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Candidate Turnover and Party System Change in Central and Eastern Europe

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ABSTRACT. All estimates of party system change rely on coding decisions regarding the categorization of parties as old or new. However, such dichotomous coding is insensitive to links between new parties and previously existing ones or extensive internal change in old parties. This paper looks at an important but so far understudied indicator of internal party change – the turnover of electoral candidates. Turnover is analysed in 55 elections in Central and Eastern Europe – a region with high levels of internal change in established parties and frequent new parties with links to established ones. We contrast the findings on electoral candidate turnover to volatility scores reported in previous studies. We also identify important cases of: (a) new parties that are only moderately novel, (b) old parties that underwent a significant internal change and (c) parties that were neither old nor new. The last category of partially novel parties pose most acute problems for the indices of party system change.

How unstable are party systems and individual parties? The most widely used indicator of party system change is the Pedersen's electoral volatility index, as it is intuitive and easy to calculate. However, it was much easier to apply in Pedersen's early work on West European party systems characterized by high levels of organizational continuity among parties than it has been in the last couple of decades – particularly in new democracies that have seen very high degrees of organizational innovation among political parties. Perhaps the most important problem facing investigators when calculating volatility in Central and Eastern Europe (CEE, the region that we focus on in this paper) is that calculation of volatility has nearly always been based on dichotomously distinguishing between new and old parties and, in case of splits and mergers, identifying a singular successor or predecessor. This paper is primarily motivated by our desire to explore levels of novelty within parties using an interval scale – that would allow for a more nuanced and adequate approach to the calculation of volatility that takes into account patterns of novelty and continuation among parties (outlined in Sikk and Köker 2015). Party novelty has several dimensions but in this paper we focus on perhaps the most understudied aspect of candidate change.²

The paper is based on a dataset of electoral candidates in 55 elections CEE elections between 1993 and 2014. Most of the data has been collected from public sources, primarily those available online. The dataset includes

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¹ Pedersen 1979, for applications see Drummond 2006; Lane and Ersson 2007; S. Mainwaring and Zoco 2007; Scott Mainwaring, España, and Gervasoni 2009; Powell and Tucker 2014; Roberts and Wibbels 1999; Sikk 2005; Tavits 2005, 2008. Still, it does suffer from problems – particularly as it does not necessarily reflect individual level changes, even if it seems to aggregate them (see Dejaeghere and Dassonneville n.d.).

² Recent studies that problematize the dichotomous notion of party novelty either do not look at candidates (Litton 2013) or do so only in the passing (Barnea and Rahat 2011).

all current EU member states from the region, excluding Croatia and Romania, for which data has been more difficult to analyse or obtain, respectively.³ Table 1 shows an overview of data used in this paper.

Table 1 Elections included in the study

Election number	BG	CZ	EE	HU	LT	LV	PL	SI	SK
1			1992	1990			1991*		
2			1995	1994	1996	1995	1993*		
3	1994*	1996	1999	1998	2000	1998	1997		1994
4	1997*	1998	2003	2002	2004	2002	2001		1998
5	2001	2002	2007	2006	2008	2006	2005	2004	2002
6	2005	2006	2011	2010	2012	2010	2007	2008	2006
7	2009	2010	-	2014	-	2011	2011	2011	2010
8	2013	2013	-	-	-	2014	-	2014	2012
9	2014	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-

^{*} Only data for parties which entered parliament.

We start with the analysis of overall trends over time in candidate novelty (and the related phenomenon of candidate dropout) in individual countries. We find that the trends vary in individual countries and looking at the region as a whole there is at best only a mild overall trend of diminishing candidate turnover. The second section of this paper explores the relationship between levels of candidate novelty/dropout and volatility specifically comparing our indices to the volatility scores calculated by Powell and Tucker (2014). We discover that there is a clear relationship between the two and also find that novelty (particularly among established parties) is more strongly linked to economic growth than the volatility measures proposed in their article. We also find excessive discrepancy between the measures for some elections that, we believe, is related to debatable coding decisions regarding individual parties and, more broadly, impossibility of "correct" coding using a dichotomous approach to party novelty. The final section looks in more detail into candidate novelty among individual parties. We discover that two groups of larger parties – genuinely new parties and existing parties - can be distinguished relatively easily based on candidate novelty. However, problems are posed by electoral coalitions and partially novel parties. First, electoral coalitions - that are very common and often highly successful in CEE - often have low levels of candidate novelty, yet in most volatility calculations have been linked to one and only one predecessor. Partially novel parties are potentially even more complex cases. On the one hand, they are genuinely novel (e.g. in terms of leadership and name) yet, on the other hand, include many candidates in their lists who had previously run on other parties' tickets. Once again, dichotomously coding such electons - to use a joint name for party lists and electoral coalitions (proposed in Sikk and Köker 2015) – "correctly" is impossible. However, given their often high levels of success, individual coding decisions can have very strong impact on the aggregate volatility scores.

Candidate turnover in CEE

Figure 1 shows the mean share of new candidates and the overall trends by countries – simply defined as those who did not contest the preceding election. The average figures are fairly high at around 75% with surprisingly little reduction over time.

³ We plan to include these as well as some of the missing earlier elections in future.

Figure 1 Overall share of new candidates

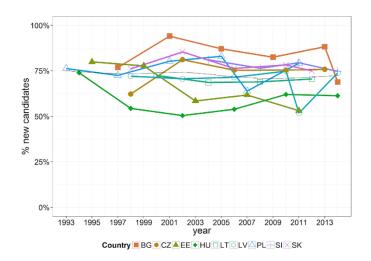
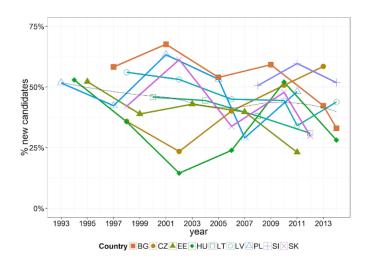


Figure 2 Candidate novelty by countries (top 25% of candidates, parties with at least 5% of votes)



Note: The fine black line show loess trend.

However, most of the new candidates in almost all elections represent small (and insignificant) parties. Figure 2 shows the trends in the share of new candidates among the top candidates of successful parties – using the threshold of five percent of votes – by individual countries. It is based on the comparison of top 25% of party's candidates in constituencies (national lists in Estonia, Lithuania and Hungary 2014) with full candidate lists (for all parties) in the previous election. ⁴ We only look at the top quartile of candidates as they are arguably the most important; changes at the bottom of the list matter less for the overall level of candidate novelty.

Generally speaking, candidate novelty has not decreased across the region. Only Estonia and Bulgaria have maintained a solid decreasing trend with respectively 23% and 33% of new candidates in 2011. The other Baltic states have seen a milder decrease. On the other hand, some countries have seen marked increases in novelty – particularly the Czech Republic – or retain high levels of candidate novelty (Slovenia, for which our data does not go back before the 2000/2004 pair of elections). The trend across the region is only mildly decreasing at best. However, the most notable feature of Figure 2 are the enormous fluctuations in candidate novelty – particularly in Hungary and Poland. This is caused by the breakthroughs of genuinely new parties that have

⁴ In some elections (particularly in Estonia 1995), some parties have run extremely oversized lists, with the number of candidates more than twice the number of seats in the parliament. To correct for such situations, top 25% and "full lists" are defined by district magnitude (i.e. 0.25M and M, respectively), or total number of seats where national lists have been used for analysis.

markedly more novel candidate lists than established parties (see below). The other reason for downward spikes is clearly that of pre-term elections – such as Poland 2007, Latvia 2011, Slovakia 2012 and Bulgaria 2014.

Figure 3 shows the extent of candidate novelty among established parties – defined here as those who did not run in the preceding election according to the Manifesto Project.⁵ There is a slight negative overall trend, with average candidate novelty among established parties decreasing from around 50% in early 1990s to around 30% in the most recent elections. Established party candidate novelty has generally decreased in some countries – particularly in Hungary where only about one in four among top candidates did not run in previous election for the last three elections. However, the trend is far from uniform and some countries have experienced consistently increasing candidate novelty even amongst established parties (particularly the Czech Republic).

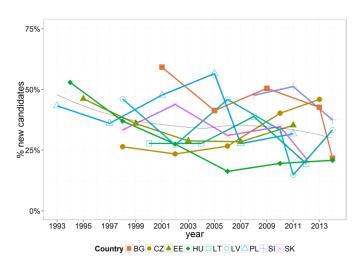


Figure 3 Candidate novelty among established parties, by countries (top 25% of candidates)

Note: only parties that were not coded as new in Volkens et al. 2014 that received at least 5% of votes. The fine black line show loess trend.

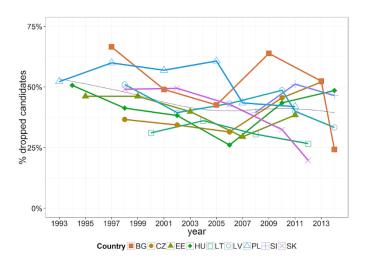


Figure 4 Candidate dropout by countries (top 25% of candidates, parties with at least 5% of votes in t-1)

Finally, candidate dropout levels – i.e. the share of top 25% candidates that did not contest the following election – follow a broadly similar trend to that of novelty. There are, however, interesting individual parties

⁵ Volkens et al. 2014. As discussed below, some of the established parties – particularly electoral alliances with sometimes limited degree of novelty – are excluded from this set of parties as they are assigned a different party code in the dataset.

which have shown remarkable degrees of candidate dropouts that has not always been matched by candidate novelty (see Appendix 2). The reason why the two can diverge is that we are comparing the top 25% of candidates in one election to full lists in another. Hypothetically, it is possible that while all top candidates dropped out in the next election (e.g. because of scandals), all of the top 25% in the second election had already run in the previous one.⁶

Candidate turnover and volatility

As one could expect, the overall candidate novelty is positively correlated to volatility (see Figure 5). However, the relationship is far from perfect. Notably, some countries seem to have consistently higher than expected levels of volatility (Lithuania) while others have consistently lower levels of volatility (Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Hungary). We contend that this might be related to different levels of typical candidate novelty, but it is more likely to be the result of coding decisions regarding new parties, coalitions and mergers – i.e. electon continuity is better or even excessively taken into account in the latter while major coalitions or partly novel electons (see below) might have been coded as new in Lithuania.

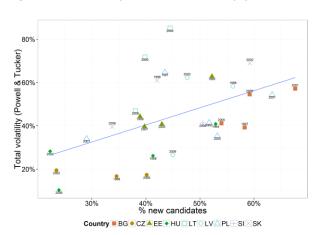


Figure 5 Total volatility and candidate novelty (parties with more than 5% of votes)

Source: total volatility from Powell & Tucker (2013)

To what extent is candidate replacement a consequence of new party entry and old party exit? Figure 6 shows the relationship between the average of candidate novelty and dropout, and Type A volatility – i.e. volatility caused by the entry and exit of parties form the political system (Powell and Tucker 2014, 124). The relationship is surprisingly weak. Some of the cases in Figure 6 emphasize the extent of political elite turnover not fully reflected in Type A volatility index. For example, the 2001 elections in Bulgaria and Poland saw many new candidates join and many old candidates leave tops of party lists, yet this is not fully reflected in the Type A volatility scores. The Polish election was a true earthquake as four parties that can be considered fully or partially new entered parliament with a combined vote share of 40.3%. The Bulgarian election saw a breakthrough of National Movement – Simeon II, one of the most successful genuine new parties in the region ever (won half of the seats). However, the Type A volatility score is only around the average for the elections included in the joint dataset.

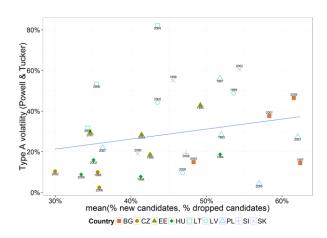
On the other hand, the type A volatility score for Lithuania 2004 is strikingly high given the medium candidate turnover (see

Figure 7 and Figure 8 for details on individual parties). The election did see a breakthroughs of an important new electons: (a) the genuinely novel Labour Party (DP), the newness of which is corroborated by candidate

⁶ It is obviously much more less likely that all top candidates ran again, but all of top 25% were new candidates.

novelty data, (b) the partially novel "For Order & Justice" (UTT) of the impeached president Rolandas Paksas, with almost 50% of its candidates having run in the previous election and (c) Liberal & Centre Union (LICS) that had a moderate level of candidate novelty (33%) generally typical of well-established parties. Two major parties also disappeared: the Liberal Union (LLS) and the New Union (NS). However, as the analysis of candidate drop-out data reveals, their candidate drop-out rates were rather low – particularly for LLS. Most of their candidates found a place on the lists of one of the new parties or the Working for Lithuania (UdL) coalition of Social Democratic Party and New Union. It had the *lowest* level of candidate novelty among main parties in the election, but has been coded as a new electon by Powell & Tucker. We do not wish to criticise the authors – who we believe have added a landmark contribution to the literature on party system change – as coding of elections with high degrees of complex electon innovation is extremely challenging and actually impossible to do "correctly" using a dichotomous scheme.

Figure 6 Type A (exit/entry) volatility, and mean of candidate novelty & dropout



Source: total volatility from Powell & Tucker (2013)

Figure 7 Candidate novelty in Lithuania (V%>5%)

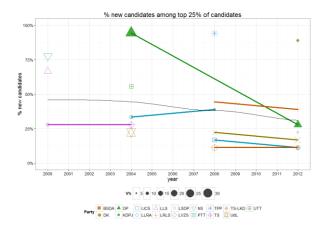
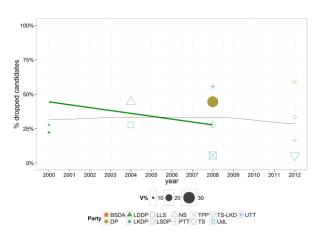
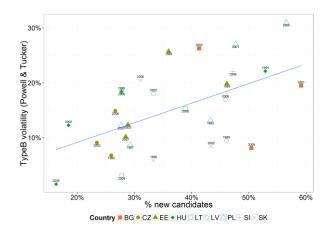


Figure 8 Candidate drop-out in Lithuania (V%>10%)



Type B volatility and candidate novelty among established parties (Figure 9) are correlated mildly but more strongly than Type A volatility to candidate turnover. There seems to be a general trend that increased candidate novelty leads to increased volatility or, alternatively, existing parties rejuvenate their candidate lists if they anticipate changes in electoral support. In particular, parties that are expected to do poorly may recruit new top candidate, possibly to replace former dignitaries that have left party politics anticipating downfall. However, volatility can obviously come about for different reasons than internal candidate change and rejuvenation of electoral lists can turn the waning tide for parties in decline.

Figure 9 Type B volatility and candidate novelty among established parties



Source: total volatility from Powell & Tucker (2013)

Powell & Tucker (2014) argued that we know little about the determinants of volatility in Central and Eastern Europe. Replication of the fully specified regression models (using elections included in Powell & Tucker and our datasets) returns no significant coefficients and neither do similarly specified models explain levels of candidate novelty. However, it is notable that a much simpler model that includes GDP change from previous election alongside country fixed effects (see Table 2) shows that improvement in economic conditions does lead to increased total volatility and lower candidate turnover. The effect on novelty is particularly robust among established parties with 10% growth over the previous electoral period leading to 3% fewer new candidates among established parties or 25% growth (the median in the joint dataset) to almost 8% fewer new candidates. Hungary and the Czech Republic tend to have lower than average levels of candidate novelty that is in line with literature arguing early consolidation of these two party systems, but has been challenged by recent high levels of candidate novelty. (Powell & Tucker data finishes with 2009).

Table 2 Effect of GDP change on volatility, candidate novelty and dropout

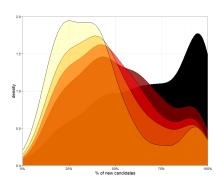
Dependent	Total volatility	TypeA volatility	TypeB volatility	Candio	Candidate		
variable:	Total volatility	TypeA volatility	турев volatility	All parties	Established parties	dropout	
(Intercept)	79.81 (18.51)***	50.12 (24.36)*	29.69 (11.66)**	88.80 (13.20)***	90.31 (12.54)***	72.06 (9.88)****	
GDPt/GDPt-1	-27.53 (15.07) [*]	-18.85 (19.82)	-8.68 (9.49)	-25.16 (10.74)**	-31.32 (10.21)***	-14.34 (8.04)*	
CZ	-31.13 (9.69)***	-21.41 (12.75)	-9.73 (6.10)	-27.85 (6.91)***	-29.67 (6.56)***	-21.11 (5.17)****	
EE	1.11 (9.04)	3.06 (11.90)	-1.95 (5.69)	-14.29 (6.44)**	-16.79 (6.12)**	-13.94 (4.82)***	
HU	-22.43 (8.97)**	-16.07 (11.80)	-6.36 (5.65)	-25.41 (6.39)***	-21.67 (6.08)***	-10.24 (4.79)**	
LT	25.29 (10.11)**	31.03 (13.30)**	-5.74 (6.37)	-14.11 (7.21)*	-16.61 (6.85)**	-17.97 (5.39)***	
LV	6.42 (10.12)	9.58 (13.32)	-3.17 (6.37)	-5.24 (7.21)	-8.28 (6.86)	-6.29 (5.40)	
PL	-1.29 (8.51)	-0.25 (11.19)	-1.05 (5.36)	-10.97 (6.06) [*]	-11.12 (5.76) [*]	0.29 (4.54)	
SI	0.17 (14.66)	-4.38 (19.29)	4.55 (9.23)	-2.94 (10.45)	1.30 (9.93)	-7.87 (7.82)	
SK	11.72 (9.84)	18.78 (12.95)	-7.08 (6.20)	-11.77 (7.01)	-14.38 (6.67)**	-4.95 (5.25)	
R ²	0.66	0.51	0.24	0.59	0.64	0.67	
Adj. R ²	0.51	0.29	-0.11	0.41	0.48	0.52	
Num. obs.	30	30	30	30	30	30	

p < 0.01, p < 0.05, p < 0.1

Party novelty and partial novelty

We now turn to candidate novelty in individual parties. How many of the parties are genuinely new and how many qualify as old in terms of their candidate lists? Looking at all parties, regardless of their levels of support, highly new parties dominate – new candidates form the majority among top 25% candidates in most of them (see the black area defined by a kernel density curve on Figure 10). Levels of novelty decrease fast when we look at progressively more popular parties. Among parties that entered the parliament (roughly those with more than 5% of votes – lighter than dark red on Figure 10) we see increasing dominance of parties in which less than 50% of top candidates were new. Among the bulk of major parties (more than 10% of votes), those with between 10% and 40% of new candidates dominate (the peak of the yellow density curve on Figure 10). The novelty does not completely tail off at high levels. A considerable portion of major and parliamentary parties had more than 50% of new top candidates. Most intriguingly, there is another peak in the distribution at close to perfect novelty – that stands for genuinely new parties (Sikk and Köker 2015; Sikk 2005). Also notably, a (slightly smaller) number of parties still falls between the two peaks. The parties with 50-80% of new top candidates are partially novel parties that are particularly problematic for the purposes of volatility calculation (see Sikk and Köker 2015).

Figure 10 Candidate novelty by vote%



Note: Kernel density curves: black (all parties), dark red (V>1%), red (V>2.5%), orange (V>5%), yellow (V>10%).

What are these highly successful parties with high levels of candidate novelty? Table 3 (the rows in bold) shows that all countries except for Hungary have seen breakthroughs of such genuinely new parties with more than 10% of votes and more than 80% of new top candidates – most of them twice. At the bottom of the table we find mostly electoral coalitions (or mergers, in italics) that are somewhat novel by the virtue of new organization or at least electoral strategy, but are often below the mean level of candidate novelty in our dataset (45.2 percent; indicated by the dashed line). Some of the others are post-electoral coalition electons; few of them can, notably, be seen as splinters from a previously existing proper party. Finally, a number of parties with candidate novelty scores between 40 and 80 percent are not straightforward cases off coalitions, splinters or mergers. These are generally formations with novel names and organizational structures, yet include a significant number of candidate at the top of their lists who had been running for other parties previously. In many cases, they have a complex organizational history and can only meaningfully classified as partially novel parties. In such cases, the line between continuations and new parties is very blurred. However, as some of the parties won the elections in these years, assigning them into categories of new or old parties can make a decisive difference to volatility score calculations. Indeed, we advocate elsewhere a more nuanced approach in such cases, that incorporates candidate novelty measured on an interval scale (Sikk and Köker 2015).

Interestingly, sometimes parties which do not undergo any significant organizational (or name) changes, see high levels of candidate turnover (see Table 4). Whether such parties should be seen as continuations is debatable.

Table 3 Candidate novelty in new parties (following party codes in Manifesto Data Collection)

			New candidate %	Vote %
NDSV National Movement Simeon the Second	BG	2001	98.6	42.7
Smer Direction-Social Democracy	SK	2002	97.4	13.5
JL New Era	LV	2002	96.3	24.0
RP Palikot's Movement	PL	2011	95.3	10.0
SaS Freedom and Solidarity	SK	2010	94.7	12.1
DP Labour Party	LT	2004	94.4	28.4
VV Public Affairs	CZ	2010	94.3	10.9
TPP National Resurrection Party	LT	2008	94.1	15.1
SMC Party of Miro Cerar	SI	2014	92.0	34.5
RP Union for the Republic	EE	2003	88.5	24.6
GERB Citizens for European Development of Bulgaria	BG	2009	87.8	39.7
SRP Self-Defence of the Polish Republic	PL	2001	86.9	10.2
NS New Union (Social Liberals)	LT	2000	77.8	19.6
PO Civic Platform	PL	2001	76.9	12.7
Jobbik Movement for a Better Hungary	HU	2010	75.6	16.7
TP People's Party	LV	1998	74.1	21.3
TOP09 Tradition, Responsibility, Prosperity 09	CZ	2010	72.7	16.7
LLS Lithuanian Liberal Union	LT	2000	66.7	17.3
PS Zoran Jankovic's List - Positive Slovenia	SI	2011	62.5	28.5
LSDA Latvian Social Democratic Alliance	LV	1998	59.3	12.9
KMÜ Coalition Party and Rural Union	EE	1995	57.7	32.2
UTT Coalition of Rolandas Paksas 'For Order and Justice'	LT	2004	55.6	11.4
PCTVL For Human Rights in a United Latvia	LV	2002	55.6	19.1
ERL Estonian People's Union	EE	2003	53.8	13.0
KzB Coalition for Bulgaria	BG	2001	53.5	17.1
SNS Slovak National Party	SK	2006	47.4	11.7
SDL' Party of the Democratic Left	SK	1998	47.4	14.7
AWS Electoral Action 'Solidarity'	PL	1997	47.0	33.8
DL Democratic Left	BG	1997	46.5	22.1
ER Estonian Reform Party	EE	1995	46.2	16.2
SDKÚ Slovak Democratic and Christian Union	SK	2002	44.7	15.1
UW Freedom Union	PL	1997	41.7	13.4
BSP Bulgarian Socialist Party	BG	2013	41.2	26.6
IL Pro Patria Union	EE	1999	40.0	16.1
FiDeSz-MPSz-KDNP Alliance	HU	2006	39.1	42.5
SLD Democratic Left Alliance	PL	2005	36.4	11.3
ODS United Democratic Forces	BG	1997	36.2	52.2
K Estonian Center Party	EE	1995	34.6	14.2
LiD Left and Democrats	PL	2007	33.1	13.2
DP Labour Party	LT	2012	27.8	20.7
SLD-UP Coalition of the Democratic Left Alliance and the Union of Labour	PL	2001	25.4	41.0
LSDP Lithuanian Social Democratic Party	LT	2008	22.2	11.7
TB-LNNK For Fatherland and Freedom National Independence Movement	LV	1998	22.2	14.7
UdL Working for Lithuania	LT	2004	22.2	20.6
PTT Order and Justice	LT	2008	16.7	12.7
SDK Slovak Democratic Coalition	SK	1998	13.2	26.3
TS-LKD Homeland Union - Lithuanian Christian Democrats	LT	2008	11.1	19.7
BSDK A. Brazauskas Social Democratic Coalition	LT	2000	11.1	31.1
FiDeSz-MPP-MDF FiDeSz-MPP-MDF-Alliance	HU	2002	6.5	41.1

Table 4 Old parties with candidate novelty > 60%

			% new candidates	% votes
FKgP Independent Smallholders' Party	HU	1994	80.4	8.8
DPS Movement for Rights and Freedom	BG	2001	78.9	7.5
Desus Democratic Party of Pensioners of Slovenia	SI	2011	75.0	7.0
PCTVL For Human Rights in a United Latvia	LV	2006	74.1	6.0
ATAKA National Union Attack	BG	2009	71.6	9.4
LPR League of Polish Families	PL	2005	67.7	8.0
SLS Slovenian People's Party	SI	2011	66.7	6.8
ODS Civic Democratic Party	CZ	2013	66.7	7.7
SRP Self-Defence of the Polish Republic	PL	2005	65.1	11.4
KDNP Christian Democratic People's Party	HU	1994	60.9	7.0

Note: as defined in Manifesto Research Group dataset

Discussion and conclusion

This paper has looked at levels of candidate novelty in Central and Eastern Europe. We saw a limited overall trend towards stabilization of candidate lists with some countries stabilizing more consistently than others. Most importantly, the trends in candidate novelty echo arguments in other literature about dynamics of individual party systems. In particular, we see a very clear pattern of suddenly disrupted consolidation in the Czech Republic and Hungary and steady consolidation in Estonia. The index of candidate novelty is correlated to volatility scores recently proposed by Powell & Tucker (2014), but the relationship is less than perfect. Indeed, looking at candidate novelty scores can indicate issues with the coding of party entry and exit. However, we argue that – more fundamentally – all electoral volatility scores that rely on dichotomous coding of new and old parties as well as splits, mergers and electoral coalitions are bound to be misleading due to prominent partially novel parties with intermediate levels of novelty. Such electons (to use a joint term for parties and coalitions) are pervasive in CEE, but they are certainly also present elsewhere – e.g. Israel (Barnea and Rahat 2011) and Denmark (Sikk and Köker 2015).

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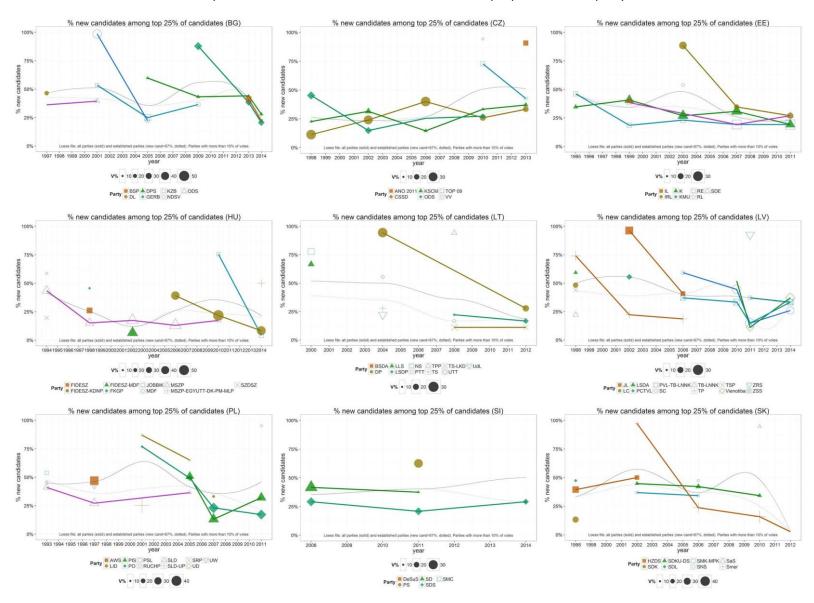
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APPENDIX 1: Candidate novelty (large parties by countries)

Notes: Parties with more than 10 percent of votes shown. The size of markers is proportional to a party's vote share in t.



APPENDIX 2: Candidate dropout (large parties by countries)

Notes: Parties with more than 10 percent of votes in election t shown; the year corresponds to election t+1 – i.e. the year when the dropouts happened. The size of markers is proportional to a party's vote share in t.

