Congrès de l'AFSP 2015 - Aix-en-Provence

ST 45:
Les logiques sociales de sélection du personnel politique en Europe Centrale et Orientale et leurs transformations historiques

Fernanda FLACCO
Doctorante – Aspirante FRS-FNRS
Cevipol / Université libre de Bruxelles
fernanda.flacco@ulb.ac.be

Camille KELBEL
Doctorante – PAI PartiRep
Cevipol / Université libre de Bruxelles
camille.kelbel@ulb.ac.be

Eastern Promises: Candidate Selection Processes and MEPs' Profiles in the CEECs

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- Abstract –

The so-called 'Big Bang' enlargement has significantly altered the organization, functioning and image of European institutions in general and of the European Parliament in particular. Key to these changes is undoubtedly the actors who embody them; the MEPs from the CEECs. Who are these MEPs and how did this new political elite come about? A vast amount of literature has investigated the growth of career politicians in the European Parliament. These studies almost invariably conceive the outcome of political recruitment only as determined by contenders' profile and the electorate decision. Yet, political parties remain the main gatekeepers to elected office. Accordingly, this paper argues that the 'selectorate' – i.e. the party agents in charge of drafting the lists - should also be considered in explanations of who gets into power. Intra-party processes should not be dismissed because attempts to stand as candidates can be largely encouraged, discouraged or even prohibited by political parties. Empirically, this paper combines a unique dataset recording the candidate selection methods used in the 66 CEECs political parties having gained representation in the 8th EP legislature, with a prosopography (multiple career-line analysis) of their corresponding MEPs (realized through the collection of CVs and interviews) in the current legislature. This paper shows that 'who' is in charge of selection influences MEPs' profile, and more precisely that middle-rank party elites tend to select more experienced politicians.

Introduction

A wide-spread assumption often found in the public debate is that members of the European Parliament (MEPs) are second-class politicians and that they are socially unrepresentative of the population (be it in terms of gender, class, or background). At the same time, Central and Eastern European Countries (CEECs) have witnessed over the past twenty-five years the emergence and development of a new political elite alongside the 'old guard'. In 2004, the so-called 'Big Bang' enlargement has marked a turn and constituted a major test for most of these elites: the incorporation and hence direct confrontation with that of the Western European countries in EU representative institutions in general, and in the EP in particular. This paper argues that the extent to which the European Parliament has constituted a new political elite's gateway (Beauvallet et *al.*, 2013) or an elephants' graveyard is best examined through the actions of the gatekeepers to these mandates: the political parties. Indeed, political parties, through the selection of candidates, are often in a position to choose directly who will hold parliamentary mandates. After all, the selectorate comes before the electorate and largely constrains its choices. List placement by political parties - and specific party agents therein – hence plays a crucial role in determining who will become a M(E)P. Attempts to stand as candidates can be encouraged, discouraged or even prohibited by political parties.

As such, electoral politics, and more broadly, democratic life is not limited to competition between parties in terms of elections and representatives, but also occurs within the parties through the selection of candidates. Recruitment and in particular the issues of how and why selection occurs bear important consequences for parties, legislatures and representative government (Norris & Lovenduski, 1995; Siavelis & Morgenstern, 2008). This paper hence contends that the way this function is performed is of extreme importance and relevance when considering the profile of (governing) elites. While previous studies are almost invariably fielded at the national level, this project examines the consequences that various candidate selection methods may have on the profile of the MEPs, which is indeed crucial for representation.

The contribution of this paper is three-fold. First, this paper finds its geographical focus in Central and Eastern Europe, where the political class have been largely rebuilt. Hence, it explores how the selection methods are performed in these new democracies and which MEPs' profiles have emerged. Second and theoretically, it subscribes to an "actor-centred" analysis of the EU (Georgakakis & Lassalle, 2004, Hooghe, 2001; Marks, 1996; Page, 1996; Stevens & Stevens, 2001; Vauchez, 2007). An analysis of European actors - as social agents - allows shedding light on the dynamics underlying the EU core machinery and improving the existing theories of European integration (Georgakakis & Weisbein, 2010). As such, this paper is an attempt to combine the "politico-institutional" with the "sociological" approaches, by studying how the formal rules of European candidate selections can influence the profile of the governing elites. Third, this paper empirically adopts a double-edged strategy. It combines a unique dataset recording the candidate selection methods used in the 66 CEECs political parties having gained representation in the post-2014 EP with a prosopography - multiple career-line analysis - of their corresponding MEPs (realized through the collection of curricula and interviews) in the current legislature. Through this double empirical platform this research project statistically examines whether and how the profile of MEPs is determined by the selection processes. Since more open and decentralized candidate selection processes are often deemed to lead to an increased personalization and decreased professionalization of politics, this paper tests the extent to which this is the case for CEECs. As such, it participates to enquiries into how the new governing elite came about. We argue

that the profile of candidates is linked to the inclusiveness of these recruitment processes and especially to the party agents in charge of selection therein.

The paper hence analyses the extent to which candidate selection processes explain the profile of MEPs. In order to establish findings, the paper proceeds as follows. It first displays a review of the literature of the two research fields, namely the one concerned with the sociology of elites and the one related to the consequences of recruitment processes. It attempts to delineate a common agenda. Then, after the data and methods are expounded, it proceeds with a descriptive outlook of the CEECs MEPs' profiles. Finally, it empirically explores the relation between the selection processes and these profiles, before a few concluding remarks are drawn.

1. Why and how studying the recruitment of MEPs from the CEECs?

1.1. MEPs and the professionalization of European elites

In the last two decades, authors increasingly turned to the narrative of political professionalization in order to analyze the EU political field. Moving beyond the neo-functionalist/intergovernmentalist macro posture, this recent literature provides European studies with a new theoretical outlook, which relies on the sociology of the elites (Field et al., 1990; Genieys, 2011), social constructivism (Kauppi, 2003), as well as social and historical neo-institutionalisms (March and Olsen, 1984; Pierson, 1996). Being rooted in the sociology of the state (Elias, 2001; Weber, 1959), the professionalization approach investigates the social dimension of actors involved in the EU decision-making, by putting forward an actor-centered analysis of the European institutions. The European political space is perceived as the product of social and political process, and not merely the effect of legal rules (Beauvallet, 2003). Common to all this studies is an overarching interest in the professionalization of the EP which certainly confers some importance to the question of "who gets (recruited) into the EP". Recruitment processes are understood as the gateway for professionalization of European elites and, indirectly, the effectiveness of the European legislative body. As Norris clearly stated, theories of professionalization suggest that the degree of EP cohesion, coherence and powerfulness is a function of "who the EP recruits, retains and promotes" (Norris, 1999: 87). The feeling that theories of (elite) recruitment and professionalization are intrinsically interrelated is well anchored in the literature[1].

When investigating the professionalization of recruited MEPs, the literature attributes a key role to some specific factors. The mobilized variables are often linked to socio-demographic characteristics (age, sex), socio-cultural properties (level and type of education), the social status prior to entering the EP, the practical experience gained in fields other than politics - and prior to their political experience -, the degree of internationalization of the representatives, as well the Europeanization of their profile[2].

[1] Indeed, before targeting EP's professionalization, political scientists have widely investigated the growth of career politicians and its consequences for national parliaments. Processes of professionalization have been highlighted in different national western parliaments. See *inter alia*: Wessels, 1997; Ruostetsaari, 2000 ; Rush, 1989, Costa & Kerrouche, 2007 ; Ilisin & Cular, 2013 ; Ştefan, 2012; Ilonszki, 2000; Shabad & Slomczynski, 2002; Ilonszki & Edinger, 2007.

[2] The latter is also understood as the investment in the European Parliament, operationalized by Beauvallet and Michon as the number of mandates and years in the EP, the positions exercised, the number of plenary

While the first analyses of EP professionalization denoted a lack of political experience by MEPs (see in particular: Holland, 1986), more recent studies describe EP as a highly professionalized space, populated by MEPs with a middle-class, intellectual and internationalized profile (Hix & Lord, 1997). Previous careers are often either media-related, having to do with legal professions, or political - within parties or not - (Beauvallet & Michon, 2010; Norris, 1999).

Investigating the making of a European supranational elite has become particularly relevant in the wake of the 2004, 2007 and 2013 enlargements. Hence, somewhat unsurprisingly, the elites of the CEECs who joined the EU became a crucial focus for those who tackle the professionalization of *Euro-insiders* (Katz & Wessels, 1999; Verzichelli & Edinger, 2005), mostly for two reasons. Empirically, scholars are provided with a sort of natural experiment to test whether the *Eastern enlargements* jeopardize the convergence of MEPs profiles, diluting (or not) the professionalization of the EP. A typical issue being dealt with is the degree of convergence among the members of the EP elites (Cotta & Best, 2007), and put succinctly, the magnitude of the gap dividing the so-called 'old members' and 'new members' profiles (Verzichelli & Edinger, 2005). Second, from a theoretical standpoint, analyzing the new MEPs' profile would provide some additional insights on one of the central mechanisms of European integration, by questioning the social dynamics underlying the EU core machinery and conceiving integration not merely in a macro (state) or meso-level perspective but also at the micro (individual)-level (Georgakakis & Weisbein, 2010).

1.2. Explaining the profile of CEECs MEPs: the role of candidate selection processes

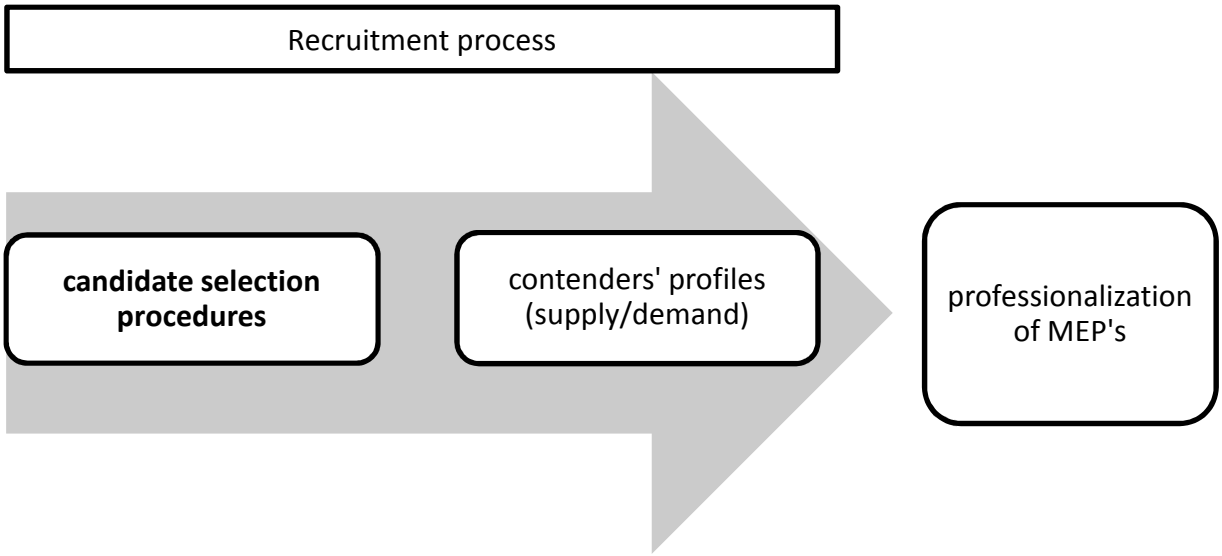
This paper draws on two theoretical streams that corroborate the idea that the ways in which elites are recruited determines what kind of personalities come about: a 'sociological approach', and the literature focusing on the consequences of candidate selection processes, of neo-institutionalist inspiration.

On the one hand, the literature on professionalization lies on the theoretical foundation that recruitment and professionalization are intrinsically related; more precisely, recruitment has consequences on professionalization, and more generally determines the profile of political elites. Yet, studies of professionalization have often used a simplified concept of "recruited elites", which is solely the result of contenders' profile (biographical variables and career trajectories) and of the electorate's decisions (since these studies focuses on the elites elected) (Norris 1999; Verzichelli 2005). Best and Cotta did depict recruitment processes as resulting from the interaction of three elements: to the above-mentioned contenders (who enter the competition for offices) and the electorates (who determine the outcome of the legislative selection), they added the selectorate (actors who select candidates)(Best & Cotta, 2000: 11-12). However, the role of the selectorate has been largely neglected. Actually, the sociological approach has confined the recruitment process to a *de facto* and "uni-directional dimension" (Ștefan, 2012). It has rather simplistically examined, diachronically or synchronically, the differences or similarities between MEPs' profiles. MEPs' social and political history is just statically portrayed, rather than transformed into operative variables. Yet, it does not really consider that the selectorate might play a role in shaping the profile of elites, including MEPs. They fail to explain how the social and professional background of MEPs can interact with other dimensions and processes of the political systems (Beauvallet & Michon, 2010). In our view, these studies hence present an "incomplete" use of theories of political recruitment. This paper by contrast hypothesizes that the selection procedures (and above all, the

interventions, the number of questions asked, written resolutions and declarations presented within a MEP mandate (Beauvallet & Michon, 2010)

selectorate) intervene in determining the MEPs' profiles, and indirectly the professionalization of the EP. This study accordingly offers a more interactive model of professionalization – which allows for institutional variables and the sociological literature's elements to interact. We accordingly offer to overcome the descriptive posture that has characterized studies on professionalization.

Figure 1. An interactive framework of analysis



On the other hand, candidate selection processes have attracted increased scholarly attention over the recent period, not least because of the consequences they entail for legislatures and representative government (Norris & Lovenduski, 1995; Siavelis & Morgenstern, 2008). By choosing who is going to stand on electoral lists and at which place, parties influence the future composition of legislative assemblies. Yet, the literature on candidate selection has tended to focus on the consequences of these processes on the behaviours of legislators and ensuing policies (Serra, 2005; Faas, 2003; Hix, 2002; 2004), be it in terms of representativeness (Kernell, 2008), or of responsiveness – i.e. the consequences on parliamentary activity, not on the composition of legislatures *per se*. This is little surprising when considering the theoretical foundations generally associated with candidate selection. Political recruitment can largely be linked to the behavioural tradition. In particular, studies of political elites saw recruitment as one element of a complex process, when it comes to the demographic differences between elites and masses. For functionalists, it constituted an input function to the political system (Almond, 1960) and into active political roles (Czudnowski, 1975).

The reinstatement of institutions, in particular under the three neo-institutionalisms has led to an increased consideration of candidate selection processes as one institutional aspect of legislative recruitment. The work of Norris constitutes a theoretical breakthrough therein to the extent that it depicts the selection processes as a chain of causality: the electoral system constrains the recruitment process which influences the demand and supply. This had led Mitchell to state that there are in fact two main factors which affect the election to legislative office: "electoral laws and (the) control of candidate selection" (Mitchell, 2000: 340; see also: Faas, 2003; Gallagher, 1988: 258). In other words, how the candidates are selected greatly affects who gets selected. In line with these theoretical outlooks, this paper asks why individuals with specific backgrounds have been selected by looking at how specific processes of selection favour specific profiles of MEPs. This paper accordingly argues that

among the several factors that come into play in the choice of candidates, agents of recruitment do matter (the other elements including: the social and educational background, formal and informal opportunity structures - the eligibility criteria and legal aspects -, the social and institutional positions, etc. – Stefan, 2012).

By opening the black box of the selectorate, this paper contributes to the discussion about the MEP professionalization. Candidate selection procedures and selectorates are considered as an explanatory variable which affects the recruited elites' profile and, as a consequence, strengthens or weakens the professionalization of the European political space.

1.3. Hypothesizing the influence of the selectorate on MEPs' profiles

Despite the growing scholarly attention having been brought to these processes in recent years, there have been only sporadic attempts to look into the EU legislative recruitment processes. Studies of the processes have focused either on the political resources of candidates, providing 'supply-side' explanations (Beauvallet & Michon, 2008; Navarro, 2012), or the peculiarities of the multi-level political context, determining the 'structure of opportunities' for these recruitments (Meserve et *al.*, forthcoming). But the analysis of party rules and of the attitudes of gatekeepers, producing the 'demand' for candidates has often been overlooked or unsystematically studied. In a different setting, Hinjosa had argued that supply and demand do not explain political gender gap in Latin America and that there is a need to look at processes through which parties filter out aspirants and choose candidates: exclusivity and centralisation (Hinjosa, 2012). It is as often simply been assumed that ballot access for European elections is the exclusive preserve of national parties (Hix, 2002; Faas, 2003; Thiem, 2009). Indeed, at the EU level, one often mentioned explanation of the strong hold of national parties on their MEPs is precisely their power in the candidate selection processes (Hix, 2002; Mühlböck, 2012). The second-order nature of EP elections means that MEPs do not need to follow the preferences of their electorate because their actions, the policies they defend or oppose in the EP, the discipline to their group are unrelated to their re-election. Conversely, they have all the reasons to follow their main selectorate, the national parties, which decide on their placement on the lists and can accordingly reward or punish them (Hix & Lord, 1997; Lord, 2002). This points at the need to look at the party agents in charge of selection and how these agents interact – in other words, how the processes of selection are conducted. Although the candidate and leader selection literature has well underlined that different layers within the party may intervene, from the leader to the grass-root members (Kenig, 2009; Hazan & Rahat, 2010), most studies related to candidate selection at EU level have so far ignored the importance of the 'who selects' question and failed to distinguish between different party actors. Indeed, among the several dimensions of selection, Meserve *et al*. assume that party leaders choose EP candidates based on party ideology, electoral salience, and access to other electoral arenas – that is, electoral context and availability of candidates. They predict that "Political parties' attitudes and emphases, their sizes, and the amount of attention that the national press pays to European elections predict the types of candidates that parties prioritize" (Meserve et *al.*, 2012). Generalising slightly, recruitment at EU level has often meant that the European elite mainly comes from national elites (Delwit et *al.*, 2001) - that is, they eschew from the actions of these elites and emerge from their pool. Although this subscribes and is justified by the elite-driven nature often attributed to EU integration, the end of the 'permissive consensus' calls for a reconsideration of the power of actors. And candidate selection is precisely the locus of power within parties (Schattschneider, 1942; Seligman, 1961). Yet, whenever encompassing mappings of the selection processes for European elections have been conducted (Lehmann, 2009; Pilet et *al.*, 2015), they have been rather descriptively and unsystematically displayed. In addition no

work has questioned the role of selection processes in conditioning elites' profiles more generally at this level. This paper ambitions to remedy this lacuna by asking how processes and agents of selection for European elections may determine "who gets elected".

H1: The manner in which the candidates for EP elections are selected by political parties has an influence on the profiles of elected MEPs.

> *H1a: The degree of inclusivity of the selectorate matters in determining the profiles of elected MEPs.*
>
> *H1b: The actors in charge of the selection matter in determining the profiles of elected MEPs.*

Aragon finds that political parties adopt open selection processes more for their desire to increase internal political competition and to push candidates to produce more efforts during campaigns than to improve the quality of their candidate (Aragon, 2009). As such, more open candidate selection processes would not least to better candidates. In addition, it has sometimes been suggested in the literature that a given selectorate would select someone who is descriptively closer to itself. The search for more (descriptive) representation is indeed one of the central arguments in favour of widened selectorates as inclusive selectorates - those including all party members and eventually up to non-member supporters - are themselves deemed to be more socially representative. Following but reversing this reasoning, more exclusive party bodies which are themselves made of experienced politicians, of 'professionals' of politics, would be more likely to favour people that descriptively resemble them. That is why the professionalization of politics is often associated with a de-democratisation of political processes. In the same line of thoughts, previous studies have shown the numerical difference between men and women in politics can be accounted for by a bias held by the party elite against women. They have in particular argues that parties can disfavour women by placing them on less attractive or less favourable districts' lists, giving them less visibility in the media or spending less campaign budget on them (Murray et *al*., 2009; Wauters et *al*., 2010; Verge & Troupel, 2011). As a consequence, the argument goes, it is not only voters' preferences which are detrimental to women, but rather choices of the parties and especially of their elites. In other words, the discrepancy would come from the most exclusive group.

The personalisation of politics literature further suggests that the electorate favours better known candidates (Poguntke & Webb 2005; Garzia 2011), so we could anticipate that enlarged selectorate would too. Regarding more precisely the European level, the second-order literature suggests that European elections are not about European parties, policies or personalities (Follesdal & Hix, 2006), and that national issues dominate (Reif & Schmitt, 1980), voters are more likely to choose candidates based on national matters, not European ones. They have also little information and contact with incumbent MEPs or their work. By contrast, parties have increasingly come to recognize the importance of representation at the EU level and policy-making in the EP. For some of them, this is unprecedented opportunity to gain representation at all (e.g. for Green parties – see *inter alia*: Bomberg, 2002; Carter; 2005 - or for radical parties – see in particular the work of Reungoat on the French FN, 2014). Some of the party elites are also involved directly in the EU decision-making process, most notably in the Council. For Reungoat, "the opening-up of a European arena develops as a matrix of constraints and new political resources that partisan national actors help to shape"[3] (Reungoat, 2014). Beyond the vote-seeking and office-seeking goals of parties at European

[3] Own translation.

level, it could be expected that higher party organs, which have become increasingly 'policy-seeking' at the EU level (even though this can be partly attributed to the impact on the EU on national politics – Lord, 2002) will seek to increase their influence through personalities with a European experience. Besides, previous research has shown that parties use reselection as a mean to ensure loyalty to party decisions in the EP.

By contrast, Rahat, Hazan and Katz have shown that more inclusive selectorates are often detrimental of more social representation (Rahat et *al.*, 2008). Parties, and smaller groups within them, are better able to select representative candidates because they (often explicitly) aim at ensuring the representation of specific groups in society. This is true in particular because when candidates are selected directly by the party leader, or by a limited number of people around it, it is in practice easier to manage a good balance between different criteria or types of candidates such as male and female candidates, ethnic or linguistic groups, age groups and regions and territories. The overarching assumption is thus that more exclusive candidate selection processes can contribute to a better representation of specific groups since "the representativeness of the selected lists, […] can only be insure by corrective mechanisms." (Höhne, 2007: 11). By contrast, when the selection of candidates is in the hands of larger bodies, achieving such aim becomes more difficult. This is supported by empirical examples showing that parties using more restrictive selectorate turn out to present more balanced list of candidates, for instance in terms of gender (see for instance: Narud and Valen, 2008 – for an illustration in the case of Norway). One posited explanation is the complex coordination ensuing from more people being involved in the selection. Moreover, it might be assumed that party leadership includes higher-educated and more liberal individuals in their attitude toward gender equality and minority rights (Randall, 1987). Furthermore, because of the personalization of politics, more participation might come to the detriment of real competition (Rahat et *al.*, 2008).

Hence, overall, the literature seems to suggest that both inclusive and exclusive selectorates may be detrimental to the quality of MEPs. By mirror, this could suggest that second-rank party elites and middle-rank activists may favour professionalization. Although it has never been suggested as such, this possibility allows exploring specific layers of the party organization that have usually been excluded from the literature - which has instead (too) often concentrated on the question of 'democratization', opposing the two ends of the selectorate continuum.

H2: Selection by the middle-level layers of the parties (second-rank elites and middle-rank activists) may favour more experienced candidates.

This hypothesis refines the overarching idea that how candidates are selected shape the particular traits of candidates, or in other words, specific selectorate value specific profiles. Instead of asking which individual and collective criteria parties look at in selection, we judge them based on the result: the elected MEPs' characteristics.

2. Methods, data and variables

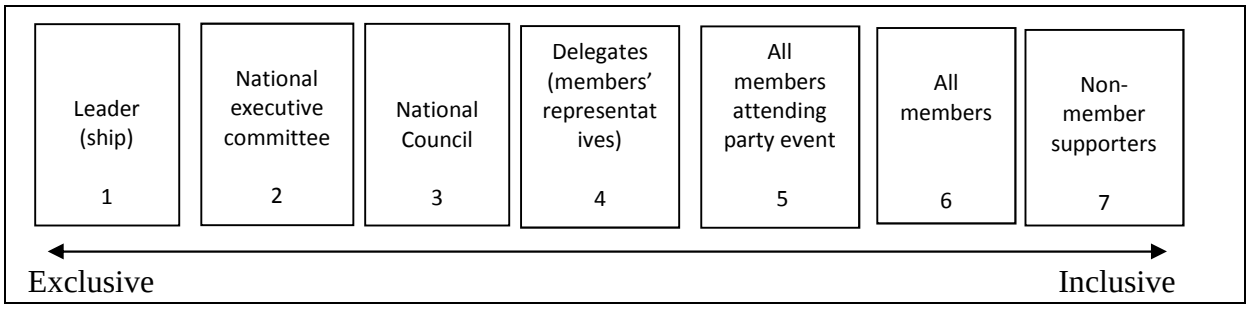
This paper looks at how processes of candidate selection impact on the type of candidates chosen. To do so, it uses elected candidates as a proxy. Despite the limitations entailed by this approach, we argue that this short-cut is relevant here for several reasons. First, selection for European elections is to some extent as important as the election itself. By selecting their heads of lists, parties practically offer a seat in Strasbourg to them. In fact, the PR-list system

entails that mainstream parties are sure to gain seats and the second-order hypothesis predicts that medium and small parties do reasonably better in European than national elections (Reif & Schmitt, 1980). A number of parties in Europe have in fact gained representation in the EP before that in their national parliaments (e.g. the UK Greens). Parties have clearly anticipated the electoral results by using sometimes different processes to select their eligible candidates (their heads of lists). Second, the notion of 'elite' itself refers to the governing elite, not only intervening in the political competition, but also influential and integrated in the decision-making sphere, preoccupied by public decisions (Coenen-Huther, 2004: 5-6). Indeed, this paper subscribes to a broader view on the consequences of candidate selection processes on legislatures and their functioning which is mostly to be captured through elected officials.

2.1. Measuring the independent variable

Authors concerned with candidate selection originally focused on examining and classifying the various procedures used by political parties (Hazan & Rahat, 2001; 2010). It has long been suggested that the selection of candidates within a political system should be treated as process rather than a punctual decision (Rahat & Hazan, 2001; Blomgren, 2003: 128). These processes can hence be divided in different stages: from the nomination to the final decision (Rahat and Hazan, 2001). Analyses of candidate selection procedures usually concentrate on two dimensions of these processes: the level of intra-party decision-making (the territorial dimension) and the selectorate used (exclusion-inclusion dimension). Nevertheless, research has more often than not concentrated on the level of inclusiveness of the selectorate (LeDuc, 2001; Hazan & Rahat, 2010; Rahat & Hazan, 2001). Depending on the inclusiveness of the candidate selection method, decisions on selection within parties may be in the hands of members, delegates at party conferences, regional sections, political factions, national executives or the very chairman of the party. Although gatekeepers select candidates both through formal rules and informal practices (Gallagher & Marsh, 1988; Norris & Lovenduski, 1995; Ramney, 1981), this paper concentrates on the rules of selection prevailing. Formal candidate selection processes are hence understood as the paths of interaction of various party actors and bodies as foreseen by the party rules.

Figure 2. Analytical framework: inclusiveness of candidate selection methods

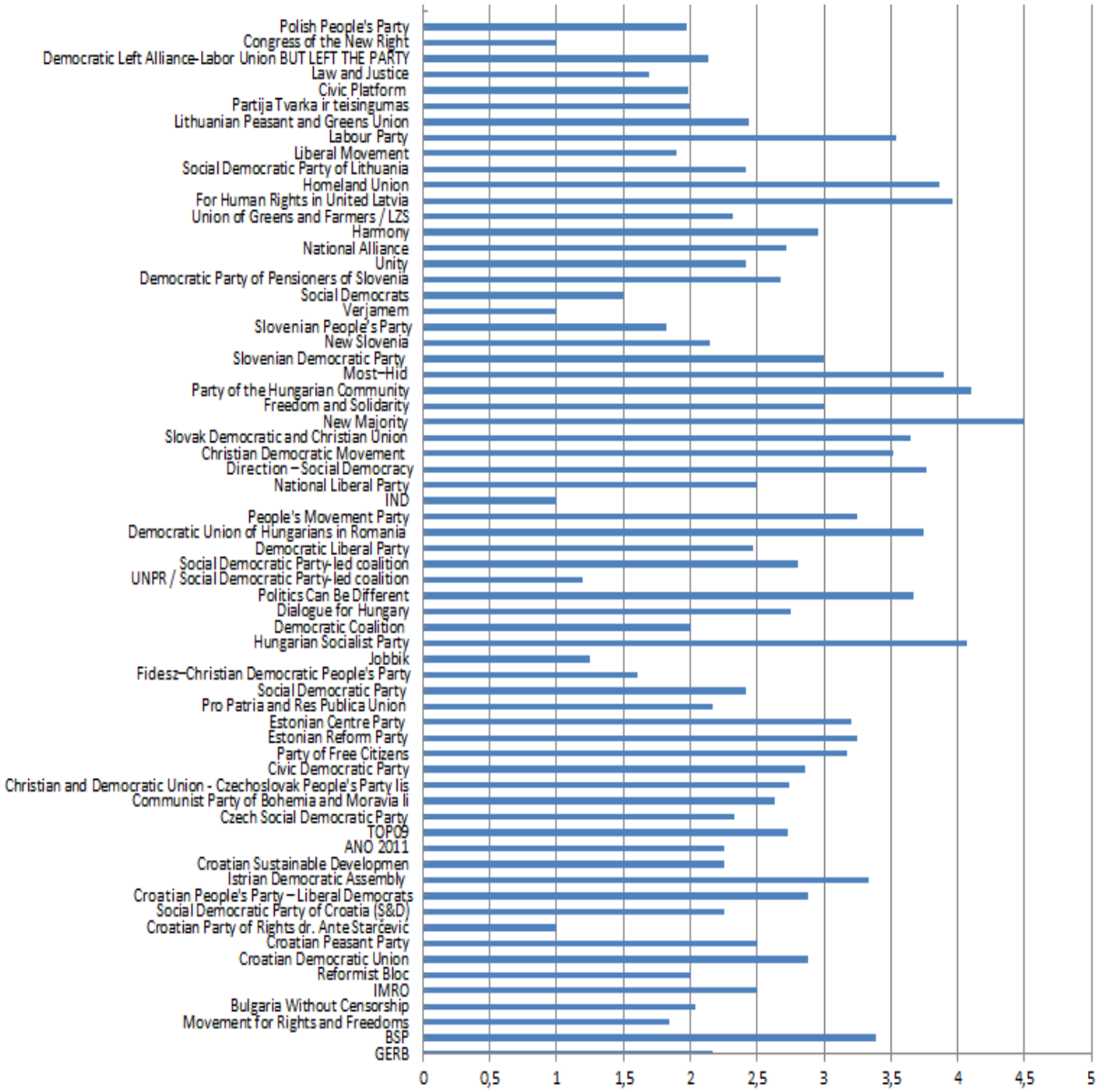


Source: own compilation, adapted from Kenig (2009) and Hazan and Rahat (2010).

The candidate selection procedures used by the 66 political parties of the CEECs having gained representation in the EP 8th legislature have been collected through an expert questionnaire. A unique database is hence built which recodes the processes in two distinct ways. First, the accent is put on the processes: they are divided into different phases, for each of which the inclusiveness of the selectorate is coded. The mean selectorate (the average of

the selectorate scores of the different phases) is then aggregated[4]. Second, the actors and bodies intervening on their own or as part of other party bodies are recoded as dummies (except leaders and delegates who are coded as present, present as part of another body or absent). This leads to a series of six variables which indicate the absence *v.* presence of specific party layers: the leader, the national executive, the national council[5], *ad hoc* (electoral) committees, the delegates, the members, the party supporters.

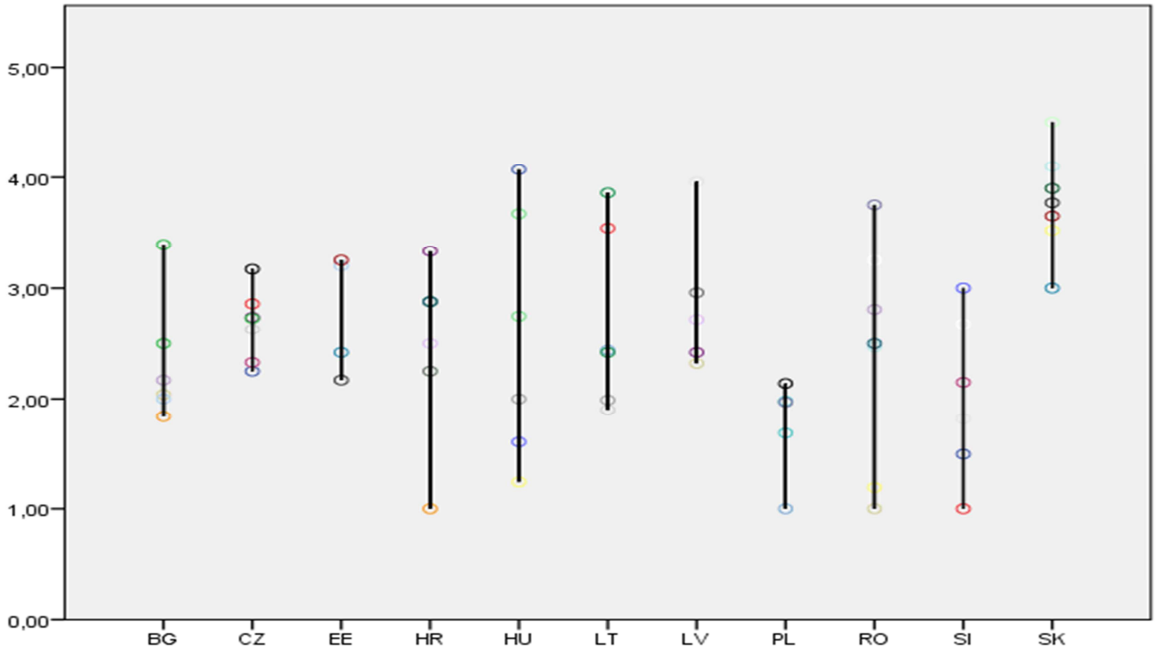
Figure 3. The inclusiveness of the selectorate per national political party



[4] For instance, if all members can nominate candidates, but then the party executive committee compiles the lists and the leader has to ratify, the mean selectorate score will be of : MEAN(6;3;1)=3.334. Such arithmetic means can aslo be calculated within each step in cases where two actors or bodies participate to the same step.

[5] This category has been introduced in particular because most parties present two types of executives which present different degrees of inclusiveness.

Figure 4. The inclusiveness of the selectorate per party and per member state



2.2. Measuring the dependant variable

In order to understand the interest of biographies in this particular research, it might be needed to expatiate further on the prosopographic method[6] at hand. The focus is on the profiles of MEPs, whose statute and career paths are considered around four main points: their socio-demographic background, their political experience, their EU specific appetency and their topical competences. In doing so, this paper questions one major characteristic of CEECs' elites, namely that the quality of the candidates standing for EU elections there is striking (Auers, 2005). We thus offer a measure of the quality of candidates understood as their experience related to the position at hand. This variable and its main components of this variable are explored hereunder, in the descriptive analysis.

3. Results and findings

3.1. Descriptive results: MEPs from CEECS, what's new?

As mentioned above, the 2004 'critical juncture' has already encouraged studies about the social composition of the new elite. Actually, the literature has detected specific characteristics of the new MEPs entering the EP in 2004. Highly educated and with a strong emphasis on natural sciences, these well-trained representatives often obtained a PhD degree; they entered the EP while being already socialized within the European space; they have usually accumulated practical experiences in fields different from politics, while among those who work in political related fields, many were former members of national chambers (Verzichelli & Edinger, 2005). Beauvallet and Michon complete this portray by highlighting how new MEPs (those who entered the EP between 2004 and 2009) are on average younger and more right-wing than their western counterparts (Beauvallet & Michon, 2010). Jurists and

[6] For an overview of the prosopographic method which is not detailed in this paper, see in particular: Chastagnol, 1980; 1996; Nicolet, 1970.

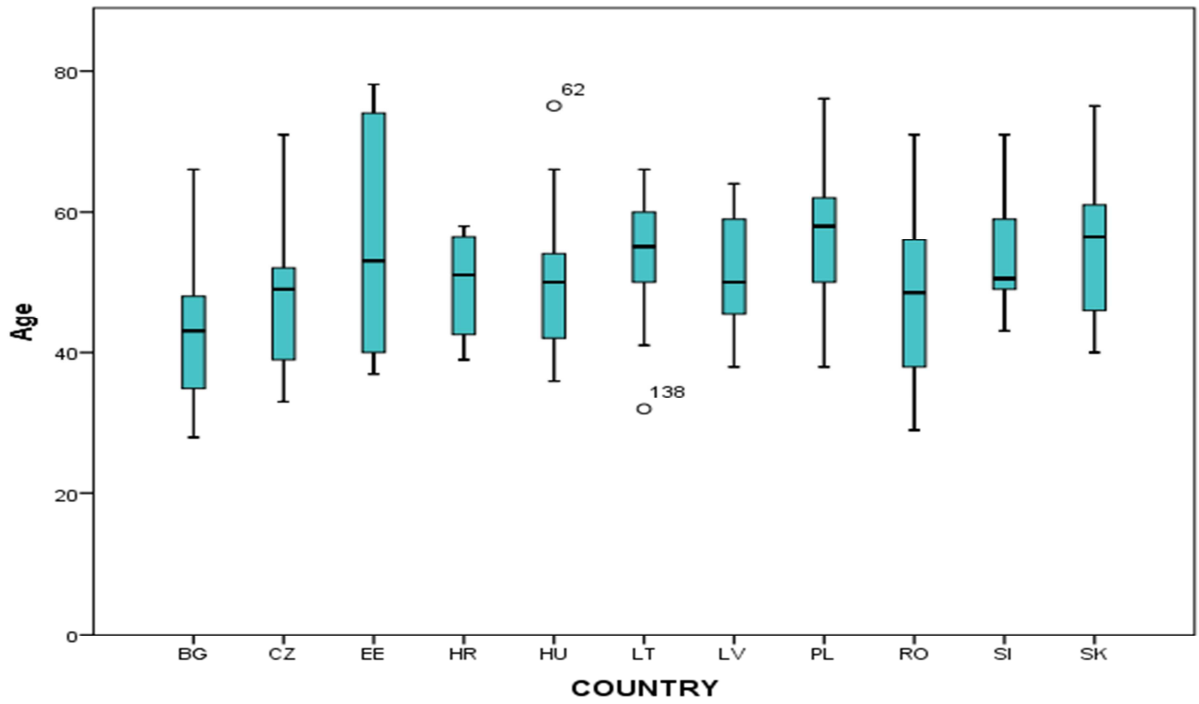
lawyers were not the dominant category and, finally, the percentage of women remains lower that for the oldest member states (Verzichelli & Edinger, 2005).

By examining the biographies of the 2014 Central and Eastern European representatives, this paper enquires whether these trends are still observable. Does a non-political profile still characterize MEPs from post-communist countries in the 8th legislature? This profile was indeed to be expected in the 2004-2009 term, since most CEECs MEPs would necessarily not have been politicians before 1991. This question however deserves renewed attention; what about the profiles of CEECs' elites in general and MEPs in particular 10 years after accession? Answering to this latter question would allow us to contribute to the assessment of an in-house socialization. This is also a pre requisite to later explore whether candidate selection procedures play a role in influencing these new members' specific profiles.

Our sample includes 198 cases, leaving aside only two CEECs MEPs[7]. The analysis starts from the observation of the socio-demographic characteristics of Central and Eastern European MEPs. It should be noted that this contribution is not about a Western-Eastern comparison but rather about detecting within CEECs profile patterns, although some references may occasionally be made to the former.

First, regarding their age (51 years old on average), no significant difference can be found across countries, even if the representatives of Bulgaria and Romania are younger than the others.

Figure 5. Age boxplot per country

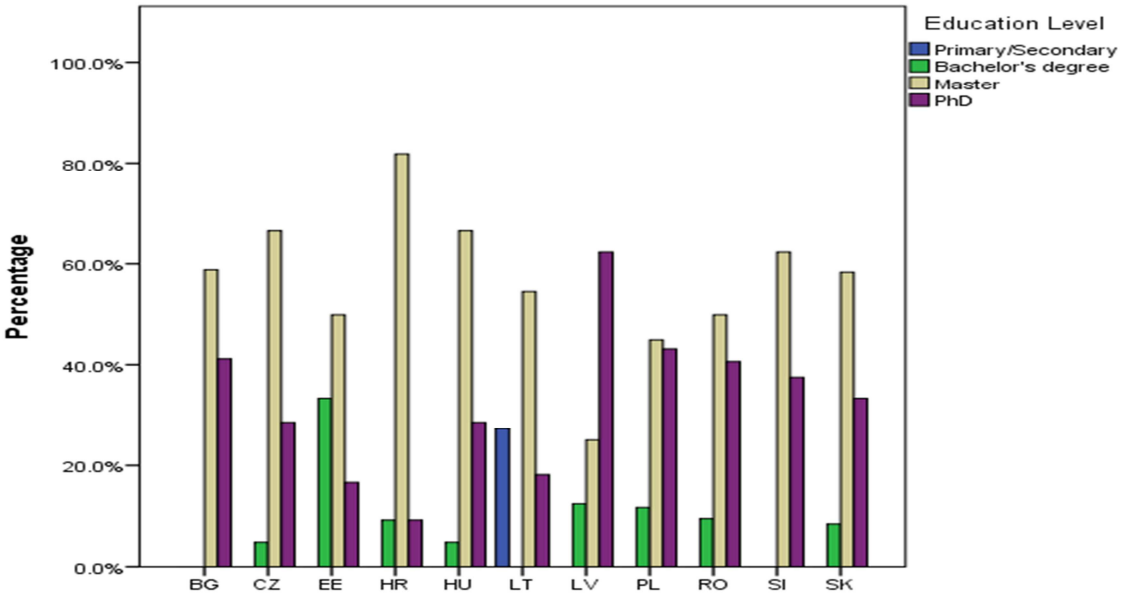


The percentage of woman remains low (26%) and, more importantly, it is lower than in the Western MS, where women represent 41% (on average) of the elected Euro Representatives.

[7] For these two MEPs, we failed to find any reliable information about their curriculum. One being an independent, we did not contact him, since his selection is not the result of party's selection procedure. The other one, a MEP from Slovakia never provided us with his curriculum or any sort of biographical information, despite several demands on our part.

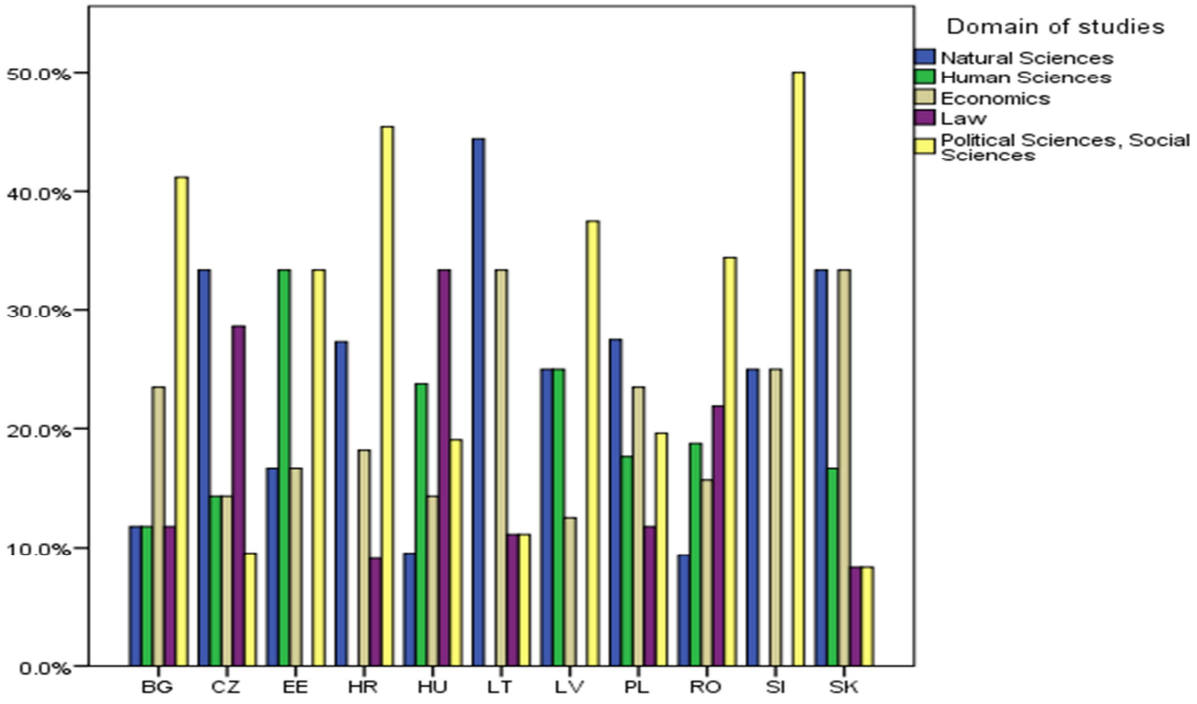
The education level confirms previous findings, as European representatives from CEECs are likely to display high levels of education. They have often obtained a Master degree or even a PhD. However, as the following figure shows, the proportion of MEPs with a PhD within each MS varies, being higher in Latvia and Poland.

Figure 6. The education level of MEPs from the CEECs (Percentage of MEPs per Country)



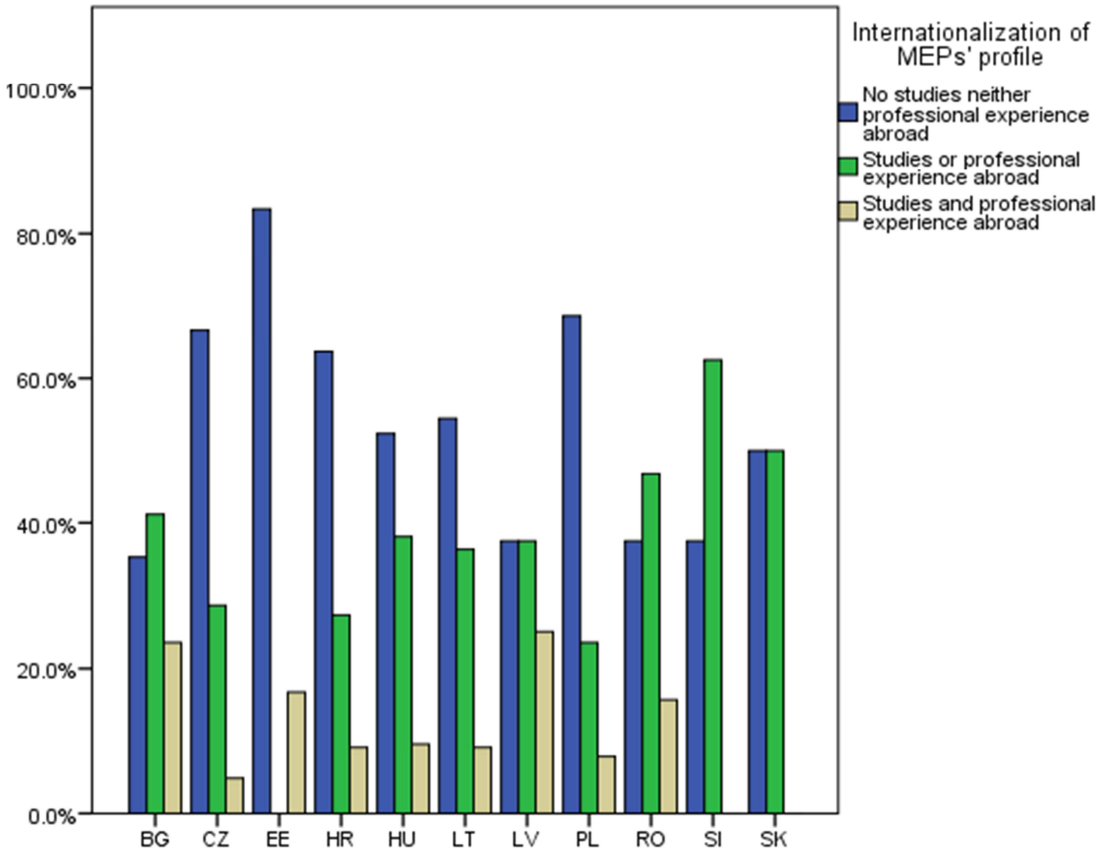
As shown by previous studies, the emphasis on natural science remains strong. That being said, our data shows that the percentage of MEPs having undertaken politics-related studies (including international relations, diplomatic and strategic studies, as well as European studies) is important. However, once again, differences can be observed across countries. It seems that politics-related studies are significantly less common among Lithuanian, Czech and Slovakian MEPs. Only one MEP has had no University degree.

Figure 7. University studies of CEECs MEPs per domain (Percentage of MEPs per Country)



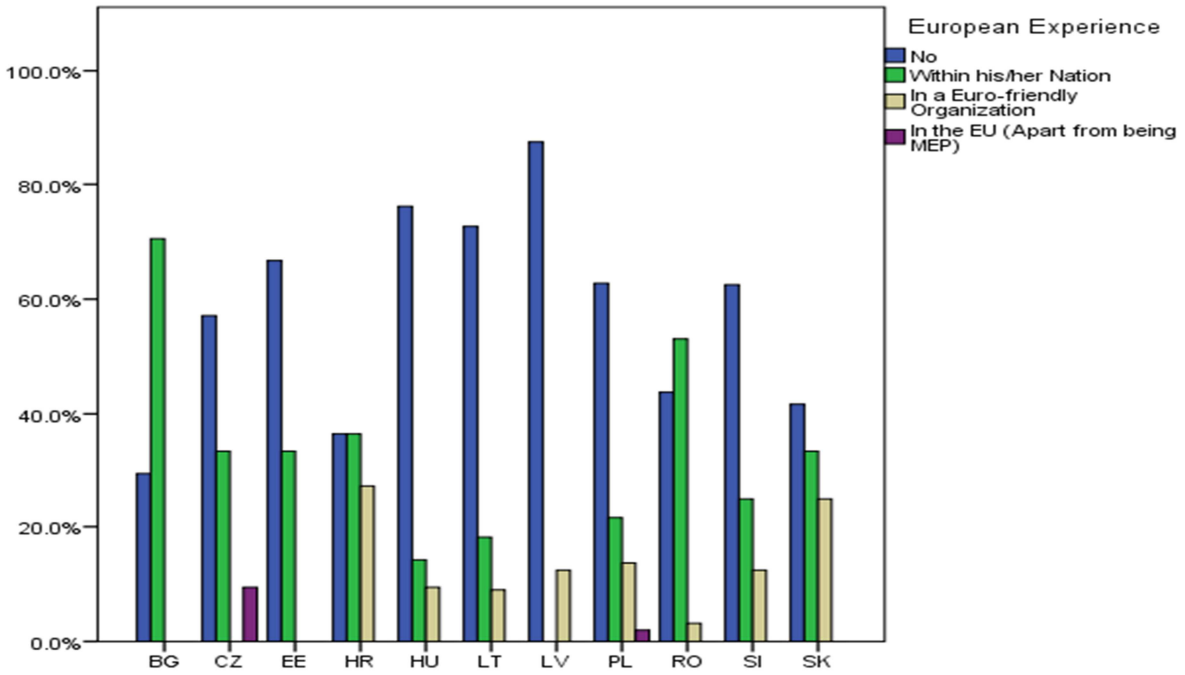
We move now to a key element, which is often deemed to be the core of analyses focusing on the professionalization of (European) elites. The cursor is placed on the political career of MEPs under scrutiny and in particular the international, European, and national dimensions of their profiles. First, we investigate the degree of internationalization and Europeanization of MEPs' background. In order to gauge the internationalization of the profiles, we look at whether each MEP has studied and/or undertaken a professional experience in a country other than his/her own. The ensuing figure shows how the index of "internationalization profile" hence constructed is distributed across countries. In Bulgaria, Latvia, Romania Slovenia and Slovakia, the number of those who undertake an international experience during their studies or their professional activities overcomes the number of MEPs with no sort of international experience. Concerning the other CEECs, the situation is reversed.

Figure 8. The Internationalization of CEECS MEPs (Percentage of MEPs per Country)



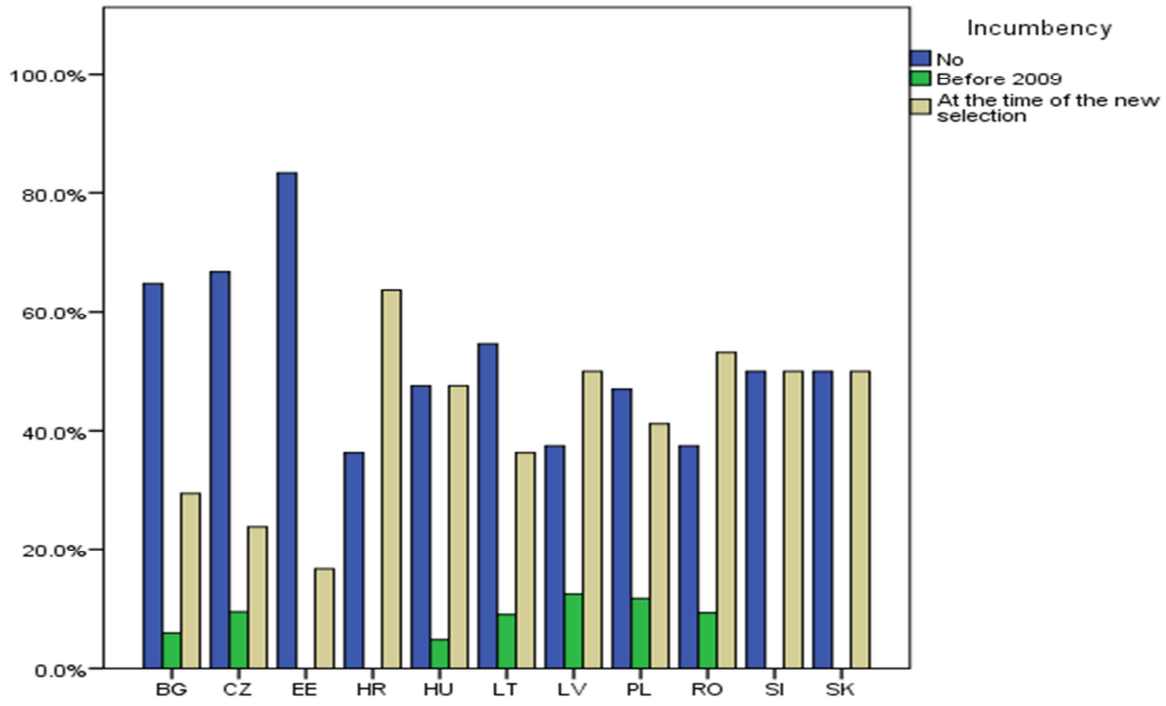
Next, we focus on a more specific level, namely the degree of Europeanization of MEPs. Our index of "European socialization" examines whether the MEP had "entered" the European space even before becoming a MEP. More precisely, we measure European socialization by looking at the professional experience the MEP has accumulated both on European issues at home and through his direct involvement in the European arena. Quite surprisingly, with the exception of Bulgaria and Romania, the percentage of MEPs with no sort of European-related professional experience overtakes the percentage of MEPs who have already been in clear contact with the EU.

Figure 9. European experience of CEECs MEPs before entering the EP in 2014 (Percentage of MEPs per Country)



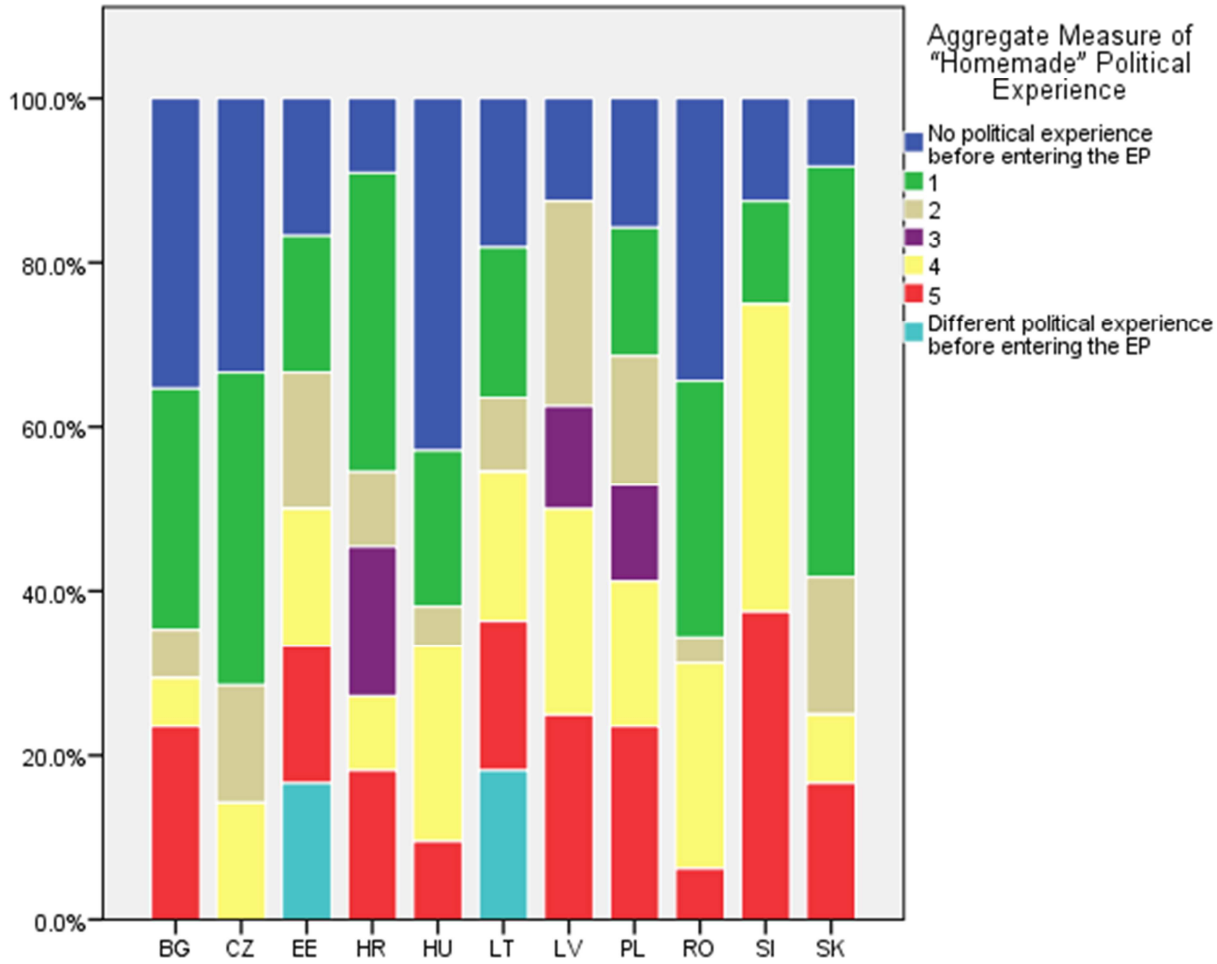
This index does not take into account whether the candidate has been already MEP in previous legislatures. We consider being incumbent as a different characteristic, since it measures a sort of routinization of the EP office (Baylis, 1998), rather than a simple socialization within the EU space. Results displayed are quite interesting, especially if we take into account our previous findings. As we noted above MEPs from CEECs are scantly involved in European affairs before their arrival in Brussels/Strasbourg, but once they enter the EP, they are more likely to be reelected (apart from the Czech, Bulgarian and Estonian MEPs).

Figure 10. Incumbency rates of CEECs MEPs (Percentage of MEPs per Country)



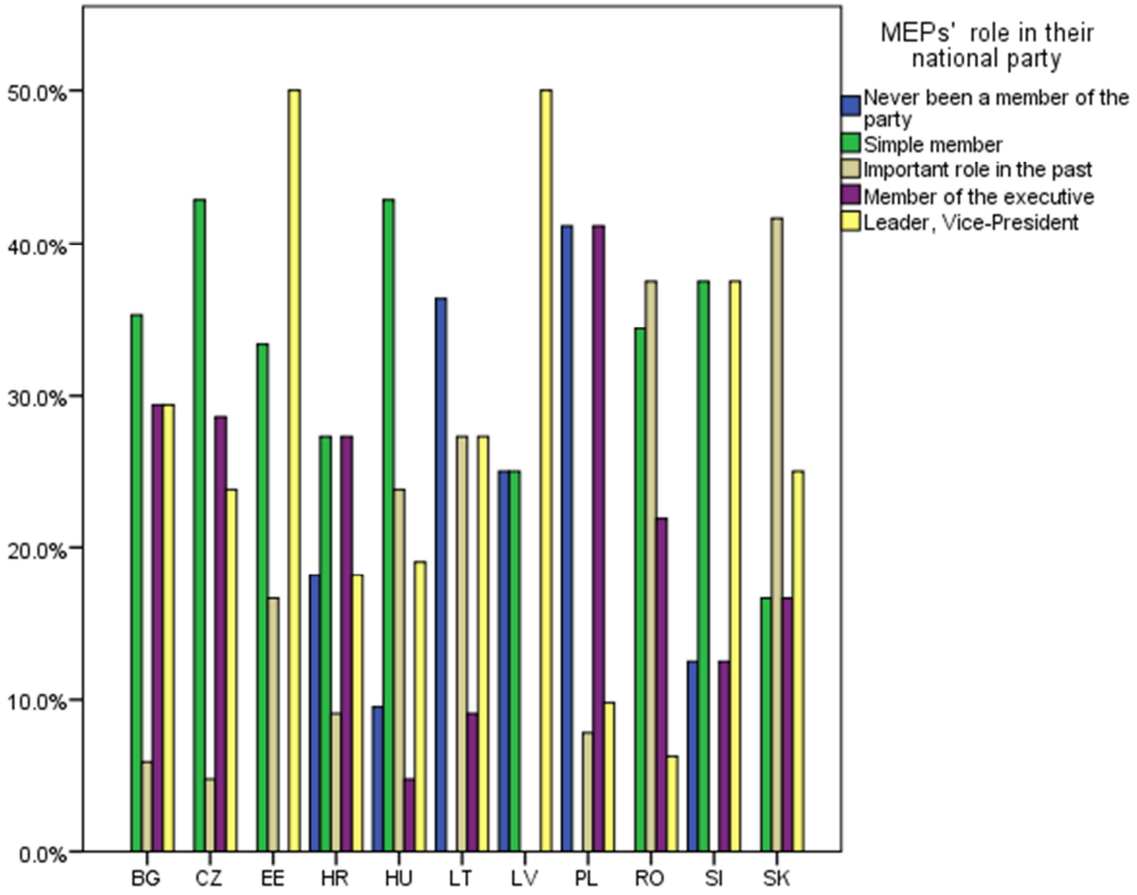
Last but not least, the domestic political career of MEPs is put under scrutiny. To assess the degree to which MEPs were national-high level politicians, we use an aggregate measure of their political experience at several levels. Results suggest that most MEPs were members of their national parliament beforehand (almost 60%), while a lower percentage (less than 40%) experienced local politics or national executive offices. An index of their overall political experience is then constructed which aggregates their experience in local politics, at the legislative level and at the executive level. This measure which goes from 0 (the MEP has no kind of political experience before entering the EP), to 6, (the MEP has accumulated different sorts of political experience in its homeland), has been plotted and is presented in the following figure, which shows the distributions of the 6 categories across countries. It appears clearly that Hungarians MEPs are more likely to enter the parliament with no sort of political experience, while Estonian and Lithuanian are incline to accumulate local, legislative and national experience before entering the EP. Smaller countries (the Baltic States and Slovenia) seem to display higher levels of political experience than bigger ones.

Figure 11. Previous Domestic Political Experience of CEECS MEPs (Percentage of MEPs per Country).



Once having assessed their international, European and domestic political profiles, we finally analyze the role MEPs played in their respective national political party. For clarity, we distinguish between four categories: the MEP has never been a member of the party for which he ran, the MEP is an ordinary member, the MEP had a key role in the party the past, the MEP is member of the party executive and, finally, he/she holds a top-position (leader, chairman or vice-president of the party).

Figure 12. MEPs' roles in their national political party



As the figure shows, results differ across countries[8]. Being simple party member is the most common feature of Bulgarian, Czech, Hungarian and Slovenian MEPs. The Slovak and Romanian cases seem to confirm the "elephant cemetery" theory (Kauppi, 2005), given the high percentage of MEPs who were pivotal actors of their party in the past, but are not anymore in the present. Quite to the opposite, the Estonian and the Latvian MEPs still tend to occupy position of undisputed leadership in their party. This is particularly relevant in view of the literature on the usage of Europe and European opportunity structures by national parties (see in particular: Reungoat, 2014).

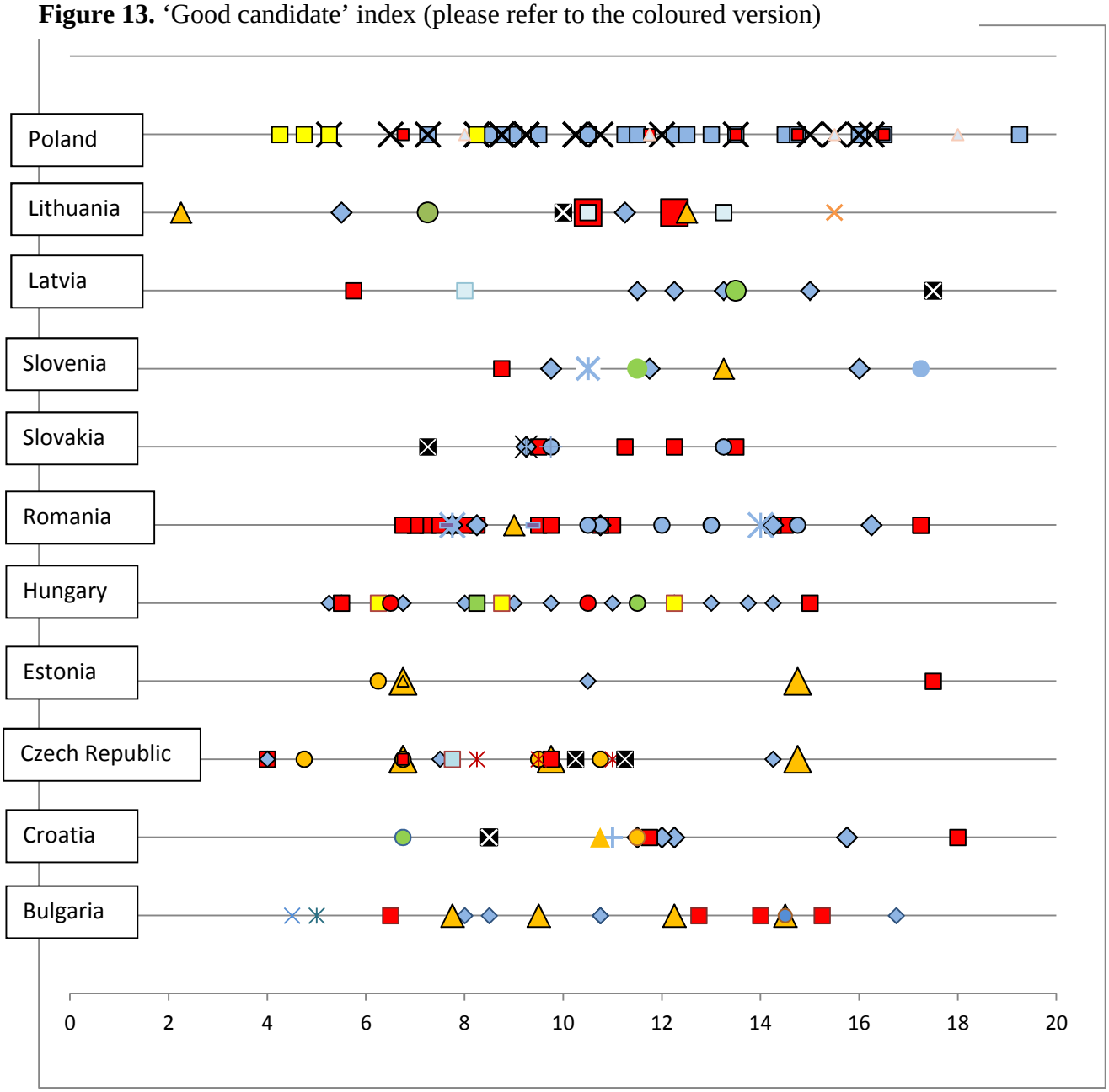
Even though this section aimed at simply portraying CEE MEPs' profiles, it paved the way for a more sophisticated analysis which questions the role of the selectorates in determining these profiles.

Aggregating these previous elements, we put together an index of MEPs' previous experience that we label 'good candidate' since it aims at measuring the quality of the candidates[9].

[8] In a number of cases, collecting information about MEPs' previous party involvement and their political experience at local and regional levels proved particularly challenging. In the absence of any information after different cross-checks, such involvement or experience was hence considered as being absent (rather than as 'missing data'). Therefore, we call for greater caution in drawing conclusions about MEPs' role in their national political parties as well as their political experience in their own member state at lower levels.

[9] A list of the variables and how they were aggregated in the index can be found in Appendix 1.

Figure 13. 'Good candidate' index (please refer to the coloured version)



NB: Each symbol represents the 'quality index' score of one MEP. MEPs form the same party are coded with the same symbol within each country. Symbols of similar colour across countries suggest that MEPs all belong to the same EP parliamentary group as of the beginning of the 2014-2019 legislature. The complete legend can be found in appendix 2.

3.2. The influence of the selectorate on the profile of MEPs

Testing for the impact of their inclusiveness, linear regressions do not show any significant impact of the processes of selection on the profiles of incoming MEPs. This suggests that very exclusive or very inclusive selection processes do not lead to specific profiles. Yet, the dispersion graph leads us to consider a squared effect to the linear effect.

Table 1. Regression models of quality of CEECs' MEPs

	Model I (curvilinear)	**Model II** (linear)
(Constant)	-2.588 (2.591)	
Selectorate (Average)	**5.671**** (1.804)	
Selectorate (Average)²	**-1.024**** (.345)	
Gender (Reference: Men)	.175 (.524)	.222 (.536)
Age	**.117***** (.021)	**.106***** (.020)
(Constant)		3.582* (1.558)
Leader		-.209 (.399)
National Executive Committee / Party Bureau		.211 (.814)
Central Committee / National Board		**1.174*** (.519)
Delegates		**.975*** (.392)
Members		-.672 (.697)
Supporters		1.060 (1.085)
Electoral Committee		1.225 (.918)
	R²(adjusted)= 0.147	*R²(adjusted) = 0.128*
*Sign.: # p<0.1 * p < 0.05, ** p < 0.01, *** p < 0.001.*		
N= 198		

Thereby, we test a non-linear effect (Model I). Although the Beta coefficient cannot be interpreted as such, the direction suggests that there is an increase followed by a decrease. In other words, when the inclusiveness of the selectorate increases, the 'quality' of MEPs increases up to a certain point, then it decreases. This hence partly confirms hypothesis 1, by showing that who selects matter in explaining how specific MEPs have been selected and then elected. Accordingly, we look at what the presence of specific actors may entail for office holders. We expect that a critical juncture will emerge in terms of actors.

And indeed, the second regression model shows that selection by specific middle-rank actors matter in determining the profiles of MEPs, and this effect holds even when we control for the socio-demographic variables. Age and education are of primary importance (Model II). Despite the fact that one main characteristic of CEECs in the EP is that they elect few women (see *inter alia*: Chiva 2014), gender does not seem to matter that much. The overarching finding is that those selection processes in which members' delegates and party national councils are present produce better candidates in terms of their previous experience, which is in line with our second hypothesis. The intervention of other party organs, by contrast, does not produce any significant impact on who gets recruited into the EP. In particular, the presence of very exclusive (leaders) or very inclusive (members and non-member supporters) is not relevant. This is a major breakthrough for the literature which has always envisaged candidate selection in a dichotomic perspective, opposing most inclusive and most exclusive party agents. It reveals that more focus should be put on selection by middle party organs which may allow for better (or at least more experienced) candidates to emerge.

Conclusion

The issue of EP professionalization covers three interlaced dimensions that this paper has explored. The first one concerns the patterns of institutionalization of the EP, and indirectly, of the EU. A central question is thus whether the self-reproduction of political elites will eventually get started within the European space, establishing an "insiders/outsiders differential" (Borchert & Zeiss, 2003) and providing EU institutions with selective mechanisms that build up the European political class (Borchert & Zeiss, 2003, cited in Best, 2006 : 7). Second, the professionalization of European actors' has been inherently linked to the issue of convergence, especially after the 'Big Bang' enlargement: are MEPs from different backgrounds converging to the same (professionalized) profile (Verzichelli & Edinger, 2005)? The third dimension questions the (non)-autonomization of EU institutions from the national level and hence is concerned with whether the European arena figures as an heterogeneous nationally-centred space (Navarro, 2009), being shaped by country-specific variables only. With these three dimensions in mind, it appears clearly why the sociological approach's most targeted locus is the European Parliament and its elites, the MEPs[10]. Being the only directly elected representatives at the European level, MEPs constitute privileged actors to understand how national patterns can be detected and explained.

This paper has accordingly explored the specific features that prevail in CEECs MEPs' profiles. It has done so through a cross-country and a cross-party analysis, that has purposely been limited to Eastern and Central Europe. In this regard, it has aimed at underlining and explaining differences between CEEs MEPs rather than between these MEPs and that of the rest of the EU/EP. It has allowed shedding new light on who these MEPs are in the context of

[10] One important exception is represented by Georgakakis and De Lasalle and their study about chief executive officers' profile (Georgakakis and De Lasalle, 2004)

the 2014 renewal of the EP. It has found that a great discrepancy exist between the MEPs' profiles, although specific patterns can be detected.

First of all, the extent to which each MEP's profile is "internationalised" and "Europeanised" varies a great deal across parties and countries. The first feature appears more accentuated among MEPs from Bulgaria, Latvia, Romania, Slovenia and Slovakia, while curriculums with a specifically 'European' dimension seem to be a prerogative of Bulgarian and Romanian MEPs. Besides, the analysis has stressed distinct patterns with regard to the domestic political career MEPs undertook before their arrival in Bruxelles/Strasbourg. More precisely, smaller countries' MEPs are more likely to have accumulated local, legislative and national experience than other CEECs MEPs. Concerning MEPs' role in their national political party, one additional cleavage has been detected. While some countries are inclined to confirm the "elephant cemetery" theory (Slovakia and Romania), others (Estonia and Latvia) are more likely to select MEPs with undisputed leadership position in their party, which may be attributed to party or country characteristics. If the descriptive section has emphasized important differences in terms of post-communist MEPs' profiles, it however has failed to determine which factor(s) can determine these differences. The heterogeneity of profiles does not seem to be a matter of regions, since differences can be observed even among the Baltic states, the Visegrad Group or the Western Balkan countries. In addition, the variation in post-communist profiles can hardly be attributed to the accession date, since different patterns can be highlighted even between countries of the same wave of enlargement (2004, 2007 and 2013).

The paper has, and this is perhaps its main contribution, explored and tested a new explanation to these differences, namely the role of the selectorate. It has indeed shown that who selects the candidates in each national party matters in explaining who the MEPs *in fine* are. As such, it has paved the way for a breakthrough in the literature by showing that, contrarily to what is often assumed, conferring selection powers to very exclusive (leaders) or very inclusive (members or supporters) selectorates does not lead to specific profiles of representatives. It is middle-rank party elites who tend to select more experienced heads of lists, a possibility which had never been clearly exposed in the literature. Two main lessons are hence in order: first, selection matters in determining who the elected personnel will be (sometimes even more than the ensuing elections), and second, it is important to decompose the party and identifies where the selection powers lie within a given party.

By endorsing these two lessons, this research calls for further investigations into how specific party actors and MEPs view the EP. If "the enhanced powers of the European Parliament may have rendered a truly European political career much more attractive than it previously was" (Manow & Verzichelli 2007), then there is a need to go beyond mere processes of selection so as to also explore the supply and demand of candidates to European elections. The multi-level structure of opportunities is of course of particular relevance to that regard, because who becomes a MEP still depends to a great extent on the alternative career paths available. Data on aspirants and candidates - and not only on elected MEPs - would hence constitute useful complementary outlooks.

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Appendix 1: Description of variables

Description of variables (N= 198)

Variable	Description / Indicator
Selectorate	Exclusiveness-Inclusiveness of the selectorate Means of the different steps with for each step the mean of the different party organs intervening in the selection (1= leader(ship) ; 2= executive committee ; 3=PPG ; 4=delegates ; 5= members attending an event ; 6 = all members ; 7=all members+non-member supporters)
Education level	Primary/ Secondary= 0 Bachelor's Degree= 1 Master= 2 Phd= 3
Internationalization of Studies	No= 0 Yes=1
Coherence EP Commission with profile	No= 0 Someway coherent=1 Yes=2
European Experience Within his/her nation	Dummy variable
European Experience In a euro- friendly organisation	Dummy variable
European Experience In the UE (apart from previous MEP)	Dummy variable
Incumbent/EP experience	0= No ; 1=has been a MEP before but not incumbent ; 2=incumbent
Political Experience Local/regional	Dummy variable
Political Experience National –legislative	Dummy variable
Political Experience National –executive	0=No ; 1= Minister ; 2=Head of State or Government
Non Elective Political Experience	Dummy variable
International professional experience	Dummy variable
Other than Politics	Dummy variables : Journalism and media: no (0), yes (1); Public : no (0), yes (1) Private: no (0), yes (1); Academics: no (0), yes (1)
(Intensity Of The) Role in the Party	0=no role ; 1=simple member ; 2=has been in the leadership of a party before ; 3=was in the highest instances of the party at the time of selection ; 4= was in the leadership of the party at the time of selection
Involvement in Civil Society	0=No ; 1=Yes, non-political ; 2 = Yes, political
Index 'Good candidate'	**Internationalization of Studies + International professional experience Coherence EP Commission with profile + European Experience** Within his/her nation + **European Experience** In a euro- friendly organisation **+ European Experience** In the UE (apart from previous MEP) + **Incumbent/EP experience + Political Experience** Local/regional + **Political Experience** National –legislative + **Political Experience** National –legislative + **Non Elective Political Experience + Other than Politics + (Intensity Of The) Role in the Party +** In the UE(a part from previous MEP)+ **Involvement in Civil Society + Education level**

Appendix 2: Legend of the 'good candidate' index graph (Figure 13.)