

PARTY RESPONSIVENESS AND GOVERNMENTAL RESPONSIBILITY: THE CONFLICTING ROLES OF SPANISH SOCIALIST WORKERS' PARTY BETWEEN 2008 AND 2011

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Abstract

The aim of the article is to analyse the dramatic decline of voters' support for Spanish Socialist Workers' Party (PSOE), a long-term established political party, between 2008 and 2011 parliamentary elections. It focuses on the government policy of PSOE during the outbreak of economic and financial crisis and attributes the drop of support to the conflicting roles of PSOE as a representative of voters' interests on the one hand and as the governing party with corresponding responsibility to the state and also to the international community on the other hand. Moreover, it links the decision-making on the national level to the supranational level. The austerity policy, pursued by PSOE in given period, was heavily influenced by the EU institutions, and made impossible to comply with the electoral promises, concentrated on the improvements in employment and social policy. The drop of support pursued the PSOE in 2011, 2015 and 2016 parliamentary elections. Therefore, the party is a case study of the decline of social democratic parties in Europe, however temporary in her case.

KEY WORDS: Spain, PSOE, Economic and Financial Crisis, European Union, Representation, Government Responsibility, Political Parties.

INTRODUCTION

The decrease of trust for the established political parties has been a political phenomenon in the recent years in Europe. However, it is a recurrent issue, which has been periodically in the centre of scholar attention. Already in 1980s the crisis of established parties was linked to the rise of green parties, in the turn of 1980s and 1990s to the rise of populist and extreme right political parties (see Mair, 1984; Ignazi, 1996; Diamond, Gunther, 2001). Recently, it is about the impact of the economic and financial crisis which was treated by the austerity policy defended by the EU institutions

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and other international organizations like International Monetary Fund (IMF). Thus the governing parties, especially social democratic ones implementing this austerity policy, had to challenge growing dissatisfaction of voters, which diverted their support to new movements or parties.

In the southern European countries a dramatic decrease of support for traditional leftist parties took place (see Bremer, 2018). For example the support for Greek Panhellenic Socialist Movement (PASOK) dropped by 31 % of votes between 2009 and 2012 parliamentary elections, for Spanish Socialist Workers Party (PSOE) by 15,14 % between 2008 and 2011 parliamentary elections, for Portuguese Socialist Party by 9,68 % between the 2009 and 2011 parliamentary elections (Election Guide, 2019). With a little delay this tendency appeared in other countries. In 2017 parliamentary and presidential elections social democratic parties lost important part of their voters in France, Germany or in the Czech Republic, in 2018 the same occurred in Italy. The voters gave the opportunity to new formations, criticising the rigidity and „corruption“ of the political system represented by the established political parties. Among leftist parties the radical left gained an important electoral support, like the Greek Syriza, Spanish Podemos or Italian Five Star Movement.

The aim of the paper is to capture the erosion of support for an established party – the PSOE – which has constituted together with the Popular Party (Partido Popular, PP) a longstanding pillar of the Spanish bipartidism. The erosion of party support is linked to the economic and financial crisis and PSOE governmental policy in the time of its outbreak (2008-2011), which was pressed by international actors, mainly the EU institutions. The presented paper works with the concept of expectation gap, meaning the gap between the expectations, which the political party aroused among the voters in the electoral campaign, and the following exercise of government tasks limited by the crisis and the influence of supranational actors. Therefore, the main research question is what has been the influence of the economic and financial crisis and supranational actors on the governmental policy of PSOE between 2008 and 2011. The article follows with the question, if there was a conflict between the role of PSOE as a representative of the voters' interests and her role as a government party with corresponding responsibility.

The article points out to crucial circumstances, which accompanied the government of PSOE during given period: (1) PSOE gave an excessive expectations in 2008 parliamentary elections by promising important improvements of social policies and the strengthening of welfare state. The gap between the electoral promises and the governmental policy was

too huge and boosted the voters' disillusion. (2) The government of PSOE was fully bound to the country's membership in Eurozone and by the recommendations of EU institutions. From this perspective the PSOE had to put into effect the austerity policy, which was in direct clash with the electoral programme.

The article considers that the decline of PSOE was caused first of all by its economic crisis management, significantly influenced by the external actors. However, it is also necessary to take into account other factors as for example the leadership of José Luis Rodríguez Zapatero, which culminated in his resignation in 2011. PP opposition labour could also play a role as this party constituted at that time the only viable option to the PSOE government. These other factors are not treated in such depth as the performance of PSOE government. Neither specific factors in different autonomous communities, which could influence voters' preferences, were possible to analyse in depth.

1 THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

The political parties are still the most important actors in modern democracies. They aggregate and articulate the social interests, they mobilise and engage the citizens in the politics and they build the political elites able to govern and bear with the political responsibility (see von Beyme, 1985). It is hardly possible to imagine the functioning of democratic politics and political institutions without the political parties.

Therefore it is important to think about the factors which are related to the functions of political parties in the political system. Ignazi (Ignazi, 1996, 550) divides them to: (1) "structural-organizational factors" and (2) "factors involving the functions performed by the party". The main indicator of party decline in the first groups is according to him a decrease of political party membership, which shows a weakening link between the party and the voters. The party membership is a key feature for the evolution and related classification of political parties according to their types. Well known is the transition from mass party to catch-all party and to cartel party in 1990s, which captures the rising bureaucratization of political parties, the strengthening of party leadership over the members and major focus on the recruitment of political personnel and governance.

The second group is more relevant for the article as it wants to show the conflict between different functions performed by political parties. During time the political parties are increasingly failing in the mobilisation and socialisation of the voters, which is closely related to the decrease of party

membership. The parties are also more pragmatic in the articulation and aggregation of social interests and their programmes intend to attract wider social groups (Fiala, Strmiska, 2009, 71). The voters have also changed their behaviour and become less predictable (Poguntke, 2004, 2-3). They are placing more and more demands on the parties, which can be contradictory. Political parties have also ceased to be the only agents representing social interests as the number of political movements and interest groups has grown.

Whereas the relationship between the voters and political parties have become weaker, the function of political parties in the political personnel recruitment and organising governments has become more important. Thus, the political parties have focused more on the formation of electoral lists, on the governance and related agenda setting and policy formulation (Ignazi, 1996, 551) and became less responsiveness to the voters' demands. As Mair expresses (Mair, 2011, 1) the contemporary parliamentary democracies „are characterised by a sharply growing tension between the demands of representation, on the one hand, and the demands of government, on the other...between the demands of responsiveness and the demands of responsibility“. And he continues to talk about the shift in party functions from the „making representations on behalf of citizens to the state, to making representation on behalf of state to the citizens“ (Mair, 2011, 8). Therefore the article works on his concept of double pressure which is exerted on the political parties in government and which can be resumed as a conflict between the responsiveness and the responsibility. The parties should be able to respond to social demands, but they also should be responsible being in government. The circumstances (economic crisis, international pressure) can forced the governing party to adopt measures, which have negative impacts on citizens, e.g. losing their jobs or housing.

Also the importance of external actors in the national politics has increased as the countries are members of international organizations and world economy is globalized. Thus, the governments have usually numerous international commitments which are there independently on which party is in government and what she promised in elections. The growing influence of supranational actors on the national governance is stressed by many scholars (e.g. Mair, 2011; Freire, Lisi, 2016; Lawson, Poguntke, 2004). The financial and economic crisis in Europe, starting in 2007, is an example of this. The EU is considered to be the main actor which forced the national governments to implement the austerity policy (see Charalambous, Conti, Pedrazzani, 2018). Some states, like Greece or Portugal, had to be saved,

which was conditioned by their commitment to fundamental structural reforms. Italy or Spain was not saved, but the European Central Bank intervened in the sovereign-debt markets. In case of Spain just „the threat to be saved“, the evaluations of Commission and the recommendations of the Council together with the pressure of international financial markets (the rise of risk premium) encouraged the governments of PSOE and lately PP to implement fundamental structural reforms.

In other words, the supranational level was able to change the national policies and to induce the political parties to adopt measures which were contrary to their programme. According to Conti, Hutter, Nanou (Conti, Hutter, Nanou, 2018, 4) the recent financial and economic crisis has limited the political agenda of governments and „incumbent parties seemed ever more caught between responsibility in terms of fulfilling commitments to their European Union (EU) partners and responsiveness to an increasingly distant public opinion“Clements, Nanou, Real-Dato (2018) point out that the political parties during the crisis were less listening to the public. This could even create an image that the established political parties do not understand the citizens and are so distant that they do not want to listen. Taking into account weak party membership in contemporary democracies the gap between the voters and the party leadership has become so wide, that the party leadership is not able to recognize voters' needs in time and thus she is losing them (Mair, 2011, 8).

The article thus parts from the assumption that the functions of political parties in the political system can be in conflict. A logical aim is to get a power and to govern and represent the voters'interests in the government. However, the representative function of parties can be in conflict with the government responsibility, especially in the time of financial and economic crisis together with the increasing influence of supranational level. The contradiction between the party programme and the real politics could be more visible in case of social democratic parties. For example Bremer (Bremer, 2018, 23) points out that the implementation of austerity measures „[undermined] the European welfare state that social democratic parties had helped to build in the post-war era“. Consequently, the voters could not perceive such political party as a representative of their interest and they were looking for alternatives or in form of protest movements (15-M in Spain) or new political parties (Podemos, Ciudadanos in Spain).

The article also uses the concept of expectations gap, because the crisis of parties can also stem from the fact, that the political parties increase, even unrealistically, the expectations of voters in political competition by

promising better policies. Flinders (Flinders, 2009, 2) points out, that „the incentive and sanctions structure associated with contemporary democratic frameworks encourage politicians to promise standards of behaviour and levels of public services that are arguably unrealistic and unattainable“. Thus the political competition in words of Flinders (Flinders, 2009, 5) „artificially increases public expectations“. The electoral fight for voters, in which the political parties compete in the best offer, together with the change of context and limited resources of the government can dramatically shake the public expectation and contribute to the decrease of trust in given political party.

2 POLITICAL AND ECONOMIC CONTEXT OF THE PSOE GOVERNMENT BETWEEN 2008 AND 2011

PSOE, founded in 1879, is the oldest political party in the country and the most important left-wing one, belonging to the social democratic party family. The contemporary party was built during the Spanish transition to democracy. She governed the country between 1982 and 1996, and thus she strongly influenced the democratic consolidation and the accession to the EC/EU. She regained the control over the government in 2004 parliamentary elections, which were marked by the al-Qaeda terrorist attack in the train in Madrid, which the governing PP tried to attribute to the Basque terrorist organization ETA. She was re-elected in 2008 parliamentary elections and stood in power until 2011, when the anticipated parliamentary elections were convoked because of the costs of economic and financial crisis. This period is linked with the Prime Minister José Luis Rodríguez Zapatero. Whereas during his first government (2004-2008) PSOE governed in the time of economic expansion and could create budget surpluses and comply with the social promises, in his second government (2008-2011) the economic and financial crisis severely hit the country, affecting the banking system and having negative social impacts like rise of unemployment or loss of housing.

The first signs of crisis appeared in the second half of 2008, when the GDP fell and continued to fall in six following trimesters. The production fell, the consumption decreased, the same was true for the investments and imports, but the biggest impact was on the loss of jobs (Ortega, Peñalosa, 2012, 9). The term „economic recession“ appeared for the first time in the report of Spanish central bank (Banco de Espino) in the end of 2008. According to her study some socio-economic indicators (like GDP, investments) were this

time even worse in comparison to previous similar crisis (1974 and 1992) and the crisis lasted longer. The increase of unemployment was twice as big in comparison to previous crisis (Ortega, Peñalosa, 2012, 13).

The crisis affected the savings banks („cajas“), which historically constituted one of the pillar of Spanish banking system. During the reference period Banco de España had to intervene in the saving banks Caja de Castilla-La Mancha (2009), Cajasur (2010) and Caja de Ahorros del Mediterráneo (2011). The government had to adopt various measures to consolidate the banking sector. Already in July 2009 a so called FROB (Fondo de Reestructuración Ordenada Bancaria) for saving banks consolidation was established. Principally, the government forced the orderly mergers of saving banks and lately (in 2011) imposed new capital requirements on them, which should be „of at least 8 percent of total risk-weighted assets“ (IMF 2012: 14). In spite of that the banking crisis continued in next years and its culmination was the nationalization of the fourth biggest financial institution in the country Banco Financiero y de Ahorros (Bankia) during the PP government. The banking sector crisis had a negative impact on public finances. Ruiz, Stupariu and Vilariño counts, that between 2010 and 2012 „around 15 billion euros of public expenditure were channelled towards the financial system...“ (Ruiz, Stupariu, Vilariño, 2016, 1467). In July 2012 the Eurogroup approved a financial aid of 100 billion of euro for the recapitalisation of financial institutions (European Commission, non-dated). In consequence of the banking sector reform the savings banks almost disappeared (from 45 only two survived) as they were forced to merge and many of them transformed to the commercial banks (see Cardenas, 2013).

In spite of economic improvement in 2010, manifested in slight increase of GDP, in 2012 the country entered again into the economic recession. However, being part of Eurozone was not considered to be a negative factor for Spanish economy. According to the central bank analysis the principle factors of so dramatic crisis resided in the burst of the real-estate bubble with negative impact on the construction of new housing, big private debt, decline of sales and the bankruptcies (Ortega, Peñalosa, 2012, 20). The citizens could not afford to take new mortgages, whose conditions became stricter, and many of them could not pay their present loans and they lost their residence. Another problem was the behaviour of the labour market with high and prolonged level of unemployment.

3 INCREASE OF POSITIVE EXPECTATIONS IN 2008 PARLIAMENTARY ELECTIONS

Precisely the housing and the employment were the areas, in which the PSOE promised important improvements in 2008 parliamentary elections. The employment and social welfare policies were the top priority, being on the first place of party programme (31 %). Economic strategy together with the energy and environmental policy formed the second pillar of the programme (20,5 %). The third pillar was dedicated to the improvements of state of democracy and country's international position (33,5 %).

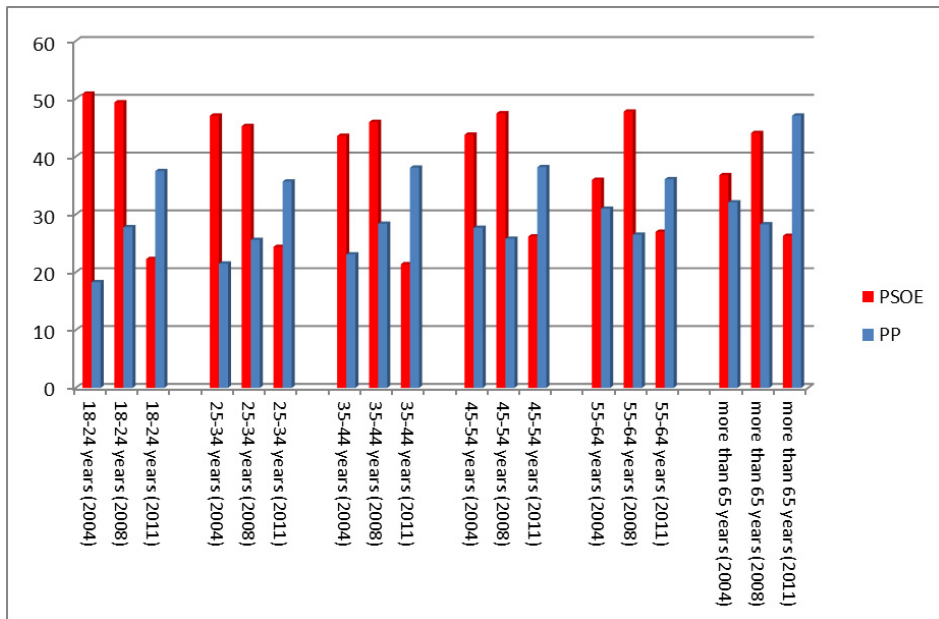
The Prime Minister Zapatero defined the social promises in his inaugural speech, in which he promised two million of new jobs, overall increase of employment over 70 %, decrease of unemployment to approximately 7 %, an increase of minimum income to 800 euro by 2012. He also committed to the improvement of job quality, especially to increase the number of contracts of indefinite duration and to decrease the number of temporary contracts to 25 %. On the other hand the pensioners over 65 years should enjoy higher minimum pension by 26 % in 2012. The socialist government also wanted to increase the number of doctors, nurses and auxiliary in the health care system, to encourage the building of the social economy and to improve the access to housing (Zapatero Rodríguez, 2008a; Zapatero Rodríguez, 2008b).

The opinion survey, conducted by the Centro de Investigaciones Sociológicas (CIS), showed that people rather positively evaluated the Socialist government performance by the time of 2008 parliamentary elections. 29,6 % of respondents gave a favourable evaluation and 39,9 % of them an average evaluation. On the other edge was PP as the main opposition party, which received a negative evaluation by 47,2 % of respondents. Evaluation of 15 policy areas revealed that the respondents had better opinion on the Socialist government performance then on the opposition PP. PSOE received especially favourable evaluation in the field of health care policy, social policy and environmental policy, while PP was though to do possibly better in the conduct of economic policy. The level of trust in Prime Minister Zapatero was high on 41,8 %, while the leader of opposition Mariano Rajoy enjoyed only 21 % of public trust. Zapatero was preferred as a prime minister by 52 % of respondents and should focus on the problems as the unemployment² and terrorism, which were considered as principal problems by citizens.

² The average unemployment rate during the first Zapatero mandate was around 9,1 % (Eurostat, 2019d).

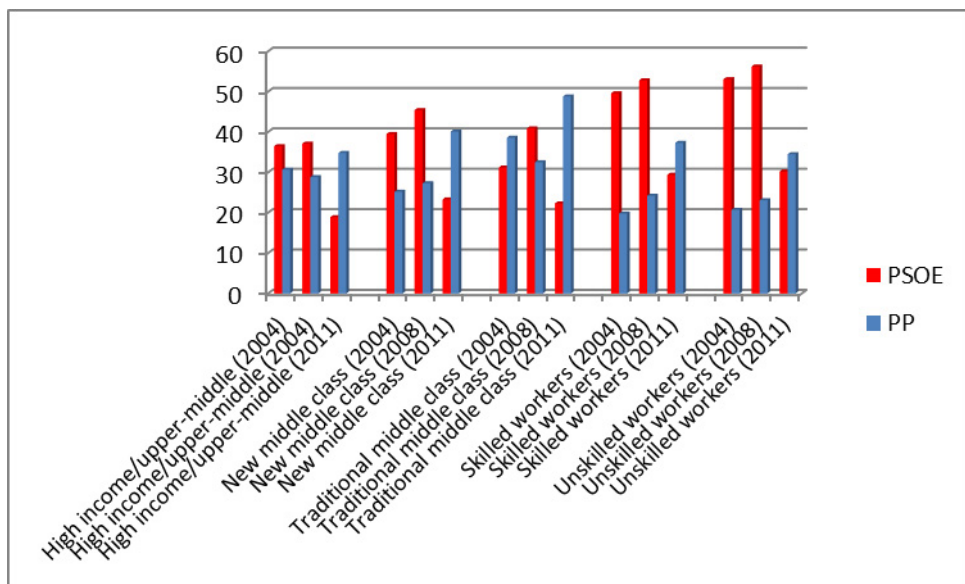
The following graphs show the level of support of PSOE across the socioeconomic and age groups in comparison to her main rival PP. They cover the 2004, 2008 and 2011 parliamentary elections. The graph 1 shows that from 2004 to 2008 parliamentary elections the PSOE was able to maintain high support among people in the age groups of 25 to 54 years old, this means among the people of productive age. According to graph 2 the PSOE was especially supported by the workers as her traditional voters, but also by the civil servants (new middle class) and managers.

Graph 1: *The evolution of PSOE electoral support according to age groups from 2004 to 2011*



Source: Author according to CIS, 2004, 2008 and 2011a.

Graph 2: *The evolution of PSOE support according to socio-economic status from 2004 to 2011*



Source: Author according to CIS, 2004, 2008 and 2011a.

Note: Category „new middle class“covers the civil servants and workers in administration and services. Category „traditional middle class“refers to small business, self-employed workers and farmers.

4 THE INFLUENCE OF EU INSTITUTIONS ON THE PSOE GOVERNMENTAL POLICY

From the beginning the Socialist government underestimated the impact of crisis. Already in his inaugural speech Prime Minister Zapatero mentioned a slow-downing of the Spanish economy and expected lower economic growth and the rise of unemployment, because of the import of the crisis from the U.S. and the burst of real-estate bubble. Still the impacts on Spain should be only transitory, hitting first of all the construction sector, and the country was well prepared to deal with it (Zapatero Rodríguez, 2008a; Zapatero Rodríguez, 2008b). The prime minister believed that his previous fiscal policy, creating budget surpluses, would cushion the crisis effect on the public budgets. In August 2008 the government adopted first anti-crisis measures and in November 2008 it launched the Plan for the stimulation of economy and employment (Plan para el Estímulo de la Economía y el

Empleo) (La Moncloa, 2008). The prime minister did not want to renounce the socialist promises, which already in 2008 led to the conflict with the minister for economy and vice-president Pedro Solbes, which proposed the decrease of public expenditures, the freeze of wages in public administration, the freeze of pensions, a balanced budget and the restructuralization of financial sector. Pedro Solbes left the government in April 2009 and was replaced by Elena Salgado. Already during 2008 the unemployment rate rose to double digit numbers and was rising in next years³, which charged the budget with high social expenditures, while tax revenues decreased as well as domestic consumption. During 2009 the crisis of saving banks appeared which led to the creation of FROB as mentioned above.

On the EU level the Commission recommended to launch the excessive deficit procedure (EDP) with Spain in March 2009. By this time the Commission evaluated Spain as medium-risk country in sustainability of public financed and stressed the ageing as a structural problem for the sustainability of pension and health care system. However, a half year later the Commission forecast for the evolution of GDP and the budget and public deficit worsened (table 1), thus the fiscal efforts needed to correct the budget deficit increased. While in April 2009 the Council recommended an average annual fiscal effort of 1,25 % of GDP, in December of 2009 it was already 1,5 % of GDP for the period 2010-2013. Spain should reach the budget deficit below 3 % by 2013 (Council, 2009a, 8; Council, 2009b, 11).

Table 1: *Selected macroeconomic data and their projections*

	2008	2009	2010	2011
GDP % change (volume terms)				
COM January 09 forecast	1,2	-2	-0,2	n.a.
COM autumn 09 forecast	0,9	-3,7	-0,8	1
Real GDP % change (Eurostat)	1,1	-3,6	0	-1
General government balance (% of GDP)				
COM January 09 forecast	-3,4	-6,2	-5,7	n.a.
COM autumn 09 forecast	-4,1	-11,2	-10,1	-9,3

³ According to Eurostat data in the second quarter of 2008 the unemployment rose firstly to 10,4 %. The Social government ended its second mandate in 2011 with 20,5 % of unemployment. However, the culmination came under PP government in 2013 with 26,2 %. (Eurostat, 2019d)

Real general government balance (Eurostat)	-4,4	-11	-9,4	-9,6
Government gross debt (% of GDP)				
COM January 09 forecast	39,8	46,9	53	n.a.
COM autumn 09 forecast	39,7	54,3	66,3	74
Real government gross debt (Eurostat)	39,5	52,8	60,1	69,5

Source: Author according to European Commission, 2009c; European Commission, 2009d; Eurostat, 2019a; Eurostat, 2019b; Eurostat, 2019c.

The government had to approve austerity measures to reach the targets set by the Council recommendations (they review is included in table 2). In 2009 budget the government still preserves its programme targets as the social expenditures, expenditures for the innovations, science and research, education and infrastructure. The savings tackled the public administration, limiting job offers and freezing the wages of top state officials (BOE, 2008). However, the budget deficit exceeded 11 % of GDP in 2009. The government proposed in its stabilization plan for 2009-2013 to reduce the budget deficit to 9,3 % in 2010, then to 6 % in 2011 and 4,4 % in 2011 and to be below 3 % in 2013 (Stability Programme 2009-2013, 2010, 4). This projection worked with the scenario of progressive economic recovery from 2011, which occurred, but already in the next year the country was in economic recession again.

The promised budgetary expenditure reduction was reflected in 2010 budget and in austerity measures adopted that year. The government wanted to maintain its economic strategy; however it was limited by the rising social spending related to the unemployment allowances. The lower revenues should be solved by the rise of taxes. The VAT was increased to 18 % and the reduced VAT to 8 %, a tax credit of 400 euro for personal income tax, promised in 2008 elections and introduced the same year, was cancelled and the tax of savings income increased. The budget expenditures for science and research, which were supposed to be pillars of new economic model, sharply decreased. The government tried to balance the austerity measures by the introduction of some support schemes as the decrease of taxes for small and medium companies, which create or maintain jobs (BOE, 2009). It is also necessary to stress that the austerity measures were adopted not only by the government, but also by the autonomous communities and local authorities, which had to comply with the deficit targets. This further weakened the leading position of PSOE in the regional and local level.

During 2010 in relation to the EDP the government adopted a royal decree-law no. 8/ 2010 of 20 of May on extraordinary measures for the reduction of public deficit, this meant sharp cuts in public expenditures. The government lowered the wages in public administration, it did not index pensions for 2011, it limited benefits for the dependent persons, it cancelled the state allowance at child birth or adoption, and it introduced measures for fiscal consolidation of local authorities and increased the control of public expenditures. The Prime Minister Zapatero defended the decree by the need to maintain the welfare state (RTVE.es, 2010a, RTVE.es, 2011). The European Commission estimated that these measures would mean a 1,5 % of GDP deficit reduction, 0,5 % of GDP in 2010 and additional 1 % of GDP in 2011. And it also appraised that the austerity measures taken by the government are the correct way in the deal with the excessive deficit (European Commission, 2010, 19-21).

In spite of it the Socialist government had to continue in austerity policy. The principal labour reform was adopted in September 2010, which made less costly and simplified the redundancies⁴. It tightened control over unemployed persons⁵ and allowed companies not to comply with some parts of collective agreements. In response a general strike was convoked in September 2010, which was the only general strike during the PSOE government. The 2011 budget further decrease public expenditures, by 3 % in comparison to previous year (RTVE.es, 2010b), which tackled again the public administration and the ministerial budgets. The freezing of wage in public administration continued, the job offer there further decreased, the pension indexing was frozen with the exception of minimum pensions. The taxes increased, but this time the tax strategy was focused on higher income groups. The tax credits for the purchase of real estate were cancelled.

Among the final measures was the pension reform. The Commission constantly pointed to the problem of ageing and its impact on the sustainability of pension systems. The government therefore opted to increase the retirement age from 65 to 67 years. It also tightened the conditions for earlier retirement and widens the period for pension calculation from the last 15 to 25 years. The culmination of PSOE economic crisis management was the constitutional reform of article 135, which introduced the principle of budget stability on all levels of public administration, including autonomous

⁴ For example it introduced new reasons for redundancy as negative economic results of company.

⁵ For example those who did not requalified could be sanctioned.

communities and local authorities. This was a direct implementation of the so called Fiscal Compact.

Table 2: *Review of austerity measures taken by the PSOE government between 2008 and 2011*

<p>2009 Budget</p> <p>Wage-freezing of top official in the public administration and public companies, institutions and foundations</p> <p>Limits on job offer in the public administration</p>
<p>2010 Budget</p> <p>Suspension of tax credit of 400 euro for personal income tax</p> <p>Increase of VAT by 2 % to 18 % and the reduced VAT by 1 % to 8 %</p> <p>Royal decree-law no. 8/ 2010 of 20 of May on extraordinary measures for the reduction of public deficit</p> <p>Decrease of wages in public administration by 5 % and their freezing in 2011</p> <p>Decrease of wages for the members of government by 15 %</p> <p>Freezing of pension indexation (with exception of minimum pensions)</p> <p>Suspension of state allowance of 2 500 euro at child birth or adoption („cheque bebé“), which was introduced in 2008</p> <p>Decrease of infrastructure investments</p> <p>Tightening of conditions for earlier retirement</p> <p>Decrease of expenditure on Official Development Aid</p>
<p>Labour market reform (September 2010)</p> <p>Cheaper redundancies</p> <p>Tightening of control over unemployed persons</p> <p>Companies were enabled not to comply with some parts of collective agreements</p>
<p>2011 Budget</p> <p>Tax increase by 3 % to 19 % on the capital gains, which are over 6 000 euro, and its further increase to 21 %</p> <p>Introduction of property tax on properties, which value is over 700 000 euro It should be a temporary measure for the years 2011 and 2012.</p>
<p>Pension reform (July 2011)</p> <p>Increase of retirement age to 67 years</p> <p>The earlier retirement in 65 years possible if the person has worked for at least 38,5 years</p>
<p>Constitutional reform on budget stability (September 2011)</p> <p>Reform of article 135 of Spanish Constitution adopting the principle of budget stability on all levels of public administration</p>

Source: Author according to BOE, 2009; BOE, 2010a; BOE, 2010b; BOE 2011.

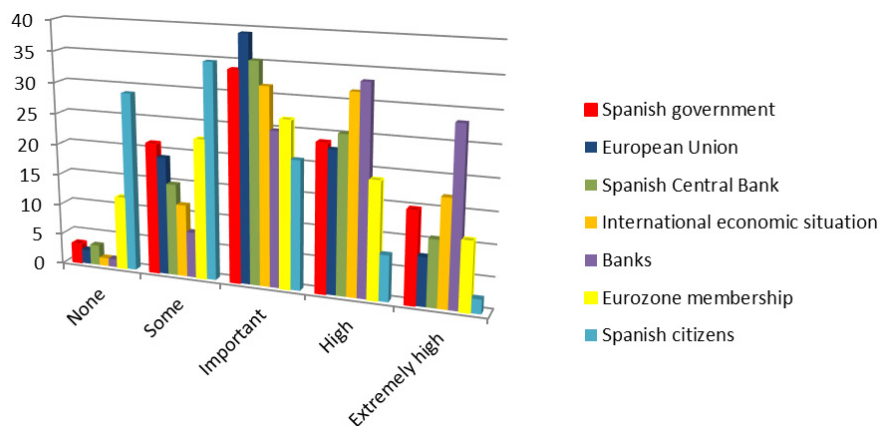
In resume, during the economic and financial crisis the government had to deal with the banking crisis, high level of unemployment and huge public

debts on the state and also sub-state level (autonomous communities). The PSOE targeted the policy on the reduction of budget deficit and slow down of the increase of public debt and followed the recommendations of the EU institution (Commission and Council). In spite of reforms the country entered into the economic recession again in 2012. In next years the government had to deal with increasing distrust of international financial markets, which reflected in high risk premium and incurred concerns regarding the sustainability of public debt. The Commission attributed the causes of recession to the high public and private debt, high level of unemployment and to the slowdown in the world economy, which hit the Spanish exports (European Commission, 2012). However, some economists (e.g. Joseph Stiglitz) pointed to the negative impact of the EU austerity policy. According to Stiglitz the international institutions sub estimated the impacts of the austerity measures and prolonged the crisis in Spain. He sided with those who advocated for major integration of the Eurozone countries (El Mundo, 2012).

5 SLUMP IN PSOE SUPPORT IN 2011 PARLIAMENTARY ELECTIONS

Comparing electoral promises with real governmental policy the PSOE was able to fulfil only those objectives, which were not related to the social and economic policy, as more liberal abortion law, penal code reform increasing penalties for terrorists and paedophiles, counter-piracy law and smoking ban (RTVE.es, 2011). In 2011 CIS opinion survey revealed that over 30 % of the respondents attributed to the government the blame for the economic crisis. She was followed by banks (23,6 %) and international economic situation (21,7 %), while the EU (6,2 %) or the Eurozone membership (5,7 %) were not considered to be decisive. In spite of that the EU and the Eurozone membership were not considered to be completely marginal. Measuring the level of influence on the economic crisis the banks, followed by the international economic situation and government policy were considered to have very high influence, but also the EU influence was considered to be important to high, whereas the Eurozone membership just important to some (see graph 3).

Graph 3: *The level of influence of selected factors on economic crisis*



Source: CIS, 2011b.

The level of trust in the Prime Minister Zapatero before 2011 parliamentary elections decreased considerably, only 13,9 % trusted him in comparison to 41,8 % in 2008. His principle rival Mariano Rajoy (PP) received a little bit better results in comparison to Zapatero and also to 2008 parliamentary elections (26,6 % in 2011 to 21 % in 2008). Prime minister Zapatero decided to resign to party leadership, which passed to the Minister of Interior Adolfo Pérez Rubalcaba, which was trusted by 27,8 % of respondents. In the same vein the opinion survey revealed that Rajoy was slightly preferred as prime minister than Rubalcaba (39,4 % to 37,9 %). The differences between the leaders were tiny, but PSOE was charged by governing in crisis with deep social impacts, which had to defend. The society, especially high and middle income groups and across age groups, preferred the change of government (62,4 %) (CIS, 2011a). New PSOE leader Rubalcaba did not imply such a change as he was member of the Zapatero government, responsible for the decisions which were taken.

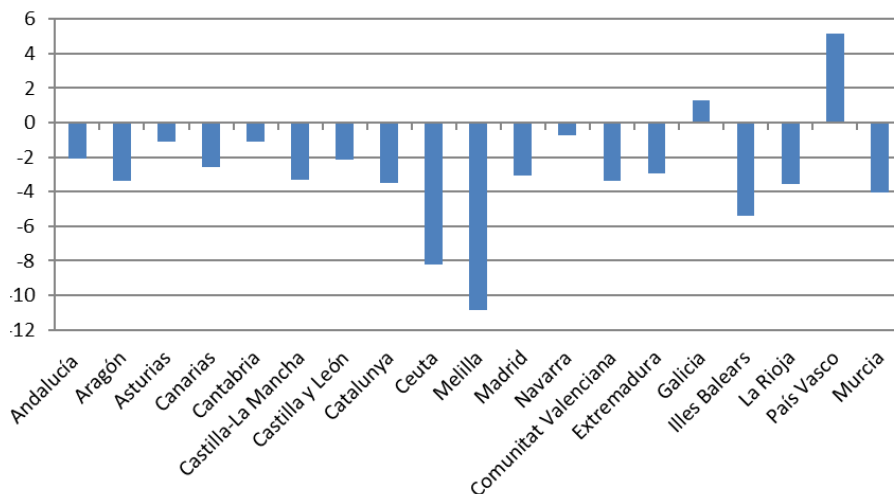
On the other hand neither the evaluation of PP performance in opposition was considered to be good. 49,3 % of respondents evaluated it as bad and 33,2 % as average, but she was perceived as a party, which is more competent to govern and solve the country's problems. She overtook PSOE in 12 policy fields out of 15. In the economic policy the difference was up to 29,9 % and in the unemployment up to 22 % (CIS, 2011a). PSOE was perceived to be better only in social policy, environmental policy and gender equality. The PSOE lost among the upper and middle classes, especially in the new middle

class (see graph 2 above). The middle class was precisely that one, which was charged with the costs of crisis, as for example the increase of taxes and austerity measures in public administration. The hard core PSOE voters voted her across the socioeconomic groups and age groups, but it was not sufficient.

2011 parliamentary elections were also influenced by the protest movement 15-M, which lately contributed to the foundation of leftist party Podemos, catching an important part of PSOE voters. However, already from these elections on the Spanish bipartidism started to erosion. In 2008 two main parties gained 84,7 % of votes (92,3 % seats in the Congress of Deputies), but in 2011 they decreased to just 74,4 % of votes (84,6 % deputy seats) (Ministerio del Interior, 2017, 45). But it was in 2015 and 2016 parliamentary elections, when the party system fragmented to four principal parties.

Looking at the vote shifts among parties, four conclusions can be drawn. First, the participation rate slumped down from 73,85 % (2008) to 68,94 % (2011) (Ministerio del Interior, 2017, 48), which penalized the governing party. The participation decreased in almost all provinces, which are the constituencies and basic units for allocation of seats (on Spanish electoral system see e.g. Hopkin, 2005). Only in Basque country and Galicia the participation slightly rose. Important slump in participation took place in provinces of autonomous communities of Balearic Islands, Catalonia, Murcia or La Rioja and the cities of Ceuta and Melilla (see graph 4).

Graph 4: *Change in voters' participation in 2011 parliamentary elections (in comparison to 2008)*



Source: Author, based on data of Ministry of Interior, non-dated.

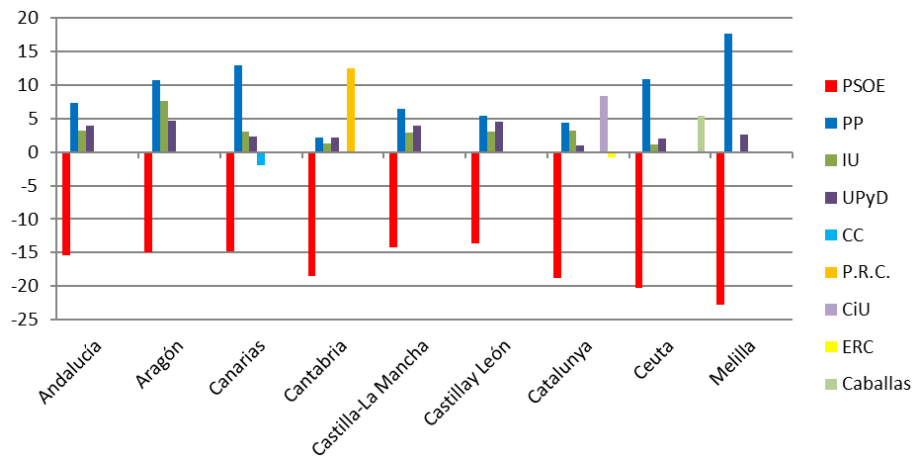
Second, support for PP increased in the whole country with the exception of Asturias, Navarra and Basque country (see graph 5 and graph 6). However, in Asturias voters gave votes to Asturias Forum (FAC), an excision of PP. PP got considerable support in the provinces of autonomous communities of Aragon, Canary Islands, Extremadura, Galicia and also in the cities Ceuta y Melilla, in which the decline for PSOE was massive and the abstention rate high. PP also rose in some Andalusian provinces, bastions of PSOE, as Cádiz, Huelva or Jaén and in León (Castilla y León). PP benefited from the fact, that many seats are allocated in relatively small or medium-sized electoral districts (from three to seven seats), which favour big parties and are one of the keys of Spanish bipartidism. In such constituencies PP usually got more seats than PSOE, still all seats here were allocated between two biggest parties. This was the case of Cantabria, all provinces of Castilla-La Mancha, of Castilla y León, of Extremadura, of Balearic Islands, La Rioja and Murcia.

Third, leftist voters split their support and apart of PSOE casted more votes or to radical left political parties as the IU (United Left) or to moderates ones as the left-centrist UPyD (Union, Progress and Democracy). UPyD was formed in 2007, mainly by former members of PSOE. It got important support in 2011 parliamentary elections, but it lost parliamentary representation in 2015 parliamentary elections. Also left-wing autonomist parties increased

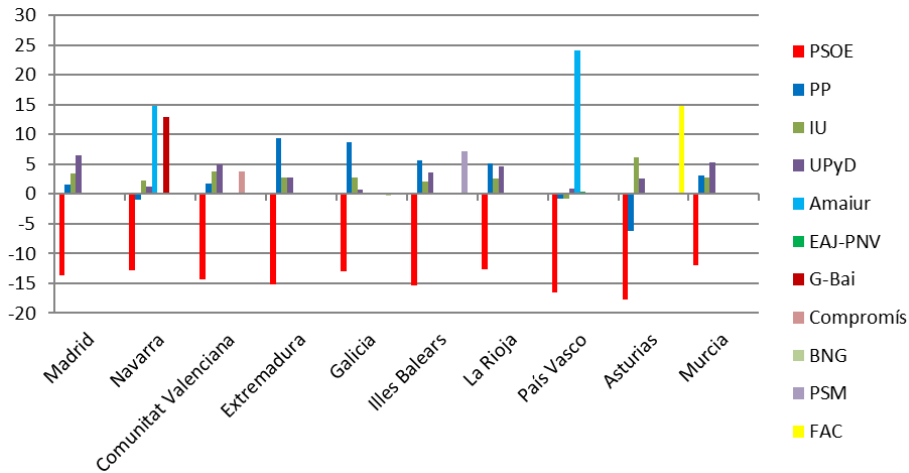
number of votes as Compromís (Comunitat Valenciana), ICV-EUiA (Initiative for Catalonia Greens–United and Alternative Left), P.R.C. (Regionalist Party of Cantabria), PSM (Socialist Party of Mallorca) or Caballas in Ceuta. Giving the system of seat allocation an increase of votes for left parties need not to translate into the seat gains. The left parties got more seats principally in big electoral districts as Madrid, Barcelona, Málaga, Sevilla and Valencia, but they were not able to get representation in small and medium-sized districts.

Four, in autonomous communities with distinctive identity as Basque country and Catalonia the support for autonomist and even separatist parties rose. In Basque country radical left, nationalist and separatist coalition Amaiur (currently known as EH Bildu) got significant support. In Catalonia voters supported more right wing autonomist political party CiU (Convergence and Union), which later became separatist and transformed to Catalan European Democratic Party (PDeCAT) in 2016.

Graph 5: *Vote switching in 2011 parliamentary elections I. (Congress of Deputies)*



Graph 6: *Vote switching in 2011 parliamentary elections II. (Congress of Deputies)*



Source: Author, calculated on electoral results presented by Ministry of Interior, non-dated.

Abbreviations: PSOE (Spanish Socialist Workers Party) – governing party, moderate left party, PP (Popular Party), principal opposition party, conservative party, IU (United Left) – radical left party, ICV-EUiA (Initiative for Catalonia Greens–United and Alternative Left) – radical left party in Catalonia, Compromís – radical left party in Valencian Community, UPyD (Union, Progress and Democracy) – social-liberal party, EAJ-PNV (Basque Nationalist Party) – principal autonomist party in Basque country, Amaiur – radical left and separatist party in Basque country; G-Bai (Geroa Bai) – parallel to EAJ-PNV in Navarra, CiU (Convergence and Union) – right wing autonomist party in Catalonia, FAC (Asturias Forum) – right wing party in Asturias, CC (Canary Coalition) – autonomist party in Canary Islands, P.R.C. (Regionalist Party of Cantabria) – autonomist party in Cantabria, BNG (Galician Nationalist Bloc) – autonomist party in Galicia, PSM (Socialist Party of Mallorca) – autonomist party in Balearic Islands; Caballas – autonomist party in Ceuta.

In sum, it is possible to conclude that PP witnessed certain, in some electoral districts considerable, vote increase. But she also benefited from the split of left voters and higher abstention rate. In total she got 44,6 % of votes (39,9 % in 2008), which enabled her to have an absolute majority of seats both in Congress of Deputies and the Senate (see Table 3). PSOE experienced a sharp decrease of votes, but she further decrease in following parliamentary elections. Other left parties as IU and UPyD got major support and more seats, but the split of leftist voters meant fewer seats for the left

parties in general. Also the autonomist and even separatist parties did well in 2011 parliamentary elections.

Table 3: *2011 parliamentary elections results*

Party	Votes in % 2011/2008	Seats in Congress of Deputies (2011/2008)	Seats in Senate (2011/2008)
PSOE	28,73/43,87	186/154	136/101
PP	44,62/39,99	110/169	48/88
IU	6,92/3,77	11/2	
PSC-ICV-EUA			7/-
UPyD	4,69/1,19	5/1	
CiU	4,17/3,03	16/10	9/4
ERC	1,05/1,16	3/3	
EAJ-PNV	1,33/1,19	5/6	4/2
Amaiur	1,37/-	7/-	3/-
BNG	0,75/0,83	2/2	
CC	0,59/0,68	2/2	1/1
Compromís	0,51/0,12	1/-	
FAC	0,40/-	1/-	
G-Bai	0,17/-	1/-	

Source: Author from Ministry of Interior, non-dated.

PP formed the government, which continued in austerity measures. She further limited public expenditures, especially in the education, health care and public administration, and increased the taxes (personal income tax and corporate tax).

CONCLUSION

The article's objective was to respond the questions on, how the economic crisis and supranational actors, in this case the EU, influenced the government policy of PSOE between 2008 and 2011 and if the PSOE was in conflict in its role as a representative of its voters and in the role of

the governing party with the corresponding responsibility. It is possible to conclude, that in its case these two roles clashed and the party opted for the responsibility. The conflict was deepened by high expectations, which she raised in 2008 parliamentary elections.

The government policy analysis has showed that the economic crisis management constituted the main agenda of PSOE government between 2008 and 2011. The Spanish economic situation and adopted measures were consistently monitored and evaluated by the European Commission, which principally recommended measures for Spain, then agreed by the Council. The recommended financial effort reached the 1,5 % of GDP annually at the end of 2009 so as Spain could be able to reduce the deficit below 3 % in 2013 and slow down the increase of public debt.

The Spanish government followed the Council recommendations and from 2009 adopted austerity budgets. Apart of them it agreed on extraordinary consolidation package in 2010, reformed the labour market and the pension system and enforced the introduction of budget discipline to the Constitution. The austerity measures impacted especially on public administration because of the reduction and freezing of wages and reduction of job offers. Also the public expenditures on pensions, unemployment allowance and other social benefits were considerably reduced, while at the same time taxes increased. The principal affected were the middle classes, which shifted support to PP in next parliamentary elections.

The austerity policy was thus in direct conflict with electoral promises of 2008, which focused on the employment and social welfare. Thus, the PSOE was in evidence that it was not able to fulfil them and moreover the situation worsened in both fields. It could not realize its economic policy based on the transition to knowledge economy as it had to cut expenditures on innovation, research and education. The gap between the electoral promises on one hand and the real government policy on the other was too huge. Therefore, the PSOE really had to make a hard choice between its role as voters' representative and the government responsibility. It finally resigned on its representation role and chose the responsibility defending government policy, which did not choose. The drastic slump in electoral preferences accompanied the party in 2011, 2015 and 2016 parliamentary elections. The drop of support stopped in recent years and only in 2019 parliamentary elections it has partially recovered former support. Therefore its case also shows that the exhaustion of established parties can be only temporary. Nevertheless the crisis introduced new competitors to the political scene and Spain is no more a bipartidist country.

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