

Course: GV251

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## **Week 8: European Elections**

**PART I) The “second-order” national election model**

**a) In small groups, please discuss the following questions related to the “second-order national election” model of European Parliament elections, and fill in the table below.**

- i. Provide a short definition of a “second-order national election”. What distinguishes second-order national elections from “genuinely European” elections?**
- ii. According to Hix and Marsh (2011), what are the observable implications of a European election conforming to the second-order national election model? In other words, what would we expect to observe in terms of voting outcomes in European elections, compared to national elections, if the model was true?**
- iii. Do Hix and Marsh (2011) actually find any evidence in support of the second-order national election model?**
- iv. According to Hix and Marsh (2011), what would be a possible observable implication of a European Parliament election being “genuinely European”?**
- v. Do Hix and Marsh (2011) actually find any evidence in support of the hypothesis that “genuinely European” issues have also influenced voting behaviour in European elections at particular moments in time?**

	<b>European elections are “second-order national elections”</b>	<b>European elections are “genuinely European” elections</b>
<b>i. Definitions</b>		
<b>ii, iv. Observable implications</b>		
<b>iii, v. Evidence</b>		

**b) *Discuss:* In what ways do low voter turnout and the lack of focus on EU-level issues in European elections pose a challenge for the democratic legitimacy of the EU?**

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**PART II) European elections and the Spitzenkandidat system**

**a) According to its proponents, in what way can the Spitzenkandidat system improve the EU's democratic legitimacy?**

**b) Did the nomination of lead candidates affect the nature of the 2014 election as a second-order national election? In providing your answer, you may refer to the findings of Schmitt, Hobolt and Popa (2015), or other sources of information.**

c) What implications does your answer in the previous question have for your overall evaluation of the Spitzenkandidat system?

d) Even if we accept that the Spitzenkandidat system is a *necessary* condition for turning European Parliament elections into genuinely European elections, is it also a *sufficient* condition for achieving that aim? What else needs to happen for the Spitzenkandidaten system to deliver on the promise of bringing about genuinely European elections?

e) Can you think of any disadvantages of the Spitzenkandidat system? *While thinking about your answer to this question, please take a few moments to read and critically evaluate the criticisms of the system put forward by the French President Macron, the ALDE party group, and the former British Prime Minister Cameron (Appendix A).*

## Appendix A: Critical views towards the Spitzenkandidat system

### Liberals ally with Macron for election, but no candidate yet

By [DAVE KEATING](#)

MADRID, 12. NOV 2018, 09:26

After months of wooing Emmanuel Macron, Liberal leader Guy Verhofstadt saw his dream of an alliance with the French president's En Marche party become reality this weekend.

Astrid Panosyan, one of the founders of En Marche, formally made the offer of an alliance on Friday (9 November) at the party congress of the Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe (Alde) in Madrid.

It will see En Marche and Alde campaign together on a common platform in the run-up to the European election. (...)

Macron has been trying to build a broad tent for a new group which also would take like-minded parties that are currently in the centre-left S&D and Green groups, and maybe even parties currently in the centre-right EPP. (...)

### No Spitzenkandidat

The Liberals declined to put forward a lead candidate (Spitzenkandidat) for European Commission president at their congress, despite the fact that the EPP and S&D groups have selected their candidates – Manfred Weber and Frans Timmermans – at their party congresses this month.

Despite having embraced the Spitzenkandidat process at the last European election in 2014, Alde is opposing the process this time around.

There was a general feeling at the Congress that the system has been designed to favour the EPP group, because it almost certainly will win the most seats in next year's election.

Emmanuel Macron has come out strongly against the process, saying that the choice of commission president should remain in the hands of member state leaders in the European Council.

A nomination coming from the council is more likely to result in a Liberal commission president because - including Macron - there are an equal number of ALDE and EPP leaders in the Council.

However, Alde will reluctantly participate in the Spitzenkandidat process by putting forward a team of candidates – most likely five.

According to Alde sources, this team is certain to include Guy Verhofstadt, but the rest of its composition is still uncertain.

Possible names include Danish competition commissioner Margrethe Vestager and Czech justice commissioner Vera Jourova. However, neither women put themselves forward at the congress.

Alde will decide who will be on the list in February. However the details of how this list will work remain murky.

Alde also adopted its manifesto for the 2019 election on Saturday, with the support of En Marche.

Source: <https://euobserver.com/elections/143345>

## Cameron hits out at Spitzenkandidaten system

By TIM KING 6/13/14

**The UK's prime minister switches focus of criticism from Jean-Claude Juncker to the procedure that the European Parliament wants to use to select the next Commission president.**

David Cameron, the British prime minister, has switched tactics in his campaign against Jean-Claude Juncker becoming the next president of the European Commission.

In an article prepared for publication today in various newspapers throughout Europe, Cameron makes a detailed criticism of the *Spitzenkandidaten* system, by which European political parties put forward candidates for the Commission presidency.

The European Council never agreed to the *Spitzenkandidaten* procedure and should not feel bound by it, he argues. It would be a mistake to establish that procedure, he says, because, he claims, no serving national president or prime minister could put him or herself forward for the post.

Strikingly, Cameron abstains from criticism of Juncker himself. Whereas his previous opposition has included criticism of Juncker as federalist and as representative of past times, his direct criticism of Juncker is muted: he repeatedly observes that Juncker's name was not on the ballot-paper in any country in the European Parliament elections and that no one voted for him.

He complains that to follow the *Spitzenkandidaten* procedure would be to "shift power from the national governments to the European Parliament without voters' approval".

He urges his fellow members of the European Council to resist a back room deal by members of the European Parliament.

"Now is the time for Europe's national leaders to have the courage of their convictions by standing up for their place in the EU and what is right for Europe's future."

Source: <https://www.politico.eu/article/cameron-hits-out-at-spitzenkandidaten-system/>

## Appendix B: The 2014 election campaign of the Spitzenkandidaten

*The following passage is an extract from the transcript of one of the televised debates among the Spitzenkandidaten in the 2014 European Parliament election. If you are interested in this topic, please read the passage and think about the following questions:*

- i. In this extract, did the lead candidates offer sufficiently distinct policy proposals on issues that matter, giving voters the sense that they have a real choice between alternative political agendas?
- ii. Did the lead candidates address a European audience, or were they appealing to their respective domestic audiences?

You can watch the entire debate here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MtLeP8BahI4>

Journalist: About recipes – governments in Europe very often claim that austerity measures are working, but with so many people out of work, is the medicine killing the patient? Would you have done something in a different way?

Ska Keller [Greens]: Absolutely. I think austerity is just bringing us deeper and deeper into the crisis. We now have 26-27 million people unemployed, and just over the austerity years, more than 6 million jobs have been actually lost. So it's very clear that the recipe of austerity has not worked, it has just worsened the situation. We have to overcome that. Instead of austerity, we have to invest into the economy, but into a greener economy, because we need to create sustainable jobs, jobs that will still be there in a couple of decades, jobs that give good life-quality for people, and that I really believe can only happen if we invest for example in renewable energy, in energy efficiency, and education and health. Unfortunately we missed the chance in the last Multiannual Financial Framework, the long-term budget of the EU, where we've been proposing more green investments, but unfortunately we didn't find support from the conservatives and the social democratic group. I think this would be the right way forward, investment is the key word, not austerity.

Alexis Tsipras [GUE/NGL – European left]: First of all, let me say that the ideas expressed by Guy - he thinks they're new but they're very old. They're the ideas that led us to this crisis. They're the ones which led to the crisis of 1929. They're the ones which caused the financial bubble in the US. And they're the ones which through the management of the crisis have led Europe to a state of grave danger. If we want to get out of the crisis, we must invest on growth and on social cohesion. We must stop austerity, boost demand, and most importantly, we have to stop with this paranoia of the debt in Europe. We must have a European convention on the debt, and to find a solution similar to the one that was given to Germany in 1953, at a unique moment of solidarity in Europe, when a large part of the debt was written off, a moratorium was given for the payment of the rest, and [there was] a growth clause. If we don't tackle the issue of the debt rationally, then we will not manage to overcome the crisis, and we will remain forever at the same state of recession and disaster.

Martin Schulz [PES – centre-left]: I would have done things absolutely differently. The combination between budgetary discipline on the one hand, which is unavoidable and necessary, and strategic investment in growth and employment, that was the better way. We have only unilaterally cut in public budgets, with the message 'you must only cut, and immediately the trust of investors you will get back'. Visibly, it didn't happen. What we have never discussed is the fight against tax evasion and tax fraud. One billion euro every year the

member-states lose by tax fraud and tax evasion. So not to cut, on one hand, but to fight against tax fraud and tax evasion, that would be my way, because we can't only speak about cut, we must also speak about the revenue side of the public budget, and about growth, investments in the digital agenda, investments in the grids for energy supply are important.

Jean-Claude Juncker [EPP – centre-right]: It's an easy and a difficult question. Everyone is speaking as if they were discovering of these problems for the first time today. The Liberals, the Socialists and the Christian Democrats were the ones who managed the crisis. I understand that now we want to stand back and look at the management of the crisis now, but the Liberals, the Socialists and the Christian Democrats were working together on it. Of course investments are necessary. Why is Europe not investing enough? Because our budgets do not allow us to do that. Why don't they allow us? Because we have accumulated debts and deficits. Those who accumulate debts and deficits do everything to make it impossible to conduct resolutely future-oriented investments. Whoever wants investment, whoever wants growth, whoever wants employment, must put public finances in order.

Guy Verhofstadt [ALDE – liberals]: I also want to react to those who say that it is not necessary to have fiscal discipline. You need fiscal discipline, otherwise you cannot have growth on the mid-term and the long-term. There is proof of that in all parts of the world. But next to that, and that is true, and that has been forgotten in the last five years, you need a new strategy of growth. And growth that means not making new debts, because we cannot afford ourselves - if you have in most of the countries more than 100% debt, it's not the budget that shall create new investment. You have to do it in a more intelligent way. And the more intelligent way is to use the size of Europe, this enormous market of 500 million. Let me give you one example, digital. If in America Apple wants to start with a new product, they go to the four main operators, they have a deal, and they start immediately to spread the new product. If we have to do it, we need in 28 different countries, 100 operators to do it, and that's the reason why they have Google, Facebook, Twitter, Apple, Microsoft, what are all American companies, and we need still to do that.