The Electoral System in Denmark

European Parliamentary Elections

European Parliamentary elections are held in the EU member states every five years. 13 Danish members were elected at the European Parliamentary election in 2009. Since the European Parliamentary election in 2004, the number of Danish members has been reduced from 14 to 13 members, following the enlargement of the European Union to include Bulgaria and Romania. After the elections in May 2014, there will be 751 members of the European Parliament in total. Its members are elected for five years.

This article gives you information about the computation of returns of European Parliamentary elections in Denmark.

1. Fixing the Election Day. Electoral Area

The Minister for Economic Affairs and the Interior sets the day for holding the election based on the appropriate rules and regulations of the European Communities, and announces the day for holding the election in the Danish Official Gazette.

The Danish rules for European Parliamentary elections are laid down in the Election of Danish Members of the European Parliament Act.

According to section 2 of this act Denmark constitutes a single electoral area in which all 13 members are elected by proportional representation. Voting and counting take place in the same polling districts and nomination districts as in general elections.

No European Parliamentary elections are held in the Faroe Islands or Greenland, as they do not participate in the European co-operation.

2. Lists of Candidates and Election Coalitions

The following parties are entitled to stand in European Parliamentary elections:
- parties which in the general election held at least six weeks prior to the election day obtained parliamentary representation, and which are still represented in Parliament six weeks prior to the election day;
- parties which in the previous European Parliamentary election obtained representation in the European Parliament, and which are still represented therein six weeks prior to the election day; and
- new parties having registered with the Minister for Economic Affairs and the Interior not later than twelve noon, eight weeks prior to the election day. The registration form must be accompanied by statements from voters corresponding to at least two per cent of all valid votes at the previous general election, at present numbering 69,189.

Only the parties entitled to stand may nominate candidates for the European Parliamentary elections. There is no access for non-party candidates to stand in the election. Candidates standing in the European Parliamentary election are entered in lists of candidates. A party may submit only one list of candidates, and a list of candidates has a maximum limit of 20 named candidates.

Lists of candidates must be delivered to the Minister for Economic Affairs and the Interior not later than twelve noon, four weeks prior to the election day.

The Minister for Economic Affairs and the Interior assigns individual letters to parties entitled to participate in the European Parliamentary election, for printing identification of the parties in the ballot papers. In assigning the letters every possible effort must be made to ensure that the parties keep the letters attributed to them in previous elections.

3. Election Coalitions

Seats are distributed among the presented lists of candidates according to the d'Hondt formula (see below). This formula favours the big lists of candidates, however only to a limited extent, and particularly when one party is comparatively much larger than the others. This tends systematically to give major parties a larger share of seats, with a lesser share being available for minor parties if compared with other methods of distribution. The parties entitled to stand may counteract the tendency to favour major parties by forming election coalitions with each other. Establishing the largest possible "units" reduces the waste of votes in connection with the allocation of seats and diminishes the tendency to overrepresentation by major parties. Even major parties form election coalitions in order to obtain the largest possible number of seats.

4. Allocation of Seats

The votes cast in favour of each list of candidates in all nomination districts are added up in the same count, i e for the whole country. In the case of a registered election coalition, the number of votes for the lists of candidates in the coalition is added up.

Seats are allocated as above according to the d'Hondt formula. This means that the total number of votes for each election coalition and each list of candidates which has not formed an election coalition, is divided by 1, 2, 3, etc as far as necessary to distribute the seats among the list of candidates and the election coalitions. The election coalition, or the list of candidates that has not formed an election coalition, which has the largest of the established quotients, receives the first seat. The second largest quotient authorises the second seat and so on, until all seats have been allocated. If two or more quotients are equal, lots will be drawn.

The number of seats allocated to an election coalition is then distributed among the lists of candidates having joined the election coalition, according to the same procedure.

If a list of candidates has won more seats than the number of candidates in the list of candidates, the remaining seat or seats are transferred to the list with which the exhausted list has formed an election coalition. If the exhausted list has not formed an election coalition with other lists, or if the lists with which the exhausted list has formed an election coalition are exhausted as well, the seats are credited to non-exhausted lists and election coalitions next in line to qualify for further seats according to the d'Hondt formula.

4.1. Example of Seat Allocation

Suppose 9 lists of candidates are registered in an election: N, O, P, Q, R, S, T, U, V, and 13 members of the European Parliament are to be elected. Parties O and P have formed an election coalition. Furthermore, parties T and U have formed an election coalition.

4.1.1. Seat Allocation Among the Parties

First, the votes are distributed among the lists of candidates, which have not formed election coalitions, and election coalitions. The votes cast in favour of each list of candidates (party) in all nomination districts are added up in the same count. Then the 13 seats are allocated among lists of candidates, which have not formed election coalitions, and election coalitions, according to the d'Hondt formula. See Table 1 below

Table 1: Seat Allocation Among Lists of Candidates

List of candidates	N	O	P	Q	R	S	T	U	V
Number of votes, whole country	2,220	530	665	750	621	1,120	370	335	350
Election coalition		**1195**					**705**		
Divided by 1	2,220 (1)	1,195 (2)		750 (5)	621 (8)	1,120 (3)	705 (7)		350
Divided by 2	1110 (4)	597.5 (9)		375	310.5	560 (10)	352.5		175
Divided by 3	740 (6)	398.333 (13)		250	207	373.333	235		116.667
Divided by 4	555 (11)	298.75		187.5	155.25	280	176.25		87.5
Divided by 5	444 (12)	239		150	124.2	224	141		70
Divided by 6	370	199.167		125	103.5	186.667	117.5		58.333
Total seats	5	3		1	1	2	1		-

The numbers in parenthesis indicate the order in which seats are allocated.

When the votes have been distributed among the registered lists of candidates and election coalitions, the seats are allocated to the election coalitions or lists of candidates participating in the election without having formed a coalition. The 13 largest quotients give a seat to the lists of candidates that have not formed an election coalition, and the election coalitions. The list of candidates designated N gets the first seat as this list has obtained the largest quotient, and the second seat goes to the election coalition between list coalitions T and U for having obtained the second largest quotient after the first division, etc. Party V does not obtain any seat and thus it does not obtain representation in the European Parliament.

Election coalition O and P has obtained three seats, no 2, no 9 and no 13 and has to split these between them by number of votes based on the same formula. This means that the seats are allocated to the parties by priority of the number of their votes.

Election Coalition	O	P
Number of votes	530	665
Divided by 1	530 (9)	665 (2)
Divided by 2	265	332.5 (13)
Divided by 3	176.667	221.667
Number of seats	1	2

Election coalition O and P has won one seat, no 7, which is allocated to the party with the largest quotient.

Election Coalition	T	U
Number of votes	370	335
Divided by 1	370 (7)	335
Divided by 2	185	167.5
Number of seats	1	-

5. Selection of Candidates

Based on the personal votes count for independent candidates and the number of list votes it is established which of a party's candidates is elected. The number of personal votes cast for each candidate and the number of list votes cast for each list of candidates in all nomination districts are added up in the same count.

A. Standing in Parallel

If candidates are *standing in parallel*, the seats of the list of candidates are allocated to candidates by priority of the size of the number of their personal votes. If two or more candidates hold an equal number of personal votes, lots will be drawn.

A register of non-elected candidates (register of substitutes) is prepared for each list, stating their names by priority of the number of their personal votes.

B. Party List Organisation

When a list of candidates has registered a *party list organisation*, it means that the candidates are nominated in a fixed order. In this case the returns of candidates are calculated according to the following procedure:

1. The total number of votes for the list of candidates is divided by an integer larger than the number of seats allocated to the list of candidates. The established number is increased to the next integer, even if it is itself an integer. This number hence constitutes the distributional number for the list of candidates (Droop's quota).
2. Candidates who have obtained a number of personal votes equal to or larger than the distributional number are elected.
3. Candidates who have obtained fewer personal votes than the distributional number are allocated seats by order of appearance in the list of candidates, by adding as many of the list votes to the number of the relevant candidates' personal votes to make them arrive exactly at the distributional number. The aggregate of personal votes and list votes thus constitutes the distributional number. Candidates that in this way obtain a number of votes equal to the distributional number are elected.
4. If, after allocation to the list of candidates, seats are still left vacant, the other candidates are elected by priority of the size of the number of their votes (personal and list votes combined). If two or more candidates hold an equal number of votes, the candidate or candidates higher on the party list are elected.

By choosing a party list, the party organisation maximises its influence as to which of the nominated candidates is elected.

5.1. Example of Selection of Candidates and Determination of Order of Substitutes in Party List Organisation

A list of candidates with 11 candidates has received a total of 2,220 votes, of which 1,360 are personal votes and 860 are list votes. Five seats are allocated to the list, and the distributional number for the list is 2,220:(5+1) = 2,220:6 = 370 increased to 371. The personal votes cast for each candidate and the distribution of list votes are as stated below:

Candidate:	Personal votes	List votes	Total	Elected	Substitutes
no 1	150	221	371	no 1	
no 2	50	321	371	no 2	
no 3	90	281	371	no 3	
no 4	70	37	107		no 2
no 5	85		85		no 4
no 6	35		35		no 6
no 7	395		395	no 4	
no 8	100		100		no 3
no 9	215		215	no 5	
no 10	115		115		no 1
no 11	55		55		no 5
Aggregated	**1,360**	**860**	**2,220**	**5**	**6**

Candidates having obtained the distributional number or above are elected first, i.e. no's 1, 2, 3 and 7. These are elected by order of appearance in the list of candidates.

Candidate no 9 is elected for being the candidate who among the candidates failing to obtain the distributional number has the largest number of votes.

Non-elected candidates become substitutes. The numbering of substitutes reflects the return by priority of the size of the total number of their votes (personal votes and list votes), regardless of ballot paper position. Hence, the six non-elected candidates become substitutes in the following order: no's 10, 8, 4, 5, 11 and 6.