

# Report on Bachelor / Master Thesis

Institute of Economic Studies, Faculty of Social Sciences, Charles University in Prague

<b>Student:</b>	<b>Jakub Černý</b>
<b>Advisor:</b>	<b>doc. Petr Janský, Ph.D.</b>
<b>Title of the thesis:</b>	<b>Population Characteristics of Voters: Evidence from the Czech Parliamentary Election</b>

## **OVERALL ASSESSMENT** (provided in English, Czech, or Slovak):

### **Contribution**

Jakub Černý wrote an excellent, policy-relevant empirical thesis on the relationship of characteristics of population and voting behaviour at the municipality level. Jakub arrived at interesting, albeit not that surprising, set of results. His findings suggest that there is a negative municipality-level relationship between the voter turnout and the share of people facing distrains, unemployment, and the share of people with no education. Getting hold of municipality-level data on distrains has not been straightforward and its inclusion in the empirical analysis is innovative. His results also suggest that one group of political parties (ANO, SPD, and KSČM) receives greater support in municipalities with greater unemployment and lower shares of businessmen and people with university education, while it is vice versa for another group of parties (ODS, Piráti, and TOP 09). While his thesis has similarities to some foreign studies and a recent thesis focused on Slovakia, the specific focus of his thesis – demographic characteristics of voters in the Czech Republic - has not been studied with the methods he employs and this focus alone would make his thesis a worthwhile contribution.

Jakub has worked intensively and diligently on his thesis throughout most of the whole year and this has enabled him to write an undergraduate thesis that is outstanding in its contribution.

I recommend that Jakub takes the time and rewrites his thesis in the form of an academic paper and submits it to a suitable economics or political science journal (perhaps European Journal of Political Economy might be a high-ranked option). Pursuing the academic publication should be of benefit to Jakub, but even more so to the research community dealing with voter behaviour in the Czech Republic and in Europe in general.

### **Methods**

Overall, I am satisfied with the ambitious thesis of Jakub. There are points that could be addressed more rigorously or fully and I discuss some of the mostly minor points below, but given that Jakub's thesis is an undergraduate one, I do not subtract much from my evaluation on the basis of these points.

I am generally satisfied with the way Jakub methodologically approached answering his interesting research questions. Unfortunately, due to limited data availability (e.g. for distrains), Jakub could not use panel data methods, which did not enable him to show his command of the respective econometric methods, but also provides a further reason for caution in interpreting the results (we do not know what would happen if Jakub controlled for municipality-specific fixed effects). When interpreting the results, it is important to keep in mind that Jakub carries out the analysis at the level of municipality, not the level of individual (i.e. a citizen), which he also discusses in the literature section as an ecological fallacy. Similarly, his regression results are correlations and without additional analysis (such as one including natural experiments that I cannot think of) one cannot interpret the results causally. Jakub addresses these and other similar concerns quite well and openly throughout the thesis. Another frequent challenge Jakub addresses openly is the selection of the variables for his empirical model – although me might have included more versions, if only as a robustness check, he does a good job in this respect, in particular, if we consider the non-existence of a respected theoretical model that could be operationalised with the available data.

In terms of the presentation of the results, we discussed with Jakub that he could do a better job in a future version of the revised thesis by presenting the results graphically. Since his current presentation of results is good and standard, this is just a suggestion for a further improvement. One specific way to

# Report on Bachelor / Master Thesis

Institute of Economic Studies, Faculty of Social Sciences, Charles University in Prague

<b>Student:</b>	<b>Jakub Černý</b>
<b>Advisor:</b>	<b>doc. Petr Janský, Ph.D.</b>
<b>Title of the thesis:</b>	<b>Population Characteristics of Voters: Evidence from the Czech Parliamentary Election</b>

do so would be to indicate the estimated coefficient values across the various political parties' regressions and explanatory variables in a colourful matrix-like table, from which the systematic differences across the groups of parties would be more apparent than from the standard regression tables currently included. In case he decided to continue in his work and redo the manuscript into a form of research paper, similar graphical representations of his results might be included, in particular, if he was to present them at conferences. One inspiration for graphical presentation of the results might be the recent paper by Rodríguez-Pose (2018), who caught the attention of mine as well as of the international media with colourful maps (which are more eye-catching and more informative than the current district-level maps of Jakub with descriptive statistics only).

## Literature

Jakub discusses the most relevant papers from both academic and policy points of view and he thus demonstrates a good command of the relevant academic literature to which he contributes.

In his thesis Jakub discusses both international and Czech Republic-specific research papers and this is good and as expected. Sometimes, however, he could perhaps add more examples from international discourse (as in the case of ecological fallacy, where he discusses only a paper by Czech academic) and sometimes he could add more Czech literature, even if that would mean adding non-academic contributions (such as in the case of ecological inference by Kamil Gregor of KohoVolit.eu or analysis of voting behaviour by Daniel Prokop, a sociologist at our Faculty, previously at Median).

Jakub does a good job of discussing the relevance of his results to the existing literature at the end of his results section.

Jakub's work is obviously at the intersection of economics and political science. I am even less familiar with the relevant political science literature than with the economics one and so I am not in a position to judge his handling of this literature, but I am happy to note that he does engage with some relevant political science and sociological literature.

Unfortunately, some of the references are not complete in the reference sections (e.g. Rodríguez-Pose, Andrés. "The revenge of the places that don't matter (and what to do about it)." *Cambridge Journal of Regions, Economy and Society* 11.1 (2018): 189-209.)

## Manuscript form

The manuscript form of Jakub's thesis is of high quality, the layout is clear and Jakub presents the results in the standard way.

## Suggested questions for the committee

You collected all the data at the most detailed level available, the level of municipality, and you carry out the analysis at this level. In addition, please imagine now that you had access to a very detailed data set of every citizen in the Czech Republic on all the characteristics you have for municipalities (I am aware that this is only a hypothetical situation in the Czech Republic). Would you expect your current conclusions to change as a consequence of the individual-level analysis? What disadvantages can you identify in using municipality-level for this analysis in contrast with data at the individual level and are there any advantages?

# Report on Bachelor / Master Thesis

Institute of Economic Studies, Faculty of Social Sciences, Charles University in Prague

<b>Student:</b>	<b>Jakub Černý</b>
<b>Advisor:</b>	<b>doc. Petr Janský, Ph.D.</b>
<b>Title of the thesis:</b>	<b>Population Characteristics of Voters: Evidence from the Czech Parliamentary Election</b>

## Summary

In short, Jakub did an excellent job of applying empirical methods in a competent way to answer interesting research questions and I recommend a grade of A, a distinction and a nomination for awards.

## **SUMMARY OF POINTS AWARDED** (for details, see below):

<b>CATEGORY</b>	<b>POINTS</b>
<i>Contribution</i> (max. 30 points)	30
<i>Methods</i> (max. 30 points)	28
<i>Literature</i> (max. 20 points)	18
<i>Manuscript Form</i> (max. 20 points)	20
<b>TOTAL POINTS</b> (max. 100 points)	<b>96</b>
<b>GRADE</b> (A – B – C – D – E – F)	<b>A</b>

**NAME OF THE REFEREE:** Petr Janský, Ph.D.

**DATE OF EVALUATION:** 20 May 2019



**Referee Signature**

**EXPLANATION OF CATEGORIES AND SCALE:**

**CONTRIBUTION:** *The author presents original ideas on the topic demonstrating critical thinking and ability to draw conclusions based on the knowledge of relevant theory and empirics. There is a distinct value added of the thesis.*

<i>Strong</i>	<i>Average</i>	<i>Weak</i>
30	15	0

**METHODS:** *The tools used are relevant to the research question being investigated, and adequate to the author's level of studies. The thesis topic is comprehensively analyzed.*

<i>Strong</i>	<i>Average</i>	<i>Weak</i>
30	15	0

**LITERATURE REVIEW:** *The thesis demonstrates author's full understanding and command of recent literature. The author quotes relevant literature in a proper way.*

<i>Strong</i>	<i>Average</i>	<i>Weak</i>
20	10	0

**MANUSCRIPT FORM:** *The thesis is well structured. The student uses appropriate language and style, including academic format for graphs and tables. The text effectively refers to graphs and tables and disposes with a complete bibliography.*

<i>Strong</i>	<i>Average</i>	<i>Weak</i>
20	10	0

**Overall grading:**

TOTAL	GRADE
91 – 100	A
81 - 90	B
71 - 80	C
61 – 70	D
51 – 60	E
0 – 50	F