Electronic Voting as an Additional Method of Participating in Elections. Opinions of Poles

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Abstract. The paper discusses Poles' opinions on the adoption of an alternative method of voting i.e. electronic voting (in the context of political preferences). The author focused on analyzing her research results on the adoption of e-voting systems in Poland emphasizing responses to the research question regarding Poles' approval for having Internet-voting available in Polish elections and, whether, given the opportunity, the respondents would make use of this voting mode. In addition to own research findings, reference was made to the results of public opinion polls carried out by the Center for Public Opinion Research and the Ombudsman's Office.

Keywords: Electronic voting · E-voting · Internet voting · Opinions of poles

1 Introduction

Recent years saw electronic voting become the alternative voting method most debated in many countries around the globe. In the wake of the successful adoption and use of this method in countries ranging from Estonia to Switzerland to Norway, political debate ensued not only among politicians and other public officials but also among ordinary citizens eager to gain access to advanced and convenient ways of voting, as offered in addition to the traditional. Poland too has for last years debated e-voting on the occasion of nearly every domestic election[1]. As a consequence, the Polish public has been, as it were, forming opinions on various alternative voting methods which are either in place in Polish political practice or whose adoption is being considered.

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[1] A model enabling Poles to cast their votes in presidential, parliamentary, local and European Parliament elections over the Internet and by correspondence has been prepared by e.g. Palikot's Movement. *Palikot's Movement* (today *Your Move*) is a liberal, anti-clerical, left-wing, and pro-European political party, founded in 2010 by Janusz Palikot – former politician of Civic Platform party. In 2013 *Palikot's Movement* changed its name into *Your Move*.

This paper discusses the opinions of Poles on the adoption of one alternative method of voting in elections and referendums, i.e. electronic voting (or e-voting). The author's primary objective has been to analyze the outcomes of her own research (a quantitative survey of a representative sample of the population)[2]. The research subject of this paper are the opinions of Poles on the implementation of one of the alternative methods of voting in elections - an electronically assisted voting. The main aim of the author is the analysis of the attitudes of Poles towards the idea of introduction of i-voting in Poland. Basing on results of own researches the author will analyze respondents' declarations regarding the use of voting via Internet (if such possibility). The survey's aim was to correlate the given answers with declarations regarding political preferences of the respondents. For the purpose of this survey five political parties have been taken into consideration – each of them has wan a mandate to the European Parliament in the 2014 elections. The own research findings have been backed up by the outcomes of the public opinion polls carried out by the Center for Public Opinion Research and the Ombudsman's Office. Before analyzing the own survey results, some definitional and legal remarks have been presented, as well as attitudes of Polish political parties and politicians toward electronic voting.

2   Electronic Voting – Definitional Remarks

Voting by electronic means is a broad category. ITC technologies are currently employed to:

– collect and process voting data and communicate election results based on input from electoral commissions in a traditional ballot-paper-based vote,
– to receive and tally votes,
– to manage remote online voting [1, 2].

Generally speaking, electronic voting can therefore be defined as the use of ITC tools to gather and count votes as well as to cast votes remotely over the Internet. Simply put, "wherever the electronic medium is the Internet, reference is made to Internet-voting whereas the mode used in voting by mobile telephone is termed mobile voting" [3].

According to the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe, electronic voting falls within the two main categories of remote and kiosk voting. In remote electronic voting, use is made of electronic media which allow votes to be cast from any location. In kiosk voting, a voter needs to show up at a polling station or another site indicated by an electoral authority for the purpose of registration. The voter then casts his or her vote electronically, commonly by means of a touch screen. The votes are counted with the so-called DRE machines (Direct Recording Electronic machines) and then forwarded to a central vote register [4]. Specialized literature distinguishes between two types of voting by electronic means: electronic voting (e-voting) and

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[2] The survey, which relied on a questionnaire, was held in November and December 2014. It involved 930 respondents who made up a representative random sample of adult residents of Poland (the survey was a part of a research "Political Preferences").

internet voting (i-voting). E-voting is the broader term which includes internet voting. As mentioned earlier, electronic voting also refers to the use of such voting technologies as digital television, the telephone and the Internet.

Internet voting comprises the two categories of Internet voting at a polling place and remote Internet voting. In the case of the former, voters cast their votes via the Internet in a specially-designed voting kiosk. Remote Internet voting, in its turn, involves voters casting a vote at either "a voting kiosk" (located outside of a polling station) or a home computer linked to the Internet. The data is then transmitted over the Internet to a central database from a terminal of either type.

Depending on whether a given democratic system is representative or direct, voters engage in either electronic voting (e-voting) or electronic referendums (e-referendums) [5]. In both cases, depending on the medium used in the voting, additional subcategories, i.e. i-voting and i-referendums, can be distinguished (both relying on the use of the Internet).

3   Electronic Voting in the Polish Constitution

The Polish Constitution neither expressly allows nor expressly prohibits providing the option of electronic voting in the national legal system. One can therefore conclude that the Constitution is silent on e-voting, particularly in its elaboration of the rules applicable to general elections.

Therefore, as has rightfully been remarked by Szymanek, the adoption or rejection of e-voting systems in Poland has been left at the discretion of the ordinary legislator whose measures must obviously "comply with any and all electoral standards enshrined in the Constitution" [6].

At this junction, note should be taken of the three electoral rules of universal, direct and secret suffrage, which have been debated in connection with the possible adoption of e-voting.

On the positive side of the issue, universal suffrage requires the legislator to adopt solutions which facilitate and thereby encourage the exercise of voting rights (making elections all the more universal). "As a consequence, (…) viewed as an obligation to create solutions which facilitate the exercise of voting rights, the constitutional rule not only refrains from constraining but in fact encourages the legislator to employ e-voting as a way to incentivize voters" [6].

Applied in connection with e-voting, the direct suffrage principle raises the most serious concerns as it requires that political office holders be elected directly, i.e. not only by having registered voters vote in a single round [7] but also personally (i.e. by showing up at a polling station in person to cast their vote) [8]. Notably, the Electoral Code of 2011 added two options which appear to contradict these principles. These allow proxy and correspondence voting under a changed interpretation of direct suffrage redefined as no longer having to involve voting in person and only retaining the criteria of single-round voting and voter registration [6]. Under the amended rules, electronic voting no longer infringes upon the constitutional principle of direct suffrage as such suffrage no longer requires that voters vote personally, i.e. show up in person at a polling station.

The third principle debated in connection with e-voting is that of secret suffrage. According to Szymanek, despite allowing proxy and correspondence voting (which raise many security concerns), the Electoral Code continues to uphold the principle of secret suffrage. Although electronic voting is bound to raise further concerns of this kind, the biggest challenge will be to establish adequate security safeguards in e-voting systems [6].

Note that the Polish electoral legislation is undergoing an evolution aimed partly at adopting the aforesaid alternative voting methods. The Electoral Code of January 2011 features a host of diverse solutions aimed at facilitating voting in general elections. Designed primarily for disabled and elderly voters, the solutions allow them to use alternative procedures and vote off the premises of polling stations. Furthermore, the Electoral Code provides for mechanisms to keep disabled voters informed about key election issues. In July 2014, an amendment to the Code extended the scope of admissibility for correspondence voting [9]. The amended electoral law allows all citizens to vote by correspondence. The postal service can be used to vote in parliamentary, presidential and European Parliament elections. Correspondence voting is not available to all voters in local elections as it has been reserved for people suffering from serious or moderate disabilities.

Without a doubt, the modifications adopted in the Polish electoral law represent a new quality in upholding the principle of universal suffrage and preventing voter exclusion [10]. Equally significant is the fact that conceptual and legislative work to develop new voting procedures (among them for Internet voting) is now under way (albeit limited in scope). It is clearly essential that Poland consider launching broad-based research into electronic voting procedures which appear to be inevitable in the future. Undoubtedly, the states which have already adopted "electronic models" (such as Switzerland and Estonia) need to be watched closely as a source of valuable insights. The overall public opinion will ultimately reflect the willingness with which voters are prepared to embrace these new voting modes.

4 The Politicians and Political Parties' Stance on E-Voting

In Poland, there is no system that would enable voting in national elections via the Internet. However the topic of implementation of e-voting occurs systematically before every national elections in Poland.

The attitude of politicians and political parties to electronic voting in Poland seemed always to be very pragmatic. Their attitudes of this kind of voting depended primarily on the potential future election benefits in terms of its implementation. Arkadiusz Żukowski points out that "the first serious debate on Internet voting took place only in terms of parliamentary elections in 2005, when voter turnout was one of the lowest [11]" [12]. Donald Tusk – leader of the Civic Platform declared that in next parliamentary elections the electorate would have possibility to vote via the electronic means. Voting on the Internet was also promised by Tusk just after the early parliamentary elections in Poland in 2007.

Jarosław Kaczynski – leader of the Law and Justice Party emphasized that he was against implementation of e-voting in Poland. "He believed that electronic voting trivialized such important act of citizenship as the vote. Moreover, he seemed to be well aware of the fact that among the young electorate and Internet users his party had little electoral support" [12].

One of the biggest supporter of implementation of e-voting in Poland is Wincenty Elsner – former MP of Palikot Movement. He was chairman of Parlamantary Group – Poland 2.0 and he prepared a project of amendment to the Electoral Code. Elsner wanted to introduce Internet voting with the use of the ePUAP (electronic Platform of Public Administration Services). The project was criticized by experts and professionals during a conference in Polish Sejm, and finally nothing was done about it.

One of the most "popular" attempt of implementation of electronic voting in Poland has been conducted in 2010 before the presidential election. Due to the death of President Lech Kaczyński in a plane crash in April, the presidential election that was initially planned to be held in Autumn, had to be brought forward.

It is worth mentioning that after accepting Bronislaw Komorowski and Radoslaw Sikorski as candidates for a candidate for a president's office, the national authority of the Civic Platform decided that the person who would be the party's official candidate for the office is to be elected by the members of the party in primary elections. "This was the first time in Poland that a candidate was chosen in this way. Moreover the party management decided to allow two voting methods: postal and internet voting" [13].

Any of the members of PO could vote either for Bronislaw Komorowski or Radosław Sikorski. There were two methods of voting available - via the Internet or by sending a special form via regular post. Ballot papers were distributed in the all over Poland via the Civic Platform's monthly magazine "POgłos", which is sent to all members of the party. The ballot paper were printed on one of the pages. The election issue of "POgłos" included also two envelopes. One of them contained unique username and password for signing in to a special server. Once the data was entered, the system opened the voting page, where a politician could choose an appropriate candidate. Username and password gave access to the system only once. There was no chance to vote again using the same user's data. Any member of the PO who was registered in the central register of the party's members had the right to vote. Members of the PO, who decided on the traditional method of voting, had to cut the ballot paper from the "POgłos" magazine, insert it into the enclosed envelope and send by post. To prevent double voting, (on-line and traditional) members were advised to attach the envelope with one-time codes to the envelope with the ballot paper. Those, who opened the envelope with the codes, were unable to send a valid vote by post. Hanna Gronkiewicz-Waltz chaired the electoral commission, and on 26 March 2010 she announced that 21246 out of 44759 members of the party had voted in the primary elections. Turnout in presidential primary election in the PO was 47.47%. PO voters definitely preferred the Internet. Over 17 thousand votes were cast in this way. 4 thousand of the party's members sent their votes by post [14]. Members of the Civic Platform have pointed to Bronislaw Komorowski as the party's official candidate for presidential elections in Poland. The Speaker of the Sejm received 68.5% of the votes. 31.5% of the members supported his opponent, Radosław Sikorski [15].

Since then no other serious discussion on e-voting has taken place in Poland. One should remember that in December 2014 huge technical problems occurred by local elections, when the "electronic [counting-M.MK] voting system suffered major technical glitches during local elections, delaying results, and leading to widely unexpected outcomes. (…) Polish courts were flooded with more than a thousand legal challenges contesting election results" [16].

In spite of the fact that the politicians do not discuss implementation of e-voting in Poland, the electorate supports this idea and expects that next to possible voting methods – voting via the Internet will be available in the future. The next part of the paper will give some proofs for it.

5 Public Perception of E-Voting in Poland

Voters in Poland are fairly open to the idea of adopting procedures other than personal voting in polling stations. They may see such modes as ways to vote more conveniently, perhaps in the comfort of their homes. As this paper focuses on the online variety of electronic voting, the findings below will be based on the surveys carried out in 2014 by the Center for Public Opinion Research and the Ombudsman's Office (compared with similar studies by the Center for Public Opinion Research conducted in July 2011). Such a selection of surveys is well suited to help identify trends in public opinion in Poland and compare multiple indicators. Each question put to the respondents in the author's own survey was analyzed threefold by accounting for the constituents of each party participating in the European Parliamentary elections of 2014 as well as the political views declared by the respondents.

5.1 Poles' Views on the Use of E-Voting in State Elections

In view of rapid advances in IT, widespread Internet access and technological progress in nearly every area of human life (e-commerce, e-administration, e-society, e-banking, e-books, etc.), one may presume that voters will want to see "upgrades" also in democratic procedures to make them more accessible and convenient.

A study on the percentage of the voters who approve having Poland adopt Internet voting found that a total of 59.14% of the respondents either "strongly" or "mildly" favor the solution and that 22.90% oppose the option.

Considering who supported each political party (as seen in the EP election), it is evident that the largest share of e-voting supporters in Poland (a total of 65.6%) voted for the Civic Platform party in May 2014 by declaring they were either "strongly" or "mildly" in favor.

Civic Platform voters were followed closely by the supporters of the New Right of Janusz Korwin-Mikke (a total of 64.4%). Internet-based voting was approved by nearly 60% of those voting for the Democratic Left Alliance – the Labor Union. The groups comprising the smallest proportion of electronic voting supporters (and whose members responded with "strong" or "mild" disapproval) could be found among the backers

of Law and Justice and the Polish People's Party (49.5% and 45.6% respectively). Supporters of these two parties were also the most likely to oppose this voting mode (33.4% of the Law and Justice supporters and 30.4% of the supporters of the Polish People's Party). The backers of the Democratic Left Alliance – the Labor Union and the New Right of Janusz Korwin-Mikke included respectively 22.3% and 27.2% e-voting opponents. The smallest proportion of such opponents (merely 16%) could be found among the supporters of the Civic Platform (Table 1).

Table 1. Percent distribution of responses to the question: "Do you want the option of electronic voting via the Internet to be available in Polish elections?" by electorate group participating in European Parliament election in 2014

	Strongly opposed	Mildly opposed	Undecided	Mildly in favor	Strongly in favor
New Right of Janusz Korwin Mikke	13.6%	13.6%	8.5%	16.9%	47.5%
Civic Platform	7.3%	8.7%	18.4%	31.1%	34.5%
Polish People's Party	15.2%	15.2%	23.9%	30.4%	15.2%
Law and Justoce	16.3%	17.5%	16.9%	29.4%	20.0%
Democratic Left Alliance-Labor Union	9.3%	13.0%	18.5%	27.8%	31.5%
Other	5.1%	16.9%	8.5%	25.4%	44.1%
Non-voters	7.1%	13.8%	21.6%	19.4%	38.2%
Cannor remember	11.1%	7.9%	15.9%	33.3%	31.7%

Source: own conclusions based on survey findings.

Very interesting results to the question came from the supporters of parties unlisted in the Table, the non-voters and those who could not remember how they voted in the EP election. The vast majority of the above, i.e. 69.5% of other party supporters, 57.6% of the non-voters and 65% of those who could not recall how they had voted, approved of i-voting. An aggregation of all favorable responses suggests that the majority of the participants in the EP election supported the adoption of electronic voting in Poland, which shows that Poles want to see the electoral law modified.

With respect to the ideological inclinations of the surveyed (left/center/right), it is worth noting four issues that distinguish the respondents and that appear to be of significance. An arrangement similar to that performed in the previous part of the findings analysis (of combining all answers that were strongly or mildly in favor as well as all those that were strongly or mildly opposed) revealed the following regularities:

– firstly, the majority of the respondents across all groups would like to see the option of Internet voting made available in Polish elections – this amounts to 69.6% of the centrist voters, 61.8% of the left-wing supporters, 56% of the right-wing supporters as well as 54.5% of those unable to define their political views;

– secondly, the most diverse opinions were noted among the respondents who declared themselves to be centrist as well as those defining themselves as rightist. While 69.6% of the former spoke in favor of e-voting, 56% of the rightist voters shared their opinion. The difference between the two amounted to 13.6 percentage points. Furthermore, 17.1% of centrist voters expressed a reluctance to having e-voting available in Poland. This view was shared by 27.5% of rightist voters (the difference on the issue between the center and right of the political spectrum amounted to 10.4 percentage points) (Table 2):

Table 2. Percent distribution of responses to the question "Do you want the option of electronic voting via the Internet to be available in Polish elections?" relative to declared political views

	Strongly opposed	Mildly opposed	Undecided	Mildly in favor	Strongly in favor
Left	8.7%	14.8%	14.8%	24.6%	37.2%
Center	6.7%	10.4%	13.4%	28.7%	40.9%
Right	13.3%	14.2%	16.5%	26.8%	29.2%
Do not know/cannot say	7.8%	12.3%	25.4%	23.8%	30.7%

Source: own surveys.

– thirdly, the biggest discrepancy in responses in support of e-voting (15.1 percentage points) was recorded between centrist voters (69.6%) and those unable to define their political views (54.5%):
– fourthly, the smallest divergence in the proportions of responses in favor of e-voting (1.5 percentage points) was found between the rightists (56%) and the undecideds. Note that the two groups differed in the distribution of negative responses, which added up to 27.5% and 20.1% respectively (Fig. 1 and Table 2).

In analysis of the average findings for the individual responses suggests that ideological views exceed party preferences as a distinguishing factor for support for i-voting in Poland, although differences between the specific values are minor and fit within the statistical error margin, which renders the finding inconclusive. The only conclusion that can be derived from the data in the Table is that Poles would appreciate an option of using an extra voting mode and that they approve of the adoption of e-voting.

The above has been confirmed by the public opinion polls held in 2011 and 2014 which found that Poles are generally in favor of voting untraditionally outside of polling stations. The most common view is that in support of Internet voting. "The adoption of this procedure in Polish electoral law would be welcome by 76% of the surveyed, 44% of whom believe it should be available to all voters, whereas 32% would rather limit its use to people unable to get to polling stations. 18% of the respondents were staunchly against the procedure. The findings closely reflected those
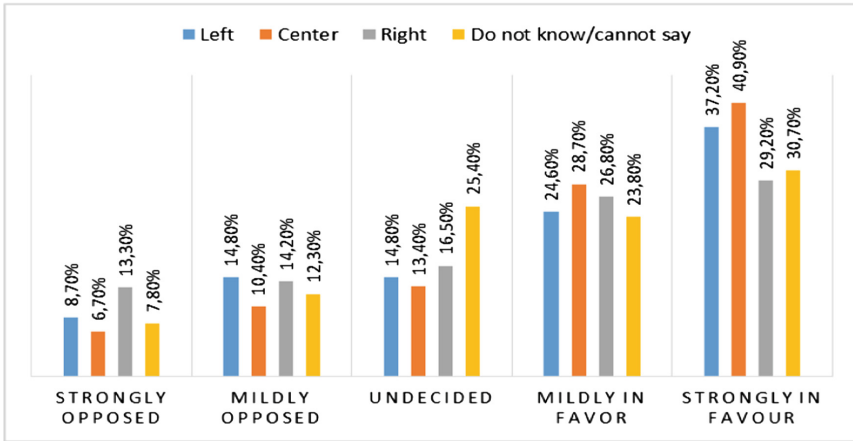
Fig. 1. Percent distribution of responses to the question "Do you want the option of electronic voting via the Internet to be available in Polish elections?" relative to declared political views (Source: own surveys).

Table 3. Average percent distribution of responses to the question "Do you want the option of electronic voting via the Internet to be available in Polish elections?" by the voter groups taking part in the EP elections in 2014 and the regional assembly election in 2014, relative to declared political views.

	Strongly or mildly opposed	Undecided	Strongly or mildly in favor
Electorates in EP election	23.95%	16.53%	59.55%
Political views	22.05%	17.53%	60.48%

Source: own surveys.

of the 2011 study with an only slight shift towards restricting the use of the procedure to persons unable to reach polling stations" [17].

Note that the public opinion poll of 2014 (conducted by the Center for Public Opinion Research and the Ombudsman's Office) found that the strongest support for i-voting could be found in the youngest age groups of 18 to 24 and 25 to 34: "84% of the members of both age groups spoke in favor of such voting. The majority of them (55%) would like the procedure to be available to all voters" [11]. The trend is common in most of the countries which either have adopted or are considering the adoption of the tool. This is due to the fact young people are significantly more likely than the old to use the Internet and that they see it as more convenient than traditional methods (voting without leaving one's home, possible at any location around the world, etc.) (Fig. 2).
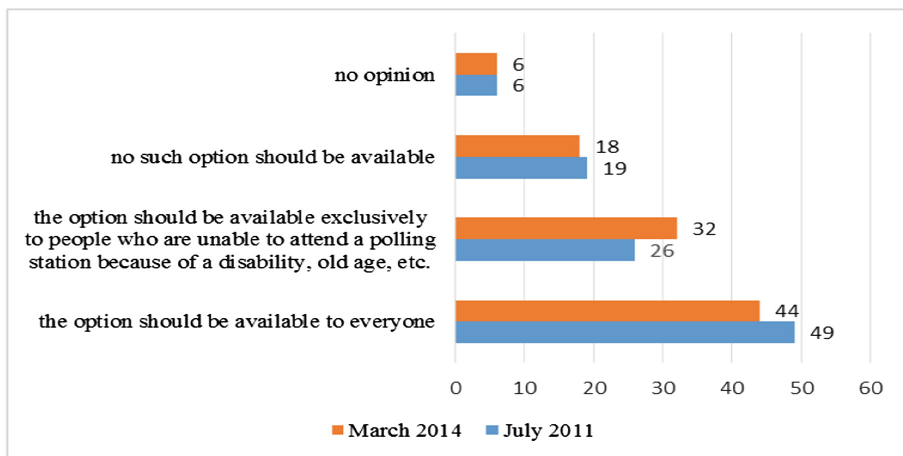
Fig. 2. Should the option of electronic voting (online) be made available? (% of responses) (Source: own study based on: Ułatwienia w głosowaniu. Wiedza, opinie i oczekiwania [Voting facilitation. The knowledge, views and expectations]. Communication 55/2014 of the Center for Public Opinion Research. Warsaw 2014, p. 3)

5.2   Poles' Declarations Regarding the Use of Internet-Voting in Elections

As a consequence of the examination of Poles' views on the adoption of i-voting in elections, a probe has been conducted into their self-declared willingness to make use of the option to vote electronically in an election, were it made available.

A study of the percent distribution of responses to the question of whether, given the opportunity, the respondents (groups voting in the EP election) would make use of the option to vote online, shows that the majority (over 50%) of the members of such groups (other than the supporters of the Polish People's Party) were either strongly or mildly in favor. The largest percent share of the "yes" votes (74.6%) came from persons who voted for parties other than those listed in the study. Ca. 5 percentage points fewer affirmative answers came from the supporters of the New Right of Janusz Korwin-Mikke and the Civic Platform (69.40% each). 50.6% of Law and Justice supporters are prepared to vote online. Meanwhile, only 45.6% of the supporters of the Polish People's Party were willing to take advantage of e-voting (Table 4).

The percent distribution of the "strongly opposed" and "mildly opposed" responses shows that the respondents were significantly more reluctant to engage in e-voting than they were to its mere introduction. The distributors among the individual groups of EP voters ranged from 15.30% (voters for parties unlisted in the table) to 38.2% (supporters of Law and Justice, who included the greatest number of those "strongly opposed"). Of the other parties' supporters, the fewest "against" responses came from those of Janusz Korwin-Mikke's party (17%) and Civic Platform. The voters for the Democratic Left Alliance – the Labor Union, turned out to be fairly disapproving, with nearly 30% declaring they were unwilling to vote via the Internet in an election. An interesting pattern emerged among the supporters of the Polish People's Party who

Table 4. Number and percent distribution of responses to the question "Given the option, would you vote over the Internet in elections?" among electorate groups participating in European Parliament election in 2014

	Strongly opposed	Mildly opposed	Undecided	Mildly in favor	Strongly in favor
New Right of Janusz Korwin Mikke	11.9%	5.1%	13.6%	16.9%	52.5%
Civic Platform	8.3%	11.7%	10.7%	29.1%	40.3%
Polish People's Party	15.2%	19.6%	19.6%	23.9%	21.7%
Law and Justoce	21.3%	16.9%	11.3%	25.0%	25.6%
Democratic Left Alliance-Labor Union	11.1%	18.5%	14.8%	27.8%	27.8%
Other	6.8%	8.5%	10.2%	25.4%	49.2%
Non-voters	12.7%	13.8%	13.1%	20.1%	40.3%
Cannor remember	14.3%	7.9%	14.3%	23.8%	39.7%

Source: own surveys.

comprised the greatest number of "undecideds" (19.6%) alongside 34.8% of "strongly" and "mildly" opposed members (the second largest number of opposed respondents).

The above shows that the supporters of Law and Justice and the Polish People's Party, followed immediately by those of the Democratic Left Alliance, display the most "traditional" approach to elections and are the most reluctant to declare willingness to engage in e-voting in an election.

A confrontation of the above responses with those compared with political views sheds light on a range of issues that appear to be of significance and that help differentiate among the individual respondent groups:

– firstly, across all of the groups, the majority declare willingness to vote electronically in Polish elections given the option: these amounted to 71.9% of the centrist, 61.8% of the leftist, 59.3% of the rightist voters as well as 56.9% of those unable to specify their political affiliations. The data shows an overall approval of the additional voting mode among the surveyed;
– secondly, the smallest proportion (18.9%) of persons unwilling to vote electronically was found among the self-declared centrist voters (the ratio ranged from 25% to 29.8% in the other groups) (Table 5);

Table 5. Percent distribution of responses to the question "Given the option, would you vote over the Internet?" relative to declared political views

	Strongly opposed	Mildly opposed	Undecided	Mildly in favor	Strongly in favor
Left	12.6%	14.2%	11.5%	18.6%	43.2%
Center	7.9%	11.0%	9.1%	27.4%	44.5%
Right	16.2%	13.6%	10.9%	26.3%	33.0%
Do not know/cannot say	11.9%	13.1%	18.0%	22.5%	34.4%

Source: own surveys.

– thirdly, the biggest discrepancies in opinions have been noted between centrist voters and those declaring themselves as right wing. While 71.9% of the former indicated willingness to take advantage of e-voting, only 59.3% of the right-wing voters shared this view. The two groups ended up being 12.6 percentage points apart. On the other hand, 18.9% of the centrist voters compared to 29.8% of the right-wing electorate (a difference of 10.9 percentage points) would rather not vote electronically (Fig. 3);
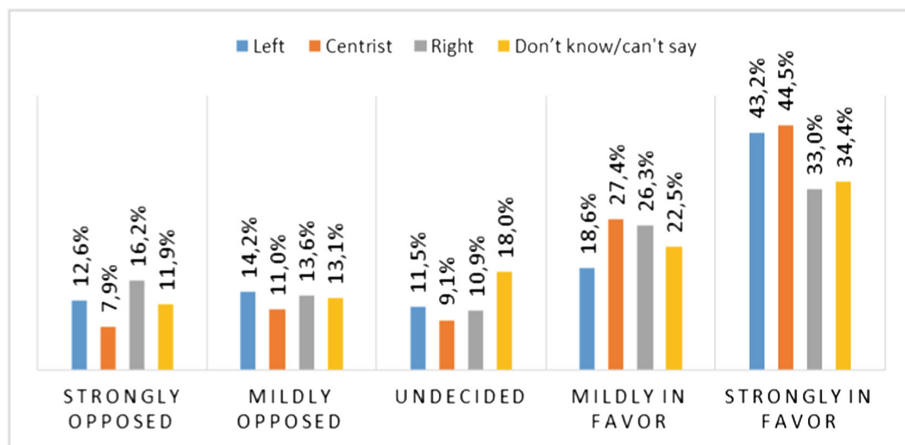

Fig. 3. Percent distribution of responses to the question "Given the option, would you vote over the Internet?" relative to declared political views

– fourthly, the biggest divergence among the persons who declared themselves as willing to vote over the Internet (15 percentage points) arose between centrist voters (71.9%) and those unable to define their political affiliations (56.9%);
– fifthly, the smallest discrepancy (of 2.4 percentage points) in the percent share of persons declared to be willing to vote electronically arose between rightist voters and those unable to define their political affiliations (Table 6).

Table 6. Average percent share of responses to the question "Given the option, would you vote over the Internet in elections?" among the electorate groups taking part in the EP election in 2014 and the regional assembly election in 2014, relative to declared political views

	Strongly or mildly opposed	Undecided	Strongly or mildly in favor
Electorates in EP election	25.45%	13.45%	61.14%
Political views	25.13%	12.38%	62.48%

Source: own surveys

A study of the average findings shows that the discrepancies between the individual values are minor (at ca. 1 percentage point) and that the opinions of persons representing similar party affiliations and political views are comparable. Persons declaring their willingness to use e-voting account for approximately 61% to 62% of the surveyed. The opponents of such instruments make up ca. 24–25% of the respondents. Every 12th or every 13th respondent had no opinion on the matter. The data appears to suggest that, given the opportunity, the majority of the surveyed would vote online. This should inspire a broader debate on adopting an electronic voting system in Poland (Fig. 4).
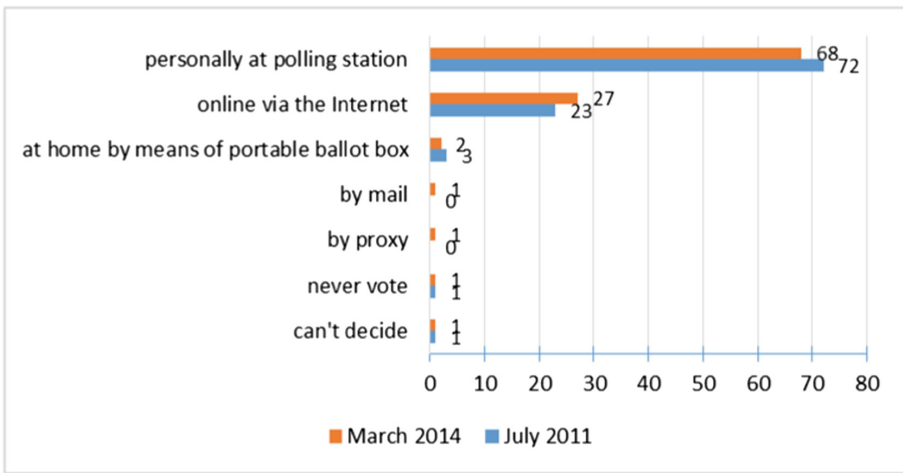

Fig. 4. Given the choice of voting method, I would prefer (% of responses). (Source: own study based on: Ułatwienia w glosowaniu. Wiedza, opinie i oczekiwania (Voting facilitation. The knowledge, views and expectations), Communication 55/2014 of the Center for Public Opinion Research, Warsaw 2014, p. 4)

Despite such unambiguous responses, one is well advised to refer to the findings of the above-mentioned surveys by the Center for Public Opinion Research and the Ombudsman's Office, which show that despite the overall approval of e-voting among Poles, the majority of those entitled to vote are in fact "traditionalists."

The outcomes of the public opinion polls held in March 2014 show that close to two thirds of the surveyed (68%) prefer voting in a polling station over any other available voting mode. Polling station voting slipped in popularity from the 2011 level (72% to 68%). "Meanwhile, a rise was seen in alternative voting procedures, especially in electronic voting, which was named as the preferred voting mode by 27% of the surveyed (up from 23% in 2011). The other procedures (such as correspondence and proxy voting) were only chosen by a small number of respondents" [11].

The aforesaid findings additionally revealed changes in the views of the youngest voters, aged 18 to 24, who were even less likely than in 2011 (49%, down from 60% in

2011) to prefer the traditional polling station voting mode involving a ballot box. As polling stations lost popularity, more respondents supported e-voting (46% in this age bracket, compared to 37–40% in 2011). Note that "the older the voters, the less likely they were to approve of this voting mode with merely 2% of the voters aged above 65 speaking out in its favor" and that "as the voters born in successive years come of age, support for i-voting is bound to rise at the expense of the popularity of polling station voting" [11].

6   Conclusions

A steady increase in the popularity of e-voting has been observed in recent years across many countries of Europe and the rest of the world, including Estonia, Switzerland, the United States and Australia. The adoption of e-voting models in domestic elections and referendums is being widely debated not only among members of parliaments and national government ministers but also the voting population at large. Notably, the new voting technologies provide one benefit of which the voters are aware, that is they eliminate the hurdle of distance between the people entitled to vote and polling stations. Other advantages of e-voting, which are organizational and procedural in nature (e.g. vote tallying), work to the benefit of both administrators and politicians [18].

One must nevertheless bear in mind the drawbacks of e-voting associated in particular with the security of casting and counting votes in elections and referendums. Despite persistent technical issues having to do with election security, etc., the wide range of benefits to be enjoyed by various segments of society such as voters, politicians and administrators as well as the positive experience of many countries, may provide a strong incentive for the adoption of e-voting not only in Europe, including Poland, but also in other parts of the world.

Although much time will certainly be needed before an e-voting model can be put in place, one should not overlook the popular approval for electronic voting that is evidenced by the research carried out in this project. While Poland's electoral law is hardly posed for a revolution, steady change can certainly be noticed. Electronic voting may well one day become a part of this change process. The author believes that this paper is a basic start on analysis on e-voting implementation possibilities in Poland, and it will be incentive for further and more deeper analysis of Polish electorate on this topic.

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