

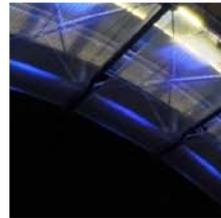
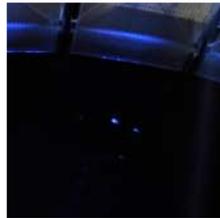
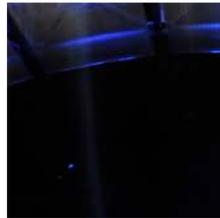


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# EUROPEAN ELECTIONS IN FOCUS



PROVIDING AN INFRASTRUCTURE FOR  
RESEARCH ON ELECTORAL DEMOCRACY  
IN THE EUROPEAN UNION (PIREDEU)

# INTRODUCTION: THE EUROPEAN UNION AND ELECTORAL DEMOCRACY



Elections are one of the primary instruments of democracy and one of the biggest exercises in democracy occurs with elections to the European Parliament at which over 375 million citizens are eligible to participate. These elections offer an unprecedented opportunity to study the functioning of electoral democracy in general and the functioning of European democracy in particular. Scientific evaluations of electoral processes at the EU level have been hampered until now by the lack of co-ordination in the collection of empirical information on which such evaluations are based. Under the auspices of the EU funded infrastructure design study “Providing an Infrastructure for Research on Electoral Democracy in the European Union” (PIREDEU), it has been possible to produce data of the type that is required to allow researchers to address fundamental questions about the representative, accountability and legitimacy functions of electoral processes.

The PIREDEU project has demonstrated both the technical feasibility and scientific impact of such

a data collection effort. A feasibility study involving 27 countries and conducted at the time of the 2009 elections to the European Parliament, PIREDEU coordinated the collection of five empirical data sets. Data were gathered on the attitudes and behaviour of some 27,000 EU citizens, campaign strategies and issues agendas for 1,350 European Parliamentary candidates, issue priorities and positions in 200 party manifestos, campaign news coverage in 140 media outlets and contextual indicators about the political and economic systems of all 27 EU member countries.

## Scientific Impact

More than 1006 users have accessed the data on the PIREDEU website. There are currently 22 published papers and 54 working papers that use the PIREDEU data. In many cases, the publications and papers use more than one of the empirical data sets.

## Technical Feasibility

Common coding categories for the separate study components facilitate linking the different data components of the study together.

## Permanent Infrastructure

In order to ensure continued monitoring of electoral democracy in the EU, there is an urgent need for the establishment of an infrastructure for European electoral research endowed with stable funding and capable of compiling, linking, disseminating, and presenting data in a coordinated and professional fashion.



# EUROPEAN ELECTIONS IN FOCUS

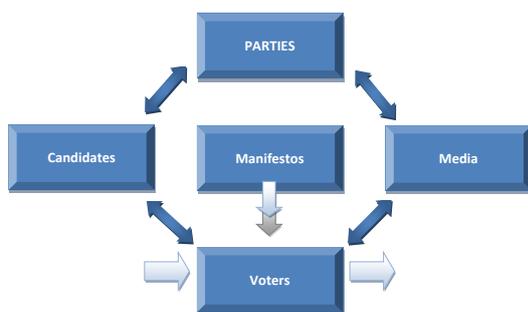
## PROVIDING AN INFRASTRUCTURE FOR RESEARCH ON ELECTORAL DEMOCRACY IN THE EUROPEAN UNION

### European Election Studies

The European Election Studies are about electoral participation and voting behaviour in European Parliament elections. They are also concerned with the evolution of the political community in the EU and the development of a European public sphere, with citizens' perceptions of and preferences about the EU political regime, and with their evaluations of EU political performance.

The project of European Election Study was started in 1979 by a trans-national group of electoral researchers and Europeanists some of whom are still involved. Between 1979 and 2004, six election studies were prepared and five of these studies were realized with the collection of data during the period around the election. The only year when a large-scale survey was not conducted was 1985. In 2004 some of the activities of the EES 2004 were supported by CONNEX, a network of excellence funded by the European Commission under the 6th framework programme.

The design study PIREDEU under the 7th framework programme considerably broadened the scope of the 2009 election study in a collaborative framework that greatly increased the number and national diversity of researchers involved.



2009 European Election Study – Data Set Linkages

### History of the European Election Studies:

- European Election Studies have been conducted since 1979.
- EES have delivered data on public opinion attitudes and behaviour, as well as elite messages (party manifestos), campaigning and issue agendas of candidates, media news content.
- EES incorporated the most essential information required for the scrutiny and monitoring of any relevant aspects to the EU electoral process.
- EES provided the basis for creating a permanent infrastructure for conducting research into electoral democracy in the EU, becoming more than a simple data collection effort.
- All European Election Studies, except for the 1984 EES, have included a post-election voter survey. Other surveys, e.g. candidate survey, have been conducted as was found possible.
- Until 2009, European Election Studies remained ad hoc without the infrastructural support that would facilitate cross-national and over-time comparisons of the data.

### 2009 European Election Study & the PIREDEU Project - Designing an infrastructure for collection, archiving and dissemination of integrated electoral research data

This study aimed at designing an infrastructure for research into citizenship, political participation, and electoral democracy in the EU. The proposed infrastructure consists of a comprehensive empirical database which will endow our user community with the most essential information required

to conduct a regular ‘audit’ that would monitor/scrutinise all relevant aspects of the electoral process in the European Union. The infrastructure also constitutes an organizational network that is able to co-ordinate different data collection activities, so that an integrated database can be created. This database has been so designed as to be accessible not only to academic researchers but also to politicians, political parties, journalists, commercial interests, and even members of civil society.

This project brought together a large network of scholars interested in attitudes, preferences, cognitions and behaviours of the main actors involved in processes of electoral participation: voters, parties, politicians and the media. In contrast to previous studies that had been unable to produce fully integrated data from the separate research projects involved, mainly because of the lack of any formal organisational network to coordinate the activities of the different research projects, the PIREDEU project set out to design an integrated database encompassing not only voter surveys, but also candidate surveys, media studies, and collections of public record data (including party manifestos) pertaining to the conduct and outcome of the European Parliament elections which are the primary objects of our interest and concern. For members of the academic community, the resulting prototype database has created unprecedented opportunities for cross-national research on electoral representation and behaviour, the role of the media, the emergence and transformation of party systems, and democratisation. It has enhanced the attractiveness of Europe as an object of study and as an environment for comparative social science research. It also holds the potential, for other stakeholders, of opening a window onto processes of electoral democracy that have hitherto remained academic and obscure.

### Scientific Impact of PIREDEU and the 2009 European Election Study

The new-look 2009 European Election Study is an essential database for all those interested in electoral democracy in Europe, extending far beyond the social scientists who are engaged in comparative and evaluative research on the European electoral process. Since the launch of the 2009 European Election Study website [www.piredeu.eu](http://www.piredeu.eu) in early 2009, it has become a vital hub for anyone inter-



“The 2009 European Election study (EES) is one of the most comprehensive, rigorous and relevant data collection projects for students of public opinion, party competition

and media reporting in Europe. The fact that the EES combines data on voters, parties and the media allows researchers to make inferences about the way in which the political and media context moderates the stances and behavior of voters and parties on a variety of topics, most notably European integration.”

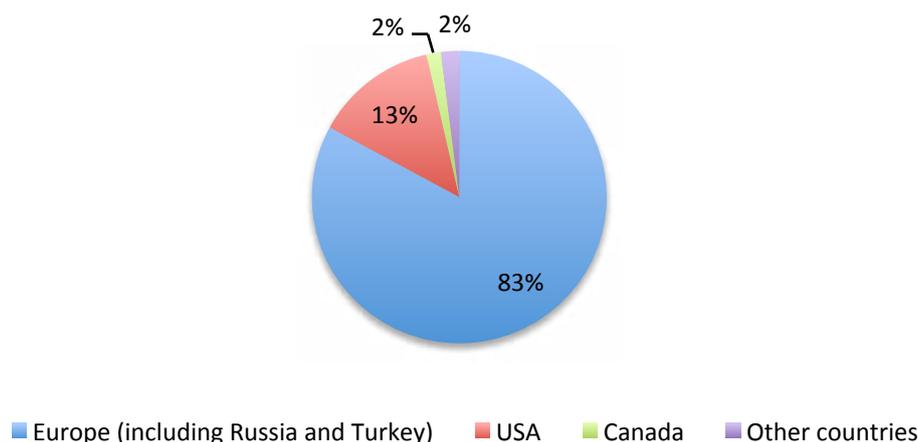
*-Professor Catherine de Vries,  
Oxford University*

ested in the various aspects related to the 2009 European Parliament Elections. The website has over 1,000 registered users and the user community is still growing strongly with new members registering regularly. For example, over 240 new members registered their interest in 2012. Responsibility for disseminating the data was then transferred to GESIS, the German social science archive.

The 2009 EES produced 4 linked data sets, providing new possibilities for scientific research. Prior to 2009 there had already been a long string of studies focusing on behavior of voters of the EU member states at European Parliament elections. Some of the classic foci of this research were the type of issues in the campaigns, the relation of European level elections to national issues, the profiles of candidates, and a wider interest in participation and mobilization of the citizens of Europe. Nonetheless, key deficiencies in this research involved gaps in understanding the broader interplay among voters on one hand, and, on the other hand, candidates, party platforms and manifestos, the media as information sources on electoral issues, and the contextual background in each

The extent of interest in the 2009 European Election Study and the data that the PIREDEU project collected is also manifested in the widespread

## Registered PIREDEU data users (total 1006 users)



dissemination of the datasets and their associated documentation. Since the first data files were uploaded to [www.piredeu.eu](http://www.piredeu.eu) in April 2010, almost 9,000 separate downloads have taken place via the website. These include over 2,500 separate dataset downloads. The most popular component of the 2009 European Election Study has proved to be the Voter Survey with over 1,100 downloads up-to-date, while the Media Study has been obtained over 400 times.

### Future of European Election Study

There is an urgent need to establish an infrastructure for European electoral research endowed with stable funding and capable of compiling, linking, disseminating, and presenting data in a co-ordinated and professional fashion. Our project has designed a new infrastructure encompassing the different types of data necessary for investigating and describing the state of electoral democracy in the European Union. Its prototype already contains data on the attitudes of voters, the behaviour of political parties and their candidates, the outcomes of elections, and the contents of mass media reports. These diverse data sets have been prepared so as to make it possible for them to be presented to the public in a way that is accessible not only to the academic community, but also to other stakeholders, such as journalists, policy-makers, and members of civil society.

### Future Plans: A Consortium for Electoral Research in Europe (CERES)

Looking towards the future of European Election Studies, and recognising the scientific added value of the PIREDEU project for studying elections in Europe, leading scholars and institutions in the field of electoral research have collaborated in founding a Consortium of Electoral Research in Europe (CERES).

The ultimate goal of this Consortium is the establishment of a permanent infrastructure for electoral research in Europe. The PIREDEU project has established clearly that an infrastructure to study electoral democracy in Europe cannot focus on European Parliament elections alone, but needs to address the electoral process in Europe at all its different levels and facets. With this in mind, CERES was established as the way forward to ensure that high quality data are available for researchers and practitioners from all communities. CERES will constitute the academic foundations for an infrastructure for depositing, accessing, processing, and adding value to election and public opinion data that is efficient, reliable and adheres to international standards.

With the development of an infrastructure in mind, in the post-PIREDEU era we are attempting to acquire funding to extend the scientific value of the data-base in three main directions: first, incorporating the data already provided by studies of past EP elections (1979-2004); second, linking these data to other studies (for example to studies of Members of the European Parliament); and third, adding supplementary data collected at the time of future elections to the European Parliament.

## Concluding Notes

For more information on the European Election Studies visit: [www.ees-homepage.net](http://www.ees-homepage.net)

For more information on the 2009 European Election Study visit: [www.piredeu.eu](http://www.piredeu.eu)

For questions or comments please send us an email at [piredeu@eui.eu](mailto:piredeu@eui.eu).

PIREDEU makes data and documents available for analysis carried out in academic research and teaching. The user should cite the use of all Euro-

pean Election Study data. As a condition of use, we ask that the following citation be used: EES (2009), European Parliament Election Study 2009, [Voter Study and/or Candidate Study, and/or Media Study, and/or Euromanifesto Study and/or Contextual Data], Release, DD/MM/2010, ([www.piredeu.eu](http://www.piredeu.eu)). The citation of the data should always be accompanied by a citation of appropriate the codebook(s).

Data are available for download at GESIS: <http://www.gesis.org/index.php?id=2784>

## Piredeu Investigators

(listed alphabetically): Susan Banducci, Stefano Bartolini, Claes de Vreese, Mark Franklin, Olga Gyarfasova, Sara Hobolt, Sylvia Kritzinger, Pedro Magalhães, Radoslaw Markowski, Michael Marsh, Ekkehard Mochmann, Markus Quandt, Holli A. Semetko, Hermann Schmitt, Gábor Tóka, Wouter van der Brug, Cees van der Eijk, Marcel van Egmond, Bernhard Weßels, Andreas M. Wüst

## Partners



PIREDEU (Providing an Infrastructure for Research on Electoral Democracy in the European Union) was a pan-European research infrastructure design study funded by the European Union under the Seventh Framework Programme from February 2008 to January 2011 (grant agreement no. 211810) with the participation of 14 universities and research centres across the EU.



\*Cover image: © European Union 2009 - Source EP. Architects: Atelier de Genval- Cerau - M. Van Campenhout, - Tractebel dev s.a. et ingénieurs associés and Architecte: AEL

\*\*Page 2: Logo for 2009 European Elections “It’s your choice” © European Parliament 2009