

**PÉTER BENEC STUMPF\***

## **The Effects of Ballot Access Requirements and Campaign Subsidies on Candidate Entry\*\***

### *I. Introduction*

Political competition has been considered to be a defining feature of democracies since Schumpeter's seminal work, *Capitalism, Socialism and Democracy*. He reversed what he called "the classical doctrine of democracy", the theory that individuals elected representatives to carry out their will in specific matters:

*"And we define: the democratic method is that institutional arrangement for arriving at political decisions in which individuals acquire the power to decide by means of a competitive struggle for the people's vote."*<sup>1</sup>

This extremely influential proposition was then used by Lipset who described democracy as such:

*"Democracy in a complex society may be defined as a political system which supplies regular constitutional opportunities for changing the governing officials, and a social mechanism which permits the largest possible part of the population to influence major decisions by choosing among contenders for political office."*<sup>2</sup>

Lipset suggested that this definition implied the existence of three specific conditions, namely (1) a set of rules specifying legitimate institutions, (2) incumbent political office holders and (3) their challengers struggling to gain power. Both Schumpeter and Lipset

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\* Tudományos segédmunkatárs, SZTE Állam- és Jogtudományi Kar, Politológiai Tanszék

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<sup>1</sup> SCHUMPETER, JOSEPH ALOIS, – RICHARD SWEDBERG: *Capitalism, Socialism, and Democracy*. Routledge. London, New York (N. Y.), 2014. p. 269.

<sup>2</sup> LIPSET, SEYMOUR MARTIN: *Political Man: The Social Bases of Politics. Expanded ed.* Johns Hopkins University Press. Baltimore, 1960. p. 45.

emphasized the role of institutions in the democratic process and its competitive nature. Other theorists greatly expanded on this minimalist definition, arguing that the democratic method involves more than the electoral race and does not end with government formation.<sup>3</sup> Whether one agrees with the more restricted approach of Schumpeter or prefers to extend the concept considerably, competition always remains a central element of the definition. Therefore, studying the nature of political competition is fundamental in understanding the democratic process. However, attitudes toward competition in general, both political and economic, are ambiguous at best. Market processes in western democracies are always regulated to some extent. For example, certain types of collusion, like forming cartels, is prohibited, negative externalities are punished by regulatory and redistribution measures. Similarly, there are certain restrictions that apply to the political market as well in many countries. There are specific rules applied to hate speech, campaign funding, or ballot access. This study is concerned with the effects of the latter two.

To appear on the ballot, candidates and political parties are generally obliged to meet certain requirements. Such conditions can be viewed as restrictions on political competition as they limit the potential challengers in contesting the elections: they *increase the barrier of entry*. At the same time, all democratic systems could be characterized as structures where competition, and thus potential challengers are incentivized, often subsidized, and are ultimately institutionalized. Political parties, both inside and outside the legislative body often receive funding from the state and the elected minority has access to necessary infrastructure and influence on the decision-making process. Such incentives and subsidies do the opposite of ballot access requirements – they *decrease the barriers of entry*. Clearly, these two elements of electoral regulation have the opposite effect and yet they coexist in the majority of countries. While in principle they contradict each other, in practice they can work well together due to the sequential nature of the electoral process: Those who have earned ballot access may receive campaign subsidies. Those who had reached the funding threshold may receive public funds for their operations between elections. Those who had reached the threshold of representation may receive not only funding but also the power to influence decision making in the legislative body. Finally, those who achieved majority, gain the opportunity to form a government.

The question that has not been answered yet, is whether these measures and regulations are effective or even necessary? The goal of this study is to determine if these two, most common regulations on political competition are beneficial or if they unjustly distort the “free market of representation”.

## *II. Theoretical framework*

Ballot access restrictions are commonplace in democracies, and while we can only distinguish three main categories of conditions on candidate or party registration, the extent to which they limit competition varies widely.<sup>4</sup> The first type of restriction requires contenders to

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<sup>3</sup> DAHL, ROBERT ALAN: *Polyarchy: Participation and Opposition*. Yale Univ. Press. New Haven, 1998.

<sup>4</sup> BISCHOFF, CARINA: *Political Competition and Contestability: A Study of the Barriers to Entry in 21 Democracies*. European University Institute. Florence, 2006.

prove their popular support by collecting signatures from voters, also known as petitioning. This requirement may constitute a substantial entry barrier if the minimum number of signatures is relatively high compared to the size of the constituency where they must be collected and/or each voter can only support a single candidate. It can further increase the difficulty of fulfilling the requirement if the timeframe of collection is narrow. The second type is a monetary requirement, either a fee that must be paid or a sum that is to be deposited by prospective contestants. The difference is that deposits are reimbursed if the candidate gains a certain share of the vote while fees are not. The third type, often presented as an alternative option for established political actors, involves nomination by a party that already has a seat in the legislative body. It should be noted that these are not the only requirements of appearing on the ballot. The most basic one is obviously passive suffrage, but even if that is sufficiently universal, a number of “implicit”, administrative requirements are often present, some of these are related to the legal access conditions, others are independent from them. Paperwork must be filed, certificates presented, etc.

While ballot access and campaign subsidies involve separate periods during the electoral competition (although, depending on the system they may overlap), political science theorizes that they both affect a crucial part of the race, namely the decision of candidates or parties to enter. Research on the behavior of political actors supposes a strategic calculus on the part of the contestants before this decision. In his seminal article, Tullock compared the contest for political power to economic competition.<sup>5</sup> He considered governments as natural monopolies and leaving them under the control of a single political party leads to a despotic state. As he so aptly observed: “*In a sense, the whole point of democracy is to prevent this sort of “free enterprise.”*” The way we prevent this despotic monopoly is political, and specifically electoral competition. In his theoretical model, the central issue here is an extreme high entry barrier faced by the potential challengers. To decrease it, democratic countries have intricate systems in place to make sure that this barrier can be overcome including rules limiting the power of those in power and institutions providing rights, infrastructure, and funding for their competitors. In these terms, maintaining democracy means that we must constantly balance out the monopolistic tendencies inherent to government. Our toolset is vast but so are our challenges, and the task is complicated by the fact that very specific rules in this intricate system may have unforeseen consequences. A great example for such complications is the situation described by the cartel-party theory of Katz and Mair.<sup>6</sup> They present a pattern where a set of political actors maintain their position in the political system by relying on extensive state resources and legislative influence, and ultimately toning down competition through collusion. For the purposes of this study, the crucial element of cartel-party thesis is its implication for electoral competition. Theoretically, both subjects of the research, ballot access and campaign subventions, can be considered as instruments of cartel parties. The former probably more obvious as candidacy requirements can easily be tightened by the legislators to lock out challengers. For the

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<sup>5</sup> TULLOCK, GORDON: *Entry Barriers in Politics*. The American Economic Review 55(1965) pp. 456–66.

<sup>6</sup> KATZ, RICHARD S. – MAIR, PETER: *Changing Models of Party Organization and Party Democracy: The Emergence of the Cartel Party*. Party Politics (1)1995, pp. 5–28.

latter, the effects are less clear, as public subsidies can open-up opportunities for new contestants and create a more leveled playing field. However, they can also provide another channel for cartel-parties to funnel tax-money into their capital-intensive campaigns. Obviously, this depends on the way campaign subsidies are introduced, mainly the generosity of the regime and the eligibility criteria.

The effects of ballot access requirements precede the actual political campaign and mainly influence the supply side of the electoral competition, that is it may deter or prevent the entry of potential contestants. The results of subventions are more complex, in the pre-campaign period generous subsidies may incentivize entry, while the lack of funding could effectively prevent it. During the campaign period however, it may level the playing field. This article focuses on what Gary W. Cox called *strategic entry*, asking the question: How does the interplay of these two factors influence the strategic calculus of potential contestants?<sup>7</sup> Cox builds on the well-established literature of political science that analyzes entry with abstract models of decision theory.<sup>8</sup> In this framework, the entry decision is positive when the product of the benefits of office (b) and the probability of success (p) is higher than the costs of entry (c) leaving us with the inequality  $p * b > c$ .<sup>9</sup> While this formula is quite straightforward, identifying what factors to include in the calculation is not a trivial pursuit.

The benefits of office are especially elusive, as much of the advantages of holding an elected position are not quantifiable – serving as a president or as a member of a legislative body even on a local level can provide a combination of authority, access to knowledge and resources, and also visibility and prestige to political actors, and the value of these bounties is not immediately obvious. It is important to note, that to a lesser extent some of these benefits, especially visibility and prestige, can be gained by simply running for the election. If there are generous campaign subsidies offered, simply entering the race promises certain benefits. For this very reason, the probability of winning may be less important than it seems – as for some actors, simply appearing as a contestant may provide enough incentive. Furthermore, in contrast with political systems like that of the United States, where elections are frequent due to mid-terms and a large number of directly elected bodies and offices, parliamentary systems often have only one national election every four or five years. Political actors who want to appear as viable contenders cannot really skip such opportunities, no matter the cost. Probability of winning is obviously a factor, and the choice of including it in decision theory models is perfectly justifiable, its importance should not be overstated. It could, however, influence the entry decision more when failure may cause additional damage e.g. to the image of the party or candidate. The costs incurred by entrants are varied but they are probably easier to define clearly. They include not only the monetary expenses of running but all aspects of the effort it requires to enter and run as a contestant. For a single candidate it requires a considerable amount of time and possibly certain risks caused by the heightened visibility, while in the case of a party, it may require a serious organizational effort, so

<sup>7</sup> COX, GARY W.: *Making Votes Count: Strategic Coordination in the World's Electoral Systems*. Cambridge University Press. Cambridge, U.K., 1997.

<sup>8</sup> FEDDERSEN, TIMOTHY J. – SENED, ITAI, –WRIGHT, STEPHEN G.: *Rational Voting and Candidate Entry under Plurality Rule*. *American Journal of Political Science* (4)1990, p. 1005.

<sup>9</sup> PALFREY, THOMAS R.: *Spatial Equilibrium with Entry*. *The Review of Economic Studies* (1)1984, p. 139.

much so that it may be prohibitive. In the case of local elections, where often an extremely large number of low benefit races are conducted simultaneously, parties can be deterred due to the extreme costs associated with the recruitment and management of thousands of candidates. This could be an explanation for the dominance of independent contestants and ad-hoc organizations observed in many countries on the municipal level of politics. From the above, it may be obvious that in this article, “costs of entry” is a misnomer, because the entire effort of entering and competing are considered.

Notably, there is a somewhat different approach relevant to the research presented here, that can be found in the works of Bartolini.<sup>10</sup> He analyzes competition, although it could also be understood as a study in strategic entry, focused on the *contestability* of elections. Although he arrived at somewhat similar conclusions as Cox regarding the factors influencing the entry decision, his approach to political competition is fundamentally different. He considered the direct analogy between economic and political competition flawed and summarized the differences in three points:

*“Competition in politics is altered by the degree of collusion intrinsic to (1) the fact that the normative-legal capsule of competition is set by the same actors who are supposed to compete within it; (2) the achievement of the exclusive good of public authority; and (3) the multiplicity of political arenas. [...] Economic theories of party competition ask to be judged by the accuracy of their predictions and refuse to discuss the realism of their assumptions. So far, after almost half a century of research, the issue is not the level of accuracy of such predictions, but more fundamentally whether they have anything to do with the objective facts of political life.”*<sup>11</sup>

To be fair, it must be noted that researchers of the public choice school of thought recognize many distinguishing features of political and economic competition. Without delving too deeply into this debate, Stigler already recognized an important difference: Political products, in the form of public policies, unlike goods and services encountered in the economic sphere, are mutually exclusive.<sup>12</sup> Consequently (and maybe mistakenly), failing to achieve majority by a small margin (e.g. gaining 49% of the seats) is often considered a failure in politics, while it could easily be characterized as a success in business, if the figure referred to the market share of the runner-up. Stigler does acknowledge that this approach is flawed as political outcome does not always range continuously between failure and success instead of a binary scale. This leads to the suggestion I had before, that the probability of a winning a seat may not be as influential if we consider other advantages of competing. On the other hand, Bartolini suggests that the high level of abstraction and simplification of decision-making models often distances them from political reality.

Regardless of his different approach and apparent distaste for the economic models, Bartolini’s dimensions of political competition are somewhat congruent with the factors

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<sup>10</sup> BARTOLINI, STEFANO: *Collusion, Competition and Democracy: Part II*. Journal of Theoretical Politics (1)2000, p. 33–65.

<sup>11</sup> BARTOLINI 2000, p. 437.

<sup>12</sup> STIGLER, GEORGE J.: *Economic Competition and Political Competition*. Public Choice (1)1972, pp. 91–106.

built upon decision making theory. These are contestability, availability, decidability, and vulnerability. Contestability includes the entry barriers, although in a much more flexible manner, as these are described to emerge from the structure of competitive interactions – political actors take strategic steps to prevent the entry of their rivals. Barriers to representation also belong to this dimension because it is not enough that anyone can run for office, at least some of them need to have a meaningful chance for success. Finally, the conditions of the race, like access to media and funding are vital to the fairness of the competition. Availability refers to the demand side of elections, the willingness of voters to change positions, to switch their votes – obviously, without this, entry into the race makes no sense. In a word where the alignment of voters is fixed, *ceteris paribus* (e.g. the composition of the voting age population does not change) the same election result would repeat over and over for eternity, and competition would cease. This extreme and unrealistic example illustrates how the stability or volatility of the vote defines competition. Decidability is the differentiation of the offer provided by the political actors, allowing voters to distinguish them from other alternatives. If the options presented on the ballot are virtually indistinguishable, then voting does not make any sense. Vulnerability refers to the strength of the incumbent candidate, as in Bartolini's model competition is always a contest between the incumbent and their challenger(s).

It is not necessary to accept Bartolini's negative assessment of the economic models developed by public choice theorists, to acknowledge the expediency of his framework. Factors influencing contestability, entry barriers increased by colluding political parties are some of the vital components of the cartel party thesis. Voter availability is examined in detail in the vast literature of voter behavior and volatility. Decidability is also related to a wide range of studies, however, in this case there are intriguing similarities with the research on second order elections, although it may require a broader definition of decidability. Reif and Schmidt<sup>13</sup> (1980) and Marsh<sup>14</sup> (1998) hypothesize that the structure and polarization of the party system has an influence of political accountability. Especially in multi-party systems, where a major actor is continuously in governing position, although with varying coalition partners, consequences of the vote become opaque: Selecting an alternative candidate may marginally change the composition of the government. Let us not forget that "the offer" presented by political parties and candidates at the election is often not just an alternative policy mix as it also has sentimental elements, involves moral values and long-term visions. Expressive voters who want to see national leadership aligned with their own values may be incentivized to vote by the chance of just adding a coalition partner to the reigning elite. Thus, decidability of the offer should encompass the clear consequences of the vote. Finally, a very relevant theory of incumbent vulnerability is directly tied to campaign subsidies. Traditionally, the strength of the party in power is assumed to be, at least in part, determined by economic performance. As Bichay points it out, public financing may significantly decrease the

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<sup>13</sup> REIF, KARLHEINZ – SCHMITT, HERMANN: *Nine Second-Order National Elections - A Conceptual Framework for the Analysis of European Election Results*. *European Journal of Political Research* (1)1980, pp. 3–44.

<sup>14</sup> MARSH, MICHAEL: *Testing the Second-Order Election Model after Four European Elections*. *British Journal of Political Science* (4)1998, pp. 591–607.

incumbency advantage as the public subsidies provide a safe financial inflow to the parties regardless of economic conditions.<sup>15</sup> Bühlmann and Zumbach (2011) provide a good example of how these dimensions can be applied to empirical research, however, their work gives a comprehensive and thus necessarily low-resolution image of competition.<sup>16</sup> Research presented here is more specific to ballot access and campaign subsidies, although it is built upon a similar theoretical basis.

In democratic systems, political opposition operates in an institutionalized format, it is granted clearly defined rights during the legislative process and is often provided with at least some form of infrastructure and financing from public funds. While public campaign subsidies are not indispensable to this model, they seem to be a logical addition to it. If we do subsidize the operation of an institutionalized opposition then it is justified to also support its formation. Campaign subsidies are treated as a subcase of political party finance in scientific research, and rightfully so, however this often blurs the specifics of such regulations. Campaign finance, in a sense, precedes party finance, as eligibility for the latter generally requires achieving results at the polls. Several different models of political finance regimes can be distinguished ranging from the free market policies to a high level of state control.<sup>17</sup> Laissez-faire regimes have no or little regulations. A very minimal policy solution is to establish transparency requirements, obligating parties, candidates and donors to disclose income, spending and donor information. Setting contribution limits mean that the amount of funds (or indirect support) that can be accepted from a single, or a certain type of donor, is restricted and it can be considered the next step toward firm state control. The imposition of spending limits, ceilings on the amount of money that can be spent by political actors, are usually included in even stricter regimes. Campaign subsidies provided by the state stand furthest from the free market policies and they may be direct or indirect. The former refers to money provided to parties and candidates, while the latter often takes the form of free airtime and advertisement space. On the scale created by Norris and Abel van Es, none of these policies are present at the free market end and all of them are available at the state management end. A hypothetical extreme would be a funding regime that requires full transparency in terms of expenses (possibly in the form of a financial account managed by state authorities), a contribution ceiling that is effectively zero, and a spending limit equal to the amount of direct public subsidy provided to contestants. Under this made-up policy regime, perfect equality of financial resources can be achieved among eligible contestants. However, it would be quite difficult to argue for such a policy in real life. Under such strict state control, to have a proper, meaningful election campaign, where contestants can engage most of the population with their messages, would require a considerable amount of public funds and probably very strict eligibility conditions. Furthermore, it could potentially have a detrimental effect on democratic competition, based on the conclusions of the cartel-party theory.

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<sup>15</sup> BICHAY, NICOLAS: *Public Campaign Financing and the Rise of Radical-Right Parties*. Electoral Studies (66)2020.

<sup>16</sup> BÜHLMANN, MARC, – ZUMBACH, DAVID: *On the Multidimensionality of Political Competition: Measuring Political Competition in a Bartolinian Way*. In: 1st Annual Conference of the European Political Science Association (EPSA), Dublin, 16 June 2011 - 18 June 2011. <https://www.zora.uzh.ch/id/eprint/53657> (accessed: April 23, 2020).

<sup>17</sup> NORRIS, PIPPA, – ABEL VAN ES, ANDREA: *Checkbook Elections? Political Finance in Comparative Perspective*. First edition. Oxford University Press. New York, NY., 2016. p. 15.

This leads to the debate that is most prevalent in U.S. politics regarding the liberalization or strict regulation of campaign funds. Those arguing against liberalization suggest that increasing state management in campaigns improving integrity by limiting the influence of donors over policy and increases fairness by leveling the playing field. These two arguments have obvious pairs in terms of policy tools: Transparency requirements and contribution limits would restrain donor influence, while spending ceilings and subsidies are supposed to level the playing field. A free market argument against the former could be that public scrutiny of the decision-making process should take care of such problems in the long-term. While the *laissez-faire* approach may seem idealistic at first, the practicality of regulations can also be questioned when it comes to decreasing corruption.<sup>18</sup> In terms of increasing fairness, the debate is more theoretical.

### *III. Hungarian context*

The research described in this article was admittedly inspired by the case of Hungary. Beginning from 2010, an extensive legislative reform began in the country, made possible by the two-thirds supermajority of the newly elected right-wing governing coalition in the National Assembly. The reform involved the overhaul of numerous political institutions including the electoral system and related regulations. In the Hungarian mixed-member system, candidate and party list registration had complex requirements since the democratic transition of 1989. Candidates had to collect 750 signatures for their nomination in the form of small paper tickets. The registration of a party list required the successful nomination of a certain number of candidates in a specific regional distribution. In practice each voter was assigned a single ticket by mail making it impossible to support more than one candidate. After the new electoral act was enacted in 2011, the number of signatures necessary was decreased to 500 and they were to be collected in fewer but more populous constituencies. The tickets were abandoned for signature sheets issued to candidates by the National Election Office and citizens gained the right to support multiple candidates – as many as they want. Party list registration was again, tied to the number and territorial distribution of candidate nominations although the specifics were tailored to the new, simplified electoral system. Overall, nomination of candidates obviously became easier, more inclusive. Before 2010, 132 000 signatures were necessary for registering candidates in every constituency, aspirants only needed to gather 53 000.

At the same time, the framework of campaign finance regulation was completely redesigned. Previously, modest public funding for the election campaigns was available to parties. The total amount of money distributed among all the contestants was determined by the National Assembly in each election year. Interestingly, representatives decided on the same amount before each election, 100 million forints (approximately EUR 300 000 today). The share of each party was determined according to the number of candidates they nominated both in single-member constituencies and on party lists. The reform effectively removed this fixed upper limit of total campaign subventions.

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<sup>18</sup> NORRIS 2016, p. 248.



Funding was again tied to the number of candidates nominated and successfully registered: The state budget provides 5 million forints to each single-member district candidate, and lists also receive a portion of this sum depending on the number of SMD candidates of the party. For a single party with candidates in all districts and also a national list, the state subsidies amount to approximately 700 million forints (approximately EUR 2 million).

With ballot access restrictions significantly decreased and subsidies dramatically expanded, in 2014, the number of parties and candidates running for office skyrocketed. While the inclusive registration requirements obviously lowered the barriers of entry, the effect of changes in the funding regime can be interpreted in two ways. One could argue that the costs of entry, and the costs of competing in the election were significantly lowered. Another, albeit more cynical narrative, is that the pay-off was drastically increased. Simply by running for office, even without any chance of winning, became a financially attractive endeavor. However, the political outcome was not what our theories of political competition would suggest. The number of actors who decided to enter the race did increase but final results do not indicate any increase in the intensity of competition. More than half of the seats in the Hungarian parliament, 106, are distributed in single-member constituencies. The remaining 93 are distributed among party lists in a proportional manner with the d'Hondt method but besides the votes cast directly for the party lists, votes spent on losing candidates and the margin of the winners are all transferred to the party list vote totals making it possible for a majority advantage to be carried over to proportional seat allocation. These rules support larger political actors and punish fragmentation mercilessly. As the Hungarian party system consists of a unified right-wing and an extremely fragmented center-left, the latter is in an inherently disadvantaged position. Low barriers to entry and increased payoffs exacerbate this situation by affecting the strategic calculus of political actors – potential allies are incentivized by the campaign funding regime to nominate candidates alone, and registration rules make such strategies easily attainable.

#### *IV. Methodology and Data*

To operationalize the theoretical framework, we need to determine the possible outcome of ballot access restrictions. The underlying assumption in this study is that such regulation is created to deter frivolous candidates and organizations from entering the electoral competition. The main issue here is that deciding which contender was frivolous is ultimately up to the voters. Donald Trump may have seemed frivolous when he announced his presidential bid but turned out to be a quite serious participant in the campaign and came out winning. Thus, categorizing candidates and parties manually, based on “expert opinion” would be quite questionable and the term frivolous does not seem to be a helpful category for the analysis. Our solution is to use two categories instead: viable and non-viable contenders. Political scientists fortunately possess a very

versatile tool to analyze electoral results, called the effective number of parties.<sup>19</sup> It is generally used to measure the concentration of votes in an election, but one interpretation of the ENP figure is “the number of electorally viable candidates”.<sup>20</sup> This index can be repurposed for this study by calculating it for every constituency in the examined countries and dividing it with the number of candidates or parties participating in the election. The result of the division is the ratio of electorally viable candidates, given as a percentage, that functions as the dependent variable of the analysis. Our expectation is that strict ballot access requirements produce a high viability ratio, while low restrictions decrease the figure. The data for the calculation was obtained from the Constituency-level Election Archive (CLEA)<sup>21</sup> for the countries selected to be in the sample.

For the purposes of this research, data was collected on national level ballot access rules and campaign funding regimes of 27 European Union member states and the United Kingdom. One source of the information was the archive of the Office of Democratic Institutions and Humanitarian Rights of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE/ODIHR, more commonly abbreviated as ODIHR). The organization deploys experts to OSCE member states to monitor and evaluate the organization and conduct of elections. The format of the deployment can be a full scale or limited election observation mission (EOM or LEOM), usually preceded by a needs assessment mission (NAM), or sometimes a small-scale election assessment mission (EAM) or an expert team. The outputs of these operations are reports on legislative, logistical and political aspects of national elections. These reports, publicly available in the ODIHR archive<sup>22</sup> provide an extremely useful database of electoral systems and campaign regulations with the added benefit that they are all available in English. Another invaluable resource was the Electoral System Change in Europe since 1945 project<sup>23</sup>, the ACE<sup>24</sup> and IDEA<sup>25</sup> databases.

Ballot access restrictions as campaign funding regimes were used to construct one independent variable each. Nomination rules were homogenized by calculating the percentage of supporters needed in a constituency to register a party or candidate. For countries where a deposit is required, it was calculated what percentage of the voters had to donate 1% of the average salary to pay the sum. Due to the nature and low variability of campaign funding regimes, data was coded into a dummy variable, that distinguishes between the presence or the lack of public campaign subsidies. General public funding of political parties was not included in the data as it is not directly related to the entry decision.

Of the 28 countries examined, 19 has provisions for nominating candidates or party lists by collecting a predetermined number of signatures as a proof of public support. The payment of a fee or deposit is required in 13 countries. The important distinction between

<sup>19</sup> LAAKSO, MARKKU–TAAGEPERA, REIN: *‘Effective’ Number of Parties: A Measure with Application to West Europe*. *Comparative Political Studies* (1)1979, pp. 3–27.

<sup>20</sup> VAN DE WARDT, MARC: *Explaining the Effective Number of Parties: Beyond the Standard Model*. *Electoral Studies* 45(2017), pp. 44–54.

<sup>21</sup> KOLLMAN, KEN, – HICKEN, ALLEN – CARAMANI, DANIELE – BACKER, DAVID – LUBLIN, DAVID: *Constituency-Level Elections Archive [Data File and Codebook]*. 2019. <http://www.electiondataarchive.org>.

<sup>22</sup> [www.osce.org/odihr/elections](http://www.osce.org/odihr/elections) (accessed 2019.10.03.)

<sup>23</sup> PILET, JEAN-BENOIT – RENWICK, ALAN: *Electoral System Change in Europe since 1945*. Université libre de Bruxelles. Brussels. (accessed: 2019.12.21.)

<sup>24</sup> [www.idea.int](http://www.idea.int) (accessed: 2019.11.10.)

<sup>25</sup> [www.aceproject.org](http://www.aceproject.org) (accessed: 2020.01.25.)

deposits and fees is that the former can be reimbursed and the latter not. However, repayment generally requires the political actors to achieve a certain vote share and for the small parties and candidates who fail to do so, the two are virtually the same. Some countries combine the two requirements: Austria, Bulgaria, Greece, Malta, the Netherlands, and the United Kingdom require both signatures and a monetary payment. In Ireland, prospective candidates can choose either.

In 10 countries, established parties already represented in the legislative body are provided with certain advantages over new political actors and independent candidates. Often, an alternative nomination requirement is available<sup>+6</sup> for them, they are permitted to register lists or candidates with the support of standing members of the parliament. This option is available in Austria, Belgium, Germany, Luxembourg, and Slovenia. In Croatia, Italy, Lithuania, the Netherlands, and Spain, established parties do not gain automatic nomination, but they face lower requirements. In France and Sweden however, nomination does not explicitly require either a monetary payment or a proof of public support.

Overall, ballot access requirements do not seem to be especially restrictive. To compare signature and deposit requirements, the data for each country was standardized. For countries with signature requirements, the number of supporters necessary for nomination was expressed as a percentage of the average number of voters in the constituencies. To produce comparable data for countries where deposit requirements were in place, it was determined how many voters have to donate to the candidate, if everyone gave 1% of the median wage, then this number was again divided with the average number of voters in the constituency. This of course is merely an approximation of the effort necessary for nomination. While one could argue that getting people to sign nomination sheets is much easier than collecting donations, deposits may be covered by the candidates themselves or a small number of generous supporters. Wherever both requirements were present, the more difficult (higher calculated value) one was considered.

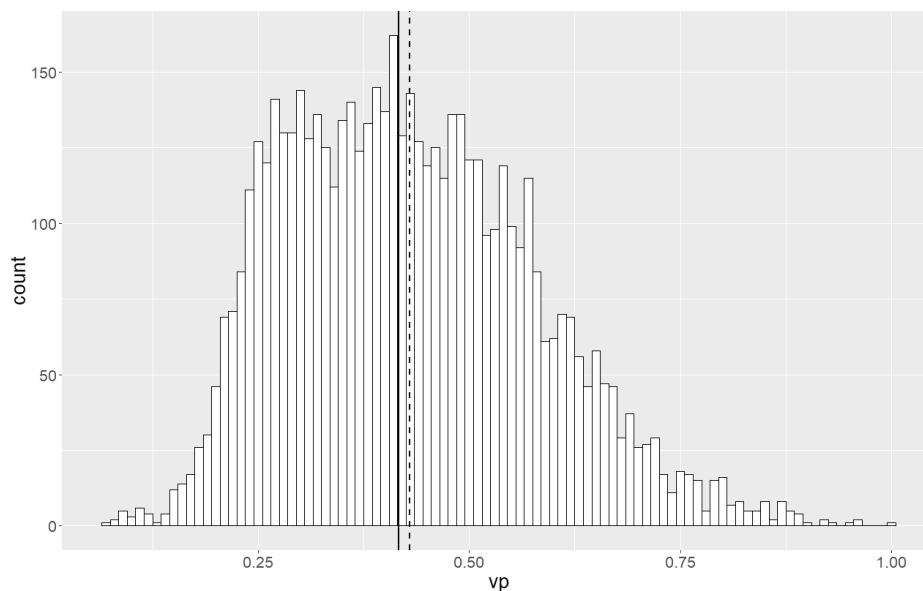
In terms of campaign subsidies, there are basically three different regimes in place: There are no public funds specifically provided for campaigning in 17 countries. In 8 states, candidates and parties surpassing a certain threshold receive a reimbursement for their expenses after the election. In 3 countries, there are pre-election subsidies available. Additionally, free airtime in television and/or radio is provided to political actors in 15 countries.

#### *V. Analysis*

The sample of countries examined include 5586 constituencies. The values for the ratio of viable candidates follow a normal distribution, with a mean of 42.96% and a median of 41.64%. Regardless of the electoral system used, the majority of candidates or parties participating in the electoral contest were not viable electorally.

Figure 1

*Distribution of the ratio of viable candidates (vp). Source: Author's calculation based on CLEA data*



The mean ratio of viable participants does not show statistically significant relationship with the ballot access requirements. In countries where ballot access requirements are non-existent (like France and to a certain extent Sweden), or very low like in the UK, the ratio of non-viable contenders shows quite high variability. In countries where restrictions are strict, the ratio of viable candidates can be 80% sometimes, indicating the ballot access requirements (see the variable “breq” in Table 1) are not especially effective at deterring them from running. Campaign funding regimes, due to their low variability, were used in the model as a control variable only, together with electoral system type.

Table 1

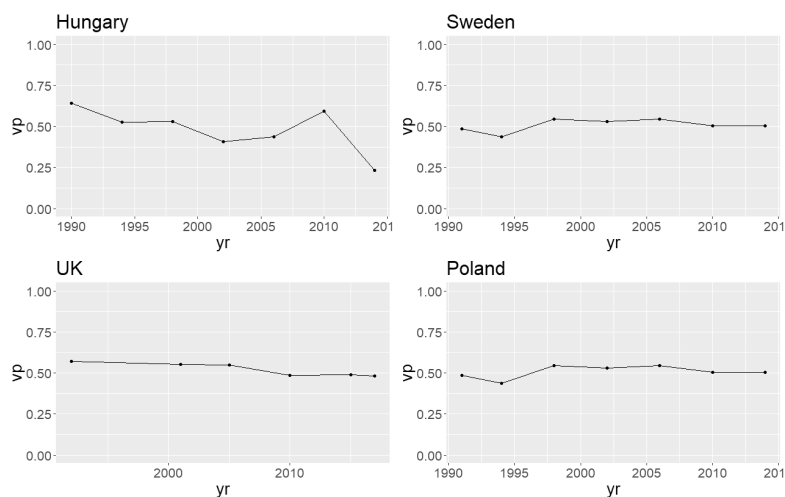
Viability ratio and ballot access requirements plotted with the linear regression line present.  
 Source: Author's calculation based on CLEA data

Coefficients:				
	Estimate	Std. Error	t value	Pr(> t )
(Intercept)	0.44404	0.04215	10.534	< 2e-16 ***
breq	1.60043	2.56573	0.624	0.53348
fund	-0.09479	0.02929	-3.237	0.00141 **
sys	-0.1013	0.03922	-2.583	0.01051 *
Residual standard error: 0.2025 on 202 degrees of freedom		Adjusted R-squared: 0.05704		
Multiple R-squared: 0.07084,				
F-statistic: 5.134 on 3 and 202 DF		p-value: 0.001923		

The fact that no relationship was found in a cross-country analysis does not necessarily mean that ballot access requirements are irrelevant – the results of the analysis indicate that it is simply not the main driving factor behind candidate entry.

Figure 2

Change of the viability ratio (vp) over time in years (yr) in selected countries. Source: Author's calculation based on CLEA data



In Hungary, the ratio of viable candidates plummeted after the 2011 reform, after a continuous decrease during the first two decades after 1990. In Sweden and in the UK, it remained virtually the same. In Portugal, where the electoral system did not change drastically, the figure plummeted by the late 2000's. The main conclusion is that except for very specific cases, ballot access requirements are not the main influencing factor in candidate entry.

## *VI. Discussion*

Apparently, ballot access restrictions fail to deter candidate entry in any meaningful way. On the other hand, they do not seem to distort competition drastically. Fees and deposits are often considered as contributions by the contenders to the organization of elections and thus have legitimacy regardless of their effects on candidate entry.

It is worthwhile to take a closer look at the measure used as an independent variable in the research. It is calculated by dividing the effective number of parties (ENP) by the number of contenders (NP). Its value increases when the number of candidates decreases (e.g. entry deterrence is successful) or when votes are fragmented, distributed evenly among any number of candidates. This explains why we see high values in the Hungarian data during the early 1990s. While there were many contenders who failed to gain seats in the National Assembly, votes were dispersed and did not concentrate on a few political actors. As voters began to gravitate towards the main parties, other candidates kept running for office, but they became less and less viable electorally, thus the figure decreased.

The results of this research definitely do not refute the main tenements of the entry calculus, but they do indicate that the most important entry barriers, the factors that drive up the costs of running are not ballot access requirements. However, these findings could be used as another argument for deposits instead of signatures. A deposit, even though it is reimbursed, is theoretically preventing frivolous candidates from running for office as a hobby with the bill footed by taxpayers. This study, however, seems to fall short of explaining campaign funding effects in detail since public subsidies are rare and are difficult to fit into quantitative models.

STUMPF PÉTER BENCE

A JELÖLTÁLLÍTÁSI KRITÉRIUMOK ÉS A KAMPÁNYTÁMOGATÁS  
HATÁSA A POLITIKAI VERSENYBE TÖRTÉNŐ BELÉPÉSRE

(Összefoglalás)

A piaci versenyhez hasonlóan a politikai verseny is erősen szabályozott környezetben zajlik. Az európai demokráciák többségében a jelöltek csak bizonyos követelmények teljesítése mellett kerülhetnek fel a szavazólapra. Nem csak a passzív választójogra vonatkozó szabályok korlátozzák az indulást, de olyan további feltétek is, mint meghatározott számú választópolgári ajánlás összegyűjtése vagy adott összegű kaució befizetése. A korlátozásokkal éppen ellentétes hatást fejtenek ki a kampányok költségvetési támogatásaira vonatkozó szabályok. Ezeknek a célja, hogy anyagilag is elősegítse a pártok és jelöltek indulását a választásokon, biztosítsa a rendszer inkluzivitását és serkentse a versenyt. Figyelemreméltó, hogy a legtöbb ország ennek a két ellentétes megoldásnak valamelyik kombinációját alkalmazza. Kérdéses továbbá az, hogy ezek a megoldások mennyiben érik el a kívánt hatást, képesek-e érdemben korlátozni az irreleváns jelöltek elindulását, vagy támogatni az új politikai szereplők belépését. A tanulmány 27 Európai Unió tagállam szabályozásának áttekintése és elemzése után arra jut, hogy mind a jelöltállítási kritériumok, mind a kampánytámogatás csak minimális hatást gyakorol a választási versenyre. Az eredmények alapján megfontolandó, hogy leszámítva azokat az eseteket, amikor az indulás jelentős anyagi előnyökkel jár, a jelöltállítási szabályok különösebb következmények nélkül lazíthatók – akár elhagyhatók