

**Policy and Voting Preferences of Romanian  
Migrants 2000-2016**

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**Abstract:**

In most studies of voting behavior, political preferences are explained at the level of the “country, election, electoral cohort or individual voter” (Franklin 2004). Notably absent from these studies is the impact of voters living abroad. Their importance is not to be neglected, especially in democratizing states.

This research targets the predictions that lie behind the turnout and preferences of Romanian emigrants. Romanian Diaspora consistently votes for parties and candidates that promise reforms. This vote is associated with liberal economic policy preferences and support for minority groups. I test these hypotheses with elections results data from 2000 to 2016 coupled with data collected from [Votulmeu.com](http://Votulmeu.com) an online Voting Advice Application from the 2012 parliamentary and 2014 presidential elections in Romania.

**Key words:**

emigrants, voting, policy preferences, Romania, Voting Advice Applications

***Introduction***

The results of the first round of the 2014 presidential elections in Romania suggested a comfortable win for the incumbent Prime Minister Victor Ponta, the president of the Social Democratic Party. After the first round, Ponta held a 10% lead over the Christian-Liberal Alliance ethnic German candidate Klaus Iohannis. The runoff campaign was marked by reports displayed on all TV channels showing the Romanian labor migrants not being able to vote abroad in the first round. Surprisingly, Klaus Iohannis, who obtained 54% of the votes, won the second round of elections. Romanian migrants queued at the Romanian embassies and consulates, massively mobilized via Facebook, and organized ad hoc street protests in front of voting stations when they were not able to cast their votes. They overtly supported Iohannis

for the second round of elections and reacted strongly against the Romanian government handling of external voting in the first round of elections. The importance of the impact of migrant political behavior and attitudes is not singular to Romania. In Nigeria, president Jonathan contemplates on allowing Diaspora to vote starting 2015 (Adichie 2014) but only after the Nigerian Diaspora collected signatures to permit their right to vote and organized several protests. In Scotland, at the 2014 referendum, up to 800,000 Scottish people living in England expressed discontent about not having the opportunity to express their preferences (Mycock 2014). In some rare cases, diasporas had a decisive effect on the national politics of countries of origin. In 2006, in Italy, Romano Prodi won a majority in the Senate with the help of the expats voting abroad. In the United States, the military overseas played an important role in providing support for the republican candidate George W. Bush while, at the same time, the civilian elections were poorly organized (Christie 2004).

Long voiced concerns with question on when and why immigrants impact electoral politics have prompted some scholars to investigate how does emigration impacts the politics of the sending countries. This gap is troubling given the increasing number of emigrant populations that sometimes cast a decisive vote in electoral contests in the country of origin. To gain a complete understanding of the impact of emigrants on national politics and particularly to answer a question whether they are a distinct electoral block, researchers must address certain puzzles. These include a comparison of emigrant and non-emigrant political participation; whether emigrants vote differently than the citizens that did not emigrate; institutional constraints on voting; determinants of emigrant voter turnout; and whether emigrants have different issues that determine their voting preferences than those that did not leave their country. Admittedly, this stream of research is facing the challenge of scarce data resources. This paper begins to fill this gap by investigating the political behavior of the emigrant population of one of the most important European countries with recent emigration – Romania. As a first step the paper will ask whether the political participation of emigrants and their political preferences differ from the non-emigrant citizens. Namely I focus on elections results to tap party preferences and on VAA data to discover the preferences on key issues such as welfare state and minority rights. As a second step I explore the determinants of vote choice of Romanians and test whether the migration experience has an effect on vote choice.

These issues are important in all countries of emigration but the investigation is focused on Romania for practical and theoretical reasons. Firstly, emigrant political behavior and its

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impact on the politics of the country of origin is becoming a highly salient topic in Europe and it is likely to remain so in the future. Secondly most studies of emigrant impact on the politics of the sending country is focused on US and Mexico. Finally, Romanian migrants have become important political actors in Romania. In the 2009 and 2014 presidential elections their contribution to the election results made former Prime Minister Adrian Nastase wonder whether emigrants should enjoy the political rights of the country they have left behind. From 2007, since Romania joined the European Union, to 2014 more than three million Romanians went abroad for work, study or join their families. The electoral strength of the emigrant Romanian electorate has prompted main political parties in Romania to devise strategies and deliver promises to capture the emigrant vote, an entirely new phenomenon in Romanian politics.

On a practical level, the election results of emigrant voting are provided at the voting section level by the National Electoral Authority. Secondly, the Voting Advice Application (an online application that compares the political preferences of users to political parties) “Votul meu” (My Vote) for the presidential elections in 2014 yielded approximately 1400 users, which voted abroad. Although fraught with issues of accurate representation, these data provide a rare opportunity to survey the emigrant issue preferences and compare them to those that did not emigrate from Romania.

The political participation of emigrants will be restricted to turnout. I investigate the attitudes of emigrants towards the market and minority rights (Kitschelt 1992). These issues have defined Romanian electoral politics since 1989 and are contested issues. I expect that that Romanian emigrants would be more supportive of the market and be more open to minority rights than non-emigrants. Further on, I explain how these preferences relate to partisan and presidential candidate support. I use regression to test whether migration affects the political choices they intend to make.

The article proceeds as follows. The next section relates this study to the relevant literature on migrant political behavior followed by a short overview of Romanian post 1989 emigration history. I then turn to data analysis and discuss the evolution of emigrant political participation starting from 2004 and display the differences on political preferences between emigrants and non-migrants in Romania. Next I evaluate the impact policy preferences and migration experience have on political behavior. Conceptual fuzziness characterizes the usage of terms such as Diaspora, migrant, trans-national community or citizens living abroad (Sheffer 2003). This paper, due to the complexity of migration circumstances does not emphasize

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distinctions and characteristics. Most migrants can be qualified as “unskilled immigrant group that is locked into a subordinate status” (Cohen 1997: 163). Others are highly skilled and some are long settled while others are recent migrants. The reasons to migrate are also diverse. Some escaped their oppressive regimes; others left their country when the regime permitted, such as the Eastern Europeans. Some have an ideal view of their home community other despise it. Some plan to return while others are not sure. Given that the focus of the project is on political participation, rights, attitudes and behavior there is no operational reason to differentiate among migrants and restrict the use of the term Diaspora. There is no cost associated with grouping migrants all together as Diaspora or emigrants since formally the country of origin treats them in the same way.

### ***The Political Role of Romanian Migrants***

The emigration from Romania took place in three important historical stages. During communism, diaspora was largely dissident. Given the restrictions to travelling abroad, the Romanian politically active diasporic community was composed of people that emigrated illegally, were expelled by the communist authorities or chose not to return once they arrived to a democratic country risking their family’s safety back home. The Romanian dissidence movement was feeble (Angi 2011). Political participation occurred mainly through protests of intellectuals broadcasted through Radio Free Europe. Paul Goma, Mihai Botez and others issued communiques and open letters addressed to the communist leader Nicolae Ceausescu. Dissidents residing in Romania often wrote the letters. The Diaspora intermediated the publication of these documents altering the image of Ceausescu as a good communist friendly to Western European leaders. The response of the communist regime was to try to repress Diaspora with the help of the Romanian Secret Police.

The second stage began after the fall of the communist regime in December 1989 that emphasized the role of the kin communities living in the neighboring countries. The 1991 Romanian constitution recognized the existence of Romanian communities abroad and established polling stations in embassies and consulates. The government focused on the strengthening of the ethnic identity of Romanians living in Hungary, Moldova, Ukraine and Serbia. Most of the initiatives focused on symbolic politics (Iordachi 2004) to strengthen the existence of a transnational community.

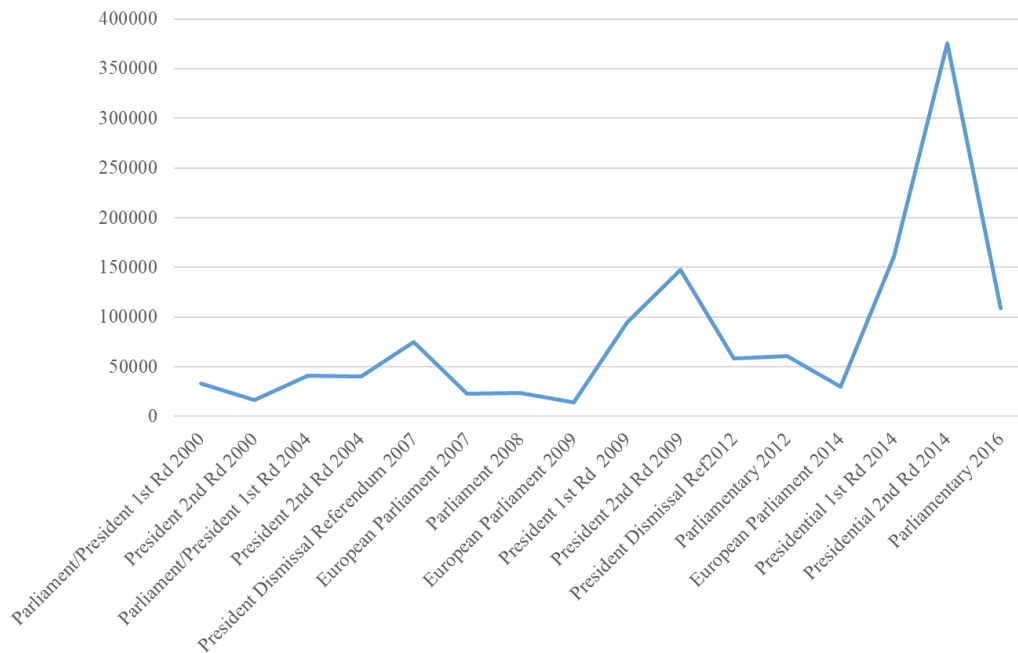
A wave of emigration took place in the years following the regime changes. Nearly 100,000 Romanians changed their residence to a domicile abroad. At the same time a wave of immigration took place from Moldova, a country with a majority Romanian-speaking population. The majority of emigrants consisted of ethnic Germans and Hungarians. During communism the western Germany officials negotiated the emigration of ethnic Germans by offering money to the Romanian authorities for each person. In this way approximately 200,000 ethnic migrants left Romania ([Adevarul.ro 2010](#)). After the regime change most ethnic Germans left Romania. Citizenship problems with Hungary were complicated. In 2004 the Hungarian government organized a referendum to discuss the awarding of citizenship rights to the three million Hungarians living in Romania. The referendum was annulled due to low turnout. Later the Hungarian government adopted the “Act of Hungarians living in neighboring countries” that offered symbolic citizenship. A few years later the Hungarian government enacted the law that was defeated in referendum allowing anyone who could prove the Hungarian origin, to receive the Hungarian citizenship. The immigrants consisted of Moldovan citizens. The supporters of granting political rights to Diaspora successfully lobbied for Romanians living in Moldova to acquire Romanian citizenship. Around 200,000 Moldovan citizens received formal Romanian citizenship through this special procedure. The number of Moldovan citizens applying for Romanian citizenship increased after Romania joined the European Union.

The third stage, the focus on identity construction was replaced by economic concerns related to European labor migration. This process started in 2001 with the European Union officials’ decision to lift visa requirements for Romanian citizens. This decision was a first step that facilitated the access of Romanians to the EU labor market. The Spanish government was most visible in trying to employ a large number of temporary workers from Romania, a program that was successful also due to the language similarities between Spanish and Romanian. In 2007, with Romania becoming a member of the European Union, the labor oriented migration accelerated. In 2008, Spanish and Italian authorities reported 1 million legal Romanian residents ([Adevarul 2009](#)). The Ministry of Foreign Affairs established a “Department for Relations of Romanians from Abroad” that elaborated policies related to the Romanians living abroad ([Soros 2009](#)). In 2008 a new electoral law established special parliamentary seats for Romanians living abroad. Political parties focused their electoral campaigning in Italy and Spain. Attention to the votes from Diaspora was great during the 2009 presidential elections. The news media showed Romanians queuing. The process of voting took longer time because each voter had to

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fill in a form and sign a statement that they would not and did not vote in another polling station. Due to the closeness of the election results the Diaspora's vote input mattered determining the winner in these critical elections. The most contested voting station was in Paris where in 14 hours 3,785 voters casted a vote triggering suspicions of fraud. The vote recount did not result in a change of the final count. In 2009 the turnout increased dramatically (Figure 1).

**Figure 1.** Turnout of Romanians living abroad, 2000-2016



Source: own elaboration.

In this section I detail the program and the electoral messages that targeted the Diaspora during the 2014 presidential elections. The popularity of certain candidates among the Romanians living abroad might be explained by the electoral promises politicians made to the emigrant community.

The political rights of Romanian emigrants did not become an electoral topic during the electoral campaign of the first round of presidential elections. Klaus Iohannis (2014) had a special section dedicated to Diaspora. The other political programs contained no more than one paragraph (Victor Ponta and Monica Macovei) or one phrase (Elena Udrea, Călin Popescu Tăriceanu, Dan Diaconescu) about Romanian communities living abroad.

Iohannis promised electronic voting, vote by mail, more consulates and Romanian classes in schools where the Romanian community is present. He proposed the creation of an advisory

board that would further the Diaspora's interests and offered encouragements for diaspora related activities by funding of NGOs. In similar vein to other candidates, he swore to protect the traditional communities of Romanians living in the neighboring countries and improve the image of Romanians abroad.

Monica Macovei promised to introduce mail voting to all elections and to be a supporter of Diaspora. Elena Udrea (2014) stated that she will protect the cultural identity of Romanians abroad. Călin Popescu-Tăriceanu (2014) focused on the need to reduce the emigration of the workforce. Victor Ponta's (2014) program focused on stopping the brain drain by promoting a program called SMART that opened jobs in the public administration for emigrants. He also promised to strengthen the identity of the traditional communities.

Dan Diaconescu, the president of the People's Party Dan Diaconescu (2014) promised the introduction of compulsory voting for Romanians living abroad and one of the 100 points program mentions that emigration has to be stopped. In 2012 the party became known for its promise of 20,000 euro for each Romanian that returns to the home country.

William Brînză was the first representative of Diaspora that ran in the presidential elections. His electoral slogan was "Let's Break their Gang" a direct antiestablishment message. He was not very popular though losing with 0.45% (43,194). In Diaspora he obtained 25,466 votes out of the 160,065 casted. Later, Brînză retired from politics following investigations of financial embezzlement.

During the first round of election the attention to the votes of Diaspora became visible. In the first round of the presidential elections the media showed, again, Romanians queuing at the Romanian embassies and consulates. Several Romanians living abroad were not able to cast a vote due to high participation. This led to protests in UK, Germany, Austria, Belgium and Italy that were portrayed across European media. Representatives of Diaspora criticized the deficient organization of the electoral process by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and asked for more polling stations and voting booths for the second round of the presidential elections. The refusal of the Minister of Foreign Affairs to respond to the demands of Diaspora led to his resignation. Yet, despite the second round of elections taking place with two polling stations less the turnout of Diaspora doubled. In seven polling stations, there were more than 4,000 votes casted in 14 hours. The highest reported turnout (4,626) was at a voting station in London. Similarly to 2009, the polling agencies projected Ponta as a winner. The next day, after the votes

were counted from abroad the outcome was overturned. Iohannis gathered more than 89% from the Diaspora. It determined the winner in a critical election.

The deficient voting process and the refusal of the government headed by Victor Ponta to increase the number of polling stations abroad had immediate results. The emigrants overwhelmingly supported Iohannis in the second round of the presidential elections.

The next section reviews other studies that investigate the political role of emigrants.

### ***Migrant Political Behavior***

Most migration studies emphasize the political integration of migrants in the host community and analyze political participation from that perspective (Audebert & Dorai 2010; Bauböck 2006; Black et al. 2010; Dancygier & Saunders 2006; Dijstelbloem & Meijer 2011; Wallace & Stola 2001). These studies focus on political integration that seems to be dependent on how permissive is the host state with granting political rights (Martiniello 2006). There are two key approaches to the analysis of attitudes of migrants and their involvement in the politics of the country of origin. First, the granting of political rights is the result of emigrants pressuring governments in the country of origin. Migrants exert pressures on the less liberal regimes (Østergaard-Nielsen 2012; Koinova 2009) through lobbying donor organizations (Koinova 2009) or sending out calls for democracy and human rights as it was the case for the diaspora of the former communist regimes in Eastern Europe (Falk 2003). Being offered an exit from the political system, dictators hoped to reduce the number of voices that support liberalization. In turn, migrants became agents of democratization from outside. Oppressive regimes attempted to reduce voting opportunities like in Zimbabwe where only military and consular service officers living abroad are allowed to vote (Magaisa 2008). In Uganda, Ghana, and Zimbabwe voting rights of the Diaspora were reduced (Boateng 2005). According to the second approach the political participation of migrants is shaped by a discussion about citizenship (Bauböck 2006; Shevel 2014, Ziemer & Roberts 2013). Voting rights of a Diaspora confronts the question regarding the appropriate conceptualization of a political community that increasingly becomes mobile. On the one hand extending voting rights to expatriates is the main element of political integration with the goal of full political inclusion for all of a nation's citizens and social groups. On the other hand expatriates are seen as renegades who should not be permitted a say in government selection since they are not affected to the same extent by its decisions, laws, and regulations as citizens living in the home country. If one is to follow the principle of "No



Taxation Without Representation,” migrants that do not pay taxes in the home country should not have political rights. In both instances the Diaspora is often a marginalized category, both by the country of origin that views them as being outside the political community and by a host country that views them as foreign, temporary, and perhaps, second-class inhabitants. States in transition are more likely to enfranchise groups that were previously excluded or marginal or enemies to national politics (Østergaard-Nielsen 2012: 72). There are significant examples of countries that extended the rights of migrants (IDEA 2007) during transition from authoritarian rule. The political influence of migrants in the country of origin is especially important in the context of the wave of migration from East-Central Europe to Western Europe. The type of migration that occurs from East to West is *liquid* (Snel et al. 2006) with temporary migrants going back and forth and having a more determined goal to settle in the home country. However, these approaches do not sufficiently consider the impact of the behavior and attitudes of emigrants towards the democratic political process of the country of origin. The former emphasizes the pressure for liberalization of authoritarian regimes and focuses less on consolidation of democracy. The latter focuses on normative discussions of citizenship rights in the origin and host countries and less on their use and impact on the attitudes of migrants (Bauböck 2006).

The political participation of Diaspora in the origin country is an increasingly relevant phenomenon (Bauböck 2006; Martiniello 2006; Burean 2011; Østergaard-Nielsen & Ciornei 2012). Findings show that granting voting rights to Diaspora accelerates the diffusion of liberal principles to neighboring countries (Turcu & Urbatsch 2015). In Mexico, migrants remit democracy through external lobbying, voting from abroad and, upon return, by influencing others to be involved in politics (Perez-Armedaniz & Crow 2010). In Eastern European countries returned migrants have political attitudes that support European Union institutions and inherit a stronger sense of political efficacy (Careja & Emmeneger 2012).

Voting is one of the most popular forms of political participation (Blais 2000) and is an indicator of democratic quality (Fieldhouse et al. 2007). Increasing turnout has become an important objective in Europe especially following the lowering turnout rates in national (Rubenson et al. 2007) but mostly in European elections. One method to foster turnout is by facilitating access to vote for excluded or marginalized groups. Lowering the voting age (Wagner et al. 2012) produced positive effects in increasing turnout. Allowing migrants to vote

at elections could be one method of increasing turnout and improving the democratic quality of a state.

Emigration is a result of an individual-self selection process that would yield systemic differences between emigrant and the non-migrant population.

The presence of migrants' changes attitudes in host and origin countries (De Haas 2005) especially when migrants' socioeconomic status suffers dramatic alterations (van Meeteren, Engbersen & van San 2009). One might postulate the economic interests would dictate preferences for candidates that encourage less redistribution and more private economic initiative. Few studies ask whether migrants acquire democratic attitudes and become agents of democratization in their home countries. Mexican migrants that live in the United States remit democratization from abroad by voting and pressuring authorities of the country of origin for reforms. Careja and Emmenegger (2012) find that the financially successful return migrants from Eastern Europe have a stronger sense of political efficacy, are more satisfied with democracy and have a higher support for the EU.

Political attitudes are influenced by socio demographic characteristics (Almond & Verba 1989) and institutional context (Anderson & Tverdova 2001). The reason to emigrate is a factor that significantly impacts the granting of voting rights. Refugees from war torn countries, political asylum recipients can have stronger pro democratic attitudes. At the same time ethnic emigrants would have more hostile attitudes towards the political system of the country of origin (Koinova 2009).

The emigration experience in a consolidated democracy increases satisfaction with democracy (Careja & Emmenegger 2012; Perez-Armedaniz & Crow 2010; Camp 2003) although some of the temporary migrants have minimal contact with the host country and rely on the bonding social capital of their co nationals. Yet financial success can have positive effects towards the attitudes towards the regime, political participation and political interest (Mishler & Rose 2001; Williams & Baláž 2006) of the host country with spills over effects on evaluations of the regime in the country of origin. Hence migrants have more liberal values than non-migrants. I expect emigrants to have more liberal preferences on economy and on granting minority rights (Hypothesis 1). These translate into support for parties that promise radical reforms that take the shape of new political parties and presidential candidates that are independent from the old political parties (Hypothesis 2). Finally I assert that the migration experience has an effect on vote choice in supporting center right candidates (Hypothesis 3).

Controls include socio-demographics (education, age, gender), past declared turnout and political interest.

### ***Methodology***

This is a case study on the political participation and voting behavior of the emigrants from Romania. As a case study its relevance relies on inspecting a phenomenon that is deviant from the classical studies of voting behavior and political participation and it has a potential impact on comparative studies. This study is relevant in the sense that it takes into account, besides the classical determinants of political supports, the experience of migration. This element seems to be particularly important in the Romanian context. The paper investigates what motivates Romanian migrants to have center-right, liberal political preferences. More generally it tries to understand emigrants role in the politics of the country of origin by describing a case where this has implications on who gets elected to the presidential office. The selection of the 2014 presidential elections data is fortunate. Similarly to 2009, the Romanian Diaspora's electoral support for the candidate of the center right National Liberal Party produced a stunning result with Klaus Iohannis gaining on the 10% deficit he had in the first round of the 2014 Romanian presidential elections and ultimately winning the elections. Almost 5% from that gain came from the emigrant vote. I use election results at the country level to assess the turnout levels of Romanians living abroad and report of their voting preferences. I use VAA data to report their preferences on issues.

The Romanian VAA Votulmeu.com data contains thirty questions on issues and a few socio demographics. The selection of the most important issues is done with Mokken scaling that led to the selection of eight issues that seem to compose an economic and a distribution of rights dimensions. The analysis was performed by Vasilis Manavopoulos. The left right self-placement taps on the level of economic liberalism. The GAL-TAN tests users permissiveness on the distribution of rights. These were transformed into dummy variables that measure the economic liberal placement and liberal distribution of rights. Candidate selection variable measures whether the candidate is preferred because of the ideas she/he promotes and it is also a dichotomous variable. The preference for issues were transformed into dichotomous variables and measure support for an issue. Table 4 shows the eight issues that were identified as relevant. Socio demographics include age, measured through the year of birth, gender and education. The education variable separates university graduates from other citizens. I use binomial logistic

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regression since the dependent variable is nominal and independent variables are dichotomous and one continuous (age). I included the logarithm of the age variable and found no significant effects thus I could include age in the model. The estimates I use are b logit coefficients that measure the association between variables. There are three types of predictors used: socio-demographic variables (age, gender, education), political variables (past reported turnout, interest in politics) and issues (reason for the selection of the candidate, GAL-TAN, left-right, support for private health care, reduce public sector, market economy, gay rights, use of marijuana, abortion, religion in school, church in public life). These three sets are added one at a time to evaluate their effects when introduced as a set of explanatory variables.

The regressions use the entire database to assess the effect of what Dancygier and Saunders (2006: 967) in a similar study on immigrants termed the *self-selection hypothesis* that measures the opinion gaps among migrants and population that does not migrate. This hypothesis explains the inherent differences that might result from the different life experiences of migrants and non-migrants.

### *Data*

The scope of the paper is to link the turnout and the election results to information about emigrant programmatic preferences with the help of data obtained from the Voting Advice Application, hereafter “VAA”. The online revolution proved to be a solid ground for the development of VAAs. Created initially as paper-and-pencil tests in the late 1990s (Ruusuvirta 2010; Gemenis & Rosema 2014), VAAs became used worldwide, with millions of users seeking advice during electoral campaigns. Initially implemented in the Netherlands, then Switzerland and Germany, VAAs are now present in almost all European countries (exceptions are Malta and Slovenia) (Garzia & Marschall 2012). VAAs are present in second-order elections as well, with the EU Profiler and EUvox in the elections for the European Parliament in 2009 and 2014. VAAs are campaigning tools that eliminate the cost of information, offering a tailored advice, simulating the context of full information. The growing importance of issue voting (Dalton 1996; Franklin et al. 2009) following Downs (1957) spatial model, where every policy can be placed on a left-right continuum, is accommodated by the VAAs (Cedroni & Garzia 2010). In order for issue voting to be meaningful, voters have to have clear issue preferences, parties have to compete over the same policy issues (Nie & Verba 1979) and voters have to be able to identify their position relative to the position of parties (Butler & Stokes 1969). VAAs help voters in

making more informed political decisions, lowering the costs of information, by presenting to the voter the parties' position on salient policy positions, by comparing, based on an algorithm, the position of the user with the position of the parties, and presenting the user with a rank-order list of parties, following a proximity logic (Cedroni & Garzia 2010). As a web survey tool, the quality of VAA data suffers from overall survey error, made out of coverage error, sampling error, non-response error and measuring error (Dilman 2011 in Andreadis 2014). Coverage error occurs when part of the population cannot be included in the sample; in the case of VAAs, this has to do with Internet usage, more specifically with the Internet penetration rate and Internet literacy. Sampling error represents the inaccuracy in estimating a certain quantity based on the sample, when the entire population is not available; here, the sampling error has to do with the self-selection bias of users into using the tool. Non-response error occurs when users do not respond to questions, and this pattern can be discerned when compared to the answers of other users. Measurement error occurs when the answers provided by the users are wrong or inaccurate (Andreadis 2014).

Although extremely cost effective, the use of this type of data is criticized. This is due to the bias the VAA generated data carries. The most important caveat one has to acknowledge when dealing with VAA is that the data is not representative of the population at large. More precisely, the data is biased towards the young, better educated (Marschall & Schultze 2012), from urban areas, with more left-wing orientation (Mendez & Wheatley 2014). An additional bias is represented by the gender, with two-thirds of the respondents being male (Mendez & Wheatley 2014). The Romanian VAA *Votulmeu.com* organized for the 2014 presidential elections contained 18,000 users. After cleaning the data 10,039 users remained out of which 956 declared that they vote abroad. Despite its obvious limitations this data offers a chance to glance at the issue preferences of Romanian emigrants. Thus this application offers a unique chance to access a population that is often not present in surveys. Although some research institutes such as CURS and Metromedia Transylvania implemented surveys on Romanian migrants living abroad they do not contain information about their voting behavior and programmatic preferences. One way to find surveys that include migrants from Romania is to find them with in the Eurobarometer data following the Careja and Emmenegger (2012) study. This was not a successful solution due to the extremely small number of citizens that were living outside Romania and declared themselves as coming from Romania in the 2014 Eurobarometer surveys. Not having an accurate picture of the emigrating population of Romania makes it difficult to

assess the representativeness of the 956 Romanians that declared that they would vote abroad and used the Romanian VAA. The users of the 2014 VAA have graduate studies, and they are young. Thus the interpretation of these data has to be done while having in mind these serious limitations.

### ***Political Preferences of Romanian Emigrants***

This Klaus Iohannis obtained 89.73% of the migrant vote in the 2014 presidential second-round runoff, receiving 338,873 of the 377,651 votes. His majority helped in winning him the presidency. Iohannis garnered almost three times the number of votes than the previous president Traian Basescu (115,831).

It is not surprising that Iohannis was popular in Diaspora. Candidates from center right parties perform better than candidates of the left. This claim holds for the Czech and the Polish Diaspora (Doyle & Fidrmuc 2005). Table 1 records the vote of the Romanian Diaspora since 2007. The vote percentages for the main Romanian political parties show a remarkable consistency in the vote. PD-L, PNL, ARD (The Right Romania Alliance) was a plurality winner in elections until 2012. Since then new parties and their candidates became increasingly popular with Diaspora. In the 2014 EP elections it was PMP (Popular Movement Party) that won the elections in Diaspora with 28.63% of the valid votes.

**Table 1.** Voting Preferences of the Romanian Diaspora (Percentage of Valid Votes Cast)

	<b>PSD</b>	<b>PD-L</b>	<b>PNL</b>	<b>UDMR</b>	<b>USL</b>	<b>ARD</b>	<b>USR</b>	<b>ALDE</b>	<b>PMP</b>	<b>Other</b>
2007 European Parliament	8.84	44.10	10.31	2.78						33.97
2008 Chamber of Deputies	15.17	46.52	21.22	4.21						12.87
2008 Senate	13.23	46.46	23.52	5.12						11.67
2009 European Parliament	14.87	37.13	15.68	7.16						25.16
2009 President (1st Round)	12.41	56.05	17.43	1.06						13.05
2009 President (2nd Round)	21.14	78.86								
2012 Chamber of Deputies				1.89	27.32	27.27				43.52
2012 Senate				1.53	28.37	39.46				30.64
2014 European Parliament	11.05	15.71	8.63	1.22						63.39
2014 President (1st Round)	15.90		46.17	0.54						37.39
2014 President (2nd Round)	10.26		89.73							
2016 Chamber of Deputies	9.95		25.93	2.34			28.87	2.87	23.18	6.86
2016 Senate	9.96		26.09	2.36			29.18	2.96	23.82	5.63

Source: own elaboration.

In the first round of 2014 presidential elections Monica Macovei, independent candidate came in third (24,342) just behind Victor Ponta (25,466 votes) and in front of Elena Udrea (15,656). Thus even if there is a shift in the Diaspora vote to new parties, this shift remains

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within the center-right ideological camp. PSD never won more than one fifth of the vote in Diaspora.

Not surprisingly, in Diaspora, Iohannis was the plurality winner in the first round of the presidential election garnering 46% of the vote. In Romania it was Victor Ponta that was the plurality winner having a 10% advantage against Iohannis. In the second round Iohannis increased his margin with 14% compared to the extra five percentage points obtained by Ponta. In the Diaspora, Iohannis's percentage grew by 43 percentage points while Ponta's percentage points actually decreased by 5%. Iohannis's gain was double than that of Basescu in 2009. This is not necessarily a result that shows that even Ponta's voters shifted their votes to Iohannis. It might be an effect of the more than doubling of the turnout between the first and the second round. Perhaps the turnout increased because Diaspora anticipated a second round and given the difficulties related to travel many decided to vote only in the second round. It is thus more likely that the increasing support for Iohannis came from new voters that showed up in the second round. A geographical inspection seems unnecessary to see where the votes for Iohannis came from. Starting the 2009 elections it is possible to scrutinize the country-level voting results for the Romanians that cast a vote outside the borders of Romania. The support for Iohannis was uniformly strong across all continents. Compared to Basescu in 2009, in the first round Iohannis won in 89 out of the 95 countries that had polling stations for Romanians. Iohannis lost elections in North Korea to Victor Ponta (by one vote out of the 7 casted votes) and in Brazil (by 3 votes), in Cuba to Monica Macovei (by one vote out of the 22 votes) and not surprisingly, in Hungary, to Kelemen Hunor. He had the same amount of votes with Ponta and Macovei (5 votes) in Angola and he had the equal number of votes with Victor Ponta (5) in Armenia. In the second round, Iohannis won in 93 out of the 94 countries where Romanians voted. Klaus Iohannis lost to Victor Ponta in Palestine by one vote. Ponta obtained 10 votes and Iohannis 9. In 27 countries, Iohannis obtained more than 90% of the vote. These include countries where there are many Romanian migrants. These include Spain, United States, United Kingdom, Germany, France, Canada, Ireland and Austria. In Italy he obtained 88% of the votes. Iohannis's triumph among Romanian migrants was overwhelming. A more systematic analysis is required to better understand the variation for the support for Iohannis in the first round.

Given the extremely limited availability of surveys on political preferences of migrants and especially the surveys of Romanian migrants in 2014, I decided to make use of the data available from the VAA Votulmeu.com. Out of the 10,039 users I could identify 965 persons

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that declared that they would vote abroad. This data is not a representative sample of Romanian migrants. More than 70% of the users that declared that they vote abroad have graduated a university and nearly half of them have post graduate studies. Half of them are male. Table 2 compares the elections results with the voting intentions of users of the VAA. Voters of Victor Ponta are severely under represented while the supporters of Monica Macovei are over represented.

**Table 2.** Voting intentions of VAA users compared to election results

Voting intentions	VAA		2014 Election results first round	
	migrants	non-migrants	migrants	all voters
Klaus Iohannis	32.5	41.3	46.17	30.37
Victor Ponta	1.6	4.6	15.9	40.44
Monica Macovei	54.8	37.1	15.2	4.44
Others	11.1	17.0	22.73	24.75

Source: own elaboration.

Next, using a dimension reduction technique, out of the thirty statements eight issues were selected that compose an economic and a distribution of rights dimensions (Table 3).

**Table 3.** Relevant dimensions identified through Mokken scaling (items that have a homogeneity coefficient higher than 0.3 the threshold for scalable items)

<u>Economy</u>	0.365
The free economic competition makes the health system work better	0.340
The number of employees from the public sector should be reduced	0.363
The state should intervene as least as possible in the economy	0.391
<u>Society</u>	0.426
Homosexual couples should enjoy the same rights as heterosexual couples	0.442
The usage of cannabis as a recreational drug should be legal	0.394
Women should have the right to decide in matters connected to abortion	0.423
Religion should be a compulsory course in public schools	0.448
The state should offer a privileged status to the Orthodox Church	0.421

Mokken analysis performed by Vasilis Manavopoulos: vmanavopoulos@gmail.com

Source: own elaboration.

Then I compared the preferences of VAA users that declared that they would vote abroad to those voting domestically. The data support the liberal policy orientation of migrants (Table 4). On economic issues migrant users support a pro-market type of economy similarly to the non-migrant users. On the distribution of rights migrants support to a greater extent gay rights (19 percentage point more in favor) and are more pro-choice (7% more) while non-migrants are more supportive of teaching religion at public schools (7% more).



**Table 4.** Political preferences on issues of migrants and non-migrants (percentage agreeing)

Economy	migrants	non-migrants	Gama
The free economic competition makes the health system work better	57.2	60.3	-.026
The number of employees from the public sector should be reduced	65.8	65.5	-.043
The state should intervene as least as possible in the economy	50.6	55.1	-.046
<b>Society</b>			
Homosexual couples should enjoy the same rights as heterosexual couples	74.6	55.6	.339***
The usage of cannabis as a recreational drug should be legal	49.9	41.6	.162**
Women should have the right to decide in matters connected to abortion	91.1	84.6	.309***
Religion should be a compulsory course in public schools	9.3	16.3	-.259***
The state should offer a privileged status to the Orthodox Church	3.2	4.7	-.189***

\* = p < .05; \*\* = p < .01; \*\*\* = p < .001

Source: own elaboration.

Next I tested the effects of these policy preferences on vote choice. At the same time I intended to find out whether being a migrant has an effect on vote choice. The VAA application contained several socio demographic and political preference questions such as past turnout behavior, political interest, voting intention, left right self placement and the reasons for choosing a presidential candidate. Thus using binomial logistic regression I tested for three categories of likely determinants of the vote for Iohannis and Macovei - the two most popular presidential candidates: socio-demographics, political variables and preferences on issues. I added a Migrant dummy variable to find out whether being a migrant has an effect on the voting preference controlling for other possible determinants (Tables 5 and 6).

**Table 5.** Determinants of vote for Iohannis of VAA users

Dependent variable: vote for Iohannis (logit estimates b)			
Age	.008**	.008**	-.014
Male	.060	.063	.119
Education	-.200**	-.198**	-.196
Migrant	-.393**	-.442**	-.021
Interest in politics		-.185*	-.016
Past turnout Behavior		-.195**	-.171
Candidate selection /programmatic			-.936***
GAL-TAN			.101
Left-Right			1.052***
Private health care			-.067
Reduce public sector			-.277
Market economy			-.491*
Gay rights			-.405
Marijuana use			.137
Pro-choice			-.379
Religion in school			-.006
Pro-church			1.113*
Constant	-16.500***	-14.530***	27.632
	(5.282)	(5.857)	(16.072)
Nagelkerke R <sup>2</sup>	.011	.017	.113

N=10039 \* = p < .05; \*\* = p < .01; \*\*\* = p < .001

Source: own elaboration.

The results show that once the issue preferences are included in the model the effect of migration disappears for both Iohannis and Macovei. The data show statistical associations between the support for Iohannis and center right ideological profile and a reduced role for Orthodox Church (Table 5). Next I measured the predictors for the vote for Macovei (Table 6).

**Table 6.** Determinants of vote for Macovei of VAA users

Dependent variable: vote for Macovei (logit estimates)			
Age	.018***	.018***	.043***
Male	-.204***	-.172**	-.166
Education	.615***	.641***	.797***
Migrant	.647***	.598***	.317
Interest in politics		.175*	-.094
Past turnout Behavior		-.253***	.058
Candidate selection			1.088***
/programmatic			
GAL-TAN			.065
Left-Right			-.292
Private health care			.119
Reduce public sector			.928**
Market economy			.939***
Gay rights			.500*
Marijuana use			.040
Pro-choice			.604
Religion in school			1.122**
Pro-church			.250
Constant	-38.623***	-37.824***	-95.749
	(5.601)	(6.222)	(18.307)
Nagelkerke R <sup>2</sup>	.042	.049	.281

N=10039 \* = p < .05; \*\* = p < .01; \*\*\* = p < .001

Source: own elaboration.

Macovei is supported by users that chose her for her ideas, are pro market, support the reduction of the public sector, support gay rights and disagree with the introduction of religion to schools. They are educated and young. The effect of migration experience dissipates once issue preferences are introduced in the statistical model.

### **Conclusion**

Presidential elections in Romania seem to become peculiar events for the Romanian emigrants. In 2009 the presidential elections brought the highest number of Romanian migrants to the polls (Figure 1). In 2014 this number more than doubled. It is the second time that the Romanian diaspora votes are decisive for settling the outcome of the presidential elections.

The paper examined the political preferences of migrants by inspecting elections results and a group of Romanian VAA users that intended to vote abroad. The election results show that

emigrants prefer to vote for parties that promote reform and since 2012 favor new political parties as well. The electoral preferences of migrants are different from non-migrants.

More migrants support gay unions, less influence of religion in school and are pro choice. The differences are statistically significant. These attitudes translate into support for Iohannis and Macovei for both migrants and non-migrants.

Ideally I have to take into account the years spent abroad, the tendency to return to the home country, income level, work status, access to media, integration in the receiving country and exposure to values of the receiving country. The political influence of Romanian migrants has increased despite the lack of political interest and difficulty to cast a vote and it seems decisive when elections are close.

One interesting finding is that migrant users are more likely to be inclusive with gay rights, are pro-choice and reject religion in schools. Is it likely that the Romanians living abroad have internalized the values and the practices of the host country? Did the fact that emigrants live in consolidated democracies influenced their attitudes to support Iohannis and Macovei? It might be that the emigrants not only act as a catalyst for economic reform but they act through their political preferences. Alternatively, it is more likely that self-selected pro-reform individuals chose to live abroad and they are the driving force of electoral engagement abroad. I found that these individuals are not much different from the self-selected pro-reform users and did not migrate. Better quality surveys are necessary before one would be able to link personal experience abroad to support for political parties that promise reform and change in a democratizing country.

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## **Appendix**

### Independent variables

#### Socio-Demographic variables

*Migrant*: This variable is coded 2 if a respondent declared that he/she will vote abroad and 1 otherwise.

*Age*: the respondents' year of birth

*Gender*: A dichotomous variable coded 2 for females and 1 for males

*Education*: An ordinal variable transformed in a dichotomous variable in which 2 represent respondents with graduate and postgraduate studies (BA, MA, PhD) and 1 is high school graduate and under

#### Political variables

*Interest in politics*: An ordinal variable transformed in a dichotomous variable in which 2 represents “I am very interested” and “somewhat interested” while 1 is represented by “I am little interested” and “I am not interested at all”

*Past turnout*: An ordinal variable transformed into a dichotomous variables in which 2 is represented by the persons that have voted and 1 by those who have not

#### Issue variables

*Candidate selection/ programmatic*: It is the recoded answer to the question “What is the main reason you have chosen this candidate”. It is an ordinal variable transformed into a dichotomous variable in which 2 is represented by “the ideas of the candidate are close to mine” and 1 is represented by the following answers: “more competent”, “supports people like me”, “my friend

and family supported this candidate”, “I like this candidate”, “I identify with the candidates’ party”, “another reason”, “I will not vote”

*GAL-TAN*: in an ordinal variable ranging from 0 to 10. 0 means liberal and 10 means conservatism. It was transformed into a dichotomous variable that measured center right wing vote. 2 is represented by those that have chosen a position from 0 to 4 and the rest are placed at 1.

*Left-Right*: is an ordinal variable ranging from 0 to 10. 0 means full statism and 10 full liberalism in economy. It was transformed into a dichotomous variable that measured center right wing vote. 2 is represented by those that expressed a position from (6 to 10) and the rest are 1.

*Private health care*: Respondents level of agreement with the following statement “The free economic competition makes the health system work better”. It is an ordinal variables transformed into a dichotomous variable in which 2 means agreement with the issue.

*Reduce public sector*: Respondents level of agreement with the following statement “The number of employees from the public sector should be reduced” It is an ordinal variables transformed into a dichotomous variable in which 2 means agreement with the issue.

*Market economy* Respondents level of agreement with the following statement “The state should intervene as least as possible in the economy” It is an ordinal variables transformed into a dichotomous variable in which 2 means agreement with the issue.

*Gay rights*: Respondents level of agreement with the following statement “Homosexual couples should enjoy the same rights as heterosexual couples” It is an ordinal variables transformed into a dichotomous variable in which 2 means agreement with the issue.

*Marijuana use*: Respondents level of agreement with the following statement “The usage of cannabis as a recreational drug should be legal” It is an ordinal variables transformed into a dichotomous variable in which 2 means agreement with the issue.

*Pro-choice*: Respondents level of agreement with the following statement “Women should have the right to decide in matters connected to abortion” It is an ordinal variables transformed into a dichotomous variable in which 2 means agreement with the issue.

*Religion in school*: Respondents level of agreement with the following statement “Religion should be a compulsory course in public schools” It is an ordinal variables transformed into a dichotomous variable in which 2 means disagreement with the issue.

*Pro-church*: Respondents level of agreement with the following statement “The state should offer a privileged status to the Orthodox Church” It is an ordinal variables transformed into a dichotomous variable in which 2 means disagreement with the issue.

List of issues

1. Romania should never adopt the Euro
2. There should be a common foreign policy of EU
3. EU should impose economic sanctions to Russia
4. International partners (EU and USA) have the right to intervene in the domestic affairs of Romania when they feel that there is a threat to democracy.
5. Getting close to China would be beneficial to Romania
6. The Free economic competition makes the healthcare system work more efficiently.
7. The number of employees from the public sector should be reduced.
8. The state should intervene as little as possible in the economy.
9. The reduction of social security benefits is a necessary measure
10. Citizens should benefit from a reduced income tax.
11. Foreign borrowings from institutions like the IMF are a good solution in crisis situations.
12. The Romanian state should permit the Gabriel Resources Canadian company to continue its mining explorations at Rosia Montana
13. Homosexual couples should enjoy the same rights as heterosexual couples.
14. The use of cannabis for recreational purposes should be legal
15. Women should have the freedom of choice regarding abortion.
16. Religion should be a compulsory course in public schools.
17. The death penalty should be reintroduced for heinous crimes.
18. Currently prosecutors have too much power when they investigate citizens.
19. The existence of undercover agents of the secret service in important public state offices is beneficial for national security.
20. Immigrants should adapt to the Romanian values and culture.
21. Romania should pursue the union with The Republic of Moldova
22. A territorial reform should include the creation of an autonomous Hungarian region..
23. Minorities should have the right to education exclusively in their mother tongue.
24. The state should offer a privileged status to the Orthodox Church.
25. The president should be an ethnic Romanian.
26. Ethnic political parties should be banned.
27. The Romanian parliament should remain bicameral.
28. Mayors should be able to switch party membership without losing their mandate.
29. The ombudsman should be elected by citizens.
30. Romania should introduce postal voting.

**Romania should pursue the union with The Republic of Moldova**

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	completely disagree	121	10.9	10.9	10.9
	disagree	99	8.9	8.9	19.8
	Neither agree nor disagree	238	21.4	21.4	41.2
	agree	219	19.7	19.7	60.9
	completely agree	307	27.6	27.6	88.5
	I do not know	113	10.2	10.2	98.7
	No answer	15	1.3	1.3	100.0
	Total	1112	100.0	100.0	



Romania should pursue the union with The Republic of Moldova

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	completely agree	1312	13.1	13.4	13.4
	agree	2279	22.7	23.3	36.7
	Neither agree nor disagree	2784	27.7	28.5	65.2
	Disagree	1968	19.6	20.1	85.3
	completely disagree	1434	14.3	14.7	100.0
	Total	9777	97.4	100.0	
Missing	no opinion	262	2.6		
Total		10039	100.0		

Romania should pursue the union with The Republic of Moldova

migrant vs. non migrant		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent	
.	Valid	completely agree	35	13.4	14.1	14.1
		agree	63	24.0	25.4	39.5
		Neither agree nor disagree	71	27.1	28.6	68.1
		Disagree	50	19.1	20.2	88.3
		completely disagree	29	11.1	11.7	100.0
		Total	248	94.7	100.0	
Missing	no opinion	14	5.3			
Total		262	100.0			
.00	Valid	completely agree	1142	13.0	13.3	13.3
		agree	2019	22.9	23.5	36.8
		Neither agree nor disagree	2424	27.5	28.2	65.1
		Disagree	1724	19.6	20.1	85.2
		completely disagree	1274	14.5	14.8	100.0
		Total	8583	97.4	100.0	
Missing	no opinion	229	2.6			
Total		8812	100.0			
1.00	Valid	completely agree	135	14.0	14.3	14.3
		agree	197	20.4	20.8	35.1
		Neither agree nor disagree	289	29.9	30.5	65.6
		Disagree	194	20.1	20.5	86.2
		completely disagree	131	13.6	13.8	100.0
		Total	946	98.0	100.0	
Missing	no opinion	19	2.0			
Total		965	100.0			

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