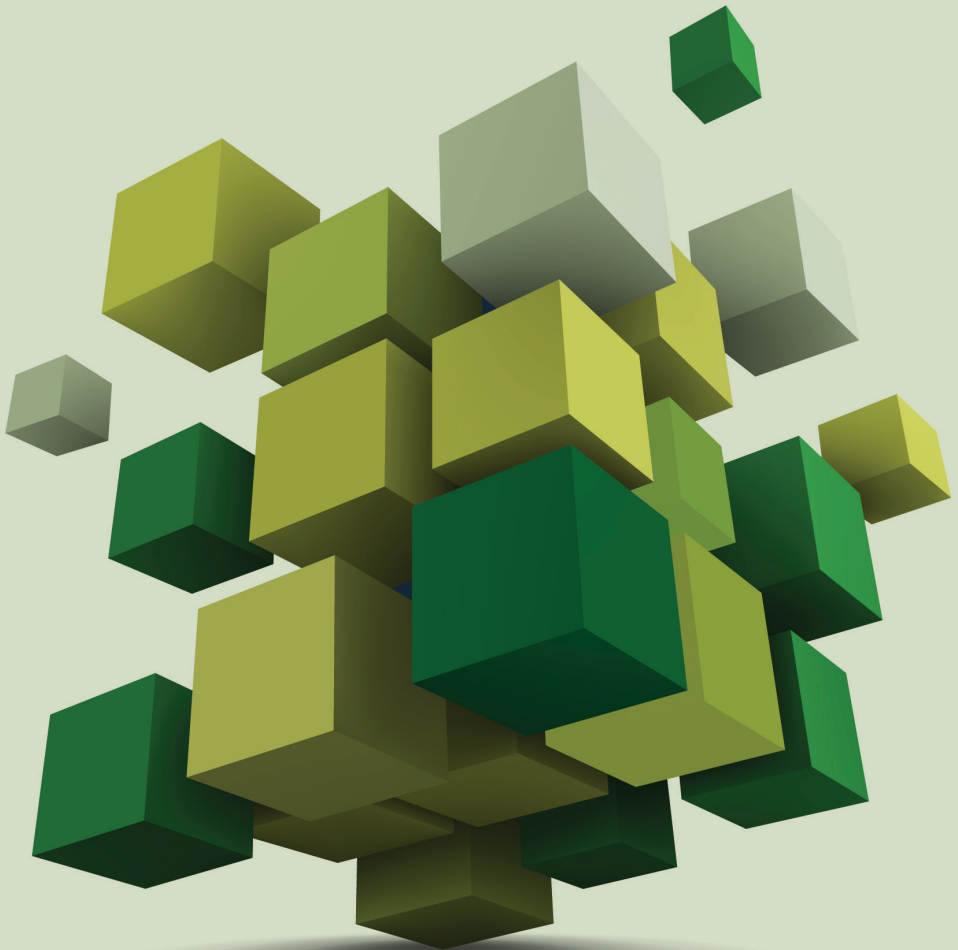




Open Primary Elections

Political Party Innovation Primer 4





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International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance

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1. Introduction

An increasing number of political parties are using primary elections to fill the most important and visible positions in their party structures. Primary elections are also seen as a mechanism for increasing party-member engagement (Cross et al. 2016). Some political parties that hold primary elections have gone a step further to enlarge the ‘selectorate’, or those eligible to vote in the election, by extending the right to vote in the primary beyond their formal memberships. These ‘open primary’ elections are the focus of this Primer.

Open primary elections are elections within a political party in which it is not only the formal membership that has the right to vote, but non-members also form part of the selectorate. The structure of open primaries varies from party to party. This Primer explains the key decisions and questions that political parties are most likely to face when considering or conducting open primaries.

This Primer draws on the experiences of a selection of political parties and builds on interviews with political party representatives from three European countries: Austria, Italy and Lithuania. It also draws on existing research on primaries in Honduras, the Netherlands, Nigeria, Spain, the United Kingdom and the United States.

The Primer therefore provides a snapshot of crucial considerations for open primaries that innovative party leaders should be aware of.

2. What is the issue?

New technologies, especially those linked to social media, make it easier than ever before for citizens to express their opinions not only in interactions with each other, but also directly with decision-makers (Micheletti and McFarland 2011). Social interactions are becoming less mediated and less hierarchical. This, in turn, has prompted a change in the way citizens relate to politics and politicians, and also in the way politicians relate to citizens. Since the 1980s, many political parties in the Western world have been struggling with dwindling membership numbers and declining levels of citizen engagement (Klaukka, van der Staak and Valladares 2017: 102). Falling membership can be largely attributed to a shift in the way people relate to politics (Faucher 2015). The challenge for political parties stems from the fact that the number of *formal* members—usually those who pay membership subscriptions—might not accurately reflect the number of citizens who are ideologically close to the party and who the party is supposed to represent (Van Biezen et al. 2012). For this reason, political party membership, in Europe at least, is not always a good measure of a party's capacity to organize and mobilize (Van Biezen et al. 2012).

Among the many measures taken by political parties to address this changing relationship, some have adopted innovative methods of including non-members who may be close to the party in the party's structures and governance. Open primaries have become a more common occurrence in Europe, giving supporters and sympathizers a say in the development and management of the party. The use of open primaries has also led to increased attention from the media, other political parties and society more generally.

A party that is exploring the possibility of adopting some form of open primary must first address a number of important questions: What are the objectives? What are the design options available for such elections? What effects might an open primary election have? What is the party selecting and how? How should

2. What is the issue?

the selectorate be defined? What measures must be taken to safeguard against potential party infiltration? How might an open primary election help a political party connect with potential voters? This Primer addresses these questions in the sections below.

3. Perspectives on open primary elections

Open primaries have become increasingly relevant primarily because they address one of the main challenges facing political parties in many democracies: the changing nature of political participation and, more concretely, the changing nature of political party membership (Faucher 2015; Cf. Ion et al. 2005). The consequences of open primaries are still a topic for discussion among practitioners and researchers, and it is useful to take account of the different perspectives on their effects.

Proponents of open primaries argue that changing habits in political engagement mean that parties must find new ways to harness political activism and increase engagement by potential sympathizers who do not formally belong to the party (Faucher 2015; Micheletti and McFarland 2011). An open primary election can therefore be a mechanism that helps political party officials harness a more diverse selectorate from which leaders and candidates can be democratically chosen. By opening primaries up beyond their formal membership, political parties can, in principle, select candidates and leaders who better fit the preferences of potential voters, in addition to the preferences of those who are formal members of the party. Furthermore, this mechanism can help to reduce the gulf in trust between political parties and citizens (Faucher 2015).

However, counterarguments abound. The renowned scholars Katz and Mair (2009) have warned that blurring the distinction between party members and non-members in primaries often benefits established party leaders, as ‘occasional’ supporters may be less inclined to challenge them (Katz and Mair 2009: 755; Cross and Pilet 2016: 11). This could translate into a blurring of distinct ideological choices between political parties, as primaries may ‘deny party members the ability to choose candidates who reflect the distinctive values of the party to which they belong’ (White 2009). Another related risk of open primaries

is that outsiders, rivals of the party or single-issue groups could ‘infiltrate’ the debate and even the nomination process.

Where levels of polarization are high, such as those recently seen in the United States or in countries in Latin America, open primaries may be vulnerable to cross-over voting or to simpler forms of infiltration, such as in the case, at least theoretically, of party adversaries strategically registering in the open primaries of a rival party in order to vote for a weaker candidate.

Moreover, open primaries can also increase the cost of election campaigns—and therefore the barriers to entry for those without access to funding—as primary candidates must effectively reach out to more potential voters (Ashiagbor 2008: 11).

According to research, three main factors encourage political parties to increase the number of people selecting their leaders and/or candidates (Barnea and Rahat 2007). First, there is a more systemic factor, in that societies are pushing political parties to adopt measures that allow citizens to more directly select their leaders and representatives (Barnea and Rahat 2007; Faucher 2015). This is in line with the current disintermediation trend in all aspects of life, in which citizens demand more direct mechanisms for decision making (Micheletti and McFarland 2011). Second, there is a competitive element. Political parties are pressured to adopt open primaries when the competition from other parties increases. This can be the case where a political party is hoping to mitigate unfavourable conditions, such as the aftermath of a major scandal or declining electoral support, or attempting a total revamp of the party structure (Barnea and Rahat 2007). Finally, there is the clarity aspect. At the intraparty level, the leadership and membership of a political party might hold an open primary to allow citizens to be the arbiter of internal tensions and ideological debates (Barnea and Rahat 2007). Barnea and Rahat (2007) apply these three factors to primaries more generally, both open and closed.

4. How do open primary elections work?

Any political party seeking to implement open primary elections will have to make several decisions in order to help define the model of open primaries that should be applied. These decisions should consider the objectives of holding open primaries, and take account of the size and capacity of the party, as well as the nature of its members, supporters and voters. This section presents a checklist of the questions a political party will need to consider when deciding whether to adopt an open primary elections model.

What is the goal of open primary elections?

Political parties that are considering whether to organize an open primary election should have clear goals in mind as to why such a process is needed, and a clear understanding of how it could help them to achieve their goals.

The most common reasons why a political party decides to run an open primary

- Increase citizen participation beyond its formal members
- Attract new voters
- Generate media attention
- Support party integration after a merger
- Revamp the party's leadership
- Increase the legitimacy of the party's leadership

These goals can be multiple and intertwined, and they will be highly contextual for each political party. Although open primaries have many elements in common, no two are the same. Some examples of the multiple goals of open primary elections can be found in political parties such as the New Austria and Liberal Forum (NEOS) in Austria and the Homeland Union: Lithuanian Christian Democrats (TS-LKD) in Lithuania. Both political parties have used open primaries to encourage citizen participation in their structures. They were also seeking to widen the popularity of a candidate, given that he or she would be selected with the support of more than purely party members. They also welcomed the free media attention that the open primaries generated. It should be noted such exposure can sometimes be counterproductive, however, if it creates negative headlines.

Another example of achieving goals through primary elections is Partito Democratico (PD) in Italy. In 2007, the newly formed PD used open primary elections, in which more than 3.5 million people voted, to expedite the merger of its different political forces. At the same time, the high level of participation sent a clear message to the electorate and helped the party gain legitimacy and position itself as the opposition bloc to the ruling party. It also helped the PD increase political engagement and attract new voters while enjoying a clear and strong mandate directly conferred by its supporters. The PD has regularly held open primary elections since then. In 2019, the party renewed its leadership through the participation of 1.8 million people (*La Repubblica* 2019).

What is going to be decided?

Primaries can decide a number of issues within a political party, such as the party's leadership, its candidates for elections, and the members of its internal

decision-making bodies at the national or subnational level. TS-LKD in Lithuania used an open primary to select its candidate for prime minister, but not its party leader. Parties such as NEOS have used primary elections to select the entire party list for elections. Podemos in Spain used primaries to elect the Executive Committee of its party (Podemos 2016: 27). They can be used to select representatives at all levels of the party, from national to regional representatives, as the PD in Italy does. Since open primary elections include outsiders, they are often better suited to selecting people to run as candidates for public office rather than internal management positions that might involve considerations linked to the internal life of the party that are not known to outsiders.

Balancing citizen participation with the party's strategic direction: the case of Austria's NEOS

Many political parties struggle with how to balance maximum citizen participation with strategic campaign objectives. NEOS in Austria, a liberal party established in 2012, has sought to establish such a balance through its three-round primary elections system. The first round, in which any citizen above the age of 16 is allowed to vote, is fully open. In the second round, an extended party board makes a further selection to balance candidates' age, gender, regional representation and skills. In the third and final round, the party's General Assembly votes on the final candidate list.

Although NEOS considers its primary elections to be a success overall, it also recognizes that there is room for improvement. In its 2017 primaries, around 5,000 citizens voted in the first round—half of whom were already known donors, party members or subscribers to newsletters. Compared to the 250,000 people who voted for the party in the general election later that year, this number was quite low. In addition, internal tensions arose when some candidates who had scored highly in round one withdrew in dismay after being moved down the candidate list in subsequent rounds. NEOS attributes some of these challenges to the novelty of the system and expects its primaries to gain popularity over time.

An important factor that might explain the increasing intraparty friction attributed to open primaries is the type of mandate that might be conferred on the elected candidate. A victory in an open primary should not be understood as giving the successful candidate *carte blanche*; that is, as a mandate for those elected to take over party structures and institutions, pushing out different ideological currents. The elected candidates should also take account of the interests of those who supported losing candidates.

What is the most suitable electoral system for open primary elections?

Another critical consideration when conducting an open primary election is the importance of choosing an electoral system that fulfils the primary's stated objectives. The electoral system chosen to conduct an open primary is often based on, or at least informed by, the electoral system used at the national level for the conduct of legislative or presidential elections.

All electoral systems have their own advantages and disadvantages (International IDEA 2005). However, the choice of an electoral system should seek to strike a balance between the extent to which a system translates voters' opinions into clear choices, thereby making good governance possible, on the one hand, and guaranteeing that those elected remain accountable to the party and its voters, on the other. In addition, electoral systems should be designed to promote gender equality and the inclusion of marginalized groups.

Where a primary election is being used to select one person, such as a party leader or a candidate for an election, the party needs to ensure that it uses an electoral system that addresses and captures the voice of its selectorate. The following electoral systems are possible options for a political party.

A single-round system: This is the most traditional and straightforward system. Voters have a pool of candidates from which to choose and the one with the most votes wins the nomination. This system selects the candidate who has garnered the most support. It is often complemented by other measures, such as having to gain a certain percentage of votes in each region. This is done to compensate for its 'winner-takes-all' approach. This system can also 'throw away' the votes of a losing candidate(s) even where the margins between candidates are very tight.

A two-round system: In a two-round system, voters are asked to cast their vote twice. On the first occasion, they select their preferred candidate from a pool of candidates. In this round, they are free to vote for their preferred candidate without having to vote strategically; that is, thinking of how likely it is that a candidate will win a competitive election. If no candidate achieves more than 50 per cent of the vote, there is a second round in which only the two top candidates compete. In this round, voters cast their vote to express a preference for one of the two candidates. The winner's endorsement is also provided a significant degree of legitimacy, as they have won the nomination of at least half plus one of all those actively voting. Nonetheless, a two-round system can generate voter fatigue, and there is often a decreased voter turnout in the second round as the strong supporters of eliminated candidates do not always vote a second time.

Preferential systems: Preferential voting is a mid-point between a single-round and a second-round system. This system uses various techniques that allow voters to rank/number candidates based on their preferences. In this way, voters get to choose their first, but also their second and third, choices, and so on. This can be a way of capturing nuances, avoiding the perception of a wasted vote and giving

voters a sense of influence. This system offers more options for voters and more flexibility to express opinions and rank their choices. Nonetheless, the voting, counting and tabulation processes can be overwhelming for both the party and voters. Preferential systems require a significant amount of voter education, which might present challenges in the case of an open primary election organized by a political party.

Where an open primary election is used to select more than one position, such as an election for an Executive Committee or to compose a list of candidates to run in an election on behalf of the party, a party may adopt either a proportional or a winner-takes-all system.

Proportional systems: With these systems, candidates are selected in proportion to the number of the votes they obtain. This provides a more heterogeneous list of party leaders and candidates, which more accurately reflects the vote and, hence, the strength of the different currents in the party. A proportional system can secure a more accurate representation of voters' interests among the party's leadership. However, shifting to a proportional system can make internal governance more difficult by adding too many voices to the governing entities of the party. There are different formulas for allocating the positions, none of which achieves perfect proportionality. For instance, the D'Hont system was created precisely to secure big majorities and to provide stability by awarding the candidates with the most votes a larger share of the seats.

The first-past-the-post system: Although usually adopted to select a single candidate, this system can be used to select a political party management team insofar as it seeks to give the team full powers to run the party. It provides full control of the list to the winning group, which favours stability over proportional representation.

Some parties, such as the PD in Italy or NEOS in Austria, combine open and closed primaries. This system can increase the level of decision-making for members, or give them some degree of veto power. Some parties such as the PD hold a closed primary to choose the candidates for the open primary. Other parties, such as NEOS in Austria, hold an open primary election first, but the final decision is taken in a closed vote by members and finally by the General Assembly of the party. A combination of open and closed rounds of elections can help parties find a balance and provide extra decision-making power to party members or the party leadership.

What is practically and legally possible?

When considering the adoption of an open primary election system, a political party consider practical and legal issues such as the cost, its internal structures, whether it is able to ensure a sound and credible electoral process, and whether organizing an open primary is in line with the legislative framework regulating

political parties and the conduct of elections in the country. In most cases, political parties will be subject to national legislation on how to run their internal affairs. Some states' legislation establishes that leaders must be elected democratically, but without specifying the method, and that parties should be democratically run entities.

In addition, it is important to understand which institutions, if any, must participate in the organization of the open primary election, based on the legislation of the country. If permitted by law, this could be expanded further, to allow international electoral observers to monitor the election. In Honduras and Nigeria, for example, the European Union was invited to monitor the primary elections of political parties (European Union 2015).

The political party must also ensure that it has the financial, technical and human capacity, as well the required physical and technological infrastructure, to successfully run the primary election. Methods of digital voting, which have evolved substantially in recent years, could help to expand the reach of open primary elections to smaller organizations. Technology providers can offer the required technological infrastructure to protect the integrity of the vote. Nonetheless, political parties need to realistically assess the cost of adopting high-end technological voting solutions, as a secure online voting system is likely to significantly increase the cost of conducting an open primary election. In addition to considering the cost, a party must assess the extent to which its managers are aware of the limitations of and caveats surrounding electronic voting, in particular to make sure key responsibilities are not outsourced haphazardly.

Many political parties, such as the New Democratic Party of Canada, have contracted private sector providers to establish their primary online voting system. The Five Star Movement in Italy went as far as to develop its own voting platform, although controversy surrounds Rousseau, its internal democracy platform, as it is privately owned and closed to external monitoring. It is therefore impossible to know whether the results have been tampered with. In addition, it has regularly suffered from technical glitches. Depending on the context, technological solutions cannot be the only means of voting in an open primary election, as some voters will still prefer traditional methods of voting.

Who decides the rules and procedures of the open primary election?

Another important element for a party considering conducting any type of primary election, including an open primary election, is to designate who is responsible for the rules that will govern it and for the oversight of the process. In some countries, there are public administration bodies, such as Electoral Management Bodies in Honduras or Nigeria, that regulate and oversee the process so the party cannot decide on the rules.

In most cases, however, the basic rules of primary elections are established in party statutes, including rules on oversight responsibilities. Details such as the timeframe, the voting and counting procedures and other technicalities, however, are sometimes agreed on before each electoral process. The group that decides on these practical rules, for instance the party's national executive, has a big influence over the inclusiveness of the primary elections. Depending on how this group is chosen, its decisions may be politically charged in a way that influences the set-up of the primary election in question.

It might also be the case that the statutes of a political party do not define how to carry out open primary elections. In this case, new rules clarifying all the elements will have to be drafted before the election. As a rule of thumb, the more gender balanced and inclusive the decision-making process for the internal regulation is, the more likely it will be that an open election achieves its objectives, as there will be fewer intraparty disagreements and less suspicion over the rules.

Who can vote in open primary elections?

One key question when it comes to conducting an open primary election is: who should be eligible to vote? Being 'open' does not necessarily mean that everyone can vote. In fact, nearly all open primary elections impose some sort of limitations on who is allowed to vote. In most cases, formal members automatically qualify, although they might still need to satisfy certain rules. For instance, for various reasons, political parties may limit the number and categories of people who can vote. Among the most common methods used to impose limitations on voting in an open primary election are age and nationality restrictions. Less commonly used methods include the introduction of the payment of a nominal fee and a 'freeze' period, in which only those who are eligible to participate before a certain date, either before or during the election campaign, are able to vote.

Methods for determining who can vote in an open primary election

- Age limit (only those above 16/18)
- Nationality rules (only those holding nationality of the country)
- Only those who adhere to certain values of the party
- Only those who have paid a registration fee
- Only those registered on the roll before a certain date

Payment of a Nominal Fee

The introduction of the payment of a nominal fee is one method that has been used by political parties when conducting open primary elections. Apart from the potential to cover the administrative costs of running the election—as in the case of the PD in Italy—introducing the payment of a fee, even if symbolic, allows the political party to set the cost of participation in the primary election high enough to deter rivals from infiltration voting and trying to influence the outcome. An individual might not be deterred, but a fee will avoid mass registrations by rival parties as the cost would be too high. At the same time, a low fee decreases the participation costs enough so that nearly anyone who genuinely wants to participate will be able to do so without barriers.

For political parties deciding on whether to introduce a system of fees, it will be important to consider what paying the fee would imply. If the adoption of fees is intended to create a small entry barrier to dissuade potential rivals from influencing the primary elections, then it should be clear that payment of the fee only entitles the voter/payer to vote. Some political parties might choose to create a different tier of membership that accompanies the payment of a fee. This would go beyond the right to vote and also involve further entitlements, such as to attend congresses, run for internal positions or serve on committees, without necessarily obtaining full membership rights and responsibilities.

A fee might also have the effect of separating those more seriously engaged in the political life of the party—even if they are not formal members—from those who are less seriously engaged. The fee might help the party get a picture of potential support trends as it might indicate an increase or decrease in the number of citizens seeking to engage with it. It is likely that those who engage with the process can be easily transformed into voters.

The use of fees by the Labour Party in the United Kingdom

In 2015 the British Labour Party, having changed the rules on how its leader and deputy leader should be chosen, ran a leadership primary election based on these new rules (Collins 2014; Quinn 2016; The Conversation 2015). The party put in place a system based on the idea of one member one vote and extended the right to participate to those close to the party. To do so, it created a category of ‘registered supporters’. Establishing this category was an innovation. Anyone who paid GBP 3 and agreed to support the aims and values of the Labour Party was allowed to vote in the 2015 leadership elections. There was no freeze or cut-off date for voters, meaning that people could sign up at any point as either a registered supporter or a party member throughout the leadership election campaign. By 2017, the Labour Party had over 550,000 members, whereas in 2010 it had only about 175,000 members. It is difficult to say what precise role the leadership elections played in the increase in membership, but they seem to have had an empowering effect on the recruitment of supporters and members.

The ‘freeze’ period

Political parties will seek to maintain the open and democratic management of their structures. They might decide not to impose a fee, but instead to introduce a so-called membership freeze for a certain period. Parties such as Podemos or the Five Star Movement allow registered members who have signed up online to vote in their various elections and internal consultations. It is important to note that both parties have separated membership from payment of a fee. In both, just registering online is enough to become a member and this does not involve the payment of a fee. For the most important decisions, however, only members who have been registered before a certain date are allowed to vote. This system does not prevent voting by rivals in the long term, but it does ensure that supporters of rival parties are not joining en masse just to participate in a key election or consultation.

Request to adhere to the party’s principles

Another potential method for selecting those eligible to vote in an open primary election is to ask those who wish to vote to adhere to certain principles or ideas in line with the party’s ideology. In 2017, this method was used by the French Socialist Party in their open primaries. All French citizens had the right to vote in the primary elections but before doing so, they were asked to sign a declaration in support of the core values of the party (*Parti Socialiste* 2016). This method was used in conjunction with the payment of a nominal fee of 1 euro.

Who can run in open primary elections?

Open primaries do not just increase the size of the electorate. They can also enlarge the number of people with the right to stand as candidates. Open primaries can sometimes even allow outsiders to run for positions within the party, or allow candidates from different parties to create a unified list, as was the case in the French *Primaires de la Gauche* (Primaries of the Left) (*Parti Socialiste* 2016). A broad enfranchisement generally creates the need for some type of vetting process.

Vetting a candidate

A positive example of vetting is the method instituted by NEOS, which allows members and voters an opportunity to participate in the vetting of candidates. This process has three steps: a light background check, a phase in which participants are able to pose online questions to the candidates and a vote in the party's General Assembly to determine whether the candidate should be placed on the list.

Sometimes, and particularly when conducting an open primary election for the first time, political parties choose not to use a fully open nominations system in order to retain some level of control over who can run. At its first primaries in 2007, the PD granted the party establishment greater ownership of nominations, to give constituency parties that were joining the PD a sense of control while they went through an already sensitive merger process (Benifei 2018).

When it is time to nominate this can be done by the political party's leadership; by its branches; through the collection of a number of signatures from party members, voters or even civil society (as in the case of the PD in Italy); or through a mix of these options. This process can be top down, bottom up or a combination of both, depending on how much control the party's leadership wishes to maintain before the open primary election begins. In Lithuania, the TS-LKD allowed its branches to select six candidates, only two of whom fulfilled the requirements to run in presidential primaries.

Overall, restricting the level of openness of a nomination process is a way for the party leadership to maintain some level of control over who can run. This is perhaps an important lesson for political parties that are considering open primaries but fear possible chaos or infighting.

How is campaign expenditure regulated in open primary elections?

As is the case in any election, open primaries need to have robust systems in place for regulating campaign finances in order to protect their integrity. This is important both when the funding is privately raised and when the funding is from public sources. The main objective of a regulatory framework for campaign expenditure in primary elections is to guarantee an electoral race in which the best-financed candidates enjoy no undue advantage. It is also fundamental that a political party must clarify how it is going to monitor and enforce the rules and regulations that it has set for the financing of campaigns in open primary elections (International IDEA 2014).

The regulation of campaign expenditures on open primary elections is important for two reasons. First, open primaries are smaller elections than national ones, which gives money a potentially bigger role. Supporting a candidate might cost less in an open primary than in a general election, and sometimes the winner of a primary is almost guaranteed victory in the later election for leader of a party. Second, it is sometimes the case that open primaries are not subject to the party's financial oversight systems. This opens a window of opportunity for illicit funding and for candidates willing to bypass financial rules. Some measures that might help to avoid any undue influence of money in open primary elections are:

- *A cap on campaign expenditures:* The legal framework of the open primary election can establish a reasonable cap on campaign expenditures that will ensure that the primary election does not become an arms race in terms of collecting funding for the campaign in order to outspend rival candidates.
- *A cap on individual campaign donations:* A party might also want to set a cap on individual donations so that no single person or entity is able to 'buy' a candidate. This should also apply to candidates financing their campaign with their own money or in-kind contributions, as this could give an unfair advantage to wealthy candidates or to those with access to public office, who could use their public exposure, financial and human resources to gain an unfair advantage for their campaign.
- *Transparency and expenditure disclosure rules:* Voters, and the public at large, should have access to details of all the expenditures in and budgets for the primary election campaigns of the candidates. Such transparency exercises should take place in parallel with the open primary elections, in a timely manner and in a user-friendly format. Voters will then know how candidates are financing their campaigns and how they are spending their

resources. Transparency in internal party elections that are open in nature should take innovative forms, such as disclosure of the agendas of the candidates, disclosure of the identity of donors, and so on.

- *Digital campaigning regulation:* It is likely that a large proportion of candidates' the primary election campaign expenditures will be generated by their activities online, a channel which presents significant difficulties for political parties in terms of monitoring and regulation. One option is to liaise directly with the most common providers, such as Facebook and Twitter, to obtain their support for monitoring online activities such as microtargeting or political advertisements. In addition, parties might ask candidates to disclose all payments made to online campaigns and cross-check that information with the providers.
- *Party funding for candidates:* The political party might decide to allocate a budget for the open primary election and distribute its financial provisions equally among the candidates in order to achieve a level playing field. This measure would give candidates access to internal party funding without having to worry about obtaining financial support for their campaigns.
- *Regulations on crowdfunding, donations and the use of electronic currencies:* The political party should be aware of the different campaign fundraising techniques of the candidates and ensure that all these techniques are well regulated and can be effectively monitored. For instance, if a candidate is expecting to carry out a crowdfunding campaign, the political party should establish clear rules to determine what is allowed, how campaign money must be collected and what levels of disclosure are required. The same is true for a candidate who chooses to use cryptocurrencies. The political party should clearly delineate what is acceptable and what is not when it comes to the use of cryptocurrencies to finance a campaign.

Securing equal and inclusive participation in open primary elections

Open primaries provide a window of opportunity for political parties to put in place new mechanisms to increase diversity in the party. Opening up the process of selecting a party candidate or its leaders, however, does not automatically lead to greater inclusiveness (Cf. Rahat, Hazan and Katz 2008; Katz and Mair 2009). In terms of gender equality, the evidence does not strongly support the assumption that open primary elections help to increase the number of women taking up leadership positions within their party's structures. Rahat, Hazan and Katz (2008) argue that increasing the number of people with the right to vote in an open primary election might punish underrepresented groups, such as women,

LGTB+ and people from ethnic minorities, rather than help them. It could replicate some of the selection bias of the wider electorate, which normally tends to favour male candidates. It could also negatively affect groups that do not have enough support from the party's apparatus.

Political parties seeking to increase diversity should adopt special measures to ensure a level playing field for women candidates in primary elections. Such measures could include one or a combination of a nomination quota, gender-targeted campaign funding, the adoption of electoral systems that promote inclusion, or ensuring that campaign rules for primary elections treat male and female candidates equally.

Protecting the open primaries from infiltration voting and cybersecurity threats

When considering the possibility of conducting an open primary election, one of the main concerns for political parties is the threat posed by 'infiltration voting', whereby the supporters of a rival political party try to influence the outcome of the primary elections, or to capture, organize a boycott of or otherwise derail the election. It is important to note, however, that in the case studies analysed for this Primer, political parties identified only a negligible level of threat from infiltration voting. A risk assessment should be carried out in order to realistically determine the level of threat posed by infiltration voting, and the extent to which such voting has taken place in practice. Where it is determined that it is taking place, an assessment should be made of whether it has affected the outcome of the election. This assessment will help to put in place adequate measures to prevent future infiltration, if deemed necessary.

Infiltration voting can be limited by implementing the methods and regulations mentioned above, such as restrictions on voting age and nationality, as long as they respect national legislation and are not of a discriminatory nature, as well as the payment of a nominal fee to be entitled to vote or the introduction of so-called freeze periods. An additional measure that a political party could take to avoid infiltration voting is the use of complex forms of data analysis to monitor voter registration trends and assess the numbers of party members and non-members who have registered, which could reveal anomalous behaviour or suspicious registration patterns. This could be a helpful method of curtailing infiltration voters, especially where the process relies on digital means of registration and/or voting. A potential infiltration of the electorate by rival political parties would necessarily leave traces in the form of suspicious activity and data. These could, for instance, be in the form of several registrations from a single IP address, or at standard intervals.

Protecting open primaries against infiltration: the case of TS-LKD in Lithuania

The Homeland Union-Lithuanian Christian Democrats (TS-LKD) is a centre-right political party in Lithuania. In November 2018, it conducted its first open primary elections to select its candidate for president. Since no other party had ever conducted a primary election in Lithuania, the TS-LKD had to create its own regulations and establish its own Central Election Commission (CEC) within the party. The CEC's membership consisted of an elected party representative, the party's secretariat staff, the heads of its regions and representatives of the candidates serving in an advisory capacity.

The biggest problem arose quite early on in the process, when registration for the party's open primary reached 20,000 voters, most of whom were not members. This figure exceeded the party's expectations twentyfold. Determined to verify all potential electors, TS-LKD faced a difficult logistical task. To begin with, prospective voters were required to confirm that they adhered to the party's values and ideology. The Party Secretariat then embarked on the herculean task of verifying the background of each of the 20,000 registered voters, through individual Google and social media searches. In cases of doubt, the party contacted each of the potential voters direct to verify that they were not members of other parties. In the end, only 200 voters of the 20,000 who had registered were disqualified from participating. Disqualification occurred primarily when voters proved unwilling to provide basic personal information, such as their surname or email address (Gedvilienė 2018).

A political party should also consider the possibility of cyberattacks on their primary elections. Cyberattacks could aim to decrease a party's legitimacy or just to interfere with its primary elections. For example, a simple Distributed Denial-of-Service (DDoS) attack¹ could block the primary election's voter registration site, the voting software (in the case of electronic voting) or the website that presents the results. This disruption, which does not require a highly technical infrastructure, could make it impossible for a party to conduct its primaries (Digital Attack Map 2013). A primary election by a political party in Canada was targeted by a DDoS attack in 2012 (National Post 2012). More sophisticated cyberattacks could seek to tamper with the tabulation of the results in order to favour a particular candidate or delegitimize the entire process. The use of digital means for primary elections therefore carries certain risks that political parties must carefully and realistically consider.

Endnotes

1. A DDoS is a coordinated attack that seeks to disrupt or paralyse a computer network by flooding it with requests and data from several individual computers at a time. A DDoS will prevent people from accessing a website or the information on a server.

5. Issues to consider before implementing open primary elections

Open primary elections have recently become more popular among political parties in Europe, but they remain relatively uncharted territory for internal party democracy. It is paramount that political parties understand the implications of embarking on open primary elections, address some common misconceptions about them and adjust their expectations accordingly.

One important aspect that political parties should consider is the potential impact of open primaries on the profile and type of candidates selected. An assumption is often made that adopting open primary elections will incentivize a political party to choose alternative types of leaders, perhaps from outside the party establishment. This is not necessarily the case. As Barnea and Rahat (2007) and Motz (2012) demonstrate, open primaries do not automatically transform the profile of those selected. Nor do they necessarily open up space for underrepresented groups such as women or members of LGTB+ or ethnic minorities.

Open primaries are often seen as a potential source of polarization and fragmentation inside the political party. An open primary election campaign will expose the different points of view that exist within the party and the different ideas of the candidates. Naturally, no political party is monolithic in its thinking, policies and ideologies, and no party is free from internal disagreement on different issues (Carty 2013; Katz 2013). In successful cases, those involved in an open primary election—political parties, the media and the public—have looked on this form of internal party election as a symbol of a healthy and functioning democracy. A political party can take active measures to ensure that every idea and each internal current is represented in its structures, rather than providing

absolute power to the winner of an open primary, which would lead to increased polarization.

Making adjustments over time: the case of Italy's Partito Democratico

The preferred open primaries model can change as a party's objectives change. Italy's centre-left Partito Democratico has been organizing open primary elections since its establishment in 2007, and turnout reached 3.5 million voters at its peak. The PD has continually readjusted the set-up of its primaries. In the beginning, open primaries provided a way to ease the merger of new parties into the PD, while maintaining the know-how and experience of the original parties. The primaries also helped to avoid too much internal strife over the merger process. To allow the constituent parties of the PD a level of control during its transformation process, those intending to run needed to have the support of members of their original party.

While open primaries initially increased the party's electoral support and brought it new energy, people and creative ideas, with time this participation and enthusiasm started to decline. The primaries caused local party sections to lose influence and momentum. Although a unifying instrument at the start, in recent years, open primaries have increased polarization within the party, including over policy direction. The PD is therefore considering further adjustments to its primaries, by determining the party's policy direction prior to the primaries. Furthermore, the PD has realized that those voting in primaries do not automatically engage in the party thereafter. It is looking at ways to involve voters at the local level before allowing them to vote in the primaries. Lastly, the PD is considering using the data of participants in the primaries to better engage with them in formulating policy proposals. As with all party innovations, the set-up of primaries requires continuous adjustment in order to keep in step with the party's evolution.

Another aspect that political parties need to be aware of is the extent to which, in countries with strong party membership traditions, especially those in Western Europe, much of the internal decision-making power tends to lie with registered members. Compared to countries where membership is mostly symbolic, there is likely to be greater internal resistance to experimenting with inclusive primaries because power will be, at least partly, diverted from fully paid up party members (Barnea and Rahat 2007). In addition, as Barnea and Rahat (2007) demonstrated, open primaries are sometimes taken up by party leaders to counteract the rise of a new leading figure, or a whole new generation of leaders, within the party.

Finally, any contest for political leadership, regardless of the extent of its inclusiveness, by default creates divisions within a party. However, the absence of clear and rigorously tested rules and institutionalized practices could encourage losing candidates to take drastic steps, such as abandoning the party or making accusations of vote rigging. These steps would ultimately weaken the party's unity

and credibility in the eyes of both its current members and potential future voters (Cross and Katz 2013). The models described in this Primer provide a useful way of avoiding such fall-out while maximizing the benefits of open primary elections.

6. Conclusions: the implications of holding open primary elections

Open primaries are slowly increasing in popularity (Cross and Pilet 2016). They can be seen as one of many attempts by political parties to connect with disenchanted or disengaged citizens. Experience of open primaries has been diverse and further research is needed on the subject. However, given their increasing relevance in political spheres, it is safe to assume that open primaries will remain an option for innovative political parties.

For voters, and citizens in general, open primary elections offer a level of influence over party decisions that was formerly reserved for full members. There are various design issues to consider to make open primaries effective. Nonetheless, open primaries are an attempt to respond to the evolving needs of today's societies; that is, to seek more direct and meaningful engagement between citizens and their elected representatives. For political parties, open primary elections represent an opportunity to re-engage with citizens. By participating in an open primary election process, voters are softly introduced to the party's internal democracy. However, voter turnout in open primary elections is not always what the party might expect. Some parties, such as the PD in Italy, registered very high turnouts in their first open primaries, but these numbers have declined steadily since (Benifei 2018). Other examples, such as the case of NEOS in Austria, show disappointing numbers for the first open primary election but a steady increase over time (Arlamovsky 2018). For the Socialist Party in France, a high turnout in the open primaries did not translate into good electoral results.

Based on the available evidence and research, political parties that adopt open primaries should consider the risk that they might not work as expected. The first open primaries process should not serve as a yardstick for calculating future voter turnout rates, as these might change drastically in subsequent open primaries. In

addition, the profile of the successful candidates might not necessarily be very different from those elected by other means (Motz 2012; Rahat, Hazan and Katz 2008).

Open primaries can also serve political parties beyond their need to simply elect candidates and leaders. They help collect valuable voter data that could then be used to support policy formulation. By gaining a better understanding of those who are willing to vote in an open primary election, a political party can get to know its electorate. Political parties can also benefit from the extra publicity they receive when conducting a primary election, with the obvious caveats, and from a potential increase in the number of paying members, as was the case for the Labour Party in the UK.

The country case studies analysed in this Primer have all covered political parties that opened up their systems of internal democracy to allow more citizens to take an active part in their decision-making processes. This trend is likely to continue (Cross and Pilet 2016).

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