EUROMANIFESTO CODING INSTRUCTIONS

First Edition

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Preface

This handbook is based on the second edition of “Manifesto Coding Instructions” by Andrea Volkens of the WZB (Volkens 2002). In accordance with the intention of The Euromanifestos Project to strive for full comparability with the Comparative Manifesto Project, most coding rules have been adapted from the original handbook. Since there has only been test coding so far, the coding instructions might be revised as the project progresses.

1. Introduction

The object of analysing election programs is to measure policy positions of parties across countries within a common framework. Election programs are taken as indicators of the parties’ policy emphases and policy positions at a certain point in time. Therefore, election programs are subjected to quantitative content analysis. For the original project, a classification scheme was designed to allow for the coding of all the content of election programs for the post World-War-II period in a variety of countries.

A first version of the original classification scheme was developed by David Robertson (1976: 73-75) for analysing modes of party competition in Britain. In 1979, the ‘Manifesto Research Group’ (MRG) was constituted as a research group of the European Consortium for Political Research (ECPR) by scholars interested in a comparative content-analytic approach on policy positions of parties. During their work, the classification scheme was extended and revised to fit additional countries. Since 1989 the Social Science Research Centre Berlin (WZB) provides resources for updating and expanding the MRG data set in the context of its ‘Comparative Manifestos Project’ (CMP).

In 2000, Hermann Schmitt started to develop the idea to apply the CMP on elections to the European Parliament. The ‘Euromanifestos Project’ (EMP) at the Mannheim Centre for European Social Research (MZES) intends to collect and code all European Parliament election programs of all parties ever represented in that body. In order to guarantee comparability with the CMP on the one hand and to make in-depth European-specific analyses possible, the classical CMP coding frame needed to be modified. In which way this has been done is explained in chapter 4.2.

This handbook is an introduction into the application of the Euromanifestos Coding Scheme (EMCS). It provides coders who do not have the background knowledge of the MRG or EMP members with all the relevant information, definitions, and sources to apply the coding scheme to their respective countries.
2. Selection of Programs

Programmatic statements are central features of parties. In party programs, the political ideas and goals of parties are put on record. Although only few voters actually read party programs, they are spread commonly through the mass media. Among the different kinds of programs which are issued in many countries, the basis for this research are election programs. The advantages of taking election programs as a source for identifying political goals of parties are manifold:

1. Election programs cover a wide range of political positions and themes and, therefore, can be seen as a ‘set of key central statements of party positions’ (Budge/Robertson/Hearl 1987: 18).

2. Election programs are authoritative statements of party policies because the programs are usually ratified in party conventions.

3. Election programs are representative statements for the whole party, not just statements of one faction or group within the party or of individual party members.

4. Election programs are published before every election. Thus, changes of policy positions of parties over time can be studied.

According to the special significance of election programs, the documents to be collected are the platforms of parties which are published for the election of representatives in the national assembly of a respective country. The sources of gathering the programs may be the parties themselves, associated research and training institutes or publications in newspapers, magazines, or books.

In some countries parties do not distribute election programs. In this case, the above given description of election programs serves as an ‘ideal type’ of a document which is to be searched for. The only documents available may be newspaper summaries of the parties’ election pledges or reports of party spokesmen about policy positions and goals for the upcoming legislature. In any case, the ideal type of a document which summarises authoritative statements of the party’s policy positions for electioneering should be achieved as far as possible. Coders are asked to note down on the Euromanifesto Coding Sheet the type of document they have used.

3. Selection of Parties

The collection should cover all the relevant parties. In general, the relevance of parties is defined as the coalition (governmental) or blackmail potential of a party in a given party system (Sartori 1976: 121-125). Coalition potential is defined as (1) the actual or former membership in a government or (2) the possibility (feasibility) of becoming a government
party. Blackmail potential is defined as the party’s impact on ‘the tactics of party competition particularly when it alters the direction of the competition - by determining a switch from centripetal to centrifugal competition either leftward, rightward, or in both directions - of the governing-oriented parties (Sartori 1976: 123). These criteria have been used in the MRG/CMP projects, f.i. whether small parties, especially new ones like the green parties, affect party competition despite of their small size.

The EMP respects these criteria, but due to the fact that in the EC/EU there are neither formal coalitions to be built nor governments to be elected, a somewhat broader criteria is applied. Relevant parties in the EC/EU are parties that have been represented at least once in the European Parliament. While manifestos issued earlier will be archived, the starting point for the collection of Euromanifestos for any single party is the election to the European Parliament in which the party was able to achieve representation for the first time.

4. The Coding Procedure

The election programs are analysed by methods of content analysis which is ‘a research technique for the objective, systematic, and quantitative description of the manifest content of communication’ (Berelson 1971: 18). The method can be applied to a wide range of different materials and research questions. The purpose of this section is to describe the specific form of content analysis to undertaken in manifesto research.

The specific kind of internal, quantitative analysis is derived from the question as to what ideas, policies, issues, and concerns parties stress in their platforms. The methods of coding are designed to be comparable over a wide range of countries irrespective of cultural and socio-economic differences. Therefore, a classification scheme with invariant general categories is used to cover the total content of election programs by identifying the statements of preference expressed in the programs. This classification scheme contains 169 different categories grouped into seven major policy domains. Each of the 169 categories sums up related issues in a way that changes over time can be measured across parties and cross-culturally. Thus, the coding procedure comprises a quantification (how many statements do parties make?) and a classification (what kind of statements do parties make?) of election programs.

4.1. Quantification: The Coding Unit

The coding unit in a given program is the ‘quasi-sentence’, defined as an argument. An argument is the verbal expression of one political idea or issue. In its simplest form, a sentence is the basic unit of meaning. Therefore, punctuation can be used as a guideline for identifying arguments. The starting point of coding is the sentence, but what we are aiming
for is an argument. In its shortest form, a sentence contains a subject, a verb and an attribute or an adjective.

Examples: ‘We make a stand for a democratic Europe.’
  ‘We support more rights for the European Parliament.’

Obviously, these two sentences contain two different arguments which are easy to identify and to distinguish. But unfortunately, languages are more complex, and it is a question of style how to express the same political ideas.

Example: ‘We make a stand for a democratic Europe with more rights for the European Parliament.’

In this case, the two statements are combined in one sentence, but for our purposes are still treated as two different arguments. Long sentences are decomposed into ‘quasi-sentences’ if the sense changes within the sentence. In most cases, one sentence which covers two (or more) arguments can be easily transformed into two (or more) quasi-sentences by repeating substantives and/or verbs. Thus, a ‘quasi-sentence’ is a set of words containing one and only one political idea. It stops either at the end of an argument or at a full stop (period).

In many cases, arguments are combined and related into one sentence.

Example: ‘Because we make a stand for more democracy in Europe, we promote an expansion of the European Parliament’s rights.’

These are two quasi-sentences, because there are two political goals, i.e. democracy and rights for the EP, which can be transformed into two quasi-sentences:

Examples: ‘We make a stand for more democracy in Europe.’
  ‘We promote more rights for the European Parliament.’

Thus, long sentences may combine two or more arguments which are often contained by commas, semicolons or colons. A list of arguments, sometimes marked with hyphens or dots, is treated as if separated with full stops.

Example: ‘In the European Union, we will
  - fight for clean air;
  - promote higher standards in water protection;
  - put the environment on top of the EP’s agenda;
  - secure social justice;
  - guarantee the rights of employees;
  - fight against corruption;
  - retain our cultural diversity.'
This text contains seven quasi-sentences. Three of the arguments (1. fight for clean air; 2. promote higher standards in water protection; 3. put the environment on top of the EP’s agenda) express the same general idea, i.e. environmental protection, but different issues in this policy field. Because distinct policies are mentioned for environmental protection, three different quasi-sentences are identified. This list of policies may be given in the following way for which the same number of quasi-sentences is coded as for the list given above:

In the European Union, we will fight for clean air, promote higher standards in water protection, and we will put the environment on top of the EP’s agenda. We will secure social justice, guarantee the rights of the employees, fight against corruption, and retain our cultural diversity.

Thus, if different issues - however short - are dealt with in the same sentence they constitute different quasi-sentences even if they apply to the same policy field. On the other hand, the same argument may be very long and may occupy a lot of space, but still be only one quasi-sentence.

Step No 1: Identifying Quasi-Sentences

1. Xerox the respective party program. Then, 2. start with reading the first paragraph, 3. look at each sentence of the first paragraph, 4. identify the number of arguments by transforming them into quasi-sentences, and 5. mark all quasi-sentences in the first paragraph as shown in sample texts in section 5.

Some parts of the platform, like statistics, tables of content and section headings are not considered as text to be coded and, therefore, do not count as quasi-sentences. Introductory remarks by party leaders are equally ignored since the ideal-type of a platform is defined as authoritative statements of parties. All the other parts of a platform constitute the basis of analysis. The total number of units of analysis equals the total number of quasi-sentences identified for the relevant text of a given platform.

4.2 Classification: The Euromanifestos Coding Scheme (EMCS)

In this project four types of comparisons are possible: (1) comparisons of changes in policy positions or in emphases over time within specific parties; (2) differences in policy positions or in emphases across parties; (3) differences across countries; and, (4) differences between elections to the European Parliament and to national parliaments.
4.2.1 Content Codes

The basic data sought to support such comparisons are the shares of election programs devoted to each category in a set of standardised issue areas. Comparison requires standardisation. The Manifesto Project, after much experimentation and discussion, developed a coding system, whereby each quasi-sentence of every election program is coded into one, and only one, of 56 standard categories. The 56 categories were grouped into seven major policy areas. The coding categories are designed, as far as possible, to be comparable between parties, countries and over time.

For the EMP, three modifications have been made, but the well-known CMP coding frame retained its central role:

1. 54 out of the 56 CMP codes build the core of the EMCS. The two remaining codes have been divided into sub-codes. In addition, more generally applicable sub-codes than in the original CMP coding frame have been developed.
2. The CMP coding frame has been “mirrored” two times (tripled to 162 codes) to document whether
   2.1. the content has an explicit focus on the party’s country as political protagonist or political arena (national, sub-national or local level)
   2.2. the content has an explicit focus on Europe as a historical, political or economical unit or the EC/EU as political protagonist or political arena (supranational level)
   2.3. the content has neither an explicit focus on the party’s country nor on Europe/the EC/EU as protagonist or political arena (including content referring to all (other) peoples of the world)

6 of the 162 ‘mirrored’ codes were found to be not applicable to the EMP, so 156 codes remained.

3. 13 additional codes have exclusively been developed for the political system of the EC/EU (mirror 2.2).

Thus, essentially, the Euromanifestos Coding Scheme (EMCS) consists of 169 codes and 86 sub-codes. 13 of the codes exclusively apply to the political system of the EC/EU, and the remaining 156 codes are – with only 6 exceptions – the tripled CMP coding frame. Neglecting the political level, there are all in all 69 standard ‘content’ categories.

4.2.2 Political Level

The structure of the codes reflects the logic of the code construction. Therefore, the first digit indicates the political level pertaining to the mirroring of the CMP coding frame. The
level digit is being determined by two meaning elements and two decision rules. The meaning elements are:

the governmental frame that may be part of an argument
[with the codes (1) National government, (2) EC/EU government and (3) World government or unspecific]; and

the policy scope that may be part of an argument
[with the codes (1) the nation or sub-national entities, (2) the EC/EU/Europe, and (3) the world or unspecific].

**The political level decision rules are:**
if only one meaning element is present, it defines the code; if both elements are present but do not suggest the same code, governmental frame beats policy scope.

This first ‘level’ digit (1, 2, 3) is separated from the ‘content’ digits by a hyphen. In case the ‘level’ digit is an x in the coding scheme, the level (1, 2, or 3) should be easily assigned by the coder. In all other, possibly more problematic cases, a description is given for every level/content combination considered necessary. The level digit and the following three digits form the 169 EM codes. In 89 cases, sub-codes are indicated by one more, a fifth digit.

**Table 1:** The Euromanifesto Coding Scheme:
69 Categories at 3 Political Levels in 7 Policy Domains

**DOMAIN 1: External Relations**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>[level]</th>
<th>[content]</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1, 2</td>
<td>-101</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1, 2</td>
<td>-102</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1, 2, 3</td>
<td>-103</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1, 2, 3</td>
<td>-104</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1, 2, 3</td>
<td>-105</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1, 2, 3</td>
<td>-106</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1, 2, 3</td>
<td>-107</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1, 2, 3</td>
<td>-108</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1, 2, 3</td>
<td>-109</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1, 2, 3</td>
<td>-110</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
DOMAIN 2: Freedom and Democracy

[1, 2, 3-201] Freedom and Human Rights; differentiated into two sub-categories
1, 2, 3 -202 Democracy
1, 2, 3 -203 Constitutionalism: Positive
1, 2, 3 -204 Constitutionalism: Negative

DOMAIN 3: Political System

DOMAIN 3.1: Political System (in general)

1, 2, 3 -301 Decentralization: Positive
1, 2, 3 -302 Decentralization: Negative
1, 2, 3 -303 Executive and Administrative Efficiency
1, 2, 3 -304 Political Corruption
1, 2, 3 -305 Political Authority

DOMAIN 3.2: Political System of the European Union
[by definition, x=2 only]

2 -306 Competences of the European Parliament: Positive
2 -307 Competences of the European Parliament: Negative
2 -308 Competences of the European Commission: Positive
2 -309 Competences of the European Commission: Negative
2 -310 Competences of the European Council/Council of Ministers: Positive
2 -311 Competences of the European Council/Council of Ministers: Negative
2 -312 Competences of the European Court of Justice: Positive
2 -313 Competences of the European Court of Justice: Negative
2 -314 Competences of Other EC/EU Institutions: Positive
2 -315 Competences of Other EC/EU Institutions: Negative
2 -316 EC/EU Enlargement: Positive
2 -317 EC/EU Enlargement: Negative
2 -318 Complexity of the EC/EU Political System
DOMAIN 4: Economy

1, 2, 3 -401 Free Enterprise
1, 2, 3 -402 Incentives
1, 2, 3 -403 Market Regulation
1, 2, 3 -404 Economic Planning
1, 2, 3 -405 Corporatism
1, 2, 3 -406 Protectionism: Positive
1, 2, 3 -407 Protectionism: Negative
1, 2, 3 -408 Economic Goals
1, 2, 3 -409 Keynesian Demand Management
1, 2, 3 -410 Productivity
1, 2, 3 -411 Technology and Infrastructure
1, 2, 3 -412 Controlled Economy
1, 2, 3 -413 Nationalization
1, 2, 3 -414 Economic Orthodoxy
1, 2, 3 -415 Marxist Analysis
1, 2, 3 -416 Anti-Growth Economy

DOMAIN 5: Welfare and Quality of Life

1, 2, 3 -501 Environmental Protection
1 -502 Culture in the Manifesto Country
1, 2, 3 -503 Social Justice
1, 2, 3 -504 Welfare State Expansion (WSE)
1, 2, 3 -505 Welfare State Limitation (WSL)
1, 2, 3 -506 Education Expansion
1, 2, 3 -507 Education Limitation

DOMAIN 6: Fabric of Society

1, 2 -601 National/European Way of Life: Positive
1, 2 -602 National/European Way of Life: Negative
1, 2, 3 -603 Traditional Morality: Positive
1, 2, 3 -604 Traditional Morality: Negative
1, 2, 3 -605 Law and Order
1, 2, 3 -606 Social Harmony
1, 2, 3 -607 Multiculturalism: Positive
1, 2, 3 -608 Multiculturalism: Negative
DOMA 7: Social Groups

1, 2, 3 -701 Labour Groups: Positive
1, 2, 3 -702 Labour Groups: Negative
[1, 2, 3 -703 Agriculture and Farmers; differentiated into two sub-categories]
1, 2, 3 -704 Middle Class and Professional Groups
1, 2, 3 -705 Underprivileged Minority Groups (UMG)
1, 2, 3 -706 Non-economic Demographic Groups (NEDG)

After identifying the quasi-sentences in the first paragraph, the next stage of the coding procedure is to decide which of the 69 standard categories of the Euromanifestos Coding Scheme a respective quasi-sentence expresses. Each category of the EMCS is specified by a set of typical issues and political ideas. Before starting the coding procedure, the coder should read through the EMCS and its defining ideas and issues several times. With 69 standard categories the EMCS is reasonably scarce so that titles of categories and their defining characteristics can be easily memorised. The better the coder can memorise the categories and their specifications, the easier and faster the coding procedure will be.

For the example given above, the introductory sentence clearly indicates that the political level in which political action should be taken is the European Union. Therefore, the first digit has to be a ‘2’, if there is no further deviation or specification. The category numbers (2-501) ‘Environmental Protection (in the EC/EU)’, (2-503) ‘Social Justice (in the EC/EU)’, (2-701) ‘Labour Groups (in the EC/EU): Positive’, (2-304) ‘Political Corruption (in the EC/EU)’, and (2-607) ‘Multiculturalism (in the EC/EU): Positive’, are noted down at the margin of the copied election program:

[ codes ] [ manifesto text ]
2-501 - fight for clean air
2-501 - promote higher standards in water protection;
2-501 - put the environment on top of the EP’s agenda;
2-503 - secure social justice;
2-701 - guarantee the rights of employees;
2-304 - fight against corruption;
2-607 - retain our cultural diversity.

This is, of course, a rather simple example. However, it already contains at least two crucial decisions that deserve special attention. The first decision is to be made concerning the political level. In the example, it is perfectly clear that the list of arguments applies to Europe, the EC/EU. Yet, if the first sentence only read ‘We will’ instead of ‘In the European Union, we will’, the political level could have been less certain, and the subsequent code could have been ‘3’ (or even ‘1’) instead of ‘2’. The second decision applies to ‘guarantee the rights of employees’ which gets the code 2-701 (Labour Groups
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(in the EC/EU): Positive). At first sight, the code does not quite fit the content. However, there is no 'support for employees’ category, and ‘favourable references to employees’ is included in the far-reaching ‘Labour Groups: Positive’ categories.

**Step No 2: Classifying the Quasi-Sentences**

Read the whole of the first paragraph before you start coding the first quasi-sentence because the context may give you hints how to code an otherwise ambiguous argument. Look to see whether one of the 69 standard categories definitely captures the sense of the first identified quasi-sentence and note down the respective number of the category at the margin of the page. Repeat this procedure for all the quasi-sentences of the first paragraph. Then proceed with the next paragraph by repeating step no 1.

While the CMP does not explicitly take into account political levels, the decision about the political level is crucial for the success of the Euromanifestos Project. We want to know whether content does explicitly point to (1) the manifesto country, (2) Europe or the EC/EU as governmental frame or to (3) neither one of these. This decision can be a delicate task. Another example shows all three levels:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>codes</th>
<th>manifesto text</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3-503</td>
<td>We totally support women’s aspirations for equality.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2-503</td>
<td>We welcome the directives of the EEC on the principle of equal treatment in access to employment.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1-503</td>
<td>We recognise that in establishing equal status for women our country lages far behind.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

If, however, the political level cannot be detected by simply reading the sentence or the quasi-sentence, follow the decision rules originally developed for the content categories, and apply it to the political level. If this does not help at all, the political level remains unspecified and should be coded with ‘3’.

**4.2.1 Categories with Country-Specific Meanings**

In most of the cases, the categories have clear-cut meanings which are applicable to all countries. But some categories have country-specific contents or require country-specific definitions. The categories (1-101) ‘Foreign Special Relations: Positive’ and (1-102) ‘Foreign Special Relations: Negative’ have country-specific meanings. Here, the coder has to decide in advance with which other country or countries the manifesto country (i.e. the country he or she is coding) has a ‘special foreign relationship’; for example, in the British case: former colonies, in the Swedish case: the rest of Scandinavia. Equally, the category (1-705) ‘Minorities’ requires a definition of what groups are considered as underprivileged in the manifesto country. The specific content of these categories must be spelled out as notes in a coding protocol.
Step No 3: Coding Protocol for all Country-Specific Categories and Codings

Note down definitions for all country-specific categories in a coding protocol. The coding has to be done in as uniform a way as possible. For comparative reasons, the greatest possible standardisation has to be achieved. Therefore, the coder must note down every coding decision he or she made if the procedure is not particularly mentioned in this handbook.

4.2.2 Coding Problems and Difficulties

Not all of the arguments are as clear as the examples given above. Three difficulties may appear in the process of applying step no 2:

a. No category seems to apply.
b. More than one category seem to apply.
c. The statement seems unclear.

a. No category seems to apply

The coding frame was created to capture the total platform content. Nonetheless, it may be that no category is available for a particular problem in a particular country. These quasi-sentences are treated as uncodable (x-000). It is important to realize that ‘uncoded’ does not necessarily mean that a sentence is devoid of meaning (although of course it may be), only that it cannot be fitted into the EMCS. However, the general rule is that sentences should be coded if at all possible. To follow this general rule there are a number of specific decision rules on how to tackle with difficult coding decisions.

In many countries some of the categories are not much used (for instance (1-405) ‘Corporatism’ and (1-409) ‘Keynesian Demand Management’), but are vital for comparative reasons. Therefore, some categories may be left empty at the end of the coding procedure. On the other hand categories used seldomly are the most difficult to handle.

Decision Rule No 1: Checking Definitions of all Categories in Policy Domains

Whenever tempted to treat a quasi-sentence as uncodable, reread the definitions of categories in the relevant policy domains because it might well be that the quasi-sentence contains a policy position that is only taken seldomly. Therefore, the specific definition of the respective category may just not be easily recalled.

A quasi-sentence may be without meaning but may nevertheless be part of the discussion of a problem and has a stylistic or linking function, for example:
‘Our party will do everything in its power to defend the interests of our farmers in Europe. To this end, we envisage several measures. Firstly, we will increase payments of all kinds to farmers. ...’

These are three quasi-sentences. The middle sentence itself is devoid of any policy-content but is a part of the same argument. Therefore, category (2-7031) ‘Agriculture and Farmers (in the EC/EU): Positive’ is coded three times.

**Decision Rule No 2: Identifying Connecting Sentences**

Some sentences, which may otherwise be uncodable, may just be connecting sentences between two arguments (for instance: Therefore, we are going to do three things.) These connecting sentences themselves do not constitute meaningful arguments but are part of an ongoing argument. Therefore, connecting sentences should be coded in the same category as surrounding sentences or as the bulk of the paragraph they appear in.

Because of the general rule to classify quasi-sentences if at all possible, all quasi-sentences treated as uncodable must be checked again after coding the total program. Uncoded quasi-sentences may be biased in meaning, that is, they may have a common thrust. Some quasi-sentences may contain country-specific issues which are not particularly mentioned in the definition of the category but nonetheless be subsumable under one of the 69 standard categories. Should this be the case, it must be noted down in the coding protocol according to step no. 3. Other quasi-sentences may have a country-specific bias too strong to be subsumed under one of the 69 standard categories. For these quasi-sentences a new subcategory may be developed to capture the content of these otherwise uncodable sentences. Subcategories must always be nested into the 69 categories so that they can be aggregated up to one of the 69 categories. For instance, 1-1101 is nested into 1-110, 2-6021 is nested into 2-602.

**Decision Rule No 3: Creating Subcategories**

Look at all uncoded sentences a second time and try to figure out whether some of these statements have an equivalent meaning. Make sure that there really is no related Standard Category that captures the sense of these quasi-sentences. Should many quasi-sentences contain the same arguments which are not subsumable under one of the 69 standard categories, note down a temporary 5-digit code and a temporary definition for a new subcategory and contact the supervisor. **Do not** create subcategories for each and every single issue because this is useless even when comparing parties from the same party system. **Never** create new categories without checking with the supervisor because you may destroy the comparability of the data.

Note that even trained coders tend to create too many subcategories, i.e. subcategories containing one or two quasi-sentences, only. To give an example: from more than 80 subcategories that had been created for transitional countries, 30 were re-aggregated into the main Standard Categories because they were almost empty. The remaining 53
subcategories prevailed and have to be applied for all programs from parties in transitional democracies.

**b. More than one category seem to apply**

The opposite difficulty of uncodable sentences is that more than one category seems to apply. This difficulty can be dealt with by applying the following decision rules:

**Decision Rule No 4: Section Headings as Guidelines**

Look at the section heading of the quasi-sentence in question. Then, take the category which covers the topic of the section or the heading. Thus, section headings are taken as guidelines for coding although section headings themselves are not to be coded.

If headings are not given or do not apply to the argument in question, a couple of decision rules are to be followed for the most common cases. The problem of choosing between two categories often occurs with respect to group politics, for instance: ‘We want more social security for the workers in our country’. In this case, category (1-701) ‘Labour Groups (in the Manifesto Country): Positive’ or category (1-504) ‘Welfare State Expansion (in the Manifesto Country)’ may apply.

**Decision Rule No 5: Specific Policy Positions ‘Beat’ Group Politics except Group (x-703) ‘Agriculture’**

Whenever there is a choice between a specific policy position given in Policy Domains 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, or 6 on the one hand and a social group from Domain 7 on the other hand, take the specific policy position. **This rule does not apply to category (x-703) ‘Agriculture’**. All quasi-sentences devoted to agriculture are to be coded into category x-703, even if a specific policy position such as (x-402) ‘Incentives’ or (x-410) ‘Economic Growth’ is taken to further the interests of farmers.

**Decision Rule No 6: Specific Policy Positions ‘Beat’ (x-305) ‘Political Authority’**

Whenever there is a choice between category (x-305) ‘Political Authority’, defined as the party’s general competence to govern or the general critique of opponent parties’ competence, on the one hand and another category from Policy Domains 1 to 7, the specific policy position is to be chosen.

For all other cases in which more than one category seems to apply, the coder has to decide what the most important concern of the argument is since one, and only one, category has to be chosen for each argument. There is only one exception to the ‘one-and only one’ rule:
Decision Rule No 7: Specific Policy Positions ‘Beat’ (x-408) ‘General Economic Goals’
Whenever there is a choice between a more specific policy position given in Policy Domains 1 to 7 and category (x-408) ‘General Economic Goals’, the specific policy positions (for instance (x-410) ‘Economic Growth’) is to be chosen instead of x-408.

c. The statement seems unclear

Even after applying decision rules no. 1 to 7, one may still not be sure where an argument is leading. Many of these problems may be solved by taking the context of the ambiguous quasi-sentence into account. Coders should first of all take into account the following sentences because the first (quasi-) sentence may be part of an argument which is explicated in the next sentences. Therefore, it is always useful to start the coding procedure by reading the whole paragraph.

In some cases, crucial decisions have to be made with respect to the manifest or latent content of statements. No inferences should be made with respect to the meaning of statements. The coder has to code what the statement says, not what he or she thinks it may lead to in the end. As with uncodable sentences, all unclear statements should be marked and reread at the end of coding.

Some of the coding problems will be solved with growing experience. However, whenever the coder is unsure about which category is to be taken, the supervisor should be contacted (Andreas.Wuest@mzes.uni-mannheim.de). The sentences in question can be translated into English and the coding decision is then taken and explained by the supervisor.

4.3 Coding Sheet

After finishing the coding of a platform, a tally is kept on a coding sheet given in this section. The coding sheet shows the respective country, party, and election year and gives the absolute number of quasi-sentences coded into each standard category of the standard coding frame as well as the total number of quasi-sentences. Two additional tables provide information on the source of the manifesto (or the document that is used as substitution for a missing manifesto) and document the coder’s placement of the manifesto on seven scales.
5. References


