

Political Preferences

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CONTENTS

Petr Kaniok (Masaryk University, Czech Republic) The Czech Republic 2014 European Parliament Election: Voters Gone Out, New Parties In.....	7
Tihomir Cipek (Zagreb University, Croatia) European Elections in Croatia	21
Gintaras Aleknonis (Mykolas Romeris University, Lithuania) European Parliament Elections in Lithuania: Populist Competition in the Shadow of the Presidential Vote	39
Toma Burean, Horia Lupu, Gabriel Bădescu (Babes-Bolyai University, Romania) The 2014 European Elections in Romania.....	57
Alenka Krašovec, Tomaž Deželan (University of Ljubljana, Slovenia) The 2014 European Parliamentary Elections in Slovenia: Hardly and Novelty	77
Dominik Szczepański (University of Rzeszów, Poland) European Parliament Elections in Poland in 2014.....	97
Mikołaj Czeźnik, Karol Chwedczuk-Szulc, Mateusz Zaremba (University of Social Sciences and Humanities, Warsaw, Poland) Voter Turnout in the 2014 European Parliament Election in Poland	111
Jarosław Flis (Jagiellonian University, Poland) Waldemar Wojtasik (University of Silesia in Katowice, Poland) Candidate Selection in the 2014 European Parliament Election in Poland	129
Katarzyna Kobielska (University Of Wrocław, Poland) Accountability and the European Parliament Elections: the Illusion of Supranational Accountability.....	145

Marzena Cichosz (University of Wrocław, Poland) Positioning Strategies of Polish Political Parties in the 2014 European Parliament Election.....	167
Agnieszka Turska-Kawa (University of Silesia in Katowice, Poland) The Specificity of Electoral Volatility in European Parliamentary Elections.....	181
Rafał Glajcar (University of Silesia in Katowice, Poland) Equal or Not? On the Material Aspect of Equality of European Parliament Elections in Poland	193

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**THE CZECH REPUBLIC 2014 EUROPEAN
PARLIAMENT ELECTION:
VOTERS GONE OUT, NEW PARTIES IN**

Abstract:

This article describes and evaluates 2014 Czech European Parliament (EP) election. Starting with the context of the election, it goes through all relevant party actors participating in the election and introduces them both in general ideological terms as well as in relation towards the European integration. After results of election are discussed, the article concludes that 2014 EP election confirmed recent changes in the Czech party system – inter alia destabilization of the system as a whole, reconfiguration on its right wing and emergence of populism. Concerning the European message of the election, their results confirmed their second-order character.

Key words:

EP election 2014, Czech Republic, ANO 2011, party system, second order elections, ODS

Introduction

Czech Republic became a member of the EU in 2004 as a part of the biggest wave in the history of EU enlargement. Completion of accession process meant that the popular and simple slogan “Return to the Europe” connected with it was not valid anymore – Czech Republic was back on track and instead of dreaming about all positive values associated with the “West” the country had to start a process of “being EU member”. This active membership can be inter alia operationalized as participation in the EU political system – e. g. through EP elections.

Both EP elections that took part in the Czech Republic in 2004 and in 2009 [Hloušek, Kaniok 2014] did not bring a lot of positive news regarding this participation. Czech voters as well as Czech politicians followed the same approach and the same bad habits that have characterized EP elections in old

member states since 1979 – low turnout, low media coverage, domestic content, second or even third order candidates. What is interesting, both 2004 and 2009 Czech EP elections were framed very specifically – the former took part just one month after EU accession and the later was held within the Czech EU Council Presidency. Thus, the 2014 EP election was from this perspective first “normal” EP election as it was not affected by any important EU related event as in the previous cases. However, as this analysis reveals, it made no substantial difference – also the 2014 followed the same second order election pattern [Reif, Schmitt 1980] as in 2004 and 2009.

The analysis proceeds as follows. First, as the Czech politics has been very turbulent in recent years, domestic context of the election is briefly introduced. After that, all relevant parties that run the election are characterized in terms of their ideology and approach towards the EU. This part particularly focuses on ANO 2011 and Dawn of Direct Democracy, two newcomers in the Czech party politics. Third part of the analysis is devoted to the electoral campaign; fourth section discusses the results of the election. Conclusion of the analysis pays attention particularly possible implications of the election for the Czech EU policy and Czech party system.

Domestic context before the election

It is very difficult to briefly sum up and characterize domestic political situation in the Czech Republic before 2014 EP elections. A lot of things have changed in recent years, both in terms of structures and relevant actors. Starting with the latter, during five years that elapsed from 2009 EP elections Czech party landscape almost completely transformed – something that had not been expected as the Czech Republic had been seen as quite stable party system whose core poles had been established already in 90’s [Havlík, Kopeček 2008: 188]. However, voting down Topolánek EU Presidency government in March 2009 started process when several new parties emerged and have persisted, some emerged as comets and in the same way disappeared and some previously key actors became rather marginal players. Almost all relevant parties changed their leaders (some of them not only once), arrival of new parties and political movements introduced new strong figures. Between May 2009 and May 2014 there were acting four different governments, two of them caretakers or semi-caretakers ones. This obvious instability led to three nationwide elections during this period – two of them parliamentary and one presidential.

Last sentence of previous paragraph refers to the most important structural change that affected Czech politics between 2009 and 2014. In 2012, all parliamentary parties agreed on introduction of direct presidential election since

2013 – however, without any changes in presidential power and competences. As the first election that was held in January 2013 won M. Zeman, strong and charismatic former prime minister, influence of presidential office at least informally increased. Despite of having the same position and role within the Czech political system as his indirectly elected predecessors; M. Zeman has become very active and activist president. As good example can be used M. Zeman’s role in forming non-partisan caretaker cabinet in summer 2013. Government that replaced coalition cabinet of Civic Democrats (ODS), Tradition-Responsibility-Prosperity 09 (TOP 09) and Liberal Democrats (LIDEM)¹ resigning in June 2013 was led by J. Rusnok, close ally of M. Zeman. This government in majority consisting of former Social Democrats and allies of M. Zeman, was initially formed against the will of fragile but still existing centre right majority in the House of Deputies – ODS, TOP 09 and LIDEM possessed 101 from 200 seats. However, M. Zeman, when designating J. Rusnok as new prime minister, said, that he “could not disappoint voters who had supported him in the presidential elections with promise to stop Nečas government”. Although Rusnok’s government did not succeed in the vote of confidence, it led the country until end of January 2014 when new government, following results of early parliamentary election held in October 2013, was formed [Hloušek, Kaniok 2014].

Results of early parliamentary election of 2013 confirmed tendencies that had been indicated already in election of 2010. Results of both elections (including distribution of seats and differences between 2010 and 2013) can be seen in Table 1.

Table 1. Overview of results of parliamentary elections of 2010 and 2013 (House of Deputies)

Party	2010		2013	
	Votes (%)	Seats	Votes (%)	Seats (+/-)
Social Democrats (ČSSD)	22.09	56	20.45	50 (-6)
Civic Democrats (ODS)	20.22	53	7.72	16 (-37)
Tradition-Responsibility-Prosperity 09 (TOP 09)	16.71	41	11.99	26 (-15)
Communists (KSČM)	11.27	26	14.91	33 (+7)
Public Affairs (VV)	10.88	24		
Christian Democrats (KDU-ČSL)	4.39	0	6.78	14 (+14)
Action of Dissatisfied Citizens (ANO 2011)		-	18.65	47 (+47)
Dawn of Direct Democracy (Úsvit)		-	6.88	14 (+14)
Others	14.44	-	12.62	-

Source: Czech Statistical Office [www.volby.cz].

¹ LIDEM was a small party existing only between as a result of internal tensions within Public Affairs (VV).

Last parliamentary election pointed out three interesting trends which had been already indicated in 2010 or earlier. Firstly, the 2013 election confirmed presence and increasing support for populism in the Czech politics. In 2010 election this phenomenon was emphasized by Public Affairs party (VV)² which based its campaign on wiping out political dinosaurs and strong anti-corruption ethos. Ironically, VV very soon adopted the same practices it had criticized and splitted due to internal tensions in 2012 [Havlík, Hloušek 2014]. In 2013 total amount of voters dissatisfied with established major actors (as Social Democrats and Civic Democrats) substantially increased, because new parties with populist or slightly populist rhetoric (ANO 2011 and The Dawn) got almost 1/3 of parliamentary seats.

Secondly, both Social Democrats and Civic Democrats, two key players in Czech party system since 1996 (and in case of ODS since 1992), continued their withdrawal from leading positions. While in all elections between 1996 and 2006 these two parties together secured majority of seats, in 2010 election became their decline which in 2013 continued. While ČSSD can still be considered as major force in Czech party system, ODS has become only one of its ordinal members.

Thirdly, ODS cannot be labelled a major right wing party anymore. For long time was dominant position of ODS at this part of party scene seen as granted for ever, but emergence of TOP 09 in 2009 started to complicate things – which was illustrated in 2010 election and confirmed in 2013 when TOP 09 took a leading role. Thus, the question that has been relevant in 2014 changed from trying to identify the strongest right wing party to estimating whether ODS can survive as relevant actor at all.

There could be probably found another interesting news brought by the 2013 election (as, e. g., comeback of Christian Democrats into the House of Deputies, low turnout etc.), but the most important one was establishment of new government. Problematic semi caretaker cabinet of J. Rusnok was replaced by coalition government consisting of ČSSD, KDU-ČSL and ANO 2011. Composition of government followed election results – ČSSD got 8 seats (including Prime Minister B. Sobotka), ANO 2011 6 seats and KDU-ČSL 3 seats. New cabinet succeeded in vote of confidence in the mid of February 2014 with 110 votes for, 38 against and 33 abstaining.

Timing of the early election as well as establishment of new cabinet obviously affected character of EP election. As both important domestic events happened very close to the start of the campaign, opposition could not profit from typical second order elections features [Reif, Schmitt 1980] – EP elections are usually held in the mid of parliamentary term, voters usually tend to support

² Interesting analysis of VV as a business party provides article by Hloušek [2012].

opposition than governing parties etc. It was thus obvious that composition of the Czech EP delegation will be substantially altered after the election – both in terms of parties and individual MEP. Table 2 offers an overview of 2009 EP election in terms of parties' gains.

Table 2. EP election 2009

Party	Votes (%)	MEPs	EP party group
Civic Democrats (ODS)	31.35	9	ECR
Social Democrats (ČSSD)	22.39	7	S&D
Communists (KSČM)	14.18	4	GUE-NGL
Christian Democrats (KDU-ČSL)	7.65	2	EPP
Others	24.43	0	-

Source: Czech Statistical Office [www.volby.cz].

Parties participating in the EP election

There were altogether 39 lists which were registered for the EP election – however, strong majority of them without having real chance to reach 5 % threshold from the beginning of the campaign. Among these “political dwarfs” could have been found traditional outsiders as Czech Monarchists or Right Block of former dissident P. Cibulka, colourful mix of extremist and small Eurosceptic parties as No to Brussels – National Democracy or ambitious but only to big cities intellectuals appealing projects as Liberal Ecological Party.

Among relevant parties could have been counted all four traditional parties that have been parliamentary represented (for the whole period or for its substantial part) in the House of Commons since 1992 – ČSSD, ODS, KSČM and KDU-ČSL. These four parties have not only formed the core of Czech party system, but have been in various configurations also responsible for executive power. Except of them, TOP 09, Action of Dissatisfied Citizens (ANO 2011), Dawn of Direct Democracy (The Dawn) could have believed in good results as all three parties succeeded in last parliamentary election. There were also several potential “black horses” which might have done a breakthrough – Eurosceptical Party of Free Citizens (SSO), Czech Pirate Party and The Greens.

Czech Social Democrats belongs among few major socialistic/social democratic parties in the Central and Eastern Europe which has not its origin in the former communist parties – ČSSD refers both to the tradition of inter-war Czechoslovakian Social Democracy as well to the Social Democracy existing during communist regime in exile. The party is firmly grounded in modern socialist ideology being inspired itself by West European social democratic

parties. Its position towards the European integration is continuously strongly positive – there is no major Eurosceptic camp of fraction within the party.

ODS was for the long time the second pillar of Czech modern party system – from 1996 to 2010 each elections were competition particularly between ODS and ČSSD as no other party could have attacked first place. After fall of Nečas government in 2013 ODS substantially declined and its leading position in the right wing of party system (and leading position in the party system as a whole) disappeared. It was not only due to the scandals of last ODS led cabinet, image and reputation of party was for a long time affected by corruption scandals of its local politicians, weak leadership and internal quarrels – Klíma argues that ODS denegerated itself into a new type of political party, that he identifies as “clientelistic party” [Klíma 2013]. In terms of ideology, ODS is usually described in ideological terms as a moderate conservative [Cabada, Hloušek, Jurek 2014: 93] or conservative-liberal subject [Havlík 2011: 134]. The party is labelled in relation to European integration as Eurosceptic or soft Eurosceptic [Haughton 2009: 1371-1392, Hanley 2008].

Third strong key actor of Czech party system is the Communist party. Its role and existence constitutes another unique feature of Czech system – Communists neither changed their name, nor never fully cut themselves off from the legacy of Communist party of Czechoslovakia. Thus the party partly has been for a long time living on collecting protest votes and on nostalgia after the former communist regime. As such, KSČM have never been a part of an executive coalition since the foundation of the Czech Republic [Cabada, Hloušek, Jurek 2014: 93]. Concerning party’s EU profile, Czech Communists have been traditionally criticizing the European integration from various perspective – taking into account both political and economic shortcomings of the EU.

As well as ČSSD and KSČM, also history and tradition of Czech Christian Democrats can be traced down to the inter war period. Ideologically, the KDU-CSL reports to the political centre and is described as part of the Christian-democratic party family [Hanley 2010: 115-133]. In modern Czech history, the Christian Democrats have traditionally played a role of “pivotal” party, cooperating in various periods and various cabinets either with the Social Democrats or with the ODS. In 2010 parliamentary election the Christian Democrats paid for several years lasting weak leadership³ and subsequent secession of substantial part of electorate, party members and party elites, did not come over 5% threshold and thus lost its parliamentary representation. However, only after one term, KDU-ČSL returned back into the House of Deputies. Concerning EU, Czech Christian democrats perceive European integration as a good thing and in principle they support it in both its economic and political dimension [Havlík 2009: 82-87].

³ During the period 1998-2009 the party leaders changed 6 times [Hloušek, Kopeček 2010: 144].

Tradition-Responsibility-Prosperity 09 was the first results of disintegration of Czech party system after 2009. The party was founded by several prominent former Christian Democrats (as e. g. M. Kalousek), but succeed in gaining popular and influential politicians and persons also from other “camps” – the most typical example of this is current and so far the only party leader K. Schwarzenberg, before TOP 09 foundation associated with The Greens⁴. As important and strategic factor seems to be TOP 09 close cooperation with political movement called “The Mayors and Independents” that organizes successful local and regional politicians. After existing for more than 5 years, TOP 09 aspires to be leading party on the right wing of Czech party system, where it tries to adopt moderate conservative and strongly pro-European stances.

Last parliamentary election brought two newcomers among Czech relevant parties. The history of the first of these, ANO 2011, started in autumn 2011. One of the leading Czech businessmen operating in the chemical and food industries A. Babiš, initiated the foundation of the “Action by Discontented Citizens” political movement, which was registered officially by the Czech Ministry of Interior in 2012 as the political movement “ANO 2011”. Roughly 17,000 citizens signed the movement’s original petition in November and December 2011, supporting a protest voice raised by Babiš against the political elite. The organisational structures of the movement were, however, only minimally developed during 2012 and the first half of 2013 because A. Babiš, who has been the head of the movement since the very beginning, concentrated his efforts on organising his weekly newspaper 5+2, and later on to investing in and buying leading quality media; this led to his occasionally-used nickname of “the Czech Berlusconi”. The activities of the movement increased prior to the 2013 early parliamentary elections 2013. Babiš succeeded in engaging some popular political as well as non-political figures to back his movement. ANO 2011 pumped lots of money (provided mainly by the different companies of Agrofert Holding, owned by Babiš) into the campaign and this, together with a perfect political marketing strategy and a brief „protest” manifesto focusing on corruption, catapulted this newcomer without any previous significant political impact to the position of the second largest parliamentary club. Still it was unclear what the programmatic priorities of his party would be, because A. Babiš most typical answer of to any question related to his movement’s precise positioning on any given issue was something like “I have to ask the experts”. It was even difficult to assess the movement’s exact position on the left-right spectrum. We can undoubtedly say that ANO 2011 did not represent

⁴ As another similar “purchase” can be pointed out Jiří Pospíšil, before January 2014 member of ODS and former Minister of Justice. Pospíšil was ranked among most popular politicians and left ODS after he had not succeeded at party congress in January 2014.

the political left, but it was also difficult to say that the party's programme fitted with what one might call the "typical" political right. However, the tycoon's rhetoric against traditional "lazy" politicians (who certainly knew how to run large businesses) proved to be impressive in eyes of many Czech voters.

Evaluation of the Dawn of Direct Democracy party's position was a much easier. The party was on the far-right of the Czech party system, not inevitably extremist but approaching some issues in ways close to political extremism, such as its stance on the role of Roma in society. The political movement, the full name of which read the "Dawn of Direct Democracy of Tomio Okamura" was founded at the beginning of 2013 by the Senator and aspiring Czech presidential candidate T. Okamura [Kaniok, Hloušek 2013]. The movement was registered as late as June 2013, yet was still able to recruit supporters, leaders and candidates for the early election in October. The main message of the Movement - under whose umbrella, incidentally, some politicians from the Public Affairs Party found a new political home, was clear from the very beginning. T. Okamura supported a substantial switch from representative to direct democracy (including popular recall of politicians at all levels of decision making) as a panacea for everything that was wrong with Czech politics. Beyond this surface, however, many extremist undertones could be heard such as Okamura's support for creation of "the Roma state". All accusations of racism were fended off with a single argument that, as a man of Czech-Japanese origin, T. Okamura simply could not be a racist. Observing the positioning of Okamura and his movement, we can, however, conclude that he was to fill the niche of the "missing" relevant party on the Czech far-right.

There were also three parties which in various pre-election polls balanced around 5% threshold. Party of Free Citizens tried to address Eurosceptical voters as the party was originally founded as mainly (but not only) Eurosceptical party [Kaniok 2014]. On specific group targeted also Czech Pirate Party (ČPS) while The Greens believed that EP election could help them to restart their political relevance.

Election campaign

EP election 2014 campaign was probably the least visible and interesting campaign in modern nation-wide elections held in the Czech Republic. It does not mean that both the parties and media ignored the election, but the intensity (number billboards, ads, meetings, TV debates etc.). Probably only those people who were really interested in politics and in European integration and of course, the politicians themselves, did really care.

Such picture is hardly surprising. European elections were never popular in the Czech Republic, which in both previous cases (2004 and 2009) have

traditionally followed pan-European patterns: very low turnout, second-rate candidates and a strong preference for domestic issues over the European ones. And, as already mentioned, Czech voters are being asked to attend their third elections at national level in 16 months. In January 2013 they voted for their first directly elected president and last October there was an early parliamentary election.

Going through party manifestos and main issues they tried to emphasize, one can simply sum up that general valence statements and empty slogans prevailed [Havlík 2014]. Concerning governmental parties, it was sometimes very difficult to distinguish among them, especially in the case of ANO 2011 and ČSSD. Starting with ČSSD, the party emphasised especially social issues, trying to capture voters' interests by saying 'Together in Europe'. In addition, the party wanted 'to play the first fiddle in Europe'. Similarly, ANO 2011 published a manifesto full of vague statements best expressed by the main slogan 'For Our Children to Have a Chance in Europe'. Only KDU-ČSL slightly differed as the party bet on motto 'We Protect the Czech Interests'. However, also Christian Democrats did not fall behind the previous two governmental parties in vagueness and emptiness.

The opposition camp did not deliver any substantial message as well. TOP 09 tried to present itself as a clearly pro-European party (a slogan 'I am a European' under the picture of K. Schwarzenberg clearly expresses the positive attitude of the party towards the EU) and persuaded the voters about the importance of the EU with the slogan 'Don't give up on Europe'. The main issue of the ODS campaign and manifesto was the rejection of the entrance of the Czech Republic to the European Monetary Union and criticizing of the European Parliament and its power. The party organised a petition against the euro during the campaign and managed to collect more than 40 000 signatures. KSCM did not invest much effort and money into the campaign and relied on its usually much disciplined voters – the Communists did the same as they had done in 2004 and 2009 EP elections. Some media attention (even abroad) got the anti-immigration campaign ran by the Dawn. The party 'borrowed' a well-known sheep poster first used by the Swiss People's Party.

Concerning non-parliamentary parties, the most visible campaign was run by the SSO. The main message of SSO was criticizing of – in SSO words 'Euro-nonsenses' including not only the euro but also, for example, the regulation of bulbs or flushing of toilets. Both the Greens and ČPS were not able to find any similar simple message and they probably hoped that voters would vote for changes and new faces.

Except of looking into the party manifestos and their headlines, it is also interesting to evaluate them on the basis of standardized coding. Kaniok and Havlík [2014] did so following the Euromanifestos⁵ project's codebook which

⁵ Euromanifestos project is run by Mannheim Centre for European Social Research (MZES).

divides codes among eight policy domains⁶ and three levels of governance⁷. Following the policy domains, parties considered as the most important issues those connected to the economy. Political topics (political system in general and political system of the EU) as well as issues connected with human right or external policies were downplayed. In this sense, relevant parties stressed the same topics (and policy agendas) that were important in the case of 2013 parliamentary election. As Kaniok and Havlík [2014] identified, parties preferred the European level of governance as a governmental frame. This not that surprising finding, because even 2004 and 2009 euromanifestos can be described as Europeanized [Kovář 2013]. However, presence of Europeanization (e. g. in sense of preference of EU governmental frame) tells nothing about quality and consistency of euromanifestos.

Perhaps more interesting than the content emptiness of campaign were the candidates standing in the election. Among the most prominent could have been found P. Telička, former Chief Negotiator for Czech EU accession and former Member of the European Commission who led ANO 2011 list. When choosing candidates, A. Babiš party tried to confirm its non-party and expert self-characterization as the list consisted mainly of diplomats, lobbyists and EU specialists – no prominent politician were present. The same strategy, at least at level of leaders, was adopted also by ČSSD (list led by sociologist J. Keller) and TOP 09 (leader L. Niedermayer, former vice governor of the Czech National Bank). The rest of parties combined experienced and young politicians as their leaders. While the former was the case of ODS (MEP J. Zahradil) and KDU-ČSL (former minister P. Svoboda), the latter strategy adopted probably surprisingly KSČM (young and quite attractive Member of House of Deputies K. Konečná).

All in all, the campaign preceding the election was hardly visible, lacking any contentious issues. As already mentioned, voters were fed up with politics on one hand and they do not have many incentives to show change of their preferences that shortly after the parliamentary election. And there was clear shortage on the supply side as well. Parties were financially exhausted by the previous campaigns and they could not pump much money to keep voters engaged. The ruling parties were consumed more with their intra-governmental agenda and disputes. On the other hand, the opposition was very fragmented and obviously needed some recovery from heavy loss in October 2013 parliamentary election.

In the framework of the project all euromanifestos in the period between first EP election (1979) and EP election of 2009 were coded.

⁶ These domains are: External Relations (EXT), Freedom and Democracy (FD), Political System (PS), Political System of the EU (PSEU), Economy (ECO), Welfare and Quality of Life (WQL), Fabric of Society (FS), Social Groups (SG). In original coding, domain Economy is divided into two domains (Economic Goals, Economic Structure).

⁷ These levels are National, European, Global/Other.

Election

Compared with the pre-election polls, the results (which are displayed in Table 4) brought some surprising results. Firstly, polls expected that ANO 2011 would have won with greater difference than it did. Secondly, support for TOP 09 had been estimated as substantially lower than was party results. Thirdly, ČSSD as well as ANO 2011 should have according polls got more than 20 % of votes. Polls also underestimated support for SSO and for the Christian Democrats.

Table 3. EP election 2014

Party	Votes (%)	MEPs (+/-)	EP party group
Action of Dissatisfied Citizens (ANO 2011)	16.13	4 (+4)	ALDE
Tradition-Responsibility-Prosperity 09 (TOP 09)	15.95	4 (+4)	EPP
Social Democrats (ČSSD)	14.17	4 (-3)	S&D
Communists (KSČM)	10.98	3 (-1)	GUE-NGL
Christian Democrats (KDU-ČSL)	9.95	3 (+1)	EPP
Civic Democrats (ODS)	7.67	2 (-7)	ECR
Party of Free Citizens (SSO)	5.24	1 (+1)	EFDD
Others	19.91		-

Source: Czech Statistical Office [www.volby.cz].

The election brought a narrow victory for ANO 2011, which can lead to a twofold interpretation. Taking into account that the party was new, winning the election and acquiring four seats in the EP can be sold as big success. However, as the party had counted with triumph and at least 7 MEPs, it was at the same time bitter victory. TOP 09, which ended as the runner-up, can be seen as the real winner of the election. The party was expected to be third at the best, acquired also 4 seats in the EP and was beaten by ANO 2011 with marginal difference. On the other hand, three MEPs elected for TOP 09 were non-partisan candidates⁸, and one represented movement The Mayors and Independents – that casts some doubts on personal policy of TOP 09 and points out to obvious shortage of its own cadres.

ČSSD and its leaders probably shared the same feelings as ANO 2011 did. Having taken into consideration the traditionally low discipline of social democratic voters, internal quarrels that occurred after the parliamentary election, 14.17 % of votes (and four seats) can be interpreted as a success for ČSSD. However, the same number can be very convincingly interpreted as sign of continuing decline of ČSSD support. KSČM ended on the fourth place, closely followed by KDU-ČSL. While the former lost one MEP – which was

⁸ Luděk Niedermayer, Jiří Pospíšil and Jaromír Štětina.

hardly success – the later party confirmed its comeback among relevant forces. Only 7.7% of voters cast their votes for ODS which meant a decrease of support of the party by more than 20 percentage points since the 2009 EP election. On the other, no one (including rational party politicians) had expected substantially better outcome after 2013 parliamentary election. Party of Free Citizens, with 5.24 % of votes and one seat for the leader of the party Petr Mach, was the last political party that managed to pass the threshold. Only several thousands of voters lacked ČPS (4.78 %) to pass the threshold while The Greens and The Dawn ended with only 3.77% and 3.12 % of votes respectively.

As expected, the election substantially changed the composition of Czech national EP delegation. Only 6 MEPs were re-elected, which represents the biggest change in the Czech MEPs composition so far. This earthquake was caused not only by success of new parties, but also by simple fact that many of MEPs elected for term 2009-2014 had not been either successful in party primaries, or had not stood for the election at all. Among new MEPs can be found many apolitical figures coming from diplomatic circles or persons lacking substantial experience with European politics.

Conclusions

It would be very risky to say that 2014 EP election had some direct and visible impact on Czech politics or that it delivered some substantial changes. Election as a whole (not only its results) rather confirmed already existing tendencies and trend both in Czech party system and in the Czech European policy.

Starting with the former, it is obvious that Czech party system is changing and unstable. Even if ANO 2011 confirmed its success from 2013 parliamentary election, its position within the system is not unshakable. As history of VV and failure of The Dawn in 2014 EP election show, Czech new parties – especially when based upon strong leader – can have very short life or perform very differently. Particularly the very future of ANO 2011 represents one big query. Will ANO 2011 transform itself into party that will be leading force in the right wing camp? Will it be able to generate more stronger and visible leaders than A. Babiš? Second question mark can be spotted above existing right wing parties – after EP election there are three of them: TOP 09, ODS and SSO. All these parties (plus ANO 2011) compete in many aspects about similar voters; on the other hand they differ substantially in various agendas. Anyway, all these player can hardly survive even in the medium term perspective. Compared to the right wing camp, left wing part of the party system seems to be relatively stable.

Results of EP election confirmed and probably deepened overall dissatisfaction of Czech voters with performance not only with Czech parties,

but perhaps with the whole political system. Constant support for political forces which apparently portrait themselves as “non-parties” (ANO 2011) or support for new parties (SSO) was in the case of EP election accompanied with candidacy of non-politicians and non-parties members (J. Keller, P. Telička and whole ANO 2011 list, L. Niedermayer etc.) and growing support for them. This phenomenon may be dangerous for the political system as whole if prevailing – it may mean that parties resign on their elite production function and thus their role in the political system.

Concerning Czech European policy, 2014 election confirmed that EU doesn't matter much in the Czech Republic. This applies not only for parties, politicians and media, but for the voters as well. The turnout record of 18.2 % was more than 10 percentage points lower than in 2009 which made the Czech voters the second lowest willing to vote in whole EU. It is also questionable how successful will newly elected MEPs be. As majority of them lack experience with the EU and have not so far established network of contacts not only within the EP, it will take some time before they are able to conduct any real politics. On the other hand, there is also one possibly positive outcome of the election. New MEPs could change existing perception of the Czech Republic as Eurosceptic country. Compared to the previous two EP elections, support for both soft and hard Eurosceptic parties (ODS, KSČM, SSO) decreased – there is obvious majority of at least declaratorily pro-European MEPs in current Czech EP delegation.

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EUROPEAN ELECTIONS IN CROATIA

Abstract:

This text discusses the results of European elections in Croatia. It reaches the conclusion that voters, unhappy with the economic situation, punished the ruling social democratic coalition which suffered a heavy defeat. On the other hand, election results prove the recovery of HDZ, the opposition, centre-right party. It is also obvious that most Croatian citizens do not believe that European elections are important enough to warrant voting. Euroscepticism in Croatia is on the rise because citizens see no obvious benefits from joining the European Union. On the contrary, it is becoming increasingly clear that, in its first year as a member, Croatia will pay more funds into EU budget than it will receive from it. It is evident that direct elections of European Parliament members did not succeed in strengthening EU's legitimacy in the eyes of Croatian voters, and that European elections are actually of secondary importance.

Key words:

European elections, Croatia, European Union, Euroscepticism

In Croatia, like in most other European Union member states, elections for the European Parliament attracted little public interest. One gets the impression that even major political parties did not put enough energy into informing voters about the importance of their participation in the European elections. The key question of why would someone even bother to vote in the European elections was not answered, neither by Croatian political parties nor non-governmental institutions. The answer they gave to this and other similar questions was only a general phrase that European elections were “very important”. Those who put a little more effort into it pointed out that around 50% of legislation that has a direct bearing on Croatian citizens is adopted in the European Parliament. Which legislation are we talking about? Why is it important? What

is the procedure for their adoption? How can citizens change them through their representative in the European Parliament? How can citizens benefit from European institution? None of these questions were subject of public debate in the Republic of Croatia. That is why I think that the real question which should be asked is this: what is the point of participating in the European elections?

Although it was generally claimed that EU citizens will be able to directly choose the President of the European Commission for the first time, the question of why this was even good was never answered. Anyway, it turned out that this position did not account for the Treaty of Lisbon, which clearly states that the President of the European Commission is chosen by heads of government of EU member states in consultation with the European Parliament. First reactions to the triumph of the Christian democratic European People's Party and, consequently, its candidate Jean-Claude Juncker, have shown that heads of governments are not willing to stand on the sidelines and that their opinion in this matter is the most important, while European Parliament plays a secondary role. This demonstrated once again that the European Union is not a union of European citizens (the big question is can and should it be one), but of nation states. Furthermore, we should take into account the fact that the European elections were held in the time of crisis of the European project, but also of the traditional model of representative democracy which is one of fundamental values of the European Union. First analyses of the European elections began with a media mantra which blamed the choice of bad politics and bad politicians on the good citizens who stayed at home and did not vote. The worst criticism was aimed at citizens of Eastern Europe who, allegedly, do not have a sufficiently developed democratic political culture, which prevents them from voting in larger numbers. It is interesting that nobody even considers the possibility that citizens of those countries are familiar with the situation in European politics, and are aware of the fact that representatives of political parties from their countries cannot really change anything in the European Parliament. That is because policies are not decided upon in the Parliament, but between heads of governments, representatives of big business, and lobbyists for other interest groups. So, maybe people are perfectly aware of European Parliament's impotence? Maybe that is why they do not vote? Maybe most people, meaning the passive ones who do not vote, simply do not understand the European Union project, and political elites cannot be bothered to explain it to them? Maybe this passivity of the silent majority points to a deeper problem in the relationship between political elites and citizens? Isn't it true that this divide is exploited by radical right parties? Isn't that the reason for their relatively good results? The question which should be clearly articulated is why should people go to the polling stations and vote if they do not see

any point in it? Namely, it is obvious that, in spite of euphoric comments about halting the decline of voter turnout, most citizens of EU member states still do not care about European elections. European Parliament data suggests that 87% of voters in Slovakia, 80% in the Czech Republic, 79% in Slovenia, and 77.3% in Poland did not vote; in Croatia, 75.7% of people stayed at home that day, same as 70.8% in Hungary. It is obvious that citizens of former socialist countries have very little interest in participating in the European elections. My opinion is that this is not just the result of underdeveloped democratic political culture, but primarily of the fact that EU institutions are still totally abstract because political elites have not demystified them. An even stronger reason is the realization of citizens from former socialist countries that their representatives in the European Parliament do not have much influence. Most people think that the logical step would be to form alliances of representatives from smaller European countries around certain issues and pertinent legislation, but this rarely happens. On the other hand, voter turnout is significantly higher in EU founding member states, which have more decision-making power. The third group of countries consists of Nordic states which have a long democratic tradition of encouraging citizen participation, resulting in a relatively big turnout at the European elections. It means that, in deciding whether to vote in the European elections and who to vote for, people are guided by their perceived interests and affiliations with specific political identities. However, considering the lack of interest for taking part in the European elections, it seems evident that the European Union did not manage to become a true political union of its citizens. Thus the once popular idea that direct elections of European Parliament members will strengthen the legitimacy of the European Union, which will then be shaped into a democratic political community [Hix, Hageman 2008: 37], has not been fully realized.

In Croatian politics, political parties deeply rooted in certain identities effectuated a great stability of the party system and determined the results of parliamentary elections for a long time. This situation also carried over to the European elections. The second important factor which influenced the turnout and choices made by the Croatian voters at the European elections were the circumstances of Croatia's entry into the European Union.

This text will therefore aim to: a) give a short outline of the economic and political circumstances in Croatia that created scepticism towards the EU, b) show and analyse the results of the European elections in Croatia and, finally, c) point to the causes of EU's democratic deficit which, in turn, resulted in low voter turnout for the European elections in Croatia. In the end, this text will ask the question whether democracy at the level of the European Union is even possible? Isn't democratic deficit a reality that will characterise the European

Union for a long time? Isn't it caused by the fact that European institution will remain abstract to its citizens for a long time? And anyway, isn't democracy a type of political order designed for nation states!? Let us first take a look at democracy and peace as basic values of the European Union.

The European Union is commonly perceived as an economic union of European countries, partly due to its initial name - European Economic Community (1st January, 1958); however, its goal wasn't exclusively economic development of its members, but a political unification of Europe¹. During the last fifty years, this initial form of economic integration, known as the European Union, went through various stages of development - from the Customs Union, through a Common Market to the current European Union which, basically, represents a successful economic and monetary union. Although economic interests were an especially important motive for its establishment, the European Union is not exclusively a monetary union; it is also a union of values, foremost liberal-democratic, based on the achievements of the Enlightenment which are at the core of the Western world: individual freedoms, three branches of government, system independence, and free democratic elections.

Today, the European Union is facing several crises. First is Eurozone's financial crisis, which has revealed the lack of efficient political institutions capable of dealing with the recession, and thus demonstrated that the real crisis is a political one. Furthermore, the crisis in Ukraine also showed that the European Union is having trouble dealing with geopolitical problems and forming its foreign policy. All these problems had an influence on the political mood of European citizens. But most of all, this seems to be the crisis of the traditional model of democratic decision-making itself. This crisis led to a low turnout at the European elections in nearly all member states, and a relative success of radical right and Eurosceptic political parties. The popularity of the radical right caused a big moral panic that was, naturally, restricted to the political elites and liberal non-governmental organisations. At the same time, warnings about how the politics of the radical right is endangering democracy did not impress most average European citizens. Quite the contrary: election results clearly speak to the relative success of the radical, even

¹ After the two World Wars, it became clear that something was not right with the way Europe was being managed. All those casualties and tenths of millions of dead and injured prompted the question of avoiding the next war, i.e. the question was how to prevent the emergence of fascist and nationalist totalitarianism and overcome communistic dictatorship. So, the main motive for EU establishment was lasting security and preservation of peace on the territory of Europe. Countries which didn't experience great casualties in the Second World War (such as Switzerland, Scandinavian countries and Great Britain) didn't wish to enter this supranational political organisation, but focused mainly on economic associations among themselves that resulted in the establishment of the European Free Trade Association.

extreme right. Marine Le Pen's National Front got 24.85% of votes in France, Austrian Freedom Party got 19.5%, Party for Freedom won 13.2% of votes in the Netherlands, and the more moderate British UKIP 27%. Parties of the extreme right also achieved good results: Greek Golden Dawn won 9.4% of votes, and Hungarian Jobbik 14.64%. Therefore, there is no doubt that radical and extreme right parties achieved relative electoral success. In Croatia, such parties were left without a mandate in the European Parliament. This was the result of the previously mentioned deep social roots of main political parties: Croatian Democratic Union (*Hrvatska demokratska zajednica*, HDZ), member of the European People's party (EPP), which represents Christian democratic and popular politics, and Social Democratic Party (*Socijaldemokratska partija*, SDP), member of the Party of European Socialists (PES), a social-democratic party that originated from the Croatian League of Communists. The manner and circumstances of the formation of Croatian political parties, the timing of Croatia's War of Independence, and deep divisions within Croatia's electorate led to ideological rifts and the formation of distinct political identities firmly embedded in the electorate, which in turn shaped two very strong parties: HDZ, a centre-right party which presided over most of the current democratic period, and SDP, a centre-left party currently in power which won its first mandate in 2000. It has been shown that this division into HDZ and SDP stems primarily from structural social rifts caused by identity-symbolic divisions that are mostly based on the interpretation of World War II events and characteristics of the Croatian Quisling state NDH (*Nezavisna država Hrvatska* or Independent State of Croatia). Another important cause of the division is worldview issues, primarily those related to the role of the Catholic Church and religion in public life (the definition of marriage, attitude towards the family etc.). This quintessential rootedness of the two main parties in the political identities of Croatian voters makes the economic-social dimension of party rivalry less important [Čular 2013: 5]. Question which should therefore be asked is: does this also hold true for the European elections in Croatia? It seems that the 2014 European elections did not bring into question the basic division of voters nor the stability of the Croatian party system. Although some voters, disappointed by SDP's politics, voted for the newly established green party ORaH, which won some 10% of votes, it is also evident that large majority of voters still support the mainstream parties. The stability of the Croatian party system therefore stems from the structural characteristics of the Croatian society and a unique politics which, with regards to the European integration, was led by two main parties: HDZ and SDP. So, let us first look at the process of Croatia's negotiation with the European Union. Why did Croatian political and economic elites decide that Croatia would benefit from joining the EU in the first place?

The European Union is not only an economic alliance, but also a union of values. In today's globalized world, the European Union has set itself several goals: a) ensuring peace for its members, b) increasing freedom of individuals, ensuring human rights and developing democracy, c) economic development of its members based on a free market economy, d) solidarity between member states and preservation of some sort of a social state. These goals were the reason that Croatia – after it gained independence in a defensive war – decided to become a member of the European Union. Since 2000, all efforts of Croatian political elites have been oriented towards this goal. The admittance of Croatia in the European Union was considered to mean its separation from the Balkans and the former Yugoslavia, and its membership was supposed to guarantee security and economic prosperity. The country signed a Stabilization and Association Agreement (SAA) with the European Union in October 2001. The country applied for EU membership in 2003, and the European Commission recommended making it an official candidate at the beginning of 2004. Croatia was granted the candidate status by the European Council in mid-2004. Accession negotiations, originally set for March 2005, began in October that year together with the screening process. Croatia's accession was further complicated by the insistence of Slovenia, an EU member state, that the two countries' border issues be dealt with prior to Croatia's accession to the EU. Croatia finished accession negotiations on the 30th June 2011, and on the 9th December of the same year signed the Treaty of Accession. However, long-lasting negotiations diminished Croatian public's enthusiasm for the accession. When the negotiations finally finished after ten years, Croatia's reason for entering the EU wasn't really clear anymore, especially since the Union was also experiencing a big economic crisis. Most people were afraid that Croatia would lose its sovereignty and once again become part of a supranational entity. Euroscepticism was growing; political elites became aware of it and decided to change the constitutional provision which mandates a referendum before entering into an alliance with other countries. Previous provision stated that a referendum is valid only if it achieves the required voter turnout of more than 50%. The constitutional changes have omitted this condition, so that the referendum was valid regardless of the number of voters who had cast their ballots. The referendum on the EU accession was held on the 22th January 2012; the turnout was 43%, of which 66% voted in favour of joining the Union. The ratification process was concluded on the 21st June 2013, and Croatia's accession to the EU took place on the 1st July of the same year. Political elites claimed that this was a great day for Croatia and announced 2013 as a turning point in Croatian history.

The number of voters that came to the polls showed that the majority of Croatian people didn't share the enthusiasm of its political leaders. The average number of voters for the European Parliament has decreased from 65.89%

in the 1979 elections to 47.85% in 2004. In the "old" member states, the average turnout was 52.88%, but citizens of new member states were not so enthusiastic about the elections and thus contributed to the decrease of the overall percentage. The lowest turnout was in Slovakia (16.94%), followed by Poland with 20.87%, Estonia with 26.83%, Slovenia with 28.43% etc. The average percentage was slightly increased by Malta with 82.37% and Cyprus with 71.19% [Weidenfeld, Wessels 2006: 246]. This trend of decreased citizens' interest in the European elections has continued all through the last elections, held in 2009, which attracted only 43% of voters.

The situation is paradoxical: although the power of the European Parliament is growing, its members are chosen by a decreasing number of voters. Why is that the case? I believe it is a result of people's realisation that, on the level of nation states, there is politics, but no policy. At the same time, the situation on the European level is reversed – policy, but no politics. So, most policies that affect citizens' lives are adopted on the EU level, i.e. in the European Commission and the European Council (by representatives of member states' governments), but at the same time there is no proper political competition. The European Parliament itself – although a strong political institution in national states – is in a way depoliticizing; there is no proper authority or opposition. Since democracy is a political order which understands an authority and opposition that form inside a state, it is not possible to give a precise answer to the question who is the actual authority and who the opposition in the European Parliament. The Union is not a state, but an alliance of states, and it can hardly exist in any other form. Since there are no citizens of Europe, for the time being they are impossible to form. That is why citizens still perceive their own national states as the platform for true politics, and institutions of the European Union as too abstract. This situation also affected the European elections in Croatia.

The first Croatian elections for the European Parliament were held on the 14th April 2013, when its citizens elected twelve members of the European Parliament. Those members will serve the remainder of the Parliament's 2009-2014 sessions, starting from Croatia's entry into the European Union on the 1st July 2013. The country formed a single constituency, with members elected by proportional representation using open lists. Despite the prediction of a decisive victory for the governing, centre-left SDP coalition, HDZ's centre-right coalition won by a razor-thin majority of votes. The turnout of just 20.76% was the lowest of all national elections in modern Croatian history and the third lowest EU Parliamentary election turnout (after the 2004 election in Slovakia with 16.96% and Poland with 20.87%). The low turnout was caused by two factors. The first one is the already mentioned democratic deficit of the European Union: simply put, liberal-democracy is a political order designed for nation

states, and it has difficulty functioning in a supranational system. This feeling of alienation from European institution is especially strong among citizens of new member states, in which democracy is just starting to take hold after the fall of communistic dictatorships. These nations have become fully-affirmed as independent states only after the breakdown of the Warsaw Pact, or of bigger countries they had been members of (as was the case with Croatia). It is not only that citizens of these countries don't have enough experience living in a democratic order, but they are also especially sensitive about their national identity and fear that they will lose it in the European Union. The second reason why most voters from post-communist countries don't vote in the elections is a very weak mobilisation potential of their political parties; political parties from those states are bad at mobilising voters, and even worse at recruiting new political elites. Parties are not well-connected to the society, members of the party elite are involved in many corruption scandals and are not adept at translating citizens' interests into politics. For all these reasons, only a small number of citizens can identify with a certain party, while the majority is not interested in the political process at all. Citizens find politics completely dependent on foreign factors which they cannot influence, and believe that political parties don't work in their best interest. It seems as though not voting represents a form of civil rebellion, which in itself symbolizes a weakness of European democracy and the entire European project. „At the heart of the European project, which is characterized by policy without politics on the European level and politics without policy on the nation-state level, is an act of self-subversion: an example, in other words, of the cultural contradictions not of a capitalism, but of democracy“ [Krastev 2013].

We also find that political elites of member states have different approaches to European politics and the European Union itself. National Parliaments of "old" EU members feel that European questions and politics encroach upon their competencies too much, while new members' legislatures consider the relationship towards the EU to be primarily a question of foreign policy. That is why their political elites believe that European politics is not a question for member states' legislatures, but for ministries of foreign relations. The situation in Croatia is similar: the attitude that European politics is closely connected to domestic politics of every member state is only gradually becoming accepted.

Considering the problem of democratic deficit, the discussion centred around three strategies: parliamentary, post-parliamentary and presidential. The parliamentary strategy emphasises the democratic function of national parliaments in the European decision-making processes; it analyses their attempts to strengthen their legitimacy through special committees for European issues. The post-parliamentary strategy supports direct coordination of interests between the European Commission and associations that represent corporative interest.

It is believed that corporative and lobby networks, although conducive to efficient decision-making, cannot replace the role of the Parliament. They do not have democratic legitimacy and are not subject to democratic control. Through their proposal of direct elections of the European Commission president, presidential legitimacy strategies are moving towards increasing democratic legitimacy of the Union on the one hand, but on the other are neglecting the imminent principle of consensus. The European Parliament remains the only institution that is attempting to establish general interests of EU citizens, which gives it a decisive role in establishing democratic legitimacy, alongside European political parties [Cipek 2007]. However, none of these strategies has proved to be especially good. Attention should also be directed to a discussion about the authority of the European Parliament which also became a subject of debate in Croatian expert public. The legitimacy of the European Parliament has been found weak because it does not have any law-making and does not reflect the multinational structure of the Union. Although the European Parliament is the only institution of the European Union whose members are directly elected by citizens, it only has the power of co-decision, while the legislative initiative is held by the European Commission. Nevertheless, the Parliament has the right to suggest that the European Commission regulate certain questions by a legislative initiative, but it cannot initiate passing of that legislation. Most of the participants in this discussion believe that the development of the European democracy depends upon the European Parliament getting the power to initiate legislation, even if only in (previously) specified and limited fields. Regarding Croatia, I find it important that the European Parliament gets the opportunity to influence the politics of regional development which is closely tied to agrarian, social and environmental policies. Those policies are of the utmost importance for the Croatian agrarian region Slavonia, which has been subsisting on the production of wheat and corn, but has been hit by a deep economic crisis. Some predictions say that, if this situation continues, only 300,000 people will remain out of the one million that currently live in this region. The decision to grant European Parliament the right to a legislative initiative regarding these policies, which are closely linked, would be welcomed in Croatia. Namely, it is obvious that agrarian policy, which is also the most expensive one in the European Union, affects social and regional policy, as well as the policy of sustainable development. All this points to a conclusion that the European Parliament could have a bigger role in this area. Furthermore, the goal of this policy is to achieve economic, social and territorial, i.e. regional, cohesion of the European Union, which should be formed on the basis of growth achieved through knowledge and innovations. It is predicted that, as part of these policies, Croatia will draw some 8.6 million euros in the period between 2014 and 2020. Since this is a large

amount for Croatian circumstances, I assume that effective policy such as this one could decrease Euroscepticism in Croatia. As it is, after its first year as a EU member, it is very difficult for a Croatian citizen to name even one advantage of this membership beside the fact they can cross borders more easily. Croatia is still in a state of “post-accession” shock which all other states that have entered the Union in 2004 have gone through. Some of them are Slovenia, Czech Republic or Slovakia which has reached 80% GDP per capita of the EU today, and Hungary and Poland which have reached 60%. Today, the Czech Republic has 20.270 euros per capita, while, for example, Germany has 28.400 euros of GDP per capita. It is evident that the differences are decreasing and that all countries that have entered the Union reaped great economic benefits. Unlike countries that have entered the Union in 2004, Croatia became a member in 2013, at the time of economic crisis. From today’s perspective, it is clear that predictions of the Institute of Economy in Zagreb, which in 2007 stated that EU accession will bring economic growth and lower unemployment in Croatia, were completely wrong. The reality was completely opposite - in 2008, Croatia found itself in a strong recession. A country with 4 300 000 residents lost 217 000 jobs. Today, Croatia’s GDP has dropped 12%, real wages are 18% lower, industrial production 16% and retail sale 21%. None of these negative trends were changed by the social-democratic government, which came into power in 2012 by beating Christian-democratic and people’s party HDZ. Even worse, economic situation in Croatia only deteriorated after its 2013 accession to the EU. Unfortunately, Croatia had the misfortune of entering the Union at the time of the biggest Eurozone debt crisis, so the initial effects of the accession were negative. The labour market suffered a significant rise of unemployment and a decline in real wages, i.e. decrease of disposable income, all of which led to a further dive of personal consumption. At the beginning of 2014, 363 400 people were unemployed, which is 5 000 more than the previous year. Furthermore, the unemployment rate has reached 21.6%, which is 0.5% more than in December 2012. Youth unemployment is especially high, over 48%, which makes it the third highest youth unemployment in the EU, following Greece and Spain.

In 2013, industrial production has decreased by 2% in relation to the previous year. Last year, exports have amounted to some 68 billion kuna, which is 6% less than in 2012, and import has decreased around 2%. Macroeconomic prediction is that 2013, fifth recession year in a row, will see an economic downturn of around 1%, which would be less than in 2012 when the GDP has decreased by 2%. In spite of EU membership, the year 2014 will likely bring further stagnation of the Croatian economy, as well as an estimated 1% drop in GDP. Credit agencies have lowered Croatia’s credit rating under the credit level. All this considered, it is evident that there are no obvious economic

advantages of EU accession, at least as far as we can see in Croatia. Just the opposite, different tax rules have taken billions of tax income out of state hands. Customs income is now shared with the European Union, and Croatia can keep only one fourth of it. A great increase in Croatian external debt and a lack of funds in its budget led the country into a cycle of excessive deficit reduction, which is mandated by the Union and entails some loss of fiscal sovereignty. Croatian administration was proven to be slow and inefficient in producing the documentation necessary for the withdrawal of money from EU structural funds. In its first year, Croatia could very well find itself in a position of having paid more money into EU funds than it has received. European Commission data states that all 12 new member states, which joined the EU in two previous circles of expansion, have finished their first year of membership in surplus. Cyprus is the only country which has marked financial loss in its fourth year of membership, while all other states, in all years of membership, have received more from the EU budget than they have paid. This proves that the European Union is a truly successful solidarity community, but that the incompetence of Croatian government could singlehandedly make it an exception to this rule.

Of course, none of this contributes to the popularity of European integrations in the Croatian society, nor to the popularity of the centre-left government which, according to over 70% of people, is leading the country in the wrong direction. This government will most likely be replaced in the next elections, but European integrations policy will continue to bear a negative image in people’s minds, at least for now.

In Croatia, the deep economic crisis prompted several, distinctly conservative referendum initiatives. The conservative right organised a successful referendum which resulted in the introduction of a constitutional provision that marriage is a union between a woman and a man (as a way of preventing the legalisation of gay marriage). Another civic initiative was a referendum on Cyrillic alphabet, used by the Serb ethnic minority, aimed at restricting its use on public buildings. Public discussion also revolves around the question of how liberal should an education program be, and what is the parents’ role in choosing the education program for their children. This conservative movement, supported by the Catholic Church and conservative organisations, also has the backing of the centre-right opposition party HDZ, which used it to win the support of some conservatively-oriented voters.

The economic and political crisis had a significant impact on the European elections in Croatia, but it did not motivate voters to use their say in these elections to change something. Just the opposite, the majority of disgruntled voters “protested” by staying at home, thinking they are powerless to change anything; European elections in Croatia remained secondary. It is true

that election turnout rose from 20.84% in 2013 to 25.24% (Table 1); this represents a bigger increase than the one on the level of the European Union, where it went up by 0.9%. This increase is not significant and has primarily a symbolic value because, for the first time since the introduction of the European elections, the downward voter turnout trend has been halted. Croatia saw its voter turnout increase by some 5%, which may seem as a positive move towards an increased interest of Croatian voters for European topics, but actually represents a negligible shift. Rather than signalling a trend towards halting the deeply rooted Euroscepticism of Croatian voters, it is a matter of deep voter dissatisfaction with the situation in the country which prompted them to go to the polls in larger numbers and express their protest. Low turnout also showed that Croatian political parties do an increasingly bad job of performing their democratic functions and are having more and more trouble mobilising voters. Present-day parties mostly boil down to party apparatuses that reward their members with well-paid positions in national or European administration, which loses them credibility with the voters.

Table 1. Turnout in EP election in Croatia

	Elections 2013	Elections 2014
Total number of voters	3 748 815	3 767 343
Number of votes	781 216	950 980
Percentage of voters	20.84%	25.24%
Number of invalid ballots	39 572	29 076
Percentage of invalid ballots	5.07%	3.06%

Source: www.izbori.hr (7.8.2014).

A smaller percentage of invalid ballots shows that, this time, voters could choose from more *protest* parties listed on the ballot, which gave them a chance to express their disgruntlement by voting instead of spoiling ballots. Generally speaking, European elections in Croatia were marked by protest voting against the current Croatian politics led by the social democrats. This is corroborated by the results achieved by the hard right, assembled in a coalition of parties called the Alliance for Croatia (*Savez za Hrvatsku*), and even more by the entry of a new green party into the European Parliament. The Alliance for Croatia got the votes of conservative nationalists who were unhappy with government's politics, but also the politics of the centre-right opposition gathered around HDZ. Protests votes of leftist voters, disillusioned by SDP's rule, went to the green party ORaH, founded just six months before the elections by the former Minister and SDP's member of Croatian Parliament M. Holy, which succeeded in entering the European Parliament.

But most of all, it was a protest against government policies that resulted in the victory of the coalition of centre-right parties led by HDZ as the main opposition party. What is interesting is that, thanks to the possibility of preferential voting, most votes from that electoral slate went to two candidates representing extremely conservative positions – R. Tomašić and M. Petir. Ruža Tomašić is the first name of the radically right Croatian Party of Rights – Ante Starčević (*Hrvatska stranka prava – Ante Starčević*). She won 107,206 preferential votes. As a member of Parliament, R. Tomašić is active in the parliamentary group European Conservatives and Reformists, and her success has shown that Euroscepticism is definitely strong in the Croatian society. Considering that predictions of the Croatian National Bank say that Croatia is a country which will pay more money into European funds than it will receive, R. Tomašić's results are not surprising. In the second place by the number of preferential votes on HDZ's slate is M. Petir, member of the Croatian Peasants Party (*Hrvatska seljačka stranka*, HSS) She won 42 683 votes by actively promoting conservative values like traditional marriage, but also by championing the protection of rights of Croatian farmers. Strong performance by these two candidates from HDZ's coalition slate, with their right-wing, national-conservative rhetoric, prevented an even bigger success of the Eurosceptic, hard, conservative right in Croatia. That type of right-wing organisations gathered around several parties and civil organisations, assembled into a coalition popularly known as the Alliance for Croatia, which won 6.88% of votes. Since these parties did not have a single candidate with enough prominence and popularity among the national-conservative public, they could not convincingly go up against parties in HDZ's coalition and the right-wing rhetoric of R. Tomašić and M. Petir. These two candidates thus prevented a vote drain from HDZ to a more radical right option. That is why, in spite of the difficult economic situation and high unemployment, Croatia did not experience the same phenomenon of the success of right-wing populists and the radical right as a number of European countries. Anyway, studies have shown that there is no automatic connection between the success of the extreme and radical right and the economic crisis. Such parties owe their success more to their identity politics and ability to publicly present certain topics (such as fear of strangers) as their own, rather than to their socio-economic programmes [Mudde 2007; 2014].

What is interesting is that, in Croatia, economic crisis and high unemployment did not result in an increased popularity of left-wing parties like, for example, in Greece, where SYRIZA emerged as an election winner by capturing 22% of votes. On the contrary, the left party which emphasised workers' rights and the idea of equality – Croatian Labourists - Labour Party – did not pass the electoral threshold and lost its only mandate in the European Parliament

(won in the 2013 elections). In the 2014 elections, Croatian Labourists won only 3.40% of votes, in spite of the widely-held opinion that Nikola Vuljanić, their representative in the European Parliament, was doing a good job. The elections clearly showed that, at the moment, there is no room for a traditional-left party in Croatia. They also made clear that left-oriented young people, who make up the biggest percentage of the unemployed in Croatia, do not favour traditional left-wing values like equality, but are more attracted to postmodern topics of environmental protection, gender equality, gay marriage etc., championed by the newly-established green party ORaH. So, although Croatian left-wing voters are clearly not satisfied with the politics of SDP-led government, they did not vote for the leftist party which ran on the platform of traditional social-democratic values.

The question which should therefore be asked is how come the government's very poor economic results and the deepening economic crisis did not compel voters to be even more decisive in punishing the ruling party? My opinion is that SDP's relative high percentage of votes (29.93%) is the result of identity politics. Namely, SDP clearly positioned itself as a defender of liberal values against HDZ's national-conservative politics. The election campaign, generally weak and half-hearted, centred around topics connected to domestic, primarily identity politics, and the results achieved by the Croatian government. In this contest, the victory went to the opposition headed by HDZ, which won 41.42% votes. HDZ emerged as a well-organised party which, even in conditions of low voter turnout, managed to mobilise its members and secure a decisive victory. SDP's ruling coalition paid the price for its thoroughly unsuccessful economic policy and interparty conflicts. Many votes were also lost to corruption scandals of middle-ranked SDP members that tarnished its image as an honest party.

Table 2. Results of the 2014 European Parliament elections in Croatia

Results of the 2014 European Parliament elections		
HDZ coalition	381,844 votes	41.42 %
SDP coalition	275,904 votes	29.93 %
OraH	86,806 votes	9.42 %
Alliance for Croatia (Savez za Hrvatsku)	63,437 votes	6.88 %
Croatian Labourist (Hrvatski laburisti)	31,363 votes	3.40 %

Source: www.izbori.hr (7.8.2014).

European elections have shown that both European and Croatian politics revolve around the centre, so that best results are achieved by centre-right and centre-left parties – the same ones which already govern the European Union in a big coalition. It also became clear that great expectations surrounding direct

elections for the European Parliament were not justified. The initial claim was that these elections would enable the formation of a genuine European political community and increase European Union's legitimacy in the eyes of its citizens. This did not happen; on the contrary, the interest for taking part in the European elections kept falling. It remains to be seen whether the 2014 elections, which stopped this tendency, will also mark its reversal or just a temporary suspension of a clear trend which shows that citizens consider European elections to be of secondary importance. Hence, the lack of interest in the European elections clearly shows that democracy is a political order designed for nation states. This is an indisputable fact which will make the gulf between the European Parliament and national parliaments of EU member states, as well as between European and national elections, difficult to overcome. Moreover, it seems that this gulf will continue to grow, at least for the time being. Namely, the Treaty of Lisbon gave the European Parliament considerable power, but it conflicts with the fact that EU is a union of states, not its citizens. That is why the tension between decisions on the European level and the consequences of those decisions for member states will continue to exist. So, there will still be some sort of tension between the politics of the member states and the EU, and that will discourage voters from taking part in the European elections. Citizens did not miss the fact that the process of globalisation led to decision-making centres becoming more and more distant, and often completely non-transparent [Dahrendorf 2002]. It has become perfectly clear that elections can serve to depose ruling politicians, but they cannot change the politics [Blühdorn 2011; Krastev 2013]. Democratic elections lose their point if they cannot bring about any significant change, which is why more and more people are giving up on the election process. That is why most political theoreticians agree that the crisis of participatory democracy is an undeniable fact. It is thought that this crisis was caused, among other things, by the rise of neoliberal ideology which followed the collapse of communist dictatorships. Neoliberalism took the slogan of the French bourgeois revolution, "Freedom, Equality, Brotherhood", which represented the ideological foundation of parliamentary democracy, and replaced it with "Costs, Profit, Efficiency". This represents a new type of fundamental liberal "political rationality", which views every democratic institution, person and politics through entrepreneurial glasses and sees no difference between political and economic activities. This process casts most people in a passive role because the actual political process takes place behind stage lights in the form of privatised interaction between political elites and representatives of economic interests [Jörke 2010]. It is not a question of businesses buying politicians, but a hard-to-unravel web of joint interests of companies and state [Bofinger, Habermas, Nida-Rümelin 2012]. This is about a tendency

of increasingly entwined power of big business and the state which ordinary people cannot easily fathom. Transnational movement of capital, goods, money and people, as well as the power of international institutions, weaken the nation state, and thereby also democracy. Namely, it is worth repeating that democracy is a political order designed for nation states, and that is why the European elections are of secondary importance.

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**EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT ELECTIONS IN LITHUANIA:
POPULIST COMPETITION IN THE SHADOW
OF THE PRESIDENTIAL VOTE**

Abstract:

The 2014 European Parliament elections in Lithuania were successful for mainstream political parties: no new-born political movement came up in the political scene; no open Euro-sceptic party was able to gain any seats. But such a victory came at a price: the major European topics (joining the euro-zone, land-ownership by the foreigners) were left aside; the EP electoral campaign was overshadowed by Presidential elections with populist discussions about Russian threats and national security. The coincidence of two political campaigns boosted the voter turnout and made a significant impact on the distribution of MEP seats; because of the higher turnout, smaller parties were able to enter the EP, while two established parties with devoted core voters suffered some losses compared to the 2009 EP elections.

Key words:

European Parliament, Lithuania, elections, campaign, electoral slogan, populism

Introduction: Lithuania in the EU and the EU in Lithuania

In 2014, Lithuania elected members of the European Parliament for the third time. In every election, the number of parliamentarians representing the country declined by one: from 13 in 2004 to 11 in 2014. The 15% decrease of the number of seats in ten years remained mostly unnoticed. Lithuanian apathy towards European affairs and an uncritical attitude towards Brussels could explain the public ignorance of the fact, that the Lithuanian (as well as the Irish) delegations in the EP proportionally shrank in comparison to other countries’.

This attitude dates back to the very beginning of the Lithuanian membership in the EU: on November 11th, 2004, the Lithuanian Seimas¹ was the first (even before the European Parliament) to ratify a contradictory Treaty, establishing a Constitution for Europe, which was signed less than a fortnight earlier and rejected half a year later by the referendums in France and the Netherlands. Ten years ago, the premature decision to ratify the imperative document without public or even parliamentary discussions was justified by the fears of the ruling elite: in October 2004, a new born Darbo partija (DP, Labour Party) won the Seimas elections and the outgoing parliament was afraid to leave the ratification of vitally important documents to unknown politicians. A few weeks later DP entered the coalition government and later joined Lithuanian mainstream politics.

The escape from broader public discussions on European affairs gradually became a sad tradition in Lithuania. This was clearly reflected in the 2009 EP elections, where the turnout was less than 21% - Lithuanians were the second least active voters in the EU (only Slovaks were less enthusiastic). Even the presidency of the Council of the EU in the second half of 2013 did not stimulate substantial changes in this field.

Lithuania remains a strongly pro-European country, but the attitudes are going through gradual transformation. In 2004, i.e. in the first year of membership, 68% of Lithuanians said they trust the EU, while only 52% preserved such high expectations in 2013. Meanwhile, the proportion of the population who distrusted the EU more than doubled from 15 to 35% in ten years [Eurobarometer 62; Eurobarometer 80]. The fact that trust of the EU had not dropped below 50% in Lithuania is more symbolic, and it is hard to answer the question: has the attitude of Lithuanians towards the EU become more realistic or more sceptic?

The roots of an uncritical attitude towards the EU could be traced back to over a quarter of a century ago. Membership in the EU and NATO was the dream in the first decade of Lithuanian independence; this goal united the nation, was accepted without public discussion and understood as a vital guarantee of lasting independence and prosperity. The Baltic States were in the second wave of the NATO enlargement, they joined the Alliance five years later than the first applicants from the CEE. Initially, Lithuania was absent in the first proposed wave of the EU enlargement as well, and a fear to be left outside the EU and NATO was politically real and publicly insulting. The membership talks resembled a horse race; Lithuania tried to close negotiation chapters as quickly as possible in order to overtake the countries which started negotiations earlier. In the 2003 referendum, 89.95% Lithuanians voted for membership in the EU. This was the second best result in the history of enlargement referendums. At the same time, Slovakia scored 92.5% in favour of membership.

¹ Lithuanian Parliament

On the eve of the 2014 EP elections, a few uncomfortable questions clearly revealed the widening gap between the rank and file and the political elite on their attitudes towards the EU. Joining the euro-zone was an old dream of Lithuania. In 2006, the Lithuanian application was rejected because of the failed inflation target. When the economic crisis hit, the common currency lost its idealized appeal to Lithuania, however, two consecutive governments and President D. Grybauskaitė continued to vow for the common currency. Because surveys showed Lithuanian distrust in the Euro, the political elite faced a delicate task of how to avoid 'uncomfortable' discussions about joining the euro during the EP election campaign.

Another, just as troublesome issue, was the problem of land ownership. During membership negotiations, Lithuania agreed on a 10 year transition period during which foreign citizens were not allowed to own land in Lithuania. From May 2014, the land ownership rules were relaxed, but Seimas failed to pass the legislation which would protect local landowners. The situation provoked discontent; a group of citizens initiated a referendum on a law, forbidding foreigners to buy land in Lithuania. Strict Lithuanian laws on referendum require at least 300 thousand signatures supporting the call of referendum for it to take place. In a country with less than 3 million inhabitants it is a huge task, which, up until then, had never been fulfilled. The Supreme Electoral Commission and Seimas did everything to postpone the vote after the EP elections and at least temporary to bury the question.

Introduction of the euro and land ownership were obvious topics for the EP election campaign. If put on the electoral agenda, they could have made an essential impact on the vote results and Lithuania would have followed the mainstream European trend of increasing Euro-scepticism. Yet, because of the united attempts of all mainstream political parties, as well as favourable circumstances, the main discussions concerning Europe shifted towards security issues. The Ukrainian crisis and Russian aggression in Crimea easily overshadowed economic problems. It became possible to present the euro-zone not as an economic question, but as security dilemma. Supporters of the referendum on land ownership were presented as undercover agents for the separation from the EU by the mainstream media. In the face of Russian aggression, any doubts about the importance of the EU (or NATO) looked like betrayal. The Baltic States had suffered from Russian occupation more than any other countries in the EU, hence, their attitudes towards Moscow are often perceived as an over-reaction. But even after a quarter of a century, the Soviet past remains an important political factor in Lithuanian politics.

In 2014, the EP elections in Lithuania coincided with the second poll of Presidential elections, which are generally valued as the most important

national vote. Security problems, even ‘the feeling of the upcoming war’ became the best tools for mobilisation of the voters. Without any doubt, the EP elections were overshadowed by the Presidential vote. Both electoral campaigns influenced each other, but with different strength and outcomes.

Electoral calendar and political landscape

If we would look for a single most important factor which influences the outcome of elections in Lithuania, the timeline for elections would be the best bet. The timing of elections not only dictates the main political topics of the campaign, but also determines the voter turnout. A low turnout is highly beneficial for the so called traditional parties, whose roots go back to the struggle for Lithuanian independence in the late 1980s and beginning of 1990s. The leading right wing party Tėvynės sąjunga-Lietuvos krikščionys demokratai (TS-LKD, Homeland Union-Lithuanian Christian Democrats) inherited traditions of the Sąjūdis movement, which played a crucial role in the struggle for independence and was the main opponent of local and Russian communists. The leading party of the left wing Lietuvos socialdemokratų partija (LSDP, Lithuanian Social Democratic Party) incorporated ex-communists and social democrats who recreated their party shortly after restoration of Lithuanian independence. These two parties extremely benefit from the stubbornness of their core voters: the proportion of TS-LKD and LSDP votes dramatically increase in case of a low turnout. **TS-LKD and LSDP in Lithuania are immune to the consequences of declining voter turnout** which could be noticed all over the CEE countries. We could even identify some sort of ‘a paradox of democracy’, when parties with disciplined voters are not interested in broader public discussions, which could boost a higher turnout. Encouraging civic activism becomes a vital task for smaller political parties which are short of a devoted poll of voters. Electoral date and additional questions supplemented to the vote (in the form of a referendum) remain a few instruments capable of political manipulation.

Every parliamentary election in the 21st century saw a birth of a new political party in Lithuania. In 2000 it was Naujoji Sąjunga-socialliberai (NS, New Union–Social Liberals), 2004 saw a rise of DP, in 2008 Tautos prisikėlimo partija (TPP, National Revival Party) was created, in 2012 Drąsos kelias (DK, The Way of Courage) entered Seimas. From all these newcomers, only DP managed to become an established political force. The rise and fall of new parties together with ‘pulsation’ of voter turnout is replacing the ‘electoral pendulum’ which was the most important electoral factor in the first decade of Lithuanian independence, when in 1992 parliamentary elections did a sharp turn to the left, followed by no less sudden turn to the right in 1996. From new

party creation point of view, there are essential differences between the EP and national parliament elections. Victory in the EP elections gives no greater political influence on the national political stage. For most new parties, Seimas elections become the entry point, but the electoral calendar plays its role as well. In 2004, the EP elections were a rehearsal for DP just before Seimas elections, which were held the same year. New born TPP was very successful in the 2008 Seimas elections, but totally defeated in the EP elections the next year. New DK received moderate support in its first electoral attempt on national level in 2012, but after two years in Parliament was unable to even register for the EP elections.

In the public eyes, the EP elections only provide an opportunity for a handful of politicians to get high paid jobs in Brussels. Different parties use different strategies to choose their candidates for the election list. In 2004, the leading parties - TS-LKD and LSDP - decided to send to the EP their most experienced politicians (V. Landsbergis, L. Andrikienė, A. Sakalas, J. Paleckis). It is not clear whether these parties consider the job in the EP a promotion, honourable pension or political exile. In any case, LSDP logically preserved this principle of selection in all the following elections. Meanwhile in 2009 and 2014, TS-LKD put some new, unknown politicians into the first positions of the electoral list. DP, the winners of the first EP elections in 2004, picked unknown politicians for their electoral list, at the same time, Liberalų demokratų partija (now known as Partija Tvarka ir Teisingumas, PTT, Party ‘Order and Justice’) recruited a professor of philosophy; while Valstiečių ir Naujosios demokratijos partijų sąjunga (now Lietuvos valstiečių ir žaliųjų sąjunga, LVŽS, Lithuanian Peasants and Greens Union) was lead by the chairwoman of the party. 2009 marked a great shift in favour of parties’ leaders: the chairmen of three parties DP, PTT and Lietuvos Lenkų rinkimų akcija (LLRA, Electoral Action of Poles in Lithuania) were elected into the EP. A strategy of ‘celebrity promotion’ was used by one of the liberal parties, Lietuvos Respublikos liberalų sąjūdis (LRLS, Liberals Movement of the Republic of Lithuania), who endorsed a professor of philosophy who was simultaneously a TV personality.

Because the EP elections in Lithuania coincide with Presidential vote, the second round of Presidential elections, which is held at the same day as the EP vote, becomes a crucial factor. If the President is elected in the first round (as it happened in 2009), voters do not bother to vote in the EP elections; if the votes coincide, they boost the turnout (as in 2004).

Another important question concerns the electoral support for parties which are currently in power. The EP elections in 2004 were held half a year before Seimas elections and were a boost for a new political force DP. The EP elections in 2009 were held just half a year after parliamentary elections, which

Election campaign

After the 2009 EP elections, certain changes in Lithuanian laws were made and had direct impact on further campaigns. In 2010, the Lithuanian Constitutional Court decided that the requirements of the electoral law, claiming that only political parties can form electoral lists, contradicted the Lithuanian Constitution. Lithuanian Seimas passed the changes of the law which created an option to form new entities – Electoral Committees. Citizens could join such committees, create electoral lists and participate in the EP elections. Such liberalisation of electoral laws was followed by changes in the regulation of funding. In order to minimise the influence of business on politics, it was decided to increase state support for political parties. Simultaneously, political parties were forbidden to receive donations from legal entities; only physical persons' support was allowed. In practice, Electoral Committees were left without options to receive any substantial funding and the possibility of their creation and electoral success remained highly uncertain. In theory, these changes were designed to support democracy and curb political corruption. In practice, the changes favoured existing political parties, reduced possibilities for new political movements, and, to some extent, encouraged the conservation of the Lithuanian political system, which, even after 25 years of independence, cannot be called a mature one.

On the eve of the EP elections, the Lithuanian Ministry of Justice had registered 42 political parties: 11 of them had not met requirements to submit a list of their members each year or had already declared intentions to stop activity. The remaining parties had a total of 114 147 members, what means that about 4.5% of Lithuanian voters had declared their support to one or another political group. Only two of the parties had more than 20 thousand members (DP and LSDP), another two claimed membership of more than 10 thousand (TS-LKD and PTT). Four political parties had more than two thousand members (LRLS, LICS, LVŽS, LŽP). A new law, passed in 2013, requires political parties to have at least two thousand members. All minor political parties have two years (till the end of 2015) to satisfy these new requirements or face closure. If we consider any elections as an opportunity to increase visibility of the political party and to boost its membership, the EP elections and local elections in 2015 were the last chance to do so.

All political parties with more than two thousand members entered the electoral race on their own. For the elections, LLRA formed a coalition with the party Rusų aljansas (RA, Russian Alliance), while DK, which was born just before 2012 parliamentary elections failed to collect 10 thousand signatures of supporters, required by electoral law was not registered for the elections. From the minor political parties, only Tautininkų sąjunga (TS, National Union), with 16 hundred

saw a victory of the right wing and populist parties. A short period between two votes was useful for the ruling coalition. As the economic crisis had just begun, the first steps of the government were unpopular, but the impact was not widely felt. Together with the low turnout, this helped TS-LKD claim the victory of the EP elections in 2009. The EP elections were another sign that the 'electoral pendulum', which usually punishes ruling politicians, is losing its strength.

It is very complicated to speak about the ideological background of the parties in Lithuania. The Left-Right axis in Lithuania lacks traditional socio-economic content and even after a quarter of a century brings up Communist-Anti-Communist discussions from the period of the fight for independence [Ramonaitė 2007: 166]. The European context makes the situation even more uncomfortable. It is not a problem with the identity of TS-LKD or LSDP: their representatives join groups of European People's Party and the Progressive Alliance of Socialists & Democrats in the EP. But the Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe recruited representatives of two very different Lithuanian political parties – DP and LRLS (in 2004 LICS, Liberalų ir Centro Sąjunga, Liberal and Centre Union). DP is considered to be left wing populists, while LRLS is clearly on the right side. The representatives of PTT during different terms joined different political groups. But these changes had its logic: PTT in 2004 was a part of the Union for Europe of the Nations group, later migrated to the Europe of Freedom and Democracy, and then to the Europe of Freedom and Direct Democracy. The leader of LLRA stayed in the European Conservatives and Reformists group for both terms, while representative of LVŽS in 2004 was a member of the Union for Europe of the Nations group, but joined the Greens-European Free Alliance in 2014. However, we should take note, that during this period, LVŽS consolidated its powers with part of the Green movement.

Table 1. Lithuanian political parties in the EP. Data Parliamentary Research Department, 2014-05-19.

	European United Left/Nordic Green Left	Progressive Alliance of Socialists & Democrats	Greens-European Free Alliance	Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe	European People's Party	European Conservatives and Reformists	Europe of Freedom and Direct Democracy*	Union for Europe of the Nations
2004		2 LSDP		5 DP 2 LICS	2 TS-LKD			1 PTT 1 LVŠ**
2009		3 LSDP		1 DP 1 LRLS	4 TS-LKD	1 LLRA	2 PTT	
2014		2 LSDP	1 LVŽS	1 DP 2 LRLS	2 TS-LKD	1 LLRA	2 PTT	

* Europe of Freedom and Democracy in 2009; ** became LVŽS in 2014

members, decided to take part in the elections and managed to collect 10 thousand signatures supporting their bid. The attempts by extreme left wing Socialistinis liaudies Frontas (SLF, Socialist People's Front) and populist Liaudies partija (LP, Peoples party) failed. There were two attempts by the Electoral Committees to enter the race, but both failed on different stages of their activities.

It is rather complicated to speak about the programmes of 10 political parties which entered the electoral race, as well as about the issues raised in discussions. Presidential electoral agenda was the moving force of both elections; and the escape from genuine European problems as well as concentration on security questions and Russian aggression were the most important features of campaigning.

In most political campaigns, party programmes remain out of reach of the ordinary voters. The ideas are interpreted and commented by the media; the rank and file are influenced by a mixture of these interpretations. To some extent, the most authentic ways of self-expression of the parties are the slogans, i.e. the most important messages politicians would like to send to their constituencies. A brief analysis of the slogans used by Lithuanian political parties in 2014 EP elections allow us to notice a few interesting things.

Eight out of ten Lithuanian parties used one or two geographical names in their slogans (Europe, Lithuania, or both). It would be too bold to make precise conclusions from these observations (picture 1). We could presume that mentioning only Lithuania in their election slogans shows more nationalistic attitudes of PTT and LVŽS, or that no geographical names in the slogans of LŽP and LSDP is a sign of open-mindedness. Geographical names in political slogans of the EP elections could serve as a map, which shows the routes of political parties on their trips to the 'hearts and souls' of the voters. In this case, it is clear that the Coalition's target is the Polish and Russian speaking voter; for DP the accent on Europe helps escape some uncomfortable questions (their leader is ethnic Russian). It is worth to notice, that all parties with overlapping voters tried to choose different geographical names (LSDP and DP; LICS and LRLS; LŽP and LVŽS).

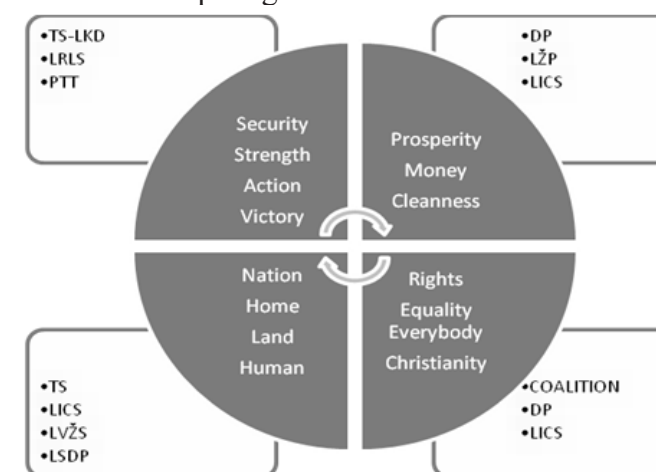
The words signifying certain values in the slogans of the election campaign could develop into an even a more useful instrument for identification of the orientation of political parties. In picture 2, we have grouped these 'value words' in four categories: up-left concentrating on Success (Security, Strength, Action, Victory), up-right on Materialism (Prosperity, Money, Cleanness), bottom-left is centred on Locality (Nation, Home, Land, Human), and bottom-right on Universality (Rights, Equality, Everybody, Christianity). Of course, this identification of values is highly conditional. But a few interesting features could be mentioned. LICS was the only party which diversified its electoral message into

three out of four categories: was speaking about money, home and everybody. Besides other important factors (after 2012 Seimas elections, LICS had no representatives in the parliament for the first time, the party was losing the fight with LRLS for the votes of the liberal minded population) such electoral tactics of 'catch them all' could have contributed to the defeat in the EP elections. DP was the only party which packed its electoral slogan into two categories, all the other parties concentrated into one field. It is interesting to mention, that the topics promoted by TS-LKD and LRLS – Security, Strength, Action, Victory – were in the centre of presidential campaign of incumbent president D. Grybauskaitė.

Picture 1. Key geographical names in official slogans of Lithuanian political parties participating in 2014 EP elections



Picture 2. The key words in official slogans of Lithuanian political parties participating in 2014 EP elections



Electoral tactics of political parties in the 2014 EP elections should also be considered in the context of presidential elections. We could identify two main models (support of incumbent president or competition), but the models have some interesting variations, for different political parties' application of these models brought very different results.

Two most influential right wing parties, which, until 2012, were in the government and during the EP elections remained in the opposition – TS-LKD and LRLS – decided to support incumbent president D. Grybauskaitė and did not evoke candidates of their own. Grybauskaitė's electoral tactics were based on alienating herself from any political party; she presented herself as independent. Such a situation complicated positions of conservatives and liberals. As all the attention was concentrated on the presidential campaign, TS-LKD and LRLS lost chances to increase their visibility and to present their agenda to the voters. However, as the main theme of D. Grybauskaitė electoral campaign was mobilisation against Russian aggression, TS-LKD felt extremely comfortable with the topic, as patriotism remains the distinctive feature of this party's identity.

TS-LKD decided to use an electoral trick which, to some extent, could be classified under 'the false name' category. 'The father of Lithuanian independence' V. Landsbergis had always been one of the greatest electoral assets of TS-LKD. He is now in his eighties and, after two terms in the EP, V. Landsbergis decided not to participate in elections any more. TS-LKD recruited V. Landsbergis' grandson, Gabrielius, to be on the list. A young man without any political experience was considered to be a strange and risky choice [Navickas 2014]. However, the traditional conservative electorate warmly welcomed the new politician and he finished the race in first place of the party's list (originally G. Landsbergis was third). For TS-LKD, the best outcome of presidential elections would have been D. Grybauskaitė's victory in the first round. In such case they could expect a repeated 2009 scenario: low turnout in the EP elections gives extra opportunities for traditional parties.

Although LRLS supported D. Grybauskaitė's presidential bid, they were highly interested in two rounds of presidential elections. An increased turnout would have attracted more voters who could have chosen neither TS-LKD nor LSDP. LRLS was inspired by its success five years ago, and expected to go on with the consolidation of the liberal electorate and focus on younger urban voters. In order to achieve their aims, LRLS tried to replicate their old tactics and recruited a well-known businessman A. Guoga as number two of their list, which was led by ex-minister for education G. Steponavičius. The ranking of the party list (A. Guoga finished first), showed how liberal voters love celebrities and despise politicians.

Other political parties tried to combine the presidential and the EP electoral campaigns. The most successful in this model was Coalition lead by LLRA. In principle, they used the same strategy, which was very effective five

years ago: the leader of the party, V. Tomaševski, was nominated as a presidential candidate with no chances of success. However, the very fact of his participation helped mobilize the Polish speaking voters. With the turnout as low as it was in 2009, this easily gave him a seat in the EP. In 2014, the task was much more complicated, as the second poll of the presidential vote was nearly inevitable as well as the higher turnout in the EP elections. V. Tomaševski could not be sure that the same tactics would lead to the same success twice in a row. So LLRA formed a coalition with RA. Before, such coalitions were fragile. Since there are more active Polish than Russian voters in Lithuania, after ranking, Polish politicians usually won the seats and the Russians left empty handed. However, after the 2012 parliamentary elections, a few Polish candidates declined to enter the Seimas and the leader of RA became a MP, the mood changed and the coalition partners gained more trust in each other.

The most contradictory combination of the two election campaigns was chosen by the leading party of the governing coalition, LSDP. Prime Minister A. Butkevičius declined the offer to participate in presidential elections. At the time he was the most popular LSDP politician with modest chances to win the presidency. The party nominated MEP Z. Balčytis as the presidential candidate; he was simultaneously assigned to lead the party list in the EP elections. In the LLRA case such a strategy and the logic of a 'double candidate' was very clear to the supporters. For the LSDP, the same strategy brought a lot of misunderstanding, which translated into an awkward situation and possible losses for the EP elections. Z. Balčytis succeeded to win the second place in the first poll of presidential elections and participated in the second. But being on two separate ballots in the same election raised difficult questions about Z. Balčytis preferences: was he eager to become the president or a MEP? Z. Balčytis lost the presidential elections, the voters ranked him down from the first place in the party list to the second, but in any case, he succeeded and became MEP for the second time.

Similar electoral combinations were on the agenda of PTT and LŽP, but their nominees were excluded from the participation in presidential elections. The leader of PTT, R. Paksas, was president of Lithuania in 2003-2004, but was impeached and barred from any office where he has to take an oath for the Republic of Lithuania. MEP remained the highest political position available for R. Paksas and he was elected in 2009. The lifetime ban from elected office for R. Paksas was ruled as illegal by the European Court of Human Rights in 2011, and Lithuania was obliged to change the law, but had not met this commitment. Despite the fact that the party, led by R. Paksas (PTT), participated in the ruling coalition, attempts to make last minute changes of the Constitution to enable R. Paksas to participate in presidential elections failed; PTT decided not to nominate another presidential candidate.

The Supreme Electoral Commission refused to register the leader of LŽP L. Balsys as a candidate for president. LŽP managed to collect 20 411 signatures in support of the leader's presidential bid, but part of the signatures were declared invalid. The former adviser to the incumbent president D. Grybauskaitė and current MP L. Balsys remained on the top of the party list in the EP elections. However, LŽP lost the opportunity to show up in presidential debates, which significantly decreased its visibility.

DP and LVŽS participated in both elections, but the DP more and the LVŽS less actively tried to separate their campaigns. DP presidential candidate A. Paulauskas was not on the EP electoral list, his presidential campaign had little correlation with the party EP campaign. In comparison with other large political parties, DP electoral campaigns could be characterised as the most professional. DP hires expensive foreign consultants; their campaigns have precise targets, are well funded and managed. It's hard to escape the impression that the leaders of DP considered the 2014 EP elections of secondary importance. As the leaders of the party were on trial for financial manipulations, the founder of DP, V. Uspaskich, needed parliamentary immunity. These modest, but selfish, intentions were unable to build a sufficient motivation for a successful election campaign.

LVŽS strength lies in rural regions: this party is more represented in local politics, so a combination of the presidential and the EP elections became a good opportunity to present themselves as a national political force. The leader of the party, R. Karbauskis, led the electoral list; the second position was left for party presidential candidate B. Ropė. Due to moderate chances of success in presidential elections and modest prospects in the EP elections, this tandem was the best decision for the party. B. Ropė's participation in presidential debates helped the party increase their visibility. To some extent this electoral strategy resembles LLRA case. When R. Karbauskis refused to enter the EP in favour of B. Ropė, it was quite understandable to the supporters of the party.

The two parties which were considered as the outsiders in the EP elections tried to replicate the mainstream strategy of connecting two electoral campaigns. But for different reasons TS and LICS were unable to succeed. TS was the weakest participant in the elections: it had no representatives in the parliament and lacked state funding which, after changes of party financing laws, became an important factor of success. TS ties with the presidential candidate MP N. Puteikis were not officially exposed. TS and N. Puteikis helped each other with the collection of signatures supporting their electoral bids, openly expressed sympathy to the upcoming referendum on land ownership, which was ignored by the other political parties. TS received nearly six times fewer votes than N. Puteikis in the first poll of the presidential election, but nearly doubled in comparison with the 2012 Seimas elections.

The 2014 EP elections could be the last for the LICS. In 2009, the party had already begun losing its position as the center of liberal electorate, when another liberal party (LRLS) managed to get twice as many votes. Participation in the government and unconditional support for president D. Grybauskaitė in the 2012 parliamentary elections became a handicap for LICS. The former leader of the party, A. Zuokas, entered the presidential race independently, but it remained unclear how either side could benefit from this 'silent coalition'.

Election results

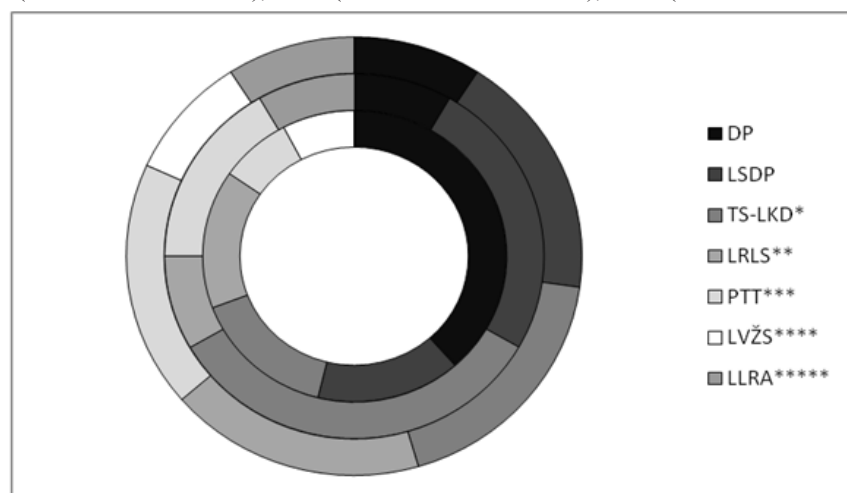
The results of the 2014 EP elections in Lithuania were unexpected and inspired passionate public discussions about the actual winners. The results provoked the political instinct to claim victory even in the case of defeat. The identification of the winner was confusing due to the even division of votes: 4 parties received 2 MEP seats each; 3 parties got 1 seat and 3 parties received zero. But the main factors which aggravated the identification of the winner, were sociological forecasts, which predicted unexpectedly good results for the ruling parties. LSDP was nearly positive of the victory and even planned personal changes in the government as some key figures were expected to leave for Brussels. The difference between expectations (the first place and 30% of votes) and reality (the second place and 17.26% of votes) was a shock for LSDP and a great joy for TS-LDK, who received 2 thousand votes more than LSDP and, despite losing half of their seats in the EP, spoke of 'success'. The situation prompted one of the leaders of LSDP, G. Kirkilas, to put all the responsibility on sociologists and declare, that "our sociologists are becoming participants of electoral campaigns" [Samoškaitė, 2014-05-26]. To some extent this is correct: in Lithuania, sociological data has not become a valuable instrument for strategic decisions, but is used as a propaganda argument or to help construct 'self-fulfilling forecast'. However, the results are to be blamed on the politicians, not sociologists [Žinių radijas 2014].

There were no problems with the identification of the winners in all previous EP elections. In 2004, DP became a clear leader with 5 seats and more than 30% of votes, in 2009 TS-LKD claimed victory with 4 seats and nearly 27% of the votes. In 2014, no party received more than 18% of votes and the more rational evaluation of the outcome is revealed by analyzing the changes of the MEP seats gained (or lost) compared with the 2009 EP elections. Two traditionally largest political parties representing right (TS-LKD) and left (LSDP) came in first and received a nearly equal shares of votes (17%), thus 2 seats in the EP. But it was a loss of half (for TS-LKD) or a third (for LSDP) of their representation in the EP. Three political parties (PTT, LLRA, DP) retained status qua, while LRLS doubled their number of MEP (from 1 to 2) and LVŽS regained a seat in the EP after five years.

One important outcome of the elections was evident even before the vote: compared with previous votes there were fewer registered electoral lists. Only 10 lists competed in 2014, while in 2009 there were 15 electoral lists and 12 lists in 2004. In 2014 only 7.04% of the votes 'were lost': the share of the voters whose support to political parties was not translated into MEP seats dramatically decreased. In 2009 and 2004, 15.31% and 17.36% votes were cast for parties which had not gained participation in the EP.

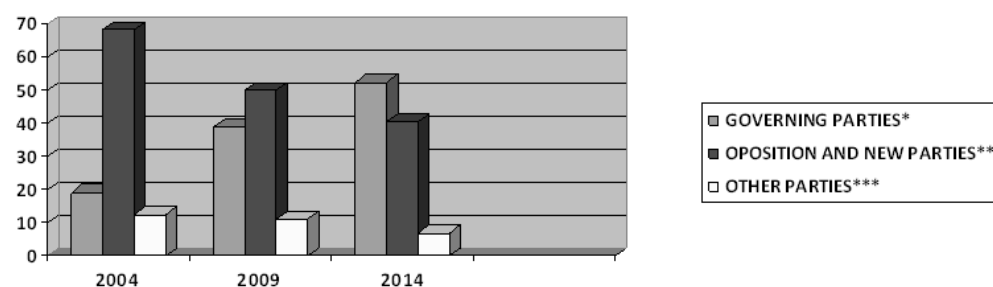
Picture 3. Lithuanian representatives in EP.

2004 (13 seats – inner circle); 2009 (12 seats – middle circle); 2014 (11 seats – outer circle)



* in 2004 participated as TS; ** in 2004 participated as LICS; *** in 2004 participated as LDP; **** in 2004 participated as LLRA & LRS Coalition, in 2009 as LLRA

Picture 4. Results of EP elections in Lithuania. Balance between governing and opposition parties



* 2004 – LSDP; NS; 2009 – TS-LKD, LICS, LRLS, TPP; 2014 - LSDP, DP, PTT, LLRA; ** 2004 – DP (new party), TS, LICS (LRLS), PTT (LDP); LVŽS (LVNDPS); 2009 – LSDP, DP, PTT, LLRA, LVŽS (LVLS); 2014 – TS-LKD, LRLS, LVŽS; *** 2004 – including LLRA; 2014 – including LICS

Without a clear impact on national politics, the EP elections could be considered as a test of trust for the incumbent government. As parliamentary elections are held in Lithuania every 4 years and the EP elections every 5 years, the time gap between the two votes has an impact as well: the less time passed after national elections, the better results governing parties can expect. In 2004, the EP elections were held three and a half years after Seimas election, the ruling coalition suffered hard defeat and a new born DP gained victory. In 2009, the time gap between national and the EP elections was only half a year, the outcome of elections was much better for the ruling parties. That year, members of the governing coalition, the short lived populist TPP was defeated, but the core ruling party, TS-LKD, gained victory. In 2014, the governing coalition was 1.5 years old and did much better than the opposition parties for the first time. However, we should note that in 2014, no new-born political party participated in the elections, and it is also important to note that the governing coalition was unusually vast.

Conclusions: short time impact or long lasting tendencies

Five weeks after the EP elections, the Referendum on land ownership was held in Lithuania. Under the turnout of less than 15%, the vote was declared invalid, as Lithuanian laws require the minimum turnout of 50%. The Supreme Electoral Commission and Seimas did everything to separate the referendum from the EP and presidential elections. This separation of referendum from EP elections and the connection of the EP vote with the second poll of presidential elections were the most important factors which determined the character and outcomes of the vote. We could presume that without 'support' of presidential elections the real turnout in Lithuanian EP elections could be about 15-20% instead of the actual 46.35%. The situation in Lithuania reminds of Slovakia, where presidential elections are held just before the EP elections and Slovak voters do not bother to come to the polls for the third time in a few weeks. The rise of voter turnout in 2014, in comparison to the 2009 EP elections is an illusion; in ten years the EP elections in Lithuania became a routine political act, traditional Lithuanian Euro-optimism is more a mood than an active civic position.

The Lithuanian media noticed that the ordinariness of the election in Lithuania is unique in the context of the EU, where Euro-scepticism is gaining power [ELTA 2014]. The domination of traditional parties and failure of extreme and populist forces was presented as a welcome outcome of the elections [BNS 2014]. Such observations please the governing establishment and simultaneously help mask the emerging contradictions inside the society. The European project becomes more and more elitist, and as the 2014 EP elections in Lithuania showed

in order to get popular support the established political parties are turning away from European problems and returning to old discussions which remind of the two decade old debates about national security and Russian threats. The victory against Euro-scepticism and populism in Lithuania was achieved at the cost of broadening the gap between political elites and ordinary voters.

In recent years we can observe certain attempts of the established parties to preserve the existing political system in Lithuania, to create artificial obstacles for establishing new political parties or movements. The 2014 EP elections saw the further steps in this direction. Formal relaxation of the rules for participation in the EP elections was inactivated by the tightening of financial restrictions on political campaigns. In Lithuania we can observe a situation when political parties are losing the interest to appeal for broader audiences; politicians are concentrating their attention on their core voters. The most important political challenge is the encouragement of your voters' participation; in this situation manipulations of electoral calendar becomes the principal method of political contest.

The ranking of party electoral lists remains one of a few channels for the voters to send their direct messages to politicians. All four parties which gained two seats in the EP saw important changes in their party electoral lists after the voters' ranking. In most cases, this influenced the personal distribution of MEP seats. The fact that after unexpected ranking into the second place of PTT list Minister of Environment V. Mazuronis decided to resign and choose the MEP seat instead of the important government job and leading position inside the party, is only an example how Lithuanian politicians value comfortable working conditions of MEP.

If we consider the EP elections as an important attempt to create a unified European political sphere, Lithuanian vote results did not support this illusion. The electoral campaign was highly concentrated on national topics, without any doubt, the EP elections lost the competition to the presidential vote even before the beginning of campaigning. Strategic decisions and steps by political parties in the EP elections were subordinated to the presidential vote. The 2014 EP elections in Lithuania revealed a fact that is clear in most 'old members' of the EU: the European project needs new stimulus. This stimulus should have a popular appeal. It is difficult to speak about the future of a united Europe if this union only makes the materialistic dreams of professional politicians and bureaucrats come true.

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Annex:

Table 1. Lithuanian political parties mentioned in the article

Abbreviation	Lithuanian name	English translation
DK	Drašos kelias	The Way of Courage
DP	Darbo partija	Labour Party
LICS	Liberalų ir Centro Sąjunga	Liberal and Centre Union
LLRA	Lietuvos Lenkų rinkimų akcija	Electoral Action of Poles in Lithuania
LP	Liaudies partija	Peoples party
LRLS	Lietuvos Respublikos liberalų sąjūdis	Liberals Movement of the Republic of Lithuania
LSDP	Lietuvos socialdemokratų partija	Lithuanian Social Democratic Party
LVŽS	Lietuvos valstiečių ir žaliųjų sąjunga (earlier Valstiečių ir Naujosios demokratijos partijų sąjunga)	Lithuanian Peasants and Greens Union
NS	Naujoji Sąjunga-socialliberai	New Union–Social Liberals
PTT	Partija Tvarka ir Teisingumas (earlier Liberalų demokratų partija)	Party ‚Order and Justice’
RA	Rusų aljansas	Russian Alliance
SLF	Socialistinis liaudies Frontas	Socialist People’s Front
TPP	Tautos prisikėlimo partija	National Revival Party
TS	Tautininkų sąjunga	National Union
TS-LKD	Tėvynės sąjunga-Lietuvos krikščionys demokratai	Homeland Union-Lithuanian Christian Democrats

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THE 2014 EUROPEAN ELECTIONS IN ROMANIA*Abstract:*

The 2014 European elections in Romania represented a test for the political parties preparing for the presidential elections at the end of the same year. Firstly, we analyze the political context in which the European elections took place. Since 2012 the changing governing coalitions have created an unstable party system with many politicians shifting party allegiances. Several high ranking party officials were considered suspicious for corruption acts and this affected the nomination of candidates. Secondly, we show that although the ideological allegiance of citizens and political parties increased since 2012, the match between policy preferences of political party and their supporters continues to be remarkably low. Finally we discuss several effects of the European elections, including difficulties in appointing candidates and creating electoral coalitions for the presidential elections encountered by the center right wing parties.

Key words:

EP election 2014, party system, Romania, political competition, European Parliament

Introduction

Romanian politicians and analysts viewed the 2014 European Election as an important test before the presidential elections at the end of the same year. One important consequence was that the main political parties postponed the nomination of a presidential candidate until after the European elections. Another outcome was that many of the policy issues that filled the European agenda, such as debates on Euro skepticism, on European integration, freedom of movement, and imposing economic sanctions on Russia, were much less visible than topics linked to internal politics. The left wing political parties were

concerned to obtain sufficient support to win presidential elections in the first round after the liberals decided to leave the governing coalition. Right wing political parties were confronted with the creation of a new political party, a splinter of the main opposition party, an organization that is supported by president Basescu, the main opposition figure of the government. This article presents several key aspects of the party system and political situation Romania that shaped the electoral campaign and influenced the results of the 2014 European Elections. It will describe the main political parties and electoral alliances, funding resources and strategies of the political actors, with a focus on ideological stances of the parties and of their voters. We will evaluate the extent that certain policy preferences differentiated between party attachments during the campaign of the 2014 European elections by using data collected by a EU-wide voting advice application (VAA). The final section discusses the main outcomes of these elections on the Romanian politics.

Party Mappings in Romania

Romania had a continuous decrease in the number of successful political competitors in Parliamentary elections: 16 in 1990, 7 in 1992, 6 in 1996, 5 in 2000, 4 in 2004, 4 in 2008, and 4 in 2012. At the same time, the number of entries in the Romanian party system was very small.

The main Romanian political parties are the Social Democratic Party (PSD), the Democratic Liberal Party (PDL), the National Liberal Party (PNL), the Democratic Alliance of Hungarians in Romania (UDMR) and the Greater Romania Party (PRM). A short description of each will follow below.

The Social Democratic Party (PSD) is the largest Romanian party in the post-communist period. It is one of the two successors of the Romanian Communist Party and the direct continuator of the Iliescu-wing of the National Salvation Front (FSN). After the 1992 National Convention of FSN, when P. Roman became its new president, the supporters of the country's President, Ion Iliescu, left FSN to form a new party, FDSN (later called PDSR and PSD).

The Democratic Liberal Party, PDL (formerly called 'Democratic Party' – PD until late 2007) is the other direct successor of the National Salvation Front (FSN). After a decade-long affiliation with the Socialist International, PD/PDL has become a member of the European People's Party in 2006.

The National Liberal Party (PNL) is the only historical party reestablished in 1990 that managed to survive as a parliamentary party until the current legislature.

The Democratic Alliance of Hungarians in Romania (UDMR) is an ethnic party which reunites different organizations representing approximately 1.4 million

ethnic Hungarians in Romania. UDMR has been present in all the post-communist parliaments and in all governments formed since 1996, except for one year between 2008 and 2009 and for two years between April 2012 and February 2014.

The Greater Romania Party (PRM) is run by V. Tudor since its beginning and reached a peak of popular support at the 2000 elections, when it received the second largest share of votes. However, in 2008 and 2012 the party failed to gain parliamentary representation.

The main electoral coalitions in Romania were CDR, USD, DA, USD and ARD. CDR was formed in 1992 and consisted in several political parties: PNȚCD, PNL, PSDR, PER, PAC, UDMR, PNLCD, PNL-AT, FER, and civic organizations Partidul Unității Democratice, Uniunea Democrat-Creștină, Alianța Civică, Asociația Foștilor Deținuți Politici din România, Solidaritatea Universitară, Asociația 21 Decembrie, Mișcarea România Viitoare, Sindicatul Politic „Fraternitatea”, Uniunea Mondială a Românilor Liberi. In 1996, CDR had a slightly different structure: a group of parties--PNȚCD, PNL, PSDR, PER, PAC, UDMR, PNLCD, PNL-AT, FER--, and one of civic organizations--Partidul Unității Democratice, Uniunea Democrat-Creștină, Alianța Civică, Asociația Foștilor Deținuți Politici din România, Solidaritatea Universitară, Asociația 21 Decembrie, Mișcarea România Viitoare, Sindicatul Politic „Fraternitatea”, Uniunea Mondială a Românilor Liberi.

USD was established in 1995 and was formed by two political parties: PD and PSDR. DA, formed in 2004, was an alliance between PNL and PD. USL, established in 2012, was the alliance between PSD, PNL and PC. ARD (Just Romania Alliance) was an electoral alliance formed between the Democratic Liberal Party, the National Peasant Christian-Democratic Party, the Civic Force and supported by the Centre-Right Civic Initiative and other NGOs.

Funding resources and strategies

Parties in Central and Eastern Europe have traditionally been short of financial resources, which many of them tried to compensate by semi-legal and illegal funding practices, including the capture of the state and the media [Gherghina, Chiru, Bertoa 2011]. Most of the post-communist political parties rely on state subventions for their funding [Ikstens et al. 2002; van Biezen 2003; Lewis 2008]. In the Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, and Slovenia parties are highly subsidized by the state [Smilov, Toplak 2007], whereas in Romania it amounts to considerably less [Gherghina, Chiru, Bertoa 2011]. The Romanian parties have developed tools to obtain state resources for electoral purposes. These practices include: partisan tailored transfers of money from the government to own constituencies prior to elections; relying on large-scale patronage to

reward party sponsors and activists; as well as making state agencies contribute indirectly to campaign funds under the guise of workshops [Gherghina, Chiru, Bertoa 2011]. Party financing in Romania gradually evolved from very general provisions valid for the first post-communist elections from 1990 to very specific regulations applicable in the 2008 parliamentary elections.

Migration of legislators

Since 1990, elected legislators moving from one party to another was significant and has had a gradual increase. Party switching by individual representatives altered the party system and the internal life and logic of party functioning. In several occasions, party defectors created new parties and made others disappear, or helped forming of new political majorities. In the 1990-1992 legislature, party switching in both in the Chamber of Deputies and the Senate was a minor phenomenon and primarily affected the dominant party, FSN/National Salvation Front, which lost eighteen deputies and twelve senators by the end of the legislature. The following legislatures were more noteworthy in this respect, especially in the case of the Chamber of Deputies, during the 1996-2000 legislature, when 91 members (out of 332) switch parties [Marian 2013]. One reason that favored migration of party members is the weak ideological basis of the parties, which prevented most of those who moved along the left-right axis to be significantly penalized by the voters.

The importance of left-right placement

The left-right cleavage has proven highly salient among the voters of long-standing democracies. More than 80 percent of Western European voters can position themselves along a left-right scale [Fuchs, Klingemann 1990], and most also can position the parties. The prevailing assertion [Downs 1957] is that voters tend to vote the political party that resides the least ideological distance from their own identified location. The empirical evidence generally supports this claim, revealing that ideological congruence between individuals and parties is a strong predictor of the vote [Klingemann 1995]. Despite changes in voter preferences and party structures over time, the simple continuum of left-and-right continues to provide an efficient vehicle of communication in the long-standing democracies, linking political parties and their prospective voters [Sum, Bădescu 2008].

The newly democratized nations of Eastern Europe do not share the same historical development of political parties. Traditional social cleavages and organizational networks were destroyed under communism. In most, political parties were not prominent during the 1989 revolution or during the period

of constitutional construction that followed immediately after. As they emerged out of an unstructured political space, Eastern European parties tended to be centralized institutionally and state-dependent, with weak social bases and low linkage to the populace [Lewis 2000; Kopecky 2008; Saarts 2011]. Yet the number of effective parties gradually stabilized and ideological stances solidified. Personalized parties lost prominence relative to more value-driven ones. Parties positioned themselves in spatially, associated with ideological blocs in the European Parliament, and competed with increasing strategic skill. Studies appear to confirm the relevance of left-right discourse for the new democracies of Eastern Europe. It is reflected in the appeals of the main political parties, the ideological self-positioning of voters, and the party preferences expressed through votes cast. Although the degree of attachment is less than in Western Europe, alignment along the left-right axis serves as “an important simplifier of partisan alignments in post-communist party competition” [Kitschelt et al. 1995: 203; Bădescu, Sum 2005; Sum, Bădescu 2008]. Romania has one of the lowest proportions of people who place themselves on a left-right scale (Table 1), and also one of the weakest correlations between ideological distance to parties and party preferences [Sum, Bădescu 2008].

Table 1. Percentage Who Do Not Place Themselves on a LR Scale

Taiwan (2004)	0.56
Kyrgyzstan (2005)	0.51
Romania (2004)	0.44
Slovenia (2004)	0.40
Italy (2006)	0.37
Russia (2004)	0.34
Mexico (2003)	0.28
Great Britain (2005)	0.27
Brazil (2002)	0.25
Hong Kong (2004)	0.24
New Zealand (2002)	0.24
Poland (2001)	0.23
Ireland (2002)	0.22
Australia (2004)	0.18
Peru (2006)	0.17
Korea (2004)	0.17
Portugal (2005)	0.16
United States (2004)	0.14
Spain (2004)	0.12
Chile (2005)	0.12
Canada (2004)	0.11
Iceland (2003)	0.10
Belgium (2003)	0.10
Finland (2003)	0.10
Hungary (2002)	0.09

Bulgaria (2001)	0.09
Czech Republic (2002)	0.08
Germany (2002 Mail-Back)	0.08
Albania (2005)	0.06
Philippines (2004)	0.06
Germany (2002 Telephone)	0.06
Israel (2003)	0.05
Norway (2001)	0.05
Switzerland (2003)	0.05
Sweden (2002)	0.04
Denmark (2001)	0.04
France (2002)	0.04
Netherlands (2002)	0.02

Source: Comparative Study of Electoral Studies Surveys.

When measures of individual left-right self-placement in Romania are compared across time, they show no systematic change between 1991 and 2011, and then, a sudden increase of the proportion of those placing themselves on the scale (Table 2).

Table 2. Individual Left-Right Self-Placement
(Lower Numbers = Further Left; Higher Numbers = Further Right)

	Left											Right	DK/NA
	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10		
1991	-	1.0%	2.2%	5.0%	10.1%	21.0%	11.9%	7.7%	4.3%	2.5%	1.3%	33.0%	
1996	3.4%	0.8%	1.4%	2.4%	2.9%	20.3%	5.8%	6.4%	7.1%	2.1%	10.6%	36.7%	
2003	-	2.0%	2.0%	4.6%	8.2%	5.0%	2.9%	3.4%	-	-	-	71.9%	
2004	0.6%	1.5%	2.3%	5.7%	4.8%	13.4%	6.7%	7.4%	6.3%	3.9%	3.3%	44.2%	
2006	-	3.3%	2.1%	5.5%	4.1%	13.2%	11.5%	5.5%	6.5%	3.2%	5.9%	39.2%	
2007a	-	3.1%	2.1%	2.9%	3.5%	15.5%	6.6%	4.1%	6.3%	2.5%	3.7%	49.8%	
2007b	-	4.2%	2.2%	5.1%	5.2%	14.7%	10.2%	5.1%	6.2%	2.0%	3.8%	41.4%	
2009	3.9%	3.6%	2.3%	3.2%	2.9%	16.9%	4.9%	4.9%	5.7%	3.5%	5.4%	42.9%	
2011	-	4.8%	3.2%	5.1%	4.4%	16.5%	4.9%	4.2%	3.8%	1.8%	4.6%	46.6%	
2012	3.2%	4.0%	5.2%	6.3%	5.5%	24.5%	6.5%	6.4%	4.8%	2.7%	5.5%	25.5% ¹	

Source:

1991 – United States Information Agency survey, Romania Module, October. (1-10)

1996 – Comparative Study of Electoral Systems/CSES, Romania Module. (0-10)

2003 – Public Opinion Barometer, Romania, October. Soros Foundation Romania. (1-7)

2004 – Comparative Study of Electoral Systems/CSES, November. Romania Module. (0-10)

2006 – Public Opinion Barometer, Romania, October. Soros Foundation Romania. (1-10)

2007a – Public Opinion Barometer, Romania, May. Soros Foundation Romania. (1-10)

2007b – Public Opinion Barometer, Romania, October. Soros Foundation Romania. (1-10)

2009 – Romanian Electoral Surveys, Presidential Elections Set. Soros Foundation Romania. (0-10)

2011 – Romanian Electoral Surveys, Soros Foundation Romania. (1-10)

2012 -- Ce-Re & CSD Survey. (0-10)

¹ A survey conducted in October 2012 by IRESCOP found an even lower proportion of those who do not place themselves, 22%.

The European elections in Romania

The electoral system is based on proportional representation having the entire country as one electoral district. There is an electoral threshold of 5%. First a national electoral coefficient is computed, which is the division between the valid votes and the number of European parliament seats allocated for Romania. To win a seat, independent candidates have to achieve that specific quota of votes. Secondly, the d'Hondt method is used for the transformation of votes into seats.

Table 3. European elections in Romanian - elections results

	2007	2009	2014
PSD-UNPR-PC	23.11%	31.07%	37.60%
PNL	13.44%	14.52%	15.00%
PDL	28.81%	29.71%	12.23%
UDMR	5.58%	8.92%	6.30%
PMP	-	-	6.21%
LászlóTökés	3.44%	-	-
Elena Basescu	-	4.22%	-
Mircea Diaconu	-	-	6.81%

Source: Romanian electoral data [<http://www.polito.ubbcluj.ro/romanianelectoraldata>].

Parties participating in the 2014 EP elections

The international membership of the Romanian parties preceded the country integration in the EU in 2007. In 1996 the Democratic Party (PD), the successor of the National Salvation Front (FSN) and predecessor of the Democrat Liberal Party (PDL), became member of the Socialist International. In 2005 the party joined the European People's Party group. In 2007 UDMR/RMDSZ (Democratic Alliance of Hungarians in Romania) joined the same European parliamentary group. PNL (National Liberal Party) adhered to the International Liberal in 1999 and to the Alliance of Liberals and Democrat for Europe (ALDE) after Romania joined the EU. PSD (Social Democratic Party) became fully affiliated to the Socialist International and to the Party of European Socialists (as an observer) in 2005. Next, we present brief descriptions of the Romanian political parties programs for the 2014 EP elections.

PSD (Partidul Social Democrat – Social Democratic Party). The party emphasizes the importance of a mixed economy, protecting the workers, consumers and the small entrepreneurs, an extensive and complex social protection network, progressive taxation, public education and healthcare systems, minimal

wages and social rights for the workers. In terms of public policies, the USL government, having PSD as a major coalition partner and a PSD prime-minister, Victor Ponta, restored the wages cut by the previous PDL government, adjusted the pensions with a percentage in accordance with the inflation rate, re-opened 17 hospitals and began the process of employment for 4.000 positions in the healthcare system, reversing the budgetary cuts imposed on medical care by the former government; it also reinstated a system of subventions for the agriculture. These measures strained the national budget. In accordance to the IMF, the government promised to cover half of the bank credit installments of the insolvent borrowers with lower incomes in order to encourage the consumption (a decision criticized for being rather in the favor of the bank instead of the debtors) and to support with credits the companies which create at least 20 new jobs.

On the political agenda, PSD emphasized that the agriculture was a priority. Although 2012 and 2013 were years with good agricultural crops the acquisition prices for raw products from the farmers remained prohibitively low compared to their expenses, and the situation was not reflected positively on the food market. The VAT for bread was reduced from 24% to 9%. Another assumed priority, the energy market, who's independence from the external suppliers was to be obtained, remained a long-term objective, pending upon natural gas and oil extraction technologies (from the resources recently discovered on the continental platform of the Black Sea) not yet available to Romania. Other macro-economic measures regarded the continuation of the privatization of the state-owned companies (CFR – the national railways system, Poșta Română – the national postal service). The PSD-led government aimed at improving the transport infrastructure that lacks motorways.

PNL (Partidul Național Liberal – National Liberal Party). This party focuses in its official documents on need to strengthen the rule of law, the separation of powers, the individual freedom and rights, to promote dialogue and tolerance, pluralism, diversity. In addition, it emphasizes on the individual, the economic freedom and the importance of the middle class, the free initiative and the entrepreneurship for the economy and for the society proper. The stipulated non-interventionism and anti-centralism does not point nevertheless towards a minimal state, but rather towards a functional state: “The liberalism does not reject neither the social responsibility of the state, nor its responsibility to provide qualitative public services [for the citizens] as a consequence of the ‘social contract’ between the state and the citizens”.

In the preamble of PNL manifesto, “The liberal state – the second modernization of Romania”, the accent is placed on the need of transforming the state from an assistential and clientelistic one to a liberal state. The state

structures, which are inherited from the totalitarian communist period, keep the society and the citizenry captive and need to be rebuilt from the ground in order to recreate a new functional, modern and competitive state, centered upon the citizen. Even it is labeled as “minimal”, it maintains enough attributes which entitles a skeptical reception of that label.

PNL's vision is that the state becomes efficient, with a workable and flexible public administration, using the criteria of the free market in order to judge its efficiency.

In terms of economic policies, the manifesto advocated for a new and flexible industrialization of the country (including the agriculture), promoting the development, a friendly fiscal system (with a further lowering of the flat income tax to 11%) and a strategy for developing the public-private management for the public capital investments. In the field of social policies the liberals called for a consolidation of the private component of the retirement funds and for switching the accent of social protection from the individual to the family.

As a minor coalition partner, PNL shared the PSD concern for development, at least at the declarative level. The USL coalition created a new ministry, label by the media as “The big projects ministry”, and the liberals controlled the Ministry of Finance. Although they went along with the PSD-inspired measures to restore the incomes and to adjust the pensions (see above), their biggest achievement in terms of right-wing economic measures was to impose the flat income tax of 16%, even if PSD agenda clearly stipulated the progressive taxation. As recent as the beginning of this year they promoted a new scheme of “gradual taxation”, moving downward from 16% to another two lower thresholds, 12% and 8%. The dissolution of USL and the withdrawal of PNL from government in mid-2014 prevented them to make any further steps in that direction.

PDL (Partidul Democrat Liberal – Democratic Liberal Party). “PDL vision for Romania” party program links the elements of the party agenda with the previous measures taken by the PDL and Dreptate și Adevăr (DA) coalition government. The vision is synthesized, in general terms, in a perfectly acceptable national conservatism slogan [Gallagher, Laver, Mair 2002: 217-218; Ware 1996: 32]: “PDL wishes for Romania to be a country in which its citizens want to live, a modern, powerful and competitive country. A country in which the law is respected, in which the hard work and the performance is encouraged, a country in which each can develop through his/her own forces.” There are several major themes of this vision. First, a modern state is viewed as a small state. In several speeches the incumbent president, a former PDL president, used the formula “fat/obese man” as a metaphor for the burden the public sector

represented for the private sector and for the entire society. The decentralization and modernization of the public administration is seen as a needed step to make the state institutions more flexible and responsive to the society.

Another central theme is the support for economic growth by attracting investments and new jobs. In this context the party program supports facilities for small and medium enterprises. The party considers that macroeconomic stability is achieved (if needed) by fiscal austerity.

PDL emphasizes the need to reform education, by encouraging merit and by connecting it with the requirements of the economy. After the perceived failure of the radical projects for restructuring the healthcare (while also curtailing the expenditures in the field) during the party's previous governments, "PDL vision for Romania" insists on the need for a gradual reform in the field of medical services. The themes of European integration and Romania's European future, although present in the agendas of all the major Romanian political parties, were more accentuated in the public speeches by the representatives of PDL, especially after the attempt dismissal of the Romanian president T. Bădescu by the USL in the summer of 2012 – attempt considered by PDL as being a coup. In terms of public policies supported by PDL – as major opposition party starting from 2012 – they continued to underline that the budgetary cuts from 2010 (25% of the salaries of the public employees), in a moment when the economic crises peaked in Romania, were the only viable solution and created the conditions for the recovery of the economy. As such, the party spokespersons emphasized the need to conserve the fiscal rectitude and criticized the government for not having found any means for a real increase of the economic parameters.

UDMR/RMDSZ (Uniunea Democrată Maghiara din România/Romániai Magyar Demokrata Szövetség – Democratic Alliance of Hungarians in Romania). The Union (Uniunea Democrața Maghiara din Romania) claims to be the political representative of the Hungarian minority from Romania, which, according to the official data of the last census (2011) counts over 1.250.000 people (over 6,5% from the total population of Romania), making it one of the most important ethnic minority in Europe. UDMR is the only political organization in Romania which systematically uses the internal elections (US-inspired "primaries") for designating, in an open manner its candidates for public office. It also reunites various social, cultural and even scientific groups and organizations. In spite of its affiliation to the European People's Party, another particularity of UDMR is that the Union as a structure presides over different ideological platforms – social-democrat, liberal and Christian-democrat. This offered the party enough flexibility to repeatedly participate,

and sometimes to be a pivotal minor coalition partner, in various right or left leaning governments, starting with 1996. In the field of ethnic and cultural rights UDMR was concerned in guaranteeing, for the Hungarian minority, the full range of rights (the use of mother tongue in education at all levels, administration, justice, the protection of the own cultural and religious traditions). Since all these were secured, since mid-to late 1990 the union identified two concrete major objectives, which should improve the symbolical status and representation of the Hungarian community from Romania: a state-funded Hungarian-language university ("Bolyai University", which should reunite, under a common autonomous management, the already existing Hungarian lines of studies from the mixed faculties and colleges) and a larger ethnic-based autonomy for the so-called Szekler Land (Székelyföld/Ținutul secuiesc), a region in Central Romania including two counties (Covasna and Harghita) and the Eastern part of a third one (Mureș), inhabited in majority by the Hungarian-speaking Szeklers/Szekelys. The general, non-ethnic related issues on UDMR's agenda indicate a social-conservative stance, emphasizing the role of the family, the community, the decentralization but also the importance of the free economical market, the democratization of the society and the country's integration in the European and Euro-Atlantic structures (NATO, EU) – a process in which the Union claims to have performed an important role by enhancing Romania's internal stability and external credibility through its participation in government.

PMP (Partidul Mișcarea Populară – Popular Movement Party).

The latest newcomer in the Romanian party politics, PMP (Partidul Mișcarea Populară) is a recent (January 2014) splinter from PDL, based on a foundation created at the initiative of the Romanian president in office, T. Bădescu, and led by the controversial E. Udrea, a former member of the presidential administration and head of the Ministry of development in the PDL government, seen by the media as the protégée of the president, and the only woman to act as a head of a party in nowadays Romania.

The party describes itself as a modern, "different type of party, not a new party", placed on the center-right of the left-right continuum and representing the middle class. The political agenda is quite similar to that of PDL (individual freedom and autonomy, free economical competition and fiscal rectitude, a reformed, "slender" state and public administration, one-chamber Parliament with a reduced number of seats, European and Euro-Atlantic affiliation, etc). Some specific tones are given by programmatic stipulations such as the modernization of the infrastructure in the rural areas and the introduction of the vote by mail, but the main distinctiveness of PMP resides in its claim to represent a non-mainstream political organization.

Apart from these themes, specific for each party, and according to which we can label them as being more or less typical members of their party family [von Beyme 1996: 21-24], there were several common themes that were shared by the parties' discourse during, and around, the period of the European elections. The two most important of these were the Constitutional reform and the independence of justice. The debate about the Constitutional reform, with older roots in the Romanian public space, started in a more structured way as an organized debate in 2013, but faded away by 2014 because of the lack of consensus. While USL (PSD and PNL) initially wanted a weaker president and more clearly stipulated and separated attributions for each of the two main figures of the executive, the prime-minister and the president, PDL insisted on the need to maintain the effective of a president possessing popular legitimacy and to legislate the result of the 2009 referendum, in which people voted for a one-chamber parliament and for a reduced number of legislators. Another issue at stake, connected to the Constitutional reform, was that of regionalization. UDMR/RMDS understanding of the principle of regional autonomy as having ethnic/cultural meaning was contested by the other (Romanian) political parties, and considered as incompatible with the national, unitary and indivisible character of the state as stipulated by the Constitution.

While all the major parties openly condemned corruption and were trying to capitalize on that, the disputations over the independence of justice opposed mainly PSD to PDL (and latter also to PMP). PSD accused DNA (The National Anticorruption Department, a structure created for combating the grand fraud and criminality) and some of the prosecutors of being dependent to, and at the service of, president Bădescu (which, by his past decisions, has made them subservient), and constituting a part of his "regime", while PDL and PMP maintained that DNA and the justice per se were on a path of consolidating their independence precisely due to the politics in the field adopted by Bădescu and by the PDL government.

The 2014 European election campaign

The campaign was categorized as uneventful [Mixich 2014; Parvu et al. 2014] and influenced by the split up of the governing coalition. 15 parties and coalitions and eight independent candidates participated in the elections. Six parties and one independent candidate passed the electoral threshold. The elections were organized just after the governing coalition just split up. The Social Liberal Union (USL) was formed in 2011 out of the Social Democratic Party (PSD) and The National Liberal Party (PNL) and two small parties: The Conservative Party (PC) and The Union for the Progress of

Romania (UNPR). At the 2012 parliamentary elections they secured 58,61% for the Chamber of Deputies and 60,07% in the Senate. In February 2014 the National Liberal Party decided to quit the coalition.

There were several irregularities during the electoral campaign. First the center left governing coalition PSD-UNPR-PC used the former coalition name and messages such "USL is alive" without the former coalition partner, the National Liberal Party's agreement. The messages were removed following a court order. Secondly the messages of the PSD-UNPR-PC "Proud to be Romanians" was contested in court as discriminatory since it suggests that only voting with the governing coalition could one be proud to be Romanian. Thirdly, President Bădescu was an active supporter of the new political party the Popular Movement Party (PMP), which according to the Constitution is violating the principle of political neutrality of the president.

The electoral messages focused more on defending the national interest in the European Union than on European issues and some messages were confusing. For example the governing coalitions' main messages were "Proud to be Romanians" and "Romania Strong in Europe". The National Liberal Party's first candidate on the party list, N. Nicolai, had the message "with dignity in Europe" and the political parties' main messages "Euro-champions to deeds". The Democratic Liberal Party (PDL), the main opposition party until USL split up confused their voters with "Europe in every Home". The Popular Movement Party, a splinter from PDL had the message "We raise Romania". The populist People's Party Dan Diaconescu (PPDD) invited voters to "Vote PPDD with a Romanian soul". The Hungarian Democratic Union from Romania messages were "Hungarian Solidarity" and "Transylvania in Europe". The extremist Great Romania Party used a word play "The only salvation: Vote the Greater Romania Party". Some opinion leaders called for a boycott for the European elections and invited citizens not to participate to the elections for several reasons and confirm the apathy and lack of interest in these elections by both political parties and citizens.

Besides the overall view of the European parliament elections as second order, the electoral process in Romania was vitiated by selection of candidates that political parties placed on eligible party lists. Parties seem to use the eligible seats as a tool to offer selective benefits to their family and political clientele. In 2009 and in 2014, the wife of the now-in-office Prime Minister Ponta obtained eligible places on the social democratic party list. The former president of the National Liberal Party and former interim president C. Antonescu obtained in 2009 and in 2014 eligible places on the National Liberal Party. In 2009, the daughter of the incumbent president Bădescu won a seat as an independent candidate benefiting from the support of the Democratic Liberal Party.

M. Diaconu, the independent candidate that won an office in the European parliament claimed not to have been doing any electoral campaigning. He managed to run for office despite allegations that claimed that the parliamentarian and actor was in a conflict of interest. His success might be explained by the extensive coverage he received on the most popular news TV station in Romania.

According to the Romanian Electoral Office (2014) political parties spent approximately 4.7 million euro for the electoral campaign. The two former coalition partners stand out in terms of debts and expenses, with both PSD and PNL spending each 1.5 million euro. The Election Day ran without significant events. However there were some complaints about the high number of citizens who were voting on supplementary lists. At the European elections, Romanian citizens are allowed to vote in any voting station regardless of their domicile as in presidential elections. This is not possible at the parliamentary elections where citizens are allowed to vote only the candidates that run for office in districts where the citizens reside. Election polls were issued at 9 pm and pointed that the incumbent political alliance won with more than 40% of the votes yet the next the final results showed that surveys errors that were larger than 5 percent for some of the exit polls. The next section will detail on the implication of the electoral results.

Table 4 provides a more precise image of the policy preferences among the supporters of each of the main party during the electoral campaign of the 2014 EP elections. Data were collected by EuVox (www.euvox.eu), a EU-wide voting advice application (VAA) for the 2014 elections to the European Parliament, conducted in Romania by a team from the Center for the Study of Democracy at Babeş-Bolyai University that included the authors of this article.

Table 4. Relationships between policy preferences and party preferences in a Voting Application Advice (VAA) study conducted in Romania during the electoral campaign of the 2014 EP elections.

Cells represent mean values [1 - strong agreement, ..., 5 - disagreement] among those who choose the party represented on the column as the one with highest chance to be voted.

	PSD	PDL	PNL	UDMR	PPDD	Total
Romania should never adopt the Euro	3.45	3.89	3.63	3.88	3.40	3.57
A single member state should be able to block a treaty change, even if all the other members states agree to it	3.16	3.35	3.24	3.43	3.13	3.21
The right of EU citizens to work in Romania should be restricted	4.14	4.43	4.35	4.42	4.05	4.26
There should be a common EU foreign policy even if this limits the capacity of Romania to act independently	2.61	2.21	2.39	2.01	2.81	2.45
The EU should redistribute resources from richer to poorer EU regions	2.07	2.54	2.47	2.39	2.19	2.38
Overall, EU membership has been a bad thing for Romania	3.65	4.31	4.02	4.02	3.52	3.90

	PSD	PDL	PNL	UDMR	PPDD	Total
EU treaties should be decided by the national parliament rather than by citizens in a referendum	3.36	3.79	3.58	3.50	3.88	3.65
The EU should impose economic sanctions on Russia, even if this jeopardizes gas supplies to EU countries	2.63	2.13	2.27	2.63	2.74	2.39
International partners have the right to interfere in the internal affairs of Romania when they feel there is a threat to democracy	3.35	2.37	2.81	2.51	2.84	2.77
Free market competition makes the health care system function better	2.68	2.23	2.36	2.67	2.67	2.48
The number of public sector employees should be reduced	2.90	2.06	2.36	2.39	2.81	2.44
The state should intervene as little as possible in the economy	3.09	2.32	2.39	2.57	2.98	2.59
Wealth should be redistributed from the richest people to the poorest	2.63	3.34	3.29	2.85	2.64	3.06
Cutting government spending is a good way to solve the economic crisis	2.53	2.26	2.46	2.59	2.14	2.40
It should be easy for companies to fire people	3.76	3.24	3.36	3.48	3.64	3.47
External loans from institutions such as the IMF are a good solution to crisis situations.	3.54	3.18	3.51	3.62	3.76	3.48
The Romanian state should allow the Canadian company Gabriel Resources to continue its operation at Rosia Montana	3.73	3.90	4.09	4.18	4.19	4.00
The poorest citizens should pay a lower rate of income tax	1.88	2.65	2.50	2.15	2.01	2.30
A petrol price increase is acceptable if the money collected is invested in the construction of new highways	2.25	3.05	2.80	2.86	2.99	2.81
Immigrants must adapt to the values and culture of Romania	2.00	2.11	2.09	2.61	1.98	2.12
Restrictions on citizen privacy are acceptable in order to combat crime	3.43	3.53	3.65	3.57	3.22	3.48
To maintain public order, governments should be able to restrict demonstrations	3.93	4.17	4.24	4.33	3.99	4.13
Less serious crimes should be punished with community service, not imprisonment	1.86	1.98	1.90	2.01	1.89	1.97
Same sex couples should enjoy the same rights as heterosexual couples to marry	3.09	2.61	2.81	2.54	3.27	2.84
Women should be free to decide on matters of abortion	1.95	1.84	1.83	1.86	2.05	1.92
The recreational use of cannabis should be legal	3.58	2.93	3.17	2.92	3.39	3.26
Downloading copyright protected material from the internet should be allowed for private use	2.85	2.70	2.75	2.42	2.71	2.76
A territorial reform should include the creation of an autonomous Hungarian region	4.45	4.18	4.37	2.16	4.44	4.18
Minorities should have the right to education only in the mother tongue, including in the university system	3.72	3.50	3.67	1.82	3.74	3.51
The constitution should diminish the role of the president in the political system	2.10	3.51	2.75	2.55	3.20	2.88

Election results

Politicians and analysts viewed the European Election as an important test before the presidential elections. The main political parties postponed the nomination of a presidential candidate until after the European elections, as a test for the popularity of political parties. The socialists were hoping for enough votes to make them be optimistic about winning the presidential office in the first round. The Liberals, their former coalition partners, hoped for 25% electoral support that would make them the largest opposition party. PMP (Popular Movement Party), the party that supports president Basescu, wanted to gain more votes than the party from which they split.

The results did not offer satisfaction to any of the hopes party officials had. The incumbent alliance PSD-UNPR-PC won the highest number of votes and a relative majority. They gained less than they expected. Most exit polls credited them with 41 to 43 percent (Table 5).

Table 5. The comparison between election polls and final results

European parliament	IRES	CURS	CSCI	CCSB	Results
PSD-UNPR-PC	42.4%	41%	41.01%	43%	42.4% 37.60%
PNL	13.3%	14%	14.92%	14%	13.3% 15.00%
PDL	11.5%	10%	11.82%	12%	11.5% 12.23%
PMP	6.5%	6%	6.7%	7%	6.3% 6.21%
UDMR	6.2%	7%	7.1%	6%	6.2% 6.30%
Mircea Diaconu	4.3%	5%	5.91%	4%	4.3% 6.81%

Source: www.ziare.com

The discrepancy between the election results and the exit polls was widely debated in press. One of the main reasons for the errors was asserted to be the increased refusal rate that peaked to 20% and the surprisingly high rate on annulled votes (5.83%) [Stoica 2014].

The number of parties competing for offices has increased due to the fragmentation of the right wing political parties. In 2014, 15 parties entered the electoral competition, compared to only 7 parties in 2009, and 8 parties in 2007.

Table 6. Results of the 2014 EP elections in Romania

	Results	Seats	European Party Family
PSD-UNPR-PC	37.60%	16	Progressive Alliance of Socialists and Democrats (S&D)
PNL	15.00%	6	European Peoples' Party (EPP)
PDL	12.23%	5	European Peoples' Party (EPP)
Mircea Diaconu	6.81%	1	Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe (ALDE)
UDMR	6.30%	2	European Peoples' Party (EPP)
PMP	6.21%	2	European Peoples' Party (EPP)
Turnout 32.44%			

Source: Romanian Electoral Authority.

In 2014, the turnout was higher than in 2007 (29.46%) and 2009 (27.67%) and below the European average (42.54%). The number female candidates that won a seat (31%) is below the European average (37%) more than Poland (24%), Hungary (19%) or Bulgaria (29%) and slightly more than in 2007 (29%) [European Parliament 2014].

The Social Democratic Party and the two smaller parties that allied with the social democrats won the elections with a plurality of votes. Compared to the 2009 elections, the socialist gained five seats and the liberals, the former coalition partners, gained one seat. On the other hand, PDL lost five seats and the extremist-populist PRM (Great Romania Party) and PP-DD (People's Party Dan Diaconescu) failed to pass the 5% electoral threshold. UDMR (The Hungarian Democratic Alliance from Romania) lost one seat. One new party (PMP) entered the European Parliament and the independent M. Diaconu won his first mandate with more votes than the Hungarian Party and the president supported new Popular Movement party. This lack of success indicates that PDL, the party that directly supported the president managed to gain electoral success despite the fact that important political officials left the party to create a presidential political movement [Tapalaga 2014]. PSD won in almost all counties with the exception of Harghita, Covasna and Alba. PDL, lost in all the counties, except one, in which they won in 2009. UDMR preserved its majority in four counties and lost Bihor county to PSD. PNL won for the first time the majority in Calarasi county.

Romanian political parties belong to the two largest European party families: the European Socialist and the European Popular group. Most mandates went to the socialist European group followed by the European Populars. The Liberal group received only one mandate from independent M. Diaconu (formerly a member of PNL), after PNL (National Liberal Party) changed its affiliation to the Popular party group immediately after the elections. Once PRM and PP-DD lost their electoral support, the nationalist Eurosceptic group did

not receive any mandates from Romania. Laszlo Tokes who was an MEP that won independently a mandate in 2007 decided to run on the mandates allocated for Hungary.

The wider impact of the 2014 European elections

One major aspect of the European elections in Romania was the quasi-absence in the public discourse and public policy area of the themes related to the new politics [Rohrschneider 1994] during the campaign. Some of them were present in the official manifestos of the parties, but were largely absent from their discourse (the protection of the environment), some others are present only in one party manifesto (PSD: multiculturalism, pacifism, open policies towards migration, a foreign policy promoting democracy and democratization) but absent from the discourse, and some are absent from the manifestos and the public discourse altogether (LGBT rights, homosexual marriages, euthanasia) – while they were major themes of debate in several, if not in most, EU countries. Nevertheless, some of them were exported from the civil society to the parties. Thus, the series of protests and rallies organized in Bucharest and other major cities starting with January 2012, besides particular subjects as the cyanide mining or the exploitation of shale gas through hydraulic fracturing, echoed more general themes as the protection of the environment, the replenishment of the political and social elite, the participative democracy and the quality of education. However, few of these (if any) were treated by the political parties in a coherent or non-contradictory manner. The national issues take precedence over European issues when the European elections take place. Another notable aspect was that the nomination of candidates was very often subjected to clientelistic exchanges or for the benefit of the families of the party leaders.

An important outcome of the 2014 European elections in Romania was that they generated the reshuffling of alliances within the party system. The socialists realized that they will not win the presidential office in one round in the upcoming presidential elections, so they made an offer to the former coalition partners the National Liberal Party and the Hungarian UDMR. The former declined the recreation of USL (Social Liberal Union), an alliance that achieved 65% of the votes in the 2012 parliamentary elections. The latter joined the governing coalition. Following the disappointing election results, the president of the National Liberal Party, and at that time the likely presidential candidate of that party, resigned. The new president of PNL, Klaus Werner Iohannis, an ethnic German who is the mayor of Sibiu, forged a coalition with PDL (the Democratic Liberals) named the Liberal Christian Alliance (ACL). ACL decided to support Klaus Iohannis's bid to become the president

of Romania. The initiative was aimed to gather support of all right wing parties. However, The Popular Movement Party refused and proposed its' own candidate, E. Udrea, the president of the party and a close ally of president Basescu.

Finally, the low turnout suggests that the European elections are still perceived to have very limited importance, and that a better communication of how European policies impact the lives of ordinary citizens would be needed.

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THE 2014 EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT ELECTIONS IN SLOVENIA: HARDLY ANY NOVELTY

Abstract:

In the article the main characteristics of the European Parliament elections in 2014 in relation to the characteristics of the both previous elections to the Parliament were analysed. First, the legal framework is presented, followed by the presentation of candidate lists. As it is frequently the case, the authors for the analysis employed the analytical framework presented by Reif and Schmitt (1980). Following the framework, it is obvious the elections in Slovenia again demonstrated many elements of the second-order elections framework, for example in terms of the turnout, success of the governmental parties, success of small parties, as well as almost complete absence of party programmes, Euroscepticism and European topics in the campaign. Since several important domestic events happened just before the EP elections (e.g. resignation of the government at the beginning of May and the fact the leader of the biggest opposition party was by the court found guilty of corruption activity and sent to the prison at the end of April) such developments did not come as a big surprise.

Key words:

Slovenia, European Parliament, elections, Euroscepticism

Characteristics of the Party System and Parties

When talking about the party system in Slovenia it is possible to see, in the context of the post-socialist European countries, its relative stability for the most of the period since the first multiparty and democratic elections in 1990 [Lewis 2001; Haughton and Deegan Krause 2010; Fink-Hafner, Krašovec 2013], despite the fairly undemanding requirements for establishing a new party (only 200 voter signatures and some formal documents are needed). However, in spite of such formal openness to new parties, only one small

new party (either genuinely new or a breakaway from another party) entered the National Assembly following each election¹ in the 1992-2008 period [Fink-Hafner, Krašovec 2013]. The radical change in this regard came with the early elections in 2011 when two new parties, Positive Slovenia (PS) and the Civic List (DL), won as much as 37% of the vote; Positive Slovenia with its charismatic leader Z. Janković was also a relative winner of the elections with 28.5% of the vote. For the second time, newcomers played a very important role on the early elections held in July 2014, when the relative winner of the elections, the Party of Miro Cerar (SMC) won 34.5%, while the United Left (ZL) coalition received 5.9%.

As claimed by Fink-Hafner [2012: 204], in Slovenia only occasionally has it been possible to detect elements of anti-system parties, while small (new) parliamentary parties have mitigated anti-party sentiments in the general public. The Slovenian party system can be described as dynamic despite the stability of the electoral rules [Fink-Hafner 2006: 222]. While at the beginning of the democratic transition a polarised party system was established, visible in the number of parties, the existence of bilateral opposition and ideological distance, later mainly elements of moderate pluralism can be observed. There was, however, a short period with an element of a predominant party system since in the 2000 elections the Liberal Democracy of Slovenia (LDS) obtained the biggest share of votes as an individual party in the system so far (36.2%) [Fink-Hafner 2012], and a similar situation happened in the 2014 elections with the SMC.

When speaking about ideological camps, it is usually said that a tripolar (conservative, liberal and social democratic) ideological structure has been clearly visible in Slovenia (during periods of political pluralism) since the end of the 19th century [Prunk 2011]. On the other hand, Fink-Hafner [2012: 201] argues that, with the passage from the polarised to predominant elements of moderate pluralism, bipolar party competition has been established.

Due to the country's gradualist approach to economic transition, quite specific in the context of other post-socialist European countries, and the clear expectations of the population to retain the welfare state, all parliamentary parties advocated similar, social democratic socio-economic policies until the 2004 elections [Stanojević, Krašovec 2011; Fink-Hafner 2012], thereby reducing the importance of the socio-economic component in the cleavage system. Yet this situation changed during the 2004 elections when the economic component in the cleavage system became more evident largely because of the Slovenian Democratic Party's (SDS) (a relative winner of the 2004 elections) final turn towards the conservative party camp. In the context of the great economic and fiscal crisis that Slovenia has faced since 2009, the question of

¹ The exception being the 2004 elections when no new party entered the parliament.

social democratic vs. (neo)liberal socio-economic policies became more evident. On the other hand, the liberal-conservative divide, usually in Slovenia referred to as an 'ideological cleavage' (mostly connected with questions over the role of the Catholic Church in society as well as in politics, the rights of minorities and, perhaps a bit strangely from the viewpoint of other countries, over developments during WW II – Partisans vs. Home Guard, or opponents of the occupation forces vs. their collaborators) has been always sharp, particularly because the cleavage has frequently been interwoven with others, for example, centre-periphery, state-church, rural-urban, traditionalism-modernism, and communism-anticommunism [Fink-Hafner 2001]. Based on these cleavages, some parties are usually perceived as (centre-)left (for example, Social Democrats (SD), LDS, and Democratic Party of Pensioners of Slovenia (DeSUS)) and some as (centre-)right parties (for example, SDS, New Slovenia (NSi) and Slovenian People's Party (SLS)).

In Slovenia, naturally enough given the PR electoral system and low threshold (3 mandates or in fact 3.3% in the period 1992-2000, and 4% since 2000 elections), all governments have been coalitions of several parties. Due to such characteristics of the electoral system, an almost complete absence of pre-electoral coalitions or electoral alliances in the party system can also be expected [Krašovec, Cabada 2013].

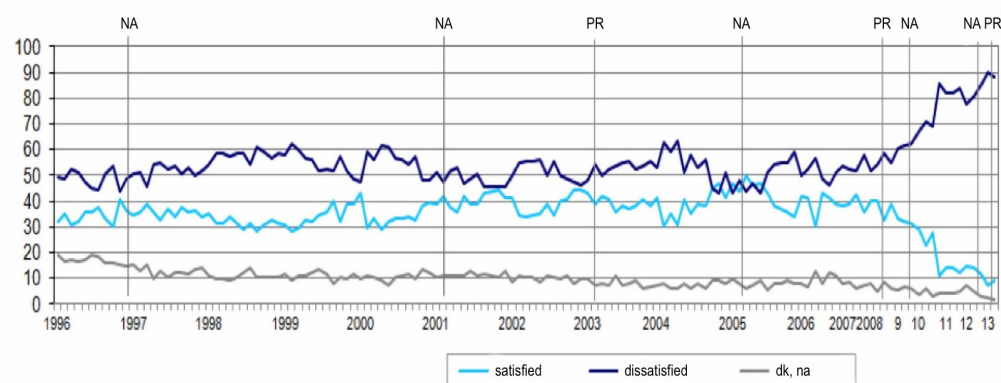
It seems a radical change took place in Slovenian politics with the 2008 elections, which were held almost on the same day as the collapse of Lehman Brothers. The economic crisis provoked by the global credit crunch began to have a serious impact on Slovenia only in the first half of 2009. In 2009, for instance, the GDP dropped by 8.1% and later continued to record negative trends. Unemployment rose from 6.7% in 2008 to 12% at the end of 2011. Borut Pahor's (SD) coalition government was heavily criticised for being too slow in making decisions and for introducing inappropriate measures to respond to the crisis, although some government measures to combat the crisis were received positively [Haughton, Krašovec 2013]. There was great disappointment with the ineffective 2008-2011 government, and this was compounded by a long list of other challenging political issues that radically reduced trust in political institutions and reduced satisfaction with democracy [Krašovec 2013]. Political scandals and the sense of widespread corruption, along with a government unable to deal with the economic crisis, fuelled support for two new entrants into the 2011 elections.

The 2011 elections brought another break with long-standing tradition when it became clear that the relative winner of the elections, Janković and his PS, would not be able to form a governing coalition, therefore the *formateur* became J. Janša from the SDS. The Janša II government, which also included the DL, DeSUS, SLS and NSi-Christian Democrats), prepared radical austerity

measures, advocated by a positive response from various international organisations. However, the government faced considerable social discontent due to its unilaterally prepared and implemented policies, which led to the largest general strike of public sector employees in 2012. These developments were accompanied by evident corruption(-risk) activities and misuse of public funds by different politicians, as well as by a perceived lack of responsiveness from politicians; this led to a significant wave of protests at the end of 2012 and the beginning of 2013, which also, for the first time in the history of independent Slovenia, escalated into violent clashes with police [Krašovec 2013]. The protestors, supported by 75% of the population [Politbarometer 2013], were not only concerned with the austerity measures of Janša's government and his leadership style, but also with corrupt politicians and the unethical nature of politics in general [Krašovec 2013]. They therefore demanded the establishment of a new political elite and the return of the kidnapped state to its citizens.

Even though one of the key characteristics of the Slovenian political system since its transition to democracy has been relatively low levels of trust in political parties, in 2005, 11% of voters still trusted parties, while in 2011 this share was only 2%, and in 2013, 1% [Politbarometer 2005; 2011; 2013]. Even though Slovenian voters have clearly preferred a democratic system over an authoritarian system [Toš et al. 1999; 2004; 2009; 2012], satisfaction with democracy has been declining since the beginning of the 1990s. This trend has been especially evident since 2005, while in the post-2009 period it is possible to speak of a collapse of trust in democratic institutions and in the present democratic arrangements in Slovenia in general [Vehovar 2012].

Figure 1. Levels of (dis)satisfaction with democracy in Slovenia (1996-2013) in %



NA - National Assembly elections, PR - Presidential elections

Source: Politbarometer, June 2013.

Taking all these developments into account, it was not a surprise that the Janša II government did not survive the parliamentary term; due to a constructive vote of no-confidence linked to an anti-corruption watchdog's revelations involving Janša himself in February 2013, he was replaced by the A. Bratušek. She, on the other hand, had become acting leader of PS after Janković stepped down from the leadership due to the findings of the anti-corruption commission which had pointed the finger of suspicion in his direction [Haughton, Krašovec 2014]. Bratušek's government, which was composed of the relative winner of 2011 elections, PS, together with the DL, SD, and DeSUS, however, survived for little more than a year. Just prior to the European Parliament (EP) elections of 2014, Bratušek submitted her resignation (and thereby the resignation of her government). Slovenia's first female premier had been successfully challenged for the leadership of the PS by none other than Janković himself. His desire to take back the party leadership not only engendered a split in the party, but provoked the governing coalition to collapse as the smaller parties in the government refused to work alongside PS with the charismatic but controversial Janković at the helm [Krašovec, Haughton 2014].

Table 1. Results of the parliamentary elections in Slovenia in December 2011 and July 2014

PARTY	2011		2014	
	Votes (%)	Seats	Votes (%)	Seats
<i>List of Zoran Janković-Positive Slovenia (PS)</i>	28.5	28	3.0	0
Slovenian Democratic Party (SDS)	26.2	26	20.7	21
<i>Social Democrats (SD)</i>	10.5	10	6.0	6
Civic List of Gregor Virant-Civic List (DL)	8.4	8	0.6	0
Democratic Party of Pensioners of Slovenia (DeSUS)	6.9	6	10.2	10
Slovenian People's Party (SLS)	6.8	6	3.9	0
New Slovenia-Christian Democrats (NSi)	4.9	4	5.6	5
Party of Miro Cerar (SMC)	/	/	34.5	36
United Left Coalition (ZL)	/	/	6.0	6
Alliance of Alenka Bratušek (ZaAB)	/	/	4.4	4
Liberal Democracy of Slovenia (LDS)	1.5	0	/	/
Zares	0.6	0	/	/
Others		0		0

Bold: Party composition of the Janša II government February 2012 - February 2013;

Italics: Party composition of the Bratušek government March 2013 - May 2014.

The Importance of the EU arena in Slovenia

As some political scientists have noted [for example, Mair 2000; Ladrech 2002; Lewis, Mansfeldova eds. 2006; Szczerbiak, Taggart eds. 2008; Lewis, Markowski eds. 2011], in the last decade, the EU has begun to be acknowledged as an environment that holds potentially significant consequences for the functioning of national parties and party systems, therefore many relevant Slovenian parties have been interested in being part of it. Almost all parliamentary parties have been formally entering the EU arena since the mid-1990s by establishing official contacts with their European counterparts.

Table 2. The evolution of formal membership of Slovenian parties in European parties

	observer	associate member	full member
NSi (EPP)	2001	2003	2004
LDS (ELDR/ALDE)		1994	1998
SDS (EPP)	2001	2003	2004
(ZL)SD (PES/S&D)	1996	1999	2003
SLS (EPP)	2001	2003	2004
Youth Party of Slovenia (SMS) – European Greens (EFGP/EG)	2003		2006
Zares (ELDR/ALDE)	2008		2008
DL (ELDR/ALDE)	2013		2013
PS (ELDR/ALDE)			2014*

Source: Krašovec and Lajh (2009); ALDE data

* At the end of January 2014, the PS decided to apply for full membership in ALDE. Due to the split of the party after a battle over the party leader position at the end of April 2014, just before the ALDE congress at the beginning of May the PS withdrew its application for ALDE membership

Unlike some other Central and Eastern European (CEE) countries [Lewis, Mansfeldova eds. 2006; Szczerbiak, Taggart eds. 2008; Haughton 2009], it seems the EU environment has minimal impact on the Slovenian party system. Already in 1997 all parliamentary parties (except for the Slovenian National Party - SNS) decided to overcome their other differences and conflicts, and sign an *Agreement on Co-operation in the EU Accession Process*. This broad consensus on EU membership as an ultimate Slovenian goal indeed meant that all major EU-related topics in Slovenia were defined as national projects [Krašovec, Lajh 2009]. Taking into account the generally favourable public opinion towards the EU, only some small and/or non-parliamentary parties and occasionally the parliamentary SNS tried to play the Eurosceptic

card, which however proved not to be a trump card in the electoral competition [Krašovec, Lajh 2009]. Based on these arguments, Krašovec and Lajh [2009] conclude that EU issues do not directly influence inter-party competition, since the EU only limited party competition (which is unusual when we compare Slovenia to other countries). Therefore, EU issues held particular salience for national politics but little salience for party politics [Krašovec, Lajh 2009: 58].

Legal framework for the EP Elections

Slovenian legislation on EP elections offers all Slovenian citizens at least 18 years old the opportunity to vote and stand as a candidate. In addition, it allows EU citizens with permanent residence in Slovenia to vote or stand as a candidate. Even though the legislation remained, in the most important aspects, the same as it was for the EP elections in 2009, some smaller changes were, nevertheless, made before the 2014 EP elections. The EU demanded some changes in regulations concerning candidacy of an EU citizen in a country of which he/she is not a citizen. Besides this, the Slovenian government also proposed some of its own changes. According to new legislation adopted by the national parliament at the end of January 2014, names, abbreviations and logos of EU parties to which national parties are linked to can be officially used in electoral material as well as on ballots. Some of the parties took advantage of this opportunity (for example, SD, Zares and DL).

Candidates for EP elections can be proposed by parties (the candidate list for the EP election must be supported by four MPs or 1,000 voters) or voters (the candidate list for the EP election must be supported by 3,000 voters). The law establishes a proportional electoral system (using the d'Hondt method) with a single constituency and the possibility of a preference vote, which however does not have an absolute. Slovenian legislation on EP elections interferes somewhat with the procedure of selecting candidates within parties since a certain list of candidates cannot comprise less than 40% of representatives of each gender and at least one representative of each gender must be placed in the top half of the list. If this gender equality norm is not respected, the list of candidates is considered invalid.

The election campaign officially starts 30 days before the date of the election and the Election and Referendum Campaign Act also determines the financial aspects of campaigns. The act sets the upper limit of election campaign expenditure for both national and EP elections in the same manner. In 2004, each candidate list could spend no more than 60 Slovenian tolar (or 0.25 EUR) per voter, while the amount was 0.40 EUR in 2009 and 2014. Amendments to the Election and Referendum Campaign Act at the end of 2013 introduced

a prohibition on contributions by legal entities to political parties or lists of candidates. Nonetheless, in contrast to the prohibition on financing of candidate lists from abroad at national elections, such financing is allowed in the case of EP elections (although not by legal entities).

The law prohibits the post of MEP being held simultaneously with the position of MP, member of the government, or member of a local representative body.

According to the legislation, candidate lists had to be submitted to the National Electoral Commission by 25 April 2014, and from this day until 24 May 2014, an electoral campaign was formally permitted.

Candidate Lists and Candidates

The majority of competitors waited with submission of their candidate lists until the very last moment. Altogether as many as 17 candidate lists were submitted, but regarding one of the lists, the electoral commission found that it did not fulfil all the formal criteria and therefore could not compete in the elections (12 candidate lists competed in the 2009 EP elections and 13 in 2004). In all of the elections, all parliamentary parties offered their (own) candidate lists and some non-parliamentary parties also competed, as well as some independent lists.

All current MEPs except for two (both from the **Slovenian Democratic Party** (EPP) whose candidate list was led by a current MEP) ran in the elections. Usually no candidate selection process can avoid disagreements [Krašovec and Štremfel 2007] and this was the case with the 2014 EP elections. The final formation of the joint **New Slovenia and Slovenian People's Party** (EPP) candidate list (led by a current MEP) with inclusion of one particular person from New Slovenia to the list provoked huge dissatisfaction with one of New Slovenia's local organisations and the whole leadership of this local organisation resigned in protest. The decision of the **Social Democrats** (S&D) that the party leader will be the first on the list, followed by both current MEPs, came as a surprise and some disagreements with this decision could be observed in the party. The candidate list of the **Democratic Party of Pensioners of Slovenia**, which is not a member of any European party, was headed by a current ALDE MEP Ivo Vajgl who felt that his party **Zares** supported some Eurosceptic stances, therefore he decided to leave it. Even though four liberal parties, all ALDE members (LDS, Zares, DL and member-to-be - PS), were engaged in discussion on formation of a joint candidate list for several months, all parties in the end ran in the elections independently even though the ALDE candidate for President of the European Commission Guy Verhofstadt tried to persuade them to form a joint list during his visit to Slovenia at the beginning of April 2014. After the EU Commissioner J. Potočnik (who would probably be accepted by all four

parties as the joint candidate list leader) made a final decision not to run on the elections, the **Civic List** quickly formed its own candidate list, while three other parties (**Positive Slovenia**, **Liberal Democracy of Slovenia** and **Zares**) tried to negotiate a joint list right until 24 April. It seems that two late developments that occurred in Positive Slovenia led to a decision that the three liberal parties would compete on their own. First, on 25 April, when candidate lists had to be submitted, a Positive Slovenia congress was held and Zares announced it was not going to form a joint list with this party with Jankovič on the top. Second, several days before the deadline for submission of candidate lists, PS announced it had selected J. Mencinger, a prominent non-partisan retired economist, who usually has critical stances toward the EU and its economic policies, as its leading candidate, also in the event of a joint three-party candidate list. The current MEP J. Kacin (Liberal Democracy of Slovenia) opposed the idea because he saw Mencinger as a Eurosceptic. On the other hand, PS explained it was not possible to form the three-party joint list since Kacin insisted on being the *Spitzenkandidat* of the list. At the end Kacin submitted his own list called **List Kacin – Concrete**, while Liberal Democracy of Slovenia was only its supporter.

After all the above-mentioned turmoil and 'popular demands' in 2012 and 2013, it was expected that some new parties and new faces would enter the political arena and fight for representation in the EP. Indeed, several (new) non-parliamentary parties submitted their candidate lists, including **United Left** which took part under the banner of the European Left, and **Solidarity** which had not decided which European party it would like to join (anyway the party supported Martin Schultz for the President of the European Commission), but selected eight candidates for the elections. A civil society organisation submitted its list under the name **I Believe - List of Igor Šoltes**. A candidate list formed by a citizens' action or political experiment ran in the elections as well. Namely, a Facebook action called a **Dream Job** was organised and eight candidates among people who expressed an interest in getting a dream job in the EP were selected by lot. As the organisers of the action explained, they wished to show that sometimes selection by lot yields better results than elections. In addition, the **Pirate Party of Slovenia** submitted its list (as the only party with just one candidate on the list) as did the **Slovenian National Party**, which after being in the national parliament for twenty years stayed out of the 2011 elections. The **Greens of Slovenia** and the **Party of the Slovenian Nation** submitted their candidate lists even though they had not expressed any interest in participating in the electoral competition. **Forward Slovenia** also submitted its list of candidates but was rejected by the Electoral Commission due to formal defectiveness. The **Youth Party – European Greens** (EFGP/EG) started a candidate selection procedure but at the end it decided not to enter the election game.

In 2014 as well, candidate lists were (as they were in 2004 and 2009) dominated by men - women headed only two candidate lists (Zares and United Left).

Since the law establishes incompatibility of the MEP position with several other top political posts, we could expect that top-ranking politicians, especially those from parliamentary parties, would not run in the EP elections. These expectations were mostly proved right in the 2004 and 2009 elections [Topolinjak 2010], and also in 2014 only a few parliamentary parties' leaders competed (SD, NSi and SLS) as well as several leaders of non-parliamentary parties (Zares, SNS, Greens of Slovenia; the United Left coalition was headed by the leader of one of the three parties which formed the coalition), while only one current minister ran in the 2014 elections (Civic List).

Programmatic Positions of Political Parties and Lists of Candidates that Entered the 2014 EP Electoral Race and the Electoral Campaign

The 2014 EP elections were in many ways comparable to the EP 2004 and 2009 elections since they likewise relied heavily on the traditional tools of campaigning [Deželan 2005]. Consequently, the EP elections emerged as a separate type of election in the Slovenian political arena when compared to other elections in the country. As a rule, during the campaign competing parties and lists replace the otherwise popular practice of capital-intensive campaigns (TV commercials, ads, banners) with labour-intensive campaigning [Deželan 2005]. This practice emerged in the past due to the lack of resources and/or approaching national elections [Krašovec 2005] and remained as a best practice example since this mode of campaigning was appropriated by the surprising first winner of the EP elections in Slovenia in 2004 – New Slovenia.

One of the best ways to grasp the plethora of differences between competing political actors in Europe and elsewhere is to examine their electoral manifestos. As manifestos are an “authoritative statement of a party reflecting its programmatic profile for an election” [Merz, Regel 2013: 149], it is clear that already at this point vast differences between political contestants are exposed. To be precise, only six out of the 16 submitted lists of candidates broadly managed to satisfy electoral manifesto criteria [see Merz, Regel 2013] by naming the prepared documents appropriately, reflecting the position of the party together with its programmatic profile as a whole and relating them to the 2014 EP elections specifically. In addition, the SD and SDS were the only parliamentary parties that passed the above-mentioned criteria and even these two parties merely revised and/or upgraded manifestos prepared by their corresponding European party (PES and EPP). The rest of them promoted the programmatic documents of ‘their’ EU parties – either by translating them or merely referring

to them – or just deliberated on election topics on the basis of their party platforms, general viewpoints of the main party leaders or their individual positions on certain topics. The nascent state of the Slovenian party system – despite its two-and-a-half decade existence – is well indicated by the fact that the main government party (PS) did not even bother to draw up a programmatic document for the elections and instead just relied on the views of the candidate heading the list, who was not even a member of the party.

Furthermore, Slovenian political parties habitually wait until the very last moment to launch their manifestos for EP elections. Their launch, if it happens at all, is very rarely in line with the official start of the election campaign (30 days prior to election day) and is also performed very tentatively. This was again evident in the 2014 EP elections since only a few lists of candidates managed to draw up some sort of electoral manifesto only three weeks prior to election day [see Hacler 2014] and even those that managed to do so appeared to validate the so-called ‘bandwagon effect’ – i.e. parties producing manifestos for the sake of having one and primarily preventing situations of being the only one not having a manifesto.² This is reinforced by the fact that electoral manifestos are very evasive documents since two months after the elections only a few parties still offer full-text versions of manifestos for citizens to read or download.

As a result, despite manifestos being a rich source of information on the positions of parties and lists of candidates, it is quite difficult to systematically discern programmatic positions of the contesting actors due to the gaps created by candidate lists not having a manifesto or just translating programmatic positions from their European counterparts. Therefore, we supplemented information gathered from manifestos with information from other programmatic documents of parties or lists of candidates and statements of their leaders and frontliners.

In general, the most important issue in the 2014 EP elections was the question of the electoral success of Eurosceptic parties. While in many EU countries such parties recorded good electoral results, this was not the case in Slovenia. Slovenia was more or less marked by the absence of politicisation regarding EU matters, especially prior to EU accession and/or only marginal parties tried to exploit an electoral opportunity playing on the Eurosceptic card, but without (much) success, either in the national parliamentary or EP elections [Krašovec, Lajh 2009]. Nevertheless, the 2009 EP elections exposed some noticeable differences between parties in this regard, which had not been exposed during the 2009 campaign due to the nature of the campaign and the ability of the mass media to determine the main campaign themes. Namely, the 2009 EP elections revealed that some parties

² As reported by Kustec Lipicer and Bilavčič [2010], all parliamentary parties, except for the Slovenian National Party, prepared electoral manifestos for both previous EP elections. But, as a rule, they were relatively short documents and for the 2009 election were generally even shorter than those for the 2004 election.

developed a critical, but at the same time still positive, stance toward the EU. This emerging scepticism was infused by concerns related to the global economic and financial crisis and a more responsible and socially-oriented market economy.

The elections in 2014 brought some new developments in this regard. Given the fact that Slovenia seemed to be on the brink of needing a Eurozone bailout on several occasions in the past few years, some critical stances on the EU and/or its policies could be expected. Not surprisingly, especially new and/or non-parliamentary parties allowed themselves to be more critical of the EU; however, only the radical left parties managed to base their criticism on a systemic set of ideological positions and arguments (Solidarity and United Left), but their fire has been directed more at the policies of austerity than the EU as such [Haughton, Krašovec 2014]. But the novelty was that for the first time, Euroscepticism could be observed in some mainstream parties. Among them, the most vigorously Eurosceptic at the time of the EP elections was the biggest government party (PS), whose candidate list leader Dr. Mencinger (a prominent economist with some political experience) expressed many Eurosceptic stances on EU economic policies. Other major parties, members of the EU parties (EPP, S&D, ALDE), borrowed or adapted programmatic documents from the EU level (action programmes or EU party election manifestos). As a result, their positions remained within the framework of 'constructive criticism' and mainly exposed the need for reforms of the Union (for example, the SD). The differences between them were manifested primarily along the ideological lines of their party families.

The only true newcomer whose bid for an MEP post was successful – Igor Šoltes (I Believe - List of Dr. Šoltes) – failed to produce more than a few vague lines on the urgency of better assertion of Slovenian interests in Europe and the need to change our mentality. In essence, his main cards were his track record as a former president of the Court of Audit and a novelty and anti-corruption ticket [Haughton, Krašovec 2014], and he played them well, which in fact was not particularly hard due to the already mentioned developments that have been shaking Slovenia in the past several years. On the other hand surprisingly, the leader of the Slovenian National Party, Zmago Jelinčič Plemeniti, who in the 2000 national parliamentary elections took a very critical stance towards the EU, while being more reserved in exposing his party's Eurosceptic positions in the 2009 EP elections, did not 'attack' the EU in his party political broadcasts, but rather castigating Slovenian representatives in Brussels for not doing anything for their country [Haughton, Krašovec 2014]. In sum, it is possible to say that in the 2014 EP elections Slovenia faced some soft Euroscepticism [see Szczerbiak, Taggart 2001] based exclusively on economic and not ethno-nationalist arguments.

For many years, the EP elections have been described as elections where European issues are overshadowed by national concerns and issues [for example,

Raunio 2002; Seoane Perez, Lodge 2010], and notable exceptions to the rule have been countries with electorally significant Eurosceptical parties [Raunio 2002: 163]. But, it seems for the first time in 2009, the degree of 'Europeanisation' of the EP campaign was in general more visible, although it indeed varied considerably in the member countries, with Hungary, Ireland, Latvia, Italy and Slovenia having markedly national campaign frameworks [Seoane Perez and Lodge 2010: 297-298]. As Krašovec and Lajh point out [2010], in Slovenia the first EP elections in 2004 also focused predominantly on national issues - this was very probably connected with parties' interest or propaganda relative to the upcoming national parliamentary elections. In the 2014 campaign in Slovenia, in contrast to many other EU countries where European issues seemed to have been much more prominent in the campaigns for these EP elections than in previous elections, European issues were again marginal in the campaign (hardly surprising if we take into account Raunio's observations on the importance of Eurosceptic parties in this regard), while Šabić et al. [2014] even concluded that the importance of European issues decreased in comparison with the 2009 EP elections.³

This prominence of domestic issues in 2014 was clearly connected with three events. First, a lot of time and energy in the (pre-)campaign period had been devoted to a referendum on the Amendments to the Law on Archives and Archival Material. The referendum was initiated by the SDS and supported by voters. In February-March 2014 a battle erupted over the date when it would be held. While the initiator strongly demanded it be held simultaneously with the EP elections, the government parties strongly opposed the idea, and both insisted on their stances due to their own political calculations. Second, as mentioned above, a battle over leadership in the PS culminated on the eve of the 2014 EP elections. Prime Minister Bratušek lost the party leadership elections and, as she had promised if such a scenario came to pass, resigned from the PM position at the beginning of May. After the resignation of the government, the main topic in Slovenia became the question of early parliamentary elections. Third, almost simultaneously with the leadership elections in the PS, the leader of the biggest opposition party (SDS) and former PM Janša was sent to prison. Already in 2013 he was found guilty of taking payments from a Finnish defence contractor during his 2004-2008 spell as Slovenia's premier (Patria scandal), while at the end of April 2014 the verdict was upheld by the Higher Court (the Court of Appeal). These developments almost completely overshadowed the upcoming EP elections.

The focus of party campaigning was therefore logically oriented towards domestic issues and domestic problems that may⁴ or may not be con-

³ According to van der Berge [2014: 4], this only happened in Slovenia and Cyprus.

⁴ As Krašovec and Lajh [2010] found, even in 2009 some primarily EU-related topics (financial and economic crisis, employment and social protection in Europe, and EU enlargement) were put almost exclusively in a national perspective in Slovenia.

nected to the EU. And when the EU was finally discussed, this was normally linked to the high salaries of MEPs, lucrative positions connected to the EU's political and bureaucratic milieus, and the (mal)distribution of EU funds. It is nevertheless fair to say that political actors competing for the job of MEP had few chances to properly present their programmatic standpoints due to the unavailability of media space and poor knowledge of citizens about the structure and functioning of the EU. The shortage of media coverage originated from the rigid normative framework of public television, which has to provide balanced coverage of election race, as well as the virtual absence of the campaign from the private networks as EP elections proved to attract relatively small numbers of viewers and thus also low ratings. The citizen knowledge gap, on the other hand, is related to the low presence of EU-related content in formal curriculums as well as only sporadic attempts to inform and educate citizens about the EU (e.g. EP information campaigns conducted prior to every EP election).

Public Opinion Polls

Several public opinion polls on the EP elections were conducted and their results presented to the public. First, there was a question about the voter turnout. According to the public opinion polls, approximately 30% of voters said they would vote for sure, while the same percentage of voters said they are very probably going to vote. Also, public opinion polls in the past predicted a relatively high turnout, but in both previous EP elections, the voter turnout was only 28%. In view of a decrease in the already relatively low level of trust in politics and political institutions in the last several years, it was estimated a turnout close to the 2004 and 2009 EP elections or lower would be more plausible. The second question was connected to the importance of a party list's leaders in voters' electoral decisions. As many as 70% of voters said they were going to make their electoral decision based on the leader of the candidate lists. Finally, data on the expected election results for individual parties with the predicted leaders of their lists was presented by several mass media and/or public opinion poll agencies. Actually, all of them predicted a victory for the SDS (when the EU Commissioner Potočnik at the beginning of March was mentioned as a potential candidate of the PS and/or a potential joint list of ALDE members, surveys showed this list would win), followed by the joint list of NSi and SLS. Soon after its decision to take part in the elections, the List of Igor Šoltes occupied the third position in the polls, while SD and DeSUS were also each expected to receive an MEP.

Results of the EP Elections and Its Consequences

As the public opinion polls suggested, the winner of the 2014 EP election was the SDS with three MEPs, followed by the joint list of NSi and the SLS with two MEPs (the leader of the SLS was elected by preference votes even though he was the last on the candidate list), while SD got one MEP. More importantly, in SD the party leader who insisted on heading the candidate list was heavily defeated by the current MEP Fajon – the latter received 11,681 preference votes, while the party leader received only 6,882 such votes. For the first time, SLS and DeSUS received an MEP, while MEP Kacin after two mandates did not get enough votes to enter the EP for the third time.

Four of the six MEPs who ran in the elections were re-elected. Looking from the European perspective, the EPP with five seats was the winner of the Slovenian EP elections, while S&D received one MEP. ALDE also received one MEP since MEP Vajgl again joined the ALDE even though in 2014 he was elected on DeSUS's list, whose programme is probably closer to the social democratic camp. But DeSUS has not been affiliated with any EU party, and therefore such a solution could be implemented. Although even right after the elections, it was not clear to which EU party/party group Šoltes from <his> Verjamem list would join, ALDE or EG, at the end the latter, with Šoltes becoming its first Slovenian MEP.

Looking at the EP election results, one can hardly avoid the famous second-order national elections conceptual framework for analysing elections, introduced by Reif and Schmitt [1980], even though it has been heavily debated throughout. For example, Koepke and Ringe [2006], but especially Clark and Rohrschneider [2009], have fiercely criticised the conceptual framework and its validity in the Central European countries. It seems the strongest criticism was directed at the observation by Reif and Schmitt on losses by government parties and the importance of the national electoral cycle in this regard. As noted by Cabada [2010], analysis of the 2009 EP elections in these countries clearly shows some peculiarities and deviations from the second-order national elections framework, but also confirms some of its elements. In Slovenia, all three EP elections were held at points in the national electoral cycle where governing parties are supposed to get, according to Koepke and Ringe [2006], the same or higher share of the vote in the EP elections as they did in the national ones – the 2004 and 2014 EP elections was held in the *later term*, while the 2009 EP election was held in the *honeymoon period*. Nevertheless, all three senior government coalition parties can be regarded as big losers of the EP elections – in 2004, the LDS lost 15% in the EP elections in relation to the previous national parliamentary election, in 2009 the SD lost 12% while in 2014 PS recorded even 22% lower support in the EP elections than in the previous national parliamentary elections. However,

the PS's defeat (as well as the SD's defeat in 2009 due to the economic and financial crisis and its unsuccessful handling of it) was somehow expected due to the fact that just before the EP elections, a battle over the leadership position between Jankovič and Bratušek led to the party's split (and the fall of the government). The party list was therefore headed by prominent non-partisan Eurosceptic economist Dr. Mencinger, who had to fight the campaign literally by himself, because seven other candidates found themselves in different political groups after the big schism in the PS, which led to their complete inactivity.

All government parties together in case of three EP elections held in Slovenia also recorded significantly lower support in the EP election than in the previous national parliamentary election (in the 2004 EP election, government parties altogether received only 36% in comparison to 53.3% of the vote in the 2000 national election; in the 2009 EP election, they received altogether 46.9%, while less than a year before, in the 2008 national elections, they received 52.4%; in the 2014 EP elections, the drop in support for government parties altogether was dramatic since they received only 23.9% in comparison with 54.3% in the 2011 national elections). Taking all this data into account, it is possible even after the 2014 EP elections to agree with Cabada [2010] that Slovenia represents the greatest deviation from the second-order national election framework among CEE countries in this respect.

Table 3. Results of the 2009 and 2014 EP Elections in Slovenia

PARTY	2009			2014		
	Votes (%)	Seats	EP Seats (%)	Votes (%)	Seats	EP Seats (%)
Slovenian Democratic Party (SDS)	26.6	2(3)*	0.4	24.8	3	0.4
<i>Social Democrats (SD)</i>	18.4	2	0.3	8.1	1	0.1
New Slovenia–Christian Democrats (NSi)	16.5	1	0.1	16.6**	2**	0.2
Slovenian People's Party (SLS)	3.6	0	0	16.6**	2**	0.2
I Believe - List of Igor Šoltes	/	/	/	10.3	1	0.1
<i>Democratic Party of Pensioners of Slovenia (DeSUS)</i>	7.2	0	0	8.1	1	0.1
<i>Liberal Democracy of Slovenia (LDS)</i>	11.5	1	0.1	/	0	0
<i>Zares</i>	9.8	1	0.1	0.9	0	0
<i>Positive Slovenia (PS)</i>	/	/	/	6.6	0	0
United Left Coalition (ZL)	/	/	/	5.5	0	0
<i>Civic List (DL)</i>	/	/	/	1.1	0	0
Others		0			0	

*After ratification of the Lisbon treaty, Slovenia received another MEP and according to the EP election results SDS got another MEP

** NSi and SLS in 2014 formed a joint list of candidates

Bold: Government parties at the time of the 2009 EP elections

Italic: Government parties at the time of the 2014 EP elections

Last but not least, Slovenia with a 24.5% voter turnout (in both the previous EP elections it recorded the same, namely 28.3%) had one of the lowest turnouts in the EU. Although the *less-at-stake* argument [Reif, Schmitt 1980] was offered to explain low(er) turnout for a long time, this can no longer be the case since the EP's powers have been progressively increased while turnout remained somewhat disappointing [Lodge 2010]. As Lodge [2010: 19] establishes, dissipating national electoral resources, enthusiasm and funding for the election of MEPs remained a low priority for top-level politicians, party activists and political journalists. Such characteristics have been obvious in all Slovenian EP elections so far [see Krašovec ed. 2005; Kustec Lipicer ed. 2005; Krašovec ed. 2010; Krašovec, Lajh 2010; Krašovec, Malčič 2014; Haughton, Krašovec 2014].

When speaking about the consequences of the EP elections for the national arena, several things can be mentioned. First, even though EP elections are predominantly seen as *second-order elections*, they were fatal for three party leaders; two leaders of government parties, SD's Dr. Lukšič and CL's Dr. Virant resigned from their leadership positions due the bad results of their parties. In both cases, the EP election results were conclusive proof that due to declining public support, two government parties had 'to deal' with their unpopular leaders before the highly important race in July 2014 – early national parliamentary elections. Non-parliamentary Zares's leader P. Gantar resigned. Second, the fact that conservatives (SDS and joint list of NSi and SLS) received 'only' 41.1% of the votes but five MEPs (62.5% of all Slovenian MEPs), together with the good experience with the NSi-SLS joint list and the fiasco of the ALDE members, on the other hand, who could not agree upon a joint list triggered many statements in the centre-left camp on the need to overcome divisions to fight the much more united conservative camp in the upcoming national parliamentary elections. The need to prepare a joint list even became a kind of slogan. The result can be best described by quoting Shakespeare's words - *much ado about nothing* since only the SD and Solidarity found enough common ground to form a joint candidate list under the SD's name, while the completely marginalised Zares and LDS ran under the banner of the Alliance of Alenka Bratušek. Third, even though the big majority of votes were assigned to established parties, the EP elections empirically confirmed that voters indeed (still) long for new parties and faces in politics – not only Dr. Šoltes with his List (10.3%), but also the United Left (5.5%), the <provocative experiment> Dream Job (3.5%) and the Pirate Party (2.5% confirmed this (in the national parliamentary elections the newcomer Party of Miro Cerar convincingly won the elections with 34.5%, while UL received 6%). Fourth, the EP elections were a good predictor or even confirmation of the already expected failure of government parties in the national parliamentary elections – PS with only 3% (as well as the PM's Alliance of Alenka Bratušek formed after the schism with

only 4.4%), with SD (6%) and CL (0.6%) where even the new (acting) leaders could not prevent their parties from suffering a big defeat. Only one government party, DeSUS, recorded better results. Fifth, European success on the other hand «beheaded» the SLS and the new Šoltes party (I Believe), whose leaders felt very comfortable with their MEP positions and both only under certain pressures decided to run in the national elections - and lost. SLS as a continually parliamentary party since the first multiparty elections in 1990 did not reach the threshold, while I Believe proved to be a mayfly completely dependent on its leader (it received only 0.8% on the national elections).

Due to all the described characteristics, it is possible to agree with Haughton and Krašovec [2014] that the “EP elections were a dress rehearsal for the forthcoming parliamentary elections. The stage was set, the parties were donning their costumes and new actors were frantically learning their lines, albeit no one was quite sure when the performance would begin”.

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EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT ELECTIONS IN POLAND IN 2014

Abstract:

The aim of the article was to discuss the elections to the European Parliament in Poland in 2014, taking into consideration the political situation before the elections in particular. The influence of the parliamentary elections in 2011 on the Polish political scene, and the activity of governmental coalition of the Civic Platform and the Polish Peasant Party, as well as the emergence of new political entities actively participating in electoral competition, has been analysed.

A detailed analysis was done regarding the course of election campaign, paying attention to the elements of negative campaigning as well as the course of the elections themselves. The final reflections were dedicated to the election results and their influence (consequences) on the Polish party system.

Key words:

elections, European Parliament, Polish political scene, political competition, party system

Introduction

The European Parliament (EP) is one of its kind forum where it comes to both confrontation as well as cooperation of almost all major political forces in the European Union (EU). Despite the fact that at the beginning of its existence the PE had only consultation rights, now, after a series of institutional reforms it can, in some extent, influence decisions of the EU which have great importance for millions of European citizens [Domagała 2010: 11-13]. The PE elections are not, however, a European event *par excellence*. They take place in particular member states, they are held in local languages and are participated by politicians known in a particular country, not in the whole EU. Additionally, they do not take place on the same day and according to the same electoral system

[Wiszniewski 2008: 131-141]. The PE election campaign is controlled by domestic political parties, the role of European issues is only symbolical and it revolves around those issues which concern domestic political affairs. The elections held in such a manner do not foster looking from the political perspective at problems of the EU as a whole, as well as European community integration.

As noticed by Jacek Kucharczyk and Melchior Szczepanik, „the elections, which are European only by their name, and are the most noticeable example of the weakness of the European Union as a political institution. There is a lack common political identity, which should be manifested by the European institutions. Until now no common political space has been created but there are 27 separate such spaces [since 1st July 2013 the number of member states is 28. Croatia, as the first Balkan state, has gained EU membership –D.S], which are connected only in a limited area. To put it in a nutshell –if a European **demos** [in bold as in the original – D.S] exists – it remains latent, not giving the ones ruling the EU clear directives concerning the future of Europe” [Kucharczyk, Szczepanik 2010: 7-8]. A partial solution in this matter was to prepare a Constitution Treaty, which did not improve the position of the PE. The improvement occurred on 1st of December 2009 with the legislation of the Lisbon Treaty, which enforced the role of the EP.

The enforcement in question concerned the two areas: material and institutional. Within the material dimension the enforcement of the EP role relied first and foremost on including the new areas into the so-called ordinary legislation procedure, the obligation for making most international agreements to be approved by the EP, as well as a series of changes in comitologic and budget procedures. The second dimension –the institutional one –has a significant role with regards to the elections perspective, as the changes introduced by the Lisbon treaty concerned the composition of the EP itself and the role of this institution in choosing the President of the Council of the European Union. Except this change, the Lisbon treaty gave the EU legal personality, it liquidated the European Community, abolished a system of three legal pillars and made reorganization of EU legal institutions. The citizens gained the laws of (indirect) initiative in legislating the new EU law [Barcz 2009: 6; Wojtaszczyk 2013: 183-187].

It should be mentioned that despite a series of the reforms made, the EP is first and foremost the EU institution which meets the conditions of enforcing democracy in EU. Since 1979 it is elected in direct elections by the total population of the member states, but despite this the elections to this institution do not arouse great interest of European citizens, which is indicated by low turnout. The elections in 2014 as well as two previous elections did not enjoy great public interest. In the first, historic EP elections in June 2014 the turnout amounted only 20,87% of the entitled to vote. Among the 25 countries lower turnout was

only in Slovakia (16,66%). In Poland it was accounted for not preparing the citizens for elections, lack of attractive election offer and poor information campaign. In 2009 during the next elections to EP the turnout among Poles was only slightly higher than in 2004 and amounted just 24,54% of the entitled to vote. At that time Poland was at the 25th place among 27 member states with regards to the turnout, ahead of Lithuania (24,54%) and Slovakia (19,63%).

The aim of the following analysis is to discuss the EP elections in Poland in 2014, considering the political situation in Poland before elections, the course of election campaign and elections themselves, as well as the results and their influence (consequences) and the Polish party system

The political situation in Poland before elections

The Polish political scene was shaped after the parliamentary elections held on 9th October 2011, which were won by the centre-right Civic Platform (Platforma Obywatelska –PO). The government, headed again by D. Tusk was entered by Polish Peoples Party (aka Polish Peasant Party – Polskie Stronnictwo Ludowe – PSL), a moderate pheasant party. In both governments PSL got 3 resorts; these included: Ministry of Economy, Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development, as well as Ministry of Labour and Social Policy. The newly elected parliament entered: PO, PiS (Law and Justice – Prawo i Sprawiedliwość), Palikot’s Movement that was later transformed into Your Movement (TR – Twój Ruch) and Democratic Left Alliance (SLD) as well as opposition parties.

The primary objective of PO-PSL coalition was to continue actions initiated in the Parliament of the 6th term of office (2007-2011). Announcing the action programme, D. Tusk pointed out to the necessity of providing the citizens with security and welfare, and as for the economy issues he announced „abandoning” in „2012 the procedure of excessive deficit and reaching at the end of the year about 3% PKB deficit of public finances sector, decrease of the public debt to the value of 52% of the GDP in 2012 with its systematic decrease to 47% in 2015” [Expose 2012: 2-3]. Besides that the Prime Minister also assured rationalising public administration by its „reduction” and making it more friendly and useful. Another point was the reform of KRUS (Agricultural Social Insurance Fund) relying on the change in a system for collecting health contribution from farmers, as well as the change in granting family allowances and child relief.

Important actions undertaken by the government were rising the pension contribution by 2% on the side of the employers; introducing changes in the valorization amount of pensions and annuities and rising retirement age for men and women to 67. Tax advantage for copyright work contracts was reduced, internet and bank deposit allowances were abolished, which enabled

to avoid capital gains tax (the so-called Belka tax); the expenditures for army remained at the same level (1,95% of GDP) and the basic salary for uniformed services workers was risen in 2012 by 300 PLN.

It is noteworthy that since the beginning of the parliamentary elections PO has maintained high support despite decreasing trust to government, which indicates „consolidation of anxiety against the possibility of the returning PiS (Law and Justice) and the conviction that PO is an alternative for that” [Fuksiewicz, Szczepański 2009: 15]. In April 2014, when one of the most crucial issues was war in Ukraine, and the annexation of Crimea by the Russian Federation, the government of D. Tusk was supported by every fourth person interviewed (25%) by CBOS (Centrum Badania Opinii Społecznej - Centre for Public Opinion Research); against the government were 43% of the interviewed, and indifference for PO-PSL coalition was declared by 29% of the people interviewed. This attitude towards D. Tusk cabinet was mostly influenced by the size of the place of residence, socio-economic status, or interviewed views and ideas. The negative scores of the government concerned only the area of economy, where 66% of the interviewed marked government activities in these areas as bad. The prime minister was rated well by young people with higher education and by people who evaluated their economic condition as good. The definite opponents were young people in the age between 18 and 24. Disapproval was expressed by PiS –supporters with un-defined party preferences [BS/49/2014].

In the period preceding the EP elections there occurred several transformations on the Polish political scene. As a result of a split in PiS, 15 members of parliament and 1 senator of this party founded on 7th November 2011 United Poland Parliamentary Club, which leader became A. Mularczyk. Then an initiative was undertaken within the party to form a political party now listed as Zbigniew Ziobro United Poland (Solidarna Polska Zbigniewa Ziobro – SPZZ), which occurred on 24th March 2014. Its leaders are Z. Ziobro (the leader), B. Kempa (vice-leader) and T. Cymański, A. Dera, M. Golba, P. Jaki, J. Rojek, M. Wójcik, J. Ziobro, K. Ziobro or J. Żaczek (members). In 2012 the party listed about 5 thousand members.

Palikot Movement, a liberal left-wing political party, which in 2011 elections introduced 40 MPs, transformed into Your Movement (Twój Ruch) grouping, associating except for Palikot Movement members also some of the members of Europa Plus Social Movement (aka Europa Plus), some of the leaders from the Polish Labour Party –August 80 (PPP- August 80), a group of activists of Social Democracy of Poland (SDPL) and Reason Party (Racja PL). The foundation of the previously mentioned Europa Plus association should also be mentioned. The initiator of its foundation was Member of the European Parliament from SLD party, M. Siwiec, who after leaving the party in 2012 set cooperation with J. Palikot.

Europa Plus was founded in 2013 and a month later a common programme by the participation of Palikot Movement, SDPL, Labour Union, the Reason Party and the Left Union (UL – Unia Lewicy) was compiled. The face of this project became A. Kwaśniewski, who together with J. Palikot and M. Siwiec announced the formation of the new centre-left association. SLD (Democratic Left Alliance) refused to involve in cooperation for this undertaking and made electoral registers together with UP. In May and June 2013 Europa Plus was joined by the new political parties: the Democratic Party (Stronnictwo Demokratyczne – SD), PPS- August 80 and the Democratic Party demokraci.pl. UP eventually resigned from participating in the project. The association was headed by M. Siwiec, A. Kwaśniewski and J. Palikot, and the vice leaders became K. Iszkowski and R. Kwiatkowski. The coalition ended up on 26th May 2014.

The final example of shaping Polish political scene was founding, on 7th December 2013, the centre-right political party with conservative incline – Jarosław Gowin’s Poland Together (PRJG – Polska Razem Jarosława Gowina). The make-up of the new formation, founded by a former PO politician, J. Gowin, included members of the Poland Comes First party (P. Kowal – the leader), the ‘Republicans’ association (headed by P. Wipler, who quite soon left the party together with his association members), as well as a part of former PO politicians. PRJR was soon joined by Conservative People’s Party (Stronnictwo Konserwatywno-Ludowe) under the leadership of M. Zagórski. The party authorities included J. Gowin (the leader) P. Dardziński, K. Iglicka-Okólska, M. Zagórski and P. Zając (vice-leaders). The leader of the national council became P. Kowal. Currently, the party enlists about 4,5 – 5 thousand members.

The additional background for all the events connected with the EP election campaign was the previously mentioned military conflict in Ukraine preceded by a series of protests and manifestations that began in November 2013 as a result of postponing by the Ukrainian President, W. Janukowycz, the decision about signing association agreement with the EU. This led, eventually, to the removal of the president from his office and then his fleeing from the country. The numerous protests and manifestations were being brutally suppressed and the participants demanded signing the association agreement with the EU. In January and February 2014 the separatists began a military uprising against the newly elected Ukrainian authorities and declared the formation of self-proclaimed Donetsk People’s Republic and Lugansk People’s republic, supported by the Russian Federation. Together with seizure of Donbas key cities the separatists proclaimed in May 2014 the Russian Federation of Novorossiia. The only actions undertaken against the growing conflict by the international community was providing Ukrainians with support, as well as laying embargos on Russia by the European Union. Poland actively involved

in the situation in Ukraine. Its main purpose was first and foremost providing material support, especially blankets, medicines and medical equipment. These actions positively influenced the scores of D. Tusk government [BS/49/2014].

The election campaign

According to the electoral law in force Poland has been divided into 13 election districts, which by no means do not overlap the Voivodships (provinces) borders, by the method of their connection „with varied population, from 2 mln in Subcarpathian area to almost 5 mln in Silesia [...] indicates how significant is the influence of current situation of political parties in support ranking on the current solutions with regards to electoral laws” [Glajcar 2010: 59]. Such electoral law legislated by the government of Leszek Miller does not meet the formal requirement of equality, as some regions are overrepresented and some underrepresented. The table 1 shows areas of electoral districts to the EP in Poland.

The main axis of Polish politics before PE elections in 2014 was the conflict between PO and PiS, especially criticism of D. Tusk actions; the other parties (PSL, SLD-UP, SPZZ, PRJG, Congress of the New Right or Self-Defense) were only a background of the conflict, sustaining the polarization during the electoral campaign.

Table 1. Areas of electoral districts to the European parliament in Poland

Number of the electoral district	Area of the electoral district and the headquarter of the election committee
1	Pomearian Voivodship – Gdańsk
2	Kuyavian-Pomearian Voivodshi – Bydgoszcz
2	Podlaskie and Warmian-Masurian voivodship – Olsztyn
4	Warsaw and 8 countries of the Masovian voivodship (grodziski, legionowski, nowodworski, otwocki, piaseczyński, pruszkowski, warszawski zachodni oraz wołomiński) – Warszawa
5	4 urban districts (Płock, Radom, Ostrołęka i Siedlce) and 29 countries of the Masovian voivodship – Warsaw
6	Łódź voivodship – Łódź
7	Greater Poland voivodship – Poznań
8	Lublin voivodship – Lublin
9	Subcarpathian voivodship – Rzeszów
10	Lesser Poland and Świętokrzyskie voivodships – Kraków
11	Silesian voivodship – Katowice
12	Lower Silesian and Opole voivodships – Wrocław
13	Lubusz and West Pomearian voivodships – Gorzów Wielkopolski

Source: self study on the basis of: *Ordynacja wyborcza do Parlamentu Europejskiego, Dz.U. 2004 nr 25 poz. 219. z późn. zm.*

The domestic campaign did not by any means encourage to voting. There were neither educational aspects nor factual discussions. The basic tool, which was used most often, were election spots shown in TV and in internet. The topics of the campaign concerned almost exclusively domestic issues and they revolved around previously mentioned conflict between PO and PiS and concentrated on the achievements of the current coalition with regards to internal policy. The criticism concerned mainly the Prime Minister, not fulfilling the electoral promises from 2011, inefficiency and caring about self-interest of PO and PSL members, or too moderate approach towards the Ukrainian crisis.

The beginning of the election campaign was dominated by the approval and public announcement of the candidates to run for office from the first places at electoral registers to EP. This phenomenon concerned almost all election committees and lasted till 2nd February 2014. Europa Plus and Your Movement announced their candidates as the first committee. The lists included, among others, K. Szczuka, R. Kalisz, W. Nowicka, A. Celiński, M. Siwiec, J. Hartman or K. Kutz. Presenting famous and popular in left-wing circles people was aimed at drawing not only Your Movement electorate, but also SLD-UP (rival parties), feminists, and young people weary of the division into PO supporters and PiS antagonists.

PO, PiS, PSL, SLD-UP, SPZZ and PRJG put their trust in well known and prominent politicians coming from their own political formations; these included, among others: J. Buzek, J. Lewandowski, E. Łukacijewska, B. Kudrycka, D. Hübner (PO); A. Fotyga, K. Karski, Z. Krasnodębski, M. Piotrowski, R. Czarnecki (PiS); E. Kłopotek, S. Żelichowski, J. Kalinowski, W. Kosiniak-Kamysz, J. Fedak (PSL), L. Pastusiak, J. Zemke, T. Iwiński, W. Olejniczak, A. Kalata (SLD-UP); L. Dorn, M. Golba, Z. Ziobro, T. Adamek, B. Kempa (SPZZ); J. Żalek, P. Kowal, J. Godson, D. Lipiński, K. Jaworski (PRJG). Except for the previously mentioned formations the parties that took part in elections included also National Movement, J. Korwin-Mikke’s Congress of the New Right, Self-defence, Greens Party and Direct Democracy [PKW data from 2014].

A significant role in the creation of domestic campaign played previously mentioned election spots, among which the ones of Your Movement and PiS included definitely the greatest amount of negative views. The aim was to discredit political rivals. Your Movement began to broadcast spots connected with criticising PiS and warning Poles before return of the party to power, which was referred to as „political hogs”. PiS, on the other hand, concentrated on presenting scandals made by the drunk J. Protasiewicz (PO) at the airport in Frankfurt, criticising J. Rostowski (the former minister in the PO-PSL government who „got Poland into debts more than Gierek, rose taxes and

retirement age”), M. Boni (reducing freedom of the information transfer in internet) and M. Kamiński (the former PiS spin doctor, listed at the first place of electoral register in Lublin, who was presented as the greatest lazybones in the EP).

The electoral spots of PO and PSL were of milder tone. The faces of PO were J. Buzek, J. Lewandowski, R. Sikorski and D. Tusk, and, what is important, the spots omitted the aspect of competition with PiS. The focus was only on encouraging the voters to vote for PO and on the attempt to convince the society about the possibility of conducting difficult negotiations about the new EU budget which would be beneficial for Poland. PSL on the other hand concentrated on the future and on things that connect Poles, namely house, street and people we meet on our way. These values were supported by the main objectives from the programme: tradition, modernity and Poland. The other parties strongly referred in their spots to the political rivals, indicating the things differing them from the present political class [Grochal, Kondzińska 2014: 3].

The key issue discussed in the campaign was the healthcare. The debate in this field was organised by PiS. In the last moment D. Tusk resigned from participation which met with immediate reaction of J. Kaczyński who described the Prime Minister as „coward”. Representatives of other groups, especially D. Gardias, a nurse who was on the first place of the electoral list of Your Movement, W. Elsner (YM), or T. Latos (the head of the parliamentary committee for healthcare from PiS) had not been invited to the debate. The debate showed clearly that PiS, which demanded increasing funds for healthcare, was not able to indicate the source of financing [Nowakowska 2014: 5].

Another point which should be mentioned is the lack of any debate concerning economic issues. Almost all the committees presenting electoral programmes and spots avoided referring to the economic issues. The reason for this was, supposing, cautious attitude towards introducing Euro currency in Poland. The leader of PRJG party, J. Gowin called upon the Prime Minister D. Tusk to present the plans of government in this area. The leader of PiS, J. Kaczyński advocated the idea to organise referendum before accepting the new currency. In other words, the economic issues, that appeared frequently in previous campaigns, did not meet with interest among EP candidates.

An evident element of the campaign was previously mentioned affair in Ukraine. The debate in this matter was organised in Hybryda student club in Warsaw. The leaders of Greens, PRJG, SPZZ, National Movement, SLD, PO and PiS. The most discussion revolved around the issue of Polish foreign policy and how effectively stop actions of V. Putin and was completely dominated by PiS and PO politicians who accused the other leaders of no action and submissiveness towards Russia.

It should be noted that lack of factual discussions and political debates participated by the leaders of electoral registers, which was noticeable during the EP campaign in 2014, was transferred into electronic media. It was by the means of political parties internet websites or blogs of particular candidates and politicians running for an EP office, or social networks such as Facebook, Twitter, Nasza Klasa, Youtube, Flickr or Pinterest, that most materials reflecting the attempt to win the support of voters was presented. These materials were exclusively dedicated to EP elections.

A relatively new approach towards making campaign turned out to be actions initiated by J. Korwin-Mikke, the leader of the New Right, who publicly stated that his participation in elections was dictated by the attempt to ridicule and show the whole „evil” of the EU from the inside. He also added that in case of winning an office his MPs will use all the privileges of the EU in order to „overthrow the system”. The electoral programme of this group was radical, which was reflected, among others, by the slogan „we are not going to fight with poverty, but we are not going to prevent the poor ones to get richer”. It should also be mentioned that on the electoral lists of the New Right there were no prominent politicians of this party, but only the local activists. The only exception was J. Korwin-Mikke himself, who ran for an office in Silesia. During the period preceding the EP elections the party gained from several to over a dozen thousand supporters on Facebook page alone, only because it was heavily reported and because its leaders were in the media. When answering the question whether it could be planned in advance, Mikołaj Cześnik, the head of the Social Sciences Institute at the University of Social Sciences and Humanities stated that „perhaps J. Korwin-Mikke has clever advisors, who decided that it would be best to show him when he is in his elements, when he seems great, authentic and reliable in what he is saying” [Kublik 2014: 5]. The New Right campaign was, in his opinion efficient, mainly because of the frankness and truthfulness of the opinions presented.

When it comes to political conflicts that became evident during the campaign it should be noted that they concerned more the party divisions than personal issues. The previously mentioned conflict between PO and PiS feuded since 2005 should be mentioned here, as well as electoral spots of Your Movement, in which PiS was being attacked directly and the society was warned against the return of this party to power. Except that one could notice conflicts between Europa Plus Your Movement and SLD-UP, where the SLD leader, L. Miller criticised directly A. Kwaśniewski who supported with his own name the coalition. A dispute was also caused by the transfer of the previously expelled SLD politician, R. Kalisz, who supported the Europa Plus Your Movement coalition.

Most conflicts could have been seen in PiS alone and they concerned the candidates supported by the Toruń community connected with father confessor

T. Rydzyk. The dispute, which divided PiS voters, revolved around the demands made by Rydzyk to place on PiS electoral lists people connected with the Toruń broadcasting agency¹. The conflict grew stronger to such an extent that the party leader had to ‘anoint’ the electoral lists leaders himself and to indicate who should be voted. Such a situation occurred in several Polish cities, especially in Lublin (W. Paruch, a political scientist, the leader of PiS electoral list competed with M. Piotrowski), in Rzeszów (the EP member, T. Poręba, compete with his party colleague S. Ożóg) and in Łódź (where the TV Trwam protégée, U. Krupa was in the 3rd place on the list), or Kuyavian-Pomerian district, the „den” of the Toruń broadcasting institution (where instead of A. Jaworski PiS chose A. Zybortowicz) [Kondzińska 2014: 4]. Eventually, the head of the Toruń radio station announced the split with PiS and the cessation of further cooperation; this concerned also visiting Radio Maryja and Trwam TV by the politicians of PiS who remained loyal to the leader.

Election

A couple of days before the vote, the electoral committees of the two largest rival political parties, Civic Platform and Law and Justice, were carefully analysing the election polls from the last few days, which clearly showed that the difference between the parties will be only 2-3%.

Table 2. Poll results showing support for the parties/committees

Date of polling	PO	PiS	E+ TR	PSL	SLD-UP	SPZZ	PRJG	KNP	RN
April 30 th	29%	21%	2%	4%	6%	1%	4%	6%	0%
May 14 th	21%	20%	2%	3%	6%	2%	1%	6%	–
May 20 th	26%	21%	2%	5%	8%	1%	2%	4%	0%

Source: Own elaboration based on CBOS polls. (Centre for Public Opinion Research)

As Table 2 shows, the greatest disparities between PO and PiS were visible on April 30th and May 20th, where the advantage of PO over PiS was in turn 8 and 5%. Other election committees, with the exception of PSL and SLD-UP, were below the electoral threshold of 5%. It was also surprising that a few days before the election, public support had decreased for almost the majority of the parties supporting the polarity during the election campaign.

According to surveys carried out by OBOP, the elections to EP did not enjoy excessive interest among the public. A discernible decline in their importance was much greater than in relation to the elections of 2009 and was

¹ Radio Maryja - religious and political socially conservative Polish radio station. The Radio Maryja Family is a religious movement led by Rydzyk

explained by not only their specificity, but also as a result of a more general trend, namely „a generally decreasing sense of meaning and importance of any elections to representative institutions” [BS/24/2014].

Table 3. A comparison of the results of the elections to the European Parliament in 2014 and 2009

Party/committee	2014			2009		
	Seats	Number of votes	Number of votes %	Seats	Number of votes	Number of votes %
Civic Platform	19	2 271 215	32,13	25	3 271 852	44,43
Law and Justice	19	2 246 870	31,78	15	2 017 607	27,40
Democratic Left Alliance – Labor Union	5	667 319	9,44	7	908 765	12,34
New Right of Janusz Korwin-Mikke	4	505 586	7,15	-	-	-
Polish People’s Party	4	480 846	6,80	3	516 146	7,0
United Poland of Zbigniew Ziobro	0	281 079	3,98	-	-	-
Europa Plus Social Movement	0	252 699	3,58	-	-	-
Poland Together of Jarosław Gowin	0	223 733	3,16	-	-	-
National Movement	0	98 626	1,40	-	-	-
Green Party	0	22 481	0,32	-	-	-
Direct Democracy	0	16 222	0,23	-	-	-
Self-Defence	0	2729	0,04	-	-	-

Source: Own elaboration based on the results of PKW (National Electoral Commission).

It is worth noting that the sense of political alienation phenomenon present in society as well as boredom by the Polish political scene, critical assessment of politicians, the quality of the entire class and political elite, did not help improve the quality of democracy at all and, what is more, did not contribute to the improvement of the voter turnout in the vote.

On the day of the election, that is May 24th 2014, the committees were receiving information about the voter turnout and the anticipated outcome of the election. Fractional data indicated that the difference between PO and PiS was small [Wroński 2014: 2]. Additionally, tension grew when TV first released the news about the victory of PO. On the next day, the victory shifted in favour of PiS who defeated PO by winning 21 seats, which is one seat more than PO. The National Electoral Commission presented the results of the election only after 24 hours from the moment all polling stations closed, and in accordance with them, announced the victory of PO over PiS by 0.35% [Czuchnowski, Górecki 2014: 3]. Detailed results of the election are summarised in Table 3.

Other election committees, especially SLD-UP and PSL, despite the expected crossing of the threshold visible in the polls, won respectively 5 and 4 seats to the EP, which means they were not able to either maintain or increase the number of MEPs when compared with the year 2009. The real surprise of the election was, first of all, crossing the electoral threshold and second, winning as much as 4 seats by KNP. Similar electoral success was noted by the environment centred around J. Korwin-Mikke in elections in 1991, when 3 candidates from the list of Real Politics Union entered the lower house of the Polish parliament. The remaining committees did not cross the required 5% of the electoral threshold.

The impact of the results of the elections to the European Parliament on the Polish party system

It is worth noting that the results of the elections to the European Parliament have significantly influenced the evolution of the Polish party system. First, they once again confirmed the bipolarity of the system and highlighted even more the scale of divisions and mutual rivalry between PO and PiS. Despite the victory of PO who won by 0.35%, both parties received the same number of seats that is 19. So, it was just apparent victory. Second, the parties and committees who were previously referred to as the ones skilfully maintaining the polarity during the election campaign showed that in the process of political rivalry such things as mediativity and motivating their own electorate play a significant role. This state of affairs led to the situation when despite the reluctance of people and weariness by both politics and politicians, the elections to the EP showed that in Poland we are dealing with a variety of political forces able to cross the electoral threshold.

The third important aspect related to the influence of the elections to the EP on the Polish party system was the initiation of the integration processes on the right and on the left. The first to take the initiative was J. Kaczyński who said that before the general election in 2015 it would have been necessary to unite the right wing who „**wanted realistic changes**”. **The talks concerned only three parties** PiS, PRJG and SPZZ and ended with signing an agreement on 19th July 2014. It was specified in the document that a strong alternative to „**the disgraced government of PO and Polish People’s Party who are hurting Poland**” must be created [Agreement 2014: 1]. In fact, what they did can be partly called „the cleaning up” of the political scene because when PiS united the right wing, they actually meant taking over the electorate of the parties they became involved in.

In the face of the established agreement on the right wing, the politicians belonging to SLD and TR expressed their willingness to form a similar

initiative for the sake of the local elections in 2014 and the parliamentary elections in 2015. In the long term, they did not create a direct cooperation and the negotiations did not bring the expected results.

The fourth important result of the elections to the EP was showing the weakness of the domestic political parties, especially PRJG, SPZZ, National Movement, Self-Defence, Europa Plus Your Movement committee and Green Party. The cause of their weakness could be appealing to a similar electorate, lack of attractive political programme as well as inability to reach a broader electorate than their own. What could also lead to their failure was for sure limited financial resources which prevented them from organising a professional campaign and, as a result, getting better results in the election.

Summary

To sum up, it should be noted that of all the national direct elections that the citizens of the Republic of Poland participate in, that is presidential, parliamentary and local elections, the elections to the European Parliament are considered to be least important, which can be seen in the low voter turnout. From the point of view of the actions taken by the national electoral committees of political parties, it is still hard to adequately encourage people to take an active part in and make a conscious choice during Euroelection.

Despite the relatively low turnout, the elections to the European Parliament in 2014 were of special interest to those groups of voters who chose their favourite politicians to represent the interests of Poland in Brussels, among them the members of PO and PiS (19 seats each), SLD-UP (5 seats) and PSL and KNP (4 seats each). In the case of the last formation, we could observe a kind of „a phenomenon” comparable with the results obtained by Freedom Union in the elections to the EP in 2004 – a party who after the period of governance was put aside the mainstream of social life. Its appearance in the European Parliament, as in the case of KNP, could be thought of as, on one hand, the opportunity to show their political platform to a larger group of people and, on the other hand, it can lead in a short spectrum of time to the alienation from the political life. This can be seen in the forthcoming local and parliamentary elections which are a test of political maturity.

An additional aspect connected with the elections to the EP was the actions taken by the right wing and led by J. Kaczyński to unite itself as well as the talks about unification undertaken on the left. For committees who won mandates to the EP, those elections were, for sure, on one hand, a confirmation of their effectiveness in influencing the voters, and on the other hand, a forecast before the next national elections that is the local and parliamentary elections.

In this respect, the national committees of political parties can make estimates on how possible it is to form their own mandates of trust and decide if they had better form ad hoc coalitions. The forthcoming elections will be the best example of that.

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VOTER TURNOUT IN THE 2014 EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT ELECTION IN POLAND

Abstract:

European Parliamentary election 2014 were the third elections for countries that joined European Union in 2004, including Poland. As we may observe from the very beginning of the EP's history, elections suffer constant drop in voter turnout, and since 1999 the turnout total for less than 50%. There are many theories explaining this state of affairs, with most notable “second-order elections” and democracy deficit theories. Polish profile of voter turnout in EP elections seems to fit into frameworks of these theories, and is positioned among EU's members with the lowest turnout. What is specific for electoral behaviour in Poland is stability: the turnout and support for political parties seems to stable and even petrified. This assessment seems to be supported by the results of election within past four years, both on aggregate and individual levels of data.

Keywords:

EP elections, voter turnout, electoral behaviour in Poland, petrification of political scene.

Introduction

European Parliamentary (EP) election, held on 25th May 2014, were third European elections since Poland joined European Union. Poland participated in EP elections for the first time in 2004, just after joining European Union, second EP elections took place in 2009. The main feature of these elections was exceptionally low voter turnout. In the 2004 EP elections voter turnout in Poland equalled only 21% and it was the second lowest rate among the EU countries in the 2004 EP elections (the only country with lower voter turnout was Slovakia, with 17%). In the 2009 EP elections voter turnout was also relatively low (25%), and it was again one of the lowest turnouts in Europe.

Voter turnout in Polish EP elections is also substantially lower than participation in other types of elections held in Poland. On the whole, Polish elections are characterised by rather low voter turnout rates, especially taking into account European standards [Cf.: Markowski 2006; Czeńnik, Zerkowska-Balas, Kotnarowski 2013]. Average voter turnout in national (parliamentary and presidential) elections vary between 40 and 50%, therefore voter turnout in the EP elections is substantially lower.

The 2014 EP elections were held in a specific political context. They were the first elections in Poland after three-year period without any elections (with exception of early local elections or local referenda held in a couple of districts). The last nation-wide elections (held before the 2014 EP elections) were the parliamentary elections in autumn of 2011. Moreover, the 2014 EP elections were the first in the “four-election marathon”, which will last from spring 2014 to autumn 2015. Next are the local elections, scheduled for 16th November 2014, presidential election in the late spring 2015 and the parliamentary elections in autumn 2015. This timing must have had an impact on the 2014 EP elections campaign, on political parties’ strategies and voters’ preferences and behaviours (both parties and voters define this election as a “rehearsal” or “warm-up” before the most important elections, i.e. presidential and parliamentary ones).

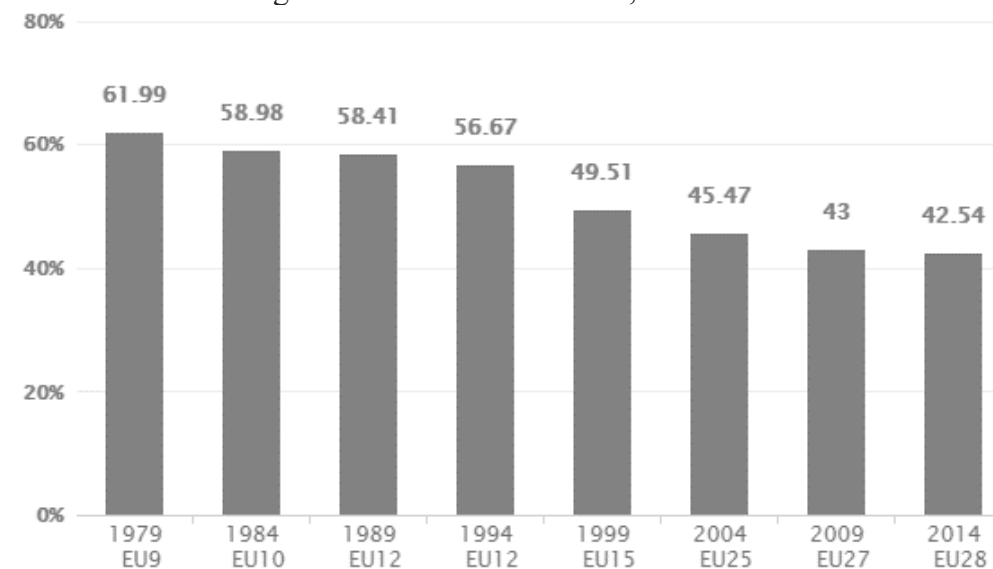
This article aims to address the issue of voter turnout in the 2014 EP elections in Poland. In the first section we briefly discuss theoretical background of our analysis and provide rudimentary facts and data. This section summarises also previous studies on voter turnout in EP elections, providing main explanations of observed trends. The second section investigates spatial dispersion of voter turnout in Poland, in case of EP and other elections. We analyse similarities/dissimilarities in voter turnout rates existing between geographically defined entities (constituencies). In the third part we investigate, using micro-level data, determinants and correlates of voter turnout. Discussion of the findings and conclusions end this paper.

Tendencies in European Parliamentary elections

The European Parliament was created in 1958, but the first elections to the EP took place in 1979, and since then it is the only European institution elected directly by the citizens of European Union. Together with The Council of European Union and European Commission, EP holds legislative power. It consists of 751 members (MEPs) and represents the second largest democratic electorate in the world (after India) and the largest international electorate in the world – 375 million voters [The EU and the World. Facts and Figures 2012].

In spite of growing importance in the law-making in the EU, both on trans-national and national level¹, EP elections suffer constant fall of voter turnout since the first elections in 1979. Since 1999 the turnout fell below 50% and reached the level 42,54% in the last, 2014 elections.

Figure 1. EP elections turnout, 1979-2014



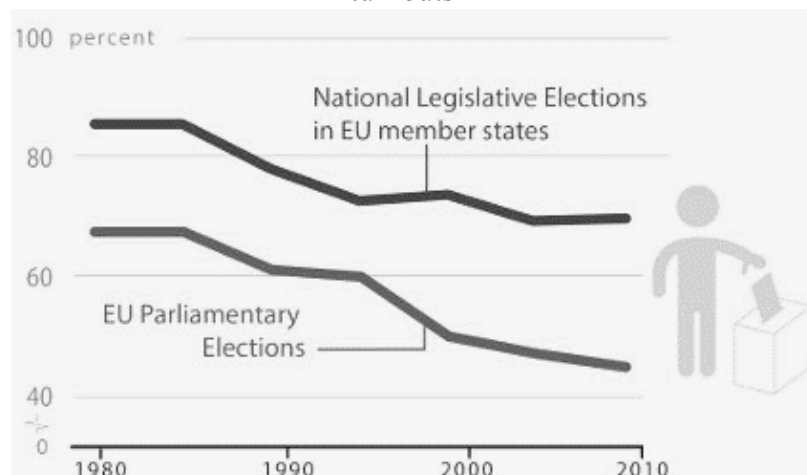
Source: TNS/Scytl in cooperation with the European Parliament.

There are different theories and hypotheses explaining the reasons of this trend. Probably the most notable explanation is the second-order elections theory [V.: Reif, Schmitt 1980]. The voters seem to be much less interested in the EP elections, because they perceive that there is less at stake, in comparison to national elections. They do not perceive the imminent effects of EP elections on their lives, as it can be easily noticed in case of national elections, resulting in formation of a national government. It is also argued that the lower turnout caused by lesser interest in European affairs, gives an overrepresentation to small protest-parties [European Parliament elections and EU governance]. It happens because EP electoral campaigns focus mainly on national issues and voters of protest parties use EP elections as an opportunity to express dissatisfaction with national governments and their policies². Following graph (figure 2) shows the earlier mentioned discrepancy in turnout between national and EP elections in time.

¹ Different estimates shows that the quantity of laws introduced in states originating from Brussels varies between 15% and 50%. V.: [How much legislation comes from Europe?].

² This thesis can serve as a partial explanation of relative success of Eurosceptic parties in 2014 elections.

Figure 2. Comparison between EP elections and national legislative elections turnouts



Source: www.idea.int/uid

Another explanation of declining turnout is connected with the process of demographic change. Previously observed higher turnout in EP elections was identified with the generation of baby-boomers and its commitment to European affairs [Bhatti, Hansen 2014]. The aging of this generation and its dropping activity (previously supporting high turnout) effects today in lower political involvement and turnout. Following generations seems to be more individualistic, and less interested in the public affairs in general, especially in European affairs that tend to be seen as vague [V.: Harris 2003].

Next major, structural theory trying to explain falling turnout is the democracy deficit theory [Moravcsik 2008]. Democratic deficit manifests itself in lack of politicians' accountability and European institutions, as they are rather appointed than elected. Structural changes introduced by the Lisbon Treaty gave more powers to the directly elected EP, but still the structure of power's delegation within the hierarchy of EU's institutions seems to be very complicated for voters – it makes those institutions less accountable for them. The complexity of the structure alienates voters further, as they do not understand the links between these institutions and their everyday lives. In spite of ongoing process of empowering democratic accountability of the EU's institutions, the issue remains problematic. The main question behind democratic deficit seems to be the transfer of legislative and even executive power to trans-national bodies of the Union [Follesdal, Hix 2006]. It gives the voters an impression that the center, where the most important decision are made, is taken further away from them (from the national government).

More current explanations of low turnout focus on the economic situation, which have deteriorated significantly due to the world economic crisis.

Some scholars connect turnout with trust in public institutions [Grönlund, Setälä 2007] – the higher the trust in the institutions, the higher the voter turnout. The theory adapted and modified for European circumstances, focuses on the public trust in the economic institutions, like European Central Bank. In this case EBC is perceived by European voters as the main responsible actor for the economic policy, ergo responsible for fighting against the economic crisis [McDougall, Mody 2014]. As the economic situation deteriorates, the trust in EBC falls, resulting in lower turnout in EP elections.

Empirical analysis: aggregate-level data

The aim of macro-level analysis is to determine similarities and differences between different types of elections. More specifically, we investigate spatial dispersion of voter turnout on commune (*gmina*) level. We use official electoral data, delivered by the State Election Commission (*Państwowa Komisja Wyborcza*, PKW). The dataset used in the article contains the official results of the EP elections in 2009 and 2014, the parliamentary elections of 2011 and the presidential elections of 2010. The data is operationalised on the commune level. We omit these communes that underwent changes impeding comparisons in analysed period, i.e. administrative changes involving shifting boundaries of communes, creation of new commune etc.

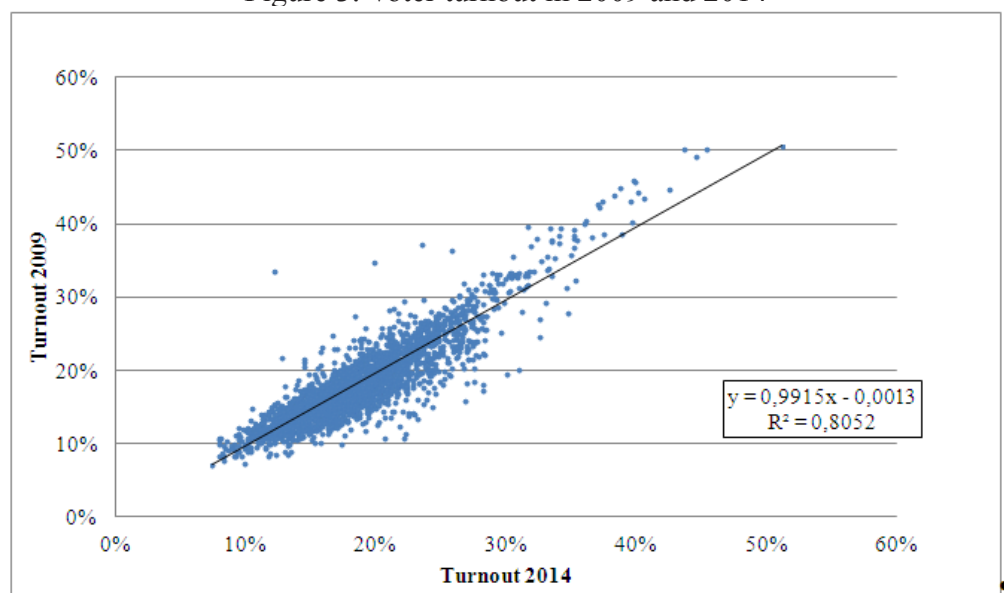
Table 1. EP 2004/2009/2014 in constituencies

	Voivodeship	Turnout		
		EP2004	EP2009	EP2014
Constituency no 1	Pomeranian	24,04%	28,05%	26,70%
Constituency no 2	Kuyavian-Pomeranian Voivodeship	18,70%	23,36%	22,59%
Constituency no 3	Podlaskie and Warmian-Masurian Voivodeship	17,62%	20,20%	19,34%
Constituency no 4	Warsaw	31,53%	38,92%	35,33%
Constituency no 5	Masovian (without Warsaw)	18,00%	19,74%	20,08%
Constituency no 6	Łódź	19,50%	23,55%	23,72%
Constituency no 7	Greater Poland	21,20%	24,13%	22,42%
Constituency no 8	Lublin	20,67%	22,04%	23,49%
Constituency no 9	Podkarpacie	21,60%	22,28%	23,99%
Constituency no 10	Lesser Poland and Świętokrzyskie	21,14%	26,11%	25,74%
Constituency no 11	Silesian	20,84%	25,26%	23,75%
Constituency no 12	Lowersilesian and Opole	19,30%	22,77%	21,73%
Constituency no 13	Lubusz and West Pomeranian	18,07%	20,84%	20,42%
TOTAL		20,87%	24,53%	23,83%

Source: own calculations based on PKW (State Election Commission) data.

We start our analyses with an overview of voter turnout in EP elections in Poland. Table 1 shows relevant information, i.e. general turnout in all EP elections in Poland. As one can see the constituencies with highest and lowest turnout are relatively stable, with Warsaw (the city) as the ‘top student’ in this field. Warsaw is the biggest, richest and most developed city in Poland, attracting especially young urban professionals, who tend to present more pro-active (than the rest of the citizenry) stance in public sphere. At the other end, with the lowest turnout one finds constituencies consisting of most rural voivodeships with lower GDP per capita, aging population and less educated population. The example of the Masovian Voivodeship (constituency number 5) is interesting, as its capital is Warsaw, but the capital forms separate constituency. Without the capital city, the whole province resembles the least developed voivodeships in Poland.

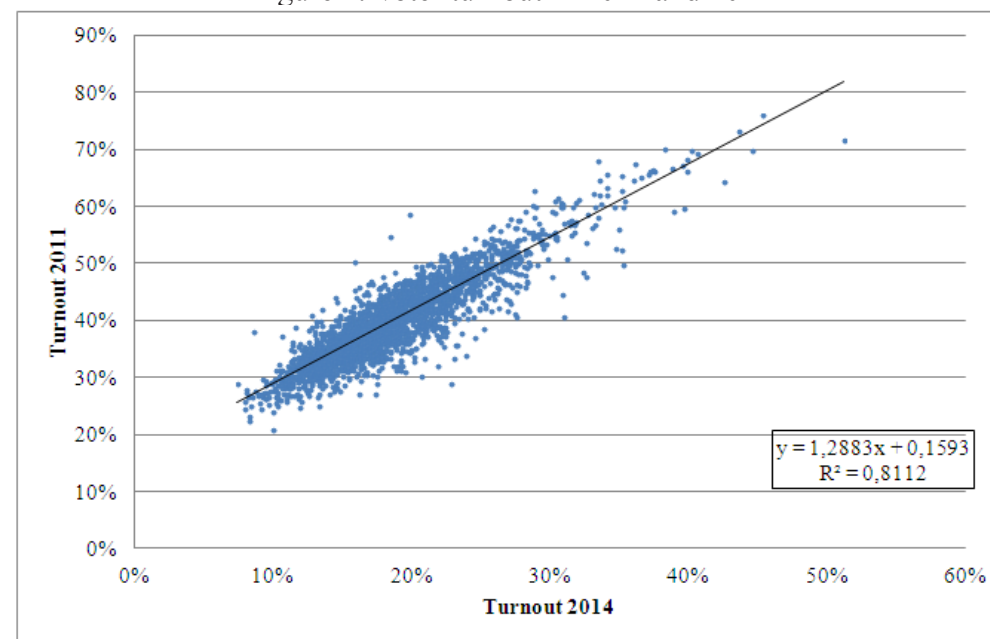
Figure 3. Voter turnout in 2009 and 2014



Source: own calculations based on PKW data.

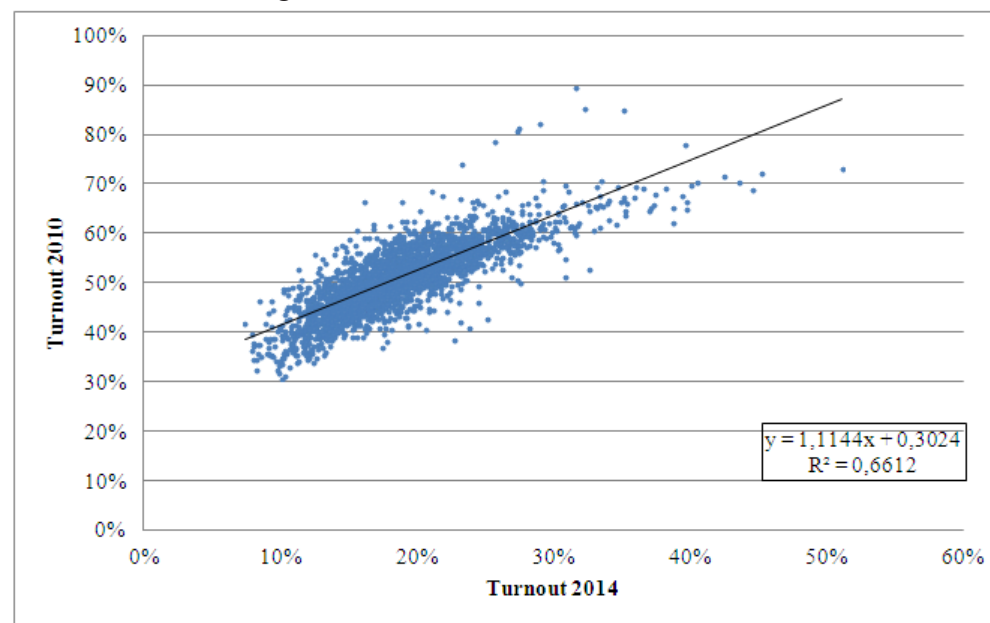
Then we proceed to analysis of voter turnout stability (on macro-level). Figure 3 shows a simple comparison of voter turnout in the EP elections of the 2009 and 2014. Given the instability of voting behaviour in Poland, often addressed in the literature [Cf.: Markowski 2006; 2008; Czeńnik 2006], the stability of voter turnout observed at the local level is striking: Pearson’s correlation coefficient R between voter turnout in the 2009 and 2014 EP elections equals 0,89. In other words, the level of turnout in the 2009 EP election explains *circa* 80% of voter turnout variance in the 2014 EP election.

Figure 4. Voter turnout in 2011 and 2014



Source: own calculations based on PKW data.

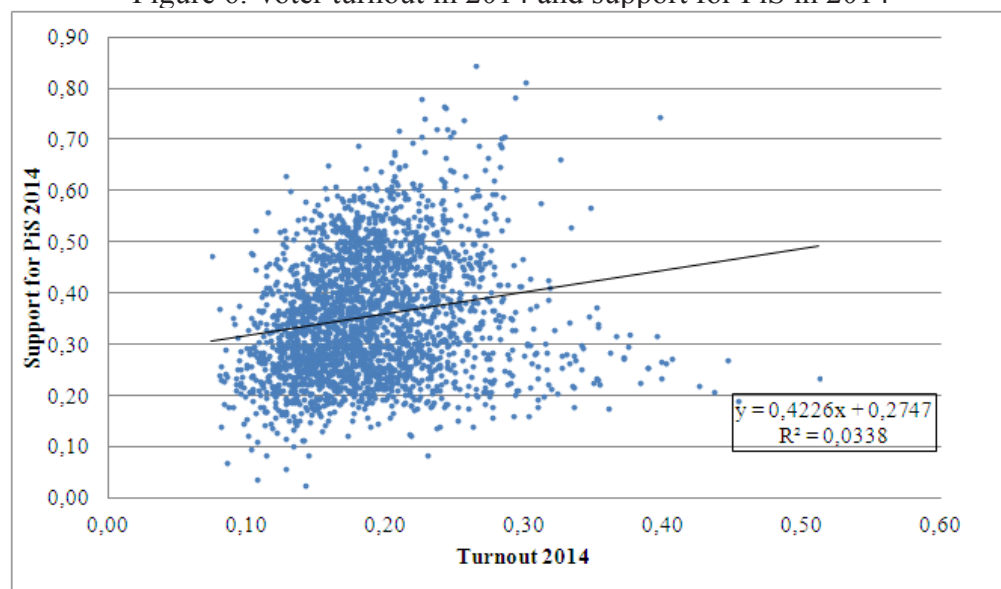
Figure 5. Voter turnout in 2010 and 2014



Source: own calculations based on PKW data.

Figures 4 and 5 show the relationship between voter turnout in the 2014 EP elections and voter turnout in the last parliamentary (2011) and presidential elections (second round, 2010). The comparison includes the level of voter turnout in 2014 and 2011 (Figure 4), and the level of voter turnout in 2014 and 2010 (Figure 5). Again, in both cases strong positive relationship (the Pearson's correlation coefficients R equal 0.90 and 0.81) can be identified.

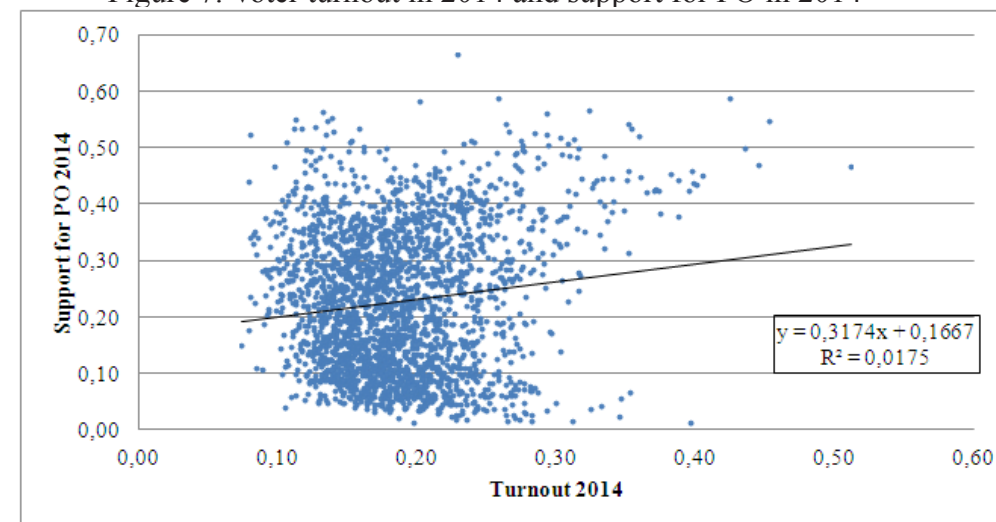
Figure 6. Voter turnout in 2014 and support for PiS in 2014



Source: own calculations based on PKW data.

Figures 6 and 7 report the relationship (at the commune level) between support for the dominant Polish political parties in 2014 (Civic Platform [*Platforma Obywatelska*, PO] and Law and Justice [*Prawo i Sprawiedliwość*, PiS]) and voter turnout. These relationships are much weaker, in fact they suggest that electoral participation is rather weakly associated with support for these political parties and does not have a strong impact on their electoral performance. In both cases, higher voter turnout is associated with a higher support for parties (and this relationship is statistically significant, though quite small): in the case of PiS, the Pearson's correlation coefficient R between the two variables equals 0.184, and in the case of PO it equals 0.132.

Figure 7. Voter turnout in 2014 and support for PO in 2014



Source: own calculations based on PKW data.

The results presented above contradict previous findings about the stability of electoral behaviour in Poland [Czeńnik 2007]. Earlier studies of this phenomenon showed very high, one of the highest in the world in fact, instability of voter turnout in Poland [Czeńnik 2008]. Similarly, analyses of electoral volatility of Poles [V.: Markowski, Czeńnik 2002; Markowski 2008; Jasiewicz 2008; Millard 2009] pointed to the exceptional 'shakiness' of Polish citizens. In a nutshell, these studies suggest that Poles quite easily transit from voting to abstention (or vice versa), and/or change their voting preferences between elections. Such assertions are at odds with the results of the analyses presented above.

Thus this macro-level stability observed in the empirical material, can be a signal of a fundamental change taking place on the Polish political scene, a signal of its petrification, when support for parties does not change even with change in voter turnout. These results require cross-checking, especially given the fact that they are in conflict with other existing data. It is interesting to what extent they indicate a general, durable, long-lasting pattern of increasing macro-level stabilization of voting behaviour. It might be expected that the identified effect can appear to be entirely episodic and idiosyncratic. Therefore further analyses, exploring individual-level data are necessary, to shed more light on this issue.

Unquestionably, the above analysis suffers from certain shortcomings. Firstly, the threat of ecological fallacy. Changes that might have happened on the individual level are not controlled. Additionally, one cannot reject the thesis that the shift in patterns of electoral behaviour are visible at the individual level, but not at the aggregate level, because it took place within the units of aggregation (i.e. within communes, municipalities).

Empirical analysis: individual-level data

This section investigates individual-level correlates and determinants of voter turnout in the 2014 EP elections in Poland. Relevant literature [Czeńnik 2007] suggests that we should observe significant effects of gender, age, education, religiosity, place of residence, ideological preferences (e.g. Left-Right scale). Previous studies [Czeńnik 2011] conducted in Poland, addressing the question of differences in electoral participation among groups defined in terms of the key socio-demographic variables (determining the position of an individual in a social structure), reveal quite significant and rather stable impacts of these variables on voter turnout. They demonstrate convincingly that (at least in years 1997-2007) electoral participation in Poland has been significantly related to gender, age, educational level and church attendance. Data from particular years provide a surprisingly similar picture and the impact of particular variables is more or less the same over time.

In the following analyse we employ post-election survey data, gathered within the framework of European Election Study (the 2014 edition). The EES 2014, in addition to the ‘classical’ post-electoral cross-section survey, also includes (for the first time) a panel component based on a series of country-specific online studies, administered in several EU member countries. The research aim behind this initiative is to compare the voting behaviour of respondents in the EP election of May 2014 with the subsequent first order national election vote. The first wave has been carried out right after the 2014 EP elections (these data are used in the analyses reported beneath) and the second wave will be carried out after the subsequent national elections.

Table 2. Voter turnout and gender³

		Gender		Total
		Female	Male	
I did not vote in the European Parliament elections	N	435	372	807
	%	28,4%	26,8%	27,6%
I thought about voting this time, but didn't do it	N	279	269	548
	%	18,2%	19,4%	18,8%
Usually I vote, but not this time	N	362	292	654
	%	23,7%	21,0%	22,4%
I'm sure I voted in the European Parliament elections	N	453	457	910
	%	29,6%	32,9%	31,2%
Total	N	1529	1390	2919
	%	100,0%	100,0%	100,0%
Pearson's Chi-squared test	Value	df	Asymptotic significance (two-sided)	
	6,005 ^a	3	,111	

Source: EES 2014.

According to our findings the differences in voter turnout between men and women in the 2014 EP elections in Poland are negligible. There is a slight over-representation of females in the group of non-voters (those who say “I did not vote in the European Parliament elections”), but this difference is minor and statistically insignificant. The same pertains to the over-representation of males in the group of voters (those who say “I'm sure I voted in the European Parliament elections”). The difference is rather small and lacks statistical significance. In the two intermediary groups (respondents who choose answers “I thought about voting this time, but didn't do it” and “Usually I vote, but not this time”) the differences are even smaller.

³ The question was phrased: “On the 25th of May this year election to the European Parliament were held. Many people did not vote, because they were ill, didn't have time, or they are simply not interested. Which of the below statements best describes your?”. In the table the “Don't know” answers are omitted.

Table 3. Voter turnout and age

		Age				Total
		18 - 24	25 - 39	40 - 59	60≤	
I did not vote in the European Parliament elections	N	107	268	256	176	807
	%	31,2%	30,7%	26,8%	23,6%	27,6%
I thought about voting this time, but didn't do it	N	78	173	155	142	548
	%	22,7%	19,8%	16,2%	19,1%	18,8%
Usually I vote, but not this time	N	65	178	237	174	654
	%	19,0%	20,4%	24,8%	23,4%	22,4%
I'm sure I voted in the European Parliament elections	N	93	255	309	253	910
	%	27,1%	29,2%	32,3%	34,0%	31,2%
Total	N	343	874	957	745	2919
	%	100,0%	100,0%	100,0%	100,0%	100,0%
Pearson's Chi-squared test 27,153 ^a		Value	df	Asymptotic significance (two-sided)		
		9		,001		

Source: EES 2014.

Age is one of sociodemographic characteristics which indisputably influences voter turnout. In general, the relationship between age and voter turnout is curvilinear: turnout is the lowest among the youngest voters, then it gradually increases to pick among middle-aged and then slowly decreases among elderly voters. Our analyses (reported in table 3) confirm this notion at least partly. In the 2014 EP elections in Poland we observe a statistically significant relationship between age and voter turnout, but this relationship is not curvilinear. Coding of the age variable – it is not continuous, but it contains age categories – might have produced this result⁴. According to our findings young people are least likely to vote. Then levels of electoral participation increases monotonically with age; voter turnout is the highest in the categories of middle-aged and elderly citizens. Due to stronger community attachments, greater participation in organizations, greater church attendance and higher income, they are more interested in politics and more prone to vote. Young people on the other hand probably have other than political concerns. Once they pass through various transition points (including leaving home, finishing education, getting a job, settling down and getting married) their propensity to vote increases. We do not find any decrease of voter turnout among the oldest voters, obstacles such as health problems, increasing disability and decreasing income do not seem to influence the propensity to vote in the group of citizens who are above 60 years of age.

⁴ Curvilinearity of the relationship is 'hidden' in the group of 60+ citizens; probably the cutting point is 'higher', among 70-75 years of age. Due to this fact we cannot see it in the analysis.

Table 4. Voter turnout and place of residence

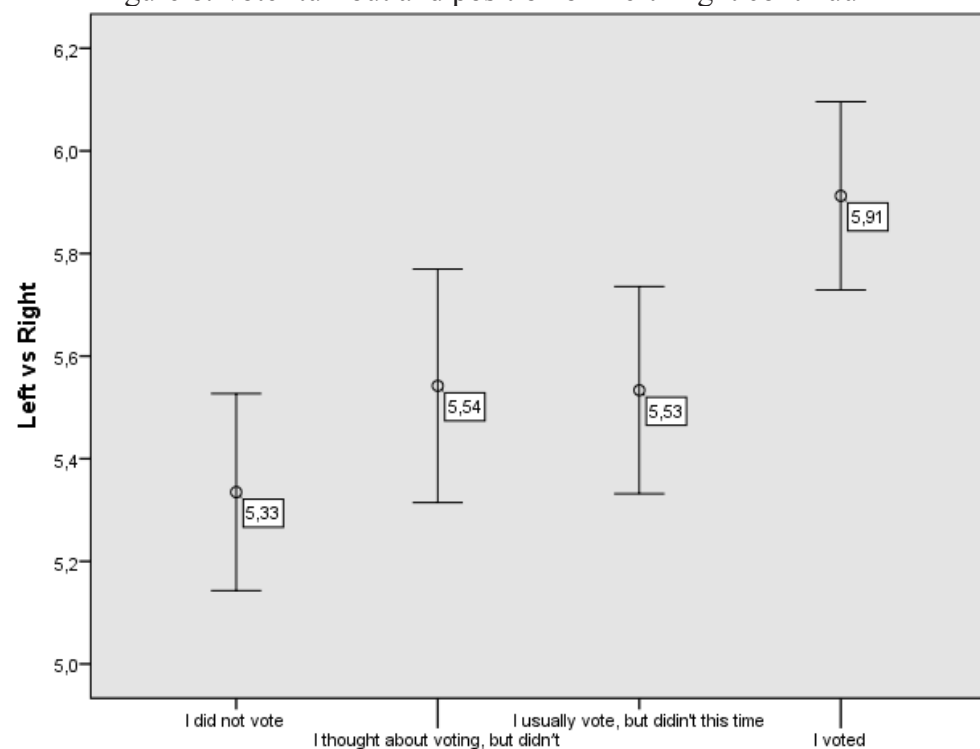
		City over 200 thousand	City 50-200 thousand	City up to 50 thousand.	Village	Total
		I did not vote in the European Parliament elections	N	148	147	181
%	26,3%		25,1%	27,5%	29,7%	27,6%
I thought about voting this time, but didn't do it	N	110	107	111	220	548
	%	19,5%	18,3%	16,9%	19,7%	18,8%
Usually I vote, but not this time	N	116	134	158	246	654
	%	20,6%	22,9%	24,0%	22,1%	22,4%
I'm sure I voted in the European Parliament elections	N	189	197	207	317	910
	%	33,6%	33,7%	31,5%	28,5%	31,2%
Total	N	563	585	657	1114	2919
	%	100,0%	100,0%	100,0%	100,0%	100,0%
Pearson's Chi-squared test 12,086 ^a		Value	Df	Asymptotic significance (two-sided)		
		9		,208		

Source: EES 2014.

The relationship between voter turnout and place of residence is less clear and may be puzzling (table 4). Typically, in previous elections in Poland, there was a clear trend: the bigger city of residence, the higher turnout. According to our findings there are some slight differences in voter turnout between the categories of this variable, but the relationship observed is not statistically significant. There is a slight over-representation of voters in the group of urban residents (those living in the cities over 200 thousand inhabitants) and slight over-representation of non-voters in the group of rural residents (those living in the villages), but these differences are quite small and – more importantly – lack statistical significance. Thus we can plausibly conclude that in the 2014 EP elections in Poland the relationship between voter turnout and place of residence is rather negligible.

Due to lack of relevant data we are unable to analyse the relationships between voter turnout and other important sociodemographic variables, which often influence significantly electoral participation, i.e. education and religiosity (like church attendance). But it is plausible to expect, especially taking into account (typical) impacts of other sociodemographics (analysed in this article) on electoral participation in the 2014 EP elections, that their effects were "usual", i.e. similar to the effects they exerted on voter turnout in previous elections. Therefore we can quite plausibly claim that voters in the 2014 EP election in Poland differ in terms of education and religiosity from non-voters: they are – on average – better educated and more religious.

Figure 8. Voter turnout and position on Left-Right continuum⁵

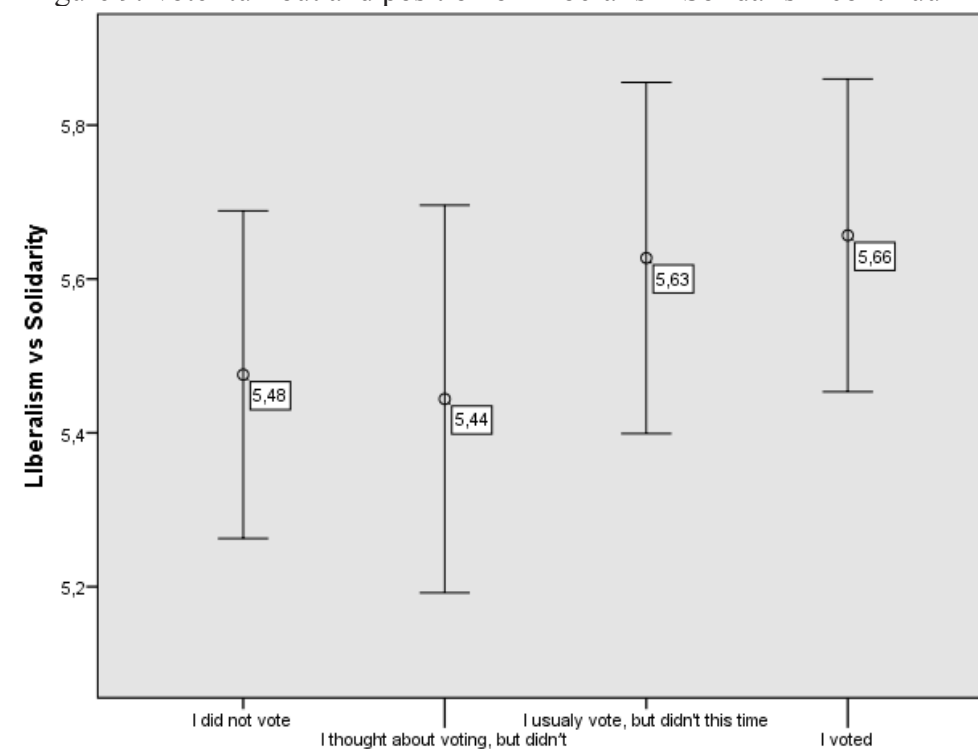


Source: EES 2014.

Our analysis is not limited to sociodemographics, as we take closer look at political differences between voters and non-voters. In figure 8 we present differences in Left-Right positioning, existing between voters and non-voters (and the two intermediary groups). The mean value of this variable is close to the centre of the scale, with a slight skew towards the right side of the continuum. The only significant difference observed exists between voters and non-voters (voters are more “rightist”, non-voters are more “leftist”); the two intermediary groups (respondents who choose answers “I thought about voting this time, but didn’t do it” and “Usually I vote, but not this time”) do not differ significantly from voters and non-voters (and from one another).

⁵ The question was phrased: “In politics we sometimes talk about the “left” and “right”. How would you define your political views? On a scale of 0 to 10, on which ‘0’ is “left” and ‘10’ is “right” please mark the number which best describes your political views”. In the analysis the “Don’t know” answers are omitted.

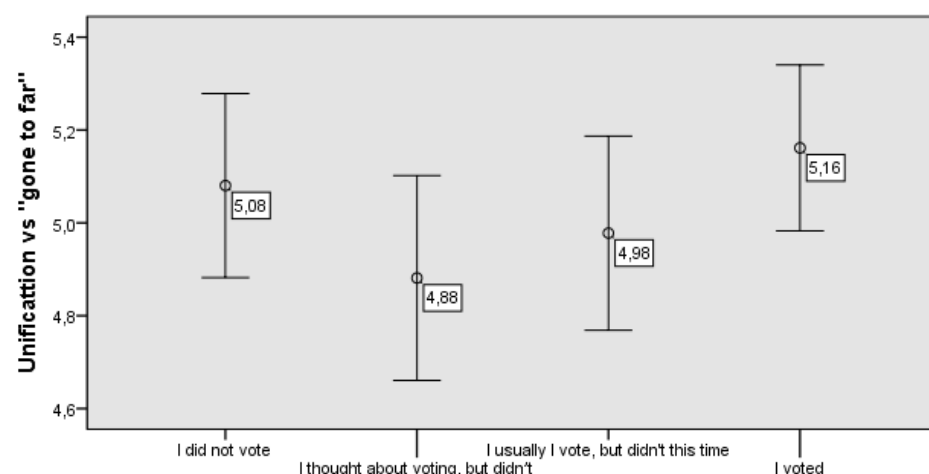
Figure 9. Voter turnout and position on Liberalism-Solidarism continuum⁶



Source: EES 2014.

Figure 9 provides further information about (potential) political differences between voters and non-voters. It presents the relationship between voter turnout and positions on “Solidary Poland vs Liberal Poland” scale. According to our analysis the differences between the groups are small and statistically insignificant. The mean value for both voters and non-voters falls close to the centre of the scale; it is slightly skewed towards the “Solidary Poland” end of the continuum. In a nutshell, “Solidary Poland vs Liberal Poland” an important aspect of Polish politics, does not relate significantly to voter turnout in the 2014 EP elections.

⁶ The question was phrased: “In politicians sometimes talk about the split into “Solidarity Poland” and “Liberal Poland”. Where would you place yourself on that scale?”. In the analysis the “Don’t know” answers are omitted.

Figure 10. Voter turnout and attitudes towards European integration⁷

Source: EES 2014.

The same pertains to the European integration issue (often regarded as an important determinant of voter turnout in the EP elections). In figure 10 we compare mean positions (of the four groups under scrutiny) on the 0-10 scale, related to this question. The differences observed are rather small and statistically insignificant; consequently, we can conclude that in the 2014 EP election in Poland the impact of attitudes towards European integration on voter turnout is limited or negligible.

Conclusions

The main objective of this study is to discuss the issue of voter turnout in the 2014 EP election in Poland. It provides the results of preliminary analyses, which address empirically this topic. More specifically, we investigate macro-level spatial dispersion of voter turnout in Poland (and analyse similarities/dissimilarities in voter turnout rates existing between geographically defined entities), and we also study micro-level determinants and correlates of voter turnout.

The paper concludes with three main assertions. Firstly, our findings support the thesis that Polish political scene has somewhat petrified in the last years. Macro-level stability of spatial dispersion of voter turnout, observed

across geographically defined entities (communes) in Poland, can signalise important processes occurring in the political system. They might indicate an ongoing consolidation of the system, which materialises – *inter alia* – in increasing (macro-level) stabilization of voting behaviour.

Our second major conclusion pertains to the individual level. According to our findings voter turnout in the 2014 EP election in Poland is quite predictable and unsurprising. Patterns of voter turnout are similar to those observed in earlier Polish elections. Electoral participation in Poland is determined by factors which usually have impact on voter turnout in general⁸. This observation corresponds with our first conclusion, indicating an ongoing consolidation of the Polish political system – consolidating, maturing electoral democracy should be in fact characterised by stabilising patterns of voting behaviour, identifiable on both aggregate and individual level.

Our third conclusion is of a more general type. The main characteristic of the previous elections in Poland (including EP elections) was low voter turnout. After the 2014 EP elections nothing has changed in this regard. Again extensive electoral abstention was the main idiosyncrasy of this election. This fact shows that the EP elections became, ten years after the accession, a normal aspect of the Polish politics, which does not generate any extra tensions, does not produce much of political mobilisation and is not a source of political disorder and turbulences. Therefore – quite paradoxically and ironically – low voter turnout in the EP elections can be perceived as a sign of painless and unproblematic ‘Europeanisation’⁹ of Polish politics.

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⁸ Poland is quite ‘unexceptional’ in terms of voter turnout determinants, i.e. voter turnout in Poland is usually determined by factors which also influence turnout in other countries; gender, age and education have an impact on turnout in majority of modern democracies.

⁹ Understood here as an incorporation of the European-level procedures and mechanisms (such as the EP elections) into the Polish political life.

⁷ The question was phrased: “Some believe that Europe should go further in the unification process. Others believe that the unification process has gone too far. What is your opinion? On a scale of 0 to 10, on which ‘0’ is “unification” and ‘10’ is “gone too far”. Where would you place yourself on that scale?”. In the analysis the “Don’t know” answers are omitted.

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CANDIDATE SELECTION IN THE 2014 EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT ELECTION IN POLAND

Abstract:

The article presents the determinants of creating candidate lists in European Parliament elections in Poland. Its subject context is the evaluation of importance of selected factors with reference to the effect obtained in the election. The main study hypothesis assumes different patterns of creating candidate lists in EP elections in comparison to parliamentary elections, involving the combined occurrence of several determinants. The first of them is the tendency to fill the highest positions in candidate lists with popular people well-known in the media, who have an advantage over anonymous ones. The second factor is territorial bonds connecting candidates with the electoral district where they stand for election. Another determinant taken into consideration is the territorial form of the candidate list. The last important element of analysis is the concentration of support, determined by the position on the candidate list.

Keywords:

party candidate selection, European parliamentary election, candidate list position, Polish party system

Introduction

One of the most important procedures defining elections in democratic states is the way of appointing candidates standing for election, often having a greater impact on the ultimate result of the elections than the applied electoral system. As William Cross [2008: 615] writes concerning the selection process, “*party candidate selection processes may be equally or more determinative of who ends up in the legislature than are general elections*”. Regardless of the applied electoral system, the institutionalization of the electoral process in contemporary democracies means that receiving a political nomination is

the preliminary stage in the process of selection of political elites. The selection carried out by parties may have two main dimensions: the substantive one and the political one. The substantive demand assumes that the candidate should have the relevant qualities, which on the one hand can facilitate generating support and as a consequence, selection, and on the other hand, predestine them to correctly fulfil their role resulting from the potential election. The political dimension of candidate selection may assume the necessity of party membership or at least ideological identity with the key values which constitute the axiological and policy foundation. Apart from these, nomination can be obtained among others by way of coalition bargaining between political parties or family-and-friends connotations. The practical dimension of candidate lists selection is the process of appointing candidates to run for election. It adopts four basic types: non-regulated appointment, appointment by local authorities, appointment by central authorities, and primary election (appointment by party members) [Sokół 2003: 73-75].

The execution of the selection function involves the choice and strategic appointment of candidates to stand for election. The candidates are then verified in the voting procedure. Krister Lundell [2004: 27-30] mentions centralized and decentralized ways of candidate selection and points out the size of the party as the main determinant. Large parties prefer the application of decentralized model, and small ones adopt more democratic ways. In the way of selection, regional patterns are also important, as part of which he indicates preferences for the centralized model among south European political parties and the opposite among Scandinavian ones, where the selection is rather decentralized. An important consequence of the application of a certain way of selection is the possible differences in the candidates' political subjectivity level. The centralization of selection may contribute to reducing the candidates' subjectivity, and decentralization may increase it instead [Shomer 2009: 953].

The article presents the specificity of creating candidate lists in European Parliament elections in Poland. Its subject context is the evaluation of importance of selected factors with reference to the effect obtained in the election. The temporal context is the 2014 election. The subjective aspect includes the analysis of the structure of candidate lists in two largest parties – Platforma Obywatelska (*Civic Platform*) and Prawo i Sprawiedliwość (*Law and Justice*). The main study hypothesis assumes different patterns of creating candidate lists in EP elections in comparison to parliamentary elections, involving the combined occurrence of several determinants. The first of them is the tendency to fill the highest positions in candidate lists with popular people well-known in the media, who have an advantage over anonymous ones. The second factor is territorial bonds connecting candidates with the electoral district where they

stand for election. Another determinant taken into consideration is the territorial form of the candidate list. The last important element of analysis is concentration of support.

Candidate selection procedure in European Parliament elections

Although there have only been three European Parliament elections in Poland so far, they have already managed to leave their imprint on political parties and the party system. Their institutional dimension and the character of party competition mostly make them similar to parliamentary elections, but with a lower rank. Karlheinz Reif and Hermann Schmitt [1980: 6-11] called EP elections *second-order elections*, mainly because they are carried out on the basis of internal political determinants which marginalize the meaning of divisions and conflicts of the European environment. In addition, although EP elections are organized in all EU states at the same time, their importance is largely reduced by the fact that they occur at different stages of internal (national) electoral cycles. The presented conclusions were confirmed in the research by Michael Marsh [1998: 595]; however, in some cases he formulated them in less absolute terms. Additionally, the researcher confirmed the connection between EP elections and national elections taking place subsequently, referring in practice to their temporal correlation and national parliamentary elections [Gabel 2000: 54].

Taking into consideration the case of Poland, it is a little difficult to classify European Parliament elections, mainly due to the fact of electing representatives for a supranational authority. This fact, despite its undeniably prestigious character, determines different strategies executed by political parties. Polish and European experiences in this regard show that parties treat these elections differently, regarding them as second order elections, which is also partly contributed to by the low public interest (concerning participation) [de Vreese, Banducci, Semetko, Boomgaarden 2006]. Radosław Markowski [2009: 31-32] observes that: "... the difference between parliamentary elections and EP elections is that in these elections the national issues are more important than the European ones, also, that people vote in a way which shows it is according to their sincere and first preference, so small parties get the advantage ...". The place and character of exercising the mandate of MEP, which for obvious reasons makes it harder to engage fully in domestic politics and thus positions one far behind the national party leaders in the political hierarchy, is also important.

The presented determinants result in the fact that the process of creating European Parliament candidate lists in the key parties is strongly centralized, and the appointments, unlike in any other elections, mainly depend on the party authorities. It is so for strategic reasons as part of which the decentralization of

selecting candidates for the lists might cause the decrease of electoral potential of the whole party [Katz 2001: 290-291]. Dieter Nohlen [2004: 92] underscores that the form of a candidate list indicates both the voter-candidate relation and the candidate's attitude to their own party, which is reflected in parties' interests that might be harmed by individual ambitions of particular members. It does not mean, however, that the strategies of creating candidate lists of particular parties are identical, nor that they are not subject to any modifications during the election preparation phase. The dynamics of political situation even requires the creation of alternative scenarios that might potentially be used in the case of changing conditions of the conducted campaign. Simon Hix [2004: 199] also observes that the degree of centralization of candidate selection in EP elections affects their later relations with the parent parties. Strong centralization leads to the deputy's greater dependence on their party in the future. Finally, the attempt to centralize the way of creating candidate lists gives various effects, including a very limited ultimate result. It is so especially in the case of the states where the democratic procedures of candidate selection are deeply rooted (e.g. Ireland) or where these procedures are even legally regulated [Katz 2001: 291].

The process of candidate selection for the lists is also determined by the existing electoral system, both its general character and individual components [Hazan, Rahat 2006: 109]. The proportional electoral formula, especially combined with the relatively low number of seats to apportion, forces the parties to fill the candidate lists, which may be a considerable challenge taking into consideration the preferences for the national parliament among the key activists. And the problem is not the quantitative aspect, which is easy to manage for large parties, but the political position of the nominated candidates. The most significant party leaders execute their objectives at the national politics level, and treat the opportunity to participate in the EP as a risk of degradation or a loss of political influence. That is why, somewhat analogously to elections to second chambers of the parliament, it can be noted that the lists of the main parties include persons not engaged in the processes of current party management.

The high importance of candidate selection mechanisms in EP elections is also the result of combination of relatively big electoral districts (in terms of territory) and relatively low number of seats to be assigned in each district. It contributes to preparing candidate lists in a way which allows for party authorities considerably controlling the direction of seat allocation. The described mechanism results from two key factors. The first of them is geographic segmentation of support and the possibility to predict quite precisely the future number of achieved seats in particular districts. The second is empirically verifiable preference to support number one candidates from party lists, although obviously the fact of typically placing party leaders there also plays a role.

All this means that EP elections do not occur in a political vacuum but are subject to processes of transferring the patterns of internal party relations from the national level to the European platform [Meserve, Pemstein, Bernhard 2009: 2].

An important determinant of creating EP candidate lists is nominating persons weakly associated with politics or even having no political connotations. This mechanism is also present in parliamentary elections but its range is relatively smaller. Such actions, although often effective (in the case of very popular candidates), from the point of view of political party's interest may evoke some doubts about treating voters subjectively and cause conflicts with local structures of parties which may want to promote their representatives on the lists. So-called celebrities present on candidate lists are supposed to increase the interest in party's electoral offer, to warm up the technocratic image and to reduce the political distance to the voters. The previous experiences show, however, that only few candidates from beyond the party mainstream can expect election success and EP seats, although greater preference in this regard is noticeable in Central and Eastern Europe [Andretta, Chelotti 2012: 12].

The third important aspect of creating candidate lists in EP elections is the possibility to use the potential of first positions on the lists. It is connected with the voters' tendency to vote for persons from the top of the list, although – obviously – the fact of typically placing party leaders there also plays a role. In the 2009 election, among number one candidates from the 4 parties which participated in seat distribution, the leaders lost to party rivals with farther positions only in 8 cases (15.4%). This may prove the supposed relation between the position on the candidate list and the achieved support, although it does not fully explain the character of the phenomenon [Wojtasik 2010: 394].

Candidate lists in the 2014 EP election

The key element of creating the lists in European Parliament election was the attempt to find balance between three factors. The first of them is the general tendency to place persons the most popular in the media on the first positions of candidate lists, as they attract voters by their public visibility. The second element of this balance is taking territorial bonds into consideration. Polish electoral districts in European Parliament elections are big and most of them are territorially diversified. Other studies on the behaviours of Polish voters, in turn, show that the territorial bond is an important factor influencing their decisions and hence the tendency to take this diversity into consideration when constructing candidate lists [Flis 2011]. But in this case the additional element was the wish to influence the personal composition of party representation in the European Parliament election. This wish is not so obvious, as is proved by

the fact that the Warsaw district had an excess of candidates with a strong position in the media or inside the party who were interested in acquiring seats in relation to the number of available seats. Hence the clear tendency to put up candidates from Warsaw in other districts.

In both main parties the phenomenon of putting up candidates in districts other than the places of residence had a similar extent. From PO (Civic Platform), 8 candidates stood in other districts, 6 out of whom were registered in Warsaw or the agglomeration. From PiS (Law and Justice), 9 candidates stood in other districts, 8 out of whom were registered in Warsaw or the agglomeration. In PiS, 2 of them had the first position on the lists, and 3 of them, the second position. In PO, there were five number-one candidates in that group, and one candidate from the second position. In PO, four of the positions were seat-ensuring positions, which means that they would give the candidates seats if the apportionment only depended on the order on the list. All of them were the first positions of the lists. In PiS, four places taken by “parachute candidates” were also seat-ensuring positions defined this way: two first positions and two second ones.

In the group of so-called “parachute candidates”, two persons in each party were candidates who had been born and raised in the districts from which they stood but later moved to bigger centres. All these four persons had previously acquired seats standing in those districts in European or national elections. The same was typical of the other four candidates – two from each of the discussed parties. Among the first position candidates, three persons from PO and two persons from PiS had no previous connections with the electoral districts. A clear tendency is noticeable here: if candidates from outside the districts appeared on the lists, they were more often placed on top positions, although it was not a 100% rule.

Eight out of the 17 candidates standing for election in places other than the places of residence – nearly a half – received the EP seats. This means a higher percentage of success than in the whole candidate group (in each of the main parties, fewer than 15% of candidates obtained seats). Two of such candidates placed on seat-ensuring positions were beaten by candidates from farther positions – the losers were Jacek Rostowski (according to the National Electoral Commission database, Jan Vincent-Rostowski) from position no. 1 on the PO list in Bydgoszcz, and Hanna Foltyn-Kubicka from position no. 2 on the PiS list in Warsaw. Three candidates acquired seats despite having completely no previous relations with the districts where they stood for election. All of them were candidates from the top list positions – Dariusz Rosati from PO as well as Karol Karski and Ryszard Czarnecki from PiS. The other candidates who received seats, especially the three candidates from positions other than first (Kazimierz Ujazdowski and Beata Gosiewska from PiS and Tadeusz Zwiefka from PO) are

persons who had previously obtained seats in the districts where they were put up. These were the seats of: an MP, a senator and an MEP, respectively. Putting up a candidate from another district on the first position in Lublin by PO did not pay off, because the party lost the seat it had obtained there before.

The attempts to ensure seats for the chosen candidates by putting them up in other districts were generally limited to a small scale and had even more limited effects. Even placing a candidate at no. 1 position on the list did not guarantee the seat if the candidate had not had anything in common with the particular district. Still, 3 out of 5 main party candidates received the seats. As for registration outside the district, it does not seem to be a particularly great burden if the candidate has clear relations with the district – either historical or resulting from previously obtaining a seat in that district, even if the success had been the result of having the first position on a *sejm* election list (Kazimierz Ujazdowski, Julia Pitera).

Territorial construction of the lists

The next stage of the analysis was to verify the degree of relevance of the final form of candidate lists of the two main parties to the territorial divisions in particular districts. Only the cases of Platforma Obywatelska and Prawo i Sprawiedliwość were chosen for analysis, because in the other parties, only one seat was received by a candidate from a position other than first. In addition, PiS obtained seats in all the districts, and PO in twelve out of the thirteen districts. In a considerable number of districts, these parties obtained two seats each. So in the case of these parties, the territorial diversity was significant. Not only first position candidates and not only candidates who managed to beat them had a chance to receive the seats but also persons from farther positions.

So the electoral district applied in senate elections was adopted as a territorial diversity unit. This choice was motivated by the fact that the number of senate districts after the reform is similar to the number of candidates put up by the parties in the European Parliament elections. Neither the division into voivodeships, nor *sejm* election districts, nor even the division into poviats had this feature. A hundred and thirty candidates theoretically could be evenly distributed in a hundred senate districts. It should be remembered, however, that European Parliament electoral districts have different sizes and – as a result – cover different numbers of senate districts. Hence, ideal allocation of candidates in this division was impossible.

For the purpose of the analysis, some of the senate districts were combined so that the number of units in none of the EP electoral district exceeded ten. In addition, the metropolises which are split into several districts in senate

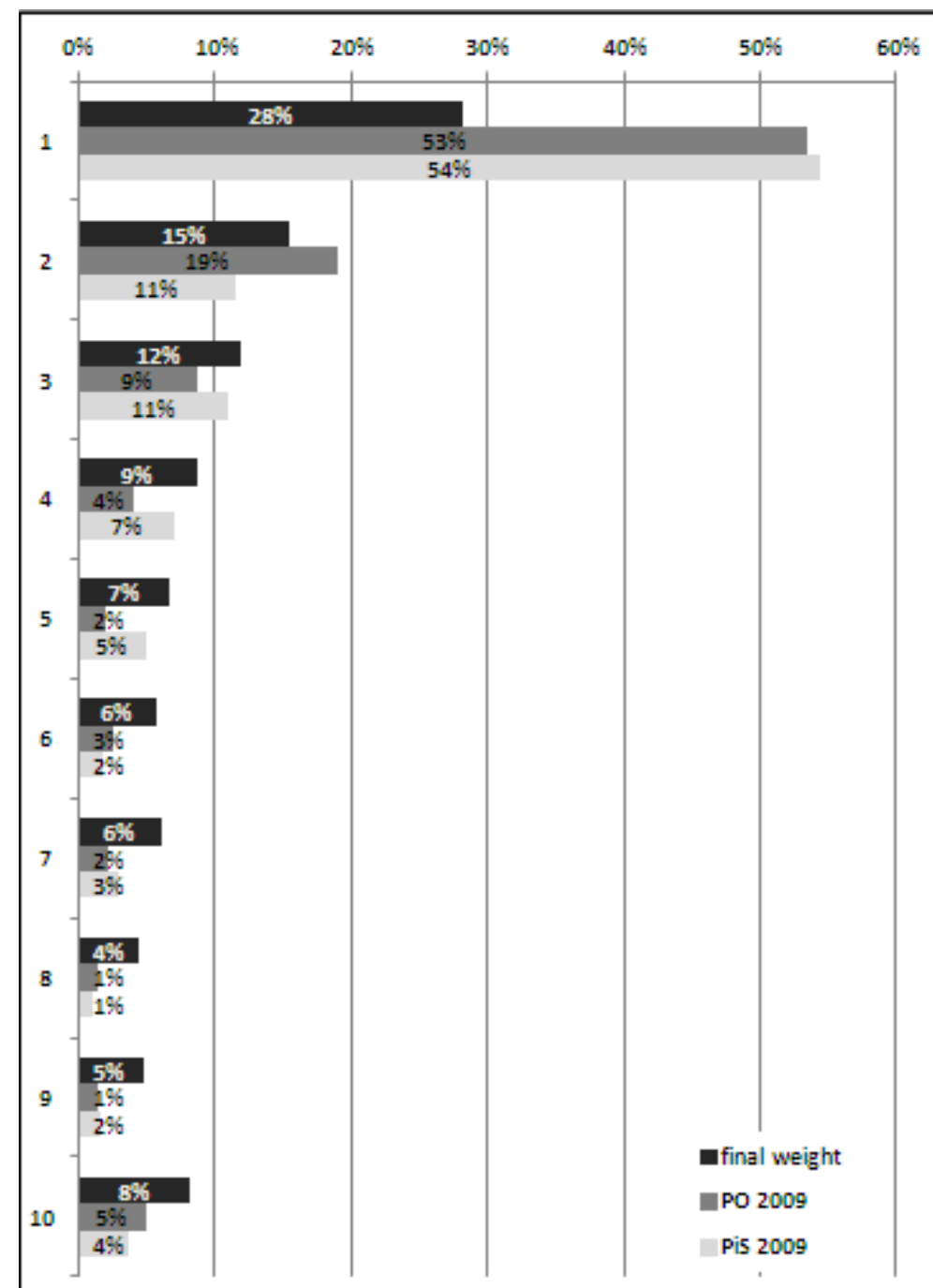
elections were treated as entire units. It was assumed that divisions of metropolises into senate districts are not based on deeper territorial differences.

Apart from metropolises, there was only a problem with the fit in Śląskie Voivodeship: thirteen senators are elected there, whereas only ten European Parliament candidates can be put up. For the purpose of the analysis, two adjacent districts were combined in three cases. Two Częstochowa districts were combined, as were Rybnik and Jastrzębie Zdrój districts as well as Katowice district and the one including Tychy and Mysłowice towns and the Bieruń and Łęczyny powiat.

This way, 91 units were isolated for analysis: from 3 in Warsaw I district up to 10 in Kraków, Katowice and Wrocław districts. For each unit it was computed what percentage of votes cast for a given party in the 2009 election in each district came from this particular unit. This allowed to estimate the significance each part of the district should have for the candidate list created according to such a conjecture.

In order to determine the importance of the territorial factor for the candidate lists, the significance of particular positions on the EP candidate lists was also estimated. The result of the 2009 election was adopted as the point of reference, calculating for both parties what percentage of votes obtained in the whole country was obtained by the candidates from particular positions on the lists. The objective was to determine a general pattern with the greatest possible averaging of effects resulting from the candidates' individual qualities. Importantly, the patterns resulting from this calculation were very similar to those concerning other (smaller) parties. There were some deviations, especially in the case of small or very specific parties, such as PSL (*Polish Peasants' Party*), but in the majority of parties the same division occurred. Number one candidates received approximately half the votes, and then the vote participation of candidates from the next positions successively decreased, although at the end it grew again. The results averaged for both parties are presented in Chart 1.

Chart 1. Participation of candidates from particular positions in votes cast for the list on the 2009 election and the estimated significance of the position on the list



Source: Own study based on information from the National Electoral Commission.

Individual candidates' results in the system of open list are distributed in accordance with the power law probability distribution, which suggests the multiplication of various kinds of advantage of the candidates. And as research shows, the position on the list is only one of such advantages [Raciborski, Rakocy 2009]. That is why not the empirically determined percentage of votes obtained by each candidate but rather the root of such participation was adopted as the weight of the position. Such rescaling led to the first position losing nearly half of its weight at the expense of the other positions. Values assumed this way are also presented in Chart 1.

In the next step, the candidates coming from particular senate districts and their weights resulting from the positions on the list was determined for each senate district. Thus the significance of each senate district from the perspective of the particular party's list was attributed to that district. This significance was compared with the significance of the district for the result of voting for the given party in the previous European Parliament election.

Very high correlation indices were obtained for both parties. Generally, the index was 0.75-0.76, but even when ignoring the extreme case of Warsaw I district, where one town clearly dominates over the rest of the district, the correlation coefficients still exceeded 0.6. In social sciences, such correlations are regarded as very strong. Such a strong correlation indicates the dominant pattern, as part of which the territorial bond is one of the key elements of candidate list construction. Candidates from particular parts of districts are placed on the lists in the order resulting from the weight these parts have for the general result of the party. We can suppose that each of them is to "serve" the relevant part of territorial identities making up the whole district in European elections. This observation follows the phenomena also occurring in countries where closed candidate lists are used [Rahat, Hazan 2001]. This issue might be seen from the perspective of general mechanisms of representative democracy: such a construction of the list would then be expected to ensure possibly complete representation of individual parts of the country. The problem is that even in the largest parties the list of each party receives only one seat in most electoral districts. Hence, logically it is impossible to provide such representation. So putting up excessive numbers of candidates has a purely marketing character. "Serving" the voters gives them slight chance for real representation, whereas it ensures additional votes for the list – cast for candidates who are known in advance to be losers.

However, this correlation – incomplete anyway – shows that there is no absolute consistency between the construction of the list and the weight of particular parts of the district in European elections. At a closer look, a number of senate electoral districts, sometimes important for the election result, had no

representatives from those districts on the lists, while in the neighbouring districts there were a few such representatives. The examples of electoral districts with no local candidates on either of the two main lists were e.g. the Tarnów district in Małopolskie Voivodeship or the Pińczów district in Świętokrzyskie Voivodeship.

Concentration of support

The importance of this factor is observed when the results of first position candidates are compared to the best of the remaining candidates in particular senate districts. The results for both parties are presented in Table 1. For each senate district (with the modifications described above) it shows what percentage of votes was cast for the candidate from no. 1 position and for the best of the remaining ones. The first candidate received on average 53% in PO and 45% in PiS. The best one of the rest received on average 26% in PO and 30% in PiS. The lighter background indicates the cases when support for the candidate was at least 1/3 higher than the mean for that candidate type. The darker background indicates the cases when support for the candidate was 1/3 lower than the mean.

Table 1. Results of no. 1 candidates and their strongest rivals in EP election divided into senate electoral districts

EP	Senate	main town	PO 1	PO other	PiS 1	PiS other
1	62	Słupsk	49%	23%	40%	23%
1	63	Chojnice	43%	18%	46%	20%
1	64	Gdynia	55%	25%	40%	36%
1	65	Gdańsk	49%	31%	55%	24%
1	66	Starogard Gd.	45%	24%	54%	11%
1	67	Malbork	52%	23%	59%	12%
2	9	Bydgoszcz	31%	49%	57%	36%
2	10	Inowrocław	27%	40%	48%	25%
2	11	Toruń	42%	43%	24%	65%
2	12	Grudziądz	26%	43%	32%	46%
2	13	Włocławek	30%	36%	40%	34%
3	59	Suwałki	70%	12%	49%	28%
3	60	Białystok	82%	8%	42%	45%
3	61	Bielsk Podl.	72%	16%	35%	28%
3	84	Elbląg	43%	27%	73%	6%
3	85	Ostróda	43%	25%	46%	34%
3	86	Olsztyn	46%	44%	55%	16%

Jarosław Flis, Waldemar Wojtasik

EP	Senate	main town	PO 1	PO other	PiS 1	PiS other
3	87	Ełk	48%	28%	55%	11%
4	40	Wołomin	69%	10%	31%	32%
4	41	Pruszków	71%	10%	40%	37%
4	42.45	Warsaw	74%	10%	49%	29%
5	38	Płock	51%	21%	47%	25%
5	39	Ciechanów	53%	22%	37%	25%
5	46	Ostrołęka	47%	35%	20%	36%
5	47	Mińsk Maz.	49%	31%	19%	22%
5	48	Siedlce	50%	25%	17%	34%
5	49	Grójec	51%	33%	11%	66%
5	50	Radom	47%	25%	6%	77%
6	23.24	Łódź	67%	18%	73%	15%
6	25	Łęczyca	68%	20%	76%	12%
6	26	Zgierz	64%	24%	73%	10%
6	27	Sieradz	61%	16%	76%	10%
6	28	Piotrków Tryb.	62%	19%	82%	4%
6	29	Skierniewice	62%	16%	79%	12%
7	88	Piła	22%	65%	71%	8%
7	89	Szamotuły	28%	48%	65%	12%
7	90	Swarzędz	39%	27%	53%	26%
7	91	Poznań	42%	31%	48%	29%
7	92	Gniezno	34%	29%	61%	15%
7	93	Konin	24%	31%	72%	11%
7	94	Leszno	35%	28%	66%	12%
7	95	Ostrów Wlkp.	34%	39%	61%	15%
7	96	Kalisz	27%	42%	43%	46%
8	14	Puławy	41%	16%	30%	37%
8	15	Kraśnik	39%	31%	27%	49%
8	16	Lublin	33%	41%	36%	53%
8	17	Biała Podl.	44%	17%	25%	43%
8	18	Chełm	21%	66%	24%	43%
8	19	Zamość	38%	33%	15%	40%
9	54	Tarnobrzeg	33%	28%	58%	24%
9	55	Mielec	38%	47%	64%	22%
9	56	Rzeszów	66%	20%	58%	32%
9	57	Krosno	78%	6%	42%	30%
9	58	Przemyśl	65%	23%	65%	13%
10	30	Chrzanów	53%	14%	37%	37%
10	31	Olkusz	50%	19%	27%	45%

Candidate Selection in the 2014 European Parliament Election in Poland

EP	Senate	main town	PO 1	PO other	PiS 1	PiS other
10	32.33	Kraków	65%	19%	32%	47%
10	34	Bochnia	42%	25%	25%	34%
10	35	Tarnów	56%	15%	24%	28%
10	36	Nowy Targ	48%	29%	25%	25%
10	37	Nowy Sącz	53%	13%	25%	29%
10	81	Pińczów	37%	51%	17%	56%
10	82	Sandomierz	49%	41%	18%	50%
10	83	Kielce	37%	52%	19%	54%
11	68.69	Częstochowa	76%	12%	24%	68%
11	70	Gliwice	84%	5%	60%	15%
11	71	Zabrze	82%	6%	63%	14%
11	72.73	Rybnik-Jastrzębie-Zdrój	72%	14%	71%	19%
11	74	Chorzów	79%	8%	59%	16%
11	75.8	Katowice-Tychy	74%	12%	62%	16%
11	76	Dąbrowa G.	83%	5%	53%	25%
11	77	Sosnowiec	79%	7%	51%	18%
11	78	Bielsko-Biała	67%	17%	36%	41%
11	79	Cieszyn	59%	32%	36%	43%
12	1	Bolesławiec	67%	11%	52%	22%
12	2	Jelenia Góra	75%	7%	37%	29%
12	3	Legnica	68%	9%	62%	21%
12	4	Wałbrzych	60%	23%	26%	48%
12	5	Kłodzko	76%	8%	27%	29%
12	6	Oleśnica	78%	15%	52%	33%
12	7.8	Wrocław	75%	18%	48%	40%
12	51	Nysa	51%	37%	40%	20%
12	52	Opole	24%	66%	30%	32%
12	53	Kędzierzyn-Koźle	34%	55%	34%	23%
13	20	Zielona Góra	54%	34%	37%	39%
13	21	Gorzów Wlkp.	60%	18%	34%	51%
13	22	Żagań	51%	36%	42%	30%
13	97	Szczecin	46%	41%	79%	7%
13	98	Stargard Sz.	53%	16%	65%	8%
13	99	Kołobrzeg	65%	10%	28%	58%
13	100	Koszalin	52%	27%	34%	54%

Source: Own study based on information from the National Electoral Commission.

The cases of list leaders who obtained the greatest participation in particular electoral districts (exceeding 80%) have one thing in common. The majority of them are persons closely connected with the particular electoral districts and at the same time popular in the media. In the case of Civic Platform, Jerzy Buzek is such a person, and in the case of Law and Justice, it is Janusz Wojciechowski. Each of them achieves similar results in several neighbouring senate electoral districts. This way, media visibility and the bond with a larger area may give such a cumulated effect and a very high support index. However, if we look at the cases when no. 1 candidates had the poorest results, the huge significance of local rivals is noticeable. In the case of PO, Chełm and Piła were such districts, and in PiS, Radom and Zamość. These cases are similar because none of these senate districts includes the central town of the EP electoral districts. In territorial opposition of this kind, internal competition within the list is the most clearly seen.

The poor result on the list does not necessarily mean that the candidate is weak. In the Opole district, previous MEP Danuta Jazłowiecka, coming from that district, received two thirds of the votes cast for PO – more than twice as many as the person from no. 1 position on the PO list, the Minister of Culture Bogdan Zdrojewski, a person present in the media and commonly recognisable. On the other side of the district, in Jelenia Góra, the same Bogdan Zdrojewski received ten times greater support than the strongest of his rivals.

Even greater relations of this kind occur on the lists of PiS, where Zbigniew Kuźmiuk standing from a far position obtained more than a dozen times greater support in the Radom district than the no. 1 candidate, Wojciech Jasiński, residing in Płock. But there are cases in which the weakness of number one candidate results from the dispersion of support among a group of other candidates, where the sum of candidate number one and the best candidate in the district does not exceed 50%.

To sum up, it may be said that the ordinance in which a voter is forced to choose one candidate on the list and districts cover geographically and historically varied areas activates a very complicated game among parties, individual candidates, their position in the media and local connections. All that leads to the fact that a considerable part of attention of political actors themselves and the media coverage is focused on this game. The game has an important impact on the personal composition of Polish representation in the European Parliament. The advantage of the candidates placed on the first positions on the lists is clearly visible. However, it must be said that the advantage is not overwhelming and can be eliminated by territorial bonds or the advantage of the incumbent.

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**ACCOUNTABILITY AND THE EUROPEAN
PARLIAMENT ELECTIONS: THE ILLUSION
OF SUPRANATIONAL ACCOUNTABILITY**

Abstract:

The paper refers to the essential problem of the European political space, namely the insufficient implementation scale of accountability standards, which has a direct effect on the democratization of the European political system, specifically on the democracy deficit. The paper was presented the accountability standard on the background on the EP election in 2014, with the strong focus on the relations between the voters and the EP candidates. In the analyses the factors characterizing the quality of political discourse were considered taking into account both, the electorate political activity (*principal* – in the meaning *Principal-Agent-Theory*), as well as the offer of the running politicians (as the *agents*).

Key words:

accountability, principal, agent, political system, European Parliament.

Accountability is a politological category that becomes particularly relevant during election campaigns. This is mostly visible in how political actors allow voters to review their actions and how intensively they interact with the electorate. Throughout the campaign and during the election itself, political representatives are subjected to a particularly thorough assessment, as voters are given an opportunity to effectively express their approval (or disapproval). This, of course, should not imply that accountability is related only to the electoral process. On the contrary – it is a permanent and inherent feature of every democratic political system. However, (free) election constitutes the one mechanism of democracy which absolutely guarantees the voters a chance to hold their representatives accountable for their actions. While democratic systems provide for various tools of ongoing evaluation, such tools are passive in nature and their scope is somewhat narrower. As one might say, they amount to

indirect, rather than direct assessment of political activity. Most of all, though, the act of voting ends with a specific result: a politician is (re-)elected or is not. Thus, voters give their sanction to particular candidates, who can be rewarded or criticised for their previous actions. Moreover, the campaign is a time when candidates are eager to interact (often directly) with the electorate – something they are far less likely to do in between elections.

The issue of accountability is relevant most of all to those bodies within the political system that are formed as a result of a direct election. This is so because such election determines who will represent the society and legitimises the newly chosen representatives to act on a broadly understood political scene. As such, the question of accountability is relevant also to the supranational level – for instance, to the European Parliament, which is the only representative institution within the EU chosen through direct election. Like in case of other elections, the period prior to the election day sees intense activity on the part of candidates, as they attempt to garner support of the voters by presenting their previous achievements and proving their responsibility. They also face the task of showing how they kept promises made earlier on, or explaining why they failed to do so. Some candidates fight for re-election, while others make their first attempt at earning the seat in the European Parliament. Still, both groups are subjected to an assessment of their previous activity. In case of the former, it is *ex-post* in nature (and comes down, broadly speaking, to legitimising their output). For the latter, it is mostly an *ex-ante* judgement, albeit it may entail some evaluation of their prior public activity in other areas.

Largely insufficient scope of accountability standards substantially hinders their implementation in the European political sphere. Numerous scholars have emphasised the democratic deficit that can be observed in several key (closely interconnected) dimensions, such as accountability, legitimacy and/or representation [Bovens et al. 2010; Hobolt, Tilley 2014; Majone 1996; Majone 1998; Majone 2009 (1); Majone 2009 (2); Menon, Weatherill 2002, Mulgan 2014; Ruskowski 2010; Scharpf 1996; Sroka 2011; Wojtaszczyk 2011]. If the European political system suffers from a chronic deficit of accountability, it might be an interesting academic challenge to answer the question of why direct elections to the EP, and debates preceding them, have not eliminated the aforementioned democratic deficit. For the purpose of this paper, I have formed a hypothesis that accountability associated with EP elections is inefficient because principals are not fully principals, while agents cannot be considered as 100 per cent agents. Hence, what we have here is a certain political illusion as to the relations between the electorate and its representatives. The purpose of this article is to examine the quality of relations occurring between principals (voters) and agents (candidates to the EP and/or MEPs) against the background of political accountability.

The considerations presented in this paper are founded upon the premise that certain conditions are necessary for the accountability to function:

- a) (...) there are legal and formal institutions and mechanisms to hold governments to account;
- b) there are clearly defined agents who demand government action;
- c) there are clearly defined agents who are responsible for government action;
- d) there are legally established and effective sanctions for those who are not accountable [Acosta et al. 2013: 12].

The electoral process - including the one on the supranational level, in case of the European Parliament - occurs in all the above circumstances. Most of all, there is a mechanism allowing for accountability: the institution of direct election itself. We also have agents: politicians who wish to be (re)elected MEPs, and hence have to garner the support of the electorate. Candidates are not novices on the political scene - they have operated on it for some time and have fulfilled certain duties as public officials. There is an effective sanction: a candidate may succeed or fail in garnering sufficient support. Finally, there are principals empowered to sanction the actions of their representatives. Therefore, there is a plane upon which relations of accountability may occur and be analysed. The examination presented below is based on three theoretical pillars - theory of democracy, theory of political system and the principal-agent theory (PAT). The first one has allowed me to focus on issues that are essential to the functioning of democratic political systems. The second has provided a tool for placing political entities in the framework of cyclical political activity. The third one, in turn, has facilitated the analysis of relations between the key actors of a political system.

As this paper has a well developed theoretical framework, it is based largely on the existing academic literature on the functioning of democracy (as well as accountability) and the European political sphere. A part of the analysis is accompanied by data from Eurobarometer, as well as two Polish organisations: the CBOS research agency and the Institute of Public Affairs, which monitors how Polish representatives operate in the European political system. Wherever possible, I have also utilised large-scale data referring to other EU member states. However, most of the empirical data presented here refers exclusively to Poland. Still, this does not diminish the value of the research, since Polish political system is largely representative of most systems that currently exist in Central and Eastern Europe.

The article consists of three parts. The first one presents particular types of accountability. This allows me to connect this concept to the other part of the subject - European Parliament elections. The second part constitutes an analysis of how principals (voters) execute accountability to sanction the political

activity of agents (candidates to the EP). The final part is focused on the (potential) representatives and their readiness to be held accountable.

Due to the limited scope of this paper, a number of issues have been only briefly mentioned, while some others were omitted altogether. Among the most relevant subjects that are not discussed here one can note the question of systemic determinants governing the work of an MEP. Such determinants unquestionably have a certain impact on how MEPs act (in the formal context). Another issue left out of this article is European multilevel governance, which determines the structural and functional character of the European political system and shapes relations between all actors on the European scene, where MEPs function as they execute their mandates. Both these subjects are fairly broad and well covered in the existing literature. Thus, readers willing to reach for additional knowledge should not have any trouble with finding sufficiently informative sources.

Accountability and its forms

The concept of accountability is of ancient provenance. It derives from the Latin terms *acomptare* (to account for), *computare* (to sum up) and *putare* (to judge, to assess). Although etymology and history place it as a term related to accounting and financial administration [Bovens 2006: 6], in modern times it is most often associated with public and political activity. It signifies transparent and fair management of the public sphere, and the mechanism of holding politicians and public officials responsible to the electorate, public opinion and representative democratic bodies.

The essence of accountability lies in one's obligation to account for one's actions - to take responsibility for the activity one undertakes when acting on behalf of the society, as a part of an entity that has been legitimised by the voters to perform certain tasks and fulfil certain promises. Accountability can be thought of as (1) a mechanism that encompasses a system of procedures and institutions; (2) a virtue that characterises the attitudes of people participating in political processes; or (3) a standard of how the public sphere functions. The concept can be viewed in a narrow or broad sense. The narrow perspective shows accountability as, primarily, a mechanism, while attitudes and standards are treated as additional aspects. Hence, following Mark Bovens [2006: 6], we can define accountability in this sense as an interaction that encompasses the following key elements:

1. a relation between the decision-making body (an actor, agent, politician) and the forum that evaluates its actions (a principal, voter),
2. in which actors are obliged to

3. explain and justify their conduct,
4. where the forum may pose questions
5. and pass a judgement,
6. while actors may face consequences.

In such view, the occurrence of the abovementioned stages testifies to the fact that accountability functions as a specific instrument of a political process.

The broad perspective pictures accountability as a category without specified borders and scope - a concept which encompasses a number of similar categories such as transparency, efficiency, democracy, effectiveness, responsiveness, responsibility, openness and coherence. All these terms de facto constitute criteria, or even indicators with which we can measure how advanced the process of accountability is. Both perspectives depict the complex, multi-level nature of accountability which results from the complicated composition of contemporary political systems and the extent of network-like connections between their actors. This means that any analysis of accountability has to factor in the position of each entity in the system, as well as the purpose and complexity of the system itself (and/or its sub-systems). As a consequence, literature of the subject names several types of accountability: horizontal, vertical and diagonal; direct and indirect; external and internal; social, legal, professional, ethical, electoral, peer, political, public and many others.

One criterion by which accountability can be classified is the source of interaction between entities participating in the political system. In such division, we can distinguish three types of accountability: horizontal, vertical and diagonal. [O'Donnell 1998; The Anti-Corruption... 2009; Bovens 2006]. The first type refers to situations when public officials are limited in their actions and supervised by other public bodies (courts, ombudsman, central bank, audit agencies, etc.) which may demand explanations and, ultimately, punish an official for improper conduct [The Anti-Corruption ... 2009: 2]. In other words, it describes control mechanisms and the balance of power within the system of public institutions. **Horizontal accountability** is therefore typical for inter-institutional relations stemming from standard administrative procedures (for instance, vote of confidence or supervisory control) or from a call for intervention on the part of one actor. The most typical example of horizontal accountability is Montesquieu's tripartite model of separation of powers [Łukomski 2004: 119-122], complemented with control and supervisory institutions. This model of accountability dominates the literature on the functioning of public administration [Bovens et al. 2014: 4]. However, horizontal accountability also includes administrative accountability, which may take the form of external accountability (that exists parallel to legal supervision and encompasses a number of judiciary, quasi-judiciary or independent institutions) and internal accountability

(based on internal regulations, statutes, codes of conduct, common practices, etc.). Horizontal accountability is also described by constitutional law scholars, who analyse legal accountability - that is, the obligation to face legal consequences of one's own or other people's actions. Legal accountability is most commonly associated with infringements of the law.

Accountability can also take on a **vertical** form which has its source in external influence - namely, in a hierarchical relation between the person held accountable and the forum. The essence of this dependence lies in the fact that the forum (a voter, principal or superior body) is formally entitled to hold its representatives (agents, politicians) responsible for their actions. This type of accountability is based on existing regulations, including the act of voting as a kind of external influence exerted by the electorate over politicians. According to standards described by Transparency International, vertical accountability enables the public to execute its right to hold public officials accountable through the procedure of election, independent media, active civil society and other, similar channels [The Anti-Corruption... 2009: 33]. Vertical accountability is typically used by political scientists, who believe that '(...) accountability generally denotes a relationship between elected politicians and their voters, sometimes mediated by parties, government representatives, or bureaucrats' [Bovens et al. 2014: 5]. The most common variants of vertical accountability are political and, even more narrowly, electoral accountability.

The third type is the so-called diagonal accountability, which occurs when citizens use public institutions to improve supervision of the activities of the authorities, but also when they engage directly in political processes (for example, through social consultations, budget proposals, monitoring of public spending or other such actions) [The Anti-Corruption... 2009: 33]. Diagonal accountability is facultative and functions without any formal pressure stemming from organisational or legal requirements. Its quintessence rests in the participative model of public policies [Bovens 2006: 20-21]. The nature of this type of accountability is well reflected in democratic accountability [Acosta et al. 2013], social accountability [Ackerman 2005] and public accountability, which emphasise citizens' involvement in the process of holding authorities and administration responsible for their conduct. At the same time, diagonal accountability can be considered a form of direct accountability, since it relies on actions undertaken directly by the principal. As indicated by Herbert Simon (et al.), this form is also important, as the mere existence of control institutions (and procedures they execute on a daily basis) is not sufficient to make the process of accountability comprehensive and effective. Simon emphasises that if accountability is to be truly implemented, law-makers should act to eliminate passive attitudes in the society by designing control mechanisms that would include individual stakeholders

in the process of monitoring and evaluating public authorities and administration [2005: 561]. Following this approach, Transparency International interprets diagonal accountability as "(...) a domain between the vertical and horizontal dimensions. It refers to the phenomenon of direct citizen engagement with horizontal accountability institutions when provoking better oversight of state actions. Citizens by-pass cumbersome or compromised formal accountability systems to engage in policy-making, budgeting, expenditure tracking and other similar activities" [The Anti-Corruption... 2009: 33].

The catalogue of accountability types can be complemented with several other forms of cross-sectional nature. One such form is moral (ethical) accountability which shows politicians as subjects responsible for judging their own conduct and establishing an appropriate relationship with their. Such accountability is a part of political culture understood as a set of patterns of rational behaviour [Łukomski 2004: 147]. It is also a virtue expected of our political representatives. Peer accountability is also a cross-sectional type of this phenomenon. One differentiation worth making here is that in its horizontal dimension, peer accountability is initiated and executed by institutions, while in vertical and diagonal dimensions it is the society at large that acts when certain norms are being violated.

The examination of accountability presented in this paper is focused on the narrow understanding of this concept - that is, on direct relations that occur between the key actors of the (European) political system, or, if one considers the problem of democratisation, between principals and their representatives. Still, I find compelling the conclusion presented by Hanna Pitkin, who stated that "(...) in a democratic environment, government officials are account givers and most of their actions are open to public scrutiny. It would not be realistic, however, to expect all officials to respond to every citizen for every one of their actions" [1967...]. This is why the subjects of the following analysis are such mechanisms of accountability as enforcement (analysed in the context of elections) and answerability (understood as deliberation and responsiveness to stakeholders, customers and clients) [Boström, Garsten 2008: 6]. **These mechanisms occur in specific moments of the political cycle and refer to interactions between specific actors.**

The Principal's Perspective

As indicated in the introduction, accountability can only occur in an existing, effective system and depends on certain criteria with regard to the functioning of the agent. However, our understanding of this issue is incomplete unless we also consider the subject of accountability - the principal, the voter. Voters are the ones who decide which politicians and parties will function on

the European scene, and who delegate agents and grant them certain decision-making competences. Voters are also the ones who control the agents' output and determine their further political fate [Ruszkowski 2010: 26].

This paper begins with a somewhat provocative hypothesis that European voters cannot be considered principals in the full meaning of this term. Hence the question: what behaviours should they exhibit if we are to classify them as truly responsible principals? There are two simple, frequently used criteria we can use to assess their involvement in political life: turnout for elections and their attitude toward a given institution (measured by their knowledge about candidates and the institution itself). In part, this is about voters' participation, as it is understood by Sartori in his concept of democracy: "Participation, in its proper sense, relies on one's willing, active personal involvement. Therefore, it is not about being merely a part of something (which usually comes down to being embroiled in some events), and it is definitely not about unwilling, compulsory engagement in something. Participation is a spontaneous action - the exact opposite of being mobilised" [1994: 148]. In case of the EP elections, participation is a secondary manifestation of political activity, as seen in Schumpeter's vision of procedural democracy. As such, it stems from and at the same time crowns the primary manifestation - one's attitude toward a given institution and the system as a whole [Schumpeter 1995: 336-337].

Even though the European Parliament is the only body in the European political system that is chosen by citizens in direct election, voters seem to have little interest in influencing its structure and composition. Since 1979, when the first direct election was held, the turnout rate has been constantly declining (Figure 1). In 2014, it fell to 42.52 per cent - nearly 20 per cent less than in the first election. Worse still, if one disregards countries where voting is compulsory (Belgium, Cyprus, Greece and Luxembourg), the result is even lower: 38.96%. When analysing turnout rates for each country, it is clear that the citizens of "old" EU countries vote much more frequently than those from the "new" ones. With the exception of Lithuania, where turnout was calculated at 47.35%, none of the Central and Eastern European states exceeded the average ratio (not even its lower "bound") for the entire Union (as presented in the figure below). The two countries that came closest were Estonia (36.52%) and Bulgaria (35.84%). Nearly one third of all eligible voters went to the polls in Romania (32.44%) and Latvia (30.24%). In Hungary (28.97%), Croatia (25.24%), Slovenia (24.55%) and Poland (23.83%) only about one in four citizens chose to vote. The lowest turnout rates were recorded in Czech Republic (18.20%) and Slovakia (13.05%).

Among the "old" EU member states, the lowest numbers of people cast their votes in Portugal, UK and the Netherlands: 33.67%, 35.40% and 37.32% respectively. The country most active in the election was Malta, with

approximately three in four citizens showing up at the polls. Other nations that clearly exceeded the overall EU average were the Italians (57.22%), the Danes (56.30%), the Swedes (51.07%) and the Germans (48.01%). In all other member states, the turnout rate was close to the average.

The gap between the "old" and "new" member states proves that the Union lacks political and cultural coherence. As it turns out, despite substantial structural support (and the accompanying promotion of the European structures) which the EU has provided to its Central and Eastern European members, and which has directly translated into improved living standards and economic growth, societies of these countries have so far failed to strengthen pro-European and civic attitudes. This conclusion is corroborated by the comparison of turnout rates in EP and national parliamentary elections. Firstly, societies identify much more with their national political scenes and consider the EP elections as secondary in importance. Secondly, Central and Eastern Europe still suffer from less developed civil societies, although Lithuania, Bulgaria and Romania are worth pointing out as exhibiting the lowest divergence in turnout rates between EP and national parliamentary elections. Among the "old" EU member states, the British emerge as the nation most stable in its attitudes - they show consistently low interest in both types of elections discussed here (with 7 per cent difference in turnout rates). Across Europe, the divergence in turnout rates varies from about a dozen per cent (France: 15%; Italy: 17%) to over 30 (Finland: 30%; Denmark: 31%; Sweden: 33%). Greece provides an interesting example of a country where even the obligation to vote is not enough to mobilise citizens, regardless of which type of election is considered (59.97 and 62.47% turnout rate respectively).

In Central and Eastern Europe, the divergence was higher than 25%, with the exception of the three countries mentioned in the previous paragraph. In Poland, it was recorded at 25%, in Estonia and Hungary at 28%, while in Latvia at 29%. Next, there is a large gap and even higher differences: 40% in case of Slovenia and Czech Republic, 41% in Croatia, and as much as 46% in Slovakia. Interestingly, the turnout rate for national parliamentary election in the latter states is comparable to that observed in most "older" democracies (still lower than in Scandinavia or Malta, though).

The data referred to above indicates that the mechanism of election is only used as a tool of accountability to a limited extent. This is particularly visible in case of the European Parliament elections, which all around Europe draw noticeably less attention among voters than national parliamentary elections, regardless of how old a given democracy is. This, however, corresponds to and reflects the results of research conducted by Eurobarometer before the most recent EP election, in which people from EU member states were asked about their identity. 39 per cent of respondents described themselves only as citizens of their

respective countries (Germans, Danes, Poles, etc.). 51 per cent expressed a “double” identity - primarily, they referred to themselves as nationals of their countries, but they also identified themselves as Europeans. Only 6 per cent of respondents considered themselves most of all Europeans, and secondarily, citizens of a given state.

The second element indicated here as a criterion for verifying the society as the subject of accountability is our knowledge about and attitude toward the EU’s institutional order (in a broader sense) and the EP itself (in a narrower sense). Research conducted by TNS Opinion one year before the 2014 EP election brought rather encouraging results. As it turns out, more than half of all respondents (53 per cent) pointed to the European Parliament as the one institution in the EU’s system they are most familiar with - a result that puts the EP far ahead of any other European body. The second and third most frequently mentioned institutions were the European Central Bank and the European Commission, both named by 27 per cent of respondents. However, nearly one third of the people who participated in the research were unable to name any EU body [One Year to... 2013: 35]. A number of other research projects revealed that we tend to confuse European institutions with one another, and it is a trend observed not only in the “old” EU member states.

An interesting picture of European voters emerges if one juxtaposes the turnout rates and levels of knowledge about the EP in particular countries (Figure 2). The two statistics are often inversely proportionate - the lower the turnout rate, the more knowledge we declare to have about the institution. This has been true in case of all Central and Eastern European member states: Slovakia (13.05 vs. 79%), Czech Republic (18.2 vs. 69%), Romania (32.44 vs. 81%), Bulgaria (35.84 vs. 75%), Hungary (28.97 vs. 67%), etc. Among the “old” EU countries, Portugal provided the most striking case of the same phenomenon (33.67 vs. 67%). In several states, the tendency is quite the opposite: the percentage of those who voted was larger than of those who declared familiarity with the EP (Malta: 74.8 vs. 63%; UK: 35.4 vs. 24%; in Sweden, France and Spain the trend was the same, but the divergence between the two numbers was fairly small). It is difficult to state with certainty what the cause of such differences in the levels of knowledge about the EP among European nations is. Any attempt at doing so is rather a speculation than a firm conclusion. One possible reason, especially with respect to the “new” member states, is the combination of cultural factors and a certain uncertainty people feel as to their knowledge on the subject. It can also stem from the fact that European bodies were strongly promoted among these societies as their countries underwent the accession process (which took place in fairly recent past, after all, especially in case of Romania and Bulgaria).

50 per cent of Europeans who took place in the abovementioned research consistently identified the European Parliament as the body which represented European interests the best. Still, nearly half of them (46 per cent) did not know when the next direct election would take place. The date of the next election was known to 34 per cent of respondents, which indicates that societies were basically aware of the event and, thus, could be considered a conscious electorate. Once again, however, if the results are considered separately for each country, it turns out that our knowledge as to the date of the election did not translate into proportionately high turnout rates - a fact clearly visible with regard to Central and Eastern European states [Ibidem: 48].

After the 2009 EP election, Eurobarometer conducted a research in order to find out why so many Europeans did not vote. The results revealed three main categories of reasons: those stemming from general opinions on politics, personal and, finally, those related directly to the EU itself. The first category was the most frequent one - 53 per cent of respondents said they did not participate in the election because they were generally unhappy with politics (they did not trust politicians), they thought their vote would not change anything or were simply not interested in politics. 30 per cent of citizens pointed to reasons related strictly to the EU: lack of knowledge about its structure, discontent with the activity of the EP, as well as overly limited public debate and/or insufficiently informative election campaign [Wybory do Parlamentu Europejskiego 2009].

When analysing European political sphere, Robert Wiszniowski compiled a review of the existing literature on behaviours and motives of the electorate. In it, he pointed out a variety of factors that determine our activity as voters. He discerned two perspectives - that of voters as individuals, and that of the environment in which they function. From individuals’ point of view, the elements that shape our activity at the polls are related to our knowledge and attitudes toward politically significant issues. These are: trust toward the EP, the sense of empowerment, interest in elections, approval for the government, political preferences, the level of general knowledge about politics, etc. One additional internal factor comes in the shape of our own perception of the European elections as being secondary in importance. The elections we find primarily important are those on the national level: parliamentary and presidential. The environment, in turn, encompasses elements such as the voting system, timing of the election (including the question of whether more than one election occurs in a short space of time), geographical factors¹, etc. [Wiszniowski 2008: 188-214; 226-235].

In his comments on our involvement in European elections, Janusz Ruskowski explains our lesser interest in them through several key factors:

¹ Geographical factors are those related to the administrative division of a country and spatial distribution of constituencies (e.g. their size).

(1) the election does not take place on the same day in all EU countries and, hence, appears less prestigious; (2) voting systems differ across Europe, which means we lack foundation to build a stronger European identity; (3) election campaigns are dominated by national political parties; (4) the debate preceding elections revolves mostly around respective national perspectives; (5) European structures are too distant and hence abstract to most citizens; (6) election campaigns are not particularly intense and (7) not well funded; (8) EP elections attract little interest from the media; (9) the EP lacks a clear position and role within the European political system [Ruszkowski 2010: 124-125]. What is interesting about this catalogue is that it focuses on shortcomings of the environment rather than voters. It points to shortcomings on the part of politicians and parties, problems of the voting system and institutional order, as well as the role of the media which shape the public opinion. This, of course, should not be an excuse for all the passive citizens. To the contrary - it signals how much the system is detached from the voters, or, looking from the opposite perspective, how much the voters are detached from the system. Having in mind such circumstances, one can hardly expect accountability to be truly effective.

The Agent's Perspective

In the framework of interactions described here, an MEP is an agent directly legitimised by a principal (a voter) to act on the political scene. His position within the system is, however, somewhat complex. In fact, he enters into various relations of accountability: electoral accountability, political accountability, direct accountability, internal accountability, external accountability etc. Moreover, one needs to remember that MEPs operate in a peculiar environment of multilevel governance, which blurs the structural and functional clarity of the system. Still, although all this background is important, it should not derail us from the analytic perspective adopted here, whereby the one crucial element of accountability is agents' readiness to be held responsible for their actions. The key moments in the process are the election and the campaign preceding it. In principle, the campaign should be the time when our representatives willingly subject themselves to judgement. The question that arises here is: how do politicians account for their activities? What exactly do they do to this end? How do they try to garner or maintain the support of the electorate? How is their input and output evaluated? In other words - how deep is our assessment and what is its nature (is it ex-ante, ongoing or ex-post)?

Most of all, the actions of candidates are shaped largely by their respective political parties. This refers to both the possibility of running for re-election and the debate preceding the election. It is worth noting here that national

parties are strongly involved in evaluating the actions of their MEPs. It can be perceived as an expression of internal or, to some extent, horizontal accountability (as it occurs within a certain political structure). This means that voters' power to hold a candidate accountable is limited right from the outset of the entire process. Even before the electorate determines the fate of candidates, all MEPs are assessed by decision-making bodies of their respective parties [Schmitt et al. 2010: 223]. This process constitutes an internal verification of loyalty, effectiveness, political strategies and further plans. As a result, a given politician is, or is not, allowed to run for an EP seat. One other element that determines a candidate's chance for (re)election is his/her place on the list, also decided on by partisan organs. As Ruszkowski pointed out: "(...) potential re-election of an MEP depends much more on his popularity within his national party than on his previous achievements as an MEP. It is determined by the leaders of the national party, not his political group in the EP (...)" [2010: 103].

In the 2014 EP election in Poland, as much as 80 per cent of MEPs (41 people) were cleared to run for re-election². This means they were subjected to both ex-post and ex-ante evaluation from the voters. Of 51 elected people, nearly half (24) was re-elected for the first time, while 11 were re-elected for their third term-of-office in the EP. The abovementioned politicians proved effective either due to their previous actions on the European and/or national venue, or thanks to an attractive agenda they presented for the future. One other possible explanation is that they simply benefitted from their partisan affiliation³. High number of re-elected candidates testifies to the fact that experience in European politics is an asset highly regarded by the voters. This view is corroborated by the results of research conducted on EP elections in Poland. As it turns out, the percentage of people who make a decision based on the candidate's name, rather than on his partisan affiliation, has increased with every successive EP election held so far (in 2004, it was 50%; in 2009 – 54%; in 2014 – 58%) [BS/96/2014: 9]. Apparently, the name and the public image that comes with it are not without importance. This is particularly true in the light of another statistic - 46 per cent of respondents declared that MEPs had a substantial impact on Poland's image in Europe (while only 38 per cent said MEPs

² Interestingly, out of those 10 first-time candidates, 9 were registered by one party - Platforma Obywatelska (PO, eng. Civic Platform). However, such personal shift in the ranks of its EP candidates is less surprising when one considers the fact that PO was by far the biggest winner of the previous EP election, when its members had obtained 25 seats.

³ Among those who won the EP seats were also well-established politicians, seasoned in working in important positions (for example, B. Zdrojewski, who prior to the election had been a minister in the government; M. Boni - also former minister; A. Kozłowska-Rajewicz - government's plenipotentiary for equal treatment), as well as two new MEPs without any experience in politics (Z. Krasnodębski and B. Wenta).

determined how well Polish interests were represented in the EU) [Ibidem: 4].

Another element of some significance to accountability is the election campaign (most of all, its quality) - the particular time when politicians are supposed to subject themselves to assessment by the electorate. Unfortunately, most candidates who base their strategy on ex-ante evaluation make a vital mistake right at the start - they fill their agendas with declarations which are impossible to implement. Moreover, such agendas are frequently vague and noncommittal. This, of course, is a safe choice if one has in mind the need to account for one's activity before the next election. Another problem concerns the debate that occurs throughout the campaign. Since it is conducted primarily by national parties, it is usually dominated by national rather than European issues. Furthermore, it is full of impractical, infeasible proposals and declarations that have nothing to do with the competences of an MEP. One example was provided by J. Kalinowski who, in a rather crude manner, (especially considering his position as an MEP and the standard we expect of the European political debate) addressed the voters, saying: *'What about regional roads? What about local roads? Don't we need them? These are the issues we're handling now, and the issues I'm sure we will be handling in the future!'* Of course, the message is far from reasonable, as it completely misses the scope of issues tackled by MEPs. It stems from a populist approach, but also from the expectations expressed by the electorate of PSL (Polskie Stronnictwo Ludowe, eng. Polish People's Party). Still, even though such agenda was clearly shaped by a calculation of votes, the candidate referred both to his previous activity, and the actions he intended to undertake in the next term-of-office.

Another significant shortcoming that hinders accountability is related to information policy adopted outside the close circles of candidates. Research indicates that the media fail to fulfil their educational and informational functions. Numerous respondents stated that the media provided insufficient coverage of the European Parliament and its work, or that information given on the subject was biased (excessively negative) - there was not enough positive message and first-hand information on what the role of the EP in the European political system is. Moreover, respondents complained that media focused on dominant countries such as Germany and France [Wstrzymujący się od głosowania... 2012: 6]. Finally, they believed media made insufficient effort to mobilise the electorate [Wiszniowski 2008: 347-348]. All the above-mentioned criticism is particularly relevant in the light of another research which revealed that during the campaign, the media (or more specifically, TV programmes) were the major source of information about parties and candidates for 58 per cent of voters. Slightly lower number of respondents pointed to TV spots and advertisements (53 per cent). On the other hand of the spectrum were meetings and direct conversations

with the candidates - 5 and 2 per cent of all answers, respectively. Internet provided information to 16 per cent of respondents. Interestingly, 27 per cent gained some knowledge from their families and friends. As much as 23 per cent did not come across any information on any of the parties or candidates [BS/97/2014]. The same research examined voters' opinions on the effectiveness of the campaign. 39 per cent of respondents stated that the campaign did not provide them with any relevant information about the candidates running for EP seats in their constituencies. 19 per cent said they only learned very little [Ibidem]. Such numbers force me to conclude that the conduct of the election campaign does not support the process of accountability. As it turns out, neither politicians and parties nor the media provide a viable platform for genuine accountability to exist on.

Many politicians and analysts emphasise that the campaign starts the day after the election, when the chosen representatives begin their work and, at the same time, their effort to be re-elected the next time around. The reality of the job forces MEPs to be constantly on the move. They perform a part of their duties in Brussels, where they participate in committee sessions and meetings of political groups and additional plenary sessions. They also work in Strasbourg, where they sit on twelve several day-long plenary sessions per year. MEPs are also "spokesmen" for the EU in their respective constituencies⁴. Although they are not legally obliged to follow the instructions of their voters, they should take their opinions into consideration. One also needs to remember that MEPs are given funds to set up their offices, which means they are given means to constantly stay in contact with the voters. Hence, the shape of the system in which MEPs execute their mandate provides a convenient ground for them to subject themselves to ongoing evaluation. However, there are two conditions that need to be met if such evaluation is to actually occur. Firstly, MEPs have to do some work which they can later be proud of in front of their voters. Secondly, they have to keep the electorate constantly informed of their actions. Here, we can refer to a qualitative research conducted in Poland, which indicates that MEPs are not widely recognisable, and "(...) even if they are, it is due to reasons different than their activity in the EU structures. The Poles do not distinguish MEPs from other Polish politicians who work in various other institutions (...)" [Dudkiewicz et al. 2013: 8]. According to analyses presented by the Institute of Public Affairs, "(...) in both the current and the previous term-of-office, not all Polish MEPs managed to execute their mandate in a satisfactory manner. Some were focused too much on national politics and, consequently, neglected their actual workplace - the European Parliament. Others engaged in work on

⁴ MEPs gather in political groups based on their views, regardless of their nationality. They execute their mandate independently. Since their prerogatives have increased over the years, their activity now influences of spheres of citizen's daily life: environment, consumer protection, transport, education, culture, health care, etc.

issues which are not particularly relevant to the future of the European Union and Poland's role in it. Others still did not possess sufficient knowledge, abilities and contacts to be able to influence decision-making processes. All such mandates cannot be considered well used. Informing citizens about the functioning of European institutions is equally important to being effective in influencing the decisions made by the EU" [Łada, Szczepanik 2013: 2]. Analysis of work done by MEPs also shows the extent of their accountability. "(...) MEPs are subjected to less control by the public opinion – the media do not follow the events in the European Parliament, so it is easier to remain anonymous and not attract any interest with one's statements and behaviour (...). The accountability of MEPs is different due to (...) lesser external control and, secondly, the complexity of issues tackled by the EP (...)" [Dudkiewicz et al. 2013: 48].

As indicated by the presented data, candidates' readiness to answer for their actions to the electorate is relative and depends on external factors. Most of all, current and/or future candidates are strongly dependant on the will and decisions made by their political parties. This refers as much to the turning point in the electoral process - a decision to allow a given person to run in the EP election - as to the information policy adopted by parties and imposed on their members. Hence, accountability is strongly determined by internal relations between politicians and their formations - an aspect which is beyond the influence of voters. This means that the electorates' decision-making powers are limited right from the start of the process.

The second factor that weakens the election as a tool of accountability is the shape and content of the debate preceding the elections. As the campaign is focused on national or even local issues and dominated by empty promises, voters have little to no reference points by which they could evaluate and verify a given politician's performance before the next election.

Finally, (Polish) MEPs show insufficient activity in fields which are vital and relevant to the functioning of the European Parliament. They also fail to keep voters well informed of their actions. Therefore, even though most of them have been positively verified in the last election (as they were re-elected for another term-of-office), the effectiveness of their work remains doubtful.

Conclusions

Acting through the European Commission, the European Union has made accountability one of the most important standards for the functioning of the public sphere. The *European Governance White Paper* [European Commission 2002] enumerates five basic principles of good governance: openness, participation, effectiveness, accountability and coherence. Although these principles

clearly fall within the multilevel governance model, they also emphasise the significance of including citizens in the process of formulating, implementing and evaluating public policies. This can be inferred from the abovementioned list. Firstly, it provides for relations based on open conduct of political process and inclusion of individuals (also through implementing standards of accountability). Then, it postulates ensuring effectiveness, efficiency and coherence of the system. None of these criteria leave out citizens, although in every case, their participation can be considered from two perspectives: infrastructure and implementation. The former is related with how the system is organised - for instance, with the existence of appropriate regulations, solutions and standards. The latter refers most of all to the activity of political actors: various administrative bodies, politicians participating in direct elections and ultimate beneficiaries of all public activity - citizens. If the system guarantees the first aspect (that is, the institutional framework), the second one depends on the activity of institutional actors and voters. Implementing good European governance requires several key elements: 1) transparency of decision-making processes and access to public information (which are the essential factors of openness); 2) mechanisms for inclusion of social (and sectoral) actors in decision-making processes; 3) a responsive model for making decisions (which is a virtue of every effective and coherent system). Such structure for European governance unquestionably forms a framework and possibility for limiting the democratic deficit observed so far. Still, the existence of standards, or even their fairly broad promotion⁵, does not by itself make the system more democratic. This is clearly reflected in the picture of the electoral process described earlier in this paper.

In practice, European societies exhibit a very limited willingness to hold their representatives (current or potential) accountable. Their participation in the elections - a crucial element of any democratic system - is incidental. Barely over 30 per cent of European eligible to vote regularly go to the polls. Societies of Central and Eastern Europe stand out as particularly passive. Moreover, voters possess a limited knowledge of the European Parliament - the institution in which they put their representatives through direct election. One particularly striking tendency is their propensity to confuse various European institutions. Furthermore, their knowledge about their representatives' activity at the European level is far from satisfactory. In the context of the subject discussed here, a closer look at those citizens who do cast their votes is also revealing - most of them make their decisions without proper reflection and analysis of

⁵ One example of such promotion in Poland in the period from 2007 to 2013 was a dedicated „Human Capital” Programme funded from the European Social Fund. „Human Capital” provided support for, among many other projects, public administration, to assist it in implementing standards of good governance (one of the Programme priorities was titled „good governance”).

what each candidate has done so far, and/or intends to do in the future. Rather than that, they follow the overall image of a given politician. Although the causes of this „laziness” are actually quite complex and include many other factors, the fact is that such attitude is not conducive to the process of democratising a system through mechanisms of accountability.

The quality of debates conducted during the election campaign indicates that MEPs are not willing to subject themselves to judgement from voters. First of all, the subjects (and with them, the entire dialogue) touched on by current and/or potential MEPs are not particularly relevant. Secondly, it is hard to speak of an actual dialogue, since candidates limit their efforts to simply informing the electorate about their actions and intentions, without engaging in a true discussion. Still, even if it is narrowed down to passing information, the mechanism could be used for the purpose of accountability, if only candidates were ready to provide information most useful to the voters (for instance, about their previous achievements in European politics, or about how they fulfilled promises made earlier on) and formulate agendas adequate to their prerogatives as MEPs (rather than focused on national issues). Finally, candidates to the EP seats are dependent - both formally and informally - on internal political systems of their countries. This fact is reflected in a number of factors: (1) dominant position of national parties; (2) varying national voting systems; (3) national character of the electorate; (4) focus on national issues during the campaign; (5) focus on national issues during the work in the EP [Ruszkowski 2011: 164].

As indicated above, the relation between MEPs and their principals do not entail evaluation of their political activity, regardless of whether one considers ex-ante or ex-post assessment. Deputies' daily work is also not easily subjected to judgment - it is either poorly reported to the electorate, overly focused on national context, or, quite simply, insufficient. This means the MEPs do not create circumstances that would allow voters to conduct ongoing evaluation of their actions.

Clearly, the European political system suffers from a substantial deficit of accountability, as reflected in very limited implementation of one of the basic standards of democracy. Consequently, EU structures lack strong legitimacy. Although a crisis of participation has affected most of Europe and is not limited to „new” members of the Union, it is particularly visible in younger democracies of states that have joined the EU since 2004. This underscores the distance between the „new” and „old” member states in terms of development of civil society and pro-European attitudes. While accountability constitutes only one area in the larger, more complex problem of democratic deficit, it is definitely worth more attention on the part of both theorists and practitioners. It is, after all, a factor that shapes social and institutional order and is required to build

high political culture.

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Figure 1. Turnout rate in selected EU countries: 2014 EP election vs. national parliamentary elections

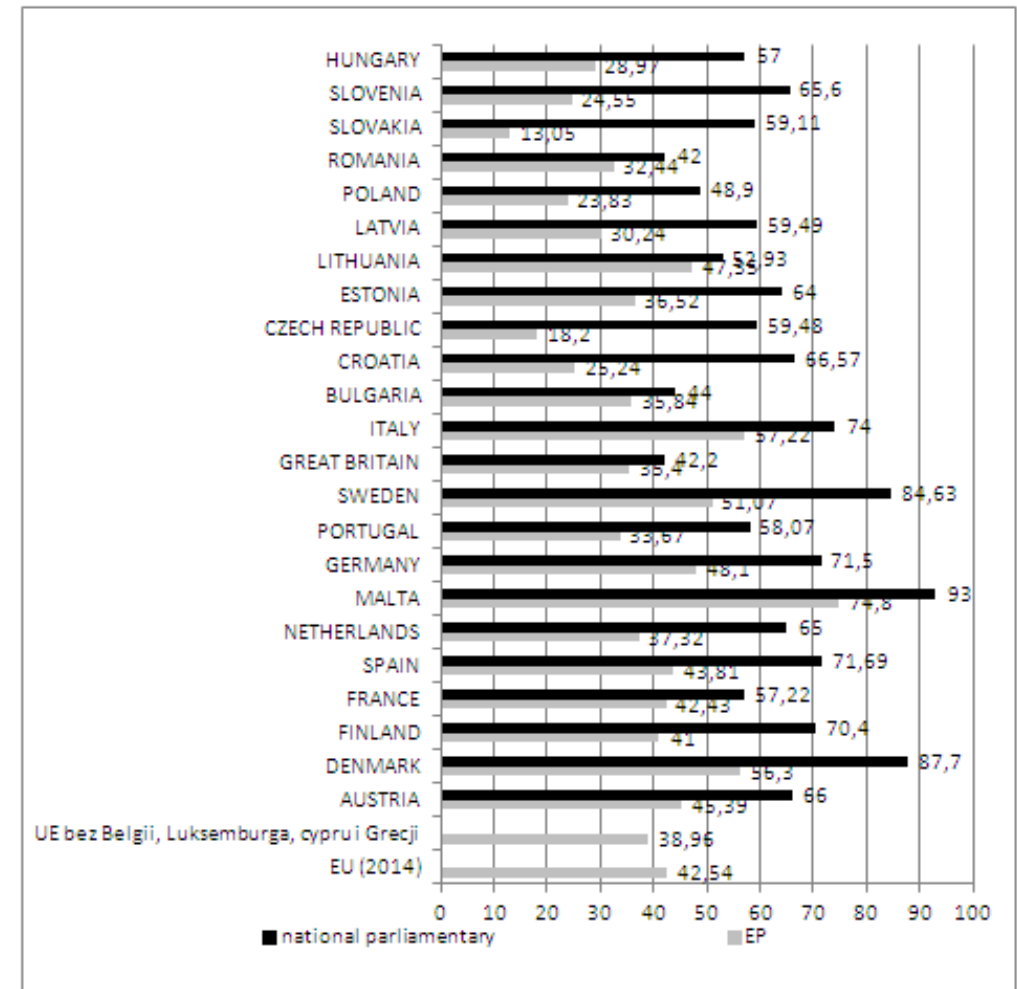
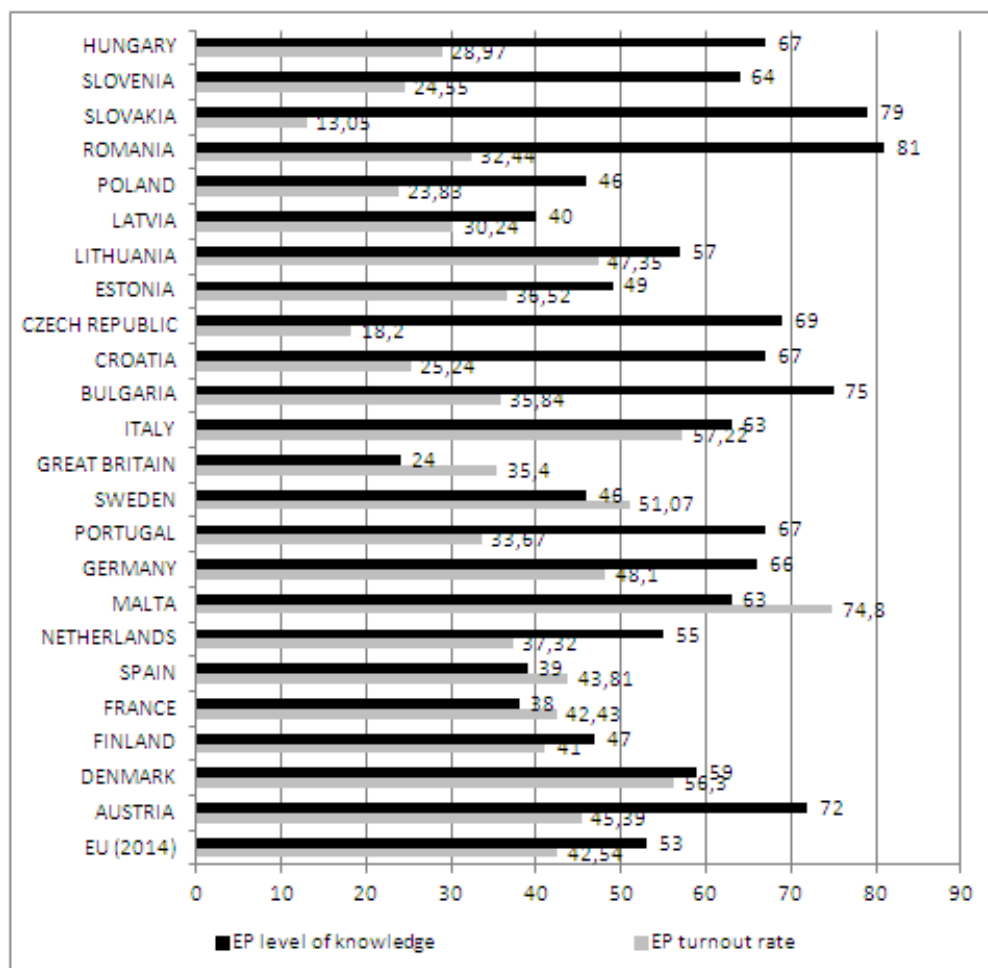


Figure 2. Turnout rates and levels of knowledge about the EP in particular countries



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POSITIONING STRATEGIES OF POLISH POLITICAL PARTIES IN THE 2014 EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT ELECTION

The article concerns an analysis of the types of positioning an electoral agenda adopted by the Polish political parties during the political campaign before the elections to the European Parliament in 2014. Positioning the electoral offer has been treated as one of the main elements of the electoral strategies of political parties, as the way of defining their electoral goals and identifying their strengths and weaknesses as well as opportunities and threats. The scope of analysis assumes main Polish political parties represented in the Polish parliament in the years 2011 - 2014 and additionally the party that managed to cross the entry barrier into the parliamentary market in the EP election in 2014.

Key words:

positioning, political parties, elections, European Parliament

The 2014 European Parliament (EP) election in Poland marks the beginning of an ‘electoral marathon’ that will stretch over 18 months and encompass local election (Autumn 2014), presidential election (Summer 2015) and the national parliamentary election (Autumn 2015). Due to the predominantly parliamentary character of Polish political system, the last of these events will be of most significance to participating parties. At the same time, the above-mentioned schedule clearly determines the importance of strategies adopted by parties in the EP election. The result of this election will constitute the first test of their efficiency.

This article is focused on analysing one very important element of electoral strategies adopted by Polish political parties - the positioning of their electoral agenda. Positioning is crucial to the strategy for several reasons. Firstly, by positioning its agenda, a party conveys information about its key assets and resources, or, at the very least, about how it identifies those assets and resources

at a certain stage in the development of the political market. Secondly, positioning strategy contains clues as to current relations between political entities and the structure of inter-partisan rivalry. This is so because when positioning themselves, parties take into consideration the place and assets of other players on the market. Finally, the way the agenda is positioned reveals target groups to which it is addressed. At the same time, it is the one element of partisan strategy that is openly announced. Its content can be examined based on messages the party conveys to the electorate in fliers, banners, TV ads, official documents, etc. All these sources are readily accessible, which makes scholars' work that much easier. Of course, one needs to remember that any analysis based on such sources allows us to determine a given party's strategic goals, but it says nothing about how effectively these goals are being achieved.

This paper presents an analysis of positioning strategies adopted by political parties represented in the Polish parliament (Civic Platform - PO; Law and Justice - PiS; Democratic Left Alliance - SLD; Polish People's Party - PSL; Europe+ Your Movement - E+TR), as well as new entities created as a result of divisions within the already existing formations, for which the EP election constituted the first big test.

The key questions I intend to answer in this article refer to positioning strategies implemented by political parties in the period from 2011 to 2014 and later, during the campaign before the 2014 European Parliament election. By comparing strategies adopted throughout these two stages, I can determine whether the 2014-2015 "electoral marathon" is perceived by parties as a chance for a new opening (reformulating their goals and gaining new slices of the market) or, rather, as a time to maintain the status quo and confirm their position. Examination of types of positioning adopted for the 2014 election will also allow me to compare the current strategies with those utilised before the 2004 and 2009 elections.

The discussion of research results is preceded by an introduction to the issue of positioning partisan agendas on the political market, as well as a brief description of the pre-election state of things in Poland.

Positioning partisan agendas on the political market

In one of the most succinct definitions of the term, Philip Kotler and Kevin Keller described positioning as 'the act of designing a company's offering (...)' [Kotler, Keller 2011: 276]. The authors of the concept of positioning, Al Ries and Jack Trout, referred to it as the battle for the mind of consumers [Ries, Trout 2001] and emphasised that the product is positioned most of all in customers' awareness. Positioning means also differentiating one's offer from

that of the competitors. So-called points-of-difference that are promoted most are those that have the biggest impact on, or the biggest relevance to, the target group - in this case, segments of the electorate at which the agenda is addressed [see also: Kotler, Keller 2011: 276-279].

Selection of positioning strategies depends on a number of factors. First of all, on elements that shape the current environment of the political market - social, economic and demographic factors which affect behaviours of the electorate and, hence, the actions of political actors. Secondly, on the structure of the market - barriers to entry and elements that limit one's choice of direction, including formal and legal aspects (for example, electoral system), as well as resources possessed and positions occupied by each actor - particularly, their "market share". Thirdly, on the character and stakes of current political rivalry, be it at the polls, in the parliament, or within the government.

Elections are, of course, particularly important to political parties, as they determine their influence on the market. Each election reveals the position held by every formation compared to its competitors, as well as the electorate's attitude toward its agenda. Depending on the current market situation and the existence of potential barriers to mobility, parties may use elections as an opportunity to pursue the following strategic goals:

- **maintaining the status quo (in other words, current market share)** - in this case, parties continue their positioning strategies without any major alterations; they might add new details to their agendas, for example to solidify their image among current supporters (so-called deep branding)
- **broadening the market** - this implies partial / complete change of positioning strategy or, possibly, inclusion of new elements in the agenda (for instance, an attempt at addressing other segments of the electorate);
- **reducing support for competitors** - a party chooses to use the campaign as a chance to implement a specific stage of its long-term strategy - that is, to weaken the most significant rival(s) with which it competes for the support of the same target group;
- **entering / returning to the market** - if barriers to entry do not exist or are significantly reduced, newly formed parties may implement innovative positioning strategies in order to draw attention to their agendas and reach potential supporters; if barriers to entry remain too high to be overcome, small entities may want to remind the electorate of their existence [Cichosz 2011a: 86].

A different view on strategic goals attained through positioning is presented by Bruce Newman and Jagdish Sheth [1987: 135], as well as Paul Baines [1999: 407-408]. These authors underscore characteristics of the electorate to which the offer of a given party is addressed. By employing two criteria

- the candidate (right / wrong) and values (right / wrong) - they distinguish four types of strategy:

- **reinforcement strategy** - used toward voters who have supported the “right” candidate for the “right” reasons; its purpose is to reassure those voters that they had made the right choice;
- **rationalisation strategy** - used when the “right” candidate has been chosen for the “wrong reasons”; it involves inducing a slight shift in the behaviour of a given party’s electorate;
- **inducement strategy** - applied to voters who pick the “wrong” candidate for the “right” reasons; it aims at attracting “misguided” voters to the “right” candidate;
- **confrontation strategy** - used when the “wrong” candidate is selected for the “wrong” reasons; here, strategic goals are achieved through negative or comparative campaign.¹

When analysing the content of messages related to the positioning of agendas on the political market, one can notice three paths most frequently taken by parties:

- ideological positioning (through agendas), which places each party on the right wing - left wing continuum that has traditionally defined inter-party rivalry;
- situational positioning (through attitude toward specific issues), whereby a party builds its niche around its attitude toward the current situation and chosen contemporary problems - most typically, those which at a given moment are discussed widely by mass media and engage the attention of the public opinion;
- innovative positioning (adopted by outsiders), which allows a party to turn away from standard methods of positioning and instead, politicise new subjects [for more, see: Cichosz 2005: 152-155].

The choice of one of these options is related to, among other things, the life-cycle of a given party. As indicated by previous research on Polish political parties [Cichosz 2010: 103-105], ideological positioning is employed primarily by formations that are either newly established or marginal to the political scene. Young parties - particularly those formed on the foundation of social organisations - are also most likely to use innovative positioning and politicise problems that were previously absent from the public debate. Situational positioning, in turn, is the domain of mainstream parties which have already firmly

¹ See also a typology offered by J. Pietraś [2000: 412-413], who describes four types of strategy: reinforcement (addressed at one’s own electorate and aimed at strengthening its support), broadening (aimed at gaining new segments of the electorate), reversal (addressed at the competitor’s voters with the purpose of changing their preferences) and neutralisation (based on discouraging a part of the competitor’s electorate from voting).

established themselves in the electorates’ awareness and specified their position on the right wing - left wing spectrum. They tend to distinguish their agendas by referring to selected specific problems, and presenting a hierarchy of social and economic goals.

In practice, one needs to make one more distinction between ways of positioning. In one variant, a party focuses on emphasising virtues it represents as a whole. In the other, it bases its strategy on promoting particular candidate(s). The choice of one of these options depends on how a given party perceives its own assets and resources, and how it identifies its strengths. The key question here is: which asset has the biggest potential to mobilise the electorate? Is it the party leader (or leaders) with his/her personality and leadership traits, or is it the image of the entire party, its character, place on the political scene and agenda.

The categories shown above should help in determining positioning strategies employed by Polish political parties before the 2014 European Parliament election. Since the choice of strategy always depends on the current situation on the political market, balance of power among partisan actors and patterns of rivalry, we have to first take a look at the shape of the market in the period before the election.

Situation before the 2014 European Parliament election

Since 2005, Polish political scene has been increasingly polarised in favour of two key players: Civic Platform (Polish abbreviation: PO) and Law and Justice (Polish abbreviation: PiS). This division has been stable enough to prompt some authors to claim the scene is now almost entirely ossified [Wojtasik 2010: 76-77; Koczylowski 2010: 121-123]. The rivalry between PO and PiS has engaged approximately 70 per cent of all active voters (see: table 2).

Table 1. Support for PO and PiS in the period from 2005 to 2011.

Election	Percentage of valid votes		
	PO	PiS	Combined
2005 presidential election (first round)	36,33	33,10	69,43
2005 parliamentary election (lower chamber)	24,14	26,99	51,13
2007 parliamentary election (lower chamber)	41,51	32,11	73,62
2009 European Parliament election	44,43	27,4	71,73
2010 presidential election (first round)	41,54	36,46	88,00
2011 parliamentary election (lower chamber)	39,18	29,89	69,07

Source: Państwowa Komisja Wyborcza, www.pkw.gov.pl.

The division both parties have used to differentiate their political agendas was drawn in 2005, when PiS symbolically presented its rivalry with PO as „Poland of solidarity vs. liberal Poland”. This conflict referred to pre-existing political divisions - most of all, to ideological dispute on economics between proponents of statism and liberalism. In the 1990s, the same debate was also interpreted as a social conflict between those who as a result of democratic and economic transformation were put at a disadvantage, and those who used the very same process to gain privileged positions [Pełczyńska-Nałęcz 1998: 222; Grabowska 2004]. Another strategic move employed by the two competing formations was to broaden the polarisation so as to encompass political and axiological issues. In the political dimension, the statism vs. liberalism debate was presented as a choice between a strong, centralised state, and a weak, decentralised one. Meanwhile, in the cultural realm, the conflict between PO and PiS was built around two opposing visions of development: the modern Poland advocated by PO and traditional Poland championed by PiS [Cichosz 2011b: 157-158]. Finally, the two political rivals divided the voters with respect to their views on European Union². Supporters of PO claimed Donald Tusk’s party represented Eurorealism, while PiS was the voice of Eurosceptics. Supporters of PiS also presented their party as Eurorealists, but attributed PO and its leaders with unjustified Eurooptimism [for more, see: Sula 2005]. Leaving such labels aside, the fact is that MEPs elected to the European Parliament from PO lists join the Group of the European People’s Party (EPP), while those put forward by PiS associate with European Conservatives and Reformists Group (ECR).

The two major parties differed also on their visions of foreign policy, particularly with regard to Polish-Russian bilateral relations. PO proposed an attempt at cooperating with the Russian Federation and following U.S. and EU’s policy on this matter. Conversely, PiS was deeply sceptical toward Russia and harboured a fear of Vladimir Putin’s imperial ambitions. This was reflected in a rather gloomy prediction the then-president Lech Kaczyński made in his speech in Tbilisi on 12th of August 2008, just days after Russian assault on Georgia: ‘*Today, it’s Georgia. Tomorrow, it will be Ukraine. The day after tomorrow, the Baltic states. Then, it may be my own country - it may be Poland*’ [Wzyta prezydenta RP w Gruzji].

Other noticeable political formations - including those that in the 2011 election managed to obtain parliamentary seats for its representatives (the Democratic Left Alliance, Polish People’s Party and Palikot’s Movement) - have usually been left with the role of mere observers, as PO and PiS kept

² Parties’ attitude toward the EU (the desirable scope of integration of goals to be pursued by the Union) corresponds directly to their position on the modernism (left-wing formations) - traditionalism (right-wing formations) spectrum. Hence, it is treated here as an element of ideological positioning.

battling for primacy. Polish People’s Party (PSL) partnered PO in a governing coalition after the 2007 election and, similarly to PO, put its MEPs in EPP. Its main target group and stakeholders are farmers, but it has been under constant threat from PiS, which has continuously tried to garner more support from the rural electorate. Nonetheless, PSL has persisted in presenting itself as a centric, pragmatic party, well-rooted in local self-government and focused on citizens’ everyday problems. It has also emphasised its detachment from the PO vs. PiS conflict [Musiał-Karg 2012: 331-332]. Another party that has championed the image of rational and cooperative politics (also within the government) is the Democratic Left Alliance (SLD). Positioned on the left wing of the scene, SLD has put its MEPs in the Progressive Alliance of Socialists and Democrats (S&D). Ever since 2005, when it suffered a major loss in the parliamentary election (only 11,31 per cent of votes, compared to 41,04 per cent four years earlier³), SLD has been unable to come up with an attractive agenda and prevent much of its electorate from moving toward other major players. The most centre-minded of its voters have chosen PO, the ones in favour of welfare state have shifted their support to PiS, and the axiological liberals have found an alternative in Palikot’s Movement. The latter party, formed before the 2011 election, positioned itself as deeply liberal, emphasising its anti-PiS standpoint, anticlericalism and liberal attitude toward issues such as soft drugs and homosexual civil unions [Modrzejewski 2012: 301-310].

During the 2011-2015 parliamentary term of office, dominant parties experience several rifts. In September 2013, a group of deputies focused around former minister of justice (in the PO-PSL government), Jarosław Gowin, left the ranks of PO. As explained by Gowin, the reason for such move was their disappointment with the government’s economic policy (specifically, decisions to increase tax rates and effectively withdraw from the previously introduced reform of the retirement funding system) [Jagor 2013]. In December 2013, together with another group of deputies, who decided to leave a small centre-right formation Poland Comes First (Polish: Polska Jest Najważniejsza, PJN), they formed a new party called Jarosław Gowin’s United Poland (Polish: Polska Razem, PR).

Another formation created during the 2011-2015 term of office is Poland of Solidarity. It was established by a group of deputies who in 2011 were expelled from PiS. Its leader, Zbigniew Ziobro, during his career at PiS reached

³ In 2001, SLD launched the campaign in a coalition with the Union of Labour (Polish: Unia Pracy, UP), while in the 2005 election it ran alone. Still, in the SLD-UP coalition, the Alliance was by far the stronger partner, with UP contributing no more than a couple per cent of support (in 2005, UP’s candidates ran from the lists of another party - Social Democracy of the Republic of Poland; they garnered 3,89 per cent of votes). This means that results from both elections can be compared and credibly considered as reflecting support for SLD.

the position of the party's vice-chairman. From 2005 to 2007, he served as the minister of justice in PiS-led government. After falling out of favour with Jarosław Kaczyński, he spent the 2009-2014 term of office in the European Parliament. Ziobro and his colleagues were expelled for disloyalty to PiS leadership - effectively, as a result of their public calls for increased internal democratisation of the party [po. PAP 2011].

Polls released before the 2014 election indicated a growing support for one other formation - Congress of the New Right, established in 2011 by activists from several small political entities of conservative and liberal character. The popularity of the Congress was to be built around the image of its leader, Janusz Korwin Mikke - a widely recognised politician with experience dating back to 1989 (who after 1993, however, has been somewhat marginalised). Korwin-Mikke gained popularity by using Internet as a tool for political communication - he has been one of the first Polish politicians to launch his own blog. Polls conducted among Internet users gave him as much as over 20 per cent of support, although realistically, it has been far lower, oscillating from 1 to 2,5 per cent.⁴

For the four parties described above, the 2014 EP election held particular importance, as it determined their chance for finding a slightly more permanent niche on the political market.

Positioning of partisan agendas during the election campaign

Polish government's attitude toward Russia changed in the months preceding the 2014 European Parliament election due to the events in Ukraine.⁵ Russian policy toward Ukraine, the invasion of Crimea (February / March 2014) and subsequent outbreaks of armed struggles in the Eastern regions of Ukraine (April 2014) pushed the major governing party - Civic Platform - to make national security one of key issues of the campaign. The threat of aggression from Russia, not only against Ukraine, but also against its other neighbouring countries (including Poland) came to the forefront of public debate. Undeniably, the government made substantial effort to convince both NATO and the EU to devote more attention to matters of European security (including energy security). The same issue was used as a centrepiece around which Civic Platform's

⁴ For instance, in one of the Internet polls conducted before the 2010 presidential election, Korwin-Mikke received 18 per cent of support, which was the second highest result after Bronisław Komorowski (41 per cent), who ultimately was elected the president [Grzesiczak 2010]. However, Korwin-Mikke's actual result in the election was only 2,5 per cent.

⁵ I'm referring to the protest which started in Kiev in November 2013, provoked by Viktor Yanukovich's policy and his decision to postpone signing Ukraine's association agreement with the EU. After the president used force against the protesters, the social movement turned strictly against him and his circles.

agenda for the European Parliament could be positioned. The party presented itself as the only political force able to provide Poland with sufficient security. The strategy was encapsulated in the following slogan: *'Strong Poland in a secure Europe'*. This amounted to a major change in the party's approach - effectively, Civic Platform moved to the position previously occupied by PiS.

Faced with such move from its most important rival, Jarosław Kaczyński's formation was forced to look for other subjects that would distinguish its offer from that of PO. The *'Serve Poland, listen to the Poles'* slogan was meant to emphasise the difference between the Civic Platform - a party interested only in power and preoccupied with its own internal conflicts - and Law and Justice, which wants to engage with the citizens. As usual, PiS referred to the symbolic meaning of the "Solidarity", pointing out that "Solidarity" is a *'movement joined by millions of people who would like to have their say'*. The post-1989 transformation arose high hopes among the Poles, but subsequent two decades proved, to many citizens, to be a disappointment. (*'This is not the Poland we agreed upon'*). PiS positioned itself as a representative of all those disappointed by the new reality [see: db/mtom 2014]. The party targeted most of all inhabitants of medium and small-sized cities, as well as rural areas.

PO's coalition partner, Polish People's Party (PSL), positioned its offer by distancing itself from both dominant players and presenting itself as *'the only Polish party focused on dialogue and cooperation'*, an entity that is *'close to people and their needs'* [Dlaczego warto głosować na PSL? 2014], *'the voice of rural areas - Poland beyond the big cities'*. As one quickly notices, the latter claim put PSL in direct rivalry with PiS over the voters from rural parts of the country.

The coalition formed by two left-wing parties, Democratic Left Alliance and Union of Labour, chose to follow its course from the 2009 campaign and emphasise its affiliation with the family of European socialists - the second most numerous group in the European Parliament. It also pledged to pursue changes in European policy and focus on creating new jobs across Europe, improving social security system and ensuring equal treatment to all citizens. As in case of some other parties, it also claimed to *'improve Poland's position'* in the EU.

The left-wing and centre-left electorate was targeted by one more actor - Europe+ Your Movement, a would-be coalition partner of SLD and UP. In itself, Europe+ Your Movement was a coalition formed shortly before the election by several former SLD members and the Palikot's Movement. Upon joining forces, these two groups created an entity which combined support for welfare state and modernisation with pro-European views. On the left-wing - right-wing continuum, it was situated slightly closer to the left than Palikot's Movement alone. The new actor decided to put itself in opposition to PO's vision of foreign policy by proposing a different take on national security.

Janusz Palikot stressed that Poles were not doomed to ‘die for Poland’ (in a war against Russia, to which prime minister Donald Tusk alluded in his speech - M.C.). Instead, he claimed, they could ‘live for Poland’, provided the country developed its economy, continued integration with Europe and introduced reforms aimed at building social capital [Przemówienie Janusza Palikota 2014]. Crucially for the image of coalition, it was backed by Janusz Palikot and former Polish president, Aleksander Kwaśniewski. The support from the latter figure meant Your Movement attempted to shed its reputation for political adventurism in favour of a calmer, more sanitised style. At the same time, it was also meant to give Your Movement more credibility in the eyes of left-wing voters.

Jarosław Gowin’s United Poland presented itself as Eurorealist, focusing on proposals for limiting EU’s bureaucracy, giving national interests primacy over the Union’s interests (hence the slogan saying ‘A great Poland in a low-key Union’), further enlargement of the EU and signing association agreements with Ukraine, Moldova and Georgia. Referring to the key subject debated during the campaign, Jarosław Gowin called on leaders of PO and PiS to overcome particular partisan interests and initiate close cooperation between all right-wing and centre-right formations. As Poland’s national security was threatened, he argued, one sign of such cooperation would be if all Polish MEPs joined the same political group in the EP so as to better represent Polish interests on the international scene [List Jarosława Gowina 2014].

Another new entity formed as a result of numerous rifts and movements in the Polish parliaments was Zbigniew Ziobro’s Poland of Solidarity. (Polish: Solidarna Polska). Going into the EP election, it faced an increasingly difficult task of distinguishing itself from all the various formations springing up on the right wing of the political scene. It positioned itself as a centre-right party, espousing socialist views on economics and conservative axiology. As for Poland’s membership of the EU and the shape of the Union as a whole, it chose a utilitarian, somewhat egoistic approach expressed in the slogan: ‘As much Union as benefits dictate’ [Program europejski Solidarnej Polski 2014]. The main asset of the party was to be its leader, Zbigniew Ziobro, pictured as a competent and effective politician.⁶

The last formation to be described in this part of the paper is the Congress of the New Right - the only party of all discussed here without national parliamentary representation. In terms of axiology, Congress presented conservative standpoint, while its economic agenda was liberal. It was the only Polish party approaching the election with strictly Eurosceptic views (by which I mean “hard Euroscepticism”, see: Taggrat, Szczerbiak 2004: 3). Congress’ leader, Janusz

⁶ Effective also in the EP, as reflected by Ziobro’s presence in the campaign of Nigel Farage - a well-known leader of UK Independence Party (UKIP) and an MEP.

Korwin-Mikke, claimed his formation would act toward ‘abolishing the EU (...) by reducing it to a free trade agreement’, ‘stopping federalists’ rush toward centralisation’, ‘fighting Eurosocijalizm (...), fighting EU’s tyranny’ [Program Kongresu Nowej Prawicy 2014]. Apart from a visibly anti-EU rhetoric, the party made use of its position as an outsider on the political scene by attempting to garner the support of those voters who openly contested mainstream politics and large formations shaping it. Therefore, Congress put itself in opposition to all other parties, describing them collectively as ineffective ‘crypto-socialists’ or even thieves. New Right’s position on Russian-Ukrainian relations was also unique - Korwin-Mikke praised Vladimir Putin’s effectiveness in this matter and demanded that Polish government retained neutral position toward the conflict between Poland’s eastern neighbours [Oświadczenie w/s sytuacji na Ukrainie 2014].

Table 2. Positioning of agendas for the 2014 European Parliament election.

Political party	Slogan	Positioning type
Civic Platform	‘Strong Poland in a secure Europe’	- situational - inducement strategy
Law and Justice	‘Serve Poland, listen to the Poles’	- situational - reinforcement strategy
Democratic Left Alliance - Union of Labour	‘Europe: #Toward changes’	- ideological (social –democratic)
Europe+ Your Movement	‘Freedom, equality, work’	- ideological (social-liberal)
Polish People’s Party	‘Close to the people’	- situational - reinforcement strategy
Congress of the New Right	‘New Right - New Europe’	- ideological (liberal-conservative and anti-EU)
Jarosław Gowin’s United Poland	‘A great Poland in a low-key Union’	- ideological (Eurorealism)
Zbigniew Ziobro’s Poland of Solidarity	‘Secure and just Poland’	- ideological (statism, conservatism)

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THE SPECIFICITY OF ELECTORAL VOLATILITY IN EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT ELECTIONS

Abstract:

European Parliament elections are a special area for the analysis of electoral volatility understood as changes of electoral support for individual parties occurring in time. Firstly, it is so because they are referred to as second-order elections. Secondly, because despite their supranational character, voting behaviours occurring in them are to a considerable extent moderated by the national context. The article discusses the qualities of European elections which generate electoral volatility at various analysis levels.

Key words:

electoral volatility, European Parliament elections, voting behaviours

The latest decades have initiated many changes on the election market, whose consequences have changed the relations between voters and political parties. These changes include mainly [Lachat 2004]: (a) *reducing the clarity of traditional social divisions* – for example the increase of education level or social mobility lead to homogeneity of lifestyles, secularization trends weaken the group of believers and churchgoers, the growing significance of the service sector lowers the numerical strength of working classes; (b) *more intensive cognitive activation* – lowering the costs of acquiring political information (e.g. by new kinds of media) and higher level of education in the society individualize the voters and make their knowledge resources and ability to acquire knowledge independent of political parties; (c) *changes concerning political parties* – the role of political parties as intermediaries between citizens and the government is more and more questioned, which means that currently it is much more difficult for parties to fulfil their traditional functions. Other changes include e.g.: greater personalization of politics – the “life cycle” of a political leader, usually shorter than that of a political party, weakening of the traditional

categories of political manifestation which used to fossilize the political sphere (traditional values, economy, nation, social system) and the emergence of new ones (ecology or globalization). Moreover, the processes of trivializing the vote, resulting among others from their occurrence in more and more political categories (e.g. the European Parliament or self-government), as well as de-ideologization of politics, have become more distinctive (weakening of the factor which cements group political identities). The outlined changes create an increasingly vast space for less stable electorate. On the one hand, it is those voters who are attracted only occasionally, not demonstrating an internal need to participate in taking decisions significant for the state and society. That electorate may be referred to as irregular, participating in elections only incidentally. On the other hand, that space also includes voters who actively participate in the voting process but are not loyally bound to any political subject. Bernadette C. Hayes and Ian McAllister [1996: 127-139] call them floating voters, pointing out that electoral influence should considerably focus on this segment, because it is the most sensitive to the impact of campaigns. Researchers attribute different characteristics to this type of voters: lower political fanaticism [Converse 1962: 578-599; Zaller 2003: 109-130], greater susceptibility to the impact of the media [Zukin 1977: 244-254], and having less extensive political knowledge [Haller 2003: 109-130]. The results of the research by Steven Chaffee and Sun Y. Choe [1980: 53-69] show that indecisive voters are worse at differentiating between candidate images in elections, do not identify with particular parties so much and have lower education levels. Hence, the explanation of citizens' voting behaviours based on long-term factors such as e.g. one's position in the social structure has become insufficient, and researchers are more and more interested in finding multidimensional determinants of electoral volatility.

The above-mentioned observations draw researchers' attention to the phenomenon of electoral volatility. It is an indicator of changes in voting behaviours observed in time. In literature of the subject we can find various definitions of electoral volatility, generating three directions it can be used in the diagnosis of changes in voting behaviours. The first group of definitions emphasizes the core of electoral volatility, namely *change*. It refers to the basis of electoral volatility, which is the transfer of votes between particular subjects on the party scene. As a considerable number of authors agree, electoral volatility is a common indicator of voting stability [Pedersen 1979; Dalton, Beck, Flanagan 1984; Bartolini, Mair 1990; Mainwaring, Scully 1995; Birnir 2007]. The second type of definition clearly emphasizes that transfers of votes may occur at different levels of political representation. In literature of the subject, authors usually refer to the three-step approach proposed by Stefano Bartolini and Peter Mair [1990: 25], who identify three levels of volatility: systemic, block and party level, referring to transfers

between the parties within a system. Each of these perspectives is connected with changes of electoral support for individual parties in time, but the results are aggregated differently. From the broadest perspective, systemic volatility measures changes in electoral support for all the subjects in a party system; a slightly narrower one adds up the support for particular families or blocks of political parties, and the narrowest one refers to single parties only. The last group of definitions of electoral volatility involves the description of the phenomenon with regard to its determinants. Many researchers make terminological effort trying to describe electoral volatility with the use of its sources, which are usually constituted as a study hypothesis or the result of conducted empirical analyses.

Thus, a change in political party support is the basic unit of analysis of electoral volatility. It is important both from the theoretical and the practical points of view. Political parties are the main representatives of citizens on the political scene. One of the fundamental functions of political parties (apart from the state/public and organizational ones) is the social function [Herbut 1997: 68 and the following], which to a greater or lesser degree connects a political party with the social structure. Entering the parliament depends on obtaining the required number of votes in an election, and this is connected with the development and implementation of an election strategy oriented at obtaining the votes. "This strategy is a specific commodity introduced to the election market, the programmes presented to mass electorate, which usually becomes the point of reference for an individual voting decision ... typically based on a specific concept defining the ideological and policy identity of the party" [Ibidem: 69]. So the election result is a consequence of interactions between voters and the political party. The studies on electoral volatility reflect the changes of these relations in time and at various levels.

Analyses of electoral volatility usually refer to national elections. Although European Parliament (EP) elections have long been an integral element of Europe's electoral landscape, they actually have a lower social importance than the national ones. It is explained by the fact that the political system of the European Union (EU) does not clearly position the electoral scene as the most important element of representative democracy [Wojtasik 2012: 282]. Although in the social consciousness the mechanism of appointing representation in the process of EP elections is perceived as similar to that observed e.g. in parliamentary elections, these elections (contrary to those at the national level) do not result in ultimate structuring of the political competition space. The internal organization of that space is ultimately ensured by national governments, delegating their representatives to European institutions. The social perception of EP elections, attributing them less importance than general national elections, is connected with regarding them as second-order elections.

Karlheinz Reif and Hermann Schmitt [1980] use this term to refer to elections which – despite being influenced by national politics of particular countries – actually have no significant impact on the national politics. Schmitt [2005: 650 and the following] points out a few characteristics of EP elections which make them second-order elections: (a) *lower level of political participation*, which probably results from not very intensive voting activation processes and low politicization of European elections; (b) *reflecting the national political situation in electing supranational representatives* – voters often treat European elections as an opportunity to express their dissatisfaction with national politics; (c) *different voting motivations* – because European elections are socially perceived to have a lower rank and as a consequence to have a weak impact on national politics, voters more rarely decide on strategic voting and follow their natural preferences instead, which may mean greater support for small parties or those with weaker national competition strength. Robert Wiszniowski [2008: 9] makes the thesis that the “location” of EP in the European political space is not clear for many member states’ citizens. It leads to general “disorientation” among voters, resulting in the trivialization of European elections and treating them as less important than national ones. The second order gives EP elections a specific character which generates features significantly affecting electoral volatility. Largely they function at the level of the state electing its European representation, because despite the supranational character of decisions taken by the EP, voting behaviours in European elections are moderated by the national context. Further in the article will be presented the features of EP elections which generate electoral volatility at different levels of analysis.

The first significant factor is clearly **weaker activation mechanisms applied at the national level** in EP election campaigns, which are bound to translate into citizens’ irregular voting patterns at the systemic level. It results from two things. The first is the weaker and less intensive positioning of election campaigns in the media, which is the main policy of communication with the electorate. Currently, the role of the media is no longer only to provide information. It is an active participant of the socio-political reality, in which it creates its own messages, actually becoming a message in itself [McLuhan 1964 /2005/: 7]. Along with the growing speed of information and the development of new information technologies which give the media opportunities to influence the society, election campaigns and transferring current election information in the media have become an integral element of each pre-election period. The role of the media in electoral campaigns is focused on two directions of activity. Firstly, candidate images are crystallized and campaign topics are presented through mass media. The media is the most important carrier of – on the one hand – pre-election information advertising, oriented at providing voters with the basic information concerning

the election (voting procedures, seat distribution, also its institutional importance), and on the other hand, political advertising encouraging to support particular candidates in the election. Secondly, the media is often the means of conveying various public service campaigns. It is used to provide information on European structures or the competencies of particular EU institutions, as well as to conduct campaigns oriented at the electoral activation of citizens (e.g. e-Europa, Your Europe). Activities taken not only in the pre-campaign period, whose aim is to activate the citizens for elections and make them want to participate in the upcoming election, may considerably affect the level of (first of all systemic) electoral volatility. They are oriented at activating specific target groups which – as shown by pre-campaign analyses – do not manifest any significant interest in elections, and probably without the pro-turnout activities would not exercise their right to vote. Provisional activities stimulating citizens to be active in the election may fully accomplish their goal in one election but will upset the stability of citizens’ active participation in the next one. Another issue is the strategies used by candidates contesting in European elections, different to those applied in national campaigns. The difference is mainly connected with their lower intensity. Julia Lodge [1982; 1986; 1990; 1996], describing the tactics of political parties in European election campaigns, observes that these elections are “disappointing” in that parties do not apply themselves to campaign activities and more often rely on social opinions, evaluations developed at the national level in the pre-election period.

The second factor generating electoral volatility in EP elections is **movements promoting Euroscepticism**, often activated in the campaign period, which may result in discouraging voters from participating in elections of supranational representatives. The advancing process of extending the European community has also caused the activation of negative assessments and attitudes to the integration process. Tamás Boros and Zoltán Vasali [2013: 11] point out the following most important motives moderating discussions on Euroscepticism: (1) *the conflict between national identity and international cooperation* – Eurosceptics claim that European integration processes lead to autonomous states having to renounce their previous accomplishments in the process of strengthening their positions in favour of other states which will draw particular benefits from those positions; (2) *the image of “punishing Europe”*, which in order to achieve a quick and effective improvement in the macroeconomic sphere imposes a number of sanctions and austerity measures, perceived by Eurosceptics as “Brussels dictatorship”; (3) *the character and quality of democracy in the EU*. Currently available tools do not always allow EU subjects to protect democratic political institutions in member states or to cope with the lack of such institutions. It often results from the lack of common democratic standards, consistently adopted in all member states. This may translate into difficulties in maintaining the political structure of

a whole group of member states; (4) *failure to meet expectations connected e.g. with the plans of EU structures' expansion to the Eastern Europe*. In literature of the subject we can find a number of typologies which show the multidimensionality and different faces of Euroscepticism. Paul Taggart and Aleks Szczerbiak [2001] differentiate between the “hard” Euroscepticism – negating the very idea of the EU and demanding the rejection of all existing projects proposed by its bodies, and the “soft” one – largely having a situational character, only referring to certain areas of activity of EU structures not accepted by the individuals who express this approach (e.g. joining the Euro zone). Tamás Boros and Zoltán Vasali [2013: 10] identify (a) *socially-based Euroscepticism* – connected with the characteristics of particular social groups which seek the causes of difficulties their members face (e.g. impoverishment) in EU structures; (b) *Euroscepticism based on prejudice* – for example prejudice to immigrants, other races or other nations; (c) *rational Euroscepticism* – based on reliable information on EU structures, extensive historical and political knowledge, the ability to find the advantages and disadvantages of politics done at the European level, and predicting the consequences of supranational projects; (d) *normative Euroscepticism* – a specific kind of Euroscepticism, initiated in the central structures of the EU, openly criticizing national policies of member states which do not comply with the values promoted by the central authorities of the EU (e.g. towards national minorities). The character of Euroscepticism greatly depends on the cultural and ideological context of a given state, which defines the proportions of its particular kinds. Thus it can be saturated with the elements of rationality, aggressiveness or ideology to different degrees. Depending on the context, various neologisms are also used, reflecting the message and form of the movement: “Euro-indifference” [Delmotte 2007], “Europhobia” [Rozenberg 2007]; “Eurocynicism” [Krouwel, Abst 2007], “Eurorealism” [Neumayer 2007]. But irrespective of the nature of Euroscepticism, the movements that demand this approach are oriented at more or less intensive criticism of EU institutions, which actually initiates processes boycotting election participation. The different strength and scope of Eurosceptic activities during electoral campaigns will influence the irregularity of voting behaviours and intensify systemic electoral volatility.

The third factor in the analysis will be the voting strategies applied. In voting in EP elections a clear tendency is emerging to depart from strategic voting, which means that **voters more and more often turn to small parties**. The lack of direct effects of the elections in domestic politics causes citizens to activate the model of voting according to their sincere and first preference [Markowski 2008: 31-32]. In national elections, strategic voting is more often activated, which must meet two conditions – the citizen does not choose between entities on the basis of their direct “first” preferences and their decision

results from the internal belief that they are likely to change the result of the election [Wiszniowski 2008: 212]. Motivations outlined this way are determined by the will to change the result of the election and the expectation that it is possible. They also mean that in order to maintain the perspective of influencing the final solution of the election, the voter will give up on their real party preferences. In this context, European elections give a citizen the opportunity to express their authentic preferences. Believing in the autonomy of elections of supranational representatives as compared to national ones, as well as the lack of direct impact of EP election results on national politics, they are stimulated to activate “voting as the heart tells them”. Such voting, based on permanent ideological and policy attachment to a particular party, generates the stability of voting behaviour in time and leads to lower party electoral volatility.

But because of the characteristics of European elections, an alternative hypothesis is also possible: if European elections are treated as an opportunity to reflect national politics, they will be **more susceptible to changes of public mood** understood as a combination of emotions in the society generated by the socio-political situation. These emotions are negative when subjective expectations of the actions of decision-making entities in the country are not met and central actions receive poor assessment from the society. The mood may be manifested in various ways: it will be visible in lower trust in party subjects in public opinion polls, and in the extreme form they may even generate strikes and protests. EP elections – due to the attributed second order – are also a field where public dissatisfaction with the authorities is expressed. Hence they will also be susceptible to emotions intensified in the society by the national level representatives. In practice it means that the currently governing national parties usually have poorer results in EP elections than in the country. It is a consequence of voters' strategic behaviour: using the opportunity to really punish the authorities for unacceptable directions of activity, they resign from supporting the winners of national elections. The sensitivity of EP elections will generate a higher level of party electoral volatility, because it will be a function of changing public mood depending on the activities of parties currently taken at the national level.

The crystallization of dissatisfaction with the rulers occurs within the framework of retrospective voting, which indicates direct relations between the voter's perception of economic issues and assigning the responsibility for their condition to the current government. The first assumptions of this model were outlined by Valdimer O. Key [1966], who expressed the belief in his book that when approaching the ballot boxes, voters have their reflections concerning the quality of life within the latest inter-election period well thought out. If this assessment is positive, they are inclined to vote for the entity that has been ruling as a result of distribution of votes in the previous election. If, however, they

have sensed the lowering of life quality, they will vote for another subject. This process is referred to as electoral reward and punishment or as a mechanism of democratic control of rulers [Cwalina, Falkowski 2006: 70]. Gregory B. Markus [1988] identifies *pocketbook voting* and *sociotropic voting* within retrospective voting. The mechanism is similar here. Voters attribute responsibility to the rulers – on the one hand for their individual financial situation, and on the other hand, for managing the national economy. Then they evaluate their financial situation since the latest election (in the microeconomic perspective) or the condition of the national economy in general (in the macroeconomic perspective). They punish or reward each of the rulers of the last term of office.

The accuracy of retrospective voting in its pure classic perspective is however only surface in the context of relations between the national and international economy. It is so because the politics of the EU plays an important role in national economic strategies, as it shapes and determines the directions of national economy. In particular, the creation of the Euro zone undeniably increases the significance of European structures for national politics. The taking of economic decisions is becoming a more and more multilevel process, which must involve the cooperation of national, international and transnational subjects. This tendency can be expressed with the question by Mark A. Kayser [2007] – *How domestic is domestic politics?*, which emphasizes the greater and greater permeability of European economies and the lower and lower autonomy of the national ones. Because of the growing popularity of national economies in the European space and their mutual permeation, more and more researchers concentrate on the importance of economic voting in the international context.

However, these studies do not provide absolutely unambiguous results. On the one hand, a number of works point out a significant relation between these variables. For example, Timothy Hellwig [2008] proved on the basis of studies he had conducted that taking into account the globalization processes in the electoral reflections lowered the importance of economic voting in France and Great Britain. In extensive research carried out in the countries of the South Europe (Italy, Spain, Greece, Portugal) Marina Costa Lobo and Michael S. Lewis-Beck [2012] made the hypothesis that if voters can see the dependence of national economic policy on the European one, they are less likely to blame the government for poor development of the country. This conjecture was statistically confirmed. The weakening of the tendency to economic voting when noticing the impact of international processes on the domestic economy is partially explained by research conducted in the year 2001 in 15 European countries [Christensen 2003]. It proved that nearly half of the respondents share the opinion that national governments are unable to control globalization processes. Such a belief directly exempts national governments from the responsibility for the state's poor

economic condition, seeking external reasons for it in a subject difficult to define and processes difficult to perceive. The significance attributed to domestic issues in the mass media, especially emphasizing economic factors, is also worth mentioning. It turns out that the poor economic condition of the country is usually attributed by citizens to the fact that the country belongs to EU structures. But if the economic standing of the country is good, they explain it with good decisions of domestic political elites [e.g. Adam 2012; Liebert, Trenz 2010]. Robert Wiszniowski [2008: 230] shows that the situation is actually even more complicated. It results from the fact that domestic matters are basically completely controlled by national party elites, and European matters are far beyond their influence. Making use of this, the media (the less restricted ones) “composes” the European contents, and often resorts to criticizing the activities of domestic governments under the “disguise” of European matters.

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EP elections are a permanent element not only of the European political space but also of national political spaces of each member state. Thus, voting behaviours in a supranational election are to a considerable extent moderated by domestic factors. It is within the framework of the national structure that key activation processes are initiated, playing an important role in the electoral activation of citizens. They may be intentional – e.g. connected with pro-turnout campaigns, spreading information on EU structures and EP elections. They may also result from the specific nature of the state – its political culture and freedom of the media or approval for the activity of formal and informal movements promoting or negating the membership of the state in the EU. These factors may significantly affect the level of electoral volatility both at the systemic and the party level. It seems, then, that although the European political space may be isolated from the methodological point of view, it is not really independent. It is subject to clear influences of national spaces, which shape it among others through moderating the voting behaviours of their citizens in supranational elections.

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**EQUAL OR NOT? ON THE MATERIAL ASPECT
OF EQUALITY OF EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT
ELECTIONS IN POLAND**

Abstract:

This article focuses on the issue of equality of elections, in the context of the 2014 European Parliament election in Poland. Most often the definition of principles of elections' equality comes down to emphasizing its two aspects: the formal one and the material one. The first of them refers to guaranteeing each person with the active voting right the same number of votes. The material aspect of the equality principle is connected with striving to guarantee the same “voting power” to the election participants. Most briefly, it means that a given number of people elect as many representatives as another group with the same numerical strength.

The main aim of this article is focus on the material aspect of implementing the principle of equality in EP elections. In the article will be emphasized three issues decisive for the specific features of the electoral system (electoral districts, election threshold and electoral formula), at the same time influencing the range of implementation of the material equality of elections. General findings will be confronted with empirical data, which will allow to formulate conclusions about the degree to which the European Parliament election conducted in Poland on 25th May 2014 met the principle of material equality.

Key words:

equality of elections, the European Parliament, electoral system

Introduction

Equality is a positive value in democratic regimes. When it is emphasized, the aim is to show that the members of a certain community are treated in the same way regarding their freedoms, rights and responsibilities. So equal

treatment of everybody, regardless of sociodemographic differences between people, is the goal to which the rulers should strive in political systems considered to meet the requirements of democracy.

The essence of equality discussed on the political ground comes down to the fact that the preferences of one citizen are no more significant than the preferences of another one [Dahl, Lindblom 1953: 41]. Hence, the attempts to create an institutional system which will guarantee each citizen an identical opportunity to participate in taking political decisions and controlling the decisions taken by the authorities are completely understandable. Taking into consideration the fact that the contemporary democracy is predominantly representative, the institution of elections is of key importance, especially regarding the way they are organized and conducted. After all, they are the basic form of citizens' participation in taking decisions on who will exercise the authority and as a consequence, whose and what kind of political programme will be chosen for implementation by particular public authority bodies¹ [Wojtasik 2012: 54-77; Wojtasik 2013: 25-38].

Elections are organized at various levels. The highest systemic and social significance is attributed to elections organized at the national level [Wojtasik 2011: 209]. By means of such elections, the citizens of a given country decide about the personal composition of the parliament (or at least one of the chambers in the case of bi-cameral parliaments). In many countries, it is becoming more and more popular to leave the issue of appointing the head of the country to the direct decision of the sovereign. Besides, political practice confirms that in different countries the institution of general elections is used as a way of creating still other national authorities (e.g. the election of the Prime Minister in Israel), which in turn proves the endemic character of many systemic solutions.

The processes of decentralization of power have led to the development of different forms of territorial self-government and/or territorial autonomy [Domagała, Iwanek 2013: 15-29; Domagała, Iwanek 2014: 29-41]. As a consequence, the citizens of certain selfgovernmental communities or autonomic regions also participate – apart from national elections – in elections at the local and regional level.

Finally, it should be noted that internationally – since the 19th century, all the way through the 20th century up to now – interrelation of countries, concerning different areas of their existence, has been more and more obvious. One of its expressions in Europe is integration processes, with their institutional manifestation of the European Union, already including almost thirty states. The formation of supranational European structures resulted in the creation of

¹ Significant differences in the execution of the elections' function are particularly observed in the case of European Parliament elections [Hix 2010: 123; Wojtasik 2012: 300], although the implementation of the Lisbon Treaty leads to the reconsideration of some conclusions.

many bodies making a complicated institutional system of the EU [Hix 2010: 55-183], in which a significant role is attributed to the European Parliament [Domagała 2010: 11-27].

The term “parliament” is of key importance, especially that we cannot imagine the existence of any democratic political system without a parliament elected directly by the sovereign [Antoszewski, Herbut 2001: 237]. At the EU level, the parliament of course does not play such a role and does not serve the functions that national parliaments do, but since it is composed of “representatives of the Union's citizens”² [*Treaty of European Union...*, Article 14.2], it is worth analysing more thoroughly its election mechanisms. From this perspective, the history of the European Parliament, which started in 1962³, can be divided into two periods. In the first one, lasting *de facto* until 1979, its composition depended on the decisions made by the parliaments of the member states, hence it appeared to be an inter-parliamentary body. The beginning of the second period was the first general and direct election of members of the European Parliament, taking place on 7-10 June 1979. As pointed out by Józef M. Fiszer [2005: 12], thanks to that, this body really became a “supranational institution”. So since 1979, the citizens of several – currently, of most – European countries have been participating in elections to a supranational body, apart from national, local and regional elections [Dalton, Scarrow, Cain 2004: 126-127].

For many states and communities, elections at the European level are a huge challenge. First, they determine the need for the subjects participating in it (citizens who exercise their active and passive voting rights and political parties) to adapt to the new conditions, which especially in the countries of the former Eastern Bloc resulted changes reflecting the dynamics of democratic transformation processes. Second, the subjects responsible for creating the rules of the electoral game should aim at creating an electoral system that would guarantee the recognition of European Parliament elections not only as free but also as fair elections.

This article focuses on the issue of equality of elections, in the context of the 2014 European Parliament election. The very concept of equality of elections is so broad that it must be at least briefly explained. Most often the definition of principles of elections' equality comes down to emphasizing its two aspects: the formal one and the material one. The first of them refers to guaranteeing each

² On the basis of national law, their status has been defined as “representatives of nations of the European Union” [*Election Code...*, Article 330].

³ The emergence of the European Parliament should be analysed from the processual perspective. True, a body called “the European Parliament” appeared in 1962, but even before, within the framework of European Communities, there had been a body identified with the contemporary European Parliament (with different names whose evolution was connected with the dynamics of integration processes) [Dydak 2003: 11-12].

person with the active voting right the same number of votes. This essentially means a demand to create mechanisms which prevent any group of people from having a higher number of votes because of the value of property they own, belonging to a certain social class, education level or other characteristics used to determine people's social status [Żukowski 1999: 22-23]. The material aspect of the equality principle is connected with striving to guarantee the same "voting power" to the election participants. Most briefly, it means that a given number of people elect as many representatives as another group with the same numerical strength [Glajcar, Okrzesik, Wojtasik 2006: 14]. This, so to say, rudimentary approach to the electoral equality principle is currently being extended, and in two directions. First, we can see the extension of application range of this principle. This is proved for example by identifying the third aspect of the discussed principle apart from the formal and material ones, referred to as the equality of electoral opportunities [Uziębło 2013: 218-327]. Second, each of the mentioned aspects is connected with a growing number of elements which determine its implementation. Thus, the scope of definitions of its particular aspects is sometimes broadened⁴. The aim of this article, however, is not to carry out conceptual analysis but to focus on one – particularly important from the point of view of election results – material aspect of implementing the principle of equality in EP elections. Further in the article will be emphasized three issues decisive for the specific features of the electoral system (electoral districts, election threshold and electoral formula), at the same time influencing the range of implementation of the material equality of elections. General findings will be confronted with empirical data, which will allow to formulate conclusions about the degree to which the European Parliament election conducted in Poland on 25th May 2014 met the principle of material equality. Obviously, absolute compliance with the principle is very unlikely in a dynamic social system, but getting possibly close to the ideal will allow us to assume that the said principle has been accomplished.

Assuming that legal norms are the framework within which the election participants should operate, it is worth making a few comments on the normative character of European Parliament elections. In Europe, the regulations are general in character, and detailed issues are decided by the legal acts of each state. As a consequence, significant differences are sometimes observed between the voting systems applied in individual member states. As part of the analysis, it is worth noticing that it was determined at the level of primary European Union law that European Parliament elections should only be general and direct,

⁴ Piotr Uziębło [2013: 59-60] points out e.g. the necessity to extend the definition of formal election equality: "... it is becoming necessary to analyse not only its fundamental element, meaning whether voters are entitled to an equal number of votes, but also their other rights connected with elections, because even in these aspects some unjustified, discriminating differentiation of rights of individual voters may appear".

and the ballot should be free and secret [*Treaty on European Union...*, Article 14.3]. In addition, aiming at the unification of election procedures, by Council Decision of 25 June 2002 and 23 September 2002 amending the Act concerning the election of the representatives of the European Parliament by direct universal suffrage [2002] it was provided that in each Member State, members of the European Parliament shall be elected on the basis of proportional representation, using the list system or the single transferable vote (STV).

It is easy to notice, then, that no declaration concerning equality of elections was included in the above regulations. It is not surprising, especially that the distribution of seats between the member states where they are later allocated leads to the material aspect of the elections equality being significantly disturbed. The data in Table 1 show the difference in the voting power between voters in particular EU member states. Of course we also need to remember that the presented data only indicate what Jerzy Jaskiernia [1992: 23] calls "potential voting power" in contrast to the "actual voting power". This distinction is worth highlighting not only because of the importance of the turnout aspect for the evaluation of material vote equality but also because the citizens of the European Union can participate in elections of MEPs on the territory of each EU member state, not only the one of which they are citizens. The use of this opportunity, then, may modify the findings concerning the "potential voting power" presented in the table. However, taking into consideration for example the Polish experience from 2009 [Glajcar 2010: 57], this phenomenon may be regarded as marginal, not affecting the data presented in the table in any significant way.

There are 503.6 million citizens in the European Union. Taking into account the fact that in 2014, 751 European Parliament representatives were elected, there is one representative to almost 670,600 citizens (the norm of representation). The fourth column of Table 1 shows the disproportions of the voting power among citizens of the member states. We can see that the vote of a citizen of Malta is thirteen times stronger than the vote of a citizen of France. So, noticeably, deviations from the material aspect of equality are considerable. The votes of citizens of demographically smallest member states of the EU are the most powerful. And conversely, the votes of largest states have the lowest power. It is connected with the adopted principle of degressive proportionality, unfavourable for the citizens of EU largest states. In addition, apart from the demographic potential, the smallest states are guaranteed the minimum number of seats (six), thus consciously violating the proportional pattern of seat distribution. The fact that this clause contradicts equality is beyond doubt. It is enough to disregard the smallest member states (Malta, Luxembourg, Cyprus, Estonia) to see that the difference between the voting power of citizens of France and Slovenia is much lower (the votes of the latter are "only" 3.5 times stronger).

The general character of the European legal norms concerning European Parliament elections resulted in the necessity to regulate the principles of electoral competition at the level of national law. What is interesting, in Poland one of the principles of election law regarding European Parliament elections is equality [*Election Code...*, Article 328]. Remarkably, this principle did not apply in the elections of 2004 and 2009. So the decision included in the Election Code is a novelty, changing the essential aspect of the European Parliament election system valid in the territory of the Republic of Poland. Since 2014, the elections should be conducted in a way which guarantees the implementation not only of the formal but also the material aspect of equality. Therefore, it is even more justified to try and find out to what extent this other aspect was present in the election of 25th May 2014. Actually, not only the code requirement is important. In literature of the subject it is emphasized that “Failure to observe the equality of elections ... may lead to the distortion of voters’ will, and this undermines the fundamental goal of free elections: appointing the representative composition of the representative assembly reflecting the actual structure of interests and views occurring in the society” [Kryszewski 2007: 103]. Another argument for seeking the mechanisms that guarantee the implementation of election equality principle (even in the situation it is not part of the constitutional or statutory catalogue of election law principles) refers to Polish electoral tradition, in which it is deeply rooted [Michalak 2010: 13].

Analysis

The issue of the material aspect of equality of elections is closely related to the necessity to analyse the selected elements of the electoral system. The first of them is electoral districts. The determination of their territorial range and size is – first of all – one of the most politically controversial issues, and secondly, as a consequence of that, it may promote equal representation but may also violate it, favouring certain parts of the country or territorial communities. Further, it may result in benefits for some groups and limit the electoral opportunities of others. Hence, the beneficiaries of the current solutions will try to retain the *status quo*, while other political actors will strive to change it.

Regarding European Parliament elections, Poland has been divided into thirteen districts. Seven of them cover the areas of single voivodeships (Pomorskie – district no. 1, Kujawsko-Pomorskie – district no. 2, Łódzkie – district no. 6, Wielkopolskie – district no. 7, Lubelskie – district no. 8, Podkarpackie – district no. 9, Śląskie – district no. 11), four were created on the territory of two adjacent voivodeships (Podlaskie and Warmińsko-Mazurskie – district no. 3, Małopolskie and Świętokrzyskie – district no. 10, Dolnośląskie

and Opolskie – district no. 12, Lubuskie and Zachodniopomorskie – district no. 13), and Mazowieckie Voivodeship was divided into two electoral districts – district no. 4 (including the capital city of Warsaw) and district no. 5. Thus the hybrid model of determining electoral districts was applied. Basically, the authors of the solution referred to the administrative division into voivodeships, but they also used the possibility to combine them, which indicates a distinct (in a way, non-administrative) way of creating electoral districts. The applied mechanism provides the basis for the formulation of twofold observations. First, the fact that decisions in this matter are taken at the statutory level may result in objections concerning consciously combining or dividing voivodeships by the parties which have the parliamentary majority in order to maximize the political benefits [Uziębło 2013: 107]. Second, the adopted mode of division from the perspective of voters from smaller (e.g. Świętokrzyskie or Opolskie) voivodeships constituting districts together with territorial division units which have a higher number of voters may distort their sense of justice concerning the implementation of the traditional model of territorial representation [Michalak 2010: 13]. Besides, we must not ignore the important aspect that members of the European Parliament formally represent the whole collective subject of sovereignty, and in this sense the division into electoral districts may be treated as a technical procedure. Remembering this, we need to emphasize the occurrence of specific ambiguity of the adopted model of representation, with its territorial dimension on the one hand, and the national one on the other.

The adopted division shows that the potential mean size of a district (3.92) is low. It is the result of a relatively low total number of seats to be distributed (51). This was one of the reasons for the interesting proposal of creating only one electoral district covering the area of Poland, presented during the works on the European Parliament electoral system [Glajcar 2010: 57]. Finally, however, it was not approved. Still, when adopting the system of thirteen electoral districts, a specific numbers of seats were not assigned to each district. Hence, the number of the seats a district receives does not depend either on the number of citizens of the territory or the number of people entitled to vote. This results from adopting a two-step mechanism of seat distribution. First, the votes cast on the candidates from the district lists of each election committee are aggregated at the national level. On the basis of outcomes determined this way, the seats are distributed among the entitled election committees (that is why some authors claim that we *de facto* have one electoral district covering the whole country [Antoszewski, Herbut 2006: 327]). After the number of seats of each committee is determined, they are distributed among the district lists of candidates.

Thus the number of seats for each electoral district indirectly depends on the turnout level within the district. Higher turnout in a district increases the

probability that particular committees will achieve better outcomes in this district than their lists achieved in other districts, and as a consequence, will be decisive for the allocation of a higher number of seats in this district. This is confirmed by the results of the election of 25th May 2014 (Table 2). The highest turnout (35.33%) was observed in district no. 4 (as compared to 23.83% at the national level), to which five seats were ultimately allocated. It was significantly more than the potential value calculated for this district, amounting to slightly above 3.6. Analogously, we cannot disregard the fact that the most unfavourable ratio of the potential size of electoral district to the actual number of seats was observed in district no. 3, where the election turnout was the lowest. It was the only district where the turnout did not exceed the 20% threshold. Hence, we must conclude that seeking correlations between a high electoral turnout and the actual size of the electoral district is fully legitimate. At the same time, as post-election data indicate, this relation is by no means absolute. Not always does a high turnout guarantee the increase of the district pool of seats, just like a low turnout does not have to result in its significant decrease in comparison with the potential size of the electoral district. For example in district no. 6 the turnout level was similar to the national one (23.72%). It was the sixth highest result among the thirteen districts. In spite of that, in Łódzkie Voivodeship the second highest negative ratio of actual versus potential district size was observed (-1.389). At the same time, in district no. 5, where the turnout level was one of the lowest (20.08%), this ratio was “only” -0.364 (Table 2.).

So the above-mentioned findings show that the actual size of an electoral district is not absolutely dependent on the election turnout. Hence, there must be another element ultimately decisive for the distribution of seats among the districts. Actually, it is the district distribution of support concerning individual election committees. It is worth checking, then, to what extent it affects the size of particular electoral districts and how the “dynamic”, not “stable”, distribution of seats among them influenced the implementation of the material aspect of equality of the European Parliament election in Poland in 2014.

It is indisputable that the mechanism of creating the electoral district size in European Parliament elections applied in Poland is more dependent on the distribution of support among district lists of a certain election committee rather than the election turnout. It is fully confirmed by empirical data (Table 3). The only election committee which obtained seats in all the thirteen districts was Prawo i Sprawiedliwość – PiS (*Law and Justice*). It is a consequence of relatively even distribution of support among the district lists of this party. It achieved the best result in district no. 10 – over three times (3.18) higher than in district no. 2, where the result of Jarosław Kaczyński’s party was the lowest. The winner of the European Parliament election in 2014, Platforma

Obywatelska – PO (*Civic Platform*), obtained seats in twelve of the districts. Lubelskie Voivodeship (district no. 8) was the only one where PO did not receive a seat in the end. The direct reason for that was the poor result of PO’s list from that district (2.86% of all the votes cast on that party in the election), even more clearly seen against the background of support for the party in the other regions. The result of the Lublin list of PO was more than five times poorer (5.2) than the result achieved in Śląskie Voivodeship (district no. 11), where the support was the highest.

The issue of diversification in the distribution of support for election committees is even better shown by the level of extreme deviation from the mean result of district lists determined for each of them. This way we can compare not the level of support for each party but first of all their popularity in the given district against the background of the all-Poland result. The district mean for Platforma Obywatelska was 8.86%, and for Prawo i Sprawiedliwość it was a little higher, 9%. The medians for both parties are also similar in both cases: 7.02% and 7.32% respectively. But the fundamental difference occurred in extreme deviations from these values, which were 6% for PO (the highest among the parties which received seats) and 4.69% for PiS. This index best shows that the votes cast for PO, which had the greatest support in the election of 25th May 2014, were distributed more unevenly than in the case of Prawo i Sprawiedliwość. As a result, the latter party obtained seats in all the districts, and PO, “only” in twelve.

In the case of the other parties, the level of extreme deviation was also varied. The lowest value of the index was observed for Koalicyjny Komitet Wyborczy Sojusz Lewicy Demokratycznej-Unia Pracy – SLD-UP (*Democratic Left Alliance-Labor Union election committee*): 4.55%. For Komitet Wyborczy Nowa Prawica (*Congress of the New Right election committee*) of Janusz Korwin-Mikke, it was 5.23%, and for Polskie Stronnictwo Ludowe – PSL (*Polish Peasants’ Party*), 5.75%. Due to the relatively low number of seats obtained by these three committees at the national level, none of the district lists managed to achieve support equal to the calculated Hare quota. Hence, the final distribution of seats was determined by the value of the rest, which means that the seats fell to those district lists which achieved the highest support, in the order of support level (in the case of SLD-UP this referred to five district lists, and in the case of Nowa Prawica and PSL, four lists each).

On the basis of the previous findings, we must assume that the factor which directly affects the size of the electoral district is the distribution of support among the districts for the election committee which accomplished the election threshold at the national level. The factor which acts in favour of increasing the size may be high election turnout, especially if its level is considerably

higher than in the other districts. However, it is not an absolute relation, since the votes in such a district may be distributed proportionally among the lists of different committees, not improving significantly the result of any of them in comparison with the results of the committee in the other districts. Another element which weakens the influence of the turnout effect on the size of the electoral district is concentration of support for parties not exceeding the national election threshold. This issue is discussed in greater detail further in the article.

At this stage of the analysis, we need to conclude that the adopted way of determining the size of electoral districts in European Parliament elections in the Republic of Poland does not guarantee the implementation of the material aspect of the equality principle or generates deviation from the ideal reflection of each voter's voting power. The ambiguity in the evaluation of the effect of the way of determining electoral districts regarding the observing of the elections' material equality, signalled in the previous sentence, results from the fact that no document specifies what level of diversification of voters' voting power means the violation of the material equality principle. On the basis of "*Code of Good Practice in Electoral Matters*": 1.2.2.4] we can only assume that the number of voters per seat within a given district should not be higher or lower than 10% (in special cases, 15%) of the computed electoral quota, indicating the number of voters per seat on average in the scale of the whole country. Yet, in the analysed election, the deviations were much greater (Table 2.). Votes cast in district no. 3 had the lowest power. In this case, the deviation from the norm of representation at the national level was almost 76%. The opposite extreme was district no. 4, where the votes proved to be by over one fourth stronger than the national standard. If we were to compute mean deviations, for the districts in which the voting power was weaker than the national norm of representation (five districts), it amounted to 45%. For the districts where the voting power proved to be higher than the norm of representation computed at the national level (eight districts), the mean deviation was slightly over 11%. These data show that the levels of acceptable deviations provided in the "*Code of Good Practice in Electoral Matters*" were exceeded, but not significantly. Of course, this evaluation is subjective, but it is impossible to ignore the fact that in the case of four districts the described deviations are within the 0-10% range suggested by the Code, in other four, 10-15%, and "only" in five districts the norms determined in the Code were obviously violated (this concerned approx. 1/3 of persons entitled to vote).

Therefore, it is proper to think whether as part of electoral engineering it would be possible to use solutions more effectively influencing the implementation of the material aspect of equality. It seems that understanding the role and significance of a MEP is of key importance in this matter. Thus, the attention must be focused on the question of representation model [more: see *Cf.*

Szymanek 2005: 223-236; Szymanek 2013: 1-22]. The basic problem is that the assumptions of who a Member of the European Parliament represents are not fully confirmed at the level of electoral practice. On the one hand, by the fact that from the point of view of election outcome determination (in the political party dimension) Poland is actually one electoral district, a seat of a representative receives the general national character or is connected with representing the citizens of a member state of the EU⁵. On the other hand, the final repartition of seats among the district lists determines the way of conducting electoral campaigns by individual committees and candidates. It is also reflected in the binding ballot mode (technique) and it often also affects the voting tactics use by voters. Finally, the question of personal seat allocation is settled at the district level. These are the premises to recognize that a special bond is created between the representative and the voters, which may be cemented by both sides' attachment to a specific territory. This may lead to emphasizing the territorial aspect of representation at the expense of its national character. This dual nature of representation, created as a result of electoral engineering, has a negative impact on the observance of the material aspect of equality of European Parliament elections. In the face of the fact that the goal of elections conducted on the territory of a state where over thirty million citizens have the active voting right is to fill only fifty one seats, from the perspective of implementation of the material aspect of equality it would be more justified to create one electoral district covering the area of the Republic of Poland. It would allow to approximate the ideal reflection of the voting power of all the voters as accurately as possible. But was/is this the aim of the political actors deciding of the adoption of solutions within the framework of the binding electoral system?

It is worth mentioning another of its elements, namely the election threshold. This issue is even more interesting as in the election of 25th May 2014 nearly 900 thousand votes were cast for candidates of the committees which did not achieve the five per cent statutory threshold as the national level. It was 12.7% of all valid votes, so approximately every eighth voter decided to support a party which finally was not taken into account in the seat distribution procedure.

Of course the basic issue is why a certain solution is introduced to the set of rules regulating the electoral competition. In the case of the election threshold, the wish to avoid excessive fragmentation of the political representation body is most often pointed out. This is justified especially when such a body is one of the links of a longer representation chain, e.g. when its political composition is of key importance for the formation and operation of the government

⁵ The element which might confirm the fact of perceiving the seat of MEP this way is the strategy used by the election committees of some parties, which involves placing a candidate "from outside" on the district list, not connected in any way with the particular territory.

(parliamentary regimes). But does this argumentation correspond to the functions and role of the European Parliament in the EU institutional system? While with reference to the previous terms the answer would be clearly negative, the 2014 election is a significant landmark in this respect. It is connected with the Treaty of Lisbon of 13 December 2007, which came into force on 1 December 2009. Among other things, it introduced changes in creative powers of the European Parliament [Galster, Knade-Plaskacz 2010: 194-195], including those concerning the European Commission, referred to as the “main executive body of the EU” [Hix 2010: 35]. It concerns the president of the Commission, who had been nominated by the Council of the European Union before, then approved by the European Parliament, and finally, appointed together with the other members of the Commission by the EU Council. The Lisbon Treaty changed this procedure, increasing the importance of the European Parliament. First, the European Council presents a candidate for the position of the European Commission president to the European Parliament. Pursuant to Article 17 section 7 of the Treaty on European Union, it does so “taking into account the elections to the European Parliament and after having held the appropriate consultations ...”. Second, the indicated candidate is **elected** by the European Parliament by a majority of its members. Thus, the new procedural solution can be perceived as tackling the problem of legitimization deficit in the European Union [Kubin 2007: 11]. In the present legal state, the European Parliament was entrusted with the election of the president of the European Commission, which means authority broader than just “approving”. However, it does not change the fact that the only body at the European level being the result of general and direct elections still cannot present its “own candidate” but takes a decision as to the nominee previously indicated by the European Council. What is even more important in the context of European Parliament elections, when indicating the candidate the European Council must “take into account the elections to the European Parliament”. This expression is at least unclear [Adamiec, Wąsowicz 2014: 15-16]. Not attempting to interpret it thoroughly, we need to assume that the political configuration of the European Parliament as a consequence of its democratic election should be reflected in the process of nomination of the candidate for the president of the European Commission. It does not mean that the current solutions are closer to those known from national parliamentary or premier-presidential regimes. After all, the institutional system of the EU is formed on a different basis. Still, the outlined procedure indicates the increasing importance of the results of the European Parliament elections in the context of creating the European executive.

Having written these short comments, let us return to the issue of election threshold. Poland is one of fifteen EU countries that apply the election threshold in European Parliament elections. It has been established at the maximum

possible level of 5% of valid votes in the whole country. The above-mentioned changes introduced with the Lisbon Treaty caused an increase of importance of the European Parliament election results for the election of the president of the European Commission, which – applying the national measure – might suggest the legitimacy of emphasizing the effectiveness of ruling rather than representative character of the representative body. This would justify the introduction of elements limiting the probability of political fragmentation of the electoral system. In this situation, however, it is important to differentiate between the national level of political competition from the European one so as to understand that the basic phase of the elections, connected with voters expressing their preferences and then with the transformation of votes into seats, is not necessarily reflected in the political landscape of the European Parliament⁶. Firstly, the electoral campaign is conducted at the level of member states, and the voters cast their votes for lists presented by national political parties or their coalitions. Thus they express their approval of particular ideological and policy options but only those defined within the national system. Secondly, the relations between political parties acting on the national political scene and supranational political groups operating in the European Parliament must be taken into consideration. The affiliation of a national party to such a fraction is the result of a post-election decision. Especially in the situation when the level of institutionalization of political parties is relatively low, it cannot be excluded that the choice of a fraction in the European Parliament will not correlate with the voters’ expectations [Wiszniewski 2008: 271, 273]. So we cannot say that the results of European Parliament elections in individual member states aggregated at the European level (in the ideological and policy dimension) will be reflected in the strength of supranational political groups functioning within this body. Thus, the election threshold applied at the level of the national electoral system is not directly translated into the level of political fragmentation of the European Parliament.

The applied election threshold might also be perceived from the perspective of protection of national interests at the level of an important European authority. It would mean aiming at the formation of mechanisms to guarantee that the pool of seats allocated to Poland will be distributed among the parties which will constitute real powers within the framework of supranational political groups in the European Parliament. Such argumentation seems legitimate, especially in the situation of a multi-party system in an extremely pluralized version. However, when the multipartyism is only moderate, the strength of such arguments is lower.

⁶ Literature of the subject refers to the stance of the Federal Constitutional Court in Karlsruhe, which decided that the introduction of the election threshold in European Parliament elections is unconstitutional. The court justified it with the lack of necessity to form stable parliamentary majority, connected with the functions this body serves [Uziębło 2013: 202-203].

The election threshold definitely corrects the decisions taken by the voters. Yet, we may think to what extent it affects the distribution of seats among the subjects participating in elections. We need to remember that the power of the election threshold depends not only on the level at which it is applied (national or district) or its height (expressed in per cent or determined by calculating the electoral quota) but also on the situation context, particularly on the number of subjects taking part in the electoral competition and their social support, as well as on whether and to what degree voters use tactics in casting their votes. So as to determine it, we can – considering the outcome of voting of 25th May 2014 – compare the official results of the election with the hypothetical distribution of votes between the election committees, disregarding the election threshold. It is not surprising that in the latter case the number of subjects receiving the seats would increase. The seats would be distributed not among five but among eight election committees. However, a shift would only occur in the case of five seats (10%). PO and PiS would lose two seats each, and PSL would receive one seat less. The beneficiaries would be the parties which achieved support at the level of 3-4% (Table 4.), and the natural threshold⁷, when treating Poland as one electoral district (the distribution of seats at the national level) would be lower than 2%. It proves, then, that the election threshold does not radically change the election results at the level of parties having the greatest voters' support, but is a significant barrier in the case of smaller subjects participating in the electoral contest. So Arend Lijphart is right when he writes that “District magnitudes and electoral thresholds can be seen as two sides of the same coin: the *explicit* barrier against small parties imposed by a threshold has essentially the same function as the barrier *implied* by district magnitude” [Lijphart 1999: 153].

It is also worth analysing whether (and if so, to what extent) the election threshold influences the implementation of the material aspect of equality. In literature of the subject a negative correlation between a high value of election threshold and the implementation of material equality of elections is pointed out [Uziębło 2013: 215]. The results of the election analysed in this work demand considerable conservatism in formulating such conclusions (Table 5.). First, when ignoring the election threshold, the distribution of seats would cause a change in the size of only four out of the thirteen districts (districts no. 4, 7, 11 and 12). At the same time, 11,742,792 persons had the right to vote in these districts, so the changes would affect over 38% of voters registered in Poland. Second, in two districts the voting power would increase (districts no. 4 and 11), and in two other, it would decrease (districts no. 7 and 12). Third, in the case of three districts the deviation from the national norm of representation would increase, and in one, the voting power would approximate it.

⁷ The natural threshold calculated from the formula proposed by Arend Lijphart [1999: 153].

As we can see, ignoring the election threshold would cause greater diversification of the voting power of voters from different districts. The maximum deviations from the electoral quota, indicating how many voters there are per seat in the whole country on average would be almost 39% in the district where all the voters would have the strongest vote (as compared to less than 27% when taking into account the election threshold) and almost 76% in the district with the lowest voting power (this value would not change). As for the mean deviation for the districts where the voting power proved to be lower, it would be slightly more than 34% (compared to 45% with the election threshold). For districts in which the voting power would prove to be higher than the norm of representation computed at the national level, the mean deviation would oscillate around 15% (compared to 11% with the election threshold).

The above calculations show that the application of election threshold does not have to cause a fundamental disturbance of the implementation of the material aspect of elections' equality. In a particular situation it may even promote the decrease of disproportion in the voting power among voters from different districts. In the analysed case, it turned out that from the perspective of material equality of elections the size of electoral districts is more important than the election threshold. Also, giving up the constant size of districts in favour of their dynamic shaping undoubtedly increases the importance of the election threshold for the implementation of material equality of elections. It is so because the exclusive character of the election threshold, eliminating weaker parties from seat distribution, not only directly translates into the increase of electoral profits of parties with the greatest voters' support but also indirectly influences the ultimate effect of the support distribution. As this analysis has showed, it may cause both increase and decrease of the size of electoral districts. The conclusion is, therefore, that in the situation when the size of the electoral district is determined at the stage of transformation of votes into seats, the election threshold is a factor affecting the implementation of material equality of votes. When the size of electoral districts is determined before the election, the election threshold does not modify the voting power regardless of whether it is referred to all the citizens or only to the part who have full political rights⁸. This conclusion is an effect of differentiation between the material aspect of equality and the equality of electoral opportunities. In the second case, the effect of election threshold is unquestionable.

Still, the above-mentioned distinction should not obscure the fact that the impact of the election threshold on the implementation (or not) of the

⁸ In this situation, we could only speak about the modifying impact of the election threshold on the material equality of elections if the voting powers were computed merely considering persons who actually exercise their active voting right. It should be remembered, though, that the elected person represents all the citizens (voters), also those who did not decide to participate in the voting.

equality of electoral opportunities in the case of European Parliament elections may modify the material aspect of equality of elections. Although the accuracy of this thesis is rather doubtless, it is impossible to measure the range of this effect precisely. On the one hand, it would require the knowledge on the decision-making process of the parties which finally did not decide to contest for seats of Members of the European Parliament, and on the other hand it would be necessary to conduct a study among the voters, concerning: 1) the determinants of their political choice during the said election, 2) the motivations for resigning from participation in voting.

Analysing this issue from the perspective of collective, secondary subjects of politics, we need to note that the election threshold may be an element decisive for their failure to participate in the electoral competition. It especially refers to regional parties, which without the election threshold or the threshold at the electoral district level would have a real chance to obtain seats. Increasing the number of subjects taking part in election competition, in turn, would not only have a positive influence on the increase of election turnout but also probably (at least in some districts) lead to a modification of support distribution. Thus it would indirectly affect the size of electoral districts.

From the perspective of the voter, it should be assumed that a higher number of subjects taking part in competition for seats and lack of institutional barriers to limit the equality of electoral opportunities (such as small electoral districts or the election threshold) lower the probability of tactical voting. And when realizing the fact that a party the voter supports for ideological and policy reasons will have a problem with accomplishing the election threshold level, the voter may vote for a candidate of another election committee which in the voter's opinion has a real chance of obtaining a seat, at the same time representing similar policies. It cannot be excluded either that some of the voters, aware of the institutional barriers incorporated in the electoral system and/or finding no party representing an outlook similar to his among the subjects competing for seats will resign from the participation in the election.

The scale of voting behaviours described here, in the context of the European Parliament election of 2014, is not known. Still, the awareness of the existing conditions allows to see an indirect impact of the election threshold on shaping the size of electoral districts. As a result, it turns out that the strength of its impact on the implementation of the material aspect of election equality may be significant. The basic difficulty lies in the fact that in the analysis we have to refer to a hypothetical situation. This, however, is always connected with high risk. Therefore, because of a lack of objective instruments to measure the defined relations, this work aims at emphasizing their potential, not real, dimension.

Studying the material aspect of equality of European Parliament elections should also involve the question of the electoral formula, i.e. the way of transforming votes into seats. The multiplicity of methods existing in this regard helps to see the different ranges of influence they have on the level of reflection of voters' preferences. Some of them promote a relatively proportional reflection of voters' will, and others deform it to a greater or lesser extent; finally, there are methods which in certain conditions reveal their discriminative character.

Generally, we should conclude that the electoral formula is the element of the electoral system which – when considered in isolation – does not affect the implementation of the material aspect of equality or its impact is negligible. It is so because if we measure the voting power referring it to the number of citizens (residents, persons with the right to vote), not persons actually taking part in the elections, then the way of transformation of the votes into seats can only be evaluated from the perspective of implementation of the equality of electoral opportunities. Only the placing of the electoral formula in a broader perspective (taking into consideration the size of electoral districts and the election threshold) makes its significance concerning the material aspect of equality grow. In the context of the electoral system existing at the European Parliament election in Poland, the importance of the electoral formula is undoubted due to the adopted “dynamic”, not “constant”, size of electoral districts. If a specific number of seats is assigned to each district even before the election, the election threshold cannot directly affect the voting power in any direct way. If, however, the size of electoral districts is connected with the outcome of the election, the choice of the electoral formula is very important.

The above-mentioned two-step mechanism of seat distribution in the European Parliament elections in Poland results in applying two methods of transformation of votes into seats. First at the national level the seats are distributed among the election committees which accomplished the election threshold with the use of D'Hondt method, the one most favourable for the parties with the greatest support among all the divisor methods. The result is a derivative of the fact that between particular divisors shaping the successive electoral quotients there is a small, unitary difference (1, 2, 3, ... 51). And the smaller the difference, the higher value the successive electoral quotients have. Especially in the situation when the difference between the election outcome of the strongest parties and of those with lower support is significant, this method brings measurable benefits to the former. In the context of material equality of European Parliament elections, it must be noted that the ultimate effect of seat distribution at the national level may lead to a change of their distribution among districts. The results of the 2014 election proved that the power of the method of transformation of votes into seats would be especially significant in a situation

of no election threshold. This is illustrated by the data presented in Table 4. The comparison of the effects of seat distribution with the use of D'Hondt and Hare-Niemeyer methods (mathematical proportion system) shows how obvious is the impact of electoral formulas on the ultimate distribution of seats.

After allocating seats to particular election committees at the national level, they are distributed among their district lists on the basis of the Hare-Niemeyer method. This second level of repartition of seats translates directly into the size of electoral districts, which has already been described. Here we need to highlight that the Hare-Niemeyer method promotes more faithful reflection of the voting results at the level of seat distribution. That is why it is more beneficial from the point of view of the districts in which a certain party received weaker support. This method does not protect such districts from a complete lack of seats, but the result of the district list is decisive in this respect.

Conclusions

This study concentrated on the implementation of material equality of European Parliament elections in Poland. Three elements of the electoral system were analysed: 1) the size of electoral districts, 2) the election threshold, and 3) the electoral formula. It turns out that none of them is clearly decisive for the assessment of implementation of the discussed principle. Still, undoubtedly the key issue is the size of electoral districts, essentially affected by the distribution of support among the district lists of election committees that obtain seats. An important determinant, though not necessarily of key importance, is the inter-district election turnout. But both the election threshold and the electoral formula have a modifying impact on the size of electoral districts. This analysis also showed that apart from the formal rules determining the framework of electoral competition, the situation context is significant, especially the character of the party system, the level of institutionalization of political parties, the strategies used by the subjects participating in the elections and the fact that some parties resign from the competition for seats. Voters' behaviours also play a role, especially the issues connected with their political choices.

On the basis of the European Parliament election in Poland of 25th May 2014, it may be said that in contrast to the statutory declaration, the election violates the material aspect of equality. The deviation from the ideal point is not very high, although it exceeds the parameters indicated in "Code of Good Practice in Electoral Matters". But if the legislator decided to adopt the principle of election equality for implementation, they should consistently aim this. At the level of the electoral system it would be possible to adopt rules which would increase the probability of approximating material equality. From this

perspective it would be fully justified to adopt a single level system of repartition of seats within the framework of one (national) electoral district. Taking into account the functions of the European Parliament in the institutional space of the EU and considering the way of participation of national political parties at the European level, it would be fully justified to disregard the use of the election threshold in this election.

The proposals presented above are only an opinion in the discussion. Presenting them, one needs to be aware that a change in the electoral rules is the subject of political competition between the beneficiaries of the current solutions and those who feel harmed by them. Besides, a change of the formal frame of electoral competition may modify the behaviours of potential participants of the election game. This way a complex network of relations appears, showing the multiplicity of interests connected with the competition for the seats of MEPs.

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Table 1. Material aspect of (in)equality of European Parliament elections – pan-European level

State	Number of citizens (in millions)	Seats	Deviations from the European norm of representation
Malta	0.4	6	10.059
Luxembourg	0.5	6	8.047
Cyprus	0.8	6	5.029
Estonia	1.3	6	3.095
Slovenia	2	8	2.682
Latvia	2.3	8	2.332
Lithuania	3.3	11	2.235
Croatia	4.4	11	1.676
Finland	5.3	13	1.645
Ireland	4.5	11	1.639
Slovakia	5.4	13	1.614
Denmark	5.5	13	1.585
Bulgaria	7.6	17	1.500
Sweden	9.2	20	1.458
Austria	8.3	18	1.454
Hungary	10	21	1.408
Czech Republic.	10.5	21	1.341
Portugal	10.6	21	1.328
Belgium	10.7	21	1.316
Greece	11.2	21	1.257
Netherlands	16.4	26	1.063
UE	503.6	751	1
Romania	21.5	32	0.998
Poland	38.1	51	0.898
Italy	60	73	0.816
Great Britain	61.7	73	0.793
Spain	45.8	54	0.791
Germany	82	96	0.785
France	64.3	74	0.772

Own study based on demographic information available from: [Official portal of the European Union...].

Table 2. Material aspect of (in)equality of European Parliament elections – whole Poland

No. of electoral district	Number of people with the voting right	Actual electoral district size	Potential electoral district size	Difference between the actual and potential electoral district size	Actual norm of representation	Real voting power	Deviation from the general Polish norm of representation (in %)	Turnout (in%)
1	1,769,312	3	2,945	0.055	589,771	1.018	1.82	26.70
2	1,648,127	3	2,744	0.256	549,376	1.093	8.55	22.59
3	2,110,287	2	3,513	-1.513	1,055,143	0.569	-75.65	19.34
4	2,200,697	5	3,663	1.337	440,139	1.365	26.73	35.33
5	2,020,737	3	3,364	-0.364	673,579	0.892	-12.13	20.08
6	2,036,030	2	3,389	-1.389	1,018,015	0.590	-69.47	23.72
7	2,720,826	5	4,529	0.471	544,165	1.104	9.41	22.42
8	1,750,992	2	2,915	-0.915	875,496	0.686	-45.74	23.49
9	1,710,529	3	2,847	0.153	570,176	1.053	5.08	23.99
10	3,686,945	7	6,138	0.862	526,706	1.140	12.32	25.74
11	3,673,738	7	6,116	0.884	524,820	1.145	12.63	23.75
12	3,147,531	6	5,240	0.760	524,588	1.145	12.67	21.73
13	2,160,786	3	3,597	-0.597	720,262	0.834	-19.90	20.42
Poland	30,636,537	51	3,923	mean: 0.735 (18.7%)	600,716	1	mean: -44.58/11.15	23.83

Author's own study based on the data from [National Electoral Commission...].

Table 3. Distribution of support for district election committees' lists

Electoral district	Turnout	PO		PiS		SLD-UP		NP – J. K-M		PSL						
		Votes	% of votes	Votes	% of votes	Votes	% of votes	Votes	% of votes	Votes	% of votes					
1	459,105	218,962	9.64	2	117,620	5.23	1	35,164	5.27	0	30,324	6.00	0	14,817	3.08	0
2	358,763	100,430	4.42	1	96,663	4.30	1	74,833	11.21	1	20,753	4.10	0	32,507	6.76	0
3	395,040	105,541	4.65	1	140,342	6.25	1	41,422	6.21	0	28,412	5.62	0	36,221	7.53	0
4	762,886	308,468	13.58	2	216,773	9.65	2	57,010	8.54	0	49,794	9.85	1	19,098	3.97	0
5	392,066	75,369	3.32	1	163,775	7.29	1	24,647	3.69	0	27,671	5.47	0	61,259	12.74	1
6	468,467	149,474	6.58	1	177,654	7.91	1	35,344	5.30	0	29,202	5.78	0	29,615	6.16	0
7	585,119	192,801	8.49	2	142,675	6.35	1	74,695	11.19	1	40,540	8.02	0	61,431	12.78	1
8	399,483	64,889	2.86	0	164,578	7.32	1	21,248	3.19	0	27,482	5.43	0	70,055	14.57	1
9	398,152	73,381	3.23	1	196,247	8.73	2	18,761	2.82	0	28,474	5.63	0	28,927	6.02	0
10	915,211	232,330	10.23	2	307,624	13.69	3	62,748	9.40	0	72,393	14.32	1	58,541	12.17	1
11	847,419	337,478	14.86	3	234,515	10.44	2	79,543	11.92	1	73,573	14.55	1	18,480	3.84	0
12	662,066	252,513	11.12	2	179,432	7.99	2	78,557	11.77	1	47,615	9.42	1	28,087	5.84	0
13	425,708	159,579	7.02	1	108,972	4.85	1	63,347	9.49	1	29,353	5.81	0	21,808	4.54	0
Poland	7,069,485	2,271,215	100	19	2,246,870	100	19	667,319	100	5	505,586	100	4	480,846	100	4

Author's own calculations based on the data from [National Electoral Commission...].

