**Interview methodology**

To assess the party management of these ‘pulls’ a substantial number of semi-structured interviews were carried out with MPs or with party strategists in the four case countries (61 in total). They centred on a set of pre-arranged themes (*ideology; policy position(s)* and *party competition*) but also allowed for follow-up questions to be asked should the answers be vague or off-topic (Devine, 2002). To get as representative a view as possible, a purposive sample was drawn from those elites that were assumed to have particular knowledge of the three themes (Patton, 2002). The selection criteria included past, and current, memberships of committee/s (e.g. Labour Market or Home Affairs); position/s held (e.g. political secretary or committee chair), and time as an MP. Due to issues of access (particularly in the British case), a ‘snow-balling’ technique was also employed (Biernacki and Waldorf, 1981) which subsequently led to some former MPs and party strategists being approached. To minimise any steering effect that the interviewer may have had on the interviewee, open-ended questions were employed and asked in a balanced fashion (e.g. ‘some parties would describe themselves as being for more state intervention in the market, while others favour more market freedom. How would you describe [party] in these terms?’). The interviews were then transcribed by the author and the research assistant and followed a ‘denaturalist’ approach which removed any ‘idiosyncratic elements of speech (e.g., stutters, pauses, nonverbals, involuntary vocalizations)’ (Oliver *et al*, 2005: 173-74). And prior to being incorporated into Chapter 4 all quotes were checked for relevance and fit.

As an additional ethical precaution all interviewees were informed that the data would be anonymised for future publications. They were also given the option to view a copy of the transcript. In a minority of cases, they suggested changes to be made. These primarily related to incorrect spelling of names and places rather than to any misinterpretation or representation of what had been discussed. Some of the validity concerns that can emerge when using qualitative data were able to be ‘controlled’ for while others proved more difficult. The material was returned to ‘over and over again to see if the constructs, categories, explanations, and interpretations ma[d]e sense’ (Patton, 1980: 339), and special attention was paid to the latter when the quotes were applied. But the data were also revisited to try and identify emerging patterns, e.g. did different interviewees portray their party’s ideology in a similar fashion? Were the effects of the EU or immigration understood differently depending on age and/or role in party? Yet other aspects, e.g. ‘how accurately the account represent[ed] participants’ realities of the social phenomena’ (Creswell and Miller, 2000: 124) were more challenging as it had to be accepted that the information provided was a truthful account of these ‘realities’. As such, the conducted research has made use of ‘mixed methodology’ (quantifying manifestos; semi-structured interviews) as well as ‘mixed modelling’ techniques when the two approaches were combined across all stages of the research process (Tashakkori and Teddlie, 1998).

And finally, the number of interviews break down as follows:

Belgium: CD&V (2); Ecolo (1); GA (1); MR (1); PS (3); Sp.a. (2); VLD (2); CDH (0)[[1]](#footnote-1);

Britain: Labour (4); Liberal Democrats(5) and Conservative (7));

the Netherlands: CDA (4); D’66 (1); GL (1); PvdA (3); SP (2); VVD (3)

and Sweden: V (4); MP (2); SAP(4) ; CP (3); FP(3); KD and M(3).

Biernacki, P. and Waldorf, D (1981) ‘Snowball sampling: problems and techniques of chain referral sampling’, *Sociological Methods and Research* 10(2): 141-163.

Creswell, J.W and Miller, D.L (2000) ‘Determining validity in qualitative inquiry’, *Theory and Practice* 39(3): 124 -130.

Devine, F (2002) ‘Qualitative methods’ in Marsh, D and Stoker, G (eds.) *Theory and methods in political s*cience (Basingstoke: Palgrave), 197—230.

Oliver, D.G., Serovich, J.M and Mason, T.L (2005) ‘Constraints and opportunities with interview transcription: towards reflection in qualitative research’, *Social Forces* 84(2): 1273 – 1289.

# Patton, M. Q (2002) *Qualitative research and evaluation methods* (London: Sage).

Tashakkori, A. and Teddile, C (1998) *Mixed methodology: combining qualitative and quantitative approaches* (London: Sage).

1. Despite several attempts, the research assistant was not able to carry out any interviews with representatives from CDH. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)