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# ELECTING EUROPE - ABSTRACTS

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**Abstracts for the European Studies' conference, *Electing Europe*, 20 May 2014**

## **Panel A - Election Essentials and Infrastructure**

*Finding Europe in the EP Election Campaign Videos of 2009 and 2014*

By **Mariam Tirkia**

Despite the achievements of European integration, decreasing turnout in the European Parliament elections illustrates that many Europeans have become disenchanted with the EU. The purpose of this study is to analyse how the European Parliament has tried to increase the salience of European issues among EU citizens and their attachment to the EU. Visual semiotics is employed to explore what type of Europe and European life is presented to European citizens in the EP election campaign videos from 2009 and 2014. The notions of European identity, "banal Europeanism" and symbolism in European integration will be further elaborated to analyse how a political authority seeks to generate identification. The study aims to identify how the only directly elected EU body is trying to shape EU identity and engaging its citizens in redefining the type of Europe they want to live in.

*The EP & Election Laws. A Comparative Analysis of the United Kingdom and Ireland*

By **Senad Ferati**

My research is concentrated on Election Law in the UK and Ireland and how it functions in relation to their status as members of the European Union. Its focus is primarily on the election laws and election systems of these two countries. The main goal is to compare these two systems using comparative law, and in doing so to look at their constitutional orders, sources of law, laws that regulate voting, voting systems, eligibility, and other relevant laws. I aim to analyse the role of election law in improving democratic representation in UK and Ireland, as well as the nature of election law in UK and Ireland and from where it derives in relation to the respective legal systems.

## *European Political Party Cleavages? A Study of the UKIP Voter Base*

By **Avtandil Koridze**,

The purpose of this project is to address the issue of influence of the European Parliament elections and generally the EU governance on the voter bases of the national political systems. It aims to identify whether such influence has been substantial enough to create new divisions or political cleavages in these voter bases. It does so by analysing the voter base of the UK Independence Party (UKIP), its values and voting behaviour. Drawing on the theoretical framework of political cleavages, it then tries to understand whether the voter base of UKIP constitutes a separate cleavage that manifests itself at the European Parliament elections only, what also might be called a European political cleavage, or is a part of a national political system. The main empirical data used consist of surveys and opinion polls conducted in 2009 before, during and after the EP elections and in 2014 before the EP elections.

## *The 2014 Lithuanian Online Campaigning for the EP. Practitioners and Practices*

By **Aliaksandr Herasimenka**,

This project examines the usage of information and communication technologies (ICT), primarily social media, by political practitioners during the 2014 European Parliament election campaign in Lithuania. With the growing numbers of social media users, politicians tend to employ new ICT tools in their campaigns more frequently. By conducting semi-structured interviews with the candidates, the project reveals the main practices and strategies of these practitioners online, as well as the ways in which they communicate their agenda. The preliminary results of the research show that the practitioners' strategy is based on the will to educate their followers and provide them with additional knowledge, rather than to promote their programme, campaign activity, or to challenge rivals. However, the online campaigners' agenda also appears to be highly influenced by the events in Ukraine and the ongoing presidential campaign in Lithuania. At the same time, a little space remains for the common EU issues.

## **Panel B - Smart Voters?**

### *University Students' Perceptions of the EP and its Elections. Case Studies of Students in Bratislava and Padua*

By **Martin Matejec & Sofia Simoncelli**

This project explores university students' perceptions of the European Parliament (EP) and its elections. Our goal is to find patterns between the chosen categories. The study draws on the literature on declining turnout, especially concerning the EP elections, and on the concern about young people's low interest and participation in politics. We combined quantitative and qualitative research employing online questionnaires and semi-structured interviews. The participants were chosen among university students due to their specific position in the society (young and highly-educated people). We decided to narrow down the study to Padua and Bratislava, cities where we already had established networks. Our expectations were that students studying subjects related to political science or European issues, and those with higher perceived knowledge of EU related topics would have more positive perceptions of the EP and its elections. This project contributes to the existing research supplementing it with qualitative elements and a comparative perspective between the two cities.

### *University Students' Perceptions of the EU and EP Elections. A Case Study across Aarhus University*

By **Nenad Sombic**

The elections for the European Parliament (EP) provide the citizens of the European Union (EU) a great opportunity to have a say in which direction the EU should go. It will therefore be interesting to see how these institutions are perceived by university students. While there is an extensive amount of studies of EP- elections and the EU, very few of them focus on university students. By using articles that generally deal with EP-elections and EU as inspiration I am in this paper focusing on what (mainly) Danish students at Aarhus University are concerned or satisfied with when it comes to the EP and the EU. The method used to gain this information was distributing a questionnaire to different departments at the University. This way the students could as best as possible express their opinions within short time. By focusing on students this study may contribute to future studies with resembling topics.

### *The Political Landscape and Participation of Danish Ph.D. Students at AU*

By **Alexandr Hripton**

Despite the fact that political participation has been the focus of substantial academic research, little attention was given to the subjective interpretations of the concept. The purpose of this study is to explore the ways in which Danish PhD students at Aarhus University in Denmark subjectively report their political (non-)participation and perceive European Parliamentary elections. First, it addresses theoretical debate over the concept of political participation in general as well as major approaches such as socio-economic status model, social network model and resource model. Then, it proceeds to the analysis of the empirical data collected by means of surveys and in-depth interviews with PhD students across a range of fields of doctoral research. It primarily aims at locating political participation on the intersection of SES, political socialization, media, democracy and trust, thus giving a comprehensive picture of the concept.

## Panel C - Media Performances

### Part I: Gender and (Self-)Representations

#### *Behind the Curtain. Celebrities in the Romanian 2009 EP Campaign*

By **Emilia Cristina Costea**

EU-related issues in news have been a prominent research topic in recent decades. A lot of research has been done on the framing of European affairs in the news. However, little is still known about EU representations in the news media of EU recent member states, such as Romania. This project examines how the European Parliament elections of 2009 were represented in the Romanian media; including an in depth study of 2 Romanian candidates who were elected to the European Parliament, Elena Basescu and George Becali. My empirical study examines the news about Europe, European Events and EU decisions published in the two most important Romanian national broadsheets: "Evenimentul Zilei" and "Jurnalul National", covering a three-week period of the 2009 EP campaign. My aim is to identify to what extent the EP elections were covered in the media in contrast to the national ones by taking into consideration the political context and Romania's status as post-communist country. Furthermore, through the in-depth analysis of Basescu and Becali, I analyse how these politicians use their private lives to appeal to the electorate and thus gain popularity and power. I look at the role of the media in this process and how the focus is on the politicians' private lives rather than on their performances in office or policy stances.

#### *Sex and the Campaign. A Study of Young Female EP Candidates in the 2014 Romanian Campaign*

By **Maria Georgiana Paraschiv**

This project is centred on an analysis of common social characteristics of young Romanian female candidates in the European elections. This mapping effort is conducted by constructing a prosopography, or social profile, of the youngest female Romanian EP candidates from each of Romania's political parties, supplemented by a comparative analysis of these prospective MEPs' self- and media representation. Since the entry of Romania into the EU, Romanian women have become ever more involved in the "battle" for self- and media representation in the campaigning for the EP. In my project, I aim to map the profiles of Romanian "young to middle aged" (below the age of 50) female MEPs, as well as how it relates to the female roles promoted in Romanian culture, such as "the woman in kitchen". In other words, how these female EP candidates try to connect with the citizenry through both self- and media representation in which personal image is often represented as an important part of their public image.

## *Polish Female EP Candidates' Self- and National Media Representations in the 2014 EP Campaign*

By **Iaryna Odynak & Liliia Budii**

Our research examines how Polish female candidates for the European Parliament are represented in mainstream as well as social media during 2014 EP election campaign. We argue that although gender equality has become a significant and widely debated agenda in the EU, female politicians campaigning for a seat in the EP still are subject to biased and diminished in national media. Traditionally, researchers apply a feminist theory to explore and explain the visibility, image, representation and agency of women in media. In this project we try to expand this traditional approach and offer a data-driven analysis of female politicians' presence in media using frame analysis. Developing this, we describe and analyse specific cases of media narration of Polish female politicians campaigning for the 2014 EP elections, exemplifying the images of female political actors in mainstream national media. Our aim is to underline the complexity of gender- and/or sex-based narratives used by media to convey political messages portraying women politicians, as well as to highlight personal communicative strategies of these female candidates competing to increase their electorate.

### **Part II: Narrating Elections**

#### *The Construction of "Crisis" in the 2014 Danish EP Election Campaign*

By **Cecilie Lindstrøm**

It has long been expected that Europe's financial crisis will dominate the European Parliament election agenda and may unleash negative campaigning against the European project as a whole. At the same time a well-known argument is that the European project was forged on the very ruins of crisis. This project analyses how 'crisis' is constructed and deconstructed in the 2014 election campaign in Denmark and which narratives of crisis can be found. It examines the use of the term 'crisis', under what circumstances and to which purpose 'crisis' is used, and how this is connected to arguments for in- or decreased EU integration. I draw upon approximately 50 articles and blog posts from eight Danish candidates for the 2014 EP election. The method and theory of this project is discourse analysis, combined with the use of narratives and the actantial model. The goal is to establish a link between 'crisis' and European integration and figure out whether 'crisis' functions as an accelerating or decelerating factor for European integration and thus affects the future of Europe.

#### *Coverage of the 2004 and 2009 EP Campaigns in Hungarian Online Media*

By **Tamás Novák**

The purpose of this study is to look at the news coverage of the 2004 and 2009 European parliamentary elections in the Hungarian online media. Its primary aim is to provide an overview of the campaign and the elections' immediate aftermath based on an analysis of two liberal-minded news sites. The data sample consists of 151 articles published in the two months immediately preceding the elections as well as the first two months succeeding them. Drawing on content analysis, narrative theory and critical discourse analysis, I develop a quantitative and qualitative framework in order to map how the two chosen news sites reported on the EP elections and presented this coverage to the Hungarian citizenry. As a result of this analysis, I aim to reveal the narrative dimensions and identify the main discourses the elections were put into.

## **Panel D - Outside Voters?**

### *Locating Europe and Elections among Young and Unemployed Voters*

By **Andreas Ulrich**

Youth unemployment rates across Europe are alarming. The fight against social exclusion is currently a top priority in the election programmes of the political parties running for the European Parliament Elections in 2014. Quantitative research, like the Eurobarometer surveys, suggests that factors like youth, low levels of education and unemployment are increasing social exclusion and disengagement from society. This case study investigates how young, unemployed Danes from the city of Aarhus perceive, respectively, their own position in society, the 2014 EP election in general and the efforts of young Danish EP-candidates to solve the unemployment crisis in particular. This analysis employs such qualitative research methods as questionnaires, using open questions, and interviews. The interviewees' answers indicate that the participants do not necessarily see themselves as socially excluded and that the 2014 EP-election is not perceived as important as the national elections.

### *The Political Landscape of Turkish Minorities in Aarhus – from Local to European Elections*

By **Aylin Huri Kuyucu**

Turks are currently the largest minority in Denmark, and one of the first large non-European immigrant groups, arriving in the early 1970s. Despite this fact, research on this Turkish minority seems to be mostly focused on Islam in Denmark, and little attention was given to this minority group in particular. The purpose of this project is to look at the perception of Turkish minorities of elections from the local to the European level. I aim to map the mental political landscape of two generations of the Turkish minority in Aarhus. First, I describe the general background of the Turkish minority in Denmark, using literature on political participation and voting behaviour of minorities to provide theoretical depth. Then, I draw on my empirical data from my own surveys and in-depth interviews to analyse their perception of political participation which is contextualised with reference to their social profile.

### *A European Electorate? Perceptions and Political Participation of European Migrants in Denmark*

By **Iria Ameixeiros Cundins, Laura Ciuksyte & Daniela Biton**

In May 2014, and for the 8<sup>th</sup> time since 1979, European citizens will be called upon to elect their European Parliament (EP) representatives. Less than two months before this event, this paper aims to analyse political participation of migrants from Spain, Lithuania and Germany living in Denmark and explore how these three groups of migrants perceive the European Union and the upcoming EP elections. Empirical data, collected through a questionnaire and migrant interviews, sheds light on the participants' social profile, media consumption, knowledge about and trust in the EU and the EP. These variables are expected to have an effect on their political participation. Another aspect we discuss is the effort of the host community to include immigrants in the EP elections. Moreover, this project evaluates whether moving to another European country has an effect on immigrants' perceptions of the EU and their perceptions as a European electorate. The study ends with a brief comparative analysis of the three nationalities.