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Edited by Swen Hutter, Hanspeter Kriesi
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European Party Politics in Times of Crisis

This comprehensive study of party competition in Europe since 2008 aids understanding of the recent, often dramatic, changes taking place in European politics. It addresses how the multiple crises that Europe faces have affected the intensity and structure of party competition, and whether we are seeing a wave of ‘critical elections’ which will reshape European politics for years to come. The geographical scope of the book covers fifteen European countries, including cases from north-western Europe (Austria, Britain, France, Germany, Ireland, the Netherlands and Switzerland), southern Europe (Greece, Italy, Portugal and Spain) and central-eastern Europe (Hungary, Latvia, Poland and Romania). Using original data from a large-scale content analysis of mass media, and the debates among parties in election campaigns, this book provides clear graphical presentations of the results, appealing to a wide readership of students, scholars, journalists, practitioners and the politically interested public.

Swen Hutter is Lichtenberg-Professor in Political Sociology at Freie Universität Berlin and Vice Director of the Center for Civil Society Research, a joint initiative of Freie Universität and the WZB Social Science Center. Hutter is the author of *Protesting Culture and Economics in Western Europe* (2014) and co-editor of *Politicising Europe* (Cambridge University Press, 2016).

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Preface and Acknowledgements

European Party Politics in Times of Crisis presents key findings from the Political Conflict in Europe in the Shadow of the Great Recession (POLCON) project funded by the European Research Council and directed by Hanspeter Kriesi. The project focuses on the development of European democracies and political conflict in the shadow of the Great Recession. Since the world entered the Great Recession with the breakdown of Lehman Brothers in autumn 2008, commentators have been afraid of the political repercussions of the economic crisis. The spectre of the 1930s is haunting many observers of European politics. The most pessimistic among them are wondering whether democracy is going to survive in the face of the grave economic consequences of the crisis.

To empirically tackle this question, POLCON has studied the structuration of political conflict in Europe by analysing contestation in the electoral arena, in the protest arena and in policy-specific contentious episodes. The main research question is whether the Great Recession and its consequences have changed the long-term trends in the development of political conflict in Europe as they were previously assessed. In our own previous interpretation – as set out in *West European Politics in the Age of Globalisation* (Cambridge University Press, 2008) and *Political Conflict in Western Europe* (Cambridge University Press, 2012) – these long-term trends include above all an increasing importance of the cultural dimension in the two-dimensional political space in western Europe and its reinterpretation as an increasing divide between those that embrace further integration and those that favour demarcation and nationalism.

The present volume – POLCON's first major publication – lays out our answers to the questions of whether and to what extent *party competition* has been restructured in Europe since the onset of the Great Recession. More specifically, we present evidence on the structuration and intensity of conflict in the national party systems of fifteen European countries. Our country selection covers cases from north-western, southern and central-eastern Europe. Moving beyond our earlier focus on democracies in north-western Europe has allowed us to assess how the financial crisis

and the multiple crises that followed (including the euro crisis and a profound crisis of representation) have left their marks on politics in these three macro-regions and how well our previous ideas on the rise of a new integration–demarcation divide not only still hold in times of crisis but also ‘travel’ south and east. As we know, these multiple crises did not affect all countries in the same way and at the same time. Focusing on how these differences were politically articulated and mobilised is a puzzle for comparative political science, but it is also of utmost social and political relevance.

Mapping politics from such diverse countries – some representing less well-known terrain for the two of us – has been an intellectual and personal adventure. This adventure has brought both of us to the European University Institute (EUI) in Florence, Italy. In hindsight, we have to say that we cannot imagine a better place than the EUI, with its diverse and vibrant community of scholars, to study European politics in such turbulent times. Having had the opportunity to work together with a group of young and inspiring colleagues from across Europe (many of whom coauthored chapters for this book), not only were we able to draw on their rich expertise and excellent language skills, but we also experienced how fruitful and stimulating exchanges with fellow Europeans with different backgrounds and attitudes can be. In other words, we experienced the integration of Europe’s diversity at its best!

Our collaborative efforts to collect and analyse original data on the changes in European party politics would not have been possible without the generous financial support of the European Research Council (ERC-grant 338875). In addition, we thank the EUI for its institutional support. Most importantly, we are very grateful to Maureen Lechleitner – our administrative assistant and the ‘heart’ of POLCON – for her tremendous support throughout the last five years. In addition, we kindly thank all the colleagues involved in POLCON. Apart from our coauthors of this book, we would also like to thank the other people involved in the data collection for this part of our empirical programme: Sergiu Lipcean, Nicole Kaiser, Anna Kandyla, Andris Saulitis, Adrian Steiner and Herwig Viechtbauer. Together with our coauthors, they went through thousands of newspaper articles and for countless hours coded what is now condensed in a few dozen figures and tables. For institutional support during the last phase of wrapping it all up, Swen Hutter would also like to thank the Center for Civil Society Research – a joint initiative of the WZB Berlin Social Science Center and Freie Universität Berlin – and the Volkswagen Foundation.

We have had the opportunity to present our conceptual ideas and the first results from our research on various occasions, both at the EUI and at

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international conferences and workshops. It is beyond the scope of this preface to list them all, but we would like to thank all the colleagues who attended these presentations and provided us with their helpful comments and suggestions. For their feedback on parts of our manuscript, we are especially grateful to Sarah Engler, Edgar Grande, Liesbet Hooghe, Brigid Laffan and Gary Marks. Furthermore, we thank the anonymous reviewers at Cambridge University Press for their insightful reviews and support. Finally, we would like to thank David Barnes for his careful reading and editing of our manuscript.