B3.4 European Election Study (EES) 2014

The EES 2014 project continues the tradition of the post-European Parliament (EP) elections studies which started in 1979. The overall goal of the project is to assess the quality of democracy in the European Union at the time of the 2014 EP elections. In light of the Euro crises and the important institutional changes, our aim is to provide suggestions for improving the state of EU democracy.

The 2014 study consists of several sub-projects:
- EES Voter Study (completed)
- EES Panel Study (in progress)
- EES Manifesto Study (preliminary results)
- EES Social Media Study (preliminary results)

The Components

1) The 2014 EES Voter Study, Post-Election Survey
   Voter Study consists of a EU-wide survey which was carried out jointly with the post-electoral survey commissioned by the European Parliament (EP). The study continues the tradition of post EP elections voter studies which started in 1979. The data is deposited at the GESIS Data Archive for the Social Sciences. A number of papers based on the data have already been published or are forthcoming.

2) The 2014 EES Panel Study
   consists of online panel surveys that will be administered in nine EU member countries. The first wave was carried out after the 2014 EP elections and the second wave will be carried out after the subsequent national elections. Data of the first wave is ready for archive.

3) The 2014 EES Manifesto Study
   consists of collecting and coding the electoral manifestos issued at the time of the 2014 EP elections by all relevant political parties. All available manifestos were collected and coded by country experts. The data will be made available as of June 2016. Initial results were presented in the form of conference papers.

4) The 2014 EES Social Media Study
   consists of all the Twitter communication of EP candidates and their followers at the time of the 2014 EP elections. Due to copyright issues, the raw data cannot be made publically available. An aggregate version of the data is currently prepared. A number of papers have already been published or are forthcoming.

Main expectations: a reformed process of nominating and electing the Commission president should improve the state of EU democracy by:
- mobilizing citizens to take greater interest and participate in the elections
- strengthening the accountability in EP and thus also contributing to the legitimacy of the EU

Findings

Voter Study
- Citizens who are aware of the Spitzenkandidaten and their role in the EP elections are more likely to vote in the EP elections (see Figure 1).

Figure 1: Effect of candidate recognition on turnout

Social Media Study
- Significant social media activity and increased attention to the topic in social media (see Figure 3).

Figure 3: Twitter mention of the Spitzenkandidaten

Manifesto Study
- 29 parties out of 159 analysed parties mentioned the topic, the mean space allocated is 0.7% of the total manifesto size.

Figure 2: Predicted values of recognition depending on support for EU

Conclusion
- Weak effects of the Spitzenkandidaten among the general public, not fulfilling initial hopes of improving the state of EU democracy.
- Possible reason: low salience among parties

Selected Publications

Journal Articles

Special Issues

Selected conference presentations
- Braun Daniela and Sebastian Adrian Popa. 2016. The effect of lead candidates emphasized in election manifestos on the relevance of European elections [23rd International Conference of Europeanists, Philadelphia, PA, April 14th to April 16th, 2016]