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Intra-party democracy from members' viewpoint: the case of left-wing parties in Portugal

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Abstract

Focusing on the Portuguese case, this article aims to examine how members evaluate items of intra-party democracy and the ways in which their evaluations vary significantly across parties and key individual-level factors. It uses data from online surveys conducted in 2014 to grassroots members of three left-wing parties that differ in their organisational and participative profiles: the centre-left Socialist Party and the radical left Left Bloc and Livre. The results reveal more positive evaluations among members of radical left parties and for those featuring higher levels of activism and ideological congruence with the party. However, appraisals tend to be more negative when there are higher expectations of influencing the candidate selection process and of gaining professional benefits through membership. The findings suggest that democratising reforms may be a double-edged sword by

attracting members who value this kind of change but at the same time fostering critical appraisals.

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Keywords

Intra-party democracy
Left-wing parties, party members
Portugal

Introduction

Political parties have adopted significant organisational reforms fostering the growing participation of members in decision-making processes, especially in relation to leader and candidate selection (LeDuc 2001; Bille 2001; Kenig 2009; Hazan and Rahat 2010; Pilet and Cross 2014). These changes are deemed to have a positive impact by boosting inclusiveness and offsetting some ‘party crisis’ symptoms such as loss of members, decreasing levels of participation and mobilisation, as well as widespread anti-party feelings and distrust (Dalton and Wattenberg 2000; van Biezen et al. 2012).

The analysis of intra-party democracy (IPD) plays an important role in furthering the understanding of various crucial problems facing representative democracies, notably in terms of legitimacy, participation and representation (Mair 2013; Scarrow 2015). Although some authors argue that parties perform relatively well in terms of outputs (Dalton et al. 2011), citizens clearly express growing mistrust towards parties as actors of intermediation, thus widening the distance between political elites and the masses, especially in Southern Europe (Teixeira et al. 2014; Torcal 2014). Moreover, the issue of IPD has become increasingly relevant as party organisations are steadily becoming more regulated by the state, on matters related to finance, election campaigns and internal functioning, for example (van Biezen 2008). As van Biezen (2014, pp. 183–188) noted, the fact that party organisations have been considered private associations benefiting from public subsidies may generate both growing tensions in public opinion, and also the need to implement democratic practices in their internal functioning. Recent comparative research has found that richer parties—more heavily dependent on state subsidies—also display lower levels of IPD and have leader-dominated organisations (Poguntke et al. 2016). Yet it remains unclear how members perceive internal party life and evaluate the level and nature of IPD.

The present article addresses three main research questions: how do party members evaluate intra-party functioning and IPD? To what extent do members' evaluations vary across parties? What kind of factors accounts for differences in the perceptions held by the members? To answer these questions, we draw on data from online surveys using a sample of grassroots members of three left-wing parties in Portugal: the centre-left Socialist Party (*Partido Socialista*, PS) and two radical left parties, namely the Left Bloc (*Bloco de Esquerda*, BE) and the Livre-Freedom—Left, Europe and Ecology (*Livre—Liberdade, Esquerda, Europa e Ecologia*). Although distinct party organisational cultures make it difficult to generalise our findings to other Western European parties, Portugal is a good example of the 'individual member/congress model' variant of party organisation that predominates in most parliamentary democracies (Poguntke et al. 2016).

Despite the fact that these are all left-wing parties, their comparison is appropriate as the extent of ideological polarisation, their organisational structures, party size and participative cultures all vary. While the PS has been in government both alone and in coalition since 1976 and is considered a catch-all party, the BE is a left-libertarian party with a loose organisational structure and an emphasis on participatory mechanisms. The BE was formed in 1999 and has experienced electoral ups and downs, but reached its peak in the 2015 legislative elections when it polled more than 10%. Finally, Livre was formed in 2014 by a former Member of the European Parliament (MEP) elected in the BE list and it was the first Portuguese party to conduct open primaries for the 2014 European elections and the 2015 legislative elections.¹ It strongly endorses transparency, civic participation and inclusiveness, especially using new information and communication technologies (ICTs). Focusing on three distinct parties in one country, a case study has the advantage of keeping systemic characteristics of the broader political system as a constant, thus allowing us to better evaluate differences in IPD across parties.

Mainstream studies on IPD in Portugal focus mainly on formal statutes (Belchior 2008; Lisi 2015a). Members' views have attracted recent interest (Coelho 2013; Lisi 2015b) but studies still lack a broader and comparative perspective (an exception is Sanches and Razzuoli forthcoming). Hence, this study aims first and foremost to fill this lacuna and to contribute to a still emerging field. In relation to the existing literature, this research introduces several novel elements in the study of IPD. First, it analyses IPD in terms of members' perceptions, relying on original surveys of party grassroots. Second, it examines multiple indicators for the study of IPD in accordance with members' perceptions. Third, it investigates variations of members' perceptions across distinct party models. Finally, it

develops and tests a set of hypotheses linking individual determinants to members' attitudes towards IPD.

In the next section, we review the literature on IPD and discuss its main findings. Thereafter, we present the data and our research design. This is followed by a brief description of the party member profile and by the presentation and discussion of our main empirical findings. We conclude by pointing out the relevance of the results for the debate on party change and party crisis in contemporary democracies and what future directions party politics in this area should take.

Intra-party democracy and members' perceptions: theory and hypotheses

Political parties have been considered crucial actors for the functioning of representative democracies. The degree of democracy within parties has been traditionally considered irrelevant to their functional and systemic role. Indeed, classical studies found that, despite their formally democratic structure, parties operate according to oligarchic principles and mechanisms rather than through inclusion, transparency and accountability (Duverger 1959; Michels 1962; Carty 2013; but see Loxbo 2013 for different results).

Yet several scholars have recently rediscovered the importance of IPD and the need to examine intra-party functioning (Pettitt 2012; Cross and Katz 2013a; Sandri and Amjahad 2015; van Haute and Gauja 2015). The working definition provided by Scarrow (2005) centres on two key dimensions, namely inclusiveness and centralisation. This operationalisation has been widely used, especially in the analysis of candidate and leadership selection (Kittilson and Scarrow 2003; Croissant and Chambers 2010; Hazan and Rahat 2010; Pilet and Cross 2014). Building on a similar approach, a recent contribution on Central and Eastern European parties operationalises the concept of IPD using a detailed set of indicators covering three main dimensions—party members' rights, organisational structure and the decision-making process (von dem Berge et al. 2013).²

Studies about Portugal have mainly focused on formal processes of internal democracy (Lopes 2002; Lobo 2003; Jalali 2007; Belchior 2008; Lisi 2015a), looking at the way in which candidates (Freire and Teixeira 2011; Freire and Viegas 2009) and leaders are selected (Lisi and Freire 2014). This work takes another step by investigating how members perceive IPD. An analysis focused on members' perceptions presents several advantages. On the one hand, party organisations often function according to informal rules, thus limiting the

capacity of the grassroots to influence decision-making. If, as Cross and Katz put it (2013b, p. 8), ‘the crucial consideration in terms of IPD appears not to be norms of party membership, or even patterns of intra-party participation, but rather who has real authority over what areas of party decision-making’, then we need to look beyond the analysis of party statutes and formal procedures and investigate party members’ perceptions with regard to their influence within internal party life. On the other hand, the analysis of IPD through members’ eyes sheds light on the perceived performance of parties and their degree of legitimacy. In particular, this approach allows us to examine the members’ evaluation of distinct aspects of intra-party life and thus to see into the “black box” of political parties. Recent studies, mostly based on Western European countries, have adopted this approach by examining members’ viewpoints on IPD.³ Notably, these works have examined how individual-level and party-related factors are associated to members’ perceptions of IPD. In the following section, we briefly review these findings and develop the working hypotheses of this study accordingly.

Existing research suggests that the type of party matters when explaining variations in members’ perceptions of IPD. Wauters (2009) found that members belonging to Agalev and VLD—a liberal party that introduced primaries some time before the study was carried out—display more positive views of intra-party dynamics, especially with regard to candidate selection. Differences between parties are also found in the Netherlands, although with no clear pattern in terms of ideology or organisational models (Van Holsteyn and Koole 2009). In the Norwegian case, Saglie and Heidar (2004, pp. 392–393) showed that members’ perceptions of IPD also varied across parties, with Labour members exhibiting more negative opinions. More importantly, Pettitt (2012) found that new left-wing parties are more likely to display higher levels (and standards) of democratic practices compared to the ‘old’, traditional and mainstream left. In one rare analysis of this topic in Portugal, Coelho (2013) found that PSD members of the Lisbon regional organisation were less receptive to the adoption of IPD procedures than PS-Lisbon affiliates. All in all, empirical studies indicate that there are differences between parties and this is an interesting finding that deserves to be explored.

Drawing on this literature, our first hypothesis is associated to party organisational models and members’ powers to influence key decision-making processes, such as candidate or leadership selection. Portuguese political parties have made important democratising reforms over the last 20 years (Lisi 2010, 2015a). The PS was the first party to introduce closed primaries for leadership selection in 1998. By contrast, the two radical left parties adopt a more collegial and consensual style of leadership, with a spokesperson representing the party in

public. Regarding the process of candidate selection, Livre has been more innovative and, when it was founded in 2014, adopted a more inclusive framework based on open primaries.⁴ The BE uses a relatively decentralised process of candidate selection, whereas the leader and national party bodies in the PS have significant power (Freire and Teixeira 2011). Nevertheless, changes in the field of policy formulation have been very limited in most parties, with the partial exception of the two radical left parties. Indeed, both BE and Livre tend to emphasise their participative culture and introduce mechanisms accordingly (e.g. instruments of direct democracy, see Sanches and Razzuoli forthcoming). Given this background, our first hypothesis is as follows:

H1 Members belonging to more inclusive and open party organisations (BE and Livre) display higher levels of satisfaction with IPD.

At the micro level, members' appraisals of IPD can vary depending on their biographic characteristics. In this context, seniority, i.e. how long members have been affiliated in the party, is usually linked to their perception of IPD. In the Spanish case, Baras et al. (2012) found that members with greater seniority and professionally involved in public or party life displayed more positive attitudes towards IPD. These findings are in line with the professionalisation argument advocated by Katz and Mair (1995). Differently, Bernardi et al. (2016) demonstrated that members' socialisation within different organisational settings explains their opinion towards primaries. Drawing on the case of the Italian Democratic Party (PD), this study shows that old-style members, i.e. those who joined the party before the introduction of more flexible and transparent forms of organisation, hold more negative perceptions of primaries than new-style members who have joined since then. In Portugal, reforms made by the parties came at the same time as party organisations were experiencing a process of increasing centralisation of power in the hands of the leadership, with consequent marginalisation of grassroots members (Lisi 2015a). Previous findings based on PS members show that satisfaction with IPD increases with seniority (Lisi 2015b). We therefore formulate the following hypothesis:

H2 Older party members express more positive views of IPD than new ones.

Members' attitudes towards IPD are often related to their degree of involvement in party activities (Saglie and Heidar 2004; Baras et al. 2012; Wauters 2014; Bernardi et al. 2016). While conventional wisdom suggests a positive relationship between degree of involvement and evaluation of IPD, this is far from uncontroversial (see, for instance, Saglie and Heidar 2004). In fact, it has been shown that members' positive opinions about primaries decline as activism

increases (Bernardi et al. 2016). Although members' perceptions of IPD may depend on the actual state of democracy within the party—in particular whether the party has adopted democratising reforms,—a recent study shows that activists, i.e. middle-level elites, are more satisfied with IPD than grassroots members (Lisi 2015b). In addition, it should be noted that the impact of the direct election of leaders on intra-party dynamics in Portugal has been weak—especially in terms of participation and degree of competitiveness—and depends on the political context (Lisi and Freire 2014). Given this we expect that:

H3 Members with higher levels of activism display more positive perceptions of IPD.

The level of ideological congruence has been a subject of interest in the literature on party members (van Haute and Carty 2012). Several studies (Baras et al. 2012; Kölln and Polk 2017) found that members who are ideologically closer to their party have more positive views of IPD. This means that ideological incongruence may increase the relevance of the 'voice' option. Hence, our expectation is that:

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H4 The higher the level of ideological congruence, the higher the level of satisfaction with IPD.

Furthermore, the Spanish case suggests that members' evaluations of IPD are influenced by the reasons for joining the party. In fact, these emerge as one of the strongest predictors, with pragmatists displaying higher levels of satisfaction, while ideologists are more critical about intra-party functioning (Baras et al. 2012). We test these relationships in the Portuguese case, formulating the following hypotheses:

H5.1 Members who join the party for pragmatic reasons display more positive attitudes towards IPD.

H5.2 Ideologically driven members will be less satisfied with IPD.

However, given that statutes and internal practices may influence members' perceptions, we also need to consider process incentives. These motivations refer to the opportunity structure inside party organisations that allows members to play a relevant role and affect decision-making processes (Seyd and Whiteley 1992). In other words, process incentives are (selective) rewards derived from the political process itself. A number of studies indicate that these factors are

extremely relevant for party members (Scarrow 2015; van Haute and Gauja 2015). In Portugal, the recently created Livre is quite distinct from other left-wing parties in terms of members' rights and participation as it provides far greater opportunities to influence both candidate selection, due to the adoption of open primaries, and the drafting of electoral manifesto. This observation leads to our final hypothesis:

H5.3 Process incentives are positively associated to satisfaction with IPD in Livre, but this relationship is negative in both the PS and the BE.

Data and methods

This research is based on online surveys conducted with members of Portuguese political parties in the framework of a research project [reference omitted for blind peer review]. A substantial part of the survey builds on the core questionnaire of the Member and Activists of Political Parties (MAPP) project.⁵ However, complementary questions, directly related to members' perceptions of intra-party functioning and IPD, were also added. In formulating the questions, we draw inspiration from similar works implemented in the Italian (Bordandini et al. 2011) and Spanish cases (Baras et al. 2012).

The online surveys reached dues-paying members through an email sent by the party headquarters. However, the resulting samples were quite dissimilar. Whereas only grassroots members participated in the case of leftist parties (PS, BE and Livre), only delegates participated in the case of rightist parties (Social Democratic Party and Social and Democratic Centre-Popular Party).⁶ Given the overlap between ideology and sample characteristics, we decided to focus solely on grassroots members' and thus on leftist parties. These parties, particularly new and radical left parties, are generally associated to a stronger participative culture and to greater openness towards participatory mechanisms, as our previous contextualisation of the Portuguese parties indicates. Hence, we might find a significant variation in the perceptions of intra-party functioning and IPD in the three surveyed parties. Nevertheless, it is worth noting that although they are within the same ideological spectrum, they are characterised by significant differences (e.g. origins, organisational model and extent of IPD) that might lead to differences in members' perceptions.

The surveys used in this article were conducted in 2014, between January and February for the PS, and from 20 October to 10 December for the BE and Livre. The different timing of the surveys is not particularly relevant, given that no significant events took place in the Portuguese party system or the internal life

of the parties during this period. Furthermore, all left-wing parties were in opposition at the time fieldwork unfolded.

Overall, we use data from 2159 members 1347 (62.4%) of whom are from the PS, 669 (31%) from the BE and 143 (6.6%) from the Livre.⁷ These data have some shortcomings for our research. In fact, online surveys are often biased with regard to participants' education levels and socioeconomic resources as it is individuals with more sophisticated cognitive skills and more regular users of new ICTs that tend to answer this type of survey (see, for instance, Bethlehem 2010). However, the data gathered are unique and allow Portugal to be included in the comparative literature on members' perceptions on intra-party functioning and IPD.

Drawing on these surveys, we measure members' perceptions by their expressed level of agreement (on a 4-point scale ranging from 'completely agree' to 'completely disagree') with the following eight statements: (a) formal rules are irrelevant to the functioning of the party, (b) the functioning of the party is influenced by internal divisions, (c) party structures inhibit internal pluralism, (d) members' internal participation depends on potential benefits, (e) members do not influence party policies, (f) leaders do not care about members' opinions, (g) the party leader is not autonomous enough and (h) internal democracy should be increased.

This operationalisation includes topics such as participation, centralisation, inclusiveness, and leader autonomy. that are similar to topics found in studies examining members' assessments on intra-party functioning and/or regarding particular aspects of IPD (Saglie and Heidar 2004; Baras et al. 2012; Kölln and Polk 2017). Saglie and Heidar (2004), for instance, consider the attentiveness of leadership, the importance of personal connections and whether strong leadership is a problem. Baras et al. (2012) elaborate an index based on four items, namely leadership accountability, members' role in the decision-making, the degree of centralisation and the use of direct democracy. Finally, other studies focus on leader's voice (i.e. autonomy), member's influence on decision-making processes and participation (Hansen and Saglie 2005; Sandri and Amjahad 2015; Kölln and Polk 2017).

Starting from this operationalisation, the empirical analysis of this article is divided into two parts. The first is mainly descriptive, and depicts members' perceptions of intra-party functioning and IPD and further explores variations across parties. The second tests the hypotheses outlined above through multiple regression analysis. In particular, it tests whether members' evaluations are

contingent on their socio-demographic characteristics, political profile and motivations for joining the party.

Members' perceptions of intra-party functioning and IPD

How do members evaluate intra-party functioning and IPD? Are there significant differences across parties? To answer these questions, Table 1 presents members' agreement with eight statements tapping into various aspects of internal party life. For the sake of simplicity, the values in the cells aggregate those who answered 'completely disagree' or 'disagree'.⁸

Table 1

Party members' opinions on intra-party functioning and IPD

	BE	Livre	PS	Total	Chi Square tests
Formal rules are irrelevant to the functioning of the party					
<i>N</i>	423	111	849	1383	$\chi^2(2) = 24.350^{***}$
%	73	86	67	70	
The functioning of the party is influenced by internal divisions					
<i>N</i>	155	57	274	486	$\chi^2(2) = 35.129^{***}$
%	27	45	22	25	
Party structures inhibit internal pluralism					
<i>N</i>	439	119	750	1308	$\chi^2(12) = 104.070^{***}$
%	77	95	59	66	
Members' internal participation depends on potential benefits					
<i>N</i>	523	116	750	1389	$\chi^2(2) = 215.002^{***}$
%	90	91	59	70	
Members do not influence party policies					
<i>N</i>	400	115	551	1066	$\chi^2(2) = 181.521^{***}$
%	69	90	43	54	
Leaders do not care about members' opinions					
<i>N</i>	413	122	551	1086	$\chi^2(12) = 218.195^{***}$
%	71	95	43	55	
Party leader is not autonomous enough					
<i>N</i>	423	116	886	1425	$\chi^2(2) = 26.501^{***}$

	BE	Livre	PS	Total	Chi Square tests
%	74	91	70	72	
Internal democracy should be increased					
<i>N</i>	121	64	180	365	$\chi^2(2) = 102.180^{***}$
%	21	50	14	19	
(1) Values in the cells are the sum of the percentage of the respondents who 'completely disagree' or 'disagree'. The difference from 100 indicates the proportion of those who 'agree' or 'completely agree'. (2) Question: 'Thinking about your experience within the party, to what extent do you agree with the following statements'. (3) Chi Square tests are significant at *** $p < 0.001$					

Overall, the results depict significant differences in members' views contingent on the party to which they belong (Chi Square tests significant at $p < 0.001$). The overwhelming majority of members do not agree that formal rules are irrelevant to the functioning of the party, and this perception is particularly marked in the case of Livre (86% disagree or completely disagree with the sentence).

Notwithstanding, only a quarter of members disagree with the statement that internal divisions influence the functioning of the party. This is particularly true for PS (22%) and BE (27%) members. This is to be expected in the case of BE, since the party resulted from a merger of three extreme-left political forces and has suffered important defections from senior members since its foundation; however, it is less so in the case of the PS. Two recent trends might explain these results: on the one hand, PS's personalised factions and, on the other, the introduction of direct leadership selection (Lisi 2015a). Both trends have increased internal fragmentation, especially when the party is in opposition. Complementary to this, the majority of members (66%) disagree that party structures inhibit internal pluralism. The members of Livre contribute most to this overall view (95%), while PS affiliates contribute the least (59%).

With regard to incentives for members' participation, there is a widespread perception that activism is not contingent on potential benefits (70%), particularly among members from BE and Livre (90 and 91%, respectively). When it comes to views on members' influence within the party, we observe that the great majority (90%) of Livre members disagree that members do not influence the party policies, while only a minority of PS members held this view (43%). Linked to this perception, we find that the same share of members (43%) within the PS disagrees that leaders do not care about members' opinions. In contrast, members of Livre and BE overwhelmingly state that leaders care about their influence. Still on the issue of leadership, 72% of the members disagree that leaders lack autonomy. In other words, they seem to be fairly satisfied with

the leader's role vis-à-vis other instances of power within the party. Finally, there is a general perception that IPD should be increased (only 19% perceive otherwise). Remarkably, it is in the PS—which has carried out most reforms in recent years—that we find the most consensus about the need to increase IPD, though demands for more IPD remain high within BE. Livre is the exception with 50% of the members disagreeing that IPD should be increased.

This pattern is confirmed by a related question in our survey that measures members' satisfaction with their influence within the party (see Appendix 1). Overall, only 39% of party members are satisfied or very satisfied with their influence within the party. The data show that PS members are the least satisfied (32%), the members of the new-born Livre are the most satisfied (70%), while BE members stand in the middle (46%).

Overall, the differences across these left-wing parties are significant and seem to be related to distinct party organisational models. Indeed, the most striking difference appears when we compare the answers given by socialist members to those of the two radical left parties (BE and Livre): the latter tend to hold more positive perceptions of all the surveyed items. Despite the recent reforms in PS, we find more inclusive and democratic cultures of participation in the two radical left parties. Thus, we confirm our expectations under H1. These results are consistent with studies that have analysed the views of members in parties that have introduced reforms aimed at increasing internal democracy (Pettitt 2012).

Explaining variation in members' evaluations of IPD

This section draws on these descriptive results to investigate what kind of individual-level factors explain members' appraisals of party functioning. For this purpose, we have created a composite index on the basis of the eight statements presented in Table 1.⁹ This index varies from 1 (negative evaluation) to 4 (positive evaluation). As for the independent variables, the model includes the political profile of members, as well as attitudes related to their motivations for joining the party. These variables are often cited in the literature and are intended to test the previously formulated hypotheses.

With respect to the political profile, we consider *ideological (in)congruence*, which is the difference between the members' self-placement and the party placement in the left–right scale (going from 0 = congruent to 9 = incongruent¹⁰); *activism* is a composite index measuring the frequency with which the members engage in a series of political activities¹¹ and *seniority* refers to years of membership.

Members' motivations for joining the party were measured on a 5-point importance scale (1 = not at all important; 5 = very important).¹² Three main types of motivation were considered: ideological, pragmatic and processual (van Haute and Gauja 2015, pp. 6–8). Ideological incentives were measured through the item 'I wanted to help fulfil the ideals that I defend'; pragmatic motivations refer to the importance attributed 'to gaining professional benefits'; and process incentives are gauged through the item 'to influence the candidate selection process'.

We also control for a number of factors found relevant in previous studies. Age (in years) is expected to be negatively correlated to members' levels of satisfaction, with the youngest being more satisfied (van Holsteyn and Koole 2009); education (1 = at least the basic level; 5 = masters or PhD) and the number of positions a member has held within the party (number of posts held at national and subnational levels of the party)¹³ are expected to have a positive impact on levels of satisfaction (Sandri 2012; Baras et al. 2012).

Looking at basic descriptive statistics for the dependent and independent variables (see Appendix 2), we observe that Livre members are the youngest (mean = 40 years) and the most educated (mean = undergraduate degree). They are also less active (mean = 2.2), which is expected due to their shorter life span and the lack of public offices. Seniority (mean = 15 years) and ideological incongruence (mean = 1.6) are higher for PS members than for the BE. Finally, ideological incentives are more important to the members' decision to join the party than process motivations (to influence the candidate selection process), followed by pragmatic motivations (to gain professional benefits).

Table 2 presents the results of three multiple regressions of members' satisfaction with IPD. The results depict different constellations of individual-level factors impacting the degree of satisfaction with IPD. Generally, however, the findings are consistent with the hypotheses outlined previously.

Table 2

Micro-level determinants of members' evaluations of IPD

	BE		Livre		PS	
	Coef.	SE	Coef.	SE	Coef.	SE
Controls						
Age	0.00	(0.00) [†]	0.00	(0.00)	0.00	(0.00)
Education	0.02	(0.03)	−0.03	(0.05)	−0.05	(0.02)**

	BE		Livre		PS	
	Coef.	SE	Coef.	SE	Coef.	SE
Sex	0.00	(0.05)	0.09	(0.10)	-0.01	(0.04)
Posts within party	0.01	(0.03)	0.05	(0.04)	0.05	(0.01)***
Political profile						
Seniority	0.01	(0.01) [†]	–	–	0.00	(0.00)*
Activism	0.05	(0.03)*	0.05	(0.04)	0.06	(0.02)***
Ideological (in)congruence	-0.09	(0.02)***	-0.13	(0.05)**	-0.10	(0.01)***
Motivation to join the party						
To gain professional benefits	-0.11	(0.05)*	-0.21	(0.10)*	-0.01	(0.02)
To help fulfil the ideals that I defend	0.03	(0.03)	–	–	-0.01	(0.02)
To influence the candidate selection process	-0.05	(0.02)**	0.05	(0.03)	-0.03	(0.01)*
Constant	2.82	(0.19)***	3.10	(0.32)***	2.74	(0.14)***
<i>N</i>	276		114		1029	
<i>R</i> ²	0.15		0.21		0.15	
Adjusted <i>R</i> ²	0.12		0.15		0.14	
(1) Values in cells are unstandardised coefficients with standard errors (SE) in brackets. (2) The dependent variable is the index of satisfaction with IPD, which is a continuous variable ranging from 1 (negative evaluation) to 4 (positive evaluation). (3) Significant at: [†] <i>p</i> < 0.10; * <i>p</i> < 0.05; ** < 0.01; *** <i>p</i> < 0.001						

In the BE model, we find that members with more years of affiliation are more active, more ideologically congruent with their party and more satisfied with IPD, thus confirming the expectations under H2, H3 and H4. With regard to motivations for joining the party, our expectation under H5.3 (process incentives) is corroborated, but we are not able to confirm H5.1 and H5.2. Indeed, we observe that there is less satisfaction with IPD among members for whom influencing the candidate selection process played a more important part in the decision to join the party. However, those driven by pragmatic reasons (gaining professional benefits) make more negative assessments of IPD. This finding goes against conventional wisdom and might be explained by the difficulties experienced by the rank-and-file to achieve top positions, as well as the elitist character of political recruitment (Teixeira 2009). Age is the only

control variable that is a significant predictor with satisfaction increasing as age advances.

Moving to Livre members, we only find two significant predictors, namely ideological congruence and expectation to gain professional benefits.¹⁴ H4 is confirmed as the lower the level of incongruence, the higher the level of satisfaction; H5.1 is also confirmed as those who placed most importance on gaining professional benefits are the least satisfied with IPD. The variable related to process incentives does not achieve statistical significance but goes in the hypothesised direction (H5.1). These findings suggest that the possibility of members influencing candidate selection is not only an important reason to join and participate within the party, but it is likely to positively impact members' evaluation of IPD.

Lastly, with regard to the PS, we find that all variables measuring members' political profile have a significant bearing on the level of satisfaction with IPD. Confirming our theoretical expectations, members who have more years of affiliation (H2) are more active (H3), and are more ideologically congruent with their party (H4) exhibit higher levels of satisfaction towards IPD. Regarding motivations for joining the party, the results confirm H5.3 but not H5.1 and H5.2. In particular, we find that there is more dissatisfaction among members for whom influencing the decision-making process was an important aspect in their decision to join the party (H5.3). However, ideological motivations have no impact on members' perceptions of IPD, and pragmatic reasons do not achieve statistical significance. This suggests a gap between members' aspirations and their practical experience within the party. After Livre affiliates, it is the PS grassroots members who stated that influencing the candidate selection process was the most important motivation for joining the party. Nevertheless, the central role of the PS leader and national party bodies in the candidate selection influences the members' real impact in this process. Therefore, socialist members may experience a mismatch between practice and values, especially those motivated by process incentives. Otherwise, the null effect of ideological motivations might express this item's low variation in the sample. In fact, because ideological incentives constitute a strong reason for enrolling for the large majority of members it does not distinguish appraisals significantly.

Overall, the results support explanations related to members' political profile and motivations, and resonate with studies carried out in other countries. Besides activism, ideological (in)congruence is one of the strongest predictors of satisfaction with IPD. The results are consistent across the different models and point to the association between a high level of ideological congruence and a higher degree of satisfaction, confirming the findings obtained for other

countries (van Haute and Carty 2012; Baras et al. 2012). However, our findings partially depart from similar studies in two ways. Firstly, process incentives for joining the party tend to inform members' appraisal of the party and point to a gap between their aspirations and their actual experiences within the party. In particular, the results for the PS show that expectations of influencing the candidate selection process have a negative bearing on levels of satisfaction. These results demonstrate that a match between members' expectations and parties' organisational cultures is relevant to increase positive attitudes towards IPD. Secondly, we were not able to find any significant association between the control variables and members' perceptions of IPD. Holding a public or party office is only associated to higher levels of satisfaction with IPD in the PS. This finding may also be linked to the distinct character of mainstream and catch-all parties vis-à-vis anti-government parties, where the wielding of power has virtually no effect on members' attitudes.

Conclusions

Political parties have experienced significant organisational changes in recent years, namely with the introduction of democratisation reforms aimed at making their internal procedures more inclusive and open. This innovation is a reaction not only to external challenges and pressures, but also to the need to strengthen political parties as membership organisations. From this viewpoint, the study of members' perceptions of intra-party democracy provides crucial insights for understanding the role of contemporary parties as actors of intermediation and representation, and reveals the challenges these organisations must face in the foreseeable future.

This study draws on original data for Portuguese parties to investigate members' evaluation of internal party democracy and their perception of intra-party functioning. The analysis focuses on three organisationally distinct parties, the PS, the BE and Livre, located from the centre-left to the radical left of the ideological spectrum. Although left-wing parties are conventionally associated to more positive views of IPD mechanisms and a more participative culture generally, the present analysis allowed us to explore this claim in greater depth and across different left-wing parties.

Overall, the findings reveal the following. Firstly, party-related factors matter, namely party organisational type. Although the majority of members are not satisfied with their degree of influence within the party, interesting nuances in the degree of satisfaction can be found when the party type is considered, with the BE and Livre members being more satisfied in relation to PS members. This finding is interesting because it suggests that democratising reforms may

stimulate further demands to change the *status quo*. From this perspective, our contribution helps make sense of the rationale and impacts of democratising reforms on different types of members. While more open and inclusive practices may revitalise party membership, new members may feel frustrated with the experience of day-to-day party functioning. In other words, democratising reforms may increase standards in internal party life and parties may find it more difficult to meet members' (heightened) expectations. This result challenges the idea that IPD may regenerate party organisations and membership; meanwhile, it seems to confirm Wauters' (2014) findings that point to the benefits acquired by older and more active members from democratising reforms. This issue clearly deserves closer examination in future cross-national comparative research.

Secondly, members belonging to the same party may differ in their evaluation of intra-party democracy, uncovering the non-homogenous nature of party membership. From an in-depth exploration of the individual-level determinants of members' perceptions, it emerges that the members' political profile and their motivations for enrolling do have a significant influence. In the case of the members of the radical left BE and Livre, the younger, more active and ideologically congruent are the ones who display a higher level of satisfaction. This holds true when looking at the catch-all PS, as members' satisfaction is positively correlated with activism, participation and ideological congruence. As for the rationale behind the decision to join the party, the results indicate that all types of motivation are important in explaining members' perception, but the impact of ideological reasons is weaker than pragmatic or process incentives. Recent research suggests that these findings are valid even in right-wing parties in Portugal (Sanchez and Razzuoli, forthcoming), which have been characterised by organisational inertia and have given less emphasis on IPD.

More generally, this work supports the idea that the evaluation of IPD varies within and across parties, while the impact of democratising reforms is far from uniform and is mediated not only by the political profile and experience of grassroots members, but also by the organisational culture of distinct political parties. These findings suggest that investigating different types of members is a fruitful pursuit if we wish to make sense of the nature and dynamics of party membership. Further comparative research is required to examine these issues in greater detail and across the left–right spectrum, and to explore whether these findings can be generalised to other countries in Europe and beyond.

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Appendix 1: Party members' satisfaction with their influence within the party (%)

	Not at all	Not very satisfied	Satisfied	Very satisfied	(N)
BE	11	43	41	5	(585)
Livre	4	26	52	18	(126)
PS	17	51	29	3	(1273)
All	14	47	34	5	(1984)

(1) Do not know/No answer excluded from the analysis; (2) The index of satisfaction with intra-party party functioning ranges between 1 (not satisfied) and 4 (very satisfied). (3) $\eta = 0.387$; $F(2) = 175.595$, $p < 0.001$. (4) Question: 'Overall, do you feel satisfied with your influence within the party?'

Appendix 2: Descriptive statistics on dependent, independent and control variables

	BE		LIVRE		PS	
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD
Dependent variables						
Satisfaction with IPD	2.8	0.4	3.2	0.4	2.4	0.5
Independent variables and controls						
Age	44.1	13.9	38.9	10.5	48.2	13.9
Education	3.9	1.0	4.2	0.7	3.8	0.9
Sex	1.3	0.5	1.2	0.4	1.2	0.4
Posts within party	0.5	0.8	1.1	0.9	1.0	1.5
Seniority	6.6	5.1			14.4	12.6
Activism	2.7	1.0	2.2	1.0	2.8	1.0
Ideological (in)congruence	1.0	1.0	0.6	0.8	1.6	1.6
To help fulfil the ideals that I defend	4.5	0.7	4.6	0.7	4.5	0.8
To influence the candidate selection process	2.9	1.3	3.8	1.2	3.2	1.2
To gain professional benefits	1.2	0.5	1.2	0.4	1.5	0.8

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¹ In Portugal, open party primaries always require enrolment in a specific party file before acquiring voting rights.

² An important strand of literature addresses the effects of IPD on the performance of political parties. Internal democracy seems to have negative effects on internal cohesion (Teorell 1999), or the probability of entering coalition governments (Bäck 2008). Moreover, it seems that IPD may also foster internal conflicts and factionalism (Giannetti and Benoit 2008).

³ There are also interesting studies that use survey data on party members in order to investigate the meaning of IPD—deliberative, participatory, etc.—according to members' perceptions (Young and Cross 2002; Saglie and Heidar 2004; Hansen and Saglie 2005).

⁴ The PS also conducted open primaries in 2014 to select the candidate for prime minister, but this was a temporary mobilisation that did not affect the more centralised and hierarchical structure of the party.

⁵ See more details at <http://www.projectmapp.eu/>.

⁶ The Communist Party (*Partido Comunista Português*) did not participate in the survey despite the contacts made.

⁷ The universe of socialist members was 83,524, whereas that of BE members was approximately 6000 and 1000 for Livre. The number of total answers was 1581 for the PS, 767 for the BE and 150 for Livre. Overall, the response rate varies from 16 to 25%.

⁸ Disagreement expresses more positive evaluations.

⁹ Cronbach's Alphas are acceptable: BE = 0.7, Livre = 0.7, PS = 0.7. The component analysis gives a two-dimensional solution with only two out of the eight items being clustered together; this might result more from the imbalance of the sample as theoretically we do see the eight items as one-dimensional measures of IPD.

¹⁰ Members were asked to position themselves and their party on a left–right scale ranging from 1 (left) to 10 (right). After subtracting the members' position in these two questions, we rescaled the result into a 0 (congruent) to 9 (incongruent) scale.

¹¹ The nine surveyed political activities are as follows: (1) helping organise local meetings of the party, (2) helping organise party gatherings, (3) helping organise meetings between the party and the community, (4) donation of money (besides membership fees), (5) meeting other party members to discuss politics, (6) meeting other party members for activities other than politics, (7) meeting people from outside the party to discuss politics, (8) distributing propaganda material during campaigns and (9) conducting other activities outside the campaign period. Cronbach's Alphas are good: BE = 0.9, Livre = 0.9 and PS = 0.9.

¹² The full wording of the question is: 'Thinking about the motivations that led you to join the party, to what extent were each of the following reasons important in your decision'. Members

used a five-point scale with 1 being not at all important and 5 very important.

¹³ For the BE and the PS, we consider whether the members have held posts in national bodies, regional or local branches, at present or in the last two years. For Livre, we consider whether the members have held posts in national bodies, territorial local branches, thematic circles or other.

¹⁴ Seniority was not surveyed in Livre due to the party's short lifespan.