

2011 Riigikogu elections: Analysis of online campaigns

e-Governance Academy

Expanding participation and inclusion in state-level decision making with the possibilities provided by information and communication technology (ICT) (democracy)



Programm Infoühiskonna teadlikkuse tõstmine





Table of Contents

| Introduction | | |
|--|--|--|
| I The object of analysis | | |
| II Background information, research questions and method | | |
| III Results | | |
| a) Party campaigns on official party websites | | |
| b) Party/independent candidates' campaigns in online media | | |
| c) Candidates' personal websites (blogs) as campaign tools | | |
| d) Party campaigns in popular social networks (Facebook, Twitter, YouTube) | | |
| e) Candidates' campaigns in popular social networks (Facebook, Twitter, YouTube) | | |
| f) Parties' evaluation of online campaigns | | |
| g) Election games | | |
| IV Conclusion: The entire campaign | | |
| References | | |

Introduction

Elections are an important milestone by which the state of democracy as well as the level of political and civil society development can be measured. Undoubtedly, the rapid development of information society affects elections, one of the main instruments of representative democracy. This has resulted in both positive and negative changes. E-voting could be considered to have a positive effect, as it makes it easier for people to fulfil their civic duties even if they are out of the country or otherwise unable to go to the voting booths. However, the transition of elections to the Internet also introduces risks that derive from the fact that it is an environment that operates on a different logic compared to the traditional environment of pre-election competition.

Since the beginning of the 1990s, when politicians and parties discovered the Internet, numerous studies with varying scope and focus have been conducted in different countries with the aim of investigating elections and the Internet. A closer look at these studies shows that most of these studies have taken a very narrow approach to the topic. For instance, Gulati (2007) analyses the 2008 United States presidential primary campaign, but deals specifically with the candidates' self-representations in online videos. There are few examples of studies that take a broad approach to the mapping and analysis of the specific pre-elections online campaigns of entire countries. An additional problem caused by the nature of scientific journals is that the studies that do, in fact, take a broad view on the topic are published considerably later than they are conducted, creating a significant temporal gap. Within the field of e-democracy and technological development, processes are so rapid that data collected a few years ago is already outdated and one is not able to make comparisons to the present situation or comment on general trends. Because of that, this article is especially valuable as it presents very new data (only a month has passed since the elections when the analysis is written and published!) and the method used in the collection of data was more versatile and immediate than in other studies known to us (students conducting the analysis, for example, created fake accounts in order to gain access to the candidates' friends).

The present article is an analysis of the online campaigns of the 2011 Riigikogu elections. The analysis was largely conducted between February 14 and March 1, 2011. In addition to experts at the e-Governance Academy, BA and MA students of communication management at the University of Tartu were involved in the analysis under Kristina Reinsalu's supervision.

In addition to the detailed descriptions of the campaigns and general evaluation, the article also points out the changes that have occurred since past elections and answers the question whether the electorate's possibilities to get thorough, updated and balanced information in order to make an informed decision in the elections have significantly improved with the development of information society? Another question pertains to interactivity: do citizens receive feedback and is there a dialogue with them?

Next to links to various environments and videos, the analysis is illustrated with screen shots from campaign ads.

Whenever possible, the discussion of every environment analysed is accompanied by references to and comments on previous studies and theories.

The final section, the Conclusion, points to the main trends and relevant conclusions in the elections as a whole. With all of the online environments analysed, attention was also paid to whether the campaigns adhered to the Good Elections Practices; this is discussed under a separate section in the Conclusion. There is also an overview of the numerous election games (the Voter Compass created by the e-Governance Academy and the Estonian Public Broadcasting company, the Election Game on Delfi, etc.), the multitude and popularity of which we were unable to predict when compiling the methods for the present analysis.

The level of detail of the results may vary in the following presentation, and one might find instances of subjectivity, as the environments were analysed by different people. We have made every attempt to remain

neutral in our evaluations which have proceeded from communication theories and principles rather than political views or anything else.

Before I let you begin the hopefully fascinating and partially virtual journey through different environments, campaigns, and candidates that has been recorded on the following hundred or so pages, I would like to express my gratitude to the people who helped in the writing of this paper.

With all my heart, I would like to thank my students, the MA students of communication management from the Institute of Journalism and Communication at the University of Tartu, for the thorough collection of data; I would like to thank Aet Kukk for great assistance in managing the empirical material; and I am likewise grateful to my colleague Jelizaveta Krenjova for the analysis of the online media in Russian. I would also like to thank all the representatives of the parties who responded to the questionnaires!

Kristina Reinsalu, the head of the project

I The object of analysis

Riigikogu, the Estonian parliament, is elected every four years. In the last elections, more than 789 candidates from 9 parties and 32 independent candidates participated in the elections; this is the largest number of candidates since Estonia regained its independence. Estonia officially has 13 voting methods.

Voter turnout was greater than it was in the previous elections but not as great as initially predicted. 580,264 people out of 913,346 citizens with the right to vote participated in the Riigikogu elections. Thus, voter turnout was 63.5%. A record number of people cast their vote electronically: 140,846.

The elections are organised by the Estonian National Electoral Committee. When talking about online campaigns, it is also relevant to comment on the changes to the Electoral Committee's website itself, which has become significantly more interactive. The Committee's website has a subsection dedicated to the campaigns where one can find videos urging people to participate in the elections as well as in the contest "My e-voting booth" (people were invited to post on the National Electoral Committee's Facebook wall¹, adding photos and descriptions of how the secrecy and formality of voting was ensured at their home, workplace or elsewhere). The same site also featured Theatre NO99's Election School video lectures.

II Background information, research questions and method

This is not the first analysis of online campaigns conducted by the e-Governance Academy. In 2009, the online campaigns of the local elections were analysed. A thorough set of tools was compiled which outlined the analysis of the official websites of all local governments on the basis of specific criteria as well as the analysis of online newspapers and social media sites². The analysis was conducted by experts at the e-Governance Academy and outside experts Hanna Šein-Meier (also see Šein-Meier 2010) and Marko Palo. The data collected was the basis for Šein-Meier's MA thesis which was completed under Kristina Reinsalu's supervision at the Institute of Journalism and Communication at the University of Tartu in 2010. A method similar to the one used in the present article has also been used by Eli Lilles (2010) whose MA thesis analysed online campaigns within the context of numerous elections.

These studies provided a good methodological foundation that had to be updated and amended but not entirely altered for the present analysis. Methodological unity means that the data collected within the framework of this analysis is comparable to data collected for the previous studies and that a more complete overview can be given and potential changes and trends can be assessed. If possible the e-Governance Academy will use a similar method, adapted according to the changes occurring in the areas of technology and e-democracy in future elections.

The analysis of the 2011 Riigikogu elections online campaigns aimed to address measurable and content-related questions, which is why both **quantitative** and **qualitative text analysis methods** were used. Generalisations concerning a large amount of data can be made with the help of the quantitative method (content analysis), whereas in-depth treatment of the data is done with the help of qualitative text analysis.

Although the study comprises of several relatively unrelated sections, these sections are connected by a central question posed in the beginning of the study: What are the characteristics of pre-elections political communication in different online environments before the 2011 Riigikogu elections?

¹ www.facebook.com/valimiskomisjon

² The analysis included 226 local government websites, the websites of all parties, 472 different blog and social media units, and 29 online newspapers (the online versions of national and county newspapers). The analysis was conducted between 5–18 October, 2009.

Each specific object and unit of analysis and sub-questions were formulated on the basis of this central question.

Online environments were divided into 6 separate objects of analysis:

- a) Campaigns on official party websites
- b) Party campaigns and independent candidates' campaigns in online media
- c) Candidates' personal websites (blogs) as campaign tools
- d) Party campaigns in popular social networks (Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, etc.)
- e) Candidates' campaigns in popular social networks (Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, etc.)
- f) Parties' evaluation of online campaigns

In order to analyse each and every environment, a checklist table was compiled, except for the mapping of the parties' evaluation of the online campaigns – for that, people responsible for the parties' campaigns were contacted in order to find out about their attitudes and evaluation of online campaigns.

III Results

a) Party campaigns on official party websites

The official websites of the 9 parties running for Riigikogu were analysed³.

General information

With the SDE, the focus was on the website they created specifically for the elections (http://sotsdem.ee/) as their former website was moved to http://vana.sotsdem.ee/ and did not include much information on the elections. The Green Party, also, has two websites. The party's official website is at http://www.erakond.ee/, specific elections-related information can be found at http://www.roheline.erakond.ee/ and http://www.roheline.erakond.ee/. As both the official websites and specific elections sites included information related to the elections, all the sites were analysed.

Party websites could be easily found with a Google search. The only party whose official website was not displayed as the first search result was the Russian Party. Party website addresses had fairly obvious names: they included the name of the party or its abbreviated form. The exceptions here, again, are the Russian Party whose website can be found through the English link http://www.rusparty.ee/ and the Green Party whose official website bears only the name "party."

Most parties have translated their websites (or, more specifically, parts of them) into Russian and English. The websites of only two parties (the Independence Party and the Christian Democrats) are entirely in Estonian.

It is important to note, however, that the information found on party websites does not always match what the parties have promised. For instance, the Green Party claims that on the specifically elections-oriented website one can find information not only in Estonian and Russian but also in English, but the latter is not true. It is also curious, that on the Green Party's website the choice between different languages is not visible on the home page, appearing in the upper right corner only after the first click. The Russian Party likewise promises to provide information in Russian, English, and Estonian, but the Estonian version of the site only includes information regarding the 2009 local elections. People looking for information in English, however, are greeted with a message saying that the home page is temporarily available only in Russian and Estonian.

The availability of elections-related information

Information concerning the elections can be found on the home pages of party websites, alongside elections programmes and lists of candidates. Only on the Centre Party page one has to make two clicks to reach the elections programme and the list of candidates. Two parties – the Green Party and the Reform Party – have designed an interactive map of Estonia, where one can find candidates by electoral districts.

Estonian Green Party (Erakond Eestimaa Rohelised) - Green Party

 ${\sf Res\ Publica\ and\ Pro\ Patria\ Union\ (Erakond\ Isamaa\ ja\ Res\ Publica\ Liit)\ -\ RPU}$

Social Democratic Party (Sotsiaaldemokraatlik Erakond) – SDE

Estonian Reform Party (Eesti Reformierakond) - Reform Party

Estonian Centre Party (Eesti Keskerakond) - Centre Party

Russian Party in Estonia (Vene Erakond Eestis) – Russian Party

Estonian Independence Party (Eesti Iseseisvuspartei) – Independence Party

People's Union of Estonia (Eestimaa Rahvaliit) – People's Union

Estonian Christian Democratic Party (Erakond Eesti Kristlikud Demokraadid) – Christian Democrats

³ The list of parties participating in the XII Riigikogu elections and their abbreviations in the present paper:

Example: The map found on the Reform Party's home page



In addition to that, the Green Party has added the top candidates of every district and their phone numbers:



A map can also be found on the Christian Democrats' website but this, unfortunately, includes information pertaining to the 2009 local elections (at least on February 23, 2011). A note next to the map states that the map of candidates is being updated.

As a rule, national and regional lists are presented separately on the sites and more information about the candidates can be found under the regional lists. Eight out of nine parties present candidates' photos, with some of them missing, however. Seven parties offer brief overviews of the candidates and it seems that it was up to the candidates to decide whether they want to present biographical data, their main views, or both.

In general, it can be said that the information the parties present about the candidates differs between parties as well as inside single websites⁴.

⁴ The People's Union and the Russian Party only list the e-mail addresses and/or phone numbers of a couple of candidates which was regarded as insufficient information in the present analysis.

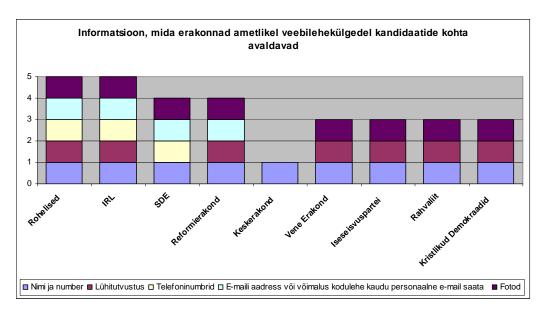


Figure 1: Information about the candidates presented on official party websites.

Making suggestions and donations, signing up for news

Two parties (the Reform Party and the Green Party) offer the opportunity to address specific questions to the party or its individual candidates via their websites. No party specifically asks for suggestions, although, next to contact information, the RPU has a feedback form. The website of the Independence Party promises communication, but a closer look reveals that this is limited to the party's e-mail address and a forum with the label "Closed on Mr Leito's demand."

The situation is fairly similar with signing up for news updates; three parties offer the opportunity to join RSS feeds (the Russian Party, the RPU, and the Reform Party); the Green Party invites people to join their newsletter. The Reform Party is the most progressive in this aspect, offering different RSS feeds (general notification, press releases only, or blogs, etc.).

The parties are somewhat more active in inviting people to support them financially – such a possibility is found with eight out of the nine parties. Only the SDE does not invite people to do so. In most instances, such an invitation can be found on the home pages. The Centre Party is slightly more modest, listing account numbers under contact information, as is the Independence Party, whose requests for donations are disguised behind the slogan "To every compatriot!"

Example:

A form for making donations on the Reform Party's website

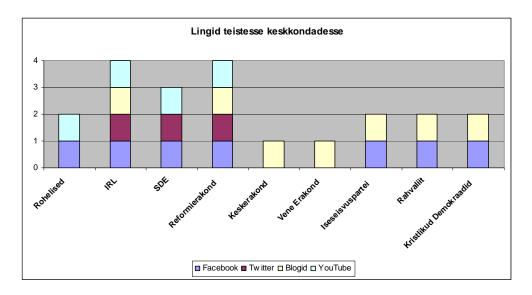
| Toeta erakonda | | |
|---|--------|--|
| Kõige lihtsam viis meie toetamiseks on anda oma hääl valimistel Reformierakonnale! | | |
| Leides endas veelgi enam motivatsiooni meid toetada, saad Sa seda teha ka rahaliselt. Meie arvelduskonto Swedbankis on 221002169472. Annetusi saavad teha ainult füüsilised isikud, ülekande tegemisel tuleb kindlasti märkida selgituse lahtrisse oma isikukood ja nimi. Lisainfot saab erakonna kontorist telefonil 6 80 80 80 või info@reform.ee. Annetuse võid teha ka alloleva vormi kaudu. | | |
| Nimi: * | | |
| Perekonnanimi: * | | |
| lsikukood: * | | |
| Summa: * | EUR | |
| | Anneta | |

Although donations are solicited, parties have not made this overly easy to comply with. For some reason, the Reform Party is the only one to present a form for making donations that directs the person to the Internet bank. All other parties list account numbers but offer no direct links.

Links to other environments and invitations to e-vote

Most parties (seven out of nine) have set up direct links to Facebook or to candidates' blogs⁵; YouTube⁶ and Twitter are less popular.

In addition to the environments Facebook, Twitter, Blogs and YouTube, the RPU's website leads to the party photo gallery on Flickr and the bio of one of the candidates from the People's Union leads to the candidate's Pipl profile.



Example: Links to blogs found on the Centre Party's home page



The Reform Party is the most active party in establishing links to other environments: almost every subpage on their site has links to other environments.

Two parties, including the Centre Party, only have links to one social media site. At the same time, links to bloggers from the Centre Party take up 1/3 of the home page which is a clear indicator that blogs are an important tool for spreading the message for the Centre Party.

Only two parties (the RPU and the Reform Party) propagate e-voting. A banner on the RPU's website invites people to cast an e-vote "in support of mother's pension, reducing costs related to homeownership, and free university education," that is, to vote for the RPU. As one clicks the banner they are automatically redirected to the Estonian National Electoral Committee's website.

⁵ On the SDE's website that has been moved to http://vana.sotsdem.ee/ for the elections period, there are links to blogs written by party members. The links are not featured on the website set up specifically for the elections.

⁶ Links on the Centre Party's website lead to YouTube videos on 2009 local elections. As the present analysis deals narrowly with the 2011 elections, this was not taken into account.

Example: A banner calling people to e-vote on the RPU's website





The Reform Party has designed an entire separate website to propagate e-voting (http://www.reform.ee/e-valimised/) including technical advice on how to cast an e-vote. Naturally, the page also refers to the list of the party's candidates.

The invitation to e-vote is also displayed on a banner at the bottom of the home page.

Example: Reform Party's website that invites people to e-vote

The descriptions of the parties' campaign elements and messages

People's Union of Estonia

At the top of the home page of the People's Union website, there is a photo of a member of the party who is running in the elections but the photo, unfortunately, does not serve as a link to further information. The website displays two banners: one that leads to the website of the party's youth organisation and one that lists all the party's candidates. One can also find the campaign video of a single candidate⁷. The party's website is straightforward and logical, information about the elections can be found easily.

The central message of the People's Union is "Estonian bread and jobs!" However, they have not made much of an effort to make the visitors notice and remember the message: one can only see the slogan when clicking the link "Riigikogu elections." In terms of its content, the message is extremely topical: unemployment is a serious concern in Estonia today. The People's Union believes that namely work will make people feel content. The message is clear and stands apart from the other ones.

Estonian Green Party

The Green Party uses banners and videos to convey their message, and there is also a map on the home page that can be used to find candidates by electoral districts. The home page of their elections site features a video that plays automatically when the page loads. The party's website and elections site are logical and easy to use.

⁷ http://rahvaliit.ee/ilja-stozarov

The central message of their campaign is "It's time!" A banner with this slogan can be found on their home page and, below it, there is the message "a richer society in every way." Their slogan "It's time!" suggests a desire for change. The slogan is short and clear and, in that, similar to the SDE's slogan "New beginning!" and the Centre Party's slogan "Enough!" However, for the voters, the slogan might remain too broad and vague. The slogan "It's time!" might also leave the impression that someone is going away somewhere.

Res Publica and Pro Patria Union

Visitors of the RPU's website can download posters in support of the party or set the party's theme as their ring tone. The site features several videos and banners, one of which leads to the website of Laar's café.

Example: One can simultaneously browse through the list of candidates and view videos featuring the top candidates.



In order to spread (or embed) their message, the RPU also uses a poll where visitors can choose one of three promises made by the party that they feel most passionate about. The site is easy to navigate and has a logical structure. The information found on the website gives a thorough overview of what the party stands for.

The RPU's slogan is "Your certain victory!" The message is displayed on a banner on the home page and, as the page loads, it appears as a pop-up. However, it is the other campaign messages that are more memorable, such as "The RPU's contract with you," "Free university education," "Mother's pension," and "Reduce homeowners' costs." Without these, the slogan "Your certain victory!" remains slightly meaningless and vague. What is the voter winning? The slogan is, also, very similar to the Reform Party's "You can be certain!"

Social Democratic Party

The SDE has used photos and videos to make the campaign more versatile. Their home page features photos of the party's top candidates but these are, unfortunately, static photos and lead no further. Information related to the elections is topical and the site is logically structured.

The SDE's main message is "New beginning!" Such a slogan, however, is somewhat empty as the party comprises of people who have been active in politics for a long time. The message suggests that the current situation has to change, that something is wrong with how things are. Thus, the target audience of the message would be people who are unhappy with the present situation. The slogan "New Beginning!" is very prominent on the website, and it is visible on all the pages on the site.

Estonian Reform Party

The Reform Party's website features banners, videos and a map that shows the candidates and the districts where they are running. As the page opens, a video inviting people to vote begins to play. It is also possible to participate in a competition by submitting the answer to a crossword puzzle and to download the party's campaign song as a ring tone. The website is carefully set up, presenting the information in a logical and structured manner. Information related to the elections is topical.

The Reform Party's slogan is "You can be certain!" The target audience of this might be people who are satisfied with how things are and value stability.

Estonian Centre Party

The home page of the Centre Party's website features a banner that invites people to read Edgar Savisaar's blog, visit his café, and conveys messages such as "Country life needs more strength," "Support the progressive income tax," and "Riigikogu 2011 programme." Following the video link surprisingly leads to the 2009 local elections ad with the caption "Who else!"

Even greater confusion is caused by the party's photo gallery. The home page has a link entitled "Photos" with subtitles "The Centre Party youths in the streets" and "The party youths propagating the Centre Party." However, clicking these titles only leads to an anti-Reform Party web page.

Example: An image that is featured in the photo gallery found on the Centre Party's website



The main message of the Centre Party in these elections was "Enough!" This does not, however, stand out on their website. It can be found under the link "Riigikogu 2011." The slogan "Enough!" suggests that the state of affairs is not good and that the Centre Party could make things better. Their target group is mainly the citizens who are unhappy with the current politics. "Enough!" is a clever slogan that has an ambiguous meaning due to the multiple meanings of the word "aitab" ("enough" or "helps") in Estonian – whether the Centre Party is there to help people or whether people have had enough of the Reform Party.

Russian Party in Estonia

Next to text, the website of the Russian Party only features candidates' photos. The site does not look very professional. However, it does offer some information about the elections (at least in Russian).

The Russian Party's slogan is "Together!" – "BMecTe!" which cannot, however, be found on their website. The slogan suggests that the elections are a joint effort and a common cause.

Estonian Independence Party

The campaign on the Independence Party's website has few features, mainly in the form of some photos. The site is fairly modest, but important information can be found. One thing that is lacking is a search engine which might make the page more accessible to the visitors.

The party's slogan is "The Independence Party is the solution" but this cannot be found on the website.

Estonian Christian Democratic Party

Christian Democrats invite people to download a leaflet that introduces their main views and candidates. In addition to the leaflet, the website features photos. There is also a link to a map which, regrettably, contains information pertaining to the local elections (at least on February 23, 2011).

The party's slogan is "Discover Christian democracy" which invites people to acquaint themselves with the party and their candidates. Sadly, the party is not too active in spreading their message on the site – it is found only on the downloadable leaflet.

General evaluation of the websites and conclusion

Boogers and Voermann (2003) claim that many of the people who look up elections-related information on the web have not made up their mind. Therefore, the content and professional presentation of the websites could have a vital role in helping these people decide for whom to vote.

Within the context of the 2011 Riigikogu elections, three parties (the RPU, the Green Party, and the Reform Party) stand out as parties who significantly make use of their websites. The websites of other parties could be criticised for their static presentation (lack of audio-visual features), superficial information about the elections, elementary technical/artistic solutions, etc.

Although some websites are considerably more versatile in terms of their content than others, information about the elections is present and easily found on the websites of all parties. The visibility of the lists of candidates seems to be considered important; some parties have designed maps that help visitors look up information about the candidates in a particular district, which is a very convenient solution. At the same time, the information given about individual candidates is quite erratic. Even within parties, the information is not always presented in a unified manner and it seems that each candidate has had the right to decide for themselves what kind of information they would like to have displayed.

The websites do not feature many interactive solutions; such solutions are not frequently used to establish a dialogue with voters. The same observation has been made by other researchers who have analysed online campaigns in other countries (Kamarck (1999); Carlson and Djupsund (2001); Šein-Meier (2009), etc.).

No party website has a functioning forum. The lack of will to provide such a feature might be due to the desire to keep the websites free of unpleasant (that is, critical of the party) questions/comments. The solution would not be to censor questions and comments before they are put up on the site, as deleting and excluding unpleasant messages could create further difficulties for the party (for instance, leading to negative reports in (social) media). Only two parties offer the opportunity to ask specific questions of the party or its candidates on the websites, and only one website features a feedback form.

The opportunity to support parties financially is also limited in its accessibility. Although eight parties out of nine invite people to make donations, only one party features a form on the website with a direct link to the Internet bank. Others only list account numbers.

Many international studies (Yannas and Lappas 2005) have shown that online campaigns are difficult to map as links between different environments are often lacking. However, based on the fact that seven parties out of nine feature links to Facebook or their members' blogs, it can be said that at least the more popular social media channels have an important role in today's campaigns, and that visitors are directed to other environments fairly actively.

The party websites generally adhere to Good Election Practices. The Centre Party showed least restraint in this regard, displaying anti-Reform Party slogans in its photo gallery. However, comparing the website to the party members' blogs, it becomes clear that the party website displays much less material aimed at criticising the competitors. The same is true with other parties – the websites are dedicated to the positive characteristics of

the parties themselves rather than the shortcomings of competitors. The same conclusion was made in 1999 when Carlson and Djupsund (2001) analysed the online campaigns of the Finnish elections.

B) Party/independent candidates' campaigns in online media

The chapter at hand, first, gives an overview of the campaigns and election ads found in Estonian online media and, second, offers a separate account of campaigns in Russian language online media, as previous studies have shown that campaigns in different languages have different forms and messages.

For the purposes of the present analysis, the online versions of national and local newspapers were observed on a single day (Friday, 25 February, 2011)⁸ and the campaign ads published were recorded. Each web page was refreshed and reloaded several times so that every individual ad would be seen (if there were sections where several ads were displayed alternately). The ads were coded and described according to the checklist. Altogether, 50 different ads (banners) were recorded in 30 environments.

19 ads were recorded on the websites of national newspapers. The online page of *Õhtuleht* featured most campaign ads; the online pages of *Eesti Päevaleht* and *Äripäev* featured none. The latter is easily explained as with national media outlets it is better to take out ads on pages that are highly visited⁹. The web pages of *Eesti Ekspress* and *Maaleht* also have small numbers of visitors, but their websites are connected to the Delfi news portal so campaign ads are displayed in several environments.

31 ads were recorded on the web pages of local newspapers. Saare, Lääne, and Hiiu counties featured considerably more online ads.

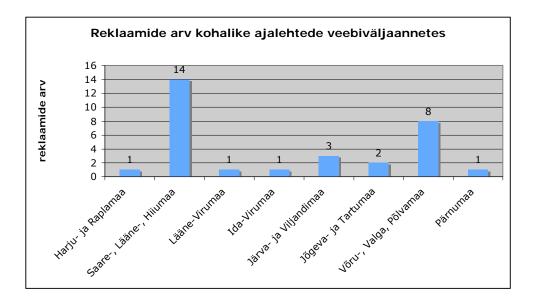


Figure 3. The number of ads in the online versions of local newspapers.

The following are good examples of the campaign ads found in the Saare, Lääne, and Hiiu counties:

⁸ The online versions of the newspapers were observed before and after this date as well but, as there were no significant changes, the analysis focused in depth on that day.

⁹ http://tnsmetrix.emor.ee/

Example: The headers of the newspapers Saarte Hääl and Hiiu Nädal on February 25, 2011



It is difficult to explain the increased activity in these counties. It might be because the political battle in that region is fought between specific individuals who utilise the same channels in order to make themselves more visible and reach their target audience.

The period under analysis also yielded online campaign ads by two independent candidates (4 ads in total).

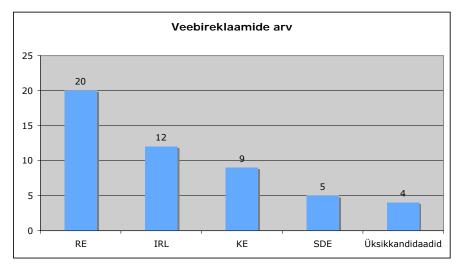


Figure 4. The number of online ads per party

Most online ads represent the party as a whole or the candidates of a specific district; about a third or fourth are dedicated to a specific candidate. It can be assumed that the campaigns of individual candidates have been paid for by the candidates themselves.

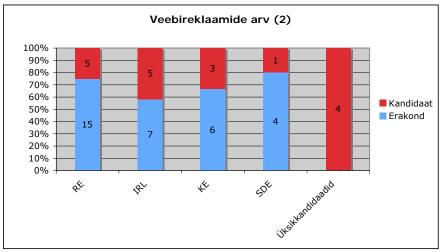


Figure 5. Party online ads, distributed between the party and individual candidates

The following is an analysis of campaign ads found in online media outlets for each party.

Estonian Reform Party

The Reform Party had the greatest amount of online ads during the period in question. There were 20 ads altogether, 5 of which were dedicated to a specific candidate.

The Reform Party is the only party to have covered all electoral districts with online ads; the ads for individual candidates always complement party ads.

All ads serve as links to the party's home page where the candidates of the respective districts are presented and where one can find both the candidates' contact information and the party's elections programme. The home page also has numerous links to Facebook.

The Reform Party has a different strategy for national and local newspapers: the ads in the national newspapers do not focus on the candidates but invite people to participate in the elections and banners direct people to www.valimised.ee.

Example: The Reform Party's ad in the online version of a local newspaper



From the negative aspect, Jaanus Rahumägi's personal campaign¹⁰ "Help clean up Tallinn and win an iPad!" that was ongoing on that particular day could be pointed out. The campaign claims that Rahumägi "has been fighting for a safe Estonia for 20 years already. This is not an easy task. Join in the game and see how difficult catching bad guys can be!" One participant wins an expensive gift: an iPad. The quickest entries will win wheel clamps. This is accompanied by the slogan: "Make Tallinn safer!"

Example: Rahumägi's online game



In the opinion of the analysts, Rahumägi is violating Good Election Practices: the topic is fairly irrelevant in the broader context of the elections and the participants are offered a valuable gift. Also, the message of the game is not directly part of Riigikogu's competence.

The personal campaigns of two other party members are considerably more modest:

 $^{10\} http://www.rahumagi.ee/?utm_source=delfi\&utm_medium=995x100\&utm_campaign=riigikogungeriigikogung$

Example: Mälberg's online ad in the newspaper Valgamaalane



Meelis Mälberg's banner that follows the party's general design directs viewers to the party website and, more specifically, to the section with information about the candidates; thus, functioning like any other part of the party's general campaign.

Example: Malm's online ad in the newspaper Valgamaalane



The Reform Party's candidate Valter Malm, on the other hand, has opted for a solution in which a banner designed on the basis of the party's general campaign invites the viewer to click on it in order to get further information; this leads to a 4-page PDF file that offers thorough information about the candidate. At the same time, the candidate's contact information is lacking and this solution could be considered fairly old-fashioned – it might have been advisable to set up a personal web page.

Broadly speaking, the Reform Party's campaign is most extensive; the solutions used are simple and classic and easily used by every person with computer access: all relevant information about the party and its programme and views can easily be found. Although the party does not invite potential voters to have a dialogue with them, everyone can easily find the candidates' contact information.

Res Publica and Pro Patria Union

The RPU has structured its campaign around three main messages – "Free university education," "Reduced homeowners' costs," and "Mother's pension" – and has set them on display in rotation.

The three banners are identical in their appearance. This is a flaw in the opinion of the analysts – it would have been better to make the messages visually different, so that the viewer would not get the impression that they have already seen the banner when the message is actually different. Even the analysts discovered by chance that they were dealing with three distinct messages, as the designs of the messages were identical.

Example: the RPU's online ads in Õhtuleht Online and Delfi on February 25, 2011





As with the Reform Party, the RPU's ads in national newspapers lead the viewer to www.valimised.ee.

The campaigns in local newspapers are centred on individual candidates, meaning that the party's general campaign does not cover local newspapers. Three candidates have a personal campaign.

Example: Tulik's online ad on the Lõunaleht website



Ülo Tulik has a carefully planned approach: in addition to the main message of the banner ("Your own guy; your certain victory!"), three topics/promises that are important to him have been listed. The banner is connected to the RPU's elections programme which is, indeed, the most important document. However, if a person is interested in that specific candidate, they will have to look him up separately on the party website.

It is the opinion of the analysts that the best and most likeable of the ads is Ago Kirss's ad. The ad features the party's general design and main message "Your certain victory!" and is accompanied by 6 personal missions and the banner itself links to his blog¹¹. The blog presents all the necessary information about the candidate as well as his views. The candidate invites readers to join the discussion and have a debate with him. Still, it has to be noted that the opportunity to comment on the information is used very little.

Example: Kirss's online ad on the website of the newspaper Meie Maa



Social Democratic Party

The SDE has focused its campaign on the most popular online environments: they use a simple banner in their party colours with three slogans that directs the viewer to their website where there are direct links to the chapters of their elections programme.

Example: The SDE's online banners on Postimees Online on February 25, 2011



¹¹ http://argokirss.blogspot.com/

Me võime olla mõnest naabrist vaesemad, aga me ei ole rumalad. -Sven Mikser, SDE Kui tahad hoolivat ja tarka riigijuhtimist, vali sotsiaaldemokraadid!

The visual is simple and clear, but the messages seem like superficial slogans. This makes it difficult to judge whether the slogans match the programme. A brief look at the same environments on the following days showed that the messages changed but remained superficial.

Banners serve as links to the party's home page where one can easily find all candidates and their contact information.

One SDE candidate has used the opportunities of the online versions of local newspapers: Anneli Viitkin uses a banner with the SDE's design, linking the viewer to the party's elections programme.

Estonian Centre Party

In addition to Delfi, the Centre Party actively uses the media outlets in Saare, Hiiu, and Lääne counties; altogether, the party had 5 ads in the newspapers of that region. Regional campaign, however, remains somewhat superficial: simple images in party colours and the candidates' pictures redirect to a subpage¹² with a single slogan that offers no additional information or further links to necessary and interesting information¹³.

Example: The Centre Party's online ad on the website of the newspaper Saarte Hääl



This, to a degree, adheres to Good Election Practices: there is no intimidation or criticism, but there is, also, no message to the voters. Furthermore, it is not clear why they have designed such ads. The only aim this could have would be to embed certain candidates in the voters' minds by reminding the voters of them.

Candidate Jaanus Karilaid has opted for a different strategy in the same region: his banner which follows general Centre Party design directs the viewer to a thorough website¹⁴ where the policies of the RPU and the Reform Party are compared to those of the Centre Party. His campaign slogan is straightforward and in keeping with the party programme ("Enough of inflation caused by the increasing value added tax and excise tax!"), but it does not follow Good Election Practices: the candidate's website intimidates voters and criticises the Reform Party and the RPU.

¹² http://www.saartehaal.ee/keskerakond1/

¹³ http://www.saartehaal.ee/keskerakond2/

¹⁴ http://laanemaa.keskerakond.ee/tule-meiega.html

Example: Karilaid's ad on the online version of Hiiu Nädal and



... an excerpt from Karilaid's website http://laanemaa.keskerakond.ee/tule-meiega.html,viewed on February 25, 2011



The Centre Party's candidates in Jõgeva and Tartu counties have also set up separate campaigns, but less successfully: their banners do not follow the party's general design (this might have been done intentionally) and link to the party's home page. This, in broad terms, is in keeping with Good Election Practices: they avoid intimidating voters or criticising competitors, but there is no message to the voter.

Independent candidates

On the day in question, the campaigns of two independent candidates were visible on the Internet, both in the Hiiu, Saare, and Lääne counties.

Both candidates' banner directs viewers to static PDF files that introduce them and their principles to the voters. Somewhat disappointingly, there is a lack of links to further information (although Rein Teesalu recommends the viewers to read his article in *Postimees*), and the candidates' contact information has not been listed.

Rein Teesalu's main message is "By voting for Rein Teesalu you get Rein Teesalu!" and he emphasises the advantages of independent candidates throughout his text. The slogan is simple and understandable, but the focus is too narrowly on the positive aspects of being an independent candidate rather than on actual principles and goals, which are only briefly dealt with.

Example: Teesalu's ad on the online version of the newspaper Saarte Hääl



Conclusion

It is apparent from comparing parties' online ads that they have adopted very different strategies: the Green Party and the People's Union have no online campaigns, the Centre Party has a limited online campaign, the RPU and the SDE have put in above average effort, and the Reform Party has been most active on the Internet. It can be assumed that the choice of strategy is linked to the size of the budget.

At the same time, in random follow-ups the strategies reveal certain changes, especially with the RPU. Their campaign became increasingly visible and forceful which could be detected in their slogans as well: voters were intimidated with the Centre Party and they were encouraged to elect a government that would have Estonian concerns at heart.

It can be concluded that the parties use established solutions – traditional banners rather than innovative solutions. This is probably motivated by the desire to cover as many of the main media outlets as possible and to do so without spending too much money on expensive new solutions. It is still probable that unique solutions are used, but these appear rarely and not on the day in question.

Considering the vast opportunities available on the web, the reliance on traditional and boring solutions is somewhat saddening: one would hope to see something interesting that would encourage people to think about the issues and join the debate.

The Reform Party's online presence on the websites of newspapers seems the most traditional and calm: they do not want to experiment but to be visible and easily noticeable everywhere.

Among all the campaigns, those of the RPU and Kirss's are worth pointing out as campaigns that attempt to initiate a dialogue with potential voters.

On the negative side, one could point to ads that serve as links to the parties' home pages: this is an old-fashioned solution which is not very convenient and offers no new information for the voters.

Online media in Russian

The following is an analysis of campaign ads found on the websites of Russian newspapers and Russian newspapers. Ads shown on the websites of 9 Russian newspapers and news portals (3 national and 6 local) were recorded over the three weeks leading up to the elections (February 2 to March 6, 2011).

The corpus includes the websites of major national daily and weekly newspapers and portals and the websites of the more prominent local newspapers and news portals¹⁵. In total, 26 campaign ads were recorded in the period of observation, of which 25 were analysed further¹⁶. The same ads appearing on different websites were considered separately, as this helps better understand the activity of election campaigns.

Background information

In providing a statistical overview of campaign ads, the nature of the ads was not considered important. Thus, simple ads (for instance, a banner with a candidate's photo and number) were considered equal to more complex ads (for instance, banners with alternating slogans). The second part of the analysis focuses on the content of the ads.

Most campaign ads were found on the online version of the Ida-Viru county newspaper Виру Проспект (6 ads), in the Russian news portal of Delfi (5 ads), and in the online version of the Narva newspaper Газета Нарва (4 ads). 3 ads were recorded in the Narva Internet portal Seti.ee, 2 ads were found in both the Russian Postimees and the newspaper День за Днём; almost void of any sign of campaigning were the online versions of Северное Побережье, Чудское побережье, Газета Нарва newspapers (see Figure 6).

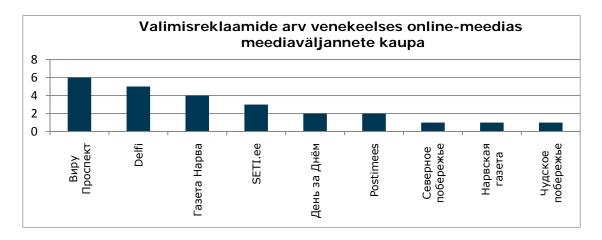


Figure 6, Number of campaign ads in Russian online media outlets

In terms of parties, a clear leader in the number of ads can be seen in the RPU who had over twice as many ads as the party following them. The RPU had 12 ads among which there are ads of varying degrees of detail, from those with individual candidates to those that promote the party in general.

The RPU is followed by the Centre Party (5 ads), the SDE is in third place (3 ads). The Green Party (2 ads), the People's Union (2 ads) and the Reform Party (1 ad) (see Figure 7) took a more modest approach to Russian

16 Ads on the same web page featuring identical slogans were not counted as separate ads, despite the differences in their size and placement.

¹⁵ Postimees http://rus.postimees.ee/, Delfi http://rus.delfi.ee/, День за Днём http://www.dzd.ee/, Северное побережье http://sp.pohjarannik.ee/, Газета Нарва http://www.narvaleht.eu/, Нарвская Газета http://www.gazeta.ee/, Виру Проспект http://www.prospekt.ee/, Seti.ee http://www.seti.ee/modules/news/, Чудское побережье http://peipsirannik.info/

online media. Most ads (19) mentioned the name of an individual candidate. The most popular names were Eldar Efendijev (the Centre Party) and Ants Pauls (the RPU).

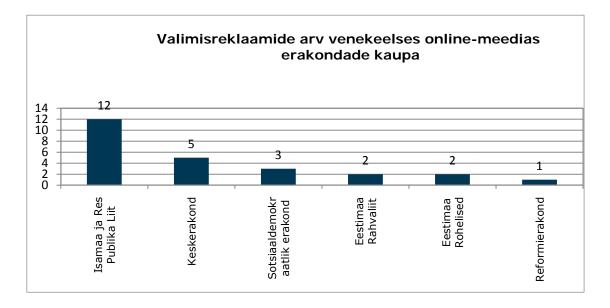


Figure 7. The number of ads in online media per party

Content analysis

In terms of content, the ads can be divided into candidate-centred and party-centred advertising. Another criterion could be the quality of the ads and messages. An ad could be considered interactive when it solicits the viewers' input and attempts to initiate a dialogue with them. In contra advertising, viewers are invited to vote against another party/candidate, or another party/candidate is shown in a negative light. Informative advertising gives information about the elections programme or lists the party's aims and priorities. Target audience centred advertising is aimed towards a specific audience. The last type of ad, advertising in the form of photos, is essentially an empty ad with no content and provides no information about the party's or candidate's beliefs. One ad can simultaneously be classified under different advertising types.

Estonian Centre Party

The Centre Party used both party-centred and candidate-centred campaign ads; to encourage people to vote against the Reform Party in the first instance, and to cast a negative light on the parties in the coalition in the second instance. In the first party-centred contra advertising they tried to convince voters to vote the Centre Party ahead of the Reform Party. In doing this they made use of *Eesti Päevaleht's* data on the public's support of the parties and tried to show that the Reform Party was already in the lead and that this could only be reversed if everyone voted for the Centre Party. Such an ad read:

• "Результаты свежего опроса газеты «Ээсти пяэвалехт» / Партия реформ 32% Центристская партия 26% / Союз отечества и РесПублики 18% / Социал-демократическая партия 12%". 2nd slide: "Проголосуй так, чтобы центристы обогнали реформистов!" 3rd slide: "Проголосуй за Центристскую партию!" (Delfi, viewed on March 5, 2011)

Проголосуй так, чтобы центристы обогнали реформистов!

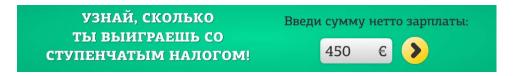
¹⁷ Original texts have been used to cite campaign slogans

The Centre Party also had an example of candidate-centred contra advertising that, compared to the first one, did not urge people to vote against someone but still tried to oppose the Centre Party to the coalition parties (the Reform Party and the RPU) by claiming that the former wanted to get the Ida-Viru county vote but not to solve the region's problems. The contra advertising featured a candidate's photo and number and asked people to vote for the candidate and read four articles by the candidate. The latter somewhat compensated for the static nature of and lack of content in the ad, as the website it had a link to gave sufficient information on the candidate's views. An entirely other matter is how many viewers actually click on the banners and how many simply read the contra ads. The number of people who do the latter is probably far greater. It should also be noted that, as one clicked on the banners, a new web page opened where, before one could actually read the articles, viewers were urged (in capital letters) not to support the coalition parties. The contra message of the ad read:

• "Правящие партии, Реформистская и IRL, заинтересованы в голосах избирателей Ида-Вирумаа, а не в решении их проблем" (*Виру Проспект*, viewed on March 5, 2011)

The Centre Party also used a party-centred interactive ad that tried to solicit the viewers' contribution. The aim of the ad was to illustrate how much financial gain people could expect if progressive income tax was to be introduced. The viewers were asked to enter the number of their net wages and the following slide showed how much they would gain if the Estonian tax system was reformed. Such an ad could be considered both interesting and informative, as it gives information about the party's views on tax policies.

• 1 "УЗНАЙ, СКОЛЬКО ТЫ ВЫИГРАЕШЬ СО СТУПЕНЧАТЫМ НАЛОГОМ! Введи сумму нетто зарплаты: ..." 2nd slide: "Выигрыш в месяц: ... / Выигрыш в году:... / Именно так увеличатся твои доходы, когда в Эстонии будет действовать система ступенчатого подоходного налога. / ВЫБИРАЙ 6. МАРТА ЦЕНТРИСТСКУЮ ПАРТИЮ! НАДОЕЛИ ВЫСОКИЕ НАЛОГИ!" (Delfi, viewed on February 28, 2011)



Social Democratic Party

An ad by the SDE could be considered a candidate-centred interactive ad – it attempted to address the dilemmas facing the Russian population in Estonia. The ad juxtaposed values such as education and survival, integration and cultural autonomy, the European Union and Russia, dignified work and work in Estonia, Estonian language and Russian language. The second slide tried to convince the viewer that they did not have to choose between these values; instead, they should choose the SDE on March 6. On the right side of the ad, there was Jevgeni Ossinovski's name and candidate number. This ad was presented in two ways: it appeared at the top of the Delfi website where it took up quite a lot of space and it was also displayed in smaller proportions when Ida-Viru county news were clicked on. Although the text on the ad differed slightly, the message remained the same which is why the two displays were considered a single ad. The ad read as follows:

• "ЭСТОНСКИЙ ИЛИ РУССКИЙ, ИНТЕГРАЦИЯ ИЛИ САМОСОЗНАНИЕ, ДОСТОЙНАЯ РАБОТА ИЛИ РОДНОЙ КРАЙ". 2nd slide: "ВАМ НЕ НУЖНО ВЫБИРАТЬ МЕЖДУ НИМИ. 6. МАРТА ВЫБЕРИТЕ СОЦИАЛ-ДЕМОКРАТЫ / Jevgeni Ossinovski nr 415". (Delfi, viewed on March 2, 2011)



The SDE's informative ads on Delfi were linked to a website designed specifically for the elections (http://vybor2011.ee) where one could find more information about the candidate Jevgeni Ossinovski (including the elections programme, a video, personal information). Candidate-centred ad photos in the newspaper Γαзετα Hapba linked to a web page belonging to the same newspaper where one could read an interview with Ossinovski. Clicking on the candidate-centred photo ad in the newspaper Чудское побережье opened a bigger image of the ad.

Res Publica and Pro Patria Union

The so-called leader in campaigns appearing in Russian, the RPU, used two types of ads in national online newspapers *Postimees* and День за Днём as well as in the Russian version of the Delfi news portal: banners promoting the party with slogans that convey the party's aims and principles, and banners promoting candidates that are aimed at the citizens in specific areas. The first type could be called party-centred and informative, as the slogans provide information about the party's elections programme. The RPU's ads promised higher paternal benefits, free university education and reduced homeowners' costs.

• ВЫБИРАЙТЕ IRL – ВАША ВЕРНАЯ ПОБЕДА! 2nd slide: "Если Вы за бесплатное высшее образование, проголосуйте здесь!" 3rd slide: "Если вы за снижение жилищных расходов, выбирайте здесь!" (День за Днём, viewed on March 1, 2011)



Another ad focused on target audiences, that is, voters in specific electoral districts. It is somewhat difficult to set the ad on a scale from candidate-centred to party-centred as it did not feature a candidate's photo and the text included slogans related to the party as well as the candidate. Nevertheless, considering that the slogans on the ad alternated (meaning that the viewer might not always see the text about the individual candidate) and keeping in mind that the candidate's photo was not visible, it might be concluded that the ad is best classified as a party-centred one.

• "ХААБЕРСТИ, ПЫХЬЯ ТАЛЛИНН И КРИСТИЙНЕ." 2nd slide: "ГОЛОСУЙТЕ ЗА ИРЛ! ВАША ВЕРНАЯ ПОБЕДА!" 3rd slide: "КЕН-МАРТИ ВАХЕР, КАНДИДАТ NR. 223" (*Postimees*, viewed on March 2, 2011)

In terms of local online media, the PRU used a candidate-centred ad where the names of Ants Pauls, Erki Nool and Robert Antropov were featured. Only Erki Nool's ad could be considered both candidate-centred as well as informative, as it included information about the RPU's elections programme.

• "№ 288 Эрки Ноол / Выборы в Рийгикогу 2011 / С IRL обязательно победишь!" After that, only the slogan in the middle of the banner changes. 2nd slide: "СНИЖЕНИЕ КОММУНАЛЬНЫХ РАСХОДОВ". 3rd slide: "БЕСПЛАТНОЕ ВЫСШЕЕ ОБРАЗОВАНИЕ". 4th slide: "МАТЕРИНСКАЯ ПЕНСИЯ – ПРИБАВКА К ПЕНСИИ РОДИТЕЛЯМ!". (Виру Проспект, viewed on March 1, 2011)



The RPU's party-centred informative ads in national media (in *Postimees, День за Днём* and the Russian version of the Delfi news portal) linked to the Estonian National Electoral Committee's website www.valimised.ee. Target

Estonian Reform Party

The Reform Party was almost excluded from the campaigns on sites in Russian as it was limited to a single candidate-centred photo ad in the newspaper *Северное ποбережье* where the names and candidate numbers of Kriistina Ojuland and Pavel Makarov alternated on a white background.

Example: Pavel Makarov's online ad in Северное побережье

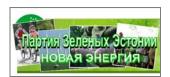


Estonian Green Party

The Green Party campaign was limited to the Narva Internet portal Seti.ee and the most popular media outlet Bupy Проспект. The latter featured an informative party-centred ad where beautiful photos illustrated the party's values: a friendly environment, environmental protection and alternative energy sources.

Examples of the Green Party's ads on Narva web portal





Urmas Hallike, who ran on the Green Party's list, had an ad on Narva Internet portal that urged Ida-Viru people to become their own bosses. In terms of content, however, the ad cannot be considered informative.

• "165 URMAS HALLIKA." 2nd slide: "Ваш кандидат! ПОРА стать хозяевами!" 3rd slide: "ВАШ КАНДИДАТ! ПОРА решать проблемы Нарвы и Ида-Вирумаа!" (Seti.ee, viewed on March 5, 2011)

Conclusion

The analysis of Russian campaign ads in online media outlets included ads from 9 newspapers and news portals. The analysis revealed that most ads were featured in the online version of the Ida-Viru newspaper *Bupy Проспект* and that the most active party in terms of online campaigns in Russian was the RPU. In terms of ad types, local media most often featured ad photos that display only the candidate's photo and number. National media featured more party-centred ads including interactive ads (the Centre Party and the SDE), contra advertising (the Centre Party), informative and target audience centred ads (the RPU). In connection to the websites that ads lead to, a clear pattern emerged: the less information the ad presented, the more information was provided by the following website. Thus, in local media, ads are more often linked to interviews with the candidates and their personal websites. National media saw more links to party websites or the elections page on the National Electoral Committee's website.

18 http://www.irl.ee/et/Riigikogu-valimised

19 http://antspauls.eu/

20 www.irl.ee

C) Candidates' personal websites (blogs) as campaign tools

The present chapter focuses on party blogs and looks at how much and to what extent the candidates use the specific possibilities of new media as a means of conveying their messages.

The chapter is divided into four parts, beginning with an overview of the corpus and method and pointing to the parties analysed. The second part is further divided into two: it gives both a qualitative and a quantitative account of all the blogs analysed. The third part offers and overview of the politicians' blogs both for those belonging to parties and those running as independent candidates, including illustrative samples from the blogs and photos from the campaigns. The fourth part is a general evaluation of all the candidates' blogs.

The blogs were found by a Google search that included the candidate's name and the word 'blog'. If the first page of results included a link to the candidate's personal blog, the blog was counted among the corpus. Out of the 789 candidates, 107 emerged as bloggers on the basis of this method (14% in total). The Russian Party in Estonia with its 16 members was the only party to have no candidates with personal blogs.

The bloggers belonged to parties as follows:

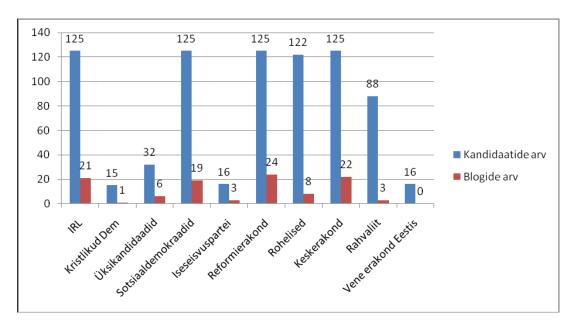


Figure 8. The distribution of bloggers by party

20 out of the 107 blogs were later discovered to be inactive with the latest posts being outdated or missing entirely.

Overall, it was found that the major parties tended to have more members who had personal blogs. A list of 125 candidates would include about 20 bloggers. Smaller parties had shorter lists of candidates and, thus, less bloggers.

In terms of percentages, the least bloggers were found among the members of the People's Union, the Green Party, and the Christian Democrats. More bloggers could be found among the independent candidates as well as among the members of the Reform Party, the Independence Party, and the Centre Party.

Quantitative analysis of the blogs

Quantitative analysis of the blogs focuses on main trends. Different aspects are elaborated and illustrated in the analysis of individual parties.

Political views

55 out of the 107 bloggers (51%) present their political views. The independent candidates stand out in terms of the presence of clear political statements which can be found on each blog. The SDE with 74% and the Reform Party with 54% should also be noted.

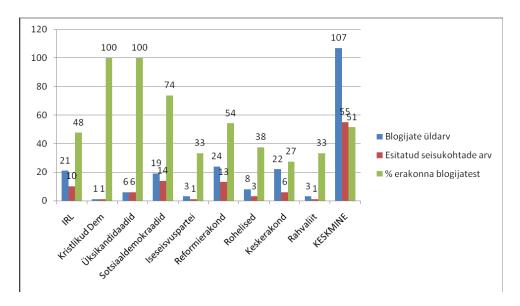


Figure 9. Political views in blogs by party

Very few blogs present political views in a comparative manner. Mostly, the presentation of political views means that the candidate has emphasised points from the party's programme that they consider important without focusing on the content. Thus, a strange tendency noted by Lilles (2010) in the 2009 elections is confirmed – if a candidate can be easily found in social networks, it might be difficult to find information about their ideas and thoughts with regard to the content of the campaign.

General information

42 bloggers (39%) refer to their party's elections programme. The RPU, the Independence Party, and the Reform Party bloggers are more active in referring to the programme.

53 blogs (50% of all the blogs) offer the opportunity to join the candidate's virtual network. The members of the Reform Party and the Independence Party were foremost among candidates to do so. In most cases, the viewers could join RSS feeds.

42 blogs (39%) include links to the candidates' other environments. The links are most common with the People's Union and the independent candidates' blogs, but the Reform Party is not far behind.

Mostly, candidates post links to their own Facebook (30 people) or Twitter (22 people) pages. Other environments are rarely linked.

58 bloggers (54%) link their party's campaigns in other environments. This is most frequently done by the Reform Party and the Independence Party. Mainly, this means links to the party's home page, but links to the blogs of fellow party members can also be found.

Qualitative analysis of the blogs

Campaign elements and messages

Several blogs had no campaign elements. One reason for this might be the wish to not overly irritate or annoy the voters with them. The Reform Party displays the largest amount of campaign elements – almost every blog features numerous elements.

Campaign messages, however, remain vague in many blogs. In half the blogs, it is unclear which message is being conveyed or to whom the messages are directed. This might be due to candidates not considering blogs important parts of their campaigns or not being aware of the need to make the messages more specific.

Interactivity

Readers remain fairly inactive in the blogs. In 2009, e-Governance Academy analysed the online campaigns prior to the local elections and it was likewise observed that communication was somewhat one-sided and there were not many comments in the blogs. Only some of the most popular bloggers had 10–20 comments. It can be concluded that commenting on blogs has remained inactive.

Below, the blogs of each party are analysed separately.

Res Publica and Pro Patria Union

The RPU is the second largest party in Estonia with 9,500 members. In the 2011 Riigikogu elections they had 125 candidates from different districts, among them both well-known players as well as newcomers. Out of the 125, only 21 had a blog where they could express their thoughts on Estonia's development, politics, and elections.

The main tendency seen in the blogs is the moment of their activation which was late January or early February as a rule. The frequency of new posts primarily in the period leading up to the elections indicates the passivity and lack of interest among party members to express their political ideas outside elections. There are very few of those who actually and consistently express their thoughts, either on personal or political topics.

Out of 21, 5 blogs were outdated, containing information and promises from the 2007 Riigikogu elections which is indicative of the bloggers' lack of continuity and their carelessness in polluting the Internet environment. The danger with outdated blogs is that readers might not notice the date and think that the views presented apply to the present elections. Outdated blogs were not included in the analysis.

Language on the blogs

The RPU's blogs are mainly in Estonian. 75% of entries were entirely in Estonian which suggests that they are primarily addressed to Estonian voters. 25% provide an opportunity to choose a language other than the national language. One candidate offers the chance to read the blog in both Russian and Estonian; another offers a choice between English and Estonian. The choice between Estonian and Russian might be based on the district the candidate is running in as some districts might have active bilingual voters. This choice was present in the blogs of the candidates running in Ida-Viru county. Next to entries in Estonian, two blogs offer some comments in English and Russian.

It is interesting that, for instance, in Mart Laar's blog the English text differs considerably from the Estonian text. This suggests that the text has not been translated but specifically written for the English version.

Views presented on the blogs

Of the 16 active blogs, 10 present the bloggers' views (that is, 16.2% of all the RPU blogs). More often, the views were personal and offered no comparisons to the views of other parties. Views were presented on the basis

of a specific candidate's area of expertise and the interests of a specific district. The views presented were connected to the party's campaign promises.

Most often, the views pertained to economic policies and stressed the importance of being active in this area. A large portion of the views presented were in keeping with the party's traditionally Estonian concerns, that is, their focus on supporting educational reform, mother's pension, and developing family policy.

Ants Pauls's campaign video presents his personal views and the main principles of the RPU's elections programme as different campaign elements, for instance, as parts of a video.

An example from Ants Pauls's blog:



Links and the possibility to join in

In 16 active blogs, candidates included links to the party's home page in 11 instances (68.75% of all the instances). Only the most passive blogs that lacked any references to other blogs also lacked links to the home page.

Six blogs offered the opportunity to follow the blogs and keep up with the posts. The primary ways of doing this would be through RSS feeds or Google Friend Connect. Joining the followers of a blog was usually one click away, but the links were not very noticeable. The possibility to follow Jaanus Ojangu's blog was most visible – the call to do so was most prominent in his blog.

In addition to inviting people to follow the blogs, there were also links to other social media channels that people were invited to join and follow candidates on. Links mainly lead to Twitter and Facebook. However, the links were not as numerous as might have been expected. The links to Facebook and Twitter accounts could be found only in the most active blogs that were consistent in spreading their messages. Altogether, 31.25%, that is, 5 out of the 16 active blogs, referred to Twitter (2 bloggers) or Facebook (2 bloggers), and only 1 blog referred to both. Links to Twitter and Facebook were generally visible on the home pages of the blogs; once, a link was listed under contact information.

In 9 instances (56.25%), fellow party members and their campaigns were referred to. The fellow members included Herkel (1 reference), Lukas (1), Nutt (1), Parts (1), Mihkelson (3), and Laar (3). There were also references to the bloggers' own additional campaign sites, for example, Jaanus Ojangu has a link (1) to his personal web page where one can read about his activities and thoughts before the elections.

Campaign elements

Only 25% of the blogs featured elements seen in the 2011 Riigikogu campaigns. 12 blogs lacked campaign elements.

The main campaign elements used by the RPU in these elections were similar to the following images:



Message: The RPU makes a contract with you. You only have to give us your vote



Laar's face as a visual feature



Logo



Campaign videos



Your certain victory! – The RPU's logo presenting the main promises made during the elections

Sven Sester's blog was the only one to feature distinct and clearly visible campaign elements. Three other blogs also displayed campaign elements that were presented not on the home page but elsewhere, for instance, in a video. Sven Sester's blog presents an audio message from him – not in the blog itself but close to it. His blog also featured the RPU's logo and slogan, the party's basic design, and a photo of a meeting with the voters.

Examples from Sven Sester's blog:







An example from Andres Herkel's blog:



Campaign messages

Campaign messages were present in 68.75% of all instances. As a rule, the messages were intended for the people of a specific electoral district, and they were connected to the RPU's programme. Campaign messages were presented both as lists and within posts. The messages contained information relevant to voters directed specifically towards people in specific districts. Campaign messages could also be found under separate blog entries. For example, free higher education was discussed under the topic of higher education, and family policy and parental benefits were discussed under the topic of family.

Sester has skilfully inserted messages into his blog entries by writing about his experience in conducting surveys. His visits included all target groups from students to senior citizens. For instance, a section in Sven Sester's blog (viewed on February 24, 2011) reads: "One Skype headset was given to a young Russian man (about 20 years of age) who rather surprisingly approved of the idea of providing free higher education. We had a longer discussion on this topic." Argo Kirss, for example, writes about teachers, thus, directing the messages to school teachers. This might be due to the fact that Kirss's wife is a teacher in a local school which means that Kirss feels a certain affinity to this topic and to the teachers among his electorate.

Interactivity

Interactivity and communication with readers were fairly low in the blogs. Only few blogs were consistently updated and, thus, also received a greater amount of comments. Comments were much more noticeable in Mart Laar's, Andres Herkel's, and Lauri Vahtre's blogs. Five blogs had no comments suggesting a limited readership – communication is one-sided and not focused on having a dialogue with the readers. It was observed that the blogs that became active shortly before the elections had no signs of interactivity. 50% of blogs had at least one comment. There were bloggers whose posts had been read and commented upon in a manner that would have required an answer which, however, was not given. In other words, the candidate failed to initiate a discussion.

For example, the comments on Laar's blog show that he was less diligent in responding to negative comments than positive ones.

Evaluation of the blogs

Only three blogs deserve to be commended – these dealt with topical issues, were continuous, and had frequent new entries that were relevant to the readership. The blogs belonged to Mart Laar, Andres Herkel, and Sven Sester.

The general impression is somewhat marred by bloggers who have neglected to make new posts or done so very infrequently, who have only been active during the elections, or whose posts are not related to the elections or current issues.

In conclusion, it can be said that the RPU has a few candidates who are committed to and work hard at making their blogs part of their campaign. The majority, however, are quite passive and do not use the blogs as campaign weapons.

For the most part, blogs adhered to the **Good Election Practices**. The RPU members did not slander other parties or make any negative references to them; they preferred fact-based discussion. The main shortcomings were, first, that bloggers failed to identify themselves as politicians and, second, that they failed to present party logos and references, so their political loyalties remained unclear.

Estonian Green Party

The Green Party is the only political organisation in Estonia whose explicit goal is a sustainable lifestyle and politics. Only 8 out of their 125 candidates have a blog. Out of these, three are passive which leaves 5 active blogs to analyse.

Language on the blogs

Posts were made only in Estonian and there was no possibility to read the blogs in any other language, which suggests that Estonian voters are the intended readers.

Views presented on the blogs

Three out of five blogs present political views that, in one instance, serve as a point of comparison with the competitors. In two instances, blogs present only the Green Party's views without offering any parallels to other parties.

Links and the possibilities to join in

Two blogs among the five had links to the party's home page. In one instance, readers could become followers of the blog. Facebook and Twitter were rarely mentioned. There was only one link to Twitter, reflecting the candidates' inactivity in social media channels other than the blog.

There were two references to other campaigns: to the home page of the party's youth organisation and to the elections section.

Campaign elements

Only two blogs featured the Green Party's 2011 campaign elements. The other three were more personal and neutral and did not focus on topics related to the elections.

The main campaign elements used in the elections are as follows:



The party logo



Campaign videos for different candidates



The slogan for the 2011 Riiqikogu elections An example from Marek Strandberg's blog:



Strandberg's blog stands out with the caricatures he has drawn. He has connected the caricatures with elections-related thoughts and, thus, turned them into campaign elements. The blog also features his photos and a video.

Paul Lettens's blog presents the party logo, his campaign poster and photos of him meeting with voters as campaign elements.

Campaign messages

Out of the five, campaign messages can be seen in three blogs where topical and useful information is provided. These blogs are also directed towards specific audiences; the only one with an unclear target audience is Strandberg's blog.

Interactivity

Interactivity is low; in one blog there is no place for comments at all. In another, comments can be submitted via e-mail. In fact, Strandberg's blog is the only interactive blog which is partly due to the fact that he has posted new entries consistently over a number of years and has, thus, gathered a steady readership. A lively debate can be found in the comments section, as Strandberg actively responds to comments.

In conclusion, it can be said that only few candidates use blogs consciously as a means of campaigning; this is evident from the small number of blogs and the fairly limited use of campaign elements in them.

Estonian Reform Party

The Reform Party with its 9,308 members is the third largest party in Estonia. In the 2011 Riigikogu elections, 125 people from the party were listed as candidates. 24 among the 125 candidates (that is, 19.2%) have blogs; 3 blogs belong to women and 21 to men.

The main characteristic of the blogs would be their uniformity: the party website offers the opportunity to set up a personal blog and this opportunity is widely used. This, however, has lead to the situation where the majority of the blogs look very much alike (following the design of the party website). The layout of the blogs, the means of sharing information, etc. are likewise similar.

Example: A blog following the Reform Party's unified design:



Only five blogs differ from the default design: those of Kaja Kallas, Silver Meikar, Rait Maruste, Kristjan Kõljalg, and Õnne Pillak.

4 out of 24 blogs are either completely inactive or almost lacking in content.

Language on the blogs

All blogs were written in Estonian. Only two blogs catered to the Russian-speaking citizens as well. Aivar Sõerd's blog features one post aimed at Russian-speaking voters that lists the party's main views; the post included a Russian leaflet. Keit Pentus has also taken Russian-speaking voters into account, probably because her district includes the Lasnamäe district. Curiously, her Estonian and Russian blogs had different designs and content. Pentus's Estonian blog followed the general layout provided by the party, but the Russian version had a different menu bar, content, and design.

Example: Keit Pentus's Estonian blog:



Keit Pentus's Russian blog:



Views presented on the blogs

Half, that is, 12 candidates out of 24 have presented their views. They mainly focus on those topics in the party's elections programme that they feel most passionate about. 11 blogs (46%) made references to the programme. Very few blog posts offered analysis of and comparison with the competitors.

Example: Views presented:

Riigikogu valimised 2011

Kinnitan teile, et kui riigi rahandus on kindlates kätes, läheb ka teie elu paremaks. Minu Riigikogu valimiste reklaamklippi vaata <u>siit</u>



Kavatsen oma tuleviku kindlasti poliitikaga siduda. Seepärast võib valija olla kindel, et seisan iga oma sõna, teo ja lubaduse taga ka pikkade aastate pärast.

Tugev majandusharidus on olnud abiks osalemaks kriisiaegsete riigieelarvete menetlemises, optsioonide maksustamise uue korra ja maksupettuste vastaste seaduste loomises. Seejuures on vanemad ametikaaslased esile tõstnud, et jaksan tundide ja päevade kaupa lahendusi ja kompromisse otsida ning mitme olulise eelnõu puhul on see ka õnnestunud. Kinnitan, et tahan ka edasipidi töötada riigieelarve tasakaalu, tööjõumaksude alandamise ja maksuerisuste vähendamise kallal.

Olen osalenud kahe Eestile üliolulise idee - vanemahtivitise ja e-valimiste algatuse - elluviimises.

Olen põline linnamees, neljandat põlve tallinlane. Nii on minu side oma valimisringkonnaga midagi märksa enamat kui vaid poliitiline ambitsioon. Need on juured, side kodukandiga. Olen Õismäel ja Kristiine piiril elanud suurema osa oma elust, aastatel 2004-2005 töötasin ta Haabersti linnaosa vanemana ning sealt edasi mitu aastat halduskogu juhina. Olen oma valimisringkonnale truuks jäänud esimestest valimistest alates.

Links and the possibilities to join in

19 candidates (79%) offered the possibility to join their virtual environment. All blogs could be followed through RSS feeds.

14 candidates (58%) presented links to their other environments. In most cases, the links were either to Facebook or Twitter; two candidates linked to Skype.

5 blogs linked only to Facebook and one only to Twitter; 6 candidates had links both to their Facebook and Twitter pages. Two people linked their Facebook, Twitter, and Skype pages.

18 candidates (75%) included links to the party's campaigns in other environments. In 15 of these instances, the links were to the party website. In three blogs, there are links to campaign ads on YouTube next to links to the party website.

Campaign elements

Almost all blogs featured the party's campaign elements. All blogs based on the general party layout had the following images:

The Reform Party's catch phrase:



The Reform Party's logo and slogan:



The candidate's district and candidate number presented on a blog:



Additionally, five candidates had links to their campaign videos on YouTube and one candidate had uploaded parts of a speech.

Example: A link to YouTube:



Arto Aas used a photo with the prime minister:



Aivar Sõerd added a campaign leaflet to his blog:



Two candidates included campaign elements that were innovative and engendered participation:

Example: On Lauri Luik's blog, readers can reply to an elections prediction and win a prize (a DVD player):



Another interesting example comes from Tõnis Kõiv's blog where, by clicking on "FREE" on the menu bar, it is possible to sign up for a free visit to Paide rampart tower with Kõiv.

Paide Vallitorni külastus Kőik sai alguse vajadusest rajada **Vallitorni lift**. Eakamad lihtsalt ei jőudnud mööda kitsaid treppe viimasele korrusele ronida. Ajurünnakud koos Eesti turismikorraldajatega viisid lahenduseni – vaja koostada suurem projekt, mis ühe detailina sisaldaks ka lifti. Aasta oli siis 2003 ja juhtisin Paide linnavalitsust. Teada oli, et Eesti liitumise järel Euroopa Liiduga avanevad tõukefondid ja sealt raha taotlemiseks peavad projektid valmis olema. Nii on ka läinud, Paide Vallitorni projekt saigi eurotoetust. Nüüd kui Vallitorn on külastajatele avatud, saan paremale käivitumisele kaasa aidata. Palju on kurdetud kõrge sissepääsu tasu (6 eurot) üle, mis takistab eelkõige kohalikku inimest torni külastamast. Minu arvates peaks aga kõik kohalikud elanikud saama võimaluse Vallitornis käia, sealset väljapanekut vaadata, kodupaiga ajalooga tutvuda. Seejärel saavad nad kõigile oma sugulastele, tuttavatele, sõpradele Eestist ja kaugemalt soovitada: t<mark>ulge</mark> Paidesse ja külastage Vallitorni, see on väärt koht. Nii elavdame Paide majandust, tööd saab kaubandus ja teenindus ning elu muutub paremaks. Järgnevalt pakun omalt poolt välja **võimaluse** Vallitorni külastamiseks minu kulul. Palun täida ankeet ja kui jõuad esimese tosina hulka väljapakutud kuupäeval, oledki saanud tasuta Vallitorni pääsemise võimaluse väljapakutud tinaimustel. 1. Nimi (nőutav) 2. Perenimi (nőutav) 3. KONTAKTANDMED Telefoni nr (nőutav)

It is noteworthy that blogs not presented in the default party layout feature considerably fewer campaign elements. The blogs by Kaja Kallas, Rait Maruste, and Õnne Pillak simply list their districts and candidate numbers. Meikar's blog features no campaign elements overtly connected to the elections and, instead, focuses on expressing his personal thoughts and views.

Campaign messages

Campaign messages can be found in 14 (58%) blogs. In most cases, candidates had chosen some topics from the party programme that they considered important or presented relevant views. The candidates also used the opportunity to repeat specific campaign promises. Approximately half of the campaign messages were directed towards certain target groups, usually the people of a certain district.

Broadly speaking, the messages remained vague and the candidates tended to present a limited number of topics and promises.

Interactivity

The interactivity in the blogs was a weak point. 14 out of 24 blogs have no comments or lack even the possibility to comment. Six blogs have a few comments. Only three blogs can boast more comments and, out of the three bloggers, only one, Tõnis Kõiv, has answered the comments made, providing thorough and concise replies.

General evaluation of the blogs

Kõiv's blog deserves the highest mark. His is a long-standing blog that features regular entries and is fairly topical. The blog received additional marks for the campaign that offered free visits to the Paide tower. Other blogs, however, are inactive or utterly void of content. One such blog belongs to Jürgen Ligi – the blog has almost no content and no operational links.

The campaign and the Good Election Practices

The blogs generally adhere to Good Election Practices. Out of the 24, two had instances where the practices were ignored. In both of these cases, the blogs pointed to the competitors' flaws:

Example: Arto Aas lists five reasons why Savisaar should leave politics:



Remo Holsmer's ironic post:



27.01.2011 4:21, Blogi 🔍 kommentaare pole

Köne linnavolikogu istungil, 27.01.2011



"Viimasest volikogu istungist on möödunud peaaegu poolteist kuud. Selle aja sisse on jäänud väga palju sündmusi, mis on mõjutanud nii Tallinna kui ka Eesti poliitikat tervikuna.

Sellesse perioodi on jäänud linnapea Venemaalt raha küsimise skandaal ja sotside lahkumine koalitsioonist, kuid ka terve rida teisi sündmusi, millel tahaksin lühidalt peatuda.

Kõigepealt, mis sotside lahkumisse puutub, siis see on selline "jooseptootsilik" pooliku rehkenduse tegemine – abilinnapea ja linnaosavanem on küll tagasi astunud, kuid keskerakondlaste häältega ametisse valitud volikogu aseesimees, komisjonide esimehed ning linnaasutuste nõukogude sotsidest liikmed istuvad oma kohtadel rõõmsalt edasi. Keskerakonnaga koostööd on ju sotsiaaldemokraadid lubanud jätkata ka tulevikus ning võibolla on praegune kummaline situatsioon Tallinnas osa sellest koosmeelest. Aga see selleks, see pole kindlasti tänase päeva põhiteema.

Viimase volikogu istungi järgsesse aega jäi ka linnapea postkaardi ning telereklaami kampaania, kus ta soovis 1,5 miljoni krooni maksumaksja raha eest meile kõigile häid jõule ja head uut aastat. Aitähh selle eest. Lisaks sellele kutsus jaanuari alguses üks linnaosavanem oma pildiga plakatitel meid tervisespordipäevale Salme keskusesse. Tänud ka selle eest. Need tänusõnad on mõeldud irooniaga ja peegeldavad üheselt seda, kuidas võimul olev erakond maksumaksia raha eest valimiskampaaniat teeb.

Estonian Independence Party

The Independence Party is one of the smallest parties in Estonia. At the moment, the party has 1,201 members. 16 people from the party participated in the 2011 Riigikogu elections. Among the 16, three candidates (19%) had blogs, all of whom were male.

Campaign elements

Campaign elements can be seen in two blogs.

Example: Tarmo Õunapuu presents the district, candidate number and the party's logo on his blog:



Õunapuu's blog also features a leaflet:



Campaign messages

Campaign messages are visible only in Tarmo Õunapuu's blog that lists both his and the party's most important messages. The two other blogs do not present campaign messages.

Interactivity

Two blogs feature the odd comment and limited interactivity. Tarmo Kruusimäe's blog has more comments, but the blogger does not respond to them.

The campaign and the Good Election Practices

Two blogs out of three do not adhere to the Good Election Practices.

Example: Tarmo Kruusimäe's blog has instances of the Reform Party being criticised:

Reformierakond - Võid kindel olla!

Tarmo Őunapuu, 11. veebr 2011

Alljärgnevat lugedes palun arvestage ka selle erakonnaga, kes Reformierakonnaga koalitsioonis oli.

ANSIPI VALITSUSE "TEENED" PRAEGUSTE JA TULEVASTE PENSIONÄRIDE EES:

- 1) Lõpetati pensionide kojukanne.
- 2) Peatati pensioni II samba riigi poolsed maksed.





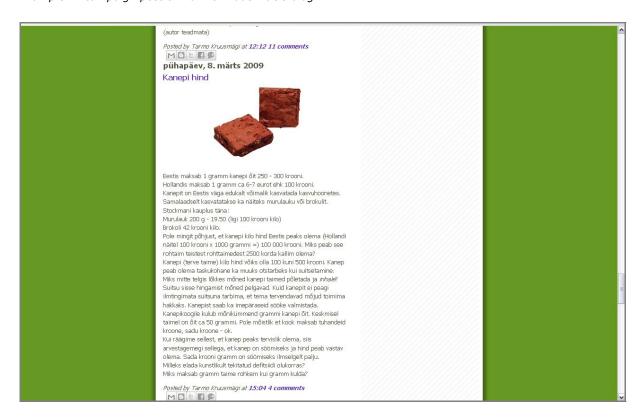
- 3) Tõsteti rahva arvamusega mittearvestamata pensioniiga.
- 4) Hakkas kehtima omaosalus hooldusravis kuni 3000 krooni kuus.
- 5) Vähendati oluliselt haigushüvitisi.
- 6) Kaotati matusetoetus ja tõsteti matuseteenuste käibemaks 5% 9%.
- 7) Vähendati kohalike omavalitsuste tulubaasi, mis muuhulgas piirab nende võimalusi hättasattunute aitamisel.



Riigipoolsetest maksetest Sinu pensionisambasse näed vaid und!

- 8) Suletakse kohalikke postkontoreid ning vähendatakse ühistranspordiliine.
- 9) Tõsteti käibemaks 18% 20%, mis lööb valusalt pensionäri rahakoti pihta.
- 10) Toasooja käibemaks tõsteti 5% 20%, mis lööb valusalt pensionäri rahakoti pihta.

Example: A campaign post on Tarmo Kruusimäe's blog:



Estonian Centre Party

The Centre Party, with over a 12,600 members, is the largest party in Estonia. In the 2011 Riigikogu elections, 125 members from various districts ran for parliament. Among them, only 22 candidates had a blog intended to convey their ideas, beliefs, and thoughts to fellow citizens. 16 men and 6 women had a blog.

Two blogs out of the 22 are outdated with the latest posts dating from 2008 (Aivar Riisalu's and Kalle Mihkels's). Many blogs look very similar – the headers feature a banner with the candidate's photo and number, below it is a video that introduces the party's campaign.

Example: The most common solutions on the Centre Party's blogs:





Language on the blogs

The blogs are mainly in Estonian. 17 blogs were only in Estonian, three were both in Estonian and in Russian, and two were only in Russian (Deniss Boroditš's and Mihhail Stalnuhhin's). As Stalnuhhin is running in the Ida-Viru region, it seems reasonable to have a blog entirely in Russian. All the ads and banners featured in his blog were also in Russian only.

Example: A campaign poster in Russian:



Views presented on the blogs

Six out of 22 blogs present party views that were more personal or related to the party's general views. For example, Priit Tobal lists promises made by other parties in previous elections, criticising the people who made them while urging people to vote for him and against things left undone. Savisaar is likewise critical of the views of other parties in his blog, and critical comparisons can also be found on Kadri Simson's blog. It is interesting that many candidates have not used blogs to make their campaign promises or introduce their views. The main views presented were connected to specific promises.

Example: Lauri Laasi has listed the party's campaign promises with the campaign banners on his blog:



Links and the possibility to join in

For the most part, the blogs lead to the party home page that opened in a new window when a banner in party colours was clicked. Many blogs also offered the possibility to follow the posts; almost all blogs offered the possibility to join an RSS feed.

Several blogs invited readers to follow the candidates on Facebook or Twitter. Twitter was referred to in four instances and Facebook in three. Similarly to other parties' blogs, links to Twitter and Facebook could be found on the home pages of the blogs.

In numerous instances, references were made to fellow party members' blogs. Almost all blogs referred to Edgar Savisaar's blog, but in addition to the section of links to further information, there were references to a banner based on the party design and to the party website.

In her campaign blog, Olga Sõtnik also presented a link to her personal cooking blog which included photos of various dishes as well as cooking tips.

Campaign elements

Campaign elements were mostly used in the blogs that featured the candidates' personal campaign banners. In about half of the blogs, campaign elements were not used and the design of the blog was not based on party colours (green and yellow) in any way. For instance, Heimar Lenk's blog was surprisingly of a dark red colour and void of campaign elements. Most ads seemed to avoid green and were presented on as light a background as possible.

Example: The greenest campaign banner:



... and the whitest:



Campaign messages

Almost all of the 20 active blogs presented campaign messages. Specific messages were missing in Evelyn Sepp's blog (the blog followed a diary-like structure, presenting her daily activities and pretty thoughts) and Katrin Siska's blog.

The messages are mainly directed towards people of certain areas or of certain groups (the unemployed, the Russian-speaking voters), senior citizens, and so forth.

Interactivity

It is interesting that the blogs had relatively few comments and very few visitors. In many blogs, the readers' questions were left unanswered. Regular entries were seen only in a handful of blogs. Stalnuhhin was the most active blogger, adding a topical entry every day. In terms of the number of comments and commentators, Sepp's and Savisaar's blogs were the most active. Sepp was very active in responding to comments, thanking those who simply complimented her without having a specific question, as well as responding politely but succinctly to those who provoked her or wrote negative comments. She replied to all questions posed in her blog.

In conclusion, it can be said that the Centre Party has relatively few active and dedicated bloggers, so blogs were not necessarily considered important in conveying campaign messages.

The campaign and the Good Election Practices

The blogs generally followed the Good Election Practices. The biggest concern was the libel directed at competing parties and Andrus Ansip. The majority of criticism was levelled against the Reform Party's actions and statements, which suggests that the Reform Party was considered the main competitor. It is interesting that in Raivo Uukkivi's blog a specific banner stated that he followed the Good Elections Practices.

People's Union of Estonia

The People's Union is the fourth largest party in Estonia. It is noteworthy that in January 1, 2010 the party held the second place. In the 2011 Riigikogu elections, 88 members ran, of whom only three had blogs.

One of the three blogs has not been actively used since 2008 (Agu Rillo's).

Social Democratic Party

The party's blogs make it quite apparent that the authors strongly opposed themselves to the parties and people in power. The SDE's messages focused on explaining the need for a new beginning and a new political force.

All 21 blogs were in Estonian. Jevgeni Ossinovski's blog also had a Russian version. This is probably due to the fact that he is running in Ida-Viru county.

Views presented on the blogs

The candidates' views were presented to a greater or lesser extent in 18 instances. Political views are usually presented inside blog posts in a fairly chaotic manner, according to the topic discussed. In fewer instances, views are presented as a distinct programme and, in a couple of instances, campaign slogans are used on banners or in blog headers as can be seen in Andra Veidemann's blog:



Gerd Tarand's blog (example visible below) used a banner at the foot of the page where different campaign promises alternated.



Blogs considered successful in terms of their presentation and content were the ones that distinctly presented the candidate's elections programme. In such instances, the programme was very specific and reflected the candidate's opinions on a number of topics.

The possibility to join in

In 7 instances, readers could join the blogs. This was mostly possible through RSS feeds. In one blog, readers could sign up for a newsletter and use Google Friend Connect.

The possibility to join Facebook, Twitter, or YouTube channels was available in 10 blogs. This was available in blogs that were particularly well-organised in terms of presentation and content. Links to Facebook pages were most common, but the possibility to follow YouTube channels was likewise frequent. Among the bloggers, 6 candidates included links to social media sites, compared to 4 independent candidates. Facebook links lead mainly to the candidates' own pages rather than to those of fan clubs or anything else.

7 blogs include links to other campaigns; in most instances, the links are to the campaign and home page of the party. Independent candidates also included references to the association of independent candidates and its views.

Interactivity

The blogs were not very interactive. 11 blogs had some interactive features, but most displayed only a few comments and replies to them. A positive and outstanding exception is Ossinovski's blog that featured a separate Q&A section where an active debate both in Estonian and Russian could be found.

Example: An excerpt from Jevgeni Ossinovski's blog:



Many blogs did not have a comments section at all.

Campaign elements

In many blogs (especially those of the SDE candidates) there is no clear reference to the party the author belongs to. For example, in Kajar Lember's blog it is evident that the blog has been carefully designed, but there are no signs of party symbols or colours.

Often, the default options of the blog environment were used without adding anything else. There are examples of even the blogger's name being missing (present only in the blog's URL), not to mention the lack of introductory texts or a comment on the author's party belonging.

The candidates used party colours, logo, slogans, and campaign videos (mostly of Sven Mikser's speech also seen in TV ads). The majority of blogs also use the author's photo as a campaign element. The most outstanding are Andres Anvelt's and Eiki Nestor's blogs.

Example from Eiki Nestor's blog:



Most blog headers presented the candidate's name, district, and candidate number as campaign elements.

General evaluation of the blogs

There were a few very good examples among the blogs analysed: those of Andres Anvelt and Jevgeni Ossinovski.

An example from Andres Anvelt's blog:



...and one from Jevgeni Ossinovski's blog:



Their blogs were packed with content and featured innovative solutions. Anvelt's blog is more focused on his personal campaign. The blog lists his achievements that are not related to politics. The blog is filled with substantial content and offers a considerable amount of information, from political ideas to a photo gallery. Ossinovski's blog features video posts. This means that, instead of featuring videos made by third parties, the author has made the videos himself (for example, one is of him meeting with voters, etc.). His is also the most interactive blog among this selection.

Most blogs, however, were mediocre. Some stood out in terms of design, but lacked content or interactivity; others lacked a presentable design, but compensated with the level of content. There were also a couple of outdated blogs.

It was noticed that the blogs became much more active right before the elections, with quite a number of them becoming more active in December and January.

There is great variation in the levels of content and technical execution in the blogs. Surprisingly, it is not the independent candidates (for whom this would be an excellent inexpensive means of campaigning) who have well-presented blogs but the SDE candidates.

The campaign and the Good Election Practices

The Good Election Practices were generally adhered to. The main concern was the references made to the competitors' (that is, the parties in power) flaws and shortcomings. However, such criticism was presented in the posts not as campaign elements. In three instances, the opposition between the blogger and the objects of criticism was quite emphatic (in Gerd Tarand's, Veiko Rämmel's, and Sten-Hans Vihmar's blogs). In other blogs, the opposition was considerably less apparent.

In many posts, personal views and campaign promises were presented within posts. Often, the promises were related to the social sphere or to specific investments which would require an estimation of the approximate costs and references to the sources of funding. This, however, was generally lacking. Quite a few of the blogs included no references to the party the author belonged to.

General evaluation of the blogs and adherence to the Good Election Practices

The blogs were assessed in terms of their activity, interactivity, and other aspects.

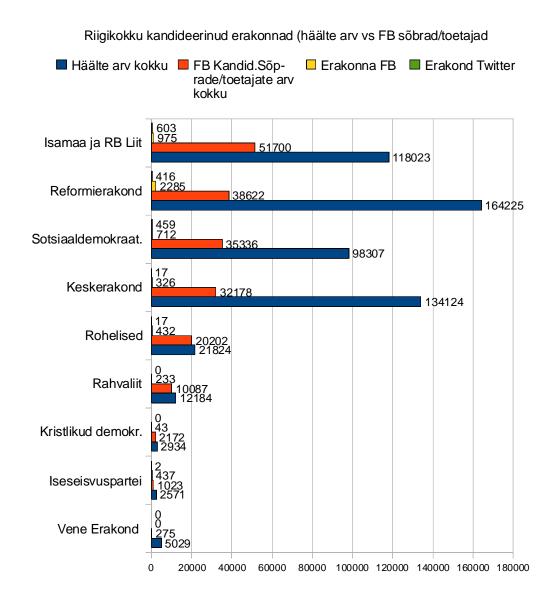
The highest marks were given to the blogs of the independent candidates Meesak and Põlluaas and, among parties, the SDE and the Christian Democrats. The reason why no blog was given maximum points was that, although the blogs might have been active, the posts were frequently aimed at too narrow an audience. Points were also lost to interactivity and responses to the comments, both of which were often almost non-existent. This suggest that the readerships are not too numerous.

With the major parties, the average evaluations were mainly lowered by the libel directed at other parties, non-active bloggers, lack of consistency in adding blog posts, and the lack of general content. The evaluation also took into account the fact that many blogs became more active immediately before the elections, having had as long as a year of inactivity before that.

D) Party campaigns in popular social networks (Facebook, Twitter, YouTube)

The chapter presents an overview of how the parties used social media in their campaigns and analyses the means the parties used to convey their campaign messages and activity on Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube.

In order to conduct the analysis, the social media channels of all parties were observed on a single day (Saturday, February 26, 2011) and the messages seen were recorded. The social media channels were coded and described according to the checklist. Altogether, 8 Facebook pages, 6 Twitter accounts, and 5 YouTube video channels were recorded. An overview of the parties' Facebook pages is given and both a quantitative and qualitative analysis is conducted. The analysis is illustrated with examples from Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube. The chapter concludes with general observations about the characteristics shared by the social media channels of all the parties in the 2011 Riigikogu elections.



Russian Party in Estonia

The Russian Party has 1,231 members (according to the e-Commercial Register, April 16, 2011).

Votes received in the 2011 Riigikogu elections: 5,029.

The party does not have a Facebook page (a page is not found under the English term 'Russian Party in Estonia' either). Twitter and YouTube were not used in the 2011 elections. Thus, there is no material to conduct a preliminary analysis of.

Estonian Green Party

The Green Party has 1,396 members.

The party had 122 candidates among whom 59 were the so-called free men who were on the list but not actual members of the party.

Votes received in the 2011 Riigikogu elections: 12,184.

The social media campaign in general: the party tried to put forth a positive campaign without complaining about unemployment or inflation. Topics discussed: education should not destroy creativity, rural life has to be healthy, and animals should not be mistreated.

Facebook

480 people follow the Green Party's²¹ page.

The party uses campaign videos, invites people to events, and distributes articles seen in the media. There is a separate campaign intended to be shared with Facebook friends entitled "Send your friend to the Solaris centre and win a gift certificate." Although a considerable amount of information was distributed, the number of comments remained low, almost non-existent. Information pertaining to the candidates and e-voting is given. Facebook posts invite people to participate in debates and events and also provide information about the candidates.



Quantitative analysis

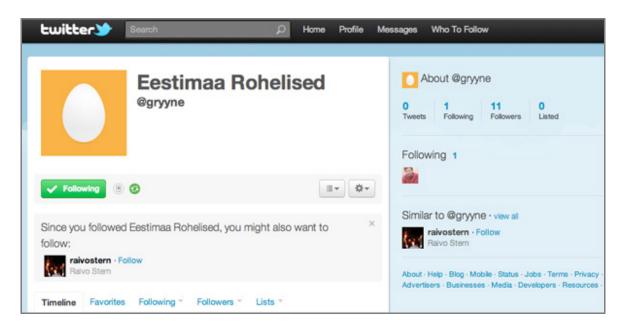
²¹ http://www.facebook.com/eestimaa.rohelised

The Facebook page presented the party's elections programme and political views, as well as links to other environments and social network pages. References were made to the party's other campaigns and its members' social media pages. The page was in Estonian.

Qualitative analysis

Campaign-related elements can be seen in videos, photos, and other campaign-related symbols as well as the party logo.

The Green Party is virtually absent from Twitter²²: they do have an account but it is not used.



On YouTube²³, the party has 7 videos introducing their candidates (on March 1). The videos might not create the most reliable impression of how they present the issues they have chosen: the presenters seem weak and unnatural.

The Good Election Practices are not violated in the campaign.





²² https://twitter.com/#!/gryyne

²³ http://www.youtube.com/user/erakond

Estonian Independence Party

The Independence Party has 1,193 members, 16 of whom ran in the 2011 elections. Votes received in the 2011 Riigikogu elections: 2,571.

Facebook

Target groups

The party has a group page²⁴ on Facebook that looks like a fan page. The page has 476 members and it presents quite a lot of information. Although the party does not focus on what they have been doing, it does offer a good overview of the articles, views, and so forth characteristic of and relevant to the party's supporters. There were primarily two active people involved with the party: Andrus Õismaa and Carl Aid.



Quantitative analysis

References to the party, its elections programme, and political views could be found under the section "Discussion." There were no references to other environments or social networks. The page was in Estonian.

Qualitative analysis

Elements related to the campaign could not be found separately.

Twitter was not used.

YouTube²⁵ features one video of the party leader Vello Leito's appearance on TV but this is from 2007 already. On the positive side, similarly to the major parties, the Independence Party has a YouTube channel; on the negative side, this is not fully utilised.

The Good Election Practices are not violated in the campaign.

²⁴ http://www.facebook.com/group.php?gid=101643276519&v=wall

²⁵ http://www.youtube.com/user/Iseseisvuspartei

Estonian Christian Democratic Party

The Christian Democrats have 1,837 members.

Votes received in the 2011 Riigikogu elections: 2,934.

Facebook

Target groups

The party had a Facebook page²⁶, but the information offered to potential voters was modest, as campaign ads were namely presented in the form of separate pages for candidates and programmes. The posts presented links to media outlets and there were also greetings on the Independence Day and condolences after the tragic fire in Haapsalu. There were relatively few comments and news, because the page was created during the elections period.



Quantitative analysis

References to the party, its elections programme, and political views were presented on Facebook as links to the candidates and the programme. There were no direct links to the candidates' pages. One would rather notice the support page "Send Christian Democrats to Riigikogu"²⁷ which had a modest 21 members.

Qualitative analysis

Campaign elements were primarily visible in the form of the party logo.

The Good Election Practices are not violated in the campaign.

Twitter and the **YouTube** video channel²⁸ were not used – although the latter existed, it was mainly used during the previous local and European Parliament elections.

26 http://www.facebook.com/pages/EKD-Erakond-Eesti-Kristlikud-Demokraadid/187271411290949?v=wall

27 http://www.facebook.com/event.php?eid=179370555438150

28 http://www.youtube.com/user/peetervosu?blend=8&ob=5#p/u/0/h3dcBtvlucw

Res Publica and the Pro Patria Union

The RPU has 9,454 members and 125 candidates in the 2011 elections.

Votes received in the 2011 Riigikogu elections: 118,023.

Facebook: Res Publica and the Pro Patria Union²⁹, followers: 975.

Target groups

The party was visible in the major social media networks but their communication was fairly one-sided and their pages were not aimed at specific groups. The materials used in campaign ads were prominent on social media as well. References are made to articles in the media as well as to surveys that attempt to create a positive impression of the party.

Facebook readily gives information on where one can meet and talk to RPU politicians. There was a humorous feature in the form of a New Year's card that depicted Putin and Savisaar carrying suitcases with the caption reading "Let's send past things to the past." Unfortunately, the party did not respond to people's questions and comments. Towards the end of the elections period, the visitors posted negative comments about the party and the campaign, but these were also left without responses. It should be noted that some campaign messages were of a negative nature. For instance, links were given to texts by Indrek Raudne and Ken-Marti Vaher that clearly criticised the manner in which the Centre Party was running Tallinn and reminded the readers of Savisaar allegedly asking money from Moscow.



Quantitative analysis

References to the party, its elections programme, and political views were not found on Facebook, but links to other environments and fellow candidates' social network pages were present. For some reason, there was a link to Ene Ergma's invitation to participate in yet another RPU survey, but the link lead to the party website.

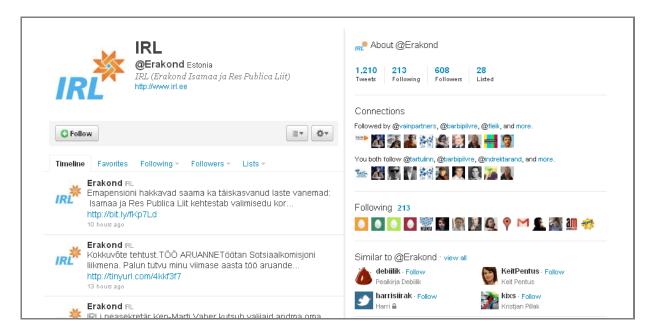
The Estonian language was used.

²⁹ http://www.facebook.com/pages/Isamaa-ja-Res-Publica-Liit/321163977576?sk=wall

Qualitative analysis

Campaign elements could be seen in videos, photos, and other elections-related information and symbols. Invitations to RPU's events, however, were posted separately on the Facebook page of Mart Laar's cafe³⁰ (1,001 followers) where visitors could also add information about the events.

The party was much more active on **Twitter**³¹, adding up to 6 posts every day. The majority of posts make references only to articles, opinion pieces, or blog posts by party members or invite voters to (campaign) events. There were 603 followers.



The **YouTube** page³² featured 51 campaign ads and videos that introduced candidates by districts and were also aired on television. Andres Herkel's, Lauri Vahtre's, and Mart Nutt's humorous video inviting people to "Vote for the sweater"³³ clearly stood out among the others. To clarify: "sweater" refers to the candidates who belonged to the Pro Patria Union and "suit" (also called "sponges"³⁴) to those who belonged to Res Publica before the two joined in 2006.

The campaign ads and messages were generally ethical. The Good Election Practices were not violated.

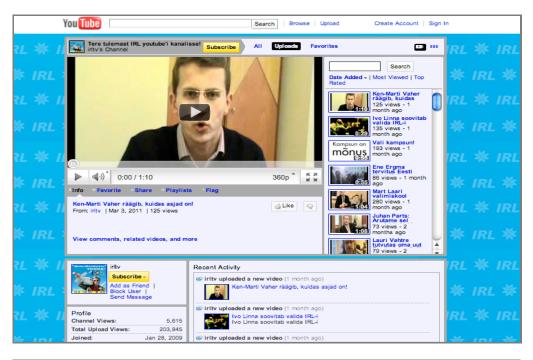
³⁰ http://www.facebook.com/pages/Mart-Laar/217904586440?sk=wall

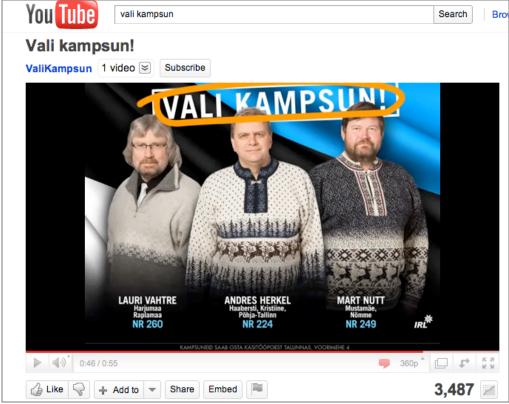
³¹ https://twitter.com/#!/Erakond

³² http://www.youtube.com/user/irltv

³³ http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9qwTKVEBLAY&playnext=1&list=PL156E42FE0035CF9D

³⁴ http://www.ohtuleht.ee/420174





Estonian Centre Party

The Centre Party has 12,587 members.

They had 125 candidates in the 2011 Riigikogu elections.

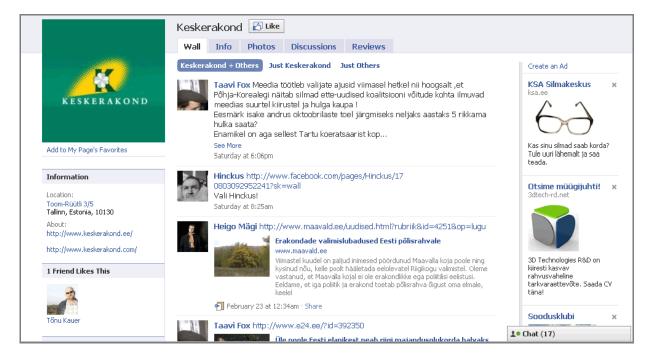
Votes received in the 2011 Riigikogu elections: 134,124.

Target groups

As the largest opposition party, the Centre Party mainly criticises the coalition parties (The Reform Party and the RPU). Characteristically to the Centre Party, the campaign is clearly negative. In every way possible, they try to show how bad and difficult the last years have been and that it is time for people to say "Enough!" and replace the government.

341 people like the party's Facebook page³⁵.

The party does not make great use of Facebook. During the period of observation, the party posted no comments. All posts were made by active visitors, but even these only counted around ten. The Centre Party does not post on Facebook, but the visitors link articles. Generally, the party's Facebook page amplifies the criticism of other parties. This could be considered a breach of Good Practices but, strictly speaking, they did not post statements made by the party but only links to articles found in the media.



Quantitative analysis

References to the party, its elections programme, and political views could be found after an extensive search under "Info" where they are listed among other links. The same applied to references to other environments and fellow candidates' social media channels.

Qualitative analysis

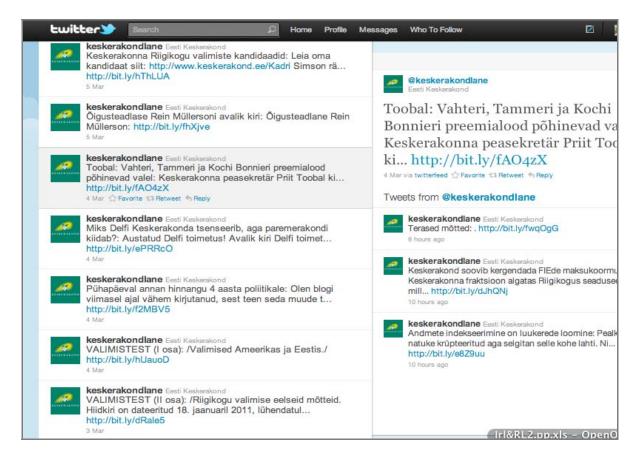
³⁵ http://www.facebook.com/pages/Keskerakond/258513287600?v=wall

Campaign elements (videos, photos, etc.) were not found.

Twitter: account titled The Centrist (Keskerakondlane³⁶), 18 followers, but 680 tweets.

Among the new media channels, Twitter is most actively used – there are several new posts made daily. At least half of the tweets serve as links to articles in the party newspaper Kesknädal where politicians (but even more frequently ordinary citizens) express their thoughts and opinions. Also, party members' blogs and, less frequently, articles in other newspapers are linked.

The most noteworthy were Priit Toobal's thoughts³⁷ found on Twitter (February 17, 2011).

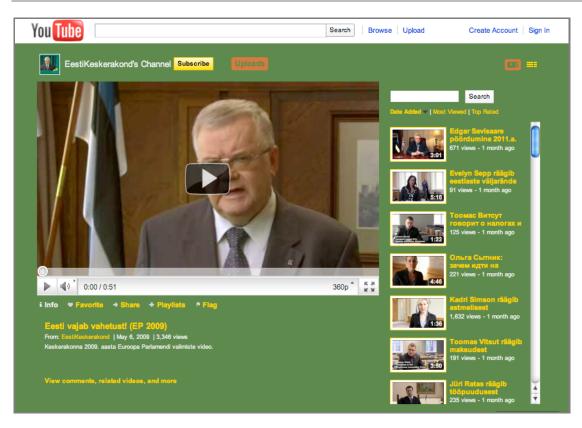


YouTube³⁸: part of the text is written with green on green, so reading the text is made more difficult. There were 14–15 videos altogether, mainly introducing the top candidates. There were two videos in Russian and a campaign ad that presented an overview of the negative aspects of life in Estonia, presenting the rhetorical question: "Who has a good life in Estonia? Say: "Enough!""

³⁶ https://twitter.com/#!/keskerakondlane

³⁷ htttp://bit.ly/ijShek

³⁸ http://www.youtube.com/user/EestiKeskerakond





Social Democratic Party

The SDE has 3,781 members. They had 125 candidates in the 2011 Riigikogu elections. Votes received in the 2011 Riigikogu elections: 98,307.

Facebook³⁹: 712 followers.

In broad terms, it could be said that the party's campaign was very neutral and modest. The YouTube videos were appropriately specific and invited people to begin anew, but on Facebook, for example, the campaign is not as clear and the party's views are not very thoroughly presented. Frequently, there were invitations to debates, members meeting with voters, and so forth. The SDE posts on Facebook and Twitter are identical.

Information available on Facebook was generally similar to the campaign as a whole (for example, in the use of campaign ads); there was also a campaign aimed specifically at Facebook users. This campaign asked the users to identify the candidate whose number was listed. Comments are responded to, discussions are being developed. In addition to that, there is information available about future events; there are links to media coverage of the candidates' statements; a call to participate in the shadow elections; and so on.



Quantitative analysis

References to the party's elections programme and political views were present on Facebook but only found when one moved on to the party website. There were links to other environments connected to the party (blogs, other social networks) as well as references to fellow candidates. These were all in Estonian.

Qualitative analysis

There were probably too many campaign elements (videos, photos, etc.) used. The pages of most candidates were overly decorated with party elements. The Facebook page also featured an extensive gallery of election campaigns, an opportunity to participate in opinion polls, a direct link to the party's YouTube channel, etc. There was some communication, but the questions and debates were not commented on by the candidates themselves but by their supporters and followers.

³⁹ http://www.facebook.com/sotsdem

Twitter⁴⁰: 459 followers.

Twitter is used extensively, with up to 3–5 posts added daily during the elections. The posts linked the candidates' blogs and articles in the media, and made references to campaign events. There are no random thoughts or quotations familiar from most other candidates' Twitter pages.



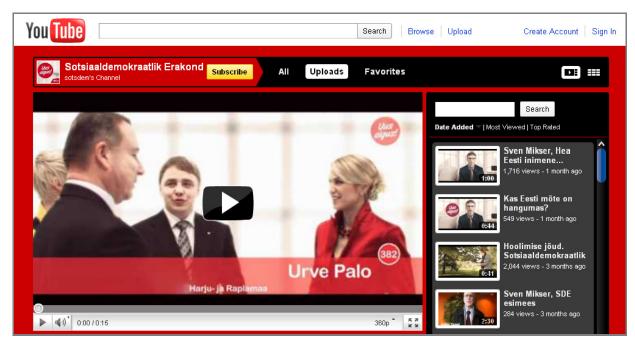
YouTube⁴¹ features 71 videos that had been viewed 14,767 times. The same videos were also aired on television channels.

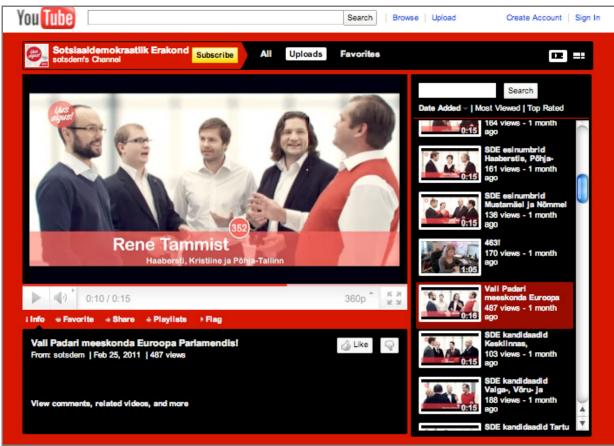
The Good Election Practices are not violated.



⁴⁰ https://twitter.com/#!/sotsdem

⁴¹ http://www.youtube.com/user/sotsdem





People's Union of Estonia

The People's Union has 8,528 members of whom 88 ran for parliament in the 2011 elections. Votes received in the 2011 Riigikogu elections: 12,184.

Before the elections, the party promised to actively use social media channels but, as of March 1, this does not seem to be true as the People's Union lacks YouTube and Twitter accounts.

Facebook⁴²: 234 friends.

Facebook has notices of debates, links to pages introducing the candidates as well as the odd pieces of entertainment next to press releases, news, and other stories. Similarly to other parties, the party design is not overly used; there are links to media coverage of the party; and limited communication with the public. It is most likely that the party members and voters do not use Facebook as a meeting place.

There was a separate Facebook campaign "Leader of the country"⁴³ worth the mention. This was a photography competition where people could submit their childhood photos and comment on who of the people depicted could run the country in the future. The party, thus, referred to people's chance of running the country themselves. 626 people liked this campaign.



Quantitative analysis

References to the party's elections programme and political views were present on Facebook but found only after moving on to the party website.

Qualitative analysis

Campaign elements (videos, photos, etc.) were used sparingly. Communication was non-existent.

⁴² http://www.facebook.com/profile.php?id=100001099527900&sk=wall

 $^{43\} http://www.facebook.com/pages/Fotokonkurss-Riigijuht-2050/103704916375302?sk=wallander and the state of the control of t$





Twitter was not used.

<u>YouTube:</u> The video channel of the party's youth organisation⁴⁴ was used. There were two videos uploaded; the soundtrack of one (a nostalgic Estonian song) characterises the party; on the background, there was a video montage of the party leader Andrus Blok at party meetings. In rather stark contrast, there were Ilja Stožarov's campaign videos "No 765" and "No 765. Episode 2"46, the likes of which are rarely seen. They were aimed at the Russian-speaking voters but the viewer is left with the question which country and culture the things seen on the videos take place in.

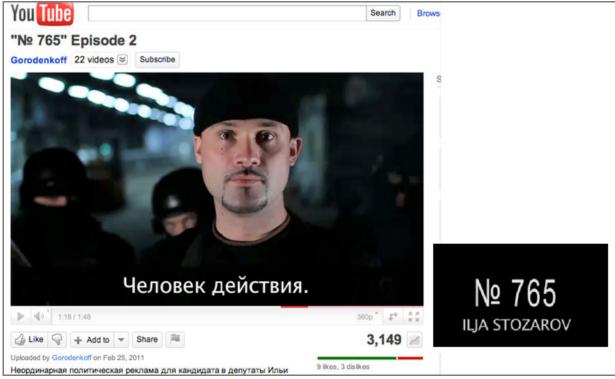
⁴⁴ http://www.youtube.com/user/rahvaliidunoored

⁴⁵ http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=epa7Wz5g-qY&feature=player_embedded

 $^{46\} http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ruDnj26GDyQ\&NR=1$

The Good Election Practices are not violated in the campaign.





Estonian Reform Party

The Reform Party has 9,302 members of whom 125 ran in the 2011 elections.

Votes received in the 2011 Riigikogu elections: 164,225.

The Reform Party had a strong presence in social media. The party was active on Facebook⁴⁷, Twitter⁴⁸, and YouTube⁴⁹. On Facebook, the party has the greatest number of followers by far (more than 2,300). It was positive to see the party actively give feedback and communicate with the public. If someone criticized an ad, the party apologised; if someone asked why politicians and parties always fight, the party responded and explained the situation. However, responses were selective. The Reform Party asked people to participate in the elections in general, instead of aggressively asking people to vote for them.



⁴⁷ http://www.facebook.com/reformierakond

⁴⁸ https://twitter.com/#!/reformikad

⁴⁹ http://www.youtube.com/user/reformierakond









Target group

The party invites people to participate in the elections, adding campaign ads and linking articles from the media. The visual of the page makes use of campaign images, providing information about the different ways of casting the vote and about the economy.

Much of the information is related to Andrus Ansip; other candidates are not as frequently presented. There was a separate search option to help find other candidates.

Quantitative analysis

References to the party's elections programme and political views as well as information about and links to the candidates could be easily found on Facebook. These were all in Estonian.

Qualitative analysis

Campaign elements (videos, photos, etc.) were present and extremely well-organised. It is obvious that the party used the help of professionals who are well informed of the features on Facebook and other social media.

The party is also active on **Twitter** (with 420 followers) but, compared to Facebook, the number of posts on Twitter was modest. On Facebook, there were up to 6–8 posts each day, whereas on Twitter, there were about 1–2 new posts every day.



YouTube: there were 33 campaign videos, including three in Russian. The last video might be pointed out as a negative one – it is a warning video entitled "Isn't there a difference?⁵⁰" which asks what would happen to Estonia if there were no Reform Party.

The Good Election Practices are not violated.





⁵⁰ http://www.youtube.com/user/reformierakond#p/u/0/uHw2zbG6GXE

Conclusion

Facebook:

- The Reform Party, the SDE, the Green Party, and the RPU stood apart from others in terms of quantity and quality.
- The smaller parties but the Centre Party also did not make full use of the social media as a means of promoting their campaigns.
- Quite a number of parties have their own pages on Facebook, but do not respond to questions or comments under the party's account. Thus, they were present but...
- Comments were not very frequent and responses to questions posed were slow to appear or did not appear at all.
- As a rule, comments and responses were made by party members themselves or by their friends and supporters.
- The parties' elections programmes and information about their candidates were usually present, although they were sometimes difficult to find.
- If the party members' posts were not added to the parties' Facebook pages, the walls would have been quite empty.
- Some parties used too many campaign elements, whereas others used too few.
- The language used was mostly Estonian.

Twitter:

- Twitter serves as the outpost of blogs and a stop on the way to Facebook.
- Twitter mainly features links to media outlets, blogs, Facebook.
- There is no discussion among Twitter followers.
- Random thoughts from the parties were rare on Twitter.

YouTube:

 Generally speaking, the parties did not make an effort to think of something new and uploaded the videos also used on TV instead.

In conclusion:

- Parties were unsure whether to make their Facebook pages friend pages, fan or support pages, or group
- Most parties presented their elections programmes and main views.
- There was some communication, but it tended to be one-sided.
- How to use social media in campaigns is something the parties still have to learn.
- Facebook pages are dominated by everyday information and comments on personal relations, rather than a clear focus on voters.
- During the elections, the candidates' information and overviews of their programmes and views were lacking.
- The voters did not receive a clear message about what unites the candidates on the same party lists or what would be their shared goals once they are in Riigikogu.
- It remained unclear why the parties were on Facebook and what they aimed to achieve there.
- The number of votes received and the number of candidates and friends/followers on Facebook seems to suggest that the parties that were more active on Facebook also had a better result in the elections.
- The parties' inability to use social media to its full benefit seems not to have an effect on the number of votes received.
- People are friends with and support more than one party; that is, no party has friends/supporters loyal only to them.

E) Candidates' campaigns in popular social networks (Facebook, Twitter, YouTube)

Social networks are webs of interpersonal communication that are based on peoples' need to communicate and express themselves and allow people to share content created by themselves. The social media and networks most used are Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, Orkut, Flickr, Digg, Linkedin as well as forums, blogs, comment sections, and so forth. In Estonia, Facebook⁵¹ is used by 369,860 people which is 28.65% of the population (on March 1, 2011). 45% of users are male and 55% female. Users' age groups are as follows: 37% are 18–24 years old, 32% are 25–34, 12% are 35–44, 4% are 45–54, and 2% are 55–65 years old or older.

Liisa Past writes that "passed have the times when people were on Facebook without a reason." The following analysis, however, suggests that the majority of candidates running for parliament have not figured out whether, how, and for what social media should be used.

The preliminary analysis suggests that most people seem to be ashamed of running to the parliament or being connected to a party. Their Facebook pages are not affected by the elections – they continue to play games; congratulate people; and read what others are doing, thinking, and posting; without commenting on all of this themselves but rather simply "liking" these things.

The candidates often have difficulty in deciding the role they have in social media: whether they are there as average people who communicate with their friends, or whether they view Facebook as a channel to campaign on without dividing their audience into family, friends, acquaintances, and strangers. Only few candidates have used the opportunity to set up a fan page for the elections and use this to convey their political views, opinions, personal information, and messages. Often, both people used to this process as well as newcomers tend to friend anyone, hoping they can influence the political preferences of the new acquaintances. Art critic Andri Ksenofontov comments to a new friend that "many are here to find playmates or political partners; some just want to sell things". Savisaar is concerned that his Facebook account will reach the limit of 5,000 and he will have to revise his old friends and get rid of the ones who are using his account to promote themselves⁵². Savisaar does not know that it would be more reasonable to use fan or support pages where anyone can come and go as they please and where 5,000 is not the limit.

The following is an overview of the social networks connected to the candidates. The main method of finding the candidates on Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube was to use the candidates' names as search phrases. If the first page of search results displayed the candidate's personal Facebook page, Twitter account, or YouTube video channel, the page was added to the corpus. It should be noted, however, that during the coding it became apparent that some results might have been missed, as some researchers did not explore the *See more results for...* option. Thus, some fan and group pages might have been missed. This method yielded the pages of 443 candidates out of the 789, meaning that 56.14% of them had a Facebook page.

In order to conduct the analysis, all of the candidates' social media channels were observed on one day out of three (February 26–28, 2011) and all messages found were recorded. Social media channels were coded and described according to the checklist. As the candidates rarely used Twitter and YouTube, the analysis only includes some examples from these environments. The analysis mapped the presence of Twitter and YouTube accounts.

⁵¹ http://www.socialbakers.com/facebook-statistics/estonia/last-month#chart-intervals

| PARTY | NUMBER OF FACEBOOK ACCOUNTS |
|-------------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| Estonian Green Party | 71 |
| Russian Party in Estonia | 5 |
| Estonian Independence Party | 9 |
| Estonian Christian Democratic Party | 7 |
| Res Publica and Pro Patria Union | 76 |
| Estonian Centre Party | 60 |
| Social Democratic Party | 71 |
| People's Union of Estonia | 44 |
| Estonian Reform Party | 78 |
| Independent Candidates | 22 |
| TOTAL: | 443 |

An overview of the candidates' Facebook accounts was made and both quantitative and qualitative analysis was performed. The analysis is illustrated with samples from Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube. Finally, a list of the general characteristics of all the candidates' social media channels is presented.

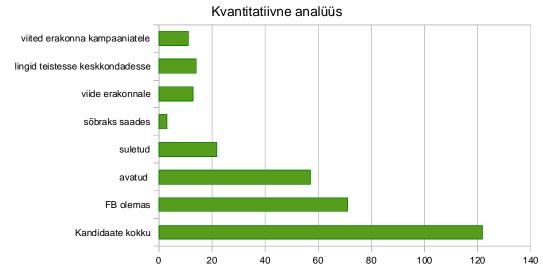
Estonian Green Party

The Green Party had 122 candidates in the elections, some of whom (59 candidates) were the so-called free men meaning that they were on the party's list without actually belonging to the party. The most well-known among them were Eerik-Niiles Kross, Artur Talvik, Kaarel Tarand, Üllar Luup, Pille Tomson, and Jaan Sööt. The Green Party was characterised by confusion in terms of who got to be on the list and who did not. It is noteworthy that the top twelve was agreed upon on at a party meeting where it was decided that the national list of candidates would list party members and the free men alternately. During the process of compiling the list, some free men and women joined the list but, at the same time, there were members of the Green Party who decided to run as independent candidates, including Toomas Trapido and Eugen Veges, for instance. The list presented to the Estonian National Electoral Committee suggests that the Green Party wished to make the best of a bad situation and used every method available to them. In the end, it was up to the candidates which party's list they wanted to join. Internal party democracy or the lack of it is what decides who makes the decisions and who gets which positions. A news programme with about twenty candidates featured on the Estonian Television did not make the power lines clear to the voters.

71 of the 122 candidates have a Facebook page. For all Facebook users, 57 accounts were visible (that is more than half of them). Many candidates had created a Facebook account a year ago and had been building a network. The number of friends was between a hundred and a few hundred on average, but there were people with more friends (for example, Valner had 1,283, Talvik had 963, and Zahharov had 583 friends).

Quantitative analysis

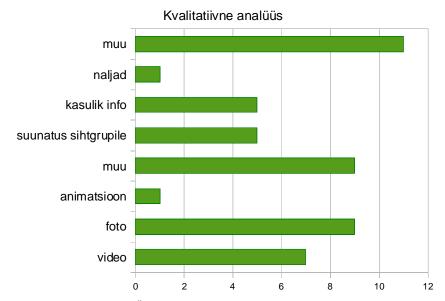
It is evident that references to party-related pages are rare, the candidates' personal views are infrequent, and references to the party programme are lacking – in general, there is a lack of certainty as to what the candidates want to do – propagate their private or public lives. There were no references to the candidates' blogs, websites, or other channels, although the top twelve candidates were more active in spreading their message. The main feature of Facebook, the opportunity to have mutual communication, was neglected: several candidates have nothing to say to their friends as if agreeing to be friends on Facebook is enough.



Qualitative analysis

Almost no material related to party campaigns was uploaded; the candidates' photos were random and most probably taken at some events. The party leader Strandberg's⁵³ account had limited access. It seems that most candidates do not care that they are running for parliament.

⁵³ http://et-ee.facebook.com/people/Marek-Strandberg/100000206655210



There were exceptions. For example, Üllar Luup complemented his existing page with a fan page created on January 23, 2011 and entitled it "Üllar Luup to Riigikogu"54. Luup's own page had more than 1,500 friends, but his Riigikogu page only had 19 fans. Eero Liivik (14th on the party list) and Rasmus Lahtvee (11th on the list) were also fairly active. The lower the position on the list, the less active the candidates were. Many candidates apparently struggled to present themselves as representatives of the Green Party on their page and there seems to be a lack of initiative in setting up separate elections pages.

Eerik-Niiles Kross was the only Twitter user to do so under his own name. He had 519 followers and 277 tweets.

The party had produced campaign videos for only seven candidates in which the same ideas and messages put forth in the elections were used. One video was in Russian. Many candidates have not even bothered to upload their campaign videos on Facebook where they could be shared with their friends. It might be that the Green Party did not want to post spam on others' accounts, but it is obvious that if one does not praise oneself, others will not do that either.

Although experts in the field advise candidates to produce videos with their personal messages and promises, what can be seen on the web are primarily videos that are slanted or feature wordplays. On the basis of the number of visitors, it can be concluded that the Green Party's videos are not very popular (20–230 views on average) but Kross, having been inspired by the RPU slogan "Vote for the sweater," introduced a more entertaining campaign ad featuring <u>Ivan Orav</u> on March 1, 2011. Hopefully, there are no copy right issues there. The results speak for themselves: it was viewed 248 times in half a day. However, on the day of the elections, Orav was removed from YouTube and a message to that effect was posted.

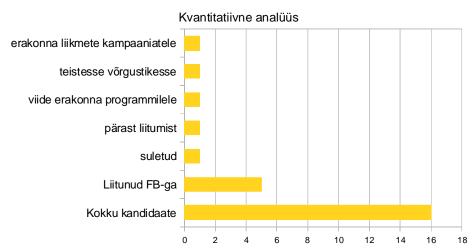
- The Green Party is not very accessible on social media channels.
- Often, candidates do not refer to their party loyalty or include references to the party programme or views.
- Campaign elements (logos, photos, videos) are rarely seen.
- Mutual communication is low.
- The higher on the list, the more active; the lower on the list, the more passive.
- The free men stand apart.
- Campaign ads are boring and unattractive.

⁵⁴ http://www.facebook.com/pages/Üllar-Luup-Riigikokku/119672348104062

Russian Party in Estonia

There were 16 candidates on the list, but only five of them had Facebook profiles. Most had set up a Facebook account in the winter or spring of 2010 or in the winter of 2011 already, but there were only two users. Unfortunately, their pages have no information about the party's activities making it difficult to conduct a specific analysis. The most active member of the party is Stanislav Tšerepanov⁵⁵ who ran in Mustamäe and Nõmme and who had 227 Facebook friends, including both Estonians and Russians.

Quantitative analysis



There are no references to the party's programme or other campaigns. The candidates' personal views are likewise rare and there seems to be an overall inability and lack of willingness to use social media. There was no indication of whether the candidates' had blogs, web pages, or other channels. The main advantage of Facebook – mutual communication – is not used for the campaign but rather serves a more personal purpose. ⁵⁶

Qualitative analysis

Stanislav Tšerepanov's account featured a photo with his number but that was it. Stansilav's birthday saw an increase in activity. His Facebook wall shows birthday greetings from Andra Veidemann, Ott Lumi, Liisa Pakosta, and Marju Länik. There were also some minor messages and references, all in Russian. Stanislav thanked everyone for the greetings in Estonian, Russian, and English.

Sergei Aunapuu, Juri Zuravljov, Gennadi Suhhov, and Igor Kukolev were modest in putting themselves forward. Campaign elements can also be seen on Igor Kukolev's⁵⁷ page. There were no references to the candidates' or the party's programme and views, or references to the Russian Party in Estonia in general.

Unfortunately, the candidates' numbers of friends were so small⁵⁸ that an in-depth analysis could not be conducted. It seems that although Facebook pages are set up, updating them has fallen victim to other obligations. The reason could be that the friends do not have Facebook accounts and that the Russian-speaking population in Estonia have not discovered this channel for themselves.

⁵⁵ http://www.facebook.com/profile.php?id=1720531205

⁵⁶ The data is presented in numbers as the amount of candidates analysed is too small.

⁵⁷ http://www.facebook.com/profile.php?id=100000998181777&sk=wall

⁵⁸ Stanislav Tšerepanov had 227 and Igor Kukolev had 47 friends.

The candidates do not tweet on Twitter or use YouTube.

- Passive.
- There are no references to the party programme or other campaigns.
- Inability or unwillingness to use social media.
- "It takes every soldier to win a battle" Stanislav Tšerepanov.
- Campaign elements were few and far between.
- Twitter and YouTube are not used.









Igor Kukolev

×

Нет дискриминации!!!

Igor Kukolev №733 Vene Erakond Eestis. Окажите поддержку и проголосуйте за меня на выборах в Рийгикогу по списку «Русской Сборной» возглавляемого Дмитрием Кленским. Иду с целью защитить права и свободы русских политическими и юридическими средствами. Иду с целью ограничи...

26 February at 18:14 · Share



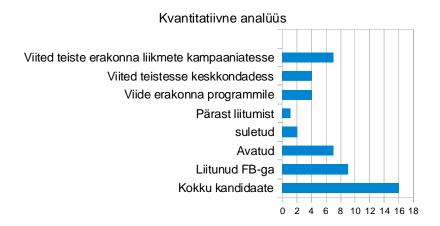
Estonian Independence Party

The Independence Party has 16 candidates all of whom are male and with the average age of 50.6 years. The limited resources of the minor parties are also evident in their use of new media. If Facebook was modestly used, then Twitter and YouTube remain to be discovered altogether.

The top candidates Vello Leito and Peeter Paemurru used other media channels. Among the candidates, 9 use Facebook and one of them, Hannes Vanaküla, also has a separate support page dedicated to the campaign.

Quantitative analysis

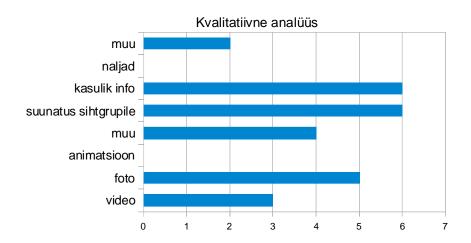
References to the party programme and views could be found on 4 pages; there was also a certain amount of support shown to fellow candidates' campaigns (4). Campaign-related materials or references to other environments had not been uploaded. Despite the small number of friends on Facebook pages, there were some discussions and comments on the topic of the elections. People were invited to vote for the party and all news pertaining to the party as well as independent candidates was conveyed. The general tone of the messages was slightly revolutionary and sharp.



Qualitative analysis

On average, there are about 50 friends (between 15 and 367). Hannes Vanaküla, who had both a personal and a campaign page, had 105 friends and 15 followers respectively. From time to time, candidates have the desire to express their true preferences, so Henn Leetna (2nd on the list) claims to be a "republican" and Tarmo Kruusimäe states that he is the representative of the Party of Happy People.

The candidates do not use Twitter or YouTube.



- Information is quickly circulated, but within a small circle.
- Masculine.
- It seems that top candidates trust traditional channels.
- There are few references to party programme or campaigns.
- Are they the representatives of the Independence Party or...
- If there were no media, there would be nothing to post.
- Revolutionary and slightly sharp.
- Twitter and YouTube are not used.











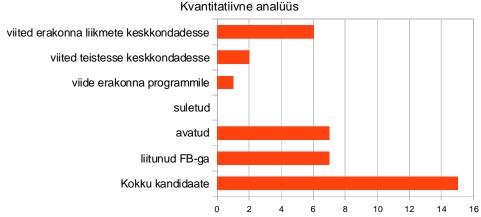


Estonian Christian Democratic Party

15 people ran to parliament in the elections, the most famous of whom were Peeter Võsu, Aldo Vinkel, and Irina Stelmach. 7 candidates use Facebook. Characteristically to a Christian party, the messages were "soft" – they mentioned pancake mornings and upcoming speeches that could also be heard on the Christian family radio station Pereraadio. Posts are not frequently added and campaign elements are not often used to agitate Facebook friends to vote for them. The two top candidates have 760 and 684 Facebook friends respectively. The network has grown slowly since 2007 and 2009. Facebook profiles are used to spread Christian values rather than to campaign actively. Some candidates did not share their profiles with the general public and befriending them granted access to no new or exciting information. The candidates, thus, valued their privacy (which is not something to reprimand them for) but someone running for parliament should take into account the fact that potential voters will look for information from different sources.

Quantitative analysis

Christian Democrats were active in social media, supported one another, and uploaded links to fellow candidates' other channels. As stated above, Christian Democrats use Facebook to communicate with their acquaintances rather than to campaign for elections; a fact confirmed by a single candidate making a reference to the party's elections programme. Mutual communication was not frequent and, if it occurred, it tended to be between the candidates themselves. References and links to the blog <u>Koquja Kroonikad</u>⁵⁹ (the title of which makes a reference to the Ecclesiasticus) are frequent. Due to the small number of candidates, the data in the table is presented in numbers.



Qualitative analysis

Campaign elements were not found. Nor were there campaign messages, videos, or photos from campaign events. Thus, the results are not presented as a separate figure. There were links to articles in media outlets and to television programmes. The number of friends was generally low, but the main candidates had a considerable amount of friends (Peeter Võsu had 760 and Aldo Vinkel had 684 friends). Whether this helps in the elections will be seen in time.

There were no Twitter or YouTube users among the Christian Democrats.

- Mainly Christian values and party views are propagated.
- Partially limited access; it remains unclear what and from whom are they hiding.

⁵⁹ http://usk-lootus-armastus.blogspot.com/

- Candidates support one another, refer to fellow candidates' social media channels as well as other environments.
- Campaign elements are not used.
- Links lead to articles in other media outlets and on television programmes.
- The number of friends-supporters is generally low, except with top candidates and party leaders.
- Twitter and YouTube are not used.





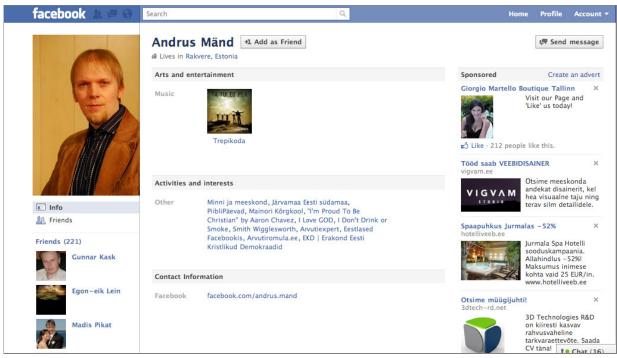
Andres Toome via Ago Lilleorg

Taevad jutustavad Jumala au ja taevalaotus kuulutab tema kätetööd.

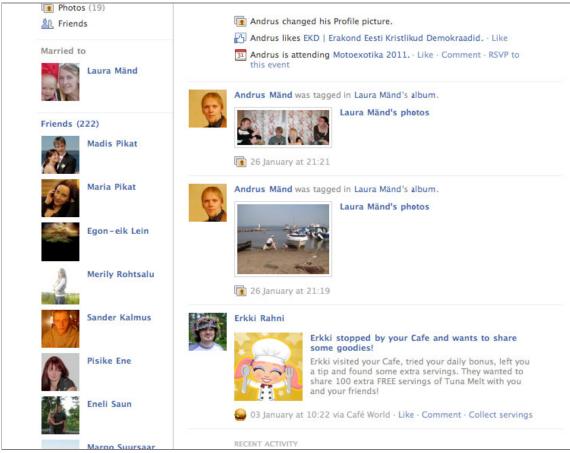
(Psalmid 19;2)

Tõepoolest imestamisväärt! Ja nüüd mõtlen: kes mina olen, et Ta hoolib minust.









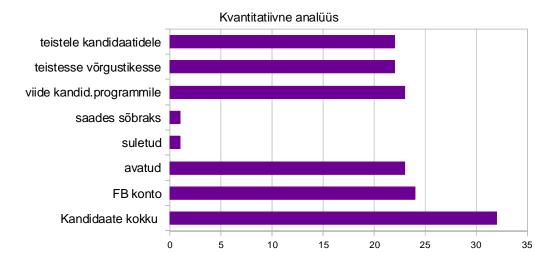
Independent candidates

This is the most varied group of candidates who allegedly would be unable to cooperate with others and could prove to be stubborn and unpredictable if they were to be elected to the parliament. This group presents a threat to others but whether to major or minor parties will be decided on March 6. The independent candidates include passionate Facebook users as well as passive candidates, both Estonians and Russians, members of the Green Party, the SDE, and the RPU, founders of new parties, and die-hard opponents of the European Union as well, so there is something for everyone. 22 people (68.75%) had a Facebook account, separate campaign pages were set up by 3 candidates (9.37%). Independent candidates are characterised by openness but one-sided, boring, and uninformative pages are frequent. Some independent candidates have set up a shared page loosely forming the Association of Independent Candidates⁶⁰. The fact that out of the 32 candidates only 8 had joined the page illustrates once again their inability to cooperate and unwillingness to find common ground.

Most independent candidates are born between 1950 and 1970, but there were candidates who were older and younger. 27 candidates were male, 5 were female. Many independent candidates were people alienated from their parties; the list included representatives of the SDE, the RPU, and the Green Party. There were also Antti Poolamets, an opponent of Euro, who had made a name for himself in the previous elections, and the former diplomat Mart Helme with his son Martin Helme. Among the women, there was the former leader of the Defence League's women's corps, Anne Eenpalu, who now directs the non-profit youth organisation Lindatütred ja Kalevipojad, and the former member of Res Publica and Riigikogu, the singer Siiri Sisask.

Quantitative analysis

Independent candidates are characterised by great openness; many of them have considered Facebook as one means of conveying their views and opinions. Fellow candidates are not neglected, as references to their accounts are made and news related to them is linked. It was also common for the candidates to have blogs but it seems that they often forget to provide links to them on Facebook (this might be due to a lack of technical skill). Many Facebook pages served only the purpose of collecting friends, being completely void of actual communication.



Qualitative analysis

Friends do not just appear on Facebook pages, so how does one make friends? It seems that for some candidates setting up a Facebook account is a campaign move which is then left unutilised in the campaign. Videos are rarely used (7 in total) and only one candidate was present on Twitter (Veiko Rämmel). The Helmes performed at an already familiar level and, although Martin Helme's fan page was set up somewhat late (it was

⁶⁰ http://www.yksikkandidaadid.ee/

quite frequent that fan pages only appeared in February), they were among the more active candidates. Rämmel was also active on Facebook and 3,198 friends had decided to keep up with his activities. It generally seems that feedback amounts to about 1%. Thus, the more of so-called friends one has, the more feedback one receives and if there are fewer friends one has to be more active in presenting themselves.

There is only one candidate on Twitter, and seven candidates use YouTube. The videos were not very original or attractive and their technical execution left something to be desired. It is highly likely that even people interested in the candidate would not watch the videos twice.



Some examples

Priit Tammeraid

Priit is a serious Estonian man who describes himself as follows: "Sometimes I feel like I don't know myself. At the same time, it is always clear what you can expect from me." His friends list on Facebook was made public. He probably campaigns elsewhere – a closer look shows that this happens on his blog. Priit Tammeraid is one of the few candidates whose blogs actually list the reasons for running to parliament, explain why this is done as an independent candidate, and what are his views. He has 238 friends. He is not on Twitter or YouTube.

Toomas Trapido

He is modest, mildly active on Facebook with the elections being tied into his everyday life. The page presents his views on healthcare. Trapido was friendly towards other independent candidates; there are mutual recommendations. One topic discussed was how to make the views heard in the media. Trapido was very pleased that he could do that on Delfi on February 20. It was also positive to see Trapido set up a separate campaign page that had 149 fans (available from January 20, 2011). This page offered an overview of his campaign activities and ideas; Trapido also actively communicates with his friends and fans; of course, moving between the two pages becomes repetitive. He had 753 friends.

Trapido campaigns on YouTube as well but, unfortunately, his personal video is long and drawn-out: 3 minutes altogether. 65 people had watched the video but whether they watched it to the end is not known. Vikerkaare TV had uploaded 5 more videos about communities, health, the forest, and the "Let's do it!" campaign. There is another video about cooperation and fear-free society. 7 videos for one independent candidate is clearly excessive because, as shown by the amount of viewers, people do not really watch them.

Twitter is not used.

Mihhail Derbnev

Unfortunately, there is not much to comment on. A photo on Facebook or rather the lack of one speaks for itself. 61

Andreas Reinberg

The Facebook account and campaign page were completely identical. The only difference was that there were 178 friends but 104 supporters.

Leo Kunnas

The Reserve Lt Col running in Harju and Rapla counties serves as an example of how not to run one's Facebook account. He had collected a lot of Facebook friends, 882 altogether, but there is no message to them or, if there is, it has to be specifically looked for among older posts. The page was set up on January 19, 2011 and he is active in creating contacts but responding to people's comments or thanking people who say that they have voted for him (which should be part of good communication), seems to be too much for Kunnas. It is, of course, possible that he has thanked them in person. The few references to his leaflet on issuu.com⁶², where it had 357 views, were surrounded by silence. Kunnas does not recommend others or point to any other candidates. Maybe he does that personally via e-mail? His Facebook wall shows that other independent candidates support him, try to keep in touch, include him in the debate, but Kunnas does not respond. Kunnas does not tweet on Twitter, but on YouTube he is represented by a very serious video.

The following presents sample images from some of the independent candidates' Facebook accounts, including both active and passive examples. They are all similar in that, often, the candidates' posts are left to wait for their own comments or the debate takes place only among the candidates themselves. It seems that many of the Facebook friends were there out of curiosity rather than out of a genuine interest in the candidates' views and willingness to vote for them.

- There are both passionate and passive Facebook users.
- There are Estonians and Russians, members of the Green Party, the SDE, and the RPU, founders of new parties as well as die-hard opponents of the European Union; so there is something for everyone.
- Many candidates are characterised by openness but one-sided, boring, and uninformative pages are frequent.
- Inability to cooperate.
- Other candidates have not been neglected, their accounts or news in the media are linked.
- Many pages have been set up to collect acquaintances but are generally void of mutual communication.
- Candidates have not made use of their fame.
- The more friends/supporters, the greater the mutual communication.
- Only seven candidates use YouTube and the videos are of low quality.
- Only one candidate is on Twitter.

⁶¹http://www.facebook.com/profile.php?id=100000824805143&sk=friends









Toomas Trapido

Tulge teisipäeval kell 18 Nõmmele Sõõrikukohvikusse juttu ajama. Sõõrikuid ja kohvi saab ka!



Trapido kohtumine Nõmme valijatega

Location: Sõõrikukohvik, Jaama 12 Time: Tuesday, 01 March 2011 18:00

♠ Saturday at 23:46 · Like · Comment · Share













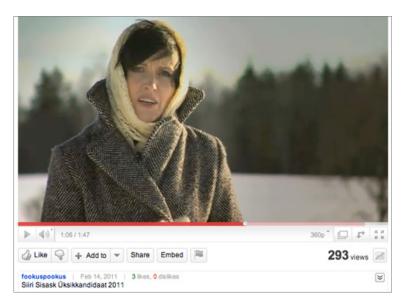






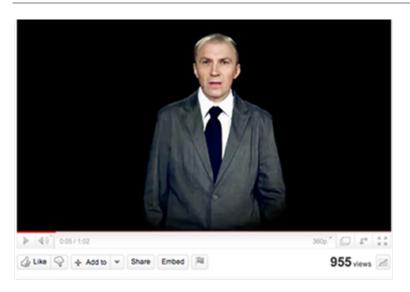












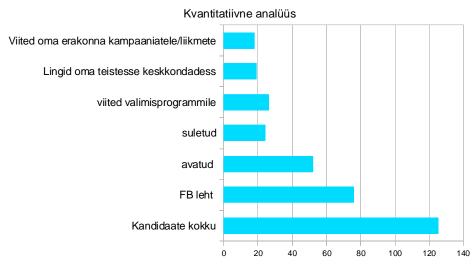


Res Publica and the Pro Patria Union

The RPU had 124 candidates in the 2011 elections. 76 of them had personal accounts on Facebook and other social media channels. The results can be compared to the analysis conducted in 2009 when e-Governance investigated the online campaigns from the local elections. In the fall of 2009, every tenth candidate was present on either Facebook or Twitter. In 2011, every third candidate represented their party on social media channels.

Quantitative analysis

The 2009 online campaign was characterised by a lack of topical discussions but the current analysis of the RPU social media channels suggests that, even if references to the campaign were missing, the party tried to create discussions on relevant campaign-related issues. Even the more active users of social media channels linked articles to highlight central issues and initiate debate related to these issues.



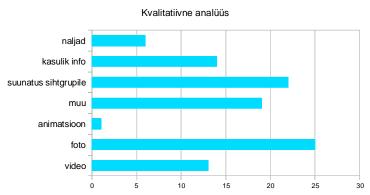
The initiation of discussions was generally not very successful, mainly taking place on the pages of some of the top candidates where the content was produced primarily by the candidates themselves and their friends and fans.

Among the 76 Facebook accounts, 52 had been made public, regardless of whether the pages featured references to the campaign or showed the candidate's party loyalties. It is interesting that only half of the candidates who had public profiles had a direct reference to the party's elections programme. The remaining 26 candidates did not have a direct and visible reference to the party.

Qualitative analysis

In many instances, the only trace of the campaign on Facebook was a post listing the candidate's number and a call for people to vote. Next to that, candidates posted their photos with their number as their Facebook profile pictures, but many of the candidates who did that had no further comments on their party belonging. Interviews with some of the candidates running on the party list showed that Facebook is rather viewed as a personal page that includes friends who are already aware of the candidate's political belonging. Thus, Facebook is not so important in terms of the campaign. The most active and most followed were the top 10 candidates of whom three (Ken-Marti Vaher, Urmas Reinsalu, and Ene Ergma) did not have personal pages.

Instead of presenting their candidate numbers, the candidates considered it more important to focus on topical issues and comment on those. The channels were treated as outlets to help prove that the candidates are competent enough to comment on issues.



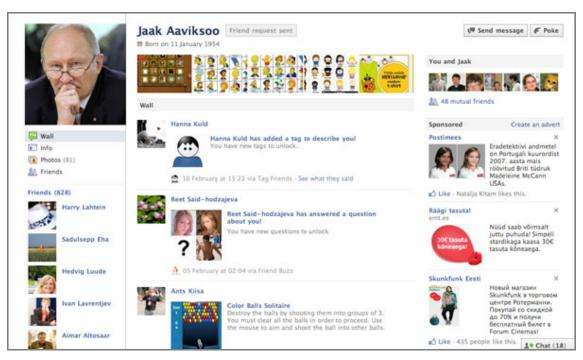
An exception would be Mart Nutt who did not have a personal page on Facebook. Instead, he had a fan page which he updated actively. Nutt, Herkel, and Vahtre also produced the humorous joint campaign "Vote for the sweater" which was presented on Facebook, YouTube, and other social media channels and which received positive feedback. Tarmo Kruusimäe could also be brought out as someone who actively updated his page and invited everyone to attend his and fellow candidates' campaign events.

It can additionally be concluded that the more friends a candidate had on Facebook, the greater the amount of campaign-related activity and references to the elections on the page was. The fewer the amount of friends, the less active and more focused on personal life the candidate was. In terms of content, less attention was paid on entertainment and greatest effort went towards making statements or expressing opinions on Facebook. There were a few references to fellow candidates. Surprisingly, the RPU candidates did not make extensive references critical of the competitors; rather, they aimed to point out the differences in views.

Twitter was less popular with the candidates, serving as a jumping board to other social media channels such as blogs or Facebook. It is clear that, although many have Twitter accounts, they do not use them. The RPU candidates did not have a specific Twitter campaign.

The use of YouTube in the 2011 elections could be assessed as low. Only 15 out of the 125 candidates had a YouTube account. These were, primarily, the top candidates of whom there were humorous uploads depicting the candidates at party events (aimed to promote the top candidates of the districts). Only a few candidates, including Ene Ergma and Mart Laar, used YouTube as a means of making statements.

- A third of the RPU candidates are present on social media channels.
- The amount of content produced is modest and only a handful of the candidates use the channel as a campaign tool.
- The channel is mainly used for personal activities and only ten candidates have more than a thousand friends.
- Facebook is mainly used by younger representatives who run in larger electoral districts.
- The RPU candidates do not have democratic discussions on their social media channels as it was more a place in which to collect articles published in the media.
- There are very few references to other candidates, campaigns, etc.
- There is a lack of a sense of solidarity and support of one another, except in the campaign "Vote for the sweater."
- Everyone for themselves!
- Twitter is rarely used.
- Mostly, it is the top candidates who have YouTube videos.











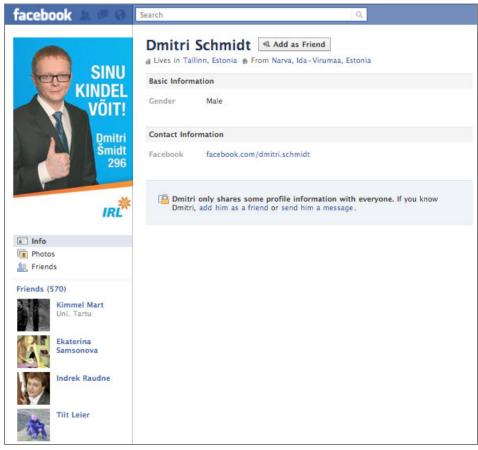


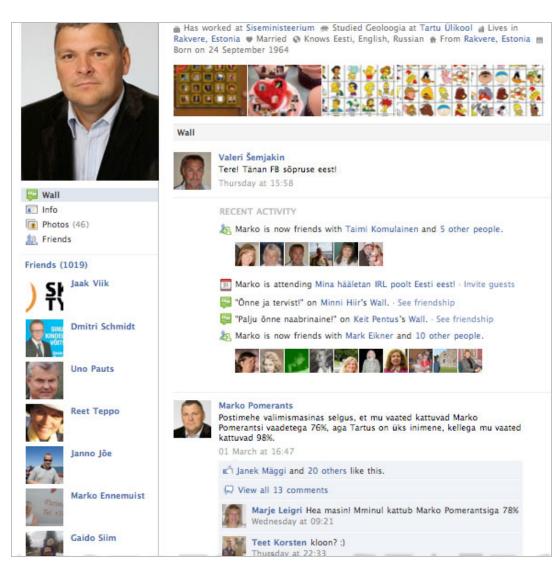




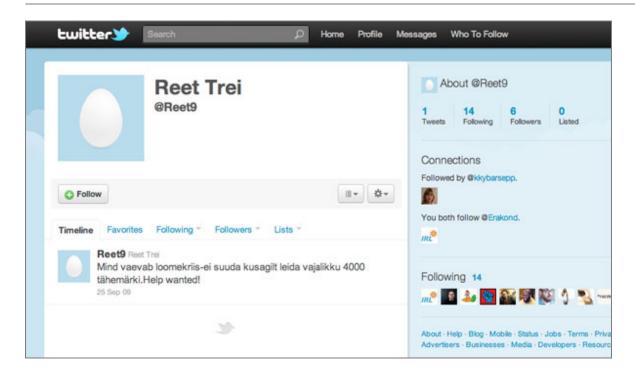






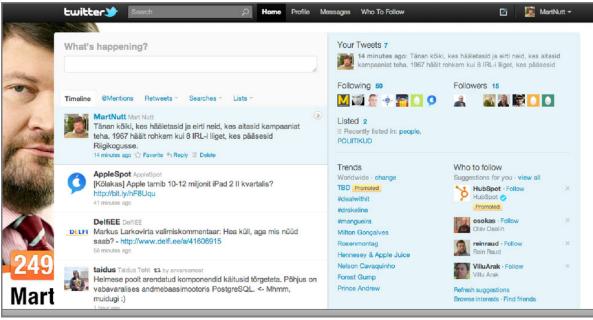




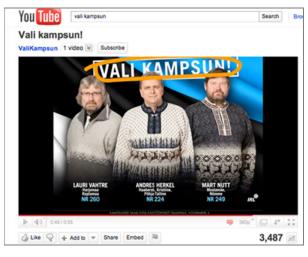
















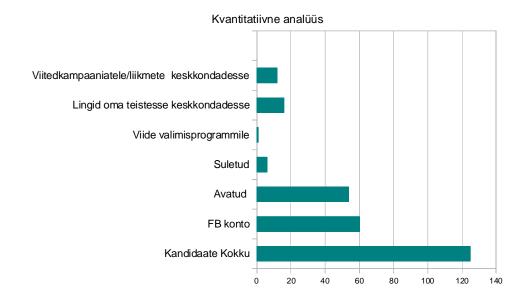
Estonian Centre Party

The analysis of the campaigns of the party's candidates in popular social media mainly proceeded from the information available on Facebook.

In a couple of instances, the candidates had a Facebook account but it was obvious that they did not manage the page themselves (the information was taken from Vikipeedia). In such cases, the database shows that the candidate did not have a Facebook account. The basis for assessing the openness of the pages was whether the candidates' messages could be viewed. If this was not allowed but access to the candidate's general information was granted the account was marked as a closed one.

Quantitative analysis

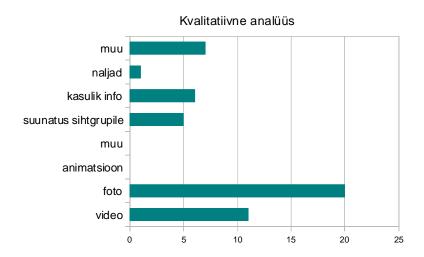
The party had the maximum number of candidates allowed: 125. Among them, 60 (that is, 48%) had a personal Facebook account. 46 of these (37% of all Centre Party candidates and 77% of those who had a Facebook page) were open to everyone. In terms of districts, the Centre Party had the largest proportion of candidates with Facebook accounts in the 2nd and 11th districts (62% and 60% respectively). The smallest proportion was found in the 6th and 9th district (29% and 25% respectively). Among candidates born between 1980 and 1989, 83% had Facebook accounts. The smallest number of Facebook accounts (28% in total) was found among candidates born between 1950 and 1959.



Only one Centre Party candidate made a reference to the party or personal elections programme on the day the site was observed. There were more references to candidates' personal blogs and other social networks and to the party's campaigns on other environments (17 and 12 references respectively). On personal pages, the references were generally to blogs, but there was one reference to a Twitter account as well. With party campaigns, the references were primarily to the party's YouTube account.

Qualitative analysis

In all the open accounts, next to messages related to the elections there were also photos (in 43% of the open accounts) and videos (24%). Of such campaign-related posts, 12% were aimed at certain target groups and 14% provided campaign-related information. 15% of the candidates had posts of a different format; mainly, in the form of references to news articles connected to the elections.



The candidates' activeness in using Facebook was relatively low considering the number of their friends. On average, the candidates had 536 friends on Facebook (on the scale of 10–4,500). Candidates born in the 1950s had most friends and those born in the 1930s had the least. With this amount of friends, the average number of followers was 4.6 per each post and the average number of comments was 1.7 in accounts open to the public.

In assessing the content and regularity of the posts, it can be concluded that the majority of Facebook pages were updated irregularly, did not include information about the election programme, or were simply unused by the candidates in advancing their campaigns. Among the 46 open access pages created by the candidates, there were 7 instances in which the Good Elections Practices were violated. This was mainly seen in derogatory comments directed at the competitors or in references to materials with such content.

As shown by quantitative data, the activeness of the candidates on social media channels was very modest during the period they were observed in. More than half of the candidates do not have a personal Facebook account and a quarter have closed theirs to most users. The content analysis of available pages seems to suggest that candidates whose pages can be viewed by everyone do not use Facebook to its full extent to further their personal or the party's campaigns.

Based on the presented data, the most popular and, frequently, the only campaign-related material were the candidates' photos that also featured party symbols and the candidates' numbers. One could also see evocative photos of the candidates meetings with voters.

Videos were not very popular among the candidates. Only a few candidates had uploaded personal videos, most often one could see the party's campaign videos being linked in an attempt to spread them.

The candidates who did not want to or did not know how to fill their own pages used the opportunity to link articles from online media outlets, but this was fairly rare.

The most important observation in terms of the candidates' Facebook pages, however, is that even if a candidate posted a campaign-related opinion or slogan and a potential voter responded to it, the opportunity to further explain their views was left unused. This suggests that when social media is used as part of the campaign, it is still thought of as a traditional one-sided advertising space. The candidates do not realise that Internet environments offer considerably more options in getting into actual contact and having a discussion with the

voters. The following presents some examples of discussions on candidates' pages that did not include the candidates themselves.

- Candidates' campaigns on social media are random.
- Candidates' pages have too few common points and they use social media infrequently.
- As a rule, the candidates' party belonging is not visible on their pages.
- Internet-based campaigning is not common among the candidates. Only the most active candidates do this and even they are fairly lazy and unattractive in doing so.
- Breaches of the Good Election Practices are mainly connected to comments criticising the competitors or references to material doing the same.
- One-sided media.
- Non-existent use of Twitter.
- YouTube: the amount of information present is equal to that provided by the party.



























Priit Toobal

Kui sulle AITAB tööpuudusest, hindade tõusust ja madalatest pensionitest, siis vali KESKERAKOND! Keskerakonna uus teleklipp!

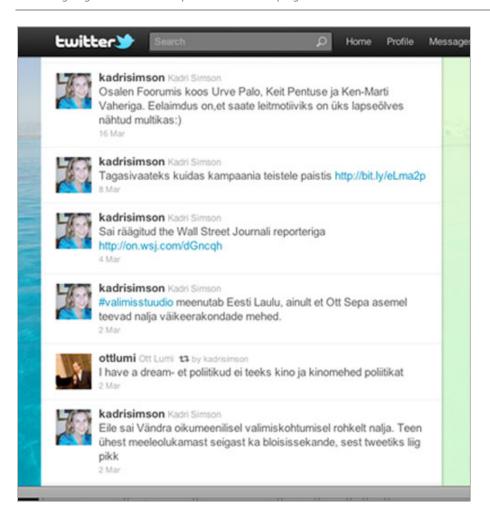


Keskerakonna Riigikogu valimiste teleklipp www.youtube.com





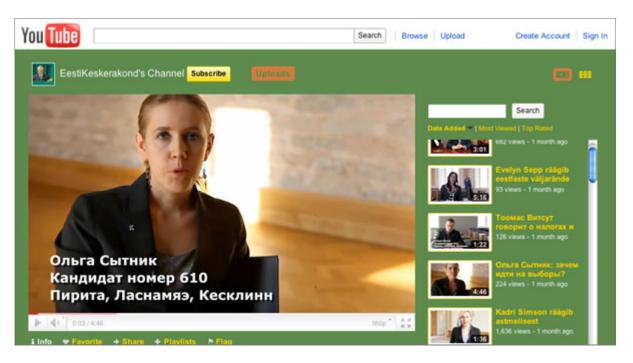














Sander Sõõrumaa Nagu ma näen, lood Sa jällegi pinnast järjekordseks, konstruktiivseks aruteluks poliitika ümber. Nimeta näiteks 5 põhjust, miks ma peaksin sind valima? Lisaks ootaks mõnda mõistlikku vastust, kuidas just Sina hinnatõusu peatad? Hinnatõusu pidurdamise selgitamise juures palun kaasata ka Philipsi kõver ja lubadus tööpuuduse vähendamiseks.

Thursday at 22:49 1 2 people



Alo Lõoke Kas Sul Silver on üldse vahet, mis plakatil kirjas ja mida lubatakse?

Thursday at 22:57



Ingrid Matela Mulle meeldib pilt näiteks :D

Thursday at 23:22



Siim Pari Sander, sina, Reformikate sülekoer ära klähvi. Too parem näiteid, kuidas praegune valitsus Eestit edasi on aidanud ning üritanud tööpuudust leevendada? Kritiseerima on kõik kõvad mehed, kuid me teame, et Eesti vajab muutust!

Friday at 10:59



Sander Sõõrumaa No tere Siim, milline julge kõnepruuk, au ja kiitus. Mina ei kandideeri riigikokku, ega ei ole kunagi plaaniski, nii, et las näiteid toovad need inimesed, kes oma loosungitega siin on lagedale tulnud. Üldiselt soovitaks kõikidel ikka kaks jalga maa peal hoida ja mitte ära unustada majanduse toimimise algtõdesid.

Friday at 14:17 : 1 person



Klemet Kivisild Ma pole ühegi keskerakondlase käest vastust saanud, et mis rohi see siis on, mis meie riigi "pasast" välja toob. Kui see nii kõva plaan neil on, äkki lähevad päästavad siis kogu maailma kriisist. See on ju praegu kõikjal. Keskerakond saaks ...See more

Friday at 15:12



Marina Riisalu

... Mina hoolin ja minul on tahe aidata... Igaüks meist väärib märkamist ja ausust ka pisiasjades! Tahan olla truu, sest on neid, kes mind usaldavad, tahan olla rikkumata, sest on neid, kes hoolivad, tahan olla tugev, sest on palju, mille nimel kannatada, tahan olla vapper, sest on palju, mida peab julgema teha. Tahan olla sõber kõigile- ka vaenlastele ja üksildastele...

16 February at 18:04

ich 38 people like this.



Ak Ny Vat see on alles sõnum valijatele ;-)) 17 February at 01:26 · 🖒 2 people



Sakarias Leppik See on väga vahva pilt. Ainult number ja tekst segavad pildiesteetikat. Paraku.

18 February at 14:41



Jaak Vackermann Sőber Marina, Kas Sina jätkaksid või peataksid praeguse haridusreformi? Palun lühidalt: ei või jah? Edu Sulle ja Aivarile!

18 February at 16:25



Tõnu Kauer Aga peale valimisi....

18 February at 18:30



Kristel Vester Selle aitamise juurde tulles...enne valimisi võiks kah aidata.

Paldiski Gümnaasiumi õpilastele oleks suuski vaja.Kasvõi 10 paari. Mina küll riigikokku ei kandideeri aga olen kah oma väikesest palgast sellele koolile kingitusi teinud.Ja Aivar ...

See more

18 February at 18:55 + ₼ 2 people

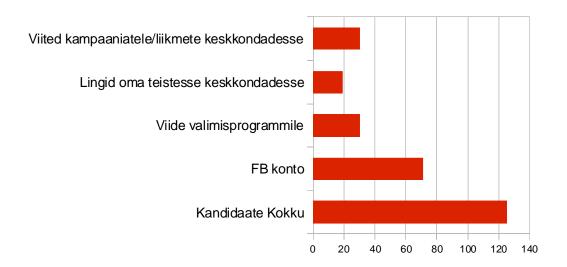
Social Democratic Party

The SDE had 125 candidates in the 2011 Riigikogu elections. Almost 58% of them can be considered active on at least one social network, Facebook, which lets the candidates offer most versatile information out of the three environments observed (Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube) and could be linked to the other two. So it seems logical that the candidates put in most effort to campaign for themselves and the party namely in that environment.

Quantitative analysis

All SDE members who actively use their Facebook accounts do so mainly in Estonian. In only three instances out of the 71 there were posts made in English and in five instances there were posts which addressed the public in Russian. Russian posts were made by Jaak Allik, Karel Rüütli, Andres Anvelt, Jevgeni Ossinovski, and Oleg Gogin. Jaak Allik and Jevgeni Ossinovski run in Ida-Viru county; Oleg Gogin in Haabersti, North Tallinn, and Kristiine; Andres Anvelt in Tallinn city centre, Lasnamäe, and Pirita; and Karel Rüütli in Harju and Rapla counties. It would be logical to assume that their Russian posts were intended to sway the results in their favour.

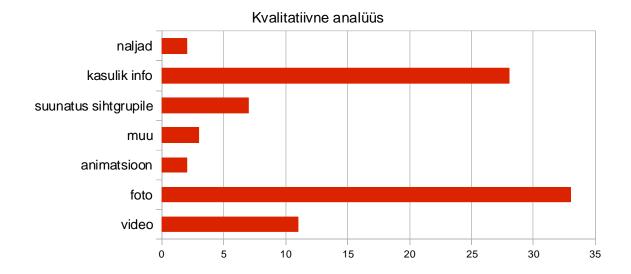
Kvantitatiivne analüüs



It was surprising, however, that only 30 candidates' Facebook profiles had a reference to the party or its elections programme and political views. Only 19 people out of 71 included information from other environments in their profiles: mostly blogs and web pages.

Qualitative analysis

The SDE online campaign, like their campaign on television and elsewhere, focused on people and had a soft effect. This is why it was difficult to distinguish, at least on Facebook, between a candidate's personal and non-political posts from the ones aimed to support the campaign. This is made even more difficult by the fact that many candidates had a campaign photo with the candidate number and district on it posted as their profile photo, as is evident from the following figure.



In terms of campaign elements, the photos were shared by the same people who made references to the elections programme and/or political views. 11 candidates had used the opportunity to upload political and campaign videos that had a serious tone and were taken from the party's YouTube channel⁶³ which had 14,178 views. This is probably why the candidates and campaign managers have not spent time or money on creating additional channels – only three candidates had their own YouTube channels. These were Rannar Vassiljev, Gerd Tarand⁶⁴, and Jevgeni Ossinovski⁶⁵ who seem to be young and politically active candidates, at least on the basis of online environments.

Among the 125 candidates, 14 had an active Twitter account, but only a few of them use it to express political thoughts. Karel Rüütli, Gerd Tarand, Barbi Pilvre, and Katrin Saks, for example, differed in that. Katrin Saks's Twitter account was almost entirely in the service of the campaign, others' accounts included non-political tweets as well.

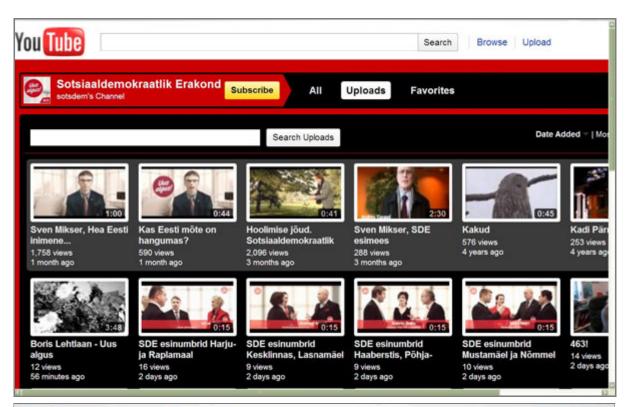
On YouTube, the party channel is mostly used. Three candidates had their own channels.

- The SDE online campaign is focused on Facebook.
- 11 candidates include campaign elements and the elections programme.
- The candidates' profiles do not provide campaign-related information, if one excludes the candidates' photos and numbers.
- With little difference, the candidates provide the same information on their pages as the party's page on Facebook does, which has a positive effect in terms of the general image.
- Should a friend or fan page be set up?
- Few references to the party programme.
- Twitter and YouTube are used.

⁶³ http://www.youtube.com/ user/sotsdem

⁶⁴ A personal video channel was not used in the campaign.

⁶⁵ http://www.youtube.com/user/vybor2011 (A video channel set up specifically for the elections)



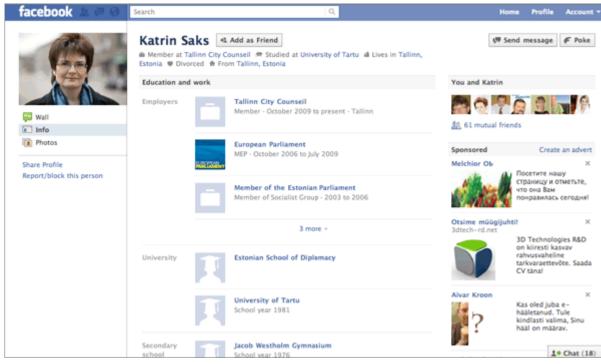


Jevgeni Ossinovski

Head Aseri valla inimesed! Kutsun teid tasuta kontserdile Aseri muusikakooli aulasse sel esmaspäeval kell 18, kus esineb meeleolukate romanssidega kollektiiv Trio Romance.

Уважаемые жители волости Азери! Приглашаю Вас в понедельник в 18.00 в актовый зал музыкальной школы в Азери на бесплатный концерт Trio Romance, в исполнении которого прозвучат прекрасные романсы.







Pärast valimisi



Pärast valimisi







Andres Anvelt

×

Nii, sain hea sõbra Toomase kaasabil valmis oma kodulehe kujunduse. Kuna ei taha FB-d erilise poliitmüraga koormata, siis peksan oma arvamustega kurjameid pigem oma isiklikul kodukal. Kellel huvi, see klikkigu:-) www.andresanvelt.com

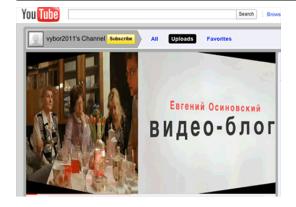


Andres Anvelt www.andresanvelt.com

TALLINN, 6. november, BNS – Kahekümnendat tegevusaastat tähistav uudisteagentuur Baltic News Service palub kogu 2010. aasta vältel Eesti, Läti ja Leedu olulistel arvamusliidritel kirjutada tulevikku vaatav essee teemal "Balti riigid 2030" ja avaldab need. Selle suure teema raames on esseede autorite

₱ 16. veebruar kell 17:15 - Jaga





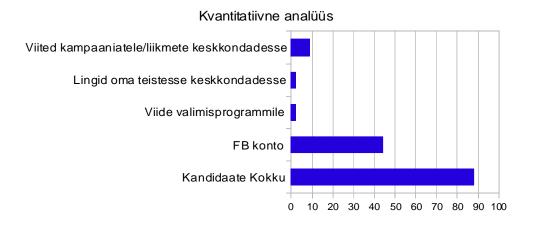


People's Union of Estonia

The People's Union 2011 list included 88 names. 44 of them could be considered active on at least one social network – Facebook. The candidates were very modest in using other social media channels; in fact, they were practically not used. At the same time, all candidates who had an account on Facebook had made them open to everyone. In communicating with the voters, the People's Union's candidates use a surprisingly limited amount (only 20%) of the possibilities available on Facebook.

Quantitative analysis

50% of the candidates have a Facebook account. The largest proportion of Facebook users was among people born after 1970. People born before the 1950s did not use Facebook.

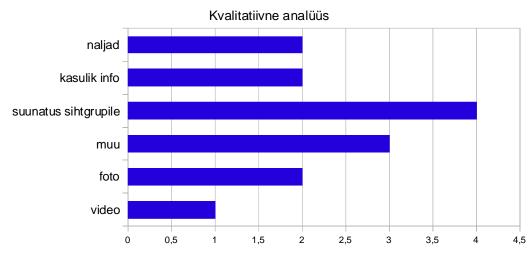


Only few candidates posted campaign ads on their walls, some made references to other sources in the form of news, surveys, or something else. The most vivid example was Koit Oras who, on February 25, encouraged people to vote for him every 20 minutes as seen on the screenshot. The most active candidate among the ones analysed was Samuel Golomb whose Facebook posts and activities were most thorough and relevant. Specific campaigning, however, is somewhat difficult to identify; there were a few of such posts.

The quantitative analysis reveals very few campaign-related references to the programme or fellow candidates' campaigns. References to the elections programme are missing and, among all candidates, only 9% link their or the party's campaigns on other environments.

Qualitative analysis

The opportunity to post videos and photos on Facebook is somewhat unused: photos were not posted by the time of this study and there were only a few videos. The majority of the pages were not only unused for campaigning, they were static in general and lacked even a modest amount of new content.



On average, the party's Facebook users had 200 friends. The inactive use of Facebook pages is best reflected in the number of comments and followers per comments made. The number was significantly below one for both.

The candidates' pages remained unused during the elections as well: there was no regularity or information related to the elections in the posts and if there were active pages, these did not feature elections-related information.

There were no Twitter or YouTube users among the candidates in these elections. The People's Union was not very visible on YouTube, although the youth organisation of the party, for example, had their own channel. None of the candidates observed had a personal channel. Ilja Stozarov's campaign videos⁶⁶ should be mentioned as something that completely diverges from the party's overall image. The city, hostages, blood, the dark and grim criminal world – such images are more directed towards the young and adventurous Russian-speaking youths than the traditional People's Union's supporters. These videos stood in an especially stark contrast to the video of Andrus Blok⁶⁷ made by the youths of the party.

- Candidates do not use Facebook to further their campaigns, the pages were more of a personal nature.
- The content of elections-related posts was limited to stating candidate numbers; in one instance, voters were invited to meet candidates.
- There were few Facebook users, but this could be due to the socio-demographic background of the candidates.
- Facebook is not used to make references to the party's elections programme or other environments.
- Candidates use their Facebook accounts very modestly.
- Use of photos and videos is non-existent.

⁶⁶ http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=epa7Wz5g-qY; http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ruDnj26GDyQ



Samuel Golomb

Neljapäeval korraldasin kohtumise valijatega. Koos oli ligi 40 eakamat Rakvere inimest. Kohtumise märksõnad: Rahvaliidul on mõistlik peaministri kandidaat, Blokk on teada/tuntud KOVjuht, erakond suutis jääda kokku, kaitske maainimest, rahvas peab presidenti valima. Kõlas kriitika erakonna reeturite üle. Ja veel oli lõbus koos olla!

17 February at 23:07





Tõnu Rattasepp

Kallid sõbrad! Valimiste lõpuni jäänud 6 päeva. Kes pole veel otsustanud, kelle poolt hääletada, siis oma hääle saad anda minule nr.839:)

Yesterday at 08:32

2 people like this.



Hjálmar Ævarsson Valin sa 100% ole küsimusi 22 hours ago · ₺ 1 person



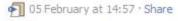
Andres Tabor

Kutsun kõiki sõpru ja tuttavaid.



Kohtumine Hiiumaa rahvaga

Location: Kivi Jüri külalistemajas, Kärdlas Time: Sunday, 06 February 2011 17:30







Tenno Lauri Hiljaks jäin, aga pole hullu! 08 February at 14:08



Hannes Toomsalu

Tädi Maali Uugametsast läks arsti juurde ja küsis rasedusvastaseid tablette. Arstil vajus karp lahti ja päris; "Tädi Maali. Te olete 75 aastat vana! Miks te vajate neid tablette?" "Mul on kohe hea uni", vastas tädi Maali. "Kuidas", imestas arst? "Need pole ju unetabletid?" "Ma panen need tütretütre õhtuse tee sisse ja mul on kohe rahulikum magada", vastas tädi Maali!

12 hours ago





Arno Reede Vanapaar ka kenasti üritab toda vanainimeste asja teha ja poole tegemise peal proua küsib, et kas sul ikka kumm on peal, härra küsib et mis asja, tolles vanuses, kardad rasedaks jääda või, proua, et ei, vanades munades pidavat salmonella olema ..

11 hours ago · ₼ 8 people



Hannes Toomsalu Väga hea! 10 hours ago



Hille Kõrgesaar tark mõte, kaval ka:)

10 hours ago · ₼ 1 person

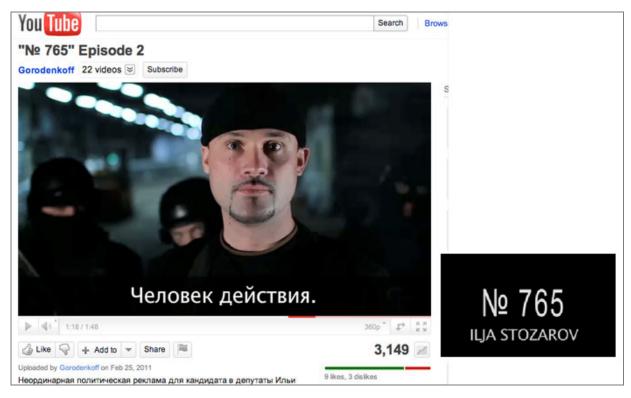




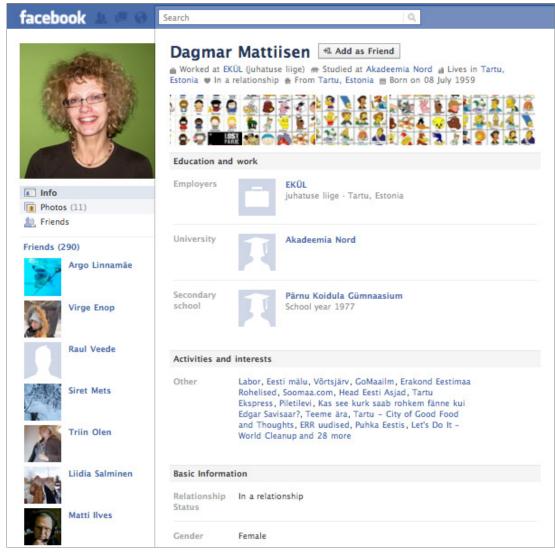


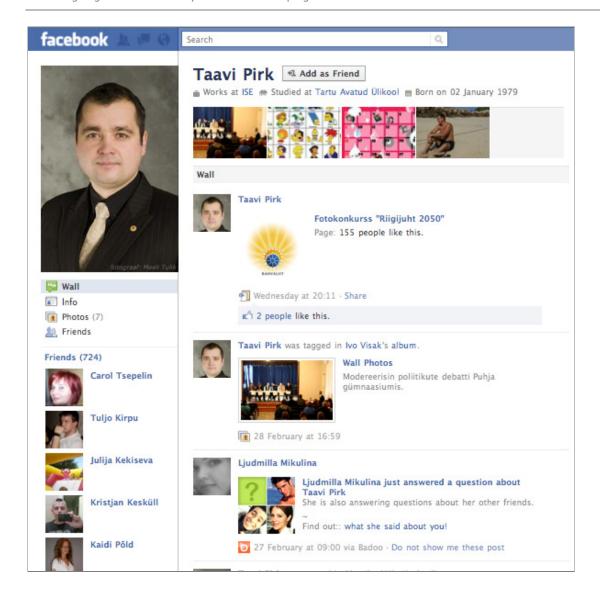
















Kerli Toots

Facebooki grupi seadistused muutusid eelmise aasta oktoobris, peale mida ei ole enam võimalik gruppi sõpru kutsuda, vaid sõpru saab ainult lisada. Seetõttu tuleks gruppi lisanutel suhtuda sellesse kuivõrd kutsesse ja soovi korral lahkuda grupist klikkides grupi lehel "lahku grupist". Gruppi saab lisada ainult oma sõpru ja hr Imre Sooäär on nii Jaani kui ka Kati sõprade nimekirjas.

Kõik, kes ei ole sõprade nimekirjas saavad grupiga liituda avaldades selleks soovi.

Ei tohiks ära unustada, et Facebooki privaatsuse reegleid kontrollib Facebook, mitte Facebooki kasutaja.

Jaan Toots: "Hr Imre Sooäär, tunnen Teid ja pean Teist lugu, kuid olen hämmeldunud, et selle asemel, et minuga ühendust võtta või grupist ise lahkuda, lahkate sellist mõttetut teemat ajakirjanduses."

about 3 weeks ago



Andres Uuli Natuke kahju et meie poliitilised parteid on nagu ususektid...kus räägitakse palju armastusest...aga see ei laiene teise sekti liikmetele...kui poliitika on mängus...unustatakse sõprus...

11 February at 15:09



Imre Sooäär Tänan Gerli. Saatsin ka Jaanile vastuse. Eks Postimees oli omakorda minu kommentaari üle võimendanud ja sellest kohe eraldi uudise teinud....

Ei ole häda midagi. Igasugune pildis olek on siiski pildis olek ja kui asjad lahenevad ilusti nagu ...See more

11 February at 15:28 via email

02 February at 12:30 · Share

** Kati Toots likes this.

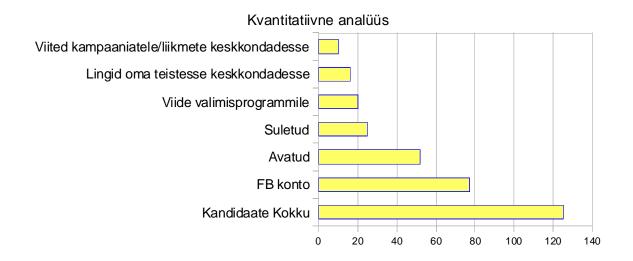


Estonian Reform Party

Of the 125 candidates, at least 78 were present on Facebook (including Andrus Ansip's Facebook fan page) which is 62.4%. Most profiles were not visible for everyone and could only be viewed once a candidate was added as a friend on Facebook. In 67 instances out of the 78, the candidates' profiles were closed and, in order to analyse their campaigns on social media, the candidates had to be added as friends. In 23 instances of the 67 (34.3%), the invitation was accepted.

Quantitative analysis

The analysis of the candidates' Facebook profiles revealed no direct links to the party's elections programme. The latter would be more likely to be found on the candidates' personal web pages. There were also no substantial discussions of the views presented in the elections programme.



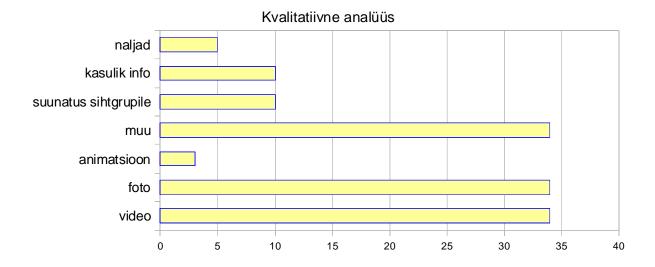
The main communication took place in the form of presenting the candidate's campaign photo (the photo and candidate number) or in making references to the party's TV ads, official campaign, and news. References to fellow candidates in the same district were found in a number of instances. Links to the candidates' blogs were also frequent and, in the blogs, more substantial discussions could be found. If a candidate did not have a personal page, links were given to the party's website where candidates were presented district by district⁶⁸. References to other channels used by the candidates, be they personal web pages or Twitter or YouTube accounts, are usually not found under candidates' personal information.

Qualitative analysis

As Facebook features a lot of information and as the candidates are human beings, there is a lot of information that is not connected to the candidates' parties but that is rather of a personal nature. The qualitative analysis revealed that 33⁶⁹ out of the 78 candidates (42.3%) used photos, videos, and other materials that were directly connected to the elections. In terms of target groups, that is, the citizens of Estonia, it can be said that the candidates' friends tend to be adults with the right to vote; at the same time, as stated above, there were no topical debates on the candidates' Facebook pages, so it is difficult to comment on whether and to what extent the information found on the pages was useful to the voters.

 $^{68 \ \}underline{\ \ } http://www.reform.ee/et/Valimised/Kandidaadid/Tallinna-Haabersti,-Pohja-Tallinna-ja-Kristiine-linnaosa.$

⁶⁹ Andrus Ansip's official fan page has been excluded. The page is intended more for him as the prime minister not the party leader.



An interesting tendency is the candidates' increasingly growing number of friends: the numbers increased significantly immediately before the elections. In the last days before the elections, candidates added tens and tens of friends. It might be justified to wonder how many of these actually were candidates' acquaintances and who was the one who established the friend connection – the candidate or the would-be friend?

Twitter & YouTube

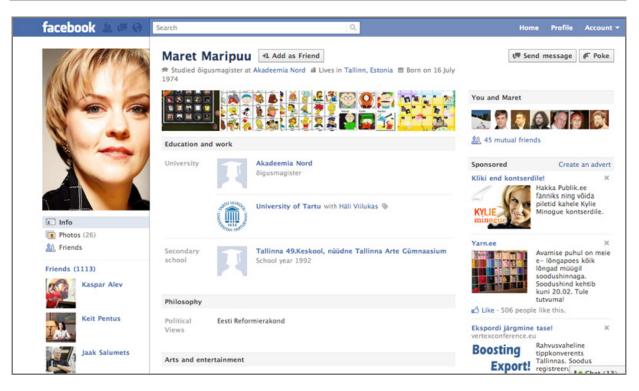
Whereas Facebook is used by 62.4% of the Reform Party's candidates, Twitter is used considerably less. Only 10% of the candidates on the list and 30.3% of the candidates befriended on Facebook use Twitter. 9 out of 10 Twitter users had active accounts. YouTube was used even less. Only one candidate had a YouTube account. The party's YouTube video channel should be pointed out as a place where one could find the campaign videos aimed at the most important target groups of the districts and the party⁷⁰.

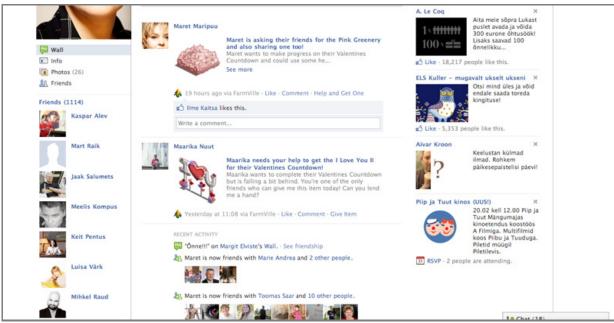
- In 52 instances out of 75, the Reform Party's candidates' profiles are not fully accessible.
- Communication can mainly be seen in the candidates' photos or in links to the party's TV ads, the official campaign, or news.
- Links to personal blogs are common.
- Facebook has a lot of information that is unconnected to the candidates' party and is more of a personal nature.
- The number of friends on Facebook is steadily on an increase.

⁷⁰ http://www.youtube.com/user/reformierakond





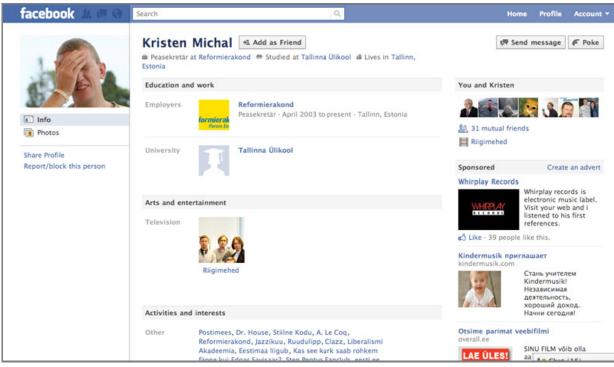
















Andrei Korobeinik

Pärnumaalt sain 2000+ häält (6. või 7. tulemus Pärnumaal ja 3. tulemus Reformierakonna nimekirjas) kuid edasipääsemiseks jäi natuke puudu. Asendusliikme koht tuleb siis, kui Rein Lang saab ministriks. Igal juhul tänud kõigile, kes minu poolt hääletas – tulemus on väga korralik!



Nemad kogusid Pärnumaal enim hääli – Uudised – parnupostimees.ee www.parnupostimees.ee

¶ 6. märts kell 23:47 · Meeldib · Kommenteeri · Jaga

Kasutajatele Kaja Kallas, Teet Kalmus, Imbi Paju ja veel 79 meeldib see viide.

□ Vaata kõiki 28 kommentaari



Omen Kobold eestimaa olevat ausate ja seadusekuulelike inimestega, sealhulgas poliitikud. miks ei võiks siis eesti maailmale eeskuju n2idata ja n6uda k6igilt poliitikutelt oma valimisprogrammi lubaduste kohta valedetektori testi võtta, et kas nad ka p2riselt kavatsevad oma lubadusi t2ita? kes minuga n6ustuvad, võivad julgelt mind oma s6bralisti panna.

9. märts kell 15:07 - Meeldib



Silje Oruvee Arvan, et pääsed riigikokku.Edu sulle! 18. märts kell 21:09 · Meeldib

Kirjuta kommentaar...



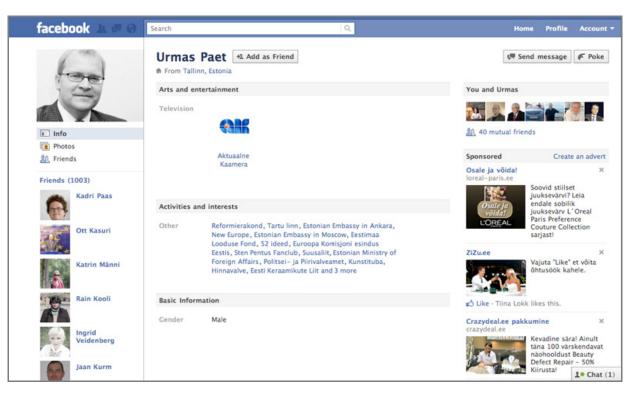
Andrei Korobeinik

6. märtsil on valimised ja hetkeseisuga on Pärnumaa valimisaktiivsus väga madal. Oleme Eestis eelviimasel kohal, Ida-Virumaa on viimane. Teeme ikka nii, et hääletame selle aasta valimistel. Näitame, et meil ei ole ükskõik ja saadame Riigikokku 8 Pärnumaa saadikut. Mitte 7, nagu seal täna on ja mitte 5, nagu mõned ajalehed meile ennustavad.

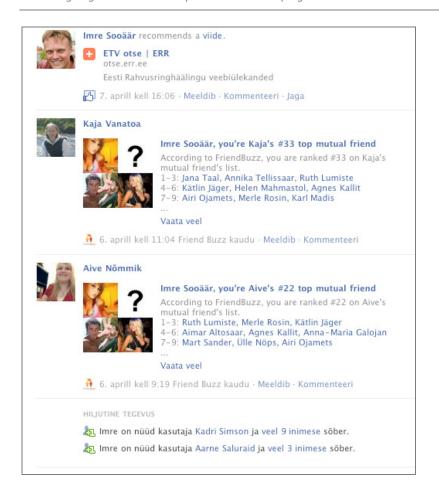


Andrei Korobeinik - Vali kaasaegne riik! www.korobeinik.ee

590 - Andrei Korobeinik, Pärnu ja Pärnumaa









In conclusion: The candidates on social media

The lists of electoral districts are public, so the candidates' positions on the list change according to the number of votes they receive. Having a higher position on the list of a particular district does not ensure that a candidates is elected, as candidates who are lower on the national list can pass them even if they have fewer votes and, thus, be elected instead. Thus, Nutt with 1,968 votes (RPU, 29th on the national list), Hanso with 1,575 votes (SDE, 32nd), Vaarmann with 1,745 votes (Centre Party, 76th), and Korobeinik with 2,057 votes (Reform Party, 58th) had a good enough result that would have carried them straight to Riigikogu if Estonia had a system of open national lists. With the current system, however, (when comparing the number of votes⁷¹ to the positions on the national lists) there were quite a few candidates who were elected to the parliament who received considerably less votes than other candidates. The media as well as party leaders talk about the results of the elections as the will of the people⁷² but the closed national lists obviously reflect the party leaderships' wishes in terms of who should be in the parliament. Such a system ensures that some candidates never have the chance to get elected to the parliament, whereas the ones favoured by party leaders would be elected due to their position on the national list and despite the modest amount of votes cast in their favour by the voters. Some examples: Kallo (Centre Party) - 308 votes (5th position on the national list), Raudne (RPU) - 774 votes (16th), Lillo (Reform Party) - 474 votes (11th). Laanet with 2,566 votes (43rd on the national list and 2nd in the district) would be an exception. He was elected due to a good position on the district list as well as the support of the party and voters.

This might be due to the fact that in many major parties the positions on the list are decided by a limited circle of people. The position on the national and district lists becomes more important than the number of votes. This means that party members are distrustful of and unwilling to help one another, which was indeed seen on social media. The members of the same party were competitors in the same district, fighting for the same votes.

The candidates from the same parties were all lone rangers; it was rare to see candidates make references to or recommendations for one another, post messages of fellow candidates' future events and activities, or support one another in the comments. The candidates in the same district kept their distance and were more willing to support candidates in neighbouring districts than in their district. Some were willing to support candidates from other parties, neglecting those from their own party. Thus, it can be concluded that the candidates see themselves as competitors rather than teammates.

It was assumed that the candidates joining Facebook a few months before the elections were hopelessly late. The analysis shows that there were those who created an account only in the last months before the elections as well as those whose pages were present since 2007. However, in both cases, the amount of contacts, friends, and posts was very different and not based on the campaigns or the candidates' activeness. The deciding factor was the candidates' fame. Some of them could gather as many friends in a few months as others could in three years. There were those who decided to follow the others' example and create a support page on the last moment but, sensing that this yielded little additional support, went back to conveying their messages on the friend page, thus, hopelessly confusing the two pages. Sometimes, even the photos on the two pages were identical. According to the analysis, friend accounts were more attractive than fan/support pages.

A Facebook user who does not write anything; who does not have messages, thoughts, or views; and whose wall only shows the user quickly adding numerous strangers as friends is as good as buying a book with covers but no pages. It seemed that many candidates' messages during the elections period were fragmented – only few pages revealed the candidate's central interests, their programme and views as well as their aims and skills.

⁷¹ Estonian National Electoral Committee http://www.vvk.ee/varasemad/?v=rk2011

Among the candidates analysed, there were also those who wrote and posted non-stop and were willing to participate in longer discussions should anyone initiate them. Their days seemed to pass in the networks and in front of a computer.

On Facebook, there was little campaigning going on – even friends and fans were passive in spreading the candidates' messages; more often, they simply clicked the passive "Like" button.

The hypothesis that a large number of friends online could be reflected in the outcome of the elections was not confirmed. There is no correlation. One could have only 28 fans and get almost 800 votes, but one could also have 5,000 friends and only receive 300 votes or have 600 fans and receive 19,000 votes.

The same people who considered candidates with similar views their friends were also friends with candidates whose parties have very different views, so it is very difficult to say how many fans/friends/supporters a candidate had. But this is part and parcel of life in Estonia where everyone knows everyone else or at least knows someone who knows someone or is friends with someone running for parliament. The Estonians prefer to observe others on social media instead of voicing their own views or opinions publicly.

Hence, a recommendation for the future – when campaigning on social media, you should keep your personal friends and your political campaign separate. They do not support each other but rather tend to create difficult choices as to what and in what manner you can post on your wall.

There were also frequent examples of people who pollute social media – they had set up a page but then lost the interest or energy to do something with it and, as a result, there are empty pages decorated only with someone's name.

There is a long way to go in terms of e-literacy in social media. When a person has decided to run for parliament and has few resources, social media could become an extremely important channel where a successful campaign could be run with a small amount of money and few resources.

In conclusion

- Should a friend or fan page be set up?
- Candidates' campaigns in social media are largely random.
- Party loyalties are often not visible on the pages.
- There is no information regarding the campaigns found on the candidates' personal profiles other than campaign photos and candidate numbers.
- · Communication is generally one-sided.
- Candidates do not or cannot use Facebook to advance their campaigns and their pages are generally intended for personal use while still being open to everyone.
- Posts related to the elections are limited to listing one's candidate number; sometimes, voters are invited to meet the candidates.
- Closed profiles: fan pages open to everyone should have been preferred.
- The number of friends increases before the elections.
- The higher the position on the candidates' list, the more active; the lower the position, the more passive.
- Top candidates (7 out of 10) remain loyal to traditional channels (not all top candidates are on Facebook).
- If there were no media, there would be nothing to post.
- There are both passionate and passive candidates.
- The greater the number of friends/supporters, the more mutual the communication.
- More friends does not equal more votes in the elections. This means that the friends/supporters and the voters might not be the same people.
- People can be Facebook friends with the People's Union, the Russian Party, and the Green Party simultaneously.

- If you do not post for yourself, no one else will either.
- Use of Twitter is non-existent.
- YouTube: there is only so much information as the party itself has provided.
- Virtual pollution neglected and incomplete accounts.
- The proper use of social media in the campaigns still has to be learnt.
- Candidates' information and overviews of their political views are lacking.
- The voters do not receive a clear message about what unites the candidates on the same party lists or what would be the shared goals they would want to achieve on Riigikogu.
- It is unclear why the candidates are on Facebook and what they aim to achieve there.
- The votes received in the elections in relation to the number of friends/supporters the candidate or party
 had on Facebook does not seem to suggest that the candidates more active on Facebook would be
 ensured a better result in the elections.
- Candidates' partial inability to use social media has no effect on the votes received.
- People are friends/supporters of more than one candidate from more than one party, so no candidate might have friends/supporters who would be loyal only to them.
- Candidates' Facebook pages do not convey the parties' central values or views during the elections period.
- Candidates' Facebook pages generally contain everyday information and personal relationships.
- People become the candidates' friends or supporters out of curiosity rather than out of a genuine wish to participate in politics and support the candidates.

F) Parties' evaluation of online campaigns

Both the parties' and the candidates' campaigns on social media networks suggest that the networks did not have a defining role in the 2011 Riigikogu elections. However, in comparison to previous elections and their evaluation, it can be said that their role is growing steadily.

Interviews with party representatives and campaign managers were conducted in order to assess the importance of campaigns conducted in virtual environments.

A comparison of the parties revealed that the most active Facebook users were the Reform Party and the RPU who were followed by the SDE and the Green Party, the Centre Party, and the People's Union. Minor parties played a marginal role. Social networks were used more by parties on the right of the political scale and in the coalition than by parties on the left and in the opposition.

The candidates' social networks pages were characterised by the modest use of these networks as campaign tools; equally modest were the candidates' answers to our interview questionnaires. The questionnaires were presented to the candidates after the elections with the aim of finding out what they thought about using social media in the campaigns. As previously stated, social networks were dominated by personal topics and communication, everyday information, and so forth. Some candidates clearly targeted the voters, had a political message, and made references to the party programme. Only a few candidates had a fan or support page intended entirely to support the campaign. It seemed that candidates were ashamed to acknowledge a connection to their party, to present their views, and to be running for parliament. This might be due to the low standing of parties and politicians in the society. It was also discovered that candidates from the same party are competitors (at least in the same district) and do not wish to advance their competitors' campaigns.

It was also found that the number of friends and the result in the elections do not correlate to a high degree and that the candidates' fame is more important than the time spent on a social network.

After the Riigikogu elections, interviews based on questionnaires were conducted among the candidates. Unfortunately, the feedback was modest, although contacts with both the campaign managers and party representatives were good and their support in forwarding the questionnaires was very important. It became clear that the parties most willing to respond were also the parties that were most active in social media, although the Reform Party's candidates remained as closed off as their accounts on social media. Independent candidates were active in giving feedback, but their answers primarily expressed negative views on e-voting.

The candidates' assessments of the importance of social media in political campaigns differ considerably, making it difficult to categorise their attitudes and opinions. The candidates were fairly unanimous in stating that social media has not really taken root as a campaign tool and does not greatly affect the results of the elections. At the same time, there is a clear tendency that suggests that the role of social networks will increase in future elections. The money spent on campaigns on social media is fairly small compared to traditional campaigns.

The questionnaires also showed that, usually, it were the candidates themselves who managed the campaigns on social networks. Campaigns organised by the party were considerably weaker online than on traditional channels. The campaigns were often random and unsystematic. Experts had been consulted in setting up the websites but not in the campaign itself.

Social media budgets compared to the budgets of traditional campaigns (the numbers can be compared with the data from the Riigikogu anti-corruption committee) were modest. It should be noted that the current system of reporting campaign costs does not give a clear overview of how the parties and candidates actually spend the money. During the Riigikogu elections, 92% of the candidates spent up to 500 EUR on their social media campaigns and only 8% spent up to 1500 EUR. Expense receipts point to expenses related to the Internet, but the specific costs are not listed.

The electronic environments were dominated by Facebook (89%) which was followed by blogs (70%), YouTube (48%), Twitter, and Facebook campaign pages (30%).

60% considered social networks either very important, important, or average in their campaigns. However, this was not seen in practice, so this assessment could be somewhat emotional.

People were not very satisfied with social networks. Facebook came in first, but only with 35%. This suggests that the candidates did not see the desired results on social media, but this could also be due to the candidates' limited ability to use social media.

The candidates were not very focused on reaching a specific target group through social media. 26% (which was the highest percentage) said they found friends by looking at people's photos.

The impact of social networks, however, was considered remarkably great. 58% replied that it was very big, big or medium. The analysis, on the contrary, does not reveal such an impact, so this assessment is in contradiction with how satisfied the candidates were with social networks.

Facebook (40%) and online newspapers (36%) were the most used electronic environments that featured most advertisements. Among the latter, the e-debate on *Pärnu Postimees* received positive comments.

When asked what they would change in using social networks, the candidates answered – nothing. This is, again, in contradiction with the low level of satisfaction with social networks but it could, also, mean that the candidates have not really thought about the networks or made use of their full potential.

The use of text messages was next to non-existent. 0% responded "Yes" and 56% responded "No" suggesting that text messages did serve an indirect campaign purpose. The reason here could lie in the high cost of text messages. The use of e-mails by the parties and candidates was very different. Similar differences could be seen in the assessment of the possibilities to provide feedback.

When asked if voters were given the opportunity to give feedback and communicate with the parties/candidates through e-channels, most candidates replied that their personal e-mail addresses were visible on Facebook as well as on their blogs. Feedback tended to be of a random nature and the responders preferred to remain anonymous. Thus, despite the number of Facebook friends, potential voters are passive in mutual communication. It is also possible that people are unwilling to show their preferences and reveal the people they plan to vote for. For example, among one candidate's nearly 800 friends/fans, there were only around ten people who had publicly stated that they were going to vote for them.

A separate topic in the questionnaire was the candidates' attitudes towards e-voting. Different answers were given when asked if the candidate's party considered e-voting important and propagated it. The general impression was that e-voting was left up to the voters and that the parties did not considerably focus on propagating e-voting. At the same time, many candidates did seem to consider e-voting important. The attitude towards honest e-voting differed as well. No one argued with the statement that e-voting should be honest, but some candidates had reservations about the possibility of ensuring the honesty. There was no across-the-board trust towards e-voting.

The candidates' Facebook pages were considered the most memorable websites, but Facebook and blogs were also mentioned. Although the candidates' pages were not used much, the attitude towards them indicates that they have a lot of potential in future elections.

In evaluating the professionalism of social media, the Reform Party, the RPU, the SDE as well as some individual candidates were pointed out. Marko Mihkelson's blog merited attention. Somewhat surprisingly, Leo Kunnas's campaign and Valdo Paddar's "dark horse" received high praise, although they were not very professional and did not have a great impact. This might be due to the subjective opinions of the supporters of these candidates. At the same time, not enough people answered this question to form a critical mass that could serve as a basis for an objective assessment.

Among the surprises of social network campaigns, Mart Nutt, Ingvar Tshizhikov, and Siiri Sisask were mentioned. There were also references to the positive "sweaters" campaign. Still, some candidates said that there were no surprises or that there were many surprises.

In conclusion, the candidates were convinced that the importance of social networks as campaign tools was on an inevitable increase. At the same time, social media does not push other means of campaigning aside but forces them to rearrange. For example, connections between different campaign methods will increase and there will be more references between the media (social media introduces the campaign organised elsewhere; the TV, radio, print media, and street campaigns will, in turn, direct people to social networks).

G) Election games

The researchers were surprised by the huge popularity of different elections-related games and applications in the online campaigns in these elections; so much so that, differently from the original methodology, we considered it relevant to briefly address this aspect in the Results chapter.

The Voter Compass created by the e-Governance Academy and the Estonian Public Broadcasting Company

The specific aim of the project was to assist voters in making their decision in the Riigikogu elections in March by offering an Internet-based voter compass that would allow voters to compare their and the parties' views on numerous key issues.

The compass created quite a stir in both traditional media and online environments. Lengthier discussions on the topic were found in a dozen blogs and several forums and after the compass was set up Facebook became a very popular arena in which people shared their results with the Facebook community.

The feedback given (immediate, collected from different online environments, etc.) shows that the opportunity created by the compass to compare personal views on key social issues with the parties' views turned out to be surprisingly popular. In designing the project, the aim set was to reach ten to twenty thousand users but, in the end, the compass made 111,535 recommendations (users staying on the page for longer than 2 minutes were counted). Many visitors used the compass several times and the total of compass uses reached 163,715 in the end.

The aim of the project was certainly not to affect anyone's choice in the elections but we believe that the compass did offer some ideas and support to most voters to help them critically assess and analyse the promises made in the election debates. The compass provided a visual map of the parties' positions on the political landscape and placed the users on the same map, thus, helping to clarify the political landscape.

Delfi election game: Elections warm-up

According to Delfi itself, the pre-elections warm-up game available on their website was a political game. As Delfi stated: "We repeat: this is a realistic game which aims to emphasise the importance of elections and to urge people to vote. We recommend that everyone make their own choice because every choice is the right choice and no one has the right to criticise it. Delfi offers the opportunity to play the pre-elections game and then vote during the advanced voting period or at the booths on March 6 with fellow Estonian citizens. In counting the votes, we have taken into account the principle of the simple quota and the distribution of mandates between districts used in the elections. Every vote counts!"

Continuing the game and choosing an electoral district, the user could move on to the party they assumed they would vote for before reaching individual candidates. Then, a specific candidate could be chosen. Once this was done, a sign saying "Vote for candidate XXXX XXXX" would appear.

But then a sign appeared saying: "Dear voter! In order to vote we ask you to identify yourselves using your Facebook accounts. This is necessary to avoid spam and to verify that you are old enough to vote (at least 18 years old). Delfi will not make your personal information available to third parties and will use it only for the project "Delfi pre-elections." Voting at the Delfi pre-elections will not be shown on your or your friends' Facebook walls."

Was this still a game or did it become real with real names and identified voters?

Subsection 60 of the Constitution of the Republic of Estonia, which specifies the procedure for elections, states that every citizen who has the right to vote can participate in free elections. It is the voters' decision whether to attend the election or not. Delfi readers had, in this instance, decided that they wanted to participate in the election game and expressed the wish to do so. At the same time, the same section in the law states that in secret elections every voter has to be able to vote so that no one else could discover (without them wanting this to be known) whether and how they voted. Under normal conditions, this is ensured by the rules of the polling stations and voting booths. In e-voting, this is ensured by the existence of the so-called virtual voting booth, that is, the possibility to change one's vote and with the supremacy of the paper ballot.

"Delfi pre-elections are not connected to the 2011 Riigikogu elections. Vote for candidate XXXX XXXX" and CLICK. See your results!"

Nevertheless, as the voting is connected to Facebook accounts where most people use their real names and in a situation where the voter has no knowledge of what his or her "click" will be used for (whether to rank the candidates or to connect it to some other information), how will it be recorded, and what does it mean to have oneself identified with one's Facebook account, what are the advantages and disadvantages of this, it is our opinion that this particular pre-elections game is in contradiction with the Good Election Practices and, in fact, with the law.

We understand that the aim was to avoid people over-clicking but connecting the vote to a person's Facebook account where they use their real names is not good for the voter or Delfi. Articles can be commented upon anonymously as much as anyone wants, yet they demand to know your real identity before you vote. Not everyone is Eva EvaEva or Old Cop.

Other applications or games do not ask the potential voters to identify themselves.

If the Good Election Practices should apply to people running for parliament, should they not also apply to media outlets?

IV Conclusion: The entire campaign

Below, the results of the analysis are summarized but not as distinct categories but as general tendencies and characteristics.

The Conclusion is structured as follows: first, the entire campaign is evaluated on the basis of adherence to the Good Election Practices; then, some of the more vivid examples are presented.

Adherence to the Good Election Practices

In order to provide additional input for the Estonian Election Watchdogs⁷³, the University of Tartu students involved in the research analysed online campaigns with special focus on the adherence to the Good Election Practices.

The MA students of communication management chose main examples from the Internet environments in which politicians intimidate voters, criticise, or mock their competitors.

The researchers, for example, brought out a post from a Centre Party blog in the Lääne county written by Jaanus Karilaid that talked about how the RPU and the Reform Party would ensure inflation and unemployment; illustrated with a visual message as well⁷⁴.



According to the Good Election Practices, campaign promises should focus on party politics not on the good and bad sides of specific people or groups which is why the post is in contradiction with the practices.

⁷³ The Estonian Election Watchdogs was the joint project of the National Broadcasting Company and the Network of Estonian NonProfit
Organizations in which several experts comment on the adherence to the Good Election Practices prior to the Riigikogu elections. The text
of the Practices can be found at www.ngo.ee/valimised. The election watchdogs' entries can be found at:
http://valimised.err.ee/?Leht=ValimisteValvurid

⁷⁴ Jaanus Karilaid. Lääne county, the Centre Party (blog), You Can Be Certain of Inflation and Unemployment, February 1, 2011: http://laanemaa.keskerakond.ee/jaanus-karilaid/70-void-kindel-olla-hinnatousus-ja-toopuuduses.html

The previous Riigikogu and local elections have traditionally been based on the opposition of and political conflict between the two major parties (the Centre Party and the Reform Party). Although the campaigns generally allowed one to hope that such bickering would not be seen, the last stage of the elections period saw instances in which voters were intimidated with the possible victory of the opposing party.



On Friday, February 18, the Reform Party posted a campaign video on YouTube entitled "There's no difference"⁷⁵ the main aim of which was to oppose them to the Centre Party by posing hypothetical thesis as to what would have been done or left undone over the past four years, had the Centre Party been in office.

Thus, in order to activate their voters in 2011, the Reform Party used intimidation through opposition – if people do not vote for them, the next prime minister could be asking money from Russia and Estonia would run into debt.

The MA students also bring out Edgar Savisaar's blog⁷⁶ that they have called an aggressive blog as the first thing seen on the page is not the Centre Party slogans but blinking banners with texts that criticise Jürgen Ligi, the Minister of Finance from the Reform Party; and Tõnis Lukas, the Minister of Education and Research from the RPU.



The sentences have been torn out of context and serve as attacks against the competing parties and this is not all: as the page is scrolled down, next to a video presenting the Centre Party's election promises and Savisaar's webcam feed, one can also see a squirrel running in a wheel next to whom there is a clock counting down the time left until the Reform Party fulfils their promises.

 $^{75 \} http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uHw2zbG6GXE\&feature=autoplay\&list=ULZG5bscmH9aE\&index=24\&playnext=184 \ http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uHw2zbG6GXE\&feature=autoplay&list=ULZG5bscmH9aE&index=24\&playnext=184 \ http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uHw2zbG6GXE\&feature=autoplay&list=ULZG5bscmH9aE&index=24\&playnext=184 \ http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uHw2zbG6GXE&feature=autoplay&list=ULZG5bscmH9aE&index=24\&playnext=184 \ http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uHw2zbG6GXE&feature=autoplay&list=ULZG5bscmH9aE&ind$



Thus, in the opinion of the students, the Centre Party leader's blog focuses on criticising other parties and pointing out their bad sides rather than on presenting the party's election promises and addressing relevant issues, which is in contradiction with the Good Election Practices.

The students also state that candidates running for parliament use intimidation among other well-known tools of propaganda.

The top candidate of the Centre Party in Võru, Valga and Põlva counties, Heimar Lenk, is another example of a candidate who intimidates people – among other things, he writes in his blog⁷⁷ that if the Reform Party remains in power for long, the state pension will disappear and the country will become poorer and poorer if the current style of government continues.

⁷⁷ http://heimarlenk.blogspot.com/

The trends and characteristics of the Estonian campaigns

How should one answer the question posed in the process of designing this extensive study: Whether the electorate's possibilities to get thorough, updated and balanced information in order to make an informed decision in the elections have significantly improved with the development of information society? Another question pertains to interactivity: do citizens receive feedback and is there a dialogue with them?

First of all, it can be concluded that the 2011 elections were broadly characterised by an even greater presence of the parties and candidates on the Internet. However, there were no success stories as striking as the independent candidate Indrek Tarand's success in the European Parliament elections. It seems surprising that the free men and the independent candidates were relatively passive on social media. At the same time, the current campaign had no specific examples of the environments not being used according to their rules (The European Parliament campaign saw the People's Union post sections of their press released and so forth on their Twitter page within the limit of the 140 characters.).

Whereas the previous elections were characterised by extensive use of Twitter, these elections saw candidates move primarily to Facebook which suggests that its superficiality and the limit of 140 characters is considered too restrictive.

Facebook does not have quite the influence sometimes assumed – the number of votes is not connected to the number of friends, proven, for example, by Evelyn Sepp who had the most friends on Facebook (over 5,000) but who received votes over ten times less than that.

The most important thing about all the environments separately is that, compared to previous studies, the parties' **official websites** are considerably more connected and directly linked to social media (for example, the Reform Party links almost every paper and newspaper on Facebook, the Centre Party campaigns a lot through blogs and links to them). Three parties have directly invested in updating their websites before the elections.

Among all the parties on social media, the Reform Party can be pointed out as the most active party – they have 2,300 people who "Like" them on Facebook, 420 followers on Twitter, 25 videos on YouTube. Nevertheless, the parties' use of social media remains modest – it seems that the candidates are allowed to operate on social media on their own and this is not interfered with or coordinated.

Candidates' overall activities in different environments are characterised by individuality and mixed roles. As a rule, candidates do not refer to their fellow candidates in the same district. In a way, this is understandable – the candidates from the same party are competitors in the same district fighting for the same votes. In an open list, the candidate's position on the list changes according to the number of votes receive, so a competitor's good result might lessen the candidate's chances of getting elected.

At the same time, we would recommend that in the future politicians keep their roles as politicians and as regular nice people separate on Facebook and blogs. At the moment, many candidates' personal and political lives are utterly mixed up (for example, there is a female politician who has posts concerning her party's programme on Facebook next to posts about how soft her cat's paws are and so forth). Some candidates have two pages that present identical information and are connected with links. In general, it can be said that the candidates who are active on social media are not usually active in other environments. The parties' top ten candidates are usually not found on Facebook and the Facebook page of an average politician is still a fairly empty book.

As a general tendency and, primarily, in comparison to previous studies, the so-called cross-referencing of channels stands out (meaning that YouTube videos are commented on Facebook, etc.). The elections are also

characterised by the fact that the parties' official websites are a place to show their strengths and aspirations, whereas social media is the place to point to the weaknesses and sins of the competitors.

Although previous studies of online environments during elections in the United States (Wattal et al. 2010) show that, at least in the States, blogs are an even more influential campaign tools than Web 2.0, less than half of Estonian politicians' blogs from the elections period had any kind of political, party-specific, ideological, or elections-related messages. More often, they are places where games are played and where people communicate with their friends and family. A positive example here is the RPU some of whose members had very good blogs.

It can also be concluded that when, for example, the Centre Party reacts to something (even something published in traditional media) they do so primarily on their members' blogs.

The Reform Party candidates' blogs are dominated by a corporate identity meaning that they use the same design. However, there were some exceptions. Keit Pentus's Estonian blog follows the standard design but her Russian blog is content-filled and unique. Tõnis Kõiv's blog is more interactive than those of his fellow candidates (one can, for instance, sign up for a free visit to the Paide tower). This is one of the few examples of entertaining elements on the blogs next to the Green Party's candidate Marek Strandberg's caricatures.

What should be stressed is that **in online newspapers and local papers**, the campaigns are very modest compared to previous elections. Small budgets are probably the main reason why online media features so few campaign elements besides the candidates' photos and numbers (one of the more memorable examples would be Jaanus Rahumägi's so-called election game in which people are called to clean up Tallinn (see the chapter on online media for more detail).

It should be noted that, although three parties have **slogans such** as **"Enough," "New beginning,"** and **"It's time,"** there is very little innovation in online environments. There were also few examples of making use of the ability to respond quickly to questions on social media, as well as few examples of humour being used as Indrek Tarand did in the above mentioned successful European Parliament campaign. There is one such instance – the RPU's so-called "sweaters" video⁷⁸.

The general openness that characterises social media is not always present when politicians use social media. For example, the students who analysed the elections sometimes found it difficult to become accepted as candidates' friends and the criteria for getting accepted were often unclear.

Nevertheless, in looking at all the environments (including traditional media), it can be concluded that in these elections the political argument was clearer and the online environment was more informative than ever before. This effect is increased by the numerous election games that were discussed in detail at the beginning of this chapter.

Looking at the different **theoretical treatments** of e-democracy, it seems that the effect of e-voting on the development of democracy has been greatly debated. In the 2011 elections, the number of e-votes was remarkable – more than 140,000 people cast their votes online. Without underestimating this convenient way of fulfilling one's civic duty, it is the opinion of the author of this paper that e-voting does not really have such a great effect on voter turnout; it does, however, leave a mark on online environments. It seems logical to assume that people voting online also find their pre-elections information online. The parties have also sensed such a connection, so during these elections two parties (the RPU and the Reform Party) added direct links to the e-voting environment to their online campaigns when e-voting began. The RPU was especially careful in trying to make the process as convenient and quick (and as automatic?) process as possible – in different environments voters were asked the question "Do you agree with the plan to offer free higher education? Click here and vote for it!" (by clicking the banner with this campaign promise, the voter was taken to the e-voting environment).

⁷⁸ http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9qwTKVEBLAY

One theoretical discussion that can also be seen in Pipa Norris's study of 15 European Union members (Norris 2003) proceeds from the question whether online campaigns are targeted towards and mainly reach the people who are already politically active or is there a chance to reach people who would remain passive in the context of traditional media and traditional campaigns. A similar discussion has been on the foreground of academic debate before. The ability of online campaigns to increase political activeness is proven by Boogers and Voermann (2003) on the basis of an analysis of the 2002 Dutch elections; they claim that the majority of people searching for elections-related information online are namely those who are unsure of their preferences. Thus, the content and professionalism of online campaigns could be considered vital in shaping their decisions.

Looking back at the **election results** (although one cannot point to a direct link between the success (or failure) of online campaigns and the final results as there is a plethora of other factors), we as researchers can nevertheless offer some interpretations and point to the following. For example, the success of the SDE does not seem so surprising if one takes a look at the party's and its candidates' relevant and active representation and unified form and visual design on different channels.

The Green Party, who focused on very humane issues (for instance, the question of increasing creativity in schools and ending cruelty towards animals) but failed to exceed the simple quota in the end, put forth an online campaign that was utterly passive, and the contribution of their free men to social media was surprisingly limited.

An exception could be the independent candidate Leo Kunnas whose online campaign was more frightening and provocative but who, despite that, received a considerable amount of votes (almost 3,000 votes which was, however, not enough to get elected).

The e-Governance Academy has every intention of analysing the online campaigns of future elections as well, given the (financial) opportunity. It is also clear that, as the environments and their use develop, so too have to develop the methods of their analysis. Clear trends and developments in political online communication can only be identified through similar studies conducted over a long period of time and if methods are used in a manner that makes comparisons possible.

It is also important to analyse politicians' e-activeness and use of new media outside elections. We will probably not leave the freshly elected Riigikogu alone and will analyse the members of parliaments' use of the Internet and social media between elections as well⁷⁹.

⁷⁹ The E-Governance Academy evaluated this with the previous Riigikogu as well and saw that 37 out of the 101 members were present on social media. The panel awarded the grand prize to a politician who made 997 blog posts, had 1,633 friends on Facebook, and 1,601 followers on Twitter during the period of observation.

References

- Boogers, M. and G. Voerman. 2003. Surfing citizens and floating voters: results of an online survey of visitors of political websites during the Dutch 2002 general elections. *Information Polity*, 8. Pp. 17-27.
- Carlson, T. and G. Djupsund. 2001. Djupsund Internet Old Wine in New Bottles?: The 1999 Finnish Election Campaign on the Internet. *The Harvard International Journal of Press/Politics* 2001 6: 68
- Gulati, N. 2007. Keeping Up Appearances: Candidate Self-Presentation through Web Videos in the 2008
 U.S. Presidential Primary Campaign. Msc Dissertation. London School of Economics and Political Science
- Lilles, E. 2010, "Erakondade veebid valimiskampaaniates 2005-2009".MA Thesis. The Institute of Journalism and Communication, The University of Tartu. Supervised by Marju Lauristin.
- Norris, P. 2003. Preaching to the converted? Pluralism, participation and party websites. *Party Politics*,
 9, pp. 21-45
- Reinsalu, K. (forthcoming), "Elections in Information Society: The case of local and European Parliament elections in 2009 in Estonia". NISPACee Journal of Public Administration and Policy.
- Šein-Meier, H. 2010, "Eesti 2009. A. kohalike omavalitsuste valimiste *online*kampaania ajalehtede veebikülgedel ja uudisportaalides". MA Thesis. The Institute of Journalism and Communication, The University of Tartu. Supervised by Kristina Reinsalu.
- Yannas, P. and L. Georgios, 2005, "Web Campaign in the 2002 Greek Municipal Elections", Journal of Political Marketing, Vol. 4 (1)
- Wattal, S., D. Scuff, M. Mandviwalla, Chr. B Williams, 2010 "Web 2.0 and Politics", MIS Quarterly Vol. 34 No. 4 pp. 669-688

