

**The selection of parliamentary candidates in Western
Europe
The paradox of democracy**

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Summary

This paper analyses the 'openness' of the parliamentary candidate selection procedures within 83 parties in twelve West European countries. It analyses both the official party rules as laid down in the statutes and the actual candidates selection process. Paradoxically, the empirical analysis shows that those organisations which are vital to democracy, namely political parties, adopt very undemocratic and elite controlled modes of parliamentary candidate selection. In order to assess whether this high level of centralisation is caused by (fear of) radicalism of the active membership, this paper compares the ideological disparity between the party leadership and active members (the mid-level elite). It emerges that the level of intra-party ideological disparity is low.

1. Introduction

If national politics is about obtaining control over the national executive, then the manner in which individuals gain this political power can not be neglected (Valen 1966; Gallagher and Marsh 1988). The method through which parliamentary candidates are selected has important consequences for the quality of the democratic political process. For one, the calibre and actions of selected candidates, their educational and professional background, their age and gender all influence the quality and representativeness of parliament. These qualities of parliamentary representatives subsequently determine the quality of government as an increasing number of ministers start their national political career in parliament (see Krouwel 1999). Some go even further and argue that the nomination and selection of parliamentary candidates is one of the most crucial functions of political parties in democratic political systems (Kirchheimer 1966).

Candidate selection procedures also influence parliamentary voting behaviour of deputies as politicians will very likely show most loyalty to the locus that has greatest influence on their (re-)selection. If the procedure is centralised and deputies depend for their re-selection on the central party organisation, they will avoid deviant roll-call behaviour. When the selection is more decentralised, deviant roll call behaviour can occur if this benefits the regional selectorate which decides on the re-election of the parliamentarian. The underpinning assumption in this paper is therefore that the cohesion of the (parliamentary) party is closely related with the locus of selection (see Gallagher 1988a, 12-16). This is relevant since party cohesion is generally seen as the most vital prerequisite for programmatically effective and democratically responsive parties (Klingemann et al. 1994). In addition, it can be argued that decisions about who takes office are good indicators for the distribution of power within the party organisation (see also Schattschneider 1942, 64). Moreover, the selection of the parliamentary representatives and the formulation of policy are interrelated since candidates, who are elected into public office are, for example, in a position to influence the political agenda and prepare the documents used in the debate. One could also reverse this argument: decisions about persons are often preliminary policy decisions and thus, choices on candidates are structured by policy preferences (see Niedermayer 1989, 15; Ranney 1981, 103). Therefore, the manner in which the parliamentary representatives are selected is related to intra-party conflict and party cohesion. As some of the earliest studies of political parties also emphasised, an 'open' or democratic selection of leadership is also crucial for the legitimacy of political leaders and the democratic polity in general (Michels 1911, 120-128; Duverger 1954, 135). Indeed, the recruitment and nomination of candidates for public office is such a vital function that it is widely regarded as the discriminating criterion of the definition of a political party (Sartori 1976; Eldersveld 1982). Given the fact that the recruitment and selection of the political elite is such a vital aspect of democratic politics it is surprising that relatively little attention has been paid to this aspect of party politics.

This paper examines both the official rules about the selection procedures as well as empirical analyses of actual selection processes. The analysis will cover 83 parties in 12 Western European over the post war period (see appendix 1). It will particularly focus on the 'openness' or 'level of inclusion' of the candidate selection procedures. The paper will seek to assess to what extent the variation in parliamentary candidate selection results from differences of political systems in the 12 countries. In some, political parties compete under the electoral regime of proportional representation, while in others parties put forward candidates in single-member constituencies (United Kingdom and France). Furthermore, some parties obtain executive power as single-party governments (United Kingdom) while in other countries coalition governments predominate (the Netherlands, Germany, Belgium, Finland, France and Italy) and in still other countries both types of government alternate (Austria, Denmark, Ireland, Norway and Sweden). Therefore, despite all the similitude of these democracies, political parties compete under distinctive circumstances in West European party systems. How does this affect their candidate selection procedures?

Secondly the paper will assess the differences between the various party families. Parties of different genetic origin have distinctive organisational and ideological characteristics which influence internal decision-making processes. How do the different perceptions of democracy and popular participation among parties of different denomination 'translate' into selection mechanisms inside political parties?

Thirdly, the data on parliamentary candidate selection are also subject to cross-time comparisons in order to assess whether in times of more pressure for more inclusive and democratic politics, as was visible in the 1960s and 1970s, make political parties open up their internal decision-making procedures.

Finally this paper addresses the question whether there is a relationship between the level of centralisation of candidate selection and intra-party cohesion. Do larger parties (in electoral terms) and parties which often take governmental responsibility have more 'closed' end elite-controlled procedures of candidate selection than the electorally smaller parties which have less or no tenure in office? Do the electorally successful and incumbent parties downgrade the influence of activist members because they are more radical and extremist and therefore unrepresentative of the electorate at large?

2. Measuring the 'openness' of selection procedures

In this paper I use the number and status of people who participate in the candidate selection to determine the 'openness' of the procedures. In general terms, the higher the number of people that have the opportunity to participate in these procedures, the more 'open' the procedure.

Usually candidate selection is an intra-party affair, where only a limited number of party members are eligible to vote and thereby, become part of the 'selectorate'.¹ Two opposing selection procedures, democratic direct membership polls or indirect nomination by the incumbent national leader(s) can be seen as two poles on the scale of centralisation in the selection of candidates (see also Ware 1996, 262). If the rank-and-file membership is excluded from the candidate selection, the procedure is considered centralised. As it is

¹ Ranney (1981, 83 ff) distinguishes three dimensions of candidate selection: centralization, inclusiveness and direct or indirect participation. Centralization refers to the pattern of power distribution in the candidate selection process over the different levels of the party organization (national, regional and local). Inclusiveness refers to the restrictiveness of the qualifications for participation in the selection process. The inclusiveness is determined by the extent to which the party elite allows the lower party echelons to participate in the election process. A direct intra-party selection procedure would thus entail an open primary, poll or referendum among all party members. An indirect method is the selection by committees or conventions where delegates decide on who is to be the candidate for public office. Another important aspect is the extent of competitiveness of the inter-party competition: the number of candidates which run for the same office. Parties will try to limit too open a competition between candidates for the party leadership, as a display of disunity will damage the party's electoral credibility and attractiveness. As politicians become more professional, and more ambitious for office and less policy oriented, they will sooner put the party's unity at risk. This will have consequences for the style of (democratic) leadership, the internal cohesion of the party and its electoral fortune (Marsh 1993; see also Dahl 1971, 7).

necessary (and sometimes compulsory by law) for parties in a democratic polity to retain a democratic structure, parties will rarely opt for an official procedure of total co-optation. However, as will be shown below, even when direct membership polls are held, candidate selection within parties is largely outside democratic popular control and the larger majority of citizens are not involved in inner party politics (see von Beyme 1985, 239). Many inner-party elections are indirect, namely, through committees or bureau's, nomination by the leadership itself, selection by the elected representatives, party congresses or conferences, all allowing for extensive control over, or even manipulation of, the outcome by the party leadership.

On the basis of research on candidate selection by Janda (1980, 110-111) and Gallagher (1988a), a scale of centralisation of candidate and leadership selection is constructed. Unlike practices in the United States such as 'primaries', the selection procedure in Western Europe is purely an intra-party process. Voters in Europe can only participate in leadership and candidate selection when they join a political party organisation. Party voters are therefore not included in this scale.

Figure 1 Openness (inclusiveness) of parliamentary candidate selection procedures: locus of major influence

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
incumbent national leader	party central office or national executive	interest or other external groups	parliamentary delegates	national convention or congress	select group of (local) party members	open party referendum for members

This scale is used to quantify centralisation in the selection of parliamentary candidates of European parties. The determining factor for each score is the major locus of influence in the selection process. The right end of the scale, box 7, indicates the most open and democratic selection procedure, in which all members formally have the right and opportunity to participate in the selection procedure. This would mean open primaries, referenda or polls among party members. Box 6 indicates a procedure in which party active members have to attend (local) meetings or congresses to be admitted in the selection procedure. Usually, this procedure entails the appointment of special election committees. A procedure in which the official congress representatives or local party leaders participate in the selection procedure and members can only ratify the candidate selection afterwards is indicated by box 5. A party is placed in box 4 when the parliamentary party mainly influences the selection of candidates. This procedure may include ratification by party members after the selection. When the locus of most influence rests outside the official party organs with affiliated interest groups (such as trade unions), yet the selection requires ratification by the party central body, score 3 is assigned. Box 2 is indicative of a procedure which gives the party central office or executive body vital influence in the selection procedure. When there is complete co-optation by the incumbent party leadership, the most centralised score of 1 is given to the respective party. Thus, a party moves toward the centralistic end of the scale when the party leadership increases its influence over the candidate selection.

One important distinction which has to be made, is between the official rules for the selection procedure as they are laid down in the party rules and the 'real world' selection process. This 'actual' selection process denotes a very complex mechanism of interaction involving multiple actors (some of which may even be outside the formal party organisation), in which all actors have a variegated degree of influence. Seldom will one single actor exert complete control over the selection process. The first part of this paper measures centralisation of parliamentary candidate selection on the basis of the formal, official written party rules (see Katz and Mair 1992).

3. The official rules of candidate selection

In some countries the inner party selection process² is regulated by legal provisions, whereas in all countries the process is influenced by historical tradition, the political culture, by the size of the constituencies as well as the electoral system. Legal provisions which regulate the inner-party process of candidate selection exist only in Finland, Germany and Norway.³ In all the other countries candidate selection is not formally governed by law. In these countries electoral laws, such as the size of the constituencies, the number of candidates per district and the ballot system, primarily determine the internal party rules and democratic participation. Duverger (1954, 356-359), for example, pointed out that a smaller constituency as well as proportional representation increases the influence of parties over the candidates, in that the rank-and-file membership can exercise more influence on the choice of the candidate. In addition, other authors have put forward a similar argument by stating that the larger the constituency, the more difficult it is for members to influence the selection, unless primaries or polls are held (Epstein 1967, 203). Furthermore, the degree of financial facilitation from the state and the accessibility to the media and other means of communication exert their influence on internal decision-making within political parties. In addition to these factors the governmental structure of a country (federal or unitary state), the political culture (people's attitudes towards political phenomena) and the nature or type of the party influence the method of candidate selection (Gallagher 1988, 8-11; Eldersveld 1964, 80). Although no European constitution outlaws candidates to run for public office outside the 'official' parties, the main route to public office is through the established political parties. Thus, in practice, nomination for public office is not equally accessible to all individuals. Legal stipulations, such as a number of required signatures or the deposit of a certain amount of money, all result in the domination of 'official' parties in the nomination of candidates for public office.

Table 1 below is based on the official party statutes which regulate parliamentary candidate selection (Katz and Mair 1992, Tables D.5) as well as secondary literature⁴ and summarises the most dominant bodies in the selection of the parliamentary candidates in Western European countries.

² In this study 'candidate nomination' and 'candidate selection' are considered two distinct processes. Nomination "is the predominantly *legal* process by which election authorities certify a person as a qualified candidate for an elective public office and print his or her name on the election ballot for that office. Candidate selection, on the other hand, is the predominantly *extralegal* process by which a political party decides which of the persons legally eligible to hold an elective public office will be designated on the ballot and in election communications as its recommended and supported candidate or lists of candidates" (Ranney 1981, 75; see also Eldersveld 1982, 196-197; Epstein 1967, 202; Duverger 1954, 354; Obler 1974; Scarrow 1994; Valen 1966).

³ Finland has strict legal provisions stipulated in the 1978 Party Law, under which party primaries are compulsory. In Germany Article 21 of the Basic Law (which stipulates that the internal organization of the parties must be democratic) and Article 2 of the Party Law (stipulating selection of parliamentary candidates as the defining function of political parties) and Article 17 of the Party Law (candidates must be selected by secret ballot) all regulate the candidate selection in German parties (Poguntke 1987, 611). Norway has the oldest legal regulation on candidate selection: the 1921 Norwegian Act of Nominations forbids the national party leadership to intervene directly in the nomination procedure and stipulates that voters are allowed to cross out the names of unwanted candidates. In Denmark and Sweden voters are given large influence in the final nomination of candidates. In Denmark a principle of candidate nomination was introduced in the electoral law in 1970 which made preferential voting more effective (Pedersen 1987, 32), while in Sweden voters have the opportunity to strike the names of unwanted candidates and thereby change the order of the candidates, yet the internal party selection is not legally regulated in both countries.

⁴ Gallagher and Marsh 1988; Gallagher, Laver and Mair 1995, 253-259; Katz and Mair 1994; Müller 1992a, 116; 1992b, 100-104; Gerlich 1987, 83; De Winter, 1988, 36; Deschouwer 1994; Pedersen 1987, 34; Sundberg and Gylling 1992, 277; Thiébaud 1988, 78-80; Gallagher 1985; 1988, 131; Mair 1987; Wertman 1988, 153; Koole 1994; Valen 1988, 228; Epstein, 1967, 220-228; Pierre 1992, 38; Denver 1988, 59-60.

Table1. Major locus of parliamentary candidate selection in West European countries 1945-1990

country	Most important party body in selection	Other important actors
Austria	local conventions	national executive
Belgium	local conventions	national executive
Denmark	local conventions	
Finland	local members	
France	national executives	local conventions
Germany	local conventions	
Ireland	local conventions	national executives
Italy	national executives	local conventions
Netherlands	local conventions	national executives
Norway	local conventions	
Sweden	local conventions	
United Kingdom	local conventions	

Adapted from Gallagher, Laver and Mair 1995, 254, additional information from Gallagher and Marsh 1988.

As can be seen from table 1, parliamentary candidate selection in Western Europe is mainly a prerogative of active local party members and the national executives of the parties. Most parties shy away from giving members, let alone voters, a direct and substantive voice in the selection of parliamentary candidates. With the exception of some of the Belgian parties during the 1960s, Labour in Britain, D66 in the Netherlands and most of the European environmental parties, practically none of the parties in this study allowed the electorate to influence the selection procedures through open primaries. Admittedly, voters are given some influence over the rank-order of candidates in Denmark and Finland through the use of preference votes and by way of the alternative vote in Ireland. Yet only in Finland have party members (not all voters) been granted the legal right of direct influence in the selection of parliamentary candidates through primaries.

The most common procedure adopted in Western Europe is the selection of parliamentary candidates by a local (regional or national) committee, followed by the subsequent ratification by the local convention of active members; the final approval or veto concerning (the rank-order of) candidates usually remains with the national executive (see also Gallagher et. al. 1995, 255). Central control therefore, is substantial and only a select group of local party activists are involved in the process (see Gallagher 1988, 245). The decision to determine which candidate's name will appear on the party's ballot paper is usually left to the party elite at the constituency level. Although a very small number of parties do hold a referendum among their members, in most West European parties members have to attend local meetings to participate in the selection. From the 'official story' it is unfortunately difficult to determine to what extent these selections are actually controlled by the higher echelons of the parties. From the analysis above it seems that national party bodies do try, and often succeed, in controlling the candidate selection to a large extent and usually have some kind of veto power as well. Still, in none of the parties in this sample are parliamentary candidates selected solely by the incumbent party leader. In some, such as the French right-wing parties, party leaders do wield substantial influence. There are, nevertheless, considerable deviations from the general pattern between countries and across time. This is summarised in the following table, for which the centralisation scale developed above (see figure 1) was used.

Table 2. The openness of the selection of parliamentary candidates of Western European parties 1945-1990

	1945 1950	1951 1955	1956 1960	1961 1965	1966 1970	1971 1975	1976 1980	1981 1985	1986 1990	<i>X</i>	<i>S</i>	<i>CV</i>
Aut	4.0	4.0	4.0	4.0	3.3	3.3	2.7	2.7	3.3	3.5	0.9	.26
Bel	5.8	5.3	5.1	4.9	4.2	3.3	2.0	2.7	2.7	4.0	2.0	.50
Den	5.0	5.0	4.9	4.9	5.6	5.5	5.5	5.5	5.5	5.2	0.9	.17
Fin	4.7	4.7	4.7	4.7	4.7	5.4	5.4	5.4	5.4	5.0	1.1	.22
Fra	5.0	5.0	5.0	5.0	5.0	5.0	2.5	2.5	1.8	4.1	1.6	.39
Ger	5.0	5.0	5.0	5.0	5.0	5.0	5.3	5.3	5.3	5.1	0.4	.08
Ire	4.5	4.5	4.5	4.5	4.5	5.0	5.0	5.5	5.3	4.8	1.4	.29
Ita	3.7	3.7	3.7	3.7	3.0	3.0	2.2	2.2	2.2	3.0	1.4	.47
Net	4.0	4.0	3.8	4.0	3.9	3.5	3.5	4.7	3.7	3.9	1.9	.49
Nor	6.0	6.0	6.0	6.0	6.0	5.7	5.7	5.7	5.4	5.8	0.6	.10
Swe	6.6	6.6	6.6	6.6	6.6	6.6	6.6	6.5	6.5	6.6	0.5	.08
UK	4.3	4.3	4.3	4.3	4.3	4.3	4.3	4.5	4.5	4.3	0.5	.12
<i>X</i>	4.8	4.8	4.8	4.8	4.7	4.6	4.2	4.4	4.1	4.6	1.1	.24
<i>S</i>	1.5	1.5	1.5	1.4	1.6	1.5	1.8	1.8	1.8	1.6	-	-
<i>CV</i>	.313	.313	.313	.292	.340	.326	.428	.409	.439	.348	-	-

Entries are average 'openness-scores'. A score of 1 indicates the most exclusive selection procedure, while a higher score indicates a more open procedure. Data on candidate selection procedures are taken from Katz and Mair 1992, tables D.5. Columns and rows indicated by an *X* provide the average score by period and country means. The column and row marked by '*S*' provides the standard deviation for the periods and the countries. Rows and columns indicated by '*CV*' provide the coefficient of variance (S/X).

The most open and democratic candidate selection procedures are practised in the Scandinavian countries (Sweden, Norway, Denmark and Finland) and Germany, while the most centralised and exclusive procedures can be found in Italy, France, Austria and the Netherlands. It emerges that legal provisions are not the major or sole determinant for democratic selection procedures. Parties in several countries, such as Sweden and Denmark, are more democratic than parties in countries where the selection procedure is subject to legal regulation. The data on the official statutes show that in the post war period the dominant trend in the selection of parliamentary candidates in Western Europe is one of increasing exclusion of the rank and file membership from the selection procedure (the $\beta = -.12^*$). Table 3 provides the results of a linear regression analysis of openness of candidate selection with the year of observation as the independent variable.

Table 3. Trends in the openness of candidate selection over time in Western Europe 1945-1990

	Aut	Bel	Den	Fin	Fra	Ger	Ire	Ita	Net	Nor	Swe	UK
(β)	-.44*	-.60*	.22	.26*	-.68*	.31*	.24	-.44*	-.01	-.31*	-.07	.12

Entries are regression coefficient between the inclusiveness score and the year of observation. An asterisk (*) indicates that the significance level (t) is below the five percent level ($p < .05$).

In Austria, Belgium, France, Italy, the Netherlands, Norway and to a much lesser extent in Sweden the selection procedure is progressively centralised over the post war period. Most notably, this exclusion of members occurred in France and Belgium. The major parties of Belgium gave their members substantial influence in the selection of representatives until the

1960s. At the end of the sixties, however, in most parties (except for the PS) the member polls were replaced by more oligarchic selection procedures (De Winter 1988, 42-43). Contrary to Kirchheimer's assertion, however, ordinary party members within some parties in Denmark, Finland, Germany, Ireland and the United Kingdom were given a greater voice in candidate selection since the 1960s. In some instances, such as the German and Irish case, the higher score results from the emergence of new parties with more open and inclusive selection procedures. This underlines the fact that in contrast to the convergence hypothesis, the differences between parties have increased over time. The pattern for the different party families is summarised in table 4.

Table 4. The openness of elections of parliamentary candidates of West European party families 1945-1990

	1945 1950	1951 1955	1956 1960	1961 1965	1966 1970	1971 1975	1976 1980	1981 1985	1986 1990	<i>X</i>	<i>S</i>	<i>CV</i>
cd	4.6	4.4	4.4	4.4	4.3	4.1	3.6	4.2	4.2	4.2	1.4	.33
com	3.6	3.6	3.6	3.3	3.3	4.1	3.4	3.4	3.4	3.5	2.0	.57
con	5.3	5.3	5.3	5.3	5.5	5.5	5.1	5.1	5.1	5.3	1.3	.25
sd	5.1	5.1	5.1	5.0	4.6	4.4	3.9	4.1	3.6	4.5	1.4	.31
soc	2.0	2.0	3.3	4.2	4.3	5.0	4.3	4.3	3.8	3.7	1.6	.43
lib	5.2	5.2	5.1	5.2	5.2	5.1	4.6	4.6	4.7	5.0	1.6	.32
env	-	-	-	-	4.0	4.0	4.3	5.1	4.9	4.5	1.8	.40
eth	6.3	6.3	6.3	6.3	5.3	4.3	4.3	4.3	4.3	5.3	1.9	.36
agr	6.0	6.0	6.0	6.0	6.0	6.0	6.0	6.0	6.0	6.0	0.8	.13
prt	-	-	-	-	-	6.0	6.0	6.0	6.0	6.0	0.0	.00
<i>X</i>	4.8	4.8	4.8	4.8	4.7	4.6	4.2	4.4	4.1	4.6	1.1	.24

Entries are average 'openness-scores'. A score of 1 indicates the most exclusive selection procedure, while a higher score indicates a more open procedure. Data on candidate selection procedures are taken from Katz and Mair 1992, tables D.5. Columns and rows indicated by an *X* provide the average score by period and party family means. The column marked by '*S*' provides the standard deviation the party families, while the column indicated by '*CV*' provide the coefficient of variance (S/X).

On average, the most open and decentralised procedures for the selection of parliamentary candidates are found within the agrarian, conservative, liberal and protest parties, while the most exclusive procedures are more common within the communist and socialist party families. Christian democratic and social democratic parties opted for procedures which place them in between these two groups. As a summary measure of overall trends the next table provides the results of a linear regression analysis of the inclusiveness of candidate selection of the different party families with the year of observation as the independent variable.

Table 5. Trends in the openness of candidate selection over time of West European party families 1945-1990

	cd	com	con	sd	soc	lib	env	eth	agr
beta (β)	-0.15	-0.02	-0.03	-0.37*	.24	-0.13	.20	-0.47*	.00

Entries are regression coefficients between the inclusiveness score and the year of observation. An asterisk (*) indicates that the significance level (t) is below the five percent level ($p < .05$).

Most party families, with the exception of socialist and environmental parties, centralised

their candidate selection procedures, particularly during the 1970s and 1980s. This process of exclusion of the party membership is most distinct within social democratic parties in Western Europe. Although some socialist parties democratised their selection procedures for parliamentary candidates during the 1960s and 1970s, this process was reversed again in the 1980s. Similarly, some Christian democratic parties decentralised their candidate selection in the late 1970s. In particular, special interest groups outside the party gained influence over the selection of candidates in the CVP, ÖVP and DC, yet overall the procedures of Christian democratic party organisations were progressively centralised up until the 1980s.

In summary, when we look at the official rules parliamentary candidate selection in Western Europe can hardly be regarded open and democratic. The hesitant experiments with primaries and member-polls during the sixties and seventies were soon reversed as parties went back to their former practice of central control over candidate selection. Regional or local elites usually have the right nominate the candidates while party members are at best asked for their approval of these pre-selected candidates. Additionally, if candidate selection takes place at the local level, national executives of most parties maintain substantial supervision and control over this selection of parliamentary candidates. If members are given a voice in the selection procedure, veto power usually remains with the national executive as a final safeguard. In other cases, such as in most of the major Dutch, Italian and French parties, the national leadership does not take any risk and pre-select most of the candidates themselves and members are subsequently only asked to ratify this selection. Still, this high level of centralised control is more a stable characteristic of European parliamentary democracy, rather than a bearing which parties embarked upon in more recent times. Also a trend towards more centralised control is discernible in the post war period.

4. Empirical analyses of candidate selection

In order to examine the congruence between the official rules on parliamentary candidate selection and the actual practice in the selection of the candidates I examined the substantial body of literature which exists on this topic.

In Austria the national party leadership controls the selection and ranking of parliamentary candidates. The selection is subject to the veto power of the national executive of the parties (Müller 1992a, 100-104; Müller 1994, 70-71; Gerlich 1987, 83).⁵ Moreover, the national organisation usually preserves several seats for persons who are selected centrally for their 'special skills or electoral appeal'. Even the few primaries that have been held are not generally binding (Nick 1992). The SPÖ has the most centralised procedure, while the ÖVP is functionally and regionally more decentralised. In both parties the members have only a very passive role in the candidates selection and the central organisations remains in almost complete control, in spite of the introduction of party primaries in the 1970's. In the SPÖ most candidates are put forward by the regional and Land organisations. The central organisation (Parteivorstand) has the right to 'appoint' one-fifth of the candidates for 'central necessities' (Müller 1992, 116). In the ÖVP the district party organisation can propose candidates, but the Land organisation decides on the ranking

⁵ Müller (1994, 71) states that "(m)ost of the candidates have proven their loyalty to the party through many years of party work and, once elected to parliament, they remain dependent on the party for their political career, with renomination or promotion requiring that MPs be both loyal and disciplined. Open conflict with the party would not only ruin the political career of an MP (there is no example of a successful independent candidate) but in many cases would also damage his or her career more generally. This is, of course, most obvious in the case of party employees, but, given the importance of party in Austrian daily life, it is also partly true for almost all occupational groups."

of candidates and 'appoints' five percent (at least one) of the candidates. Additionally, the central office has the right to 'appoint' ten percent of the candidates and the candidates must be approved of by the party chairman and leader of the parliamentary fraction. By the party reform of the ÖVP in 1991, the special interest groups (Bünde) gained in autonomy. In the FPÖ the Land organisation draws up the candidates list which had to be approved of by the national party organisation. The national leadership can change the list for 'important reasons'. In Die Grüne Alternative individual members can vote to decide the ordering of candidates, after which the Land and national organisations decide in two stages on the final selection.

Candidate selection in Belgium used to be conducted by an intra-party 'poll' in which all members could participate, which gave individual members some power (De Winter 1988, 42). Over the post war period, however, this tradition of polling has gradually disappeared, "and today it is the central party executive, or eventually the leadership at the constituency level, which really decides. The members are sometimes, but not always, called together to approve the list proposed by the executive, and although changes might be made, it is the leadership which has the final word" (Deschouwer 1994, 96). Although the formal rules are very different, the political reality shows large similarities between parties. In the Belgian Christian democratic parties, the constituency committee proposes an alphabetical 'model' list of candidates which then have to be put to the members' approval in a poll. Since the 1960's the poll system has vanished in practice and more oligarchic procedures have been used. After 1965 the central office has to 'approve' of the list of candidates proposed by constituency party leaders and the special interest groups (standen). The local party leadership and the leadership of special interest groups gradually abolished member participation in the selection process as not to upset the fragile compromises among the elites. The official party statutes of the Christian democratic parties stipulate that the party congress elects a candidate from a list drawn up by the party council. In 1960 the CVP/PSC statutes stipulated that a poll must be held and the party executive needed a 75 per cent majority in order to change the list. In 1965 a rule was added which stated that the national executive decides on the list when the constituency level fails to do so. The Dutch-speaking CVP adopted this same rule in 1972, and two years later the statutes stated that only the candidates who have a real chance to be elected must be selected by a poll. For the rest of the list, any other procedure could be used. In 1989 the poll disappeared, and the constituency congresses are allowed to decide on the list. The national executive then ratifies the proposal, and can change it with a 2/3 majority. The statutes of the Walloon PSC stipulated in 1980 that membership ballots are required for all positions. Nevertheless, not many polls are held and the traditional 'model-lists' from the executive have continued to structure the selection process (De Winter, 1988). Before the 1990s the socialist parties had little formal regulation for candidate selection at the constituency level, but most constituencies opted for a pure intra-party poll system. Over time there is a clear centralisation process visible within the socialist parties. Traditionally, the constituency elite only retained control because they were allowed to reserve some top places on the lists for 'hors-poll' placement so the membership poll only decided the lower places on the list. Under this system the national leadership had only indirect power. In the 1960's the central party organisation of the Flemish SP moved away from the poll system and gained more control over the selection. And although the Walloon PS tried to hold on to the poll system, in both parties the central party organisation now increased its influence. When still in existence, the PCB/KPB remained loyal to its principle of democratic centralism, thus the central committee decided on all candidates. In the Liberal parties (PRL/PVV) the statutes recommend a general member poll, yet other procedures are allowed. Since 1961 the central office can

'recommend' candidates and when conflicts over candidates occur it has the right to change the list by a two-third majority. The central office has come to rely on 'hors-poll' placement and in 1976 member participation was severely restricted to guarantee defecting Rally Walloon members a secure place. The Flemish PVV maintained this regulation until 1982, when the final decision on candidates was given to the party branches. Thus, here we see a process of decentralisation as the central executive lost its power in favour of the local constituency elite. Within the Walloon PLP (later PRL) the elite of the branches are also in complete control, although polls are frequently used (De Winter, 1988: 36). Before 1966 no official rules existed within the Volksunie. Now, the VU-constituency committees draw up a list which has to be approved by a constituency congress. These lists have to be approved and can be changed by the national leadership with a simple majority. In this centralised procedure individual members have no role. The FDF has strict central control as the national election commission selects all candidates. In the RW the constituency elite has complete control. Ecolo allows members to vote at constituency or national level for candidates proposed by the constituency elite. In Ecolo the power to decide on candidates lies with the membership, which can vote at the constituency level. The national congress only decides in cases where too few members are available (the rules state that 20 per cent of the members must be present). In most Belgian parties the national executive bodies continue to exert a substantial and sometimes decisive influence, while rank-and-file party members are gradually marginalised. Overall, the constituency elite have maintained considerable autonomy or even increased their authority over candidate selection (De Winter, 1988; Deschouwer 1994).

Until the 1960's individual party members in Denmark always played an important and decisive role in the selection of candidates as parliamentary candidates were nominated in 126 (relatively small) constituencies where local and regional party meetings were open to all members with the right to vote. In addition, voters had additional opportunities to decide on candidates by preferential voting in the parliamentary election itself.⁶ The constituency organisation has lost some of its former autonomy since the municipality reform in 1970 and experiments with primaries, while the national executives have gained more control over parliamentary candidate selection. Particularly the SKDL and PP executive practice severe central control. Also in the SF, the national organisation is entitled to actively partake in the selection of candidates and to 'approve' candidates nominated by the lower echelons. In the more open procedure of the SD the central office still has to approve all candidates and can add names to lists proposed by members at local branch meetings. The KrF has adopted the same procedure. RV members can propose and elect candidates at constituency meetings. Pedersen (1987, 34) regards RV the most 'open' party. In the CD the national organisation has gradually been increasing its decisive power in the candidate selection. In the Liberal party the national organisation plays no role (officially). Members have, since 1973, the opportunity to choose candidates at constituency meetings proposed by the regional elite. Party members in Denmark play greater roles in candidate selection after the introduction of membership ballots in several party organisations (the SD in 1969, the CD in 1974, and the SF in 1976) particularly in those cases where votes may be cast without attending a party meeting.⁷

⁶ "The boards of the local/regional branches have always defended this prerogative from direct interference or orders from the central party, with candidate selection being considered as an indicator of their autonomy. Indirectly, however, the central and local levels have always collaborated in the nomination of leading or promising politicians in safe constituencies ..." (Bille 1994, 144).

⁷ Bille (1994, 144) concludes that "the role of the central party has remained effectively unchanged over the past thirty years, which means that in four parties (SF, SD, KRF, FRP) the national committee has to approve the list of nominees or the candidates actually nominated. In the remaining parties, the national bodies have no direct role, but do have the right to

In Finland, parties could make up their own rules for the selection of parliamentary candidates. Between 1969 and 1972 several laws were adopted (Party Act and the Act on Parliamentary Elections the Act of Local Elections) which outlawed undemocratic political organisation and stipulated that party members have the legal right to select and nominate candidates. The differences between parties disappeared rapidly.⁸ Although the national executive formally has the right to replace a quarter of the candidates selected at the local level, it is evident from empirical analyses that this type of interference from the national executive usually meets with strong aversion from the local party executives. All formal attempts by the central elite to influence the selection process have been stopped, but there is of course substantial informal influence in the selection of candidates (Sundberg 1994, 165).

Although there is no legal regulation of candidate selection in France, for the French case it is important to note the influence of electoral laws. In the Third Republic there was substantial decentralisation in the selection of parliamentary candidates and local notables were decisive in the final stage (Ware 1996, 279). The Fourth Republic demarcates a period of centralisation. From 1958 until 1986 parliamentary candidates were elected in single member constituencies with a second ballot. This allows for dominance by the regional party organisations, but also some influence by voters. Some party blocks used the first round as a primary to see which candidate appealed to the widest electorate and this candidate then usually became the single candidate for this party block in the decisive second round. In the 1986 election PR was adopted, giving the national party organisations more opportunities to control the candidate selection process. The RPR has had a very centralised procedure even before 1986. Although there is still much centre-periphery interaction, the selection process is dominated by a very small national nomination committee consisting of the General Secretary, the presidents of the parliamentary groups and some experts. The committee can 'parachute' candidates to the top of the regional lists and members have no opportunity to influence the selection. The introduction of PR has strengthened the position of the committee even further. Also in the UDF a small national committee holds the most influential position in collaboration with the president of the parliamentary group (Ware 1996, 266). The fact that this organisation is an alliance of several parties (PR, CDS, PSD and RP) results in some member participation and local elite control, but central co-ordination remains substantial. The PSF has the most decentralised procedures of French political parties. Most candidates are selected at the constituency level and local members can exert some influence at local conventions (Ware 1996, 280). Although there is some influence from the centre, it seems that prior to 1986 PSF members and local elites dominated the candidate selection. A constituency committee drew up a list on which member than had to vote. The national organisation had important supervisory powers and could intervene in cases of conflicts. The change to PR in 1986 has resulted in a "more vigorous power of national intervention (...) The adoption of PR, then, generally reduced the role of Socialist Party activists in candidate selection" (Thiébaud 1988, 78). The PCF has officially a very

comment on the list, to propose changes, or to be present at a nomination meeting in the local/regional organisation. The selection of candidates for national elections has always been largely a matter for the party members at the constituency/regional level and has increasingly become so, a development which is particularly interesting given the tremendous decline in membership levels. This decline was especially marked in the period from the mid-1960s to the mid-1970s, and it was precisely in this period that some of the parties changed their rules from a process of nomination at a membership meeting to a process of nomination via a membership ballot. It is therefore tempting to suggest that the increased role assigned to the individual member can be seen as an attempt to counteract the decline in membership levels per se."

⁸ "According to the new Act on Parliamentary Elections, candidates are to be selected in a secret and universal ballot from among those party members living in the constituency. Primary elections are not compulsory if the number of nominated candidates does not exceed the number that the parties have the right to nominate in each constituency" (Sundberg and Gylling 1992, 277).

decentralised procedure, but central control is assured by article 54 of the statutes that stipulate that candidates need ratification by the Central Committee (see Ware 1996, 280).⁹ In France parliamentary candidate selection is a prerogative for the elite and there has even been a process of centralisation, evidenced by more control over the candidate selection process by the central party organisations at the expense of local elites (Ware 1996, 269). The introduction of PR only reinforced this process.

In the German context, with its legal restrictions, an important feature in candidate selection is the difference between candidates for the single member constituencies and the list candidates. In the first case, members can exert more direct influence, while in the latter a smaller proportion of the members have the opportunity to participate. Nevertheless, most candidates are selected at the constituency level by individual party members (Ware 1996, 280). Yet, from empirical studies it emerges that within the major German parties the local elite and the leadership at the level of the Länder both wield substantial influence over the nomination process and structures the selection process to a large extent. The local party leadership prepares the selection procedures and can thereby largely determine its outcome. In all, candidate selection in Germany is relatively open and democratic and the local elite and activists do not usually accept any interference from the national party leadership (Niedermayer 1989, 22-23).¹⁰

Ireland, with its electoral system of the single transferable vote in multi-member constituencies, gives voters the opportunity to make use of a preferential vote. This is, however, after candidates have been selected and nominated by the parties. In all parties candidates are selected at the constituency level with either direct or indirect member-participation, but in all Irish parties the national organisation has veto rights. According to Gallagher (1985; 1988, 131) the political culture accounts for more localism than a legalistic interpretation would indicate. Despite this contention, Fianna Fáil and Fine Gael display a large amount of central control. The national executives of these parties can select and 'add' candidates to the names already selected by a constituency and they can call upon a candidate to 'resign' and have done so frequently (Mair 1987; Farrell 1994, 228). On top of this involvement by the leadership, Fianna Fail also created a Constituencies Committee which actively 'head-hunted' candidates. Although FG allows extensive member involvement, the party experienced increasing central control under Fitzgerald after 1977. The head office has increasingly played an active role in both in 'head-hunting' and adding candidates to local lists. The PD is the most centralised party of the big four after the national office imposed candidates upon its lower organs in 1987 although there was relatively little interference by the central leadership in the selection of candidates in the 1989 and 1992 elections. The Labour party constitution had no provisions regarding candidate selection until in 1984 a new rule was introduced which allowed the parliamentary leader and party chairman to add candidates to those selected by the convention, which resulted in increasing central involvement. The central office of the WP has to ratify all candidates nominated by the constituencies. In all parties, even in the Greens, a process of centralisation is visible and the national organisation can reject any candidate that is proposed.¹¹

⁹ "The party's central apparatus controls the selection procedure in its entirety, and only lets the departmental organisations nominate people of whose political reliability it is already certain" (Thiébaud 1988, 80).

¹⁰ Roberts (1988, 116) concludes that in Germany "the selection process is a democratic a procedure - both in constituencies and in Land delegate conferences - as one could reasonably hope to have, given that most party members do not choose to participate in the selection process, and that initiatives by local and regional elites (and less frequently by national leaders) are required to give structure to the selection process by sounding out possible candidates, calculating balances among different groupings or interests in the party, arranging compromises, and so forth. It is open to all electors to join a party, and for all party members to participate in the selection process, at first- or second-hand."

¹¹ This all justifies Farrell's (1994, 229) conclusion that "(i)n general, therefore, while it remains the case that candidate selection process may be characterised as one of 'constituency-level selection, with national supervision and influence'

Despite the fact that the Italian voter can give preference votes, parliamentary turnover is very low, as is membership influence on candidate selection. In the party statutes on candidate selection of the DC, members are not even mentioned. The first on the list (copolista) is chosen by the national executive. The rest of the list is the result of negotiations between ideological factions, regional leaders and the elite of special interests groups. The method of selection, "both in terms of the official rules and real practice, has changed little during the post-war period" (Wertman 1988, 153). Bardi and Morlino (1994) suggest, however, that the changes in the party rules in 1964 did mean a growing influence of provincial federations in determining parliamentary nominations and an increasing autonomy of the parliamentary party. The disentanglement of the party leadership with corrupt practices and organised crime resulted in a complete loss of credibility and power by the central leadership. Similar developments can be witnessed within the PSI, where the national executive committee has formal final authority in candidate selection, but alters relatively few proposals from the local organisations. The party experienced increasing centralisation from the 1970's on under Craxi.¹² Ordinary members "have virtually no effective role in the process" (Wertman 1988, 157). After the '*mani pulite*' investigations, which decimated the party leadership, things took a different turn in the PSI. Here also the central party organisation lost much of its credibility and power. Before its transformation into the PDS, the PCI had the most centralised procedure of all.¹³ The national executive, usually consisting of 6 or 7 members exercise complete control over the nomination process. The parliamentary party remained in a subordinate position vis-a-vis the extra-parliamentary party as the national executive bodies remained solely responsible for parliamentary candidate selection (Bardi and Morlino 1994, 261-262). An indicator of increasing central control in the PSI, DC and PCI is the substantial number of 'independents' that have been nominated since 1976. "In the four smaller parties (MSI, PRI, PSDI and PLI), the central leadership rarely exercises its power to change locally prepared lists. Most decisions are left to the provincial - and to a much lesser extent the regional - levels, to a far greater degree than in the DC and PCI" (Wertman 1988, 160). The consultation of the members in Italian parties are primarily of symbolic importance. Candidate selection is left almost exclusively to the parties' elites and local elites, while rank-and-file members have little or no influence whatsoever.

A more diverse picture appears in the Netherlands. In the Christian democratic parties before their merger into the CDA, only ARP members had influence on candidate selection. The merger meant a formal democratisation and decentralisation for CHU and KVP. After the merger into the CDA, a 'fusion protocol' accounted for increasing central control to assure the selection of members from all 'bloodgroups'. This protocol was abolished in 1984 and the formally decentralised character was reinstated. In reality central control was substantial. The PvdA has experienced increasing centralisation after the referendum was abolished in the 1960s. First the party adopted a decentralised procedure which gave party activists a strong position in the selection, but this was soon replaced by a more centralised procedure where the party top can determine half of the candidates. The VVD is the most

(Gallagher, 1988, p. 125), the degree of central involvement has nevertheless increased. And when this is also associated with the attempts to rationalise branch structures and to weed out paper branches, on the one hand, and with the staffing developments and the professionalization of campaign strategies, on the other, then the image of organisational centralisation clearly becomes very persuasive."

¹² In general, under Craxi the national leadership "had a free hand in drawing up parliamentary candidate lists, but could seldom exercise any influence on local government alliances or even single decisions" (Bardi and Morlino, 1994, 264).

¹³ This autonomy results from the fact that the party rules give "a very brief, inadequate description of the way the process takes place", empirical observations are necessary (Wertman 1988, 157).

centralised party in the Netherlands as far as candidate selection is concerned; the national party council, under supervision of the party leader, selects the candidates. The most democratic procedure is adopted by D66, which has a referendum open to all members. In 1986, however, there was an 'advice' from the national executive and since, D66 included with its postal ballot on candidate selection an advisory list with an ordering proposed by the national committee of the party. In many of the local branches of the three larger parties (VVD, CDA and PvdA) the lists of candidates are not even discussed and when they are on the agenda only a limited number of party members participate in the decision-making (Hillebrand 1992). The central and regional party leadership dominates the candidate selection in the Netherlands.¹⁴ In the 1990s there has been a process of centralisation, particularly in the VVD and PvdA, although this centralisation is also visible within the CDA and even in D66.

In Norway the candidate selection is regulated by the 1921 Norwegian Act of Nominations. This law stipulates that the provincial constituencies have to be the decisive locus in the selection of national parliamentary candidates and that voters can cross out names of unwanted candidates. The law does not permit the national leadership to interfere directly in the nomination process, but neither does it prevent influence of the central party leadership on the nomination process. In reality, however, most provincial constituencies are fairly independent in this respect. "The fact that the Act of Nominations is applied almost without exceptions, although it is not mandatory, suggests that the political parties agree with the principles laid down in the Act" (Valen 1988, 228). Attempts, primarily within parties on the left, by the central party leadership to centralise the nomination processes, to influence the selection of candidates or to 'parachute' candidates are rare and have all failed without exception. Despite this decentralisation and openness, membership attendance at meetings is low and less than 10 per cent of party members can be defined as 'active' (Svåsand 1994, 317).

Three Swedish parties (MSP, Fp and SP) hold primaries. These are not open to all voters, but are strictly a "private party affair" (Epstein, 1967, 228). This consultation of dues-paying members indicates substantial member influence. In the SAP and VpK no primaries are held and local activists and constituency elites control the selection procedure within these parties. Although the party statutes of all political parties stipulate large regional autonomy in the selection procedure and allow for little central interference, Pierre (1992, 38) concludes that the national party leadership has gained more control over the candidate selection process. Particularly the need for more party unity (avoiding the selection of candidates with too much regional loyalty) and a more balanced representation of women, social strata and age groups have contributed to this centralisation process. Nevertheless, there is substantial aversion within the local membership and leadership against central interference in the selection procedure. This leads to a relatively decentralised selection procedure of parliamentary candidates. Over the period from 1960 to 1990, however, Pierre and Widfeldt (1994, 341) observe a decreasing significance of party membership, increasing centralisation of party organisation and increasing autonomy of the parliamentary parties. They argue that the possibilities for members to, for example, influence party policies are significantly more limited than is suggested by the party statutes and it is clear to them that the party leaderships holds a firm grip on their parties.¹⁵

¹⁴ Koole (1994,294) who concludes that "the process of candidate selection has become decentralised, with the influence of the regional party bodies in particular becoming more important, not least as a result of the wave of democratisation in the late 1960s and early 1970s which had stressed the need to bring politics closer to the grass roots. This process of regionalisation was formally introduced in the PvdA in 1969 and later became manifest in the other major parties."

¹⁵ Officially, "the party congress, which is composed by representatives elected by the party membership, is the supreme decision-making body in the organisation. Furthermore, the party leadership is elected by and accountable to the congress. At

Finally, in the United Kingdom, where there is no legal regulation of candidate selection and elections are held in single member districts with a simple plurality, in both parties the power to nominate candidates rests with the constituencies and the local constituency elite dominates the selection process. Within the Conservative party the constituencies have more autonomy than in the Labour Party. In the Conservative Party the Constituency Association's Standing Election Committee (25-30 persons) selects the candidates. Nevertheless, there is co-ordination and supervision by the central party body that reviews and approves candidates before they get the party ticket. Candidate selection is thus an elite controlled affair.¹⁶ In the 1990s the power in the selection procedure has moved more to the centre (Ware 1996, 283). Even more (formal) control is exercised by the National Election Committee in Labour. This body has to approve of all candidates that are selected by the constituencies. In the 1990s the Labour party moved towards more democratic procedures giving all members a vote in the candidate selection procedures, but trade unions still exert substantial influence as they can nominate and 'suggest' candidates (Ware 1996, 284). The SDP and Liberal party have a more open procedure with substantial membership influence. Denver (1988, 59-60) comments nonetheless: "In all parties selectors constitute a tiny fraction of party voters. (...) the right to participate in the choice of candidate is a prerogative of party activists." The increased power of the central leadership in the candidate selection in both the Conservatives Party and Labour "has been mainly geared towards shaping the context in which local parties conduct their nominations. Given the constituency based electoral system and a tradition of activist involvement in the parties, the central party structures cannot become more directly involved in the candidate selection" (Ware 1996, 284). Recently this local aversion against central interference came to the fore in the Labour Party when it succeeded to 'parachute' Alan Micheal as leader of the Welsh Labour Party, at the expense of the locally popular Rodrey Morgan. Ever since Kinnock the Labour leadership has tried to curb the influence of the local activist members out of fear that they are unrepresentative of the opinion of mainstream society (Webb 1994; Richards 1997). Whether this fear is justified and the high level of centralisation in candidate selection in most West European parties is motivated by the perception that the active membership is more radical or that their opinions deviate from the official party policy position, the next section examines the differences in policy position of the active members with the official party position.

Candidate selection, party cohesion and government control

From the case of the British Labour Party it becomes clear that, next to centralisation, there is a second method in which the central party leadership can try to curb the influence of what they perceive as 'radical elements' in the active membership. By giving all members a vote in the inner-party proceedings, concerted action against the leadership of a small and

the same time, however, it would not seem very controversial to assert that the parties are highly and increasingly centralised organisations" (Pierre and Widfeldt 1994, 342-343).

¹⁶ "Not only are ordinary party voters outside the process, but so are most of the dues-paying members. These members, as many as a few thousand in some units, do not ordinarily exercise a choice between possible candidates. The choice is made for the members by their local leaders" (Epstein 1967, 220). Webb 1994, 120 concludes that "(i)n the major parties, the process of selecting candidates for national parliamentary contests has traditionally been dominated by local party elites rather than individual members as such, although individual members of the Conservative Party may attend a general meeting of the constituency association at which a ratification vote takes place. Moreover, in the case of Labour, the powers of constituency members have actually increased over the past decade or more. Since 1981 all Labour candidates have been subject to mandatory re-selection between general elections, and in 1993 the party conference decided that "local electoral colleges" would be replaced by a system of direct balloting among individual members and "registered" members from the unions on the question of whom to adopt. In both the Conservative and Labour cases, however, the central party apparatus can effectively veto a local choice."

unrepresentative group of activists becomes far more difficult and when it occurs will not likely be successful. Further corroboration of the finding that the centre has substantial influence in inner-party decision-making can be found in an expert study conducted by Laver and Hunt (1992, 84) assessing the intra-party distribution of influence on policy formation based on expert judgements. They also showed that, in 56 out of the 83 parties included in this study, the party leadership exercises the largest influence on policy. Why does the centre in so many parties fear activist influence? Are active party members more radical and/or more extreme than the party leadership?¹⁷ Does more membership influence lead to intra-party conflict and an erosion of party cohesion?

In order to test the assumption that party activists are more radical I have taken several measures which indicate the policy position of the party and compared them with the policy position of party activists.¹⁸ In order to perform this comparison, I have collected data from eight studies on the ideological position of parties which use different methods¹⁹ and one study on the position of party activists (Rohrschneider 1994; see also Schuur 1984).²⁰ To analyse the differences in ideological or policy position of the party leadership (for which I take the party manifesto as a proxy as well as the policy positions experts assign to parties and the position on the left-right scale where voters place the party) and the policy position of activists (based on the data from the European Parties Mid-Level Elites Project; see Rohrschneider 1994) table 6 provides the average difference in policy positions between the leadership and activists in 12 European countries.

¹⁷ See May, 1973, 139, where active members (sub-leaders) are depicted as extremists. May distinguishes four other types of opinion disparity between the leadership and the (mid-level) elite of political parties (leaders as rightist deviants, leaders as extremists, leaders as centrists and sub-leaders as centrists).

¹⁸ According to Laver and Schofield (1990, 245) four methods to locate parties on a left-right scale can be distinguished: the scaling can be done on the basis of expert-judgements (Taylor and Laver 1973; de Swaan 1973; Dodd 1976; Castles and Mair 1984; Laver and Hunt 1992), on the basis of the analysis of parliamentary roll-call behaviour of the parties representatives, on the basis of the analysis of mass survey-data (Inglehart and Klingemann 1976) and on the basis of policy-documents of parties (Budge, Robertson and Hearl 1987; Laver and Budge 1992).

¹⁹ I utilise data from five expert scales (Morgan 1976; Dodd 1976, Castles and Mair 1984; Laver and Hunt 1992; Knutsen 1998), 2 mass survey scales (Sani and Sartori 1983; Inglehart and Klingemann 1987;) and one scale based on party manifestos (Laver and Budge 1991). Scaling on the basis of experts or survey-data is very sensitive to pre-conditioned bias of the respondents. Laver and Schofield (1990, 246) argue that "expert judgements are most likely to be conditioned by historical experiences of coalitions, while mass attitudes reflected in surveys may be conditioned in the same way if voters assume that parties which go into government together share policy goals. The analysis of electoral policy documents, therefore, seems likely to provide the most genuinely independent 'fix' that we are likely to get on the policy positions of political parties."

²⁰ In general the correlations between the different scales are very high. This is particularly striking when we take into account that the data are collected with widely dispersing methods, measures and scales. Also, the time elapsed between the first expert surveys (Morgan and Dodd in 1976) and the last conducted expert survey (Knutsen in 1993) is 17 years. There is also high correspondence between expert opinions on the position of parties and the self-placement of voters (correlations range from $r .93$ to $r .76$). The Sani and Sartori scale correlates somewhat higher with the expert surveys than the Inglehart and Klingemann-scale. The scale based on the party manifestos correlates highly with the expert surveys (correlations range from $r .80$ to $r .85$). There is an almost perfect correlation of $r .98$. between the mass surveys. Correlations between mass surveys and the manifesto-based scales is much lower (between $r .60$ and $r .82$), indicating that the population at large perceives a different party position than that which can be extracted from the party manifesto.

Table 6. Average policy distance between leadership and activists of Western European parties

	Morgan	Dodd	Castles and Mair	Laver and Hunt	Laver and Budge	Sani and Sartori	Inglehart and Klingemann	Knutsen	<i>X</i>
Bel	2.1	0.8	0.7	1.8	0.9	1.3	0.9	1.0	1.2
Den	1.0	1.0	0.4	0.8	0.7	-	0.9	0.6	0.8
Fra	-	1.7	1.4	2.1	-	1.3	1.4	1.6	1.6
Ger	-	1.5	0.6	2.6	1.1	0.9	0.9	0.5	1.2
Ire	-	1.5	0.8	2.1	0.8	-	1.4	1.1	1.3
Ita	0.9	0.8	1.4	1.1	1.6	1.3	1.0	1.7	1.2
Net	0.6	0.8	0.6	1.7	0.3	0.9	1.1	1.1	0.9
UK	-	-	0.7	1.3	0.6	-	-	0.7	0.8
<i>X</i>	1.2	1.1	0.8	1.5	0.9	0.8	1.1	1.0	1.1
<i>S</i>	1.0	0.7	0.7	1.1	0.8	0.6	0.5	0.7	0.8
<i>CV</i>	.833	.636	.875	.733	.888	.750	.455	.700	.741

Entries are average policy distances between the policy position of the party leadership (see appendix 1 for sources of data) and the policy position of party activists (data from Rohrschneider 1994). All scales have been recalculated into a ten-point scale. Data for Austria, Finland, Norway and Sweden are not available. Columns and rows indicated by an *X* provide the average score by study and country. The row marked by '*S*' provides the standard deviation for all party scores. The rows indicated by '*CV*' provide the coefficient of variance (S/X).

Considering the fact that both party leaders and active members (sub-leaders) are placed on a ten-point scale, the overall ideological disparity between leaders and activists is low. The largest disparity is found in France, while there is also above average ideological disparity in Ireland, Belgium, Germany and Italy. Below average ideological disparity between the leadership and activists can be found in the United Kingdom, the Netherlands and Denmark. It seems that French and Italian party leaders are correct in assuming that their active members are more radical and this may be the reason that the selection of candidates is very centralised in both countries. There seems to be less reason for the Dutch party leadership to exclude active members from the selection process.

Table 7. Average policy distance between leadership and activists in Western European party families

	Morgan	Dodd	Castles and Mair	Laver and Hunt	Laver and Budge	Sani and Sartori	Inglehart and Klingemann	Knutsen	<i>X</i>
cd	1.3	1.3	0.7	1.3	1.4	1.2	1.0	0.7	1.1
com	-	1.5	0.1	-	-	-	-	-	0.8
con	2.1	0.7	1.2	1.4	0.2	1.9	1.1	1.0	1.2
sd	0.4	0.9	0.4	1.8	0.7	1.4	1.3	1.3	1.0
lib	1.6	1.5	0.9	1.7	1.0	0.9	0.8	0.9	1.2
<i>X</i>	1.2	1.1	0.8	1.1	0.8	0.8	1.1	1.0	1.1

Entries are average policy distances between the policy position of the party leadership (see appendix 1 for sources of data) and the policy position of party activists (data from Rohrschneider 1994). Data for Austria, Finland, Norway and Sweden are not available. Columns and rows indicated by an *X* provide the average scores by study and party family.

When we examine the ideological disparity between leaders and activists within the different party groupings, there are no large differences among parties of various genetic origin.

Moreover, the data show that liberal and conservative party leaders have to deal with somewhat more radical party activists than Christian democratic and social democratic party leaders. This finding, that parties which traditionally belong to the right have more radical activists than parties of the traditional left and centre contradicts a common wisdom of political science. It must be pointed out, however, that several of the studies (Dodd, Laver and Hunt, Laver and Budge, Knutsen) do find relatively more radical activists on the left.

Maybe there are other reasons why party leaders fear too much membership influence. Perhaps they fear that more open and democratic selection procedures will lead to a deterioration of party cohesion. The active membership may select parliamentary candidates which are less loyal to the party policy position or ideology. Insofar as the evidence is concerned and contrary to received opinion, however, there is also no indication that a more centralised method of candidate selection leads to a more cohesive leadership or organisational continuity. There is only a weak relationship between indicators of intra-party conflict (measured as the number of splits of the party) and the openness of the selection procedure ($r^2 = -.07$). Neither can evidence be found that more open and democratic procedures affect the party's ability to control governmental power. The correlation between the openness of the candidate selection procedure and governmental control (measured as the average percentage of ministerial posts held by the party) is weak as well ($r^2 = .01$). Tenure in office (measured as the percentage of time the party controls at least one ministerial portfolio) is also insignificant ($r^2 = -.07$). Nevertheless, there are significant differences between party families, which are summarised in the table below.

Table 8. Correlation coefficients of centralisation and government control

	communists	social democrats	Christian democrats	liberals	conservative s	agrarian
Time in government	.11	.04	-.42**	-.17	-.29**	-.66**
government control	.05	.32	-.00	.12	-.14	-.59**

The table reports Pearson's correlation coefficients. The asterisks (**) indicate statistical significance at the 0.001 level. Time in government is measured as the percentage of time the party controls at least one ministerial portfolio control. Government control is measured as the average percentage of ministerial posts held by the party.

As can be seen from table 8, only within the Christian democratic, conservative and agrarian party family there is an effect of the openness of the parliamentary candidate selection procedure upon the level of government control and tenure in office. This coincides with the earlier finding that active members of these parties are somewhat more radical. An increase in their influence upon the candidates for national parliament may weaken these parties' ability to enter and maintain governmental responsibility.

Conclusions

Parliamentary candidate selection in Western Europe can hardly be regarded open and democratic. First of all it should be noted that parliamentary candidate selection in Western Europe is the exclusive domain of political party organisations and their membership. Although in theory all citizens have the opportunity to join a political party and participate in this selection process, candidate selection is by and large controlled, or at least dominated, by the local or national party elite, as the analyses of both the official rules as well as empirical studies have shown. Due to the almost total absence of primaries, non-members are excluded from the selection of parliamentary candidates and thereby the vast majority of those eligible to vote have no say in the matter. Moreover, only around ten per cent (on average) of West European citizens is a party member and even when citizens join a political

party, the chance that these individuals can have substantial influence in the selection of their parliamentary representatives is small. Party primaries for all members are only held in a very limited number of parties in Western Europe and not throughout the entire post war period. Primaries are held in Finland (since 1978 within all parties as stipulated by law), in Belgium (only in the 1960's in the CVP, PS, SP and PRL), in Austria and Germany (one experiment in both the OVP and the CDU), in the Netherlands (only D66) and within the liberal party and SDP in the United Kingdom. In most countries, with the possible exception of Ireland and France, only a small proportion of party members actively participates in the selection of parliamentary candidates (Gallagher 1988c, 246).

This paper corroborates the finding of the Gallagher and Marsh volume (1988, 237) that the power to select parliamentary candidates is primarily decentralised to a subset of constituency party members. However, this 'subset' is usually the regional or local party elite which pre-selects (by drawing up short-lists), thoroughly screens and finally nominate candidates, while party members are at best asked to approve this pre-selection. Moreover, there is substantial centre-local interaction in drafting the party lists for elections. Nevertheless, Gallagher (1988, 245) concludes that "in a slight majority of countries the centre, i.e. the national executive or a small group of party leaders, has little if any power in the candidate selection process." Gallagher argues that the centre plays a marginal role in Belgium, Britain, West Germany, Norway, Finland and Austria. In Ireland, the Netherlands and Italy the centre plays an important role in some parties, while only in France the central elite can be regarded as the main selector of candidates. What has been left out of some of the analyses quoted in this paper, however, is that the centre can usually stipulate the rules whereby candidates are selected for public office. By structuring the decision-making process, by way of establishing a final veto, the centre can also influence who is finally selected. Sometimes, as in the Austrian case, the centre can appoint a certain percentage of the candidates. In addition, from the analysis of the official rules it is clear that there has also been a tendency towards increasing centralisation of candidate selection procedures over the post war period. Still, complete and direct dominance by the centre or by a single party leader in the selection of parliamentary candidates is not a common feature of West European politics (although this is the case in some French and Italian parties).

It remains unclear why the centre has been reluctant to open up the selection procedure for parliamentary candidates. This paper showed that the active members of parties are not the radical and unrepresentative extremists as some party leaders might fear. The ideological disparity between the party leadership and the active middle level activists is rather low, namely between 0.8 and 1.2 on a ten-point scale. Furthermore, this paper only found a negative effect of the openness of the selection procedure for parliamentary candidates on government control and tenure in office for Christian democratic, conservative and agrarian parties. An intriguing paradox emerges from this analysis. Despite the fact that political parties are usually considered the most essential representative institutions in democratic political systems and political parties emerged as decisive actors in the development and consolidation of democratic regimes in Europe by mobilising previously excluded or subordinate social groups and by articulating their interests²¹, internally parties in Western Europe are not the democratic creatures they are held to be.

²¹ (Schattschneider 1942, 1; Key 1942, 9; Sartori 1976, 28; Lipset 1966, 413; Rueschemeyer et al. 1992, 9).

Appendix 1. The West European parties under analysis

No	Country	Name of the political party	Abbreviation	Party family
01	Austria	Kommunistische Partei Österreichs	KPÖ	COM
02	Austria	Die Grüne Alternative	GA	ENV
03	Austria	Freiheitliche Partei Österreichs	FPÖ	LIB
04	Austria	Österreichische Volkspartei	ÖVP	CD
05	Austria	Sozialistische Partei Österreich	SPÖ	SD
06	Belgium	Parti Réformateur Libéral/Partij voor Vrijheid en Vooruitgang	PRL/PVV	LIB
07	Belgium	Parti Social Chrétien/Christelijke Volkspartij	PSC/CVP	CD
08	Belgium	Parti Communiste de Belgique/Kommunistische Partij van België	PCB/KPB	COM
09	Belgium	Parti Socialiste Belge/Belgische Socialistische Partij	PSB/BSP	SD
10	Belgium	Volksunie	VU	ETH
11	Belgium	Écologistes confederés pour l'organisation de luttes originales	ECO	ENV
12	Denmark	Venstre	VEN	LIB
13	Denmark	Radikale Venstre.	RV	LIB
14	Denmark	Socialdemokratiet	SD	SD
15	Denmark	Socialistisk Folkeparti	SF	SOC
16	Denmark	Centrum-Demokraterne.	CD	LIB
17	Denmark	Fremkridspartiet	PP/FRP	PRT
18	Denmark	Det Konservative Folkeparti	KF	CON
19	Denmark	Danmarks Kommunistiske Parti	DKP	COM
20	Denmark	Kristeligt Folkeparti	KrF	CD
21	Finland	Suomen Kansan Demokraattinen Liitto/Demokraattinen Vaihtoe	SKDL/DEVA	COM
22	Finland	Liberaalinen Kansanpuolue	LKP	LIB
23	Finland	Kansallinen Kokoomus	KOK	CON
24	Finland	Suomen Kristillinen Liitto	SKL	CD
25	Finland	Suomen Sosialidemokraattinen Puolue	SSP	SD
26	Finland	Keskustapuolue	KESK	AGR
27	Finland	Svenska Folkpartiet	SFP	ETH
28	France	Parti Socialiste (SFIO/PSF + PSU)	PSF	SD
29	France	Gaullistes (RPF, UNR, UDR, RPR and UDC.	GAUL	CON
30	France	Union pour la Democratie Française (CNIP, CNI, FNRI, CDS, Parti Républicain)	UDF	LIB
31	France	Mouvement Republicain Populaire	MRP	CD
32	France	Parti Communiste Française	PCF	COM
33	France	Mouvement des Radicaux de Gauche.	MRG	LIB
34	France	Parti Républicain Radical et Radical Socialiste (PRR/RS) + Radical Socialist Party (RSP)	RAD	LIB
35	Germany	Christlich Demokratische Union	CDU	CD
36	Germany	Christlich Soziale Union	CSU	CD

37	Germany	Die Grünen.	GRU	ENV
38	Germany	Sozialdemokratische Partei Deutschlands	SPD	SD
39	Germany	Deutsche Kommunistische Partei	DKP	COM
40	Germany	Freie Demokratische Partei	FDP	LIB
41	Ireland	Worker's Party	WP	SOC
42	Ireland	Fine Gael	FG	CD
43	Ireland	The Communist Party of Ireland	CPI	COM
44	Ireland	Fianna Fáil	FF	CON
45	Ireland	Irish Labour Party	ILP	SD
46	Ireland	Progressive Democrats	PD	LIB
47	Ireland	The Green Alliance	GRE	ENV
48	Italy	Democrazia Proletaria	DP	SOC
49	Italy	Partito Radicale	PR	ENV
50	Italy	Partito Socialista Italiano/Partito Socialista Unificato	PSI/PSU	SD
51	Italy	Partito Socialista Democratico Italiano	PSDI	SD
52	Italy	Partito Liberale Italiano	PLI	LIB
53	Italy	Partito Repubblicano Italiano	PRI	LIB
54	Italy	Movimento Sociale Italiano	MSI	FAS
55	Italy	Democrazia Cristiana	DC	CD
56	Italy	Partito Comunista Italiano/Partito Democratico de la Sinistra	PCI/PDS	COM
57	the Netherlands	Democraten '66	D66	LIB
58	the Netherlands	Volkspartij voor Vrijheid en Democratie	VVD	LIB
59	the Netherlands	Christelijk Historische Unie	CHU	CD
60	the Netherlands	Anti-Revolutionaire Partij	ARP	CD
61	the Netherlands	Katholieke Volkspartij	KVP	CD
62	the Netherlands	Christen Democratisch Appel	CDA	CD
63	the Netherlands	Communistische Partij Nederland	CPN	COM
64	the Netherlands	Partij van de Arbeid	PVDA	SD
65	Norway	Norges Kommunistiske Parti	NKP	COM
66	Norway	Det Norske Arbeidersparti	DNA	SD
67	Norway	Venstre	V	LIB
68	Norway	Hoyre	HOYR	CON
69	Norway	Kristeligt Folkeparti	KRFP	CD
70	Norway	Socialistisk Venstreparti	SV	SOC
71	Norway	Senterpartiet	SP	AGR
72	Norway	Fremskrittspartiet	FRP	PRT

73	Sweden	Kristdemokratiska Samhällspartiet	KDS	CD
74	Sweden	Folkpartiet	Fp	LIB
75	Sweden	Vänsterpartiet Kommunisterna	VpK	COM
76	Sweden	Socialdemokratiska Arbetarpartiet	SAP	SD
77	Sweden	Moderata Samlingspartiet	MSP	CON
78	Sweden	Senterpartiet	C	AGR
79	Sweden	Miljöpartiet de Gröna.	MP	ENV
80	United Kingdom	The Conservative Party	CON	CON
81	United Kingdom	Labour Party	LAB	SD
82	United Kingdom	Liberal party	LIB	LIB
83	United Kingdom	Social Democratic Party	SDP	SD

Appendix 2. Correlation matrix of 9 different left-right scales

	Morgan (1976) expert	Dodd (1976) expert	Castles and Mair (1984) expert	Laver and Hunt (1992) expert	Laver and Budge (1991) manifesto	Sani and Sartori (1983) mass	Inglehart and Klinge- mann (1987) mass	Knutsen (1993) expert	Rohrsnei- der (1994) mass
Morgan (1976)	1.00								
Dodd (1976)	.95**	1.00							
Castles and Mair (1984)	.95**	.88**	1.00						
Laver and Hunt (1992)	.93**	.84**	.93**	1.00					
Laver and Budge (1991)	.84**	.83**	.83**	.79**	1.00				
Sani and Sartori (1983)	.90**	.89**	.92**	.85**	.60**	1.00			
Inglehart and Klingemann (1987)	.89**	.78**	.89**	.76**	.63**	.98**	1.00		
Knutsen (1993)	.92**	.87**	.94**	.89**	.79**	.92**	.85**	1.00	
Rohrsneider (1994)	.93**	.87**	.90**	.85**	.82**	.88**	.90**	.89**	1.00

Entries are Pearson's correlation coefficients. The ** means that the coefficient is significant at the .001 level. Data from Laver and Schofield 1991; Laver and Hunt 1992; Laver and Budge 1991; Krouwel 1999.

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