

Global Development Network and CERGE-EI Regional Research Competition

Project Title: Electoral Behavior: An experimental approach from the laboratory and the field of Romanian local and general elections (no. RRC12+06)

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Paper No 1: The Effects of the 2008 Romanian Electoral System on Candidate Behaviour. Evidence from the Lab

Non-Technical Summary

The purpose of this study is to analyse the effects of the new Romanian electoral system on the strategies of the candidates. The main argument is that under the new system, inter and intraparty competition coexist and that intraparty competition manifests itself mostly through the choice of a single-member district (SMD). Due to the manner in which seats are allocated to candidates and to variations in SMD size, running in one SMD or another alters the candidates' chances of winning a seat.

As the system has only been applied once in 2008 and few data are available, we use laboratory experiments to simulate elections in a mixed-member district (MMD) with 5 SMDs, where 3 parties with 5 candidates each run for office. In order to identify the effects of the new electoral system on the candidates' behaviour, we contrast the findings against results under the plurality voting rule, using the same setting.

Thus, the experiment provides an innovative manner of studying results of intraparty negotiation, through which parties assign candidates to specific SMDs in specific MMDs, altering their chances of winning seats. Given the SMD characteristics and the party's ranking of the candidates, how would they choose SMDs so as to maximize their chances of winning seats, if they could choose their SMDs freely?

Paper No 2: Preferences, voting rules, behaviour and outcomes. A field experiment on the local elections in Romania

Non-Technical Summary

The purpose of this paper is to study the electoral behaviour of the Romanian voters under different voting rules, looking to answer the question regarding the extent to which voting rules matter in the local context. In order to achieve this purpose, I use the results of a field experiment conducted in Bucharest during the local elections, which took place on the 10th of June 2012. Using the experimental results, I aim to answer two types of research questions. The first concerns the extent to which results obtained through different voting rules really differ in a real-life setting, and if so, whether it is due only to the aggregation rule or also to a change in electoral behaviour caused by changing the rule. The second one concerns strategic behaviour in particular and aims to see to what extent strategic voting existed in these elections and whether some rules actually encourage strategic voting more than others, as theory predicts.