

The social and political situation of the radical Left in Europe – overview

Cornelia Hildebrandt

Institute for Social Analysis
Rosa-Luxemburg-Foundation

July 4th 2013

Structure

- Preliminary remarks
- The economic and social development in Europe and the different relationship toward the European Union – the Euro barometer
- Short summary of electoral results in the European Union since 2009
- overview and selected results:
 1. of the moderate leftwing parties
 2. of the Green parties
 3. of the extreme Right
 4. of the radical leftwing parties
- What can be done
The questions of a new vision of the European Union

Preliminary remarks

- Via the crisis of the banking system the crisis of financial-market capitalism is transformed into a state debt crisis and further into a social and political crisis of the European Union.
- These crises are connected with sharp political crises of national governments, with political instabilities, especially in the Euro-zone. In 12 of the 17 Euro countries early elections were held. Political instabilities in Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Denmark, Greece, Portugal, Spain?
- Social protests haven' t led to a qualitative shift in the political balance of power. No major change in policy was achieved.
- The rejection of parties by social protest movements relates to left-wing parties as well. They are perceived as part of the established party system and are hardly in a position credibly to represent the participatory social protests at the political level.
- To an increasing extent European policy is internal policy of the EU countries. To be effective European and national policies must be interlinked. This is valid for left-wing resistance against austerity policies as well.

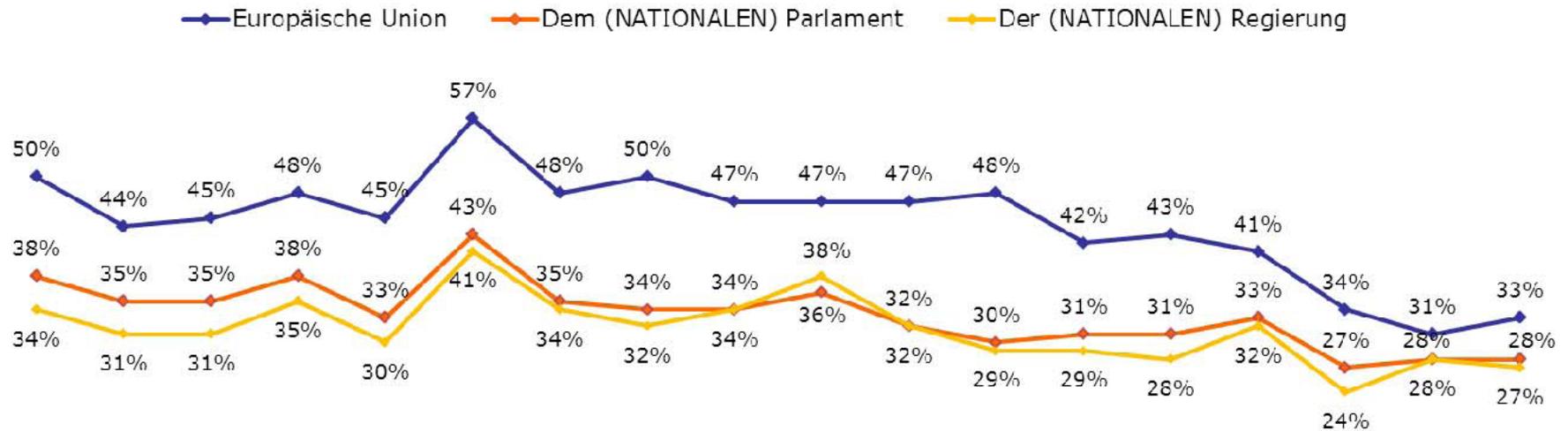
The economic development in the EU – some facts

- **In the 17 Euro countries:** GNP growth only 0,3% in 2012
Greece: - 4,4% (2011: -6,8%), Portugal: -3,3% (2011: -1,5%)
Italy: - 1,3% (2011: +0,2%)
- **In the Euro-Zone:** unemployment rate: 12,2 %, in the countries of the EU in total: **26,8 million unemployed** (May 2013); among them 5,6 million young people; the highest unemployment rate in: 27% Greece, 27% Spain, 17,5% Portugal, over 14% in Slovakia, Latvia and Cyprus – in contrast: 6,4% in the Netherlands, 5,5% in Luxembourg, 5,4% in Germany and 4,5% in Austria (March 2013)
- **Spain:** Commitment to reduce the budget deficit to 63 % of GDP by tax increase and spending cuts of 13,5 billion Euro (in total 7,8 billion Euro savings 2013, value-added tax increased from 18 to 21%, pension cuts of 3,8 billion Euro and cuts of social income and minimum wages .
- **Greece:** since 2008 the economic output has decreased by 20%, a further decrease by more than 5 % is forecasted for 2013 ; since 2008 the wages have been reduced by 30 – 40%, the VAT have been increased to 23%. The unemployment-rate of young people is about 62.5 %.

Facts of the Euro-Zone 2012/2013 overview

	Greece	Spain	Portugal	Italy	Nether-lands	Slovakia	France	Germany
Real income in 2012	-7,5%	-1,7%	-6,1%	-1,7%	-0,6%	-0,6%	0%	0,3%
Costs 2010 2011, 2012	4,7, 3,1; -0,5%	2,0;3,1 1,9%	-0,9;1,4 3,0%	1,6; 2,9 3,2%	1,0; 0,9 2,5%	5,8; 1,5 1,4 %	1,4; 1,0 0%	3,2; 1,6 0,4%
Unemployment rate 3/2013 young people	27,0% 62,5%	26,8% 56,5%	17,8% 42,1%	12,0% 38,5%	6,5% 10,4%	14,5% 34,5%	11,0% 24,6%	5,4% 7,6%
VAT rise	18% - 23%	18% 21%	since 2012 23%	2012': 21%	19% 21%	20%	19,6 21,2%	still 19% (2005: 17 %)
Inflation rate 2012	1,4%	1,8%	3,1%	3,8%	2,9%	3,9%	2,6%	2,3%
Increase of retirement age	To 65	To 67	65 to 67 next time	To 67 next time	To 67	To 62	To 62	To 67
Poverty risk 2010	21,4%	21,8%	18,0%	19,6%	11,0%	13,6%	14,0%	5 15,8%

How much confidence you have in the EU institutions, the National parliaments and national governments?



Hbt. 2004	Fr. 2005	Hbt. 2005	Fr. 2006	Hbt. 2006	Fr. 2007	Hbt. 2007	Fr. 2008	Hbt. 2008	Jan.-Feb. 2009	Fr. 2009	Hbt. 2009	Fr. 2010	Hbt. 2010	Fr. 2011	Hbt. 2011	Fr. 2012	Hbt. 2012
EB62	EB63	EB64	EB65	EB66	EB67	EB68	EB69	EB70	EB71.1	EB71	EB72	EB73	EB74	EB75	EB76	EB77	EB78

Critique of the crisis-politics from the Left

- Since 2011 - inspired by the Arab Spring - European citizens protested against the shifting of the burden of the crisis on the socially disadvantaged, against the destruction of the European social model and against the weakening of democratic rights and freedoms.
- On March 2 2013 in **Portugal** demonstrated 1,5 Mio. Portuguese (15 % of the whole population) demanding the abdication of the government (15% of Germans = 12 Mio.)
- On March 29 2012 was the biggest general strike supported by social movements and trade unions in **Spain** – in the end of 2012 followed the march on Madrid with more than one hundred thousand people
- Last year were many mass-demonstration in **Greece**, and on October 8 the 4th general strike was organized
- On the September 30 2012 more than 80.000 people demonstrated in **Paris** against the austerity policy of the socialist government of Francoise Hollande
- 2012: About 40.000 demonstrators demanded in **Germany** the redistribution of wealth from the top: Umfairteilen! 20.000 demonstrated by blockupy 2013 – a signal
- On the November 14 2012 for the first time a **transnational-general strike** was organized in Portugal, Spain, Greece, Cyprus and Italy – a new step for the European organizations
But only 15.000 people joined the European Action Day in March 2013,
160 Organizations, include trade unions, NGOs, social movements and political actors came to the Alter Summit to Athens - 1.500 – 2.000 people demonstrated

Critique of crisis- and EU-policy from the Right

- **Right-wing EU criticism** is expressed as a national or nationalistic policy orientation with elements of chauvinism and radical-populist criticism of the EU. The radical Right is united in the fundamental rejection of the Euro and political union of the European Union.
- **Hungary** – January 2012: more than 100.000 people demonstrated for the Orbán government on the streets against the European Union. The separation of powers in Hungary is more and more dissolved, the freedom of press became limited
- **Greece**: In polls the fascists of the Golden Dawn are at 11%. In the last days 2013 to form a new Anti-Euro-Party was formed: the „Greece democratic vive-stars-movement: aiming: 1) against the EU-Memorandum; 2) demanding the return to the Drachme; 3) supporting a national growth policy; 4) defending national dignity and 5) social justice (5- Stars-Beppo Grillo: environment, development, , water, internet and transport)
- **Italy**: Lega North will organize a network of Euro-skeptical parties with the aim to build a European parliamentary group for a Europe of peoples and regions in 2014 after the European Parliamentary Elections together with the FPÖ
- **Germany**. in February 2013 a new conservative anti-Euro-party was founded with the aim of an orderly exit from the euro zone for economically weak countries and the relaunch of national currencies.

Parliamentary Elections between 2010 - 2013

- Between 2010 – 2012 parliamentary election in 17 countries in the EU were held. In 12 countries, there were – among them in 9 countries in the Euro-zone – early elections or Rebuilding of governments as Italy 2011
- in all countries (with the exception of Belgium) the reasons of early elections were the disputes over austerity measures dealing with the crises of the banking system and the state-debt crisis
- The political instability in the Euro zone is increasing - for example in Greece, Italy, Spain, Portugal and Bulgaria
- The parliamentary elections present a very heterogeneous picture: under the pressure of the austerity measures parties in office were defeated or have resigned. Italy– replacement of the government in 2010, resignation and early elections in Czech 2010 Greece 2011 and 2012, Ireland 2011, Italy 2011, Latvia 2011, Slovenia 2011, Spain 2011, Poland 2011, Portugal 2011, Slovakia 2012, Netherlands 2012,
- In part: increasing political polarization of the electorate as in Greece or the break-down of parts of the party system like in Italy

In 2013 – new trend?

- Development of new anti-parties: Palikot party in Poland, Beppe Grillo in Italy, pirates in Germany
- Formation of new euro-skeptic parties as in Germany: AfD or in Greece: 5-stars-
movement

Parliamentary election result of the moderate Left

- In 2009 in only 7 countries the social-democrats were in government, in 2012 11 – including the social-democrats as part of a larger coalitions
- **Stable electoral turn-out:** Denmark: 24,8% 2011 (-0,7% to 2007) – Social Democrats – minority government, Belgium: 13,7% (+2,84% to 2007), Latvia 2011: 28,4% (+2,4%), Finland: 19,1% (-2,3%)

- **Increasing electoral turn-out**

France

presidential elections 2012: Socialists 28,63%

parliamentary elections 2012: **Socialists 2012: 39,25% (+4,62% 2007)**

- **Slovakia 2012: 44,4 (+9,6% to 2010); Netherlands 2012: 24,84% (+5,21%)**
Ireland 2011: 19,4% (+9,35), Estonia: 17,1% (+6,5% to 2007),
Lithuania: 18,4% (+6,4%)
- **loss of voters and loss of governmental power :**
Greece PASOK: Mai 2012 13,2%, June 2012: 12,3%, Oct.. 12: ca. 4,5%
Poland 2011 8,2% (-5,0%), Portugal:- 8,51%, Slovenia : -20% (decrease from 30,5% to 10,5%), Sweden 2010: 30,7% (-4,3%), Spain 2011: 28,76% (-15,9%)
UK 2010: 29% (-6,2%),

Electoral results of the Green parties

- | | | |
|-------------------------|-------------|--------------------------------|
| Belgium: | 2009: 7,71% | 2010: Ecolo 4,8%, Groen! 4,38% |
| ▪ Estonia: | 2007: 0,5% | 2011: 3,8% +3,3% |
| ▪ Finland: | 2007: 8,5% | 2011: 7,3% -1,2% |
| ▪ France: | | |
| presidential elections: | | |
| 2007: | | 2012: 2,31% |
| parliamentary elections | | |
| 2007: 3,25% | | 2012: 5,46% +2,4% |
| ▪ Netherlands | 2010: 6,67% | 2012: 2,33% -4,34% |
| ▪ Sweden | 2006: 5,2% | 2010: 7,3% + 2,1% |

were the radical leftwing parties are highly fragmented or insignificant the Green parties are relatively strong. In 2010, the Greens got over 4% Belgium, in Hungary (LMP) 7.4%, in Estonia 3.8% in 2011, in 2009 the Greens got 11% of the popular vote. In opinion polls in Austria the greens get currently about 13%.

Electoral results of the radical Right

- **Belgium:** 2010: 7,76% (-4,23% 2007)
- **Denmark:** 2011: Dansk Folkeparti (DF), (right-wing-populist) 12,3% (-1,6% 2007)
- **Finland:** 2011: True Finns 19,1% (right-wing-populist)) 19,1% (+15%)
- **Greece:**
May 2012: ANEL 10,6%, Chrysie Avgas 7,0%, LAOS: 2,9% = 1,2 Mio. voters
June 2012: ANEL 7,5%, Chrysie Avgas 6,9%, LAOS 1,6%
survey (October 2012)
ANEL 7%, Chrysie Avgas 14% (50 % of the police men of the special forces voted for the Chrysie Avgas 2.
- **France:**
presidential elections 2012 Front National 17,9%
parliamentary elections 2012 Front National 2012: 13,6% (+9,31% 2007)
- **Latvia:** national conservative **Nacionālā apvienība "Visu Latvijai!"** 13,9% (+6,2% to 2007)
- **Netherlands:**
right-wing-populist Partij voor de Vrijheid 2012 10,08% (-5,37% to 2010)
- **Sweden:** right-wing-populist **Sverigedemokraterna** 2010 5,7% (+2,8%)
- **Hungary:** Jobbik 2010: 16,67% **Bulgaria:** ATAKA 7,3% in 2013 (-2%)

Electoral results of the radical Left

- **Sweden 2010:** Vänsterpartiet : **5,6%** (-0,3%)
Denmark 2011: Enhedslisten (EL) from 2,17 in 2007 to **6,68**
Socialistisk Folkeparti (SF) lost from 13,4 to **9,2**
social democrats minority government supported by the red-green Enhedslisten
Finland: Left alliance (VAS) 2011: **8,1%** (-0,7% 2007)
center-left – six-party-coalition since 2011
- **Greece:**
May 2012: **SYRIZA 16,8%**, KKE 8,5%, DIMAR 6,1%
June 2012: **SYRIZA 26,9%**, KKE 4,5%, DIMAR 6,3%
larger three party coalition
France:
presidential election 2012: **Front de Gauche 11,1%**
parliamentary election 2012 **Front de Gauche 6,91%**
- **Netherland:** SP 2012 9,65% (-0,17%) in the polls 2 weeks before the election over 20%, but only a half of that in election, **Ireland:** Sinn Fein 2011 **9,9%** (+3,0%)
Spain 2011: *Izquierda Unida* (IU) from 3,77% in 2008 to **6,92%**
Portugal 2011: Bloco from 9,81 in 2009 to 5,17% 2011
- **Cyprus 2013** – presidential election: the candidate of the AKEL lost the race with the candidate of the conservatives
- **In 14 countries of the EU is the radical Left no important – without social and political function**

Demands of the Left

- Demands for democratization of the political system and in the society – e.g. change of electoral law (Italy, Spain, Portugal)
- Renegotiation of conditions of the European and international support to solve the crises and end of austerity measures destroying the conditions of growth and social stability
- legal action against the austerity measures at the level of the constitutional court
- Investment program for employment and social growth
- Minimal income of 60 % of the average income in each of the European countries
- Labor law restricting precariousness (subcontracting and temporary employment)
- Expansion of public services, programs to reduce youth unemployment, support of affordable housing and energy, measures of poverty reduction

Problem: the Left parties have the same demands as the left-wing social movements but the movements stay distant to the parties

some problems of the radical left-wing parties

- the distance of the political system and the political parties concerns the radical leftwing parties too.
- In the view of the Left in Europe – describes the real problems and conflicts but they don't have a solutions and the most of them have political power.
- In the current crisis is the social question combined with the crisis of the Euro Union and in this question is the radical Left to split.

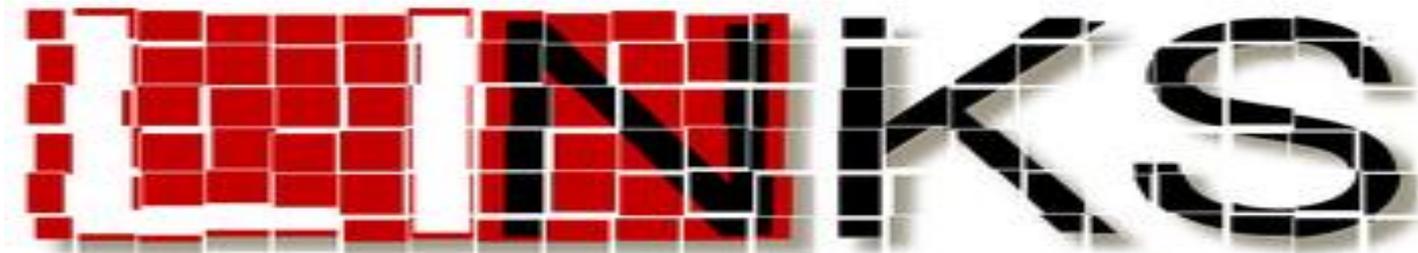
The Left is successful if it

combines the national and European struggles *in* the existing structures with struggles to change these structures – struggle for a double transformation



The Left needs:

A new attractive left-wing “story” for Europe, an alternative project capable of counter-hegemony aiming at a social-ecological transformation for a solidarity society, new forms of participatory organization and coalitions



Literature:

From revolution to coalition ...

<http://www.rosalux.de/publication/38610/from-revolution-to-coalition-radical-left-parties-in-europe.html>

If you need the book (for free)
please send an E-Mail to

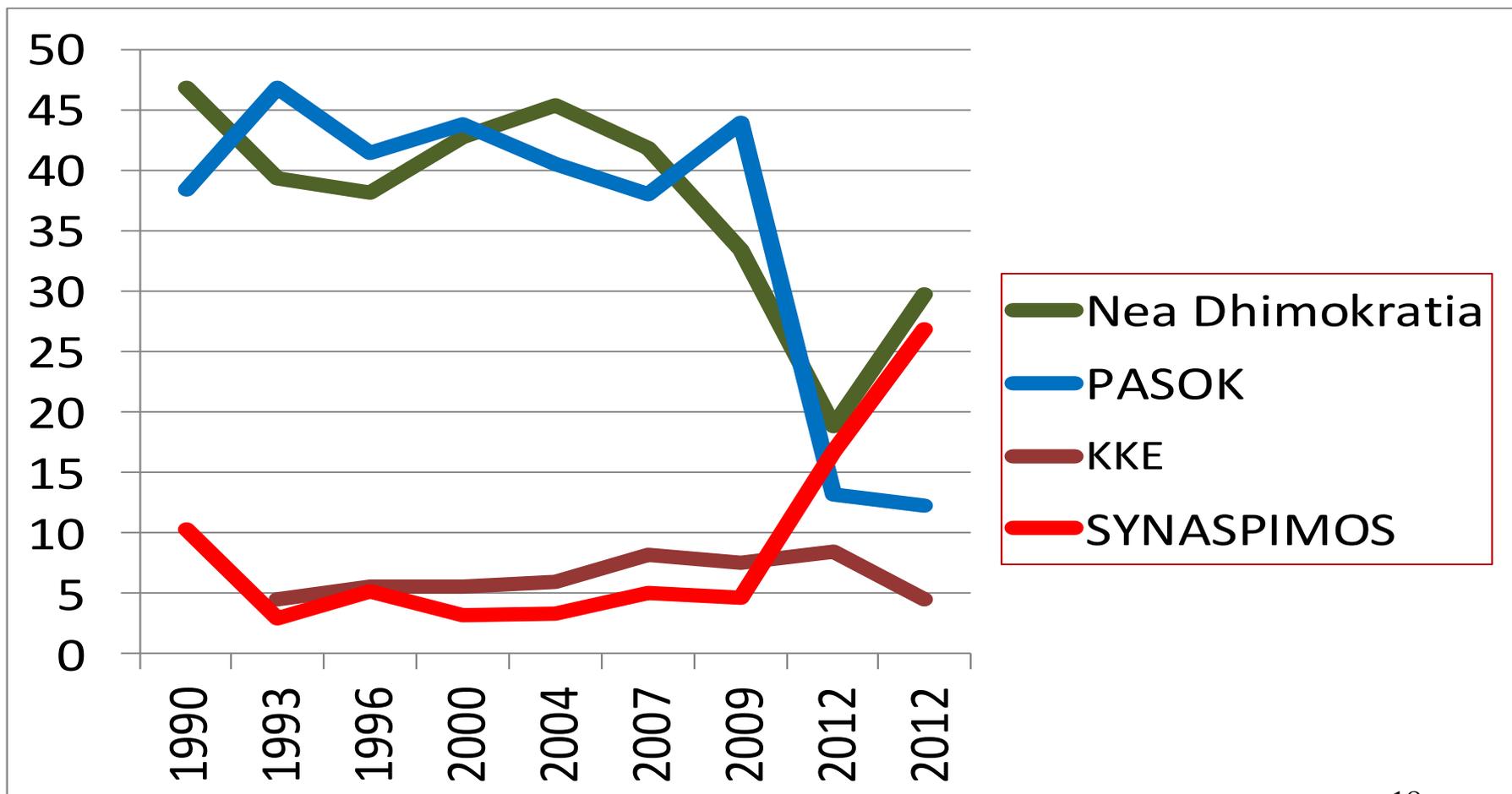
Hildebrandt@rosalux.de



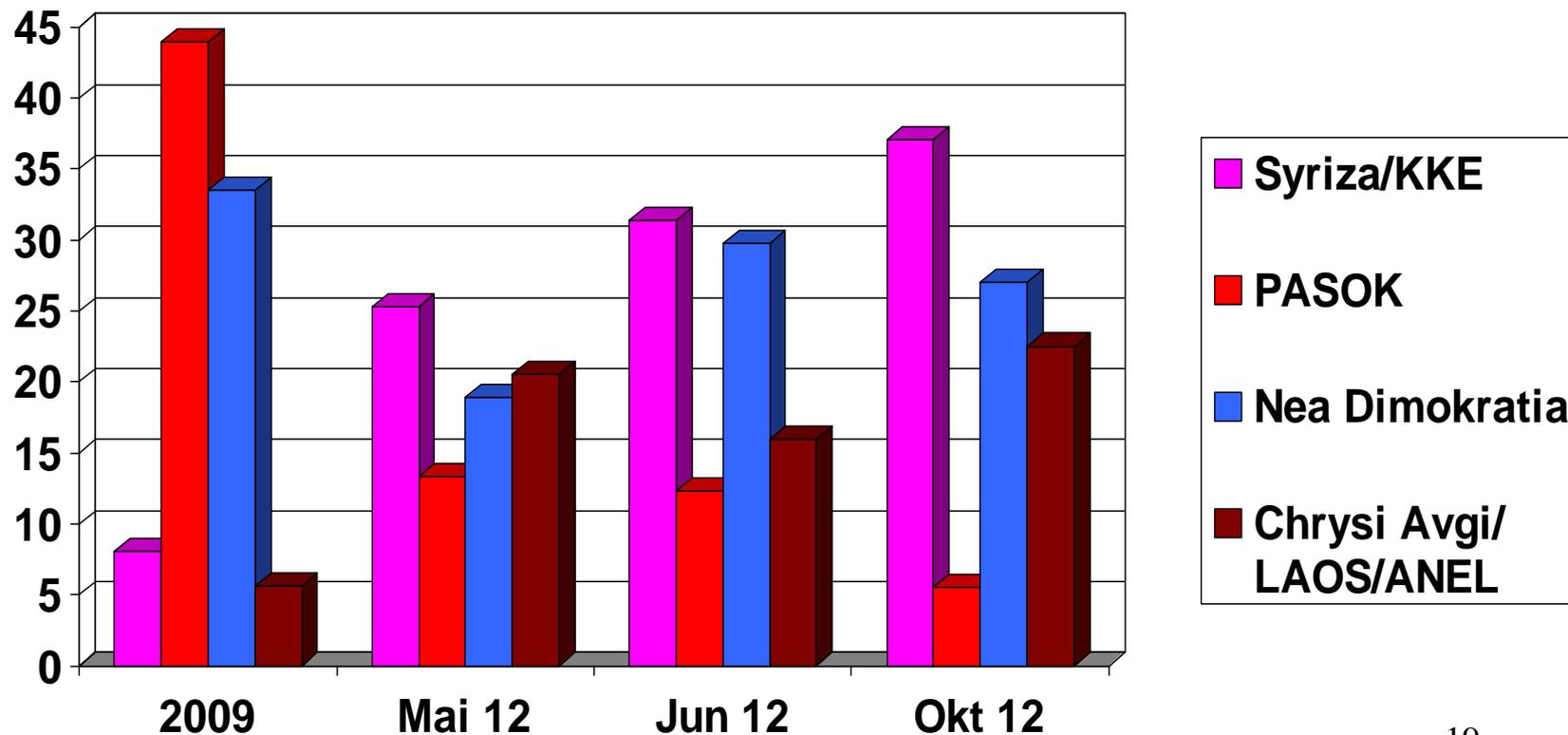
2

Many thanks for your attention!

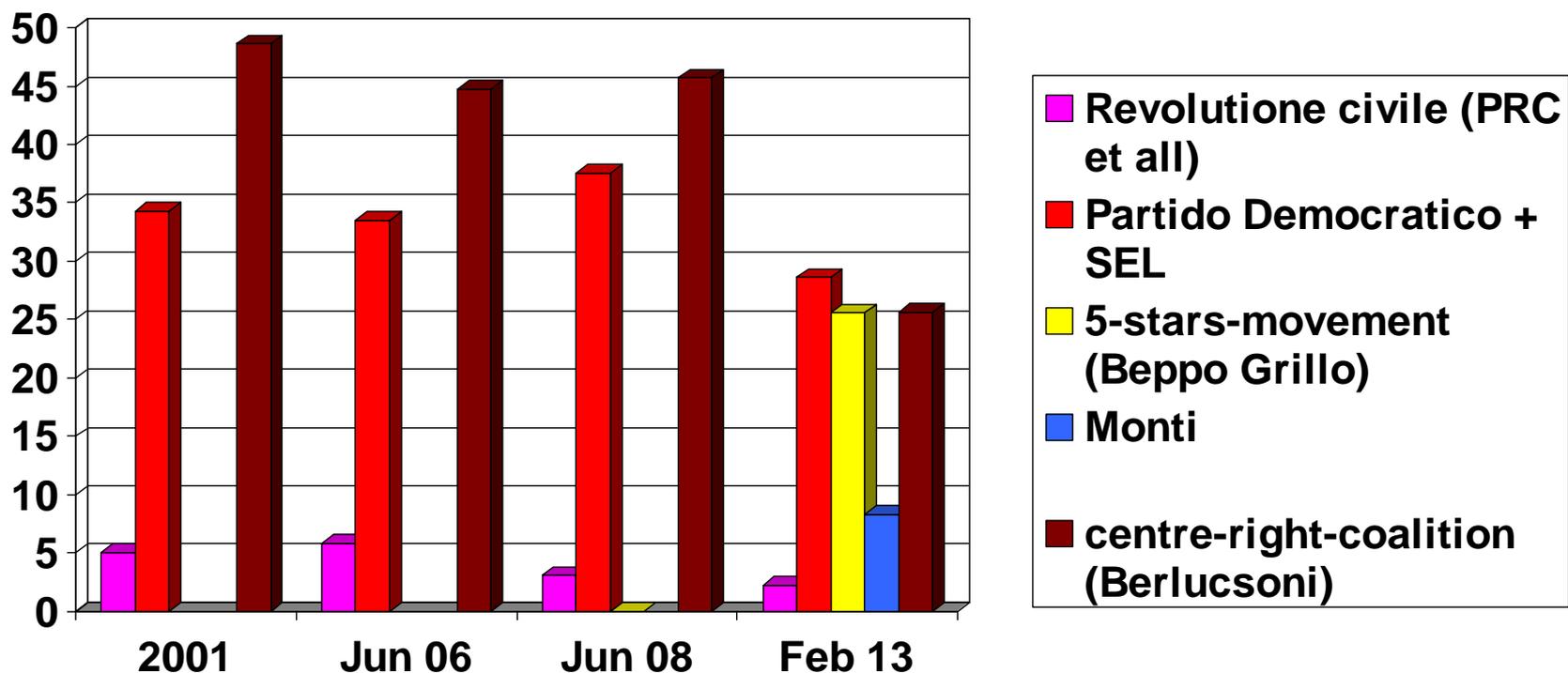
Electoral results in Greece 1990 - 2012



Polarization of the electorate in Greece



Deep change of the party system in Italy



Composition of the electorate in Italy 2013

	workers	employers	Self employed persons	Freelancer	Students	House-wives	Unemployed persons	Pensioners
PRC (radical-left – coalition)	3,6	2,6	1,6	2,6	2,1	1,6	2,1	2,2
Centre-left-coalition	21,7	32,4	14,8	29,6	27,4	24,5	20,1	39,5
Centre-right coalition (Berlusconi)	25,8	21,2	34,6	15,6	26,1	43,3	23,7	32,2
Monti	6,6	13,0	5,8	15,3	12,4	7,5	9,5	12,3
M5S (Beppo Grillo)	40,1	27,1	40,2	31,3	29,1	20,0	42,7	11,5
other	2,2	3,7	3,0	5,6	2,8	3,1	1,9	2,3