

The objective of the project is to determine the impact that party selection and general election processes have on the composition of national delegations to the European Parliament (EP). The particular research objectives include the following: 1) To conceptualise models for determining the composition of national delegations to the EP; 2) To determine the level of the inclusiveness of the selection and election processes in EU Member States; 3) To determine the impact of selection and election on the composition of national delegations to the EP; 4) To determine the extent of differences among EU Member States (comparative analysis); 5) To identify trends in the processes determining the composition of national delegations to the EP; 6) To identify the main factors determining the occurrence of the respective models; 7) To determine the importance of the processes of selection and election for the legitimisation of elites in national delegations to the EP. The theoretical basis of the project is provided by contemporary interpretations of the classical theories of the circulation of elites by Vlfredo Pareto and the iron law of oligarchy by Robert Michels.

General elections are a fundamental element of democracy. Since 1979, EP elections have also constituted a means of legitimising the powers and actions of the European Union (EU). The earlier equation of elections with the act of voting itself has been broadened in recent decades to include research on the processes preceding actual elections, principally the process of candidate selection. The selection process is also an important, and in some countries decisive, component of determining who will seat in the EP. Such research mainly focuses on the normative determinants of the selection process at the level of individual Member States and the practices at the level of political parties. However, there is a lack of research aimed at identifying the actual, rather than normative, level of “openness” (inclusiveness) of selection and election, and thus the relative impact of both processes on the shaping of the composition of national delegations to the EP. This project aims to bridge this gap. We propose a fully original research concept to complement existing qualitative research with a quantitative analysis allowing for establishing the degree of openness (inclusiveness) of both these processes according to unified criteria. This will make it possible to compare the inclusiveness of selection and election over time (1979-2024) and space (Member States of the Communities and subsequently the EU). The results of the research will allow conclusions to be drawn with regard to the mechanisms of the democratic selection of MEPs. At a detailed level, they may yield important findings regarding the changing roles of political parties, voters, selection, elections and the EP itself.

The overall research plan provides for five main phases stretched over 48 months: structuring, integration, quantification, comparison and evaluation. On this basis, models for determining the composition of the EP will be identified. These will be arranged along the exclusion-inclusion axis. According to the initial model it will be possible to assign individual national delegations to one of the four inclusiveness/exclusiveness models. The core of the research will be based on data provided by the EP, namely the personal profiles of MEPs, as well as data available from national electoral commissions or Member States’ ministries of internal affairs. The main research methods include: - desk research: analysis of the EP data, analysis of the national data concerning selection and election; - expert panel: an initial discussion and evaluation of the assumptions, research models and methodology and a final discussion of the project process and findings; - process tracing: analysis of the selection and election processes in connection with MEPs’ career paths; - comparative analysis: comparison of national delegations in terms of the models, trends and determinants attributed to them; - statistical methods (multivariate analysis, logistic analysis, survival analysis).