

Proportional Systems

GLOSSARY

Coalition government – A government in which two or more parties control the Cabinet, usually on the basis of a formal agreement about who will lead, how portfolios will be assigned, and what policies will be implemented.

Effective threshold – Not all electoral systems have a legal or formal threshold that parties must reach to qualify for seats, but for many systems it is possible to calculate the effective threshold: the level of support that in practice allows a party to win seats. In the 150-seat single-district parliament in the Netherlands, for example, the effective threshold is 0.67% of the total vote.

Formal threshold – The legal requirement that a party obtain a specific level of support, either a proportion of the vote or a number of constituency seats, to qualify for any distribution of proportional seats based on party vote.

Closed list – In List Proportional Representation electoral systems, a type of ballot where voters choose a party list; voters are not allowed to change the order of candidates on the list.

Free list – In List Proportional Representation electoral systems, a party ballot that allows voters to choose from among different parties' lists and rank the candidates as they choose.

Open list – In a List Proportional Representation system, a party list that allows voters to express a preference for one or more of a party's candidates.

Party list – In List Proportional Representation systems with multi-member districts, the parties compile lists of candidates to be elected. These lists can be **closed, open, or free**.

Quota – The number of votes required to obtain a seat in a proportional representation system with multi-member districts. The quota for each election is derived from a formula that computes the number of votes cast and the number of seats to be elected.