

Addressing Europe's democratic deficit:

An experimental evaluation of the pan-European district proposal

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Abstract

Many academics and commentators argue that Europe is suffering from a democratic deficit. An interesting proposal that has been put forward to address this problem is to elect some members of the European parliament in a pan-European district. In this paper, we evaluate this proposal using an online experiment, in which thousands of Europeans voted on a pan-European ballot we created. We find that the voting behaviour of European citizens would be strongly affected by the presence or absence of candidates from their own country on the lists. If a pan-European district is created, our findings provide an argument in favour of using a closed-list ballot, and fixing a maximum number of candidates from each country on the lists.

Introduction

There is a vivid debate in the literature about the (lack of) democratic legitimacy of the European Union (EU) (Kohler-Koch and Rittberger 2007). Some argue that the democratic deficit is limited as EU decision-makers are elected in well-functioning national democracies and interact in an institutional framework characterized by strong checks and balances (Majone 1998; Moravcsik 2002). Others contend that the democratic deficit is severe as there is a growing discontent among European citizens regarding the EU in general and its legislative decision-making process in particular (Hix 2008; Hooghe and Marx 2008; Karp, Banducci and Bowler 2003; Rohrschneider 2002).

Among those who accept that the perception of a democratic deficit is an important phenomenon (regardless of whether it is justified), it is often argued that the way European elections are organized does not help to reduce this deficit. Although the European parliament (EP) is elected during a massive election where hundreds of millions of voters elect their representatives, national considerations usually dominate vote choice. European citizens are not interested in European elections, they tend to abstain more, and they tend to use their vote as a way to protest against, or to reward, national governments, depending on the national electoral cycle (Hix and March 2007; Hobolt and Wittrock 2011; Reif and Schmitt 1980; Marsh 1998). As a consequence, parties use national instead of European labels to compete in EP elections, even if they form European political groups in the legislature after the election.

An interesting proposal that has been put forward to address the EU's democratic deficit is to change the districting system of the European election, and to elect, in addition to the current

national districts, a fixed number of members of the EP (MEPs) in a pan-European district.¹ Similar to national districts, the pan-European district would use some sort of proportional representation (PR) and each European citizen would be invited to cast a vote for a European party on a one-person-one-vote basis, regardless of her country. Since candidates from different countries would be competing against each other, it would help develop a genuine European political space, where ideas and arguments would be debated transnationally. In turn, this development, often referred to as the politicisation of the EU, is likely to increase citizens' support for European integration (De Wilde 2011; Habermas 2012). A recent study shows that Europeans are willing and able to engage in such a transnational political space (Fiskin, Luskin, and Siu 2014).

In this paper, we evaluate the pan-European district proposal. To do so, we rely on a unique online experiment that we conducted during the 2014 EP election. We invited thousands of European citizens to report how they would vote on a pan-European ballot. On this ballot, we randomised the nationality of candidates appearing on the various party lists. We are thus able to assess whether vote choice is affected by the presence of candidates from the subjects' own country on the lists.

At the end of our experiment, we asked participants whether they like the idea of transnational party lists competing in European elections. On the 1,116 people that fully completed our experiment (see the description of the sample below), 59% responded that they like it and 23% that they do not. However, even if the proposal is approved by a majority of Europeans, it is important to evaluate how voters would react to it. If their vote is strongly affected by national considerations, there are good reasons to think that the effectiveness of the pan-European district as a way to address Europe's democratic deficit will be threatened.

¹ A couple of years ago, MEP A. Duff formerly introduced this proposal to the EP. See the report of the EP Committee on Constitutional Affairs (AFCO 2012).

Creating a pan-European ballot

In the three weeks preceding the 2014 EP election, we conducted an online experiment (for a discussion of the details of this experiment, see [reference omitted as to preserve the anonymity of the review process]). We created a multi-lingual website², open to all, where users were invited to learn more about European elections in general and the rules used to elect MEPs, and to participate in an online voting experiment. To recruit experimental subjects, we collaborated with several local academic colleagues from almost every one of the 28 European countries. These colleagues were in charge of publicizing the website through national media. This operation was more successful in some countries than in others. In some of them, very few subjects completed the online experiment.³ To make sure that our results are not driven by very specific samples, we focus in this paper on the three countries for which we have the required data for more than 200 subjects: France, Germany, and Sweden.

In the experimental part of the website, we invited subjects of seven pre-selected European countries (i.e. Belgium, France, Germany, Hungary, the Netherlands, the United Kingdom, and Sweden) to report how they intended to vote in the upcoming EP election with the ballot utilized in their district. We also asked all subjects, regardless of their country, to report how they would vote if ten MEPs were elected in a pan-European district. This part of the study is the focus of the analysis in this paper. Finally, we invited subjects to respond to a short questionnaire concerning their socio-demographic profile and political attitudes.

We simulated a pan-European ballot by creating party lists based on the existing political

² The website is still on line and can be accessed via [url omitted as to preserve the anonymity of the review process].

³ Users who took part in the study after reading the online consent form became de facto subjects of our experiment.

groups of the EP. During the 2009-2014 EP legislature, there were seven political groups: the European People's Party (EPP, centre-right), the Progressive Alliance of Socialists and Democrats (S&D, centre-left), the European Conservatives and Reformists (ECR, conservative-Eurosceptic), the Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe (ALDE, liberal-centrist), the European United Left-Nordic Green Left (GUE-NGL, radical left), the Greens–European Free Alliance (Greens-EFA, green), and the Europe of Freedom and Direct Democracy (EFD, right-wing populist). We used these seven political groups to create seven lists on the pan-European ballot. It is reasonable to think that if there were a pan-European district, each of these groups would form a party list to compete against the others.

As mentioned above, we decided to set the number of MEPs elected in the pan-European district to ten. We thus had to present subjects with ten candidates per list. To do so, we randomly picked, for each subject, ten incumbent MEPs from each political group (in total there were more than 736 MEPs in all seven political groups). It is worth noting that although not all these MEPs were candidates for re-election, selecting actual European politicians has the advantage of making our experiment more realistic.

On the pan-European ballot we presented subjects with the seven pan-European lists, with the label and logo of the corresponding political group. The order of these lists varied randomly from user to user. We also disclosed the names of the ten MEPs we randomly selected, their official MEP pictures, and their country of origin. Figures 1 and 2 show a snapshot of our pan-European ballot under closed- and open-list PR, respectively (see below for a description of these two electoral systems). Subjects were able to click on the name of a candidate to access his or her webpage on the official EP website.

[FIGURES 1 AND 2 ABOUT HERE]

The way we built the pan-European ballots has the advantage of following clear and ‘neutral’ rules. However, it is worth noting that it excludes independent MEPs, as they were not part of any political group.

Since the first election in 1979, a European law stipulates that the members of the EP need to be elected through PR. However, each country can decide upon which variant of PR to use. In the 2014 EP election, 90% of all European countries used either a closed-list PR system, where voters have to cast a vote for a list, or an open-list PR system, where voters have to cast a vote for a list and for individual candidates within the list.⁴ In both instances, the seats are first allocated by party in proportion of the number of party-votes received. However, the two electoral systems differ in how they allocate seats to individual candidates within parties. Under closed-list PR, the seats are allocated to individual candidates in the order of the list, while in open-list PR the allocation depends on the number of individual votes received by each candidate. Note that, for our experiments the ordering of the candidates on the list was random. In reality, this ordering is decided by the party, possibly under some constraint (for instance, alternating gender like in France).

Several sub-variants of open-list PR were used during the 2014 EP election. In Sweden, voters had to choose a single individual candidate on the party list they voted for. In Belgium, they could choose as many individual candidates as they wanted on their chosen party list. In our experiment, we invited users to vote under the sub-variant used in Latvia where voters had to give a ‘+2’, a ‘+1’ or a ‘0’ to each of the individual candidates on the list they voted for. By default, the respondents gave a ‘+1’ vote to all the candidates on the list (see Figure 2). The ‘0’ vote can thus be considered a negative vote. This system is actually similar to the one used in

⁴ Only Luxembourg, Malta and Ireland used different electoral systems. In Luxembourg, the electoral system was panachage and cumulation. In Malta and Ireland, it was the single transferable vote.

Belgium except that in Belgium voters had to choose between giving a '+1' or a '0' to each of the individual candidates of the list they voted for.

In our online experiment, we asked all participants to cast a hypothetical vote under three electoral systems: closed-list PR (used in France and Germany), open-list PR (Latvia, as described above), and panachage with cumulation (Luxembourg). We used these three electoral systems for both ballots, i.e. the actual national ballot of the subject's district in the seven pre-selected European countries mentioned above and the pan-European ballot. In this paper, we focus on the pan-European ballot and the closed- and open-list PR systems only. As mentioned above, these two electoral systems are the most commonly used in EP elections.

Theoretical expectations

Vote choice can be seen as a function of two vectors of preferences: preferences over parties and preferences over individual candidates. Voters evaluate the various parties and candidates, and decide to cast their vote considering these two vectors. The literature has long focused on the determinants of preferences over parties, somehow assuming that these preferences are more important to explain vote choice. The classic studies mention, for example, a voter's socio-economic status (Lazarsfeld, Berelson, and Gaudet 1948), ideology (Downs 1956), partisan identification (Campbell et al. 1960), attitudes towards specific issues (Nie, Verba, and Petrocik. 1999), and the overall reputation of parties (Stokes 1963).

But there is evidence that voters also take individual candidates into consideration (Canache, Mondak, and Cabrera 2000). This tendency is probably even more frequent nowadays given the recent trend towards the personalisation of elections and politics in established democracies (Colomer 2011; Karvonen 2012). Recent research has investigated various

determinants of preferences over candidates such as the candidate's gender (Dolan 2014), appearance (Lawson et al. 2010), non-verbal attributes (Dumitrescu, Gidengil and Stolle 2015), activity on Twitter (Spierings and Jacobs 2014), whether they introduce Private Members' bills in parliament (Loewen et al. 2014), whether they systematically follow the party line in parliamentary votes (Vivyan and Wagner 2012), and how frequently they visit their constituency (Crisp and Desposato 2004).

In this strand of research, a special focus has been put on how local ties affect preferences over candidates. It is often assumed that local candidates, i.e. those who are from the district in which they compete or have a special connection with the district because they used to hold other political positions there, are more successful. As a consequence, most parties seek to recruit local candidates to increase their vote share (Gallagher 1988), and the candidates themselves tend to run in their local district, especially when competition is severe (Shugart, Valdini, and Suominen 2005). This assumption has been tested in several studies. Blais et al. (2003) show that under single-member district plurality rules vote choice is affected by voters' preferences over local candidates. Tavits (2010) demonstrates that in open-list PR systems candidates who have held political positions locally are more successful than others. Riera (2011) finds that, even under closed-list PR, party lists that are led by a candidate born and raised in the district tend to obtain slightly more votes.

In our experiment, we expect co-nationality between candidates and subject to affect voting behaviour. We expect this effect to be even stronger than in national elections given that Europeans from different countries show high levels of distrust for each other (Bornhorst et al. 2010; Klingermann and Weldon 2012).

Our first hypothesis concerns the open-list PR system. We expect co-nationality to affect

preferential votes. Under this electoral system, subjects could choose to give a positive (+2), negative (0) or neutral vote (+1) to each candidate on the list they chose. We expect experimental subjects to give more positive, and fewer negative, points to their co-nationals. The hypothesis is thus:

Hypothesis 1. The probability of a subject casting a positive (negative) individual candidate vote is higher when the candidate is (is not) a national of her country.

The second hypothesis concerns both closed- and open-list PR systems. We expect co-nationality between candidates appearing on each list and subjects to affect list votes. In particular, we expect that the probability of voting for a given list will be a function of the presence of co-nationals on the list.

Hypothesis 2. The probability of a subject voting for a pan-European list, under both closed- and open-list PR, is higher when there are candidates from her country on the list.

We also have expectations regarding the moderating effect of the electoral system on the relationship between co-nationality and list vote. In a recent study, Blumenau et al. (forthcoming) show that mainstream parties are more successful under open-list PR than under closed-list PR because voters who have an extreme preference over a certain 'niche' issue do not have to vote for a niche party to express it. Under open-list PR, they can express this extremity by giving a positive preference vote for a similarly-extreme individual candidate.

We thus expect the effect of the presence/absence of co-nationals on list votes to be larger under closed-list PR. Under open-list PR, subjects can still favour their co-nationals by voting

directly for them on the list they choose, even if the number of candidates from their country on the list is lower. Under closed-list PR, they do not have this opportunity. This leads to our third hypothesis:

Hypothesis 3. The effect of the presence of national candidates on the probability of voting for a given pan-European list is larger under closed-list PR than under open-list PR.

The findings

We focus in this paper on the experimental subjects from France, Germany, and Sweden. In total, 1,116 subjects from these countries completed the online voting experiment (421 in France, 316 in Germany, and 379 in Sweden). Table 1 reports their list vote in the pan-European ballot, under both open- and closed-list PR. The first observation to make is that the distribution is rather dispersed. No list reaches more than 28% of the votes (i.e., the Greens-EFA). This is in line with the reality of the EP, which is highly fragmented in terms of parties.

[TABLE 1 ABOUT HERE]

The second observation is that there are few differences between closed- and open-list PR systems. In the aggregate, the largest difference in votes concerns the Greens-EFA, but it is only eight votes (so, not even 1% of the 1,116 votes cast).

As noted in [reference omitted to preserve the anonymity of the review process], left-leaning voters are over-represented in our sample. Only a bit more than 30% of all 1,116 subjects voted for a right wing or centre-right pan-European list (i.e. the ALDE, EPP, EFD, or ECR). In the actual 2014 EP election, these parties obtained a bit more than 50% of the seats.

To correct this bias, we weight subjects using the actual results of the 2014 EP election. To do so, we use vote intention in the national ballot (regardless of the pan-European vote) under the given national electoral system in their country (open-list PR in Sweden and closed-list PR in France and Germany). Then, we apply this weight to the pan-European results. In the weighted sample, we also sure that the difference in size of the country sub-samples does not alter the results in making the sum of the weights to equal a standard 1,000 units in each country.

Table 1 also shows the vote in the pan-European ballot when we use the weighted sample.⁵ Table A1 in the Appendix reports the weighted and non-weighted vote in each country in the pan-European ballot, under both electoral systems. All the analyses presented in this paper are based on the weighted sample. However, we always report the initial, before weighting, number of observations.

To test our first hypothesis, we run a multinomial logit model predicting the probability of each subject giving a positive, negative, or neutral vote to each individual candidate on the list she voted for under open-list PR. Each subject had the possibility of voting for ten individual candidates on the list, so there are ten times 1,116 observations. On average, 7% of the votes were negative, 21% positive, and 72% neutral.

The main independent variable is the nationality of the candidate (1 if she is a co-national of the subject, 0 otherwise). We also include several controls. Some of them are located at the subject-level, others at the candidate-level. At the subject-level, we include the country of

⁵ Given the nature of our recruitment process, it is reasonable to think that highly educated people interested in politics and citizens favourable to the EU are also over-represented in our sample. However, we lack of pertinent information to correct for these biases. We discuss the potential problem this bias could create in the conclusion.

origin of the subject (France, Germany, or Sweden), the pan-European list she voted for under open-list PR (to control for party bias), and the number of points she gave to candidates in total. At the candidate-level, we include a dummy variable for whether the candidate is female or male, and her age.

Table 2 reports the estimations of the multinomial logit models. It reveals that a voter has a between seven and eight times greater chance of giving a positive vote to a candidate of her country, all other things being equal. This effect is statistically significant at a level of $p < 0.01$ and is much stronger than the one of other candidate-level covariates. As a matter of comparison the age of the candidate does not affect preferential voting, and although female candidates are more likely to receive positive votes and less likely to receive negative votes, the effect is much weaker.

[TABLE 2 ABOUT HERE]

Similarly, the chances of giving a negative vote to a co-national candidate is 32% lower. However, this effect is not statistically significant. This might be due to the rather low number negative votes given in total (only 7%). The empirical evidence thus supports our first hypothesis at least partially: subjects give more positive votes to candidates of their country.

To test our second and third hypotheses, we run conditional logit models predicting the probability of voting for each list under both closed- and open-list PR systems. Each subject had the opportunity to vote for seven lists, so there are seven times 1,116 observations. We measure the co-nationality of the candidates on the list in three different ways. First, we use a continuous measure counting the number of co-nationals in each list. In our dataset, this number goes from zero to six with more than 90% of the lists having zero, one or two national

candidates. Second, we use a categorical measure of the number of co-nationals to evaluate whether the effect is linear or not. We suspect that the effect of one extra co-national on the list diminishes as the number of co-nationals increases. Finally, following the same intuition, we use a binary variable measuring whether there is a least one co-national on the list or none. In our dataset, 54% of the lists that appeared on the subject's screen did not include any co-national.

In this analysis, we again include controls at the subject- and list-level. At the subject-level, we use fixed-effects to account for the wide range of factors affecting the probability of voting for a given party list. At the level of the list, we include a dummy variable for whether the list would be consistent with the vote cast by the subject on the national ballot (same party family), the number of female candidates on the list, and the average age of the candidates.

Tables 3 and 4 report the results for closed-list and open-list PR, respectively. Under both systems, we observe from the first column that for each extra co-national candidate on a list, the probability of voting for the list increased by 12%, all other things being equal. This effect is statistically significant at a level of $p < 0.05$. However, we see from the second column that the highest effect is between lists that include zero co-nationals and those that include two co-nationals. The probability of voting for the list increases by 45%-65% in this situation (statistically significant at a level of $p < 0.05$). This seems to constitute a ceiling for the effect of co-nationals: the inclusion of an extra co-national does not increase the probability to vote for the list further once this threshold of two co-nationals is reached. However, it is hard to draw any definitive conclusion here, as there are very few lists that included more than two co-nationals (less than 10%).

[TABLES 3 AND 4 ABOUT HERE]

The last columns of Tables 3 and 4 show that the presence of at least one co-national increases the probability of voting for a list by 48% (under closed-list PR, 50% under open-list PR). This effect is strong and statistically significant at a level of $p < 0.01$. Tables 3 and 4 show that in all specifications and even after controlling for the effect of consistent voting, which is a powerful predictor, the positive effect of co-nationality on list choice is strong. This finding lends support for Hypothesis 2.

Tables 3 and 4 also reveal that the effect of the presence of co-national candidates on the probability of voting for a list is equally strong under both closed- and open-list PR (for example, the coefficient associated to the presence of a least one co-national on the list is of 0.4 and 0.41 respectively). Thus, we do not find empirical evidence supporting our third hypothesis. This unexpected result may come from our design, as we always asked experimental subjects to vote first under closed-list PR and then under open-list PR. It is reasonable to think that many of them were reluctant to switch their list vote from one system to the other in an attempt to appear consistent. One way to circumvent this problem would be to randomly ask subjects to cast a vote under either closed- or open-list PR. Further research is thus needed to properly test our third hypothesis.

Further tests

To evaluate the robustness of our findings and to further investigate the effect of co-nationality on vote choice, we conducted some additional analyses. We use the same variables as in models in Tables 2, 3, and 4. In the models predicting list voting, we use the binary measure of co-nationality (presence or absence of a least one co-national on the list).

First, one of the main concerns in the literature on attitudes towards the EU is that citizens of some countries are more favourable to European integration than others (Hooghe and Marx 2008). We thus conduct the same analyses as above in each of the three countries separately.

Figures A1 and A2 in the Appendix show the odd ratios associated with the effects of co-nationality on preferential and list voting, for French, German and Swedish subjects. It appears that co-national candidates are as likely to receive a positive vote under open-list PR in each of the three countries. The absence of a clear effect of co-nationality on the probability of giving a negative vote is also confirmed.

Similarly, we observe that the effect of the presence of at least one co-national on the probability of voting for a list under both closed-list and open-list PR is positive among French and German subjects. Swedish subjects do not seem to be affected by the presence of co-nationals on a party list. This result might be due to the fact that Swedish citizens, just as those of other Nordic countries, show exceptionally high levels of social trust towards foreigners (Delhey and Newton 2005). This suggests that in the country partisan preferences trump the effect of co-nationality.

Second, when modelling vote choice, it is important to evaluate whether the odds of selecting a given party or list depend on the presence or absence of other alternatives. We re-estimated the models of Tables 3 and 4, excluding each of the seven lists one at the time. Figure A3 in the Appendix shows the odds ratios associated with the effect of co-nationality on the probability of voting for a list under closed-list and open-list PR. For the most part, the effect of co-nationality is not affected. It is only when we exclude the EFD, the ECR, and the GUE-NGL that the effect diminishes, but only slightly. This is rather logical given that very few co-nationals appeared on these lists in our experiment and that these lists did not obtain a large portion of

the votes.

Third, under closed-list and open-list PR (at least in the variant of open-list PR used for this experiment), the order of candidates on the list is crucial to determining who is ultimately elected. The higher a candidate is on a list, the higher her chances of being elected. Subjects may thus be more affected by the nationality of the candidates at the top of the list. To test this intuition, we estimated the same models as in Tables 3 and 4, first considering the number of nationals among the first nine candidates appearing on the list, then another model in which we considered the first eight candidates appearing on the list, and so on, until we considered just the first candidate appearing on the list. Figure A4 in the Appendix reports the odds ratios associated with each of these variables. We observe that the effect of co-nationality on the probability of voting for a party list does not vary according to the position of the candidates. This result suggests that the subjects were affected by the nationality of the candidates regardless of their position on the party list. However, it worth being noted that subjects were aware that the ordering of the candidates on the lists was random. In reality, parties decide upon this ordering and voters can use this information to make their choice (for example candidates at the top of the list might be more competent or more willing to be elected than those at the bottom).

Looking at these findings, a final question comes to mind: are voters ready to vote for an ideologically distant party in order to support candidates from their country? To answer this question, we calculated the predicted vote of each subject based on the models of Tables 3 and 4 while (1) keeping all variables at their original values, (2) simulating that there was at least one co-national on each of the lists. The predicted vote in the second scenario can be considered the list for which the subject should have voted if there was no consideration of co-nationality. In Table 5, we cross these two predictions and report the proportion of subjects

that are likely to have changed their vote because of co-nationality. For the sake of clarity, we have listed the pan-European party lists from the ideological right to left.

[TABLE 5 ABOUT HERE]

From Table 5, we see that most subjects did not switch their vote (bolded values).⁶ When they do switch, however, they do not seem to follow any clear ideological pattern. More precisely, for five of the seven lists (EED, EPP, S&D, Greens, and GUE-NGL) the list that gets most switchers is *not* the most proximate. Those who are willing to switch because of nationality considerations seem to be ready to support ideologically distant lists.

Conclusion

The EU is in a critical moment in its development. Many citizens express a negative attitude towards European integration and do not trust European decision-makers. A proposal that has been put forward to mitigate this problem, and to help European representatives gain the confidence of the population, is to create a pan-European district in which a small number of MEPs would be elected. In this paper, we evaluated this proposal via a unique online experiment where we invited thousands of Europeans to report how they would vote in a pan-European ballot, and where we randomised the nationality of the candidates appearing on the lists. We find that vote choice in a pan-European district would be substantially affected by the presence of national candidates on the lists. Europeans would give more positive votes to candidates of their country under open-list PR. Also, they would tend to vote for pan-European party lists that included co-nationals.

⁶ We cannot interpret the results for the EFD and the ECR, as only very few subjects are predicted to vote for them (less than 1%).

We conclude by discussing three aspects of our online experiment that could potentially affect our results. First, in the website we created a pan-European ballot, but there was no pan-European election at the time of our experiment. If there had been one, it is reasonable to assume that pan-European parties would have engaged in pan-European campaigns. These campaigns would have increased the parties' visibility in the European public. If the citizen-subjects had been more informed about the pan-European parties, it is possible that they might have been less affected by the presence of national candidates on the lists. Also, in the long run, a pan-European election might increase the politicisation of the EU and reduce the effect of the nationality of the candidates on vote choice. Still, the effect of national identity is likely to be substantial at least during the first pan-European elections.

Second, in the pan-European ballot, we primed the subjects to think in terms of nationality by providing them with the country of origin of all the candidates appearing on the lists. If a pan-European district is created, this information might not be provided to voters. This priming might have led to an overestimation of the effect of the presence of national candidates on the party lists on vote choice.

Finally, the sample we rely on for our analyses is not fully representative of the European population. In particular, given the nature of our recruitment process, highly educated citizens and citizens interested in politics who know the EU and the EP political groups are certainly over-represented (the website was presented as a website on EP elections). We do not have the information necessary to correct for this bias, and it could have led to an underestimation of the effect of the presence of national candidates on the party lists on vote choice. It is reasonable to think that citizens who are less educated and knowledgeable about the EU would be even more affected by the presence of co-nationals on party lists.

However, we can derive two concrete recommendations for EU decision-makers from our findings. First, if a pan-European district is created, we recommend fixing a maximum number of candidates from each EU country on the lists. Given that there are currently 28 EU member states and that the original proposal is that 20 seats be created, this might mean a maximum of one candidate per country on each of the lists. If this number is not fixed, pan-European parties, anticipating the effect of the nationality of candidates appearing on the list on vote choice, as elucidated in this paper, would be prone to nominating candidates from large countries. This would be a rational strategy to maximize their overall vote share.

Another strategy for pan-European parties would be to nominate candidates with multiple nationalities, such as the former President of the Green-EFA political group, who is German and French. Some studies show that the overall population of this type of 'transnationally active' citizen within Europe is growing (Kuhn 2015). However, this would also weaken the transnational character of the pan-European election, as most candidates would come from the United Kingdom, Germany and France. In turn, it would not help European citizens from small countries to feel represented in the EU decision-making process.

Second, if a pan-European district is created, the argument developed in this paper goes in favour of the implementation of a closed-list PR system, instead of an open-list PR system. Since we find that Europeans would give more positive individual candidate votes to national candidates, the open-list PR system would also lead to the domination of the pan-European seats by large countries. Under this electoral system, which candidates are ultimately elected (partially) depends on the number of individual candidate votes. Again, this would not help citizens from small countries feel represented in the EU legislative process. All in all, although we see the great potential of creating a pan-European district to reduce the EU democratic deficit, we recommend being very cautious in setting the precise rules for this election.

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Table 1. List voting in the pan-European ballot

(N=1,116)	Closed-list		N	Open-list		N
	Non-weighted	Weighted		Non-weighted	Weighted	
EFD	5%	5%	56	5%	6%	59
ECR	4%	5%	41	3%	6%	35
EPP	7%	21%	77	7%	22%	77
ALDE	13%	17%	150	14%	15%	151
S&D	22%	23%	242	22%	28%	241
Greens-EFA	27%	14%	306	28%	13%	314
GUE-NGL	22%	15%	244	21%	12%	239

Table 2. Predicting preference voting

	Negative vote		Positive vote	
	Coef.	RRR	Coef.	RRR
Co-national candidate	-0.39 (0.28)	0.68 (0.19)	2.03** (0.14)	7.62** (1.10)
Age of the candidate	0.01 (<0.01)	1.01 (0.01)	-0.01* (<0.01)	0.99* (<0.01)
Female candidate	0.12 (0.15)	1.12 (0.016)	0.28** (0.10)	1.32** (0.13)
Subject's total number of points given	-5.69** (0.36)	<0.01 ** (<0.01)	4.73** (0.26)	112.90** (28.83)
Subject's party vote (GUE-NGL as reference):				
EFD	0.42 (0.28)	1.53 (0.43)	0.42 (0.23)	1.52 (0.35)
ECR	-0.02 (0.34)	0.98 (0.34)	0.11 (0.20)	1.12 (0.30)
EPP	0.31 (0.24)	1.37 (0.33)	0.13 (0.16)	1.14 (0.18)
ALDE	0.86** (0.23)	2.35** (0.55)	0.55** (0.17)	1.73** (0.29)
S&D	0.63** (0.19)	1.88** (0.36)	0.35** (0.13)	1.43** (0.18)
Greens-EFA	0.57** (0.18)	1.76** (0.31)	-0.07 (0.11)	0.93 (0.10)
Subject's country (Sweden as reference):				
France	0.12 (0.17)	1.13 (0.19)	-0.29* (0.12)	0.74* (0.09)
Germany	0.01 (0.16)	1.01 (0.16)	-0.34** (0.11)	0.71** (0.08)
Constant	2.12** (0.54)	8.55** (4.53)	-7.07** (0.42)	<0.01 ** (<0.01)
Chi²	766.76**			
N	1,160			
Observations	11,160			

Note: Entries are coefficients (Coef.) and relative risk ratios (RRR) estimated through multinomial logit predicting preference voting for individual candidates (neutral vote as reference). Standard errors are in parentheses. * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$ (two-tailed).

Table 3. Predicting list voting (closed-list PR)

	Continuous		Categorical		Binary	
	Coef.	OR	Coef.	OR	Coef.	OR
Number of co-nationals (linear)	0.12*	1.12*				
	(0.05)	(0.06)				
Number of co-nationals: (categorical, 0 as reference)						
1 co-national			0.37*	1.45*		
			(0.17)	(0.25)		
2 co-nationals			0.50*	1.65*		
			(0.24)	(0.39)		
3 co-nationals			0.31	1.37		
			(0.16)	(0.22)		
4 co-nationals			0.27	1.30		
			(0.31)	(0.41)		
5 co-nationals			0.56	1.75		
			(0.41)	(0.71)		
6 co-nationals			0.65	1.91		
			(1.03)	(1.96)		
At least 1 co-national					0.40**	1.48**
					(0.15)	(0.23)
Consistent vote	2.07**	7.91**	2.04**	7.72**	2.04**	7.69**
	(0.11)	(0.90)	(0.11)	(0.88)	(0.11)	(0.87)
Number of women	0.08*	1.08*	0.07	1.08	0.07	1.08
	(0.04)	(0.04)	(0.04)	(0.04)	(0.04)	(0.04)
Age (mean)	0.04	1.04	0.03	1.03	0.04	1.03
	(0.02)	(0.02)	(0.02)	(0.02)	(0.02)	(0.02)
Chi ²	389.72**		380.67**		377.32**	
N	1,160		1,160		1,160	
Observations	7,812		7,812		7,812	

Note: Entries are coefficients (Coef.) and odd ratios (OR) estimated through multinomial conditional logit with subject-level fixed effects predicting list voting under closed-list PR. Standard errors are in parentheses. * p < 0.05, ** p < 0.01 (two-tailed).

Table 4. Predicting list voting (open-list PR)

	Continuous		Categorical		Binary	
	Coef.	OR	Coef.	OR	Coef.	OR
Number of co-nationals (linear)						
Number of co-nationals: (categorical, 0 as reference)	0.12*	1.12*				
1 co-national			0.41*	1.50*		
2 co-nationals			0.45*	1.57*		
3 co-nationals			0.33	1.38		
4 co-nationals			0.28	1.32		
5 co-nationals			0.56	1.76		
6 co-nationals			0.05	1.05		
At least 1 co-national					0.41**	1.50**
Consistent vote	2.06**	7.84**	2.03**	7.63**	2.03**	7.64**
Number of women	0.08*	1.09*	0.07	1.08	0.07	1.08
Age (mean)	0.03	1.03	0.03	1.03	0.03	1.03
Chi ²	386.00**		379.75**		375.07**	
N	1,160		1,160		1,160	
Observations	7,812		7,812		7,812	

Note: Entries are coefficients (Coef.) and odd ratios (OR) estimated through multinomial conditional logit with subject-level fixed effects predicting list voting under open-list PR. Standard errors are in parentheses. * p < 0.05, ** p < 0.01 (two-tailed).

Table 5. Predicted effects of co-nationality on list voting

	Predicted vote (original values)							
	EFD	ECR	EPP	ALDE	S&D	Greens-EFA	GUE-NGL	Total
Closed-list PR								
Predicted vote (if co-nationals in all lists)								
EFD	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	11.6%	0.0%	88.4%	0.0%	0.3%
ECR	0.0%	0.0%	51.5%	0.0%	25.6%	7.7%	15.3%	0.7%
EPP	0.0%	0.0%	90.2%	0.3%	0.3%	8.0%	1.2%	31.9%
ALDE	0.0%	0.0%	9.6%	75.8%	9.9%	3.3%	1.4%	15.6%
S&D	0.4%	0.0%	1.1%	1.7%	92.8%	1.8%	2.3%	26.4%
Greens-EFA	0.0%	0.0%	0.6%	2.1%	0.2%	96.8%	0.2%	16.1%
GUE-NGL	0.0%	0.0%	0.4%	5.4%	0.0%	3.4%	90.8%	9.1%
Open-list PR								
Predicted vote (if co-nationals in all lists)								
EFD	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	100.0%	0.0%	0.2%
ECR	0.0%	0.0%	52.9%	0.0%	18.4%	7.9%	20.9%	0.7%
EPP	0.0%	0.0%	91.0%	0.1%	0.3%	7.6%	1.0%	33.2%
ALDE	0.0%	0.0%	1.8%	81.7%	11.5%	4.0%	1.1%	13.5%
S&D	0.4%	0.0%	0.9%	2.4%	92.9%	1.8%	1.6%	26.5%
Greens-EFA	0.0%	0.0%	0.6%	2.2%	0.2%	96.5%	0.5%	16.7%
GUE-NGL	0.0%	0.0%	0.4%	0.8%	0.0%	3.4%	95.4%	9.2%

Note: Columns are predicted votes when the number of co-national in the lists are kept at their original values, rows are predicted votes if there was at least one co-national in each list (based on models of Tables 3 and 4, all other variables are kept at their original values). For example, the first row can be read as ‘among the 0.3% of subjects that are predicted to vote for the EFD under closed-list PR if there was at least one co-national in each list, 0% are predicted to vote for the EFD if the co-nationality is kept at its original value, 0% for the ECR, 0% for the EPP, 11.6% for the ALDE, ...’.

Figure 1. Screenshot of the closed-list pan-European ballot

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Closed List

1 You vote for one list. The votes will determine the number of seats given to the list. Within each list, candidates will be elected according to the order that appears on the ballot, which has been decided by the party.

2 Hit "Confirm your choice"

<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
1 Gabriele ZIMMER Germany	1 Nigel FARAGE United Kingdom	1 László SURJÁN Hungary	1 Robert STURDY United Kingdom	1 Jean-Luc BENNAHMIA France	1 Amelia ANDERSSDOTTER Sweden	1 Gianni PITTELLA Italy
2 Cornelia ERNST Germany	2 Zbigniew ZOBRO Poland	2 Lambert van NISTELROOU Netherlands	2 Kay SWINSBURNE United Kingdom	2 Andrew DUFF United Kingdom	2 Jean LAMBERT United Kingdom	2 Marek SIWIEC Poland
3 Sabine WILS Germany	3 Mara BIZZOTTO Italy	3 Sebastian Valentin BOCU Romania	3 Valdemar TOMAŠEVSKI Lithuania	3 Cecilia WKSTRÖM Sweden	3 Heiga TRÖPEL Germany	3 Monika FLAŠKOVÁ BEŇOVÁ Slovakia
4 Vladimír ŘEMEK Czech Republic	4 Jacek Ogiard KURSKO Poland	4 Thomas MANN Germany	4 Marina YANNAKODAKIS United Kingdom	4 Eduard-Raul HELLVIG Romania	4 Satu HASSI Finland	4 Ioan Mircea PAȘCU Romania
5 Sabine LÖSING Germany	5 Jaroslav PAŠKA Slovakia	5 József SZÁJER Hungary	5 Ryszard Antoni LEGUTKO Poland	5 Angelika WERTHMANN Austria	5 Christian ENGSTRÖM Sweden	5 Dolores GARCÍA-HIERRO CARAMALLO Spain
6 Nikola VULJANIĆ Croatia	6 Paul NUTTALL United Kingdom	6 Barbara MATERA Italy	6 Michał Tomasz KAMIŃSKI Poland	6 Charles GOERENS Luxembourg	6 Carl SCHLYTER Sweden	6 Sergio Gaetano COFFERATI Italy
7 Karlka Tamara LIOTARD Netherlands	7 Jacek WŁOSOWICZ Poland	7 Horst SCHNELLHARDT Germany	7 Konrad SZYMAŃSKI Poland	7 Guy VERHOFSTADT Belgium	7 Eva JOLY France	7 Claudette ABELA BALDACCINO Malta
8 Georgios TOUSSAS Greece	8 Frank VANHECKE Belgium	8 Marco SCURRIA Italy	8 Anthea McINTYRE United Kingdom	8 Giommarta UGGIAS Italy	8 Eva LICHTENBERGER Austria	8 Marino BALDINI Croatia
9 Charalampos ANGOURAKIS Greece	9 Roger HELMER United Kingdom	9 Roberta METSOLA Malta	9 Edvard KOŽUŠNIK Czech Republic	9 Ole SCHMIDT Sweden	9 Philippe LAMBERTS Belgium	9 Spyros DANELLIS Greece
10 Marisa MATIAS Portugal	10 Basilean BELDER Netherlands	10 Theodor Dumitru STOLOJAN Romania	10 James ELLES United Kingdom	10 Jorgo CHATZIMARKAKIS Germany	10 Itzi IRAZABALBEITIA FERNÁNDEZ Spain	10 Vilija BLINKEVIČIŪTĖ Lithuania

Confirm your choice

Figure 2. Screenshot of the open-list pan-European ballot



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Open List

- 1 You vote for one list. The votes will determine the number of seats given to the list.
- 2 Within your chosen list, you give 0, 1 or 2 points to each candidate. Within your list, candidates will be elected according to the points they received.
- 3 Hit "Confirm your choice"

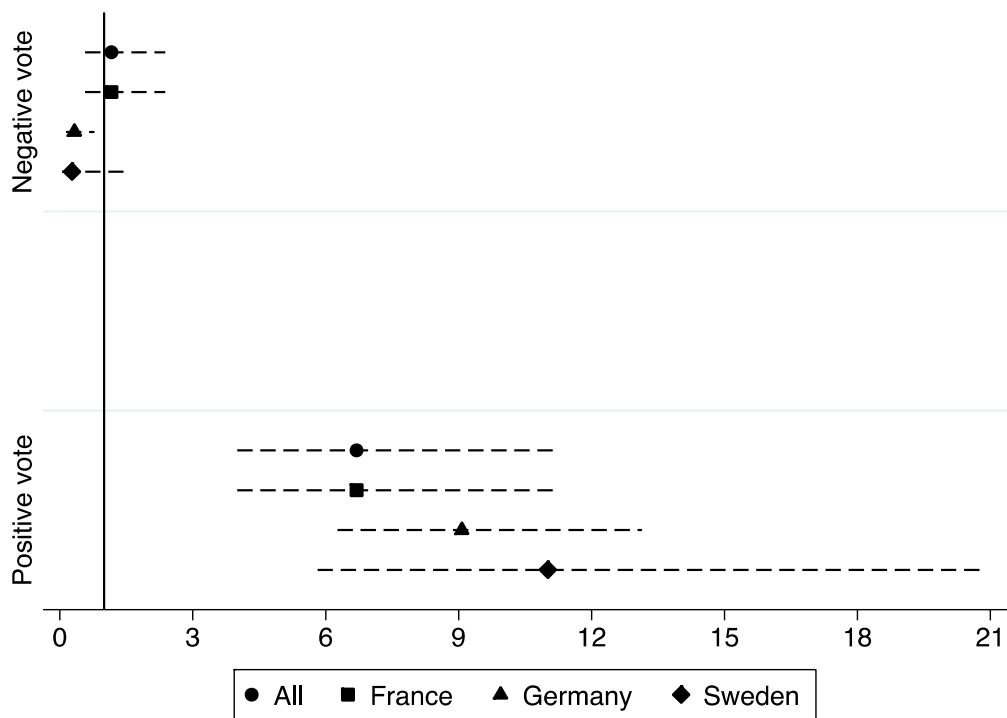
 United Left - Nordic Green Left	 Freedom and Democracy	 European People's Party	 Conservatives and Reformists	 Alliance of Liberals and Democrats	 Greens - European Free Alliance	 Progressive Alliance of Socialists and Democrats
 Germany	 United Kingdom	 Hungary	 United Kingdom	 France 0 1 2	 Sweden	 Italy
 Germany	 Poland	 Netherlands	 United Kingdom	 United Kingdom 0 1 2	 United Kingdom	 Poland
 Germany	 Italy	 Romania	 Lithuania	 Sweden 0 1 2	 Germany	 Slovakia
 Czech Republic	 Poland	 Germany	 United Kingdom	 Romania 0 1 2	 Finland	 Romania
 Germany	 Slovakia	 Hungary	 Poland	 Austria 0 1 2	 Sweden	 Spain
 Croatia	 United Kingdom	 Italy	 Poland	 Luxembourg 0 1 2	 Sweden	 Italy
 Netherlands	 Poland	 Germany	 Poland	 Belgium 0 1 2	 France	 Malta
 Greece	 Belgium	 Italy	 United Kingdom	 Italy 0 1 2	 Austria	 Croatia
 Greece	 United Kingdom	 Malta	 Czech Republic	 Sweden 0 1 2	 Belgium	 Greece
 Portugal	 Netherlands	 Romania	 United Kingdom	 Germany	 Spain	 Lithuania

Appendix

Table A1: Party vote on the pan-European ballot, per country

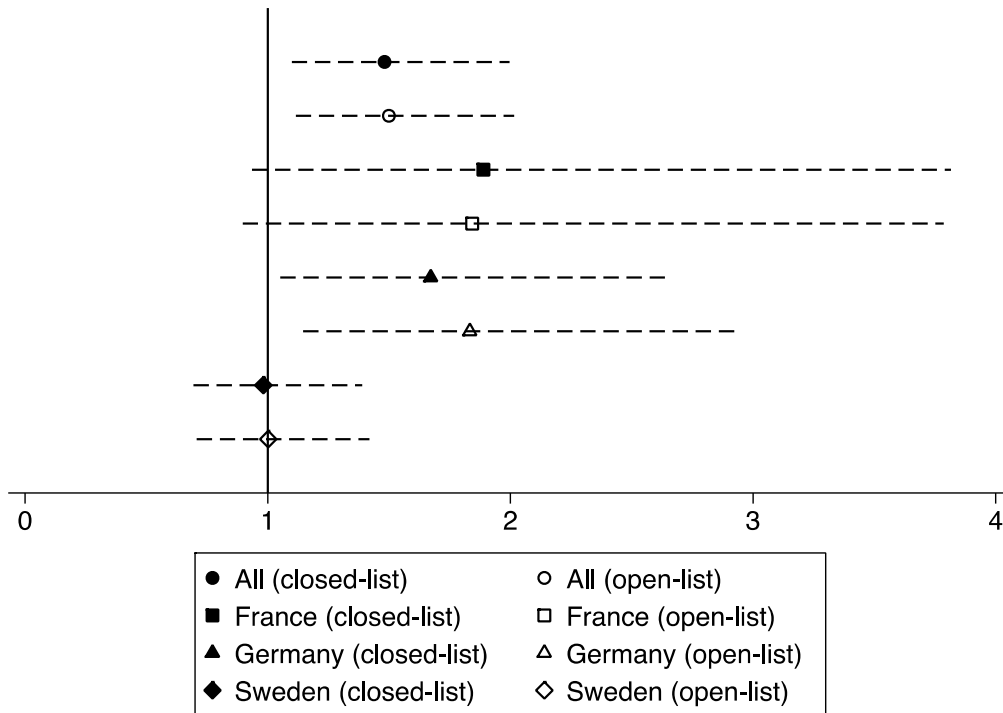
	Closed-list		Open-list	
	Non-weighted	Weighted	Non-weighted	Weighted
France (N = 421)				
ALDE	12%	17%	13%	17%
EPP	5%	24%	5%	24%
EFD	2%	6%	3%	6%
ECR	1%	5%	1%	5%
S&D	20%	15%	20%	15%
Greens-EFA	31%	15%	31%	15%
GUE-NGL	28%	18%	27%	18%
Germany (N = 316)				
ALDE	7%	12%	7%	12%
EPP	9%	30%	9%	30%
EFD	2%	1%	2%	0%
ECR	2%	1%	1%	0%
S&D	34%	34%	33%	33%
Greens-EFA	32%	12%	34%	14%
GUE-NGL	14%	10%	15%	10%
Sweden (N = 379)				
ALDE	20%	23%	20%	21%
EPP	7%	9%	7%	11%
EFD	11%	9%	11%	9%
ECR	8%	9%	7%	8%
S&D	13%	21%	14%	21%
Greens-EFA	20%	15%	20%	15%
GUE-NGL	22%	15%	21%	14%

Figure A1. Effect of co-nationality on open list preferential voting, by country



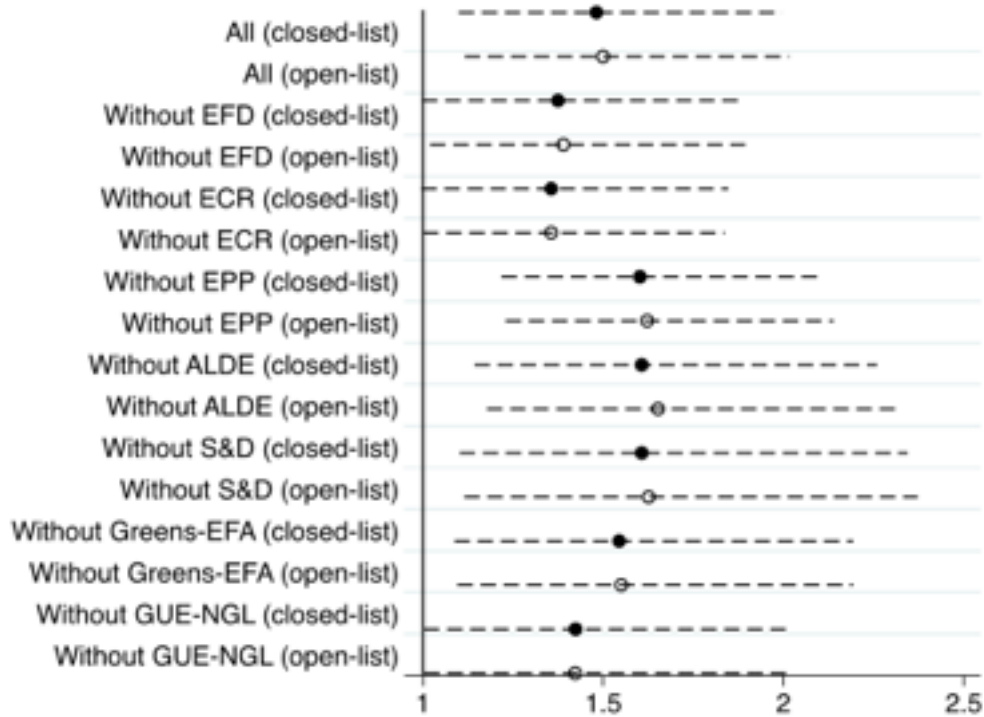
Note: Entries are relative risk ratios and 95% confidence intervals of voting positively or negatively for a co-national candidate (compared to the neutral vote category), estimated through multinomial logit models. Other covariates are the same as those of Table 2.

Figure A2. Effect of co-nationality on list voting, by country



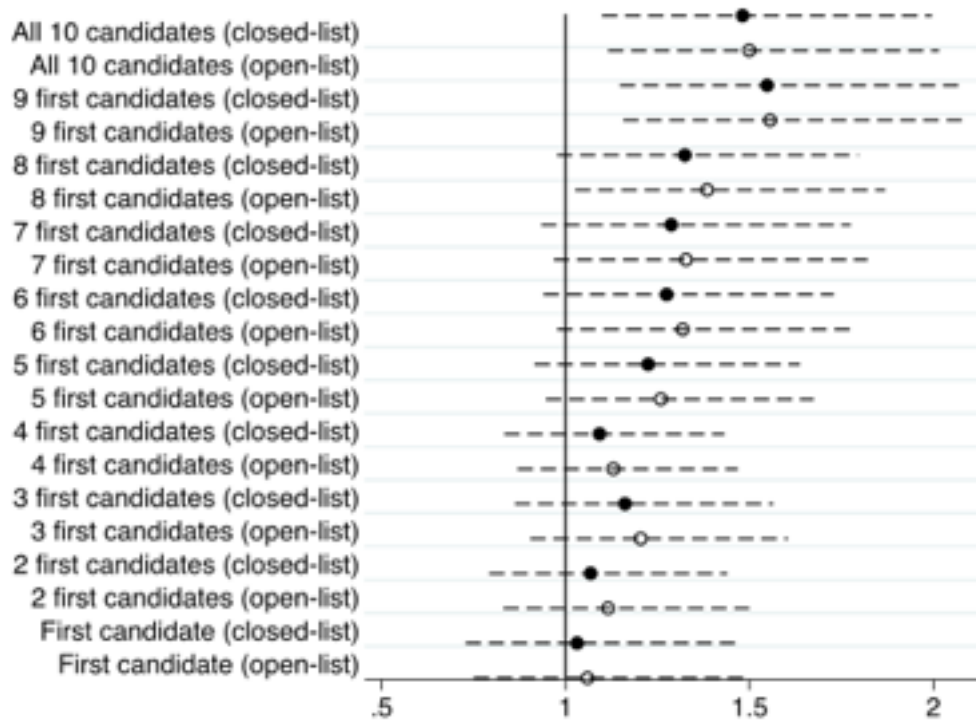
Note: Entries are odd ratios (and 95% confidence intervals) of voting for a list where there is a least one co-national candidate (compared to none), estimated through subject-level fixed effects conditional logit models. Other covariates are the same as those of Tables 3 and 4.

Figure A3. Effect of co-nationality on list voting, excluding lists



Note: entries are odd ratios and 95% confidence intervals of voting for a list where there is a least one co-national candidate (compared to none), estimated through subject-level fixed effects conditional logit models. Each time, we exclude one list. Other covariates are the same as those of Tables 3 and 4.

Figure A4. Effect of co-nationality on list voting, reducing the number of candidates considered



Note: Entries are odd ratios and 95% confidence intervals of voting for a list where there is a least one co-national candidate (compared to none), estimated through subject-level fixed effects conditional logit models. Each time, we only consider a sub-sample of list candidates to measure the dependent variable. Other covariates are the same as those of Tables 3 and 4.