Policy Department C
Citizens' Rights and Constitutional Affairs

Which electoral procedures seem appropriate for a multi-level polity?

CONSTITUTIONAL AFFAIRS

Which electoral procedures seem appropriate

for a multi-level polity?

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Abstract:

This note was presented by the author for a workshop organised by the Committee on Constitutional Affairs on 25/26 March 2008. It describes some possible changes to the electoral procedures applicable for the European elections. A particular suggestion concerns the introduction of more open lists in order to enable citizens to select the individual candidates of their choice.

1. INTRODUCTION

The European Union is a union of Member States, each of which has its own national parliament and arrangements for its national elections. The European Parliament faces the challenge of making itself a body that is truly representative of the people of the Union, elected by them not just on national or national party lines but on the basis of a European agenda and on how they want the Parliament to perform as a European institution.

The Treaty of Rome required the European Parliament to "draw up proposals for elections by direct universal suffrage in accordance with a uniform procedure in all Member States". In the half century that has passed since the Treaty was signed, the Union has grown from 6 to 27 states and a population of nearly 500 million, but a "uniform procedure" has not been achieved.

Nevertheless, all Member States do hold elections for their MEPs and, since Britain changed its electoral system in 1999, all elections are held using systems of proportional representation. There are, however, differences in the electoral systems used, and some can be considered more democratic than others.

Participation in European Parliament elections remains a concern across the EU. In 2004 the average turnout was only 45%, and in some countries only around a quarter of electors voted. This is no doubt in part a consequence of the 'second-order' nature of such elections and of the low level of consciousness of the significance of the Parliament and its influence in the Member States. Elections are too often viewed as national elections fought by national parties on national interests.

2. THE NATURE OF EUROPEAN ELECTIONS AND THE PROBLEMS OF EURO-REPRESENTATION

The European Parliament differs from national parliaments in its remit and powers. The big issues that affect people's everyday lives – health services, education, jobs, housing, taxation, etc. – are dealt with by national governments, and even the big decisions that affect Europe tend to be taken by the Council of Ministers. What the Parliament does is important, but is often seen (rightly or wrongly) as of secondary importance in a Europe in which federalism is weak and national interests predominate. The European Parliament is consequently seen as being of second-order importance. It suffers from remoteness, its affairs do not dominate the news agenda in the way that national parliaments do. It is not about electing an executive and therefore the outcomes of elections do not appear of the same importance (other than for national politics).

This has consequences for European democracy and European elections and perceptions of the relevance of the Parliament. Elections excite little public interest. Those who vote may do so not on the basis of the sort of Europe they want, but to express support for their favoured parties, to express support or opposition to their national governments, or to support particular causes for which the parties stand.

The question is whether changes in electoral arrangement could to some extent overcome these difficulties, making the elections ones in which people elect MEPs on the basis of what they will do for Europe (even if on the basis of what MEPs can get Europe to do for them or their regions/communities)?

We cannot, however, expect electoral systems to overcome all of the problems of European democracy. Compared with their national counterparts, MEPs face particular difficulties:

- The ratio of electors to MEPs is high – on average around half a million electors to every MEP - making it difficult for MEPs to develop the strong links that national politicians have, or like to think they have, with their constituents.

- Contact between MEPs and their constituents, and as a result their public profile, is further weakened by the time they must spend far from their regions in Brussels or Strasbourg.

- Many of the issues of most pressing concern to voters are the province of national governments, and MEPs are not therefore seen as having the same power as national politicians when it comes to intervening on voters' behalf.

As a consequence, people do not turn out to vote for their MEPs in the same way as they do for their national politicians.

Could the democratic credentials of the European Parliament be improved and its elections made more European in character through changes in its electoral systems? That is the issue addresses in this paper. The choice of electoral system influences not just the composition of the Parliament but also the nature of the relationships between elected representatives, their electorates and the political parties. Thus while electoral systems are not the only areas in which improvements should be sought, they are key determinants of the nature of a democracy.

In this paper I examine some possible changes that might be considered and in particular:

- The case for seeking changes in the electoral systems used by Member States in order to strengthen the links between MEPs and their electorates;

- The proposals that have been made for the election of some members of the Parliament through transnational lists in order to emphasise the European nature of European Parliament elections and to foster a greater sense of European identity; and

3. The merits and defects of electoral systems used by Member States

Most Member States use list systems to elect their MEPs (and many do for their national parliaments). List systems, however, are of three broad types –

- Closed lists which are ordered by the parties with the order determining which of a party's candidates will be elected;

- Semi-open lists (or alternative, 'semi-closed lists) which are ordered by the parties, but voters have the option of either voting for a complete list (in the order presented) or for a particular candidate;

- Open lists in which voters must vote for individual candidates and in which the order in which a party's candidates are elected is determined by the votes received by the candidates rather than by any ordering by the party,

Only Ireland, Malta and Northern Ireland within the UK, use the Single Transferable Vote (STV) method. Although parties may present lists of candidates, it is not a list system in that it treats all candidates as individuals, seats being allocated according to voters' lists of preferences.

The systems used by Member States are shown in table 1 below.

COUNTRY	No. MEPS	National electoral system	European electoral system	Number regions
Austria	18	Semi-Open	Semi-Open	1
Belgium	24	Semi-Open	Semi-Open	1
Bulgaria	18	Closed	Semi-Open	1
Cyprus	6	Semi-Open	Semi-Open	1
Czech Republic	24	Semi-Open	Semi-Open	1
Denmark	14	Semi-Open	Semi-Open	1
Estonia	6	Open	Closed	1
Finland	14	Open	Open	1
France	78	Two-round Plurality	Closed	8
Germany	99	MMP	Closed	1[1]
Greece	24	Modified Open	Closed	1
Hungary	24	MMP	Closed	1
Ireland	13	STV	STV	4
Italy	78	Closed	Semi-Open	5
Latvia	9	Semi-Open	Semi-Open	1
Lithuania	13	MMP	Semi-Open	1

[1] German parties can, however, present regional lists of candidates.

Luxembourg	6	Open	Open	1
Malta	5	STV	STV	1
Netherlands	27	Semi-Open	Semi-Open	1
Poland	54	Closed	Closed	13
Portugal	24	Closed	Closed	1
Romania	35	Closed	Closed	1
Slovakia	14	Semi-Open*	Semi-Open	1
Slovenia	7	Semi-Open	Semi-Open	1
Spain	54	Closed	Closed	1
Sweden	19	Semi-Open	Semi-Open	1
			Closed	
United Kingdom	78	FPTP	(N Ireland STV)	12

Table1: National and European electoral systems

Thus the use of different types of system, in terms of the numbers of MEPs to be elected in 2009, will be:

Closed lists	60.3%
Semi-open lists	34.5%
Open lists	2.5%
STV	2.7%

Closed List systems

Closed list systems leave much to be desired. We have commented on the weakness of the relationship between MEPs and their constituents, but electoral systems in which electors can choose only the parties they want to represent them and not the people, can only exacerbate this problem. Some candidates may already be well known political figures, but for others on lists election campaigns do little to enhance their profile. Voters are encouraged to vote for one party or another, not for candidates by name and rarely on the basis of the particular experiences and aptitudes that might fit candidates for the role of an MEP. In Britain, and we expect in most other Member States, people have great difficulty in naming even one of their MEPs.

With closed lists MEPs are elected as a result of where their parties placed them on their party lists rather than on the basis of their merits or public approval of past performance. Consequently MEPs are only weakly linked to their electorates, and voters cannot easily remove those of whom they disapprove, which should be a central principle of representative democracy. Owing their positions to their parties, MEPs' sense of accountability can shift from electorate to party.

The perceived distance of MEPs from electors is heightened where electoral regions are large. Although the Anastassopoulos Report made the modest recommendation that sub-national constituencies should be created in States with populations of more than 20 million, many States in this category still conduct their elections using the entire country as a single electoral region.

Closed lists offer only an imperfect form of democracy. People's votes do not necessarily give them what they want. A voter might, for example, be attracted to a list with candidates A, B and C (in order) on the basis of the merits of C, but considering A and B to be second-rate or worse. But if the party receives only enough votes to win 2 seats, the voter may have contributed, against his or her wishes, to the election of A and B but not of C.

In other cases a voter may be attracted to a list because of a prominent or charismatic candidate at the head of the list, but if the popularity of that candidate attracts enough votes for the party to win more than one seat, then the vote contributes to the election of a candidate, or candidates, in whom the voter has little interest. Such problems can be exacerbated if the lead candidate then resigns or defects to another party (e.g. in Britain in the 2004 elections the UK Independence Party benefited from having a popular television presenter as a candidate, but shortly after the election he left UKIP leaving questions over whether electors now have the representation for which they voted).

In many cases the candidate at the top of a party's list is almost guaranteed election, whether or not that candidate enjoys popular support while a candidate at the bottom, even if a person of outstanding ability, has next to no chance of election. Prior to elections it is generally possible to predict many candidates who will be successful and many who will not. That seems a poor form of democracy.

List systems of proportional representation assume that the party is all-important. Undoubtedly many if not most voters will cast their votes on the basis of party affliliations, but many also want to make their choices on the basis of other factors, such as gender, age, ethnicity, or an interest in particular issues that goes beyond the commitments of party manifestos.

Semi-open lists

Semi-open lists give voters the choice of voting simply for a party list or for a particular candidate on the list (votes for candidates contributing to the party's total vote for the allocation of seats to parties). While this is marginally preferable, the extra choice offered to voters can be illusory depending on the mechanism used to determine which candidates win their party's seats. Unless very significant numbers of voters express support for an individual candidate, it is generally the order of the list determined by the party itself that prevails. This can lead to apparent anomalies where a candidate is not elected in spite of having more personal votes than another who is elected through having been placed higher on the list.

While semi-open lists may offer a slightly stronger link between MEPs and constituents, the advantages over closed lists are not great, and semi-open lists suffer from many of the same defects of closed lists that have been described above.

Open lists

The best form of list system is the 'open' list in which all voters are required to vote for candidates rather than parties. Votes for candidates count as votes for their parties for the allocation of seats to parties, but which of a party's candidates win the seats depends on their personal votes and not on the order determined by party selectors. The system does not, however, get over the problem of voters finding that their votes had consequences they did not intend if their preferred candidates were unsuccessful and their votes consequently used to secure the election of others on the list.

The Single Transferable Vote

The Single Transferable Vote (STV) is a much superior system of proportional representation. As with open lists, voters vote for candidates, thereby strengthening the democratic legitimacy of those elected and enhancing their profiles during election campaigns. Unfortunately, however, Ireland, Malta and Northern Ireland within the UK are the only parts of the EU to use this system.

STV differs from open lists in that it uses preference voting. Voters mark the ballot paper with a '1' for their first choice of candidate, a '2' for their second and so on for as many preferences as the voter wishes to give. Voters are not restricted to support for a single party – for example, if they give their first preference to a candidate of party A, they can either give their second preference to another party A candidate or can switch to a candidate of another party.

The count is performed by calculating the number of votes required for election (termed the 'quota'): this is the total number of votes divided by one more than the number of seats to be filled. Thus in a four seat region, the quota would be one fifth of the votes, i.e. 20%. A candidate with more votes than the quota is declared elected, and the proportion of the votes in excess of the quota are then transferred to the next preferences on the ballot papers. If no candidate has more than a quota, the candidate with the lowest number of votes is eliminated and their votes transferred to the next preferences (disregarding candidates who have already been elected or eliminated). The process of transferring surplus votes and eliminating candidates from the bottom continues until the right number of candidates have been elected.

By allowing the transfer of votes in this way, most voters find that a candidate for whom they voted has been elected. Voters may not find that the candidate of their first preference has been successful, but the great majority of voters will find that one of the candidates in their list of preferences has been successful.

STV produces proportional outcomes in that the number of seats parties win will reflect their level of support. It can, however, produce a more sophisticated form of party proportionality in that the outcome is based not just on voters' first preferences, but in many cases on second or lower preferences.

What STV does that list systems cannot do, however, is to provide rough proportionality by whatever other factors significant numbers of voters use in casting their votes. For example, if half of all voters decided electing more women was important, we would expect around half those elected to be women. Similarly, if environmental was a major concern of voters, we would expect voters, whatever their party affiliation, to give higher preferences to candidates on their parties' lists who have strong records on environmental issues.

STV can also have important consequences for the nature of representation. Voters are much more likely to feel a sense of linkage with politicians whom they helped elect than with those they did not support, or with those who owe their election to the decisions of the internal party processes that determined the ordering of the lists. In the context of the European Parliament, the propensity of STV to strengthen the links between the elected and the electors could be an important factor.

To summarise:

- STV is about electing people- not just parties – thereby promoting candidates as people and not just as names on a party list;

- STV produces proportional outcomes, but can also produce approximate proportionality by factors other than party;

- STV offers voters a more sophisticated choice, allowing them to rank candidates rather than just using a single cross;

- STV results in most voters finding they contributed to the election of a candidate, thereby strengthening voters' sense of attachment to their representatives.

4. SHOULD WE MOVE TOWARDS A UNIFORM EUROPEAN ELECTION SYSTEM?

A "uniform procedure" for elections has been an aspiration of the Parliament since the days of the Treaty of Rome. There is now uniformity in that all countries use proportional systems, but should we go further?

If a move towards uniformity were to be about enhancing democracy in Member States, then the answer is surely 'yes'. If uniformity were to mean getting all Member States to use the best practices found in the EU then it would be desirable, but not if it were to require some to lower their standards.

I have argued that the best system for all European Parliament elections would be STV. This case has already been made by John Bruton, former Prime Minister of Ireland, in 2003 when he was a member of the European Convention. In a paper to the Convention he concluded:

> "In summary, the Convention should give the most serious consideration to the proposal that Proportional Representation by means of the Single Transferable Vote (PR-STV) should be adopted as the electoral system for European Parliament elections."[2]

There are of course arguments about subsidiarity and about allowing States to take account of the systems they use for other levels of government in choosing how they elect their MEPs, but I conclude that the benefits of changing to STV are such that the Parliament should at least adopt such a policy as an aspiration even if not as an immediately attainable objective.[3]

There is a strong argument for insisting that all EU voters have the right to vote for a candidate of their choice and not just a party – a measure that would strengthen the democratic accountability of MEPs and their links with their constituents. Thus, even if use of STV throughout the EU is not politically feasible at present, there is case for calling for:

- A change to either an open list system or STV for all European Parliament elections.

If even this should prove to be a step too far for some Member States, then a minimum demand should be an end to open lists.

The strength of links between MEPs and constituents, as noted above, also depends on the size of the electoral region. Here a minimum requirement should be implementation of the Anastassopoulos Report's recommendation that States with populations of over 20 million should be split into more than one electoral region, but there may be a case for going further and stipulating that no electoral region should contain more than, say, 20 seats.

5. TRANSNATIONAL LISTS

The Anastassopoulos Report (1998) proposed the election of 10% of members of the European Parliament by transnational lists. It argued that:

> "Such a system ... would certainly contribute to the emergence of a genuine European political awareness and to the establishment of proper European

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[2] European Convention paper CONV 585/03 of 27 February 2003.
[3] There are of course other aspects of elections in which we do not have uniformity, such as the voting age, measures to promote gender balance in representation, candidate selection procedures, etc. but these are not considered in this paper.

political parties. It would also give European elections a more European dimension which would be less concerned with national political issues."

The European Parliament is now much larger than it was when this recommendation was made, and it is possible that, if writing in 2008, Anastassopoulos would have suggested something less than 10%. However, for a transnational list to be truly transnational it would need to be sufficiently large to allow inclusion of candidates from at least most member states.

Before considering the practicalities of transnational lists, we need to consider who the transnational members would represent and how they would affect the composition of the Parliament. At present members are both (i) members of European parties, generally voting for the policy positions of their party groups, and (ii) representatives of constituents in geographic areas, in some cases countries and in others regions of countries, raising issues of concern to their constituents and lobbying for their interests. While transnational members would be members of party groups, they would not have constituents in the same sense. There is a danger that they could disturb the national balance of the Parliament – for example if those elected were predominantly from, say, Britain or Germany or France – although this could be reduced, although not removed, by rules to ensure a mix of nationalities in the candidates of each party group.

However, if we were to assume that a transnational list for 10% of seats was desirable, how would we implement it?

Firstly there is a problem with the number of seats. We could increase the number of seats in the Parliament to 872 of which 87 would be transnational leaving the existing 785 seats unchanged. Whether such an increase would be acceptable is a question of politics rather than of democracy. Alternatively, we would take 78 seats from the existing total and adjust the national allocations. This, however, would have even more political problems - even if were possible politically, Member States that use regional constituencies would need to re-adjust the number of seats in each region, and that would not be popular, either with existing MEPs or with election administrators.

However, assuming this problem could be overcome, there is then the problem of how to elect the transnational members. The options appear to be the use of a list system or STV.

a) **List system**

The use of closed lists would be the easiest option. Party groups within the Parliament would need to present a list of candidates at EU level. In addition to voting for their national lists, voters would have a second vote for the Euro party group of their choice and seats would be allocated using a D'Hondt or Saint Lague method (preferably the latter to give a more proportional result, allowing more opportunity for smaller parties).

While the opportunity to vote for a list of candidates from across the EU would emphasise the European character of the elections, it is not clear that it would add much to the choice offered to voters. A vote, for example, for the British Labour Party is effectively a vote for the Socialist Group. Certainly voters could vote Labour for their national representatives and, say, Green for the transnational list, but it is unlikely that many would want to do so.

Having transnational lists for the election of 78 or 79 seats would have some advantages for small parties, and indeed for independents. The threshold for winning a seat would only be 1.27% of the vote, allowing parties not strong enough to win votes in national contests, or independents with a profile across Europe, to gain seats.

The use of an open, or semi-open, list would be even more problematic. If 8 Euro parties were each to present lists of, say, 78, candidates, we would have 626 candidates and we would have ballot papers looking more like telephone directories. The choice offered to voters would be more perplexing than useful.

b) STV

A single transnational constituency for an STV election would give the same problem. Moreover, for voters to be able to make informed choices, they would need to be provided with details of each of the 626 candidates and that is clearly impractical.

Even if transnational seats were only 5%, or even only 2.5%, of the total number of seats, the number of candidates would be formidable.

A more workable solution would be to have several transnational lists. Rather than having any elector involved in electing 78 seats, each Member State, or groups of States, would be required to elect up to 10 of the transnational members. Table 2A (below) shows some possible groupings and the number of members they might elect.

Table 2A: Possible arrangements for 79 transnational seats

| Country group | Present no. MEPs | | No. transnational MEPs |
	Country	Group	
Germany	99	99	10
France	78	78	8
Spain	54	78	8
Portugal	24		
Netherlands	27	90	9
Belguim	24		

Sweden	19		
Denmark	14		
Lux	6		
Czech	24	62	6
Hungary	24		
Slovakia	14		
Romania	35	53	5
Bulgaria	18		
Italy	78	96	10
Austria	18		
UK	78	91	9
Ireland	13		
Poland	54	96	10
Finland	14		
Lithuania	13		
Latvia	9		
Estonia	6		
Greece	24	42	4
Slovenia	7		
Cyprus	6		
Malta	5		
	785	785	79

At the worst, 8 Euro parties electing a transnational group of 10 could produce 80 candidates, but in practice the number is more likely to be around 30. This is because with STV there is a disincentive for parties to have many more candidates than they have chances of being elected. Too many candidates and parties face the risk of 'vote leakage'.[4]

Although 30 candidates for an STV election is still on the high side, it would not be possible to elect fewer than 10 members from some transnational lists without subdividing Germany. However, if it were decided that, with the present size of the Parliament, the number of transnational seats should be smaller, then smaller STV constituencies would be possible (constituencies of 5 – 7 seats would offer good proportionality and opportunities for candidates of smaller parties with a manageable size of ballot paper). Suppose, for example, there were 27 transnational seats (the same number as there are Member States), then two possible arrangements for STV constituencies are shown in table 2B below.

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[4] For example, if the candidates of party A were A1, A2 and A3, some supporters might give their first two preferences as A1 and A2 but their third preference to a candidate of party B. A1 may be safely elected but A2 may not have sufficient votes and be eliminated. The votes transferred from A2 would be lost by party A rather than securing the election of A3. If the party had stood only A1 and A3, voters may have voted A1 and A3 before a candidate of another party, thereby electing two candidates of party A rather than just one.

OPTION A	Current MEPs	Transnat. seats		OPTION B	Current MEPs	Transnat. seats
Belgium	24			Denmark	14	
Ireland	13			Ireland	13	
Luxembourg	6			Malta	5	
Netherlands	27			Netherlands	27	
UK	78			Sweden	19	
				UK	78	
	148	5			156	5
France	78			Belgium	24	
Portugal	24			France	78	
Spain	54			Luxembourg	6	
				Portugal	24	
				Spain	54	
	156	5			186	6
Austria	18			Austria	18	
Denmark	14			Estonia	6	
Finland	14			Finland	14	
Germany	99			Germany	99	
Slovenia	7			Hungary	24	
Sweden	19					
	171	6			161	6
Bulgaria	18			Cyprus	6	
Cyprus	6			Greece	24	
Greece	24			Italy	78	
Italy	78			Romania	35	
Malta	5					
Romania	35					
	166	6			143	5
Estonia	6			Bulgaria	18	
Czech Rep	24			Czech Rep	24	
Hungary	24			Latvia	9	
Latvia	9			Lithuania	13	
Lithuania	13			Poland	54	
Poland	54			Slovakia	14	
Slovakia	14			Slovenia	7	
	144	5			139	5

Table 2B: Possible arrangements for 27 transnational seats

Note: Option A and Option B are given for purposes of illustration only. Option A is based largely on geographic areas while Option B to a limited extent recognises linguistic ties or similarities. Many other schemes could be devised.

The above schemes come close to what was recommended by John Bruton in 2003 while a member of The European Convention:

> "… a Europe-wide thirty-seat constituency covering 25 countries would impose unrealistic demands on both the European electorate and on the candidate selection process and would put the legitimacy of the notion of transnational representation at risk. Accordingly, the Convention should propose the creation of a series of (say) six five-seat constituencies that would reflect or combone common regional groupings of the member states. These transnational seats would then be filled by … PR-STV."[5]

To ensure the transnational nature of these seats, it would be necessary to restrict them to candidates from outside the Member States electing them. For example, the transnational list for Germany should not include German candidates, and it might also be advisable to require Euro parties to have all of their candidates on each list from different countries.

With STV voters would vote for candidates rather than parties, encouraging voters to make their choices on the basis of the merits of the candidates and not solely on the parties they represent. If they wished, voters could select their candidates on the basis of gender, age, ethnicity, sexual orientation, policies on the environment, etc.

However, the risks of voter confusion, leading to a high level of spoilt ballots, needs to be considered. Unless all countries were prepared to improve their elections by moving to STV for electing their national candidates, in countries with list systems voters would be required to vote with an 'X' for their nationally elected MEPs and by numbering candidates in order of preference for the transnational elections. Experience in the Scottish elections of 2007 shows that using two very different types of voting system on the same day is at best unwise.

Whether lists or STV is used for the election of transnational candidates, issues of candidate selection arise. Involving the membership of all Socialist Group parties across the EU in a selection contest would not be feasible, and even if it were it would advantage candidates in those countries where party membership is strong. A more realistic option would be to form transnational lists from candidates already selected for national European Parliament elections, conducting the count before national counts and then removing the names of successful candidates from national lists. For example, if a national party with candidates A1, A2, A3, A4 and A5 were to win 3 seats but A3 had been elected on a transnational list, then A1, A2 and A4 would be elected to the national seats. A similar process could be used for countries which already use STV.

A transnational count would present further difficulties. National votes would need to be transmitted to a central point where the count could be conducted by an EU

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[5] European Convention paper CONV 585/03 of 27 February 2003.

returning officer (possibly overseen by an EU electoral commission). This could be quite straightforwards if a list system were used as transnational votes could be counted in country and only the totals submitted to the EU returning officer, but with STV all votes (i.e. the preference lists of all voters) would need to be sent to the returning officer. While this information could be sent electronically if optical scanning equipment were used in country (as it has been used successfully for STV elections in Scotland), in some countries it would require a major investment in technology. It would also introduce major risks of counts being delayed, thereby delaying counts across the EU, through local technology failures.

Thus while the political argument for electing some European Parliament seats on a transnational basis are strong:

- There is a danger that transnational lists would upset the balance of representation from Member States;

- They would require a significant increase in the size of the Parliament or an adjustment to number of members elected by each country, in many cases with knock-on effects for regional representation;

- The election of transnational members by a list system would add little to the choice offered to voters, although it could make it easier for very small parties to win seats;

- The election of transnational members in Member States or groups of States by STV would be much superior in democratic terms and would extend voter choice, but would pose formidable logistic problems.

Consequently I conclude that the election of transnational members by STV in constituencies composed of groups of Member States could offer benefits, but serious consideration would need to be given to the practical problems of implementing such a system.

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Dr Ken Ritchie is the Chief Executive of the Electoral Reform Society, a British voluntary organisation that campaigns for the strengthening of democracy, particularly through improvements in voting systems. He acknowledges the assistance of colleagues within the Society, and particularly Andrew White, in preparing this paper. The views expressed are, however, his own.