

The scientific goal of the research project is to analyse elections to the European Parliament in the Visegrad Group countries in 2024. The 2024 European Parliament elections will be held under conditions of growing crises over the years. They were caused among others by problems with the adoption of the constitution in 2005, economic problems, energy crisis, the migration crisis, war in Ukraine, the Covid-19 Pandemic, Brexit, and rule-of-law issues. A growing polarization between Euroenthusiasts and Eurosceptics is visible in member states. In this context, a significant scientific challenge is to examine the role of Visegrad Group countries as so-called new democracies in the process of the European Parliament election. Initially, political movements referring to nationalist and populist ideas in Visegrad Group countries were marginal. However, over time, they have gained importance. In this respect, the countries in the Visegrad Group are differentiated. This affects both the internal policy of individual countries forming the Visegrad Group, as well as decisions taken at the level of the European Union.

Answers to the following research questions will be sought: 1) If the second-order character of the European Parliament elections also concerns the second-order campaigning of political parties and the second-order reporting of the 2024 European Parliament election by the mass media in the Visegrad Group countries?; 2) Will the campaign in Visegrad Group countries focus on national issues?; 3) What factors influence campaign patterns in the Visegrad Group countries?; 4) What are the similarities and differences in national campaign styles?; 5) Do the turnout confirm the second-order character of the 2024 European Parliament elections?; 6) Do the ruling parties in Visegrad Group countries lose in 2024?; 7) If small and new political parties in Visegrad Group countries will succeed?; 8) Will the populist and extreme parties and movements in Visegrad Group countries be successful?; 9) What will be the impact of the timing of European Parliament contests within the domestic electoral cycle?; 10) What will be the impact of the 2024 EP election results in Visegrad Group countries on the shape of the European Parliament?; 11) What old and new trends can be identified?

Two models will be used in the conducted research. According to the first model, we can distinguish between First-Order Elections (general elections in parliamentary systems and elections of the head of state in presidential systems) and Second-Order Elections (regional, municipal, or local elections in parliamentary systems). It is said that European Parliament elections are Second-Order Elections. This is because they are based on internal political determinants. In this setup, the significance of divisions in the European environment was marginalized. Several determinants can be indicated that are characteristic of the Second-Order Election: a low turnout; a focus on national rather than European issues; the defeat of government parties; losses by major parties, and the impact of the timing of European Parliament contests within the domestic electoral cycle on the results for the ruling and big parties. In accordance with the European Salience Theory the following assumptions are adopted regarding the period that elapses between parliamentary elections and the succeeding elections to the European Parliament: better performance of green parties; gain of extreme parties on the left and/or the right of the political scene; and success of Eurosceptic and anti-European parties.

The results of the planned research will provide new scientific knowledge that will verify the existing scientific findings on the participation of citizens in Visegrad Group countries at the level of the European Parliament elections, campaigns before elections to the European Parliament, the significance of the election results in the context of the national electoral cycle, and European integration. The obtained results will also be important in the context of research on populism and nationalism, as well as the shift towards so-called illiberal democracy. Importantly, scientists, and other social groups, including journalists, NGOs, politicians, think tanks, social activists, and public administrations at various levels, will benefit from them.