

WHERE IS THE DIFFERENCE? THE PROFILE OF THE ROMANIAN CANDIDATES FOR THE 2009 EUROPEAN ELECTIONS

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Abstract** *Drawing on a complex dataset that includes the age, gender, education, public experience, party career, wealth, and the occupational background of all 215 candidates proposed by the five Romanian parties winning seats in the 2009 EP elections, this article devises an analytical framework for the candidates' profiles. The study is valuable for those researching the professionalization of the EP along the convergence thesis, and for the legislative recruitment scholars interested in candidates' qualities targeted by selectorates in a blocked-list PR setting, i.e., the significant differences between candidates receiving an eligible place and the rest. Our findings reflect the importance given by parties to previous experience in the EP and to wealth/capacity to contribute to the campaign costs and, at the same time, they emphasize the ambivalent educational trajectories of the candidates and the dominance on the lists of male politicians.*

Keywords: *MEPs, professionalization, political profile, patterns of recruitment, eligibility*

JEL Code: C46.

Introduction

The dynamics of involvement in the European elections is considerably reduced compared to the domestic electoral practice both from the perspective of candidates and voters. In the eyes of the latter, the European issues acquire significance only when they are prioritized on the national agenda to which they get access. As this is not a major issue in the old member states from Western Europe, it is problematic for the new Eastern European joiners where electorates are

inattentive and characterized by severe knowledge limits about the workings of the European Parliament (EP) or the responsibilities of the MEPs. In fact, they are scarcely aware of how their representatives are elected. This is the particular case in the two most recent European Union members, Romania and Bulgaria, where in 2007, the year of their accession, only one quarter to 40% of the population was aware of the European elections.¹ Looking from the angle of political parties and candidates in these countries, they rarely enrich the quantity of information received by the

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¹ Data are taken from the standard Eurobarometers, Spring and Autumn 2007.

citizen on European issues and often use loose messages that hardly help voters differentiating between competitors. Actually, their task becomes more difficult as they frequently compete with members of the same European party group.

In such environments the choice in the European elections usually revolves around two major possibilities. On the one hand, the majority of voters stick to their domestic choice. On the other hand, the available voters orient themselves towards smaller parties. The last 2009 elections brought numerous small parties to the forefront and new parties gained for the first time seats in the EP. Nevertheless, in both situations parties promote candidates that are able to gather votes for the party. The relevant case occurs for blocked lists where parties decide who is on top and who fills the list. The factors behind such a decision vary. By examining all candidates of the five parties that secured seats in the EP, this paper aims to illustrate and analyze the differences observed at general and party level between the successful and unsuccessful candidates in the 2009 European elections in Romania. We focus on this country due to its recent accession to the EU, because it had now the first European election for a full mandate, only half a year after its domestic legislative elections, and

because it uses blocked lists for the EP elections. Consequently, it is a valuable case for the identification of the profile of candidates whenever the party is the main decision-maker.

Generally, less than one percent of those eligible to public offices 'survive' the candidate selection trials² - where parties' selectorates (i.e. those in charge with the decision-making process regarding the selection) are the gatekeepers. The mechanics behind this simple fact has provoked important scholarly curiosity, transforming the patterns, the outputs and the effects of recruitment into some of the most researched topics in the contemporary scope of political elites' studies. Inside the field, probably the most studied single subject regards the recruitment for the national legislatures.³ More recently, one can observe a shift of interest, at least from the part of some scholars towards the patterns of recruitment into the EP. Thus, part of seeing how institutionalized has become the supranational body is to look at the degree of professionalization of its members⁴. Essential questions in this respect target the occupational background of the MEPs, their public experience and nonetheless their career ambitions. Due to data availability and workload the majority of studies concerning the recruitment for the EP are focused only on those successful

² Pertti Pesonen in Michael Gallagher & Michael Marsh, eds., *Candidate Selection in Comparative Perspective: The Secret Garden of Politics*, (London: Sage Publications, 1988), p. 2

³ See for example: Pippa Norris & Joni Lowenduski, *Political Recruitment – Gender, Race and Class in the British Parliament*, (Cambridge, Cambridge U. P., 1995); Heinrich Best & Maurizio Cotta, eds., *Parliamentary Representatives in Europe, 1848-2000. Legislative Recruitment and Careers in Eleven European Countries*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000)

⁴ Pippa Norris, 'Recruitment into the European Parliament', in Richard S. Katz, Bernard Wessels, *The European Parliament, National Parliaments and European Integration*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), p. 86

candidates who managed to be elected⁵. Our study goes beyond this limit, analyzing the sociological and political profiles of all the candidates proposed by the five Romanian parties that secured seats in the last June elections.

This article brings two major contributions both at theoretical and empirical level. First, we fill a void in the literature by emphasizing the differences between the successful and unsuccessful candidates. Thus, we set the framework for a profile to be used in further analyses and reveal certain patterns that may serve as departure points for comparisons. This pioneering effort for the legislative studies literature about Romania is complemented by a systematic use of data collected by the authors. In this respect, the paper meets the need for empirical data on the profiles of the MEPs, a necessity created by the growing comparative research on the convergence thesis, i.e., the idea that we are in the middle of the making of a new, supranational elite⁶, which shares similar career trajectories and values and assumes multiple representational roles.

The first section briefly presents the political developments in Romanian politics associated with the European elections. The second section sheds light on the methodology and variables used for our analysis, whereas the following five sections include general and party level difference occurred between

elected MEPs and unsuccessful list partners. Finally, the last two sections test for the statistical robustness of the results and expand on the implications of the findings, opening the floor for further investigation.

The Bumpy Road to the First Full EP Mandate

The first 35 Romanian MEPs were appointed in January 2007 by the parliamentary parties in accordance with their share of mandates in the national legislative. It was a provisory solution until the first European elections which were scheduled to take place in May. Which did not happen because the Liberal Prime Minister delayed them until November, motivating that the "internal political climate was inappropriate"⁷ (i.e., the tensions in the coalition government which was just about to collapse). Thus, from the beginning the Romanian experience with the EP was circumscribed to the national agenda's issues, with the effect that the mandates of the first elected MEPs were shortened with half a year, to a period of only 18 months.

The preference for a national career, rather than a European one, was emphasized by the decisions of 9 MEPs⁸ (25.7%) to renounce their mandates won in 2007, in order to return into the national legislative or to be part of

⁵ A notable exception is the extensive research conducted by Martin Holland, 1987, who had interviewed not only the candidates but also the non-selected aspirants for the EP elections in Britain in 1979.

⁶ See for example: Luca Verzichelli & Michael Edinger, "A Critical Juncture? The 2004 European Elections and the Making of a Supranational Elite", *The Journal of Legislative Studies*, Vol.11, No.2, Summer 2005, pp. 256-8

⁷ For the positions of the relevant actors involved in that decision, see: <http://www.hotnews.ro/stiri-arhiva-1107477-alegerile-europarlamentare-amanate-prin-decizie-asumata-premierul-calin-popescu-tariceanu.htm>.

⁸ Seven from the PDL and 2 from the PSD; for more details and a solution proposed to this kind of defection see: <http://www.crpe.ro/library/CRPE%20Policy%20Memo%20no.1%20Romanian.pdf>

the new government formed after the November 2008 general elections. In the end 14 of those 35 elected in 2007 did not participate at all in the first EP elections held in Romania for a full-time mandate. Despite all these, the incumbency rate is quite high – 21 of those in office at the start of the 2009 elections were reelected, while other 5 were placed on un-eligible positions⁹.

Besides their European significance – deciding on whom and how will represent Romania for the next five years in Brussels and Strasbourg – the current elections were highly relevant for the national political system in two respects. First, there were a series of stakes related to both the previous parliamentary elections and the future presidential ones (December 2009). Thus the EP elections were expected to show who is the more popular partner in the ‘Grand coalition’ since it was not very clear who won the parliamentary elections¹⁰ and also to show if the political system will stabilize itself to the “3 big parties + 1” formula, excluding the extremist Greater Romania Party (PRM). They were also to be taken as a barometer for the presidential vote, and the current president as his most important challengers, the president of the Social-Democratic Party (PSD) Mircea Geoană and that of the National Liberal Party (PNL) Crin Antonescu participated in the Euro-campaigns of their parties. This was probably most obvious a case for Crin Antonescu, recently elected as the president of the

Liberals and their presidential candidate, whose image was present on almost all PNL advertising materials, from banners to leaflets, although he did not run for an EP mandate.

The second important implication which the European elections had on the political system refers to the parties’ tacit consensus to play them by the good old rules of the closed PR. It seemed a little bit illogical to keep the same closed lists once all significant parties (with the exception of the PRM) have supported more or less vocal the abandonment of this electoral system at national legislative level in exchange for a mixed one¹¹, held in Single member district (SMD) due mainly to the alienating effects for voters of the former.

The explanation at hand is that the parties were not willing to take the risks that a preferential vote or a semi-open list would come along with and they were more enthusiastic to establish once again who gets elected and who does not only by ranking the candidates. In other words, although popular figures could have won more votes for the parties than a list, this perspective was not strong enough to defeat the fear of “unpleasant” surprises, i.e., defeats of important politicians, preferred by the party leaderships. Actually, there was no real debate around renouncing this electoral system for the EP elections as well. This despite the proposal of the CRPE think tank which made an appeal to open the lists based on the December

⁹ The distribution of the reelected MEPs was the following: PSD - 8, 7 for PDL, 4 from the PNL and 2 UDMR (including the special case of Laszlo Tokes).

¹⁰ PSD had won the popular vote, while PDL received more mandates.

¹¹ For an ample discussion of the reasons of the electoral change see: Mihail Chiru & Ionuț Ciobanu, “Legislative Recruitment and Electoral System Change: The Case of Romania”, in *CEU Political Science Journal*, Vol. IV, No. 2, (April 2009), 2009, pp. 204-207.

2006 legislative initiative of the PSD MPs, Vasile Pușcaș and George Maior, who tried unsuccessfully to introduce the preferential vote with regional lists as the electoral system for the European elections.

There are five main political parties that won seats in the 2009 European elections in Romania. First, the Democratic Liberal Party (PDL) is member of the EPP and the center-right part of the 'Grand Coalition' established after the November 2008 general elections. In 2007¹² the party, then named PD (Democratic Party) won 13 mandates. Shortly after, 3 other MEPs joined their ranks, when their party, PLD (Liberal Democratic Party) merged with the PD to form PDL. At the present elections they obtained only 10 mandates, a sign that the party is losing ground, weakened also by the independent candidature of the president's daughter, who rejoined PDL, right after being elected.

PSD is the biggest party, not only on the left, member of PES, and the other half of the governing coalition. After the 2007 results, when PSD got the smallest share of votes in its entire history (23.1%), the party is constantly recovering, winning both the parliamentary and European elections. Despite their lead, the number of mandates increased only by one, from 10 to 11. PSD accepted to give one eligible place to the Conservative Party (PC), a traditional alliance made in exchange for media exposure in the media trust owned by the leader of the PC. The one and only time when the Conservatives went alone, unlike in all the elections since 2000, was in the

previous European cycle, when they only got 2.93% of the votes.

PNL, which is currently the most important opposition party, member of ALDE, obtained a better percentage of votes than in 2007 (14.5 vs. 13.4%) but the number of their MEPs decreased from 6 to 5. The Democratic Alliance of Hungarians in Romania (UDMR) is another member of the EPP, benefited from the return of Tokes Laszlo, who in 2007 won a mandate of MEP as an independent and secured 3 seats. After failing to enter the EP in 2007 and the national legislative in 2008, PRM capitalized on the wave of popularity of George Becali, ex-President of the New Generation Party (PNG), managing to win 3 seats. In 2007 PRM and PNG had won separately 9% of the votes, but none of them surpassed the 5% threshold.

Research Design: Cases, Data, and Variable Operationalization

The general analysis includes 215 cases, 43 candidates from each of the parties that won seats in the European elections. Out of these, 32 candidates got elected for the EP. We do not include the independent candidates as our main concern is to identify the relevant discrepancies between elected and not elected candidates from the lists of the political parties. As the universe of cases is completely covered and no representative sample is selected, the level of significance of the statistical tests indicates the robustness of the relationship rather than the probability to generalize it. We use

¹² The European elections were held only in the two new Member States that joined the EU in January 2007, Romania and Bulgaria.

basic statistics (cross-tabulations) and graphical representations to illustrate the main differences between the successful and unsuccessful candidates. We focus on age, gender, education, wealth, occupational background and experience in public institutions of all candidates. As the latter four variables reveal stark discrepancies at party level, supplementary statistical analysis is provided to test if the claims resulting from the first part of the analysis hold.

The data were taken from the official websites of the parties and their local branches, from websites of candidates, but also from newspapers and campaign blogs. For the variable 'institutional experience' the information provided by candidates or by news regarding them, was verified on the official websites of those institutions. Only two of the parties, PSD and PDL had websites specially designed for the campaign, which included curriculum vitae-s of all their candidates. It was particularly difficult to find data on the candidates proposed by the CNMT (National Council of Hungarians in Transylvania) on the UDMR list, because of their regional/local profile and also on some of the candidates of the PRM. Despite this, the level of missing data is very low (2.32%). All variables are considered and coded as ordinal (see appendix 1). If for education, wealth, and level of experience in the public institutions this is a normal assumption, the occupational background variable is also ordinal due to methodological considerations¹³. We considered the political background to be the most appropriate for candidates and we assigned the reference score, all

other backgrounds receiving consecutive scores as their distance to the reference background increases.

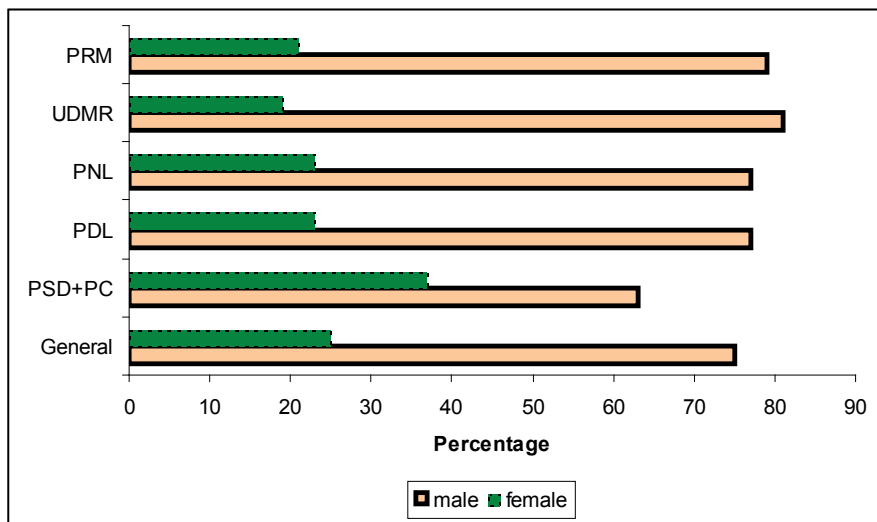
Gender under-representation on the lists

The gender distribution of the candidates (figure 1) illustrates a dominance of the male candidates on the lists both at general and party level. Overall, only one in four candidates is a female. Out of the parties that gained seats into the EP, the winner of the popular vote (the PSD+PC coalition) has the highest proportion of female candidates on its list (38%) compared to the average. At the other extreme, the party that promotes the fewest female candidates is UDMR with barely one out of five candidates being a woman. It is closely followed by PRM (21%) and PNL and PDL, both promoting an equal proportion of 23% females on their lists.

Coincidence or not, the parties that promoted the smallest number of women on their lists did not place them on eligible seats. As a result, UDMR and PRM are the only Romanian parties in the 2009-2014 legislative without any female representative. The explanation at hand concerns the target groups and the size of these parties. As numerous election polls indicated before June 7, these parties could get at most 3 MEPs, PRM being credited most of the times with one or two successful candidates. UDMR could have easily placed a female candidate on the top eligible positions as it is the least volatile party in Romania and for that reason counts always on a stable number of voters.

¹³ All the other variables being ordinal, we coded background in the same way so as the symmetry coefficients of the cross tabulations to make sense.

Figure 1: Gender distribution of candidates for the European elections



The re-joining of Laszlo Tokes with the so-called “Solidarity List”¹⁴ involved the assignment to the former independent MEP of one eligible seat. However, the allocation of the rest of eligible seats depended entirely on the party’s choice. They were not entirely sure of the 3rd seat – which depended on the participation of the Hungarian population at the polls. On the other hand, the first woman, Anna Horvath, is placed only on the 6th position. The situation is different for PRM and its decision can be easily related to an electoral strategy. It failed to enter the Romanian Parliament and disappeared for more than half a year from the domestic political scene. Thus, the party needed visible candidates that could attract votes for themselves and

for the list. In this respect, the president of the party was followed by on the list by George Becali, the former leader of PNG. The latter, and implicitly PRM, was on the centre of the public agenda for a few weeks before the elections due to an incoherent act of the Romanian Justice who arrested Becali without sufficient evidence. His victimization promoted by media created certain waves of sympathy for this candidate determining his positioning on top of the PRM’s Euro-list. At the same time, it made a good subject for their populist slogans.

Besides the obvious relevance of candidates’ gender distribution for the balance of power between men and women politicians in the Romanian parties, there are three other important

¹⁴ Laszlo Tokes accepted to be the head of the UDMR’s list, with the condition that the party officials would grant places on the list to a number of other candidates supported by the CNMT (National Council of Hungarians in Transylvania). These were mainly Hungarian personalities living in Transylvania (artists, writers, civil activists or people from the more radical PCM – Hungarian Civic Party) who were not/ not anymore members of the UDMR. For more details see: Csaba Ferenc Asztalos, 2009.

aspects that the same variable can be associated with. The data in table 1 reflects the distribution of candidates' gender and education relative to their success in the European elections and represents the basis for the assessments. The first column indicates the level of analysis, conducted both at general level, for all candidates, and at party level. Overall, one in three elected candidates is a female, a higher percentage than the one in figure 1, which took into account all the candidates. Such a situation indicates that they occupied more eligible seats compared to the male candidates. In this respect, the extreme case is PNL, where 80% of the elected MEPs are women although they represent slightly over 20% of the total amount of candidates. The fact that PNL placed women candidates on top of the list is confirmed also by the proportion of women that were not elected, which was

the smallest among all successful parties (i.e. they represent only 16% of the non-elected candidates). Second, there is consistency for those parties situated at the extremes of gender balance in these elections. On the one hand, the party that promotes most women on its list (PSD+PC) also displays the highest number of elected female candidates. Almost half of their MEPs and exactly one third of the non-elected candidates are women. These figures indicate that, beyond the unique (for the Romanian parties running in European elections) balanced gender distribution from the eligible seats, this party is consistent in its approach. It does not include female candidates just to fill the list, but it did provide a real chance for representation. On the other hand, the parties that had the smallest percentage of women on their lists had no women representatives either (i.e. UDMR or PRM).

Table 1: Gender and Education of the Euro-Candidates (percentages)

		Gender		Education				
		Male	Female	Highschool	BA	MA	PhD	Postdoctoral
Pooled analysis	Elected	66	34	3	25	31	38	3
	Not elected	77	23	1	49	23	25	2
PSD + PC	Elected	55	45	-	18	27	46	9
	Not elected	66	34	-	32	36	32	0
PDL	Elected	80	20	-	20	40	40	0
	Not elected	76	24	-	33	24	37	6
PNL	Elected	20	80	-	0	60	40	0
	Not elected	84	16	-	43	38	16	3
UDMR	Elected	100	0	-	100	0	0	-
	Not elected	80	20	-	76	9	15	-
PRM	Elected	100	0	33	33	0	34	0
	Not elected	77	23	5	56	11	25	3

Third, there is one case of inconsistency in the approach towards women candidates: although PDL has an equal percentage of female candidates on its lists with PNL, only 20% of its elected candidates are women. Such a discrepancy cannot be explained by the different number of won mandates (PDL has twice as many as PNL) as equal numbers of female candidates on eligible seats leads to less difference between the percentages of women representatives of the two parties. In a nutshell, PDL placed on the eligible seats two times fewer women than PNL or PSD + PC.

Towards highly-educated MEPs

Education appears for a long time as a key component in politics. Moreover, as pointed out by Pippa Norris, “one of the most striking long-term trends in many parliaments is the gradual rise in university-educated members”¹⁵. When considering all 215 candidates, one can observe the predominance of Bachelor studies, almost half of them (45%) graduating from at least one faculty. Approximately equal percentages of candidates have MA degrees (25%) or PhD (27%) studies. Basically, 97% of the candidates graduated at least one faculty, whereas there are isolated cases with post-doc (2%) or high-school (1%) studies. The distribution is not similar when looking at the elected MEPs. The figures displayed in table 1 indicate that seven out of ten elected candidates have at least MA studies, with a predominance

of PhD studies (38%). This category overshadows the MA (31%) and BA (25%) graduates. Consistent with the reduced share in the candidate cohort, only 3% of the elected MEPs have high school and post-doc studies. The latter two categories are due to two parties that placed on top of their lists one candidate with post-doctoral studies (PSD+PC) and another with highschool (PRM).¹⁶ In fact, PRM is the only party that has candidates highschool graduating only on its lists, all other parties orienting themselves towards people that have at least a BA. However, the education indicator can be misleading if we closely analyze the institutions that granted some of the diplomas. In fact, almost a quarter of the PSD+PC candidates have degrees conferred by the party’s *Ovidiu Șincai Institute*, which is more of an overly partisan think-tank, rather than an education centre. There are also candidates in the PRM and PDL with studies at the highly controversial *Spiru Haret University* or graduating from unaccredited programmes at private universities like *Hyperion* or *Dimitrie Cantemir*.

Overall, we observe a tendency of parties to place the highly educated candidates on eligible seats. For example, although the BA graduates represent proportionally, almost half of the candidates, they were assigned more non-eligible than eligible seats. The evidence indicates that one in four got elected, whereas half of those not elected are BA graduates (columns 6 and 7, rows

¹⁵ Pippa Norris, ‘Recruitment into the European Parliament’, in Richard S. Katz, Bernard Wessels, *The European Parliament, National Parliaments and European Integration*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), p. 97.

¹⁶ The percentages in table 1 are different for the two categories due to the different number of MEPs elected from each party. One out of 11 PSD+PC elected candidates has post-doc and one out of three elected PRM MEPs graduated highschool.

3 and 4 in table 1). Although displaying a small variation of patterns, the tendency towards highly educated candidates is visible at the three parties that got 26 out of the 33 mandates. Almost half of PSD+PC's elected candidates hold a PhD, slightly more than a quarter have MA studies and less than one fifth hold only a BA. At the same time, it is the only Romanian party that had one successful candidate with post-doctoral studies in the June 2009 elections. The proportion of PhD and MA graduates among the elected PDL's candidates is equal (40%), with only one fifth of its MEPs graduating a faculty. Finally, PNL has among its successful candidates only MA graduates (60%) and PhD holders (40%). Different from the previous political parties, PNL is the party in which the PhD holders are less than MA graduates. In fact, this party displays the strongest tendency among the Romanian competitors in the European elections to place highly educated people on the eligible positions: 40% of the elected candidates hold a PhD and only 16% of the unsuccessful have this degree, the situation being similar

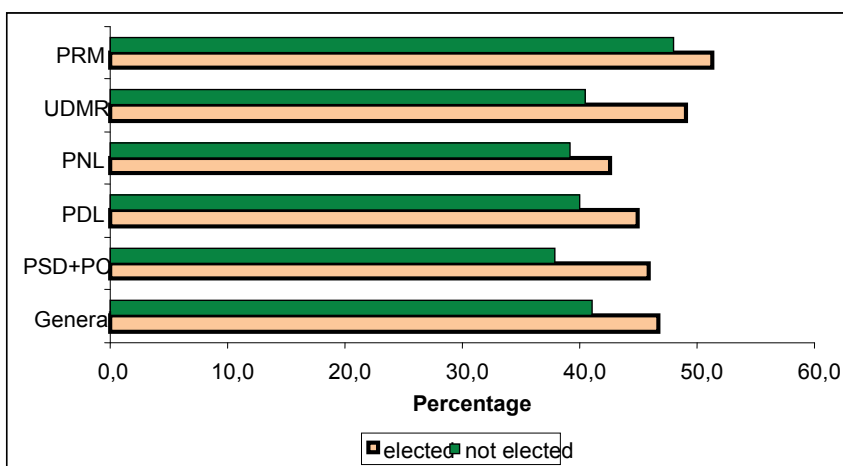
with the MA graduates (60% among the elected vs. 38% among the non-elected).

UDMR and PRM are two particular cases. The successful candidates of the former have only BA, none of those holding an MA or a PhD being elected. PRM has an equal distribution among its elected candidates, one holding a high school diploma, one graduating his BA and one with PhD.

Oldies, but goldies

Figure 2 illustrates the differences between the average ages of elected and the non-elected candidates for the European elections in Romania. Although the number of cases to establish the average age for elected candidates is considerably smaller compared with their colleagues that did not get elected, this is not a major inconvenience. Theoretically, the higher number of cases in one category may lead to artificial difference between categories. However, empirically it is not the case here: there are no major variations of age within the group of successful candidates. On the

Figure 2: Differences between average ages of elected and non-elected candidates



contrary, some outliers are registered within the non-selected candidates and problems could appear if their number would have been smaller. As this is not the case, the presented evidence is reliable.

At a general level, there is a relevant difference between the average ages of successful and unsuccessful candidates. The average age of the 32 MEPs is close to 47 years old, whereas the average age of the candidates that failed to get access to the EP is slightly over 41 years old. This age-lag varies from party to party, with UDMR at one extreme - the highest discrepancy between the average ages of the cohorts (49 vs. 40.5 years old) – and PNL at the other, with only three and a half years difference (42.6 vs. 39.2). The party with the highest average age of elected candidates is PRM (51.3 years old), whereas the same PNL promoted the youngest average winners (42.6).

The importance of age is twofold. First, it is an indicator of the career ambitions of those running for the EP, as in the first decades of its existence the supranational body was the retirement home for many national politicians, being in their late 50's or older¹⁷. That fact inhibited the development of life-time careers as MEPs and subsequently the institutionalization of the European legislative. On the other hand, one could argue that the Romanian parties' preference for older candidates in eligible positions has more to do with those persons being more experienced than their younger colleagues. Second, the age difference would be a significant cleavage if indeed the new generation of politicians – i.e., those candidates in their

30's would have a completely different worldview and values than the others, who were mainly socialized (i.e. used and adapted to specific mechanisms) and lived most of their lives under communist rule.

Wealth leads the lists

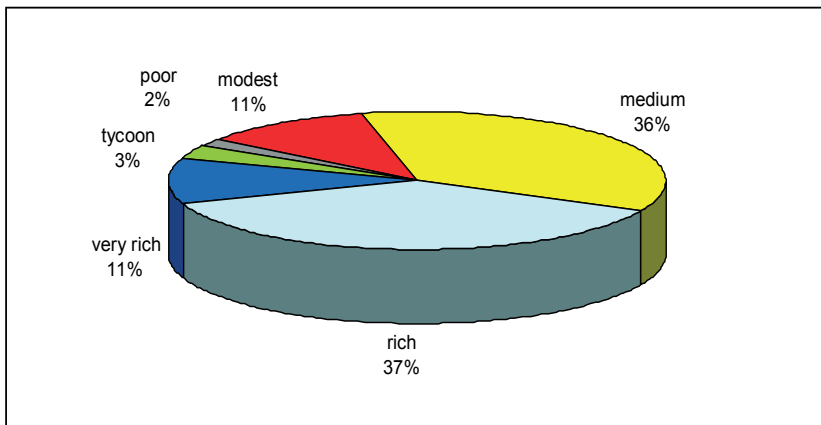
The wealth distribution among all candidates (figure 3) illustrates that three out of four individuals on the lists have a medium or a high level of wealth. This means that each candidate in these two categories has one-two cars, one-two houses, lands and/or bank accounts of 10,000-50,000 Euro. Out of the remaining 25% of candidates approximately equal percentages are situated at the wealth extreme. Thus, 2% of the candidates can be labeled as being poor, with no land, no car, and no accounts, whereas 3% hold large amounts of goods and extremely good financial situation. Similarly, the modest and very rich categories display equal proportions of candidates, one in ten candidates getting into each of these categories. Such a distribution leads to the general conclusion that the candidates placed on the lists have good or very good financial situation with a large majority benefiting from numerous goods and money accounts. This strategy of the selectorates vis-à-vis the financial situation of those selected to run for office bears both benefits and disadvantages. On the one hand, it is important to have candidates with stable financial situation as their interest in politics cannot be reduced to personal gains. It can be assumed

¹⁷ Luca Verzichelli & Michael Edinger, "A Critical Juncture? The 2004 European Elections and the Making of a Supranational Elite" *The Journal of Legislative Studies*, Vol.11, No.2, Summer 2005, p.261

that the corruption temptation is smaller when the individual needs are satisfied prior to the election as MEP. Moreover, from the party's perspective, this profile indicates a capacity of the candidate to bear, at least partially, the costs of the electoral campaign. This can be a valid explanation for the inclusion of relatively rich people on party lists for the European elections and it is plausible since the traditional party sponsors (businessmen forming local clienteles) were reluctant to contribute to the costs of the Euro-campaigns after spending large amounts of money to secure victories in the first post-'89 general election fought in SMDs, the last November. On the other hand, the main disadvantage is represented by the danger to have rich people pursuing further economic interests once in office. The cartelization of politics is not a new phenomenon and it affects not only Eastern European countries, but also old EU member states.¹⁸

distribution at party level can shed light on the reasons to include reasonably wealthy candidates on their lists. Table 2 includes the percentages of elected/not elected candidates with a certain financial situation. At a glance, there is a tendency of wealthier candidates to be elected compared to their unsuccessful colleagues. In this respect, the elected candidates are in their vast majority (85%) either rich or very rich. Only one out of ten has an average economic situation and two out of the entire cohort of representatives are extremely rich. Regarding the later, a closer look indicates that both candidates in this category originate in PRM, none of the other parties having tycoons as successful candidates (e.g. PNL did not even have such candidates). At the same time, it is relevant to notice that none of the candidates with poor or modest economic situation got elected (13% of the total number of candidates – figure

Figure 3: Wealth Distribution of Euro-Candidates (pooled data)



The differences between the elected and non elected candidates and their

3). PSD+PC did not have any candidate on its list to fit in the "poor" category,

¹⁸ Richard S. Katz & Peter Mair, "Changing Models of Party Organization and Party Democracy: The Emergence of the Cartel Party," *Party Politics*, 1 (January, 1995), pp. 5-28

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which is quite paradoxical for a social-democratic party claiming to represent the interests of the disadvantaged stratum of the society. Sticking to this party, it displays the most balanced distribution of wealth among its selected candidates with equal percentages of rich and very rich (40%) and average wealthy MEPs (20%). However, when looking at the unsuccessful candidates, their vast majority belongs with the average wealthy category, whereas the very rich candidates were generally not positioned on non-eligible seats (only 6% of the unelected candidates). Thus, with seven out of ten unelected candidates coming from the modest and average categories, PSD+PC favours wealthier candidates, placing them on top of the list. A similar situation is registered for PDL where nine out of their ten MEPs are rich and very rich and the remaining has an average economic status. The wealthier candidates are placed on eligible

positions compared to the rest: only 38% of their unsuccessful candidates belong to the rich-tycoon categories, whereas 62% are in the poor-medium categories. UDMR fits within the same pattern with all its elected representatives falling within the rich category. At the same time, only 37% of the unsuccessful candidates are rich or extremely rich, the rest being in the poor/average categories. As a result, we can easily observe an increased tendency of UDMR to favour the wealthy candidates and place them on top of the list.

The evidence shows that PRM is the party with the highest discrepancies between candidate positions: all selected candidates from the very rich and tycoon categories, whereas only 11% of the unsuccessful candidates belong to the same categories. This implies that wealthier candidates are preferred to fill the eligible positions. These results are valid despite the low number of MEPs and

Table 2: Wealth of the Euro-Candidates (percentages)

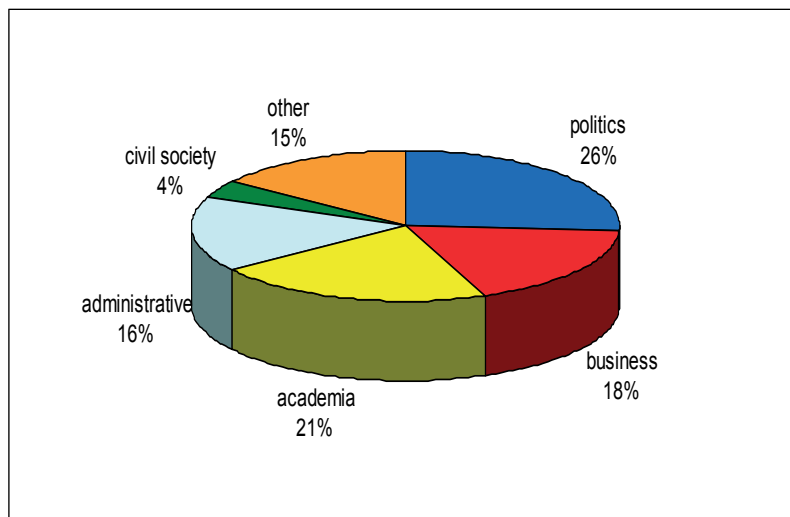
		Wealth					
		Poor	Modest	Average	Rich	Very rich	Tycoon
Pooled analysis	Elected	0	0	9	50	35	6
	Not elected	3	11	40	35	8	3
PSD + PC	Elected	-	0	20	40	40	0
	Not elected	-	9	61	21	6	3
PDL	Elected	0	0	9	46	45	0
	Not elected	3	9	50	29	3	6
PNL	Elected	0	0	0	80	20	-
	Not elected	5	8	26	45	16	-
UDMR	Elected	0	0	0	100	-	0
	Not elected	3	20	40	35	-	2
PRM	Elected	0	0	0	0	33	67
	Not elected	3	19	30	37	8	3

they can be explained by the necessity of the candidates to financially support their own electoral campaign. As the party failed to gain access into the national legislative at the general elections in 2008, it does not receive funds from the state and relies on individual contributions. As such, candidates that are able to support the campaign and gather votes for the list are placed on top positions. At the other extreme, PNL has the least tendency to differentiate candidates according to wealth. Although having as elected MEPs only rich (80%) and very rich (20%) people, a close look at the unsuccessful candidates reveals that 61% of them belong to the same categories. At the end of the day, wealthy candidates are placed by all parties, to a lesser extent by PNL, in front of their lists.

Professionalizing top positions

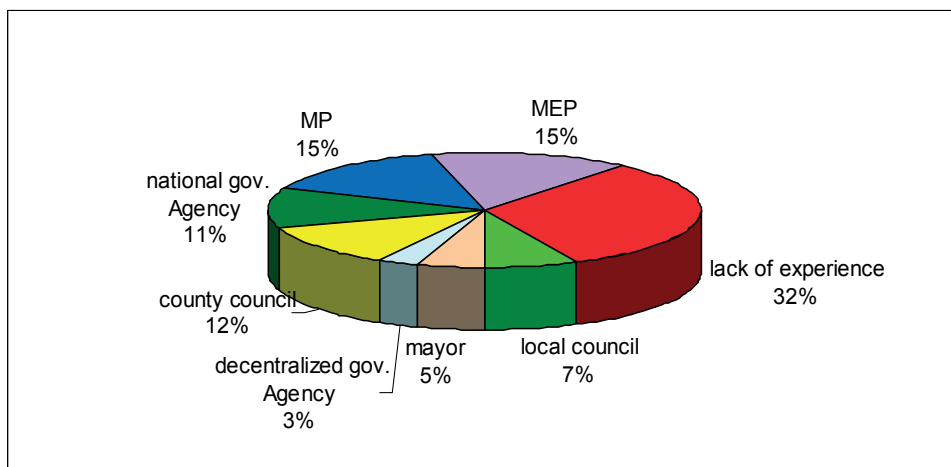
The two indicators chosen to observe the professionalization of Euro-candidates are their occupational background and their experience in public institutions.¹⁹ Initially, we included party career as an indicator to reflect the promotion of members of various party organizations (e.g. youth) as candidates, but its presence does not differentiate between parties and candidates. Figure 4 includes the distributions of all candidates according to the two indicators. A few conclusions are possible at a glance. First, as reflected in 4(a), there is no clear tendency of the political parties to fill the lists with candidates having certain backgrounds. Although those active in

Figure 4: Euro-Candidates' Background (a) and Institutional Experience (b)



¹⁹ Richard S. Katz & Peter Mair, "Changing Models of Party Organization and Party Democracy: The Emergence of the Cartel Party," *Party Politics*, 1 (January, 1995), pp. 5-28

**WHERE IS THE DIFFERENCE?
THE PROFILE OF THE ROMANIAN CANDIDATES FOR THE 2009 EUROPEAN ELECTIONS**



politics are the biggest group (26%), the candidates with academic, business and administrative backgrounds represent relevant proportions. However, adding up the four categories we observe that 80% of the lists are filled with individuals belonging to one of them. Consequently, such a clustering around four major categories should not be neglected. However, the second conclusion is a paradox revealed by figure 4(b) in the light of the above discussed pattern from 4(a): the majority of the candidates (one third) have no prior public experience. This percentage is higher than the sum of people acting as or working for MP or MEP is the past (each representing 15%).

These aspects change when we look at the differences that occur between the elected candidates and the rest. Tables 3 and 4 reveal these discrepancies, both at pooled and party level. Starting with the background of the candidates (table 3), we observe at general level a weak tendency to favor those candidates acting in politics: almost half of those elected and only a quarter of the unsuccessful have this feature. Thus, although those candidates with political

background hardly represent a quarter of the lists, they are placed in front. In this respect, UDMR and PSD+PC are the forerunners, the former having all its representatives elected from those with a political background (and only 40% among unelected candidates), whereas the latter is closer to the general average with almost half elected MEPs holding a political background (and only 16% of the unelected candidates displaying the same feature). Contrary to this trend, PRM and PDL appear to have extremely weak preference to promote politicians in front of other backgrounds. Summing up, although the rough picture presents a quite balanced distribution of candidates' occupational background, the differences between successful and unsuccessful candidates reveal a weak tendency to favour the political background in top positions of the electoral list.

The situation with political experience is more clear-cut than with the background. The general tendency, revealed in table 4, is to have as MEPs individuals with experience in the representative bodies at domestic and European level. Thus, the picture

Table 3: The Background of the Euro-Candidates (percentages)

		Background					
		Politics	Business	Academia	Administrative	Civil society	Other
Pooled analysis	Elected	47	19	13	6	9	6
	Not elected	23	18	22	18	3	16
PSD + PC	Elected	46	36	0	9	-	9
	Not elected	16	13	23	25	-	23
PDL	Elected	30	10	30	10	20	0
	Not elected	3	28	35	31	0	3
PNL	Elected	60	0	20	0	20	0
	Not elected	21	18	16	26	0	19
UDMR	Elected	100	0	0	0	0	0
	Not elected	40	12	18	12	13	5
PRM	Elected	33	33	0	-	-	34
	Not elected	28	18	23	-	-	31

drawn after seeing figure 4(b) has major shortcomings and hides what really happens: although the number of people with no experience in public institutions is high, they did not get access in the EP, being positioned poorly on the list. Only 10% of the elected candidates fall in this category (one from PDL and two from PRM), whereas more than a third of the unelected lack prior experience. The relationship between experience and being elected as MEP is strong at the level of all candidates with almost two thirds of the elected MEPs holding previous experience as MEP or working for one. Only 6% of those having such an experience failed to enter the EP, most of them from PDL. Also, it is relevant to notice that no candidates that acted before in the local councils or as mayors were elected and only isolated cases of prior experience in the decentralized local administration agencies or as MPs were successful.

At party level, UDMR and PNL are the clearest examples of preferring experience as a representative to other types of experience when deciding who gets the eligible seats. All UDMR's new MEPs have European experience, whereas PNL has four MEPs with the same profile and one originating in the national legislature. PSD + PC also clearly favors this type of experience having three quarters of its elected MEPs fitting the profile. PRM is the only party where no relationship can be established, with two thirds of its elected MEPs lacking any political experience and only one former MEP succeeding in these elections (i.e. the president of the party). In a nutshell, excepting PRM, all parties clearly favor European level experience in top positions. As a result, almost two thirds of the current Romanian MEPs acted within the framework of the EP before and are socialized and acquainted with its workings.

Table 4: The Experience of the Euro-Candidates (percentages)

		Experience							
		Lack	Local council	Mayor	Decentralized local admin	County council	National gov. agency	MP	MEP
Pooled analysis	Elected	10	0	0	3	9	9	6	63
	Not elected	36	9	6	3	13	11	16	6
PSD + PC	Elected	0	0	0	0	18	0	9	73
	Not elected	29	10	3	3	26	10	13	6
PDL	Elected	10	0	0	10	10	30	0	40
	Not elected	21	9	6	0	15	12	12	25
PNL	Elected	0	0	0	0	0	0	20	80
	Not elected	34	10	10	3	8	16	16	3
UDMR	Elected	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	100
	Not elected	29	10	10	8	11	16	13	3
PRM	Elected	67	0	-	-	0	0	0	33
	Not elected	60	5	-	-	7	3	25	0

Statistical robustness

Table 5 includes the correlation coefficients for tables 1-4. As all variables are ordinal we use *sommer's d* as statistical coefficients to indicate the strength of relationships. They basically confirm the conclusions reached in the previous paragraphs. According to the coefficients, education and background establish weaker relationships with the success of candidates at the general level. The variables that differentiate the most between the two groups are the wealth and the (level of) prior experience.

The statistical coefficients for education reflect the weak general tendency towards higher educated elected MEPs. In the entire cohort, PNL is the party that favors the most such

a situation, placing candidates with more education than the rest on the winning seats. By contrast, PRM and UDMR favour the presence of the less educated individuals on winning seats with BA graduates as forerunners on the list and MA and PhD candidates failing to get elected. Out of all parties, PDL is the only case in which there is no relationship between education and being a successful or unsuccessful in the European elections. The coefficients for the background of candidate support the above conclusions referring to a weak tendency to favour the political past of the candidate (-0.29).²⁰ The parties that consider this variable in appointing candidates on top positions are UDMR and PSD+PC, each with statistically significant relationships.

²⁰ The coefficient is negative as the political background was coded 1.

Table 5: Correlation coefficients for all indicators

Variable	Wealth					
	Pooled analysis	PSD+PC	PDL	PNL	UDMR	PRM
Education	0.21**	0.28	0.04	0.46**	-0.24*	-0.19
Wealth	0.57***	0.6***	0.55***	0.36*	0.6*	0.94**
Background	-0.29**	-0.48**	-0.12	-0.36	-0.6*	-0.09
Experience	0.62***	0.78***	0.23	0.94***	0.97*	0.07
N	215	43	43	43	43	43

* significance at 0.1, ** significance at 0.05, *** significance at 0.01

Regarding wealth, there is a general increased tendency to place wealthier candidates on eligible positions (0.3). The extremes are represented by PRM (0.94) that does it the most compared with the other competing parties and PNL (0.36) that favors the smallest discrepancies between elected and non-elected candidates. The other three parties have similar tendencies to do so, around the average (0.55 PDL and 0.6 PSD+PC and UDMR). The degrees of significance indicate that the relationship is a robust pattern (i.e. not accidental at all) for the entire cohort, PSD+PC, PDL, and PRM. For PNL and UDMR the probability of an accident in detecting this pattern is smaller, but still significant at a probability of 90%. Finally, the level of prior experience appears decisive for many parties in assigning top positions. UDMR and PNL value such a profile to a maximum extent preferring former MEPs and MPs to any other type of activity. The figures for PSD+PC reveal that the institutional experience plays a crucial role also in its decision-making process.

In the end, as a large part of the analysis is conducted at party level, the political parties deserve a few

words about the differences that occur between elected candidates and the rest from their lists. Far from explaining the mechanisms of selecting and ranking the candidates, our analysis indicates that there are several variables that matter in placing the candidates in top positions. PSD+PC consider experience and wealth as primary indicators for its decision, followed by a background of the candidate (oriented towards politics). The last considered factor is education. A similar prioritization of factors is played by PDL with the only exception that wealth is the major discriminatory factor between elected and non-elected candidates. Experience and background are only marginal, while education does not matter at all. For PNL the experience plays the primary role, followed by the level of education and wealth. UDMR also relies on the level of experience, followed by wealth and inclination towards the political background. PRM is the only party, for which wealth is the sole attribute that makes the difference, being indifferent to all the other indicators. As previously explained, such a situation was to be expected given its limited resources before the elections on June 7.

Conclusions

This study represents the first systematic analysis of the profiles of the Romanian candidates for the EP. We gathered and interpreted data on age, gender, education, occupational background, wealth, experience in public institutions and party career of all the 215 candidates proposed by the five Romanian parties which managed to secure seats. Thus, we had the complete universe of cases, not a representative sample, which is quite rare since the majority of similar studies are, most of the time, limited to the elected candidates. Our first major finding is that wealth seems to be a precondition for a successful candidature to the EP, since 85% of the elected candidates are either rich or very rich. Only one out of ten has an average economic situation and two out of the entire cohort of representatives are extremely rich. This situation can be explained mainly by the fact that the parties choose to delegate at least partially their campaign costs to the eligible candidates, their central budgets being overwhelmed by the five electoral cycles and referenda in the last 2 years.

The second most significant finding refers to the importance that 3 of the parties (PSD+PC, PNL and UDMR) have placed, when ranking their candidates, on the previous institutional experience in the EP. The elected candidates with such experience make up to two thirds of all the new MEPs. The analysis of the occupational background and party careers of the candidates revealed a tendency towards professionalization: almost half of the elected MEPs are professional politicians, who held leadership positions at national or county level of the parties.

Regarding the education of the candidates one has to observe that while almost all have university studies (with only 3 exceptions in the whole cohort), there is a preeminence of elected MEPs with doctoral degrees (38%). The indicator goes in line with the European tendencies, but it should be taken with reservation, since many of the diplomas are granted either by party institutes or by unaccredited programs of phantom universities.

The average age of the 32 MEPs is close to 47 years old, whereas the average age of the candidates that failed to get access to the EP is slightly over 41 years old. For this reason it can be concluded that generally the Romanian politicians do not regard the EP as a pre-pension stage of their career. The gender distribution illustrates a dominance of the male candidates on the lists both at general and party level. Overall, only one in four candidates is a female. The parties that secured the fewest seats UDMR and PRM (three MEPs each) did not place any woman in the eligible positions. This is in stark contrast with the lists supported by the PNL and PSD+PC where 80%, respectively almost half of the MEPs are female politicians.

These contributions have two major implications. On the one hand, we identify selection patterns and sketch the profile of the candidates in the European elections, providing the research bases for further investigation on the causes and mechanisms that lead to their success. Moreover, the identification of certain patterns for selecting candidates allows both political parties and their members to establish specific relationships in the future. For example, those party members that are rich, have high education, important

public experience, and a rather political background become the usual suspects to be nominated on top of the list. The party encourages their presence as they are able to gather votes and campaign donors, whereas these individuals are aware of existing rewards coming from the party. On the other hand, our empirical evidence documents sharp differences between the successful and unsuccessful candidates based on professional and

economic characteristics. To what extent such features help MEPs better fulfil their representation tasks remains an issue to further research. Moreover, our quantitative assessment reveals general trends and needs to be complemented by closer investigation able to distinguish specific models of promotion on electoral lists within party politics.

Appendix 1: Variable Operationalization

Variable	Operationalization
Education	1 = High School, 2 = Bachelor of Arts, 3 = Master of Arts/of Science or equivalent, 4 = Doctor of Philosophy, 5 = Post-doctoral studies.
Experience in public institutions	1 = no experience, 2 = local council, 3 = mayor/vice-mayor, 4 = decentralized, local governmental agencies, 5 = county council, 6 = national governmental agencies, 7 = Member of the Parliament or of an MP's staff, 8 = Member of the EP, or part of MEPs' staff.
Occupational background	1 = politics, 2 = business, 3 = administrative/bureaucracy, 4 = academia, 5 = civil society, 6 = other.
Wealth	1 = poor – no house, no car, no land, no account, 2 = modest – one house/ car, no land or accounts, 3 = average – house, car, accounts smaller than 10,000 Euro or one land, 4 = rich – two houses, car, two lands or accounts between 10,000 and 50,000 Euro, 5 = very rich – three or more houses, lands or accounts larger than 50,000 euro, 6 = tycoon.

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Websites*:

Central Electoral Bureau for the EP elections in Romania: <http://www.bec2009pe.ro/>

PSD' s official campaign website: <http://europene2009.psd.ro/>

PDL' s official campaign website: <http://www.euro-pdl.ro/>

PNL' s official website: <http://www.pnl.ro/>

UDMR's official website: www.udmr.ro

PRM' s official website: <http://www.prm.org.ro/>

Other websites providing information about candidates and recruitment:

www.alegeriparlamentare2008.ro

www.alegeri.tv

www.alegeri-2008.ro

www.infoalegeri.ro

www.stirilocale.ro

www.1001politicieni.ro

www.thinkopolis.eu

*We did not include all the used sites (of county councils, city halls or other central or local institutions), but they can be offered upon request.