

**Recruitment of candidates within major German parties for
EU elections: Changes in the recruitment patterns?**

Benjamin Höhne

(University of Trier)

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1 Problem, approach and scope of research

This paper relates to a process which is central for democratic political systems: the selection of candidates for parliaments. In addition to socialisation and communication, recruitment belongs to one of the three functions of each political system (Almond/Powell 1992: 10). Before the actual electoral act candidate selection processes take place. That means that there is a preliminary decision in a - mostly intra-party - decision-making process about the composition of the parliament which will be elected. Accordingly, Sternberger (1961: 11) divides elections in two phases: first, the nomination and presentation of one or more candidates and second, ensuing the final and binding choice of candidates by the voters. Depending on how recruitment works in a political system the results of the recruitment procedures have effects on the whole configuration of a political system. Processes, structures as well as fields of policy and their results are affected (Hazan/Rahat 2006). Thus, some time before the elections are held conditions are created which considerably codetermine the performance, legitimacy and durability of the political system. Parties as intermediary institutions take part in that process in a key position by executing their core function of recruitment of political actors (Katz 2001: 278; Norris 2006: 89). In fact, with the nominations only formal decisions are being made on the time of one legislative period. As soon as a parliament mandate is exercised, members of parliament have a lead with regard to contents and material compared to future rival candidates, which they will make use of in their re-election in order to secure their own professional existence. The average period a mandatary spends in parliament can be well beyond one legislative period; on average it is 10.7 years (comparing 20 OECD countries).¹ Considering that members of parliaments in parliamentary systems of government provide an important pool for ministers in cabinets, the significance of the topic is pointed out additionally.² Consequently, analyses which concern only parliaments but do not consider their previous history would take to narrow a perspective.

¹ Examined states were Australia, Belgium, Denmark, Germany, England, Finland, France, Ireland, Italy, Canada, Luxembourg, New Zealand, the Netherlands, Norway, Austria, Portugal, Sweden, Switzerland, Spain, and the USA. The period of research took place during the respective legislative periods around the year 2000.

² Until 2000, there was only one cabinet minister (P. Gordon Walker) without a seat in the British House of Commons. The portion of the cabinet members of the German Federal Government that had no *Bundestag* mandate during their appointment amounted to 18.2% in the period of 1949 until 2000. In addition, federal ministers aimed at a mandate in numerous cases at a later time and in this they were mostly successful (Helms 2001: 564). A recent prominent example is the present German minister of foreign affairs, Frank-Walter Steinmeier, who will be the leading candidate for the next *Bundestag* elections of the Social Democrats of the *Bundesland* Brandenburg (Die Welt, 07.07.2007: 35). Also, members or leaders of federal state governments can come from the *Bundestag*, which has been a practice since the establishment of the Federal Republic of Germany (Plöhn 1984: 185).

In the European Union (EU), the European Commission (EC) is not really dependent on the direct or indirect support of the parliament in the sense of a parliamentary government elaborated by Lijphart (1994). Overlapping memberships in executive, judiciary or legislative organs of the EU or the national member states are not legally permitted. The composition of the EC is to a large extent determined by national governments. If the Commission was selected autonomously by the European Parliament (EP) this would lead to a serious institutional change: the parliament would be substantially strengthened in comparison with the EC and the Council of Ministers.

This analysis is designed as a case study which focuses on recruitment of candidates for European elections in Germany during the period of 1979 until 2004; the main subject of investigation is the political system of Germany. To a large extent the analysis levels ‘party system’ and ‘intra party arena’³ worked out by Barnea/Rahat (2007: 377) in their three level approach remain unconsidered. This does not mean that these are insignificant for procedures of nominating candidates. It is assumed, however, that the political system provides crucial basic conditions which exercise effects on the two subsystems and which contribute considerably to the structure of opportunities.⁴ In this respect, the empirical procedure follows - despite associated difficulties - an approach of descriptive secondary analysis of official data, which is wide-spread in European recruitment research (Patzelt 1999: 261-2). Units of analysis within the explorative study are not the transnational parties on the European level, the so called Europarties or TNPs, but the national parties. The former have developed from loose parliamentarian groups to institutionalised European political parties. Indeed they could contribute to a growing legitimacy for EU integration (Mittag/Bräth 2006: 721). But all in all, they have only reduced party functions; especially the missing authority to nominate their own candidates is a particularly serious deficit. Despite partial harmonisation there is no

³ The goal of analysis of the intra-party arena is to identify specific factors which are of importance during the nomination of candidates within the parties. The requirements a candidate has to fulfil are based on different party programmes, rules and organization.

⁴ Best/Cotta (2000: 8) also argue in this way when they write recruitment of candidates “is best interpreted as an interactive combination of social and of political processes.” The following belong to the basic - non static - influence factors, which are set by the political system and its subsystems: *structure of state*, with its parameter values federal vs. central, whereby for the political elite the opportunity structure in federal systems is clearly better in relation to centralized political system. This can be expressed quantitatively by a larger number of political positions and a larger number of entrance possibilities under a decentralized candidate nomination system. Party members in Germany which are interested in a parliament mandate can acquire this, besides one for the EP, for the *Bundestag* or one of the 16 state parliaments, so that a total number of 2.697 delegates results from this (Wiesendahl 2006: 99); *legal system* which determines, for example, eligibility criteria such as age and nationality; *electoral system*, but it must be pointed out that the representation of social groups or regions by the elected parties is rather a question of the internal-party pre-selection than a question of the electoral system design; *political culture* and finally, also the *media structure*. However, the distinction between external (political system and party system) and internal factors (party context) of influence cannot always be maintained clearly since parties, as central intermediate actors, also affect their system environment. The mutual influence, for example, becomes clear in the arrangement of electoral laws by parties in parliament, which also contribute the rules for the nomination of candidates.

standardised European electoral law which would regulate elections. The election law belongs - with certain restrictions - to the regulation range of the national states. These fundamentals are still intact today (for details see chapter 3.1). All parties participating in European elections have in common the aim of achieving seats in the EU parliament. En route they exercise a nearly unrestricted dominance within their respective national political systems. This starts with the procedures of candidate nominations and moves toward the election campaign and its dominating - mostly national - topics. This dominance is, however, more or less clearly restricted in the logics of action of the Members of the EP (MEPs) (Raunio 1998: 184-5). To that effect, EP elections are treated as 27 simultaneous national “second order” elections (Reif/Schmitt 1980), i.e. as elections which are understood as subordinate elections by the voters and which are mostly dominated by national topics. Unsurprisingly, Blomgren (2003: 141) reaches the conclusion that the recruitment patterns differ mainly between the examined states and less between the parties within a national party system. This is the reason why it is necessary to study legislative recruitment in each single country and not on a general level. National parties decide in internal decision-making processes which candidates will be put on the list, and more importantly, which positions they will occupy. Accordingly, national parties, which are ‘relevant actors’ in the German party system, are included. ‘Relevant’ means that these parties actually are or have been partisan veto players, as suggested by Tsebelis (2002: 79). They regularly take part in European elections, federal elections and elections of the states of the Federal Republic. Furthermore, they obtain mandates and are involved in government coalitions of the respective system levels. These parties with veto positions are: Christian Democratic Union (CDU), Social Democratic Party (SPD), Bavarian Christian Social Union (CSU), Liberal Party (FDP), and Green Party (*Bündnis 90/Die Grünen*)⁵. Since the European election in 1994, the Socialist Party (PDS) which developed from the GDR state party SED, can be added to that group. After the unification with the social protest party WASG (Election Alternative for Jobs and Social Justice) to the Left Party (*Linkspartei*) in summer 2007, this party could be durably established in the left sector of the German party spectrum.

The specific interest in recruiting procedures for the EP in Germany results from several factors. On the one hand, candidate selection processes for parliaments in Germany (Schüttemeyer/Storm 2005: 540-1), but particularly for European elections (Patzelt 1999: 255-6) is a research field which has so far only been investigated roughly. Studies concerning the latter investigation area are already some years past: from Holland (1986) to Great Britain

⁵ In 1979, the Greens for the first time participated unsuccessfully in the European election campaign. After the fusion with the East German *Bündnis 90* the party was renamed *Bündnis 90/Die Grünen* in 1993.

and the European Candidate Study in 1994 to nine states of the European Community (Norris 1997 and 1999). Other authors have dealt with candidate selection to the EP only in the margin of their work (Blomgren 2003: 128-43, Poguntke 2007: 118-20) or refer more strongly to judicial frameworks (Bryder 1998). On the other hand, significant meaning is added to the EP due to its specific position within the political system of the EU because it is the only organ of the EU that is elected directly, elected by its citizens for a legislation period of five years. With the deepening European integration it experienced a continuous increase in meaning in the legislation, however, also due to having a say in the constitution of the EC. Important steps were the treaties of Maastricht (1992), Amsterdam (1997), and Nice (2001). Also the compromise to the reform of the EU system obtained in June 2007 - based on the failed European Constitutional treaty - means a reinvigoration of the EP, mainly in the field of legislation. The aim of this paper is to examine whether recruitment patterns to the EP - against the background of strengthening the EP - have changed and which might be the reasons for these changes. The phenomena professionalisation and democratisation (Cotta/Best 2000) are regarded as issues affected by Europeanisation. It is accepted that there is an increase in the level of professionalisation in consequence of the Europeanisation, simultaneously there is no democratisation of candidate selections.

2 Processes of change and reactions of parties against the background of Europeanisation of political parties

2.1 Dealignment processes, growing importance of media and implications for candidate selection

From the social and political changes that have taken place over the past few years, so far it can not be predicted “which new challenge will determine the structure of parliamentary representations in the future or what effect this will have on recruitment patterns.” (Best/Hausmann/Schmitt 2000: 189) Nevertheless, some conclusions shall be drawn here in order to show some of the possible consequences.

In the cartel party approach of Katz/Mair (1995) the starting point is the observation that social linkages of the parties became weak.⁶ As a reaction to that parties move closer to

⁶ Removing voter loyalties was detected as a trend - with different extent and speed - in all western democracies (Mair et al. 1999: 11). By these dealignment processes parties are concerned in a double way (Klein 2004: 229). First, the sociological Lipset Rokkanian cleavage (Lipset/Rokkan 1967) generally loses its binding character. Furthermore, the binding effect to persons who still are bound to parties also decreases. Consequences of these

the state, and social resources lose their meaning while the meaning of state resources grows. Cartel parties try to be as independent of risks connected to election results and party memberships (participation, donations, membership fees) as possible. The following is characteristic of the cartel party: party manifestos lose their significance, professionalisation increases, the party's grass roots becomes less important and even loses its function, and the party tries to isolate itself from competing parties (Katz/Mair 1998: 93-119). With the changing image of the party type the prevailing role model of a politician also changes. Following the replacement of the catch-all party by the cartel party, the type of politician changes from entrepreneur to agent of state (Katz/Mair 1995: 18). The challenge the cartel parties are faced with having to integrate an increasingly heterogeneous electorate. Consequently, programmatic positions are less definite and contain different and sometimes even contradictory policies. Persons become more significant objects of orientation, functioning as integration factors at the same time. A result of the parties moving closer to the state and at the same time losing their social links is the risk of neglecting their linkage function. Thus, the question how parties fulfil their main function, namely linking the social with the political sphere, inevitably gains importance.

On the one hand, an increasing professionalisation can be observed to close the gap between voters and politicians (Katz 2001: 287-9). On the other hand, elections are a corrective factor if the distance between the spheres becomes too great: If politicians distance themselves too much from their electorate they risk losing votes or even their or the party's constituency. To avoid this candidates can be replaced by selectors during the candidate selection process. In this context two different strategies can be pursued, the first rather refers on professionalisation and the second on democratisation. Interestingly both strategies, which are characteristic for candidate selections in the cartel party, contribute to a further weakening of the classic party membership.

1. "There will be increased involvement by the central party in candidate recruitment and in setting and limiting the options among which local selectorates will choose, at the same time broadening the range of groups from which candidates may be recruited (greater categoric inclusiveness) and limiting the choice of particular individuals from those categories (what might be termed 'personal exclusivity').
2. There will be a movement of local candidate selection procedures and selectorates toward greater inclusiveness, in particular away from choice by local party officials and formal party meetings and

processes of change are a decrease in the number of the party members and sinking willingness to participate within the parties, as well as changes at the level of electorates, especially an increase of the number of non-voters and a higher volatility. One result for parties and representatives is an increasing uncertainty as regards the outcome of elections.

toward selection by broad-based ballots, and toward procedures that are increasingly open to direct participation by party sympathizers rather than being restricted to formal members.” (Katz 2001: 292)

Due to the regulations of candidate recruitment parties are „in a very strong position to control their representatives“ (Raunio 2000: 213). If candidate selections became democratised through outsourcing from the parties or expansion of the selectorate as “an elite strategy to defang the base” (Katz 2001: 293), this would have several consequences. Candidate selections would be characterised by greater uncertainties to both candidates and selectorates. The latter would have to fear losing influence on nomination processes and would have to pursue other strategies to sustain an influence. Candidates would orientate themselves more strongly toward the widened (party-external) selectorate (Hazan/Rahat 2006: 373). It could be accompanied by a profit of action autonomy of the mandataries, since they would not have to fear any longer not to be nominated in case of tensions between themselves and the selectorate. The drawback is that the parties would lose their influence on their parliamentarians’ actions (Barnea/Rahat 2007: 392).

Because of the changing role of the media in modern democracies a change from party democracy to media democracy can be observed (Meyer 2003: 345). Parties as adaptable bodies have accepted this development as their own and have adopted the character of professional media-communication actors (Jun 2004: 115-24). Politics adjust more and more to the mechanisms of the media. This adaptation takes place in order to be able to influence the presentation of politics. The pressure of having to present or stage oneself in the media society is a basic experience of the political class (Meyer 2003: 344). Media strategies are part of the professionalisation of political parties and result not only from the change of the media but also from changes in the structure of society, as presented above (see footnote 6). As a consequence for (leading) politicians different qualifications gain importance if they want to be elected. It is no longer enough to do qualified work within the party organisation, but they also have to be able to present specific topics and - more importantly - themselves to the public. Therefore it is necessary that candidates have media competences and handle the media adeptly (Jun 2004: 118). Indicators of the increased significance of media factors could now, for example, be found in the skills and abilities of the candidate, such as media competence. It is less and less true for parties that “‘symbolic’ qualities of candidates attracting a wider audience are of less importance than their intra-organizational qualities such as loyalty or managing skills.” (Best/Cotta 2000: 12)

2.2 Europeanisation and its effects on legislative recruitment for the European Parliament

There are several papers and references to be found in existing research on the subject of which state institutions are more and which institutions are less affected by Europeanisation. Even though an increasing interest in the subject could be observed over the past few years research on Europeanisation of parties and party systems is only at its beginning. One of the causes for the low level of Europeanisation of parties and party systems defined in research is the missing cleavage structure on the EU level. Hanley (2006: 35) points out that “our understanding of *party* [...] has proceeded on the basis of locating these organisms within the context of their own national states” (Hanley’s italics). Mair (2000: 39), on the other hand, emphasizes institutional characteristics as complementing factors: The cooperation of the EU institutions lacks the logic of a parliamentary governing system, especially the parties’ missing competition for government. In research on parties and party systems, areas of investigation for evidence of Europeanisation were identified (Ladrech 2002: 396-400). One of the most obvious areas that are influenced by European integration are programmatic changes. Parties opting for government have to do without certain programmatic positions because competences formerly within the state can now be found on the EU level and are no longer part of the party’s regulatory responsibilities.

This essay works according to its research interests with a definition of Europeanisation as an “intra-organizational change in national political parties that is induced by the ongoing process of European integration“ (Carter et al. 2007: 5). European integration is the independent variable which causes adaptation pressure on the organisational structure of political parties (dependent variable). Except for Carter et al. (2007) candidate recruitment processes have not been introduced as a separate field of research so far (Ladrech 2002), but are to be considered in a wider framework of examining the changes in intra-party organisation. If European integration effects the party organisation, objective evidence should be found especially in recruitment processes for the EP as it considerably takes part in EU legislation processes. In contrast to that, national parliaments increasingly fall behind, and they often only reproduce decisions that have been made in Brussels.

2.2.1 Strengthening the trend of professionalisation by Europeanisation?

The central thesis is that selection within the parties in the last elections is linked more strongly to criteria of European politics than in the first direct elections to the EP. Because the

significance of the EP has grown the candidates are now rather rated according to their knowledge and skills related to EU topics (Poguntke/Pütz 2006: 349). The parliament of the EU originated from the Common Assembly of national parliamentarians which held their national mandates. This double membership is also the background for slogans such as the German „Hast du einen Opa, schick ihn nach Europa!“ (If you have a grandpa, send him to Europe!). The national parliaments then had to do without those members who were taking part in meetings in Brussels. Today, parties will ponder more intensively whether they send a worthy party member to Europe just for the climax of his or her political career or choose the candidate who is best prepared for the variety of tasks and will thus look after the party's interests in the most efficient and effective way. National parties are aware that professionalisation of their MEPs is “essential to produce an effective and cohesive body which can act as a counterweight to the expertise of Brussels bureaucrats and national ministers” (Norris 1999: 86). As Germany only provides 99 MEPs, especially smaller parties cannot afford mistakes in the selection of their representatives.

Increasingly complex politics require adequate reaction strategies by political decision entities. Part of this is to organise the parliaments more on the basis of division of labour and increasing expert knowledge of the members of parliament. One of the consequences for candidate recruitment is that European parliament parties have a growing interest in using the party experts' knowledge even after the European elections. As the Europarties do not have recruitment competence for 'their' MEPs this interest may not make a big difference in the recruitment process (if, for example, a certain part of expert politicians are placed in promising positions on the lists). On the informal level, however, the EP groups or their leading members might make a greater effort prior to the nomination process, supported by the comparatively more centralised recruitment processes and the smaller number of relevant selectors that need to be attended to. Even the national parties have an increased interest in the professionalised work of their members. It is agreed that they could attempt to influence decisions in the EP and to profit from their members' expert knowledge on EU subjects. This should especially be observed in governing parties which “have a higher incentive than the opposition to learn about the mood in the EP as the outcome of their legislative initiatives also depends on the EP“ (Raunio 2000: 216). Beside the increased significance of candidate selection this could bring the parties and their MEPs closer together. However, there is no empirical evidence so far that the relationship between the parties and their MEPs has become closer. It has been shown that the decisions in parliament are very rarely influenced by the national parties - only if fundamentally important (Raunio 2000: 217). Indeed, the MEPs have “a very considerable autonomy in their own decision-making.“ (Poguntke 2007: 124)

Nevertheless, it remains open whether this autonomy would still exist in the same form if Europe-related publicity was more pronounced due to increased media coverage. This is to be doubted especially in cases where MEPs have to make decisions on initiatives that come from national governments with the same party affiliation. The reason for the MEPs' high level of autonomy is also to be found in the recruitment mechanism. After all, the MEPs account for their regional party or their constituency but not to the party leadership on the national level. That is why the significance of the selection processes could increase for the German national party leaders so that they could attempt to further strengthen their influence. Due to the specific character of the candidate selection the chance of implementing this may be greater than at the occasions of elections on a national level or elections for the *Bundesländer* parliaments. Whether or not there have been changes in the parties' selection processes despite the MEPs' relatively great individual autonomy and the increased significance of the EP must be further investigated. It is to be expected that there is a change in recruitment patterns, connected to a turning away from typical career paths. A seat in the EP may have been considered to be the successful conclusion of a political career for a long time, but nowadays this is less and less the case. Because of its professionalisation the membership in the EP could well be a separate form of career. As „career politicians see their primary ambitions within the institution, or related higher offices“ (Norris 1999: 94) the duration of membership may, on the one hand, increase. On the other hand, the reversed direction may be pursued more often: from the EP to the *Bundestag*.

2.2.2 Europeanisation of candidate selections: decrease of intra-party democracy?

In addition to the dealignment processes described above, Europeanisation in its previous form contributes to a further distancing of the political from the social sphere as democratic control over politics is getting more difficult (Mair 2000: 29). Despite the formation of European party groups, national parties are the linking elements between European institutions and national societies. Especially members of the EP can counteract this trend by contributing to improving the link between the European and the national level, since unlike ‚ordinary‘ members of parliament they are not only accountable to their electorate and their party, but also to their EP party group. Therefore, they apparently “would welcome more attention by national party politicians (and the public) to European matters in general and their activities in the EP in particular.” (Poguntke 2007: 123, Poguntke's brackets)

Early on, Leibholz (1967: 127) demanded the democratisation of candidate selections. That this demand occurred in actual fact, Bille (2001) was able to show for the period of 1960

until 1990. In contrast to the democratisation trend, the thesis is presented that a trend like this is not characteristic for nominations of candidates for the EP. On the question of how democratisation is understood, there are different perceptions. Primarily, democratisation means - in the sense of Bille (2001: 365) - that the selection process is decentralised, i.e. it follows a bottom-up and not a top-down direction of decision making (Lucardie/Voerman 2006: 2). The concept of democratisation thus contains strategies which aim at an „opening of the channels for political participation and legislation recruitment to more social groups“ (Cotta/Best 2000: 495) with the effect of a more inclusive electorate. This text applies to the latter concept of democratisation, because decentralisation “can limit, maintain or expand the extent of intra-party democracy” (Rahat/Hazan 2001: 309). According to Rahat/Hazan (2001: 316), the thesis is that centralised candidate selection procedures can contribute to a better representation of social groups because the „representativeness of the selected lists, [...] can only be ensured by corrective mechanisms“.

In the European Parliamentary Assembly which emanated from the Common Assembly, German members came from the *Bundestag* and retained their national mandates. To that extent, for the time after the elections in 1979, one could speak of a democratisation thrust. However, if only the period after 1979 is taken into account, when candidates were nominated for the EP alone, a contrary connection is to be made: The stronger the trend of professionalisation the more limited the space for grassroots-democratic list procedures. The cause for this is that professionalisation means specialisation on a certain professional field. Apart from training and acquisition of occupation-specific abilities and knowledge, MEPs also strengthen their intra-party position. The corresponding working hypothesis is: The longer MEPs follow their parliamentary activity the more independent they make themselves of their electorate. From this perspective, a low average incumbency return rate can also be regarded as an indicator for the closeness of the recruitment paths, and is thus a sub-range of the political class, which works against democratisation (Cotta/Best 2000: 495). Looking at internal-party processes in the cartel party approach it can be seen that they follow individualised patterns of participation. However, participation of the party on the ground pales in comparison to decisions of the party leadership (Katz/Mair 1995: 21). Mair et al. (1999: 22) presume that parties could show more openness to the people by admitting more rapid changes of candidates or members of parliament. However, this alone would not make processes more democratic. They would also not be more professionalised since a short-term parliamentary activity hardly permits the development of specialised knowledge.

Nevertheless, it is assumed that shifts of power take place within the parties caused by the organisational adjustments in the course of European integration (Ladrech 2002: 397).

Due to negotiations on the EU level which have an executive character, Europeanisation contributes to shifts of power within the parties. Political elites in particular are the beneficiaries. But it was shown in past research that the effects on the party organisation are still quite insignificant. Direct effects are hardly recognised (Poguntke 2007: 128). However, since it is a process that is being looked at, conclusions such as these can only refer to moments in time. Nonetheless, it is assumed that MEPs could develop their intra-party position to an extent that would make them shoo-ins as regards their re-nomination.

3 Empirical findings for Europeanisation of legislative recruitment for the European Parliament

3.1 Characteristics of candidate selections for the European Parliament in Germany

99 of the current 785 MEPs are elected in Germany. So far, there have been six European elections in which the CDU and CSU together always obtained more mandates than the SPD (see table 1). In the first three elections, there were 81 seats available to Germany in the EP. It is not candidates, but parties with candidates on closed lists, that are elected for the EP in Germany. Compared to intra-constituency recruitment such as those for the first vote for *Bundestag* elections, this recruitment process is made more complex by the greater number of interests and of actors involved.

Table 1: Total number of German seats in the European Parliament according to parties

Election year	Mandates	CDU	SPD	CSU	FDP	Greens	PDS	REP
1979	78	32	34	8	4	-	-	-
1984	78	32	32	7	-	7	-	-
1989	78	24	30	7	4	7	-	6
1994	99	39	40	8	-	12	-	-
1999	99	43	33	10	-	7	6	-
2004	99	40	23	9	7	13	7	-
Average	-	35.0	32.0	8.2	5.0	9.2	6.5	-

Notes: Information without mandates elected by the Berlin House of Representatives: 1979: CDU: 2, SPD: 1, 1984: CDU: 2, SPD: 1; 1989: CDU: 1, SPD: 1, Alternative List (Greens): 1 and also without observers from the East-German *Länder* elected by the *Bundestag* upon German unification; REP (*Republikaner*) = extreme right-wing

Sources: Statistisches Bundesamt 2004a: 20; Statistisches Bundesamt 2004b: 128.

Despite the lack of standardised European electoral laws there are harmonisations, decided in 1976 by the member states of the EC/EU and documented by the European Elections Act (EEA) (last amended in 2002). The following general rules are documented in this regulatory

framework: general, direct, free, equal and secret ballots (art. 1 sec. 3), elections based on the principles of proportional representation with list nominations or the single transferable vote system (art. 1 sec. 1), admission of preferential votes which can change the placement on the lists (art. 1 sec. 2), allocation of constituencies is possible as long as the principle of proportional representation is maintained (art. 2), barring clauses can be introduced but the respective limit may be no more than five percent (art. 3). The requirements set down in the EEA are implemented in Germany through the Law on the Election of Members of the European Parliament and the European Electoral Regulations. The regulations regarding methods of calculation for the assignment of seats, conditions for active and passive suffrage and modalities of list establishment are relatively extensive, which is why there are barely any differences between the parties. Unlike in national *Bundestag* elections, substitute candidates can be nominated in case a candidate refuses to accept his election or a member subsequently withdraws from the EP. If there is no substitute candidate, the mandate goes to the next candidate on the list who was not elected.

One characteristic effect of the German type of election system on the candidate selection is that the parties' regional level is particularly strong (Best/Hausmann/Schmitt 2000: 147). The same can be said for European elections even though there are some differences. Electoral laws allow for the compilation of a list based on federal criteria as well as for the compilation of a *Bundesland* list. Apart from CDU and CSU where candidate recruitment is based on Land lists, so that the *Bundesländer* function as constituencies, all relevant parties carry out their recruitment on federal lists (see table 2). In all relevant parties, the profoundly complex candidate selection process is based on a special representatives' assembly or a general representatives' assembly that decides on the list. A members' assembly making the decision would also be possible, but due to constituency allocation and the relevant parties' number of members this is, in fact, not feasible.

Table 2: Certificated party lists for elections to the European Parliament

Election year	Number of parties	Combined party list for all <i>Bundesländer</i>	Party list for a single <i>Bundesland</i>	
1979	9	7	10	(CDU, CSU)
1984	14	11	11	(CDU, CSU, BP)
1989	22	20	10	(CDU, CSU)
1994	26	23	17	(CDU, CSU, Familie)
1999	23	19	18	(CDU, CSU, BP, Familie)
2004	24	21	17	(CDU, CSU, BP)

Notes: BP = Bavarian Party, Familie = Family Party
Source: Statistisches Bundesamt 2005: 18.

The difference found in the CDU and CSU is connected to the traditional significance of the Land organisations as an important power factor within the Union parties. Consequently, national leadership is of no importance to them, a regional balance of seats is obtained through compiling the *Bundesland* lists and the process is generally less prone to conflict. The importance of regional proportion for the compilation of the *Bundesland* list in the CDU and CSU depends on the size of the *Bundesland*. City states or smaller *Bundesländer* such as the Saarland will get a maximum of one seat whereas large ones like North Rhine-Westphalia or Bavaria will get up to 12 or 10 (see also table 9). All other parties attempt to make sure that the regional proportion is more or less met when compiling their federal lists. This is done by integrating preselected land lists in a common list. This contributes to a limitation of the national party leaders' powerful position. To the smaller parties regional representation is of minor importance as they get fewer seats and cannot cover every *Bundesland*. National party leaders can exert stronger influence and will integrate intra-party groups and strategies regarding the electorate in their considerations (for comparison see table 3). The process is made even more difficult in the SPD, the Green Party and PDS because they have to consider a certain ratio of female candidates which is a standard in their party charters. It is characteristic for the selection of candidates "that regional power base is the paramount selection criterion for the larger parties whereas the strategic situation of the smaller parties has varied over time, hence providing differential opportunities for national leaderships to exert influence." (Poguntke 2007: 119)

Table 3: Characteristics of candidate selection for European Parliament elections

	CDU	SPD	CSU	FDP	Greens	Left Party
Selection level	Regional	National	Regional	National	National	National
Influence of regions	Very strong (districts)	Very strong (districts)	Very strong (districts)	Important (Land executives)	Moderate	Moderate
Influence of national leadership	Weak	Weak	Weak	Moderate/strong	Moderate	Strong
Intra-party attention	Increased	Increased	Increased	No change (always high)	Increased	No change (always high)

Source: Poguntke 2007: 120.

3.2 Thesis of growing professionalisation

The fact that media plays an increasingly important role in the candidate selection can be shown by using the example of the Liberals' election campaign in 2004. FDP chairman Guido Westerwelle followed a media strategy which was to contribute to the party's chances in the

election. Centre of the strategy was to put the candidate Silvana Koch-Mehrin in position 1 of the list. The professionally successful then 32-year-old should function as the appealing focus of the campaign. As voters do not vote for individual candidates on the list but for a party, the actual candidates on the list are, apart from ‘luring candidates’ such as Koch-Mehrin, not that important, however. Even MEPs holding prominent positions for a number of years, such as Hans-Gert Pöttering, currently President of the EP and former chairman of the People’s Party group (EPP), or Martin Schulz, President of the Socialist Group in the EP (PSE) since 2004, are not particularly well-known within the electorate. Nevertheless, media-oriented strategies may contribute increasingly to improve the parties’ chances in future European elections. As base party members are less bound to their party now, it may become easier to select external candidates for party lists. That a strategy like this can work was shown by the FDP in the unusually extensive publicity for their top candidate (Poguntke 2007: 119).

Best/Hausmann/Schmitt (2000: 187) argue that “increasing seniority is [...] indicating a constant growth of professional potential in parliaments.“ It could be showed that the increase in professionalisation directly correlates with a greater duration of the candidates’ time in parliament (Z’graggen/Linder 2004: 31, 34). When staying in the parliament for a longer period of time members of parliament get a chance to put knowledge and skills to practice for a longer time. A new mandatary will need more time to learn routines, understand structures and build up his reputation. The level of professionalisation of the MEPs is in this case to be operationalised through the ratio of new members and the quota of re-election. A smaller ratio of new MEPs is an expression of personnel continuity which makes the work of the party groups easier, especially as regards planning. At the same time it is an expression of strong links between the party and its MEP. Parties control the recruitment processes which is the most secure means of ensuring the MEPs’ link with their party. If the re-election quota is high it can be concluded that the MEP has a certain position of power connected to his placement in parliament, but at the same time, the MEP’s responsibilities are carried out to a satisfactory degree. In any case they cannot be replaced offhand by the parties as this would mean a considerable loss of specific knowledge.

Table 4: Percentage of the re-elected Members of the European Parliament

1984	1989	1994	1999	2004
90.6%	83.7%	86.4%	87.0%	86.8%

Notes: own calculations. The quota of re-elected candidates is calculated by dividing the number of repeatedly successful candidates by the number of newly recruited candidates. Information includes the MEPs elected by the Berlin House of Representatives in 1984 and 1989, excluding members of the *Republikaner*.

Source: Statistisches Bundesamt.

As shown in table 4, the re-election rate is relatively high. This means that if a MEP decides to be put on a party list again the probability of being re-elected for another term in parliament is quite high. What is problematic about these figures, however, is that they do not show to what extent MEPs will retreat from their goals before or during the nomination process and will subsequently not appear in any of the lists. When interpreting the figures it has to be taken into consideration that the divergence from the quota of 100 is connected to the failure of the FDP to reach above the percentage set down in the five per cent clause. This was the case in 1984, 1994 and 1999 and explains the minimal increase in the re-election quota for 1999, as at that time FDP candidates did not have to be taken into account in the calculations. In addition, another part of the divergence from 100 is connected to candidates that were not re-elected into parliament because their parties received fewer votes. Thus, an assumingly safe placement in the list can become unsafe.

When considering the ratio of new MEPs (see table 5) the election years 1989 and 1994 are particularly prominent. Partially caused by the election of the Greens and their regulation of rotation of mandates the quota reaches a level of 39.0% in 1984 and 41.5% in 1989.⁷ The election of 60 new MEPs in 1994 is connected to the German unification. Along came MEPs from the new *Bundesländer* of former East Germany and a new party, the PDS. It seems to be a paradox that despite an increased electoral volatility the ratio of new MEPs is smaller than in the years before. This means that election results become less and less unsafe, and still, the continuity of the personnel composition of the German MEPs grows. The decreasing rate of parliamentary newcomers could be regarded as support of the thesis of professionalisation. If that rate is too high there is no personnel stability that would make the acquisition of professional skills and expert knowledge possible (Best/Hausmann/Schmitt 2000: 183-5). The level reached in the last two elections (approximately one third) can be considered beneficial to personnel stability and continuity on the one hand, and to necessary changes at the hands of new MEPs on the other hand.

Table 5: Parliamentary newcomers in the European Parliament

Election year	1984	1989	1994	1999	2004
New MEPs/number of mandates	32/81	34/81	60/99	32/99	33/99
Percentage	39.0	41.5	60.6	32.3	33.3

Notes: own calculations. The ratio of parliamentary newcomers is calculated by dividing the number of new MEPs by the number of all German MEPs. Information includes the MEPs elected by the Berlin House of Representatives in 1984 and 1989, excluding the members of the *Republikaner*.

Source: Statistisches Bundesamt.

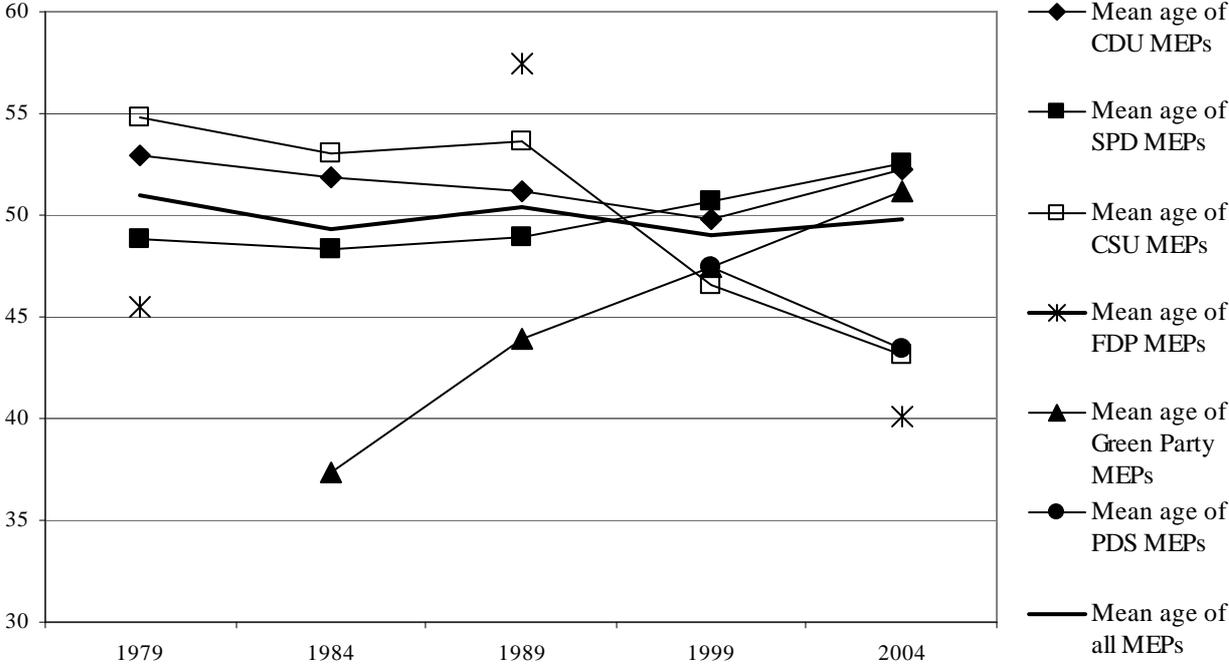
⁷ 1984 the Greens obtained 7 mandates and 1989 8 mandates including one mandate for the AL in Berlin. Re-elected were Friedrich Wilhelm Gräfe zu Baringdorf and Dorothea-Gertrud Piermont.

It has been assumed that the ratio of those who have been members of a different parliament prior to their becoming MEP is decreasing. A number of merited political figures were members of the first EP assembled through direct elections, among them the former chancellor and chairman of the SPD, Willy Brandt, the former Bavarian Prime Minister, Alfons Goppel, and the retired President of the *Bundestag*, Kai-Uwe Hassel. Out of the 81 German MEPs 40 were members of the *Bundestag* or of a *Bundesland* parliament (Statistisches Bundesamt 1980: 49). The current German group in parliament shows a somewhat different picture: well-known former federal or *Bundesland* politicians are barely to be found anymore at all. Exceptions are former Prime Minister of Mecklenburg-Western Pomerania (1990-1992), Alfred Gomolka, and two Greens, Angelika Beer, chair of her party between 2002 and 2004 as well as Cem Özdemir, who belongs to the group of the youngest MEPs. After slumps in their careers at the federal level the latter do not need to fear, however, that they have reached the end of their career in a backbencher role in the EP. More or less well-known representatives who, after a period of time in the EP, have played or are still playing an important part in federal politics include Friedrich Merz (chair of the CDU/CSU fraction in the *Bundestag* between 2000 and 2002), Claudia Roth (political group chair of the Greens in the EP from 1994 until 1998, since 2004 one of the two member chairs of the German Green Party) and Joachim Wuermeling (state secretary in the Ministry of Economy since the end of 2005).

Corresponding to the professionalisation thesis, an increase in age should be observed between 1979 and 2004 when looking at the development of the average age in all parties. Figure 1 shows, however, that the mean age level continuously remains around an age of 50. More considerable variances can be observed when looking at each party individually. The two large parties, CDU and SPD, show the fewest variances. The mean age of the SPD MEPs increases almost continuously. In the CDU, an increase in age by 2.4 years took place only in 2004, whereas until 1999 there had been a slight decrease. The most considerable variances can be seen in the mean age of FDP MEPs. In this case, it must be taken into account, however, that this is a comparatively small group, and that the party did not manage to get above the five per cent clause several times. The decrease can nevertheless be considered to be connected to the 2004 recruitment strategy according to which no MEPs from the previous election period had to be included. The situation of the CSU is similar even though between 1989 and 2004 the decrease of the mean age has been less rapid. The most substantial increase in mean age can be observed in the Green Party, however, where it rises almost linearly from 37.4 years (1984) to 51.2 years (2004). The thesis of professionalisation is

supported by the CDU, SPD and especially the Greens data, whereas the development in the FDP, CSU and the PDS would suggest the contrary. This discrepancy could be explained by the later start of professionalisation of the latter MEPs. Subsequently it is to be expected that the mean age of these parties will increase around the election in 2009.

Figure 1: Mean age of Members of the European Parliament by relevant parties (1979-2004)



Notes: without substitute candidates, the mean age is not available for the election year 1994.
 Source: Statistisches Bundesamt.

It is hardly surprising that, with the exception of the FDP, the mean age of the candidates is lower in comparison to the mean age of MEPs in the election year of 2004 (see table 6). Experience in politics is a significant criterion for the selection of a candidate for one of the top positions on the list, especially because the long-term continuous political work creates a strong and trustful relationship between party and parliament candidate. Relevant political experience cannot be acquired overnight. An achievement such as this takes time.

Table 6: Mean age of Members of the European Parliament and candidates by relevant parties

	Mean age of MEPs	Mean age of candidates
CDU	52.2	45.0
SPD	52.5	44.1
CSU	43.1	42.1
FDP	40.1	43.1
Green Party	51.2	48.0
PDS	43.4	41.1

Note: without substitute candidates.

Sources: Statistisches Bundesamt 2004b: 142;

http://www.bundeswahlleiter.de/europawahl2004/informationen/pressemittelungen/presse04/statement_hahlen.pdf (21.08.2007)

3.3 Thesis of closing the participation channels in candidate selections

If candidate selections for the EP had been democratised - meaning the selectorate is more inclusive - the number of aspirants would have to have risen from election to election. This could be an indicator for democratisation, as democratisation contributes to an increase of chances for receiving candidateship. In addition, the proportion between men and women might become more unbalanced (Hazan/Rahat 2006: 380). Since there is no data on aspirants, only the development of the number of candidates and distribution between the sexes can be examined and compared with data of the MEPs.

Table 7: All candidates for European elections by sex (absolute number and percentage)

	All	Men		Women	
	Number	Number	%	Number	%
1979	534	424	79.4	110	20.6
1984	727	563	77.4	164	22.6
1989	906	616	68.0	290	32.0
1994	994	720	72.4	274	27.6
1999	937	635	67.8	302	32.2
2004	967	680	70.3	287	29.7

Note: without substitute candidates.

Source: Statistisches Bundesamt 2005: 19.

The data in Table 7 shows that the number of candidates nearly doubled between 1979 and 2004 from 534 to 967. At the same time the number of women rose from 110 to 287, so that the portion of women increased from 20.6% to 29.7%. Also, with the candidates of the relevant parties a moderate rise of the portion of women can be observed, up to the slight decrease in 1994. Up to the decrease in the year 2004 the portion of women continuously rises among MEPs (see table 8). According to the underlying conceptualisation of democratisation it can be concluded that the risen portion of women among MEPs and candidates was favoured by the exclusive character of the selectorate. The increase of the number of women is mainly connected to the women's quota in the SPD, the Greens and PDS. But the portion of women among candidates and MEPs from the Union parties also increased between 1979 and 2004 (CDU: 8.8% to 20.0%; CSU: 12.5% to 22.2%). The fact that an increase in the portion of women in these parties is obtained even without a women's quota can be regarded as a

result of a closer selectorate which can balance the proportion between men and women. If there are no influence mechanisms of party leaderships it could be feared that party lists are clearly dominated by men, similar to the composition of membership of the parties (Niedermayer 2007: 373). The fact that the relationship between women and men is not balanced despite correction mechanisms is not least also a problem of the supply side.

Table 8: Share of women of Members of the European Parliament and candidates of all relevant parties (as percentage)

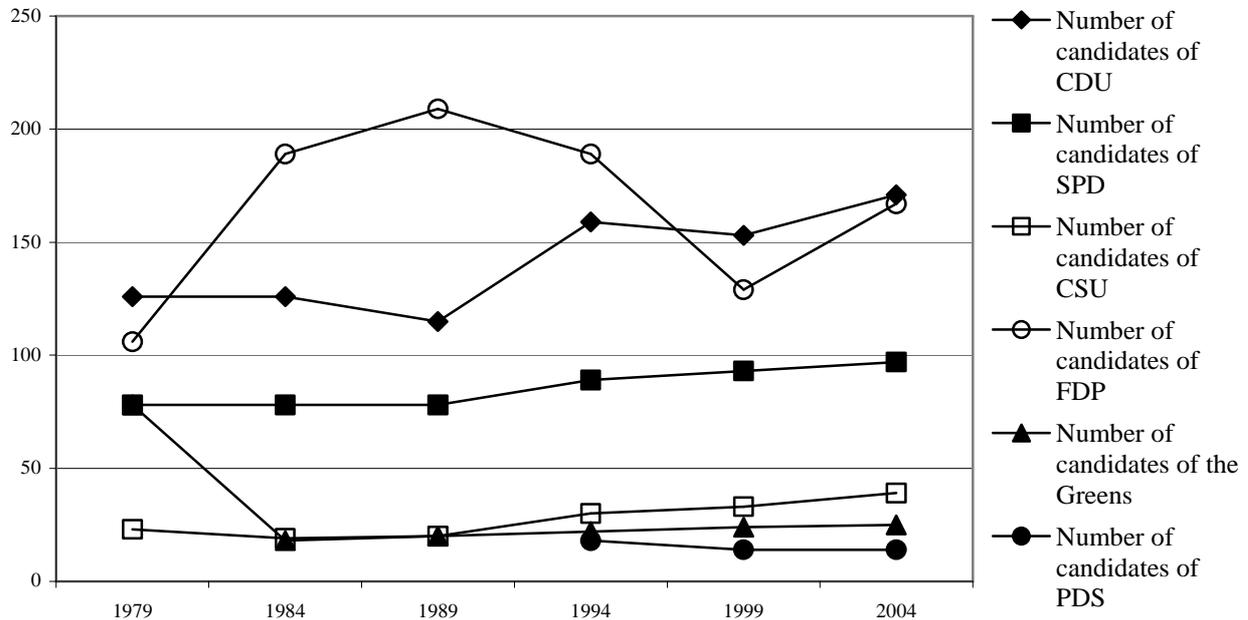
	MEPs	Candidates
1979	14.8	18.7
1984	19.8	20.0
1989	29.7	30.5
1994	35.4	29.6
1999	37.4	31.6
2004	31.3	31.6

Note: without substitute candidates.

Source: Statistisches Bundesamt.

It is remarkable that the number of nominees since 1989 is relatively constant in the span between 906 and 994. These numbers include all candidates which were from all certified parties and not only from the relevant parties. This is the reason why the total number of the parties has to be considered. The latter nearly trebled itself between the first direct elections and 2004 and varied in the last four elections between 22 and 26 (see table 2). However, from the increase of the number of parties results a rise of the number of candidates. Nevertheless, this rise does not point to democratisation but to fragmentation of the national party system on the electoral analysis level. The two main parties, the so called *Volksparteien*, lost attractiveness, whereas smaller parties increasingly become more attractive. Unlike in the 1970s, today there are - also promoted by the second order character of the EU elections - increased chances for Greens, FDP and Left Party to receive mandates. The differentiation of the party system has moderately improved the opportunity structures for acquisition of an EP mandate (see table 1). Small parties are profoundly interested in winning EP mandates, especially in the situation in which they did not cross the 5 per cent hurdle in other elections, such as the PDS in the 2002 *Bundestag* elections.

Figure 2: Number of candidates by relevant parties



Note: without substitute candidates.

Source: Statistisches Bundesamt.

Regarding the development of the number of candidates on the level of the established parties the picture is more differentiated (see figure 2). With the exception of FDP and PDS, the number of candidates has risen in all parties since 1989, most clearly in the CDU, from 115 to 171. The number of candidates from the PDS and the Green Party are relatively constant and correspond with the status of small parties. The latter ran only for the elections in 1979 with a clearly above-average number of candidates. CDU and FDP have in common that clearly more candidates run for mandates than mandates can actually be obtained. This disproportion particularly seriously preponderates in the FDP. In the election in 1989 there were 209 candidates from the Liberal Party and only four got into the EP. Apparently the party leadership pursues a strategy which shows the importance of European elections to the Liberals. The candidates' individual readiness to be put in hopeless list positions could be explained with the symbolic character of the achieved candidate status, which possibly might also be used in power games within the party. But which conclusion can be drawn from a comparison of the development of the number of candidates from the individual parties? Apparently the interest in an EP mandate rose in all parties. Despite the decrease in the number of candidates with the Liberals, in 2004 there were still 167 candidates on the list.

This is four candidates less than in the CDU which nominated the most candidates. This development cannot be understood, however, as an indication for democratisation. It is rather more plausible to assume that the attractiveness of an EP mandate increased in consequence of the EP's gain of authority, and that the candidate selections became more divisive.

The pressure on the parties to select suitable political personnel increases due to the limited number of seats which can be acquired. For FDP and PDS only seven candidates were elected into the EP in 2004 respectively. On the other hand, the main parties obtain a larger number of seats in parliament; CDU receives 35 mandates on an average of all European elections, SPD receives 32. However, it is to be considered that the federal structure is a constitutive characteristic of the CDU. When considering the number of mandates of CDU and CSU by *Bundesland* of the Federal Republic, it becomes apparent that the CDU in the city state Bremen never had an EP mandate and in East German *Bundesländer* such as Brandenburg or Mecklenburg-Western Pomerania had to get along with one mandate (see table 9). Obviously the large parties with their federal structure can hardly renounce an appropriate task fulfilment of their MEPs.

Table 9: European Parliaments mandates of CDU and CSU by *Bundesländer*

EY	GE	BW	BY	HB	HE	HH	LS	NW	RP	SH	SL	BE	BB	MW	SN	ST	TH
1979	40	6	8	0	3	1	5	12	3	1	1						
1984	39	6	7	0	3	1	5	12	3	1	1						
1989	31	5	7	0	2	1	4	8	2	1	1						
1994	47	7	8	0	3	1	4	10	3	1	1	1	1	1	3	1	2
1999	53	6	10	0	3	1	5	11	4	2	1	1	1	1	3	2	2
2004	49	8	9	0	3	1	5	10	3	1	1	1	1	1	2	1	2

Notes: EY = Election year, GE = Germany (mandates of CDU and CSU), BY = Bavaria (mandates of CSU), SH = Schleswig-Holstein, HH = Hamburg, LS = Lower Saxony, HB = Bremen, NW = North Rhine-Westphalia, HE = Hesse, RP = Rhineland-Palatinate, BW = Baden-Württemberg, SL = Saarland, BE = Berlin, BB = Brandenburg, MW = Mecklenburg-Western Pomerania, SN = Saxony, ST = Saxony-Anhalt, TH = Thuringia
Sources: Statistisches Bundesamt 2004a: 20; Statistisches Bundesamt 2004b: 128.

Poguntke (2007: 121) did not draw a distinction to a generally risen influence of the MEPs on candidate selection processes in Germany. The reason he gives for his estimate is connected to the authority of decision-making, which is essentially with the *Bundesland* parties. This estimate is also supported by a survey of candidates in 1994.⁸ The majority of candidates questioned admits that important regional party leaders exert the most important influence on

⁸ Characteristics of the German part of the European Candidate Study, conducted in the weeks before the 1994 EP election, are: 395 respondents, rate of return: 34%.

the selection of candidates. Correspondingly, 'national party factions' followed by 'local party members' exercise the smallest influence (Norris 1997: 222). Nevertheless, MEPs will use their available resources to influence intra-party power games, at least the nomination of candidates to the EP. This argument is corroborated by the high re-election ratio and the small portion of parliamentary newcomers. The fact that parties place well-known party members on top list positions can also result from a stronger influence of prominent party members. As the nomination of candidates is still a domain of the *Bundesland* parties, and as a careful opening of the recruitment processes to party sympathisers, for example, was not observed, the democratisation thesis can be regarded as disproved. However, the strategy of the FDP during the election campaign in 2004 can clearly be rated as a strong involvement of the party leadership. If this example of integration of external expert knowledge found followers, it would contribute to a further weakening of the classic party membership.

4 Summary and outlook

The data interpreted here points to the fact that recruitment patterns for the European Parliament have partially changed. Thus, the rise in the number of candidates can be regarded as an indicator of an increased interest in the EP in the course of its becoming more important. If a final political career used to be an important qualification to receive a mandate to the EP in its first electoral periods, this is hardly the case anymore today. According to the thesis of professionalisation an increase of the MEPs' mean age was to be expected. The hypothesis was corroborated by the two main parties and clearly by the Greens. In contrast the mean age of the MEPs of CSU, FDP and PDS sank. Reasons for this trend may be a delayed professionalisation and specific factors within these parties which could not be discussed in detail here. Furthermore, this trend points to the fact that today a member's activity in the EP represents a discrete alternative to a *Bundestag* or a federal state parliament mandate which includes specific challenges. It does not mean that the affiliation to the EP has to represent the last step of a political career. For the past years it can increasingly be observed that a career path from the EP into the *Bundestag* can be taken (Borchert/Golsch 1999: 129-30). Further indicators which suggest an increased level of professionalisation are the decreased portion of parliamentary newcomers and - even though this is significant only to a limited extent - the very high re-election ratio.

Clear indicators for a closing of participation channels in the sense of a more exclusive selectorate could not be found. Somewhat more difficult is the response to the question about

the control model of the selection of candidates. Neither clear tendencies for centralisation nor for decentralisation could be found. Thus, the status quo was maintained to a large extent during the period of investigation. Within the parties, party leaderships exert influence on a regional level, and less strongly do the grassroots members or national party leaders. The latter have to consider different factors depending on the respective party. In the large parties the regional proportion dominates, whereas it plays a subordinate role for smaller parties. Due to the Europeanisation party leaders might increase their efforts to centralise the nomination of candidates for future elections. A harbinger of this development could be the opening of lists to more or less party-external candidates, as exercised so far by the FDP and PDS. However, there are strong limits imposed on the centralisation efforts since the powerful regional organisations would have to give up power, without an adequate compensation for it.

The considerations and empirical proof given in this essay could contribute to a first investigation of recruitment of candidates to the EP in Germany. Prospective investigations should take the analysis levels of the party system and the intra-party arenas into consideration more closely. In order to be able to understand processes on the supply as well as on the demand side of legislative recruitment (Norris 2006) better, it is essential to create qualitative and quantitative surveys which focus stronger on informal changes, especially on attitudes and behaviour of aspirants, candidates, and selectors. On a widened empirical basis, a main objective of future work, especially with regard to the EU election 2009, must be to find out whether the thesis of Europeanisation with its implications for candidate selections examined here can be maintained or must be qualified. However, there are institutional boundaries for an advanced Europeanisation of candidate selections: A proposal which would have largely left the candidate recruitment to the national parties, however, ten per cent of the mandates placed on comprehensive EU lists, found no majority even within the EP (Arndt/Eisser 2004: 36-7). Taking their own interests into account, national parties and their subdivisions will hardly diminish these hurdles.

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