

EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT ELECTIONS AND POLITICAL PARTIES: CHALLENGE FOR DEMOCRACY IN THE EUROPEAN UNION

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Abstract

Two dimensions of democratic quality which create the backbone of a working democracy- participation and competition- are analysed at the EU level. The purpose of this thesis is to identify reasons for low turnout in European Parliament (EP) elections and to propose solutions for this unpleasant phenomenon. In order to address research problem, combined investigation of the work of European party groups (EPGs) and quality of EP elections is done. Firstly, level of cohesion, competition and interactions between EPGs are under main scrutiny. Based on analysis, non existent European Union party system is labelled as the cause of problematic EP elections. Secondly, comparative analysis of organisational and electoral rules governing EP elections in member states over time is done. Primary aim of this comparison is to determine which indicators positively influence electoral turnout. Based on results, list of recommendations for higher turnout in future EP elections is formulated. Qualitative research is based on data from various literature sources, electoral databases and portals, and semi- structured interviews with Slovak members of the EP.

Keywords: European Parliament, European party groups, European Parliament elections, 'second order elections', electoral turnout, democratic quality

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List of abbreviations

| | |
|-------------|--|
| ALDE | Group of the Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe |
| CoM/ CoEU | Council of Ministers/ Council of the European Union |
| ECR | European Conservatives and Reformists |
| EFD | Europe of Freedom and Democracy |
| EP | European Parliament |
| EPG | European party group |
| EPGs | European party groups |
| EPP | European People' s Party |
| EU | European Union |
| EUPS | European Union party system |
| Greens- EFA | European Greens- European Free Alliance |
| GUE- NGL | European United Left- Nordic Green Left |
| MEP | member of the European Parliament |
| MEPs | members of the European Parliament |
| NI | Non- Inscrits |
| S&D | Progressive Alliance of Socialists and Democrats |

Introduction

Background of the topic

The European Union nowadays acquires parameters and duties of a global player in international politics. Its twenty seven member states represent approximately 500 millions of people. On the European Council meeting in 1993 there were clearly defined conditions for membership in the EU- the Copenhagen criteria. According to them, each candidate country should be a functioning democracy respecting rule of law, human rights and protection of minorities; should have a functioning market economy and should be able to accept all EU obligations and treaties. Even though all EU member states claim to be democracies, the democratic governance of the EU itself is often challenged by politicians, academics and scholars. More concretely, the legitimacy of the EU structures, policies, decisions and governance is often undermined due to the existing ‘democratic deficit’.

The initial motivation for this thesis is the demand to analyze and discuss the democratic quality of the European Union. Is there a need for a democratic EU? Is the EU democratic enough according to its own criteria for membership? How to increase the level of democracy in the EU? There are vivid and abundant debates about the meaning of democracy and it is challenging to come to one universal definition. However, difficulties with providing clear and straightforward definition of concepts is a common sign for the majority of terms in social sciences. Therefore, I do not consider the fact that there is no universal definition of democracy a disadvantage or obstacle for studying it. However, I base my arguments on Dahl’s minimalist definition of democracy. He claims that democracy consists of two crucial attributes- competition and participation (Dahl 1971, 5).

In order to address problem of democracy in the EU at least partially, understanding democratic quality is a necessary precondition. However, democratic quality is a value- laden

and multidimensional concept (Diamond and Morlino 2005). Due to scope limits of the thesis, I focus on two dimensions- participation and competition as I consider them as the most fundamental principles of the functioning democracy (based on Dahl's definition). These democratic qualities will be analyzed and measured at the EU level. More precisely, the level of competition will be measured within the work of European party groups (EPGs) in the European Parliament (EP). The level of participation will be linked to engagement of citizens in politics at the EU level in EP elections. The topic of the thesis can in a broader sense be situated under studies of theories of democracy. More precisely, it comes under the research field of European Union studies.

Justification for topic selection = Why is it relevant to deal with European party groups and European Parliament elections?

Average turnout in the last European Parliament elections in 2009 was the lowest one in history- 43% (European election database). Of course low voting turnout can not be seen in all member states. For example in Belgium or Luxemburg, member states with compulsory voting, turnout in 2009 EP election was around 90%. But in general we can talk about a paradox linked to the EP and its elections. This powerful and the only directly elected institution of the European Union is ignored and underestimated by voters. It is surprising that the opportunity to vote in EP elections is not fully utilized by citizens of EU member states.

Elections are probably the most common tool enabling participation and engagement of ordinary citizens in politics. Voters have the right to express their opinions and choose among available alternatives. Function of elections is to ensure representation of citizens' preferences and interests. However, with low participation this can not be adequately achieved. As argued by Lijphart, "low voter turnout means unequal and socioeconomically biased turnout" (Lijphart 1997, 2). Therefore, EP elections with generally low turnout do not

fulfil their primary function; they do not provide adequate representation of voters' preferences. It seems that level of participation at the EU level is problematic.

Next to this, one can not overlook that even though there are EP elections, there are no truly European parties running in them. As argued by Linz, "political parties are an essential component for working democracy" (Linz 2002, 291). Concerning the meaning of party system, Sartori states that "it is a system of interactions resulting from inter-party competition" (Sartori 1976, 43). I claim that the European Union party system lacks this level of interactions and competition and therefore it has a less developed format.

For me combined investigation of political parties at the European level (European party system) and EP elections seems inevitable in studies of democratic quality at the EU level. Based on the literature on democracy and democratic quality I argue that EP elections characterized by low participation and competition and less developed party system at the EU level decrease the level of democracy in the EU. These two elements contribute to the creation of a 'democratic deficit' in the EU. A working democracy can not function without a developed party system and with problematic elections.

Research problem and hypothesis

There are few preliminary and attendant questions which direct attention to the main research problem. What is the problem with the democratic quality in the European Union? Does the European Union party system work in an effective way? What are the imperfections of EP elections? These matters help to specify the underlying dimension of the thesis and help to focus towards main problem.

What is the main problem of European Parliament elections? How do European Parliament elections differ in member states of the European Union? The most serious problem of EP elections is its low and declining turnout. I assume that it is possible to identify

numerous causes. Probably the most crucial is the fact that in EP elections there are no winners and losers because, no government is created after elections. However, this can not be changed without any significant treaty modification or any big changes in organizational set up of the EU. My hypothesis is that low turnout in EP elections can be caused by the poorly developed party system at the EU level. This is consequently linked to problems like low level of competition between European party groups and no contest at EP elections. My second hypothesis is that EP elections are not identical in individual member states. They vary in their organizational setup and electoral rules which can influence voting turnout.

In this thesis, I address problem of imperfect level of democracy in the EU- inadequate participation and competition at the EU level. I do this by analysis of the work of European party groups and by analysis of EP elections. Level of cohesion, competition and interactions between EPGs is investigated in order to point out to deviations from functioning political parties and party system. Poorly developed party system at the EU level is crucial reason why EP elections do not fulfil their primary function- they do not properly represent voters due to its low turnout. Trough comparative analysis of EP elections in member states, I identify reasons for low and changing turnout. I propose recommendations how to increase the quality of EP elections (and level of democracy in the EU) trough adaptation of concrete organisational and electoral rules.

Methodology and data

In order to approach my research problem, I have decided to use mainly *qualitative* research methods. Regarding the first part of my research, analysis of European party groups, I use the following research methods- text analysis, descriptive statistics and semi- structured interviews. Combination of text analyses of scholarly articles, descriptive statistical data and

interviews with MEPs allows investigation and understanding from various perspectives how European party groups function.

Firstly, I conduct qualitative *text analysis* of the literature discussing the European Union, European Parliament, democratic deficit in the EU, European party groups, and European elections. Here I focus mostly on the work of Simon Hix, Robert Ladrech, Philippe Schmitter, Paul Maignette, John McCormick, Nils Ringe, David Judge, David Earnshaw, Amie Kreppel, Tapio Raunio, John Peterson and Michael Shackleton. The analysis of work of these scholars provides the theoretical background for the thesis.

Secondly, I use *descriptive statistics* regarding the functioning and work of EPGs. Here, I obtain statistical data from the VoteWatch portal about the level of intra party cohesion and coalition formation trends in the EP.

Thirdly, I conduct personal *semi-structured interviews* with members of the European Parliament (MEP) from Slovakia. Interviews serve the purpose to gain more information and facts about the functioning of EPGs. In the selection process of respondents, accessibility and better contacts with representatives from Slovakia (compared to other member states) played a crucial role. I contacted all thirteen MEPs from Slovakia but due to their busyness I managed to conduct interviews with only four of them: Eduard Kukan, Peter Šťastný, Monika Smolková and Katarína Neved'alová. Interviews were recorded with the approval of all respondents. I do not consider the lower number of respondents as a disadvantage to my research. My interviews are not supposed to constitute any representative sample of the MEPs or to provide any statistical data. They are rather supposed to ensure more empirical perspective to the problem researched.

In the second part of my research, analysis of EP elections in member states is conducted. As I have already indicated, EP elections are not identical but they vary. Therefore, I will do *comparative analysis* of EP elections in all 27 member states of the EU over time.

This comparative analysis is done with the purpose to analyse causes of changes in turnout in individual member states. Subsequently, I hope to provide a list of recommendations how to increase voting turnout in EP elections, thus increase the quality of EP elections through changes in organizational setup of these elections.

There are various indicators influencing turnout in elections. Since organisational setup and electoral rules governing EP elections have a potential to influence turnout and they can be manipulated over time, I have decided to focus on them. There is group of indicators which will be analysed and which based on the literature can influence voting turnout- compulsory voting, weekend voting, concurrent voting, e- voting, electoral system, preferential voting, threshold, frequency of elections in country, timing of elections, number of constituencies, and turnout in previous national elections. Data for all these indicators can be obtained mainly from the European Election Database, European Election Studies, International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance and VoteWatch portal.

Structure of the thesis

The first part of the thesis is devoted to the analysis of the European Parliament. Even though, this is not the primary focus of the research I argue that understanding the functioning of this institution is inevitable. I explain the unique status of this body within the structure of the EU. Besides this, functions, powers and roles of the European Parliament will be explained.

In the second part of the thesis, I deal with the party system at the EU level. Firstly, a well functioning and developed party system is defined according to the literature, which provides a theoretical model. Then, the work of European party groups and their heterogenous composition is under scrutiny. I continue with the debate on elements crucial for well functioning of the EPGs and party system. Firstly, cohesion in EPGs and determinants

influencing voting in the EP are analyzed. Next, competition between EPGs and coalition tendencies in the EP are discussed.

The last chapter of the thesis is devoted to European Parliament elections. Here, imperfections, problems and their labelling as 'second- order' character is analyzed. Then the organisational setup and electoral rules of elections is compared in all member states over time. Next to this, list of recommendations for the improvement of the quality of elections is formulated.

1. The European Parliament

European institution which is especially related to democratic qualities like participation and competition, the European Parliament, is under great scrutiny in this chapter. The core part of the thesis is devoted to analysis of European party groups and organisation of EP elections. However, one can not proceed towards this without in depth scrutiny of the EP as it is linked to both phenomena. In this chapter I firstly focus on uniqueness and speciality of the EP. Secondly, main functions, roles and potential of the EP to influence decision-making processes in the EU are discussed. I base my arguments mainly on theoretical knowledge gathered from various literature sources on this topic. Next to this, I support my claims by information obtained from semi- structured interviews with Slovak MEPs.

1.1 Unique status of the European Parliament

European Parliament is by many scholars, academics and politicians regarded as one of a kind. It has no resemblance at national level, in any international organisation or any other political entity. At this point I attempt to explain this 'uniqueness' and speciality of this institution. Bomber and Peterson summarize that "European Parliament is open, public, democratic institution which is at same time often labelled as powerless money- wasting talking- shop" (Bomber and Peterson 1999, 43).

First of all, one should keep in mind that the EP did not always have the status and position in the EU structures at it has today. It follows from historical development that the EP is the major winner of all treaties and reforms. "It moved from the status of consultative assembly to that of fully- fledged legislative body" (Judge and Earnshaw 2003, 64). It is doubtlessly powerful legislative body which has authority to influence decision- making process in the EU.

Since adoption of Lisbon Treaty in 2009, status of the EP changed and it became more or less equivalent partner to the Council of Ministers/ Council of the EU (CoM/CoEU). Stronger position of the EP was also confirmed in interviews with Slovak MEPs. MEPs as well indicated that these increased competencies of the EP were not understood and realized properly since the beginning. “It has very influential and strong influence, mainly after the Lisbon Treaty. Since Lisbon Treaty is in power, enormous majority of legislative can not be moved anywhere without the European Parliament. In the European Parliament there are the only delegates directly elected by citizens. And this legitimacy puts them above all. Because of this it has a great respect among all these European institutions” (Peter Šťastný, March 26th 2012). “I think it has a strong position, mainly after Lisbon Treaty. It was even surprising for individual member states and also for European Commission” (Monika Smolková, March 23rd 2012). “I think that the European Parliament has since the ratification of the Lisbon Treaty stronger position. It even lasts for a while until members of the European Parliament, members of the European Commission and mainly of the European Council, meaning the states, realized it rightly. But sometimes this stronger position of the European Parliament can also prolong decision procedure” (Eduard Kukan, March 30th 2012).

Ringe Nils in his book, *Who decides, and how? Preferences, uncertainty, and policy choice in the European Parliament*, provides micro- foundation explanation of politics in the EP. He clearly explains why the EP is different from other legislatures, providing list of arguments. Even though not all arguments unambiguously contribute to uniqueness of the EP, existence of all of them in one institution does so.

It is first ever directly elected international parliament, law- making assembly consisting of transnational groups, those consist of members representing national delegations, there is no government directly drawn from the EP’ s rank which would be fully accountable to it, laws approved by the EP are binding on EU member states and elections to the EP take place simultaneously across the EU but according to national rules (Ringe 2010, 1).

The EP is compared to other European institutions, the only one which is since 1979 directly elected (Judge and Earnshaw 2003, 68). Therefore, it directly represents citizens of member states. Next to this, it also significantly differs from legislative bodies presented at the level of national states. The EP is transnational body operating in multi- level governance which is by many (Mezey and Norton) considered as strong policy- making institution (Judge and Earnshaw 2003, 24). Similarly, Amie Kreppel argues that it is a 'transformative legislature' evidently influencing decision- making and policy process in the EU (Kreppel 2002, 1). Nevertheless, there exist sceptical opinions about the position of the EP as well. According to some scholars, it is often times functioning properly, but it is questionable how effective it is in influencing policies (Peterson and Shackleton 2006, 110).

Apart from its powerful position, the EP is special and unique when looking at its composition and internal organisation. As argued by Simon Hix, the EP may be the most *fragmented* parliament in the world as it includes representatives from 25¹ member states and from over 150 different national parties (Hix, Noury and Roland 2007, 50). Concerning the concrete members, most of them are either high- profile politicians whose careers have peaked but who do not want to leave the political scene or politicians 'on the rise'" (Bomber and Peterson 1999, 44).

According to Shackleton, EP is very *heterogeneous institution* (Shackleton 2006, 110) consisting of different party groups, national delegations and individual members. Those are concentrated in special parliamentary committees which represent 'legislative backbone' of the EP (Ringe 2010, 20). These committees are like miniatures of the EP. Performance of the EP is basically based on activities of these special committees. Each committee consists of chairperson, vice- chairs, party group coordinates and rapporteurs while proportional

¹ Since 2007 it includes representatives from 27 member states as Bulgaria and Romania joined the EU in this year.

representation of nationality an ideological preference is kept. After the EP receives legislative proposal, it is postponed to working committee while few opinion- giving committees also coordinate the functioning. Trough work in these committees, the EP has “more chance to influence policy making” (Raunio 2006, 304). According to Lord, the EP is perfect example of committee based parliament as more time is spent in those small groups than in plenary sessions (Lord 1998, 70). Individual committees are responsible for preparing draft and amendments. Later proposals are again discussed in EPGs where positions towards proposals are adopted. Finally, proposals are presented in plenary session by ‘rapporteur’ (Peterson and Shackleton 2006, 113). This presentation is followed by voting on them.

MEPs confirmed that work in committees is the most important and key part of their work in the EP. “Work in committees is the most important one. 70% or 80% of the work itself is done in committees” (Peter Šťastný). “Exactly in committees everything is decided. When you see the plenary session, there are only few people presenting. There is limited time for discussion” (Katarína Neved’alová, March 9th 2012). “So the professional subject matter in concrete topic is discussed in committees. Here it is debated and in plenary only political view is presented. So the main part of the work is in committees” (Monika Smolková). Even though the work in committees is the most demanding and very important for the functioning of the EP, relevance of political groups should not be overlooked. “All positions are first prepared within political groups. And when it goes to committee it is based on what is agreed in political groups” (Eduard Kukan).

System of these committees stands for consequent advantages as well as problems. On the one hand this positively contributes to more transparency of the whole process (Shackleton 2006, 113). It is due to relatively high level of autonomy of these committees and public nature of these meetings. Besides this, it contributes to more efficient and faster decision- making process. According to many, these “committees are like miniature versions

of the EP but more homogenous ones. Committee members share interests and expertise in concrete subject” (Magnette 2005, 122). On the other hand, committee system requires highly specialised and professionalized members. This seemingly advantageous composition of committees leads to fact that position of these experts is often times followed by others (less informed MEPs) in political groups and plenary sessions. It is often the fact, that these specialists are the only ones having full information and clear preferences about policies adopted. “Legislators are due to external constraints on their ability to collect information on great number of policy proposals quite uninformed about policies” (Ringe 2010, 209). “It is impossible to have detailed knowledge about all proposals. If you are not from that particular committee, you have no chance to know what it is about. But of course we have person who is dealing with that and he has to know everything about something. You can also rely on your political group colleagues from different countries who are in different committees. It is always discussed within political group where our rapporteur from that committee tells us whether the proposal is fine or no and how should we vote” (Katarína Neved’alová). “On political group meetings mostly main and shadow rapporteurs have the main saying here. We are dealing with very wide range of topics. And of course not everybody is into these topics. So rapporteur presents and explains that there is this kind of resolution which is in interest of this and this and so on” (Monika Smolková).

1.2 Functions and powers of the European Parliament

In this part I continue with analysis of powers and functions of the EP. This debate follows the argument of Judge and Earnshaw. They claim that legislatures are multifunctional institutions which must fulfil following three functions- legitimacy function (parliament must have its own legitimacy), linkage function (parliament must link politics to broader

population) and decision- making function (parliament must have some degree of decision-making capacity) (Judge and Earnshaw 2003, 10).

Concerning the first *legitimacy function*, the EP is considered to be a legitimate body as it is the only directly elected institution within EU structures. There was a false assumption behind the introduction of direct elections that it can solve broader problem with democratic deficit and increase legitimacy of the whole EU (LeDuc 2007, 140). It was also optimistically expected that more powerful EP can increase legitimacy of the EU (Judge and Earnshaw 2003, 14). Unfortunately, none of the above assumptions is correct and direct elections to the EP can not produce missing legitimacy for all other EU institutions. More courageously, these elections do not even ensure sufficient legitimacy for the EP itself.

In a broader sense, the EU suffers from 'democratic deficit' which can not be removed by direct EP elections. 'Democratic deficit' negatively undermines credibility and legitimacy of decisions, policies, institutions and the whole EU. Hallstein assumed three positive results from introduction of direct EP elections. He expected that voters will be interested and willing to examine the questions and the various options on which the EP would have to decide; there will be candidates with a truly European mandate; truly European political parties will emerge (Hallstein 1972, 74). Unfortunately, for voters there seems to be little at stake, domestic politics are still more important for voters so they are less motivated to participate and present their interest in EU politics. Next to this, candidates are still selected by domestic parties and we can hardly talk about truly European parties.

The most crucial problem linked to EP elections itself is the fact that there is no contest over control of political authority at the European level (Hix 2008, 68). More concretely, "neither national elections nor European Parliament elections are really European contest and they miss European element" (Hix 2008, 50). EP elections are not about personalities and political parties at the EU level or about direction of the EU policy agenda

so they simply miss ‘European’ element (Hix 2008, 70). It is not enough to have representative institutions and free and fair elections if these elections are uncontested and do not change the political outcome (Hix 2008, 76). Therefore, I would say that the EP emerging from these elections does not perfectly fulfil legitimate function.

Next to this, EP elections are characterized by low voting turnout and consequent inadequate representation at the EU level. This is related to *linkage function*, according to which parliament should create links and connections between broader public and political elites. In other words, parliament should connect people to government. However, it is debatable ‘who are the people’ and ‘what is the government’ in the EU (Judge and Earnshaw 2003, 66). In general, these linkages are mostly created through process of election and subsequent representation of voters’ preferences and interests. But the EU is often criticized for inadequate representation of public opinion, needs and values due to insufficiently competitive system of party politics (Lord 1998, 67). This is one of pivotal deficits of the party system at the EU level which is discussed more in detail later in the thesis.

Apart from insufficient representation of citizens’, linkage function is undermined by “the gap between powers of European institutions and citizens’ ability to influence the work and decisions of these institutions” (McCormick 2008, 122). McCormick argues that leaders make crucial decisions without asking people; Commission’s position as the main law initiator is too strong; there are relatively closed meetings which hinder accountability process, the EP is still weak; and European Court of Justice is too powerful (McCormick 2008, 124).

Finally, each legislature should be capable to *influence decision-making and policy making processes*. Here I refer to two scholars- Michael Mezey and Philip Norton. Mezey defines three categories of legislatures depending on its policy-making capacities. The EP can be defined as legislature with strong- policy making power as it can modify as well as reject executive proposals (Mezey as cited in Judge and Earnshaw 2003, 25). Similarly

Norton, distinguish between legislatures having policy- making capacity, policy- influencing capacity or having little policy impact. The EP again scores in the highest category as being a legislature with policy- making powers (legislature which can formulate and substitute policies for those proposed by executive) (Norton as cited in Judge and Earnshaw 2003, 13).

In the following debate it is explained why the EP scores so high in these categorizations and why it is considered as very powerful legislature. There are four crucial powers which define capacity of the EP to influence decision- making process- legislative power, budgetary power, appointment and dismissal powers and supervision power.

Concerning the *legislative power*, there are four procedures how the EP can interfere in legislation process- codecision, consultation, cooperation, and assent procedures. The most powerful is the codecision procedure, firstly introduced by Maastricht Treaty. Subsequent treaties widen its usage to more areas and since Lisbon Treaty the EP can be considered as equivalent partner to the CoM. In other words, the EP became equal co- legislator next to the CoM (Ringe 2010, 15). Currently, term 'ordinary legislative procedure' is used since Lisbon Treaty. There is no need to provide detailed explanation of concrete steps of this complicated procedure. Therefore, I rather simply outline the skeleton of its structure. Firstly, the Commission as legislative initiator prepares legislative proposal. The EP and the CoM independently take position on this proposal. The EP submits its position to the CoM. Following this, the CoM can either adopt proposal or return it back to the EP. The EP has possibility to amend its position. If the CoM rejects the new EP' s position, Conciliation Committee tries to reconcile positions of the EP and the CoM. In the final stage of the procedure, the EP can still reject CoM' s position by absolute majority and text is rejected (www.europarl.europa.eu). The EP has basically right to veto legislative proposal even if the CoM adopts it. Currently, majority of EU laws are adopted jointly with the EP and the CoM.

Nowadays, this procedure is used in around 80% of legislation (Ringe 2010, 15). According to many scholars, the EP became an equal partner to the CoM. When applying this ordinary legislative procedure, “three poles of political triangle are working together where none of them can dominate the other two and each has power to oppose any feature” (Magnette 2005, 118). As was already mentioned, the EP works mostly in its special working committees in order to make whole process more efficient. For ordinary legislative procedure role of ‘rapporteur’ and ‘shadow rapporteur’ is inevitable. He or she is a member of the EP, having expert knowledge in concrete issue. ‘Rapporteur’ implements amendments into draft proposal, later steers this proposal during stages of legislation process and also negotiates compromises with the CoM and the Commission (Ringe 2010 15). Crucial role of rapporteurs was also confirmed by MEPs in interviews. “Main rapporteur does not consult with all members of the EP but only with the shadow rapporteurs of particular political groups. These shadow rapporteurs have very important role because they communicate with members of the EP from their political groups about amendments they want to propose. These rapporteurs have the key role, main and shadow rapporteurs sit together and try to come to compromises” (Monika Smolková).

In areas where ordinary legislative procedure is not applied, different powerful mechanisms are used. Even though, they are less influential, they can not be overlooked. For example, power of assent is like authorisation necessary for adoption of some acts. It is often compared to ratification power of national parliaments (Judge and Earnshaw 2003, 210). This assent procedure is mostly used in signing agreements with foreign countries or when deciding about the accession of new candidate. According to some, it is “cruder form of codecision procedure as the EP can use its veto power here” (Bomber and Peterson 1999, 45). In order to summarize the powerful position of the EP in this legislative process I refer to Simon Hix. He argues that the EP is not forced to support the Commission or the CoM and it

is probably one of the most powerful legislatures in the world (Hix, Noury and Roland 2007, 21). He also claims that development of the EP legislative powers can be characterised as “transition from consultation to bicameralism” (Hix as cited in Judge and Earnshaw 2003, 292).

Second important power of the EP is its *budgetary power* which applies in budget approval and budget implementation. Draft budget is proposed by the Commission and submitted to the CoM which adopts its position on it. Then the EP adopts some amendments to it and in case of need Conciliation Committee is set up (www.europarl.europa.eu). I claim that in such a situation, the EP has even higher authority than the CoM due to following reasons. Firstly, the budget can not be approved without signature of President of the EP. Secondly, the EP also has authority over implementation of the budget (implementation is conducted by Commission) as it can grant discharge to the Commission about its implementation. This power to grant or not to grant discharge is the EP’s strongest control over the Commission in implementing budget (Judge and Earnshaw 2003, 219). There is need to emphasize that balance between the EP and the CoM was mostly reached after Lisbon Treaty. The EP is together with the CoM regarded as a “budgetary authority” (McCormick 2008, 85). Doubtlessly, the EP has more influential say over the budget than national parliaments do. The EP has a control over expenditures and a little control over revenues (Judge and Earnshaw 2003, 213). EU revenues consist from four sources- custom duties, agricultural levies, VAT resources and GNP resources (contributions from member states based on to their GNP). The last segment is the most important one as it stands for around 70% of total resources (www.europarl.europa.eu).

Thirdly, the EP has extensive *appointment and dismissal powers* in relation to other European institutions. It has authority over appointment of the Commission, Ombudsman, Court of Auditors or European Central Bank (ECB). More concretely, the EP must approve

appointment of President of the Commission, his Commissioners, and some members of ECB. Simon Hix summarizes development of appointment and supervisory powers as transformation of the EU from international organization to parliamentary government (Hix as cited in Judge and Earnshaw 2003, 292). In 2004 for example, the EP used this power and blocked the appointment of Italian Commissioner Rocco Buttiglione due to his controversial views on homosexuality and women (McCormick 2008, 85). Probably the most important weapon in the hands of the EP is its right to express motion of non- confidence to the Commission. This means that it can also subsequently force the whole Commission to resign (www.europarl.europa.eu). So far, the EP has never used this 'atom bomb' to censure the Commission (Bomberg, Cram and Martin 2003, 58). But it was very close to this step in 1999 when Santer Commission resigned before the EP published its findings of investigation on nepotism and mismanagement (McCormick 2008, 85).

Finally, the EP has extensive *supervisory powers* (power of scrutiny) in relation to other European institutions. It confronts dual executive- the CoM and the Commission (Judge and Earnshaw 2003, 236). The EP exercises its power to oversight through various mechanisms. Concerning the Commission and the CoM, it has right to ask oral and written questions (written are used more often) (Judge and Earnshaw 2003, 236). It can also set up committees of inquiry to examine implementation and use of European law. It can be said that the EP has more power over the Commission than over the CoM. Concerning the European Council, it has little power to influence its work so far (Hix, Noury and Roland 2007, 13). Besides this, the EP examines and solves petitions put forth by EU citizens and examines annual reports from the Commission, the CoM and ECB. Finally it can ask statement from European Court of Justice on conformity of international treaties with EU laws.

All the above discussed powers and functions of the EP confirm its influential and important status in EU structures. More precisely, the EP has history- making power (through

approving appointment of President of the Commission and approving the accession of new member states), policy- making power (through its role as co- legislator and institution crucial in budgetary and supervision areas) but it has little power in policy- implementing (Peterson and Shackleton 2006, 114- 117).

2. European Union party system

In this chapter, political parties at the European level are under main scrutiny. In the first part of the chapter, I provide discussion on political parties and party systems from general perspective. Then I turn to situation in the EP where political parties from all member states are represented in European party groups. Previous chapter indicated that European party groups are, next to parliamentary working committees, crucial element in the European Parliament. Here two things will be in the main focus- level of intraparty cohesion, discipline and loyalty and level of interparty competition. By doing so, I aim to provide comparison with the ‘well functioning and developed party system’ defined by theory. I attempt to highlight the most serious imperfections and difficulties with political parties and party system at the EU level. I base my arguments on theoretical knowledge obtained from the literature and on information obtained from interviews with MEPs.

2.1 Well functioning and developed party system

Firstly, I present arguments of the most prominent scholars discussing political parties. Juan Linz claims that “political parties are essential component for working democracy” (Linz 2002, 291). This conviction represents the pivotal idea standing behind my thesis. Next to strong position of political parties in democratic system, Linz also formulates critique, distrust and contradictory attitudes towards functioning of political parties. He provides valuable discussion about three paradoxes linked to political parties. He accepts that parties are necessary but unfortunately not trusted by voters; they are interested only in votes and not in people’s opinions and they should represent voters’ interests but not special interests (Linz 2002, 294- 301). I fully agree with first two paradoxes but have slight difficulties with accepting the last one. I assume that political parties should provide wide range of political options in order to represent interests from all sections of society. It may seem that Linz

favours more moderate and centre oriented politics in order to avoid high fragmentation of political spectrum. Anyhow, crucial role of these paradoxes is that they point out to deviations from 'ideally functioning political parties'. Linz continues and suggests solutions to these paradoxes by addressing the idea of 'more democratic parties'. He stresses the need for higher responsiveness (related to communication with citizens), responsibility (ability of parties to hold their commitments) and accountability of parties (holding parties accountable for their past activities) (Linz 2002, 309-312).

Philippe Schmitter has similar position as Linz towards the role and functioning of political parties. He situates the crucial role of the political parties in broader context of politics. Schmitter argues that political parties provide by far the most important linkage between citizens and political process. Party platforms provide the best possible means for aggregating diverse interests and passions into a coherent, system- wide mix of public policies. Consequently, competition between them provides the most reliable mechanism for ensuring the accountability of rulers and cooperation provides the only feasible way of forming viable governments (Schmitter 2001, 67). When combining these roles of political parties, one can get a picture of well functioning and developed party system. Schmitter also underlines inevitable function of citizens in political process and need for their vital participation. According to Schmitter, political parties have consolidating function in recruitment process as they allow citizens to have choice between alternatives, provide set of goals and make citizens feel that they are part of the process. Parties are capable to form a government and to aggregate interests (Schmitter 2001, 73). It is obvious that without adequate and vital citizens' contribution to politics, functioning of party system is questionable.

According to Schmitter there are four crucial functions each political party should fulfil. Parties should structure electoral competition; they should ensure symbolic identification; they should aggregate interests and passions and they should form a

government (Schmitter 2012). As is discussed in further parts of this chapter, political parties at the EU level (European party groups) do not fulfil these functions properly. EPGs do not form government; they do not really structure electoral competition as EP elections are organized by national parties; and one can be very sceptical about symbolic party identification or aggregation of interests as voters are rather attached to national parties than to EPGs.

Another group of scholars discusses political parties and government models. I consider it legitimate to talk about party government model here due to fact that the EU should be a “representative democracy” (TEU Art. 10A; Lisbon Treaty Art. 8A). As argued by Mair and Thomassen, in European countries “representative government takes the form of party government and representative democracy operates as a party democracy” (Mair and Thomassen 2010, 23). In other words, political parties are necessary within representative democracy (Mair and Thomassen 2010, 24; Judge and Earnshaw 2003, 111).

There are various approaches for defining party government models. I prefer referring to model presented by Schmitt and Thomassen who emphasize role of decisive elections. Based on their model, voters should have a choice so there are at least two parties with different policy proposals; voters should have clear preferences; voters should know about differences between party programs of different political parties; voters should vote according to their preferences; parties should be internally cohesive enough to implement policies; and party or coalition of parties winning the elections takes over the government (Schmitt and Thomassen 1999, 113- 116). However, both scholars accept that their model is rather a theoretical ideal. Therefore, they define list of requirements for more realistic, responsive and well functioning, party model. According to them there is need for voters who can choose from alternatives and who care about problems; need for sufficiently cohesive political parties; and need for voters who know about differences between parties and subsequently vote

according to their concerns- they choose parties they believe will best solve problems which are central to them (Schmitt and Thomassen 1999, 115). In later parts of this chapter, I look closer on the functioning of EPGs in relation to well functioning party model defined by these scholars. I focus mostly on attribute linked specifically to behaviour of EPGs and not to behaviour of voters. Therefore, level of internal cohesiveness of EPGs will be discussed.

When discussing party systems, one can not overlook valuable contribution of Peter Mair to this topic. He argues that “party systems are defined by reference to a given structure of competition, in which the patterned interactions between the parties enjoy a pronounced degree of predictability and stability” (Mair 2000, 39). Similarly, Sartori explains that “system displays properties that do not belong to a separate consideration of its component elements; system results from patterned interactions of its component parts; and a party system is system of interactions resulting from inter- party competition” (Sartori 1976, 43). Both prominent scholars emphasize competition and interactions between parts of the system. However, it is very difficult to talk about any of these at the EU level where no government is created after EP elections and where there is no contest over executive office. In other words, the EP is a representative body in which there is no competition for executive office and thus there is no European party system (Mair 2000, 41). I fully agree with argument that there is no European Union party system so far. However, in later sections of this chapter I attempt to look closer on relations between EPGs. It will be done with the aim to discover whether there are any interactions and competition between EPGs.

2.2 European party groups

In this subchapter, I intend to look closer at the functioning of political parties at the EU level- European party groups- and at deviations from well functioning parties and party system. Schmitt and Thomassen stipulate to which extent is the European Union party system

(EUPS) well functioning and developed. They argue that in order to approximate to their 'responsible party model' some concrete steps need to be done. There is "need for party government where cohesive parties with different political platforms compete for voters' support" (Schmitt and Thomassen 1999, 257). However, as will be discussed later, political groups at the EU level are cohesive but not really competitive. Judge and Earnshaw's idea of party government where competitive parties play a crucial role hits the same problem- there are "no competitive parties at the EU level and no EU government" (Judge and Earnshaw 2003, 112).

Robert Ladrech, is another scholar dealing with parties and party system more precisely within European context. He rightfully asserts that initially there was expectation that European level parties will become a factor for integration within the EU (Ladrech 2006, 495). However, the current functioning of the EUPS can challenge the validity of this argument. Unfortunately, there is still only modest organizational growth and linkage between supranational and national political parties after thirty years of European Union parties' existence (Ladrech 2006, 498). He explains this phenomenon with continued centrality of national parties in party activity at the EU level as national parties behave as 'gatekeepers' on transnational party activity. McKay presents similar point and claims that there are basically "no union- wide parties of the name but there are just 'families' of parties across countries" (McKay 2001, 135). These arguments point out to obstacles in forming developed and well functioning party system at EU level. Schmitter and Trechsel argue that the reason for no genuine European parties is no uniform basis of the EP elections across member states (Schmitter and Trechsel 2004, 48). This point will be discussed later in the thesis.

There is also another institutional impediment towards formation of a developed EUPS- fact that there is system of well- established national parties with which any EUPS would have to compete (Filippov, Ordeshook and Shvestova 2004, 321). This is doubtlessly

very clear and strong argument against the development of the EUPS. I would not be too enthusiastic about idea that this obstacle (well- established national party systems) can be fully removed. The principal idea behind the difficulty with parties at the EU level is that they are still subordinated to national parties. Even though EPGs have vital importance in the EP, they do not deserve appropriate attention from voters or politicians. Next to this, since 1979 until 1998 across twelve of the current member states, only three new political parties directly linked to the issue of European integration were created (Mair 2000, 30). This happened regardless the fact that in these years national party systems in these twelve countries became more fragmented and many new parties emerged. Moreover, these three parties proved to be among the least successful in domestic elections (Mair 2000, 30).

Before going into deeper discussion about EPGs, I would like to refer to Raunio's definition of party group. He argues that "party group is organized group of members of representative body who are elected either under the same party label or under label of different parties that do not compete against each other" (Raunio 2006, 299). Concerning the case in the EP, difficulty emerges. As we know, common labels of party groups in the EP are rarely used during campaigns before EP elections. Moreover, these party groups usually consist of more parties from one member state which compete against each other in these elections. This is just one difficulty and imperfection linked to 'party groups' represented in the EP. However, there seem to be more severe and inherent problems linked to EPGs I intend to discuss in following subchapters.

2.2.1 Heterogeneous composition of the European Parliament

Since 2004, each EPG should consist of at least 19 members of the EP (MEPs) and should represent at least one fifth of member states (Raunio 2006, 299). Currently, there is seven EPGs- European People's Party (EPP), Progressive Alliance of Socialists and

Democrats (S&D), Alliance of Liberals of Democrats for Europe (ALDE), European Greens- European Free Alliance (Greens- EFA), European Conservatives and Reformists (ECR), European United Left- Nordic Green Left (GUE- NGL), Europe of Freedom and Democracy (EFD) and Non- Inscrits (NI). Please see division of seats in the EP since last 2009 EP in Figure 1 below. Figure 1 shows that EPP followed by S&D are the strongest EPGs in this electoral term. Then they are followed by Liberals, Greens, Conservatives, Leftist group, Eurosceptics and non- attached members.

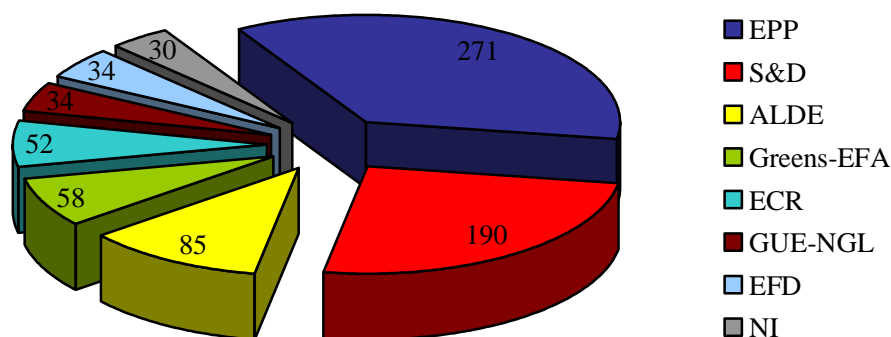


Figure 1: European Parliament composition since 2009 elections

Note: EPP: European People's Party; S&D: Progressive Alliance of Socialists and Democrats; ALDE: Group of the Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe; Greens-EFA: European Greens- European Free Alliance; ECR: European Conservatives and Reformists; GUE-NGL: European United Left- Nordic Green Left; EFD: Europe of Freedom and Democracy; NI: Non- Inscrits

Source: www.europarl.europa.eu

Since first direct elections in 1979, EPP and S&D remain the strongest EPGs. They have usually around 30%- 35% of seats while other smaller EPGs have around 3- 10%. Please see power distribution in the EP over time presented in Figure 2 below. Based on this power division, party system at the EU level is often labelled as 'two- plus- several party system' (Hix, Noury and Roland 2007, 22- 23). Figure 2 indicates that power distribution between EPGs is quite stable over time (even though concrete labels of EPGs changed slightly over time). In general one can observe that Social Democrats were more successful than Christian

Democrats until 1999 EP elections and since then Christian Democrats are the most powerful EPG. It is also shown that Greens and Liberals gained slightly on power over time. Next to this, far- left and far- right groups lost on power. Interestingly and in contrast to current situation, there were national conservatives and far- right nationalist in previous terms. This might indicate that political spectrum of the EP is more centrist while extremist EPGs are on decline. However, conclusion that the EP is more homogenous would be premature as it is quite possible that elements of far- left and far- right politics were integrated into other EPGs.

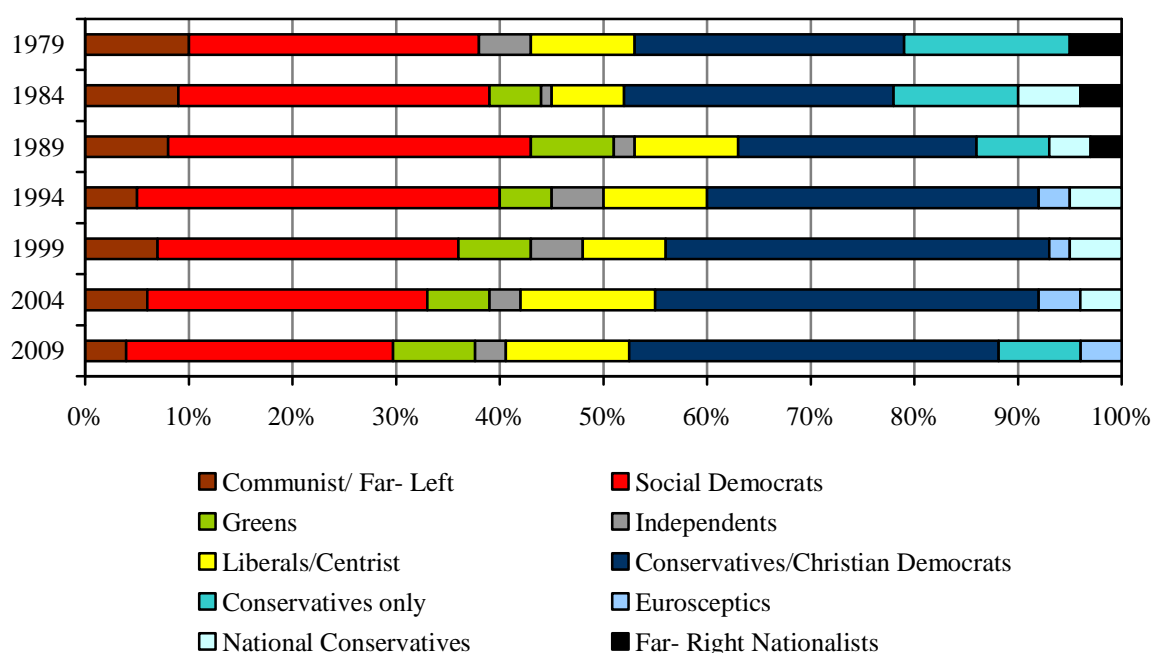


Figure 2: Political composition of the European Parliament over time

Note: Next to party families there are current EPGs indicated in the brackets: Communists/ Far- Left (GUE-NGL); Social Democrats (S&D); Greens (Greens-EFA); Independents (NI), Liberals/ Centrist (ALDE); Conservatives/ Christian Democrats (EPP); Conservatives only (ECR); Eurosceptics (EFD)

Source: www.europarl.europa.eu

2.3 Cohesion in European party groups

Cohesiveness is inevitable precondition for effective functioning of the parties and their capability to have influence on policy making and decision making processes. When discussing cohesion within EPGs we should keep in mind that it can be undermined by their

extremely heterogeneous composition. Surprisingly, despite of their high internal heterogeneity, EPGs are quite cohesive in their voting (even though they are still less cohesive than political parties in member states legislatures) (Judge and Earnshaw 2003, 155). Based on literature, level of cohesion increased until 1984 and since then it is on slight decline (Hix, Noury and Roland 2007, 92). Contrary to that, data from the VoteWatch portal show that cohesion of EPGs is since 2004 on slight increase (VoteWatch portal). Table 1 below presents data for last electoral period since 2009. It is shown that cohesion in all EPGs (except of EFD and NI) is remarkably high, above 80%. Greens have even higher cohesion level than the two biggest EPGs- EPP and S&D.

Table 1: Cohesion levels in European party groups since 2009

| EPP | S&D | ALDE | G-EFA | ECR | GUENGL | EFD | NI |
|-----|-----|------|-------|-----|--------|-----|-----|
| 93% | 93% | 90% | 95% | 86% | 82% | 49% | 41% |

Source: www.votewatch.eu

Hix, Noury and Roland also conducted research with remarkable results. According to their findings, EPGs are more cohesive than national delegations of MEPs as average EPG cohesion is around 80% while average cohesion of national delegation is around 60% (Hix, Noury and Roland 2007, 94). It even seems that EPGs' cohesion was increased while national delegations' cohesion has declined.

There are also more pessimistic views regarding the apparent high cohesion in EPGs. Kreppel argues that next to high level of cohesion there is also high level of abstention on voting which does not mean that there is no opposition towards party policies (Kreppel 2002, 172). This abstention problem is linked to level of participation of MEPs. In general, month of ordinary MEP consists of week in committee, week in party group, week in plenary session and week back home dealing with constituency and local business (Hix, Noury and Roland

2007, 72). Basically only one week per month is devoted to debates and voting in plenary session. There is general positive trend in participation which is increasing over time and positively variations among countries in participation are also decreasing (Hix, Noury and Roland 2007, 77- 79).

Discussion of cohesion in EPGs is inseparably linked to voting behaviour of individual MEPs. Therefore, I consider it inevitable to look at factors and determinants which influence voting in the EP.

2.3.1 MEPs = agents with two principals

Also Ringe accepts that there is a remarkable cohesion within EPGs, but he emphasizes that EPGs are structurally and organizationally weak compared to national parties (Ringe 2010, 19). This problem is linked to fact that MEPs are basically agents with two principals- national party and European party group (EPG)- and sometimes it might be unclear who controls them. Based on principal- agent theory, principal can not control full activity of agent but only final outcome of agent's work. However, there are some tools which principals (EPG and national parties) can use in order to influence activity of agents (MEPs).

From EPGs's perspective, they can control allocation of committee assignments and rapporteurships, parliamentary agenda, access to political leadership positions or speaking time in plenary sessions. In terms of sanctions or punishments, EPGs can expel either individual MEP or whole national party delegation from the EPG (Hix, Noury and Roland 2007, 133-135). However, this step is rarely used as it would weaken whole EPG in the end. Next to this radical instrument, EPG has basically no other sanctions if deviation from party politics and no rewards for party loyalty (Ringe 2010, 27). In general, they have little instruments to motivate and discipline their members. In summary, EPGs can satisfy office-

seeking interests of individual MEP. According to monitoring instruments, EPGs control MEPs either via 'whips' (monitoring of votes and informing about breaches of party voting instructions) or 'group coordinates' (senior member of committee monitors work of the group) (Hix, Noury and Roland 2007, 134- 135).

Based on interviews with MEPs from Slovakia, all respondents confirmed that there is no punishment or sanctions from the EPG if MEP votes against the EPG's position. They emphasized that they can freely vote on their conviction and consciousness and that opinion diverging from their EPG's position is fully accepted and understood. Respondents also mentioned that position differing from the EPG's position should be announced in advance. Despite emphasized free will in voting, one of the respondents admitted that membership in the EPG is not meaningless factor in their voting behaviour. This might indicate that some level of internal discipline and loyalty is created. "Of course, they (EPG) can not punish you. Because it is your personal decision and nobody can force you to vote in line with the EPG. So when there is something specific, you can always vote differently. The only sanction available is that when MEP requests for some reports or materials during next deliberation, the EPG will not provide them to him. But this is something which is not done usually" (Katarína Neved'alová). "After legislative proposal is approved by committee, basically something like check or verification is done within the EPG. We basically go through the agenda prepared for voting and everybody can express himself here. And sometimes position of the EPG is taken based on majority voting. In cases when I have different position than the EPG I do not see any problem in it" (Peter Šťastný). "Nobody persuades me. They will tell me that well ok it is your position. If you think like that, vote like that. But the opposite position than the majority has, is needed to be told to the chair of EPG in advance" (Monika Smolková). "I always vote according to my own reason. Ordinarily I vote differently than EPG's voting list. And this is accepted. We understand those who will vote differently. But

there is an effort to coordinate voting as much as possible. This membership in EPG is very strictly understood and it is expected from us that we would behave according to that” (Eudard Kukan).

From national parties’ perspective, it seems that they have more potential to influence MEPs’ behaviour. In principle, politicians do primary seek their reelection and there is need to satisfy their vote-seeking interests (Ringe 2010, 27). Here national parties become especially crucial as party nomination and selection of candidates is in their hands. This might be a significant incentive for MEPs to follow national preferences in case of conflicts between EPG and national party. But even though national parties create candidate lists for the EP elections, it is often times difficult for them to bind MEPs to specific preferences (Judge and Earnshaw 2003, 147). Next to this, quite high turnover of MEPs undermines the leverage of nomination process.

It seems inevitable to look at conflict situations when the EPG and national party have different position on some legislative proposal in order to see capability of ‘principals’ to influence MEP’s decision. According to Judge and Earnshaw, even though national parties tend to intervene into decision process in the EP, their effectiveness is limited due to features of decision- making in the EP (Judge and Earnshaw 2003, 147). In conflict situations (situations when EPG’s position differs from national party’s position) MEPs usually vote in line with EPG position also due to procedural rules in the EP which favours cohesion and cooperation (Judge and Earnshaw 2003, 148). Quite opposite position is presented by group of scholars arguing that in case of conflict, MEP is likely to vote in line with its national party (Hix, Noury and Roland 2007, 133). However, they also admit that these conflicts are usually surprisingly rare. According to their research, there is 90% consensus of voting between EPGs and national parties, less than 5% of MEPs’ votes is against their national party and less than 9% is against their EPG (Hix, Noury and Roland 2007, 138). This was also confirmed in

interviews. “It is an exception. It is not a daily issue” (Katarína Neved’alová). Scholars also argue that this convergent voting is quite stable over time. But one should keep in mind that also individual MEP’ s preferences matter. In cases of high distance between MEP’ s preference and EPG’ s position, MEP votes against its EPG regardless of national party position (Hix, Noury and Roland 2007, 143).

Concerning the influence of national party on individual MEPs voting, information obtained from interviews is the following. Contrary to the literature, respondents mostly claimed that their national parties do not significantly influence their voting and activities in the EP. This can be partly explained by inadequate cooperation and communication between MEPs and national parties. “Communication with my party is not at such level as it should be. Communication is mainly when some really key questions are on agenda and there is need to make fast decisions in agenda in which the MEP is not maybe sufficiently oriented. There is not any system created which would ensure this permanent communication. Moreover, the initiative always derives from MEPs. So this communication is ad hoc, from case to case. And in absolute majority, the initiative for this contact derives from MEPs” (Eudard Kukan). “Communication with my national party is rather informal” (Peter Šťastný). “I would probably appreciate meetings at ministerial level if some important legislations are dealt. Sometimes, I get information about bargaining between ministries and Commission from media. This is kind of shame and this communication absents totally” (Monika Smolková).

MEPs also claimed that their national parties do not regularly take positions (unless something urgent and weighty is on agenda) on concrete legislative proposals discussed in the EP. However, their responses were different (even in cases when respondents were from same political party and same EPG). “No. Maybe in some cases yes. I can not tell that entirely or categorically that no. Because it is more in concern of representatives of the government than in party itself. Sometimes there is need to ask for Slovak position. Those are not so much

political but Slovak issues. To present political interests of SDKU in the European Parliament...it is out of question, and even not logical” (Peter Šťastný). “In some concrete questions we discuss proposals with SDKU. As we need to obtain political position from SDKU towards concrete questions” (Eduard Kukan). “No, we do not discuss with SMER concrete legislative proposals because SMER was in opposition during last 15 months. If it is something significant, SMER takes its position. As for example there was this question regarding resolution on Hungary” (Monika Smolková). “If something is discussed in the European Parliament and we are supposed to take some position on it, then of course we will make some proposal and it is communicated here with the headquarter of national party” (Katarína Neved’alová).

All respondents agreed that in situations linked directly to interests of Slovakia, they vote in line with domestic position. But in these cases, they represent usually Slovak, not partisan position. In key questions, they cooperate together as national delegation and vote as a ‘Slovak bloc’ even when it is against EPGs’ positions. “So if there are things which are above ideology, then definitely yes, we cooperate with other MEPs from Slovakia. And there is quite a lot of these things I have to admit. Since these are European issues. And what is good for Europe is also good for Slovakia and vice versa” (Peter Šťastný). “I have to tell that if there are topics as was for example nuclear energy, then we (Slovak MEPs) agree entirely. Even though EPGs had different positions and various opinions, we agreed entirely and we had no problem” (Monika Smolková). “So if we want to present something as Slovak interest, then on majority of topics we can agree if it is linked to Slovak interest. Then we all vote in favour of Slovakia. No party in Slovakia will tell you that it goes against nuclear energy and that we will close all power plants. So for example, Socialists are against nuclear energy. But we have this exception that we told them that we are for nuclear energy” (Katarína

Neved'alová). “But if there is some situation, usually negative, or if really national and statewide interests are at stake, thirteen of us adopts common position” (Eduard Kukan).

In general respondents claimed that in majority of cases European issues prevail over national ones. But they also admitted that position of their national party is not overlooked. “We are independent in decision making of course. But obviously, it is clear that we are somehow linked to our national party” (Katarína Neved'alová). “Political position of SDKU has sometimes priority over the political position of political group in which SDKU is a member” (Eduard Kukan).

2.3.2 Voting in the European Parliament

While discussing level of cohesion in EPGs, we should keep in mind that it can not be monitored in all situations. In the EP there are three types of voting which can be used- ‘show of hands’ (chair of session observes which side has won the vote), ‘electronic voting’ (MEPs can vote Yes, No or Abstain and this voting is anonymous) and ‘roll- call voting’ (MEPs votes are recorded in the minutes) (Hix, Noury and Roland 2007, 29). Cohesion can be monitored and measured only when roll- call voting is used. But this approximately applies only to one third of situations. It is not used automatically, but based on request of rapporteur, EPG or one fifth of MEPs. There is also positive relationship between usage of roll- calls and increased power of the EP (Hix, Noury and Roland 2007, 30).

“Roll- call is done in situations when it is not clear that the majority can be achieved or in some specific situations where for example rapporteur or EPG requests for roll- call vote. It must be always requested in advance. But it is also done when visual majority voting was used but it was not clear who won” (Katarína Neved'alová). “It is used when rapporteurs propose it based on results in committees, whether it was there approved or no” (Monika Smolková). “Basically it is often times made on behalf of request of somebody, either

member of the EP or rapporteur. And also many times it can happen that directly EPG can request for it. And there are many controversial issues when it is used for political purposes. If they want to show and prove that they stood behind their value, then they request for roll call” (Peter Šťastný).

Contrary to the literature and theory, respondents argued that use of roll- call has no impact on voting behaviour of individual MEPs. “People do not vote differently when there is roll- call. They vote exactly how they want to vote” (Katarína Nevedálová). “No, I think no. Nobody is following it in such manner” (Monika Smolková). “I do not think so. But you really have knowledge who voted how” (Eduard Kukan).

2.3.3 Other determinants influencing cohesion

There are positive incentives as well as some negative obstacles to intraparty loyalty in the EP. In order to achieve consensus, EPGs often time present centre oriented positions which are acceptable for many (Raunio 2006, 302). EPGs are well aware of fact that without intraparty cohesion it is much more complicated to have influence on decision- making process. Moreover, with increased power of the EP there is more at stake for the EP. Therefore, consensus and cohesion is even more valuable and expected.

On the other hand, there are valid reasons going against the politics of cohesion. Next to influence of national parties, there is inherent problem in political system at the EU level. Executive branch (Commission) is not dependent on majority in the EP as composition of the Commission is only partly based on EP elections results (Raunio 2006, 300). There is no classic coalition- opposition dynamics as there is no EU government based on partisan majorities in the EP. Another crucial obstacle towards cohesion is the fact that the EP does not control the agenda setting at such level as national parties do in member states (Hix, Noury and Roland 2007, 5). Agenda is in majority set externally to the EP, thus the increased

cohesion can not be explained by strategic control of agenda setting (Hix, Noury and Roland 2007, 108). Therefore, agenda setting can explain party discipline and increased cohesion only very partially.

Here is the list of the determinants which supports intraparty cohesion- size of the EPG (bigger party group can have bigger influence on the outcome and more is at stake for members of this party group), number of MEPs in government, pro- EU orientation of the EPG (Hix, Noury and Roland 2007). Next to this, MEPs are more disciplined when roll- call voting is requested by EPG he is member of. MEPs are also more cohesive on partial amendments than on whole reports. There are also more individual determinants specific for each MEP which can influence his voting behaviour. It matters whether his national party delegation is in the leadership of the EPG. Next to this, people being longer in the EP are usually more independent from their national party so there is higher chance for party loyalty within EPG (Hix, Noury and Roland 2007, 143). Surprisingly, internal heterogeneity and diversity of the EPG has no effect on party discipline. But division and fragmentation along national lines decreases level of cohesion (Hix, Noury and Roland 2007, 101). Finally, when external issues like security, defence and trade are discussed, cohesion is usually lower.

Interestingly, over the years cohesion within concrete party groups increased but in general cohesion in the whole EP decreased. Lower level of consensus can be somehow related to level of competition between EPGs which is under scrutiny in the following part.

2.4 Competition between European party groups

This subchapter provides discussion about competition and interactions between EPGs. Generally, EUPS is by many criticized for very low level of interparty competition. EPGs do not produce real agendas but rather moderate and general manifestos. Therefore, they do not provide spectrum of various alternatives and opposing positions for voters.

When discussing competition tendencies in the EP, we should keep in mind that there is no coalition- opposition conflict in the EP. Another fact is that no EPG is big enough to have significant majority for adopting any policy decision. Therefore, work of party groups in the EP is characterized by cooperation and compromises (Peterson and Shackleton 2006, 122). According to many scholars, main incentive for coalition formation tendencies is policy preference of the EPG and not desire to be a powerbroker (Hix, Noury and Roland 2007, 148). In other words, policy preferences are more important than 'being on the winning side' (Hix, Noury and Roland 2007, 158). Also Magnette emphasize that in the heterogeneous EP it is impossible to have homogenous majority. Therefore, there is need to seek wide compromises (Magnette 2005, 116). He defines EUPS as a form of "polarized pluralism characterized by strong fragmentation, ideological polarization and government of centrist compromise" (Magnette 2005, 116). Many other scholars have similar opinions about these centrist, consensual and moderate policies. It is often argued that EPGs must produce these moderate proposals in order to have influence on decision- making processes (Judge and Earnshaw 2003, 155). Kreppel explains these moderate stances of EPGs in the following way. She argues that there is left- right cleavage in the EP but it is less important as there is seen potential to influence decision making processes. Therefore, party system is more pragmatic seeking cooperation, compromises and moderate policies (Kreppel 2002, 173). She also calls EUPS as "a moderate party system founded on bipartisian cooperation" (Kreppel 2002, 151).

There is need to create coalitions on the spot when individual issues are voted. Usually the two biggest party groups EPP and S&D cooperate together which is considered as a "sign of maturity" (Raunio 2006, 305). EPP and S&D have similar positions on many issues and they tend to collude because of legislative procedures rules in the EP. "In a vast majority of cases, some compromise solution is found in order that both party groups would vote together" (Eduard Kukan).

However, this trend of ‘grand coalition’ is currently on decline and these two EPGs tend to cooperate more often with other smaller EPGs. Liberals and Greens become more important in this coalition building processes as they occupy pivotal position between EPP and S&D. Based on interviews, ad hoc coalition formation depends largely on topic and issues discussed. “The strongest ones are EPP and Socialists and also Liberals often join. But there are topics when there is fight for Liberals. So who gets Liberals usually gets majority as they can turn the scales. But also ECR and Greens are quite strong; it still does not have to be enough. But usually when you gain Liberals you can also gain others” (Peter Šťastný). “I would say Liberals are the next. If we want to propose something but can not make an agreement with Socialists, we try to agree with Liberals, Greens and ECR. But these have to be some very crucial questions on which we can not agree” (Eduard Kukan).

Table 2 below presents recent data from VoteWatch portal. It demonstrates ‘ad hoc coalitions’ created in around 65% of cases.

Table 2: Coalition trends in the European Parliament since 2009

| Winning majorities | % | No |
|------------------------------------|-------|-----|
| ALDE+G-EFA+EPP+S&D+ECR+EFD+GUE-NGL | 11.72 | 337 |
| ALDE+G-EFA+EPP+S&D+GUE-NGL | 9.60 | 276 |
| ALDE+EPP+S&D+ECR+EFD | 6.16 | 177 |
| ALDE+G-EFA+EPP+S&D+EFD+GUE-NGL | 5.29 | 152 |
| ALDE+G-EFA+EPP+S&D+ECR+GUE-NGL | 5.18 | 149 |
| ALDE+G-EFA+EPP+S&D | 5.43 | 156 |
| ALDE+EPP+ECR+EFD | 5.22 | 150 |
| ALDE+G-EFA+S&D+GUE-NGL | 4.97 | 143 |
| ALDE+G-EFA+EPP+S&D+ECR+EFD | 4.70 | 135 |
| ALDE+G-EFA+EPP+S&D+EFD | 3.62 | 104 |

Source: www.votewatch.eu

These data also confirm decline of ‘grand coalition’ trend. Usually very wide ad hoc coalitions (consisting of five or six EPGs) are created. This was also affirmed by respondents

in interviews. “And there are many cases that decisions are adopted by let’s say five party groups. This is the best situation” (Eduard Kukan). Even though, there is no clear pattern observed in these coalition tendencies (presented in table 2), one can see that Liberals are in winning coalition most often times. This supports the argument that Liberals play a crucial role in coalition formation and bargaining processes.

Keeping in mind that there are no real polarized positions in the EP, one might be sceptical about level of competition between EPGs. According to scholars, there are possibly only two lines along which these EPGs compete on. Next to crucial left- right dimension there is also pro- anti integration division (Judge and Earnshaw 2003, Lord 1998, Raunio 2006, Ringe 2010). The advantage of left- right dimension is its presence in almost all EU member states which leads to the highest level of congruence between voters and candidates on this scale (Lord 1998, 69). On the other hand, we should keep in mind that major left- right issues like social policy, taxes or health system are not in the competence of the EP (Raunio 2006, 305).

Against the theory, respondents in interviews did not confirm visible ideological conflict or competition between Left and Right. They rather admit presence of pro- anti EU elements in the EP. “In majority of cases there is no conflict between EPP and S&D. I can tell that 90% or highly above 90% of the final version of the legislation is approved” (Peter Šťastný). “Conflicts are usually at rhetoric level. But in these two party groups (EPP and S&D) there is a maximum effort to find an agreement. Because when they agree it is basically decided. But if they do not agree, they make their lives more difficult, both of them” (Eduard Kukan). “No, no. I did not realize any conflict. There is conflict only with conservatives from Great Britain who are Independents and Eurosceptics” (Monika Smolková). “There are of course these anti- Europeans, EFD and ECR, which are absolutely against everything. Then there is this small group of Independents” (Katarína Nevedálová).

3. European Parliament elections

As was discussed earlier within the party system and work of party groups, there are significant imperfections in competition in the EU. In this chapter, I intend to analyze another dimension of democratic quality at the EU level which is closely linked to level of competition. At this point, I turn to participation dimension and involvement of ordinary citizens into political life at the EU level. European Parliament elections, probably the most significant instrument for citizens of member states to participate in the EU, are under scrutiny in this part of the thesis.

I look closer at the most serious problem of EP elections- low and declining turnout- and attempt to propose solution to it. Firstly, there is need to define and name reasons for this unpleasant phenomenon. Secondly, I focus on organisational setup and electoral rules (as these indicators have potential to influence voting turnout) governing these EP elections in member states. Here, I provide comparative analysis of EP elections in 27 member states over time across organisational dimension. Based on results from this analysis, I come up with list of recommendations which might possibly increase turnout of EP elections in the future.

3.1 *'Second- order elections'*

Elections are according to some considered as the essentials of the functioning democracy as they should “connect the policy preferences of the voters to public policy” (Mair and Thomassen 2010, 27). However, it can hardly be told about EP elections as results of these elections are not necessarily transformed into policy formation. As argued by Marsh and Mikhaylov, elections are meaningful when political parties winning the elections subsequently take over the government (Marsh and Mikhaylov 2010, 6). This argument is linked to idea of party government discussed earlier. In general, elections should be “reasonably fair, decisive and effective” (O’Donnell 2007, 7).

According to many scholars and politicians, EP elections are labelled as ‘second-order elections’ (Reif and Schmitt 1980, DeBardeleben and Hurrelmann 2007, Hix 2008, McCormick 2008). Surprisingly, they received this interesting attribute already one year after their introduction in 1980. According to Reif, “all elections (except the one that fills the most important political office of the entire system and therefore is the first- order election) are ‘national second- order elections’” (Reif 1997, 117).

Probably the most crucial reason why EP elections are considered as less important than national elections is the fact that they do not determine who controls the executive; do not create EU government; have no potential to change government and therefore there is less at stake (Hix, Noury and Roland 2007, 27; McCormick 2008, 133). In words of Hix, there is basically “no arena for competition over political authority in the EU (Hix 2008, 84). These elections are uncontested and do not change the political outcome (Hix 2008, 76). If majority coalition in the EP was able to dominate policy- making, there would be more at stake. For national parties who run electoral campaign, it does not really matter who wins. For politicians, media and citizens, there seem to be little at stake in these elections.

As a consequence, EP elections are infamous with its low and even declining turnout. Direct elections were firstly introduced in 1979 and many hoped that it can increase credibility and legitimacy of the EP as well as decrease the ‘democratic deficit’. In words of Lawrence LeDuc, these expectations that direct EP elections will solve problem with democratic deficit, accountability and legitimacy were overestimated (LeDuc 2007, 140). According to other scholars, establishment of direct elections was supposed to establish a direct link between the individual citizen and decision making at the EU level (Marsh and Mikhaylov 2010, 5). Even though the EP gained more powers and competences over years, participation in EP elections is on decline. Figure 3 below demonstrates declining turnout in

EP elections since 1979 from 62% to 43%. This downward trend came to a head in last 2009 EP elections which were labelled as “failure for Brussels” (Malkopolou 2009, 1).

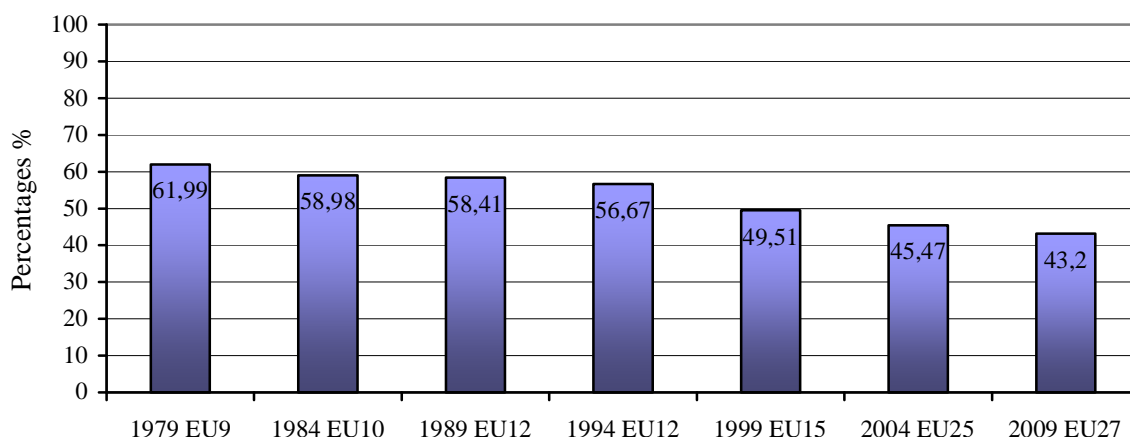


Figure 3: European Parliament elections turnout 1979- 2009

Source: European Election Database

It is true that there is usually also slight decline in national elections turnouts which is explained by institutional arrangements and party competitiveness (Lijphart 1997, 5; Franklin 2007, 26). But turnout in EP elections is typically 15- 20% points lower compared to national elections (DeBardeleben and Hurrelmann 2007, 151). It seems that next to general omnipresent declining trend in political participation there is additional problem of EP elections.

Turnout in EP elections is changing over time in the whole EU as well as in individual member states. Table 3 presents results over time and it can be seen that in most member states turnout declined between the first and last elections. However, there are few remarkable exceptions to this trend. Out of ‘old member states’ there was significant increase in Denmark and slight growth in Luxembourg, United Kingdom and Sweden. When looking at results in ‘new member states’ joining in 2004 and 2007, we can say that turnout is generally lower than in the rest of the EU (except of Cyprus and Malta). Here, Estonia, Latvia and Bulgaria

achieved significant increase in turnout. Slight positive changes can be also observed in Poland and Slovakia.

Table 3: European Parliament elections results 1979- 2009

| | 1979 | 1981 | 1984 | 1987 | 1989 | 1994 | 1995 | 1996 | 1999 | 2004 | 2007 | 2009 |
|-----------|--------------|-------|--------------|-------|--------------|--------------|-------|-------|--------------|--------------|-------|--------------|
| BE | 91.36 | | 92.09 | | 90.73 | 90.66 | | | 91.05 | 90.81 | | 90.39 |
| DK | 47.82 | | 52.38 | | 46.17 | 52.92 | | | 50.46 | 47.89 | | 59.54 |
| DE | 65.73 | | 56.7 | | 62.28 | 60.02 | | | 45.19 | 43.00 | | 43.30 |
| IE | 63.31 | | 47.56 | | 68.28 | 43.98 | | | 50.21 | 58.58 | | 58.64 |
| FR | 60.71 | | 56.72 | | 48.8 | 52.71 | | | 46.76 | 42.76 | | 40.63 |
| IT | 85.65 | | 82.47 | | 81.07 | 73.60 | | | 69.76 | 71.72 | | 65.05 |
| LU | 88.91 | | 88.79 | | 87.39 | 88.55 | | | 87.27 | 91.35 | | 90.75 |
| NL | 58.12 | | 50.88 | | 47.48 | 35.69 | | | 30.02 | 39.26 | | 36.75 |
| UK | 32.35 | | 32.57 | | 36.37 | 36.43 | | | 24.00 | 38.52 | | 34.70 |
| EL | | 81.48 | 80.59 | | 80.03 | 73.18 | | | 70.25 | 63.22 | | 52.61 |
| ES | | | | 68.52 | 54.71 | 59.14 | | | 63.05 | 45.14 | | 44.90 |
| PT | | | | 72.42 | 51.10 | 35.54 | | | 39.93 | 38.60 | | 36.78 |
| SE | | | | | | | 41.63 | | 38.84 | 37.85 | | 45.53 |
| AT | | | | | | | | 67.73 | 49.40 | 42.43 | | 45.97 |
| FI | | | | | | | | 57.60 | 30.14 | 39.43 | | 40.30 |
| CZ | | | | | | | | | | 28.30 | | 28.20 |
| EE | | | | | | | | | | 26.83 | | 43.90 |
| CY | | | | | | | | | | 72.50 | | 59.40 |
| LT | | | | | | | | | | 43.38 | | 20.98 |
| LV | | | | | | | | | | 41.34 | | 53.70 |
| HU | | | | | | | | | | 38.50 | | 36.31 |
| MT | | | | | | | | | | 82.39 | | 78.79 |
| PL | | | | | | | | | | 20.87 | | 24.33 |
| SI | | | | | | | | | | 28.35 | | 28.33 |
| SK | | | | | | | | | | 16.97 | | 19.64 |
| BG | | | | | | | | | | | 29.22 | 38.99 |
| RO | | | | | | | | | | | 29.22 | 27.67 |
| EU | 61.99 | | 58.98 | | 58.41 | 56.67 | | | 49.51 | 45.47 | | 43.00 |

Note : BE (Belgium), DK (Denmark), DE (Germany), IE (Ireland), IT (Italy), LU (Luxembourg), NL (Netherlands), UK (United Kingdom), EL (Greece), ES (Spain), PT (Portugal), SE (Sweden), AT (Austria), FI (Finland), CZ (Czech republic), EE (Estonia), CY (Cyprus), LT (Lithuania), LT (Latvia), HU (Hungary), MT (Malta), PL (Poland), SI (Slovenia), SK (Slovakia), BG (Bulgaria), RO (Romania).

Source: www.europarl.europa.eu

3.1.1 Reasons for low turnout in European Parliament elections

Before discussing reasons for non-voting, we should keep in mind that voting is according to many scholars 'habitual thing' (Schmitt 2002, Schmitt and Eijk 2007, Bilcka 2010). Due to this and due to inadequate participation of young people, many scholars assume that turnout will even decrease in the future.

"Voting is like habit. In general, there is very strong alienation of young people from politics. Young people do not go to ballots as much as older people do. Therefore, there is no guarantee that they will change their behaviour in the future when becoming seniors. So we can expect that turnout will decrease in the future" (Schmitter, 2012).

Probably, the most obvious reason for low turnout in EP elections is its '*second order*' *perception*. When no relation is perceived between election results and policy outcomes (no government is formed), there is no motivation to vote in such elections (Schmitt and Eijk, 2007, 146). 'Second order' nature of elections influences politicians who devote less effort into campaign and mobilization of voters. Following this, media coverage of EU issues is lower and domesticated. Media have mainly potential to influence non-habitual voters and people less interested in politics (Bilcka 2010, 6). Following low mobilization, voters abstain from elections because costs of gathering information and participating seem to be higher than benefits from voting.

Another reason for low participation in EP elections is the fact that they '*miss European element*'. These elections are run, organized and prepared by national parties and on national issues. They coordinate candidate selection and electoral campaign. Concerning mobilization of voters, parties usually produce very similar and modest 'manifestos' (Judge and Earnshaw 2003, 70). In other words, little alternatives and competing elements are provided for voters. There is no European campaign, no European candidates and no truly European parties represented in these elections (Judge and Earnshaw 2003, 81). Even when

European issues are discussed, parties usually do not present divergent positions and it is very complicated for voters to define differences between parties. After elections EPGs prefer policies of compromise, cohesion and consensus so little competition is seen there as well.

Next factor influencing turnout is *citizens' perceptions and knowledge* about the EU and the EP. Both are considered as less important for citizens leading to their lower interest in them and consequently insufficient knowledge about them. 'Brussels is far away' (Malkopolou 2009, 4) and it is assumed that little can be changed from level of citizens. Citizens have little knowledge about European issues and work of the EP. They are lost in EU institutional labyrinth with fragmented political power and blurred accountability and the whole EP agenda is too technical and too complicated for them (Malkopolou 2009, 4). In 2004, around 50% of citizens did not even know that EP elections are direct process (McCormick 2008, 122). Paradoxically, the most democratic institution at the EU level is unknown for many citizens. Usually, voters argue that they are not interested in the EU; the EP is not dealing with their problems; and that MEPs are not representing their views (Clark 2010, 15). Compared to national legislations, there are very weak psychological ties to the EP (McCormick 2008, 82). This low psychological ties and little interest in the EP can be explained by fact that "all urgent issues for ordinary citizens (like education, health care, taxation) are decided by national legislations" (Peterson and Shackleton 2006, 122). All of these arguments are somehow linked to insufficient citizens' knowledge about functioning of the EU.

Next to these causes for low turnout there are other *attitudinal reasons*. Firstly, EP elections are often times perceived as possibility to express attitudes towards domestic politics. Voters tend to express their dissatisfaction with current domestic politics; they aim to influence national government and domestic policies (Hix 2008, 81- 83). As a consequence, they often time punish current governing parties and vote for parties in opposition.

Interestingly, voters sometimes vote for different parties in national and EP elections even when held on the same day (Edmond 2007, 33). By abstaining from elections or supporting parties in opposition, they 'send the message' to governing parties. Next to this, in EP elections voters usually do not vote strategically (as less is at stake for them), thus they vote sincerely and express their full preferences (Marsh and Miknaylov 2010, 11). Euroscepticism, hostility, distrust and dissatisfaction with the EU and the EP can partly explain why people voluntarily abstain from elections (Schmitt and Eijk 2007, 149).

Finally, there are some structural and *organizational indicators* which can influence turnout. This is under scrutiny in the following subchapter of the thesis. There are also other indicators influencing turnout like being recipient of EU budget; being supportive for EU membership; or having longer period of socialization into democratic system (holding free elections for longer time) (Mattila 2003).

3.2 Organisation of European Parliament elections in member states

As was already indicated, turnout in EP elections is changing over time also in individual member states. I assume that it is possible to identify causes for these changes. However, the list of explanations can be quite long and can vary from country to country. Based on the literature, there are two key groups of indicators influencing turnout, electoral rules governing elections and voters' attitudes to the EU (Mattila 2003, 450). I am rather sceptical about the potential of attitudes to the EU to influence the participation in EP elections. Schmitt argues that "Euro- hostile attitudes play only a minor role in abstaining from elections" (Schmitt 2002, 99). Next to this, it would be very difficult to change and manipulate this cause influencing turnout. This would definitely be a long term process focused on citizens' education and fundamental changes in the EU political system. I have decided to focus on second potential cause influencing turnout- organisational setup and

electoral rules governing EP elections. These indicators fulfil two conditions- they have a potential to influence turnout and they can be manipulated from one election to another. In other words, I concentrate on indicators influencing turnout in elections which can be easily changed in order to increase turnout in the future.

In this part of the thesis, comparative analysis of EP elections in member states over time is done. I plan to look at changes in organisation of EP elections in particular member states. By doing so, I hope to identify which organisational rules governing elections had impact on turnout. Following this, recommendations for future EP elections are formulated.

Based on researches and empirical observations, following indicators linked to organisational rules can influence voting turnout- compulsory voting, number of elections scheduled at that year, time distance between EP elections and national elections (Judge and Earnshaw 2003, 79). Next to this, Mark Franklin argues that it matters where in national electoral cycle are EP elections located. Turnout is usually lower when holding elections right after the national elections and it can increase as it precedes national elections (Franklin 2007, 18; Marsh and Mikhaylov 2010). He explains it with fact that EP elections are perceived as 'primary elections' for national elections (results are interpreted as barometers for how well would parties do in real). He also adds that 'first- time voting' in EP elections can positively increase turnout (Franklin 2007, 15). Next to this, type of electoral system, type of party list, number and size of constituencies can also modify turnout (Mattila 2003). Another indicator influencing turnout in EP elections is turnout in previous national elections (Marsh and Mikhaylov 2010, 10).

3.2.1 Comparative analysis of European Parliament elections

In this part, I analyse these indicators in all 27 member states over time- compulsory voting, weekend voting, concurrent voting, e- voting, electoral system, preferential voting,

threshold, frequency of elections in country, timing of EP elections, number of constituencies, and turnout in previous national elections. Based on the literature, I assume that each of these indicators can influence turnout in EP elections. Please see Table 4 below for further detail.

Table 4: Organisational rules influencing electoral turnout

| ORGANISATIONAL RULE | INFLUENCE ON TURNOUT | |
|-------------------------------|---------------------------------|------------------------------|
| | Increase of turnout | Decrease of turnout |
| Compulsory voting | X | |
| Weekend voting | X | |
| Concurrent voting | X | |
| E- voting | X | |
| Electoral system | X (proportional representation) | X (majoritarian voting) |
| Preferential vote | X | |
| Threshold | | X |
| Frequency of elections | X (less frequent elections) | X (more frequent elections) |
| Timing of elections in cycle | X (before national elections) | X (after national elections) |
| Number of constituencies | X (more constituencies) | X (less constituencies) |
| Turnout in national elections | X (higher turnout) | X (lower turnout) |

Note: Symbol 'X' in the table indicates the expected influence of indicator on electoral turnout. Seven indicators can be considered as categorical dichotomous variables which can either increase or decrease turnout. Next four indicators can be considered as continuous interval variables which can increase (or decrease) turnout on scale (more or less). In brackets situation which is supposed to increase (or decrease) turnout is indicated.

Source: Compiled by author.

I have conducted comparative analysis of EP elections in member states over time since 1979- 2009 (covering seven EP elections). This analysis focused on organisational setup and electoral rules arranging these elections. Concrete details and results of analysis are presented in Appendix II and Appendix III. In this discussion, I refer to information presented in these Appendices (please see them for further details).

Based on the literature and analysis conducted, there are indicators which favours higher turnout in elections. I claim that Belgium and Luxembourg apply probably most of these favouring indicators for organizing EP elections. In both countries EP elections are

compulsory, held on weekend days, usually held concurrent with other national elections (in Luxembourg all EP elections were held together with parliamentary elections). Electoral system in EP elections is proportional representation, with possibility to give preferential votes (in Luxembourg split- vote is used) and without any threshold. Next to these, there is usually lower frequency of other elections before EP elections. Belgium is also divided into more constituencies. Both countries have permanently the highest turnout in the EU and there were no noticeable changes over time. Logically, one should not expect that these 'model countries' would introduce any significant changes in electoral or organisational rules.

However, I argue that there is no guarantee that combination and implementation of all favouring indicators in country with lower or declining turnout would automatically transform into expected increased turnout. Therefore, I claim that 'copying' of systems from Belgium or Luxembourg into different countries does not need to ensure higher turnout in EP election. Next to this, even though all of these indicators are favouring higher turnout, not all of them are effective and useful at same degree. In other words, results from analysis propose that some of these indicators are more efficient than others. In following discussion, I go through all of these indicators and evaluate their contribution to higher turnout in member states.

Compulsory voting, which could seemingly have positive effect on turnout quite easily, is rather a rare solution. Currently it is used in Belgium, Luxembourg, Greece and Cyprus. Until 1994 EP elections it was also used in Italy. One can argue that abolishment of compulsory voting in Italy had negative effect on turnout in EP elections (-6.40%). However, I claim that this drop was result of more impulses combined together (abolishment of compulsory voting, higher frequency of other elections in country and wrong timing of EP elections in electoral cycle- only three months after parliamentary elections).

Even though compulsory voting is not an ideal solution, positive results can be observed in countries when looking at turnout (except of last two elections in Greece, turnout

was always above 70%) Variances in turnout in these countries are also linked to differences in punishment and enforcement. Belgium has the lowest fines out of these countries but the most efficient enforcement; higher fines in Luxembourg and Cyprus are rather weakly enforced and there is basically no enforcement in Greece where voting is “compulsory *in abstracto*” (Malkopoulou 2009, 9). However, when looking at turnout rates in EP elections, one can argue that system works also without enforcement. Next to difficult and expensive enforcement of compulsory voting, there are other arguments against its implementation. Lijphart argues that increase in turnout after implementing compulsory voting depends on the baseline of participation before (Lijphart 1997, 9). Therefore, one might be sceptical about positive results of this indicator in countries with generally lower turnout (in countries where people are not used to go to ballots). Other scholars argue that it is anti- liberal reform (it is against principle of liberty, it is undemocratic and coercive; but there is still possibility to cast blank ballot) and it decreases the quality of vote. But positively, it ensures full participation, lowers campaign spending, improves quality of campaign (more focus on issues than on persuasion of voters) and educates citizens in political engagement (Malkopoulou 2009). In words of Spiegel, “democracy does not work without democrats and there is need for sanctions if non- voting (as cited in Malkopoulou 2009, 8).

Secondly, it is often argued that exact day in week of elections can influence turnout and many scholars prefer *weekend voting*. Three member states in the EU (Netherlands, United Kingdom and Ireland) do traditionally hold elections on week days (Thursday in Netherlands and United Kingdom, Friday in Ireland) (Lehmann 2009). Therefore, it would be illogical to forcefully change the date of EP elections in these countries. It would go against their election tradition and could have even negative effect on turnout. Next to them, three countries changed their day for EP elections and introduced weekend voting over time (France in 1994, Spain in 1999 and Denmark in 2004). However, except of slight increase in

turnout in Spain in 1999 (+3.91%) and in France (+4.06%) no other significant positive changes could be observed.

Thirdly, it is often argued that positive results can be observed when holding *concurrent elections*. In my analysis, I focused on situations when EP elections were held together with national elections (parliamentary or presidential), nation wide referendum or regional elections. In situations when EP elections were held together with local elections, I did not consider it as concurrent elections (because local elections are usually not held on nation wide scale and their influence on population of whole country is therefore limited). Positive impact on turnout could be observed in Denmark (in 2009 +11.56%) when EP elections were held together with referendum on Danish Act of Succession or in Ireland (in 1989 +20.70%) when EP elections were held together with parliamentary elections and in 1999 (+6.23%) and in 2004 (+8.37) when EP elections were held together with referendums in country. Negatively, drops can be noticed in cases where EP elections were not concurrent (compared to previous EP elections) - in Portugal (in 1989 -21.20%) or in Lithuania (in 2009 -22.40%). Lithuania became popular with its quite high turnout in 2004 EP elections and remarkable drop in 2009 EP elections. Unfortunately, 2009 EP elections were not held together with presidential elections (compared to 2004 EP elections) but just one month after them. Next to this, there was higher frequency of other elections in country before EP elections. Despite the positive effect of concurrent elections, there are arguments against their implementation. Opponents (similarly as in the case of compulsory voting) argue that holding concurrent elections does not ensure higher quality of vote, or higher quality of political engagement.

Next indicator influencing turnout is probably the most innovative and the least tested one. From this perspective, *e-voting* can be considered as a very promising tool for increasing turnout in the future. So far, Estonia was the only member state testing this innovation in EP

elections. Turnout in 2009 EP elections in Estonia was higher by 17.10% compared to previous elections. Except of introducing e- voting in 2009 EP elections in Estonia, no other significant changes were done in organisational setup and electoral rules. There was also slight modification of timing of EP elections within electoral cycle. In 2004 EP elections were held rather earlier after parliamentary elections while in 2009 EP elections were held in the middle of electoral cycle (according to the literature this timing is more in favour of higher turnout). Therefore, I would consider e-voting as the most crucial cause of higher turnout in 2009 EP elections in Estonia. In these elections, 6.5% of eligible voters and 14.7% of participating voters used e- voting possibility (STOA 2011, 115).

Out of various types of e- voting, I discuss pros and cons of remote internet voting. This e- voting “seeks to maximize the convenience and access for the voters by enabling them to cast their ballots from virtually any location that is internet accessible” (STOA 2011, 111). Despite positive results in Estonia, there are opposing and contradictory arguments presented by scholars. According to some, e- voting can increase participation by ensuring more convenient voting and also improve administrative efficiency of elections (Norris 2009). But one should keep in mind that e- voting would only reduce costs linked to casting of ballot while other incentives influencing voters’ participation (linked to gathering of information, registering for elections, making decisions) will remain untouched (Norris 2009). Opponents argue that e- voting would privilege some sectors of society as there is no equal access to internet (but this could be solved by public terminals in each community). There are also many concerns about security issues, voter privacy, need for financial resources and quality of participation (Norris 2009). Some argue that by transferring a public act into a private setting, nature of election process and symbolism of election act might change (STOA 2011, 111). However, one should not consider e- voting as a magic solution to low and declining turnout in EP elections. There are other, more inherent problems, linked to unsatisfactory

participation at the EU level which can not be addressed by introduction of e- voting. As argued by Schmitt, “e- voting provides no cure against electoral boredom” and it will not solve the problem with EP elections (Schmitt 2002, 104).

Another bunch of indicators which can influence turnout is linked to electoral system applied in elections. More specifically, it depends on what kind of *electoral system* is used; what kind of *ballots* is used; whether there is chance to give *preferential votes* for candidates; and whether there is any *threshold* for political parties.

Before discussing electoral system of the EP elections, I touch upon legal basis governing these elections. There is EU legislation defining rules common to all member states and specific national provisions varying from one member state to another. In 1976 Council implemented provision that there should be direct universal suffrage for EP elections by the Act of Act Concerning the Election of the Representatives of the Assembly by Direct Universal Suffrage (now Article 223 TFEU) (Lehmann 2009). Even though there was goal to define a ‘uniform electoral procedure’ for EP elections in all member states, there was no agreement on any such procedure so far. During years Seitlinger Report 1982, Bocklet Report 1985 or de Gucht proposal were rejected (Toloudis 2001). After unsuccessful attempts, Amsterdam Treaty introduced the possibility to introduce “uniform electoral procedure or a procedure based on common principles” (Amsterdam Treaty 1997, Art. 5). Later, principle of proportional representation and incompatibility between national and European mandates was introduced by Council amendment to ACT 1976 (Council Decision 2002/772/EC, Euratom). This Council Decision basically defines parameters of ‘European electoral system’². Since

² 1) EP elections are to be held according to the proportional system, using the formula of candidate lists or a single transferable vote; 2) the member countries are free to include the option of preferential voting (it is not required); 3) the member countries are free to set the size of the voting district but in each district so many mandates must be elected to ensure proportional distribution of the mandates; 4) if a member country sets a closing formula, it should not exceed 5% of the votes; 5) The concrete form of the electoral law can be adapted to a specific situation in a particular country, but the proportional character of the elections must be preserved (Outly 2007, 8).

Lisbon Treaty, right to vote and to stand as a candidate acquires the value of a fundamental right (Charter of Fundamental Rights of the EU 2000, Art. 39).

In general, apart from few exceptions, member states did not make any significant changes in their electoral systems over time. United Kingdom is the only country which before 1999 EP elections switched from majoritarian system (first- past- the post system) to proportional representation. Paradoxically, after implementation of PR, turnout in EP elections decreased (it was lower by 12.41% compared to previous elections). Next to lower number of constituencies in these elections, no other changes in organisational and electoral rules were conducted. I assume, that introduction of PR had negative effect in United Kingdom as this country is rather used to majoritarian electoral system. Since 1999, PR is used for EP elections in all member states (Ireland and Malta use single- transferable vote).

Another change linked to electoral system was introduced in Italy before last 2009 EP elections. Italy introduced 4% threshold for these elections and turnout decreased by 6.67%. Next to Italy, there is group of countries using threshold in EP elections over time- Germany (5%), France (5%), Austria (4%), Sweden (4%), Greece (3%) and majority of new members (joining since 2004) like Latvia, Lithuania, Czech republic, Slovakia, Poland, Hungary, Romania (all having 5%)³, Slovenia (4%), Cyprus (1.8%) and Bulgaria (5.56%)⁴. In countries where threshold is set up for political parties, there is higher possibility of wasted votes (votes cast for parties which did not win seats in the EP). Keeping in mind that threshold is usually used in newer member states, it can negatively influence turnout in theses countries. In 2004 EP elections, in eight new member states (except of Poland and Hungary) there were more than 10% of wasted votes (ranging from 26.7% in Latvia and 11% in Malta) (IDEA 2004, 9).

³ Out of these countries, Latvia and Lithuania apply threshold relative to vote cast while other countries apply threshold relative to valid votes (Oelbermann, Palomares & Pukelsheim 2010, 153).

⁴ Bulgaria is the only member state having threshold which exceeds 5% maximum defined by the EU in parameters of 'European electoral system' (Outly 2007, 8).

Final indicator linked to electoral system is connected to possibility of preferential votes. Voters can cast their preferential votes in more than half of member states- Belgium, Luxembourg, Netherlands, Denmark, Italy, Ireland, Austria, Sweden, Finland, Latvia, Lithuania, Czech republic, Slovakia, Slovenia, Cyprus, Malta and Bulgaria. Concerning this rule, there were no changes in individual member states over time. Because there were not so many changes done in these rules over time, it is rather difficult to evaluate their impact on turnout in EP elections. However, I assume that possibility to cast preferential votes and no threshold should have positive effect on voters' participation in elections.

Based on results from analysis, following indicators- *timing of EP elections* in electoral cycle and *frequency of other elections* held in country before EP elections- seems to be determining factors influencing turnout. According to the literature, turnout in EP elections is the lowest when EP elections are held soon after national elections. Approximately middle of the electoral cycle is the turning point since when there is tendency that turnout can increase. Turnout is supposed to be the highest when EP elections are held close before national elections. Concerning the frequency of other elections in country, it is assumed that lower frequency is favouring higher turnout. Over time, there were numerous examples when turnout in EP elections in individual countries noticeably changed. I claim that these two indicators were quite potentially causes of these changes. For example in Netherlands (in 1994 -11.51%, in 2004 + 9.24%), Denmark (in 1994 +6.72%, in 2009 +11.56%), Germany (in 1999 -14.81%), France (in 1989 -8%), Greece (in 1994 -6.72%, in 2004 -8.27%), Portugal (in 1999 +4.39%), Spain (in 1989 -14.30%, in 2004 -17.91%), Sweden (in 2009 +7.68%), Finland (in 1999 -27.46%, in 2004 +9.29%), Austria (in 2004 -6.58%), Latvia (in 2009 +12.35%), Cyprus (in 2009 -13.10%) and Bulgaria (in 2009 +9.72%). Increases in turnout were usually accompanied by lower frequency of other elections and better timing of EP elections. The most evident examples occurred in Latvia, Bulgaria (elections held one month

before parliamentary elections), Netherlands (lower frequency and elections held in the middle of electoral cycle), Sweden, Finland and Denmark. On the contrary, drops in turnout were accompanied by more frequent other elections in country and worse timing of EP elections; for example in Germany, France, Netherlands, Greece, Spain, Finland or Cyprus.

Number of constituencies in country, is the last indicator influencing turnout discussed in this analysis. In majority, member states have one single national constituency for EP elections (which is according to the literature supposed to have negative effect on turnout). More constituencies are in Belgium, Italy, United Kingdom, Ireland, Poland and in France (since 2004 EP elections). Over time, no crucial changes occurred within this indicator in member states. Therefore, it is also complicated to evaluate its impact on turnout. There was a drop in turnout in United Kingdom in 1999 EP elections which might be caused by lowering the number of constituencies from 85 to 12. However, this drop can be also influenced by change of electoral system from FPTP to PR. Slight positive impact on turnout could also be noticed in France which changed its number of constituencies before 2004 EP elections.

Finally, according to the literature *'first time voting'* in EP elections should have positive effect on turnout. Analysis showed that in few countries, noticeable drops could be observed in second EP elections- Finland, Portugal, Austria, Ireland or Germany. However, this indicator can not be manipulated or changed in the future. Therefore, I do not consider it as beneficial for this analysis.

There is also need to emphasize that some significant changes in turnouts could not be explained by above mentioned indicators used in this analysis- Denmark (1989), Germany (1989), Portugal (1994), United Kingdom (2004) and Greece (2009). However, this could be somehow expected as organisational setup and electoral rules represent only one dimension influencing turnout in EP elections. There is long list of other dimensions influencing turnout in EP elections like media coverage, political campaign, nature of political participation in

country, attitudes and perceptions of citizens towards the EU and politics. However, these indicators are not included in this analysis from two reasons. It would be complicated (maybe even impossible) to manipulate and change them from one EP elections to another in order to increase turnout. And most of them are country specific, thus they can not be easily changed by 'copying' examples from different countries with higher turnout.

3.2.2 Recommendations for future European Parliament elections

Based on results of analysis, I propose list of recommendations for future EP elections. I assume that implementation of some changes in organisational setup and electoral rules might positively influence turnout and quality of EP elections. With higher turnout, better representation of voters' preferences can be ensured.

Firstly, I would recommend that *timing of EP elections* within electoral cycle and *frequency of other elections in country* is regulated and manipulated as much as possible. These two indicators were the most effective one in changing the turnout. They have potential to positively and negatively influence voters' participation in EP elections. Member states should pay special attention to these two factors and attempt to control them if possible.

Secondly, I propose that holding EP elections *concurrently* with other national elections or national referendum might increase turnout. This suggestion is closely linked to previous point. In case that there should be numerous elections in country, holding some of them concurrently with EP elections would also decrease frequency of elections and ensure better timing of EP elections within electoral cycle.

Thirdly, I want to emphasize importance of *preferential voting* and elections *without threshold*. On the one hand, there have been only minor changes done in these two factors over time. Therefore, it is complicated to evaluate their potential to change electoral turnout. Despite of this, I assume that both of these factors should motivate voters to participate in EP

elections. Thus, I would recommend abolishment of legal electoral threshold in countries which still has one (practical threshold is sufficient criterion for division of seats in the EP). Next to this, I would introduce preferential voting in those countries which do not have this option (vote- splitting used in Luxembourg might serve as a model system).

Fourthly, I assume that introduction of *e- voting* has a potential to positively influence turnout. So far it was tried out only in Estonia in 2009 EP elections. Therefore, we do not have enough knowledge about its effect on turnout. However, I assume that positive results observed in Estonia can be followed by other countries as well. Of course, some technical preconditions must be fulfilled in country before its implementation. Sufficient internet coverage of households is one of the first requirements. I expect that e- voting might motivate younger generations to engage in political life. This should have positive impact on political participation in a longer term (keeping in mind that nowadays young people participate less in elections than older generations).

Finally, I would emphasize positive results in countries which have *compulsory voting*. Compulsory voting works also with low or no enforcement. It seems that there are expected outcomes despite the fact that it works only 'on paper'. From that reason, I would recommend considering this element as another option which might increase turnout in EP elections. However, I would be sceptical about positive results in countries which have low turnout also in their national elections as this indicator is highly dependent on baseline of participation before its implementation.

Conclusion

From a broader perspective, imperfect democratic quality in the European Union was approached in this thesis. Two dimensions of democratic quality which create the backbone of a working democracy- participation and competition- were analysed at the EU level. More specifically, level of participation and level of competition were examined through the work of the European Parliament. It was done with the purpose to understand causes and reasons for imperfect level of democracy in the EU and to propose solutions for its improvement.

The EP, powerful and unique institution of the European Union, was under main scrutiny in this thesis. Currently, it is a fully- fledged legislative body which resembles committee based parliament. Without any further definitions, it is one of a kind having no resemblance in any other political entity. Even though this institution is by many respected and valued, it is often times criticized and underestimated as well. Its critics usually argue that it does not properly fulfil legitimacy and linkage functions. Both of these deficits are related to problematic European Parliament elections which influence functioning of the EP itself.

What is the main problem of the European Parliament elections? The main problem of EP elections is their infamous low and declining turnout. These elections do not fulfil their primary purpose; they do not ensure adequate representation of voters' preferences due to very low turnout. However, unsatisfactory level of turnout is a consequence and not the cause of the problem. I argue that EP elections do not have enough attention from voters, politicians and media because there are no truly European political parties running in these elections and no European Union party system.

Analysis of European party groups indicated that they deviate from well functioning political parties and they do not create party system at the EU level. On the one hand, EPGs have satisfactory level of internal cohesion. In other words, they fulfil necessary precondition

for well functioning political parties. Party discipline in EPGs, loyalty of its members and tendency to coordinate voting behaviour of its members was also confirmed in personal interviews with MEPs. On the other hand, EPGs do not fulfil crucial requirement for creating a party system at the EU level. They behave in very pragmatic way, seek for compromises and cooperation. There are no patterned interactions and no inter- party competition between EPGs. I argue that this deficit can be hardly removed unless there will be contest over executive office in EP elections. Until then, no European Union party system can be developed.

This pessimistic concluding remark indicates that there is no solution to problematic EP elections so far. Despite of the fact that the cause of the problem can not be removed, this thesis addressed the unpleasant consequence of EP elections as well. There are various reasons for low turnout in EP elections. However, analysis is focused on indicators (organisational setup and electoral rules of EP elections) which can be manipulated and changed in order to increase turnout.

How do European Parliament elections differ in member states of the European Union?

Comparative analysis of EP elections in 27 member states over time was done in order to identify differences in organisation and preparation of these elections. It was done with the purpose to find out which organisational rules have positive effect on electoral turnout. Based on this, list of recommendations for higher turnout in future EP elections is formulated. Higher turnout has potential to increase the quality of EP elections and quality of democracy in the EU as well.

Analysis proposed that certain organisational and electoral rules are more efficient and useful in influencing electoral turnout. Timing of EP elections in electoral cycle and frequency of other elections before EP elections showed to be the most crucial indicators

changing turnout. Next to them, holding EP elections concurrently with other national elections ensured positive effects on turnout. Not surprisingly, compulsory voting translated into higher turnout despite low enforcement capacities in countries. Finally, introduction of e-voting seems to be very promising factor increasing turnout. Some indicators were not changed over time significantly, thus their effect on turnout is hardly measurable. Despite of this, I claim that opportunity to cast preferential votes and abolishment of electoral threshold might support participation in EP elections. Other factors, exact day of EP elections and number of constituencies, did not create significant shifts in turnouts.

This thesis focused on two elements which are inseparable from the work of the European Parliament. Combined investigation of the work of EPGs and quality of EP elections was inevitable in order to address broader research problem. Results of analysis proposed two conclusions. Firstly, EPGs do not produce European Union party system so far and there is limited chance that this will happen in near future. Secondly, quality of the EP elections can be partly increased by higher turnout in these elections. This turnout can be 'mechanically increased' by introduction of concrete organisational and electoral rules. However, this improvement changes quality of EP elections only partially. EP elections with higher turnout can ensure better representation of voters' preferences. Apart from this, they can better fulfil linkage and legitimacy functions. Therefore, I claim that they can partly increase level of democracy in the EU.

On the other hand, there is need to change status of EP elections from 'second- order elections' to 'first- order elections'. It is desirable that EP elections would be important for voters, politicians and media. I agree that there should be more at stake in EP elections (EU government should be created based on elections' result). However, I claim that powerful position and competences of the EP are sufficient motivation for voters, politicians and media

to genuinely care about the EP and its elections. In order to achieve veritable and meaningful engagement of citizens in EU politics, there is need to focus on education about the EU. I claim that, adequate level of knowledge and proper understanding of the functioning of the EU is inevitable precondition for healthy citizens' participation and for more democratic EU.

I propose that further research focuses on the level of education about the EU and its influence on citizens' participation in EU politics. I assume that citizens' knowledge about the EU is another crucial factor influencing their participation in EP elections. This indicator can be also manipulated and changed over time (even though it would be a long- term process).

Appendices

Appendix I: Organisation of European Parliament elections in member states.

| BELGIUM | | | | | | | |
|----------------------------------|-------|--------|--------|--------|----------|--------|--------|
| Indicators/ Elections | 1979 | 1984 | 1989 | 1994 | 1999 | 2004 | 2009 |
| Compulsory voting | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes |
| Weekend voting | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes |
| Concurrent voting ¹ | No | No | Yes/R | No | Yes/Pa,R | Yes/R | Yes/R |
| E- voting | No | No | No | No | No | No | No |
| Electoral system ² | PR | PR | PR | PR | PR | PR | PR |
| Preferential vote | | | | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes |
| Threshold (%) | | | | - | - | - | - |
| f of elections ³ | 3 | 1 | 2 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 |
| Timing of elections ⁴ | 7A Pa | 16B Pa | Middle | 11B Pa | Con | 13A Pa | Middle |
| N of constituencies | 2 | 2 | 2 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 3 |
| Turnout in EP el. (%) | 91.36 | 92.09 | 90.73 | 90.66 | 91.05 | 90.81 | 90.39 |
| Change in turnout ⁵ | +0.73 | -1.36 | -0.07 | +0.49 | -0.24 | -0.42 | -0.42 |
| Turnout in last NE ⁶ | 94.87 | 94.56 | 93.38 | 92.71 | 91.15 | 91.63 | 91.08 |
| Turnout difference ⁷ | -3.51 | -2.47 | -3.07 | -2.05 | -0.10 | -0.82 | -0.69 |

Note: Following notes (1- 7) and sources apply for all tables below covering organisation of EP elections in member states.

¹ Data indicate whether EP elections were held on same date as some national elections or referendum in country. It also specifies type of election held in country (Pa- parliamentary, Pr- presidential, R- regional, Ref- referendum). In situations when EP elections were held together with local elections, I did not consider it as concurrent elections. Local elections are usually not held nation wide and their influence on population of whole country is therefore limited.

² Data indicate type of electoral system in country: PR (proportional representation), FPTP (first- past- the post system), STV (single transferable vote system).

Data about electoral system, preferential votes and threshold are not complete for first three EP elections (1979, 1984, 1989) due inadequate accessibility of data. However, I assume that there were no significant changes in these indicators in concrete member states.

³ Data specify how frequently were elections held in country. It covers period of 12 months before each EP elections in country. Frequency scale is divided into four categories ranging from less frequent to more frequent elections: 1- only EP elections, 2- EP elections + subnational elections (local, municipal, provincial, cantonal, regional) or referendum; 3- EP elections + national elections (parliamentary, presidential), 4- EP elections + national elections + subnational elections.

⁴ Data specify timing/ scheduling of EP elections within national electoral cycle (in relation to national elections held in country). Subnational elections are not taken into consideration. Each notion includes following information: number of months, before/ after elections, type of national elections (7A Pa = EP elections were held 7 months after parliamentary elections); 'middle'- approximate middle of electoral cycle; 'con'- concurrent elections.

⁵ Data indicate changes in turnout between individual EP elections.

⁶ Data indicate turnout in last national elections (NE) held before EP elections. In most cases parliamentary elections are considered as NE. In cases when country holds parliamentary and presidential elections, data about both are indicated (first line includes turnout in presidential elections, second line includes turnout in parliamentary elections).

⁷ Data indicate difference between turnout in EP elections and previous NE. In cases when both, parliamentary and presidential elections were held in country first line includes difference between EP elections and presidential elections, second line includes difference between EP elections and parliamentary elections.

Source: European Election Database, European Election Studies, International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance, Gagatsek 2010, Outly 2007, Toloudis 2001, www.europarl.europa.eu, www.ethesis.net/european_parliament/ep.htm; Compiled by author

| NETHERLANDS | | | | | | | |
|-----------------------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|
| Indicators/ Elections | 1979 | 1984 | 1989 | 1994 | 1999 | 2004 | 2009 |
| Compulsory voting | No | No | No | No | No | No | No |
| Weekend voting | No | No | No | No | No | No | No |
| Concurrent voting | No | No | No | No | No | No | No |
| E- voting | No | No | No | No | No | No | No |
| Electoral system | PR | PR | PR | PR | PR | PR | PR |
| Preferential vote | na | na | na | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes |
| Threshold (%) | na | na | na | - | - | - | - |
| f of elections | 1 | 1 | 1 | 3 | 1 | 1 | 1 |
| Timing of elections | Middle | Middle | 3B Pa | 1A Pa | 13A Pa | Middle | 12B Pa |
| N of constituencies | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 |
| Turnout in EP el. (%) | 58.10 | 50.60 | 47.20 | 35.69 | 30.02 | 39.26 | 36.75 |
| Change in turnout | -0.50 | -3.40 | -11.51 | -5.67 | +9.24 | -2.51 | |
| Turnout in last NE | 88.00 | 80.98 | 85.76 | 78.75 | 73.23 | 80.04 | 80.35 |
| Turnout difference | -29.90 | -30.38 | -38.56 | -43.06 | -43.21 | -40.78 | -43.60 |

| LUXEMBOURG | | | | | | | |
|--------------------------------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|
| Indicators/ Elections | 1979 | 1984 | 1989 | 1994 | 1999 | 2004 | 2009 |
| Compulsory voting | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes |
| Weekend voting | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes |
| Concurrent voting | Yes/Pa | Yes/Pa | Yes/Pa | Yes/Pa | Yes/Pa | Yes/Pa | Yes/Pa |
| E- voting | No | No | No | No | No | No | No |
| Electoral system | PR | PR | PR | PR | PR | PR | PR |
| Preferential vote ¹ | na | na | na | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes |
| Threshold (%) | na | na | na | - | - | - | - |
| f of elections | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 2 | 1 | 1 |
| Timing of elections | Con | Con | Con | Con | Con | Con | Con |
| N of constituencies | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 |
| Turnout in EP el. (%) | 88.90 | 88.80 | 87.40 | 88.55 | 87.27 | 91.35 | 90.76 |
| Change in turnout | -0.10 | -1.40 | +1.15 | -1.28 | +4.08 | +0.59 | |
| Turnout in last NE | 90.14 | 88.85 | 88.81 | 87.39 | 88.30 | 86.51 | 91.68 |
| Turnout difference | -1.24 | -0.05 | -1.41 | -1.16 | -1.03 | +4.84 | -0.92 |

Note: ¹ Luxembourg is the only EU member country where voting lists are open and voters can choose among all candidates of the different party lists, with a maximum of two votes for any candidate. Voters cast as many votes as seats to be distributed (vote- splitting) (Oelbermann, Palomares and Pukelsheim 2010, 169).

| DENMARK | | | | | | | |
|-----------------------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|
| Indicators/ Elections | 1979 | 1984 | 1989 | 1994 | 1999 | 2004 | 2009 |
| Compulsory voting | No | No | No | No | No | No | No |

| | | | | | | | |
|-----------------------|-----------------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|---------|
| Weekend voting | na | na | No | No | No | Yes | Yes |
| Concurrent voting | No | No | No | No | No | No | Yes/Ref |
| E- voting | No | No | No | No | No | No | No |
| Electoral system | PR ¹ | PR | PR | PR | PR | PR | PR |
| Preferential vote | na | na | na | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes |
| Threshold (%) | na | na | na | - | - | - | - |
| <i>f</i> of elections | 2 | 3 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 |
| Timing of elections | 4B Pa | 5A Pa | Middle | 3B Pa | Middle | 8B Pa | Middle |
| N of constituencies | 2 | 2 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 |
| Turnout in EP el. (%) | 47.80 | 52.40 | 46.20 | 52.92 | 50.39 | 47.89 | 59.54 |
| Change in turnout | +3.60 | -6.20 | +6.72 | -2.53 | -2.50 | +11.56 | |
| Turnout in last NE | 88.70 | 88.44 | 85.70 | 82.85 | 85.95 | 87.15 | 86.59 |
| Turnout difference | -40.90 | -36.04 | -39.50 | -29.93 | -33.86 | -39.26 | -27.05 |

Note: FPTP system was used for election of one representative from Greenland until 1985 when Greenland left the European Community (Ellis and Larserud 2005, 141).

| ITALY | | | | | | | |
|-----------------------|--------------------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|
| Indicators/ Elections | 1979 | 1984 | 1989 | 1994 | 1999 | 2004 | 2009 |
| Compulsory voting | Yes | Yes | Yes | No | No | No | No |
| Weekend voting | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes |
| Concurrent voting | No | No | No | No | No | No | No |
| E- voting | No | No | No | No | No | No | No |
| Electoral system | PR | PR | PR | PR | PR | PR | PR |
| Preferential vote | na | na | na | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes |
| Threshold (%) | na | na | na | | - | - | 4 |
| <i>f</i> of elections | 4 | 3 | 2 | 4 | 2 | 2 | 2 |
| Timing of elections | 1wk A ¹ | 12A Pa | Middle | 3A Pa | Middle | Middle | 14A Pa |
| N of constituencies | 5 | 5 | 5 | 5 | 5 | 5 | 5 |
| Turnout in EP el. (%) | 84.90 | 83.40 | 81.00 | 73.60 | 69.76 | 71.72 | 65.05 |
| Change in turnout | -1.50 | -2.40 | -6.40 | -3.86 | +1.96 | -6.67 | |
| Turnout in last NE | 90.35 | 89.02 | 88.86 | 86.14 | 82.91 | 81.44 | 80.54 |
| Turnout difference | -5.45 | -5.62 | -7.86 | -12.54 | -13.15 | -9.72 | -15.49 |

Note: ¹ Elections were held one week after parliamentary elections.

| GERMANY | | | | | | | |
|----------------------------------|--------|--------|--------|--------|-------|--------|-------|
| Indicators/ Elections | 1979 | 1984 | 1989 | 1994 | 1999 | 2004 | 2009 |
| Compulsory voting | No | No | No | No | No | No | No |
| Weekend voting | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes |
| Concurrent voting | No | No | No | No | No | No | No |
| E- voting | No | No | No | No | No | No | No |
| Electoral system | PR | PR | PR | PR | PR | PR | PR |
| Preferential vote | na | na | na | No | No | No | No |
| Threshold (%) | na | na | na | 5 | 5 | 5 | 5 |
| <i>f</i> of elections | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 3 | 1 | 1 |
| Timing of elections | 16B Pa | 15A Pa | 18B Pa | 4B Pa | 9A Pa | 15B Pa | 3B Pa |
| N of constituencies ¹ | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 |
| Turnout in EP el. (%) | 65.73 | 56.70 | 62.28 | 60.02 | 45.21 | 43.00 | 43.27 |
| Change in turnout | -9.03 | +5.58 | -2.26 | -14.81 | -2.21 | +0.27 | |
| Turnout in last NE | 90.75 | 89.09 | 84.33 | 77.76 | 82.20 | 79.08 | 77.65 |

| | | | | | | | |
|--------------------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|
| Turnout difference | -25.02 | -32.39 | -22.05 | -17.74 | -36.99 | -36.08 | -34.38 |
|--------------------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|

Note: ¹ There is single national constituency but members are elected either from Länder or from Federal lists (OSCE/ ODIHR 2009, 15).

| FRANCE | | | | | | | |
|-----------------------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|----------------|----------------|
| Indicators/ Elections | 1979 | 1984 | 1989 | 1994 | 1999 | 2004 | 2009 |
| Compulsory voting | No | No | No | No | No | No | No |
| Weekend voting | na | na | No | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes |
| Concurrent voting | No | No | No | No | No | No | No |
| E- voting | No | No | No | No | No | No | No |
| Electoral system | PR | PR | PR | PR | PR | PR | PR |
| Preferential vote | na | na | na | No | No | No | No |
| Threshold (%) | 5 | na | na | 5 | 5 | 5 ¹ | 5 ¹ |
| <i>f</i> of elections | 2 | 1 | 4 | 2 | 1 | 2 | 1 |
| Timing of elections | 15A Pa | Middle | 12A Pa | 15A Pa | Middle | Middle | Middle |
| N of constituencies | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 8 | 8 |
| Turnout in EP el. (%) | 60.70 | 56.70 | 48.70 | 52.76 | 46.76 | 42.76 | 40.63 |
| Change in turnout | -4.00 | -8.00 | +4.06 | -6.00 | -4.00 | -2.13 | |
| Turnout in last NE | 84.23 | 83.38 | 84.20 | 84.20 | 79.68 | 79.71 | 83.97 |
| | 71.63 | 70.87 | 66.18 | 68.93 | 67.96 | 60.32 | 59.98 |
| Turnout difference | -23.53 | -26.68 | -35.50 | -31.44 | -32.92 | -36.95 | -43.34 |
| | -10.93 | -14.17 | -17.48 | -16.17 | -21.20 | -17.56 | -19.35 |

Note: ¹ Threshold is calculated separately for each constituency (Oelbermann, Palomares and Pukelsheim 2010, 164).

| UNITED KINGDOM | | | | | | | |
|--------------------------------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|
| Indicators/ Elections | 1979 | 1984 | 1989 | 1994 | 1999 | 2004 | 2009 |
| Compulsory voting | No | No | No | No | No | No | No |
| Weekend voting | No | No | No | No | No | No | No |
| Concurrent voting | No | No | No | No | No | No | No |
| E- voting | No | No | No | No | No | No | No |
| Electoral system ¹ | FPTP | FPTP | FPTP | FPTP | PR | PR | PR |
| Preferential vote ² | na | na | na | No | No | No | No |
| Threshold (%) | na | na | na | - | - | - | - |
| <i>f</i> of elections | 3 | 3 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 |
| Timing of elections | 1 A Pa | 12A Pa | Middle | Middle | Middle | Middle | 11B Pa |
| N of constituencies | 79 | 79 | 78 | 85 | 12 | 12 | 12 |
| Turnout in EP el. (%) | 32.34 | 32.57 | 36.21 | 36.43 | 24.02 | 39.21 | 34.48 |
| Change in turnout | +0.24 | +3.64 | +0.23 | -12.41 | +14.91 | -4.73 | |
| Turnout in last NE | 76.00 | 72.81 | 75.42 | 77.83 | 71.46 | 59.38 | 61.36 |
| Turnout difference | -43.66 | -40.24 | -39.21 | -41.40 | -47.44 | -20.17 | -26.88 |

Note: ¹ Since 1994 electoral system in Great Britain changed from FPTP to PR (STV). In Northern Ireland, STV was always used (Ellis and Larserud 2005, 141).

² In Great Britain voting lists are closed but in Northern Ireland preference votes are used through STV (Mellows- Facer, Cracknell and Lighdown 2009, 19).

| IRELAND | | | | | | | |
|-------------------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|
| Indicators/ | 1979 | 1984 | 1989 | 1994 | 1999 | 2004 | 2009 |
| Compulsory voting | No | No | No | No | No | No | No |

| | | | | | | | |
|-----------------------|--------|---------|--------|--------|---------|---------|--------|
| Weekend voting | No | No | No | No | No | No | No |
| Concurrent voting | No | Yes/Ref | Yes/Pa | No | Yes/Ref | Yes/Ref | No |
| E- voting | No | No | No | No | No | No | No |
| Electoral system | PR | PR | PR | PR | PR | PR | PR |
| Preferential vote | STV | na | na | STV | STV | STV | STV |
| Threshold (%) | na | na | na | - | - | - | - |
| <i>f</i> of elections | 1 | 2 | 1 | 1 | 2 | 1 | 2 |
| Timing of elections | Middle | Middle | Con | Middle | Middle | Middle | Middle |
| N of constituencies | 4 | 4 | 4 | 4 | 4 | 4 | 4 |
| Turnout in EP el. (%) | 63.60 | 47.60 | 68.30 | 43.98 | 50.21 | 58.58 | 57.57 |
| Change in turnout | -16.00 | +20.70 | -24.32 | | +6.23 | +8.37 | -1.01 |
| Turnout in last NE | 47.60 | 47.60 | 47.60 | 64.10 | 46.71 | 46.71 | 46.71 |
| | 76.31 | 72.86 | 73.33 | 68.49 | 65.92 | 62.57 | 67.03 |
| Turnout difference | +16.00 | 0 | +20.70 | -20.12 | +3.5% | +11.87 | +10.86 |
| | -12.71 | -25.26 | -5.03 | -24.51 | -15.71 | -3.99 | -9.46 |

GREECE

| Indicators/ Elections | 1981 | 1984 | 1989 | 1994 | 1999 | 2004 | 2009 |
|-----------------------|--------|--------|---------------------|-------|--------|--------|--------|
| Compulsory voting | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes |
| Weekend voting | Yes | na | No | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes |
| Concurrent voting | Yes/Pa | No | No | No | No | No | No |
| E- voting | No | No | No | No | No | No | No |
| Electoral system | PR | PR | PR | PR | PR | PR | PR |
| Preferential vote | na | na | na | No | No | No | No |
| Threshold (%) | na | na | na | 3 | 3 | 3 | 3 |
| <i>f</i> of elections | 1 | 1 | 1 | 3 | 1 | 3 | 1 |
| Timing of elections | Con | 12B Pa | 3day B ¹ | 9A Pa | 16B Pa | 3A Pa | 4B Pa |
| N of constituencies | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 |
| Turnout in EP el. (%) | 78.60 | 77.20 | 79.90 | 73.18 | 71.49 | 63.22 | 52.63 |
| Change in turnout | -1.40 | +2.70 | -6.72 | -1.69 | -8.27 | -10.59 | |
| Turnout in last NE | 81.11 | 81.50 | 83.81 | 82.95 | 76.34 | 76.62 | 74.14 |
| Turnout difference | -2.51 | -4.30 | -3.91 | -9.77 | -4.85 | -13.40 | -21.51 |

Note: ¹ Elections were held three days before parliamentary elections.

SPAIN

| Indicators/ Elections | 1987 | 1989 | 1994 | 1999 | 2004 | 2009 |
|-----------------------|---------|--------|--------|--------|--------|---------|
| Compulsory voting | No | No | No | No | No | No |
| Weekend voting | No | na | na | Yes | Yes | Yes |
| Concurrent voting | No | No | No | No | No | No |
| E- voting | No | No | No | No | No | No |
| Electoral system | PR | PR | PR | PR | PR | PR |
| Preferential vote | na | na | No | No | No | No |
| Threshold (%) | na | na | - | - | - | - |
| <i>f</i> of elections | 3 | 1 | 3 | 1 | 3 | 1 |
| Timing of elections | 12 A Pa | 4 B Pa | 12A Pa | 9 B Pa | 3 A Pa | 15 A Pa |
| N of constituencies | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 |
| Turnout in EP el. (%) | 68.90 | 54.60 | 59.14 | 63.05 | 45.14 | 44.90 |
| Change in turnout | -14.30 | +4.54 | +3.91 | -17.91 | -0.24 | |
| Turnout in EE (%) | 68.90 | 54.60 | 59.14 | 63.05 | 45.14 | 44.90 |

| | | | | | | |
|--------------------|-------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|
| Turnout in last NE | 70.37 | 70.37 | 77.05 | 78.06 | 75.66 | 76.03 |
| Turnout difference | -1.47 | -15.77 | -17.91 | -15.01 | -30.52 | -31.13 |

| PORTUGAL | | | | | | |
|-----------------------|--------|--------|---------|--------|--------|--------|
| Indicators/ Elections | 1987 | 1989 | 1994 | 1999 | 2004 | 2009 |
| Compulsory voting | No | No | No | No | No | No |
| Weekend voting | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes |
| Concurrent voting | Yes/Pa | No | No | No | No | No |
| E- voting | No | No | No | No | No | No |
| Electoral system | PR | PR | PR | PR | PR | PR |
| Preferential vote | na | na | No | No | No | No |
| Threshold (%) | na | na | - | - | - | - |
| f of elections | 1 | 2 | 1 | 2 | 1 | 1 |
| Timing of elections | Con | Middle | 16 B Pa | 4 B Pa | 8 B Pa | 3 B Pa |
| N of constituencies | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 |
| Turnout in EP el. (%) | 72.40 | 51.20 | 35.54 | 39.93 | 38.60 | 36.78 |
| Change in turnout | -21.20 | -15.66 | +4.39 | -1.33 | -1.82 | |
| Turnout in last NE | 78.15 | 78.15 | 61.92 | 66.29 | 50.03 | 61.53 |
| | 75.37 | 72.64 | 68.18 | 66.30 | 62.84 | 64.26 |
| Turnout difference | -5.75 | -26.95 | -26.38 | -26.36 | -11.43 | -24.75 |
| | -2.97 | -21.44 | -32.64 | -26.37 | -24.24 | -27.48 |

| AUSTRIA | | | | |
|-----------------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|
| Indicators/ Elections | 1996 | 1999 | 2004 | 2009 |
| Compulsory voting | No | No | No | No |
| Weekend voting | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes |
| Concurrent voting | No | No | No | No |
| E- voting | No | No | No | No |
| Electoral system | PR | PR | PR | PR |
| Preferential vote | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes |
| Threshold (%) | 4 | 4 | 4 | 4 |
| f of elections | 3 | 1 | 3 | 3 |
| Timing of elections | 10 A Pa | 4 B Pa | Middle | 9 A Pa |
| N of constituencies | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 |
| Turnout in EP el. (%) | 67.73 | 49.01 | 42.43 | 45.97 |
| Change in turnout | -18.72 | -6.58 | | +3.54 |
| Turnout in last NE | 80.91 (Pr) | 74.40 (Pr) | 71.60 (Pr) | 71.60 (Pr) |
| | 85.98 (Pa) | 85.98 (Pa) | 84.27 (Pa) | 81.71 (Pa) |
| Turnout difference | -13.18 | -25.39 | -29.17 | -25.63 |
| | -18.25 | -36.97 | -41.84 | -35.74 |

| FINLAND | | | | |
|-----------------------|------|------|------|------|
| Indicators/ Elections | 1996 | 1999 | 2004 | 2009 |
| Compulsory voting | No | No | No | No |
| Weekend voting | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes |
| Concurrent voting | No | No | No | No |
| E- voting | No | No | No | No |
| Electoral system | PR | PR | PR | PR |
| Preferential vote | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes |

| | | | | |
|----------------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| Threshold (%) | - | - | - | - |
| f of elections | 1 | 3 | 1 | 1 |
| Timing of elections | 19 A Pa | Middle | 15 A Pa | Middle |
| N of constituencies ¹ | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 |
| Turnout in EP el. (%) | 57.60 | 30.14 | 39.43 | 40.48 |
| Change in turnout | -27.46 | +9.29 | +1.05 | |
| Turnout in last NE | 76.96 (Pr) 68.58 (Pa) | 76.96 (Pr) 65.27 (Pa) | 76.80 (Pr) 66.71 (Pa) | 74.05 (Pr) 65.02 (Pa) |
| Turnout difference | -19.36 -10.98 | -46.82 -35.13 | -37.37 -27.28 | -33.57 -24.54 |

Note: ¹ There is single national constituency but members but candidates are elected from 4 regional or national lists (OSCE/ ODIHR 2009).

| SWEDEN | | | | |
|----------------------------|---------|--------|--------|------------------|
| Indicators/ Elections | 1995 | 1999 | 2004 | 2009 |
| Compulsory voting | No | No | No | No |
| Weekend voting | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes |
| Concurrent voting | No | No | No | No |
| E- voting | No | No | No | No |
| Electoral system | PR | PR | PR | PR |
| Preferential vote | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes ¹ |
| Threshold (%) ² | 4 | 4 | 4 | 4 |
| f of elections | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| Timing of elections | 12 A Pa | 9 A Pa | Middle | 15 B Pa |
| N of constituencies | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 |
| Turnout in EP el. (%) | 41.63 | 38.84 | 37.85 | 45.53 |
| Change in turnout | -2.79 | -0.99 | +7.68 | |
| Turnout in last NE | 86.82 | 81.39 | 80.11 | 81.99 |
| Turnout difference | -45.19 | -42.55 | -42.26 | -36.46 |

Note: ¹ Voters may also add new names on blank ballot (write- in ballots) (OSCE/ ODIHR 2009, 14)

² There is 4% threshold for political parties and 5% threshold for candidates (candidates must obtain 5% of total number of voters cast for his/ her party) (OSCE/ ODIHR 2009, 14).

| ESTONIA | | |
|-----------------------|---------|--------|
| Indicators/ Elections | 2004 | 2009 |
| Compulsory voting | No | No |
| Weekend voting | Yes | Yes |
| Concurrent voting | No | No |
| E- voting | No | Yes |
| Electoral system | PR | PR |
| Preferential vote | No | No |
| Threshold (%) | - | - |
| f of elections | 2 | 1 |
| Timing of elections | 15 A Pa | Middle |
| N of constituencies | 1 | 1 |
| Turnout in EP el. (%) | 26.83 | 43.90 |
| Change in turnout | +17.10 | |
| Turnout in last NE | 58.24 | 61.91 |

| | | |
|--------------------|---------|---------|
| Turnout difference | - 31.41 | - 18.01 |
|--------------------|---------|---------|

| LATVIA | | |
|------------------------------|-------------|----------------|
| Indicators/ Elections | 2004 | 2009 |
| Compulsory voting | No | No |
| Weekend voting | Yes | Yes |
| Concurrent voting | No | No |
| E- voting | No | No |
| Electoral system | PR | PR |
| Preferential vote | Yes | Yes |
| Threshold (%) | 5 | 5 ¹ |
| <i>f</i> of elections | 2 | 2 |
| Timing of elections | Middle | 16 B Pa |
| N of constituencies | 1 | 1 |
| Turnout in EP el. (%) | 41.34 | 53.69 |
| Change in turnout | +12.35 | |
| Turnout in last NE | 71.17 | 60.98 |
| Turnout difference | - 29.83 | - 7.29 |

Note: ¹ 5% of vote cast (Oelbermann, Palomares and Pukelsheim 2010, 153).

| LITHUANIA | | |
|------------------------------|-------------|----------------|
| Indicators/ Elections | 2004 | 2009 |
| Compulsory voting | No | No |
| Weekend voting | Yes | Yes |
| Concurrent voting | Yes/ Pr | No |
| E- voting | No | No |
| Electoral system | PR | PR |
| Preferential vote | Yes | Yes |
| Threshold (%) | 5 | 5 ¹ |
| <i>f</i> of elections | 1 | 3 |
| Timing of elections | Con/ 4 B Pa | 1 A Pr/ 9 B Pa |
| N of constituencies | 1 | 1 |
| Turnout in EP el. (%) | 43.38 | 20.98 |
| Change in turnout | -22.40 | |
| Turnout in last NE | 52.65 (Pr) | 51.76 (Pr) |
| | 58.18 (Pa) | 32.37 (Pa) |
| Turnout difference | - 9.27 | - 30.78 |
| | -14.80 | - 11.39 |

Note: ¹ 5% of vote cast, and full- seat restricted greatest reminder variant (equivalent to 6.7% of votes cast) (Oelbermann, Palomares and Pukelsheim 2010, 150).

| CZECH REPUBLIC | | |
|------------------------------|-------------|-------------|
| Indicators/ Elections | 2004 | 2009 |
| Compulsory voting | No | No |
| Weekend voting | Yes | Yes |
| Concurrent voting | No | No |
| E- voting | No | No |
| Electoral system | PR | PR |
| Preferential vote | Yes | Yes |

| | | |
|-----------------------|---------|---------|
| Threshold (%) | 5 | 5 |
| <i>f</i> of elections | 2 | 2 |
| Timing of elections | Middle | 11 B Pa |
| N of constituencies | 1 | 1 |
| Turnout in EP el. (%) | 28.30 | 28.22 |
| Change in turnout | -0.08 | |
| Turnout in last NE | 57.95 | 64.47 |
| Turnout difference | - 29.65 | - 36.25 |

| HUNGARY | | |
|-----------------------|---------|---------|
| Indicators/ Elections | 2004 | 2009 |
| Compulsory voting | No | No |
| Weekend voting | Yes | Yes |
| Concurrent voting | No | No |
| E- voting | No | No |
| Electoral system | PR | PR |
| Preferential vote | No | No |
| Threshold (%) | 5 | 5 |
| <i>f</i> of elections | 1 | 1 |
| Timing of elections | Middle | 10 B Pa |
| N of constituencies | 1 | 1 |
| Turnout in EP el. (%) | 38.50 | 36.31 |
| Change in turnout | -2.19 | |
| Turnout in last NE | 73.47 | 64.39 |
| Turnout difference | - 34.97 | - 28.08 |

| POLAND | | |
|-----------------------|------------------|------------|
| Indicators/ Elections | 2004 | 2009 |
| Compulsory voting | No | No |
| Weekend voting | Yes | Yes |
| Concurrent voting | No | No |
| E- voting | No | No |
| Electoral system | PR | PR |
| Preferential vote | No | No |
| Threshold (%) | 5 | 5 |
| <i>f</i> of elections | 2 | 1 |
| Timing of elections | 15 B Pa/ 16 B Pr | 12 B Pa |
| N of constituencies | 13 | 13 |
| Turnout in EP el. (%) | 20.87 | 24.53 |
| Change in turnout | +3.66 | |
| Turnout in last NE | 61.12 (Pr) | 50.99 (Pr) |
| | 46.18 (Pa) | 53.88 (Pa) |
| Turnout difference | -40.24 | -26.46 |
| | - 25.31 | - 29.35 |

| SLOVAKIA | | |
|-----------------------|------|------|
| Indicators/ Elections | 2004 | 2009 |
| Compulsory voting | No | No |
| Weekend voting | Yes | Yes |

| | | |
|-----------------------|------------|-----------------|
| Concurrent voting | No | No |
| E- voting | No | No |
| Electoral system | PR | PR |
| Preferential vote | Yes | Yes |
| Threshold (%) | 5 | 5 |
| <i>f</i> of elections | 4 | 3 |
| Timing of elections | 2 A Pr | 2 A Pr/ 12 B Pa |
| N of constituencies | 1 | 1 |
| Turnout in EP el. (%) | 16.97 | 19.64 |
| Change in turnout | +2.67 | |
| Turnout in last NE | 43.48 (Pr) | 51.67 (Pr) |
| | 70.07 (Pa) | 54.65 (Pa) |
| Turnout differences | - 26.51 | - 32.03 |
| | - 53.10 | - 35.01 |

| SLOVENIA | | |
|-----------------------|------------|------------|
| Indicators/ Elections | 2004 | 2009 |
| Compulsory voting | No | No |
| Weekend voting | Yes | Yes |
| Concurrent voting | No | No |
| E- voting | No | No |
| Electoral system | PR | PR |
| Preferential vote | Yes | Yes |
| Threshold (%) | 4 | 4 |
| <i>f</i> of elections | 1 | 3 |
| Timing of elections | 4 B Pa | 9 A Pa |
| N of constituencies | 1 | 1 |
| Turnout in EP el. (%) | 28.35 | 28.33 |
| Change in turnout | -0.02 | |
| Turnout in last NE | 65.24 (Pr) | 58.45 (Pr) |
| | 70.36 (Pa) | 63.10 (Pa) |
| Turnout differences | - 36.89 | - 30.12 |
| | - 42.01 | - 34.77 |

| CYPRUS | | |
|-----------------------|------------|------------|
| Indicators/ Elections | 2004 | 2009 |
| Compulsory voting | Yes | Yes |
| Weekend voting | Yes | Yes |
| Concurrent voting | No | No |
| E- voting | No | No |
| Electoral system | PR | PR |
| Preferential vote | Yes | Yes |
| Threshold (%) | 1.8 | 1.8 |
| <i>f</i> of elections | 2 | 1 |
| Timing of elections | Middle | 16 A Pr |
| N of constituencies | 1 | 1 |
| Turnout in EP el. (%) | 72.50 | 59.40 |
| Change in turnout | -13.10 | |
| Turnout in last NE | 90.55 (Pr) | 86.92 (Pr) |

| | | |
|---------------------|------------|------------|
| | 91.75 (Pa) | 89.00 (Pa) |
| Turnout differences | - 18.05 | - 27.55 |
| | - 19.25 | - 29.60 |

| MALTA | | |
|-----------------------|---------|---------|
| Indicators/ Elections | 2004 | 2009 |
| Compulsory voting | No | No |
| Weekend voting | Yes | Yes |
| Concurrent voting | No | No |
| E- voting | No | No |
| Electoral system | PR | PR |
| Preferential vote | STV | STV |
| Threshold (%) | - | - |
| f of elections | 2 | 2 |
| Timing of elections | 14 A Pa | 15 A Pa |
| N of constituencies | 1 | 1 |
| Turnout in EP el. (%) | 82.39 | 78.79 |
| Change in turnout | -3.60 | |
| Turnout in last NE | 95.70 | 93.30 |
| Turnout differences | - 13.31 | - 14.51 |

| BULGARIA | | |
|--------------------------------|------------|------------|
| Indicators/ Elections | 2007 | 2009 |
| Compulsory voting | No | No |
| Weekend voting | Yes | Yes |
| Concurrent voting | No | No |
| E- voting | No | No |
| Electoral system | PR | PR |
| Preferential vote ¹ | Yes | Yes |
| Threshold (%) ² | 5.56 | 5.88 |
| f of elections | 3 | 1 |
| Timing of elections | 8 A Pa | 1 B Pa |
| N of constituencies | 1 | 1 |
| Turnout in EP el. (%) | 29.22 | 38.92 |
| Change in turnout | +9.70 | |
| Turnout in last NE | 42.62 (Pr) | 42.62 (Pr) |
| | 55.76 (Pa) | 55.76 (Pa) |
| Turnout differences | - 13.40 | - 3.70 |
| | - 26.54 | -16.84 |

Note. ¹ Individual candidate has to get at least 15% of votes of his political party (Maškarinec 2008, 116).

² The electoral threshold is equal to the national quota, which could be calculated as the sum total of the actual votes given to all the parties and party coalitions divided by the number of European Parliament seats from the Republic of Bulgaria (18 seats in 2007 EP elections and 17 seats in 2009 EP elections) (Lyubenov 2010, 56).

| ROMANIA | | |
|-----------------------|------|------|
| Indicators/ Elections | 2007 | 2009 |
| Compulsory voting | No | No |

| | | |
|-----------------------|------------|----------------|
| Weekend voting | Yes | Yes |
| Concurrent voting | No | No |
| E- voting | No | No |
| Electoral system | PR | PR |
| Preferential vote | No | |
| Threshold (%) | | 5 ¹ |
| <i>f</i> of elections | 1 | 4 |
| Timing of elections | 12 B Pa | 7 A Pa |
| N of constituencies | 1 | 1 |
| Turnout in EP el. (%) | 29.47 | 27.67 |
| Change in turnout | -1.80 | |
| Turnout in last NE | 55.21 (Pr) | 55.21 (Pr) |
| | 58.51 (Pa) | 39.20 (Pa) |
| Turnout differences | - 25.74 | -27.54 |
| | - 29.04 | - 11.53 |

Note: ¹ For individual candidates separate threshold (2.9% of votes cast) (OSCE/ ODIHR 2009, 14) (Oelbermann, Palomares and Pukelsheim 2010, 150).

Appendix II: Electoral calendar in member states of the EU

| Year | Country (type of elections) |
|------|---|
| 1977 | Denmark (Pa), Netherlands (Pa) |
| 1978 | Belgium (Pa, Reg, Pro), Denmark (Ref), France (Pa), Italy (Ref), United Kingdom (Loc) |
| 1979 | EU9 , Denmark (Pa), France (Can), Ireland (Loc, Ref), Italy (Pa), Luxembourg (Pa), United Kingdom (Pa, Loc) |
| 1980 | Germany (Pa), United Kingdom (Loc) |
| 1981 | Greece (EU) , Belgium (Pa, Reg, Pro), Denmark (Pa), France (Pa, Pr), Greece (Pa), Ireland (Pa), Italy (Reg, Loc, Ref), Luxembourg (Com), Netherlands (Pa), United Kingdom (Loc) |
| 1982 | Belgium (Mun), France (Can), Ireland (Pa), Netherlands (Pa), United Kingdom (Loc) |
| 1983 | France (Mun), Germany (Pa), Ireland (Ref), Italy (Pa), United Kingdom (Pa, Loc) |
| 1984 | EU10 , Denmark (Pa), Ireland (Ref), Luxembourg (Pa), United Kingdom (Loc) |
| 1985 | Belgium (Pa, Pro), France (Can), Greece (Pa), Ireland (Loc), Italy (Reg, Loc), United Kingdom (Loc) |
| 1986 | Belgium (Reg), Denmark (Ref), France (Pa, Reg), Greece (Loc), Ireland (Pa, Ref), Italy (Ref), Netherlands (Pa), Spain (Pa, Ref), United Kingdom (Loc) |
| 1987 | Portugal, Spain (EU) , Belgium (Pa, Pro), Denmark (Pa), Germany (Pa), Ireland (Ref), Italy (Pa, Ref), Luxembourg (Com), Portugal (Pa), Spain (Loc), United Kingdom (Pa, Loc) |
| 1988 | Belgium (Mun), Denmark (Pa), France (Pa, Pr, Can, Ref), Portugal (Reg), United Kingdom (Loc) |
| 1989 | EU12 , Belgium (Reg), France (Mun), Greece (Pa), Ireland (Pa), Italy (Ref), Luxembourg (Pa), Netherlands (Pa), Portugal (Loc), Spain (Pa), United Kingdom (Loc) |
| 1990 | Belgium (Reg), Denmark (Pa), Germany (Pa), Greece (Pa, Loc), Ireland (Pr), Italy (Reg, Loc, Ref), United Kingdom (Loc) |
| 1991 | Belgium (Pa, Pro), Ireland (Loc), Italy (Ref), Portugal (Pa, Pr), Spain (Loc), United Kingdom (Loc) |
| 1992 | Denmark (Ref), France (Reg, Can, Ref), Ireland (Pa, Ref), Italy (Pa), Portugal (Reg), United Kingdom (Pa, Loc) |
| 1993 | Denmark (Ref), France (Pa), Greece (Pa), Italy (Loc, Ref), Luxembourg (Com), Portugal (Loc), Spain (Pa), United Kingdom (Loc) |
| 1994 | EU12 , Belgium (Mun, Pro), Denmark (Pa), Finland (Pr, Ref), France (Can), Germany (Pa), Greece (Loc), Italy (Pa, Loc), Luxembourg (Pa), Netherlands (Pa), Sweden (Pa, Ref), United Kingdom (Loc) |
| 1995 | Sweden (EU) , Austria (Pa), Belgium (Pa, Reg), Finland (Pa), France (Pr, Mun), Ireland (Ref), Italy (Reg, Loc, Ref), Portugal (Pa), Spain (Loc), United Kingdom (Loc) |
| 1996 | Austria, Finland (EU) , Finland (Mun), Greece (Pa), Ireland (Ref), Italy (Pa, Loc), Portugal (Pr, Reg), Spain (Pa), United Kingdom (Loc) |
| 1997 | France (Pa), Ireland (Pa, Pr, Ref), Italy (Loc, Ref), Portugal (Loc), United Kingdom (Pa, Loc) |
| 1998 | Austria (Pr), Denmark (Pa, Ref), France (Reg, Can), Germany (Pa), Greece (Loc), |

| | |
|-------------------|---|
| | Ireland (Ref), Italy (Loc), Netherlands (Pa), Portugal (Ref), Sweden (Pa), United Kingdom (Loc) |
| 1999 | EU15 , Austria (Pa), Belgium (Pa, Reg), Finland (Pa), Ireland (Loc, Ref), Italy (Loc, Ref), Luxembourg (Pa, Com), Portugal (Pa), Spain (Loc), United Kingdom (Loc) |
| 2000 | Belgium (Mun, Pro), Denmark (Ref), Finland (Pr, Mun), France (Ref), Greece (Pa), Italy (Reg, Loc, Ref), Portugal (Reg), Slovenia (Pa), Spain (Pa), United Kingdom (Loc) |
| 2001 | Cyprus (Pa), Denmark (Pa), Ireland (Ref), Italy (Pa, Loc, Ref), Poland (Pa), Portugal (Pr, Loc), United Kingdom (Pa, Loc) |
| 2002 | Austria (Pa), Czech republic (Pa, Mun), France (Pa, Pr, Can, Mun), Germany (Pa), Greece (Loc), Hungary (Pa, Loc), Ireland (Pa, Ref), Italy (Loc), Latvia (Pa), Lithuania (Pr), Netherlands (Pa), Poland (Loc), Portugal (Pa), Slovakia (Pa, Loc), Slovenia (Pr), Sweden (Pa, Loc), United Kingdom (Loc) |
| 2003 | Belgium (Pa), Czech republic (Ref), Cyprus (Pr), Estonia (Pa, Ref), Finland (Pa), Hungary (Ref), Italy (Loc, Ref), Latvia (Ref), Lithuania (Ref), Malta (Pa, Ref), Netherlands (Pa), Poland (Ref), Slovakia (Ref), Slovenia (Ref), Spain (Loc), Sweden (Ref), United Kingdom (Loc) |
| 2004 | EU25 , Austria (Pr), Belgium (Reg), Czech republic (Sen, Reg), Cyprus (Ref), Finland (Mun), France (Reg, Can), Greece (Pa), Ireland (Loc, Ref), Italy (Loc), Lithuania (Pa, Pr), Luxembourg (Pa), Romania (Pa, Pr), Slovakia (Pr, Ref), Slovenia (Pa, Ref), Spain (Pa), United Kingdom (Loc) |
| 2005 | Bulgaria (Pa), Denmark (Pa, Loc), France (Ref), Germany (Pa), Italy (Reg, Loc, Ref), Luxembourg (Com Ref), Netherlands (Ref), Poland (Pa, Pr), Portugal (Pa, Loc), Slovakia (Reg), Spain (Ref), United Kingdom (Loc) |
| 2006 | Austria (Pa), Belgium (Mun, Pro), Bulgaria (Pr), Czech republic (Pa, Sen, Mun), Cyprus (Pa), Finland (Pr), Greece (Loc), Hungary (Pa, Loc), Italy (Pa, Loc, Ref), Latvia (Pa), Netherlands (Pa), Poland (Loc), Portugal (Pr), Slovakia (Pa, Loc), Sweden (Pa, Loc), United Kingdom (Pa, Loc) |
| 2007 | Bulgaria, Romania (EU) , Belgium (Pa), Denmark (Pa), Estonia (Pa), Finland (Pa), France (Pa, Pr), Greece (Pa), Ireland (Pa), Italy (Loc), Poland (Pa), Portugal (Reg, Ref), Slovenia (Pr), Spain (Loc), United Kingdom (Loc) |
| 2008 | Austria (Pa), Czech republic (Sen, Reg), Cyprus (Pr), Finland (Mun), France (Can, Mun), Ireland (Ref), Italy (Pa, Loc), Latvia (Ref), Lithuania (Pa), Malta (Pa), Portugal (Reg), Romania (Pa, Loc), Slovenia (Pa), Spain (Pa), United Kingdom (Loc) |
| 2009 | EU27 , Belgium (Reg), Denmark (Loc, Ref), Germany (Pa), Greece (Pa), Ireland (Loc, Ref), Italy (Loc, Ref), Lithuania (Pr), Luxembourg (Pa), Portugal (Pa, Loc), Romania (PR), Slovakia (Pr, Reg), United Kingdom (Loc) |
| 2010 | Austria (Pr), Belgium (Pa), Bulgaria (Pa), Czech republic (Pa, Sen, Mun), Hungary (Pa), Italy (Reg, Loc), Latvia (Pa), Netherlands (Pa, Loc), Poland (Pr), Slovakia (Pa), Sweden (Pa, Loc), United Kingdom (Pa, Loc) |
| 2011 | Bulgaria (Pr), Denmark (Pa), Estonia (Pa), Finland (Pa), France (Can), Germany (Loc), Ireland (Pa), Italy (Ref), Latvia (Pa), Malta (Ref), Poland (Pa), Portugal (Pa, Loc), Slovenia (Pa), Spain (Pa, Loc) United Kingdom (Loc) |
| 2012 ¹ | Belgium (Mun, Pro), Czech republic (Sen), Finland (Pr, Loc), France (Pa, Pr), Greece (Pa), Italy (Loc), Lithuania (Pa), Malta (Loc), Netherlands (Pa), Romania (Pa), Slovakia (Pa), Slovenia (Pr), Spain (Loc), United Kingdom (Loc) |

Note: Table covers elections in each country since date when first EP elections were hold in country. EP elections are highlighted by red colour. Following abbreviations are used for type

of elections: Pa- parliamentary, Pr- presidential, Reg- regional, Loc- local, Mun- municipal, Pro- provincial, Com- communal, Sen- senate, Ref- referendum.

¹ Data cover also upcoming elections in 2012.

Source: European Election Database, International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance

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