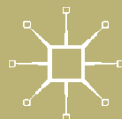# Political Communication and European Parliamentary Elections in Times of Crisis

Perspectives from Central and South-Eastern Europe

Edited by Ruxandra Boicu,
Silvia Branea, Adriana Ștefănel

Political Campaigning and Communication

Political Campaigning and Communication

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Editors

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South-Eastern Europe

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Foreword

The European Union is constantly evolving. Recent years have brought about a number of unprecedented developments. At the same time, both public and political discussions about the European Union have changed in nature and intensity. Much of our current scholarship is biased towards looking at longer-standing members of the Union. With this important book on the 2014 European Parliament election in Central and South-Eastern Europe, an important gap is filled.

European parliamentary elections have resulted in a number of unexpected outcomes: public attention and media coverage have increased over the years, the EU itself has become central to processes of politicization and in some instances the vote is not only based on domestic politics considerations—as predicted by the second order election theorem—but turnout is still lagging behind (see Conclusion of de Vreese and van der Brug in *(Un)intended Consequences of European Parliament Elections* (2016).

To understand changes in the political landscape of Europe, and simultaneous changes in political elites and the citizenry, we need to focus on dynamics of the campaign, the role of the media and the information environment, and the interactions between citizens, the media and political elites. In this respect, too, this volume plays an important role. The focus on the political campaigns, media coverage, national versus European perspectives and the vote makes this volume

a very comprehensive book on the 2014 European Parliament elections in a region where our collective knowledge is finally brought up to date.

Claes H. de Vreese
Amsterdam
January 2016

Acknowledgements

Contents

Notes on Contributors

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Determinants of Political Actors Strategy Setting (ed. R. Alberski, 2011); 'Strategies of Political Actors in the European Parliament Election Campaign', Cichosz, M., Solarz, R., in *Elections to the European Parliament in Lower Silesia and Opole Region* (ed. A. Antoszewski, 2006).

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List of tables

Introduction: Proposal of a Framework for the 2014 European Parliament Elections and Campaigns in Central and Eastern Europe

Silvia Branea and Ruxandra Boicu

The postulate designed by Reif and Schmitt in 1980,[1] regarding second-order elections, represents an indispensable landmark for European elections analysts.[2] No other equally strong vision regarding the way in which national elections intersect with European Parliamentary elections has appeared since that date. However, many researchers argue that European elections have become ever more prominent over the past decade. Therefore, we may talk about the fact that voters have started to take these elections more seriously, and about the need for political parties to pay greater attention to them too.[3] Dedicating a volume exclusively to a number of new and relatively new European Union (EU) member states will help to test the special and complementary nature of the relationship between European policies and national policies. Analysing election campaigns and the way in which the citizens of some Central and South-

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Eastern European EU member countries voted could, among other things, offer important information about the greater or lesser degree of integration of the EU countries that joined between 2004 and 2014 and are represented in this volume: Bulgaria, Croatia, the Czech Republic, Hungary, Lithuania, Poland, Romania and Slovakia (here listed in alphabetical order).

These countries, new EU member states in Central and Eastern Europe, have all passed through a recent history characterized by many common features, but also by just as many differences. The quarter of a century intercalated between the political movements that led to the fall of communist regimes in those countries and the current political arena has massively moved the debate about their stages of transition towards a debate about the ability of these countries to contribute to the development of the EU, together with other older or newer members. The need for involvement of these countries in European politics could probably increase the chances of finding solutions to difficult problems facing the continent, such as high unemployment rates, especially among young people, and the recession that has affected many European countries. The present period is marked by scepticism and the emergence of an increasing number of anti-system political movements. Dissatisfied voters sanction both the leaders of national political institutions and those who participate in campaigns for the European Parliament (EP) for their inability to inspire voters with the confidence that they are handling economic and political difficulties responsibly.[4] Besides domestic issues specific to each country, political debates during EP election campaigns also bring to light European issues, which are approached by active political actors either favourably or unfavourably. Paradoxically, some of the politicians who express themselves on topics concerning the EU are better known precisely because they reveal radical attitudes towards certain decisions taken in Brussels or Strasbourg or against the intentions of important European players to act towards greater *Europeanization*.[5]

The challenges that politicians (including those in this region of the EU) must face today are so considerable and sometimes so unexpected that their discourses and their behaviours together with those of the active electorates make the campaign atmosphere much more lively than it was during the European election campaigns conducted five or more years ago. This vivid atmosphere has been greatly boosted both by journalists,[6] who report on various facets of the campaign actions undertaken by candidates, and by political communication experts, who prepare the elec-

toral strategies.[7] Significant novelties have lately emerged as a result of the growing use of the facilities of political messaging in new media and on social networks. Political actors are beginning to understand that they can benefit from using the Internet as a means of transmitting electoral messages in a complementary way to traditional media and direct political communication. In Central and Eastern Europe, the penetration of new media and interpersonal online communication among citizens has become so important that we may be sure that this region can be counted among digitalized societies. As a consequence of this favourable context for the exchange of ideas between political leaders and their supporters in an interactive online environment, there is the possibility of hearing more political voices than usual, given that classic media advertising is much more expensive. Thus, digital advertising can sustain the efforts of candidates who do not have sufficient financial resources to promote their political programmes, since communication on blogs, forums, social networks or other online communication tools does not require the spending of substantial funds. However, despite these chances for the campaigns of prospective MEPs to be promoted, there are still insufficient grounds for optimism in this respect.[8]

Under the present circumstances, marked by the search for scapegoats for what is going wrong in the economic or social, local or European fields, some parties are trying to find the guilty by activating older or newer ethnic tensions. In this context, it is not without interest to mention the existence of disputes between political actors in the region. As neighbouring countries, they are sometimes dealing with similar communities/minorities from the ethnic point of view. Nationalism goes hand in hand with right-wing populism, which is also increasingly widespread across Europe.

If diverting attention from the inefficiency with which political parties treat citizens' needs by invoking traditional or more recent ethnic stereotypes does not have the expected effect, the politicians resort to anti-Europeanism or Euroscepticism. The discontent of the population in countries where public policies of austerity have led to significant sacrifices in terms of incomes and living standards has been increasingly used lately by political forces of both the left and the right,[9] in order to blame the European political and financial institutions that have supervised these countries' reactions to the crisis.

Major political leaders (presidents, prime ministers) who were heard in the 2014 election campaign, because of their invocation by the

candidates, were trying to use European rhetoric, either as allied to their own speech or as a source of distancing. This version of critical distancing from the EU was adopted especially when the electorate was obviously dissatisfied with domestic public policies. The situation was completely different when proximity to the heads of major European political families was taken into account in order to increase local visibility, on the occasion of visits made by leaders of the European People's Party (EPP), the Progressive Alliance of Socialists and Democrats (S&D), the Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe (ALDE), the European Conservatives and Reformists Group (ECR) or other large groups of European parties made in the period preceding the elections for the European legislative body in countries in the region. These electoral visits were highly mediatized by the media institutions close to local politicians.

The countries included in this book have varied perspectives on the common policies stipulated in European treaties. Those that joined the EU in the 2004 enlargement are bolder (though some of them only declaratively) in delimiting themselves from the decisions of the Commission or of other institutions. For instance, this volume contains chapters written by authors from all four countries of the Visegrad group (Poland, Hungary, the Czech Republic and Slovakia), which offer useful analyses to researchers and consultants on EU matters who are interested in knowing the atmosphere within this group and the extent to which the politicians in this sub-region consider whether or not co-operation within the group remains important.

Another relevant angle by which the specificities of the political confrontation over the election of citizens' representatives in the EP in the spring of 2014 may be revealed is the ratio between men and women trying to win seats in this forum, either as party members or as independents. Election results in the eight countries studied in this volume show a significant gap from a gender perspective, as against the European average (37 % women) of women's representation in the EP. Seven of the eight countries elected less than 37 % women MEPs. It was only Croatia that managed to have a significant group of women politicians in the European legislative body (45 %).

Citizens of countries in Central and South-Eastern Europe participated in the 2014 vote for the EP, after passing through a very difficult period from economic and social points of view. Evaluations by both specialists and ordinary readers of politicians' speeches and behaviours during the electoral campaign should take into account the nuances that are neces-

sary in the observation of a region that has suffered particularly harsh constraints and challenges.[10] This context probably explains some of the more aggressive accents that political players and their supporters adopted during doctrinal, personal and media confrontations in the 2014 campaign.

<p style="text-align:center">* * *</p>

The project of writing *Political Communication and European Parliamentary Elections in Times of Crisis: Perspectives from Central and Eastern Europe* was the initiative of the Romanian editors, Ruxandra Boicu, Silvia Branea and Adriana Ştefănel, who teach media and communication studies at the University of Bucharest. The book's objective was to reveal to readers all over the world the democratic exercise of campaigning and voting in countries that have not known an uninterrupted democratic evolution.

Invitations to contribute chapters were addressed by the editors to researchers and university teachers in all the European countries that have shared a recent past, more precisely as former communist counties and as present day members of the EU, in which the 2014 European Parliamentary elections were organized.

The invitation to contribute national perspectives was enthusiastically answered by scholars from a number of these countries that share a somewhat similar history and belong to the Central and Eastern European space. The co-authors who contributed chapters are highly respected researchers at a national and international level. They teach and reside in the countries represented in this book: Bulgaria, Croatia, the Czech Republic, Hungary, Lithuania, Poland, Romania and Slovakia; they are native speakers of the official languages spoken in these countries and thus have a direct access to national media outlets and political documents.

Political Communication and European Parliamentary Elections in Times of Crisis: Perspectives from Central and Eastern Europe is made up of four parts, corresponding to various thematic areas related to the 2014 European Election in the countries listed above, although the chapters grouped together in each part are in fact more comprehensive and sometimes study the interconnected implications of more than one thematic area.

Part I, 'Media Coverage and Political Marketing', offers analyses of political advertising on Polish public and commercial TV stations (Stępińska) and of intermedia agenda-setting between mainstream media and social media in Poland (Lodzki and Paluch), a rhetoric approach to political

communication in Bulgarian media and virtual space (Mavrodieva), studies of electoral themes in two of Croatia's leading newspapers (Vilović) and of electoral programmes broadcast on three Romanian TV news channels (Ştefănel), and an interpretation of the popular style of the presentation of electoral news in a Romanian quality newspaper (Boicu).

Part II, entitled 'A Second-order Campaign?' contains a study focusing on Lithuanian political parties' and candidates' campaign communications, showing how they were marked by the characteristics of a second-order event (Unikaitė-Jakuntavičienė), a confirmation of Karlheinz Reif and Hermann Schmitt's theory through the paradoxical juxtaposition of the supra-national nature of the 2014 EP election with the predominance of national issues in the Czech Republic (Charvat) and a demonstration that female politicians in Romania are not to be considered second-order candidates in these elections, even if some of them are connected by more or less direct wires with certain prominent male politicians (Branea).

Part III, 'European vs National Agenda', includes a chapter on the lack of significant differences in the approaches to the EU agenda by Slovakia's political parties involved in the 2014 electoral campaign (Gyarfasova), an analysis leading to the conclusion that 2014 represents a turning point, marking a new era in how EU, anti-EU, and national issues, images and symbols appear in political rhetoric in Hungary (Koller) and two perspectives on the EP elections in the Czech Republic: in terms of the citizens' agenda during the electoral campaign as manifested in the special attention given to the Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership and the Russia–Ukraine conflict (Švihlíková), and in terms of the essential electoral contribution of two independent Czech think-tanks, to spur the debate on topical issues relevant at EU level (Kruliš).

Part IV, 'Ideological Premises, Candidate Recruitment, Voting Results', consists of a focus on the electoral strategies adopted by six major Polish political parties concerning international political developments in 2014—the crisis in the Eurozone and the events in Ukraine (Cichosz), an examination of the patterns of candidate recruitment with an emphasis on the political and social environments from which EP candidates were recruited in Poland (Skrzypinski), and an interpretation of the data regarding the voter turnout, the results, and the political consequences of the EP elections, both on the European level and for Polish parties (Alberski).

Finally, Eibl and Pink approach the 2014 elections to the EP in the Czech Republic, analysing electoral results as well as candidate lists with regard to the age, gender and other characteristics of the candidates, while Just reveals

the changes in the representation of Eurosceptic parties in the EP from the moment at which the Czech Republic acceded to the EU until 2014.

Notes

1. Karlheinz Reif and Hermann Schmitt, 'Nine second-order national elections – a conceptual framework for the analysis of European election results', *European Journal of Political Research*, 8 (1980): 3–44.

2. According to Reif and Schmitt, it is the national systems that make the most important political decisions; the European elections play a minor role compared to the national ones. This study appeared one year after the first direct elections for the EP.

3. Zeynep Somer-Topcu and Michelle E. Zar, 'European Parliamentary Elections and National Party Policy Change', *Comparative Political Studies* (2014), Vol. 47(6) 878–902, p. 882.

4. This relatively low turnout leverages both the candidates and those finally elected.

5. One year before the European election, Corina Stratulat and Janis A. Emmanouilidis considered that '*dissatisfied voters – of which there is no shortage at the moment – will probably not miss their chance to vote against (further) European integration.*' ('The European Parliament elections 2014: Watershed or, again, washed out?', *European Policy Centre*, September 2013: 9, http://www.epc.eu/documents/uploads/pub_3699_ep_elections_2014.pdf (accessed 28 January 2016)).

6. Journalists contribute in their own way to attracting the attention of the audience to the European elections, sometimes moving the focus of the political debate towards, for instance, the description of how female and male politicians present themselves to voters as more or less photogenic public actors, wearing classic or bold outfits and accessories.

7. The communication of persuasive political messages, in one way or another, directly or mediated, is often accompanied by increased attention paid to the sources of these messages—individuals who will represent citizens in legislative bodies. These political figures are no longer described only from a social perspective with the roles related to it, but also from the private perspective, in other words, in terms of hobbies and other aspects that make them

unique, not only when the candidate is independent, but even when they represent a party.

8. Javier Lorenzo Rodríguez and Amuitz Garmendia Madariaga, 'Going public against institutional constraints? Analyzing the online presence intensity of 2014 European Parliament election candidates', *European Union Politics* (2015) 1–21.

9. Lately a growing approximation of political doctrines, and even their hybridization, can be observed.

10. "*The financial crisis has hit the various Member States of the European Union to a different degree. The global financial crisis affected the real economy in Central and Eastern European Union countries such as Czech Republic, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Hungary, Poland, Slovenia, Slovakia, Romania and Bulgaria through two main perspectives. First, the credit squeeze affected borrowing conditions for firms and households with subsequent adverse effects on domestic investment and consumption demand. Second, the downturn in the global economy affected export demand severely.*" (Ebru Terazi and Seçil Şenel, 'The Effects of the Global Financial Crisis on the Central and Eastern European Union Countries', *International Journal of Business and Social Science*: 186, http://www.ijbssnet.com/journals/Vol_2_No_17/25.pdf (accessed 30 January 2016)).

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Media Coverage and Political Marketing

Political Advertising During the 2014 Polish EU Parliamentary Election Campaign

Agnieszka Stępińska

Introduction

The 2014 European Parliamentary election was the fourth EU-related vote in Poland. A decade previously, on 13 June 2004, Polish citizens had elected their delegates to the European Parliament (EP) for the very first time. This was just one year after Poland's accession referendum (7 and 8 June 2003). All three EP elections from 2004 to 2014 had been scheduled just a year before parliamentary or presidential elections in Poland.

EP elections are often described as 'second-order elections', where the turnout is expected to be lower than in national elections and voters are more prone to vote for protest parties, or parties on the periphery of the political system, rather than the mainstream parties they would vote for in a national election. As a result, second-order elections are '*often used by voters to punish or reward the current governing parties*'.[1]

For political parties these elections often seem to provide an opportunity for a 'rehearsal' campaign before 'first-order' ones. This means that campaigns before the EP elections are not primarily focused on the European Union (EU) or EP but are dominated by national issues.

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'*The weakness of the relationship between what elected Members of the EP (MEPs) actually do there and their chances of re-election attenuates the political responsibility of MEPs to the electorate as a whole and deepens their dependence on national parties as selection makers*'.[2] Hence, idealistically one could expect an image-oriented campaign and a competition heavily focused on such features as candidates' education, experience and language skills, but in fact the campaign messages are devoted mostly to political parties and their leaders.

The aim of this chapter is to present the conclusions drawn from an analysis of political spots and programmes broadcast on public and commercial TV stations in Poland during the campaign before the 2014 EP elections. The study was designed to answer the following questions: (1) How much attention is paid to political parties and their leaders in the campaign spots and programmes? (2) What images of the political parties are presented in the campaign spots and programmes? (3) How much attention is paid to the MEP candidates in the campaign spots and programmes? (4) What are the main issues raised in the campaign spots and programmes?

In order to answer these questions, I have used both quantitative and qualitative content analysis. The unit of analysis was an individual election spot. For the purpose of this study I selected campaign messages of nine election committees that registered their lists in all constituencies. All these nine committees were either based on existing political parties or closely related to them. They were: Patforma Obywatelska (PO) [Civic Platform], Prawo i Sprawiedliwość (PiS) [Law and Justice], Polskie Stronnictwo Ludowe (PSL) [Polish People's Party], Sojusz Lewicy Demokratycznej–Partia Pracy (SLD–UP) [Democratic Left Alliance–Labour Party], Solidarna Polska (SP) [Solidarity Poland], Europa Plus Twój Ruch (EP) [Europe Plus Your Move], Polska Razem (PR) [Poland Together], Ruch Narodowy (RN) [National Movement], and Nowa Prawica–Kongres Nowej Prawicy (KNP) [New Right–Congress of New Right]. I coded a total number of 45 advertising spots (five ads per election committee).

The next section of the chapter provides a broader political context and a brief characterization of the Polish political market. Some basic information about the legal framework of political advertising in Poland and its features is then presented. Finally, the characteristics of the political advertising on Polish TV in 2014 are given.

Political Context of the European Parliamentary Elections and Campaigns

One of the distinctive features of the post-communist countries is an ongoing process of stabilization of the political market. Today, with a broad spectrum of political orientations and several right- and left-wing political parties and a few more at the centre being represented in the parliament, the Polish political market may be characterized as a '*stable multi-party system*'.[3] On the other hand, in the previous two decades of a democratic regime in Poland, almost every single parliamentary election has resulted in the opposition taking power. So far, Platforma Obywatelska [Civic Platform] is the only political party that has won two consecutive parliamentary elections (after its victory in 2007), and Aleksander Kwaśniewski is the only president who has been re-elected (in 2000). It seems that Polish voters express their distrust and disappointment as soon as possible, very rarely giving those who are in power an opportunity to further their agendas. Not surprisingly, however, '*some political parties change their labels quite frequently and eagerly adapt their politics to current social expectations and needs, hoping for a new chance*'.[4] Consequently, the level of competition between political parties is high enough to discourage them from building a tradition of long-standing coalitions (so far, the only exception is a governmental coalition between Platforma Obywatelska [Civic Platform] and Polskie Stronnictwo Ludowe [Polish People's Party], which continued for a second term 2015).

Political parties are dominant factors in all the political processes in Poland. Since other political and civil organizations are still not well developed and established, individual political careers are almost unthinkable without the support of a political party. Those political parties which have obtained at least 3 % of the vote draw financial support from the state budget. Consequently, they can afford to build their structures in most of the regions of the country (usually based on the offices of their MPs). Many Polish scholars have noted that '*political parties not only provide financial and logistic support for their candidates,*'[5] but also play a '*crucial role in the process of candidate selection and nomination in every single type of election*'.[6]

As Stępińska, Wiszniowski and Mazur showed, '*political leaders and their agenda predominantly affect the content of all campaign messages*'.[7] Previous studies on political advertising broadcast during the accession

referendum campaign and the EP elections revealed that '*the EU-related campaigns would not be exceptions to that rule*'.[8]

Therefore, in my study I proposed two main hypotheses: (H1) Political parties will be the dominant actors present in campaign spots and programmes. (H2) Domestic issues will be raised more frequently than European ones in campaign spots and programmes.

POLITICAL ADVERTISING ON ELECTRONIC MEDIA IN POLAND

In Poland, two types of broadcast political advertising are distinguished: unpaid programmes and paid spots. Political actors are allowed to purchase airtime in both commercial and public electronic media to broadcast their spots within the period of 15 days prior to 24 hours before the election day. The unpaid programmes, however, are broadcast exclusively on public radio and TV stations (again, within 15 days prior to 24 hours before the election day). In the course of the last 24 hours prior to the opening of voting and on the election day itself, any campaigning and canvassing in favour of a candidate or a political party is prohibited. Results of opinion polls may not be published during that time either.

As far as unpaid programmes are concerned, the regulations for the allocation of broadcasts give an equal amount of time to all election committees that have gone successfully through the process of registration. In particular, for the EP elections, a committee that registers its candidates' lists in at least half of the total number of electoral districts is allowed to have access to national public TV and radio stations, while a committee that registers its list in at least one constituency may broadcast its programmes in regional public TV and radio stations. All the election committees that meet the former requirement share a total number of 360 minutes of free airtime on Channel 1 of the national public TV station, 360 minutes on Channel 2 and 180 minutes on TV Polonia. At the same time, they share altogether 1000 minutes of free airtime on four national public radio stations (plus 200 minutes on the radio station devoted to Polish citizens living abroad). In the latter case, an election committee shares '*600 minutes of free airtime on regional TV stations and 1200 minutes on regional radio stations*'.[9]

Unpaid political advertising is broadcast in blocks of programmes without any break and the sequence of the presentation of the advertisements

is established by drawing lots. The content of the advertising may not be questioned or changed without a court's permission. Consequently, political parties and candidates may prepare their campaign messages freely in order to meet their objectives by using a variety of techniques. What is required by the law is a sponsor identification note in every advertisement.

While paid spots may be described as regular political advertising, the unpaid programmes share certain similarities with 'primary videos'[10] studied extensively by Pamelee, and 'campaign films'[11] studied in the USA by Morreale. First of all, they run longer than paid spots: around four minutes on average (the actual duration depends on the number of election committees because the time devoted to campaign messages of this kind is shared by all the eligible committees). Secondly, because of being broadcast during a limited period of time (15 days prior to the election day) and in a particular format (blocks of programmes), campaign programmes seem to be addressed mostly to regular voters and people who are highly involved in the political process. Thus, they should '*focus voters' attention on a political party's or a candidate's stands on problems and issues and deliver arguments for the candidate rather than attacking opponents or modifying a party's or a candidate's image*'.[12]

The placement, duration and format of the unpaid programmes heavily affect the audience rate. Namely, the rate is usually low since the programmes are watched '*only by those who are actually interested in this type of campaign message and in the elections in general*'.[13] During the 2014 campaign, the audience size varied from '*160,000 to 1.75 million viewers*', but in fact television stations lost half of their market share while broadcasting these programmes. For example, '*TVP1's regular share at prime time is around 18 %, while during the election programmes it was only 8 %*'.[14] Still, all the political parties prepared content for unpaid campaign programmes.

Since the programmes are not paid, they are often the first and only opportunity for political parties without strong financial resources and for newcomers to introduce themselves to the voters and compete with other political actors. Findings of the studies conducted by Stępińska showed that it is the programmes, not the spots, that contain more negative messages. Furthermore, despite the fact that the programmes are broadcast at the same moment as the spots (the final stage of the campaign), the former usually provide different content and use different formats than the latter. While the spots are '*more focused on the party leaders, the programmes are more issue-oriented*'.[15]

The paid spots, on the contrary, are broadcast among commercial advertisements, including the prime time before or after popular newscasts or movies. Therefore, the potential and actual audience rate is much higher than in the case of unpaid programmes. On the other hand, since the airtime must be purchased, the mean duration of a message is only 20–30 seconds.

POLITICAL ADVERTISING IN THE 2014 EU PARLIAMENTARY CAMPAIGN

In 2014 all political parties purchased airtime and broadcast political advertisements. Election committees spent almost '*12 million PLN in total on political advertising in TV and radio stations*'.[16] Table 2.1 presents overall duration of these messages per election committee and the costs of their dissemination.

Prawo i Sprawiedliwość [Law and Justice] and Platforma Obywatelska [Civic Platform] spent the highest amounts of money on TV advertising.

Table 2.1   Political advertising on TV and radio stations

Election committee	Overall duration of the spots (in minutes)		Overall expenditure (PLN)	
	Television	*Radio*	*Television*	*Radio*
PO [Civic Platform]	4174	1703	4,386,575	196,735
PiS [Law and Justice]	3635	1652	4,640,878	167,865
SLD–UP [Democratic Left Alliance–Labour Party]	732	425	211,015	53,664
Nowa Prawica–KNP [New Right–Congress of New Right]	93	213	113,760	26,494
PSL [Polish People's Party]	1889	1325	265,046	125,255
Ruch Narodowy [National Movement]	18	0	461	0
Europa Plus Twój Ruch [Europe Plus Your Move]	1022	461	178,273	67,075
Polska Razem [Poland Together]	606	575	183,382	94,624
Solidarna Polska [Solidarity Poland]	406	343	940,353	61,810

Source: Krajowa Rada Radiofonii i Telewizji (2014)

These two parties were also the most successful since they gained 32.1 and 31.8 % of votes, respectively. For small political parties the EP elections were an opportunity to gain access to public electronic media (unpaid programmes), but they could hardly afford paid spots. Nowa Prawica–KNP [New Right–Congress of New Right], however, gained a relatively high result (7.1 %) despite spending less than 140,000 PLN on paid political advertising in electronic media. Its campaign was addressed to the youngest voters and ran mostly in online media.

Although political parties paid much attention to political advertising, voters seemed not to feel informed enough about political parties' offers. Among those who were still undecided before election day whether to vote or not to vote, '*23 % declared poor knowledge about candidates and their agenda*'.[17] This may be because more than a '*quarter of people declared that they were not interested in politics at all*',[18] and they did not follow any information about elections. We may argue, however, that the content of political advertising was also not helping in this matter. In fact, most of the campaign spots broadcast on TV presented only a very general image of the political parties and their leaders or a very brief delineation of the candidates. In fact, political parties focused on promoting their regular values and issues, while only a minority (27 %) of the campaign messages covered in the study included any reference to the EU. Table 2.2 collects the key values and issues covered by paid and unpaid political spots broadcast on TV.

All campaign messages included political parties' symbols, slogans and basic values. The content of the political advertising was so universal that it could be broadcast during any election campaign. Most of the political parties took an opportunity to criticize either the current government (PiS [Law and Justice], Polska Razem [Poland Together], Europa Plus Twój Ruch [Europe Plus Your Move], Solidarna Polska [Solidarity Poland]) or all mainstream political actors (RN [National Movement], Nowa Prawica–KNP [New Right–Congress of New Right]). Some political actors openly expressed their either positive (PO [Civic Platform], Europa Plus Twój Ruch [Europe Plus Your Move]) or negative (RN [National Movement], Nowa Prawica–KNP [New Right–Congress of New Right]) attitude towards the EU, while the others only occasionally mentioned the EU (Polska Razem [Poland Together], Solidarna Polska [Solidarity Poland] and PSL [Polish People's Party].

Domestic issues were prevalent in a majority of the campaign spots: 30 out of 45 spots included in the study focused on purely domestic

Table 2.2   Key elements of the content of political ads

Election committee	Values/attitudes	Issues
PO [Civic Platform]	Stability, independence, respect, leadership, modernization	Economy, army, security, energy, international relations, regional issues
PiS [Law and Justice]	Safety, honesty, Christianity, tradition; criticism of the current government	Energy security, economy, healthcare system, industry reconstruction, labour market, L. Kaczyński's political heritage
SLD–UP [Democratic Left Alliance–Labour Party]	Equality, human rights, safety, development, criticism of the current government	Labour market, alternative political agenda, Poland's EU accession as a success of the SLD's government; the strong position of left-wing parties in other European countries
Nowa Prawica–KNP [New Right–Congress of New Right]	Protest against all mainstream political actors, criticism of the EU, freedom of choice	Labour market, taxes, pensions, army
PSL [Polish People's Party]	Family, tradition, modernity, choice, safety, relations	Labour market, agriculture, food, education, healthcare system, security
Ruch Narodowy [National Movement]	God, honour, homeland, tradition, nation, Euroscepticism; protest against all mainstream political actors	Polish minorities, labour market
Europa Plus Twój Ruch [Europe Plus Your Move]	Respect, open-mindedness, democracy, courage; criticism of the current government	Economy, open borders, citizen's pensions, European contract law, European healthcare zone
Polska Razem [Poland Together]	Religion, tradition, family, criticism of the EU and of the current government	Emigration, labour market, protest against same-sex marriage and the right of same-sex couples to adopt children
Solidarna Polska [Solidarity Poland]	Honesty, Christianity, family, justice; criticism of the current government	Unemployment, Ryszard Kukliński's rehabilitation, anti-communism, healthcare system, social divisions

topics. All political actors discussed problems of the Polish labour market, economic migration, the healthcare system, education, and so on. Within the sample of spots and programmes included in the study, only two election committees (PO [Civic Platform] and SLD–UP [Democratic Left Alliance–Labour Party]) sponsored spots exclusively focused on EU

themes (PO: four out of five spots included in the study; SLD–UP: two out of five). In particular, they emphasized the EU's achievements as well as the way the EU has been affecting domestic policy and law.

Three issues seemed to be most popular in that campaign: (1) energy security (Poland has been opposing the EU policy on sources of energy), (2) national security (in the context of the Russian–Ukrainian conflict) and (3) economic migration (young people leaving Poland to find a job). While the governmental coalition presented security issues within the EU context (EU as a partner), the opposition claimed that the government had failed on the issue of the labour market. At the same time, the opposition parties presented themselves as defenders and guarantees of security and those who had a plan for dealing with domestic affairs, including unemployment.

Right-wing populist political parties (RN [National Movement] and Nowa Prawica–KNP [New Right–Congress of New Right]) promoted themselves through traditional values such as family, homeland, religion and nation. They equally criticized all mainstream political actors and the EU for neglecting Polish priorities. They called for a 'radical change' and presented themselves as 'the only alternative to the establishment'. Paradoxically, even former ministers who had left mainstream parties such as Platforma Obywatelska [Civic Platform] (J. Gowin) or Prawo i Sprawiedliwość [Law and Justice] (Z. Ziobro) to establish their own political organizations (Polska Razem [Poland Together] or Solidarna Polska [Solidarity Poland], respectively) blamed 'conflicting and feeble' politicians for a significant wave of migration and other negative social phenomena.

Alongside spots promoting political parties, messages presenting candidates were produced by all election committees. They were either broadcast as separate advertisements or were collected together with other similar spots and broadcast as unpaid programmes on public TV. While some political parties (PO [Civic Platform] and PiS [Law and Justice]) offered a 'party template' to be used by their candidates, the others (Solidarna Polska [Solidarity Poland], SLD-UP [Democratic Left Alliance–Labour Party], Polska Razem [Poland Together]) seemed to be less eager to interfere in the format of campaign messages prepared by their candidates.

The most popular types of candidate images were as follows: (1) an expert (education, knowledge), (2) a person with experience (in regional, national or European politics), (3) a new face in politics and (4) a political leader. Still, in some cases more of the spots' content was devoted

to values and issues than to a presentation of the candidates' characteristics. The political party's label seemed to be a crucial element of the campaign message of such political actors as: Ruch Narodowy [National Movement], Nowa Prawica–KNP [New Right–Congress of New Right], SLD–UP [Democratic Left Alliance–Labour Party], Polska Razem [Poland Together] and PSL [Polish People's Party]. The only exceptions were the spots presenting well-known politicians who did not have to be introduced to the public, such as former or current MPs, ministers or party leaders.

CONCLUSIONS

This chapter agrees with those scholars who have argued that political parties play a predominant role in the Polish public sphere. The study of political advertising during the Polish 2014 EP election campaign revealed that political parties not only played a crucial role in the process of candidate selection and nomination, but also predominantly affected the content of campaign messages. Hypothesis 1 theorized that the political parties would be the dominant actors present in the campaign spots and programmes. Indeed, the findings showed that most of the paid political advertising was devoted mostly to the political parties, whereas unpaid programmes were focused more on the candidates. Although paid advertisements are shorter, they have a potentially larger audience than unpaid election programmes. The fact that political parties decided to use purchased airtime for promoting their own general agenda rather than particular candidates for election to the EP provides an additional argument for the concept of so-called 'rehearsal campaigns'.

Hypothesis 2 was confirmed by both quantitative and qualitative study. Despite the EU context of the campaign, domestic issues were raised much more frequently than European ones in the campaign spots and programmes. Furthermore, international (European) issues were usually presented from a national perspective.

NOTES

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Media Rhetoric and Virtual Communication in Bulgaria

Ivanka Mavrodieva

The Political and Social Situation in Bulgaria

The multi-party system was established in 1990 after the 45-year reign of the totalitarian socialist regime in Bulgaria. The Constitution of July 1991 states that Bulgaria is a representative democratic parliamentary republic. Bulgaria has been a full member of the European Union (EU) since 1 January 2007. Three European parliamentary election campaigns have been conducted since the Republic of Bulgaria became a full member of the EU in 2007. The first elections were held on 20 May 2007, the second on 7 June 2009 and the third on 25 May 2014. Political rhetorical practices have spread immensely and their practitioners have grown in experience in the course of these elections. Political election communication has undergone a great change and Bulgarian candidates for the office of MEP present their messages and appeals in a clear style and in varied forms, combining direct, media and virtual channels.

The political situation in Bulgaria in the winter of 2013 was very complicated. There were public protests against the high prizes of electricity, high taxes and fees, low salaries and so on. The Prime Minister, Boyko

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Borissov, resigned from the rostrum of the National Assembly on 20 February 2013. On 14 March 2013 the National Assembly suspended its activities.

The preliminary elections for the Bulgarian parliament on 12 May 2013 were won by Borissov's party, Citizens for European Development of Bulgaria (Граждани за европейско развитие на България, ГЕРБ [Grazhdani za evropeysko razvitie na Balgariya, GERB]), but the party refused to form a government. The Coalition for Bulgaria or the Bulgarian Socialist Party (Българска социалистическа партия, БСП [Balgarska sotsialisticheska partiya, BSP]), the second largest parliamentary group, undertook to form the government, and Plamen Oreharski was elected Prime Minister on 29 May 2013. Bulgarian citizens protested against the Oreharski cabinet: street demonstrations started on 14 June 2013, the immediate reason being the nomination of Delian Peevski by the Movement for Rights and Freedom (Движение за права и свободи, ДПС [Dvizhenie za prava i svobodi, DPS]) for the position of Chair of the State Agency for National Security. The political situation in Bulgaria included confrontation between the government, the political elite and citizens.

In the Bulgarian European elections in 2014, 15 parties, six coalitions and three independent candidates took part: The main political formation was GERB. Four parties ideologically oriented to the left took part in the elections: the BSP, the party Alternative for a Bulgarian Revival (Алтернатива за българско възраждане, АБВ [Alternativa za balgarsko vazrazhdane, ABV]), the Bulgarian Left (Българска левица [Balgarska levitsa]) and the Bulgarian Communist Party (Българска комунистическа партия [Balgarska komunisticheska partiya]). Two conservative parties participated separately and were rivals in the elections: the Reformist Block (Реформаторски блок [Reformatorski blok]) and Blue Unity (Синьо единство [Sinyo edinstvo]). Three eco/green parties took part independently of each other: the Green Party (Зелена партия [Zelena partiya]), the Party of Greens (Партия на зелените [Partiya na zelenite]) and Green Bulgaria (Зелена България [Zelena Balgariya]). The Movement for Rights and Freedoms (Движение за права и свободи [Dvizhenie za prava i svobodi, DPS]), generally accepted as an ethnic minority party with a liberal ideology, was an active participant in the parliamentary competition. Four nationalist parties were the main opponents of the DPS: "Attack" (Атака [Ataka]), the Internal Macedonian-Odrin Revolutionary Organization (Вътрешна Македоно-Одринска революционна организация [Vatreshna Makedono–Odrinska revolyutsionna organizatsiya]), the Bulgarian

National–Patriotic Party (Българска национално-патриотична партия [Balgarska natsionalno-patriotichna partiya]), and the Nationalist Party of Bulgaria (Националистическа партия в България [Natsionalisticheska partiya v Balgariya]). The parties Bulgaria without Censorship (България без цензура [Balgariya bez tsenzura]) and Vox Populi (Глас народен [Glas naroden]) were at the time relatively new political parties, and they became very active participants in the election.

Bearing in mind the above data, it is possible to summarize that the political spectrum included traditionally ideologically oriented formations of the left and right as well as conservative, liberal and neoliberal, nationalist and green parties. The candidates looked on themselves as serious separate competitors for MEP seats during the 2014 election campaign and they simultaneously presented their ideas and programmes in connection with Bulgaria's admission to the EU. Only a few of them had background experience as MEPs while the rest did not have much political experience at all. Most candidates sent ideologically orientated messages and only a few of them took part in the communication process as experts in the fields of politics, economics, international relations and so on. The winners were Citizens for European Development of Bulgaria (six seats), the Bulgarian Socialist Party (four seats), the Movement for Rights and Freedoms (four seats), Bulgaria without Censorship and the Internal Macedonian-Odrin Revolutionary Organization (two seats) and the Reformist Block (one seat).

Theoretical Review and Framework of the Research

Researchers in Bulgaria analysed televised debates and online media during the election campaigns, considering one or two aspects only—for example, the media behaviour of the candidates, their tools of public relations, their rhetorical techniques or their psychological features—and limiting their research to their special fields of interest. Basically the role of television as electronic media is investigated by researchers such as Todd Belt and Marion Just,[1] who try to explain the magic formula: how to make TV that viewers will watch. Cristian Kock investigates the complicated relations and influences between rhetoric and media.[2] The crossing points between rhetoric and reputation provoke the interest of Anne Surma,[3] who emphasizes them in her research on vision and visibility.

Political election rhetoric has new manifestations that make it branch into media rhetoric, political media oratory, political election rhetoric,

media election oratory and so on. The rhetoric in media, political practices and elections is not used solely in image-making election campaigns. Political oratory is an instrument to promote the ideas of European Parliament (EP) candidates from the current political spectrum and to inform the public about the values associated with the EU, and one of its main aims is to ensure that such values are widely shared within Bulgarian civil society.

The role of the Internet in the EP election campaigns in 2007 and 2009 is investigated by the author of this chapter,[4] who accepts that there are sufficient grounds to give the following definition of *virtual rhetoric*:

Virtual political rhetoric includes different kinds of oratory, that is speeches of politicians and statesmen delivered in virtual environments as synchronous and asynchronous computer-mediated communication, as well as the use of the opportunities provided by the Internet (in particular Web 2.0), when the political orators publish online their video speeches, lectures, reports, presentations or participations in dialogue formats: for example, their individual participations in conferences, debates, discussions, round tables and press conferences; it also includes the readiness of the orators to take part in the interactive communication spaces applying verbal, visual and non-verbal tools.[5]

The assumption is that arguments from authority, *ad rem*, *ad populum* and *ad hominem*, have much application at the verbal and visual levels of media and in the diverse events of virtual communication concerning elections.

The analyses are based on a study of the verbal and visual arguments, and therefore it is reasonable to give definitions about the visual argument as a relatively new tool. Leo Groarke and Christopher Tindale give a definition of visual arguments in the dictionary of the book *Good Reasoning Matters! A Constructive Approach to Critical Thinking*:[6] 'Visual arguments are arguments that convey premises and conclusions with non-verbal images one finds in drawing, photographs, films, videos, sculptures, natural objects, and so on. In most cases they combine visual and verbal cues that can be understood as argument.' Sonja Foss analyses visual rhetoric too,[7] and the focus of her study is placed on the framing of visual rhetoric and the transformation of rhetorical theory.

The current analysis is in agreement with the positions and definition given above, especially with the position that verbal and visual cues are combined to support the process of understanding the arguments, and this understanding will be employed as a part of the theoretical back-

ground of this study. Visual arguments and situations of application can be extended in connection with personal, institutional, party and national reputation. It is reasonable to add to the list of visual arguments parties' logos, EU institutional and state emblems, maps, diagrams and so on. The visual arguments include unique elements, as well as well-known portraits, pictures, plots, posters and other forms of election and party slogans adapted to the specific election situation. Scholarly correctness makes it necessary to specify that the political and social context in Bulgaria plays a key role and that some of the visual arguments are combined with different types of verbal arguments.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS AND RESEARCH DESIGN

The hypothesis initiating the present search is that Bulgarian political rhetoric during the EP election campaign in Bulgaria in 2014 included the use of both traditional rhetorical techniques and combined verbal and visual arguments, gradually and steadily transforming in order to respond to the changing technology and to cover the expanding spaces of public communication.

The aim of the study is to find answers to the following research questions:

- What rhetorical and media genres were used during the election campaign of 2014?
- What was the significance of social networks during the election campaign of 2014?
- Which rhetorical techniques and arguments did the candidates use purposefully to convey their main messages during the election?
- How did verbal and visual arguments create opportunities to persuade Bulgarian citizens to accept the candidates' messages?

The empirical sources for the present study of media rhetoric and virtual communication during the 2014 election campaign are selected out of four sub-groups: (1) websites of Bulgarian public and private television channels and links to debates and speeches of candidates; (2) websites of political parties, blogs of candidates and politicians; (3) Facebook profiles, pages and walls of candidates; (4) video clips on YouTube. The posts, video clips and information used by the candidates during the elections for MEPs are selected from the period from January to May 2014.

The study is based on a grounded analysis of televised debates, televised interviews, video speeches, video presentations and so on. The specific features of election campaign political rhetoric and virtual communication are outlined at the beginning of this study. Next the focus is placed on the rhetorical arguments and their specific use in media rhetoric, Facebook profiles and video clips published on the websites and on YouTube. The research includes analysis of rhetorical genres and communicative channels, rhetorical techniques and arguments at the verbal and visual levels in media and virtual environments.

Media Communication in the 2014 Election Campaign in Bulgaria

The analysis in this part of the chapter focuses on televised speeches and debates and on arguments used by speakers and debaters.

The preferred issues discussed during the TV debates were: reforms in the EU, EU borders, the rights of European citizens, new members of the EU, European basic income and European bureaucracy, as well as current events and occurrences: South Stream, energy policy and so on.

During the debate on 14 May 2014 on Bulgarian National Television (BNT), Nadezhda Neynski (Sinyo edinstvo) and Ivaylo Kalfin (ABV) focused on their personal contributions and competence, supporting the idea that they could continue their good practice as experts in their new mandate in the EP. The adversaries argued on the topic of agricultural policy of the EU and both of them, as experts and former ministers of foreign affairs and former MEPs, preferred *argumentum ad rem* and argument from authority.

The debate broadcast by BNT on 21 May 2014 was between Slavi Binev (Ataka) and Bozhidar Lukarski (Reformatorski Block) and the issues discussed were the borders of Europe and the future of the EU. Slavi Binev introduced the topics of Schengen and the results of monitoring by the European institutions in Bulgaria. He emphasized external issues and ideas in connection with Bulgarian membership of the EU.

Ivaylo Kalfin talked about the European income and financial transactions, he supported the proposal for a common European Union energy policy. As a socialist, he argued that European funds were concentrated in the hands of a few people who benefited from them, and he declared openly more than once that the EP should have a social policy in favour of European citizens.

Most of the orators explained policies and good practices, focusing on European issues: European currency, markets, grants, funds and so on.

The leader of the Nationalist party Attack, Volen Siderov, introduced the idea of European Confederations and Eurasian Union, and suggested the building of a wall along the border between Bulgaria and Turkey. Siderov often used *argumentum ad hominem*, abusing the Bulgarian MEPs and accusing them of being inert rather than promoting and defending national interests.

Filiz Hyusmeova from the Movement of Rights and Freedom (DPS) raised the the issue of protection for Bulgarian citizens working on the territory of the EU including ethnic Bulgarians and members of the Turkish minority. The speakers from the DPS applied strong *argumentum ad rem* and argument from authority, and they avoided taking part in verbal controversy or getting involved in a war of words with their opponents from the nationalist parties.

Nikolay Barekov from Bulgaria without Censorship and his partner from the Internal Macedonian-Odrin Revolutionary Organization, Angel Dzhambazki, presented their political and ideological views in the European centre. They appealed for more rights for women and mothers as well as for a permanent defence of Bulgarian national interests, and they gave a definite 'No' to 'Turkey in the EU'.

It could be concluded that the basic monologue genres of rhetoric, such as *speech*, *address*, *statement* and so on, are not the preference of TV viewers; the electorate watch and listen to dialogues and controversies between competitors because *debates* are more attractive models through which to explain ideas. The issues of media participation have a connection with the EU.

Virtual Election Communication and New Genres

Virtual election communication is a kind of virtual political communication which appears in the virtual environment in the form of websites, blogs, social networks, video clips, virtual forums and so on.

The speakers in the 2014 election campaign preferred the modern rhetorical genres of video presentations and video addresses recorded and broadcast on the websites of television channels and shared after that on social networks. Selected parts of video-recorded election conferences and press conferences, candidate's media interviews, video addresses and video clips were also posted on their sites.

The representatives of Citizens for European Development of Bulgaria, the Bulgarian Socialist Party, the Movement of Freedom and Rights, Blue Unity and so on have personal video clips presenting them as public figures with a special emphasis on their contributions as MEPs. All candidates preferred argument from authority, and they included speeches by other MEPs or by chairpersons of different committees of the EP in an attempt to increase their own personal credibility. The candidates who had experience as MEPs incorporated in their video clips the citations of MEPs who were chairs of commissions and committees of the EP. The candidates Iliana Yotova and Antonia Parvanova combined verbal messages with photos and videos where they appeared in the company of celebrated politicians from European countries and parties.

Seventeen candidates from the party Vox Populi presented themselves in public in video presentations, where the focus was on their ideas, proposals, education abroad in prestigious European and American universities, jobs and background in foreign companies and international institutions, and fluency in two, three or four foreign languages. Increasing their credibility was an important aspect of their virtual activities.

The participants most often used traditional and well-known formats and tools such as websites of political parties (Ivaylo Kalfin, Iliana Yotova, Miroslav Naydenov), and rarely individual sites (e.g., Antonia Parvanova, Slavi Binev).

Political bloggers, political blogs and the Bulgarian political blogosphere in general created effective and efficient virtual spaces during the pre-election period in 2009. However, blogs ceased to be a preferred channel for persuading the electorate during the European elections of 2014. Only a few bloggers were active: Viktor Papazov,[8] who was an independent candidate, and Vassil Kolarov,[9] from the Bulgarian Communist Party.

Blogs are comparatively cheap and easily maintained online tools but they are not modern and effective models for organizing election campaigns. They are individual or collaborative, and that makes them look like private virtual spaces rather than appearing as interactive forums for sharing views.

Candidates accepted Facebook as a modern channel to communicate with the electorate, but they still followed the format of direct communication and did not adapt to a new role as virtual communicators. Most candidates had Facebook accounts containing their public profiles and interactive and varied Facebook walls: for example, Evgenia Baneva,

Eva Paunova, Antonia Parvanova, Nadezhda Neynski, Filiz Hyusmenova, Nikolay Barekov and Iliana Yotova. Facebook is a favourite social network with candidates from different political parties, coalitions and unions, and candidates regularly post online their media interviews and video-recorded speeches.

YouTube was preferred by most political parties and candidates during the election campaign in 2014. Video-taped speeches, presentations, participations in the electronic media, televised debates and interviews are posted on YouTube. Rumyana Ugarchinska-Vincenti posted most of her presentations on YouTube. Nadezhda Neynski shared her reports as a former MEP and current candidate for a new mandate in video format, which was divided into five parts on YouTube. Svetoslav Malinov was very active, and accepted electronic media and social media as modern ways to send his messages to his electorate. He took part in different media broadcasts, and all his video clips were posted on YouTube.

Thus it can be concluded that candidates for the EP in 2014 preferred social networks, especially Facebook, to blogs, video presentations to traditional political speeches, video presentations on YouTube to verbal explanations, TV interviews to TV debates, and multi-modality to verbal information posted on the party website. Messages created and shared in social networks became an inseparable part of election political communication, and modern channels, genres and tools were preferred by the competitors in the 2014 election campaign.

Visual Arguments in Virtual Space

Visual arguments are nowadays widely used by candidates for the EP. The argument from authority in its visual modes found application in different political speeches, presentations and video addresses during the 2014 election campaign. The tangible effects of this were enlarged at the visual level in connection with the election campaign.

The argument from authority is often used by MEPs in video presentations and has variable visual manifestations. Candidates who have experience as MEPs incorporate in their video clips extracts with MEPs who are chairs of commissions and committees of the EP (commissioner Gunther H. Oettinger supported Nadezhda Neynski in her contribution to legislation on energy policy, for example.)[10] They incorporate extracts from their own speeches, for example Filiz Hyusmenova's speech on the modernization of agriculture and small farmers, Antonia Parvanova's

speech about medical care, Ivaylo Kalfin's speech about finance and incomes. The Bulgarian candidates combine verbal messages with photos and videos in which they appear in the company of celebrated politicians from European countries and parties (Meglena Kuneva and Gunter Verheugen, Iliana Yotova and Sergey Stanishev, the chair of the Party of European Socialists, PES).

The most outstanding visual elements repeatedly appearing online are the logo of the political party, the national flag and the flag of the EU. Each visual element has the power to persuade the audience, and in particular the virtual audience, of the contributions of the candidates to the EP. There is an appeal to the EP as an international institution of authority.

The preferred visual elements used in video presentations on topics concerned with European funds, European grants, European legislation and citizens' participation in European projects are maps and diagrams. These visual arguments are incorporated depending on the communicator's aim and context and they are combined with verbal explanation. This kind of visualization helps to explain more clearly the successes and opportunities of Bulgaria's EU membership.

One of the most popular types of visual argumentation includes the larger figure of the party leader and smaller figures of members. For example, Svetlyo Vitkov stays in the centre of posters and video presentations; he is the main player of a football team, which stands as a metaphor that he supports and leads the EP candidates. Svetlyo Vitkov, who is a popular Bulgarian musician and singer and the leader of the party Vox Populi, plays the role of the hero in constructing the argument from authority: he believes that the electorate will support the party's ideas because he presents them effectively to Bulgarian voters.

The second type of visual argumentation expresses team work and equality, with the candidate standing as an equal member next to other participants in the election campaign from the same party (e.g., the Bulgarian Socialist Party and Citizens for European Development of Bulgaria). The visual argument suggests that all of them are partners and solid politicians who have dignity and virtue, and that the electorate can trust them. The third type of visual argumentation includes a road as an additional visual element as well as the politician or candidate who goes with a leader, party members or politicians (e.g., the Movement of Freedom and Rights and Blue Unity). The sense of affiliation is presented clearly because the visual argument of a road is accepted positively, and this fact is a credential in itself.

In summary it can be said that the elections in 2014 have enriched Bulgarian political rhetoric on its verbal, virtual and visual levels.

Conclusion

Media and online political communication during the 2014 election campaign included issues concerning the European identity and the responsibilities of the Republic of Bulgaria as a full member of the EU. The campaign accelerated the process of a clearer explanation of the EU in terms of its significance and particular features of social government, such as new laws and projects, and rights and obligations of the Bulgarian institutions, parties and citizens. The candidates for MEP seats frequently spoke about documents, standards, norms, rules, European funds, European grants, European legislation, citizens' participation in the European projects and so on.

The role of Bulgarian politicians and statesmen in connection with the opportunities for development of the country as a member of the EU was presented in diverse ways using media and virtual rhetoric. The candidates used verbal and visual arguments in short written posts in online media and social networks, but they were not ready to take part in interactive cyber communication personally and permanently. The repetition of portraits, photos and video clips including celebrated European politicians next to Bulgarian MEPs was a novel phenomenon, and the combinations of varied verbal and visual elements reconstructed in accordance with the rhetorical aim increased the persuasive effect of public addresses. The abstract words used by opponents in TV debates gradually shifted to concurrence with current topics and expressions which defined the processes and actions exactly. It can be stated that media and virtual political communication during the 2014 EP election campaign in Bulgaria displayed more specific national and geopolitical features than any other events of the same type and significance had done earlier.

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Intermedia Agenda-Setting During the European Parliament Elections in Poland

Bartlomiej Lodzki and Anna Paluch

INTRODUCTION

The European Elections 2014 took place in the year of the tenth anniversary of Poland's accession to the European Union (EU). It was the third European election to be held in Poland and the first since the Lisbon Treaty, which expanded the powers of the European Parliament (EP), entered into force.

The results of the European elections in Poland are often treated as a forecast of the future results of parliamentary elections. For this reason they usually attract considerable attention from politicians, political scientists and voters.

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43

Importantly, there are significant differences between different age groups among Polish voters in their usage of information sources about campaigns and elections. According to a research study,[1] 93 % of people in the 18–24 age group in Poland were Internet users. However, the older the age group, the lower the percentage of Internet users (for example, it was 40 % in the 55–64 age group and only 11 % in the age group over 65 years old). There were also huge differences in social media usage – 90 % of the youngest group of Internet users had signed up on at least one social media platform. This compared with 37 per cent in the 45–54 age group, 30 per cent in the 55–64 age group and only 19 per cent in the group over 65 years old.

A later survey revealed that the main sources of information about the candidates for the EP elections of 2014 were:[2] television (42 %), advertising campaigns (40 %), Internet (31 %) and newspapers (29 %). However, in this respect a significant difference exists between different age groups. For the youngest groups of voters it was the Internet which was the most important source of information about the European elections (it was indicated by 60 % of the 18–24 age group and 50 % of the 25–34 age group). At the same time, it was the main source of information for only 7 % of the oldest age group (over 65 years old).

Considerable changes in media usage among Polish voters are evident. Therefore, there is a significant need for media researchers to take a closer look at the agenda-setting and intermedia agenda-setting processes during election campaigns and to determine which media outlets have the most profound impact on the other media's coverage of elections and on the public agenda.

This study focuses on the media coverage of the 2014 EP elections in Poland. It aims at understanding the intermedia relationships between Polish mainstream media and social media.

Theoretical Framework

We place our research in the theoretical framework of agenda-setting theory. Since this theory was formulated,[3] there have been hundreds of research projects conducted in this framework. Most of them were focused on the impact of the media's agenda on the public's agenda. Some concentrated on intermedia agenda-setting and referred to 'the influence that mass media agendas have on each other',[4] mostly newspapers and TV stations.[5] However, intermedia agenda-setting studies including social media agendas are still rare. Researchers started to explore this issue approxi-

mately 15 years ago.[6] Therefore, we tried to expand traditional intermedia agenda-setting research by including in our study the agenda of social networking sites and focusing on content concerning the EP and the 2014 elections. This allowed us the possibility of evaluating the roles of mainstream and social media in the process of agenda-setting during the election campaign. Most researchers imply that mainstream media strongly influence the social networking sites' agenda. But the results of such studies are still inconclusive.[7]

Considering the previous studies in the field of intermedia agenda-setting reviewed above, we predicted the following hypotheses:

H1: There are significant intermedia agenda-setting effects between leading Polish mainstream media and social networking sites.

Most of the previous studies concentrated on intermedia agenda-setting effects that indicated the existence of a relationship between the agendas of newspapers and TV news channels. This has proved to be valid for media in many different countries and for various types of political and non-political events. Therefore, in the case of the 2014 EP election in Poland too, it is likely that:

H2: There are significant intermedia agenda-setting effects between leading Polish newspapers and TV news channels.

Methodology

Data Collection

The data for this study were derived from three different types of sources: daily newspapers, TV news channels and social networking sites. In total, we included in the analysis the content of six major news media outlets and social networking sites. Four of these were mainstream Polish media outlets: daily newspapers, *Gazeta Wyborcza* and *Rzeczpospolita*, and TV news channels, TVP Info and TVN24. The other two sources for data collection were the prominent social networking sites Facebook and Twitter.

According to a report on the most opinion-forming Polish media,[8] based on the count of quotations from media published in other media, *Gazeta Wyborcza* and *Rzeczpospolita* are not only the most influential Polish newspapers but indeed the most influential Polish media outlets

of the last decade. Owing to their agenda-setting role within the Polish media landscape, these dailies played a crucial role in our study.

Gazeta Wyborcza is the largest quality daily newspaper in Poland.[9] It is the most prestigious brand among many different media outlets owned by a Polish media company—Agora SA. The daily was launched in 1989. It supported the Solidarity movement and played an essential role in Poland's transition to democracy. It served as a voice of democratic opposition against the communist government before the first partially free elections in communist Central and Eastern Europe.

Rzeczpospolita, the other Polish national daily newspaper examined in our research, is published by Gremi Business Communication, which also distributes a number of other newspapers. *Rzeczpospolita* was launched in 1980 and achieved independence from the state in 1989. Since then it has been giving a voice to conservative and liberal opinions.

For most Poles the principal source of information about politics is television. The TV broadcasters TVP and TVN are the most trusted institutions in Polish public life, with over 80 % of Poles trusting them.[10] We included the TV news channels of both of these broadcasters in our research. Moreover, these channels, TVN24 and TVP Info, remain the most influential Polish TV news channels.[11] TVN24 is a privately owned channel. It was launched in 2001 as the first Polish 24-hour television news channel. TVP Info has been broadcast by the Polish public broadcaster TVP since 2007.

We conducted the data aggregation ourselves. We collected stories on the 2014 European election reported by the abovementioned media from the websites that provide their online versions or extensions. In the case of the dailies, these were exactly the same stories as published in their print versions. In the case of the TV news channels, the stories collected were in the form of transcripts or textual summaries of news presented on air.

In order to download all the relevant stories, we conducted a keyword search with the assistance of the search engines built into the websites of the analysed media. Four Polish search terms in all grammatical cases were applied for this keyword search: 'euroelection', 'European Parliament', 'Europarliament' and 'election campaigning'. We excluded stories which appeared in local or thematic editions. Similarly, stories which contained the phrase 'election campaigning' in a different context than the European election were also eliminated. We collected all relevant stories regardless of whether they were commentaries or news pieces.

The last two sources of our data were the social networking sites Facebook and Twitter. Facebook has achieved the greatest popularity among social networking sites in Poland. According to a survey,[12] in March 2014 it had over 16,000,000 real users in Poland. Twitter, a social networking and microblogging service, with almost 3,000,000 Polish users, was less popular. However, the number of its users was increasing rapidly and it had more than doubled in the previous two years.

Significantly, Twitter in Poland plays a more and more important role as a space for public debate: the most active Twitter users are not celebrities but politicians, journalists and commentators. According to a study,[13] Facebook and Twitter were more influential in terms of the number of citations in other media than most of the major Polish newspapers, magazines and TV stations. In most cases these social networking sites were referred to by the mainstream media, which cited celebrities' posts on Facebook and politicians' messages on Twitter. In view of this, the vital role played by Twitter in Polish public debate seems obvious.

To collect tweets and Facebook posts related to the 2014 European elections, we used the same search terms as mentioned above. We conducted a keyword search with the assistance of Brand24—an Internet monitoring tool. Although such tools are very valuable in research focused on social media, they are still very rarely employed by Polish media researchers. It is worth underlining that Brand24 not only made our data collection easier and more effective, but also enabled the identification of the users with the most profound social influence (in terms of number of people reached by their messages).

The data for this study were collected throughout the two months preceding the European election, that is during the most intense period of the election campaign—between 25 March 2014 and 24 May 2014 (the last day before coverage of the elections was excluded owing to the election silence period, a time when the media are prohibited from disseminating information concerning elections).

Sampling

The volume of our initial database, with stories and posts coming from the six different sources, was very large. The content analysis that we had designed necessitated a reduction in the number of units to be analysed. We decided to employ the method of constructed week sampling, as the previous studies showed that this method 'is more efficient than simple

random sampling or consecutive day sampling' in research devoted to media coverage.[14]

However, we did not want to give up analysing the final stage of the election campaign, because it was characterized by the most extensive media coverage. Therefore, we also included in the sample the six consecutive days preceding the election (the seventh was excluded because of the election silence rule).

The constructed week was composed over a period between 25 March 2014 and 17 May 2014. In the case of the mainstream media, we also included in the analysis the two days preceding each day of the constructed week. In total, our analysis was based on eight time lags. This procedure enabled the examination of intermedia agenda-setting effects and the influence of mainstream media on the social networking sites.

We wanted to concentrate only on content with a relevant potential impact. Therefore, in the case of the social networking sites, we decided to analyse only messages written by users who posted more than five posts or tweets concerning the European election during the research period.

The method of constructed week sampling proved to be remarkably efficient and ensured the representativeness of the final sample. The selected data reflected quite accurately and correctly the proportions between materials from the different media outlets. Moreover, removal of part of the dataset did not substantively change the patterns it had reflected. The final sample represented the same variations in the number of stories and posts published over this period, as did the full data set.

The final sample consisted of (n = 1455) stories, 1046 of which were derived from the social networking sites, 183 from the newspapers and 226 from the TV news channels.

Coding

In order to analyse the coverage of the 2014 European elections in Poland and to test the abovementioned hypotheses we developed an original codebook. The coding categories included standard variables such as the date of publication and the type and name of the medium. As regards the main issues of the stories and posts, we categorized these into 12 groups: 'profiles of candidates, politicians, and parties'; 'interactions between candidates, political leaders, and parties'; 'election campaigning', 'election rules and voting procedures'; 'public opinion'; 'media coverage'; 'political consequences of the EP election outcome'; 'agitation'; 'institution

of the European Parliament'; 'other EU institutions'; 'other countries'; 'other topics'. In addition, we examined whether parties participating in the election or their candidates were mentioned in the research material and what kind of sentiment was assigned to each party or its candidate.

We coded the sample ourselves. The unit of analysis was the individual story, Facebook post or tweet. Within the content analysis we coded all the materials from the final sample.

Before the coding we performed an intercoder reliability test to evaluate the quality of the codebook. It was conducted by both coders on the basis of the data coming from the constructed week. In the first test we had 76 % agreement. After introducing slight changes to the codebook the agreement reached a highly satisfactory level of 89 %.

Results

Issues Agenda

There is a definite distinction between the mainstream media and the social networking sites in terms of the most frequently raised issues.

Table 4.1 presents the percentages of stories and messages focusing on certain issues in the different media outlets. The newspapers wrote most frequently about the profiles of the candidates, politicians and parties

Table 4.1 Media coverage of the 2014 European Parliament election issues

Issues	Newspapers (in percents)	TV news channels (in percents)	Social networking sites (in percents)	Total (in percents)
Profiles	25.8	21.1	14.6	17.0
Interactions	14.6	26.1	5.4	9.7
Election campaigning	12.4	15.1	9.8	10.9
Rules and procedures	3.9	6.4	6.5	6.2
Public opinion	12.4	7.8	14.3	13.1
Media coverage	0.6	2.8	19.3	14.5
Future	3.9	3.7	2.2	2.6
Agitation	1.1	0.5	13.5	10.0
European Parliament	2.8	1.4	2.5	2.4
European Union	5.1	0.9	3.1	3.0
Other countries	10.1	7.8	4.9	6.0
Other topics	7.3	6.4	4.0	4.8
Total	100	100	100	100

(their images, personalities and strategic positions). More than a quarter of all articles regarded this issue.

The other issues of concern to the newspapers were interactions between the candidates, political leaders and parties (e.g., discussions, comments, conflicts, alliances, debates) (14.6 %); election campaigning (e.g., electoral strategies of parties, style of the campaign, financing, fundraising, events, political marketing, political advertising) (12.4 %); and public opinion (e.g., opinions of voters, opinion polls) (12.4 %).

The newspapers were also very preoccupied with election campaigns in other European countries (over 10 % of the articles), while the TV news channels and the social networking sites did not pay much attention to this issue. Furthermore, the analysed dailies covered the issues of the EU and the EP (their competences, decision-making processes, relations with other institutions, etc.) much more extensively than did the TV news channels. It is worth noting that even the social networking sites paid more attention to these complex issues than the TV channels did.

On the other hand, the TV news channels most frequently referred to interactions between the candidates, political leaders and parties. More than a quarter of all stories dealt with this issue (much more so than the newspapers). This can be explained by the fact that the TV channels were engaged in organizing numerous debates and discussions between the candidates. TV shows of this sort attracted the attention of their audiences. The TV channels' coverage also encompassed profiles of the candidates, politicians and parties (21.1 %) and election campaigning (over 15 %).

The users of the social networking sites showed a widespread interest in other issues than those raised most frequently by the mainstream media. Moreover, their interest was spread more evenly across the different 2014 European election issues. The messages from the social networking sites most frequently referred to the media coverage of the campaign (almost one-fifth of all analysed Facebook posts and tweets were classified in this category).

Another important issue for the social media users was profiles of the candidates, politicians and parties (14.6 %). However, this issue attracted much less attention in social media than it did in the mainstream media. Finally, the users of the social networking sites referred quite frequently to the public opinion issue (14.3 %)—almost twice as often as the TV news channels. As opposed to the mainstream media, the social networking sites did not very frequently highlight interactions between the can-

didates, politicians and parties. They also paid less attention to election campaigning.

It is worth underlining that many of the messages published in the social networking sites (13.5 %) were classified as 'agitation', compared to almost no stories of this kind in the newspapers and TV stations.

Intermedia Agenda

Correlation analyses and Pearson coefficient were used to test the hypotheses. The results revealed the intermedia agenda-setting effect between the newspapers' and the TV news channels' coverage of the European election of 2014 in Poland. Thus, Hypothesis 2 is confirmed. A statistically significant, positive correlation existed between the issues agenda of the newspapers and the TV stations in all eight analysed time lags (r = 0.34 to r = 0.64).

At the same time, no correlation or a negligible correlation existed between the TV news channels' and the social networking sites' coverage in four out of eight time lags. While a weak negative correlation existed in three of them, a weak positive correlation was observed in the last time lag (Table 4.2).

Similarly, the interrelation between the newspapers' coverage and the social networking sites' coverage was insignificant. Negligible correlations (positive or negative) were recognized in four time lags, weak correlations (positive or negative) existed between the agendas in three time lags and

Table 4.2 The level of correlation of the issues agendas of the newspapers, the TV news channels and the social networking sites in eight time lags

Time lag	Newspapers–TV news channels	TV news channels–SNS	Newspapers –SNS
1 (29–31 March)	0.64	0.06	0.09
2 (6–8 April)	0.64	−0.34	−0.23
3 (14–16 April)	0.34	−0.20	0.21
4 (22–24 April)	0.41	−0.13	0.36
5 (30 April–2 May)	0.50	−0.19	−0.16
6 (8–10 May)	0.51	0.00	0.43
7 (16–18 May)	0.46	−0.25	-0.09
8 (19–23 May)	0.62	0.20	0.16

a statistically significant moderate correlation existed only in one time lag (the sixth one).

A significant correlation between the agendas of the newspapers and the social networking sites and between the TV channels and the social networking sites was not observed. Therefore, Hypothesis 1 is rejected.

Discussion

The existence of a significant correlation between the agendas of the TV channels and the newspapers was not unanticipated. Much more remarkable was the lack of a correlation between the agendas of the mainstream media and the social networking sites, while previous studies had suggested the existence of interrelations between those agendas.

The social networking sites raised a wider range of topics concerning the 2014 European election than the mainstream media, which concentrated exclusively on several major issues. It seems that the social networking sites dealt with the issues which were relevant to voters but ignored by the mainstream media (e.g., public opinion or rules and procedures of the election). In other words, they served as a forum for open public debate on the election, while the mainstream media focused mainly on the interactions and debates among politicians and the candidates.

The differences between the agendas of the mainstream media and the social media probably result from their entirely distinct characteristics. While the mainstream media try to follow the principle of journalistic objectivity, the social media seem rather to favour supporting one of the parties (extreme opinions generally attract the greatest attention). Moreover, social media provide politicians and candidates in elections with the opportunity to communicate directly with their voters. Furthermore, they became a forum for a crowd of supporters calling for votes and opponents criticizing their views and opinions. Most probably this is the reason why there were so many posts and tweets classified as agitation.

Furthermore, the high percentage of messages in social media dealing with media coverage was noticed. This issue was almost entirely ignored by the mainstream media. Very probably, the popularity of this issue stems from the presence of the mainstream media on the social networking sites. The official profiles of mainstream media and their journalists were highly active (even if not very interactive) on the social networking sites during the campaign. They published numerous messages inviting users to read, watch or listen to stories produced by mainstream media or contain-

ing hyperlinks to their content. Such messages were classified as 'media coverage'.

What is more, four out of the six most popular profiles on social media identified by the Brand24 tool were the official profiles of the mainstream media.

Therefore, it should be underlined that even if correlation between the agendas of the mainstream media and the social networking sites was generally low, undoubtedly the mainstream media had a certain influence on the 2014 European election agenda of social media.

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An Overshadowed Campaign in Two Croatian Dailies

Gordana Vilović

Introduction

On 1 July 2013, Croatia became the newest member of the European Union (EU) after a decade-long accession process. Just prior to Croatia's accession, the country held its first European Parliament (EP) elections, in April 2013, resulting in a interim ten-month mandate for the 11 newly elected Croatian members of the EP. Its second EP elections, this time for a full mandate, were held in May 2014 in conjunction with all the other EU member states. Thus within the course of one year, Croatia witnessed two election campaigns for the EP. At the time of the first elections, most of the media coverage focused on the salaries the potential MEPs would receive once elected. The standard salary for an MEP is nearly ten times Croatia's average per capita salary. Very little of the coverage explored the candidates' stances on issues and policy. Ideally, the role of the mass media in elections is to help people understand which elections are taking place and how they are conducted, what is to be expected from the elected members and how citizens can influence discussions concerning policy.[1] Many assumed that the second election campaign, the one for a

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57

full mandate for the Croatian MEPs, would be more complete and thorough. The campaign did partly improve, though not so much because the largest parties realized that EP elections have some significance as because the ruling party was afflicted by internal divisions and the replacement of the Minister of Finance.

According to policy analysts, the elections for the EP in Croatia in 2014 were mostly focused on punishing the ruling party and had very little connection with EU politics. Dario Čepo notes that Croatian 'voters have expressed a lack of interest in European policy by giving up voting at all, while those who voted, in the majority, choose the conservative coalition led by the Croatian Democratic Union [HDZ: Hrvatska demokratska zajednica]' [my translation].[2] During the election campaign, Croatia was hit by catastrophic floods, so it was considered inappropriate to deal with campaigning when several thousand people were left homeless. Therefore, the politicians lowered the intensity of their planned campaigns, while the country's journalists and media had their own agenda regarding what to focus on and how to cover the campaign. It is assumed that their main focus was on the scandals that were shaking the ruling party and on stories and photographs from the flooded areas, rather than on the election campaign. This is not necessarily unusual; indeed, it is the role of professional journalism. However, this chapter examines whether there was any coverage of the election campaign for the EP elections, as well as the ways in which the two leading newspapers—*Večernji list* (Evening Paper) and *Jutarnji list* (Morning Paper)—handled the topics in their commentaries.

Representatives of the media should aspire to be as fair as possible in their reporting, and allow for complete freedom in their editorial commentaries. However, this is rarely the case. Indeed, the problem for citizens lies in the fact that much of the content is editorialized and opinionated in the form of columns, opinion pieces and editorials, thus lacking the clarity and objectivity of plain reporting. Given the preponderance of such opinionated content in the Croatian media, we should explore how the lack of plain reporting may contribute to, or hinder, the broader development of citizens' opinions concerning the EU and the EP elections.

As a result, this chapter will examine what was emphasized and connected to the 2014 EP elections in the opinions, commentaries and columns of Croatia's two leading newspapers.

Why, though, explore commentaries about elections in newspapers that belong to the so-called old media? The most important reason for analysing columns in newspapers is the authors themselves, recognized as media

professionals whose opinions, even if we do not necessarily need to support them, are nevertheless still the newspapers' 'trade marks'.

Jutarnji list is a national daily newspaper, considered to express the most liberal option among Croatian newspapers. Its daily circulation is around 50,000 copies (*Novinar* 2014, p. 6). *Večernji list*, the second analysed daily, is considered to have a more conservative world view than *Jutarnji list*. Its average daily circulation is around 60,000 copies (*Novinar* 2014, p. 6). *Večernji list*'s columns are often diametrically opposed to the opinions of those held by the columnists writing for *Jutarnji list*. Content analysis is the chosen and most suitable method for analysing the opinions of journalists and editors in the process of reporting on the EP elections.

Election Reporting: The European Parliament Elections Between 'Second-Handedness' and 'Indifference'

Since Croatia's independence in 1990, and up to the 2015 presidential election, media professionals had regularly met at round-table discussions and other pertinent forums to discuss how to avoid the traps of bias and how to present candidates in an objective and balanced way. All national elections were preceded by discussions about why it is important to report the programmes of political parties and candidates in the media, and how to attract citizens to the polls. Such round-table discussions had been organized by the Croatian Journalists' Association, the Agency for Electronic Media, GONG (a civil society organization aimed to encourage citizens to political participation) and the Faculty of Political Science of Zagreb University. Despite this, turnout in Croatia had decreased with each election between 1990 and 2014. The weakest was during Croatia's 2013 EP election. Indeed, Croatia was at the bottom of the list. So far, the literature shows that voters do not consider elections for the EP to be very important, and nor do they believe that their vote can have a substantial impact on national policies.

How do the media in EU member states, including Croatia, reflect the need to explain to their citizens the importance of the EP and the importance of participating by voting in these elections? Studies of the coverage of the 2004 EP elections show a decreasing visibility for campaigns, candidates, and other information relating to EP elections in the media, both in the older EU member states and in the new ones.[3] The main actors in media reports were mostly national political figures.[4] Similar findings

on the 'relatively low visibility of European elections in national newspapers and the dominance of domestic actors' resulted from research into European elections in Croatian dailies in 2013.[5] Grbeša and Tomičić explain the 'communication deficit':[6] the 'inefficiency of European institutions' use of the media in order to build the European identity and establish a stronger connection between EU citizens and EU institutions' [my translation]. The authors say that responsibility for the 'communication deficit' lies not only with the EU institutions but also with the member states. The question then becomes: what can the media do and what could the media have done to solve the communication deficit?

A content analysis of the two Croatian daily newspapers, *Jutarnji list* and *Večernji list*, will help us towards a partial answer to this question as regards how columnists, journalists, editors and party leaders attempted to overcome the 'communication deficit' within Croatia.

EP elections are often considered 'second-order elections',[7] as they conform to the four key characteristics of second-order elections developed by Norris,[8] and by S. Hix.[9] Second-order elections have: (1) a lower turnout in comparison to key (first-order) national elections; (2) a smaller focus of voters on political programmes, and a bigger focus on parties' popularity and successes on the national scene; (3) a greater readiness of voters to punish the ruling party or coalition; and (4) a tendency for voters to reward smaller, often radical political options. The first EP elections in Croatia (2013) suffered from 'second-orderness' owing to the distance and indifference of the citizens regarding European issues and European institutions.[10] Such indifference was followed by an exceptionally low turnout in the EP elections (20.84 % in 2013, and 25.2 % in 2014). Research on voter turnout during the referendum on EU membership concluded that Croatia was 'Euro-indifferent' and introduced the new term 'Euro-indifferentism'.[11] According to Jović,[12] Euro-indifferentism 'is the state and (in)action based on indifference toward the EU and its institutions, representatives, and policies, as well as toward its survival or breakup… . Euro-indifferentism is the lack of any emotional relationship toward the EU and its policies' [my translation].

Considering the low turnout in the EP elections and the second-order nature of the elections, as well as the impression of an overall indifference towards the EU, it might be expected that the media would reflect similar attitudes, reflected in an absence of relevant information about the EP's importance and a low emphasis on the role of Croatian representatives in the EP.

Jutarnji List and Večernji List Under Examination

Bearing in mind the contemporary media environment, where anyone who is connected to the Internet can be a media channel and a message, it is understandable that newspapers do not play a leading role in informing audiences; especially not about a campaign that is supranational, second-order and towards which the citizens have mixed feelings. Nevertheless, the controversial selection of newspapers for the purpose of content analysis can indicate the intensity and direction in which newspapers choose their agendas, whether they serve the public and whether they help citizens to decide to support a certain political option.

General, simple and clear news is evaporating from print outlets owing to the speed of publishing; news is now immediately published on social networks and online media. The news published in newspapers has more background and unavoidable commentary.

The main hypothesis of this paper is: *Jutarnji list,*[13] and *Večernji list,*[14] as influential national newspapers, were mostly indifferent to the EP elections, and their editorial policy, comments and opinions promote distance and scepticism towards the role of the Croatian candidates in the work of the EP and towards the EU in the broadest sense.

The research was conducted between 14 April and 24 May 2014. That was also the official period of the EP election campaign. All the columns, editorials and opinion pieces published in *Jutarnji list* and *Večernji list* in that timeframe that in any way mentioned the EU, the EP elections or the candidates for MEP seats were examined.

Representing All Candidates: Mission Impossible

During the research period, *Jutarnji list* published 51, and *Večernji list* 65 articles related to the EP elections. During previous national election campaigns, both newspapers had had a regular daily section with specialized articles. However, during the EP election campaign, they only sporadically published a title above interviews with individual candidates. Twenty-five party lists stood for election to the EP, and each list had 11 candidates. There were 275 names! Out of that number, mostly comprising people who were otherwise unknown, *Večernji list* recognized five, while *Jutarnji list* selected nine leaders, and conducted and published longer interviews with those people. Objectively, the editorial boards would have faced an impossible task if they had sought to present all the candidates to the

public, but it was still important for their audiences to know at least the criteria that underlay the selection of a certain candidate for interview. It seems that *Večernji list* chose people whose political stance was right of centre, while for *Jutarnji list* it is not possible to confirm the manner in which interviewees were selected.

Daily and regular columns, in which journalists wrote about the EP elections, were present in both newspapers. There were 19 in *Jutarnji list* and 12 in *Večernji list*. News that consists of simple reporting is less and less represented in newspapers, and this was also the case with news about the election. Usually simple reporting is more present in online issues of those newspapers, and the most interesting news is featured in expanded reports. There were 16 simple news stories in *Jutarnji list* and 22 in *Večernji list*. Expanded reporting of events was found in eight articles published in *Jutarnji list*, and in nine in *Večernji list*. Unlike *Jutarnji list*, *Večernji list* regularly published strong statements of individual candidates.

Jutarnji List*: Ferocious Columns*

During the EP elections, columns were mostly written by senior political analysts. *Jutarnji list* directed its commentaries toward the ruling party, particularly the president of the Social Democratic Party (SDP) (Socijaldemokratska partija), Prime Minister Zoran Milanović. This is not surprising, since ahead of the election campaign the party was drenched in scandals involving party members, corruption, arrests, indictments and the dismissal of the Finance Minister.

Jutarnji list's most distinguished, left-leaning, columnist, Jelena Lovrić, wrote a piece published on 17 April 2014 under the title 'Milanović as the protector from painful cuts' [my translation], describing Milanović as a would-be populist who saw himself as standing in defiance of Brussels, and arguing that: 'If Croatia wants to witness further budget cuts then people should vote for the opposition, HDZ' [my translation].

In *Jutarnji list* dated 24 April 2014, Lovrić is once again critical about the way Milanović communicates in public: 'And it is not that Milanović is unpopular because he tells people the truth, but because he failed to change the harsh truth of the pre-existing condition. And he failed because he himself sailed through the wilderness of unreality and illusions… It seems that directives from Brussels substantially helped him to sober up' [my translation].

'How has Zoran Milanović been changing 2007–2014' is the title of an extensive piece by Jelena Lovrić published on 27 April 2014. In that article the criticism continues. 'His government seems like a mad house, with a cacophony of voices, and without any serious political anchor…' [my translation]. On the same day, another comment was published, one by D. Butković, also a left-leaning columnist, who wrote that: 'European elections are an ideal occasion for the punishment of the Government by their constant and potential voters…' [my translation].

This is how Lovrić commented on 8 May 2014 on the dismissal of the Minister of Finance: 'To kick out prominent Linić only three weeks before the European elections, that does not really seem like a rational act …' [my translation]. On same day, 8 May 2014, Robert Bajruši, a moderate columnist and journalist, wrote about the divisions in the SDP because of the dismissal of the Finance Minister: 'And the discharge of Finance Minister Slavko Linić has set the fuse of discontent within SDP. Losing the elections on 25 May could cause an explosion' [my translation]. Bajruši continued: 'It is quite certain that the stillness in the SDP will last until 25 May, when the EP elections are held, which will greatly define Milanović's future…' [my translation]. Lovrić once again commented about the upheaval in the SDP on 9 May 2014: 'Although in the SDP they are trying to mend their unity and claim that they will by all means turn to the European election campaign, the division line within the party is getting clearer and deeper' [my translation].

The remaining two comments directly linked to the EP elections were published on 23 May 2014, by Vuk Vuković (Assistant Professor at the Zagreb School of Economics and Management) under the title 'For the recovery of the Union, national elections are more important than the EU elections', and on 24 May 2014, by columnist and writer Jurica Pavičić under the title 'European elections are the most important…' Pavičić's commentary predicted low voter turnout in Croatia and labelled the EU elections as 'irrelevant' for two reasons: (1) 'one sixth of the country is flooded. The rest of the state is completely focused on that human drama…'; and (2) 'Along with the flood, the impression of the irrelevance of Sunday's election was helped by the political class that itself has devalued the Euro elections by reducing them to its own political exercise before the Croatian parliamentary elections in 2015' [my translation].

The opinions in *Jutarnji list*, published during the election campaign, show that distinguished people were exceptionally critical of the ruling

party and particularly of Prime Minister Milanović. Besides the assessment that the EP election was irrelevant, the columns focused on the bad situation within the SDP, arguing that it could, as they correctly predicted, result in better results for the opposition candidates for the EP, which was what ultimately happened.

Večernji List: *A Broader Range of Topics*

Columns in *Večernji list* did not glorify the EU and its institutions either, but the tone of its articles was different. Although *Večernji list* had a considerably lower number of commentaries (12) it contains a broader range of topics and opinions.

Journalist Tomislav Krasnec wrote in a column on 14 April 2014, about the irrelevance of the EP, stating: 'It sounds better than it is in reality.' He also discussed the work of Croatian members of the EP, arguing that: 'Croats still managed to influence the real content of decisions that impact on the lives of Croatian citizens.' He went on to compare the work of the EP and that of politicians in Croatia, writing that: 'work in the EU Parliament shows the restrictions and backwardness of the routine way of work on the Croatian political scene'. Finally, he discussed the EU as a stage, arguing that 'The EP is used as a stage for promotion with a lot of acting and little authentic substance.' [my translations]

In one reader's letter, written by Krsto Sunara (15 April 2014), there is a clear explanation of the need to introduce preferential voting for the EP elections, because the current election process, concludes Sunara, best serves the parties.

Negative Remarks About the Prime Minister

In columns and comments in *Večernji list*, the Prime Minister was portrayed in a negative way, such as 'lost in space, found in the underworld' [my translation] (by Milan Ivkošić, 3 May 2014), or 'an incapable, unprincipled man of bad character' [my translation] (by Marinko Jurasić, 6 May 2014).

After the replacement of the Finance Minister, Gojko Drljača wrote (10 May 2014): 'Zoran Milanović does not live in reality any more [...] It is clear that the Prime Minister has shut himself within his own virtual world of unprincipled politics, in which the main rules of the game are subjected to the needs of his personal political advancement' [my translation]. On

the same day, journalist Marko Špoljar had two columns published. In the first, he described how the Prime Minister saw his opponents in his own party as 'selfish, frustrated and irresponsible' [my translation].

Support for Small Parties

In addition, support for small parties was visible in commentaries in *Večernji list*. In a commentary published on 24 April 2014, Gojko Drljača, the eminent editor of *Večernji list*, wrote positively about Nikica Gabrić, the leader of the National Forum (Nacionalni forum), a new small party, and a candidate for the EP.

Nino Raspudić is an Assistant Professor at Zagreb University who writes a weekly column in this daily. On 16 May 2014, he advocated that voters should recognize smaller parties in the upcoming EU elections, and at the same time he criticized the way in which the ruling party was covering up its scandals.

Another positive comment about the small party National Forum (Nacionalni forum) appeared on 21 May 2015, written by eminent columnist Milan Jajčinović. He advocated support for the 'new and so far unknown [parties], like the National Forum led by Nikica Gabrić, Orah lead by SDP dissident Mirela Holy, and those united in the Alliance for Croatia'. Jajčinović claimed these parties would 'make a revolutionary overturn' [my translation].

On the other hand, Milan Ivkošić, a noted name among *Večernji list* commentators, forecast the election results on 23 May 2014. As a Eurosceptic, he wrote that 'we are in loss, because we paid more for membership than we have got from EU funds'. He was convinced that 'the HDZ's electoral victory the day after tomorrow would be the victory of the historical HDZ, cleared of leftward leanings and deleterious despotism and crime' [my translation].

Večernji list's editor-in-chief, Goran Ogurlić, addressed readers through an editorial two days before the elections (23 May 2014), telling them to vote for a candidate who was 'good, daring, wise, sly, someone who will not forget our national and human interests… [And] to try to judge for yourself which one of the numerous candidates on the lists, despite that goodly salary, will not forget the Croatian poor, his own homeland… the 53 % unemployed young people, dear God…' [my translation].

The opinions and editorials published in *Večernji list* differed from those in *Jutarnji list*. They were more conservative, but there was also visible support for lesser known coalitions and new small parties that had

been formed to participate in the EP elections. It was noticeable that the National Forum had a distinct space in this part of the paper, but also in individual reports and statements. Almost all of the columns had a positive news value. A similarity with *Jutarnji list* is that criticism was not only aimed at the Prime Minister, but also at the other members of his team and at the ruling party's top leaders.

Conclusions

The content analysis of opinions concerning the 2014 EP election published in *Jutarnji list* and *Večernji list* showed that the supranational EU elections were only of minor interest to the authors and the columnists. The EP was intriguing only to the extent to which the authors could use it as a reason to criticize the work of the Prime Minister, the Government and the ruling party. The recession, unemployment, a bad economic situation without a foreseeable end, corruption and the replacement of the Finance Minister were issues accorded greater interest than questioning the work of future Croatian MEPs. To all those dominant topics, we should add the circumstances of the catastrophic floods affecting part of Croatia, which completely removed the EU election campaign from the pages of the newspapers. Topics directly related to the elections, the role, work and responsibilities of the EP and its connection to the decisions of the European Commission, were exceptionally rare and almost invisible. These findings are in agreement with most research studies on EP elections, according to which they are not interesting to the media. National topics completely overshadowed any kind of systematic approach in covering EU content.

Notes

1. Gordana Vilović, "Etika i izborno izvještavanje" [Ethics and Election Reporting] in *Izbori u Hrvatskoj i iskustva iz regije* [The elections in Croatia and the experience from the region], ed. Boško Picula (Zagreb. Gong i Fakultet političkih znanosti. 2012), 44.
2. Dario Čepo, "Izbori za Europski parlament u Hrvatskoj," [European Parliament elections in Croatia] *Političke analize*, 18.6 (2014a): 23.
3. Claes H. De Vreese, Susan A. Banduccci, Holli A. Semetko, Hajo G. Boomgaarden, "The News Coverage of the 2004 European

Parliamentary Election Campaign in 25 Countries," *European Union Politics,* Volume 7.4 (2006), 477–504.

4. de Vreese et al., "The News Coverage," *European Union Politics,* 477–504.

5. Marijana Grbeša and Tihana Tomičić, "Izbori za Europski parlament u hrvatskim medijima: analiza sadržaja izvještavanja tiska o europskim izborima 2013. u Hrvatskoj," [Elections for the European Parliament in the Croatian media: content analysis of the press coverage of the European elections in 2013 in Croatia] *Media studies,* 5.9 (2014), 19–42.

6. Grbeša and Tomičić, "Izbori za Europski," *Media studies,* 19–42.

7. Dario Čepo, "Zašto su europski izbori drugorazredni izbori?," ["Why are European elections second-class elections?"] *Političke analize,* 18.6 (2014b): 58.

8. Pippa Norris, "Second-Order Elections Revisited," *European Journal of Political Research* 30(1)(1997): 112.

9. Simon Hix, *Political System of the European Union* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005), 193.

10. Dario Čepo, "Europski parlament: koga predstavlja, kako radi i treba li ga mijenjati?," [European Parliament: Who represents, how it works and wether it should be changed?] *Političke analize*, 14.6 (2013): 8.

11. Dejan Jović, "Euroravnodušnost," [Euro Indifference] *Političke analize*, 9.3 (2012): 64.

12. Jović, "Euroravnodušnost," *Političke analize*, 64.

13. *Jutarnji list*: all issues, from 14 April to 24 May 2014.

14. *Večernji list*: all issues from 14 April to 24 May 2014.

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Perspectives on the Romanian Electoral Context and Media Coverage of Campaign Discourses

Adriana Ştefănel

INTRODUCTION

The 2007 EU enlargement was enthusiastically received by Romanian citizens and perceived not as an opportunity but as an act of geostrategic justice that reinstated the country where it rightfully belonged. According to Flash Eurobarometer 159,[1] one could trace in Romania one of the highest levels of support for the European Union (EU) and for European integration, and the highest among the Central and Eastern European countries. In 2007, 68 % of Romanians trusted the EU, 10 percentage points more than in Bulgaria,[2] and 20 percentage points more than the European average.[3] Although the level of trust had decreased to 45 % by 2012,[4] Romania remained one of the most Euro-optimist states in the EU. In 2015, Romanians seemed to have the most positive image of Europe,[5] of all member states.[6]

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There is not the same enthusiasm, however, when it comes to voting. Only 29.46 % of Romanians voted,[7] on 25 November 2007,[8] even though a referendum concerning the national voting system was scheduled the same day; the turnout was even lower in 2009, when only 27.67 % of Romanians voted in the European Parliament (EP) elections.[9] In 2014, the turnout increased to 32.44 %,[10] but this was still lower than the 35.84 % turnout in neighbouring Bulgaria, and far from the 42.61 % average in the Union.[11] These data indicate that in Romania, interest in voting for EP representatives is correlated less with trust in EU institutions and more with the belief that Romania's voices do not count in the EU (48 % of Romanians share this view).

This paradox—trust in the EU on the one hand but lack of interest in EP elections on the other—might be explained by the low presence of EU issues in the Romanian electoral campaign. The intention of this chapter is to stress the distance between EU and Romanian agendas during the 2014 elections as a key to explaining the low number of voters.

According to an INSCOP research poll,[12] European elections are to some extent distinct from national elections and are not perceived as having the same relevance and importance for people's lives, since the European elections do not lead to a change in the Government, or directly affect everyday life. At the same time, there is a generally shared feeling that the EU agenda is more difficult to follow and assess than that of national decision-makers. This situation is not only characteristic of Romania, but it is common in the EU. As Sonia Pierdafita and Anne Launroth point out at the start of their article 'EU Division Laid Bare by Election to the European Parliament',[13] EP elections are usually characterized by a low voter turnout, which in most member states has been declining over time and is generally much lower than the participation rate in national elections. As the quoted authors emphasize, the majority of voters throughout Europe have little interest in EU affairs, lack knowledge about EU activities and perceive European policymaking to be irrelevant. The fact that the political consequences of voting are unclear, and that voters cannot elect a national type of government at European level, further discourages them from voting; in the end, the EP elections tend to be second-order elections mainly focused on national issues.

Karlheinz Reif and Hermann Schimitt,[14] the authors of the *second-order election* concept, claim that EU elections have little newsworthiness and, as a consequence, are less covered by the media. At the same time, the

media play a less significant role in informing and mobilizing the electorate during this type of election campaign.[15]

Relevant Aspects of the Electoral System, Main Parties and Candidates in the EU Election

In Romania, the electoral system in use for European elections is a proportional one, based on national party lists. In order to run in the EU elections, parties must collect 200,000 signatures from their supporters and produce a list of 42 candidates for the 32 seats; independent candidates must have 100,000 signatures from their supporters. For major parties and well-known candidates, this condition is easy to fulfil, but it might work as a glass ceiling for new parties and less known candidates.

Another requisite difficult to meet is the threshold of 3 % for parties and independent candidates and 5 % for coalitions. For these reasons, since 2007, only major parties have reached the electoral threshold and only two independent candidates, László Tökés, a Hungarian ethnic with an aggressive anti-Romanian discourse in 2007, and the daughter of President Băsescu in 2009, have been elected.

In European elections, the whole country is considered to be one electoral district; mandates are distributed according to the d'Hondt methodology. Access to traditional media is guaranteed for parties represented in the national parliament, but no candidates are allowed to appear in the media in the two days prior to election day. No opinion polls and no vote estimations are allowed in traditional media during this period until the ballot boxes are closed.

In the 2014 European elections 14 parties and 11 independent candidates took part, according to the Central Electoral Bureau. One party, the PRM (Partidul România Mare: the Greater Romania Party—a nationalist party now in decline, but very dynamic in the first decade of the century) submitted two electoral lists because the leadership of the party was split after contestations in court.

The Coalition PSD+PC+UNPR

These parties from the USL, that is Uniunea Social-Liberală (Social-Liberal Union), the coalition that won the parliamentary elections in 2012, who supported the government, ran together in the EP elections

under the sign of the major partner, the Social Democrat Party (Partidul Social Democrat: Social Democrat Party—PSD). Of the total of 16 seats won, two were assigned to the Conservative Party (Partidul Conservator: Conservative Party—PC) and two to the National Union for the Progress of Romania (Uniunea Naţională pentru Progresul României: National Union for Romania's Progress—UNPR). The electoral list was headed by two women, but they both resigned soon after the election; one, Corina Creţu, to become a European Commissioner, and the other, Ecaterina Andronescu, to return to national politics, leaving the leading position open for a man (Cătălin Ivan). More than 30 per cent of the elected candidates were women, including Daciana Sârbu, the wife of the Prime Minister, Victor Ponta, and the daughter of the former President of the Senate, Ilie Sârbu.

The National Liberal Party (Partidul Naţional Liberal—PNL)

The fraction of the USL that had withdrawn their parliamentary support for Victor Ponta's government ran with the same team as in the previous European elections. Even if in national elections the Liberals are rather traditional and maintain the political informality of a 'boys' club' strategy, the team that ran in the EP elections was dominated by women (four out of six), two of them being the wives of national political leaders (Adina Văleanu, the wife of the party leader, Crin Antonescu, and Ramona Mănescu, the wife of the mayor of the Sixth District of Bucharest).

The Democrat Liberal Party (Partidul Democrat Liberal—PDL)

No longer supported by President Traian Basescu, as had previously been the case in contravention of the Constitution, but still associated with the unpopular decisions of former Prime Minister Emil Boc, the PDL won only five seats, half as many as in the previous elections in 2009. The very well-known politician Theodor Stolojan, a former Prime Minister and highly regarded economist, in first place, followed by Monica Macovei, a former Justice Minister strongly associated with the struggle against corruption, and Traian Ungureanu, a well-known journalist, could not fire up the list of the party. Relative to the 2009 EP elections, the PDL lost five seats out of ten.

The Independent Candidate Mircea Diaconu

One of the most well-known and beloved cinema and theatre actors in Romania, Mircea Diaconu was excluded from the Liberal list because of accusations regarding an incompatibility issue that had arisen some years previously, while he was the manager of Nottara (a theatre in Bucharest) and his wife was a stage director at the same theatre. Supported by citizens and constantly accused by governmental institutions (the National Agency for Integrity was the loudest contestant), Mircea Diaconu ran independently and won fourth position, with 6.81 % of the votes, double the threshold of 3 %, positioning himself before the UDMR (6.29 %) and the PMP (6.21 %).

The Democratic Alliance of Hungarians in Romania (Uniunea Democrată Maghiară din România—UDMR)

The ethnic party that has represented the Hungarian minority in Romanian politics for a quarter of a century, the UDMR won its usual 6 % and sent two candidates—both male—to the EP, one less than in the previous elections.

The People's Movement Party (Partidul Mișcarea Populară—PMP)

Led at the time by Elena Udrea and heavily supported by Traian Băsescu, the PMP, recently separated from the PDL, was the only Romanian new entry in the EP. Both Cristian Preda and Siegfried Mureșan were former PDL members.

TV Coverage of the European Parliament Election Agenda

In order to present the themes used in the discourses of the Romanian candidates, we analysed the electoral programmes broadcast on three Romanian news channels (Antena 3, B1 TV and Realitatea TV), during the EP campaign in 2014. No television news channel from the 'must carry package' changed its schedule during the EP electoral campaign; there were no broadcasts dedicated to this election or TV debates involving only

Romanian EP candidates, but the regular TV programmes were flavoured with an EU twist.

The method of analysis selected for this article is *thematic analysis*,[16] which is designed to bring order, structure and interpretation to the mass of collected data, a qualitative approach to data analysis that enables data sources to be analysed in terms of principal concepts or themes; it is, as the quoted authors stress, the search for general statements about relationships among categories of data and among data to identify content. The themes within the data might be identified both in an inductive manner, from the raw information itself or in a deductive manner, using existing theoretical ideas that the researcher brings to the data;[17] we will use the first method as it allows us to build the categories that emerge from the data.

Before presenting the results of the thematic analysis, it must be said that out of the several alternative ways of operationalizing themes that thematic analysis offers, we employed one of the most frequently used, operationalization based on keywords. Synthetically, the themes addressed in the electoral talk shows, broadcast on the three analysed TV channels, in prime time, between 8 and 22 May 2014, are shown in Table 6.1.

In these talk shows, EP candidates participated together with other politicians, blending the following national and European topics:

(a) The Romanian Presidential Election in November 2014 as the Main Topic in the Campaign for the European Parliament

Under the sign of the presidential election that was to be held at the end of it, 2014 was a tense political year, marked by unexpected ruptures,

Table 6.1 The themes addressed in European Parliament electoral talk shows on three Romanian channels, 8–22 May 2014

Theme	Total occurrences	B1 TV	Realitatea TV	Antena 3
Romanian presidential election in November 2014	67	21	23	23
Other domestic political topics	50	16	17	17
Scandals related to the EP elections	55	11	19	25
European themes	15	5	2	8
European elections	18	4	6	8

surprise nominations and spectacular failures. The Union that had won the parliamentary elections outright in 2012 and had been close to dismissing President Traian Băsescu (in the 2012 Referendum), the Social Liberal Union (USL), decided to run separately, mainly because the members of this Union were part of different European political parties (the Liberals were members of ALDE at that time; the Social Democrats were part of PSE), but also because their differences of opinion regarding national politics could no longer be hidden. On 25 February, the rupture became official: the National Liberal Party (PNL) resigned from all governmental functions and positioned itself in opposition to its former partners in the Social Democratic Party (PSD).

Pursuing their presidential election interests, both liberal and socialist parties decided to build the EU campaign around their presidential candidates, as far as these were known at that time. Thus, Crin Antonescu, leader of the PNL and the USL's candidate for the Presidency since 2009, was a central figure in the Liberals' electoral posters.[18] A similar strategic decision was made in the newly born PMP (Popular Movement Party), which endorsed Elena Udrea's presidential campaign later on in 2014, while using her image to promote her party's EP candidates. Furthermore, Victor Ponta, who had not yet announced his candidacy for the Presidency, occupied the central position in the Social Democrat electoral campaign.

Leaving aside the UDMR (the Democratic Alliance of Hungarians in Romania), whose ethnic character led to a totally distinct approach, the only party which exceeded the threshold of 5 % using its EP candidates as spokespersons was the Democrat Liberal Party (PDL), perhaps because the party was drifting after the rupture from Traian Băsescu. To complete the picture, we must add that, after the elections, the PDL and the PNL (which left ALDE for PPE the day after the EP elections) joined their effort to endorse Klaus Iohannis's winning presidential campaign in November 2014, while Monica Macovei, one of the PDL's candidates in the EP elections, resigned from the PDL and ran independently for the Presidency.

In this context, the main topic during the EU campaign was correlated with domestic politics. The major parties positioned themselves for the presidential contest, as continuing the USL project (mainly PSD, but also PNL) or in opposition to Traian Băsescu, the incumbent President, while the PDL and the PMP tried to gain votes from those disappointed by the USL or still captive to Traian Băsescu's charismatic discourse.

Another cleavage which was revealed during these elections and afterwards became decisive in the presidential election in November 2014. This was the opposition of ex-communists and anti-communists. As Sorina Soare emphasizes,[19] the issue had been used by the PMP and the PDL to distinguish themselves from the PSD, whose origins could be traced back to the former PCR (Partidul Comunist Român—Romanian Communist Party). In this regard, the exhortations of one of the most well-known representatives of the PDL, Monica Macovei, are quite significant. According to her, a vote for the PSD was a vote against Romanian interests and in favour of a pro-Russian President of the European Commission.

(b) Scandals related to the European elections as a Topic in the Campaign for the EP

By far the most mediatized scandal during the EP elections concerned Mircea Diaconu's candidature. The topic on which he built his campaign was the interdiction of his candidature. He participated in nine talk shows out of our corpus, while his daughter, overnight transformed into campaign manager, took part in six. During these talk shows he masterly played the role of the common man lost in politics, and constantly complained about the evil politicians that were hindering him from representing Romanians in Europe. His political vision, gloomily marked by a mixture of nationalism and populism, though he was assumed to be a liberal, was not so important: only on two occasions did he take some time to speak about his objectives once elected.

The second scandal surrounded the President in office at the time, Traian Băsescu. Having emerged victorious from two attempts by parliament to remove him (the first in 2007, the second in 2012), against the rules of the constitution he openly supported the PMP's candidates and Elena Udrea. During the 1 May holidays, he was photographed wearing a PMP electoral shirt. Challenged both by the Social-Democrats and by the Liberals, he turned to the Constitutional Court, which affirmed his right, as a regular citizen, to vote and to express his voting intentions. Twelve talk shows during the analysed period had this as the main topic.

Not quite a scandal, but more a piece of mundane news that captured the lead position in electoral talk shows, was Elena Udrea's parachute jump: seven talk shows had this as the main topic. Confronted by the EP

elections, Romanians were asked to say whether she should or should not have jumped.

(c) European Themes and European Leaders in the Romanian Media during the EP Elections

Even if they were not very prominent, there were several major issues which were tackled by the representatives of the major parties: the economic and financial crisis, and especially its consequences for the Romanian economy; youth unemployment; the Eurozone and possible adoption of the euro in 2020; the Schengen area; and the European future of the Republic of Moldova. In addition to these, there were specific issues for each party: the PDL sought to capitalize on Monica Macovei's struggle against corruption and attempted to distance itself from the austerity measures taken by the former PDL-led cabinet, which had increased public discontent; the PNL's agenda focused on obtaining additional financing for agriculture and lower tariffs for phone communication, as well as changing the time zone; the PSD's discourse emphasized the need for solidarity among Romanians and for gaining full respect for Romanian citizens in the EU.

But all these were peripheral matters; the main issue regarding the EP elections was the decreasing interest of Romanians in these elections. The EP candidates were all aware of this trend, and many were keen to address it in their public appearances during the campaign.

Since for the first time the President of the European Commission (EC) was to be chosen from the party that won the elections in Europe, the presence of prominent European leaders in the Romanian campaign for the EP was notable. Both Martin Schulz and Guy Verhofstadt endorsed the Romanian candidates from their own political families but also sought their support in the choice of EC President in advance.

When it comes to the Social Democrats' support for their candidates for the EC presidency, it is worth noting that Martin Schulz participated in the opening of the Romanian Social Democrats' European election campaign in Bucharest in late April with a message centred on the support that the Romanian Social Democrats gave to Schulz's nomination, but also Schulz's support for Victor Ponta, both as Prime Minister and as a candidate for the Presidency of Romania.

In the same manner, but with fewer long-term effects, Guy Verhofstadt, ALDE's candidate for the presidency of the EC, was praised by his

Romanian colleagues in the PNL for his performance in the first debate between candidates for the Commission presidency, particularly for the way in which he covered the main priorities and questions addressed (the solution to the economic crisis, the development of the labour market with a particular focus on integrating young people through entrepreneurship programmes for youth and reindustrialization projects across the EU). A better integrated transport infrastructure mostly in terms of energy and telecommunications was also part of Verhofstadt's political vision that was embraced by Romania's liberal leaders.

Conclusions

The EP election campaign in the Romanian news media can hardly be labelled as *Europeanized* but rather *domesticized*. National political themes prevailed over those with a focus on the EU; stories with a domestic bias, such as *Election Technicalities*, *Overall Political Parties' Campaigns* and the *Presidential Election*, which followed the EU elections, clearly dominated news media coverage of the campaign. EP election stories centred on the EU, such as *EP Elections in Other Member States*, were only tangentially touched on. On the other hand *EU-related issues* were covered rather minimally. In Romania, the EP elections of 2014 were more a dress rehearsal for the presidential election that was to be held later that year, and an opportunity for the parties to set out their battle lines—inside and outside the party—for the same event.

Although the EP elections of 2014 had the potential to be different, as the EU slogan stressed, meaning that ordinary citizens of the EU could vote for the European Commission President, they may still be considered second-order elections because of the domesticized media coverage and also because of the hiding of European voices under the noise of national politics. Although Europe was a constant reference in political discourses, national issues prevailed in the electoral TV talk shows.

Notes

1. European Commission, *Flash Eurobarometer 159,* The future European Constitution (Brussel, EC, 2004), 3.
2. Neighbouring Bulgaria joined EU in the same year; Romania and Bulgaria are often seen as a cluster and/or compared with each other.

3. European Commission, *Standard Eurobarometer 68,* Public Opinion in the European Union (Brussel, EC, 2008), 10.

4. European Commission, *Standard Eurobarometer 77,* Public Opinion in the European Union (Brussel, EC, 2012), 15.

5. 62 % of Romanians have a positive image of Europe, followed by Ireland (57 %), Lithuania (55 %), Bulgaria (55 %), Poland (53 %), Luxembourg (52 %) and Malta (5 %).

6. European Commission, *Standard Eurobarometer 83*, European Citizenship (Brussels, EC, 2015), 8.

7. The Central Election Bureau (BEC),"Press Release: Results of the 2007 European Elections", www.bec.ro (accessed 1 December 2015).

8. Midterm elections, due to the 2007 integration.

9. The Central Election Bureau (BEC), "Press Release: Results of the 2009 European Elections Results", www.bec.ro (accessed December 1, 2015).

10. The Central Election Bureau (BEC),"Press Release: Results of the 2014 European Elections Results", www.bec.ro (accessed December 1, 2015).

11. European Parliament (EP), "Results of the 2014 European Election" http://www.europarl.europa.eu/elections2014-results/en/turnout.html (accessed December 1, 2015).

12. INSCOP Research, *European Elections 2014 Barometer* (INSCOP, Bucharest, 2014), 2.

13. Sonia Pierdafita and Anne Launroth, "EU Division Laid Bare by Election to the European Parliament," in *Between Apathy and Anger: Challenges to the Union From the 2014 Elections to the EP in Member States,* ed. Sonia Piedrafita, and Anne Lauenroth (EPIN Paper No.39/May 2014), 1.

14. Karlheinz Reif and Hermann Schmitt,"Nine Second Order National Elections: A Conceptual Framework for the Analysis of European Election Results," *European Journal of Political Research* 8 (1980), 6.

15. Claes De Vreese "Second-rate election campaigning? An analysis of campaign styles in European parliamentary elections," *Journal of Political Marketing,* 8 (2009), 17.

16. Catherine Marshall and Gretchen Rossman, *Designing qualitative research* (3th edition) (London; Thousand Oaks, CA, Sage, 1999), 150.

17. Richard Boyatzis, *Transforming qualitative information: thematic analysis and code development* (London, Sage 1998), 12.
18. After losing the EU election, he resigned from the leadership of the PNL, leaving the place free for Klaus Iohannis, who, from this position, successfully challenged Crin Antonescu's bid to be PNL candidate for the Presidency.
19. Sorina Soare, "A preview of the 2014 presidential elections?" in *The European Parliament Elections of 2014*, edited by Lorenzo De Sio, Vincenzo Emanuele and Nicolla Maggini ed,(CISE, Rome, 2014), 239.

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Coverage of the 2014 European Parliamentary Electoral Campaign in Romania's Print Press (A Case Study)

Ruxandra Boicu

INTRODUCTION AND THEORETICAL CONSIDERATIONS

This chapter is a qualitative analysis of news about the 2014 European Parliament (EP) campaign and elections in Romania, published in a Romanian newspaper, *Evenimentul zilei* [The Event of the Day]*,* during the period 25 April–26 May 2014. This study is not intended as a generic approach that will lead readers to definite conclusions about the national media system in relation to European issues. It is a narrow interpretation of the way in which the EP elections were approached in *Evenimentul zilei*, in terms of news selection (newsworthiness), styles of headline and lead writing, as well as the inclusion of electoral news within the newspaper's structure.

Within the framework of a conceptual vacillation between several theories on the present-day blurring of the boundary between the quality and the tabloid press, I shall attempt to examine the type of media coverage

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that is situated at the intersection of conventionally considered serious news, such as political/electoral news, and its commercial treatment.

I start from the assumption that media commercialism, associated with the well-known phenomena conceptualized as infotainment, tabloidization or soft news, relies on various communication and discursive strategies, among them being the editorial strategy of news dramatization: staging two or more distinct and often conflicting points of view, embodied by political opponents, envisaged as actors in a theatrical performance. In this respect, Beciu[1] explains that '[m]edia discourse valorizes the spectacular dimensions/drama of one case or another' [my translation].

In the specialized literature, there is a useful conceptual distinction between the phenomena/processes of tabloidization and infotainment. For instance, Deuze specifies that: '"Tabloidization" is a term generally related to processes in the print media sector, [while] "infotainment" is a term coined to describe broadcast media developments'.[2]

In order to define the above-mentioned type of media coverage relying on the proposed corpus, we should examine another conceptual distinction that is made in the introduction to *Tabloid Tales: Global Debates Over Media Standards*, where editors Sparks and Tulloch consider that tabloidization characterizes the very low-quality press, while the popular press is associated with a wide category of media outlets that facilitate the public's democratic access to information.[3]

Popular journalism permeates all media outlets, the print press included, through the hybridization of journalistic genres, among other manifestations, and it equally implies the multi-faceted treatment of conventional thematic fields approached in the main newspaper sections. In fact, it is not unusual nowadays, although it seems paradoxical, for fields traditionally considered serious, such as politics or economics, to be stylistically exploited in keeping with the logic of commercialism. Deuze includes commercialism among the four distilled repertoires of tabloids, alongside irony, morality and popular journalism ideology.[4] On the other hand, Charaudeau opposes commercialism to ethics as fundamental facets of the journalist's communication contract. According to this theory, journalistic products have a double purpose: an ethical one, consisting in the correct and unbiased transmission of information, and a commercial one, seeking to conquer the greatest possible audience as potential buyers of a media product.[5]

In this chapter, commercialism is considered to be inherent to the media market in the contemporary world, while tabloidization corresponds to

the extreme lowering of quality journalism, which can be avoided. Popular journalism, on the other hand, defined as an ideology and a set of practices, better suits the corpus that is being studied.

Narrowing the theoretical perspective to newspapers and political news, there is one more dichotomy in the literature, that between so-called hard and soft news. For instance, Reinemann et al. consider that 'it [this dichotomy] can be regarded as a key concept of political communication research',[6] which relies on 'thematic, focus and style features',[7] 'that is, the changes to the content and style of news presentation'.[8] The authors emphasize that soft news 'is typically more personality-centered' and 'more incident-based than other news'.[9]

In terms of the hard news/soft news dichotomy, the analytical objective of this study is to deconstruct one of the mechanisms through which hard news is delivered in a softer style in the Romanian newspaper *Evenimentul zilei*, the quality daily with the largest circulation. This mechanism is observed in the paper's coverage of the 2014 EP electoral campaign, which is subject to the dramatized treatment of adversarial verbal interactions. This staged dialogue between political actors, both politicians and political parties involved in the electoral campaign, is here conceived as an illustration of news 'conflict framing'. According to Martin Gleissner and Claes de Vreese,[10] '[t]he conflict frame was defined as emphasis on disagreement and other tensions that occur when the interests of individuals, groups, parties, organizations, and even countries are diverging'. De Vreese specifies that the conflict frame,[11] as it was studied by Neuman et al.,[12] is related to public perceptions of current affairs, alongside the economics frame and the moral values frame. Within this context, the conflict frame springs from the 'media's game interpretation of the political world as an ongoing series of contests, each with a new set of winners and losers'.

Evenimentul zilei [The Event of the Day]

Evenimentul zilei is a national daily newspaper, each issue read by 150,000 Romanians, as attested by the National Study of Audience (SNA FOCUS)[13]; it is the most read newspaper in the quality press sphere (Bureau Transmedia – BRAT).[14] It emerged in 1992 as the first popular newspaper in the Romanian media market. It was founded by a famous journalist, Ion Cristoiu, whose name is associated with the launch of a popular press in Romania. In 1996, *Evenimentul zilei* became a generalist

newspaper with a centre-right political bias. 'From this standpoint, this newspaper [*Evenimentul zilei*] adopted a hybrid format, placed between popular journalism and journalism of information'[my translation].[15]

Although *Evenimentul zilei* has the prestige of a quality publication, with a substantial content of 'hard news' and serious journalistic genres such as press analyses, interviews, reports and so on, it is just a small part of the Romanian media landscape and is subject to the economic constraints that have generally affected the print press all over the world. This could explain the compromises that it and similar newspapers have made in order to survive. These compromises, however, should not be categorized as manifestations of tabloidization, in the light of the theories presented in the introduction to this chapter, but rather as features of popular journalism, which confirms the conclusions of the scholarly articles written about this newspaper in Romanian.

The daily issue has 24 pages, in a medium-sized format. On the front page there is a red circle inside which there is the name of the newspaper's founder, Ion Cristoiu. The Saturday edition exhibits a white circle with red letters on its front page. There is no Sunday edition. The first news about the EP elections was published on Friday, 25 April 2014.

In Romania, the electoral campaign for the 2014 EP elections started on 25 April and ended on 24 May 2014, at 7:00 p.m., Romanian time. To cover electoral news throughout the campaign, *Evenimentul zilei* created a special sub-section of the paper containing one, two or more pages out of the 24 pages of an ordinary issue. These pages are visually identified through the page sub-headline 'Alegeri europarlamentare 2014' [European Parliamentary Elections 2014] included in the current paper section 'Actualitate Politică' [Political News].

The sub-section headline is printed in capital letters, larger than the section headline letters. The 'European Parliamentary Elections 2014' headline is printed in white letters against the EU-characteristic blue background and the graphic design of a ballot box bearing the EU banner. Such a page is made up of one or two larger opinion articles and one to three shorter news stories.

This specially designed sub-section was to contain both analysis and comment of the sort that is specific to the generalist press: opinion articles, short news stories, reports and short column headings. It is worth mentioning that *Evenimentul zilei* has a team of columnists that specializes in politics, elections and so on.

On the upper left-hand corner of p. 8 on 25 April 2014, which inaugurates the electoral news series, there is a short introduction and mission statement for the set of articles that will be published during the campaign: '[…] We will publish the most important election news of these days, as well as candidates' election fibs, unusual slogans and the inevitable campaign incidents' [my translation].

Analytical and Methodological Framework

This research focuses on a corpus made up of the headlines, sub-heads, leads and short column headlines of the news articles devoted to the 2014 EP elections included in the specially designed newspaper section of *Evenimentul zilei*.

As van Dijk points out,[16] headlines constitute one conventional category, besides leads, main events and context. He adds that '[a]s every newspaper reader knows, [headlines] are the most conspicuous part of a news report: they are brief, printed "on top", in large bold type, and often across several columns. Their main function is to summarize the most important information of the report. That is, they express its main "topic"'.[17]

Headlines, sub-heads and leads are also approached by Tankard,[18] cited by De Vreese,[19] among the '11 framing mechanism or focal points', while Deuze,[20] emphasizing the answers of some interviewed editors, was very categorical about the relevance of headlines: 'we have to write an exciting headline and a teasing lead, that makes a story different'.

Methodologically, I shall subject the items in my research corpus to a qualitative content analysis, relying on language and communication characteristics. Writing about qualitative media analysis, Altheide and Schneider place newspapers at the top of 'primary documents which are the objects of study'.[21]

Following Hsiu-Fang Hsieh and Sarah E. Shannon's theoretical considerations, I shall attempt to demonstrate that qualitative content analysis 'goes beyond merely counting words to examining language intensely for the purpose of classifying large amounts of text into an efficient number of categories that represent similar meanings' (Weber, 1990).[22] These categories can represent either 'explicit communication or inferred communication'.[23]

Research Corpus

The following content analysis refers to a research corpus consisting of the headlines and leads of the news articles published on the 41 pages devoted by *Evenimentul zilei* to the 2014 EP campaign and elections; the news is published both under the sub-section heading 'Alegerile europarlamentare 2014', accompanied by the above-mentioned EU symbols, and on the additional ten pages in which the European elections are only identified by the blue band at the head of the pages and the ballot box (without the headline text 'Alegeri europarlamentare 2014').

Consequently, there are 52 pages under consideration. They contain the news on these elections in 25 newspaper issues, corresponding to the one-month electoral campaign, according to the electoral legislation in Romania.

As already specified in this chapter, the research assumption is that the headlines and the leads referring to the elections contain strategically used theatrical elements, relying on the oxymoronic linguistic formulations produced by the political actors and echoed by the journalists who sign the articles.

The number of newspaper articles and short news stories that explicitly refer to the EP campaign in these 52 pages is 78 (vs. 29 that have no relevance for the issues under examination); their headlines and leads include 'campaign words and phrases' as well as the names of Romanian political actors involved in the elections.

Out of the 78 opinion articles and news stories, 14 are genuinely informative and concern European issues and electoral polls, legislation and so on, or are evaluations of the electoral climate: for example 'România, insulte nu dezbateri' [In Romania, there are more insults than debates] (21 May, p. 8); 'Austeritatea și imigrația, teme favorite în campania electorală' [Austerity and immigration, favourite themes in the election campaign] (21 May, p. 8), both examples throwing a pessimistic perspective on the future of the European Union (EU).

Editorial Discursive Strategies for Rendering Drama and Spectacle

In terms of character delineation, as in every dramatization, the team of specialized journalists (Laura Ciobanu, Carmen Vintilă, Mircea Marian, Andreea Udrea) who sign the opinion texts belonging to the specialized

paper section that covers the EP elections made a strategic selection of dramatis personae that the Romanian media had already exploited in order to sell their products. Besides the two lead actors, the then President of Romania, Traian Băsescu, and the then Prime Minister, Victor Ponta, whose names appear in a quarter of the newspaper headlines and leads in the corpus, other important politicians, such as party leaders, have prominent parts in the electoral play published in daily episodes for about a month. In an attempt at systematizing our corpus items, we propose the following sub-categories of theatrical elements corresponding to the newspaper strategies of conceiving headlines and leads: electoral context (1), political actors' names (2) and open theatricality (3).

1. There is an interesting editorial strategy that contributes to the shaping of the electoral context and climate. It is implied in 19 headlines and leads reminiscent of situation comedies, and consists in catching the political actors (both politicians and parties) in incongruous or awkward positions. The humour engendered in this way is underlain by the contrast between what is generally expected to happen during a serious electoral campaign, according to written or unwritten norms, and Romanian electoral practices; the columnists mock this inadequacy, sometimes under the pretext of exposing either:

   – undemocratic behaviour, for example: 'Micii[24] electorali nu se mai împart alături de trandafirul PSD' [Grilled minced meat rolls are no longer distributed together with the Social Democrat Party rose] (1 May, p. 10)[25]; 'PSD, acuzat că face campanie în școli' [The Social Democrat Party, accused of campaigning in schools (14 May, p. 6); 'O petrecere contra voturi' [Partying for votes] (17 May, p. 6).
   – electoral illiteracy, the politicians and parties' lack of professionalism, for example: '"Românii mândri" din afișul PSD, originari din Belarus' [The 'proud Romanians' in the PSD poster are actually from Belarus] (1 May, p. 11); 'Daciana Sârbu nu știe cum arată materialele PSD' [Daciana Sârbu doesn't know what her party's electoral materials look like] (5 May, p. 6)[26]; 'A încurcat-o pe Macovei cu Nicolai' [He mistook Macovei for Nicolai] (15 May, p. 9).[27]

  – the politicians' exaggerated preoccupation with their physical
    appearance, trying to imitate the Western way of campaigning,
    for example: 'Cu politicianul la Photoshop' [Take the politician
    to Photoshop] (8 May, p. 6); 'Selfie-urile politice, noua modă
    de campanie' [Political selfies, the new campaign fashion] (12
    May, p. 8); 'Politicienii prezintă moda de campanie' [Our poli-
    ticians show the campaign fashion] (14 May, p. 6); 'Băsescu:
    "Ma îmbrac cum vreau, votez PMP"' [Băsescu: 'I dress how
    I want and I vote for the People's Movement Party'] (5 May,
    p. 6).[28]

2. Corresponding to the contemporary way of doing politics, with an
   emphasis on politicians' personalities at the expense of party ideolo-
   gies, the columnists who authored the electoral news stories make
   excessive use of the names of the most prominent politicians of the
   moment. In keeping with this editorial strategy, 31 headlines and
   leads include names of non-candidates in the EP elections. Thus, the
   names of the protagonists, those of the President and the Prime
   Minister, as well as those of the strongest party leaders, appear in
   almost half of the items in the corpus, while in only nine items can
   one read the names of some of the EP candidates.

It is true that this selection of names reflects the real manner in which
the campaign was conceived by the party staffs (electoral posters
abounded in photo portraits of the political leaders, who were shown
as engines for their candidates). However, the high visibility of these
top politicians, sometimes even strident, is advantageous to the media
institution too, and that is why it may be considered to be strategic.
Here are some examples of headlines and leads that belong to this
sub-category:

  – the name of the Prime Minister: 'Ponta, baie de mulţime la
    mănăstirea Nucet, Judeţul Dâmboviţa' [Ponta: walkabout at
    Nucet Monaster, Dâmboviţa County] (26 April, p. 6)
  – The leader of the National Liberal Party [Partidul Naţional
    Liberal] in 2014, Crin Antonescu, whose wife was an MEP and
    a candidate for a new mandate: 'Antonescu, aplaudat contra
    cost la lansarea candidaţilor la PE' [Antonescu: applauded for a
    fee at the launching of the EP candidates] (25 April, p. 8); 'Ode
    lui Crin în revista de cultură a Clujului' [Odes to Crin in Cluj's

cultural magazine] (25 April, p. 8); 'Antonescu a început campania: Antonescu vrea să treacă la ora Europei' [Antonescu has started the campaign: Antonescu wants to go onto European time] (15 May, p. 8).

3. The most 'dramatic' sub-category of headlines and leads is devoted to the strategic mediatization of the real adversities between the most prominent politicians in the State, the President of Romania, Traian Băsescu, and the Prime Minister, Victor Ponta. The news headlines echo their public attitudes and statements on the political stage. The daily frictions between these two personalities are amplified so as to feed the readers' appetite for scandal. It is worth mentioning that the President' s and Prime Minister's names appear 12 times in *Evenimentul zilei* headlines and leads, as admitted by the newspaper itself in the following news headline: 'Ponta și Băsescu au eclipsat campania' [Ponta and Băsescu have eclipsed the campaign] (13 May, p. 8).

Generally speaking, these two actors' verbal exchanges are reflected more as adversarial discourse than as the competitive discourse properly characteristic of electoral campaigns: in litigious situations, there are direct verbal attacks contained in the semantics used in headlines and leads; for example: 'PSD i-a plagiat sloganul lui Mugur Isărescu' [The Social Democrat Party has plagiarized Mugur Isarescu's slogan] (26 April, p. 6); 'Băsescu: Ponta să renunțe la minciună măcar acum' [Băsescu: Ponta should give up lies at least now] (21 May, p. 8); 'Ecuația alegerilor: Scârba votează cu Ponta și PSD' [The election equation: disgust votes for Ponta and his party] (24 May, p. 5).

– Sometimes, the two 'warriors', Băsescu and Ponta, are only implicitly involved in the battles. The direct participants are their political allies. For example: 'Bătălia afișelor'; 'Udrea: Ponta nu e bun la ridicat, ci la prăbușit' [The battle of the posters; Udrea: Ponta is not good at lifting, but at crashing] (8 May, p. 7). A well-known figure in Romania, Elena Udrea is an influential politician, faithful to Traian Băsescu.

– The war becomes total when the parties' initials are personified, being turned into active participants in the hostilities. For example: 'Biroul Electoral Central «exorcizează» USL' [The Central

Electoral Bureau 'exorcises' the Social Liberal Union] (13 May, p. 9); 'PDL vrea alianţă cu liberalii, PNL refuză' [The Democrat Liberal Party wants an alliance with the Liberals, but the National Liberal Party refuses] (16 May, p. 6); 'Slogan PSD interzis; la sesizarea PDL' [PSD slogan prohibited, upon PDL referral] (17 May, p. 6).

There are 27 headlines and leads that preface political attacks.

The theatricality of the staged conflicts, through the three above-mentioned editorial strategies, was intensified by the thematic focus laid on superficial aspects of the 2014 EP elections in Romania, such as the exaggerated attention that politicians, both candidates and non-candidates, paid to outfits, photos, portraits on electoral posters and so on.

Last but not least, the sensationalist coverage of the campaign reached a climax because of the insinuations and connotations of the short column headings published in the European elections section of the paper. For instance, the heading 'Polemica zilei' [The polemics of the day] is used seven times; 'Gafa de campanie' [Campaign gaffe] six times; and 'Gafa electorală' [Electoral gaffe], 'Gafa zilei' [The gaffe of the day], 'Trădari electorale' [Electoral betrayals], 'Incident electorall' [Electoral incident] and 'Gogoaşa electorală' [Electoral fib], one time each.

Conclusions

We have shown that there is generous coverage of the 2014 EP elections in *Evenimentul zilei*. In the metadiscourse of this newspaper's columnists, some headlines and leads prove a reflexive coverage of the campaign, showing a critical view of the high share of scandal and society news in the paper's news economy. Likewise, the journalists in charge of the electoral news decry the lack of public interest in the political parties' programmes, while they exclusively blame Romanian political life for the low quality of the EP electoral campaign in the country.

There is no self-reflexion in the headlines and leads in the research corpus. These are actually written according to the rules of commercialism, which, in the hall of mirrors of society and media, leads to a cumulative negative effect on the readership.

As was anticipated in the theoretical introduction to this chapter, in the specialized literature, popular journalism is considered less unethical than

tabloidization, from the point of view of the media's impact on society, and more permissive with regard to the democratic access to information of large categories of readers.

It is difficult to foresee the consequences of professing popular journalism in the long run; however, to return to our case, the 'softer' manner in which the EP election campaign was covered in *Evenimentul zilei* should have appealed to the substantial readership of the most circulated quality newspaper in Romania, and should have informed them better than other Romanian media outlets of the crucial importance of the EP elections for the evolution of the EU as a whole.

Notes

1. Camelia Beciu, "Diaspora și experiența transnațională. Practici de mediatizare în presa românească," [Diaspora and the transnational experience. Practices in the Romanian press coverage] *Revista Română de Sociologie*, new series, year XXIII, no. 1–2 (2012): 16.
2. Mark Deuze, "Popular journalism and professional ideology: tabloid reporters and editors speak out," *Media Culture Society* 27 (2005): 880.
3. Colin Sparks and John Tulloch, eds., *Tabloid Tales: Global Debates Over Media Standards* (Boston: Rowman & Littlefield, 2000).
4. Deuze, "Popular journalism and professional ideology: tabloid reporters and editors speak out," *Media Culture Society*, 874–877.
5. Patrick Charaudeau, *Les médias et l'information. L'impossible transparence du discours* (Louvain-la-Neuve: De Boeck-Ina, 2005), 71–73. (*See* Ruxandra Boicu, "TV Journalists in Televised Electoral Debates," in *Media, Public Communication and Globalization,* ed. Boicu Ruxandra (Bucharest, The University of Bucharest Publishing House, 2013), 140.
6. Carsten Reinemann et al., "Hard and soft news: A review of concepts, operationalizations and key findings," *Journalism* 13 (2) (2012), 223.
7. Reinemann et al., "Hard and soft news: A review of concepts, operationalizations and key findings," *Journalism*, 221.
8. Ibid., 223.
9. Ibid., 224.

10. Martin Gleissner and Claes H. de Vreese, "Journalism. News about the EU Constitution Journalistic challenges and media portrayal of the European Union Constitution," *Journalism* 6:2 (2005), 227.

11. Claes H. de Vreese, "News framing: Theory and typology," *Information Design Journal + Document Design* 13, no. 1 (2005): 56.

12. Russell W. Neuman, Marion R. Just and Ann N. Crigler, *Common knowledge. News and the Common Knowledge: News and the Construction of Political Meaning* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1992), 64.

13. SNA FOCUS is a media research organization offering beneficiaries, among other information, audience figures for newspapers, http://www.evz.ro/tag/Studiului-National-de-Audienta83

14. Latest figures disseminated by the Romanian Audit publications. http://www.brat.ro/audit-tiraje/publicatie/evenimentul-zilei/audienta/

15. Beciu, "Diaspora și experiența transnațională. Practici de mediatizare în presa românească," [Diaspora and the transnational experience. Practices in the Romanian press coverage] *Revista Română de Sociologie*, 3.

16. Teun van Dijk, *Race reporting newspapers* (Library of Congress Catalogue, 1991a), 115.

17. Teun van Dijk, *Racism and the Press* (London and New York: Routledge, 1991b), 49.

18. William J. Tankard, J. "The empirical approach to the study of media framing," in *Framing public life*, ed. Reese, S. D. O. H. Gandy and A. E. Grant (Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum, 2001), 101.

19. de Vreese," News framing: Theory and typology," *Information Design Journal + Document Design*, 54.

20. Deuze, "Popular journalism and professional ideology: tabloid reporters and editors speak out," *Media Culture Society*, 866.

21. David L. Altheide and Christopher J. Schneider, "Qualitative Media Analysis," *Qualitative Research Methods* 38 (2013): 7.

22. Robert Philip Weber, *Basic content analysis.* no. 49 (London: Sage Publications Ltd., 1990).

23. Hsiu-Fang Hsieh and Sarah E. Shannon, "Three Approaches to Qualitative Content Analysis," *Qualitative Health Research* 15 (2005), 15.

24. The Romanian word literally means 'small ones'. It is a traditional Romanian dish of grilled ground meat rolls made from a mixture of beef, lamb and pork with spices (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mititei).

25. An ironic hint at how voters are bribed with food; grilled minced meat rolls are one of the most popular Romanian dishes. Here, the comical contrast is between gross food and the beauty and purity of the rose, the symbol of the Social Democrat Party.

26. Daciana Sârbu was an MEP at that time and a candidate for a new mandate; the irony is that she proved not to know the electoral materials of her own party PSD [the Social Democrat Party], whose leader was her husband (also the Prime Minister at that time).

27. The paradox exploited here is that both Macovei and Nicolai were outstanding female politicians, both were MEPs and there was no physical resemblance between them.

28. This title alludes ironically to the fact that the President of Romania was photographed wearing the electoral outfit of a newly born party, while he was supposed to be independent; moreover, the head of the PMP was Elena Udrea, a sex symbol in Romanian political life.

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A Second-Order Campaign

A Second-Order Campaign in Lithuania?

Ingrida Unikaitė Jakuntavičienė

INTRODUCTION

The European Parliament (EP) elections represent a rather interesting case for election analysis. As Strömbäck, Maier and Kaid pointed out, 'they are both national and European at the same time'.[1] Since the first direct EP elections in 1979, much has changed, but "*the relative unimportance of the European elections*" (average turnout of voters is decreasing) remains constant.[2] Research data show that parties and candidates as well as the media and voters tend to treat EP elections as second-order national elections.[3] These 'are perceived to be less important, because there is less at stake.'[4] This second-order nature has several specific features: weak campaigning and little attention to European issues in the campaigns of political parties; low visibility of EP election campaigns in the media, which concentrates more on domestic issues than on European ones; lower turnout of voters in EP elections than that achieved in national elections; national governing parties and larger parties in general doing worse than parties in opposition and smaller ones.

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Is this theory of second-order national elections applicable in Lithuania, with its experience of ten years of membership in the European Union (EU) and three EP elections? In 2014, Lithuania held its third round of EP elections (the first were held in 2004 and the second in 2009). The first two election campaigns appear to confirm the theory of second-order national elections (low turnout, inactive campaigning of parties, concentration of discussions on national instead of European issues). However, Lithuania may expect some changes in EP election campaigning and results. Therefore, the aim of this chapter is to answer the following research questions: Were the 2014 EP elections second-order national elections in Lithuania? What issues dominated the EP campaign? Did the Lithuanian political parties' and candidates' campaigns as well as media coverage focus more on national issues and actors rather than on European issues? In order to answer these questions, a review was carried out of the coverage of the EP elections campaign on major Lithuanian news media portals and of the political parties' EP election campaign communications. This chapter is organized as follows. First, a review of all the EP elections in Lithuania since the country became a member of the EU in 2004 is presented to provide some background information as a basis for observing the changes in the elections; second, the political situation in Lithuania and the national context of the 2014 elections is presented; third, the data on the last 2014 EP elections in Lithuania are discussed; and finally, some concluding remarks are presented.

Review of Earlier European Parliament Elections in Lithuania

In Lithuania, Members of the European Parliament (MEPs) are elected using a proportional electoral system, with preference voting for a term of five years in one multi-mandate constituency.[5]

The number of MEPs to be elected in Lithuania was determined in the Act concerning the Conditions of Accession to the European Union. Lithuania elected 13 MEPs in 2004. Owing to changes in EU treaties and the accession of new member states, the number of MEPs in the next elections decreased to 12 in 2009 and to 11 in May 2014.

The first EP elections in Lithuania were held in parallel with an extraordinary presidential election (this took place following the removal of Rolandas Paksas from the office of President on 6 April 2004 as a

consequence of unprecedented impeachment proceedings). These circumstances were important in enhancing the turnout at the EP elections: 48.38 % of voters turned out to vote. This 'was above the EU-25 average, and the highest among Central and East European countries but it was the lowest compared to recent national elections (63.37 per cent in the EU accession referendum in 2003; 53.92 per cent in the Presidential and local elections at the end of 2002; 58.63 per cent in the 2000 parliamentary elections)'.[6] The lower activity of voters can be explained as a popular reaction to the 'political tiredness' that arose from the presidential impeachment scandal.

The first EP elections attracted 12 parties to run the race. These included major parties— the Lithuanian Social Democratic Party (LSDP, Lietuvos socialdemokratų partija), the Homeland Union—Lithuanian Christian Democrats (HULCD, Tėvynės Sąjunga-Lietuvos krikščionys demokratai), the Liberal Democratic Party (LDP, Liberalų demokratų partija), the Liberal and Centre Union (LCU, Liberalų ir centro sąjunga), the newly established Labour Party (LP, Darbo partija) and a number of smaller parties. The Lithuanian political elite regarded the first EP elections as a test before the national parliamentary elections to be held the same year in October. In the campaigning and political communication of the parties it was very difficult to notice any fresh ideas, or the construction of serious party manifestos concentrating on European issues. The European ideas were bureaucratic and opportunistic, without any clear political vision. The public debates of the parties concentrated on the idea of 'how the representatives will fight for Lithuania and its interests in Brussels'. The names of the candidates showed that some political players regarded the EP as a place for recreation. The public's point of view was almost the same, based on the idea that the EP was a place where you can get a high salary without doing anything special.[7]

As a result, six of the party lists were successful in obtaining seats. There were no Eurossceptic parties among them. The national popularity of parties seemed to be a crucial factor in determining voters' choices, allowing the newly created populist LP to become the winner (5 mandates, 30 % of the vote). Compared to the 2000 parliamentary elections, the centre-left ruling coalition parties lost supporters (LSDP—two mandates, 14.43 % of the vote; Union of Farmers' Party and New Democracy Party—one mandate, 7.41 % of the vote; LDP—the party of former president R. Paksas—one mandate, 6.83 % of the vote). The New Union (Social Liberals) obtained just 4.85 % of the vote and no mandate, while the LP

was created just in 2003 and had no record of elections. The 'traditional' centre-right increased its support (HULCD—two mandates, 12.58 % of the vote; LCU—two mandates, 11.23 % of the vote). The LP victory was commented upon as a 'Lithuanian tragicomedy': the party perhaps least prepared for work in the EP became the winner; its victory and the first EP elections were interpreted as a 'referendum on confidence in the incumbent government and the so-called traditional parties'.[8]

The second, 2009, EP elections differed from those of 2004. First, the EP election campaign was running at the beginning of the cycle of first-order national elections (the parliamentary elections in Lithuania had been held in October 2008). The government had changed just half a year previously (the centre-right parties were in a governing coalition) and people had no incentive to express their protest against the parties yet. Governing parties and larger parties were not very active in campaigning, expecting that their electorate would support them without discussions on Europe. Second, the presidential election in Lithuania had had a high turnout (51.71 %), and President D. Grybauskaitė had been elected in the first round in May 2009 without the necessity for a second round the same day as the EP elections. It was clear that without parallel elections the turnout in the EP elections would be lower than in previous elections. Third, in the 2009 EP elections as many as 15 party lists took part (three more than in previous elections). Fourth, the elections were running in a time of economic crisis. Thus they tested whether people supported the measures that had been taken by national governments in the crisis period.

As in previous elections, the 2009 EP election campaign was practically invisible. The EP elections were on the margins of politics. Media coverage was poor. The means of agitation used by the parties were not attractive or informative. Again, politicians talked more about national, domestic issues than about European ones. There was little discussion about the future of the EU. The majority of participants had no clear vision on this question.

These 2009 EP elections in Lithuania resulted in a very low turnout: 20.9 %. It seemed that people were tired of elections. Consequently, six parties divided the 12 mandates among themselves. The winner of the elections was the governing party, HULCD (four the s and 26.86 % of votes). The LSDP received three mandates and 18.61 % of votes. Both parties successfully mobilized their electorates and improved their positions in comparison with previous EP elections. In third place, the Order and Justice party (OJP, Tvarka ir teisingumas, former LDP) gained two mandates and 12.22 % of the vote. The LP (former election winner) lost

four mandates and remained with just one mandate and 8.79 % of the vote. The Liberal Movement of the Republic of Lithuania (LMRL, Lietuvos Respublikos Liberalų Sąjūdis) and Polish Election Action (Lenkų rinkimų akcija) obtained one mandate each. Smaller parties and Euro-sceptic parties were not supported by the electorate and lost the EP elections.

This review of turnout, campaigning and vote share in the first two EP elections in Lithuania indicates that they have the basic features of second-order national elections, though radicals, Eurosceptics and small parties had no chance of being successful. Did the situation change in the third, 2014, EP elections? We will try to find the answer.

The National Context of the 2014 European Parliament Elections in Lithuania

Lithuanian citizens came to the 2014 EP elections with a positive image of the EU. Euro-optimism had dominated the entire decade since the first 2004 EP elections. 'The parliamentary mainstream Lithuanian political parties (whether on the left or the right of the ideological spectrum) actively promoted EU integration. Political parties openly declaring their euro-sceptic positions remained on the margins of politics, finding little support among Lithuanian voters.'[9] Lithuanian citizens tended to hold positive attitudes towards the EU as well. In the period from 2004 to 2015 more than half of residents (from 47 % to 68 %) answered that they tended to trust EU institutions. Trust in EU institutions is even stronger in Lithuania than the average among all 28 EU countries (it varied from 42 % in 2010 to 40 % in 2015). Moreover, the numbers from the last two years indicate that Lithuanians' trust in the EU is growing while distrust is decreasing.[10] Notwithstanding, the 2014 EP elections in Lithuania were very popular for the first time among Euro-sceptic movements and small parties, which nominated their candidates for the campaign expecting that they would be supported by the same voters who had supported the referendum on the prohibition of land sale to foreigners and had negative views to the EU, and relying on the experience of Western European countries where radical and anti-European parties had succeeded in obtaining seats in the EP.

The 2014 EP elections in Lithuania were held in the middle of the national (parliamentary) election cycle. This time the governing coalition parties (LSDP, OJP and LP) had a chance to test their popularity

among the voters. The public opinion polls indicated a high support for the leading coalition party LSDP, whose leader was Prime Minister Algirdas Butkevičius. As announced on the news media portal kaunodiena.lt, 27.5 % of respondents were going to support LSDP in the next elections in April 2014. In May 2014 support decreased to 24.6 %, but allowed the party to stay ahead.[11] With such support, the party expected to obtain three or four seats in the EP. The LSDP had a parallel campaign in the two elections. The leader of their list in the EP elections, Zigmas Balčytis (MEP), participated as a candidate in the presidential election. Thus he had double visibility. However, this strategy was not successful for the LSDP, and, as we shall see later, pre-electoral expectations about the results were not confirmed.

In the spring, the OJP with leader R. Paksas had 13 % support in the polls, securing second place in terms of popular support. This party tried to maintain a Eurosceptic position by supporting the initiative of a referendum on the introduction of the euro. The LP had similar support, of around 8.7 %, in May before the EP elections.[12] This party had been affected for a long time by a political corruption scandal, and its leader, V. Uspaskich, was involved in court hearings. He expected to get immunity by being a member of EP and to avoid a sentence.

Opposition right-wing parties such as HULCD and LMRL were prepared for an active election campaign and expected that voters would punish the governing coalition. They were active supporters of Lithuanian President D. Grybauskaitė, who was the leading candidate in the presidential election. Thus the right-wing parties were working actively to mobilize voters, expecting that the second round of the presidential election would help them to secure more seats.

The third EP elections in Lithuania in 2014, like the first ones in 2004, were held alongside a presidential election. The EP elections were held simultaneously with the second round of the presidential election. This situation gave rise to two issues regarding turnout and equality of advertising. For some parties and candidates, having two parallel elections was a convenient circumstance, but for the others it was inconvenient. Political parties with a loyal electorate preferred lower turnout, while parties trying to rely on undecided voters, having a less loyal electorate, needed a higher turnout. Having two elections on the same day meant that higher turnout was likely. The second issue concerned inequality of advertising and visibility: parties with presidential candidates had double visibility in the media, while parties participating only in the EP elections had just one campaign.

There were ten campaign participants registered. This number of party lists was the smallest out of the three EP elections in Lithuania (compared with 12 lists in 2004 and 15 lists in 2009), indicating low interest on the part of the parties.

Parties' Campaign Communication in 2014 European Parliament Elections

An examination of the ten participants' platforms (EP election manifestos of ten parties), and reading of their campaign materials (advertisements in media, ten web pages of parties and their social networks—Facebook), reveals that all the participating political parties and unions came to the 2014 EP elections with campaign slogans which may be grouped into the two categories: the first emphasizing some aspect related to Europe, and the second more nationally oriented or abstract (suitable for use in any election campaign). The larger parties, except for the LSDP, and some smaller ones used the European dimension: 'Functioning Europe, winning Lithuania' (LMRL—liberals), 'Secure Lithuania in a strong Europe' (HULCD), 'For Europe, where it is good to live for everyone' (LP), 'European money in every home' (LCU), 'Equal rights for all, and Europe based on Christian values' (Coalition of Polish Election Action and Russian Alliance). These slogans show the concentration of participants in the EP elections and their wish for Lithuania's active participation in the EU. The LSDP and some smaller parties stressed with their slogans some core values without the European context: 'Most important is the human being!' (LSDP), 'For Earth, humans, Lithuania!' (Lithuanian Peasant and Green Union/Lietuvos valstiečių ir žaliųjų sąjunga), 'For a clean environment and a clean policy' (Lithuanian green party/Lietuvos žaliųjų partija), 'Lithuania get up!' (OJP). All these slogans indicated that their creators were trying to avoid European contexts and associations with Europe. One participant had a nationalistic and euro-sceptic slogan: 'Lithuania for Lithuanians, Europe for the European Nations' (Nationalists Union). They tried to collect Eurosceptic votes, but, as we shall see in the section on results, they did not succeed.

The first two weeks of campaigning in the 2014 EP elections in Lithuania were very calm and campaign activity was practically invisible. It seemed that the major aim for the candidates was to be visible in the media instead of talking directly about the EP elections and topics related

to them. Accordingly, for ordinary people it might have seemed that effectively there were no EP elections in Lithuania until 9 May when all the participants started their advertising campaigns. Because of a lack of funds, all decided to have short and active EP election campaigns. In contrast to the first weeks, the third and fourth campaign weeks saw a high level of activity. Public spaces were full of provocative materials and posters; Internet and news media portals presented advertisements; the final week debates on the EP elections started in the media (in total four debates were organized on TV: two on the public channel Lithuanian Radio and Television, and two on the commercial channels BTV and Info TV).

Though campaign materials appeared everywhere, parties and politicians themselves did not try to engage the public actively. First, the majority of the parties had no information presented in an attractive way about the EP elections on their websites. Only some slogans, portraits and biographies were offered to help people to decide whom to vote for. It seemed like a competition based on personalities rather than ideas. On the websites of the major political parties, EP election information was not presented centrally. Voters seeking such information had to spend a lot of time searching for it.

Second, instead of talking directly about the EP elections, the parties tried to focus on other topics that would help them enter the EP: many focused on the presidential elections and discussions on national issues (the size of the minimum wage; pension increases; unemployment and emigration; education and health policy; energy security; criticism of the political and legal framework). Some candidates exploited the movement for a referendum restricting land sales to foreigners, and the debate on the number of signatures necessary to initiate such a referendum. The majority of candidates avoided talking about European issues: the EP election paradox was that candidates and voters were more interested in what was happening in Lithuania. In all countries, candidates for the EP are more likely to talk about non-European, national issues; so Lithuania was following a well-trodden European path.

Exceptionally among the political parties in 2014, the LMRL had a very active and attractive campaign that concentrated on the European context and stressed the importance of Europe for Lithuania. Their campaign was sincere, with some irony and fun (in the posters leaders invited voters to take their friends to vote, promising to reward the votes by doing good works, and so on), and it attracted voters. A major role in campaigning was played by a famous Lithuanian businessman with a good reputa-

tion, sports sponsor and poker star Antanas Guoga, who was well known among the elite as well as among the 'ordinary' people. He was enrolled on the candidate list in second place with the intention of attracting young people and new voters. This proved the right decision and the LMRL campaign succeeded. The liberals brought together about two thousand volunteers to help in the campaign. Guoga himself travelled in all the regions and even to small towns in Lithuania, meeting various groups of people.[13] Personal contacts were effective: he secured first position on the voting day and the liberals received two seats). As the leader of LMRL, E. Masiulis commented, 'He was able to engage people and infect them with liberal ideas.'[14]

The HULCD made a good decision as well. They invited a young politician, Gabrielius Landsbergis, a grandson of the former leader of the party and first Chairman of the Lithuanian parliament, to take third place in the list of candidates. He succeeded in attracting young new voters and was supported by the old electorate as well, achieving first place.

Indirectly, all the major parties were seeking voters' attention, and in particular they tried to use the presidential election. Some candidates participating in the presidential election campaign were actually seeking in this way to get more votes in the EP elections. This was very obvious in the campaigning of a few candidates. For instance, V. Tomaševskis (Lithuanian Polish Election Action) and Z. Balčytis (LSDP) were primarily seeking to be elected to the EP instead of being elected President. On the one hand, they were trying indirectly to grab voters' attention, but at the same time it was clear that they did not plan to debate on European issues, on the Eastern neighbourhood policy, on progress in implementing the Europe 2020 Strategy or on the crisis in the Eurozone or other similar issues. They spoke of what was important in the election for the position of President, in this way hoping to be elected to the EP. Everyone was expecting the re-election of D. Grybauskaitė and tried just to use the additional time for advertising. This strategy worked well for V. Tomaševskis, who mobilized Lithuanian Polish- and Russian-speaking people, securing one seat in the EP. But, on the contrary, this strategy was ill chosen for Z. Balčytis and the LSDP. Hearing the slogan that 'Most important is the human being',[15] and seeing that one person was planning 'to sit on two seats', their electorate lost trust in the party. The whole campaign of the LSDP was sluggish and poorly visible, being a continuation of the last parliamentary election campaign.

Review of European Parliament Election Campaigning on News Media Portals

In Lithuania as in other countries the media constitutes one of the most important sources of information and channels of communication in all kinds of elections. However, the media does not only reflect the agendas of political parties and candidates. Increasingly, it actively participates in shaping election campaigns and in setting the election agenda, thus influencing both political parties and candidates and also voters. As the greatest part of the readership in Lithuania use electronic media (58 % of citizens use the Internet to read the news daily) rather than print (print media is daily used by only 34 % of citizens),[16] a review of news media portals was carried out in order to analyse the media coverage of the 2014 EP elections in Lithuania.

Analysis of politicians' views or opinions presented in a special column in the news media portals shows that candidates were likely to write articles during the campaign period, but that they combined national issues with European issues. The campaign opinions were connected with the tenth anniversary of EU membership. The topics in these articles concerned the choice of being part of Europe, security issues and the federalization of Europe. The core values stressed in the articles were democracy, freedom and safety, and peace. It was noticeable that discussions of European issues were more popular among MEPs. National MPs and other politicians concentrated on the national context. Altogether the parties used more European context in their discussions than in the previous two EP election campaigns.

All the major Lithuanian news media portals (delfi.lt, lrytas.lt, 15min.lt) provided special information on the EP elections during the campaign. One of the leading portals, delfi.lt, had the special rubric Balsuok 2014 (Vote 2014), under which it posted information and articles on the two elections, EP and presidential. The greater part of the information provided was devoted to the coming 2014 presidential election—two-thirds of it. However, articles on EP elections were not rare either. From the period 1 March to 1 May more than 30 articles (on average one every two days) were published in this portal. In May until the day of the elections approximately the same number of articles, 33, were found.

In Lithuania not only did parties and politicians not try to engage voters during the campaign, but media coverage of the EP elections was poor as well. Analysis of the content of the articles shows that in the media

negative, cynical views of the elections predominated. This is illustrated by the following article titles: 'Lithuanian EP members are among the worst', 'Lithuanian votes are swimming to another country', 'The portrait of the EP candidate: a 48-year-old millionaire with a university degree', 'Competition for 21,000 LTL [7000 euro] salaries: who is going to succeed?', 'Double election agents' games', 'Why is a quarter of the Seimas [Lithuanian parliament] competing to go to Brussels?'. These titles promoted negative views of the candidates, creating a picture in which the politicians were going to the EP to have a rest or to earn large sums of money instead of working for a better life for citizens.

Only five articles took a positive view or discussed the main issues of the elections. Their titles were as follows: 'The thoughts of Lithuanians on why they vote in EP elections—competition for the best arguments', 'Information about casting lots by the parties to choose the numbers', 'Good news for the social democrats', 'Whom to vote for—user manual'.

The news media portal 15min.lt had a special rubric entitled 'Europos parlamento rinkimai 2004' (EP elections 2014), but the amount of information on the EP elections was similar to the previous portal. The dominant topics were practically the same, concentrating on campaign events, discussions of the privileges of EP members, the reasons why national parliament members were likely to give up their mandates to become MEPs, or which party was going to get more votes.

It seemed that the EP elections were not a priority topic for the Lithuanian media, which tended to present the elections in an American style—not caring about the issues and substance so much as about the horse race, the competition and revealing only negative, entertaining and cynical news which was more likely to demobilize than to mobilize the electorate, and in the long term even to alienate them from elections and politics.

The Results

The EP election voting day showed that voting turnout (47.35 %) was higher than might have been expected given the campaigning of the political parties (passivity at the beginning and activity just in the last two weeks). Certainly this result was influenced by the second round of the presidential elections. Voting for the President mobilized voters for the EP elections as well. Some of the voters reported that they came to vote for the President and had no intention of voting in the EP elections (as the

post-election survey of Eurobarometer EE2014 indicates: "*12 % of respondents decided whom to vote for in the EP elections only on the election day*").[17] They chose candidates randomly, having no clear choice (this was reported on the news when voters were asked about their choice). Consequently, though the turnout was rather high, the perceived importance of the EP elections was still low.

The final election results were of great interest because they were not predicted by the public opinion polls. Instead of their expected four seats, the LSDP obtained only two. In total, seven parties obtained representation in the EP (one party more than in the previous two elections). The seats were more equally shared among the parties than in previous elections and no party managed to obtain more than two seats: four parties had two representatives each and three had just one (making a total of 11 MEPs). In terms of seats, the large parties won the 2014 EP elections in Lithuania: two of them were governing parties (LSDP and OJP) and two opposition parties (HULCD and LMRL). Examining the vote share of Lithuanian parties in the EP elections, we may observe the success of opposition parties; both liberals and conservatives (see Table 8.1.). The impressive performance of the liberals (LMRL), gaining two seats and receiving more than 16 % of the vote (188,000 votes), was surprising. LMRL were called the real winners because they increased the number of their seats from one to two, while HULCD and LSDP lost seats (the first going from four to two, and the second from three to two). This partly confirms the thesis of second-order national elections, in which one of the characteristics mentioned is the loss of votes for governing parties.

The second important aspect of the EP elections' second-order character—the success of populist small parties—was not confirmed. We may observe that pro-European parties won the 2014 EP elections, indicating that Lithuanians still have positive views of EU membership. The Eurosceptic and small parties had no support among voters.

Parties did not present voters with clear messages, either within the European context or the domestic context, which would be helpful in choosing a party. That is why it seems that voters were electing the candidates' personalities instead of the parties. It was the good image of candidates that helped them to appeal to voters, attracting votes both for the party and for themselves. In this case it was not the parties that worked for the candidates but personalities that worked for the parties. Those parties which added attractive personalities to their lists (liberals, conservatives) won more votes.

Table 8.1 European Parliament and parliamentary election results in Lithuania (2004–2014)

Parties	European elections			National elections (party list results)		
	2004 (48.38 % turnout)	2009 (20.98 % turnout)	2014 (47.35 % turnout)	2004 (46.08 % turnout)	2008 (48.59 % turnout)	2012 (52.93 % turnout)
LP	**30.16 %**	**8.79 %**	**12.81 %**	28.44 %	8.99 %	19.82 %
LSDP	**14.43 %**	**18.61 %**	**17.26 %**	20.65 %	11.72 %	18.37 %
HULSD	**12.58 %**	**26.86 %**	**17.43 %**	14.75 %	19.72 %	15.08 %
LCU	**11.23 %**	3.47 %	1.48 %	9.19 %	5.34 %	2.06 %
Lithuanian Farmers and Green Union	**7.41 %**	1.87 %	**6.61 %**	6.60 %	3.73 %	3.88 %
LDP (OJP)	**6.83 %**	**12.22 %**	**14.25 %**	11.36 %	12.68 %	7.31 %
Lithuanian Polish Election Action	5.71 %	**8.42 %**	**8.05 %**	3.79 %	4.79 %	5.83 %
LMRL	-	**7.36 %**	**16.55 %**	-	5.73 %	8.57 %

Source: prepared according to the data provided by The Central Electoral Commission of Lithuania: http://www.vrk.lt/pagal-rusi, accessed on 25 August 2015

Concluding Remarks

The Lithuanian experience of EP elections indicates that Lithuania only partially follows the model of second-order national elections. Some elements of the model were confirmed and others lack evidence.

First, though the participation rate in the 2014 EP elections in Lithuania was just slightly lower than in the national parliamentary elections, this high turnout did not result from voters' considering the EP elections to be important or having a clear idea of the EU so much as from their thinking about the national context and wishing to vote in the presidential election, which was organized at the same time.

Second, in contrast to the model, small parties lost the election to the large parties. We notice that the main feature of the EP elections in Lithuania is the dominance of parties with traditional ideologies. Extreme or populist parties lacked support. The fact that so few votes went to Eurosceptic parties is a sign that a majority of voters still positively assesses

the country's membership in the EU. In this respect Lithuania differs from some other EU members.

Third, the EP elections might be considered not to reflect people's attitudes to the parties in European policy, so much as national policy assessment. The 2014 EP elections were no exception. Though opposition parties obtained a substantial share of the vote when compared to the last national elections, the coalition parties still had a majority. Lithuanian voters were not trying to punish the government.

Fourth, weak campaigning and low attention to European issues in the political parties' campaigns confirm that Lithuanian parties treat the EP elections as a test before the coming new national elections and do not invest a lot of energy and funds in the EP elections themselves.

Fifth, during the 2014 EP elections campaign we observed its low visibility in the media. Although the media had a special section for the EP elections and the quality of communication regarding EU issues had improved slightly, it concentrated more on domestic issues than on European ones. Core ideas about EU integration and policies were not often discussed.

Finally, having positive attitudes to membership of the EU, Lithuania may expect some changes in EP election campaigning. The potential to improve communication regarding EU issues is growing. Although campaigns still concentrate more on the national context, discussions on the European context are growing in comparison with the first two EP elections.

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Content Emptiness, Low Media Coverage, Exhausted Parties and Indifferent Voters: An Invisible 2014 European Parliamentary Election Campaign in the Czech Republic

Jakub Charvát

European Election Campaigns as a Research Topic

It was in 1983 that one of the earliest comparative European studies on election campaigning was published. The study was initiated by Jay Blumler, and the authors included in the edited volume analysed the 1979 European Parliament (EP) election campaign. Fifteen contributors focused on campaigning, and especially on the role of television broadcasting, in all the nine European Community member states in the 1979 EP elections. One of the leading ideas was that European elections, as a simultaneous and common event, offered a unique opportunity for a cross-national comparative analysis of campaigning in Western European democracies. Since then, analyses of European elections campaigning have been an important and integral part of both political communication and European election studies.

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One of the main findings of the seminal work of Blumler et al. was the existence of significant cross-national differences in how political actors in the individual member states dealt with the 1979 European elections.[1, 2] The individual campaigns were framed according to the models of traditional national campaigns and concentrated more on national than 'European' aspects and issues.[3]

The Second-Order Nature of European Election Campaigns

These findings are in accordance with the idea of Karlheinz Reif and Hermann Schmitt,[4] that EP elections are 'second-order national elections' (SOE) in member states because less is at stake in such elections compared to first-order elections (parliamentary elections in parliamentary systems and presidential elections in presidential systems). Instead of the critical voters' choice as to who should govern in the country, SOE generally— be they European, regional or local elections – have no direct impact on national governments, nor are they decisive for important domestic political issues; instead, they 'only' concern election to offices of lesser importance and with a smaller range of competences (Members of the European Parliament—MEPs, or regional, municipal and/or local authorities). The EP elections are 'second-order' because they are secondary to the main national contest, and 'national' due to the fact that they are more national than 'European' elections.[5]

Since then, the concept of SOE has remained the prevalent framework for analysing EP elections. Moreover, the second-order nature of European elections has certain implications for political communication and campaigning, and influences the behaviour of all actors in the political communication process: voters, parties and candidates, as well as the media.[6] As Reif stresses, both the campaigns and the results in second-order contests are considerably influenced by the constellation of the dominant (first-order) political arena within the system,[7] and this is largely determined by domestic politics.[8] And, at the same time, domestic politics is at the forefront, as the focal point of campaigning in European elections.

This is mainly because of the following factors. The electorate fails to be interested in 'European' issues and voters' interest and knowledge of candidates is very limited. Furthermore, when casting their votes, voters are influenced by the circumstances in the main (domestic) political arena within the system. Moreover, the parties fail to campaign on

'European' issues and their candidates are often 'second-rate' and quite unknown to the electorate. Instead of being 'European', most campaigns in EP elections continue to be dominated by domestic political issues. But, as Michael Marsh claims, parties themselves work to make the European elections a second-order contest in order to gain a national advantage.[9] As a consequence, parties do not want to spend both their finances and their energies on a race where less is at stake, and therefore allocate considerably fewer resources to the European campaigns. The media, in their turn, also treat the EP election as a matter of lesser importance.[10]

Hardly Visible Campaigning in the European Election in the Czech Republic

The above characteristics more or less applied to the EP elections campaign in the Czech Republic in 2014. When evaluating the campaign, experts labelled it as follows: content empty, boring, invisible, hardly visible, quiet, featureless, with low media coverage, or lacklustre. According to Petr Kaniok,[11] it was 'probably the least visible and interesting campaign in modern nation-wide elections held in the Czech Republic'. Vlastimil Havlík adds that the campaign was full of general valence 'European' affirmations and empty slogans by almost all contesting parties.[12] It was therefore 'hardly visible and lacking any contentious issues'.[13] In relation to its financial performance, campaigning was evaluated as low-cost, on a tight budget, very modest and so on.

This was caused by a number of factors; for example, a passive approach of citizens and a general lack of interest in the European Union (EU) in the Czech Republic; a low level of information about the EU and general lack of knowledge of the EU; rising frequency of elections in the Czech Republic and especially the timing of the early election to the Chamber of Deputies of the parliament of the Czech Republic [Poslanecká sněmovna Parlamentu České republiky], which took place only several months before, in October 2013, and so on. Under those circumstances, it was not easy for parties to campaign in the European elections. As Kaniok asserts,[14] only those really interested in politics and the politicians themselves really cared.

A similar conclusion was reached by a survey carried out by the Public Opinion Research Centre [CVVM; Centrum pro výzkum veřejného mínění] at the Institute of Sociology of the Czech Academy of Sciences approximately 14 days after the European elections (2–9 June 2014): 55 %

of respondents did not care about the European elections while only 10 % of respondents were strongly interested, and another 35 % declared at least a little interest. Moreover, 52 % did not notice the campaign that preceded the European elections. Only 11 % of respondents rated the campaign positively while one-third of respondents (33 %) rated it strongly negatively; another third (32 %) had a neutral impression and the remaining 24 $ of respondents did not know.[15]

Indifferent Voters

Not only did the European elections seem to be quite unpopular and undervalued in the Czech Republic (see, for example, its low turnout in 2004 and 2009, and in 2014 as well), Czech citizens are also assumed to be one of the most 'Eurosceptic' nations in the EU. This assumption was, inter alia, confirmed by the Eurobarometer survey on public opinion in the EU held six months before the European elections, in November 2013. According to the survey (and not only this one), the EU does not matter much in the Czech Republic. Most Czech citizens feel that their voice does not count in the EU, and generally their knowledge of the EU is very limited. Czech citizens do not understand the postwar process of European integration and its historical connotations, or the functioning and importance of the EU and its institutions. Furthermore, from their point of view the EP is pretty far off and has very little impact on their daily lives.[16]

Czech voters therefore did not care much about the European elections or the candidates. As Jindřich Šídlo, a respected Czech journalist, aptly noted, a lot of Czech citizens usually notice an election to the EP only after it is over.

But the fact that the EU does not matter much in the Czech Republic holds true not only for voters, but also for parties, politicians and the media. Besides, politicians and the media, in addition to deficiencies in the Czech educational system in this field, have contributed significantly to this situation. In the long-term perspective, there is no real debate about 'European' issues in the Czech Republic (and voters therefore receive limited information on such issues both from the media and from the political parties). Moreover, instead of helping to break the 'virtuous circle',[17] the media marginalize 'European' issues—inter alia, because they are very complicated issues both for journalists and for their audience. The EP elections therefore enjoy low media coverage in the Czech Republic (and

indeed not only there).[18] And if politicians and the media do inform the public about 'European' issues, the debate is—most of the time—framed in a negative or critical light. Generally, Czech politicians have only very limited ability, and often even willingness, to explain the European integration project and its benefits for both the Czech Republic and its citizens.

Furthermore, campaigning in the 2014 EP elections was strongly affected by the national electoral cycle in the Czech Republic because important domestic elections had taken place only a few months before, very close to the beginning of the campaigning. For Czech voters, fed up and dissatisfied with domestic politics, the May 2014 EP elections were already the third elections on the national level in 15 months. In January 2013, Czech citizens were asked to vote for the Czech president; moreover, this was the first direct presidential election in the Czech Republic. In October 2013, an early election to the Chamber of Deputies of the parliament of the Czech Republic took place. And to make matters 'worse', elections for one-third of the Senate, the upper chamber of the parliament of the Czech Republic [Parlament České republiky] and for local authorities were scheduled to take place later in October 2014.

Exhausted Parties

As mentioned above, parties' campaign expenditures were very modest and considerably lower than in the recent elections to the Chamber of Deputies, held in October 2013.[19] Alongside the fact that parties did not want to spend their funds on the European contest owing to its second-order nature, the campaign expenditures were also significantly affected by the national electoral cycle in the Czech Republic. Czech parties had very limited budgets for campaigning in the European elections. This was mainly because they had spent most of their funds on the October 2013 election. Moreover, the October 2013 electoral results failed to meet the expectations of most of the established parties and, consequently, most of them had gone broke. Last but not least, the parties had to save both their funds and their strength for the upcoming autumn Senate and local elections.

Because of their tight budgets for campaigning, the contesting parties focused more on contact campaigns. This strategy was complemented by a variety of small gifts that were handed out to people attending their local meetings; for example, Česká strana sociálně demokratická [ČSSD; Czech Social Democratic Party] handed out roses to women,

whereas ANO2011 handed out donuts.[20] Občanská demokratická strana [ODS; Civic Democratic Party] organized a petition against the Euro, and leaders of Strana svobodných občanů [SSO; Party of Free Citizens] toured the country handing out special party newspapers and regular light bulbs.

The content of campaigns was significantly influenced by the timing of the EP elections within the national electoral cycle, especially the imminence of national elections. As Kaniok points out,[21] because both important domestic political events—the timing of the early election and the establishment of the new government (consisting of ČSSD, ANO2011 and the Christian Democrats) occurred very close to the start of the campaign, the opposition could not profit from typical SOE features;[22] for example, protest voting against the incumbent government. The government was not formed before the end of January 2014 and, therefore, it came into power just a few months before the European elections. At least for the moment, the coalition government was thus not significantly unpopular among Czech voters. There was, therefore, a lack of additional mobilization stimulus to cast protest votes, as had been the case in both the previous European elections in the Czech Republic.

Last but not least, the October 2013 early election to the Chamber of Deputies changed the Czech political landscape significantly. Many Czech voters left the established parties and, consequently, the 2010 and 2013 elections saw the erosion of their voter support, which was accompanied by a significant increase in voter support for new parties.[23] Under these circumstances, it was highly unlikely that the right-wing opposition parties—or, for obvious reasons, the KSČM—could gain votes at the expense of the coalition government parties.

European Issues but Not Within European Parliament Competences

According to Havlík,[24] the 2014 EP elections were the first since the Czech Republic's accession to the EU in which the vast majority of the contesting parties focused on 'European' issues. On the other hand, the presence of 'European' issues did not mean that parties presented their complex view of the European integration process. Eurosceptic parties especially—the KSČM, the ODS and the newly created SSO are relevant—were heav-

ily criticized in the media and by experts for stressing issues outside the direct competence of the EP.

Since the Czech Republic's accession into the EU in 2004, the ČSSD has been dealing with the fact that although it is pro-European its supporters are (increasingly) sceptical about the EU. That is why the party has tried to avoid 'European' issues when campaigning because these cannot attract its potential voters. Moreover, 'European' issues seem to be too complicated for social democratic supporters who respond mainly to simple social issues such as welfare, jobs and so on. The Social Democrats therefore especially emphasize social issues in their campaigns, including the campaign preceding the European elections—regardless of the fact that the EP does not have many direct competences in social policy. A lot of these issues are, in fact, subject to domestic policies and therefore cannot be resolved through the EP. The ČSSD manifesto for the 2014 EP election was called 'Together in Europe' ['Společně v Evropě'] and one of the main slogans of the campaign was 'We want to play in the first league in Europe' ['Chceme hrát v Evropě první ligu'].

Despite the fact that ANO2011 was one of the few Czech parties to have published a detailed programme for the elections, its campaign was, similar to that of the ČSSD, full of general statements and 'populist' slogans. This was obvious not only from the party manifesto but also from slogans such as 'Money where it is needed' ['Peníze tam, kde jsou třeba'], 'So that our children have a future' ['Aby i naše děti měly budoucnost'], 'We will protect Czech quality' ['Ochráníme českou kvalitu'], 'Our farmers deserve more' ['Naši zemědělci si zaslouží více'] and so on. In this respect, ANO2011's EP election campaign followed in the steps of its campaign preceding the October 2013 early elections for the Chamber of Deputies. The same applies to its strategy of putting faces on billboards: one of the selected party candidates for the EP appeared on each billboard next to the party chairman Andrej Babiš, who was not himself standing in the EP elections. In other words, instead of having strong issues that were absent, the party offered the faces of major candidates and of the popular party chairman (see below).

To protect Czech interests was also a major motto of Křesťanská a demokratická unie–Československá strana lidová [KDU–ČSL; Christian and Democratic Union–Czechoslovak People's Party] in its European campaign. The campaign of the Christian Democrats was, however, barely visible. On the other hand, the party has quite a disciplined electorate; and what is more, the party supporters have a mostly positive relationship

with the EU. Therefore, the party did not need intensive campaigning to succeed in the 2014 EP elections.

Right-wing, conservative TOP09 tried to present itself as a clearly pro-European party.[25] This was obvious not only from the main slogan of the party's campaign preceding the EP election, 'Care about Europe' ['Nekašlete na Evropu'], but also from the content of the party manifesto, which was called 'Europe is us, not them' ['Evropa jsme my, ne oni']. The party manifesto emphasized that it was not just about Czech interests but about the future of the Czech Republic, because it was about the European future and we (Czechs) are part of Europe. The TOP09 campaign was also, similarly to the ANO2011 campaign, significantly personalized and associated with the popular party chairman Karel Schwarzenberg, even though he was not standing in the EP elections. This can be illustrated, for example, by the motto 'I am European' ['Jsem Evropan'] placed under the picture of the party chairman and clearly expressing the positive attitude of the party towards the EU.

The Communist Party has been traditionally put in the Eurosceptic camp, inter alia because the party advised its supporters to vote 'No' in a referendum on the country's accession to the EU, which was held in 2003. But since then, the party's hard Eurosceptic position and critical stance have considerably softened,[26] even though the Communists remain critical of the EU and voice requests for more democratic, socially oriented and environmentally oriented European integration but without unnecessary bureaucracy. This was also seen in the 2014 European campaign of the KSČM. For example, in November 2013 the leader of the party's list of candidates, Kateřina Konečná, said in one interview (it being repeated several times) that 'the EU project is, *de facto*, a socialist project', and that therefore the KSČM wanted to return the EU to its founding principles of building peace as well as social cohesion. The party election manifesto followed this idea and was therefore called 'We want a Europe for the people' ['Chceme Evropu pro lidi']. This was also the main slogan of the party's European campaign. On the other hand, the 2014 European campaign was partly undermined by accusations of financial impropriety and false expenses claims against Miroslav Ransdorf, former leader of the party's electoral list and senior MEP, who was shunted from first to fourth place on the party's 2014 EP list.[27] Overall, the KSČM campaign preceding the 2014 European elections was, in fact, low intensity and lacklustre. The party did not invest either much effort or much money in campaigning, and relied instead on its traditionally disciplined electorate.

Soft Euroscepticism has been mainly associated with the right-wing ODS. Although its platform is generally pro-European, with the party arguing that Czech membership in the EU is necessary for the country, it opposes further economic and cultural integration by emphasizing the threat of a prospective loss of national sovereignty.[28] However, the ODS was cut down to the status of a minor party in the October 2013 elections to the Chamber of Deputies, and therefore it was relegated to the position of a bit-part player on the Czech political scene. The ODS 2014 European campaign was built especially on opposition to (or non-adoption of) the single European currency, the euro. This was also reflected by the main motto of the party's European campaign, promising voters that the party would fight 'for the koruna against the euro' ['Pro korunu proti euru'] because, as other slogans emphasized, 'Defending the koruna is defending the interests of our citizens' ['Hájit korunu znamená hájit zájmy občanů'] and 'No euro–strong koruna–common sense' ['Žádné euro–silná koruna–zdravý rozum']. Moreover the phrases 'national interests' ['národní zájem'] and/or 'interests of (our) citizens' ['zájem (našich) občanů'] were quite frequent in both the party's European election manifesto and its rhetoric. However, because of the party's emphasis on the non-adoption of the euro, this seemed to be, in fact, the only issue of the party in the European campaign—even despite the lack of significant direct competences of the EP, if any, in this matter. On the other hand, this issue seemed to be a potentially influential marketing tool in the Czech Republic, as the majority of Czech voters had been against a European economic and monetary union with one single currency, the euro.[29] Even during the campaign, the Civic Democrats organized a 'Petition for the Koruna' ['Petice za korunu'] and managed to collect more than 40,000 signatures, which was more than a third of the number of votes that subsequently went to the party in the elections (ODS got 116,389 votes).

The extreme Eurosceptic position was held especially by the libertarian SSO, which was, in fact, the only relevant extreme Eurosceptic player in 2014 in the Czech Republic. Even though the SSO had run for the previous European elections, in June 2009, criticizing the EU as a whole,[30] it had remained at that time a marginal party. Only in 2014 did the party gain more media and public attention and become relevant for the European contest. In this context, it should be mentioned that it was the SSO that was probably the most active and most visible party during the campaign—even despite its very limited finances for campaigning (see above). The party decided to use social networks, student debates and

hundreds of volunteers from among both party members and party supporters for (contact) campaigning instead of billboards. Although the party's European campaign relied to a large extent on shortcuts that are less complex in nature when describing the EU—chiefly focusing on negative Euromyths,[31] or, in the party's words, 'Euro-nonsenses' ['euronesmysly'], including not only the euro, but also, for example, the EU regulation about switching from regular to energy-efficient light bulbs. It nevertheless seems to have been quite appropriately targeted and properly implemented because it was simple, popular and therefore understandable for (Eurosceptic) voters. The party election manifesto was called 'Alienated Europe' ['Odcizená Evropa'], and the most visible slogan of the campaign was 'we will shed the light on Euro-nonsenses' ['Posvítíme si na euronesmysly']. Regular light bulbs therefore became a symbol of the campaign.

First-Order Candidates in a Second-Order Contest

The above-mentioned assumption that if running in a second-order contest parties often propose 'second-rate' and relatively unknown candidates was not confirmed in the 2014 European elections in the Czech Republic. Some Czech parties instead proposed credible and/or popular, non-partisan candidates for the elections, at least at the level of leaders. Because professional politicians have lost their popularity among the public in recent years, there is a rising trend to put forward non-partisan candidates for elections in the Czech Republic. This was the case for the 2014 EP elections as well.

Among the most prominent candidates should be mentioned Pavel Telička, who led the ANO2011 list of candidates, Luděk Niedermayer and Jiří Pospíšil, the leading candidates of TOP09, or sociologist and academician Jan. Keller, the leader of the ČSSD list. As Kaniok[32] points out, ANO2011 chairman Babiš tried, when choosing the movement's candidates, to confirm its non-party and expert self-characterization, as the list consisted mainly of diplomats, lobbyists and EU specialists. Therefore ANO2011 presented its candidates as new, fresh faces, while no prominent politicians were placed on the list. That is also why Telička—former Deputy at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Czech Republic (1998–2002) and a vastly experienced former diplomat, who headed the Czech Republic's EU accession negotiating team (2003–2004) and then briefly served as the first Czech European Commissioner in the European Commission of Romano Prodi (May to November 2004)—was chosen to head the ANO2011 list.

A similar strategy was adopted by TOP09 as well. The leader of the party's list, non-partisan candidate Niedermayer, had earlier served as a Member of Board of the Czech National Bank (1996–2008) and indeed as the National Bank's Vice-Governor from 2000 to 2008. But it should be mentioned that the success of TOP09 was also driven by the candidacy of Pospíšil,[33] a former Deputy Chairman of the ODS (up to January 2014) who joined the TOP09 electoral list as a non-partisan just a few months before the European election and who differs from the above-mentioned candidates in that he had been a professional politician: he served, inter alia, as Minister of Justice (in 2006–2009 and again in 2010–2012) and as Chairman of the Legislative Council of the Government of the Czech Republic (in 2006–2007 and again in 2010–2011). His electoral result (number of preferential votes) reflects his persistent popularity among the public.

The rest of the relevant parties combined experience, on the one hand, and young politicians, on the other, as the leaders of their lists. Experience was preferred by the ODS, whose candidate list was headed by senior MEP Jan. Zahradil (MEP since 2004). The latter strategy was adopted, probably surprisingly, by the KSČM, which nominated Kateřina Konečná, a 33-year-old Member of the Chamber of Deputies, as its EP election list leader.[34] But this was, at least partly, the consequence of controversies associated with the former European leader of the KSČM and senior MEP Miroslav Ransdorf, as mentioned above.

Campaigning on Social Networks

Because of limited budgets for campaigning, it seemed likely that, instead of costly campaigning and in addition to direct meetings with citizens, parties might rely on Internet social networks. However, parties had not previously been much interested in campaigning on social networks, and the same was true in the European elections. The weight of social networks in campaigning proved to be quite marginal in this election (on the other hand, it showed an undoubted potential for future campaigns). Campaigning in this way was in fact at a significantly lower intensity than in the October 2013 elections to the Chamber of Deputies.

Consequently, social networks failed to motivate voters to pay more attention to the European elections. Overall, small non-parliamentary parties and their candidates were more active and creative when campaigning on social networks, both on Facebook and Twitter, than parties with

parliamentary representation. In this respect, the most active and creative party was the SSO, although most of its activity was concentrated around its two or three most active candidates and their supporters.

Conclusion: Still Second-Order, or a Third-Order Contest?

When analysing the 1984 EP elections, Reif observed that a distinction could be made between SOE and 'third-order elections' (TOE).[35] Although SOE may be less important than 'first-order elections', at least in the eyes of citizens, they are still 'real elections' because they produce a government (local, regional and so on), and especially a Head of Government. On the contrary, the EP elections are in danger of becoming TOE 'with barely more relevance than a public opinion poll'.[36]

This seems to be the case for the 2014 EP elections in the Czech Republic, even though the parties tried to put forward quite popular and credible candidates, even if they were often non-partisans. The EU does not matter much in the Czech Republic—to voters, to political parties or to the media—and European elections are generally unpopular and undervalued there. There are several reasons for this, but one of the most important is very limited knowledge of the EU among Czech citizens, inter alia because of the lack of interest in the EU on the part of Czech citizens and a lack of public 'European' debate in the Czech Republic; and if there is such a debate it is dominated by Eurosceptic voices and framed in a negative or critical light. At the same time, parties did not want to spend their finances and strength on the European elections. Therefore the campaign preceding the 2014 European elections in the Czech Republic was barely visible and lacked any contentious issues.

Even if one could argue that the 2014 European election did 'produce' a 'European' quasi-government, the European Commission, with its Head to be determined by the electoral results, in fact Czech citizens entitled to vote seemed not to know this, thus making this argument irrelevant. Furthermore, the EU-wide 'Spitzenkandidaten' played almost no role in campaigning in the Czech Republic. Although one of the debates of the candidates for President of the European Commission was broadcast by the public service media, the public was not paying attention. As someone aptly put it, a quarter-final match of the Ice Hockey World Championship between Sweden and Belarus was watched by more Czech viewers than the debate between candidates for the European Commission Presidency. Similarly, political parties declared their support for the candidates only sporadically.

Notes

1. Jay G. Blumler ed. *Communicating to Voters. Television in the First European Parliamentary Elections* (London: Sage, 1983).
2. Jay G. Blumler ed. *Communicating to Voters. Television in the First European Parliamentary Elections* (London: Sage, 1983).
3. Holtz-Bacha, Christina, "Political Campaign Communication: Conditional Convergence of Modern Media Elections" in *Comparing Political Communication. Theories, Cases, and Challenges,* ed. F. Esser and B. Pfetsch (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 217.
4. Karlheinz Reif and Hermann Schmitt "European elections as member state second-order elections revisited"', *European Journal of Political Research*, XXXI (1980):115.
5. Simon Hix and Michael Marsh, "Punishment or Protest? Understanding European Parliament Elections", *Journal of Politics*, LXIX (2007), 495.
6. Jesper Strömbäck, Michael Maier and Lynda Lee Kaid, "Political Communication and Election Campaigns for the European Parliament" in *Political Communication in European Parliamentary Elections,* ed. Michaela Maier, Jesper Strömbäck, and Lynda Lee Kaid (Farnham: Ashgate, 2011): 13.
7. Karlheinz Reif, "National Electoral Cycles and European Elections", *Electoral Studies*, III (1984): 217; Karlheinz Reif, "European Elections as Member State Second-Order Elections Revisited", *European Journal of Political Research*, XXXI(1997): 117.
8. Pippa Norris, "Second-order elections revisited", *European Journal of Political Research*, XXXI (1997):111.
9. Michael Marsh, "Testing the Second-Order Election Model after for European Elections", *British Journal of Political Science*, XXVIII (1998):607.
10. Holtz-Bacha, "Political", 129.
11. Petr Kaniok, "The Czech Republic 2014 European Parliament Election: Voters gone out, new parties in", *Political Preferences*, nr. 9(2014): 14.
12. Vlastimil Havlík, 'The Czech Republic: Where all the Voters Gone?' in *The European Parliament Elections of 2014* ed. Lorenzo De Sio, Vincenzo Emanuele, and Nicola Magini (Roma: Centro Italiano Studi Elettorali, 2014), 171.

13. Vlastimil Havlík, "The Czech", 168.
14. Petr Kaniok,"The Czech", 14.
15. CVVM (2014d) *Občané o kampani k volbám do Evropského parla-mentu – červen 2014* [Citizens on Campaign for the European Elections – June 2014], http://cvvm.soc.cas.cz/en/media/com_form2content/documents/c1/a7043/f3/pv140703.pdf, data accessed 16 July 2015.
16. According to the October 2013 Standard Eurobarometer survey, 61 % of Czech citizens tend not to trust the EU (the eighth highest percentage among all the EU member states), and the image of the EU is, on the whole, rather negative in the Czech Republic, as 33 % of Czech citizens rate the EU image as 'totally negative' (which is the seventh highest percentage among the EU member states and 5 % above the EU-28 average), and only 24 % as 'totally positive' (the sixth highest percentage and 7 % below the EU-28 average). And last but not least, 44 % think that the Czech Republic could better face the future outside the EU: only two nations, Cyprus with 56 % and the UK with 50 %, scored more (Eurobarometer 2013). In addition, the survey confirmed that the EU does not matter much in the Czech Republic. According to the survey, most Czech citizens are not well informed about how the EU works, and therefore they do not understand the EU and have a negative attitude towards the EU—inter alia, owing to the impression of 79 % of them that their voice does not count in the EU, which is the fourth highest percentage after Cyprus, Greece and Spain, and 13 % above the EU-28 average (Filipec and Hurtíková 2014: 50; cf. Eurobarometer 2013).
17. Pippa Norris, *A Virtuous Circle: Political Communications in Postindustrial Societies* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000).
18. In this respect, one should mention that only the public service Česká televize (ČT; Czech Television), Český rozhlas (ČRo; Czech Radio), and Česká tisková kancelář (ČTK; Czech News Agency) have regular correspondents in Brussels.
19. By way of illustration, the current government coalition parties invested the following funds in their campaigns before the October 2013 early elections to the Chamber of Deputies. The winning Social Democrats allocated almost 100 million CZK (about €3.6 million) to the campaign. ANO2011, the party of entrepreneur

(owner of a food and chemicals empire Agrofert) and current Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance Andrej Babiš, spent about 120 million CZK (more than €4.25 million). And their junior ally, the Christian Democrats, paid up to 40 million CZK (less than €1.5 million). Their campaign expenditures for the May 2014 European election were considerably lower. The Social Democrats spent about 25 million CZK (less than €1 million), ANO2011 about 18.5 million CZK (less than €700,000), and the Christian Democrats 6 million CZK (some €200,000). Similarly, TOP09, the main right-wing opposition party, spent about five times more on the early Chamber of Deputies election than on the May 2014 EP election. TOP09 and the Civic Democratic Party (ODS)—up until 2013 one of the two major pillars of the Czech political system—allocated some 10 million CZK (about €360,000) to the 2014 EP election campaign. The Party of Free Citizens, the newcomer to the EP, paid some 5 million CZK (less than €200,000) for the campaign preceding the 2014 European elections. Altogether, the expenditures for the European elections may be estimated to be one-tenth (in case of ANO2011) to one-quarter (in case of the Social Democrats) of those for the October 2013 election to the Chamber of Deputies.

20. 'ANO', which also means 'YES' in Czech, is an acronym for 'Akce nespokojených občanů' ['Action for Alienated Citizens']; the figure '2011' refers to the year in which the movement was founded.
21. Petr Kaniok, "The Czech", 10.
22. Karlheinz Reif, and Hermann Schmitt, "Nine second-order national elections: A conceptual framework for the analysis of European election results", *European Journal of Political Research*, VIII (1980): 23.
23. Jakub Charvát, "The Czech Party System Change since 2010: From Fragile Stability to Stable Fragility", *Revista de Stiinte Politice/Revue des Sciences politiques*, iss. 41 (2014), 141–154.
24. Vlastimil Havlík, "The Czech", 167–168.
25. 'TOP' is an acronym for 'Tradice–Odpovědnost–Prosperita' ['Tradition–Responsibility–Prosperity']; the figure '09' refers to the year 2009 in which the party was founded.
26. Ralph Negrine, Václav Štětka, and Markéta Fialová, "Campaigning in but not for Europe: Europe Campaign Strategies in the UK and the Czech Republic" in *Political Communication in European*

Parliamentary Elections ed. Michaela Maier, Jesper Strömbäck, and Lynda Lee Kaid (Farnham: Ashgate, 2011):78–79.

27. Sean Hanley, *Czech Eurosceptic parties are likely to be pushed to the side-lines by Andrej Babiš's ANO movement in the upcoming European elections*, published 31 March 2014, http://blogs.lse. ac.uk/europpblog/2014/03/31/czech-eurosceptic-parties-are-likely-to-be-pushed-to-the-side-lines-by-andrej-babiss-ano-movement-in-the-upcoming-european-elections/, data accessed 27 May 2014.

28. Ralph Negrine, Václav Štětka, and Markéta Fialová, "Campaigning", 78.

29. According to the autumn 2013 Eurobarometer survey, 70 % of respondents were against the euro in the Czech Republic, while only 26 % for. These were the third highest percentage among the EU-28 Member states following the United Kingdom and Sweden (see Eurobarometer 2013).

30. Ralph Negrine, Václav Štětka, and Markéta Fialová, "Campaigning", 79.

31. Ondřej Filipec and Hana Hurtíková, 'Media reflections of Euro myths in the Czech Republic', *Contemporary European Studies*, IX, (2014): 45.

32. Petr Kaniok, 'The Czech Republic 2014 European Parliament Election: Voters gone out, new parties in', *British Preference* 9/2014: 16.

33. Pospíšil, number two on the TOP09 candidate list, became the most successful candidate in the 2014 EP elections in the Czech Republic, as he received more than 77,000 preferential votes.

34. Petr Kaniok, "The Czech", 16.

35. Karlheinz Reif, "European Elections as Member State Second-Order Elections Revisited", *European Journal of Political Research*, XXXI(1997): 121; Karlheinz Reif, "National Electoral Cycles and European Elections", *Electoral Studies*, III (1984): 253.

36. Marsh, Michael "Testing", 603.

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Outline of Female Candidates in Romania's EP Elections

Silvia Branea

INTRODUCTION

The composition of lists of candidates represents an important political strategy for different types of elections, including European elections. The opportunity for women politicians from Romania to represent the electorate in the European Parliament (EP) is significantly higher than in national political competitions. *Exiling* female politicians in Romania to the EP elections gives them the chance to have more important public roles within the internal structures of the parties they are part of, where 'women are mostly responsible with secretarial positions, act as media liaisons and chair party committees geared towards "family and social issues" and are very rarely included in de facto decision-making at top party levels'.[1] Even though placing the female politicians in Romania in eligible places for the EP "*could be considered an image strategy of the Romanian political parties*",[2] one must, however, take into consideration the positive effects of this policy as, once they get elected, most of them start developing successful political careers on their own.

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According to the data provided by the EP site, the number of female MEPs constantly increased from 1979 to 2009, from 16 % to 33 %. In 2014, before the elections, "*only 35 % of the EP members were female, even though women represented 52 % of society at European level.*"[3]

In Romania women's representation in the EP is much better compared to the female presence in the Romanian Senate and the Chamber of Deputies. The number of female MEPs before the EP elections in 2014 was almost three times higher than women's representation in the Romanian parliament. Elena Brodeală believes that *the* poor representation of women in the national parliaments would rather indicate that "*national parliaments are still perceived as being much more important than the EP*" [my translation].[4] Another argument for the disadvantages women face in politics within Romania comes from observing the lower number of mandates held by women in the Senate compared to the Chamber of Deputies. The office of senator is associated with higher prestige and more privileges, and therefore political parties have placed women on lists for the Chamber of Deputies rather than for the Senate.[5]

The underlying reasons for women's poor representation in politics are, according to a project co-ordinated by National Liberal Party vice-president Andreea Paul-Vass,[6] prejudice and discrimination, the process of women's socialization and mediatization, family responsibilities, myths regarding their lack of qualification, limited access to campaign finance—and these are only some of the aspects that prevent women from participating in Romanian politics.

The year 2014 was a good year for female politicians in Romania because, later in the year, there were two female candidates in the presidential elections who, even though they did not make it to the second round, were able to animate the public debate regarding women's representation in politics. Also in 2014, for the first time, a woman got to lead an important political party in Romania, the National Liberal Party. We cannot talk with the same optimism if we take into consideration the fact that, in the same year, there were approximately 11.5 % women in parliament, a lot fewer than the approximate number of women present in parliaments in Western Europe in 2000: 21 % on average.[7] This disadvantageous participation in domestic political life may be related to the fact that, after the fall of the communist regime in Romania, 'the pro-women discourse was labeled as a communist residue'.[8]

On the candidate lists of the parties participating in the EP elections in 2014 a fairly large number of female candidates were registered in first

position. Even though one cannot neglect the point of view that the real political battle takes place within the country and not in the EU, the fact that this type of election takes place in conditions which are more fair towards women is remarkable. However, one must notice that uneven distribution also appears in the case of some families where more than one member is a politician, in such a way that the male politicians (husbands or fathers) deal with national politics while the women are active in international politics, such as the EP. These observations bring to our attention a possible distortion of the meritocratic rules in favour of providing well-paid work for wives, daughters or family friends. An interesting question arises: can female politicians represent themselves, as female politicians, as candidates for the EP elections, or must we admit that they would not have arrived there had it not been for some male politicians guaranteeing that they would do a good job representing voters in the EP?

Women's Chances in National Politics vs. Women's Chances in European Politics

The analysis undertaken here is based on the theoretical approaches of feminist philosophy, especially the part that talks about the importance of the principle of women's autonomy—women having come a long way, in the last hundred years, from the domestic/private space to the public/political one. This criterion refers to women becoming autonomous, which means building their identity through self-defining and not by reflecting their qualities as companions of male politicians. This process of autonomization is accompanied, according to Susan Hekman, by "*actions that successfully deny their inferiority*".[9] On the other hand, establishing these connections between women's political actions and the decisions made by their male counterparts must be done in a contextualized manner because in political activity in general one creates and recreates different forms of dependence/subordination and interdependence between male and female political actors. These different placements are typical for any social exchange taking place at all levels "*between actors or groups of actors interacting within certain communication processes*"[10] that operate in different contexts.

The national context could be defined as being traditionalist and therefore consequently stressing male values in politics, whereas the European context, more modern, provides better conditions for the affirmation of female politicians. However, this statement is not based on the gender

equality principle that "*women are the same as men*",[11] because this would mean that women should behave in politics just as men do.

Besides approaching the identity of the Romanian women in the EP based on different theoretical contexts, an analysis has also been made of certain female politicians who were on the lists of the main political parties participating in the Euro Elections for the EP 2014: the Social Democratic Party [Partidul Social Democrat], the National Union for the Progress of Romania [Uniunea Națională Pentru Progresul României], the Conservative Party [Partidul Conservator], the National Liberal Party [Partidul Național Liberal], the Democrat Liberal Party [Partidul Democrat Liberal] and the Popular Movement Party [Partidul Mișcarea Populară]. The working methodology is a qualitative one, based on a corpus of biographies, news reports and interviews from online media (especially published on the following online platforms: hotnews.ro and ziare.com, Adevarul.ro, Mediafax.ro and in the local media).

In order to avoid the possibility of choosing just one type of political route for the female candidates, a random selection criterion was applied (from the female candidates of a certain party the first candidate was chosen, the fourth, the seventh, etc.). While examining both some well-known female politicians and some candidates who did not rank very high in the EP election lists, we noticed a dramatic decrease in the quantity of public information concerning the characteristics of the less known female politicians. As a result, we can talk about a 'silence' about those female politicians who did not hold eligible positions on the candidate lists, even though they would have had, at least in the online environment, the opportunity of self-promoting without having to pay too much money.

Female Candidates from the Centre-Left Alliance

The first group of female candidates analysed (the centre-left alliance of Social Democratic Party–National Union for the Progress of Romania–Conservative Party) is made up of five female politicians. The percentage of female politicians placed by the Social Democratic Party in eligible places was pretty high, even though it did not come close to 50 %. This may have to do with the fact that social democratic parties in Romania have had constant political objectives in favour of women, some of these materializing in "*legislative changes that are meant to provide higher protection for women*".[12] Four of the five candidates of the centre-left alliance

were under 40 years old and were described in online media in career and personal terms.

The most well-known personality was Corina Crețu, who was chosen to be European Commissioner for Regional Policy. She was already an MEP when she entered the competition for a seat in the EP in 2014. The question regarding the autonomous development of her political career was asked by journalists soon after her name became known in the Romanian political sphere, because she was supported by the first president elected in Romania after the fall of communism, Ion Iliescu. Thus, according to the news agency *Mediafax*, "*Corina Crețu built her political career while close to the former head of state, and indeed she has never denied this*".[13] The present European Commission member (Corina Crețu is the first woman in Romania ever to have held the position of Commissioner within the European Commission) has had an important political career both nationally and within the EP. Even though over the course of the years there have been speculations regarding her dependence on the former president, she is now more and more considered an example of a woman who has asserted herself in politics through her own skills, proven over the almost 20 years since she first became a member of the Social Democratic Party.

Some renowned Romanian female politicians became more known after they became members in the EP. One can establish a sort of pattern for their evolution: once supported/helped by male politicians, husbands/fathers or influential colleagues, they acquired their own autonomy and evolved independently. Sometimes, however, the success they acquired in European politics was tempered by the necessity to fill another social role, that of a wife. Such is the case of Daciana Sârbu, the only daughter of the famous socialist leader Ilie Sârbu (*according to the news site "ziare.com". The EP statistics highlight a notable level of activity for her in her second mandate in the EP, in addressing issues during meetings, raising questions and proposing solutions, being at the same time "rapporteur with reference to the issue of recognizing agriculture as a strategic sector"*),[14] who, after marrying future Prime Minister Victor Ponta took a step back: she was more a politician's wife and less a politician. At a high level, she followed the pattern seen in many Romanian families, where the man needs a wife to support him (especially when the two are part of a party addressing a large number of voters). This MEP's withdrawal from the centre of political life thus seems justified by the expectations of 'deep Romania': "*Romanian*

"deep" society has maintained a patriarchal vision of the relations between men and women."[15]

In regard to the other three female candidates of the centre-left alliance (those situated in seventh, tenth and 13th positions on the female candidate list) the political blogs do not provide enough news, interviews or references for us to be able to evaluate their degree of autonomy or political dependence. The three female candidates, Maria-Gabriela Zoană, Iuliana-Florina Anghel and Stela Arhire, seem to have consistent professional activity in the fields of law, economic studies and education. One of these candidates stood out within the PSD Diaspora department, another is the vice-president of the UNPR's organization for women and the third is a lawyer and university professor (there is more information available regarding this candidate, but much of it has to do with her family life).

Female Candidates from the Main Parties of the Right

The first female politician on the list of the National Liberal Party, Norica Nicolai, is a former senator in the Romanian parliament, who was also the vice-president of the Senate. After a mandate in the EP where she stood out both through her level of interventions and as rapporteur, she entered the competition for the EP in top position on her party's list. She stood out many times by standing firm when criticizing the public administration in Romania, as happened during the election campaign in 2014 for the EP elections, when she made reference to the mistakes made by the administration in Bucharest in managing EU funding. The portrait of this female politician, to go by the information available about her rich political career (both internally and externally), is defined by autonomy, courage in taking a stand during crucial moments and her competitive spirit. This trajectory does not place her in the category of female politicians dependent on the family or on the political group interests of some male politicians, except to the extent that, as the number of active women in Romanian politics is much smaller than that of men, all the important interactions in the decision-making phase take place in a public space dominated by men.

Another example of a successful woman politician, Renate Weber, comes from civil society and can be categorized as an independent and strong political actor, as we can see from the description published by *Adevărul* one day after she won her third EP mandate:

"Renate Weber is the first representative of Romania to be entrusted with leading a EU electoral observation mission (2008). Renate Weber held, during December 2004–December 2005, the function of presidential counsellor for constitutional and legislative problems for President Traian Băsescu, but quit after only one year. Since December 2007 she has been a PNL member, giving up the position of president of the Soros Foundation."[16]

Regarding political dependence on or independence from men in the case of the candidate in seventh position on the PNL's list of female candidates, one can give a categorical verdict of the highest degree of political independence and evolution… but in the Republic of Moldova. Despite the relevance of the political activity of Ana Guțu, this candidate was not placed in an eligible position on the list. The last female candidate analysed from the PNL's list of female candidates (Mihaela-Simona Polak) is a candidate about whom there is very little information regarding her political activity, as she seems to be one of those female politicians who entered political life for professional advancement—in her case so that she could become the president of a county health-insurance house.

One of the most well-known Romanian female politicians outside Romania is Monica Macovei. She is characterized by the media almost exclusively from the point of view of her political activity. A jurist, she has made a major contribution to elaborating the procedures and institutions meant to stop corruption in Romania. "*She became Minister of Justice in the Tăriceanu Government, being supported by the PDL and by President Traian Băsescu. In the previous legislature, Macovei wrote and negotiated as rapporteur 40 reports that were approved.*"[17] During the campaign for the EP she was among the few female candidates who ran a negative campaign against the counter-candidates from the left-centre alliance.

The candidate ranking fourth in the Democrat Liberal Party (Simona Drăghincescu) turned the fight with the market mafia into a real statement of faith. "*For years she has fought against the market mafia and stood out as one of the strongest women in local politics.*"[18] The new economic environment in the former communist states went back to a social division of labour depending on gender, and women have been greatly represented in the sector of small business.[19] More surprising seems the focus of this female candidate's public activity in a field mainly reserved for men—managing public food markets in urban areas. It is also true that for many candidates in elections for mayor, this activity has been an important step in political ascent at a local level. Just like one of the female candidates

from the National Liberal Party, the candidate ranking seventh among the female candidates on the PDL's list (Carmen Panțiș) seems to have gone into politics in order to be able to exercise a leadership position in the field of health in the county she comes from. Because we notice that some of the female candidates in non-eligible positions have a local political career, we can presume a calculus regarding the desire to share places on the lists of candidates equitably at local party branch level, and less the objective that women and men should be proportionally represented. This is the case of Ancuța Mihaela Ștefan; the only available information about her refers to her status as sales manager and manager partner in Ilfov county.

The best-positioned female candidate on the list of the Popular Movement Party (Partidul Mișcarea Populară), Carmen Mariana Roșu, is presented less from a directly political perspective and more from a tangentially political perspective, that of management of European funds, the highest position held by this candidate being General Director of the authority managing European funds for human resources, totalling up to 4.25 million euros. The activity of the next two female candidates, Cristina Timariu and Octaviana Marincaș, was not greatly remarked on by journalists, as far as can be seen in the online media we took into consideration: one of them was criticized for unjustly receiving (according to a local publication) a position of director at a cultural centre financed by the state, while the other was mentioned from the perspective of her activity in the University of Arts. None of the women who were chosen to be candidates for a mandate in the EP were in eligible positions on the list, and, unlike the other parties, who placed women either in first or second place on the list, in the case of the PMP Carmen Mariana Roșu appears only at sixth position after five male politicians, thus differentiating this party from the others analysed as regards their attitude to supporting female candidates.

Conclusions

The presence of women in the EP started to grow gradually, reaching 37 % after the elections of 2014. In the case of Romania, women's representation (31 %) is close to but still lower than their representation at a general level in the EP. However it is much higher than in the case of the national parliament: only 11.5 % of Romanian deputies and senators are women.[20]

The well-known female politicians randomly selected for this study proved that they had the necessary qualities to be elected to the EP. In

this connection, it may be noticed that two of the candidates placed in first positions on lists for the EP had had previous, and indeed very successful, mandates in the European legislative forum (Corina Crețu for the centre-left alliance and Norica Nicolai for the National Liberal Party). In the case of another very strong position on the list, Monica Macovei of the Democrat Liberal Party, we may notice the arguable decision of the party for which she was standing to place her in second position, despite the fact that her European reputation was far beyond that of her male party colleague who was placed in first position. Regarding the female candidates placed second and third on the candidate list of the National Liberal Party (Adina Vălean and Ramona Mănescu), they were both women politicians who had remarkable political careers in the EP. Both of them are married to politicians, but we could not say that they had been propelled by their husbands. Even in the case of those women whose political ascension was characterized by journalists as being influenced by the decisions of male politicians, at a certain point they became autonomous, standing out within the political groups in the EP. However, this observation can only be applied to the group of female politicians analysed in the present study, according to the random selection principle.

The female candidates who, according to their positions on the list, did not have any real chance of being elected to the EP can be called silent candidates (silent women politicians). With regard to them we cannot state whether they are or are not autonomous and independent of male politicians. We cannot say whether they are autonomous because we do not know enough details about their professional and/or political life from the online media.

Perhaps the internal political arrangements offering women politicians more chances to gain seats in the EP than in the national parliament consolidate the possibility of a diverse political world where political roles are appropriate for both men and women. Regardless of how decisions are made when the eligible and the non-eligible places are established for different types of elections, there are notable differences between the positions occupied by Romanian women in national politics and the positions they hold in European politics. Even though we cannot directly make a connection between this fact and Moira Gatens's vision regarding "*the polymorphy of the social–political corpus*",[21] we can say that for those who make decisions in political life in Romania, women are considered as less able to face 'masculine politics' in the country and, on the other hand, more able to act in the (more feminine?) European legislative arena.

As regards the less aggressive style practised by female politicians in comparison with male politicians, the present endeavour highlights the almost complete absence of negative political communication ("*advertisements which focus on the alleged weaknesses of an opponent rather than on the positive attributes of the candidate him or herself*")[22] during the election campaigning for the EP of the analysed female candidates.

Another conclusion has to do with the insufficient use by all the female candidates of the opportunities offered by the online media for the 2014 EP election campaign. Besides the articles published by newspapers during the election campaign, the female candidates could also have relied on comments made by online media readers, readers who could have formed 'feminist counterpublics' that would have contributed to the restructuring of the '*hegemonic structure of the public sphere*'.[23] This state of affairs, even though it is based on certain unfavourable contexts such as the insufficient mediatization of the EP elections and the poor mediatization of women politicians in general compared to male politicians, also has causes that have to do strictly with the female candidates' efforts. These efforts, which in the traditional election campaign depend to a certain extent on the poorer financial potential of the women politicians, can nevertheless be counter-balanced with lower financial costs for the use of new media (blogs, personal sites, the comment sections of online publications, etc.). The women politicians included in the sample monitored in the present study did not take full advantage of this possibility, neither the well-known ones nor the silent candidates.

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European vs. National Agenda

The EU Agenda as an Emerging Cleavage of Political Competition? Parties and Their Voters in Slovakia

Olga Gyárfášová

Introduction

European Parliament (EP) elections are somehow odd elections. As Michael Marsh and Mark Franklin said several years ago they are 'neither really European nor proper elections'.[1] They are not proper elections because the European Union (EU) executive is not directly affected by the outcome of the European elections in the member countries. This means that EP elections do not initiate a process of government formation as in parliamentary democracies. And they are not European because the electoral competition is not driven by the European agenda.

Both specific dimensions of the EP elections are addressed in the concept of the *second-order national election*, proposed by Reif and Schmitt (1980) after the very first EP direct elections in 1979. For decades, the theory became the basic narrative, an academically vivid concept, developed, discussed, questioned, empirically verified or rejected up until the present day.[2] To sum up: second-order elections, unlike national (first-order

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elections) are characterized by comparatively lower turnout, weak perfor-mance of ruling parties and electoral success of small, marginal, often radi-cal and/or Eurosceptic parties. All in all, 'less is at stake' in EP elections, and this has consequences for voting mobilization and electoral choices.

In the history of the EU-wide contest, the 2004 EP elections were a milestone: they represented a unique laboratory test in terms of compara-tive analysis of electoral behaviour in 'old' and 'new' member states. In particular one general pattern emerged: in spite of the years of yearn-ing for EU membership, the citizens of post-communist countries were not very enthusiastic in exerting their newly acquired rights as EU citi-zens. Average turnout was significantly lower than in the older EU mem-ber states. Neither did the anticipated euphoria of getting into the EU work, nor the first-time boost resulting from the excitement accompany-ing the novel experience. On the contrary, the new EU citizens of the post-communist countries downgraded the 'second-order' status of the EP elections to a critically low level hitherto unknown. This could be illustrated by voter turnout in the 2004 EP elections: the average for the old EU-15 was 52.7 % of eligible voters whereas in the eight new post-communist members it reached on average only 31.2 %. In 2009 the gap in electoral participation was very similar. In Slovakia the abstention rate was the highest: only 17 % of eligible voters showed up. The second European elections in Slovakia did not mean a fundamental change in the formula of voter mobilization and voters' decisions. Despite a much more intense election campaign, and more numerous and more visible activities of political parties and other public actors, participation did not rise signif-icantly. Closing of the information deficits and increased Europeanization did not automatically mean greater mobilization: only one voter in five came to the polling stations.[3]

The 2014 elections were fought under the headline 'This time it's different!' Under the heading of 'different' we could understand the changes brought to the EP by the Lisbon Treaty: more competencies, but in particular a closer connection between the decision of European vot-ers and the filling of the position of Head of the European Commission. Therefore, the 2014 EP elections were expected to be more personalized, and, owing to the economic crisis and increased Euroscepticism across the EU, also more politicized. So the slogan 'This time it's different!' pointed to an expectation of greater interest and higher electoral turnout. This was confirmed in several member states (e.g., the UK, Greece, Romania, Lithuania), albeit at the price of a rise in support for Eurosceptic and

Euro-critical parties. In many Central and East European countries, however, the trend of voter participation moved in the opposite direction. With 13 % voter turnout, Slovakia again set a record in non-participation, surpassing its own lows in 2004 and 2009. The 'champion in abstention' was closely followed by the Czech Republic, where participation reached 18 % (five years previously it had been 28 %, Poland (23 %), and the EU family's newest member, Croatia (25 %). Ten years after entering this prestigious club and a quarter of a century after the fall of undemocratic regimes, when a 'return to Europe' was a yearned-for goal, the majority of citizens in this part of the EU stayed away from the polls.

The following study examines the changing role of the EU agenda in Slovak politics by combining several data sources. Based on analyses of the election manifestos of the main political parties, the findings of the Voting Advice Application EUVOX 2014, the electoral results and the findings of post-electoral surveys, this chapter explores to what extent the EU agenda is relevant for the political competition and what the existing stage means for electoral behaviour in Slovakia.

The European Agenda in Political Competition: From a Broad Consensus to Emerging Profiling

The weak politicization of the EU for domestic politics is a general phenomenon. The EU agenda has often been depicted as a 'sleeping giant',[4] which represents a dormant potentiality rather than interfering in domestic politics. For Slovakia, some country-specific conditions can be identified. Slovakia, unlike the Czech Republic (mostly in the person of ex-President Václav Klaus), did not exhibit open, party-based Euroscepticism, and the relevant public actors did not oppose or criticize EU integration. As Karen Henderson pointed out regarding countries with a difficult accession trajectory such as Slovakia, 'the major EU debate was not about what Slovak parties wanted from the EU in policy terms, or what sort of EU they wanted, but rather about what the EU required from Slovakia and who could deliver it'.[5] And she continued, 'EU accession is a valence issue: it is generally accepted in the political discourse as a "good thing", but the ability to achieve it is the contested political issue.'[6]

After the country's accession to the EU, the broad consensus on the strategic importance of EU membership turned into a comfortable but passive consensus with respect to the European agenda and to Slovakia's

performance in the EU. This corresponds to the famous 'permissive consensus' typical of the established EU members in the earlier decades of membership. Unsurprisingly, this situation has not stimulated political or public discussion on EU matters.[7]

Another consequence of the broad pre-accession consensus and of the very undeveloped and unstructured debate on the pros and cons of being part of the EU is that Slovakia's membership has been viewed mostly instrumentally. This can be traced in several party manifestos and politicians' statements, not only in the past but up until the present day: the EU is presented as the money giver and not as the value in itself.[8]

The EU agenda was more successfully used as a tool for mass mobilization by those parties that managed to instrumentalize the EU as a guarantee of improved economic conditions or as a scapegoat for economic misery. Euro-critical or Eurosceptic positions were practically absent from the political mainstream. This situation changed in the 2012 national elections. As the early general election took place because the government broke down on the vote about measures to bolster the powers of the Eurozone bailout fund in October 2011,[9] the EU agenda emerged in the domestic political competition as a new phenomenon. In addition to EU-enthusiastic positions or stances more or less ignoring the EU, new faces of Euroscepticism emerged—nationalistic and (neo)liberal—and these continued to be visible positions also for the 2014 EP elections.

The 'text book example' of peripheral nationalism against global institutions, the West and the EU can be found in the rhetoric of the Slovak National Party [Slovenská národná strana, SNS]. This is in line with the centre–periphery conflict which has been foreseen as the 'backbone' for EU-critical and sceptical voices.[10] The nationalists' arguments focus on loss of (national) sovereignty and the desire to avoid being 'the servants of the West'.[11] The Euroscepticism of the SNS fits a 'pattern' of radical right-wing parties, such as the True Finns or the Freedom Party of Austria (FPÖ).

It is worth mentioning that the appeals against a solidarity contribution to the European Financial Stability Facility (EFSF) also enhanced the widespread Slovak self-image (auto-stereotype) as those who are the poor and have tightened their belts for too long.[12]

However, Eurosceptical appeals by the nationalist parties were not rewarded by electoral votes either in the 2012 early general election or in the 2014 EP election. The outcomes also indicated the lowering salience of the national agenda, which was the key programme of the SNS, a typical

'single issue' party. Nationalism connected with anti-EU positions became insufficiently salient, probably partly because of the general pro-EU bias, which could be found also among SNS voters.[13]

For neoliberals, the EU with its solidarity and bailout is irrational and denies rational free-market economic principles: it means a 'road to socialism'. The party Freedom and Solidarity [Sloboda a solidarita, SaS] also rejects a deeper integration, as it 'can lead to the reduction of sovereignty of Member States'.[14] SaS supports 'stricter and enforceable sanctions not only against small or less important states but also against the EU giants, Germany and France' (ibid.). This type of Euroscepticism is based on economic reductionism and 'worshipping' of the invisible hand of the market. One may be sceptical about the liberal nature of the party, as Euroscepticism is rather inappropriate for a member of the Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe (ALDE). Therefore it seems only logical that Mr Sulik (party chairman and the only MEP for SaS) decided to join the European Conservatives and Reformists group (ECR) in October 2014.

Political Discourse Before the 2014 European Parliament Elections

Although the EU agenda became more visible in the 2012 national election, it did not re-configure the dividing lines of the political competition. The main cleavage was (still) based on economic and social issues. A more articulated positioning of the parties in relation to EU issues was brought about by the campaign for the 2014 EP elections. The entire centre-right parliamentary opposition moved closer to EU-critical positions. On the one hand, this move should be seen as a step back from the uncritical 'EU-phoria' of the early membership period and certainly as a manifestation of self-confidence acquired after a decade of EU membership experience. On the other side we see the declared Euro-optimism of the ruling centre-left party Direction–Social Democracy [Smer-Socialna demokracia, Smer–SD], which put its pro-EU position into the 'display window' of its profile. However, this pro-manifestation was not followed by the development of clearer policies or attractive visions. As an influential analyst pointed out: '… political parties that generally advocate the EU project and its current direction, lack a deeper rationale and vision for future development'.[15]

In their party manifestos, centre-right political parties presented a certain emancipation from the EU. The Slovak Democratic and Christian Union–Democratic Party [Slovenská demokratická a kresťanská únia–Demokratická strana, SDKU–DS], a leading pro-EU voice in the period of accession and the early years of integration, called for 'more democracy and less bureaucracy',[16] and the political movement Ordinary People and Independent Personalities [Obyčajní ľudia a nezávislé osobnosti, OlaNO], a typical alternative party proclaiming 'in the EU we want to be ourselves', demanded sovereignty even in those areas in which the EU does not interfere in any way (such as in cultural and ethical issues). Similarly, the party Bridge [Most-Hid] postulated in its programme a 'strong representation of citizens in Europe', but did not specify how this should be exerted and where the existing deficits were.

In the EP election campaign, the parties remained loyal to their party programme profiles. The OlaNO movement transferred the problem of corruption to the European level. The Christian Democrats [Kresťanskodemokratické hnutie, KDH] emphasized family values, and a substantial part of their programme consisted of conservative attitudes and cultural and bioethics issues, such as refusal of registered partnerships, the pro-life protection of life from conception or the rejection of euthanasia.

Freedom and Solidarity (SaS) continued its consistent criticism of the EU from a neoliberal position, yet very vehemently rejected the label of Euroscepticism, which has negative connotations in Slovakia.

As mentioned above, the most pro-EU positions were presented by Smer-SD, which in the spirit of a utilitarian framing of EU membership opens its programme: 'In Europe we vote for a successful Slovakia', thus bridging the national and European levels and calculating the contribution that Slovakia has gained during a decade of membership. And in relation to the future, it openly declares: 'The future of Slovakia is clearly linked with the European Union.'[17]

The elections of 2014 showed that after a decade of membership some profiling of the political parties on the European agenda is emerging. In the current configuration, the centre-left Smer party is profiled as clearly pro-European, while the fragmented centre-right part of the spectrum is closer to the Euro-critical pole. However, the nuances are rather subtle and overshadowed by a general EU consensus. And experts forecast that this will last, at least in the near future:

"Slovakia's consensus on Europe appears to be durable, at least in the medium term, barring any major economic disruption. As long as European integration commands public consent, no mainstream political party will have an incentive to break ranks. The fact that EU affairs are not subject to political contestation further reinforces the status quo. In the long term, however, absence of an informed debate ... and the capacity for populist revolt against the political establishment may render the domestic consensus in Slovakia more fragile than it appears today."[18]

Profiles of Parties by EUVOX

Another view of the positions of political parties on the substantive issues of the European agenda is offered by the voting advice application project EUVOX.[19] Within this project domestic experts coded the positions of the ten most relevant Slovak political parties on 30 issues on the European agenda—identified as relevant by a team of EU experts—divided into three dimensions: economic, social and cultural issues. It was found that among 30 different statements the highest consensus was reached on Slovakia's membership of the European Monetary Union, rejection of tax harmonization and redistribution via Euro-funds. The most controversial issue was the bailout, in other words, whether the member states should provide assistance to countries that find themselves in a budget crisis.

EUVOX also revealed a number of incoherencies and inconsistencies in the positions of the political parties. Often they had 'two faces'; one for the domestic audience and the other for the EU political class (e.g., on registered partnerships or environmental targets). There were also inconsistencies in relation to the declared ideological orientation of the parties, in that economically right-wing and liberal parties often presented typically leftist opinions (e.g., on redistribution) and parties with proclaimed liberal values tended to adopt conservative positions. The existence of differing opinions within a single party can no doubt be attributed to the non-existence of discussion within that party. Moreover, the parties did not have positions at all on many issues (e.g., environmental issues or common security policies). Such incoherence and 'no-opinion positions' complicate the orientation of voters. Analysts refer to a further extended insufficiency of political parties when they want to solve via EU level issues that are clearly 'homework' and can be tackled only at the national level: 'In their programme a number of parties addressed topics that could hardly be influenced from the European Parliament, it being much easier to solve them from the national parliament.'[20]

2014 European Parliament Election Results

Although the elections were won by the governing party, Smer–SD (24 %), it fell far short of its showing five years before, not to mention its success in the 2012 early parliamentary elections when it got 44 %. Smer-SD has four MEPs who strengthen the Socialist Group. The centre-right Christian Democratic Movement (KDH) and Slovak Democratic and Christian Union–Democratic Party (SDKÚ–DS) each held onto two seats. The Party of the Hungarian Community (SMK) remained in the EP as well, although with only one mandate. These three parties are established members of the EPP. The newcomers to the EP, with just one mandate each, are: Ordinary People and Independent Personalities (OĽaNO), NOVA (both in the ECR group), Most–Híd (EPP) and SaS (initially in ALDE, but a few months after the election it moved to the ECR group). The results thus reflect the current situation on the Slovak political scene: a strong party on the left and a fragmented centre-right spectrum. It must be noted, however, that it is difficult to draw far-reaching conclusions about current support for individual parties based on these results—not only because of the critically low voter turnout, but also in view of the fact that the newly established party Network [Sieť], which performs significantly better in public opinion polls than any of the centre-right parties, did not take part in these elections (Table 11.1).

Table 11.1 Election results in three European Parliament elections in Slovakia

	% of valid votes			*Number of mandates in the EP*		
	2004	*2009*	*2014*	*2004*	*2009*	*2014*
Smer–SD	16.9	32.0	24.1	3	5	4
KDH	16.2	10.9	13.2	3	2	2
SDKÚ–DS	17.1	17.0	7.8	3	2	2
OĽaNO	X	X	7.5	X	X	1
NOVA–KDS–OKS	X	X	6.8	X	X	1
SaS	X	4.6	6.7	X	0	1
SMK	13.2	11.3	6.5	2	2	1
Most–Híd	X	X	5.8	X	X	1
TIP	X	X	3.8	X	X	0
SNS	2.0	5.6	3.6	0	1	0
ĽS-NS	X	X	1.7	X	X	0
HZDS	17.0	9.0	X	3	1	0

Source: Statistical Office of the SR
Notes: X = the party did not exist, or did not run

The EU Agenda for Parties and Voters

To what extent are voters able to decode the positions of parties on EU issues? Based on the European Elections Study post-election survey in 2009, we stated that more than 30 % of respondents were not able to indicate the position of political parties on the anti-EU vs. pro-EU axis.[21] In 2014, awareness was definitely higher: 'don't know' responses reached on average only about 10 %. However, differentiation among the parties' positions was relatively low. In addition, we could point to another phenomenon when we compare two other levels of party evaluations. On the one hand, voters perceived the parties of their choice as being much more pro-EU than the general public. On the other hand, voters for particular parties perceived themselves as much less pro-European than the parties they voted for in the EP elections. This 'mismatch' shows that there was very little congruence between the perceptions of the public—the voters—and the parties, and the low differentiation in the perception of parties could be one of the factors affecting voters' choices. As Eurosceptical appeals are only seldom visible, voters do not follow them.

Similarly, by exploring the differentiation of the Slovak electorates on three attitudinal dimensions—left vs. right, liberal vs. conservative and pro-EU vs. anti-EU—it has been revealed that whereas the first two dimensions differentiate different electorates to a statistically significant extent, the third dimension does not. On the contrary, the electorates of different political parties create an undifferentiated cluster of positions.[22] This supports the argument that there is no dividing line across different political environments, and when it comes to EU issues the attitudinal congruence between parties and their voters is weak and fuzzy.

Concluding Discussion

The signs of a rising relevance of the EU agenda in Slovak politics cannot be overlooked. Among the factors influencing this shift are the euro and/or debt crises as well as the request for solidarity, which is not popular, especially when citizens have the feeling that they are being called to show solidarity with those who are richer and better off. Yet, despite the fact that EU issues are more visible, Euro-critical appeals did not mobilize Slovak voters in the 2014 EP elections and Slovakia, for the third time, ended up with the lowest turnout across all the member states.

We may identify several explanatory factors:

The EU arena is still perceived as a sphere in which less is at stake, and therefore the main political 'battlefield' and source of power is politics at national level. Political parties behave accordingly: in spite of more visible EU content, there is a very weak EU contest, and even Eurosceptical positions are rather separate monologues than political debate or discourse. The positions of most political parties on many issues are fuzzy or even non-existent.

So far, the politicization of EU issues—the case of the European Financial Stability Facility (EFS), for example—seems to be more a temporary episode than a long-term dividing line and has a weak impact on the pattern of voting behaviour. The EU agenda did not dominate the political competition and attitudes towards the EU are more embedded at the national level: we still see 'more EU context than EU contest'.[23]

The relevance of the EU factor is increasing, but it is still not fully developed as an independent dividing line in the political competition; it is stuck between previous irrelevance and expected future salience. As has been stated: 'The notion of the EU as an extension of the battlefield in terms of everyday political struggle is still an alien concept in Slovakia. The battle is not about fighting to impose a super-state at the cost of self-emancipation—as some would like to make the public believe—, it is about the nature of public policies and how we can best create them.'[24]

As for the voters' mobilization and political appeals we can state that the stances of the political parties are not very visible to the public; moreover, the public does not see any major differentiation among the parties. Voters see the parties of their choice as being more pro-EU than the voters consider themselves to be.

The EU agenda was more successfully used as a tool for mass mobilization by those parties that managed to present the EU as a guarantee of improved economic conditions or as a scapegoat for economic misery. This is the case of the governing Smer-SD, which was a clear winner of the 2014 EP election. The pro-European stance of the Slovak social democrats instrumentalized the EU for several purposes: to strengthen the image of the party as a guarantee of social stability and security as well as a guarantee of political stability, as the party defines itself in opposition to those adopting anti-European attitudes in order to pursue their own political interests. It drew on the image of the EU as being a co-protector of national interests. The unambiguous winner of the EP election was the EU-optimistic Smer-SD party. However, the party's landslide victory

was not reached thanks to its pro-EU stances but because it offered social security and better economic conditions. The EU was used as an additional pragmatic instrument to appeal to an electorate yearning for more social and economic security; and this was rewarded by the voters. This implies that the utilitarian model of public perception of the EU is (still) more explanatory ('It's the economy, stupid!') than any other model.

The results of the centre-right opposition parties reflected the recent fragmentation of this part of the political spectrum: nine mandates were divided among six parties, three of them newcomers in the EP. Euroscepticism, as presented by the Slovak National Party or the quasi-liberal Freedom and Solidarity, was not attractive to voters. And the critically low turnout shows that the Slovak public could enjoy the benefits of the EU without any motivation to participate in EU democracy.

Notes

1. Michael Marsh and Mark Franklin, "The Foundations: Unanswered Questions from the Study of European Elections", in *Choosing Europe? he European Electorate and National Politics in the Face of Union 1979–1994*, ed. Cees van der Eijk, Mark N. Franklin et al., (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1996), 11.

2. Michael Marsh, "Test in the Second-Order Election Model after Four European Election," *British Journal of Political Science*, Vol. 28(4) (1998): 591–607.

   Mark N. Franklin, and Cees van der Eijk, "The Problem: Representation and Democracy in the European Union," in *Choosing Europe? The European Electorate and National Politics in the Face of Union*, ed. Cees van der Eijk and Mark N. Franklin, (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1996), 3–11.

   Hermann Schmitt, "The European Parliament Election of June 2004: Still Second-order?," *European Election Study 2004* (2005), www.europeanelection.net.

   Mark Franklin, "Turning out or turning off? How the EP elections of 2004 shed light on turnout dynamics", in *European Elections after Eastern Enlargement. Preliminary Results of the European Elections Study 2004*, edited by Michael Marsh – Slava, and Mikhaylov – Hermann Schmitt, 53–70. CONNEX Report Series, Vol. 1, (Wiesbaden: MZES, 2007).

3. Olga Gyárfášová, "Medzi spokojnosťou a ľahostajnoťou: Voľby do Európskeho parlamentu 2009 a voliči na Slovensku". [Between satisfaction and indifference: EP election 2009 and voters in Slovakia], in *Slovensko volí. Európske a prezidentské voľby 2009,* ed. Mesežnikov, G., Gyárfášová, and O., Kollár M. Bratislava, Inštitút pre verejné otázky [Institute for Public Affairs], 71–80, 2009.

4. Catherine E. de Vries, "Sleeping Giant: Fact or Fairytale? How European Integration
   Affects National Elections", *European Union Politics*. Vol. 8(3), (2007): 363–385.

5. Karen Henderson, "Europeanization of Political Parties: Redefining Concepts in a United Europe", *Slovak Sociological Review*, Vol. 41(6) (2009): 535.

6. Henderson, "Europeanization of Political Parties: Redefining Concepts in a United Europe", *Slovak Sociological Review*, 535.

7. Darina Malová et al., *From Listening to Action? New Member States in the European Union* (Bratislava: Devin Printing House, 2010).

8. Zuzana Gabrižová, and Radovan Geist, "Za Brusel, proti Bruselu, alebo celkom inak? Programy a postoje politických strán pred voľbami do Európskeho parlamentu 2014". [For Brussels, Against Brussels, or completely differently? Programs and positions of political parties before the European Parliament elections 2014]. *EurActive*, May 2014. http://www.euractiv.sk/fileadmin/user_upload/EP2014_Analyza_FINAL.pdf.
   Zuzana Gabrižová, "The EU in Slovak political discourse – the neglected battlefield".
   International Issues and Slovak Foreign Policy Affairs, 23 (1–2) (2014): 55–70.
   Olga Gyárfášová and Vladimír Krivý, "Vzorce voličského správania" [Patterns of voting behaviour] in *Ako sa mení slovenská spoločnosť*, ed. Krivý Vladimír (Bratislava: Sociologický ústav SAV, 2013) 257–342.

9. In October 2011 the Slovak parliament became the only one in the Eurozone to vote against measures to bolster the powers of the Eurozone bailout fund, seen as vital in combating the bloc's debt crisis. Prime Minister Iveta Radičová had made it a vote of confidence in the government in the hope of bringing one of the coalition partners into line. In spite of that the neoliberal Freedom and Solidarity (SaS), opposed the bailout and abstained, while the

other three coalition partners voted in favour. The largest opposition party, Smer–SD, also supported the bailout but abstained in the vote. Only the smaller nationalist Slovak National Party actually voted against the bailout. However, the failure of more than half of the deputies to vote in favour led to the defeat of the measure and the fall of the government. Just a few days later, when early elections had been agreed, the majority of the government and opposition deputies joined together and approved the measures. The parliamentary elections of March 2012 returned a centre-left government to power.

10. Cas Mudde, "EU Accession and a New Populist Center-Periphery Cleavage in Central and Eastern Europe. Center for European Studies. Central Eastern Europe", *Working Paper* No. 62 (2004).

11. *Vernosť Slovensku.* Programové memorandum SNS 2012 [Faithfulness Slovakia. Program memorandum SNS 2012], 1.

12. For example, the Slovak National Party (SNS) used billboards with the slogans: 'The Greek pension is € 1,600; an Italian teacher earns € 2,000. And where are we, Slovaks?'

13. Gyárfášová and Krivý, "Vzorce voličského správania".

14. *Volebný program SaS pre budúce generácie.* [SaS election program for future generations]. http:// www.strana-sas.sk/program/16, 56.

15. Gabrižová, "The EU in Slovak political discourse – the neglected battlefield", 65.

16. "Viac demokracie, menej byrokracie". Program SDKÚ-DS pre eurovoľby 2014. [More democracy, less bureaucracy. 2014 Election Manifesto for the European election]. http://www.sdku-ds.sk/article/showArticle/viac-demokracie-menej-byrokracie (accessed 25 August 2014).

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European and National Agendas in the 2014 EP Elections in Hungary

Boglárka Koller

Introduction

The 2014 European Parliament (EP) elections were considered unique because it was the first time that they had been held in accordance with the provisions of the Lisbon Treaty, which entered into force in 2009.[1] While a heated debate ensued around the emerging system of *Spitzenkandidaten* (leading candidates that were named by the European parties for the position of European Union (EU) Commission president), Europe became more politicized, and a new kind of Europe-wide campaign was born within the EU.[2] In addition, these were the first EP elections that reflected the effects of the economic and financial crisis, the euro crisis, and also the sovereign debt crisis of some member states. For new member states, such as Hungary, the year 2014 was symbolic in other ways, too. It marked the 25th anniversary of the fall of the Berlin Wall, symbolizing the end of the Communist regime, and also marked the tenth anniversary of EU membership.

This chapter analyses European and national agendas during the most recent EP elections in Hungary. These were held right after the national

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elections (only seven weeks separated them in the spring of 2014). Because of this timing, the national and EP campaigns merged into one another, and for voters the significance of the EP elections was largely decreased. After introducing a suitable conceptual framework and the circumstances surrounding the elections, party campaigns have been analysed by focusing on three main questions: (1) What was the perceived image of the EU in the campaigns? (2) Were there any thematic issues in the campaigns? If yes, what were they? (3) Who constituted 'the others' for the parties in their EP campaigns?

Conceptual Framework

The 2014 EP elections could be characterized as the first ever 'Europeanized elections', because with the introduction of *Spitzenkandidaten*, a truly European political space and Europe-wide public debate emerged.[3] But was this Europeanization reflected in the campaigns of the Hungarian political parties?

Europeanization and re-nationalization provide the conceptual framework for analysis. The concept of *Europeanization* became fashionable in the 1990s; numerous scholars described the effects of the EU political system on member states, mainly through analysing it from a top-down direction.[4] The 2000s and the accomplishment of the largest, 'big-bang', enlargement of the EU in 2004 and 2007 brought a further massive increase in Europeanization literature.[5]

One of the most cited definitions is also rooted in this period. According to Radaelli,[6] Europeanization refers to the 'processes of construction, diffusion and institutionalization of formal and informal rules, procedures, policy paradigms, styles, ways of doing things and shared beliefs and norms which are first defined and consolidated in the making of EU decisions and then incorporated in the logic of domestic discourse, identities, political structures and public policies'.[7]

Parallel to this Europeanization, owing to the region's socialist past and the lack of the experience of a 'Western-European' type of nation-building, signs of the rebirth of nationalism came to the front after 1989/1990 in most of the Central and Eastern European countries.[8] Re-nationalization became a dominant pattern of the post-enlargement period of Hungarian politics too, which was further strengthened when Fidesz won a two-thirds majority in the Hungarian parliament in 2010.[9] Additionally, the European economic and financial crisis management

from 2008 onwards opened up a new phase of EU integration that led more often to differentiated solutions.[10] In an increasingly differentiated EU, however, the Central and Eastern European countries—including Hungary—very often felt that they did not belong to 'the core of the EU' but rather to 'the laggards' that were not able to set agendas but could only follow them. Such sentiments caused growing scepticism with regard to the EU.[11]

As the post-enlargement experience of the new member states also grew apart from the top-down direction of Europeanization, the bottom-up processes of Europeanization also appeared on the stage. All these factors contributed to a 'more emancipated' view of the EU, its institutions, decision-making processes, and policies. Emancipation in the post-enlargement context indicates a process in which a member state critically assesses EU membership and the benefits and duties derived from it. Emancipation refers to the efforts of a member state to use the channels of bottom-up Europeanization and transfer its own, national vision of integration to European institutions and decision-makers. Through an analysis of the 2014 elections, we may develop a deeper understanding of the nature of this emancipation in Hungary.

EP Election Circumstances

The 2014 EP elections occurred in a substantially changed Hungarian party system.[12] The national election results of 2010 transformed the portfolio of political actors. The coalition of the centre right Fidesz (Fiatal Demokraták Szövetsége: Alliance of Young Democrats–Hungarian Civic Party) and the KDNP (Kereszténydemokrata Néppárt: Christian Democratic People's Party) acquired a two-thirds majority in the Hungarian parliament in 2010. The MSZP (Magyar Szocialista Párt: Hungarian Socialist Party) shrunk significantly. New parties appeared on the scene: the radical right Jobbik (Jobbik Magyarországért Mozgalom: Movement for a Better Hungary) and the green party LMP (Lehet már a politika: Politics Can Be Different). Additionally, another three small parties were established on the left in the second decade of the new millennium: the DK (Demokratikus Koalíció: Democratic Coalition), led by former Prime Minister Ferenc Gyurcsány; Együtt (Együtt–A Korszakváltók Pártja: Together–Party for a New Era), led by former Prime Minister Gordon Bajnai; and the PM (Párbeszéd Magyarországért Párt: Dialogue for Hungary), established by ex-members of LMP. The last two formed an

electoral alliance (Együtt–PM) in 2014 against the government of Viktor Orbán.[13]

General elections were held on 6 April 2014, the first, single-round general elections since the new Hungarian constitution entered into force on 1 January 2012.[14] The campaign for the general elections began 50 days before the election date, and included print ads, TV appearances and direct marketing.[15] Except for the LMP, all parties exceeded the limits of campaign spending that are dictated by the Election Law in Hungary (Transparency International 2015). The outcome of the 2014 general elections was the re-election of the ruling Fidesz. Together with the KDNP, the party again gained a two-thirds majority in the Hungarian parliament, a unique phenomenon in the post-1945 political history of Hungary. This also ushered in a new era of party politics, where Fidesz–KDNP strengthened their 'superpower' position in parliament.[16]

Also around this time, the EP announced its election day for 25 May. The EP elections were held in a single-round system where electorates selected candidates from party lists. Only parties which could gather at least 20,000 supporting signatures and submit them to the National Electoral Commission (Nemzeti Választási Bizottság: NVB) by 22 April could have candidates on the ballot papers. The EP campaigns of the parties reflected the changed power relations in the Hungarian National Assembly, where, apart from the centre-right coalition of Fidesz–KDNP, there were significantly smaller parties in opposition on the left.

The circumstances of the elections being held so near each other led some to speculate that campaigning would be less vigorous than at the time of the general elections, and that in addition, being aware of the national election results, electorates would become less motivated to cast their vote. This speculation on 'election fatigue', as this chapter will demonstrate, was actually proved accurate by the low turnout at the EP elections.

National and European Agendas

Through a qualitative content analysis, this chapter's aim is to depict the national and European agendas in the campaigns. In order to demonstrate signs of emancipation in the EP campaigns of political parties, this analysis focuses on three angles of the campaigns. First, the perceived image of the EU and EU membership will be examined, comparing the different party

positions. Second, the campaigns are analysed by looking for thematic issues and references to sectoral politics in relation to the EU. And third, the main references to the 'otherness' question are examined; namely: who constituted the others for the parties in their EP campaigns? In analysing these three aspects, we must first consider the governing and opposition parties.

As a proof of confidence, neither Fidesz nor the KDNP published an official EP election programme in 2014, just as in the general elections, in which the governing parties did not publish programmes either. Prime Minister Viktor Orbán only posted a message on Facebook: 'I am now going to disappoint you, because our programme can be summarized in a single word: we will "continue" or more modestly, "we would like to continue".'[17] This was a significant change in attitude compared to previous EP elections, such as in 2009, when Fidesz, in opposition, prepared a detailed document and invested a great deal of time in the EP election campaign. In 2014, after winning a two-thirds majority for the second time, Fidesz was confident he could do so without a programme. Fidesz–KDNP only published a list of their candidates. As a sign of their confidence, but also a tactic to avoid direct debate with the opposition, Fidesz–KDNP did not join the live debate among the political parties broadcasted on 23 May 2014 by ATV (a left-wing Hungarian TV channel) during the campaign period.

For the opposition parties, however, the EP elections proved to be a real battle, and a chance for the campaigners to prove that they could be challengers to Fidesz at both national and EU levels. Additionally they wanted to demonstrate that they could remain long-term actors in the political arena. The LMP was striving for one mandate, while Jobbik's objective was to become the second largest party. The MSZP's modest objective was to stay in the political arena, and the DK wanted to become the leading left-wing party.

Membership Image

For the Fidesz party, the main message regarding EU membership was that it is adversarial in nature. The EU, frequently referred to simply as 'Brussels' during the campaign, was considered an alien power that would attempt to impose rules and norms on Hungary, which should be unacceptable for Hungarians. The 'emancipation message'—leaving behind

the practice of uncritical adoption of the rules and norms of the EU—
was clearly formulated in the campaign videos, speeches and visuals of
Fidesz. The central message of the campaign was: 'We send the message
to Brussels: more respect for Hungarians!'[18] Such a statement presents a
clear differentiation between 'us' (Hungary) and 'them' (the EU). In it,
there is no reference to a common Europe, common values or a common
destiny within a larger political community. Brussels appears as a distant
power which attempts to influence Hungarian politics and policy-making
from the outside. In Fidesz's campaign video, the Prime Minister further
stresses: 'We should not allow anybody to weaken the reputation and the
prestige of Hungary.'[19] Compared to the 2009 Fidesz campaign, this is
a radical turn away from the moderate way of 'emancipation' and a turn
towards assuming the existence of an enemy on the EU side. In the 2009
Fidesz program, it was highlighted that 'Brussels is not Moscow', and the
decisions of EU institutions are not 'external dictates'.[20]

The MSZP, the Hungarian Socialist Party, did not prepare a detailed
programme either, but only included bullet points in which national and
European issues were mixed. The membership of Hungary in a larger
community was, according to Socialists, taken for granted. Nevertheless,
in their campaign they depicted a changing Europe, and MSZP saw itself
as a catalyst for this change. In their campaign video, they promoted the
slogan 'Let's change Europe!' (in addition to the 'Security for all!' detailed
later).[21]

The LMP campaign video provided a clear vision of Europe. It was
emphasized that the party did not want more or less Europe (trying to
avoid the competency debate) but a Europe which is 'more effective and
more democratic'. The party at the same time favoured a Europe that is
fair, that is not fragmented into rich and poor, a Europe where employ-
ees do not become slaves, where the young are not unemployed. This
new direction of Europe was a central topic in their campaign. They also
emphasized: 'Those that fall out, also fall back! Hungary, do not miss the
future.'[22] Visually, their posters and images were designed around a green
apple, which appeared in the hands of citizens of various age groups and
social statuses.[23]

The Együtt–PM electoral alliance campaigned with value-based mes-
sages and put the protection of European values at the centre of their
campaign. Former Prime Minister, and party leader of Együtt, Gordon
Bajnai was shown with a Hungarian flag painted on his right cheek and

an EU flag on his left cheek—symbolizing an identification with both communities at the same time. He summarized the reasons behind joining the EU as the following: 'We joined Europe in order not only that our dreams could become European but that our lives could become European as well.'[24]

Among the parties, the radical right-wing opposition party Jobbik prepared the most detailed programme. However, compared to the 2009 elections, their programme proved to be less radical, and brought the party closer to the centre of the ideological spectrum. In their campaign video they promised a 'clear vision' on EU issues and emphasized their mission to 'defend the Hungarian soil and ensure European rights and wages for Hungarian people, in the middle of Europe'.[25]

The programme of the left-wing Democratic Coalition tried to reflect the government's national election campaign which was titled 'Hungary performs better', but the DK turned it into 'Europe performs better'. The campaign was built around the concept of creating a supranational Europe and proposed the creation of the United States of Europe.[26]

Thematized Issues

Although the EP campaigns were mostly driven by national agendas, we can find some specific policy issues in the campaigns of the political parties.

Fidesz argued that Hungary should send representatives to the EP who would be able to defend the Hungarian national interest and the unique achievements of the nation. In addition to this, the programme of decreasing utility costs (*rezsicsökkentés*) appears as a symbol of the unorthodox Hungarian economic policy, and the defence of Hungarian soil and Hungarian families (against Brussels) appears as a main objective as well.[27]

The MSZP campaigned for more jobs and workplaces Europe-wide in its EP campaign. The leader of the party list, Tibor Szanyi, articulated the Socialist vision of the EU's economic model: 'There are two options: continuing with conservative austerity measures or trying to create new workplaces and opportunities.'[28]The concept of security was also put into the forefront of the Socialist campaign. In their campaign video, 'Security for all', they argued for the security of families in Europe, which was—according to their argument—linked to a decent income with a high enough minimum wage and pension and equal wages for men and women.[29]

The LMP's EP campaign programme included some European themes: the party campaigned on the need for a general reform of EU institutions and decision-making, and for creating a single European labour law, in addition to eliminating nuclear power plants from Europe. The leader of the LMP party list, Tamás Meszerics, argued for a 'changed Europe' that, apart from providing the benefit of free movement, would also provide jobs for an emerging, youthful workforce.[30] For Meszerics, the issue of unemployment was the key challenge for Europe, a problem which required a solution. The common EU labour code could be a common objective in that direction.

Együtt argued for a better and more effective absorption of EU funds.[31] For Jobbik, human rights and, within that, labour rights constituted a central theme in the EP election debate. As the first candidate on Jobbik's list, Krisztina Morvai highlighted in the live debate the issue of human rights and labour rights should be the central focus of future European debates.

Identity Boundaries: Who Are the Others?

Ten years after joining the EU, it is interesting to see the political parties' expressed position about the European political community. In this respect, references to identity boundaries emerged. Who constituted the 'others' for the parties in their EP campaign?

Fidesz, as was previously mentioned, put the identity boundary issue at the centre of its campaign. It differentiated 'us' (Hungarians) from 'them' (the EU, or colloquially 'Brussels'); thus for Fidesz the EU governed from Brussels constituted a kind of negative 'other', and they constantly argued for 'better national solutions'. For Fidesz, all opposition parties belonged to the 'others', and they referred to them as incompetent actors, who were not able to challenge the Fidesz–KDNP coalition in the EP elections either.

In the campaign of Együtt, the co-existence of national and European identities was emphasized. For Bajnai's party, the negative 'other' was Fidesz, about which they claimed: 'We have to defend Hungary against its own goals as well. If you do not want to have to decide between being European and being Hungarian, choose us.' Együtt rejected the unnecessary identity decision between Hungarian and European identities and emphasized that 'we' are part of the common Europe: Europe is not the 'other' but 'us'. In the live TV debate, Bajnai further emphasized that the results of the EP elections could show the future direction of Hungary:

either going towards the 'East' (getting closer to Russia) as was suggested in the Fidesz campaign, or towards 'Europe', which was recommended by Együtt (EP elections TV debate 2014).

For the MSZP, the negative other is 'Jobbik' in the first place and 'Fidesz' in the second. According to them, these are the parties that offer a 'non-European' solution for Hungary. Further, according to Szanyi, votes for the left would only be valuable if they were cast for the Socialist party: all other votes go into the 'dustbin', referring to the fragmentation, and the existence of small parties on the left (EP elections TV debate 2014).

For Jobbik—which characterized itself as the second party in Hungary— all parties belonged to the 'other' and their main objective at the EP was to beat the parties and have more mandates in the EP than their left-wing opponents. Jobbik designed a dramatic movie trailer in which they asked the voters to cast their vote on 25 May to overthrow the 'liars and the criminals' (referring to the left-wing 'mafia' parties). They argued that these parties would finally have to understand that 'The time of the liars is over' (Jobbik campaign against the left, 2014). Nevertheless for Jobbik, the EU itself also represented the 'negative other', and the party constantly argued against supranationalism and the existence of a 'super-state' in Europe, and for the 'Europe of nations' model. In the live TV debate, however, Krisztina Morvai—being less radical—emphasized the necessity of finding the 'national minimum' on which the opposing political parties could agree, and trying to represent this at the EP.[32]

Voter Turn-Out and Election Results

Looking at the ten years of membership, the voter turnout at the three EP elections remained below the average of the EU in each election period, and also showed a downward trend in Hungary: in 2004 it was 38.50 %, in 2009, 36.31 % and in 2014, 28.92 %. At the most recent, 2014, EP elections, the fifth lowest voter turnout among the newer Central and Eastern European member states was that in Hungary (Table 12.1).

Out of the 21 mandates allocated to Hungary, Fidesz–KDNP obtained 12, Jobbik three, the MSZP and the DK each, and the LMP and Együtt–PM one each. Overall, it can be claimed that Fidesz won without an official programme, the MSZP further shrank, and although the Democratic Coalition only received two mandates, this was a victory for the party, considering it was only established in 2011 (Table 12.2).

Table 12.1   Voter turnout at the European Parliament elections in New Member States (NMS), 2014 (%)

EU	**43.11**
Hungary	**28.92**
Bulgaria	35.50
Czech Republic	19.50
Estonia	36.44
Latvia	30.04
Lithuania	44.91
Poland	22.70
Romania	32.16
Slovenia	20.96
Slovakia	13.00

Source: European Parliament

Table 12.2   European Parliament election results in Hungary, 2014

Party	*Official name*	*Number of seats*	*EP political groups*
Fidesz-KDNP	**Fidesz–Kereszténydemokrata Néppárt** (Alliance of Young Democrats–Hungarian Civic Party and Christian Democratic People's Party)	12	European People's Party (EPP)
MSZP	**Magyar Szocialista Párt** (Hungarian Socialist Party)	2	Group of the Progressive Alliance of Socialists and Democrats (S&D)
Jobbik	**Jobbik Magyarországért Mozgalom** (Movement for a Better Hungary	3	Independents
DK	**Demokratikus Koalíció** (Democratic Coalition)	2	Group of the Progressive Alliance of Socialists and Democrats (S&D)
Együtt-PM	**Együtt–PM** (Together–Party for a New Era and Dialogue for Hungary)	1	Greens/European Free Alliance
LMP	**Lehet Más a Politika** (Politics Can Be Different)	1	Greens/European Free Alliance
Altogether		21	

Conclusions

The EP elections in Hungary were less vigorous than the general elections, which proved the thesis that EP elections should be considered as 'second-order' elections.[33] Nevertheless, because the national elections were held so close in time to the EP elections, the opposition parties in Hungary proved to be less successful in the 2014 EP elections than the governing parties. As a content analysis of the campaigns shows, EU membership itself was criticized by some parties, including the governing party Fidesz. The uncritical adoption of EU rules and norms was also rejected not only by the governing coalition but also by the radical right-wing Jobbik party. The LMP and Együtt argued for a more active role in EU–Hungary inter-actions, and the necessity of strengthening bottom-up processes. Looking for thematized European issues in the EP campaigns, we only found a few, including the defence of the Hungarian soil, creating more jobs and workplaces, the reform of EU institutions and decision-making, and more effective absorption of EU funding. By analysing the identity boundaries, it can be concluded that Hungarian political parties strongly emphasize the 'otherness' character of the EU in opposition to the national politi-cal community. Thus, on the basis of the analysis of EP election agendas, we can conclude that Hungary has entered a new emancipated phase in EU–Hungary relations, and one where signs of re-nationalization have emerged.

Notes

1. According to Article 17.7 of the Lisbon Treaty 'Taking into account the elections to the European Parliament and after having held the appropriate consultations, the European Council, acting by a qualified majority, shall propose to the European Parliament a candidate for President of the Commission.'
2. Gergely Fejérdy, Zoltán Gálik, Judit Hamberger, J. László Kiss and István Szilágyi, "Európai Parlamenti Választások." Budapest: Magyar Külügyi Intézet (Hungarian Institute of International Affairs), 30 June 2014.
3. One can argue against it: despite the obvious efforts of the EP to harmonize the electoral rules of member states, the member states' different electoral systems and constitutional traditions do not

allow them to step forward towards 'truly Europeanized EP elections'.

4. Robert Ladrech, "Europeanization of Domestic Politics and Institutions: The Case of France," *Journal of Common Market Studies*, 32:1, (1994): 69–88. Tanja Börzel,. "Towards Convergence in Europe? Institutional Adaptation to Europeanization in Germany and Spain," *Journal of Common Market Studies*, 39:4, (1999): 573–596.

5. Thomas Risse, Maria Green Cowles, and James A. Caporaso, "Europeanization and Domestic Change: Introduction." in *Transforming Europe: Europeanization and Domestic Change,* ed. Maria Green Cowles, James A. Caporaso, and Thomas Risse (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2001):1–20. Radaelli, Claudio, "The Europeanization of Public Policy" in *The Politics of Europeanization* ed. Kevin Featherstone, and Claudio Radaelli, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003): 27–56. Paolo Graziano, and Maarten Peter Vink, *Europeanization: New Research Agendas* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2008). Frank Simmelfennig, and Ulrich Sedelmeier, *The Europeanization of Central and Eastern Europe* (Cornell University Press, 2008). Börzel, 2002; Ladrech, 2010; Radaelli, 2003; Radaelli & Pasquier, 2008; Olsen, 2002; Exadaktylos & Radaelli, 2014; Caporaso, 2008.

6. Claudio Radaelli, "The Europeanization of Public Policy" in *The Politics of Europeanization* ed. Kevin Featherstone, and Claudio Radaelli, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003): 27–56.

7. Radaelli, "The Europeanization", 30.

8. Antal Örkény, "Hungarian National Identity. Old and New Challenges," *International Journal of Sociology.* Vol. 35, no. 4, Winter 2005–6: 28–48.Rogers Brubaker, *Nationalism Reframed, Nationhood and the National Question in the New Europe* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996).

9. Boglárka Koller, "Trajectories of Identity Formation in the Post-Enlargement Era. The Hungarian example," *Jagiellońskie Forum Europejskie* [Jagiellonian European Forum], No. 20, (2011): 7–29. Koller, Boglárka, "Patterns of Post-Enlargement Identity Formation. The Case of Hungary" in *Constructing and Communicating Europe: Cultural Patterns of Politics,* ed. Olga, Gyarfasova, and Karin, Liebhart (Zürich; Berlin; Münster: LIT Verlag, 2014): 187–215.

10. Boglárka Koller, "The Takeoff After Lisbon. The Practical and Theoretical Implications of Differentiated Integration" *World Political Science Review*, Vol. 8, Issue 1, Published Online (2012).

11. Koller "The Takeoff".

12. Zsolt Enyedi, and Kenneth Benoit, "Kritikus választás 2010. A magyar pártrendszer átrendeződése a bal–jobb dimenzióban," in *Új képlet. Választások Magyarországon 2010,* ed. Zsolt Enyedi, and Róbert Tardos (Budapest: DKMKA, 2011): 17–18.

13. This coalition ceased to exist after the two elections (general and EP) in 2014.

14. The new electoral system is characterized by a single round election mechanism where 106 mandates are earned in individual constituencies and the remaining 93 are selected from national lists. The new system brought a smaller parliament: instead of the former 386 MPs, in 2014 only 199 could be elected. See *Hungarian Election Law, 2011.* di.

15. On the use of the media in general election campaign see Kim Scheppele's analysis (Scheppele, 2014).

16. Enyedi and Benoit, "Kritikus", 22.

17. Fidesz Facebook (accessed 2 March 2014).

18. Fidesz EP billboard, 2014.

19. Fidesz EP campaign video, 2014. "Május 25.-én újra csak a Fidesz! – Orbán Viktor üzenete." https://www.facebook.com/photo.php?v=10152830726874307&set=vb.9844779306&type=3&video_source=pages_video_set (accessed 7 January 2015).

20. Fidesz EP election program. *"Yes, Hungary can perform better*!" www.valasztas.2009.fidesz.hu (accessed 10 January 2015).

21. MSZP EP campaign video, 2014. (accessed 20 March 2015).

22. LMP EP campaign video, 2014. "Május 25-én újra LMP!" https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YC48GLNFhBA#t=19 (accessed 30 January 2015).

23. LMP billboards 2014.

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European Parliament Elections in the Czech Republic: Reflection of Citizens' Agenda

Ilona Švihlíková

Brief Introduction of the Main Candidates and Their Topics in the European Parliament Election Campaign

A record number of political parties and movements, 38, ran in the European Parliament (EP) elections and presented their candidates. Many were not only completely unknown to ordinary citizens but also to political experts who closely follow the Czech political landscape. Without analysing the political position and programme of all of the competing political organizations, this is clearly a reflection of a strongly fragmented political scene. Comparing this high motivation to 'be in Brussels' with very low public interest in the issue, later unfortunately reflected in the second lowest turnout in the European Union (EU), gives a saddening insight into Czech political culture.

Czech voters may vote on two days—Friday till evening and Saturday till two o'clock. In 2014, the voting days were 23 and 24 May. Voters (over the age threshold of 18 years of age) could choose one list representing

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185

one political party or political movement and had at most two preferential votes for individual candidates within that list. There was a 5 % threshold. The Czech Republic was to elect 21 MEPs (one fewer than in the previous period).

The importance of the EP elections was shaped by the fact that, for the first time, the coalition parties of the government, formed at the beginning of 2014, were standing against each other. The EP elections were thus the first opportunity to measure popularity among the three parties of the government. Thus, the EP election results sent a signal of changing power relations inside the coalition, with worrying signs for the Czech Social Democratic Party.

On the rather Eurosceptical or Euro-critical side we may observe the following parties and agenda priorities. The most vocal proponents of Euro-criticism used to be Občanská demokratická strana (ODS: the civic democratic party). Here it should also be mentioned that the party's founder, and later president of the Czech Republic (for two election terms, that is, for ten years altogether), Václav Klaus shaped the sceptical and critical attitude of the Czech Republic towards European integration, and his influence should not be underestimated. The ODS had been going through internal political turmoil and had been balancing on the verge of the 5 % threshold. Its main campaign theme involved the preservation of the Czech koruna—the national currency—and opposition to the euro. Although the party has been a consistent opponent of direct democracy and people's participation, during the EP election campaign it even started a petition for the preservation of the Czech koruna.[1]

As the ODS was in crisis, a relatively new party of a libertarian character had emerged. Svobodní (the Party of Free Citizens) was probably the sharpest critic of the EU project. The party altogether refused the idea of deeper cooperation unless it was solely restricted to trade and investment, but without standardized approaches. A symbol of their campaign was a regular light bulb—as an example of EU overregulation that makes no sense. Svobodní also presented their disapproval of the subsidy system.[2]

The conservative party TOP09 (which can be described as pro-European) had as their main motto: 'Do care about Europe.'[3] In their campaign, they showed their position to be in favour of the Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership (TTIP) and the Fiscal Compact, and supported an approach to EU integration that could be named as neoliberal (together with supporting austerity in Greece, Spain, etc.).

The smallest coalition party, the Christian Democrats, concentrated on Czech national interest, without, however, specifying how they understood the term. Reflecting their traditional electorate, the Christian Democrats emphasized the need for a fair and equal position for domestic farmers and agricultural subsidies.

ANO,[4] a party without any clear ideological anchoring, led by the 'oligarch' Andrej Babiš, one of the wealthiest men in the Czech Republic, was considered the top candidate for success. The programme of ANO focused on various practical issues that should be solved by experts in given fields.[5] These were represented by the leader of their list for the EP elections, Pavel Telička, a highly controversial figure. His career includes a variety of functions, one of them being that of the main negotiator for the Czech Republic's entry into the EU. In the 2014 campaign, on the other hand, he was presented as an expert, who knew how the EU 'really' worked, and his lobbyist career was introduced in the best light.

On the left side of the political spectrum, there were two major forces: Česká strana socialně demokratická (ČSSD: the Czech Social Democratic Party), leading the government, and Komunistická strana Čech a Moravy (KSČM: the Communist Party), the strongest opposition force. The Czech Social Democratic Party offered a list leader who was an icon of the radical left: sociology professor Jan Keller. He was able to shape the agenda and draw attention to the TTIP and other controversial topics. However, the campaign was not unanimous, as there were candidates clearly pushing for the TTIP, whereas the list leader was radically against it. Czech Social Democrats are sometimes viewed as overly keen eurofans even supporting policies that are refused by their voters, typically the Fiscal Compact.[6]

The Communist Party has a rather ambivalent stance towards the EU. On the one hand it is not directly against integration, but in the past it was able to find a common position with Václav Klaus on some issues. Overall, the main topic was a more social Europe with the slogan: 'Europe for people'.[7]

In short, the election campaign did not bring any dominant motif and the campaign as such could be named as dull at best. To judge by the election turnout, most voters reacted neither because of fears nor hopes connected with the integration process. Nevertheless, it would be a mistake to claim that there were no topics at all that resonated in civic movements and in public debates.

Civic Agenda: Topics, Discrepancies, Debates

It is very difficult to summarize the civic agenda, as there are many diverse movements and groups representing heterogeneous citizens' interests. Some of these groups may be only a blind for the clear interests of political parties; some may arise spontaneously in reaction to specific problems or situations. Clearly, one would expect that environmental groups would emphasize a nuclear-free Europe, trade unions would push for higher social standards and groups of young conservatives would warn about the flow of Islamic immigration. Despite their heterogeneity there were two topics that from bottom up were able at least partly to influence the agenda and in the end also to gain attention in the official TV pre-election debates. Surprisingly, the euro was not much part of the agenda. The Czech Republic is not a member of the Eurozone and even the current government, which could be described as euro-optimistic, claimed that the euro was not a question for this election period.

The first and dominant topic became Ukraine. The conflict in Ukraine 'woke up' all citizen movements regardless of their political orientation. The reaction varied from calls for more NATO soldiers in the Czech Republic and a stronger military presence, spreading a hysterical fear of Russia, to deep criticism of the EU stance towards the crisis and the stand of the Czech Foreign Ministry especially. Not surprisingly, the topic of EU military and foreign policy became a principal focus of interest and dominated public debates in the media and informal political discussions among ordinary people. The final TV debate showed that most of the political leaders not only harshly criticized the uniform reporting of Czech TV,[8] but also pursued a more balanced position towards Russia, mostly rejecting the idea of sanctions and turning attention to extreme right-wing groups operating on Ukrainian territory. Before the elections, there were numerous public debates organized, in some of which the author of this chapter took part. Many of these debates had extraordinary attendance figures, surpassing the capacity of the seminar halls five times or more, so that most people had to stand.

The biggest discrepancy between public meaning and political approach could be observed in the Czech Social Democratic Party. The rather pronounced anti-Russian views of the Czech Foreign Minister and Czech Social Democratic Party member Lubomír Zaorálek caused much mayhem among leftist oriented civic organizations. Various events showing contempt for such a policy from the Foreign Ministry took place, one even

on the Global Day of Action on Military Spending (GDAMS), 14 April, right in front of the Foreign Ministry building.

The situation escalated so much that the ČSSD's leading candidate, Jan Keller,[9] clearly distanced himself from the Foreign Minister in his public appearances as well as in articles, as otherwise he would have stood no chance against the mass of angry leftist voters.

The second topic was the controversy over the TTIP. This was almost unknown in the Czech Republic, apart for a few articles that directed attention towards controversial points like investor-state dispute settlement, non-tariff barriers, and so on.

However, the topic was largely ignored until various green and social movements started to draw attention to these points. A real breakthrough in the agenda was achieved by Jan Keller, as he mentioned that the TTIP could destroy the very popular farmers' markets. He immediately became the media number one enemy, facing hateful attacks from other leaders. Nevertheless, the topic had reached public debates and eventually, after long months of total neglect, it also played its role in TV debates. It should be mentioned that Pirátská strana (the Pirate Party) opposed the TTIP in an especially vociferous way, and its leader was thus able to score highly in the final TV debate. Again, a visible discrepancy could be seen both within the Social Democratic Party and between the party and its supporters. While the list leader Jan Keller (not a member of the ČSSD), stood against the TTIP, other candidates were either silent or expressed their positive stance towards the Treaty. The Minister for Industry and Trade (also in the Czech Social Democratic Party) was enthusiastic about the treaty. Such unclear and ambiguous positions caused chaos among supporters, who were not really sure which opinion corresponded to the programme of Social Democracy.

Before the elections there were numerous debates (mostly in Prague, but not only) involving various candidates and regarding all kinds of topics. Some concerned the female candidates; others were organized by the think-tank Evropské hodnoty (European values).[10] There were many more, as well as debates in town squares and other public events. I will focus on public debates organized by Spojenectví práce a solidarity (SPaS: The Alliance of Labour and Solidarity) because they were recorded and placed on YouTube and reflected topics of the Fiscal Compact, the Ukraine crisis and the TTIP in depth, presenting various candidates in a lively public debate. A number of candidates from the ANO movement, the Green

Party, the Czech Social Democratic Party, the Communist Party and others took part in the debates.

The debate that focused on the euro and the Fiscal Compact showed, quite shockingly, how little the candidates knew.[11] Instead of providing an expert discussion, the candidates tried to turn the topic in another direction, and were not able to present the main points of the Fiscal Compact, despite the fact that the government had accepted it only a short time before. Instead the public heard stock phrases, often with nationalistic accents.

The second debate fortunately involved more in-depth arguments and enjoyed a record attendance of more than 200 people.[12] The topic was the foreign policy of the EU, with respect to current developments in Ukraine and policy towards Russia. The high attendance and the many following debates, events, articles and even demonstrations that included these topics showed that there was enormous interest in these issues in civil society, thus reflecting what was mentioned above, namely that Ukraine was one of the most important topics in the EP elections. Interestingly, the candidates for the EP, among them the candidate for the right-oriented governmental party ANO, did not follow the hawkish position of the Czech Foreign Ministry with regard to Russia.

The last debate focused on the topic of social standards, and also partly touched on the topic of the TTIP.[13] The level of argument and knowledge in this debate was probably the highest in the series, not least because the Green Party candidate was the well-known Czech philosopher Martin Škabraha. The general stances presented are worth following and watching even after the EP elections have taken place.

ANALYSIS OF THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT ELECTION RESULTS AND THEIR IMPACT ON THE CZECH POLITICAL LANDSCAPE

This part of the chapter draws on the official results as published by the Czech statistical office, which presents the overview of all elections in a detailed way on the webpage www.volby.cz, enabling comparison with previous EP elections.

In order to understand the Czech EP elections, one must be aware of at least two important facts. First, following the early national elections of October 2013, these elections were the first in which the government

parties stood against each other, both in terms of their programmes and as regards their different programme priorities and candidates for the post of European Commissioner. Candidates were presented both by the Social Democrats and by the ANO movement.[14] In the end, it was the candidate from ANO, the former Minister for Regional Development Věra Jourová, who was appointed Commissioner.[15]

The second fact is the huge number of political parties and movements that presented their lists of candidates. In 2009, there had already been 33 of these, but five years later there were 38 political organizations seeking support. This reflects the fragmentation of the Czech political landscape, as many of these shared a similar agenda and fragmentation was led by personal animosities. We could name, for example, several small movements all focused on such slogans as 'No to Brussels', 'for the Czech koruna' and 'Sovereignty'. Parties concerned with regional aspects, such as Moravané (Moravians) and Strana regionů (the Party of the Regions), also tried to win seats. There were also two Green parties in the elections: Strana Zelených (the Green Party) and the newly established Liberální ekologická strana (the Liberal Ecological Party). Neither of them succeeded, however.

The results were deformed by an extremely low turnout of less than 20 %. The Czech Republic was outdone in this respect only by Slovakia: in all other EU member countries the turnout was significantly higher. This fact alone would be worth analysing in depth. First, let us compare the 2014 turnout with that in the previous (two) elections to the EP, as the Czechs have been able to vote in EP elections since their accession to the EU in 2004.[16]

The first and the second elections enjoyed almost the same turnout with only a slight difference (28.32 % in 2004, 28.22 % in 2009). Elections to the EP thus never enjoyed the image of very popular elections or elections that 'matter' in the view of citizens.[17] They may be contrasted in this respect with the presidential election in 2013, which was accompanied by a highly emotional campaign and saw a fairly high turnout as well (around 60 % in each of the two rounds), although presidential powers are quite limited. Symbols and tradition definitely play a role in the rather conservative Czech political landscape.[18]

There have been various views of how to interpret and explain such a low turnout. There could have been various factors at play. One of them is that, traditionally, EP elections do not attract much interest. Domestic problems predominate, as can be observed from the long-term turnout for

elections to the Chamber of Deputies. The rather timid attitude towards the EU was definitely formed by the critical and Eurosceptic approach of the former president Václav Klaus. His opinions were echoed in the media and voiced by the Civic Democratic Party, which this time headed the anti-euro campaign.

Another problem is that only a very few people understand the relevance of the EP and the mechanisms through which the EU functions (generally described as the democratic deficit). The media coverage of the EU is very poor, and only rarely are the proceedings and agenda of the EP reported on. When this happens, it is mostly in connection with some affair of minor importance, such as the light bulbs regulation or restrictions affecting the application of Czech brands. This creates an overall image of a Brussels that is far away, hostile towards Czechs and at the same time unimportant. This unimportance is accompanied by the feeling that only the 'big ones' decide (the Germans will have it their way) and we are left without any power.[19] This may indeed be true sometimes, but it unfortunately reflects the fact that Czech policy has been unable to build coalitions of smaller countries in order to make its voice heard.

However, this cannot be the whole explanation for such a distressingly low turnout. One of the possible explanations why citizens did not pay attention to the EP elections is the overall atmosphere of indulgence and apathy. An average Czech may have the feeling that he is a victim or an observer of high political games without any possibility of intervening.[20] A new wave of *privatism*—a tendency to escape from public problems into the sphere of private life—can be seen to be spreading. A combination of these factors may be the explanation for the low turnout, which led to surprising results (Table 13.1).[21]

There was no universal theme of the election campaign, according to the analysis of political scientist Štěpán Drahokoupil. He also stresses that the ANO movement started to succeed in the Czech political landscape. We can see that no party was able to get more than 20 % support, which again demonstrates how much the Czech political scene is fragmented.[22] There is a long-term dissatisfaction with 'traditional' parties, and people are willing to lend support to new, sometimes obscure, movements and parties. Some political analysts even claim that the era of big parties enjoying support of 30–40 % is definitely over. This presumption will have to be proved in the years to come.

An interesting change could be the shift in attitudes among voters, analysed by the political scientist Kamil Gregor, who is also active in the

Table 13.1   Results of the Czech elections to the European Parliament in 2014

Party	Leader of the candidate list	Results in %	Number of MPs
ANO	Pavel Telička	16.13	4
TOP09	Luděk Niedermayer	15.95	4
ČSSD (Social Democrats)	Jan Keller	14.17	4
KSČM (Communist Party)	Kateřina Konečná	10.98	3
KDU-ČSL (Christian Democrats)	Pavel Svoboda	9.95	3
ODS (Civic Democratic Party)	Jan Zahradil	7.67	2
Svobodní (The Free Citizens' Party)	Petr Mach	5.24	1

Source: Czech statistical office: www.volby.cz

civic organization of Kohovolit.eu—a webpage generating the most suitable political choices according to the answers given by those interested. From his analysis,[23] we can see that the most stable voter bases were those of the Christian Democrats and the Communists. However, we might wonder where a significant part of the Communist voters had disappeared to, because of their rather weak results. Kamil Gregor claims that they did not vote for a different party but rather abstained. The Greens, on the other hand, lost part of their voters to the Pirate Party.

As for the absolute number of preferential votes, Jiří Pospíšil from the conservative party TOP09 gained 32.15 % of preferential votes, followed by Jan Keller of the Czech Social Democratic Party (26.91 %) and Pavel Telička (ANO, 20.77 %).

Conclusion

The elections to the EP showed both emerging and deep problems in Czech politics and, at the same time, at least partly, brought about changes that will probably shift the whole Czech political scene.

It has to be said that Czech political parties were not able to reflect the topics raised by civil society. Their campaigns were either without any ideas, supplemented by rather superficial slogans, or were built on minor issues that unfortunately resound in Czech society (such as the prohibition of light bulbs). The gap between the parties and the people, their needs

and priorities is further widening. Privatism, escaping from public matters and retreating into one's private world, is becoming a prevalent strategy. Indulgence, apathy, the division between 'us and them' and a hostile attitude with a vague anger against all parties still prevail among the majority of citizens.

This should cause the political parties to worry. But in most cases, the main issue for them as well as for the mainstream media was whether (and by how much) they would succeed and that pro-European parties should win—even it that might mean that parties with very low social sensitivity such as TOP09 were put into the same bag as the Social Democrats. The fragmentation of the political scene continues to be seen in the fact that even parties considered 'big' and traditional did not succeed in gaining more than 20 % of the vote. The crucial issue of legitimacy in politics and its proceedings should actually have emerged, but in fact 'business as usual' more or less continued.[24]

Consider that the winner of the EP election in reality gained the support of only 2.9 % of those with the right to vote (not just those who took part in the election). This is an alarming state of affairs, and it is probably the most important fact regarding the EP elections.

The split, especially in the Czech Social Democratic Party, in attitudes towards Russian foreign policy is still visible, although the emotional driver of Czech politics is currently the issue of immigrants and policy connected with them.

The EP elections highlighted the topic of the TTIP. This led to renewed civic activity. A platform against the TTIP was created, connecting various initiatives and movements,[25] from trade unionists to civic activists and political party members. Many demonstrations, petition stalls, and conferences and debates have been organized. This effort has had results. For the first time, the Czech Republic has been able to gather enough petition signatures to fulfil the criteria for a European Civic Initiative.[26] The civic resistance against the TTIP is one of the visible outputs of the EP election campaign in 2014, during which this topic was publicly articulated for the first time.

Notes

1. See the picture of a huge Czech koruna with the list leader for the EP, Jan Zahradil, and the title: 'The Czech Republic holding onto the Czech koruna'. ODS, "Česko se drží koruny. Kampaň ODS

vstupuje do finále", http://www.ods.cz/clanek/7261-cesko-se-drzi-koruny-kampan-ods-vstupuje-do-finale.

2. With of the slogan 'No to bureaucratic nonsense from Brussels', and emphasizing dislike for the euro. ODS, "Česko se drží koruny. Kampaň ODS vstupuje do finále", http://www.ods.cz/clanek/7261-cesko-se-drzi-koruny-kampan-ods-vstupuje-do-finale.

3. TOP09 is an abbreviation of Tradice, odpovědnost, prosperita (Tradition, Responsibility, Prosperity), the number 09 signals the year of foundation—2009. However, the full name of the party is never used.

4. The movement ANO (in English YES) was founded on the basis of the movement ANO: Aliance nespokojených občanů (Alliance of Discontented Citizens) in 2011.

5. The brief summary of programme points shows a typically technocratic view, concerning, for example, the reduction of bureaucratic obstacles, more Czech experts in European institutions, more effective funding from the EU, equal conditions for Czech farmers and so on. ANO, "Eurovolby, zkrácený program", http://www.anobudelip.cz/cs/o-nas/eurovolby/zkraceny-program/. It should be noted that the leader (and financer) of the ANO movement, Andrej Babiš, made his fortune in agribusiness—hence the priorities.

6. Examples of their slogans are: 'New jobs' (which has little practically to do with the EU), 'High quality food' and 'Against tax evasion'.

7. The main points of their programme for the EP can be found here: KSČM, "Volby do EP 2014", http://www.kscm.cz/volby-a-akce/evropsky-parlament2/program. It includes more democracy and human rights, the right to work and a fair wage, prohibition of tax havens, no Internet censorship, and peace and adherence to international law.

8. The public Czech TV has been criticized for its anti-Russian, pro-American stance, where the Ukrainian crisis was presented one-sidedly in such a propagandistic way that it caused a wave of disgust among citizens.

9. Confirmed from personal correspondence with Jan Keller.

10. See, for example, the debate on the candidates' vision of the EU in a year's time. Evropské hodnoty, "Debata kandidátů, No 4",

http://www.evropskehodnoty.cz/akce/debata-kandidatu-evropskeho-parlamentu-4/.

11. The debate took place on 10 April 2014, in the Trade Unions' headquarters in Prague. SPaS, "Fungování eurozóny euro, fiskální kompakt", https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iOY9tmQ_98c&list=PLCqFDEBNy0BfgvJLQlFb_D8h0TQN_DMcY&index=12.

12. The second debate took place on 24 April 2014, in the great hall of the Trade Unions' headquarters in Prague. SPaS, "Zahraniční politika", https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EogGiClOmOk&list=PLCqFDEBNy0BfgvJLQlFb_D8h0TQN_DMcY&index=8.

13. The last debate was held on 15 May 2014, again at the Trade Unions' headquarters in Prague. SPaS, "Jak může EP přispět ke zlepšení naší sociální situace", https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7YySr-0sZz8&index=4&list=PLCqFDEBNy0BfgvJLQlFb_D8h0TQN_DMcY.

14. The official candidates at the time were Pavel Mertlík, a former minister of finance, for the Social Democrats, and for ANO the above-mentioned lobbyist Pavel Telička.

15. This choice has had an impact on the civic agenda as Věra Jourová is Commissioner for Justice, Consumers and Gender Equality, which means she has some influence on the TTIP agenda, especially regarding consumer rights.

16. The CVVM (Centrum pro výzkum veřejného mínění, in English: Public Poll Centre) announced that in April 2014 only 19 % claimed they were interested in EP elections. This corresponds to the low turnout. Other polls predicted significantly higher turnout—around 30 %. CVVM, "Občané o volbách do Evropského parlamentu – duben 2014". http://cvvm.soc.cas.cz/media/com_form2content/documents/c1/a7219/f3/pv140428.pdf.

17. See the research of STEM (Středisko empirických výzkumů: Centre for Empirical Research), concluding that EP elections matter least of all compared with other elections (only 9 % of citizens consider them very important). Moreover, the importance of EP elections is decreasing with time. STEM. *Press conference on the EP elections.* http://www.stem.cz/clanek/2887

18. General tendencies are well analysed in Veronika Sušová, "František Josef v nás? Vnímání politické autority jako středoevropský kulturní vzorec. Úvaha o možnostech studia imperiálních základů

moderní politické kultury ve střední Evropě." (Praha: Historický ústav, 2008), 274–285.

19. These findings come from the media agency Median's research, "Evropská unie očima Čechů a Slováků". Česká televize. http://img.ct24.cz/multimedia/documents/55/5499/549861.pdf

20. As individuals perceive themselves as victims, they may show a tendency to look for 'strong personalities' who will solve problems for them. This may account for the popularity of the oligarch Andrej Babiš.

21. For more on the topic of Czech national identity and political culture, see the book by famous Czech neuropathologist František Koukolík, *Češi. Proč jsme kdo jsme – a jak dál,?,*(Praha: Galén, 2015).

22. Štěpán Drahokoupil, "Evropské volby ve znamení nezájmu voličů a neúspěchu euroskeptických stran v ČR". Heinrich Böll Stiftung. https://cz.boell.org/cs/2014/07/14/evropske-volby-ve-znameni-nezajmu-volicu-neuspechu-euroskeptickych-stran-v-cr.

23. Kamil Gregor, "Voličské přesuny: Svobodní nabírali hlasy u TOP09, Piráti u Zelených". Aktuálně. http://blog.aktualne.cz/blogy/kamil-gregor.php?itemid=22998.

24. Seán Henley sees the danger in emergence of authoritarian populists as a reaction to this situation. Seán Henley, "Two cheers for Czech democracy," *Czech Journal of Political Science*, No 3 (2014), 161–176.

25. There is also a professional campaign organized to inform people about the TTIP, called 'špatný vttip' (a play on words, literally 'bad joke'). More information at: http://vttip.cz/.

26. Tomáš Vovsík, "Česká veřejnost se vyslovila proti TTIP". VTTIP. http://vttip.cz/ceska-verejnost-se-vyslovila-proti-ttip/.

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Looking Behind the Scene of the Panel Discussion Organized by the Czech Independent Think-Tanks Before the European Parliament Elections of 2014

Kryštof Kruliš

The main feature of European Parliament (EP) election campaigns in the Czech Republic has been a weak link to the truly European agenda. Campaigns in the past have thus consisted mostly of vague declarations about the role of the EU, or had a primary focus on general domestic issues such as opposition to the incumbent government.[1] The 2014 elections to the EP could have been the first elections with different features because they were held shortly after the elections to the lower chamber of the national parliament [*Poslanecká sněmovna Parlamentu České republiky*] and thus were not used as a 'referendum' on the still relatively

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201

new incumbent government. This, however, did not bring a dramatic change as regards the relevance of truly European issues in the campaign, as compared to previous electoral campaigns. The general public and even several of the candidates in the Czech Republic still revealed a lack of sufficient knowledge about the European Union (EU).

The situation described calls for an investigation into the role of the expert public during electoral campaigns in the Czech Republic. This chapter therefore tries to examine one specific event—a panel discussion involving several representatives of the top political parties running for the EP in 2014, organized by two Czech independent think-tanks.

National Versus European Issues in the Campaign

The Czech Republic has been indicated as one of the member states where the campaign was dominated by national issues, mostly because of a general lack of interest in topics truly related to the EU, or even to a lack of relevant knowledge about the EU.[2] Apart from the Czech Republic, this category of countries includes Latvia, Austria, Slovakia and Croatia. What these countries have in common is their size (they are all small or medium sized member states). Except for Austria, they are also countries of the former communist bloc. The smaller size of the countries results in a lower number of seats in the EP. A general feeling that their representatives may not sufficiently alter the course of the EU agenda may intuitively be one of the reasons influencing their tepid interest in truly European topics. The relatively young membership of these countries in the EU may be amongst the features influencing the persistently poor knowledge among the general public of the role and tasks of the EU itself. Another distinctive group consists of member states where the campaign focused predominantly on the EU. It includes Sweden, Denmark, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Germany and Estonia.[3] With the exception of Estonia, this group is formed by states with a significantly longer track record of participation in the European integration process. The remaining states that do not fit into either of the two groups can be characterized either as states where domestic and European issues were lumped together in the campaign (for example the UK, Cyprus and Hungary) or states where domestic issues were put forward owing to the existence of simultaneous campaigns for national (or other nationwide) elections, as in the case of Belgium, Lithuania and Ireland.[4]

The Czech Republic thus belongs to the group of relatively new member states where national issues still dominate in the campaign for EP elections, regardless of the coincidence of European elections with other nationwide elections. A general lack of interest in topics related to the EU or even lack of relevant knowledge of the EU is identified as the main cause of this situation. Therefore, one of the key factors in understanding the campaigns in this group may be to look at the role of the expert public (relevant think-tanks in particular), and to investigate what strategies (if any) they employ during the campaign to give a high profile to issues relevant to the EP.[5] Another important aspect is to look at how candidates respond to such an endeavour.

This chapter conducts a qualitative analysis of one such event organized in the Czech Republic. A series of guided interviews with organizers of the event in question served to provide a 'behind the scenes' insight and reveals how they prepared the examined event. The positions presented in the debate by the invited candidates are then briefly analysed, with a focus on issues that offered a clash of ideas and on what distinguished the tone of the debate from other debates in the Czech EP election campaign in 2014.

The Analysed Debate and Its Organizers

This chapter focuses on a public panel discussion among candidates of the leading political parties running in the elections, which was organized by two leading Czech independent think-tanks: the Association for International Affairs and the Prague Twenty. Of all the debates organized by various NGOs and the media during the May 2014 election campaign, this particular debate was selected for analysis mainly because of the high profile of the two organizers, as well as the declared purpose of the panel discussion. The motto of the discussion was: 'Will the EU help the Czech economy?' The two organizing think-tanks intended to tackle the lack of EU-specific knowledge that was typical of the public and was even displayed by some of the candidates. The organizers of the preparatory phase of the event were inspired by the slogan of the 2014 information campaign by the EP: 'This time it's different.'

The Association for International Affairs (AMO) [*Asociace pro mezinárodní otázky*] is a respectable Czech think-tank engaged primarily in the field of international relations and the EU. It has a long record of

activities ranging from research to education. Its Research Centre calls on experts, mostly with a background in political science, law or economics. They comment and analyse topical issues concerning international affairs and the EU. The main mission of the AMO is to provide an open and impartial platform for interaction of experts from academia with civil society organizations, industry, policy-makers, diplomats and journalists. It therefore has no affiliation to any political party or doctrine.

The Prague Twenty (P20) [the same name is used also in the Czech language] is a Czech think-tank established in 2009, the year that marked the 20th anniversary of the fall of communism in Central and Eastern Europe. It organizes various educational events for the interested public, focusing primarily on the development of Czech society. However, its focus also covers the future development of the EU and important issues with particular relevance for Central and Eastern Europe. It does not aim to present a particular line of thought or a one-sided ideology, but rather strives to accommodate conflicting views in order to improve the quality of the general debate and thus of political culture overall in the Czech Republic.

SELECTION OF TOPICS

The event was scheduled to last two hours, including the possibility for expert guests and members of the public who were present to ask questions. The intention was to involve specific topics concerning the next EP that would be interesting for a broader public. Given the time limitation and availability of the speakers, too large a number of topics was considered unsuitable, so it was agreed that five would be covered. The think-tanks decided to prepare analytical overviews of each topic that would serve as background for the semi-guided discussion of the panellists (these were sent to them two weeks in advance) and as background documents for the attending public.

Two criteria were applied in the selection of topics for this debate: firstly, they should be subjects which the EP would be dealing with in its upcoming term, and secondly, the issues should be relevant for the everyday life of Czech citizens and/or important for the Czech economy. The first criterion of the process was treated rather liberally in order not to exclude issues that had already been voted on by the EP, but might be submitted for another reading after a negative vote in the Council. The following five issues were chosen: (1) the Transatlantic Trade and

Investment Partnership (TTIP); (2) the proposed Directive on the Common Consolidated Corporate Tax Base (CCCTB); (3) the proposed Directive on improving the gender balance among non-executive directors of companies listed on stock exchanges; (4) the role of the EP in the control of the post-Lisbon Treaty system of delegated legislation; and (5) the proposed Regulation on interchange fees for card-based payment transactions.

Selection of the Speakers

There were 38 parties and movements running in the Czech 2014 elections to the EP. Like the number of topics, the number of speakers was limited by the scope of the event. In order to provide each speaker with sufficient time to cover all the selected topics, it was decided to invite only representatives of five political parties. In taking this decision, the organizers took into consideration the following factors. The first was the party's results in the last national elections for the lower chamber of the Czech parliament, held in October 2013. Secondly, the organizers reflected on the party's result in the last elections to the EP, held in the Czech Republic in 2009. The results in the opinion polls before the elections to the EP in April 2014 were considered as a supporting factor. Based on these factors it was decided to invite the following five political parties: (1) the Czech Social Democratic Party (ČSSD) [*Česká strana sociálně demokratická*]; (2) ANO 2011 [*Hnutí ANO 2011*]; (3) the Communist Party of Bohemia and Moravia (KSČM) [*Komunistická strana Čech a Moravy*]; (4) TOP 09 and Mayors and Independents (STAN) [*TOP 09 a Starostové a nezávislí*]; and (5) the Civic Democratic Party (ODS) [*Občanská demokratická strana*].

Out of these five parties, only three had already won seats in the EP in 2009. ANO 2011 and TOP 09 (running in the elections together with STAN: Mayors and Independents) were founded just after the 2009 elections to the EP. ANO 2011 was, however, the second strongest political party in the 2013 elections for the national parliament (18.65 % of the vote) with the conservative TOP 09 coming fourth (11.99 % of the vote). Out of all political parties and movements represented in the lower chamber of the Czech parliament, only the two smallest political parties, the populist movement ÚSVIT [*Úsvit přímé demokracie Tomia Okamury*] and the Christian Democratic Party (KDU–ČSL) [*Křesťanská a demokratická unie–Československá strana lidová*], were not invited to the debate. The decision to exclude ÚSVIT was apparently easier owing to their rather

poor result in the last national elections, and the fact that at the time of the May 2014 elections, the party had no seats in the EP. This decision was later proved right as the ÚSVIT movement won only 3.12 % of the vote in the 2014 elections to the EP and thus did not pass the 5 % threshold to obtain seats. However, the decision to exclude the Christian Democratic Party KDU–ČSL was more problematic. It was the smallest political party in the lower chamber of the Czech parliament, yet it still held two seats in the EP of 2009. With several polls suggesting that the KDU–ČSL would achieve a better result than the Civic Democratic Party (ODS), the possibility of inviting the KDU-ČSL instead of the ODS was considered. However, as the ODS had come first in the last elections to the EP in 2009 (nine seats out of the total of 22), it was given preference in the end. The suggestion to invite the KDU–ČSL as a sixth member of the discussion was finally dismissed for capacity reasons. In the end, the KDU–ČSL won three seats (9.95 % of the vote) in the 2014 elections, thus beating the ODS, which won only two seats (7.67 %of the vote). This may have cast a slightly negative light on the decision not to invite the KDU–ČSL. On the other hand, both the uninvited KDU–ČSL and the invited TOP 09 declared their allegiance to the European People's Party (EPP) for the next parliamentary term. It can be argued that the decision to invite the moderately Eurosceptic ODS, which belongs to the European Conservative and Reformists Group (ECR), was enriching for the discussion and brought more diversity of views. With the exception of this slight controversy, the choice of candidates proved reasonable. Of the total of 21 Czech seats in the EP, the invited parties won 17 seats; the remaining four were shared between the KDU-ČSL (three seats) and Svobodní (one seat). This suggests that the invited political parties and their representatives were a representative sample of the most relevant political forces in the Czech Republic.

The selected five political parties represented a diverse spectrum, with regard to the groups in the EP to which they declared their prospective allegiance in the next parliamentary term. In fact, each of them belonged to a different grouping in the EP.

The selection of the five political parties and movements was followed by deciding who should be the individual speakers/representatives for the selected parties. The initial intention to invite the five leading candidates (the candidates ranking first on the lists of their parties) was difficult to fulfil. The unavailability of the candidates, who were busy campaigning, was identified as the biggest problem. The two political parties which had

been the most successful in the last Czech national elections, in 2013, and which were at the same time the two main government parties (ČSSD and ANO 2011) wanted to be present together at the debate, and each made the presence of their leading candidate conditional on the attendance of the leading candidate of the other government party.

Introduction of the Speakers and Their Political Parties

The process of inviting the speakers took several weeks and involved intensive communication between the organizers and the secretariats of the parties. In the end, only one party (TOP 09 and Mayors and Independents) agreed to nominate its leading candidate (Luděk Niedermayer) for the panel discussion. All three political parties which were already represented in the EP, the ODS, the ČSSD and the KSČM, nominated their incumbent Members of the EP (MEPs), but not their leading candidates. The choice made by these three political parties may be considered a strategic move, reflecting the topics announced and the expected level of expertise required for the discussion. For most of the selected debate topics, the incumbent MEPs had been involved in the previous phases of the legislative process, and could thus draw on their practical experience at the EP. This hypothesis seems further confirmed by the fact that the leading candidates of both the ČSSD (Jan Keller) and the KSČM (Kateřina Konečná) were not MEPs. The strategy of nominating someone with an extensive and up-to-date knowledge of EU policies could also be seen in the nomination of Jiří Šír, a diplomat working in the Permanent Representation of the Czech Republic at the EU, who was nominated to the panel discussion by ANO 2011. This interpretation of the strategies used by the invited political subjects can be expanded even further: it may be the case that the political parties do not necessarily select their leading candidates based only on their expertise in EU policies. However, when such expertise is clearly called for, they put forward a candidate from a lower position on the list who has a more suitable background for the task at hand.

ANO 2011 nominated **Jiří Šír**, a member of the Permanent Representation of the Czech Republic at the EU and number six on the candidate list. ANO 2011 won the 2014 European elections in the Czech Republic, yet obtained only four seats (16.13 % of the vote). Mr Šír was thus not among the successful candidates.

TOP 09 sent its leading candidate **Luděk Niedermayer**, the former Vice-Governor of the Czech National Bank. TOP 09 and Mayors and Independents (STAN) came second and won four seats (with 15.95 % of the vote). Mr Niedermayer thus became an MEP.

The Czech Social Democratic Party (**ČSSD**) was represented by **Libor Rouček**, an MEP and number nine on the party´s list. Libor Rouček had been elected to the EP in 2004 and 2009, and thus was running for his third term. From 2009 to 2012 he had been a Vice-President of the EP. The ČSSD came third in the 2014 elections and won four sets (14.17 % of the vote). Mr Rouček was thus not re-elected.

The extreme left-wing Communist Party of Bohemia and Moravia (**KSČM**) nominated **Miloslav Ransdorf,** an MEP and number four on the candidate list. Mr Ransdorf had also been elected to the EP in 2004 and 2009. The KSČM came fourth in the 2014 elections and received three seats (10.98 % of the votes). Mr Ransdorf was elected to the EP for the third time in a row, as thanks to preferential votes he beat the higher-ranking candidates of the KSČM.

Finally, the right-wing and moderately Eurosceptic Civic Democratic Party (**ODS**) responded to the invitation to the panel discussion with the nomination of **Oldřich Vlasák,** the Vice-President of the EP and number four on the list of ODS. Oldřich Vlasák had been elected to the EP in 2004 and 2009 and was running for his third term in office. From 2012 to 2014 he had been a vice-president of the EP. The ODS came sixth in the 2014 elections (just after the KDU-ČSL) and won only two seats (with 7.67 % of the vote). Mr Vlasák was therefore not re-elected.

Level of Controversy in the Positions Expressed in the Panel Discussion

All invited candidates agreed on the need to improve the level of awareness of important EU issues and appreciated the opportunity to draw the attention of the public to issues which would be debated in the EP in the next five-year term.

Only the issues of the proposed Directive on the CCCTB and the TTIP were contentious enough to induce diverse positions among the speakers in this debate. On the TTIP, the variety of opinions reflected different aspects of the negotiated treaty that the speakers considered beneficial or threatening, and different levels of criticism towards the possible content of the treaty. Miloslav Ransdorf (KSČM), focusing on the issue of the

arbitration clauses and data protection, voiced significantly more concern about the impact of the negotiated treaty than the other speakers.

An even greater variety of positions was revealed on the CCCTB. In this case four different opinions were provided. Three of them could be considered to reveal a rather negative approach to the proposal and one was more or less positive. Each of the three negative approaches was different.

Oldřich Vlasák (ODS) offered a right-wing and Eurosceptic reasoning for rejection of the CCCTB. He feared that the CCCTB could be a first move towards the unacceptable unification of corporate tax rates. For him, tax competition between member states of the EU was necessary, and companies selecting the CCCTB would diminish the positive impact of tax competition. A left-wing Eurosceptic argumentation was put forward by Miloslav Ransdorf (KSČM), who stressed that the idea of tax neutrality included in the CCCTB proposal was to the detriment of the necessary capacity of the government to influence the structure of the national economy through tax measures. Both of the positions thus refused the CCCTB proposal, one from the perspective of tax competition between member states for the sake of lower taxes and the other from the perspective of a denial of tax neutrality for the sake of preserving the possibility that individual states could intervene in their economy through tax legislation.

The last negative approach to the CCCTB proposal was based more on the objection related to possible re-distribution of tax revenue. Jiří Šír (ANO 2011) stressed that owing to the uncertainty over the outcome of the suggested CCCTB, it was legitimate for the Czech Republic to vote against the CCCTB. However, the country must be able to explain clearly its reasons for doing so.

The only position supportive of the CCCTB was expressed by Luděk Niedermayer (TOP 09). For Mr Niedermayer, the CCCTB proposal should be considered from an expert point of view rather than ideologically. It was a key strategic issue which should not be dealt with merely from the short-term perspective. Libor Rouček (ČSSD) did not mention this issue.

The remaining three issues were dealt with in highly consensual terms. This could be interpreted as a general tendency of the speakers to narrate most of the problems from the perspective of a Czech position rather than in terms of the ideological approaches of their respective political parties and prospective groupings in the EP.

The collegial atmosphere of the debate was in stark contrast to most other election debates broadcast on television or published in other media, in which the candidates showed more animosity towards each other and took the chance to launch personal attacks. The three MEPs relied in their answers largely on their experience and told several anecdotes to depict their working life in the EP. On the one hand, this served well to show their insight into and knowledge of what goes on behind the scenes, and was therefore a 'bonus' for the debate, the aim of which was to improve general awareness of the role and tasks of the EP. On the other hand, this style was occasionally to the detriment of a clear statement of their positions and could be considered an 'escape strategy', adopted instead of directly discussing the issues in question.

Conclusion

Think-tanks specializing in European affairs can play an important role in the process that leads to a Czech public becoming better informed about the topical issues of the EP. This chapter has analysed one event of the election campaign: a panel discussion focused on five issues truly relevant for the upcoming EP, organized by two Czech independent think-tanks (AMO and P20). It was revealed that the Czech political parties were interested in participating in such events and preferred to be represented by their incumbent MEPs, or by a candidate with an extensive knowledge of the policies of the EU, if the party did not have representatives in the EP from previous elections. The media coverage of this event was, however, rather limited, as only one national daily reported on it.

The panel discussion was a good example of an event clearly focusing on European-wide issues. The topics of discussion were relevant for the EP and the Czech public. Owing to low media coverage, however, this debate alone could not appreciably alter the overall tone and content of the electoral campaign in the Czech Republic. The difference between the tone of this event and the general lack of interest in EU issues in the Czech Republic might explain why the media coverage of this event was limited. Despite its curbed impact, the analysed debate revealed a possible model for co-operation between established think-tanks, media and political parties in the Czech Republic. In future, this may be an important source for improvement of the dramatically low Czech turnout in elections to the EP.

Notes

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Ideological Premises, Candidates' Recruitment, Vote Results

What's the Right Kick-Off to a Good Finish? Polish Political Parties and Their Strategies in the 2014 European Parliament Elections

Marzena Cichosz

Introduction

Today, dubbing European Parliament (EP) elections as 'second-order' is something of a truism, since such a conclusion has already been expressed by numerous authors, with regard to both national-level rivalries and the entire European electoral market.[1] EP elections are considered to be of secondary importance by both politicians and citizens: recent research by the Public Opinion Research Centre (CBOS), revealed that approximately 60 % of Poles are convinced that European elections are largely insignificant.[2] This opinion is reflected in turnout rates, which are consistently lower than in the case of national parliamentary elections. As for political actors, their low regard for EP elections translates into less intense campaigns. Moreover, despite the fact these elections concern a European-level body, parties tend to focus their agendas on national politics.

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215

Nonetheless, in Poland, the 2014 EP elections could have been treated somewhat differently, at least by political entities—primarily because they marked the beginning of a two-year long 'electoral marathon' that would also see local elections (autumn 2014), a presidential election (spring 2015) and national parliamentary elections (autumn 2015). For well-established parties, it was a chance to confirm their strong position and possibly make some new gains. For new actors, it was an opportunity to break into the market, since in EP elections people are less likely to vote 'strategically': in other words, they are more willing to vote according to their actual views and preferences.[3] Hence, smaller parties that have little chance of success in national elections are more likely to be supported. All this makes the strategies adopted by Polish formations before the 2014 EP elections a subject worthy of closer examination.

Research Outline

The strategies adopted by political parties are among those elements that are usually difficult to assess. This is because parties do not reveal them either to the public at large or to researchers. In most cases, their content can only be inferred *ex post*, by reviewing electoral agendas and the activities undertaken by parties and their leaders and, subsequently, by juxtaposing such analysis with research on the electorate's preferences. The research presented in this article follows this path. The main questions to be answered here refer to goals and strategies that political actors adopted for the 2014 EP elections.

Parties' strategies—the way they specify their goals for a given electoral contest—depend mostly on their market positions. It is the market share that determines their aspirations. Butler and Collins suggested adopting certain categories from theories of marketing in economics to describe market positions held by political entities. Hence, they distinguished between four types of parties: (1) 'the leader,' who enjoys the biggest market share; (2) 'challengers'—entities that adopt offensive strategies (e.g., attacking the leader's position); (3) 'followers'—parties that are content to mimic strategies and agendas employed by other players (usually, the leader); (4) 'nichers'—formations focused on narrow segments of the market, aiming to create and occupy a specific niche.[4] Therefore, the first step in identifying Polish parties' objectives is to determine their market positions before and during the election campaign.

Throughout a campaign, crucial strategic decisions concern parties' relations with their electorate—that is, garnering and maintaining a certain level of support. Other vital matters, such as attitude toward rivals or positioning of the agenda, are merely the consequence of one basic choice: determining one's target groups. Hence, any assessment of strategy—its innovativeness, defensive or offensive character—has to revolve around the party's ability to identify its potential voters.

Another element subjected to analysis is the content of the agendas presented by political entities. These documents not only constitute tools to achieve party goals, but also suggest what is at stake in the electoral rivalry. This chapter describes two elements of each party's agenda: the manifesto and the image. There are several reasons why image and its key 'selling points' are worthy of attention. First of all, when preparing election manifestoes, parties tend to focus on the overall direction of the policies they propose, rarely delving into any details. As a result, manifestoes are usually vague and contain very few apparent differences. Instead, such differences are more likely to be communicated by leaders in their public appearances and emphasized in the party's image. Secondly, it is very difficult for political actors to predict all the subjects that may rise to the forefront of public attention throughout the campaign. Thus, they can hardly be expected to adapt their agendas in advance to cover all possibilities.

The image analysis presented here is based on the concept of political image as a phenomenon determined by five major components: (1) social (a candidate's/party's association with certain segments of society); (2) functional (related to competences and experience that a given entity claims to possess); (3) programmatic (concerning key slogans and the positioning of agenda); (4) epistemic (referring to voters' familiarity with candidates and their ideas—the 'well-established, trustworthy' versus 'all-new, with an eye toward change' rhetoric); (5) emotional (mostly related to the values professed by a given entity). While this method is derived from Newman's model of voter behaviour,[5] it has been modified to account for conclusions stemming from other research.[6]

The diagnosis of strategies adopted by political parties is based on Ansoff's framework,[7] which employs the 'current/new offer' and 'current/new market' criteria, and distinguishes between:

- market penetration—presenting a previously established agenda to the present market;

- market development—presenting an unchanged agenda (a present product) to a new market;
- product development—offering a new agenda to a present market; one can state that the main goal of such a strategy is to preserve one's share in an already occupied market;
- market diversification—proposing a new agenda to a new market (or a new segment of a previously occupied market).

Bearing in mind earlier remarks, market development and market diversification may be dubbed offensive strategies, while market penetration and product development should be seen as defensive in character.

The analysis encompasses parties represented in the Polish parliament and dominating the political scene (Civic Platform [Platforma Obywatelska], PO; Law and Justice [Prawo i Sprawiedliwość], PiS; Democratic Left Alliance [Sojusz Lewicy Demokratycznej], SLD; Polish People's Party [Polskie Stronnictwo Ludowe], PSL; Europa Plus–Your Movement–Europa Plus [Twój Ruch], EP–TR), as well as new entities created through divisions within already existing formations, for which the 2014 EP election constituted the first electoral test.

Sources subjected to analysis include materials published by political parties for the purpose of the 2014 campaign, information published on their official websites and data on the electorate and its preferences, as collected by public opinion research agencies.

The key considerations contained in this chapter are preceded by a presentation of factors that influence the content of electoral strategies.

Determinants of the 2014 European Parliament Election Campaign in Poland

Political parties operate in a certain environment. Hence, in pursuit of their goals, they are affected by various factors, both internal and external to their domestic political system. When analysing the 2014 EP election campaign, one should consider at least the most important of such factors:

- the structure of rivalry on the Polish national political scene and the position of each party;
- the international political situation in the period before the elections.

Since the 2005 presidential and parliamentary elections, the Polish political market has remained fairly stable. It is a de facto two-party system,

dominated by the rivalry between the centrist, economically liberal PO and the right-wing, ideologically conservative and statist PiS. The market leader position was first occupied by PiS (2005–2007), but since 2007 has shifted into the hands of PO.

Together, these two large political formations cover approximately 70–80 % of all active voters, with PiS controlling the right wing and PO dominating in the centre. They are also the only two parties with any realistic chance of an electoral victory—that is, of garnering the highest support and winning the highest number of parliamentary seats. Their strength allows them to drain votes away from smaller rivals (PO feeds off other centrist or left-wing formations, and PiS off its right-wing competitors), as well as to sway the undecided citizens who make their decisions just before casting their votes and usually choose to support one of the largest parties. For several years PO and PiS have actually reinforced each other in these positions by virtually ignoring smaller parties in the course of the political debate.

Ever since its creation in 2001, PO has presented itself as a rational actor, receptive to 'genuine' social needs. It claims successes in modernizing the country and highlights its concern over Poland's position on the international scene. PO positions itself as a pro-European party. However, in its agenda it points out the need to limit EU legislation to areas that are not sufficiently regulated by national laws.[8] In the EP, PO deputies are affiliated with the largest political group—the European People's Party (EPP). Between 2011 and 2014, PO's support ranged from 30 to 40 %, but a substantial portion of PO's supporters are what one could call PiS's negative electorate—people who see the Civic Platform as a 'lesser evil'. This is why PO's electorate is less loyal than that of PiS—if another political actor emerged as a better, stronger safeguard against the threat of PiS coming into power, it would be able to attract votes from many people who had previously endorsed PO.

Of all Polish parties, PiS possesses the most mobilized electorate. This ensures Jarosław Kaczyński's formation a consistent support in the region of 30 %. In fact, however, PiS's strong results are possible partly thanks to the backing the party receives from its major stakeholders: the Catholic Church and the Solidarity trade union. Since 2001, PiS has kept its agenda focused on axiological issues. It portrays itself as the defender of 'true patriotism', Polish families, the Catholic religion and the state. In the light of such rhetoric, it is only natural that it opposes further European integration. To express its Euroscepticism, PiS has placed its MEPs in the European Conservatives and Reformists (ECR) group. PiS's supporters are on average less educated and more religious.

Since 2005, the left side of the Polish political spectrum has been very much on the back foot. The biggest left-wing formation, the post-communist Democratic Left Alliance [Sojusz Lewicy Demokratycznej], SLD), which in the 1990s garnered as much as 40 % of the vote, for the past ten years has been oscillating between 8 and 15 %. Thus, from being the market leader, it has been brought down to the role of niche—a party supported primarily by former members of the pre-1989 communist mammoth, the Polish United Workers' Party. SLD has placed its MEPs in the Socialists & Democrats (S&D) group. On the domestic political scene it is viewed as a pro-EU formation.

Another entity consistently present on the Polish political scene is the agrarian party, the Polish People's Party [Polskie Stronnictwo Ludowe], PSL). It is also a niche party, supported mostly by inhabitants of rural areas in central and eastern Poland. Its results in national parliamentary elections usually do not exceed 8 % of the vote. While PSL's MEPs, just like their colleagues from PO, belong to the European People's Party (EPP), the party presents itself as 'Euro-realist': it acknowledges and accepts the notion of further European integration, but is clearly against adopting a federalist model.[9]

2011 saw the emergence of a new player. Palikot's Movement entered the scene with a liberal economic and (more notably) axiological agenda. Formed shortly before that year's parliamentary election, the party won a solid 10 % of the vote and became the third largest force in the Sejm (the lower chamber of Polish parliament). Among its supporters, 21 % come from the youngest group of eligible voters—people aged 18–24, most of whom declare atheism or do not participate in religious practices.[10] Being a new formation, in 2011 it also drew those citizens who, in an act of disillusionment with the political status quo, chose to vote against all mainstream parties. It competes with SLD for the support of axiological left-wingers and the pro-European electorate, and with PO for the votes of economic liberals. After its initial success, Palikot's Movement (in 2013 rechristened Your Movement) lost much of its appeal: a January 2014 poll estimated its electorate at a scant 3 %.[11]

Last, but not least, an overview of the Polish political scene should include the Congress of the New Right [Kongres Nowej Prawicy], KNP). Congress's leader, Janusz Korwin-Mikke, has chosen to enhance his political stature mostly through an online blog. He has become a popular figure with Internet users: his Facebook page has over 600,000 'likes'—something of a record in Polish politics. Korwin-Mikke's agenda

is economically liberal, socially conservative and consistently, uncompromisingly anti-EU.[12] A large part of his followers (as much as 40 %) are men aged 18–25.

The debate before the 2014 EP election and preferences of Polish voters were influenced by two major external factors. The first was the 2008–2009 economic crisis. Although the Polish economy stood the test fairly well compared to many other European countries, the struggles of the Eurozone affected people's attitudes toward the EU. While a prevailing majority (over 80 %) of Poles still support Poland's membership in the EU,[13] many citizens express certain reservations about deepening European integration, particularly in its economic aspect. According to a January 2013 public opinion poll, 64 % of interviewees did not want Poland to adopt the euro. In a similar poll conducted in 2009, over 50 % of citizens had been in favour of adopting the common European currency.[14]

The second issue to emerge in the public debate before the EP election was the situation in Ukraine. Russia's military aggression and annexation of Crimea (March 2014) was condemned by nearly all political entities in Poland. The Polish government supported the protesters who in the early weeks of 2014 gathered in the Maidan square. It was also quick to recognize Ukraine's interim government and Yanukovich's successor as President, Petro Poroshenko. Moreover, it was a vocal advocate for Ukraine's interests at EU level. Moscow's aggressive moves spurred a noticeable change in Poles' view of national security. At the beginning of 2014, only 10 % of interviewees believed Russia presented a genuine military threat to Poland.[15] However, in May the same year, over 60 % admitted to fear for the security of Poland and the entire EU. More than half of Polish citizens believed Poland should actively participate in resolving the conflict in Ukraine.[16]

Strategies Adopted by Political Actors for the Campaign

The strategies adopted by the two biggest political parties before the 2014 EP elections contained both offensive and defensive aspects. In order to further broaden their support base, they supplemented their agendas and images with additional elements.

As the market leader and the governing party, PO was forced into defending its achievements on the European scene and promising even more successes in the future. Its campaign was conducted by party

structures and utilized the image of well-known MEPs. However, bearing in mind the changing international political situation, PO engaged in an offensive strategy by taking the leading role in the debate on Poland's military and energy security—a subject previously largely monopolized by its main competitor. The credibility of this part of PO's agenda rested upon the image of its leader, the then Prime Minister Donald Tusk, and the fact that public administration would ensure effective implementation of the government's policy. Tusk repeatedly referred to the threat to peace looming behind Poland's Eastern borders. He was also clear about what he saw as cornerstones of national security: stable internal and foreign policies, membership in the EU and NATO, as well as close relations with Ukraine.[17] All in all, PO presented itself as an effective, pragmatic player whose policies, both domestic and foreign, were predictable and uncontroversial. It also included in its image elements such as concern for national security and patriotism.

It seems as if PiS prepared its strategy very carefully, with an eye toward all the elections that were to come in 2014 and 2015. Its extensive agenda contained a comprehensive plan for reforming state institutions, as well as a voluminous section on economic and social issues. Additionally, the party prepared a separate agenda addressed specifically at a single sector of the electorate: farmers.[18]

The purpose behind these moves was to correct PiS's earlier agenda and supplement its image as the 'protector of basic values' with the pro-social component and willingness to engage in a dialogue with citizens. Such a path promised Jarosław Kaczyński's formation a chance to gain increased support at the expense of its rivals (for example, the then co-governing PSL) and to strengthen its appeal to the group of wavering voters.

However, PO's strong stance toward Russia put PiS in an awkward position. Suddenly, the main competitor had not only 'stolen' one of PiS's key arguments in the area of international politics, but had also effectively forced PiS to acknowledge the government's line of foreign policy. This was evident when Kaczyński endorsed the government's stance with regard to the Ukraine crisis during a parliamentary debate.[19] Hence, in the discourse on national security and foreign policy, PiS was bound to play second fiddle.

Threatened by PiS's increasing appeal among inhabitants of rural areas, PSL focused its agenda on social and economic matters ('defending the interests of Polish families'). Its intended image was that of the protector of traditional values (for example, the Christian roots of Europe). To dis-

tinguish itself from PiS, PSL juxtaposed its conciliatory approach to making politics with PiS's 'political brawling'—that is, its tendency to provoke conflicts and its ruthless criticism of all its competitors.[20]

The competition for domination on the left side of the political market was between two coalitions: Democratic Left Alliance–Labour Union [Sojusz Lewicy Demokratycznej–Unia Pracy], UP), and Europe Plus–Your Movement [Europa Plus–Twój Ruch], EP-TR). Both entities prepared a similar agenda. SLD–UP published its proposals in two major documents: the PES Common Manifesto for the European Elections 2014 'Towards a New Europe',[21] and its own agenda entitled 'Towards Change'.[22] Both documents were centred around economic and social issues. Still struggling to regain its footing after heavy losses in several previous elections, SLD defended its position and tried to maintain the support of its narrow electorate. For this purpose, it referred to epistemic elements in the party's image. It portrayed itself as a pragmatic, rational actor, well known to voters and established in domestic politics. It also stressed its presence in PES—the second-strongest political group in the EP.[23]

Reacting to the erosion of its support, Your Movement chose to form a coalition with several smaller left-wing formations, thus creating Europe Plus–Your Movement. To further bolster its offensive, it convinced a part of SLD members (including several well-known MEPs formerly affiliated with the SLD–UP coalition) to 'jump ships' and join its ranks. Over 90 % of its agenda, entitled 'It's in Brussels where we change Poland', was devoted to economics. As the only political entity in Poland, the coalition was clearly in favour of adopting the euro.[24]

Led by Janusz Korwin-Mikke, the Congress of the New Right [Kongres Nowej Prawicy], KNP) tried to enter the parliamentary arena by embarking on the most offensive campaign of all Polish political entities that participated in the 2014 EP election. It positioned itself as the only truly anti-EU party, attacking all its rivals for their pro-European attitude. In the words of KNP's leader, their purpose was to 'get into the European Parliament, plant a bomb and blow the whole thing up!'.[25] KNP focused its criticism of the EU on bureaucracy and the legal system, which, in its view, limited the sovereignty of EU member states.[26] In the final weeks of the campaign, the Congress appealed for support to the negative electorate of all mainstream forces by emphasizing its anti-establishment attitude.[27] The strategy proved successful, giving Korwin-Mikke's formation 7 % of the vote, which translated into four MEP mandates.

Conclusions

Over three decades ago, Budge and Farlie noted that the traditional way of running election campaigns (that is, the government hails its own achievements, while the opposition criticizes and proposes supposedly better solutions) was gradually being replaced by a new approach, whereby each party repeats its ideas and ignores its competitors for as long as possible.[28] In Poland, this has not completely been the case. The debate is dominated by the two biggest rivals (PO and PiS) which conduct their campaigns traditionally—by taking opposite stances—but ignore less influential actors. Conveniently, each successive campaign provides PO and PiS with a chance to solidify the existing division of the electorate. Firing from their strong, well-entrenched positions, these most powerful players are able to drain support away from smaller entities and sway wavering voters. The 2014 EP campaign saw both PO and PiS maintain this course, while enhancing their agendas and (above all) images with additional elements. PO concentrated on security and on presenting itself as the protector of Polish *raison d'état*. Its message was emotionally charged and appealed to the fear that the aggressive policy of the Russian Federation has evoked among the Poles.

PiS, in turn, attempted to add functional elements to its image by claiming to be competent in the area of economic and social issues. Both PO and PiS elected market differentiation strategies. Another entity to go down this path was Europe Plus–Your Movement. Its 2014 agenda saw the party move away from the image of a new actor appealing to the disillusioned, and towards the image of experience, competence and predictability. This called for an emphasizing of functional aspects.

Market penetration strategies were adopted by SLD–UP and PSL, both of which focused on preserving their positions and kept their agendas largely unmodified.

Finally, there was the surprising success story of the Congress of the New Right. The fact that Korwin-Mikke's formation garnered sufficient support to place its representatives in the EP is sometimes viewed as an expression of increasingly Eurosceptic, or even anti-EU, attitudes. Such an interpretation is not necessarily well grounded. In general, Poles remain supportive of the EU. Moreover, the EU has grown into one of those institutions that are believed to stabilize the situation in Europe. Nonetheless, its extensive bureaucracy draws increasing criticism, while the continuing economic struggles of some EU member states evoke fears that the crisis

may soon engulf the entire Eurozone. The New Right's good result in the 2014 election should most probably be attributed to the fact that, as a new actor (new offer) on the political scene, it succeeded by convincing citizens disillusioned with all major parties to vote 'against the mainstream'.

NOTES

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Results of the European Parliament Elections in Poland

Robert Alberski

INTRODUCTION

The European Parliament (EP) elections, held in Poland on 25 May 2014, were the first nationwide elections since October 2011. They also opened a new, 18-month election period, including the local government elections (November 2014), presidential election (May 2015) and parliament elections (October 2015). Therefore, the main parties in the political scene treated them very seriously, seeing them as a chance to determine their real political power. Election rivalry proceeded on two different levels. For Civic Platform [Platforma Obywatelska: PO] and for Law and Justice [Prawo i Sprawiedliwość: PiS], winning this election was a matter of prestige. The main party of the governing coalition wanted to confirm their dominance, despite the defeat in the 2013 by-elections and falling support in the polls. For Law and Justice, after losing six elections in a row, victory in the EP elections was supposed to be the first step towards regaining power in Poland. For other Polish political parties these elections were a fight for survival. The Democratic Left Alliance [Sojusz Lewicy Demokratycznej: SLD]—entering these elections in a coalition with another left-wing party,

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229

not present in the Polish parliament, Labour United [Unia Pracy: UP], and the Polish People's Party [Polskie Stronnictwo Ludowe: PSL], wanted to maintain their status among the parties that safely exceed the electoral threshold. However, for new political initiatives, such as the centre-left coalition Europe Plus–Your Movement (including former SLD Members of the EP, in conflict with their old party and Janusz Palikot's party), Solidarity Poland (politicians previously connected with Law and Justice, with their leader Zbigniew Ziobro, former justice minister in Jarosław Kaczyński's government), Poland Together, New Right and the National Movement, the EP elections were a chance to emerge onto the Polish political scene.

In this chapter I will present data about voter turnout in the 2014 EP elections in Poland, election results and also shifts in electoral support in the years 2009–2014. In the final part I will analyse the political consequences of the EP elections in Europe and in Poland.

European Parliament Election Turnout in 2014

As in the previous two EP elections, voter turnout in Poland was one of the lowest in the European Union (EU), reaching only 23.83 %, compared to a European average of 43.09 %. Only in Slovakia (13 %), the Czech Republic (19.5 %) and Slovenia (20.96 %) did fewer people vote. The average turnout across the EU was slightly higher than in the previous election (43.09 % in 2014 compared with 43 per % in 2009), but in many individual countries the turnout dropped slightly. Among these was Poland.

Voter turnout in individual constituencies in 2014 was similar to that in the two earlier EP elections. Out of the 13 constituencies established in Poland, the absolute turnout leader was constituency 4, covering Warsaw and eight neighbouring *powiats* (counties). Voter turnout in this constituency amounted to 35.55 %. However, it was also in this constituency that the largest relative decline in the number of voters was noted—a drop of as much as 3.59 percentage points compared to the 2009 figures. Following tradition, the lowest turnout in EP elections was observed in constituencies 3 (Olsztyn)—19.34 %, 5 (Mazovian voivodeship, excluding Warsaw and neighbouring *powiats*)—20.08 %, and 13 (Gorzów)—20.42 %. A more thorough analysis of voter turnout data indicates that the turnout may have had a significant impact on the election results. Four constituencies where the percentage of voters increased compared to 2009 (Mazovia, Łódź, Lublin and Rzeszów regions), are the ones with a high level of

support for Law and Justice (or, in wider terms, for the Eurosceptic right-wing parties). At the same time, in constituencies traditionally supporting Civic Platform or left-wing parties (Warsaw, Gdańsk, Poznań, Katowice, Wrocław), the voter turnout dropped by between 1.04 and 3.59 percentage points. The 2014 elections also confirmed that the EP elections could be referred to as 'big-city' elections, with turnout in the largest cities being well above the average: in Warsaw it amounted to 38 %, in Kraków to over 40 %, in Gdańsk to nearly 36 %, in Wrocław to more than 33 %, in Poznań to over 32 % and in Łódź to over 29 %.

Low turnout in all previous EP elections has been broadly analysed in the Polish political science literature. Some authors emphasize the complex election system;[1] others suggest that low turnout is the result of the strategies of Polish political parties, which do not attach very high priority to these elections.[2] However, the prevalent view is that low level of involvement in these elections results from a common belief in the relatively low significance of the EP in the EU government structure (as most of the power is held by non-elected institutions). Another reason is that the representatives of any specific country have very little influence on the decisions made by the EP.[3]

The Results of the 2014 European Parliament Elections in Poland

In the race for the 51 seats assigned to Poland in the EP, 12 committees participated, five of which obtained seats (see Table 16.1). As in 2009, the fight for election victory was between Civic Platform (PO) and Law and Justice (PiS). It was very close, but in the end Civic Platform maintained the leading place. However, the party lost about 1 million voters and six seats in the EP. The second place was taken by Law and Justice. Jarosław Kaczyński's party gained about 200,000 voters, and its number of seats rose from 15 to 19.

However, the biggest surprise was the success of the extreme right and anti-European party New Right, with Janusz Korwin-Mikke as its leader, which debuted in the EP election. They received more than 0.5 million votes and four seats. Left-wing parties suffered high losses. The SLD-UP coalition lost a third of its electoral support and two seats as compared to the 2009 election. The other left-wing coalition, Europe Plus–Your Movement, failed to pass the electoral threshold. Only the PSL maintained its electoral support and number of seats.[4] The European elections ended with defeat for

Table 16.1 The results of the European Parliament elections in 2009 and 2014

Election committees	2009			2014		
	Number of votes	Votes percentage	Number of seats	Number of votes	Votes percentage	Number of seats
PO	3,271,852	44.43	25	2,271,215	32.12	19 (−6)
PiS	2,017,607	27.40	15	2,246,870	31.78	19 (+4)
SLD-UP	908,765	12.34	7	667,319	9.44	5 (−2)
The New Right	–	–	–	505,586	7.15	4 (+4)
PSL	516,146	7.01	3	480,846	6.80	4 (+1)
Solidarity Poland	–	–	–	281,079	3.98	–
Europe Plus–Your Movement	–	–	–	252,779	3.58	–
Poland Together	–	–	–	223,733	3.16	–
The National Movement	–	–	–	98,626	1.40	–
Greens	–	–	–	22,481	0.32	–
Direct Democracy	–	–	–	16,222	0.23	–
Self-defence	107,185	1.46	–	2,729	0.04	–
PdP Centrolewica	179,602	2.44	–	–	–	–
Republic of Poland Right	143,966	1.95	–	–	–	–
Libertas	83,754	1.14	–	–	–	–
UPR	81,146	1.10	–	–	–	–
PPP	51,872	0.70	–	–	–	–
Forward	1,537	0.02	–	–	–	–

Abbreviations used in the table: PO: Civic Platform (Pol. Platforma Obywatelska); PiS: Law and Justic (Pol. Prawo i Sprawiedliwość); SLD-UP: Democratic Left Alliance–Labour United (Pol. Sojusz Lewicy Demokratycznej–Unia Pracy); PSL: Polish People's Party (Pol. Polskie Stronnictwo Ludowe); PdP Centrolewica: Agreement for the Future Centre-Left (Pol. Porozumienie dla Przyszłości Centrolewica—a coalition of three parties: Democratic Party, Social Democratic Party, and Greens 2004); UPR: Real Politics Union (Pol. Unia Polityki Realnej); PPP: Polish Labour Party (Pol. Polska Partia Pracy); PPS: Polish Socialist Party (Pol. Polska Partia Socjalistyczna)

the right-wing breakaway parties, Solidarity Poland and Poland Together, which did not pass the electoral threshold, receiving slightly above 200,000 votes each. Four other parties—National Movement, Self-defence, Greens and Direct Democracy—received only marginal support.

M. Pedersen's volatility index reached a high value of 24.2 for the EP elections in Poland in the years 2009–2014. However, in comparison with the previous elections, we have a relative stabilization of electoral behaviour: the value of this index for the years 2004–2009 was 38.7.[5]

As compared to the 2009 EP elections, the 2014 elections slightly increased the fragmentation of the political party system in Poland. The Laakso and Taagepery effective number of parties index rose both on the electoral and parliamentary levels (see Table 16.2). On the other hand, the percentage of votes received by the winning party decreased—from 44.43 % in 2009 to 32.21 % in 2014. In addition, the two-party index was lower in 2014 (63.91) than in 2009 (71.83). However, both these indices remain much higher than in 2004, when the former reached 24.1 points, while the latter amounted to 40.02 points. Another noteworthy aspect of the 2014 elections is the large percentage of votes received by parties below the electoral threshold. All this data indicates a degree of erosion of support for the parliamentary political parties, yet not significant enough for major changes on the national political scene in Poland.

As in the previous EP elections, Civic Platform (PO) received the highest support in Gdańsk (47.69 %), Warsaw (40.43 %), Katowice (39.82 %), and Wrocław (38.14 %) voting constituencies. The party received the lowest numbers of votes in south-eastern Poland, in the regions of Lublin (16.24 %) and Rzeszów (18.43 %). This structure of votes was typical for PO. However, the governing party suffered a serious loss of support in all voting constituencies, with the biggest drops in Warsaw, Bydgoszcz and Lublin. In these last two constituencies, the loss of support could be connected with controversial personnel decisions. The first place on the electoral list in Bydgoszcz was given to a very unpopular ex-finance minister,

Table 16.2 Indicators characterizing the European Parliament election system in Poland in the years 2004–2014

Indicators	2004	2009	2014
Number of seats to win	54	50	51
Proportional index	91.72	90.17	93.65
Effective number of parties (electoral level)	7.51	3.27	4.41
Effective number of parties (parliamentary level)	6.13	2.75	3.34
Breakpoint	10.78	12.34	6.8
'Wasted' votes	8.18	8.82	12.70

Source: Own calculations

Jan Vincent Rostowski. The decision to put Michał Kamiński at the head of the PO electoral list in Lublin came as a shock for some party members and for society at large. This politician had recently been one of the leaders of Law and Justice and chief of many of their electoral campaigns, and he had won a seat in the 2009 EP election on the PiS lists.

PO received the most seats (three) in Katowice constituency. They got two each in Gdańsk, Warszawa, Poznań, Kraków and Wrocław constituencies. In each of the remaining ones, with the exception of Lublin, they obtained only one seat. Compared to the previous election results, Donald Tusk's party lost one seat in the EP in each of the following constituencies: Warszawa, Łódź, Lublin, Katowice, Wrocław and Gorzów. The largest numbers of votes were received by those PO candidates who had been active in the European forum: ex-president of the EP Jerzy Buzek (over 250,000 votes), ex-commissioners Danuta Hübner (about 220,000 votes) and Janusz Lewandowski (over 100,000 votes), Member of the EP (MEP) Róża Thun (over 120,000 votes). The ex-mayor of Wroclaw and former culture minister Bogdan Zdrojewski also achieved a good result (over 160,000 votes).

As usual, Law and Justice (PiS) had their best results in south-eastern Poland (Rzeszów and Lublin constituencies) and central Poland (Łódź, Mazovia). Support for Jaroslaw Kaczynski's party was lowest in northern and western Poland. However, it is important to note that in 12 constituencies support for PiS improved. A significant increase in the numbers of voters could be observed in central Poland (apart from Mazovia and Łódź, Bydgoszcz is also worth mentioning, because support for PiS improved by 7 percentage points there). Law and Justice had not received such good results in these parts of Poland since its victory in the presidential and parliamentary elections of 2005. It is very interesting, however, that PiS vote dropped by 7.5 percentage points in the Krakow constituency, including the voivodeships of Lesser Poland and Świętokrzyskie. The reason was competition from Solidarity Poland and Poland Together, which received their highest support in this constituency (Solidarity Poland won 9 % and Poland Together 6 % of the vote). This was because the leaders of both those parties—Zbigniew Ziobro and Jarosław Gowin—were the candidates in this region. It may be that the 76,000 votes lost in this constituency had an ultimate impact on the overall defeat of Law and Justice in the EP election (the total margin by which PO defeated PiS was 24,345 votes across the entire country).

Yet it was in the Krakow voting constituency that PiS gained the highest number of seats (three). The party obtained two seats in each of the following constituencies: Warsaw, Rzeszów, Katowice and Wrocław. In these

regions the party won four new, additional seats. In each of the remaining eight constituencies, Jarosław Kaczyński's party received only one seat. Among PiS candidates, the highest support was received by MEPs Janusz Wojciechowski (over 130,000 votes) and Tomasz Poręba (over 110,000 votes), and also Polish Senator Bolesław Piecha (over 120,000 votes).

As in the 2009 elections, the Democratic Left Alliance and Labour United coalition received the highest support in the voting constituencies which are known as the 'Stronghold of the Left', namely Bydgoszcz (20.86 %) and Gorzów (14.88 %).[6] However, in the latter, support for the left-wing coalition decreased by over 5 percentage points (the drop in support was slightly bigger only in Łódź). Bad results in south-eastern Poland are not a big surprise. It is worth noticing that in constituency 9 (Rzeszów) the SLD-UP coalition did not pass the electoral threshold, receiving only 4.71 % of votes. Similar to Civic Platform, the Democratic Left Alliance and Labour United coalition suffered greater or lesser support losses in all constituencies.

In the 2014 election, SLD–UP lost one seat each in the Warsaw and Kraków constituencies, despite the fact that its list leaders in those regions were two well-known MEPs: Wojciech Olejniczak and Joanna Senyszyn. The coalition maintained its seats in the constituencies of Bydgoszcz (Janusz Zemke), Poznań (Krystyna Łybacka), Katowice (Adam Gierek), Wrocław (Lidia Geringer de Oedenberg),[7] and Gorzów (Bogusław Liberadzki).

The Polish People's Party (PSL) confirmed in the EP elections that it is the party with the most stable electoral support. In almost all constituencies it received very similar results to those in the 2009 election. This time the highest support the PSL received was in Lublin region, where the result was three times higher than the average result across the whole country and 4 percentage points higher than in the 2009 election. This was because Krzysztof Hetman, marshal of Lublin voivodeship, is very popular in the province. The slightly lower PSL result in the 2014 election was due to losses in electoral support, suffered in two constituencies where they had normally had many voters. One of them was Rzeszów constituency, where a corruption scandal had recently occurred, involving the PSL Subcarpathian voivodeship marshal. The other was Mazovian constituency, administered by a controversial marshal, Adam Struzik. He started out at the top of the PSL electoral list in the EP elections. However he received only 9702 votes and did not get a seat. Right before the election it turned out that Mazovia voivodeship was in a very difficult financial situation. The opposition suggested that one of the reasons was the erroneous

policy of the administration headed by Struzik. The fact that draws attention is that in four out of the 13 voting constituencies the Polish People's Party failed to pass the electoral threshold. In 2009 there were only three such constituencies: Warsaw, Katowice and Gdańsk. In 2014, apart from the three above, the party was below the threshold also in Wrocław region.

Similar to the previous EP elections, the PSL received seats in Mazovia (Jarosław Kalinowski), Poznań (Andrzej Grzyb), Lublin (Krzysztof Hetman), and Kraków (Czesław Siekierski). Except for Hetman, all the Polish People's Party MEPs were elected in the same constituencies as in 2009.

Support for New Right, led by Janusz Korwin-Mikke, which was taking part in EP elections for the first time,[8] was distributed very evenly across all constituencies. The party achieved its best result in Katowice (8.68 %) and Kraków (7.91 %), and received the lowest support in Bydgoszcz (5.78 %). New Right obtained one seat in each of four constituencies: Warsaw (Michał Marusik), Kraków (Stanisław Żółtek), Katowice (New Right's leader Janusz Korwin-Mikke) and Wrocław (Robert Iwaszkiewicz). Except for Janusz Korwin-Mikke, who had experience as a member of the Polish parliament, the other MEPs were political novices.

Among other committees, which did not pass the 5 % electoral threshold, the best result in the whole country was achieved by Zbigniew Ziobro's Solidarity Poland (3.98 %). This party received high support in southern Poland: Kraków (9.01 %) and Rzeszów (5.91 %). These are the regions where the right-wing parties are usually very popular. In other constituencies, especially in western and northern Poland, Solidarity Poland received support of only 2–3 %.

The results obtained by the Europe Plus–Your Movement coalition were well below expectations. This was despite the fact that the coalition electoral lists included a lot of well-known left-wing politicians, such as Ryszard Kalisz, Marek Siwiec, Robert Kwiatkowski, Andrzej Celiński and independent senator Kazimierz Kutz, and despite the support of the former president, Aleksander Kwaśniewski. The main constituent of the coalition was Your Movement, led by Janusz Palikot, which, as Palikot's Movement, had received over 10 % of the vote in the 2011 parliamentary elections. Yet in the 2014 EP elections, the entire coalition won only 3.58 % of the vote. Only in Warsaw, did this coalition receive over 6 % of the vote. However, in as many as four electoral constituencies the coalition received below 3 % of the vote (Kraków, Mazovia, Łódź, Gdańsk), and in Rzeszów only 1.95 %.

Jarosław Gowin's Poland Together also proved to be a one-region party, even though it had registered lists in all constituencies. In Kraków region the party received over 6 % of the vote. However, in all other constituencies it received support of below 4 %. It would have been hard to imagine a better result, as the party had been established only six months before the elections and had neither the local structures nor the financial resources necessary to run a successful electoral campaign.

The participation of other committees or parties was merely symbolic. The extreme right-wing National Movement received fewer than 99,000 votes in total across all 13 constituencies. The other groups could not register their electoral lists in all the constituencies. The Greens, who participated in this election as an independent party (in the 2009 election they had been a member of the Agreement for the Future Centre-Left coalition), competed in only five, Direct Democracy in only six, Self-Defence in just two constituencies. In view of the 5 % electoral threshold in the EP elections in Poland, this situation excluded any chances of a good result in the election.

Political Consequences of the European Parliament Elections in Poland

Analysing the political consequences of the first in the series of four elections to be held in Poland in the years 2014–2015, we should consider two aspects: the external, connected with Poland's position in the EP, and the internal, related to the situation on the domestic political scene.

Regarding the first aspect, one may assume that Poland's position in the EP was slightly weakened. This is because the number of Polish MEPs in the two largest EP groups decreased. As in the previous parliamentary term (2009–2014), members of Civic Platform and the Polish People's Party joined the European People's Party, while the MEPs from the SLD represent the Progressive Alliance of Socialists and Democrats group. In the previous term, Poland had a total of 36 MEPs in those two groups. Now there were only 27 (after Lidia Geringer de Oedenberg left SLD). Poland was very poorly represented among centre and left-wing groups in the EP. SLD members represent only 2 % of S&D members. There are no Polish MEPs in the liberal, extreme left-wing and green groups. The growing importance of Law and Justice in the structures of the European Conservatives and Reformists group does not compensate for this. PiS members account for almost a quarter of the ECR group, and are second

only to British Conservatives, who are represented by 20 MEPs. New Right members did not find their place in the EP political structure. They decided to become independent MEPs, which weakens their capabilities in the EP. Poland's weakened position in the EP structures was particularly visible during the negotiations about the distribution of functions in the EP leadership and in the Commissions.

The EP election results triggered a consolidation process on the Polish political scene. After the announcement of the official results, the coalition Europe Plus–Your Movement collapsed. Your Movement leader Janusz Palikot and Democratic Left Alliance chief Leszek Miller started negotiations to co-operate in the Polish parliament. A pretext for starting the negotiations was the outbreak of the so-called 'tape scandal'. This started when a Polish magazine published the transcripts of illegally recorded conversations of leading politicians in Donald Tusk's government (the ministers of internal affairs, finance and foreign affairs) with the head of the National Bank of Poland. The negotiations between two left-wing leaders concerned the registration of joint lists in the local government elections and joint candidates for the mayorships of the biggest cities. However, the talks ended without any agreements being reached. Relations between the politicians of both parties are full of mistrust, owing to their recent fierce competition for the favour of the left-wing electorate. On the other hand, the EP election results clearly demonstrated that this competition severely impairs both parties and may lead to future electoral disasters.

The consolidation of the right-wing political parties is much more advanced. Jarosław Kaczyński proposed a joint start in the next elections to the politicians of Solidarity Poland and Poland Together, the parties which did not pass the electoral threshold in the EP election but took away about half a million votes from Law and Justice. The negotiations started very slowly, because the leaders of the smaller parties tried to ensure for their members the best possible places on the future PiS electoral lists. In the end, however, on 19 July 2014, Jarosław Kaczyński, Zbigniew Ziobro and Jarosław Gowin announced a joint start in the local and parliamentary elections and a plan to nominate a common candidate in the presidential election. This is undoubtedly a success for Jarosław Kaczyński. Thanks to this agreement he ensured himself a monopoly on the right of the political scene. At the same time, he gained many very popular politicians, who—as the 2014 election shows—have significant groups of supporters in certain regions of Poland.

The EP election results, the abovementioned 'tape scandal' and the consolidation processes in the opposition put the governing coalition in a difficult situation. Within two months of the EP elections it had been severely tested. First, after the outbreak of the 'tape scandal', the Prime Minister renewed the vote of confidence for his government. During the next session of the Sejm (the lower house of the Polish parliament), Law and Justice motions for a vote of no confidence, both for the entire government and for one of the contributors to the tape scandal, internal affairs minister Bartłomiej Sienkiewicz, were tabled. Even though all these votes were won by the coalition, they prevented Prime Minister Donald Tusk from using the electoral victory to consolidate his party and take the political initiative. In the July opinion polls, Law and Justice obtained a high advantage. For example in the TNS Poland survey, conducted on 11–16 July 2014, PiS received 35 % support, PO 23 %, SLD 8 %, New Right 5 %, PSL 4 %, and Poland Together, Solidarity Poland and Your Movement 2 % each. These results indicate that Civic Platform did not continue the advantageous trends in the polls from the beginning of 2014, which had resulted in its winning the EP elections.

Conclusions

The 2014 EP elections confirmed that in Poland such elections are not perceived as meaningful.[9] Like the previous two elections, they were characterized a by very small voter turnout. The slight decrease in 2014 concerned mostly those constituencies where pro-European and left-wing parties had usually achieved better results.

Paradoxically, despite the low turnout in the 2014 EP election and the good result for the Eurosceptic parties, Polish people are very content with Poland's membership of the EU. In a 2014 survey, 89 % of respondents declared support for Polish membership of the EU (compared with 7 % opposed to it). In the same survey, 62 % claimed that EU membership ensures Poland more benefits than losses. According to 20 % of respondents, the level of benefits and losses is the same, and only 13 % claimed that the losses surpass the benefits.[10] In this context the EP election results primarily reflect the situation on the Polish political scene.

The May 2014 election also showed the balance of power between the governing Civic Platform party and the main opposition party, Law and Justice. The EP election results in Poland, as in other EU countries, ended with a huge success of right-wing, Eurosceptic and even anti-EU

parties. The governing coalition parties, left-wing and centre-left parties lost some of their supporters. The geographical distribution of support for individual parties confirmed the tendencies observed in Poland in successive elections since the mid-1990s.

The 2014 election results weakened the position of Polish MEPs in the EP. Only the members from PiS are now one of the main forces in their political group. On the other hand, Polish representation in the two biggest EP groups is slightly weaker in terms of numbers than in the 2009–2014 term.

The EP election results triggered a consolidation process on the Polish political scene—among both left-wing and right-wing opposition parties. The weakness of the ruling coalition, visible in the election, put pressure on the government, which is now strongly criticized in Parliament at every opportunity. The result was a shift in the tendencies in the polls two months after the EP election. This time PiS support rose, and support for the governing party decreased. Law and Justice became the favourite for future elections. The EP elections initiated a process of important changes in Polish politics, which lead to the victory of the Law and Justice in presidential and parliamentary elections 2015.

Notes

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   Lech Jańczuk, "Wybory do Parlamentu Europejskiego jako miernik rozwoju społeczeństwa obywatelskiego w Polsce." [Elections to the European Parliament as a measure for the development of civil society in Poland] in *Wybory do Parlamentu Europejskiego na Lubelszczyźnie w 2014 roku*, [Elections to the European Parliament in Lublin region in 2014] ed. Agnieszka Łukasik-Turecka (Lublin: Wydawnictwo Katolickiego Uniwersytetu Lubelskiego, 2015), 48–49.

2. Waldemar Wojtasih, "Partie polityczne i system partyjny RP w wyborach do Parlamentu Europejskiego w 2009 roku," [Political parties and party system of Poland in the European Parliament

elections in 2009] in *Wybory do Parlamentu Europejskiego w Polsce 2009* [Elections to the European Parliament in Poland 2009], ed. Rafał Glajcar and Waldemar Wojtasih (Katowice: Wydawnictwo Remar, 2010), 78–82.

3. Andrzej Antoszewski, "Funkcje eurowyborów," [Features of European Elections] in *Wybory do Parlamentu Europejskiego w 2004 r. na Dolnym Śląsku i Opolszczyźnie,* [Elections to the European Parliament in 2004. Lower Silesia and Opole] ed. Andrzej Antoszewshi (Wrocław: Wydawnictwo Profil, 2006), 18–19.

4. In 2009 this party obtained three seats in the elections. However, during the EP term, after the Treaty of Lisbon, Poland gained one more seat, which was granted to a member of the Polish People's Party.

5. Robert Albershi, "Wyniki wyborów do Parlamentu Europejskiego w 2009 roku na Dolnym Śląsku i Opolszczyźnie," [The results of the elections to the European Parliament in 2009 in Lower Silesia and Opole] in *Wybory do Parlamentu Europejskiego w 2009 roku w okręgu dolnośląsko-opolskim. Uwarunkowania kształtowania strategii wyborczych,* [Elections to the European Parliament in 2009 in the district of Lower Silesia-Opole. Conditions of formation of election strategies] ed. Robert Alberski and Radosław Solarz (Wrocław: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Wrocławskiego, 2011), 139–140.

6. In the EP elections Gorzów constituency (13) included the voivodeships of Lubusz and West Pomerania, where support for SLD is usually very high.

7. A month after the election Lidia Geringer de Oedenberg announced that she was leaving the Democratic Left Alliance party. She claimed that the reason was lack of party support for her efforts to become Vice-President of the EP or one of the EP's quaestors.

8. New Right participated in the parliamentary election in 2011, when they received only 151,837 votes (1.06 %).

9. Wolfgang Merhel, "Embedded and Defective Democracy," *Democratization* 11, no. 5 (2004): 41–42.

10. Centrum Badania Opinii Społecznej, *10 lat członkostwa Polski w Unii Europejskiej. Komunikat z badań no. 52* [Public Opinion Research Center, 10 years of Polish membership in the European Union. A research report no. 52] (Warszawa: CBOS, 2014), 2–5.

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Patterns of Recruitment of Polish Candidates in the 2014 European Parliament Elections

Dariusz Skrzypinski

Introduction

The process of recruiting candidates for elected positions is one of the major challenges faced by party leaders. When they decide to nominate candidates who will later stand for elected posts, they must take into account many, often conflicting, factors. It is therefore not surprising that the mechanisms which govern these processes are an object of study for political scientists.[1]

On the one hand, political leaders are aware that modern democracy is mediatized, which imposes the necessity of filling party positions and public posts with candidates who are skilled in using modern communication methods and tools, and particularly in the effective use of mass media, mainly television.[2] On the other hand, however, they must also take into account other, more complex, aspects of the decision-making process. Leaders not only have to adjust to voters' expectations concerning the personality of their future representatives, but also have to follow certain

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internal objectives, such as maintaining party unity by satisfying faction leaders' personal ambitions and increasing control over the party apparatus. For party leaders, the principal objective at first glance is to maintain the party's market position (electoral support). But two other objectives may also be taken into consideration. The first is related to the necessity of allocating positions on lists to potential members of parties in an electoral coalition. The second objective concerns the situation when a party gives places on lists to the representatives of interest groups with the intention of leveraging resources from them more efficiently.[3]

The problem of recruiting candidates for election is especially important in young democracies, in which the organizational structures of political parties and the bonds connecting them to the electorate are weak. Consequently, the process of creating political elites is the result both of strategic calculations and of various conflicts and complex faction games within the party. R. Solarz points out that 'this type of procedure can be classified as a part of a broader human resources strategy pursued by political actors whose aim is to increase operational efficiency in the political space'.[4] In contrast, M. Cichosz notes that 'sometimes the result of recruitment is the result of rivalry between regional party oligarchs'.[5]

This chapter aims to present the specificity of the process of candidates' selection and appointment for the European Parliament (EP) elections in 2014 in Poland, and also show to what extent the party leaders resolved the abovementioned dilemmas. I will therefore focus on answering the following questions:

- To what extent were party leaders, in their choices of personnel, focused on achieving market goals (gaining political support) and to what extent were they oriented towards meeting other internal and external goals?
- What was the percentage of female candidates?
- What kinds of political career pattern were presented by candidates running for the EP?
- How often did parties put forward current MEPs (incumbents)?
- How many celebrities without political experience (artists, sports stars and so on) were enrolled as candidates?
- Were there any internal party conflicts in the process of preparing election lists?

These questions will be answered on the basis of an analysis of scholarly literature, reports of European institutions, official data from the National Electoral Commission website and media information.

According to Polish electoral law, each electoral committee running in the EP elections can register a list of five to ten candidates in each of 13 electoral districts, and at least 35 % of the nominees enrolled must be female. In the elections of 25 May 2014, there were a total of nine Polish electoral committees running, only seven of which were represented in the national parliament at the time of the elections:

- Liberal Christian Democratic: Civic Platform [Platforma Obywatelska: PO];
- Agrarian: Polish People's Party [Polskie Stronnictwo Ludowe: PSL];
- Centre-Left: Europe Plus–Your Movement [Europa Plus–Twój Ruch: EP–TR];
- Social Democratic Coalition: the Democratic Left Alliance–Labour United [Sojusz Lewicy Demokratycznej–Unia Pracy: SLD–UP];
- Conservative National: Law and Justice [Prawo i Sprawiedliwość–PiS];
- Conservative Liberal, formed by secessionists from the currently ruling Civic Platform: Poland Together [Polska Razem: PR];
- Conservative National, formed by the former members of Law and Justice: Solidarity Poland [Solidarna Polska: SP];
- Conservative and anti-European: New Right [Nowa Prawica: NP];
- Nationalist: National Movement [Ruch Narodowy: RN].

Besides these parties, there were also three regional committees with election lists registered in only some of the 13 districts. However, the following study discusses only the lists of candidates registered by national committees.

Selection of Candidates

As observed by the authors of the report 'Candidate selection procedures for the European elections',[6] the procedures for selecting candidates in member states of the European Union (EU) differ in three ways:

- nomination of the appointing body, where the possible models involve decision-making by voters, by all members of the party, by delegates, by political elites or independently by the head of the party;

- level of centralization of decision making;
- indication of the requirements to be met by candidates.

From the perspective of the authors of the cited report, it may be concluded that the candidate selection procedures applied in the Polish political environment have a low participatory rate, with the decisive role being played here by party elites or even party leaders, whose suggestions may be prevalent in particular situations (Jaroslaw Kaczynski—Law and Justice, Donald Tusk—Civic Platform, Janusz Korwin-Mikke—New Right). There is also a high degree of centralization, as regional committees, in most cases, can only propose candidates, and indeed not infrequently only a proportion of them, whereas all final nominations are made by central authorities. Finally, regarding the requirements to be met by candidates, these are not formulated in a direct way, even though, for example, some groupings hailing from the anti-communist tradition exclude candidates who held political office in the time of the communist dictatorship.

While analysing the catalogue of goals that leaders wanted to achieve through an appropriate selection of names on electoral lists, it should be kept in mind that EP elections are so-called 'secondary elections'.[7] It may therefore be assumed that when political elites and party leaders establish electoral lists, they give the same attention to their external goals related to building the party's market position as to their internal objectives. They are important inasmuch as presence in the EP provides MEPs, and the parties they represent, with prestige, access to information, broad logistic capabilities and significant financial resources to maintain their offices and experts' activities, which prove to be important resources when there are limited budget subsidies for political parties.

When analysing the share of women on electoral lists (Table 17.1), it must be remembered that the Quota Act, which has been legally binding in Poland since 2011, requires the presence of at least 35 % women and 35 % men on electoral lists. Therefore, given the relatively small size of districts in European elections (between two and seven seats, an average of 3.9), we may conclude that differences in the percentages of women on the lists examined are relatively small, varying between 40 and 49.6 %, and in case of the seven parties under discussion not exceeding 45 %. The highest number of women were on the lists of Europe Plus–Your Movement and the Democratic Left Alliance–Labour United, which should be no surprise considering the presence (especially in the first of these) of representatives of feminist groups. In the case of the remaining parties, high

Table 17.1 The share of women on electoral lists

Party	Participation of women (in %)	Number of women placed in pos. 1	Percentage of women among candidates placed in pos. 1 (in %)	Number of women placed in pos. 2	Percentage of women among candidates placed in pos. 2 (in %)	Number of women placed in pos. 3	Percentage of women among candidates placed in pos. 3 (in %)
EP-TR	49.6	6	46.0	7	53.8	6	46.0
SLD-UP	45.3	5	38.4	6	46.0	8	61.5
PiS	44.6	1	7.6	6	46.0	6	46.0
SP	43.7	1	7.6	6	46.0	2	15.3
PR	42.6	0	–	6	46.0	7	53.8
PO	42.3	6	46.0	8	61.5	2	15.3
RN	41.7	1	7.6	8	61.5	5	38.4
NP	41.5	0	–	3	23.0	6	46.0
PSL	40.0	1	7.6	8	61.5	5	38.4

Source: Own study based on data from Państwowa Komisja Wyborcza. *Visualization of the elections to the European Parliament.* http://pe2014.pkw.gov.pl/pl/, accessed 22 August 2015

levels of female representation can be attributed to the implementation of the principle of gender quotas.

However, some noticeable differences emerge when percentages of women occupying the top three places on these lists are examined. Unsurprisingly, women took these top places to the greatest extent in the election committees of Europe Plus–Your Movement [Europa Plus–Twój Ruch], with 19 female candidates in the top three places, including six in first position, and Democratic Left Alliance–Labour United [Sojusz Lewicy Demokratycznej–Unia Pracy], also with 19 women in the top three places, including five at the head of their lists. The electoral lists of the ruling Civic Platform included 16 women in the top three positions and six in the top position. For all other electoral committees, there were between nine and 14 women in places from first to third, but only one woman at the head of a list, or in the case of two parties none at all.

Careers Patterns of Candidates

In the analysis of the predominant political career patterns of candidates it should be emphasized that, whenever possible, the political parties chose to designate people with experience in public services. This model of recruitment applied particularly in the case of the long-operating parties

which are experienced in governance at national and local levels. Slightly different patterns of recruitment were applied by National Movement [Ruch Narodowy], New Right [Nowa Prawica] and to a lesser extent by Europe Plus [Europa Plus], Solidarity Poland [Solidarna Polska] and Poland Together [Polska Razem]. In the case of these parties, a significant and often dominant part of the candidates were new politicians, and the main criterion for their recruitment was their high level of commitment, ideological identification and good personal relations with central or regional political leaders.

Returning to the first group of the parties under discussion, the existing MEPs should be analysed in the first place. However, a detailed analysis of electoral lists reveals a somehow inconclusive career pattern for the 50 MEPs from the previous elections. If in this case we take into account only those MEPs who held mandates at the time of the elections (regardless of whether they obtained them in the 2009 elections or had come in to replace former deputies, who had had to resign their mandates because of their appointment to other public functions), it turns out that ten of them (constituting 20 % of the total) were not enrolled again on electoral lists. This problem concerned mostly the Civic Platform [Platforma Obywatelska] MEPs, more than one-third of whom (nine out of 25) were not put on the lists again. The most common reasons for their absence were accusations of unethical or illegal practices, candidates' resignations owing to a low ranking on the lists or defeats in intraparty competitions. In the case of Law and Justice [Prawo i Sprawiedliwość], only one MEP did not find himself on the lists. Furthermore, nine MEPs of the 2009–2014 tenure, seven of them from PiS, PO and SLD-UP, changed their parties while running for re-election. All of them lost their seats as the new groupings failed to win any mandates in the 2014 elections.

Another vital group of candidates were members of the national parliament. A total of 131 deputies (approximately 28.5 % of the total) and nine senators (9 % of the total) ran in the elections. Electoral committees' reluctance to enrol senators probably resulted from the fact that electoral law required their resignation from the national parliament in the event of their winning EP mandates; while for the Sejm (the lower chamber of the Polish parliament) this meant that a deputy leaving the chamber was replaced by the next deputy from the same electoral list; in the case of the Senate it raised the prospect of a by-election, the outcome of which would not necessarily provide a mandate for the same political formation.

Therefore, the ruling Civic Platform, for example, anticipating a decline in public support, reluctantly accepted the discussed solution.

The long-operating parties willingly designated their former and current ministers and vice-ministers, whose knowledge, experience and popularity were supposed to strengthen their electoral potential; however, in the case of the ruling Civic Platform ministers, it turned out that owing to the Platform cabinet's decrease in social rankings, the presence of their names on the electoral lists did not bring the expected image benefits, and candidates such as the former finance minister Jacek Rostowski suffered spectacular failures even in national elections. There were a total of 27 such candidates on the analysed lists, seven of them, the largest group here, being on the lists of Democratic Left Alliance [Sojusz Lewicy Demokratycznej] and Civic Platform [Platforma Obywatelska]. Six of them were on the lists of Law and Justice, three on those of the Polish People's Party and finally two on the lists of Europe Plus–Your Movement, and another two on the Solidarity Poland list. The group under discussion consisted of people with ministerial experience in fields such as foreign affairs, economy, finance, justice and science.

Another group of candidates favoured by party leaders was made up of regional councillors and members of local authorities. Their names on lists were supposed to attract regional and provincial voters, for it should be considered that under the provisions of Polish electoral law electoral districts were not given a fixed number of mandates; instead they were distributed to districts after the vote, favouring those that had higher voter turnout. For these reasons the political parties not only had to compete with one another for mandates, but also had to make efforts to increase the turnout in the districts where they had higher support, and in order to achieve this they enrolled locally popular politicians.

A separate category of candidates on electoral lists were celebrities. There were a total of 14 female and male public figures running. Five of them represented Europe Plus, five represented Democratic Left Alliance, Civic Platform had two and the Polish People's Party and Solidarity Poland each had one. It should be noted that this group was relatively heterogeneous, as the candidates either had no experience in political or public activities (ten candidates) or had taken up such activities while pursuing their basic professional careers (art, sports) (four candidates). The discussed group included eight sportspeople (for example, Olympic champion swimmer Otylia Jędrzejczak, karate world champion Marta Niewczas, football player Maciej Żurawski, boxer Tomasz Adamek, national handball

coach Bogdan Wenta), three renowned artists (one movie director and two actresses), two television personalities and one fashion model.

Finally, it is also worth noting that some parties chose to designate people whose actual or potential popularity could procure votes: an example of this political practice, deliberately applied to trigger electoral effectiveness, is enrolling candidates bearing the same names as popular party leaders or celebrities. Solidarity Poland had people with the same names as the leaders of the party, Zbigniew Ziobro and Tadeusz Cymański, and Civic Platform nominated, for example, Halina Kunicka, a candidate with the same name as a popular singer of the 1970s and 1980s.

As for conflicts related to the process of formation of electoral lists, these had many reasons, such as:

- elimination of candidates representing circles hostile to party leaders (e.g., the non-inclusion of the former MEP Piotr Borys on the district 12 election list of Civic Platform);
- inner-party faction candidates competing for high ranking on the list, for example, M. Piotrowski, a deputy associated with the Catholic radio station Radio Maryja who was one of the main opponents of the party headquarters candidate for the leading position on the Law and Justice district eight list;
- crossing out or moving down the list of candidates whom the party leaders regarded as disloyal. For example, the final decisions of the central authorities of Law and Justice were officially said to have been based on both substantive criteria and loyalty. It seems, however, that loyalty counted more for the party leaders since, for instance, Konrad Szymański, recognized as the best Polish MEP, was not on the list. On the other hand, it is worth noting that the party heads' attitude was to some extent understandable, especially in view of the fact that as a result of secessions within the party, Law and Justice had lost nine of their 15 seats in the EP between 2009 and 2014.
- efforts of some candidates to hold positions that give them a unique kind of 'monopoly' for representing a particular interest group or idea.

Conclusions

In conclusion it should be noted that the specificity of the EP elections under discussion, determined by the minor political weight of the election, the low turnout and the low magnitude electoral districts (3.9 in

European elections compared with 11.2 in national elections), makes the candidates' recruitment patterns to some extent peculiar. This specificity reveals itself mainly in the promotion of loyal candidates at the expense of substantially better deputies, in the absence of 'new names' on lists of relevant groupings and also in the promotion of politicians from party headquarters in districts beyond their electoral range.

It also seems that the party leaders in their personnel decisions focused more on achieving objectives related to the internal functioning of the party, and those objectives seem to have been as important as getting electoral support. This kind of political logic was amplified by candidates focused on achieving individual goals who saw the significant material attractiveness of being elected.

The analysis also showed that the recruitment procedures used by political parties participating in the elections were characterized by a low level of participation and a high level of centralization. In such a model, the leading role is played by the central authorities of the party, and especially their leaders. Because compared to other elections the circle of candidates running in elections to the EP is relatively small, the party leaders, if only given the opportunity, nominated people who were already experienced in public services. Such recruitment patterns were most often used in the case of the lists of parties represented in the national parliament; that is, Civic Platform, Law and Justice, Democratic Left Alliance, the Polish Peasant Party and Europe Plus–Your Movement. Among the candidates representing these parties there were, among others, deputies to the national parliament (140 candidates), existing MEPs (40 candidates) and current and former ministers (27 candidates). However, in the case of the other parties, candidates were recruited to a greater extent from people with experience only in local politics or even newcomers. The need to attract voters caused the party leaders also to reach for celebrities inexperienced in politics, although it should be noted that there were only 14 of them. Significant differentiation is also evident in the analysis of the presence of women on electoral lists. On the one hand, all the parties competing in the elections gave them almost half of the places on their lists, but only Civic Platform, Democratic Left Alliance–Labour United and Europe Plus–Your Movement decided on a relatively frequent assignment of leading positions on the lists to women.

Notes

1. e.g. Michael Gallagher and Michael Marsh, eds. *Candidate Selections in Comparative Perspective. The Secret Garden of Politics* (London: Sage, 1988).

2. John Thompson, *The Media and Modernity* (London: Polity Press, 1995), 119–148.

3. Robert Ormrod and Stephan Henneberg, "Are you thinking what we're thinking" or "Arę we thinking what you're thinking?. An exploratory analysis of the market orientation of the UK parties," in *The Marketing of Political Parties. Political Marketing at the 2005 British General Election,* ed. Darren G. Lilleker, Nigel A. Jackson and Richard Scullion (Manchester, New York: Manchester University Press, 2006), 31–58.

4. Radoslaw Solarz, "Mechanizmy rekrutacji kandydatów jako element strategii wyborczej" [Mechanisms for recruiting candidates as part of electoral strategy], in *Wybory do Parlamentu Europejskiego w 2009 roku w okręgu dolnośląsko-opolskim [Elections to the European Parliament in 2009 in the district of Lower Silesia-Opole],* ed. Robert Alberski and Radosław Solarz (Wrocław: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Wrocławskiego, 2011), 107.

5. Marzena Cichosz, "Czterobarwne układanki. Podsumowanie strategii podmiotów politycznych w wyborach do sejmików województw w 2010 roku" [Four-color puzzle. A summary of the strategy of political parties in elections to regional assemblies in 2010], in *Gra o Regiony. Wybory do sejmików województw w 2010 roku [Game of Regions. Elections to regional assemblies in 2010],* ed. Robert Alberski, Marzena Cichosz and Katarzyna Kobielska (Wrocław: Remar, 2013), 316.

6. Jean Pilet, Emilie Van Haute and Camille Kelbel, *Candidates selection procedures for the European elections* (Brussels: Directorate General for Internal Policies, 2015), 11.

7. Cliff Carrubba and Richard Timpone, "Explaining Vote Switching Across First- and Second-Order Elections. Evidence From Europe," *Comparative Political Studies*, no 38 (2005): 261–269.

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Election Results, Candidate Lists and the Framing of Campaigns

Otto Eibl and Michal Pink

Introduction

The focus of this chapter is a description and explanation of the basic characteristics of the Czech elections to the European Parliament (EP) in 2014. The first section introduces the electoral system, its properties and basic parameters. This is followed by a description of the election results achieved by the parties, their electoral support and the relationships between the results of elections to the Chamber of Deputies (the lower chamber of the national legislature [Poslanecká sněmovna]) and the EP. The next section analyses in detail the candidate lists proposed by the parties for Members of the EP (MEPs), by the average age, gender and education of the candidates. It also notes the number of candidates/politicians holding an elected office who sought an additional seat at EP level.

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Electoral System, Political Parties and Elections to the European Parliament

In 2014, the third set of elections to the EP was held in the Czech Republic. Although not many people voted in these elections, (EP 2004: 28.32 %; EP 2009: 28.22 %; EP 2014: 18.20 %; compared with general elections 2006: 64.47 %; GE 2010: 62.60 %; GE 2013: 59.48 %) a large number of political parties and movements regularly contest this type of election. This was the case in 2014, when 849 candidates on 38 candidate lists sought to win seats.

Electoral System

A proportional electoral system with a single constituency and a 5 % threshold is used in the Czech Republic for elections to the EP. An electoral formula with the d'Hondt divisor is used to convert votes into seats.[1] In 2014, 21 seats were allocated to the Czech Republic. Unlike elections in most other European Union (EU) countries, elections in the Czech Republic are held over two days (Friday and Saturday). Another peculiarity of the Czech elections is that the voters may assign two preferential votes for their chosen candidate list and change the order of the names on the list; candidates who are given preferential votes by at least 5 % of the voters are moved to the first position on the list.

Certainly, parties are motivated to contest elections because of the prospect of a state subsidy (CZK 30 per vote won; about €1.10) when they win at least 1 % of the vote. Low voter turnout combined with the low threshold of 1 % makes the subsidy relatively easy to obtain.

Another somewhat interesting effect of this type of Czech elections stems from the fact that the country is treated as one large constituency. The electoral system in this election is based on proportional representation for candidate lists. The whole country is not divided into smaller electoral districts as it is in national or regional elections, but the parties compete at the level of one district—the whole country. The d´Hondt formula is used to allocate seats and a 5 % administrative threshold applied at national level is used to eliminate smaller parties. The fairness of setting the threshold at 5 % was called into question after the 2014 elections, as representatives of the Green Party [Strana zelených; SZ] and Czech Pirate Party [Česká pirátská strana; ČPS] unsuccessfully sought to have the threshold judicially removed.[2] Only persons aged 18 or more can stand for election or vote on the day of the election.

Successful Parties and European Integration

Although issues concerned with the functioning of the EU and political cleavages which influence questions of European integration are generally neither salient in Czech political discourse nor perceived as important by Czech voters (as demonstrated by the turnout at the 2014 EP elections, 18.20 %), most (relevant) parties assume stands on these issues that are identifiable and intelligible. Broadly speaking, the majority of Czech political parties view the EU and European integration positively, without uncritically adopting all EU debates or agreeing with the conclusions drawn from them.[3] However, regardless of their particular ideology, parties tend to accentuate issues of national politics or issues that might potentially affect daily life in the Czech Republic. Euro-optimistic parties include the Social Democrats [Česká strana sociálně demokratická; ČSSD), the Christian Democrats [Křesťanská a demokratická unie–Československá strana lidová; KDU–ČSL], the Greens and TOP09 [Tradice, odpovědnost, prosperita] (the first Czech political party to advertise on Spotify). Opposition of varying intensity to the Euro-optimistic parties comes from the Free Citizens Party [Strana svobobných občanů; SSO], whose rhetoric is the strongest (its position seems to have been met with some favour among voters, as the party achieved a historic success with the election of its chair as an MEP), the Communist Party of Bohemia and Moravia [Komunistická strana Čech a Moravy; KSČM] and the Civic Democratic Party [Občanská demokratická strana; ODS] (which organized a popular petition for the preservation of the Czech national currency during the election campaign). Using Conti's typology of parties,[4] based on their attitudes towards European integration, there are within the Czech Republic representatives of Hard Euroscepticism (SSO and KSČM), Soft Euroscepticism (ODS), Functional Europeanism (ČSSD and KDU-ČSL) and borderline cases of Identity Europeanism (TOP09 and the Green Party).[5]

This analysis excludes Andrej Babiš's movement ANO 2011 [formerly Akce nespokojených občanů; ANO] because its position on the EU is not entirely clear. The aim of ANO, according to its programme, is to capitalize on Czech EU membership to promote Czech interests in Europe and beyond. There is a relatively strong emphasis on the national character of ANO's representation in the EP. Therefore, it can be observed that in essence ANO's manifesto was not excessively critical of the EU, though mostly stressing national issues. It is thus difficult to determine the party's character in this respect. It appears that ANO is still trying to find its optimal position, an observation valid in areas beyond its policy on the EU.

Elections to the European Parliament in the Czech Republic

Seven parties won seats in the most recent EP elections in 2014. The victory of the ANO movement, which is in government, was not a surprise, because it had been a favourite in the opinion polls. By far the greatest surprise was the result for the opposition TOP09. Their candidate list came second after ANO, trailing it by less than 1 % of the vote. This success can be explained by citing TOP09's well-targeted campaign and the fact that TOP09 is the most relevant right-wing party offering pro-European policies. These parties were followed by the ČSSD (in government), the KSČM (in long-term opposition), the KDU–ČSL (in government), the ODS (opposition) and the non-parliamentary SSO. The election represented its greatest electoral success for the SSO because it had never won a seat in the national parliament.

The Czech Pirate Party was placed just under the threshold with only 0.22 % of the vote (about 3500 votes) separating the party from a seat. The Green Party (whose chair and candidate list leader Ondřej Liška subsequently resigned) came next,[6] followed by Tomio Okamura's Dawn of Direct Democracy (in opposition).[7]

The results of the 2014 European elections were influenced by low voter turnout, in that almost 20 % of votes were wasted. Parties with a relatively stable electoral core (KDU–ČSL, KSČM) also enjoyed relatively stable results. By contrast, parties that struggled to maintain voter loyalty (ČSSD) or had not yet managed to build it (ANO) lost ground. It also became apparent that the theme of the EU mobilized the voters of two parties in particular, TOP09 and SSO (Table 18.1).

Next, we turn to the election results in greater detail. The first column in Table 18.2 shows the variability between the electoral results of individual parties by the coefficient of variation. Put simply, the values of the coefficient indicate divergence between the electoral results within the set examined. This allows us to state that the voters of the KDU–ČSL are the most regionally concentrated, followed by regions which vote for TOP09, a liberal–conservative party with a more urban base. By contrast, the candidate list most able to appeal to voters uniformly across the country was that of ANO. It is also interesting to note that the level of variability was almost identical for three political parties, the ČSSD, the KSČM and the SSO.

Turning our attention to the relationship between support for parties in elections to the Czech Chamber of Deputies and the EP, there is evidence

Table 18.1 Electoral gains in 2014 (Parties with 1 + % support)

Party	No. of votes	% of vote	Seats	Gains/ losses	Re-elected			State subsidy (CZK)
					Since 2004	Since 2009	Newly elected	
ANO	244,501	16,13	4	4	0	0	4	7,335,030
TOP09/STAN	241,747	15,95	4	4	0	0	4	7,252,410
ČSSD	214,800	14,17	4	−3	0	2	2	6,444,000
KSČM	166,478	10,98	3	−1	2	0	1	4,994,340
KDU-ČSL	150,792	9,95	3	1	0	0	3	4,523,760
ODS	116,389	7,67	2	−7	1	1	0	3,491,670
SSO	79,540	5,24	1	1	0	0	1	2,386,200
ČPS	72,514	4,78	0	0	–	–	–	2,175,420
SZ	57,240	3,77	0	0	–	–	–	1,717,200
Dawn	47,306	3,12	0	0	–	–	–	1,419,180
CSP–NO to Euro	24,724	1,63	0	0	–	–	–	741,720

Source: www.volby.cz

Table 18.2 Relationship between electoral support for parties in the 2014 elections to the European Parliament and the 2013 elections to the national parliament, and variability in 2014

	Variability 2014	ANO 13	ČSSD 13	KDU 13	KSČM 13	ODS 13	TOP 13
ANO14	0.18	**0.77**	−0.39	−0.68	0.05	0.16	0.30
ČSSD14	0.26	−0.24	**0.79**	0.04	0.36	−0.48	−0.64
KDU 14	0.69	−0.53	0.04	**0.97**	−0.31	−0.38	−0.28
KSČM 14	0.27	−0.08	0.46	−0.42	**0.91**	−0.25	−0.56
ODS 14	0.22	0.27	−0.31	−0.30	−0.26	**0.38**	0.41
TOP09 14	0.37	0.22	−0.56	−0.35	−0.39	**0.82**	**0.77**
SSO 14	0.27	0.38	−0.57	−0.25	−0.50	0.41	0.70

Source: www.volby.cz (Own calculation)

of continuity between the two elections. It is likely that most parties in the EP elections found votes in the same regions that had served them well during elections to the Chamber of Deputies.

It is also interesting to consider the relationship between electoral support for individual parties. Areas that voted for ANO in 2013 likewise tended to do so in 2014 (the coefficient being the highest in this case),

but they also supported the ODS, TOP09 and the SSO (positive, but lower values of the coefficient). ANO was less successful in areas that traditionally vote for the left (represented by the ČSSD) and in Moravia, the traditional stronghold of the KDU–ČSL. The only positive correlation for the ČSSD was with the KSČM; hence, one may argue that these two parties drew their voters from similar localities. By contrast, as the gains of the other parties increased, those of the ČSSD and the KSČM tended to decrease.

The peculiar result achieved by TOP09 can be explained by reference to the party's candidate list, where the no. 2 was Jiří Pospíšil, formerly a minister and deputy chair of the ODS, and an MP for many years.[8] The electoral support for TOP09 in the elections to the EP was therefore closer to that enjoyed by the ODS in the Chamber of Deputies elections than to TOP09's own support in those elections. The last row of the table reveals further interesting information: the positive values of the correlation coefficient for SSO indicate that the party's electoral support in 2014 was located in those areas that had supported ANO, the ODS and TOP09 in 2013 (Table 18.2).

Candidate Lists and the Framing of the Election Campaign

In terms of personal characteristics, the candidate lists for the elections to the EP contained more university-educated people than is typical in other elections. Their proportion varied across parties, never falling below 48 % (ČPS), and it was often much higher. In two cases it reached almost 100 % (KDU–ČSL and TOP 09). The level of education achieved was reflected in the professional profiles of the candidates: unlike in other elections, blue-collar workers, students or pensioners were hardly represented. Indeed, the last of these categories was particularly rare. By contrast, relatively highly positioned professionals involved in business, universities, health services and so on often stood for election.

ANO 2011

The movement ANO 2011 was contesting seats in the EP for the first time, and its campaign followed that waged before the early elections to the Chamber of Deputies. Thus, the party sought to communicate the promise of a better future and its own ability to secure that future (the

main slogan of the campaign was 'Yes, it's going to be better'). Its candidate list contained 28 people with an average age close to 45 (the youngest was 28, the oldest 66), and the candidates with leading positions on the list did not differ much in terms of age from the remainder of the list. The first nine candidates had no political party affiliation. The total number of unaffiliated candidates on ANO's list was 15, or almost 54 %. Indeed, the party's image was principally based on the non-political character of its candidates. In gender terms, men prevailed on the list. There were eight women on the list in total, and two and three women within the top five and ten respectively. The proportion of candidates with a university education stood at 64 %. As ANO is a new movement which defines itself by its opposition to established political parties, its contingent elected to the EP was made up of newcomers who had never held an elected office. However, leading the list was an experienced ex-civil servant from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, who had been the Czech Republic's top negotiator during the EU accession process and had briefly been a member of Prodi's Commission.

ČSSD

European elections were nothing new to the Social Democrats, who had been successful in previous EP elections in 2004 and 2009. In 2014 they defended seven seats; five of the incumbents were among the top ten candidates on the 2014 list, but only one incumbent was in the top five. The economist Jiří Havel, leader in 2009, did not stand for re-election. The ČSSD nominated the well-known sociologist Professor Jan Keller as leader of its list, and contested the election with the slogan: 'We wish to play in the first league in Europe.' Like ANO, the ČSSD nominated the maximum possible number of candidates. Their average age was 46.5, with older people occupying leading places on the candidate list. The average age of the top five was 50, and of the top ten 55. The youngest candidate was 25 and the oldest 73. All but two candidates (the leader Keller and the no. 26) were not party members. The ČSSD's candidate list was also a rather masculine affair: eight women stood for election, of whom only one was in the top five, and two, both incumbent MEPs, in the top ten. The proportion of university-educated candidates was close to 90 %. The present contingent of four ČSSD MEPs was half new, half old, Keller and Poche being the newcomers and Poc and Sehnalová the re-elected incumbents.

KDU–ČSL

During the 2009–2014 term, the Christian Democrats had two MEPs, whose diligence in the EP was much discussed prior to the election. However, neither Zuzana Roithová nor Jan Březina stood for re-election. Czech national interests dominated the Christian Democrat campaign (the main slogan was: 'We protect Czech interests'), and there was some controversy over a clause in its manifesto concerned with immigration, which was described as xenophobic by Ondřej Liška, the leader of the Green Party.[9,10] The KDU–ČSL candidate list featured younger candidates (including those in the top positions) than most. The average age of its 28 candidates was 40.5, and those in the top ten were only a little bit older (41.5). The youngest candidate was 24 and the oldest 58. As in other established parties, party members dominated the KDU-ČSL list. Only three candidates were without political affiliation. Six women stood for election, two of them being among the top five candidates. All the candidates with one exception were university educated. The party's newly elected group of three MEPs were all newcomers, none of whom had previously sat in a supranational elected body.

KSČM

The KSČM fought with the slogan: 'Social Europe. A Europe for the People.' In terms of seats, the Communist Party achieved its worst result since 2004. Of the four incumbents elected in 2009, three were standing for re-election in 2014,[11] occupying positions in the top five on the KSČM's candidate list, which was led by Kateřina Konečná, the youngest Czech MP at that time. The average age of the party's 28 candidates was almost 46, but most of those in leading positions were noticeably older. The average age of the top five was 55; however, the leader of the list was younger by almost two decades. The average age of the top ten, 47, was closer to that of the list as a whole. The youngest candidate was 26 and the oldest 71. Party affiliations were as follows: 23 KSČM members, two SDS members and three with no political affiliation. KSČM members occupied all the leading positions. Eight women stood for election on the KSČM ticket; one of them led the candidate list and four women were among the top ten candidates. The proportion of university-educated candidates on the KSČM's list was lower than for the other main parties, at 64 %. Although voters rarely re-order candidates on the KSČM list in national

elections, in 2014 they moved Miloslav Ransdorf MEP up from his lower position on the list. Ransdorf and Jiří Maštálka are among the longest-serving Czech MEPs, having defended seats continuously since 2004.

ODS

A party that could not be described as enthusiastic about European integration (the main slogan of their campaign was: 'Moving Europe in the right direction'), the Civic Democratic Party won the most seats in 2004 and 2009 (nine in both elections). The party's poor showing in the early elections to the Chamber of Deputies signalled that it would be unlikely to hold onto all of its nine seats in the EP. Its campaign focused on the struggle to preserve the Czech currency and reject the euro. The party organized a public petition for the preservation of the Czech koruna and collected signatures from citizens as part of its campaign.

Only four of its MEPs stood for re-election; they were all placed among the top ten on the candidate list, and three of them were in the top five. Jan Zahradil was the leader as he had been in 2004 and 2009. The average age of the candidates was 44, with those in leading positions somewhat older (the average ages among the top five and ten being 53.5 and 47 respectively). The youngest candidate was 21 and the oldest 70. Of the party's 28 candidates, 25 were party members, two were unaffiliated and one was a member of the Conservative Party (coincidentally he was also the youngest candidate). The ODS list was weighted towards men, with just six women standing for election, of whom two were in the top ten and one was in the top five. Three-quarters of the candidates were university educated. The party won two seats in 2014, both of which were taken by incumbent MEPs: Jan Zahradil had been sitting in the chamber since 2004 and Evžen Tošenovský since 2009.

TOP09

Because TOP09 was only founded in 2009, it had not been in a position to contest previous elections to the EP; thus the 2014 elections presented it with its first opportunity to win seats in this chamber, just as it did for ANO. The campaign mounted by TOP09 emphasized the importance of the EU, appealing to voters not to abandon the notion of being good Europeans (they used the slogan: 'Don't be dismissive of Europe').

Like many other parties, TOP09 nominated 28 candidates, and their average age was 45.5. The top five candidates were older by about four years; the average for the top ten was slightly lower than that for the candidate list as a whole. The youngest candidate was 25 and the oldest 71. The list featured a relatively high proportion of party members (64 % were members of TOP09 and 11 % of STAN). However, the leading two candidates were unaffiliated: the economist Luděk Niedermayer stood as no. 1 and the ex-ODS politician Jiří Pospíšil as no. 2. The candidate list for TOP09 was among the most unbalanced in gender terms, with only four women, only one of whom was in the top ten. Only one candidate was not a graduate. The four candidates who were elected were newcomers to the EP, but three had previously served as elected politicians.[12]

SSO

The Free Citizens Party is a Eurosceptic liberal party that bases its existence on pointing out the 'nonsense coming from the EU' (the main slogan of the campaign was: 'Let's cast light on the Euro-nonsense'). In particular, it highlights what are, in its opinion, a large number of useless regulations that affect citizens' lives. This critical theme dominated their campaign for the elections to the EP. The party symbol was the regular light bulb, which has practically disappeared from shops.

All 27 of the party's candidates were members. Their average age was 40 and those at the top of the list were even younger, with an average age of 37. The average age for the top ten was a little older, at 42. The youngest candidate was 21, the oldest 67. There were 20 men and seven women none of whom were in the top ten. Three-quarters of SSO's candidates were university educated.

Conclusion

Since 2004, elections to the EP have become an integral part of the Czech electoral competition. Elections are held with the entire territory of the country as one constituency and using a system of proportional representation. This fact, combined with low voter turnout, makes it relatively easy to win a seat, as demonstrated by the SSO's success in 2014. Despite winning less than 80,000 votes, the party managed to cross the administratively set electoral threshold of 5 % and win a seat. In terms of party funding, the EP elections provide parties with relatively low requirements

to access state funding. In the last elections, fewer than 25,000 votes were necessary to make a party eligible for this. Low voter turnout, the countrywide constituency and the possibility of awarding preferential votes to candidates on the chosen candidate list would suggest that the re-ordering of candidates by voters would be relatively common, but this was not necessarily so. While some candidates obtained more than 100,000 preferential votes in the first EP elections in 2004, in later years the numbers dwindled. The most successful candidate in 2014 was Jiří Pospíšil, an ex-member of the ODS who stood as an independent on the TOP09 ticket. He obtained almost 80,000 preferential votes, which is about half those achieved by Miloslav Ransdorf in the first elections.

In terms of age, the four newly elected ANO MEPs were the youngest. By contrast, the two MEPs of the ODS and the three of the KSČM are the oldest. The young age of the KSČM's electoral leader lowered the average age of the party's MEPs. Without her, the KSČM cohort in the EP would certainly have been the oldest of all the Czech parties. In terms of re-elected and newly elected MEPs, the 2014 elections produced a substantial replacement of MEPs. Three candidate lists competed in these elections for the first time and their newly elected MEPs had no previous experience in the EP. On the other hand, two successful candidate lists included former. Two of these MEPs were re-elected in 2014 from the KSČM and one from the ODS.

NOTES

1. Czech Republic. *Act No. 62/2003 Coll.* Prague: Ministry of the Interior.
2. Josef Kopecký, "Právník přitaká stížnosti Pirátů a zelených. Napadnou hranici 5 procent." *iDnes.cz.* 26 May 2014. http://zpravy.idnes.cz/u-ustavniho-soudu-bude-jiz-druha-stiznost-piratu-na-hranici-5-procent-12n-/domaci.aspx?c=A140526_101524_domaci_kop.

   "Ústavní soud odmítl stížnost Pirátů na pětiprocentní volební hranici." *Idnes.cz.* 26 August 2014. http://zpravy.idnes.cz/ustavni-soud-zamitl-stiznost-piratu-dwd-/domaci.aspx?c=A140826_155046_domaci_cen.
3. Vít Hloušek and Luboš Kopeček, *Origin, Ideology and Transformation of Political Parties. East-Central and Western Europe Compared* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2010).

4. Nicolo Conti, 2003 "Party Contestation of the Political Space and the European Issue: The Attitude to EU of the Italian Parties (1994–2002)" (paper presented and the ECPR Conference, Marburg, Germany, 18–23 November 2003).

5. Vít Hloušek and Luboš Kopeček, *Konfliktní demokracie. Moderní masová politika ve střední Evropě* (Brno: International Institute of Political Sciences, 2004).

     Luboš Kopeček and Jakub Šedo, "Czech and Slovak Politicial Parties and their Vision of European Integration." *Central European Political Studies Review* 5.1 (2003): 15–23.

6. "Liška rezignoval, zelené vede místopředsedkyně Drápalová." *Novinky.cz.* 8 June 2014. http://www.novinky.cz/domaci/338707-liska-rezignoval-zelene-vede-mistopredsedkyne-drapalova.html.

7. The candidacy of this party gained some notoriety, owing to its controversial leader Klára Samková (she had to resign during the campaign). The electorate of Dawn did not receive Samková enthusiastically, as she is known to represent Romani clients in court cases, a fact that some of Dawn's electorate found difficult to stomach; she was also accused of fraud during the campaign.

8. His move to TOP09, a party close to the values espoused by ODS, but not identical with it, and his involvement in European politics, came after his failed bid to be re-elected as deputy chair of ODS in January 2014. He was among the most popular Czech politicians between 2006 and 2014.

9. The party subsequently removed the offending sentence from its manifesto.

10. Josef Kopecký, "Lidovci se vymezili proti imigrantům, drogám a islamismu. Teď couvli." *iDnes.* 10 April 2014. http://zpravy.idnes.cz/lidovci-potichu-z-programu-stahli-vetu-proti-imigrantum-pes/domaci.aspx?c=A140410_135633_domaci_kop.

11. The KSČM's fourth MEP Vladimír Remek had become the Czech ambassador in Moscow, and hence did not stand for re-election.

12. The exception was the leader, who had previously been a member of the Board of the Czech National Bank, a position that is appointed rather than elected.

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Eurosceptic Parties in the Czech Republic's 2014 European Parliamentary Elections

Petr Just

INTRODUCTION

The Czech Republic is considered by many authors to be one of the most Eurosceptic and most critically profiled countries in relation to the European Union (EU).[1] Criticism in relation to the EU is present not only in the behaviour and attitude of some political parties as such, but it also comes from individuals acting on their own behalf. Additionally, this critical discourse is present in the public sphere throughout all of Czech society, not just in the political sphere.

The reasons for the presence of Euroscepticism and critical attitudes towards the EU and European integration stem from different causes. Historical traumas—particularly the 1938 Munich Agreement, which is reflected in the attitudes of Czech society even today—have certainly played their role in strengthening Eurosceptic views and attitudes. However, the aim of this chapter is not to look for the causes of recent Eurosceptic sentiments in society. Rather it aims to answer the question of whether such a critical attitude towards the EU and European integration was reflected and manifested in the latest elections to the European Parliament (EP) in

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2014 in the Czech Republic, and whether or not the political parties considered to be Eurosceptic benefited from these critical sentiments.

<div align="center">EUROSCEPTICISM</div>

Euroscepticism has recently become a frequently studied phenomenon. Although it may seem at first glance that the concept is quite clear, the opposite is true. This is demonstrated, among other reasons, by the fact that many political parties that are critical of the EU do not consider themselves to be Eurosceptic.

Euroscepticism in the broader sense 'expresses the idea of contingent or qualified opposition, as well as incorporating outright and unqualified opposition to the process of European integration'.[2] Taggart and Szczerbiak, however, propose that for a better understanding of Euroscepticism, especially in Central and Eastern Europe, it is necessary to distinguish between soft and hard Euroscepticism.

Hard Euroscepticism 'implies outright rejection of the entire process of European political and economic integration and opposition to one's country joining or remaining a member of the European Union'.[3] According to the authors, Euroscepticism is often present in the platform of single-issue political parties, where opposition towards European integration represents such an issue. But it may also be influenced by the ideological framework of the political party,[4] for example among communist or nationalist parties.

Soft Euroscepticism, on the other hand, is not built on a principled rejection of the idea of European integration, but is based on a criticism of the depth, scope and trends of integration in the recent European integration process and towards some specific European sectoral policies (for example, a rejection of the common European currency, the euro).[5]

According to Petr Kaniok, party-based Euroscepticism can take several forms. One of them is Euroscepticism as a debating point of single-issue parties. These parties' platforms are primarily built on Euroscepticism, challenges towards European issues and the criticism of European issues as either a standalone or a key topic. However, Euroscepticism in the platforms of political parties may also, according to Kaniok, be reflected as a 'second ideology'. In this case, it is not the main theme of the parties' platform, but their approach towards the EU is the fulfilment of party ideology (for example, communist parties). For other parties, Euroscepticism is mostly a form of protest, especially among protest, anti-establishment

and extremist parties. Euroscepticism can also be viewed as a platform applied by establishment and non-extremist and non-populist political parties, when they are in opposition, for example.[6]

Boros and Vasali divide the Eurosceptic countries according to the cause of their critical attitude to the EU.[7] In the majority of Eurosceptic countries, among which they include the Czech Republic, Euroscepticism is (among other reasons) the result of historical conflicts and events. Boros and Vasali also place the United Kingdom, and recently Hungary, in this category of Euroscepticism. Both authors differentiate these historical roots of Euroscepticism from countries where Euroscepticism, in their view, has different causes, such as the economic crisis (Portugal, Spain, Greece, Cyprus) or the rejection of specific EU policies (Estonia, the Netherlands, Latvia, Poland).[8]

The rate of Euroscepticism is sometimes associated with voter turnout. In this case, we may ask whether the low turnout in the recent EP elections in the Czech Republic (18 %) was a manifestation of Euroscepticism. The supposition that low turnout is a reflection of Euroscepticism was presented by the most well-known Eurosceptic among relevant Czech politicians, former President Václav Klaus. 'These elections in our country were won by the non-voters. Those 82 % of people who did not come to the polls, gave a clear signal that they are not interested in the EU. They gave a clear signal that they know that the EU has nothing to do with democracy,' [our translation] said the former president in an interview for the Czech Television programme *Events, Comments* on 26 May 2014.[9]

Klaus's attitude is based on the assumption that these 82 % of voters were adequately informed and aware of the problem related to low levels of democracy in the EU. Low voter turnout is certainly, among other things, due to voters' disapproval of Czech membership of the EU. However, it cannot be regarded as the sole reason. More frequent explanations for the low voter turnout refer not only to the rather low level of broader awareness of the EU, the European agenda and its policies, and the perceived distance of the EU from the people, but also the second-order nature of these elections, the form of electoral campaign, and the intensity and frequency of elections. In 2013, the year before the EP elections, Czechs went to the polls twice—for two rounds of presidential elections in January and for elections to the lower house of parliament, the Chamber of Deputies [Poslanecká sněmovna], in October. Two more elections—Senate and municipal—followed in 2014, just five months after the EP elections.

THE CZECH EUROSCEPTIC PARTIES IN THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT ELECTIONS IN 2014

Seven Czech political parties succeeded in the elections to the EP in 2014. Three of them—the Communist Party of Bohemia and Moravia [Komunistická strana Čech a Moravy: KSČM] (10.89 %, three mandates), the Civic Democratic Party [Občanská demokratická strana: ODS] (7.67 %, two mandates) and the Party of Free Citizens [Strana svobodných občanů] (5.24 %, one mandate)—could be defined as Eurosceptic, as will be shown in the platform analysis later. For the first time in the history of Czech elections to the EP, the aggregate number of seats allocated to Eurosceptic parties was in the minority, as these three parties obtained only six of the 21 mandates allocated to the Czech Republic. Also for the first time in the history of EP elections in this country, the top three parties in the 2014 elections were pro-European. In the 2004 elections, the top two positions were held by Eurosceptic parties, and in the 2009 elections Eurosceptic parties took first and third places (Table 19.1).

The table that compares the results of Eurosceptic political parties and movements in all EP elections since 2004 clearly shows the decreasing share of Eurosceptic representation of the Czech Republic in the EP. While after the first elections in 2004 more than two-thirds of the Czech members of the EP (MEPs) represented Eurosceptic parties, in the most recent elections, in 2014 that portion fell below one-third. However, the high representation of Eurosceptics after 2004 might be more a result of internal failures and crisis within pro-European parties, rather than of any major success of Eurosceptic parties. In terms of quantity, it can be said that the strength of Czech Euroscepticism in the EP is weakening. However, the presence of a hard Eurosceptic group reinforces it in terms of 'quality'.

The Czech MEPs are represented today in all three Eurosceptic factions that currently exist in the EP. Two MEPs elected on the list of the Civic Democratic Party (ODS) are members of the European Conservatives and Reformists Group, a soft Eurosceptic organization. The ODS has been a member party since 2009; previously ODS members sat in the group of the European People's Party—European Democrats. Three MEPs elected for the Communist Party of Bohemia and Moravia (KSČM) sit with the European United Left/Nordic Green Left, which is also considered softly Eurosceptic. Only after 2014 has the Czech Republic also been represented in the hard Eurosceptic group of Europe for Freedom and Direct Democracy, where the sole representative of the Party of Free Citizens (SSO), Petr Mach, sits.

Table 19.1   Returns for Eurosceptic political parties in the European Parliament elections in the Czech Republic, 2004–2014

	EP elections 2004			EP elections 2009			EP elections 2014		
	Votes	*%*	*M*	*Votes*	*%*	*M*	*Votes*	*%*	*M*
ODS	700,942 (1.)	30.04	9	741,946 (1.)	31.45	9	116,389 (6.)	7.67	2
KSČM	472,862 (2.)	20.26	6	334,577 (3.)	14.18	4	166,478 (4.)	10.98	3
NEZ	191,025 (6.)	8.18	2	–	–	–	–	–	–
SSO	–	–	–	–	–	–	79,540 (7.)	5.24	1
TOTAL			17/ 24			13/ 22			6/ 21

Source: Czech Statistical Office (Electoral Website: http://www.volby.cz). Only parties with representation in the EP are listed

Note to 2004 data: The political movement Independents [Nezávislí: NEZ] was not a Eurosceptic political organization. However, both their elected members to the EP, Vladimír Železný and Jana Bobošíková, independently and autonomously represented strongly Eurosceptic attitudes. In the following elections in 2009, both entered the elections with their own strongly Eurosceptic political movements. Vladimír Železný founded the Libertas.cz movement, which obtained only 0.94 % of the vote and did not meet the 5 % cut-off threshold. Jana Bobošíková's Sovereignty movement was more successful. However, she also failed to meet the required threshold as her movement received only 4.29 %

Abbreviations (in alphabetical order): KSČM Communist Party of Bohemia and Moravia, *NEZ* Independents, *ODS* Civic Democratic Party, *SSO* Party of Free Citizens

The Communist Party of Bohemia and Moravia: Euroscepticism as 'Second Ideology'

Neither the platform of the Communist Party of Bohemia and Moravia for the EP elections in 2014, nor the platform of the European United Left/Nordic Green Left in any way mentions the topics most frequently addressed by the Eurosceptic parties, such as the common currency or the deepening of European integration. Nevertheless, the platforms of both Czech and European communists include multiple indications of disagreement with a number of European themes. Communist Euroscepticism represents a classic type of 'second ideology' as presented above in the typology of Petr Kaniok. According to Chris Terry, Czech communists are, like most extreme and far-left parties in Europe, 'a rather Eurosceptic party, decrying the Lisbon Treaty as an attempt to impose a reactionary antisocial and military politics against the interests of the people'.[10]

The Communist Party of Bohemia and Moravia in its election manifesto for the 2014 European elections declared that the European integration

process had been 'usurped by right-wing power elites and financial circles and distorted by the influence of European bureaucrats' [our translation].[11] According to the Czech communists, we have witnessed growing 'regional and social disparities, differences between nations, awakenings of national egoism, and xenophobia as serious threats to democracy' [our translation].[12] While a number of groups representing right-wing Euroscepticism criticize the EU for being too socialist, Communists (and Eurosceptics from the left side of the political scale generally) say the opposite: 'We reject the criticisms of the neo-liberals and the far right, in which the EU is too social and too restrictive of the free market' [our translation].[13]

When it comes to official statements, however, the communists' position is rather softly Eurosceptic. Soft Euroscepticism is represented in its platform by assuring voters that: 'EU membership is a reality, and the participation of representatives of the Communist Party in European legislative structures is therefore a logical part of our political existence. KSČM is committed to positive solutions to the complex issues of the democratic and social functioning of European integration' [our translation].[14]

Just as in the case of general subjects, on European issues we can also sometimes observe a divergent view of the more conservative members. For example, on the website of the local organization of the Communist Party of Bohemia and Moravia in the city of Písek we can find a more radical attitude towards the EU. 'We all know what the EU practices. Just remember the (military) engagements in the Balkans, Iraq, Afghanistan, and Libya' [our translation].[15] The website of the Písek organization also published part of the Declaration of the Bureau of the European Left Party from November 2011 which, among other things, contains the following statement: 'Today, the eurozone and the EU are facing the most critical situation since its foundation. Not only the existence of the eurozone but also the institutional structure of the EU itself are being strongly questioned. The process of uniting Europe is being transformed into an ideological and political weapon of the European capitalist classes in their conflict with the working class, and the rescue of the euro is promoted at the expense of the majority of people in Europe. Europe will either become democratic and social, or it will cease to exist.' The communists of Písek conclude this quotation with the following words: 'Lenin already knew this in 1915!' [our translation].[16]

The Civic Democratic Party: The Most Relevant Eurosceptic Party in the Party System

The Civic Democratic Party underwent a rather variable development in its relations towards the EU. Euroscepticism was most strongly manifested during periods when the party was in opposition, which is not a surprising outcome. The position of a party in government or in opposition may affect the strength, intensity, frequency, relevance and purposefulness of its critical attitude towards the EU. Civic Democrats, however, do not label themselves a Eurosceptic party. They usually describe themselves as 'Eurorealists'.

Today's official party position is rather softly Eurosceptic. Only some individuals within the ODS members openly advocate hard Eurosceptic positions. Many, however, have left the party and joined the Party of Free Citizens or other hard Eurosceptic organizations or have manifested their Eurosceptic attitudes individually (for example, former Senator Petr Pakosta).

The softly Eurosceptic profile of the Civic Democratic Party was also documented in its platform for the EP elections in 2014, where the party assured voters that 'unlike irresponsible populists, we do not seek to terminate the process of European integration, but to reform it so that it returns to its original, economically liberal values' [our translation].[17] The party's most obvious and at the same time central theme for the EP elections in 2014 was its opposition towards introducing and adopting the euro in the Czech Republic. The key slogan of the campaign before the elections in 2014 was: 'Let's keep the koruna,[18] not the euro' [our translation].

The ODS states that in the future, the EU should be 'a flexible, open and economically expanding body, which will lead to the concept of "flexible" or "variable" integration. This concept is the opposite of a European unitary superstate. The scenario of one-sided and rigid unification is not in conformity with the interests of Czech citizens' [our translation].[19] The party stands against 'initiatives leading towards fiscal union or tax union. […] In the hands of European bureaucrats these would become just another stage in the formation of a political union and would limit the Czech government's powers both to respond flexibly to both the domestic and global economic situations and to ensure the prosperity of the Czech Republic' [our translation].[20]

Other slogans used by the Civic Democratic Party in the EP elections were: 'The Union already has sufficient powers; let's get some of them back to the Czech Republic', and: 'A stronger European Parliament does not benefit the Czech Republic'.[21] The latter is somewhat surprising, because the EP is the only directly elected EU body, and thus serves to overcome the democratic deficit. And the democratic deficit is one of the major sources of Euroscepticism.

The Hard Euroscepticism of the Party of Free Citizens

The Party of Free Citizens is an openly hard Eurosceptic party that has been profiled on issues related to European integration for a long time. This single-issue approach could mainly be observed when the party first formed, when it primarily focused on criticism of the Lisbon Treaty and tried to offer alternatives to the then 'conciliatory' attitude of the Civic Democratic Party. The Party of Free Citizens was mainly founded by former ODS members. Although the party's platform ranges more widely today, the EU still remains a key and most visible theme. The European agenda is still the main issue, but it is not an umbrella issue. Therefore, the party cannot be unambiguously labelled a single-issue party today. Its Euroscepticism is more or less a manifestation of the 'second ideology'. Petr Kaniok talks about the Party of Free Citizens' attitude, which is 'a consequence, not the cause, of the libertarian orientation' [our translation].[22]

The key slogan of the Party of Free Citizens in the 2014 EP campaign was 'We'll shine the light on Euro-nonsense.' This slogan was reflected in various forms of criticism of regulations, orders, and bans coming from European institutions. Its media campaign was built on popular topics in which, according to the party, the EU had made decisions in a 'nonsensical' way. Examples include: the 'light bulb' regulation (determining what kinds of light bulbs may be used), the 'spreadable butter' regulation (a ban on using the term 'butter' in a specific popular Czech product), the 'rum' regulation (a ban on using the term 'rum' for a specific popular Czech liquor) and the 'banana curvature' regulation (a hoax claiming that the EU was regulating the proper shape of bananas). The party says, however, that these are only details. In its platform, it lists some more serious problems, such as blaming the EU that its 'directives and regulations have destroyed Czech sugar factories' [our translation].[23] It should be added that the resonance of these latter issues in the campaign was considerably weaker (if they were ever mentioned at all).

In the previous EP election in 2009, the party tried to distance itself from Brussels with a platform entitled 'The EU has an Alternative'. Among other things, it stated: 'We are for freedom, which involves travel and the free movement of goods across the borders of European countries, and we know that it can be achieved even without the Brussels institutions (look at Switzerland and Norway). We are for the friendly and peaceful cooperation of European nations, which share the fundamental values of respect for individual freedoms, democracy and the free market' [our translation].[24]

The Party of Free Citizens is not, however, 100 % consistent in its hard Euroscepticism. From time to time, its hard Eurosceptic platform is mixed with some aspects of soft Euroscepticism. Besides its conviction that the country can exist even without 'Brussels', its platform documents include a critique of current trends in the EU and a criticism of selected sectoral policies, together with proposals for solutions within the EU. Those are typical characteristics of soft Euroscepticism. Overall, however, hard Eurosceptic tendencies prevail in its platform.

Euroscepticism Displayed by Other Political Parties

The hardest Eurosceptic tendencies are manifested by the political parties and movements that have ultimately remained outside the EP. Of those that ran in the 2014 elections, the main examples are the extreme nationalistic Workers' Party of Social Justice [Dělnická strana sociální spravedlnosti: DSSS] (obtained 0.52 %) and the party named NO to Brussels–National Democracy [NE Bruselu–Národní demokracie: NB–ND] (obtained 0.46 %).

The Workers' Party of Social Justice entered the elections with the slogan 'Out of the Crisis = Out of the EU'. In its electoral platform it posed the question: 'Why are we campaigning for the Europarliament?' and immediately answered itself: 'Because we are the anti-establishment party. We want to overthrow the system, which dictates our way of life in the Czech Republic and in Europe' [our translation].[25] NO to Brussels–National Democracy, associated with former journalist Adam B. Bartoš, states in the first point of its election platform: 'Immediate withdrawal of the Czech Republic from the European Union' and: 'Revise all the norms and standards imposed by Brussels' [our translation].[26]

Conclusion

The analysis above demonstrates that Euroscepticism and its elements did not have any significant or major impact on the results of the EP elections in 2014. The low voter turnout recorded in the Czech Republic could possibly lead to the opposite conclusion, but it was not primarily caused by Eurosceptic moods. The low turnout may be interpreted more in terms of lack of interest in European issues, rather than as a manifestation of Euroscepticism.

Quantitatively, the representation of Czech Eurosceptic organizations in the EP has decreased compared to the previous parliamentary terms, 2004–2009 and 2009–2014. It can be said, however, that from a 'qualitative' point of view, Czech Euroscepticism has gained in strength thanks to the success of the hard Eurosceptic Party of Free Citizens. However, one of the main reasons for its success probably lies in the weakening of the Civic Democratic Party.

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9. *Události, komentáře* [Events, Comments]. Czech Television program broadcasted on channel CT24, 26 May 2014.

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16. KSČM Písek. *Pohledy na spojenou Evropu.*

17. ODS. *Otáčíme EU správným směrem: volby do Evropského parlamentu 2014* [We're Steering the EU the Right Way: 2014 European Parliament Elections] (Praha: ODS, 2014), 3.

18. Koruna = crown. Czech official currency [author's note].

19. ODS. *Otáčíme EU,* 4.

20. ODS. *Otáčíme EU ,*4.

21. ODS. *Otáčíme EU,* 14.

22. Peter Kaniok. "Strana svobodných občanů – čeští monotematičtí euroskeptici?" [The Party of Free Citizens – Czech Monothematic Eurosceptics?]. *Středoevropské politické studie* 16.1 (2014), 84.

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Conclusions: Features of the 2014 European Elections in Central and Eastern Europe

Adriana Ştefănel

The European Parliament (EP) elections of 22–25 May 2014, that is, the eighth round of voting for MEPs, marked a series of outstanding firsts: this was the first voting round in which European citizens indirectly chose the European Commission President; for the first time, electoral debates between the leaders of the main competing party families at the European level were organized and broadcast on TV; Croatia, the state most recently accepted into the select club of European countries, elected its representatives for an entire mandate for the first time; these were the first European elections that took place after the lifting of all restrictions on the free movement of workers. All these factors drew reality closer to the dream of the founding fathers of the European Union (EU).

But, just as in any magnification one can see the seeds of decadence, these elections also represented a milestone because, more than ever before, extremist parties with a nationalist-populist discourse, clearly oriented towards the dissolution of the EU in its present form, entered the EP, not as strange exceptions to elective democracy, but as lawful representatives of millions of citizens. The image of the UKIP representatives

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283

turning their back on the European flag during the solemn investiture oath, emblematic of the new wave of Euroscepticism, was hardly a singular gesture.

Confronted with an economic crisis, overlapped by the crisis of confidence in institutions and in political elites as well as by the failure to maintain the standards of the welfare state within the context of deep structural changes in the EU, traditional parties throughout Europe lost voters to parties whose populist-Manichaean reductionist solutions seduced more than convinced the voters.

In the countries of the eastern flank of the EU, the situation was more complex. Against the background of the economic crisis that has destabilized Europe in recent years, the European dream began to resemble a nightmare; unprepared to cope with the rigours of life in the EU, incapable of solving internal problems of corruption and the high costs of integration, on the one hand, and treated as second-class countries within the EU, on the other, these countries witnessed greater electoral apathy and the (re-)emergence of Eurosceptic parties.

As may be seen in the chapters featured here, in Poland, Romania, Lithuania and Slovakia, European issues represented the exception rather than the rule in election debates. With the exception of Bulgaria, where 'The candidates for MEP seats frequently spoke about documents, standards, norms, rules, European funds, European grants, European legislation, citizens' participation in the European projects and so on' (Mavrodieva, I, p. 39), debates remained stuck in the field of domestic policies. The observation made by Ingrida Unikaitė-Jakuntavičienė on the situation in Lithuania—'although the media had a special rubric on the EP elections and the quality of communication regarding EU issues had improved slightly, it concentrated more on domestic issues than on European ones. The core ideas on EU integration and policies were not often discussed'—may be extrapolated to all the countries included in this analysis.

This lack of interest in European issues was exacerbated by the apparent distance between the Brussels agenda and the problems faced by ordinary citizens in this part of the EU, and also by the scheduling of significant internal elections (presidential or parliamentary) that same year.

Exhausted parties (both financially and humanly) preferred to treat the European elections as a preamble to the internal elections, as happened in Romania, whose case I present in my own chapter in this volume, or as a test of the popularity of the ruling coalition, as happened in Lithuania, where 'EU Elections were held in the middle of the national

(Parliamentary) election cycle' (Unikaitė-Jakuntavičienė, I, p. 101). Also interesting is the Czech case, where the elections to the Chamber of Deputies of the parliament of the Czech Republic that had occurred a few months before dried up the EP elections both from a financial and from a human point of view; the election campaign in this country was assessed in terms of low cost, on a tight budget, very modest and so on (Charvát, J.).

Against the background of general apathy or waiting for election campaigns with national stakes, Eurosceptic and nationalist parties began to gain ground in this part of Europe too. Rejected by a Europe to which they lawfully belong, Czechs, Poles and Hungarians, more than citizens of the other analysed countries, were attracted to the revival of nationalist discourse. The loss of national sovereignty in exchange for (alleged) European benefits and the recurrent fear of becoming (again) servants of the West, themes more associated with the years before integration into the EU, reappeared in the public sphere and coalesced the popular vote.

The chapters here clearly reinforce the point that, besides differences related to national specificities and the specific political situation of individual countries, the concept of second-order election seems to have asserted itself once again in the European elections of 2014.

Index

Note: Page numbers followed by "n" refer footnotes.