

ESSAY

THE V4 COUNTRIES REPRESENTATION IN THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT

Jakub Charvát, PhD

ABSTRACT

Modern democratic political systems are hardly conceivable without political representation. This also applies to the European Union (hereinafter “EU”), a unique economic and political union of twenty-eight Member States with a directly elected and fully-fledged assembly, the European Parliament, representing EU citizens. And because the European Parliament is the first transnational representative body based on the Member States representation, the issue of its composition, and especially the apportionment of seats among the EU Member States appears to be a relevant issue. Therefore, the chapter addresses the issue of territorial representation in the European Parliament.

Keywords: European Union, V4 cooperation, national interest assertion

Given the transnational nature of the EU party system and because the representation size (number of seats) in the European Parliament does not directly affect the strength of EU Member States in the decision-making process, someone might argue that the issue of representation of the Member States is irrelevant. But the opposite seems to be true. Together with the creation of the Common Assembly in 1952, the question that arises was how the Member States will be represented in the Assembly. And as the former British Member of the European Parliament Andrew Duff reminds, the question of the size of the representation of EU Member States in the European Parliament has traditionally represented one of the most complex and sensitive issues of inter-governmental conferences.¹

Therefore, it is not surprising that one of the controversial issues being raised about Brexit was reapportionment of the seventy-three British seats in the European Parliament. This reopened the possibility of introducing a single pan-European constituency with transnational lists as a second tier of the European Parliament electoral system.² However, the idea of introducing the transnational (pan-European) lists has not been new at all as it was first suggested by the Anastassopoulos report in 1998³ as a tool how to make the European elections more European. Since then, this issue has been regularly appearing in discussions on the European Parliament electoral reform. Despite both transnational lists, it gained significant political backing in

¹ Andrew Duff, "Finding the Balance of Power in a Post-National Democracy," *Mathematical Social Sciences*, Around the Cambridge Compromise: Apportionment in Theory and Practice, 63, no. 2 (March 1, 2012): 74–75, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.mathsocsci.2011.11.007>.

² Jakub Charvat, "Pan-European Constituency and Transnational Lists: The Third Wave of the EU Politics of Electoral Reform?," *Revista de Stiinte Politice* 61 (May 26, 2019): 24–33.

³ Georgios Anastassopoulos, "Report on the Preparation of a Draft Procedure Including Common Principles for the Election of Members of the European Parliament, Committee on Institutional Affairs, A4-0212/1998," European Parliament, June 2, 1998, <http://www.europarl.europa.eu/sides/getDoc.do?pubRef=-//EP//TEXT+REPORT+A4-1998-0212+0+DOC+XML+V0//EN>.

the most recent debates on the European Parliament electoral design in 2018, as it was supported by French President Emmanuel Macron, or the representatives of South European countries (Cyprus, France, Greece, Italy, Malta, Portugal and Spain), and the proclaimed political support and recommendation from the Committee on Constitutional Affairs, the proposal was finally rejected. Especially due to opposition from the European People's Party, which was supported in this position by the Eurosceptic and nationalist Members of the European Parliament (hereinafter "MEPs").

However, it was also the Visegrad Group countries (also known as the "Visegrad Four") who have disagreed with the idea of the establishment of a transnational list as it was formulated, for example, in the "V4 Statement on the Future of Europe" at the end of January 2018.⁴ Several arguments were explicitly raised for that position in the V4 Statement. And there were some more implicit reasons as well; one of them being a fear of weakening the Visegrad Group countries representation in the European Parliament, and thus expanding the already existing gap between them and the most populous EU Member States. Considering all the above mentioned, the question of the representation of the Visegrad Group countries in the European Parliament arises.

Therefore, the main objective of the chapter is to analyze the Visegrad Group countries representation in the European Parliament from the territorial representation perspective as it seeks to quantify their over-/under-representation as compared to their population ratio. The present text does not have any deeper theoretical ambitions. Instead, it employs a pragmatic approach;⁵

⁴ "V4 Statement on the Future of Europe," Visegrad Group, January 26, 2018, <http://www.visegradgroup.eu/calendar/2018/v4-statement-on-the>.

⁵ Richard Rose, *Representing Europeans: A Pragmatic Approach* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 6.

i.e., it is neither aimed at defending or criticizing the current state from the perspective of various paradigms and/or theoretical concepts, but it is rather seeking to evaluate and explain the current state.

Regarding the above-mentioned, the chapter is conceived as an idiographic case study and its structure is as follows. The very subsequent part of the text is devoted to the description of how the European Parliament should be composed according to both the relevant provisions of the Treaty of Lisbon⁶ and related.⁷ The analytical framework for measuring Member States representation in the European Parliament at the individual level is then presented. And finally, the last part of the text concentrates on an empirical analysis of the Visegrad Group countries representation in the European Parliament since the 2004 European election.⁸

EU Member States representation in the European Parliament: the Lisbon Treaty provisions

For a long time, the EU law has not provided any (even) general principle for allocating the European Parliamentary seats among the Member States. Instead, seat apportionment has traditionally been the result of political negotiations at inter-governmental conferences, and its underlying principles have been based on the composition of the Common Assembly from 1952. Debates among the founding countries' representatives resulted in the Member

⁶ "Consolidated Version of the Treaty on European Union," EUR-Lex, December 13, 2007, <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=celex%3A12012M%2FTXT>.

⁷ Alain Lamassoure and Adrian Severin, "Report on the Composition of the European Parliament, A6-0351/2007," European Parliament, October 3, 2007, <http://www.europarl.europa.eu/sides/getDoc.do?pubRef=-//EP//TEXT+REPORT+A6-2007-0351+0+DOC+XML+V0//EN>; "2013/312/EU: European Council Decision of 28 June 2013 Establishing the Composition of the European Parliament," Pub. L. No. 32013D0312, 181 (2013), <http://data.europa.eu/eli/dec/2013/312/oj/eng>.

⁸ For the sake of simplicity, the term "European election(s)" will be used as a synonym for "European Parliamentary election(s)".

States being clustered according to population size; four seats were granted to Luxembourg, ten seats obtained both Belgium and the Netherlands, while Italy, France and Germany each occupied eighteen seats in 1952. The transformation of the Common Assembly to the European Parliamentary Assembly in 1958 (and renaming it to the European Parliament in 1962) or enlargements of the Communities in 1970s, 1980s and 1990s did not alter the underlying seat apportionment strategy of clustering; only the total number of the seats in the European Parliament and the number of clusters has increased with each new wave of the accession of new Member States to the EC/EU.⁹

⁹ The politics of clustering was attempted to change by the Patijn Report (on behalf of the European Parliament's Political Affairs Committee) of February 1975. The Report proposed a politically impartial reapportionment procedure based on the degressively proportional representation. Other conditions for the proposed procedure included that all relevant political forces from each Member State would be represented in the European Parliament and that the new allocation of seats would not reduce the number of "MEPs" of any Member State. The Report proposed each Member State of up to a million of inhabitants being entitled to 6 MEPs and of less than 2.5 million inhabitants to 12 MEPs. States with a larger population would be entitled to at least 12 seats, and the size of their representation would increase with a growing total population as follows: Member States of up to 5 million inhabitants should be given an additional seat for every 500,000 inhabitants; with a size of 5 to 10 million, an additional seat should be given for every 750,000 inhabitants; with a size of 10 to 50 million, an additional seat should be given for every million inhabitants; and countries with larger populations should be given a seat for every 1.5 million inhabitants. As a result, Germany would have 71, the United Kingdom 67, Italy 66, France 65, the Netherlands 27, Belgium 23, Denmark 17, Ireland 13 and Luxembourg 6 seats in the European Parliament with a total of 355 MEPs in 1979 (European Parliament, 1975). However, the proposed seat apportionment procedure was not adopted finally. In a similar vein, the European Parliament considered the mid-1992 proposal of each Member State having at least six seats. Other seats exceeding this basis should be allocated according to population size so that the Member States of up to 25 million inhabitants should be given a new seat for every 500,000 inhabitants; with a size from 25 million to 60 million, an additional seat should be given for every million inhabitants; and countries with larger populations should be given a seat for every 2 million inhabitants. In the end, however, the European Parliament withdrew from this idea and it has never been applied (Axel Moberg, "EP Seats: The Politics behind the Math," *Mathematical Social Sciences* 63, no. 2 (March 1, 2012): 80, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.mathsocsci.2011.10.011>; Jacek Haman, "The Concept of Degressive and Progressive Proportionality and Its Normative and Descriptive Applications," *Studies in Logic, Grammar and Rhetoric* 50, no. 1 (June 27, 2017): 75, <https://doi.org/10.1515/slgr-2017-0019>).

Table 1. Apportionment of seats in the European Parliament among EU Member States since 1979

	1952	1958	1973	1979	1984	1987	1995	2004	2007	2009	2014
Belgium	10	14	14	24	24	24	25	24	24	22	21
France	18	36	36	81	81	81	87	78	78	72	74
Germany	18	36	36	81	81	81	99	99	99	99	96
Italy	18	36	36	81	81	81	87	78	78	72	73
Luxembo urg	4	6	6	6	6	6	6	6	6	6	6
Netherla nds	10	14	14	25	25	25	31	27	27	25	26
Denmark	-	-	10	16	16	16	16	14	14	13	13
Ireland	-	-	10	15	15	15	15	13	13	12	11
United Kingdom	-	-	36	81	81	81	87	78	78	72	73
Greece	-	-	-	-	24	24	25	24	24	22	21
Portugal	-	-	-	-	-	24	25	24	24	22	21
Spain	-	-	-	-	-	60	64	54	54	50	54
Austria	-	-	-	-	-	-	21	18	18	17	18
Finland	-	-	-	-	-	-	16	14	14	13	13
Sweden	-	-	-	-	-	-	22	19	19	18	20
Cyprus	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	6	6	6	6
Czech Republic	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	24	24	22	21
Estonia	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	6	6	6	6
Hungary	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	24	24	22	21
Latvia	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	9	9	8	8
Lithuani a	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	13	13	12	11
Malta	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	5	5	5	6

Poland	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	54	54	50	51
Slovakia	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	14	14	13	13
Slovenia	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	7	7	7	8
Bulgaria	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	18	17	17
Romania	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	35	33	32
Croatia	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	11
EU		14	19	41	43	51	62	73	78	73	75
	78	2	8	0	4	8	6	2	5	6	1

Thanks to the politics of clustering similarly populous countries into groups with the same number of seats in the European Parliament,¹⁰ the apportionment of the European Parliamentary seats has been degressively proportional since the very beginning of the assembly existence, even though the principle was not explicitly codified by the EU law for a long time. It was only the Treaty of Lisbon of 2007 that introduced the general principle of representation in the European Parliament, namely degressively proportional representation, into the EU law (the degressive proportionality principle was already included in the draft European Constitution).

However, there may be some tension at first sight between the demands formulated by the Lisbon Treaty. Article 10, on the one hand, defines the European Parliament as a body representing the EU citizens, which could imply a requirement for equal representation of citizens in the European Parliament. All the more so when the preceding article of the Treaty states that *“i/n all its*

¹⁰ Yet the 1979 seat apportionment in the European Parliament brought about a relaxation of the existing practice as Denmark did not agree with the proposed number of MEPs, requiring an additional seat for Greenland, an autonomous constituent country of the Kingdom of Denmark, to satisfy the demands of the local population for their own representative in the European Parliament (Huber, 1981: 93). Finally, the Belgian political representation gave up one of its seats in favour of Greenland, satisfying the demands of the Danish negotiators. Thus, the existing equality of representation between Belgium and the Netherlands was disturbed, as well as between Denmark and Ireland, which has not been restored in the following years. Partly because Belgium has not been given the seat back after Greenland left the EU in 1985.

activities, the Union shall observe the principle of the equality of its citizens (...),¹¹ on the other hand, shift attention to Member States representation. However, it does not require equal representation of the Member States but assumes a degressively proportional representation, which is further emphasized by setting the minimum and maximum number of MEPs per Member State (each Member State representation may range from 6 to 96 seats in the European parliament) while the total number of MEPs should not exceed 751.¹²

Nevertheless, the degressive proportionality remains rather an abstract concept of the nature of the European Parliament's composition that needs to be defined further. Thus, a report on the European Parliament's composition was prepared in October 2007 within the Committee on Constitutional Affairs. According to this report, a more populous country shall not have a smaller number of seats than a less populous country, but the larger a Member State's population, the more inhabitants are represented in the European Parliament, and vice versa.¹³ This was further clarified by the European Council in June 2013 by stating that the average number of citizens per MEP increases with the increasing number of citizens of the Member State, and vice versa.¹⁴ However, it needs to be emphasized that while the allocation of seats among the EU Member States may be bound by the above-mentioned rules, the final composition of the European Parliament remains the result of political negotiations at inter-governmental conferences.

¹¹ "Consolidated Version of the Treaty on European Union" Art. 9); Art. 14 (2).

¹² The original proposal assumed a maximum of 750 MEPs. However, the representatives of Italy did not agree having 72 seats, while the United Kingdom having 73 and France 74 MEPs. At the last minute, the Italian representatives obtained a change during the Lisbon conference, which increased the total number of deputies to 751, with the extra seat for Italy (Duff, 2012: 75). Therefore, it is possible to find wording in the Lisbon Treaty that the number of MEPs "*shall not exceed seven hundred and fifty in number, plus the President*" (Treaty on European Union, 2007: Art. 14(2)).

¹³ Lamassoure and Severin, "Report on the Composition."

¹⁴ 2013/312/EU: European Council Decision of 28 June 2013 establishing the composition of the European Parliament Art. 1).

As a consequence, the principle of degressive proportionality causes a distortion in the proportional representation of Member States (malapportionment) in the European Parliament. Or, in other words, existing EU legislation implies a disproportionate (unequal) representation of citizens in the European Parliament across EU Member States. However, while EU law lays down degressive proportionality as the main conceptual framework of the European Parliament's composition, it does not specify how large the distortion may, or should be. The Council Decision of June 2013 merely states the resulting disproportion should be as low as possible (as it shall “*reflect as closely as possible the sizes of the respective populations of Member States*”), while meeting the other conditions, especially the minimum and maximum number of MEPs per Member State.¹⁵

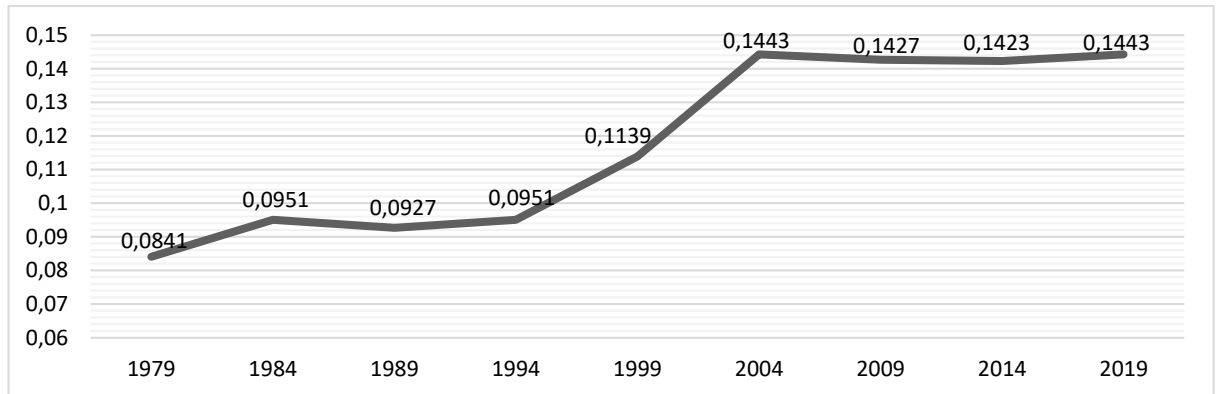
The analysis of malapportionment in the European elections at the aggregate level shows that the distortion of proportional representation has stabilized at about 14 per cent¹⁶ since the largest (Eastern) enlargement of the European Union in 2004 (see Figure 1). This is equivalent to about 105 (in 2009) to 108 seats (in 2019) in the European Parliament, occupied by representatives from the other EU Member States than being equivalent to the proportional representation.¹⁷

Figure 1. Malapportionment in the European Parliament elections since 1979

¹⁵ Ibid. Art. 1).

¹⁶ At the aggregate level, malapportionment was calculated using the adaption of Loosemore–Hanby distortion index (1971) as recommended by David Samuels and Richard Snyder David Samuels and Richard Snyder, “The Value of a Vote: Malapportionment in Comparative Perspective,” *British Journal of Political Science* 31, no. 4 (2001): 654–655.; cf. Jakub Charvát, “Poměrné sestupné zastoupení v Evropském parlamentu: unijní právo vs. realita,” *Mezinárodní vztahy* 54, no. 1 (2019): 23–24..

¹⁷ For more detail see e.g. Charvát, “Poměrné sestupné zastoupení v Evropském parlamentu.” Prior to 2004, this distortion ranged from 8.4 per cent (in 1979) to 9.5 per cent (in 1984 and 1994), and it rose to 11.4 per cent only in the 1999 European elections, following the accession of Finland, Austria and Sweden (see, e.g., Ibid., 29., Figure 1).



Source: author's own calculation (using Eurostat population data).

Measuring malapportionment at the individual level: methods and data

If we focus our attention on the individual level of quantifying malapportionment, i.e. to measure the under-/over-representation of individual Member States, two indices are employed. Because the June 2013 European Council Decision states that each MEP from a more populous EU Member State shall represent a higher number of citizens than an MEP from a less populous Member State, and vice versa (see above), one of the measuring tools is *the value of a vote (VAL)* in each Member State which is expressed as the average number of citizens in a particular Member State per seat in the European Parliament.

The degree of over-/under-representation is calculated using the *advantage ratio (A)*, i.e., as a result of dividing the proportion of a given EU Member State population in the total EU population and the proportion of the number of MEPs of that EU Member State from the total number of MEPs. The value $A = 1$ would, therefore, express the exact proportional representation which means the EU Member State occupies the same proportion of seats in the European Parliament as is its share in the EU total population. Values lower than $A = 1$ imply under-representation of a given Member State. The lower the value, the higher the under-

representation of that EU Member State. For example, $A = 0.75$ would mean that the EU Member State only occupies 75 per cent of the European Parliamentary seats compared to the number that would apply to it if strict proportional apportionment was applied. On the contrary, values higher than $A = 1$ indicate that the EU Member State occupies a higher proportion of European Parliamentary seats than its share of the total population. The higher the value, the higher the over-representation. For example, $A = 2.5$ would mean that the Member State occupies two and a half times more European Parliamentary seats than would be the case of with strict proportional allocation of seats between EU Member States.¹⁸

The necessary statistical data on the actual population figures of individual EU Member States (i.e., the number of persons having their usual residence in a country) and the European Union's total population on 1st January of the year that the European elections were held, were drawn from the publicly available data archive of Eurostat (Statistical Office of the EU).¹⁹

Visegrad Group countries representation in the European Parliament

As the EU is largely formed by less populous countries, under-representation concerns only a few of the most populous EU Member States. Since the introduction of direct elections of MEPs in 1979, Germany, the United Kingdom, Italy and France have been included among the under-represented countries in the European Parliament, joined by Spain (except for the 1994 European elections) and Poland after their accession to the

¹⁸ Charvát, "Poměrné sestupné zastoupení v Evropském parlamentu," 24.

¹⁹ See

<https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/tgm/table.do?tab=table&init=1&plugin=1&pcode=tps00001&language=en>.

Communities. Thus, only six EU Member States with the largest population are currently under-represented in the European Parliament, while the remaining twenty-two Member States are more or less over-represented (see Table 2).

Member State	2004 European election			2009 European election			2014 European election			2019 European election			Member State	
	pop.	VAL	A	pop.	VAL	A	pop.	VAL	A	pop.	VAL	A		
		79973	7,842			8,231			9,432	493559	82260	8,311		
Malta	399867		1	410926	82185	0	429424	71570	8			8	Malta	
Luxembourg		75826	8,271			8,224			7,369	613894	10231	6,682	Luxembourg	
	454960		0	493500	82250	5	549680	91613	2		6	6		
		12048	5,205			13282	5,093		14300	4,721	875898	14598	4,683	
Cyprus	722893	2	4	796930	1	0	858000	0	1		3	6	Cyprus	
		22770	2,754			22262	3,038		21930	3,078	1324820	22080	3,096	
Estonia	1366250	8	2	1335740	3	6	1315819	3	4		3	6	Estonia	
		25294	2,479			27035	2,502		25763	2,620	1919968	23999	2,848	
Latvia	2276520	6	4	2162834	4	1	2061085	5	4		6	9	Latvia	
		28520	2,199			29033	2,329		25018	2,698	2080908	26011	2,628	
Slovenia	1996433	4	0	2032362	7	9	2001468	3	5		4	6	Slovenia	
	339892	26145	2,398			26532	2,549		26758	2,523	2794184	25401	2,691	
Lithuania	9	6	7	3183856	1	6	2943472	8	0		7	7	Lithuania	
		X	X						38607	1,748	4076246	37056	1,845	
Croatia	X			X	X	X	4246809	3	7		8	1	Croatia	
		30991	2,023			37677	1,795		4637852	42162	1,601	4904226	44583	1,533
Ireland	4028851	1	7	4521322	6	4			2	2		9	6	Ireland
		38370	1,634			41403	1,633		5415949	41661	1,620	5450421	41926	1,630
Slovakia	5371875	5	5	5382401	0	8			1	5		3	8	Slovakia
		37283	1,682			40971	1,651	5451270	41932	1,610	5517919	42445	1,610	
Finland	5219732	8	1	5326314	6	1		8	0		5	8	Finland	
		38554	1,626			42395	1,595		43286	1,559	5806081	44662	1,530	
Denmark	5397640	5	7	5511451	7	6	5627235	4	6		2	9	Denmark	
		X	X			43924	1,540		42621	1,584	7000039	41176	1,660	
Bulgaria	X			7467119	2	1	7245677	6	0		7	5	Bulgaria	
		45236	1,389			49029	1,379		47265	1,428	8858775	49215	1,389	
Austria	8142573	5	4	8335003	4	7	8507786	4	3		4	3	Austria	
		1011674	42153	1,487	1003097	45595	1,483		47035	1,435	9772756	45636	1,469	
Hungary	2	0	8	5	3	6	9877365	0	3		9	2	Hungary	
		47240	1,327			51442	1,315		48224	1,399	1023018	51150	1,336	
Sweden	8975670	3	6	9256347	1	5	9644864	3	9		5	9	7	Sweden
	1047305	43637	1,437	1056301	48013	1,408	1042730	49653	1,359	1027661	48936	1,397		
Portugal	0	7	2	4	7	9	1	8	6		7	3	2	Portugal
		1019534	42480	1,476	1042578	47389	1,427	1051241	50059	1,348	1064980	50713	1,348	
Czechia	7	6	3	3	9	4	9	1	6		0	3	2	Czechia
	1103774	45990	1,363	1119065	50866	1,329	1092580	52027	1,297	1072228	51058	1,339		
Greece	5	6	7	4	6	9	7	6	6		7	5	1	Greece
	1039642	43318	1,447	1075308	48877	1,384	1118084	53442	1,268	1146792	54609	1,252		
Belgium	1	4	8	0	6	0	0	0	0		3	2	0	Belgium
Netherlands	1625803	60214	1,041	1648578	65943	1,025	1682928	64728	1,043	1728216	66469	1,028	Netherlands	
		2	9	5	7	1	8	9	0	0	3	9	6	
		X	X	2044029	61940	1,092	1994731	62335	1,083	1940165	60630	1,127		
Romania	X			0	2	1	1	3	0		8	2	7	Romania

Biztpol Affairs

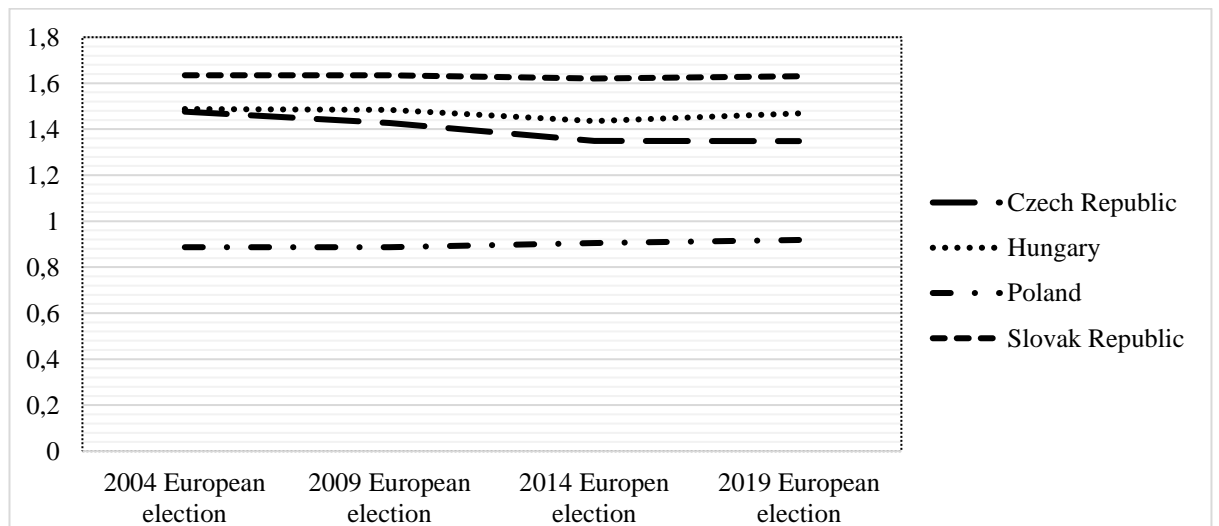
Poland	3819060	70723	0,886	3813587	76271	0,886	3801785	74544	0,905	3797281	74456	0,918	Poland
	8	3	8	6	7	9	6	8	6	2	5	3	
	4254745	73712	0,850	4623927	92478	0,731	4651219	86133	0,783	4693463	86916	0,786	
Spain	1	6	8	3	5	5	9	7	8	2	0	7	Spain
	5749590	78791	0,796	5900058	81945	0,825	6078266	83263	0,810	6035954	82684	0,826	
Italy	0	5	0	6	2	6	8	9	8	6	3	9	Italy
	5979375	76658	0,818	6204234	86169	0,785	6435115	88152	0,765	6664711	91297	0,748	
U.K.	9	6	1	3	9	0	5	2	8	2	4	9	U.K.
	6229224	79861	0,785	6435022	89375	0,756	6594226	89111	0,757	6702804	90578	0,754	
France	1	8	3	6	3	9	7	1	6	8	4	8	France
	8253167	83365	0,752	8200235	82830	0,816	8076746	84132	0,802	8301921	86478	0,790	
Germany	1	3	3	6	6	7	3	7	4	3	3	6	Germany
EU 28	<i>MAL</i> = 0,1444 (~ 106 seats)		<i>MAL</i> = 0,1427 (~ 105 seats)			<i>MAL</i> = 0,1423 (~ 107 seats)			<i>MAL</i> = 0,1443 (~ 108 seats)		EU 28		

Table 2. Malapportionment in the European Parliament since 2004

Source: author's own calculation (using Eurostat population data).

If we focus our attention on the representation of Visegrad Group countries in the European Parliament, as this is the aim of the chapter, we can state that Poland is the only Visegrad Group country being under-represented in the European Parliament, with advantage ratio ranging from 0.8868 in 2004 to 0.9183 in the most recent European election. In practice this means that the Polish representation in the European Parliament is about a tenth under-represented compared to its share of the total EU population. Or in other words, Poland would occupy about 5 or 6 more seats in the European Parliament if the seats were allotted in accordance with the principle of proportional representation. In contrast, all three other Visegrad Group countries, i.e. the Czech Republic, Hungary and the Slovak Republic, are over-represented in the European Parliament as compared to their population shares (see Figure 2). And this has been the case throughout the whole period of their membership in the European Union.

Figure 2. Over-/under-representation of Visegrad Group countries in the European Parliament since 2004



Source: author's own calculation (using Eurostat population data).

In accordance with the degressive proportionality principle, the Slovak Republic, as the least populous among the Visegrad Group countries, is the most over-represented case of them occupying about 60 per cent more seats (five more seats) in the European Parliament compared to the strict proportional apportionment. Hungary and the Czech Republic are slightly less over-represented in the European Parliament, which occupied seven more seats (Hungary) and five more seats (the Czech Republic) in the most recent European election in May 2019 than would correspond to the proportional representation (see Table 3).

Table 3. Modelling Visegrad Group countries representation: model of proportional representation (PR model) vs. reality

	2004 EU election		2009 EU election		2014 EU election		2019 EU election	
	reality	<i>PR model</i>	reality	<i>PR model</i>	reality	<i>PR model</i>	reality	<i>PR model</i>
Czech Republic	24	16 (+ 8)	22	15 (+ 7)	21	16 (+5)	21	16 (+ 5)
Hungary	24	16 (+ 8)	22	15 (+ 7)	21	15 (+ 6)	21	14 (+ 7)
Poland	54	61 (- 7)	50	56 (- 6)	51	57 (- 6)	51	56 (- 5)
Slovakia	14	8 (+ 6)	13	8 (+ 5)	13	8 (+ 5)	13	8 (+ 5)

Source: author's own calculation (using Eurostat population data).

Conclusion

The most recent debates on possible reforms of both the composition of the European Parliament and the procedure of electing the MEPs raised many questions. Among other issues, the question of how to make the European elections more European was also discussed. And as one of the possible solutions, an introduction of a second tier of the system for electing the European Parliament (with twenty-five seats to be allocated) was proposed. The second tier was to take place at a transnational level, in a single pan-European electoral constituency and via transnational lists. A wave of criticism against such a proposal rose immediately. There were several arguments against transnational lists whereas one of them stating that transnational lists in the pan-European constituency will favour the most populous EU Member States at the expense of less populous Member States.

Opponents of transnational lists included prominent representatives of the Visegrad Group countries who publicly disagreed with such an electoral design at the end of January 2018 arguing, *inter alia*, by the threat of weakening the Visegrad Group countries representation in the European Parliament. Transnational lists have been seen as a tool on how to promote the representation of the most populous Member States. Thus, the question of the Visegrad Group countries representation in the European Parliament arises. However, the analysis showed that three out of four Visegrad Group countries, in particular, the Czech Republic, Hungary and the Slovak Republic, are significantly over-represented in the European Parliament while Poland being slightly under-represented.

Considering this we can argue that transnational lists are in fact no real threat for the Visegrad Group countries representation.

Conceivably, allocating twenty-five seats out of about the total of 700 or more seats in the European Parliament via transnational lists could slightly reduce the over-representation of the Czech Republic, Hungary and the Slovak Republic in the European Parliament. However, all these countries would certainly be considerably over-represented even after the European Parliament electoral system's second tier was introduced. And if the pan-European constituency is expected to lead to an advantage for the most populous EU Member States, Poland may profit from such a reform. And even if not, Polish under-representation rate is unlikely to increase significantly. Either way, the Visegrad Group as a whole will be over-represented even in the event of introducing transnational lists for electing 25 MEPs in a single pan-European constituency.

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