



Editorial:

Policies of Electoral Reform in Post-Communist Countries: the advantage of backwardness?

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The first elections in which real competition between political parties was possible took place in most of the post-communist countries at the beginning of the 1990s. In the ensuing years, all those countries have modified their electoral designs in particular ways. Post-communist countries thus provide electoral studies with a unique opportunity to explore a wide range of topics both in narrow, specific analyses and in extensive comparative work. This Special Issue Section of the journal *European Electoral Studies* intends to outline some of the challenges and questions connected with elections in post-communist countries.

Stanislav Balík and Jan Holzer focus their paper on the general question of the role of elections in evaluating the nature of a regime. The democratization of political systems in Central and Eastern Europe did not proceed at a uniform pace and with uniform success across the region and electoral competition is therefore a fascinating criterion for classifying those processes. On the basis of critical reflections on earlier studies the authors arrive at an important distinction in the role of elections. Elections are a key factor separating democratic regimes from their non-democratic counterparts, but using them as a way of differentiating the various types of non-democratic regimes is rather problematic.

Roman Chytilék and Jakub Šedo study electoral reforms and their effects with a wider comparative perspective. They provide a brief evaluation of the second electoral reform in 15 post-communist countries. These reforms were mostly expected to advantage strong and established political parties in party competitions. The authors then test the advantage ratio, understood as an indicator which should



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truly advantaged after the second reform, and if so, how much. The test has shown that it is difficult to predict the outcome of electoral reforms and that the actors quickly adapt to new conditions.

Jean-Benoit Pilet and Jean-Michel De Waele examine electoral reforms in a specific post-communist country, Romania, where they observe the gradual reduction of inclusiveness of the electoral system. Their analysis focuses both on the rules used in Romania and on the attitude of political parties, which generally lend their support to the process leading to a less inclusive electoral system. They also look into the causes of this attitude, which – given the conditions of extreme volatility – could seem paradoxical.