External Voting among Central European Migrants Living in Western Europe

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References
1. Introduction: Why Study External Voting?

Elections are the core practice of democratic politics, and they epitomize the ideal of popular rule to such an extent that even authoritarian dictatorships often hold them to legitimize their power and bask in democracy’s reflected glory (Knutsen, Nygård, and Wig 2017). The mechanics of electoral politics are also intuitively grasped by people globally: citizens are universally (or selectively) enfranchised to cast their ballot at polling stations. As modernity brings about increased mobility, a practical question emerges—what if a citizen is temporarily abroad when an election is held? Or to complicate things—what if a citizen of state A resides permanently in state B, but wants to take part in elections held in their homeland?

Non-resident citizens’ participation in national elections is known as external voting. The number of states that enfranchise their citizens residing outside national borders is rising rapidly (Navarro, Morales, and Gratschew 2007; Turcu and Urbatsch 2015). Although external voting remains a matter of heated debate among political theorists and lawyers, as of 2020, almost all European countries allow their nationals to cast ballots outside their territories (Commission 2020).

Despite the globally expanding émigré enfranchisement and the clear potential impact of migrant votes on politics in some regions, like within the European Union, comparative politics, but also migration studies to an extent, still pay only limited attention to external voting (but see Collyer 2014; Escobar, Arana, and McCann 2015; Lafleur and Sánchez-Domínguez 2015; Goldberg and Lanz 2019; Finn 2020). Most studies of migrant electoral behavior concern the way immigrants vote in the elections of their countries of residence, even though there are still significant barriers to immigrant enfranchisement. The disproportionate attention paid to immigrant voting vs. external voting is explained e.g. by data availability and the interest within receiving societies.

In comparison to immigrant voting in countries of residence, external voting in country of origin elections receives less attention. Large European ‘sending countries’ have been studied, e.g. Poland and Romania (Lesinska 2018; Burean and Popp 2015). Existing comparative research focuses on explaining the emergence and horizontal diffusion of external voting rights, that is—why do sending countries grant expatriates the right to vote in the first place (Collyer 2014; Hartmann 2015; Lafleur 2011; Rhodes and Harutyunyan 2010). Another issue attracting attention has been the impact of party mobilization and party activity abroad (Burgess and Tyburski 2020; Kernalegenn and van Haute 2020; Lazzari 2019). Meanwhile, analyses of the factors that can account for turnout and results beyond a single country of origin or residence remain scarce (Chaudhary 2018; Ciornoi and Østergaard-Nielsen 2020; Pallister 2020; Klitkou et al. 2019; Szulecki et al. 2021; Ognibene and Paulis 2021).

Our research project, Understanding the Political Dynamics of Émigré Communities in an Era of European Democratic Backsliding (DIASPOlitic),1 a collaboration between the Department

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1. See the DIASPOlitic website: diaspolic.eu.
of Political Science at the University of Oslo, the Peace Research Institute Oslo (PRIO) and the SWPS University in Warsaw, emerged with the hope of filling some of these gaps.

In launching the project, we were driven by several overarching questions: how do migrants vote? Is there any systematic difference external voting and domestic results? To what extent and how can migrants influence electoral politics ‘at home’? Are migrants generating democratic – or rather ‘illiberal remittances’ (Szulecki 2020).

The project had two empirical work packages. Some of the results of the ‘qualitative’ work package, which created an extensive qualitative dataset of 80 in-depth interviews with four groups of migrants, were presented in an earlier PRIO report (Bertelli et al. 2021), as well as some articles, more of which are forthcoming (Szulecki et al. 2021; Mikiewicz et al. 2021).

This report presents the findings of the ‘qualitative’ work package, which created a comparative dataset of external voting results for 9 countries of origin and 17 countries of residence. We focus on the European context. Following the post-Enlargement (2004-2007) wave of migration to other European Union (EU) member states, Central and Eastern European countries faced the expansion of existing émigré communities and the emergence of new ones (Anon 2010). As this process coincided with the expansion of migrant voting rights, the result is a large set of populous diaspora communities which can potentially have a significant impact on sending country electoral politics, making the study of external voting highly relevant. But how different are external voting results from those seen in countries of origin, what are the ideological differences between voting migrants and the ‘mean’ voter back home, and to what extent does that matter – these are some of the question the data gathered may help shed light on.

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Kacper Szulecki
2. Data Gathering

The data collected in this project concerned the voting of migrants from Central and Eastern European (CEE) countries, which became Member States of the European Union (EU) in 2004 and 2007, in Northern, Western and Southern European countries (i.e., the “old” EU member states). Our analysis focused on how the communities of migrants – which we call diasporas – voted in elections organised in their countries of origin. In other words, we were interested in non-resident, external voting. For example, we looked at how Poles residing in Norway voted in Polish parliamentary and Polish presidential elections, Bulgarians settled in France voted in Bulgarian parliamentary elections, etc.

In Step 1, we checked the data availability for all CEE member states. It turned out that the Hungarian electoral system does not allow for the study of external voting, as émigré votes are added up to the constituency in their last registered place of residence in Hungary. Similarly, Estonian and Slovakian regulations do not allow for an analysis by country of residence, although we have gathered data on the émigré vote summed together. Finally, Slovenian data was available, and we gathered it for the most recent election at the time, but due to very low numbers of votes cast and few host countries where external voting was organized, we did not include it in Step 2.

The countries of origin included in the main analysis were Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Lithuania, Latvia, Poland and Romania. On the other hand, the analysed countries of residence where diasporas cast their votes were Austria, Belgium, Germany, Denmark, Spain, Finland, France, Great Britain, Greece, Ireland, Italy, the Netherlands, Portugal, Sweden (EU members) as well as two countries belonging to the European Economic Area (Norway and Iceland) and Switzerland.

The period of the analysed data included the most recent elections before the accession of a given country of origin to the European Union and every subsequent election until the first half of 2021. The summary of analysed parliamentary election results by country of origin and host country is presented in Table 1. The rows of the table indicate host countries, and the columns indicate the year in which the elections were held. Entries of the cells denote the country of origin of the diasporas. For example, the entry PL in the row AT and column 2001 means that our dataset contains the voting results of the Polish diaspora in Austria in the Polish parliamentary elections held in 2001. For parliamentary elections, we collected data on 573 diaspora external voting events for diasporas from seven countries of origin voting in seventeen host countries between 2000 and 2021.

In addition, we collected data on the voting results in the country of origin – for example, how all Poles voted in the 2001 parliamentary elections, how all Bulgarians voted in the 2005 elections, etc. Altogether, we collected data on voting results in 35 elections: six elections in Bulgaria, Lithuania, Latvia, Poland, five in the Czech Republic and Romania, and one election in Slovenia.

As far as possible due to data availability, we collected the following data for each diaspora, in each host country, and each election: number of registered voters, number of votes cast, number
of valid votes, number of votes cast for particular political parties, support for specific parties among those who cast a valid vote. We took into account those parties which gained at least 3% of the electoral support on a national scale. We collected comparable data for election results in the country of origin, i.e., how Poles voted in Poland, Bulgarians in Bulgaria, etc.

In our study, we also collected data on diaspora voting in presidential elections. Not all countries of origin organise general presidential elections, and therefore the amount of data is much smaller for this type of voting. For the presidential election, we collected data on voting results in 302 events (see Table 2). This includes diasporas from six countries (Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Lithuania, Romania, Poland, Slovenia) that voted in 17 host countries. The data cover 19 presidential elections (five in Poland, four in Lithuania and Romania, three in Bulgaria, two in the Czech Republic and one in Slovenia). We also collected data on voting results in the country of origin for each election. The scope of data collected for presidential elections was similar to that for parliamentary elections. We were interested in the number of registered voters, the number of votes cast, the number of valid votes, and the number of votes cast for individual candidates together with a percentage of support out of valid votes. For those countries where there were two rounds of voting in presidential elections, we collected election results for both rounds.

In both parliamentary and presidential elections, there were situations where in a given election a certain diaspora was able to vote in several locations within the host country. For example, the Polish diaspora in Norway in the 2015 parliamentary elections was able to vote in five polling stations: two in Oslo, in Bergen, Stavanger, and Trondheim. In these situations, we aggregated data from all the election commissions in a given host country. It means that the information we included in the prepared dataset was the total number of voters in the host country, and the total support for each party/presidential candidate in the host country, in the given election.
Column 2000 means that the analysed data contains voting results of the Lithuanian diaspora in Austria in the parliamentary elections held in Lithuania in 2000. The rows in Table 1 indicate host countries; the columns years in which the elections were held; the entries of the cells show the diasporas among which the election results were analysed. For example, the entry “LT” in row AT and column 2000 means that the analysed data contains voting results of the Lithuanian diaspora in Austria in the parliamentary elections held in Lithuania in 2000.

Table 1: Summary of analysed diaspora voting results in parliamentary elections

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<td>2019</td>
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<td>2020</td>
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<td>LT, RO</td>
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</table>
Based on the dataset we built, many types of analyses can be conducted. This report will show the results of our study on how voting results in diasporas differ from voting results in the country of origin. Due to the scope of the data and its greater analytical possibilities, we will focus on the data on parliamentary elections. We will present two types of analysis here. First, we will examine the extent to which voting in diasporas differs from voting in the country of origin. Here, we will propose a measure of voting differences that determines the extent to which the compared election results differ. In the next section, we will try to show how, in what direction, the election results in diasporas differ from the election results in the country of origin. In other words, we will indicate for which parties voters in diasporas vote more or less frequently than voters in their home countries.

3.1 Comparison of voting results in diasporas with voting results in the country of origin

In this analysis, we compare the results of elections in the diaspora with the results of elections in the countries of origin. The point of comparison for us is to contrast the results of elections of the same type, held in the same year, in a given diaspora with the results of elections in the country of origin. For this purpose, we compare the election results in a given diaspora, at a given point in time, from a parliamentary election with the election result of the same election in the country of origin.

In our comparison, we use a measure called the Pedersen index. It is an index typically used in measuring electoral volatility, i.e. how the results of the same type of election, held in the same country, differ over time. In our case, we apply the Pedersen index to cross-country comparisons, i.e. between the voting outcome in the diaspora and the voting outcome in the country of origin.

The formula defining the Pedersen Index is shown below.

\[
\text{Pedersen index} = \frac{\sum_{i=1}^{n} |P_{io} - P_{ih}|}{2}
\]

According to the formula, first (1) the absolute differences between the percentage support for a party among voters in the country of origin \(p_{io}\) and support of the same party among the diaspora \(p_{ih}\) are calculated. Then (2) the sum of these differences is calculated, which is then (3) divided by two. As an example, we will show how the Pedersen index is calculated by comparing the voting result of the Polish diaspora in Norway with the voting result among all Polish voters in the 2019 parliamentary elections. Table 3 shows:

- the percentage support in elections for particular parties among voters in Poland (column A);
percentage support for the same parties among Polish voters in Norway (column B);

absolute differences in support by party between the result in the country of origin and the result in the diaspora (column C);

sum of absolute differences, values in column C, value 44.08;

Pedersen index value: sum of absolute differences divided by two, value 22.04.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Parties</th>
<th>A. Support in country of origin</th>
<th>B. Support among Polish diaspora in Norway</th>
<th>C. abs(A-B)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>KO</td>
<td>27.40</td>
<td>32.43</td>
<td>5.03</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PiS</td>
<td>43.59</td>
<td>26.24</td>
<td>17.35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SLD</td>
<td>12.56</td>
<td>20.13</td>
<td>7.57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Konf</td>
<td>6.81</td>
<td>16.25</td>
<td>9.44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PSL</td>
<td>8.55</td>
<td>4.95</td>
<td>3.60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>1.09</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>1.09</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Sum of column C</td>
<td>44.08</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Pedersen Index value: (Sum of column C)/2</td>
<td>22.04</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3: Example of using the Pedersen index for calculating discrepancy between homeland and diaspora voting results

An important property of the Pedersen index is the significance of its extreme values. Its minimum value is 0, which means that the compared election results are not different. In our case, the result in the diaspora is identical as in the country of origin. In contrast, the maximum value of the Pedersen index is 100, which in our case means that voters in the diaspora voted for entirely different parties than voters in the country of origin. The general property of the Pedersen index is thus that the higher its value, the greater the differences in the results of compared elections. In our case, the greater the value of the Pedersen index, the greater the difference in voting outcomes between given diaspora and the country of origin.

Thus, we counted Pedersen index values for diasporas originating from different countries, located in various host countries and voting in elections held at various points in time. In total, we calculated 653 distinct Pedersen index values. The calculated Pedersen index values are contained for all analysed elections in an Excel sheet named “A1_Discrepancy_data.xlsx”. To ensure...
the readability of the collected data containing the Pedersen index values, they are presented below in graphs and maps.

The graphs are constructed separately for each sending country. Each figure, in turn, consists of multiple panels showing the discrepancy values in one host country for the consecutive elections for which we had data. For example, Figure 1, which presents data for the Bulgarian diaspora, shows in successive panels the discrepancy values of the Bulgarian diaspora in Austria, Belgium, Switzerland, etc. Similarly, Figures 2, 3, 4, 5, 6 present data for Czech, Lithuanian, Latvian, Polish and Romanian diasporas.

We have also visualised the same data using maps in Figures 7-12. Each map shows the discrepancy values for diasporas from the same sending country in the given election. The saturation of colour in the area of a given host country indicates the value of discrepancy calculated for the diaspora residing in that country. The lighter the colour (going from green to yellow), the higher the discrepancy value, the darker the colour (going from green to dark blue), the lower the discrepancy value. For example, the voting data of the Bulgarian diasporas in 2005 show that the highest value of discrepancy was recorded among the Bulgarian diaspora residing in Spain and Denmark and the lowest for the diasporas in Sweden and Switzerland. It means, therefore, that the election result among Bulgarian diasporas in Spain and Denmark differed the most from the election result in Bulgaria. On the other hand, the election result among the Bulgarian diaspora in Sweden and Switzerland was the least different from the election result in Bulgaria. One should read all subsequent maps presented in Figures 7-12 in the same way.

Let us now consider what follows from the above statement of discrepancy values. The data can be analysed in various ways; here, we will focus on only one of them. We will investigate whether voters in diasporas are becoming more and more similar in their voting behaviour to voters in the country of origin or, on the contrary, voters in diasporas are voting increasingly differently from voters in the countries of origin. The fact that voters in diasporas are becoming more similar to voters in the country of origin is evidenced by the decreasing value of discrepancy in subsequent elections. The fact that voters in diasporas vote in an increasingly different way than voters in the country of origin will, in turn, be evidenced by the increasing value of discrepancy.

The results we observe across diasporas are diverse. In the case of the Bulgarian diasporas (Figure 1), between 2005 and 2017, discrepancy values were decreasing in most host countries, so Bulgarians abroad voted increasingly like voters who stayed in the homeland. A certain breakthrough occurred between 2017 and 2021 and in some host countries since 2014. At that time, the level of discrepancy started to increase, meaning that Bulgarian diaspora voters began to vote differently from voters in the domestic population.
Figure 1: Discrepancy levels for Bulgarian diasporas
Figure 2: Discrepancy levels for Czech diasporas
Figure 3: Discrepancy levels for Lithuanian diasporas
Figure 4: Discrepancy levels for Latvian diasporas
Figure 5: Discrepancy levels for Polish diasporas
Figure 6: Discrepancy levels for Romanian diasporas
In the case of Czech diasporas, there is a clear trend that the level of discrepancy in most host countries is getting higher in the subsequent elections (Figure 2). Thus, Czech diasporas increasingly vote differently from voters in their country of origin.

The discrepancy calculated for Lithuanian diasporas in most host countries decreased between 2000 and 2004 (Figure 3). It may be an effect of immigration from Lithuania that began after the country acceded to the EU – new migrants were more likely to vote like voters who stayed in Lithuania than Lithuanians who emigrated earlier. In the following years, 2004-2016, the level of discrepancy for Lithuanian diasporas remained at a similar level. Since 2016, we have seen a decrease in the level of discrepancy in most host countries, which means that in the last elections (held in 2020), the election result among Lithuanian diasporas became more similar to the election result in the country of origin.
Figure 8: Discrepancy levels for Czech diasporas - maps

Figure 9: Discrepancy levels for Lithuanian diasporas - maps
Figure 10: Discrepancy levels for Latvian diasporas - maps

Figure 11: Discrepancy levels for Polish diasporas - maps
In the case of Latvian and Polish diasporas, the dynamics are similar to those observed among Bulgarian diasporas. First, the convergence of election results between diasporas and country of origin was observed. Discrepancy values for the Latvian diasporas decreased in 2010-2011, and for the Polish diasporas decreased in 2005-2011 (Figures 4, 5). In the subsequent period, there was an increase in discrepancy. For Latvian diasporas, an increase is observed between 2011 and 2018, and for Polish diasporas, between 2015 and 2019. This dynamic applies to most host countries.

Voting results among Romanian diasporas between 2008 and 2016 increasingly differed from those in Romania. During this period, discrepancy values were increasing in most host countries (Figure 6). In contrast, in the last period, 2016-2020, there was a slight decrease in discrepancy values – this also applies to most host countries. Thus, it means that the election results in the Romanian diasporas in the recent period have become more similar to the results in Romania.
4. What parties do diasporas vote for?

Identifying the mean position of voters on ideological and programmatic dimensions

Earlier, we showed how voting in diasporas differs from voting at home. The following question may now arise: If there are differences, what do they imply in political terms? Which parties do voters in the diasporas vote for more often, and which less often than voters in the country of origin? It is a question about the direction of the differences. In what way (in ideological terms), does the electoral behaviour of the diasporas differ from the electoral behaviour of voters in the country of origin? Another question is whether voters in diasporas become similar to voters in the host country on particular ideological and programmatic dimensions or whether they remain similar to voters from their country of origin.

To answer the above questions, we merged our data on election results in the diasporas with data from the V-dem Party database. The V-dem Party database contains for each party its position on multiple dimensions in each election we analysed. Our analyses used party positions on two general synthetic dimensions (illiberalism and populism) and 11 specific dimensions. One can find detailed information on the V-Dem set in the extensive documentation of this project (Lührmann et al. 2020). Let us now turn to the description of the dimensions used in the subsequent analyses. Below we present the names of the dimensions used, how they were constructed and the meaning of their values:

**Illiberalism** – this dimension relates to the question: “to what extent does the party show a lacking commitment to democratic norms prior to elections?” The higher the illiberalism index value, the more illiberal the party. There is a synthetic dimension based on the following specific measures:

- Political opponents – “Prior to this election, have leaders of this party used severe personal attacks or tactics of demonisation against their opponents?”
- Political pluralism – “Prior to this election, to what extent was the leadership of this political party clearly committed to free and fair elections with multiple parties, freedom of speech, media, assembly and association?”
- Minority rights – “According to the leadership of this party, how often should the will of the majority be implemented even if doing so would violate the rights of minorities?”
- Rejection of political violence – “To what extent does the leadership of this party explicitly discourage the use of violence against domestic political opponents?”

**Populism** – this dimension relates to the question: “to what extent do representatives of the party use populist rhetoric (narrowly defined)?” The higher the index value, the more populist the party. This synthetic dimension, which is based on the following specific measures:
- Anti-elitism – “How important is anti-elite rhetoric for this party?”

- People centrism – “Do leaders of this party glorify the ordinary people and identify themselves as part of them?”

**Immigration** – this dimension relates to the question: “what is the party's position regarding immigration into the country?” The higher the value, the more the party supports different forms of immigration into the country.

**LGBT social equality** – this dimension relates to the question: “what is this party's position toward social equality for the lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) community?” The higher the value, the more the party supports LGBT social equality.

**Cultural superiority** – this dimension relates to the question: “to what extent does the party leadership promote the cultural superiority of a specific social group or the nation as a whole?” The higher the value, the more the party opposes cultural superiority.

**Religious principles** – this dimension relates to the question: “to what extent does this party invoke God, religion, or sacred/religious texts to justify its positions?” The higher the value, the less often the party refers to God, religion or sacred/religious texts to justify its positions.

**Gender equality** – this dimension relates to the question: “what is the share of women in national-level leadership positions of this political party?” The higher the value, the more balanced the proportion of women in party leadership.

**Working women** – this dimension relates to the question: “to what extent does this party support the equal participation of women in the labour market?” The higher the value, the more the party supports different types of measures to encourage equal participation of women in the labour market.

**Economic left-right scale** – this dimension relates to the question: “please locate the party in terms of its overall ideological stance on economic issues.” The higher the value the more right-wing the party's position.

**Welfare** – this dimension relates to the question: “to what extent does the party promote means-tested or universalistic welfare policies?” The higher the value, the more the party promotes universalistic welfare policies for all groups of the society.

**Clientelism** – this dimension relates to the question: “to what extent do the party and its candidates provide targeted and excludable (clientelistic) goods and benefits – such as consumer
goods, cash or preferential access to government services – in an effort to keep and gain votes?” The higher the value, the more the party supports providing targeted goods and benefits to potential voters.

For each diaspora and voters in the country of origin, in each election, we counted the average position of voters on each dimension. The average position of voters will determine how much they supported parties advocating for certain policies or using a particular type of rhetoric. The average position of voters allowed us to determine the essence of the difference in the election outcome between diaspora and home country voters. In other words, we were able to show in what way the parties for which voters in the diaspora voted differ from the parties for which voters in the country of origin voted. More figuratively, our data allows us to determine whether voters in diasporas support to a greater extent parties using populist rhetoric than voters in the country of origin or whether it is voters in the country of origin who more often vote for parties described as populist. Similarly, our data can indicate whether voters in diasporas are more likely to support right-wing economic parties than voters in the country of origin. We can make such a comparison for any dimension taken from the V-dem dataset. It is also possible to compare various diasporas from the same or different countries.

Technically speaking, the average position of voters on a given dimension was defined as the average position of individual parties on a given dimension weighted by the size of support for those parties in the diaspora or country of origin. Party positions were sourced from V-dem data and support for parties from data collected by the Diaspolitics Project Associates. For example, the more voters supported parties advocating LGBT social equality solutions, the higher the average position of diaspora voters on the LGBT social equality dimension. On the other hand, the more voters supported parties advocating limited support for the LGBT community,

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>A. Electoral support among Polish diaspora in Norway – in %</th>
<th>B. Party position on LGBT social equality</th>
<th>C. =(A/100)*B Position of each party weighted by party support</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Civic Platform</td>
<td>32.4</td>
<td>2.53</td>
<td>0.82</td>
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<tr>
<td>Law and Justice</td>
<td>26.2</td>
<td>0.42</td>
<td>0.11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Democratic Left Alliance</td>
<td>20.1</td>
<td>2.98</td>
<td>0.60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>National Movement</td>
<td>16.3</td>
<td>0.38</td>
<td>0.06</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Polish Peasants’ Party</td>
<td>5.0</td>
<td>1.40</td>
<td>0.07</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Position of Polish Diaspora in Norway on LGBT social equality (sum of column C) 1.66

Table 4: Calculation of the average position on the LGBT social equality dimension for the Polish diaspora in Norway in the 2019 parliamentary elections
the lower the average position of diaspora voters on the LGBT dimension. An example of the calculation of the average position of the Polish diaspora in Norway in the 2019 parliamentary elections for the LGBT social equality dimension is presented in Table 4.

Column A shows the percentage of support for each party in the Polish parliamentary elections 2019 among the Polish diaspora in Norway. Column B, in turn, shows the positions of these parties on the LGBT social equality dimension. Column C shows the product of the support (expressed as a proportion A/100) and the position of a given party (B). These values are calculated in each row – for each party. The sum of the values in column C (1.66) is the average position of the Polish diaspora on the LGBT social equality dimension. In this way, we calculated the average positions of diasporas in all the dimensions included in the analyses. Detailed data containing the positions of all diasporas on all dimensions are provided in the Excel sheet “Data positions.xlsx”. We will present these data in a synthetic way below in the form of graphics.

Figure 13 charts the average positions of Bulgarian diasporas in all eleven dimensions considered in the analyses. Each dimension is presented in one figure. In each figure, the horizontal axis represents the year in which the Bulgarian parliamentary elections were held, and the vertical line represents the average position of voters on a given dimension. The coloured lines indicate the average positions of voters belonging to the Bulgarian diaspora in the different host countries in each election. The black line, in turn, represents the average position of all Bulgarian voters in consecutive elections. The black line can be seen as an approximation of the position of voters who stayed in their country of origin. The comparison of the black line and the coloured lines indicate which parties the diaspora voted for more often than the voters in the country of origin. The comparison of the positions of the coloured lines, on the other hand, indicates the difference between diasporas residing in different countries of origin. The horizontal axis represents the time dimension, so it is also possible to track changes over time in support of parties with particular characteristics. Analogous data for other diasporas are presented in the subsequent figures. Figure 14 shows the average positions of diasporas and voters in the country of origin for the Czech case, Figure 15 for Lithuanian, Figure 16 for Latvian, Figure 17 for Polish, Figure 18 for Romanian.

One can analyse data presented in the graphs in many ways. Here we will present the most general conclusions that can be drawn from them. First, in all countries where we had data for different points in time, for almost every dimension, we observe that the average positions of voters in diasporas strongly depend on the positions of voters in the country of origin. Changes in black line positions over time tend to correspond to changes in coloured line positions. Let us trace this with the example of voters’ positions on the populism dimension in the case of Bulgaria (Figure 13). Among diasporas (coloured lines) and in the country of origin (black line), we observe an increase in populism between 2005 and 2009, then a decrease between 2009 and 2013, then an increase between 2013 and 2017, and then a decrease in 2021. Such
Figure 13: Average positions of Bulgarian diasporas
Figure 14: Average positions of Czech diasporas
Figure 15: Average positions of Lithuania diasporas
Figure 16: Average positions of Latvian diasporas
Figure 17: Average positions of Polish diasporas
Figure 18: Average positions of Romanian diasporas
a correspondence of trends, more or less, is observed for almost all analysed dimensions, for all countries of origin. Even if voters in diasporas vote for different parties than voters in the country of origin, the dynamics of changes in the position of voters in diasporas are similar to those in the country of origin. One example here is illiberalism in the Czech Republic (Figure 14). Voters in Czech diasporas are significantly more liberal than voters in the Czech Republic at all points in time. However, changes in the average position of diasporas on the illiberalism dimension have the same dynamics (increasing or decreasing in the same period) as voters’ positions in the Czech Republic. These results imply that the diasporas’ vote strongly depends on how voters in their country of origin vote. The electoral behaviour of diasporas is a reflection of what is happening in the country of origin. In other words, it is not possible to understand how diasporas vote without reference to voting behaviour in the country of origin.

Let us now look at how diaspora voters differ from voters in origin countries in terms of which parties they are more likely to vote for. Although our data set is extensive and detailed, we can identify more general trends and relationships. In most elections analysed, diasporas voted more often for more liberal and less populist parties than voters in the country of origin. Moreover, this difference is most clearly visible in the last analysed years in each sending country. In the last elections, diaspora voters from countries such as Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Poland and Romania were more liberal than voters in their country of origin in all the host countries studied. In the case of voters coming from Lithuania and Latvia, they were more liberal than stay at home fellows in most host countries. Similarly, Czech and Polish diasporas in all host countries and Bulgarian, Lithuanian and Latvian diasporas in most host countries voted for parties that were less populist than voters at home.

Let us now consider cultural issues. Here we analyse voters’ positions on dimensions such as LGBT social equality, cultural superiority, religious principles, gender equality and working women. All scales have been constructed in such a way that the higher the value on a given dimension, the more culturally progressive the position of the party concerned. On the other hand, the lower the value on these dimensions, the more conservative the position of the party was. In the case of the Lithuanian, Latvian and Polish diasporas on each of the cultural dimensions, in almost all diasporas and at almost all points in time, diasporas voted for more culturally progressive parties than voters in their country of origin. It is evidenced by the black line usually located below the coloured lines in the graphs on the cultural dimensions in these three diasporas (Figure 15, 16, 17). As far as the Czech diasporas are concerned, since 2010, they have been more culturally progressive than voters in their country of origin on dimensions such as LGBT social equality and cultural superiority. On the other hand, on the dimensions of religious principles, gender equality and working women, voters in the country of origin are more progressive than Czech diasporas. To some extent, Romanian diasporas voted similarly to Czech diasporas. As of 2012, diasporas voted more often than voters who stayed in the homeland for culturally progressive parties on LGBT social equality, cultural superiority, and religious principles. In contrast,
voters in Romania were more progressive on gender issues – they were more likely to vote for parties that supported the equal participation of women in the labour market and parties that had a more balanced proportion of women among party leaders. Bulgarian diasporas are a certain exception to the general trend here. In the recent period (since 2017), these diasporas have been more culturally conservative than voters in their country of origin in all cultural dimensions.

If we consider the economic issues, we find that almost all diasporas, throughout the analysed period, were more likely to vote for economically right-wing parties (coloured lines higher than the black line in the econ_rightleft graphs). Diasporas also preferred to vote parties advocating limited welfare measures (coloured line below the black line in the welfare graphs). The exception, however, is the Bulgarian diaspora since 2017. During this period, Bulgarian diaspora voters supported economically left-wing parties and those favouring welfare solutions to a greater extent than Bulgarian voters.

An interesting relationship is observed on the clientelism dimension. This dimension determines how much a party or its candidates provide clientelist goods and benefits. It turns out that almost all diasporas in the analysed period voted for clientelistic parties less frequently than voters in the country of origin. This result may indicate that voters in the country of origin, not those in diasporas, have something to gain from clientelistic parties.

A complex pattern of interdependence is observed in the case of the immigration dimension – Bulgarian and Latvian diasporas are more likely to vote for anti-immigrant parties than voters in their country of origin. The opposite is true for Czech, Lithuanian, Polish and Romanian voters. Diaspora voters from these countries are more likely to vote for pro-immigrant parties than voters who stayed in their country of origin.

Here we conclude the description of the results concerning the position of diasporas and voters in the countries of origin on different dimensions. Of course, this description is not exhaustive, and the data can be analysed in different ways. Finally, as we did for the discrepancy, the programmatic differences between voters in diasporas and voters in the country of origin can also be represented by maps. Nevertheless, we do not do that here because including all dimensions for all diasporas at different points in time would generate too many maps for the capacity of this publication.
5. The Size of the Voting Diasporas

In this section, we will address the question of the size of the voting diasporas. Having presented the above results on the description of how diasporas voted, it is reasonable to ask how large these voting diasporas are. It raises the further question of how significant diaspora voting is for electoral outcomes in the country of origin, and on the other hand, how large a community they constitute in host countries.

Detailed data indicating the number of voters in each diaspora, in each host country, in each election are provided in the file “Size of voting diaspora.xls”. In this report, we will present the key findings on the number of voters in each diaspora. Figure 19 below shows the total number of voters coming from the analysed sending countries in all analysed host countries. As individual countries varied considerably in the size of their diasporas, these data are not presented in a single graph. The key to properly interpreting these graphs are the scales shown on the vertical axis in each panel. Differences in the size of diasporas are obviously due to differences in the population of sending countries. Each panel in Figure 19 indicates that over time, the sizes of voting diasporas increased. This is true for all host countries. It was influenced by increased migration from the newly acceded countries to the old European countries and the EEG, and the increasing number of electoral commissions in the host countries.

Let us now look at which host countries the analysed diasporas are most numerous. Let us start with the Bulgarian diasporas. Between 2005 and 2013, the most numerous voting Bulgarian diaspora was in Spain. More than 10,000 Bulgarian voters voted in Spain in the 2009 and 2013 elections. In 2014, among Bulgarian diaspora voters, the diaspora in the UK was the largest (12,549 voters), although the one in Spain was slightly less populated (12,434). As of 2017, the largest Bulgarian diaspora is that located in Germany, although the Bulgarian diaspora voting in the UK was slightly smaller. In the 2021 election, 34,967 Bulgarian citizens voted in Germany and 33,685 in the UK.

Czech diasporas are the smallest of all those analysed. The total number of Czechs voting in the analysed host countries in the 2017 elections was only 6293. Before the Czech Republic acceded to the EU, the Czech external voters in France were the most numerous (260 people), followed by those located in Germany (196 people) and Italy (170 people). In 2006, the largest was the Czech voting diaspora in the UK (527 people), and in 2010 the largest were those in France (696 people) and the UK (668 people). Since 2010, the size of the diaspora voting in France has stopped growing and then decreased. On the other hand, the size of diaspora voting in Belgium and Germany has been increasing. In the last elections analysed, the largest Czech voting diaspora was in Germany (1495 persons), the United Kingdom (1058) and Belgium (833 persons).

In the case of Lithuania, the size of diaspora voting in 2000 and 2004 was relatively small. At both points in time, the largest Lithuanian voting diaspora was in Germany, with 336 voters in the 2000 election and 822 in 2004. Since then, there has been a marked increase in the
The case of Latvia is quite similar to that of Lithuania. Since 2006, the most numerous Latvian diaspora voter is the one voting in the UK. We also observed a significant increase in Latvians voting there, from 927 people in 2006 to 10,706 in 2018. In the last elections, held in 2018, other significant diasporas were in Germany (3041 people), Sweden (2002 people), Ireland (1958 people) and Norway (1932 people).

Due to the size of Poland, Polish diasporas are the largest among those analysed. In the 2019 elections, 321,764 Polish voters voted in the analysed host countries. Among Polish diasporas,
the diaspora in the UK has been by far the most numerous since 2007. In the most recent 2019 elections in the UK, 88,686 Poles voted. The second significant voting diaspora is that in Germany (46,205 voters in 2019).

The territorial distribution of the Romanian diasporas is slightly different from the others. Throughout the period studied, the most numerous Romanian voting diasporas were in Spain and Italy. With the diaspora in Italy being by far the larger one since the 2016 elections. In the 2020 elections, 48,272 Romanians voted in Italy and 31,980 in Spain. Since 2016, Romanian diasporas in the UK and Germany have been growing in importance, with 31,310 and 30,188 Romanian citizens voting in these countries in 2020, respectively.

In the next section, we analyse to what extent the electoral vote of diasporas can be significant for the outcome of elections in the country of origin. Figure 20 shows the percentage of all voters in a given election in the diasporas analysed here. As we pointed out earlier, the number of voters in diasporas has increased in successive elections. Hence, we see in Figure 20 that for almost all sending countries, the percentage of diasporas among all voters increases. To assess the importance of diasporas in individual sending country elections, let us focus on the percentage share of diasporas in the last elections held. The largest share among them was recorded in the case of the Bulgarian diaspora. Voters in the analysed Bulgarian diasporas accounted for 3.85% of all voters of the parliamentary elections held in Bulgaria in 2021. The corresponding figures were 3.11% for the Romanian diasporas in the 2020 elections, 2.98% for the Latvian diasporas, 2.66% for the Lithuanian diasporas and 1.72% for the Polish diasporas. Voting in Czech diasporas is the least important for the electoral outcome in the country of origin. Despite the fact that the share of the Czech diaspora in the election result in the Czech Republic

![Figure 20: Diasporas as a percentage of voters in the country of origin](image-url)
increased in successive elections, it remained shallow. In 2017, the percentage of Czech diasporas in the analysed countries in the overall Czech election result was only 0.12%.

These results may indicate that with an even electoral race, in basically all sending countries except the Czech Republic, the diaspora votes may determine who wins the elections and who governs. On the other hand, the electoral law may be relevant here. In Poland, for example, diaspora votes are counted only in the capital’s electoral district, in which only 19 out of 460 MPs are elected. In this situation, even the enormous electoral mobilisation of the diaspora will not significantly impact the final outcome of the elections.

The importance of the émigré vote can be greater in presidential elections, especially closely contested runoff (second round) vote between just two candidates. Understanding that the size of emigration from these countries is considerable (for Lithuania and Latvia almost one fourth of the population has migrated, while Poland and Romania count their emigrants in millions), electoral mobilization can lead to situations where diasporas hold the swing vote. That was arguably the case in the recent presidential election in Romania, however, our data are yet to be analysed.

As a final note, it is complicated to estimate voter turnout within individual diasporas. The problem here is estimating the size of respective diasporas. Such data is often incomplete and varies in quality between individual host countries. For these reasons, we do not address the issue of voter turnout in individual diasporas in this report.
References


External Voting among Central European Migrants Living in Western Europe

Non-resident citizens’ participation in national elections is known as external voting. This report presents the first comparative dataset of external voting, both in parliamentary and presidential elections. We gathered voting results among migrants from nine Central and Eastern European countries, with the main analysis focusing on six where most data were available: Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Lithuania, Latvia, Poland and Romania. The analysed countries of residence where diasporas cast their votes were Austria, Belgium, Germany, Denmark, Spain, Finland, France, Great Britain, Greece, Ireland, Italy, the Netherlands, Portugal, Sweden (EU members) as well as two countries belonging to the European Economic Area (Norway and Iceland) and Switzerland.

How different are external voting results from those seen in countries of origin? What are the ideological differences between voting migrants and the ‘mean’ voter back home, and to what extent does that matter? These are some of the questions the data gathered may help shed light on.

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