

# EPAC – a new dataset on ethnonationalism in party competition in 22 European democracies

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**Edina Szöcsik**

ETH Zurich, Switzerland

**Christina Isabel Zuber**

University of Cologne, Germany

## Abstract

Datasets in the field of ethnic politics still tend to treat ethnonational groups as unitary actors and do not differentiate between the positions of the organizations representing these groups. Datasets in the field of party politics differentiate between the positions of political parties, yet fail convincingly to conceptualize an ethnonational dimension of competition. This Research Note presents EPAC, a new dataset on Ethnonationalism in Party Competition that seeks to fill this gap. Based on an expert survey, EPAC provides cross-sectional data on the ethnonational positions of 210 political parties in 22 multinational European democracies. The conceptualization of an ethnonational dimension of competition underlying the dataset is introduced and a series of validity and reliability tests performed. Test results show that EPAC provides valid and reliable measures of party positions on an ethnonational dimension that can serve as an empirical base for study of the causes and effects of the mobilization of ethnicity in party competition.

## Keywords

Data report, ethnicity, Europe, expert survey, party competition

## Introduction

In contemporary European multinational democracies parties seeking to defend the interests of ethnonational groups<sup>1</sup> are flourishing. Whereas some of these parties have adopted a radical, secessionist programme that challenges the very existence of the polities they inhabit, others seek to accommodate the interests of ‘their’ ethnonational group in more moderate ways. Several small-N studies have begun to draw attention to this variance in the policy positions adopted by ethnonational parties in competition (Bochsler and Szöcsik, 2010; Caspersen, 2010; Chandra, 2005; Coakley, 2008; Zuber, 2011). The variance appears to be particularly puzzling from the perspective of the ethnic outbidding model of party competition in ethnically plural societies. The model expects that parties appealing to voters on the basis of ethnic identity categories will be most successful in competition if they outbid each other by choosing ever more radical positions. This exacerbates intergroup conflict and challenges democratic stability in the long run (Horowitz, 1985; Rabushka and Shepsle, 1972).

The outbidding model has never been tested systematically in a large-N study due to a lack of data on the *positions* of ethnonational parties (Chandra, 2005: 238). The lack of data is twofold. Datasets in the field of *ethnic politics* (e.g. MAR, 2009; Cederman et al., 2010) deal explicitly with the demands of ethnonational groups, but fail to differentiate between the stances of the various parties aiming to represent these groups in politics. By contrast, datasets in the field of *party politics* take parties as the unit of analysis and deal extensively with the measurement of their policy positions (e.g. Benoit and Laver 2006; Budge, et al., 2001; Klingemann, et al., 2006). However, ethnic parties often tend to be small players at the national level of party competition and play only a peripheral role in large-N datasets. The question which party seeks to represent

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## Corresponding author:

Edina Szöcsik, ETH Zurich, Haldeneggsteig 4, 8092 Zurich, Switzerland.  
Email: edina.szocsik@eup.gess.ethz.ch

which ethnic group is never covered. Furthermore, none of the existing datasets differentiates clearly between an ethnonational and a multicultural dimension of competition. This problem afflicts even the detailed coding scheme suggested by Protsyk and Garaz (2011) to capture the politicization of ethnicity in party manifestos.

This article presents EPAC, a new dataset on Ethnonationalism in Party Competition that seeks to fill this gap. Between June and November 2011, we conducted an expert survey to collect data on ethnonationalism in party competition for 210 parties in 22 multinational European democracies. For each country, EPAC records the positions of the leadership of ethnic minority parties, of majority nationalists and of the most relevant non-ethnic parties. For the first time, the dataset allows researchers to draw on cross-nationally comparable measures of the positions taken by political parties on an ethnonational dimension. The EPAC data, an exemplary version of the EPAC survey instrument and an online appendix accompanying this research note can be found at Christina Zuber's website.<sup>2</sup>

Section two introduces our conceptualization of an ethnonational dimension of party competition and the criteria applied for selecting countries, parties and experts. Section three presents a series of state of the art tests to examine the validity and reliability of the EPAC data in light of the methodological challenges of measuring party positions through an expert survey. Section four provides an outlook on research that could draw on the dataset.

### Conceptualizing and measuring party positions on an ethnonational dimension of competition

The conceptualization underlying the EPAC data follows Kymlicka's (1998: 113–119) clarification that *polyethnic* states (where pluralism results from immigration) and *multinational* states (where pluralism results from the incorporation of different nations with traditional homelands into a single state) are both instances of *multicultural* states, a term which is used widely, yet lacks conceptual clarity. In analogy to Kymlicka, a *multicultural* dimension of competition should therefore be differentiated into an *ethnonational* and a *polyethnic* dimension. The former is the subject of the EPAC data and concerns the territorially based claims of parties representing ethnonational majority and minority groups. The latter concerns parties' stances toward the integration of migrant groups into the society.

Following Gellner's (1994: 35) seminal definition of nationalism, the ethnonational dimension of party competition should reflect the *degree of congruence* parties seek to achieve between the boundaries of the state and the boundaries defining ethnonational groups. In the constellation most common in Europe, a demographic majority faces self-determination claims by one or several organizations

representing one or several national minorities. In this constellation, the extreme poles of the ethnonational dimension consist in seeking *full congruence* between the majority ethnonational identity category and the *current* state on the one hand, and seeking full congruence between a minority ethnonational identity category and a *new* nation-state on the other. The former can be achieved through assimilation of all peripheral ethnonational identities; the latter through an act of secession that leads to a new nation-state where the former minority dominates (with the former majority losing part of its territory). The first survey item therefore asked experts directly for the *ethnonational* positions taken by parties.

Through the principles of cultural and territorial autonomy, national minorities can realize the goal of self-determination to a certain extent within the state, and therefore often demand the devolution of decision-making competencies to their own rulers, either in certain policy areas that are vital to their ethno-cultural survival or on the basis of a certain territory where they constitute the regional majority. Party positions on the ethnonational dimension of party competition should therefore be further reflected in parties' stances on the principles of *cultural* and *territorial autonomy*.

At the level of actual policy-making, the principle of cultural autonomy can be further disaggregated into party positions on *education of and in the languages of national minorities* and *use of the minority languages*.<sup>3</sup> The survey uses 11-point scales with positions ranging from zero (0) to ten (10) and an unequivocal centre position at five (5) for each of these items. All scales follow a similar logic that allows differentiating between more moderate and more radical stances for both minority and majority parties. Position zero (0) always refers to the situation where a party opposes granting any special rights to a minority group on the basis of its distinctive ethno-national identity. Throughout, position ten (10) corresponds to a maximalist minority nationalist position.

Even in contexts where ethnonational identity is politicized, parties may appeal to voters on different bases and either take no position on the ethnonational dimension or treat it as unimportant. Therefore, for every item, the survey allows experts to state that a party has no position on the given issue. Furthermore, we asked experts how important every issue is for each party, again using 11-point scales that range from 'not important at all' (0) to 'extremely important' (10).

In addition, experts were asked to provide their judgement on parties' stances on the economic and the libertarian/authoritarian dimension of party competition, adopting two questions from the Chapel Hill Expert Survey (Hooghe et al., 2010). Finally, items on party origin, party organization and whether the party seeks to represent ethnonational groups and regions were included in the survey. The latter information can be used to classify parties into ethnic and regionalist parties.

**Table 1.** Validity and reliability problems of expert surveys.

Level	Problem	Method for diagnosis
Measurement	Survey items do not measure the ethnonational dimension of party competition → No construct validity	Confirmatory factor analysis shows that the five survey items are not associated with the same underlying construct
Intra-expert	Biased expert judgments → Low internal validity	OLS regressions show that party placements are systematically associated with experts' own policy preferences
Inter-expert	Variance of expert judgments → Low reliability	(1) High standard errors of mean party positions. (2) Variance components analysis shows high variance of experts' judgments when placing the same party on the same scale
Dataset	EPAC biased → Low external validity	Placement of parties in the EPAC dataset diverges from party placements in other datasets

We selected all European democracies where ethnonational identity categories are considered to be politically mobilized drawing on country assessments provided by the EPR-ETH dataset (Cederman et al., 2010).

For the resulting sample of 23 European multinational democracies,<sup>4</sup> 210 political parties were selected according to the following criteria.

First, we selected all ethnonational parties, defined as a specific subset of ethnic parties. Ethnic parties are parties that appeal centrally to an ethnic category to the exclusion of others (Chandra, 2005). Ethnonational parties are parties that appeal centrally to a *territorially* based ethnic identity category to the exclusion of others.<sup>5</sup> The classification of parties was based on secondary sources and party websites. **Ethnonational parties were listed in the survey if they managed to gain at least one seat in the national parliament in the most recent parliamentary elections as of June 2011, or at least one seat and at least 3 percent of the subnational votes in at least one region in the last regional elections as of June 2011.**<sup>6</sup>

**Second, we selected non-ethnic parties if they had gained at least 5 percent of the national vote-share in the most recent elections as of June 2011.**

To guarantee experts with substantial knowledge, we chose only social scientists with at least an M.A. degree and a record of research on party competition and/or on ethnonationalism/majority–minority relations in the respective country. To guarantee unbiased knowledge, we included only academics that were either employed at a higher academic institution or an independent research institution/think tank.<sup>7</sup> Additionally, we included experts with a majority and a minority ethnic background into our database in the hope that potential biases when rating the same parties would cancel each other out. In case of the subject of ethnonationalism in party competition, the pool of experts is limited. Our goal was to collect at least four surveys per country, a benchmark applied by the Chapel Hill Survey (Hooghe et al., 2010: 692). This goal was surpassed in all countries except for Latvia (four surveys) and Denmark (two surveys, not included in the EPAC dataset). Overall, 475 surveys were sent out and 153 completed

surveys were returned, yielding a response rate of 32.21 percent (for more detail, cf. online appendix A).<sup>8</sup>

## Evaluating the validity and reliability of EPAC

Table 1 presents a number of potential problems of validity and reliability associated with expert surveys in the literature.

In the following, we examine whether the EPAC data provide internally valid and reliable measures of an ethnonational dimension of party competition, i.e. we address the first three problems listed in Table 1. We cannot examine the external validity of the EPAC data since, as we argued earlier, so far no other dataset measures party positions on the ethnonational dimension of party competition in an unambiguous and cross-nationally comparable way. The analyses of construct validity, expert bias and reliability draw on two types of data, the *EPAC summary data* with mean expert ratings and the *EPAC raw data* with individual expert ratings.

### Construct validity

Following Robertson (1976: 70), ‘a dimensional framework is a simplification of the mass of “issues” or “topics” of political debate. The simplification, if such is possible, arises from the correlations and interdependency of issues’. Whether parties’ stances on the majority–minority issues introduced above indeed correlate enough to warrant the assumption that they reflect a single, underlying ethnonational dimension of party competition can be evaluated through confirmatory factor analysis (Brown, 2006).

The measurement model takes a latent ethnonational dimension of party competition as exogenous to observed mean party ratings on five endogenous indicators: ethnonationalism, cultural autonomy, territorial autonomy, education in and of the minority language, and use of the minority languages. Ethnonationalism defines the metric of the latent ethnonational construct. Correlated residuals were specified between ethnonationalism and territorial

**Table 2.** Assessing the measurement model for the ethnonational dimension of party competition.

Construct: Ethnonational dimension of party competition		
Items (measured on 11-point scales ranged 0–10)	Non-standardized loading	Standardized loading
Position on ethnonationalism (ethno_m)	1	0.910
Position on cultural autonomy (cul_m)	1.197*** (0.048)	0.944
Position on territorial autonomy (ter_m)	1.321*** (0.058)	0.876
Position on education in and of the minority language (edu_m)	1.156*** (0.043)	0.966
Position on use of the minority language (lan_m)	1.279*** (0.046)	0.975

N = 209 parties. Position on ethnonationalism was used as a marker indicator. Standard errors are given in parentheses. \*\*\* $p < 0.001$  (two-sided).  $\chi^2 = 4.103$  with 3 degrees of freedom,  $p$ -level = 0.251. CFI = 0.999; RMSEA = 0.042 (90% CI = 0.000 to 0.131).

autonomy, and between territorial and cultural autonomy.<sup>9</sup> The model was tested through maximum likelihood estimation using AMOS 20 for Windows. As data input, a variance-covariance matrix was computed from the EPAC summary data, using pairwise deletion of missing values.<sup>10</sup> Table 2 presents key results of the confirmatory factor analysis calculated to assess the quality of the EPAC measurement model.

Common fit indices point to a very good fit between the model and the data. The  $\chi^2$  statistic is 4.103 with 3 degrees of freedom and a probability level of 0.251. The comparative fit index (CFI) of 0.999 is above the cut-off point of close to or greater than 0.95 and with a value of 0.042 that falls within the boundaries of the 90 percent confidence interval (0.000 to 0.131), the root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA) is below the cut-off point of 0.06 (on these cut-off values, see Hu and Bentler, 1999). All four freely estimated factor loadings are significant at the 0.001 level. Standardized loadings range from 0.88 to 0.97, which indicates that all items are salient. This demonstrates high construct validity. Additionally, since the scales of all indicator variables are identical, the similar values of the unstandardized loadings further corroborate the conclusion that the five indicators validly measure the same underlying construct.<sup>11</sup>

### Expert bias

The insight that experts' own political preferences may influence their placement of political parties originates from social judgment theory. Moderate experts are expected to evaluate parties more correctly than experts with extreme positions who are expected to pull preferred parties towards their own position and push parties they dislike away from their positions (Granberg and Brown, 1992: 728).

We therefore asked experts to state their own policy positions on ethnonationalism.<sup>12</sup> A majority of 68.78 percent of all EPAC experts located themselves at the moderate middle point (5) of the ethnonationalism scale. The only problematic case is Latvia, where all four experts located

themselves at point four (4), which is slightly toward the majority nationalist side of the scale.

Furthermore, instead of assuming that moderate experts will provide unbiased results (Benoit and Laver, 2006: 225–228), regression analysis can be employed to estimate whether there is a significant effect of experts' own policy preferences on their placements of political parties (Curini, 2010). In order to have a sufficiently high number of expert-party ratings that allows running a regression for each party, we pooled the three variables related to the ethnonational dimension of party competition for which experts' own positions were measured: ethnonationalism, territorial and cultural autonomy.<sup>13</sup> After pooling, 72 out of 210 parties could be evaluated with regard to expert bias. A significant effect of experts' own policy preferences on the party score was found for 11 of these 72 parties (for detailed analyses, cf. online appendix B). We therefore advise users of the dataset to check whether results of any substantial analyses are robust against the inclusion and exclusion of these parties.

### Reliability

A low variance in the ratings of several experts of one party on a given scale indicates that the party's position is measured reliably. We therefore assess the variance of our expert judgments in two ways. First, we calculate standard errors to include a measure of uncertainty for each party rating into the dataset. Following Benoit and Laver (2006: 176), standard errors were computed as the standard deviation of the expert placements divided by the square root of the number of placements minus one. Mean standard errors of party ratings across the entire dataset are either smaller than or at maximum equal to one point on the measurement scale, ranging from 0.59 for ethnonationalism to 1.16 for the salience of territorial autonomy.

Second, we evaluate the variance across experts by calculating a variance components analysis following Steenbergen and Marks (2007). Table 3 presents the variance components analysis for the variables 'ethno'

**Table 3.** Cross-classified variance components analysis of the variables 'ethno', 'cul', 'ter', 'edu', 'lan', 'ethnosal', 'culsal', 'tersal', 'edusal' and 'lansal'.

	ETHNO	CUL	TER	EDU	LAN	ETHNOSAL	CULSAL	TERSAL	EDUSAL	LANSAL
<b>Fixed effects</b>										
Grand mean $\mu$ .	5.1615*** (0.205)	6421*** (0.3)	5.154*** (0.414)	6.844*** (0.247)	6.251*** (0.337)	7.0985*** (0.174)	6.389*** (0.213)	6.117*** (0.344)	6472*** (0.229)	6.614*** (0.260)
<b>Variance components</b>										
National $\sigma^2_{\delta}$	0.234 (0.264)	1.078 (0.594)	2.597* (1.138)	0.309 (0.396)	1.249 (0.707)	7.76e-15*** (7.14e-14)	0.023 (0.331)	1.557 (0.824)	1.37e-07 (1.51e-06)	0.372 (0.407)
Party $\sigma^2_{ej}$	5.346*** (0.579)	6.058*** (0.665)	8.194 (0.893)	6.116*** (0.715)	6.498*** (0.752)	4.07*** (0.446)	5.468*** (0.617)	3.813*** (0.448)	6.324*** (0.726)	5.882*** (0.706)
Experts $\sigma_{ei}$	0.348*** (0.069)	0.9145 (0.155)	0.917*** (0.151)	0.974 (0.1655)	1.187 (0.198)	1.157 (0.183)	1.952*** (0.302)	3.263*** (0.466)	1.7335*** (0.273)	1.378 (0.255)
Inter-expert correlation	0.941	0.886	0.922	0.868	0.867	0.779	0.738	0.622	0.785	0.819
Reliability	0.99	0.979	0.938	0.97	0.969	0.957	0.942	0.905	0.949	0.957
N	1281	1242	1214	1019	995	1323	1221	1221	1063	1031
-211	5095.487	5316.418	5230.413	4231.084	4153.697	5601.361	5487.205	5469.018	4694.162	4692.567

N: number of country-party expert opinions, \* $p < 0.05$ ; \*\* $p < 0.01$ ; \*\*\* $p < 0.001$  (two-sided).

(ethnonationalism), ‘cul’ (cultural autonomy), ‘ter’ (territorial autonomy), ‘lan’ (minority language use), ‘edu’ (education in and of the minority language) and for the variables that measure the saliency of these positions. Additionally, we calculate the inter-expert correlation<sup>14</sup> and the reliability via the Spearman–Brown formula (Steenbergen and Marks, 2007: 363).<sup>15</sup> The inter-expert correlation for the variables ranges from 0.622 (‘tersal’) to 0.941 (‘ethno’). The reliability of the variables ranges from 0.905 (‘tersal’) to 0.99 (‘ethno’). The inter-expert correlation and the reliability measures indicate high expert convergence and provide evidence of a very high reliability of the EPAC data on party positions on the ethnonational dimension of competition (cf. online appendix C for the corresponding analysis of party positions on the economic and cultural dimensions of competition).

## Conclusion

This research note has presented EPAC, a new dataset that provides an empirical base for the analysis of ethnonationalism in party competition in Europe. Results of the validity and reliability tests presented show that, with the exception of the parties affected by expert bias, EPAC provides valid and reliable measures of party positions on an ethnonational dimension of competition that can be applied in large and small-N research on a range of topics.

Most prominently, whereas a full test of the ethnic out-bidding model would require longitudinal data,<sup>16</sup> the cross-sectional EPAC data provide the first stepping stone towards this aim, as they map the varying radicalism of ethnonational parties across European contexts.

Furthermore, the dataset also allows a systematic analysis of ethnonational parties’ location in multidimensional political space. Apart from some classifications provided for Western Europe by Massetti (2009), to the best of our knowledge the topic of whether and how ethnonational parties combine their ethnic appeal with stances on other dimensions has so far been neglected.

Finally, although ethno-regional parties in Western Europe and ethnic minority parties in Eastern Europe are empirically similar phenomena, they have until now not been addressed in a comprehensive, European-wide study. The EPAC dataset covers parties in Western and Eastern European multinational democracies and can hopefully inspire scholars to fill this gap in the future.

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## Notes

The authors are listed in alphabetical order and contributed equally to this paper.

The EPAC data, a detailed codebook, the expert survey, the list of experts and the computer code necessary to replicate the results will be made available at Christina Zuber’s website upon publication (<http://www.vergl-polwiss.uni-koeln.de/24990.html>).

1. Following Birnir (2009: 24) ‘an ethnic group is defined by members of the group who consider themselves ethnically distinct from other groups in society’ and where ‘this identification centers on a characteristic that is difficult to suppress, such as language, location, or race’. An ethnonational group is an ethnic group that conceives of itself as a nation on the basis of a traditional homeland territory.
2. Available at: <http://www.vergl-polwiss.uni-koeln.de/24990.html>.
3. The Belgian case is particular due to the fact that parties representing the Flemish majority demand secession. We adapted the wording accordingly. We excluded the items on education and language use in Bosnia and Belgium since the languages of the major groups already enjoy equal status.
4. We originally selected 23 countries. In the case of Denmark, only two surveys were returned to us. Therefore, Denmark was excluded from the final version of the dataset.
5. Therefore, Roma parties were excluded from the selection.
6. Information on whether directly elected regional assemblies exist was taken from Marks et al. (2008). Raw data for the most recent regional election results in Eastern Europe and very helpful advice on regional elections were provided by Arjan Schakel (2011).
7. We diverged from the latter rule in the case of two experts in two young democracies where a very high number of experts from academia are actively involved in politics.
8. For a comparison, the response rate of the expert survey on party positions of Benoit and Laver (2006: 157) was 28 percent.
9. In CFA, it is possible to account for method effects in the measurement model. This is warranted if there is a substantive interpretation of correlated errors (Brown, 2006: 186). The first item measures parties’ ethnonationalism directly. Therefore, experts were likely to be primed by the first question when answering the subsequent ones (we thank Daniel Bochsler for pointing us towards this possibility). Additionally, the wording of the questions on cultural and territorial autonomy is very

- similar, another common source of correlated errors (Brown, 2006: 181). The correlation between the error terms of ethno-nationalism and territorial autonomy is 0.236 ( $p = 0.002$ ) and between the error terms cultural autonomy and territorial autonomy 0.188 ( $p = 0.019$ ). While improving model fit ( $\Delta\chi^2 = -14.538, p = 0.001$ ), their inclusion left the other estimated parameters almost untouched.
10. Schafer and Graham (2002) show in a simulation that if only a small sample of the data is discarded (in our case, 4.76 percent) and if missingness can be assumed to be completely at random (MCAR), pairwise deletion is efficient and produces robust results. MCAR is known to hold in cases of planned missingness (ibid., p. 152), such as in our case where the items on education and language use were not included in the Belgian and Bosnian questionnaire.
  11. Additionally, we conducted a multiple group confirmatory factor analysis to test for invariance of the measurement model between Eastern and Western European parties. The results (available upon request) support configural invariance.
  12. We further asked for experts' own positions on cultural autonomy, territorial autonomy, and on economic and cultural issues. Of course, we cannot exclude that some experts gave socially desirable answers.
  13. Pooling these variables can be justified on the basis of the results of the CFA.
  14. The inter-expert correlation is computed as  $\frac{\sigma_{\delta}^2 + \sigma_{\epsilon_j}^2}{\sigma_{\delta}^2 + \sigma_{\epsilon_j}^2 + \sigma_{\epsilon_i}^2}$ .
  15. The Spearman-Brown formula is computed as  $\frac{nr}{(1 + (n-1)r)}$  where  $n$  is the average number of experts and  $r$  is the inter-expert correlation.
  16. We plan to repeat the survey in 2015 to overcome this restriction.

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### Author biographies

**Edina Szöcsik** is a PhD candidate for the Chair in European Politics, ETH Zurich, Switzerland. Her research interests include the

role of ethnicity in party competition, party politics in Eastern Europe and democratization.

**Christina Isabel Zuber** is a PhD candidate and Research Assistant for the Chair in Comparative Politics, University of Cologne, Germany. Her research aims at bridging the fields of ethnic and party politics to understand the behaviour of ethnic parties in competition. Her articles have appeared in *Comparative Political Studies* and *Party Politics*.