<sup>31</sup>. Among them, the former Christian Democratic people's component stood out. Together with the French, Belgian, Dutch national Christian Democratic delegations and other individual members, they created the Schuman Group in March, 2000. Its goal was to "keep alive the values of Europeanism, Christian-oriented reformism (Christian roots) and the centrist strategy which had enabled the construction of Europe"<sup>32</sup>. The group was formed – among other factors – at a time of heated discussions on the Austrian issue, where there was an alliance between members of the people's party and the more populist right wing. It drew up a manifesto called "The future is at the centre". The document supported the revival of federalism and insisted on the objective of the European Constitution as a guarantee of unity and diversity at the same time; it made reference to the value of personalism and proposed a model of democracy based on participation<sup>33</sup>. Earlier on, similar objectives had been claimed by the "Athens Group", whose name referred to the above-mentioned congress that took place in the Greek capital and where there were protests against Forza Italia's membership to the EPP. The Schuman group would later intensify its criticism of conservatism; its predominant pragmatist perspective was deplored as it was deemed to be driven by mere reasons of electoral opportunity; and this could not be the soul of the People's movement<sup>34</sup>. After the 2004 elections – as is widely known – the group stopped activity.

### The EPP and the Europeanist Conscience: an Open Challenge

However, the underlying strategy of the party remained unchanged – even after Berlin; sharing and identifying its Europeanist conscience remained an open question itself. As Durand highlighted, certainly the EPP, "which accepts various types of alliances and political strategies, does not compromise on Europe"<sup>35</sup> or – recalling Jansen's considerations contained in the epilogue of his volume on the history of the EPP – within the construction process "of an international or supranational party, the

EPP is certainly more advanced than the Socialists, the Greens or the Liberals"; however, the "goal of the 'European party' is still far away"<sup>36</sup>.

Although the recent Bucharest Congress – which took place in October 2012 – welcomed the results obtained by a political entity that since 2000 had almost doubled the number of its member parties, it also recognised that the long sought-after European project still had to be completed and that the EPP continued to call for "gradual but decisive progress towards an authentic political union"<sup>37</sup>. Furthermore, on the values-foundation front, although there was an explicit mention made of inspiring Christian values, both in terms of the image of man and the search for the common good (without, however, any explicit reference to the social doctrine of the Church), some divergences – or better, some reservations – enclosed at the end of the document emerged. In particular, I am referring to those expressed by the French component of the "Union pour un Mouvement Populaire", which – in the name of the principle of secularism and the absolute respect for freedom of conscience – reiterated its distance from the statements contained in the document concerning the divine nature of creation, contraception, termination of pregnancy and bioethical issues<sup>38</sup>.

After all, the building of a shared Europeanist conscience within a party where its many souls overlap and are sometimes in conflict with each other remains an open challenge. Even recently, the party leaders themselves have not hidden the difficulties and tensions within the group. With reference to the Italian case, Joseph Daul, the new EPP president – who took over from Martens – relaunched a controversy concerning Italian political leader Silvio Berlusconi, repeatedly accused by the French representative of an irresponsible populist attitude and a scarce Europeanist conscience. Towards him Daul explicitly advocated the EPP stance "against any form of populism and against anti-Europeanist approaches"<sup>39</sup>.

Beyond this specific episode, the challenge that for a long time has accompanied the history of the EPP – the overall coexistence of forces and components, sensitivities and consciences that may appear perhaps

<sup>31</sup> S. Van Hecke, "Démocrates chrétiens et conservateurs au Parlement européen: mariage d'amour ou de raison?", in P. Delwit (ed.), *Démocrates chrétiens et conservatisme en Europe*, p. 330 (pp. 323-343).

<sup>32</sup> G. Bodrato, *Scalare l'Hindalaya. Dopo il Vertice di Nizza e dopo il Congresso di Berlino quale è l'avvenire dell'europeismo e del populismo?*, Santena (TO), Ianni, 2001, p. 7; cf. also p. 32.

<sup>33</sup> *Ivi*, p. 33.

<sup>34</sup> *Ivi*, p. 61. References to the presence of the Schuman group may be found in *Id.*, *I confini dell'Europa*, Santena (TO), Ianni, 2001 and *L'Europa (im)possibile*, Casale Monferato (AL), Portalupi, 2004.

<sup>35</sup> J.-D. Durand, *Storia della Democrazia Cristiana in Europa*, p. 285.

<sup>36</sup> T. Jansen, *Il Partito Popolare Europeo*, p. 238.

<sup>37</sup> *Piattaforma Congresso Statutario del PPE 17-18 ottobre 2012 Bucarest, Romania*, in *www.epp.eu*, p. 29 (No. 306); also see p. 3 (No. 5) and p. 16 (No. 201).

<sup>38</sup> *Ivi*, pp. 54-55.

<sup>39</sup> F. Lo Sardo, "Joseph Daul presidente del PPE. Il più anti-Berlusconi dei popolari europei", in *www.europaqnotidiano.it* /2013/10/08. This criticism dated back to December 2012 and originated from Berlusconi's decision to favour the Italian government led by Mario Monti; this crisis had harmful consequences for the entire European Union. On that occasion, Daul said: "Europe fights against populism. We do not need any moments of turbulence. For the sake of the euro and the economy we cannot afford showbiz politics". *ibidem*.

even more intricate, going even beyond the rift between the Christian Democratic school and the liberal conservative groups – remains. In almost 40 years of history, the EPP has certainly changed, just like Europe and the world have rapidly changed. Europe has changed, but its journey has been marked by contradictions that make it difficult to respond to the issue of identity, boundaries and Europeanist conscience.

All this makes the wish that Jansen repeatedly expressed – of an EPP that affirms its identity “both in its political programme and in its ability to develop projects and make new proposals, both in its behaviours and in the way it acts” – all the more relevant<sup>40</sup>. As for the statement on a unitary Europeanist conscience, throughout its history, its original Christian Democratic roots have faded away. They are recalled in the original documents, but have difficulties in being inextricably linked with other political schools and families. Perhaps we can go back and propose again, in a wider sense, the statement voiced 10 years ago by Van Hecke. With reference to the relationship between Christian Democrats and Conservatives, the author wrote: “Comme telle, l’alliance n’est pas (pour tous les participants) un mariage d’amour, pas plus qu’elle n’est simplement un mariage de raison. Il s’agit sans doute d’un entre-deux ou, comme l’a suggéré un député européen, d’une relation de cohabitation sans mariage”<sup>41</sup>.

## CONTINENTAL COOPERATIONS

### PART II

<sup>40</sup> T. Jansen, *Il Partito Popolare Europeo*, p. 239.

<sup>41</sup> S. Van Hecke, “Démocrates chrétiens et conservateurs au Parlement européen”, p. 338.