

# **EUI WORKING PAPERS**

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**PREFERENCE VOTING AND  
INTRA-PARTY COMPETITION  
IN EURO-ELECTIONS  
PROSPECTS FOR HARMONIZATION**

by

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**EUROPEAN POLICY UNIT**

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## The European Policy Unit

The European Policy Unit at the European University Institute was created to further three main goals. First, to continue the development of the European University Institute as a forum for critical discussion of key items on the Community agenda. Second, to enhance the documentation available to scholars of European affairs. Third, to sponsor individual research projects on topics of current interest to the European Communities. Both as in-depth background studies and as policy analyses in their own right, these projects should prove valuable to Community policy-making.

Further information about the work of the European Policy Unit can be obtained from the Director, at the European University Institute in Florence.

One of the main stumbling blocks in the negotiations concerning the establishment of uniform election procedures for the European Parliament was and remains the principle of proportional representation. It has often been suggested that a preference voting mechanism should be adopted in order to provide an explicit link between the will of the electorate and the choice of representatives to the EP. Yet such a mechanism has had rather a bad press in some Member States. To supply a critical datum in the current debate, Dr. Bardi conducted a study of the role preference voting plays in countries with proportional representation. Empirical findings based on the data collected by several experts in the Community are used to challenge the alleged effects of preference voting and to test its effectiveness in the countries where it is already allowed.



## I. STUDY DESCRIPTION

### Background

Article 138, paragraph 3, of the The Treaty of Rome lays upon the European Parliament the obligation to:

"draw up proposals for elections by direct universal suffrage in accordance with a uniform procedure in all member states" (emphasis added)

Although the European Parliament has been elected by direct universal suffrage since 1979, there is still only a hope that a uniform electoral procedure will be adopted for the 1989 election, over three decades after the signing of the Treaty.

The European Parliament had indeed adopted in March 1982 a Draft Act on a uniform electoral procedure by 158 votes to 77, with 27 abstentions (1). The Draft Act was the result of two and a half years of heated debates in the Political Affairs Committee of the Parliament. In the end, the desires of a majority within the Parliament (Christian Democrats, Liberals, Socialists) to introduce a system of proportional representation (PR) prevailed. A consistent number of MEPs, mostly from Britain, however, denounced the ill effects of having single national lists of candidates.

Critics of national list PR argued that this procedure would to a large extent leave all decisions concerning MEP recruitment to the party apparatuses. By thus short-circuiting the direct relationship between electors and their MEPs, it was feared that use of national lists would inhibit mobilisation of the electorate, a frightening prospect given the very low turnout in European elections, and nullify the principle of individual accountability. As a response to these criticisms, the Draft Act provided for the creation of regional constituencies and the option of an intra-party preference vote (2). Voters would be allowed to cast votes for individual candidates listed on the party slate, with the preferences they expressed determining which candidates eventually would be elected.

Shortly after the adoption of the Draft Act by the European Parliament, the Council of Ministers set up a working party of national officials to consider the question. It soon became evident that no decision could be reached if the unanimity principle required by Council decision-making was to be respected. The main stumbling block was still the PR principle. As a result, the Council decided to defer the adoption of a uniform electoral system until the 1989 elections.

The Political Affairs committee of the current European Parliament took up the matter immediately after taking



office in 1984. The committee's revised Draft Act, dated March 22, 1985, was substantially similar to the 1982 draft. An opinion of the Legal Affairs committee was also attached to the new Draft Act. In this opinion, the Legal Affairs Committee expressed the view that if a single member constituency PR system (such as the one adopted for the Italian Senate) were not to be introduced "it would be necessary to retain the preference mechanism, in order to provide the explicit link between the will of the electorate and the choice of representatives to the European Parliament. This would be more difficult with blocked lists or if preference voting were abolished" (emphasis in original).

As the next step in the decisional procedure was unfolding in the Council of Ministers, there seemed to be no question that a PR system would eventually be adopted and that the Italian Senate model did not enjoy the sympathies of most national governments. Preference voting mechanisms thus appeared to be the only technical device that would potentially permit the enforcement of individual accountability in a PR system and therefore favour the development of consensus in the working group of the Council of Ministers.

Unfortunately, the potential advantages of preference voting have never been clearly understood, especially in

London. To make matters worse, preference voting has recently had a bad press, mostly as a result of the current Italian debate on institutional reform. preference voting is depicted as one of the factors most favouring factionalism and clientelism in the Italian political system. This view has no doubt contributed to the growing consensus on the desirability of the elimination of preference voting in the Italian electoral system.

The striking feature of the Italian debate, which is being echoed at the European level, is the totally impressionistic nature of the arguments produced against preference voting. As the itinerary of the European electoral law harmonisation proposal is approaching its final and decisive stages, it is painfully clear that not enough is known, especially in comparative terms, about the political consequences of preference voting, one of the potential features that are most likely to favour the reaching of a satisfactory compromise over a unified electoral system.

#### Research questions

Recent research on preference voting, mostly based on Italian national electoral data, but also supported by some



comparative findings, has produced the following conclusions

(3):

1) on the possible negative effects of preference voting:

a) there seems to be no causal relationship between preference voting and party factionalism and/or clientelism;

2) on the possible positive effects of preference voting:

b) preference voting seems to provide an incentive for voter mobilisation;

c) preference voting seems to permit the enforcement of individual accountability even in PR party-list systems.

Item c) implies a normative judgement on the subject of accountability. Some may have a preference for collective accountability to be enforced through the electorate's control over the party as a whole. It is considered here as a positive factor in the context of the debate on European electoral harmonisation.

It seems evident that if results such as these could be shown to be generally applicable, most of the overt

arguments against PR could be defeated by the adoption of preference voting. The purpose of this project is to study preference voting in comparative perspective, with particular reference to elections of the European Parliament.

Preference voting stricto sensu, that is allowing voters to cast a preference for candidates running on a party list, is already included in the European electoral legislation of Belgium, Denmark, Italy and the Netherlands, whilst intra-party choice mechanisms also exist in Ireland (single transferrable vote), and Luxembourg (panachage). Although presenting very evident technical differences, all six electoral systems potentially allow individual accountability and proportional representation to coexist.

Whilst preference voting generally has no direct effect on the proportionality of representation (4), the degree of its effectiveness has a great impact on an electoral system's potential to enforce individual accountability. Only if an incumbent MEP has reason to fear for a possible withdrawal of personal support on the part of the electorate, especially at times of growing overall support for that incumbent's party, must he or she feel individually accountable.



In practice, in a PR system with preference voting an incumbent could face the following outcomes:

- a) reelection;
- b) defeat due to his/her party's loss of electoral support (inter-partisan defeat);
- c) defeat due to his/her own loss of personal preference votes (intra-partisan defeat).

Whilst the first of these three possible outcomes is intuitively understood, we can distinguish between inter-partisan and intra-partisan defeat as follows:

- 1) a defeated incumbent suffers an inter-partisan defeat if no new candidate in his/her party list is elected in his/her constituency; although preference voting may still play a crucial role in determining which incumbent is defeated, the defeat of some incumbent is dictated by the distribution of votes among the parties;
- 2) a defeated incumbent suffers an intra-partisan defeat if he/she is replaced by a new candidate from his/her party list in that constituency;
- 3) if fewer new candidates in a given list are elected than incumbents are defeated in one

constituency, those defeated incumbents who would have been elected had their parties not lost some seats, suffer an inter-partisan defeat, all the other defeated incumbents suffer an intra-partisan defeat.

The relative incidence of intra-partisan vis-à-vis inter-partisan defeats gives a measure of preference voting effectiveness in a given system. Another measure of preference voting effectiveness is given by the ability of voters to alter the rank order of candidates as listed by the various parties. Both measures of preference voting effectiveness will be assessed in the course of analysis.

A fourth possible outcome, which is typical of rigid list PR systems, but one that can also occur in countries such as Belgium and the Netherlands where PV effectiveness thresholds are very high, is list order based intra-partisan defeat. Some incumbents are occasionally attributed list positions which are lower than some new candidates. Given the transfer of surplus votes down the list, such incumbents will be reelected only if their parties win enough seats to accommodate them, after the higher ranked new candidates have already been attributed seats. Otherwise they suffer an intra-partisan defeat. This type of defeat has very different implications from PV based intra-partisan defeats and cannot be considered an indicator of PV effectiveness.



Parties have a very good idea of how many seats they are likely to win and by placing incumbents lower on the list, they single-handedly determine their defeats.

The question of voter mobilisation is particularly relevant to the incidence of preference voting, and since in some systems (eg. the Netherlands, Belgium, Luxembourg) the proportion of voters choosing to cast preference votes as well as the relative numbers voting for each candidate contributes to determining the outcome, it is indirectly relevant to the effectiveness of preference voting as well. Are voters of notoriously disciplined parties more or less inclined to cast preference votes? Are voters of clientelistic or factionalised parties more likely to cast preference votes? Does personal competition among candidates for intra-party preference support lead to greater mobilisation of voters for their parties as well? Are especially prominent candidates, or candidates with ties to important interest groups able to attract exceptional numbers of preference votes? (And are they more able to deliver additional votes to their parties in systems with preference voting?) Although the data currently available allow only limited conclusions on most of these points, they remain important questions for informed speculation and future research.

## II. PREFERENCE VOTING INCIDENCE IN THE 1984 ELECTIONS OF THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT

### Overall incidence in five countries

Analysis in this section will be limited to five of the countries considered in our study as all votes cast in Irish European Parliament elections are by definition preference votes for individual candidates. Table 1 reports the incidence of preference voting in European Parliament elections in the other five countries (Belgium, Denmark, Italy, Luxembourg, Netherlands). For three of these countries comparisons with the last general elections are offered. Percentages in Table 1 describe the proportion of preference votes actually cast by voters relatively to the number of preference votes that theoretically could have been cast. Such theoretical figures are obtained by multiplying the number of preference votes available to each voter (usually 1) by the number of voters. In most cases (with the exception of 4 out of 5 Italian constituencies, where voters were allowed to cast more than one preference vote), such percentages correspond to the number of voters who did cast preference votes.



TABLE I  
1984 European Parliament elections - Percentages of possible preference votes cast for political parties by country

Countries - Parties	Belgium		Denmark		Italy		Luxembourg		Netherlands			
	1984	1981	1984	NA	1984	1983	1984	NA	1984	1982		
Communists	PCB KPB	28.6 31.1	SF	37.1	PCI	25.0	25.0	PC	24.4			
Socialists	PS SP	59.9 59.9	45.7	Soc. Den. 43.0	PSI PSDI	32.2	31.1	POSL/ LSAP	29.4	Pvd.A	16.7 11.2	
EPE	PSC CUP	59.6 43.0	59.2	CD	90.0	DC	37.3	36.2	PCS/ CSU	39.3	CDA	11.3 0.3
ED				KF	74.4							
European Liberals	PRL PVV	58.7 41.6	51.3	V	66.7	PRI/PLI	28.4		PD/DP	46.2	VVD	25.9 5.6
DR						MSI	37.8	26.4				
RAITHROW-IND	AGALEU	22.8	23.0	FB	61.1	DP	16.7			Green/Red	30.2 12.8	35.3 9.2
	VU	55.2	45.6			P. RAD.	35.2			Protest.	22.2	6.7 3.1
	ECOLO-V	24.6										0.3

Preference voting incidence varies considerably among parties and from country to country. In the 1984 elections the highest scores were registered for two Danish parties, the Center-democrats (CD) with 90% and the Conservatives (KE) with 74.4% respectively, whilst two Dutch parties had the lowest scores: the CDA (11.3%) and the PvdA (16.7%), the same score as the Italian DP. The peculiarities of the individual electoral laws, however, make comparisons across countries very difficult and misleading.

In the Netherlands, a simple party list vote is formally cast by voting for the first candidate on that party's list. Hence it is impossible to distinguish party votes from votes expressing on individual preference for the first candidate on the list. In this analysis only votes cast for candidates other than the head of the list have been counted as preference votes. This obviously makes Dutch preference voting incidence data not comparable with other countries' (5). Except in the Italian Islands constituency (see Table 4 for a breakdown of Italian constituencies), where voters were allowed to cast a single preference vote, Italian European Parliament election data is for the proportion of possible preference votes, not for the voters using the preference system (the same is true of all Italian national election data) (6). This obviously poses another unsurmountable problem of data comparability. These and



other similar problems discouraged the consideration of overall preference voting incidence figures by country.

The existence of certain common relationships can however be observed by examining data at levels of aggregation lower than country (i.e. party or, when possible, constituency) and by comparing European Parliament elections to national elections. Table 1 offers comparisons between the 1984 European elections and the most recent general elections in three countries, Belgium, Italy and the Netherlands. Limiting our attention to those parties for which exactly comparable data is available, fifteen dyads comparing for the same parties preference voting incidence in European elections and national elections can be observed (8 in Belgium, 4 in Italy, and 3 in the Netherlands). Of these, 10 indicate higher preference voting incidence in European elections than in national elections, as opposed to only 2 dyads reflecting the existence of the inverse relationship. In 3 cases the difference was 1% or less and is to be considered insignificant.

#### Personality factors

Certainly single country factors can account at least partially for the greater incidence of preference voting in European elections than in national elections. In the Netherlands, for instance, there is a tendency on the part

of political parties to give the first position to relatively unknown candidates in European elections, leading to a greater spread than in national elections of votes among other candidates (which, according to our operationalization, are then counted as effective preference votes). This is especially illustrated by the case of E.H.T.M. Nijpels. Mr Nijpels was the leader of his party (VVD), but because he had no intention of serving in the European Parliament was nominated in last position on its list. Nonetheless, he obtained 102,500 preference votes, equal to 10.2% of the party's total vote and, as such, accounting for over half of the difference registered for the party between the 1982 Tweede Kamer election and the 1984 election of the European Parliament.

Despite electoral law differences, "personality" factors seem to have an impact in Denmark, Italy and Belgium as well. The most outstanding case is probably represented by Erhard Jacobsen who obtained 88.4% of all preference votes cast for candidates from his party, the Danish CD, the party that obtained with 90% the highest preference voting incidence score! A number of other prominent Danish candidates, such as conservatives Paul Møller and Claus Toksvig, and anti-EEC Else Hammerich also obtained very high scores. Such cases can find an explanation in the fact that constituencies in European elections are very large. As indicated by research carried out prior to this project in



Italy, the smaller number of candidates and lists to be distributed over the national territory in European elections (81 MEPs to be elected in 5 constituencies, as opposed to 630 deputies to be elected in 32 constituencies) allows greater concentration than usual of outstanding candidates, while at the same time permitting the presentation of such candidates even in areas that in national elections represent rather marginal constituencies, where secondary candidates are usually nominated. Although evidence of an importance of personalities in favouring higher preference voting incidence in European elections exists for most Italian parties, the most interesting case might be the one provided by the PCI in the Central constituency in 1979 (very similar figures were observed in 1984). For the first time Communist voters in the "red" belt covering Tuscany, Umbria and the Marches, who normally are among the least enthusiastic users of preference votes, were able to vote for party secretary Enrico Berlinguer, who obtained a number of preference votes (more than 830.000) equal to 36.8% of his party's voters. One week earlier, in the national elections, PCI head of list candidates had averaged a number of preference votes equal to about 17% of PCI votes in the constituencies making up Central Italy, with a minimum of 6.3% in the Florence-Pistoia constituency, and a maximum of 24.7% and 32.2%, secured in Rome and Aquila respectively, again by Berlinguer, elected in both constituencies (7).

Finally, there are some indications that personality factors might contribute to explain preference voting incidence differentials between national elections and European elections in Belgium. The highest such differentials were registered in 1984 for the PS in the Walloon constituency and for the SP in the Flemish constituency (about 14% and 13% respectively). In the Walloon constituency a non-incumbent independent candidate, J. Happart, a very well known personality, and a symbol of Walloon ethnicity obtained over half (about 235.000) of all preference votes cast for candidates on the PS list. Even more strikingly, in the Flemish constituency, K. Van Miert, party president and incumbent MEP, obtained over 84% of all preference votes cast for candidates on the SP list. Similarly to what has been observed about Italian PCI electors, a much greater number of Belgian Socialist electors were offered an opportunity to vote in European elections for at least one very prominent candidate and took advantage of such an opportunity. As could be expected, preference vote dispersion over the provinces making up the two constituencies was greatest for Happart and Van Miert of all PS and SP candidates respectively (8).

#### Geographical factors

This consideration introduces another possible explanation for the higher incidence in European elections



with single national or otherwise very large constituencies than in the national elections with a much higher number of constituencies (18 for the Netherlands, 30 for Belgium, 32 for Italy). With very large or single national constituencies, regional loyalties can only be expressed through intra-party preferences, whereas with more numerous constituencies parties can cater to such loyalties through regional variations in their lists. Some evidence in support of this speculation is provided by the fact that candidates, as has been observed for the Netherlands, tend to obtain more preferences in the electoral subdistricts in which they live. The phenomenon seems to be most evident in districts including major cities and in the Southern province of Limburg (9). The local implantation of European Parliamentary candidates seems to be even more generalized in Belgium. Table 2 divides the 120 candidates of the parties that obtained seats in either 1979 or 1984, on the basis of the concentration or dispersion of the preference votes they obtained in the 1984 European elections.

TABLE 2

Geographical concentration or dispersion of preference votes for candidates in the 1984 European Parliament elections in Belgium, by political party

	PS	PRL	PSC	FDf/CFE	VU	PVV	CVP	SP	AGALEV	ECOLO-V	TOTAL
A: Dispersion	1	1	3	5	2	2	3	5	12	10	44
B: Concentration in one province with penetration in other provinces	5	6	3	1	6	4	3	3	1	1	33
C: Concentration in one province	5	4	5	5	5	7	7	5	0	0	43

Source: Gérard et al, op. cit. (our elaboration).

Candidates were included in row A if they received less than 50% of their preference votes in all provinces. They were included in row B if they obtained between 50% and 75% of their preferences in only one province and obtained 10% of their votes in respectively at least two more provinces. They were included in row C if they obtained more than 75% of their votes in only one province.



Almost two thirds of the candidates (76 out of 120) obtained a majority of their preference votes in only one province, whilst over one third of these received the near totality of their preference votes in only one province. These results are even more striking if one excludes the two lists of ecologists (ECOLO-V and AGALEV). Support for candidates from these rather unconventional parties is fairly evenly distributed within the two constituencies and jointly they make up for more than half of the candidates in row 1. Limiting ourselves to the consideration of candidates on the eight more traditional lists, (representing almost 90% of the electorate and having over 90% of the seats) we can see that over 75% of the candidates (74 out of 96) obtained a concentration of preference votes in only one province. Most notably of the 22 who did obtain a dispersion of preference votes over at least four provinces only 3 obtained less than one third of their preferences in the province in which they were most popular (10).

TABLE 3

Concentration or dispersion of preference votes for candidates in the 1984 European Parliament elections in Belgium by electoral outcome\*

	Elected according to list order	Elected out of list order	Not elected
A	11 (9)	0 (0)	33 (13)
B	10 (10)	0 (0)	23 (21)
C	2 (2)	1 (1)	40 (40)

Source: Gérard et al, op.cit., (our elaboration).

Figures in parenthesis are obtained by deducting ECOLO-U and AGALE candidates.



Things look very different if one considers those candidates who were eventually elected in 1984. Although 10 elected candidates obtained a concentration of preferences in one province with a sizeable penetration in other provinces, only three candidates who became MEPs had their personal following almost exclusively concentrated in one province. Almost half (11 out of 24), on the other hand, saw a dispersion of their preference votes over the five provinces.

As we shall see, preference voting effectiveness in Belgian elections is almost nil, and the type of implantation of candidates probably has very little to do with their degree of success in the actual election. But it may have an influence on the position they end up obtaining on their lists. The near totality of candidates eventually elected according to list order (21 out of 23) have some significant support in provinces other than their own. The preference votes of more than half of these (11/21) present a marked degree of dispersion over the five provinces. By contrast, proportions are very different for non elected candidates. If, again, we limit our attention to those parties that are more established in the Belgian political tradition, they are almost reversed, with more than half of non elected candidates (40/74) obtaining a significant number of personal preferences in only one province.

It is impossible to establish a causal link between the two phenomena. If it is quite acceptable that political parties may prefer to place high on their lists those candidates who are perceived to have a broad appeal constituency-wide, the opposite could also be true and some highly ranked candidates may receive a high number of preference votes partly because of their position. Previous research done in Italian national elections shows that privileged positions on the party slate result in preference vote advantages which are certainly not due to particular regional loyalties.

Parties on the other hand may be very well aware of the importance of regional loyalties for the overall appeal of their lists. This could explain the inclusion, with positions below the number of the seats the party expects to win in that constituency, of candidates whose support is concentrated in a limited geographical area. Undecided electors might end up choosing a party solely on the grounds that a particularly appealing candidate is on that list, regardless of his/her position. A partial confirmation of this hypothesis is provided by the only deviant case in the 1984 European Parliament election in Belgium. R. Nols, a national parliamentarian with a strong local constituency, was nominated as an independent on the PRL list. Like E.H.T.M. Nijpels he had no intention to serve in the European Parliament (after election he indeed opted for his



national and communal mandates), and his nomination in last position simply had the declared aim of attracting votes for the party list. He was indeed very successful, obtaining almost 93.000 preferences (17.2% of his party's total vote). A huge majority of these (82.8%) were concentrated in Brabant.

#### Party factions and joint lists

One fairly general observation that can be made on Table 1 is that, with the possible exception of the Netherlands, more preference votes tend to be cast for parties of the Right and Center than for parties of the Left. This confirms the findings of research carried out in the past in Italian parliamentary elections. In particular, striking differences were observed between the behaviour of supporters of Italy's two largest parties, the DC and the PCI, with DC electors being much more inclined to cast preference votes than their PCI counterparts. This phenomenon was explained with two negatively perceived attributes of the DC: traditionalism (and its corollary, clientelism) and factionalism. No doubt the importance attributed to these two factors in determining the level of preference voting is at the roots of the arguments in favour of the abolition of preference voting in Italian national elections.

Preference voting, like DC predominance, has its deepest roots in the South and in the Islands, regions where the traditional culture and patronage phenomena are more diffused. Hence the inference that clientelistic practices may indeed be responsible for the higher incidence of preference voting in the South and most notably for the DC. The importance of clientelism in building up a strong personal following is also well known to students of Irish Dail elections. This view is, however, "most clearly challenged in European competitions by the enormous constituencies, and for the incumbent MEP the lack of clientelist or localist benefits from the distant European Assembly" (11). Similar considerations do not seem to apply to the Italian case since preference voting incidence was for the DC almost the same in the 1984 European Parliament elections (actually slightly higher) as in the previous national elections. What is more interesting, however, is that the primacy of DC preferences in the South and the Islands is missing in the 1984 European elections. Table 4 shows that in the South, both the PSI and PSDI obtained higher percentages of preference votes than the DC.



TABLE 4

1984 European Parliament elections and 1983 Chamber of Deputies elections percentages of possible preference votes cast for political parties by constituency in Italy

	NW		NE		C		S		ISLANDS	
	EP	83	EP	83	EP	83	EP	83	EP	83
PCI	19.1	12.1	15.4	11.2	25.2	17.4	46.4	37.2	49.7	23.4
PSI	21.8	18.3	19.5	13.5	32.3	28.5	58.6	51.4	63.6	46.3
PSDI	16.2	NA	15.7	NA	35.6	NA	63.1	NA	74.4	NA
DC	26.9	23.8	28.9	22.8	38.8	35.4	57.2	52.1	62.4	52.3
PRI/PLI	24.3	NA	22.6	NA	26.1	NA	51.3	NA	73.0	NA
MSI	19.7	11.4	31.1	9.6	30.6	25.6	56.6	41.0	59.4	30.7
DP	13.0	NA	11.9	NA	16.3	NA	39.9	NA	35.6	NA
P. RAD	25.9	NA	30.2	NA	37.9	NA	50.0	NA	68.5	NA

In the Islands DC candidates were also less successful in eliciting personal electoral support than their counterparts running for the Radical party and for the PRI/PLI alliance. If the PSI and the PSDI have often been accused, like the DC, of keeping patron-client relationships with the electorate, the opposite has always been affirmed about the PRI and above all the Radical party. While it is probable that in the South and Islands the personalist aspects of political culture in general favour high preference vote rates, the fact that these phenomena are recorded for many political parties prevents the drawing of further consequences, particularly on the effects of clientelism, as had been done in the past for the DC.

As already pointed out, high preference voting incidence for the DC has been explained in other ways. The DC's crucial power position has never been challenged in post-war Italy for political and institutional reasons. It can thus be deduced that the real fight for power largely takes place within the DC itself. It has been argued elsewhere that preference based intraparty competitions are, in many respects, the functional equivalent of US primary elections. Similarly to what happens in American primaries contested among candidates whose party is dominant in that particular area, the crucial importance of the competition among DC candidates could "lead to greater voter interest and participation in the intra-party preference poll" (12).



As a consequence of this, and given that the Italian electoral system allows voters to cast multiple preference votes, groups of DC candidates might tend to form alliances in which each candidate would encourage his own voters to support his allies, obviously expecting a return of the favour. In other words, such factions would perform in the intra-party election, determined by personal preferences, many of the functions performed by the parties themselves in the general election. The relationship between the existence of strong and clearly identifiable intra-party factions and high preference voting rates has always been substantiated by pointing out that whenever two or more parties presented joint lists in Italian national elections, preference voting sprang up and went down again in the first election after the demise of the alliance.

No doubt evidence of a relationship between higher preference voting incidence and the presence of joint lists seems to be confirmed by at least one case in the 1984 election. Table 1 shows overall increases for preference voting rates obtained by the Red-Green alliance and by the Protestant coalition in the 1984 European Parliament elections in the Netherlands compared to the previous national elections. In only one case, that of the PSP, 1982 single party percentages were higher than 1984 coalition percentages. Even allowing for the general "Euro-election effect" we have already seen (but increases for all the

parties in the two coalitions were registered with respect to the 1979 European elections as well), this phenomenon is still quite remarkable, especially considering that it concerns parties whose electors are not normally inclined to challenge party choices through the use of preference votes. Actually, one could also argue that voter "indiscipline" manifested with regard to multi-party list choices can be considered a sign of tight single party discipline. Our interest here, however, is not to assess the degree of voter discipline, but to analyze the effect of multi-party/faction lists on the incidence of preference voting. To such an extent we feel authorized to consider a rise in preference voting levels as a sign of "indiscipline".

Naturally voter "indiscipline" in the Netherlands has different implications and consequences than in Italy. Since preference votes are the sole determinants of who gets elected on a given list, individual parties and intra-party factions may have a real interest in eliciting individual preference votes. Some analysts would even say that the latter find the main reason for their existence precisely in the search for preference votes. But in the Netherlands the power of list order in determining the election of individual candidates is overwhelming. Voters know that, with very few exceptions (but in such cases elected candidates generally resign) their preference votes only have a symbolic value. In the case of the Red-Green cartel and of the Protestant



coalition, the only aim in 1984 was to reach the 4% threshold. A possible explanation for the sharp increase of preference votes in 1984 is that electors wanted their respective electoral weights to be known (13).

This still confirms the importance of the relationship between higher preference voting rates and the existence of factions (or individual parties) within a list, but offers new suggestions as to the direction of causality within the relationship. Whereas, somewhat acritically, Italian analysts had always assumed that the existence of effective preference voting in the electoral system of that country was an important determinant of intra-party factionalism, the Dutch case rather seems to indicate that factionalized and joint lists, especially if characterized by heterogeneous programmes and strategies, may be an important factor in explaining high preference voting incidence.

The existence of a causal link between higher preference rates and intra-party factionalism is further challenged by another case, paradoxically registered in the 1984 European Parliament elections in Italy, when discordant figures were registered for the PRI/PLI joint list. Whilst in the South and Islands, as was expected on the basis of previous experience, slight increases in the rate of preference voting over the 1979 averages between the two parties' individual scores were recorded, in the other three

constituencies there were instead rather sharp decreases (14). This may partly be attributed to a general decrease in the use of preferences from 1979, in the light of which a non-increase for the joint list might even have been regarded as normal; but the size of the decrease (between 7 and 8%) in the other three constituencies removes further credibility from the hypothesis of a preference vote necessarily associated with list-factionalism, be it party or faction related, and calls for other explanatory factors.

In the 1984 elections, the electoral agreement between the PRI and PLI was not simply dictated by electoral tactics, but it rested on a solid common programme which at the time was perceived as a first step towards the fusion of the two parties. Especially in the North, where the two parties have their historical roots, the agreement was especially clear and detailed even on which candidates should eventually be elected. Lists were in fact characterized by the absence of outstanding candidates beyond the number of seats the alliance expected to win (15). The lower number of preferences secured by the list than in similar cases might thus be due not only to the absence of candidates capable of attracting preference votes for their personalities, but also to the greater tranquillity of the more likely candidates for election, and their smaller need to make efforts to secure a personal consensus.



In the light of these observations, it seems that the relationship between intra-party factionalism and high preference vote rates may be enhanced by the inability or unwillingness on the part of parties (or factions) to handle intra-alliance (or intra-party) conflict otherwise than in elections, regardless of the symbolic (such as in the Dutch case) or concrete (like in Italy) nature of such conflicts. It therefore comes to seem increasingly less acceptable to assert with certainty that preference voting per se is the cause of intra-party factionalism.

## II. PREFERENCE VOTING EFFECTIVENESS IN EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT ELECTIONS

### Preference voting and personnel turnover

As already mentioned, one of the supposed prerogatives of intra-party preference voting is that of providing an instrument for the enforcement of individual accountability in multi-member constituency PR electoral systems. The enforcement of individual accountability in fact presupposes that the reelection of incumbent parliamentarians be determined, at least in part, by factors other than the overall success or lack of success of political parties. What is important is the ability of intra-party choice mechanisms to affect parliamentary turnover. Only if an incumbent MEP has to personally compete with the individual candidates for the favours of the electorate in order to be reelected, will he or she feel accountable to the electorate itself and not to the party apparatus. Such a competition in PR list systems can only involve members of the same party.

Comparative research covering national parliamentary elections in 13 countries with electoral systems providing mechanisms for intra-party competition has shown that intra-party defeats can represent a considerable share of electorally induced turnover of parliamentary personnel (in



Malta even reaching 100%) (16). In particular, the study registered the existence of a positive relationship between the size of the constituencies into which the countries were divided up and the effectiveness of intra-party mechanisms. A possible explanation for such a finding is that larger constituencies generally mean differentiated geographical areas and social composition, wider numbers of contenders and the inability of factions and/or individual candidates to extend their own influence to the whole territory of the constituency. All these elements render the control of preferences harder and the election of particular candidates less certain.

If this finding should be confirmed, one could expect intra-party competition to be a rather important source of personnel turnover in the European Parliament. All of the elements which are thought to make reelection more difficult for incumbents contesting national elections in large constituencies are characteristic of European Parliament elections as well. The only exception might be the number of candidates competing for seats in a given constituency, which in a number of cases is lower than in the corresponding national elections. Table 5 illustrates the outcome of the 1984 European Parliament elections for incumbent MEPs of the six countries considered in this study.





Only slightly over one half of them (50.6%) were reelected for a second term, but the relatively high turnover of personnel was only to a limited extent due to defeats of incumbents (electorally induced turnover). Over one quarter of them (25.9%) chose not to run again for election, which lowers electorally induced turnover in the six countries to a total of 23.5%. A more detailed analysis of these data requires some considerations on political parties' electoral strategies. Political parties are usually believed to have great control over the election of candidates on their lists. The most powerful tool in the hands of party organizations is of course nomination, or renomination in the case of incumbents. Other important factors of party control are the attribution of a more or less "safe" district, or, in most of the countries covered in this study, of a high or low position on the party slate. List position is believed to be an important determinant of election even in countries with "loose" party lists like Italy or Denmark. A high list position reflects the personal stature of the candidate and the endorsement of the party, which can make the candidate appealing even to the uninformed voter. Such an advantage for highly ranked candidates can be supplemented with specific voting instructions handed down to the rank and file. Although a number of new candidates is nominated at each election with the promise of success, the bulk of privileged candidates is represented by incumbents.

Party organisations may be motivated by essentially two concerns when renominating outgoing MEP's. The first motive, is the obvious one, that the MEP did his job well and the party wants him to carry on. In this case the party will do everything possible to make sure the candidate will be elected (good list position, safe district). Given the number of incumbents (in this case about one quarter) who are not put up for reelection, parties theoretically have a sufficiently safe cushion to ensure the election of such a category of incumbents. In theory, these incumbents should indeed be elected, even though in cases of particularly severe setbacks of their parties, some of them might be expected to suffer inter-partisan defeats. Incumbents who do not wish, or are not considered fit, to be reelected can still be renominated for their personal appeal and their potential ability to attract votes for the party-list. Incumbents renominated on the basis of this second motive are usually not placed in list positions that might facilitate their reelection (in some cases they are placed at the very bottom of the list, where they are more likely to catch the elector's eye but most unlikely to be reelected) and are expected to suffer list order based intra-partisan defeats (17). Since this second category of incumbents is rather small, one could expect that most incumbents running for reelection would indeed be successful and that a small number of them would suffer inter-partisan and intra-partisan defeats. Any deviation from this pattern



would constitute a measure of preference voting effectiveness.

The data shows that inter-partisan and list order induced intra-partisan defeats are not very numerous indeed. In particular, all renominated Danish incumbents were elected in 1984, suggesting the existence in that country of a particularly well developed ability of political parties to protect their incumbents. Inter-partisan defeats were suffered by only 7 incumbents EP-wide, with no single party suffering more than one such defeats. In four cases (RW in Belgium, D '66 in the Netherlands, Labour in Ireland, PSDI in the third Italian constituency) they were the result of a total loss of representation for the parties concerned. This type of electoral outcome was of some significance only in Ireland, with 21.4% (3 out of 14) members of the first European Parliament failing to win seats for their parties. The higher incidence of inter-partisan defeats in Ireland can be attributed to the difficulties parties and candidates have in controlling second and third preferences. A number of unpredictable defeats (especially those suffered by Labour) can be indeed imputed to candidates' failures to attract adequate numbers of transfers (18). The phenomenon is indeed much more limited, or non-existent, like in Denmark, in countries adopting list PR systems (8.3% in Belgium, 1.3% in Italy, 4% in the Netherlands).

The case of Luxembourg is an exception in that 5 of its 6 incumbents were defeated due to list-order intra-partisan defeats. Luxembourgish incumbents account for exactly half of such defeats registered in the six countries concerned. As already mentioned in an earlier footnote, European Parliament elections in Luxembourg tend to be dominated to an even greater extent than in other countries by domestic policy considerations. This is reflected by the more privileged list positions attributed to prominent national leaders over outgoing MEPs, who are listed alphabetically with the rest of the candidates. Given the situation, Socialist MEP Vic Abens' success over his party leader Jacques F. Poos (who was also elected) can be considered to be a remarkable feat. List order intra-party defeats are present to any significant extent in only one other country, the Netherlands, where they account for the near totality (16% out of 20% incumbents defeated in 1984) of electorally induced turnover. Even in this case, though, such defeats should not have come as surprises to the headquarters of the parties involved (CDA and PvdA) as the number of seats they eventually won was equal to or higher than the number of renominated incumbents.

As we had already anticipated, inter-party and list order intra-party defeats are fairly minor factors of personnel turnover in the European Parliament and certainly they are not factors that could dramatically affect



political parties' abilities to ensure the reelection of their incumbents. As a result of this, preference vote related intra-partisan defeats emerge as the only effective instrument in the hands of electors to affect personnel turnover in the European Parliament and to potentially enforce individual accountability. preference voting intra-partisan defeats account for over one half of all electorally induced turnover (13.3% out of 23.5%). Even more interestingly, they represent the single most important source of turnover in Italy where they concerned a number of incumbents higher than those who chose, or were forced, not to run for reelection. Only one other outgoing MEP, in Ireland, lost his seat due to an intra-partisan defeat. In Italy preference votes are the sole determinant of the order in which candidates are attributed seats won in the constituency by the list as a whole. Even if most incumbents are given high positions on their party lists (the exception is represented by PCI lists where most incumbents are listed alphabetically with the other candidates), they still have to secure a higher number of preference votes than the other candidates on that list, in order to be reelected. Parties' electoral strategies, organizational strength and internal dynamics have a great importance in explaining the huge differences in the incidence of PV intra-partisan defeats among Italian political parties (from 0 to 70%).

Party differences aside, reelection is obviously much more difficult to achieve in Italy than in Denmark, a country where preference votes are also an important determinant of the election of individual candidates (19). Preference votes are as important in Luxembourg and indeed they determined the defeat of 5 incumbents out of 6, but we have seen how such defeats had already been sanctioned by the order in which candidates had been presented. A number of factors might contribute to explaining the difference between Italy and Denmark. Constituency size can definitely be such a factor. Even the smallest Italian constituency, the Islands, had almost twice as many valid votes as the whole country of Denmark, even if it was only to be represented by half as many candidates. Each party in Denmark did not have more than 3 incumbents to "protect". The PCI and the DC had up to six incumbents up for reelection in some constituencies. The option given to Italian electors to cast up to three preference votes in the four larger constituencies certainly contributed to making party control of preference votes more difficult and consequently the effectiveness of preference votes greater. Another factor might be party discipline. As we have already pointed out, parties boasting a tight control and discipline over their rank and file usually manage to control very well the effectiveness of preference voting. Danish parties are in general more disciplined and not as faction-ridden as



their Italian counterparts, and may be better able to influence their electors' individual choices.

Danish parties certainly are the most inclined to give their incumbents full support. Denmark was in fact the only country in which all incumbents were attributed exclusively top of the list positions. This might be another contributing factor in explaining the above mentioned differences with Italy and Luxembourg. Most Italian major parties ranked a number of new candidates higher than some incumbents. The same happened in Luxembourg. This practice may be of little consequence for the PCI, whose lists are mostly alphabetical, but might be a contributing factor for the high number of intra-partisan defeats suffered by Italian DC incumbents.

Incumbency, at any rate, is a very powerful asset and a majority of candidates who possess it and decide to stand for re-election are indeed successful. Although sex has always been considered a very important factor, and men have always been perceived as more likely to have a long-lasting parliamentary career, our data show that such an advantage does not seem to exist for candidates who have already successfully competed in elections at least once.

TABLE 6

Outcome by sex for incumbents 1984

		Elected	Inter- partisan defeat	List order defeat	Preference Vote defeat	National Candidate	N
Belgium	M	55.6	5.6			38.9	18
	F	50.0	16.6			33.3	6
Denmark	M	58.3				41.7	12
	F	100.0					4
Ireland	M	53.8	23.1		7.7	15.4	13
	F					100.0	1
Italy	M	47.1	1.4	1.4	22.9	27.1	70
	F	50.0			30.0	20.0	10
Luxembourg	M	25.0		75.0			4
	F			100.0			2
Netherlands	M	50.0	5.0	15.0		30.0	20
	F	80.0		20.0			5



According to Table 6, women seem to be slightly more likely to run for reelection, which may be indicative of a relative scarcity of suitable female candidates, and seem to fare roughly as well as their male colleagues. The most interesting finding in this table is that women were more likely to suffer preference vote based intra-partisan defeats in Italy. This datum, to be taken with great caution given the small number involved, suggests in contrast with findings in the Netherlands and Denmark that women tend to receive more preference votes than men, especially as a consequence of the efforts of female organizations (20). Social and cultural differences aside, such a contrast might be explained by the different intrinsic value of preference votes in the Netherlands and for some Danish lists, where they are often used as protests or testimonials, and in Italy where they actually determine election. Such an hypothesis, however, requires further testing.

#### List order and preference voting

Table 7 lists by country and party four numbers: (a) The number of preference votes received by the least popular winning candidate; (b) The number of preference votes received by the most popular losing candidate; (c) The list position of the lowest ranked winning candidate (where two numbers are listed the first is the position of a candidate

who was elected but immediately opted out); (d) the list position of the highest ranked losing candidate. If list order strictly determined election, (c) should be one bigger than (d). If preference vote strictly determined election, (a) should always be bigger than (b). In this latter case an extra word of caution appears to be necessary. Not only should (a) be bigger than (b), they should also be relatively close to one another, otherwise one could argue that the party had simply nominated as many outstanding candidates as the seats it expected to win in that constituency.

List order, as could be expected, does strictly determine election in Belgium; and the Netherlands. The two exceptions being the two candidates, Nols, for the PRL in Belgium, and Nijpels, for the VVD in the Netherlands, who were elected despite very unfavourable list positions, but immediately opted out. In 4 cases out of 9 observed in Belgium and in 3 out of 5 observed in the Netherlands the least popular winning candidates obtained fewer preference votes than the most popular losing candidate on his list.



TABLE 7

Preference votes and rank order positions for lowest placed winners and highest placed losers in the 1984 European Parliament elections

Countries	Party	N	Const.	Win	Lose	Win	Lose
Belgium	BSP	13		2384	8562	4	
	CUP	13		45296	80900	4	
	PVV	13		13968	20118	2	
	PRL	11		40529	39022	11/2	
	PSC	11		35438	32450	2	
	PSB	11		19651	23213	5	
	UU	13		44524	44610	2	
	ECOLO-U AGALFU	11 13		17504 23126	8507 6339	1 1	
Denmark	CD	10		116664	637	1	
	FB	20		16733	7741	13	
	KF	20		7211	5526	4	
	S	20		15618	8659	5	
	SF	20		42345	5430	1	
	U	18		20823	19709	2	
Italy	DC	22	1	137846	134739	18	
		14	2	115317	101211	14	
		16	3	81559	69540	16	
		19	4	152581	144463	15	
	MSI	9	3	69010	50121	3	
		16	3	119905	76143	1	
		19	4	106533	56533	2	
		9	5	99009	39789	1	
	PCI	22	1	47792	47300	21	
		15	2	48509	27667	15	
		16	3	42542	19268	16	
		19	4	153579	127897	18	
	PLI/PRI	9	5	139802	34103	2	
		22	1	151290	88243	3	
		15	2	58216	47513	1	
		16	3	52213	31591	1	
	PSI	19	4	70604	32760	1	
		22	1	80689	64097	3	
		15	2	75397	56421	3	
		16	3	70926	40325	2	
19		4	174450	140085	3		
9	5	140453	37102	1			
Luxembourg	PCS	12		15761	12810	12	
	PD	12		22239	13388	1	
	POSL	12		13411	11215	2	
Netherlands	CDA	40		4607	16354	1	
	Pvd.A	37		3184	10917	9	
	VVD	40		8543	5767	40/5	
	Green/Red	40		10237	3047	2	
	Protest.	30		214531	36187	1	

On the other hand, preference voting was always the decisive factor in Italy, Denmark and Luxembourg. In at least 1 case in Denmark and in 3 cases in Italy the difference between (a) and (b) was less than 10% indicating that at least in some cases intra-partisan competition can be very tight. Denmark and Italy, despite very similar electoral systems, had displayed very different levels of preference voting effectiveness with respect to European Parliamentary personnel turnover. Much closer levels of preference voting effectiveness can be observed by looking at a different indicator. Whilst in 50% of Italian lists at least one candidate was elected, owing to preference voting, at the expense of a higher ranked candidate, the same occurrence was observed for one third of Danish lists. This finding, however, can do nothing more than confirm the observation that preference voting is a powerful tool in the hands of electors only to the extent that the organizational strength of political parties and their control over the electorate permits.

Table 8 offers a synthesis of some of the information that has been analyzed so far. Row 1 consists of five scores, one for each country considered, representing the correlations between incumbency and list position. As was argued earlier, renominated MEPs should to a very large extent be given high positions on their party lists. Excluding Luxembourg, whose exceptionality has already been



TABLE B

Incumbency, list position and outcome in the 1984 elections  
of the European Parliament - Correlation scores

	Belgium	Denmark	Italy	Luxembourg	Netherlands
1) Incumbency and list position	.93	1.00	.66	.38	.96
2) List position and electoral outcome	.93	.96	.65	.69	.92

discussed at length, the fairly high, positive, scores in row 1 seem to indicate that indeed most incumbents are granted privileged list positions. The Italian score, relatively low if compared to the other three countries, can be explained with the two opposite strategies adopted by the two major parties. The DC placed in privileged positions a number of prominent new candidates which was higher than the number of seats the party could realistically expect to win. This was possibly resulting from an inability of the party to reach a compromise that would be acceptable to all of its factions. The PCI, on the other hand, ran largely alphabetical lists, thus placing near the bottom a number of incumbents. The party was obviously relying on the efficiency of its electoral apparatus and on its ability to steer in the desired direction sufficiently large numbers of preference votes.

The results in row 2 are somewhat more surprising, even if at first sight they look very similar to those in row 1. No significant difference among the 5 countries was to be expected for the latter batch of results, since no matter what electoral system a country adopts, all parties should have an interest in emphasizing the candidacies of the incumbents they renominate. Some difference could be expected, on the other hand, with respect to the correlation between list position and electoral outcome. Highly placed candidates in Belgium and the Netherlands, given the almost



totally rigid nature of lists adopted in those countries, should be elected, whereas all bottom candidates should be defeated. Correlation scores should thus be perfect 1.00s. This is in fact very closely reflected in our data. Both Belgium's (.93) and the Netherlands' (.92) scores are almost perfect. They would be, if not for one candidate in each country placed at the bottom of the list who was elected and immediately opted out.

By the same token, one would expect that theoretically loose list systems would produce less than perfect, albeit positive, scores in Denmark, Italy and Luxembourg. These expectations are matched by Italy's .65 and Luxembourg's .69. Denmark's score, on the other hand, is in the same league as Belgium's and the Netherlands; missing perfection because of one single candidate who was elected out of list order. This finding seems to confirm the importance of party characteristics and strategies in determining the effectiveness of preference voting even in loose list systems.

Further proof of this can be found by looking at different party scores in those countries where overall correlation scores were rather low. Table 9 shows that even within the same country political parties may have radically divergent strategies with respect to list ordering.

TABLE 9

Incumbency, list position and outcome in the 1984 elections  
of the European Parliament in Italy and Luxembourg -  
Correlation scores by party

Italy	DC	MSI	PCI	PLI/PRI	P5DI	PSI
1) Incumbency and list position	.66	1.00	.21	.96	.96	.87
2) List position and electoral outcome	.44	1.00	.57	.95	.95	.96
=====						
Luxembourg	PCS			PD		P05L
1) Incumbency and list position	.23			0.00		.82
2) List position and electoral outcome	.33			1.00		1.00



Particularly dramatic on this point are the differences between the PD and the POSL in Luxembourg and between the PCI and most other parties in Italy. On the other hand, in the two countries list position and electoral outcome correlation scores are very high, sometimes even perfect, for six parties out of nine. Besides the DC and PCI, whose strategies and relationships with the electorate have already been discussed, the PCS is the only other party whose list order seems to have been upset by preference votes.

The Danish/Italian system vs. the Belgian/Dutch system: a simulation on preference voting effectiveness

As we have seen, preference voting effectiveness can be not only a function of the electoral system adopted in a given country but also a function of certain political, social and cultural characteristics of that country. Although it is very difficult to assess the importance and the effects of the latter, some light can be shed on at least some of the effects of the former, which remain the essential focus of this study.

Table 10 simulates the effects of the two major preference voting models presently adopted in the elections of the European Parliament. Row A lists all the MEPS

TABLE 10

The 1984 Elections of the European Parliament - A simulation of seat allocation under different electoral systems

Belgium	TOTAL	SP	CVP	PVV	PRL	PSC	PS	VU	ECOLO
A	24	4	4	2	3	2	5	2	1
B	20	4	3	1	3	2	4	1	1
C	24	4	4	2	3	2	5	2	1
Denmark	TOTAL	CD	FB	CPN	SD	SP	U		
A	15	1	4	4	3	1	2		
B	15	1	4	4	3	1	2		
C	13	1	3	4	2	1	2		
Italy (Islands)	TOTAL	DC	MSI	PCI	PSI				
A	7	3	1	2	1				
B	7	3	1	2	1				
C	7	3	1	2	1				
Luxembourg	TOTAL	PCS	PD	POSL					
A	6	3	1	2					
B	6	3	1	2					
C	5	2	1	2					
Netherlands	TOTAL	CDA	PvdA	VVD	GREEN	Prot.			
A	25	8	9	5	2	1			
B	19	6	6	5	1	1			
C	25	8	9	5	2	1			



actually elected by each party in each country in the 1984 elections. Row B is the number of those candidates who would have been elected under the Italian/Danish (only explicitly cast preference votes count) system. Row C is the number of those candidates who would have been elected under the Belgian/Dutch (party votes transfer straight down the list) system. Italian data is limited to the only constituency (the Islands) where only one preference vote is allowed, the other, multiple preference, constituencies not being comparable to the other four countries. Obviously rows A and C are by definition the same for Belgium and the Netherlands. The same applies to rows A and B for Denmark, Italy and Luxembourg.

Given the limits imposed by our need for data comparability, Italian data does not yield any interesting results, as all the MEPs who were actually elected in 1984 in the Islands would have been elected under the Belgian/Dutch system as well. We know, of course, that significant differences are to be expected only in large enough constituencies. In fact, the effects of the adoption of a semi-rigid system would have been rather limited also in Luxembourg, where they would have affected one PCS MEP, and in Denmark, where one FB and one SD MEPs would not have managed to subvert their parties' list orders under the Belgian/Dutch system.

The potential effects of the adoption of the Italian/Danish system in the Netherlands and Belgium are much more evident and as such, they permit more interesting considerations. A total of 10 MEPs (that is over 20% of all MEPs elected in the two countries) were elected because of transfers of surplus votes from above, and would have failed under the Italian/Danish system. Whilst the 4 Belgian cases are very evenly distributed (one for each of four parties), the 6 Dutch cases are mostly concentrated on the two major parties (3 PvdA, 2 CDA, 1 Green/Red Alliance). If a loose list system should actually be adopted in the Netherlands, it is quite possible that preference votes would be redistributed in such a way as to minimize the effects of the change. It is still very interesting to note, however, that large parties, structurally forced to appeal to a more heterogeneous electorate, are the ones that would be more likely to have a hard time in coping with the new situation. It is quite possible, therefore, that most of the effects produced by our simulation would indeed happen in reality.

This simulation thus seems to indicate that conditions for significant preference voting effectiveness may exist, once a suitable electoral system is adopted, in countries other than Italy and that the high degree of preference voting control observed in Denmark may be the exception and not the rule.



#### IV. SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

The preceding analysis allows for the drawing of some generalizations on the subjects of voter mobilization, geographical representation and individual MEP accountability. On the basis of these general findings some inferences are possible on the potential consequences of the projected adoption of preference voting mechanisms in future elections of the European Parliament.

The use of preference voting, or preference voting incidence, as it has been defined in this study, seems to be connected with a political culture to a large extent imbued with personalist elements. But the high number of personal votes received by prominent personalities in Belgium, Denmark, Italy, Luxembourg and the Netherlands is certainly a result of a trend towards an increasing encroachment of the media, television above all, upon the political process. Such a trend, even if begun in a country, the USA, where individual personalities dominate the political scene, has now spread to many Western European countries, even if strongly characterized by party politics. It is arguable, even if empirical evidence to this effect is difficult to obtain, that wherever voters are offered the opportunity to cast personal (or preference) votes for prominent

politicians they may see it as an incentive to participate in elections.

The adoption of preference voting in the framework of a unified system for the election of the European Parliament, would probably have some effects in the three countries adopting rigid list preference voting systems, France, Germany and Greece. The awareness that the opportunity offered to the electorate to actually cast a vote for a prominent personality could have an effect on the mobilization of the electorate, would most likely have an effect on party nomination strategies. Although it is doubtful whether voter turnout would significantly increase (an educated guess is no more than 1 or 2 percentage points) as an immediate consequence of the inclusion of more prominent candidates in party lists, such an occurrence might in the long run contribute to the spreading of the conviction that the European Parliament is an important institution and consequently that EC politics is important. If these two combined effects can be seen as positive and perhaps auspicious developments, a number of measures would have to be adopted to avoid the distortions that can already be observed in some countries and that would no doubt spread to all member countries in the presence of a unified electoral system.



The trend towards the nomination of prominent national leaders who are eventually elected only to opt out immediately after election has already reached pathological proportions in Luxembourg and has been harshly criticized in the Netherlands and Belgium as well. Besides undermining the process of formation of a genuinely European political class this would reinforce the feeling that European elections are nothing more than a sounding board for domestic politics which national leaders can use at the time of maximum public attention and dispose of immediately after. These negative effects can only be avoided through the adoption of very rigid incompatibility clauses, such as an obligation to resign from previously held positions in case of election to the EP. Similar considerations, but with different implications, can be made about the Italian strategy, inherited from national parliamentary elections, to nominate the same prominent leaders in several different constituencies. The actual, final, constituency of the candidate is decided only after election, depending on the outcome(s) of the election. This blurs the meaning of geographical representation, and allows multiple winners, or their parties, to decide, independently of voters' wishes, which runner ups will eventually sit in Parliament. Again, the solution here is the prohibition of multiple constituency candidacies.

The hypothesis has been put forth that the problem of geographical representation could also be eased with the adoption of preference voting mechanisms. The argument is that even in the presence of national or very large constituencies (like the Irish and Italian ones) voters could always discriminate in favour of their local candidates by giving them their preference votes. As we have seen, Belgian evidence confirms that most candidates receive an overwhelming percentage of their preferences in one specific province. This, incidentally, justifies the inference that an apt geographical distribution of candidacies might constitute another incentive for voter mobilization. But, even if the opportunity to cast preference votes for local candidates might be very gratifying for many local community minded voters or members of minorities, they will only receive actual representation if their candidates are elected. Unfortunately for them, our data indicates that election seems to require voter appeal well beyond the borders of one single province. This finding of course is limited by the fact that preference data at levels of aggregation lower than constituency was only available for Belgium, where election is determined by party choices, resulting in the selection of candidates with broad appeal. This consideration, however, still does not remove the fact that there is no evidence that preference voting might allow for some degree of minority or geographical representation in PR list systems. A single member



constituency PR system, such as the one used for the election of the Italian Senate might be more suitable for that purpose.

One other important point that was instead confirmed in the course of the analysis of the incidence of preference voting is that preferential mechanisms are not the cause of party factionalism. The fact however remains that preference voting incidence for loosely organized and highly factionalized parties tends to remain higher than for highly organized parties. In fact, a number of parties seem to be able to maintain an extraordinary degree of control over the preferences cast by their electors. This suggests that the extension of the use of preference voting to other countries, where parties are used to keeping a strict control over who gets elected on their lists, might induce a tightening of party organizations, thus indeed reducing the danger of party factionalization.

The desirability of tighter organizations and of structures designed to facilitate internal compromise is made all the more urgent for parties contesting European elections by the fact that preference voting effectiveness is greatly increased by the size of constituencies, which in European Parliament elections are bound to be very large. In the 1984 election inter-partisan defeats were very few and in most countries personnel turnover was totally controlled

by political parties. This obviously made outgoing MEPs virtually unaccountable to their electors, in open contrast with the principle of individual accountability. Intra-partisan defeats (which are determined by preference votes) were the only significant source of electorally induced European Parliament personnel turnover, making Italy, where most such defeats occurred the only country where individual MEP accountability is potentially enforced. As we have seen, the effectiveness, as well as the incidence, of preference voting can be counteracted by political parties through the elimination of internal disputes, through the creation of efficient electoral machineries, and through the keeping of better links with the electorate. This in itself would be a desirable consequence of the adoption of preference voting mechanisms. But the level of organizational efficiency required to attain total preference voting control are very difficult to achieve for many political parties. Intra-partisan defeats would consequently and in all likelihood constitute the most significant source of personnel turnover, making renominated incumbents effectively and individually accountable to the voters. Effective preference voting thus potentially represents an important prerequisite for the respect of an important principle, individual accountability which is at the basis of the performance of the function of representation in the European Parliament.



NOTES

This report was prepared by Luciano Bardi with the collaboration of Richard S. Katz of the Johns Hopkins University and is based on the findings of research undertaken by an international group of scholars directed by Michael Steed, University of Manchester, and consisting of: Luciano Bardi (responsible for Italian data collection), EUI and University of Bologna; Neil Collins (responsible for Irish data collection), University of Liverpool; Jürgen Elklit (responsible for Danish data collection), University of Aarhus; Richard S. Katz (responsible for Belgian and Luxembourgish data collection), Johns Hopkins University; Ruud Koole (responsible for Dutch data collection), Groningen University. Much needed funding for data collection, coding, and analysis was provided by the European Policy Unit of the European University Institute.

- (1) David Millar, "Electoral Procedures, 1979-1984", paper presented at the EES Symposium on European Elections, Neustadt, 9-12 November 1984.
- (2) Michael Steed, "Research into the Procedures for Electing the European Parliament", in K. Reif ed., European Elections 1979/81 and 1984, Berlin, 1984.
- (3) See: Richard S. Katz, "Preference Voting in Italy: Votes of Opinion, Belonging or Exchange", in Comparative Political Studies, July 1985, pp. 229-249 and Luciano Bardi, "Il voto di preferenza in Italia e la legge elettorale europea", in Rivista Italiana di Scienza Politica, Agosto 1985, pp. 292-313. For a comparative analysis of intra-party choice mechanisms, see: Richard S. Katz, "Intraparty Preference Voting", in Electoral Laws and their Political Consequences, Agathon Press, New York, 1984.
- (4) It is arguable that the preference mechanisms that are present in the single transferrable vote system adopted in Ireland could, mostly negatively, influence the proportionality of seat distribution among parties. In the 1984 election, Ireland's two major parties, Fianna Fail and Fine Gael, obtained a total of 93.3% (14 out of 15) of that country's European Parliamentary seats, whilst their combined share of the popular vote stood at a mere 71.1%. In general, however, the allocation of seats to contesting parties is independent of individual candidate vote counts. In Italy, for instance, the country closest to Ireland in terms of combined electoral strength of the two major parties

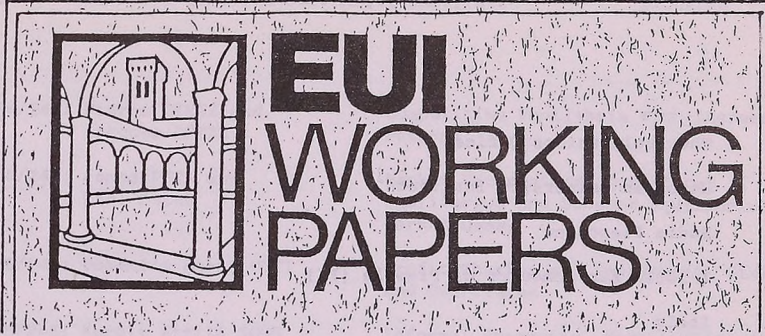


(the DC and the PCI), the discrepancy between the two parties' combined Euro-parliamentary strength (65.4% of the seats, 53 out of 81) and their combined electoral strength (66.3%) was almost nil.

- (5) It is assumed that the laws regulating the election of Members of the European Parliament in the six countries are well known to the readers of this report. Specific references to single country peculiarities will be made to the extent that they can clarify some aspects of the analysis.
- (6) Italian electors are normally allowed to cast more than one preference vote for individual candidates (up to four in national elections, up to three in European elections, depending on the size of their constituencies).
- (7) See Bardi, op. cit. A similar phenomenon has also been observed in Luxembourg, where European Parliamentary elections are viewed by top politicians "as a unique opportunity to 'test' their popularity on a national scale". See Mario Hirsch "Luxembourg" in Electoral Studies, vol. 3, N° 3, Dec. 1984, p. 299.
- (8) See Jules-Gérard Libois, Malou Jalin and Xavier Mabile, "Elections Européennes en Belgique: géographie des votes de préférence" in Courrier Hebdomadaire du CRISP, N° 1057-1058, 9 November 1984, pp. 16-27.
- (9) Ruud Koole, "Preference Voting in the Netherlands in the 1984 European Elections", paper presented at the EES Symposium on European Elections, Neustadt, 9-12 November 1984, p. 5.
- (10) The data in this table have to be considered with a great deal of caution. The number of votes in the various provinces varies considerably (e.g. in the Walloon constituency they range between about 130.000 for Luxembourg and about 620.000 for Hainaut) and it is unavoidable that a number of candidates receive a great number of their preference votes in one, large, province. At any rate even the largest province accounts for less than one third of all valid votes and the fact that so many candidates receive over 50% of their preferences in one province, regardless of size, is certainly significant. The fact that a relatively high number of candidates receive a very high percentage of their preferences in one province (some even in the smallest one) is indeed remarkable.
- (11) Neil Collins, "Ireland", in Electoral Studies, Vol. 3, N° 3, December 1984, p. 292.



- (12) Richard Katz and Luciano Bardi, "Preference Voting and Turnover in Italian Parliamentary Elections" in American Journal of Political Science, Vol. 24, N° 1, February 1980, p. 102.
- (13) Most preferences for the two combined lists indeed went to the highest ranked candidates of each individual party. Koole, op. cit., p. 7.
- (14) In 1979 weighted averages between the two parties were: 32.7 in NW; 29.5 in NE; 33.0 in the Center; 47.8 in the South and 71.3 in the Islands.
- (15) On specific candidates on the joint list see: Bardi, op. cit.
- (16) Richard S. Katz, "Intraparty Preference Voting", cit.
- (17) The existence of such a motive is substantiated by interviews with several MEPs (see: Bardi, op. cit.).
- (18) Collins, op. cit., p. 290.
- (19) The "effectiveness" of preference votes in Denmark varies, and is determined by the type of candidate list used by individual parties (see Geoffrey Hand et al. European Electoral Systems Handbook, London, Butterworths, 1979, p. 37 et passim). In the 1984 European Parliamentary elections most parties used effective preference lists.
- (20) Koole, op. cit., p. 4.



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