
Manifesto Project Main Dataset

Manifesto Collection Guidelines

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The handbook specifies guidelines for collecting manifestos. This includes a definition of what constitutes a manifesto, which parties are included in the collection, the internal storing, documentation and naming procedures as well as acquisition rules and substitutes.

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1 What is a manifesto

A manifesto is a document issued by a party. It is written for the purpose of informing voters (and uniting the party members) about the party's goals during the next legislative period. It is often called something like "Electoral platform", "Election programme" or "Our goals/plans for year1-year2". Ideally it is one consistent file (pdf or doc(x)). Sometimes this consistent file is only available as one or more webpages on the party's homepage (html).

2 Which Parties are included

Our general rule for collection is that we collect all manifestos from all parties that look promising to enter parliament (or presidential office). We code parties winning one seat in Western Europe and the oversea OECD countries, all parties winning two seats in Eastern Europe and all presidential candidates winning at least 5% of the popular vote in the first round in Latin America. However, there are exceptions to this rule. We are, for example, collecting manifestos of parties that used to be important in the political competition (especially members of the ruling coalition), but which, due to a dramatic loss in votes between two elections, would not qualify for our selection rule anymore. In such cases we usually make an exception and include these parties at least for the first election in which they do not enter parliament. We kindly ask coders to point us to such cases and also bring to our attention additional cases which might be worth considering for coding. In the case of a coalition we prefer to collect as many manifestos as available (even if we do not code all these documents). This means we like to collect individual manifestos from each member of the coalition as well as a coalition manifesto. If either of these documents is not available, we collect all documents that do exist. If we can neither find a coalition manifesto nor manifestos from all members of the coalition, we ask coders to search for a manifesto from the one or two biggest coalition members. Until April 2017 we asked coders to collect manifestos for us, from then onwards we collect the documents ourselves. However, if we are unable to collect manifestos or unsure whether we collected the right ones, we consult with our coders.

3 Manifesto Information Template

In order to document our collection, we fill in a *Manifesto Information Template* for each election. In this Template we summarize information about the collected manifestos. In case a manifesto is obtained from the internet, we provide the source link/URL in this file.

4 Naming Files

Since the Manifesto Project collects over 300 manifestos a year, we have to be very specific with file names. Therefore, upon collection, we assign each manifesto with a file name in the following format:

(P)PPPPP_YYYY.(docx|pdf|...)

Where “(P)PPPPP” is the party code (if available) and “YYYY” is the election year. If the party code is not available, we substitute the party acronym for the party code. In cases where a substitute was collected, we add some information to the file name, e.g. PPPPP_YYYY_interview or PPPPPP_YYYY_speech of party leader.

5 Acquisition Rules

For different purposes of our project, different formats of the document are valuable. Therefore, we collect as many different formats as possible. First, we save the original digital documents, which might be formatted as pdf, doc, docx, rtf, txt, or html. These are increasingly available on the internet on the party's homepage or by direct request to the party itself. In case multiple formats are available, we save all. In case the party presents its full manifesto on its webpages, we save the whole webpage(s).¹ It is important to note that sometimes the websites including the manifesto consist of more than one page. We save all of them and name them in the original order. For more information on collecting manifestos from webpages, please refer to the Website Collection Guidelines in our Handbook Series. If no digital documents are available we ask coders for the printed documents. If only a hard copy is available, the coder should send us an original or scan it in the best possible quality, thereby avoiding reducing the file size of the scanned files, as this often has harmful effects on the quality of the scans or the files. When a manifesto is published in multiple languages, we collect all versions.

6 Substitutes - as a last resort

If the party has not issued an ideal type manifesto as described above, we ask coders to look for substitutes that could be coded instead of a manifesto. Substitutes are always a very delicate issue; we only use them as a last resort and **they should only be collected if there really was no manifesto** issued by the party at the specific election. We like coders to discuss all queries they have about such substitutes with us in each specific case. What kind of document works best as a substitute always depends on many issues, e.g. country or party specific facts and traditions. In order to be as close as possible to ideal manifestos, substitutes should best be created and solely determined by the party itself. In particular, the party itself should choose the topics and the space they gave to each of topic.

Here is a list of possible substitutes that can be a guideline when searching for the right document:

- Collections of policy field documents. These are often found on parties' websites. In these cases, parties do not publish one complete manifesto but different documents (these can be single pdfs or different html pages on the website), each expressing the party's view in one specific policy area. A collection of all these different policy documents (if published before an election) is a good substitute, as the party itself chooses for which policy issues it published such documents and how long they are.
- General programmes. Especially if a party was only founded shortly before an election, it sometimes just publishes a general programme in which it lays down its general policy goals and not its specific goals for the next legislature. In case an election and the publication of such a general programme fall close together, the document is most likely a good substitute for the policy positions of the party.
- Speeches by party leaders. Depending on the specific context in a country or party, a party leader's speech can be a clear and binding document for the party's positions. Generally, this should not

¹Firefox: Save Page As... > Web Page, complete
Safari: Save Page As... > Webarchive
Internet Explorer: Save Page As... > Web Page, complete

be a random leader's speech, but only very prominently featured speeches, like campaign opening or closing speeches. In Australia and New Zealand they are, for example, even more common than manifestos. Another possible scenario is where a party leader has such a dominating position within the party (e.g. as is the case for Viktor Orbán within the Hungarian Fidesz 2014), that his/her speech expresses the whole party's position. In the best case scenario, these speeches are published on the party's website if this is not the case, it may sometimes be necessary to transcribe the speech from a TV broadcast.

- Shorter election leaflets. These leaflets are shorter than a normal manifesto, but still summarize the main goals of the party.

Only if such documents are also not available should documents be considered where the party cannot set the agenda completely independently. In these cases coders should look for the following documents as substitutes:

- Interviews with the party leader,
- Party position summaries in a newspaper,
- Opening and/or closing broadcasts on national TV.