

Justyna Nyćkowiak*
Joshua Kjerulf Dubrow**
Tomasz Kołodziej***

**INTERNATIONAL SCIENTIFIC COLLABORATION
IN THE ELECTORAL CONTROL IN EASTERN
EUROPE PROJECT**

Introduction

A major concern in Central and Eastern Europe is the role of elections in controlling the behavior of parties and parliamentarians. Studies of the early post-Communist era had found that, though there is much party switching in Central and Eastern Europe, repeated elections do function as a form of electoral control over politicians and parties (Zieliński et al. 2005, Shabad, Słomczyński 2011, Roberts 2008). Updated, comprehensive information about parliamentarians and candidates continues to be a fundamental resource for citizens and scholars to understand how well the electoral system functions and to hold parliament, parliamentarians, and parties accountable for their actions.

To this end, the Electoral Control in Eastern Europe project was formed. This project was based on the research grant, “Who Wins and Who Loses in the Parliamentary Elections? From Formal Theory to Empirical Analysis,” funded by Poland’s National Science Centre (Sonata Bis decision number 2012/05/E/HS6/03556) from 2013 to 2016. The Principle Investigator of this project was Joshua Kjerulf Dubrow, Associate Professor

* **Justyna Nyćkowiak** – Ph.D. in Sociology, University of Zielona Góra; research interests: political sociology and methodology of social research; e-mail: jjustan@gmail.com

** **Joshua Kjerulf Dubrow** – Ph.D. in Sociology, Associate Professor, Institute of Philosophy and Sociology Polish Academy of Sciences and Lecturer and Coordinator, The Ohio State University; research interests: social stratification, political sociology, political inequality, gender and politics, Intersectionality, urban studies, sociology of sport; e-mail: dubrow.2@osu.edu

*** **Tomasz Kołodziej** – M.A. in Sociology, University of Zielona Góra; research interests: occupational careers and methodology of social research; e-mail: t.kolodziej@onet.pl

at the Institute of Philosophy and Sociology (IFiS) of the Polish Academy of Sciences (PAN). The Electoral Control project built an international multi-disciplinary scientific team focused on the collection and use of data on parliamentarians and candidates in CEE to address critical issues in representation, accountability and political inequality. To that end, this project produced the East European Parliamentarian and Candidate dataset (EAST PaC), composed of all candidates who stood for national parliamentary elections in Ukraine, Poland, and Hungary from the first post-Communist election to the most recent and who are matched over successive elections. In addition to bringing the project team together to various events held in Warsaw and in scientific venues elsewhere, Poland's National Science Centre funded EAST PaC data and various scientific publications. The project is fully described in the book, *Towards Electoral Control in Central and Eastern Europe*, edited by Joshua K. Dubrow and Nika Palaguta (2016), that focuses on the methodology of EAST PaC.

In this article, we discuss this project in terms of its scientific aims and the experiences of its members.

Intellectual Foundations of the Project

Theories of democratic accountability tell us that voters can use elections to control parties and politicians. Theorists assume that political representatives anticipate sanctions for poor individual and party-performance and thus have an incentive to implement policies that correspond with citizen preferences. Citizens lose control when their electoral voice does not compel parties and politicians to act according to the interests of the people who put them in power. Repeated elections are supposed to function, then, as a mechanism of electoral control.

The winning and losing in parliamentary elections should be considered in broad context of demographic characteristics of candidates, of the party that they represent, and the electoral system. The Electoral Control project was concerned with questions directly related to how individual traits impact electoral success in CEE democracies. The implications of such a relationship are wide-ranging – who political candidates are and where they are from, not to mention who the winners and losers of repeated elections may be, is consequential for the evolution of the quality of democracy in post-Communist countries in terms of representation, accountability, and political inequality of voice.

The Universe of Candidates in the CEE

A key aspect of this project was to update and expand data on parliamentarians and candidates who ran for the national parliament in Ukraine,

Poland, and Hungary. The outcome was the East European Parliamentary and Candidate data (EAST PaC) for Ukraine, Poland, and Hungary, 1985-2014. Updated from data used in publications of Zieliński et al. (2005) and Shabad and Słomczyński (2011), are among others, key features of EAST PaC data as completeness and historical relevance: (a) we include here all elections that took place in Poland, Hungary, and Ukraine in the post-Communist era, and (b) we cover a long period of time that accounts for dynamics of the political party systems. EAST PaC data include the names of all candidates who stood for national parliamentary elections in Ukraine, Poland, and Hungary and generally spans from the 1990s to the 2010s (Polish data goes back to 1985). Candidates are matched over time, rendering a dataset that allows researchers to track the political careers of nearly every candidate, from the thousands who never won to the few political lifers whose parliamentary careers are decades long. By covering every parliamentary election and situating them in their particular historical moments, scholars can identify trends and dynamics of the political party systems and achieve major insights into electoral politics of the region. EAST PaC is an opportunity for scholars to better test theories of accountability, representation, and political inequality in Central and Eastern Europe from the fall of Communism to the present.

For each country, the data for all elections are pooled so that the candidate is the unit of observation. The personal characteristics and characteristics of electoral participation are the main variables. These data allow us to track the political experience of candidates, including dynamics of their partisan affiliations, across consecutive elections. The main sources of data on parliamentary candidates are official records from governments and state agencies responsible for maintaining election archives. For elections conducted in the early 1990s, these records were in the form of paper documents, while in later years they were stored as electronic files. Candidates from the early 1990s who were from small parties that ran for office but never won, and never ran again, were not recorded in electronic format. Because of the very small proportion of results, the Electoral Commissions of EAST PaC countries did not retain these data, and thus information on them is perhaps lost forever.

Table 1 summarizes EAST PaC data. While Ukraine and Hungary have only post-Communist elections, Polish data goes back to the Communist Party controlled elections of 1985. EAST PaC data are separated into each country: one for Ukraine, one for Poland, and one for Hungary. All told, EAST PaC covers three countries, 29 years, 23 elections, and 97439 unique candidates. EAST PaC data are publicly available for free and are archived

in the Polish Data Archive.

Table 1

Summary of EAST PaC Data Ukraine, Poland, and Hungary

	Ukraine	Poland	Hungary
House of Parliament	Verkhovna Rada	Sejm and Senat	Országgyűlés
Period covered	1990-2014	1985-2011	1990-2010
Number of elections	8	9	6
Number of unique candidates	35.791	46.426	15.222
Main source of data	Central Election Commission	National Electoral Commission	National Election Office

Source: EAST PaC.

Collecting, cleaning, and matching EAST PaC was a complicated task. The problems and errors encountered were of various kinds: technological, bureaucratic, social and political. The solutions for matching were generally based on a combination of automatic coding based on gender, age, and political affiliation, and of manual coding, where the data collection team had to comb through the data to identify and resolve duplicate cases. The process required multiple technological solutions, some of them dedicated to this task and all of which we developed over time and improved.

Building a Project Team

Across the social sciences, scientific collaboration is on the rise (Hunter, Leahey 2008, Jones et al. 2008, King 2014, p. 166). Scientific teams are research situations in which individuals bring their expertise to the problem at hand.

Increasingly, these scientific teams are multi- or interdisciplinary (Luncheon et al. 2013). Multidisciplinary teams examine the problem from their disciplinary vantage points. Interdisciplinary teams work together to bridge their disciplinary divisions to create new and emergent knowledge with a vocabulary that everyone in the team can understand. Uzzi et al. (2013) found that when scientists with narrow specialties collaborate with scientists outside of their specialties, true scientific breakthroughs are more likely to occur. Though interdisciplinary or cross-field collaboration is fraught with challenges, it sparks new insights (ibid., p. 468). They found that team work most often leads to innovations and breakthroughs.

As manager of the project, Dubrow was concerned with facilitating collaboration between team members from sociology and political science who had various degrees of prior collaboration: some had worked with each other before, some were familiar with the work of some of the team members, and some team were completely unfamiliar with each other. It was a network of weak ties that Dubrow tried to turn strong. The key was working together in physical and virtual places where direct communication was necessary and creativity was encouraged.

Between 2013 and 2015, the project held three workshops, two specialized courses, and concluding event. The first Workshop for the Electoral Control project, “Winners and Losers in the Elections of Eastern Europe,” was held on October 18-19, 2013, at IFiS PAN in Warsaw, Poland. The workshop introduced the data collection effort for EAST-PaC. Structurally, the Workshop was designed to present substantive and methodological issues of the EAST-PaC data, encourage discussion, and facilitate networking. Based on ideas that emerged from the discussions of this first workshop, we constructed a bibliography on electoral control and accountability, along with country reports on elections that will provide subject and methods contexts to produce scientific articles and other academic products. The Workshop generated useful ideas on how to manage communication issues, including the use of online scientific management software and websites.

The project held a workshop and specialized course at IFiS PAN on Tuesday, March 18, 2014. A sequel to the first workshop, this international workshop and specialized course brought together scholars who are interested in using EAST-PaC data. Workshop 2 and specialized course featured (a) training in the EAST-PaC data collection effort in Poland, Hungary, Ukraine and Romania and (b) discussions of moving from research ideas to manageable research projects and publications involving the analyses of these data. The Workshop and specialized course organizers encouraged participants to be creative in their approach to the theories and methods – including the possibility of merging EAST-PaC with other data – and to be open minded with regard to suggestions from fellow colleagues on the possible directions of the research project. The purpose is to generate ideas that can be turned into manageable and publishable research products.

The project then held a two-day international workshop and specialized course at IFiS PAN on December 12-13, 2014. Workshop 3 brought together the project team and students interested in these data and these topics. The focus of the Workshop was on the analysis of EAST PaC. Workshop 3 was also an opportunity to invite new scholars to join the Project Team and to use these data. Building on the theoretical, methodological, and empirical

discussions of Workshops 1 and 2, Workshop 3 featured (a) intensive discussions of empirical research that uses EAST PaC data, as well as similar data in Romania and Nepal, based on individual scholarly interest in the methodology of collecting data on candidates and parliamentarians around the world; (b) methodological discussions on collecting and analyzing candidate, contextual and electoral data; and (c) networking and planning of academic products that present the empirical analysis of EAST PaC to be published in 2016 and beyond. Workshop 3 also functioned as a Specialized Course for PhD students on theoretical issues in electoral control and political inequality, as well as the methodology and analysis of EAST PaC data.

Project members asked questions about the present and future of the project in terms of publications: Should we produce a guest edited journal or edited volume? Which is better? This was a revisit of the discussion in Workshop 2. The primary concern is to produce the best work in the highest quality outlet such that the work is as widely available as possible. Edited volumes have certain advantages in that one can publish longer pieces and newer ideas. An advantage of the guest edited journal is its wider availability and perception of being “worth more” in terms of career and tenure. The eventual consensus was to pursue a guest edited journal. However, the NCN grant was specific about an edited book. A compromise was reached. We pursued a guest edited Web of Science journal consisting of five to six articles (which will become a forthcoming special section of the journal, *Problems of Post-Communism*), and a group publication on the methodology of EAST PaC (mentioned above).

The concluding event for the project was titled, “Building on EAST PaC,” and was held on December 18, 2015 at the IFiS PAN. We (a) discussed possibilities of merging EAST-PaC with longitudinal survey data, such as the Polish Panel survey (POLPAN) 1988-2013 and (b) had a special session on the possibilities of using EAST PaC and longitudinal survey data for the study of women in politics worldwide – the leaders of this discussion were well-known social scientists working in the fields of gender political inequality: Amy C. Alexander, Quality of Government Institute Sweden, Catherine Bolzendahl, University of California-Irvine USA, and Tiffany Barnes, University of Kentucky, USA. In addition, we (c) facilitated networking and plan of academic products – including this edited book – that presented the empirical analysis of EAST PaC or addressed the key concerns posed in the grant proposal, to be published in 2016 and beyond.

In general, these events were designed for (a) intensive discussions of empirical research that uses EAST PaC data; (b) methodological discussions

on collecting and analyzing candidate, contextual, and electoral data; and (c) networking and planning of academic products that present the empirical analysis of EAST PaC. The project attempted to implement the lessons learned about managing a multi-disciplinary scientific team across countries and time zones. By promoting a creative environment and providing the space and tools that the team needed, they attempted to meet the goals of the project.

Experiences of Team Members

The goals of the project from the management point of view can be different from the lived experiences of the team members. In this section, we discuss the experiences of the team members in an international project held in Poland. We begin with the presentation of the assumptions of two projects in which their Polish participants used the EAST PaC database. The first project appears to be interesting because of the distinguishing approach to data collection, while the second project shows one of the possible uses of EAST PaC for analyses of Poland's electoral politics. Afterwards, we describe the experience of working within an international team, particularly from the perspective of young scientists.

The first from the projects presented was by Justyna Nyćkowiak and concerned the course of political careers of the parliament members after 1985. Studies of such a type have so far been limited by the availability of research material, usually involving a narrow group of people (e.g. party leaders; parliamentarians of two consecutive terms in comparative studies; members of the parliamentary circles, informal groups or the government). Attempts to recreate the trajectory of political careers were rarely seen, with those isolated publications usually focused on the ways of reaching the parliament or the government.

The basic goal of the Nyćkowiak's project was to analyze the institutional determinants of trends in political careers' after 1985 in Poland and a reconstruction of professional politicians' political biographies. It required using unique data sources, taking into account their structure and capacity for harmonization. To achieve that purpose there was a preliminary analysis of statistical data that came from the POLCAN database. POLCAN was a data set of electoral activity of all candidates for the parliament since 1985, constructed under the direction of Kazimierz M. Słomczyński and Goldie Shabad within the CONSIRT program that was carried out by the Departments of Sociology and Political Science of The Ohio State University and the Institute of Philosophy and Sociology, and the Graduate School for Social Research at the Polish Academy of Sciences. The POLCAN da-

taset allows to trace exactly who and when appears in the parliamentary elections in the years 1985-2007. This database has been used in numerous articles on Polish MPs after 1985 (Shabad, Słomczyński 2004, Zieliński et al. 2005, Słomczyński et al. 2008). After 2007, POLCAN has been folded into EAST-PaC, funded by Poland's National Science Centre. Data stored in EAST PaC database allow to trace the political activity of professional politicians (within the meaning assigned by Nyćkowiak 2013), enabling the reconstruction of the course of their political careers, along with their complete electoral history. As EAST PaC was not constituted during this first project by Nyćkowiak, we will refer to the Polish candidate data as POLCAN.

Considering the nature of the POLCAN database, the information available within and its purpose, it was decided that it is necessary to widen the scope of the data collected. Modifying the POLCAN database with additional variables would not yield the expected results because of its design. Data about all the candidates from the elections 1985-2007 is within this database. New database schemas, including relational and post-relational ones, were created in order to cope with situations in which the traditional hierarchical model database turned out to be an obstacle.

The three central sources of data that founded the basis for supplementing the information previously gathered were the archives of the Sejm (www.sejm.gov.pl), the Senat (www.senat.gov.pl) and the National Electoral Commission (www.pkw.gov.pl). Thus, a relational database scheme was prepared, with use of information collected partially from the POLCAN database and then supplemented with data from the analysis of the documents obtained from the institutions and regarding the progress of professional politicians' careers. Having started the work with the parliament databases one faces several vital problems to be solved: the data contained therein apply only to persons who have received a mandate, at the same time without any clues regarding periods before, after or between terms for a given individual. Databases of the Sejm and the Senat vary in the respect of both the content and structure of the information stored within (being also true for consecutive terms). However, data provided by the National Electoral Commission relate to all candidates, but it only contains gender, age, and occupation. Due to the structure and format of the data collected by the NEC, the Archives of the Sejm and the Senat, there were efforts to find relevant data and appropriately transform them.

In the second stage of the project a database was created for which the information regarding 318 people was collected, all of whom entered the parliament at least three times in the years 1985-2007. A number of events

showing the course of individuals' political careers were used to describe their political biographies. All events were studied at intervals no longer than a parliament term (for more details see Nyćkowiak 2014).

The project has provided data on the history of professional politicians running for parliament and the history of their successful and failed attempts. These data also include socio-demographic factors affecting the course of careers of professional politicians, characteristics of the party system that impact the chances of pursuing a successful political career, the attributes of the electoral system, and their influence on prolonging political careers.

Gathering information illustrating the course of politicians' careers in Poland after 1985 can offer answers to a number of vital questions, such as: (1) To what extent parts of the electoral system and the party system determine the course of political careers? and (2) To what extent specific attributes of candidates determine their chances of electoral success and prolonging their political careers? The data allow us to understand what characteristics make people successful within the political arena, and what attributes of professional politicians can be considered as favoring the continuation of political careers, including their advancement in the future (Nyćkowiak 2013).

The second project concerns the functioning of selected mechanisms contained in the electoral law, primarily of electoral lists. Analyses conducted by Justyna Nyćkowiak and Tomasz Kołodziej focus on the effects that result from decisions made by individuals in the course of parliamentary elections. This subject is important to estimate how the decision to change the electoral list, from which a candidate runs in the elections, influences their chances of electoral success.

Among the post-Communist democracies of Central and Eastern Europe, Poland has one of the highest frequencies of shifts in party affiliation (Hug, Wüest 2011, O'Brien, Shomer 2013). This tendency raises questions about the costs and benefits of candidate mobility. Understandably, there were massive migrations generally from smaller to larger parties, and typically within the bounds of a given ideological family early on in the new democratic experience. Shabad and Słomczyński (2002, 2004) showed that across the first three free and fair elections (1991, 1993, and 1997), political loyalty was questionable, especially in the case of the so-called "political nomads", in which their actions were seen as support of the thesis of the unfinished institutionalization of the political system (Wasilewski 1994, Kamiński, Kurczewska 1994; see also Olson 1998, Kreuzer and Pettai 2002, Desposato 2006).

In relation to the changes within the Polish political scene after 1989, which witnessed both dawn and dusk of consecutive political entities combined with merging and division of political parties, one of the necessary elements of politicians' career has become an ability to make the decision to change or remain in a particular political party. Many authors have analyzed the patterns of candidates' repeated electoral runs (Flis 2014), yet few examine the electoral consequences for candidates who change electoral list affiliations across consecutive elections. Candidates who decide to change electoral lists are an interesting category because only some of them manage to succeed. Who are the candidates who decide to change electoral lists across consecutive elections? Under what circumstances do they make such decisions? Does this decision improve the chances of electoral success? To answer these questions, we use data from the East European Parliamentarian and Candidate (EAST PaC) Database, covering all candidates competing in elections to the Polish lower house of parliament (the Sejm) between 2001 and 2011. These data allow us to track mobility between electoral lists among parliamentary candidates across consecutive elections and determine the extent to which list-switching is a viable strategy for reelection.

Participation in the Electoral Control in Eastern Europe project and the possibility of cooperation within the framework of an international group of scientists has enabled not only an exchange of experience with representatives of foreign centers, but also the understanding of the international context in which data from the EAST PaC database should be perceived. Partnership within the workshop allowed young scholars to gain experience that accompany the building of an international project.

For a doctoral student, the opportunity to participate in the workshops was a unique opportunity to gain practical experience in project work that requires the involvement of an international team. Collaboration between team members resulted in establishing a common platform that continues to constitute an area of contact. This platform is a place where members exchange observations and seek answers to problems that arise during analyses. This enables developing collective solutions, which in turn translate into more adjusted examinations and results obtained by scientists in different countries.

All these elements contribute to the scientific development and are very important for people aspiring to become young scholars. Especially from the perspective of a doctoral student, the opportunity to work with experienced researchers from different countries is a very important complement to the curriculum and helps to broaden the scope of activities conducted with stu-

dents. EAST-PaC is an excellent resource that can be used during academic classes to describe the political situation in Poland, Hungary and Ukraine, and for cross-national research. Experience gained during the workshops has also proven to be useful during the planning and organization of cooperation with other international research projects.

Multi-disciplinary scientific collaboration across institutions and countries has become the norm of doing science, and thus is a fundamental building-block of the education of graduate students and young scholars in Poland and abroad. Such collaboration allows for the creativity and productivity that produces innovations and breakthroughs. For the good of the international scientific community, and of scientific knowledge, scientists – from graduate students to established scholars – must learn how best to work together.

Literature

- DESPOSATO W. S. (2006), Parties for Rent? Ambition, Ideology, and Party Switching in Brazil's Chamber of Deputies, "American Journal of Political Science", Vol. 50, Issue 1, pp. 62-80.
- DUBROW J. K., PALAGUTA N. (2016), Towards Electoral Control in Central and Eastern Europe, IFiS PAN Publishers, Warsaw.
- FLIS J. (2014), Złudzenia wyboru. Społeczne wyobrażenia i instytucjonalne ramy w wyborach Sejmu i Senatu, Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Jagiellońskiego, Kraków.
- HUG S., WÜEST R. (2011), Ideological Positions of Party Switching, Paper Presented at the 2011 ECPR Joint Sessions, St. Gallen, Switzerland, April, pp. 12-17.
- HUNTER L., LEAHEY E. (2008), Collaborative Research in Sociology: Trends and Contributing Factors, "The American Sociologist", No. 39, pp. 290-306.
- JONES B. F., WUCHTY S., UZZI B. (2008), Multi-University Research Teams: Shifting Impact, Geography, and Stratification in Science, "Science", No. 322, pp. 1259-1262.
- KAMIŃSKI A., KURCZEWSKA J. (1994), Institutional Transformations in Poland: The Rise of Nomadic Political Elites, [in:] The Transformation of Europe: Social Conditions and Consequences, eds. Alestalo, Allardt, Rychard, Wesolowski, pp. 132-53.

- KING G. (2014), *Restructuring the Social Sciences: Reflections from Harvard's Institute for Quantitative Social Science*, PS: Politics & Science.
- KREUZER M., PETTAI V. (2002), *The Calculus of Party Affiliation in Post-Communist Democracies: Party Switching, Fusions, Fissions and the Institutionalization of Party Systems*, Paper presented at the annual meeting of the American Political Science Association, Boston, MA.
- LUNGEANU A., YUN H., NOSHIR S. C. (2013), *Understanding the assembly of interdisciplinary teams and its impact on performance*, "Journal of Infometrics", No. 8, pp. 59-70.
- NYĆKOWIAK J. (2013), *Perspektywa neoinstytucjonalna w analizach przebiegu karier politycznych*, "Folia Sociologica", No. 46.
- NYĆKOWIAK J. (2014), *Construction and Use of a Relational Database to Analyze the Careers of Professional Politicians in Poland, 1985-2007*, "ASK Research & Methods", Vol. 23 (1, 2014), pp. 115-134.
- O'BRIEN D. Z., SHOMER Y. (2013), *Legislators' Motivations, Institutional Arrangements, and Changes in Partisan Affiliation: A Cross-National Analysis of Party Switching*, "Legislative Studies Quarterly", No. 38(1), pp. 111-141.
- OLSON D. M. (1998), *Party Formation and Party System Consolidation in the New Democracies of Central Europe*, "Political Studies", No. 45, pp. 432-64.
- ROBERTS A. (2008), *Hyperaccountability: Economic Voting in Eastern Europe*, "Electoral Studies", No. 27(3), pp. 533-546.
- SHABAD G., SŁOMCZYŃSKI K. M. (2002), *The Emergence of Career Politicians in Post-Communist Democracies: Poland and the Czech Republic*, "Legislative Studies Quarterly", No. 27, pp. 333-59.
- SHABAD G., SŁOMCZYŃSKI K. M. (2004), *Inter-party Mobility Among Parliamentary Candidates in Postcommunist East Central Europe*, "Party Politics", Vol 10, No. 2, pp. 151-176.
- SHABAD G., SŁOMCZYŃSKI K. M. (2011), *Voters' perceptions of government performance and attributions of responsibility: Electoral control in Poland*, "Electoral Studies", No. 30(2), pp. 309-20.
- SŁOMCZYŃSKI K. M., SHABAD G., ZIELIŃSKI J. (2008), *Fluid Party Systems, Electoral Rules and Accountability of Legislators in Emerging Democracy. The Case of Ukraine*, "Party Politics", No. 14, pp. 91-112.
- UZZI B., MUKHERJEE S., STRINGER M., JONES B. (2013), *Atypical Combinations and Scientific Impact*, "Science", No. 342, pp. 468-472.

WASILEWSKI J. (ED.) (1994), *Konsolidacja elit politycznych: 1991-1993* ('The consolidation of political elites: 1991-1993'), Instytut Studiów Politycznych Polskiej Akademii Nauk, Warszawa.

ZIELIŃSKI J., SŁOMCZYŃSKI K. M., SHABAD G. (2005), Electoral Control in New Democracies: The Perverse Incentives of Fluid Party Systems. "World Politics", No. 57, pp. 365-395.

Justyna Nyćkowiak
Joshua Kjerulf Dubrow
Tomasz Kołodziej

**INTERNATIONAL SCIENTIFIC COLLABORATION
IN THE ELECTORAL CONTROL IN EASTERN
EUROPE PROJECT**

Keywords: EAST-PaC, political careers, political biographies.

Across the social sciences and across nations, working in teams has become the normal course of conducting scientific research. Scientific teams are research situations in which individuals bring their expertise to the problem at hand. Multi-disciplinary scientific collaboration across institutions and countries has become the norm of doing science, and thus is a fundamental building-block of the education of graduate students and young scholars in Poland and abroad. The empirical example of international scientific collaboration in this article is the Electoral Control in Eastern Europe project. This international project, funded by Poland's National Science Centre, assembled a research team composed of established scholars, young social scientists, and graduate students from across Europe, the USA, and from various institutions and disciplines, including sociology, political science, and area studies. From the perspective of the project administrators, young scholars, and graduate students of this project, we discuss the administration of this project in terms of its scientific aims and the experiences of its members. All elements of the project – workshops, informal discussions, data collection, and publications – contribute to the scientific development of young scholars. Especially from the perspective of a doctoral student, the opportunity to work with experienced researchers from different countries is a very important complement to the curriculum. Such collaboration allows for the creativity and productivity that produces innovations and breakthroughs. Moreover, the experience gained in this project plants the seeds for future international research projects to be conducted by young Polish scholars. For the good of the international scientific community, and of scientific knowledge produced in Poland, scientists – from graduate students to established scholars, and across nations – must learn how best to work together.