

Non-native candidates as a strategic party resource: electoral effectiveness and spatial consequences

This paper examines non-native candidates¹ as a strategic resource for political parties in Poland's European Parliament elections between 2004 and 2024. The aim of the study is to answer three questions: (1) what is the scale and effectiveness of non-native candidates in the 13 electoral districts; (2) what is their effectiveness relative to native candidates within electoral committees; (3) what are the spatial consequences of the dominance of imported candidates, using the example of the Wielkopolska region (district no. 7 – Poznań). In addition, the strategy of the Polexit Electoral Committee was analyzed, which in 2024 fielded candidates from outside the electoral districts on 77.4% of its lists, concentrating recruitment in southern Poland (Lesser Poland and Silesian regions). The study primarily used official electoral data published by the National Electoral Commission, covering five European Parliament elections in 2004, 2009, 2014, 2019, and 2024. The methodological framework was based on indicator analysis, measuring turnout, committee and candidate support, and the degree of electoral and party personalization. Proprietary indicators for non-native candidates (list participation, vote share, and relative effectiveness index) were also constructed, enabling the assessment of their over- or underrepresentation. Pearson's linear correlation and simple linear regression were used in the statistical framework to identify the relationships among the levels of personalization, list structure, and candidate effectiveness. A significant element was spatial analysis, including measures of territorial contrast and the geographic correlation coefficient, which enabled the assessment of similarity and concentration in support distributions. This was supplemented by cartographic methods, primarily choropleth maps, which enabled the visualization of spatial patterns in turnout, personalization, and the effectiveness of non-native candidates.

The findings indicate that non-native candidates, despite constituting a minority on the lists, achieved disproportionate results in some districts, serving as "electoral engines." Within the committees, their effectiveness was often higher than that of native candidates, especially at high levels on the list, which favored vote concentration at the expense of local structures. The example of District No. 7 (Poznań) demonstrates a clear spatial concentration of support and the consolidation of personal strongholds, while the Polexit Election Committee's 2024 strategy demonstrates that a highly centralized recruitment model, based primarily on candidates from

¹ A non-native candidate was considered to be a person whose place of residence, according to the National Electoral Commission information, was outside the area of the electoral district in which he or she was listed.

outside the starting districts, does not guarantee proportional electoral effectiveness without territorial roots.

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