

**Reinventing political communication: still informing or engaging citizens?
European Parliament electoral campaigning trends 2009 – 2014 in the comparative
perspective.**

Karolina Koc-Michalska, Communication Department Audencia Business School

&

Darren Lilleker, Media School Bournemouth University

ECREA, Lisbon 2014

Research questions

RQ1. To what extent political parties **incorporate online tools** in their **communication strategies** during the second order elections?

RQ2. Is there a **change in time** of the level of online performance?

RQ3. Which communication strategies are they using most intense (Information, Engagement, Mobilization, Interactivity)?

RQ3. What are the factors (**independent variables**) **influencing** employment of web1.0. and web2.0 online strategies?

RQ4. How online performance change according to those factors?

RQ5. Is there any **impact** of the **usage of different online strategies on the vote share**?

Theoretical assumptions

Internet an embedded campaigning tool - is norm not exception in political communication: 'banalization' (Koc-Michalska & Gibson 2014; Koc-Michalska & Vedel, 2013; Lilleker & Jackson, 2011; Schweitzer, 2011; Ward et al., 2008)





Politics as usual theory (Margolis & Resnick, 2000) – offline inequalities are reflected online, and smaller parties are least likely to have a sophisticated website performance (Kluver et al., 2007; Resnick, 1998; Xenos & Foot, 2005).

vs. **mobilization theory** (Gibson & Ward, 2000b; Jackson, 2006; Jackson and Lilleker 2009).

informational function (**web.1.0**) as the prime purpose of websites (De Landtsheer et al., 1999; Lusoli & Ward, 2005; Ward et al., 2005; Jackson, 2008) and possible shaper of visitors' voting behaviour (Tolbert & Mcneal, 2003).

vs. interactivity (**web.2.0**) – dialogue and communication (Jackson & Lilleker 2010) to build the network and community/online advocates (Lilleker & Koc-Michalska, 2013; Koch et al. 2011)

Country characteristics comparison

								
	2009	2014	2009	2014	2009	2014	2009	2014
Years in the EU	36	41	52	57	52	57	5	10
Number of seats in EP	72	72	72	74	99	96	50	51
Number of countrys residents (in millions)	59.8	64.3	62.1	65.8	81	82	37.8	38.4
Country's GDP	116.2	106	107.9	108	115.6	124	56.4	68
Internet connections (in % of population)	77.9	89	69.3	84	67	85	53	65
Voting system	Party list system Proportional		Party list system Proportional		Party list system Regional		Party list system Preferential	
Turnout in 2004 (in %)	38.9		42.7		43		20.4	
Turnout in 2009 (in %)	34.7		40.6		43.3		24.5	
Turnout in 2014 (in %)	35.4		42.4		48.1		23.8	
Number of parties in 2009 elections	22		31		32		12	
Number of parties in 2014 elections	49		40		28		14	

METHODOLOGY

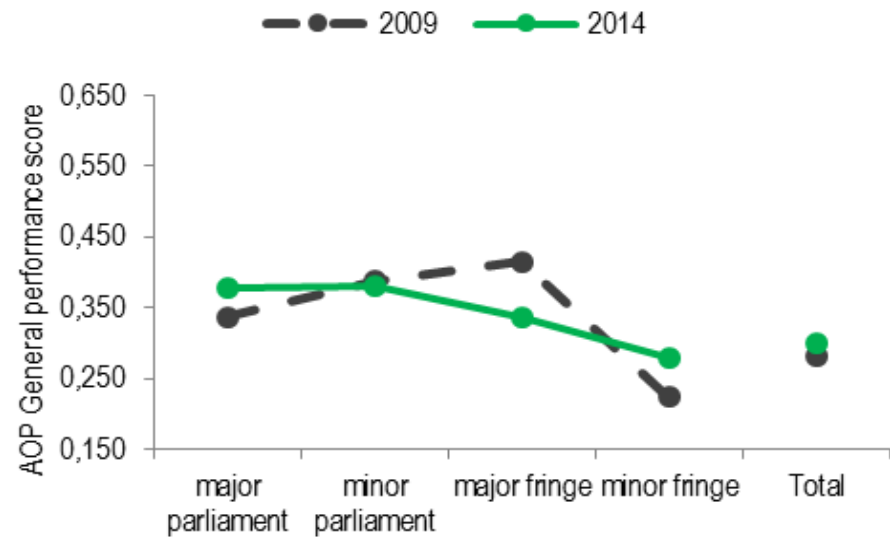
- quantitative content analysis (presence/absence of features) – websites, SNS
 - international coding schema: 182 features – recoded into 38 final variables (same for both years)
 - grouped into
 - general performance
 - 4 online strategies: Information Provision, Engagement, Mobilization, Interactivity
 - 2 strategies: web.1.0, web.2.0
- ‘all’ political parties present in 2009 (CENEMP) and 2014 elections
 - Panel data 2x 56 parties N=112
 - Pooled data N=228
- four coders: inter-coder reliability tests Krippendorff’s Alpha .81
- field of research: May 2014 (one week before voting)

statistical tests

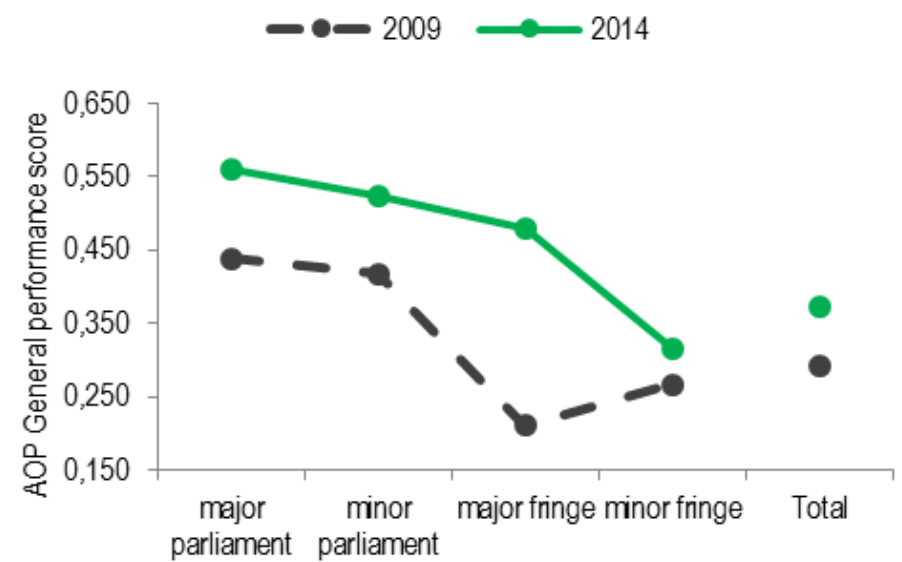
- OLS (for performance)
- Average Online Performance (AOP)
 - (number of features gained/general nb of features in the grouping)
 - ANOVA, t-test
- Poisson regressions (for vote share)

GENERAL PERFORMANCE

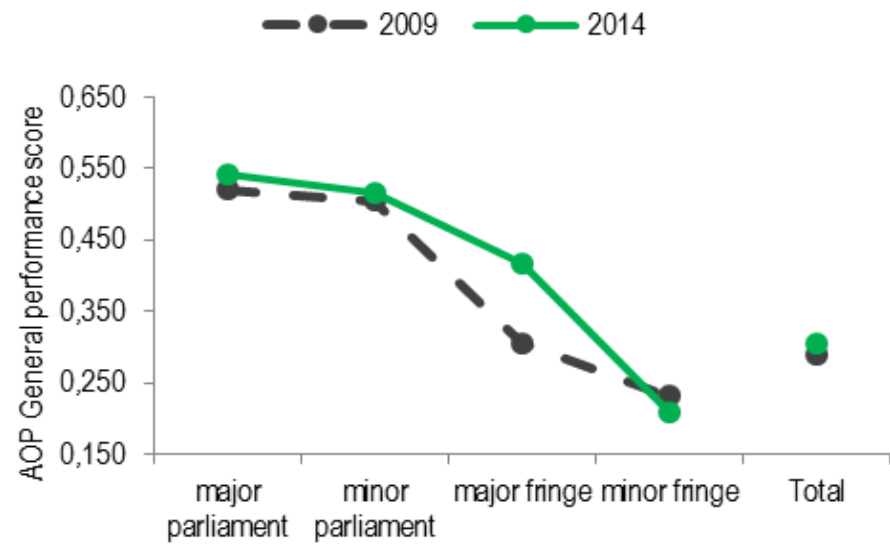
Great Britain



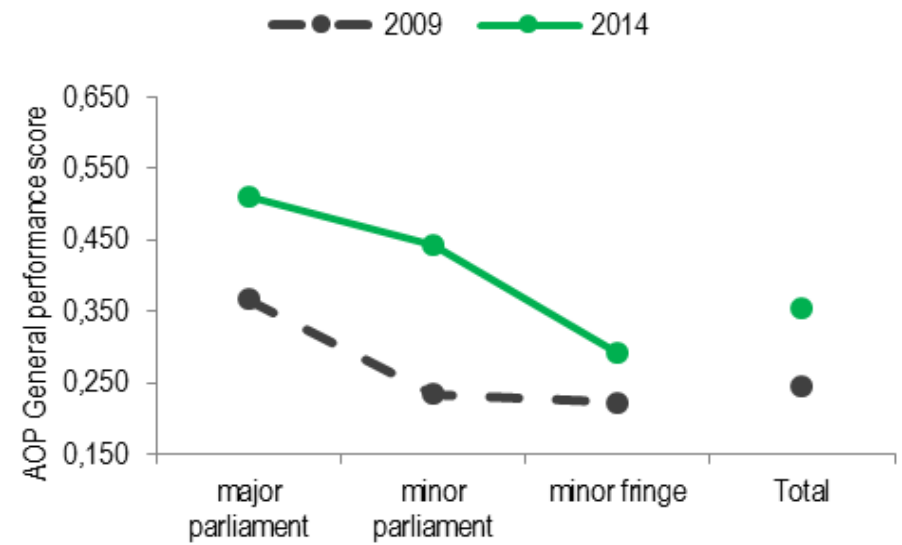
France



Germany



Poland



Informing,

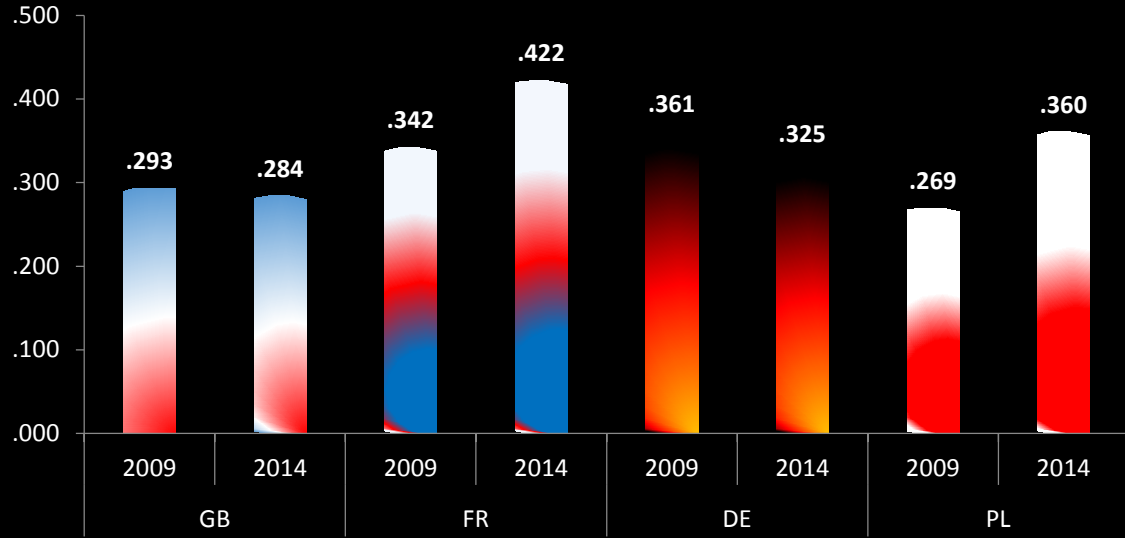
Engaging

Mobilize

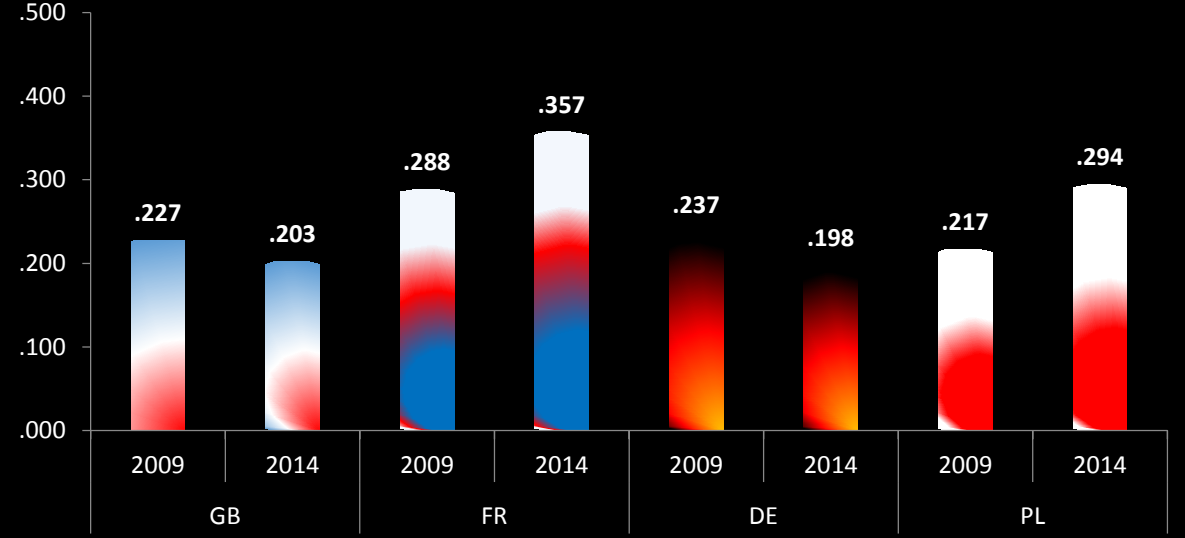
or

Interact

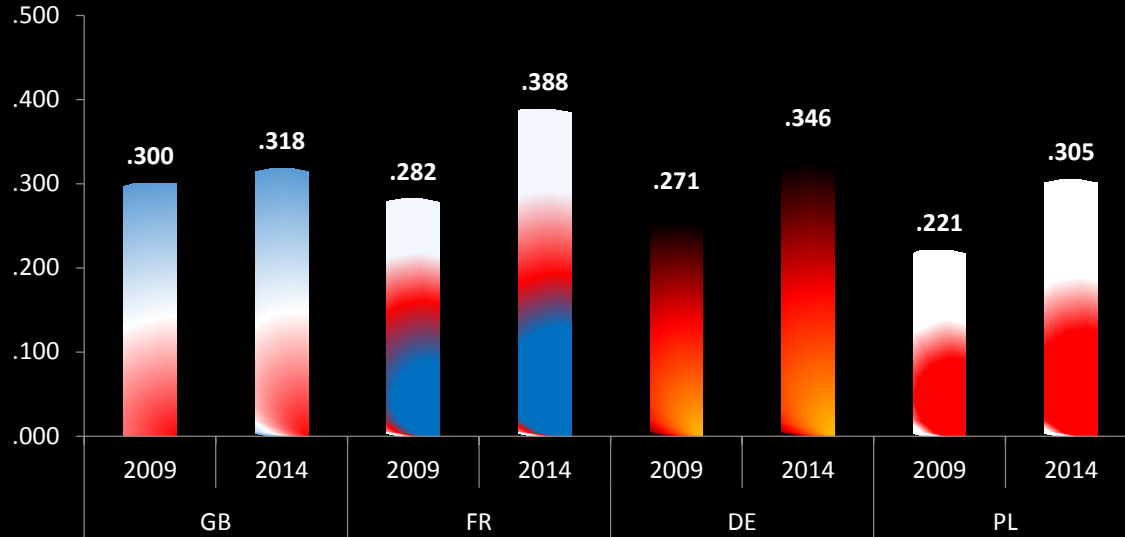
Information provision



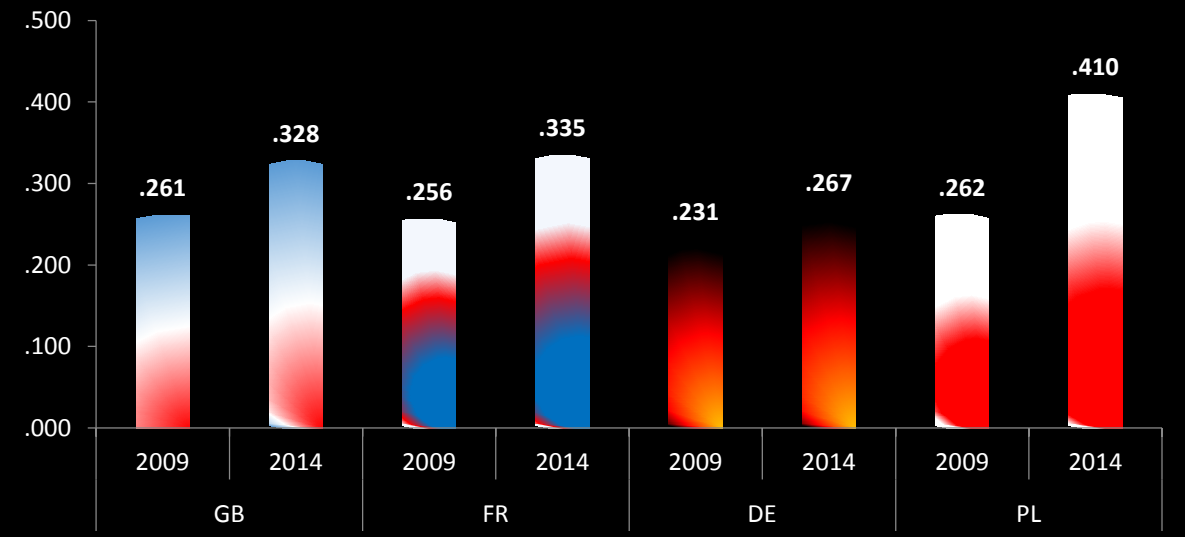
Engagement provision



Mobilization provision



Interactivity provision



web.1.0. or web.2.0.

DEPENDENT VARIABLES

- web1.0. web.2.0.
- vote share in 2009 and 2014 EP elections

INDEPENDENT VARIABLES

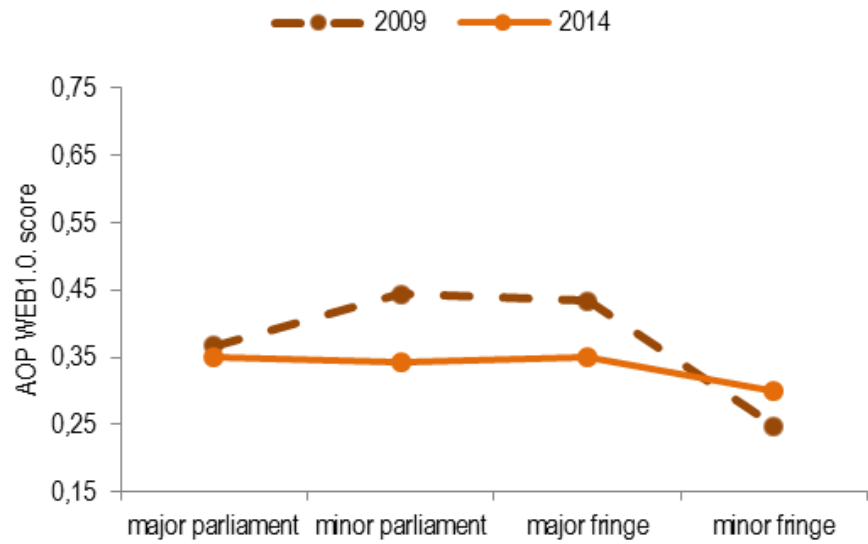
- Parties present in both elections '09/'14
- Time difference (2014)
- Country (comparison Germany)

Party characteristics

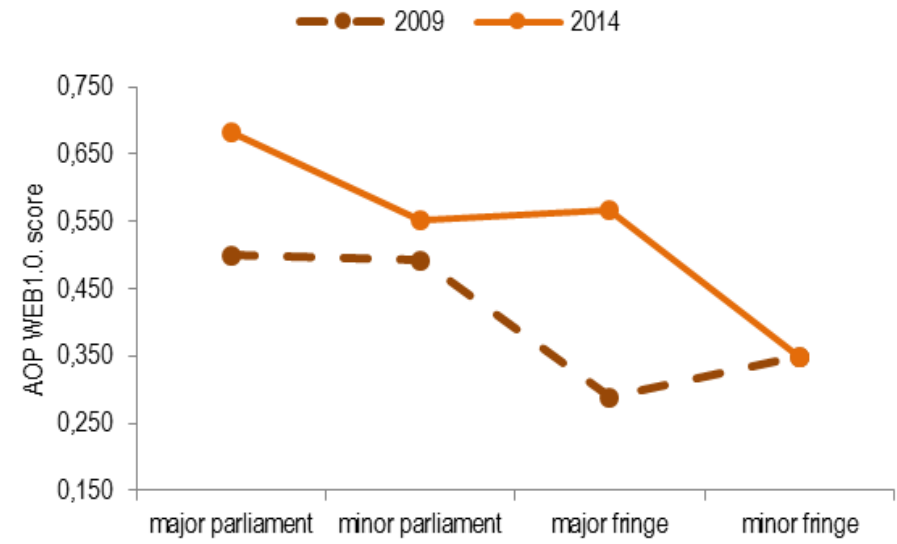
- Party years of existence
- Party id (comp. single issue party) Right, Left, Centre
- EU positioning (comp. Positive) Neutral, Negative
- Party size (comp. minor fringe) Major parliamentary, Minor parliamentary, Major fringe OR Vote share in EP elections
- NB of seats in EP in previous term

B Coef OLS	web.1.0	web.2.0
	N = 228	
Parties present in both elections '09/'14	.009	.007
Time difference (2014)	.023	.104***
Country (comparison Germany)		
GB	-.049**	.066**
FR	.045**	.060**
PL	-.067**	.063*
Party characteristics		
Party years of existence	.000	.000
Party id (comp. single issue party)		
Right	.039	.000
Left	.061**	-.016
Centre	.049	-.022
EU positioning (comp. Positive)		
Neutral	.006	-.028
Negative	.005	-.016
Party size (comp. minor fringe)		
Major parliamentary	.087	.134*
Minor parliamentary	.117***	.186***
Major fringe	.077**	.105**
NB of seats in EP in previous term	.005*	.002

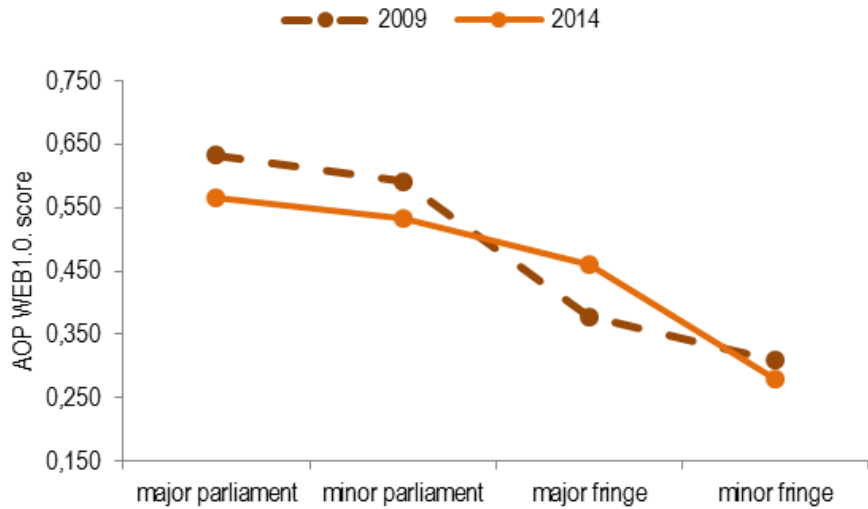
web.1.0.Great Britain



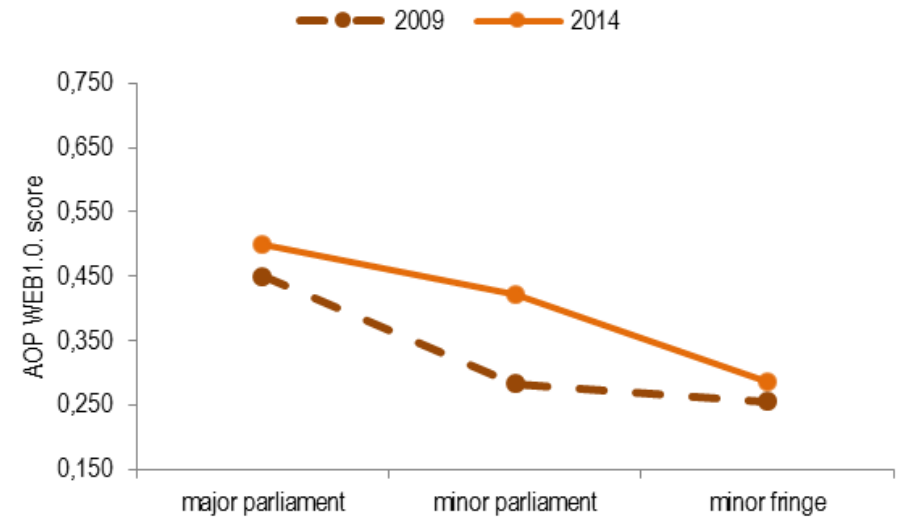
web.1.0.France

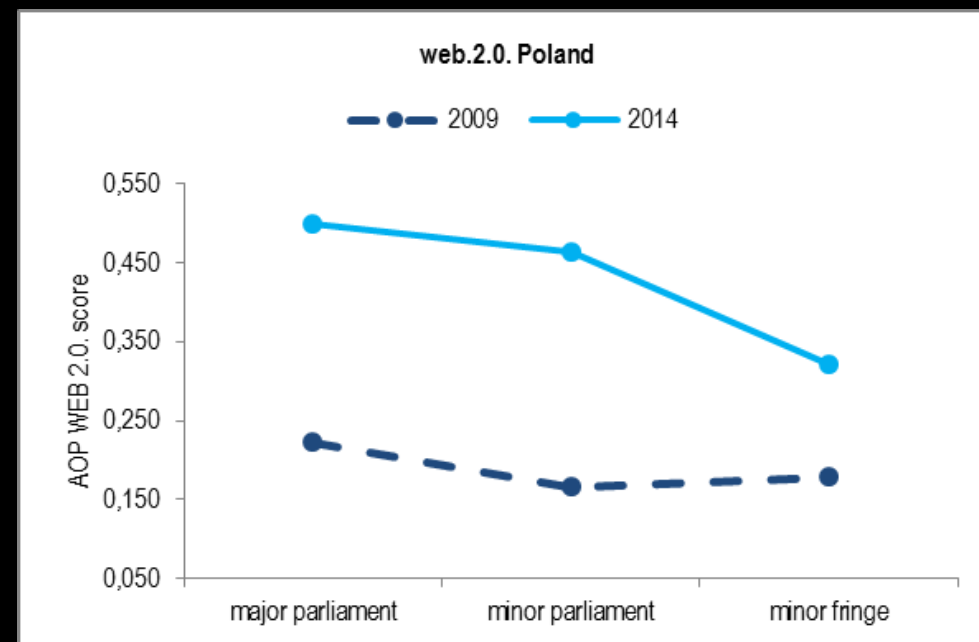
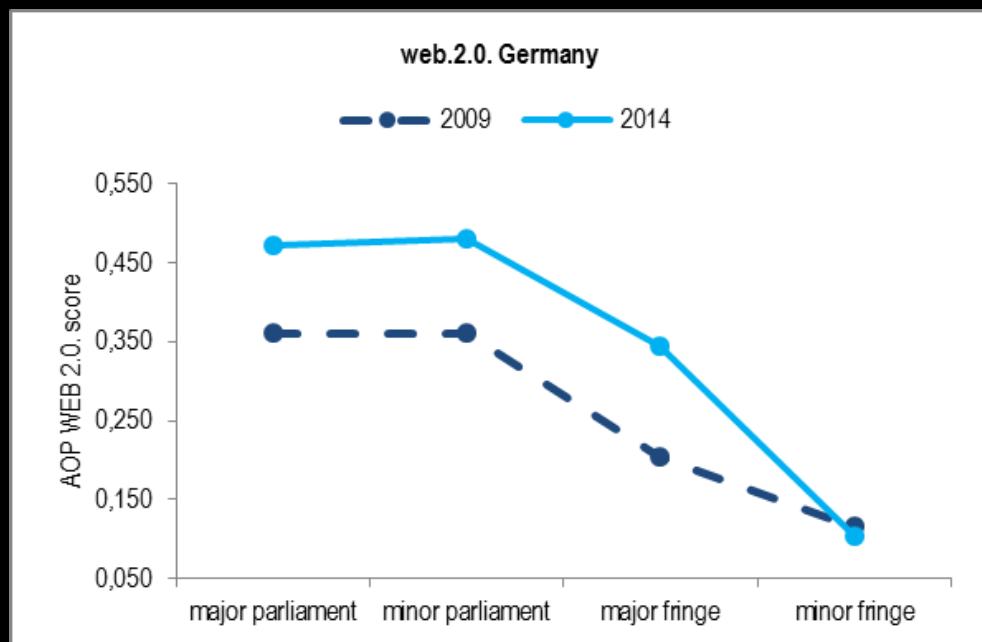
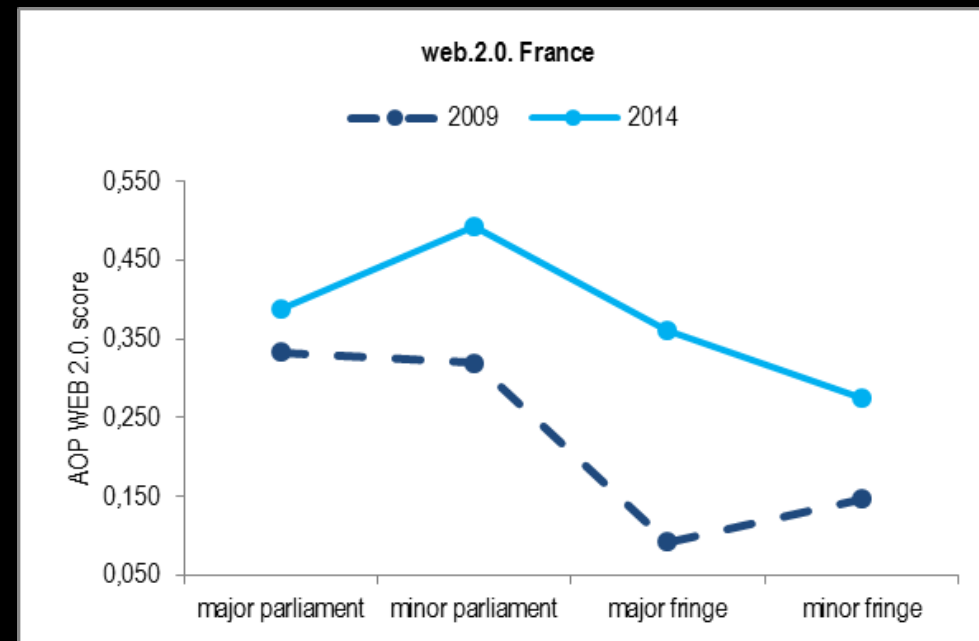
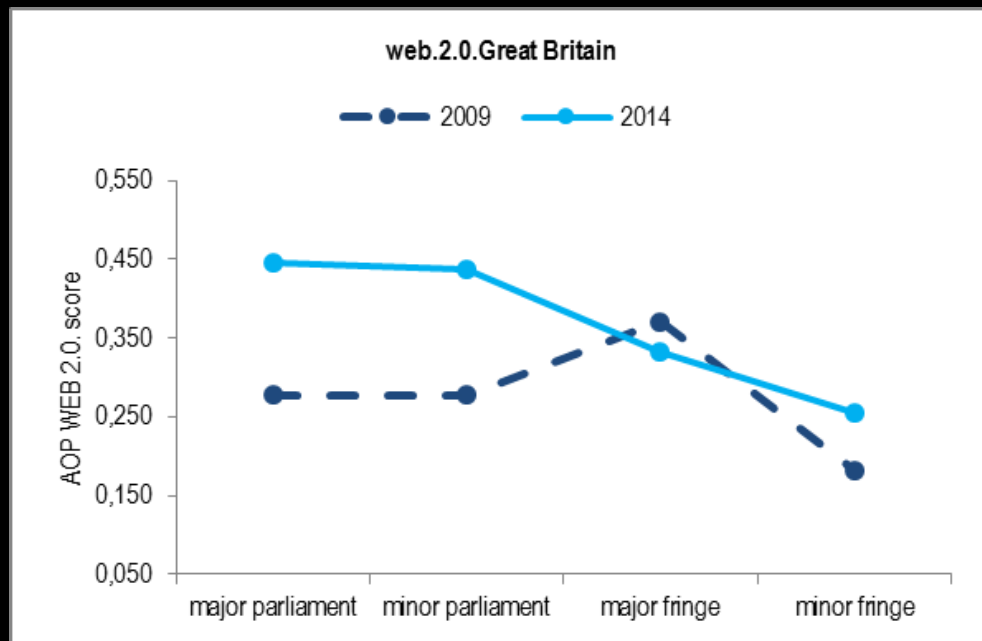


web.1.0.Germany



web.1.0.Poland





Vote share in EP elections

	Coef.
Party characteristics	
Party years of existence	-.001
Party id (comp. Left)	
Right	.299**
Centre	.201
Single issue	-1.961***
EU positioning (comp. Positive)	
Neutral	-.959**
Negative	-.066
Stood in previous EP election	.693**
Vote share in last national election	.096***
In government	-.329**
web.1.0. performance	1.484
web.2.0. performance	2.244***
Interaction (National vote share * web.1.0.)	-.037
Interaction (National vote share * web.2.0.)	-.054**

conclusions

- There is no one pattern across countries in study
- Differences among countries are statistically significant
- Most important factors influencing online performance are country and party size differences
- Normalization hypothesis is rather confirmed however with different power for web.1.0 and web.2.0

- web.1.0 campaigning is less effective than web.2.0 campaigning in gaining votes
- web.2.0 campaigning is more effective for smaller parties

Thank you

kkocmichalska@sciencescom.org