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Abstract:

The aim of the article was to present electoral activities diversification as well as political preferences of the citizens of the Subcarpathian Voivodeship in years 1989-2014. The measure of the conducted analyses were the results of parliamentary and European Parliament elections, by means of which it was possible to indicate recurring cyclicity of right-wing political sympathies of the citizens of the Subcarpathian Voivodeship, as well as noticeable, with regards to the whole country, election turnout.

The primary part of the conducted analysis was an attempt to answer the question of what determined the change of political preferences and if contemporary electoral activity and political sympathies reflect historical and cultural determinants.

Key words:

Subcarpathian Voivodeship, elections, electoral, political parties

Introduction

Elections to contract Sejm conducted in 1989 revealed aerial differentiation of political sympathies and preferences in Poland [Zarycki 1997; Kowalski 2000; Kowalski 2003: passim]. With regards to the period of People's Republic of Poland, where the winner of all elections, both to Sejm and to National Councils, was only one subject (together with bloc parties), it was a completely new situation. Despite that in 1989 there were two considerable political options, i.e. government side and the opposition, this state of affairs became evident already in the early eighties of the 20th century, when together with the introduction of the martial law, and then proscription of „Solidarność”, the significant and

stereotype division was formed and was connected with perception of contemporary reality, dividing people between „we” and „they” and dichotomous evaluation as „good” and „evil”¹. As accurately noted by Tadeusz Godlewski, it was, however, unnatural view, resulting both from contemporary socio-political situation, as well as seeing reality in black and white [Godlewski 1998: 38].

It was only when parliamentary democracy developed, which was connected with foundation of new parties and political groups, that solidification of new political divisions was possible, but it also contributed to diversification of election sympathies and preferences [Raciborski 2009: 397-399]. Elections observed since 1989 until now, and election results in particular, indicate that aerial differentiation of social support for particular political options is especially visible on regional level. Influence on that situation may have, among others, administrative changes, as well as „formation and disappearance of centres of power and ethnical differentiation” [Turska-Kawa, Wojtasik 2012: 10].

Paying main attention, however, to the Subcarpathian Voivodeship, and its characteristics on the electoral map of Poland, it should be noted that in the existing subject literature Subcarpathia (Podkarpacie) is stereotypically presented as „right-wing stronghold”, nowadays associated with Prawo i Sprawiedliwość (PiS), that since 2005 has won in consecutive elections [Puacz-Olszewska 2012: 101; Żukiewicz 2013: 179; Betkiewicz 2011: 36; Redo 2011: 315-316]. It also concerns presidential elections in years 2005-2015, where PiS candidates, standing for the presidential post of the Republic of Poland got in Podkarpacie one of highest results in the country.

The aim of the article is to present electoral characteristic of Subcarpathian Voivodeship on the electoral map of Poland with special consideration of election results from years 1989-2014 (to Sejm and the European Parliament). For the needs of this paper the former Rzeszowskie, Tarnobrzесьkie, Przemyskie and Krośnińskie voivodeships were unified and in the following article are called collectively Subcarpathian Voivodeship. The aim of the article was also a verification of the following hypothesis: despite clear preference of Podkarpackie citizens for right-wing parties and groups there is also strong support for political entities of people’s, left-wing and liberal character.

1 In the beginning this division was the result of communist propaganda that aimed to define the so-called „class enemies”, and then differentiation for „we”, which meant the nation, citizens, and the opposition, whereas „they” referred to Polska Zjednoczona Partia Robotnicza, current regime and totalitarian power.

Elections to Sejm between 1989 and 2011

The division for governmental and opposition sides was especially visible during the campaign to contract Sejm. According to the requirements of the applicable electoral law, passed by People's Republic Sejm on 7th April 1989, in the Subcarpathian Voivodeship there were 25 parliamentary and 8 Senate mandates to fill [Gliwa, Krzysztofinski 2011: passim]. In the first ballot on 4th June 1989 a decisive success was achieved by Solidarity („Solidarność”) that was concentrated in Civic Committees, gaining significant advantage over governmental side candidates, who were forced to take part in the second ballot. Additional argument for the success of „Solidarność” was filling all senatorial mandates². It should be noted, however, that this success would not have been possible to achieve if it had not been for the huge support of Catholic Church and clergyman actively involved in the electoral campaign, as well as the local groups of „Solidarność” organized in numerous electoral committees.

Election turnout, that in Subcarpathian Voivodeship (68.94%) was only slightly higher than the nationwide turnout (68.87%), attest to popularity of solidarity candidates (Table 1)³. These indicators were the result of intensive attempts of both governmental and opposition (with Church) sides to influence citizens. It should be noted, however, that elections conducted on 4th June 1989, as put by Jacek Raciborski, „had breakthrough character and citizens came to realize that extraordinariness” [Raciborski 1997: 248]. High support for „Solidarność” candidates to Sejm and Senat also attests to that (Table 1).

Table 1. Selected indicators concerning elections to contract Sejm in 1989 in Podkarpacie

Voivodeship	Election turnout in 1989 r. I ballots	The number of votes for the most popular candidate of „Solidarność” to Sejm	The number of votes for the most popular candidate of „Solidarność” to Senatu	Election turnout in 1989. II ballot
rzeszowskie	71.52%	81.32%	8.67%	30.10%
tarnobrzesckie	64.88%	74.91%	13.61%	20.32%
przemyskie	69.49%	77.77%	11.26%	20.09%
krośnieńskie	69.61%	75.64%	14.41%	20.31%
average	68.87%	77.41%	11.98%	23.45%

Source: own work on the basis of [Raciborski 1997: 269].

- 2 Mandates were obtained by: Gustaw Holoubek and Andrzej Szczypiorski (Krosno district), Jan Musiał and Tadeusz Ulma (Przemyśl district), Bolesław Fleszar and Józef Ślisz (Rzeszów district) as well as Jan Kozłowski and Zbigniew Romaszewski (Tarnobrzeg district).
- 3 It should be emphasised that the election turnout in the first ballot to the parliament in 1989 in the Subcarpathian Voivodeship was one of higher turnouts in the whole country. Much higher indicators were enjoyed by former bielskie (69.99%), leszczyńskie (70.62%), nowosądeckie (69.09%) and pilskie (70.20%) voivodeships (Raciborski 1997: 271-272).

Differentiation of election preferences and sympathies of Subcarpathian Voivodeship citizens was possible to notice especially during first free elections to the Parliament in 1991, and their solidification took place during next elections (1993-1997 and 2001-2011). In the early nineties of the 20th century, despite significant diffusion of votes casted to particular parties and campaign committees, that in particular elections were regarded as election winners, it should be noted, that in case of Podkarpacie citizens, there occurred a reversal of nationwide tendencies for the support given to parties and committees of people's, Christian-democratic and independence provenance.

From the analysis of data shown in table 2 and 3 it turns out that people's parties in Subcarpathian Voivodeship gained, on average, higher social support than nationwide. It concerns almost all elections from 1991 to 2011, when PSL had their representatives in Sejm, as well as elections to the European Parliament in 2004. PSL won then in Podkarpacie one of two mandates. Such a strong position of PSL is attested by, among others, the tradition of people's movement, related to the foundation of Stronnictwo Ludowe, and then PSL in Rzeszów, before the first World War, very strong position of „Wici” Country Youth Association, that associated boys and girls from rural areas, and agricultural-industrial character of Podkarpacie, where according to demographic indicators, about 60% of citizens lived in rural areas, whereas the remaining 40% in city areas [Mierzwa 2005: 62]. This correlate also determined clear division of economic and social interests, the equality of which was postulated by people's parties [Zarycki 2000: 35-36; 38-41].

It is noteworthy, that in 1991, the Campaign Committee „Porozumienie Ludowe” was founded for the occasion of parliamentary elections, and after the end of election campaign it transformed into a political party under the name PSL – Porozumienie Ludowe. In 1991 this Committee got in Podkarpacie 2,5-times higher result than nationwide (Table 2). They did not manage to repeat this success in next elections, but in elections in 1993 this party introduced two representatives to Senate, including one from Podkarpacie. This result was without a doubt influenced by significant dissipation of people's parties and committees, both on Podkarpacie and national political scenes, especially the initiatives undertaken by PSL „Solidarność” (transformed later into Stronnictwo Ludowo-Chrześcijańskie), concerning possible electoral alliances.

Samoobrona enjoyed relatively high social support of Podkarpacie citizens, posing a threat to PSL, that in elections to Sejm in years 2001-2005 got slightly higher results, than nationwide (Table 3). It was the period of peak popularity of Samoobrona, especially when considering, that later the party did not cross the electoral threshold and found itself outside the parliament.

When it comes to parties and committees of democratic and independence provenance, in Subcarpathian Voivodeship the most numerous representation had Konfederacja Polski Niepodległej (KNP), especially in 1991-1993 elections, Komitet Ojczyzna, that stood for elections in alliance with Wyborcza Akcja Katolicka. In the later case an important element emphasised while conducting electoral campaign was the support of Catholic Church⁴. It is evidenced by, among others, the statement of Ryszard Kapala, the vice-chairman of the board of PSL in Rzeszów, who stated that „countryside youth, whose support no one really sought, supported KNP, despite the fact that they had an alternative in the person of Jan Bury and ZMW [Association of Country Youth]; they, however, did not use it. The older ones supported Wyborcza Akcja Katolicka, which reflects strong influence of Church” [Kwiatkowski 1991: 2]. Of course supporting people’s, independence and democratic parties did not imply that Subcarpathian Voivodeship citizens did not express support to Christian-democratic or right-wing parties. In years 1991-1993 it was especially noticeable in results acquired by, among others, Porozumienie Centrum (PC), whereas in 1997 the citizens supported Akcja Wyborcza Solidarność (AWS) and Ruch Odbudowy Polski (ROP), the social support of which in the Subcarpathian Voivodeship exceeded the nationwide average (Table 2). The aforementioned state of affairs was influenced first and foremost by consolidation of Christian-democratic, conservative and centre-right parties, groups, organizations and associations concentrated in AWS, as well as election programme that emphasized the necessity to remove SLD-PSL coalition from power. Moreover, the key element used in AWS programme was respect of Christian values and referring to the teaching of Pope John Paul II.

In the face of decomposition of this group due to lost parliamentary elections in 2001 AWS, now concentrated in a new political form (Akcja Wyborcza Solidarność Prawicy) got in Podkarpacie one of higher indicators of social support (Table 3). A significant number of votes of the so-far AWS were taken over by new political entities founded in 2001, such as Liga Polskich Rodzin (LPR), PiS, or Platforma Obywatelska (PO). Among right-wing parties it was LPR that overpowered in Podkarpacie other committees, getting in Rzeszów-Tarnobrzeg election district twice-higher results than nationwide.

4 The role of Catholic Church, especially with regards to parliamentary elections, was described, among others, by Marek Delong, who rightly stated that „Church thought they have doubtless right to give advice before elections, and even to warn, showing this way the main directions, that faithful members of the Church should follow. It is justified as they speak in the name of Christ, who encompasses all areas of human activity” (Delong 2010:62). Although the Polish Episcopate resigned from making their followers vote according to the rule that „A Pole votes for a Catholic”, in social reception the Church and priests granted informal support to parties and election committees. It is evidenced, among others, by the support given to Wyborcza Akcja Katolicka in 1991, AWS in 1997, LPR in 2001 and PiS since 2005.

A surprising indicator of political sympathies in Podkarpacie were high results obtained in 2001 by SLD-UP coalition. Although this result was lower than the nationwide average, over 30%-support may imply reversal of electoral preferences (Table 3). As indicated by later electoral experience, it was a short-term tendency [Maciałek 2008: 175].

Real stabilization of political preferences and sympathies of Subcarpathian Voivodeship citizens, especially when it comes to right-wing parties, may be observed since 2005, when PiS not only got the highest number of votes, but also overpowered other political competitors. This party got in Podkarpacie one of highest indicators of support. It did not mean, however, that other parties and committees did not enjoy political sympathy of the citizens.

The contemporary mosaic of the electoral map of Poland was greatly influenced by, especially after 2001, LPR, PO and PSL, that in almost all elections to Sejm won the posts. It should be emphasized, that competition in elections to Sejm (but also to Senat) in years 2007-2011 between main political competitors, i.e. PiS, PO, PSL and SLD determined, in reality, the effectiveness of PiS affecting other political entities in the region⁵. Even parties that were formed due to split in PiS, such as Polska Jest Najważniejsza, and one year later Solidarna Polska Zbigniewa Ziobro, that appealed to the same electorate, were not able to pose a threat to the position of PiS, both nationwide as well as in Podkarpacie (Table 3 and 6).

5 About the effectiveness of PiS affecting other parties in the region attests, among others, by-election to Senate in 2013, in which PiS got over 60% of votes. For more information see: Szczepański 2014a: 37-48.

Table 2. Election results for Subcarpathian Voivodeship citizens and the rest of the country in parliamentary elections 1991-1997

Election year	Party/ committee	rzeszowskie Voivodeship	tarnobrzesckie Voivodeship	przemyskie Voivodeship	krośnieńskie Voivodeship	Avarage results of Subcarpatian Voivodeship	Nation-wide results
1991	PSL	11.2%	16.7%	23.6%	11.2%	15.67%	8.67%
	Ojczyzna/WAK	13.3%	8.1%	6.4%	13.4%	10.3%	8.74%
	SLD	7.1%	10.6%	5.7%	7.5%	7.72%	11.92%
	KPN	10.5%	9.8%	10.1%	11.7%	10.52%	7.50%
	UD	6.6%	5.7%	10.3%	8.9%	7.87%	12.32%
	NSZZ „S”	7.2%	-	3.6%	4.7%	3.87%	5.05%
	PC	8.9%	9.0%	10.6%	12.8%	10.32%	8.71%
	PSL-PL	15.8%	11.0%	14.2%	12.3%	13.32%	5.47%
	Solidarność Pracy	-	-	1.9%	2.3%	1.05%	2.06%
	UPR	2.1%	1.1%	1.5%	1.5%	1.55%	2.26%
	KLD	2.6%	2.6%	1.7%	4.5%	2.85%	7.49%
	SD	3.4%	2.4%	-	-	1.45%	1.42%
1993	PSL	20.9%	28.0%	29.2%	17.9%	24.0%	15.40%
	Ojczyzna/WAK	10.6%	5.4%	9.5%	14.2%	9.92%	6.37%
	SLD	12.1%	18.3%	12.9%	12.5%	13.95%	20.41%
	KPN	8.1%	7.0%	7.6%	8.7%	7.85%	5.77%
	UD	5.7%	4.5%	8.4%	7.9%	6.62%	10.59%
	NSZZ „S”	8.3%	8.2%	5.5%	5.6%	6.90%	4.90%
	KdR	3.5%	2.4%	1.9%	5.4%	3.30%	2.70%
	PC	4.7%	4.9%	5.5%	4.2%	4.82%	4.42%
	PSL-PL	6.4%	3.7%	4.4%	4.5%	4.75%	2.37%
	UP	4.7%	4.1%	3.1%	4.1%	4.00%	7.28%
	UPR	2.5%	2.3%	1.5%	3.4%	2.42%	3.18%
	Samoobrona	2.2%	-	2.5%	3.3%	2.00%	2.78%
	BBWR	5.2%	6.0%	3.7%	3.3%	4.55%	5.41%
Partia X	2.0%	3.3%	2.0%	3.2%	2.62%	2.74%	
KLD	1.4%	1.5%	2.1%	1.5%	1.62%	3.99%	
1997	PSL	9.14%	11.60%	14.25%	7.03%	10.50%	7.31%
	SLD	13.58%	23.73%	16.13%	15.58%	17.25%	27.13%
	AWS	57.80%	39.29%	45.72%	47.20%	47.50%	33.83%
	UW	6.10%	7.11%	8.20%	7.60%	7.25%	13.37%
	ROP	5.48%	8.00%	5.36%	10.2%	7.26%	5.56%
	KPEiR RP	1.52%	2.70%	2.82%	1.96%	2.25%	1.63%
	UP	2.56%	2.80%	1.47%	3.69%	2.63%	4.74%
KPEiR	1.24%	1.90%	2.51%	2.24%	1.97%	2.18%	

Source: self work on the basis of [Raciborski 1997: 273-276 and 279-280].

Table 3. Comparative Election results to Sejm 2001-2011

Election year	Party/ committee	Subcarpatian Voivodeship		Nationwide results
		District no 22 Krosno-Przemyśl	District no 23 Rzeszów-Tarnobrzeg	Sejm
2001	SLD-UP	31.62%	31.19%	41.04%
	PSL	15.90%	13.78%	8.98%
	Samoobrona	12.27%	10.14%	10.20%
	LPR	11.89%	15.78%	7.87%
	AWSP	10.29%	9.90%	5.60%
	PiS	8.79%	8.41%	9.50%
	PO	7.02%	8.86%	12.68%
2005	PiS	33.78%	38.20%	26.99%
	PO	15.44%	16.25%	24.14%
	LPR	13.63%	13.09%	7.97%
	Samoobrona	11.83%	7.89%	11.41%
	PSL	9.56%	10.24%	6.96%
	SLD	9.16%	7.34%	11.31%
2007	PiS	44.19%	48.43%	32.11%
	PO	29.30%	27.81%	41.51%
	PSL	12.96%	11.16%	8.91%
	LiD*	9.21%	8.78%	13.15%
	Samoobrona	1.81%	1.09%	1.53%
	LPR	1.49%	1.84%	1.30%
2011	PiS	44.73%	48.03%	29.89%
	PO	25.30%	24.46%	39.18%
	PSL	12.65%	10.46%	8.36%
	Ruch Palikota	7.06%	6.72%	10.02%
	SLD	6.18%	5.61%	8.24%
	PJN	1.51%	1.84%	2.19%

*Lewica i Demokraci coalition was formed by: SLD+SDPL+PD+UP

Source: self work on the basis of election results, webpage of the National Electoral Commission, <http://pkw.gov.pl> (14.07.2015).

A measurable indicator of the activity of Subcarpatian Voivodeship citizens was also election turnout, attesting to involvement of this community in both social and public issues as well as expressing willingness of having direct influence on numerous processes taking place both nationwide and in Podkarpacie. Table 4 analyses election turnout of the citizens of Podkarpacie

and the rest of the country in years 1991-1997. These data imply, that participation of citizens taking active part in elections was only slightly higher than generally in the whole Poland.

Table 4. Election turnout of Subcarpathian Voivodeship and the whole country in parliamentary elections 1991-1997

Election year	rzeszowskie voivodeship	tarnobrzeskie voivodeship	przemyskie voivodeship	krośnieńskie voivodeship	Average turnout for Subcarpathian Voivodeship	Nationwide results
1991	51.40%	38.70%	45.30%	47.40%	45.70%	43.20%
1993	55.40%	48.40%	52.70%	53.20%	52.42%	52.13%
1997	59.81%	46.44%	52.15%	52.79%	52.79%	47.93%

Source: self work on the basis of [Raciborski 1997: 273, 275 and 279].

A detailed data analysis enables to make a conclusion that election turnout in Podkarpacie in years 1991-1997 was not really one of the highest in the country, but it rather comprised an averaged result. In case of parliamentary elections in 1991 an upward tendency deviating from turnout in Podkarpacie was recorded in former voivodeships: the capital city of Warsaw (54.7%), leszczyńskie (45.8%), poznańskie (47.7%), pilskie (46.0%), gdańskie (50.1%), tarnowskie (50.03%), nowosądeckie (52.5%), nrakowskie (48.1%) and bielskie (50.0%). On the other hand, higher level of citizens activity, measured by participation in the parliamentary elections in 1993, that deviated from the average in Podkarpacie, was noted in the former voivodeships of: capital city of Warsaw (61.1%), warszawskie (48.7%), Białopodlaskie (52.7%), bielskie (55.3%), bydgoskie (57.1%), gdańskie (55.6%), kaliskie (56.6%), Sosnowiec - katowickie (55.6%), koszalińskie (53.2%), krakowskie (52.9%), leszczyńskie (60.0%), łódzkie (53.5%), nowosądeckie (53.4%), pilskie (58.9%), płockie (52.9%), poznańskie (59.3%), wrocławskie (52.7%) and zamojskie (53.4%). In parliamentary elections in 1997 the indicator of election turnout for Podkarpacie was higher only in the voivodeships of: capital city of Warsaw (60.68%), bielskie (56.15%), gdańskie (55.01%), krakowskie (54.48%), nowosądeckie (56.57%) and toruńskie (53.68%) [Raciborski 1997: 273-276; 279-280].

Small percentage of citizens taking active part in elections to parliament improved in elections in years 2001-2011 (Table 5), but only in elections in 2005 the election turnout in Podkarpacie was higher, than in the rest of the country. Over the years, especially in the analyzed period between 1991 and 2011, we can observe slight increase of the interest in parliamentary elections, in connection with which we can assume, that strong influence on participation of citizens in elections may be exerted by current socio-political situation

or a range of other factors, which were completely independent from citizens. The turnout is lowered by people who are passive towards participation in elections, and the high percentage of the so-called indecisive people.

Table 5. Election turnout in Subcarpathian Voivodeship and nationwide in years 2001-2011

Election year	Subcarpathian Voivodeship		Nationwide results
	Election district no 22 Krosno-Przemyśl	Election district no 21 Rzeszów-Tarnobrzeg	
2001	47.28%	49.14%	49.29%
2005	41.10%	44.24%	40.57%
2007	48.52%	52.47%	53.88%
2011	44.18%	48.75%	48.92%

Source: self study on the basis of the data of the National Electoral Commission, www.pkw.gov.pl, (accessed on 15.07.2015).

European Parliamentary Elections 2004-2014

The specificity of the Subcarpathian Voivodeship elections against the background of the country can be characterised taking into account the elections to the European Parliament. They are held in all of the member states, carried out in national languages as well as with the involvement of politicians popular in the given country, not in the whole of European Parliament. It should also be noted that the EP elections are not held on the same day and by the same electoral law [Szczepański 214b: 97-110]. So far there have been three such elections in Poland, in 2004, 2009 and 2014 and each of them represented an area of competition at both central and local level.

The layout of political forces in the Subcarpathian Voivodeship was determined, as shown in chart 6, by four parties, which obtained their representation in European Parliament (EP). In 2004 –LPR and PSL, whereas in 2009 and 2014 – PiS and PO⁶. In the first of these periods, the essential part of the competition was putting the names of the candidates on the electoral lists, rather than the parties themselves, although they played an important role in getting electoral mandate too. In this case, right-wing and people’s sympathies of the citizens of the Subcarpathian Voivodeship proved to be key while in the next elections, the fundamental part of the competition was all about the supporters and the opponents of PO and PiS. This trend also continued in the elections in 2014, where the letter party got as many as two mandates [Szczepański 2015: 47-57].

6 In the UP elections in 2004 the mandate was won by Filip Adwent (LRP) and Mieczysław Janowski (PSL), in the elections in 2009: Tomasz Poręba (PiS) and Elżbieta Łukacijewska (PO), while in 2014 T. Poręba and Stanisław Ożóg (PiS) and E. Łukacijewska (PO).

It is worth noting that in 2004-2014 we could observe left-wing, liberal, centre-right and right-wing political players trying to play an important role in both national and local arena, however in the highly polarised political system and with the right-wing sympathies of the Podkarpackie province citizens it was hard to win people's support needed to get an electoral mandate.

Table 6. European Parliament election results of the Subcarpathian province citizens together with the electoral turnout against the background of the country 2004-2014

Election year	Party/ committee	Subcarpathian province	National results	Subcarpathian Voivodeship turnout	Turnout on a national scale
		District nr 9 Rzeszów			
2004	PO	13.42%	24,10%	23.90%	20.87%
	LPR	24.00%	15,92%		
	PiS	19.63%	12,67%		
	Samobrona	11.33%	10,78%		
	SLD-UP	8.62%	9,35%		
	UW	1.98%	7,33%		
	PSL	11.15%	6,34%		
SdPL	3.00%	5,33%			
2009	PO	29.19%	44.43%	22.28%	24.53%
	PiS	41.88%	27.40%		
	SLD-UP	7.40%	12.34%		
	PSL	12.45%	7.01%		
	PdP - CentroLewica*	1.66%	3.98%		
	Prawica Rzeczypospolitej	3.04%	1.95%		
2014	PO	18.44%	32.13%	23.99%	23.83%
	PiS	49.31%	31.78%		
	SLD-UP	4.71%	9.44%		
	Nowa Prawica-Janusz Korwin Mikke	7.15%	7.15%		
	PSL	7.27%	6.80%		
	Solidarna Polska	5.91%	3.98%		
	Europa Plus Twój Ruch	1.95%	3.58%		
	Polska Razem JG	3.47%	3.16%		

* Porozumienie dla Przyszłości - Centrolewica – committee formed by: Partia Demokratyczna demokraci.pl, Socjaldemokracja Polska and Zieloni 2004.

Source: own work based on National Electoral Commission <http://pkw.gov.pl/wybory-do-parlamentu-europejskiego/> [accessed on: 15.07.2015].

The electoral turnout in the Podkarpackie region, as indicated in chart 6, was higher than the national average only twice i.e. in 2004 and 2014. The reason for such a situation was the lack of interest in the election as such, uninteresting programme as well as the announcement of the two-year period of elections in Poland: EP, local, presidential and parliamentary elections [Szczepański 2014b: 97-99].

The causes of electoral behaviours among the residents of the Podkarpackie voivodship

Among the most frequently mentioned explanations of the aerial differentiation of sympathies and political preferences, especially in the local arena, there exists, among others, a very popular collective hypothesis used by political scientists and sociologists, which explains the results of the local elections in terms of historical divisions of Poland from the time of the Polish partitions. Each of the regions annexed could be characterised, in a way typical for the organisation of the state by the invader, by a different political culture, the level of economic growth, and a considerable degree of civil liberties in the case of the current area of Podkarpackie which was part of Galicia region [Raciborski 1997: 158; Skwierczyński 2008: 141-143].

This hypothesis has, of course, its undeniable scientific value, but there are some factors which influence the local diversity of political preferences which, until now, have been ignored. These are, among others, the role of the Catholic church and the clergy during the electoral campaign, electoral absenteeism, raised awareness of the citizens when it comes to the decision-making process understood as taking part in elections and putting papers into the ballot boxes, demographic diversity, differences in economic status as well as unequal access to education and health facilities etc. All these elements will determine the political preferences and sympathies in a given voivodeship. This, however, requires a separate study.

Concluding remarks

Looking at the electoral map of Poland, one may say that the Subcarpathian Voivodeship is strongly polarised by leading political parties and groups which, in majority of the elections, shape their outcome. Referring back to the hypothesis formulated at the beginning of this work, it should be stated that the Subcarpathian Voivodeship enjoys the support given to not only right-wing parties but also to people's parties, leftist and liberal ones, which significantly impacts the political mosaic of the region. This is not, however,

the support strong enough to let them win in the province though the significant number of people who give their support to people's, leftist and liberal parties affect the polarity of the political system as well as the rivalry to a great extent.

The well-grounded sympathies and electoral preferences of the residents of the Podkarpackie province were already seen in the first elections in 1991 and, since then, we have had the chance to observe the manner with which political parties and committees have been trying to win the public support. From the scientific point of view, this phenomenon provides us with a lot of valuable material, on the other hand, however, the stability of electoral behaviours concentrated only around the biggest political parties has a negative influence on the possibility of participation in the process of struggle for power.

The conclusions drawn on the basis of the above presented material allow one to say that the Podkarpackie region has proved to be a real „right-wing stronghold”. The question to be raised though is: what would have to change in the Polish political system so that the residents of the region changed their preferences? It seems there would be too many responses and the multitude of hypotheses could be hard to justify from the scientific point of view.

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