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Alternative for Germany's position on European integration 2013-2019

The AfD's attitude to European integration has undergone a fundamental evolution. In a relatively short period of time, the party, whose central political goal was to correct the economic and monetary union within the EU, has transformed itself into a grouping that comprehensively criticises the European Union and questions the benefits of Germany's membership in its structure. At the same time, economically motivated criticism of the single currency gave way to electoral agitation focused on migration and asylum issues.

The theoretical framework for the analysis in the submitted thesis is the model of the Eurosceptic party. It allowed a positive verification of the thesis according to which, as part of the ideological and programmatic evolution that the AfD underwent in 2013-2019, there was an intensification of the party's contestation of the European Union. This intensification resulted both from ideological radicalisation and for strategic reasons, i.e. to strengthen the image of the anti-establishment opposition. As a result, although the party was initially characterised by soft Euroscepticism, after the process of internal radicalisation it should already be classified as representing a hard variant of the critical stance towards the EU.

Given the long-term tendency of the main German parties to exclude the issue of European integration from political competition, Euroscepticism as a niche in the programmes of political competitors has been a factor in stabilising the AfD in the German political system.

The link between the AfD's right-wing orientation and its populist character and the group's criticism of the EU was confirmed. Empirically, it was shown that the AfD combines a populist vision of the functioning of democracy with a critique of the EU as a political system. Diagnoses of the European project in political, socio-economic and cultural-social terms have been sharpened. The weight of the countermeasures advocated has also changed, up to the conditional option of Germany's withdrawal from the integration structures.

The emergence and rapid stabilisation on the German political scene of a party categorised as right-wing populist and hostile to European integration ends a period of divergence between the German party system and the experience of other Western European countries.