Rejuvenation or renomination?

Corruption and candidate turnover in Central and Eastern Europe

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ABSTRACT. Recent studies have analysed the electoral impact of political corruption and effectiveness of
elections in holding implicated politicians to account. However, high levels of corruption or publicised cases of
political malfeasance also influence parties’ strategies before elections. While some studies argue that political
scandals decrease candidate renomination rates and electoral fortunes of incumbents, others suggest that parties
stick to established candidates when corruption increases. We put these contrasting arguments to the test by
studying candidate turnover on party lists in nine Central and Eastern European countries. Based on related
literature on electoral effects of corruption, we formulate two competing hypotheses on the impact of corruption
(perception) on candidate turnover: 1) rejuvenation, under which parties renew their candidate lists in response
to corruption, and 2) renomination, under which corruption leads to renomination of old candidates and
stagnation of the candidate pool. Our analysis is based on a new data set covering nearly 200,000 candidates in
most elections in Central and Eastern Europe since 1990. We find more support for the rejuvenation hypothesis
– deteriorating corruption situation leads to increased candidate turnover, but only among governing parties.
Additionally, we find that turnover is lower among larger parties, parties with increasing electoral support and
under economic growth.

KEY WORDS: Elections, Voting, Candidate, Political Parties, Europe (Central and Eastern), Governance

Regular elections are one the most important accountability mechanisms in a modern
representative democracy. Electoral contests allow the public to evaluate their representatives
and governing personnel, voters can reward parties and candidates for satisfactory
performance or punish them if they fall short of their expectations (Kriesi 2012). Punishment
can be motivated by a multitude of reasons including failure to implement campaign or
manifesto promises (McDonald and Budge 2005), underperformance on economic issues
(Ecker et al. 2015; Hernández and Kriesi 2016) but also by scandals or revelations about
political malfeasance and corruption (Bågenholm 2013b). Over the last two decades, a growing
number of studies has investigated the determinants, working mechanisms and effects of
political corruption (see e.g. Heywood 1997; Heidenheimer and Johnston 2011). One stream
of literature has devoted particular attention to the electoral impact of political corruption and
the effectiveness of elections as mechanisms of vertical accountability (Banducci and Karp

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1994; Chang, Golden and Hill 2010; Costas-Pérez, Solé-Ollé and Sorribas-Navarro 2012; Ferraz and Finan 2008; Kauder and Potrafke 2014; Pattie and Johnston 2012; Peters and Welch 1980). Most studies thereby investigate to what extent voters actually punish corrupt parties or individual politicians and ‘throw out the rascals’ (Bågenholm 2013b). Overwhelmingly, authors find that almost irrespective of national context or level of government voters do so considerably less severely or much less frequently than expected. Still, there are very few comparative large-N studies on the topic (Bågenholm 2013b remains an exception) and research has also failed to systematically address the influence of corruption on party strategies before they face voters at the polls.

Parties’ pre-election strategies encompass numerous activities, including programmatic adjustments and planning of the campaign. One of parties’ most important activities among these – arguably one of the most important functions of political parties in general – is the selection and presentation of candidates for public office (Gallagher and Marsh 1988; Hazan and Rahat 2010). Candidates are not only important because they implement policies once elected, but also because they are the literal ‘face’ of a party and constitute a link between voters and the state. Candidate selection mechanisms as well as the effect of quotas and other legal regulations have been researched both theoretically and empirically (e.g. Hazan and Rahat 2010; Lundell 2004; Rahat 2007). However, the determinants of candidate turnover and have hitherto received little scholarly attention. The effect of corruption on candidate turnover presents an ideal starting point for exploring these mechanisms. Voters’ perception of corruption in political parties is an important factor in determining party support and voting decisions (Deegan-Krause, Klasnja and Tucker 2011; Ecker et al. 2015; Slomczynski and Shabad 2012). Furthermore, high and increasing levels of perceived corruption are crucial for the break-through of new, anti-establishment parties in Central and Eastern Europe (Hanley and Sikk 2016). The abovementioned studies all suggest that corruption (or lack thereof) could create specific opportunities and incentives for parties to change their candidate line-up. However, their findings suggest two contrasting working mechanisms with diametrically opposed effects. While some studies argue that political scandals can decrease renomination rates and hamper incumbent’s electoral fortunes, others suggest that parties will stick to established candidates rather than replacing them with new faces when corruption increases.

The aim of this paper is to test the two competing notions by studying the effect of corruption perception on candidate turnover on party lists in 61 elections since 1990 in Central and East European (CEE). We formulate two different responses of political parties to increasing corruption perception: (1) rejuvenation, under which parties renew their slates in response to corruption, and (2) renomination, under which corruption leads to the stagnation of the
candidate pool and keeping of old candidates. We find significant support for the rejuvenation hypothesis as increased levels of corruption lead to an increase in candidate turnover. However, the effect is limited to governing parties. Turnover among all parties is affected by further factors. First, larger parties ceteris paribus tend to experience lower levels of candidate turnover. Secondly, candidate turnover increases when parties lose electoral support and decreases when parties increase their vote shares. Thirdly, economic growth limits candidate turnover while a drop in unemployment levels has (puzzlingly) the opposite effect.

**Mechanisms of candidate turnover**

Regular turnover of parliamentary elites is a defining characteristic of and a necessity for any democracy (Goodin and Lepora 2015; Petracca 1996; Putnam 1976). Legislative turnover rates are determined by factors ranging from the electoral system to parties’ performance in elections. They naturally also depend on how many members of parliament run again and who parties decide to nominate (Matland and Studlar 2004; Rahat 2007). However, the turnover of candidates themselves is so far a largely understudied subject. Existing scholarship mostly focusses on the renomination (and deselection) of incumbents and candidate selection in general (Gallagher and Marsh 1988; Hazan and Rahat 2010). Alternatively, they focus on pairs of election in countries with single mandate districts or very small multi-mandate districts (e.g. U.S., the UK and Italy) rather than elections in list-based electoral systems. Lack of adequate comparative data, too, has contributed to this gap in the literature. However, parties regularly nominate more candidates than they could reasonably get into office so that incumbents usually only occupy a fraction of places on party lists. Thus, there is considerable scope for candidate turnover in want of study and explanation – even if we assume that most incumbents are renominated (a trend visible in most Western democracies; see also discussion below).

There are generally two types of candidate turnover, which are similar to those identified by Matland and Studlar (2004) in their study of legislative turnover. Candidate turnover can be due to voluntary resignation of candidates, i.e. the decision not to run again for personal reasons (e.g. age, family, general dissatisfaction with party/office, or to pursue a career outside of politics). Although some factors – such as redrawing of constituency borders and the introduction/phasing out of more beneficial retirement options – have been shown to increase

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1 Exceptions are Kreuzer and Pettai (1999; 2003) and Shabad and Slomczynski (2004) who look at several countries and elections, yet even they are eventually mostly concerned with inter-party mobility of incumbents between elections.

2 Party-specific voluntary list turnover can also be caused by political tourism, i.e candidates’ deliberate decision to run for another party in the next election. Nevertheless, this has no effect on general levels of candidate turnover.
the rate at which incumbents retire from office (Banducci and Karp 1994), party list turnover should be significantly less affected by this. Such (dis)incentives almost only relate to incumbents and legislative turnover otherwise tends to be comparatively stable (albeit on country-specific levels; Matland and Studlar 2004).

On the other hand, party list turnover can also be caused by the involuntary removal of candidates from party lists. Thereby, a candidate is either deselected by the party or is forced to give up their list place. Although it is not always obvious whether incumbents resign of their own accord or are (informally) pressured into doing so, the impetus for involuntary removal should lie in their inability to win elections or adverse effect of the candidacy on the party as a whole. Health issues or death present another form of involuntary removal from party lists. As mentioned above, comparative studies of candidate list turnover are rare so that providing a preliminary analysis of wider patterns of candidate turnover is part of the rationale of this paper.

Studies of candidate selection in Western Europe and the United States have shown that most incumbents seek renomination by their party and tend to be renominated without problems (see chapters in Gallagher and Marsh 1988; Matland and Studlar 2004). At the same time, targeted deselection of incumbents – denial of renomination or forced retirement – appears to be uncommon. Yet as Matland and Studlar (2004) suggest, it may only appear rare as ‘incumbents who face a serious danger of being deselected [by the party leadership or through intra-party defeat] may opt for “voluntary” retirement instead’ (ibid. 97). This is backed up by most studies, prominently those on the UK expenses scandal in 2009 (Eggers and Fisher 2011; Larcinese and Sinclair 2013; Pattie and Johnston 2012) and corruption scandals affecting members of United States Congress (Basinger 2013; Banducci and Karp 1994). However, in each case other factors were also shown to have significantly contributed to increased levels of retirement and findings from similar studies on Italian deputies (Chang, Golden and Hill 2010; Asquer 2013; 2014) are mixed.

In any case, some natural baseline level of candidate turnover in all parties can be expected as a number of candidates resign voluntarily and are replaced with new aspirants for political office. Nevertheless, it is yet unclear to what extent the above findings can be applied to explaining variations in candidate turnover. Studies have so far focussed almost exclusively on plurality voting systems with comparatively decentralised systems of candidate selection. List-based electoral systems tend to be more centralised and exclusive, giving more power to central party organisations or regional leaders in the selection process (Hazan and Rahat 2010). In addition, incumbent candidates seeking re-nomination and ‘ordinary’ candidates differ in so far as the cost of removing the former is far greater. As Larcinese and Sinclair (2013) show,
parties do not remove MPs whose voting behaviour frequently deviates from the party line due to their ability to win elections. Ordinary list candidates on the other hand are considerably less costly to remove and their replacement might even be beneficial for the party. Incumbents implicated in scandals might thus simply be banished to an unwinnable place on the party list rather than being de-selected while ‘ordinary’ candidates are removed. Nevertheless, there is so far only some anecdotal news reporting of cases in which political malfeasance also affected ‘ordinary’ parliamentary candidates (e.g. Lalani 2015). Furthermore, ordinary candidates might themselves be considerably less interested in running again than incumbents given costs of campaigning and uncertainty about the outcome.

Finally, note that in addition to being a potentially important indicator of political corruption, candidate turnover is also a relevant variable for the study of other issues. For example, Kreuzer and Pettai (1999) argue that decreasing levels of candidate turnover can be seen as an indicator of parties’ institutionalisation and development of effective recruitment channels (which favour stability). In a similar vein, Sikk (2013) and Barnea and Rahat (2011) use it as an indicator of party novelty, the use of which could improve our understanding of party system dynamics, promising more reliable electoral volatility indices.

**Candidate turnover and corruption: rejuvenation vs. renomination**

Until now, candidate turnover and its determinants remain understudied and findings on legislative turnover are not fully applicable. Such problems notwithstanding, in this paper we offer a first step towards explaining candidate turnover by considering the relationship between candidate turnover and corruption. Studies on the impact of corruption on electoral outcomes and political recruitment often address the issue of candidate (de-)selection and turnover, although rarely in much depth. Interestingly, the existing literature suggests two mechanisms of effect which lead to diametrically opposed outcomes. One the one hand, corruption can be linked to an increase in candidate turnover as implicated candidates resign or are involuntarily removed by parties trying to increase their electoral appeal. On the other hand, corruption can also be associated with a rise and strengthening of clientelist structures which hinder turnover and decrease the pool of potential candidates. Thus, studying the relationship between corruption and candidate turnover not only offers a promising avenue in explaining wider patterns of elite rotation but also presents the opportunity to solve an intriguing theoretical puzzle. In the following, we review both arguments and formulate two competing hypotheses. These are then tested on a novel data set of candidate turnover in 61 elections in nine Central and East European democracies.
Relegation, de-selection and strategic newness: The case for rejuvenation

Corruption plays an important role in voters’ decision-making before elections. Although other factors naturally play an equally substantial role, corruption significantly affects citizens’ inclination to vote for a particular party (Deegan-Krause, Klasna and Tucker 2011; Slomczynski and Shabad 2012; Ecker et al. 2015). Voters are overall more likely to vote for parties and candidates who they perceive as less corrupt (or not corrupt at all). It is thus in parties’ best interest to appear as ‘clean’ as they can. There are a multitude of measures parties might employ to this end and prevent losses on election day (or maybe even increase their vote share), ranging from programmatic reorientation to structural changes (including splits and mergers with other parties to obscure their past). Yet, the most straightforward way to disassociate themselves with a corrupt image is to ‘throw out the rascals’. Despite some mixed findings in the case of Italian members of parliament (Asquer 2013; 2014; Chang, Golden and Hill 2010) and state legislators in Bavaria (Kauder and Potrafke 2014), this notion is supported by a great number of studies, most prominently those of the UK expenses scandal in 2009 (Eggers and Fisher 2011; Larcinese and Sinclair 2013; Pattie and Johnston 2012) and corruption scandals affecting members of Congress (Banducci and Karp 1994; Basinger 2013). Voters tend to see individual politicians rather than political parties as such as corrupt (Slomczynski and Shabad 2011), so that replacing old and ostensibly corrupt candidates would appear to be an effective way for a party to distance itself from the wrongdoings of previous representatives.

Offering a novel set of candidates untainted by political scandals has been linked the success of new anti-corruption parties in Europe (Bågenholm 2013a). Furthermore, ‘newness’ can also present a general strategy for parties to break into the electoral market or to increase their vote share (Sikk 2012). Thus, even if a party or its candidates have not been involved in any scandals, voters’ perceptions of rising levels of corruption (and increased awareness of the potential for malfeasance by established politicians) still present incentives for parties to change their line-up. Party lists are rejuvenated in order to increase electoral appeal. Thereby, party leaders can either elevate relatively unknown (and previously unsuccessful) candidates to higher and more promising list places or they recruit genuinely new candidates, without any political experience and/or with specific appeal to their electorate, from outside the party. Incumbents and previous top candidates on the other hand can either be relegated to ‘unwinnable’ list places or

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3 Nevertheless, this mechanism can be mitigated by individual party loyalty or overall political leaning.

4 Examples of this would be labour union activists running on social-democratic/socialist party lists or representatives of employer organisations on the lists of economically liberal parties. This might also happen, albeit to a lesser degree, if corruption is absent or declining.
districts or they are entirely purged from the lists, respectively. From this follows our 
rejuvenation hypothesis:

*Increasing corruption is associated with greater candidate turnover as parties try to anticipate 
punishment by the electorate and/or increase their electoral appeal by rejuvenating their 
candidate lists.*

**Clientelist structures and recruitment problems: The case for renomination**

Places on electoral lists – particularly those with a reasonable chance to get the respective 
candidate into parliament – are pricy goods. Political hopefuls usually have to proof their 
loyalty by long-standing commitment to the party, by engaging in grass-roots activism, 
canvassing and committee work, if they want to ascend in the party hierarchy and land one of 
these coveted positions (Gallagher and Marsh 1988; Manow 2013; Matichescu and Protsyk 
2011; Norris 1997; Protsyk and Matichescu 2011). The further parties institutionalise, they also 
develop more stable and effective recruitment channels (Bolleyer and Bytzek 2013; Kreuzer and 
Pettai 1999). Thus, one’s political pedigree becomes more important for recruitment into 
‘winnable’ list places, although it should not be prohibitive to recruitment of genuinely new 
candidates. While these arguments are still compatible with the rejuvenation hypothesis 
presented above, it can also be argued that a rise in corruption will change the incentive 
structure governing parties’ recruitment strategies to the effect that less rather than more new 
candidates are recruited. This effect is amplified by a lack of potential new candidates, leading 
to a stagnation and decrease in candidate turnover.

Political corruption is often associated with the existence and rise in clientelist structures and 
practices in the electoral arena. In the context of candidate selection, a rise in clientelist 
practices means that regular channels of meritocratic recruitment – which would still allow for 
the recruitment of party outsiders whose merits stem from a different field – become less 
permeable. As Protsyk and Matichescu (2011) show, parties will trade high-ranking/safe list 
places for potential financial contributions to parties’ budgets and recruit specifically with the 
aim of increasing their revenue (Matichescu and Protsyk 2011; Protsyk and Matichescu 2011). 
Potential candidates who do not possess sufficient material or immaterial resources are at a 
disadvantage compared to others who can use their wealth and influence to fill the party coffers. 
Candidates who already competed for a party in the previous election (not only incumbents) 
are particularly advantaged as they are even more likely to command resources for the benefit 
of the party and its networks. Yet there are further reasons why increasing corruption should 
decrease parties’ incentives to replace old candidates. While a new set of candidates may be 
appealing to voters, studies of the UK expenses scandal have shown that even incumbents who
have been implicated in will almost always achieve a better than entirely new candidates due to name recognition and track record of getting elected/the incumbency effect (Larcinese and Sircar 2013). At the same time, removing old candidates from candidate lists amid a climate of increasing occurrence of corrupt practices, might equal an ‘admission of guilt’ on behalf of the party, highlighting the practices and deterring voters. Highly publicised cases of political malfeasance also tend to be rather individualised and are therefore unlikely to account for large variations in overall candidate turnover. Furthermore, the more wide-spread clientelist practices are, the more likely it is that parties will try to protect their top candidates from prosecution by keeping them in high (and secure) list places (Protsyk and Matichescu 2011; Matichescu and Protsyk 2011).

A last point is that even if the value of ‘newness’ would outweigh the disincentives described above, parties will likely have difficulties to find new and politically ‘clean’ candidates to replace any dropouts when corruption increases. Indeed, it is likely that new candidates may also not necessarily want to join lists of governing parties if corruption perception is increasing. Parties may have to stick to the candidates that they have as they cannot (rather than will not) rejuvenate when they stagnate under increasing corruption. From this follows our renomination hypothesis:

*Increasing corruption leads to a decrease in candidate turnover because parties prefer to protect established candidates, previous candidates are able to offer more benefits to the party, and because the pool of ‘clean’ candidates is limited.*

The role of party leadership and government participation

Irrespective of which of the two competing hypothesis proves true, the role of party leadership and government participation by political parties should remain equal. All electoral systems for parliamentary elections in Central and East European democracies are based on party lists or at least have a strong list-based component (i.e. under mixed systems in Hungary, Lithuania). In such systems, candidate selection tends to be more centralized, thus giving party leaders more influence over candidate (de-)selection (Hazan and Rahat 2010; Matichescu and Protsyk 2011; Protsyk and Matichescu 2011). Candidate selection is further concentrated in the hands of party leadership in newer and less institutionalised democracies, which is of particular interest here as our data stems from CEE. Here, the lack of established party structures which could otherwise restrict leadership autonomy and the strategic complexity produced by the

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5 Members of all parliaments included in this study enjoy immunity from prosecution for the duration of their mandate which can only be lifted by a parliamentary majority.
high number of competitors strengthens party leaders and should lead to more centralized selection procedures (Field and Siavelis 2008, 630-32). In case parties choose rejuvenation as a strategy, this leverage would give party leaders the possibility to rid the party of old candidates and politicians associated with corruption. Should corruption rather lead to renomination, party leaders would be able to prevent the de-selection of ostensibly corrupt candidates and protect them by giving them the most promising list places, leaving significantly less scope for turnover. This makes both rejuvenation and renomination not only plausible but also feasible party strategies.

Parties’ participation in government, too, should amplify the effect of rising levels of corruption irrespective of its outcome. Parties who hold responsibility in government have the easiest access to public goods and determine their mode of distribution. On the one hand, representatives of these parties could be more likely to be involved in clientelistic exchanges where these goods are diverted from their intended use, thus strengthening corrupt networks and favouring renomination over rejuvenation. On the other hand, government parties should also be under greater pressure to renew their candidate lists if corruption is increasing. As argued by Ecker et al. (2015), voters evaluate government parties not only on the basis of economic performance (economy, unemployment rate etc.) but also on the existence and level of corruption. This should particularly be true in the countries of CEE where corruption tends to be among the most important issues for voters (ibid., Singer et al 2011).

Irrespective of corruption scandals among other (opposition) parties, governing parties will be under particular pressure to renominate or to rejuvenate. Governing parties not only have access to public goods but also the power to prevent its misuse for private gain. High or increasing levels of corruption will put greater pressure on these parties either to rejuvenate their candidates lists in a bid to anticipate punishment by the electorate or to renominate previous candidates to benefit from their resources and shield them from prosecution.

**Data and variable coding**

We employ a new data set on electoral candidates and party lists from nine Central and East European democracies and 61 elections between and 1996 and 2015, i.e. all current EU member states in the region with the exception of Croatia and Romania and a handful of early elections.

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6 Admittedly, this mechanism of punishment is likely mediated by individual voters’ political/party preferences (Eckert et al 2015; see also Anderson and Tverkova 2003).
where the data has been more difficult to analyse or obtain, respectively (see Table 1). Candidate lists and electoral results were obtained from public sources, primarily those available online (e.g. the websites of national electoral commissions, parliaments and ministries). As far as available, we incorporated data from the ‘Political Transformation and the Electoral Process in Post-Communist Europe’ database at the University of Essex. Data from the Comparative Manifesto Project, the Political Science Data Yearbook and the ParlGov data base (Döring and Manow 2016) were used to complement the data set and code government participation, electoral performance and party change. Overall our data set records nearly 200,000 candidacies. To calculate candidate turnover between elections, we developed an automatized matching function in R which compares candidates between pairs of subsequent elections.

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*Only parties that entered parliament.

Dependent variable: Candidate turnover

Candidate turnover can be approached in two ways – the percentage of new candidates who did not compete in the previous election (candidate novelty) or the percentage of candidates who failed to run again (candidate dropout). Although similar, the two measures reflect different processes – namely the recruitment of new candidates on the one hand and the removal of old candidates on the other – which do not necessarily go hand-in-hand, particularly if parties remain unstable. Novelty and dropout would be equivalent only if no parties disappeared and no new parties emerged. Furthermore, it would require that parties ran list of equal length in each election and candidates in all list positions were of equal interest. That is not the case and instead we focus on top ranks in candidate lists and use indices of

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7 In the actual analysis, we generally do not use data from before 1997 due to lack of data on corruption perception. We have already obtained further data and will include these countries as well as some of the earlier elections in the future.

8 The function also includes comprehensive tools to deal with complicate situations such as duplicate names, multi-district candidacies, misspellings and different ways of recording names in different elections.
weighted candidate novelty and dropout (see the discussion below). Therefore, we analyse both indicators and compare the results; even though our hypotheses should equally apply to both indicators, there are important and interesting discrepancies in results. For our analysis, we introduced adjustments to the raw percentages of candidate novelty and dropout that are outlined in more detail below.

**Independent variables**

*Corruption/clientelism.* We use Transparency International’s corruption perception index (CPI) to operationalize corruption. Although the index does not reflect actual or ‘real’ levels of corruption or clientelism, it can be argued to a meaningful indicator of the persistence of such exchanges in a society, including among political parties. We analyse both the level and change in CPI. For change, we look at the development of the index over the first three years of a legislative term without taking into account most recent changes that may not yet have had tangible impact (especially if elections are held early in the year). Our rationale is that a trend should represent the public relevance and pressure for political parties better than the average CPI score over the parliamentary term (cf. Eckert et al. 2015). Following Hanley and Sikk (2016), we also include the level of CPI for the year before the election – given that data is collected in the year preceding the headline year, this is more appropriate than taking the CPI score of the election year; particularly as some of the elections took place in the first half of the year.

*Government participation.* According to our hypotheses, government participation should be associated with either greater or lower rates of candidate turnover. However, particularly in the early years of democratisation, the new democracies in CEE often experienced several governments that included different parties during a single parliamentary term. Thus, cabinet participation cannot adequately be captured using simple dummy variables of government membership. Even more qualified approaches that only include parties most recently participating in government (see Bågenholm 2013b) fail to capture this complexity by leaving out important governing parties. Therefore, we coded the governing and prime ministerial status for all parties using data from the ParlGov data base (Doering and Manow 2016). Furthermore, we added data on portfolio allocation for each government from the Political Science Data Yearbook, Blondel and Mueller-Rommel (2001), and Ismayr (2010). Based on that, we constructed the measure of *weighted cabinet participation* that ranges from 0 (no

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9 For simplicity we assume a four-year term for all elections, but exclude from analysis very early elections (less than two years after previous), see discussion below.
portfolios held during the electoral term) to 1 (the party held all portfolios during the electoral term). We classify all parties for which the weighted cabinet membership was 0.1 or higher as governing parties. This includes all large or long-term cabinet parties, but excludes some marginal governing parties, those whose membership was short-lived or limited to early part of an electoral term. Further details on the index are presented in the appendix.

Party size. We operationalise party size as its vote share. Thereby, we expect the same effect of party size on candidate turnover irrespective of the applicability renomination and rejuvenation hypotheses. Under a renomination scenario, larger parties (those with a larger voter base) will have wider and stronger networks and are therefore able to provide more goods for their voters in exchange for their support. They are also more likely to be part of the government, granting them access to even more potential for patronage. Even in the face of allegations of corruption, these parties are under less pressure to deselect their candidates. Slomczynski and Shabad (2011) and Ecker et al. (2015) find that party supporters are less likely to see their preferred party as corrupt, so that parties with a larger voter base can count on their supporters’ votes regardless of any scandals. Larger parties also tend to be associated with larger organisational structures (or more complicated ones in the case of alliances). Under a rejuvenation scenario, the larger party organisation thus helps parties to reach out to people outside their existing structures and offer an attractive and relatively low-risk opportunity to run for parliament (higher chances of election means that associated costs of candidacies can be recuperated – through state party financing – more easily). We enter the variable as its logarithm to the base of 10 to ensure that the relative differences in party sizes are reflected more accurately.11

Vote change. Tracing political parties and their vote changes in CEE is a thankless and nigh impossible task because of the amount of changes political parties have experienced in the region (see Ibenskas & Sikk forthcoming; Marinova 2015). Our variable of vote change is based on a somewhat experimental approach suggested elsewhere (Sikk 2013). The vote share for parties in the preceding (resp. following) election is imputed based on successor (resp. predecessor) parties that were identified using overlap (or congruence, to use our preferred term) of candidates in consecutive elections. Where mergers or splits or coalitions occurred, the imputed vote is based on split votes for congruent parties according to the degree of

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10 From the analysis of candidate novelty and 37 from the analysis of dropout below.
11 For example, the logarithm ensures that a party with 20% of votes is equidistant from parties with 10 and 40 percent of votes, rather than 0% and 40% or 10% and 30% of votes. 20% is substantively closer to 40% than 0% and 30% is substantively closer to 20% than 10%.
congruence (see Sikk 2013 for additional detail on the method). Note that we exclude from all models new parties – i.e. parties for which predecessors cannot easily be determined. Almost by definition, they have very high levels of candidate novelty and mixing them with existing and more established parties would conceptually blur the picture. Still, we note that new parties have often benefitted from rising perceptions of corruption (Hanley & Sikk 2016).

Unemployment and GDP per capita change. Finally, we include the change in the unemployment rate and GDP per capita levels in the three years preceding the election year. Hanley and Sikk (2016) show that socio-economic developments affect chances of new political party breakthroughs. Even though those factors are not the main focus of this study, we tentatively expect them to impact candidate turnover and include unemployment and GDP per capita change in our models as control variables. Due to the great variation in the rate across countries and the fact that even high levels of unemployment can quickly become accepted as the norm (ibid.), we include the change rather than the absolute level of unemployment as our indicator.

Candidate turnover in CEE

As comparative large-scale data on candidate turnover has not previously been presented, we begin with an overview of overall levels and trends of candidate turnover in CEE. Figure 1 shows general trends in turnover by country, plotting the share of new candidates (those who did not contest the previous election) for each election year. Graph (a) shows that overall candidate novelty remains consistently high in most countries – only Estonia has experienced a nearly constant downward trend since early 1990s. Candidate novelty has usually fluctuated sharply when countries have held early elections (Bulgaria 2014, Czech Republic 1998, Latvia 2011, Poland 2007). When elections are held early, fewer candidates need to be replaced after retiring and fewer new parties are created with (often) predominantly new candidates. Remarkably, early elections do not reduce candidate dropout – i.e. the share of candidates running in previous election who do not run again (Figure 1b).

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12 Whether we can talk about party continuity under such circumstances is debatable, but the method does give an indication of the trend in the support for parties that field a certain set of candidates. Still, the imputed vote shares gave a good indication of trends in support for parties that had experienced such organisational changes. The exclusion of the imputed vote change variable does not substantively change other effects in the models.

13 As a starting point for identifying continuing parties, we used repeated party codes in consecutive elections from the Manifesto Project (Volkens et al 2014). Some of the established parties – particularly electoral alliances often with low candidate novelty – are assigned a different party code there. Manually added list of continuing parties is available in Appendix.
Such overall trends alone can be misleading as it is great extent based on numerous extra-parliamentary parties, which have limited political relevance. More established parties can be expected to show significantly lower degrees of candidate novelty. Figure 2 focusses on candidate turnover in parties which received at least 5% of votes in the respective election (roughly the typical electoral threshold in the region). Furthermore, we restrict our analysis here to the most important candidates by only looking at top 25% of party lists. Hence, the top quartile of a party’s candidates in districts are contrasted to full candidate lists in the previous election.\textsuperscript{14} Thus, new candidate percentage in Figure 2a refers to the share of candidates among

\textsuperscript{14} To remedy the fact that parties ran overlong lists (up to twice as many candidates as seats in parliament; e.g. Estonia 1995), we constrain ‘full lists’ above and ‘top 25 per cent’ to district magnitude or the total number of seats
top 25% who did not contest the *preceding* election. Dropped candidate percentage (Figure 2b) refers to the percentage among the top 25% of candidates who contested only the *preceding* election. We defined top 25% based on initial list placements or preference votes, where open lists used.\textsuperscript{15}

Among the top candidates in larger parties, turnover has very slightly decreased over time, yet there are strong country-specific variations. Some of the sharp drops are caused by early elections which restricted parties’ ability to recruit new candidates, while sharp increases can generally be traced back to the breakthrough of genuinely new parties which fielded almost exclusively new candidates (see Sikk 2005). Note that candidate novelty and dropout can diverge as we are comparing the top quartile of a candidate list in one election to full lists in another. Even if all top candidates were to drop out (e.g. due to scandals), many of them would be likely replaced with experienced candidates from lower down the lists rather than completely new candidates. Among established political parties (for definition see footnote 13 above), candidate novelty is generally lower with the aggregate novelty score clearly below 50% in most of the elections (see Figure 3). Still, there is no clear trend towards fewer new candidates (detectable in Estonia, Lithuania, Poland and Hungary), even if we exclude significant new parties from analysis. Also, significant variation remains within and between countries.

**Figure 3: New candidates in established parties by country (top 25%)**

![Graph showing the percentage of new candidates in established parties by country over time.]

*Note: only parties that were not coded as new in Volkens et al. 2014 that received at least 5% of votes.*

:\textsuperscript{15}For more details and our approach to single-mandate district candidates under mixed systems in Hungary and Lithuania, see Appendix.
Figure 4: Aggregate weighted candidate turnover by country over time

Note: For details on weighted candidate turnover see Appendix. Aggregate turnover scores weighted by party vote share.

Finally, instead of adopting a strict thresholds in terms of list placements and parties’ vote shares, we suggest looking at the aggregate score based on weighting individual candidates’ novelty using their list placement and their parties’ vote shares. The same approach will be used below for analysing individual parties. Weighted candidate turnover is calculated based on candidate’s relative list placement \( r \) that ranges from 0 (top candidate) to 1 (bottom candidate).\(^{16}\) The relative list placement of a candidate can be interpreted as the proportion of her party’s candidates in a district with a higher list position. The formula further takes into account overall party vote shares \( v \) based on the assumption that candidates for whom \( r > v \) are more serious or feasible than those for whom \( r < v \). Further details on the calculation of weighted turnover are given in Appendix.

Figure 4 shows trends in weighted candidate novelty (a) and dropout (b). Again, there is little evidence that overall political parties have become more stable in terms of their candidate, but as said before, any aggregate scores can mask variation among individual political parties.

**Governing status and candidate turnover**

Governing parties tend to include fewer new candidates in their electoral lists than opposition parties. The overall mean weighted candidate novelty for the former was 29.6% and for previously existing non-governing parties above 5% of votes it was 36.1%. Weighted dropout was also lower for governing parties than for opposition parties, even though the difference was

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\(^{16}\) Assuming no overlong lists where the number of candidates is higher than district magnitude.
less pronounced (mean weighted dropout 34.8% and 39.8%, respectively). Most of the countries followed this general pattern of lower candidate turnover among governing parties, with the exception of the Czech Republic and Slovenia where governing parties generally experienced higher dropout rates (see Figure 5b, slightly higher novelty in the Czech Republic, see Figure 5a).

**Figure 5: Distribution of weighted turnover by country and governing status**

Note: violin plots show density estimates of weighted turnover; black dots show overall means for countries

**Candidate turnover and corruption**

We now turn to the analysis of the relationship between candidate turnover and perception of corruption. Before proceeding with multivariate models, it needs to be noted that our analysis looks at parties that contested pairs of consecutive elections and where it was reasonably straightforward to code party continuity. We separate our statistical analysis in two ways. Firstly, we model separately weighted candidate novelty and weighted candidate dropout. We analyse the indices for individual parties, in contrast to Figure 4 above that shows aggregate figures for elections. Secondly, as the dynamics of candidate turnover in governing and non-governing parties differ, we run models separately for the two groups of parties, including pooled models for reference. To avoid our data being contaminated by numerous tiny extra-parliamentary parties, we only include those that won at least 5% of votes.

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17 Governing parties defined here as all that had the weighted cabinet seat share above 0.1. The difference in means did not decrease if the threshold was increased.

18 As parties in the region have not been stable, the models differ in the number of observations. For the analysis of novelty, we only include continuing non-governing parties as otherwise the models would be “contaminated” by genuinely new parties with (by definition) very high levels of candidate novelty. For the analysis of dropout, we
In preliminary analyses we discovered that candidate novelty is strongly dependent on other variables, particularly party size that we need to add as control variables.\textsuperscript{19} We also discovered a clear relationship between candidate change and time between elections with early elections producing more limited candidate change than elections held after full term. The models could in principle account for the difference in electoral terms by dividing candidate turnover by the time between elections, as there seems to be a roughly linear relationship between the two. However, we chose to exclude elections that took place less than two years before the previous one from our analysis. In particular, we could have not used the same lags for change in corruption and socio-economic variables as for full terms elections. Shorter lags would have been problematic because they have a more constrained scale and do not necessarily capture overall trends as well. Furthermore, voters might not attribute responsibility for changing corruption or economic situation to parties that have only been in government for a short while.

When looking at bivariate relationships between the change in corruption perception and candidate turnover (Figure 6), it only appears to affect candidate dropout among governing parties (Figure 6b) with no discernible effects on candidate novelty or dropout when considering all continuing parties. Furthermore, only increase in corruption perception seems to increase candidate dropout among governing parties while improved corruption perceptions do not seem to affect candidate dropout.\textsuperscript{20} Interestingly, the outliers among governing parties which saw high candidate dropout despite no worsening of corruption perception – Gregor Virant’s Civic List (LGV) in Slovenia, Public Affairs (VV) in the Czech Republic and Alliance of the New Citizen (ANO) in Slovakia – were new formations that disintegrated soon after the election. Even more interestingly, VV and ANO campaigned on anti-corruption ticket yet become mired in corruption scandals themselves after joining the governments.\textsuperscript{21}

\textsuperscript{19} In pairs of elections, the vote share refers to vote share in the later election for novelty analysis and to the vote share in the earlier election for the dropout analysis (i.e. when the candidates who dropped out did run). In many ways it would be more appealing to look at the effect of vote share in the more recent election, but determining these vote shares is almost impossible given the changing nature of the CEE party systems. We do, however, include the variable of imputed vote change that attempts to measure trends in party support taking into account splits, mergers and electoral coalitions (for details see p. 13).

\textsuperscript{20} Admittedly, already when change in corruption perception is zero, the average dropout levels off to fairly low levels – potentially close to “natural” baseline levels of candidate replacement.

\textsuperscript{21} This show limitations of CPI as a measure – it captures the overall perception in the direction in corruption, but does not reflect corruption scandals more specific to individual parties.
Figure 6: Weighted candidate turnover and change in corruption perception

Deteriorating corruption perception (i.e. declining CPI change in Table 2) increases governing party candidate dropout, but affects neither their candidate novelty nor non-governing parties. A ten point decrease in CPI during electoral term – close to the minimum in the dataset – increases dropout by 10%. The effect would be present in a bivariate model (not displayed), but persists when controlling for other variables that potentially affect candidate turnover included in our model (socio-economic trends, party size and party vote change, see below). This finding leads support for our rejuvenation hypothesis whereby governing parties respond to increased perceptions of corruption by replacing the candidates or the candidates leave the parties. Note that the effect is independent of party fortunes, as we are controlling for the impact of party size and change in vote share in Table 2. The effect would be slightly stronger without the controls (not shown); adding an interaction term for CPI change and vote change would not change the effect.
| Table 2: Electoral candidate turnover

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<th>Dependent variable:</th>
<th>Weighted novelty</th>
<th>Weighted dropout</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>all parties</td>
<td>governing parties</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CPI change</td>
<td>-0.28 (0.29)</td>
<td>-0.01 (0.42)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CPI</td>
<td>-0.05 (0.14)</td>
<td>-0.04 (0.19)</td>
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<tr>
<td>GDP change</td>
<td>-0.41** (0.21)</td>
<td>-0.76** (0.32)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>unemployment change</td>
<td>-0.47 (0.48)</td>
<td>-0.72 (0.71)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>log vote</td>
<td>-15.73*** (4.73)</td>
<td>-12.93*** (6.60)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>imputed vote change</td>
<td>0.54*** (0.16)</td>
<td>0.34 (0.23)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>weighted cabinet share</td>
<td>-17.46 (0.48)</td>
<td>-17.46 (11.47)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As shown above on Figure 6b, it is only the extent of perceived deterioration in corruption situation that seems to impact candidate dropout among governing parties. If we replaced the CPI change variable with a constrained variable where any improvements were set to 0, the model fit would improve (adjusted $R^2=0.3$) and strengthen the effect of CPI change as well as GDP change (discussed in more detail below).

In contrast to CPI change, the level of CPI has negligible impact on candidate turnover. We detect a minor effect on dropout among non-governing parties only, where ten points difference in CPI (roughly its standard deviation) leads to nearly 4% lower dropout. However, this finding is difficult to interpret. We can tentatively argue that when corruption is high, opposition politicians may be targeted by the government and can either drop out because they are involved in a scandal (or even arrested) or to escape the attention of the government or prosecution services. The level rather than trend of CPI could matter for such government.

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22 OLS estimation. The models satisfy standard tests of linear regression. None of the models suffer from multicollinearity, heteroscedasticity or observations with very high leverage.
tactics as they are more likely to appear in environments where corruption in engrained in the system rather than where CPI has only just increased. This finding again on balance supports the rejuvenation hypothesis even though the dynamics here are quite different from those involved in the effect of CPI change on governing parties.

Of the socio-economic variables, increased per capita GDP reduces both candidate dropout among both governing and non-governing parties and novelty among governing parties. Economic growth of 10% over electoral period (well within the range of the variable) compared to standstill would reduce candidate novelty among governing parties by around 7% (depending on model specification) and dropout by more than 8%. Hence, governing party candidates remain more stable in good economic times and change more during poor economic performance. The effect of GDP change on the candidate dropout among non-governing parties is more subdued – 10% growth compared to no growth decreases dropout by 5% (but the standard error is rather high). Interestingly, change in the unemployment level only affects candidate dropout (does not affect novelty) – a 10% increase in unemployment levels (just within the range in data) reduces dropout considerably (by about 18%), but the standard error of the estimate is high.23

Larger parties – be they in government or not – experience less candidate turnover compared to smaller parties.24 The effect is more pronounced for candidate dropout and for non-governing parties that keep 26% more of their candidates as party size increases tenfold25 while doubling would reduce dropouts by about 8%. Even though larger parties may have a larger pool of potential candidates – possibly increasing dropouts as they can be more easily replaced – they often also have a stronger party organisation and hierarchy. These in turn favour the nomination of party elites or their control over the process. This can benefit existing candidates as people stay in leadership positions longer than in small, less structured and more volatile parties.

When party vote increases, candidate dropouts become less common. For each added 10% of votes, dropout rate decreases by some 5% for governing and 7% for non-governing parties; alternatively, this can be seen as candidates dropping out if their parties lose support. Interestingly, candidate novelty increases as party vote shares increase – parties on the rise

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23 This is again a finding that requires further analysis. We speculate that unemployment might be a delayed effect of GDP change that the parties first react to. Also, established candidates could be more eager to keep their places under poor labour market conditions.

24 Note that parties less than 5% of vote are excluded from analysis. The average weighted candidate dropout for parties under 5% of the vote is much higher (73%) than for those above 5% (37%).

25 We use log to the base of 10 to ease interpretation.
attract new candidates or new faces attract additional voter support. Vice versa, declining parties fail to enlist new candidates. However, the effect is weaker compared to dropout and only limited to non-governing parties. One possible explanation of the effect is that opposition parties on the rise could be more open in accepting new candidates and could be more appealing to new faces. On the one hand, party ideology might be more in flux at the time of increasing popularity and new entrants may hope to have more say in shaping it. On the other hand, opposition parties on the rise are increasingly likely to enter the cabinet after elections, providing opportunities of jobs and power. It is also perfectly explicable that declining opposition parties are not particularly attractive to new candidates.

The weighted share of cabinet seats has no discernible effect on candidate turnover – possibly because we are controlling for party size that is related to cabinet seat shares.²⁶ If candidate turnover reflects anticipated electoral backlashes, this could indicate that in multi-party systems voters do not necessarily attribute responsibility for policies correctly – and all parties that have been part of the government are affected to similar extent.

**Conclusion**

The finding of this paper – that increasing perception of corruption leads to higher candidate dropout among governing parties – broadly supports the rejuvenation hypothesis.²⁷ Still, we believe that both tendencies can exist simultaneously whereby parties engage both in renomination and rejuvenation (even in the same election). Our evidence suggests that rejuvenation has been the dominant tendency in the countries under study, but the relative extent of each tendency needs further scrutiny. Furthermore, determining which governing parties should be ‘blamed’ for increasing corruption is far from clear in countries with multi-party cabinets (most of our cases) – an issue covered by the ‘clarity of responsibility’ discussion in the literature on economic voting (see Andeson 2000, Hobolt et al 2013, Royed et al 2002 and Whitten & Palmer 1999; also see Tavits 2007 on the impact of clarity of responsibility on corruption).

These limitations notwithstanding, this paper has presented one of the first large-scale analyses of candidate turnover in modern democracies. We believe that focussing on electoral candidates not only provides a way to study political parties’ responses to corruption but it also

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²⁶ But less so to weighted cabinet membership as the index also takes into account temporal distance of cabinets from elections and some sizable parties may have been out of cabinet for some of the electoral term.

²⁷ This is in contrast to our earlier models (see Sikk & Köker 2015) that relied on less sophisticated measures of candidate turnover and overly restrictive definition of governing parties.
has the potential for understanding political parties and party system change more broadly. The selection and presentation of candidates is one of the essential functions of political parties. Furthermore, candidates are a key part of a parties’ organisational structures and are invariably linked to elections. Candidate turnover helps to capture the fluidity and development in electoral and party systems which is particularly pronounced in CEE, but is also on the ascent in many Western European countries.

Works cited


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**Appendix**

**Weighted candidate novelty and dropout**

All candidates are not equal. Those in higher list positions carry more weight as potential MPs than those at the bottom of the list.\(^{28}\) The most straightforward way to weight candidates—so that those at the top contribute more and those at the bottom less to the index of novelty—would be a negative linear progression of weights—e.g. (1, 0.75, 0.5, 0.25, 0) for M=5.\(^{29}\) However, this clearly gives too much weight to all low-ranking candidates bar the last very one. The importance list positions also varies between parties. For example, imagine two candidates ranked 25 out of 100. If one of the parties is likely to win 30 of the mandates and the other one only 4 mandates, the candidate of the bigger party has a real chance of winning a seat and is obviously more significant than the candidate of the smaller party.

Hence, weights that decline mildly at the top, more significantly in the middle and smoothly taper off at the end are more appropriate. Out weights are based on the well-known formula of the logistic function:

\[^{28}\] Hungary and Lithuania employ mixed systems. Winning candidates in single mandate district and those with a reasonable chance are more important than also-runs far behind the top competitors.

\[^{29}\] We disregard candidates with list placements in excess of M.
\[ w(r, v) = 1 - \frac{1}{1 + e^{-k(r-v)}} \]  

(1)

where \( v \) the party’s overall vote share.\(^{30}\) Candidate’s relative list placement \( r = (\text{rank} - 1)/(M - 1) \).\(^{31}\) Finally, \( k \) is a constant affecting the steepness of the curve that is set at 0.25 as this produces suitable curves for our purposes. The weights for each party must to add up to 1 – therefore, we divide the weights by the sum of weights for all candidates.

Thus, we can calculate the weighted candidate novelty (WCN) of party \( p \):

\[ WCN_p = \sum \text{NEW} \cdot \frac{w(r,v)}{\sum w(r,v)} \]

(2)

where NEW is a dummy for candidates who did not run in previous election. Figure 7 illustrates the standardized weights for candidates. It shows that for largest parties, more candidates carry significant weight as more stand a reasonable chance of success. The smaller the party, the higher the weight of the candidates at the top of the list as few others stand a reasonable chance of winning a seat.\(^{32}\) The interpretation of \( WCN_p \) is straightforward as it ranges from 0 (no new candidates) to 1 (all candidates are new).

**Figure 7: Candidate’s standardised weight for selected party sizes**

![Graph showing standardised weights for selected party sizes](image)

*Note: Relative list placement \( r = (\text{rank} - 1)/(M - 1) \). Areas under the curve add up to 1.*

The calculation of relative list placements is complicated by the use of different electoral systems. Firstly, in nearly all elections, the eventual list placement of candidates was fully or partly based on preference votes. For open list systems, we used the highest of original and

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\(^{30}\) We use the national vote share as our dataset currently does not hold information about constituency level support for parties.

\(^{31}\) I.e. for fourth ranked candidate under \( M=10 \), \( r = (4-1)/(10-1) = 3/9 = 0.33 \).

\(^{32}\) We assume that when fielding candidates, parties have some information about the likely number of seats they are going to win and we use the actual share of votes as a proxy for expected vote shares.
preference-vote based list placements.\textsuperscript{33} Secondly, candidate weight in single mandate districts (under mixed systems in Hungary and Lithuania) is based on the following formula:

\[ w(x) = \frac{1}{1+e^{-x}} \]  

for top candidates: \( x = \log_{1.5} \frac{v_1}{v_2} \) for all other candidates: \( x = \log_{1.5} \frac{v_i}{v_1} \)

where \( v_i \) is the number of votes cast for the i-th ranking candidate. This ensures higher weights for candidate who win by a large margin (compared to those with smaller winning margins) and higher weights to competitors narrowly behind the top candidate (compared to those more behind).\textsuperscript{34}

Finally, for multi-tier systems (Estonia, Hungary, Lithuania), we use the highest weight\textsuperscript{35} across the tiers.

Weighted candidate dropout is calculated exactly in the same fashion, except that in equation 2 the dummy for novelty is replaced by whether the candidate ran again subsequent election.

**Index of weighted cabinet participation**

The index of *weighted cabinet participation* (WCP) that takes into account the length of the electoral term \( (T) \), party’s share of ministerial portfolios \( (m) \), the duration of the cabinet where it was included \( (d) \) and the time until election \( (t) \) from the middle of the cabinet term. For party \( i \) WCP over an electoral term is the sum of its weighted cabinet memberships in all governments during an electoral term:

\[ WCP_i = \sum m_i \cdot 2 \cdot \frac{d}{T} \cdot \frac{T-t}{T} \]  

For a party that held all ministerial portfolios during an electoral term WCP = 1. For a party that held all seats in the cabinet but only during the first half of a four-year electoral term WCP = 0.25. For a party that held all portfolios during the second half of the electoral term \( m_i = 1, d/T = 0.5 \) and \( (T-t)/T = 0.75 \) \( \rightarrow \) WCP = 0.75. For a party that held half of the portfolios during the second half of the electoral term \( m_i = 0.5, d/T = 0.5 \) and \( (T-t)/T = 0.75 \) \( \rightarrow \) WCP = 0.38.

\textsuperscript{33} Often, parties place some of the most important candidates at the bottom of the list who move considerably up in preference-based rankings.

\textsuperscript{34} For example, in a two-way race with \( v_1 = .7 \) and \( v_2 = .3 \) the corresponding weights for the candidates are .89 and .11; if \( v_1 = .55 \) and \( v_2 = .45 \), the corresponding weights are .62 and .38. Log to the base of 1.5 is used as other bases (2, natural logarithm or 10) would result in too low weights for top candidates with safe winning margins and too high weights for runner ups.

\textsuperscript{35} Before standardisation.
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<td>Weighted candidate novelty</td>
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1 only included in models for governing parties

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