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## Group targeting and citizens' responses to electoral pledges and their realization

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### *Abstract:*

Party competition for office at elections is meant to broaden the focus of representation and to balance the logic of power prevailing in policy-making. What are the incentives for group representation generated by electoral competition? Are representatives incited to address groups largely perceived as "deserving", to respond to their constituent's deservingness perceptions or to target as many groups as possible according to a particularistic logic? GROUPTA sheds new light on this question based on a survey implemented in France and Germany during their respective recent national campaigns (in 2022 and 2021). We analyze, on the one hand, a paired-conjoint experiment on how citizens weigh targeted policy proposals when choosing between two programmes and, on the other, a survey experiment on their responses to the fulfillment or breakage of a pledge by the incumbent. Our findings reveal that whether an electoral programme targets specific groups in a beneficial or detrimental way shapes citizens' choice mainly depending on their ideology (rather than a pocketbook or deservingness logic), generating incentives for party competition over policy. By contrast, there are no particular electoral incentives to deliver on targeted pledges: no matter whether a pledge was or not targeted at specific groups, voters punish government for breaking pledges but do not reward for fulfilling them. Being targeted in a beneficial way does not lead to more electoral rewards on fulfillment. The absence of electoral incentive for elected representatives to reason in terms of target groups when deciding which of their promises to prioritize for enactment potentially limits the effect of elections on balancing group representation. This could result in different groups being targeted at different stages of the policy cycle, nourishing the frustrations with broken promises in an unequal way.

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