

From opacity to openness. The necessary journey for political parties

A comparison between Spain and Portugal

Abstract

The Spanish and Portuguese political parties are highly distrusted by the citizens. The promotion of transparency by political parties might be useful to improve this situation of illegitimacy, even though it has not received much attention in previous academic studies. In this article, we also explore not only transparency, but the rest of the principles of Open Government performed by political organizations. We analyzed the development of transparency, accountability, deliberation, decision-making and collaboration by political parties in Spain and Portugal. The methodology used was an in-depth content analysis of the websites of the five main political parties in each country, which was previously supported in a Delphi study and tested in an exploratory study in Spain (Díez-Garrido, 2020). The results of the analysis show that political organizations are still far from being able to be considered "open" and must especially develop the principles that involve citizen interaction.

Keywords: political parties, Spain, Portugal, distrust, transparency

1. Introduction

Political parties have received little attention in studies on transparency and openness, despite the fact that they require a great deal of modernization, since their opacity can lead to attitudes of distrust (Fazendeiro & Razzuoli, 2016). This article seeks to investigate the openness of Spanish and Portuguese political parties in terms of

transparency, participation and collaboration, and to establish a comparison between them.

There are many reasons why it is interesting to compare political parties in Portugal and Spain. Not only are they neighboring countries with a related culture, but their recent political history is similar as well. Both are young democracies that came from a long dictatorship –Francisco Franco in Spain and Antonio de Oliveira Salazar in Portugal– and they have had a transition to the current democracy.

This convergence in the history of Spain and Portugal is not just comparable in their political functioning, but they also suffered severely from the economic crisis of 2008. Likewise, in both countries political parties depend largely on public funding (Van Biezen, 2000).

However, the trust that citizens have in political parties is different and much worse in the case of Spain, which is in the top three of countries that least trust them in the European Union, according to the Eurobarometer (2019). Only 7% of the Spanish population trust their political parties, while in Portugal 22% do so, slightly above the European average of 19%.

Transparency and participation seem like ideal elements to improve their image. Due to these reasons, we question the level of openness of political organizations on their websites, as well as the development of their transparency, accountability, deliberation, decision-making and collaboration with citizens.

The article is structured as follows. The next section will define the openness of political parties through a theoretical framework, which will deepen in the principles of the Open Government and its adaptation to political organizations and then to the development of transparency of Spanish and Portuguese political parties in their websites. Subsequently, the methodology will be explained – which is fundamentally quantitative, although with some qualitative aspects–, used to analyze the openness of the main political organizations in Spain and Portugal. The conclusions will compare the situation in both countries and try to define the level of openness of political parties.

2. Framework

2.1. Political Parties' duty with openness

The promotion of transparency at the academic level has been accompanied by an evolution also in the political field (Cahlikova & Mobilard, 2019). This goes hand in hand, both in studies and in practice, with the Open Government for its practical effects, especially related to trust and increased participation. Open Government is based in the development of transparency, participation and collaboration thanks to the digital tools (Lathrop & Ruma, 2010).

In this direction, Matheus and Janssen (2020) point out that the development of the Open Government research has had four stages. The first of these is the one prior to 2009, where there was little information about transparency or openness. After Barack Obama's Memorandum for Transparency and Open Government in 2009, the second phase began, which was very focused on transparency. The third stage, which these authors call *the hype phase*, was the discussion of practical consequences of the opening of many transparency portals. The fourth stage, which began in 2014, brought realism to the investigations and research began to point out that open data does not necessarily imply greater transparency.

The motivation of governments to develop these practices is that aperture breaks the gap between citizens and politicians (Cahlikova & Mobilard, 2019). An asymmetry is assumed between the information of governments and citizens. Transparency consists of illuminating this gap (Matheus & Janssen, 2020).

In this article we focus on political parties, which stand between the citizenry and the administration. They can make the interests of the public fit the State and have the power to make citizens' voices be heard (Amtiram & Angi, 2019). Therefore, the parties are one of the most important institutions because without being directly governmental organizations, they participate directly or indirectly in political decision-making (Amtiram & Angi, 2019).

Political parties' accountability and transparency are necessary for citizens to choose who to vote for. Their openness refers to showing their activity to the people who vote them (Frank & Otoprak, 2015). Political parties can be transparent or they can go one step further and adapt to the openness that is generally assumed for governments and public institutions. This implies that their activity is based on the principles of transparency, participation and collaboration (Díez-Garrido, 2020).

Political organizations have an interest in increasing their transparency because of its positive effects, which are accountability, rise of trust and credibility, increased participation, efficiency, governance, decrease of corruption and end of information asymmetry (Matheus & Janssen, 2020). The disaffection of political parties has led organizations to further explore technology and the Internet, in part to connect with digital natives (Serra-Silva et al, 2018). Their openness through the internet is an opportunity for them to rebuild trust.

There are several barriers to digital openness, such as access problems, culture of transparency, privacy issues, unprepared institutions, fear of losing control and the cost of transparency (Meijer, 2015). It can also lead to a decrease of privacy (Meijer et al, 2014).

Openness and transparency are also associated to effectiveness of politics. By making information public, politicians will tend to behave better and respond to the public's interests (Frank & Oztoprak, 2015). Cucciniello et al (2017) also highlight democratic improvement and good governance.

Transparency is necessary for accountability to be effective, but it is not the only requirement needed (Fox, 2007). These principles –transparency, participation and collaboration– are useless in their most practical form if the deepest and most intrinsic values, such as public duty, political commitment, legacy and honesty, are not assumed.

This access to information, the participatory processes that it involves and the openness of institutions in general are possible due to the existence of the internet, especially in terms of transparency, as it offers free access to millions of databases. This has prompted many institutions to promote access to information for sharing and monitoring (Davies & Bawa, 2012). However, transparency requires equal opportunities for people to access information (Brunswick et al, 2018).

Technological development has transformed the way politics are made and even decision making processes are influenced by Artificial Intelligence (Criado et al, 2020). Thus, information should not only be available through the internet, but data about how algorithms and AI affect policy should also be public. The transparency of the algorithms is essential to ensure control and accessibility to information. In addition, information about the private entities contracted to create these algorithms must be shared. It is

important to explain how decisions are made and the impact that the algorithms have on them (Criado et al, 2020)

«Algorithms are a set of rules or procedures to solve a problem or to find a solution for an administrative procedure. Then, transparency of algorithms (or algorithmic transparency) is a key factor for the understanding of their results and potential problems derived from the decisions made using autonomous systems»

(Criado et al, 2020: 453).

It is necessary to clarify that open data and transparency are not the same thing. Open data intends precisely to increase transparency and accountability by publication of raw data. The publication of raw data allows people to process that information, use it and reach their own conclusions (Yu & Robinson, 2012). However, transparency permits external actors to scrutinize and monitor an institution's information. It is a more philosophical concept that includes many more features (Cahlikova & Mobilard, 2019).

Open data enables civic innovation for citizens to use information and create software tools or content that address their concerns (Brunswicker et al, 2018). Due to this reason, data has to be reusable, without copyright restrictions, nor control mechanisms, nor patents (Meijer et al, 2014).

There is a fear of information overload caused by open datasets, but for Meijer et al (2014) what is truly dangerous is that this will lead to less valuable information being shared or parties considering what is or is not important to share.

Matheus and Janssen (2020) also point out that when data is opened up, the government loses control, so it can also result in a decline in confidence:

«Opening too much data without proper guiding mechanisms can only result in blurring the window and actually preventing the viewer from seeing what is happening inside the Government»

(Matheus & Janssen, 2020: 21).

Another danger of transparency is that it can be opaque and not imply true accountability. Therefore, the information must be clear, updated and its structure must be comprehensible:

«Opaque transparency refers to the dissemination of information that does not reveal how people actually behave in practice, while clear transparency involves using information-access policies and programs that do, in fact, reveal reliable information about human or organizational actions»

(Mayernik, 2017:2).

Transparency is now more necessary than ever. The pandemic has demonstrated that citizens have the right to access several databases, not only related to health issues. Moreover, this crisis has shown that data must be updated, that interests in information change, that there are issues that access to information laws do not address, and that transparency is not and should not be static.

2.2. Spanish and Portuguese transparency development

The availability of data on the Internet has recently been institutionalized in most Western democracies through access to information laws (Shepherd, 2015). These advances in the culture of transparency have occurred especially in Europe and the United States with the Obama Administration. Even many of these standards include the value of open data for commercial reuse or otherwise (Meijer et al, 2014).

This study, which focuses on the transparency of political organizations in Spain and Portugal, is even more necessary if we take into account that studies of the online communication strategies of political parties have usually been marginalized (Serra-Silva et al, 2018). We consider transparency as a part of this strategy. In fact, Fazendeiro and Razzuoli (2016) mentioned the need to explore the transparency of political parties in Portugal and Spain in their websites, with the aim of understanding their functioning and their de-institutionalization.

As mentioned above, party organizations from both countries hold very low levels of citizen trust (Fazendeiro & Razzuoli, 2016). Promoting a culture of transparency is therefore an important task for them.

In Spain, this culture of transparency is very scarce and is demonstrated by the recent approval of a law that regulates it, which is Law 19/2013 on transparency, access to public information and good governance. These regulations establish two levels of transparency: active and passive. Active transparency consists of the voluntary publication of data by

the obligated subjects on their web pages. On the other hand, passive transparency allows citizens to access data by making requests for information.

The Spanish law 19/2013 includes political parties as obligated subjects to comply with it. However, political organizations are only obliged to comply with part of the active transparency, but nothing in relation to the passive one.

In addition to this regulation, in Spain there is the Organic Law 8/2007, of July 4, on the financing of political parties and the Law 9/2017, of November 8, on Public Sector Contracts. The first reiterates some principles present in the transparency law and the obligation to publish on the web some data such as the audit report of the Court of Auditors, the balance sheet, the profit and loss account, the amount of the credits pending amortization, among others. With regard to the second one, this one obliges them to publish the contracting instructions.

Portugal, on the other hand, has Organic Law 2/2003 on Political Parties, which was reformed in 2018 and has a section devoted to the principle of transparency. Specifically, it obliges them to publish the statutes, the identity of the holders of the organs, the declarations of principles and programs, and the general activities. Furthermore, it also establishes the communication of these matters to the Constitutional Court, as well as the regulation of the funds of the political parties in the Law of Financing of the Political Parties and the Electoral Campaigns.

Both countries have laws that oblige political parties to publish some data on their websites. Both Spanish and Portuguese laws require little from political organizations, although the Portuguese law requires even less. Therefore, there is a need to explore not only their transparency, but also how they comply with the principles of participation and collaboration.

3. Method

To undertake this study, we carried out a quantitative analysis, with some qualitative aspects, of the websites of the main Portuguese and Spanish political parties. In this sense, we selected the five political parties with the largest number of representatives in the

Spanish Congress of Deputies¹ and in the Assembly of the Portuguese Republic. Thus, the organizations analyzed were the following:

Spanish Political Parties

Partido Socialista (PSOE)

Partido Popular (PP)

Vox

Unidas Podemos (UP)

Ciudadanos (Cs)

Portuguese Political Parties

Partido Socialista (PS)

Partido Social Democrata (PSD)

Bloco Esquerda

Partido Comunista Português (PCP)

CDS-Partido Popular (CDS-PP)

The methodology used was an analysis already used in the past to study Spanish political parties (Díez-Garrido, 2020), which we updated and transformed to adapt also to the analysis of Portuguese political organizations. This previous analysis had been designed from the ideas of 20 experts in a Delphi study. Therefore, it has the support of experts in the field. The methodology aims, as indicated in the theoretical framework, to study the values of the Open Government in the case of political parties. This article aims to answer the following research question:

Are Spanish and Portuguese political organizations open political parties?

We worked with two hypotheses:

H1: Political parties have a low level of openness

Previous studies and various transparency indexes such as those of International Transparency and Dyntra show signs of many improvements by the parties.

H2: Spanish political organizations will have a better level of openness than Portuguese ones

This hypothesis is based on the existence of a specific and more demanding rule -although somewhat scarce in the international context- in Spain regarding transparency and which obliges political parties to comply with it. Moreover, in a previous study by Fazendeiro

¹ In the Spanish case, we selected those parties that presented themselves at the national level, not among the nationalists, since the intention of this study was to analyze the state situation.

and Razzuoli (2016), the Spanish parties proved to be more transparent than the Portuguese, although the method was different and more than four years have passed since then.

Thus, we designed a method and adapted it to analyze the openness of political parties in Spain and Portugal on their websites. Thus, the methodology addresses three levels of openness: a) transparency; b) deliberation; c) decision making and collaboration.

Level a) Transparency

The study considers that the first step to political openness is its informative openness, so the basis of this analysis is the transparency of political parties. It was necessary to analyze, on the one hand, whether the organizations had passive transparency systems, that is, whether there were channels for requesting information. On the other hand, we analyzed their active publicity, which is the information published voluntarily by the political parties. This section had 82 indicators divided into the following categories

- Basic requirements of transparency: basic aspects present the Spanish and Portuguese legislation.
- Institutional information of the organizations.
- Procedures and internal organization of the political parties.
- Data related to their corporate communication and their media coverage.
- Accounts and economic information.

Some aspects of the open data published by the political parties were then assessed. In particular, we gave great importance to the existence of an advanced search engine on the website, the presence of a simple and understandable language, the accessibility of the platform and, above all, the publication of the data in reusable formats and the updating of the contents.

With respect to accountability, we valued the fact that the political parties offered on their web pages a scrutiny of their electoral program, as well as a summary of the proposals made in Parliament and in other regions, in addition to other aspects, such as the proper publication of economic information. We also appreciated when the parties mentioned their commitment to transparency.

Level b) Deliberation

The next step in the opening of political parties is deliberation, that is, the promotion of debate in the citizenry. In this study, we valued the fact that they mention this commitment in their statutes, as well as the existence of some norm for its practical regulation.

Secondly, we researched the existence of deliberative initiatives by political organizations, such as debate forums, platforms for proposals, chats with members of the party, virtual assistants that function with artificial intelligence, instant messaging dissemination channels, e-mail contact, and face-to-face events for debate, among others.

Level c) Decision making & Collaboration

The last step for opening is composed of two separate but similar concepts, such as decision-making and collaboration. In the first, citizens take part in the functioning of some aspects of the party, while in the second, they cooperate with the party and they work together.

As at the deliberative level, the analysis also took into account that the parties mentioned this in their statutes and that there was some kind of regulation of this participation.

- Level c1) Decision-making. In the first place, we analyzed whether there were mechanisms of internal democracy and, secondly, the development of some decision-making initiatives, such as citizen consultations, signature gathering, participation applications and other proposals that the parties could make.
- Level c2) Collaboration. At this last level, we value the promotion of collaborative initiatives, such as the elaboration of the electoral program, the sending of materials, fundraising, crowdsourcing, collaboration in electoral campaigns and social networks, social actions, and some face-to-face events, among others.

4. Empirical Findings

Level a) Transparency

As noted above, transparency is the first step in making political parties open. Without transparency, it is not possible to develop deliberation, decision-making, or collaboration. If political party openness were a ladder, transparency would be the first step.

However, political parties had many shortcomings with respect to their transparency, with an overall average of 43.98%, far below the desired level. We found important differences

between the Spanish political parties that hardly approved with 54.12%, and the Portuguese, with a scarce 33.93%

Thus, in the case of the Spanish political parties, Partido Socialista (64.42%) was the most transparent –also in the total computation–, followed by Podemos (61.05%), Partido Popular (54.39%) and Ciudadanos (50.66%). Vox was the only Spanish party to fail (39.61%).

The level of Portuguese political parties was low and only Partido Social Democrata (52.19%) passed. The rest obtained bad results: Partido Comunista (35.22%), Bloco Esquerda (32.11%), Partido Socialista from Portugal (29.34%) and CDS-PP (20.79%).

None of the political parties analyzed had a system of requests for information, nor any channel that resembles passive transparency, which should have response deadlines, as well as a simple, free and electronic system.

On the other hand, active publicity was more developed, and again the Spanish political parties (63.9%) achieved a better result than the Portuguese (37.44%). The political parties that voluntarily shared the most information were: PSOE (76.8%), Podemos (71.9%), Partido Popular (62.8%), Partido Social Democrata (60.9%) and Ciudadanos (60.9%). On the other side of the balance are Vox (46.9%), Bloco Esquerda (36.5%), PCP (35.3%), Partido Socialista from Portugal (30.4%) and CDS-PP (23.7%).

The section most developed by all the political parties was the institutional information, which gathers data on the party, followed by the basic demands of transparency. However, there was a notable difference between the Portuguese and Spanish parties in terms of party accounts. This was the section most developed by the Spanish and the least developed by the Portuguese, which can possibly be explained by the demanding Law 8/2007 on the financing of political parties in Spain.

Political parties must improve the information they publish on procedures and internal organization, as well as data on their corporate communication.

Below is a table with the results of the political parties in each active transparency section:

	Basic demands	Institutional data	Procedures & Organization	Corporate communication	Economic accounts	Active transparency

P. Socialista España	85,71%	71,42%	58,33%	76,47%	88,88%	76,83%
Partido Popular	64,28%	71,42%	33,33%	44,11%	94,44%	62,80%
VOX	42,85%	52,38%	16,66%	26,47%	83,33%	46,95%
Podemos	92,85%	71,42%	66,66%	47,05%	86%	71,95%
Ciudadanos	53,57%	62%	45,83%	41,17%	94,44%	60,98%
P. Socialista Portugal	25%	54,76%	25%	41,17%	0	30,49%
P. Social Demócrata	60,71%	66,66%	33,33%	55,88%	77,77%	60,98%
Bloco Esquerda	35,71%	57,14%	50%	41,17%	0	36,59%
P. Comunista Portugal	21,42%	66,66%	33,33%	47,05%	0	35,37%
CDS-PP	21,42%	57,14%	25%	8,82%	0	23,78%

Total Spain	67,85%	65,71%	44,16%	47,05%	89,44%	63,90%
Total Portugal	32,85%	60,47%	33,33%	38,82%	15,50%	37,44%
Total	50,35%	63,05%	38,75%	42,94%	52,50%	50,67%

It is not only necessary for political parties to publish data, but also the way in which they offer this information. Citizens must be able to find the information without difficulty, they must understand it and it must be up to date.

While almost all political parties had a search engine on their websites, these were too simple and most allowed only word searches. Therefore, Partido Popular in Spain stood out for having an advanced search engine that allowed not only to search by date, but also

by type of content (news, videos, documents, images), by subject (education, employment, family, etc.) and by location (Senate, Congress, Europe, etc.). They also had a venue search engine and a party member search engine.

Image: Partido Popular's search engine

The image shows a web interface for an advanced search engine titled "Búsqueda avanzada". It features a search bar labeled "Texto de búsqueda:" with a magnifying glass icon. Below it, there are checkboxes for "Tipo de contenido:" including "Noticias", "Videos", "Documentos", and "Imágenes", all of which are checked. To the right, there are date filters labeled "Fecha:" with "Desde:" and "Hasta:" input fields, each accompanied by a calendar icon. Further right, there are dropdown menus for "Dónde:" (set to "Toda la web") and "Tema:" (set to "Todos los temas"). At the bottom left is a "Buscar" button, and at the bottom right are two links: "Ir al buscador de personas" and "Ir al buscador de sedes", both with magnifying glass icons.

One of the most disappointing aspects of this analysis was the updating of the contents, especially in the case of Spanish organizations. Curiously, the Spanish Partido Socialista and Podemos, which published the most data, were the ones that had the most outdated information. In the case of Podemos, there was data that even belonged to 2018, so they were more than two years late. No Spanish party approved its update, while in Portugal only the Bloco Esquerda and the CDS-PP suspended, although the results of the rest were very tight.

In terms of understanding the contents, all the parties used simple language, although none had tools such as text boxes to expand information, which would have been very interesting. We can offer very interesting visualizations, especially in its economic information and also the Social Democratic Party of Portugal had some remarkable visualizations, for example, a chronology of the party's history that helps to make it more interesting.

Another very disappointing aspect was the accessibility of the contents, since the political parties hardly promote the reuse of their data, publishing excessive documents in PDF and very few in formats that facilitate recycling by citizens. The only political party that came close to this was Podemos, although it did not approve either.

Organizations are aware that the consumption of information on cell phones is growing without control, so all websites were adaptive. However, none was accessible or had accessibility modules for people with special abilities. In Spain, only Podemos and Ciudadanos offered information in other Spanish languages and the first one also in English, while in Portugal only the Communist Party did it.

Interestingly, although Portuguese parties shared less data, accountability was better than the Spanish. All Portuguese organizations made a summary of the proposals made in the Assembly of the Republic, categorized by type of initiative. In addition, there were more interesting elements: first, the Portuguese Socialist Party conducted a scrutiny of the previous electoral program. Secondly, the Communist Party, on the website of the coalition with which it presented itself, published an attractive assessment of its parliamentary activity and the progress of the initiatives proposed.

Regarding the commitment to transparency, only Spanish political parties showed it in their websites, which demonstrates their need to clean up their image to the citizens, trying to prove their effectiveness and honesty through a declaration of compromise with transparency.

Level b) Deliberation

The next step to transparency on that imaginary ladder is that of deliberation. This is less developed than transparency by most political parties. In fact, only the Portuguese PSD was advanced in this sense and was the only party to pass with 63.15%. With regard to the difference between countries, on this occasion the Portuguese were ahead, with an average of 41.05%, compared to 34.73% for the Spanish.

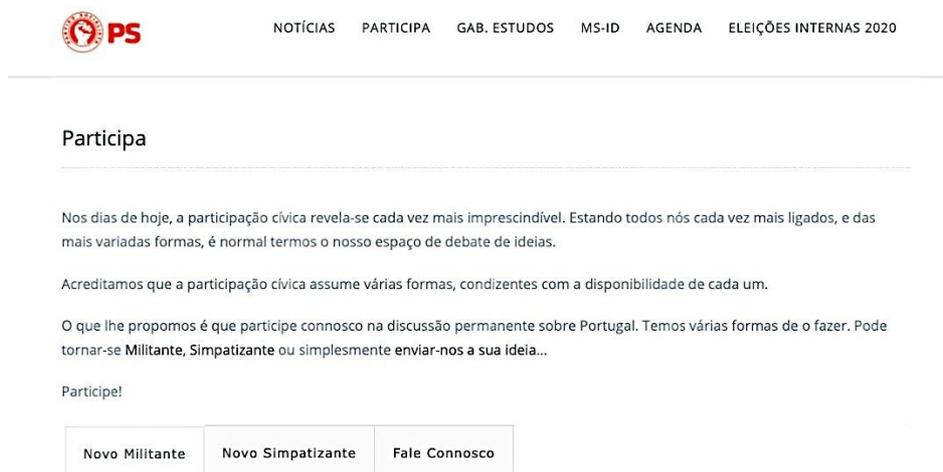
Thus, with the exception of the PSD, the rest of the parties suspended their level of deliberation and this was the result, in descending order: Podemos (47,36%), PSOE (44,70%), Portuguese Partido Socialista (42,10%), PCP (42,10%), Spanish Partido Popular (39,47%), Bloco Esquerda (34,21%), CDS-PP (23,68%), VOX (22,22%) and Ciudadanos (21,05%).

The mentions of deliberation and the commitment to encourage debate among citizens were more developed by the Portuguese parties –except for CDS-PP– than by the Spanish –only Podemos was advanced in this sense–. However, we detected a significant lack of regulation in both countries. In fact, one of VOX's regulatory standards states the following: «Deliberations will be held behind closed doors and will be conducted under absolute secrecy». Not surprisingly, this party was the second worst in terms of deliberation.

The deliberative initiatives proposed by the political parties were not particularly innovative. Thus, only the Portuguese Partido Socialista had chats with supporters. None of them had an advanced proposal platform, nor debate forums, nor chatbots or virtual

assistants, which would have put them in the technological vanguard. Only Podemos participated in platforms like Reddit and also in Osoigo, which is a portal where politicians answer questions from citizens. In addition, the Portuguese socialists had a channel on their website to send ideas, called Talk2Us ².

Image. Portuguese Partido Socialista's participation platform



They did develop some elements that have to do with their communication with the electorate, such as the option of sharing content and broadcast channels in instant messaging applications (e.g.: WhatsApp and Telegram). They all established some basic elements, such as a subscription channel or RSS and e-mail contact.

With respect to offline events, this is a difficult stage in history to hold political events due to the COVID pandemic, so all online events were taken into account to replace face-to-face ones. In this sense, Portuguese Partido Socialista and PSD were the ones which offered more, which held round tables, information days, assemblies and congresses.

Level c) Decision-making & Collaboration

Political parties must climb one last step up the ladder of openness: decision-making and collaboration. The commitment with this level was clearly questioned, as none of the political parties approved. The average of all organizations was 26.75% compliance.

The result of the Spanish organizations was slightly higher than that of the Portuguese, although both results were very negative (32% and 21.50%).

PSOE and Podemos were only parties that came close to passing this level, both with 45%. Next were Ciudadanos (30%), Portuguese Partido Socialista (30%), the PSD (25%),

² Source: <https://ps.pt/index.php/participe/#Talk2Us>.

Bloco Esquerda (22.50%), the Spanish PP (20%), VOX (20%), CDS-PP (17.50%) and the PCP (12.50%).

In Spain, the progressive parties (PSOE and Podemos) mentioned these concepts in a more advanced way in their statutes, while in Portugal this fact was more spread and developed among parties with different ideology, such as Partido Socialista, PSD and PCP. In addition, the Portuguese parties had more specific regulations on this type of processes.

This level has two parts, as mentioned above: decision-making and collaboration. With respect to the first, political organizations with progressive tendencies have more internal democratic processes than more conservative ones. In this case, the Spanish political parties did have more processes for choosing candidates, or at least they shared this information better than the Portuguese.

Decision-making scenario was dismal, as there were hardly any parties that carried out citizen consultations. Bloco Esquerda does have a mechanism for holding internal referendums³. Podemos once had a platform that allowed for consultations on proposals with sufficient support, but they changed this procedure and it no longer exists. In addition, no organization collected signatures or used digital participation applications.

Podemos had an extra initiative, the Vamos Channel (<https://vamos.podemos.info>), which aims to promote spaces for participation and collective action, although no post-2017 initiatives were found, so it was only partially valued in this article.

In the collaboration section, we found remarkable initiatives. We the collaboration of the parties with the citizens in the drafting of the electoral program as a very interesting issue in the methodology. Portuguese Partido Socialista pointed out on the website that its latest electoral program, for 2019, was the result of a broad debate⁴. For its part, Podemos offered its members the opportunity to accept or reject the electoral program. No other parties let citizens collaborate with them to write the program.

Interestingly, both socialist parties had suggestion boxes, where they receive ideas, proposals and/or criticism from citizens.

Most of the parties had channels to make economic donations, except for Portuguese Partido Socialista, which did not have any, and Bloco Esquerda, which only had one for

³ Source: <https://www.bloco.org/o-bloco/estatutos.html>

⁴ Source: <https://gabinetedestudos.ps.pt/index.php/2019/07/programa-eleitoral-do-ps-2019/>

a specific campaign. Regarding collaboration in electoral campaigns, Podemos and Bloco Esquerda –parties with similar ideologies– developed some initiatives.

Most Spanish parties encouraged the electorate to use hashtags or corporate elements in social media, such as Twitter, Facebook and Instagram. In contrast, no Portuguese organization did so, which draws attention and reflects the importance that Spanish parties attach to these platforms.

Political parties' projects to promote social action were also considered. Thus, the PSOE had an Ecological Transformation Plan promoted with contributions from citizens; Podemos promoted its IMPULSA program, with which they dedicate the organization's surplus public funds to social projects; Ciudadanos' youth section also publicized some of the volunteer actions they carry out (with organizations such as the Red Cross or the Spanish Federation of Food Banks).

No organization developed other interesting proposals such as sending materials, surveys, crowdsourcing, wiki tools, nor did they publicize citizen tools that have reused party data.

Regarding other extra initiatives developed by the political parties, we highlight the Vox Volunteer Network (although they did not specify the type of volunteer work) and a section in which the PSOE promotes employment in the party.

5. Conclusion & Discussion

The aim of this article was to respond the following question:

Are Spanish and Portuguese political organizations open political parties?

No. They are not and they are far from being open. It is true that there are three political parties that obtained a score above 50%, which were the PSOE, with 59.44%, Podemos (57.25%) and the PSD (50%). However, none of these organizations approved the three levels of openness -a) Transparency, b) Deliberation and c) Decision-making and Collaboration-, which is considered an indispensable requirement to be open. It is not enough to have one highly developed pillar and forget the rest, as is the case with the PSOE with transparency and in the case of the PSD with deliberation. Therefore, not even these parties, with relatively good results, were open.

In addition, the rest of the political parties obtained very disappointing results, as can be seen in the following table, which shows the results of each party:

Table. Development of each level of openness of the political parties

Spain	PSOE	Partido Popular	VOX	Podemos	Ciudadanos
Transparency	64,42%	54,39%	39,61%	61,05%	50,66%
Deliberation	44,70%	39,47%	22,22%	47,36%	21,05%
Decision-Making & Collaboration	45,00%	20,00%	20%	45%	30,00%
Total	59,44%	48,04%	34,74%	57,25%	44,28%

Portugal	Partido Socialista	P. Social Democrata	Bloco De Esquerda	PCP	CDS-PP
Transparency	29,34%	52,19%	32,11%	35,22%	20,79%
Deliberation	42,10%	63,15%	34,21%	42,10%	23,68%
Decision-Making & Collaboration	30%	25%	22,50%	12,50%	17,50%
Total	31,01%	50,00%	31,11%	33,10%	20,72%

H1: Political parties have a low level of openness

The first hypothesis is fulfilled. As just noted, the political parties in Spain and Portugal are not open. In this line, the most developed level of openness was that of transparency, which is considered the most basic and essential. Even so, the average of all parties in terms of transparency was far below the desirable level, with 43.98% compliance.

There were many aspects that need to be improved:

- No party has organized, free, electronic systems of information requests (passive transparency).
- Updating is very scarce. Information must be kept up to date, especially if disinformation is to be combated.
- Political parties do not share data in an accessible and reusable way.

The worst developed levels were deliberation, with an average of 37.89%, and decision making and collaboration, with 26.75%. This shows the scarce interest of political parties

in promoting debate among the electorate, allowing internal processes to also take into account supporters and co-creating different initiatives with citizens.

H2: Spanish political organizations will have a better level of openness than Portuguese ones

The second hypothesis is also fulfilled. The result of the Spanish organizations was superior to the Portuguese, although both were negative. Below are the averages for each country and the total.

Table. Results of the political parties in each country.

	Spanish Political Parties	Portuguese Political Parties	Total
Transparency	54,12%	33,93%	43,98%
Deliberation	34,73%	41,05%	37,89%
Decision-Making & Collaboration	32,00%	21,50%	26,75%
Total	48,76%	33,19%	40,97%

As can be seen in the table, only the level of transparency of the Spanish political parties was approved, with a scarce 54.12%. However, deliberation and decision making were very negative (34.73% and 32%). The Portuguese achieved their best result in the second level, deliberation, with 41.05%. Transparency and decision-making and collaboration had disastrous results, with 33.93% and 21.50%, respectively.

Why does it happen? Although it has not been proven, in this article we believe that the serious cases of corruption and the terrible lack of confidence in political parties in Spain have resulted in the approval of regulations related to the subject matter of this study. Thus, the Law 19/2013 on transparency and the Law 8/2007 on the financing of political parties were approved. In the analysis carried out, we observe that the aspects dealt with in these norms were the most developed by the Spanish political parties in their websites.

We think that the very low level of confidence that exists in Spain, which is worse than in Portugal, has led to the approved rules being more demanding precisely in order to fight against this citizen disaffection and to put an end to corruption. In fact, the preambles of these laws mention this situation. Therefore, not only are the rules more demanding, but political parties are seeking to improve their image through the Internet.

On the other hand, this is not the case in Portugal, where the Law on Political Parties is much less strict. This may have caused political parties to publish less content on their websites.

The results of the article do not show great differences between different ideologies. While in Spain the left-wing parties were more open, in a right-wing party *won* in Portugal. Hence, ideology is not a decisive element for a political party to be more open. It is, therefore, related to attitude, since it is not enough to comply with the rules, but it is an idea that the parties must assume as a way of working and relating to the citizenry, with activities based on transparency, participation and collaboration.

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