

**Bills Committee on the Legislative Council (Amendment) Bill 2003**

**Proportional Representation : List Voting System**

**Introduction**

Having discussed Legislative Council (LegCo) Paper No. CB(2)2075/02-03(03) on “Allocation of Seats under the List Voting System” at the meeting of this Committee on 15 May 2003, Members requested the Administration to provide further information on –

- (a) the electoral systems adopted in Germany, Italy, Portugal, Spain and Israel; and
- (b) in relation to (a) above, the number of seats in the legislatures, the number and size of the constituencies, and the number of candidates returned from the constituencies.

**Proportional Representation System**

2. Germany, Italy, Portugal, Spain and Israel all adopt the proportional representation (PR) system. The major advantages of this system are –

- (a) the election outcome could more accurately reflect voter preference;
- (b) it would better ensure representation of smaller parties, hence a fuller representation of different views of the electorate overall;
- (c) it would enable more voters to have a voice in the legislature, thus increasing the propensity of the electorate to vote; and
- (d) because of (a) to (c) above, the representativeness of the legislature is enhanced.

3. The five countries all adopt the list voting system, which is one form of PR system. In an election, voters vote for a list instead of individual candidates. Seats in the legislature are distributed among the lists in proportion to the number of votes received by each list. Seats won by a list will be allocated to candidates on the list in accordance with pre-determined ranking on a candidate list. The main attractions of this system have been set out in Paper No. CB(2)2075/02-03(03). In gist, the system is simple and straightforward, and is easily understood by voters and candidates alike.

### **Electoral systems in Germany, Italy, Portugal, Spain and Israel**

4. Some further information as requested by Members on the electoral systems in Germany, Italy, Portugal, Spain and Israel is set out below. The information is based on publicly accessible material. There is no readily available information on the size of constituencies in Germany, Italy, Portugal and Spain. (In Israel, the whole of the country forms one single constituency.)

#### Germany (population as at July 2002 : around 83 million)

5. The German electoral system provides two routes to the parliament which comprises 598 seats. Half of these seats (i.e. 299) are returned by 16 constituencies, each with seats ranging from 2 to 64, using the PR list voting system. The other half are returned by 299 single-seat constituencies using “first-past-the-post” voting system.

6. A voter in Germany has two votes. The first vote is a vote to elect a member of parliament for the local single-seat constituency. The other vote is a vote for a candidate list in a multi-seat constituency election. The overall allocation of seats in the parliament is decided by the results of the PR list votes. Each party list is awarded as many PR seats as is necessary to ensure that its total number of seats (local constituency seats and PR seats combined) is proportional to the share of PR list votes it has received. If a party wins more constituency seats than it is entitled to on the basis of its PR votes, it is allowed to keep these extra seats and the size of the parliament is expanded accordingly. Therefore, the total number of seats in the parliament may vary from time to time. For example, in the 2002 election, 603 members were returned to the parliament.

Italy (population as at July 2002 : around 58 million)

7. Italy also adopts a mixed system that is similar to the German system. There are a total of 630 seats in the parliament, among which 475 are returned by single-seat constituencies using the “first-past-the-post” voting system. The remaining 155 seats are returned by 26 constituencies, each with seats ranging from 1 to 11, using the PR list voting system. As with the German system, a voter in Italy has two votes.

Portugal (population as at July 2002 : around 10 million)

8. In Portugal, the PR list voting system is used to return 230 members of the parliament. There are 22 constituencies, each with seats ranging from 2 to 48.

Spain (population as at July 2002 : around 40 million)

9. The parliament in Spain has 350 members who are returned by 52 constituencies. Among these members, 348 are returned by 50 constituencies, each with seats ranging from 3 to 33, using the PR list voting system. The remaining two members of the parliament are returned by two single-seat constituencies using the “first-past-the-post” voting system.

Israel (population as at July 2002 : around 6 million)

10. There are 120 seats in the parliament of Israel. The entire country is treated as a single constituency, and a PR list voting system is adopted to return members of the parliament.

Constitutional Affairs Bureau  
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