

Cross-legitimities between ideology and nation

A study of the positioning of
political parties with respect to
transnational lists in the EU

EUROPEAN DEMOCRACY: THE REQUIRED INSTITUTIONAL REFORMS

CROSS-LEGITIMITIES BETWEEN IDEOLOGY AND NATION

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Ideologies have historically managed to bring people together to advance their agendas and political objectives, but in the case of the EU, these have been crossed by national tensions. MEPs have to comply not only with their ideals, but also with the wishes of their national constituencies, failing to be an institution of ideological representation.

To overcome this weakness, and render the EU a true representative democracy, transnational lists may be an answer to leave behind the limitations of national constituencies, advancing the concept of a European identity represented in a European constituency. The issue is so complicated that it has managed to split the vote of the European People's Party, with some of its MEPs voting in favour and some against.

The proposal for transnational lists is still in a limbo, however its implementation may soon become a reality for which some issues remain to be addressed, specially those dealing with getting around nations as a limitation to the way we conceive politics.

Social Media summary

The future of the Europarl are transnational lists, but fostering a European identity may mean confronting nation and ideology

Keywords

#transnationallists #nationalism #voting #participation #europeanidentity

Short bio

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TABLE OF ACRONYMS

ECR – European Conservatives and Reformists
EFA – The Greens/European Free Alliance
EP – European Parliament
EPP – European People's Party
EU – European Union
GUE/NGL – European United Left/Nordic Green Left
ID – Identity and Democracy
MEPs – Members of the European Parliament
n-i – non-inscrits or non-attached
Renew – Renew Europe
S&D – Progressive Alliance of Socialists and Democrats
TEU – Treaty on European Union
TNL – Transnational lists

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Ideology and Nation

Where there have been societies, there has been a development of different forms of government to manage social conflict. More archaic forms of government resorted to rule of the strongest or rule by fear. Some authors speak of « states of nature » to refer to a less politically developed kind of society, at least in terms of the European liberal democracies that start to appear by the early 19th century.

The growing challenges of further demand for political participation (namely the expansion of suffrage) essentially meant that institutions and the law needed to adapt and invent new ways of channeling this activity. It is the birth of the political clubs, in England and France mostly, to gather sensibilities and support from different people. What Althusser (1970) defines as « a system of ideas, of representations that shape the mind of a man or social group », that is, an ideology.

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Ideologies are found at the center of all levels of political life, they move the individual and hence they move the masses. All liberal democracies have created systems of representation through the existence of political parties that relate to the different spectrum of ideals present in the constituency. Cleavages found in societies are thus represented in parliaments and tend to accommodate confronted positions on different issues.

Further, some systems are bicameral, to accommodate not only ideology, but also territorial representation, where needed. It is the case and utility of most senates, although name may vary, which include for example Germany, India, Argentina, Brazil or the United States, to name a few. It is true that electoral systems tend to favor certain conditions that facilitate political participation through the adherence to a party, and so to an ideology, so we find that in most systems the same parties are present on both cameras of parliament, with the same stance on the same issues.

In any case, these arrangements are made to manage the tensions existing between ideologies, to accommodate opposed concepts of justice or economic projects. Moreover, in some countries, the presence of independentist movements find in these spaces a way of democratically addressing their concerns and pushing for their agenda. It is the case of Spain, Belgium or United Kingdom, where public political spaces provide an opportunity for debate within the democratic institutions.

Nationalism appears then as a specific branch in ideology that advocates for a project of political legitimacy linked to a land and a culture¹. « In brief, nationalism [...] requires that ethnic boundaries should not cut across political ones, and, in particular, that ethnic boundaries within a given state – a contingency already formally excluded by the principle in its general formulation – should not separate the power-holders from the rest » (Gellner, 1983 : 2).

Also, nationalism is not a monolithic ideology, and is crossed by other sensibilities and stances, which may never topple the ultimate objective of nationalist self-determination. The main two approaches to nationalism are the French and German traditions, mostly defined by Ernest Renan and Johann Gottfried Herder, and can be summarised as the republican model and the culturalist model.

The culturalist model, or German model of Nation, is related to the philosophical notion of *Volkgeist*. Defined by Herder in his *Ideas for the Philosophy of the History of Mankind* (1784 – 1791), this concept encompasses the spirit of a people which is shaped by their common language, but also collective experiences, cultural references and shared religious beliefs. It is inspired by the context of the German states which were independent and needed a theory to consolidate their claims to become one nation.

The republican model was explained by Renan in 1882 in his work *What is a Nation ?* where he questioned the idea of the link provided by a common history, language, culture or religion as the fundamental bond between citizens to define a Nation. The lessons learned from the French revolutionaries that expanded the ideals of the Revolution throughout Europe, tell us that the existence and future of a Nation depend on the willingness of the citizens to work for a common political project.

There are as many systems as countries exist in the world since every society builds a specific structure to answer its needs and face its internal challenges, the answers of Renan and Herder to the context they lived in reflect the impossibility to separate ideology to reality. This can be applied to every State, however, there is only one supranational system that deals with these issues, as there is only one supranational system based on the principles of transfer of competences and political representation of the citizens, that is, the European Union.

¹ Nationalism is an ideology whereas nationality is a legal link between a person and a country.

EU tensions between sovereignty and representation

Founded in 1951 by the Treaty of Paris as the European Economic Community and refounded in 1993 as the European Union by the Treaty of Maastricht, the EU gathers 27 countries in a unique international organization that is built on the transference of competences and a solid body of institutions and *acquis communautaire*. It is an exceptional exercise of international cooperation that has grown and survived thanks to the establishment of strict rules of accession that include territorial, economic and political conditions: the countries must be geographically European, with market economies that can compete in the common

The EU can be flexible, it has demonstrated its ability to adapt to challenges, and this may be one of its best attributes and the reason it has only advanced for 70 years.

market, and meet the Copenhagen criteria (having stable institutions, rule of law, respect for minorities, ability to comply with membership obligations, etc.).

The system created these last 70 years has accommodated to the changes both in the EU and in Europe, to better represent the interests of the Member states and the citizens, and to pursue its own objectives of economic, social and political cohesion and development.

Some of the best examples of these changes are the adjustments introduced by the Treaty of Amsterdam (1997) to accommodate the expansion of post-soviet Europe; the introduction of a common currency in 2002 following the Delors Report; or the restructuring of the power-share in institutions after Brexit since 2020.

The EU can be flexible, it has demonstrated its ability to adapt to challenges, and this may be one of its best attributes and the reason it has only advanced for 70 years, not taking a step back and rising to the occasion every time, i.e., Brexit.

The policy discussed here is the proposal for transnational lists, a radical change to the election method of the members of one of the EU's main political bodies. Out of all the EU's institutions, the better-known ones are the Council, the Commission and the Parliament, because of their purposes but also their configuration. The Parliament is the institution that more effectively brings the policy of the EU from the supranational to the local level. It manages to take *Brussels* into the home of every citizen with right to active and passive suffrage.

The Parliament

The Parliament was established in 1952 as the Common Assembly of the European Coal and Steel Community, then reformed in 1962 as European Parliament, and it held the first direct elections in 1979. Hence, it is the only directly elected EU body. It has legislative, supervisory, and budgetary responsibilities which were last developed by the Lisbon Treaty in 2009, to give it equal footing with the Council. Other than its powers and policy, it is the common public space to put forward different projects, gathering its 705 MEPs in the same public institution to debate and challenge the political agenda at the highest level.

Other than this, it has an important role as it should be the place where ideological and national tensions manifest, but the democratic deficiency of EU institutions harms its efficiency in this sense.

What is the democratic deficiency? This issue can be approached from several fronts, for example voting turnout, which in the European case tends to reflect a lack of participation in elections, and thus a real representation of the European citizens.

Table 1. Voting turnout in EU elections (1979 – 2019)

Elections	1979	1984	1989	1994	1999	2004	2009	2014	2019
Turnout	61,99%	58,98%	58,41%	56,67%	48,51%	45,47%	42,97%	42,61%	50,66%
Member States	9	10	12	12	15	25	27	28	28

Source: European Parliament (2019)

Others, like Mair & Thomassen, address it as « the explicit ambitions of the European Union to be a representative democracy » (Mair & Thomassen, 2008:3). The citizens expectations regarding the Parliament were related to the ambitiously written Treaty of the EU, that establishes in its Article 10 (1) that “the functioning of the Union shall be founded on representative democracy”. This is the real challenge; shall the EU be a representative democracy? Does it have the tools and institutions to make this happen? Do TNL have any power to change this lack of citizen support?

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The Electoral System

The 705 MEPs are elected at the EU elections, which work through a system of proportional representation. Although the specific date may vary from one EU member state to another, elections are held every five years.

Citizens of EU member states cast their votes for political parties or independent candidates in their home country. As for eligibility, voters must be citizens of an EU member state and meet the voting age requirements established by their respective country. Also, in some countries, voting is compulsory, while in others, it is voluntary.

Table 2. MEPs by country

Austria	19	Italy	76
Belgium	21	Latvia	8
Bulgaria	17	Lithuania	11
Croatia	12	Luxembourg	6
Cyprus	6	Malta	6
Czech Republic	21	Netherlands	29
Denmark	14	Poland	52
Estonia	7	Portugal	21
Finland	14	Romania	33
France	79	Slovakia	14
Germany	96	Slovenia	8
Greece	21	Spain	59
Hungary	21	Sweden	21
Ireland	13		

Source: European Parliament (2019)

Most EU member states use a system of proportional representation. This means that the number of seats a political party or independent candidate wins in the EP is proportional to the percentage of the vote they receive. After the votes are counted, MEP seats are allocated to each political party or independent candidate based on their share of the vote. Further, some countries may have electoral thresholds, which require a political party to receive a minimum percentage of the vote to secure any seats in the EP. The specific threshold percentage varies from country to country.

Once this process takes place, the composition of the Parliament reflects two things: first a proportional representation by country of the citizens that make up the EU; second, an ideological representation by political parties, which organize in political groups in the EP.

Hence, the allocation of seats in the EP is crossed by two elements: nationality and ideology. This would mean that sometimes the MEPs find themselves in a tension between the interests of their political group and the interests of their constituency

(their country), even though the spirit of the institution is to have ideological representation, not territorial, and that may be an issue to achieve the status of representative democracy as proclaimed in the TEU².

Table 3. Composition of the European Parliament by political groups and countries, 2023

	EPP	S&D	Renew	Greens/EFA	ECR	ID	GUE/NGL	n-i	total
Austria	7	5	1	3		3			19
Belgium	4	3	4	3	3	3	1		21
Bulgaria	7	5	3		2				17
Croatia	4	4	1		1			2	12
Cyprus	2	2					2		6
Czech Republic	5		6	3	4	2	1		11
Denmark	1	3	6	2		1	1		14
Estonia	1	2	3			1			7
Finland	3	2	3	3		2	1		14
France	8	6	23	13		23	6		79
Germany	30	16	7	25		11	6	1	96
Greece	7	2	1		1		6	4	21
Hungary	1	5	2					13	21
Ireland	5		2	2			4		13
Italy*	8	19			6	29		14	76
Latvia	2	2	1	1	2				8
Lithuania	4	2	1	2	1			1	11
Luxembourg	2	1	2	1					6
Malta	2	4							6
Netherlands	6	6	6	3	5	1	2		29
Poland	16	7	1	1	27				52
Portugal	7	9		1			4		21
Romania	14	11	8						33
Slovakia	6	3	2		1			2	14
Slovenia	4	2	2						8
Spain	13	21	9	3	4		6	3	59
Sweden	6	5	3	3	3		1		21
EU	187	147	98	76	67	61	39	29	704**

² On a more philosophical level it would also confront models of nationalism, as the EU would embody the French of republican model of nation where peoples of different backgrounds and languages (although the idea of a collective European experience lingers in the form of Jewish-Christian civilization), against the more restrictive nationalist models of culture, religion or language, which often include euroskeptic positions.

Source: European Parliament (2023)

* Italian MEPs have switched back and forth between groups so to measure we have just taken

2019 election results without afterwards changes, unlike every other country

** 1 vacant of a total 705 MEPs

Reinforcing the « ideological » role of parties and groups in the EP by supressing the « national » element created by the system of national lists, may thus be an option to advance towards making the EU the representative democracy it ambitions to be. Of course this would imply giving up certain sovereignty rights, creating a tension between the national governments and the citizens, as member states would be bypassed by the EU in its relations with its EU citizens.

Transnational lists

The idea of TNL involves creating a system in which a portion of the seats in the European Parliament would be filled by MEPs elected through pan-European electoral lists, rather than through national elections. This would mean that citizens across the EU would have the opportunity to vote for candidates from different countries, and the elected MEPs would represent the interests of the entire EU rather than just their respective member states.

Advocates of TNL argue that such a system could strengthen the European dimension of the EU and promote a sense of shared identity among European citizens. They believe it would provide an opportunity for voters to engage with EU-wide issues and enhance democratic representation at the European level. It could also potentially contribute to a more integrated and cohesive European Union.

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On the other hand, critics have raised concerns about the potential challenges and implications of implementing TNL. Some argue that such lists could weaken the connection between MEPs and their national constituencies, as they would no longer be directly elected by citizens of their respective countries. There are also practical considerations, such as the difficulty of designing a fair and

balanced system that ensures proportional representation from different member states.

It is worth noting that the decision to introduce TNL would require significant changes to the existing electoral framework of the EP, although as we have pointed out it has changed before to adapt to new needs. Any proposal to implement TNL would require approval from all EU member states, as well as amendments to the treaties governing the functioning of the EU.

For now, the proposal provides that every voter gets 2 votes, one for the national list and one for the EU constituency of the TNL. This second list will be decided by the EP political groups who, since there are 27 seats to be disputed, will be allocating the 27 seats ideally in a plural and diverse fashion, to reflect the diversity of the European society.

It is important to note that all MEPs will have the same standing in the EP, with no differences between the national-lists and the TNL elected ones. It also introduces the figure of the Spitzenkandidaten or the lead-candidate, who will have legitimacy to head the Commission (Kotaniadis, 2023).

The results and debate

In May 2022 the draft legislative act was approved by 323 votes for, 262 against, and 48 abstentions, and the accompanying resolution with 331 votes for, 257 against, and 52 abstentions.

In the vote, S&D, Renew, Greens/EFA and GUE/NGL voted in favour. In sum, the leftist groups (including the environmentalists and regionalists) plus the centrist liberals, voted for the flexibilization of the voting procedure to facilitate eliminating the « national » or « territorial » element, in favour of a universal project of EU shared political identity.

The rest, ECR, ID and n-i, voted against the proposal, so the center to far right preferred to keep the system as it was, with national lists and representation in the EP.

There is one group, however, whose decision on the issue matters most out of all the EP. Part of the EPP, the christian democratic and conservative party, voted for, while part voted against of TNL. This demonstrates exactly what the conflict implies, specially on such a sensitive subject in regard to national representation.

This duality reproduced in the Committee responsible on the draft motion for a legislative resolution, with half of the EPP voting in favour and half against the resolution.

Table 4. Committee vote on the draft motion for the TNL proposal

In favour	EPP	Christian Doleschal, Othmar Karas, Sven Simon, Antonio Tajani
	Renew ³	Pascal Durand, Charles Goerens, Sandro Gozi, Guy Verhofstadt
	S&D	Brando Benifei, Gabriele Bischoff, Włodzimierz Cimoszewicz, Victor Negrescu, Giuliano Pisapia, Domènec Ruiz Devesa
	GUE/NGL	Leila Chaibi, Helmut Scholz
	Green/EFA	Damian Boeselager, Gwendoline Delbos-Corfield, Daniel Freund
Against	ECR	Angel Dzhambazki, Jacek Saryusz-Wolski
	ID	Gerolf Annemans, Laura Huhtasaari, Antonio Maria Rinaldi
	n-i	László Trócsányi
	EPP	Brice Hortefeux, Paulo Rangel, Loránt Vincze

Source: European Parliament (2022)

The two positions that divide the EPP can be seen represented by Sven Simon and Paulo Rangel, in the debate in the Committee for the draft of the proposal. The full intervention is laid in Annex 2, however the main points were:

- MEP Simon considered that the growing role of the EU as a geopolitical actor should be met with a reform of the democratic legitimation of its institutions, essentially tackling the issue of democratic deficit. Creating a European constituency would allow citizens to express their ideological preference, disregarding the national limitation of the vote.
- MEP Rangel argued that instead of solving the democratic deficit, it would reinforce it by breaking the principle of being close to citizens. Also, as a supporter of federalism, this instrument appears as a centralization tool that would ultimately harm the representation of smaller countries (however the project provides a mechanism to guarantee their fair participation). Lastly, TNL create an opportunity for nationalization of issues having, for example, several people from the same nationality on one group and none on another.

Hence, the same ideological group sees the same policy with two different approaches: for Simon Sven (CDU – EPP) it is an opportunity to create a European

³ The intervention of MEP Pascal Durand (Renew) is also interesting to analyse the position of the liberals that conceive the EU not as a country, but as « une construction démocratique sui generis et nous avons la nécessité de créer un corpus européen, une citoyenneté européenne, de partager »; and believe that the elections are a tool to achieve this end.

constituency, whereas for Paulo Rangel (PSD – EPP) it is a way of enhancing nationalism.

CONCLUSION

The EU is perhaps the more complex international organisation in the world, with a set of transferred competences and the political, economic and social compromise of 27 member states.

Since 1992, the Maastricht Treaty, there is a concept of European citizenship that has been promoted among Europeans to attain the ultimate objective of transforming the EU into a representative democracy. The project of TNL may become a tool to create that sense of common identity and to overcome the limitation of territory or nation when defining the composition of the EP.

Moreover, it is an issue that has demonstrated that within the EP political groups there can be different stances on the same issue, and that sometimes it answers to a national/ideological cleavage. While for the Portuguese EPP TNL may endanger the representation of smaller countries, for the German EPP it is a chance to foster EU identity among citizens by giving them power to vote for candidates outside their borders, European candidates.

Therefore it is a good policy, at least on a more liberal stance of Renew MEPs like Pascal Durand, who conceive this as an opportunity to build EU, to promote citizen engagement and political participation. It is also a substitution of the more restrictive concept of cultural nationalism, with the republican nationalism promoted by the EU which is plural and diverse, as long as one believes in the common political project.

POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

By september 2023, the proposal remained in a procedural limbo, waiting to be implemented towards 2024. If it were implemented, there would be a set of issues to observe to guarantee the correct functioning of this policy:

- If we do conceive the EU as a representative democracy, as laid by Article 10 (1) of the TEU, the TNL policy is a first step towards this objective.
- The democratic deficit of the EU may not be solved only by applying TNL, there is a lack of political participation in the EU. When granted more political participation, if citizens do not respond with a higher turnout in 2024 this may backlash against the policy.
- Although in an ideal situation citizens would vote for the candidate that best represents their ideology, TNL can't guarantee that nationalism is not an issue when voting, and people may vote for their national candidate. The only real chance we have at overcoming this tension between ideology and nationalism, is to foster the sense of a European identity and the adjustment of society to this new constituency.
- As EPP MEP Paulo Rangel points out, this may enforce certain issues (environmentalism, conservatism, socialdemocracy, women's rights, etc.) to become national issues if only people from one country get elected for one ideology, which in the end would mean identifying a country with an issue or an agenda.

However, amid the EP enlargement to accommodate the new realities of many states, TNL have become a sudden collateral damage. The new allocation of seats in the EP was approved by 515 votes, and has given 15 more seats to the Member States (+2 for Spain, France, and the Netherlands, and +1 to Belgium, Denmark, Ireland, Latvia, Austria, Poland, Finland, Slovenia, and Slovakia) (Griera, 2013; Orbán, 2023).

Moreover, the new seat allocation has erased the plan for the TNL that needed an allocation of 28 seats. This development rises many issues:

- First, the lack of a balanced power between institutions, given that it has been a decision of the Council without consulting with the EP first. This is the sort of issue that deepens the democratic deficiency that hurts citizen participation in EU affairs.
- Second, the main argument of the Council being about budgetary efficiency when, as MEP Johan van Oortveldt (ECR) pointed out, the European Council does not have competence to decide over budgetary matters.
- Third, the issue of TNL has been discarded to give more « room », to nationally run and elected candidates. In the end, nationalism has won this

round against building a stronger European identity. A « political mistake », in the words of MEP Sandro Gozi (Renew).

The TNL remains an interesting policy for the future, and even though it has found reticences both in national governments and inside the EU institutions, it is a proposal whose main objective is to build Europe. This could also be seen as an opportunity to address the aforementioned lacks of this policy, to make sure that the concerns of the federalists or the smaller countries are thoroughly managed in the future attempts at approving TNLs in the EU.

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ANNEX 1– EP POLITICAL GROUPS

There are currently 7 political groups (plus the non-inscrits or non-attached) :

- **European People's Party (EPP):** The EPP is a center-right political group and one of the largest in the European Parliament. It includes MEPs from various national parties across Europe, and it is affiliated with the European Christian Democratic and conservative movements.
- **Progressive Alliance of Socialists and Democrats (S&D):** The S&D is a center-left political group that includes MEPs from social democratic and labor parties across Europe. It advocates for social justice and workers' rights.
- **Renew Europe:** Formerly known as the Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe (ALDE), Renew Europe is a centrist political group that includes liberal and centrist MEPs. It focuses on issues such as individual freedoms, human rights, and market-oriented economic policies.
- **European Conservatives and Reformists (ECR):** The ECR is a center-right to right-wing political group that advocates for national sovereignty and eurosceptic positions. It includes conservative and right-wing MEPs.
- **The Greens/European Free Alliance (Greens/EFA):** This group is made up of Green parties and regionalist parties. It advocates for environmental sustainability, social justice, and the rights of minority groups.
- **Identity and Democracy (ID):** ID is a right-wing to far-right political group that includes eurosceptic and anti-immigration MEPs. It is known for its nationalist and anti-EU stance.
- **European United Left/Nordic Green Left (GUE/NGL):** GUE/NGL is a left-wing political group that includes MEPs from various left and socialist parties. It advocates for workers' rights, social equality, and anti-austerity policies.
- **Non-attached Members (n-i):** Some MEPs do not belong to any specific political group and are classified as non-attached members. They may come from various political backgrounds or represent niche parties.

ANNEX 2 – EPP POSITIONS

- **Sven Simon, on behalf of the PPE Group.** – Domènec said that this file is innovative and balanced. Well, I would perhaps even go one step further: the law in front of us today is a historic draft. For over 45 years, no reform of European electoral law has succeeded. But in those 45 years, our Union has changed dramatically. It has become a functioning single market, a currency Union, a political Union, and it is set to become a geopolitical project.

But the increase in competences has not been met with a reform of the democratic legitimization of its institutions. Citizens have no direct say on how to choose leading figures of the

Commission and the policies they stand for. The idea behind a European—wide constituency is to allow citizens to directly express a preference for a European political family with a second vote at the ballot. We want to spark a European public debate.

Colleagues, remember the situation in 2019, when everybody was so disappointed because we had the lead candidate, and in the end the European Council proposed somebody who we didn't campaign for. We want to put lead candidates on the ballot. With that move we won't change the Treaty, that is true. But we want to make European parties directly electable for voters. This is a historic chance and a window of opportunity. Let's use it now.

- Paulo Rangel (PPE). – Mr President, this electoral law is a bad electoral law because, instead of reinforcing democracy, it puts the citizens further away from their representatives. This is a bad law because it will create two kinds of MEPs: the ones that feel themselves Europeans and the others that will be the locals. And this is unacceptable to a parliament.

This idea of transnational lists has nothing to do with lead candidates, as we see when we read the piece of legislation, because we have lead candidates in all our countries and we don't have nationwide constituencies. This is not a federalist idea, it's anti-federalist, because I don't know any federation where there is a federal constituency. Not the United States, not in Switzerland. And I am not going to say that they are anti-American or they cannot represent the United States because they are elected in Texas or they are elected in Nevada.

This is something that we should bear in our minds: that we should be closer to the citizens. That is the most important principle of democracy. And transnational lists break this principle.

That is the reason why I'm very pro-European, Mr Verhofstadt, and I cannot accept that someone says that those who are against transnational lists are not pro-European or are not federalist. It's quite the opposite: it's those who want devolution and to be close to the citizens who are against this electoral law. It is a bad project and I hope it will not be approved.

- Paulo Rangel (PPE), blue-card answer. – But if you look at all the systems, you have the lead candidate without any constituency. I see my prime minister was elected in at least one constituency and Mr Boris Johnson was in a very local constituency. And this was not a problem. Why do you need a European-wide constituency?

And second, let me say, I am a federalist and I want Europe to be a federation, and that's the reason why I am against transnational lists, because they are not a federal instrument. They are a centralisation instrument.

This is not by chance. It is normally the MEPs from the big countries that are in favour of that because they know that their rate will be much higher. And it's in representing also the small and medium sized countries that I'm here defending this position.

- Paulo Rangel (PPE), blue-card answer. – In fact, you cannot complain because the President of the Commission is German now. But let me tell you something that is very clear. I always defended that the European parties were on the ballots, in the ballot papers at home, across all Europe. Now, with this system and, by the way, I defend the direct election of the President of the Commission, that will be a different system but it would be much more democratic than the transnational lists. And, you know, I have a fear with transnational lists, because imagine in Italy, an Italian on the Socialist list, but not an Italian in the EPP or the Greens list, and this will create a nationalistic debate about the transnational lists and it will be counterproductive. And that is something that you should bear in mind.
- Paulo Rangel (PPE), intervention (translated from original in french) *blue-card answer*. – Mr. President, I must say that I have already spoken indeed, but I appreciate this debate because it is a parliamentary debate. For the first time, I see a parliamentary debate here, and that is very good. I just want to ask a question to Pascal Durand. Are the United States not a democracy? Is Switzerland not a democracy? Do we need to create this artificial figure of transnational lists to have representation, a true democracy in Europe? Is that the problem with Europe? I think not.