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ELECTORAL ACTIVITY OF THE POPULATION OF WESTERN UKRAINE BORDER TERRITORY

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Abstract

The spatial temporal as well as structural and functional analyses of electoral activity were carried out in the paper. Electoral activity of the population was analyzed in terms of indicators of electoral potential, electoral turnout and electoral preferences. The dynamics of the electoral potential and its role in the all-Ukrainian scale have been analyzed. The level of electoral turnout was estimated and the main features of temporal and spatial distribution were found. The analyses of multicomponent systems of modern electoral preferences of the population in the region in terms of left and right political forces were carried out.

Key words

Western Ukrainian borderland, electoral activity, electoral potential, electoral turnout, electoral preferences, right and left political forces.

1. Introduction

The development of civil society requires active political position of citizens and their conscious participation in making socially important decisions. Electoral activity realized through potential voter participation in the electoral process is a part of the political activity of the population. The issue of participation in the elections actualizes fundamental research, including human geographical one, research into involvement in the electoral process of subjects of electoral activity through the prism of quantitative (primarily through attendance figures) and qualitative (the study of ideological preferences) party of

election activities. These studies are interdisciplinary and are subject to study electoral geography, political science and sociology.

For the first time the problem of electoral activity began to engage representatives of American science (Conway, 2000). M. Weber (1919) and others explored the self-identity and EA, have emphasized potential levels of activity in politics. Electoral activity phenomenon study in the XX century included more recent forms of activity in the sphere of scientific interest: passive forms of participation (political immobility, voter apathy, ballot strike) and absenteeism (Weber, 1919; Verba, Norman, 1972), non-conventional forms, including the use noninstitutionalised forms and

methods of struggle (Milbrath, Goel, 1982) and cognitive aspects – tracking policy through the media (Milbrath, Goel, 1982). EA studied as the phenomenon of emotional and evaluative nature (Conway, 2000; Scott, 2000).

Also, scientists cognize that the electoral activity is unequal shapes in a democratic and non-democratic (transition) society. In a democratic society it manifests itself in forms such as voting in elections at various levels, referendums, participation in management in local government in the activities of Parliament. During the grassroots campaign a lot of people involved in various forms of practical activity – collecting signatures on petitions, meetings with candidates, rallies, demonstrations, pickets, tents, etc. (Scott, 2000). In undemocratic societies where political rights and freedoms have limited, electoral activity is mostly formal and often seen only through participation in elections. Other forms of political activity have severely persecuted by power (Peltzman, 1998).

S. Huntington (1976) specify that EA forms adapted to the political situation, noting that today the electoral activity of youth increasingly becomes „network” form, or forms of participation in the electoral process through the Internet, blogs, social networks, forums. Sociological Approaches explained the political activity of the election as a sense of belonging to a particular social group and identity through political choice (Crotty, 1991).

Theoretical, methodological and applied aspects of PA highlighted in the works of Ukrainian and foreign scientists: political scientists (Milbrath, Goel, 1982), sociologists, political psychologists and slightly less – geographers.

Ukrainian geographers examine the human-geographical and political aspects of different types and forms of PA: general and regional electoral geography; political and geographical processes; regional political behavior, electoral landscape, electoral culture and electoral preferences, political, geographic and electoral zoning and others (Дністрянський, 2010, 2014; Шаблій, 2000).

However, these studies do not always consider a geospatial dimension that allows detecting all patterns of implementation of citizens' electoral activity. The distinctive features of electoral activity in the vast region have not been researched so far, as well as its dependence on geographical factors. Real dynamic changes in the political situation in Ukraine in recent years have not been taken into account either.

2. Comprehensive analysis of elections in Ukraine

Therefore, electoral activity (hereinafter – EA) is a kind of conscious political activity of an individual/group which defines an active (passive) participation of potential voters in the electoral process (Мишов, 2014). The key players of EA include individuals; social groups; cultural, professional, ethno-national, confessional and politically united communities; all adult citizens of the state-organized structures as well as the international community. Regional EA is part of a national EA and is developed within it, adapting national formal and informal electoral standards to specific local communities.

To analyze the EA of the population of the region the results of the elections taken place after the establishment of a sovereign state have been used. However, most attention is focused on the study of the last parliamentary (2012 and 2014) and presidential (2010, 2014) elections. This is explained by two facts. Firstly, the elections were held under a mixed system that allows you to objectively evaluate the EA of population by comparing the results of the vote in different administrative and territorial units (ATU). Secondly, in 2010, after V. Yanukovich had been elected President of Ukraine, political processes boosted resulting in the Revolution of Dignity in 2013–2014, so it is important to trace the dynamics of EA over this period of time. Electoral activity of the population living in western Ukraine border territory (hereinafter – WUBT) is going to be analysed through the indicators of electoral potential, electoral turnout and electoral preferences.

Electoral potential of the region is an indicator of the population in the region that can carry out electoral activities under favourable conditions. Electoral potential directly depends on the number of people in the region. However, more often than not, less populated regions may partially compensate for low electoral potential by having high electoral turnout (Дністрянський, 2010, 2014).

The proportion of electoral potential of the WUBT to the national one is significant. The region in question accounts for almost 1/5 or 17.8% of Ukraine's electoral potential (cf. Центральна виборча комісія України). The power of potential of the region is significantly decreasing, thus correlating with general demographic tendencies. The lowest indicators of electoral potential (over the last 17 years) were recorded in 2015. This fact is explained by a deep demographic crisis and political developments in 2013–2015 when a considerable number of residents of border territory were called up and involved in solving the military conflict in eastern

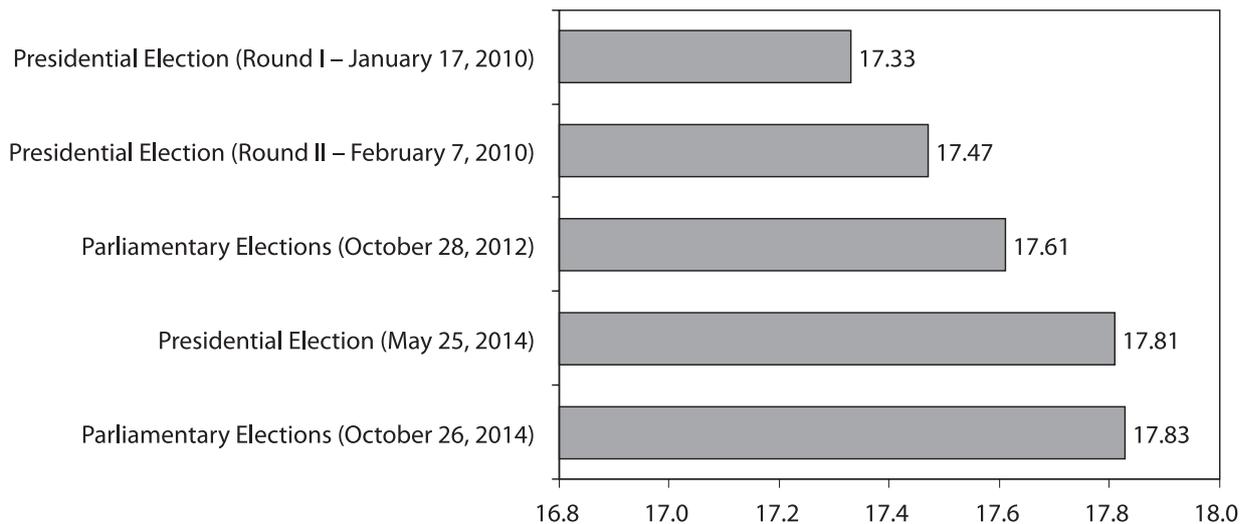


Fig. 1. The proportion of electoral potential of the WUBT to the regions of Ukraine, 2010–2014, %.

Source: own studies based on Центральна виборча комісія.

Ukraine. However, the level of drop in electoral potential is lower than in the country as a whole, which is why the proportion of this region to the total state potential was steadily increasing (Fig. 1).

Thus the region still traditionally maintains the status of one that balances the east pole of biased for Ukraine electoral geographical axis of „West-East” (Шаблій, 2000).

The greatest potential is observed in Lviv oblast (≈ 2 mln. people or 30.96%), thus occupying the fifth place in Ukraine (5.43%). In fact, the region represents the interests of the whole Western macroregion. The oblast indicators are almost twice as high as the indicators of each of the oblasts within WUBT (cf. Банк даних Державної служби статистики; Мирош, 2014, Центральна виборча комісія України). Ivano-Frankivsk oblast also has a great electoral potential, approaching a million, which makes up 3% in all-Ukrainian and 17% in regional terms. Nearly half of the voters of the region, which is 3 million or 46% of the voters live in Lviv and Ivano-Frankivsk oblasts. Electoral potential of other oblasts of the border territory does not exceed 1 million people, which is less than 15% of the electoral potential of the whole region. Electoral potential of Chernivtsi oblast is the lowest one not only in the region but in the country as a whole (cf. Політичні карти областей 2014).

Thus, the electoral potential of WUBT is powerful and characterized by a noticeable disparities. This is explained by deep democratic tradition established by Austro-Hungarian, Czech-Slovak and Polish parliamentary systems, society structuring according to political orientations, its highly organized nature and focus on hot-button issues (Возняк, 2010).

Residents of Ukraine border territory have been known by traditionally high voter turnout and trust

in public institutions, sustained support of the forces of the national democratic orientation and choice of the European vector of Ukraine’s development. This is confirmed by the results of the elections. The indicators of electoral turnout in border territories in general and separately in specific ATU are traditionally higher than on average in Ukraine (Центральна виборча комісія України).

Disparities in electoral turnout of voters of Ukraine and of the region in question range from 0 to 15%. For example, the turnout in Parliamentary elections of 26.10.2014 in WUBT reached 69,2% against 60,3% of the national turnout, which is almost 10% more. The research into the dynamic and spatial characteristics of electoral turnout in the WUBT shows the following: (1) since 2004 voter turnout has been steadily declining; (2) quantitative difference in turnout in the presidential and parliamentary elections is traced; (3) presidential elections are more interesting to the public, where electoral turnout is traditionally higher, with a run-off election being especially popular. This situation is typical of the other oblasts of the region; turnout dynamic of ATU is similar to the region as a whole.

3. The analysis of electoral activity at Western Ukrainian borderland

Spatial distribution of electoral turnout is not uniform. The analysis of nationwide parliamentary and presidential elections of 2010–2014 singles out three groups of ATU in western border territories in terms of voter turnout. The first group includes Lviv oblast as a leader in the region and the state. Its electoral turnout in the elections to the Parliament of Ukraine

of October 26, 2014 was the highest in the country (Центральна виборча комісія України). Other areas of WUBT, such as Volyn, Ivano-Frankivsk and Rivne oblasts, occupy the third to fifth places in terms of the national turnout. Only Rivne's turnout is lower than the average regional figures. The turnout in two areas of the region – Transcarpathia and Chernivtsi – is lower than the national one – 44.7% and 48.5% respectively.

Current electoral preferences of the population of WUBT were shaped after Ukraine gained its state independence and maintained state position. The region is a traditional electoral base of right-wing national-democratic forces. However, political preferences in the region are not limited to classical coordinates „left-right”, since the significant role is played by the peculiarities of the region and its focus on the East or West, and behind it there are vectors to Europe and Russia (Шведа, 2010). Thus, having analyzed the system of political preferences of the population of the region, the following features are considered important:

1. Western Ukraine is internally heterogeneous, with each region having its mental differences. The process of patriotic awareness formation in Halychyna gets sometimes perverse forms, due to long periods of struggle for national independence, relatively liberal Habsburg rule and the activities of the Greek Catholic Church. Instead, Hungarian, Romanian and Russian rule did not provide such an opportunity to other regions, and national potential there was significantly lower (Львів, 1998).
 2. Essential feature of WUBT Ukrainians is their self-awareness as Europeans, within the context of their geographic surroundings – states that are moving to the EU and NATO. This clearly distinguishes them from other eastern Ukrainians whose ideological guidelines are different. Thus, in terms of foreign policy, WUBT could become a model of European Ukraine, a bridge to the West. Sovereign Ukraine as a member of the European Union and NATO is a definite priority of voters (Березинський, 2004).
 3. In terms of the domestic policy, the region in question is characterized by prevailing religious, cultural and linguistic preferences to economic and pragmatic ones. Thus, the border territory voter votes by listening to his heart (Львів, 1998).
- Electoral preferences of the residents of the region will be researched with the help of a traditional scheme of political opposition: right (right, far-right, center-right and centrist national-democratic keeping to pro-European foreign policy) and left (pro-Russian) forces (Березинський, 2004).

Western Ukrainian border territory without any exaggeration can be considered a bulwark of national and state right-wing political forces. The results of a referendum on the Act of Independence of Ukraine and the first presidential elections of December 1, 1991 are the first manifestations of patriotic positions. Further regular and snap parliamentary and presidential elections confirmed the traditional electoral orientation of the region.

In the 2010 presidential election in Ukraine, 18 candidates were registered, of whom six represented right and center-right political forces. In total, they won by an overwhelming majority – 71,2%. Y.V. Tymoshenko received the largest number of votes (37.98%), which is 15% more than in the country as a whole. And in the run-off, voting for this candidate was almost unanimous (81.16%). Tymoshenko's support is localized in the northern region (in Volyn oblast the highest level of electoral preferences was recorded). Halychyna region was distinguished by a moderate support for a candidate and only the run-off of February 7, 2010 demonstrated unanimity and trust. Transcarpathia turned out to be the only area where the candidate lost the vote and the representative of the „left” political parties got the upper hand, and only in the run-off she won an edge in the election.

Other right-wing candidates are V. Yushchenko (16.8% of the vote in WUBT) and A. Yatseniuk (10.9%). While the former secured the support in Lviv and Ivano-Frankivsk oblasts, the latter received a large proportion of votes in his native Chernivtsi oblast as well as in Transcarpathia, where Yushchenko failed. A low level of support of both candidates was observed in Polissia area where Tymoshenko was leading.

A characteristic feature of the election was the emergence and growth of support for extreme right candidate O. Tiahnybok, which indicates the radicalization and nationalization of electoral preferences of the inhabitants of the region.

The results of 2012 parliamentary elections confirmed the high level of right national-democratic electoral preferences. The total amount of votes cast for right-wing parties was 79,9%. However, in Transcarpathian oblast left-wing parties took an upper hand. The segment of voters who supported the „Yulia Tymoshenko Coalition” (YTC) was clearly distinguished, constituting more than 35% of the population. Electoral support for YTC was concentrated in Chernivtsi (the second result in the country), Volyn and Lviv oblasts. Yatsenyuk team won in six out of eight oblasts of the region. However, in two oblasts BYT failed to keep leading positions: in Lviv oblast, an all-Ukrainian alliance „Svoboda”, which positioned

itself as extreme right, nationalist-radical party, came first, whereas in Transcarpathia public preferences shifted toward the left-wing political forces.

The result of „Svoboda” is a victory in Lviv oblast, the second place in Ivano-Frankivsk and Volyn, and the third one in Rivne oblast. More than 40% of the votes the party won in Drohobych and two urban districts of the Lviv city. This result was 1% lower than their previous result in districts with centers in Ivano-Frankivsk and Stryi (Lviv oblast). In Bukovyna and Transcarpathia, „Svoboda” received less than 10% votes. Thus, local concentration of the electorate of „Svoboda” is quite evident. The party „Udar” also entered the Parliament by receiving more than 16% of the votes in the region, with the second result in Rivne oblast and the third place in other ATU. The best results of „Udar” were shown in Rivne, Transcarpathia and Bukovina – more than 19% of the population. The party managed to become a winner only in Hust (over 30% of votes). The position of „Our Ukraine” and the Radical Party by O. Liashko were rather weak, but while „Our Ukraine” was at the final stage of its great public policy, the Radical Party was just beginning to work and a certain level of commitment to the party’s messages indicates that west

voters were looking out for the new political face alternative to „traditional” forces.

Early presidential elections in Ukraine of May 25, 2014 took place in a permanent emergency situation. The achievements of the Revolution of Dignity of 2013–2014 led to the destruction of the presidential vertical and transformed the party system, while the annexation of the Crimea, military events in Donbass, the constant threat of open Russian invasion resulted in high mobilization of patriotic voters and peculiar political preferences.

In this election, the traditional right as well as center-right and far-right forces were represented by at least 6 candidates that received a record amount of electoral support, i.e. 93.1% of the vote (Fig. 2).

It is in this region that the current President P. Poroshenko became the overall winner with 61.63% support and the first place (more than 50%) in all oblasts and districts of the region. The best results were achieved in Lviv region (69.92%), where the candidate received the support from more than 1 million voters (Fig. 2). In Pustomyty district, more than three quarters of voters cast their votes for Poroshenko.

Y. Tymoshenko received the second national result within WUBT (Chernivtsi oblast), while the

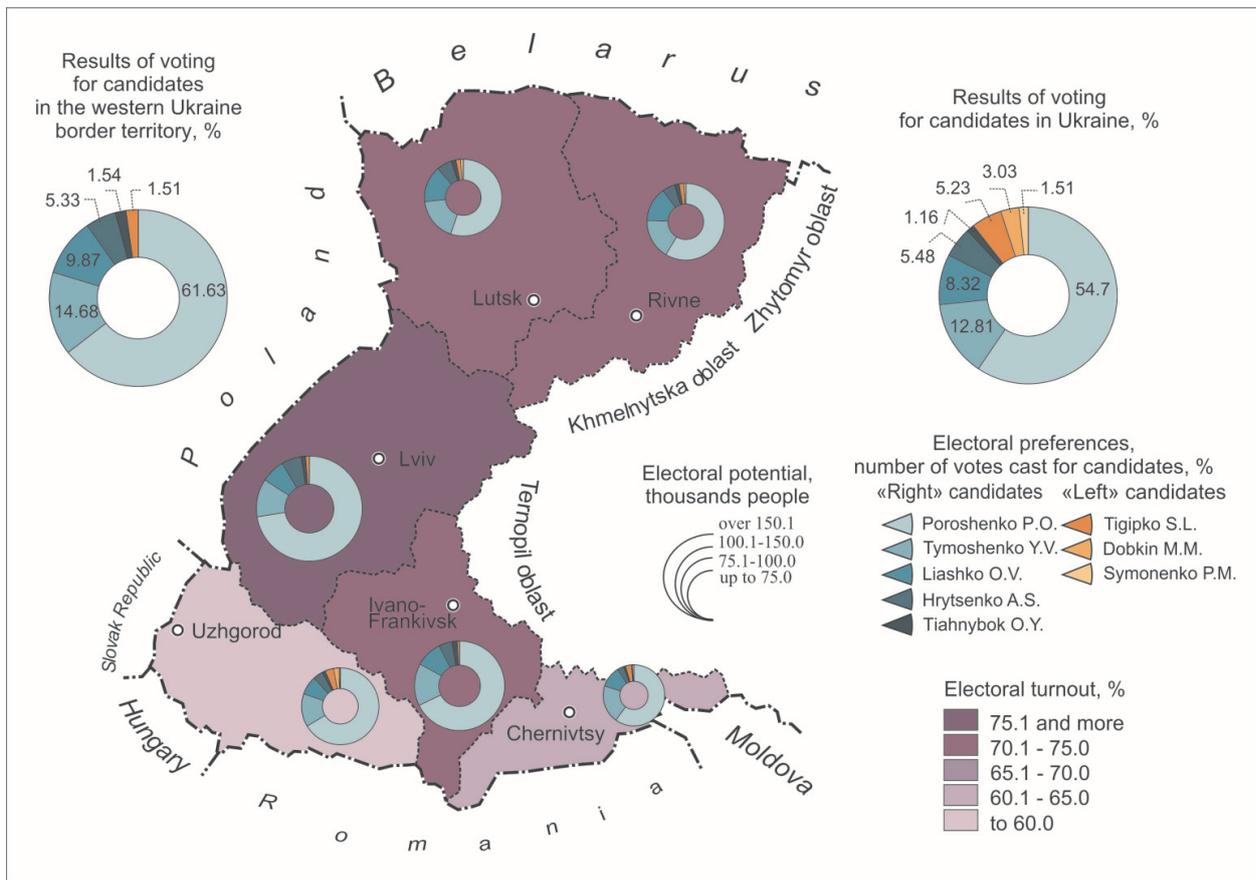


Fig. 2. Electoral activity of WUBT population at the Presidential election of May 25, 2014

Source: own studies based on Центральна виборча комісія.

regional average support ranged from 15% (in Ukraine – 12.8%). The largest support of the candidate was observed in Volyn oblast. However, the symbolic threshold of 20% was not crossed by Yulia Tymoshenko in either any ATU or district of the region (neither was in Ukraine) (Fig. 2). High rates were received by O. Liashko (>10%), especially in Volyn and Rivne oblasts. The candidate got more than 10% of support in Bukovyna. A. Hrytsenko was the «fourth» in all ATU of the region, gaining almost 5.3%. The best results of the candidate were obtained in Lviv oblast: the third result in three districts of the region (in Lviv). Transcarpathia and Bukovyna were the most unfortunate for the politician (for example, in Novoselytsia at Bukovyna his result was less than 2%). O. Tiahnybok's results were also higher in the region than on the all-national level (over 1.5%). The best result of the leader of «Svoboda» was not in his native Lviv, but in Volyn oblast followed by Ivano-Frankivsk oblast (Fig. 2).

Electoral population choice in parliamentary elections of October 2014 was formed under the influence of military operations in the anti-terrorist operation (ATO) area, lustration period, tough economic and political situation. The first elections to the Parliament held after Euromaidan–2014 differed

from all the elections by a key moment – it was for the first time when there was no question whether «pro-Russian» or «pro-Ukrainian» forces will win. Artificial ethnic confrontation that was escalated for years lost any sense. It was clear that the «pro-Ukrainian» candidates will win because radical «pro-Russian» ones were now running for quasi-parliaments of the DPR and the LPR. And even the «Opposition alliance» which was based on the remnants of the Party of Regions, represented the interests of the old bureaucracy and associated business, rather than the interests of Russia (cf. *Вибори ВР 2014: особливості і сюрпризи; Парламентські вибори-2014: аналіз білбордів*).

Therefore, the right-wing political forces represented by eight parties received a substantial support within the Western region – 91.75% (Fig. 3). The segment of voters who supported the «Popular Front» stand out with its 32.6% in the region, which is 10% more than the party's general result. The party won six first places in the WUBT oblasts. Over 30% of voters supported Yatseniuk's party in Ivano-Frankivsk (the largest result in Ukraine – almost 38%), Volyn, Lviv and Bukovyna. In Halychyna they received more support from peripheral districts, while oblasts centres demonstrated lower support

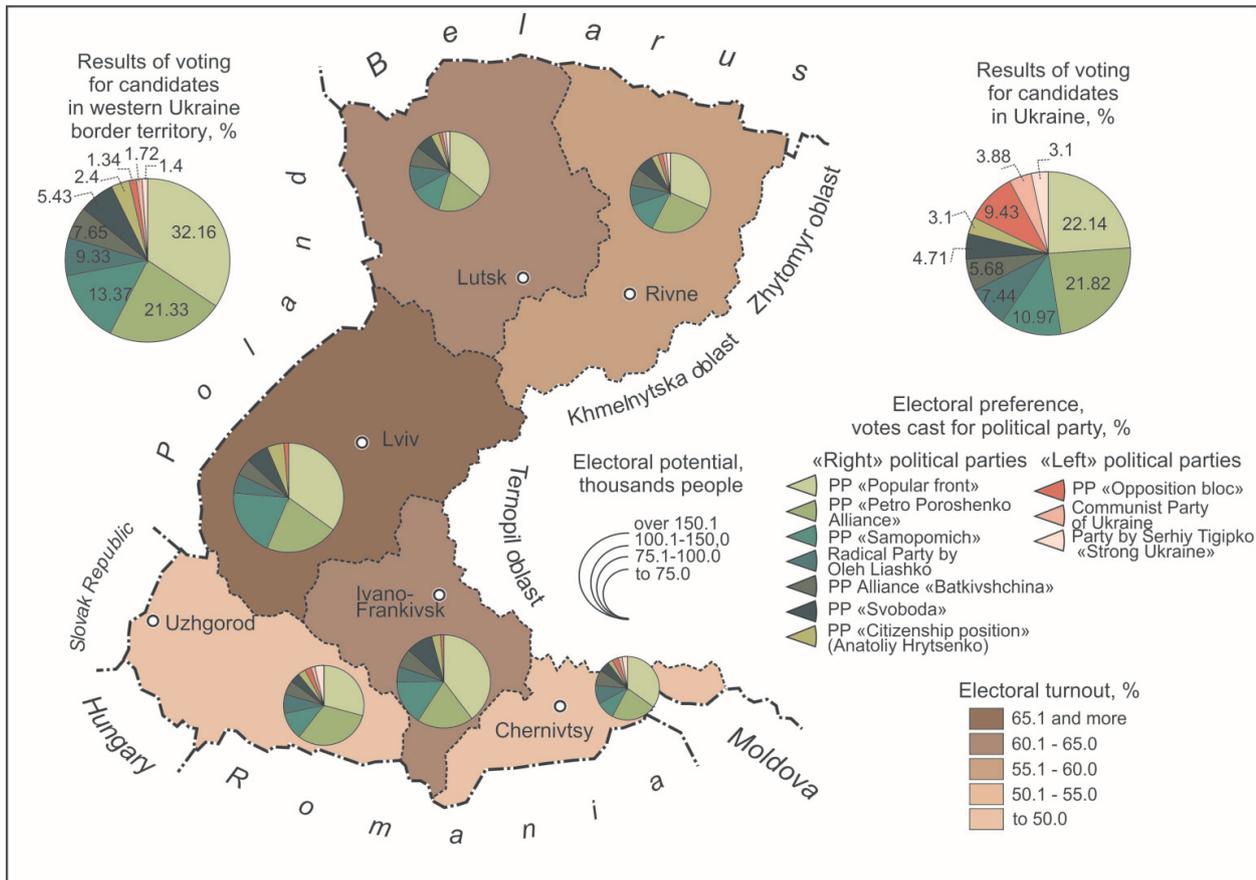


Fig. 3. Electoral activity of WUBT population at the parliamentary election of October 26, 2014

Source: own studies based on Центральна виборча комісія.

of the party. The worst result of "Popular Front" were observed in Transcarpathia and Rivne oblast – less than 30% (Fig. 3).

Petro Poroshenko Alliance (PPA) polled 21% of the vote and came second in all ATU and in all districts of the region. As Fig. 3 indicates, the second best result (28%) the presidential party secured in Transcarpathia, where in some districts more than 30% of voters cast their votes in its favour. On the other hand, the worst result was observed in Volyn oblast where only 17% of the votes supported the alliance.

The Party «Samopomich» was supported by 13% of residents of Western Ukraine. The success of the party in these elections can be explained by the voters' wish to see new faces in the parliament, who would be able to carry out the reforms in the country. The role of A. Sadovyi's image as an effective mayor as well as beneficial use of Lviv's image as a successful European city to support this political party were decisive. However, the activity of «Samopomich» and Sadovyi is assessed positively in Ukraine, whereas in Lviv they are often accused of corruption and kickbacks. In all ATU of the region the party won more votes in regional centres than at the periphery. Less than 10% of electoral support was received in Bukovyna and Transcarpathia, where the party gave leadership to the Radical Party (Fig. 3).

The Radical Party by Oleh Liashko, the Alliance «Fatherland» and «Svoboda» are among those who secured more than 6% of electoral votes in the region.

Permanent leftist electoral preferences are not typical of the region at all. These ideas are supported by a relatively negligible but clearly distinctive segment of population.

In the first round of 2010 presidential election, leftist candidates were supported by 20.7% of the voters of the region. This result is quite impressive, particularly in view of region's political hostility towards leftist candidates. V. Yanukovich won the highest share of the vote with almost 12%, which was twice as many votes as S. Tshipko got, while P. Symonenko barely had 1% of the votes cast for him.

In 2012 parliamentary elections leftist parties (the Party of Regions, the Communist Party of Ukraine and the Party of Natalia Korolevskaya «Ukraine – Forward!») obtained together 18% of the vote, which slightly improved their result in the previous presidential election. The largest voter support – 12.38% – was given to the Party of Regions. Transcarpathian region is traditionally the only one where the Party of Regions won with 30% of the vote. Halychyna cast only less than 7% of the votes for the Party of Regions (Lviv oblast result was still lower with 4.7%).

The Communist Party of Ukraine received 4% of the population votes of WUBT, which is three times less than their all-national result.

The same low support of the leftist representatives was observed in 2014 presidential election on May 25 barely reaching 2.3% (Fig. 2).

At the parliamentary elections held on October 26, 2014, left-wing political forces managed with the utmost stretch of their powers to get the fourth result in the country, but the share of their supporters in WUBT only grew by 3% (Fig. 3). The results of «Opposition bloc» in Western Ukraine can be considered a failure. There was no region where the opposition gained more than 3% of the votes, and the three Halychyna oblasts did not even cast 1% of the votes.

4. Summary

The discrete nature of EA suggests such forms of its geospatial organization as the core of political activity of different ranks. The city of Lviv clearly stands out in WUBT, with its electoral activity having a general impact on the national level and representing the interests and characteristics of electoral activity of entire macro-region. The powerful electoral potential (far exceeding those of each subsequent settlement), underpinned by a high voter turnout and historically determined electoral preferences single out Lviv as a macro core of EA in Western region of Ukraine. Spatio-temporal analysis of EA allows also to regard oblast centres, which accumulate powerful in terms of ATU electoral potentials (more than 100,000) and shape the general picture of electoral situation in the area, as regional cores. Large cities as well as towns of regional subordination function as sub-region cores of EA, whereas small cities where polling stations were operating are viewed as cores of local electoral activity.

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