Abstract

Despite a gradual improvement, the European Parliament, like most of its national counterparts, still suffers from a social representation deficit in terms of gender. Previous studies suggest that the descriptive representation of voters, including that of women, is clearly affected by the way political parties select their candidates. In particular, the composition and practices of the selectorate are often underlined as the key factors. As party gatekeepers are constrained both by formal rules and informal practices, including gendered ones, this paper analyses how far the parties’ demand for candidates can explain the pattern of EP legislative recruitment. More specifically, it asks whether ‘who’ selects has an impact on the proportion of women representatives in the EU legislature. One hypothesis is that more exclusive selecting agencies would benefit women, while competing views suggest that more inclusive ones are themselves more socially representative and thus likely to reproduce this pattern. This paper examines the evidence for these hypotheses. The research draws mainly on a statistical analysis of a unique dataset of the candidate selection methods used in 126 national political parties across the 27 member states for the 2009 European elections.
Introduction

Gender inequality in politics is arguably one of the fundamental problems of contemporary democracies (Inglehart, Norris and Welzel 2002). Despite a gradual improvement, the European Parliament, as most of its national counterparts, still suffers from a social representation deficit in terms of gender. In 2014, women amount to less than a third of the outgoing MEPs.

Parties are the main revolving doors between aspirants and candidates. Women attempts to stand as candidates can be encouraged, discouraged or even prohibited by political parties – in case of religious parties, for example. Much of the work on the representation of women concentrates on the socio-economic or cultural factors to explain variations in women representation. The party variable is often set aside, while parties vary a great deal in the number of women elected to offices. Cross-party and not solely cross-national variations in women's representation may deserve renewed scholarly attention.

Authors concerned with candidate selection originally focused on examining and classifying the methods used by political parties. Criteria to that end have often included: eligibility or candidacy criteria, the level of centralization, and the selectorate (see in particular: Rahat and Hazan 2001). Yet light has also been shed on the consequences of the different methods on the functioning of democracies. Most notably, these consequences concern the dimensions of participation, competition, responsiveness, and last but not least, representation (Hazan and Rahat 2010). Nevertheless, the relation between these four dimensions is not always linear or positive: one dimension may go at the expense of another, and in particular more participation does not necessarily entail a better representation (Katz 2001; Rahat, Hazan and Katz 2008).

In the meantime, the characterisation of candidate selection as 'secret garden of politics' (Gallagher and Marsh 1988) still largely holds. Little information is available on these processes, and often only covering the selection of candidates for national (legislative) elections. Local, regional or European elections largely constitute under-studied interfaces when it comes to the selection of candidates.

Thus, the ambition of this paper is two-fold. It is first concerned with unveiling the processes of candidate selection taking place in the wake of the elections to the European Parliament (EP). Second, and it is its central aim, this research seeks to examine whether and to which extent these processes affect the representation of women. More precisely, it asks whether 'who' selects has an impact on the national parties' proportion of women MEPs. To that end, two competing
patterns are tested, which constitute the two extremes of the same continuum. On the one hand, more exclusive selectorates made of the party leader and other eventual top-executive party officers could prove more beneficial to women. One posited explanation is that party leadership usually includes more highly-educated individuals who are more liberal in their attitude toward gender equality and minority rights (Randall, 1987). Further, smaller groups are considered to be better able to balance list composition as internal coordination is easier. On the other hand, competing views suggest that more inclusive selectorates, being themselves more socially representative, are more likely to reproduce this pattern of representation when selecting. As such, this research is primarily concerned with party-level mechanisms enabling the political participation of women in parliaments.

To investigate these mechanisms and to establish findings, this paper proceeds as follows. First, it briefly surveys the literature on candidate selection processes and delineates major theoretical arguments linking these processes to the issue of representation, thus highlighting the relevance of the subject-matter. It further expounds on specificities of candidate selection at the EU level, in order to place this study in context. Second, it proceeds with a brief discussion of the methods, variables and data used. Finally, descriptive and inferential statistical models are tested and results are highlighted, before a few concluding remarks are drawn.

I. Theoretical framework

I.1. Theoretical argument: selectorates as gate-keepers to public office

Recruitment and selection processes and in particular the questions of how and why selection occurs bear important consequences for parties, legislatures and representative government (Norris, 1995; Siavelis and Morgenstern, 2008). Electoral politics and, more broadly, democratic life is not limited to competition between parties in terms of elections and representatives, but also occur within the parties through the selection of candidates. The accession of an individual to political offices is thus two-fold: first, within parties, aspirants are (or not) selected as candidates; second, candidates are (or not) elected to public office. In order to understand any democratic system, one therefore cannot be deprived of a systematic study of methods for selecting candidates. Literature on the inter-party arena of electoral competition is however generally acknowledged as less developed than the intra-party one, that of general elections (Alvarez and Sinclair 2012). Indeed, by choosing who is going to stand on electoral lists and at which place, parties influence the future composition of legislative assemblies (and even of
executives) and hence their policies. An increased number of studies have linked recruitment and selection to subsequent parliamentary work, by examining the effects of these processes on the behaviour of legislators in various types of political systems (Alvarez and Sinclair, 2012; Bowler et al., 1999; Crisp et al. 2004; De Luca et al. 2002; Faas 2003; Hazan 2000; Hazan and Rahat 2000; Hix 2002; 2004; Shomer 2009) and on the representativeness of the party’s list (Kernell 2008). The consequences of these processes have in fact been analysed in terms of participation, competition, responsiveness and, last but not least, representation (Rahat and Hazan 2010) as essential elements of any democratic system.

There are, however, different forms of representation. A distinction should in particular be made between descriptive representation (the ‘representation as presence’) and substantive representation (the ‘representation of ideas’) (Pitkin 1967; Rahat & Hazan 2006). This paper is primarily concerned with descriptive representation, and more precisely with the representation of women. It partly rests on the assumption that socially inclusive legislatures are usually considered desirable. The literature on voting behaviour in parliamentary elections has suggested that voters tend to vote more for male candidates than for female ones (Fréchette et al, 2008). This is interesting in particular because the electorate is a kind of enlarged or all-inclusive selectorate, and studies on candidate selection democratisation have precisely often tended to consider (open-) primaries as the most inclusive form of selectorate. Other studies have shown that among the independent variables influencing these results, the difference between men and women can be accounted for by a bias held by the party elite towards women (Murray et al, 2009; Wauters et al, 2010; Verge & Troupel, 2011). They have in particular argues that parties can disfavour women by placing them on less attractive on less favourable districts’ lists, giving them less visibility in the media or spending less campaign budget on them. As a consequence, the argument goes on, it is not so much voters’ preferences which are detrimental to women, but rather choices of the parties and especially of their elites. In other words, the discrepancy would come from the more exclusive group, not the most inclusive one. This further reduces the electorate to a kind of second-hand selectorate.

Political recruitment had long been associated with the behavioural tradition. In particular, studies of political elites saw recruitment as one element of a complex process, when it comes to the demographic differences between elites and masses. For functionalists, it constituted an input function to the political system (Almond 1960) and political roles (Czudnowski 1975). The reinstatement of institutions, in particular under the three neo-institutionalisms has led to an increased consideration of candidate selection processes as one institutional aspect of legislative recruitment alongside other institutional and non-institutional aspects (respectively the
electoral system and more diffuse elements concerning the demand and supply) (Norris 1997). Considering candidate selection as one aspect of legislative recruitment (Matthews, 1985; Patzelt, 1999), neo-institutionalists have thus apprehended it as both reflecting and affecting politics. In sum, the affirmation of the neo-institutional approach can thus be seen in light of the growing importance of the institutional element in analyses of legislative recruitment (Hazan and Rahat 2010: 5). This in particular intrinsically links how the candidates are selected to whom gets selected: in this sense, candidate selection affects party politics.

Figure 1. Analytical framework

It has long been suggested that the selection of candidates within a political system should be treated as process rather than a punctual decision (Rahat & Hazan 2001; Blomgren 2003: 128). These processes can hence be divided in different stages: from the nomination to the final decision (Rahat and Hazan 2001), and through eventual inputs. Analyses of candidate selection procedures usually concentrate on two dimensions of these processes: the level of intra-party decision-making (the territorial dimension) and the selectorate used (exclusion-inclusion dimension). Rahat and Hazan have however introduced a more encompassing framework, distinguishing four dimension of CSM democratisation: candidates’ eligibility criteria, the selectorate, decentralisation and voting v. appointment systems (Hazan and Rahat 2001). Along this framework, studies have suggested that the outcome of candidate selection (who is selected) is largely determined by the degree of centralization of the selection process, discrimination by selectors and the use of affirmative action. Nevertheless, research has more
often than not concentrated on the level of inclusiveness of the selectorate (Le Duc 2001; Hazan and Rahat 2010; Rahat and Hazan, 2001). This appears in line with the idea that candidate and leader selection confer crucial powers within the party to the actor(s) in charge (Gallagher and Marsh 1988; Marsh 1993; Massari, 2004; Hazan and Rahat, 2010). In any case, over seventy years ago, Schattschneider analysed the nominating as the most crucial process of the party, suggesting that "he who can make the nominations is the owner of the party. This is therefore one of the best points at which to observe the distribution of power within the party" (Schattschneider, 1942: 101). Selection is the focus of power contests within parties (Seligman, 1961). Accordingly, numerous studies have concentrated on who controls selection within political parties (e.g. leaders, executive committees or rank-and-file members) and how this power has evolved overtime. Depending on the inclusiveness of the candidate selection method, decisions on selection within parties may be in the hands of members, delegates at party conferences, regional sections, political factions, national executives or the very chairman of the party. Gatekeepers however select candidates both through formal rules and informal practices (Gallagher & Marsh 1988; Epstein 1980; Norris & Lovenduski 1995; Ramney 1981).

**Figure 2. Inclusiveness of candidate selection methods**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Exclusive</th>
<th>Inclusive</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>One person (leader, chairman) or small group</td>
<td>Nominating committee</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Selected party agency or PPG</td>
<td>Party Conference (delegates)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All members</td>
<td>Electorate</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: own compilation, adapted from Kenig 2009a and Hazan and Rahat 2010

There are differences between processes for different elections and although recruitment occurs at different levels legislative recruitment has certainly concentrated much of the scholarly attention (Norris, 1995). Yet, candidate selection for European Parliament elections has not been the object of extensive research so far. There has nevertheless been sporadic attempts to look into the EU legislative recruitment processes by focusing on either the political resources of candidates, providing ‘supply-side’ explanations, or the peculiarities of the multi-level political context, determining the ‘structure of opportunities’ for these recruitments. But the analysis of party rules and of the attitudes of gatekeepers, producing the ‘demand’ for candidates has often been overlooked or unsystematically studied. This is all the more surprising given that at the EU level, one often mentioned explanation of the stronghold of national parties on their MEPs is precisely their power in the candidate selection processes (Hix 2002; Lord 2002; Mühlböck
The second-order nature of EP elections means that MEPs do not need to follow the preferences of their electorate because their actions, the policies they defend or oppose in the EP, the discipline to their group are unrelated to their re-election. Conversely, they have all the reasons to follow their main selectorate, the national parties which decide on their placement on the lists and can accordingly reward or punish them (Hix and Lord 1997; Lord 2002). It is as such relentlessly assumed that ballot access for European elections is the exclusive preserve of national parties (Hix 2002; Faas 2003; Thiem 2009), and that political parties at European level or other actors are excluded from these processes. Generalising slightly, recruitment at EU level has often meant that the European elite mainly comes from national elites (Delwit et al. 2001). Political recruitment in general and candidate selection in particular have further relentlessly served as illustrations to the underdevelopment of political parties at European level (the so-called “Europarties” or transnational party federations). Authors have used it as a justification when arguing and agreeing that Europarties development is unimpressive and that national parties are the central actors within Europarties (Bardi 1994; Lord 2002). Yet, empirical researches on candidate selection methods for European Parliament elections have so far often been limited to case studies (Linek and Outly 2006). Although more encompassing mapping of the processes have also been conducted (Lehmann 2009), they would deserve updating in light of the 2014 elections and a more systematic comparative analysis (one limited attempt to do so is Bardi et al. 2010). In sum, at the EU level as elsewhere, candidate selection methods have been the object of scattered researched, not least because of the often deplored difficult access to empirical material (Hazan and Rahat 2010). This essentially places the processes of recruitment at the EU level in a largely under-studied interface.

I.2. Hypothesizing the influence of the selectorate on gender representation

Considering political parties as office-seeking actors, who is elected is largely determined by intra-party processes, most notably that of candidate selection. Different party actors can encourage or discourage the participation (and hence representation) of women. Accordingly, this leads to a continuum of hypotheses available for empirical testing, that I reduce to two competing ones. These hypotheses are the two face of the same coin – the selectorate as a determinant in representation.

First, inclusive selectorates, those eventually including all party members and eventually non-member supporters, are themselves deemed to be socially representative. Although the selection of leaders and candidates by inclusive selectorates could threaten their responsiveness toward their party (and thus threaten intra-party cohesion), this claim has been largely
challenged by researches showing that on the contrary, more inclusive methods can help to select candidates who are more in accordance with the party's ideology or with party voters (Mikulska and Scarrow 2010). Besides, in line with above-mentioned studies showing that the overrepresentation of men is due to a bias of the party elite which disfavour women (Murray et al. 2009; Wauters et al. 2010; Verge & Troupel. 2011), the more inclusive groups’ alleged preferences towards men would not by themselves disfavour women. This places this paper at the core of one of the main paradoxes of modern representative democracies: parties are essential to the functioning of democracy, but it is not clear whether these parties are themselves democratic. In this respect, changes toward enlarged selectorates are generally considered as a democratisation trend (Hazan and Rahat 2010).

H1: More inclusive selectorates are beneficial to the representation of women in the European Parliament.

In contrast, Rahat, Hazan and Katz have shown that more inclusive selectorates are often detrimental of more social representation (Rahat et al. 2008). Parties, and smaller groups within them, are better able to select representative candidates because they (often explicitly) aim at ensuring the representation of specific groups in society. This is true in particular because when candidates are selected directly by the party leader, or by a limited number of people around it, it is in practice easier to manage a good balance between different criteria or types of candidates such as male and female candidates, ethnic or linguistic groups, age groups and/or regions and territories. By contrast, when the selection of candidates is in the hands of larger bodies, achieving such aim becomes more difficult. This is supported by empirical examples showing that parties using more restrictive selectorate turn out to present more balanced list of candidates in terms of gender (see for instance: Narud and Valen 2008 – for an illustration in the case of Norway). One posited explanation is the complex coordination ensuing from more people being involved in the selection. Moreover, it might be assumed that party leadership includes higher-educated and more liberal individuals in their attitude toward gender equality and minority rights (Randall, 1987). Furthermore, more participation might come to the detriment of real competition (Rahat et al. 2008). In particular, because of the personalization of politics, more inclusive selectorates tend to reselect incumbents (or in our case: outgoing/sitting MEPs). In fact, the argument goes, giving party agency the capacity to approve or disapprove incumbents' candidacies might allow compensating that tendency and enhancing competition. This line of thought sees the power of incumbents (who are disproportionately men) as being increased in the case of enlarged selectorates (Rahat and Sher-Hadar, 1999; Hazan and Rahat,
Our second hypothesis thus sees exclusive selecting agencies as benefitting women, while more inclusive selectorates would be detrimental to more social representation.

**H2: More exclusive selectorates favour the representation of women in the European Parliament.**

## II. Research design

### II.1. Empirical case: candidate selection ahead of the 2014 European elections

This paper analyses how far the patterns of the European legislature composition can be explained by the parties’ demand for candidates, their gatekeepers being constrained by formal rules and informal practices, including gendered ones. More specifically, it asks whether ‘who’ selects has an impact on the representation of women in the EU legislature. The research is based on a unique dataset of the candidate selection methods used in the national political parties of the 27 member states for the 2009 European elections, containing the selection processes’ formal rules and informal procedures regarding the selectorate (including mixed and multi-stage systems), as well as detailed accounts of the list formation criteria concerning gender.

The study of women and political participation seldom includes political parties and their internal processes of candidate selection as explanatory variables (one major exception and explanations are to be found in: Baer 1993). In addition, national political parties are often assumed to be unitary actors which unilaterally control ballot access for European elections, although the actual processes remain empirically unexplored. This paper analyses whether the level of inclusiveness of candidate selection procedures impact on the presence of women as MEPs. As such, it examines the role of political parties in shaping women’s descriptive representation by focusing on a specific party-level mechanism that can either enable or inhibit women’s political participation in parliament. In this sense, this research constitutes both an update and complement to the main study conducted so far on the subject-matter, that of Norris and Franklin 1997), by including far more countries and political parties, but then focusing on less variables.

Because it focuses on a field which is at the heart of numerous ontological and epistemological debates, and in line with EU studies focusing on national as well as traditional left-right cleavages, this study first proceeds to a descriptive analysis of cross-national and cross-party (based on European Parliamentary groups’ affiliations) variations of the independent (the
selectorate) and dependent (the representation of women) variables in order to give an overall impression of these cleavages.

II.2. Empirical sources and variables

This section briefly presents the dependent and independent variables and outlines the exact operationalization as well as the data source.

The inclusiveness of the selectorate and gender provisions

This paper builds on an original, systematic and comparative dataset mapping the candidate selection methods used by all major parties in the 27 Member States in the wake of the 2009 European elections (N = 126 parties). Information about formal party rules and informal practices was collected in Lehmann (2009) which used expert surveys and semi-structured interviews in the parties to establish his report country-by-country and party-by-party, but does not systematically analysed the vast amount of data produced. The data collection has not been framed by a common coding scheme. Therefore, the report does not allow for a systematic comparison. The data therefore had to be coded. I have coded formal rules and informal procedures, and divided the selection process into four different stages (initiative – input or amendment – formal vote – approval or ratification); the coding scheme relies upon two of the dimensions and the categories used in the literature (see previous section; Norris and Franklin 1997; Rahat and Hazan 2001): the level of inclusiveness of the selectorate, and the existence of selectability criteria but limited to those regarding gender parity or representation. Because candidate selection is usually measured as a scale from more exclusive to more inclusive selectorates, the dependent variable is treated as metric, as this has been done elsewhere. Most definitions agree on 5-6 different categories therein. The coding reflects this literature by coding 1 the most exclusive selection agencies and 5 the most inclusive ones. This also ontologically seems to reflect an assumption often found in the literature on the desirability of more inclusive selectorate in terms of democratisation. This study does not however a priori subscribe to this claim. Rather, it seeks to establish a measurement. Although six kinds or levels of party bodies have been often relied upon in the literature (Bartolini, Hug and Caramani 1998; Bosco and Morlino 2007; Hazan and Rahat 2010), this research de facto excludes the "non-party sympathisers" and “electorate" as categories for which no evidence has been found. When head(s) of the list position(s) is (are) selected according to a different procedure, this procedure was taken into consideration (since often, only head(s) of the lists has(ve) chances to get elected). Contrary to Kenig’s one (2009a; 2009b), this piece does neither include the parliamentary party group, which has only been detected as part of other bodies. While PPGs
play an important role in leader and candidate selection in Westminster democracies for instance, parliamentary parties at EU level or national delegations within them do not enjoy any recognition in the national parties as such. Besides, although individual MEPs may be part of party bodies, this is sometimes but not always attributable to their specific position as MEP. The party bodies considered for this study are hence summarised in figure 3. Thus, the candidate selection processes are coded distinguishing both the different phases and party organs. Both the collection of the data (the reliance on the study by Lehmann is complemented by the experts’ survey and MEPs interviews conducted for 2014 in the absence of significant changes) and the coding itself were double-checked.

**Figure 3.** Inclusive-Exclusive dimensions of the selectorate for EP elections

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Exclusive</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>Inclusive</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Highest ranking party member</td>
<td>Party’s highest-ranking leaders &amp;/or office-holder delegates at all levels = restrictive executive body</td>
<td>Party’s governing body = political leadership</td>
<td>Member delegates, party office-holders and national and regional leaders = party’s parliament</td>
<td>All party members, eventually brought together as an assembly</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>⇒ party chairman, secretary or leader</td>
<td>⇒ political bureau, ‘restricted bureau’ or ‘national secretariat’</td>
<td>⇒ steering committee, party bureau, ‘national executive’ or ‘national board’ &amp;/or body elected by the party congress</td>
<td>⇒ the ‘central committee’, ‘national political committee’ or ‘national board’</td>
<td>⇒ the party congress</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: own compilation

There are, nevertheless, and as suggested above, other intervening variables that are worth accounting for. Norris summarizes the most important factors of the electoral systems affecting women representation as follows: the electoral formula determining the allocation of seats and the use of legal strategies of affirmative actions (Norris 2000).

Undoubtedly, one intervening variable which almost automatically comes to mind concerns requirements regarding gender, which according to the corresponding literature form part of the eligibility criteria (Rahat and Hazan 2001). The widespread label of ‘gender quotas’ hides different realities. Distinction can in particular be made regarding the level at which the quotas are in place: legislative quotas – as part of the electoral law, e.g. in Belgium, France, Italy or Romania since the 1990s, but previously used in India as early as the 1930s -; party quotas - i.e. voluntarily self-imposition, adopted by parties themselves, mainly in the absence of legal rules – or reserved seats – predefined and often allocated through separate contests, e.g. in Morocco or Kenya - (Krook 2006). This paper only partly follows this distinction because of the absence of
the third category in European countries. Because of their recent diffusion to western democracies since the 1980s (Caul 2001), the presence or absence of legal requirements has first been coded. Similar dummy variables are then used for formal party commitments toward gender representation, and for more informal rules, targets or practices endorsed by the parties. It should be noted that parties might not at all consider this issue or even purposely do away with it, as it is the case for some religious parties. The idea behind this control variable is thus that there are different kinds of gender quotas (different percentages as well as a range of different ways to fulfil them, up to “zipping systems”) that should be accounted for. Especially interesting in this regard, are lists where either one or three candidates were elected despite a zipping system, in which case the gender of the head of list really matters, creating automatically a misbalance in favour of one or the other gender.

One other variable that could be worth controlling for is of course the electoral system. The impact of the electoral system on women representation has sometimes been considered as substantial: in particular, party list proportional systems have shown to contribute to a higher representation of women than majoritarian electoral systems in single-member districts (Norris 2006). Larger district magnitude would also considerably increase the chances for women to get elected (Ibid). Furthermore, open lists, single transferable votes or preference voting could largely undermine the effect of the role of the selectorate on gender representation. Nevertheless, it could be argued that even when the lists are open, the party’s fixing of the list order remains crucial. And hence the body to which this task is delegated further than being important for the selection is also determining in the ensuing election. In the Belgian case for example, and despite changes in the electoral rules, the preferential votes do not in practice disturb the ordered list to a great deal despite the system; only 1% of MPs have seen their place altered from the initial party list (De Winter and Dumont 2006; Rihoux 1996).

Women representation

In order to become an MEP, there are three conditions that need to be fulfilled: getting on the electoral list of a party, getting a relatively high position on the list, and getting a sufficient number of votes in the election. National parties are seen as powerful, or even as principals of MEPs as they control at least the two first conditions and might influence the third one, funnelling aspirants into (top-)candidates, and eventually into MEPs. The interest of this paper lies in those who made it through this process: women elected MEPs, as the EP constitutes the only directly elected EU institution and the only one where clear partisan politics is at stake.
The proportion of women in the EP 7th and current legislature was coded as the number of women relative to the total number of seats secured by a particular party. To this end, the initial composition of the legislature was used, to control for eventual early drop-outs. Because ‘women representation’ is measured as the proportion of women MEPs in each party having gained seats in the 7th legislature, the dependent variable can be treated as metric. I will therefore use a linear, simple and multiple regression model to measure the possible effect of selectorate inclusiveness on gender representation. On the one hand, the possible effect of the overall multi-stage selectorate on gender representation is measured. On the other hand, the effect of the selectorate for each individual stage, notwithstanding their order or sequence (initiative, formal inputs or amendments, formal vote, approval), is assessed.

In sum, the relevance of candidate selection processes for the party and political systems at EU level makes it crucial to describe and analyse the procedures applied by national parties to establish their candidates’ lists for European elections. The first concern is descriptive: it encompasses the questions of how inclusive the national candidate selection processes are and how much women are elected to office. Second, the impact of the inclusivity-exclusivity of the selectorate on the representation of women should be assessed. It is not however the ambition of this paper to engage into ontological debates about the underrepresentation of women. Nor is it concerned with epistemological considerations found in the feminist political science literature on the emergence of women representation as an important political issue. Yet, it contributes to the understanding of the underrepresentation of women in political positions and might indirectly offer remedies.

III. Findings: candidate selection and gender representation in the 2009-2014 EP

Who decides in national parties?

The burgeoning literature on party politics at the European level invariably assumes that national parties select candidates for European elections (Delwit et al. 2001; Hix 2002; Faas 2003; Thiem 2009; Mühlböck 2012). It seldom engages however in examining how exactly candidates are selected. A few exceptions focus on MEPs voting behaviours in relation to their selectorate (Faas 2002; 2003; Hix, Noury and Roland 2005; Frech 2013). These studies generally suggest that the stronghold of national parties on their MEPs is due to their power in the candidate selection processes. Parties can reward or punish their parliamentarians through list placement and as such largely determine their reelection chances. Accordingly, MEPs follow the
preferences of their selectorate (that is: their national party) when voting. This argument depicts national parties as unitary actors and says little on the parties' internal dynamics. Only a few empirical researches have offered more parsimonious insights into candidate selection methods for EP elections. Seeking to establish the patterns of this mechanism, Faas has shown that MEPs belonging to national parties using centralized candidate selection methods are more likely to defect from their EP group line (Faas 2002; 2003). Hix further argues that decentralized methods would allow MEPs to follow the preferences of the voters and not be limited to those of the party leaders (Hix 2004). Other attempts to unveil the candidate selection methods have so far often been limited to case studies (Buskjær Christensen 2009; Linek and Outly 2006). Therefore, candidate selection processes at the EU level remain largely under-studied and little is known about the patterns and variety of processes.

Hence this paper first proceeds with a descriptive analysis of the candidate selection methods used for European elections. Although the (horizontal) Europeanisation and policy diffusion literatures suggest that alignments of the selection processes are foreseeable, this paper is not directly concerned with such processes. It more blatantly uses two of these possible alignment scenarios, mainly for readability purposes. The underpinning theoretical argument is that parties’ organizational structures and strategies may depend upon the different political institutions in which they take part (Panebianco 1988; Hix 1998). This is usefully complemented by the assumption that ideology should be considered among the determinant of CSMs (O’Neill & Stewart, 2009). To that extent, parties might conform to specific models in the way they select candidates. A first observation worth mentioning is that the inclusiveness average of all the parties considered over all the stages amounts to 3.007, that is almost exactly the middle of the scale. “Party family” selection patterns, as illustrated in Graph 1 using the EPG affiliation in the previous 2004-2009 EP as proxy, show that the three biggest EP groups display an inclusiveness around this average, but tend to lean toward the most exclusive side. Clearer results are evidenced for the Greens-EFA group for which all cases are situated in the most inclusive part of the graph. Conversely, political parties which are not affiliated to any EPG present only more exclusive selection processes.
The geographical patterns revealed by our dataset through Graph 2, and despite the rather arbitrary nature of the categories adopted, show that parties from Nordic countries and perhaps to a lesser extent from Baltic ones are relatively more inclusive than other parties. In particular, this appears in sharp contrast to Southern European parties which tend to be quite exclusive in selecting candidates for EP elections.
Gender representation

A largely discussed issue of contemporary democracies, gender inequality in politics and in elected public offices in particular (Inglehart, Norris and Welzel 2002) is blatant in the European Parliament. Although the social representation deficit has decreased over the years, women still amount to less than a third of all the MEPs in the current legislature. **Graphs 3** depicts a situation whereby the biggest contingent of parties is constituted by those with no or few women in their ranks.

**Graph 3. Distribution of Women MEPs percentages by parties (N=126)**

[Bar chart showing distribution of women MEPs percentages by parties]

Attempting to give an overview by grouping again parties, **graphs 4 & 5** display a mixed picture. Regarding European Parliamentary groups, the most ‘extreme’ ones (GUE-NGL, IND/DEM & UEN and non-aligned) are those displaying the biggest representation deficit in terms of gender with a majority of their parties having less than 20% of MEPs (although once again these might also be smaller delegations with only one MEP). None of the non-aligned national parties indeed gather more than 40% of women in their EP delegation. Conversely, the Greens-EFA group depicts the best representation with over 40% of its member parties achieving a representation of women between 80 and 100%.
Conclusions are a bit less straightforward when grouping the parties according to geographical criteria as in graph 5. Unsurprisingly, Nordic countries perform relatively better in terms of women representation. The continental countries distribution (with for a majority, legal quotas
applying) is somewhat centred around the 40-60% category, which regroups a little less than 40% of all the parties. The Baltic States present a very much cleaved picture with parties achieving either a very high or very low representation of women (again, those are smaller parties with in most cases only one MEP).

These descriptive stances give an idea that is complemented with a view of the effect of selectorate inclusivity in supporting the representation of women in the EP.

Selectorate and gender representation

A linear regression analysis is used to attempt at presenting an overview about the selectorate determinants of women representation. From this regression, summarised in table 1, it appears that gender rules are not significant in explaining levels of women representation. Individual selection stages are also not relevant; except maybe for the third stage (model 4 - voting selectorate inclusivity presents a p-value of 0.019). Conversely, the overall selectorate, which considers all the stages together (through their arithmetic means), displays significant results.

Table 1. Regression models of the representation of women in the EP

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Model 1</th>
<th>Model 2</th>
<th>Model 3</th>
<th>Model 4</th>
<th>Model 5</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Intercept</td>
<td>-0.400</td>
<td>0.020</td>
<td>0.416</td>
<td>-0.414</td>
<td>0.117</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(0.265)</td>
<td>(0.206)</td>
<td>(0.277)</td>
<td>(0.310)</td>
<td>(0.299)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Selectorate inclusivity (overall)</td>
<td>0.525** (0.095)</td>
<td>0.356 (0.071)</td>
<td>-0.063 (0.121)</td>
<td>0.538* (0.084)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Initiative selectorate inclusivity</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Input selectorate inclusivity</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Voting selectorate inclusivity</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ratification selectorate inclusivity</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>0.258 (0.098)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Legal requirements</td>
<td>0.067</td>
<td>0.017</td>
<td>-0.007</td>
<td>-0.276</td>
<td>-0.015</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(0.150)</td>
<td>(0.173)</td>
<td>(0.235)</td>
<td>(0.360)</td>
<td>(0.266)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Formal party rules</td>
<td>0.043</td>
<td>0.160</td>
<td>0.376</td>
<td>0.311</td>
<td>-0.047</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(0.122)</td>
<td>(0.141)</td>
<td>(0.174)</td>
<td>(0.143)</td>
<td>(0.172)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Informal practices</td>
<td>-0.013</td>
<td>0.005</td>
<td>0.053</td>
<td>-0.138</td>
<td>0.099</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(0.101)</td>
<td>(0.134)</td>
<td>(0.130)</td>
<td>(-0.140)</td>
<td>(0.144)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$R^2$ (adjusted)</td>
<td>0.191</td>
<td>0.051</td>
<td>-0.061</td>
<td>0.178</td>
<td>-0.137</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*p<0.05; **p<0.01; ***p<0.005

The regression coefficient for the overall selectorate variable, estimated by the first model, is 0.525 and the value of the t-test is 2.849 with a p-value of 0.008. The t-test value and his associated p-value indicate that the regression coefficient of the overall selectorate inclusivity is statistically significant. The value of 0.525 estimated for the standardised regression coefficient indicates that the percentage of the representation of women increases on average from 0.525
units when the inclusivity of the selectorate increases of one unit on the scale. Besides, 19.1% of the variance of the dependent variable can be explained by the linear dependence depicted in the model.

As such, women seem to benefit albeit to a limited extent from inclusive selectorates. This finding validates the first hypothesis that more inclusive selectorate are more beneficial to women, and invalidate the opposing view of the second hypothesis. It thus appears in contradiction with the mainstream literature on the effect of candidate selection methods on representation, and maybe most clearly with Rahat, Hazan and Katz’s claim that “the parties that are most internally democratic produce lists of candidates that are least representative” (2008: 663). It further contributes to the view that party elites rather than enlarged selectorates or members are an impeding factor to the political presence of women (Wauters 2012).
Conclusion

Previous studies suggest that the representation of voters is clearly affected by the selection of candidates by political parties. Among the effects of the ‘demand side’, authors have in particular underlined selectors’ discrimination, the use of affirmative action and centralisation as having the most significant effect on the representation outcome (Norris and Franklin 1997). These factors all more or less explicitly point at the composition of the selectorate. Accordingly, this paper has outlined a set of competing but continuous hypotheses on the effect of ‘who selects’ on gender representation. As such, it has solely concentrated on intra-party mechanisms claiming that parties are essential gatekeepers to public offices. Based on evidence from national parties throughout the 27 member states and which have secured seats in the current EU legislature, it has first revealed the diversity of methods used to select candidates in the wake of the 2009 EP elections. At the same time, it has highlighted patterns within these processes along EPG and geographical lines. Doing away with the idea of parties as unitary, it has further attempted to entangle the imbrication and succession of various party actors in these processes. After having illustrated the under-representation of women in the EP, this research has drawn on a statistical model inspired by the literature to explore the Ins of this social representation deficit. It has found that the exclusiveness of the selectorate partly but significantly explains this composition.

Future research endeavours might further consider this path and go beyond it. Centralisation and inclusiveness are two dimensions of the candidate selection methods which are often mixed or confused in the literature. Following Rahat and Hazan (2001), they represent two dimensions that should be treated separately. Studying the same issue but looking at how much decentralized candidate selection was, Kittilson (2006) has also shown that more centralization allows for a better representation of women among candidates. The model developed in this paper has not considered decentralisation and has retained eligibility criteria only to a very limited extent, focusing on gender quotas and associated rules and practices. Another research avenue could expound other such criteria which can be linked to women representation. Provisions regarding incumbents, who disproportionately belong to the male gender, might deserved renewed scholarly attention.

All in all, this research has shed light on one possible factor explaining the patterns of theof women’ descriptive representation in the European Parliament. Although being quite limited in its scope, it has touched upon a central paradox of politics: the relation between intra-party democracy and democratisation in general. In other words, it has asked whether parties should themselves be democratic in their own internal functioning in order for the political system to be democratic. This question seems particularly relevant in view of the recurring debates surrounding the alleged EU ‘democratic deficit’.
References


Party Politics 7 (3) (May 1): 297–322.


