**Transnational interdependencies between political parties in the multi-level system of the European Union**

My speech today is going to concern the analysis of the growing role of transnational processes and the interaction between political parties – through their considerable influence – have highlighted the discussion and political dialogue taking place with respect to adequate decision-making in the EU institutions and the Member States.

The speech accounted for the impact of the systemic factors and conditions such as the absence of political competition, the rules governing the decision-making mechanisms and the search of system's legitimisation on the process of institutionalising European political parties and their role in the integration process.

The main aim of this study is focused on the factors conditioning the establishing of the type of interdependencies between the political parties in the European Union and on determining its durability.

The research problems approached in this speech include: 1) establishing the nature of legitimisation of such entities, their motivation and the nature of the interest articulated; 2) the definition of the position of the representation of political parties in the EU political system and to the methods and means of influencing the EU policies that result from it.

The explanation of the development of the interaction between political parties in the EU will be reached through the use of the transnational research perspective. The broader definition of transnational research approach covering all forms of activity, phenomena and processes regarding participants from many states, with the reservation that at least one of these entities cannot be a government representative. Transnationality is a search for dynamic relations based on accidental contacts and network links with state and non-state actors. Their distinguishing feature is their casual nature. Once these relations become institutionalised and included in other structures, they usually take the form of international or supranational relations.

The analysis covers selected interrelations between political parties in the EU, divided according to their functional representation of the levels of the system (national, transnational, supranational), according to the theoretical principles of multi-level governace (MLG).
national level will be analysed on the example of domestic parties; the transnational level on the example of transnational federations of political parties, referred to as European Parties or Europarties; the supranational level on example of the political groups in the European Parliament.

The presentation was founded on the results concerning the strongly rooted national institutions such as political parties and featured a hypothesis that every level in the EU system has its democratic forms of governance while the political parties are involved in the transnational political process as a result of interactions and network connections, being also element consolidating the whole system, guaranteeing its connectivity and cross-level durability.

At the national level they are the domestic parties. Their main functions are selection of the representatives and conducting election campaigns for the European Parliament in the Member States. Moreover, the politicians prepare positions for activities of the representatives of state administration in non-official meetings or Council’s working groups in the decision-making processes in the EU.

The interactions between the political parties in the EU also take form of the transnational inter dependences, refered to as the Europarties. However, even despite the existence of legal statutory principles and a liberal financing system, the cooperation of national political parties acting on the transnational level are not fully-formed political structures. For example for the reason that EU citizenship does not include the right for citizens to establish ‘European’ political parties. Secondly, so far election campaigns are conducted in the Member States by domestic parties. Thirdly, these Europarties are not parties by definition, as they do not fulfil the fundamental goal of a party, which is exercising power. They are a manifestation of transnational processes and interactions taking place between political parties from EU Member States.

The functioning of Europarties does not exclude the transnational cooperation of political parties. The interactions and contacts between the organisational structures of political parties have been taking place for many years. They occur with different intensity in different ideological families – from occasional interpersonal contacts between individual politicians, to official visits and the exchanges of good practice during congresses and national election campaigns, through to establishing international secretariats, offices or committees for cooperation and international exchanges at the general secretariats of the parties’ central bodies. Similarly, the young wings of political parties have frequent transnational contacts.
Europarties makes easier to find a suitable partners, contribute to a greater transparency of funding and the citizens’ access to politics. The transnational channels make it possible for political parties from various EU Member States to communicate with each other, make agreements, exchange non-material content, ideas, and solutions when problems arise. So far, European cooperation between parties has proven effective in working out joint manifestos announced before elections to the European Parliament. Occasionally these contacts are taken advantage of to prepare a joint position in important negotiations, as a political base for the MEPs, e.g. at an intergovernmental conference preparing change of the Treaties. This cooperation is brought about by the limited competences of the EP in making binding decisions. Therefore, these Europarties are striving to develop extra-parliamentary influence on the EU decision-making process. These efforts are a good example of transnational participatory processes. Political parties are the direct exponent of the will of the Member States’ societies, both in theory and in practice, and additionally they have been legitimised by the Treaties.

At the supranational level they are the political groups in the European Parliament. This is the representations of the members from domestics parties who gain a mandate to become a member of the European Parliament. Moreover, the nature of solutions related to the political system of the EU has resulted in replacing political competitiveness with cooperation practice and in building up the majority around legislative proposals which stand a chance of being endorsed by the Council and possibly adopted in a Council and Parliament cooperation procedure. As a result, the European Parliament is to be dominated by a consensual mechanism leading essentially to the creation of a 'cartel' of political parties. This renders the general the positive evaluation of the activity of both European parties and the Members of European Parliament difficult, as their programme objectives are only partially met. In practice, the nature of the decision-making mechanisms in the European Union results in the fact that the political parties cannot be directly involved in the exercise of power in the EU. Their influence can only be exerted through their national executive and administrative institutions. This makes the actions of political parties in the European Public Space resemble the other forms of expressing group interests.

Conclusions

The unique solutions of the EU system, particularly the functional solutions and principles of decision making, give both forms of cooperation between political parties from the EU Member States the opportunity to participate in EU political life and to determine its
shape. In the period preceding the emergence of Europarties, political groups in the EP achieved a sophisticated level of organisation, manifested e.g. in managing their own finances, the creation of leaders, the support of administrative staff, participation in the intra-parliamentary decision-making process, as well as in various committees and work groups. The emergence of the second form is connected with the first direct elections to the European Parliament, when the opportunity arose to fight for the European electorate.

The study points to the fact that all forms of influence exercised by political parties in the European Public Space, namely the representations of politicians at national level, actions of political groups in the European Parliament and of the European parties, are indeed alternative channels for influencing the EU decision-making process and for expressing the political will of the societies. The factor of democratisation of the political parties' activity is rather strong in the EU, which is why the parties should be regarded as a factor that stabilises and consolidates political representation on European level.

The characteristic features of the transnational processes examined in this presentation are that they permeate and amplify each other, that the entities participating in them represent the interests of various levels of the system, as well as the fact that they take place on several levels of the EU system.

The participation of various transnational entities in the various interrelations is most often motivated by the need to coordinate positions and expectations, but these links do not imply only cooperation. They also include forms of self-limitation, including mutual adjustment. In the case of transnational participatory processes with the participation of political parties, we are dealing with the mutual cooperation of entities from various levels of the EU system. For instance, during the election campaigns to the European Parliament, the leading element is the national level political party. It requires support from both the Europarties and political groups in the EP. They provide the opportunity to work out common electoral programmes and ensure a financial and HR base. Transnational interactions contribute to strengthening the process of European integration. They consolidate the ties and the multi-directional process of interaction between the levels of the European Union. Due to the fact that transnational participatory processes take place on all levels and with various decision-making entities, EU citizens can influence the directions of programmes and the implementation of EU policies.