



**THE CHOICE OF CANDIDATES
FOR THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT
ELECTIONS 2009**

DANISH PARTIES AND THEIR PROCEDURES
FOR SELECTING CANDIDATES

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Executive summary

This report describes and analyses the procedures applied by Danish political parties when selecting candidates for EP elections 2009. Furthermore, it examines Danish political party cooperation at the European level with both European party federations and political groups in the EP.

Denmark is an interesting case as it has a separate party system for EP elections due to the two EU-critical movements that do not contest national parliamentary elections but only EP elections, and the Red-Green Alliance (Enhedslisten) that does not contest EP elections. This particular system is a result of the euroscepticism that Denmark has experienced since its accession.

Interviews with party officials from seven Danish parties have been carried out in order to encompass both formal and informal procedures of candidate selection. In the procedures for candidate selection all Danish parties are similar in that they have a strong emphasis on the top candidate position because of experience and the low number of MEPs per high number of parties. Recognition and personal popularity has played a larger role in the outcome of elections than the actual policy stance of candidates. Selecting the top candidate is therefore often a central party decision. Furthermore, the campaign and preparation resources are much larger for the top candidate than for the remaining candidates.

The electoral system of Denmark provides for equal competition between candidates and allows candidates to enhance their political visibility, which may potentially improve the voters' interest in EP election. However, the Danish parties still experience low competition when establishing the complete electoral list and low voter turnouts which confirms the second-order thesis of EP elections. But when looking at the composition of the 2009 electoral list there is a majority of pro-European profiles and also many young candidates. Moreover, the top candidates are not only famous faces but also politicians who have been rewarded for good political work on EU issues. The traditional pro/anti EU divide has also decreased. This signals a potential change of EP elections becoming more than just second-order national contests which could also lead to a change in the traditional notion of an MEP position as a 'pre-retirement job' towards a recognised individual political career goal.

The interviews with party officials revealed that cooperation between Danish parties and their European sister parties is general very low and particularly low in the procedures

of selecting candidates. This is partly due to the different electoral systems in the member states and lack of knowledge about best practices of European sister parties. Those parties who do have some cooperation with the European level in campaign preparations see a potential for saving resources and for a better profiling of their European partners in the national campaign.

Introduction

On 7 June 2009, Denmark will elect 13 representatives to the seventh European Parliament (EP). The Danish parties have during 2008 been recruiting and selecting candidates in order to establish their electoral list before elections.

This report describes and analyses the procedures applied by Danish political parties when selecting candidates and establishing their electoral lists for EP elections 2009. Furthermore, the paper examines Danish political party cooperation at the European level with both European party federations and political groups in the EP. It is important to be aware of the nature of the candidate selection process and the electoral system in order to understand the relationship between the MEPs and the voters and to address the problem of decreasing turnout rates at EP elections.

The paper starts out by presenting the Danish party system and providing background information about the Danish parties that are contesting the EP elections. Parties that are currently represented in the Danish Parliament and/or the EP will be the basis for the paper. It is important to understand the Danish party system as it has a unique setup due to the euroscepticism that Denmark has experienced during the three decades of EU membership. Moreover, the Danish electoral system and electoral law will briefly be described. This broader context will create the necessary frame for the analysis.

The investigation of procedures on candidate selection has been carried out in two phases. In the first phase all political parties were asked to complete a questionnaire about their formal rules on selection of candidates, the recruitment of candidates, the preparation of candidates, and finally the impact of cooperation with EP party groups or European party federations. The parties were also asked to provide documentation of party rules and statutes. During the second phase semi-structured interviews were carried out with party officials from all the parties included in the study. The interviews were divided into three sets of questions. Firstly, the interviewees were asked to describe the formal procedures to verify the results from the first phase. Secondly, they were asked about the party's informal procedures in order to understand how the formal procedures were carried out in practice. Finally, they were asked to elaborate on their party's cooperation at the European level. A small group of candidates were also interviewed in order to gain their understandings and perspectives on the procedures applied by their party.

The report has been conducted on the basis the Danish contribution to a larger comparative research project on procedures of candidate selection commissioned by the Committee on Constitutional Affairs of the EP to the Danish Institute for International Studies. The aim was to collect reports from all 27 member states.

I. The Danish party system and electoral system

Denmark has a multiparty system with eight parties currently represented in parliament (Folketinget). Denmark's party system is an interesting case as it differs from many other European systems. Due to a 2% threshold which is the lowest in Europe, Denmark has a very large number of parties represented in the Danish parliament compared to its small population of 5.5 million people (Siaroff, 2000: 226-234). Consequently, several parties have similar political profiles as new parties have emerged when internal party disputes occurred. The latest example is the new political party in parliament, the Liberal Alliance, which was formed partly due to disagreements within the Social Liberal Party. Moreover, Denmark has a tradition for minority governments. Since 1909 no single party has had the majority of parliamentary seats, and most Danish governments have therefore been minority governments consisting of one or more parties (Bille, 2006)

The four oldest and historically most influential parties are the Conservative People's Party (founded in 1870), the Social Democrats (founded 1871), the Liberal Party (founded in 1870) and the Social Liberal Party (founded in 1905). The younger parties are the Socialist People's Party (founded in 1959), the Danish People's Party (founded in 1995), The Danish Red-Green Alliance (founded in 1989) and the Liberal Alliance (founded in 2007 under the name 'New Alliance'). The two latter will not be included in the report since they have not announced a list of candidates for EP elections. In the following section all parties contesting the EP elections in 2009 will briefly be introduced. Their different attitudes to European integration will also be addressed. The Danes have had to answer 'yes' or 'no' in no less than six EU referenda during the three decades of EU membership. The EU debate has therefore traditionally been reduced to a 'for' or 'against' discussion which is also reflected within the parties.

Political parties contesting EP-elections

The mainstream pro-European parties in Denmark include the Liberal Party, the Conservative People's Party, the Social Liberals and the Social Democrats.

The Liberal Party of Denmark (Venstre (V)) is currently the leading political party in Denmark with the largest number (46 out of 179) of seats in the Danish parliament. Since 2001 it has maintained a right-wing minority government with the Conserva-

tive People's Party with support from the Danish people's party. It was traditionally a party advocating agricultural interests but after the 1960s became reoriented towards a more classical liberal party. The liberal party currently has three Members of the EP (MEPs) and is part of the EP party group Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe (ALDE) and a member of the European Liberal Democrat and Reform Party (ELDR).

The Conservative People's Party (Det Konservative Folkeparti (K)) is currently the fifth most important party in Denmark as it has 18 seats in the Danish parliament and received 10.4% of the vote in the 2007 national parliament elections. In the EP, the party has one MEP who is member of the European People's Party-European Democrats (EPP-ED) and the party is also member of the European People's Party.

Both the Liberal Party and the Conservative People's Party have experienced a voting support which is largely in favour of Danish membership and have therefore since the Danish accession in 1973 been able to follow a steady pro-integration course which is not the case of the other current pro-European parties in Denmark. During the history of Danish EU membership, the Liberal Party and the Conservative People's Party have had the smallest percentage of EU sceptic voters as less than 20% have voted against Danish ratification of the Single European Act (SEA) in 1986, the Maastricht Treaty in 1992 and 1993 and the Amsterdam Treaty in 1998 (Haahr, 2000: 313).

The Social Liberal Party (Det Radikale Venstre (R)) is a centrist party currently in opposition to the right-wing government coalition with nine seats in parliament after having received 5.1% of the vote. The party recommended to vote against the Single European Act (SEA) in the 1986 referendum as it rejected any development of the European Community into a political union. Soon after the party changed position to a significant pro-European profile and has for instance been a strong supporter for Denmark joining the common currency since the referenda on the Maastricht Treaty of 1992-1993 (Haahr, 2000: 317-318). Today the Social Liberals is perceived as the Danish party with the strongest pro-European profile. In the EP, the party has one MEP who is part of the ALDE group and the party is also member of the ELDR.

The Social Democrats (Socialdemokraterne (S)) is the major opposition party and the second most important party with 25.5% of votes and 45 seats in the Danish parliament. Moreover, the party has five MEPs and is thus the best represented Danish party in the EP. The MEPs are member of the Socialist Group in the EP and the party is also member of the Party of European Socialists (PES). The Social Democrats were

divided over accession to the EC in 1972, and were pleased to have the issue settled through a referendum. The divisions over European integration have continued to be present within the party after the Danish accession, but the number of eurosceptics within the party has diminished over time. The Social Democrats recommended a 'no' to the SEA in the 1986 referendum as it was seen as mainly a market liberalisation project. However, the success of the single market and the new political security situation in Europe after 1989 made the Social Democrats change its discourse to a more pro-integrationist approach and the party recommended a 'yes' in all the following Danish referenda (Haahr, 2000:315-317).

The traditional eurosceptical parties in Denmark, the Red-Green Alliance (Enhedslisten), the Socialist People's Party and the Danish People's Party, are situated on both the left and right side of the political spectrum. The Red-Green Alliance does not contest EP elections and is therefore not included in the analysis.

The Socialist People's Party (Socialistisk Folkeparti (SF)) is a left-green political party. It has never formed part of a government. It was originally strongly against European integration, arguing that the EU was a capitalist project and had a very critical opinion towards the economic and monetary union. But after the Danish electorate voted yes to the SEA against the advice of the Socialist People's Party it no longer advocated for Denmark's withdrawal from the EC. The party was crucial in the 'no' campaign leading to the rejection of the Maastricht Treaty in 1992. After the Danish 'no' to the Maastricht Treaty, the party also played a decisive role in negotiating the broad 'national compromise' that paved the way for a second referendum on the Maastricht Treaty in 1993 and the negotiation of four Danish opt-outs in the Edinburgh agreement of 1993 (Christensen and Manners, 2008). The second Maastricht referendum is the only referendum in which the party has recommended a 'yes' but only 20% of the party's supporters followed its recommendation (Raunio, 2007). The party has, in recent years, undergone a transformation from having a strong eurosceptic approach towards becoming an EU-supporter. The success of the single market and with it a change in the societal conditions for the achievement of its policy goals like environmental protection and regulation of social standards, created a need for the party to change direction (Haahr, 2000: 324-325). This change can also be seen as a result of not wanting to share camp with the nationalist right party, the Danish People's Party, and as way of showing its capability to become a government party (Lauring Knudsen, 2004). The Socialist People's party is still split on issues like joining the euro but cannot anymore be categorised as a merely eurosceptical party. In a 2004 internal party poll almost 64% of the members declared that the party should recommend

a yes in a referendum on the European Constitution. The party is now the fourth largest party in the Danish parliament with 23 seats. The Socialist People's Party has one MEP in the EP and is part of EP party group the Greens. The party is not a full member of the European Green Party but currently has an observer status.

The Danish People's Party (Dansk Folkeparti (DF)) is a fairly young populist right-wing party. With 25 seats in the Danish parliament and 13.8% of votes, the party is the third largest in Denmark. The Danish People's Party's emphasis is on defending Danish sovereignty and culture. The party is not against Danish EU membership per se, but is against supranationalism and argues that European integration should not be extended beyond traditional intergovernmental cooperation. The Danish People's Party has, since 2001, been the support party to the centre-right government but the support does not include EU issues. In the Danish parliament, the strongest critics of the EU are now the Danish People's Party who is trying to capture eurosceptic voters with an aggressive anti-EU discourse (Raunio 2005, Lauring Knudsen 2004). The Danish People's Party has one MEP and is part of EP party group the Union for Europe of the Nations.

Separate party system for EP elections

Danish EP elections differ from EP elections in most other EU countries as Denmark is one of the only member states where a separate party system for EP elections has emerged. This particular system expresses itself with two parties that do not contest national parliament elections and hence only submit lists of candidates for EP elections, namely the People's movement against the EU and the June Movement. They both define themselves explicitly as movements rather than as parties. The existence of the two movements is a result of the euroscepticism that Denmark has experienced since its accession to the European community.

The People's movement against the EU (Folkebevægelsen mod EU (N)) is an anti-EU political organisation which was established just before the EC referendum on Danish membership in 1972 as a cross-party platform for the no-campaign. The primary objective of the movement is to withdraw Denmark from the EU. In the 2004 EP election it gained 5.2% of the votes and was thus able to elect one MEP by gaining benefit from an electoral pact with the June Movement. It is currently part of the Nordic Green Left (GUE/NGL) EP party group. The movement is a cross-party organisation although a majority of its members belong to the left of the political spectrum. For EP elections, the movement aims at establishing a broad cross-party

electoral list and tries to recruit candidates from all Danish parties. Getting EU-critical politicians from other parties to stand as EP candidates for the movement is a strategy to flag up internal party disputes over European integration.

The June movement (Junibevægelsen (J)) is also a eurosceptic political organisation that claims to be politically neither left nor right. The name of the movement comes from the referendum that took place in Denmark in June 1992 and its initial goal was to prevent a second referendum. The June Movement differs from the People's movement against the EU as it accepts Denmark's membership of the EU, but opposes any further European integration and has thus adopted a softer version of euroscepticism. The success of the June movement is mainly due to the personal engagement of the leader, Jens-Peter Bonde, who has been an MEP since 1979. In the 2004 EP election the movement gained 9.1% of the national vote and re-elected Jens-Peter Bonde. The movement is part of the Independence/Democracy Group (IND/DEM) in the EP. Jens-Peter Bonde resigned as an MEP in May 2008 and the June movement is thus

Table.
Results of EP election 2004 in Denmark

	Total votes of EP 2004	No of MEPs won, 2004	Change in MEPs, EP 2004-EP 1999	% of total votes in EP 2004	Change in % of votes EP 2004 – EP 1999
Social Democrats	618,412	5	2	32.6	16.2
Social Liberal Party	120,473	1	0	6.4	-2.8
Conservative People's Party	214,972	1	0	11.3	2.9
Socialist People's Party	150,766	1	0	7.9	0.9
June Movement	171,927	1	-2	9.1	-7.0
Christian Democrats	24,286	0	0	1.3	-0.7
People's movement	97,986	1	0	5.2	-2.1
Danish People's Party	128,789	1	0	6.8	1.0
Liberal Party	366,735	3	-2	19.4	-4.0

Source: Ministry of Internal Affairs and Health, 'Europa-Parlamentsvalget 13. juni 2004 Landsresultat' (available at: <http://www.ism.dk/publikationer/res13juni2004/la000.htm>)

likely to lose many votes in the 2009 elections. After Jens-Peter Bonde's resignation he has become a political advisor for the new pan-European political party, Libertas. Both movements saw their votes share decline sharply in the 2004 elections (Raunio, 2007). The June movement will unfortunately not be included in the analysis as the movement did not have the capacity or time to participate.

The electoral system in Denmark

Before explaining the procedures of candidate selection applied by the above mentioned political parties, it is important to lay out the electoral rules governing the EP elections in Denmark and thus also the framework for the procedures of the parties.

In Denmark the whole country forms one single electoral district from which the 13 members of the European Parliament (MEPs) will be elected. On average, each Danish MEP represents approximately 391,000 citizens (Lehmann, 2009: 28).

The submission of nominations is restricted to political parties and political organisations. Parties represented in the Danish parliament or the EP are entitled to submit lists of candidates. The lists must be registered with the Ministry of Welfare four weeks before election day. Lists submitted by other parties must be supported by electors numbering at least 2% of valid votes cast at the last election. When registering the list, the new party needs to hand in declarations of support from 2% of voters in order to be approved for EP elections. The approval last for three years. New party lists must be submitted eight weeks before election day.

The electoral list of a party may consist of a maximum of 20 candidates. The parties can either establish the list ranking the candidates or have the candidates listed as equally ranked. In practice a majority of Danish parties present a prioritised list of candidates on the ballot paper but the candidates are registered as equally ranked meaning that the party ranking of the electoral list can be altered by the number of personal votes.¹ Other member states with a semi-open list system are Austria, Belgium, Finland, Italy, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Sweden, Lithuania, Latvia, Slovakia, Slovenia, Czech Republic and Cyprus. Nine member states have a closed list system where voters choose between parties and cannot alter the order of the electoral list (Germany, Spain, France, Greece, Portugal, the United Kingdom, Es-

¹ Danish electoral law nr. 584 from June 23, 2008, available at: <https://www.retsinformation.dk/Forms/R0710.aspx?id=120389>

tonia, Poland and Hungary). In Ireland, Luxembourg and Malta the lists are open meaning that voters choose one (or more) candidates rather than voting for a party (Lehmann, 2009: 16).

Danish voters have one vote which they can give either to a list as a whole or to a candidate of their choice on the list. During counting, all votes cast for candidates and lists are added together. Seats are allocated to the different party lists using the d'Hondt method (Elklit, 2005). There is a provision for the Danish Parliament to verify the election result that has been presented by the Ministry of Welfare.

The d'Hondt method slightly favours large parties over small parties. There is a tendency that bigger parties systematically get a bigger share of mandates than they would have received if the distribution was done according to the largest remainder method (Elklit, 2005). To counterbalance the advantages for bigger parties and to avoid wasting any votes, the parties have the opportunity to form electoral pacts with each other. All electoral pacts must be registered before 10 May 2009 at the Ministry of Welfare. In previous elections many parties have benefitted from their electoral pacts. The best way of gaining the maximum from an electoral pact is to form coalition with a party smaller than you. Forming electoral pacts is therefore a strategic consideration as much as a political decision.

At the 2004 EP elections the following electoral pacts were established:

- Social democrats with Socialist People's party
- the Social Liberals with the Christian Democrats (The Social Liberals gained one mandate due to the electoral pact)
- the Conservative People's Party with the Liberal Party
- June movement with the People's movement against the EU (The latter achieved one mandate due to the electoral pact)

The Danish parties commented that the electoral pacts were expected to be even more crucial for the 2009 elections since it is likely that one or more Danish parties will lose their seats in the European Parliament when the Danish number of MEPs will go down from 14 to 13.²

² For the 2009 elections, the allocation of seats will be done according to the Treaty of Nice and the Accession Act of the Republic of Bulgaria and Romania. This will reduce the total number of seats from 785 to 736. Once the Treaty of Lisbon enters into force the number of seats will raise to 754 but the number of Danish MEPs will stay the same.

2. Procedures of candidate selection

Candidate selection is subject to both formal party rules and informal practices. The analysis of party procedures on selecting candidates thus takes into account both aspects by analysing formal party statutes as well as informal procedures through interviews with party officials and candidates. Interviews with party officials from all the parties have been carried out.

This section will provide an analysis of the procedures applied by Danish parties, including differences and similarities between them.

In order to understand the different selection procedures, it is also necessary to know how the parties are organised. A new municipal reform entered into force on 1 January 2007. Before the reform Denmark consisted of 14 counties and 271 municipalities. Denmark is now divided into 5 regions and 98 municipalities. The reform also meant the introduction of new and larger constituencies. In national elections candidates and votes are now distributed in 10 large constituencies (storkredse) and 92 local constituencies and thus reflect the new borders of the regions and municipalities.

Danish parties have also undergone a change in their internal organization to adjust to the new divisions.

None of the Danish parties have exactly the same organisation. However, it is common for a party to have:

- an annual party conference which approves manifestos and elects a party chairperson (the highest authority of the party);
- a party board of leaders;
- a number of regional organisations (either according to the number of regions (5) or large constituencies (10)) and a number of local branches with their own organisation.

Danish constituencies as of 1 January 2007



Source: Ministry of Internal Affairs and Health (available at: <http://www.dr.dk/NR/rdonlyres/4F80D718-C54C-439E-B2CF-06F0680EAA55/636346/Valgkredse.jpg>)

General observations

Most Danish parties elected their candidate list at the annual party conference between September 2008 and January 2009. All parties are for the 2009 elections presenting a prioritised list of candidates but the candidates are registered as equally ranked meaning that the order of the lists can be altered by personal votes. However, the electoral list of the Liberal Party differs from the other Danish party lists as the candidates are being presented in alphabetical order, except from the top candidate. The competition between candidates is thus supposed to be more equal than if the candidates are placed in a prioritised order.

When establishing the full list of candidates most parties aim at ensuring regional representation on the list, except from the Danish People's Party where the competition of selecting candidates is played out on a national basis and has no regional nominations. Many parties express difficulties in recruiting candidates from all constituencies and generally find the Copenhagen area as the easiest district for recruitment.

Another important observation is that most parties experience a low level of internal competition when establishing the complete electoral list. The majority of lists are shorter than the maximum of 20 as laid out by Danish election law. Moreover, most parties have a very limited recruitment pool of potential candidates and in several cases only just enough to meet the required number of candidates. This is partly due the relatively low number of Danish mandates and hence low chances of being elected. Due to the relatively high number of parties, most Danish parties will only get one or two mandates if any. Many candidates on the lists who are not likely to get elected use their candidature as a way of profiling themselves within a certain constituency before local or national elections. Since the majority of candidates on the lists are aware that chances of being elected are very low, there is no really stiff competition between candidates but rather a team spirit and many candidates are standing for elections to support their party and the top candidate.

Selecting the top candidate

When comparing the procedures of Danish parties and movements it becomes clear that the main issue at stake is selecting the best top candidate or top candidates. The importance of having strong personal profiles on the top of the list is confirmed when looking at number of personal votes compared to votes for an entire list. Data from the Danish 2004 EP election show that personal votes comprise 82.4 % of all

votes.³ The most remarkable personal victory in the 2004 EP election is that of Poul Nyrup Rasmussen, former Prime Minister and chairman of the Social Democrats who won 407.966 personal votes and secured five seats in the EP.

The importance of the top candidate is also reflected in the decision-making process of the Danish parties when selecting the top candidates. All parties take the top candidate decision separately and before establishing the full list of candidates. The name of the top candidate is also published before establishing the complete list of candidates.

In most cases the selection of the top candidate is a top-level and central party decision and the selection is more an appointment than an actual party election. The exception is when there is competition amongst equally qualified candidates (Social Liberals) or in the case where there is a rule of ballot among members (Socialist People's Party). The centralised decision allows for parties to ensure the selection of high profiled and famous candidates or, as in the case of the Social Democrats, reward current MEPs for good parliamentary performance in the EP.

A decentralised decision for selecting top candidates as in the case of the Socialist People's party also has its advantages. The party has a strong tradition for member's democracy and internal membership ballots when selecting candidates for elections at both the local, national and European level. Consequently, all members of the party were given the chance to vote for the four top candidates among 12 members either by letter or electronic voting. The four candidates who received a majority of votes were chosen and placed on the electoral list in accordance to number of votes. The method of a ballot among members is not only there to secure member participation but is also likely to enhance internal competition for the top positions. The candidates who stand for top candidate election need to prepare internal candidate material before the ballot presenting their candidature for publication and distribution amongst all members of the party. Some candidates prepare additional brochures and election material to raise their profile within the party even though costs for internal campaigning are not covered by the party. EP candidates from the party confirmed that the level of internal competition amongst the top candidates is high. Furthermore, the method often provides more publicity in the media during the period of selecting candidates.

³ The data from the Danish EP-elections in 2004 is available at: <http://www.im.dk/publikationer/res13juni2004/lp000.htm>

Although the current procedures of ballot among members have the potential of enhancing internal competition, the participation rate amongst the members of the Socialist People's Party for the EP candidate selection vote in 2008 was only 15.2% (16,000 members had the chance to vote). There are also disadvantages of the procedure because the party loses control over decisions. This means that the leaders of the party do not have the same opportunity to reward candidates for good parliamentary work during their time as either MEPs or MPs. Moreover, it is a risky method when taking into account the nature of EP-elections where the importance of personal profiles is hard to neglect.

The emphasis on top candidates with well-known personal profiles is not without its consequences.

Selecting the top candidate according to her/his level of personal popularity among Danish citizens could result in sending politicians to Brussels without a real interest in practising European politics. This could affect the performance of the MEPs and their capability to create political outcomes in the EP, and thus ultimately also people's interest in showing up at the polls.

Reflections on candidate selection and the electoral system in Denmark

Candidate selection also has an important impact on the performance of the parliamentarians after being elected. In the EP, national parties are in charge of candidate selection and hence also the re-election while the EP party group control the distribution of offices in the EP, the parliamentary agenda, the choice of rapporteurs and the allocation of speaking time. Research has shown that MEPs from national parties that have a centralised method of candidate selection are more likely to defect from EP party group lines which could mean lowering their chances of internal promotion (Faas, 2003). On the contrary, the more decentralised the candidate selection is, the greater is the possibility for MEPs to act as independent politicians who are freer to vote with their EP party group and against their national party. Furthermore, the decentralised method makes it easier for the MEP to follow the preferences of the voters and not only the preferences of party leaders (Hix, 2004).

Both the electoral system of the member state and the party procedures on selecting candidates shape the relationship between candidates and parties. Moreover, in the case of Denmark the large number of parties affects the importance of the top

candidate compared to the remaining EP candidates. In the Danish electoral system voters can choose individual candidates which then encourage candidates to gain personal recognition and support among the electorate. But voters can also choose to vote for a party instead of an individual candidate. Candidates thus also have a strong incentive to support their party and its policies in order to increase the overall electoral chances of the party, in order to better their own chances of being elected. Consequently, rivalries between candidates from the same party are less likely and thus few voters are likely to be aware of policy differences between candidates (Hix, 2004).

Previous research has suggested that an electoral system with small electoral districts and an open ballot structure provides the best basis for changing the second-order nature of EP-elections and for increasing the voter turnout (Hix, Hagemann 2008). Denmark is one of the member states which have almost the ideal electoral system, a semi-open list system which allows for greater choice of the voter. However, this does not seem to solve the problems that some Danish parties experience in terms of low competition and difficulties in recruiting candidates. Moreover, Denmark has seen a decline in voter-turnout at EP elections since 1994 and in 2004 the turnout rate was 47.9%. This is fairly low compared to the turnout in national elections which is generally around 90 %.

Composition of the electoral lists

When comparing the profiles of the top candidates of the seven parties included in the study, a majority have strong pro-European profiles except from the top candidate of the Danish People's Party, Morten Messerschmidt, and People's movement against the EU, Søren Søndergaard. In the 2004 EP-elections the top candidates of the Socialist People's Party still reflected the internal party dispute over European integration as a pro-EU and an anti-EU top candidate were competing (Margrethe Auken versus Pernille Frahm). Today all the four top candidates of the party have pro-EU profiles and instead they differ because each of them emphasise different European political issues. The People's movement against the EU has presented a cross-party list but did not manage to recruit many well-known politicians from other parties as they have done in previous elections. This shows that the aim of displaying internal party disputes over EU has become more difficult for the movement. In general, the composition of the electoral lists reflects a tendency of moving away from the traditional pro/anti EU debate towards discussions of different attitudes on EU political issues.

Another tendency is that several parties have started to select top candidates with strong EU profiles whose main career goal is to become an MEP but who do not necessarily enjoy a high level of personal popularity among Danish citizens. Selecting candidates with a genuine career goal of becoming a European politician is an important step in changing the notion of EP elections as second-order national elections. If becoming an MEP is a recognised political career goal and not just a ‘pre-retirement job’ then voters are more likely to perceive the elections as important.

Only three out of the seven top candidates are veteran MEPs (Margrethe Auken (SF), Dan Jørgensen (S) and Søren Søndergaard (N)). One top candidate is a current MP (Morten Messerschmidt (DF) and one is former leader of his party and former minister (Bendt Bendtsen (K)). Out of the current Danish MEPs, 36% are not running for re-election. This is the second highest percentage in the EU. Denmark therefore expects to see a generational shift in the Danish MEPs. The Danish party lists also have many young candidates. The Social Liberal Party presents the youngest list with an average age of 36. The average age of all Danish EP candidates is 44 (see annex 1).

When looking at the total groups of Danish candidates, the electoral lists are composed of 37% female candidates and 63% male candidates.

The number and percentage of Danish women elected to the EP during the 1979-2004 period: (Lehmann, 2009: 28):

	1979	1984	1989	1994	1999	2004
MEPs	16	16	16	16	16	14
Women	5	6	6	7	6	5
%	31.2	37.5	37.5	43.8	37.5	35.7

Preparation and campaigning before elections

The campaigning for the top candidates is in all cases run by the national party secretariat and includes a much larger budget and support than is the case of the remaining candidates. This again confirms the importance of the profiling of the top candidate.

The campaigns for the rest of the candidates are run by the local party branches that each of the candidates stand for and the size of the campaign budgets depend solely

on the economy of the local organisation. The budgets differ a lot since the public fund to the local party branches depends on the vote share they achieved in the last national elections. The candidates are likely to have very limited campaign resources this year as Denmark is also holding local elections in November. The local party organisations are likely to be more involved in the local campaigning compared to the EP election campaigning.

In general very little support and preparation are provided from the parties to the candidates. A common procedure for all parties is to provide all candidates with a website. Furthermore parties hold media training courses, a study trip to Brussels and prepare material on the overall functioning of the EU.

In Denmark, there is no official campaign starting date.

3. Cooperation at European level

All parties included in the study were asked about their cooperation with the EP party group or the European Party Federation on candidate selection and preparation of candidates. Common to all was that the cooperation at the European level had no impact on their internal procedures of candidate selection. The parties explained that one of the reasons was different electoral systems in the member states and hence also different candidate selection procedures applied by national political parties. The Danish parties all had very little knowledge about procedures applied by their sister parties in Europe and sharing best practices is thus not a common procedure.

In the party procedures on preparing candidates for election little cooperation takes place although many candidates will be presented to representatives from the correspondent EP party group during the study trip to Brussels that most Danish parties arrange. ELDR also invites a small number of candidates from the Liberal Party and the Social Liberal Party to a preparation seminar.

The Social Democrats and the Socialist People's Party were the parties which showed the highest levels of cooperation with their European partners in the election preparation phase, including the running of campaigns. The Social Democrats cooperates with PES in many aspects of the party's activities. The Social Democrats are very involved in the process of preparing the PES manifesto and this will be linked to the national campaign of the party. The current president of PES is the Danish MEP Poul Nyrup Rasmussen and his involvement has, of course, played a significant role in enhancing cooperation between the Danish Social Democrats and PES. Furthermore, four candidates on the party's EP election list are current MEPs and are already strongly engaged with the Socialist Group in the EP.

The Socialist People's Party is also cooperating with the European Greens in their campaign preparations. The party provides support for its sister parties in the East European countries which have very limited resources for campaigning. The Socialist People's Party's campaign company is also running the transnational campaign for the European Green Party which has meant a lot for enhancing cooperation in the campaign preparations. The Socialist People's Party explained that part of their campaign strategy is to profile their affiliation with the European level by showing that voting for the Socialist People's Party is also voting for something bigger, the European Greens.

The remaining Danish parties did not plan to link their national campaigns to the campaigns run by their European party federation or to refer to European party manifestos. A study of Euromanifestos during the 2004 EP electoral campaign (the Euromanifestos Project) showed that only seven national parties across Europe made use of the Euromanifesto of their European party federation as their own manifesto. Three of them were part of the European Greens. The study also showed that the European parties were more important resources for small countries and small parties (Bastos, 2009).⁴

All the parties were also asked how fixed they considered their alignments with the EP party group to be. A majority of parties expressed that their alignments were very fixed and not up for discussion. The Socialist People's Party used to belong to the GUE/NGL group but changed to the Greens after the 2004 elections. In October, the party board decided to stay within the Green Group and thus confirmed that their group affiliation is now fixed. The Conservative People's Party showed a strong affiliation to the EPP-ED. Curiously, the Liberal Party in government and the Social Liberal Party in opposition are both members of ALDE and ELDR but none of them are considering alternative affiliations. They do not regard being part the same political group as a problem but neither of them intend to profile their European affiliation in their national campaigns as this might cause confusion amongst voters.

Only the Danish People's Party and the People's movement against the EU voiced the possibility of changing group affiliation after the 2009 elections. Danish People's Party said it was up to the top candidate, Morten Messerschmidt, to decide which group he wanted to be part of. The People's movement against the EU expressed difficulties in finding an appropriate EP party group. The choice of being part of the left alliance was mainly due to the left-wing profile of their current MEP but did not reflect the cross-party profile of the movement. The group affiliation was therefore considered to be mostly a technical necessity rather than a political decision for the movement. The June Movement are in the same group as a number of right-wing politicians from for instance Poland and the UK which is quite paradoxical considering the neutral left/right profile of the movement. The reason why this affiliation is not political suicide for the movement is because many voters are not aware of their party's group affiliation in the EP.

⁴ The Euromanifestos Project is directed by Professor Hermann Schmitt from the MZES of the University of Mannheim: <http://www.mzes.uni-mannheim.de/projekte/manifestos/>.

The role of European political parties is likely to be enhanced in the future in order to improve the importance of EP elections and to establish a pan-European public space. The EP is demanding that some MEPs should be elected through Europe-wide lists in order to create incentives for political parties to have a joint European campaign. Furthermore, suggestions for an enhanced role of the EP in the election of the President of the European Commission have also been put forward in order to make transnational political parties nominate potential candidates for the position (Bonvicini, Tosato, Matarazzo, 2009). Proposals to reform the Elections Act and to get more harmonised rules on the EP elections process is being prepared by the EP's Constitutional Affairs Committee and it will be up to the next EP to decide on these changes in time for 2014 elections. These developments show that there are a number of good reasons for Danish parties to enhance cooperation with their sister parties around Europe in order to have a stronger say in the development of European politics.

4. Conclusion

This article aims at providing an analysis of the Danish procedures on candidate selection and thus also an understanding of the nature of EP elections in Denmark. Furthermore, it examined the cooperation of Danish parties at the European level. These are the main findings of the study:

- Denmark has a separate party system for EP elections due to the two EU-critical movements that do not contest national parliament elections but only EP elections and the Red-Green Alliance that does not contest EP elections. This particular system is a result of the euroscepticism that Denmark has experienced since its accession.
- The electoral system of Denmark provides for equal competition among candidates as the established lists can be altered by personal votes. Although the Danish electoral system allows candidates to enhance their political visibility, which may potentially enhance the voters' interest in EP election, the Danish parties still experience low competition when establishing the complete electoral list and also have difficulties in recruiting candidates. Furthermore, Denmark has experienced low voting turnouts at EP elections.
- In the procedures of candidate selection all Danish parties have a strong emphasis on the top candidate position because of experience and because of the low number of MEPs per high number of parties. Recognition and personal popularity has played a larger role in the outcome of elections than the actual policy stance of candidates. Selecting the top candidate is therefore often a central party decision. Furthermore, the campaign and preparation resources are much larger for the top candidate than for the remaining candidates. The emphasis on the personal popularity of the top candidate runs the risk of electing Danish MEPs without the will or capability to produce political results in the EP.
- When looking at the composition of the 2009 electoral list there is a majority of pro-European profiles. Moreover, the top candidates are not only famous faces but also politicians who have been rewarded for good political work on EU issues and with genuine career goals of becoming MEPs. The Danish party lists reflect that the traditional pro/anti EU divide has decreased. All in all, this signals a move in the right direction of EP elections becoming more than just second-order national contests where the candidates are being elected according to their EU political ambitions.

- The cooperation between Danish parties and their European sister parties is general very low and particularly low in the procedures of selecting candidates. This is partly due to the different electoral systems in the member states and lack of knowledge about best practices of European sister parties. Those parties who do have some cooperation with the European level in campaign preparations see a potential for saving resources and for a better profiling of their European partners in the national campaign. There are many advantages for Danish parties to enhance cooperation with the European level as the European political parties are likely to play a more prominent role in future European elections.

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Annex I.

List of Danish EP candidates – age and gender composition

Name of candidate	Gender	Age
<i>Conservative People's Party</i>		
1. Bendt Bendtsen	M	55
2. Chr.Wedell Nedergaard	M	52
3. Pernille Høxbro	F	48
4. Mette Abildgaard	F	20
5. Tove Videbæk	F	62
6. Peter Norsk	M	55
7. Thomas Krarup	M	33
8. Jan Køpke Christensen	M	53
9. Julie Brøe	F	26
10. Michael Christensen	M	31
11. Karsten Skawbo-Jensen	M	48
12. Ole Brøkner	M	63
Average age	45.5	
Gender composition	Male: 67%	Female: 33%
<i>Danish People's Party</i>		
1. Morten Messerschmidt	M	28
2. Kenneth Kristensen	M	31
3. Anna Rosbach Andersen	F	61
4. Dennis Flydtkjær	M	30
5. Rikke Karlsson	F	43
6. Aia Fog	F	41
7. Jette Plesner Dali	F	60
8. Bente Kronborg Holst Flensted	F	26
9. Henrik Ræder Clausen	M	45
10. Jeppe Jakobsen	M	20
Average age	38.5	
Gender composition	Male: 50%	Female: 50%
<i>Liberal Party</i>		
1. Jens Rohde	M	38
2. Charlotte Antonsen	F	50
3. Poul Dahl	M	64
4. Hans Jørgen Dalum	M	58
5. Kasper Elbjørn	M	35

Annex I (continued)

Name of candidate	Gender	Age
6. Louise Feilberg	F	32
7. Poul F. Hansen	M	59
8. Anne E. Jensen	F	57
9. Bent Claudi Lassen	M	63
10. Jens-Kristian Lütken	M	27
11. Morten Løkkegaard	M	44
12. Hanne Severinsen	F	65
13. Ole B. Sørensen	M	40
14. Jan Winther	M	27
Average age	47	
Gender composition	Male: 71%	Female: 29%
<i>People's movement against the EU</i>		
1. Søren Søndergaard	M	53
2. Ditte Staun	F	32
3. Rina Ronja Kari	F	23
4. Karina Rohr Sørensen	F	33
5. Christian Juhl	M	55
6. Kirsten Annette Christensen	F	58
7. Mehmet Aksoy	M	44
8. Hans Henrik Larsen	M	54
9. Sven Skovmand	M	72
10. Ole Nors Nielsen	M	50
11. Helge Rørtoft-Madsen	M	64
12. Jørgen Grøn	M	60
13. Jaleh Tavakoli	F	26
14. Thorkil Sohn	M	58
15. Søren Kolstrup	M	61
16. Povl Kristensen	M	51
17. Johanne Langdal Kristiansen	F	23
18. Keld Hvalsø Nedergaard	M	44
19. Ebba Bigler	F	64
20. Mette Langdal	F	50
Average age	49	
Gender composition	Male: 60%	Female: 40%

Annex I (continued)

Name of candidate	Gender	Age
<i>Social Democrats</i>		
1. Dan Jørgensen	M	33
2. Britta Thomsen	F	54
3. Christel Schaldemose	F	41
4. Ole Christensen	M	53
5. Claus Larsen-Jensen	M	56
6. Hüseyin Arac	M	52
7. Malou Lunderød	F	21
8. Einer Lydich	M	57
9. Mikkel Schøler	M	27
10. Henning A. Jensen	M	57
Average age	45	
Gender composition	Male: 70 %	Female: 30 %
<i>Social Liberals</i>		
1. Sofie Carsten Nielsen	F	33
2. Johannes Lebech	M	60
3. Lotte Rod	F	23
4. Anna Allerslev	F	24
5. Stefan Seidler	M	28
6. Kristina Siig	F	38
7. Jakob Erle	M	58
8. Anne Elizabeth Kamstrup	F	23
9. Christian Høgedal Kjølhede	M	19
10. Lasse Holm Grønning	M	31
11. Claus Brandt Rasmussen	M	28
12. Birger Nissen	M	62
13. Morten Kirk Jensen	M	35
Average age	36	
Gender composition	Male: 62%	Female: 38%
<i>Socialist People's Party</i>		
1. Margrethe Auken	F	64
2. Emilie Turunen	F	24
3. Fathi El-Abed	M	41
4. Ole Riisgaard	M	42
Average age	43	
Gender composition	Male 50%	Female 50%
Average age of total list: 44		

